

UPDATE ON REVIEW OF SCIENCE CURRICULUM MATERIALS

SUMMARY OF POLICY ISSUE/STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION (SBE) STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The SBE's goal of improving student preparation for postsecondary education and the 21st century world of work and citizenship has focused its attention on key subject areas such as math and science. In addition to developing math and science action plans, the SBE has been engaged in an ongoing review of science standards and curriculum materials.

BACKGROUND

The Legislature asked the SBE to review and make recommendations on the science standards, receive the revised standards from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and provide official comment and recommendations to OSPI regarding science curricula that OSPI recommends to align with the revised standards.¹

The SBE recommended changes to the science standards in May 2008, based on a review by its consultant, David Heil & Associates, Inc., and the Science Standards Advisory Panel. The OSPI revised the standards and sent them to the SBE on December 1, 2008. The SBE convened a special meeting² to receive the revised science standards from OSPI and to accept the Heil report on the revised standards.

OSPI was charged by the Legislature to recommend "...no more than three basic science curricula each for elementary and middle school grade spans, and not more than three recommendations for each of the major high school courses within the following science domains: earth and space science, physical science, and life science."³ On June 30, 2009, OSPI submitted its initial recommendations regarding the science curricula to the SBE. The SBE has 60 days to provide official comment and recommendations to OSPI.

Throughout the review of standards and curriculum materials, a 19-member Science Standards Advisory Panel, formed by the SBE, has met seven times to provide critical feedback on content and process. In addition, two members of the panel served as part of OSPI's curriculum materials review team.

¹ RCW 28A.305.215

² December 10, 2008

³ ESSB 5414, Section 5 (7) (c-f)

POLICY CONSIDERATION

In Superintendent Dorn's transmittal letter to the SBE (see appendix A), he provides his initial curricula recommendations, and asks for guidance from the Board and the Science Standards Advisory Panel, "with particular interest in...comments regarding the elementary programs and the integrated programs."

None of the six elementary programs reviewed met the minimum composite score of .70, established for eligibility for consideration in the initial recommendations. For this reason, Superintendent Dorn did not make any initial recommendations for the elementary level.

Of the two Integrated Science programs Superintendent Dorn recommended, one of them, "Coordinated Science," does not address one of the three "domain standards." The domains are: 1) physical science, 2) life science, and 3) earth and space science. Coordinated Science does not have a life science component. Despite this omission, Coordinated Science still attained a composite score that met the preset standard for consideration among initial recommendations. Superintendent Dorn is asking for feedback on this recommendation.

OSPI staff, and the consultant hired to lead the curriculum review, will provide the Board with an overview of the process and recommendations.

Official comment and recommendations. To help the SBE fulfill its responsibility to provide official comment and recommendations, staff will call upon the expertise of the Science Standards Advisory Panel. The SBE asked for, but did not receive, funding to hire an external consultant to provide a more comprehensive review. The Panel has provided significant feedback to the curriculum review process by e-mail and teleconference, but in order to fulfill this final task, a face-to-face meeting of the Panel has been scheduled for August 7, 2009. A special meeting of the SBE is scheduled for August 25, 2009 to consider the Panel's feedback. The legislation requires SBE to provide OSPI with recommendations by September 1, 2009.

The first, summative section of the Preliminary Report is included in appendix B.

EXPECTED ACTION

No action will be taken.