



Washington State  
Board of Education



*Working to Raise Student Achievement Dramatically*

## Update on Legislative Tasks

### **BACKGROUND**

The legislature and/or Governor have requested that the Board study and provide recommendations about the following issues:

- **End-of-Course Assessment and Charter:** Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of a move by Washington toward end-of-course assessments, and consider the role of norm-referenced assessments as alternative tests for graduation. (The charter for this task, revised after Board feedback in September, is included under the “charter proposals” tab in the packet.)
- **Science Standards Review and Charter:** Review K-10 science standards and provide feedback on the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction’s recommended science curricula. (The charter for this task, revised after Board feedback in September, is included under the “charter proposals” tab in the packet.)
- **Career and Technical Education:** Reevaluate the graduation requirements for students enrolled in vocationally intensive and rigorous career and technical education programs, particularly those that lead to a certificate or credential that is state or nationally recognized.
- **Meaningful High School Diploma Purpose:** Develop and propose a revised definition of the purpose and expectations for high school diplomas issued by public schools in Washington State.

### **END-OF-COURSE ASSESSMENT**

Staff will receive a preliminary report from the consultant, Education First Consulting, on October 30, 2007 that will include a review of current literature on end-of-course assessments, and a description of eight states’ use of these assessments.

## **SCIENCE STANDARDS REVIEW AND CHARTER**

Staff hired a consultant, David Heil and Associates, to perform the work of the science standards review. The contractor will bring a strong leadership team to direct the review, including: David Heil, one-time host of the Emmy Award-winning PBS family science program Newton's Apple; Rodger Bybee, Director Emeritus of the Biological Science Curriculum Study; and Harold Pratt, a private consultant and former Disciplinary Literacy Fellow in Science at the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh.

By the end of October 2007, staff will select 16 residents of Washington to serve on the science standards advisory panel that will provide formal feedback and guidance to the consultant. Closing date for applications was October 21. The first meeting of the advisory panel will be December 18, 2007.

## **CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE)**

The 2006 legislature tasked the Board to:

...reevaluate the graduation requirements for students enrolled in vocationally intensive and rigorous career and technical education programs, particularly those programs that lead to a certificate or credential that is state or nationally recognized. The purpose of the evaluation is to ensure that students enrolled in these programs have sufficient opportunity to earn a certificate of academic achievement, complete the program and earn the program's certificate or credential, and complete other state and local graduation requirements. The board shall report its findings and recommendations for additional flexibility in graduation requirements, if necessary.<sup>1</sup>

Staff hired a consultant, Washington State University's Social and Economic Sciences Research Center, to provide a statewide snapshot, analyzing available data about CTE completers—students enrolled in vocationally intensive programs. The study will analyze graduation trends and WASL performance for students enrolled in the 16 different CTE pathways to determine the:

- relationship between high school students who graduate and their peers who have completed CTE programs;
- relationship between high school graduates and non-graduates who complete CTE programs and various characteristics of the students (demography, socio-economic status) and their districts (geography/poverty);
- post-high school graduation characteristics of the class of 2005 and 2006 (e.g., tech prep participation and completion, enrollment in two-year schools, enrollment in four-year schools); and
- number of industry certificates earned.

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<sup>1</sup> RCW 28A.230.090

What the data will tell us is how students who are enrolled in intensive CTE pathways are doing. Are they graduating on time? Are they meeting standard on the WASL? How do they compare to students not enrolled in CTE programs?

What the data won't tell us is how many students chose not to enroll in CTE, nor will we know anything about why they made those choices. It will also not tell us, as the legislation requested, about whether students have had “sufficient opportunity to earn a certificate of academic achievement...” The oldest students in the study will be from the class of 2006, and they did not need to attain a CAA in order to graduate.

The second part of our approach is to study more carefully a few selected programs that have been successful in establishing academic equivalencies for career and technical education courses. We have heard repeatedly from representatives of the workforce and CTE communities about the valuable contributions that CTE courses can make in meeting academic core requirements, and we want to learn more about what schools are doing to make these initiatives *really* work. The study will be completed in December.

### **MEANINGFUL HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA PURPOSE**

The 2005 legislature asked the Board to:

...develop and propose a revised definition of the purpose and expectations for high school diplomas issued by public schools in Washington State. The revised definition shall address whether attainment of a high school diploma is intended to signify that a student is ready for success in college, ready for successful and gainful employment in the workplace, or some combination of these and other objectives. The revised definition shall focus on the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students are expected to demonstrate to receive a high school diploma, as well as the various methods to be used to measure student performance, rather than focusing on courses, credits, seat time, and test scores.<sup>2</sup>

The Board has considered the purpose of a diploma in its meaningful high school diploma work and in its own goals for students. In an earlier paper, the Meaningful High School Diploma Committee characterized the diploma as a “social contract” to whatever institution or employers the graduate moved on to—a contract that says the graduate has acquired a particular set of knowledge and skills. At its September 2007 meeting, the Board clarified the purpose as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> ESSHB 3098

The purpose of a diploma is to prepare a student to be ready for success in postsecondary education, gainful employment, and citizenship. The diploma should meet the personalized education needs of each student, as well as society's needs.

With respect to methods used to measure student performance, the Board redefined in 2000 a credit to include the "satisfactory demonstration by a student of clearly identified competencies established pursuant to a process defined in written district policy."<sup>3</sup>

**Staff Recommendation:** The Board will be asked, at its January 2008 meeting, to adopt a revised definition of the purpose of a diploma to forward to the legislature. Staff recommends that the Board consider a definition that builds on the ideas listed above, such as:

The purpose of a diploma is to prepare a student to be ready for success in postsecondary education, gainful employment, and citizenship. The diploma should meet the personalized education needs of each student, as well as society's needs. The diploma represents a social contract to whatever institution or employers the graduate moves on to—a contract that says the graduate has acquired a particular set of knowledge and skills. How the student demonstrates those skills may differ; whether a student earns credit by participating in formal instruction or by demonstrating competency through established district policies is immaterial; they are equally acceptable.

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<sup>3</sup> WAC 180-51-050