

The Washington State Board of Education

Governance | Achievement | High School and College Preparation | Math & Science | Effective Workforce

REQUIRED ACTION DISTRICT APPROVAL

BACKGROUND

The State Board of Education's (SBE) work for a new statewide accountability system includes a new Required Action process adopted by the state Legislature in the 2010 session¹ to address the needs for dramatic turnaround in our persistently lowest-achieving schools. This process mandates that certain districts with persistently lowest achieving schools participate in Required Action when designated to do so by the SBE. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) will use federal school improvement grants to support these schools. A parallel process is a selective competition from the remaining pool of persistently lowest-achieving schools for voluntary school improvement, also known as Models of Equity and Excellence through Rapid Improvement and Turnaround (MERIT).

At the January 2011 Board meeting, the Board designated the following four districts for Required Action:

- Lakeridge Elementary School, Renton School District
- Morton Junior-Senior High School, Morton School District
- Onalaska Middle School, Onalaska School District
- Soap Lake Middle and High School, Soap Lake School District

Approximately \$7 million in federal funds is available for this fiscal year for both the MERIT schools and Required Action Districts.

Although the Board is not required to act until May 15 of each year, OSPI requested that the Board make its decisions by March 31 so that it could begin an implementation of each school's plan in the early spring of 2011. The Board agreed to do so although it was concerned about the tight timeframe requested for Required Action District plans as well as for Board review.

Requirements of Required Action Districts:

The Required Action plan must be developed in collaboration with administrators, teachers, and other staff, parents, unions, students, and other representatives of the local community. The local school board must conduct a public hearing to allow for comment on the Required Action plan. The Required Action plan must include selection of one of the four federal intervention models (state/local models may be used in subsequent years):

- Turnaround: Replace principal and 50 percent of staff.
- Restart: Open the school under a third party education management organization.
- Closure: Send students to higher-achieving schools in the district.
- Transformation: Replace principal, reform instructional environment, develop teacher and school leader effectiveness, increase community engagement, and extend learning time).

Required Action Districts participated in an academic performance audit, which included:

- Student demographics
- Mobility patterns
- School feeder patterns
- Performance of different student groups on assessments
- Effective school leadership
- Strategic allocation of resources
- Clear and shared focus on student learning
- High standards and expectations for all students
- High level of collaboration and communication
- Aligned curriculum, instruction, and assessment to state standards
- Frequency of monitoring learning and teaching
- Focused professional development
- Supportive learning environment
- High level of family and community involvement
- Alternative secondary schools best practice
- Any unique circumstances or characteristics of the school or district

The intervention model selected by the district must address the concerns raised in the academic performance audit. If necessary, the district must reopen the collective bargaining agreement to address the audit's areas of concerns.

As part of the Required Action plan, districts were required to submit the following documents to OSPI:

1. Collective Bargaining Agreement (Certificated Staff) and Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement.
2. Annual District Calendar and School Calendar, if different (2010-11).
3. Calendar for Professional Development (2010-11).
4. Bell Schedule for Students (2010-11).
5. Current School Improvement Plan (2010-11).
6. Certificated Staff Roster with Assignments (2010-11).

Required Action Plan Approval

In February and March, OSPI and ESD 113 provided assistance to the RADs in completing their Required Action plan. The plans were due to OSPI on March 4. OSPI provided input and feedback to the RADs who submitted revised plans, which were forwarded to SBE between March 18 and 23. The level of that review was to ensure that the RAD plans are consistent with the federal school district improvement grants guidelines.

An SBE Review Team of lead Board Members (Kris Mayer and Connie Fletcher) and staff conducted a thorough review of the original plans, the revised plans, the academic performance audits, and other supplemental materials in order to make a recommendation to the full Board to approve or not approve each Required Action plan.

According to RCW 28A.657.050 and RCW 28A.657.060, SBE may approve a plan only if the plan meets all of the following requirements:

- Implementation of one of the four federal intervention models. SBE does not tell them which model to select.

- A budget that provides for adequate resources to implement the federal model selected and any other requirements of the plan.
- A description of the changes in the district's or school's existing policies, structures, agreements, processes, and practices that are intended to attain significant achievement gains for all students enrolled in the school.
- Identification of the measures that the school district will use in assessing student achievement at a school identified as a persistently lowest-achieving school, which include improving mathematics and reading student achievement and graduation rates that will enable the school to no longer be identified as a persistently lowest-achieving school.
- Sufficient remedies to address the areas of concern in the academic performance audit to improve student achievement.
- A public hearing conducted by the school board on the proposed plan.
- Evidence of collaboration to develop plan with administrators, teachers, staff, parents, union representatives, students and members of the community.

If SBE does not approve a Required Action plan, it will notify the local school board and local district's superintendent in writing with an explicit rationale for why the plan was not approved. At that point, with the assistance of OSPI, the district shall either: a) submit a new plan to SBE by May 10 (the SBE will meet within two weeks after the May 10 deadline to review the new plan); or b) submit a request to the Required Action Plan Review Panelⁱⁱ for reconsideration of the SBE rejection by April 10.

The Required Action Plan Review Panel may:

- Reaffirm the decision of SBE;
- Recommend that SBE reconsider the rejection; or
- Recommend changes to the Required Action plan.

The Panel shall consider and issue a decision regarding a district's request for reconsideration to the SBE no later than June 10. The SBE shall consider the recommendations of the Panel and issue a decision to the district and the Panel no later than June 20. The district then has 40 days after that decision to provide a new plan to the SBE.

If SBE does not approve the final Required Action plan or the school district does not submit a final plan, SBE may direct OSPI to redirect the district's Title I funds, based on the Academic Performance Audits.

Required Action Districts must participate in the Board's teleconference March 31 Special Meeting to provide a brief summary of their plans and answer any questions Board members have. At the end of the Special Meeting, the Board will vote to approve or not approve each district.

Summary of Recommendations by the SBE Review Team

The SBE recognizes in the case of the smaller districts, there is less capacity to develop strong plans for implementation. Nonetheless, OSPI and other entities offered assistance to create a strong plan. To proceed with these plans and ensure the money will be well spent, the Board needs to ensure that the plans will address the issues sufficiently identified in the audit as well that rapid turnaround will occur. These documents should be not be focused on planning to plan to plan but to be ready to implement quickly to impact student achievement.

More detailed summaries on each district are attached behind this summary

Onalaska Middle School, Onalaska School District

Recommendation: do not approve without further response from Onalaska

Rationale: the plan does not provide sufficient remedy for the five areas of concern in the academic performance audit, excerpted from the BERC Group report.ⁱⁱⁱ

1. **Performance Audit: Conduct an action planning process to identify a mission statement, specific goals, and strategies for school improvement.** *There does not appear to be a clearly understood or common focus at OMS. While everyone is interested in seeing their students succeed, they are not working together toward clearly defined goals, and many people work in isolation. Without a clear and common focus in place, staff members' efforts will continue to be fragmented. We recommend the creation of a clear and shared mission and vision that should include specific goals and benchmarks for performance (staff and students) and strategies for improvement. This mission should then be shared with all stakeholders to focus skills and energy and to drive decision-making and resource allocation. The school improvement plan should reflect the mission and be monitored and refined regularly based on student data.*

Comments from SBE Review Team: the academic achievement audit placed a very strong emphasis on developing the mission and goals, but there is not a clear plan to work with the Board, staff, parents and community to develop a mission, define clear goals, and develop benchmarks for performance. The link from the mission and goals to student learning should be explicit.

The plan also implies that many structures will be in place by the end of three years. This is too late for the work to be planned to be complete, especially when it comes to mission, goals, and strategies. The timeframe does not reflect a sense of urgency. There is an expectation of improvement after three years. The plan needs more specificity about the action planning process.

2. **Performance Audit: Access support to develop a Comprehensive Human Resource Management System.** *Onalaska School District personnel have had difficulty recruiting staff members to their community, and the task of creating a new teacher evaluation system stalled because it was "too overwhelming." We recommend the district access support to develop a Comprehensive Human Resource Management System to deal with the two issues and to identify additional means the district can support administrators and teachers through the Transformation process. Additional areas to explore include induction and mentoring, self-assessment and evaluation, and recognition and retention.*

Comments from SBE Review Team: There doesn't appear to be a specific plan for recruiting and hiring new teachers. Overall this part of the plan is not specific enough. Readers were concerned that may not be sufficient staff capacity once the contractors leave in three years. It was not clear when the new evaluation system will be implemented. This is an important component of the improvement effort.

3. **Performance Audit: Set high academic expectations.** *OMS students have many barriers to learning. This can make it challenging to set high expectations, particularly if teachers are acting alone. However, all students should be encouraged and challenged to excel. We*

recommend staff members work together to identify the highest level of expectations possible for OMS students and develop common language around those expectations. These expectations should relate to or exceed state standards and performance expectations, and there should be opportunities for students to take advanced classes. We recommend staff members identify high-achieving middle schools with similar demographics and resources and ascertain how expectations are implemented. This can be followed by an investigation of how those expectations are supported.

Comments from SBE Review Team: there is no clear plan for staff to work together to identify high expectations for ALL students and develop common language around those expectations. There was no mention of opportunities for students to take advanced classes. The responsibility for setting high expectations for students seems to lie exclusively with the K-8 principal. Specifically how will this individual build high expectations with staff, especially considering the expanded role to serving as principal of both the elementary and middle schools?

- 4. Performance Audit: Develop a long-term vision for curriculum implementation by identifying essential standards, curriculum alignment, and pacing.** *Aside from the math program, teachers and administrators report curricular materials are outdated, lessons are not aligned to the state standards, and there are not enough textbooks for all students. We recommend that administrators develop a long-term vision to adopt curricular materials and to provide support to align the materials to the state standards. Conducting a gap analysis in both the reading and math programs may be necessary to ensure full coverage of the material. Assistance from OSPI may be helpful in these efforts.*

Comments from SBE Review Team: the timeline is not aggressive enough for rapid improvement. Many things are scheduled to be completed by the end of the three year grant. There was no description of a gap analysis for reading and math. We highly encourage the district to adopt curricula and instructional materials are that aligned to the standards.

- 5. Performance Audit: Fully implement PBIS.** *OMS staff spent time and resources to consider, adopt, and be trained in the PBIS program and initially staff, parents, and students reported changes in behavior. Without full commitment to the teacher, administrator, and parent actions required by the program, its power is diluted and the program becomes ineffective. We recommend that all staff members receive follow up training in PBIS. Further, we recommend that parents be invited to attend these trainings as well, to better inform them of their responsibilities in helping to address the behavior issues at the school. Staff members may also wish to investigate existing programs to see how PBIS has been implemented at other schools.*

Comments from SBE Review Team: The academic audit spoke of bullying of students by teachers, not just student to student, and a pattern of inappropriate use of behavior rewards. The plan should address not just the attitudes and behavior of students, but the entire school community in the building as well. There did not appear to be a clear plan for holding teachers accountable for their actions or consistent implementation of the PBIS. Monitoring the implementation of the PBIS plan should be a priority.

Overall Comments from SBE Review Team: This plan will require significant work to address the concerns raised. We appreciate the cooperation of staff and community has provided to address these issues and recognize that the challenges are significant. We appreciate the improved focus in the plan on providing ongoing professional development and coaching for

instructional leaders and classroom teachers in effective classroom practices and the addressing the need for differentiated instruction..

Soap Lake Middle and High School, Soap Lake School District

Recommendation: do not approve without further response from Soap Lake.

Rationale: the plan does not provide sufficient remedy for five areas of concern in the academic performance audit.

1. **Performance Audit: Develop a clear understanding of the requirements for transformation and turnaround.** *There did not appear to be a clear understanding of the requirements of the transformation or turnaround model within the district. For example, there were misunderstandings around the requirements regarding replacement of the principal and linking student growth to the evaluation. We suggest district personnel work with OSPI to develop a clear understanding of the model requirements and then put in support structures to develop staff capacity.*

Comments from SBE Review Team: It was not clear to the Review Team specifically what professional development would be provided for teachers and district leaders, or when. The plan was unclear about additional instructional time for students, specifically how the after school tutoring would work and what the structure and content of the daily Advisory/Intervention time would be. The Plan states that the district will “begin the process of looking at extending the school learning time” which left the Review Team with the impression that there was not yet a concrete plan. The academic audit spoke of the need for the principal to build his instructional leadership skills and be more visible in the classroom, but there was not a concrete clear plan for this support to be provided.

2. **Performance Audit: Conduct an action planning process to identify a mission statement, specific goals, and strategies for school improvement.** *There does not appear to be a clearly understood or common focus at SLMSHS. While everyone is interested in seeing their students succeed, they are not working together toward clearly defined goals aimed at student learning, and many people work in isolation. Without a clear and common focus in place, staff members’ efforts will continue to be fragmented. We recommend the creation of a clear and shared mission and vision that should include specific goals and benchmarks for performance (staff and students) and strategies for improvement. This mission should then be shared with all stakeholders to focus skills and energy and to drive decision-making and resource allocation. The school improvement plan should reflect the mission and be monitored and refined regularly based on student data.*

Comments from SBE Review Team: The plan does not reflect a sense of urgency about conducting an action planning process to develop a mission, goals, and specific strategies. The plan states the intention to do this but not enough details or a rigorous timeline. The plan states, “the District plans on adopting three distinct, but key system elements: a quality teaching-learning framework, an intervention-advisory format, and an extended learning structure for students.” More detail about these elements would strengthen the plan.

3. **Performance Audit: Set high academic expectations.** *SLMSHS students have many barriers to learning. This can make it challenging to set high expectations, particularly if teachers are acting alone. However, all students should be encouraged and challenged to excel. Transcript results show very few students (21%) are taking rigorous coursework, and*

almost no improvement has been made in this area for the past three years. We recommend staff members work together to identify the highest level of expectations possible for Soap Lake students and develop common language around those expectations. These expectations should relate to or exceed state standards and performance expectations, and there should be opportunities for students to take advanced classes. We recommend staff members identify high-achieving middle and high schools with similar demographics and resources and ascertain how expectations are implemented. This can be followed by an investigation of how those expectations are supported.

Comments from SBE Review Team: There is not a clear plan to add rigor to existing coursework or to add advanced coursework. There is not a plan to ensure that staff develop high expectations for students or common language around expectations.

- 4. Performance Audit: Develop a long-term vision for curriculum implementation by identifying essential standards, curriculum alignment, and pacing.** *Aside from the math program and some upcoming work in science, teachers and administrators report curricular materials in some subject areas are outdated and lessons are not aligned to the state standards. We recommend that administrators develop a long-term vision to adopt curricular materials and to provide support to align the materials to the state standards in all content areas. Conducting a gap analysis in both the reading and math programs may be necessary to ensure full coverage of the material. Assistance from OSPI may be helpful in these efforts.*

Comments from SBE Review Team: There did not appear to be a long-term vision to adopt aligned materials. The curriculum and lesson alignment relies heavily on Teachers on Special Assignment. The Review Team is concerned that there is not a strong plan for accountability for adoption and alignment of new materials beyond the TOSA involvement. It is not clear how teacher buy in and responsibility will be built. Minimal funds were requested for materials, which led to concerns that even if a vision is developed that the funds may not be there to adopt new materials.

- 5. Develop leadership structures.** *Currently, no leadership team exists at the middle and high school. The process of decision-making appears to happen largely on an informal basis and by the principal. It is unclear how teacher leaders are selected, though some faculty members suspect it is an issue of seniority. Many staff members expressed a desire to be more involved with the decision-making process, and we recommend capitalizing on this commitment by developing a distributed leadership model. This will also encourage more authentic communication between the principal and staff members about school decisions. Developing a distributed leadership model will entail determining what forms of leadership are needed and delineation of responsibilities. This will also require periodic meetings of a leadership team and procedures and policies around the functioning and selection of the team. The lack of a building leadership team also leaves the implementation and monitoring of school improvement goals and strategies up to the building principal rather than to a larger group of people.*

Comments from SBE Review Team: No specific leadership structure is mentioned. There are committees but most of the leadership appears to come from the Superintendent and Principal, rather than a distributed leadership model to build buy-in and commitment from staff.

Overall Comments from SBE Review Team: We appreciate the cooperation the staff and community has provided to address the audit concerns and recognize that the challenges are significant. We appreciate the focus in the plan on job-embedded professional development and outreach to the community to engage more parents.

Morton Junior-Senior High School, Morton School District

Recommendation: do not approve without further response

Rationale: the plan does not provide sufficient remedy for two areas of concern in the academic performance audit.

1. **Performance Audit: Address leadership structures.** *Currently, no leadership team exists at the junior and senior high school. The process of decision-making appears to happen largely on an informal basis and teacher leaders appear to be selected in an informal process, which leads some to be unclear about how to be involved in the process if they are not selected. The lack of a building leadership team also leaves the implementation and monitoring of school improvement goals and strategies up to the building principal rather than to a larger group of people. Many staff members expressed a desire to be more involved with the decision-making process, and we recommend capitalizing on this commitment by developing a distributed leadership model. This will entail determining what forms of leadership are needed and delineation of responsibilities. This will also require periodic meetings of a leadership team and procedures and policies around the functioning and selection of the team.*

Comments from SBE Review Team: It is not clear that the plan as outlined is for a distributed leadership model sufficiently involving current staff. It relies on hired outside experts. It did not seem that this plan would provide sufficient capacity building with current staff to ensure sustainability of improvements. The plan is not clear how the proposed leadership structure will involve current staff, or what the plan is for deciding what forms of leadership are needed and clear delineation of responsibilities.

2. **Performance Audit: Set high academic expectations.** *Morton Junior and Senior High School students have many barriers to learning. This can make it challenging to set high expectations, particularly if teachers are acting alone. However, all students should be encouraged and challenged to excel. If Morton is to be successful in transformation, they will need to put plans in place for how to change the culture and perception of the school from a place where there are low academic expectations to one where the school is seen as rigorous and challenging. We recommend staff members work together to identify the highest level of expectations possible for Morton students and develop common language around those expectations. We also recommend staff members identify high-achieving districts with similar demographics and resources and ascertain how expectations are implemented. This can be followed by an investigation of how those expectations are supported. In addition, Morton personnel should use data from the high school outcomes (course offering and transcripts) section of this report in making decisions about course offerings and determining policies related to course taking.*

Comments from SBE Review Team:

The issue of setting high academic expectations was not clearly addressed in the plan. There was no discussion of developing common language among staff, no plan to identify other districts to investigate how high expectations are supported, and no plan to use data from high school outcomes to make decisions about course offerings for ALL students. The plan should

address the need to change the culture and perception of the school to one that is rigorous and challenging.

Overall Comments from SBE Review Team:

While there were only two areas that were cited as deficient for providing sufficient remedies to the audit, there are a number of areas that clearly need strengthening such as full and consistent implementation of the PBIS system. We appreciate the initial work on this plan to address some very challenging issues that permeate throughout the district and community.

Lakeridge Elementary School, Renton School District

Recommendation: approve

Rationale: the plan provides for sufficient remedy in all aspects of the academic performance audit

Comments from SBE Review Team:

The district and building should ensure that English Language Learner and Special Education teachers are fully integrated into the professional learning communities and that the district reviews the special education referral process. The building is urged to address high expectations for all students as well as advanced learning opportunities for accelerated students. Ensure that all ELL families have equal access (e.g. translation, home visitations). There is a robust discussion of community issues. The building may need to consider ways to address gang activity and student safety.

Overall Comments from SBE Review Team:

This is a very strong Required Action plan. There is excellent support from the district. The focus on additional learning time for all students is clearly planned out. There is a concrete plan for improving staff capacity and recruiting additional high quality staff. The professional development and support for staff in using student data is impressive. The sustainability plan is well thought-out.

EXPECTED ACTION

The Board is expected to vote on March 31, 2011 to consider approval on the four proposed Required Action District Plans.

SBE Review Team Recommendations are:

- Approve the Renton Lakeridge Elementary School Plan.
- Do not approve the Onalaska Middle School Plan without further response from district.
- Do not approve the Soap Lake Middle and High School Plan without further response from district.
- Do not approve Morton Junior-Senior High School Plan without further response from district.

ⁱ RCW 28A.657

ⁱⁱ The Review Action Panel shall consist of five individuals with expertise in school improvement, school and district restructuring or parent and community involvement in schools. The Speaker of the House, the President of the

Senate and the Governor shall solicit recommendations and make appointments by December 1, 2010. The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall convene the Review Action Panel as needed. Members serve four year terms. Note: the appointments to this panel have not yet been made.

ⁱⁱⁱ Academic Performance Audits for Required Action Districts, prepared by the BERC Group

Description of Four Intervention Models

OSPI Summary Prepared for RADs
December 2010 Seminar

Four SIG School Intervention Models

Turnaround

Restart

Closure

Transformation

Turnaround Model Overview

Teachers and Leaders

- Replace principal
- Use locally adopted “turnaround” competencies to review and select staff for school (rehire no more than 50% of existing staff)
- Implement strategies to recruit, place, and retain staff

Instructional and Support Strategies

- Select and implement an instructional model based on student needs
- Provide job-embedded Professional Development designed to build capacity and support staff
- Ensure continuous use of data to inform and differentiate instruction

Time and Support

- Provide *increased learning time*
- Staff and students
- Social-emotional and community-oriented services and supports

Governance

- New governance structure
- Grant operating flexibility to school leader

May also implement any of the required or permissible strategies under the Transformation Model

Restart Model Overview

- Restart model is one in which an LEA converts a school or closes and reopens a school under a charter school operator, a charter management organization (CMO), or an education management organization (EMO) that has been selected **through a rigorous review process**.
 - A restart model must enroll, within the grades it serves, any former student who wishes to attend the school.
 - A rigorous review process could take such things into consideration as an applicant's team, track record, instructional program, model's theory of action, sustainability.
 - As part of this model, a State must review the process the LEA will use/has used to select the partner.

School Closure Model Overview

- School closure occurs when an LEA closes a school and enrolls the students who attended that school in other schools in the LEA that are **higher-achieving**.
 - These schools should be within reasonable proximity to the closed school and may include, but are not limited to, charter schools or new schools for which achievement data are not yet available.

Transformation Model Overview

Teachers and Leaders

- Replace **principal**
- Implement new evaluation system
 - Developed with staff
 - Uses student growth as a significant factor
- Identify and reward staff who are increasing student outcomes; support and then remove those who are not
- Implement strategies to recruit, place and retain staff

Instructional and Support Strategies

- Select and implement an instructional model based on student needs
- Provide job-embedded Professional Development designed to build capacity and support staff
- Ensure continuous use of data to inform and differentiate instruction

Time and Support

- Provide *increased learning time*
 - Staff and students
- Provide ongoing mechanisms for community and family engagement
- Partner to provide social-emotional and community-oriented services and support

Governance

- Provide sufficient operating flexibility to implement reform
- Ensure ongoing technical assistance

An LEA with nine or more Tier I and Tier II schools may not implement the Transformation Model in more than 50% of those schools.