

October 30, 2006

Welcome to Highlights, a summary of the Washington State Board of Education meetings. Details of meetings are posted on the board's Web site (www.sbe.wa.gov).

On October 26 and 27, the board met in Renton and largely focused on the Collection of Evidence and strategies to address the challenges of students learning mathematics.

COLLECTION OF EVIDENCE

The board voted 10-2 to adopt Collection of Evidence Guidelines, Protocols, and Scoring Criteria as an option for students to meet standards for the Certificate of Academic Achievement. The Collection of Evidence option will be made available to students who take the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) twice but are unsuccessful in passing one or more areas. The collection is designed for students to create a portfolio of their work to show that they have the skills and knowledge to meet the same standards for reading, writing and/or mathematics through this alternative method.

The board heard from a number of teachers, principals, and other administrators about issues around implementation of the Collection of Evidence. A number of people raised concerns about the challenges of compiling collections by the proposed March deadline, the complexity of the mathematics collection, and the availability of staff and funding to assist students.

By its vote, the board affirmed the validity and reliability of the guidelines, protocols and scoring criteria, but made it clear that there are significant implementation challenges. The board listed three conditions for the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction: 1) extend the deadline for the initial submittal of student work from March to by June 15th, 2007; 2) post quality work samples on the OSPI Web site for teachers to use ; and 3) send a letter to the Superintendent from the board chair requesting an implementation plan be created with input from teachers and administrators present it to the board.

MATH LEARNING

The board heard from a large group of individuals, including parents, teachers, legislators, and school administrators who made suggestions for improving math learning, which is a significant challenge in Washington State. (Last Spring, close to half of current high school juniors failed the math WASL.) The board is developing a math action plan jointly with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the state Professional Educators Standards Board, which the board plans to adopt at the November meeting.

There was conflicting advice whether the board should recommend keeping or deferring mathematics as a Certificate of Academic Achievement graduation requirement starting in 2008. Most speakers, however, hit some common points: the need for improved curriculum, alignment of curriculum and standards, teacher assistance and more help for parents and students.

Following public comment, the board used a discussion guide to narrow their focus on what elements should be included in their math action plan. A board subcommittee will present a mathematics action plan and options for the Class of 2008 for consideration at the next meeting in late November.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The board heard a detailed presentation on building a state-wide accountability system by Scott Palmer and Jonathan Furr of Holland & Knight. The consultants described how accountability is a core strategy for achieving educational goals and is key to achieving system change in an education. Palmer and Furr gave suggestions for how the Board of Education can develop an accountability system for Washington State.

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT – TRIBAL HISTORY

The board passed a resolution to sign a Memorandum of Agreement on Tribal history, government, and culture. In signing the agreement, the board agreed to consider the possibility of including Tribal History, government, and culture as a graduation requirement. A decision will

be made by December 2007. The board clarified that it may need legislative authority to move to final adoption of that goal.

SIGN UP FOR HIGHLIGHTS

Please forward this note to others who might be interested in the State Board of Education's work.

Please visit the board's Web site, (<http://www.sbe.wa.gov>) to sign up for Highlights and other messages, read complete minutes of board meetings, and learn more about K-12 education in Washington State.

The web site also includes a copy of chair Mary Jean Ryan's essay on Washington Learns, which was recently printed in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

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