



WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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TRANSCRIPT STUDY

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

The SBE contracted with THE BERC GROUP, INC. to perform an analysis of transcripts from 2008 graduates in order to better understand the course-taking patterns of Washington students. This information, together with the SBE's 2007 study of district graduation requirements, will inform the SBE's Meaningful High School Diploma work by providing a rich picture of current practice.

BACKGROUND

The SBE conducted a study in spring 2007 to determine the 2007-2008 graduation requirements by district. With that information in hand, the SBE posed a second question: "Now that we know what students are required to do, what are they actually taking?"

The SBE selected THE BERC GROUP, INC. from three vendors who responded to the Request for Proposals, and contracted with BERC to conduct a transcript analysis of 2008 graduates, drawn from a representative sample of approximately 100 school districts. The sample included at least one district (and thus one high school) from every county, and was drawn from a list that included any school where the grade span extended through 12th grade. The sample did not include schools identified as home-based schools, learning centers, special education schools, technical skills centers, parent partnership schools, night schools, and schools located in justice centers.

The following research questions were posed:

1. What percentage of Washington students are taking courses that meet the minimum, public four-year Washington college admissions standards set by the Higher Education Coordinating Board?
 - a. What is the relationship between districts that require more than the state minimum requirements in math and science, and the number of students who take courses that meet the minimum, public four-year Washington college admissions standards?

- b. What is the relationship between districts that require only the state minimum credits in math and science, and the number of students who take courses that meet the minimum, public four-year Washington college admissions standards?
- c. What required college admissions courses are most frequently not taken?
2. What does a typical senior schedule look like—how many credits are seniors taking, and what types of courses?
3. How do course-taking patterns differ for students who meet standard on the math, reading, writing, and science Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) and those who don't?
4. How many students earn high school credits in math and world language prior to entering ninth grade?
5. How many credits in each subject area required for high school graduation (e.g., English, mathematics, science, social studies, arts, occupational education) are students actually taking?
6. What is the relationship between the number of credits required for graduation at the district level and the number of credits students actually take?
7. What courses are students taking in each subject area?
8. What percentage of honors courses (Advanced Placement, IB) are students taking, and in what types of districts are these courses likely to be available?
9. What differences emerge if the response to each of these questions is cross-referenced by gender and race?

The BERC GROUP is in the process of completing the full report, which will be submitted to the SBE by December 1, 2008. Findings will be presented at the meeting, and copies of the PowerPoint presentation will be distributed.

POLICY CONSIDERATION

The scope and representativeness of this sample should enable the SBE to generalize about the course-taking patterns of Washington State high school students. This information will inform the SBE's Meaningful High School Diploma work by providing a rich picture of current practice.

EXPECTED ACTION

None; information only