



THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Governance | Accountability | Achievement | Oversight | Career & College Readiness

March 6, 2014

Randy Dorn
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
600 Washington Street SE
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Superintendent Dorn:

The State Board of Education (SBE) appreciates the ongoing collaboration with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) Office of Student and School Success on the development of the Synergy Accountability System. Mr. Andy Kelly and his team presented to the SBE and engaged in discussions with the Board in November 2013 and January 2014. The SBE appreciates that the state is positioned to implement a unified accountability system.

In accordance with the Board's statutory responsibility under E2SSB 5329 to recommend "approval or modifications of the system design by January 1, 2014", I wrote you on behalf of the Board on December 10, 2013. I am writing to you again to express the Board's recommendation for approval of the progress and direction of the development of the state accountability system. The Board feels there is additional work to continue to build the efficacy and alignment of the system as a whole, and the Board looks forward to continued collaboration with the Office of Student and School Success.

Areas of continued work to further develop a unified accountability system are listed and described below:

- The Board is impressed with OSPI's stated commitment to take the Synergy model to scale for all struggling schools in our state, in accordance E2SSB 5329 (2013). After reviewing the model, and learning how significantly the number of identified schools will increase as a result of serving all struggling schools—not just Title-eligible schools as before—the Board is interested in monitoring how the agency is able to respond to the growing needs for services, given the existing level of federal and state resources. It is important to the Board that the school identification process be seen as one that comes with significant assistance. Our ability to provide some basic level of value-added assistance to all identified schools will be an important consideration to the Board as we move forward.
- The Board has reviewed the Synergy model visuals and materials in some detail. Our review suggests that the priorities and areas of focus articulated in the Synergy model and the accompanying Theory of Action are the correct ones (Transformational Teaching,

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Peter Maier • Holly Koon • Tre' Maxie • Connie Fletcher • Judy Jennings • Isabel Munoz-Colon • Jeff Estes
Randy Dorn, *Superintendent of Public Instruction*

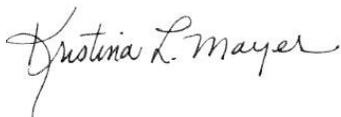
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and Courageous Leadership). The primary strategies articulated in the Synergy model (performance audit, data analysis, utilization of action-planning tool, community engagement, job-embedded professional development, etc.) as reflected in the System Design visual are, on some level, presumed to already be underway in schools implementing the federal SIG models. However, we believe that the Synergy model will provide a higher level of emphasis and commitment to implementing these essential strategies. We look forward to monitoring and observing how the Synergy model is implemented to produce improved achievement for schools.

- The Board sees its role in this process as focusing primarily on student outcomes; in particular, how those outcomes are defined and measured. The Board continues to work on a framework for reviewing system performance, and looks forward to working with the Superintendent as we move forward. OSPI reports to the Board twice yearly on the progress of required action districts. In keeping with the Board's responsibility for creating an accountability framework that provides a unified system of support for Challenged Schools that aligns with basic education, increases the level of support based upon the magnitude of need and use data for decisions (RCW 28A.657.005), the Board asks that the report be expanded to include an update that summarizes the progress of all Challenged Schools, implementation of OSPI support to the Challenged Schools, and any significant issues encountered or on the horizon. In defining desired outcomes for all of our struggling schools, we will need to remain consistent with the values of the revised Achievement Index—which is our primary means for evaluating school-level performance—and the Indicators of Educational System Health, now in statute—which are our primary means of measuring system-wide achievement. In particular, as we monitor the progress of our schools in improvement status, we need to stay focused on opportunity gaps, expressed both as proficiency gaps and as gaps in growth rates among our student subgroups.

The SBE recognizes the work of the Office of Student and School Success in creating a system that meaningfully works to help schools raise student achievement. The Board looks forward to continuing to work with you and your staff on behalf of the students in Washington state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kristina L. Mayer".

Dr. Kristina L. Mayer
Chair

cc: Andy Kelly, OSPI