



Summary of the September 2015 Legislative Priorities and Strategic Plan Discussion

At the September 2015 board meeting, members commented on legislative priority options that were suggested by staff in a memo on pages XX of the packet. Members also engaged in general discussion of the Strategic Plan based on a six-meeting planning document that outlined major work on competency-based crediting, aligning the system to a definition of career readiness, and other major upcoming policy work. During the general discussion, members talked about a wide range of possible strategic directions that overlapped with potential legislative priorities. This memo separates that general discussion from comments that were specific to the legislative priority options listed by staff in the packet memo.

In recognition of the broad scope and wide variety of topics raised during discussion, members noted that not all of the topics raised would result in upcoming policy work. Furthermore, members stated that the Executive Committee would have the role of listening to the entire board's ideas then filtering through the input to arrive at a limited number of strategic aims and legislative priorities. This summary document is not intended to reflect the outcome of the Executive Committee's work of converting the entire board's guidance into a limited number of aims and priorities moving forward.

Discussion Specific to Legislative Priority Options Listed by Staff in the September Board Packet

Members noted that certain legislative priorities, like compliance with *McCleary* and advocating for state-funded professional learning for educators, were ongoing priorities of the Board that require less explorative discussion and staff research than session-specific legislative priorities, like expanded learning opportunities or graduation alternatives. A member suggested categorizing legislative priorities as either long-term, ongoing positions or short-term, terminal priorities.

1. Achieve compliance with *McCleary*

- Eliminate reliance on local levies for basic education.
- Establish regular and dependable revenue sources.
- Fully implement ESHB 2261 (2009) and SHB 2776 (2010).

Members were supportive of a legislative priority to achieve compliance with *McCleary*. Members stated that it was an ongoing legislative priority that is a given for the 2016 session.

2. Establish a program of high-quality, state-funded professional learning for educators.

Members were supportive of a legislative priority to establish state-funded professional learning for educators. This was generally regarded as an ongoing priority that does not require extensive new discussion among the Board.

3. Preserve the integrity of the Career and College-Ready Diploma while expanding graduation alternatives.

The Board was supportive of the general concept but did not land on agreement on the specifics of the legislative priority. This legislative priority was generally well-received by the Board but the discussion of details behind it was broad and the ideas for policy work went in multiple directions. For instance, some members were thinking of ways to offer competency-based crediting while other members suggested additional assessment alternatives. A member stated that the priority to preserve the CCR diploma should strike a balance between keeping students from falling behind and maximizing the opportunity for flexibility and exploration. A member cautioned that this priority to “preserve” the CCR diploma is framed in a defensive way. A member voiced concern that more work and information is needed for this legislative priority. Members offered the following ideas for improving implementation of the 24-credit graduation requirements:

- Fund eight periods as part of basic education.
- In collaboration with OSPI, develop a bank of competency-based courses to aid in credit retrieval.
- Advocate for additional assessment alternatives.
- Allow students to use any of the alternatives to meet graduation requirements even if they have not already failed the Smarter Balanced assessment.

4. Strengthen the High School and Beyond Plan.

Members engaged in limited discussion of this legislative priority but did not voice opposition to it.

5. Increase access to high-quality expanded learning opportunities.

Members did not agree on a path forward for advocacy involving expanded learning opportunities. Multiple members recognized the importance of expanded learning opportunities. A board member stated that expanded learning opportunities were not the best investment of state dollars. A member suggested that there be a clear distinction between “expanded” learning, including afterschool programs, and “extended” learning, including summer school. This legislative priority left more questions than answers.

6. Bring clarity to basic education requirements by harmonizing the definitions of “school day” and “instructional hours.”

Three members stated that the Board should not pursue a legislative priority on the definition of the school day and instructional hours. Such a legislative priority would be at odds with where the Board believes the system is going (i.e. competency-based education and other flexible methods of instructional delivery). One member stated that work on the definition of the school day and instructional hours should be done but that it should be taken care of as housekeeping among legislative staff rather than a Board-level legislative priority.

Legislative Priority Options Raised by Board Members

The following are legislative priority options raised by board members:

- Eliminate the Biology E.O.C. as a graduation requirement.
- Allow students to access alternative pathways to meeting graduation requirements without having to first fail the Smarter Balanced assessment.
- Improve discipline policy with the goal of reducing disproportionality and lost instructional time.

- Advocate in support of Dual Credit programs.
- Bolster policy work on Special Education. In discussion, the details and purposes of this option were varied.
- Eliminate the graduation cut score; delink exams from graduation requirements.

General Discussion of Strategic Plan and Legislative Priorities

Assessment

The majority of members stated that upcoming board meetings should have time on the agenda focused on assessments.

Members raised the following questions regarding assessment:

- Should the Smarter Balanced assessment be administered in 10th grade?
- What is the Board's position on HB 2214 or a similar bill, given that the issue will emerge again in the 2016 session?
- Should the Smarter Balanced assessment continue to be a graduation requirement?
- How should the Smarter Balanced assessment be used in the Achievement Index?
- Is there evidence that requiring assessments as graduation requirements positively impacts student outcomes?

Members suggested the following actions be taken on assessments:

- Communicate the value of the Smarter Balanced assessment to the public.
- Prepare a position on the science assessment. Proactively work to eliminate the Biology E.O.C. as a graduation requirement beyond the current temporary suspension of the Biology E.O.C.
- Increase the usefulness and acknowledgement of the Smarter Balanced assessment by employers.

Educator Supply and Teacher Attendance

- Examine educator supply issues to understand whether the system will have the teachers needed in the regions where they are needed. Cooperate with the Professional Educator Standards Board on this. Focus on educator supply in science, mathematics, Special Education, and meeting the impact of lower class sizes in preschool through third grade.
- Research the relationship of teacher attendance to student outcomes, especially drop-out rate.

Achievement and Opportunity Gaps

A member stated that the legislative priority options listed by staff did not adequately address closing achievement gaps. However, board members noted that much of the policy work of the Board is aimed at closing achievement gaps without explicitly stating something about closure of gaps in an individual legislative priority. For instance, competency-based crediting is aimed at allowing students who are at risk of not graduating to engage in credit retrieval. The intended outcome being that credit retrieval would positively impact outcomes for student groups that are affected by achievement and opportunity gaps, thus closing those gaps. A member stated that further policy work or a legislative priority around discipline can play an important role in closing opportunity gaps.

Competency-Based Crediting

Members supported future policy work on competency-based crediting. A member suggested that Smarter Balanced assessment scores should be used to accelerate students so that they do not have to take unnecessary courses that include coursework that they already understand.

Aligning the System around a Definition of Career Readiness

Members voiced enthusiasm for partnering with peer agencies to define career readiness and align the system around that definition. Members noted the importance of working with the Workforce Training Board. Members stated that soft skills and social-emotional learning are integral to career readiness. A member stated that the Board should engage in policy work to develop more workforce and project-based learning opportunities. However, members engaged in limited discussion of the details of this career readiness policy work.

Early Warning Systems

A member stated that the Board should work to develop early warning indicators for students and promote the use of early warning systems in the state.

Special Education

Members raised the idea of engaging in more policy work on special education. Members suggested possible engagement on the following issues:

- Special Education funding formula
- Standardizing practice for Special Education and promoting successful practices to address the lack of consistency in Special Education
- Conducting a needs or gap study

Process and Structure

Members suggested exploring the following ways to improve the Board's process and structure, particularly in regards to strategic planning and developing legislative priorities:

- Enhance the Board's capability in change management. Consider contracting a change management specialist or organizational development expert.
- Develop a theory of action that connects the dots between the Strategic Plan and the legislative priorities. Present on the transformative process in the Strategic Plan at the November board meeting.
- Clarify the relationship among legislative priorities, the Strategic Plan, and the detail of policy work.
- Continue to hear the input of the entire board then have the executive committee develop a plan to move forward based on that guidance. Improve this feedback loop whenever possible.
- Provide opportunities for board members to get educated on issues in between board meetings. Step up the inter-meeting information so that members are learning about policy issues throughout the two months between meetings instead of during the week before a meeting when members have received the entire board packet.

If you have questions about this summary, please contact Parker Teed, Data Analyst, at parker.teed@k12.wa.us