

December 1, 2020

Esteemed board members, colleagues, and state-level decision makers,

In response to [RCW 28A.305.035](#), the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) and the State Board of Education (SBE) are pleased to report on the “the progress the boards have made and the obstacles they have encountered, individually and collectively, in the work of achieving the goals” of basic education in Washington state. The PESB and the SBE are committed to a thriving and productive partnership that builds on each organization's role and position in governance and oversight of our state's public education system.

In the 2019 and 2020 legislative sessions, legislators enacted several policy changes that aligned with both Boards' priorities to improve equity in education and close the education opportunity and achievement gaps for students in the K-12 system and pathways to teacher certification. These include:

- **Graduation Pathway Options:** Legislation passed in the 2019 session ([E2SHB 1599](#)) established new graduation pathway options. The Legislature gave SBE authority to write rules to further define the graduation pathways. SBE undertook an extensive stakeholder engagement effort to inform the rulemaking process. The Board adopted new rules for the graduation pathway options ([WAC 180-51-230](#)) in November 2019. SBE has created a variety of [communication materials](#) to help school districts, families, and students understand the new graduation pathway options. In addition, SBE has published two interim [reports](#) on the equity and adequacy of the pathway options.
- **Mastery-Based Learning:** [E2SHB 1599](#) also established a state mastery-based learning (MBL) work group to explore the barriers to MBL and provide recommendations around how to increase capacity for MBL, including the development of a MBL pathway to a high school diploma. SBE provides staff support to the work group. PESB has provided information to the work group on professional learning of educators and on professional development and certification.
- **Expanding the current and future educator workforce supply:** [ESHB 1139](#) looked to address the educator workforce, provided greater definition for teacher shortage, and transferred educator pathway programs to be funded through financial aid. The bill worked to fund Grow Your Own programs including alternative routes. The bill also established The Collaborative, a work group centering the educator workforce and system improvements to education.
- **Modifying the basic skills assessment for approved teacher preparation programs:** [HB 1621](#) recognized that passing the WEST-B basic skills assessment could be a barrier to students who were interested in becoming a teacher, so the requirement was removed. Students still need to take the assessment or an alternative, and teacher preparation programs will evaluate candidates before recommending for teacher certification.

In an effort to build stronger partnerships across the organizations, the PESB and SBE have taken specific steps to ensure better collaboration and cooperation. These include direct board member to board member meetings and conversations, co-scheduled board meetings, participation with workgroups, and identification of shared values and priorities. This has led to new opportunities for working together towards common goals.

The boards have specifically found common purpose and ground in the following shared priorities:

- Advancing equity in education
  - Educators have the ability to change lives, to change the trajectory of families and communities through learning with and from students. Despite the widespread racial, economic, and social inequality on which this country was founded, the single-most important in-school factor related to student learning is the educator. The success of Washington's students depends on the success of Washington's educators. To ensure that success, the Professional Educator Standards Board is steadfast in its pursuit of educational equity. (PESB)
  - Recognize and promote equity and excellence in the preparation and practice of educators. Additionally centering equity in standards, approval and review of educator preparation programs that operate in WA state. (PESB)
  - Incentivize innovative approaches that maximize impact. PESB has implemented the Advancing equity grant program exploring three strands to advance equity in educator preparation including curriculum, research and systemic improvements to outreach and community engagement. (PESB)
  - SBE supports structures, policies, and practices which support all students, and eliminate systemic bias, barriers, and inequities in education opportunities (SBE)
  - Ensure equitable access to quality schools and expanded learning opportunities (SBE)
  - Ensure an equitable funding system prioritized to those most in need (SBE)
  - Revised the state accountability and recognition system to be more equitable (SBE in partnership with OSPI and EOGOAC)
- Program and Policy Oversight
  - Center the perspectives and experiences of practicing educators to develop and improve policy (PESB)
  - Guide policy and innovation to remove institutional barriers and increase educational opportunities needed to support flexibility in assessment of educators (PESB)
  - Center the perspectives and experiences of students to develop and improve policy (SBE)
  - Improved basic education oversight with revised reporting requirements (SBE)
  - Supported implementation of Washington State Science Learning Standards (SBE)
- Advocacy & Systems Development
  - Establish and strengthen community partnerships and shared decision making. (PESB)
  - Critically examine data and research on the educator workforce for continuous improvement. (PESB)
  - Connect efforts to improve the educator workforce across the career continuum, including when educators access and identify the profession, are prepared by programs, placed in schools, through retention initiatives, and growth opportunities. (PESB)
  - Improve engagement and communications with student, parents, educators, and community partners (SBE)
  - Provide staff support to the Mastery-based Learning Work Group, collaborated with WSSDA in their development of subject-specific model policies for providing mastery-based credit, and developed new rules to clarify and support districts in offering mastery-based crediting (SBE)

For more information regarding these and other efforts, please see the following documents and reports:

- Professional Educator Standards Board
  - [Agency Overview](#)
  - [Agency Strategic Plan](#)
  - [2021 Legislative Priorities](#)
  
- State Board of Education
  - [Agency Overview](#)
  - [Strategic Plan](#)
  - [2021 Legislative Platform](#)

PESB will finalize its strategic plan in January 2021 and has engaged in a year long strategic planning process to steer the future direction of the organization. The SBE is making progress towards its 2019-2023 strategic plan goals.

As we look ahead to the 2021 and 2022 legislative sessions and the 2021-23 biennium, it is clear that long-standing challenges and inequities in the education system have been exacerbated by three life-changing crises:

1. The focused attention against racial injustice and discrimination;
2. A global health emergency that has turned education on its head; and
3. A fragile economy with the highest unemployment rates in nearly a century.

The novel coronavirus has peeled back what many of us have long known are critical to student success: social and emotional learning; response to mental health needs; and authentic student, family, and community engagement. COVID-19 has also exposed the dramatic need for connectivity for all students. The emergency offers all of us the opportunity to rethink how instruction is delivered and how to best meet the varied needs of the diverse students in our system.

The State Board of Education and Professional Educator Standards Board see the pandemic as an opportunity to transform Washington's education system into one that serves each and every student equitably. To this end, we are committed to working together for bold system change. Only through close collaboration can we gain momentum in forward progress and collectively address barriers to student achievement.

Respectfully,



Alexandra Manuel  
Executive Director  
Professional Educator Standards Board



Randy Spaulding  
Executive Director  
Washington State Board of Education

PESB Members: Adam Auilera, Tenesha Fremstad, Robert Hand, Michelle (Shelly) Milne, Ann Robins Michaela Miller, Bethany Rivard, Maribel Vilchez, Marissa Winmill. Executive Committee: Amy Frost (Chair), Ron Jacobson, Aurora Flores.

Paraeducator Members: Yukari Amos, Omar Escalera, Lisa Markussen, Cindy Rockholt, Laura Rogers, Lizzy Sebring, Jamie Wells. Executive Committee: Cathy Smith (Chair), Loren Sickles.

SBE Members: Peter Maier (Chair), MJ Bolt (Vice Chair), Bill Kallappa II, Harium Martin-Morris, Holly Koon MEd, NBCT, Jan Brown, Jeff Estes, Kevin Wang, Mary Fertakis, M.Ed, Patty Wood, Dr. Paul Pitre, Ryan Brault, Dr. Susana Reyes, Chris Reykdal (State Superintendent), Margarita Amezcua (Student Member), McKenna Roberts (Student Member).