



Washington State
Board of Education



Working to Raise Student Achievement Dramatically

Strategic Plan 2009-2015

**Submitted to the Office of Financial Management
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by

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WASHINGTON STATE BOARD of EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2009-2015

Introduction

The world is a more competitive place than it used to be, and our children must be much better prepared than graduates of 20 years ago. The vast majority of decent-paying jobs now require some kind of training or education after high school. Business leaders report they can't find qualified employees who can read operating manuals, write coherent memos and compute sales prices. There are significant differences in achievement among student populations, and too many of our students are still struggling with the basics.

In our fast-moving, high-tech, global economy, we need people who have strong skills in mathematics, science and communication. To succeed in life, whether it's buying a home, reading the newspaper, or applying for and keeping a job, people must be able to think critically and solve problems creatively. In recognition of this imperative, the legislature passed the Basic Education Act, in order to:

...provide students with the opportunity to become responsible and respectful global citizens, to contribute to their economic well-being and that of their families and communities, to explore and understand different perspectives, and to enjoy productive and satisfying lives. Additionally, the state of Washington intends to provide for a public school system that is able to evolve and adapt in order to better focus on strengthening the educational achievement of all students, which includes high expectations for all students and gives all students the opportunity to achieve personal and academic success. To these ends, the goals of each school district, with the involvement of parents and community members, shall be to provide opportunities for every student to develop the knowledge and skills essential to:

- (1) Read with comprehension, write effectively, and communicate successfully in a variety of ways and settings and with a variety of audiences;*
- (2) Know and apply the core concepts and principles of mathematics; social, physical, and life sciences; civics and history, including different cultures and participation in representative government; geography; arts; and health and fitness;*

(3) Think analytically, logically, and creatively, and to integrate different experiences and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and solve problems; and

(4) Understand the importance of work and finance and how performance, effort, and decisions directly affect future career and educational opportunities.¹

The legislature recognizes that our schools should not only prepare all students to read, write and do mathematics, but also to understand scientific findings, reflect critically on contemporary issues, and appreciate the diversity of cultural and artistic contributions. Our children need these abilities in order to succeed personally and professionally in an increasingly global and competitive economy.

But for decades, we haven't reached all students – only some of them. We can no longer afford to let any student "fall through the cracks" of our education system. If students leave high school without the skills they need to succeed in life, they will struggle personally and professionally, because their choices will be limited. And they will have difficulty making informed decisions about everything from managing their money to electing local, state and national leaders.

For our children's sake, we must improve our schools and improve student results.

¹ RCW 28A.150.210 Basic education act — Goal

Vision for Washington's K-12 Education System

The State Board of Education envisions a learner-focused state education system that is accountable for the individual growth of each student, so that students can thrive in a competitive global economy and in life.

The K-12 system that we envision is one which:

- Provides all students with opportunities to learn
- Provides multiple pathways for satisfying graduation requirements
- Graduates students with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to thrive in the workforce, succeed in future studies and serve as responsible citizens
- Is accountable for its results as well as its use of resources
- Uses performance data to guide continuous improvement and provides an early warning system to guide interventions
- Puts the education of the students first in developing policy
- Provides and supports quality teaching and counseling at all levels
- Provides the resources to support learning and teachers
- Is nimble and innovative, focused on supporting learning at all grade levels
- Shares responsibility and collaboration across the system
- Has the capacity – systems, infrastructure, technology – to support learning
- Provides seamless connections between preschool, kindergarten, elementary, middle and high schools and postsecondary education
- Makes effective use of compulsory and supplementary learning time
- Supports students in making good choices for their lives beyond K-12.

Authority and Mandates

RCW 28A.305.130 authorizes the State Board of Education to “provide advocacy and strategic oversight of public education; implement a standards-based accountability system to improve student academic achievement; provide leadership in the creation of a system that personalizes education for each student and respects diverse cultures, abilities, and learning styles; and promotes achievement of the goals of RCW 28A.150.210 .“

The State Board of Education has several specific responsibilities related to the establishment of standards for student achievement and attendance, graduation from high school, and the accountability of schools and districts. These and other administrative responsibilities of the Board are detailed in Appendix A.

It should be noted that in 2005, the legislature significantly changed the role of the State Board of Education. Before that time, the Board had focused largely on administrative issues, such as school district boundary adjustments and oversight of school construction and accreditation. The new Board retains some administrative duties, but it is now mandated to provide a broad leadership role in strategic oversight and policy for K-12 education.

The Governor and the Legislature have set high expectations for the Board. We welcome that responsibility, but we know that progress will only come from collaboration. The quality of our work will depend on listening and learning from educators and others across the state. For this reason, the Board's statute also mandates it to work closely with the institutions of higher education, workforce development representatives, and early learning policymakers and providers, to coordinate and unify the work of the public school system.

Board Membership

The State Board of Education is composed of sixteen Washington state citizens: five who are elected by school district school board members (three from western Washington and two from eastern Washington), seven appointed by the Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, a representative of private schools elected at-large by the members of the boards of directors of all accredited private schools, and two students. Appointees of the governor must be individuals who have demonstrated interest in public schools and are supportive of educational improvement, have a positive record of service, and who will devote sufficient time to the responsibilities of the Board. The Board is staffed by an Executive Director and five additional staff.

The members of the board are:

- Mary Jean Ryan, Seattle, Chair
- Warren T. Smith Sr., Spanaway, Vice Chair
- Dr. Bernal Baca, Des Moines
- Dr. Kristina L. Mayer Ed.D., Port Townsend
- Dr. Terry Bergeson, Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Amy Bragdon, Newman Lake
- Dr. Steve Dal Porto Ed.D., Quincy
- Steven Floyd, Gig Harbor
- Dr. Sheila Fox, Bellingham
- Phyllis Bunker Frank, Yakima
- Linda W. Lamb, Olympia
- Eric Liu, Seattle
- John C. Schuster, Ocean Shores
- Jeff Vincent, Bainbridge Island

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- Lorilyn Roller, Renton
 - Austianna Quick, Oroville

Environmental Scan

Upon taking office in 2005, Governor Gregoire and the Legislature commissioned the Washington Learns initiative, requiring a comprehensive review of the state of education in Washington State. According to the Washington Learns final report,

“Right now, in Washington:

- *Less than 50 percent of children enter kindergarten ready to learn.*
- *Only 70 percent of ninth graders graduate from high school with their peers.*
- *Only 60 percent of black and Hispanic students graduate from high school with their peers.*
- *One-third of the adult population has only a high school diploma or less.*
- *The younger working age population is less educated than their older counterparts.*
- *51 percent of employers report difficulty finding qualified job applicants with occupation-specific skills.*
- *32 percent of Washington students who go to college must take remedial math classes before taking college level classes”.*
- *Washington’s rate of high school graduates going directly to college is the lowest in the nation.”²*

This data does not bode well for the future of the Washington’s employers or their employees.

Washington Learns estimates that sixty percent of today’s jobs require some form of post secondary education or job training; by 2014 that percent will increase to 76 percent. However, in 2007, Washington ranked last in advanced degrees per thousand. At the current rate, only 19 out of 100 students in the ninth grade will earn an associates’ degree or higher. For the first time in US history, we are falling behind other developed or developing countries in the percent of 24-35 year olds with an associate degree or higher.³

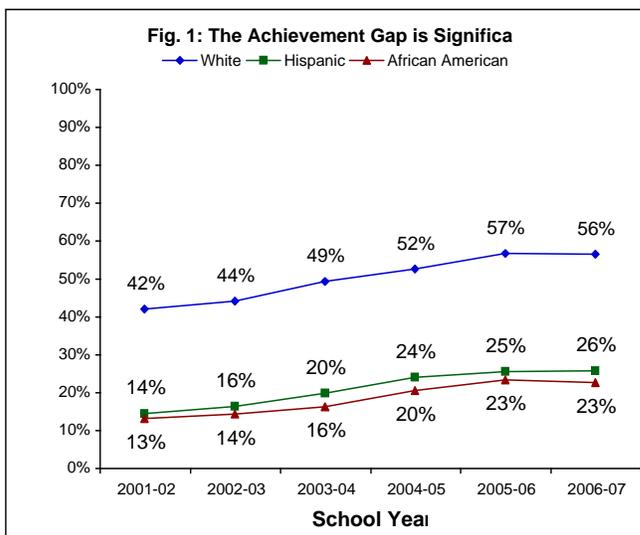
² Washington Learns, November 2006

³ Higher Education Coordinating Board “2008 Master Plan for Higher Education in Washington”

In addition, although the economy and labor market into which we send our graduates has dramatically changed, credit requirements have not changed since 1985. In fact, Washington requires a full credit less than the median for all other states in Math, English and Science, and a ½ credit less in Social Studies.⁴ To meet the need for skilled workers, we have been importing educated workers from other states and nations to fill our best jobs, leaving the less stable and lower paying jobs for people educated in Washington.⁵

Employers are not the only beneficiaries of a strong education system. Since the mid-1980s, earnings of people with baccalaureate and graduate degrees have been growing relative to those with only a high school diploma: in 2004, people with baccalaureate degrees earned 1.8 times what high school graduates earned, while advanced degree holders earned 2.7 times what high school graduates earned. Even one additional year of school beyond high school, especially if it results in a workforce certificate or credential, brings a significantly higher paycheck.⁶

Yet, our children are graduating from high school poorly prepared for higher learning. A recent study ascertained that 52% of community and technical college students who graduated from high school in 2006 required remedial classes in math, English or reading.



The impact of the skill gap is amplified for students in poverty and students of color, who continue to show significant achievement gaps in reading, writing, math and science (Fig 1).

Students of color are vastly underrepresented in postsecondary education, even though, by 2030, 37 percent of Washington’s K-12 students will be people of color. Yet, a study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education

indicates that a more rigorous K-12 curriculum actually benefits students from lower socio-economic situations: low-income students with a rigorous high

⁴ Education Commission of the States, August 2006

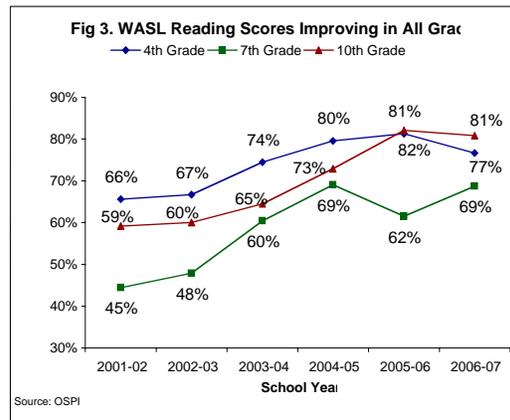
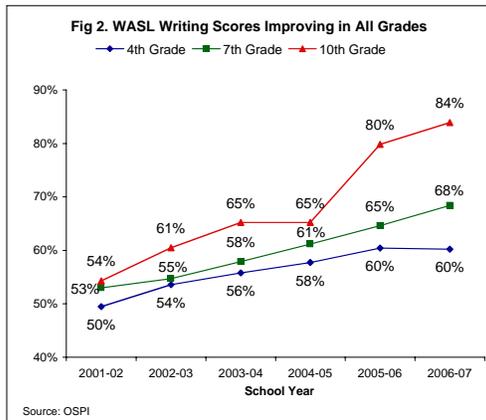
⁵ Washington Learns

⁶ *ibid*

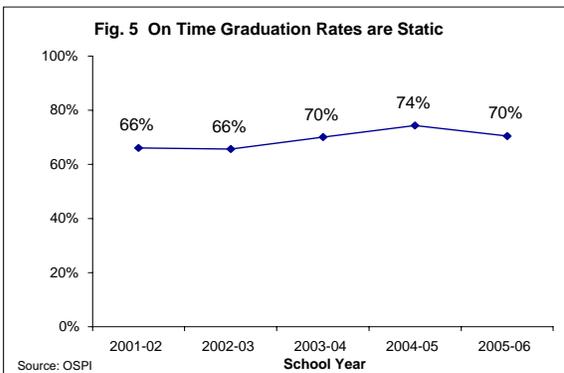
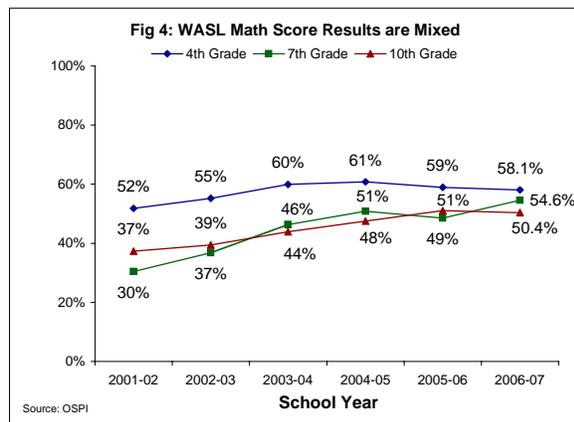
school curriculum were almost 50% more likely to obtain a BA in four years than the average low-income college entrant.⁷

With the release of the WASL scores in 2006 for the Class of 2008, the first year that scores could be used to determine eligibility for graduation, brought a renewed sense of urgency to the issue.

The good news is that great progress has been made overall for students meeting the Washington Assessment of Student Learning standards in reading and writing. Writing scores are trending upwards for all grades (Fig. 2), while reading scores improved most dramatically at the 7th grade level (Fig. 3).



However, based on the WASL scores, at least half of our students are not learning the math skills they need (Fig. 4), and science achievement lags math. In addition, on-time graduation rates showed no statistically significant level of change (Fig. 5).



Why are our students not achieving standards? Performance assessments in education point to a number of contributing factors, including the lack of individualized support for students, insufficient

⁷ Adelman, Clifford. *The Toolbox Revisited*, U.S. Department of Education, 2006.

funding, and inadequate systems of accountability. Standards of performance for the various entities in the system are lacking, and there are multiple authorities – local, state and federal - to which they report.

Local school boards are accountable to their communities for the continuous improvement of their students’ performance. They are also accountable for meeting a myriad of federal and state requirements, such as offering 180 days of instruction, meeting specified teacher-to-student ratios, assuring special education student procedures, and ensuring proper management of funds.

At the state level, the accountability system is defined by annual measurement of student academic performance on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in reading and mathematics for grades 3-8 and 10, as well as science and writing for selected grades, and the high school graduation requirement that students pass the 10th grade WASL in math and reading.

However, beyond public reporting of the WASL scores by different student subgroups at the school, district, and state level, there are no state-level consequences for schools’ or districts’ poor performance. The economy and labor market into which we send our graduates has dramatically changed, skill requirements are rising.

The federal “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) law requires schools and districts in each state to make “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP) to increase the academic proficiency of all students. NCLB requires a state to implement a system of corrective action for all schools and districts receiving Title I federal funds. Some of the corrective actions recommended by NCLB include:

- Providing school choice;
- Providing supplemental services;
- Providing technical assistance;
- Replacing school personnel;
- Taking over specific schools for governance; and
- Taking over a district for governance.

NCLB encourages states to provide a system of rewards, assistance, and interventions; however, it falls short of compelling such actions. In Washington, the legislature has prohibited any state interventions to address poor student achievement except to permit the withholding of federal funds and providing professional development. Washington has used a voluntary approach of technical assistance to work with struggling schools since 2002.

The myriad levels of accountability and standards make it difficult for schools and districts to focus on the issues and efforts that will improve outcomes.

Requirements and resources vary widely from district to district, which means that benchmarking to improve is difficult. And, where any element of the system fails to meet standards, there is little clear authority to enforce them.

In response to the recommendations of the Washington Learns report, the Governor established the P-20 council with a mandate to improve student success and transitions within, and among the early learning, K-12 and higher education sectors. The Governor chairs the P-20 council, bringing together the major components of the P-20 system on a regular basis. The Chair of the State Board of Education is a member of the council and reports to the Council on the Board's progress toward its own strategic objectives. However, the P-20 council has no statutory authority to intervene at the local or federal level.

Performance Assessment

2006 and 2007 were formative years for the Board as it realigned its efforts around a new mandate and the goal of dramatically improving student achievement. The Board shifted the focus of its attention from administrative duties to policy establishment and advocacy around graduation requirements, achievement in mathematics and science and the development of an accountability system.

Meaningful High School Diploma

The Board launched its work on graduation requirements by surveying all 246 districts with high schools and developing a database of the varying requirements. The Board sought input from parents, students, community and business leaders, community and technical college educators, and higher education administrators and heard: "One diploma - multiple pathways."

Based on its research, the Board established that a student's ability to attain a meaningful high school diploma depended on student access to a more rigorous high school curriculum, provisions for individualized learning, and stronger support for High School and Beyond Plans. As the Board determined:

"the purpose of the diploma is to declare that a student is ready for success in post secondary education, gainful employment, and citizenship, and is equipped with the skills to be a lifelong learner."

The Board drafted its recommendations and reviewed them with interested parties at a series of public outreach sessions in the fall of 2007. The Board anticipates adoption of a final proposal in July 2008 to inform the work of the K-12 Task Force on funding for Basic Education. The Board is especially sensitive to identifying potential implementation challenges, since stronger graduation requirements will require additional investment and revisions to the definition of Basic Education.

Achievement in Math and Science

The Board chose to focus initially on improving achievement in math and science. Currently, each school district decides on its own curriculum, and Washington State requires only two math credits to graduate. Students who transfer between schools are then confronted with different standards, and many high school graduates who go on to a college or university must enroll in remedial math because they are not prepared for college level work. The Board voted to add a third year of mathematics to the requirements for graduation, and expects to complete the required rule amendment in 2008. The Board also began working with the Professional Educator Standards Board to ensure that qualified teachers are in place to support the new curriculum.

Accountability System

A workable accountability system is foundational to improving student outcomes. Accordingly, in 2005 the state Legislature directed the Board to create a system of accountability to improve student achievement. A committee of the Board began work with a review of findings from other states and the A+ Commission. The committee presented its recommendations at the September 2007 Board meeting, laying out three concepts for consideration:

- Clear, appropriate indicators and measurements to monitor progress of the education system.
- A continuous improvement assistance program for all Washington schools and districts.
- Criteria to identify schools and districts in which students are successful, need assistance, or consistently fail to meet state standards; and proposals to create targeted state/local partnerships to help improve student achievement.

The Board is currently studying the policy barriers to student achievement and options for state/local partnerships to support chronically underperforming schools, “priority schools.” The Board plans to adopt its recommendations in September 2008 and propose them to the legislature in 2009.

Mission, Goals and Indicators

The mission of the State Board of Education is to lead the development of state policy, provide system oversight and advocate for student success.

To accomplish that mission, the Board has set itself three goals. These three goals are outcome-oriented and framed in terms related to students. They define the three major areas on which the Board will focus as it sets policy and carries out its oversight role. For each goal, we have an indicator for which we have current data and trends at the state level.

GOAL 1:

Improve achievement for all students

INDICATOR:

Percent of students meeting assessment targets by subject, grade and population segment

This goal affirms the Board's commitment to set policy and standards that will be effective in increasing student mastery of critical subjects. In particular, the Board is committed to setting policies that will address discrepancies in learning between student populations. In addition, standards which students will be expected to achieve will be set at a level consistent with the skills required by employers and institutions of post-secondary learning.

GOAL 2:

Improve graduation rates

INDICATOR:

Percent of students graduating using extended time by population

It is not enough to improve achievement in specific subject areas. We also must see a major improvement in the percentage of students who graduate from high school. Board policies and influence will also be aimed at supporting students in accumulating the necessary credits for graduation over the course of high school. This is a new goal for the Board and will drive much new work and strategy development in the years ahead.

GOAL 3:

Improve student preparation for post-secondary education and the 21st century world of work and citizenship

INDICATOR:

Percent of students enrolled in post-secondary institutions or industry certification programs

Students must not only master the subjects but they must also be able to apply the skills and knowledge gained. Board policies will ensure that schools support the delivery of course material with opportunities for students to integrate academic learning with opportunities to apply that learning and explore pathways for work and learning beyond high school.

Strategies

There are four strategies that are foundational to achieving the Board goals.

STRATEGY 1:

Advocate for the creation of a strategic compact among SBE, OSPI, PESB, local school districts and other key stakeholders to forge a system approach to achieve the goals.

This is a cornerstone among the foundational strategies. The Board alone can do little to improve student success. The policies it sets must be operationalized by many others at the state and local level. The Board will seek and welcome opportunities to partner with others who can influence the direction of K-12.

STRATEGY 2:

Implement a clear, workable statewide accountability system with shared responsibility between the state and local school districts that fosters a learning culture, helps assess progress and informs policy-making.

Like the compact, this strategy is absolutely essential to improving K-12 outcomes. An effective accountability system is one that provides the information and data that allows managers and decision-makers to determine if things are improving, declining or staying the same for effect. An accountability system ensures that the feedback loop is closed and that appropriate incentives and support exist to produce and reinforce improvement. In collaboration with others, the Board intends to strengthen the data collection and review system to identify schools and districts that are effective, as well as those in which

improvement is needed, and then to designate the authority and a process for ensuring that schools and districts take the necessary steps to improve.

STRATEGY 3:

Develop a comprehensive data system to inform management and instructional decisions.

The Board began work on a statewide performance accountability system during BY 2007-08, and expects to complete its research and recommendations in the fall of 2008. This will allow it to prepare its recommended budget request and suggested law changes by September 2008, and to inform the work of the joint Basic Education Funding Task Force.

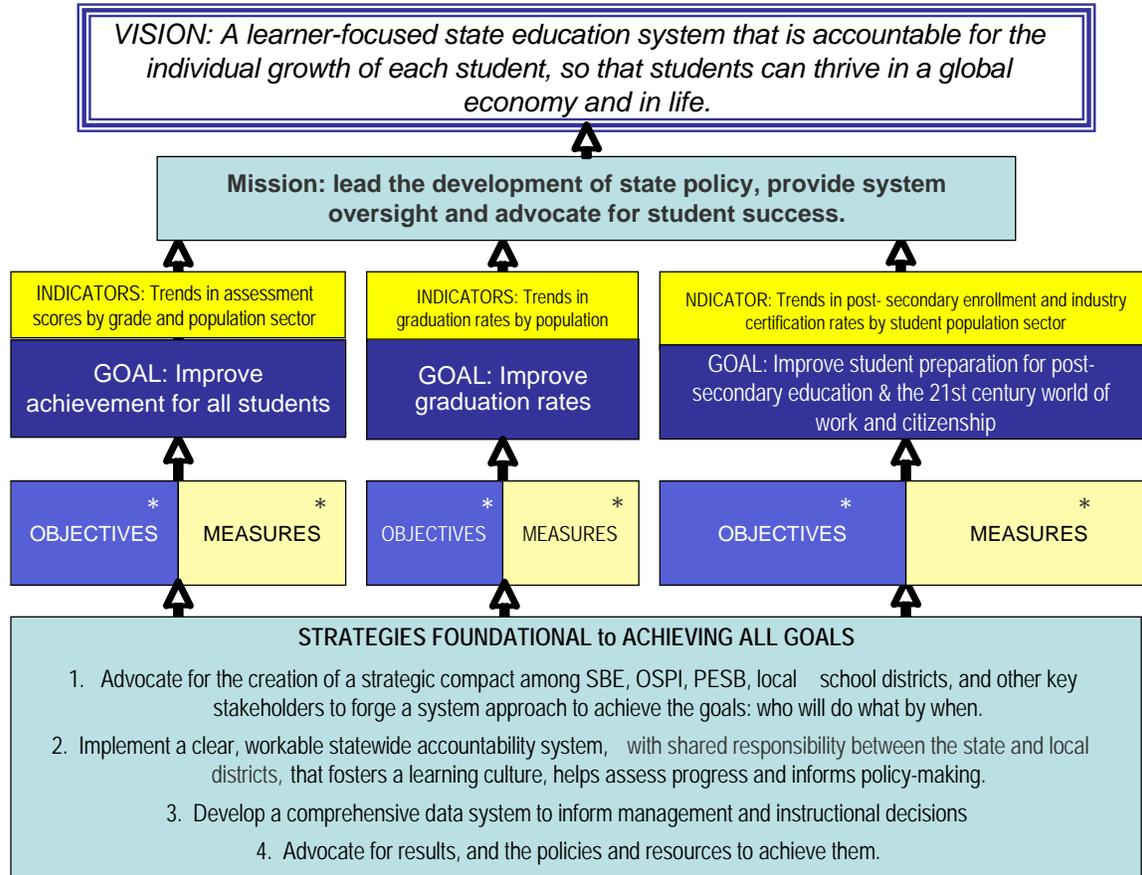
An accountability system is predicated on the existence of credible, timely and accessible data. While the high-level indicators of success are generally agreed on, the data to track progress at the 'objective' level is not always of good quality. Significant gaps in availability and in access also exist. The Board will advocate for the development within the system of a shared base of data on which to base decisions.

STRATEGY 4:

Advocate for results, and policies and resources to achieve them.

In developing policies to advance its goals, the Board will focus on practices that are – based on the evidence - most likely to ensure positive results in student outcomes and then advocate for the adoption of these practices in graduation requirements, curriculum, teacher preparation and other aspects of quality education. The Board will also use its influence to advocate for the resources necessary to operationalize its policies, and is working closely with the Basic Education Funding Task Force toward that end.

The linkage between the Board’s mission, goals, objectives, strategies and indicators, and its vision for K-12 is illustrated by the following graphic:



* Note: The Board will be completing work in the next several months to develop relevant performance baselines and targets.

Internal Capacity and Financial Health

The Board has a challenging mission, to be accomplished with a staff of six and a biennial budget of \$1,895,000. The Board relies on the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for virtually all of its administrative and fiscal support, allowing it to focus on its policy role. Although the Board’s fiscal position is sound, its small budget requires that it seeks all possible opportunities to partner with others to achieve its goals.

Appendix A: RCW 28A.305.130 Powers and duties — Purpose

The purpose of the state board of education is to provide advocacy and strategic oversight of public education; implement a standards-based accountability system to improve student academic achievement; provide leadership in the creation of a system that personalizes education for each student and respects diverse cultures, abilities, and learning styles; and promote achievement of the goals of RCW 28A.150.210. In addition to any other powers and duties as provided by law, the state board of education shall:

(1) Hold regularly scheduled meetings at such time and place within the state as the board shall determine and may hold such special meetings as may be deemed necessary for the transaction of public business;

(2) Form committees as necessary to effectively and efficiently conduct the work of the board;

(3) Seek advice from the public and interested parties regarding the work of the board;

(4) For purposes of statewide accountability:

(a) Adopt and revise performance improvement goals in reading, writing, science, and mathematics, by subject and grade level, once assessments in these subjects are required statewide; academic and technical skills, as appropriate, in secondary career and technical education programs; and student attendance, as the board deems appropriate to improve student learning. The goals shall be consistent with student privacy protection provisions of RCW 28A.655.090(7) and shall not conflict with requirements contained in Title I of the federal elementary and secondary education act of 1965, or the requirements of the Carl D. Perkins vocational education act of 1998, each as amended. The goals may be established for all students, economically disadvantaged students, limited English proficient students, students with disabilities, and students from disproportionately academically underachieving racial and ethnic backgrounds. The board may establish school and school district goals addressing high school graduation rates and dropout reduction goals for students in grades seven through twelve. The board shall adopt the goals by rule. However, before each goal is implemented, the board shall present the goal to the education committees of the house of representatives and the senate for the committees' review and comment in a time frame that will permit the legislature to take statutory action on the goal if such action is deemed warranted by the legislature;

(b) Identify the scores students must achieve in order to meet the standard on the Washington assessment of student learning and, for high school students, to obtain a certificate of academic achievement. The board shall also determine student scores that identify levels of student performance below and beyond the standard. The board shall consider the incorporation of the standard error of measurement into the decision regarding the award of the certificates. The board shall set such performance standards and levels in consultation with the superintendent of public instruction and after consideration of any recommendations that may be developed by any advisory committees that may be established for this purpose. The initial performance standards and any changes recommended by the board in the performance standards for the tenth grade assessment shall be presented to the education committees of the house of representatives and the senate by November 30th of the school year in which the changes will take place to permit the legislature to take statutory action before the changes are implemented if such action is deemed warranted by the legislature. The legislature shall be advised of the initial performance standards and any changes made to the elementary level performance standards and the middle school level performance standards;

(c) Adopt objective, systematic criteria to identify successful schools and school districts and recommend to the superintendent of public instruction schools and districts to be recognized for two types of accomplishments, student achievement and improvements in student achievement. Recognition for improvements in student achievement shall include consideration of one or more of the following accomplishments:

(i) An increase in the percent of students meeting standards. The level of achievement required for

recognition may be based on the achievement goals established by the legislature and by the board under (a) of this subsection;

(ii) Positive progress on an improvement index that measures improvement in all levels of the assessment; and

(iii) Improvements despite challenges such as high levels of mobility, poverty, English as a second language learners, and large numbers of students in special populations as measured by either the percent of students meeting the standard, or the improvement index. When determining the baseline year or years for recognizing individual schools, the board may use the assessment results from the initial years the assessments were administered, if doing so with individual schools would be appropriate;

(d) Adopt objective, systematic criteria to identify schools and school districts in need of assistance and those in which significant numbers of students persistently fail to meet state standards. In its deliberations, the board shall consider the use of all statewide mandated criterion-referenced and norm-referenced standardized tests;

(e) Identify schools and school districts in which state intervention measures will be needed and a range of appropriate intervention strategies after the legislature has authorized a set of intervention strategies. After the legislature has authorized a set of intervention strategies, at the request of the board, the superintendent shall intervene in the school or school district and take corrective actions. This chapter does not provide additional authority for the board or the superintendent of public instruction to intervene in a school or school district;

(f) Identify performance incentive systems that have improved or have the potential to improve student achievement;

(g) Annually review the assessment reporting system to ensure fairness, accuracy, timeliness, and equity of opportunity, especially with regard to schools with special circumstances and unique populations of students, and a recommendation to the superintendent of public instruction of any improvements needed to the system; and

(h) Include in the biennial report required under RCW 28A.305.035, information on the progress that has been made in achieving goals adopted by the board;

(5) Accredite, subject to such accreditation standards and procedures as may be established by the state board of education, all private schools that apply for accreditation, and approve, subject to the provisions of RCW 28A.195.010, private schools carrying out a program for any or all of the grades kindergarten through twelve: PROVIDED, That no private school may be approved that operates a kindergarten program only: PROVIDED FURTHER, That no private schools shall be placed upon the list of accredited schools so long as secret societies are knowingly allowed to exist among its students by school officials;

(6) Articulate with the institutions of higher education, workforce representatives, and early learning policymakers and providers to coordinate and unify the work of the public school system;

(7) Hire an executive director and an administrative assistant to reside in the office of the superintendent of public instruction for administrative purposes. Any other personnel of the board shall be appointed as provided by RCW 28A.300.020. The Board may delegate to the Executive Director such duties as deemed necessary to efficiently carry on the business of the Board including but not limited to, the authority and employ necessary personnel and the authority to enter into, amend and terminate contracts on behalf of the Board. The executive director, administrative assistant, and all but one of the other personnel of the board are exempt from civil service, together with other staff as now or hereafter designated as exempt in accordance with chapter 41.06 RCW; and

(8) Adopt a seal that shall be kept in the office of the superintendent of public instruction.