

**WASHINGTON STATE
WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD
MEETING NO. 139
JUNE 25, 2009**

The Future of Basic Education in Washington

Background:

In response to the recommendations of the Joint Legislative Task Force on Basic Education Finance, the 2009 Legislature passed ESHB 2261, a bill that defines the “program of basic education” which the Legislature shall fund, including the “instructional program of basic education,” subject to a phased-in implementation. Representatives Pat Sullivan and Skip Priest, sponsors of ESHB 2261 and members of the Joint Legislative Task Force on Basic Education Finance, are scheduled to report on the legislation.

In the bill, the instructional program of basic education is defined to include instruction that provides students the opportunity to complete 24 credits for high school graduation, subject to a phased-in implementation. The instructional program of basic education will be considered to be fully funded through an allocation based on minimum staffing and non-staff costs the Legislature deems necessary to support instruction and operations in prototypical schools. The prototypical school includes an average class size specifically for exploratory and preparatory career and technical education and enhanced funding for non-staff costs in exploratory career and technical education courses for students in grades seven through twelve. The prototypical school model also includes an allocation for guidance counselors performing functions that include parent outreach and graduation advising.

ESHB 2261 creates the Quality Education Council to recommend and inform the ongoing implementation by the Legislature of an evolving program of basic education and financing and develop strategic recommendations on the program of basic education. Duties of the Council include identifying measurable goals and priorities for the educational system for a 10-year period, including ongoing strategies for coordinating statewide efforts to eliminate the achievement gap and reduce student dropout rates.

The bill also declares legislative intent to establish a comprehensive K-12 data improvement system to monitor student progress, have information on the quality of the educator workforce, and monitor and analyze the costs of programs. The data system will include a subset of student information elements to serve as a dropout early warning system. The bill establishes a K-12 Data Governance Group in the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to assist in the design and implementation of a data system for financial, student, and educator data.

In addition, the bill directs the State Board of Education to develop an accountability index to identify schools and districts for recognition and for additional state support. Performance will be measured using multiple outcomes and indicators including, but not limited to, graduation rates and results from statewide assessments.

Board Action Required. None. For discussion only (see attached key policy questions).

ESHB 2261 – Key Policy Questions

- How will the new definition and funding support the extra costs related to career and technical education and the development of additional career pathways options for students?
- What safeguards does the legislation provide to ensure that remote, rural and/or underserved communities have access to high quality CTE?
- How will the new definition and funding support a comprehensive guidance and counseling system, including career guidance similar to Navigation 101?
- How and when do you see the Quality Education Council addressing the dropout issue?
- What is the role of the additional educational data systems contemplated in the legislation in improving educational outcomes and accountability?
- What components of the new definition of the basic program of education are a priority as funding is phased in during subsequent biennia? Special education? Non-staffing costs? Full funding of the 24 credits for high school graduation?
- Will passage of a phased-in funding plan be sufficient to satisfy the courts that the Legislature is meeting its paramount duty to define and fund basic education?
- What is the Workforce Board's role in the next generation of education reform?