State Board of Education System Performance Accountability
Policy Framework Proposal
October 28, 2008

SUMMARY OF POLICY ISSUES/SBE STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL

Washington State statute[1] assigns the State Board of Education (SBE) the authority to create a statewide accountability system, which includes:
- Identifying objective, systematic criteria for successful schools and districts.
- Identifying objective systematic criteria for schools and districts in need of assistance or where significant numbers of students persistently fail to meet state standards.
- Identifying range of state intervention strategies for legislature to consider authorizing.

The Board has three strategic plan goals, which are the underpinnings of an effective statewide accountability system: 1) improve student achievement; 2) improve graduation rates; and 3) improve student preparation for success in post secondary education, 21st century world of work and citizenship.

BACKGROUND

Why has the Board engaged in this work? ***All students deserve to receive a quality education.***

The Board believes in continuous improvement for all schools and districts to ensure that they have the tools to do their work to help all their students. The Board wants to recognize schools that are doing an outstanding job for their students and many of them are. Like all states, Washington has a small number of schools where students persistently achieve at significantly lower levels than at peer schools. The Board estimates that 70,500 students[2] are enrolled (one out of 14 students in the K-12 system) in struggling schools (identified by its accountability index). There are no state incentives or significant consequences for making transformational changes in these schools and districts, thus the need for the Board's work, to help these students.

Also like all states, Washington has not been able to eliminate the large achievement gap between affluent and high-poverty students and schools. And finally, Washington's public schools are not yet broadly and successfully preparing most high school graduates with work-ready and or college-ready skills, after 15 years or more of standards-based reform.

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[1] RCW 28A.305.130 (4)

[2] If alternative education students are included, the number is 83,000.

The Board has engaged in an extensive review of accountability issues through its work sessions with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, advisors, stakeholder meetings, community surveys, and research over the last two years. The Board has examined other states' accountability systems, national studies on high performing high poverty schools and accountability issues, and the policy barriers to student achievement in Washington, as identified by policy makers and practitioners.

It has retained the services of consultants to assist with the development of the proposals described below in the framework. The consultants worked with Washington practitioners to develop their proposals. National and Washington-based research reveals a clear set of barriers that have undercut the impact of school reform efforts to date. They include insufficient and unstable resources, insufficient time, inflexibility in allocating resources to higher need areas to improve student achievement, lack of coherent systems to recruit and prepare quality educators, insufficient coordination among intrastate agencies, and insufficient focus (i.e., with funding) on schools serving high-challenge student populations.

The background information and consultant reports for this work can be found on the Board's Web site: www.sbe.wa.gov

DRAFT SYSTEM PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY POLICY FRAMEWORK

The System Performance Accountability Policy Framework operates under a central premise: all schools and their districts should be engaged in continuous improvement efforts to ensure that all students are reaching their highest potential.

Four suggested guiding principles to this overall accountability policy framework (based on feedback received):

- All students will have a quality education
- Basic Education will be redefined and funded
- A reciprocal relationship will be created between the state and local school district for student success
- The state will create one unified accountability system

The framework includes key and connected components to identify ways to focus on increasing student achievement:

1. An **accountability index**, which uses objective systematic criteria to identify successful schools and districts, as well as those in need of assistance or those where students persistently fail to meet state standards. Those in the latter category will be analyzed in greater detail after identification through the accountability index to develop a list of "Priority Schools" that clearly demonstrate a need for additional support.
2. A **preventative, proactive system** of support to help all schools and districts continue to improve, which would be voluntary for districts except where the accountability index indicates a clear need for support in specific areas, such as closing the achievement gap among certain subgroups (e.g., English Language Learners or African-American students), or in certain curriculum areas including math and science.
3. A range of **voluntary state and/or local district intensive assistance strategies** for districts with one or more "Priority Schools", to develop a systems approach for improving student academic performance including: a) the voluntary state/local Innovation Zone Program, which would allow local school boards (together with their superintendents, union leaders and other stakeholders) to create a systemic turnaround effort that directly and comprehensively addresses the barriers to reform identified by the research cited earlier, supported by state investment in resources and capacity; b) the

voluntary state/local Summit District Program (OSPI operates this currently under No Child Left Behind identification), a district-wide reform initiative focused on developing effective leadership, quality instruction, data analysis, needs assessment, and targeted strategies for improvement, supported by state investment in resources and capacity; or c) a voluntary local district program to develop and implement its own strategies to bring its schools out of Priority status with state approval of the district's plan and accompanying state resources and support.

4. A category of deeper state and local partnership, called **Academic Watch,** if after two full years of implementation there is insufficient progress under any of the forms of intensive assistance described above based on the accountability index and follow-up review of local district conditions and strategies.

I.   THE PROPOSED ACCOUNTABILITY INDEX

SBE has developed a draft accountability index to sort schools and districts into different "tiers" based on multiple measures. It is expected that additional work will need to be done to refine this accountability index over the next six months.

Schools and districts in most need are given "Priority" status, making them eligible to receive more significant support as outlined under Table III below.

A set of principles has guided the development of the system. The accountability system will: (1) be transparent and simple to understand; (2) use existing data; (3) rely on multiple measures and familiar concepts; (4) include assessment results from all grades and subjects tested statewide; (5) use concepts of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and its Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) system when appropriate; (6) be fair, reasonable, and consistent; (7) be valid and accurate; (8) focus at both the school and district levels; (9) apply to as many schools and districts as possible; (10) rely mainly on criterion-referenced measures instead of norm-referenced measures in order to create clear goals and encourage cooperation among educators; and (11) provide multiple ways to demonstrate and reward success.

The proposed index is based on how schools and districts perform on a set of five outcomes and four indicators. The five outcomes are the results of state assessments in four subjects (reading, writing, mathematics, science) and the "extended" graduation rate (for high schools and districts). These five outcomes are examined using four indicators: (1) achievement for all students; (2) achievement of low-income students; (3) achievement of all students compared to similar schools (controlling for the percentage of students who are learning English, have a disability, live in low-income homes, and are mobile); and (4) improvement. The results of the 20 measures form a matrix as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Accountability Matrix

INDICATORS	OUTCOMES				
	Reading	Writing	Math	Science	Extended Grad Rate
Achievement					
Achievement of low-income					
Achievement vs. peers					
Improvement					

Each cell of the matrix is rated on a 5-point scale (from 0 to 4) using fixed benchmarks. Each of the four subjects is rated using the same set of benchmarks across the entire school (i.e., all subjects have the same set of benchmarks, and the assessment results are the aggregate totals for all the tested grades). The index is the simple average of all 20 ratings. The index ranges from 0.0 to 4.0 and is a number similar to a GPA where 4.0 is the highest score. Table 2 shows how each of the five outcomes are measured using the four indicators and the benchmarks that produce the ratings. Tier assignments are determined based on the index score. Schools and districts would fall into four tiers, with an in-depth analysis of the data and conditions of those in the lowest tier to see if they merit being placed in a fifth (Priority) tier.

Table 2: Benchmarks and Ratings for Outcomes and Indicators

	READING	WRITING	MATH	SCIENCE	EXT. GRAD. RATE[1]
ACHIEVEMENT (ALL STUDENTS) **ACHIEVEMENT (LOW INCOME)**	% MET STANDARD RATING 86-100% 4 70-85.9% 3 55-69.9% 2 40-54.9% 1 < 40% 0			RATE RATING > 95 4 85-94.9% 3 75-84.9% 2 65-74.9% 1 < 65% 0	
ACHIEVEMENT VS. PEERS[2]	DIFFERENCE IN LEARNING INDEX RATING > .20 4 .10 to .20 3 -.099 to .099 2 -.20 to -.10 1 < -.20 0			DIFFERENCE IN RATE RATING > 12 4 5.01 to 12 3 -5 to 5 2 -5.01 to -12 1 < 12 0	
IMPROVEMENT[3]	CHANGE IN LEARNING INDEX RATING > .12 4 .05 to .12 3 -.05 to .05 2 -.051 to -.12 1 < -.12 0			CHANGE IN RATE RATING > 6 4 3.01 to 6 3 -3 to 3 2 -3.01 to -6 1 < -6 0	

Note: Assessment results include both WASL and WAAS results.

[1] This outcome only applies to schools and districts that are authorized to graduate students.

[2] This indicator adjusts the outcomes using statistical methods (multiple regression) to control four student characteristics beyond a school's control: the percentage of low-income, ELL, special education, and mobile students. (Mobile students are those who are not continuously enrolled from October 1 through the testing period). Scores are the difference between the actual level and the predicted level. Scores above 0 are "beating the odds" and negative scores are below the predicted level. Separate analyses are conducted for each of the four assessments in elementary, middle, and high schools.

[3] Measured in terms of the change from the previous year.

INITIAL RESULTS

Table 3 shows the suggested ranges for the tier assignments and the number of schools and districts that would have been placed in each tier in 2007 using the above criteria.

Table 3: Tier Ranges and Preliminary Results (2007)

Tier	Index Range	Percent of Schools	Percent of Districts
Exemplary	3.00 – 4.00	4%	1%
Good	2.00 – 2.99	32%	35%
Acceptable	1.00 – 1.99	51%	59%
Struggling	0.00 – 0.99	13%[1]	5%
Priority (eligible for Innovation Zone) [2]	0.00 – 0.99	TBD	TBD

[1] About 40% of the schools in this tier were alternative schools or served other special populations. Schools in this tier had a total enrollment of about 83,000 students, with about 70,500 attending "regular" schools. About 78% of the schools in this tier had a 2-year index average below 1.00, and 55% of these were "regular" schools with a total enrollment of about 50,500 students. There were 22 districts that had at least two regular schools with a two-year index average of less than 1.00, and eight districts had at least four regular schools with a two-year index below 1.00.

[2] Those in this tier would be determined after an in-depth analysis of their data and local conditions.

IDENTIFYING "PRIORITY" SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS (LOWEST TIER)

Various quantitative and qualitative data will be used to determine which schools and districts that fall in the "struggling" tier should be placed in the "Priority" tier and be eligible to receive significant support. The data falls into four categories:

1. **Contextual Data:**
   Type of school
   Changes in student population
   Programs served by the school
   Level of student mobility

2. **Assessment Results (WASL/WAAS/WLPT)**
   Trends over multiple years for each subject area
   Subgroup trends
   Results for students who have been enrolled for at least two years

3. **AYP Results:**
   Distance from the annual goal.
   Type of cells not making AYP
   Percentage of cells not making AYP

4. Other Data:
  Graduation and dropout rates for subgroups
  Student/teacher ratio
  Teacher education and experience levels
  Funding from local levies/bonds and outside sources
  Recent changes in leadership (key central office staff and principals) and teachers

Each year, the process would begin when OSPI computes the index using the most recent data and prepares a set of preliminary results. Given the relatively large number of schools that may fall into the "struggling" tier,[3] the schools must be screened to eliminate those that clearly should not fall into the Priority tier, which would reduce the number of schools and districts that require a deeper analysis. OSPI staff would review the index results for each school and district in the "struggling" tier and sort them into two categories:

  (1) Schools/districts will remain in the "struggling" tier if the in-depth analysis provides good cause for why they should not be a part of the Priority Schools Tier.
  (2) The remaining schools/districts are placed in a p*ossible Priority tier* category pending a deeper analysis.

OSPI staff will conduct a deeper analysis using available data for the schools and districts placed in the possible Priority tier category. This may require contacting the district and/or local ESD to get more information. Based on this review, the schools and districts will be sorted again into the same two categories. Those placed in the possible Priority tier will be notified of the possible designation and given the reasons why designation is possible. The district/school will be given a chance to avoid the Priority designation by providing more information, including what explains the low index results. Districts, with school board approval, could appeal to OSPI. OSPI would review the additional information, and then recommend a final Priority list to the State Board of Education for review and approval.

RECOGNITION

The Board intends to provide recognition based on sustained exemplary performance, and it will provide multiple ways to reward success using the results from the accountability matrix. The Board is considering three options: providing recognition for: 1) each of the 30 cells of the matrix; 2) the 20 "inner" cells of the matrix; and 3) the 10 "average" cells of the matrix. A minimum rating of 3.00 is required to receive recognition in the 20 "inner" cells, and a minimum rating of 2.75 is needed to receive recognition for the "averaged" cells (see Table 4). Any cell with a 3.5 or above would receive recognition "with honors." The ratings will be calculated every year, and recognition is given when the two-year average rating meets the minimum requirement. This system of recognition will supplement the federal and state awards currently in place.

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[3] The number will still be far fewer than those not making AYP or identified for "improvement" under NCLB.

Table 4: Minimum Requirements for Recognition**

	Reading	Writing	Math	Science	Extended grad rate	Average
Achievement	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.75
Ach. vs. peers	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.75
Improvement	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.75
Low-inc. ach.	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.75
Average	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75

**Any cell of the matrix with a 2-year average rating of 3.50 or above would be recognized "with honor."

II. PREVENTIVE, PROACTIVE SYSTEM OF SUPPORT FOR ALL SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS

Traditionally the state has not had a strong comprehensive program of general assistance for all schools and districts to improve student achievement. The State Board of Education requires that all schools have school improvement plans with specific elements, which the local school board approves and monitors. OSPI is in the process of developing more ways, in partnership with the Educational Service Districts and local districts, to provide general and more targeted assistance. Some of the areas that they are working on include: online professional learning and data collection tools; school and district plan management tools, regional training on specific areas such as English language learners, reading and mathematics. Additional areas could include training for school board members from the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA).

The accountability index will help districts and the state identify areas of particular challenge, and in these areas, districts meeting certain criteria for underperformance will be required to participate in a new set of state services designed specifically to help them meet these specific challenges. OSPI plans to create services focused on helping districts that are trying to close an achievement gap with one or more subgroups of students (e.g. English Language Learners, African- American or other groups) and may include services designed to assist with certain curriculum areas including math and science.

III. VOLUNTARY INTENSIVE ASSISTANCE STRATEGIES FOR DISTRICTS WITH PRIORITY SCHOOLS

Priority Schools designation reflects school-wide issues that go beyond achievement gaps for students facing certain challenges or within selected curriculum areas, and therefore need a more comprehensive solution as described in Table II above. Districts will be notified by OSPI that they have schools with a Priority designation. Districts will have two years of full implementation (plus six to nine months of planning time) to move their schools out of the Priority Schools designation using one of the following three strategies to work in greater intensity to improve student achievement:

a) the voluntary state/local Innovation Zone Program, which would allow local school boards (together with their superintendents, union leaders, and other stakeholders) to create a systemic turnaround effort that directly and comprehensively addresses the barriers to reform identified

by the research cited earlier, supported by state investment in resources and capacity;

b) the <u>voluntary state/local</u> Summit District Program (OSPI operates this currently using NCLB and primarily federal resources), a district-wide reform initiative focused on developing effective leadership, quality instruction, data analysis, needs assessment, and targeted strategies for improvement, supported by state investment in resources and capacity;

c) <u>a voluntary local district</u> program to develop and implement its own strategies in a plan to bring its schools out of Priority status with OSPI approving the district's plan and providing resources and support.

For the purposes of this memo, we will focus on the Innovation Zone as one of the three options open to districts under Table III, acknowledging that OSPI had provided, or is developing the programs in Table III b and c.

A. INNOVATION ZONE: AN OPPORTUNITY TO UNDERTAKE TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

The Innovation Zone is provided to allow local districts, through their school board, to develop a performance contract with the state in exchange for state resources to assist them. The Innovation Zone concepts represent:

- **At the instructional level,** a chance for educators to ask fundamental questions about what it takes to help high-challenge, high-poverty students succeed, and to reshape their approach accordingly based on research conducted nationally and in Washington State.
- **At the systems level,** an opportunity for district and community leaders and their partners, supported by the state, to re-imagine and rebuild the structures and operating habits that shape the nature and quality of the education they offer.
- **At the policy level,** an effort to pilot the next generation of standards-based reform in Washington State – an approach marked by greater degrees of accountability by every stakeholder in the enterprise.

- **Key Elements of the Innovation Zone:**

  - **Making the reforms systemic and "scale-able."** Districts with Priority Schools as determined by the state's Accountability Index will be encouraged to apply to the Innovation Zone on behalf of a small cluster of schools – including their Priority School(s) – organized intentionally by feeder pattern or school type (within or across district lines), so that the reforms are systemic and scale-able, rather than being limited to a focus on individual schools.

  - **Focusing on those districts best positioned to achieve success.** Districts will be selected to develop a comprehensive Innovation Zone plan after careful vetting by OSPI and the SBE for readiness (i.e., strong signals of commitment to transformative change; evidence that it will be a collaborative effort among district leaders, including the school board, superintendent, teachers' union, and community officeholders; and a strong preliminary plan).

  - **Establishing demanding criteria and encouraging districts to enlist a highly capable lead partner.** Districts will be provided with resources to develop their Innovation Zone plan. The SBE recognizes that in most cases, districts will need outside support to produce a plan that meets the rigorous criteria the SBE will establish for Innovation Zone plans. The SBE will instruct OSPI to assist with this

process and to facilitate the development of partnerships between districts and lead turnaround providers, both for the planning cycle and for implementation.

- o **Incorporating changes in operating conditions into the Zone criteria.** Through a collaborative, local process involving all key stakeholders (district administrators, school board, union, community, and parents), districts with Priority Schools that want to apply to the Innovation Zone will need to develop more flexible operating conditions that research shows are required for transformational – not simply incremental – change and to serve high-challenge, high-poverty students successfully.

The four critical elements of the Innovation Zone are contrasted with Traditional School Improvement in the following chart to understand the differences:

Traditional School Improvement Approach	Transformative, Comprehensive Turnaround Approach (Innovation Zone)
CRITICAL ELEMENT #1: PEOPLE	CRITICAL ELEMENT #1: PEOPLE
Help current staff perform at a higher level through training, coaching, and leadership development.	Turnaround leaders have all necessary tools and authority to fulfill the turnaround plan including: recruiting incentives; flexibility on staff hiring, allocation; and time to make staff development coherent.
CRITICAL ELEMENT #2: TIME	CRITICAL ELEMENT #2: TIME
Tweak existing schedule, while maintaining same-length school day and year.	Strategic assessment to determine if expanding school day, school year, and/or significant change to the schedule is necessary to fulfill the plan; resources to help fulfill those requirements.
CRITICAL ELEMENT #3: MONEY	CRITICAL ELEMENT #3: MONEY
Minimal impact on budgetary authority. Sometimes includes additional resources generally for staff development.	Strategic re-allocation of the budget is allowed. Additional resources are provided to support the implementation including: pay for extra time, incentives, and partner support.
CRITICAL ELEMENT #4: PROGRAM	CRITICAL ELEMENT #4: PROGRAM
Improve quality of existing strategies through evaluation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment tools.	Development of a coherent, whole-school plan that integrates strategies to address impacts of poverty and other strategies shown to succeed in high-challenge schools. Also provides relief from compliance burden to allow focus on instruction.

IV.   ACADEMIC WATCH IF NO IMPROVEMENT

It is intended that Academic Watch would be used only after all other intervention efforts fail to improve the academic performance of students in the District's Priority Schools. The Accountability Index will be used to determine initially if the district's schools have moved out of Priority Status. OSPI will verify this status based on additional analysis.

Based on this verification, OSPI will notify the district that it is on Academic Watch if the district has been unable to bring its Priority Schools out of Priority status after two full implementation years. The district will be required to undergo a performance or academic audit managed by one of a number of Peer Review Teams convened by OSPI. The Peer Review Teams will be composed of educators and experts with knowledge of school district processes and improvement strategies. The district will then take the performance audit and strategies and develop an implementation plan for approval by OSPI.

There are two options for the Board to consider under Academic Watch:

Option A: Authority for Implementation Remains with the Local District

After the corrective action and implementation plan is approved by OSPI, the local school board would be responsible for implementation of that plan and the state would provide needed resources to assist the district. OSPI would continue to monitor the district's progress with periodic updates to the State Board of Education.

Option B: Authority for Implementation Requires State-Specified Binding Conditions

OSPI may determine that the district requires a deeper level of state partnership to implement their plan successfully. In that event, after the corrective action and implementation plan is approved by OSPI, the Superintendent of Public Instruction may recommend to the State Board of Education that OSPI place the local school board under a set of binding conditions to carry out the corrective action and implementation plan. The State Board of Education could approve, disapprove, or modify the binding conditions. If the plan is not being carried out successfully after one year, OSPI and the Peer Review Team may recommend to the State Board of Education a new corrective plan of action for implementation for that district.

PROPOSED BOARD ACTIONS

In the interests of ensuring that all students in our state have access to a quality education, the Board will adopt the System Performance Accountability Policy Framework as follows:

1. Motion to adopt the general concepts of a system performance accountability policy framework, per this document, consisting of the guiding principles, found on the second page of this document, and: a) the accountability index; b) preventive, proactive assistance to all districts and schools; c) intensive assistance strategies for districts with one or more Priority Schools, and d) an "Academic Watch" for those districts with Priority Schools that continue not to improve student achievement using Option A or Option B (pick one) as outlined under "Academic Watch."

2. Direct SBE staff to work with OSPI on:

    a. Refining the overall accountability index through:

        i.   A unified accountability system which creates a coherent system between the current NCLB system and the proposed SBE accountability index.
        ii. Continued refinement of the draft accountability index that includes different weights assigned to indicators, additional data items such as, but not limited to, the number of cells a school misses Annual Yearly Progress and the percent of college/work ready courses high school students take.
        iii. A request for national experts to review the SBE proposed accountability index to determine if it measures the achievement and improvement the Board intends.
        iv. A review of achievement for different subgroups in the non-struggling tiers and recommending ways to address those gaps.
        v.   A request that the Federal government replace its current NCLB system with the state's proposed statewide accountability system.

b. Refining the recognition system to:

    i. Define a clear purpose for recognition that encourages schools to continue to make significant and sustained improvements that meet certain achievement levels.

    ii. Coordinate the SBE proposed accountability index, with the current OSPI schools of distinction process, to determine and ensure a coherent system to identify districts and schools for recognition.

c. Creating the necessary administrative structures between OSPI and the SBE to carry out the concepts for this new statewide accountability system to:

    i. Ensure a system of program supports for continuous improvement of student achievement for all schools by identifying practices, policies, and tools necessary to assist and hold districts accountable for closing the achievement gap for students of poverty and color.

    ii. Refine the continuum of programs available to schools and districts for targeted and intensive assistance, including the SBE-proposed Innovation Zone.

    iii. Define the specific processes needed to move forward under the Academic Watch under Option A or Option B or an additional Option to be defined by Board members (pick one).

    iv. Examine ways to address the needs of alternative education schools under the new accountability system.

d. Defining the resources needed to implement the new statewide accountability system for the state and local districts.

e. Providing periodic updates to the Board with a final report on the Accountability Index by June 30, 2009, and a final report on the recognition system and administrative structures and resources needed by October 15, 2009.