

Washington Adopts Race to the Top Legislation

SB 6696 includes key provisions and reforms that will accelerate student learning, improve teacher and principal performance, and ensure students receive a college-ready education through the development of a robust accountability system and adoption of common core standards. SB 6696 is a step in the right direction to develop an improved education system in Washington that will prepare all students for college and careers.

As enacted by the Legislature of Washington State, SB 6696 includes the following actions:

I. Provisional adoption of common core standards.

- Requires the Office of Public Superintendent of Instruction and the House and Senate education committees to review the Common Core standards and, upon review and approval, adopt the standards by August 2, 2010.

II. Establishes a multi-tiered teacher and principal evaluation model that includes the use of student growth data.

- Creates new evaluation criteria for teachers and principals, and calls on districts to design the new evaluation systems using a four-tiered rating system.
- Requires the use of student growth data to be used when available and relevant to the subject matter.

III. Authorizes state intervention in low-performing schools.

- Requires districts with schools performing in the bottom five percent of Title I schools to submit an action plan to the state identifying the measures that will be taken to turn around the school.
- Creates a new state accountability index which is to be designed to identify high- and low-performing schools.

IV. Allows for district superintendents to demote ineffective principals.

- Provides authority to districts superintendents with more than 35,000 students to demote ineffective principals.

V. Expands alternative route preparation programs for teachers.

- Authorizes the Professional Educator Standards Board to accept proposals for teacher preparation programs from community colleges and non-higher education providers.

VI. Extends the teacher provisional period.

- Lengthens the time in which a teacher is without tenure from two years to three years.

VII. Increases salaries of staff that implement innovative programs in schools.

- Allows district superintendents to increase the salaries of staff involved in implementing innovative activities designed to close the achievement gap; encourages a focus on innovative programs in STEM subjects.

VIII. Consideration of a single, statewide evaluation model.

- Requires the Office of Public Superintendent of Instruction to provide recommendations to the Legislature by July 1, 2011, regarding if a single, statewide evaluation model should be adopted.



With the passage of SB 6696, Washington advances to the starting line in the \$4.35 billion Race to the Top grant competition. Yet, the provisions included in the legislation represent only a subset of the innovative reforms that were advocated for during the legislative session.

The following measures were not adopted in SB 6696, but must be part of the state's application for Race to the Top:

- **Implementation of common core assessments.**
 - Participating districts must agree to adopt aligned, internationally-benchmarked formative, interim and summative assessments, curriculum and other tools for all courses in all districts in Washington state.

- **Strengthening the teacher and principal evaluation model**
 - Participating districts will need to commit to implementing additional reforms to the state's evaluation model, such as:
 - Including student growth data as a *significant factor* of the evaluation model.
 - Using evaluation data to serve as a primary factor in all staffing, tenure, retention and compensation decisions.
 - Committing to using of student growth data for all students in tested and untested subjects and grades as soon as it is developed and adopted.
 - Providing differential pay and other incentives to top-evaluated teachers and principals, teachers and principals who work in high poverty, high minority or low-achieving schools and hard-to-staff subject areas (i.e. math and science), and to teachers and principals that are successful in closing the achievement gap and raising student performance.

- **Supporting the expansion of alternative routes for principals.**

The hard work now begins as the state prepares to develop an application that is bold, innovative and builds upon state policies and the latter reforms in order to make Washington highly competitive in Round II of Race to the Top.