



2011 LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

Excellent Schools Now Coalition's goal is to achieve meaningful education reform that increases student achievement, closes the achievement gap and prepares all students to be college and career-ready. This legislative session we focused on the following policies to achieve those goals.

WAKIDS (WASHINGTON KINDERGARTEN INVENTORY OF DEVELOPING SKILLS): LEGISLATION PASSED

WaKids allows families, kindergarten teachers and early learning professionals to share information about incoming kindergarteners. The purpose is to gather information about the child in order to better inform teacher instruction.

In 2009, the Legislature tasked the Department of Early Learning, OSPI and others to identify and test a kindergarten assessment process and tools in geographically diverse districts. OSPI piloted WaKids in the fall of 2010.

Senate Bill 5427 was signed by the Governor on May 12. The bill requires state-funded all-day kindergarten programs to implement a kindergarten transition process beginning with the 2011-12 school year.

INNOVATION SCHOOLS: LEGISLATION PASSED

HB 1546, sponsored by Rep. Hargrove, passed the legislature and was signed by the Governor on May 5th. The bill authorizes the creation of Innovation Schools, which would be granted certain waivers from state requirements. These school, which provide opportunities to partner with business as well as using project based or use hands-on learning, must be predominately STEM or arts focused. It is a move in the right direction toward providing schools and communities the flexibility to improve education programs.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS: OFFICIALLY ADOPTED

The Common Core Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn so that teachers, parents and afterschool and youth development programs know what they need to do to develop them.

This legislative session bills were brought forward to delay the implementation of the Common Core Standards. The Excellent Schools Now Coalition successfully halted the legislation to delay, allowing Washington to formally adopt these much-needed standards. (State law provides that OSPI may formally adopt these standards following the 2011 Legislative Session unless otherwise directed by the Legislature.)

TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EVALUATION PILOTS: SECURED FUNDING

The 2010 Washington State Legislature passed a law that requires each school district in the state to establish performance criteria, an evaluation process for all staff, and establish a four-level rating system for evaluating teachers and principals. Beginning in the 2010-11 school year, OSPI

and selected school districts launched pilot programs to help guide that work. The 2011 Legislature allocated funding to continue the pilot projects.

MATH AND SCIENCE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS: REACHED COMPROMISE

Although Excellent Schools Now opposed legislation to reduce the number of math and science assessments required to earn a graduation requirement, the coalition was able to reach a compromise with OSPI and the legislature.

Math: House Bill 1412 was signed by the Governor on April 11. The bill requires the class of 2013 and 2014 to pass one math end-of-course assessment (Algebra I or Geometry), requires the class of 2015 to pass two math end-of-course assessments, and maintains the momentum for high standards for all students without going backward in math.

Science: The legislature approved House Bill 1410, which delays the science assessment graduation requirement until the class of 2015, allowing for the transition to an end-of-course biology exam from the single, comprehensive science High School Proficiency Exam. (State Superintendent Dorn's original bill requested a delay in the science graduation requirement until the class of 2017, which Excellent Schools Now opposed.)

PERFORMANCE-BASED REDUCTIONS-IN-FORCE: LEGISLATION DIED, CONVERSATION STARTED

The Excellent Schools Now Coalition introduced and supported legislation that would require districts facing reductions-in-force to include factors other than seniority, including evaluations, when determining layoffs. Although legislation ending the outdated last-in-first-out policy did not pass this year, the coalition launched a meaningful statewide discussion about performance based layoffs. (NB: It did pass the Senate by a vote of 30-17, but was not voted on by the House.)

The public clearly supports this reform; a total of 81% of Washingtonians think layoffs should be based on performance not seniority (Partnership for Learning statewide voter poll, 2011) and every major editorial board in the state supports this position. In addition, this reform received countless stories in newspapers, blogs, TV stations, and radio all around the state.

Excellent Schools Now Coalition is comprised of the following organizations: Alliance for Education, ArtsEd Washington, Black Collective, Black Education Strategy Roundtable, Coalition for Equal Education Rights, College & Work Ready Agenda, College Spark, College Success Foundation, Communities in Schools of Seattle, Executive Council for a Greater Tacoma, King County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, League of Education Voters, New Futures, Pacific Science Center, Partnership for Learning, Powerful Schools, Rainier Scholars, Schools Out Washington, Seattle Biomedical Research Institute, Seattle Breakfast Group, Social Venture Partners, Stand for Children, Tabor 100, Teachers United, Technology Access Foundation, Technology Alliance, WashACE, Washington Alliance of Black School Educators, Washington Global Health Alliance, Washington Roundtable, Washington State PTA, and Washington Technology Industry Association.

www.excellentschoolsnow.org