

Initiatives for Student Success in the 21st Century: Assessment of Student Achievement

The Oregon School District has long been guided by the principle of "continuous improvement"; namely, a process of examination and change as dictated by best practices. Over the last six years, the District's Board of Education has engaged in a critical review of the District's curriculum and its delivery and assessment, and has crafted a broad strategic plan to continuously improve District educational practices.

In 2004, the Board adopted a position paper titled "Accountability for Student Achievement in the Oregon School District" ("the Accountability Paper") which addressed what District success looks like and set forth an outline of how the District will measure whether it is successful. In 2007, the Board adopted a position paper titled "Visioning for the Future" ("the Visioning Paper") which identified specific goals and practices to pursue so all who graduate from the District have the skills and knowledge relevant for success in the 21st century. The Accountability and Visioning Papers contain a vision of the District's future and seek the implementation of significant changes in how the District operates.

The Board's Accountability paper defined "success" in the District. Students are viewed holistically and their achievement is measured in the areas of Competency, Culture, Community and Character. Through the establishment of these indicators, the District now analyzes data on a systemic, annual basis to discern District strengths and weaknesses and to establish short- and long-term goals. The District has made tremendous strides in monitoring student achievement through data and goals.

The Board's Visioning paper established a broad outline for the development of a District strategic plan. As a direct result of that paper, the District has already implemented a number of initiatives. For example, the District has established a World Languages program that has brought foreign language instruction to the elementary schools. A virtual program has been created to provide on-line instruction to home school and District students. The District has re-structured delivery of its technology resources with a focus on curriculum integration and continues to develop District curriculum, particularly in the areas of math and language arts.

During President Obama's November 4, 2009 visit to Madison, he articulated a vision for the future of American education. His platform is one of radical departure from the status quo. His message was clear.

American prosperity has long rested on how well we educate our children. But this has never been more true than it is today. In the 21st century, when countries that out-educate us today will out-compete us tomorrow, there is nothing that will determine the quality of our future as a nation and the lives our children will lead more than the kind of education that we provide them. Nothing is more important."

President Obama's words serve as a validation of the efforts which the District has been engaged for the last several years. One only has to look at the text of President Obama's speech and review the Accountability and Visioning papers to see a similar vision and theme. The Board is extremely proud of the implementation of new District initiatives under this strategic plan. The District is on the right track.

While our visioning process has resulted in the implementation of critical components of 21st century learning, the District needs to grow and improve on those initiatives. This paper addresses the next steps in the process of continuous improvement. It is the Board's desire to move the District towards its vision, while at the same time providing the opportunity for stakeholders to understand, evaluate, advise, assimilate and adapt to the changes that are necessary for the District's continued vitality.

This paper outlines the changes the Board is seeking in District assessment practices and graduation requirements - changes that will implemented over the next three years.

Assessment of Student Achievement

The District's ultimate measure of success is whether its graduates have met their individual potential and have acquired the skills necessary for success as citizens and workers in the changing landscape of the 21st century. The Visioning paper identified 21st century challenges, why it is important to adapt District educational practices to meet the changing criteria for success, and how the District might change and adapt current practices to better meet these educational and cultural challenges. Specifically, the Visioning paper identified curriculum content, curriculum delivery, and assessment of student learning as three areas that will have the most direct impact on future student achievement. The District is in the process of a number of District-wide initiatives in the areas of curriculum content and delivery.

At the same time, District assessment practices must be relevant to the changes being made in content and delivery. The relationship between standards and assessments was highlighted by President Obama on November 4, 2009:

*I also challenge states to align their assessments with high standards -- because we should -- we should not just raise the bar, we should prepare our kids to meet it. There's no point in having really high standards but we're not doing what it takes to meet those standards. And I want to be clear. This is not just about more tests... it is about being smarter with our assessments. It's about measuring not whether our kids can master the basics, but whether they can solve challenging tasks; they have the skills like critical thinking and teamwork and entrepreneurship; assessments that don't just give us a snapshot of how a student is doing in a particular subject, but a big picture look at how they're learning overall; and assessments that will help tell us if our kids have the knowledge and the skills to thrive when they graduate. **So standards and assessments, that's the first measure, are we doing that well?***

A. Grading Practices

With respect to accountability for student achievement, the District has established various indicators in each of the four areas that define success: Competency, Culture, Character and Community. With respect to Competency, for example, the District has established a number of external data points to assess achievement, including certain measures of data under the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam (WKCE), Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) and the college preparatory ACT tests. These provide external “benchmark” measurements. The District needs, however, a corresponding internal measurement for correlation with these benchmark measurements.

A valid internal assessment system that correlates with external assessment data will be crucial to measuring student achievement accurately and with relevance, particularly if student achievement becomes a measure of teacher accountability, as is being discussed nation-wide. A valid internal assessment system provides verification from and correlation to external measures such as standardized scores. The current federal and state rhetoric links merit pay with standardized test scores. The Board has been reluctant to establish standardized test scores as the sole indicator of student success and articulated such in the Accountability paper. The best judge of student achievement are teachers who work with students on a daily basis. The most relevant assessment of student achievement is a valid internal assessment system which can be verified and correlated to external benchmark measurements.

It was in this context that the Board created the Grading Task Force (see Appendix A) comprised of teachers, administrators and Board members to examine the current state of District grading and its impact on successful student learning. The charge given to the Task Force was to examine best practices and make recommendations to the Board for changes to current District practices. To effectively understand assessment practices with the goal of recommending changes, the Task Force discussed the following questions.

1. What is the purpose of grades?

As articulated in current Board policy¹, the purpose of grades is to:

- Provide a format to evaluate student progress;
- Inform the student and parent regarding student educational growth; and,
- Provide data for modification of programs if indicated for an individual student or groups of students.

The Board believes this policy continues to reflect the appropriate purpose of grades as a means of District accountability. The District’s Exit Outcomes require students to “demonstrate proficiency in academic skills.” In this context, grades should be a measure of proficiency as measured against State and District curricular standards. Furthermore, according to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (“DPI”, Aug. 2009), “proficiency should not be an

¹ Board policy # 415, revised February 11, 2008.

endpoint instructionally.” This coincides with District Policy 415 and its directive that grades should measure proficiency in the context of progress and growth.

2. How and why do grades affect student learning and achievement?

Grading practices can have significant positive and negative effects on student learning. Research reviewed by the Task Force made it clear that formative class assessments are far more effective than summative assessments in guiding student learning. (Popham, W.J. 2008, Ainsworth, L and Viegut, D. 2006, Doty, G. 2008). Formative assessments should be used to give students a clear picture of their progress towards learning goals and can guide students towards those goals by identifying areas in need of improvement. The effectiveness of formative assessments is the feedback, not a grade. This feedback, which includes suggestions for how to improve, has been found to be the most powerful single assessment practice to enhance achievement because it encourages students to improve. (Hattie, J. 1992).

Assessments that are based on clearly defined rubrics relevant to the curriculum are most successful in contributing to student achievement and communicating to all stakeholders (students, parents and teachers) where there has been success and where there is room for improvement. (Marzano, R. 2000). Inconsistent grading practices cause confusion among students and parents and have an adverse effect on student achievement. (Reeves, D. 2006, Wormeli, R. 2006, Guskey, T. 2000). Grading rubrics must be developed to be consistent across grades and subject areas and must contain measurements of 21st century skills. They must be designed to align with national and state standards, and should eliminate the redundancy present in the District’s current reporting system of both grades and outcome scores.

In addition to serving as a positive communication tool to facilitate progress towards learning goals, grading practices also impact student motivation to learn. There has been significant research on the effect of extrinsic motivators, such as grades, on performance. Daniel Pink recently examined motivation in this context and summarized the current state of research on this topic:

128 experiments lead to the conclusion that tangible rewards tend to have a substantial negative effect on intrinsic motivation. Whenschools ... focus on the short-term and opt for controlling people’s behavior, they do considerable long-term damage.

People use rewards expecting to gain the benefit of increasing another person’s motivation and behavior, but in doing so, they often incur the unintentional and hidden cost of undermining that person’s intrinsic motivation toward that activity.

Ameible and others have found that extrinsic rewards can be effective for algorithmic tasks – those that depend on following an existing formula to its logical conclusion. But for more right brain undertakings, those that demand flexible problem solving, inventiveness, or conceptual understanding – contingent rewards can be dangerous. Rewarded subjects often have a harder time seeing the periphery and crafting original solutions.

The relationship between rewards and punishments and student motivation to learn is critical to effective assessment practices.

3. What are our current practices?

The Task Force's review of the District's grading practices revealed a variety of practices, none of which was tied to any systemic accountability regimen. In particular, the District has a dual system of assessment measurement at the high school and middle school. Both schools report student achievement to parents primarily by use of letter grades, which have no systemic tie to any internal or external proficiency standard. At the same time, teachers must also assess proficiency for each student using an outcomes-based number scale.

In addition to a dual system of reporting, grading practices vary within the District. Many teachers use letter grades as a measure of and to regulate classroom behavior and student participation. One common method used by teachers to communicate to parents about student behavior is the grading of homework. There is inconsistency with this practice from teacher-to-teacher, subject-to-subject and building-to-building. Some teachers grade homework and include this grading in a final grade. Some teachers use grades to reflect attendance, effort and classroom behavior. In some cases, students are "penalized" with zeros for turning in late work; in others, they are given multiple opportunities with minimal consequences.

The variation in District assessment practices is not surprising given the differences among teachers on basic principles of student assessment.

4. What are current best practices that we should implement?

The Board has performed an extensive review of best practices in grading and assessment. This has included review of the Task Force's work, examination of DPI initiatives, survey of numerous contemporary authors on assessment practices, and discernment of other comparable school district assessment policies. We have vetted drafts of this paper with national, collegiate and Wisconsin curricular authorities. The current state of assessment best practices is clear to the Board and includes the following:

Practice One

Common assessments must be uniformly adopted and followed. The District must establish a systemic and defensible assessment system that is clearly identified and aligned across grades, buildings and curricular areas. (Doug Reeves, 2004; Ken O'Connor; Susan Brookhart, 2009; and Thomas Guskey, 2002).

Practice Two

The role of formative, benchmark and summative assessments must be clearly defined and delineated. (Guskey, T & Bailey, J. 2001; O'Connor, K. 2002, Wormeli, R.

2006, DPI, 2009). In DPI's report titled "Next Generation Assessment Task Force" (Aug. 2009), it recommends an assessment system that is comprised of formative, benchmark and summative assessments. This system is consistent with District Policy 415. Formative assessments should be used to provide timely and relevant feedback to students, parents and teachers and be used to guide instructional and curricular decisions to improve student achievement. Benchmark assessments, such as MAP and ACT tests, which the District already uses, will serve as periodic indicators of student achievement. Summative assessments will provide data to inform curricular and instructional decisions at the District level. According to Ken O'Connor (2007), formative assessments should be "designed to help students improve and not used to determine grades." Other researchers on this topic are uniform in this belief. (Burke, K. 1994; Brookhart, S. 2009; Fisher, D & Frey, N. 2007; Guskey, T. 2002; Guskey, T. & Bailey, J. M. 2001; Marzano, R. 2000; Reeves, D. 2006; Stiggins, R. 2005) Similarly, DPI states that the major benefit of formative assessments is to "provide timely, relevant feedback." (2009). In DPI's recommended system, benchmark assessments, such as MAP and ACT tests, should serve as periodic indicators of student achievement. Summative assessments should provide data to inform curricular and instructional decisions at the District level and should assess individual student proficiency levels.

Practice Three

Grading homework that is intended to be for practice (formative) is not an accurate reflection of student learning and those scores should not be included in the final (summative) grade. (Wormeli, R., 2006). Punishment for not doing homework does not motivate long-term student achievement (Reeves, D., 2006). A common justification for including formative homework grades in a student's summative assessment is that limiting grades on formative homework will cause lack of student motivation and declining grades. However, according to Susan Brookhart (2009), student motivation for learning is driven by the student, the classroom environment, *and* by the actions of the teacher. Grading practices contribute to a student's motivational state and according to Guskey and Bailey (2001), what students really need is "feedback". This is different than grading. As stated by Alfie Kohn (2006):

To the best of my knowledge, every study that has ever investigated how grades affect intrinsic motivation – the disposition to learn – has turned up bad news. To grade homework is especially destructive behavior because this tells students that the point of the exercise isn't to help them learn; it's to evaluate them on whether they are already succeeding. Nel Hoddings, one of our most incisive educational theorists, emphasizes that 'there should be no penalty for getting things wrong on homework.

Kohn also notes:

Others may reach for bribes and threats to compel students to turn in assignments; indeed, they may insist these inducements are necessary: "If the kids weren't being graded, they'd never do it!" Even if true, this is less an

argument for grades and other coercive tactics than an invitation to reconsider the value of those assignments.

This does not mean that homework should not be given. Good homework is essential for a student’s practice and learning. Therefore, student homework should be evaluated in a timely manner to provide relevant feedback. In addition, not all homework is formative.

Formative Homework	Summative Homework
Purpose: To improve learning and achievement	Purpose: To measure or audit attainment
Carried out while learning is in progress - day-to-day, minute-to-minute	Carried out from time-to-time to create snapshots of what has happened
Example: Practice of math processes, initial draft of an English paper, journals documenting notes from reading assignments, and worksheets designed to help a student find information from an article or textbook.	Example: Projects that need additional time to be completed outside of class time such as research reports, final drafts of an English paper, and end of unit projects

The determination of whether homework is formative or summative should be arrived at by a process that ensures consistency in application.

Practice Four

Summative grades should reflect proficiency with respect to state and local curriculum standards and should not include measures of behavior. According to Marzano (2000), teachers view inclusion of behavioral elements in grades as a means of classroom control. Lowering a grade based upon behavior is a method of student punishment (Guskey, T. & Bailey, J., 2001). According to Rick Wormeli (2006), if participation is an actual skill being taught, it is appropriate to grade that skill; otherwise, current research suggests that effort, behavior and attendance should be assessed and measured separate from a proficiency grade. While important to life and learning, active class participation and student effort to learn course content and skills are not demonstrations of proficiency themselves; they are routes to that proficiency. Separately recording behavior skills and assessing them based on common standards and rubrics is a more accurate and useful means of assessment without obscuring the content proficiency grade. When a course grade includes student effort or behavior, it runs the risk of not truly reflecting understanding of course content. It does no good to “give grades based on trying hard or behaving nicely because sooner or later they (students) hit the wall of not having the knowledge the grade implied.” (Wormeli, 2006).

Practice Five

Giving zeros distorts the accuracy of a summative grade and serves as a negative motivator with respect to student achievement. (Reeves, D. 2006; Wormeli, R. 2006, O’Connor, K. 2002, Guskey, T.R. & Bailey, J. 2001). If failing is defined as a score lower than 50, the use of a zero, in a system that uses the mean creates a distorted view of student proficiency. Instead of using a zero to reflect "failure" on an assignment, the student could be assessed a score to reflect non-passing by assigning the numerical equivalent to failure, in this example, a fifty.

Scores	
0	50
79	79
82	82
94	94
Mean 63.75	Mean Score 76.25

This has the effect of increasing the mean and more realistically portraying the student’s proficiency level with respect to all of the summative assessments.

With respect to missing work or an incomplete assignment, the better practice is to give the student an incomplete as opposed to assigning a numerical proficiency level that has no relevance to the curricular standard being assessed. In such cases, the student’s summative assessment would not be complete until the student receives a meaningful assessment with respect to the missing assignment or incomplete work.

Practice Six

Using the mean of accumulated summative scores does not accurately portray student learning. The median of a series of scores is a more accurate statistical measure if accumulated points are used to determine a final summative letter grade. (Guskey, T.R. & Bailey, J. 2001; O’Connor, K. 2002). For example, the following box shows that identical scores result in a different grade depending on whether the mean or median is used to determine the letter grade.

Scores	
50	50
79	79
82	82
94	94
Mean Score 76.25	Median Score 80.5

The use of zero exacerbates the assessment distortion produced by use of the mean.

Scores	
0	0
79	79
82	82
94	94
Mean 63.75	Median Score 80.5

One can see by these examples that in systems which use the mean as the arithmetic basis for determining a letter grade, a student who scores low at the initial stages of summative assessment faces an uphill battle to obtain a passing grade, much less receive an “A” or “B” in the course, even though the student shows marked proficiency growth over time.

As the District examines the impact of grading on student motivation, the practice of using the mean and a zero score in determining letter grades from summative assessments must change.

5. Future Actions

District teachers have varying assessment philosophies and practices. They have articulated a legitimate concern that in moving in the direction of best practices, student grades will drop. In order to minimize this potential impact and to ensure faithful implementation, a period of training and transition needs to take place. Therefore, the District will devote the 2010-11 school year's professional development to the establishment of a District-wide common philosophy and practice with respect to student assessment that is consistent with the following best practices:

1. Effective September 1, 2010, the District will utilize a grade-based system of reporting student proficiency of standards content and not a combined system of letter grades and outcome scoring. The elementary schools and Rome Corners will maintain their recently developed grading system. Rome Corners will no longer use the "P", "B" and "N" grading system. The middle and high schools will utilize a grade-based system and, as discussed below, will begin a staged implementation of basing grades solely on proficiency standards and not behavioral factors.
2. Grades will measure student proficiency of content. Grading content rubrics will be developed. This work will be completed by Subject Area Committees (SAC) and will follow the work that has been started, extend across all grades and subject areas, and include the following factors:
 - A consistent, defensible and clear definition of proficiency and non-proficiency as they relate to each summative grade;
 - A reporting scale that is consistent, easily understood and communicated, and defensible;
 - A means of reporting on 21st century skills where appropriate. These skills are commonly identified by leading educational groups, such as the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, to include critical thinking, problem-solving, analytical thinking, creativity, group collaboration and written and verbal communication. Those skills must be identified at a curricular level, and assessments must be developed and implemented to adequately measure these important aspects of student learning. Accurately and appropriately measuring these skills can inform educators in all areas of success (Competence, Community, Character and Culture). These new assessments should become additional indicators that will guide District educational practices and more adequately measure individual student growth;

- A system that is consistent and aligned with MAP, ACT and other benchmark measurements established as indicators of District success; and,
 - An acknowledged grading system specific to on-line learning.
3. Grading practices that have no positive basis in research will be eliminated. District teachers and Administrators will work together to develop by June 30, 2010 a plan for the implementation of best assessment/grading practices in the District. The implementation plan will establish a feasible and reasonable timeline. Elements which should be addressed in the plan include professional development, modeling, collaboration, data analysis, and opportunities for feedback with Administration and the Board. The Board will review the plan for approval at its July 12, 2010 meeting and thereafter on a regular basis. The Board anticipates that the plan will be followed in good faith and in a professional manner.
 4. Grades will independently measure student mastery of curriculum. Behavior and participation will be measured separately from content mastery. A student will receive a grade reflecting solely curriculum mastery.

The Board recognizes the value of holding students accountable for their behavior and participation. Assessing and reporting such behavior is an ideal way to define and measure one of the elements of success identified in the Accountability paper, i.e., Character. This factor should be measured as a Tier One Character indicator and recorded in students' portfolios along with their Competency grade. The District will establish a Tier One Character rubric to reflect students' behavior and participation, which will include the following factors:

- A. The indicator will be based on consistent, defensible and relevant measures of student expectations and behaviors within the context of 21st century skills;
- B. The indicator will be easily communicated and understood; and,
- C. The indicator will be distinguished from content mastery.

The District will establish a method by which this Character indicator will be reported by teachers. The Administration will take lead in performing this work in collaboration with District teachers. An implementation plan for this work will be included in the plan discussed in paragraph 3, above.

Hands-on professional development will be critical to the success of implementing these practices. As indicated, the District will dedicate professional development during the 2010-2011 school year to grading and assessment practices. In addition, the District will begin a

staged implementation of these best practices using selected teachers to assess, model and evaluate issues which arise from the implementation of the practices identified above and to collaborate with their colleagues on universal implementation of these principles.

B. Recognition of Student Achievement

The use of grades to establish class rank and to sort students is a long-standing practice of many school districts, including Oregon, and has been a principal factor used by institutions of higher learning to evaluate potential entrants. The inclusion of ranking in the assessment of students, however, has an impact on our accountability system. Ranking creates both positive and negative student motivation for learning. Students who strive for higher ranking may be more motivated to achieve. Ranking can, however, lead students to select course work on the basis of potential impact on rank rather than on learning. In the light of pressure placed on students regarding ranking and the external competition that students face with respect to post-secondary admissions, teachers are subject to increasing pressure to assure that high-achieving students perpetuate their rank. One way of accomplishing this is to dilute proficiency as the sole component of assessment by including other factors in a grade. But, as set forth above, the District will separate issues of motivation from the measurement of proficiency in District grading practices.

An additional pressure brought by ranking is the concept that grades should be weighted in order to reflect a subjective degree of content matter difficulty. Again, this brings into play the positive and negative aspects of motivation into District assessment practices. Weighting classes requires a subjective value assessment of District courses. Typical weighted grading systems fail to recognize student achievement in areas such as the arts, music, vocational trades and other, less traditional, areas of study. If District grades are an assessment of student proficiency of curriculum content and student understanding, students should not be limited by a system of ranking and weighted grades. Instead, students should be encouraged to explore all avenues of academic and personal interest and not limit themselves to following a path of perceived success which is perpetuated by a subjectively established weighting system.

At the pinnacle of the District's ranking process is the designation of a class Valedictorian and Salutatorian. The recognition of top students does a disservice to the entire student body in that it overlooks student achievement of different kinds by differing students. While designating two top students motivates some students to learn for learning's sake, it also serves as a motivation for students to follow a less challenging academic path in an attempt to achieve a higher class rank.

The Board rejects class ranking and sorting by grade point average as a proper measure of student success. The practice of selecting a Valedictorian and Salutatorian based on class rank should be eliminated and, in its place, a new system established to recognize at graduation students who meet newly defined standards of excellence. These standards can include significant contributions to the District community, outstanding personal achievements in academics, the arts, and other areas of personal learning, or other criteria to be determined. Such recognition will motivate students to excel in their areas of interest and create a community of students who want to become more engaged in the learning process.

The Board directs that ranking students be discontinued except to the extent such ranking is required internally for purposes of college applications or student scholarships. The Board also directs that the practice of naming a Valedictorian and Salutatorian be discontinued and be replaced by a new honors systems for students who meet prescribed standards of excellence.

These changes will take place beginning with the 2011-2012 incoming freshman class. In the interim, a **Student Honors Task Force** (see appendix E) will recommend a system of honoring students on a broader scale as an alternative to designation of a Valedictorian and Salutatorian.

C. Graduation Standards

The Board is committed to making District education relevant to the 21st century and to ensuring the success of all students. The emerging global workplace demands our students possess a new skill set in order to succeed in the future. According to Tony Wagner in "The Global Achievement Gap" (2008):

The rigor that matters most for the twenty-first century is demonstrated mastery of core competencies for work, citizenship and life-long learning. Studying academic content is the means of developing competencies, instead of being the goal, as it has been traditionally. In today's world, "It's no longer how much you know that matters; it's what you can do with what you know."

This is echoed by Richard Rutherford in "Grading Education: Getting Education Right" (EPI, 2008):

Adolescents should enter young adulthood with many cognitive skills and non-cognitive qualities – not only strong academic knowledge and skills, but also the ability to reason and think creatively, an appreciation of the arts and literature, preparation for skilled work, social skills and strong work ethic, good citizenship, and habits leading to good physical and mental health.

The District's current graduation policy is long-standing and is based solely on the number of credits earned by students. Credits are based upon classroom hours. Attainment of credits, however, does not inform the District whether students have skills relevant to and necessary for success in the 21st century. In this sense, the District's current accountability system is out-dated and an inadequate assessment measure. This is underscored in the work currently underway with DPI. (www.highschool4success.org/partnerships).

It was for this reason that the Visioning paper called for an evaluation of the District's graduation standard. A Task Force was formed in 2009 from District constituencies to study the District's graduation policy and possible revisions to it. (See Appendix B). The Task Force reached consensus that it was critical for District students to obtain 21st century skills and that such skills were, in fact, outlined in the current District exit outcomes. However, these outcomes are not assessed except to the extent those skills are embedded in curriculum and measured indirectly through current grading practices.

The Task Force reviewed several areas of potential modification to the District's current graduation policy. The first was the number of credits required to graduate. Because State law requires the attainment of a specified number of credits in specific curricular areas for graduation, any District graduation policy must retain this element. Current District policy requires a student to attain twenty-three credits. The Task Force discussed whether this number should be increased or decreased. The Task Force also reviewed whether the mathematics requirement should be raised from two to three credits, whether there should be a foreign language and fine arts requirement and whether the social studies requirement should focus less on American history and include additional emphasis on other cultures and civics. There was discussion about creating a community service/service-learning requirement that would incorporate the District's Character, Culture and Community components of student success.

The Task Force also discussed the measurement of 21st century skills. Assessment of these skills should involve an individualized assessment of a student's skill set as the student approaches graduation. Districts which perform this type of individualized assessment often do so in the form of Individualized Learning Plans ("ILP's) through which students demonstrate proficiency and the attainment of the 21st century skills within the context of a student's chosen curricular career path. In some cases, districts use a capstone project in conjunction with ILP's for purposes of demonstrating the attainment of district graduation requirements. A capstone assessment of 21st century skills will require a significant change in the District's educational paradigm in which the standard of success remains embedded in the universal attainment of twenty-three credits.

The District's current practice is not consistent with the growing call for individualization in curriculum, delivery and assessment. One of the primary recommendations made in 2006 by DPI's High School Task Force was that education must focus on individual students rather than a "one size fits all" system so that "pathways to success not be limited." (www.dpi.wi.gov). DPI's latest report recommends that Wisconsin high schools assess students by means of individualized learning plans:

Having a learning plan helps students focus on their learning styles, goals, and course of action to accomplish their goals. Plans should be developed as students are transitioning to high school and should be reviewed and updated at least annually, including actions that address post-high school plans. (www.highschool4success.org/learningPlan).

At the present time, District eighth grade students engage in a planning process to prepare for high school, but that process is not embedded in any systemic manner in high school, nor does it engage parents, students and staff on a long-term basis. While the District formerly had a course for seniors in which development of a portfolio was a component, that exercise did not develop an individualized path for students, but rather memorialized their completed high school career.

In order to truly individualize a student's educational path and be able to assess it, not only at graduation, but also during that journey, the District must establish a systemic plan of developing, monitoring and evaluating individualized plans for each student. This plan should be started early in a student's education and transform over time. Planning will include teachers, parents and students. Individualized learning plans should not only incorporate attainment of

required credits and 21st century skills, but should also identify a student's relevant course of study and the appropriate delivery system so that upon graduation the student has reached his or her potential. This will require a radical change in the District's assessment practices.

Recognizing this, the Board directs the following:

1. **The High School Graduation Task Force** (see Appendix E) will finalize review of the District's current graduation standard and the number of credits which should be required for graduation, including possible modifications to the specific credits required in each curricular area. In addition, this Task Force will provide recommendations to the Board as to whether the District should require demonstrated proficiency in the following areas, and if so, how that would be accomplished:
 - i. Civics;
 - ii. Personal finance and career competencies;
 - iii. Wellness;
 - iv. Foreign language;
 - v. Creative arts;
 - vi. Community Service/Service Learning; and
 - vii. Other (co-curricular, extra-curricular, work experience).

The High School Graduation Task Force's recommendations are to be presented to the Board by May 2011 at which time the Board will consider adoption and implementation of those recommendations in a new graduation policy. If any changes need to be made to the graduation policy with respect to alternative avenues to graduation, high school Administration will present those to the Board at the same time.

2. By the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year, the District will have in place an electronic portfolio for each District student to record relevant Competency, Character, Culture and Community data.
3. By the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year, each student K-7 will lead a conference with the student's teacher(s) and parents/guardian no less than once per year, utilizing the student's electronic portfolio to establish on-going educational and behavioral goals. This process will utilize and be consistent with the District's Response-to-Intervention (RtI) processes and building and District goals.
4. In conjunction with the development of a new graduation policy and the use of electronic portfolios, the District will utilize ILP's to guide students from 8th grade through graduation. Each ILP will be consistent with and directed toward attainment of required graduation elements. The District will have in place by no later than the freshman class of 2012-2013 a plan by which students continue to

evaluate, modify and complete their ILP's as they progress from 8th grade through high school.

In order to achieve this, an **ILP Leadership Group** (see Appendix E) will be constituted to develop an implementation plan that will include the following:

- a. A class offered freshman year designed to assist students in the transition to high school, begin the development of a mentoring/advisory process, work on the student's ILP's, and provide instruction with respect to required District proficiencies;
- b. An advisory process for sophomores and juniors to work on and evaluate their ILP's on an on-going basis, including conferences with the student, parent/guardian and advisor no less than two times per school year; and,
- c. A process by which ILP's will be reviewed in the senior year to include the consideration of a capstone project.

Implementation of ILP's in this fashion will have budgetary implications. This Leadership Group will work in conjunction with District Administration to address and plan for the financial impacts of implementation.

Implementation of advisories will require teachers to play a significant role in developing plans with parents and students. This will require training and more time within the school day and year to accomplish these tasks. This may mean re-defining the school day and year. This Leadership Group should assess scheduling systems and calendars which will maximize student achievement and provide the time necessary for the execution of this system. The Leadership Group shall provide a report to the Board so as to permit implementation of ILP's by no later than the incoming 2012-2013 freshman class.

5. The Board will establish a **Capstone Project Task Force** (see Appendix E) to report to the Board on the design and feasibility of implementing a capstone project for all Oregon High School students as part of their graduation requirement.

Conclusion

Since the adoption of the Accountability paper, the District has been on a defined course of action to stay relevant in the changing world. A number of changes have already been implemented in a short time. This paper calls for the implementation of even more radical changes over the next several years. The Board recognizes that such change will not be easy. The Board's primary motivation for the aggressive course it has pursued is that the District must ultimately answer to our students and the future needs of our larger community, not personal preferences or historical methods or traditions.

If the District does not make those changes, others will make them for it. This is shown in the recent policy directives from President Obama, which are mirrored, for financial reasons, by the State. The District can either wait for outside change to be imposed on it, or the District can develop a model based upon those concepts, but implemented at a pace and in a manner most compatible with its culture.

The District is at a complicated stage in the visioning process. The changes the Board has outlined are all inter-related. The District needs to complete work on grades so that it has a meaningful assessment of success with respect to competency. The District will continue a data-based review of student achievement and move the successes achieved at the elementary levels to the middle and high school. At the same time, the District has already begun the process of incorporating 21st century skills through adoption of the World Language program, its work with the Global Academy Consortium and the continuing work to develop an interface between technology and curriculum. The District will continue to work to develop individualized learning options for students, including support for the District's alternative school, OASIS, and the on-line program. The more options the District is able to provide for its students, the more the District will be able to develop truly personalized learning paths for students.

One of the District's core values is a process of continuous improvement. In its leadership role, the Board is dedicated to this process, as borne out by the position papers and the rapid pace of changes that have directly flowed from them. As Dr. Heidi Hayes Jacobs, an educational consultant, summarizes regarding the state of public education today, "We don't need any more 19th century approaches to 21st century learning. You are officially in a movement, and you are it."

The 21st century requires the District to fundamentally shift its educational paradigm, seek ways to make education relevant to its students, and change accordingly. By following the path outlined in this paper, the District intends to meet that challenge.

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- Grading Task Force Roster
- High School Graduation Policy Task Force Roster
- Teacher Job Description – adopted May 2009
- Teacher Job Description Task Force Roster
- Board Paper Work Plan

Appendix A

Outcomes, Grades and Common Assessment Task Force

Team membership will consist of 6-9 teachers, 6 administrators, and 2 School Board Members. Teachers will be chosen based on a mix of instructional levels and recommendations from administrators.

Jane Peschel & Leslie Bergstrom Co-Facilitators

Michelle Baltés	RCI
Judy Brashi	BKE
Jan Bonsett-Veal	RCI
Lynda Farrar	BOE
Jon Fishwild (Resigned May 2009)	OHS
Dawn Goltz	NKE
Mark Lindsey	OMS
Courtney Odorico	BOE
Chris Telfer	OMS
Heather Sveom	PVE
Andy Weiland	DO
Dawna Wright	RCI

Appendix B

High School Graduation Policy Task Force Roster

Chris Ligocki & Anita Koehler - Co-Facilitators

Heidi Davies

Dave Ebert

Will Howlet

Sara Kissling

Doug Kornetzke

Lauren Lebwohl

Tracey Leider

Tim Martinelli

Bob Prah

Dan Rikli

Leyla Sanyer

Candace Weidensee

Steve Zach

Parents

Richard Dow

Laura Douglass

Scott Flanagan

Julie Hagen

Sue Nelson

Chuck Soule

Julie Underwood

Appendix C

Oregon School District **Teacher Job Description** (Adopted May 2009)

Position Title: Teacher

Reports To: Administrator

Qualifications:

Meets the criteria of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act for “highly qualified” teacher.

The Wisconsin definition for “highly qualified” is: A highly qualified teacher meets all of the requirements of PI 34 for the subjects and levels that he/she is teaching. The requirements include, but may not be limited to, a bachelor's degree and completion of an approved licensing program.

Position Summary:

An Oregon teacher is a person who is able to demonstrate the ability to 1) create a learning environment that encourages positive interaction, active engagement and self motivation, 2) use effective techniques in communication and instructional technology to foster active inquiry and collaboration, 3) adapt to and implement educational change initiatives and 4) know and comply with all district policies and procedures.

Primary Tasks:

Planning and Preparation

- Establish and communicate high academic expectations with regard to state and local curriculum objectives.
- Choose the best instructional techniques based on research, content, context, and student ability.

Classroom Environment

- Serve as a role model.
- Inspire students to learn and demonstrate positive academic, social, and attitudinal outcomes.
- Be flexible, responsive and empathetic towards students.
- Build a student community which values civic responsibility, diversity, and shared cultural norms.

Instruction

- Use district curriculum along with diverse resources and collaboration to plan and structure engaging learning opportunities
- Use a variety of instructional techniques and apply them appropriately to provide differentiated learning for students.
- Focus on the individual learning needs of each student.
- Monitor student progress by successfully administering and evaluating through multiple sources of evidence, including formative and summative assessments to guide instruction and report progress.

Professional Responsibilities

- Collaborate and work with other teachers, administrators, parents, and education professionals to ensure student success, particularly the success of students with special needs and those at risk of failure.
- Pursue ongoing professional development to stay abreast of current best practice, and to maintain relevance.
- Communicate effectively and appropriately through a variety of means with various audiences
- Demonstrates awareness of and actively employs in their practice the ten Wisconsin Teaching Standards, and is able to cite examples of their own expertise with each.

Appendix D.

Teacher Job Description Task Force Roster

Deedra Atkinson Chairperson and Facilitator	BOE
Guy Trgo	BOE
Todd Bresser	OHS
Shannon Boyer Luehmann	PVE
Scott Jones	OHS
Sarah Koch	RCI
Peter Kritsch	OHS
Mark Lindsey	OMS
Kerri Modjeski	BKE
Jane Peschel	DO
Jody Schmidt	OMS
Jeri Shumaker	OMS
Jon Tanner	DO