

THE SUPERINTENDENT'S Pipeline Extra!

Extra!

June 16, 2000

This *EXTRA!* edition of Pipeline is devoted to information about improving Oregon's education system and recent State Board actions.

Three Recommendations
for Adjustments to
Oregon's Educational
Reform



From My Desk to Yours

A Message from Stan Bunn
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

I want to share with you the recent actions taken at our State Board meeting this week and the positive results these changes will bring for Oregon students and teachers. I also want to compliment the Board on the quality of their deliberations and the tremendous care and thought they put into examining the issues before making policy changes.

One recommendation approved by the Board at their June 14 meeting, is to make the Certificate of Initial Mastery a program that runs grades 9-12 and is integrated with the Certificate of Advanced Mastery. This removes what many have felt was an unreasonable push for all students to achieve our high academic standards by the end of their sophomore year. Many students will achieve standards early in some areas and take longer for others. No students see time as a barrier in striving toward these important goals.

Originally, this recommendation included "uncoupling" the single Certificate of Initial Mastery to create certificates in each required CIM subject area. This particular issue generated much response through our "electronic town hall," phone calls and face to face discussions with groups around the state. As I listened to the arguments on both sides of this important issue, I became convinced that additional time was needed for dialogue and conversation before any decision could be made. Therefore, I informed the Board that I would remove that recommendation as an action item from this agenda, asking instead for a thorough discussion. I still believe this item needs to move forward but that conversation will be beneficial.

That discussion continues. Many of you responded to the invitation in the last issue of The Superintendent's Pipeline, to send in comments to an "electronic town hall" via e-mail, fax, letter or survey. Those responses have been shared with the Board and informed their discussion on Wednesday. Further conversation will be taking place, and you are welcome at the table. Send in your comments or attend any of the summer institutes for discussion (ode.peer@state.or.us).

In this edition of the Pipeline, you'll find more information about the Board meeting, including their action to move forward on our second recommendation, defining the Certificate of Advanced Mastery. That activity will be ongoing this summer, and your participation is important. Check our web site at www.ode.state.or.us and discussions at the summer institutes for updates.

We'll be moving the grade 3 writing assessment to grade 4 and the grade 5 science test to grade 6 in the 2001-2002 school year. We anticipate that the science change will ease the testing burden at grade 5 and assessing writing in grade 4 will be more developmentally appropriate. More details about these tests will be communicated over the next several months and into next school year.

I'm looking forward to seeing many of you at COSA next week!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stan Bunn". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Stan Bunn

Oregon Department of Education

Three Recommendations for Adjustments to Oregon's Educational Reform

The State Board of Education took action on three recommendations for adjustments to Oregon's school reform program at their June 14 meeting. Information about changes being proposed by Supt. Stan Bunn and Department of Education staff had been announced earlier and input sought from educators and the public.

Recommendation No. 1

The Certificate of Initial Mastery

One proposal called for the current Certificate of Initial Mastery to be redefined as multiple certificates, with students receiving recognition when they achieved the high academic standards in each required subject area. That proposal also recognized the CIM as a program for grades 9-12, rather than emphasizing completion by the end of grade 10 as was the case previously.

Although comments from educators and the public were strongly in favor of the proposal to recognize student achievement in each required CIM subject area, Supt. Bunn felt there was enough desire for additional discussion to warrant continuing the dialogue. As a result, he decided to hold off on asking the Board to approve an "uncoupling" of the Certificate of Initial Mastery to allow everyone a full opportunity to participate in the conversation before a decision is made.

Discussion among State Board members at Wednesday's meeting revealed a range of perspectives on the uncoupling topic and on the overall view of the CIM and the Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM). Although Board members were in agreement that students should be able to work on the CIM throughout their high school years, concern was expressed that some students would put off taking the state assessments if they were not required to attempt the tests in their sophomore year.

On a vote of 6-1, the Board approved the following resolution:

RESOLVED, That the Certificate of Initial Mastery shall be available to students in

grades 9-12, thereby removing the emphasis on grade 10 as the completion point. As this occurs, it is critical that the CIM and the CAM be developed as an integrated system. This process must also affirm the essential requirement that all students participate in all state assessments.

Recommendation No. 2

Define the Certificate of Advanced Mastery

Board members heard a report from Associate Superintendent for Professional Technical Education, Ron Dexter, and Teresa Levy, CAM Specialist on the plan and timeline for development of a CIM-CAM design.

A CIM-CAM Design task force team has been formed to facilitate completion of the recommendations for the Certificate of Advanced Mastery. While the task force's emphasis is on the CAM, the design work will address the CIM-CAM system as a whole. And while CIM and CAM are considered grades 9-12, the design work will address CIM-CAM in a comprehensive PreK-12-next step system.

The CIM-CAM design strategy includes the following steps:

1. Identify characteristics of a successful CIM-CAM system to guide design work;
2. Identify and examine key design issues and put forward solutions and strategies;
3. Examine design issues from the perspective of key stakeholders, and include them in the design process;
4. Build an integrated program including the CIM-CAM-PASS-PREP work and seek solutions and strategies from those already implementing in the field.

The following resolution was adopted by the Board on a 7-0 vote:

RESOLVED, the Board directs staff to further develop the design for the Certificate of Advanced Mastery and bring that design before the Board at their September 2000

meeting for further discussion and direction.

Recommendation No. 3

Adjusting the Statewide Assessment System

Whenever changes to the CIM are considered, the statewide assessment becomes an integral part of the equation. Therefore, after careful consideration, Supt. Bunn and Department staff recommended to the State Board that some tests at the elementary level be discontinued in order to free up instructional time for a greater focus on English and mathematics.

Comments from the field were more divided on this issue than on any other. The Board and Department staff entered into an in-depth discussion after which the Board approved a motion amending the original resolution and moving the writing assessment from grade 3 to grade 4 and the science test from grade 5 to grade 6. Moving the writing assessment to grade 4 will be more developmentally appropriate and will result in more reliable information for students, parents, teachers and schools. The change from grade 5 to grade 6 will reduce the existing testing burden on 5th grade students and teachers.

The Board also directed staff to conduct a study to determine the most appropriate methods and grade levels for assessing science and social sciences and return with recommendations. Finally, the Board adopted a resolution encouraging districts to consider implementing off-grade testing in mathematics and reading/literature.

Continued Dialogue

As Department staff begins to implement the changes and conduct the design work and studies, it will be important to continue the conversation around fulfilling the promise of the Oregon Advantage. Oregon students have made achievement gains over the last decade and Oregon teachers have worked relentlessly to provide a quality education to students. In making any adjustments, benefits to students and teachers must be the heart of our work.