

*“Student assessment must be meaningful and result in teaching and learning improvement.”*

Phyllis Edmundson,  
Chair,  
Achievement Standards  
and Curriculum  
Management Task Force  
and Dean, Graduate  
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Portland State University

The Achievement Standards and Curriculum Management Task Force was composed of experts in education, active parents, former and current Portland Public Schools staff and former Board members. The Task Force divided their 52 recommendations into subgroups and, in some cases, established subcommittees to review the recommendations. In general, the Task Force and AISC found that KPMG’s recommendations in these areas were limited by their lack of depth. In areas such as English as a Second Language and Bilingual Education, the recommendations failed to address key District issues.

### **Strategic Planning**

**Recommendations 6 II-3.1, 111 VII-4.1, 144 VII-18.2**

The Task Force and AISC recommends that the District’s new efforts at strategic planning begin with the existing School Improvement Plans and other strategic documents already developed by the District.

### **Curriculum Alignment & Staff Development**

**Recommendations 106 VII-2.1, 107 VII-2.2, 108 VII-2.3, 112 VII-4.2, 113 VII-4.3, 114 VII-5.1, 115 VII-5.2, 116 VII-5.3, 117 VII-5.4, 118 VII 5.5, 128 VII-11.2, 134 VII-12.1, 136 VII-14.1, 139 VII-16.1, 140 VII-16.2**

Curriculum alignment has been an on-going District priority and the Task Force and AISC supports the work done to date. The District has been fortunate to have a PEW Foundation grant to support some of this work and the Task Force and

AISC urges the District to continue to seek outside resources to support these efforts. Although KPMG did not address the fiscal impact of future curriculum alignment efforts, we believe that significant additional resources will be needed in this area. In particular, the AISC recognizes the continued need for curriculum coordination at the same grade level across the District (horizontal) and between school levels (vertical). Despite the shortage of financial resources, the Task Force and AISC believes staff development needs to be continued, particularly in light of changing state standards.

### **Assessing Student Achievement & Program Performance**

**Recommendations 105 VII-1.2, 109 VII-3.1, 110 VII-3.2, 121 VII-7.1, 123 VII-8.1, 124 VII-9.1, 125 VII-10.1, 126 VII-10.2, 127 VII-11.1, 129 VII 11.3, 130 VII-11.4, 131 VII-11.5, 132 VII-11.6, 143 VII-18.1, 153 VII-25.1, 154 VII-26.1, 155 VII-27.1**

To ensure that students succeed under the new education reform, it is important that the District consistently assess student achievement and evaluate programs that serve students. Any assessment needs to be meaningful and result in teaching/learning improvement. Assessment efforts cannot be over-burdensome to the system.

*“District decisions, some at the school level and others at the central office, mean some students receive unequal access to programs and services.”*

Carol Turner  
Achievement Standards  
and Curriculum  
Management Task  
Force and Education  
Advocate, Office of the  
Mayor, City of Portland

## **Equity & Access**

**Recommendations 122 VII-7.2, 135 VII-13.1, 137 VII-14.2, 138 VII-15.1, 141 VII-17.1, 142 VII-17.2, 152 VII-24.1, 156 VII-28.1, 157 VII-28.2, 158 VII-29.1, 159 VII-30.1**

Several of KPMG’s recommendations address the issue of equity or access to learning opportunities for all students. The specific groups addressed in the recommendations include non-native English language speakers, TAG students, or students who attend school in different geographic areas of the District. Also, there is an inherent tension within the District between school-based decision-making and central District decision-making on resource allocation. This sometimes results in students receiving unequal access. Other student educational programs, such as TAG or ESL, are not centrally coordinated and again, in some cases, this leads to unequal access for students. In the area of ESL and Bilingual education, the Task Force has made a series of implementation recommendations that should be reviewed by the District.

## **Early Childhood Development & Literacy**

**Recommendations 119 VII-6.1, 120 VII-6.2, 133 VII-11.7, 160 VII-31.1, 161 VII-31.2, 162 VII-32.1**

The Task Force and AISC believe that early childhood development and literacy are high priorities. Literacy serves as a foundational skill for all future student achievement. Investments in early childhood development and literacy should serve all students and will improve overall District student achievement.

The Task Force and AISC recommendations, however, come at a potentially significant cost. The Task Force recommends the District look to outside resources to support some of this work and use internal resources already developed to their fullest extent. Before acting on the recommendations, the District must resolve the internal tension that exists between supporters of phonics and whole language. The PreK-3 Literacy Benchmarks project endorses a balanced approach incorporating phonics and whole language. It is strongly recommended that the Superintendent and the Board clearly endorse this approach and that this endorsement be communicated to all staff. To support this approach, the Task Force also recommended that a central District advocate be assigned to coordinate Pre-K-3 programs and District efforts across schools.