

Recommendation 2-1:

Maintain the current geographical distribution and number of Educational Service Districts.

ESD System Response: Implemented.

The ESDs agree with this recommendation and believe that the nine current ESDs are adequate.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 2-2:

Modify the Washington Administrative Code 180-22-150 so that all ESDs fall within its square mileage requirements.

ESD System Response: Accepted.

Initial Action Steps: The AESD will review the WAC and submit a recommendation for revision to the State Board of Education (SBE) and/or the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), as appropriate.

Timeline: Fall 2008.

Recommendation 3-1:

Remove ESD Superintendents' responsibility from the regulatory functions of RCW.28A 310.260, in relation to member school district staff code of conduct violations.

ESD System Response: Accepted, with qualifications.

The reported "cost savings" would actually be a "cost shift," as another entity assigned the responsibility would assume the same costs currently incurred by ESDs.

In addition to the reasons for this recommendation delineated in the *Global Report*, the ESDs question whether this regulatory duty is consistent with the "service" relationship that exists with local school districts.

Initial Action Steps: The AESD will submit a recommendation for RCW revision.

Timeline: Fall 2008.

Recommendation 3-2:

Modify the controlling statutory language to eliminate the Boundary Committees and the ESD Superintendents' role in resolving boundary disputes.

ESD System Response: Accepted, with qualifications.

It is important to keep the boundary decisions within the broader educational system and out of the political arena. This is best accomplished by developing one statewide regional committee consisting of regional representatives. This would provide consistency to the process across the state, thereby reducing liability for inconsistent application of rules/policy.

The costs of this time consuming process must be reimbursed regardless of where the responsibility is placed. The ESDs could continue to perform these duties, without draining existing resources, if

the state would fund the actual cost of services involved.

The anticipated cost savings would actually be a cost shift. If another entity besides ESDs would step in to perform the same function, that entity would realize the same, or greater, costs.

Initial Action Steps: The AESD will submit a recommendation for legislative action.

Timeline: Fall 2009.

Recommendation 3-3:

All ESDs should continue to implement comprehensive strategic planning processes within their organizations.

ESD System Response: Implemented.

Each of the nine ESDs have various types of strategic planning processes in place.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 3-4:

Washington's ESDs should, in collaboration with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and other key stakeholders, develop a statewide accreditation system/process for ESDs.

ESD System Response: Declined.

The AESD is monitoring the national Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESAs)'s evolving national ESA accreditation program. It is more prudent to encourage each ESD Board to explore national accreditation rather than recreate a state system.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 3-5:

The ESDs in Washington should vigorously continue their efforts toward being recognized as a statewide "system" of ESDs.

ESD System Response: Accepted.

The Association of Educational Service Districts (AESD) has developed and approved a strategic plan that includes development of a statewide system of ESDs as a priority outcome.

Initial Action Steps: The ESD superintendents have drafted a grant proposal to the *Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation* to secure funding for a consultant to facilitate systemic strategic planning related to the establishment of a formal statewide system of ESDs. Ongoing efforts will continue at regularly scheduled AESD Executive Committee and General Membership meetings.

Timeline: Estimated July 2009.

Recommendation 3-6:

Washington policy makers should undertake an evaluation or performance audit of the state's special education delivery system in an effort to increase efficiency and use existing infrastructure.

ESD System Response: Declined, with qualifications.

While the AESD agrees with the potential value of such an evaluation, neither the ESDs individually nor the system of ESDs (AESD) are Washington policy makers. As such, this recommendation is not appropriate for this *Global Report*. Should policy makers wish to implement this recommendation, the AESD can, and stands ready to, provide related data.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 4-1:

Tie ESD budgets to long-range strategic plans and develop performance measures to ensure that goals and objectives are being attained.

ESD System Response: Declined, with qualifications.

While the AESD would like to embrace the concept, with so little stable ESD funding (~3-4% core) this is not realistic. The vast majority of ESD revenue is received as the result of cooperatives, fee-for-service, or grants—each with specific requirements/expectations prerequisite to receipt of those funds. Tying these funds to strategic plan obligations would, in many cases, result in the loss of the cooperative, fee revenue, or grant—and resultant services to school districts.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 4-2:

Develop and implement accounting and fiscal policies and document accounting and fiscal procedures.

ESD System Response: Implemented.

Each of the nine ESDs have implemented accounting and fiscal management policies, as evidenced by annual unqualified opinions from State Auditor Office (SAO) fiscal audits.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 4-3:

Develop policies that set minimum and maximum unrestricted and undesignated fund balance targets, and develop processes for addressing fund balance levels that fall above or below the targets.

ESD System Response: Declined, with qualifications.

The small level of stable ESD funding (~3-4% core) makes this unrealistic. A significant portion of ESD revenue is volatile and received as the result of cooperatives and grants. The ESDs have “front funded” various state grants until OSPI processes the contracts. Depending upon the program and which ESDs are impacted to what levels, individual ESD reserves must be prepared to handle this and absorb what can be significant fluctuations; making minimum and maximum reserves unrealistic.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 4-4:

Reduce payroll processing costs by implementing a mandatory direct deposit policy for ESD and school district employees.

ESD System Response: Declined, with qualifications.

ESDs do not govern the payroll function for school districts and, therefore, cannot require school districts to have a mandatory direct deposit policy.

The AESD agrees that direct deposit is a more efficient payroll function for ESD regular employees. However, this is **not** a more efficient system for all employees receiving pay. For example, a significant portion of some ESD payrolls include pay for workshop attendance and non-ESD employees. The administrative cost of collecting and processing direct deposit information for someone receiving one or two ESD paychecks exceeds any potential cost savings. In addition, collectively bargained agreements govern pay policies for some ESDs. These ESDs would have a duty to bargain a mandatory direct deposit policy prior to implementation.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 4-5:

Implement the purchasing card program in all ESDs.

ESD System Response: Declined, with qualifications.

Several ESDs already use purchasing cards. Some ESDs have investigated purchasing card programs and determined that other bank cards and/or Costco membership cards are in fact less expensive. As such, each ESD should make a determination as to whether to implement purchasing cards in its organization, based on their own fiscal practices and oversight procedures.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 4-6:

Research the potential benefits of using specific interstate purchasing cooperatives and, if feasible, coordinate a collective effort among ESDs and school districts to join these cooperatives.

ESD System Response: Implemented.

Some technology hardware and software agreements in Washington are coordinated on a statewide basis either through the Department of Information Services (DIS) or the Washington State Information Processing Cooperative (WSIPC). These agencies solicit bids for technology items on behalf of all state agencies. Each ESD is a part owner and sits on the governing board of WSIPC and is thus responsible for providing purchasing agreements statewide for Microsoft, Citrix, and HP software. The nine ESDs also participate in a technology bid program administered by ESD 112 from which ESDs and school districts in eight states purchase.

The newly created Washington Learning Sources (WLS) is a collaborative effort of the state's nine ESDs to provide significant cost savings to districts for educational hardware and software purchases. WLS website is: <http://walearningsource.org>

Both ESDs and schools districts statewide also participate in the King County Directors' Association (KCDA), a statewide purchasing cooperative.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 5-1:

Establish a comprehensive statewide ESD strategic planning process, to include client satisfaction surveys, needs assessments, and program evaluations, that link ESD services and staff development to student performance indicators.

ESD System Response: Declined, with qualifications.

ESDs have established a statewide strategic planning process through the AESD. However, survey data supports regional client satisfaction surveys and needs assessments so that responses may be tailored to fit the needs of the local school districts. However, a significant portion of ESD services support school districts in operations not aligned to student performance (e.g., budget approval/management, L & I trusts, insurance cooperatives). It is not realistic, or appropriate to tie these programs to student performance indicators.

Initial Action Steps: AESD review of current *AESD Strategic Plan* to consider the addition of objectives related to statewide coordination of regional client satisfaction surveys, needs assessments, and program evaluations—for those programs supporting student learning.

Timeline: June 2009.

Recommendation 5-2:

Establish Centers for Excellence among the Educational Service Districts for decentralization of technical assistance and staff development to participating schools districts throughout Washington.

ESD System Response: Implemented, with qualifications.

The concept of coordinated delivery of services from one ESD into the regions of other ESDs already exists. However, the term "Centers for Excellence" is disheartening as it implies the ESD receiving the service possesses less than excellence. The already implemented approach to coordinated delivery of services across ESD regions statewide is experiencing ongoing expansion, while avoiding the negative label, as appropriate.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 5-3:

Examine effective instructional models and programs for core academic subjects that can be collected and disseminated to all school administrators and teachers.

ESD System Response: Implemented, with qualifications.

ESDs, in an evolving partnership with OSPI, are examining effective instructional models and programs in core academic subjects that will be disseminated to school districts.

Initial Action Steps: Effective models and programs and a plan for dissemination and implementation is established.

Timeline: Mathematics and science implementation in Fall 2007 and 2008, respectively.

Recommendation 5-4:

Develop a system-wide professional development plan consistent with system-wide ESD strategic planning, program evaluation, and student performance indicators.

ESD System Response: Implemented, with qualifications.

ESDs, in a evolving partnership with OSPI, are developing professional development programs to support/develop the effective instructional models and programs in core academic subjects, beginning with mathematics and science.

Initial Action Steps: Effective models and programs and a plan for dissemination and implementation is established.

Timeline: Mathematics and science implementation in Fall 2007 and 2008, respectively.

Recommendation 5-5:

Implement a plan for increased on-line/distance learning opportunities for both meetings and trainings.

ESD System Response: Accepted.

ESDs will seek funding to increase the availability of online instruction delivered via the K-20 network.

Initial Action Steps: The AESD will submit a funding proposal for legislative action.

Timeline: Fall 2009.

Recommendation 5-6:

Develop a collaborative partnership between ESDs and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to develop a statewide, proactive, campus-level training model for state reform to be delivered by ESDs and replicated at the building campus by building administrators.

ESD System Response: Implemented, with qualifications.

ESDs, in an evolving partnership with OSPI, are developing instructional models and programs, including professional development, to support/develop state reform initiatives through regional and school dissemination/replication, beginning with mathematics and science.

Initial Action Steps: Effective models and programs and a plan for dissemination are established.

Timeline: Mathematics and science implementation in Fall 2007 and 2008, respectively.

Recommendation 6-1:

Ensure that an Employee Handbook is available to all staff at each ESD.

ESD System Response: Declined, with qualifications.

Many ESDs already comply with this recommendation, whether in written form or on the Internet. However, collectively bargained agreements would govern handbook contents and distribution for some ESDs. These ESDs would have a duty to bargain many employment practices prior to implementation.

Initial Action Steps: Provide requested assistance to ESDs that desire assistance designing and/or modifying employee handbooks.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 6-2:

Expand the capacity of ESD Web sites to allow applicants the opportunity to apply online.

ESD System Response: Declined, with qualifications.

Some ESDs already have this capacity. However, absent state funding system-wide hardware/software capacity and staffing, the statewide implementation of the recommendation is not possible. The ESDs stand ready to implement the recommendation should funding be provided.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 6-3:

Develop a master ESD recruitment plan.

ESD System Response: Declined.

The disparate nature of the nine ESDs' programs and associated workforce needs does not support creating a statewide ESD recruitment plan. For example, one ESD employs numerous certificated employees for an instructional program while others may have no certificated staff, but employ other specialists. Another ESD employs a substantial number of early childhood staff while other ESDs do not provide early childhood services at all. The differing geographic locations of the ESDs also do not support a statewide recruitment plan. Also, the employment market and therefore recruitment strategies for Puget Sound region are very different compared to more suburban or rural regions.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 6-4:

Develop the capacity to provide cultural competency training to school districts.

ESD System Response: Implemented.

Several ESDs already provide cultural competency training to school districts. Additionally, three ESDs currently operate Migrant Education Regional Offices (MEROs) which have training materials and services available which are provided across ESD regions in a statewide deployment, consistent with Recommendation 5.2.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 6-5:

Prepare, plan, and introduce a longitudinal salary schedule with increases in pay after 7, 10, and 15 years of employment in the same position with an ESD.

ESD System Response: Declined.

No data in the *Global Report* indicates the ESDs have a staff retention problem or face higher than average recruitment costs due to turnover. In fact, several individual ESD audit reports comment on the high longevity of staffing and high retention rates.

Salary advancement based on longevity is not always an appropriate compensation practice. Compensation studies consistently indicate there is no one compensation model that serves all organizations. In fact, research indicates that each organization must look at its workforce data and establish compensation policies to meet its recruitment needs.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 6-6:

Restructure the salaries of assistant superintendents so they are competitive with those of peer assistant superintendents in the state.

ESD System Response: Declined, with qualifications.

No data in the *Global Report* indicates the assistant superintendent salaries are not competitive with school district assistant superintendents within the region each ESD serves. A statewide comparison/schedule is not prerequisite to realizing competitive assistant superintendent compensation, just as salaries for school district assistant superintendents in one region may vary from another. As such, the salaries for assistant superintendents must be set by each ESD based on the responsibilities of the position and regional market data.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 6-7:

Ensure that non-certificated employees are evaluated annually as part of a comprehensive system of appraising employee performance, merit compensation, and growth and development of the individual, as well as growth of the organization.

ESD System Response: Declined, with qualifications.

Most ESDs already have annual evaluation systems for non-certificated employees that encompass the growth and development of the employee and the growth of the organization.

However, no data in the *Global Report* indicates that merit compensation is appropriate for all non-certificated staff. Each ESD will determine what evaluation and compensation system best supports the recruitment, development, and retention needs of its workforce.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 7-1:

Develop a long-range facility master plan for each ESD.

ESD System Response: Accepted.

Most ESDs already have facilities plans in place. In some cases, the plans may need to be updated to reflect facilities planning for the next five years.

Initial Action Steps: Review facility master plans and update as needed.

Timeline: Fall 2009.

Recommendation 7-2:

Establish a funding mechanism for the acquisition, improvement, and maintenance of ESD facilities.

ESD System Response: Accepted, with qualifications.

ESDs will need legislative assistance in order to address this recommendation.

Initial Action Steps: The AESD will submit a legislative proposal for the acquisition, improvement, and maintenance of ESD facilities.

Timeline: Fall 2009.

Recommendation 7-3:

Explore and "pilot" the practice of "home-officing" for itinerant/consultant employees.

ESD System Response: Implemented.

Opportunities for telecommuting are provided within the ESDs on a case-by-case basis.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 7-4:

Implement preventive maintenance plans/processes with a simple written plan that both prompts activities and documents their completion in all ESDs.

ESD System Response: Accepted, with qualifications.

Informal preventive maintenance plans and processes are maintained by some ESDs. All ESDs would benefit from their establishment.

Initial Action Steps: Review preventive maintenance plans and formalize processes to promote effective and efficient maintenance of all facilities and equipment.

Timeline: January 2009.

Recommendation 7-5:

Conduct periodic energy audits to identify areas that need retrofitting to reduce energy expenditures.

ESD System Response: Declined, with qualifications.

Consistent with the concept of Recommendation 5.2, an Energy Conservation Specialist is currently employed by one ESD and position responsibilities could include energy audits for other ESDs. However, absent funding, ESDs' inability to purchase this service precludes statewide implementation. The ESDs stand ready to implement the recommendation should funding be provided.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 7-6:

Install additional energy saving devices as part of a total energy conservation program.

ESD System Response: Declined, with qualifications.

ESDs will need legislative assistance in order to address this recommendation, as an element of Recommendation 7-2.

Initial Action Steps: The AESD will include energy conservation program elements within its legislative proposal for the acquisition, improvement, and maintenance of ESD facilities (pursuant to Recommendation 7-2).

Timeline: Fall 2009.

Recommendation 7-7:

Develop and conduct ongoing staff training related to techniques for saving energy in the work place.

ESD System Response: Accepted.

Policies exist at most ESDs whereby staff are encouraged to operate in an energy saving mode, including the use of recycling for paper, plastic, and aluminum.

Initial Action Steps: ESDs will continue to implement programs that promote staff awareness and provide program development assistance to any ESD not currently practicing energy saving techniques. Each ESD will schedule initial staff training related to saving energy in the workplace as budget and time constraints permit.

Timeline: Fall 2008.

Recommendation 7-8:

Employ a resource conservation manager to lower utility costs.

ESD System Response: Declined, with qualifications.

Consistent with the concept of Recommendation 5.2, an Energy Conservation Specialist is currently employed by one ESD and position responsibilities could include services to other ESDs. However, absent funding, ESDs' inability to purchase this service precludes statewide implementation. The ESDs stand ready to implement the recommendation should funding be provided.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 7-9:

Establish a database for each ESD Construction Services Group construction project to accurately record cost-savings and time-saving efficiencies.

ESD System Response: Implemented.

A data collection system has already been established. The Construction Services Group (CSG) project managers are reporting savings on a monthly basis.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 7-10:

Adopt cleanliness standards for custodial services to guide the custodial staff in their work.

ESD System Response: Accepted.

The practice of adopting cleanliness standards for custodial services is standard operating procedure at most ESDs.

Initial Action Steps: Provide assistance establishing cleanliness standards, as requested by any ESD not currently operating with standards.

Timeline: Fall 2008.

Recommendation 8-1:

Develop a centralized system of tracking and support at each ESD for all technology-related equipment and networks.

ESD System Response: Implemented.

Each ESD has implemented a Help Desk (or similar) system for tracking and support of internal technology-related equipment, networks, and troubleshooting issues.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 8-2:

Create a more coordinated and systematic set of mechanisms to elicit feedback and direction from the school districts and the personnel directly affected by the technology services.

ESD System Response: Accepted.

An annual survey could be helpful in better understanding school districts' technology needs and how ESDs might be able to address those needs.

Initial Action Steps: Develop and implement an on-line survey.

Timeline: Fall 2009.

Recommendation 8-3:

Develop a technology planning process that is integrated into the agency-wide ESD strategic planning process, and that produces a plan that meets E-rate requirements.

ESD System Response: Implemented.

As required by law, the ESDs currently have technology plans in place, which comply with E-rate requirements.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 8-4:

Develop, document, and implement a disaster recovery plan based on appropriate industry practices.

ESD System Response: Declined, with qualifications.

Proactive planning for service interruptions is essential. Most ESDs have plans and procedures in place for recovery of lost essential data. Reciprocal agreements between ESDs would provide a beneficial enhancement of these recovery plans. However, no ESD currently has sufficient capacity to support the operation of another ESD without committing to substantial system upgrades and reconfiguration. Absent funding, the realization of a statewide disaster recovery plan is precluded.

The ESDs stand ready to implement such reciprocal redundancy should funding be provided.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 8-5:

Consider reorganizing the multiple technology-related departments into a single division under the direction of a chief information officer.

Response: Declined.

This recommendation may have merit for some ESDs, but not all. In general, each ESD's technology programs service varying member districts for separate purposes/cooperatives. The diversity of job responsibilities in each ESD would determine the wisdom of consolidating internal technology-related departments into a single division with the recommended single Chief Information Officer.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 8-6:

Develop a plan to consolidate the seven data centers into two data centers, strategically located across the state.

ESD System Response: Declined.

A comprehensive study of data center organization and efficiencies, funded by a state grant, has been completed. Based upon this study, the ESDs have concluded the potential operational savings do not warrant the prerequisite investment in hardware and infrastructure.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 8-7:

Develop and implement a strategy for applying for E-rate discounts to achieve 100 percent E-rate participation by the ESDs and the school districts throughout the state.

ESD System Response: Accepted, with qualifications.

ESDs may or may not qualify for the E-rate discount. To qualify, institutions must provide direct instruction to students. In 2005, three ESDs received the discount, and in 2006, five ESDs received the discount. Some ESDs currently assist school districts with E-rate participation. Revenues to school districts may increase if this program were implemented. Implementing an E-rate program will likely cost \$100,000 per ESD (salary, benefits, direct, indirect costs).

The cost to the nine ESDs in the first year is estimated at \$900,000. If this recommendation were to be implemented, the ESDs could provide this service to school districts for a fee to help defray the costs needed to implement an E-rate program—subject to school district willingness to support these fees.

Initial Action Steps: The state's nine ESD superintendents will 1) review the models used in other states, and 2) assess school district interest to determine program feasibility.

Timeline: Fall 2009.

Recommendation 8-8:

Investigate replacing the existing internal phone systems with more up-to-date systems and apply for E-rate discounts for these services every year.

ESD System Response: Declined, with qualifications.

This element will be included within Recommendation 7-2 and is redundant here. Each ESD must determine its own telecommunication needs.

Timeline: NA

Recommendation 8-9:

Study standardizing on one technology platform with a single vendor for the purpose of improving efficiency and minimizing technical support costs.

ESD System Response: Declined.

Technology platforms must be compatible with both state and district systems. In addition, ESDs play an important role in providing support for districts whose platforms vary from district to district. It is important that ESD technology staff maintain familiarity with multiple platforms in order to be able to provide these services.