



# THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

---

*An education system where students are engaged in personalized education pathways that prepare them for civic engagement, careers, postsecondary education, and lifelong learning*

## COVER: WAIVERS FROM CREDIT-BASED GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Prepared for the July 2019 Board Meeting

Information and action item.

As related to:

**Goal One:** All students feel safe at school, and have the supports necessary to thrive.

**Goal Two:** All students are able to engage in their schools and their broader communities, and feel invested in their learning pathways, which lead to their post-secondary aspirations.

**Goal Three:** School and district structures and systems adapt to meet the evolving needs of the student population and community, as a whole. Students are prepared to adapt as needed and fully participate in the world beyond the classroom.

**Goal Four:** Students successfully transition into, through, and out of the P-12 system.

**Goal Five:** Students graduate from Washington State high schools ready for civic engagement, careers, postsecondary education, and lifelong learning.

**Goal Six:** Equitable funding across the state to ensure that all students have the funding and opportunities they need, regardless of their geographical location or other needs.

**Other**

Materials included in packet:

- Memo describing the applications

Synopsis and Policy Considerations:

Do the applications for a waiver of credit-based graduation requirements by Moses Lake School District for Moses Lake High School and Snoqualmie Valley School District for Two Rivers School for Moses Lake High School provide the information and documentation required by WAC 180-18-055?

Do the Moses Lake and Snoqualmie Valley School District applications present learning goals and competencies aligned to state standards, and explanations of how achievement of the goals and competencies will be determined, sufficient to warrant approval of the requests by the Board?

Do the districts demonstrate in their applications that the proposed non-credit based graduation requirements will meet minimum college admission standards?



# THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

---

*A high-quality education system that prepares all students for college, career, and life.*

## MEMO ON WAIVERS FROM CREDIT-BASED GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Prepared for the July 2019 Board Meeting

### Policy Considerations

Do the applications for waiver from credit-based graduation requirements provide the information and documentation required for approval?

### Overview of Waivers

#### Credit-Based Graduation Requirements Waivers

1. Moses Lake School District requests a waiver from credit-based graduation requirements for four years for Moses Lake High School.
2. Snoqualmie Valley School District requests a waiver from credit-based graduation requirements for four years for Two Rivers School.

Do the applications for a waiver of credit-based graduation requirements by Moses Lake School District for Moses Lake High School and Snoqualmie Valley School District for Two Rivers School for Moses Lake High School provide the information and documentation required by WAC 180-18-055?

Do the districts demonstrate in their applications that the proposed non-credit based graduation requirements will meet minimum college admission standards?

### Background: Credit-Based High School Graduation Requirements Waiver

In April 1999, the SBE adopted WAC 180-18-055, titled "Alternative high school graduation requirements." The rule authorizes the granting of a waiver by the Board that would enable students to earn a diploma by a demonstration of competencies in core subjects meeting state standards, in place of earning the credits required by Chapter 180-51 WAC (High school graduation requirements).

In filing the adopted rule, WSR 99-10-094, the Board stated that the purpose was to provide school districts and high schools a waiver option from credit-based graduation requirements to support performance-based education.

WAC 180-18-055(1) declares:

"The state board of education finds that current credit-based graduation requirements may be a limitation upon the ability of high schools and districts to make the transition from a time and credit-based education system to a standards and performance-based system with the least amount of difficulty. Therefore, the state board will provide districts and high schools the opportunity to create and implement alternative graduation requirements."

WAC 180-18-055 provides that a school district, or a high school with permission of the district's board of directors, or an approved private school, may apply to the SBE for a waiver of one or more of the requirements of Chapter 180-51 WAC. The rule is unique among provisions of Chapter 180-18 WAC in authorizing schools, as well as the districts that govern them, to apply for a waiver of basic education requirements, as well as in extending the opportunity to private schools. The SBE may grant the waiver for up to four school years.

The rule lists in detail the information that must be submitted to the SBE with the waiver request. The application must include, for example:

- Specific standards for increased learning that the district or school plans to achieve;
- How the district or school plans to achieve the higher standards, including timelines for implementation;
- How the district or school plans to determine whether the higher standards have been met;
- Evidence that students, families, parents, and citizens were involved in developing the plan; and,
- Evidence that the board of directors, teachers, administrators, and classified employees are committed to working cooperatively in implementing the plan.

The applicant district or school must also provide documentation that the school is (or will be) successful as demonstrated by such indicators as assessment results, graduation rates, college admission rates, follow-up employment data, and student, parent, and public satisfaction and confidence in the school, as evidenced by survey results.

WAC 180-18-055 allows for a waiver of the specific credits enumerated in WAC 180-51. It is not a waiver of learning standards, including grade level expectations, nor is it a waiver of instructional hours. In addition, students still are entitled to a curriculum that meets the minimum requirements for admission to a public four-year college in Washington should they choose that option in their high school and beyond plan (28A.600.160). Any school or district granted a waiver under this section must report annually to the SBE on the progress and effects of implementing the waiver.

Table 1 shows the state learning standards, required high school credits, and the College Academic Distribution Requirements (CADRs) which are minimum requirements to be eligible for admission to a state public baccalaureate institution, and although many schools have additional requirements, the CADRs are generally consistent with minimum expectations for college level work at most public and private colleges and universities. The table below is for illustrative purposes. Content area learning standards are not waived under this waiver authority but high school credit requirements in Chapter 180-51 WAC are waived. High Schools may need to show credit equivalencies for colleges and universities to recognize the CADR credit or other admission requirements.

Content Area Learning Standards	High School Graduation Requirements	College Academic Distribution Requirements (CADRs)
<a href="#">The Arts</a>	1-2 (depends on HSBP choice)	1
<a href="#">Computer Science</a>	Optional	can meet Math or Sr. Year Quantitative
<a href="#">English Language Arts</a>	4	4
<a href="#">English Language Proficiency</a>	English Language Proficiency	n/a
<a href="#">Mathematics</a>	3	3 - Alg. 2
<a href="#">Science</a>	3 for class of 2019 (districts with a waiver may require only 2 credits for class of 2019 and 2020)	2-3
<a href="#">Social Studies</a>	3 (Including Civics and WA State History)	3
<a href="#">Educational Technology</a>	Must be offered, not required for graduation	n/a
<a href="#">Health and Physical Education</a>	2	n/a
<a href="#">Integrated Environment and Sustainability</a>	May be addressed in Science or other Subject	n/a
<a href="#">World Languages</a>	0-2 (depends on HSBP choice)	2
<a href="#">Financial Education</a>	Must be offered, not required for graduation	n/a
<a href="#">Career and Technical Education</a>	1	n/a

WAC 180-18-055 includes no specific criteria for evaluation of a request for a waiver of credit-based graduation requirements. The rule does stipulate that the SBE may not grant the waiver unless the district or school shows that the proposed non-credit based graduation requirements meet minimum college core admission standards.

Current recipients of the waiver are:

- Federal Way School District for Career Academy at Truman and Federal Way Open Doors that were approved in May 2017;
- Highline School District for Big Picture High School that was approved for renewal in March 2015;
- Issaquah School District for Gibson Ek High School that was approved in January 2016;
- Lake Chelan School District for Chelan School of Innovation that was approved in May 2016;
- Methow Valley School District for the Independent Learning Center that was approved in May 2016;
- Peninsula School District for Henderson Bay High School that was approved in July 2018;
- Quincy School District for Quincy Innovation Academy that was approved in July 2018;

- Selah School District for Selah Academy that was approved in May 2019;
- Soap Lake School District for RISE Academy that was approved in May 2019; and,
- Tonasket School District for Tonasket Choice High School in May 2019.

All of these schools incorporate aspects of the “Big Picture Learning” model. Big Picture Learning is a Providence, R.I.-based nonprofit, founded in 1995, that supports the creation and operation of public schools that follow its model of personalized, competency-based learning. There are over 70 Big Picture network schools in the U.S. and more around the world.

### Current Requests for Credit-Based High School Graduation Requirements Waiver

The applicants for this waiver have collaborated with Big Picture Learning through its regional network. The schools seek to use the Big Picture Learning competencies to offer educational programming that they state is aligned to the learning standards.

The districts attest that this model meets or exceeds the state learning standards and offers students the opportunity to meet the college academic distribution requirements (CADRs) required for admission to the public four-year colleges in Washington. The schools assert that they are monitoring the attainment of CADRs through a transcript that depicts the Big Picture Learning Competencies. They posit that student learning towards the Big Picture Learning Competencies is monitored and evaluated through assessment, student exhibitions of their project-based learning, internships or other work experiences, and personal inventories of student progress. The schools plan to measure student progress on transcripts by indicating which of the Big Picture Learning Competencies are “in progress,” have “met expectations,” or “have exceeded expectations.” Instead of using grades or credits to track progress, the schools are using “met expectations” on Big Picture Learning competencies to monitor whether the students comprehensively met the school’s requirements. The general idea is that this allows for individualized education that is based on the student’s pace and learning interests rather than on pre-packaged courses. The evidence that each district provided shows that they are considering how the CADRs are satisfied by the students’ learning on the Big Picture Competencies and that they monitor attainment of the competencies on transcripts in a similar way to how a district would monitor credit accrual. For instance, the transcripts crosswalk elements of each Big Picture Learning competency to each of the CADRs. The schools provided the Gibson Ek sample transcript that assures that students who level up to grade 11 have reached math proficiency through Algebra 2 and geometry, English proficiency, and have completed scientific inquiry including lab science.

The crosswalk in each application demonstrates each district’s intentionality to offer CADRs. These waivers, if approved, do not waive the Washington State Learning Standards and each district provides assurance that their educational programming is aligned to the learning standards, including Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards.

Notable aspects of the Big Picture Learning model include the following:

- Use of the five Big Picture Learning competencies;
  - Personal Qualities – “the goal is to be the best you can be - to demonstrate respect, responsibility, organization, leadership, and to reflect on your abilities and strive for improvement.”

- Communication – “the goal is to be a great communicator: to understand your audience, to write, to read, to speak and listen well, to use technology and artistic expression to communicate, and to be exposed to another language(s).”
  - Communication – “the goal is to think like a mathematician: to appreciate relationships and patterns in numbers, to analyze uncertainty, to comprehend the properties of shapes and graphs, and to study change over time.”
  - Empirical reasoning – “the goal is to think like a scientist or engineer: to use empirical evidence, numerical or qualitative data from your own or others’ observations, and logical processes to make decisions, evaluate hypotheses, and develop informed conclusions. It need not reflect specific scientific content, but may also incorporate ideas from a range of disciplines within the four major branches of science: Mathematics/Logic (including Computer Science), Biological, Physical, and/or Social Sciences.”
  - Social Reasoning – “The goal is to think like a social scientist, historian, or anthropologist and to apply an understanding of social and historical patterns to thinking about current political, social, ethical, economic, and cultural issues.”
- Intentional use of internships and/or work experience;
  - Individualized learning at the student’s pace and based on the student’s interests;
  - Use of a mastery-based learning model that uses “met expectations” rather than traditional grade points and credits and leveling up rather than traditional grade promotion;
  - Advisory, which is often mixed grade levels, with a focus on parent engagement;
  - Focus on student-chosen projects and exhibitions; and
  - Use of an array of assessment tools, including but not limited to state assessments.

Each of the schools notes that it is modeling its school after the following Big Picture Learning Distinguishers that correspond to the SBE staff analysis of notable characteristics that are listed above:

- Internships in the real world;
- One student-at-a-time personalization;
- Authentic assessments;
- School organization;
- Advisory structure;
- Small school culture;
- Leadership;
- Parent/family engagement;
- School college partnership and college preparation; and
- Professional development.

All of the applicants noted their collaboration with Big Picture Learning, including modeling their transcripts and practices after Big Picture exemplars such as The Met School in Providence, R.I.

Each school emphasizes the importance of career readiness in addition to college readiness and places importance on internships and work opportunities for their students.

Each district answered all of the required questions and provided evidence that they have considered how their educational programming aligns with the state learning standards and the CADRs. The

districts have met the minimum requirements for the waiver application process and submitted all required documentation.

#### **MOSES LAKE SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Moses Lake School District requests a waiver from credit-based graduation requirements for Moses Lake High School for the 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023 school years.

The alternative school in Moses Lake School District closed in 2014. Since then, Moses Lake High School has been challenged by overcrowding and a lack of alternative models other than online, the Skill Center, and Open Doors. The district seeks an option that provides individualized, student-driven learning. Moses Lake High School is unique among the requestors of this waiver in that it plans to offer a “school-within-a-school” program that is based on the Big Picture Learning model. Thus, Moses Lake High School plans to start this program with only 12-15 students out of the 2,278 students that are enrolled. The majority of the students at the high school will remain in traditional classroom settings.

The district states that the school’s proposed competencies, based on Big Picture Learning competencies, are aligned to state learning standards and that the school will offer programming that meets the CADR’s.

The district states that this program, within Moses Lake High School, will use the accountability measures of the district and the waiver is aligned with the vision of the district.

The district describes essential elements of engagement with students, families, and citizens in developing the waiver plan.

The district provides example transcripts from other Big Picture Learning schools and describes how the transcript can demonstrate that students have met CADR’s. The Moses Lake High School transcript will explain the student’s attainment of the CADR’s so that institutions of higher education have an easier time interpreting student transcripts.

The district provided information that describes the Big Picture Learning model. The prior section of this memo summarizes key aspects of that model.

The district successfully submitted all required components of the application and responded to all necessary questions. If approved, the approval letter will note that this waiver only applies to credit graduation requirements and is not a waiver from funding formulas, time requirements, High School and Beyond Plan requirements, or graduation pathway options.

#### **Snoqualmie Valley School District**

Snoqualmie Valley School District requests a waiver from credit-based graduation requirements for Two Rivers School for the 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023 school years.

The alternative programs in Snoqualmie Valley School District only have about a 50% graduation rate. The district seeks a competency-based education program that uses project-based learning to focus on internships and mentorships. The district seeks to reengage students who have been disengaged or didn’t find their passion in traditional classrooms. Two Rivers School has seen year-after-year increases in graduation rate from the Class of 2014 through the Class of 2017.

The district states that the school's proposed competencies, based on Big Picture Learning competencies, are aligned to state learning standards and that the school will offer programming that meets the CADR's.

The district states that this program will use the accountability measures of the district and the waiver is aligned with the vision of the district.

Although the district states that the community has not been directly involved in the details of redesigning the district's alternative programs, this waiver request is responsive to the district's 2018-19 Strategic Planning Initiative and Portrait of a Graduate Initiative. Both of these were developed with extensive outreach, including a community forum and input from over 100 community members. In 2019, Two Rivers School has held evening events to solicit feedback from prospective families and students. Staff wrote a letter of support for the waiver request and staff view family engagement as critical to success. Thus, the district has provided ample opportunity for student, family, community, and staff involvement.

The district provides example transcripts from other Big Picture Learning schools and describes how the transcript can demonstrate that students have met CADR's. The Two Rivers High School transcript will explain the student's attainment of the CADR's so that institutions of higher education have an easier time interpreting student transcripts.

The district provided information that describes the Big Picture Learning model.

The district successfully submitted all required components of the application and responded to all necessary questions.

### **Action**

The Board will consider whether to approve the requests for waivers of credit-based graduation requirements under WAC 180-18-055 presented in the applications by Moses Lake School District for Moses Lake High School and Snoqualmie Valley School District for Two Rivers School summarized in this memorandum.

If you have questions regarding this memo, please contact [Parker Teed](#).