



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 May 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 by Selah, Soap Lake, and Tonasket for a waiver of credit-based graduation requirements for Selah Academy, RISE Academy, and Tonasket Choice High School provide the information and documentation required by WAC 180-18-055?

Do the Selah, Soap Lake, and Tonasket 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 May 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. Selah School District requests a waiver from credit-based graduation requirements for four years for Selah Academy.
2. Soap Lake School District requests a waiver from credit-based graduation requirements for four years for RISE Academy.
3. Tonasket School District requests a waiver from credit-based graduation requirements for four years for Tonasket Choice High School.

Do the applications by Selah, Soap Lake, and Tonasket for a waiver of credit-based graduation requirements for Selah Academy, RISE Academy, and Tonasket Choice High School provide the information and documentation required by WAC 180-18-055?

Do the Selah, Soap Lake, and Tonasket 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?

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.

Accordingly, Section 1 of WAC 180-18-055 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.

The table 1 shows the state learning standards, required high school credits, and the College Academic Distribution Requirements (CADRs) which are required to be eligible for admission to a state public baccalaureate institution, and are generally consistent with expectations for college level work at most public and private colleges and universities. The table below is for illustrative purposes. Content area learning standards and CADRs are not waived under this waiver authority but high school credit requirements in Chapter 180-51 WAC are waived.

Content Area Learning Standards	High School Graduation Requirements	College Academic Distribution Requirements (CADRs)
The Arts	1-2 (depends on HSBP choice)	1
Computer Science	Opt.	can meet Math or Sr. Year Quant
English Language Arts	4	4
English Language Proficiency	EL	n/a
Early Learning (birth through 3rd grade)	n/a	n/a
Mathematics	3	3 - Alg. 2
Science	3 in 2019 or 3 in 2021 with waiver	2-3
Social Studies	3 (Incl. Civics and WA State History)	3
Educational Technology	Must be offered, not required for graduation	n/a
Health and Physical Education	2	n/a
Integrated Environment and Sustainability	May be addressed in Science or other Subject	n/a
World Languages	0-2 (depends on HSBP choice)	2
Financial Education	Must be offered, not required for graduation	n/a
Career and Technical Education	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; and,
- Quincy School District for Quincy Innovation Academy that was approved in July 2018.

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. Its [website](#) states there are more than 65 Big Picture network schools in the U.S., and many 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 provides 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.

In example transcripts from Big Picture schools, each district crosswalks samples of coursework or projects to the CADRs. 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, Rhode Island.

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.

SELAH SCHOOL DISTRICT

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

Selah Academy was first opened as PULSE in 1986 to serve students considered “at-risk” of not succeeding in a traditional school environment. Selah Academy also offers online/ALE courses.

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 CADRs.

Selah notes that they have begun using the Pearson Connexus curriculum. Self-paced classes are offered through blended learning of digital content with classroom teachers, online classes, and traditional classroom courses. Selah will use the Big Picture Learning model to develop three components of each student’s work: core content, independent/team projects, and internships. Selah describes an assessment system built around the five Big Picture Learning competencies, each student’s personal goals, and the use of the state assessment. The district notes that internships will be a considerable focus and that students will have internships on two days per week. As noted above, the approval letter for each district will note that this waiver only applies to graduation requirements and is not a waiver from funding formulas or time requirements.

Selah notes several promising programs that they will offer, such as a student leadership council, a restorative justice process, multi-curricular study projects, and seminars led by parents, students, mentors, or teachers.

Selah Academy makes use of the district’s accountability measures that include the following:

- OSPI School Improvement Planning;
- Graduation Rates;
- SBAC and WCAS scores;
- Enrollment, attendance, and discipline data; and
- Center for Educational Excellence student, staff, and parent survey data.

Furthermore, Selah Academy will use assessments of student learning that are common to the Big Picture Learning network such as:

- Three exhibitions per year presented to a panel of peers, staff, parents and mentors;
- Formative and summative processes to determine adequate progress;
- A system of evaluating whether a student is ready to level up (i.e. grade promotion); and
- Standardized method of evaluating projects.

Selah provides a chronological description of the involvement of students, families, and citizens in developing the waiver plan. Also, they describe the buy-in from other educators within the district and the team planning towards this transition. The district provides graduation, attendance, and discipline data that shows Selah Academy as underperforming when compared to Selah High School and posits

that this transition to the Big Picture Learning model will improve results. The district also shared student and parent survey data and reflected on those student opinions.

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

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

SOAP LAKE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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

RISE Academy was first opened as Smokiam Alternative School in 1988 for students who were not successful at the district's comprehensive high school.

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.

Soap Lake provides sample transcripts from other Big Picture Learning schools, information regarding the Big Picture Learning competencies that they assert are aligned to the learning standards, and describes the unique aspects of Big Picture schools that are referred to as Big Picture Learning Distinguishers. RISE will implement restorative justice practices and engage in a global learning community by partnering with a national Big Picture school. The district provides a timeline for implementation of the Big Picture Learning design and of other improvements to the school's programming.

RISE will make use of all Soap Lake accountability measures including the following:

- Graduation rates;
- Attendance rates;
- Discipline rates; and
- Assessment results including the state assessments and the multiple Big Picture assessment methods that include exhibitions, portfolios, internships, self-assessment, et cetera.

RISE notes that many current students have attendance issues and that they are confident that the Big Picture model will help them address barriers to attendance. The barriers to attendance include jobs, anxiety, lack of interest, nearing "age out" requirements. The RISE design is mindful of these barriers and the focus on internships/work opportunities is meant to address these barriers.

In addition to the district accountability measures, RISE will use the following elements of "authentic assessment" based on Big Picture Learning:

- Exhibitions;
- Portfolios;

- Real-world standards for assessment guidelines;
- Student narrative reflections;
- Weekly individual check-ins between advisor and student;
- Reflective journaling;
- Benchmarks for 9th and 11th grades;
- Gateway to Senior Institute after 11th grade;
- Graduation gateway;
- Senior project; and
- Academic transcripts.

The district notes that RISE Academy is supportive of district options at the comprehensive high school, through Running Start at Big Bend Community College, and through Columbia Basin Technical Skills Center.

Soap Lake School District notes that the transition of the RISE Academy to this model corresponds closely to the district’s mission and vision. This application is a result of months of learning and listening through conversations with parents and students that started in April 2018. The district provides detailed information about its parent, student, and community outreach. A promising development is that the Mayor of Soap Lake plans to network among the community to generate more internship opportunities for students. School and district officials have also been meeting with other waiver recipients such as the Independent Learning Center in Methow Valley School District and Quincy Innovation Academy in Quincy School District. During these conversations, Soap Lake staff and community members became excited about the Big Picture Learning model.

Upon approval, RISE Academy plans to work with other Big Picture Learning schools and college admissions staff to design transcripts using models developed by other Big Picture schools. Like the other applicants, the transcripts will include a crosswalk with CADR. The district provides a focus group analysis of why students do or don’t succeed in postsecondary education.

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

TONASKET SCHOOL DISTRICT

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

Tonasket Choice High School was first opened in 1995 as Tonasket Alternative School.

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 CADRs.

Tonasket Choice High School will make use of the following district accountability measures:

- Graduation rates;
- EOC and SBAC scores;
- Enrollment, attendance, and discipline data;
- College enrollment, persistence, and other post-high school success data; and
- District survey data.

The application provides survey data that indicates that Tonasket Choice improves students' consideration of whether to drop out. The school candidly addresses challenging attendance issues of students. The individualization of Tonasket Choice learning plans allows students to continue with high school despite competing family, medical, or other obligations. Compared to the traditional district high school, Tonasket Choice offers greater flexibility to continue high school despite attendance problems and does not use punitive responses to attendance problems. Discipline rates are used as an example of how Tonasket Choice provides a learning environment that is a better fit for students who have faced behavioral challenges. The school implemented restorative justice practices during the 2018-19 school year.

Tonasket Choice notes that the assessment of student learning will use methods common to Big Picture including exhibitions of student projects and a standardized rubric for evaluating exhibits. Tonasket Choice describes "benchmark requirements" and "gateway expectations" that are used as grade-level expectations. Tonasket Choice notes the following elements of assessment:

- Exhibitions;
- Portfolios;
- Real-world standards for assessment guidelines
- Student narrative reflections;
- Weekly individual check-ins between advisor and student;
- Reflective journaling;
- Benchmarks for 9th and 11th grades;
- Gateway to Senior Institute requirements;
- Graduation gateway requirements; and
- Academic transcripts.

Tonasket provides a detailed description of parent/family engagement and draws on survey data to compare student perceptions of their prior school to Tonasket Choice. The district states that this waiver request is aligned to the district vision and that the Superintendent and Board of Directors engaged Big Picture Learning. The district notes that the community is becoming increasingly involved in Tonasket Choice, particularly student projects, exhibitions, and internship/work opportunities of Tonasket Choice students.

In addition to the example transcripts from Big Picture schools, the district provides assurance that the Tonasket Choice transcript will have an explanation of how the competencies meet the CADR. They will continue to work with other schools in the Big Picture regional network and they plan to engage with higher education and the Big Picture schools that are partnering with the Mastery Transcript Consortium.

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 Selah School District for Selah Academy, Soap Lake School District for RISE Academy, and Tonasket School District for Tonasket Choice High School summarized in this memorandum.

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