

The Washington State Board of Education

Governance | Achievement | Transitions | Math & Science | Effective Workforce

Title:	Option One and Option One WaKIDS Waiver Requests	
As Related To:	<input type="checkbox"/> Goal One: Advocate for effective and accountable P-13 governance in public education <input type="checkbox"/> Goal Two: Provide policy leadership for closing the academic achievement gap <input type="checkbox"/> Goal Three: Provide policy leadership to strengthen students' transitions within the P-13 system	<input type="checkbox"/> Goal Four: Promote effective strategies to make Washington's students nationally and internationally competitive in math and science <input type="checkbox"/> Goal Five: Advocate for policies to develop the most highly effective K-12 teacher and leader workforce in the nation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other
Relevant To Board Roles:	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy Leadership <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> System Oversight <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Convening and Facilitating
Policy Considerations / Key Questions:	The Board will consider for approval thirteen requests for Option One waivers of the minimum 180-day school year. The Board will also be asked to approve requests for five expedited Option One waivers for districts required by law to implement the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) in the 2012-13 school year.	
Possible Board Action:	<input type="checkbox"/> Review <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approve <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Materials Included in Packet:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Memo <input type="checkbox"/> Graphs / Graphics <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Third-Party Materials <input type="checkbox"/> PowerPoint	
Synopsis:	<p>This part of your packet contains materials related to requests from 13 school districts for Option One waivers. Six of the requests are for professional development and alignment of curriculum, five for full-day parent-teacher conferences, and two to aid in the transition of students to new schools. Eleven are new requests and two renewals. The memo briefly summarizes each of the 13 waiver requests. It is followed by a table providing basic data on each request. The full waiver applications are provided in the Appendix for your review.</p> <p>In addition, six districts are requesting one-year Option One waivers through the expedited process for districts that are required by law to implement the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS). The WaKIDS waiver applications will be distributed to the Board as additional materials.</p>	

Basic Education Program Waivers: Current Requests

Policy Consideration

SBE staff have reviewed the waiver applications and provided them to the Board for consideration. The waiver applications are included in your packets.

Summary of Waiver Applications

Auburn requests three waiver days for the 2012-13 school year to continue restructuring initiatives and implement revised school improvement plans in alignment with its 2009-12 Strategic Improvement Plan. The district's strategic plan for closing the achievement gap includes a focus on mathematics and science; improvement in literacy; classroom-based assessments in social studies, health, physical education, and the arts; development of instructional models in math and reading that address student mobility, and the use of technology for differentiated instruction and assessment. Auburn currently has a waiver of three days to implement its school improvement plan, and requests it be extended one year.

Battle Ground requests five waiver days for the 2012-13 school year for implementation of the teacher and principal evaluation program directed by ESSB 5895, 2012 Session, in the 2013-14 school year, and to begin using a specific research-based instructional framework. The five waiver days will be used for training for teachers and principals in the use of the new evaluation system and instructional framework.

Cascade requests four waiver days for school years 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 for parent-teacher conferences, in order to reduce from 12 to four the number of early release days. The district states that its goal is to maintain instructional integrity for students and teachers by preserving, to the extent possible, full-length class periods at the secondary level and full instructional days at elementary.

Columbia (Walla Walla County) requests three waiver days for school years 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15, for elementary and middle schools only, for the purpose of holding two full-day parent-teacher conferences in the fall and one full-day parent-teacher conference in the spring. The plan would increase the number of full-day offerings by three days and decrease the overall half days by six. The district says that fewer half days and more full days of instructional time has a positive impact on student learning. It is also intended to support meeting with all parents and increasing student attendance.

Cusick requests two waiver days for school years 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 for staff professional development. On both of the days, the district will meet with eight other districts of similar size to maximize professional development and create "vertical teams" and grade-level teams, as each district generally has one teacher per grade.

Kelso requests one waiver day for the 2012-13 school year for its high school and two middle schools only. The purpose of the waiver day is to help students entering sixth and ninth grades make the transition to their new schools. Students will be informed about rules, procedures, organization skills, and resource identification. A group of staff will meet with participating parents to provide information and answer questions.

North Franklin requests four waiver days for the 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years to provide four full days of parent-teacher conferences. The purpose of using full days for the conferences is to increase parent participation, provide more full days of instruction, and lessen the disruption of half-days. The waiver plan would reduce eight half days and increase instructional time by about 24 hours.

Prosser requests four waiver days for the 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years for full-day parent-teacher conferences. The purpose is to provide ample time for students and parents to attend conferences with teachers, with a goal of more than 90 percent parent participation. There is no proposed reduction in the number of half days.

Republic requests two waiver days for the 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years for staff professional development, to be conducted in collaboration with eight other districts. Republic would join a consortium called the Panorama Rural Education Partnership made up of districts of similar size in that region of the state. The eight other districts requested two waiver days last year as a way to provide professional development in a collaborative way. (Republic's application is similar to Cusick's.)

Stevenson-Carson requests one waiver day for the 2012-13 school year to provide training for staff for the restructuring and move of the seventh and eighth grade students from a traditional middle school setting, in a separate building, to a junior-senior high school. The district says the waiver day will also be used for training of teachers and principals in the TPEP program for implementation in 2013-14.

Tacoma requests two waiver days for the 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years for staff professional development. Activities will focus on continuing the work begun on implementing the University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership's "Five Dimensions of Teaching and Learning (Purpose, Student Engagement, Curriculum and Pedagogy, Assessment for Learning, and Classroom Environment and Culture). Each of the two days would be structured around specific activities. The plan would build on the work done through the two waiver days granted the district for 2011-12.

Thorp requests two waiver days for 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 for professional development of staff. Goals of the waiver include: provide training for teacher on research-based instructional strategies in literacy and mathematics; develop plans to implement a Response to Intervention model to assist students who are struggling; increase teacher understanding of the Common Core Standards in mathematics and language arts, and increase student safety and a supportive learning environment.

West Valley requests four waiver days for the 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years for parent-teacher conferences in elementary and middle schools. The purpose of the waiver is to reduce the number of half-days required to carry out parent-teacher conferences. The district currently has a week of half days in the fall and another in the spring, which it says results in low instructional rigor, higher absenteeism, and hardship for parents.

Table A: Summary of Option One Waiver Applications

District	School Years	Waiver Days Requested	Student Days	Additional Teacher Days w/o Students	Total Teacher Days	Reduction in Half-Days	New or Renewal
Auburn	2012-13	3	177	0	180	0	R
Battle Ground	2012-13	5	175	3	183	0	N
Cascade	2012-13 2013-14 2014-15	4	176	1	181	8	N
Columbia (Walla Walla)	2012-13 2013-14 2014-15	3	174	3	183	3	N
Cusick	2012-13 2013-14 2014-15	2	178	4	184	2	N
Kelso	2012-13	1	179	3	183	0	N
North Franklin	2012-13 2013-14 2014-15	4	176	0	180	8	N
Prosser	2012-13 2013-14 2014-15	4	176	5.5	185.5	0	N
Republic	2012-13 2013-14 2014-15	2	178	2	180	2	N
Stevenson-Carson	2012-13	1	179	0	180	0	N

District	School Years	Waiver Days Requested	Student Days	Additional Teacher Days w/o Students	Total Teacher Days	Reduction in Half-Days	New or Renewal
Tacoma	2012-13 2013-14 2014-15	2	178	2	182	0	R
Thorp	2012-13 2013-14 2014-15	2	178	1	181	0	N
West Valley	2012-13 2013-14 2014-15	4	176	8	188	8	N

Background

This memo presents thirteen school district requests for Option One 180-day waivers.

Option One is the regular 180-day waiver request that has been available to districts since 1995. The State Board of Education is authorized by RCW 28A.305.140 to grant waivers to school districts from the minimum 180-day school year requirement in RCW 28.150.220 to implement a local plan that is designed to enhance the educational program for each student. Districts may propose the number of days to be waived and the types of activities deemed necessary to enhance the educational program and improve student achievement. The State Board may grant waiver requests for up to three years.

Action

Consider approval of the district applications summarized in this memorandum.

180-Day Waiver Requests for WaKIDS Implementation July 2012

School District	# of Schools	# of Days	School Year
Bremerton	6	2	2012-13
Centralia	1	3	2012-13
East Valley	3	3	2012-13
Mabton	1	2	2012-13
Mary Walker	1	3	2012-13
Renton	4	2	2012-13

Waivers Survey: Summary of Respondent Comments

A follow-up question in the SBE survey asked, "Please list any other criteria you think should be considered in evaluating requests for 180-day waivers." Following is a representative sample of responses received, edited for clarity and brevity.

Many respondents said that 180-day waivers are an important – and often necessary – tool for improving student outcomes, particularly in a time of fiscal constraints, and recommended that SBE not be too restrictive in criteria for evaluation of requests.

- *The district should be able to request a waiver for any reason. They are responsible and accountable for student performance. They should have the freedom to do as they see fit.*
- *The loss of state funded LID days should be considered along with the financial constraints of districts. Also, more opportunity should be given for unique ways to meet the time requirements in fewer than 180 days.*
- *The state has completely relinquished all funding for professional development days for teachers, one of the most basic requirements for improvement. If the state continues to neglect this essential requirement, it needs to at least provide waivers. A better solution would be to hold to the 180 days and to return to funding statewide teacher professional development days as a required addition to the teachers' contracts.*
- *The SBE needs to understand that as the State increases requirements like TPEP without providing the time and resources they take to implement, waivers are one of the only solutions available to districts.*
- *Current lack of funding for staff development day time. This is a very important aspect of school improvement and learning/teaching improvements can definitely outweigh the lost seat time.*
- *Parent Student Conferences conducted on full day releases should be automatic, not requiring districts to use the waiver process.*
- *Consideration for full-day parent-student-teacher conferences as a school day is our highest priority. Our schools conduct student-led conferences and they are a powerful motivator for increasing student achievement.*
- *I think the main criterion should be, "Does this district meet the 1000 hours requirement?"...Please empower districts to decide how they will meet the 1000 hour requirement. All decisions should be made with sensitivity to the current funding climate.*

Others said that 180-day waivers are too numerous, too easily obtained, and take too much time away from instruction.

- *I believe our students need more learning time, not less. I appreciate the SBE being very careful about granting these waivers. They are necessary because of the lack of funding support from the state but a disadvantage to student learning opportunities when granted.*
- *In my opinion 180 days is the very minimum number of days students should be in school. Waivers should not be allowed except under extreme conditions. Parent-teacher conferences should not be counted in the 180 days.*
- *I think waivers should be very difficult to obtain, and strict criteria set and adhered to. I do NOT think that student conferences are an acceptable reason for waivers as conferences can be accomplished outside of the school day.*
- *Please make getting calendar waivers harder to get. Students need instruction time in classrooms. NO days should be waived for parent/teacher conference days.*
- *If the state thought it was important enough to have 180 days of instruction, then we should not have waivers. The state should fully fund education. Everything that was described prior to this question could be subjective and manipulated.*
- *Unless the school is significantly above the national average in test scores - the full number - 180 days - should not be waived.*
- *I don't like the idea of waivers at all. 180 days is not a long enough school year as it is.*

Many of those generally supportive of 180-day waivers had strong views about criteria for evaluating requests. Some common themes: Expected impacts on student learning, results from prior waivers, and flexibility to address local needs and circumstances.

- *Will the loss of student instructional time be balanced by the premise of better teaching as a result, so that the students are the final beneficiary of the waiver?*
- *Is there or will there be a negative impact to student learning from a 180-day waiver?*
- *Evidence of direct impact on student learning.*
- *Evidence that lost teacher student contact time will increase student performance, tests scores and student well-being.*
- *Previous outcomes from waivers.*
- *Report to the Board directors on outcome-based evidence of success, based on school improvement plan goals.*
- *How many years in succession can a district receive a waiver from the 180 day requirement? Will student achievement gains be factored into subsequent waiver requests?*
- *Some evidence of staff commitment to using the waiver days for the purposes intended.*
- *Prior participation in the parent-teacher conferences. Review documented evidence from the prior year of how many parents actually participated in conferences. Determination for*

waivers should be based on prior year's participation so kids are not missing out on several school days during the year when they can be in the classroom learning.

- *Criteria pertaining to the number of parents participating in past conferences should be considered in deciding how many days to allow.*
- *Perhaps a limitation on how many consecutive years a district may apply for the waiver.*
- *Applicants should address all applicable criteria but not be required to address all criteria. There may be innovative district ideas that address only some criteria which have significant merit.*
- *In our district we ask for waiver days for professional development at a fair time for staff so that the efforts of the PD are realized during the school year...I'm concerned that your criteria are too limited. Each school district has its own local needs, just as students have their needs... PD in the summer may not meet the needs of students because it is not applied in the classroom at that time, and it costs districts in funds that may not be there.*
- *Professional development should be focused on specific school improvement goals that coordinate with the "big picture" focus of the school.*
- *References to the importance of measurable student achievement scores were rated low in question 8 because professional development is a longer term strategy to build capacity of teachers and may not result in immediate changes to scores. . . . PD requests should be directly tied to School Improvement Plans that have those goals embedded. . . . With losing Learning Improvement Days over time, and the need for staff to be versed in higher standards, this PD time is very valuable to us.*
- *Requiring measurable student impact = INCREDIBLY redundant AND takes away from the opportunity to use those days toward development/growth in areas NOT measured by standardized testing.*
- *The forced ranking for these criteria will not produce an independent evaluation of the importance of each. If waivers are not used for shifting our schools from individual to collective effort, and concentrate efforts on effective practices (without falling prey to reliance on shoddy research), they will not produce a net positive effect for students.*
- *This process should be as streamlined as possible. Any additional requirements -- especially reporting requirements -- should be avoided.*
- *In this environment where the state has very inadequate paid time for professional development, and given how essential this is for teacher and system growth and improvement, the criteria for waiver days should rest in, honor, and support of a local school Board's authority. The last time we went through the SBE waiver day process it was overly complex and required way too much detail and information.*
- *School board approval should always be required. These should be automatically approved: Provide professional development, provide TPEP support, WaKIDS, Exceptional circumstances. Others on a case-by-case basis - maybe a two-step process.*

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