

Piedmont Unified School District

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Board of Education

FROM: Randall Booker, Superintendent
Cheryl Wozniak, Assistant Superintendent

DATE: March 9, 2022

RE: Board Policy 6146.11 - Alternative Credits Toward Graduation

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Each year there are a subset of students with unique circumstances where enrollment in the traditional set of courses for their grade level does not meet their current and/or long-term educational needs. Some scenarios include: student athletes with special schedules and students at Millennium High School where a more restrictive school schedule prevents them from choosing between an elective course offered at Piedmont High School that conflicts with a core course at MHS. Like many neighboring districts, such as San Francisco Unified, Palo Alto, Alameda Unified, and Pleasanton Unified, PUSD also believed it was in the best interest of their students to allow them the flexibility of earning high school and college credit concurrently. For this reason, Board Policy and Administrative Regulation 6172.1, Concurrent Enrollment in College Classes, was passed on May 13, 2020, allowing PHS and MHS students to take a course at a community college and earn high school credit along with college credit for the course.

Here is a link to the BP 6172.1 Concurrent Enrollment in College Classes

https://docs.google.com/document/d/12LhzzL8Pd54gTFKKrDW50ylogJFRlidTUuUvxqCGv_A/edit?ts=5eb5b0b7

At the same Board meeting on May 13, 2020, revisions to BP 6146.11 Alternative Credits Toward Graduation were brought to the Board for two reasons:

- 1- to align the old policy (adopted 2001) to the new BP 6172.1 Concurrent Enrollment in College Classes

2- to reflect what for years has been the practice of high school students being able to earn credits toward graduation through a limited number of alternative means:

- supervised work study
- career technical education
- regional occupational center programs
- independent study
- credits earned toward physical education

Here is a [link to the May 13, 2020 Board presentation](#) on Alternative Credits Toward Graduation.

At the Board meeting on July 13, 2020, BP 6146.11 Alternative Credits Toward Graduation was revised to include provision #7: Concurrent Enrollment in an Outside Accredited School. PUSD was entering the 2020-21 school year in distance learning and the Board wanted to provide students with the greatest level of flexibility. The Board approved revisions to BP 6146.11 to include the following new language:

During the 2020-2021 school year only, a student who is regularly enrolled and in attendance at a high school shall receive credit toward high school graduation for studies successfully completed at an outside accredited school if the instruction entails fields and subjects included in the high school's courses of study and curricula.

The student must be enrolled in a minimum of five (5) classes in the district.

An "accredited" school is one that has received accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) or other statewide or regional commissions or, in the case of a school outside California, by the equivalent governmental or other regional accrediting agency in that jurisdiction.

The principal or designee shall be responsible for determining which of the student's credits are equivalent to district requirements. Guidelines for determining equivalency shall be developed by representative certificated staff familiar with the district's academic standards and graduation requirements.

Approved courses taken at an outside accredited school will be listed on the transcript and identified as having been taken at the outside accredited school.

Approval of Enrollment at Outside Accredited School

The Principal or designee may approve high school students to apply for part-time

enrollment in an accredited outside school when it is determined to be in the student's best interest and the student is adequately prepared for such coursework.

Upon recommendation of the principal and with parent/guardian consent, the Board may authorize a student to attend a community college or four-year college during any session or term as a special part-time student and to undertake one or more courses of instruction offered at the outside accredited school.

If the Principal denies a request for special part-time enrollment at an outside accredited school, the Principal shall issue a written recommendation and the reasons for the denial at least 30 days, but within 60 days, after the request has been submitted.

If denied, the parent/guardian may appeal to the Superintendent within 10 days of receiving the denial letter. The Superintendent will issue a decision within 5 school days. The Superintendent's decision is final.

At the Board meeting on May 12, 2021, BP 6146.11 Alternative Credits Toward Graduation was brought to the Board for discussion because the policy was due to expire in June, 2021. The following data points were provided to evaluate the impact of the board policy on course enrollment at Piedmont High School.

- 97 individual students submitted requests to add off-campus courses to the PHS transcript. Here is the breakdown by grade level:
 - 9th grade = 9 students
 - 10th = 23 students
 - 11th grade = 26 students
 - 12th grade = 39 students
- The total number of requests for courses to be added to students' transcripts was reported to be 154. However, a more comprehensive report of the data later showed that 14 more students and an additional 49 courses were added to students' transcripts for a total of 203 courses in the 2020-21.

After much discussion, the Board voted to keep #7 Concurrent Enrollment in an Outside Accredited School with the agreement that we would revisit the policy in 2-3 years.

II. SUPPORT INFORMATION

The revisions to BP 6146.11 have led to unintended outcomes that the PHS counseling staff, teachers, and site and district administrators believe are not good for students, staff, and the overall organization. The following list of issues have surfaced as a result of the last two revisions to BP 6146.11 allowing students to attend private institutions in addition to community colleges and four-year universities.

1. In the past, students took courses at community colleges and these were always for courses not offered in our district (eg. ASL, Chinese music, Sociology, Japanese). Now, students are taking courses at private institutions to supplant courses offered at PHS. The result is fewer students are taking classes at PHS.
2. Students whose parents have the financial resources can pay for their children to take online courses at a private institution where it is believed to be easier to earn a higher grade than taking it at Piedmont High School. This could lead to one group of students having a 1:1 or small group learning experience only if their parents can afford it while others cannot, even though they would have benefited from that type of experience even more.
3. Students are taking AP level classes outside of the school in addition to the AP classes they are taking on campus. There is a concern that students are doing this primarily to boost their GPA.
4. Despite the counseling office advertising the policy and its requirement to get pre-approval to confirm that the course fits the graduation requirement, students often do not tell the counseling office they are taking an outside course until after they complete it. When an institution does not issue transcripts with credits and grades listed, those courses were not approved to be added to the transcript which led to some students becoming very upset.
5. Some students took off-campus courses both last year and this year. Because PUSD has no limit to the number of courses students can take, counselors are reporting that students are taking more than a full load of seven classes. The policy states that students must be enrolled in five classes in PUSD; however, it does not limit the number of courses for graduation credit that can be taken outside of the district in one year or in total. This has led to some students taking more than seven courses during the school year and taking more courses during the summer.
6. Some students' high school transcripts have a significantly greater number of courses from an outside institution, such as Tilden. We are concerned that the PHS transcript will no longer reflect the experience of getting an education from PHS given the number of courses students are taking somewhere else.
7. As we head into course sign-up season, counselors are hearing from many more students that they are planning to take online courses next year so it appears that the board policy is leading to an increasing number of students taking courses outside of the district.
8. Students are taking courses outside of the district as a replacement for courses that are offered in PUSD. This allows students to avoid taking a teacher that they perceive to be harder.

9. Some students are enrolling in AP level courses to replace taking senior graduation requirements like Economics and Civics. This will lead to lower enrollment in some courses and will affect FTE allocations for teachers.
10. Several 9th graders are taking AP classes outside of the district. Historically, freshmen have not been allowed to take the AP classes offered at PHS until their junior and senior years. Counselors believe this is happening so 9th graders can get a head start on increasing their GPAs sooner.
11. After a year of distance learning, there is agreement among educators and the community that students benefit more from attending high school classes in person. However, the majority of courses that students are taking outside of the district are online.
12. Students are making requests of the counseling office that cannot be accommodated. Students want to take a UC Scout class and are asking for a scholarship to cover the cost of the class. Some students are requesting that they be given an open period in the middle of their day to take an online class outside of the district. They also need a space on campus to take the course.
13. A small number of students have graduated after their junior year but we anticipate this number will continue to grow if the policy is not revised.

Below are the mid-February data points for the 2021-22 school year. These numbers are growing. The PHS counseling staff anticipates there will be many more courses added to transcripts by the end of this school year given an estimated 25-30% of students have not been getting pre-approval before enrolling in an outside course.

2021-22 Year-to-Date

139 requests from 86 students

- 38 courses taken for grad requirements
- 22 courses taken at community colleges (free)
- 117 courses taken at private (fees charged)

III. INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION

Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Cheryl Wozniak, will present the ways BP 6146.11 has negatively impacted students, staff, and Piedmont High School's overall program and provide options for revisions to the policy. Board members will discuss the impact and decide whether to direct the district to make revisions to BP 6146.11 Alternative Credits Toward Graduation.