



MEMO: SUMMARY OF REQUESTS FROM WAIVER OF THE CREDIT-BASED GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Submitted for the September 2022 Board meeting by Alissa Muller, Director of the Mastery-based Learning Collaborative

Introduction

In April 1999, the SBE adopted [WAC 180-18-055](#). The rule authorizes the granting of a waiver by the Board that would enable students to earn a diploma by a demonstration of mastery in core required subject areas meeting state learning standards, in place of earning the credits required by Chapter 180-51 WAC (High school graduation requirements). Essentially, the waiver lets schools track student mastery of the subject area requirements differently, i.e., not through credits (but does not waive the subject area requirements.) Schools are also required to ensure students have the opportunity to meet the minimum college admissions standards. The waiver also does not waive the requirements for students to have a High School and Beyond Plan or meet a graduation pathway.

Although the definition of a high school credit has been delinked from seat time requirements for over a decade, schools find the waiver helpful in communicating to their staff and community the focus on meeting the learning standards at the student's individual pace (versus over the course of a time-bound credit course). Additionally, while a waiver of credit-based graduation requirements is not required for schools to implement mastery-based learning, many schools find the waiver helpful in order to track student mastery of the subject area requirements differently than schools that use credits as an accounting mechanism for students meeting the subject area requirements.

Board action is anticipated on two waiver requests at the September Board meeting.

Renewal Applications for Waiver from Credit-Based Graduation Requirements

Two districts, Lake Chelan School District and Quincy School District, are requesting renewal of their waivers from credit-based graduation requirements. The SBE may grant the waiver for up to four school years.

Lake Chelan's waiver expired at the end of the 2020-2021 school year and Quincy's expired at the end of the 2021-2022 school year. Both districts are seeking approval for the full four years, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, and both schools have new principals this school year. Quincy Innovation Academy is a Mastery-based Learning Collaborative grantee school, and both districts are engaged in the innovative learning pilot program with OSPI. Several requirements

are laid out in WAC for renewal requests, including that the school holds a public meeting regarding the request and that an updated school board resolution in support of continuing the waiver is provided. The applicants have provided all necessary application documents, including the resolutions from their respective local school boards.

Both schools also follow the Big Picture Learning model, where students work toward meeting the 5 Big Picture Learning competencies of Communication, Empirical Reasoning, Personal Qualities, Quantitative Reasoning, and Social Reasoning. Key to the Big Picture model is a focus on developing an individualized learning plan, based on the student's learning goals. Students are also able to show growth in their competencies through work completed outside of school through internships, volunteer work, etc. as long as they and their teacher are able to tie this learning directly back to learning standards.

Students demonstrate their growth in learning and provide evidence of meeting a particular competency through quarterly Learning Exhibitions (or students can schedule an exhibition at another time if they are ready to level-up sooner). As stated by Quincy, "the ability to provide evidence of learning and communicate about [the student's] own personal learning growth are both skills that require a deeper level of learning than mere recall of content."

Chelan School of Innovation in Lake Chelan School District

At Chelan School of Innovation (CSI), where the Big Picture model is used, students learn through personalized projects and internships that are aligned to their career interests. Students receive instruction in all required subjects and also are required to complete Individual Learning Plans that align their projects and internship learning activities to state standards.

Within each student's internship, staff develop an internship plan to be executed with the site mentor, and outlines what activities students will be taking part in and those will be aligned to state standards that are applicable. Since each student internship experience will be different, each student will be addressing different standards during the internship experience. To supplement this, each student will be participating in standards aligned instruction and content in Social Studies, Science, Math, and English through a variety of self-paced curriculums. Students, with the help of their teachers, will be aligning their learning with state standards to ensure they are not only accessing grade level material but also tracking their own proficiency in standards in each subject area.

CSI also shared the following about programs and activities implemented as a result of the current waiver, including evidence of whether deeper learning for students has occurred: "From the exhibitions that I was able to witness last Spring, before taking over as Principal, I witnessed evidence of deeper learning in many presentations. One student in particular performed an internship at our local airport by working with a local pilot as his mentor, and was able to demonstrate mastery in each aligned standard on his learning plan and took that experience and created a fantastic presentation, outlining each skill and standard and his evidence of reaching proficiency.

Recent Chelan School of Innovation graduates have gone on to have success in gaining employment at a high rate. Of our 16, 2022 graduates, 9 students were hired for full time employment. Of those nine, five were accepted into paid apprenticeship programs, earning well above minimum wage with benefits. One of our students is working as a welder at a local organization, where he interned and gained valuable deeper learning as a result of the current waiver. In addition, two of our graduates are currently enrolled in community college programs in Washington state. One is enrolled in a cyber security program and the other is pursuing a degree in dental hygiene. Both of these students began pursuing these career fields due to the current waiver in place that allowed them to pursue their interests while still ensuring students receive guaranteed and viable curriculum.”

Quincy Innovation Academy in Quincy School District

At Quincy Innovation Academy, benchmarks have been designed for each grade level to set measurable standards for evaluation of students’ learning goals. The middle school program worked with their regional Big Picture Learning coach to create revised learning benchmarks for 6th-8th grade students (see example in their renewal application), and the high school teacher will be going through the same process this year. In these benchmarks, you can see the Big Picture Learning model’s focus on real- world, applied learning. For instance, Quincy shared about a recent opportunity for students to participate in applied learning through having students partner with the city on planning a community garden.

As mentioned above, Quincy has a new principal this year, so Quincy was somewhat limited in what data could be provided. They do know that out of the nine seniors in Quincy over the last three years, eight have graduated, and of those, three have continued on to attend a local community college.

Their renewal application also focuses on areas of identified growth moving forward, including:

1. Creating systems for gathering and retaining information about what positive outcomes students are having in the 13th year and beyond.
2. Establishing a digital system for retaining evidence of student learning such as their work samples, exhibition rubric scores, or feedback from their community learning experiences
3. Tracking adequate learning progress toward standards for all students through building Professional Learning Community (PLC) team time so we have some whole school data to monitor progress in continuous improvement.
4. Working to connect the learning we are measuring in Big Picture benchmarks to specific learning standards for each grade. (Our participation in the MBL Collaborative grant project will help here.) If we are granted a renewal of our waiver from credit-based graduation requirements, I believe we have strong new staff members, leadership, professional development opportunities, and coaching support that will enable us to make strong improvements in our ability to ensure that students are growing in their learning of WA state learning standards and our ability to provide evidence of that learning.

5. Improving our academic transcript, particularly to more easily show alignment with College Academic Distribution Requirements (CADRs)

Quincy shared several anecdotes about student internships, including:

"We have had a student that did an internship at our community assisted living home and then later earned her Certified Nursing Assistant credentials and was hired to work there after finishing school. We have a student that interned at a real estate office and is studying for her real estate license. One of our students that was passionate about technology interned with our district IT team and was later hired to be a tech assistant. These internships allow students opportunities to really understand the application of their skills in real world contexts."

The district also has a focus on increasing implementation of evidence-based practices (known as the Quincy Big 5) that align well to the goals of MBL (see Quincy's application for more details). QIA will be working on implementing these practices as well.