

September 2017

Dear Executive Director Rarick and team:

Thank you for your inquiry regarding Highline Big Picture's compliance with the requirements outlined in its waiver of credit-based graduation requirements. I have provided a brief response to the requests for information in regards to WAC 180-18-055 along with attached data. If after reading this document you have additional questions, feel free to contact me at the number below.

We are very invested in our program at Big Picture Schools and truly believe we are providing a rich learning experience that prepares students for college, career and citizenship. We appreciate your support of our work and we know we would not be able to provide this type of educational experience without your support. As stated by the previous principal, "we believe that we are meeting and exceeding the targets outlined in our wavier and making good on our commitments to the State Board and to our students."

Sincerely,

Lisa Escobar
Principal, Highline Big Picture Schools
206-681-6430

1. *Please describe and document the progress made by the school during the last school year in meeting the standards for increased student learning set forth in the district's waiver application.*

Attachment:

1A: Waiver Renewal Submission
1B: "The Path"

For Highline Big Picture, as outlined in the 2015 waiver renewal and the 2016 waiver update, a large part of the "the standards for increased student learning" referred to our 5 competencies or "learning goals." Each learning goal has several defining skills that correlate in some instances to the Common Core State Standards. This past year, staff have refined the 5 learning goals and created "look fors." This provides students clear indicators of ways to show mastery of the learning goals.

Assessment and feedback about the progress towards mastery of the learning goals is very important at Big Picture. Here are some of the ways student progress is assessed and communicated:

- Students demonstrate their learning across the 5 Big Picture learning goals at “exhibitions.” Exhibitions occur 3 times a year at the high school level and 2 times a year at the middle school level. Families, mentors and staff attend and evaluate a student using a rubric. This past year, there was a move toward using co-created rubrics where the student, advisor and mentor sit down and create an evaluation tool that included what student would need to accomplish to be successful in a professional setting. There was an increased effort to have mentors attend exhibitions in order to give relevant feedback to the student.
- Students and families continue to receive narratives about progress toward mastery of the learning goals twice a year. Within each learning goal, specific areas of learning that are “in progress,” “meeting,” or “exceeding” expectations are identified. Student portfolios of work are maintained by advisors. This year, student portfolios continue to be digital.
- Student projects are evaluated using rubrics and we are moving toward 100% use of co-created rubrics with students, mentors and advisors. The co-created rubrics use the worksite expertise of professional mentors as part of the criteria evaluated.
- Students are evaluated by their mentors at their internships.
- Student progress is monitored by formative assessments of their work in their advisories.
- Students at Big Picture complete all state-mandated standardized assessments, as well as, PST, SAT and NAEP.

Assessing growth in our model can be complex due to the uses of multiple assessment modalities and measures. Aside from our testing performance, here are a few things worth highlighting as progress specific to the 2016-2017.

- The growth we made in the number of students graduating at Big Picture was the largest in the district and we were recognized by the superintendent at our district back to school event.
- We have updated and refined our competencies and have established “look fors” so that students and staff are clear as to have to demonstrate progress towards mastery.
- Several common formative assessment practices continue to be used: consistent narrative transcript format sent home twice per year, common exhibition rubrics, and common project rubrics.
- As a result of staff collaborating with staff at Eagle Rock in Colorado, the concept of co-created rubrics where students create rubrics for their internship projects with their mentors and advisors was piloted by some advisors. In addition, a tool called “The Path” (see attached) to assist with project management was developed by staff at Eagle Rock and is being implemented this year by advisors.

- Students at 8th grade and 10th grade “level up” when they meet the requirements by the end of the summer. 89% of 8th graders leveled up to 9th grade and 62% of 10th graders leveled up to 11th grade. Students are required to complete the all requirements before they graduate.
2. *If the school’s students, whether in aggregate or by major subgroups, are not making satisfactory progress in meeting the standards for increased student learning set forth in the district’s waiver application, please describe any changes made or planned in instructional practices, strategies, or curricula to improve student achievement against the standards.*

Attachment:

2A: Three Year Vision Plan

2 B: 2017-18 Annual Action Plan

Narrative:

Big Picture is an innovative school with a unique approach to learning. As a result, we attract many students with significant life and academic challenges. We work with “one student at a time” and we continue to work on improving the positive impact we have on their academic and social-emotional outcomes at scale. A few general interventions we have in place for struggling students:

- After school tutorials and our own summer school, funded through Title 1 and LAP, which are focused on helping students who don’t “level up” (see above) on time.
- Because we over-represent students with IEP (roughly double the district average), we over-staff our inclusive Education Department and have a significant degree of focus on supporting these students effectively and over-allocate budget (vs. district recommendation) to IEP push-in support.
- We work with the district differentiation specialist on improving our capacity to differentiate our instruction to meet the varying needs of our students and to effectively implement the co-teaching model where appropriate.
- Our focus on “learning through interests and internships” provides our students with real life opportunities to engage in learning in settings that are relevant to them and play to their strengths.

In addition to our attached Annual Action Plan (AAP) for next year (attachment), I have pulled out some general areas of focus that seem to align to this question below:

- Develop co-created rubrics 7-12 for a minimum of one project this year.

- Align math anchor standards 7-12.
- Increase math performance task individual practice.
- Incorporate online assessment tools into math courses weekly.

3. *Please describe any changes made in the standards for increased student learning and the evidence selected to determine whether the standards have been met. What changes, if any, are you making in goals for student learning?*

Attachments:

3A: Competencies 3.0

3B: Competencies "Looks fors"

3C: Common Transcript Template

Narrative:

Aspects of this question were alluded to in our narrative for #1 (above). Key initiatives at the school included new formative and summative assessment tools and common practices (including "PIE" internship assessment tool, revised common transcript template, common exhibition feedback guide, and new common progress narratives sent home by advisors on a set schedule). We have also continued conversations about deepening and expanding engagement with the 5 competencies in response to new research (particularly with regard to "meta-cognitive variables" and "soft skills". Broadly speaking, however, we have refined our competencies for student learning in competencies 3.0. The approach to learning outlined in our 2016 Waiver renewal submission still represents our current approach.

4. *Please submit the following data, preferably in tabular form, and provide any explanatory comments on each as deemed helpful for the information of the Board.*
- Enrollment by grade*
 - Percent meeting standard on the Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBA) on English Language Arts and Mathematics, in each grade in which the assessment results are available.*
 - Adjusted four-year cohort graduation rate, for most recent class available.*
 - Adjust five-year cohort graduation rate, for most recent class available.*

- e. Any post-graduate employment and post-secondary participate data as may be available.

Narrative:

16-17 Enrollment Data:

7th – 31

8th- 31

9th –31

10th –29

11th – 33

12th - 29

16-17 Test Scores

Grade	SBA ELA	SBA Math
7th	55%	23%
8th	32%	25%
11th	62%	24%

Class of 2016 -2017 – 4 year graduation rate: 93%

Class of 2015 - 2016 – 5-year graduation rate: 91%

5. *What challenges, if any, has the district encountered in the transfer of credit equivalencies for Big Picture School to other school districts or in meeting credit distribution requirements for institutions of higher education?*

Narrative:

Challenges to date have been relatively minor, and we have managed to work through most of them thanks to strong relationships with colleges and universities and growing understanding of our model as it expands across the country and the world. However, a couple areas of lingering concern include:

- NCAA continues not to recognize our students as having met their credit requirements, resulting in students not having access to college sports if they come from a Big Picture school operating under a waiver. This has been an area of extensive discussion over the years between the national Big Picture organization and the NCAA, but we are yet to see a solution.
- In some cases, a student can lose credit if transferring prior to graduation from Big Picture, meaning they must take extra courses to meet state requirements.

There are still hurdles for us to be aware of and overcome as we progress with the Big Picture model here in Highline. It should be noted that we are considered a leader in the implementation of the model and have given key support to schools in the area that are developing the Big Picture model. Many of these schools are following suit on our credit waiver and all are improving outcomes for students they are serving by a very significant margin relative to the schools they replaced. In addition, Highline Big Picture has had a role in seeding and supporting what has now become one of its helpful sustainers, namely a regional network of critical friends and thought partners.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact me with any follow-up questions.

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Note from SBE staff: Addenda to this report can be found at www.sbe.wa.gov/waivers.php in the table for waivers of credit-based graduation requirements.