

October 1, 2017

Dear Members of Washington State Board of Education,

This report is outlined at your request, and is intended to serve as a summary of our progress toward increased student learning as detailed in our waiver application. Enclosed, you will find qualitative and quantitative data highlighting the recent evolution of our program, areas of success and challenges to be addressed moving forward.

Defining Success: Access to Real World Learning

With a focus on developing students prepared to pursue the widest range of post secondary opportunities, including education, military, and career related training, we have expanded our program. Significant progress has been made regarding opportunities for real world learning and advanced academic opportunities over the past three years. Over the past year, specifically, we've seen a significant rise in the numbers of students engaged in internships and advanced coursework. Reasons for these shifts are twofold. First, because of the waiver, students are expected to show competency in learning goals through real world learning experiences and are supported by staff in doing so. Second, a cultural shift appears to be in progress regarding post high school planning. With more students considering college as an option, a greater number of them are choosing to challenge themselves with advanced coursework, either through rigorous internships, coursework taken at the comprehensive high school, or Running Start.



Observations

1. Data from students in internship for the year 2016/17 appears to be higher than the current year. This is due to the time of year data was collected. We anticipate that by

the spring of this year, almost 100% of our students will be engaged in internship work.

- There is no data for numbers of students choosing advanced coursework in 2015/16 and 2016/17 because in those years, students were not making that choice.

Next Steps

The internship program will continue to grow, and in doing so, expose students to opportunities for rigorous real-world learning. The relationship between traditional academic rigor and real world rigor is well described by the founder of High Tech High, Larry Rosenstock, “One misapprehension of rigor is that it’s more content. A more nuanced misapprehension of rigor is it’s increasingly complex content. I would argue that rigor is being in the company of a passionate adult who is rigorously pursuing inquiry in the area of their subject matter and is inviting students along as peers in that adult discourse.” It is our intention that each ILC student will have the opportunity to work alongside adults in their fields of study multiple times throughout their high school career.

Defining Success: From ‘Alternative’ to ‘Option’

Another area of growth is regarding school culture. A survey completed this fall assessed students and parents’ perception of nine characteristics of highly successful schools. Results show generally positive perceptions of three categories. These categories included: Supportive Learning Environment, Family & Community Involvement, and Communication & Collaboration.

	Supportive Learning Environ.		Family/Comm Involvement.		Communication/Collaboration.		Average
	Students	Parents	Student	Parents	Student	Parents	
Positive	100%	66%	83%	66%	80%	66%	70%
Negative	0	25%	16%	25%	0	8%	16%
Neutral	0	8%		8%	20%	16%	14%

Interest Based Curriculum

Some of the most significant changes to our program since the inception of the waiver have been the growth of project based, interest driven work outlined in individualized learning plan. This work, initiated by students with the support of advisors, has led to deep learning. Using student exhibitions of learning at the end of each trimester, community members, staff, families, and peers have opportunities to provide students with useful feedback regarding their academic and personal goals. These exhibitions provide students with a platform to share their successes and challenges, explaining goals on their learning plans and sharing evidence connecting goals to competencies.

Observations

A 2017 graduate hosted an open house slideshow to educate the community about his senior project, a service trip to Nepal. Describing how he used his skills learned in an internship with a concrete contractor to assist in the rebuilding of a school, the student reflected on his unique learning experience abroad.

A current senior at ILC shared highlights from her internship working in the infant/toddler program at a local Montessori school. Since then, she has completed summer Montessori training workshops and has been hired to work part-time at the school's new campus as an assistant teacher.

Another current senior has been hired as a part time paraprofessional after her widely touted success working with children in the Special Education classroom at the local elementary school. She is now certificated as a paraprofessional and can be hired as a substitute para. She intends to pursue a degree in Special Education upon graduation.

Each of the successes described above are the direct result of students having the freedom to pursue areas of interest as the basis for their academic and personal learning. These three unique young people would likely not be experiencing the same inspiration to pursue their futures without the competency based program.

Defining Success: Student Support

Our goals for student learning have not changed significantly since the waiver application in spring of 2016. What has changed, though, has been the way in which students are supported in making changes. Staffing increases in the fall of 2017 improved the way in which students are connected to community as well as the way students with IEPs are supported. A part time mentorship coordinator supports students connecting with internship, project, and long term mentors. The results of this change are reflected in the graph above illustrating increases in student interns. Also, paraprofessional staffing to support instructors in meeting needs of students with IEPs has increased.

Another change has been made in collaboration time afforded to staff. Twice monthly, staff are engaged in collaboration time in which they may plan off campus real-world learning experiences, support students of concern, share instructional practices, and modify schedules to better meet student needs.

Observations

A recently homeless 2017 graduate and first generation college student has just moved into an apartment with the support of a mentor. The security

provided by multiple scholarships she earned last spring will help with her first few months rent, while she finds a part time job to sustain herself as she pursues a two year degree in Business.

Defining Success: Communication & Community

In order to improve communication between the school and stakeholders, a weekly newsletter has been initiated this year. This newsletter, which aims to inform families and community members about school programming, also provides for increased collaboration between the school and regional partners. The intention of improved communication is to strengthen relationships between the school and families as well as invite participation by an increased number of community members. See Appendix “A” for this year’s newsletters.

One other change in process is the school’s involvement in a regional partnership. It is the intention of the school staff to strengthen relationships with other Big Picture schools to access support and exchange ideas. In addition, staff members are actively making connections with other regional alternative schools who wish to explore options for programmatic shifts.

A significant change being implemented this fall is the use of a new software program which will enable staff to more efficiently and regularly assess student progress toward competencies. Previously, competency based rubrics were not used regularly with formative assessment. With the support of the new software, regular formative assessment of student work using competencies will be efficient and provide timely feedback to students. See Appendix “B” for an example of a rubric currently being used to assess progress toward competency in a current events activity.

Data

Enrollment

Total enrollment has remained steady throughout the past three years with significant increase in the number of students qualifying for special education services.

	2016/17 (spring)	2017/18 (fall)
9th grade	5	3
10th grade	3	5
11th grade	5	6
12th grade	11	7
Transitional IEP	2	1

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Total Enrollment	21	25	22
Ethnic minority (Latino, Native American)	14%	16%	9%
Ethnic majority (White)	85%	80%	91%
Special Education	4%	24%	40%
% Qualify free/reduced lunch	57%	68%	63%

Smarter Balanced Assessment Scores

Note from SBE policy analyst Parker Teed: Information below has been redacted to comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

	spring 2016 passing	spring 2017 passing
9th grade taking Biology EOC*	██████████	██████████
10 grade Biology EOC	██████████	██████████
11th grade Biology EOC*	██	██████████
10th grade SB ELA	██████████	██████████
11th grade SB ELA	██████████	██████████
11th grade SB Math or ALG EOC	██	██████████

*Some 9th grade students at ILC join the Biology course taught to 9th/10th grade students, and therefore take the End of Course Exam at the end of 9th grade.

It is difficult to use SBA scores to measure progress at ILC since the waiver has been implemented. There are several reasons why this measure is not a reliable reflection of student progress.

1. It is difficult to generalize statistics with a very small sampling size.
2. Several students with IEPs are counted in the group of students testing. While they may have accommodations stating they may pass the test with a different scale score, this is not reflected in the recorded score.
3. Overall, we are experiencing an increase in transfer students enrolling in 11th and 12th grade. Therefore, it is difficult to accept that their scores are an accurate reflection of our program changes.

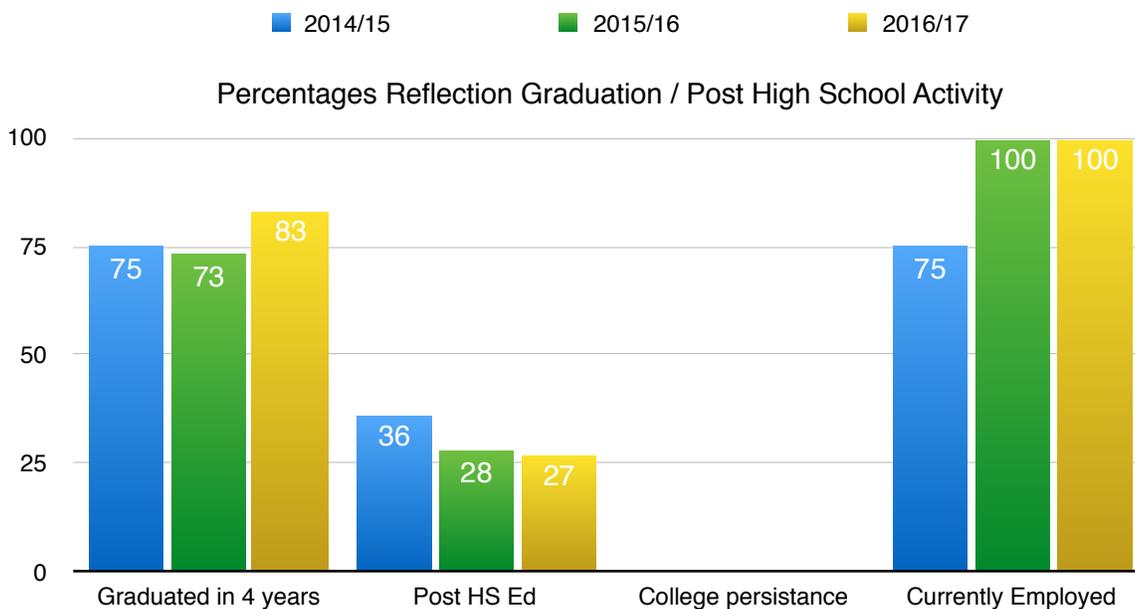
Adjusted four-year cohort graduation rate

2015/16 - 72.7%

Adjusted five-year cohort graduation rate

2016/17 - 83.3%

The graduating class of 2017 graduated eleven students, one of whom was a teen parent. Needing an extra year to complete graduation requirements, she graduated in five years. This explains the “five-year” cohort rate in 2017 rather than “four-year”.



Challenges & Next Steps

While we have significant numbers of students graduating, and rising numbers of students choosing to pursue post high school options, our college persistence levels are zero. This means that though we’re helping students pursue options, they are not able to complete the degrees they set out to complete.

We attribute this to several reasons:

1. Almost 100% of our students choosing to pursue post high school education are first generation college students. Multiple barriers exist for first generation students.

2. Our community is geographically isolated from access to colleges and universities. This creates many barriers for students, specifically those who need to work while in school, some of whom are contributing to their families livelihood.
3. Many of our students have very limited exposure to life outside of our small community. It is challenging for students to leave a supportive, familiar environment and sustain independent life elsewhere.

Next Steps

We are making several changes district wide to address these issues. The implementation of our mentorship coordinator was initiated with the specific purpose of seeking long term mentors to commit to supportive relationships beyond high school. Our hope is that if students have extra support in making decisions and taking action to pursue post high school education, they will be more likely to persist.

Second, the district has recently added funding to the position of College and Career Counselor. This counselor, accessible for all high school students, will provide extra support to students as they explore options.

For students who have chosen to pursue college, we have not faced challenges related to our competency based transcript. Both graduates from 2017 who pursued post high school education chose to start at Wenatchee Valley College, which honored their diplomas and transcripts. It is our intention, though, to actively build relationships with regional colleges and universities to create a path for students who wish to apply. In collaboration with Gibson Ek, Highline Big Picture, and Chelan School of Innovation, we believe this relationship can be established effectively.

Thank you for your support of our innovative program. We will continue to keep you updated as to our progress, and welcome your feedback and questions.

Sincerely,