

June 5, 2014



Emily Nazaov

Executive Officer

Rob Saxton

Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction

Oregon Department of Education

255 Capitol Street NE

Salem, OR 97310-0203

Deputy Superintendent Saxton and Executive Officer Nazarov,

Please accept this supplementary information to Bethel's one-year waiver request for Division 22 Standard 581-022-1131 – Credit Options, dated May 22, 2014.

In the May 22 request I referenced a number of factors. One factor was, *"A reduction in student contact days beginning in the 2009-2010 school year. Faced with a variety of difficult choices during the recession, Bethel chose to reduce student days rather than continuing to increase class size or reduce high school programs and courses."*

I want to be clear that this was *one of several factors* that caused the district to fall short of the 130 hour requirement. In fact, it is not the greatest factor. During the height of the recession the District, through a collaborative bargaining process, did institute as many as eight furlough days that impacted student instruction. This year there are three. Next year we anticipate two, although bargaining is not finalized and we are currently attempting to restore additional days.

The decision to accept furlough days as part of a short-term solution to the economic crisis was multifaceted. However, the primary reason related to our Board Adopted Budgeting Philosophy:

The quantity and quality of programs offered by Bethel School District are related to both the amount of funding provided as well as the effective and efficient management of those funds.

To maximize the benefit to our community's children, the District must continue its effort to cultivate strong relationships with and between students, parents, staff, and community members in local fiscal decision making. In optimizing those funds for the benefit of the students, the District will strive to:

- Maximize the positive impact on classroom instruction, instructional support, readiness to learn, and efforts to increase student achievement and engagement so that all students make progress toward meeting state standards, District goals, and personal aspirations.*
- Protect, maintain, and enhance the community's investment in our facilities, physical spaces, equipment, and other assets.*
- Prepare for both short and long-term fiscal responsibilities including: labor agreements, reserves, fund balance, planning for current and future mandates and community needs, and by investing in the sustainable growth of new and existing efficient and effective programs.*

The primary objective of the decision to use furlough days was to maintain a strong breadth and depth of programs, particularly at the high school level. We are a district with a single large (1,500+ students) comprehensive high school and a small alternative high school. To meet the needs of our diverse student population, our programs need to be varied and strong. Implementing furlough days allowed us to maintain or add programs including:

- International Baccalaureate
- Advanced Placement
- Career Technical Pathways:
 - Engineering
 - Culinary Arts
 - Hospitality
 - Health Occupations
 - Business
 - Graphic Arts
- Award winning music programs
- Dramatic arts
- Intervention courses for students failing to meet Essential Skills requirements for the Oregon Diploma
- And, maintaining a strong core curriculum

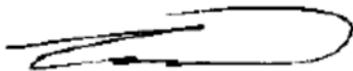
We believe maintaining these programs helped to improve student performance, as noted in the May 22 request: Willamette has been steadily improving its 4-year cohort graduation rate and has the *highest graduation rate among all the Eugene and Springfield high schools* at 78.25% (10 percentage points above the state average). Additionally, over the last five years (2009 to 2013) Willamette's OAKS Scores have also made substantial gains:

- Mathematics improved by 16.2 percentage points
- Reading/Language Arts improved by 25.8 percentage points
- Writing improved by 24.2 percentage points

In closing, I'd also like to share that the district would still be slightly below the 130 hour requirement even if all furlough days were restored. The District is able to correct the noncompliance issue, but time is required because a schedule change involving a change in student contact time is a bargaining subject in our collective bargaining agreement. Bethel is in the planning process to develop a schedule that complies with the requirements of 581-022-1131 – Credit Options. Implementing this change unilaterally and immediately in the fall of 2014 would constitute an unfair labor practice. Additionally, immediate implementation would disrupt the support systems and education for current students who have already projected courses for the 2014-15 school year. We are confident that our plan will provide us with the necessary time to work through a collaborative process in an effort to assure strong outcomes for all Bethel students in the future.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Colt Gill
Superintendent