

May 22, 2014



Together we will reach, teach and inspire each student to excellence

Rob Saxton

Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction
Oregon Department of Education
255 Capitol Street NE
Salem, OR 97310-0203

Deputy Superintendent Rob Saxton,

Bethel School District is requesting a one-year waiver as it is out of compliance with Division 22 Standard 581-022-1131 – Credit Options:

“Each school district or public charter school shall offer students the option for earning each credit required for the diploma or a modified diploma by successfully completing classroom or equivalent work (e.g., supervised independent study, career-related learning experiences, project based learning) in a course of at least 130 clock hours in accordance with OAR 581-022-0102. The classroom or equivalent work must meet Common Curriculum Goals by OAR 581-022-1210.”

Specifically, Bethel does not meet the 130 clock hours at Willamette High School, a large comprehensive high school. Contributing factors to be considered include:

- A well-established 20-year traditional A/B schedule;
- A revised class schedule in compliance with 581-022-1131 would lead to increased student contact time. An increase in student contact time is a mandatory subject of bargaining and the District and Board of Directors would require additional time to enter into bargaining with the Eugene Education Association (EEA);
- A thoughtful review of a complex comprehensive high school schedule requires a collaborative approach and thorough assessment. Today’s Willamette High School students have very different needs and realities than when the A/B schedule was originally implemented. In short, our approach and lens would not only include the 130 clock hours requirement, but also additional efforts and supports to increase graduation rates and post-high school outcomes for students; and
- 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.

Though the school is not in full compliance with 581-022-1131, strong student outcomes have been accomplished.

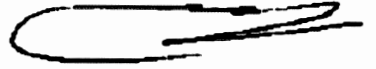
- Willamette, a school with over half of its students participating in free and reduced lunch, has been steadily improving its 4-year cohort graduation rate and was recently acknowledged for having the highest graduation rate among all the Eugene and Springfield high schools at 78.25% (10 percentage points above the state average); and
- Over the last five years (2009 to 2013) Willamette 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

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Colt Gill
Superintendent



Sincerely,

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

We believe increased time in courses could lead to even more positive outcomes for students. However, 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.

Bethel is in the planning process to develop a schedule that complies with the requirements of 581-022-1131 – Credit Options in the following manner:

- **May, 2014**—Form a schedule development committee comprised of high school teacher leaders, association leadership, high school administration and central office administration.
- **Fall-Winter 2014**—The committee will research, develop, and recommend a high school schedule that meets the 130 clock hour requirement and one that best supports a learning environment necessary for students to meet high school graduation requirements and prepare them for college and career.
- **Winter-Spring 2015**—Schedule recommendations presented to the School Board and Association bargaining teams for consideration.

In addition, Willamette High School has developed programs to support students, including:

- A differentiated intervention schedule and coursework to support students in meeting rigorous graduation requirement including the essential skills requirements;
- The school-wide implementation of Common Core State Standards aligned proficiency-based grading systems;
- The addition of reading/writing/language arts and math interventions for students not meeting essential skills;
- The development of an essential skills testing protocol and process in coordination with Lane ESD (now available to other districts);
- A comprehensive set of core and elective Career Technical Education (CTE), Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), dual credit, and online courses to meet the needs of a variety of learners;
- New Common Core Aligned Curriculum and course in English language arts and mathematics; and
- After school tutoring and homework support options for all students;