

## **Ensuring Access to Graduation in June 2020 for Seniors**

### **April 1, 2020**

The opportunity for seniors to graduate from high school in June 2020 has been made more complicated in light of the COVID-19-related school closures. It is an important part of our work to ensure that the closures do not impede students' access to graduation.

[State law](#), signed by Governor Inslee on March 17, 2020, provides for a waiver process for some graduation requirements. We are still awaiting the rules for the waiver from the State Board of Education. In addition to the state rules for the waiver, we know that the COVID-19 situation is changing and will require us to adapt to other changes.

In order to help our seniors meet the graduation requirements by June 2020, staff are expected to:

1. Continue to develop learning engagement materials and support student and family access to maintain continuity of student engagement, learning, and progress toward meeting graduation requirements;
2. Prioritize experiences that help students develop skills that are most critical for postsecondary success;
3. Keep in mind the social and emotional well-being and varied circumstances of our students in all communications.
4. Continue to maintain student engagement and learning support platform(s) weekly, with the exception of Spring Break (April 6-10);
5. Collaborate with teams so that students have equitable access to learning engagement materials;
6. Provide meaningful and timely feedback to students who are moving toward meeting core course learning standards and meeting graduation requirements;
7. Contact parents/guardians of students who are not demonstrating engagement in the online environment, offering help and connecting them with other support personnel as appropriate;
8. Collaborate with special services staff, counselors, English Learner staff, and others to ensure appropriate modifications and accommodations are in place for students with disabilities, EL students, and others who may need additional support;
9. For those teaching dual credit courses (College in the High School and CTE Dual Credit), collaborate with both the institution of higher education and with district leadership regarding content and grading to ensure students' continued access to the dual credit opportunity.

### **Earning credits and grades for current courses**

Students may earn credit in courses in which they are currently enrolled through work completed before, during, and after the school closure; work may be assigned online or in other formats (i.e. written work packets, project-based learning, etc.).

Course grades issued at the end of the semester should recognize student past work, when schools were open, as well as opportunities to demonstrate new learning in the on-line environment. Mitigating circumstances will be considered in the assignment of credit and grades. **The grade at the end of the semester should offer students the option that is most beneficial to them.** Options include:

- A letter grade (A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C) that is the same as or higher than the student's grade prior to the school closure if the student has engaged in learning experiences during and after school closure;
- A non-numerical grade (CR for credit) if a student's level of achievement was
  - below a C level prior to school closure, and the student has engaged in learning experiences during and after school closure (a letter grade of C or higher may also be considered) OR
  - at or above a C level prior to school closure, and the student demonstrated little engagement in learning during and after school closure;
- A non-numerical grade (NC for no-credit) if a student's level of achievement prior to school closure was not at a passing level prior to school closure AND the student did not engage in learning experiences during and after school closure.
- Partial credit with a letter grade (A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C) or a non-numerical grade (CR) may also be considered.
- Additional information will be forthcoming regarding grades for students earning college credit in College in the High School courses.

#### **Additional options for credit**

- Locally developed, competency-based assessment, including formative and summative course content, with opportunities for re-teaching and re-testing
- Competency-based credit per updated procedure 2410P, allowing for original credit as well as credit recovery, for meeting standard on state assessments and graduation pathway options
- Credit recovery completed online, in packets, or by completing work assigned by teacher or administrator
- World Language Assessments
- Coursework completed via independent study with an assigned teacher
- Partial credit determined through a review of transcripts and entry/withdrawal history

#### **Assigning credits to graduation requirement areas and waiving non-core credits**

Principals have the authority to assign subject areas for dual credit courses. For example, the normal procedure for a 5-credit running start math class is to have 0.5 high school credit awarded in math and 0.5 high school credit awarded as an elective. Principals have the authority to award the full 1.0 credit as math, if necessary, to ensure a student's graduation. Counselors and principals should review senior transcripts to determine if the credit should be awarded differently from past.

Principals also have the authority to waive non-core credit requirements. They should use this authority as much as necessary to ensure that school closure does not impede students' ability to graduate on time.

### **Assessment requirements for graduation/graduation pathway**

Students must meet the graduation pathway requirement. Seniors who have not yet met the requirement should be encouraged to apply to a local community college and send the acceptance letter they receive to the success coordinator for assessment.

Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) will not be available this spring for students in grades 3-10. However, provided schools reopen, the testing window will open April 27-June 5 for seniors for whom that is a viable graduation pathway, to assure access to alternative assessments (class of 2019 and prior), or for students for whom the SBA would provide access to the seal of biliteracy.

### **High School and Beyond Plan and College-Entrance Requirements**

Students must meet the high school and beyond plan requirement. Counselors, career specialists, students' College and Career Readiness Seminar (or equivalency) teachers, and administrators, with support from the high school and beyond facilitator, should communicate the need for students to complete the requirements in Naviance and provide necessary support. For students who qualify for special education services, this plan must align with the transition plan.

Students and families should engage with counselors to develop graduation plans that allow students to meet requirements for college and post-secondary program entrance requirements. Students and families may wish to contact colleges and post-secondary programs for information regarding waiving some entrance requirements due to school closures.

## Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Q1: If the state is going to waive graduation requirements for seniors, why are we worrying about ensuring that they earn credit?

A1: The governor signed a bill ([HB2965](#)) into law on March 17, 2020 addressing the state's response to the Novel Coronavirus emergency. In that law, the State Board of Education was authorized to administer an emergency waiver program for students in the class of 2020 and earlier who are unable to meet the graduation requirements due to school closures as a response to the Novel Coronavirus outbreak. The waivers will only be authorized if students were "on-track" prior to the closure and there is a "good faith effort" to address core course requirements and credit deficiencies through other mechanisms.

The State Board of Education is in the midst of determining the rules for the waiver process. The steps outlined above, including addressing core course requirements for current courses, competency-based credits, and credit recovery, are the mechanisms we can use help students meet the requirements.

In addition, providing all the opportunities we can for students to learn aligns with our mission: to inspire, educate, and prepare each student to achieve to high standards, contribute to our community, and thrive in a global society.

Q2: What do you mean by prioritizing experiences that help students develop skills that are most critical for postsecondary success?

A2: The course content and outcomes will not be exactly as it would be if we were in school. Instead, teachers should use their knowledge of students and the skills they will need in the future to design course content and delivery. Teachers can work with colleagues, curriculum specialists, and others to determine which are the highest priorities for seniors.

Q3: What are some things to keep in mind as I'm communicating with students, given the emphasis on social and emotional well-being and the varied circumstances of our students?

A3: Our hope is that each of our students, including our seniors who are scheduled to graduate this June, will engage in the learning that we are designing during the school closure. We also know that for many of our families, additional stresses may make that engagement more difficult. When a student is not engaging in the on-line learning, an email or phone call to the family should focus first on assistance they may need rather than on the academic work. Try communicating in this order

- Are you doing ok? Do you need anything?
- I miss connecting with you.
- Is there something I can do to help you connect with our learning?

If a family or student indicates a need for help, contact a school counselor, student support advocate, or administrator who can connect them with services.

- Q4: I teach a College in the High School course and the college is sending communications to me that conflict with our district's direction to me as a teacher. What should I do?
- A4: Contact Becky Ballbach, [rballbach@everettsd.org](mailto:rballbach@everettsd.org), if you need assistance with the College in the High School program and communications. We want to ensure that students who have registered for college credits are able to earn these credits whenever possible.
- Q5: Students in my AP class are worried about what the testing will look like and if they will be prepared. What can I tell them?
- A5: Students will take the AP exams remotely. [College Board](https://collegeboard.org) will be announcing more details about the AP exams by April 3, 2020. Cathy Woods ([cwoods2@everettsd.org](mailto:cwoods2@everettsd.org)) will continue to communicate the changes and announcements. Contact her if you have specific questions about AP.
- Q6: Will there be a June graduation ceremony for our seniors?
- A6: Currently, our graduation ceremonies are planned for June 11, for Sequoia High School, and June 13, for Everett, Cascade, and HM Jackson High Schools. No decision has been made to cancel these events. We will keep you updated if this changes.
- Q7: What are locally developed, competency-based assessments for earning credit?
- A7: These are assessments that students can take to demonstrate their competency in the core learnings of a course. Students who may have gaps in credits, may have learned the core content of a course, but because of high-mobility or other factors, may not have earned credit. These assessments will allow students in the class of 2020 or earlier to demonstrate their learning. Please contact your school principal or Cathy Woods ([cwoods2@everettsd.org](mailto:cwoods2@everettsd.org)) if you have questions about a competency-based assessment for a course you teach.
- Q8: What will happen to grading if we don't return to school with a reasonable amount of time left for instruction (or at all)?
- A8: We don't have an answer for this now. We will keep you updated as the situation changes.