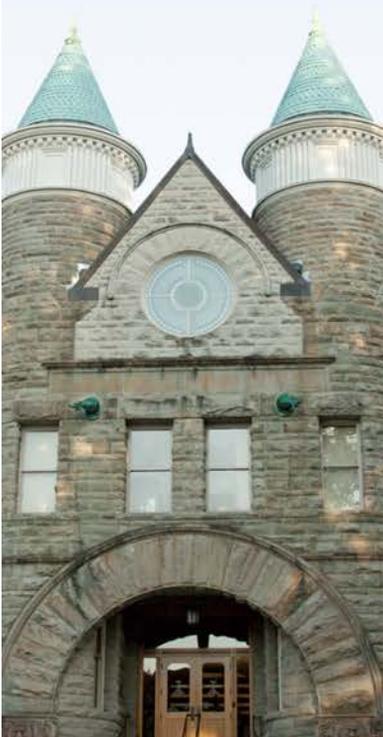


REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Innovative Inter-district Cooperative High School Programs 2011-2012

December 2012



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Executive Summary

[ESHB 2913 \(2010\)—Authorizing innovative inter-district cooperative high school programs](#) made it possible for districts without high schools to collaborate and create new and innovative high school models for their students.

Since the bill’s passage, one Innovation High School Inter-district Cooperative Academy (Academy), Paideia High School, has been approved by OSPI. Griffin School District also considered, and ultimately decided against, creating a cooperative under this legislation. Both Paideia High School and Griffin School district, along with OSPI program staff, contributed to this report.

In general, the application and approval process have not been burdensome to the applicant or OSPI to date. The assessment of the program is limited, however, due to a lack of participating programs.

This lack of interest suggests some unknown challenges still exist. Potential challenges to inter-district partnerships will require additional research.

The success of Paideia High School is encouraging. The school is a rigorous college and career-ready program that also includes fine arts and STEM. Highlights of the program include innovative teaching, expert use of technology, and dedicated staff.

I. Background

Forty six school districts in Washington do not have a high school. Students in these districts are known as “nonhigh” and attend high school in neighboring districts. The school districts where these students attend high school receive state funding for nonhigh students, and the nonhigh district pays the high school district for additional costs funded by local levies. According to [RCW 28A.545.030\(3\)](#) nonhigh districts must also pay their share of capital facilities costs.

Any new high school program in a nonhigh district must be approved by OSPI ([RCW 28A.340.060](#)). Nonhigh districts must enroll at least 400 students in 9th-12th grade to be approved. Smaller enrollments may be allowed if a relatively stable enrollment of at least 400 is expected within three years.

ESHB 2913 (2010) allows two or more nonhigh districts to form an inter-district Innovation Academy Cooperative (Academy) their high school students. The Academy does not replace current inter-district agreements for nonhigh students. Those students may still choose to attend a neighboring high school, and current payment agreements for those students still apply.

In the fall of 2010, OSPI approved the first Innovation High School Inter-district Cooperative Agreement. The agreement between the Valley School District and the Orient, Loon Lake, Summit Valley, and Orondo school districts created Paideia High School (PHS). PHS, now in its third year, is the only approved agreement thus far. The school is in Valley School District and reported 21 students as of October 1, 2012.

II. Findings

FORMATION OF THE INTER-DISTRICT COOPERATIVE—[RCW 28A.340.090](#)

The application and review process as outlined in statute appears complete and efficient.

Valley School District pursued an aggressive outreach to other nonhigh districts throughout Washington, using conference calls, webinars, phone calls, site visits, and school board presentations. This process was intense, but it was prepared the potential partner district for success.

Valley School District had already done significant planning to develop a high school prior to this legislation. This preparation helped the district develop a strong application quickly.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT—[RCW 28A.340.080](#)

According to PHS, enrollment has been negatively affected by OSPI's interpretation of [RCW 28A.225.220](#) and [RCW 28A.225.225](#).

OSPI understands the legislative intent of ESHB 2913 (2010) was to provide a high school program for nonhigh district students, not to offer an alternative program for students of high school districts. Therefore, the innovation language does not cover the "Choice" option, or options such as [RCW 28A.225.225](#) for children of teachers of that district. Only students who are physically residing within the districts' boundaries are eligible.

CURRICULUM

PHS is a rigorous high school program based on Core 24, which was a State Board of Education proposal at the time of application. The approved plan requires all students develop a high school and beyond plan and all students either meet or exceed the Core 24 requirement:

- 4 years of English
- 4 years of math
- 4 years of science
- 3 years of social studies
- 2 years of arts

- 1.5 years of fitness
- ½ year of health
- 4 years of world language (A minimum of 2 will be Latin or Greek)

PHS’s goal is to create critical thinkers who are college and career ready when they graduate, regardless of their post-secondary plans.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING & MATH (STEM) — Students who graduate from PHS will be ready to pursue careers and education in STEM because of the rigorous requirements for science, math, and Latin (a foundation for engineering). PHS also provides laptops to all students.

INSTRUCTION

PHS students work mostly on netbooks and technology is integrated into science and music through testing and studio-enhanced recording equipment. Classroom instruction is live and students attend in person or via video feed.

PHS teachers use a conversational style of teaching similar to the Socratic method to teach thematic units. This approach combines lecture delivery with hands-on learning and field-based projects in 90 minute blocks.

Some students participate in Paideia High School curriculum via an alternative learning experience online environment (Columbia Virtual Academy) and are not enrolled as part of the statute authorizing Academies.

PHS also uses the Langford Quality Learning system. Students gather and analyze data about a problem, present their findings, and propose a plan for solving the problem by following the Plan-Do-Study-Act (Langford) cycle.

EXPANDING LEARNING OPTIONS WITH INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION—[RCW 28A.340.085](#)

PHS serves a wide spectrum of students. A growing percentage of their students are taking classes in Running Start, online, and through other off-site learning locations.

SUBMISSION AND REVIEW OF AGREEMENT BY OSPI—[RCW 28A.340.090](#)

According to PHS, the approval process was not difficult or time consuming. OSPI senior leadership in policy, fiscal, and student information met with PHS after they submitted their application to address questions or concerns.

Paideia indicates that the testing calendar for statewide assessments has prevented innovative curriculum sequences and reduced chances for deep cross-curriculum units of study. It has also forced students to sit for assessments in subjects they haven't taken yet (i.e. biology).

Although OSPI understands these challenges, statewide evaluation standards must be uniform to insure complete, valid, and accurate reporting.

III. Recommendation and Conclusion

RECOMMENDATION

OSPI asks the Legislature to clarify whether choice statutes (for students from high school districts) or students of teachers in Valley School District are eligible to be part of the Academy.

CONCLUSION

The application and approval process for innovative inter-district cooperative high school programs has not been burdensome to applicants or OSPI to date. However, the lack of more than one applicant indicates that other nonhigh districts that may have decided to not apply based on some provisions of the bill.

Depending on the Legislature's decision, growth of an inter-district cooperative high school may be limited by OSPI's interpretation of the bill in relation to Choice laws.

OSPI also believes that developing these cooperatives may require a focused communication effort to help districts better understand the opportunity.

Finally, within its enrollment constraints, PHS has been a true pioneer and has provided a good guide for future innovative inter-district cooperative high school programs.

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