

EL CAMINO REAL ALLIANCE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RECOMMENDATION

BOARD MEETING DATE: May 27, 2021

AGENDA ITEM:

V.B. Reducing Graduation Credit Requirements for Juniors/Seniors

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE:

Our most vulnerable students, including students with disabilities, English Learners, students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, and students in our Flex program (alternative education and Independent Study) have been disproportionately impacted by the Covid-19 global pandemic, school site closures, and distance learning. To most effectively support these students and mitigate the impact of the pandemic, Board level intervention is needed to support our students' ability to graduate in a timely fashion. ECR can support our current 11th and 12th graders in this unprecedented time by reducing the overall number of credits required to earn an ECR diploma from 230 total credits to 210 total credits. This would be accomplished by reducing the required elective credits from 75 credits to 55 credits for students currently in these two grade levels. The state of California already recognizes the need for reduced credits in specific situations and offers a reduced credit requirement for students who are homeless (AB 1806) and foster youth (AB 167/216). Many schools and districts throughout the country and the state have already reduced or are considering reducing graduation requirements due to the impact of the pandemic on students.

PERSONNEL INVOLVED:

Executive Director, Assistant Principal of Student Support Services, Assistant Principal of Secondary Counseling Services

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS (IF ANY):

There is no cost to ECR to update the graduation requirements for these two grade levels. While it may decrease demand for some summer classes, there is currently more demand for summer school than courses openings available.

IMPACT ON SCHOOL MISSION, VISION OR GOALS (IF ANY):

As a result of the global Covid-19 pandemic that caused extended school site closures and the transition to distance learning, our most vulnerable students have been disproportionately impacted in their ability to meet all graduation requirements earn their diploma at the same time as their grade-level peers. Students with disabilities, English Learners, students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, and students in our Flex program (alternative education, Independent Study) have been disproportionately impacted. Many challenges resulting from the pandemic are negatively impacting our students and their families, including (but not limited to) the lack of access to in-person instruction due to school site closures, significant social-emotional challenges, changes in economic status resulting in the need for students to

work (or to work more), parents who are not able to provide academic support or structure due to various family circumstances, learning environments in the home that are often less than ideal, and health concerns. Some students have lost family members to the Coronavirus. This is an issue involving equity for our most vulnerable students.

ECR has a duty and a responsibility to support our students with successfully completing graduation requirements and earning a high school diploma. ECR's mission includes preparing our students for the next phase of their journey through a "customized academic program." Our vision includes empowering students to be independent, determined, and compassionate. Expected learning outcomes for our students include not only developing the critical thinking skills to analyze and evaluate information, but also to be able to reassess previous interpretations when presented with new information. We also seek to help our students learn to demonstrate compassion and to create positive change in the world by connecting local issues to global systems. This is an opportunity for ECR to actively demonstrate the qualities that we strive for as an educational institution. Additionally, failure to effectively address the needs of our students will result in a lower graduation rate, which impacts not only our students but also impacts state dashboards, charter compliance, accreditation, and our public reputation in the community.

The California Education Code establishes a minimum set of requirements for graduation from California high schools. Local districts and independent charter school boards have the authority and responsibility to establish the specific requirements beyond these minimum requirements for their school(s) to award a high school diploma. The state of California already recognizes the need for reduced credits in specific situations and offers a reduced credit requirement for students who are homeless (AB 1806) and for foster youth (AB 167/216). Due to the Coronavirus pandemic's negative impact on students, many schools and districts throughout the country and the state have already reduced or are considering reducing graduation requirements. At the California state level, there are several bills under current consideration that would impact student graduation requirements and timing. If ultimately approved, AB 104 includes reduced graduation requirements for students in their 3rd or 4th year of high school (juniors and seniors) during the 2020-2021 school year. This bill was approved by the Assembly 77-0 and is currently waiting for a hearing in the Senate Education Committee.

The proposed reduction in credits to earn a diploma has the potential to impact the graduation timeline for 14% of our current senior class (126 students) who currently have 195 or fewer credits and 19% of our junior class (176 students) who currently have fewer than 140 credits. This percentage may ultimately be higher depending on final spring semester credits earned this year. For our senior class, 33% of those behind on credits are students with a disability (either an IEP or a Section 504 Plan), 25% are English Learners, 40% are enrolled in our Flex program, and 13% are already in their 5th year at ECR. For our junior class, 23% of those behind on credits are students with a disability (either an IEP or a Section 504 Plan), 24% are English Learners, 55% are enrolled in our Flex program.

Updating the graduation requirements now for our junior class would allow our counselors to proactively support students with meeting the updated requirements through programming for fall classes and ensuring students enroll in appropriate summer school classes based on the updated requirements in order to most effectively support their credit recovery.

OPTIONS OR SOLUTIONS:

The Board can consider adjusting ECR's graduation requirements from 230 to 210 credits (a reduction of 20 credits) for students in their 3rd year of high school and beyond (juniors and seniors) or can consider reducing the requirement by an alternative number of credits.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S RECOMMENDATION:

Due to the global Coronavirus pandemic's unprecedented impact on students, the Executive Director recommends that the Board approve adjusting ECR's graduation requirements for students in the 11th and 12th grades this school year to 210 total credits by reducing the elective course requirement from 75 credits to 55 credits.

PROPOSED MOTION:

Motion to approve updating ECR's graduation requirements for students currently in the 11th or 12th grade by reducing the elective credit requirement by 20 credits to a total of 55 credits and reducing the total credit requirement for graduation to 210 credits.