



# Innovative Schools & Zones

## Summary

The 2011 Washington State Legislature passed two bills relating to innovation in schools:

HB 1521 directed OSPI to identify and recognize *existing* innovative schools.

E2SHB 1546 directed OSPI to establish an application to certify *new* innovative schools and innovation zones (groups of schools) that focus on the arts, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (A-STEM). E2SHB 1546 also directed OSPI and the State Board of Education (SBE) to grant waivers of state statutes and administrative rules to these innovative schools and zones when appropriate.

[House Bill 1521-Innovative Schools Recognition](#)

[Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 1546-Innovative Schools & Zones](#)

## Background

### **HB 1421- RECOGNITION OF EXISTING INNOVATIVE SCHOOLS**

In September 2011, OSPI launched and promoted an application to identify existing innovative schools . To be recognized, schools had to:

- Implement bold, creative and innovative educational ideas.
- Hold both students and educators to high expectations.
- Provide students with a diverse array of educational options.
- Engage in meaningful family and community involvement.
- Serve as a laboratory for experimentation and innovation.
- Demonstrate that students have succeeded in meeting expectations.

On November 18, 2011, OSPI announced the selection of [22 innovative schools](#) from 17 districts. The group included schools of all levels, sizes and demographic profiles. Magnet type programs, such as Aviation High School and Vancouver School of Arts and Academics, were identified along with innovative inter-district partnerships such as Delta High School.

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## **E2SHB 1546 - NEW INNOVATIVE SCHOOLS & ZONES**

The Legislature created the Innovation Schools & Zones program to encourage districts to create new innovative programs, focused on A-STEM, in partnership with business, industry and higher education. An innovation zone can be designated if a group of schools share a geographical location or serve students sequentially through grades. No additional state funds were appropriated for these projects. Partnerships with external funders was encouraged.

School districts applied on behalf of programs set to begin during the 2012–2013 school year in January of 2012. Each application included a plan that:

- Defined the scope of the school or zone and described how the designation would enhance student achievement and close gaps using community partnerships and project-based learning.
- Provided specific research-based activities and innovations.
- Justified requests for waivers of state laws or rules.
- Identified goals for student achievement and closing opportunity gaps.
- Provided a budget with anticipated sources of funding including private grants, if any.
- Listed technical resources needed and who will provide the resources.
- Provided written commitment from school directors and administrators to exempt the program from local rules as needed.
- Provided written commitment from school directors and local bargaining units to modify local agreements as needed.
- Identified multiple ways for measuring student achievement improvement, closures of gaps and overall school performance. Included written support from the school directors, superintendent, principal, school staff local employee associations, parent organization, individual parents, businesses, institutions of higher education and community-based organizations.
- Was approved by a majority of staff assigned to the school.

[Twelve programs](#) were approved to begin for the 2012–2013 school year.

### **Waivers Granted**

To reduce barriers to innovative programs, OSPI and SBE provided an expedited review of requests for waivers. Waivers could be denied by OSPI or SBE if the waiver would

likely result in a decrease in student achievement, would jeopardize the school's ability to receive state or federal funds or would violate state or federal laws or rules that are not authorized to be waived. The following schools were granted waivers:

**STEWART MIDDLE SCHOOL (TACOMA)**

A waiver was granted by SBE under Option 1 (WAC 180-18-040 (1) and WAC 180-18-050 (1) and (2)) on November 9, 2012 and is valid until the 2014–2015 school year. Option 1 allows districts to request a waiver for the number of days to be waived to enhance the education program and improve student achievement.

**ODYSSEY HIGH SCHOOL (HIGHLINE)**

A waiver from credit based graduation requirements of WAC 180-51-061 (1)(a) through (h) and WAC 180-51-066 (1)(a) through (h) was granted by SBE on March 15, 2012 and is valid until the 2018–2019 school year.

**Future Work**

As required by statute, the new innovative schools & zones will submit an annual progress report to OSPI in the summer of 2013.

Additionally, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) received a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to perform detailed study of the innovative schools & zones by the summer of 2013. Additional information about the study design is available from the [WSIPP website](#).

**For More Information**

For more information regarding innovative schools & zones, please see <http://www.k12.wa.us/InnovativeSchools/default.aspx> .