

Methow Valley Independent Learning Center

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To Whom it May Concern:

As a school leader and Advisor, I support HB 1162 as a step in the right direction. Methow Valley ILC, similar to Highline Big Picture, has a credit waiver from SBE. This waiver allows us to co-create learning plans with individual students which build upon the individual's strengths, interests, and needs. Without this format, many of our graduates would not be thriving, and several may not have graduated from high school. Releasing students from rigid standards and accountability measures allows individuals to define a path which meets their academic, social, and emotional needs. It allows learners to pursue what is relevant, which is how most humans thrive. Following are three stories of recent ILC graduates to paint a picture of the variety of ways our students succeed:

Carter Darwood is a 2020 graduate of ILC who loves engines. Carter would tell you that as an elementary aged child absolutely hated school. While he could barely make it through a day of school without significant incidents, at home he was content tinkering with engines small and large. Struggling to feel successful due largely to significant learning challenges in math and reading, Carter thrived when problem solving mechanical issues. In this arena, his creativity and intelligence shone. Yet he was still required to muddle through the traditional program. Fast forward to his junior year and a transfer to ILC. In our program, he created a learning plan focused on exploring his interest in mechanics through internships and enabling him to create academic goals around community college readiness. He began to dream of being a certified mechanic and believe that college could actually be an option for him. He learned to advocate for his needs, secure housing, plan for financial independence, and navigate the college systems. He is now a full time student in the Automotive Technology program at Wenatchee Valley College, working part time to fix snow plows and living independently. This fall he was proud to visit us at ILC to announce that he had earned two "A"s on his transcript. He is the first in his family to attend college.

Amelia Osborne is a 2019 ILC graduate who dreamed of helping others. After securing internships at local clinics and one at a regional hospital, Amelia set her sights on nursing school. Despite significant personal barriers, including housing instability and lack of financial support from her family, Amelia was able to focus her learning specifically on her goal of becoming a nurse, as well as gaining the skills and competencies needed for becoming financially stable, healthy, and happy. Her learning plan reflected these goals and enabled her to forge a pathway leading toward a fulfilling future. Amelia has acquired her CNA certification, is working at a hospital in Bellingham and remains a full time college student pursuing a degree in nursing.

Haley Preciado is a 2018 ILC graduate who loves babies. When she first transferred to ILC, she suffered from intense social anxiety which crippled her ability to interact with new peers or adults. The one place she felt comfortable was with babies and toddlers. In her sophomore year, she secured an internship at the local Montessori school. Her learning plan reflected her desire to learn new strategies for nurturing and teaching children, her hopes for overcoming social anxiety, and her wish to achieve financial stability. She worked on these goals and more for three years. Upon graduation, she was offered a full time position at Little Star Montessori. She had secured her own apartment and purchased a vehicle on her own. She is now the lead teacher in the infant & toddler classroom.

Each of these students approached their learning through our program in different ways. They were held accountable for progress through regular exhibitions of learning, where they received authentic feedback from panels of community members, family, and educators. They were challenged not only by life circumstances, but by the hard work of thriving in real world learning experiences. These experiences enabled them to make informed decisions about their life's pathways, challenged them to rise to their best potentials, and enabled them to find success in ways that were truly relevant to them as individuals. Their examples have a significant impact on others in their lives; family and friends, community members and peers. It is through these stories that we can see the true power of education that is individualized, strengths based, and relevant. These stories wouldn't have the same outcome if these individuals were forced into programs with prescribed credits and standardized measures of accountability.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sara Mounsey
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