



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Building Bridges

2021

Authorizing Legislation: [RCW 28A.175.075](#)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Legislature established the Building Bridges program and workgroup in 2007 to keep all students visible and on track to graduate from high school. The state's ongoing engagement and reengagement efforts are based on the three major recommendations of the Building Bridges Workgroup:

1. Set an educational goal for youth- and family serving agencies and coordinate efforts to achieve it.
2. Build local dropout prevention and intervention systems and practices at every grade level.
3. Create a dropout reengagement system for 16- to 24-year-old youth who are not likely to return to high school.

With Building Bridges as a foundation, the Graduation: A Team Effort (GATE) Advisory continues to meet with a focus on coordinating efforts and removing barriers to graduation through:

- Inclusion of a broad base of state agencies and youth serving organizations in collecting feedback; and,
- The promotion of tiered academic, behavioral, social/emotional support system grounded in evidence-based practices.

Washington state continues to improve on the number of students graduating from high school on time (defined as graduating within four years). The graduation rate for students in the Class of 2011 was 76.6%; for the Class of 2020, the rate increased to 82.9%. Extended (5-year) graduation rates increased from 78.2% for the Class of 2011 to 83.9% for the Class of 2020.

For the Class of 2020—students who began as ninth graders in the 2015–16 school year—about 9% of students were recorded as being dropped out (20,926 students). Of the students reported as dropping out in the 2019–20 school year, 81.8% were identified as either unconfirmed transfers or reason unknown. Gaps affecting some student populations persist.

Reengagement system development also continues through the Open Doors programming. 9,575 full time students were served in the 2020–21 school year, which demonstrates growth from the 4,700 full-time equivalent students that were served monthly in the 2017–18 school year in programming through school districts, technical colleges, educational service districts, and state tribal-education compact schools.

Recommendations for the Legislature

The Building Bridges Workgroup recommends the Legislature take the following actions:

- Fund universal preschool for all of Washington’s students.
- Support schools in creating master schedules that are driven by high expectations for all students and the necessary supports to meet those expectations with additional training and data system improvements.
- Increase funding for school staff to provide caring adults. Additional student support staff, such as nurses, school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists are needed.
- Enable year-round funding for Open Doors Youth Reengagement by changing Open Doors Youth Reengagement apportionment from a 1.0 annual average full-time equivalent (AAFTE) allocation per student to a 1.2 AAFTE per student.
- Revise Open Doors Youth Reengagement apportionment rates by providing the district’s prototypical and vocational enhancement rates instead of the current apportionment rate that is a flat rate created by averaging statewide rates.
- Allocate barrier reduction funding for Open Doors Youth Reengagement programs funded at the same rates and tiers as skill centers receive. Support full implementation of the Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol, including expansion of community needs assessment and asset mapping support, as well as funding for community mentoring to expand student access to caring adults.

BACKGROUND

In 2007, the Legislature established the Building Bridges Workgroup, now known as the Graduation: A Team Effort (GATE) Advisory. This high-level workgroup, comprised of state legislators and state agency partners, was charged with creating a statewide program for comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval (DPIR) programming, and to make annual recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor on DPIR best practices and system needs.

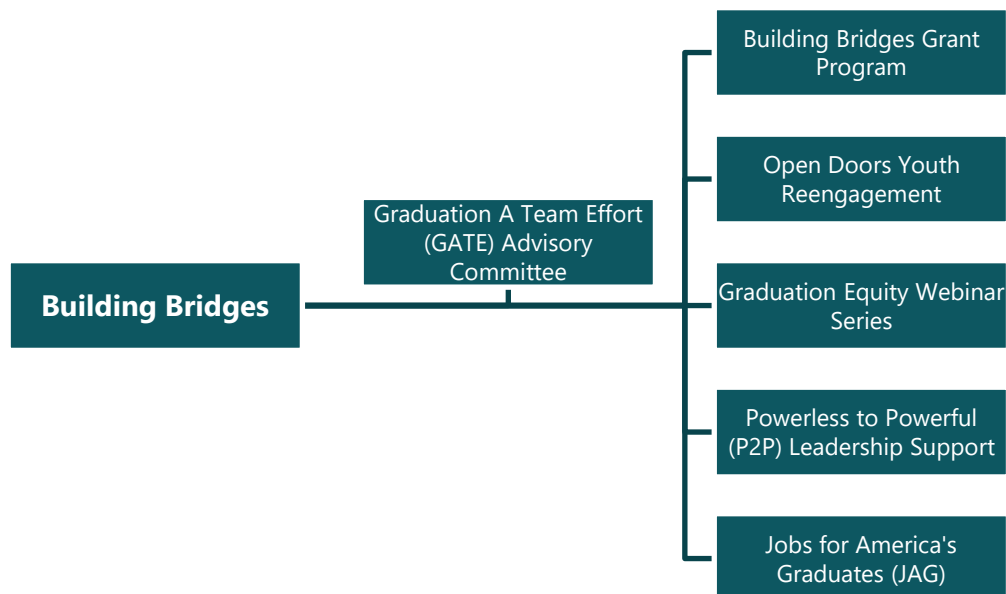
This work has evolved conceptually and been reframed as a continuum of engagement and reengagement supports.

The Workgroup created three primary recommendations which continue to serve as the guiding principles for DPIR programming:

- Set an educational goal for youth- and family-serving agencies, and coordinate efforts to achieve it.
- Build local dropout prevention and intervention system practices at every grade level.
- Create a dropout reengagement system for 16- to 24-year-old youth.

Building Bridges incorporates several projects and programs. See the structure below.

Figure 1: Building Bridges Structure



Building Bridges supports a continuum of supports for the engagement and reengagement continuum. Each component supports proactive engagement and disengagement prevention. Grant funding supports innovation pilots.

For more information go to the [Building Bridges 2008 Legislative Report](#).

In 2018, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) began to leverage the newly adopted Washington School Improvement Framework, authorized under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, and the successes of the Building Bridges Workgroup to further accelerate graduation rates for all students. In support of academic success, dropout prevention and identification practices have been strengthened by the Improvement Framework's focus on school quality and student success indicators, such as regular attendance, ninth graders on-track for graduation, and dual credit course completion.

Over the past few years, OSPI has been intentional about creating direct alignment between Building Bridges and the Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol—a multi-tiered system of supports integrates team-driven shared leadership, data-based decision making, family, student, and community engagement, a continuum of supports, and evidence-based practices. The Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol core components include needs and strengths assessments, community partnerships, coordination of supports, integration of supports, and data-driven practices. Implementation science helps ground this work using teaming structures and improvement science also aligns well with the core components with its data driven framework.

BUILDING BRIDGES ANNUAL PROGRESS

Graduation: A Team Effort (GATE) Advisory

The [Graduation A Team Effort \(GATE\) Partnership Advisory Committee](#) (Revised Code of Washington [RCW] 28A.175.075) is a broad base of youth and family-serving state agencies and community organizations that meet quarterly to provide a wide lens of input on specific goals and topics related to the development and implementation of a dropout prevention, intervention, and reengagement system across cradle to career milestones.

The GATE Advisory group has gathered feedback from members, including organizations serving Black and/or Indigenous youth and young people of color, to help eliminate barriers to serving students and grant awards. Their comments are incorporated in the recommendations section of this report.

Building Bridges Grant Program

In the 2020–21 school year, OSPI awarded 12 [Building Bridges grants](#) to various community-based organizations serving Black and/or Indigenous youth and young people of color to offer timely supports to students. Activities include mentoring, tutoring,

transition planning, and more. With additional federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds, the project expanded to 36 grants over the 2021–22 and 2022–23 school years, supporting additional youth-serving community-based organizations.

These innovation grants allow the program to continue to explore promising practices throughout the engagement and reengagement continuum.

See RCW 28A.175.025 for more information about the grant program.

Graduation Equity Webinar Series

In the 2021–22 school year, the [Graduation Equity Webinar Series](#) has continued to focus on best practice models and highlight schools pioneering those practices and education leaders from across the country. Some of the themes the series explored included attendance and engagement, hope and mentoring, social emotional learning, suicide prevention, and academic press. The webinars have continued to draw a wide audience across the state of primarily administrators, school counselors and student support staff, and educators.

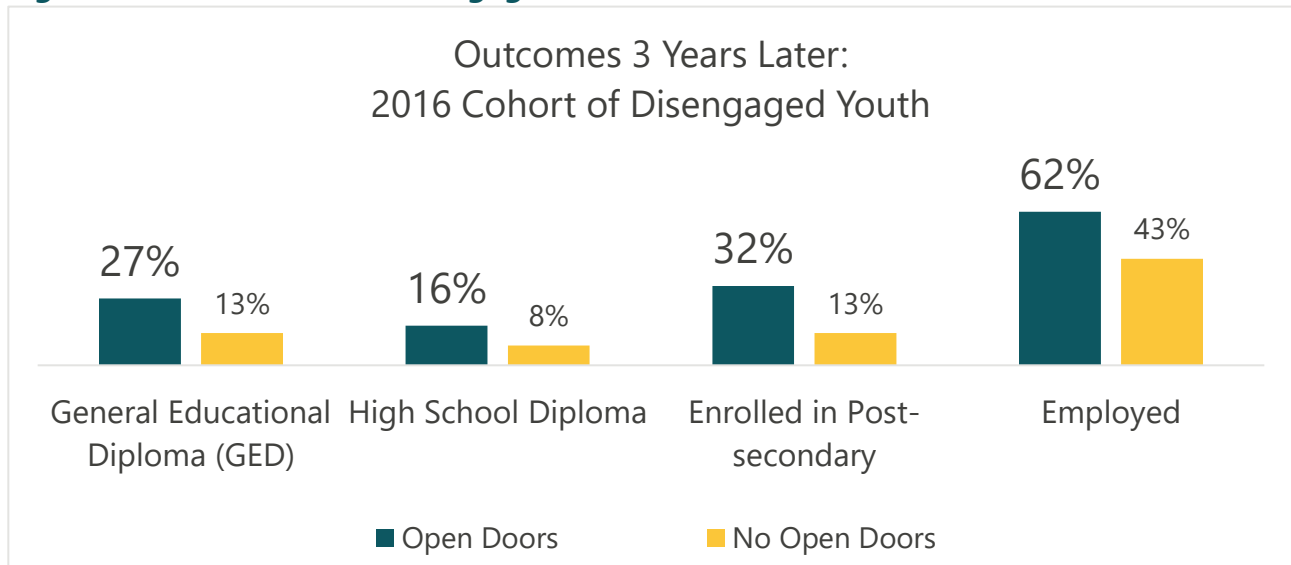
OSPI offered Clock Hours for participants and expanded the accessibility for participants with sign language interpretation and live captions. Webinar recordings can be found on OSPI's [Graduation Equity Webinar YouTube playlist](#).

Open Doors Youth Reengagement

[Open Doors Youth Reengagement](#) is a reengagement system that provides education and services to older youth, ages 16–21, who have dropped out of school or are not expected to graduate from high school by the age of 21 (see [RCW 28A.175.100: Statewide dropout reengagement program](#)). Open Doors reengages disconnected youth through programs that encourage community partnerships, create multiple pathways for students to realize success, and provide an on-ramp to post-secondary achievement through a performance based, individualized support model.

Youth reengagement aligns with the Building Bridges Workgroup's third recommendation: Create a dropout reengagement system for youth (ages 16–24) who are not likely to return to high school. Open Doors Youth Reengagement Program serves as a critical component of the Building Bridges program as it represents Washington's legislative strategy to reengage students who are no longer attending school and to assist students who are unable to graduate with their four-year cohort due to severe credit deficiency. Open Doors Youth Reengagement has proven successful in helping eligible students attain General Education Diplomas (GEDs), high school diplomas, enrollment in post-secondary options, and employment (Figure 2).

Figure 2: 2016 Cohort of Disengaged Youth Outcomes after 3 Years



Source: [Open Doors Program Outcomes | Washington State Education Research and Data Center](#) – 2021 Report; Figure 10; Figure 10. *Outcomes 3 years later for Graduate Requirement Year (GRY) 2016 dropout cohort.*

Collectively, Open Doors Youth Reengagement Programs served 9,575 students in the 2020–21 school year, with an average of more than 5,000 full-time equivalent students monthly. Open Doors is available in many locations and is implemented by 135 school districts, several direct-funded technical colleges, educational service districts (ESDs), and a tribal-education compact school. The entities deliver or partner to deliver reengagement programming for older youth not likely to graduate in the traditional or alternative education models.

OSPI continues to partner with the Washington State Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) on longitudinal performance goals for youth reengagement reporting as regulated by WAC 392-700-195. The most recent report, [Open Doors Program Outcomes \(2021\)](#) includes outcomes related to high school education, postsecondary education, and workforce participation. Among the report’s key findings:

*“Open Doors successfully enrolls students before they leave high school, as well as engaging students who already left.
Open Doors successfully routed 41% of students to receive a GED or high school degree.
Participation in postsecondary education, completion of certificates and associate degrees, and participation in employment increases by years in the program and age.”*

The report contained further analysis of a subset of the 2017 Open Doors cohort, which included students expected to graduate in 2016 and who dropped out of school prior to enrolling in an Open Doors program in 2017, shows that Open Doors participants graduated and/or enrolled in postsecondary education at twice the rate of students who did not participate in Open Doors.

During 2020–21, Open Doors Youth Reengagement implemented an emergency rule allowing virtual and synchronous options for program attendance and engagement requirements. The program will submit a report to the Legislature in November 2021 with recommendations for improving service for post-resident youth as directed by Section 5 of House Bill (HB) 1295, passed by the 2021 Legislature. For both the emergency rule and the recommendations report, OSPI partnered with the Open Doors Steering comprised of members from community colleges, community-based organizations, and ESDs.

Powerless to Powerful Leadership Support

Powerless to Powerful (P2P) is a team-driven leadership support process designed for principal leaders. This leadership network supported five Educational Service District teams in partnership with action researchers from Gonzaga University during the 2020–21 school year. Focused attention was given to schools identified for support through the federal accountability school improvement process.

Fifteen school districts and the schools within those districts signed on for regular professional development seminars and coaching between sessions. Evaluation through quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews has shown that participants have seen progress in connecting staff to the school efforts, building a sense of purpose and belonging, and envisioning life beyond COVID. The indicators for success may have been altered, but the core goals and key leadership strategies to achieve them remain consistent.

Schools are engaging in meaningful check ins with staff to collect data and using that data, along with other sources to create and monitor a leadership plan designed to support leadership actions to support staff and students.

Jobs for America's Graduates – Washington (JAG-WA)

Jobs for America's Graduates – Washington (JAG-WA) helps young people to stay in school through graduation by providing them an opportunity to attend a regional high school or skill center, work toward graduation, and get a job.

In the past year, JAG-WA has focused on delivering programs in hybrid or entirely virtual models. This was a change from historic in-person delivery. In response to growing unemployment rates and future workforce shortages, national employers including

Amazon, Hilton, and Icee offered students opportunities for post-graduation employment. OSPI partnered with the JAG national organization to adapt and modify practices in response to rapidly changing school and student need, because of COVID-19.

OUTCOMES DATA

Impact of COVID-19

Since March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged Washington's schools. As school districts worked to provide access to education for all learners in a remote environment, emergency rules were put in place to provide a no harm grading policy. Under this policy students could not earn a grade that was lower than they had earned when the stay-at-home order was issued but were able to improve grades. Schools were able to issue incomplete grades. This change will likely have lasting impacts on graduation trends.

Partner Agency Performance Measures

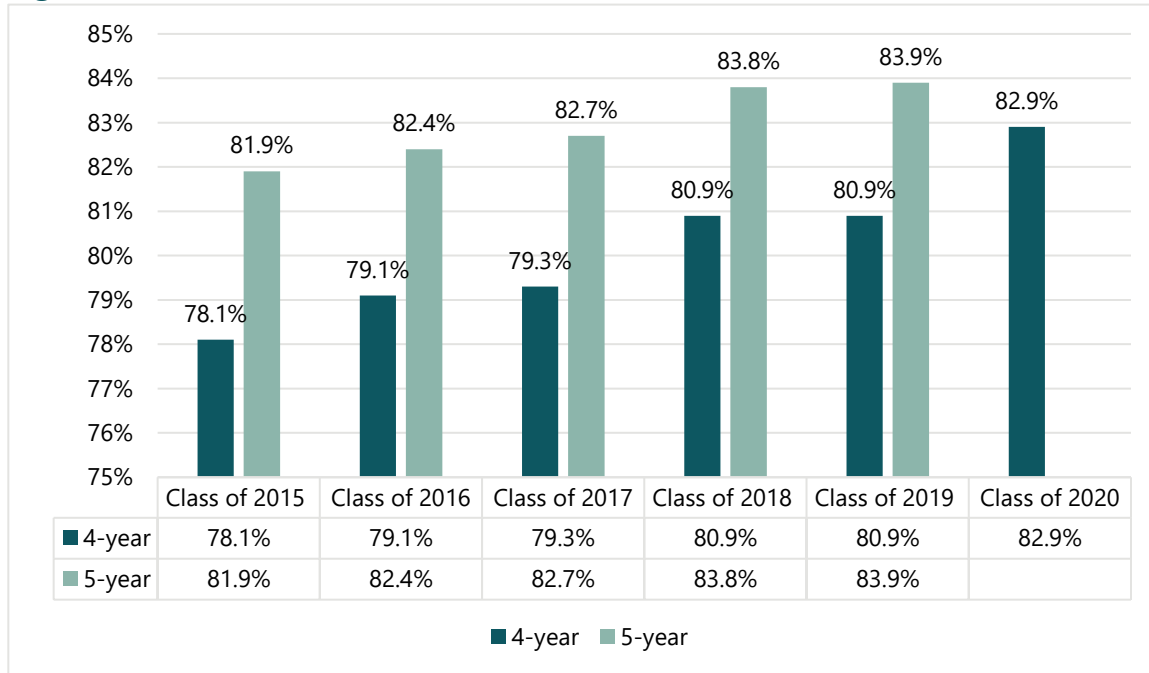
Each year OSPI tracks performance measures and benchmarks based on student characteristics and outcomes specified in RCW 28A.175.035(1)(e). The Building Bridges partner agencies and organizations across the state may be collecting related performance measures and benchmarks based on student characteristics and outcomes, but the level of participation has not been tracked recently.

Student Data

Washington's goal is that every student group will reach a minimum 4-year graduation rate of 90 percent by the 2027–28 school year (see [Washington's ESSA Consolidated Plan, section A.4.iii. "Establishment of Long-Term Goals"](#)).

In 2019–20 school year assessments were not offered statewide. Spring 2021 assessments were pushed to fall 2021 instead with a shorter form test that would not make it comparable to previous years. Results will be published in 2022 and spring 2022 administration of assessments will be more in line with the typical data model.

Figure 3: 4- and 5-Year Graduation Rates



Source: Washington State Report Card, retrieved November 15, 2021.

Figure 4: 4-Year Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity Over Time

Student Race/Ethnicity	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
American Indian/Alaskan Native	60.6%	60.3%	60.4%	61.7%	69.8%
Asian	88.6%	87.5%	90.0%	90.4%	91.1%
Black/African American	70.7%	71.5%	74.4%	73.6%	76.3%
Hispanic/Latino	72.3%	72.7%	75.2%	75.7%	77.7%
Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	68.2%	68.1%	74.0%	74.4%	77.3%
Two or More Races	77.9%	79.7%	80.6%	81.2%	83.9%
White	81.5%	81.9%	82.9%	82.8%	84.7%

Source: Washington State Report Card, retrieved November 15, 2021.

Figure 5: 4-Year Graduation Rates in Student Groups

Student Group	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
English Learners	57.6%	57.8%	64.2%	62.4%	68.4%
Low Income	69.4%	70.0%	72.1%	72.2%	75.1%
Students with Disabilities	58.1%	59.4%	61.7%	62.1%	64.5%
Migrant	67.4%	68.2%	70.9%	73.6%	75.5%
Students Experiencing Homelessness	53.2%	53.9%	55.5%	55.8%	59.4%

Student Group	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Female	82.4%	82.6%	84.0%	84.0%	86%
Male	76.0%	76.3%	77.8%	78.1%	80%

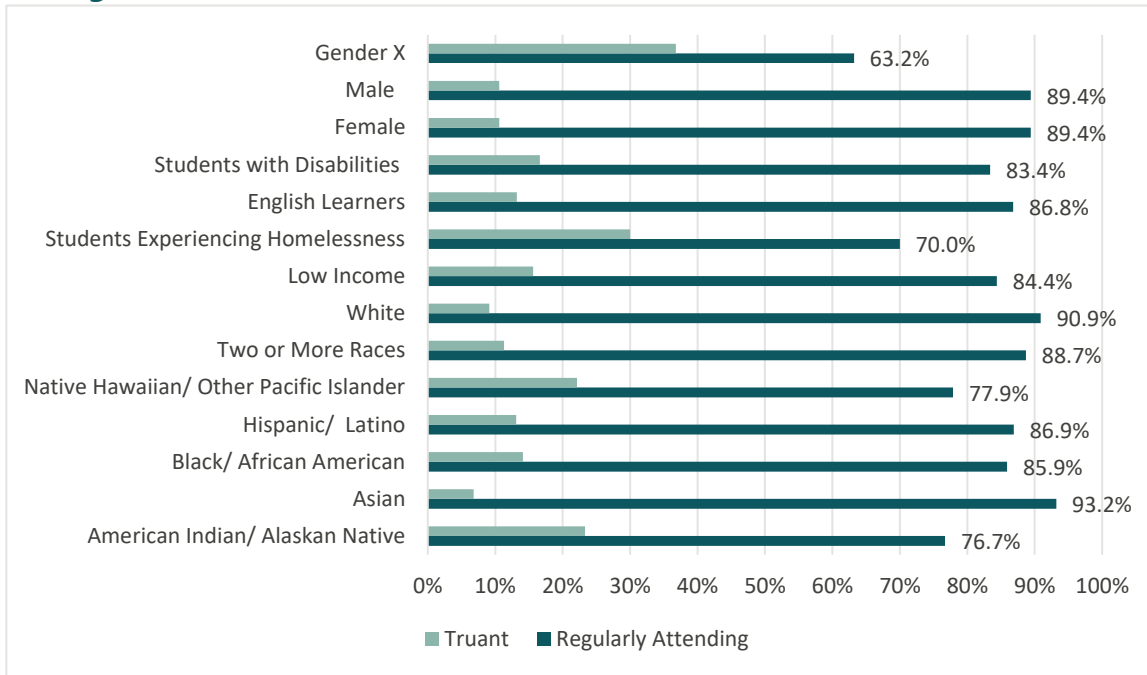
Source: Washington State Report Card, retrieved November 15, 2021.

Figure 6: Annual Dropouts – Reasons for Dropping Out

Reason	Total Students Recorded as Dropped Out in 2019–20	Percent of Total Enrollment
Attended School for 4 Years; Didn't Graduate	688	3.3%
Lacked Progress or had Poor Grades	1,213	5.8%
School Not for Me; Chose to Stay Home	1,025	4.9%
Married, Family Support, or Child-Related	35	0.2%
Offered Training or Chose to Work	194	0.9%
Exited with a GED	515	2.5%
Expelled or Suspended	67	0.3%
Drug- or Alcohol-Related	12	0.1%
Unconfirmed Transfer	6,045	28.9%
Dropped for Medical Reasons Not in School	61	0.3%
Dropped for Other or Unknown Reason <i>Includes school withdrawal codes of D0 – student dropped out for unknown reason, U1 or U2 – student quit attending school, location, or status unknown</i>	11,071	52.9%
Total	20,926	100%

Source: Washington State Report Card, retrieved November 24, 2021.

Figure 7: What percent of students had fewer than two absences per month, on average in 2020?



Source: Washington State Report Card, retrieved November 15, 2021.

EMERGING BEST PRACTICES

Throughout the year OSPI staff have been looking for promising practices to bounce back from the pandemic. Transitioning between virtual and in person classrooms has caused social and academic disruption for students and staff. Coming back to school will require schools to provide student supports to more students than school systems have historically served.

Restarting and Reinventing School

Stanford's Learning Policy Institute authored a helpful guide in August of 2020 with recommendations for "[Restarting and Reinventing School: Learning in the Time of COVID and Beyond](#)". The paper lists 10 priorities:

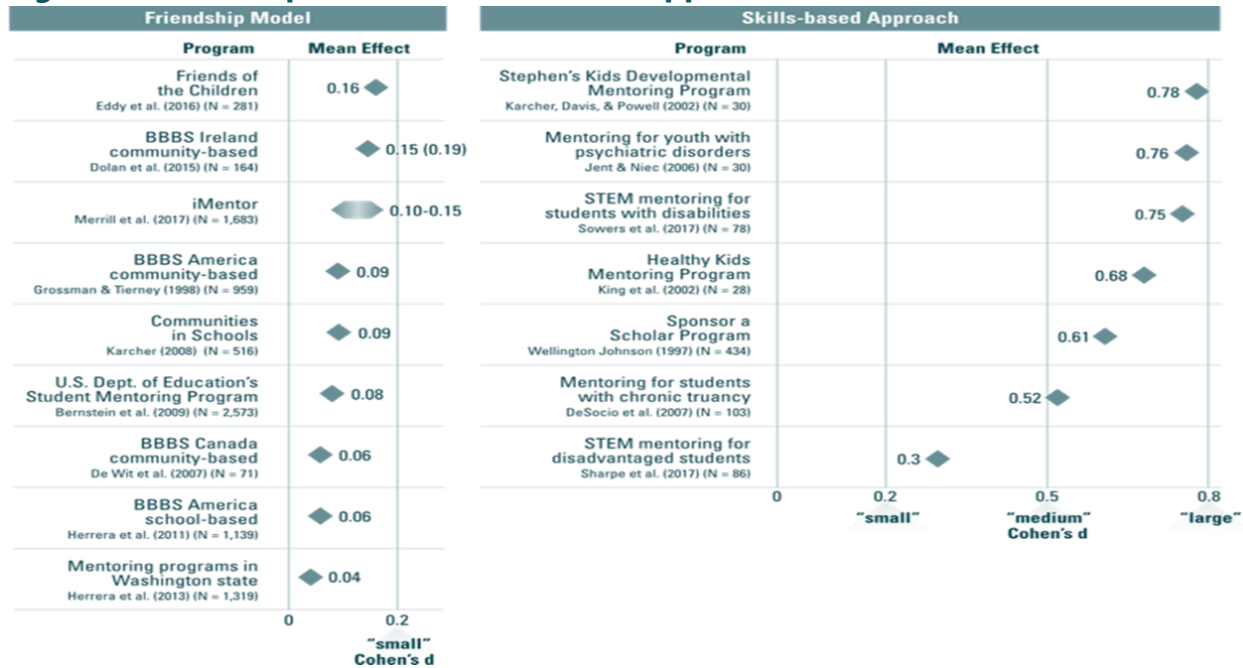
1. Close the digital divide
2. Strengthen distance and blended learning
3. Assess what students need
4. Ensure supports for social and emotional learning
5. Redesign schools for stronger relationships
6. Emphasize authentic, culturally responsive learning
7. Provide expanded learning time
8. Establish community schools and wraparound supports
9. Prepare educators for reinventing schools
10. Leverage more adequate and equitable school funding

Mentoring for Transitional supports and learning recovery.

Mentor Washington has created a guide for mentoring, "Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring" that includes standards related to recruitment, screening, training, matching and initiating, monitoring and support, and closure. This guide also has additional supplements for best practices for LGBTQ+ youth, STEM, workplaces, E-Mentoring, peer mentoring, and group mentoring.

Skill-based mentoring programs show more promise than friendship models.

Figure 8: Friendship Model vs. Skill-based Approach Effect Sizes



Source: Dr. Jean Rhodes (2021).

Early Warning Systems

Dr. Robert Balfanz and a multitude of researchers have studied how to predict which students will get to graduate on time. The goal of an early warning system is to identify "the right intervention for the right student at the right time." An early warning system includes three key components.

The ABCs

Includes research-based predictors of student engagement, attendance, behavior, and coursework, which drive the process and focus attention on students who without added help, would disengage.

Teacher Teams

Grade level and cross-curricular teacher teams, sharing the same students, and empowered by the administration to act within and beyond their classrooms on behalf of those students.

Tiered Interventions

A coordinated system of interventions to meet the needs of the whole school (Tier 1), targeted groups of students with common needs (Tier 2), and individually case managed high needs students (Tier 3).

These indicators and practices align with multi-tiered system of supports and the Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol.

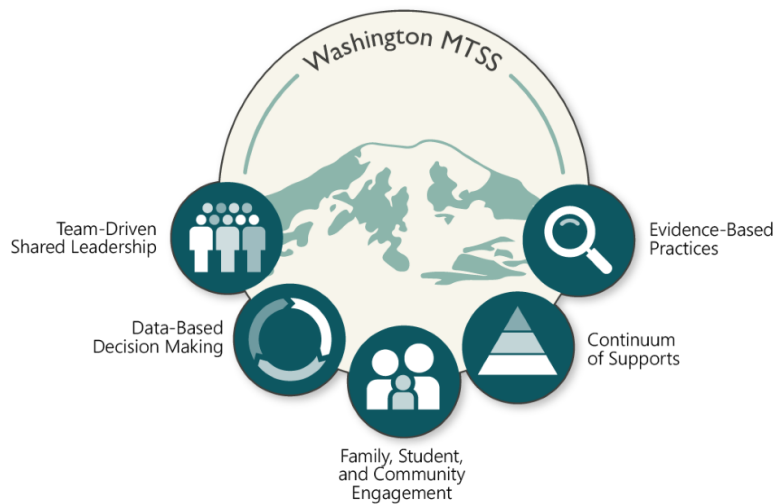
To learn more you can read Johns Hopkins' Everyone Graduates' ["Indicators & Interventions: A Practical Manual for Early Warning Systems."](#)

Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Supported by the work of Kent McIntosh and colleagues at the University of Oregon College of Education, OSPI has identified Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) as an essential framework for enhancing the adoption and implementation of a continuum of evidence-based practices to achieve important outcomes for every student.

The MTSS framework builds on a public health approach that is preventative and focuses on organizing the efforts of adults within systems to be more efficient and effective. MTSS helps to ensure students benefit from nurturing environments and equitable access to universal instruction and supports that are culturally and linguistically responsive, universally designed, and differentiated to meet their unique needs.

Figure 9: Washington MTSS Framework



Read more on [OSPI's MTSS page](#).

Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol

The Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol core components include needs and strengths assessments, community partnerships, coordination of supports, integration of supports, and data-driven practices.

When a student struggles in school, the extent to which they get the support they need to be successful depends on several factors. Someone must notice that the student has a need for additional support, an educator must correctly identify the source of the student's

struggle, and the school must be able to connect the student to an appropriate intervention.

In many cases, schools do not have a system in place to uniformly identify early warning signs that a student might be struggling and to address them in a way that is culturally or linguistically responsive.

Without a system in place, an opportunity gap is created because students are not identified based on need, but instead based on whether a caring adult was in the right place at the right time or had access to the right data they needed to notice the student's need for support.

Research shows that when implemented within the context of a tiered system of support, ISS, which focuses on partnering with the community to develop or secure and coordinate supports which target academic and nonacademic barriers to achievement, is a promising approach to improving student learning and development (Moore, K.A., et. al., 2014).

For more information, see the [Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol](#).

Hope Science

Dr. Chan Hellman, a professor at the University of Oklahoma School of Social Work and Founding Director of the Hope Research Center, has authored several books on the science of hope. Dr. Hellman's research led him to creating the Children's Hope Scale, which can measure hope in adults, children, and communities. The Children's Hope scale has inspired several questions on the Washington Healthy Youth Survey. Hope is an important predictor of positive outcomes for human service agencies and can be increased and sustained through effective programming.

According to [Hellman's research](#), hope is the belief that the future will be better and you have the power to make it so. Hope is based on three main ideas:

1. The ability to set desirable goals
2. Ability to identify viable pathways to these goals
3. The capacity to dedicate mental energy or willpower to pursue these goals

Network Improvement Communities

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has created a body of research around improvement science. In line to support the MTSS framework, when conditions are set to bring researchers and educators together to practice disciplined inquiry to identify, adapt, and scale up promising practices they can accelerate learning in key areas. A

foundational reading is Learning to Improve, which includes these [six core principles of improvement](#):

1. Make the work problem-specific and user-centered. It starts with a single question: "What specifically is the problem we are trying to solve?" It enlivens a co-development orientation: engage key participants early and often.
2. Variation in performance is the core problem to address. The critical issue is not what works, but rather what works, for whom and under what set of conditions. Aim to advance efficacy reliably at scale.
3. See the system that produces the current outcomes. It is hard to improve what you do not fully understand. Go and see how local conditions shape work processes. Make your hypotheses for change public and clear.
4. We cannot improve at scale what we cannot measure. Embed measures of key outcomes and processes to track if change is an improvement. We intervene in complex organizations. Anticipate unintended consequences and measure these too.
5. Anchor practice improvement in disciplined inquiry. Engage rapid cycles of Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) to learn fast, fail fast, and improve quickly. That failures may occur is not the problem; that we fail to learn from them is.
6. Accelerate improvements through networked communities. Embrace the wisdom of crowds. We can accomplish more together than even the best of us can accomplish alone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Program Implementers & Youth Serving Providers

Below are some proposed strategies that program implementers, school leaders, and youth serving organizations should consider exploring to support each student getting what they need to be successful in Washington schools.

Start implementing a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) and the Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol

- Conduct community/school student support asset mapping.
- Secure community partnerships to ensure student needs are addressed.
- Identify and administer a student-level needs assessment.
- Provide timely data reports using attendance, behavior, and course work measures to identify students that need support.
- Provide time for teachers to meet to review student data trends, assign supports, and evaluate their effectiveness.
- Empower teacher leaders to suggest improvements.

Create school schedules to build relationships and create career and college going transcripts

- Develop school schedules to maximize robust transcripts to support post high school training and college access.
- Consider adding an advisory period with a consistent advisor from year to year.
- Create flexibility in your schedule so students who need additional supports can access them within the school day.
- Integrate mentoring services into the school day.
- Use a social emotional learning curriculum and integrate social emotional learning into core subject areas.

Provide integrated social emotional supports via mentoring

- Education that promotes social emotional learning has a wide range of positive outcomes, including academic performance, healthy relationships, mental wellness.

Help students reach their desired future through hope-based High School & Beyond Plans

- Student motivation increases as they work toward their goals and believe they will accomplish them. School staff can directly support student High School and Beyond Plan development, while community mentoring organizations can be powerful partners for reiterating goal setting and pathway identification activities and offering culturally relevant motivation strategies.

Participate in a Network Improvement Community (NIC)

- Encourage adults to join existing networks and share their learning. Learn about best practices, set goals, review progress, share promising ideas, and get inspired by colleagues.
- Support regional creation with a group of schools and/or community partners that are working toward a shared goal.

Build relationships with youth serving community-based organizations

- Organizations have access to youth and families that can complement school goals. They can offer relevant and timely support to youth that are struggling to engage in or have disengaged from educational programming through providing outreach, valuable mentoring, tutoring, and social emotional support and fill in gaps in staffing and personalization in our school system.
- Knowing the organizations in the community, their focus areas and who they serve through asset mapping, as well as community needs assessment efforts can help build a robust and comprehensive support system that will more effectively, efficiently, and equitably meet the needs of students, especially those furthest from educational justice.

Recommendations for the Legislature

Improve and Increase Access to Caring Adults

School staff were already limited before the pandemic struck. Many schools were struggling to find student support staff such as school counselors, school nurses, school psychologists, and social workers. School Counselors have caseloads that exceed the recommended caseload of 1:150.

It is not uncommon for one school nurse to serve an entire district of students. With the additional needs of contact tracing, more positions need to be funded to meet the need.

The pandemic created additional job duties, early retirements, and lower enrollment in teaching programs. Support staff such as substitute teachers, paraeducators, bus drivers, lunch services, custodians have also been difficult to attract.

Students now need increased support. Many students earned incomplete grades for courses during the pandemic, suffered from loss, depression, and isolation. High School and Beyond Plans have been disrupted and need to be reevaluated so students stay on track. School districts across the state have shown increasing interest in integrating social emotional learning, transition supports, and mentoring into their programs. Many schools are working with community-based organizations to fill the needs of students when school staff are not available.

With the passage of legislation that covers the cost of employing more caring adults, there are still not enough applicants to fill these positions. The GATE Advisory recommends considering opportunities and incentives to attract potential professionals to fill these positions through pipeline shifts that help create more teachers, administrators, and student support staff.

Dedicate Resources to Support Innovation Pilots

To create a continuum of engagement and reengagement supports, there needs to be funds designated to attract and sustain participation. Innovation pilots that support attendance, community partnerships, and ninth grade success are reliant on ongoing funding for best practices to take hold. For full implementation of new practices, it is ideal to have funding span five years. Grant funds usually buy teacher time for participating in professional learning and provide resources to support student success. Innovation pilots can provide staffing, networking of best practices, job embedded coaching, and access to best practices.

Provide year-round funding for Open Doors Youth Reengagement

A current barrier within the Open Doors Youth Reengagement Program is the ability to sustain programs through the summer. Presently, Open Doors operates with a 1.0 annual average full-time equivalent (AAFTE) allocation. The present allocation is a barrier to Open Doors Youth Reengagement programs offering a year-round schedule as the programs serve students without reliable access to apportionment (funding) for the entire year-round schedule. The solution to this issue would be for Open Doors to have a 1.2 AAFTE allocation, allowing all dropout reengagement students to be claimed for 12 months at a 1.0 FTE per month so that programs can depend on funding through all months that they serve students.

Revise Open Doors Youth Reengagement Apportionment Rates

The current Open Doors full-time equivalency (FTE) allocation is aligned to the average Running Start non-vocational rate. While this is an average fiscal rate for all districts, a few outlying districts generate more than this average and thus in some districts where there are Open Doors programs, the schools receive from \$200-\$5,000 less per Open Doors AAFTE than the district rate for prototypical students. Districts should receive the prototypical and vocational enhancements for all students, including Open Doors students, to provide greater equity in resources.

Allocate barrier reduction funding for Open Doors Youth Reengagement programs

Barrier reduction funds would allow Open Doors Youth Reengagement programs to cover additional costs for youth such as transportation, meals, gear and equipment for internships, clothing, and utilities. Funds could serve all youth enrolled in the program and are recommended to be funded at the same rates and tiers as skill center allocations. Currently, for skill centers with 50% or more students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL), the allocation for the site is \$55 per student in November and \$56 per student in February. For skill centers where less than 50% of students are eligible for FRPL, the allocation for the site is \$39 per student in November and \$39.48 per student in February.

Leverage more adequate and equitable school funding

Building Bridges grants can be used to ensure supports for social and emotional learning as well as provide important partnerships to redesign schools for stronger relationships. With increased mentoring from BIPOC organizations, schools can help to emphasize authentic, culturally responsive learning, and increase learning time.

[Restarting and Reinventing School: Learning in the Time of COVID and Beyond](#) specifically calls out in Priority 7 (p.11):

- Infuse high-quality tutoring within and beyond the school day. There is a well-established literature on the positive effects of tutoring, which can produce large gains that can be achieved cost-effectively both in-person and virtually.
- Expand high-quality after-school programs. Research shows that after-school extensions of learning time, when used well, can accelerate learning and reduce the opportunity gap. After-school learning opportunities are made more meaningful when they align with the school's academic learning goals and incorporate meaningful activities that engage deeper learning pedagogies with content that is connected to students' cultural backgrounds and lives outside of school.

Strong Foundations: Fully fund preschool for every Washington student

In Washington, the students who score lower on the WaKIDS assessment stay behind in other assessments throughout their school experience. Providing each student with preschool would increase access to school content from the outset, creating a stronger foundation to build on. Universal preschool also provides support to working families who may not be able to afford childcare programs. This preventative approach is equity forward and will directly impact generations of Washington students and scholars.

Support Improving Master Scheduling

Schools would benefit from support to audit their practices for master scheduling. The legislature should fund balanced calendar innovation efforts, as well as equity auditing and system supports, such as data analytics and coaching support.

Schools struggle to match the needs of students with course offerings that are aligned to student aspirations, needs for additional support, and the flexibility to adjust based on changing student populations. Many schools do not have the capacity to audit their master schedules. Ideally, a school would be able to expand advanced courses and pathways, remove barriers so students have access to advanced coursework, build proactive supports to ensure students stay on track for graduation, and eliminate course offerings that do not lead to post-secondary readiness.

Piloting models for mastery-based learning has potential to accelerate and engage students who are struggling due to incomplete credits and disengagement.

Teachers also need time to prepare. With staffing shortages many teachers are operating without planning periods or using an emergency certificate as they substitute for other classes. It would be helpful to build in additional teacher preparation time throughout the school year to better support school staff wellbeing.

Support a Statewide Implementation of a Comprehensive Student Engagement System

Fund and support the development and implementation of a comprehensive student engagement system through the Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol. A comprehensive student engagement system requires capacity, time, and resources for full implementation. Access to core content, trained professionals, embedded professional development, and resources to identify and serve students that need more support is critical in our schools. Ideally each school staff needs support to have the means to regularly review data sets (such as asset mapping, needs assessments, and disaggregated

early warning indicator) and provide students with timely evidence-based practices and supports, including family and community partnerships.

The following would be important components of a comprehensive student engagement system to introduce or expand.

Data Access & Training

Access to disaggregated early warning student data sets is limited by school staff capacity and by access to data visualizations. To respond to early warning system concerns, data needs to be pulled and reviewed often. For schools who currently do not have access to data visualizations, it would be helpful to provide access and training on how to integrate data reviewing practices.

Capacity for Data-Informed Decision Making

With the limited capacity in Washington schools additional funding for mentoring and high intensity tutoring may help to bridge the gaps.

For a multitiered system of support to become a standard practice, schools and districts across the state would require funding for the time that is needed for teams to meet to plan and progress monitor student supports based on the needs of the students in their schools. Teams would also benefit from participating in regional networks to support cross pollination of promising practices.

Leadership Development

According to a [report from the University of Washington in 2017](#), on average 42% of principals remain in their same schools after five years, while an additional 23% remain in their same districts statewide. 22% of principals exited the Washington state system, including those who may have retired. According to the [PESB](#), with the pandemic, 53% of teachers work using emergency certificates, with 44% using residency certificates (p. 18). To maximize the interest of principal candidates, these candidates need to support them through mentorship, coaching, and funding participation in networks for improvement, similar to the Powerless to Powerful Leadership Learning Network.

CONCLUSION

Building Bridges continues to create innovative projects that support graduation equity, engagement, and reengagement efforts. The Building Bridges work has seen successes in several of its programs, including the GATE Advisory, Graduation Equity Webinars, Open Doors Youth Reengagement, and Building Bridges Community Grants. This work has supported student engagement, capacity building, and collaboration among youth-serving organizations.

Many of the projects for the 2021–22 and 2022–23 school years will be funded out of Elementary and Secondary School Education Relief (ESSER) funds. These funds covered costs for forty community-based organizations to provide mentoring support to students across the state, and the staffing to support it. Without additional funding and staffing these grants will not continue.

The GATE Advisory recommendations are a positive starting place for the legislature and youth serving organizations to start to address access to education in our state.

The GATE Advisory work has attracted partnerships and interest from a variety of youth serving organizations. Drawing on the collective knowledge of the workgroup, Washington can continue to build toward a more just educational system.

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