

Student Access to Dropout Prevention Supports Annual Survey

## 2016

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## Executive Summary

Washington continues to improve graduation rates and outcomes for youth, but we are still seeing one in five students not graduate within five years.

The purpose of this annual survey is to:

* Measure progress in developing district-level systemic supports to reduce dropouts and increase graduation rates.
* Identify common practices to support districts, as well as barriers and needs.

Major sections of the survey include:

* Early Warning Systems
* Responsive services
* District/Building System of Support
* Barriers and issues

For the 2016 survey, 123 districts (42%) responded, accounting for around seventy-three percent (73%) of Washington public school students.

| Question Topic | 2015 response | 2016  response | Difference 2015-2016 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Data Systems and Partners | | | |
| Has Formal Graduation Goal | 53% | 55% | +2% |
| Has Early Warning Data System | 72% | 82% | +10% |
| Has 3 Tier Supports | 79% | 88% | +9% |
| Inform Students/Families of supports | 88% | 70% | -18% |
| Partner with Community | 80% | 77% | -3% |

### ****Data Systems and Partners****

Over eighty-two percent (82%) have a dropout early warning data system. Compared to last year, more schools have a data system at the high school, middle school, and elementary levels.

Articulating a graduation goal and publicizing it to staff, students, families, and community members help frame the message that graduation is bigger than school, and that the community as a whole plays a critical role in the effort. More districts (55%) report having a formal graduation goal. This is a two percent (2%) increase from last year. Of the districts that report a goal, 31.5% publicize the goal to staff, students, families and community members.

The majority of districts report moving forward in implementing multi-tier system of supports (MTSS), including: a graduation goal; an early warning data system and processes; tiered supports; and a process to inform students and families of available supports. Overall, thirty-four percent (34%) of districts report having all four components.

### ****System Supports****

More than half of building teams are following implementation plans, while meeting with their district at least twice a year. These teams have authority to make decisions and meet at least monthly (75%). They report to the community every six months and sixty percent (60%) report both program information and outcomes.

Districts are asking for more staffing and professional development around differentiated instruction, followed closely by mental health promotion and counseling, dual credit, and student and parent engagement. At this point, almost half of districts don’t have a process for adjusting to training needs. Over half of the districts said that the outcomes of their professional development were reviewed informally instead of being targeted for specific training, selection, or coaching plans.

**Leading District issues/needs:**

* Staffing for system support, tier 2 and 3 case management
* Alternative accountability: options to recognize success for outcomes including six-plus-year graduation rates, vocational diploma, connecting to and completing programs beyond high school that may not include a diploma.

## Background

For the 2014–15 school year, the adjusted on-time (four-year class of 2015) graduation rate was 78.1% with the extended (five-year class of 2015) graduation rate reaching 81.1%, an increase of around one percent (1%) for both categories.

Of students who enrolled as freshmen in 2010–2011, 62,598 graduated. 62,164 graduated with a high school diploma and 434 graduated through an AA degree (usually through a Running Start program). 8,348 are still enrolled.

Nine thousand five hundred and eleven (9,511) students are counted as dropped out. This group is split in three categories—the reason for dropping out is known, unknown, or withdrawn to get a GED. Unknown dropouts made up over fifty-five percent (55%) of the dropouts. Although these students may not have dropped out, the state just doesn’t have any confirmation for where they have gone and therefore they are considered dropouts. This means that on average, qualitatively six students dropped out a day.

Supported by the partnership of the Governor’s office and their goal of raising graduation rates by two percent (2%) each year, OSPI, through Graduation: A Team Effort (GATE), first conducted a baseline survey of districts targeting the systemic elements of a comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention, and reengagement system.

From this survey and report, OSPI and GATE have shared with districts and partners elements of a multi-tiered system of supports, their value, examples, and tools for implementing and using data for improvement. OSPI has created Equity Analytic data visualizations to present data that identifies successes and disproportionality in higher-risk demographics, specifically in graduation and discipline rates.

Comparing the 2016 survey to the 2015 survey is mostly positive, demonstrating at least a better understanding of the vocabulary and system elements presented. Further analysis will need to be accomplished to compare combinations of elements with OSPI’s graduation key performance indicators of graduation rates, post-graduation enrollment, failure in core 9th-grade courses, attendance, and discipline.

OSPI’s efforts are largely informed by the foundational work of Building Bridges, as well as Jobs for America’s Graduates, Graduation: A Team Effort (GATE) cross-sector partnerships, and Open Doors reengagement program. As an agency, OSPI continues to make significant inroads in providing supports to students who are at risk of dropping out, or who have already dropped out, to reengage in school. State superintendent Chris Reykdal has made increasing graduation rates and academic achievement of all students one of his top priorities. Gov. Jay Inslee’s Results Washington strategic framework envisions “world-class education.” This goal calls for increasing access to and availability of effective dropout prevention programs and improved graduation rates.

## Update Status

### ****Multi-tier System of Supports****

Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is the coordinated data system and process for identifying at risk students, appropriate and timely tiered interventions, and responsive monitoring of progress.

More districts than last year have a formal graduation goal, data based early warning systems, look at data at least once a month, and have three tiered supports (33%). The other thirty-three (33%) have at least three of the four in place.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Districts** | **Formal Goal** | **Data-Based Early Warning System** | **Use data at least monthly** | **3 Tiered Supports** |
| 33% | x | x | x | x |
| 17% |  | x | x | x |
| 11% | x | x |  | x |

Districts are struggling with addressing both academic and non-academic (behavioral, social, and emotional) needs. Over half of the districts have Multi-tiered Systems of Support implemented, but sixty-seven percent (67%) reported that although they have both, they’re limited in one or both categories.

### ****DATA Use: Graduation Goals****

Graduation goals show that the district and school has prioritized graduation rates, and may have a plan for achieving the goal using performance indicators and a process for progress monitoring.

#### Data Breakdown

More districts (55%) report having a formal graduation goal. This is a two percent (2%) increase from last year. Fewer schools reported not having a goal. Of the districts that report a goal, 31.5% publicize the goal to staff, students, families and community members. This is a way of formalizing the goal, expanding transparency, responsibility, and opportunities for celebration.

This question changed this year, asking districts to site where they post their goal, which may be responsible for the fall in responses in the Formal Goal for Staff, Students, Family, and Community category.

When asked about post-graduation goals sixty-three percent (63%) said they measure either enrollment, student progress, remediation, or completion in post-secondary education (apprenticeships, community and technical colleges, certification programs, and universities). Thirty-seven percent (37%) said that they don’t have a goal that they measure. The majority of districts track and provide support to college bound scholarship students (70%).

Post-graduation data is available for free through the Education Research and Data Center (ERDC), and about fifty-five percent (55%) of districts use it. Nine districts pay for their data through Lifetrack or Student Clearinghouse. Nineteen (19) districts collect the data themselves.

Many districts are providing options to reengage in education either through Open Doors or other reengagement models. However, twenty-four percent (24%) of districts say they are not providing them at all.

**Question: Does your district use the OSPI data analytics on key performance indicators?**

OSPI has tools that allow for easier comparison by sub-group and across districts and can be found on [OSPI’s website](http://k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/PerformanceIndicators/DataAnalytics.aspx). Most districts use them to look at graduation rates and discipline. About half look at chronic absences, a new feature in January 2016. Some districts weren’t aware of them until taking the survey (17%).

#### Question: How is your district adapting to or enhancing existing programming to support the 24-credit graduation requirement?

Districts are using credit retrieval, online options, and summer programs the most. Less than half are using individualized personal pathway efforts (based on their High School and Beyond Plan) or offering classes before and after school. Some districts already require 24 credits or more so won’t feel an impact.

Other districts are offering middle school credit or dual credit options. Some districts are changing their schedules to trimesters, seven (7) period days, adding classes before or after school, or moving to four (4) classes a day with eight (8) classes total. However, changing the structure of the school day doesn’t guarantee success if the same students aren’t getting the attention they need. For more information visit the State Board of Education [website](http://www.sbe.wa.gov/graduation.php#.V-L41WwVCas).

### Data Use: Dropout Early Warning and Intervention Systems (DEWIS)

A data-based dropout early warning and intervention system is a process for identifying students at risk, intervening promptly, and monitoring progress and effectiveness of interventions.

#### Question: Does your district use a data system to identify and track students who are at risk of dropping out?

#### Data Breakdown

Over eighty-two percent (82%) of districts have a data early warning system. Of those districts, close to forty-four (44%) have a data system that spans from kindergarten to 12th grade. Compared to last year, more schools have a data system at the high school, middle school, and elementary levels. The number of districts that don’t have a data system but are interested has gone down. Districts that don’t have a data system and aren’t interested in one have gone down to 5.4%.

Fewer districts don’t have data systems. Last year nearly 29.4% didn’t have a data system, compared to 17.9% this year; a 12.5% increase in participation. Only nine (9) districts (7.3%) reported not being interested this year. Seven of those districts were small, serving no more than 436 students.

This question was modified after the 2014 survey to specify a *data-based* early warning system, which may attribute the reduced number of districts responding that they have a system overall.

#### Question: What elements are you using to identify students?

Over ninety percent (90%) of districts with an early warning data system report using research-supported attendance, behavior and academic progress (ABC’s) as their primary indicators along with assessment data. Around half of the districts also relied on staff contact and demographics (ex. homelessness).

This question was changed for this survey to include response options instead of as a write-in response.

#### Question: How often are you looking and responding to this data?

The frequency of early warning system data review was quite diverse. Weekly (52.8%) and monthly (43.9%) access was the most common response. Only eleven percent (11%) of districts reported that early warning data was accessed daily, and fifteen percent (15%) reporting annual review of early warning data.

### Teams

#### Question: Do building teams have implementation action plans that align with the district plan?

More than half (58%) said that all school building teams have documented improvement and implementation plans and all are consistent with district goals or outcomes. Although teams have documented improvement plans, twenty percent (20%) said they are not all consistent with district goals and outcomes. Mirroring them twenty-two percent (22%) said that eighty percent (80%) of school teams at least have documented improvement plans.

#### Question: Do school teams report at least twice a year to district leadership on fidelity of intervention and student outcomes?

Around half of the district’s teams report to the district at least twice a year. On the lower end of the spectrum forty percent (40%) said less than half of their school teams report to the district twice a year. In the minority twelve percent (12%) said at least half of their teams do report to the district at least twice a year.

The survey also asked about implementation teams and their authority to make decisions. Three quarters responded that their teams exist, include members of the superintendent’s cabinet and have the authority to make decisions. In the minority, some districts (12%) have no teams and (12%) did have teams but no authority to make decisions.

Meeting habits of the teams mostly included meeting at least monthly for at least seven of the past nine months (75%). Only one district said that their team hasn’t met in the past six months. Ideally these teams should be reporting to the district board and community stakeholders. Half of the districts have reported at least every six months. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of teams have reported at least once but less than three times over eighteen months. Some teams haven’t reported in the past year.

The content of the reports that went to the district board and community stakeholder meetings, was divided based on whether the team reported on program information, outcome information, or none. Sixty percent (60%) reported both program and outcome information. The remaining forty percent (40%) was evenly split between no information and either program or outcome information.

### Tiered Interventions

This section looks at specific processes, programs and other activities that the district view as valuable to getting students to graduation. OSPI frames these activities under a Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) model. A complete MTSS supports both academic and non-academic student needs:

* Tier 1—Prevention (school or district wide, all students)
* Tier 2—Strategic Intervention (Group Targeted)
* Tier 3—Intensive Intervention (Individual Targeted)
* Reengagement (Dropout Retrieval)

*Note: The presence of tiered interventions may not be indicative of a system of supports. As we continue with this survey we may keep this question but expand our analysis to include elements of the early warning system and process to look for statewide capacity and growth in this area. See the correlated data chart in the Executive Summary.*

#### Question: Tell us about the implementation of your Multi-Tier System of Supports

| Question Topic | 2014 response | 2015 response | 2016 response | Difference  2015-2016 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Has 3 tiers of supports | 32% | 79% | 88% | +9% |

Supports included in a district’s multi-tiered system of supports includes academic and non-academic (behavioral, social, and emotional) needs. Sixty-seven percent (67%) responded that although their MTSS addresses both needs, it is limited in one or both categories. The only academic needs category shrunk significantly down to five percent (5%) from last year’s ninety-eight percent (98%). Addressing both needs well described twenty-seven (27%).

#### Progress monitoring and continuous improvement:

#### Question: Is someone at the school assigned to access and monitor appropriate interventions for individual at-risk students?

School districts report early warning data is available primarily to school administrators, counselors, or a specific team. Teachers almost thirty-five percent (35%).

When asked whether they have teams responsible for implementing evidence based academic and behavior supports, fifty-one percent (51%) responded that although building teams are established, they lack training and need support. Sixteen percent (16%) reported not having teams. On the other end, thirty-three percent (33%) said the district develops, trains, and supports their teams.

#### Question: Describe your district tiered supports for mental health services and supports.

|  | **Does Not Exist** | **Planning** | **Implemented** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Tier 1:** Improving mental health literacy or awareness | 23% | 29% | 49% |
| **Tier 2:** Screening for mental health needs such as programs, groups, or referral systems to service providers | 26% | 19% | 55% |
| **Tier 3:** Access to mental health counseling, therapy, or other direct mental health services | 18% | 18% | 65% |

There is growing concern for how to support students with mental health issues. This question is new to the survey this year. Having three tiered supports implemented is shared by almost half of the districts. The remaining districts are evenly split between not having an MTSS system for mental health and being in the planning stage.

### Engagement

#### Community Partnerships

OSPI understands that schools and communities must work collectively to support students and assist with both academic and non-academic barriers to learning. We asked districts to rate elements of key community partnerships to indicate their progress toward implementation. Data trends toward implementation.

|  | **Does Not Exist** | **Planning** | **Implemented** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sharing Data** | 16.4% | 22.1% | 61.5% |
| **Shared Outcome Measures** | 20.7% | 29.8% | 49.6% |
| **Coordinated Reinforcing Strategies** | 18.2% | 34.7% | 47.1% |
| **Regular Communication** | 7.3% | 15.3% | 77.4% |

#### Family Engagement

The majority (74%) of districts rated their level of parent engagement as somewhat engaged. Around half noted a reduced engagement with specific demographics. Districts rated consistent equity in engagement at thirty-two percent (32%).

#### Engagement: Academic Engagement

To engage students academically around sixty percent (60%) of districts are using student led conferences, dual credit, expanded course offerings, and advisory. Forty-two percent (42%) are using High School and Beyond Plans. Thirty-five percent (35%) are using peer support.

#### Engagement: Outreach and Student Access

Services and interventions are only useful if students and parents know about them and can access them. This section seeks to find out how schools are marketing their supports.

#### Question: How do you promote to students, families, and your community about your intervention supports and services?

#### Data Breakdown

One way the survey attempted to identify student access to dropout prevention, intervention and reengagement supports was to ask about how districts marketed these services to students and parents.

When asked “How do you promote to students, families, and your community about your intervention supports and services?” Eighty-five percent (85%) said individual parents or guardians were contacted through phone calls, emails, letters, or home visits, more than last year. The number of districts marketing to individual students fell this year to seventy-eight percent (78%) from ninety-three percent (93%). Broadly, seventy-eight percent (78%) market to all students using posters, brochures, assemblies, announcements, and through websites and social media. In addition to website and social media strategies, seventy percent (70%) of parents are marketed services through PTA/PTO meetings and flyers. A third of districts reached out to their communities through billboards, newspapers, radio, and TV.

This year a new response was added and found that over half of the districts use language services to provide information on supports and services in non-English formats.

### Culture and Perception

A positive school culture means that students, staff, and faculty feel safe, trusted, welcome, supported, and engaged in learning. Seventy-three percent (73%) said all of their schools have a positive school culture. Twenty-six percent (26%) said that only some schools do.

Perception surveys help staff measure the school’s culture. The majority (80% +) of districts survey students, staff, faculty, and families. Some districts (62%-67%) track changes over time, use the data to start conversations, as an opportunity for reengagement, and to help form school improvement plans.

### Challenges and Policy/Training Needs

#### Question: Besides program funding, what are your biggest challenges to meeting the Dropout Prevention, Intervention, and Reengagement work needs in your district?

Many of the same challenges made the list this year including:

* Time/staffing challenges
* Mental health/substance abuse
* Family/parent engagement
* Transportation
* State and Federal Policy

Staffing/time challenges were detailed by several districts as a combination of:

* Addressing diverse student needs
* Lack or reduction in staff and their time for:
  + - Counseling/advising
    - Monitoring and tracking interventions
    - Providing alternative learning opportunities

Transportation: many districts included challenges related to transportation and its effect on students in poverty and in rural areas. Students without available transportation have much less access to before and after school opportunities, or community support services.

State and federal policy challenges include:

* Meeting assessment requirements
* Changing graduation requirements
* Unfunded mandates that result in initiative overload

Other challenges of note included difficulty developing programs and alternative pathways to reengage students who have dropped out.

#### Question: What are the policy needs from the state that could more effectively support desired Dropout, Intervention, and Reengagement efforts?

Two policy elements were really emphasized in this year’s responses:

* Funding for increased counseling, graduation coaching, mental health/substance abuse specialist, advisors and staffing for dropout prevention monitoring, outreach, and coordination.
* Flexibility for alternative program options is needed. With the growing requirements for graduation, schools are struggling to support all students. Not every young adult is interested or ready to enter college after four or five years of high school. Some students will take longer to graduate; some will be looking to immediately enter the workforce or a certification program. The state needs to look at how to encourage programs that successfully launch youth into postsecondary opportunities no matter what that looks like.

### Training Opportunities

#### Question: Rate topics based on district desire for support and professional development

The topics that got the most attention were differentiated instruction, followed closely by mental health promotion and counseling, dual credit, and student and parent engagement.

This portion of the survey allowed districts to indicate how high their interest was based on five stars. Although differentiated instruction was indicated by the most districts, the average need for mental health was rated as more important.

In the comments section many school districts indicated that they need more professional development days to interpret data and create interventions, as well as learning and sharing best practices in a professional learning community.

**Question: Does the district leadership/implementation team have a written process for** **assessing and responding to the training needs?**To dig further into professional development needs, an overwhelming forty-eight percent (48%) responded that they don’t have a process for assessing or adjusting to training needs. Only forty-one percent (41%) of districts said there was evidence that training resulted in personnel gaining the initial skills and competencies needed to begin implementation.

Data on training effectiveness is largely informally reviewed (53%) instead of being targeted for specific training, selection, and coaching service delivery plans.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

#### CREATE MOTIVATION FOR CHANGE AND PROMOTE STANDARD SUCCESS MEASURES

#### The responses showed that many districts continue to not see the value of these elements or the systems and processes that make them effective. OSPI can provide tools and data that highlight disproportionality and successes, and communicate the value of a systemic approach.

* Highlight district achievement gaps in sub-populations through the OSPI data gateway.
* Highlight district discipline disproportionality for sub-populations through the OSPI data gateway.
* Further develop data tools to view and monitor Key Performance Indicators through the OSPI data gateway.

#### DEVELOP DISTRICT CAPACITY

The responses indicated that most districts have some of the elements and offer programming but do not have the complete system and continuous improvement process to realize continued improvement. OSPI can increase awareness of essential elements through website, presentations, webinars, and professional learning opportunities.

* Leadership
* Data use for early warning, and continuous improvement
* Local Multi-tier System of Supports with wraparound services
* Engaging of students, families, and community

#### SUPPORT DISTRICTS MOTIVATED AND WITH CAPACITY

Many districts do have these elements but are not seeing the same success as other districts with similar populations. OSPI could support these districts through personalized:

* Grants
* Professional Learning Communities
* Collaborative support from OSPI secondary education and Office of Student and School Success, mentor districts, ESD data coaches, and professional organizations.

#### SUPPORT AND DEVELOP LEADERS

Leaders are key to solutions through their role identifying goals, defining accountability, and fostering a culture that supports staff and students.

* Continue identifying districts that are increasing graduation rates and reducing disproportionality for sub-population.
* Cross reference district data, and survey data to identify trends and correlations between survey responses and district graduation rates.
* Collaborate with key associations on leadership professional learning and support opportunities.

#### POLICY AND BEST PRACTICES

Identify where policy or best practices may address issues identified through the survey including:

* Data-based early warning system implementation and support
* Alternative graduation accountability
* Mental health and substance abuse support
* Barriers to attendance including transportation

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