

# April Resource Toolkit

## Continuous Improvement Principles and Framework

### The Continuous Improvement Framework

#### Continuous Improvement Framework

- Elevation of anti-racist practices.
- Identification, provision, and growth of equitable supports within learning communities.
- Development of strong leadership at all levels.
- Use of data inquiry/school improvement principles and processes.
- Focus on improving core instructional practices.
- Implementation within a multi-tiered system of supports.



#### Focus: Learning Options and Open Doors

The April Resource Toolkit highlights Learning Options and Open Doors which encompass various approaches to teaching and learning, varying from mainstream education in philosophy and practice. These alternatives often prioritize small class sizes, close teacher-student relationships, time and location of learning, and a strong sense of community.

In Washington state, Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) provides a funding and instructional model for offering basic education. ALE aims to tailor educational opportunities to meet individualized student needs, offering a continuum of options from single courses to comprehensive instructional models. Considerations for ALE implementation varies depending on the chosen model and scale of offerings.

Online learning is an instructional delivery model that may be incorporated into a comprehensive high school schedule or delivered through ALE.

Open Doors is a funding model that is designed to reengage 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.

Mastery-based learning is an instructional delivery model and crediting practice that supports student learning.

During this month, please review these materials in support of the various options available to students to guide them in finding another pathway to success.



## What is Alternative Learning Experience (ALE)?

ALE is a funding and instructional model for providing basic education. It is available to all public school districts and public charter schools in Washington state. The intent of ALE is to ensure that students have educational opportunities designed to meet their individualized needs.

[Chapter 392-550 WAC](#) outlines the rules for ALE implementation. It provides guidelines and program requirements for offering ALEs in addition to a standard method of determining full-time equivalent enrollment and a statewide reporting process for claiming funding for ALEs.

ALE options can be provided on a continuum through any public school district or charter school from something as simple as offering a student a single ALE course, to planning an entire instructional model around ALE that offers hundreds of students full-time ALE courses through a designated school site.

Fast facts about ALE include:

- ALE is a course-level designation, not a school or student designation
- ALEs often require significant in-person learning time
- Authorization for ALE is local via school board policy and procedure
- ALE is not always online and online is not always ALE

## Check out the [ALE website](#) or reach out to the [Learning Options team](#) with questions! **What is Open Doors Youth Reengagement?**

Open Doors Youth Reengagement ([WAC 392-700](#)) 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.

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.

For more information about Open Doors, visit our [Open Doors website](#)!

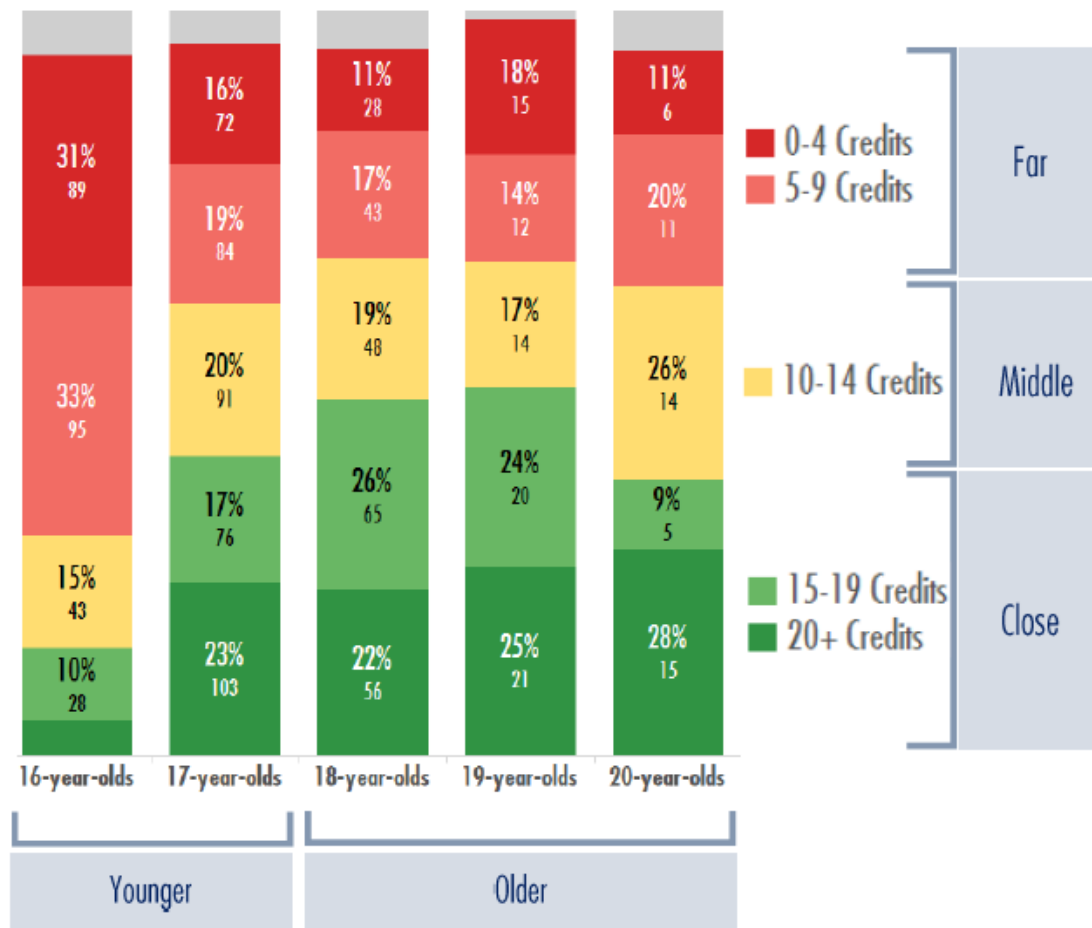
## Open Doors Student-Centered Supports: Near or Far from Goal?

By Mandy Paradise

When it comes to planning for school improvement, Open Doors Youth Reengagement programs must intimately understand their students both in terms of their goals and their credits. Using the student's proximity to goal is a common framework. In this approach, the age of the student is contrasted with their credits earned and timeline for aging-out of K-12.

### Diploma Earning

Students who are "near" or "close" to goal are those whose age and credit accumulation indicate that diploma earning is possible or feasible by age 21. Those who are "far" from goal are those whose age and accumulated credits make it more difficult, or even impossible to earn a diploma by age 21.



Data Source(s): OSPI CEDARS Student-level database via ERDC. Findings prepared by CCER Data Team, July 2016

For students who are unable to graduate in an Open Doors program by age 21 and whose goal is to earn a diploma, our work is to help them make academic gains that prepare them for continued learning as adults in community college where they may continue working to earn their Washington state high school diploma.

### **GED, College, and Career**

In an Open Doors program, student goals may result in earning a GED, college credit accumulation, or career skill development. In many programs, a student is defined as a completer when the student achieves their pathway's goal. This means the student earns a GED, a diploma, earns 15 college credits (or dual credits), or makes strides in career-relevant skills.

The program aims for students to make progress. For students who are far-from-goal and anticipated to age-out without a diploma, the program should prepare students to participate in Basic Education for Adult courses in community college settings and/or lead them to elevated career and workforce opportunities and/or certificate earning. Many Open Doors programs partner with community colleges, a partnership that integrates the student into a college setting and instills in them a sense of belonging in post-secondary education.

### **Progress-Focused**

Though we hope that all young adults may earn a diploma by age 21, the Open Doors program exists to serve those who are not able to achieve this goal. We embrace our student population by providing case management and instruction with multiple opportunities for learning and career skill development.

Our intent is to provide our students access to public education settings that help them **make progress** – progress that otherwise would not have occurred had the student remained disconnected from public education.

## **The Importance of Face-to-Face Contact in Open Doors**

By Liz Quayle

Students enrolling in Open Doors programs are required to have in-person face-to-face contact during their first full month of enrollment, and then after each month where they have not achieved a required indicator of academic progress (IAP) until an IAP has been earned. After the first full month and while the student continues to earn IAPs, face-to-face contact may be digital-synchronous. All face-to-face contact is expected to occur in real time.

WAC 392-700-015(3)

(3) "Attendance period requirement" is defined as, at minimum, two hours of face-to-face interaction with a designated program staff for the purpose of instruction, academic counseling, career counseling, or case management contact aggregated over the prior month. In-person face-to-face interaction is required for the month that the student was

claimed for the first time. Thereafter, the interaction may include an option for digital-synchronous interaction when a student:

- (a) Requests digital-synchronous options; or
- (b) Requires digital-synchronous access as determined by program staff.
- (c) If, after each three months of claimed enrollment, the student has not earned an indicator of academic progress through the utilization of digital-synchronous interaction, then the interaction must return to in-person face-to-face until an indicator of academic progress is earned.

On the surface, it would seem that requiring a student to show up for two hours a month would not be a hardship, however for students who are working full-time, have family responsibilities, and/or don't have transportation available, this is truly a challenge to meet.

That said, meeting with students in person during that first month and for each month after they have not been claimed due to not earning an indicator of academic progress (IAP) is key for reengagement in learning and developing a connection with the Open Doors staff. According to studies published as a result of the COVID pandemic, we find that students entering college (students at the same age as most Open Doors students) "preferred in-person teaching and reported higher engagement, learning, and understanding during classroom teaching" [[Remote and In-Person Learning: Utility Versus Social Experience, Dec 2022](#), Photopoulos, et al]. These in-person face-to-face attendance opportunities provide that social incentive for engagement and success.

For continuing students who are successful in learning as evidenced by earning IAPs, in-person meetings are optional. These students may use digital-synchronous methods for meeting this attendance requirement, allowing for real-time conversations to enhance instruction and address barriers to learning. Meeting IAPs does not mean that students do not need regular, individualized staff support and connections.

Students are enrolled in Open Doors because they have disengaged from school and are not on track to graduate on time. The best way to re-engage students is through personal connections and individualized learning, which is why Open Doors exists.

## **What is Mastery-based Learning (MBL)?**

Source: [State Board of Education MBL webpage](#)

Many ALE and Open Doors programs and schools choose to use mastery-based learning as a delivery model.

MBL is an instructional approach designed to help students learn deeply and effectively. Classrooms using MBL have these in common:

- **Student agency.** Students help direct their own learning. MBL values the knowledge, skills, and interests of every student.
- **Relevance.** Students are empowered to make interdisciplinary connections and use their learning in many ways. Learning is relevant and engaging for students and can be applied outside of the classroom.
- **Differentiation.** Students receive help based on their individual interests and needs. Students move forward at their own pace. This is especially important as students recover from learning disruptions caused by COVID-19.
- **Inclusion.** Students experience compassion and belonging. MBL honors the unique contributions of every student and the knowledge they bring from their diverse cultures and communities.
- **Innovative assessment tools.** Students demonstrate mastery of skills or concepts through tests, portfolios, projects, or other demonstrations. Students and educators are encouraged to try new tools. Assessments are aligned to standards and allow students to show what they know as well as provide valuable feedback on the areas in which students need to deepen their learning.

Together, the elements of MBL lead to the transformation of our education system that will close opportunity gaps and support the needs of each and every student.

## Learning Options and Open Doors

Please reach out to our team if you need additional support with your schools.

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## Conclusion

In our quest for educational transformation, the April Resource Toolkit spotlights Learning Options and Open Doors, championing personalized learning paths and fostering strong community ties. Alternative options for students help prioritize tailored educational experiences,

emphasizing close teacher-student relationships and flexibility in where, when, and how a basic education is provided. Understanding a student's proximity to their educational goals is crucial, with tailored programs providing pathways to success through diploma attainment, GED acquisition, college credits, or career skill development.

As we embrace Learning Options and Open Doors, let's remember that education is about opening doors of opportunity and empowering every student to thrive regardless of their background or circumstances—and together, we help unlock a student's individualized potential, one opportunity at a time.