

OPEN DOORS SUMMER PILOT SITE PROFILE

ESD 101 Next Generation Zone

Prepared for the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) by Education Northwest.

Overview

Next Generation Zone (Next Gen Zone) is an Open Doors program run by ESD 101 in Spokane. The program combines education, career skills and training, community and employment resources, and wraparound support in one place for young people to pursue their success. Students have the option to participate online or in person. Each Next Gen Zone student is assigned a career coach who connects students with paid work experience and in-demand job training, like welding, nursing, and commercial driver's license (CDL) classes. Next Gen Zone offers a 21st Century Skills Academy, an eight-day course on life skills and work readiness.

Next Gen Zone program overview, school year 2023–24

- GED plus
- ESD
- Community type: All types (suburban, rural, city, town)
- **433** students enrolled in SY 2023–24
- Average age at enrollment: **17.1**
- Average credits at enrollment: **6.2**

Source: Evaluation team analysis of Appendix R and Open Doors end-of-year data.



Summer 2024 pilot program design and implementation

Prior to the pilot, Next Gen Zone offered year-round programming with a focus on GED completion and career and technical learning. Participation during the summer is an option for students, not a requirement. Staff members find that summer programming is key for students to keep momentum toward their academic and career goals, as it can be challenging to re-engage students after a break.

OVERVIEW OF SUMMER PROGRAM PILOT

During the summer, Next Gen Zone continued to offer in-person and online academic support for GED completion, as it does during the school year. Staff members said they also continued to offer paid career-connected learning experiences. Career coaches connected students to in-demand jobs and training, like welding, nursing, or CDL classes, as well as paid work experience or occupational training.

In terms of new programming, the summer 2024 pilot funding allowed Next Gen Zone to form new community partnerships centered on building students’ essential life skills, helping them explore their career interests, improving their sense of competency and self-efficacy, and expanding barrier reduction supports (table 1).

Table 1. ESD 101 Next Gen Zone summer 2024 pilot goals, activities, and intended outcomes

Goals	Summer program activities	Intended outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New/deeper programming• Expanded student participation in summer learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• GED instruction and testing• Career-connected learning• Unique or innovative program activities limited to the summer months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student well-being and stability

New community partnerships

Next Gen Zone used the summer pilot funding to grow community partnerships (table 2). The community-based organizations focus on mentoring, workforce skill development, and social and emotional skill development. For example, the organization If You Could Save Just One provided Next Gen Zone students with work-based learning and vocational opportunities. Morning Star Baptist Church referred students to Next Gen Zone, and Revive Community Services bolstered the program’s barrier reduction support for students.

Table 2. ESD 101 Next Gen Zone summer 2024 pilot partners and activities

Partners	Key summer activities
If You Could Save Just One*	An after-school program that supports youth learning opportunities in math, science, technology, creative skills, and areas of student interest, which builds a bridge to educational and work-based learning. The program connected Open Doors students with vocational opportunities.
Morning Star Baptist Church*	A faith-based organization that conducts community outreach through prison ministry social justice initiatives and hosts a homeless warming and cooling shelter.
Revive Community Services*	A nonprofit that supports youth and families through barrier reduction and basic needs support.

*Indicates a new partnership

Expanded basic needs support

Next Gen Zone staff members reflected on the importance of providing consistent services, including barrier reduction support, during the summer. Staff members gathered information about potential student needs during the intake process. With the flexible barrier reduction funds afforded by the pilot, the staff could meet students’ needs in creative ways. For example, students who did not have reliable transportation received funds for ride shares, like Uber, to get to school.

Student participation in summer 2024 pilot

STUDENT OUTREACH

Most Next Gen Zone participants are referred to the program from their school district or probation officer. Many students are also referred through word of mouth, including friends, friends of friends, and family members. Program staff members have increased their marketing of summer programming to students and families through emails, phone calls, and text messages. Staff members also recruit students by tabling at events held by local organizations, such as Tree House, a program for foster youth.

Next Gen Zone staff members reflected that the student population is different during the summer than the school year, as summer offers an important opportunity for students who are close to graduating. Staff members noted that many summer students had not completed their GED or high school diploma in the spring and then carried over into the summer.



Summer is when [for] people ... it just clicks and they're like, 'I got to get done.' And it drives them, and it motivates them. And then because there's fewer people here, fewer distractions, they tend to do better. And you'll see people go through three or four tests, whereas they didn't go through any in a whole year despite regular practice testing, and it's just the atmosphere and the environment."

Next Generation Zone program staff member

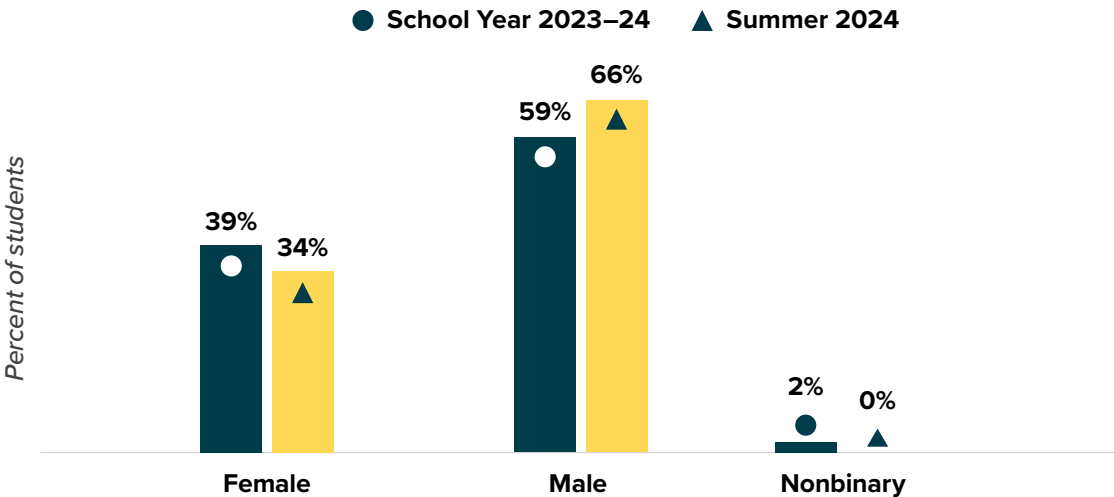
STUDENTS SERVED IN SUMMER 2024

Forty-four students participated in summer 2024. All students participated in both July and August. Fourteen percent of summer participants were post-resident youth.

Compared to students enrolled in the 2023–24 school year program, students in the summer program first enrolled in Open Doors at a slightly younger age (16.5 compared with 17.1) and with the same number of credits (6.2).

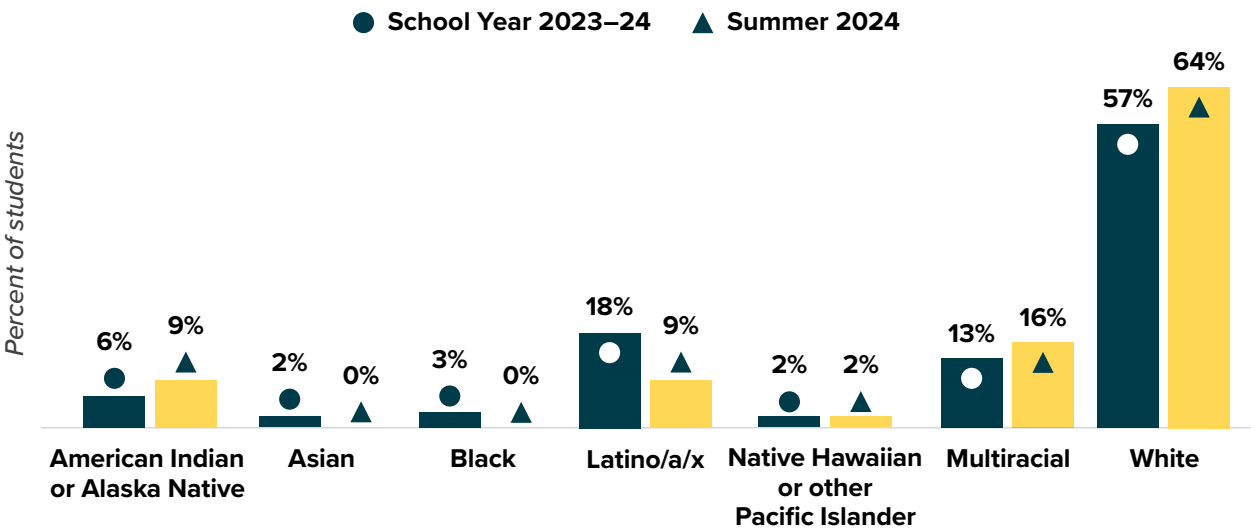
The summer population was slightly more likely to be male and identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, multiracial, or white compared to the school year population (figures 1 and 2). In addition, the summer population was more likely to have experienced homelessness and been eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Figure 1. The summer 2024 student population had a higher percentage of male students compared to the 2023–24 school year population



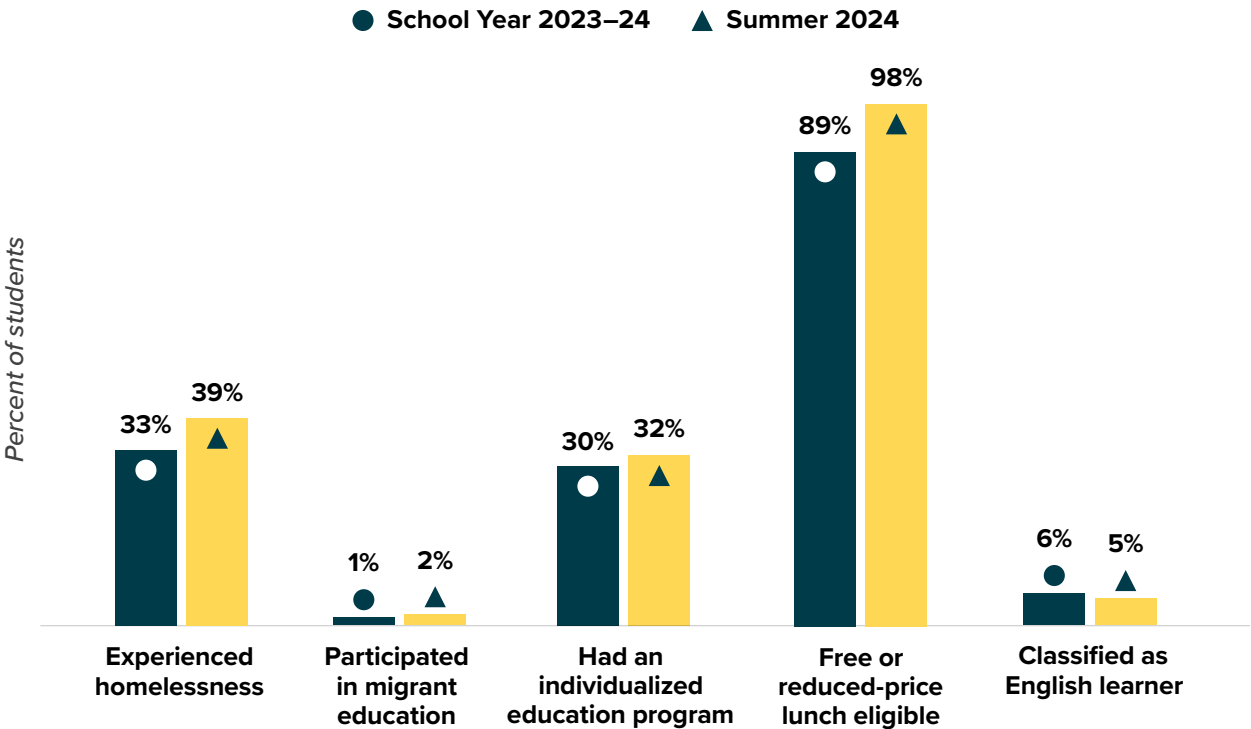
Note: N = 433 for school year and N = 44 for summer.
Source: Evaluation team analysis of Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) data.

Figure 2. The summer 2024 student population had a higher percentage of students who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, multiracial, or white compared to the 2023–24 school year population



Note: N = 433 for school year and N = 44 for summer.
Source: Evaluation team analysis of CEDARS data.

Figure 3. The summer 2024 student population was more likely to have experienced homelessness and been eligible for free or reduced-price lunch compared to the 2023–24 school year population



Note: Data are from 2014–15 to 2023–24 so span students’ upper elementary, middle school, and high school years. N = 433 for school year and N = 44 for summer.

Source: Evaluation team analysis of CEDARS data.

Outcomes

ACADEMIC PROGRESS AND A SENSE OF EFFICACY

In summer 2024 the program saw an increase in GED completion, the highest yet. When asked what they were most proud of from participating in Next Gen Zone, nearly all student focus group participants mentioned their progress on completing the GED tests.



I'm proud that I'm being able to pass social studies and math for the tests."

Next Generation Zone student

"I've been able to pass all my tests except my math and I'm pretty much almost done with that too."

Next Generation Zone student

"I've been passing all my tests. Only you need to do the real one and, yeah, I already passed all it up."

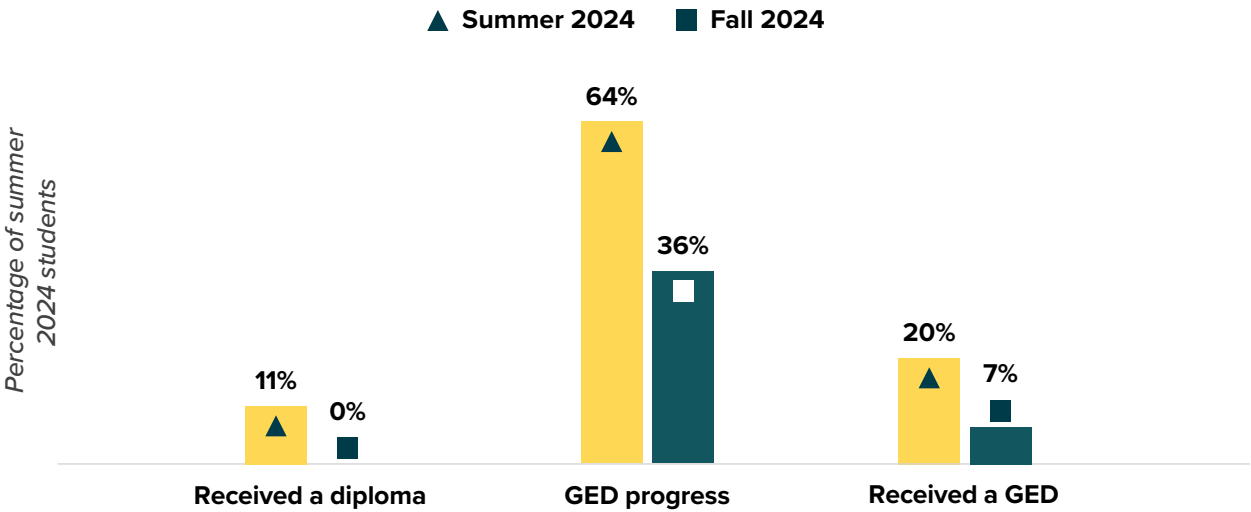
Next Generation Zone student

In addition to academic progress, Next Gen Zone strove to support students' employment, life skills, and career connections.

Student achievement of indicators of academic progress in summer and fall 2024 based on quantitative data

Sixty-six percent of summer 2024 students earned an indicator of academic progress (IAP) in summer 2024 and 36 percent earned an IAP in fall 2024. About two-thirds of students were working toward GED progress in the summer (64%; figure 4), and that persisted through the fall, with one-third of summer participants making progress toward their GED in fall 2024. Additionally, during the summer 11 percent of summer students earned a high school diploma and 20 percent received their GED. In the fall, 7 percent of summer students received their GED.

Figure 4. In summer 2024 nearly two-thirds of student participants made progress toward a GED and 20 percent received their GED



Note: N = 44. IAPs were categorized into high school diploma progress, high school diploma completion, GED progress, GED completion, college academic progress, college credential completion, career progress, and career credential completion. IAP categories are not shown if no students achieved IAPs in that category in either summer or fall 2024. For the categories displayed in this figure, the IAPs that were achieved were:

GED progress: f. Passes one or more high school equivalency certificate measures (each measure may only be claimed once per enrolled student), or other state assessment; g. Makes a significant gain in a core academic subject based on the assessment tool’s determination of significant gain (may be claimed multiple times in a year per enrolled student).

Source: Evaluation team analysis of pilot site reporting on summer 2024 and fall 2024 outcomes.

Success factors and challenges

CONSISTENT YEAR-ROUND SCHEDULE WITH FLEXIBLE OPTIONS FOR GED WORK

Next Gen Zone offers in-person and online classes for students. Staff members reflected that an online option was very beneficial for their students, particularly during the summer when students have competing demands such as work. To maintain consistency, Next Gen Zone offers the same classes in the summer as in the school year. One program staff member reflected,



We've just found significantly changing the schedule is not a good thing, so we just try to keep it consistent and offer the same classes we offer the rest of the year. There's more opportunity for one-on-one tutoring and small group things because it's not as busy. In terms of the structure, the structure of the classes is all the same."

Next Generation Zone program staff member

CULTIVATING AN INCLUSIVE PROGRAM ENVIRONMENT

Summer participation is not an expectation of the program, and young people often have external commitments that make it challenging to participate. As a result, participation in summer is lower than during the school year. However, the smaller student enrollment provides an opportunity to offer more one-on-one support, like tutoring, and to develop stronger relationships.

Staff members and students noted that positive relationships and an inclusive environment are key to engagement and learning. Relationships are critical to building a comfortable environment where students can share about their situations and what is going on in their lives. Relationships are also important for connecting students to resources that help them be successful.



I think just creating that atmosphere and welcoming them no matter what they've been through. You are not coming here and getting judged when you're walking in the door. We're here to help you, point blank."

Next Generation Zone program staff member



They aren't really pushy about you doing your work, though. You can do it when you're ready or feel comfortable, and they don't rush you. They don't critique you. If you get it wrong, they'll be like, 'Okay, we can try this again and see if we get better.' And they'll help see what areas you need to get better at, too."

Next Generation Zone student

Staff members also mentioned the importance of relationships with the staff and among peers. In particular, Next Gen Zone is a safe space for LGBTQ+ youth. Staff members reflected that the program offers a comfortable environment where youth from similar backgrounds and experiences can connect and form community.

INTENTIONAL SUPPORT FOR POST-RESIDENT YOUTH

During the intake process, Next Gen Zone staff members ask students if they have ever been involved in the justice system and, if yes, about their probation officer. Staff members then check in monthly with probation officers and counselors. Personal and longstanding relationships support connections between Next Gen Zone and the juvenile justice system. Program staff members also reflected on challenges retaining youth who were justice involved.



I've had a few [students] who were justice involved that would just disappear. And we don't know where they are, and their [probation officers] don't know where they are, and they more than likely moved away or moved in with family or something happened. But I would say that's probably the biggest struggle that I've seen, is when they just up and disappearing."

Next Generation Zone program staff member

COMPETING COMMITMENTS FOR STUDENTS AND DISTRICT SCHEDULES

External commitments, particularly seasonal jobs, can make it challenging for students to join the program during the summer. In addition, school districts are less responsive during the summer, which can slow down referrals and connections to students.

About this project

Washington state appropriated funds for the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to conduct a summer program pilot with up to 12 [Open Doors Youth Reengagement Programs](#). The funding period spanned the 2023–2025 biennium as outlined in House Bill #5187, Sec. 522. ESD 101 Next Generation Zone participated in the summer 2023 and summer 2024 pilot. OSPI contracted with [Education Northwest](#) to evaluate the Open Doors Summer Pilot. Education Northwest prepared this profile as part of the evaluation.

METHODS

Education Northwest developed this summer pilot program profile from artifact review and interviews/ focus groups in summer 2024 with five Next Gen Zone students and eight staff members. We also analyzed quantitative program and student data from OSPI to produce the student demographics and outcomes figures. Thank you to the Next Gen Zone students and program team for taking the time to share your stories and perspectives about the summer pilot.

Recommended citation

Fujita-Conrads, E., Kennedy, C., Petrokubi, J., & Hodara, M. (2025). *Open Doors Summer Pilot site profile: ESD 101 Next Generation Zone*.

Appendix. 2023 Summer pilot data

One-hundred forty-seven students participated in summer 2023. All participated in both July and August. Summer 2023 students were more likely to be male than female or nonbinary. About half of participants were white and 16 percent were Latino/a/x. Over one-quarter (26%) were post-resident youth. Most students came from low-income backgrounds, with 91 percent who had been eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and 33 percent who had experienced homelessness.

Table 1A. Identities and experiences of summer 2023 students

Characteristic		Percentage
Gender	Female	38%
	Male	59%
	Nonbinary	3%
Race/Ethnicity	American Indian or Alaska Native	8%
	Asian	1%
	Black	1%
	Latino/a/x	16%
	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	2%
	Multiracial	17%
	White	54%
Characteristics prior to Open Doors enrollment	Average age	17.6
	Average credits	4.7
School experiences	Post-resident youth	26%
	Experienced homelessness	33%
	Participated in migrant education	0%
	Had an individualized education program	41%
	Free or reduced-price lunch eligible	91%
	Classified as English learner	3%

Note: N = 147. Post-resident youth data were self-reported by Open Doors sites. The other school experiences are from 2014–15 to 2022–23 CEDARS data and so span students' upper elementary, middle school, and high school years.

Source: Evaluation team analysis of CEDARS data and summer 2023 data from sites.

Across these identities and school experiences, the summer 2023 and 2024 populations had some differences. A higher percentage of students were post-resident youth in summer 2023 compared to summer 2024 (26% compared to 14%). The summer 2024 population also had a slightly lower percentage of Latino/a/x students (9%; see figure 2) and a higher percentage of white students (64%). Finally, the summer 2024

population had a slightly higher percentage of students who had experienced homelessness (39%; see figure 3) and were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (98%) but a lower percentage of students with an individualized education program (32%).

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT OF INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC PROGRESS IN SUMMER 2023

Twenty percent of summer 2023 students earned any indicator of academic progress (IAP) in summer 2023. About one in five made progress toward a GED and 1 percent earned an IAP related to college academic progress.

Figure A1. About one in five summer 2023 students made progress toward a GED and 1 percent earned an IAP related to college academic progress in summer 2023



Note: N = 147. IAPs were categorized into high school diploma progress, high school diploma completion, GED progress, GED completion, college academic progress, college credential completion, career progress, and career credential completion. IAP categories are not shown if no students achieved IAPs in that category in summer 2023. For the categories displayed in this figure, IAPs are as follows:

GED progress: f. Passes one or more high school equivalency certificate measures (each measure may only be claimed once per enrolled student), or other state assessment; g. Makes a significant gain in a core academic subject based on the assessment tool's determination of significant gain (may be claimed multiple times in a year per enrolled student)

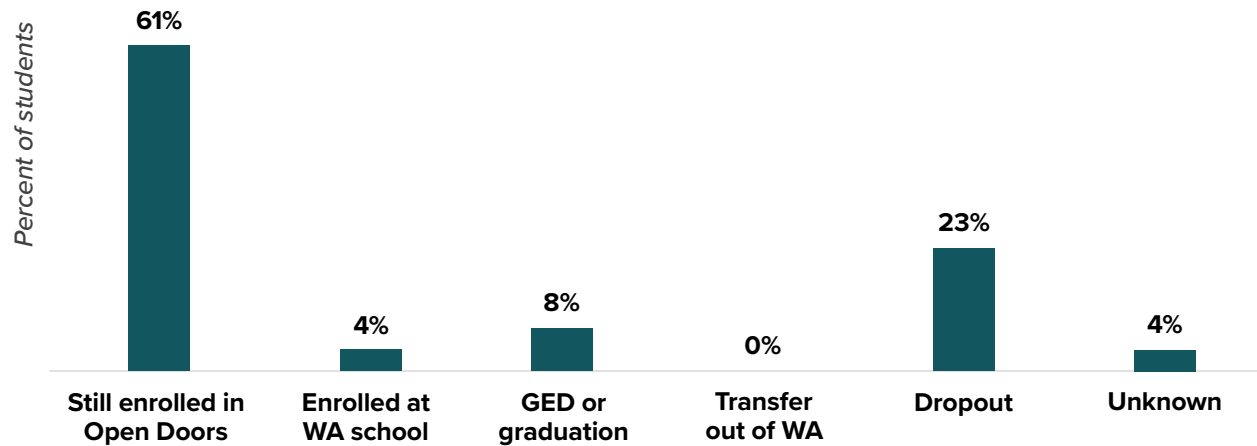
College academic progress: i. Successfully completes college readiness course work with documentation of competency attainment.

Source: Evaluation team analysis of pilot site reporting on summer 2023 outcomes.

SCHOOL YEAR 2023–24 SCHOOL STATUS OF SUMMER 2023 STUDENTS

By the end of the 2023–24 school year, 61 percent of summer 2023 students were still enrolled in Open Doors.

Figure A2. Most summer 2023 students were still enrolled in Open Doors in the 2023–24 school year



Note: Note: N = 147. Unknown means the student did not show up in any data file in the 2023–24 school year.

Source: Evaluation team analysis of CEDARS data, including enrollment, graduation, and Open Doors end-of-year data.

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