

OPEN DOORS SUMMER PILOT SITE PROFILE

ESD 113 Gravity Learning Center

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

Overview

ESD 113 Gravity Learning Center operates Open Doors programming in six locations across the state. Students come to one of Gravity's six centers to take classes, participate in career planning, and make progress on earning their GED. Gravity received 2024 summer pilot funding to support expanded summer partnerships and its year-round program model.

ESD 113 Gravity program overview, school year 2023–24

- GED plus
- ESD
- Community type: All types (suburban, rural, city, town)
- **818** students enrolled in SY 2023–24
- Average age at enrollment: **17.2**
- Average credits at enrollment: **5.5**

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, Gravity offered consistent year-round programming with a focus on GED completion. Staff members reflected that summer programming not only provides stability for students but also builds trust between the staff and students. They said that not having summer programming can make



students feel like the program does not care about their overall well-being. The summer pilot funding offered Gravity the opportunity to expand its community partnerships, particularly with a coffee roaster local to Olympia.

OVERVIEW OF SUMMER PROGRAM PILOT

Gravity envisioned the summer pilot as an opportunity deepen summer program offerings with the goal of increasing students' indicator of academic progress (IAP) earning, pathway completion, retention from spring to fall, well-being and stability, and college and career skills (table 1).

Table 1. ESD 113 Gravity summer 2024 pilot goals, activities, and intended outcomes

Goals	Summer program activities	Intended outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New/deeper programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GED instruction and testing • Career-connected learning • Intensive case management • Unique or innovative program activities limited to the summer months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators of academic progress earning • Pathway completion • Retention from spring to fall • Student well-being and stability • College or career skills

New and deeper partnerships for career-connected learning

Gravity used the summer pilot funding to expand community partnerships (table 2). To support students' career-connected learning, Gravity established a new partnership with Olympia Coffee Roasters to create a barista training program and a coffee stand that employed Gravity students. Olympia Coffee Roasters supplied coffee and training at a discounted cost for the program.

In addition, Gravity deepened its partnership with the Thurston County Chamber to provide workforce training opportunities and job placement options for students. Gravity offered students a range of other paid internship opportunities as a part of the 2024 summer pilot.

Table 2. ESD 105 summer 2024 pilot partners and activities

Partners	Key summer activities
Olympia Coffee Roasters*	Created a barista training program and coffee stand
Thurston County Chamber	Provided training opportunities and job placement options
Touchstone Community Facility	Outreach and referrals

*Indicates a new partnership

Continued support for academic progress and transition to postsecondary

The summer pilot enabled Gravity to continue working toward its goal of supporting students as they work toward GED completion and learning outcomes. The summer months are especially important for students who are older and close to completing the GED to earn their certificate before the next academic year. The summer pilot focused on students who need to finish or were very close to finishing the program. Gravity has also found success in keeping students enrolled during their first entry into college as a “soft handoff” from GED to postsecondary.

Barrier reduction and support for basic needs

Gravity seeks to provide students with basic needs support and teach students how to access public benefits. The summer pilot program began with an orientation to build relationships and connect students with needed barrier reductions to help them participate in the program. Staff members emphasized the importance of summer programming in offering consistent, year-round basic needs support for students who need it.



If we weren't open for the summer, they wouldn't have access to the great food bags. They know that we are a safe place to come to if they're having a crisis and that we have resources to give them if they are having a crisis. So, again, being open in the summer allows them to come in if they're having a crisis to get resources that they might need.”

Gravity program staff member

Student participation in summer 2024 pilot

STUDENT OUTREACH

Gravity uses a variety of methods to reach out to and engage youth. Program staff members call and text students, reach out to district partners to refer students who would be a good fit, and collaborate with Touchstone Community Facility, a program with the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families, to refer youth who have experienced incarceration or detention. Gravity finds success in having multiple staff members, including teachers and case managers, reach out to a student to encourage engagement. As noted above, the program especially encouraged youth who were older and closer to GED completion to remain actively engaged during the summer.

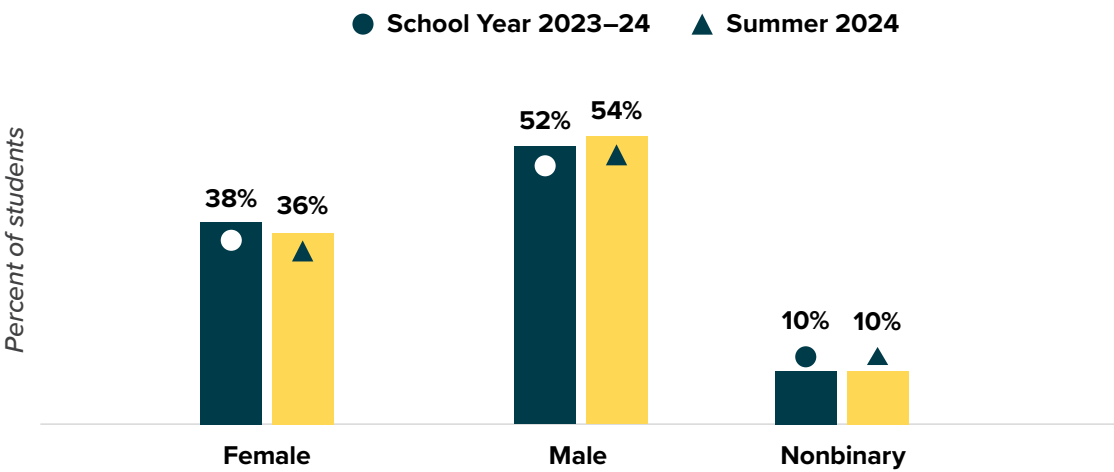
STUDENTS SERVED IN SUMMER 2024

Three hundred seventy-four students participated in summer 2024. Most students participated in both months, and some participated in only July or August. Ten 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 (16.9 compared with 17.2) and with slightly more credits (5.7 compared with 5.5).

The summer population was slightly more likely to be male and identify as white compared to the school year population (figures 1 and 2). In addition, the summer population was more likely to have had an individualized education program in the high school years before summer 2024 but less likely to have experienced homelessness or been classified as an English learner (figure 3).

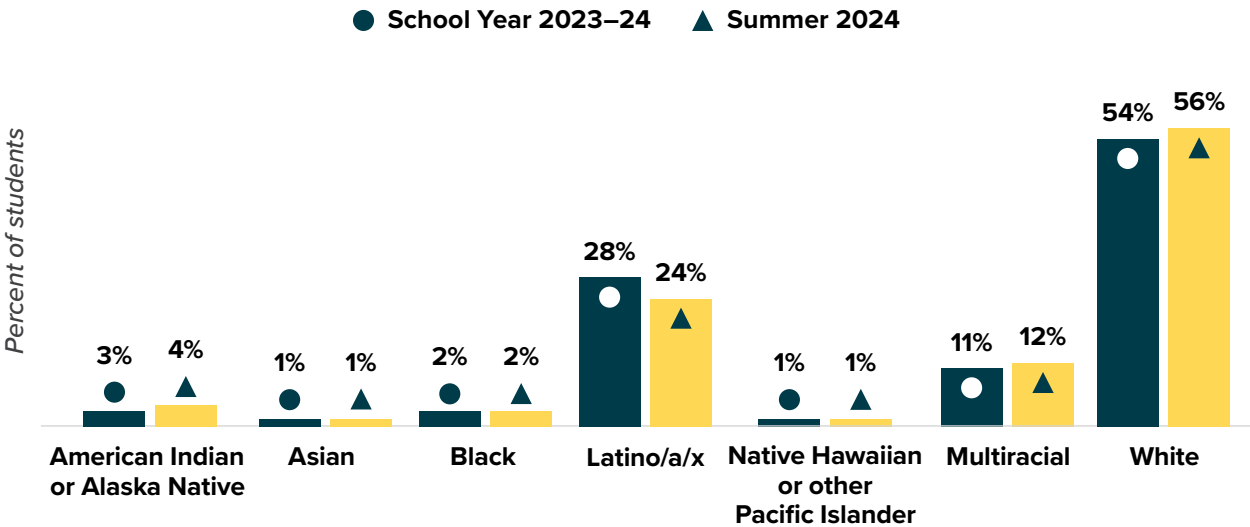
Figure 1. The summer 2024 student population had a higher percentage of male students compared to the 2023–24 school year population



Note: N = 818 for school year and N = 374 for summer.

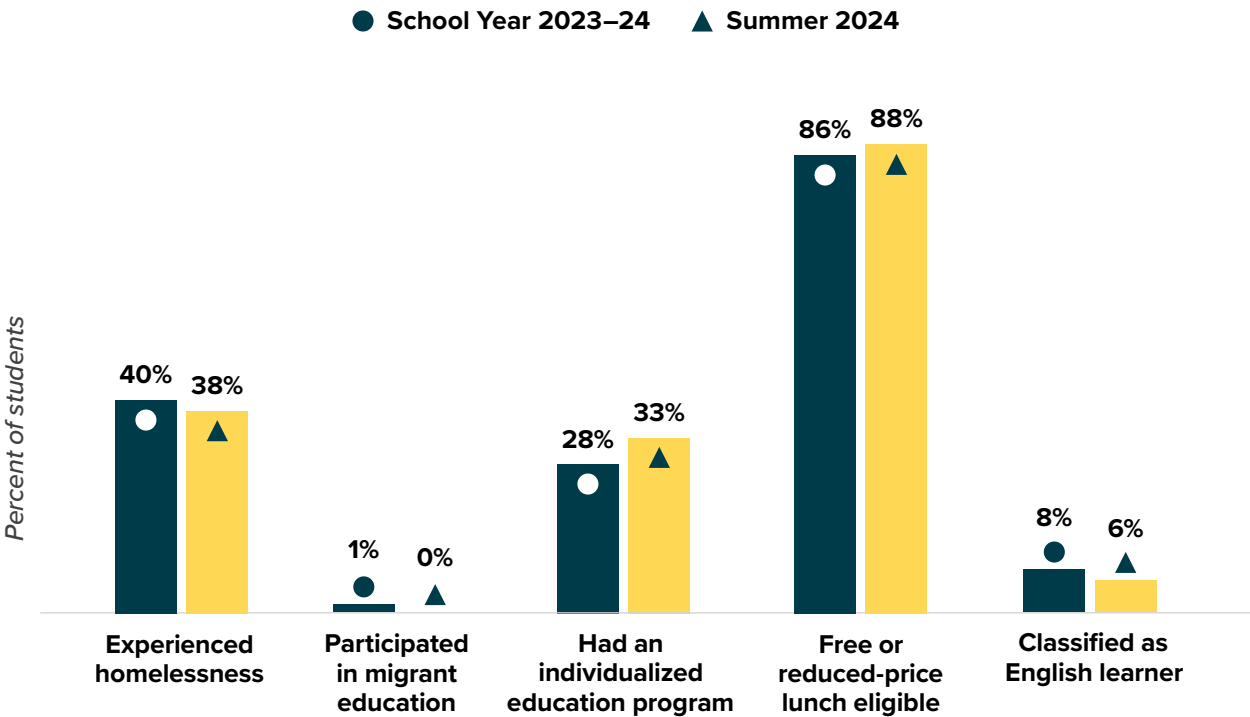
Source: Evaluation team analysis of Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) data.

Figure 2. The summer 2024 student population had a higher percentage of students who identify as white compared to the 2023–24 school year population



Note: N = 818 for school year and N = 374 for summer.
Source: Evaluation team analysis of CEDARS data.

Figure 3. The summer 2024 student population was more likely to have had an individualized education program compared to the 2023–24 school year population



Note: Data are from 2014–15 to 2023–24 and so span students’ upper elementary, middle school, and high school years. N = 818 for school year and N = 374 for summer.
Source: Evaluation team analysis of CEDARS data.

Outcomes

PROMOTING ACADEMIC PROGRESS AND CAREER SKILLS

Gravity strove to develop sustainable partnerships to support student employment and career connections. Staff members and partners saw the partnership with Olympia Coffee Roasters as critical for supporting students in the summer and expect that it will continue to be integral to the program. The staff and partners reflected on the potential for this local partnership to provide job opportunities and career growth for students in their community. Through the partnership, students will be trained and ready to work in one the many coffee roasters in town.



... there was maybe seven coffee roasters in our small town of Olympia, all functioning at the same time, and so there's a lot of jobs and career paths for people."

Gravity partner

Gravity staff members and students described the importance of the program—and the relationships they built through the program—in developing students' self-confidence, empowerment, and hope for the future. In particular, students described how participating in Gravity promoted their sense of efficacy, or their belief that that can successfully accomplish their learning goals.



I've completed more in the last seven months at Gravity than I have in the last eight, seven years at school. It feels like I'm actually smart."

Gravity student

"I actually have plans for the future, unlike when I was in normal high school."

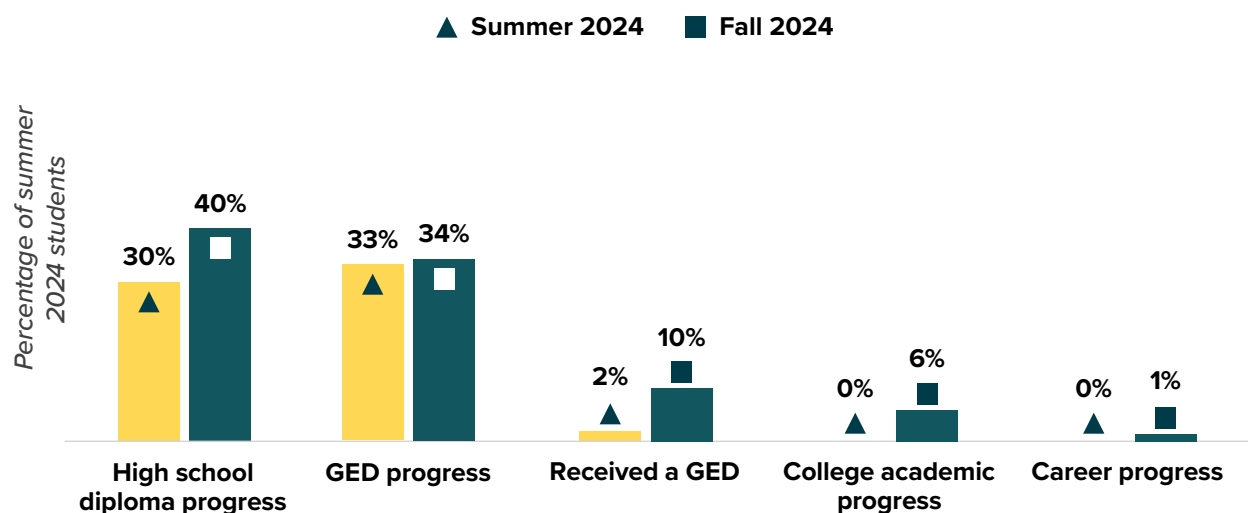
Gravity student

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

Forty-six percent of summer 2024 students earned an IAP in summer 2024 and 51 percent earned an IAP in fall 2024. About one-third of students were working toward high school diploma or GED progress in the summer (30% and 33%, respectively; figure 4), and that persisted through the fall with **40 percent of**

summer participants making academic progress toward their high school diploma and 34 percent making GED progress in fall 2024. Additionally, 10 percent of summer students received their GED in fall 2024.

Figure 4. In summer and fall 2024, about one-third of students who participated in summer 2024 made progress toward a high school diploma or GED and 10 percent earned a GED in the fall



Note: N = 374. 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:

High school diploma progress: a. Earns at minimum a 0.25 high school credit; h. Successfully completes a grade level curriculum in a core academic subject that does not earn high school or college credit.

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: b. Earns at minimum a whole college credit; l. Enrolls in a college level class for the first time (limited to be claimed once per enrolled student).

Career progress: k. Successfully completes a paid or unpaid cooperative work-based learning experience of at least 45 hours. This experience must meet the requirements of WAC 392-410-315(2).

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

Success factors and challenges

INCLUSIVE PROGRAM ENVIRONMENT AND INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT

Program leadership, staff members, and students reiterated Gravity’s philosophy of meeting students where they are, not making judgements, and giving everyone a chance. Staff members emphasized the importance of building relationships with students and knowing students on an individual level before any learning can happen. Staff members and students reflected that building relationships is particularly important because many students experienced a lack of individualized connections at their high schools



I’ve never been one to ask for help or anything. That’s why I wasn’t doing as good in school ever, because I never had help ... when I got into Gravity, they made it 100 percent easier, more comfortable in everything, make it known to ask questions if you don’t get it. [Gravity staff members] literally say, ‘If there’s a wrong answer, don’t consider it wrong. Think of it as another strategy that you thought of.’”

Gravity student

“I think that a lot of students, the biggest obstacle at traditional schools has been them feeling invisible or becoming invisible. Maybe people out there have this perception of kids being bad kids or something. They’re put in that category. But a lot of times, they’re just kids that have been forgotten. They’re not the ones that get all the attention.”

Gravity student

CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS PRESENT OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Gravity fostered collaboration and developed a program to meet student needs by building a sustainable partnership with Olympia Coffee Roasters, a key local employer with a mission to support the broader Olympia community. Staff members also mentioned challenges forming partnerships across sectors, reflecting on differences in how nonprofits, educational service districts, and employers function in terms of deadlines, guidelines, and working with students. They noted that communicating expectations and holding regular check-ins helps to sustain partnerships. Gravity experienced challenges with the OSPI grant system at the start of the 2024 summer pilot which delayed the start of its partnerships. As a result, students could not start the barista training until after the summer pilot.

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 113 Gravity 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 eight ESD 113 Gravity students, five staff members, and one community partner. We also analyzed quantitative program and student data from OSPI to produce the student demographics and outcomes figures. Thank you to the ESD 113 Gravity students, program team, and partners for taking the time to share your stories and perspectives about the summer pilot.

Recommended citation

Fujita-Conrads, E., Cigarroa Kennedy, C., Hodara, M., & Petrokubi, J. (2025). *Open Doors Summer Pilot site profile: ESD 113 Gravity*. Education Northwest.

Appendix. 2023 Summer pilot data

Three hundred forty-two students participated in summer 2023. Summer 2023 students were more likely to be male than female or nonbinary (53% compared to 39% and 8%). Over half of participants were white (56%) and 23 percent were Latino/a/x. Eight percent were post-resident youth. Most students came from low-income backgrounds, with 88 percent who had been eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and 43 percent who had experienced homelessness.

Table 1A. Identities and experiences of summer 2023 students

Characteristic		Percentage
Gender	Female	39%
	Male	53%
	Nonbinary	8%
Race/Ethnicity	American Indian or Alaska Native	2%
	Asian	1%
	Black	3%
	Latino/a/x	23%
	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1%
	Multiracial	14%
	White	56%
Characteristics prior to Open Doors enrollment	Average age	17.8
	Average credits	6.6
School experiences	Post-resident youth	8%
	Experienced homelessness	43%
	Participated in migrant education	1%
	Had an individualized education program	31%
	Free or reduced-price lunch eligible	88%
	Classified as English learner	2%

Note: N = 342. 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.

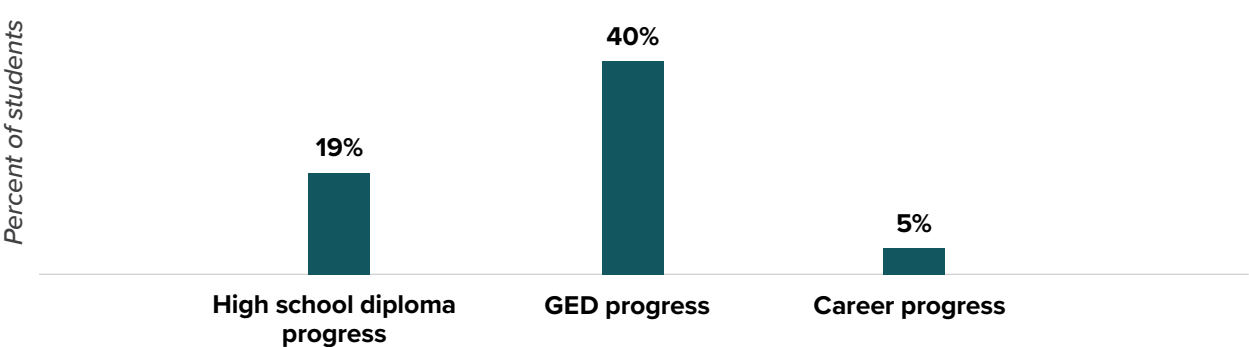
Across these identities and school experiences, the summer 2023 and 2024 populations had some differences. A higher percentage of students were post-resident youth in summer 2024 compared to summer 2023 (10% compared to 8%). The gender and racial/ethnic composition of the summer 2023 and 2024

populations was similar, but the summer 2024 population had a slightly lower percentage of students who had experienced homelessness (38%; see figure 3) and a slightly higher percentage of students who had been classified as English learners (6%; see figure 3).

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT OF INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC PROGRESS IN SUMMER 2023

Fifty-one percent of summer 2023 students earned any IAP in summer 2023. Nineteen percent earned high school credit toward a diploma, 40 percent made progress toward their GED, and 5 percent earned an IAP related to career progress.

Figure A1. About 40 percent of summer 2023 students made progress toward a GED in summer 2023



Note: N = 342. 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:

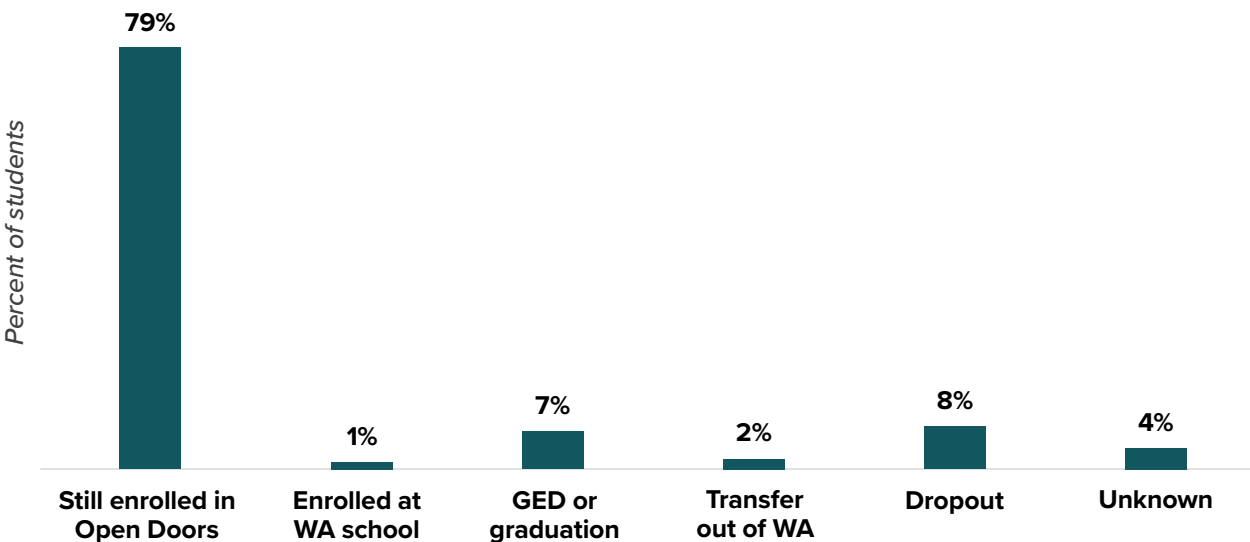
- High school diploma progress:** h. Successfully completes a grade level curriculum in a core academic subject that does not earn high school or college credit.
- GED progress:** f. Passes one or more high school equivalency certificate measures (each measure may only be claimed once per enrolled student), 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).
- Career progress:** k. Successfully completes a paid or unpaid cooperative work-based learning experience of at least 45 hours. This experience must meet the requirements of WAC 392-410-315(2).

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, 79 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: N = 342. 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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