



OPEN DOORS SUMMER PILOT SITE PROFILE

Puyallup-Walker High School

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

Overview

Puyallup School District operates Puyallup-Walker Open Doors as a program of Walker High School. The alternative high school and reengagement program share nine staff members. The Open Doors program operates as a hybrid model: students are encouraged to come in person for at least half the day; to reduce barriers, students also have the option of working from home. Students can choose to earn credit through computer-based, project-based, or assessment-based learning or through work experience.

Puyallup-Walker High School program overview, school year 2023–24

- GED Plus and high school diploma pathways
- District
- Community type: Suburban, large community
- **193** students enrolled in SY 2023–24
- Average age at enrollment: **17.1**
- Average credits at enrollment: **9.4**

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

Summer 2024 pilot program design and implementation

Puyallup-Walker Open Doors did not offer summer programming prior to the 2024 pilot. The district used the pilot funds to “test the waters” for launching a new summer program called Puyallup Works. Open Doors students participated alongside students from other high schools in paid work experiences with local employers.



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OVERVIEW OF SUMMER 2024 PROGRAM PILOT

Puyallup-Walker Open Doors intended for the summer program to promote retention and provide students with new opportunities for career-connected learning while making progress on their academic goals (table 1). The program staff aimed to offer a program that felt different than the school year since youth were not accustomed to coming in the summer. They hoped that the work experience with a stipend at the end would “entice” Open Doors students to participate.

Table 1. Puyallup-Walker High School 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">• Career-connected learning• Community-connected learning• Case management intensity• 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 deepened community partnerships

Puyallup-Walker High School Open Doors used the summer pilot funds to grow partnerships with local organizations (table 2). A new partner, the Puyallup Chamber Foundation, served as fiscal agent and helped to coordinate the weekly Lunch and Learn series. Puyallup Parks and Recreation provided additional funding to support Puyallup Works and hosted student interns as camp counselors and support for community events. Puyallup Food Bank hosted students in multiple roles, and the YMCA hosted student interns in their summer camps.

Table 2. Puyallup-Walker High School Open Doors summer 2024 pilot partners and activities

| Partners | Key summer activities |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Puyallup Chamber Foundation* | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide fiscal and logistical support• Coordinate guest speakers• Host student interns |
| Puyallup Parks and Rec | |
| YMCA | |
| Puyallup Food Bank* | |

*Indicates a new partnership

Career-connected learning

Students received a stipend after completing 80-hour internships at one of three worksites. In addition, they came together on campus for weekly Lunch and Learn sessions to participate in a variety of career-connected learning activities and eat lunch that was provided by the program. To support work readiness, students worked on resume writing and financial literacy skills and had the chance to earn a first aid/CPR certificate and a food handler's safety card. Guest speakers covered topics such as how to start a business and persevere in the face of challenges. Students also took a field trip to a local college.

Sustained academic and basic needs support

The program used pilot funding to offer support from an in-person teacher for the first time during the summer. The program continued to offer students flexibility in whether and how they pursued their academic goals during the summer, in terms of coming in person or completing coursework online. Staff members completed a needs assessment with each student at the start of the summer to identify needs for barrier reduction support. They met with students individually to provide resources (e.g., food, gas, school supplies) and made referrals as appropriate. Staff members conducted home visits with some students and offered support to families as needed.

Student participation in summer 2024 pilot

STUDENT OUTREACH

Given that summer offerings were a new experience, staff members conducted intensive outreach (e.g., emails, conversations) to encourage students to participate. They were careful to frame the opportunity as paid internship because students do not want to come to summer school.

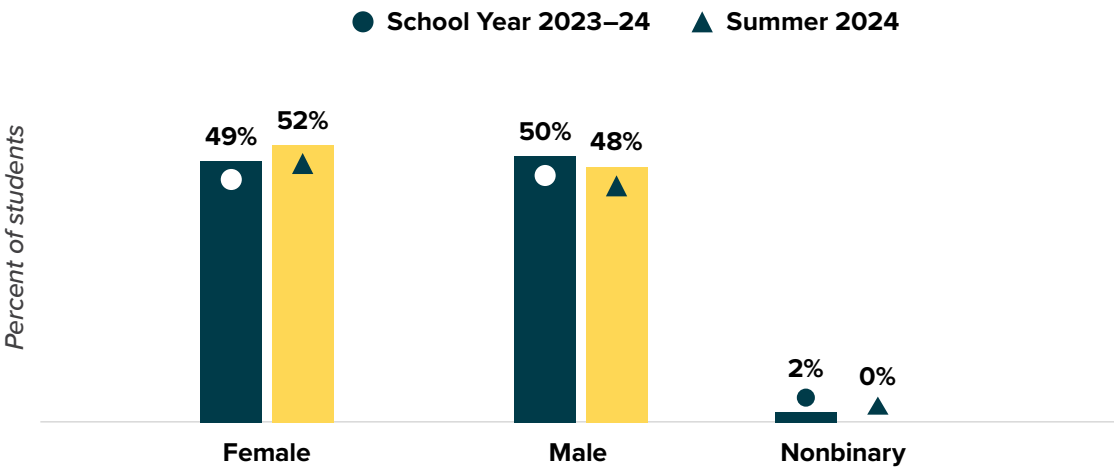
STUDENTS SERVED IN SUMMER 2024

Twenty-five students participated in summer 2024. All students participated in both July and August. Twenty percent of summer pilot students were post-resident youth.

Compared to students enrolled in the 2023–24 school year program, students participating in the summer program first enrolled in Open Doors at about the same age (17.3 compared with 17.1) and with about the same number of credits (9.5 compared with 9.4).

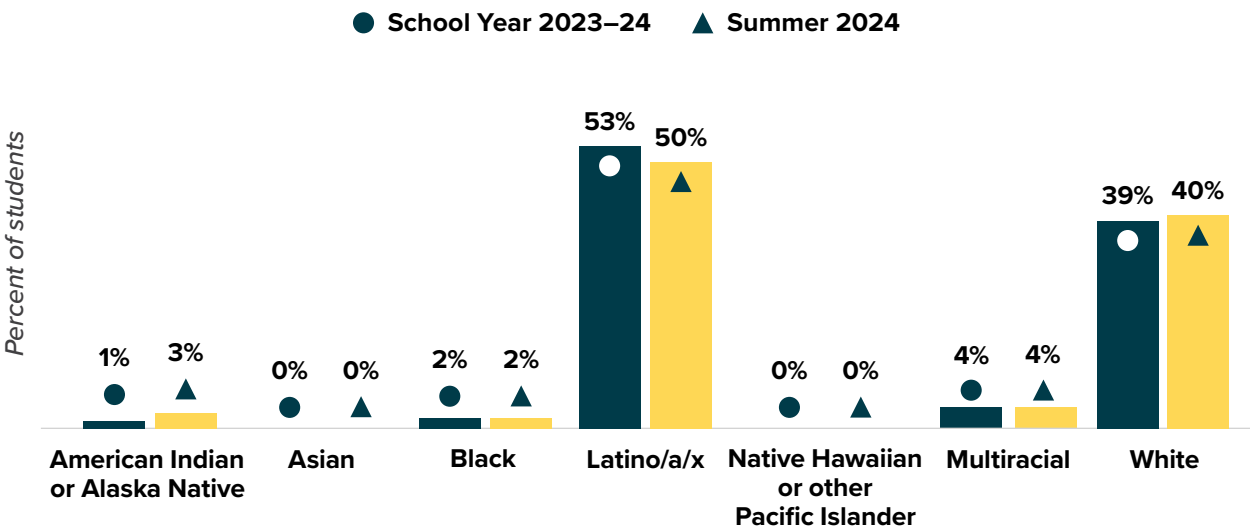
The summer population was slightly more likely to be female and identify as American Indian/Alaska Native compared to the 2023–24 school year population (figures 1 and 2). In addition, the summer population was more likely to have had an individualized education program in the high school years before summer 2024 but less likely to have been eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (figure 3).

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



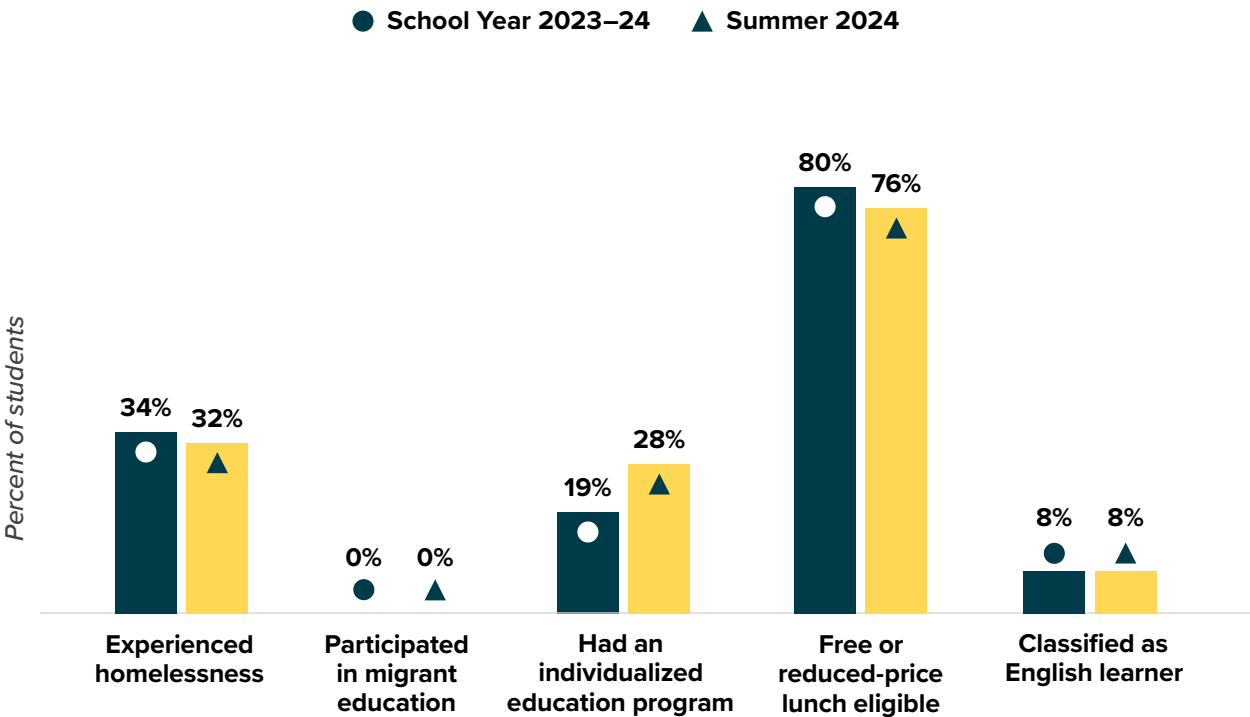
Note: N = 193 for school year and N = 25 for summer.
Source: Evaluation team analysis of Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) data.

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



Note: N = 193 for school year and N = 25 for summer.
Source: Evaluation team analysis of CEDARS data.

Figure 3. The summer 2024 student population differed in terms of their school experiences 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 = 193 for school year and N = 25 for summer.

Source: Evaluation team analysis of CEDARS data.

Student outcomes

SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT, EXPOSURE TO THE WORKPLACE, AND CAREER KNOWLEDGE

The summer program provided structured learning opportunities for students over the summer and a reason to stay connected with the program. One student, who joined the program over the summer, found the summer academic support helpful in preparing for the school year program. Staff members said that students who did not have other summer activities looked forward to the weekly “connection” provided by the program.

Community partners across multiple sites reported that students were reliable workers who provided useful “extra hands” to their organizations. They enjoyed working with the students and seeing them grow into their responsibilities.



[The kids really just showed up to work and had really positive attitudes, and the efforts of the students were really solid.]”

Puyallup-Walker High School partner

Students appreciated that internships offered them the chance to try out employment settings to see what might interest them. Students also said that guest speakers increased their understanding of potential career options and provided new insights into industries they were interested in. Through these career-connected learning opportunities, some students made connections with mentors in their fields of interest.



I’m going to keep in contact with this one mentor. They do real estate ... they came a few weeks back and we had a good conversation, so that’s what I want to [do for] work.”

Puyallup-Walker High School student

Community partners observed that students built positive relationships with others in the workplace, such as older volunteers and staff members. A couple of partners discussed how positive interactions with the student interns may have challenged negative stereotypes about students from alternative learning environments.



Just getting down to these kids’ levels and having day-to-day conversations with them and treating them like human beings and not a product of their circumstances, I think is very valid. It’s very important and it’s integral to the trajectory of their lives, of where they go from here and getting jobs moving forward.”

Puyallup-Walker High School partner

Community partners and staff members also observed that students increased their confidence and skills over the course of their internship placement.



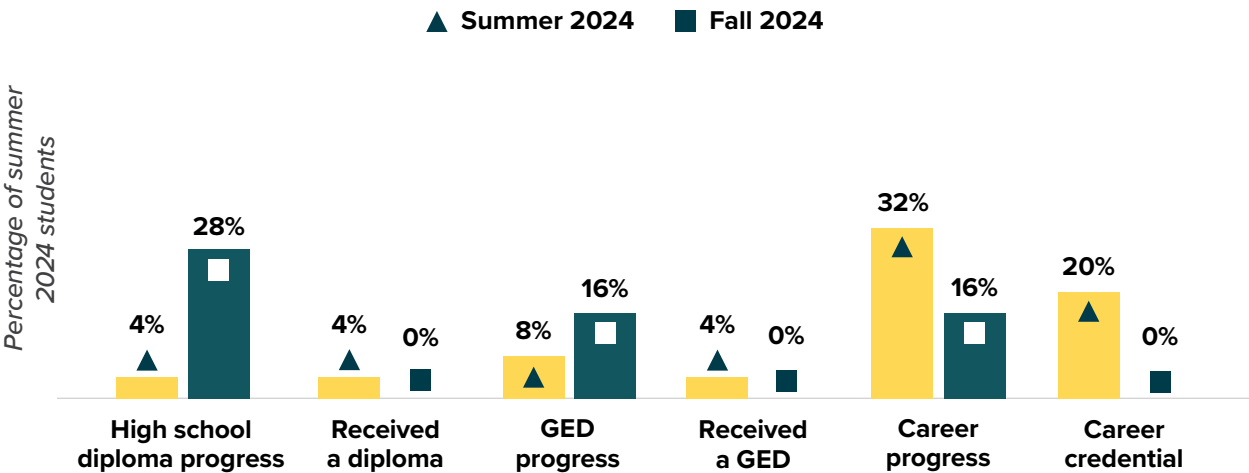
[Students gained] a more global feeling of confidence in the workplace and getting that exposure, many of them for the first time. Being more social, putting themselves more out there. Even just resonating feelings from the guest speakers of accepting that failure is a natural part of the process. A lot of them are more willing to put themselves out there.”

Puyallup-Walker High School staff member

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

Forty-eight percent of summer 2024 students earned an indicator of academic progress (IAP) in summer 2024 and 44 percent earned an IAP in fall 2024. **During the summer, about a third of students earned IAPs related to career progress (32%; see figure 4) and 20 percent earned a career credential.** In the fall, nearly one-third of summer 2024 students made progress toward a high school diploma. Additionally, during the summer 8 percent of students made progress toward a GED and 4 percent earned a GED. In the fall, 16 percent of summer 2024 students made progress toward a GED.

Figure 4. One-third of students who participated in summer 2024 made career progress during summer and nearly a third made high school diploma progress during the fall



Note: N = 42. 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.

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.

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).

Career credential: o. Successfully completes a series of short-term industry recognized certificates equaling at least 40 hours.

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

Success factors and challenges

OFFERING A STIPEND AND CHOICE INCREASED STUDENT INTEREST

Staff members and students both reported that paid work experience, along with service-learning credit, was an effective “carrot” to keep students engaged in summer. Students also appreciated the chance to select their placement site. Once engaged, students expressed appreciation for the chance to have something positive and fun to do over the summer.



I wanted to do it [summer program] because I wanted to get some extra money in my pocket and I wanted to separate myself from the regular life for a little bit, have a little time on my hands or whatever. Just get away, distract myself from the real world. And it's free money but it ain't really, like ... It was fun.”

Puyallup-Walker High School student

WEEKLY LUNCH AND LEARNS

Students enjoyed the chance to come together across their internship sites for weekly Lunch and Learns where community members shared their experience and advice related to careers. Staff members said that the food was a big draw, as the program does not typically offer it. Staff members collected feedback forms from students at the end of each workshop and used that information to refine the program offerings.

OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT

Partners offered ideas for improving the organization of the summer internships. This included providing information about Open Doors during the partner orientation, aligning internship dates with partner training calendars, and providing clearer systems for tracking participation.

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. Puyallup-Walker High School Open Doors participated in the 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 three Puyallup-Walker High School Open Doors students, two program staff members, and four community partners. We also analyzed quantitative program and student data from OSPI to produce the student demographics and outcomes figures. Thank you to the Puyallup-Walker High School Open Doors program team, partners, and students for taking the time to share your stories and perspectives about the summer pilot.

Recommended citation

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