



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Reducing Restraint & Eliminating Isolation

2025

Authorizing Legislation: ESSB 5950, Sec. 501(4)(mm)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes activities undertaken by OSPI's **Reducing Restraint & Eliminating Isolation (RREI) project** during fiscal year 2025, as mandated through 2023's biennial operating budget and 2024's supplemental operating budget.

Demonstration Projects

Demonstration projects incorporate "*Pilot site*" districts that strategically engage in the process of building systems of support, and "*Demonstration site*" districts that serve as learning communities to share their stories and highlight exemplary practices within these systems. Their outcomes have revealed promising practices and effective strategies for improving school safety and reducing the use of restraint and isolation.

Professional Development

Contracted providers partner with district sites, offering a variety of training styles and curricula in order to address each school's unique needs and strengths. Professional development is equipping school staff with the skills and knowledge needed to address student behavior in safe, informed, and proactive ways.

Technical Assistance Manual

A manual has been drafted in partnership between OSPI's Special Education and Student Engagement & Supports divisions, with support from the American Institutes of Research. This is intended to guide educators, staff, and administrators in development and implementation of best practices to support student behavior and reduce restraint and isolation practices.

Findings

71% of project sites decreased incidents of restraint and isolation in school year 2024-25, as compared to the previous school year. This decrease in incidents was statistically significant.

Project implementation has revealed the need for continued collaboration and alignment, intentional use of student data, addressing effective strategies for improving staff safety in tandem with student safety, and building on OSPI's Inclusionary Practices work.

Recommendations

Recommended statewide policy changes include training and professional development for school district staff on trauma-informed and inclusionary practices for behavioral support, as well as funding time for staff to debrief incidents. These and other recommendations are detailed further.

INTRODUCTION

During the 2023 session, the Washington State Legislature proposed [House Bill \(HB\) 1479](#), a measure which would have prohibited isolation and further restricted restraint in public schools. Because the bill did not pass, OSPI received designated state funds to begin actualizing the goals of the legislature to help districts build systems of support that eliminate student isolation and reduce student restraint.

Project Goals

To create safe and supportive learning environments for students and staff, and recognizing the importance of supporting efforts to eliminate isolation and reduce restraint in partnership with a variety of constituent groups, the legislature directed OSPI to:

- (1) provide a select number of grants for **demonstration projects**,
- (2) provide statewide **professional development** and technical assistance to districts,
- (3) create a **technical assistance manual** to support the elimination of isolation and reduction of restraint based on the results of the demonstration projects.

The Reducing Restraint and Eliminating Isolation (RREI) project supports capacity for statewide elimination of isolation and reduction of restraint by equipping school staff with *effective skills and knowledge needed to reduce behavioral crises and dangerous interventions*, in service to a safe and supportive school environment for students and staff.

BACKGROUND

The intended use of **restraint and isolation (R&I)** in Washington schools is to increase student and staff safety¹ by providing crisis intervention when reasonably necessary to control spontaneous student behavior that poses an imminent likelihood of serious harm.² However, in the pursuit of safety, these practices can **put students and staff at risk**³ of serious physical injuries such as broken bones and head trauma⁴, and long-term psychological harm⁵ such as post-traumatic stress disorder.⁶ Repeated instances often lead to higher student absences and more staff use of sick time.⁷ In very rare cases, they have resulted in student death.⁸

Recognizing the danger that restraint and isolation (R&I) pose to students, staff, and school communities, as well as the ineffectiveness of these practices, state law directly addresses their use.

Current Law

From⁹ RCW Title 28a (Common School Provisions), Chapter 600 (Students), Section 485

Isolation: restricting the student *alone* within a room or any other form of enclosure, from which the student *may not leave*.

- It does NOT include a student's voluntary use of a quiet space for self-calming, or temporary removal of a student from their regular instructional area to an unlocked area for purposes of carrying out an appropriate positive behavior intervention plan (BIP).

Restraint: physical intervention or *force* used to control a student, including the use of a restraint device to restrict a student's *freedom of movement*.

- It does NOT include appropriate use of a prescribed medical, orthopedic, or therapeutic device when used as intended, such as to achieve proper body position, balance, or alignment, or to permit a student to safely participate in activities.

Use of restraint and/or isolation: permitted only when necessary to control spontaneous

¹ Pudelski, 2012. [*Keeping Schools Safe: How Seclusion and Restraint Protects Students and School Personnel*](#)

² [RCW 28a.600.485](#)

³ U.S. Senate, 2014. [Dangerous Use of Seclusion and Restraints in Schools Remains Widespread and Difficult to Remedy: A Review of Ten Cases](#)

⁴ Collyer & Dufault, 2023. [Crisis Response Workgroup: Report to the Legislature](#)

⁵ Cardona, 2025. [Secretary Cardona Letter on Restraints and Seclusion in Schools](#)

⁶ Hodell, 2023. [Myths Behind Restraint and Seclusion – A Literature Review](#)

⁷ U.S. Department of Education, 2012. [Restraint and Seclusion: Resource Document](#).

⁸ National Disability Rights Network, 2009. [School is Not Supposed to Hurt](#).

⁹ [RCW 28a.600.485](#)

behavior that poses *an imminent likelihood of serious harm*. Additionally, these practices:

1. Must be closely monitored to prevent harm to the student.
2. Must be discontinued as soon as the likelihood of serious harm has dissipated.
3. Must be followed by debrief procedures, including with the student's parent or guardian.

Debrief and Follow-Up Procedures

If school or district staff use restraint with a student:

1. The staff member needs to tell the school's principal (or their deputy) as soon as possible. Within two (2) business days, the staff member also needs to submit a written report to the district office, including information on any staff or student injuries sustained;
2. The school needs to tell the parent/guardian verbally, within twenty-four (24) hours. Within five (5) business days, the school also needs to tell the parent/guardian in writing and provide the written report in their preferred language;
3. The school needs to follow up with the student and their parent/guardian to discuss the behavior that led to the restraint or isolation and how appropriate this response was to the behavior;
4. The school also needs to follow up with the staff member(s) involved to discuss whether or not appropriate procedures were followed correctly, and what support or training the staff member(s) need to avoid similar events in the future.

Students Eligible for Special Education Services

In addition to the above rules and restrictions, staff are prohibited from using the following practices with a student eligible for special education services:¹⁰

- Prone (lying face-down) restraint.
- Supine (lying face-up) restraint.
- Wall restraints.
- Noxious sprays.
- Any other restraint that interferes with the student's breathing.

Applied Definitions: Behavioral Health Disorders

The following are **not defined in state education** law and are subsequently from¹¹ RCW Title 71 (Behavioral Health), Chapter 05 (Behavioral Health Disorders), Section 020.

Imminent: the state or condition of being likely to occur at any moment or near at hand,

¹⁰ [WAC 392-172A-02076](#)

¹¹ [RCW 71.05.020](#)

rather than distant or remote.

Likelihood of serious harm: (a) A substantial risk that physical harm will be inflicted by a person upon: (i) their own person; (ii) another, or (iii) the property of others, or (b) The person has threatened the physical safety of another and has a history of one or more violent acts.

OSPI considers this definition insufficient for the purposes of application to school settings and recommends that “serious harm” be clearly and adequately defined for use in education law.

History of Restraint & Isolation in WA Legislature

2008: Proposed (did not pass) restrictions on physical restraint and prohibition of chemical restraint. ([ESHB 2884](#))

2013: Passed reporting requirements for incidents involving students with an individualized education plan (IEP). ([ESHB 1688](#))

2014: Passed mandate for districts to adopt and publish an R&I policy. ([HB 2605](#))

2015: Passed prohibition of R&I unless necessary to avoid harm, and expanded reporting requirements to all students. ([SHB 1240](#))

*"The legislature finds that there is no educational or therapeutic benefit to children from physically restraining or isolating them as part of their public school programs when not necessary for immediate safety. **The use of seclusion or restraints in nonemergency situations poses significant physical and psychological danger to students and school staff.**"¹²*

2022: Provided OSPI with designated funds to convene a statewide advisory *Crisis Response Workgroup* to develop legislative recommendations related to reducing restraint and isolation.

2023: Proposed (did not pass) further restrictions on physical restraint, and prohibition on chemical restraint, mechanical restraint, and isolation. ([HB 1479](#))

- Provided OSPI with designated funds to support reducing restraint and eliminating isolation.

2024: Proposed (did not pass) further restrictions on physical restraint and isolation, prohibition of chemical and mechanical restraints, and staff training requirements. ([E4SHB 1479](#))

¹² [Finding—2015 c 206 s 1](#)

2025: Proposed (did not pass) further restrictions on restraint and isolation, prohibition of chemical and mechanical restraints, training requirements, and room clear follow-up procedures. ([HB 1795](#))

WA State Reports: Overlapping Recommendations

The 2022 Legislature directed OSPI to convene an advisory workgroup to identify strategies for supporting students in distress that prioritize relational safety, and to develop recommendations to reduce restraint and isolation. The Crisis Response Workgroup issued a report¹³ in December 2022.

From 2018–2022, Disability Rights Washington (DRW) and the ACLU of Washington (ACLU- WA) conducted research investigating the prevalence and impact of restraint and isolation in Washington schools. A report of findings¹⁴ titled *“Coming Into the Light”* was published in 2023. Recommendations from each report are summarized below.

Crisis Response Workgroup Aug–Dec 2022 Report: 2022	Disability Rights WA / ACLU WA 2018–2022 Report: 2023
Eliminate isolation and chemical restraint	Eliminate isolation and chemical restraint
Improve access to behavior supports	Invest in mental health supports
Improve data collection and reporting	Modify data collection requirements
Increase training of de-escalation practices	Fund training for alternative practices
Clarify definition of “serious harm” as “serious physical injury”	Remove “property damage” from definition of “serious harm”

¹³ Collyer & Dufault, 2022. [Crisis Response Workgroup: Report to the Legislature](#)

¹⁴ Kadlec et al., 2023. [Coming Into the Light: An Examination of Restraint and Isolation Practices in WA Schools](#).

Year 1 Progress

1. Conducted consultant meetings, focus groups, key informant interviews, and surveys in partnership with American Institutes for Research (AIR) to gather perspectives from statewide stakeholders for the purpose of informing key project priorities and manual development.
2. Began development of a robust technical assistance manual to guide educators, staff, and administrators in development and implementation of best practices.
3. Offered live webinars, in-person trainings, and recorded modules of Dr. Ross Greene's Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS) model to 1,085 educators.
4. In partnership with the University of Washington (UW) Haring Center, developed the structure for implementation of demonstration projects.
5. Identified 6 (six) demonstration districts to collaborate with the UW Haring Center.
6. Identified 16 (sixteen) pilot districts and provided grant funding and direct assistance to support planning processes.
7. Conducted a data co-interpretation event in partnership with AIR, during which participating teachers, paraeducators, district staff, union leaders, and families identified four key priorities:
 - Addressing disproportionality of R&I use on students from marginalized populations (including students with disabilities and Black, indigenous, and multiracial students)
 - Improving content and caliber of professional development
 - Creation of safe spaces for students to self-regulate
 - Addressing long-term trauma experienced by staff, students, and families.
8. Solicited proposals from and subsequently contracted with a cohort of professional development consultants to provide training and supportive services.

UPDATE: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MANUAL

A Technical Assistance Manual has been jointly developed by OSPI's Special Education and Student Engagement and Support divisions, with research support from American Institutes for Research.

The manual includes a central "hub" resource with six connected sections to support readers in understanding how district, school, classroom, and individual support practices and requirements fit together to address student social, emotional, and behavioral learning. The central resource features a self-assessment to assist the reader in prioritizing which section(s) to explore, based on their interests and needs.

The manual is projected to be finalized late Autumn of 2025.

Section 1: Foundational Knowledge of Positive and Trauma-Informed Behavior Support

1. How student needs and past learning experiences can impact behavior at school.
2. How a student's sense of belonging and connection relate to behavior support.
3. How trauma-informed behavioral science can support positive outcomes for all students.

Section 2: School & District Systems That Support Behavior Learning and Safety

1. Overview of universal supports/systems and their relationship to student behavior (e.g., family and community partnership, social & emotional learning, school-based mental health, universal design for learning, engaging and effective instruction, and inclusionary practices).
2. Overview and considerations for school responses to interfering behavior (including disciplinary removals, informal removals, shortened school day, and threat assessment).
3. Preventing inequity and disproportionality in exclusionary and disciplinary responses.

Section 3: Classroom Practices That Support Behavior Learning and Safety

1. Partnering with families to ensure culturally relevant and welcoming classrooms.
2. Strategies to proactively teach age-appropriate social, emotional, and behavioral skills.
3. Co-regulation and other strategies for staff wellbeing.

Section 4: Effective Support for Students with Extensive Behavior Learning Needs

1. Teaming to support student behavior learning across tiers of support.
2. Individual positive behavior supports within tiered systems of support, including high-quality functional behavioral assessments (FBAs) and behavioral intervention plans (BIPs).
3. Data based progress monitoring and decision making for individual student behavior support.

Section 5: Crisis Prevention and De-Escalation

1. Foundational concepts (e.g. defining crisis, crisis prevention, crisis response, and de-escalation).
2. Prevention and management practices during a crisis.
3. Considerations for the utilization of school/district resource officers and other law enforcement.

Section 6: Considerations for Students with Disabilities

1. Ensuring that students eligible for services are still accessing a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in their least restrictive environment (LRE).
2. Behavior support as part of the IEP or 504 Plan.

3. Themes from Office for Civil Rights and Department of Justice investigations into district use of restraint and isolation.

Manual Design: Internal and External Feedback

Feedback was sought from OSPI staff from a variety of perspectives, including: Student Engagement and Support; Equity and Civil Rights; Social-Emotional Learning; School Safety; Mental, Social, and Behavioral Health; School Counseling; Integrated Student Supports; Special Education Dispute Resolution; Special Education Policy and Community Engagement; and Special Education Program Improvement. OSPI leadership and various project constituents will be asked to further collaborate and review content as the manual is finalized.

External feedback on the initial outline was collected via survey distributed as follows:

- To attendees of the 2024 Washington Integrated Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Conference;
- To organizations that are members of the Inclusionary Practices Technical Assistance Network¹⁷ (IPTN), as well as to the communities that IPTN partner organizations serve; and
- To labor partner organizations (PSE, WEA, etc.) as well as Disability Rights Washington (DRW), ACLU of Washington, and League of Education Voters.

Balancing Constituent Perspectives

As mandated in the authorizing legislation, OSPI must consult with the following:

- a) State associations representing both **certificated staff** and **classified staff**;
- b) An association representing **principals**;
- c) An association representing school **administrators**;
- d) The Washington state **school directors'** association;
- e) An association representing **parents**;
- f) An individual with **lived experience** of restraint and isolation; and
- g) A representative of the protection and **advocacy** agency of Washington. A list

of contributing consultants can be found in Appendix A.

UPDATE: DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

OSPI was directed to create demonstration projects that “build schoolwide systems to support students in distress and prevent crisis escalation cycles that may result in restraint

¹⁷ [OSPI - Inclusionary Practices Technical Assistance Network](#)

or isolation.”

The demonstration project model offered in partnership with the University of Washington Haring Center¹⁸ engages districts in goal-oriented professional development (PD) to address site-specific needs. Districts receive funding to support this work, as well as access to a menu of contracted PD providers. **Project districts** illustrate the processes and outcomes of constructing schoolwide systems while elevating resources, strategies, and tools that have worked.

Districts

There are two types of project district partners:

Demonstration sites share their stories of building tiered systems of student support while collecting resources that have shown success. They serve as *learning communities* that allow educators and community members to observe positive practices in real-world settings.

Pilot sites engage in targeted professional development through the learning experiences offered by demonstration sites and contracted providers. They serve as “*test flight*” examples that allow OSPI and partners to understand what practices can support schools best.

Demonstration Sites

1. Auburn School District
2. Bainbridge Island School District
3. Centralia School District
4. Mukilteo School District
5. Gatewood Elementary (Seattle Public Schools)
6. Spokane Public Schools

Pilot Sites

1. Anacortes School District
2. Bremerton School District
3. Castle Rock School District
4. Central Valley School District
5. Concrete School District
6. Davenport School District
7. Edmonds School District
8. Everett Public Schools
9. Fife Public Schools
10. Kelso School District
11. Lakewood School District
12. North Thurston Public Schools
13. Pullman Public Schools
14. Rochester School District
15. Snoqualmie Valley School District
16. Vancouver Public Schools

¹⁸ [UW Haring Center Demonstration Sites: RREI Demo Sites](#)

District Activities

The RREI project grants were designed to allow school districts to focus on logistics and build a system of supports around their chosen professional development. Funding was focused generally on the following areas:

1. Substitute coverage and paid release time for staff to participate in: debrief meetings with students and families after an incident, professional development such as training or coaching sessions, peer support networks, co-teaching, and mentoring.
2. Materials and labor to convert isolation rooms into sensory spaces for students to use self-regulation skills and manage their emotions.
3. Developing policies and procedures for behavioral crises through Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) membership, consultation with equity organizations, etc.
4. Creating and improving data collection tools that track restraint and isolation incidents, school climate, student and staff support needs, family outreach, etc.
5. Providing district teams and school teams (classified staff, general and special education teachers, paraeducators, administrators) with hands-off crisis de-escalation skills.

Outcomes

Outcomes data in this report are from July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025 (school year 2024-25) and measure outcomes for 21 out of 22 project sites.¹ A summary of general outcomes is presented below, followed by highlights from individual districts and analysis of restraint and isolation data from OSPI's Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS).

1. Restraint and isolation data collected through CEDARS indicates that 71% of project sites decreased incidents of restraint and isolation in school year 2024-25, as compared to school year 2023-24. This decrease in incidents was statistically significant.²
2. Increased access to general education settings for over 500 students across project districts.
3. Increased use of school needs assessments to plan systems improvement, and student behavior assessments to identify appropriate interventions and supports.
4. Increased use of supportive alternatives to isolation rooms, such as regulation and sensory spaces.
5. Increased implementation of debrief and follow-up procedures, with a focus on antecedent behaviors, staff collaboration, and family engagement.
6. Improved safety for students and staff when isolation rooms were used, indicated by a reduction in reported injuries.

¹ Bremerton School District was not able to submit final 2024-25 restraint and isolation data to CEDARS in time for writing this report, and so their data was not included in the analysis.

² A Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated a significant decrease in the number of restraint and isolation incidents per 100 students enrolled, $V = 56$, $p = 0.0192$.

7. Improved reporting and data collection, which have allowed for more productive incident reviews and more effective behavior support planning.
8. Team cohesion and buy-in, including mindset shifts, co-created goals, and shared language.

District Highlights

Auburn: Reduced the use of isolation rooms by 78% during the 2024-25 school year, largely replacing this practice with use of sensory spaces for students to use self-regulation skills.

Central Valley: Implemented a new system for administering, monitoring, and reporting incidents of isolation, including added time for thorough debrief processes. This improved staff and student safety and reduced the median amount of time students spent in isolation rooms by 40%.

Centralia: Strengthened Tiers 1 and 2 across all schools, with a focus on staff collaboration and spaces for students to use self-calming skills. Reduced R&I incidents by 76% when compared to the previous school year.

Kelso: Reduced incidents of restraint and isolation by 64% compared to the previous school year.

Pullman: Reduced incidents of restraint and isolation by 89% compared to the previous school year.

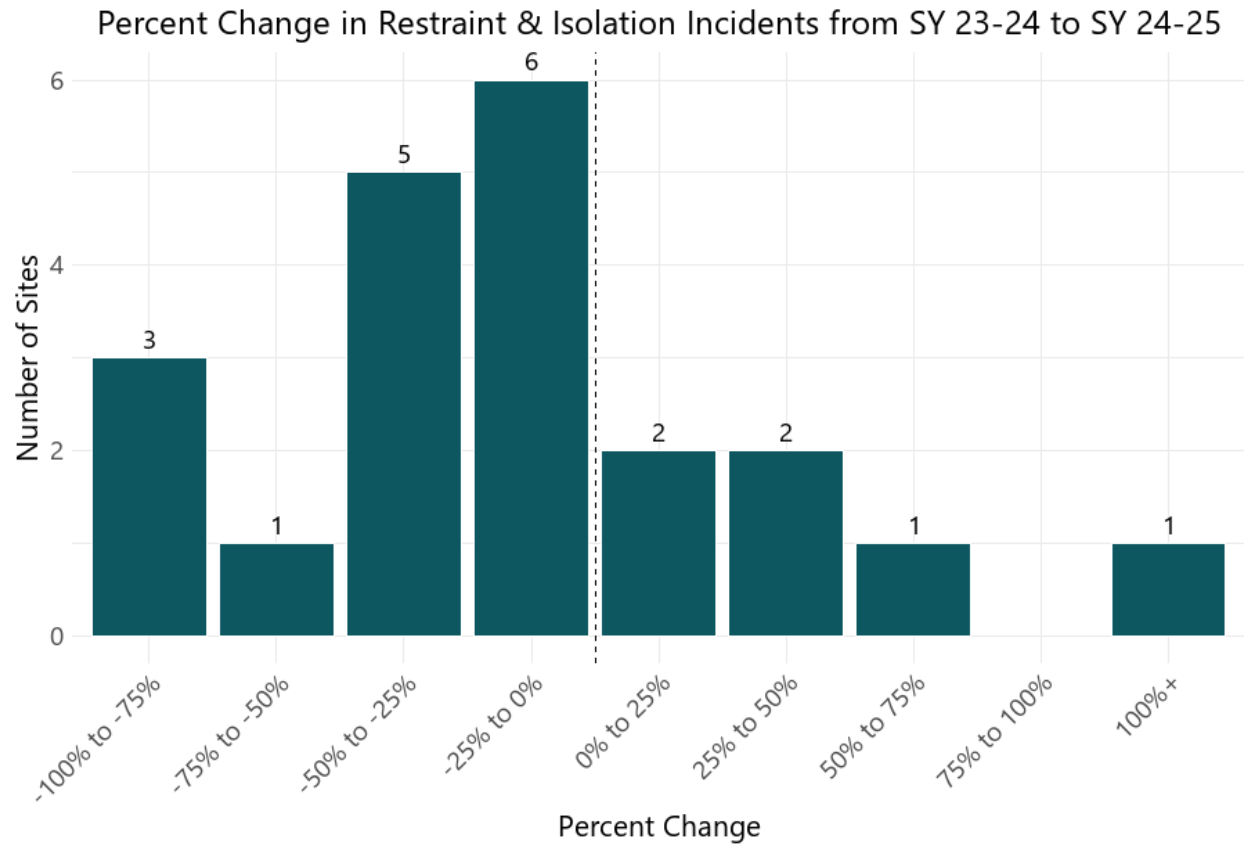
Rochester: Reduced incidents in the primary school by over 70% in part by training school staff to both use and teach self-regulation skills.

Restraint & Isolation Incident Data

Restraint and isolation data collected through CEDARS indicates that 71% of project sites decreased incidents of restraint and isolation in school year 2024-25, as compared to school year 2023-24. Statistical testing³ of the decrease in incidents at project sites resulted in a p-value of less than 0.05, meaning there is less than a 5% chance that a decrease of this size would occur just from random variation. These results suggest that the RREI grant project likely had an impact on decreasing incidents of restraint and isolation at project sites.

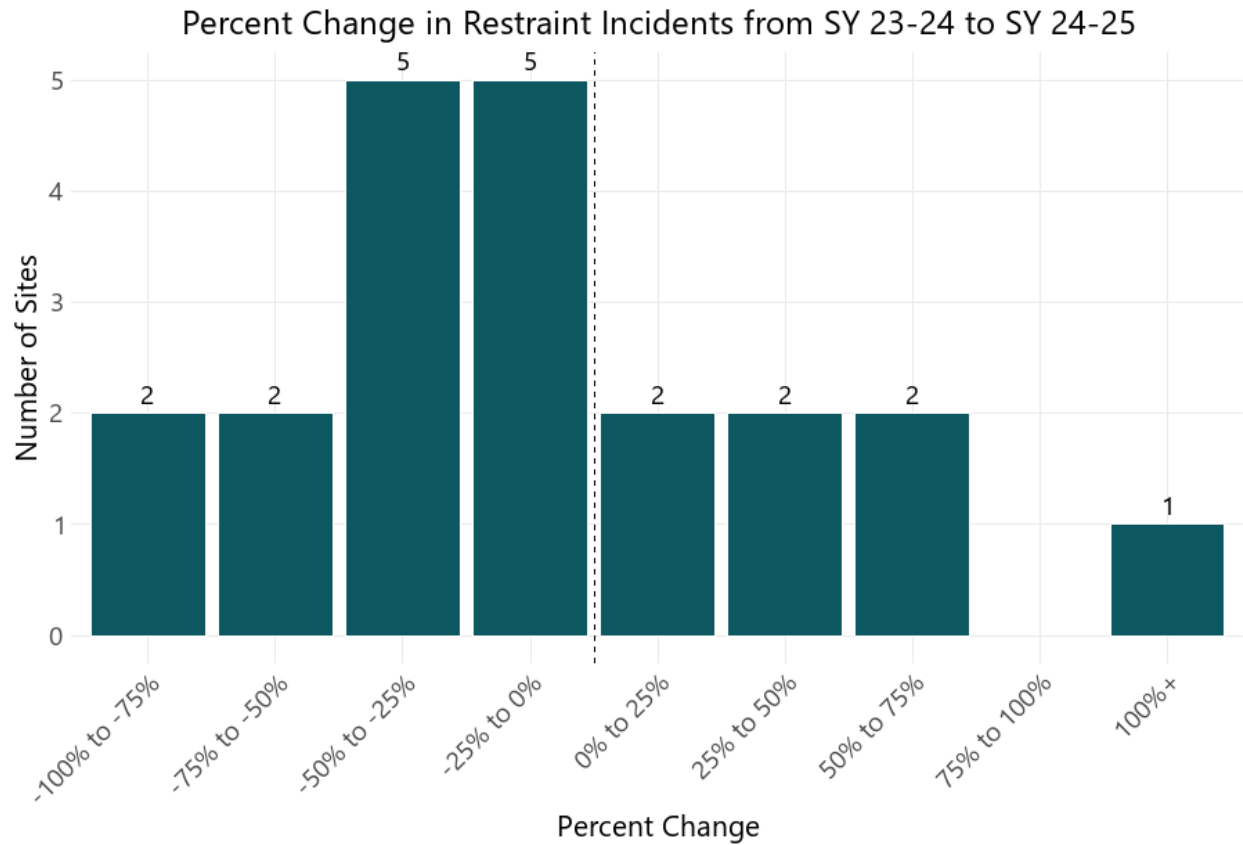
The following graph shows the number of project sites that saw decreases (or increases) in restraint and isolation incident counts in school year 2024-25, as compared to the previous school year. Of the 21 project sites examined in this analysis, 15 saw decreases in R&I:

³ A Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated a significant decrease in the number of restraint and isolation incidents per 100 students enrolled, $V = 56$, $p = 0.0192$.



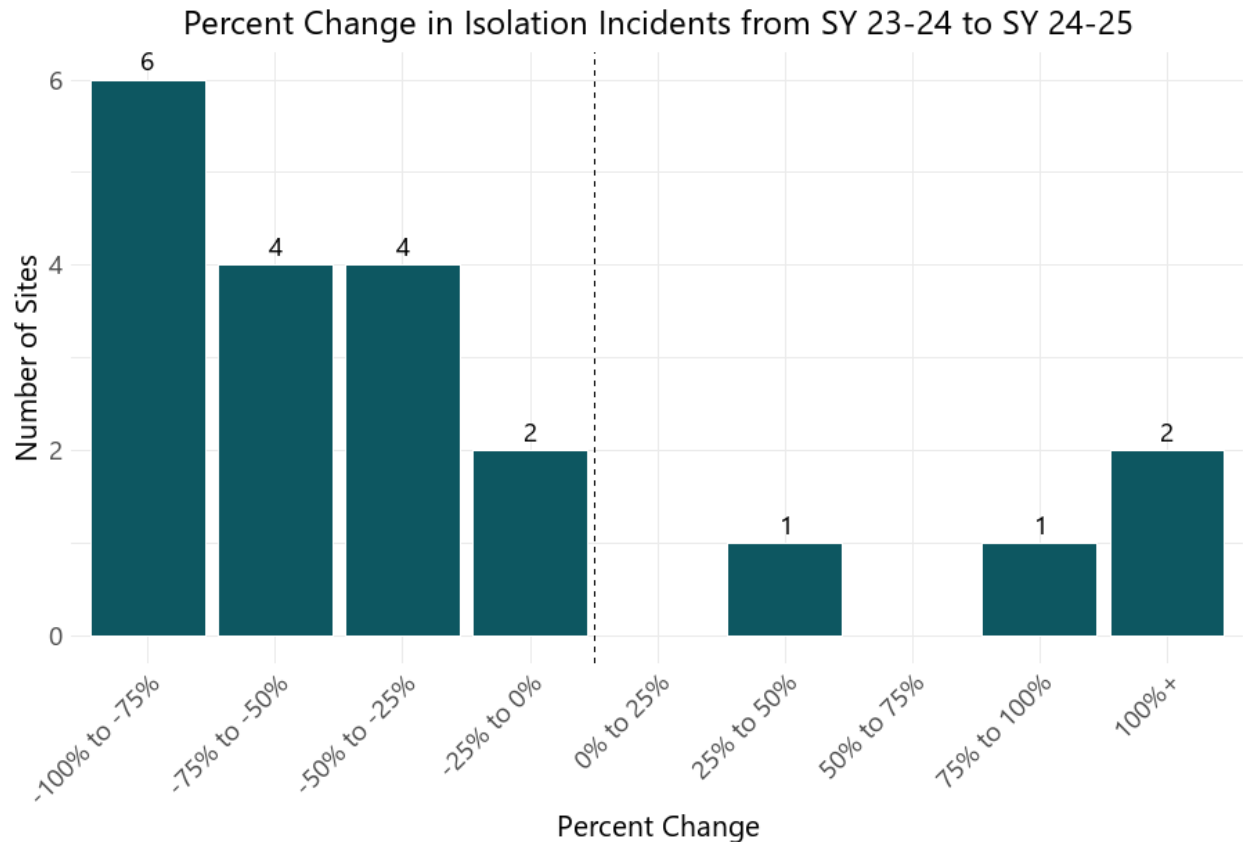
Source: CEDARS, OSPI, July 2025

In looking at *restraint* incidents alone, 14 project sites were able to reduce the number of incidents of restraint as compared to the previous school year:



Source: CEDARS, OSPI, July 2025

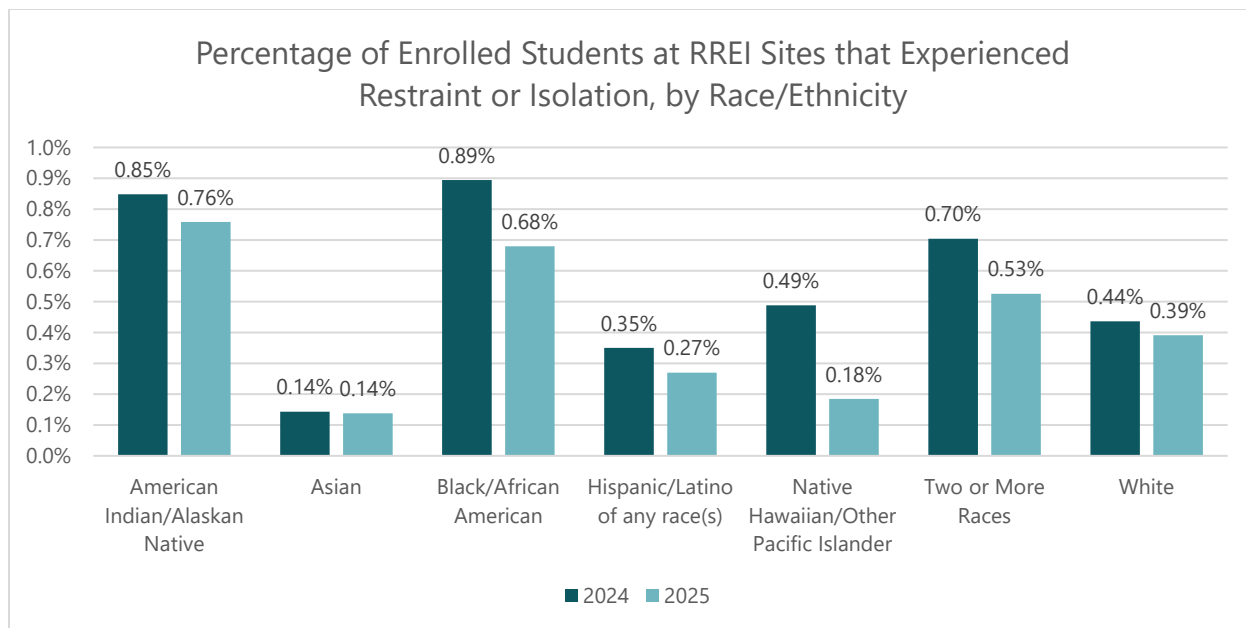
In looking at *isolation* incidents alone, 16 project sites were able to reduce the number of incidents of isolation as compared to the previous school year. Note that only 20 project sites are represented on this graph because one site (Gatewood Elementary in Seattle SD) reported zero incidents of isolation for both school years:



Source: CEDARS, OSPI, July 2025

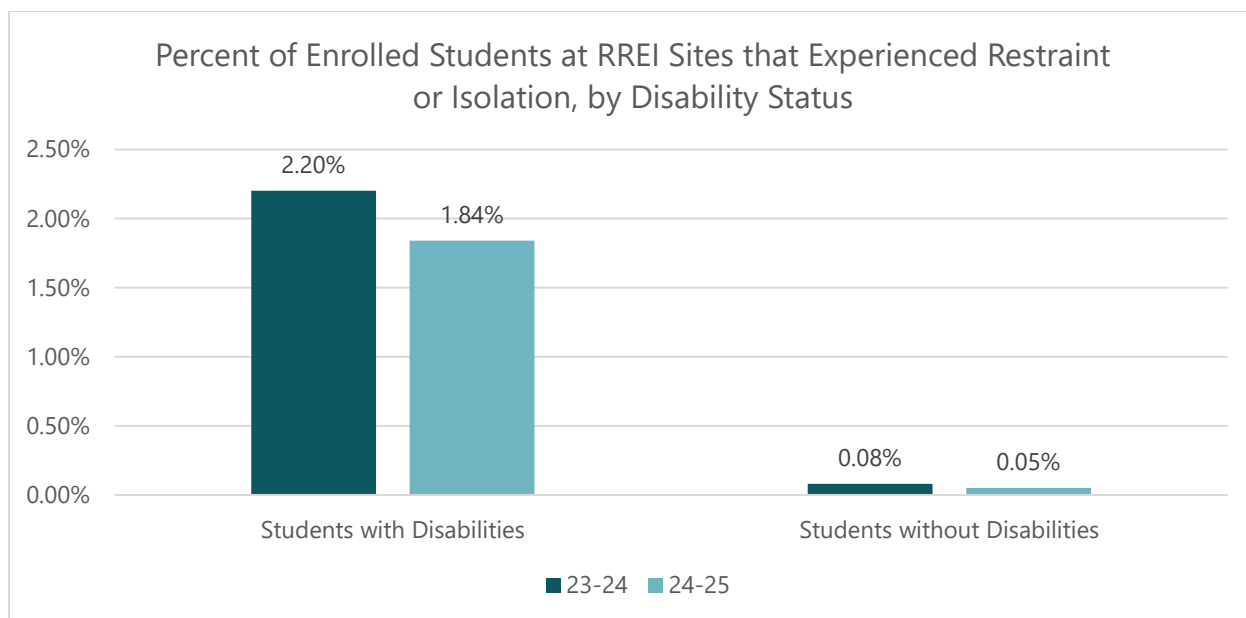
Demographics of Students Restrained and Isolated

The graph below shows the percentage of students enrolled at RREI project sites that experienced restraint or isolation, broken out by race/ethnicity. Comparing the percentage of students from racial/ethnic groups that have experienced restraint or isolation is one way to illustrate potential disproportionality. Though American Indian/Alaskan Native students, Black/African American students, and students who are two or more races were still restrained or isolated at higher rates than White students these rates did decrease in school year 2024-25, showing a decrease in disproportionality. In the 2024-25 school year, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students experienced restraint or isolation at half the rate of white students, a large reduction over the prior year.



Source: CEDARS, OSPI, July 2025

Rates of restraint and isolation also decreased for both students with and without disabilities at RREI project sites in school year 2024-25:



Source: CEDARS, OSPI, July 2025

Staff and Student Injuries

Analysis of staff and student injuries reported through CEDARS saw reductions in both for RREI project sites. Thirteen project sites saw decreases in the number of staff injuries. For the RREI cohort as a whole, total staff injuries decreased by 15% in school year 2024-25, as compared to

the previous school year. Of the sixteen project sites that had any student injuries to report (five project sites reported zero student injuries both years), nine of these sites reported decreases in student injuries in the 2024-25 school year. For the RREI cohort as a whole, total student injuries decreased by 38%.

UPDATE: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The rollout of statewide professional development began in December 2023 with trainings by Dr. Ross Greene of Lives in the Balance on the Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS) model.¹⁹ The project has subsequently focused on professional development offered by successful bidders who applied to a Request for Proposals (RFP).

Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS)

CPS was among the intervention programs recommended by the Crisis Response Workgroup. It is an evidence-based, trauma-informed model that assists adults in collaboratively identifying and solving problems that bring about students' concerning behaviors. CPS contains no physical management, instead focusing on prevention.

¹⁹ [Collaborative & Proactive Solutions](#)

Training Offered in Fiscal Year 2025	Participants*
Recorded three-hour webinar (asynchronous)	767
Recorded two-day training (asynchronous)	79

* The number of individuals registered as “present” between July 1, 2024–May 12, 2025

Contracted Providers

OSPI issued a [Request for Proposals](#) seeking consultants to: design and deliver professional development to one or more targeted audiences, with the goal to reduce restraint and eliminate isolation. Audiences include paraeducators, families, school leaders, classroom teachers, support staff, district staff, and school board members.

Of those received, 10 proposals were chosen due to their scalability, specificity to Washington, and alignment with key project priorities (e.g., focus on decreasing equity gaps identified in data.)

American Institutes for Research in Behavioral Sciences (AIR)

Expands on AIR’s previous RREI research, working with districts to identify root causes of discipline disparities in order to change harmful beliefs and practices.

And Still We Rise

Focuses on collaboration with families and students from diverse backgrounds, and implementation and evaluation of trauma-informed behavior interventions.

Character Strong

Focuses on developing a comprehensive Tier 3 system of support through high-quality in person and virtual training paired with strategic coaching.

Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI)

Offers training to equip staff with verbal skills, hands-off disengagement techniques, and antecedent strategies to identify and mitigate crisis behavior. Piloting “reframing behavior” series.

NWESD (ESD 189)

Engages district staff in professional development that focuses on trauma-informed MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) supports for students with intensive behavioral needs, and coaching with Dr. Bridget Walker.

QBS MIDCO, provider of Safety-Care

Provides PBIS-aligned training programs to reduce the frequency and severity of behavioral challenges through crisis de-escalation and intervention. Uses a “Train-the-Trainer” model.

Sound Supports

Helps schools evaluate areas of need and success, as well as assessing implementation

fidelity of multiple interconnected initiatives that improve outcomes for students.

True Measure Collaborative

Works deeply with districts to improve inclusionary practices and data-driven planning by providing coaching and training, and assistance in developing local school board policy.

TurnerDEV, provider of Supported School

Provides app-based dynamic data collection, analysis, and streamlined staff communication to improve intervention strategies by enhancing data-driven decision making.

University of Washington Haring Center for Inclusive Education

Provides two concurrent series of [Project ECHO](#) (Extension of Community Healthcare Outcomes) workshops for educators and school teams, as well as families and caregivers.

Cultural Competency: And Still We Rise

In addition to the funded proposals above, And Still We Rise is partnering with OSPI to develop a series of modules that guide educators in developing cultural competency skills for the purpose of reducing restraint and eliminating isolation. These will be offered as free, asynchronous learning resources, hosted by OSPI.

6. Course 1: Enhancing Cultural Competency to Reduce Restraints and Eliminate Isolation.
7. Course 2: Implementing Trauma-Informed Practices in Educational Settings.
8. Course 3: Safety, Communication, and De-escalation.
9. Course 4: Effective Incident Response and Follow-Up.

KEY FINDINGS & CHALLENGES

Finding: Collaboration and Alignment

The work directed by this proviso is complex and intersects with school safety, data collection and administration, special education monitoring, inclusionary practices, and behavioral health, among others.

In addition, professional development providers met every two months throughout project implementation to collaborate, learn from one another, discuss problems of practice, and connect on emergent issues. District grantees met every six weeks in a similar collaborative space. District staff discussed topics such as reporting forms, use of data, and

strengthening of Tier 1 supports.

This intentional focus on collaboration has built a mutual commitment to this work that resonates both in the project's positive outcomes, and in the shared humanity that guides efforts to educate children and youth in safe environments.

Finding: Data and Documentation

Statewide data has been incorporated into many aspects of this project, including pilot site identification, professional development planning, partnership development, and targeted outreach. However, districts have reported confusion on how to report specific R&I data, such as multiple instances of restraint that occur as part of one behavior incident.

In response to this finding, OSPI has created a guidance and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document to help standardize reporting of these incidents and reduce confusion. Available Here: <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/student-success/health-safety/school-safety-center/restraint-and-isolation>

In addition, project staff are creating a model/template reporting form based on best practices identified in collaboration with district grantees.

Finding: Staff Needs

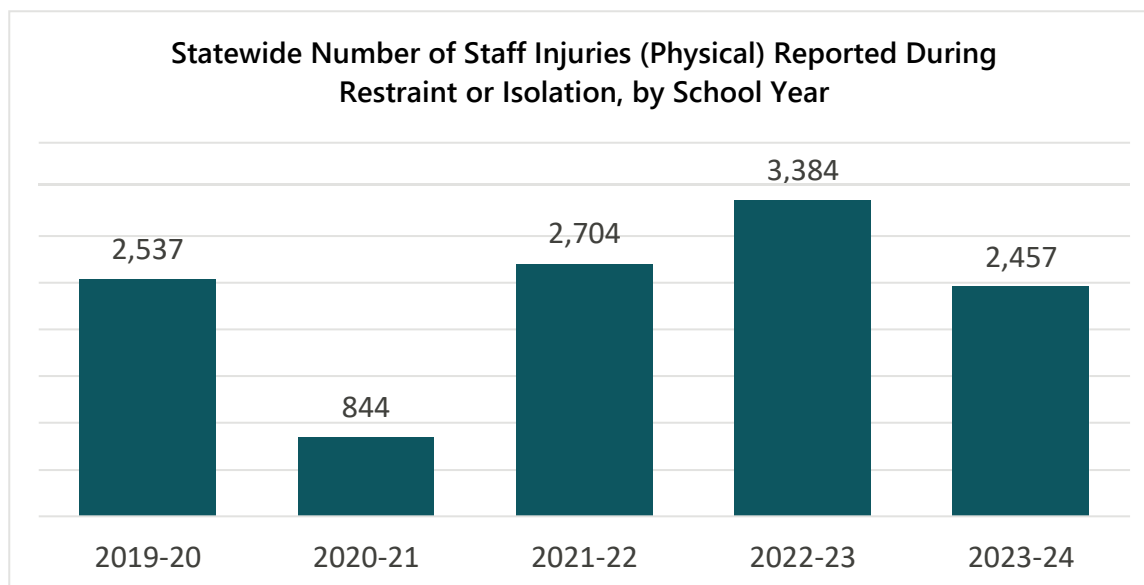
Prior to this project, no comprehensive study of Washington's staff experiences related to R&I had been conducted. AIR's research and OSPI's district collaboration supported OSPI's understanding that staff across Washington do their best to keep school communities safe²⁰, and as such largely use restraint and isolation as a last resort following implementation of de-escalation strategies.²¹ For years, educators have been advocating for training²² in positive behavioral interventions and supports, as well as trauma-informed crisis prevention and intervention techniques.

Staff injuries remain prevalent, indicating that their needs are not being adequately met by the skills and tools they have been given. However, it is promising to see a decrease in injuries since the RREI project's implementation began.

²⁰ Jackson, Fatima, & London, 2024. *Understanding Restraint & Isolation in Washington Schools*

²¹ Pudelski, 2012. [*Keeping Schools Safe: How Seclusion and Restraint Protects Students and School Personnel*](#)

²² [*NPR \(2019\): A Dreaded Part Of Teachers' Jobs: Restraining And Secluding Students*](#)



Source: [OSPI Data Submitted by Districts](#)

The constituent engagement work conducted in partnership with American Institutes for Research (AIR) revealed the following, which the RREI project has been addressing through targeted professional development and statewide technical assistance.²³

1. District policies are often misunderstood, unclear, and subject to interpretation. Those most likely to use R&I reported the least understanding of policies.
 - 43% of teachers and paraeducators reported high familiarity with policies in comparison to 88% of district staff and school administrators.
2. Staff experience physical and psychological harm from using R&I, considering it a “last resort” and reporting a need for safer ways to de-escalate students. Those most likely to use R&I reported the least feelings of safety.
 - 31% of teachers and paraeducators reported feeling safe during an incident of R&I in comparison to 64% of district staff and school administrators.
3. Families and staff both reported a lack of appropriate systems in schools to prevent and respond to escalations.

Finding: Isolation Rooms vs. Sensory Spaces

Throughout project implementation, it became clear that a common misconception is that isolation rooms and sensory spaces are the same. This has hindered policy discussions at the district and state levels, as well as reporting practices at the school and district levels.

Isolation rooms are small, enclosed spaces with a locking door. They are typically empty spaces the size of a small walk-in closet, bereft of decoration. The goal is to remove a student from the school environment and confine them until a crisis state has ended. On

²³ Jackson, Fatima, & London, 2024. *Understanding Restraint & Isolation in Washington Schools*

the other hand, sensory spaces are open and inviting. Lighting is typically dimmed, and padding or bean bags are provided. The goal is to offer a student space to self-soothe and self-regulate, practicing the skills they need to keep their bodies safe.

When a sensory space is used voluntarily by a student for self-regulation, or when a student is able to freely exit the space at their will, it is *not* considered isolation according to state law. In order to support school and district staff in enhancing reporting accuracy, this conflation is addressed in OSPI's data reporting guidance and the upcoming Technical Assistance Manual. However, there is also an opportunity to educate policy practitioners about the distinctions between these spaces in order to inform both district and state policy adoption.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Authorizing legislation includes a directive to develop recommendations for statewide policy and funding changes, including the scope and degree of professional development (PD) needs.

Policy Changes

Immediate Policy Actions

1. Prohibit life-threatening R&I practices with all students.

A number of R&I practices are known to interfere with breathing and are explicitly prohibited for use on students eligible for special education services, including:

- Prone (lying face-down).
- Supine (lying face-up).
- Wall restraints.
- Noxious sprays.

Although understood to be dangerous and potentially life-threatening, these practices are not prohibited for use with all students.

2. Define “imminent likelihood of serious harm.”

- Current law permits R&I only when student behavior “poses an imminent likelihood of serious harm,” although this is not defined in education law.
- The Crisis Response Workgroup recommended “imminent danger of serious physical injury,” and the DRW/ACLU Report recommended clarifying that harm “does not apply to property damage, unless it creates risk of injury or death.”

3. Prohibit chemical restraints.

Define chemical restraints and prohibit the use of these sedative drugs on students. This was identified as a key priority by both the Crisis Response Workgroup and the DRW/ACLU Report.

Long-Term Policy Goals

1. Prohibit isolation

Eliminating harmful practices involves improving access to behavioral health supports by addressing professional development and training needs, and expanding statewide technical assistance.

2. Create inclusionary practices requirements for general education teacher programs

Programs leading to general educator certification would benefit from instruction in student behavioral supports and inclusionary practices.

3. Invest in a review of crisis intervention programs offered in Washington state

A state standard of approved crisis intervention programs would decrease the possibility of districts training their staff in dangerous or ineffective strategies of de-escalation and crisis response.

4. Continue funding and supporting statewide adoption/expansion of inclusionary practices

This work is embedded in efforts to reduce restraint and eliminate isolation.

Funding

Through this project, it has become clear that reducing student and staff harm caused by restraint and isolation requires ongoing statewide collaboration and support, and localized district-directed spending plans. Recent increases in outreach to both OSPI’s Safety Center and Special Education emails around restraint and isolation have shown an increased need to support school staff and district leaders in understanding R&I policies and practices.

In order to support this educator growth, it is recommended to provide funding for the proceeding list of statewide professional development needs. These were developed in tandem with district grantees and contracted providers.

In addition to funding statewide collaboration and professional development, OSPI recommends directly funding staff release time for mandated debrief and follow-up procedures (summarized in the *“Debrief and Follow-Up Procedures”* section of the Background).

Professional Development Needs

1. Trauma-informed behavior supports and inclusionary practices.
2. Robust school-wide tiered systems of supports.
3. Debrief and follow-up procedures (requires directed funding for staff release time).
4. Family and community partnerships.
5. Discipline disparities, cultural competency, anti-racism, and anti-ableism.
6. Proactive crisis intervention and de-escalation.
7. Framework for understanding and using trauma-informed behavioral science.

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

Statewide Scalability

The scope of this project has been limited to fewer than 10% of Washington’s districts. Not all problems have been solved, and not all lessons have been learned. However, there is now robust qualitative and quantitative data pointing to promising practices and successful strategies for significantly reducing R&I in schools. There is now a need to scale the work, investing in sustainability and promotion of practices that show potential to lead to large systematic change.

The 2024 supplemental budget amended this project to, among other things, include an additional requirement of this report on “information on the amount of professional development needed across the state.” System level change is complicated and quantifying statewide need is challenging, especially without long-term data or results from this project.

There are different paths and roll out could look different for different groups. Consider the differing roll of school boards, building level leadership and educators. That said, this is a projected scaling of this project and estimated investment needed. Over the next two years of the program, OSPI will continue to refine this proposal as we gather more data and continue working with school districts.

Guiding Principles:

- Training content supports a system, including information on preventing the need for R&I as well as early intervention, safe restraint practices, when necessary, data collection & reporting requirements.

- Assumes using state-funded Social Emotional Learning (SEL) day already funded
- Professional Development providers are for implementation training and coaching support

1. All Staff (123,000 individuals) training and implementation coaching:

- Administrators (5,000 individuals) - \$50 per person using half-day online group style training – \$250,000
- Certificated Educators (74,000 individuals) - \$150 per person in one-day cohort group and/or TOT model – \$11,100,000
- Classified Staff (44,000 individuals) - \$150 per person in one-day cohort group and/or TOT model – \$6,600,000
- Total: **\$17,950,000**

2. Statewide Contracted Professional Development for Educators to support implementation/coaching:

- (\$250,000 x 10 providers) – **\$2,500,000**

3. Funding for districts to contract with their own Professional Development to support implementation:

- 295 school districts x \$50,000 per district – **\$14,750,000.**

Grand Total: **\$35,200,000**

Next Steps

The 2025 legislature included funding in the 2025–27 biennium budget [[ESSB 5167 sec. 501\(1\)\(p\)](#)] to continue the following aspects of the RREI project. At the time of the report's writing, the governor had yet to sign the budget; if approved, OSPI will determine the implementation plan.

- (i) Provide district grants for:
 - a. Six (6) demonstration sites to showcase best practices and serve as learning communities,
 - b. Increasing the number of pilot sites to engage in targeted PD through demonstration sites and contracted providers.
- (ii) Pilot sites must:
 - a. Build school-level and district-level systems of positive, trauma-informed behavior support practices,

- b. Improve data collection and reporting systems.
- (iii) By November 15, 2026: OSPI must provide a report to the legislature on demonstration project implementation and outcomes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Directive (iii) in Authorizing Legislation

(iii) In developing the [technical assistance] manual, the office must consult with, at minimum:

- a. Representatives from state associations representing both certificated and classified staff;
- b. An association representing principals;
- c. An association representing school administrators;
- d. The Washington state school directors' association;
- e. An association representing parents;
- f. An individual with lived experience of restraint and isolation;
- g. A representative of the protection and advocacy agency of Washington.

OSPI consulted with the following constituents throughout the RREI project's implementation:

1. Representing Administrators:
 - Joel Aune of Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA)
2. Representing Certificated Staff
 - Jared Mason-Gere of Washington Educator's Association (WEA)
 - Karen Strickland of American Federation of Teachers Washington (AFT WA)
3. Representing Classified Staff
 - Rick Chisa of Public School Employees of Washington (PSE SEIU 1948)
 - Erin Haick of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 925
4. Representing Nurses
 - Katherine Weiss of Washington State Nurses Association (WSNA)
5. Representing Parents (Families)
 - Sarah Butcher of Roots of Inclusion
 - Kristi De Vadder of Seattle Parent Teacher Association
6. Representing Principals
 - Scott Seaman of Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP)

7. Representing Protection and Advocacy

- Roxana Gomez of American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Washington
- Andrea Kadlec of Disability Rights Washington

8. Representing School Directors (School Board Members)

- Tim Garchow of Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA)

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