



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: School Transportation Efficiency Reviews 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each year, school districts receive an efficiency rating of their student transportation operations using previous school year data recorded in the transportation funding system, Student Transportation Allocation Reporting System (STARS). Regional Transportation Coordinators (RTCs) conduct efficiency reviews for those districts with an efficiency rating below 90 percent. Most districts operate with an efficiency rating above 90 percent as evident with only 70 out of the 279 eligible school districts receiving an efficiency review in 2025.

The review process looks at school districts that have a current rating that is currently below 90 percent and above 90 the previous year and districts that are below 90 percent the current year and the previous year. The RTCs assess the available district data to determine if there is a potential cause of the rating to be below 90 percent. Contact is made with the district to discuss the efficiency rating and for the district to provide input. Possible reasons for a low efficiency rating are the district's decision to provide a specific level of service to the community, geographic constraints, one-time purchases, to name a few.

Efficiency ratings are unpredictable in nature and items outside the district's control can affect the ratings. Making operation changes based on efficiency ratings can promote behaviors or decisions that lead to higher efficiency ratings but less state allocation or affect student safety. It is important to note that the efficiency ratings have no direct impact on district allocations calculated by the STARS model.

INTRODUCTION

STARS, the current student transportation funding system, was implemented in 2011. An efficiency evaluation system of school district transportation operations was included with the STARS funding model. The intent of the efficiency evaluation system was to encourage school districts to operate their student transportation programs while making efficient use of state resources.

Deciphering the efficiency system is challenging due to the difficulty in explaining the system's behavior. Cohort districts can change from year to year, and some districts are considered outliers, districts that receive 100 percent due to their unique circumstances.

OSPI also generates KPIs as an alternate measure of efficiency that compares district transportation operations in three categories: the number of basic program students per basic program bus, the number of special education students per special education bus, and the cost per student transported. The district cohorts for KPIs are determined by the number of students transported. KPIs may be more transparent method in comparing districts transportation programs.

BACKGROUND

The efficiency system was developed by the consultant that created the STARS funding model and uses a Target Resource Model to determine the efficiency ratings. A target district is created for districts that are rated less than 100 percent efficient. The target district is created from data from other school districts across the state that have similar or more challenging features than the district with the rating.

The calculation of the efficiency ratings requires actual district expenditure data, which is available for the prior school year. The target district establishes the expected resource requirements (expenditures and number of buses) needed to achieve a 100 percent efficiency score. Districts are compared to their target district to determine their efficiency ratings and placed in cohort groups.

District data changes from year to year which can change cohort groups and affect efficiency ratings. Geographic location, district reporting errors, one-time purchases, and district determined levels of school bus service can affect a district's efficiency rating.

The efficiency ratings are released in March and are published via a bulletin. The RTC efficiency reviews, and KPIs, are available for download and found on OSPI's [Student Transportation Allocation Reporting System \(STARS\)](#) webpage.

UPDATE STATUS

The RTCs complete the efficiency evaluation through two different review processes. The first process is for districts who receive a rating below 90 percent and the prior year rating was above 90 percent. The second review process is for districts whose prior year and current year efficiency ratings are below 90 percent.

2024–25 School Year Results

The review process for the 2024–25 school year resulted in 70 reviews out of 279 districts receiving efficiency ratings. Eighteen districts received reviews due to efficiency ratings below 90 percent in the current year and above 90 percent the prior year. The RTCs completed 52 reviews for districts with a current and prior year rating below 90 percent.

Table 1: 2025 District Efficiency Ratings Distribution

Efficiency Rating	Number of Districts 2025	Number of Districts 2024
100%	187	181
90–99.9%	22	29
80–89.9%	31	34
70–79.9%	24	15
60–69.9%	10	9
Less than 60%	5	11

Source: STARS, June 2025

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

The efficiency ratings are determined using prior school year data. Districts receiving a rating below 90 percent receive an efficiency review. The RTC and the district will discuss any concerns found during the review. Efficiency ratings do not give a true sense of efficiency since the district cohorts can change from year to year but can be a starting point for reviewing potential concerns and exposing how districts best utilize resources.

Due to the changing cohort groups in the efficiency rating formula which result in the unpredictability of efficiency ratings, KPIs are also used in the review process. KPIs are useful tools that are easier to comprehend than the efficiency rating system, and can indicate relative efficiency, particularly for outlier districts with efficiency ratings of 100 percent. The 100 percent rating for some districts is not an accurate depiction of their efficiency.

Reasons vary for a rating below 90 and can range from one-time purchases, reporting errors, geographic constraints, and a district's level of service. School districts may find ways that can increase their efficiency rating but should be mindful not to do so at the expense of student safety.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Efficiency reviews by review type

Table 1: Current and Prior Year Rating Below 90%

District	Efficiency Rating 2024–25 SY	Efficiency Rating 2023–24 SY
Anacortes	74.29%	71.57%
Blaine	78.25%	73.13%
Brinnon	65.51%	58.08%
Centerville	70.01%	78.17%
Central Kitsap	75.24%	80.84%
Chewelah	84.07%	63.67%
Colton	66.23%	61.61%
Conway	78.44%	85.98%
Curlew	55.99%	55.12%
Deer Park	89.58%	85.81%
Easton	88.80%	57.31%
Eatonville	61.09%	63.73%
Great Northern	60.94%	50.60%
Green Mountain	64.18%	59.75%
Griffin	55.61%	61.18%
Hood Canal	70.99%	74.18%
Mead	79.32%	83.10%
Medical Lake	74.26%	87.10%
Methow Valley	87.37%	75.96%
Monroe	74.84%	73.97%
Mukilteo	85.48%	89.64%
Napavine	78.77%	84.38%
Nine Mile Falls	81.37%	86.97%
North Kitsap	76.51%	80.13%
North River	68.58%	82.40%
North Thurston	80.30%	81.07%
Oak Harbor	74.30%	83.01%
Ocean Beach	86.40%	87.27%
Ocosta	88.68%	89.94%
Olympia	83.37%	83.89%
Onalaska	76.77%	73.73%
Orient	65.07%	40.49%
Pasco	80.33%	87.97%

District	Efficiency Rating 2024–25 SY	Efficiency Rating 2023–24 SY
Pateros	75.30%	71.35%
Port Angeles	88.72%	84.20%
Port Townsend	84.81%	78.25%
Quilcene	33.87%	34.01%
Raymond	63.75%	67.73%
Renton	82.91%	79.58%
Rochester	69.78%	66.86%
Rosalia	83.72%	67.49%
Sequim	66.01%	75.17%
Skamania	82.53%	58.68%
South Kitsap	79.57%	78.72%
Star	78.41%	66.51%
Steptoe	57.47%	52.08%
Sultan	82.11%	82.83%
Tekoa	50.77%	55.91%
Tumwater	76.10%	85.21%
Vashon Island	83.67%	85.74%
West Valley (Spokane)	88.22%	85.86%
Yakima	83.97%	89.53%

Source: STARS, June 2025

Table 2: Current Below 90%, Prior Above 90%

District	Efficiency Rating 2024–25 SY	Efficiency Rating 2023–24 SY
Almira	80.93%	93.03%
Carbonado	74.79%	99.78%
Castle Rock	75.19%	93.72%
Chimacum	80.05%	100.00%
Darrington	83.95%	100.00%
Freeman	79.38%	93.97%
Grandview	75.45%	92.17%
Granger	88.71%	98.77%
Lake Chelan	83.76%	90.25%
Lake Stevens	89.58%	100.00%
Lopez	81.05%	100.00%
Manson	76.55%	98.74%
Mount Vernon	83.48%	90.23%
Nooksack	88.98%	100.00%
Riverside	84.93%	90.59%

District	Efficiency Rating 2024–25 SY	Efficiency Rating 2023–24 SY
San Juan Island	87.35%	92.25%
Tenino	71.38%	91.82%
Vancouver	79.22%	94.69%

Source: STARS, June 2025

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