

FROM SUMMER SLIDE TO SUMMER STRIDE

A No-Gap Approach to Student Reengagement

Results from the Open Doors Summer Pilot



The Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) oversees Open Doors Youth Reengagement, a statewide dropout retrieval system” (RCW 28A.175.100) for youth ages 16 to 21. Open Doors reengages thousands of students each year, including a high percentage of students who face challenges such as high poverty and homelessness, as well as “post-resident youth” (individuals who are under the age of 21 and former residents of an institutional education facility). The Open Doors program gives students the opportunity to continue their education, earn a GED or high school diploma, obtain career training, or earn college credits.

The Open Doors summer pilot program

The two-year Open Doors summer pilot was an innovative statewide policy response to address the gap in summer education services. Like most schools, Open Doors programs are funded for 10 months to provide academic reengagement for students. Washington House Bill 5187, Sec. 522, appropriated funds for OSPI to conduct a summer program pilot in 2023 and 2024. Ten pilot sites from across the state received additional funds beyond the 10-month student apportionment allocation. These funds allowed the sites to work with local partners to expand summer learning, reengage post-resident youth, and reduce barriers to learning.

OSPI contracted with Education Northwest to conduct a mixed methods evaluation of the Open Doors summer pilot. Here is what we found in our evaluation of the summer 2024 pilot.

Given the opportunity, Open Doors students will engage, or reengage, in school during the summer



The funding provided by the summer pilot **allowed more than a thousand students to stay in school** and further their education



The summer pilot **increased the reach of the Open Doors program:** 11 percent of the students who enrolled in a summer 2024 program had never participated in Open Doors before

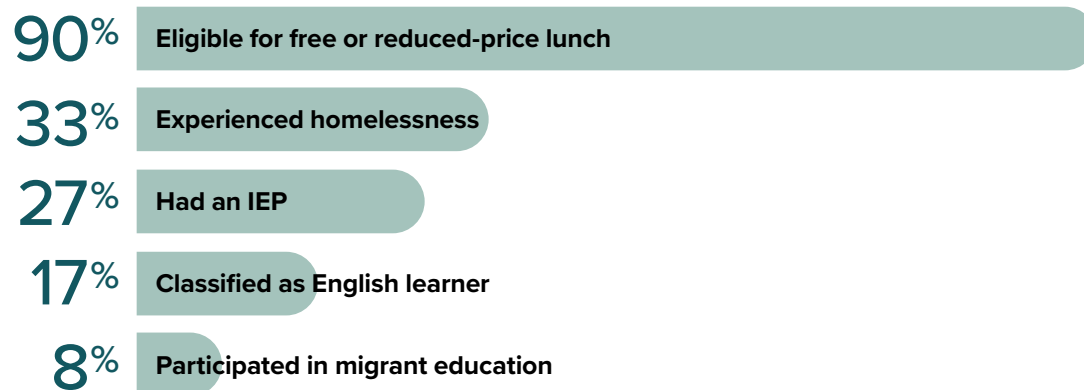


The summer pilot allowed students to remain connected to the Open Doors program and the support it offers: **A third of students who were enrolled in Open Doors during the 23–24 school year chose to keep coming** during the summer



The summer pilot served an even higher percentage of students who **participated in migrant education, special education, free or reduced-price lunch, or English language learner services** compared to those served during the regular school year

Summer 2024 participants' school experiences



IEP = individualized education program. This represents students who qualify for special education services.

Note: N = 1,025 for summer 2024 participants.

Example interpretation: Eight percent of summer students at the 10 sites participated in migrant education during the school year.

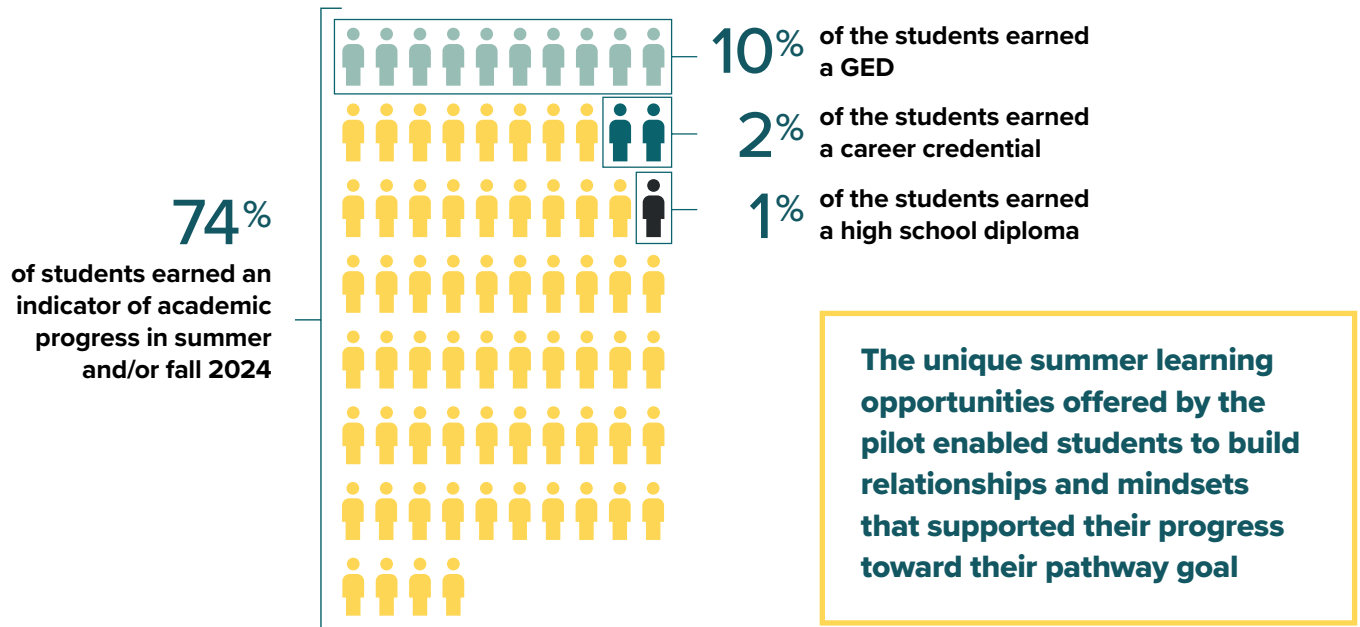
Source: Evaluation team analysis of CEDARS data and pilot site reporting in summer 2024.



If the summer program wasn't on this year, I probably would've never wanted to go to [college]. I would've probably never seen college as an actual good opportunity."

Open Doors student pilot student

Students made academic progress during the summer that persisted into the fall



I just feel like [the summer pilot program] has helped me have a routine and be more on top of things. [It] made me realize that these are things that I need to be doing, trying to set up a future for myself.”

Open Doors student pilot student

Summer pilot sites tended to serve more post-resident youth, who went on to make strong academic progress during the summer and fall

During the school year, the pilot sites served a higher percentage of post-resident youth:

13%

compared to

7%

for other Open Doors programs

14% of summer pilot participants identified as post-resident youth

8% of these students enrolled in Open Doors for the first time during the summer

71% of post-resident youth earned indicators of academic progress

7% of post-resident youth earned a GED

3% of post-resident youth earned a career credential

Post-resident youth expanded their social networks, workplace skills, and future orientation through unique summer learning experiences



Thanks to Open Doors and to the program, now I'm here thinking with better mind, better vision. I actually want to be somebody in life."

Open Doors student and post-resident youth

Summer pilot funding helped reduce barriers to learning for individual students and positively influenced high school completion and career progress


In summer 2024, eight summer pilot sites used \$37,463 to support individual students' unique academic, clothing, food and nutrition, and transportation needs. This flexible funding is not available during the school year. About half of the students received funds for specific academic needs—such as testing, training, or license fees—that were related to their Open Doors pathway goal of GED completion, high school completion, or college or career. This modest investment resulted in significant benefits for students, such as increased likelihood of earning a career credential, earning any indicator of academic progress, earning a GED, or making career progress.

Who received these funds?

105 students at eight pilot sites used individual-level barrier reduction funds


Post-resident youth and students who had an IEP were more likely to receive these funds

What did they use the funds for?

48%  received funds for specific academic needs related to their Open Doors pathway goal of GED completion, high school completion, or college or career

42%  received funds for food

36%  received funds for clothing

32%  received transportation

What were the outcomes of students who received barrier reduction in summer and fall 2024?

79%
earned indicators of academic progress

22%
earned a career credential

11%
earned a GED

2%
earned a high school diploma

Summer pilot funding allowed Open Doors programs to develop new programming and partnerships and serve students year-round



Summer pilot funds enabled five programs to offer summer programming for the first time.



Most often programs used the summer pilot funds to cover staff time, followed by transportation and work supplies.



All 10 sites used the planning and pass-through funds to explore new partnerships, resulting in new or expanded summer programming for most sites.



At least 34 community partnerships were implemented through the summer pilot, many of them new relationships for Open Doors programs.

The summer pilot unlocked the potential for more Open Doors programs to offer career-connected learning experiences that older students ages 16 to 21 value



All but one pilot site offered career-connected learning, five for the first time



Seven sites offered students paid work experience and five sites offered the opportunity to earn career credentials

The summer pilot provided valuable lessons about the importance of community-based learning, relationship building, and barrier reduction



Community-based learning, especially career-connected learning, along with barrier reduction support, attracts students and promotes their academic progress during the summer.



Positive relationships with staff members, peers, and community partners bolsters student engagement and progress. Trusting relationships are especially critical for post-resident youth, and intentional strategies to engage and support them can be effective.



Students have complex lives and responsibilities outside of school that may present barriers to learning that are beyond the scope of what the programs can address.



How can the state build on the positive outcomes of the Open Doors summer pilot program?



Policy considerations

Align state policy, funding, and guidance to sustain summer learning, barrier reduction, and career-connected learning for Open Doors students

Facilitate cross-system and cross-sector collaboration at the local and state level to better support students who are post-resident youth



Programming considerations

Engage local partners to offer more community-based learning experiences responsive to the priorities and interests of Open Doors students

Intentionally design programming and outreach strategies to engage post-resident youth



Data considerations

Expand the available data on summer learning in Open Doors

Evaluate the long-term impact of these interventions for Open Doors students

See [Open Doors Reports](#) on the OSPI website for more in-depth evaluation results from summer 2023 and summer 2024. For more information about this evaluation contact Julie Petrokubi at julie.petrokubi@ednw.org.

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