Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Reducing Restraint & Eliminating Isolation
2026

Authorizing Legislation: ESSB 5167, Sec. 501(1)(p)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Reducing Restraint and Eliminating Isolation (RREI) Project was established in 2023, when the Legislature provided the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) with designated state funding to help districts build systems of support that reduce restraint and eliminate isolation. The 2025 Legislature continued this work through ESSB 5167, Sec. 501(1)(p), directing OSPI to:

a) Provide grants to six demonstration sites that showcase best practices and serve as learning communities for other districts.
b) Increase the number of pilot sites engaging in targeted professional development offered by demonstration sites and contracted providers.
c) Report to the Legislature on the demonstration projects, including student outcomes, the fiscal impact of statewide implementation, key implementation challenges and findings, and recommendations for statewide policy changes.

Recommendations

For each recommendation, OSPI offers relevant context and rationale in the Recommendations section of this report. The following are OSPI's 2026 recommendations to the Legislature:

Recommendation 1: OSPI recommends that the Washington State Legislature continue funding the RREI Project and extend it to more local education agencies through a phased cohort model, in which a different 20% of local education agencies participates each year**,** using the project's current demonstration and pilot site model, to build the professional development and technical assistance capacity districts need to end the use of isolation and to prepare the state to enact a prohibition on isolation by all providers of public educational services.

Recommendation 2: OSPI recommends that the Washington State Legislature define "licensed health care provider" within Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 28A.600.485 to specify which licensed professionals may document that restraint is medically necessary when it is included as a planned behavior intervention in a student's individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan.

Recommendation 3: OSPI recommends that the Washington State Legislature continue to dedicate funding to school districts to support expansion of inclusionary practices statewide, as inclusionary practices are a strategy to prevent the behavioral crises that can lead to restraint and isolation.

Funding should support:

- Professional development and coaching in inclusionary practices and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), including explicit instruction in students' self-regulation skills.
- Paid professional learning time for educators outside the school day.

- Technical assistance to help districts integrate inclusionary practices and restraint and isolation reduction into their existing prevention efforts.
- Review and analysis of disaggregated data to identify and address disparities.

Recommendation 4: OSPI recommends that the Washington State Legislature direct the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) to establish requirements for general education teacher preparation programs to prepare educator candidates in inclusionary and prevention-focused practices that reduce the need for restraint and isolation.

Building on existing requirements for social emotional learning and for cultural competency, diversity, equity, and inclusion, requirements should include preparation in:

- Inclusionary practices that support all students, including students with disabilities, in general education settings.
- PBIS and proactive classroom practices.
- Crisis prevention and de-escalation.
- Culturally responsive behavior support, including recognizing and addressing disproportionate responses to student behavior.

INTRODUCTION

The Reducing Restraint and Eliminating Isolation (RREI) Project was established in 2023, when the Legislature provided OSPI with designated state funding to help districts build systems of support that reduce restraint and eliminate isolation. The 2025 Legislature continued this work through funding in the 2025 state operating budget SB 5167 (2025), Sec. 501(1)(p)). (This report provides an update to and builds on OSPI's previous RREI reports to the Legislature.

The purpose of the project is to help districts build schoolwide systems that support students in distress and prevent the crisis escalation cycles that can result in restraint or isolation. The project provides demonstration and pilot sites across the state with grants, guidance, technical assistance, and professional development grounded in student-centered approaches and PBIS, with a focused commitment to the students most affected by these practices: students in preschool through grade 5; students with disabilities; Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and multiracial students; male students; students experiencing poverty; students experiencing homelessness; and students in foster care.

The project's vision is for Washington schools to center student humanity and dignity, reduce harm, increase inclusion, and transform practices to create safe, engaging learning environments where all students can fully participate, learn, and thrive.

This report provides data on outcomes, addresses implementation challenges, identifies findings, and makes recommendations for statewide policy changes. It also includes an estimate of the fiscal impact that statewide use of the identified practices might have on school district budgets.

BACKGROUND

Under RCW 28A.600.485, as amended in 2026, isolation means restricting a student alone within a room or other enclosure from which the student may not leave. Restraint includes physical restraint (staff physically immobilizing or limiting a student's movement), mechanical restraint (staff use of a device to restrict a student's movement), and chemical restraint (staff use of a drug or chemical to control a student's behavior or movement). Each term has specific exceptions; see RCW 28A.600.485 for the full definitions.

The intended use of restraint and isolation (R&I) in Washington schools is to increase student and staff safety by providing crisis intervention when reasonably necessary to control spontaneous student behavior that poses an imminent likelihood of serious harm.[1] However, in the pursuit of safety, these practices can put students and staff at risk[2] of serious physical injuries such as broken bones and head trauma[3], and long-term psychological harm[4] such as post-traumatic stress disorder.[5] Repeated instances often lead to higher student absences and more staff use of sick time.[6] In very rare cases, they have resulted in student death.[7]

Recognizing these risks, the Legislature has passed legislation regulating the use of R&I in 2013, 2015, and 2026, and has considered additional proposals in other years. A full history of R&I legislation in Washington is provided in Appendix A. In 2022, the Legislature directed OSPI to convene the Crisis Response Workgroup (Senate Bill 5693 (2022), Sec. 501(3)(h)(i)) to identify strategies for supporting students in distress and to develop recommendations to reduce the use of restraint and isolation in student discipline. The workgroup's December 2022 report recommended eliminating isolation and chemical restraint, improving access to behavior supports, improving data collection and reporting, and increasing educator training in de-escalation practices.[8]

In 2023, the Legislature considered House Bill 1479 (2023), which would have prohibited isolation and further restricted restraint in public schools. Although the bill did not pass, the Legislature directed OSPI to (1) provide grants for demonstration projects, (2) provide statewide professional development and technical assistance to districts, and (3) create a technical assistance manual, based on the results of the demonstration projects, to support the elimination of isolation and reduction of restraint. OSPI published that manual, *Positive Behavior Supports for Resilient & Inclusive Schools: Guidance for*

[1] RCW 28a.600.485
[2] U.S. Senate, 2014. Dangerous Use of Seclusion and Restraints in Schools Remains Widespread and Difficult to Remedy: A Review of Ten Cases
[3] Collyer & Dufault, 2022. Crisis Response Workgroup: Report to the Legislature
[4] Cardona, 2025. Secretary Cardona Letter on Restraints and Seclusion in Schools
[5] Hodell, 2023. *Myths Behind Restraint and Seclusion – A Literature Review*
[6] U.S. Department of Education, 2012. *Restraint and Seclusion: Resource Document.*
[7] National Disability Rights Network, 2009. *School is Not Supposed to Hurt.*
[8] Collyer & Dufault, 2022. Crisis Response Workgroup: Report to the Legislature

Reducing Exclusionary Discipline, Restraint, and Isolation through Student-Centered Practices, described in Appendix C.

In 2026, the Legislature enacted House Bill 1795 (HB 1795), which took effect June 11, 2026. The law prohibits chemical restraint, mechanical restraint, and physical restraint that is life-threatening or restricts breathing or blood flow to the brain; prohibits isolation as a planned behavior intervention; and prohibits establishing new rooms for the primary purpose of isolation. It also states the Legislature's intent, by 2031, to implement professional development and technical assistance that will allow the state to ban isolation practices.

UPDATE: DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

The RREI Project supports districts in strengthening practices and systems that prevent crisis escalation and create safer, more inclusive learning environments. The project includes 23 districts identified as project sites in this report which includes 6 demonstration sites and 17 pilot sites.

All project sites receive grant funding, professional learning, implementation coaching, and access to contracted professional development providers based on locally identified needs. Demonstration sites model established practices and serve as learning communities, giving other districts the opportunity to observe these practices and to identify resources, strategies, and tools that may be useful across the state. Pilot sites engage in targeted professional development offered by demonstration sites and contracted providers as they build their own systems of positive, trauma-informed behavior support. Both types of sites are described further below. During the 2025–26 school year, OSPI:

- Provided grant funding to all 23 project sites.
- Connected project sites with 10 contracted professional development providers, listed in Appendix B, and launched implementation of the RREI Project.
- Facilitated monthly professional learning communities for project sites, and in every meeting, the project sites discussed and reviewed statewide and district restraint and isolation data. Four additional sessions also included the use of a behavioral tracking tool.
- Facilitated quarterly professional learning communities for professional development providers.
- Conducted site visits with project sites.
- Published the *Positive Behavior Supports for Resilient & Inclusive Schools* manual, described in Appendix C. During a webinar on the manual, the UW Haring Center presented on each section, and project sites shared their best practices for using the manual in their work.
- Hosted an end-of-year convening for project sites and professional development providers, where project sites shared spotlights of their work.

Districts

The project includes two types of project sites:

Demonstration sites showcase best practices and serve as learning communities where educators and community members can observe positive practices in real-world settings. They share their experiences building tiered systems of student support and collect resources that have shown success.

Pilot sites engage in targeted professional development offered by the demonstration sites and contracted providers, while building school-level and district-level systems of positive, trauma-informed behavior support and improving their data collection and reporting.

Demonstration Sites

- Auburn School District
- Bainbridge Island School District
- Centralia School District
- Mukilteo School District
- Seattle Public Schools
- Spokane Public Schools

Pilot Sites

- Anacortes School District
- Bremerton School District
- Central Valley School District
- Concrete School District
- Davenport School District
- Edmonds School District
- Fife Public Schools
- Kelso School District
- Lakewood School District
- North Thurston Public Schools
- Oakville School District
- Pullman Public Schools
- Reardan-Edwall School District
- Rochester School District
- Snoqualmie Valley School District
- South Whidbey School District
- Vancouver Public Schools

District Activities

The RREI Project grants were designed to give project sites flexibility to address the logistics and infrastructure needed to support implementation of their selected professional development. Grant funding was generally used to support the following activities:

1. **Staff release time and substitute coverage** for debrief meetings with students and families following an incident; professional development, training, and coaching; peer support networks; co-teaching; and mentoring.

2. **Materials and labor to repurpose isolation rooms into sensory spaces** where students can practice self-regulation skills and manage their emotions.

3. **Development and revision of policies and procedures related to behavioral crises**, including Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) membership to access model policies and policy support, and consultation with equity-focused organizations and other partners.

4. **Development and improvement of data collection tools** to track restraint and isolation incidents, school climate, student and staff support needs, family outreach, and other information used to inform implementation.

5. **Hands-off crisis prevention and de-escalation training for district and school teams**, including classified staff, general and special education teachers, paraeducators, and administrators.

Outcomes

This section reports student outcomes for the 23 project sites during the 2025–26 school year:

- changes in restraint and isolation incidents
- the percentage of students restrained or isolated, by race/ethnicity and by disability status
- access to general education settings for students receiving Tier 3 support

Restraint and isolation data come from the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) and compare each site's baseline year (2023–24 or 2024–25) to the 2025–26 school year. Data on access to general education come from project site progress reports.

Restraint & Isolation Incident Data

Restraint and isolation data collected through CEDARS indicates that 14 of the 23 project sites decreased incidents of restraint and isolation during their participation in the grant. For 20 project sites, this change was measured over two years: school year 2023–24 to school year 2025–26. For the other three sites, this change was measured over one year: school year 2024–25 to school year 2025–26.

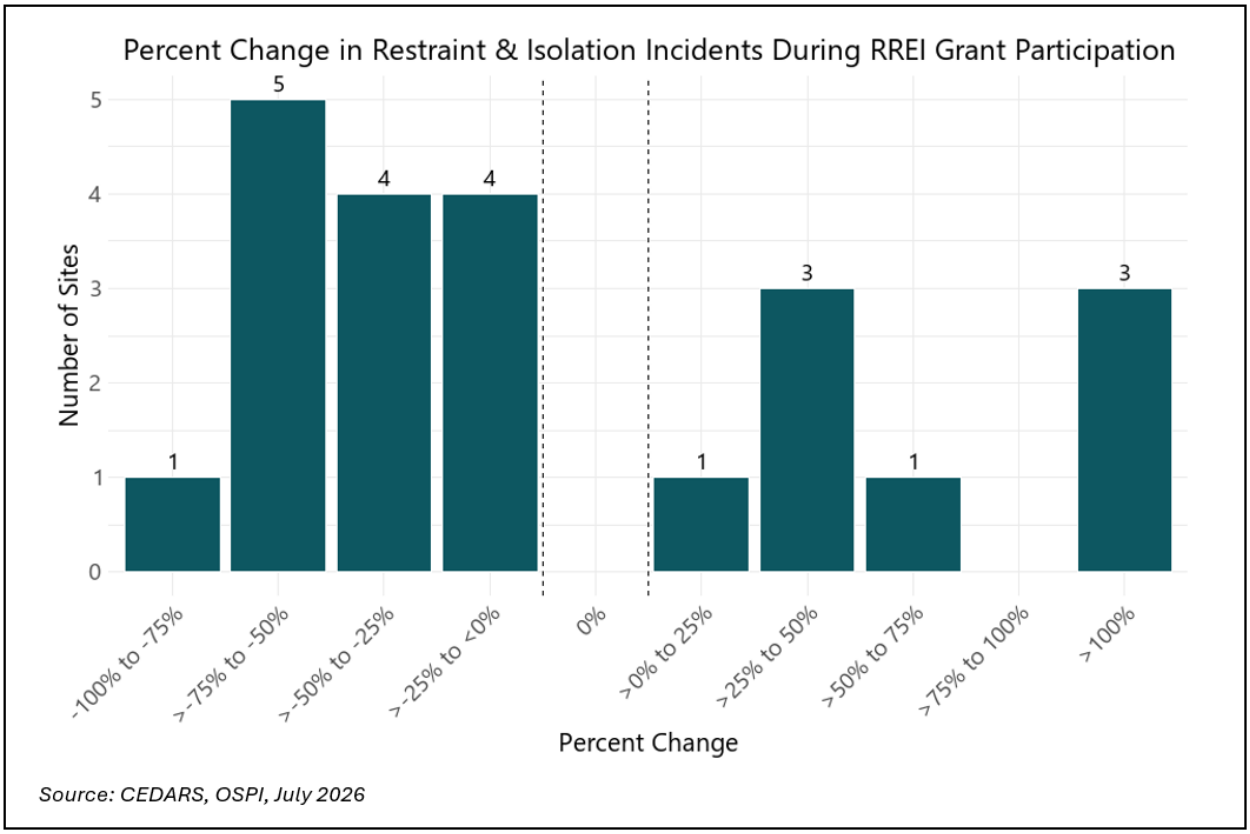
Table 1: Measurement Periods for Project Sites

Number of project sites	Years in grant	Baseline (year prior to grant participation)	First year of grant participation	Last measurement
20	2 years	SY 2023–24	SY 2024–25	SY 2025–26
3	1 year	SY 2024–25	SY 2025–26	SY 2025–26

Source: CEDARS, OSPI, July 2026

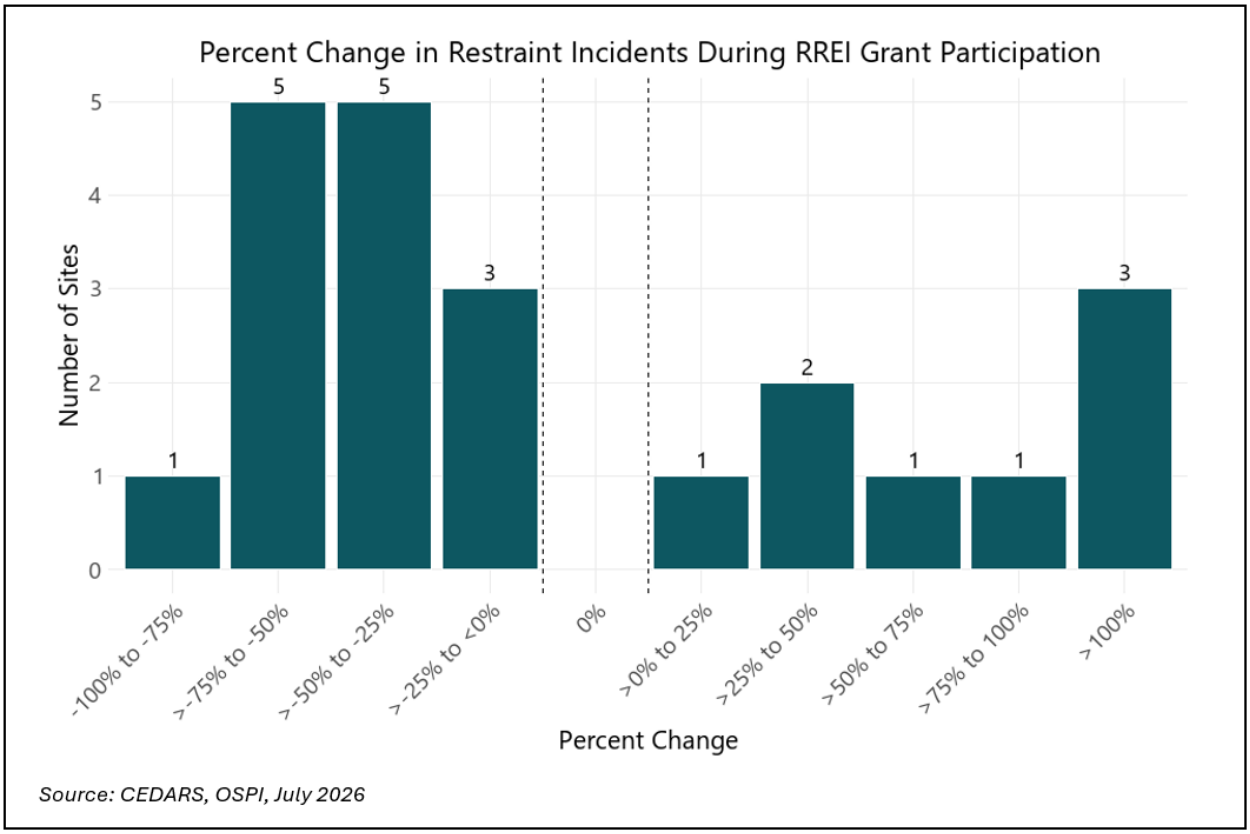
The following graph shows the number of project sites that saw changes in the combined number of restraint and isolation incidents during their time participating in the grant. One district does not appear on this graph because it recorded zero incidents in its baseline year, so the percent change cannot be calculated.

Table 2: Change in Combined Restraint and Isolation Incidents



In looking at restraint incidents alone,14 project sites reduced the number of incidents of restraint compared to their baseline year. Again, one district does not appear on this graph because it recorded zero incidents in its baseline year .

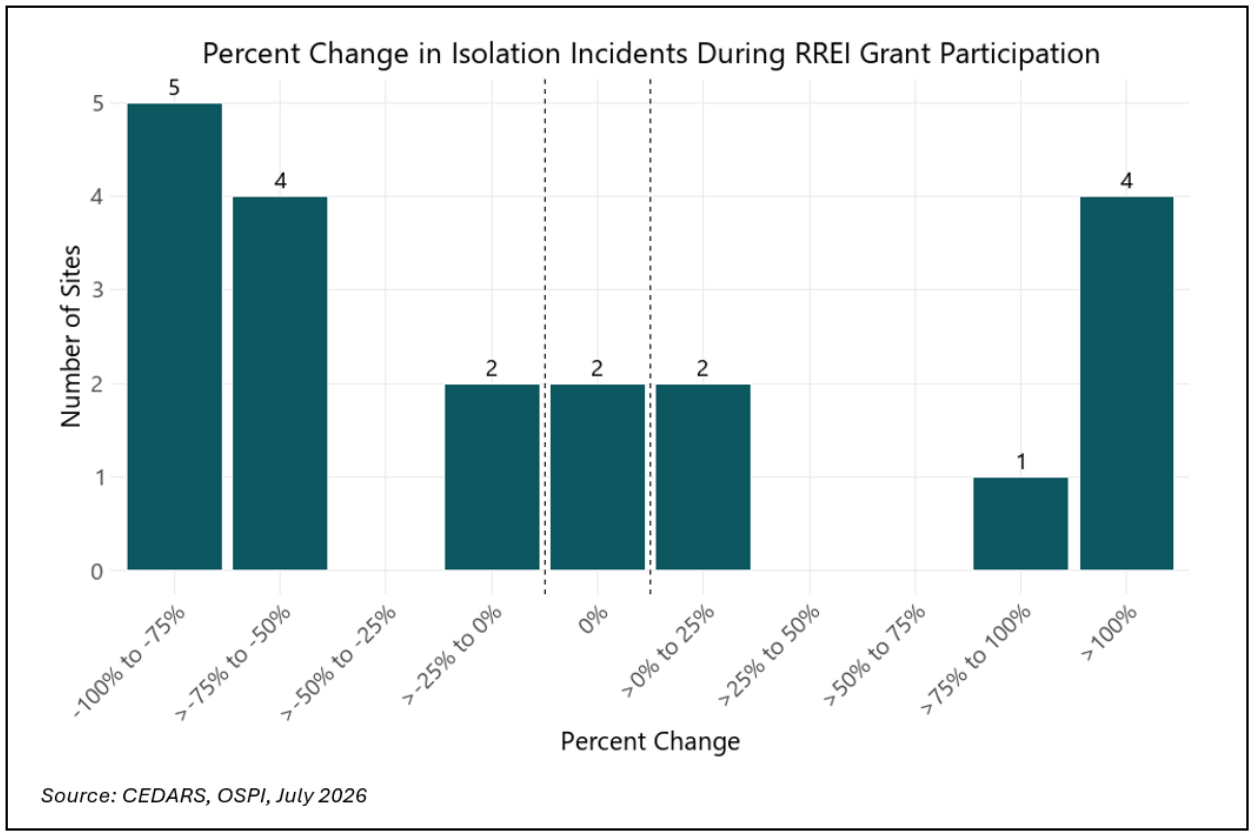
Table 3: Change in Restraint Incidents



Source: CEDARS, OSPI, July 2026

In looking at isolation incidents alone, 11 project sites reduced their use of isolation, and two sites saw no changes (but both had very low incident counts). Three project sites recorded zero isolation incidents in their baseline year *and* zero incidents during the grant, and these sites do not appear on the graph.

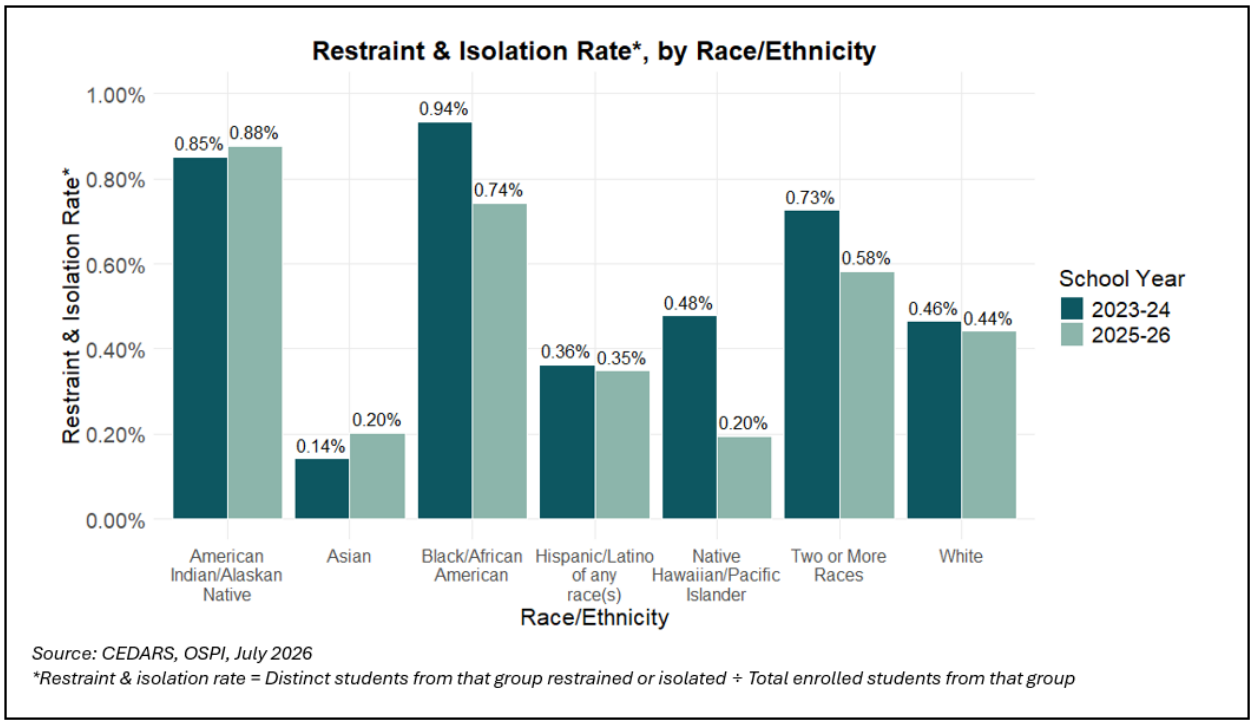
Table 4: Change in Isolation Incidents



Demographics of Students Restrained and Isolated

The graph below shows the percentage of students enrolled at 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 identify and illustrate potentially disproportionate use of restraint and isolation on different student groups. Though Black/African American students and students who identify as two or more races were still restrained or isolated at higher rates than White students, these rates did decrease from 2023–24 to 2025–26, showing a decrease in disproportionality. In the 2025–26 school year, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students experienced restraint or isolation at less than half the rate of White students, a large reduction over the 2023–24 school year.

Table 5: Percentage of Students Restrained or Isolated, by Race/Ethnicity

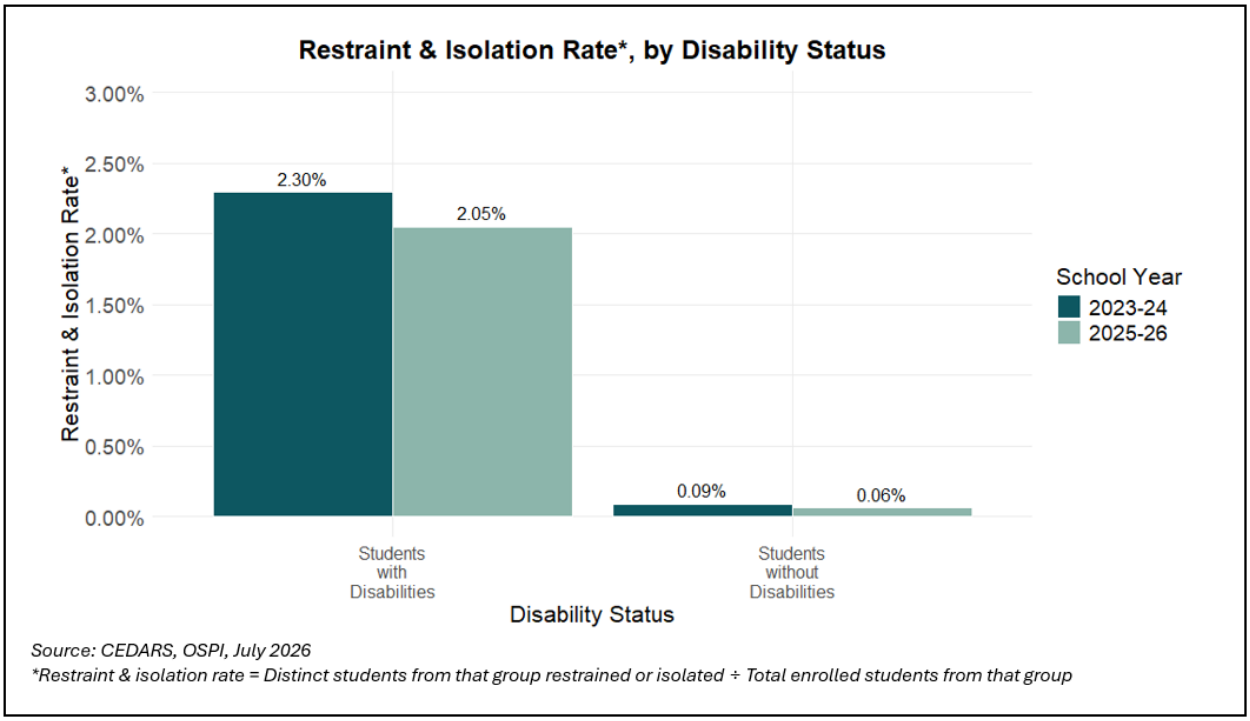


Source: CEDARS, OSPI, July 2026

**Restraint & isolation rate = Distinct students from that group restrained or isolated ÷ Total enrolled students from that group*

Rates of restraint and isolation also decreased for both students with and without disabilities at project sites in school year 2025–26.

Table 6: Percentage of Students Restrained or Isolated, by Disability Status



Source: CEDARS, OSPI, July 2026

**Restraint & isolation rate = Distinct students from that group restrained or isolated ÷ Total enrolled students from that group*

Access to General Education and Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Tier 3 refers to the most intensive level of support within a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), providing individualized interventions for students whose needs are not met by universal (Tier 1) and targeted (Tier 2) supports. Increasing access to general education settings for these students reflects the principle of the least restrictive environment (LRE). Among 20 project sites reporting on Tier 3 access in progress reports, 15 reported increased access to general education settings, four reported no change, and one reported decreased access. These results reflect each site's own assessment, based on its local data and observations, and were not measured using a common definition across sites.

KEY IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES & FINDINGS

OSPI identified the following implementation challenges and findings through its work with project sites, including monthly meetings, site visits, and end-of-year reports, as well as through professional development providers and partners. The recommendations in this report are designed to address them.

Implementation Challenges

Challenge 1: Ambiguity in Statutory Language

Special education directors have expressed concern to OSPI that the term "licensed health care provider" in RCW 28A.600.485 is not defined. The statute requires a licensed health care provider to document that restraint is medically necessary when it is included as a planned behavior intervention in a student's IEP or Section 504 plan. Without a definition, districts are uncertain who may provide that documentation, and directors are concerned that this uncertainty exposes districts to legal risk.

Challenge 2: Finding Time for Professional Development

Project sites reported difficulty finding time for professional development. One project site reported that "ongoing substitute shortages made it difficult to pull staff out of class for the collaborative coaching we had planned," and another reported that its schools "expressed difficulty with scheduling, attending, and completing the in-between work for the online training." These challenges limit educators' access to professional development, including training in inclusionary practices, which project sites viewed as closely connected to reducing restraint and isolation. As one project site wrote, "you cannot meaningfully reduce restraint and isolation without robust inclusionary systems, and true inclusion is impossible without proactive behavior supports." Some project sites made time for this learning by visiting inclusionary practices sites and meeting with other districts to discuss inclusionary practices.

Washington continues to experience a statewide educator shortage [9][OBJ][OBJ] As a result, fewer substitutes are available to cover classrooms so that educators can attend professional development. In some districts, particularly rural districts, there can be too few qualified substitutes available, in part because substitute pay is not competitive with other available work. In others, particularly urban districts, the cost of coverage can be the primary barrier, because substitute pay rates are higher and more substitutes are needed overall. Project sites used grant funds to help pay for staff release time and substitute coverage, but funding alone does not resolve a shortage of available substitutes.[10]OSPI

[9] Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2024. Maintaining Targeted Support and Expansion of the Washington Educator Workforce.

[10] Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2025. Emergency Substitute Pipeline: FY25 Proviso Report.

has prioritized the substitute shortage through its educator workforce initiatives, including an emergency substitute teacher pipeline funded in fiscal year 2025 and a 2025–27 budget request to continue supports for emergency substitute teachers.[OBJ] Recommendation #3 and OSPI's planned online learning modules respond to this challenge by supporting professional development that does not require substitute coverage.

Challenge 3: Managing Competing Priorities

Project sites reported that implementing many new programs and requirements at the same time stretched their capacity. Competing priorities can limit districts' ability to take on new work, including grant funding and professional development opportunities, even when those opportunities are offered at no cost. This challenge is compounded by gaps in the systems schools use to prevent escalation, such as schoolwide behavior expectations, tiered supports, and team-based planning for students with intensive behavioral needs. A 2024 study of restraint and isolation in Washington schools found that families and staff reported a lack of appropriate systems in schools to prevent and respond to escalations, and that district policies were often misunderstood.[11] Without these systems in place, prevention-focused practices may be seen as separate programs rather than as central to reducing restraint and isolation.

Findings

Finding 1: Reducing Restraint and Isolation Starts with Crisis Prevention

Project work reinforced that reducing restraint and moving away from isolation depends largely on preventing behavioral crises before they escalate. Restraint and isolation typically occur at the end of a crisis escalation cycle, when staff have the fewest options available. The most effective point of intervention comes earlier, through inclusive, multi-tiered systems of support that address students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs before situations escalate.

The work of project sites reflects this approach. Demonstration sites showcase tiered systems of student support, and project sites used grant funds to build prevention capacity: training staff in crisis prevention and de-escalation, repurposing isolation rooms into spaces where students can practice self-regulation, holding debrief meetings with students and families after incidents, and improving the data used to identify student needs early. OSPI's technical assistance manual, *Positive Behavior Supports for Resilient & Inclusive Schools*, was developed in close partnership with the demonstration sites and largely reflects this prevention-focused approach. Several project sites identified dedicated time to debrief after incidents as one of their most effective practices.

[11] Jackson, Fatima, & London, 2024. *Understanding Restraint & Isolation in Washington Schools*. American Institutes for Research.

This finding is consistent with the Crisis Response Workgroup's recommendations to improve access to behavior supports and training in de-escalation practices, and with the statement of legislative intent in HB 1795 (2026) to build statewide professional development and technical assistance capacity that will allow the state to ban isolation practices.

Finding 2: Districts Need Sustained Support to Implement and Maintain Inclusionary Practices

Implementing inclusionary practices requires ongoing work to build school and district systems, such as schedules that allow educators to plan together, team-based planning for students with intensive needs, and data systems that track student progress, along with professional learning, technical assistance, and time for educators to translate new learning into practice. Sustained support helps districts build and maintain these practices rather than relying on one-time trainings or short-term funding. Project sites' experience with coaching reflects this need. The sites reported that ongoing coaching was essential to putting new practices in place, and one requested an on-site coach for a sustained period rather than occasional visits, noting that "with someone coming in here and there, they didn't see any major student escalations."

Finding 3: General Education Teachers Need Expanded Preparation in Inclusionary and Prevention-Focused Practices

Students with disabilities and students with a wide range of social, emotional, behavioral, health, and learning needs are supported across both general and special education settings. In Washington, 65.1% of students with disabilities are served in general education classrooms for 80% to 100% of the school day. Rates of inclusion have been increasing since 2019 when the Legislature started investing in inclusionary practices .[12] Yet research finds that most general education teachers do not feel prepared to meet the diverse learning, social, and emotional needs of students with disabilities.[13] As schools expand inclusionary practices, general education teachers are increasingly responsible for supporting students when behavioral needs arise.

Building inclusionary practices and behavioral supports into general education teacher preparation would help educators enter the profession with foundational skills for supporting every student, rather than building those skills through professional development after they enter the classroom. Because restraint and isolation disproportionately affect students with disabilities and students of color, this preparation should also equip educators to recognize and address disparities in how schools respond to student behavior. One project site specifically recommended that "teacher preparation programs should also include stronger requirements related to disability awareness, behavior support, and de-

[12] Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2024. Washington Students with Disabilities Are Spending More Time Learning Alongside Their Peers, Data Show.
[13] Boardman, Schwarz, & Sollenberger, 2024. Integrating Disability into Equity-Focused General Education Teacher Preparation.

escalation strategies so all educators are better prepared to support students with diverse needs and reduce the use of restrictive practices."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1: Continue and Extend the RREI Project to Prepare for a Statewide Prohibition on Isolation

OSPI recommends that the Washington State Legislature continue funding the RREI Project and extend it to more local education agencies through a phased cohort model, in which a different 20% of local education agencies participates each year, using the project's current demonstration and pilot site model, to build the professional development and technical assistance capacity districts need to end the use of isolation and to prepare the state to enact a prohibition on isolation by all providers of public educational services.

Rationale

HB 1795 (2026) prohibits isolation as a planned behavior intervention and prohibits establishing new rooms for the primary purpose of isolation, but isolation remains permitted when reasonably necessary to control spontaneous behavior that poses an imminent likelihood of serious harm. The law states the Legislature's intent to implement, by 2031, a trauma-informed professional development program and the technical assistance needed to allow the state to ban isolation practices, but it does not enact that ban.

The case for prohibiting isolation is well established. Isolation poses risks of physical and psychological harm, and it falls disproportionately on students with disabilities and students of color. The Crisis Response Workgroup recommended eliminating isolation in its 2022 report. Public testimony in support of HB 1795 (2026) cited the state-funded demonstration sites as evidence that schools can reduce restraint and isolation when they receive support.[14] Project sites have shown that schools can operate without isolation: some project sites reported no incidents of isolation during the 2025–26 school year, and others chose not to build isolation rooms when opening new programs, investing instead in staff skills in prevention and de-escalation.

Many districts are not yet ready to operate without isolation. Project sites have shown that progress is possible with sustained support, but building the systems, staff skills, and alternatives needed to end isolation takes more than a single year, and a prohibition enacted before districts are prepared could leave staff without effective alternatives when a crisis occurs**.** Under the phased cohort model described in the Fiscal Impact section, a different 20% of Washington's local education agencies (LEAs) would receive grants and support through the RREI Project each year, extending the project's current approach statewide. After their cohort year, LEAs would continue to have access to OSPI technical assistance and resources as they experience staff turnover, open new programs, and serve students

[14] Senate Bill Report, ESHB 1795, As Passed Senate, March 5, 2026.

with changing needs. This work would build the statewide readiness needed for the Legislature to enact a prohibition on isolation, so that the transition is thoughtful, sustainable, and focused on creating safer and more supportive learning environments for both students and staff.

Recommendation #2: Define "Licensed Health Care Provider" in RCW 28A.600.485

OSPI recommends that the Washington State Legislature define "licensed health care provider" in RCW 28A.600.485 to specify which licensed professionals may document that restraint is medically necessary when it is included as a planned behavior intervention in a student's individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan.

The definition should:

- Limit the term to licensed professionals whose training and scope of practice include assessment relevant to a student's behavioral, psychiatric, or developmental needs.
- Align with the term "licensed health professional," which HB 1795 (2026) uses elsewhere in the same section, so the statute uses consistent language.

Rationale

Current law requires documentation from a licensed health care provider before restraint can be included as a planned behavior intervention in a student's IEP or Section 504 plan, but it does not define which professionals meet this requirement. "Health care provider" is a broad category, and as written, the requirement could be met by a licensed professional with no expertise in the student's behavioral or developmental needs.

HB 1795 (2026) retained this requirement and added the related term "licensed health professional" elsewhere in the same section, also without a definition. As described in the Key Implementation Challenges section, special education directors have expressed concern that this ambiguity leaves districts uncertain about who may provide the documentation and exposes them to legal risk.

A clear definition would protect students by ensuring that decisions about restraint are informed by relevant expertise and would give districts a consistent standard to apply statewide.

Recommendation #3: Continue Funding and Supporting the Statewide Expansion of Inclusionary Practices

OSPI recommends that the Washington State Legislature continue to dedicate funding to school districts to support expansion of inclusionary practices statewide, as inclusionary practices are a strategy to prevent the behavioral crises that can lead to restraint and isolation.

Funding should support:

- Professional development and coaching in inclusionary practices and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), including explicit instruction in students' self-regulation skills.
- Paid professional learning time for educators outside the school day, such as Inclusionary Practices Technical Assistance Network (IPTN) self-paced courses and after-school or summer sessions.
- Technical assistance to help districts integrate inclusionary practices and restraint and isolation reduction into their existing prevention efforts.
- Review and analysis of disaggregated data to identify and address disparities in restraint, isolation, and access to general education.

Rationale

Inclusionary practices are an important part of Washington's efforts to reduce restraint and eliminate isolation. Continued funding can help districts strengthen inclusive learning environments, increase staff capacity to support students with diverse needs, and provide students with greater access to learning and participation alongside their peers.

Research associates schoolwide PBIS with improved academic performance and with reductions in office discipline referrals, suspensions, and incidents of restraint and seclusion. When implemented with fidelity, it is also associated with improved social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes and greater academic engagement for students with disabilities, who are disproportionately affected by restraint and isolation.[15] In 2019, the Legislature also directed OSPI to adopt social emotional learning standards (Senate Bill 5082 (2019)), which include self-management. These standards give educators a shared framework for teaching students to recognize and regulate their emotions and behavior, a skill directly connected to preventing the crises that can lead to restraint and isolation.

Restraint and isolation also disproportionately affect students of color. OSPI's technical assistance manual reports that Black students are 1.8 times more likely, American Indian/Alaska Native students 1.6 times more likely, and students of two or more races 1.4 times more likely than White students to experience one or more incidents of restraint or isolation.[16] Project data similarly show that Black/African American students and students of two or more races experienced restraint or isolation at higher rates than White students. Reviewing and analyzing disaggregated data allows districts to identify these patterns and direct supports where they are most needed.

HB 1795 created new obligations for all providers of public educational services, including revising restraint and isolation policies and ending isolation as a planned behavior intervention, without a dedicated appropriation for implementation. Because a shortage of substitute teachers limits

[15] Center on PBIS. Why Implement School-wide PBIS?; Why Use PBIS to Support Students with Disabilities?
[16] Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Positive Behavior Supports for Resilient & Inclusive Schools, Section 6: Crisis Prevention and De-Escalation. Data from the 2023–24 school year.

educators' access to professional development during the school day, paid learning time outside the school day helps districts build this capacity.

Sustained state support can also help districts continue building the systems and practices needed to make inclusion part of everyday teaching and learning, rather than a one-time effort. This includes helping districts see how inclusionary practices and the work of reducing restraint and isolation fit within their existing prevention efforts, so that the work strengthens what districts are already doing rather than adding a separate program.

Recommendation #4: Establish Inclusionary and Prevention-Focused Practice Requirements for General Education Teacher Preparation Programs

OSPI recommends that the Washington State Legislature direct the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) to establish requirements for general education teacher preparation programs to prepare educator candidates in inclusionary and prevention-focused practices that reduce the need for restraint and isolation.

Building on existing requirements for social emotional learning and for cultural competency, diversity, equity, and inclusion, requirements should include preparation in:

- Inclusionary practices that support all students, including students with disabilities, in general education settings.
- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and proactive classroom practices.
- Crisis prevention and de-escalation.
- Culturally responsive behavior support, including recognizing and addressing disproportionate responses to student behavior.

Rationale

General education teachers support students with a wide range of learning, behavioral, and disability-related needs. Preventing the behavioral crises that can lead to restraint and isolation begins in the classroom, through schoolwide systems that address students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs before situations escalate. Educators who enter the profession with foundational skills in these practices are better prepared to support every student from their first day.

Building these skills during preparation also eases the burden on districts. As described in the Key Implementation Challenges section, a shortage of substitute teachers limits educators' access to in-service professional development. Preparing educators before they enter the classroom reduces districts' reliance on professional development that is difficult to provide.

This recommendation aligns with the Washington Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Committee's 2026 recommendation that the Legislature fund a statewide SEL needs assessment of educator preparation programs, reflecting a shared priority across OSPI's work.

FISCAL IMPACT

This estimate reflects a phased cohort model for extending the RREI Project statewide, in which a different 20% of Washington's 315 LEAs participates each year, reaching all LEAs over five years. A simultaneous statewide rollout would make it difficult to provide the level of support that project sites have received and would likely be less effective. Each cohort would follow the project's current approach: participating LEAs would serve as either demonstration sites, which showcase best practices and serve as learning communities, or pilot sites, which build school-level and district-level systems of positive, trauma-informed behavior support. They would receive grant funding for professional development and implementation, along with OSPI technical assistance, coaching, professional learning communities, site visits, data collection, and support with tracking tools.

Table 7: Estimated Annual Costs of a Phased Cohort Model

Item	Annual Cost
Grants to 20% of the LEAs (63 x $60,000)	$3,780,000
OSPI staffing (2.5 FTE)	$282,000
Resource development and demonstration site training	$50,000
IPTN participation (20 contractors x $5,000)	$100,000
Indirect costs (9% of staffing and contracts)	$38,880
Total per year	**$4,250,880**

Percent of total going to LEA grants: 89%

Grants to LEAs. Each participating LEA would receive grant funding to provide targeted professional development, implement positive, trauma-informed behavior support practices that prevent crisis escalation and reduce the use of restraint and isolation, and improve data collection and reporting systems. LEAs would contract directly with professional development providers, who would be required to participate in the IPTN.

Administration. Administration costs would allow for OSPI staffing to continue monitoring the grants; provide technical assistance, coaching, data collection, site visits, support with tracking tools, and

professional development; and maintain, build on, and disseminate resources for all school districts at the universal (Tier 1) level.

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

The RREI Project has supported project sites in building prevention-focused systems that help students in distress and reduce reliance on restraint and isolation. With the enactment of HB 1795 (2026), this work is now central to how all providers of public educational services will meet their new obligations. The law also states the Legislature's intent, by 2031, to implement a trauma-informed professional development program on alternatives to restraint and isolation that will allow the state to ban isolation practices, and to provide the technical assistance necessary to operationalize that ban.

Looking ahead, OSPI will:

- Develop online learning modules based on the *Positive Behavior Supports for Resilient & Inclusive Schools* manual, including content on using disaggregated data to identify and address disproportionate use of restraint and isolation, expected to be completed in early 2027.
- Provide grants to districts outside the RREI Project to support educator professional development in reducing restraint and isolation. Grants prioritize districts with the highest number of restraint and isolation incidents.
- Provide guidance and technical assistance to districts on integrating inclusionary practices and restraint and isolation reduction into their existing prevention systems, such as multi-tiered systems of support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

OSPI extends its gratitude to the staff of the 23 project sites, whose commitment to building safer, more inclusive learning environments made this work possible. Special thanks to the district leaders who shared their work and lessons learned with colleagues across the state: Annalisa Sanchez, Bainbridge Island School District; Dominick Ventresco, Pullman Public Schools; Eric Brewer, Central Valley School District; Stephanie Salazar, Fife Public Schools; Kristen Koehler, Anacortes School District; Lissan Wipfli, Lakewood School District; and Heather Ogden, Kelso School District.

OSPI extends special recognition to Dr. Jaimee Kidder, OSPI Special Education, the primary author of the *Positive Behavior Supports for Resilient & Inclusive Schools* manual, for their leadership in its development and for leading professional learning sessions for project sites on the use of a behavioral tracking tool.

OSPI also thanks the following individuals and partners for their contributions to this work:

- Ross Boylan, OSPI, Executive Services
- Mikhail Cherniske, OSPI, Government Relations
- Stephani Hemness, OSPI, Student Engagement and Special Programs
- Josie Horn, OSPI, Contracts and Procurement
- Christine Hurley, OSPI, Student Engagement and Special Programs
- Andrea Kadlec, Disability Rights Washington
- Dr. Cassie Martin, OSPI, Special Education
- Dr. Tania May, OSPI, Special Education
- Scott Raub, OSPI, Special Education
- Jennifer Story, OSPI, Special Education
- Haring Center for Inclusive Education, University of Washington

OSPI also recognizes the professional development providers who partnered with project sites:

- Dr. Britney Boyles, And Still We Rise
- Dr. Sue Bube, Dynamic Education Consulting Solutions
- Chris Daikos, Continua Consulting Group
- Courtney Daikos, Continua Consulting Group
- Dr. Hannah Gbenro, 21st Century Possibilities
- Dr. Ross Greene, Lives in the Balance
- Roberta Holmes, And Still We Rise
- Kim Hopkins, Lives in the Balance
- Tricia Kannberg, TurnerDev
- Debra Limon, Sound Supports
- Mark Lund, TurnerDev
- Dr. Lori Lynass, Advanced Behavior and Inclusion Supports
- Allison Mahoney, School Behavioral Consulting
- David Mendez, True Measure Collaborative
- Sarah Okun, True Measure Collaborative
- Riss Thompson, Lives in the Balance
- Corey Turner, TurnerDev
- Dr. Bridget Walker, Advanced Behavior and Inclusion Supports

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: History of Restraint & Isolation in WA Legislature

2008: Proposed (did not pass) prohibition of chemical and mechanical restraint, with exceptions. (ESHB 2884)

2013: Passed reporting requirements for incidents involving students with an individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan. (HB 1688)

2014: Proposed (did not pass) making school district R&I policies available to parents on the district website or in written form, instead of providing a copy when an IEP or Section 504 plan is created. (HB 2605) (HB 2605)

2015: Passed prohibition of R&I unless necessary to avoid harm, and expanded reporting requirements to all students. (HB 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****."*[17]

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)

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)

[17] Finding—2015 c 206 s 1

2026: Passed significant revisions to Washington's restraint and isolation law, signed by the Governor on March 24, 2026. The law prohibits chemical restraint, mechanical restraint, and life-threatening physical restraint or physical escort; strengthens reporting and follow-up requirements; and states the Legislature's intent, by 2031, to implement professional development and technical assistance that will allow the state to ban isolation practices (ESHB 1795).

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 report[18] 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 findings[19] 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	Modify data collection requirements
Clarify definition of "serious harm" as "serious physical injury"	Remove "property damage" from definition of "serious harm"

[18] Collyer & Dufault, 2022. Crisis Response Workgroup: Report to the Legislature
[19] Kadlec et al., 2023. *Coming Into the Light: An Examination of Restraint and Isolation Practices in WA Schools*

Appendix B: Professional Development Providers

OSPI selected the following 10 professional development providers through a competitive Request for Proposals process. The providers offered expertise in multi-tiered systems of support, positive and trauma-informed behavior support, crisis prevention and de-escalation, functional behavioral assessment and intervention planning, inclusive practices for students with disabilities, culturally responsive practices, family engagement, and data-based decision making. Project sites selected providers based on locally identified needs.

- 21st Century Possibilities
- Advanced Behavior and Inclusion Supports
- And Still We Rise
- Continua Consulting Group
- Dynamic Education Consulting Solutions
- Lives in the Balance
- School Behavioral Consulting
- Sound Supports
- True Measure Collaborative
- TurnerDev

Appendix C: Technical Assistance Manual

In 2023, the Washington State Legislature established a requirement for OSPI to develop a technical assistance manual to support districts in reducing restraint and isolation in schools. *The Positive Behavior Supports for Resilient & Inclusive Schools: Guidance for Reducing Exclusionary Discipline, Restraint, and Isolation through Student-Centered Practices* manual was developed in close partnership with demonstration sites, whose expertise and on-the-ground experience informed its strategies and tools.

The manual is a practical, research-based guide designed to help schools create safer, more supportive learning environments. It offers actionable strategies, tools, and real-world examples to help educators reduce the use of restraint and eliminate isolation practices while promoting positive behavior and student well-being. Districts interested in seeing these practices in action can request a Demonstration Site visit through the University of Washington's Haring Center for Inclusive Education website.

The manual also helps districts build lasting systems for improvement, including professional development resources, ways to track progress, and guidance for creating a culture of safety and inclusion. By using this manual, schools can support the social, emotional, and academic growth of every student.

Section 1: Understanding Positive and Trauma-Informed Behavior Support

Section 1 provides guidance on the fundamentals of student-centered behavior support practice. Content includes key principles of behavior in which effective trauma-informed behavior support is anchored, important concepts (e.g., school climate, student belonging) that influence the effectiveness of behavior support in a school or district, and basic concepts that support educators and family members to develop positive behavior supports. The section also features specific information about approaching behavior support from a lens of equity and avoiding implicit bias.

Section 2: School and District Systems That Support Social, Emotional, And Behavioral Well-Being

Section 2 focuses on improving positive behavior support at the school and district level. It describes a variety of interconnected school and district systems and how they can fit together in a multitiered system of supports (MTSS) to support student and staff well-being. Specific school and district systems, as well as their relationship to student behavior and safety, are discussed in brief with intentional connections to further resources.

Section 3: Classroom Practices for Safe and Inclusive Learning

Section 3 describes practices for improving positive behavior support at the classroom level. Content addresses how *social and emotional learning* (SEL) can fit into teaching of social, emotional, and

behavioral health (SEBH) skills, how teachers can partner with parents to cultivate an inclusive classroom that supports all students to learn skills for success, and how to design a classroom in which most interfering behaviors are prevented by setting the stage for healthy behavior instead. Specific practices associated with effective classroom management that foster a climate of belonging and safety are included.

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

Section 4 addresses individual behavior support for students who engage in significant interfering behavior, including teaming processes to engage in meaningful and student-centered data collection, problem solving, and cycles of intervention and review. Content also includes best practices and requirements for conducting functional behavioral assessments (FBA), using the results of the FBA to develop an effective and high-quality behavioral intervention plan (BIP), and making data-based decisions to ensure the student's supports are effective.

Section 5: Considerations for Students with Disabilities

Section 5 describes best practices and requirements for providing behavior support, in alignment with the legal right to a free appropriate public education, to students who are eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Content includes a summary of discipline protections for students with disabilities and key takeaways from federal investigations into district misuse of restraint and/or isolation with students with disabilities.

Section 6: Crisis Prevention and De-Escalation

Section 6 focuses on balancing the importance of schools to have an effective behavioral crisis response process with the urgent need to reduce or eliminate the harmful and ineffective practices of restraint and isolation. Guidance includes legal requirements and processes in restraint and isolation use, recommendations for safe de-escalation and reduction of certain preventable harms associated with restraint and isolation, and collaborative practices amongst all members of the school team and family to serve the student safely and supportively.

Appendix D: Fiscal Impact Calculation

1. Total LEAs statewide: 315 (295 school districts, 8 state-tribal education compact schools, and 12 additional jurisdictions)
2. Annual cohort: 20% × 315 = 63 LEAs
3. Grants to LEAs: 63 × $60,000 = $3,780,000
4. OSPI staffing (1.0 program supervisor, 1.0 program specialist, 0.35 administrative assistant, 0.15 data analyst): $282,000
5. Resource development and demonstration site training contract: $50,000
6. IPTN participation: 20 contractors × $5,000 = $100,000
7. Indirect costs: 9% × ($282,000 + $50,000 + $100,000) = $38,880
8. Total annual cost: $3,780,000 + $282,000 + $50,000 + $100,000 + $38,880 = $4,250,880
9. Percent of total going to LEA grants: $3,780,000 ÷ $4,250,880 = approximately 89%

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