9th Grade Success

Budget Language

$1,500,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2026 is provided solely for grants to school districts for ninth grade success. Within the amounts in this subsection, funding is provided for the office to contract with an evaluator to conduct a yearly evaluation of the program's success.

Proviso Purpose

The purpose of the Ninth Grade Success (NGS) proviso is to support secondary school teams in implementing evidence-based strategies that improve student outcomes during the critical transition into high school. Ninth grade is widely recognized as a pivotal year that strongly predicts high school graduation. Students who are on track at the end of ninth grade—measured by attendance, behavior, and course performance—are significantly more likely to graduate on time.

This funding enabled OSPI to provide grants to school districts to implement the Ninth Grade Success model within ninth grade teams at the high school level. In addition to direct grants, the funding also supported a contract with Stand for Children (Stand) and its implementation partner, Center for High School Success (CHSS), to provide professional development, coaching and technical assistance to school teams implementing the model. Finally, a portion of the funds was used to contract with Education Analytics Consulting, an external evaluator, to assess the program's effectiveness and inform continuous improvement.

Services Provided

OSPI Services Include:

- Grant Administration: OSPI awarded formula grants to school districts to support the implementation of the NGS model. These grants help fund staffing, professional development, and systems-building efforts within ninth grade teams.

Contract Services

OSPI contracted with Stand to provide comprehensive implementation support to school-based ninth grade teams receiving Ninth Grade Success (NGS) grants through CHSS. Stand's services are designed to build school and district capacity to implement the NGS model with fidelity and sustainability. These services include:

- Direct Coaching: CHSS provides individualized coaching to school-based ninth grade teams. Coaches support schools in using early warning systems, analyzing student data, and designing timely, targeted interventions to improve student outcomes.
- Grantee Collaboratives: CHSS facilitates regional collaborative learning sessions for grantee schools. These sessions provide opportunities for school teams to deepen their

understanding of the NGS model, share implementation strategies, and learn from peer districts across the state.
- Demonstration Site Visits: CHSS organizes site visits to schools that have successfully implemented and sustained the NGS model. These visits allow grantee teams to observe best practices in action and engage with experienced NGS Teams.
- Summer Institute: CHSS hosts an annual Summer Institute to onboard and orient new grantees. This professional learning event introduces school teams to the core components of the NGS model and sets the foundation for implementation in the upcoming school year.

As a part of the NGS proviso, OSPI contracted with Education Analytics Consulting to provide evaluation services for the program during the 2025–26 school year, with a focus on assessing program impacts on student outcomes from 2019–20 through 2024–25 (which reflected all available data to date) to support a broader analysis of the program's impact over time.

Evaluator services included:

- Assessing the impact of the NGS model using quasi-experimental methods and statewide aggregate data from 2019–20 through 2024–25.
- Examining outcomes related to ninth grade on-track status, attendance, graduation outcomes for eligible cohorts, and discipline, including analyses of student group disparities.
- Gathering information on implementation fidelity and variation across participating schools through ongoing collaboration with OSPI and program partners.
- Producing a final summative evaluation report documenting program impacts, implementation findings, and recommendations.

Criteria for Receiving Services/Grants

Invitations to participate in the NGS program are based on a set of criteria designed to prioritize schools where the model can have the greatest impact. These criteria help ensure that resources are directed to schools that are both in need of and well-positioned to benefit from the support. Selection considerations include:

- Percentage of students on track at the end of ninth grade, as measured by the School Quality and Student Success (SQSS) indicator on OSPI's Washington School Report Card. Currently, the statewide average for ninth grade students being on-track is approximately 72%. OSPI prioritizes grant funding for schools that fall below this threshold at the start of their first year in the program. Schools that meet or exceed the on-track threshold in their second or third year are supported in transitioning toward sustainability and alumni status within the NGS network.
- Percentage of students identified as low-income, geographic diversity to ensure statewide representation, and total number of ninth grade students served—with preference given to schools serving larger populations.

- All participating grantee schools received $5,000-$6,000 in funding, with the majority continuing from prior cohorts and only a small number of new schools joining the program.

Beneficiaries in the 2025-26 School Year

Number of School Districts: 32

Number of Schools: 50

Number of Students: 15,352

Number of Educators: 630

Are Federal or Other Funds Contingent on State Funding?

No.

State Funding History

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2026	$1,500,000	$1,487,231
2025	$3,000,000	$2,200,728

Number of Beneficiaries Per Fiscal Year (e.g. School Districts, Schools, Students, Educators, Other)

Fiscal Year	Number of Beneficiaries
2026	16,064
2025	17,609

Programmatic Changes Since Inception (If Any)

The NGS program has expanded since its inception, driven in part by increased funding, including federal ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) funds from 2021 to 2023. This additional support enabled OSPI to scale the program, reaching 63 schools by Year 6. Due to reduced funding during the 2025 legislative session, the program could only maintain support for 50 schools.

Timeline of schools supported:

- In Year 3 (2021-22), 19 new schools were added, bringing the total to 23.
- In Year 4 (2022-23), 29 additional schools joined, increasing the total to 51.
- In Year 5 (2023-24), OSPI paused onboarding to focus on deepening support for existing grantees; however, 11 schools did not return.
- In Year 6 (2024-25), the program resumed expansion, adding 24 new schools to reach a total of 63 participating schools.

- In Year 7 (2025-26), due to state budget reductions and decreased program funding, OSPI paused the onboarding of new districts to continue supporting the 50 schools participating in prior cohorts.

Program(s) Evaluation or Major Findings

Key Evaluation Findings

- The NGS model was associated with a 6.01 percentage point increase in ninth-grade on-track rates, equivalent to approximately 15 additional students per year staying on track to graduate in a typical high school.
- Positive impacts were strongest for multilingual learners (+10.96 percentage points) and low-income students (+6.75 percentage points), with larger effects observed in schools serving higher percentages of students of color and students experiencing poverty.
- The evaluation found no significant impact on attendance rates or exclusionary discipline, but identified evidence suggesting NGS may contribute to higher graduation rates.
- Implementation data showed schools were generally successful in establishing NGS Teams and using data systems but faced greater challenges implementing individualized interventions and instructional practice changes.

Major Challenges Faced by Program(s)

- Reductions in grant awards over time, from $25,000 per grantee school in earlier years to a minimum of $10,000 per school in FY2025 and $5,000 per school in FY2026, required schools to adapt and identify new ways to sustain NGS teams and implementation activities.
- Limited grant funds constrained participation for grantee schools in professional learning opportunities and regional collaboration activities due to substitute staffing costs.
- Staff and leadership turnover in long-serving grantee schools created challenges in maintaining implementation momentum and securing ongoing administrative commitment to the NGS model.
- Uncertainty in annual program funding created challenges for long-term planning, coaching continuity, and sustainable implementation, as the model often requires one to three years to become fully established.
- Due to reduced program funding, the coaching contractor implemented a fee-for-service model for participating schools to sustain coaching supports.

Future Opportunities

- Develop a more equitable funding model that differentiates support for new and continuing grantee schools, ensuring new participants have sufficient resources to fully implement the NGS model.

- Strengthen collaboration with coaching partners to better understand school-level challenges, successes, and implementation needs.
- Partner with coaches and participating schools to identify and promote effective attendance and student behavior improvement strategies.
- Develop a more equitable and consistent recruitment strategy in partnership with coaches and school improvement partners to increase access to the program for eligible schools statewide.
- OSPI is exploring grant cycle limits to encourage long-term sustainability and expand access to additional schools while balancing continued support for existing participants.
- Developing a consistent and equitable recruitment process for future cohorts remains an ongoing priority to ensure access to the program across eligible schools statewide.
- Continue evaluation efforts to assess program impacts on ninth-grade on-track rates, attendance, discipline, and graduation outcomes, while examining the relationship between resource investments and program outcomes.
- Expand statewide awareness of the NGS model through webinars, presentations, and peer-learning opportunities featuring exemplary grantee schools.

Other Relevant Information

- For additional information on the 2025–26 program evaluation, refer to the *Ninth Grade Success Summary Evaluation Report*.
- For more information on the ninth grade success model, see the Freshman Success Framework that guides our work.
- The Center for High School Success is our partner and contracts to provide coaching using their NGS model.
- The CHSS roadmap for 9th Grade Success
- The OSPI NGS webpage - Ninth Grade Success

Schools/Districts Receiving Assistance

Click here to see a list of all OSPI grant recipients in the 2026 Fiscal Year.

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