



REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Building Bridges (Dropout Prevention, Intervention, and Reengagement)

2017

Authorizing legislation: RCW 28A.175.075(3)(a)

(<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.175.075>)

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Executive Summary

Each year more students graduate from public high schools in Washington state. The on-time (four-year) graduation rate for students in the Class of 2011 was 76.6 percent; by the Class of 2016, the rate increased to 79.1 percent, up 1.0 percentage point from 2015. Extended (five-year) graduation rates increased from 78.2 percent for the Class of 2011 to 81.9 percent in the Class of 2016, a 0.8 percentage point increase from the Class of 2015.

Although there has been an increase in overall rates, the gaps between student groups remain fairly constant. The 4- and 5-year graduation rates across student groups vary significantly, with the largest variance in 4-year rates occurring between Asian students (88.6%) and American Indian/Alaskan Native students (62.8%). A disproportionate number of students who fail to graduate live in low-income households, are in foster care, are in the juvenile justice system, or are without stable housing. Further, the gap between student groups has remained relatively constant over the years, with the biggest gaps appearing for English Language learners, homeless, and low-income students. For the Class of 2016—those students who began as ninth graders in the 2012–13 school year—about one in nine students dropped out (9,474 students). Of the students reported as dropping out in the 2015–16 school year, 74.2 percent were identified as either unconfirmed transfers or reason unknown.

To keep all students visible and on track to graduate from high school, multi-tiered systems that provide both academic and non-academic supports are essential. The Building Bridges program, and its accompanying workgroup, was established by the Legislature in 2007 to do just that. The state's ongoing dropout prevention efforts are based on the three major recommendations of the Building Bridges Workgroup:

1. Set an educational goal for youth- and family-serving agencies and coordinate efforts to achieve it.
2. Build local dropout prevention and intervention systems and practices at every grade level.
3. Create a dropout reengagement system for 16- to 24-year-old youth who are not likely to return to high school.

The Building Bridges Workgroup continues to meet annually, with a focus on coordinating efforts around:

1. the integration of a behavioral health support system;
2. the support of a statewide school attendance effort; and
3. ongoing support of dropout early warning system data collection and analytic processes.

The overall goal is to increase overall graduation rates and close the gaps between student groups. In addition to graduation and attendance, the workgroup will direct specific attention to ninth grade course failure and dual credit enrollment. Reengagement system development will continue to enhance K–12 education and workforce connection, along with targeted juvenile rehabilitation reengagement programming.

Background

In 2007, the Legislature passed House Bill 1573 (HB 1573), which established the Building Bridges program, including a companion workgroup. This state-level workgroup, comprised of legislators and agency partners, is charged with the development of a common vision for dropout prevention, intervention, and reengagement (DPIR) programming, as well as making annual recommendations to the Legislature and the governor on DPIR best practices and system needs.

The Legislature has continued to support the development of a comprehensive dropout prevention system through various policy actions, such as:

- HB 1418 (2010), which established a dropout reengagement system;
- HB 1599 (2011), which established the Pay for Actual Student Success program and tasked OSPI with creating a standard definition of absence;
- HB 1541 (2016) which established educational programming for suspension alternatives and behavior best practices;
- HB 2449 (2016), which added processes—such as a community truancy board—to lessen instances of truancy;
- HB 1541 (2016), which tasked the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning with creating the Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol; and
- HB 1170 (2017), which builds on past community truancy board and promotion of positive attendance legislation (HB 2449).

Under the umbrella of the Building Bridges program, OSPI has continued to support the initial workgroup recommendations through the facilitation of several time-limited, task-focused ad hoc workgroups. The groups are comprised of individuals from state, regional, and local agencies including community youth- and family-serving organizations committed to increasing student success.

The following tables/graph illustrate the challenges.

Table 1: Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity

Student Race/Ethnicity	4-Year Graduation Rate	5-Year Graduation Rate
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	60.6%	62.8%
Asian	88.6%	90.6%
Black/ African American	70.7%	74.6%
Hispanic/ Latino	72.3%	75.2%
Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	68.2%	72.0%
Two or More Races	77.9%	81.7%
White	81.5%	84.0%

Table 2: Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity over Time

Student Race/Ethnicity	2013	2014	2015	2016
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	52.5%	53.7%	56.4%	60.6%
Asian	84.1%	86.5%	87.8%	88.6%
Black/ African American	65.4%	67.8%	68.8%	70.7%
Hispanic/ Latino	65.6%	67.3%	69.6%	72.3%
Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	62.3%	64.6%	67.0%	68.2%
Two or More Races	76.2%	75.5%	77.9%	77.9%
White	79.4%	80.5%	80.9%	81.5%

Table 3: Graduation Rates by Student Group

Student Group	4-Year Graduation Rate	5-Year Graduation Rate
Special Education	58.1%	65.6%
Limited English	57.6%	65.1%
Low Income	69.4%	73.0%
Migrant	67.4%	71.4%
Homeless	53.2%	55.59%

Table 4: Disproportionality between Student Groups and Non-Group Peers

Student Group	Group Graduation Rate	Non-Group Graduation Rate	Difference	Change from 14-15
Special Education	55.7%	80.1%	23.9%	-0.5
ELL	53.7%	78.6%	22.89%	-2.1
Low Income	66.4%	88.3%	19.9%	-2.0
Migrant	63.6%	77.6%	12.0%	-2.1
504	74.8%	77.4%	1.7%	-0.9
Homeless	46.1%	78.5%	27.6%	-4.8

Table 5: Annual Dropouts – Reasons for Dropping Out

Reason	Total Dropouts	Percent of Total
Attended School 4 years, didn't graduate	727	4.4%
Lacked Progress or Poor Grades	1,148	7.0%
School Not for Me, Chose to Stay Home	1,439	8.7%
Married, Family Support, or Child Related	78	.5%
Offered Training or Chose to Work	195	1.2%
Left to Take GED	358	2.2%
Expelled or Suspended	267	1.6%
Drug or Alcohol Related	32	.2%
Unconfirmed Transfer	4,415	26.8%
Dropped for Other or Unknown Reason	7,812	47.4%
Total	16,471	

Update Status

Graduation a Team Effort (GATE)—Shared Outcomes and Vision

GATE is a collaborative effort to share what is working across state, regional, and local systems to increase graduation rates. GATE continues to partner with the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Early Learning (DEL), the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

In 2017, GATE efforts focused on:

- Sharing communication strategies relative to dropout early warning indicators.
- Providing ongoing support of the Graduation: A Team Effort (GATE) Advisory Committee and webinar series.
- Supporting a Professional Learning Equity Alliance (PLEA).

GATE's work in 2017 concentrated on creating common understanding around key dropout prevention indicators, including attendance, behavior, and ninth grade course performance. A communication strategy was developed to create shared messaging across agencies. The strategy included tweets, Facebook postings, newspaper articles, as well as trainings and workshops for diverse audiences across the state. DSHS played a critical role in the development and dissemination of informational materials to Community Service Offices and Child Welfare Offices statewide related to the importance of regular school attendance.

GATE Advisory meetings are held quarterly and include a diverse membership. Topics for 2016–17 included a systematic approach to graduation, engaging students in civic education, strengthening school-based mental health services, and addressing chronic absenteeism. Past presentations and notes are contained on the [GATE webpage](#).

The GATE Equity Webinar is a monthly webinar series that supports graduation by exploring topics on best practices in relation to the OSPI performance indicators, such as chronic absenteeism, behavior, ninth grade course performance, postsecondary enrollment, and high school graduation. The webinars are a resource for partners who wish to improve support systems, data use, and instruction in an effort to increase student achievement. Presentations include current research, state and local statistics, and presentations by school districts and community representatives that have experienced success. A list of past webinar recordings, as well as the schedule for 2017-18, is located on the [GATE webpage](#).

To align professional learning efforts system-wide, GATE continues to support the PLEA. PLEA membership includes representatives from the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP), the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA), the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA), the Washington School Counselor Association (WSCA), WSAC, Educational Service Districts (ESDs), and higher

education. Quarterly meetings have focused on aligning professional development, with a specific focus on equity. Short-term outcomes of the PLEA group have been the creation of a common vision for equity in student achievement, alignment with shared outcome measures, jointly sponsored conferences and presentations, and shared communication strategies relative to equity.

Building Bridges Grants/Graduation Equity—Dropout Prevention System

One of the key features of a comprehensive dropout prevention system includes a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS). There has been extensive work throughout OSPI to create agency-wide use of an MTSS service delivery model. Work has centered on the development of an agency MTSS framework and the defining of key work using an MTSS lens.

There has also been an effort to collect resources for districts interested in implementing and sustaining MTSS efforts. There is an opportunity on the [MTSS webpage](#) to register as an MTSS resource, as well as an opportunity for districts to review the list of consultants and access a suite of tools and resources to assist in the development and sustainability of an MTSS. OSPI also started a monthly MTSS District Leadership Professional Learning Community (PLC) offered in a webinar format to provide current research and brainstorm barriers to implementation.

Additionally, an external MTSS Advisory Committee was formed to provide feedback to OSPI on program development as it relates to MTSS. The MTSS Advisory Committee, chaired by district leadership, contains a broad base of representation from building, district, regional, and statewide education associations, as well as several family- and community-based organizations.

Key components of an MTSS are being implemented in districts across the state. Four of those districts continue to serve as models for other districts working to implement a dropout prevention system. District grantees for 2016–17 were Franklin Pierce School District (ESD 121), Kelso School District (ESD 113), Sunnyside School District (ESD 105), and Spokane School District (ESD 101).

The four district grantees entered into a multi-year process of developing professional development resources and providing presentations and onsite visits. The work of the grantees focuses on reviewing data to a problem of practice that negatively impacts graduation, implement a plan to address the root cause, and assign key performance indicators to monitor progress and make adjustments. The purpose of this ongoing grant is to build capacity across the state for using a Dropout Early Warning and Intervention System (DEWIS).

Information on these grants, including materials developed as part of the work, is located on the [GATE webpage](#).

Open Doors—Youth Reengagement

The Open Doors Youth Reengagement framework (28A.175.100-115 RCW) continues to expand. This program reengages older youth who have dropped out with pathways to college and career. Youth reengagement aligns with the 2014 update to the Building Bridges Workgroup’s third recommendation: Create a dropout reengagement system for youth (ages 16–24) who are not likely to return to high school.

During the past year, the program has expanded to 115 districts (4,000 students monthly) delivering or partnering to deliver reengagement programming for older youth not likely to graduate in the traditional or traditional alternative education models.

There was also an increase in Open Doors programming through community and technical colleges, specifically coordinating programming between Open Doors and the High School 21+ program. These may improve transitions and outcomes for youth as they age out of the K–12 supported system and become eligible to be served in the adult education system. This effort is a collaboration between OSPI and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. More information is located on the [GATE webpage](#).

Conclusion and Next Steps

OSPI, in collaboration with school and community partners across Washington state, will continue to promote the use of early warning indicator data and data processes and the development of comprehensive MTSS to assist students facing substantial barriers to getting to school. An issue tied to chronic absenteeism, as well as school success in general, is behavioral health. Through work associated with OSPI’s federal Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education) mental health grant, as well as the work attached to House Bill 1541 (2016) and the development and implementation of an Integrated Student Supports protocol, support is needed in strategizing systemic actions to behavioral health (mental health promotion and substance use prevention).

The Building Bridges program will continue to align and share what is working to keep students on track to graduation, with a targeted focus on chronic absenteeism, behavior, and ninth grade success. Reengagement efforts will continue to support and expand programs focusing on the evaluation process of program accountability and efficacy. There will also be an effort to increase transition support for youth aging out of the K–12 supported system, including pathways to vocational rehabilitation, college and adult education, vocational training, and industry. OSPI staff will work to further coordinate with Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR) to better transition, serve, and provide opportunities for disengaged youth who reengaged through the juvenile rehabilitation institution system.

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