



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Post-resident Youth – Dropout Prevention System Examination

2021

Authorizing Legislation: House Bill 1295 (2021)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Washington, it is required as part of the program of basic education that instruction and associated state funding be provided for school-aged students in institutional facilities. In 2021, the Legislature passed House Bill 1295, which directed the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to examine the dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval system established under Chapter 28A.175 Revised Code of Washington (RCW), including associated administrative rules. The law also requires OSPI to recommend new or modified dropout reengagement requirements and practices that will promote credit earning and high school completion by youth and post-resident youth. OSPI focused this analysis on Washington's statewide dropout reengagement program: Open Doors.

Trend data from 2017-18 to 2020-21 indicate that on average approximately 10% of all youth participating in Open Doors programs have at one time previously experienced institutional education, and approximately 10% of age-eligible (youth aged 16 or older by September 1) post-residential youth enrolled in an Open Doors program in the year they left the institutional education setting.

Below are OSPI's recommendations to promote better outcomes for post-resident youth and all youth who engage in the state's youth reengagement programs:

1. Strengthen the capacity of education advocates to collaborate with Open Doors case managers and follow post-resident youth into the Open Doors program, ensuring the students are supported and engaged. This would require additional funding for the education advocate program and should include additional time and training for both Open Doors case managers and education advocates.
2. Fund Open Doors programs at a 1.2 Annual Average Full-Time Equivalent (AAFTE) so all students in Open Doors programs have access to year-round programming and programming is fully available to post-resident youth.
3. Allocate barrier reduction funding for Open Doors programs. Barrier reduction funding presently exists in skill centers and allows resources to flow directly to meeting student needs, such as transportation and fees.

INTRODUCTION

In Washington, it is required as part of the program of basic education that instruction and associated state funding be provided for school-aged students in institutional facilities. The 2021 Legislature found that students in Washington’s institutional facilities have been “unable to access the education and supports they need to make life-changing academic progress” and passed House Bill (HB) 1295 as a significant step of progress toward better meeting the needs of students who are in or have been involved with the transitional components of the juvenile system. Section 5 of HB 1295 directs OSPI to examine the dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval system established under Chapter 28A.175 RCW, including associated administrative rules, and to recommend new or modified dropout reengagement requirements and practices that will promote credit earning and high school completion by youth and post-resident youth.

Open Doors Youth Reengagement ([Washington Administrative Code \(WAC\) 392-700](#)) is a reengagement system that provides education and services to older youth, ages 16–21, who have dropped out of school or are not expected to graduate from high school by the age of 21. Open Doors reengages disconnected youth through programs that encourage community partnerships, create multiple pathways for students to realize success, and provide an on-ramp to post-secondary achievement through a performance-based, individualized support model. It is important to note that the Open Doors 1418 Youth Reengagement Program is designed for multiple outcomes that lead to postsecondary engagement beyond credit earning and high school completion. Open Doors currently allows students to focus on basic skill attainment, GED-plus, high school diploma, college enrollment, and/or workforce preparation.

To meet the requirements of HB 1295, OSPI analyzed student-level data from the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) and the Open Doors Youth Reengagement data application, surveyed several Open Doors programs affiliated with institutional education, read the [United Way of King County’s Open Doors Sustainability Project: Co-Creating a Strong Future for Young People](#) report, and received input from the Open Doors State Steering Committee.

FINDINGS

Optimizing the Coordination of Transition and Reentry Supports for Post-resident Youth

OSPI surveyed Open Doors programs known to have connections to institutional education programs to see if the rates of engagement of post-resident youth was different from state averages, and to gain a better understanding of the referral process. Data accumulated from these regional surveys indicate a much higher percentage of post-resident youth participate in Open Doors when the Open Doors program:

1. has either a shared administration with institutional education (principal oversees both programs or both programs are run by an educational service district) or a strong partnership between education advocates serving adjudicated youth and Open Doors staff, **or**
2. was specifically designed as a landing for post-resident youth. A specific example is when the role of Open Doors case manager and education advocate are split or shared by a single staff or staff transitions from one role to the other and brings knowledge and relationship between the programs.

Better integration of Open Doors supports results in increased participation by post-resident youth. Education advocates and juvenile rehabilitation transitions specialists can collaborate and engage in processes that identify student needs and goals to inform student transition to the best-fitting educational program. While some post-resident youth make a direct transition to Open Doors, it is expected that not all post-resident students will enroll or be eligible for the program immediately upon release.

Survey findings and qualitative data gathered from the Open Doors State Steering Committee indicate the importance of relationships, both between the post-resident youth and their education advocate as well as between the education advocate and the Open Doors case manager and instructional staff. It is not uncommon for a post-resident youth to have multiple adults and agencies involved in their reentry. The education advocate is best suited to coordinate the services and supports for the student in their new educational setting.

The purpose of the education advocate is to assist youth previously incarcerated in county detention centers or juvenile justice institutions to successfully transition back to community schools, vocational training, college, GED programs, or jobs.

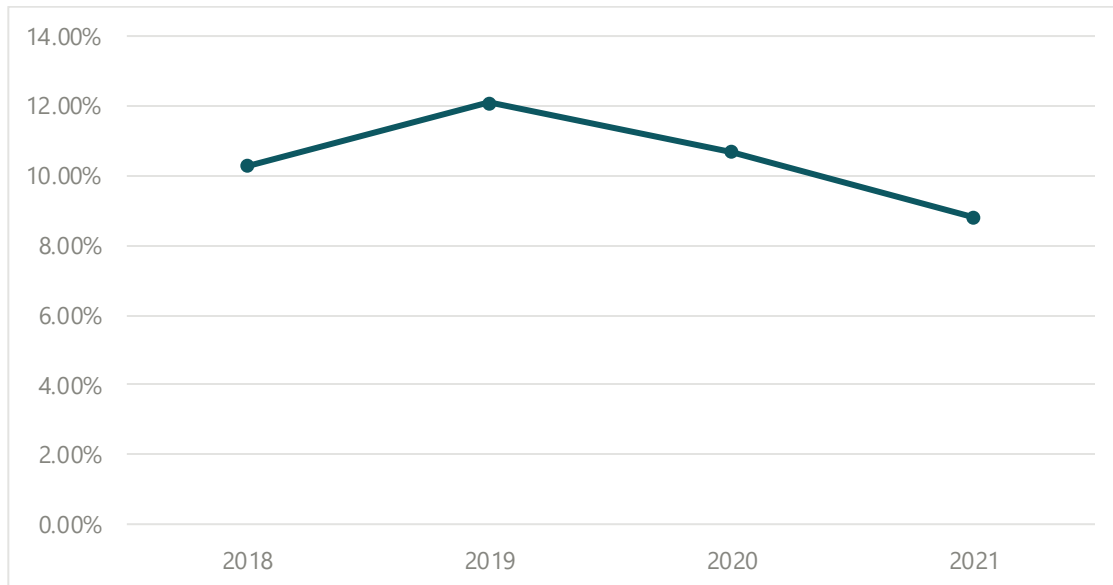
Functions of an education advocate include:

- Assessing student needs and recommending educational programs to meet those needs for the purpose of successful transition into a community school program.
- Assisting in developing education plans for transitioning students suspended or expelled from school for the purpose of finding an appropriate school.

- Facilitating school enrollment and monitoring progress and attendance.

In reviewing Open Doors program with shared administration designed to serve post-resident youth, OSPI found a three-year average of 52% of youth in the program had been adjudicated. Additionally, 49% of eligible youth leaving the institution enrolled in the Open Doors program, which is five times higher than the state average. Data gathered from CEDARS indicates our state average of youth in Open Doors programming who experience adjudication is 10% (Figure 1).

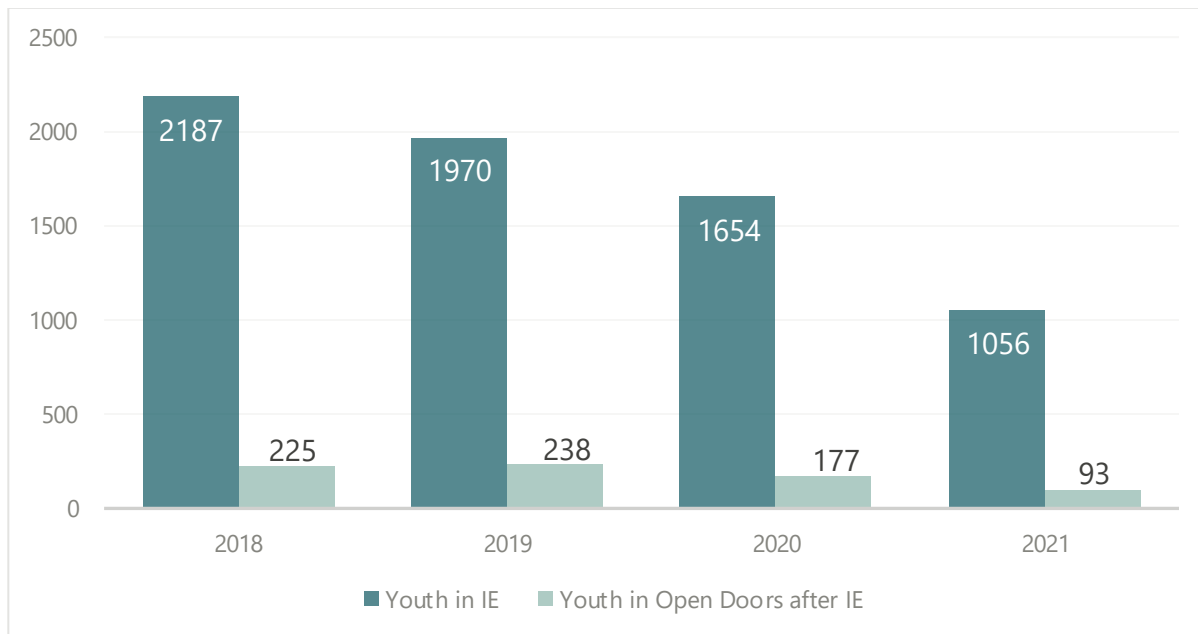
Figure 1: Percentage of Students Who Were Age-Eligible and in Open Doors After Experiencing Institutional Education, by School Year



Source: CEDARS, August 19, 2021.

Note: Figure 1 displays the percentage of students who experienced institutional education and who were at least 16 years of age by September 1st and participated in Open Doors afterwards during the same school year. The 2018-19 school year had the highest percentage of students aged 16+ that participated in Open Doors (12.1%) while 2020–21 had the lowest percentage of students aged 16+ in Open Doors (8.8%).

Figure 2: Age-Eligible Youth Who Were in Institutional Education (IE) and Participated in Open Doors Afterward, by School Year



Source: CEDARS, August 19, 2021.

Note: Figure 2 displays the number of youth ages 16+ in institutional education (IE) compared to youth ages 16+ who were in IE that also participated in Open Doors afterwards during the same school year. For example, in 2017-18, there were a total of 2,187 students who were 16+ by September 1 and experienced institutional education. Of those students, 225 of them engaged in Open Doors after enrollment in an institutional education facility at some point during the same school year.

Upon re-entry and transition to community school environments, post-resident youth rely on supports from their education advocate. The education advocate surveys and networks with the various educational opportunities that a post-resident youth is eligible for and may thrive in. To achieve increased high school diploma and GED attainment, adjudicated and post-resident youth may be best served through various education options. This can include comprehensive high school, alternative school programming, alternative learning experience, virtual programming, credit retrieval options, career and technical education (CTE), Running Start, and skill center participation. Ten percent of age-eligible post-resident youth engage in Open Doors (Figure 2). If Open Doors is the best fit, the likelihood of the student finding success will be increased by ongoing support from the education advocate in coordination with the case manager in Open Doors. When education advocates and Open Doors case managers have time to collaborate and learn together, they are better positioned to serve post-resident youth and offer consistent wrap-around supports targeted to specific student needs.

Providing Year-round Engagement Options

Currently, many Open Doors programs do not operate during summer months due to the fiscal barriers of the 1.0 Annual Average Full Time Equivalent (AAFTE) allocation, limiting students to be

claimed for a 1.0 FTE for no more than 10 months. Post-resident youth reentering community settings during spring or summer months will have exhausted their individual FTE allocation. If the post-resident student intends to enroll in summer programming, there will be no FTE allocation to support a reengagement program's service to them, even when an Open Doors program is operating year-round.

Programs cannot rely on stable funding for the youth they are serving in the summer months because of the 1.0 AAFTE limitation. While within the juvenile rehabilitation facility, the institutional education services provided to youth deduct from the existing post-resident allocation of 1.0 AAFTE. Many student's AAFTE allocation is exhausted by the time summer months arrive, even as those students continue to make educational gains.

Programs that do continue to serve students in the summer months rely heavily on recruiting out-of-school youth with untapped AAFTE apportionment, thus subsidizing continuously enrolled students, both post-resident and non-post-resident. Some students who enroll in an Open Doors program mid-year have been out of school, and therefore have available AAFTE for the summer months and are eligible for the school to claim for a portion of their 10-month annual average FTE. Otherwise, programs must rely on grant funding to operate year-round, continuous programming. This gap is also addressed in the recently published report, [*Open Doors Sustainability Project: Co-Creating a Strong Future for Young People*](#) issued by the United Way of King County. The 2021 report recommends that programs be funded for 12 months in place of the current 10-month funding model to meet student needs.

To remove the unintended penalization and barrier for students who have exhausted their FTE, including post-resident youth in reentry, OSPI recommends that Open Doors be funded at a 1.2 AAFTE – allowing all students to be claimed for a 1.0 FTE for 12 months and thus eliminating the missing funding of summer months. The ability to claim all students at a 12-month rate will enable Open Doors programs to become viable as a year-round education option. For post-resident youth, an uninterrupted educational transition without gaps due to summer funding barriers is a high-leverage strategy for continuous transition supports.

Removing Barriers to Accessing Existing Reengagement Programs

A preliminary analysis of student demographic data reveals that among Open Doors students in the 2020 four-year cohort, students who were in institutional education at some point prior to Open Doors experience a statistically significant higher rate of homelessness and low-income than students who were in Open Doors but never in institutional education. Open Doors students are over the age of 16, severely credit deficient, generally experience higher rates of homelessness than their non-Open Doors peers, and are more likely to be from low-income families. OSPI's analysis indicates that the dual experience of institutional education and Open Doors results in a higher need for case management, barrier reduction, and continuous support.

These youth have increased unmet needs that create barriers to successfully pursuing education through reengagement. This is not a uniformly unique issue; it has been addressed by skill centers serving similar student populations with the same needs.

Currently the ability of students in Open Doors programs to have barrier reduction funds available is dependent on what community partners are able to contribute to barrier reduction funding. An example of additional funding to support opportunity youth, specifically those in Open Doors programming, exists in King County. Opportunity youth are defined as young people who are between the ages of 16–24 and are disconnected from school and work. The United Way of King County has made opportunity youth a priority focus since 2015 and has distributed millions of dollars to help support over 17,000 youth in King County Open Doors since that time. In their 2021 sustainability report, [Open Doors Sustainability Project: Co-Creating a Strong Future for Young People](#), United Way of King County recommends that barrier reduction funds be available to all Open Doors programs. In other parts of the state, opportunity youth are not a priority focus, and programs struggle to help students get basic needs met. The United Way of King County has been actively lobbying for Open Doors barrier reduction funding for the past two years to address various needs, including:

- Food insecurity
- Transit fare, parking fees, and gas vouchers
- Costs for gear and equipment needed for internships and apprenticeships
- Clothing and professional wear
- Electricity and utilities
- State identification

Post-resident youth in Open Doors 1418 Youth Reengagement programs would greatly benefit from receiving barrier reduction funds.

"...We want to be the hub where any kid could come and get any of their needs met. If they had a medical need, I would want to be able to help them get medical care. And, we do help them get their Apple Care coverage. We have kids that just need to do laundry. I want to be able to have a laundry room so they can do laundry. Some just need a shower, but we don't have the facilities. We're just a small classroom space."

–Anonymous Program Administrator, Open Doors Youth Reengagement Program

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings identified within this report, OSPI brings forward three recommendations which are designed to create enabling contexts for post-resident youth, specifically by removing barriers to accessing existing reengagement programs, creating conditions for year-round reengagement options, and optimizing the coordination of transition and reentry supports for post-resident youth as it relates to their education.

Recommendation 1

Strengthen the capacity of education advocates to collaborate and receive professional development with Open Doors Youth Reengagement case managers.

Increased resources to support education advocate work and dual-role inclusive professional development opportunities will strengthen and refine referral pathways and transition plans for post-resident youth so they align with the student's High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP). These strategies will enhance the ability of education advocates, juvenile rehabilitation transition specialists, and Open Doors case managers to collaborate, thus increasing the ability to provide a continuity of support and educational options.

Recommendation 2

Fund Open Doors Youth Reengagement programs year-round.

The 1.0 Annual Average Full-Time Equivalent (AAFTE) allocation is a barrier to Open Doors programs offering a year-round schedule and would be remedied by a 1.2 AAFTE allocation, allowing all students to be claimed for 12 months at a 1.0 FTE.

Recommendation 3

Allocate barrier reduction funding for Open Doors Youth Reengagement programs.

Barrier reduction funds would allow Open Doors 1418 Youth Reengagement programs to cover additional costs for youth such as transportation, meals, gear and equipment for internships, clothing, and utilities. Funds could serve all youth enrolled in the program and are recommended to be funded at the same rates and tiers of skill center allocations. Currently, for skill centers with 50% or more students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL), the allocation for the site is \$55 per student in November and \$56 per student in February. For skill centers where less than 50% of students are eligible for FRPL, the allocation for the site is \$39 per student in November and \$39.48 per student in February.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

OSPI is currently engaged in the first phase of a larger data collection effort to examine how post-resident youth are being served. This work includes interviews with a small set of program leaders to gain detailed information about their programs, which will inform the development of a state-wide survey to be administered in early 2022. The survey will help OSPI build a more comprehensive understanding of how post-resident youth are accessing prevention, intervention, and reengagement systems.

These recommendations are designed to create enabling contexts for post-resident youth, specifically by removing barriers to accessing existing reengagement programs, creating conditions for year-round reengagement options, and optimizing the coordination of transition and reentry supports for post-resident youth as it relates to their education.

Post-resident youth are among those students who are furthest away from educational justice. Implementing the three recommendations put forth in this report will enable the Open Doors 1418 Youth Reengagement system to operate more cohesively through improved connections to education advocates and reduced fiscal barriers encountered by post-resident youth. The recommendations contribute to creating a more equitable and accessible pathway for post-resident youth.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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- Open Doors State Steering Committee,
- ESD 112 Open Doors Program,
- Open Den Program in Coupeville School District,
- Capital Region ESD 113's GRAVITY program,
- United Way of King County, and
- Next Generation Zone (operated in partnership with Northeast Washington ESD 101 and Spokane Community College)

REFERENCES

The United Way of King County (2021). *Open Doors Sustainability Project: Co-Creating a Strong Future for Young People*. Retrieved from: https://2fg6bf52ooj3wo7vv26nnz53-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/ftp/reconnecting-youth/RY_OpenDoors_web.pdf

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