



REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

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

**December 2015**

**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

A coordinated system for targeted prevention, intervention and reengagement is needed to keep students engaged in school and on track to graduate from high school.

In Washington, of the students who first enrolled in ninth grade during the 2010–11 school year, 9,670 dropped out of school by the end of the 2013–14 school year. This number is disproportionately represented by vulnerable youth, especially those in foster care, the juvenile justice system, and youth without stable housing.

There have been improvements. Washington state graduation rates are increasing over the past 10 years. For this group of students—the Class of 2014—the on-time (four-year) graduation rate is 77.2 percent. This is an increase of 1.2 percent from the Class of 2013. The five-year graduation rate for the Class of 2013 was 79.9 percent. This is a 1.1 percent increase from the previous year of 78.8 percent.

The Building Bridges program was established by the Legislature in 2007 to prevent students from dropping out of school and to reconnect students who are already disengaged. The program is funded on the three 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.

In 2014, the Building Bridges Workgroup expanded on their original 2009 recommendations to include funding for serving organizations and K–12 target efforts.

The Building Bridges program supports the statewide Building Bridges grantees, as well as Graduation Success Initiative (GSI), Open Doors, and Graduation: A Team Effort (GATE).

## Background

In 2007, the Legislature passed Substitute House Bill 1573, which established the Building Bridges Workgroup. This high-level workgroup, comprised of state legislators and state 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 DPIR system through program funding and various policy actions, such as: SSHB 1418 (2010) reengagement system (RCW 28A.175.100-115); HB 1599 (2011) (RCW 28A.175.035) standard absence definitions, graduation coach policy and graduation incentive metric; HB 1556 (2014) educational programming for suspension alternative and behavior best practices.

Since 2010, OSPI has supported Graduation: A Team Effort (GATE) through the creation and facilitation of an Advisory Group, Backbone Committee, and several time-limited, task-focused ad hoc workgroups. The groups are comprised of individuals from state, regional and local agencies including community youth-serving organizations committed to increasing student success.

### Washington's current graduation rates listed by student group:

Student Group	4-year Graduation	5-year Graduation
Special Education	55.7%	55.7%
Limited English	53.7%	59.6%
Low Income	66.4%	69.7%
Migrant	63.6%	67.1%
Homeless	46.1%	51.9%
Foster Care	41.5%	42.5%

### Disproportionality between student groups and non-group peers:

Student Group	Group Graduation Rate	Non-Group Graduation Rate	Difference
Special Education	55.7%	80.1%	24.4%
ELL	53.7%	78.6%	24.9%
Low Income	66.4%	88.3%	21.9%
Migrant	63.6%	77.6%	14.0%
504	74.8%	77.4%	2.6%
Homeless	46.1%	78.5%	32.4%

## Update Status

### Building Bridges Grants

The seven district grantees completed the two-year process defining a problem of practice that negatively impacts graduation, implementing a plan and addresses the root cause, and assigning key performance indicators to monitor progress.

The purpose of this grant was to build capacity for using a Dropout Early Warning and Intervention System (DEWIS). While these systems are typically to identify at-risk students and track appropriate interventions, they should also be used to identify commonalities.

These commonalities may indicate school or district level problems of practice that is impacting student achievement. Addressing these issues at the tier 1 and tier 2 level will reduce the need for intensive services and have a greater impact on student achievement than individual interventions.

District Grantees for 2014–15 were:

- Evergreen SD—ESD 112
- Longview SD—ESD 112
- Sultan SD—NWESD 189
- Federal Way SD—PSESD 121
- Kent SD—PSESD 121
- Renton SD—PSESD 121
- Tukwila SD—PSESD 121

The grantees also created materials that explain the process and framework that can support further work utilizing data, and root cause analysis to drive action.

For complete information on these grants, including district defined problems of practice and action plans, and the Draft Framework for High School Completion, please visit our website: <http://k12.wa.us/GATE/BuildingBridges>

### Open Doors Youth Reengagement

Open Doors Youth Reengagement framework (RCW 28A.175.100-115) continues to expand. This program reengages older youth who have dropped out with pathways to college and career. During the past year, the program has:

- Expanded to 90 districts delivering or partnering to deliver reengagement programming for older youth not likely to graduate in the traditional or traditional alternative education models.
- Increase Open Doors programming through community and technical colleges, specifically coordinating programming between Open Doors and the High School 21+ program that 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.

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.

For more information:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/GATE/SupportingStudents/StudentRetrieval.aspx>

### **Graduation a Team Effort (GATE)**

GATE is a collective impact initiative to coordinate efforts and share what is working across state, region, and local systems. GATE continued to partner with the Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Early Learning (DEL), the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), and the Department of Health and Social Services (DSHS).

2015 GATE efforts updated the Building Bridges recommendations and have also increased collaboration and participation with youth and family-serving agencies. This includes Washington State Center for Court Research, Washington Student Achievement Council, and Department of Social and Health Services Juvenile Rehabilitation, and Children's Administration.

In 2015, GATE efforts have expanded within OSPI to include:

- Partner representation added to the OSPI Data Governance Committee (DSHS, Courts, Washington Student Achievement Council).
- Agency-wide definition and tools to support and evaluate “youth and family engagement.”
- Agency-wide use of program level multi-tiered system of supports model.
- Development of data analytic tools to better support and measure graduation rates, school discipline, and chronic absenteeism.

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Graduation Report:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/LegisGov/2015documents/GradandDropoutStats2015.pdf>

Visit our website for more information on dropout prevention, intervention, and reengagement in Washington: <http://www.k12.wa.us/GATE>.

### **Graduation Success Initiative (GSI)**

This initiative has identified, shared and supported systems-level work to improve graduation rates with increased equity.

The foundation of this work is based on a framework developed through Building Bridges. District grants and existing districts that are experiencing success can articulate their story with data that demonstrates effectiveness. Elements include leadership, data use, multi-tiered system of supports, and school culture.

In 2015 the Graduation Success Initiative:

- Identified districts that are achieving high graduation rates with increased equity for low income youth.
- Identified common elements, processes and systems including leadership, data use, multi-tiered system of supports, and school culture.
- Shared these practices through the GATE website, key conference presentations, and the GATE dropout prevention webinar series.
- Developing a support model to scale the framework of these systems to districts ready to implement. This support model will include district grants and professional learning with direct contact with the identified model districts.

These efforts are in alignment with Building Bridges Workgroup's second recommendation: Build local dropout prevention and intervention systems and practices at every grade level.

For more information about the Graduation Success Initiative:  
[http://www.k12.wa.us/GATE/pubdocs/GradSuccess\\_1page.pdf](http://www.k12.wa.us/GATE/pubdocs/GradSuccess_1page.pdf)

## Conclusion and Next Steps

### Building Bridges Grants

These grants will continue to support building local dropout prevention, intervention, and reengagement systems through the Graduation Success Initiative. These grants will utilize the framework and processes developed through the 2013–15 grantees to support targeted professional learning and system development.

### Open Doors Reengagement

Continue support and expansion of programs focusing on:

- Evaluation process of program accountability and efficacy.
- 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.
- Coordinate with Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR) to better transition, serve and provide opportunity for disengaged youth who reengaged through the JR institution system.

### GATE

Continue collective work with youth and family serving agencies to support local dropout prevention efforts, pre-K through post-graduate.

Implement a collaborative initiative to target chronic absenteeism including:

1. A shared communications plan for state youth and family serving agencies to:

- Raise awareness about the causes and effects of and potential solutions to chronic absenteeism, especially targeting youth and families.
  - Share available support services to address absenteeism before any student misses so much school that it is nearly impossible to catch up
  - Communicate that chronic absenteeism is a problem that affects the entire community.
  - Work together as a community so that everyone feels responsible for successfully addressing underlying causes of chronic absenteeism.
2. Commitment to building capacity across the Washington state government to support local communities in the work of addressing and eliminating chronic absenteeism.
  3. Commitment to creating or enhancing coordinated, cross-sector systems for identifying and supporting students who are, or are at risk of becoming, chronically absent, with the goal of reducing chronic absenteeism

More information on the initiative to target chronic absenteeism at:

[http://www.k12.wa.us/GATE/pubdocs/CountMeIn\\_ChronicAbsenteeism.pdf](http://www.k12.wa.us/GATE/pubdocs/CountMeIn_ChronicAbsenteeism.pdf)

### **Graduation Success Initiative**

Utilizing the identified district frameworks, the draft framework developed through the 2013–2015 Building Bridges grants, and implementation science, this initiative will:

- Develop common framework, and language to support scalability.
- Develop district grants coordinating funding, professional learning and mentorship process with Education Service Districts (ESDs) and identified positive outlier districts.
- Coordinate mutually reinforcing activities and shared measurements with OSPI, ESDs, and school leadership associations WASA, AWSD, WSSDA, WSCA.
- Continue communication of system elements and effective local practices.

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