REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

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

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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 and 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 2015, the rate increased to 78.1 percent. Extended (five-year) graduation rates increased from 78.2 percent for the Class of 2011 to 81.1 percent in the Class of 2015.

But for the Class of 2015 – those students who began as ninth graders in 2011-12 – about one in nine students dropped out (9,511 students). Too many of those students were vulnerable: they live in low-income households or are in foster care or the juvenile justice system or are without stable housing.

A coordinated system to keep all students, especially those who are vulnerable, engaged in school and on track to graduate from high school is essential. The Building Bridges program was established by the Legislature in 2007 to do just that. The program and ongoing 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 21-year-old youth who are not likely to return to high school.

The Building Bridges Workgroup continues to meet annually. Future efforts will focus on coordinating efforts around mental health, dropout early warning system development to increase graduation rates overall, and closing the gap for low income student graduation rates, targeting 9th grade course failure. 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 Substitute House Bill 1573, which established the Building Bridges 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:

- SSHB 1418 (2010) , which established a dropout reengagement system;
- HB 1599 (2011), which established the Pay for Actual Student Success program and which tasked OSPI with creating a standard definition of absence;
- HB 2449 (2016), which adds processes – such as community truancy board – to lessen instances of truancy by; and
- HB 1541 (2016), which tasks the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning with creating the Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol and which stresses alternatives to suspensions.

Since its inception, OSPI, through the Building Bridges program, 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- and family-serving organizations committed to increasing student success.

The following tables 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	56.4%	58.2%
Asian	87.8%	89.5%
Black/ African American	68.8%	73.8%
Hispanic/ Latino	69.6%	72.9%
Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	67%	70.1%
Two or More Races	77.9%	79.9%
White	80.9%	83.7%

Table 2: Disproportionality by Race/Ethnicity

Student Group	Group Graduation Rate	Non-Group Graduation Rate	Difference
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	56.4%	78.4%	22.0%
Asian	87.8%	77.3%	-10.5%
Black/ African American	68.8%	78.6%	9.8%
Hispanic/ Latino	69.6%	80%	10.4%
Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	67%	78.2%	11.2%
Two or More Races	77.9%	78.1%	0.2%
White	80.9%	73.7%	-7.2%

Table 3: Graduation Rates by Student Group

Student Group	4-Year Graduation Rate	5-Year Graduation Rate
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%

Table 4: 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%
Foster	45.1%	1	1

Note:
1. Data for this group/non-group comparison will be added to the analytic tool beginning in 2017.

Update Status

Graduation a Team Effort (GATE) – Shared Outcomes and Vision #1

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

In 2016, GATE efforts focused on:
- Shared communications strategy relative to chronic absenteeism.
- On-going support of the Graduation: A Team Effort (GATE) Advisory Committee and webinar series.
- Formation of a Professional Learning Equity Alliance (PLEA).

The focus of GATE's work in 2016 concentrate on chronic absenteeism. There has been a communication strategy developed to create shared messaging across our agencies. Communications have included tweets, Facebook postings, newspaper articles, as well as trainings and workshops for diverse audiences across the state. This work has proven critical in creating a foundation for the implementation of HB 2449 and the creation of community truancy boards. The following is a link to that work: http://www.k12.wa.us/GATE/Truancy/

GATE Advisory meetings are held quarterly and include a diverse membership. Topics for 2015-16 included post-graduation success, social emotional learning, school-based mental health, and school attendance. The following link is to the webpage that contains past presentations and notes. http://www.k12.wa.us/GATE/AdvisoryMeetings/default.aspx

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, 9th grade course failure, post-graduation enrollment, and graduation. The webinar is 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 districts and community representatives that have experienced success. A list of past webinar recordings, as well as the schedule for 2016-17, is located at the following web address: http://www.k12.wa.us/GATE/WebinarWorkshops.aspx.

To align professional learning efforts system-wide, GATE facilitated the formation of the Professional Learning and Equity Alliance (PLEA). PLEA membership includes representatives from AWSP, WASA, WSSDA, WSCA, WSAC, ESDs, and higher education. Monthly 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 the OSPI equity analytics, jointly sponsored conferences and presentations, and shared communication strategies relative to equity.

Building Bridges Grants/Graduation Equity – Dropout Prevention System #2

The Building Bridges work has provided motivation to apply the newly created OSPI equity data analytic tools. The tools provide districts with information to better support and measure graduation rates, school discipline, and chronic absenteeism. Positive "outliers" are identified through these tools and those "outlier" districts have been recruited to share successful practices addressing these key issues with other districts.

Based on above state average graduation rates, a higher percentage of low income students graduating, and larger district enrollment size, four districts were chosen to work with the Graduation Equity Initiative to identify key practices and processes to help other districts increase graduation rates. District Grantees for 2015–16 were: Franklin Pierce School District (Education Service District 121), Kelso School District (ESD 113), Sunnyside School District (ESD 105), and Spokane School District (ESD 101).

The four district grantees entered into a two-year process to develop a professional development system that defined 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 grant was to build capacity across the state for using a Dropout Early Warning and Intervention System (DEWIS). While these systems are typically meant to identify at-risk students and track appropriate interventions, they should also be used to identify group characteristics. These group characteristics may indicate school or district level problems of practice that are impacting student achievement. Addressing these issues universally at the Tier 1 level, and as a group at the Tier 2 level, will reduce the need for intensive services and have a greater coordinated impact on student achievement than individual interventions.

The grantees also created materials that explain the process and framework that can support further work using data and root cause analysis to drive actions. As a result of

these grants, OSPI entered into a contract with Gonzaga to do action research to raise graduation rates. These districts, along with OSPI and Gonzaga presented a pre-conference day as part of the AWSP/WASA Conference. Over seventy-five individuals from districts across the state attended to learn proven strategies to increase graduation rates, especially for their low income students.

Information on these grants, including and materials developed as part of the work, is located at http://www.k12.wa.us/GATE/GraduationEquity.aspx

One of the key features of a comprehensive dropout prevention system includes a multi-tier system of supports (MTSS). There has been extensive work throughout OSPI to create agency-wide use of a 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. Spotlight documents have been created for attendance and mental health.

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

There has also been an effort to collect resources for districts interested in implementing and sustaining MTSS efforts. There is an opportunity on the webpage to register as an MTSS resource, as well as an opportunity for districts to review the list of potential consultants.

The MTSS webpage can be found at http://www.k12.wa.us/MTSS/default.aspx

Open Doors - Youth Reengagement #3

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. 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 90 districts (4,000 students) 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. For more information, go to: http://www.k12.wa.us/GATE/SupportingStudents/StudentRetrieval.aspx

Conclusion and Next Steps

Building Bridges efforts will continue to promote regular school attendance and the development of comprehensive multi-tier systems of support to assist those students facing substantial barriers to getting to school. An issue tied to chronic absenteeism, as well as school success in general, is behavioral health. We are all cognizant of the problems that our youth and families face in this arena. Through work associated with OPSI's federal Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education) mental health grant, as well as the work attached to HB 1541 and the development and implementation of an Integrated Student Support protocol, we would like your support in strategizing systemic actions to behavioral health (mental health promotion and substance use prevention). Specifically, we would like to form a workgroup to explore resources and barriers to accessing behavioral health supports.

Through the use of OSPI equity analytics, Building Bridges and GATE will continue to align efforts and share what is working across school and community systems through the Advisory Committees, the Professional Learning Equity Alliance (PLEA), and the MTSS Advisory Committee. Specific focus will be given to 9th grade success, and keeping students on track to graduation.

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 opportunity for disengaged youth who reengaged through the juvenile rehabilitation institution system.

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