



The Honorable Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-40002

To the Honorable Governor Inslee,

The Steering Committee of Excellent Schools Now (ESN) respectfully submits this letter regarding the Results Washington draft of measures and indicators for a world-class education. ESN is a statewide coalition of nearly 40 organizations. ESN believes we can and must accelerate career- and college-readiness and success for all young people, especially for low-income students and students of color. ESN seeks to achieve meaningful education reform in Washington state in order to increase student achievement, close the opportunity and achievement gap and prepare all students for college and career.

The quality of our education system is critical to the health and success of Washington and we are pleased to see education as a top priority for this administration. Washingtonians can ill afford to allow the postsecondary developmental education crisis and the opportunity gap to persist. This administration has an opportunity to highlight the specific areas that need improvement in order to focus our actions and our limited resources to improve outcomes for all students.

As Governor Inslee wrote in the Results Washington announcement on Twitter, “We can only improve what we can measure.”

If Washington wants to develop a tool to show the health of the education system and drive system improvements, the right combination of indicators, measures, and goals are critical. We need to think big. Although the Results Washington education measures and indicators are an important start, they should be stronger and more ambitious if we want to make real progress on closing the opportunity gap for our students and our future. Furthermore, we encourage close alignment with existing measurement and accountability efforts by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, State Board of Education, Department of Early Learning, and Student Achievement Council.

Opportunity Gap

The failure to reduce the educational opportunity gap in recent years is one of the most significant issues facing the state. Any plan around education must address the disturbing reality that low-income students and students of color are not offered the same opportunities and are not achieving the same levels of education as their higher-income and white peers. Collecting data on key indicators disaggregated by race and income will provide transparency so that we can see where improving the equality of access or outcomes can improve the educational system. We believe that the following indicators would benefit from further disaggregation:

- Students who have access to high-quality online learning opportunities
- Students attending exemplary or RAD schools
- Percent of students who have access to all required subject areas
- The number of students taking courses to prepare for STEM careers
- Participation in the G.E.T. program
- Access to career, workplace, and other non-traditional learning opportunities

K-12 Access

Limited access to high-quality digital learning options, STEM opportunities, and other academic supports or interventions for struggling students impedes a student's ability to receive a high-quality education. Access for students across the state varies widely with a district's affluence, density, or geographic location influencing the degree and types of academic opportunities that are available to enhance their academic experience. We recommend the following:

- Add an indicator for the percentage of school districts that have access to high-quality online learning.
 - Many rural communities across the state have difficulty in attracting teachers, which may lead to a limited set of course offerings, especially in emerging STEM fields like computer science. We need to prioritize access for all students in all communities having access to high quality online learning opportunities. An indicator that only measures the percent of students will mask the number of school districts in rural Washington that lack access.

Set goals at 100 percent for increasing access to high-quality online learning, dropout prevention programs, academic supports for struggling students, and classes in all subject areas. These indicators are all critical elements of a robust, high-quality, 21st century K-12 education system and every student in Washington should have equal access to them.

- Set a goal to improve persistently low-achieving schools. Just as the state works to increase the number of schools rated exemplary or very good according to the new Washington School Achievement Index, we should also be evaluating how effective the state is at improving the educational prospects of students in our lowest-performing schools.

Postsecondary Access

We recommend the following:

- Include the completion rate of those who are referred to developmental education, not just those who enroll in developmental education, as an indicator. Better understanding of the experiences of those who get referred to developmental education and why they decide to pursue their studies or choose to not enroll in classes will help reduce barriers within the developmental education system.

K-12 Success

Washington students, parents, and businesses deserve a consistent and coherent school improvement and recognition system that is based on demonstrated results. We recommend the following:

- Once the Achievement and Accountability index is implemented, Innovative Schools should be required to achieve an exemplary rating on the Achievement Index in order to maintain that status.

Postsecondary Success

Minority and low-income students are underrepresented across the higher education spectrum, especially at four-year institutions. An all-inclusive postsecondary completion rate does not capture the details necessary to gauge system effectiveness at overcoming the opportunity gap for either two- or four-year institutions.

Although STEM is the fastest growing employment sector, a well-educated citizen understands the big picture and takes a holistic view of our interdependent economy. A variety of credentials in a diverse array of employment sectors are needed to meet employment demands and secure living wage jobs for Washingtonians. Adding indicators for completion in non-STEM fields will allow us to measure the effectiveness of our higher education system as a whole.

We applaud and support Governor Inslee's focus on education. But the Results Washington framework will not live up to its potential unless we use the data to inform thoughtful, aggressive policies to improve outcomes for all Washington's students. Right now, your administration has an opportunity to demonstrate your commitment to data-driven improvements that will help close the opportunity gap and support a strong, well-educated economy for years to come. We are well into the 21st century, and our students deserve a 21st century education system that will prepare them for the jobs of tomorrow.

We look forward to working with you to improve results for all Washingtonians.

Respectfully yours,

The Excellent Schools Now Steering Committee

The Excellent Schools Now Steering Committee is made up of the following five organizations

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