

A+ Washington Progress Report 2014



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Excellent Schools Now (ESN) is a statewide coalition of nearly 40 organizations that 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. **To achieve our vision, in 2010 we crafted an ambitious six-year plan called A+ Washington with five strategies:**

1

Expand Access to High-Quality Pre-Kindergarten through 3rd Grade Education

2

Provide All Students with Access to Excellent Teachers and Leaders

3

Position the State's Students for Career and College Readiness

4

Implement Flexible and Transformative Approaches to K-12 Education

5

Develop Effective Data and Accountability Systems

This update provides an overview of the progress to date and key areas for additional improvement.

1 Expand Access to High-Quality Pre-Kindergarten through 3rd Grade Education

Washington state has made significant progress in improving the quality of, and access to, early learning. Key areas of progress:

- **Addition of ECEAP slots**

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is a comprehensive preschool program funded by Washington state to provide free services and support to low-income children and their families. In 2013–2014, 250 additional Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) slots were added and another 1,350 slots will be added in 2014–2015.

- **Expansion of full-day kindergarten**

In 2013–2014, 44% of kindergarteners were in state-funded FDK (up from 22% the previous year). The ramp-up prioritizes low-income students first. Statewide participation in full-day kindergarten by 2017–2018.

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- **Improved quality of early learning**

Early Achievers, Washington's quality rating and improvement system, was implemented statewide in the summer of 2013. Currently, well over 2,000 providers are participating in the program.

- **Increased use of WaKIDS tool**

The Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) tool is a process for assisting students and their families in the transition to kindergarten, assessing students' strengths, and discussing the characteristics of children's development and learning that will enable them to be successful in school.

- More than 38,000 kids participated in WaKIDS in 2013–2014, up almost 75% (21,811) from the year before. The number of teachers participating in WaKIDS almost doubled from 2012–13 to 2013–14.

Key areas for improvement:

- *Provide state-funded preschool and full-day kindergarten to all families who want it.*
- *Achieve better alignment between early learning and primary grades via curriculum, assessments, professional development, and sharing and use of WaKIDS data.*

2 Provide All Students with Access to Excellent Teachers and Leaders

Though there has been significant progress made in creating a teacher and principal evaluation system, we have only scratched the surface in using that system to drive improved outcomes for kids. Key areas of progress:

- **Creation of a statewide teacher and principal evaluation program (TPEP)**, including use of student growth as one of multiple measures of evaluation, that provides a vehicle for professional development and meaningful feedback.
- **Use of evaluation results must be used as part of personnel decisions as of 2015–2016.**
- **Expansion in tests accepted by the Professional Education Standards Board** for admission into teacher preparation programs.

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- **Encouragement of effective teachers**, including those with National Board certification, to relocate to high-poverty schools, and offer sufficient monetary stipends for their service.
- **Helped protect funding for Beginning Educator Support Teams (BEST)**, a high-quality induction program that helps develop and support new teachers.

Key areas for improvement:

- *Require the use of state assessments, when available, as part of student growth measurements in teacher and principal evaluations.*
- *Attract higher-quality and more diverse candidates into the teaching and principal profession and ensure that newcomers have foundational skills they need to address the needs of their students.*
- *Provide more support and professional development about or on the principal evaluation framework.*
- *Require annual, targeted, evidenced-based, individualized professional development plans for all teachers to support continued growth and effectiveness.*
- *Direct teacher and principal preparation programs to incorporate the skills embedded in TPEP frameworks into their curriculum.*
- *Increase beginning teacher salary to attract new and diverse educators to the profession.*
- *Measure effectiveness of teacher preparation programs through the use of retention rates, student learning gains, and other relevant measures.*

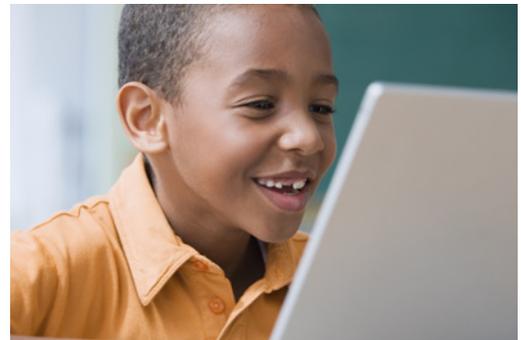
3 Position the State's Students for Career and College Readiness

Significant foundational progress has been made in aligning standards between the K–12 system and postsecondary. However, the heavy lifting of implementation has yet to be done. Key areas of progress:

- **Adoption of the Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards.**

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- **Formation of the Ready Washington Coalition** to help build awareness and support of college- and career-ready learning standards and exams through a public communications campaign.
- **Adoption of the College and Career Ready Diploma.**
- **Passage of a law to ensure that Advanced Placement computer science courses count** as a high school mathematics or science course toward graduation requirements.
- **Expansion of access to Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses** and establishment of CTE course equivalencies to support varied career pathways and increase relevance of coursework for more students.
- **Passage of the Academic Acceleration law**, which encourages districts to implement a policy that automatically enrolls students performing at grade level into advanced courses that can help them earn credits for college. The law provides funding for districts that adopt Academic Acceleration.
- **Increase in funding for the Learning Assistance Program (LAP) by nearly 50%** and mandate that LAP funds to be spent on evidenced-based practices.
- **Creation of the Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) council**, a common definition of expanded learning opportunities, and an extended school year pilot project.



Key areas for improvement:

- *Work with the Expanded Learning Assistance council to help develop a plan that increases access to expanded learning, strengthens school-community partnerships, and adopts quality standards for culturally-responsive, expanded learning opportunities.*

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- *Provide specialized supports to children in challenging family situations, such as homelessness, child protective services, foster care, and poverty.*
- *Support enhanced access to expanded and summer learning opportunities for students and develop systems to identify those in need of additional learning time.*
- *Increase adoption of district-wide academic acceleration policies.*

4 Implement Flexible and Transformative Approaches to K–12 Education

Pockets of transformative practices are happening throughout the state. However, transformative practices have not been taken to scale, nor is there a robust systemic process to identify and replicate promising practices. Key areas of progress:

- **Creation of a Required Action District process**, for persistently low-achieving schools that will help to add accountability and create meaningful change in the school turnaround process.
- **Passage of a public initiative** establishing public charter schools.
- **Creation of a rigorous process**, both for approving charter authorizers and charter schools, with one school district authorizer (Spokane Public Schools) and eight charter schools approved.

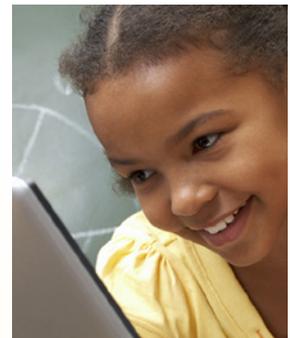
Key areas for improvement:

- *Spotlight district policies based on successful outcomes in model districts and replicate best practices (e.g., Spokane collective impact work, Road Map, Tacoma, TPEP pilot districts, and academic acceleration in Federal Way).*
- *Leverage technology to better assess student needs and provide differentiated instruction.*
- *Provide students with access to online learning opportunities that provide content or instruction otherwise unavailable.*

5 Develop Effective Data and Accountability Systems

Much progress has been made to create a longitudinal data system, but Washington has not leveraged this valuable asset. Data must be more accessible and used to inform instruction and decision-making on a regular and timely basis at all levels of the education system—classroom, school, district, and state. Key areas of progress:

- **Transition as a state from a compliance-based accountability system to a system that requires meaningful change** and improvement in underperforming schools.
- **Creation of a State Achievement Index** that will provide disaggregation for many subgroups and incorporate student growth percentile data.
- **Creation of a data dashboard** by the Washington State Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) for postsecondary outcomes that can provide cross-referenced longitudinal data and postsecondary outcome data disaggregated by demographic group.



Key areas for improvement:

- *Adequately resource the State Achievement Index to provide the necessary data and analyses to fulfill its potential value add to the educational system.*
- *Provide support to districts to enable teachers and principals to look at student growth scores on formative assessments to inform instruction.*
- *Assess Washington's funding formula to ensure adequate funding, transparency, innovation, and flexibility.*

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- *Implement an early warning indicator system that tracks information statewide that identifies, monitors, and supports every student at risk of dropping out.*
- *Require school districts to report information to the state in a standard format on key policies and practices to make performance-related information easier for the public to access and understand, such as salary schedules, TRI (Time, Responsibility, Incentive) pay, benefits, use of professional collaboration time, and transportation costs.*

Please visit www.ExcellentSchoolsNow.org to view the A+ Washington plan and learn more about our efforts to improve public education for all Washington students.