A+ WASHINGTON: A Way Forward for All Students

QUALITY PRE-K
CAREER & COLLEGE READY
DATA & ACCOUNTABILITY
EXCELLENT EDUCATORS
TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES

NOVEMBER 2011
COALITION MEMBERS

★ Alliance for Education
★ ArtsEd Washington
★ Black Collective
★ Black Education Strategy Roundtable
★ Coalition for Equal Education Rights
★ College & Work Ready Agenda
★ College Spark
★ College Success Foundation
★ Communities in Schools of Seattle
★ Executive Council for a Greater Tacoma
★ Invest in Youth
★ King County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
★ League of Education Voters
★ New Futures
★ Pacific Science Center
★ Partnership For Learning
★ Powerful Schools
★ Rainier Scholars
★ Schools Out Washington
★ Seattle BioMed
★ Seattle Breakfast Group
★ Social Ventures Partners
★ Spokane Library Ladies
★ Stand For Children
★ Students for Education Reform – Whitworth
★ Tabor 100
★ Teachers United
★ Technology Access Foundation
★ Technology Alliance
★ WashACE
★ Washington Alliance of Black School Educators
★ Washington Biotechnology & Biomedical Association
★ Washington Coalition for School Libraries and Information Technology
★ Washington Global Health Alliance
★ Washington Roundtable
★ Washington Technology Industry Association
INTRODUCTION

Excellent Schools Now (ESN) is a statewide coalition of 36 organizations spanning a diverse mix of groups and interests. ESN members share a passionate commitment to quality education for all children and for improving Washington’s P-16 education system (pre-kindergarten through college completion). We believe that with the right vision, strategies, public demand, and political will, Washington can create an education system that prepares all students for success in college, work, and life. To achieve this vision, Washington needs a bold and comprehensive plan to change our educational systems.

An Aspirational and Achievable Plan
ESN has crafted aspirational, yet achievable, strategies to spark change in Washington’s P-16 education system, to be implemented over a six-year time period. Our intent is to build a system in which every Washington student has an excellent start, attends an excellent school, is taught by an excellent teacher, and achieves at high levels.

A CALL TO ACTION IN CHALLENGING TIMES
We recognize our state is experiencing a deep and persistent recession, resulting in budget cuts and job losses. People and organizations are challenged by the economy and its implications, yet with such challenges come great opportunities for change.

Washington urgently needs to take action to improve education and eliminate opportunity gaps. These investments will result in a skilled, knowledgeable workforce and new job creation. We need comprehensive and realistic strategies that will prepare all Washington students for the future. We need strategies that will define what our state and the education community can do together to prepare children for school, improve high school graduation rates, send more children to community colleges and universities, and provide the opportunity for all students to achieve their best futures.

We need to move fast and do as much as we can, as quickly as possible. With the support of parents, educators, advocates, and business and community leaders, we can create a future that every child deserves. Our children cannot wait, and neither can their future employers.

BUILDING ON THE WORK ALREADY DONE
Since 2009, Washington legislators passed three key bills that A+ Washington intends to build on. House Bill 2261 established a new definition of “basic education” and a pathway for education reform in the state. It also expanded the school day, established a transparent school funding model, and developed an accountability system. House Bill 2776, passed in 2010, addresses the technical details of HB 2261—specifically the development of a new funding formula around a funding model that sets numeric values for average class sizes and phases in class-size reductions and all-day kindergarten. Also in 2010, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 6696, which calls for the implementation of key provisions and reforms designed to accelerate student learning, improve educator performance, and track college-readiness by developing a robust accountability system and adopting Common Core State Standards.

Many Washington organizations, individuals, and studies have argued for changes to the P-16 education system. There have been calls to improve teaching and learning, particularly around closing the opportunity gap between and among students of color and white students, and between students from places with few
financial and educational resources and students from more affluent places. Similarly, accurate and consistent data systems and analysis have been identified as helping better monitor and hold accountable those responsible for educating our students.

We are realists and we understand the political and fiscal realities of our time. These strategies build on the hard work and policy direction of recent legislatures and the critical policy work already underway. It extends beyond that work to identify specific strategies and phases, including low- or no-cost actions our state can take now to improve educational outcomes. We also identify which recommended strategies will require new legislative authority or funding.

**FUNDING WILL BE REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE OUR VISION & DESIRED OUTCOMES**

Turning this vision into reality and achieving the benchmarks will require adequate state funding, as well as new ways of delivering education to our young people. The Legislature has already provided funding for some of the Strategic Actions; others will require new revenue. For a summary of the range of funding that will be required for statewide implementation of A+ Washington, please see Attachment A.

**IT WILL TAKE THE WHOLE COMMUNITY, WITH CLEAR ROLES FOR EVERYONE**

Making A+ Washington a reality will take everyone’s help – the Legislature, state agencies, school directors and administrators, educators, parents, community members, and students. These strategies focus on the role of state government in creating educational improvement, particularly on legislative policy action, funding, and education agency implementation. Yet we know that school districts and schools are where it all happens – and these recommendations will affect how schools are governed and managed. We also know that change can start at the local level, and we encourage such innovation and the establishment of local examples highlighting successful policies, programs, and practices that can be scaled up at the state level.

**STATEWIDE DIALOGUE**

As a coalition, we know part of our role is to hold a statewide discussion about the steps called for in each strategy. To broaden the input, we will reach out across the state to parents, educators, students, community members, advocates, business leaders, and elected officials.

We would like to stress that A+ Washington represents our best thinking at this time, incorporating and balancing the feedback we’ve received to date. It is our intention that this is a working, living document – though its platform of reform is clearly centered on five broad strategies. We expect the document and diversity of support will become stronger the more we hear and learn from others.

**Educators Are Valued**

ESN greatly values our educator workforce. Teachers, administrators, and parents are the life blood of our educational system. In crafting these strategies, we have drawn on feedback from many educators and policymakers as well as our respectful and nuanced understanding of the complex issues and challenges facing our education system and the people who work in it.

**Defining Responsibilities**

In the specific strategies outlined, ESN has identified who the responsible entities are for achieving successful outcomes. By responsible entity, we mean the lead entity that must take initial action, particularly at the state level, to make these changes happen. ESN also recognizes that in fully implementing these actions, all levels—from the Legislature and state agencies to school districts and school boards to educators, parents, and students—will need to be involved if we are to succeed.
OUR VISION: CAREER AND COLLEGE SUCCESS FOR ALL

Washington can and must accelerate career and college readiness and success for all young people, especially for low-income students and students of color.

ACTION STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE VISION

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

Strategy #2: Provide All Students with Access to Excellent Teachers and Leaders

Strategy #3: Position the State’s Students for Career and College Readiness

Strategy #4: Implement Flexible and Transformative Approaches to K–12 Education

Strategy #5: Develop Effective Data and Accountability Systems

OUTCOMES: MEASURING OUR RESULTS

Outcome #1: Eliminate the Opportunity Gap Among All Student Groups

Outcome #2: All Children Will Enter Kindergarten Prepared for Success in School and Life

Outcome #3: All Students Will Graduate Career– and College–Ready

Outcome #4: All Students Will Be Internationally Competitive in Math and Science Performance, with Increased STEM Degree Achievement

Outcome #5: All Students Will Attain Living-Wage Certificates, Associate’s Degrees, Industry Certificates, or Bachelor’s Degrees
STRATEGY #1

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

Investment in early education can yield powerful results for children, in short term performance and in longer term educational success. Major research studies have shown that children who participate in high-quality, aligned pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade learning have lower rates of special education referral and fewer behavioral issues, together with higher overall school attendance, improved test scores, higher graduation and college participation rates, and lower rates of incarceration. By investing in early education, we will focus more on prevention and acceleration than on intervention and remediation, and help children become significantly more successful in their adult lives.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

A. Expand Access to Quality Pre-Kindergarten.
Implement and fund voluntary universal pre-kindergarten, beginning with those most at-risk of academic failure.

- **2012–14** Expand access to high-quality pre-kindergarten for all children and families who want it.
- **2012–14** Align the expansion of pre-kindergarten with the implementation of full-day kindergarten.

**Responsible Entity:** Legislature

B. Expand Access to Full-Day Kindergarten.
Increase the number of children enrolled in full-day kindergarten.

- **2012–14** Accelerate expansion of funding for full-day kindergarten, beginning with low-income students and those who are most at risk of academic failure.

**Responsible Entity:** Legislature

A+ Example: The Bremerton School District Model

Bremerton’s PreK–3 Early Childhood Care and Education Initiative, launched in 2006, has goals to increase the number of children entering kindergarten with early literacy skills and to decrease the number of students with learning disabilities or differences associated with reading.

So far, Bremerton has seen great results. In 2001, only 4% of Bremerton students entered kindergarten knowing the alphabet. Now more than 65% of children start kindergarten knowing their letters, and more than 90% are consistently reading at benchmark levels by the end of kindergarten.
A+ Example: Keystone STARS

Keystone STARS is an initiative to measure, improve, support, and recognize the continuous quality improvement efforts of early learning programs in Pennsylvania.

The system utilizes research-based best practices to promote quality early learning environments and positive child outcomes. The standards for each level address staff qualifications and professional development, the early learning program or curriculum, partnerships with family and community, and leadership and management. The ratings are fully public and help families make informed decisions about what option is best for their child.

C. **Support Funding and Implementation of an Aligned PreK–3rd Grade System.** Improve transitions between pre-kindergarten and primary grades to support long-term educational success for children.

**2012–14** Align early learning provider and primary grade curriculum, assessments, teacher training, and professional development.

**Responsible Entities:** Legislature; Department of Early Learning; Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

D. **Complete Implementation of the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) Process.** Support successful transitions for children from pre-kindergarten to kindergarten classrooms.

**2014–16** Expand use of the state’s WaKIDS kindergarten transition process for all entering kindergarteners in all districts.

**2014–16** Establish routine WaKIDS data sharing between early learning providers, school districts, and parents.

**Responsible Entities:** Legislature; Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; Department of Early Learning

E. **Implement the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Statewide.** Create a system to empower parents to make informed choices about early education opportunities for their children.

**2014–16** Develop and implement QRIS to help drive and support quality improvement in licensed early learning settings across the state and to help parents make informed choices about educational options.

**Responsible Entities:** Legislature; Department of Early Learning
STRATEGY #2

Provide All Students with Access to Excellent Teachers and Leaders

Washington can improve student outcomes by improving the quality of instruction in classrooms, particularly for the state’s low-income students and students of color. Effective educators are the key to student success and we need to support them to be their very best. We need strong systems and practices for attracting, training, supporting, assigning, and compensating educators. And, we need to use data to inform and improve instruction in our classrooms.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

A. Implement a Statewide Performance Evaluation System for Educators. Complete the statewide, four-tier evaluation system for teachers and principals, based on the work of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction’s (OSPI) evaluation pilot projects and the Models of Equity and Excellence through Rapid Improvement and Turnaround (MERIT) Schools’ evaluation processes.

- **2012–14** Develop and implement a common evaluation framework with multiple measures of educator effectiveness, including state- and locally-decided student growth measures, state summative measures in tested subjects, and student surveys.

- **2012–14** Expand the definition of educator effectiveness to explicitly include family engagement, cultural competency, and improvement based on school performance goals.

- **2012–14** Identify appropriate measures in untested subjects and grades, and allow individual teachers to collaborate with administrators to identify student learning objectives.

**Responsible Entities:** Legislature; Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

B. Use an Improved Evaluation System for Principals as the Basis for Professional Development and Performance Decisions. Expand professional development opportunities for principals that are informed, in part, by the evaluation framework to support increased principal effectiveness.

- **2012–14** Provide differentiated and targeted professional development and training to increase principals’ effectiveness, using the principal evaluation as a guide.

- **2012–14** Build successful induction programs with rigorously selected and trained mentors for principals in their first three years of practice, beginning with the lowest-performing schools.

- **2014–16** Broaden the pipeline of effective and diverse principal candidates by developing alternative pathways into the principalship, including non-university-based pathways.

- **2016–18** Provide training to prospective or current principals as school turnaround specialists and assign them to work in Washington’s lowest-performing schools.

**Responsible Entities:** Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; Professional Educator Standards Board
C. **Use an Improved Evaluation System for Teachers as the Basis for Professional Development and Performance Decisions.** Improve the available professional development avenues for teachers while utilizing the evaluation framework to support increased teacher effectiveness.

- **2012–14** Require annual, targeted, evidence-based, individualized professional development plans for all teachers to support continued growth and effectiveness.
- **2012–14** Scale successful induction programs, beginning with the lowest-performing schools, with rigorously selected and trained mentors for teachers in their first three years of practice.
- **2014–16** Offer schools additional funding to enable more collaboration, planning time, and job-embedded professional development.
- **2016–18** Award continuing contracts to teachers who earn at least three consecutive ratings of effective or higher within five years, based on the new evaluation system.
- **2016–18** Create a fair and expedited process to dismiss educators rated ineffective if they have not improved after receiving targeted, individualized, intensive professional development, coaching, and support.
- **2016–18** Allow cause for educator dismissal to be lack of available, applicable positions.

**Responsible Entities:** Legislature; Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

D. **Improve Teacher Preparation Program Recruitment and Effectiveness.** Attract additional high-quality, diverse candidates to the teaching profession, and increase alignment between preparation and professional practice.

- **2012–14** Develop recruitment approaches to attract increasing numbers of high-caliber teachers of color to the profession.
- **2012–14** Direct teacher and principal preparation institutions to incorporate the new evaluation framework into their curriculum.
- **2012–14** Measure the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs through the use of retention rates, student learning gains, and other measures established by Washington’s Basic Education Reform Law.
- **2014–16** Recruit more math and science undergraduates to concurrently earn teaching credentials, together with subject matter and pedagogy expertise, in mathematics and science.
- **2014–16** Require elementary teacher candidates to demonstrate increased competencies in math and science content and teaching methods, and the use of technology in the classroom.
- **2014–16** Encourage more teachers to obtain an English Language Learners (ELL) endorsement.

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**A+ Example: UTeach**

Founded at the University of Texas at Austin in 1997, UTeach addresses the shortage of highly qualified secondary teachers in science and mathematics by allowing undergraduates to earn a Bachelors of Science in a math or science content field along with their teaching certificate. UTeach also offers certification to degree holders and induction support to UTeach graduates. The program has doubled the number of math majors being certified to teach, and 80% of graduates are still teaching after five years in the classroom. More than two dozen universities currently offer some form of the program, and the UTeach Institute predicts that graduates of these programs will teach more than 3.5 million secondary students across the nation by 2019.
Create a public-private partnership to design new residency-based preparation programs to train teachers to succeed in low-performing schools, based on successful models in other cities and states.

**Responsible Entity:** Professional Educator Standards Board

**E. Redesign the State’s Teacher Compensation System.** Building on the work of the Compensation Technical Working Group, implement a new educator compensation system, implement an educator compensation model that emphasizes responsibilities, skills, effectiveness, and assignments.

Transition from our current credit-based system to an outcomes-based system that uses multiple measures to gauge a teacher’s contribution to the school community and by which increases to their base salary are determined.

Enable effective educators to advance in the profession without leaving the classroom or entering administration through meaningful roles in instructional leadership via the career ladder.

Increase beginning teachers’ salaries to make the profession more appealing to new and diverse candidates.

**Responsible Entity:** Legislature

**F. Implement New Approaches to Educator Staffing.** Implement innovative and performance-based approaches that encourage, support, and leverage excellent educators.

Enable innovative staffing arrangements that allow districts to hire college instructors or industry experts part-time, especially in math and science.

Enable school and district leaders to retain, transfer, and place teachers based, in part, on performance and skills match.

Prioritize teacher effectiveness over years of service in the profession.

Provide opportunities for districts to restructure the role of the principal to separate out business management functions in larger schools.

Identify and encourage effective teachers, including those with National Board certification, to relocate to high-poverty schools, and offer sufficient monetary stipends for their service.

Help schools extend the reach and impact of effective teachers by providing funding for strategic staffing arrangements, creative instructional groupings, job redesign, and use of technology.

**Responsible Entities:** Legislature; Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

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**A+ Example: Strategic Staffing**

The Charlotte–Mecklenburg Schools’ Strategic Staffing Initiative uses of effectiveness data and strategic staffing to create a coherent, systemic approach to school turnarounds, and is seeing student achievement gains as a result. The district uses educator effectiveness data to identify top talent and recruit them to turnaround failing schools with financial and other professional incentives. Critical components include a transformational leader, high-capacity teams of teachers who utilize appropriate data, the prioritization of core academics and individualized interventions, and resources and central support to implement the turnaround vision.
Position the State’s Students for Career and College Readiness

Excellent schools have a culture of high expectations that is rooted in the belief that all children can achieve at high levels. It means that every student should be enrolled and succeeding in college- and career-prep coursework and that schools and communities will provide the supports needed for students to be successful.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

A. Raise Expectations and Standards to Achieve Higher Rates of High School Graduation. Move to a standards-based education system for instruction, assessment, and grading that allows students to move at their own pace.

2012–14 Align high school exit and post-secondary entrance requirements and fund an aggressive implementation phase-in plan.

2012–14 Enroll middle and high school students in a default college- and career-preparatory course of study, including four years of math and science in high school, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Cambridge, Running Start, and Tech Prep.

2012–14 Implement Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English standards, and the Next Generation Science standards, and provide professional development on the new standards for educators statewide.

2012–14 Support district use of aligned and rigorous instructional materials, including online materials and software, and professional development; especially in math and science.

A+ Example: Federal Way’s Academic Acceleration

Starting in 2010, Federal Way Public Schools began automatically enrolling its 6–12 grade students who met State standards in their school’s advanced academic programs. All students who pass standardized tests are enrolled unless they opt out with parent permission. As a result, the number of students enrolled in advanced courses has increased dramatically—72% of 11th graders and 63% of 12th graders took at least one advanced course.

The policy was established to help close the opportunity gap: prior to this policy, 80% of students met proficiency on State exams, but only 30% were signing up for the advanced programs, with advanced programs having traditionally served predominantly White and Asian students. Automatic enrollment ensures the demographic of students within the advanced programs is the same as it is in the rest of the district. The policy was implemented without any increase in funding and in a district with approximately 122 first languages spoken.
A+ Example: Everett’s Success Coordinators

Starting in 2003, Everett Public Schools implemented a program of hiring “success coordinators” (at a cost of approximately $35,000 each) who are tasked with tracking students who are at-risk of dropping out, or who have dropped out, and relentlessly pressing them to get to school and do their work. The result is that over seven years, the graduation rate in Everett Public Schools increased by 30%.

B. Increase Access to and Completion of Post–Secondary Pathways. Provide all students with the opportunity and support they need to earn advanced degrees necessary for tomorrow’s workforce.

2012–14 Set post-secondary completion goals and related performance funding methods for each campus and the state as a whole, using a common framework endorsed by the National Governors Association.

2014–16 Remove policy and financial barriers that create disincentives for K-12 and community and technical colleges to work together on dual enrollment programs, such as Running Start, Tech Prep, and College in the High School.

2014–16 Increase career and technical education (CTE) opportunities to enable students to exit high-school with a workforce credential, especially in STEM fields.

2016–18 Provide incentives for low-income students and students of color to participate in proven models that help students earn a high school diploma and an associate’s degree in five years.

Responsible Entities: Legislature; School Districts; Higher Education Coordinating Board; State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

C. Engage Parents, Families, and Community Partners in Supporting Students with Greatest Needs. Partner with families and the community to meet the needs of all students.

2012–14 Transition to systemic and integrated approaches to family engagement that focus on student achievement and school performance, and closing the opportunity gap.

2012–14 Develop a state school-family partnership guide that includes sample best practices, standards, policies, and strategies; performance assessment tools; parent, student, and teacher surveys; goals; and evaluation systems for schools.

2012–14 Encourage schools to partner with community-based organizations to provide culturally appropriate before- and after-school programs for English Language Learners.

2012–14 Provide specialized supports for children in challenging family situations, such as homelessness, child protective services, foster care, and poverty.

2012–14 Establish common definitions and outcomes for high-quality Expanded Learning Opportunity (ELO) programs that align with K-12 standards.
Encourage schools to partner with community-based organizations to provide high-quality afterschool and youth development programs, including ELO programs, as innovative out of school time strategies.

Support enhanced access to extended and summer learning for students and develop systems to identify those in need of additional learning time.

**Responsible Entities:** *Legislature; School Districts; Community-Based Organizations*

**D. Provide Students with Increased Opportunities for Academic Support Services.** Expand schools’ capacity to provide the supports students need to meet high academic standards.

- **2014–16** Build capacity within the P-8 system to accelerate English language mastery.
- **2014–16** Encourage schools to adopt evidence-based student support strategies, such as Navigation 101; Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID); Mathematics Engineering and Science Achievement (MESA); Response to Intervention Models (Los Angeles); Strive (Atlanta, Cincinnati, Portland, San Francisco, New York City); and partnerships with Communities in Schools.
- **2016–18** Provide schools with competitive, flexible funds for student academic supports and wraparound services. Funds could be used for expanding home visitation services to at-risk families, promoting and supporting family involvement, expanding middle and high school guidance counseling programs, supporting coordinated school health programs, and other such services.

**Responsible Entities:** *Legislature; School Districts; Community-Based Organizations*
STRATEGY #4

Implement Flexible and Transformative Approaches to K-12 Education

School leaders need flexibility to staff buildings and to create instructional models that best fit their students, while being held accountable for results. This flexibility includes opportunities to offer a longer school day/year when needed, to offer instruction through a variety of methods, to exert greater control over budget decisions, and to use transparent accountability systems that identify strengths and areas in need of improvement.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

A. Replicate Lessons Learned from Quality Public School Models Nationally and in the State.
Adopt successful school models and innovative approaches that increase student learning and help close opportunity gaps.

2012–14 Allow educators to build high-performing school cultures by allowing principals to make staffing decisions, including hiring and firing, based on performance, school needs, and district priorities.

2014–16 Encourage districts to strategically vary class sizes based on teacher effectiveness, class content, differentiated student grouping, and other factors.

2014–16 Use technology to better assess student needs and develop differentiated instruction, and provide students with access to online learning opportunities that provide content or instruction otherwise unavailable.

2016–18 Encourage districts to innovate in structuring the school year and day by moving to a year-round calendar, and increasing instructional and collaborative planning time.

A+ Example: Rocketship Education
Rocketship Education, founded in the San Francisco Bay Area in 2007, uses a hybrid model of education to produce breakthrough results. Teachers at Rocketship engage in whole class instruction, but also use a variety of supports including online education, in-house tutors, and real-time evaluation of student achievement in order to create an inclusive, yet individualized learning experience. Rocketship’s hybrid model (sometimes referred to as “blended learning”) has been lauded nationally for its innovative uses of limited resources.

Responsible Entities: Legislature; School Districts

Examine high-quality public charter school models that are successfully closing opportunity gaps and preparing students for college and careers.

2012–14 Engage in a statewide conversation about the role and potential for high-quality public charter schools.
Identify and consider successful models for legislation to enable high-quality public charter schools in the State.

**Responsible Entity:** Legislature

**C. Exercise the State’s Power to Intervene in the Lowest-Performing Schools.** Place chronically failing schools under state authority into Transformation Zones, which supervise the improvement efforts of these schools.

- **2012–14** Identify and consider successful models for legislation to enable high-quality public charter schools in the State.

**Responsible Entity:** Legislature

- **2014–16** Provide funding for Transformation Zone schools to implement innovative reforms, such as strategic staffing, longer school days, and technology-based learning.

- **2014–16** Design Transformation Zones to attract the best educators and to provide them the flexibility and resources to be successful. Attract high-performing principals to move to Transformation Zone schools through increased autonomy and flexibility to manage budget, time, curriculum, and hiring, assigning, reassigning, and dismissing of building staff.

- **2014–16** Contract management of low-performing schools to proven learning management organizations such as the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), Green Dot, Achievement First, Mastery, or Aspire rather than direct state management. Require the use of performance contracts and revoke contracts if the managers fail to meet them.

- **2014–16** Enable Transformation Zone schools to renegotiate collective bargaining agreements and enable greater flexibility in hiring, placement, and dismissal processes.

**Responsible Entities:** Legislature; School Districts; State Board of Education

**D. Provide Support to Districts to Improve Teaching and Learning.** Provide the necessary supports, incentives, and technical assistance to empower superintendents and district administrators to transform central offices from their historical compliance role into organizations leading the improvement of student learning.

- **2012–14** Set guidelines for district policies based on successful outcomes in model districts and utilize emerging best-practices.

- **2014–16** Provide education, training, research, and technical assistance for central office transformations.

- **2014–16** Provide funding for districts to develop and launch central office transformation plans.

**Responsible Entities:** Legislature; School Districts

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**A+ Example: New Orleans Recovery School District**

The Recovery School District, established by the Louisiana Legislature in 2003, is a special statewide school district. Schools fall under the district’s purview when they are rated as failing for at least four consecutive years. On entering the Recovery School District, schools become public charter schools with a strong focus on recruiting high-quality teachers and leaders and clear accountability measures. Principals can set their own budgets and school boards consist of community members overseeing the schools. While the Recovery School District does monitor schools, it does not tell parents and teachers how they should educate their children.
Develop Effective Data and Accountability Systems

It’s a truism that what gets measured gets managed. Washington needs improved data systems that integrate early learning, K-12, higher education, and workforce data, as well as new approaches to effectively communicate those results to educators, parents, and the community. New methods and tools are also needed to hold schools accountable for student achievement, especially in low performing schools.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

A. Develop Aligned Data Systems to Inform and Improve Instruction and Provide for Public Reporting. Finish the development of a comprehensive statewide data system.

- **2014–16** Continue the development of a P-20 longitudinal data system that ties together early learning, K-12, higher education, and workforce data, using federal grant funding Washington State received. Create common structures and protocols to analyze, distribute, and coordinate data usage.

- **2014–16** Implement the remaining seven of the ten state actions recommended by the Data Quality Campaign with existing federal funding.

**Responsible Entities:** Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; Education Research & Data Center

A+ Example: Colorado’s SchoolView

Public transparency and reporting of education statistics is important. Making information easy-to-use means that families and the general public will be better able to understand how their local schools are performing — and learn what questions they should ask.

In Colorado, the Department of Education launched SchoolView, an interactive, user-friendly web tool the public can use to view education statistics and gauge school improvement. SchoolView helps the public understand individual school growth on achievement tests, as opposed to absolute performance from year to year. Furthermore, anyone can create custom charts to track growth based on the state’s assessments.

B. Provide Data to Educators to Help Improve Instruction. Use data to drive decisions, identify and scale successful programs, and intervene with students at-risk of dropping out.

- **2012–14** Develop and implement a fair and reliable statewide student growth model that allows educators to compare student learning gains, disaggregated by individual classrooms, schools, and districts.

- **2012–14** Disaggregate data categories to more accurately reflect the state’s population.

- **2012–14** Share post-secondary student remediation information with K-12 districts to allow educators to identify course-taking patterns, student supports, and other factors that lead to inadequate preparation for post-secondary education.
Implement an early warning indicator system that tracks information statewide, starting in middle school, and identifies, monitors, and supports every student at risk of dropping out.

**Responsible Entities:** Legislature; School Districts; Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; Higher Education Coordinating Board; State Board of Education; State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

**C. Develop Data Dashboards and Community Reports on Student and School Performance.**
Develop data platforms that display school and district performance in an accessible format and can be provided to educators, parents, and the community in a timely manner.

- **2014–16** Establish data dashboard for educators and the public that are transparent, readily available, and include real-time data that is easy to understand.
- **2014–16** 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 locally-negotiated salary allocation schedules, use of Time, Responsibility, and Incentive (TRI) days and benefits programs, use of professional collaboration time, and transportation costs.

**Responsible Entities:** State Board of Education; Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

**D. Develop School Accountability Processes and Indices.** Establish expectations and benchmarks for student learning, and determine whether districts are on track to meet them.

- **2014–16** Hold middle and high schools accountable for meeting minimum proficiency standards by phasing-in accountability for grade-level competencies that lead to college- and career-readiness for each student.
- **2014–16** Develop a standards-based accountability index that measures college and career readiness for all schools, and is transparent and easily accessible to the public. Incorporate career- and college-readiness indicators and ensure that the accountability index evaluates the achievement gains and student growth of low-income students and students of color. Publish community college and four-year college remediation rates for each high school.
- **2016–18** Hold all schools accountable for successful turn-around efforts, especially persistently low-achieving schools that fail to improve as Transformation Zone schools.

**Responsible Entity:** State Board of Education

**E. Analyze State Spending and Funding.** Assess Washington’s finance system to ensure equity and adequacy.

- **2012–14** Analyze current state spending on basic education and categorical programs to identify efficiencies, and redirect savings to increase productivity.
- **2012–14** Assess Washington’s funding formula to ensure adequate funding, transparency, innovation, and flexibility.

**Responsible Entity:** Legislature
We envision five major outcomes for A+ Washington, with benchmarks to measure progress:

**Outcome #1: Eliminate the Opportunity Gap Among All Student Groups**

**Benchmarks**

★ Reductions in the mean score gap on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) between White and African American students, White and Latino students, White and Native American students, and White and Asian students on 4th grade math, 8th grade math, 4th grade reading, and 8th grade reading.

★ Reductions in dropout rates among all student racial/ethnic, income, special education, and English Language Learner subgroups.

★ Reductions in the disproportionate representation of students of color and low-income students among students classified for special education services and/or suspended from school.

★ Increases in Advanced Placement exam participation and Level 3 or higher passing rates among all student racial/ethnic, income, special education, and English Language Learner subgroups.

★ Increases in the overall four-year graduation rate for all student racial/ethnic, income, special education, and English Language Learner subgroups.

**What is the Opportunity Gap?**

Opportunity gap refers to the disparity in academic performance between groups of students. The opportunity gap shows up in grades, standardized-test scores, course selection, dropout rates, and college-completion rates. The gap is created by inequitable access to quality schools, educators, and educational programs as well as the inequitable allocation of resources across communities.

Building excellent schools is the strongest avenue to closing the opportunity gap and ensuring all students, especially students of color and students from low-income families, succeed.

**Outcome #2: All Children Will Enter Kindergarten Prepared for Success in School and Life**

**Benchmarks**

★ Increases in the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in pre-kindergarten.

★ Increases in the percentage of public school kindergarten students participating in full-day kindergarten.

★ Increases in the percentage of public school kindergarten students entering school kindergarten ready.

★ Increases in students who are meeting or exceeding grade level reading and numeracy standards by third grade.
Outcome #3: All Students Will Graduate High School Career- and College-Ready

**Benchmarks**

★ Increases in the number of educators earning high marks on the four-tier evaluation system.
★ Increases in students performing at standard; on all tested state, national, and international subjects; at all tested grade levels; and in all schools.
★ Increases in high school juniors’ and seniors’ participation and performance in externally validated career and college ready programs including: dual credit, career and technical education, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Cambridge International Education.
★ Increases in students enrolled as full status college freshmen in non-remedial credit bearing courses at two- and four-year colleges.
★ Increase Washington’s career- and college-ready high school graduation rate to be in the top 10 states in the nation.

Outcome #4: All Students Will Be Internationally Competitive in Math and Science Performance with Increased STEM Degree Achievement

**Benchmarks**

★ Increases in number of students at two-year colleges, technical colleges, industry-validated certificate programs, and four-year colleges and universities earning STEM degrees.
★ Increases in K-12 students taught by teachers with appropriate mathematics and science certification and endorsements, and STEM training or experience.
★ Increases in the number of educators employed in Washington’s school systems who are among the top 10% of all mathematics and science college graduates.
★ Increases in Washington State’s math and science performance ranking to be among the top 10 states, with student performance increasing in mathematics at grades 4 and 8, in science at grade 5, and in Algebra I by students’ freshman year in high school.

Outcome #5: All Students Will Attain Living-Wage Certificates, Associate’s Degrees, Industry Certificates, or Bachelor’s Degrees

**Benchmarks**

★ Increases in number of students going to post-secondary education within one year of high school graduation.
★ Increases in two-year college, technical college, industry-validated certificate program, and four-year college and university completion rates.
★ Increases in the first to second year retention rate in Washington’s four-year colleges.
★ Increases in the three-year associate’s degree graduation rate.
★ Increases in Washington State’s bachelor’s degrees awarded per capita to be among the top 10 states.
Washington State has supported various studies and task forces that have greatly informed our work. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the following studies and reports for their impact and influence on A+ Washington: A Way Forward for All Students. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list; reports and studies from other states and research organizations were also considered.

- Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (created by Washington Legislature), *Synthesis of the 2008 Recommendations to Address the Academic Achievement Gap*, 2009.
- Advisory Committee and the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (created by Washington Legislature), *A Plan to Close the Achievement Gap for African American Students*, 2008.
While the recommendations of *A+ Washington: A Way Forward for All Students* are those of its authors alone, we would like to thank the many educators and community members who reviewed this document and provided detailed feedback. This does not constitute an endorsement of A+ Washington. They include:

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Methodology

The cost estimates contained in this proposal are based on a variety of sources, including historical data and forecasts from state, federal, and institutional sources; research studies and evaluation reports; and assumptions we developed with the aid of experts in the field. All data sources and assumptions are cited in the comments contained in the detailed strategy worksheets. Depending on the nature of the reform, estimates are based on the number of districts, schools, teachers, or students, or may be presented as a fixed cost. Some reforms are phased in over time.

The forecasted number of students is based on the Washington K-12 Long Range Projection (unofficial), updated November 2010 (Washington State Caseload Forecast Council, http://www.cfc.wa.gov/publicEducation/k-12LongRange.htm). The number of teacher, principals, and schools increase in differing proportions to the number of students in the long-range projection. The number of school districts remains constant.

In general, costs are inflated based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Cost Index, although some are inflated based on the Consumer Price Index.