



2015 Policy Priorities

Our Vision

Excellent Schools Now (ESN) is a growing statewide coalition of 40 organizations that believes we can and must accelerate college and career readiness and success for all young people, especially for our lowest performing and most vulnerable student populations.

Our Role as Education Advocates

Each year, the ESN coalition develops policy priorities that align with our vision, mission, and A+ Washington plan. These policy priorities guide our advocacy and implementation work so we can help ensure all children access and attend high-quality public schools with effective educators.

Our Mission

To achieve meaningful education reform in Washington state that increases student achievement, closes the opportunity and achievement gap, and prepares all students to be college- and career-ready.



2015 Legislative Session: A Look Forward

We understand the political and fiscal complexities of our time. The 2015 legislative session will be one of the most challenging in recent state history as lawmakers face competing and difficult policy and budget decisions, most notably funding education under the *McCleary* decision.

Legislators are compelled to not only identify opportunities to increase resources to schools, but to also ensure that education funding and policies help increase student achievement, particularly for children who are struggling with barriers to success.

We will urge lawmakers to support high-quality implementation of, and build upon, the education reform policies that were signed into state law in recent years. The 2015 legislative session provides a rare opportunity to greatly improve the quality of education through priorities that help students start school ready to learn and be prepared for success in college, work, and life following high school.

Our 2015 Policy Priorities

1. Advance state education policies that prepare all students to graduate college- and career-ready.
2. Ensure that all students have access to effective teachers and leaders.
3. Increase kindergarten readiness with an integrated high-quality care and early learning system.
4. Close opportunity gaps for all students by supporting effective and innovative approaches to education.

2015 Excellent Schools Now Policy Priorities: A Detailed Overview

- 1. Advance state education policies that prepare all students to graduate college- and career-ready.**
 - a. Ensure that increases in education funding are equitably and adequately invested in evidenced-based strategies that improve student access and outcomes.
 - b. Create a statewide Special Education Task Force that examines barriers, disproportionality, and opportunity gaps in special education, and provides recommendations on how to close opportunity gaps for all students.
 - c. Prepare students for college, work, and life by adopting K-12 social, emotional, and behavioral health skills and standards that are part of the comprehensive education system.
 - d. Defend and support key education laws and initiatives:
 - College and Career Ready Diploma
 - Common Core State Standards
 - Smarter Balanced exams that are aligned to college- and career-ready expectations
 - High School and Beyond Plans
 - Academic Acceleration
 - Next Generation Science Standards
 - STEM Initiatives

- 2. Ensure that all students have access to effective teachers and leaders.**
 - a. Require student test scores to count as one factor among many in measuring student growth in teacher and principal evaluations in order to restore Washington State’s federal No Child Left Behind waiver.
 - b. Increase student access to effective teachers and leaders through a shared definition of high-quality professional learning.

- 3. Increase kindergarten readiness with an integrated high-quality early care and learning system.**
 - a. Pass an Early Start Act that improves continuity of childcare, sustains and grows Early Achievers, honors parent choice, supports culturally relevant training for providers, and helps the childcare and early learning workforce in reaching higher levels of quality.

- 4. Close opportunity gaps for all students by supporting effective and innovative approaches to education.**
 - a. Improve portability of each student’s academic profile so that school staff have secure and timely access to key information needed to provide each student with effective instruction and personalized supports.
 - b. Gain a better understanding of student assets and challenges, and provide more effective and targeted interventions accordingly, through more disaggregated student data categories.
 - c. Protect and strengthen key laws and initiatives around:
 - Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO)
 - Summer learning loss
 - Public charter schools
 - Student discipline