



ESN 2018 Priorities

The Excellent Schools Now (ESN) Coalition has set goals that by 2030, 100 percent of students will graduate from high school in five years and 70 percent of Washington students will earn a post-secondary degree or credential.

In order to meet those goals, the state, districts, and schools must significantly increase efforts to support students to close opportunity and achievement gaps. ESN is committed to ensuring the investments made in our educational system improve outcomes for our systemically underserved students, particularly students experiencing poverty, students of color, English learners, students with disabilities, students in foster care, and students experiencing homelessness—creating a system that is transparent and accountable at every level.

We will work during the 2018 legislative session to provide quality educational opportunities to every student across the educational continuum, from Pre-K to postsecondary.

Transparency and Accountability

ESN believes that our system improves only when everyone has the information they need to fully participate. In order to hold every level of our educational system accountable for student success, families and community members, as well as administrators, policymakers, and advocates, must have meaningful access to data and information on resources and student outcomes. ESN supports policy changes that increase access to comparable spending data from districts and schools; spending data on special programs, such as the Learning Assistance Program (LAP) and Special Education; information on allocation structures within districts; and student outcome data. This information will allow stakeholders to determine where new state investments are targeted and if our system is effectively meeting student needs—and push for change.

High-Quality Early Learning

Every child deserves the opportunity to succeed in school and in life. An early and great start for children promises more positive outcomes for students, stronger families, and a healthier economy for all of us. Preserve Washington's commitment to high-quality early learning, a strategy proven to help kids thrive. A range of top quality child care, family care and preschool options must be available to all families including increasing Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP) slots and home visiting. Additionally, professional development opportunities must be accessible to the thousands of early learning and child care professionals across the state.

Support the Whole Child

Students come to school with a variety of strengths, challenges, and untapped potential that will help or hinder their academic achievement. Issues relating to mental health, physical health, a sense of belonging—and more—often go unaddressed and can impact a student's academic success. Additionally, kids only spend 20% of their waking hours in school, so

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providing fun and engaging avenues to learn outside of the classroom is critical to developing the whole child. In recognizing the need to support full student growth and potential, a strong integrated system of supports needs to be in place to knock down barriers and propel students to success. ESN supports legislative efforts to support students including increasing LAP funding and removing the 5% community cap on partnering with community based organizations; access to high-quality Expanded Learning Opportunities after school and in the summer; staff professional development related to trauma and social emotional learning; access to mental and physical health services; and adding additional support staff such as social workers, nurses, and counselors.

K-12 College and Career Readiness

ESN is committed to ensuring that every Washington student graduates from high school with a meaningful diploma that prepares them for college and career. Currently, Washington ranks 40th in the nation for high school graduation rates. Of students who do finish high school, 40% graduate with no plan to attend a two- or four-year college. ESN supports legislation that will increase graduation rates through early warning data and intervention systems, which utilize student data to identify students at risk of dropping out and provide them the academic and nonacademic supports they need to graduate. Additionally, ESN supports expanding dual credit opportunities through academic acceleration, which over 50 districts have adopted since 2013. Academic acceleration has been shown to increase enrollment in advanced programs such as AP, IB, and Running Start, particularly for students of color who are too often overlooked for these opportunities. Students who enroll in these programs are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college. Together, early warning data and interventions and academic acceleration can help ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Access to Higher Education

Serving about 70,000 students per year, both traditional and non-traditional, the State Need Grant (SNG) program is Washington's largest state aid program. Since 2010, there have been more eligible students than available funding. This trend continued through 2015-2016, with more than 27,000 eligible students unserved by the program, which has created barriers for low-income students across our state. Eligible unserved students have higher average debt loads than their served peers. They also tend to work more hours and take fewer credits, which slows their progress and reduces the chances of completion. More than half of the unserved students attend a community or technical college. Fully funding SNG will improve access and affordability and enhance academic success for more than 27,000 additional students.

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