



# College Bound Scholarship Annual Update

Supporting equity in postsecondary enrollment for low-income students

May 2018

## Executive Summary

The College Bound Scholarship is an opportunity to encourage students who may otherwise think higher education is out of reach, to persist, graduate, and enroll in college. College Bound has a proven record of making access to higher education more equitable in Washington. However, there is still more work to do to meet the state's attainment goals.

In 2013, the Legislature stated that by 2023:

- All adults in Washington, ages 25–44, will have a high school diploma or equivalent.
- At least 70 percent of Washington adults, ages 25–44, will have a postsecondary credential.

College Bound is a crucial policy tool to meet these goals. Despite the noted success of the program in its first ten years, WSAC has identified areas for improvement. In 2017, WSAC completed a study, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The study found that students who participated:

- Were uncertain about program requirements.
- Wished a trusted source had informed them about general college and career resources earlier in high school.
- Wanted to pursue postsecondary education.

Notably, all of the students in the study wanted to continue their education after high school.

This report covers CBS data and current initiatives that support CBS students in Washington.

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### What is College Bound?

The College Bound Scholarship (CBS) is an early commitment of state funding, which inspires and encourages low-income Washington students to dream big. College Bound includes:

- State grant aid to cover tuition costs at public rates.
- Some fees and a \$500 book allowance for four years, up to a bachelor's degree to eligible low-income students.

Established by the Washington Legislature in 2007, CBS aims to alleviate financial barriers that prevent low-income middle school students from aspiring to and accessing higher education.

The CBS program starts when students apply in middle school, no later than the end of their eighth grade year. In order to be eligible, seventh and eighth graders who qualify for free or reduced price lunch sign a pledge to graduate from high school with a 2.0 grade point average or higher and without felony convictions, as well as to complete admissions and financial aid applications and enroll in college within one year of high school graduation. Foster youth are automatically enrolled. Applicants who meet pledge requirements, whose family income falls within 65 percent of the state's median family income, and who meet other scholarship requirements are eligible for an award.

The scholarship funds four years of education. Students must attend within five years of high graduating from high school, and they can use the scholarship at over 60 postsecondary schools within Washington. These include community colleges, private career colleges, and public and private four-year schools.

### Breaking down the College Bound commitment

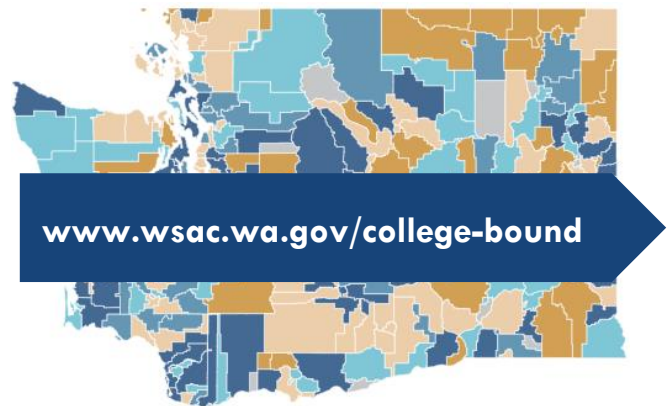
College Bound is designed to be an early commitment of an enhanced State Need Grant award. Statute dictates College Bound award amounts for public and private sectors. These amounts are tied to public tuition plus a small book stipend. In 2013, the Legislature required campuses prioritize State Need Grant funding for College Bound students. To do this, administrators subtract the State Need Grant award from the maximum award amounts to determine the College Bound portion.

For example, at the University of Washington, the College Bound Scholarship maximum award amount for the 2017-18 academic year is \$10,802. The State Need Grant portion of that commitment is \$9,553, while the College Bound portion is \$ 1,249 for a full-time student.

For the 2017-19 biennium, the Legislature appropriated \$604 million for State Need Grant and \$45 million for the College Bound Scholarship. The Legislature increased the College Bound appropriation during the 2018 Session, due to additional student enrollments.

### Data tells the College Bound story

College Bound data tells a story of success for low-income students from middle school, through high school, all the way to postsecondary. Since 2007, over 280,000 students have signed up for the College Bound Scholarship. As these students progress through the education system, the state has gathered data along the way to tell the story of College Bound from middle school sign up to postsecondary persistence. Find online dashboards at [www.wsac.wa.gov/college-bound](http://www.wsac.wa.gov/college-bound). The dashboards have Educational Service District (ESD), district and county level views for the three most recent cohorts of eighth graders.



### CBS Applications

College Bound sign-up rates are measured by cohort because the application window for middle school sign-up spans two years. Beginning with the 2020 cohort, which finished eighth grade in June 2016, WSAC has been able to provide a more accurate sign-up rate calculation. This methodology, created in partnership with OSPI, measures eligibility by including anyone who was both:

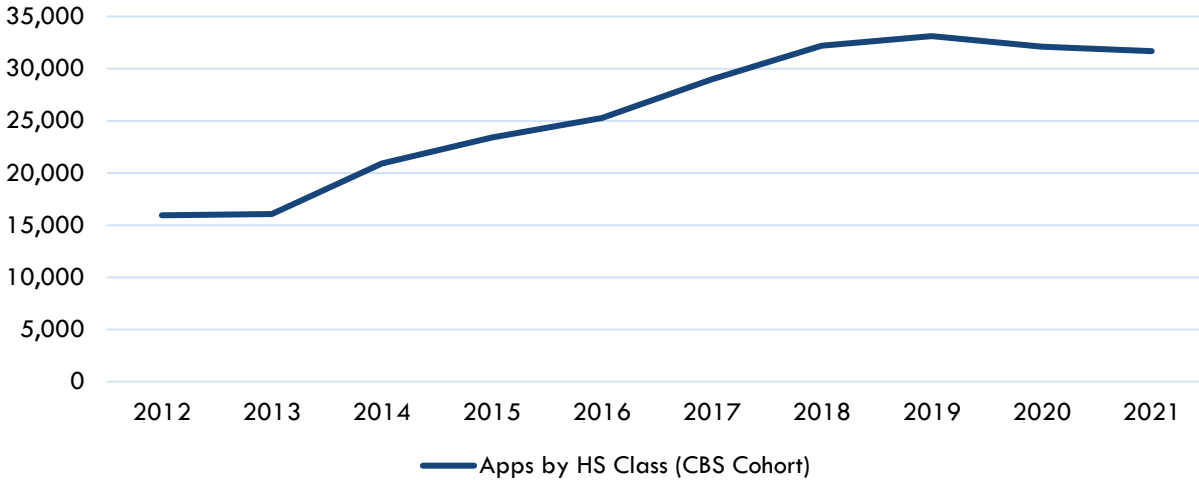
- Eligible for free and reduced price lunch at any point during their seventh or eighth grade year.
- Still enrolled in a Washington public school at the end of eighth grade.

Middle school sign-ups continue to grow. The state's sign-up rate for this cohort, expected to graduate high school in 2021, was 71 percent. In the most recent cohort 31,666 students completed a College Bound application. A total of 40,916 students from the 2021 cohort met the two criteria, above. Of these, 29,098 eligible students at public middle schools completed an application. Another 2,568 students who completed a College Bound application were from private schools, home-schooled or are no longer enrolled in Washington State.

Figure 1 shows that applications continue to grow. However, nearly 30 percent of eligible students are missing the College Bound opportunity because they don't sign up.

Figure 1

**CBS cohorts continue to grow**



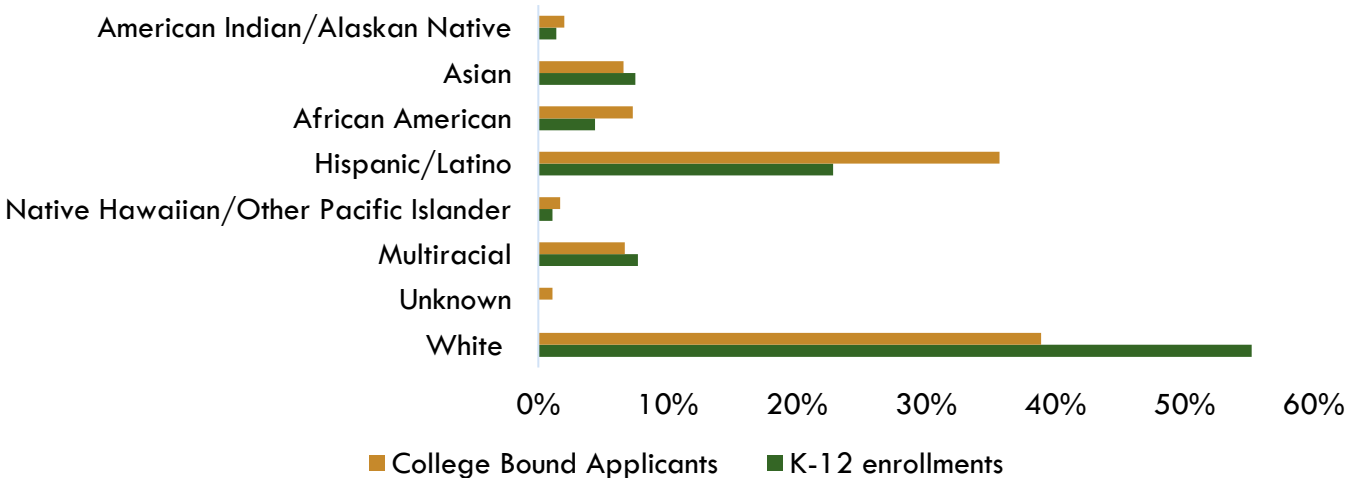
Source: WSAC Administrative Data, October 2017.

**CBS Student Diversity**

College Bound is improving equity among the state’s most diverse populations. College Bound students are more likely to represent racial/ethnic minority groups than the overall K-12 population in Washington. Because of this, College Bound is an important opportunity for Washington’s increasingly diverse population. Figure 2 compares College Bound applicants to statewide K-12 enrollment.

Figure 2

**Race/Ethnicity of current CBS high school students compared to overall K-12 enrollments**

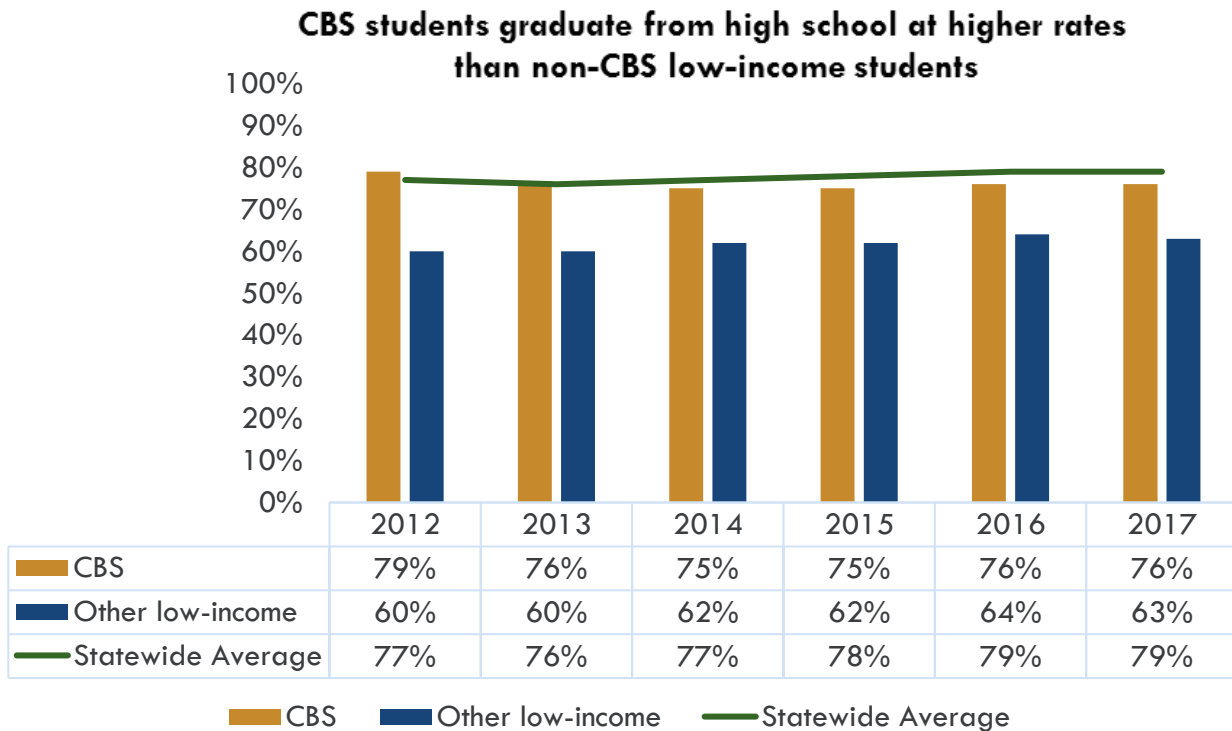


Source: WSAC administrative data, OSPI Washington State Report Card

### CBS High School Graduation

There is a correlation between College Bound sign-up and high school graduation rates. In 2017, College Bound students graduated at a rate 12 percentage points higher than their low-income peers, who were eligible, but did not sign up. College Bound students graduate from high school at nearly the statewide average, even as new cohorts continue to grow in size,

Figure 3



Source: OSPI analysis of WSAC CBS applicant data (2/6/2018).

### CBS High School to Postsecondary Transition: College Bound Scholars

College Bound students who complete an application in middle school are College Bound Scholars when they meet the pledge requirements:

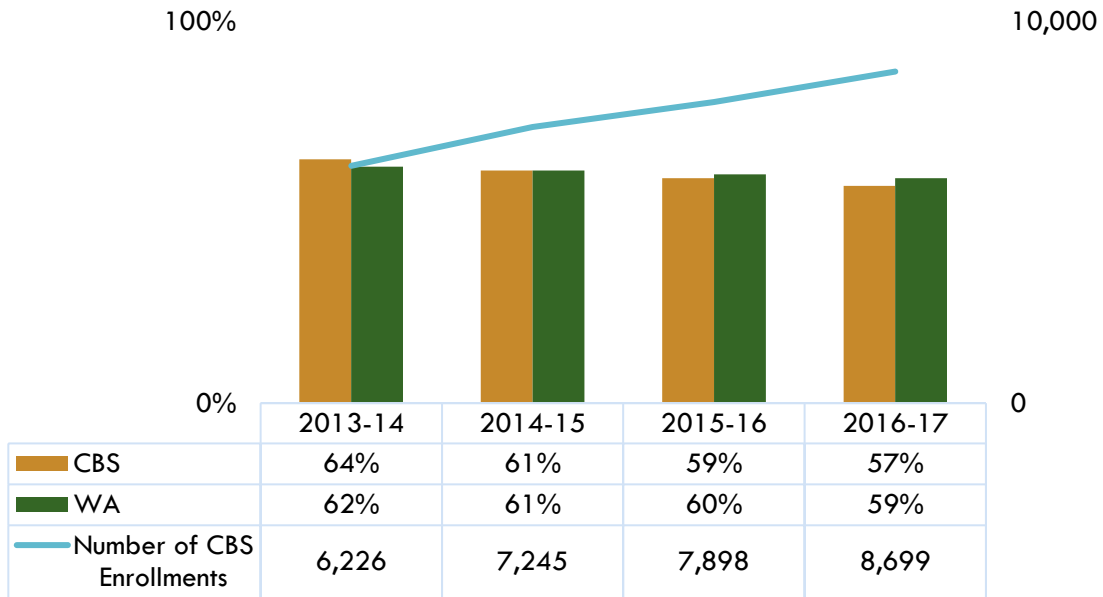
- Graduate from a Washington State high school with a cumulative 2.0 GPA or higher.
- Have no felony convictions.
- Apply for financial aid by completing the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) or WASFA (Washington Application for State Financial Aid) beginning their senior year.

### CBS Postsecondary Enrollment

As cohorts increase, the number of College Bound Scholars enrolling immediately after high school continues to grow as cohort sizes increase. However, the rate of immediate enrollment has dipped. College Bound students are enrolling at similar rates to the statewide rate, but there is more work to be done. For the most recent cohort entering college within their College Bound eligibility window, 94 percent enrolled the year immediately following high school graduation.

Figure 4

**Direct postsecondary enrollment rates of high school exit cohorts:  
College Bound Scholars and Washington high school graduates**



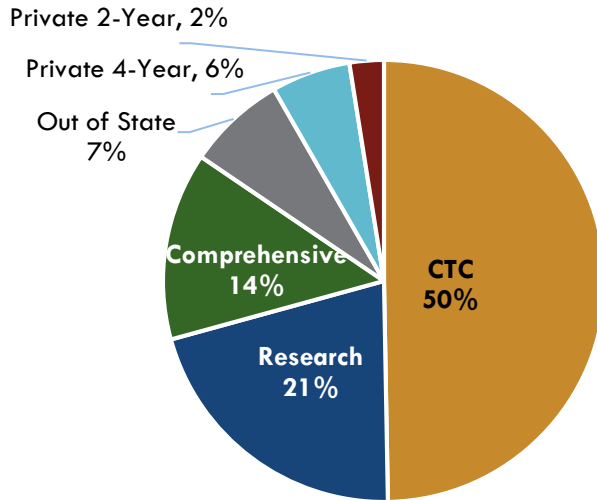
Source: CBS Postsecondary Enrollment Rates (CBS): WSAC Application Data matched with National Clearinghouse Data December 2017. Washington High School Graduate Postsecondary Enrollment Rates (WA): ERDC High School Feedback Report.

***CBS Scholars Postsecondary Enrollment by Sector***

College Bound Scholars enroll in a diverse set of institutions. There are over 60 eligible institutions around the state. Half of Washington’s College Bound Scholars have attended a community or technical college and over 40 percent have enrolled in a four-year institution in Washington.

Figure 5

**College Bound Scholar Enrollments by Sector  
2012-13 to 2016-17**



Source: WSAC Application Data matched with National Student Clearinghouse data as of February 2018.

**Forecasted CBS Scholars Postsecondary Enrollment**

In 2011, the Legislature assigned the Caseload Forecast Council with projecting CBS student enrollments for budgeting purposes. As of February 2018, the Caseload Forecast Council projects that CBS eligible enrollments will increase 18 percent by 2019-20, as shown in Figure 6. This growth reflects improvements in sign-up rates, academic outcomes, as well as outreach and college readiness initiatives.

Figure 6. Forecasted College Bound Scholarship Postsecondary Enrollments.

2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
19,928	22,430	24,415

Source: Caseload Forecast Council. Forecast for College Bound Scholarship as of February 2018.  
[www.cfc.wa.gov/Monitoring/WSAC\\_CBSP.pdf](http://www.cfc.wa.gov/Monitoring/WSAC_CBSP.pdf)

**CBS Scholars Postsecondary Persistence Rates**

In 2015-16, College Bound Scholars' persistence from the first to second year of college was higher than the national average of 73 percent even as cohorts have grown.



Figure 7. CBS First to Second Year Persistence Rates

2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
79%	74%	74%

Source: WSAC Administrative Data, February 2018.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy will complete an academic outcomes evaluation of College Bound by 2018 (as assigned in RCW 28B.118.095).

## Behind the Scenes: Administrative Updates

### Middle School Sign Up

Districts, schools, and partners continue to improve sign-up strategies statewide. For example, data showed that districts and schools who used the online upload process to begin eligible students' applications achieved higher sign-up rates than those who relied solely on paper forms. Beginning with the 2016-17 academic year, WSAC promoted the upload and online application as the primary ways to support College Bound application completion. This administrative shift has resulted in more engagement with schools, increased ability to track student application completion via the WSAC portal and more consistent information for students. Initial trends suggest that overall sign-up rates are increasing as well.

The online application is available in English and Spanish. The signature and verification page for families is available in English, Spanish and Russian. WSAC plans to offer the signature and verification page in seven more languages beginning in the 2018-19 academic year. Paper applications are available on request for families who need one in an additional language.

Additionally, the Washington College Access Network (WCAN), housed within the College Success Foundation, receives state funding via an OSPI contract to support sign-up efforts. WCAN's regionally based program officers provide districts with in-person outreach and training. They are a key partner to engaging with districts on the most effective sign-up strategies.

### Engaging High School CBS Students

Many statewide and regional initiatives help College Bound students enroll in postsecondary education.

#### 12th Year Campaign

WSAC administers the 12th Year Campaign, an annual statewide effort to help prospective students with college and financial aid applications. It provides free training, resources and materials to districts, schools, and organizations statewide. WSAC includes College Bound materials and support in this campaign. In 2017-18, over 130 sites hosted 12th Year Campaign events throughout the state.

#### Repledge Campaign and College Knowledge

In February 2017, WCAN ran the inaugural *Repledge Campaign* to remind ninth grade students of their College Bound pledge and scholarship requirements. During the 2018 campaign, over 150 sites participated statewide, and over 20,000 student workbooks were delivered at repledge events. Additionally, a cross-sector collaboration gathered family and student feedback

to produce *College Knowledge*, a digital publication of 23 handouts. They cover the most frequently requested college readiness topics, with one chapter focusing on the College Bound Scholarship. These materials are available in English, Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese and Somali. The group that produced this product includes: Community Center for Education Results, Puget Sound College and Career Network, WCAN, and WSAC.

### *Mailer Project*

Beginning with the class of 2019, funds from the High-Achieving, Low-Income budget proviso will focus on College Bound students. The goal of this project is to encourage high-achieving students to consider the most rigorous college opportunities available to them. These funds allow WSAC to send customized materials to students about their options.

In May of 2018, over 9,000 high-achieving College Bound students received a customized packet with a letter from Governor Inslee encouraging them to pursue higher education and reminding them of the College Bound commitment. WSAC will complete an internal evaluation of the project. In a previous high-achieving mailer project, WSAC collaborated with the College Board.

### *Financial Aid Completion*

Completing a financial aid application is a key requirement to access the College Bound Scholarship. Beginning in the 2017-18 academic year, WSAC launched *Plus 5 Push*, a statewide effort to increase financial aid application completion of high school seniors by 5 percent over last year's results. 12th Year Campaign sites that increase their 2017-18 FAFSA completion rate by 5 percent will receive an award at OSPI's School Counselor Summer Institutes.

## **2018 Legislative Session**

The 2018 legislative session included three significant changes to CBS statutes. These changes affect residency, sign-up, and coordination with other state financial aid.

### *Residency*

In 2015, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service issued guidance that individuals with Deferred Action Childhood Arrival (DACA) status are not prevented from establishing state residency. As a result, undocumented students with DACA status became eligible to receive the College Bound Scholarship.

The passage of HB 1488 aligns College Bound state residency requirements with those for State Need Grant. Previously, a student could meet State Need Grant residency requirements using the *1079 standard* but a College Bound student could not. Additionally there is a change to the *DACA standard* that allows a residency determination to be made for a student who was granted DACA even if DACA has expired. Additional information on both these residency standards can be found at [www.readysetgrad.org/wasfa](http://www.readysetgrad.org/wasfa). WSAC will provide technical guidance ahead of implementation in the spring and summer of 2018.

### *Sign-Up*

HB 1293 states that a counselor may witness the College Bound pledge for a student whose parent or guardian is unable to sign with their student. This will take effect beginning with the 2018-19 academic year. WSAC will provide procedural guidance as the application period opens on September 1, 2018.

### *Coordination with other state financial aid*

The Washington Opportunity Scholarship (WSOS) is once again considered state aid when determining the College Bound Scholarship state-aid award commitment. Beginning in 2018-19, the following state programs will coordinate with the College Bound Scholarship to cover the state's commitment.

- State Need Grant
- Passport to College Promise Scholarship
- SBCTC Opportunity Grant
- SBCTC Worker Retraining Funds
- American Indian Endowed Scholarship
- Washington Opportunity Scholarship

## Conclusion

In its first ten years, College Bound has invigorated college access work in Washington. Much of College Bound's success stems from community engagement. The program engages communities to support low-income students to pursue a postsecondary education when it might otherwise seem unreachable. College Bound is unique in that students develop a relationship with the program starting in middle school, which continues in high school and later in college as they complete a degree. The longevity of this relationship with students encourages and requires diverse networks of support statewide.

It is important to not forget the nearly 30 percent of eligible middle school students who miss signing up for this opportunity. Expanded sign-up efforts are needed to close this gap. At the same time, it is important to focus on providing comprehensive, consistent and accurate information to College Bound students in high school.

The close collaboration between WSAC, OSPI, WCAN, schools and districts, and other non-profit organizations is critical to College Bound outreach and support efforts. Together, these agencies and organizations work closely to identify and maximize training opportunities for professionals who work with students. Additionally, WSAC continues to build upon proven methods to communicate directly with students and families so they understand CBS and the state's commitment to their success.

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