

# Designing Postsecondary Education for Parenting Students

Research Brief

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September 2025



## Introduction

Our education system is most likely to yield transformative change when learners can access the support they need to succeed. For parenting students, or students who care for dependent children, an education system developed with their needs in mind can help them meet their personal goals and develop the skills necessary for stable employment and steady income.<sup>1</sup> In this way, education for parenting students is both an individual opportunity *and* a multigenerational opportunity that creates immediate and long-term benefits for families and communities.

Parenting students begin their post-high school education or training resilient and motivated to learn.<sup>2</sup> When they arrive, they typically find educational structures that work against, not for, them. Class schedules may conflict with childcare operating hours, and school expenses compete with childcare costs. Further, time spent in class or studying is time that parents cannot spend focused on their children and families. The tension between their motivation and the structural challenges they encounter puts parenting students in a challenging position, where they often outperform peers in academic coursework<sup>3</sup> but, according to estimates from the Urban Institute, graduate at lower rates.<sup>4</sup>

Washington's higher education system can address these challenges and create more welcoming campuses for parenting students. By working with institutions and communities to help parenting students succeed, we are also investing in a more educated workforce that has greater economic returns for smaller communities, families and the state.<sup>5</sup>

In this report, we present a profile of Washington's parenting students, then situate this profile alongside the universal childcare challenges experienced by all parents. We then summarize the resources and targeted supports that are available for parenting students and highlight strategies and interventions other states have used to center parenting students' needs in policy and practice.

## A Profile of Washington's Parenting Students

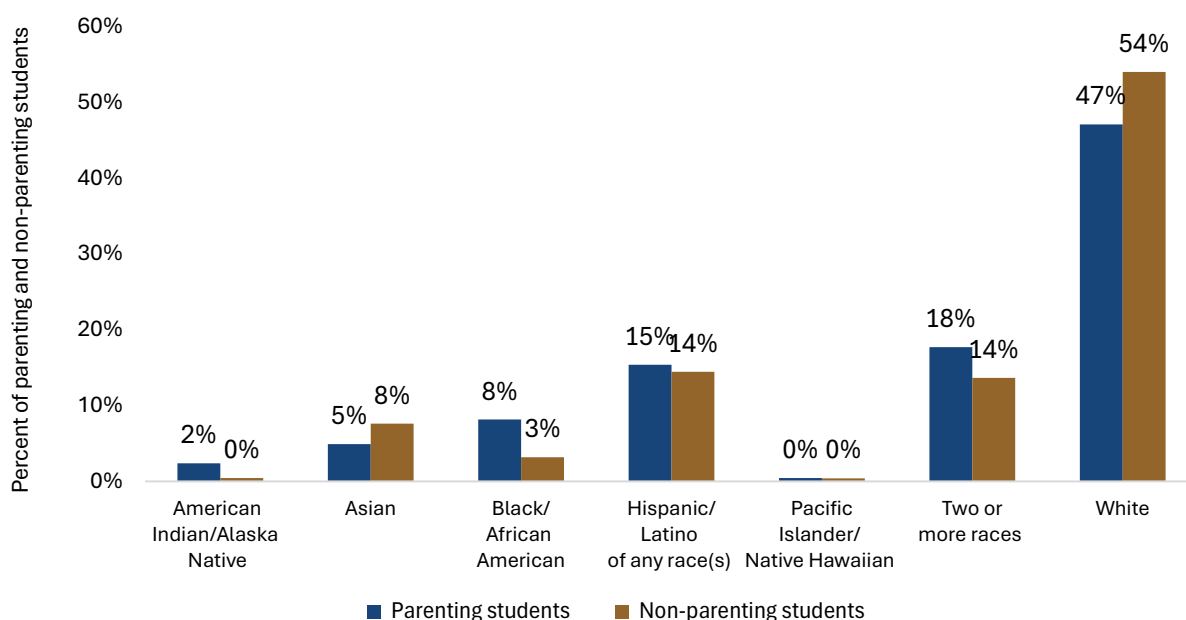
In fall 2024, the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) partnered with Western Washington University and Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to administer the WSAC Basic Needs Survey to students enrolled at all public universities and all but one community and technical college (CTC) in the state. Survey responses provide valuable insights into the composition of Washington's parenting student population and the

estimated level of basic needs insecurity among these students. The survey results are therefore used to inform our understanding of the parenting student population within the state. <sup>6</sup>

Across Washington, approximately 18% of survey respondents self-identify as having a dependent which is equal to the nationwide average. <sup>7</sup> The students who comprise the population of parenting students within the pool of survey respondents are also disproportionately female and low-income. They are also likely to identify as being from a population historically underserved by higher education and likely to report experiencing basic needs insecurity (Figure 1):

- 75% of parenting students identify as female, compared to 63% of non-parenting students statewide. <sup>8</sup>
- 62% are low-income, compared to 40% of non-parenting students statewide. <sup>9</sup>
- 2% identify as American Indian/Alaska Native, compared to less than 1% statewide.
- 8% identify as Black/African American, compared to 3% statewide.
- 15% identify as Hispanic/Latino, compared to 14% statewide. <sup>10</sup>
- 68% of parenting students report challenges accessing basic needs such as affordable housing, food, healthcare, and childcare, compared to 52% of all students statewide. <sup>11</sup>

**Figure 1. Share of parenting and non-parenting students among Basic Needs Survey respondents enrolled in any Washington public postsecondary institution in the 2023-24 academic year, by race and ethnicity**

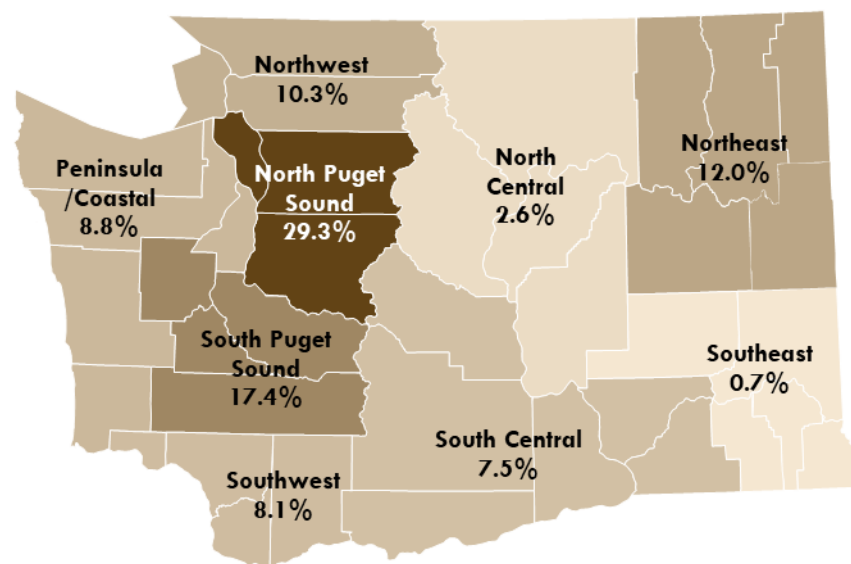


Source: Bryant, M., & Magisos, A. (January 2025). *Reassessing Basic Needs Security Among Washington College Students*. WSAC. <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025.BasicNeedsReport.pdf>

When examined geographically, parenting students comprise a higher percentage of the student population in more densely populated regions within Washington (Figure 2):<sup>12</sup>

- Nearly 30% of students surveyed in the North Puget Sound region, where Seattle is located, identify as parenting students. This is the highest percentage statewide.
- Almost 20% of students in the South Puget Sound region, where Tacoma is located, identify as parenting students. This is the second highest percentage statewide.
- Less than 1% of students surveyed in the Southeast region—where Pullman is located—and less than 3% of students in the North Central region—where Wenatchee is located—identify as parenting students. These are the lowest percentages statewide.

**Figure 2. Distribution of parenting students across Washington, by region**



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Source: Bryant, M., & Magisos, A. (January 2025). *Reassessing Basic Needs Security Among Washington College Students*. WSAC. <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025.BasicNeedsReport.pdf>

## The Intersection of Geography and Childcare Accessibility

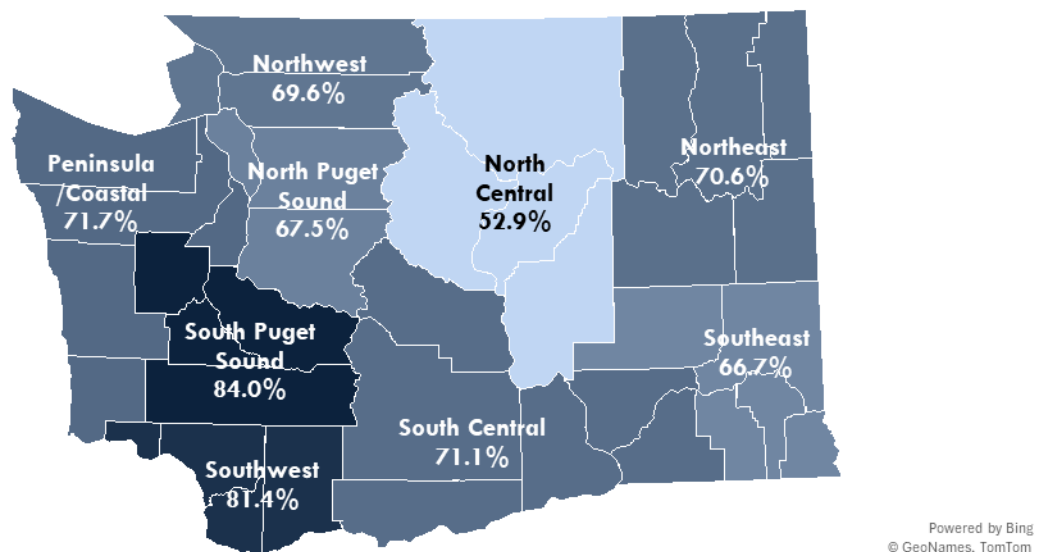
Over the years, the total number of licensed childcare providers in Washington has decreased and the number of slots available at remaining childcare centers has increased.<sup>13</sup> Although the increase in available slots is encouraging, overall capacity may still decline if lost slots outnumber new slots at remaining centers. Moreover, with fewer centers, families may have to travel further, making it harder to balance the time required to manage school, work, and childcare. These dueling trends have left 63% of Washingtonians living in a childcare desert, or a community without a single licensed childcare provider or an insufficient number of childcare providers.<sup>14</sup> By comparison, 51% of the national population lives in a childcare desert.<sup>15</sup> By land area, most of the state's childcare deserts are in low-density regions, outside of the state's major metropolitan areas.

That said, the challenge of limited providers is not unique to rural communities, which means the large percentage of parenting students in the North and South Puget Sound regions still experience

difficulties with accessibility. Childcare providers in densely populated regions like the North Puget Sound, may struggle to open due to steep commercial real estate prices that result from limited physical infrastructure, resulting in limited access even in populated areas.<sup>16</sup>

For the childcare centers that *do* exist, operating costs are high and must be passed down to families—eroding affordability. As evidence, the three regions with the highest percent of parenting students reporting that they cannot pay for childcare without worrying about basic needs are *also* home to some of the most densely populated counties in the state. In the North Puget Sound, over two-thirds of parenting students worry about the cost of childcare.<sup>17</sup> In the South Puget Sound and Southwest regions, where two of Washington’s largest cities are located, over 80% of parenting students report that they cannot pay for childcare without worrying about basic needs insecurity (Figure 3).<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 3. Percent of parenting students who cannot pay for childcare without worrying about basic needs insecurity, by region**



Source: Bryant, M., & Magisos, A. (January 2025). *Reassessing Basic Needs Security Among Washington College Students*. WSAC. <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025.BasicNeedsReport.pdf>

Put simply, issues of affordability and accessibility in the childcare industry can occur no matter where a parent lives.

## Challenges in the Childcare Sector

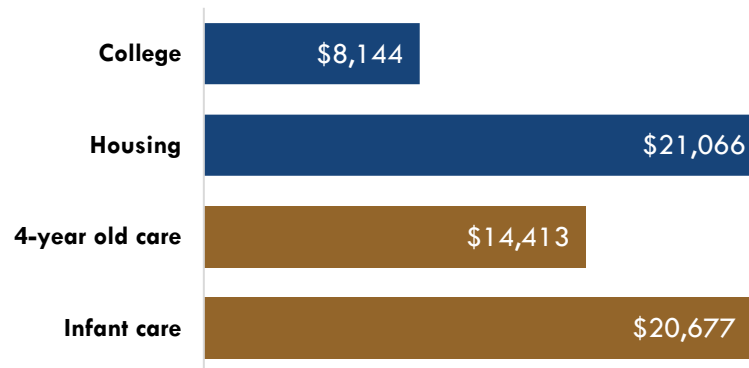
Low supply and high demand make childcare in Washington hard to access and more expensive as a result. Washington currently ranks eighth nationally for most expensive childcare, with the median family spending over 15% of their income on childcare.<sup>19</sup> Affordability and accessibility challenges are felt acutely by parenting students whose schedules and costs are further constrained by a postsecondary education system that costs money and requires time.

- **High costs of care for young children are unaffordable for parents.** Childcare costs vary significantly across different age groups depending on the required staff-to-child ratio, the

level of supervision required, and developmental needs of the children based on their age. In Washington, the annual cost of childcare for infant and 4-year-old care both exceed the average cost of in-state college tuition, with infant care being more than double the cost of in-state college tuition and approximately on par with housing costs (Figure 4).<sup>20</sup>

- **Parenting students may need to work more hours** than non-parent students to cover the costs of postsecondary education *and* the costs of childcare.<sup>21</sup>

**Figure 4. Annual Costs in Washington State**



Source: Economic Policy Institute. (n.d.). *The Cost of Childcare in the United States*. Economic Policy Institute. <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/WA>.

- Even for parents willing or able to pay, **childcare availability is limited**. Forty-three percent of parenting students in Washington self-reported that they have experienced unreasonable waitlists or lack of spots for their children.<sup>22</sup>
- If a parenting student can access a slot for their child, **the hours may not meet their needs**. Nearly a third of all undergraduate students take night classes, but only 2% of center-based childcare providers operate after 7pm.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, nearly 50% of parenting students in Washington indicate that childcare provider hours and their own student schedules were at odds with each other.<sup>24</sup>
- The childcare industry has **stringent staffing needs** set by mandated caregiver-to-child ratios.<sup>25</sup> These staffing needs result in it being a labor-intensive industry, with up to 80% of expenditures going to salaries and benefits.<sup>26</sup> As a result, providers cannot improve family affordability without eroding their own financial stability.
- Competitive pressure to keep costs low for families means **each center fends for itself** as it pieces together revenue from families, government programs, and private donors.<sup>27</sup> Revenue from any of these streams can change suddenly, which means centers focus more on immediate financial survival and less on costly long-term investments like expanded enrollment or higher staff wages.<sup>28</sup>

- **Staff turnover in the industry is high and recruitment is hard**, due in part to low pay and minimal benefits that result from financial instability.<sup>29</sup> In Washington, early learning professionals are among the 3% lowest paid professionals.<sup>30</sup> When centers cannot maintain the mandated caregiver-to-child ratio, they are forced to close or downsize—resulting in unexpected disruptions for families.<sup>31</sup>

Together, these challenges show that the childcare industry needs innovative, solutions-oriented action, so that needs are met for the workforce, the children in care, and the parents and parenting students who depend on it.

## Existing Supports and Subsidies in Washington

Although individual financial supports cannot reverse industry challenges, supports and subsidies remain a powerful first line of defense against childcare disruptions. Parenting students in Washington already pay \$19,200 more annually than non-parenting students at public colleges and universities when childcare costs are factored into the cost of attendance. This is \$6,000 more than the national average of \$13,000.<sup>32</sup> A small number of existing financial support programs help counteract these costs—be they through direct subsidies funded by state programs, or indirectly through pass-through grants (i.e., funds allocated to colleges and universities). Several colleges and universities commit additional funds to dedicated supports for parenting students.

### State Subsidies Directly to Parenting Students

Eligible families can receive a subsidy for childcare expenses through the Working Connections Child Care Program (WCCC), operated by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). For income-eligible parenting students, eligibility is highly specific to their educational context. To receive a WCCC subsidy, they must show that their educational enrollment aligns with WCCC’s approved activities. Specifically, for students attending a community, technical, or tribal college, they must be enrolled either:

- (1) “full-time and seeking an associate or vocational degree”; or
- (2) “part-time and seeking an associate or vocational degree AND working 20 hours per week.”<sup>33</sup>

Although other state subsidies for parents exist, these are not easily accessible to parents who are enrolled in a postsecondary program.<sup>34</sup>

### Pass-Through Grants to Institutions

Washington’s colleges and universities may also receive pass-through grants from state or federally funded programs, which are then used to fund student childcare subsidies or on-campus childcare centers. Colleges and universities may also repackage and/or combine funds with other institutional funding sources to increase subsidy award amounts.

- WSAC's state-funded Child Care Grants program, established in 1999, provides block grants to colleges and universities who can then allocate funds directly to parenting students. Total funds available for block grant awards are minimal when compared to other block grants available in Washington (less than \$150,000 over a two-year period). <sup>35</sup> The Child Care Grants program provides block grants to six public colleges and universities statewide: Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, Evergreen State College, University of Washington, Washington State University, and Western Washington University.
- The federally funded Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program gives grants to eight Washington colleges and universities. <sup>36</sup> The goal of CCAMPIS is to offer campus-based childcare programs or before/after school care within the community to support low-income or Pell Grant-Eligible students. The eight Washington colleges that were CCAMPIS grantees are: Clark College, Clover Park Technical College, Edmonds College, Evergreen State College, University of Washington, Walla Walla Community College, Spokane Colleges (Spokane Community College and Spokane Falls Community College), and Washington State University.

### **Institutional Subsidies for Parenting Students**

Some Washington colleges and universities provide subsidies supported by a mix of institutional and state or federal funds directly to parenting students. Examples include:

- The Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEAA) Aerospace Career Enhancement (ACE) grant provides eligible parenting students enrolled in aviation, engineering, or other aerospace degree programs up to \$5,000 annually for childcare assistance. This one-year grant, administered by SBCTC and WSAC, is available at nine CTCs and one university: Bellevue College, Bellingham Technical College, Big Bend College, Clover Park Technical College, Columbia Basin College, Everett Community College, Green River College, Renton Technical College, Spokane College, and Eastern Washington University. <sup>37</sup>
- Through the Childcare Grant, Eastern Washington University and the Biella Foundation provide up to \$2,000 of financial assistance in the spring, winter and fall quarters toward childcare fees at a licensed facility. <sup>38</sup>

### **On-Campus Childcare Centers**

All six of Washington's public bachelor's institutions offer on- and off- campus childcare programs to lessen parenting students' childcare costs, and 21 of 34 CTCs offer childcare (18 on-campus centers and 3 external contractors). This offering gives parents a convenient location near classes and provides a connection to other campus services and supports. For example, Spokane Community College's Bigfoot Child Care Center provides affordable childcare for the children of parenting students that qualify for Head Start or Early Head Start. <sup>39</sup>

Campuses may also opt to provide parenting students with access to back-up childcare services, which can help maintain parenting students' enrollment continuity even when regular childcare becomes unexpectedly unavailable. These services ensure that parenting students can, for example, still attend class or campus events even when their usual childcare is unavailable. At the University of Washington Bothell's off-campus BrightHorizons childcare center, parenting students can get care through UW WorkLife up to five times each year.<sup>40</sup>

Despite the benefits of on-campus childcare, parenting students may have trouble accessing these services due to long waitlists resulting from excess student demand and/or preferential treatment given to faculty and staff.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, recent funding challenges, such as disrupted or delayed federal grants that cause temporary closures, have required that colleges adjust parenting student supports in real time. Thirteen community colleges in Washington do not have any childcare resources available, and some colleges that had resources are having to scale back. Everett Community College, for example, announced in Spring 2025 that it would close its nationally accredited Early Learning Center due to funding cuts.<sup>42</sup>

### **Institutional Basic Needs Support for Parenting Students**

All of Washington's public colleges and universities now provide support for students' basic needs, and some have begun to prioritize the distinct needs of parenting students through targeted campus-based resources. A sampling of available supports for parenting students at colleges and universities across the state includes:

- Washington State University's Women's Club maintains a list of resources for parenting students, including information on pregnant and/or parenting students' rights.<sup>43</sup> The university also employs a Basic Needs Benefits Navigator; students can refer themselves or a fellow student to meet with the navigator for support.<sup>44</sup>
- Everett Community College's Belonging Center is designed to support adult learners and parenting students as they return to school. The center offers study areas, children's toys and books, electronic charging stations, and fidget tools. It is located near on-campus financial aid and counseling services, providing students with convenient access to additional resources.<sup>45</sup>
- Walla Walla Community College provides a list of resources to help parenting students find and pay for childcare. They also have a list of available on-campus and community resources parenting students.<sup>46</sup>

That institutional resources exist is a necessary precursor to supporting parenting students. For these—or any—resources to benefit their target population, learners must be proactively connected to them. This connection could occur at the time of enrollment or, for parenting students, when their parenting status changes—which could occur at any time. More research is needed to understand whether, when, and how parenting students interact with on-campus basic needs support.



## Innovative Strategies for Supporting Parenting Students

The five strategies below provide a roadmap for strengthening Washington’s higher education system by centering parenting students’ needs in policy and practice.

### **Strategy #1: Formalize administrative data collection protocols to better identify parenting students and their needs**

Formally collecting data on parenting students helps colleges, universities, and policymakers identify parenting students’ specific needs and adapt policies and practices accordingly. In Washington, beyond the high-level findings in WSAC’s Basic Needs Survey and historical data collected by SBCTC, little information is systematically collected on or about parenting students either at each institution or across institutions.<sup>47</sup>

Recognizing the value of robust data collection, several states have adopted or proposed policies to collect comprehensive data on parenting student status:

- In 2021, **Oregon** passed Senate Bill (SB) 564 which requires that colleges and universities collect demographic data on parenting students. This data is then reported publicly.<sup>48</sup>
- In 2021, **Illinois** passed SB 0267 which mandates that colleges and universities collect data about parenting students and provide a semester report totaling the number of children served at their on-campus childcare centers.<sup>49</sup>
- In 2024, **California** passed Assembly Bill (AB) 2458 which requires that colleges and universities collect data on parenting students and clearly show on- and off-campus resources and services provided for these students. Institutions are also expected to consider childcare expenses in the cost of tuition, allowing parenting students to be eligible for more financial aid.<sup>50</sup>

### **Strategy #2: Design educational processes and institutional support systems to help parenting students navigate complexity**

A parenting student’s limited and inflexible schedule is at odds with the time required to access programs and services that could support their success in postsecondary education. For example, a 2023 study of parenting students’ experiences with a California cash assistance program found that eligible learners encountered time-consuming paperwork, limited caseworker support, and rigid submission timelines.<sup>51</sup> This example is specific to a public assistance program for parenting students, however complex processes likewise exist within institutions of higher education.

The most straightforward solution is to simplify the processes and access to support, so that parenting students’ time constraints are not a barrier to accessing childcare. Simplifying may involve changing core processes (like registration). The addition of individualized support ensures parenting students have help as they navigate time-consuming administrative challenges.

- In 2022, **California** passed AB 2881, requiring colleges and universities to provide priority registration for parenting students, an example of an adapted educational process.<sup>52</sup> Streamlining access to course registration ensures that parenting students have an opportunity to prioritize classes and class times that work within the time constraints of their family life. Even so, recent research finds that only 4% of California State Universities and 1% of California Community Colleges comply fully with these policy changes.<sup>53</sup>
- In 2020, **Austin Community College in Texas** partnered with United Way for Greater Austin to design their Parenting Students Project as an individualized, case management model. Participating students receive case management support from a Student Advocate, and they are encouraged to attend monthly peer meetings with other parenting students. Participating students also receive a \$500 monthly stipend. Early evidence indicates that participation in the program had a measurable, positive impact on student retention and completion indicating the power that comes from providing individualized support.<sup>54</sup>

By simplifying and eliminating bureaucratic processes, we can improve access to the services that help parenting students succeed in their educational journeys.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the above examples specifically address the needs of parenting students, but all learners stand to benefit from feedback loops that encourage universal improvements in educational processes and expand access to existing supports.<sup>56</sup>

### **Strategy #3: Surface community-grounded solutions that are responsive to regional context**

Understanding the landscape of childcare in different regions is key to effectively supporting parenting students in Washington. In some communities, access may be a transportation challenge, in other areas, it may manifest as long waiting lists or high monthly costs. Moreover, these same communities may identify innovative solutions that fit their local needs and have the potential for statewide scaling. Supporting parenting students in their communities would not only help individual families but would create a more educated workforce with larger economic returns locally and at the state level.

- The **Minnesota** Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) and **Michigan** Department of Education partnered to fund the Rural Child Care Innovation Program (RCCIP) initiative of First Children's Finance. This program begins by assessing local childcare gaps and needs so that RCCIP can then partner with the community in developing an action plan bespoke to local needs and available resources.<sup>57</sup>
- The Center for Rural Policy and Development in **Minnesota** assessed childcare challenges in each region of the state. Their regional assessment allowed them to make recommendations and provide support to families and childcare centers using community-grounded initiatives. For example, Brown County offers training for local childcare providers and does not charge a fee for licensing or re-licensing.<sup>58</sup>

Similar initiatives already exist within Washington and signify a chance to innovate through geographic responsiveness. The Washington State Department of Commerce's Child Care Partnership Grants program has awarded funds to over 40 partnerships across the state, each one focused on addressing challenges that prevent expansion in local childcare capacity.<sup>59</sup> At the intersection of education and early learning, the Cornerstone Program, a partnership led by the Chehalis School District, leverages its state-funded Regional Challenge Grant (RCG) investment to provide dual-generation support to young children and their families/parents. Nearly 25% of parents who received support in the program's first year of operation reported that the RCG grant made meaningful changes in their education and career path.<sup>60</sup>

Ongoing learning about the impact of these initiatives, on those directly served as well as the broader community in which the partnerships operate, provides Washington with an invaluable opportunity to further invest in innovative, locally responsive strategies.

#### **Strategy #4: Center parenting students' experiences when designing higher education policy and practice**

Centering parenting students' experiences can lead to a better, more accessible higher education system for all learners, regardless of whether they have dependents. For this reason, policymakers benefit from including parenting students' voices during the policymaking process.

- In **California**, the CalWORKs Association's Project SPARC partnered with the Center for the Study of Social Policy to research the barriers that parenting students experience. Through this study, researchers confirmed that parenting students are motivated, but struggle to meet their goals because of challenging systems.<sup>61</sup>
- The **University of Michigan (UM)**, the Center for the Education of Women + (CEW+), and the Michigan Caregivers and Student Parents (MCaSP) partner together to inform UM's parenting student supports and policies. Together the group has encouraged the university to develop parenting student study rooms in two of the libraries and adopt a syllabus and Title-IX statement to support parenting students.<sup>62</sup>

In both instances, parenting students' voices become an opportunity for colleges and universities to identify how practices within institutions can be improved.

#### **Strategy #5: Expand state-funded direct subsidies for parenting students**

Lastly, and perhaps most simply, expanded investments in direct subsidies provide straightforward financial relief from the high cost of childcare. Parenting students in Washington pay more on average than parenting students across the nation. As evidenced by early data from **Austin Community College's** Parenting Students Project, even a modest subsidy can ease a parenting student's financial instability and increase their chances of staying enrolled (see also, Strategy #2).<sup>63</sup>

- In 2019, the **Oregon** Higher Education Coordinating Commission established the Student Child Care Grant Program, which provides up to \$10,000 each academic year for eligible

parenting students enrolled in colleges and universities, so long as they maintain satisfactory academic progress.<sup>64</sup>

- In 2005, **Minnesota** launched a childcare grant program that gives parenting students an annual stipend for formal and informal childcare providers.<sup>65</sup>

These kinds of state investments in direct subsidies can keep educational opportunity within reach for a population that graduates with a credential at lower rates than their peers without children.<sup>66</sup> Large investments in subsidies of this kind should be accompanied by formal evaluation activities to better understand the results across demographics, geography, and institutional sectors.

## **Unlocking immediate multigenerational educational opportunity**

We can make higher education more supportive for parenting students. Doing so begins with strategies such as collecting better data on parenting students' demographic backgrounds and experiences; creating support systems for parenting students, centering these experiences when developing and revising supports; assessing regional differences in childcare access to build strategies that work locally; and expanding subsidies for parenting students. Moreover, attending to regional differences in childcare access and affordability will surface innovative solutions with the potential for statewide scaling. If the capacity of our state's childcare industry improves, so too does the potential for parenting students to earn a credential and experience economic opportunity.

When the state and institutions collaborate to help parenting students succeed, generations of learners, families, and communities benefit.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Coca, V., Mitchell, S., & LiCalsi, C. (October 2023). *Parenting Adult Learners' Experiences in Higher Education*. American Institutes for Research. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED638734.pdf>
- <sup>2</sup> Sick, N., Anderson, T., Green, A. R., Adu-Gyamfi, A., & Demario, M. (March 2023). *Considerations for Postsecondary Data on Student Parenting Status*. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Considerations%20for%20Postsecondary%20Data%20on%20Student%20Parenting%20Status.pdf>
- <sup>3</sup> DeMario, M. October 2021. *Supporting One of Our Most At-Risk Populations: Student-Parents*. League for Innovation in the Community College. <https://www.league.org/innovation-showcase/supporting-one-our-most-risk-populations-student-parents>
- <sup>4</sup> Sick, N., Anderson, T., Green, A. R., Adu-Gyamfi, A., & Demario, M. (March 2023). *Considerations for Postsecondary Data on Student Parenting Status*. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Considerations%20for%20Postsecondary%20Data%20on%20Student%20Parenting%20Status.pdf>
- Source document, which references analysis of the Beginning Postsecondary Students 2012/2017 (BPS) dataset, does not provide specific estimates or the timeframe in which graduation is considered.
- <sup>5</sup> For evidence of the positive effects of an educated workforce on state and national economies: Berger, N., & Fisher, P. (August 2013). *A Well-Educated Workforce Is Key to State Prosperity*. Economic Policy Institute. <https://www.epi.org/publication/states-education-productivity-growth-foundations/>
- <sup>6</sup> The overall response rate for the survey was 4.5% (11,320 of 249,451 surveyed students responded). According to the final report, this is considered “a reasonable response rate for an opt-in survey administered without incentives” (pg. 6). administered to an approximate 250,000 students statewide). Because of the low response rate and the potential for self-selection bias into survey completion, the findings presented here should be interpreted as generally representative of the population of survey respondents rather than the full population. See pg. 6 of Bryant, M., & Magisos, A. (January 2025). *Reassessing Basic Needs Security Among Washington College Students*. Washington Student Achievement Council. <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025.BasicNeedsReport.pdf>
- <sup>7</sup> See pg. 12: Bryant, M., & Magisos, A. (January 2025). *Reassessing Basic Needs Security Among Washington College Students*. Washington Student Achievement Council. <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025.BasicNeedsReport.pdf> ; See also: Anderson, T., Dundar, A., Gittens, S., Ryberg, R., Schreiber, R., Taylor, L., Warren, J., & Westaby, K. (September 2024). *Who Are Undergraduates with Dependent Children?* Spark Collaborative. <https://studentparentaction.org/assets/r-file/Who-Are-Undergraduates-with-Dependent-Children.pdf>
- <sup>8</sup> See pg. 37 of Bryant, M., & Magisos, A. (January 2025). *Reassessing Basic Needs Security Among Washington College Students*. Washington Student Achievement Council. <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025.BasicNeedsReport.pdf>
- <sup>9</sup> Low-income status is defined by a student’s self-identification as eligible for need-based aid.
- <sup>10</sup> See pg. 37 of Bryant, M., & Magisos, A. (January 2025). *Reassessing Basic Needs Security Among Washington College Students*. Washington Student Achievement Council. <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025.BasicNeedsReport.pdf>
- <sup>11</sup> See pg. 38 of Bryant, M., & Magisos, A. (January 2025). *Reassessing Basic Needs Security Among Washington College Students*. Washington Student Achievement Council. <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025.BasicNeedsReport.pdf>
- <sup>12</sup> We were unable to locate a national comparison of the geographic distribution of parenting students nationwide.
- <sup>13</sup> Between 2010 and 2024, there were over 24,000 additional childcare slots available in Washington but decreased by 1,700 family childcare providers and 300 centers. See: Childcare Aware of Washington. (September 2024). *Child Care in Washington State*. Childcare Aware of Washington. <https://childcareawarewa.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Statewide-9-2024.pdf>

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<sup>14</sup> The Center for American Progress defines a child care desert as “any census tract with more than 50 children under age 5 that contains either no child care providers or so few options that there are more than three times as many children as licensed child care slot.” See: Center for American Progress. (n.d.). *Washington*. Center for American Progress. <https://childcaredeserts.org/2018/?state=WA>

<sup>15</sup> Center for American Progress. (n.d.). *Washington*. Center for American Progress. <https://childcaredeserts.org/2018/?state=WA>

<sup>16</sup> Schmidt, D. (May 2022). *King County property values soar, especially in NE, according to assessor*. KOMO News. <https://komonews.com/news/local/king-county-property-values-soar-especially-in-ne-according-to-assessor> See also a proposed implementation plan from the members of the Children and Families Task Force for making childcare in King County more equitable and accessible: King County. (September 2020). *Equitable and Accessible ChildCare in King County: Recommendations from the Children and Families Strategy Task Force*. <https://cdn.kingcounty.gov/-/media/king-county/depts/dchs/best-starts/documents/bsk-reports/0145-report---equitable-and-accessible-child-care-in-king-county.pdf?Rev=fccc9531791c4f95a43c38d0eb7ee5e9&hash=DB28E08A0A82D73AEFF175720FC4DB3B> ; See also: Kunkler, A. (October 2019). *King County parents are still struggling with childcare*. Snoqualmie Valley Record. <https://www.valleyrecord.com/news/king-county-parents-are-still-struggling-with-child-care/>

<sup>17</sup> For a map of Washington’s population density by county, see: <https://ofm.wa.gov/washington-data-research/population-demographics/population-estimates/population-density/population-density-county#slideshow-12>

<sup>18</sup> Tacoma, in the South Puget Sound, region is Washington’s third-most populous city; Vancouver, in the Southwest region, is the fourth most populous as of the 2020 Census.

<sup>19</sup> The Economic Policy Institute’s recommendation is that childcare costs should not exceed 7% of a Washington family income. For more details, see: Economic Policy Institute. (n.d.). *The Cost of Childcare in the United States*. Economic Policy Institute. <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/WA>.

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<sup>21</sup> Bintar, J. & Reese, S. (September 2025). *Closing the Gap: Making College Affordable for Student-Parents at Public Two-Year Colleges*. EdTrust. <https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/SP-Policy-Brief-Final.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> See pg. 38 of Bryant, M., & Magisos, A. (January 2025). *Reassessing Basic Needs Security Among Washington College Students*. Washington Student Achievement Council. <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025.BasicNeedsReport.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> For details on standard non-traditional childcare hours see: Administration for Children & Families. (August 2023). *Understanding Families’ Access to Nontraditional-hour Child Care and Early Education*. Administration for Children & Families. <https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/Nontraditional-hour%20Care%20highlight%20508.pdf> ; For data on the share of students taking any night, weekend or online classes see: National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). *Digest of Education Statistics: Table 311.20. Number and percentage of undergraduate students taking night, weekend, or online classes, by selected characteristics: 2011-12*. National Center for Education Statistics. [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d22/tables/dt22\\_311.20.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d22/tables/dt22_311.20.asp?current=yes) ; See also National Survey of Early Care & Education Project Team. (September 2015). *Fact Sheet: Provision of Early Care and Education during Non-Standard Hours*. Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/factsheet\\_nonstandard\\_hours\\_provision\\_of\\_ece\\_toopre\\_041715\\_508.pdf](https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/factsheet_nonstandard_hours_provision_of_ece_toopre_041715_508.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> See pg. 38 of Bryant, M., & Magisos, A. (January 2025). *Reassessing Basic Needs Security Among Washington College Students*. Washington Student Achievement Council. <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025.BasicNeedsReport.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> ChildCare.gov. (n.d.). *Supervision: Ratios and Group Sizes*. Childcare.gov. <https://childcare.gov/consumer-education/regulated-child-care/supervision-ratios-and-group-sizes>



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- <sup>27</sup> Dichter, H., Mitchell, A., & Stoney, L. (2001). *Financing Child Care in the United States: An Expanded Catalog of Current Strategies*. Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED458932> ; For a more recent distillation of costs associated with operating a childcare center, see the chapter on costs in New America's The Care Report, "The First Pillar of Care: Cost." <https://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/care-report/first-pillar-care-cost/>
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- <sup>31</sup> Carrazana, C. (August 2023). *The Death of a day care: when a child care center closes, an entire community is affected*. The 19<sup>th</sup>. <https://19thnews.org/2023/08/child-care-centers-closing-pandemic-era-funding-communities/>
- <sup>32</sup> Bintar, J. & Reese, S. (September 2025). *Closing the Gap: Making College Affordable for Student-Parents at Public Two-Year Colleges*. EdTrust. <https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/SP-Policy-Brief-Final.pdf> ; The student-parent affordability gap is a measure that adds child-care costs to the net price of college while subtracting the income a student-parent could reasonably earn working 10 hours per week. Statewide, non-parenting students have an affordability gap of \$13,000 and must work 26 hours a week to cover their unmet need. In contrast, Washington parenting students have an affordability gap of \$32,000 and must work 69 hours a week to meet their unmet need. See also: EdTrust. (September 2025). *Affordability Gap State Rankings* [Dashboard]. <https://edtrust.org/rti/supporting-student-parents-at-two-year-colleges-addressing-the-affordability-gap/>
- <sup>33</sup> Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families. (n.d.). *Working Connections Child Care*. Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families. <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/services/earlylearning-childcare/getting-help/wccc>. Secondary sources specify that the work requirement for part-time students is a minimum of 20 hours, however we have elected to directly quote the eligibility language on the DCYF website since we could not independently confirm that 20 hours is a minimum.
- <sup>34</sup> For additional details on the challenges that adult learners face, see: Washington Student Achievement Council. (2022). *Study of Adult Learners*. Washington Student Achievement Council. [https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/WSAC.Berk\\_AdultLearnerStudy.pdf](https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/WSAC.Berk_AdultLearnerStudy.pdf)
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- <sup>36</sup> Since 2023, Everett Community College has closed their early learning center and no longer receives the CCAMPIS grant. See 2023 CCAMPIS grantees: <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ed.gov%2Fsites%2Fed%2Ffiles%2Fprograms%2Fcampisp%2Fccampisfinal2023.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK> ; See also: U.S. Department of Education. (July 2025). *Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program (CCAMPIS)*. U.S. Department of Education. <https://www.ed.gov/grants-and-programs/grants-special-populations/economically-disadvantaged-students/child-care-access-means-parents-in-school-program> For further details on

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- <sup>39</sup> Spokane Community College. (n.d.). *Childcare*. Spokane Community College. <https://scc.spokane.edu/For-Our-Students/Student-Resources/Childcare>
- <sup>40</sup> University of Washington-Bothell: Student Affairs. (n.d.). *Parenting Student Resource Program*. University of Washington-Bothell. <https://www.uwb.edu/student-affairs/hawrc/basic-needs-programming/students-who-are-parents> ; For details on available WorkLife resources see: <https://hr.uw.edu/worklife/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2023/07/worklife-summary-20230714-a11y.pdf>
- <sup>41</sup> Palmer, I. New America. (January 2025). *Childcare Centers on Campus Alone Don't Solve the Problem*. New America. <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/child-care-centers-on-campus-alone-dont-solve-the-problem/>
- <sup>42</sup> Geschke, W. (May 2025). Everett Community College to close Early Learning Center. Heraldnet. <https://www.heraldnet.com/news/everett-community-college-to-close-early-learning-center/>
- <sup>43</sup> Washington State University: Student Affairs. (n.d.). *Resources*. Washington State University. <https://women.wsu.edu/resources/>
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### About the Washington Student Achievement Council

The Washington Student Achievement Council is committed to increasing educational opportunities and attainment in Washington. The Council has three main functions:

- Lead statewide strategic planning to increase educational attainment.
- Administer programs that help people access and pay for college.
- Advocate for the economic, social, and civic benefits of higher education.

The Council has ten members. Four members represent each of Washington's major education sectors: four-year public baccalaureates, four-year private colleges, public community and technical colleges, and K-12 public schools. Six are citizen members, including two current students (one graduate student and one undergraduate student).

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