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Washington Student Achievement Council
Listening Tour Summary

Introduction

At the beginning of 2013, the Washington Student Achievement Council launched a statewide Listening Tour to engage in a constructive dialogue with stakeholders. This tour came on the heels of their Critical Crossroads[1] report detailing the challenges faced by education in Washington. During the tour, Council members gathered feedback related to the issues set out in that report and asked what is and is not working, all in preparation for the creation of a Ten-Year Roadmap that they will present to the Legislature by the first of December.

The Council invited attendees from a broad cross-section of those invested in educational achievement and attainment in Washington, with a particular emphasis on outreach to under-represented communities and communities of color. Participants included educators, education administrators, students, education advocates, legislators, and community leaders from ten cities around the state.

From this plurality of voices, common themes emerged. These themes form the basis for this report – a report that does not pretend to supply answers to the significant challenges that education faces in Washington. Rather, this report supplies needed perspective to the Council as they begin their difficult work of generating recommendations on these issues.

Throughout the Listening Tour, Council members focused on putting the needs of students first. Their mission is not about coordinating the various statewide educational institutions, but rather about helping students achieve. They approached this tour with open ears and open minds, ready to hear current examples of what is working for education in the state, and what the greatest challenges are.

Importantly, what they heard was a great deal of wisdom, dedication and hope for the future. Council members were particularly struck by the impressive results that have been achieved by a variety of education-related programs around the state. While there are many concerns about the state of education in Washington, those concerns were almost always voiced as constructive criticisms, accompanied by relevant and productive suggestions. What you will find on the pages that follow represents great potential for education in Washington, and therefore great opportunity for generations of Washingtonians to come.

– Coraggio Group

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[1] A summary of the Critical Crossroads report is included as an appendix to this report, on page 38

Listening Tour: By the Numbers

8 dates

10 cities

113 organizations

224 individual stakeholders

2,603 invitees

59,076 words of notes

Executive Summary

This Listening Tour was undertaken in light of this premise: education in Washington is at a critical crossroads, this is a threat to the economic well-being of the state's residents, and urgent action is required to make improvements. While none disputed the challenges, meeting participants around the state detailed an impressive array of successes and a long list of programs that are working to rectify this.

Perhaps the greatest challenge this Council faces is not the daunting list of issues, but rather the heavy synthesis that must happen in order to turn these isolated examples into replicable or scalable solutions that can be implemented across our state in ways that are customized to local communities yet be measurable and accountable under common agreement.

This report begins the process of aligning all that was heard into logical groups that can provide the Council with a basis for its ongoing planning, including the Ten-Year Roadmap due December 1, 2013. We have divided the information into six sections, each representing an overarching theme that the Council members heard around the state. Each of the six sections highlights what is working, what challenges exist, and what the implications are for Washington. This summary information is backed up with sub-themes culled from the city-by-city reports that were generated throughout the tour.

The six main themes are:

1. Collaboration and innovation happen at the local level, but must be enabled and encouraged statewide.

2. We should support "systems thinking" to better support students in their transitions between institutions, or between school and work.

3. While change is necessary, it can be costly, create widespread frustration, and sometimes result in outcomes that do not improve student achievement.

4. Educational institutions, like individual students, are unique. "One size fits all" solutions often fall short when this isn't taken into account.

5. Socioeconomic factors are integral to any solution.

6. Funding focus and prioritization will be critical to improving educational outcomes for Washington students over time.

In the "Critical Crossroads" report of December 2012, the Council identified five critical levers of change. Each theme in this report crosses multiple levers of change, as illustrated in the table below:

	Readiness	Affordability	Institutional Capacity and Student Success	Capturing the Potential of Technology	Stable and Accountable Funding
Collaboration and innovation happen at the local level, but must be enabled and encouraged statewide.	✓		✓	✓	
We should support "systems thinking" to better support students in their transitions between institutions, or between school and work.	✓		✓	✓	✓
While change is necessary, it can be costly, create widespread frustration and sometimes result in outcomes that do not improve student achievement.	✓		✓		✓
Educational institutions, like individual students, are unique. "One size fits all" solutions often fall short when this isn't taken into account.	✓		✓	✓	
Socioeconomic factors are integral to any solution.	✓	✓			✓
Funding focus and prioritization will be critical to improving educational outcomes for Washington students over time.	✓	✓	✓		✓

This amount of crossover is to be expected – in a system so complex, there will be many cross-connections between the ideas and the action targets. We have also indicated these crossovers on the summary pages for each theme.

At the end of the report can be found brief summaries of the multitude of successful programs that the Council members learned about during this Listening Tour, as well as a comprehensive list of all organizations whose representatives met with the Council members.

Theme 1: Collaboration and innovation happen at the local level, but must be enabled and encouraged statewide.

Summary

Through the Listening Tour, Council members were presented with numerous local efforts and programs that are contributing to significant educational impact on a local level. Examples include collaboration with employers to design and graduate college students with skills appropriate to job market demands, and programs like Running Start and GEARup.[2] The mechanisms for collaboration ranged from structured programs to informal meetings that ensure coordination across multiple organizations. The common complaint, however, was that innovation and collaboration are often constrained by state requirements and regulation which, while perhaps well intended, result in limitations on what local communities can do. Participants also highlighted that while employers are asking for more "soft skills" from graduates, they also need to get more involved and engaged with educational institutions.

> **RELATED TO CHANGE LEVERS:**
> - Readiness
> - Institutional Capacity and Student Success
> - Capturing the Potential of Technology

What's Working?

Local collaboration between 2-year and 4-year higher education institutions

> *"We collaborate and talk between the higher education organizations in this region. All of us meet periodically to look at ways we might be able to work together."*

Local collaboration between K-12 and higher education

> *"In terms of being a trustee for ten years, there are a lot of meetings between all the boards. The staff and faculty are getting behind a seamless transition between K-12, CC and 4-years. There is a lot of collaboration right now."*

Local collaboration between employers and educators can provide stronger pathways to careers. However, there was concern that employers are often uninterested or disengaged from the discussion.

> *"Employers here have been involved in this region with [the community college and the university]… They tell us they'll teach content (schools can't keep up with the rapid change anyway) – [but that they need for educators] to have curriculum and experiences that prepare students to be adaptable, flexible, and gain real-world 'soft' skills."*

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[2] See the "Programs and Tools" section on page 31 for details on these and other programs.

Success Story

The Spokane STEM Network has seen improvements in STEM education through local collaboration. The group seeks to:

- Build a community consensus for the importance of STEM education
- Increase readiness for postsecondary STEM-related education through improved curriculum and instruction
- Increase Readiness for postsecondary STEM-related education through effective and transformational professional development for educators
- Increase Completion of postsecondary degrees and certificates in STEM fields
- Advocate for positive change in rules, law, and policy affecting STEM education and workforce development

What are the Challenges?

Allowing for local flexibility in how programs are implemented to recognize regional differences.

> *"I wish they would give us some flexibility in what we fund instead of mandating it."*

Statewide requirements and contractual obligations often prevent us from being able to give students what they need to succeed.

> *"Collective bargaining ties my hands a lot. For example, we are locked into a 180-day year with 6.5 hour days. If I was able to differentiate, I would build a more year-round calendar for the kids who need it. Nothing against any one teacher, but they have a trump card in terms of being able to change the calendar."*

First generation parents often don't have an understanding of the educational requirements for their children.

> *"Often, it's not lack of desire [on the part of parents], but they don't know how to engage."*

> *"Somewhere around 55% of our students are first-generation college-goers. That's the highest percentage in the state." -- President Arévalo, Eastern Washington University*

Challenge Spotlight

Percentage of first-Generation College Students at EWU
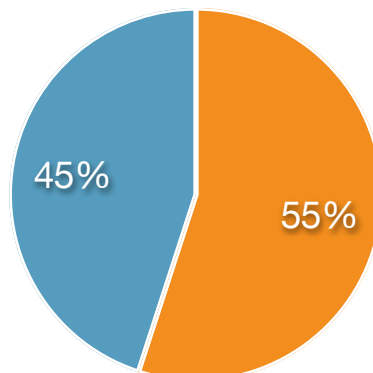
- 🟠 First-Generation
- 🔵 Parents College-Educated

What are the Implications?

1. As the House and Senate, as well as OSPI, consider the right level of local accountability and outcome expectations, consideration should be given to the differences between communities and how community collaboration can affect outcomes.

2. Consider ways to encourage local collaboration and innovation where there is a high disparity in socioeconomic factors influencing regions and communities across the state.

3. Identify local innovations and find ways to share them across the state.

Theme 1 Sub-Themes

Institutions are collaborating locally to bridge gaps in the system, but need more flexibility and encouragement to innovate.

In Bellingham and across the state, Council members heard a need for improved collaboration, coordination and alignment across educational sectors and to meet the workforce needs of our area and state. Education institutions, including school districts, universities, community colleges, technical colleges, and tribal colleges in Whatcom and Skagit County are collaborating and working together to create close connections between the K-12 and higher education systems, ensure little overlap in programs and offerings, and connect to employers to ensure they are meeting workforce needs. Patricia McKeown, President of Bellingham Technical College, commented, "We are very responsive within the two-year system. When there are changing workforce needs, we have independently or collaboratively developed the programs to meet those needs."

Many institutions in both the K-12 and the higher education systems pointed to the need for more flexibility in offering the programs that students need. One trustee commented, "We are hampered by our overall system and the controls that are put on us....We would like more flexibility to be as innovative as we want to be."

Examples included:

*   Allowing school districts the flexibility to fund full day Kindergarten and pre-K programs

*   Creating opportunities for flexibility with school calendars, including summer school and all-year school options

*   Allowing community colleges more flexibility in how they structure programs and collaborate with employers, from work-study to entry requirements for programs

School administrators, non-profit leaders and teachers agree that a collaborative, integrated approach to addressing the needs of at-risk and disadvantaged students is critical to improving student outcomes.

There is often a lack of connection between school, community, and human services for students in poverty. In order to provide them with the support they need to stay in school, they need a multi-faceted support system which works together with their family. In Ellensburg, as one K-12

administrator pointed out, "We used to have programs to get kids who were getting in trouble [support by] building a multi-unit plan where schools, juvenile detention, etc. worked together and gave strength to the system. Everyone was working together to get them out of trouble." Community College and K-12 leaders point to programs like Running Start and GEAR Up as having a big impact on these students in Yakima and Ellensburg.

Educational structures must be coordinated so we can deliver services that will otherwise fall through the cracks.

In Seattle, we heard that many services that are essential for student success have distributed responsibility throughout the education system, and when nobody is "in charge" of them, they are likely to be delivered inconsistently. For instance, the more graduating high school students who fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, the more federal education dollars that are likely to flow into our state. But, as Mary Jean Ryan of the Road Map Project put it, "Whose job is it to help? Nobody's job. We need coordinated structures so we can deliver these services that fall in the grey area."

Similarly, every higher education institution puts forth considerable effort to attract students, and these efforts could be aligned. Independent Colleges of Washington President Violet Boyer said, "Every college is out there encouraging kids to go to college: bringing kids on campus, etc. If you created a group of the outreach people on campuses to talk about best practices, how they do what they do – you could facilitate the conversation. We need a coxswain – somebody who gets us to row in unison."

Collaboration works, but transparency is key.

Council members have heard about many effective programs that boast collaboration between agencies, non-profits, and education providers. One key insight they gleaned involves getting all parties at the table to form a memorandum of understanding and agree to transparency with one another. This peer-accountability system promotes effectiveness, allows for organizations to mentor one another, and can keep a collaborative effort honed down to the most effective organizations working in that space.

Only so much can be steered from afar – communities need to drive their own success and form their own connections.

Particularly in rural areas and isolated urban areas, Council members have heard that decisions made in Olympia — both in the Legislature and at OSPI — often don't mesh with local context. The greatest gains made in these communities often come from their own deliberate efforts at collaborative work between education sectors, and with the local business community.

In some cases, local businesses provide opportunities for on-the-job learning, or partner with institutions to employ recent graduates. In other cases, local business groups are beginning to meet with higher education institutions to find alignment between programs and employment positions.

Educators often bear a great burden in keeping up with all the regulations and requirements that are put into law, cutting into the time they have for instruction and professional development. As one K-12 administrator put it: "The Legislature should be focusing on rights and responsibilities, not on which tests we should give third graders."

Families and communities are key partners in the educational endeavor, and we need to find better ways to engage and support them.

Council members heard from many meeting attendees about how much of an influence parents and communities can have on academic success – both in positive and negative ways. Programs that give parents the tools to support their children's education have terrific potential to boost attainment.

However, this is outside of the traditional purview of education reform, and schools aren't able to provide these services. Partnerships with programs like Head Start were cited as meaningful examples of how to address this gap.

As former WSU Spokane Chancellor Brian Pitcher put it, "[We need to] stress that it's a partnership. Business needs to get involved again, and parents need to get involved. This absolutely needs to be more localized."

Theme 2: We should support "systems thinking" to better support students in their transitions between institutions, or between school and work.

Summary

There was widespread acknowledgement that the transition points within and between education institutions and/or between school and career are among the moments most rich with possibility for the improvement of educational outcomes. When transitions are prepared for properly, they can be terrific accelerants for student success. When they are not well-supported they can be frustrating fetters, often giving a sense of "one step forward and two steps back."

RELATED TO CHANGE LEVERS:
- Readiness
- Institutional Capacity and Student Success
- Capturing the Potential of Technology
- Stable and Account-able Funding

What is working?

Systemic thinking

"How did we [get to the point where we could collaborate between institutional levels]? A lot of it was being able to tolerate discomfort. There's a lot of blaming the first couple of meetings. And you need to get through that."

Early childhood education

"If a student gets off to a great start in Pre-K, and then begins to see him- or herself as a learner in early elementary school, that is going to take them forward into life in really powerful ways."

Community support structures

For Example: Family Community Resource Centers helped Vancouver Public Schools reduce "struggling" schools from six to two over four school years, as seen in the chart below.[3]

Success Story

Legend:
- Struggling
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good
- Exemplary
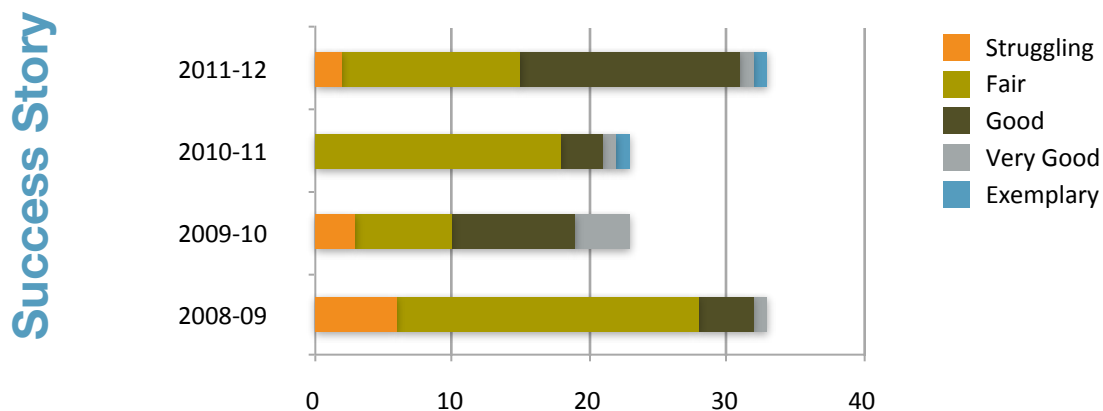
3 Source: Tom Hagley, Jr, Executive Director, Community & Government Relations, Vancouver Public Schools

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What Are the Challenges?

Data sets are not comprehensive

One administrator admitted to retroactively going back through records to reverse-engineer what made the successful graduates. If this data were more available at all levels, this could be understood more easily, and with much greater precision.

Inadequate student readiness

For instance, 60% of students entering community and technical colleges in Washington need remedial coursework.[4]

Challenge Spotlight

● Need Remediation
● Do Not Need Remediation

40%

60%
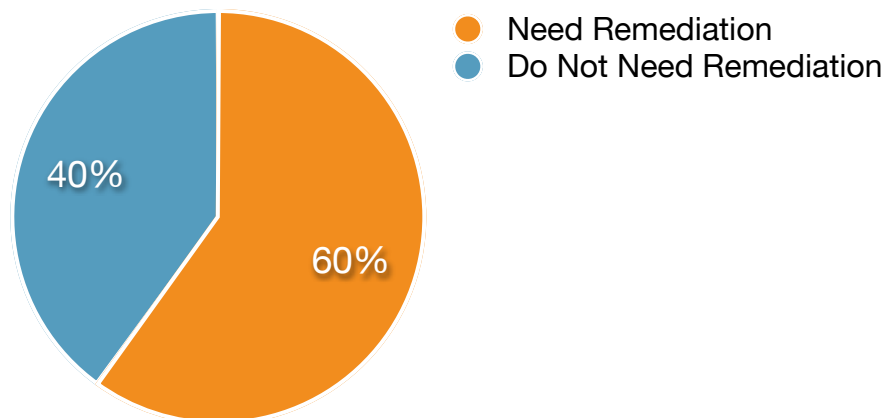
Unclear opportunity paths

"The counselors in high school weren't the greatest in helping us find the courses that we needed to take. I think there could be a lot more connection [to the higher education institutions]."

What Are the Implications?

1. Connect schools to communities

2. Enable and incent collaboration

3. Invest in data clarity

[4] Source: Washington Student Achievement Council

Theme 2 Sub-Themes

It is critical to start earlier in the system – even before pre-Kindergarten.

Many participants, both in the K-12 system and in higher education, pointed to early childhood education as a key lever for change. As a public school administrator put it, "If a student gets off to a great start in Pre-K, and then begins to see him- or herself as a learner in early elementary school, that is going to take them forward into life in really powerful ways."

Education is not a series of institutions; it must be a system (and one with many participants).

As the Council members have heard in other locations, the efforts that have the highest success in improving student outcomes are often those that bridge across educational sectors and into communities. A true partnership is not just between elementary, secondary, and university levels but involves all aspects of the community – business, nonprofits, government, and education. One powerful lever for the Vancouver area is that the community understands the value of partnerships; this has permitted the implementation of programs such as the Family Community Resource Centers to support low-performing schools.

Greater communication around standards and expectations is particularly needed between the sectors. While curriculum is being aligned informally, a more rigorous approach would minimize missed opportunities when students progress with skills not aligned to needs at the next level, whether that is the next step in education, or entry into the workforce. While the Council members heard much agreement about the need to align, it remains unclear where the responsibility lies for making those changes.

A systems-based approach to education was urged by many attendees. As Edri Geiger, a Vancouver Public Schools board member put it, "We have a discussion that is talking about bits – early learning, K-12, etc. Those are just segments. By just talking in these bits, we allow for segments to protect their own."

Silos within the educational system can be broken down, but not without significant effort.

The Spokane area boasts a vital conversation among educators at various levels -- bringing subject-matter instructors from K-12 and higher education together, for instance. When these partnerships have invested the effort required, they have been able to align on standards and improve transitions, making them more of a hand-up than a hand-off.

This isn't easy to do, however. Jim Minkler, VP of Learning at Spokane Falls Community College, had this to say: "How did we do it? A lot of it was being able to tolerate discomfort. There's a lot of blaming the first couple of meetings. And you need to get through that."

Higher education leaders likewise said that they have been working together, but that it has required frank discussion and a willingness to collaborate from all parties.

Cross-institutional data is needed, is currently lacking, and faces challenges.

The ability to track student progress has a wide variety of uses and is beneficial for many organizations. Good tracking can help determine what is working (success stories) as well as identify trouble spots (e.g. at-risk students). But there are currently huge gaps in data, particularly when trying to view information across multiple institutions. There is no ability, for instance, to measure outcomes from one educational level to the next, much less into employment outcomes. We have made some progress with data, but much remains to be done. One attendee put it this way: "We need the data to know if we are getting the results we need once they leave campus."

Further, the lack of available data leads to inefficiencies. One administrator admitted to retroactively going back through records to reverse-engineer what made the successful graduates. If this data were more available at all levels, this could be understood more easily, and with much greater precision.

A practical issue facing such tracking data is privacy concerns, including what kind of unique identifier should be used for student tracking. Public perception of tracking students is often perceived as a "Big Brother" type practice, posing challenges to the implementation of any such system.

High school counseling in Washington is challenged to appropriately and sufficiently prepare all students for the decisions they need to make about college and career.

Echoing comments the Council members have heard in other parts of the state, many roundtable participants in Southeastern Washington cited the need to provide more high school counselors, and to arm those counselors with the information they need. Courtnee Grego, a student at WSU Tri-Cities, recalled the counselors she recently had in her high school: "The counselors in high school weren't the greatest in helping us find the courses that we needed to take. I think there could be a lot more connection [to the higher education institutions]." The responsibility for this connection lies on both sides. As one university administrator said, "I'm not playing the blame game – it's really about the back-and-forth communication. We have failed K-12 in some ways by not clearly communicating what the expectations are."

When students do have access to counselors, those counselors may unintentionally frame a binary choice between a four-year institution and no higher education at all. Shane Reeder, from for-profit Charter College said, "High school counselors talk about that to students – if it's not four years, it's not moving on. They put emphasis there, and not on other options." Rich Cummins, President of Columbia Basin College, had a similar perspective: "Another faculty counselor [was heard to say] – if you want to go to Harvard, take four years of writing, four years of math, etc. If you want to go to the community college, they will just give you a test when you get over there."

This isn't a new issue – high school counseling has been stretched thin for generations. Whitman College President George Bridges recalled, "My high school counselor told me that I probably couldn't cut it in college and should look into a vocational program. He had over 300 students to work with. He could only base his recommendation on a standardized test score I had received. Fortunately, my mother and I had a different vision."

Washington's schools need to prepare HS students for college, ensuring they need less remedial support when they get there.

All higher education institutions agreed that they have high numbers of students who require remedial support when they start college. This puts a burden on both families to fund this support and institutions that need to offer remedial services.

Community college representatives see this as a key part of their mission – to teach students basic skills at the same time as they are getting a college degree. "Our job is mostly teaching people how to be good learners. We give them the content of a 2 year college education and teach them how to learn at the same time, which I think is nothing short of heroic," commented Dr. Ron Leatherbarrow, Vice President for Instruction at Whatcom Community College.

Alignment and coordination of credits between higher education institutions as well as programs like Running Start into college needs improvement.

Students and educators in Olympia pointed to the lack of transferability of many credits between institutions across the state as well as from the K-12 system into college. They highlighted the fact that this is costly to students as they sometimes have to repeat elements in order to gain credits they have already completed, or lose credits when they transfer. Many students are trying to graduate early

or take additional credits to reduce their debt burden, and transfers can add an additional barrier. As Angie Weiss, Government Relations Director for the Associated Students of University of Washington pointed out, "If we could have aligned course numbering systems it would help transfers across institutions."

Online learning will clearly be an integral part of the future of education, but it must complement other aspects of the educational experience.

Council members listened as several education leaders shared their experience and discussed the power and pitfalls of online education. Participants shared stories about the importance of access for online learning to be successful, especially for K-12 students, referencing the initiative "Bridging the Digital Divide" from the Clinton administration. They also discussed how it has the power to change lives by giving access to opportunities that individuals might not find in their local environments.

The value of online learning in giving students skills to prepare them for college and for the workforce was discussed. One participant shared that he had done some research and found that a number of states are now requiring online classes as a prerequisite for high school graduation. "It's a recognition that students will need to have these skills and be fluent in online learning for college and beyond."

On all aspects of learning, both online and classroom, the participants agreed that creating the need and desire for learning is a prerequisite. Another participant commented, "Access itself isn't enough. Perhaps the value of what their goal is – what do they want to learn and become – is the critical piece to make the intrinsic value of learning attainable at an earlier age."

Improving student transitions in the education system

Participants pointed out that one of the key weaknesses in the education system is the transitions – at Kindergarten, from elementary to high school, from high school to college, and from college to career. In Olympia and across the state, Council members heard many suggestions on how to improve those transitions.

Jonelle Adams, Executive Director, Washington State School Directors' Association, shared the WSSDA's report, "Strategies for Improving Key Transition Points in the P-20 education system." As Dr. Adams pointed out, many of these strategies are already being implemented across the state. "We have bold school board members who are willing to do this," she commented.

Other participants echoed the theme of letting local communities decide how to address this issue. Kristine Bartanen, Academic Vice President, University of Puget Sound, highlighted the Access programs at Puget Sound which give middle school through high school student's access to the college experience through a series of ongoing programs, including a full-time, month-long math and science focused summer program.

Theme 3: While change is necessary, it can be costly, create widespread frustration and sometimes result in outcomes that do not improve student achievement.

Summary

While Listening Tour participants agreed that there are many innovations that they would like to see in their communities, they also had the perception that change is sometimes pursued for its own sake. Exploring successful models and thoroughly considering the goals and implications of statewide change efforts would help the success of those efforts. This theme was reflected in the perceptions of testing initiatives across the state as well as the approach to technology integration in education.

> **RELATED TO CHANGE LEVERS:**
> - Readiness
> - Institutional Capacity and Student Success
> - Capturing the Potential of Technology
> - Stable and Accountable Funding

What's working?

Education leaders want to be held accountable for performance and student achievement in their communities

> *"We have a 97% graduation rate. We do, however, have a resource gap. Our students don't have the resources that other kids in this state have."*

Faculty and administrators are reaching out to colleagues in other parts of the state and learning about what is successful there, to understand what and how they implement it at their institution.

> *"We are in the middle of a grant to do what Spokane did – what is it that the kids do in high school that ends up with a successful college experience? We have 15 of 18 school districts signed up."*

Success Story

Achieving the Dream

At Whatcom Community College the Council heard about the success of the Achieving the Dream program in aligning and inspiring faculty, staff and administration behind a singular purpose: ensuring student attainment. Trish Onion, Vice President for Educational Services at Whatcom, believes the success of this program lies in the fact that it is data-driven and that it is wholeheartedly embraced by many of the faculty and staff.

What are the challenges?

Regulations and restrictions can stifle creativity and local initiative

> *"There has to be a better connection between practitioners and policy makers. We have many masters… [it works] as long as it doesn't come down as a top-down mandate."*

Faculty and administrators are feeling change fatigue

Challenge Spotlight

"They [our K-12 faculty] have gone through more change in the last three years than they did in the twenty years prior. There's change fatigue."

> *"The Teacher/Principal Evaluation Project will fail – when I have a rookie principal, they don't have the time to manage the logistics"*

High-stakes testing, while useful in terms of accountability, can place undue emphasis on particular portions of the educational spectrum.

> *"I'm very concerned with high-stakes testing as it relates to the Certificate of Academic Achievement. The CAA was originally supposed to be added to the diploma, not be a requirement to attain it."*

What are the implications?

1. Support the implementation of the WSAC 10-year roadmap, and stick with it
2. Set clear goals in terms of student achievement
3. Consider collaboration forums for Washington educators to learn about the "best of" what is happening across the state

Theme 3 Sub-themes

Educators want to innovate, but they get change fatigue, and need clarity around the ultimate goals.

Educators on the front lines feel as if they are serving multiple masters, and that winds of change can blow in from many directions, often before they are able to get traction on the last change. While all share the desire to improve student outcomes, many decried the lack of consistency in what is expected of them. As one educator put it: "In K-12, we keep changing the standards that we are chasing."

Rex Fuller, Provost at Eastern Washington University, summed it up for higher education: "President Arévalo is telling us to go out and watch the data – be farsighted. Eastern has always been innovative, and our faculty are willing to be innovative. [But] they need some ways to secure resources to be innovative."

High-stakes testing may have unintended consequences.

The graduation requirements that are being rolled out in Washington raise issues for many education professionals and other community leaders. Concerns mostly revolve around the single point of pressure that these high-stakes EOC tests put upon graduation rates, as well as concerns that they may act as psychological barriers to further education. A local school district board member said, "Then there is this exam they are expected to pass to graduate. I think it does nothing to encourage anyone. I think that's an incredible thing to put over people's heads."

Other participants expressed concern that these tests were a "one size fits all" tool designed without the perspective of the variety of students in the state, and that they may force students who are otherwise on track for graduation to drop out.

Walla Walla Schools Superintendent Mick Miller summed it up: "I'm very concerned with high-stakes testing as it relates to the Certificate of Academic Achievement. The CAA was originally supposed to be added to the diploma, not be a requirement to attain it."

Technology is an opportunity, but also has challenges in how it is implemented.

While participants believe there are significant opportunities for the use of technology, many cautioned that it is also challenging to implement. One faculty member who teaches online courses clarified the opportunity. "The classrooms are where the learning happens… Hybrid courses worked well, I could see what they were getting and what they weren't. The online part allowed them to work at home, but the in-person part allowed for student-to-student interaction and interaction with the professor."

Participants also encouraged the Council members to see the technology opportunity more broadly, not just about Massive Open Online Courses but about how to integrate digital learning into all aspects of the education system.

Theme 4: Educational institutions, like individual students, are unique. "One size fits all" solutions often fall short when this isn't taken into account.

Summary

In many locales, Council members heard that local institutions desired greater flexibility to innovate for local solutions, yet this is sometimes challenged by uniform expectations or measures of success imposed from outside the community. Finding opportunities for local innovation that is simultaneously equitable is a terrific challenge, but seems to be rich with possibility.

Students, likewise, could benefit from greater access to flexible choices, particularly if those choices are better illuminated for them.

> **RELATED TO CHANGE LEVERS:**
> - Readiness
> - Institutional Capacity and Student Success
> - Capturing the Potential of Technology

What's working?

Local institutions find innovative ways to serve their communities

Success Story

> *"This [Enology and Viticulture] program has created 9,000 jobs, and has had a 230 million-dollar impact. And it's attracting talent to Walla Walla like you wouldn't believe."[5]*

9,000 jobs
$230,000,000
added to the Walla Walla area economy

Statewide institutions develop complementary specialties

> *"I don't think we would be competing so much if we had a better sense of why all the sectors are critical for the overall success of the educational system… how they are all part of the overall remedy."*

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5 Source: Steven VanAusdle, President, Walla Walla Community College

Consortium models allow for coverage of a broader spectrum of needs

> "We recognize that through collaboration and coordination, we can better serve our students and our communities as we fulfill that mission. To that end, we hereby establish a consortium… with the goal of maximizing efficiencies and promoting institutional coordination and collaboration."

What are the challenges?

Consistently delivering "soft skills" is difficult

> "My experiences in theater and in student government helped keep me engaged and able to work successfully in teams."

Students don't necessarily understand the choices they have

> "We must recognize that their family experience often doesn't help them get and stay on a path to the right college. That requires deliberate institutional attention to help them know about and make effective choices that support their success in college."

Connectivity between employers and educators is often poor

> "[We need to] stress that it's a partnership. Business needs to get involved again, and parents need to get involved. This absolutely needs to be more localized."

What are the implications?

1. We can apply frameworks rather than rigid structures, allowing for institutions to fill voids.

2. We can incent collaborative, rather than competitive, connections between institutions.

3. Better connections to employers will illuminate choices and support "soft skill" development.

Theme 4 Sub-themes

Students need choices, and they need for those choices to be better-defined for them.

Given the ever-increasing expense of higher education, and a challenged job market in many fields, there were many who felt that students should be given the resources to make more informed decisions about their education, and in particular about what those choices might mean for them.

Sally Jackson, Director of Planning, Institutional Effectiveness and Research at Spokane Falls Community College had this to say: "One of the challenges I am seeing is the impact of financial aid changes. We have a culture that has promoted the prolongation of adolescence, and yet we are asking 18 year-olds to know what they are doing for the rest of their education. Or asking eighth graders to know what track they are on – there are undue expectations put on the students."

Students, too, felt that they could use more guidance. Jonny Whitmore, Associated Students of Whitworth University, said, "I don't remember anybody telling me what the market is like. People told me to go after my passions, do what I wanted to do. I would have appreciated more guidance that would have matched my passions to what kinds of open jobs there are."

This pointed to what some called a deficit in the availability of high school counselors to help students make those choices: "We have 2000 students, and four counselors. We aren't funded at the level that I think our counseling needs to be," said an area school district administrator.

Access is vital, but there is no single best way to provide access.

Because there are so many different groups and types of students with disparate needs, there is no "magic bullet" for providing access to education. The Vancouver area has both urban and rural areas, and has both well-to-do and economically challenged populations. This diversity requires a collection of approaches to providing educational access at all levels.

The physical campus of WSU Vancouver has been a boon to place-bound students in the area, while online education offers many opportunities for the more rural portions of southwest Washington, providing opportunities for high school students to gain access to Running Start college courses, for instance.

More isolated campuses like Lower Columbia College can provide applied baccalaureate degrees, and can partner with universities to provide instruction on their campuses. At LCC, they have brought City University to campus with an Education and Teacher Certification program, and have plans to add programs from Washington State University and Eastern Washington University.

As one administrator said, "The community is thrilled – it gives more baccalaureate opportunity to people who are place-bound."

Students need to feel that they have paths to careers, and that all those options have value.

Many participants felt that an over-emphasis on four-year education as the "preferred" path gives short shrift to other pathways to careers. If the decision becomes a binary one of "college" or "not college," then many students disengage early if they feel that they are not on the college path. Bob Hickey, a professor at CWU, put it this way: "The two most important places to pour resources are preschool and junior high. Kids need to be exposed to all of their options for the future. What I see as the largest loss is vocational and technical education – the fact that a kid doesn't get to play with a welder and figure out that they like fixing things. We are pushing kids away from these opportunities. It's junior high where those decisions are made."

Council members also heard that students tend to get sorted in education systems, and that this may contribute to declining outcomes for the student who is not college-bound. "They ask in eighth grade whether your student is college bound, and you had better say 'yes' or they will get slotted into remedial courses," commented one participant.

Higher-ed institutions should find and develop unique niches so we have a system that is more comprehensive than it is competitive.

All four-year institutions in Washington are not cut from the same cloth. Likewise, the Community and Technical colleges each serve unique needs of different student populations. However, this story is not often told. Council members have heard from many education leaders who say we could do a better job of both defining and refining those differences. The result would be a patchwork of institutions that support a broad range of educational needs, while minimizing duplication of effort.

President Michael Young from the University of Washington had this to say: "How do we turn each of the institutions loose to be best in class? …If you are Evergreen [for instance] be the best you can be

in that space." Meanwhile, another higher-ed administrator asked about how we can better understand the "interlocking" of the various institutions: "I don't think we would be competing so much if we had a better sense of why all the sectors are critical for the overall success of the educational system… how they are all part of the overall remedy."

Efforts such as the Five Star Consortium of community colleges may provide a replicable model of collective engagement between higher-ed institutions.

Both K-12 and higher education need to do a better job of preparing students with the "soft skills" required for employment, while business needs to make a commitment to internships and jobs for qualified candidates.

Employers are looking for employees who know how to work within deadlines, communicate well, know how to present themselves in a professional manner, and can work in teams. Council members heard from members of the business community that these skills are often lacking in graduates. In addition, faculty members indicated that research, while often considered an "optional" area, is actually the place where those soft skills are developed and assessed. "Start a project, propose a hypothesis, prepare a budget, manage a project, sometimes manage other people… and present that information. All of those things can be assessed in that one class. That's why the research component is so important, " said Mike Jackson, Professor and Chair of CWU Department of Physics.

At the same time, both higher education and community colleges believe they could recruit and graduate more qualified workers if they had commitments from employers. That commitment, either to internships or to jobs after college, is very appealing to college students. "I want companies to guarantee internships for the students majoring in our programs. The one thing I believe is missing is partnerships with the business community," said Jackson.

There is a need for rethinking how we teach and how we prepare teachers.

Much of the discussion in Olympia focused on rethinking our teaching models. President Jim Walton of Centralia College shared his impressions of the TED talk by Sugata Mitra, who describes a series of experiments in self-teaching of students conducted in India. His findings were that if children are interested, they educate themselves. "I think it's important that we not just take how we've taught in the past and do it better, but rather that we fundamentally rethink how we teach," said President Walton.

Other participants echoed this theme. Some expressed the need for teacher education programs to change. Many expressed frustration with teacher education programs which prepare teachers as content experts, but not with the skills they need to be effective teachers. "The powerful piece of the TED talk that President Walton has shared is that the children were working together to learn. We know this is one of the most powerful tools we have – that children learn through collaboration. So our teachers need to become facilitators of collaboration," suggested Michelle Andreas, Director, Student Services and Transfer Education, State Board of Community and Technical Colleges.

Different students need different paths.

The Council heard many participants who recognized that a 4-year college education is not right for everyone. Garrett Havens, Executive Director of the Washington Student Association, said "I know a lot of our students come in to college thinking that's what they want, but once they get there, they realize it may not be for them." The discussion focused on many different paths to a career, including straight from high school, a 2-year technical or community college, or a 4-year college. Randy Dorn, Superintendent of Public Instruction, commented, "Today we have shifted to say 'every kid is going to be college and career ready'…I'm not sure people understand what they mean when they say college and career ready. But what we really need to do, is to get them career ready, 2-year college ready, technical college ready, and 4 year college ready."

Theme 5: Socioeconomic factors are integral to any solution.

Summary

At nearly every session during the Listening Tour, community members highlighted the importance of socioeconomic factors that are impacting student achievement. From eastern to western regions of the state, as well as within cities and communities, socioeconomic differences are putting pressures on educational institutions and require coordination and, in some instances, additional resources to address.

> **RELATED TO CHANGE LEVERS:**
> - Readiness
> - Affordability
> - Stable and Account-able Funding

What's Working?

Schools and local social support networks are working together to ensure that the most vulnerable students get what they need.

> *"We have launched family resource centers in our high needs schools. It's a community schools model, bringing partners with a shared interest in making a difference for students and family."*

Local education leaders are developing partnerships with local employers to ensure both job creation for their communities and a steady stream of qualified workers for those employers.

> *"When there are changing workforce needs, we have independently or collaboratively developed the programs to meet those needs."*

Success Story

360+

pre-K children served by La Casa Hogar in 2011

La Casa Hogar, based in Yakima, empowers and supports Hispanic women to overcome significant cultural, linguistic and educational barriers and achieve their dreams. Their Children's Learning Center served over 360 preschool children in 2011.[6] Mothers have the opportunity to experience, learn and practice effective ways to engage their preschool aged children in the learning process. Mothers actively participate in the children's learning center on a regular basis, learning from the

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[6] Source: La Casa Hogar http://www.lacasahogar.org

modeling of the teacher and other resource people. This environment provides an opportunity for the mothers to practice English with their children and to develop skills and confidence in relating to their child's teacher.

What are the Challenges?

Many programs for at-risk youth have been cut over the past 5 years, leading to more pressures on schools.

> *"We used to have programs to get kids who were getting in trouble to build a multi-unit plan where schools, juvenile detention, etc. worked together and gave strength to the system…. It really helped our schools. There's no longer connectivity in the system."*

As state demographics shift over the coming years, schools will have a shifting student population with different needs, but the same requirement to help students graduate from high school and ensure they (and their families) understand what college or career readiness means.

> *"Within 15-20 years, Hispanics will be the majority population in the United States. It's important that we have Hispanic teachers. Bi-lingual is good, but if you are Hispanic, you will be able to sense what the needs of the kids are, and you will also be reaching out to the families. Bring the families in for school events. Language is important, but communication with the community requires a cultural understanding."*

What are the Implications?

1. Explore models for better local coordination between local and state agencies to ensure a more efficient use of resources and outcomes around student achievement

2. Workforce development requires an integrated effort between employers, schools and colleges to ensure that students are developing the right skills for the jobs that will exist when they are starting their career and, in needed, as they are changing careers.

3. When using standardized testing to measure student success, if other factors that may result in poor test scores are not taken into account, we may find that we are measuring student circumstances rather than student achievement.

Theme 5 Sub-themes

Socioeconomic factors must be addressed as part of any solution, and they must be addressed as early as possible.

Many students are impacted by socioeconomic factors, which schools are ill-equipped to overcome by themselves. In the Spokane area, community groups are becoming partners to help alleviate some of these effects, but more could be done.

A school administrator expressed his concern this way: "We haven't touched the subject of the barriers that students bring to school, and we get into ideological fights instead of asking 'what we can do?' Are we willing to ask the questions about what it means to intervene with social programs at an age that can make a difference?"

Michele Cook, a GED instructor from the Community Colleges of Spokane, emphasized that most of the students in her program have socioeconomic challenges: "It's rare that I see students who don't have something else going on outside of class."

All agreed that the potential impact of solutions to these challenges would be profound: "If every child comes to school ready to learn, that is half the battle. Bring 'em ready," said one educator.

Socioeconomic disparities influence educational outcomes, and educational institutions need support to address those disparities.

Throughout the Listening Tour, Council members have heard about the profound effect that socio-economic factors have on educational outcomes throughout the educational system. What is becoming clear, however, is that we can turn that situation on its head by partnering higher educational institutions with communities, K-12 schools, and community support services to deliver an integrated support structure that enables communities to improve educational outcomes.

Programs such as the Seattle University Youth Initiative have already proven the potential of this approach, having helped Bailey Gatzert Elementary — which has a 96% Free/Reduced Lunch population — achieve the greatest test score gain in the Seattle Public School system last year.

This supports the goals of the University as well: about 1,000 Seattle University students are involved in the program, and school administrators cite the tremendous benefit this has had on their educations.

In addition to providing workers, targeted education programs can spur development of whole industries in a community.

Walla Walla Community College President Steven VanAusdle declared that, "Investing in talent is a job creator. The common wisdom is that companies create the jobs and we educate students to meet those needs, but talent investment is a job creator."

He cited the Center for Enology and Viticulture – wildly successful by almost any measure – as proof: "This program has created 9,000 jobs, and has had a 230 million-dollar impact. And it's attracting talent to Walla Walla like you wouldn't believe."

Part of VanAusdle's strategy has been to cut marginal programs and re-invest in other areas, always with an eye to the eventual job prospects of his students, and the economic development of the city. Further, integrating basic educational content into the technical portions of the education makes those portions have more relevance, and shortens the pathways to success for his students. "Talent development is your major economic development strategy," he said.

Theme 6: Funding focus and prioritization will be critical to improving educational outcomes for Washington students over time.

Summary

The current state of education funding presents challenges not just to families paying tuition, but also to the educational institutions themselves. Going forward will require a hard look at how we pay for post-secondary education in Washington, how we fund schools at all levels, and how we attract the best and brightest into the teaching profession.

> **RELATED TO CHANGE LEVERS:**
> - Readiness
> - Affordability
> - Institutional Capacity and Student Success
> - Stable and Account-able Funding

What's Working?

Our education institutions have found ways to be incredibly efficient.

"We've taken seriously the ability to create efficiencies in what we do."

A demonstration of efficiency: while Washington ranks below average for per-student state spending, our completion rate for baccalaureate degrees is the third highest in the nation, as represented in the chart below.[7]

Success Story

Per-Student spending   **Completion Rates for Baccalaureate Degrees**
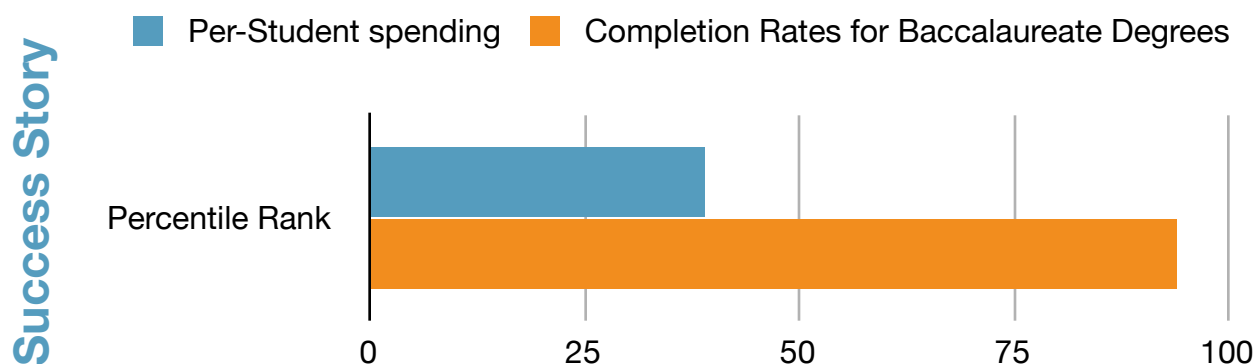
There are many programs that help mitigate the costs of post-secondary education, including GET and Running Start.

"I wouldn't be able to afford college without the GET program."

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[7] Sources: completion rates, Chronicle of Higher Education; spending, US Census

Technology, in some cases, offers the opportunity for access at lower cost.

> *"[We] are also allowing for running start students to take their courses online from their high school. If we have to, we provide the technology."*

## What are the challenges?

Rising tuition costs for post-secondary education are creating barriers.

Challenge Spotlight

> *"You focused on tuition [in the report], but as a result of cuts, we have seen a lot of fees that have been tacked on. My concern is student loan debt and default on student loans… We are really in an unsustainable situation where we are growing in the same or higher trajectory as health care costs. How do we get that under control?"*[8]

Tuition at public universities, as a percentage of median family income
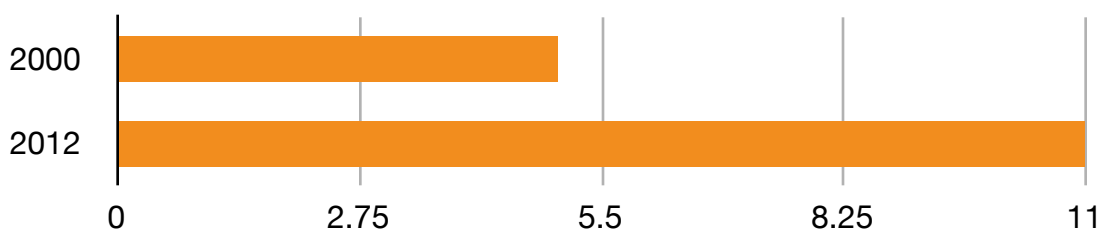
Teaching isn't as attractive as a career as it should be, and it is expensive to become a teacher.

> *"To get to great [the first thing I would do is] dramatically increase new teacher pay to attract better teachers. The best and the brightest are not interested in teaching"*

Despite evidence of the impact of early education, it seems to be low on the investment priority list.

> *"There's always a huge gap between our ability to implement what we know. We know there should be more emphasis on the early years. Our funding and curricular mechanisms have not kept up with that."*

What are the implications?

1. To the extent that any new education funds are made available, deliberate focus should be put on those choices that offer greater long-term enhancements to student achievement.

2. Identifying and building upon efficiencies may be just as important as increased funding.

3. Investments in technology may be able to lower some costs.

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[8] Chart source: Washington Student Achievement Council

Theme 6 Sub-themes:

The rising cost of higher education is creating a barrier.

Council members heard a clear recognition that financial constraints are limiting the ability of many programs to meet the educational needs of all our citizens and in particular the opportunities of economically disadvantaged and minority students. The significant increases in the cost of higher education have created a barrier to access for many of Washington's students. "We are constantly talking about the budget and what needs to be cut," said one college trustee. A student added, "I wouldn't be able to afford college without the GET program."

We need to strengthen and expand the pathways to becoming a teacher – and increase the training those teachers get.

Council members heard from many educators about the need to reinforce the "pipeline" for new teachers, starting with attracting qualified candidates: "We are good, but to get to great [the first thing I would do is] dramatically increase new teacher pay to attract better teachers. The best and the brightest are not interested in teaching," said one administrator. Others suggested that a pathway for para-educators to become certified teachers would be a way to bolster the ranks of teachers with people invested in their local communities.

Another obstacle identified is the expense of getting a teaching degree and maintaining certification. Teacher education often requires additional semesters to complete, and student teaching means a semester where those teacher candidates may not be able to work other jobs. Further, the additional education required for certain teaching positions, or to grow salaries, can be a challenge to teachers, and presents a challenge to institutions looking to fill those positions.

Finally, participants suggested that changing demographics may mean that teachers of the future will need more robust training in working with English Language Learners (ELL), as well as training for dealing with other learning disabilities.

Participants were concerned about the funding pressures that both K-12 and higher education are facing.

Students, administrators and faculty alike expressed concerns about choices that will be made over the next few years to address funding pressures. Faculty members were frustrated by the fact that they had not seen an increase in pay in 5 years. Students pointed to reduced class offerings and increases in tuition. The resulting funding structure, highlighted participants, is a shift from public to private funding. As President Les Purce of The Evergreen State College remarked, "Evergreen has always been committed to giving all levels of society an education. But I am truly concerned about whether we will be able to continue this in the future."

Programs and Tools

Council members heard about a wide variety of successful programs during the Listening Tour. The list below captures many that they heard, though it is not all-inclusive of the landscape of educational programs in Washington.

Early Education Support Programs

Head Start

Head Start is a federal program that promotes the school readiness of children ages birth to 5 from low-income families by enhancing their cognitive, social and emotional development.

La Casa Hogar

La Casa Hogar, based in Yakima, empowers and supports Hispanic women to overcome significant cultural, linguistic and educational barriers and achieve their dreams. Their Children's Learning Center served over 360 preschool children in 2011. Mothers have the opportunity to experience, learn and practice effective ways to engage their preschool aged children in the learning process. Mothers actively participate in the children's learning center on a regular basis, learning from the modeling of the teacher and other resource people. This environment provides an opportunity for the mothers to practice English with their children and to develop skills and confidence in relating to their child's teacher.

STEM Development Programs

MESA

MESA is a national program that provides opportunities to underrepresented students in math, engineering, and science. MESA targets students in grades 6 through 12 by using a partnership between higher education, school districts, business, government, community organizations, family, and alumni. MESA prepares students for college paths and careers in STEM fields.

Spokane STEM Network

The Spokane STEM Network seeks to:
- Build a community consensus for the importance of STEM education
- Increase readiness for postsecondary STEM-related education through improved curriculum and instruction
- Increase Readiness for postsecondary STEM-related education through effective and transformational professional development for educators
- Increase Completion of postsecondary degrees and certificates in STEM fields
- Advocate for positive change in rules, law, and policy affecting STEM education and workforce development

LEGO™ Education and FIRST

LEGO Education was created to deliver teacher-tested, classroom–ready solutions for engaging and inspiring young learners. LEGO Education combines the unique, inspiring qualities of LEGO bricks with subject-specific tools and curricula so classroom teachers can meet key learning objectives.

LEGO has teamed with FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) for student science competition programs.

The FIRST organization's mission is to inspire young people to be science and technology leaders by engaging them in exciting mentor-based programs that build science, engineering, and technology skills; inspire innovation; and foster well-rounded life capabilities including self-confidence, communication, and leadership.

Science Olympiad

For the past 29 years, Science Olympiad has led a revolution in science education. What began as a grassroots assembly of science teachers is now one of the premiere science competitions in the nation, providing rigorous, standards-based challenges to 6,400 teams in 50 states. Science Olympiad's ever-changing event line-up of events in all STEM disciplines exposes students to practicing scientists and career choices, and energizes classroom teachers with a dynamic content experience.

Academic Impact Programs

AVID

AVID is an elective class offering rigorous curriculum to promote student achievement. The class is offered for middle and high school students, and was created to help students be successful in school and to plan for college after high school graduation. The program focuses on students who are passing their classes, but may lack the necessary support to pursue a college education. Three main components of the program:

- Rigorous academic instruction
- Collaborative tutorial group support
- Motivational mentorship and college-going culture

Stand for Children

Has more than a decade of experience working together with parents, communities and organizations as partners. Together, they elect state legislators and local officials who will be champions for education, deliver policy victories at the state level, and follow through to ensure new policies are effectively implemented in public school classrooms. Stand for Children staff work state by state, community by community in order to make the biggest possible impact.

Middle College High School

Middle College High School at Seattle University is a small high school for students who want to improve their academic skills while earning their Seattle Public Schools high school diploma. They offer the following: a core curriculum of high school classes, preparation for college on a university campus, career exploration, and Running Start.

Achieving the Dream

At Whatcom Community College the Council heard about the success of this program in aligning and inspiring faculty, staff and administration behind a singular purpose: ensuring student attainment. Trish Onion, Vice President for Educational Services at Whatcom, believes the success of this program lies in the fact that it is data-driven and that it is wholeheartedly embraced by many of the faculty and staff.

Partnership for Learning

Partnership for Learning , the education foundation of the Washington Roundtable, is a statewide nonprofit organization that communicates the need for all Washington's students to graduate from high school ready for career and college. As a trusted source of information, Partnership for Learning makes complex education issues accessible.

PFL's primary focus is to build awareness, understanding and demand for K-12 public education reform so that Washington state can lead the nation with an education system that prepares all students to succeed in college and career, and fosters our state's economic competitiveness.

Transition Support Programs

Running Start

Gives high school students the opportunity to earn college credit without the expense of college tuition. Through the Running Start program, students have the opportunity to take courses that may not be offered at the high school, including a wide range of elective courses.

College in the High School (CHS)

Programs provide college level academic courses in high schools to serve qualified high school students. CHS programs are established through a contract between a high school and a college or university. The high school and college or university together define the criteria for student eligibility.

Rural Alliance for College Success

Provides more than 23,000 students from 35 rural school districts in Eastern and Central Washington access to relevant and up-to-date information to transition them from school to higher education.

John Deere training program at WWCC

WSCC offers two two-year programs in association with John Deere: the Technology program designed to prepare students for technical careers related to Deere, and the Dealership Management program designed to educate students in topics of relevance to store management (including general agriculture science topics). The second program also offers a four-year track. In addition to classrooms and laboratories, the programs provide on-site opportunities at dealerships.

Five Star Consortium

The MOU to Establish Five Star Consortium states: "We, the leaders of Cascadia Community College, Edmonds Community College, Everett Community College, Lake Washington Institute of Technology, and Shoreline Community College are committed to the mission of community and technical colleges in the State of Washington. We recognize that through collaboration and coordination, we can better serve our students and our communities as we fulfill that mission. To that end, we hereby establish a consortium of our colleges, hereafter to be known as the "Five Star Consortium," with the goal of maximizing efficiencies and promoting institutional coordination and collaboration."

Member institutions have agreed to the following principles:

- All students should be permitted to attend the member college of their choice.

- Bureaucratic barriers for students attending any of the member colleges should be reduced and/or eliminated.

- The strengths of the member colleges should be leveraged for resource development and community engagement.

- Each member college will accept and honor the courses, credits and degrees earned by students at any other member college.

- The member colleges will seek to align their programs, services, and/or administrative functions with each other.

MAP

At WSU Vancouver, the Business Growth MAP provides high-level consulting services to help businesses and non-profit organizations in Southwest Washington grow and create jobs in our community. The program pairs business students, faculty mentors and recent business graduate advisors with businesses that are looking to grow. The program consulted with 21 businesses spring semester.

Gateway to College

Gateway to College reconnects high school dropouts with their education. Through the program, students complete their high school diploma requirements at community and technical colleges while simultaneously earning college credits toward an associate's degree or certificate.

Socioeconomic Support Programs

CAMP

The College Assistance Migrant Program offered at Central Washington University provides financial and academic support services to freshman students from migrant and seasonal farm working backgrounds.

GEAR UP

Provides services in each participating middle and high school building for seven years to build a sustainable culture of college-awareness and preparation by the project's end. GEAR UP is a discretionary federal grant program designed to increase the number of low-income students prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

GEAR UP, administered in state by the Washington Student Achievement Council, provides college readiness aid to low-income students. Services include mentoring, tutoring, college visits, test preparation, and admissions/financial aid assistance. Roughly 75 school districts in Washington received GEAR UP-related support in 2011-2012.

Road Map Project

The Road Map Project is a community-wide effort aimed at improving education to drive dramatic improvement in student achievement from cradle to college and career in South King County and South Seattle. The project builds off of the belief that collective effort is necessary to make large-scale change and has created a common goal and shared vision in order to facilitate coordinated action, both inside and outside school.

The Road Map Project Goal is to double the number of students in South King County and South Seattle who are on track to graduate from college or earn a career credential by 2020, as a path to

close achievement gaps for low-income students and children of color, and increase achievement for all students from cradle to college and career.

College Spark

Funds programs that help low-income students become college-ready and earn their degrees, and makes grants to organizations and institutions throughout Washington state that are helping low-income students improve their academic achievement, prepare for college life, and graduate from college.

Seattle University Youth Initiative

The Seattle University Youth Initiative is a long-term commitment by Seattle University faculty, staff and students from all disciplines to join with parents, the Seattle School District, the City of Seattle, foundations, faith communities and more than 30 community organizations to help children of Seattle succeed in school and life.

The goal of the program is improve the academic achievement of low-income youth living in the Bailey Gatzert neighborhood while strengthening the education of Seattle University students and expanding professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, become a national model of campus-community engagement.

Building Bridges with Migrant Youth

Francisco Rios, Dean of Woodring School of Education at Western Washington University, shared the variety of programs, including activities at middle schools in Bellingham that are focused on helping Latino kids to develop leadership skills, stay in school, and develop literacy competencies. He also mentioned the Building Bridges with Migrant Youth program aimed at increasing the number of students from migrant backgrounds to consider higher education. Rios said, "We are working to get professors out of the college and into the communities to work with education professionals."

Compass 2 Campus

A program at Western Washington University designed to increase access to higher education by providing an opportunity for 5th-12th grade students from traditionally underrepresented and diverse backgrounds in Whatcom and Skagit counties to be mentored by university students.

Family-Community Resource Centers

A network of Family-Community Resource Centers assists students and their families, brings partnership resources together, and provides continuity between levels and across the system. The FCRCs initiative in Vancouver Public Schools is recognized as a national model by the Coalition for Community Schools and was one of 15 projects in the U.S. to receive a 2011 Magna Award "Honorable Mention" from the American School Board Journal.

BELIEF

The BELIEF program at Whitworth University provides Spokane high school students in low-income areas with resources and practical tools to make higher education an obtainable goal. Twenty students from Rogers High School participated in the inaugural conference.

Collaborative Schools for Innovation and Success Pilot Program

A collaboration between Gonzaga University and Spokane Public Schools to establish collaborative schools for innovation and success serving particularly at-risk and low-achieving students.

Organizations Represented on the Listening Tour

American Federation of Teachers Seattle

Associated Students of Central Washington University

Associated Students of Eastern Washington University

Associated Students of University of Washington

Associated Students of Washington State University

Associated Students of Washington State University, Tri-Cities

Associated Students of Western Washington University

Associated Students of Whitworth University

Association for Higher Education, Community Colleges of Spokane

Bellingham Public School Foundation

Bellingham Public Schools

Bellingham Technical College

Blue Mountain Action Council

Cascadia Community College

CCER/Roadmap Project

Central Valley School District

Central Washington University

Centralia College

Charter College

Cheney Public School Board

City of Pullman

City of Walla Walla

City Year

Clark College

Colfax School District

College Place School District School Board

CollegeSpark

Columbia Basin College

Community Colleges of Spokane

Community Colleges of Spokane/Pullman

Community Foundation of Southwest Washington

Department of Early Learning

Eastern Washington University

Eastern Washington University

Eastmont School District

ESD 101

ESD 112

ESD 189

Everett Community College

Evergreen School District

Foundation for Early Learning

Gonzaga University

Grays Harbor College

Green River Community College

Heritage University

Homelink

Horizons Elementary School

Independent Colleges of Washington

Independent Colleges of Washington

International Air and Hospitality Academy

Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission

Kittitas Valley Daily Record

LaCasa Hogar

Lower Columbia Community College	Toppenish School District
Mead School District	Tumwater City Council
Northwest Education Loan Association	United Way of Thurston County
Northwest Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce	University of Puget Sound
Northwest Workforce Council	University of Washington
Palouse Discovery Science Center	Vancouver Public Schools School Board
Payne and Associates Inc.	Vancouver School District
Pullman High School	Walla Walla Community College
Saint Martin's University	Walla Walla Community College Foundation
Seattle Central Community College	Walla Walla Public Schools
Seattle Community Colleges	Walla Walla School District School Board
Seattle University	Warden School District
Seattle University Youth Initiative	Washington Association of School Administrators
Soap Lake School District	Washington Roundtable Partnership 4 Learning
Sound Kids Drum and Dance	Washington State Council of Presidents
South Puget Sound Community College	Washington State School Directors' Association
Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council	Washington State University, Pullman
Spokane Area Workforce Development Council	Washington State University, Spokane
Spokane County	Washington State University, Tri-Cities
Spokane County United Way	Washington State University, Vancouver
Spokane Falls Community College	Washington Student Association
Spokane Public Schools	Western Washington University
Spokane Teachers Credit Union	Whatcom Community College
Stand for Children	Whatcom Community College Board of Trustees
State Board for Community and Technical Colleges	Whitman College
State of Washington Commission on Hispanic Affairs	Whitworth University
The Columbian	Workforce Development Council of Snohomish County
The Council of Presidents	Yakima County Development Association
The Evergreen State College	Yakima Valley Community College
Timberland Regional Library	

EDUCATION IN WASHINGTON STATE: A CRITICAL CROSSROADS

The following is a summary of the report published by the Student Achievement Council in November, 2012, entitled Critical Crossroads: A Call for Action | The 2012 Strategic Action Plan for Educational Attainment

The report may be found in its entirety at the Council's website: http://wsac.wa.gov

Washington's ability to remain competitive, and for its businesses and families to thrive in today's knowledge economy, is at serious risk. We can't fill the high-skill jobs we have with the numbers of graduates we have. The gaps in economic opportunity for people without a college education are getting wider and more serious. And far too many students in our public K-12 system are not graduating prepared for their next stage in college or career.

A central part of addressing this challenge is making sure every student progresses seamlessly through the educational system, from the time they enter kindergarten to when they walk out with a degree in hand. Unfortunately, that's not always the case in Washington.

Consider the following challenges:

- Our education system lacks coordination and strategic planning.

- Nearly 25% of our students don't make it through high school.

- Already high tuition continues to rise.

- Those who do go on to college often leave with a mountain of debt – and in many cases, they leave short a degree.

- The income gap between college grads and those without is growing.

- Many people are having a hard time getting hired because they don't have the right skills, training or education to get the jobs that the economy demands.

This is a problem for all Washingtonians: families, students, employers and communities. And it's only going to get worse. By 2020, an estimated 70% of jobs will require post-secondary education.

This problem needs to be solved across the entire system.

Recommendations for Action

Based on what we've learned, five Action Steps must be taken if we are serious about solving our education problems:

3.1. Prepare, support and inspire students to move through the entire system

3.2. Make post-secondary education of all kinds more affordable and accessible, regardless of family income or location

3.3. Increase capacity at our universities, community colleges and technical schools so they are ready for more students as our population grows and the economy evolves

3.4. Use technology to make college more effective, affordable and convenient for more students

3.5. Develop a sustainable, long-term funding plan that is based on measurable outcomes

The Washington Student Achievement Council

The Council is the only entity in the state charged with addressing these issues in a comprehensive manner.

The Council represents a wide cross-section of Washingtonians and reflects the intentional collaboration we need to fix this problem: five members are citizens with no institutional interests within our education system; and four members bring these important interests to the table.

Our purpose is to assess the system comprehensively, to educate the public about these issues and to lead and coordinate a new approach to solving our state's education problems. This is an important moment for education change – change to deliver better results for our students at a better cost for our citizens.

Our Vision for Education in Washington

Washington deserves nothing less than the best education system in the country:

• Accessible, affordable, and high-quality education for every young person

• Students graduating with the skills, competencies, and insights relevant and valued in the marketplace

• More opportunities for people of all ages to improve their skills, change their careers and be engaged in their communities.

• A robust economic climate because we have a homegrown workforce ready to grow Washington businesses.

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