

OPEN DOORS SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT



CO-CREATING A STRONG FUTURE
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

SPRING 2021



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Introduction: Starting with Students

Youth and young adults aren't just the future of our communities. They are already leading, continuously showing up as resilient and creative truth-tellers with a clear vision for a more equitable future. Our job as funders, as system-builders, as policy and decision-makers, and as adults in young peoples' lives is to support and co-create that vision so that all young people can live the lives they deserve.

At any given time, an estimated 14,000 young people between the ages of 16-24 in King County are not in school and not employed. These young people are disconnected from the economic opportunities that educational and employment opportunities provide. By our region's failure to invest in the success of all youth, we suffer the loss of enormous potential, progressive ideas and creative solutions to our most pressing problems.

Our most important job as adults
is to listen to young people.

When we look deeper at the data on who exactly is not finishing, we see that students of color are pushed or pulled out of school at higher rates than their white peers. These disparities are driven by systemic and structural racism and demand approaches centered in racial equity to ensure all students truly do succeed, and to correct a long history of educational inequity.

On an individual level, there are many reasons young people don't graduate. Often, multiple circumstances converge to create conditions where a youth leaves school, including things like needing to care for family members, having to get a job in order to support the family financially, homelessness or foster care placement, bullying, and experiences of racism or discrimination. We recommend the following local resources to learn what students of color say they need in a school setting and to gain insight on what is not working for them about education currently:

[Latinx Youth Reengagement Project Report](#)

[Creating Pathways for Change Report](#)

[Start With Us: Black Youth in South Seattle and South King County](#)

Students who leave school have just as much potential as those who stay, but the system lacks the strength, resources and will to keep them engaged. Until classrooms can support the brilliance of all our young people, alternatives are and will remain necessary.

One of those alternatives is Open Doors programs.

Building on Successful Work

OPEN DOORS REENGAGEMENT (HOUSE BILL 1418)

Open Doors (WAC 392-700) is a reengagement program that provides education and services to young people, ages 16-21, who have left school without graduating or are not expected to graduate by the age of 21. Enacted by the Washington State Legislature in 2014, Open Doors provides the funding mechanism for programs to serve credit-deficient students through partnership with a school district. The legislation requires case management support and program funding is outcome-based rather than based on seat-time. Students are required to meet a minimum number of Indicators of Academic Progress (IAPs) in order for the program to bill for them.

Open Doors provides a pathway to capture critical education resources in service of opportunity youth.

United Way Reconnecting Youth Initiative

In 2015, United Way recognized the opportunity to both leverage state dollars and help create an Open Doors reengagement system that was youth-informed and connected existing programs. United Way launched Reconnecting Youth with the goal of supporting reengagement of 9,600 youth, with 50% graduating. The Reconnecting Youth initiative successfully raised \$20M between 2015 and 2019. Reconnecting Youth dollars bolstered the King County Open Doors reengagement network in the following ways:

- Grants toward startup of new programs
- Emergency financial assistance for students—uses included books/mandatory class fees, helping paying bills, transportation, fines
- Community-based-organizations partnering with Open Doors programs to provide culturally relevant programming supporting students of color, especially Black and Latino students
- Scholarship program for students transitioning to college from Career Link at South Seattle College
- Participation of five programs in the Open Doors Improvement Network
- King County's [Latinx Student Listening Project](#)
- King County ReOpp staff ([Reconnect to Opportunity](#), the outreach arm of the reengagement network)
- AmeriCorps Vista position at United Way creating student engagement opportunities
- Public policy advocacy

The network has grown from three Open Doors programs to well over 20 reengagement programs in King County. To date, Reconnecting Youth has engaged more than 17,000 young people through Open Doors in King County, and 3,557 have received a credential. Racial disparities persist however, as 1,169—roughly just 1/3—of those who received a credential were young people of color, whereas 70% of those engaged in the program are youth of color.

Next Phase: Open Doors Sustainability Project

Closing out the stewardship of \$20M in investment requires intentionality and strategy. We want to ensure that, as our initiative moves on from this initial phase, the reengagement network in King County is in strong condition, moving toward equitable outcomes for students. We want to put forward our strongest policy recommendations based on our local experience.

This report is the culmination of the initial phase of Reconnecting Youth body of work. It includes the following:

- Program snapshots of four reengagement programs in King County, designed to give a glimpse into who these students are and how the programs operate.
 - Detailed descriptions of four programs with different location models: **Career Link**—a community college campus; **Federal Way Open Doors**—within a school district; **Southwest Education Center**—a community-based organization (CBO); and **Youth Source**—local government.
 - A summary of common themes discovered through the program snapshots
- Finance Study conducted by BERK consulting
 - Deep dive into Open Doors program finances and potential paths for financial sustainability
- Overall recommendations
 - Directed toward multiple stakeholders, including funders, school districts, OSPI, local, and state elected officials and other decision makers

Program Snapshots

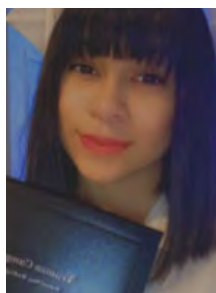
The following snapshots give a glimpse inside four different Open Doors programs. We talked with students, teachers and staff in order to share details of how they work. Because Open Doors allows for flexibility in program design, no two programs look exactly alike. Here, we feature programs from four different types of locations where we see Open Doors reengagement occurring in King County:

- On a community college campus
- Within a school district
- Onsite at a community-based-organizations
- In partnership with local government

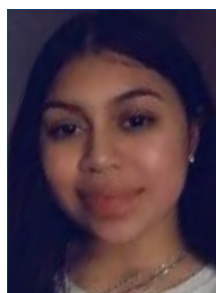
Each contains one school year's worth of data. Programs worked in partnership with United Way on the construction of these snapshots.

A note about data: We chose what data to include in the program snapshots based on where we had parallel data for all four programs featured. The data points give some useful information about the number of students coming in and out of programs, as well as some of their characteristics. We also include data such as credential earning rates, which serve to show that students who were previously disconnected from education are both consistently engaging in and graduating from these programs. While credentials earned is clearly a key measure of success for high school reengagement programs, it tells just part of the story and must be considered along with important contextual information such as the particular population of students served by a program, how many credits away from graduation they are when they enroll, what life circumstances they have that influence their ability to dedicate the necessary time to school, etc.

Student Voices: We partnered with two young people to source student interviews from each of the programs. Read more about our incredible youth voice co-leads below:



Katerin Beukema was a youth voice co-lead for the United Way Open Doors Sustainability Project. She has experience working for King County, interviewing young people for a study called the Latinx Listening Project. Katerin earned her high school diploma from Federal Way Public Schools in 2020. She has worked at Amazon and as an intern for King County Reconnect to Opportunity. In the future, she plans to join the Navy and eventually become a neurologist.



Marcia Ugalde-Santiago was a youth voice co-lead for the United Way Open Doors Sustainability Project. She graduated with her high school diploma in 2018 through Running Start. She is currently exploring future career options, including computer science and the Air Force. She enjoys cooking and her favorite dish to cook is chicken.



Career Link High School Program Snapshot

Location Type	Community College
School District Partnership	Highline Public Schools
Credential Pathway	High school diploma
Classroom Schedule	12-4 p.m., Monday–Friday
Classroom Style	Traditional
Number of Teachers*	8
Enrollment Schedule	New cohort starts quarterly
Students Served in 2019/2020	243

PROGRAM HISTORY

Career Link (formerly Career Link Academy) opened in 1994 as a GED and career readiness program. This program model continued for ten years. In 2004 the state graduation requirements changed to require all students passing standardized testing. Meanwhile, Career Link students had expressed the desire to get a high school diploma rather than a GED, and there was an increasing sense that OSPI did not want K-12 dollars to support students getting GEDs. These and other factors led Career Link to change their model entirely from GED to high school diploma and re-brand as Career Link High School, in partnership with Highline Public Schools, in 2005. In 2014, Career Link High School became an Open Doors program, continuing its partnership with Highline.

Listen to student Khamaron describe the Career Link experience.



Students aren't out of school because they're missing a PE credit or they just can't get fractions. There's a million other reasons why they didn't show up and a lot of that is solved by coming to a place where a bunch of adults are caring about you and there's some structure."

—Curt Peterson, Career Link director

*Teachers double as case managers, which fulfills the case management requirement.

Career Link High School Program

INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH

The hallmark of the Career Link program is *structure*. A new cohort begins each quarter with the 1st Quarter Experience Course, which students need to pass in order to move on in the program.

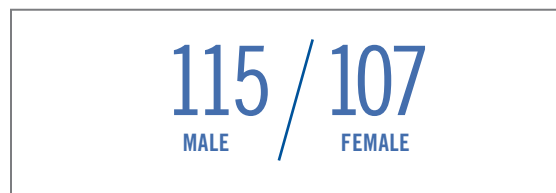
Classes follow a schedule and students are expected to attend regularly. While at Career Link, students can take college classes and/or try technical programs.

Jaylene, a Career Link student, shares her experience of education interruptions due to moving around while in foster care.



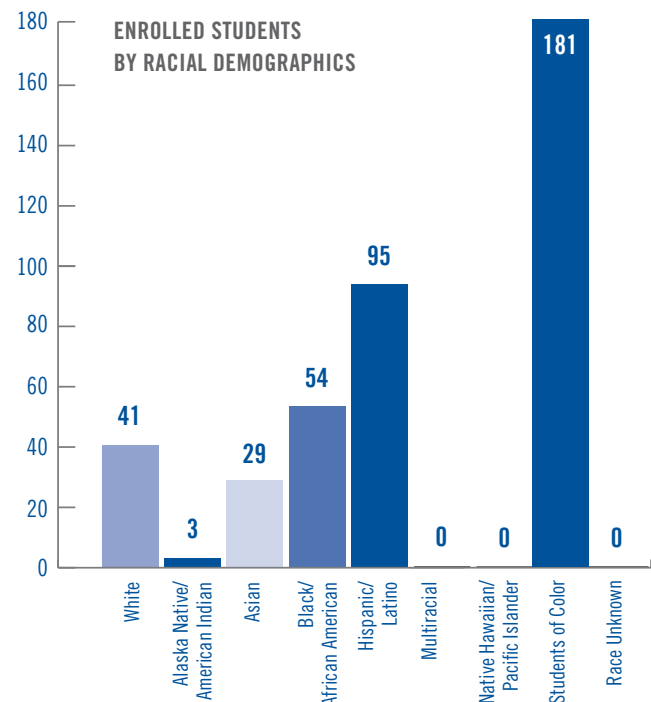
MORE ABOUT OUR CAREER LINK STUDENTS

ENROLLED STUDENTS BY GENDER



STUDENT BARRIERS

Low-income	84%
Homeless or housing unstable	14%
Foster system involved	5%
Pregnant or parenting	4%
English language learners	22%
Special education	11%
Students who are (or have been) justice system involved	3%



CAREER LINK OUTCOMES DATA 2019-2020 SCHOOL YEAR

Total number of students served	222
Students exited w/ credential	67
Stick Rate (staying in program even w/out credential completion)*	83%

The multiple challenges that reengagement students face often means that the path to graduation is not a straight line. Sometimes it is life circumstances that cause students to need to take breaks from their education. Other times it takes several tries to find a program that can meet the student's particular needs at the time.

*Teachers double as case managers, which fulfills the case management requirement.



Our students are just as capable as any other student, they just have challenges that other students don't have. So we need to address those challenges but still make sure they're as prepared as any other student entering college or entering another program."

—**Molly Ward**, Career Link director

STUDENT SUPPORTS

At Career Link, most instructors serve as advisors in addition to their role as teachers. This is how Career Link fulfills the case management mandate of Open Doors. The teacher-student relationship is fostered through daily classes and students meet with their teacher at least once a quarter, one-on-one. Classes are paused in order to create time for these meetings.



Students say, 'This is the most a teacher has ever talked to me when I wasn't in trouble.' Most students have never had a one-on-one meeting with a teacher and we require it with all their teachers every quarter."

—**Curt Peterson**, Career Link director

Career Link has an education advocate from [Northwest Education Access \(NWEA\)](#) supporting students in pursuing post-secondary education on-site 2 days per week. The education advocate visits the 1st Quarter Experience Course, ensuring students have the opportunity to begin thinking about college from the very beginning of their Career Link journey.

Career Link previously had King County staff from [Career Connect](#) on-site 3-4 days a week to help connect students with internships, jobs shadows and employment opportunities. This contract ended in 2019.

Students like Jaylene are looking for more support around internships and job placements.



Through United Way's Open Doors Sustainability Project, Career Link embedded a mental health specialist in partnership with Southwest Youth and Family Services. While students do have access to counselors through the college, they are more skilled in academic advising than in therapeutic, social-emotional support. Career Link believes that having on-site mental health support embedded within their program offerings will better enable student access to meaningful support. Career Link recognizes that students are better equipped to learn when their social-emotional needs are met.

Students can also access other supports across the South Seattle College campus, including the math lab, the writing center, tutoring and child care. Staff note that services embedded at Career Link are more likely to be utilized by Career Link students because students feel more comfortable in that space.

Jaylene describes the difference in feel between the Career Link space and other educational spaces.



TRANSITION AFTER GRADUATION

Career Link starts conversations about what's after high school early on in a student's journey. Students take a career exploration class, where they're exposed to all kinds of different jobs. They also learn about different pathways to viable careers, not all of which require classroom-based education.

Most Career Link students take at least one class on the college campus outside of the Career Link program prior to graduation. This allows them to experience a college course while maintaining the connection and support of Career Link. Some can finish nearly half of their degree requirements this way. The goal is a smooth and successful transition to college.

NWEA runs a workshop for students identified as seniors, to help them get their financial aid started if they want to go to college. NWEA also supports students one-on-one through the transition to college and beyond, whether they stay at South Seattle College or choose to attend elsewhere.

Career Link supports students who are taking college courses as part of their high school completion pathway through paid sponsorships. Graduated Career Link students have the opportunity to get a scholarship called Jump Start to support college after graduation. This is the result of a United Way of King County grant. Career Link recently developed a peer mentorship program for Jump Start students with United Way support. The hope was that students can transition into the Seattle Promise Program following Jump Start, which pays for two years of college tuition and includes specific supports. However, Career Link students are not currently eligible for Seattle Promise because the program is affiliated with the Highline School District even though it is located in Seattle.

VALUES

- Relationships with caring adults
- Structure and consistency
- High expectations paired with lots of support
- Exposure to multiple options and pathways



[Students] will do algebra not because they need algebra, but because Susan is asking them to do algebra. Right? That's how all the classes are. [Students] value the relationship more than they do any subject. So if we can't get that, I don't think we have a school."

—Curt Peterson, Career Link director

STUDENT CREDENTIAL EARNING BY RACE

Looking at rates of credential earning and disproportionality by race is one way to try to understand where programs may be closing or exacerbating gaps. This chart shows what portion of total annual enrollment each group makes up and what portion of all credential earners each group makes up. The extent to which a racial group is over- or under-represented in credential earning is shown in the last column, labeled “difference.”

Race	Meeting Credential	Total enrolled	Difference
White	17.9%	18.4%	-.5%
Alaska Native/American Indian	4.4%	1.3%	+3.1%
Asian	16.4%	13%	+3.4%
Black/African American	14.4%	23.8%	-9.8%
Hispanic/Latino	46.2%	42.3%	+3.9%
Multiracial	0%	0%	0%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%
Race Unknown	0%	0%	0%

*Career Link’s system includes Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander under Asian and does not have a multiracial option.

Unique count of students connected to a job	17
Unique count of students connected to an internship	17
Unique count of students connected to a post-secondary navigator	All
Unique count of students who did college Try-A-Trade program in Auto Tech, Culinary Arts, or Welding	20

It’s important to note that all students are included in the credential earning calculations, regardless of where they are in their educational journey. For example, some students enter the program at a 9th grade level, and so can expect to remain in the program for a number of years before graduating, but are still included in that credential earning rate. The average number of credits students enter with varies from year to year at Career Link, and can have a major effect on the outcomes. A more accurate calculation would be to consider the graduation rate for just those who are technically “seniors” by credits.

YOUTH VOICE AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Career Link conducts a student survey every quarter. While instructors are required to have students fill out South Seattle College's standardized course evaluation form, Career Link has created their own course evaluation forms that are more meaningful to the students and more useful to staff. Leadership and instructors review the feedback and implement changes based on this feedback on a regular basis.

Career Link has a student-led Leadership Club. Examples of things this group has done include creating a "relaxation room" during finals, as well as hosting a game night and a Halloween party. For students who missed out on the traditional high school experience of pep rallies or prom, these activities are particularly important. They foster social connectedness and promote engagement on campus, which can translate into better educational outcomes.

Students have access to and occasionally get involved on the broader campus in activities like the Black Student Union, student government, or by initiating on-campus clubs.

RACIAL EQUITY

Career Link recognizes the importance of hiring staff that represent the identities of their students, however the majority of the staff and teachers are white. A particular challenge related to this goal is the inability to offer full-time employment. Career Link has one teacher who is Native Hawaiian and Filipino. This teacher designed and teaches an Indigenous science course. Career Link's office manager is Mexican American and fluent in Spanish. Teachers pay particular attention to students' cultural identities, allowing students to be the experts in their own experience. Curriculum is created based on this tenet.

Career Link leadership and staff work to create an environment where students know they have a voice, that their voice matters, and that they should be free to call out what's not working for them. Because many students haven't felt they had a voice in their mainstream high school, Career Link believes that cultivating this culture is an important piece of advancing equity.

The program serves a large number of Latino students, who perform strongly. Many of these students heard about the program from their peers or family members who had experience with it. Staff have identified, in particular, the need for a strategy to better support Somali male students, a small cohort of which are enrolled in the program but which the program hasn't successfully engaged. Career Link identifies that a multi-year dataset indicates variation in graduation rates across race/ethnicity and is a more accurate representation than a single year of data.

IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION

Career Link program improvements and innovation have included:

- Piloting “Career Link Foundations,” a math and English boot camp, designed for students who are testing around a third-grade reading level. This pilot encouraged Career Link to reflect on and refine their strengths as a program. They have determined they are less well-suited for students with that set of needs.
- Career Link has recently intentionally focused on trades and expanded what post-secondary education can mean for students. Open Doors allows the flexibility for students to take classes that aren’t required for graduation. This has given room for students to explore trades and learn skills that they couldn’t before. The program has become more intentional about ensuring students know that their options include short-term or long-term trainings, certifications, apprenticeships and everything in-between. Many students need options that will enable them to be able to support themselves financially quickly, often primarily due to tenuous housing circumstances. The program emphasizes trainings that link to living wage careers.

STRENGTHS

- Preparing students with skills to be successful in life
- Relationships
- Staff retention and staff satisfaction
- Location on college campus helps students transition
- Positive culture
- Strong graduation rate

CHALLENGES

- Open Doors is structured in a way that programs receive 93% of the Basic Education Allotment. For this reason, programs like Career Link have fewer resources to give kids the supports that typical schools provide, like transportation and food. Career Link believes that a rate higher than the BEA is justified considering the barriers and challenges facing Open Doors students.
- Finding qualified, diverse teachers willing to commit to less than full-time positions presents a huge challenge.
- There is no unified system for Open Doors programming. Programs are operating differently across King County and across the state. The flexibility is in many ways appreciated, but having a system where programs talk to each other and share a framework could support the network.



Federal Way Open Doors Program Snapshot

Location Type	School district
School District	Federal Way Public Schools
Credential Pathways	GED Competency-based High school diploma
Classroom Schedule	8 a.m.–8 p.m., Monday–Friday
Classroom Style	Drop-in
Number of Teachers	4
Number of Reengagement Specialists	5
Enrollment Schedule	Rolling
Students Served in 2019/2020	478

PROGRAM HISTORY

Federal Way’s high school reengagement program started as an [Acceleration Academy School](#) in 2013. Acceleration Academies partner with school districts to operate a web-based high school diploma program. Federal Way’s program operated out of a storefront prior to moving to the Truman Campus. As understanding of the needs of Federal Way’s reengagement students evolved, so did the program model, expanding to include GED instruction in partnership with a community-based organization, Multi-Service Center. Eventually the program fully divested from Acceleration Academy in favor of a competency-based high school diploma model, still including the GED option.

Listen to a full interview with Federal Way
Open Doors student, Joey.



We still make kids come to the schoolhouse and tell us what they know. That’s old thinking. My push to the teachers is to capture the learning... We know that kids are out there doing stuff and learning stuff. Go watch them. Learning happens outside of school. Competency-based [education] is about attaching learning to what’s happening.”

—**Ashley Barker**, former principal

Federal Way Open Doors Program

INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH

Federal Way Open Doors values accessibility and flexibility in their instructional approach. Offering extended hours allows students to come to school around their personal obligations and schedules. However, it is challenging to strike the right balance of flexibility and structure.

In this program, students generally work independently under the supervision and support of teachers. Students gather for “Advisory” daily at 10:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.. These advisory groups are part of the program’s efforts to build social cohesion and promote restorative justice practices. The program moved to a cohort model in the fall of 2020.



Our students are good at managing their time. Many of them have jobs and other responsibilities and they still manage to come in and work on their diploma.”

—**Mayra Lopez**, reengagement staff

Students often enter the program wanting to earn their GED because they have been counseled in that direction. Program staff work with the student to determine their goals, and students often end up instead using GED tests as projects for the competency-based high school diploma credential.

The shift from being an online-only educational model to a competency-based high school diploma model has been a huge transition and a major challenge for Federal Way Open Doors. In the competency-based model, students guide their own learning projects designed to fulfill the competencies and graduation requirements. Teachers support students to create projects, and these can include anything from internships, work or volunteer experience, to GED tests.

The program is shifting to align with a [Big Picture](#) model and recently became a Big Picture School. This transition brings a network, training opportunities, connection and shared learning with other similar schools.

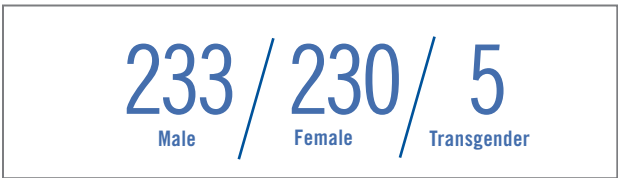
The Truman Campus of Federal Way Public Schools, where Federal Way Open Doors is located, is also home to other alternative high school programs, including an online option, Career Academy and Running Start. The site is co-located with a youth center, which students can access, and a Head Start program.

Staff describe both drawbacks and strengths to being located on the Truman Campus. Advantages include cost-savings to the district, easy access to district resources including food, and the support of community-based organizations that can serve students across the multiple programs. However, staff are concerned about the image of locating all the students marginalized out of traditional high school in one place. The optics could read as institutionalization, or separation, of students who the larger system failed.

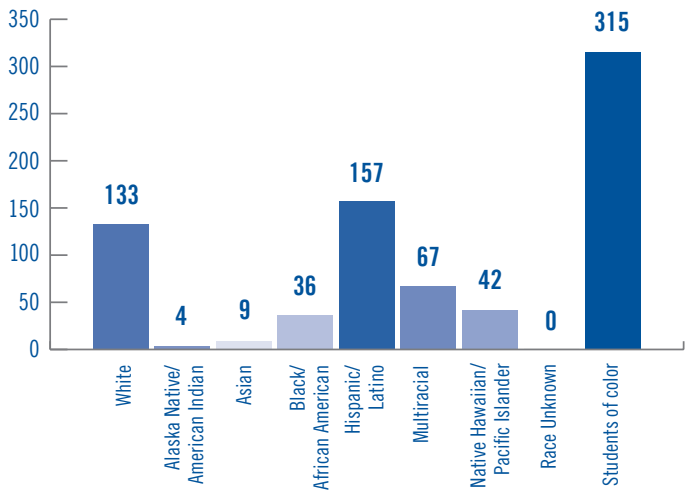
Federal Way Open Doors Program

MORE ABOUT FEDERAL WAY OPEN DOORS STUDENTS

ENROLLED STUDENTS BY GENDER



ENROLLED STUDENTS BY RACIAL DEMOGRAPHIC



STUDENT BARRIERS

Low-income	62%
Homeless or housing unstable	7%
Foster system involved	3%
Pregnant or parenting	5%
English language learners	10%
Special education	13%
Students who are (or have been) justice system involved	7%

“Our students are the magic. It’s your job as educators to work hard at supporting them and understanding their needs.”

—Melissa Pederson, school social worker

STUDENT SUPPORTS

Students are organized into groups of 60. Each group has one assigned instructor and a reengagement specialist (RS). RSs, who fulfill the Open Doors case management requirement, support up to 30 students at a time. There is one school social worker who meets with every student at entry and also provides ongoing support.

Students have access to food, gift cards and McKinney Vento resources. Federal Way Open Doors is creative about garnering resources for college tuition, including the Basic Education Allotment or Running Start. For students interested in the trades, Federal Way Open Doors has partnerships with [YouthBuild](#) and [AJAC](#).

Federal Way Open Doors partners with community-based nonprofit organizations (CBOs) to support students. The first of these partners was [Multi-Service Center](#), which is still on-site offering GED instruction and case management. In 2017, United Way supported [El Centro de La Raza](#) to begin providing culturally-relevant supports to Latino students on campus. [Northwest Education Access](#) (NWEA) supports students seeking post-secondary education.

Beginning in 2019, two more CBOs were funded by United Way. [Good Shepherd Youth Outreach](#) was funded to provide mentorship and services to African American young people and [Open Doors for Multicultural Families](#) was funded to provide services to immigrant and refugee students with developmental delays and disabilities. Both partners have since pulled their services. El Centro, Multi-Service Center and NWEA are still providing services onsite.

Some students, like Kesiah, find support outside of school to be more motivating.



Federal Way Open Doors Program



Our students carry lots of trauma and come in heavier. It's our job to help remove the barriers and provide opportunities.”

—Melissa Pederson, school social worker

TRANSITION

Through the competency-based model, students do an exit exhibition, which is a project focused on their post-high school plan. Every graduate exits with either employment or college acceptance. Multi-Service Center and NWEA can continue to support students directly through their transition and up to age 24.

United Way currently funds a partnership with Federal Way Open Doors and NWEA to create a “college-going culture” in the program. This includes ensuring access to a range of career and education options to all students at entry, hosting a variety of workshops for students, as well as training teachers and staff in post-secondary transition support. A key piece of this work is increasing equitable outcomes for students of color, who often have fewer resources and more systemic barriers to entering and being successful in college.

VALUES

- Inclusivity
- Adaptability
- Hopefulness
- Equality
- Second chances/open door policy (i.e if you leave, you can come back)
- Access to resource and opportunities
- Student agency

RACIAL EQUITY

When Federal Way Open Doors started as Acceleration Academy, student demographics mirrored those of Federal Way Public Schools, which meant a larger proportion of white students. As time went on, the demographics began to actually mirror the demographics of the population of students leaving school, who are disproportionately students of color.

Former principal Ashley Barker indicated that the engagement of community partners increased culturally relevant outreach channels to bring scholars of color into the program and support them once enrolled. Referrals from community-based organizations also increased the number of justice-involved students accessing the program.

Staff identify restorative justice practices and trauma-informed instruction as keys to increasing equity. Advisories are part of the intentional relationship and community-building foundational for restorative justice to be effective. When there is harm caused between people at Federal Way Open Doors, they implement restorative justice circles rather than resorting to traditional discipline and punishment interventions. Because there is a connection between discipline practices that disproportionately impact students of color and students leaving high school, restorative justice practices, which aim to keep students in the classroom rather than punish them out, can be an effective tool for increasing equity.

All of Open Doors’ teaching staff is white. The program has English language learner support on-site once a week. Staff notes that, because the curriculum is competency-based, most projects can be completed in the student’s native language.

There is a campus-wide equity team that meets weekly. The equity team is working to create a referral body where staff and students can bring complaints. The Federal Way Public School District itself also has an increasing focus and support on racial equity.

Federal Way Open Doors identified the following needs regarding equity:

- Training for staff in implicit bias and micro-aggressions
- Larger systemic issue of finding teachers of color

Federal Way Open Doors Program

OUTCOMES DATA 2019-2020 SCHOOL YEAR

Total number of students served	478	
Students exited w/ credential	156	33%
Stick Rate (staying in program even w/out credential completion)	66%	

STUDENT CREDENTIAL EARNING BY RACE

Looking at rates of credential earning and disproportionality by race is one way to try to understand where programs may be closing or exacerbating gaps. This chart shows what portion of total annual enrollment each group makes up and what portion of all credential earners each group makes up. The extent to which a racial group is over- or under-represented in credential earning is shown in the last column, labeled “difference.”

Race	Meeting Credential	Total enrolled	Difference
White	21%	28%	-7%
Alaska Native/American Indian	1%	1%	0%
Asian	5%	2%	3%
Black/African American	18%	8%	10%
Hispanic/Latino	36%	33%	4%
Multiracial	12%	14%	-2%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	7%	9%	-2%
Race Unknown	0%	0%	0%

Unique count of students connected to a job	300
Unique count of students connected to a post-secondary navigator	67
Unique count of students were connected with mental health service or a mentor (or peer mentor)	25

It is important to note that all students are included in the credential earning calculations, regardless of where they are in their educational journey. For example, some students enter the program at a 9th grade level, and so can expect to remain in the program for a number of years before graduating, but are still included in that credential earning rate. The average number of credits students enter with varies from year to year, and can have a major effect on the outcomes. A more accurate calculation would be to consider the graduation rate for just those who are technically “seniors” by credits.

Federal Way Open Doors Program

YOUTH VOICE AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Federal Way Open Doors employs former Open Doors scholars as outreach workers, which gives them experience and connects disconnected young people to the program.

Students complete an interview at exit and their feedback from those interviews is regularly considered.

The school principal and school social worker meet with every student who comes through the doors.

The reengagement specialists help them create an initial, individualized plan for their education.

Staff noted that on the school climate survey, Federal Way Open Doors receives high marks for creating a sense of belonging.

IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION

Federal Way Open Doors has implemented major programmatic shifts with the intent of better serving students. The biggest of these shifts is moving from online-only diploma instruction to now the competency-based model. Becoming competency-based pushes educators to see learning both in and outside the classroom, and allows students to exhibit their knowledge in out-of-the-box ways. It's not all tests, papers and assignments.

From previous years' exit interview data, staff discovered that students who are on campus at least three days a week tend to be more successful, so efforts are made to encourage student attendance at that level. Staff note that students who are more closely connected with their reengagement specialist tend to be more engaged. Students also say that community-building circles (advisories) are really important to them.

STRENGTHS

- Flexibility
- Adaptability
- CBOs on site
- Model of teachers and RAs working alongside
- Open concept space—flat, no perceived hierarchy
- Relationships

CHALLENGES

Making the change to the competency-based model has presented challenges for both students and staff. It is a paradigm shift. A cookie cutter model is easy for everyone to understand, but also perpetuates inequities for marginalized students. Students have voiced the challenge with the competency-based model is they don't always see a straight line from start to finish (i.e. earning a credential) because it is completely individualized. Staff have had the idea to create examples of students' journeys that all look different but have achieved their goal, so students can get a sense of what a potential path looks like.

Mark, a former student and intern at Federal Way Open Doors, describes advantages and drawbacks of the competency-based and more individualized program.



Staff sometimes work long hours supporting students because they're willing to go that extra mile. But that can be really challenging, and specific support for teachers is not readily available.

Balancing flexibility with accountability and preparing students for what is next is another identified challenge. While expectations for students certainly exist, they can drop-in when it works for them and will be welcomed back even if they have not attended for some time. Systems like college and the workforce don't typically allow for that same flexibility, so the struggle is to ensure students are prepared for what they're moving to next.

Mark articulates the need for enhanced structure.



The physical space of Truman Campus can be challenging because there are several different but similar programs co-located. Some resources are shared and some are specific, and the expectations are very different for each of the programs. In addition, being in a separate building can give the perception of secluding or, as Ashley described, "institutionalizing" students for whom the traditional system didn't work.

While CBO partnerships have been valued by Federal Way Open Doors leadership, partnership can be challenging. School staff have viewed CBOs as working on competing rather than complementary goals, while CBO staff have experienced racism and a lack of understanding about the critical nature of their work.



Southwest Education Center (SWEC) Program Snapshot

Location Type	Community-based organization (CBO)
School District Partnership	Highline Public Schools
Credential Pathways	GED Competency-based High school diploma Young Parent Program, designed for students who are pregnant or parenting
Classroom Schedule	9 a.m.–3:15 p.m., Monday–Friday; flexible attendance policy
Classroom Style	Drop-in, non-traditional
Number of Teachers	5
Number of Case Managers	2
Enrollment Schedule	Rolling
Students Served in 2018/2019	116

PROGRAM HISTORY

Southwest Youth and Family Services (SWYFS) has a long and unique history as one of few community-based organizations continuously operating an education program. Beginning in 1986, SWYFS hosted Interagency School, an alternative high school program of Seattle Public Schools. Over time as SWYFS observed that this program model was not effective for all students, they created their own, which helped students prepare for the GED through a tutoring model.

SWYFS maintained a partnership with Seattle Public Schools until the passing of Open Doors legislation. After the Southwest Education Center (SWEC) became an Open Doors program they began to work exclusively with Highline Public Schools. Located in the city of Seattle, SWEC serves Seattle Public Schools students through the inter-district transfer process and Highline students without a transfer.

In 2000, SWEC received a federal grant through the Private Industry Council that afforded the opportunity to expand the education center. This resulted in the hiring of additional teachers and opening of new classrooms. SWEC became an Open Doors program in 2014. In 2016, they opened a new classroom in White Center, near their case management and administrative offices.

Steve Daschle, executive director of SWYFS, and Bryan Hayes, program director for SWEC, were engaged advocates in the development of Open Doors legislation and outlining the program concept. They see the relationship between case management (i.e. social-emotional support) and education as the key cornerstone of the Open Doors concept.

Listen to a full interview from SWYFS student, Julian.



INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH

Students are expected to attend daily. However, SWEC values flexibility, allowing students to drop in around their personal schedules. Case managers are in touch with students weekly and encourage them to attend regularly, but the program model is meant to accommodate the real circumstances of students’ lives like employment, family responsibilities, tenuous housing circumstances and legal-system involvement.

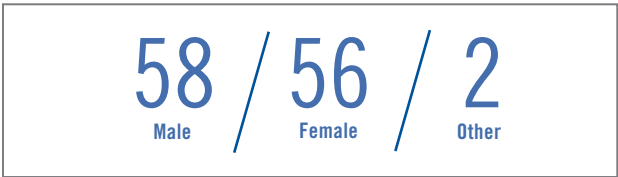
Due to the drop-in nature of the model, SWEC’s instructors may be teaching students at a variety of different grade levels with a variety of learning styles at any given moment. Therefore the model is highly flexible, and the curriculum is not rigidly designed or reliant on consistency. Teachers meet whichever students show up in the classroom “where they are” every single day.

SWEC student, Vivien, describes how the size of the school works for her.



MORE ABOUT SWEC STUDENTS

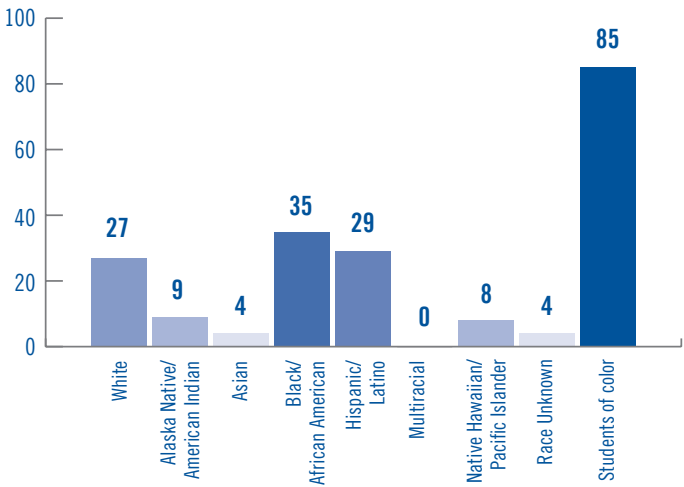
ENROLLED STUDENTS BY GENDER



STUDENT BARRIERS

Low-income	88%
Homeless or housing unstable	10%
Foster system involved	3%
Pregnant or parenting	14%
English language learners	9%
Special education	9%
Students who are (or have been) justice system involved	15%

ENROLLED STUDENTS BY RACIAL DEMOGRAPHIC



Our students are aware of what’s going on in society. We have great discussions about the justice system, social services... They know what’s going on, and they have a sense of awareness about where they’re at in relation to all that. They have strong voices but not the access to be heard.”

—Lisa Gascon, lead instructor



We don’t punish students for their plight, we support them. We try to be as flexible as we can to accommodate their needs, not ours.”

—Bryan Hayes, program administrator

STUDENT SUPPORTS

As a multi-service community-based organization, Southwest Youth & Family services (SWYFS) is uniquely positioned to offer a variety of supports to students in-house. These include:

- Dedicated case management focused on academic success, employment and college readiness
- Mental health counseling and group programs
- Aggression Replacement Training
- Youth development programs
- Family resources services (including one-on-one family advocates services)
- On-site child care¹

SWYFS refers students out for the following services: substance abuse services, legal assistance and housing supports.

TRANSITION AFTER GRADUATION

SWEC's case management staff provide transition support to students who have graduated with a GED or high school diploma. This includes a series of field trips to local colleges to introduce students to advisors and start the financial aid process.

VALUES

Hope • Voice • Community connection • Knowledge and skills

RACIAL EQUITY

SWEC describes itself as confronting structural racism head-on. When you walk into the classroom there are stickers that say “Decolonize Education,” “Black Lives Matter,” and a poster on the wall about the school-to-prison pipeline. These are examples of how the environment is intentionally curated to embrace the identities and experiences of marginalized students. Other ways racial equity is implemented at SWYFS include:

- Staff that reflect the race/ethnicity, culture and languages of students
- Culturally relevant, student-centered, empowering curriculum
 - Including explicit instruction on systems of oppression
 - Including a people's history with a critical lens
- Restorative justice practices
- Trauma-informed practices
- Staff training on equity
- Quantifying success in terms other than credits and credentials

“ We recognize the world they live in. That's what's different from other schools. [Other schools are] devoid of economic and social realities these kids live under. We recognize that things are designed against them.”

—Ramon Jimenez, instructor

¹ The child care center is funded by the City of Seattle and is partnered with the agency's Family Resource Center. Parenting students can utilize the child care while they are on-site and engaged in school or other services at SWYFS. This is the only reengagement program offering child care on-site in King County.

Southwest Education Center Program

SWEC teachers are certified, but are not a part of the school district's collective bargaining, do not receive a school district teacher salary, and don't have access to in-services and trainings or materials that district-supported teachers receive. This could make it challenging to retain talented, diverse teachers at SWEC, but their current teaching staff has been retained for many years because they are passionate and connected to the students they serve. SWEC serves a community of students who are some of the furthest from educational justice, and yet its teachers receive some of the fewest resources because SWEC is a community-based organization and not a district program. United Way funded SWEC to increase teacher salaries under their Program Enhancement Project beginning in 2019.

Program staff expressed that many students are caught up in and often failed by mainstream systems, including the education system, foster care and juvenile justice. For example, students that have been tracked into special education inappropriately or the reverse, students who would benefit from special education services but were not connected. Instead, these students tend to be labeled with behavioral issues, contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline.

OUTCOMES DATA 2019-2020 SCHOOL YEAR

Total number of students served	116	
Students exited w/ credential	10	9%
Stick Rate (staying in program even w/out credential completion)*	85%	

STUDENT CREDENTIAL EARNING BY RACE

Looking at rates of credential earning and disproportionality by race is one way to try to understand where programs may be closing or exacerbating gaps. This chart shows what portion of total annual enrollment each group makes up and what portion of all credential earners each group makes up. The extent to which a racial group is over- or under-represented in credential earning is shown in the last column, labeled "difference."

Race	Meeting Credential	Total enrolled	Difference
White	30%	23%	7%
Alaska Native/American Indian	0%	8%	-8%
Asian	0%	3%	-3%
Black/African American	30%	30%	0%
Hispanic/Latino	20%	25%	-5%
Multiracial	0%	0%	0%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	20%	7%	13%
Race Unknown	0%	0%	0%

SWEC students are some of the furthest from educational justice, as exhibited by the large percentage of students facing multiple barriers. The fact that SWEC's stick rate is so high is a huge accomplishment. It's also important to note that all students are included in the credential earning calculations, regardless of where they are in their educational journey. For example, some students enter the program at a 9th grade level, and so can expect to remain in the program for a number of years before graduating, but are still included in that credential earning rate. The average number of credits students enter with varies from year to year, and can have a major effect on the outcomes. A more accurate calculation would be to consider the graduation rate for just those who are technically "seniors" by credits.

Southwest Education Center Program

YOUTH VOICE AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Because of the strong relationships and the smaller scale of the student body, SWEC staff hear from youth “all day every day.”

SWEC staff state that students drive what their education looks like, meaning they each have a significant voice in how their individual education is administered. When students suggest changes to curriculum or assignments, they are heard, and those suggestions are implemented. It’s a powerful experience students typically haven’t had in mainstream high schools.

SWEC is currently developing its own formal youth council, which will give students leadership opportunity and a voice in the program.

SWEC has conducted a Young Writer’s Workshop in the summer in partnership with the City of Seattle’s Youth Employment Program. Young people receive stipends to learn about social justice and how to express themselves through writing. The program culminates in a live performance and a printed publication called “The Boot.” Student writing is uncensored, and students are encouraged to explore their identities, systems of oppression, their personal history and express themselves freely through the process. SWEC is offering the Young Writer’s Workshop year-round as part of the United Way Program Enhancement Project for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years. They find that students stay engaged and attend school regularly under this program, because the program fosters social cohesiveness among the young writers and allows freedom of expression.

Hear SWEC student, Vivien , talk about how her voice is heard through The Boot.



IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION

- SWEC previously partnered with both Seattle Public Schools and Highline Public Schools. It was a major shift to go from contracting with both districts to exclusively partnering with Highline. There were at one point several community-based organizations with education programs through Seattle Public Schools, including United Indians of All Tribes Foundation, Peace for the Streets by Kids from the Streets and the YMCA. Some of these sites became interagency (alternative high school sites) sites, and some left the work of education programming altogether. SWEC has maintained its programming long-term but is unique in doing so.
- The decision to have one case manager per site instead of one that shares both sites was a significant change. SWEC decided it worked best to have one case manager for each site, with smaller caseloads and increased, dedicated focus.
- SWEC was a part of the Open Doors Improvement Network and learned to test and implement changes rapidly. Examples of that work included creating peace circles and increasing orientation sessions from once a quarter to every Thursday.

“ One of the things I’ve always said about our ed center is that, in a typical school you have an academic focused environment with a few social services thrown in. We’re the reverse. We have a social services environment with academics thrown in. And I think the contrast expresses itself in how the students engage.”

—Steve Daschle, executive director

STRENGTHS

- The wide array of on-site services as a result of being located at a multi-service, community-based organization gives students easier access to needed supports.
- As a nonprofit, SWYFS employs fund development staff dedicated to garnering resources to support the education center. These resources augment Open Doors funding, which is insufficient to meet the needs of students.
- SWYFS is relatively small in staff size and not part of a larger bureaucracy. As a result, making programmatic changes involves fewer challenges and can happen more rapidly.
- SWEC staff identify flexibility as a critically important strength in supporting students how they need to be supported.
- When a young person is asked to wait to enroll, they may lose momentum. SWEC is able to engage students when they're ready with a rolling enrollment model.
- Instructors are dually-credentialed, understand the community and are truly invested. It's more than a job for them, they're passionate about social justice.

Hear Vivien share how she enjoys coming to school now.



CHALLENGES

- SWEC identifies both challenges and benefits to the outcome-based funding of Open Doors. It can feel more restrictive than funding based on seat time. However, SWEC agrees that student outcomes are a better way of measuring success than seat time and understands the intent of this in legislative design.
- SWEC carries with it the challenges of being confused with or associated with charter schools. SWEC is clear internally in its identity as a supplemental program to mainstream education, without intention to undermine that system. SWEC is serving students that are some of the furthest from educational justice. Their outcomes may be perceived as lower than other programs, but they see themselves as making inroads and graduating a proportion of students that the mainstream system never would.
- SWEC faces challenges as being one of very few community-based organizations operating an education program. They are not equipped with the level of resources that schools receive through districts. This creates an equity issue as students who have the highest needs and experience the most marginalization are attending a school that, while richer than other environments in social-emotional programs, can't afford the same compensation and supports for its staff that districts do. Additionally, leadership describes a steep learning curve in entering the education space as a human service organization. Over the many years they have become adept in understanding education policy and systems, but entering the arena from human services was a challenge.



YouthSource Program Snapshot

Location Type	Government
School District Partnership	Renton School District and Tukwila School District
Credential pathway	GED Competency-based High school diploma (new as of 2019)
Classroom Schedule	9 a.m.–12 p.m., 12:30 p.m.–3:30 p.m. Monday–Friday
Classroom Style	Drop-in
Number of Teachers	2 (1 GED, 1 High School)
Number of Case Managers	5
Enrollment Schedule	Rolling
Students Served in 2018/2019	108

PROGRAM HISTORY

YouthSource is one of the longest-standing high school reengagement programs in King County. The original YouthSource model was to create a one-stop employment and training navigation center for young people, inspired by the one-stop center model that existed for adults. The program was rebranded in 2003 with its current name.

Prior to state Open Doors funding, YouthSource operated a GED program funded through Adult Basic Education dollars for students ages 16-21 in partnership with Renton Technical College. Students who wanted to earn their GED would withdraw from their high school and enter into the program, which leveraged WIOA and county resources to pay for case management and support services.

After the passage of Open Doors 1418 legislation, YouthSource struggled to find a school district to partner with in order to operate as an Open Doors site. School districts were hesitant because of YouthSource's GED-only model. The GED was not viewed by districts as a positive outcome and they felt this pathway would negatively affect graduation rates. Ultimately, Renton School District agreed to partner with YouthSource and Renton Technical College to become an Open Doors program in 2013.

Listen to a full interview of a YouthSource graduate.



INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH

Attendance ebbs and flows. Some days and times the classroom is full, other times it's relatively empty. YouthSource previously tried hosting set class times by subject, but there wasn't always the critical mass of students that would have made that schedule practical. The flexible, drop-in classroom has been the best fit because many students have multiple other obligations that make a rigid attendance schedule unworkable. Unlike most other programs, YouthSource can enroll students during the summer months.

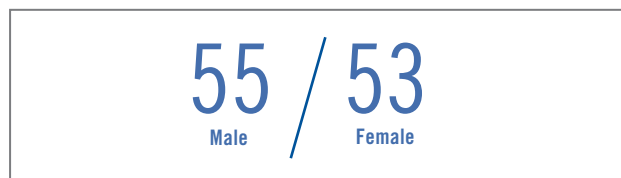
Instruction often happens one-on-one, but depending on the students in attendance, can be done in groups. The GED teacher instructs in Spanish, as needed. YouthSource is considering formalizing a Spanish-language GED program.

YouthSource student, Natalia, describes the individual attention at YouthSource that is such a contrast to her previous school.



MORE ABOUT YOUTHSOURCE STUDENTS: 108 STUDENTS WERE SERVED IN THE 2018/2019 SCHOOL YEAR

ENROLLED STUDENTS BY GENDER*

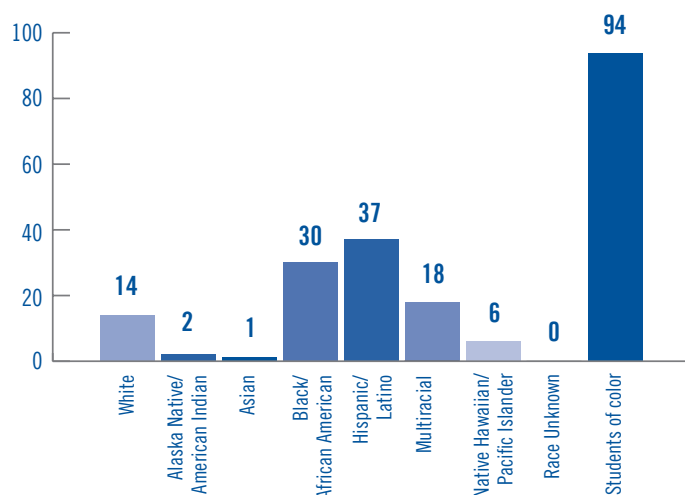


*YouthSource does not collect data on whether students identify as transgender or any gender identity other than male or female.

STUDENT BARRIERS

Homeless or housing unstable	1%
Foster system involved	4%
Pregnant or parenting	3%
English language learners	1%
Special education	16%
Students who are (or have been) justice system involved	10%

ENROLLED STUDENTS BY RACIAL DEMOGRAPHIC



“My title is technically case manager, but it's not the traditional sense of the role. I consider myself a cheerleader. I'm not there to tell kids what they have to do... the kids know what they need to do, they just need to know that someone believes in them.”

—Quiana Williams, youth case manager

Young people tend to come to YouthSource having been out of school longer than at other reengagement programs. YouthSource leadership suspects this is because the program is less directly connected with a school district, where students are more likely to be referred by a counselor or other school staff directly to an Open Doors program.

STUDENT SUPPORTS

YouthSource intentionally keeps its case management caseloads relatively small in order to provide comprehensive and individualized support to all students.

YouthSource partners with two community-based organizations to provide services on-site: WAPI Community Services and Northwest Education Access (NWEA).

[WAPI](#) provides substance abuse prevention and support for students, including leading a Girls' Group, led in partnership with a case manager and the YouthSource director.

[Northwest Education Access](#) provides support to students interested in pursuing post-secondary education. This includes assistance applying for financial aid, transitioning to college and continued support through post-secondary.

King County leverages federal [WIOA](#) (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) funds to provide case management, paid internships, job readiness training, job placement and job retention services to a subset of young people also enrolled in Open Doors. WIOA funds also provide support services to help with items such as tuition, books and registration fees when young people are ready to enroll in post-secondary education.

TRANSITION

YouthSource wants to inspire students to think beyond high school, so the transition conversation begins on day one. As students get rolling on passing GED tests, YouthSource instructors and case managers continually talk with each student about the next steps they could take in order to reach their goals. YouthSource staff find that successfully passing a GED test can inspire confidence to continue further in education achievements.

The case managers create transition plans with each student and ensure they are connected with NWEA if college is part of that plan. Other common transition referrals include WIOA, Career LaunchPad and paid internships.

VALUES

- Meeting students where they are
- Acceptance
- Youth-focused



In so many other settings, youth are forced or told what they have to do or can't do, but we give them a choice."

—Jamalia Jones, YouthSource manager

OUTCOMES DATA 2018-2019 SCHOOL YEAR

Total number of students served	108	
Students exited w/ credential	45	42%
Stick Rate (staying in program even w/out credential completion)*	65%	

STUDENT CREDENTIAL EARNING BY RACE

Looking at rates of credential earning and disproportionality by race is one way to try to understand where programs may be closing or exacerbating gaps. This chart shows what portion of total annual enrollment each group makes up, and what portion of all credential earners each group makes up. The extent to which a racial group is over- or under-represented in credential earning is shown in the last column, labeled “difference.”

Race	Meeting Credential	Total enrolled	Difference
White	18%	13%	5%
Alaska Native/American Indian	0%	2%	-2%
Asian	2%	1%	1%
Black/African American	20%	28%	-8%
Hispanic/Latino	40%	34%	6%
Multiracial	16%	17%	-1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	4%	6%	-2%
Race Unknown	0%	0%	0%

It is important to note that all students are included in the credential earning calculations, regardless of where they are in their educational journey. For example, some students enter the program at a 9th grade level, and so can expect to remain in the program for a number of years before graduating, but are still included in that credential earning rate. The average number of credits students enter with varies from year to year, and can have a major effect on the outcomes. A more accurate calculation would be to consider the graduation rate for just those who are technically “seniors” by credits.

YOUTH VOICE AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP

YouthSource is looking to better formalize how it collects and acts on student voice. With United Way funding, they are working to create an internship to formalize a student focus group structure and integrate feedback into planning. Staff have noticed that students enjoy giving feedback in group settings rather than on an individual level.

Staff want students to have voice not just in the YouthSource program, but to be empowered in speaking their truth about how they’re experiencing the world as young people of color.

“We want to help [students] feel like they have a voice that matters, they’re valued and they value themselves. We need to work on how we help them intrinsically really believe that they can succeed... Especially for Black youth, when you look at the community-wide data, Black youth are still struggling more than any other group.”

—Jamalia Jones, YouthSource manager

RACIAL EQUITY

YouthSource promotes equity by hiring staff that represent the students in their program. 80% of the students are youth of color, and 77% of their staff are people of color. Staff of partner community-based organizations (WAPI and SEA) who interact with YouthSource students are also people of color. The staff hasn't always been so representative, however. In 2013, program leadership made a conscious effort to diversify, and the program has remained vigilant in guarding this diversity, recognizing the critical importance of having staff that reflect the student population.



You have to decide in your mind that you want a diverse staff and then you have to strive to do it. It's harder... but in this community it's not impossible. You just have to set your mind to doing it."

—**Jamalia Jones**, YouthSource manager

YouthSource is a part of King County's data system, which is an advantage in terms of data capacity. They are able to disaggregate student outcomes by demographics, like race or gender, and they do so on an ad hoc basis. As data demonstrates, the largest proportions of YouthSource's student population are Black or Latino, and the vast majority are students of color.

Because YouthSource receives direct referrals from King County Superior Court, they serve a larger percentage of legal-system-impacted students, who are disproportionately Black and Brown. YouthSource would like to offer specific programming supporting Black youth in the future. Staff notice that students are comfortable within the YouthSource environment because they are truly accepted, but when placing students in internships or other situations in the outside world, students need support to navigate environments that are not guaranteed to be accepting.

IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION

When YouthSource started utilizing Open Doors as the funding stream, they focused on recruiting and serving a large number of students. Open Doors is structured such that programs receive more funding for having more billable students, which incentivizes quantity. YouthSource's numbers were around 100 students per month.

After operating that way a number of years, YouthSource concluded it is better to serve fewer students and serve them really well rather than serve high numbers of students and have lower outcomes. YouthSource currently bills for close to 45 students at a time, which they feel allows for right-sized support for their student community.

YouthSource credits resources they have from King County, WIOA and United Way for making serving fewer students viable.

STRENGTH

- Case management and support services/incentives onsite
- Diverse team that young people can see themselves in, especially men

CHALLENGES

- YouthSource has struggled to receive appropriate referrals from school district staff. School districts at times make decisions to refer students based on how the districts' graduation rate may be impacted as opposed to what is in the best interest of the young person. YouthSource's education programs should be viewed as a legitimate alternative to traditional school. YouthSource routinely hears about 18- or 19-year-olds students who are very credit-deficient and yet the district is still hesitant to refer them.
- Open Doors funding allows programs to bill for students for 10 months out of the year. Students who have been billed for 10 months then need to take a break and return. Sometimes students lose momentum and don't return after that two-month break. YouthSource believes being able to serve students for a continuous 12 months would result in better outcomes for students.
- YouthSource sees their position as part of King County government as both advantageous and a challenge. While they have strong capacity around data and access to resources due to their position, there are specific county rules and regulations that make things like having a social media presence difficult.
- Because they're not as directly connected to a school district, YouthSource finds it more difficult to get the word out to students, and their families, who could benefit from the program. YouthSource believes the system should better equip students' families to be able to advocate for attending the right reengagement program, not necessarily within their original school district.

School buildings in King County remain closed, and programs continue to operate virtually for the 2021 school year. Program enhancement projects are continuing this year.



Program Snapshot Themes and Analysis

The program snapshots reveal several common themes. Read on to see what we learned.

1. FLEXIBILITY AND STRUCTURE

All of the programs value flexibility, knowing that students have different needs and carry different challenges with them every day in coming to school. However, the programs also described the work to balance flexibility with structure in order to help prepare students for the world beyond high school.

SCHEDULE

- All but Career Link have open “drop-in” style classrooms, allowing students to come around their schedules.
- Federal Way Open Doors’ campus is open extensive hours—8 a.m. to 8 p.m.—to provide a maximum range of time students can come to school.
- Career Link was the only program of the four featured that has set, daily class times.

CURRICULUM

- SWEC and others adapt curriculum based on current events and student interests.
- Some programs allow students to design projects that fulfill competencies. These can relate to activities students participate in outside of school.

ENROLLMENT

- Programs have open enrollment with the exception of Career Link, which enrolls a new cohort quarterly.

2. RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICES

Students of color face disproportionate rates of discipline and even expulsion from high school . When students experience exclusionary discipline, they often receive the message that they’re not wanted, that school is not the place for them. Exclusionary discipline is one of many factors that pushes students of color out.

Programs featured highlighted restorative justice practices as key to creating a supportive environment and to increasing equity. In contrast to traditional discipline practices, restorative justice prioritizes keeping students in the classroom through a relationship-based approach. Everyone in the school environment (students, teachers, staff, etc.) is accountable to each other, and when wrongs occur, space for healing is created.

² Public School Review, Students of Color Disproportionately Disciplined in Schools, updated August 19, 2019
<https://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/students-of-color-disproportionately-disciplined-in-schools>

3. LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS THAT AFFIRM STUDENTS' IDENTITIES

Many students have left traditional high school settings at least in part due to how they were treated there. When students' identities, goals, interests and passions are affirmed, young people are much more likely to stay in school.

Programs describe creating affirmative environments in different ways. YouthSource talked about the importance of greeting every young person with dignity and respect. SWEC classrooms are decorated with Black Lives Matter signs and other social justice-related items reflecting the race and cultures of the student population.

Affirmation can also come in the form of representation. A Career Link teacher described adapting her health class curriculum to feature the diets of the various cultures of students in her classroom. Another teacher created an Indigenous science class. YouthSource and SWEC have Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) teachers and majority BIPOC support staff, including Black program directors. CBO staff supporting students at Federal Way Open Doors and Career Link are BIPOC.

Finally, programs can affirm students' identities through culturally-relevant support and programming. For example, El Centro de la Raza has seen success in Latino-specific programming. These types of supports increase engagement and foster connection among students as well as between students and staff.

This also means not shying away from discussions of structural racism and other forms of oppression. Anti-racist education builds power for young people by contextualizing the system in which they find themselves. They can then become leaders as agents of change, using the expertise of their own experiences to push for the more equitable systems all students deserve.

4. ON-SITE SERVICES: BIPOC COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION OFFER STRONG SUPPORT

BIPOC community-based organizations play a key role in supporting young people. They are often able to foster trusting relationships in ways that institutions cannot. Most effective is when organizations supporting students are rooted in the cultural identities of students they serve, staff are reflective of those identities, and students' identities are actively and explicitly affirmed. United Way has also [collected data](#) that demonstrates the effectiveness of BIPOC organizations to support BIPOC students in particular.

Programs noted that when students have access to these services on-site at school, they are more likely to utilize them than if they must travel somewhere else or don't experience a warm hand-off from staff. For example, Career Link notes that although there are myriad services across campus at South Seattle College, students prefer and most utilize what can be offered in the Career Link space.

5. PARTNERSHIPS ARE CHALLENGING

Students benefit from community-based organizations' support in addition to what they receive from their Open Doors program. That being said, partnerships between CBOs and Open Doors sites have not been without challenges, and some partnerships did not last. CBO staff faced implicit and explicitly racist interactions, pressure to perform work outside their roles, and, at the same time, school staff not truly valuing their unique relationships and ability to connect with students.

These challenges can be mitigated in part by establishing strong relationships, boundaries and roles prior to implementing services. Consistent communication between CBO and program staff is key to maintaining these relationships. Open Doors programs must respect the unique set of strengths that CBOs bring. An alternative is for CBOs to run Open Doors programs themselves. Ideally, all funding would flow directly to the CBO rather than go through a school district (see Finance Study).

6. MULTIPLE PATHWAYS FOR STUDENTS

Several programs noted that opportunity youth benefit from genuine support navigating high school options that honors their goals and strengths. Mention of this included the districts, staff and therefore, students themselves often feel a stigma against the GED. For some students this is a great option, but they may feel that it is “less than” the high school diploma. On the flip side, programs mentioned that some school staff encourage students to do the GED rather than the high school diploma when the student’s desire is a high school diploma. Federal Way Open Doors noted that through their competency-based model, students often come into the program through a GED track but end up earning their high school diploma, using some GED tests to demonstrate some competencies. YouthSource recently began a high school diploma program in their formerly GED-only site. They regularly met young people who wanted to get their high school diploma but YouthSource did not offer that. The closest Open Doors high school diploma program geographically is Renton Tech. This is a great program for many students but not all thrive on the community college campus. YouthSource’s new high school option is catching young people that were falling through the cracks.

This is not to say that every program needs to have both a GED and high school diploma pathway. It is to say that all students deserve access and support navigating to the program that will work best for them. Additionally, effective program models include career and college exploration along with transition support to ensure that young people not only graduate from Open Doors, but successfully transition to college or career. South King County was one of seven communities selected to participate in Opportunity Works, a national effort to help disengaged youth transition to postsecondary education. A [rigorous evaluation](#) by Urban Institute found that Open Doors programs providing postsecondary navigation support through Northwest Education Access had a “consistent, large and positive impact” on postsecondary enrollment, and a particularly strong effect on young men of color.



Student Interviews Themes and Analysis

United Way worked with two young people, Katerin and Marcia, to gather interviews of current and former Open Doors students to use in the program snapshots. Katerin and Marcia designed the interview questions and edited the recordings. Each student interviewed consented to the use of their interview for United Way's purposes and received a \$50 gift card in exchange for their time and expertise. The interviews took place between February and May 2020. Below are themes that emerged from the interviews.

Students expressed that being able to talk with teachers and have one-on-one time was important to them.

Students talked about this both as something they did not experience in their mainstream high school and something that they did experience more often in Open Doors. This was closely related to several students stating they preferred the smaller class size of their Open Doors program to a larger high school environment.

Students value teachers who care, engage and communicate authentically, and are willing to listen and support even with concerns outside of academics.

Flexibility in terms of being able to attend school around other obligations as well as being able to complete work at a pace and on a schedule that worked for them was mentioned several times. Open Doors students often have a lot of other obligations outside of school, making the typical daily schedule a barrier. However, some students thought that there was too much independence expected from their program and thought more structure would help.

All of the students interviewed were **either attending college or planned to go to college** and felt their program was supporting them with those goals. One student described their Open Doors program as a “sturdy bridge from high school to college.”

Students appreciated being able to participate in activities beyond academics. Examples included creative writing, identity-based clubs like Gay-Straight Alliance or Black Student Union, prom and volunteering opportunities to give back. These opportunities helped students feel connected to their reengagement program and motivated them to engage in the school community.

Culture and environment are very important to Open Doors students interviewed. Students appreciated a school that felt “home-like” and friendly. In addition, students talked about the importance of staff and teachers genuinely hearing students and not suppressing student voices.

Sustainability Project: Program Enhancements

As part of the overall work of the Sustainability Project, United Way is supporting a Program Enhancement Project from each of the four highlighted programs. These projects included work that would be beneficial to the entire network of reengagement programs, rather than so program-specific that it would not be applicable to other programs. The grants began in July of 2019. This summary includes information from the first year of the two-year projects.

About nine months into the first year of project funding, schools in Washington state closed as the community scrambled to respond to the coronavirus. Reengagement programs were significantly impacted by closures and by the pandemic overall. United Way made sustainability grant funds flexible to meet emergent programmatic needs, if necessary, related to the pandemic. As a result, programs were able to provide technology (e.g. laptops) to students, help with basic needs and re-assigned staff to supporting emergent needs.

CAREER LINK

- Project funded an on-site, low-barrier mental health counselor and a peer mentorship program for students starting college

Mental health counselor highlights: *We continue to highly recommend finding a way to provide students access to a counselor without the long intakes, insurance requirements and general paperwork that is typical. We've found that being able to engage with students "in the moment" is invaluable. Getting the counselor to get out of their office and mingle with students also is critical to building relationships. We can't wait to get back into a somewhat normal environment to continue to see this work.* Forty-nine students were formally supported by the mental health staff. Many more were supported informally by her presence on campus.

Mentorship challenges: *For the mentor program, we don't have a lot to work from right now. We feel like this program was just getting its legs under it when we closed. We look forward to growing it when we return to some kind of in-person program. We had much lower numbers of students taking college classes—and therefore less need for mentors –and the online format just didn't work as well. If students felt like they needed to reach out for help and the only option was online, they chose to go directly to staff instead of a new mentor that they had no relationship with.*

Career Link “pivoted” some of these funds for these uses:

- Technology for staff to work and teach/support students remotely
- Purchased computers for students
 - “Some students were planning to write English essays on their phone for the whole quarter”
- Purchased and distributed grocery gift cards to students to meet basic needs

FEDERAL WAY OPEN DOORS

- Project funded the creation of a “college-going culture,” including student workshops, staff training and development of a menu of options, in partnership with Northwest Education Access

With the encouragement and support of NWEA, Federal Way Open Doors recognizes the need for foundational equity and anti-racist cultural shifts to occur in order to have a truly equitable “college-going culture.” The second year of the work will include a consultant focused on assessment, accountability and evaluation around racial equity.

Project activities thus far have included: design and implementation of a data tool, staff training and “cultural norm setting” with a consultant, re-vamp of student intake, creation of a “tuition waiver checklist” and resource maps.

With COVID-19, NWEA actively supported Federal Way Open Doors in getting resources to students for a wide range of needs, both those related to academic outcomes and more generally.

- 40 students complete FAFSA
- 107 met with a college success coordinator
- 56 enrolled in college
- 56 passed a college course

SOUTHWEST EDUCATION CENTER

- Project funded the year-round expansion of a student writer’s workshop, a data specialist position and teacher salary increases

The Writer’s Workshop went year round, and had its first virtual reading in the summer of 2020. Students reflected that writing helped them cope with current events, such as COVID-19 and the on-going uprising against white supremacy in the wake of George Floyd’s death. The summer workshop was held virtually, including a Zoom reading. Writing continues to be an important outlet for students to cope with the pandemic. A website for the program has been developed: <https://swboot.org/>.

SWEC needed to shift the role of its data specialist position to part-time case management in order to ensure all students had their needs met during the stay-at-home order—academically, physically and social-emotionally.

This shutdown made it very clear how few of our students have computer access at home, and how even fewer have reliable internet access at home. This challenge showed us where we, as an education center, have opportunity to grow and develop and initiated conversations about how we can much more effectively proceed both short- and long-term in terms of meeting student needs in a digital capacity. While our department has discussed this at multiple, different points in the past, we recognize how many students come to us BECAUSE they would not be successful in an exclusively online learning environment.

SWEC held a “drive-through” graduation celebration in June 2020.

YOUTHSOURCE

- Project funded a new high school diploma model in partnership with Renton Technical College

YouthSource enrolled 39 students to the new model in the first year, higher than the anticipated goal of 24 students. This is a huge achievement, especially considering the challenges presented by going entirely remote due to COVID-19 partway through the first year.

14 students received diplomas in the first year!

“We have learned that many youth of color are seeking alternative options to complete their high school credential in an environment that has instructors and staff that reflect them and their community. They perform better with instructors of color and similar lived experience, and also smaller classroom size and supportive environment. Most have been systematically targeted and discouraged from attending their traditional high schools. In addition, many have competing priorities that prevent them from attending school on a consistent basis”.

COVID-19 was a challenge and some students found it difficult to stay in school. YouthSource was able to get students technology so they could work virtually, and some continued to earn credits and credentials.



Next Steps: Looking Forward for United Way and Open Doors

The work of Reconnecting Youth has revealed both bright spots within Open Doors and its programs and issues that need to be addressed. Open Doors programs are attracting and retaining students who otherwise would not be engaged in education and moving them along a path to credential earning, a point that cannot be overstated. Until traditional programs can support the talents and resilience of all youth, reengagement programs will be the necessary soft landing for students pushed or pulled out of traditional high schools. Washington state's Open Doors structure is unique nationally and is proving its potential to be a game-changing model for supporting reengaged students with state dollars.

That said, there's also general consensus that the current model of Open Doors is limited in its ability to truly meet the needs of all students, particularly in terms of the billing structure. This presents barriers to equitable service, especially for students of color.

The race inequity that exists within reengagement is among the most resonant findings of Reconnecting Youth, and United Way's next phase of work in this arena will focus on addressing that directly through both program and policy approaches. Doing right by opportunity youth of color within this system is one way of beginning to make reparations to Black, Indigenous and people of color communities that have been most harmed by education systems and policy. To that end, our most salient policy recommendation is:

- **Create a sustainable pathway to invest Open Doors funds directly in community-based organizations** rather than passing the funds through school districts. This would allow CBOs full access to the Basic Education Allocation (BEA) dollars and control over their use, which is critical, in particular for the success of BIPOC-led CBO programs. Planning and start-up resources need to be included so that programs can get off the ground successfully. United Way plans to support the opening of one or more BIPOC-led, community-based reengagement programs in King County in the coming years. We are committed to this effort because:
 - The mainstream education system produces disparities for students of color. Because the funding passes through school districts, Open Doors programs are extensions of a system that has already failed youth.
 - [There are serious concerns](#) that students are pushed out of traditional high schools into Open Doors programs in order to improve district graduation rates. A [recent report](#) shows that 59% of Open Doors students were still enrolled in high school when they enrolled in their reengagement programs, rather than enrolling after being separated from school. Students deserve options that will best help them meet their goals, not what will impact a district's graduation rate.
 - BIPOC CBOs produce stronger results for students of color than mainstream CBOs, as data from United Way's Supporting Youth initiative [demonstrates](#).
 - BIPOC CBOs have the expertise in their own communities. United Way's [Racial Equity Technical Assistance](#) report supports this.
 - BIPOC CBO programs are rooted in positive cultural identity promotion, which helps build resilience in youth to navigate a world that often doesn't support them.

Our other recommendations cover both program and policy.

The Reconnecting Youth initiative illuminated a number of promising practices at the individual school level with the following programmatic recommendations rising up as critical to increasing equity in the design of Open Doors programs:

- **Utilize best practices for students of color**, including restorative justice, trauma-informed practices, culturally tailored curriculums and services, and positive cultural identity frameworks. Centering the needs of the most marginalized students will ensure that all students benefit. The programs featured in this report are implementing some of these practices. Students will benefit from their becoming universal.
- **Listen to and give leadership to young people** in learning how to design and improve programs, as well as in policy advocacy efforts. Students know what they need in order to succeed in school. In partnership with young people, adults can create environments where youth thrive.
- **Engage whole communities to truly create the equitable education spaces students deserve.** This goes beyond family engagement. BIPOC CBOs are key trusted resources to involve in these processes.
- **Ensure programs have the capacity and resources to prioritize college/career exploration, readiness and transition support.** All students, especially those who reengage, need to see the connection between completing their GED or diploma and achieving their future goals in order for school to be relevant.

There are also structural, policy changes that would improve Open Doors and its fiscal sustainability. Our key policy recommendations are:

- **Provide a clear mechanism for BIPOC CBOs to receive sustainable funding** for the critical support services they provide students. These services often including mentoring, case management, disability services and social-emotional skill building, all from a lens of positive cultural identity. This funding could come directly from OSPI or as a subcontract through an Open Doors program. This will ensure that these services are consistently available to students and that the organizations providing them are equitably compensated.
- **Create sustainable funding streams for critical social-emotional supports that enrich the learning environment.** Flexible funding to reduce student barriers has proven effective for providing more holistic services and helping students stay engaged. Programs currently have to find dollars to supplement public funding in order to provide these needed supports.
- **Change the billing structure to fund programs for 12 months of the year rather than 10.** This will give programs the flexibility to engage students the moment they reach out and ensure there are no disruptions in support that can lead to disengagement.
- **Allow programs to bill for activities such as outreach, helping students complete the enrollment process, and supporting students even when they are not “billable.”** This is some of the most critical work that Open Doors programs and CBO partners are doing and they are doing it without sustainable resources. This work directly contributes to engagement and retention of students.

- **Examine and alter the billing structure to eliminate the potential for creaming**, which can have racially disparate impacts. The “pay for performance” structure incentivizes serving students more likely to be billable, and strains resources of programs who commit to serving students regardless of their ability to bill for them. This recommendation is linked to the following recommendation.
- **Re-evaluate the list of Indicators of Academic Progress (IAPs)**. The current set of IAPs provide a narrow view of a student’s achievements, for example, earning a high school credit or passing 1 or more tests. These are important milestones but fail to capture the myriad other successes students may have along the way. We recommend seeking community feedback and making revisions to IAPs with a racial equity lens.
- **Change the billing structure so that smaller programs can be viable**. Open Doors requires a high volume of students in order to be financially viable, and still requires additional funding to truly support students well. This incentivizing of quantity means that only large organizations are able to open and sustain Open Doors programs even though size does not equate with effectiveness. It also effectively negates the opportunity for most BIPOC organizations to provide these education services

Conversations about how to implement the recommendations related to billing structures and mechanisms are complicated and fraught, but the reengagement field needs to continue to grapple with the issues and test alternatives. United Way is committed to remaining involved in these discussions in the coming years, even as our role shifts. We will keep our finger on the pulse of Open Doors-related policy advocacy and continue our efforts, in partnership with many others in the community, to elevate the need for specific changes to the Open Doors framework and approach. We hope that this report has provided a helpful glimpse into Open Doors programming, both its triumphs and its flaws, and we encourage the field to take action on these recommendations. Our youth deserve it.

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Appendix

Finance Study

Open Doors Reengagement Finance Study

July 2020



United Way of King County



Open Doors Reengagement Finance Study

July 2020

Executive Summary

Open Doors is a statewide program in place since 2011 that enables Washington State basic education allocation (BEA) dollars to flow to programs serving young people ages 16-21 who have either left school without graduating or who are not on track to graduate. This ability for BEA funds to “follow the student” enables greater educational choice for students who have not been well served in traditional high school settings to reengage. However, the change in setting and educational service provider also comes with differences in service and resource availability. These differences can be positive. For example, an Open Doors program based at a community college often creates better access to college-level classes for students concurrent with completing their high school diploma. A community-based organization (CBO) may also be better positioned to connect students with workforce opportunities and social and emotional supports and may have the community’s trust in ways that other educational institutions do not.

Though Open Doors represents an important step in making reengagement an option statewide, many programs experience a major gap between the available state resources and the needs of the young people they serve. They must dedicate significant resources to making ends meet and are constantly vulnerable to a lack of funding. Due to compounded years of structural racism and marginalization by traditional educational systems and other systems of opportunity young people in Open Doors are more likely to identify as Hispanic/Latinx, Black, Indigenous, and/or multiracial. Thus adequate funding and effective policies around Open Doors programs are key structural issues with racial equity implications.

This finance study, commissioned by United Way of King County (UWKC) at the conclusion of their \$20 million, 5-year campaign to support Open Doors programs, examines the flow of resources to Open Doors sites and compares existing funding levels to what it takes to serve our state’s most marginalized students well. We rely on a financial analysis and national scan to reflect on sustainability and racial equity in this system considering UWKC’s campaign sunset.

First, financial analysis of four Open Doors sites provides insight into how the state funding system is working on the ground for different program models. The BEA reimbursement rate of \$8,503 only

covers 50% of the resources needed to serve students. This analysis highlights the variety of program models within King County, the various strategies and sources programs have assembled to complement BEA funds in order to serve students well, and the significant challenges that remain in delivering effective, equitable services.

BERK also conducted a scan of comparable programs based on referral from experts at Community Center for Education Results (CCER), MDRC, and the National League of Cities. Comprehensive programs that offer behavioral health and substance use counseling alongside academic instruction boast up to 94% persistence and completion rates. They also cost upwards of \$21,000 per student, both within CBOs and at alternative or charter schools. Program profiles offer some insight to potential strategies the Open Doors sites, the region, or the State could adopt to enhance effectiveness and sustainability.

The results are three key findings.

Open Doors funding in the current system is not adequate or equitable. On the aggregate, the young people in Open Doors have greater needs than the typical high school student and have access to fewer and less sustainable resources.

- First, the BEA for school districts in King County (median of \$9,530) exceeds the statewide Open Doors reimbursement rate of \$8,503 (Exhibit 11). In other words, the State, by formula, allocates fewer “per student” dollars to students in King County Open Doors programs than to traditional students in-district. Open Doors legislation requires districts to pass on no less than 93% of their BEA funds to contracted Open Doors programs. That means students in contracted programs receive 7% fewer resources than in-district students. Districts are also required to ensure special education and transitional bilingual supports to Open Doors students, but districts may not distribute funds and services equitably, and the legislation does not address other services commonly available in school.
- Open Doors programs are structurally limited in their ability to bill or be reimbursed for services provided to students and, unlike other public high schools in the state, only receive reimbursement for services if students meet performance benchmarks. Open Doors sites can only bill the State for students that meet several criteria each month, even though they may serve many more students. The most restrictive criterion for billability is meeting the Indicators of Academic Progress (IAPs) every three months. This criterion creates a perverse financial incentive to “cream” or only work with students that will be most billable, leaving those most in need behind. In this way, Open Doors is set up to replicate inequities experienced in the traditional K-12 system. Also, by state policy, sites can only bill for each student for 10 months out of the year, though services are often provided year-round at sites as an essential way to keep students engaged.
- The one-size-fits-all and performance-based funding model does not account for where students start in terms of credits, competencies, and basic needs. Open Doors programs serve a wide range of ages, skills, credit standing, and needs as compared to traditional in-district programs that can deliver instruction and support at scale and in grade cohorts. Most Open Doors programs accept all eligible students at a wide range of progress levels, academically or otherwise, and seek to meet their holistic needs, which requires tailored individual services. A

one-size-fits all model creates differences in the resources that ultimately reach students based on the Open Doors operating model. For example, we found in the financial analysis that the type of agency which operates the program can have a significant impact on the total resources available and the flexibility of those resources.

Equitable resources for Open Doors students and programs can have outsize social benefit. The study draws on four sources to shed light on what Open Doors reengagement does and should cost.

- First and at a minimum, the study programs are estimated to use, on average, \$17,089 in total resources per Open Doors student in the 2019-20 school year. This includes direct spending as well as infrastructure, staff, and student supports paid for by other programs and entities.
- Second, we look to the school districts themselves for a benchmark. In the 2019-20 budget year, the average total expenditure (not including debt and capital) per student FTE in King County school districts was \$17,276. While comparable to the median Open Doors program resources, it is important to remember that Open Doors students typically have higher needs than general education high school students. It is also important to note that traditional school resources require less effort to raise and access, being backed by federal and state mandates and long-term grants and levies.
- Third, our scan of national programs that have been implemented and evaluated at some scale reveals another tier of potential comparison costs. While each program is unique, we see costs of service that range \$21,771 to \$27,382 per student full-time equivalent.
- Finally, we should consider the costs in light of quantifiable benefits. Vining and Weimer,¹ building on cost-benefit methodology from the Washington State Institute of Public Policy, estimate the lifetime social value of *each* additional high school graduate at \$332,000. In a study using statewide Open Doors data, the Washington State Education Research and Data Center (ERDC)² demonstrated that among young people who had left high school without graduating, those who enrolled in Open Doors were roughly twice as likely to graduate high school and to be ever enrolled in postsecondary three years later as those who did not enroll in Open Doors.

While showing clear value for the population that left school, Open Doors programs still graduate students at much lower rates than traditional high school leaving ample room for improvement and greater capture of social value. For example, 19% of the state's traditional high school students do not graduate within four years, and among Open Doors students, 65% do not graduate or earn an equivalent credential within three years of starting the program.³ Using Vining and Weimer's estimate, the four Open Doors sites in this study graduated 370 students in the 2018-19 school year, creating lifetime social value roughly estimated at \$122.8 million, and yet their potential to graduate students is much greater. Adequate, equitable funding could ensure that much larger numbers of

¹ Vining, Aidan R. and David L. Weimer, 2019. "The Value of High School Graduation in the United State: Per-Person Shadow Price Estimates of Use in Cost-Benefit Analysis." *Administrative Sciences*. 9 (4): 1-15.

² ERDC, 2020. "Outcomes of the Open Doors Youth Reengagement Program."

³ OSPI, 2020. "Washington State Report Card."

<https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103300>

students could access Open Doors services and achieve success through them.

There are paths to improved sustainability and equity. Findings from the interviews and literature offer some paths toward financial sustainability.

- The most impactful of these originate in state policy. State policy makers can revise the billability structure to allow sites to claim funding more in line with the effort they expend and the needs of Open Doors students. The rate could be linked instead to school district BEA rates, include BEA enhancements, and/or be calculated separately based on Open Doors programs and costs (instead of school districts' costs, which are fundamentally different).
- There are also potential opportunities in regional collaboration among Open Doors sites to share services more efficiently or collectively raise funds. The creation of some regional reconnection and program support services across King County over the past several years lays the groundwork for further collaboration of this kind.
- Finally, school districts themselves have significant discretion over their BEA, local levy, and other funds. Some have chosen to use an equity-weighted allocation of resources across school buildings within district. For example, in Portland Public Schools, the contract alternative schools were approved by the school board to be included in the racial equity formula for staffing resources. School districts can also support more generally by “subsidizing” the Open Doors the program with general funds, similar to Federal Way. Districts may also have discretion over various categorical funds and special programs listed in Appendix A and should consider options for providing Open Doors students the resources they need.

Open Doors students are young people who have made a conscious personal step to reengage with an education system that has previously let them down. Regardless of the reasons they left school or fell behind, they come to Open Doors with renewed personal motivation to complete. Our education system needs to match that commitment with commensurate resources in order not to lose these students forever.

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About this Study and Methods

Following a five-year, \$20 million campaign to support Open Doors Youth Reengagement programs, United Way of King County embarked on the Reconnecting Youth Sustainability Project to examine what it takes to operate a successful reengagement program, how sites across the country are doing similar work, and to fully consider the racial equity implications of the current funding model.

This study engaged four high school reengagement programs in King County that receive Washington State basic education funding through the Open Doors Youth Reengagement system. We took a comprehensive look at the federal, other state, local, private, and in-kind supports that make these programs possible, and we reviewed program expenses to understand the adequacy of state funding. We also scanned model national programs for youth reengagement through literature review and interviews to compare costs, services, and outcomes. Finally, we used a scan of categorical and grant funding for K-12 school districts as a useful benchmark for understanding resources in Open Doors compared to resources in-district.

Our team was advised by staff at UWKC, the Community Center for Education Results (CCER), Career Link High School, Federal Way Open Doors, Southwest Education Center, and YouthSource.

What is Open Doors?

Washington's Open Doors Youth Reengagement system provides education and services to young people, ages 16-21, who have left school or are not expected to graduate from high school by the age of 21. The system is defined by state law and allows state basic education funding be used to provide these services in one of four models: (1) directly operated by a district or college, (2) partnered with another district, educational service district, or agency, (3) partnered with a college, or (4) as part of a consortium.

In the schematic on the following page (Exhibit 1), **blue** represents key state funds.

- The basic education allocation (BEA) is the state appropriation for general education apportioned to school districts on a per student full-time equivalent (FTE) basis. It is the K-12 school system's main source of flexible, or "general purpose," funding in Washington State. The more students are enrolled within a district, the more money the district draws from the State in BEA. Every year, each school district receives a slightly different "per student" BEA rate that is distributed by formula and based on the state appropriation. Districts in King County had a median rate of \$9,530 in the 2019-20 school year (Exhibit 11)
- Open Doors legislation allows BEA funding to be passed through to Open Door programs at a statewide average rate per student. This reimbursement rate is the same across the state and was \$8,503 in the 2019-20 school year. It is the same as the Running Start dual credit reimbursement rate that is calculated annually by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).⁴

⁴ WAC 392-169-095, <https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=392-169-095>.

- School districts also draw enhanced funding from the State based on the number of students eligible for special education and transitional bilingual (TBIP) services. Open Doors rules require districts to provide TBIP and special education services to eligible students in the Open Doors programs as well. In the case of TBIP, districts can choose to pass the enhanced funding along to programs rather than providing the services directly.
- School districts access other state funds for resources and services for students that are either not addressed in Open Doors policies or explicitly not available to Open Doors students. These include categorical programs and state transportation funding. In some cases, districts have the discretion to pass through these categorical funds (through dollars or services) to Open Doors students, while some are restricted in ways that make Open Doors students ineligible. See Appendix A: K-12 Funding Sources for more detail on state and federal categorical programs.

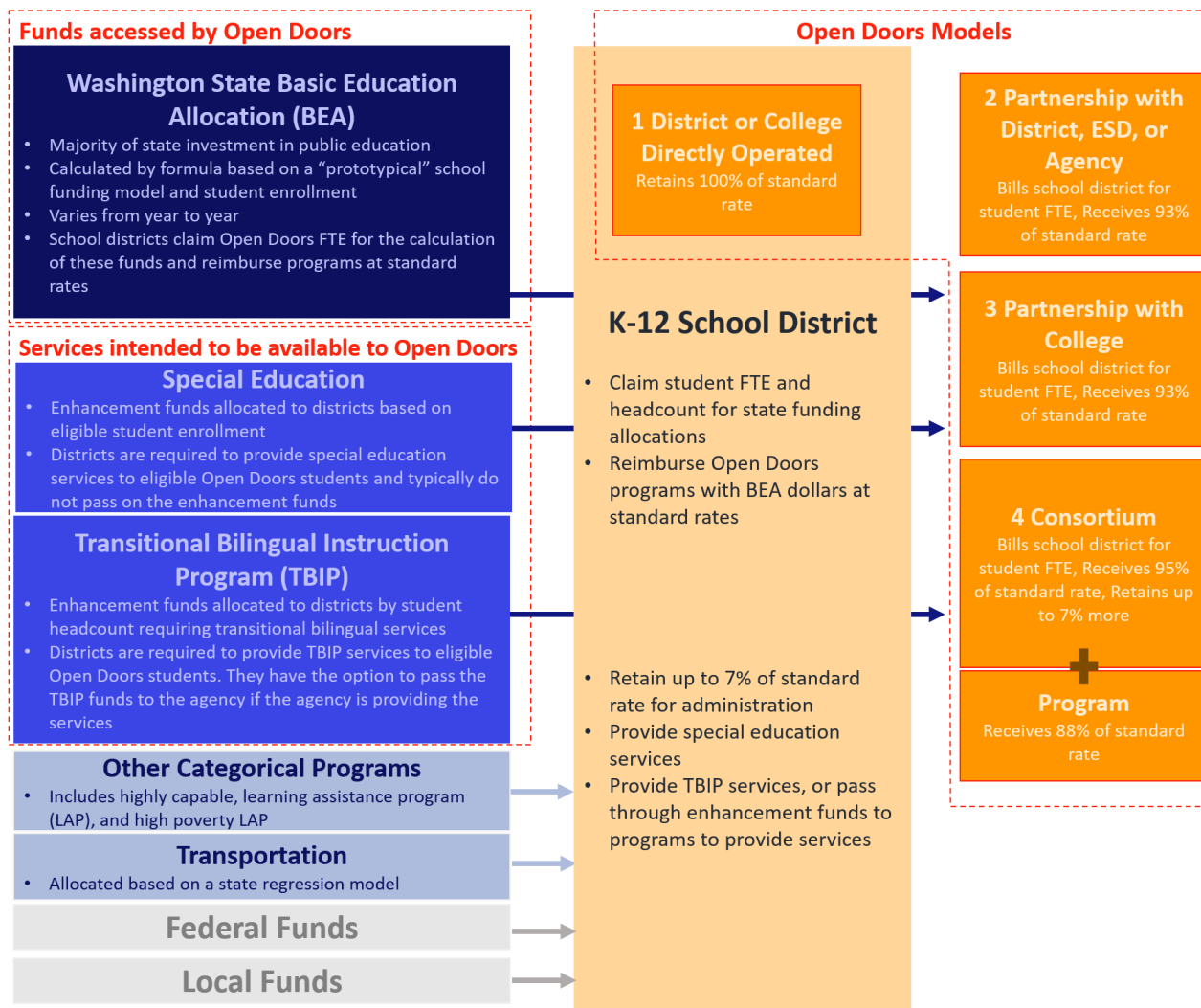
In gray, **federal and local funds also accrue to K-12 School Districts**, but they are not required to be passed to Open Doors in any way and may be restricted from use in Open Doors.

There are four standard Open Doors models shown **in orange**.

- One is directly operated by the district or college that is billing the State for BEA, and three are based on out-of-district contracts where the district bills the State and reimburses contract providers with 7% withheld for administration.
- Only in-district providers retain 100% of the BEA (the full \$8,503 per student) that is drawn from the State.
- All models have the same mandated instructional and case management staff ratios. The maximum ratio in legislation is 25:1 for instruction and 75:1 for case management.

Exhibit 1. K-12 Funding and Open Doors Models

Open Doors Program Funding



Source: BERK, 2020.

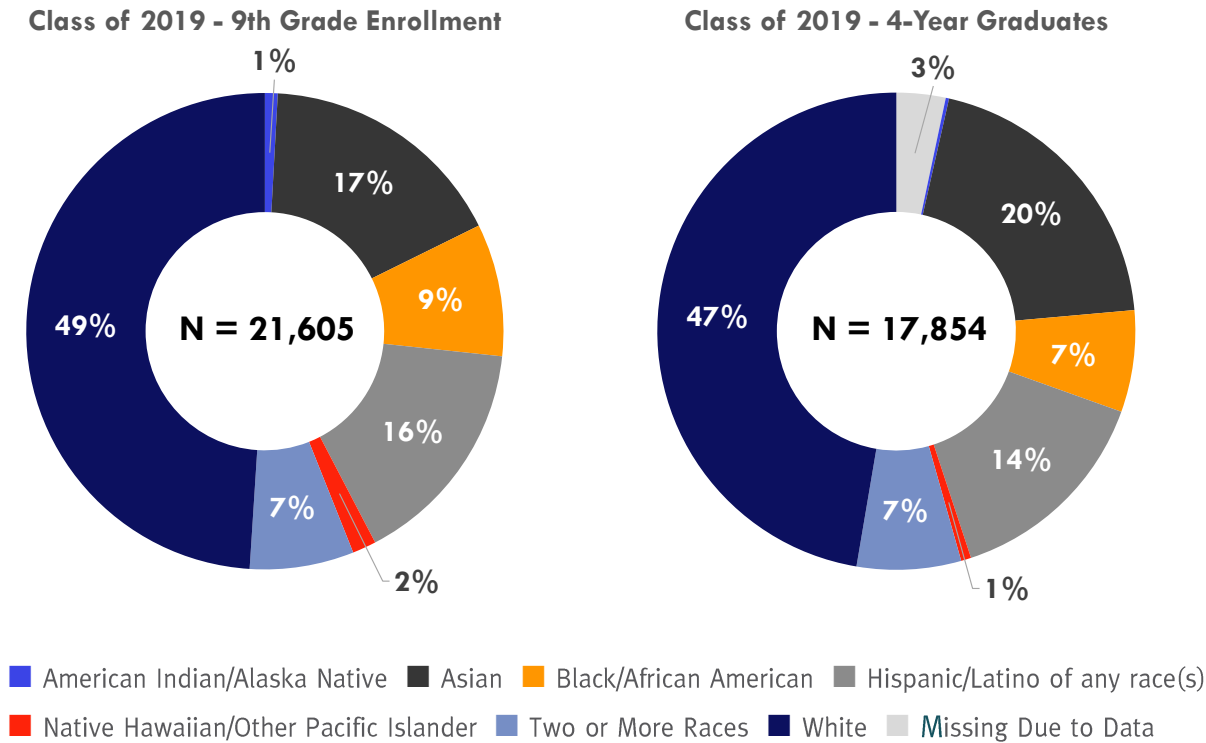
The Ones Who Come Back: Racial Equity

This study explores Open Doors financing to understand how finances and policies can result in inequitable outcomes or patterns of difference in education outcomes by race. To center the experience of reengagement youth, we explore publicly available data disaggregated by race about who is in the K-12 system at 9th grade, who graduates on time, who leaves without graduating, and who participates in reengagement programs. What the following numbers do not necessarily reveal are the myriad circumstances that cause students to be pushed out or pulled out of the comprehensive high school experience. For example, educational scholarship points out that the dominant culture in mainstream schools establishes a standard of speaking, thinking, and acting. When these standards are held to non-White and working-class students, they experience high rates of discipline, and feelings of invisibility or unwelcome. This contributes to the phenomenon known as

school pushout⁵. Pullout factors typically refer to the cost-benefit equation of staying in school relative to earning needed income or taking on family responsibilities. Some research has also noted students may be pulled away by opportunities with greater cultural relevance to them, preferring that to having to assimilate to succeed in school. While each instance of school leaving is a mix of push and pull factors, in the aggregate, quantitative researchers have identified structural patterns in these factors by race⁶ highlighting a role for institutions and policy change.

The following data also do not show that Open Doors students are a very special distinct subset of credit deficient or out-of-school young people. In-depth participatory action research with reengagement students themselves showed that motivated, resilient, hard-working young people is a more fitting identity⁷. It's crucial to remember they are the ones who come back.

Exhibit 2. King County School Districts Enrollment and 4-Year Graduation, Distribution by Race



Source: OSPI, 2020; BERK, 2020.

When interpreting these charts, it is important to note that King County's students encompass a vast diversity of ethnicities, nationalities, languages, and cultures not reflected within these race categories. We acknowledge the available data may belie some important differences within race.

With the available data, we see in Exhibit 2 that Hispanic/Latinx students comprised 16% of the Class

⁵ E. Taylor, D. Gillborn, & G. Ladson-Billings. *Foundations of critical race theory in education*. New York, NY: Routledge.

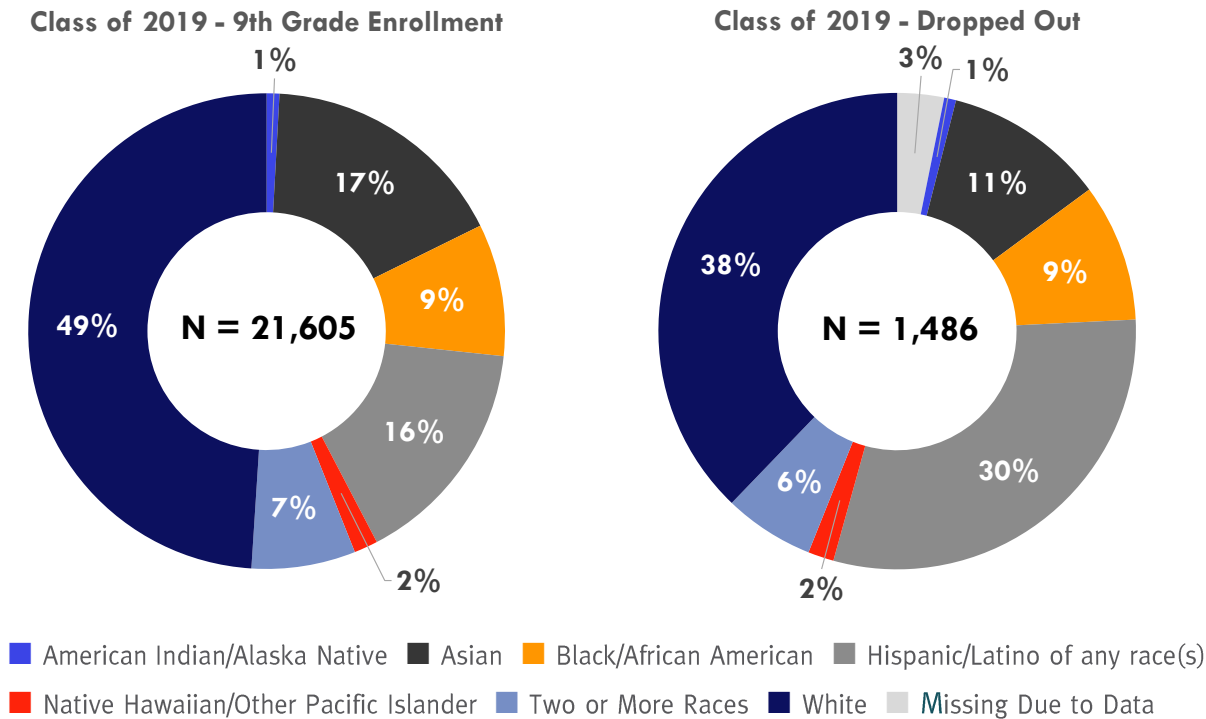
⁶ Bradley, C. L., & Renzulli, L. A. (2011). The complexity of non-completion: Being pushed or pulled to drop out of high school. *Social Forces*, 90(2), 521-545.

⁷ Burbach, Jessica Hopson. (2018). *Pushing Back on School Pushout: Youth at an Alternative School Advocate for Educational Change Through Youth Participatory Action Research*.

of 2019 in 9th grade and a slightly lower share of those who graduated on time (within four years). Black/African American students comprised 9% of the incoming class of 2019 and 7% of those who graduated by year four. Though there are transfers in and out of the cohort, this represents a net loss of about 700 Black students between the starting 9th grade cohort and the four-year high school graduating class.

American Indian/Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students are the most invisible in the data due to small numbers and suppression requirements⁸. However, they experience highly disproportionate outcomes. For example, the 2019 four-year graduating class has less than half the number of Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students as the corresponding 9th grade class. There are less than a quarter of the American Indian/Alaskan Natives in the graduating class as the corresponding 9th grade class. Some of this gap is due to suppression in the graduation data, but the change between who starts and who finishes is staggering.

Exhibit 3. King County School Districts 9th Grade Enrollment and Dropout⁹ Distribution by Race



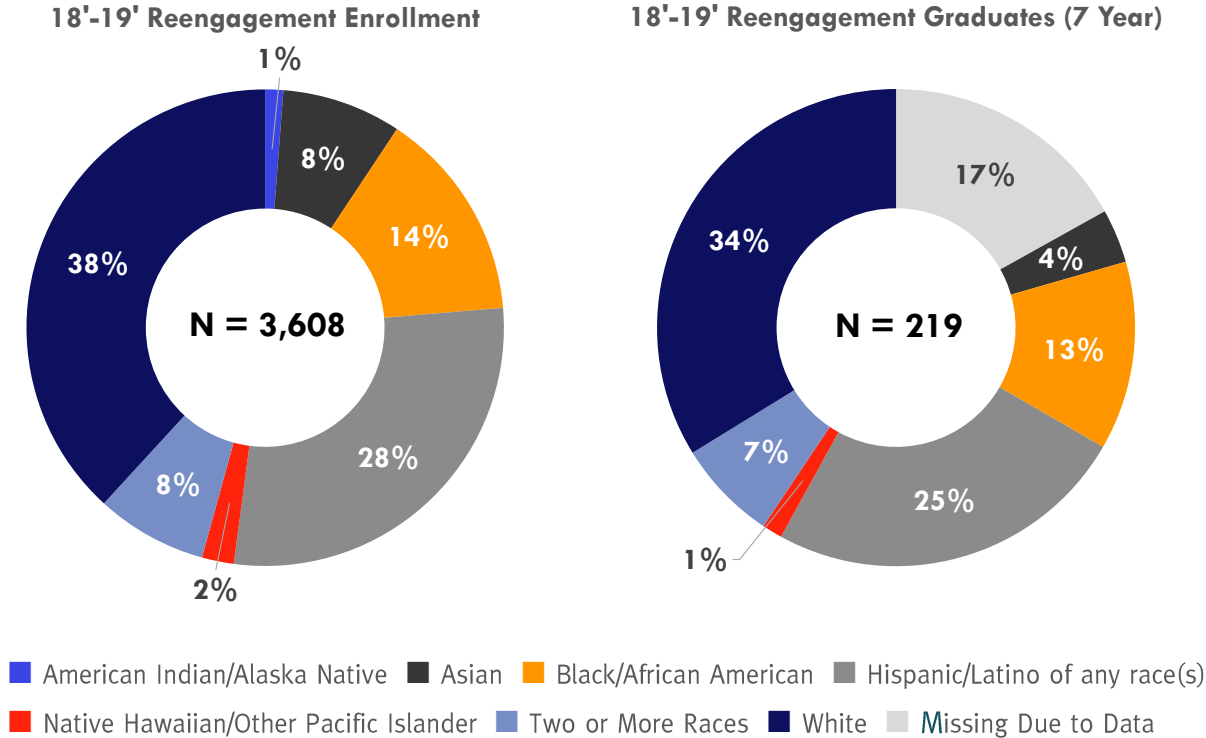
Source: OSPI, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Students can come to Open Doors as direct enrollees from high school if they are not on track for graduation, or they can reenroll after leaving school. As such, numbers for students who leave school do not necessarily comprise the whole population of students who might enter an Open Doors program. Indeed, anecdotal evidence and program-specific analysis suggest that up to 75% of students in Open Doors never hit the district’s official dropout list and are directly enrolled in an Open Doors program when they meet the credit deficiency requirements. Nonetheless, the data

⁸ OSPI suppresses data from any category of student with fewer than 10 individuals to protect identifiability.
⁹ Dropout is the term used by OSPI data sources for students who leave school.

highlights racial disparities in who does officially leave school without graduating. Exhibit 3 shows Hispanic/Latinx students comprised 16% of the Class of 2019 in 9th grade, but 30% of those who were no longer in school by their target graduation year. Black/African American students comprised 9% of the incoming class of 2019 and of those who had left school by year four. American Indian/Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students are the most invisible in the data due to small numbers and suppression requirements.

Exhibit 4. King County School Districts Reengagement Enrollment and Graduation Distribution by Race



Source: OSPI, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Again, enrollment numbers (Exhibit 4) include both direct enrollments and enrollments from students who have previously been pushed out or pulled out of school without graduating. Hispanic/Latinx students are disproportionately likely to enroll in reengagement programs, as 28% of reengagement enrollees, compared with 16% of 9th grade enrollees. Black/African American students are also disproportionately likely be enrolled in the reengagement system. They represent 14% of reengagement enrollees in 2018-19, compared with 9% of 9th grade enrollees and 9% of those who left school. Asian reengagement students are the least likely to graduate the program with seven years, representing 8% of enrollees but only 4% of graduates within seven years. Otherwise, the racial makeup of reengagement graduates is roughly proportional to reengagement enrollment.

Data from King County school districts also show disparities by gender. Male students are more likely to leave school without graduating within the four years of high school. They represent 52% of 9th grade enrollees, but 61% of those who leave school. Male students are also comparatively less likely to return to a reengagement program and those who do return to reengagement programs are less likely to graduate than female students on average.

Financial Analysis of Four Open Doors Sites

To understand how the state funding model works on the ground, BERK collected and analyzed budgeted and actual data from four Open Doors sites and interviewed several program administrators. The intent of Open Doors legislation is to allow flexibility in where education services can be provided, and to allow providers and districts to come to many different arrangements to serve students in their region. While this is a great benefit for educational choice, it also presents challenges in analyzing “apples to apples” financial data across sites with varying delivery models, accounting practices, fiscal years, and data systems. Despite these limitations, this analysis demonstrated that BEA on average only covers 50% of the resources expended per student. The analysis also highlighted the variation among different models, the various strategies and sources programs have assembled to complement BEA funds and serve students well, and ultimately, the challenges and inequitable outcomes produced by the current financial arrangement.

The four sites engaged in this study are:

- **Career Link High School.** Career Link (formerly Career Link Academy) is a High School Diploma completion program operated out of the South Seattle College’s main campus. The program is a cohort-based model with instruction taking place in a traditional classroom setting. Career Link High School partners with Highline Public Schools for the Open Doors program as a contractor. They also pay Seattle Colleges and the South Seattle campus an indirect rate for use of classroom space, offices, and college amenities. The indirect rate paid to the college and relationship with the college creates access to college counselors, math lab, the writing center, tutoring, student associations, and child care. Career Link pays tuition for high schoolers taking college level courses.
- **Federal Way Open Doors.** Federal Way Open Doors is an in-district GED and high-school diploma granting program with flexible drop-in style engagement and extended hours (12 hours a day) based at Truman High School. Truman is home to several alternative high schools. The diploma at Federal Way Open Doors is competency-based, further lending flexibility for students. The school is part of the Big Picture network of schools, which organizes learning around small student groups led by a teacher advisor to develop individualized learning plans. In exchange for a membership fee, Federal Way Open Doors receives coaching, shared learning with other Big Picture schools, and professional learning.
- **Southwest Education Center (SWEC).** Southwest Education Center is an Open Doors program operated by the non-profit Southwest Youth and Family Services (SWYFS) and in partnership with Highline Public Schools. Students can earn a GED, competency-based high school diploma at the Center, as well as participate in a Young Parent Program on a drop-in basis at two sites (one in White Center and one in Delridge). SWYFS is a multi-service non-profit with programs dedicated to young adult development, family advocacy, and behavioral health in addition to education. Open Doors students have exposure to and can access these other services in tandem with their education pursuits.
- **YouthSource.** YouthSource is a one-stop education and employment center for young adults run by King County that includes an Open Doors program. Renton Technical College is the partner

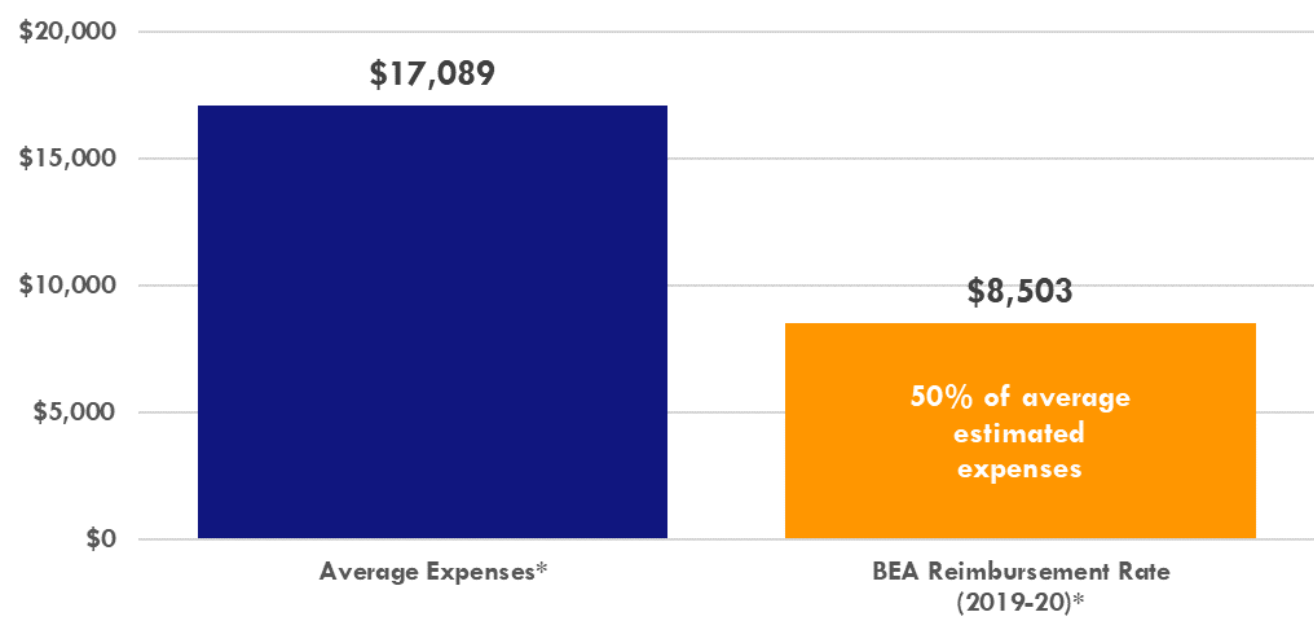
providing instruction at the site, and Renton School District is the K-12 district partner. YouthSource offers a GED and a competency-based high school diploma on a drop-in basis that often happens one-on-one depending on the students in attendance. YouthSource receives fewer direct-from-district referrals than other programs in the study, and proportionally its students are older and disengaged for longer periods. They also receive referrals from Superior Court for students impacted by the justice system. As a one-stop model, many other programs and services are available on-site to Open Doors students.

PROGRAM REVENUES

Basic Education Allocation (BEA)

BEA is the only sustainable funding source across all four sites paying a rate of \$8,503 per student (before school district holdbacks) and yet, it comprises on average, only 50% of the per student resources expended on Open Doors in 2019-2020, as shown below in Exhibit 5.

Exhibit 5. Average Estimated Expenses to BEA Comparison at Open Doors Study Sites, 2019-2020

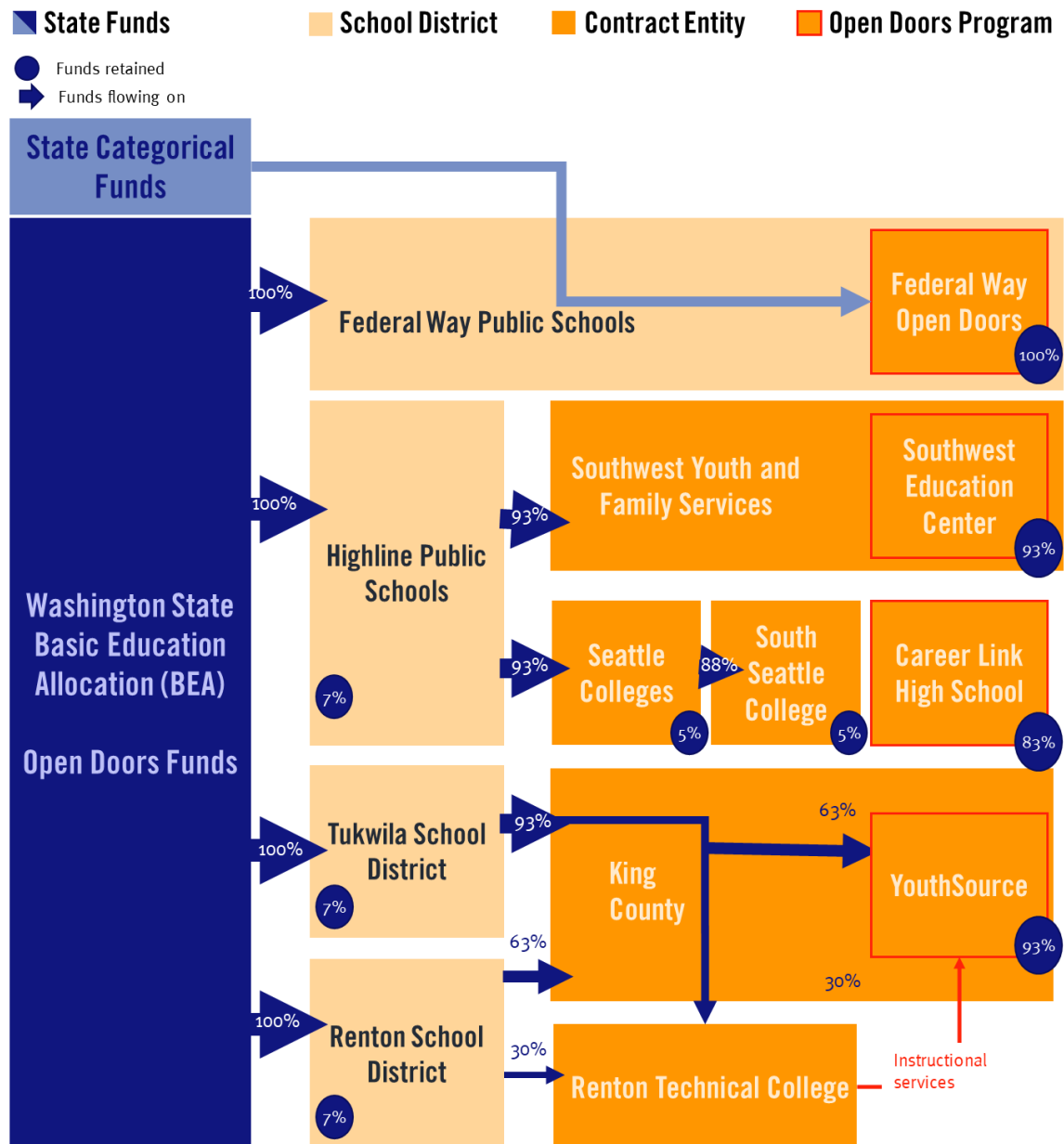


Notes: Average estimated expenses include both on- and off-budget expenses (such as staff funded by other sources, and the value of discounted/donated space). Reimbursement rate shown is for non-vocational students as all four Open Doors program sites profiled receive the non-vocational reimbursement rate.
Source: Career Link High School, 2020; Southwest Education Center, 2020; Federal Way Open Doors, 2020; YouthSource, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 6 provides an overview of state BEA funding flows to the four Open Doors sites included in this study. Federal Way Open Doors is the only in-district model in the study and so retains 100% of the BEA allocation to serve Open Doors students. The other sites are subject to at least a 7% withholding on that reimbursement. Career Link, situated as a contractor, pays indirect costs to both the Seattle Colleges system and the South Seattle campus—where it is located—out of the BEA funding. YouthSource is contracted to two different school districts with slightly different

arrangements that essentially end at the same per-student funds being received by King County and Renton Technical College, who operate the Open Doors program together. Renton Technical College provides instructional services to the Open Doors students at YouthSource for 32% of the BEA funds (after the 7% hold back).

Exhibit 6. Flow of State Education Funding at Open Doors Study Sites



Source: BERK, 2020.

Grants (Private and Government)

Aside from BEA, program hosts used various other grant funds and one-time allocations to make their programs whole. United Way of King County (UWKC), King County, and the City of Seattle are the major grant funders among the four study sites. SWEC also reported individual and corporate contributions.

These are vulnerable sources contingent on funder interests and eligibility requirements, often requiring program fundraising capacity to access and maintain. Notably, United Way’s support was intentionally time-limited to build up capacity in the Open Doors system and will be sunseting shortly. Further, each grant source may come with restrictions that complicate programs’ ability to serve their Open Doors population. For example, SWEC uses City of Seattle Summer Youth Employment grants to serve Open Doors students in the two months of the year they cannot bill for BEA. However, this grant is designed for slightly different purposes than Open Doors, and is limited for use with residents of Seattle, while SWEC serves Open Doors students from both Seattle and Highline Public Schools.

Organization Subsidy

Sites embedded in larger entities with flexible dollars often receive a subsidy within their institutions to sustain the Open Doors program if expenses exceed what is available from BEA and grants. For example, Federal Way local levy revenues cover the difference for Federal Way Open Doors, and YouthSource accesses the King County general fund. In the 2019-2020 school year, these represent significant contributions relative to BEA. For Federal Way, the local subsidy is nearly 50% of the BEA allocation received. In King County’s case, the general fund is equal to 89% of the BEA funds received. Programs without access to flexible institutional funds must manage their costs extremely carefully. For example, as a stand-alone contractor, Career Link operates on a balanced budget every year – there are no reserves or general fund to cover shortfall.

Other Public Program Funding Streams

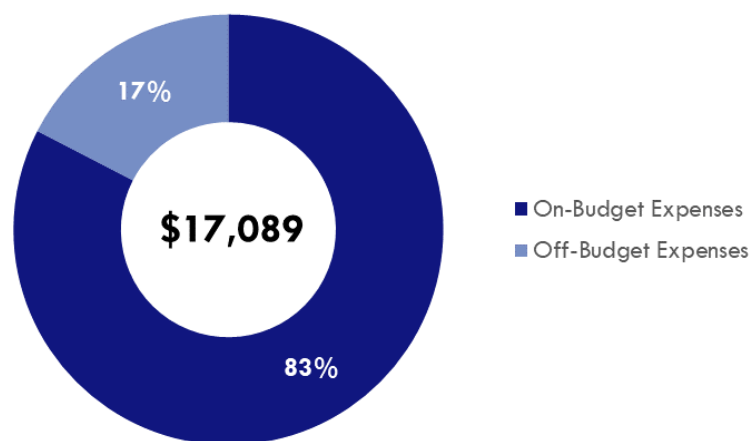
Depending on the host organization’s status and individual student eligibility, some programs draw on other program funds to support Open Doors students. For example, considered a school within the district, the Federal Way Open Doors program’s students qualify it for categorical school funding like high-poverty learning assistance program (LAP) dollars and state targeted school grants. None of the other study sites have access to these funds because they are not schools. Sited within a district high school, the Federal Way program also benefits from more efficient access to district supports, including child care, food and nutrition programs, and translation and interpretation services.

YouthSource provides workforce and employment programming in addition to the education opportunities provided by Open Doors. Where Open Doors students participate in multiple programs, YouthSource may bill other funds that offer a better reimbursement rate than Open Doors, including federal Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act funds and funding from the Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation at DSHS.

PROGRAM EXPENSES

Expenses are expressed in this study as either on-budget or off-budget. Exhibit 7 below outlines the average estimated on-budget and off-budget expenses at the four Open Door study sites for the 2019-2020 year.

Exhibit 7. Average Estimated On-Budget and Off-Budget Expenses at Open Doors Study Sites, 2019-2020



Source: Career Link High School, 2020; Southwest Education Center, 2020; Federal Way Open Doors, 2020; YouthSource, 2020; BERK, 2020.

On-budget costs reflect the Open Doors program budget as accounted by the site and comprise, on average, 83% of average annual expenses across the four Open Doors study sites. Off-budget costs are the value of resources provided to Open Doors students funded through another program or organization's budget. Off-budget costs comprise, on average, 17% of average annual expenses across the four Open Doors study sites. These off-budget items can include facilities, utilities, internet, software, and administrative support, staff, and student supports. Including these off-budget costs gives a more comprehensive picture of the actual per-student cost to deliver reengagement programming. However, this still only offers a limited picture based on resources that programs have been able to attain, not what they fully need to serve their students.

Staff

Staff are the core on-budget expense for an Open Doors program. Program legislation requires a maximum instruction ratio of 25:1 and a maximum case management ratio of 75:1, but the sites in this study often operate at lower ratios to better support student success. To meet these ratios and students' often intersecting needs, sites report needing to hire multi-talented staff and yet are unable to offer competitive salaries to retain them. Sites based within CBOs, in particular, face difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff, as they cannot match district and county salaries. Most instructors at Career Link High School work part-time up to 0.66 FTE due to college union contracts and other restrictions placing a further constraint on their hiring pool.

All four sites had at least one staff on-site that was off-budget.

- A separate CBO, Seattle Education Access, provides on-site postsecondary education navigators at Career Link High School, Federal Way Open Doors, and YouthSource.
- Behavioral health and substance use counselors are also available on-site at SWEC, Federal Way Open Doors, and YouthSource via Best Starts for Kids funding.

- El Centro de la Raza provides culturally relevant supports to students at Federal Way Open Doors.
- King County funding provides Career Launchpad staff at Federal Way Open Doors and YouthSource, funded by DSHS Basic Food Employment and Training.

These off-budget staff are seamlessly integrated into the student experience at sites and report full case loads. These CBOs are unable to receive Open Doors funding and are not reflected in program budgets despite directly supporting Open Doors student outcomes.

Occupancy

Besides labor, occupancy is typically a major program cost. However, three of the four Open Doors sites were not paying “full freight” for their classroom and office space, and this value was reflected off-budget. The common use of discounted or donated space underscores the fact that the current BEA rate of \$8,503 per student is inadequate to fund full program operations.

- Career Link High School pays a 5% indirect rate to the college that covers classroom furniture, common area equipment, office space, classroom space, and utilities, as well as other supports. The full market rate for these supports would amount to much higher than 5% of the BEA for Career Link.
- SWYFS benefits from below-market occupancy costs at the Delridge site, due to a decades old arrangement with the Seattle Parks Department where the agency paid for upfront renovations of a community center in exchange for depreciating that cost over time. In this way, SWEC’s Open Doors budget reflects a significantly discounted expense for occupancy.
- Federal Way Open Doors does not reflect any occupancy costs in their budget, as they use space at Truman High School that the district would maintain regardless of occupancy.
- YouthSource Open Doors’ budget directly reflects overhead and administrative costs that include occupancy and central County services like technology support.

Student Supports

On-budget student supports most commonly included tuition paid for college level coursework, student incentives or stipends, transportation costs, textbooks and school supplies, and food. Many of the same supports can appear off-budget when provided as in-kind donations and discounts. For example, food bank contributions and discounted bus tickets would be considered off-budget.

All programs in the study reported a variety of needs among their student population, resulting in a wide range of potential individual costs. According to YouthSource data over a three-year timespan, these participant costs could range from \$0 to \$6,676 per Open Doors participant, with an average of \$510 and college tuition representing the highest cost supports.

Professional Learning

A few sites emphasized professional learning as a category of expense. Professional learning can be crucial for retaining staff who are dedicated to the mission, oftentimes working for below market pay

and benefits. Career Link High School and SWEC consistently dedicate what funds they can to professional development. Federal Way Open Doors has invested in the Big Picture model, which includes professional learning opportunities and coaching support.

National Scan of Programs

BERK conducted a scan of comparable programs based on referrals from experts at CCER, MDRC, and the National League of Cities. The main findings from this scan with regard to program revenue and cost structure and outcomes are summarized after a brief introduction to the programs. Full program narratives are available in Appendix B: National Scan Program Details. As in the Open Doors programs studied, most of the students in these programs are non-White, highlighting that structural inequalities in education follow racial patterns across the country.

Boston Day and Evening Academy (BDEA)

- BDEA is a public charter school located in Roxbury, Massachusetts, within the Boston Public Schools (BPS) district. BDEA serves students who are behind schedule for high school graduation or have left school without earning a diploma. Its model integrates competency-based learning with wrap-around social services, with the goal of helping students to earn their high school diploma and graduate college- or career-ready.
- In 2019, 48% of the student population identified as Black and 43% as Hispanic/Latinx.¹⁰ Students must be at least two years behind schedule to enroll, and the school has a four-year graduation rate of 10%. However, over five years, 18% of BDEA students graduate with a high school diploma and a further 7.2% earn a GED or other credential.¹¹ Of those who graduate, 83% enroll in postsecondary education.¹²
- BDEA has a per participant cost of \$21,771 and receives 87% of its funding via BPS allocations, 9% via state and federal grants, and 3% via private foundation and corporate grants.¹³

Colorado Youth for a Change (CYC) Futures Academy

- CYC is a community-based organization located in the Denver, Colorado area that operates a range of programs to discourage students from leaving school and to improve high school graduation rates among young people in Colorado. One of these programs is Futures Academy, an alternative program located within the Aurora Public Schools (APS) district, that assists

¹⁰ Massachusetts Department of Education. 2019. "School and District Profiles: Boston Day and Evening Academy Charter School."

¹¹ Massachusetts Department of Education. 2019. "School and District Profiles: Boston Day and Evening Academy Charter School."

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=04240000&orgtypecode=5>

¹² Sturgis, Chris. 2012. "Reading the Pulse of Students at Boston Day and Evening Academy." *Aurora Institute*.

¹³ Boston Day and Evening Academy. 2018. "Annual Report for School Year 2018." https://bdea.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/BDEA_Annual-Report_2018.pdf

students ages 17-21 who are credit-deficient in earning their GED, technical certificate, or associate's degree. Students at Futures have the opportunity to co-enroll in courses at the Community College of Aurora or Pickens Technical College, and can earn credit towards an associate's degree or technical certificate concurrently to prepare for GED exams.

- In the 2018-2019 school year, 48% of students served by CYC across programs were Hispanic/Latinx, 8% were Black, and 7% multiracial. 50% of young people served by the reengagement team had current or previous experiences with the justice system.¹⁴
- CYC receives per-pupil allocations from APS based on the number of in-district students enrolled in the program on an annual count day. For Futures Academy, CYC received \$5,500 per student per year in the 2018-2019 school year, with the amount increasing to **\$6,000 per student** in the 2019-2020 school year. In the 2018-2019 school year, 16% of the 357 students served at Futures Academy earned a GED. Most enrolled students made progress toward a GED—74% took a pre-GED or GED test, 32% passed at least one GED test, and 49% of those who took a test improved their score.

Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) Career Academy

- LAYC is a community-based nonprofit serving low-income young people in Washington, DC and Maryland. LAYC operates four youth centers, three community schools, and a wide range of in-school programs for young people ages 11-24.¹⁵ Among LAYC's programs is Career Academy, a public charter school in DC. LAYC Career Academy is open to young people ages 16-24 and offers multiple credential pathways to its students, with a focus on career readiness. These include the opportunity to earn a GED with concurrent enrollment in community college courses or in certification programs in information technology or medical assisting.
- 50% of Career Academy students identify as Black and 44% as Hispanic/Latinx of any race.¹⁶ Originally founded as a community center for Hispanic/Latinx youth, LAYC has expanded its scope to all low-income young people, but retains a focus on Hispanic/Latinx young people by offering bilingual programming across its sites. Sixty percent of young people in LAYC programs speak a language other than English at home and 35% were born outside of the US.¹⁷
- Career Academy spent **\$26,895 per student** in 2018. In the 2018-2019 school year, 67% of Career Academy students earned some form of secondary school credit, and 85% took at least one GED test. Of students who had earned their GED from Career Academy, 71% were employed or in school.¹⁸

¹⁴ Interview with Mary Zanotti and Nick Conner, Colorado Youth for a Change, May 29, 2020.

¹⁵ LAYC Career Academy. 2020. "About Us." <https://www.layc-dc.org/about-us/>

¹⁶ DC Public Charter School Board. 2019. "LAYC Career Academy PCS: School Quality Report."

¹⁷ LAYC. 2020. "Our Impact." <https://www.layc-dc.org/about-us/our-impact/>

¹⁸ DC Public Charter School Board. 2019. "LAYC Career Academy PCS: School Quality Report." <https://dcpccb.org/sites/default/files/media/file/PMF%20Score%20Card%20SY18-19%20-%20LAYC%20Career%20Academy%20PCS.pdf>

PACE Center for Girls

- PACE is a community-based organization in the state of Florida that provides educational and social services to girls who have been or are at risk of involvement in the criminal justice system. PACE currently operates a statewide system of 21 centers and serves over 3,000 girls per year. PACE serves girls ages 11-18 in nonresidential centers and focuses on gender-responsive programming. While not explicitly focused on students who have left school or are behind on credits, most PACE participants do fall into these categories. While PACE offers on-site academic instruction, it does not grant academic credentials directly. PACE serves girls for a limited period of time, with the goal of connecting them with a traditional high school or other educational program to earn their high school diploma or equivalent. PACE programs focus on providing services to traditionally marginalized girls and young women.
- 45% of program participants are Black and 16% Hispanic/Latinx. More than 40% are from families with an income of less than \$28,050; nearly two-thirds had a family member with a criminal history, and more than a third were survivors of abuse or neglect.
- The average cost to serve a student in a PACE program is **\$23,498** over 7.9 months—the average length of stay in PACE programs. In the 12 to 18 months after first enrollment, girls in PACE program were significantly more likely to be on track for on-time graduation than girls in the control group—27.6% of PACE participants were on track, compared with 14.2% of control group members. PACE participation also significantly increased days of school attendance and participation in summer classes.

REENGAGEMENT SYSTEMS: PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

While not a standalone credential-granting opportunity, **Portland Public Schools (PPS) Reconnection Services** is a district-operated program in Portland, Oregon that connects disengaged young people with educational opportunities through active outreach. They serve over 1,200 students a year.

The school district expends \$9.3m for ten contract alternative schools and two options at Portland Community College to serve the variety of needs among students contacting Reconnection Services. Schools are on 5-year contracts with an RFP process. The program is majority funded with school district general funds, with some support from federal Title 1D and grants.

The PPS Reconnection Center is a temporary opportunity for students to take classes at Alliance at Benson alternative school and receive case management and supportive services while awaiting enrollment in a best fit reengagement opportunity.

With the passage of the Student Success Act in the 2019 session Oregon began contributing state resources to their reengagement system, a significant improvement PPS looks forward to.

YouthBuild

- YouthBuild is a national model program for disconnected young people, currently operating over 250 sites across the US. YouthBuild programs provide services to over 10,000 out-of-school young people between the ages of 16 and 24 each year in the US.¹⁹

¹⁹ YouthBuild, “About YouthBuild USA,” 2019. <https://www.youthbuild.org/about-youthbuild-usa>

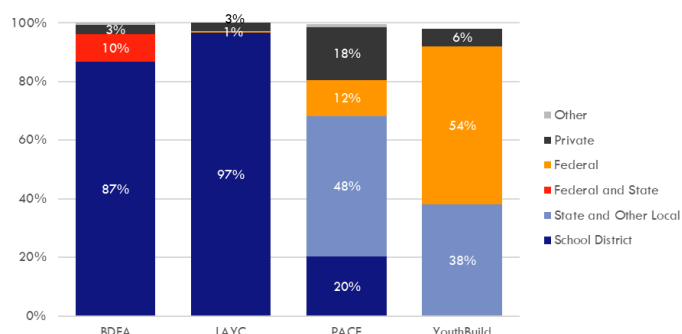
- YouthBuild programs serve primarily young people of color—63% of participants are Black and 15% are Hispanic/Latinx.²⁰ The hallmark of YouthBuild programs is vocational training services, provided alongside educational instruction and social services. Traditionally, YouthBuild programs focused on training in construction, but since 2012 programs have expanded to include training in healthcare, transportation, information technology, food service, and more.²¹ Traditionally housed within the community-based or faith-based organizations, YouthBuild sites are now found within government agencies and educational institutions, including alternative and charter schools. A four-year nationwide evaluation of YouthBuild programs by MDRC found that 34.5% of program participants across 75 sites had earned a high school equivalency credential 48 months after initial enrollment. In contrast, 23.5% of young people in a control group earned a credential over the same time period.

COST AND REVENUE STRUCTURE

The national scan revealed the following findings:

- Programs that offer **both academic instruction and comprehensive support** services range from **\$21,000 to \$27,000** in per-student annual costs (see Exhibit 9).
- Programs that offer a more **limited set of services** (e.g., GED preparation only or support services only) have lower costs, in the range of **\$6,000 to \$10,000** per student per year.
- Reengagement programs that operate as **charter schools** may have **higher costs** because they provide more comprehensive services and facilities.
- **Operating as a charter or alternative school** may offer more stable access to school district and other public funds. As shown in Exhibit 8, BDEA and LAYC charter schools operate with most funds coming from the K-12 system. PACE is operated by a CBO, while YouthBuild can be run at a variety of organization types, primarily CBOs or public agencies. When funded by the YouthBuild grant, programs can receive half or more of their total resources from the federal government.

Exhibit 8. National Scan Program Funding Sources



Source: BERK, 2020.

²⁰ MDRC, “Laying a Foundation: Four-Year results from the National YouthBuild Evaluation,” May 2018.

²¹ YouthBuild, “YouthBuild USA, Inc.: 2016 Annual Report,” 2016.

Exhibit 9. Summary of Program Cost and Services

Program Name	Per Participant Cost (2019\$) ²²	Credential Options	Instruction	Behavioral Health	Substance Use Counseling	Case Mgmt.	Nutrition	Transportation
Boston Day and Evening Academy (BDEA)	\$21,771	HS diploma	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Colorado Youth for a Change (CYC) Futures Academy	\$5,714- \$6,723 ¹⁰	GED / Certificate	✓			✓	✓	✓
Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) Career Academy	\$27,382	GED / Certificate	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
PACE Center for Girls	\$24,508 ²⁴	None	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
YouthBuild	\$24,521	GED / HS diploma	✓	✓	Site-dependent	✓	Site-dependent	✓

²² Per participant costs in this table are adjusted to 2019 dollars using the US Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index. Actual fiscal expenditures (with year indicated) are included in the Appendix.

²³ CYC bills the school district based on a one-day annual headcount which is the rate reflected here, not an annual FTE. All other listed program costs are on an FTE basis.

²⁴ Reflects program costs over 7.9 months, the average length of stay in a PACE program. All other listed program costs are for one year of program participation.

APPROACH AND OUTCOMES

While acknowledging each program is unique, we offer some observations on common approaches and outcomes across scanned programs:

- Successful programs offer a range of services to address barriers to academic success including behavioral health, substance use counseling, case management, nutrition, and transportation.
- National models create learning environments that are personal and relevant to students, including opportunities to explore identity, race, gender, and civic engagement.
- Programs evaluated using a randomized controlled trial—PACE and YouthBuild—have **significant, positive effects** on academic outcomes.
 - PACE participants are significantly **more likely to be on track** academically than non-participants, have fewer absences, take more summer classes, and earn a high percentage of the credits they attempt.
 - YouthBuild participants are **significantly more likely to earn a high school diploma** or equivalency credential and to enroll in postsecondary education than non-participants.

Exhibit 10. National Program Stick Rate and Graduation Rates

Program	Stick Rate	Graduation/ Credential Rate	Graduation Time Frame
Boston Day and Evening Academy (BDEA)	94% ²⁵	25.2%	5 years
Colorado Youth for a Change (CYC) Futures Academy	69%	16%	One year
Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) Career Academy	68%	Not available	N/A
PACE Center for Girls	94% ²⁶	27.6%	“On track” rate
YouthBuild	74%	34.5%	4 years

- Programs proven as effective are associated with relatively high costs —PACE and YouthBuild both average around \$24,500 per student per year.

The full benefits of these programs may not be captured in the existing short-term studies, since the impacts of improved education and employment outcomes accrue over a lifetime.

²⁵ Only includes students in 9th through 11th grades.

²⁶ Reflects percentage of students enrolled in school one year after beginning PACE services. Florida State law requires all youth under age 16 to be enrolled in school.

Findings

FUNDING IN THE CURRENT SYSTEM IS NOT SUSTAINABLE OR EQUITABLE

Young people in Open Doors programs typically have greater needs than traditional high school students, and yet the programs designed to meet their needs have access to fewer and less sustainable resources. Young people in Open Doors are also more likely to identify as Latinx, Black, and/or Indigenous. In this way, the Open Doors framework currently structurally directs more state resources to students in traditional high schools (disproportionately White and Asian) than students in Open Doors (disproportionately Black, Hispanic/Latinx, Indigenous, and multiracial). We highlight here some key points in the structure that contribute to this inequity.

- Even before considering the 7% administrative holdback, the BEA for the school districts in King County exceeds the statewide Open Doors reimbursement rate. In other words, the State, by formula, allocates fewer “per student” dollars to students in Open Doors than students in-district. According to interviewees, this gap has grown in recent years as McCleary funding rules have come into place.

Exhibit 11. Average state funding per student FTE, District and Open Doors

RATE TYPE	2019-20 PER STUDENT FTE
BEA Rate Per Student FTE (Median for King County Districts)	\$ 9,530
Open Doors Reimbursement Rate - Non-vocational ²⁷	\$ 8,503
Open Doors Reimbursement Rate - Vocational	\$ 9,470

Aside from the reimbursement rate, there are other structural reasons Open Doors students in contracted programs receive fewer resources than do in-district students.

- Districts have institutional status as Local Education Agencies, which means they are eligible recipients of state and federal grants and funding sources not available to community colleges and CBOs.
- Districts can leverage economies of scale in providing transportation, meals, instruction, and support services more efficiently on a “per student” basis.

²⁷ All four Open Doors program sites in this report receive the non-vocational reimbursement rate.

- While Open Doors legislation requires districts to pass on 93% of their BEA funds and ensure special education and transitional bilingual supports to Open Doors students, it does not address other services commonly available in traditional high schools. The special education services are intended to be equivalent to what would be provided in traditional high schools, but out-of-district providers reported extremely limited on-site special education staff provided by the districts. Districts may assess and develop IEPs, but implementation at the site level is not necessarily supported. This can result in further marginalization for students with disabilities, and particularly for students of color with disabilities.

Open Doors programs are also structurally limited in their ability to bill or be reimbursed for services provided to students. They can only bill the State for students that meet several criteria each month, even though they may serve many more students.

- The most restrictive criterion for billability is meeting the Indicators of Academic Progress (IAPs) every three months. While it is reasonable to expect accountability, and it is widely agreed that outcomes are a better measurement than seat time, traditional high schools are not required to demonstrate academic progress in order to receive per student BEA funding. This criterion also creates a perverse financial incentive for sites to “cream,” or only work with students that will be most billable, leaving those most in need behind. In this way, Open Doors is set up to replicate the inequities

INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC PROGRESS (WAC 392-700-015(14))

- (a) Earns at minimum a 0.25 high school credit;
- (b) Earns at minimum a whole college credit;
- (c) Receives a college certificate after completion of a college program requiring at least forty hours of instruction;
- (d) Receives an industry recognized certificate of completion of training or licensing received after completion of a program requiring at least forty hours of instruction;
- (e) Passes one or more tests or benchmarks that would satisfy the state board of education's graduation requirements as provided in chapter [180-51](#) WAC;
- (f) Passes one or more high school equivalency certificate measures (each measure may only be claimed once per enrolled student), or other state assessment;
- (g) Makes a significant gain in a core academic subject based on the assessment tool's determination of significant gain (may be claimed multiple times in a year per enrolled student);
- (h) Successfully completes a grade level curriculum in a core academic subject that does not earn high school or college credit;
- (i) Successfully completes college readiness course work with documentation of competency attainment;
- (j) Successfully completes job search and job retention course work with documentation of competency attainment;
- (k) Successfully completes a paid or unpaid cooperative work based learning experience of at least forty-five hours. This experience must meet the requirements of WAC [392-410-315](#)(2);
- (l) Enrolls in a college level class for the first time (limited to be claimed once per enrolled student);
- (m) Successfully completes an English as a second language (ESL) class;
- (n) Successfully completes an adult basic education (ABE) class; or
- (o) Successfully completes a series of short-term industry recognized certificates equaling at least forty hours.

experienced in the traditional K-12 system.

- By policy, Open Doors sites can only bill for each student 10 months out of the year, though services are often provided year-round at sites. Year-round programming is essential to keeping students engaged. Programs have had some success supplementing additional funds to meet this gap, but additional sources add administrative burden and complexity, and they may be unable to uniformly serve all Open Doors students through the summer. For example, Southwest Education Center serves students in both Highline Public Schools and Seattle Public Schools, and their summer youth employment grant from the City of Seattle can only bridge the gap for residents of Seattle.

The one-size-fits-all funding model does not account the wide range of ages, skills, credit standing, and needs, compared to traditional in-district programs that provide education in larger cohorts. Most Open Doors programs accept all eligible students at a wide range of progress levels, academically or otherwise, and seek to meet their holistic needs, which requires tailored individual services. For example, YouthSource draws on Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, and King County general funds to meet the individual needs not paid for by BEA, such as food and transportation.

A one-size-fits-all funding model also has equity implications based on the different Open Doors operating models. We found that a site's funding model has significant impacts on the total resources available and the flexibility of those resources. For example, Career Link uses a stand-alone contract and must achieve a balanced budget every year with no flexible funds to lean upon. Other programs embedded within larger organizations can flex dollars from other budgets or a general fund. In-district programs can leverage school resources for translation/interpretation, pregnant/parenting students, and other services. In-district programs can also access categorical funding sources via their designation as a school, as Federal Way Open Doors does with the high poverty Learning Assistance Program (LAP) funding.

- A program's location in- or out-of-district also affects its staffing model. SWEC staff highlighted that with highly limited resources, their teachers are paid less than district teachers, are all on part-time positions, and have access to fewer resources. SWEC recognizes that its teachers provide high value for Open Doors students—they must be certified teachers and they provide extensive social support to students. Yet, with the limited resources available, SWEC has difficulty paying staff a salary commensurate with their skill level.

EQUITABLE RESOURCES FOR OPEN DOORS STUDENTS AND PROGRAMS CAN HAVE OUTSIZE SOCIAL BENEFIT

This study has drawn from four sources to shed light on what Open Doors reengagement does and should cost. First and at a minimum, we look to the programs themselves to understand the resources they have pulled together to supplement BEA to make their services work for students. Programs have adopted creative measures, leveraged other funding sources, and drawn on donated or discounted goods and services to meet the needs of Open Doors students.

Counting all on-budget and off-budget costs, a program is estimated to need, on average, \$17,089 in

total resources per Open Doors student. C together vulnerable resources is not sustainable or desirable, as it draws effort away from case management and instruction and poses consistency risks to students who need stable education.

Second, we look to the school districts themselves for a benchmark. In the 2019-20 budget year, the average total expenditure (not including debt and capital) per student FTE in King County school districts was \$17,276. While this median on the surface is somewhat comparable to the median costs identified in the study sites, it is important to remember that Open Doors students typically have higher needs than general education high school students. It is also important to note that traditional high school resources typically require less effort to raise and access, as they are backed by federal and state mandates and long-term grants and levies, compared with Open Doors resources. Open Doors programs are held to performance standards beyond what schools are held to in order to access the same funding. This structure is inequitable at face value and presents a disproportionate administrative burden for small programs.

Third, our scan of national programs that have been implemented and evaluated at some scale reveals another tier of potential cost comparison. While each program is unique, we see costs of service that range \$21,771 to \$27,382 per student full-time equivalent. These programs are hailed as models for reengagement, yet in interviews and reports, program staff and experts identify areas for improvement and additional investment.

Finally, we consider the costs in light of quantified benefits. Open Doors-enabling legislation was passed in 2010, and programs saw their first full cohorts of students in the 2012-13 school year. Recently, available long-term data made cohort analysis possible by the Education Research and Data Center (ERDC). Their *Outcomes of the Open Doors Youth Reengagement Program* report²⁸ (2020) demonstrates that most Open Doors participants are either employed or enrolled in a postsecondary institution three years later, and older students are the most likely to experience these positive outcomes. The study found a relationship between direct enrollment from school and higher graduation rates. ERDC also compared outcomes among students who had left school and enrolled in Open Doors with those who left school and did not enroll. This analysis demonstrated that those who enrolled in Open Doors were roughly twice as likely to graduate high school and twice as likely to ever have been enrolled in postsecondary education three years later.

Vining and Weimer (2019), building on cost-benefit methodology from the Washington State Institute of Public Policy, estimate the lifetime social value of *each* additional high school graduate at \$332,000. Using this estimate, with the four Open Doors sites in this study having graduated 370 students in the 2018-19 school year, the lifetime social value generated by these Open Doors sites could be roughly estimated at \$122.8 million, and yet their potential is much greater. Open Doors programs still graduate students at much lower rates than traditional high school, leaving ample room for improvement and greater capture of social value. For example, nineteen percent of the state's traditional high school students do not graduate within four years, and among Open Doors

²⁸ ERDC, 2020. "Outcomes of the Open Doors Youth Reengagement Program."

students, 65% do not graduate or earn an equivalent credential within three years of starting the program.²⁹

THERE ARE SOME POTENTIAL PATHS TO RESOURCE ADEQUACY AND EQUITY

Several Open Doors sites have said they could not continue services at their current level without outside funding from private funders and local support, including sunseting UWKC funding and the time-limited Best Starts for Kids levy, spurring the interest in this study. Findings from interviews and literature offer some paths toward financial sustainability. The most impactful of these originate in state policy.

Potential paths to adequacy and equity in Open Doors funding through policy, rules, and rate-setting include:

- **Removing the requirement to partner with a school district** to improve race and funding equity and allow more CBOs to provide educational services.
- **Allowing sites to claim funding directly from OSPI**, rather than going through a school district, to remove administrative costs of transaction. This change would immediately make the remaining 7% of the BEA rate available to sites.
- **Revising the state's billability structure** to allow sites to claim funding more in line with the effort they expend, including revising or eliminating the IAP requirements.
- **Allowing the reimbursement rate to vary by region.**
 - A statewide reimbursement rate disadvantages regions with higher labor costs and operating costs, such as King County.
 - Programs need talented, versatile instructors and may struggle to retain staff who could likely demand higher compensation than Open Doors programs can offer.
 - The rate could be linked instead to school district BEA rates, include BEA enhancements, and/or be calculated separately based on Open Doors programs and costs (instead of school districts' costs, which are fundamentally different).

Pathways to resource adequacy drawn from programs in the national scan include:

- The most sustainable programs with long track records of success rely **heavily on sustained government support**. They may draw significant school general fund or federal grants.
 - A few had robust private fundraising opportunities but were concerned about the waxing and waning interests of private philanthropy.
- Several of the national sites **operate as charter schools** as a sustainability strategy. The financial advantageousness of this depends on the state. For example, charter funding in some states includes a facilities and transportation allocation and funding for start-up costs. Washington

²⁹ OSPI, 2020. "Washington State Report Card."
<https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103300>

State is generally less favorable to charter operations compared to states where these examples were found.

- Less common strategies among the national sites include social enterprises to generate revenue and develop business and entrepreneurship skills and setting up organizations (“Friends of”) to enable broader private or individual fundraising and smooth year-to-year fluctuations. These are certainly possibilities for sites in the King County region. The outreach and reconnection functions are already regionalized at King County, and there may be opportunity for more regional shared services for efficiency.

Finally, school districts themselves have significant discretion over their BEA funds and local levy funds, though they are also charged with meeting a multitude of needs. Some districts have chosen to use an equity-weighted allocation of resources across school buildings within the district and could consider including Open Doors programs in that calculation. For example, in Portland Public Schools, the contract alternative schools were approved by the school board to be included in the racial equity formula for staffing resources. School districts can also support more generally by “subsidizing” the Open Doors the program with general funds, similar to Federal Way. Finally, they also may have some discretion over various categorical funds and special programs and can review Appendix A to more thoroughly consider options for getting Open Doors students the resources they need. As school districts benefit from the availability of Open Doors programs through lower dropout rates and better graduation rates, they should consider ways to sustain this option.

Appendix A: K-12 Funding Sources

As described in the report, school districts access many other sources of funding outside of the State-provided BEA. While schools are required to provide special education and TBIP to Open Doors students, funding for transportation, free and reduced lunch, student extracurricular activities, and student supports such as career counseling, they are not required to pass on these funds or service in any form to Open Doors programs. Some of this is due to restrictions on the uses of funding, some of which is at school districts' discretion. Either way, the result has equity impacts. This table serves to detail major K-12 funding sources for policymakers and school districts, allowing them to consider the possibilities for making some of these funds or resources more available to Open Doors students.

Basic Education Allocation. State funds made available by the legislature for the current use of the common schools. They are distributed by the superintendent of public instruction annually according to formulas based on average annual full time equivalent (AAFTE).

Eligibility	Allowable Services	Allocation Method	School District Allocations	Open Doors Sites Allocations
Washington State uses a student-count method to determine K-12 school district funding based on a monthly count of enrollment. School districts report the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students enrolled on the fourth school day of September and on the first school day of October through May. (An FTE student is one enrolled four hours per day for Grades 1–3 and five hours per day for Grades 4–12.) These nine counts are then averaged to obtain an AAFTE enrollment and are used to determine districts' state funding.	Minimum instructional program of basic education.	See “Eligibility.”	2017-18 actual: Federal Way - \$147M Highline - \$127M Renton - \$104M Tukwila - \$23M 2019-20 budget: Federal Way - \$199M Highline - \$170M Renton - \$144M Tukwila - \$26M	2017-18 actual: Career Link HS: \$682,649 Federal Way OD: \$1,835,634 Southwest Education Center: Not Provided YouthSource: \$206,044 2019-20 estimated: Career Link HS: \$932,344 Federal Way OD: \$1,443,070 Southwest Education Center: \$439,450 YouthSource: \$275,824

Property Tax Levies. A local property tax passed by voters of a school district that generates revenue for the local school district. All money generated by school district levies goes directly to the school district to pay for enhancements to the state-funded basic education allocation. By voting for a local levy, voters are voting for an additional property tax in their district.

Eligibility	Allowable Services	Allocation Method	School District Allocations	Open Doors Sites Allocations
Article 7 of the State Constitution and Chapter 84.52 RCW gives school districts authority to levy local property taxes. The voters of the school district must approve such levies.	Levy money cannot be used to pay for basic education, but districts are otherwise free to spend the money as they wish. As an example, by law, levy funds cannot be used to enhance state-funded base teacher salary for teachers performing basic education duties. However, levy money may be used for hiring additional staff or paying teachers for additional duties, such as after-school programming.	<p>The amount of revenue generated by a local levy depends on the levy rate that voters approved to be levied per every \$1,000 of assessed value.</p> <p>As of January 2020, the maximum levy rate for school districts in Washington is now capped at \$2.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value.</p>	<p>2017-18 actual: Federal Way - \$52M Highline - \$59M Renton - \$50M Tukwila - \$12M</p> <p>2019-20 budget: Federal Way - \$29M Highline - \$40M Renton - \$39M Tukwila - \$7M</p>	<p>2017-18 actual: Career Link HS: \$0 Federal Way OD: \$0 Southwest Education Center: \$0 YouthSource: \$0</p> <p>2019-20 budget: Career Link HS: \$0 Federal Way OD: \$0 Southwest Education Center: \$0 YouthSource: \$0</p>

Title III – Language Instruction, Transitional Bilingual (TBIP). These are district's responsibilities under Open Doors. The state Transitional Bilingual Education Program (TBIP) and federal Title III address the unique needs of eligible students, who come from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. Both programs share the same goal: develop language proficiency that enables meaningful access to grade level curricula and instruction. In state law, TBIP is a program within Washington's Basic Education Act - Chapter 28A.180 RCW. The federal Title III program supports supplemental instruction and services for language acquisition.

Eligibility	Allowable Services	Allocation Method	School District Allocations	Open Doors Sites Allocations
<p>A student who meets the following two conditions is eligible for the Transitional Bilingual Instructional Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The primary language of the student is a language other than English; and ▪ The student's English skills are sufficiently lacking or absent as to delay learning. <p>Washington State defines “primary language” as the language most often used by a student (not necessarily by parents, guardians, or others) for communication in the student's place of residence or the language that the student first learned.</p>	<p>Washington State recognizes six types of program models for the purposes of TBIP funding and reporting:</p> <p>Bilingual Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dual Language ▪ Developmental Bilingual Education (DBE) ▪ Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) <p>Alternative Instructional Programs (AIP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Content-Based Instruction (CBI) or Sheltered Instruction (SI) ▪ English as a Second Language (ESL) ▪ Newcomer Program 	<p>Funding to districts is based on a September through May average headcount of TBIP-eligible students. For the 2017-2018 school year, there were 125,930 TBIP-eligible students and TBIP provided an average allocation of \$1,008 per eligible EL student and \$633 per former EL who exited the TBIP within the past two years.</p> <p>Total expenditures to support English language development services across the state was \$176.4 million, of which \$158.7 million was from TBIP funding.</p>	<p>2017-18 actual: Federal Way - \$6M Highline - \$6M Renton - \$3M Tukwila - \$1.3M</p> <p>2019-20 budget: Federal Way - \$9M Highline - \$9M Renton - \$5M Tukwila - \$1.5M</p>	<p>2017-18 actual: Career Link HS: \$0 Federal Way OD: \$0 Southwest Education Center: \$0 YouthSource: \$0</p> <p>2019-20 budget: Career Link HS: \$0 Federal Way OD: \$0 Southwest Education Center: \$0 YouthSource: \$0</p>

Special Education Funding. These are district's responsibilities under Open Doors.

Approximately 143,000 eligible students in Washington State receive special education and related services. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) fulfills the requirements of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which ensures all children with disabilities have access to a free appropriate public education.

Eligibility	Allowable Services	Allocation Method	School District Allocations	Open Doors Sites Allocations
Students determined eligible for special education services must meet all three of the following criteria: The student must have a disability or disabilities. The student's disability/disabilities adversely affect educational performance. The student's unique needs cannot be addressed through education in general education classes alone – with or without individual accommodations –and requires specially designed instruction (SDI).		For students with disabilities aged K–21, the annual average headcount of age Kindergarten-age 21 special education enrollment, limited to 13.5% of annual average K-12 resident FTE, times the district's BEA rate, times .995. (# of BEA AAFTE * 13.5%) *(BEA * 0.995) = allocation for students with disabilities aged K-21	2017-2018 actual Federal Way - \$28M Highline - \$24M Renton - \$21M Tukwila - \$3M 2019-2020 budget Federal Way - \$42M Highline - \$35M Renton - \$31M Tukwila - \$4M	2017-18 actual: Career Link HS: \$0 Federal Way OD: \$0 Southwest Education Center: \$0 YouthSource: \$0 2019-20 budget: Career Link HS: \$0 Federal Way OD: \$0 Southwest Education Center: \$0 YouthSource: \$0

Learning Assistance Program (LAP). The Learning Assistance Program (LAP) is a state-funded program that offers supplemental services for K–12 students scoring below grade-level standard in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. These services focus on accelerating student growth to make progress towards grade level. Funds may be used to support ELA, math, or behavior supports that improve academic readiness.

Eligibility	Allowable Services	Allocation Method	School District Allocations	Open Doors Sites Allocations
<p>A student is eligible for LAP services if he/she scores below grade-level standard in ELA or mathematics. Districts must use multiple measures of performance in determining student eligibility. Districts have flexibility and local control in determining measures to establish student eligibility.</p> <p>Funds are generated by a formula and distributed to districts. It is then up to the District to determine how to allocate funds to individual schools. Because of the State's "K-4 Focus First," these funds tend to be focused on elementary K-4 literacy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduation assistance Professional development for staff Consultant teachers to assist teachers serving LAP students Family engagement Tutoring support Community partnerships 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> LAP Enrollment: Prior Yr AAFTE x Prior % of FRPL as of Oct 1 LAP Base CIS units: LAP Enrollment/Class size of 15 x 2.3975 hrs per week x 36 hours per week LAP Base Allocation Generated: LAP Base CIS units x CIS salary and benefits x regionalization for school year 	<p>2017-2018 actual</p> <p>Federal Way - \$11M</p> <p>Highline - \$10M</p> <p>Renton - \$6M</p> <p>Tukwila - \$2M</p> <p>2019-2020 budget</p> <p>Federal Way - \$15M</p> <p>Highline - \$14M</p> <p>Renton - \$7M</p> <p>Tukwila - \$2M</p>	<p>2017-18 actual:</p> <p>Career Link HS: \$0</p> <p>Federal Way OD: \$</p> <p>Southwest Education Center: \$0</p> <p>YouthSource: \$0</p> <p>2019-20 budget:</p> <p>Career Link HS: \$0</p> <p>Federal Way OD: \$0</p> <p>Southwest Education Center: \$0</p> <p>YouthSource: \$0</p>

LAP High Poverty. Similar goals to LAP; however, it is a new allocation for students who are not meeting academic standards who are specifically in high-poverty schools.

Eligibility	Allowable Services	Allocation Method	School District Allocations	Open Doors Sites Allocations
A school is eligible if it has at least 50% of its students qualify for Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL), based on the previous year's data. Schools right above or below the 50% FRPL mark may have their eligibility shift year to year. The funds may only be used by the eligible school -- they cannot be transferred for use in another building.	Similar to LAP	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> LAP Enrollment: Prior Yr AAFTE LAP Base CIS units: LAP Enrollment/Class size of 15 x 1.1 hrs per week x 36 hours per week LAP Base Allocation Generated: LAP Base CIS units x CIS salary and benefits x regionalization for school year 	2019-20 Federal Way - \$6M Highline - \$5M Renton - \$2M Tukwila - \$1M	2019-20 Career Link HS: \$0 Federal Way OD: \$73,685 Southwest Education Center: \$0 YouthSource: \$0

Free and Reduced Meals. The Washington School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) are designed to promote the health and well-being of children by providing nutritious meals to children in public and private schools and residential child care institutions (RCCIs).

Eligibility	Allowable Services	Allocation Method	School District Allocations	Open Doors Sites Allocations
Eligibility is based on annual household income being below certain thresholds. Additionally, all students receiving TANF or Basic Food Program assistance automatically qualify as well as foster children, homeless, and migrant students.	Provide free and reduced-price meals to students in need	USDA-funded Child Nutrition Programs use two primary sources of data to determine whether a site is area eligible - school or census data.	2017-2018 actual Federal Way - \$7M Highline - \$8M Renton - \$4M Tukwila - \$1M	2017-18 actual: Career Link HS: \$0 Federal Way OD: \$0 Southwest Education Center: \$0 YouthSource: \$0
		School or census data must indicate that the proposed meal site is located in either the attendance area or census block group/tract of a public school where at least 50% of the children are eligible for school meals at a free or reduced price.	2019-2020 budget Federal Way - \$7M Highline - \$7M Renton - \$4M Tukwila - \$1M	2019-20 budget: Career Link HS: \$0 Federal Way OD: \$0 Southwest Education Center: \$0 YouthSource: \$0

Student Transportation/Student Transportation Allocation Reporting System (STARS). Student Transportation provides essential services to support the safe and efficient transportation of the students of Washington State. The office oversees the allocation of operations funding through the Student Transportation Allocation Reporting System (STARS).

Eligibility	Allowable Services	Allocation Method	School District Allocations	Open Doors Sites Allocations
<p>The system for funding pupil transportation operations costs is based on the number of students provided with transportation services and the number of miles between their route stop and their school destination.</p> <p>Students are eligible to be counted if they are served by a district or charter school transportation program either by bus, district car, or individual arrangements and meet one or more of the following criteria:</p> <p>(a) A student whose route stop is outside the walk area of the student's enrollment school site; or</p> <p>(b) A student whose disability is defined by RCW 28A.155.020 and who is either not ambulatory or not capable of protecting his or her own welfare while traveling to or from school.</p>	<p>Eligible transportation services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To and from home to school ■ Basic program ■ Special program transportation such as bilingual, gifted, homeless, early education ■ Private Party Contract ■ In lieu ■ Pass/Token 	<p>STARS funding uses a regression analysis using individual school district characteristics to determine an expected cost of operations.</p>	<p>2017-2018 actual</p> <p>Federal Way - \$9M</p> <p>Highline - \$6M</p> <p>Renton - \$5M</p> <p>Tukwila - \$1M</p> <p>2019-2020 budget</p> <p>Federal Way - \$13M</p> <p>Highline - \$8M</p> <p>Renton - \$8M</p> <p>Tukwila - \$1M</p>	<p>2017-18 actual:</p> <p>Career Link HS: \$0</p> <p>Federal Way OD: \$0</p> <p>Southwest Education Center: \$0</p> <p>YouthSource: \$0</p> <p>2019-20 budget:</p> <p>Career Link HS: \$0</p> <p>Federal Way OD: \$0</p> <p>Southwest Education Center: \$0</p> <p>YouthSource: \$0</p>

Title I – Targeted Assistance. Federal funds. Targeted Assistance Programs must use Title I, Part A funds to provide academic services to children who are identified as failing or at risk for failing to meet state standards. The school makes this determination based on multiple, educationally related, objective criteria, and places students on a rank order list.

Title I – Schoolwide. Schoolwide Programs allows a school to consolidate its federal, state, and local funds to upgrade the entire educational program. Research suggests that in schools with relatively high poverty, students' needs are more widespread throughout the entire school population. Though the school is not required to identify certain children as being eligible for services or to provide certain students with any specific supplemental benefits, the focus of the program must be on addressing the needs of low-achieving children and those at risk of not meeting state student academic achievement standards.

Eligibility	Allowable Services	Allocation Method	School District Allocations	Open Doors Sites Allocations
<p><u>Targeted Assistance</u></p> <p>Any school with a poverty average of at least 35% or the district's poverty average (whichever is lower) is eligible to operate a Targeted Assistance Program. Funding may only be used to support students identified for service. Any Title I, Part A school that doesn't operate a schoolwide program must operate a TAS.</p>	<p>Fairly broad, allows for activities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Providing eligible students with a well-rounded education ■ Instructional supports ■ Non-instructional supports such as behavior and mentoring supports and social and emotional learning ■ Improving school quality <p>Costs must only benefit eligible students (identified students in a targeted assistance program).</p>	<p>LEAs of 1,000 or more enrolled students must rank its schools from highest to lowest concentration of poverty. LEAs first rank school attendance areas with LI % > 75% (50% for HS) from highest to lowest, then the LEA may serve remaining eligible school attendance areas from highest to lowest either by grade span or district average.</p>	<p>2017-2018 actual</p> <p>Federal Way - \$6M</p> <p>Highline - \$6M</p> <p>Renton - \$3M</p> <p>Tukwila - \$2M</p> <p>2019-2020 budget</p> <p>Federal Way - \$7M</p> <p>Highline - \$8M</p> <p>Renton - \$5M</p> <p>Tukwila - \$2M</p>	<p>2017-18 actual:</p> <p>Career Link HS: \$0</p> <p>Federal Way OD: \$1,588</p> <p>Southwest Education Center: \$0</p> <p>YouthSource: \$0</p> <p>2019-20 budget:</p> <p>Career Link HS: \$0</p> <p>Federal Way OD: \$56,500</p> <p>Southwest Education Center: \$0</p> <p>YouthSource: \$0</p>
<p><u>Schoolwide</u></p> <p>Any school with a poverty average of at least 40% (or if the building has applied for and received a waiver from OSPI) may operate a schoolwide program. A schoolwide program is not required to identify students for services.</p>				

Migrant Education Program (MEP). Federally funded program that is overseen by OSPI, regulated by Title I, Part C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that ensures that high-quality education programs and supplemental support services are available to migratory children.

Eligibility	Allowable Services	Allocation Method	School District Allocations	Open Doors Sites Allocations
<p>Eligible children are those who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are younger than 22 and do not have a HS diploma or equivalent ▪ Are the child or spouse of a migrant worker or who are a migrant agricultural worker <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have moved within the last 36 months because of temporary or seasonal agricultural employment from one school district to another 	<p>The program provides services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dropout prevention or return to school ▪ Alternative education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health programs • Tutoring • Family home visits and academic counseling 	<p>Federal funds are allocated to OSPI based on per pupil expenditure for education and counts of eligible migratory children, age 3 through 21, residing within the state. OSPI authorizes the sub-grants to local education agencies (school districts), institutions of higher education, and other public and nonprofit agencies.</p>	<p>2017-2018 actual Federal Way - \$oM Highline - \$oM Renton - \$12,875 Tukwila - \$oM</p> <p>2019-2020 budget Federal Way - \$oM Highline - \$oM Renton - \$oM Tukwila - \$oM</p>	<p>2017-18 actual: Career Link HS: \$o Federal Way OD: \$o Southwest Education Center: \$o YouthSource: \$o</p> <p>2019-20 budget: Career Link HS: \$o Federal Way OD: \$o Southwest Education Center: \$o YouthSource: \$o</p>

Title VI Native American grants. Districts and tribal organizations supplement the State's basic education allocation through this program. Title VI, Part A is governed by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The No Child Left Behind Act converted earlier Indian education programs into Title VI, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In Washington, Title VI, Part A funds support a variety of programs - after-school, academic enrichment, tutoring, dropout prevention, and more.

Eligibility	Allowable Services	Allocation Method	School District Allocations	Open Doors Sites Allocations
<p>LEAs that enroll a threshold number of eligible Indian children, certain schools funded by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs. Indian tribes, Indian organizations and Indian community-based organizations under certain conditions, also may apply.</p> <p>In order to participate in the Title VI Indian Education Formula Grant program, eligible applicants must have a minimum of 10 Indian students enrolled in the LEA or not less than 25% of the total number enrollment. Exceptions - The enrollment requirement does not apply in Alaska, California or Oklahoma, or to LEAs located on, or in proximity to, a reservation.</p>	<p>Programs are authorized for direct assistance for: (1) meeting the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives; (2) the education of Indian children and adults; (3) the training of Indian persons as educators and counselors, and in other professions serving Indian people; and (4) research, evaluation, data collection, and technical assistance.</p>	<p>In 2016, WA LEAs received \$4.1 million in Title VI grant awards for 18,681 students, coming out to about \$217.80 per student.</p>	<p>2017-2018 actual Federal Way - \$81,001 Highline - \$101,757 Renton - \$62,049 Tukwila - \$0M</p> <p>2019-2020 budget Federal Way - \$81,300 Highline - \$80,000 Renton - \$56,582 Tukwila - \$0M</p>	<p>2017-18 actual: Career Link HS: \$0 Federal Way OD: \$0 Southwest Education Center: \$0 YouthSource: \$0</p> <p>2019-20 budget: Career Link HS: \$0 Federal Way OD: \$0 Southwest Education Center: \$0 YouthSource: \$0</p>

GRADS (Graduation, Reality and Dual-Role Skills). Graduation, Reality and Dual-role Skills (GRADS) is a program for pregnant teens and/or young parents that focus on work and family foundation skills of significance to these students. GRADS programs include student demonstration of skills leading to high school graduation and economic independence.

Eligibility	Allowable Services	Allocation Method	School District Allocations	Open Doors Sites Allocations
Available for pregnant and parenting students in grades 9-12.	<p>GRADS programs require a National Standards for Family and Consumer Sciences Education (FACSE)-certified teacher, who has also completed GRADS training. The program includes on-site childcare and practicums, as well as coordination of learning activities outside the classroom. Students enrolled in GRADS programs will earn credits in a locally determined series of courses. Those courses can be included in a complete sequence just as they would for a student who earns credits in the courses when offered “outside” a GRADS program. The Work and Family Foundation areas of study in the National Standards for FACSE include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutrition and Wellness • Human Development • Career, Community and Family Connections • Family Systems • Interpersonal Relationships • Parenting • Consumer and Family Resources 	The program is funded in part by the State’s per-student Career and Technical Education allocation and the Working Connections Child Care subsidy.	Not specifically broken out in school district budgets. Currently, 23 school districts in Washington State offer GRADS programs.	<p>2017-18 actual: Career Link HS: \$0 Federal Way OD: \$0 Southwest Education Center: \$0 YouthSource: \$0</p> <p>2019-20 budget: Career Link HS: \$0 Federal Way OD: \$0 Southwest Education Center: \$0 YouthSource: \$0</p>

McKinney-Vento / Homeless Student Stability Program. The McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth Assistance Act is a federal law that ensures immediate enrollment and educational stability for homeless children and youth. McKinney-Vento provides federal funding to states for the purpose of supporting district programs that serve homeless students.

Eligibility	Allowable Services	Allocation Method	School District Allocations	Open Doors Sites Allocations
<p>Under the McKinney-Vento Act, the term “homeless children and youths” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes children and youths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ who are sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals; ■ who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings; ■ who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and who are migratory children who live in one of the above circumstances. 		<p>Washington receives funding each year from the US Department of Education and the Washington State Legislature to support the education of homeless students in school programs. Funding is distributed to LEAs through a competitive grant process. OSPI, as the state educational agency, designates a statewide Education of Homeless Children and Youth Coordinator and a Homeless Student Stability Program Supervisor to provide training and technical assistance, review and create policies and procedures, monitor LEAs for program compliance, provide dispute resolution procedures, to ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness are able to attend and fully participate in school.</p>	<p>Not specifically broken out in school district budgets. Total allocation to Washington in 2019 was \$1,294,120. However, The State can retain up to 25% of the funds at the state level for administration and they must distribute at least 75% to LEAs through a competitive subgrant process.</p>	<p>2017-18 actual: Career Link HS: \$0 Federal Way OD: \$0 Southwest Education Center: \$0 YouthSource: \$0</p> <p>2019-20 budget: Career Link HS: \$0 Federal Way OD: \$0 Southwest Education Center: \$0 YouthSource: \$0</p>

Appendix B: National Scan Program Details

BOSTON DAY AND EVENING ACADEMY (BDEA)

BDEA is a public charter school located in Roxbury, Massachusetts, within the Boston Public Schools (BPS) district. BDEA serves students who are behind schedule for high school graduation or have left school without earning a diploma. Its model integrates competency-based learning with wrap-around social services, with the goal of helping students to earn their high school diploma and graduate college- or career-ready. A hallmark of BDEA's model is responsiveness to student needs. In addition to offering scheduling flexibility through two daily school "shifts" and supplemental academic support classes, BDEA provides extensive social support services to its students. These services include case management, counseling, assessment and referral for external services, home visits, court advocacy, and more.

Costs and Funding

In fiscal year 2021, BDEA will spend **\$21,837 per student**. This is slightly below the average of \$23,248 per student across all BPS high schools.^{30 31}

BDEA receives 87% of its funding via BPS allocations, 9% via state and federal grants, and 3% via private foundation and corporate grants.³² Of the BPS funds, 33%, or \$2.6 million in fiscal year 2021, are per-student basic allocations. BDEA's allocated funds for student and program support—including transportation, student benefits, and more—nearly match basic education expenditures at \$2.5 million per year, or another 32% of the BPS funding. A further 22% of the BPS funds, or \$1.8 million annually, is allocated for targeted student supports—special education, English learner, and "economically disadvantaged and other high risk" students.

Outcomes

Given that BDEA requires that students are at least two years behind schedule to enroll, it is not surprising that the school has a four-year graduation rate of 10%. However, over five years, 18% of BDEA students graduate with a high school diploma and a further 7.2% earn a GED or other

³⁰ Boston Public Schools. 2020 "Boston Public Schools Budget: Individual Schools." <https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/cms/lib/MA01906464/Centricity/domain/184/budgetvisualization/index.html#/SchoolAllocationActivities/DistrictView>

³¹ The lower costs at BDEA versus BPS public high schools are primarily due to lower teacher salaries—of all BPS high schools, BDEA ranks 24th of 29 in per-student spending on teachers. BDEA teachers are not members of the Boston Teachers Union, and charter school teachers in Massachusetts earn significantly less than their public schools counterparts.

³² Boston Day and Evening Academy. 2018. "Annual Report for School Year 2018." https://bdea.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/BDEA_Annual-Report_2018.pdf

credential.³³ Of those who graduate, 83% enroll in postsecondary education.³⁴

Alternative schools often struggle to retain students, as they work with young people that have been pushed out of traditional school environments and face other life challenges. However, BDEA has made progress in retaining students in high-need groups. In the 2017-2018 school year, BDEA retained 96% of students who qualified for special education services, 100% of students with limited English language proficiency, and 93% of students who were free and reduced lunch eligible. Overall, BDEA retained 94% of students in the 2017-2018 school year.³⁵

Challenges

While BPS uses a weighted formula to allocate additional funding to schools that serve high-need students, this formula only considers students who enter a school at 9th grade. Because BDEA serves many of students who have left other schools between 9th and 12th grades, at times BPS has recognized as little as 3% of BDEA's students as falling into the "at-risk" category and eligible for additional funding.³⁶

Changes in the way Massachusetts calculates student need have also affected BDEA's ability to serve students. Historically, between 89% and 99% of BDEA's students qualified for free and reduced lunch (FRL).³⁷ In the mid-2010s, Massachusetts switched to an FRL eligibility model that primarily considers a student's usage of other public benefit systems, like SNAP, TANF, or Section 8 housing vouchers; rather than considering only family income. As a result of this change, BDEA's FRL-eligible student percentage fell to 56%.³⁸ It is 65% in 2020.³⁹

The drop in FRL-eligible students at BDEA may be because many BDEA students are over age 18, were previously incarcerated, or are experiencing homelessness; and thus may be unable to apply for public assistance programs or face barriers to doing so. While BPS currently provides free breakfast and lunch to all students, BPS also uses the FRL eligibility metric to determine school funding allocations based on student need. As a result, BDEA faces challenges in adequately serving its high-need student population.

Equity

BDEA's student population is majority students of color—in 2019, 48% of the student population

³³ Massachusetts Department of Education. 2019. "School and District Profiles: Boston Day and Evening Academy Charter School."

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=04240000&orgtypecode=5>

³⁴ Sturgis, Chris. 2012. "Reading the Pulse of Students at Boston Day and Evening Academy." *Aurora Institute*.

³⁵ Massachusetts Department of Education. 2019. "School and District Profiles: Boston Day and Evening Academy Charter School."

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=04240000&orgtypecode=5>

³⁶ Sturgis, Chris. 2012. "Reading the Pulse of Students at Boston Day and Evening Academy." *Aurora Institute*

³⁷ Boston Day and Evening Academy. 2018. "Annual Report for School Year 2018."

³⁸ Boston Day and Evening Academy. 2018. "Annual Report for School Year 2018."

³⁹ Massachusetts Department of Education. 2019. "School and District Profiles: Boston Day and Evening Academy Charter School."

identified as Black and 43% as Hispanic/Latinx.⁴⁰ Additionally, BDEA serves a high-need student population—many students are low-income, carry risk factors for trauma, require special education services, are pregnant or parenting, are English language learners, are experiencing homelessness, or have been justice system-involved.⁴¹

BDEA's student-centered and trauma-sensitive approaches recognize the ways in which traditional high school settings may push students with marginalized identities—including Black and Latinx students—out of school. BDEA provides personalized supportive services and programming, with a focus on issues that are central to students' identities, such as racial and economic justice.

COLORADO YOUTH FOR A CHANGE (CYC)

CYC is a community-based organization located in the Denver, Colorado metropolitan area. CYC operates a range of programs that support its mission of preventing students from dropping out of school and improving high school graduation rates among young people in Colorado. One of these programs is Futures Academy, an alternative program located within the Aurora Public Schools (APS) district, that assists students ages 17-21 that are credit-deficient in earning their GED, technical certificate, or associate's degree.

From 2009 to 2020, CYC operated Futures Academy via a contract with APS. Beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, APS will fold Futures Academy into Avenues, its district-operated alternative high school program. Futures Academy offers GED preparation instruction, academic counseling, and other supports to its students. Students at Futures have the opportunity to co-enroll in courses at the Community College of Aurora or Pickens Technical College, and can earn credit towards an associate's degree or technical certificate concurrently to preparing for GED exams.

Costs and Funding

The annual budget for CYC's Futures Academy was \$1.2 million in the 2019-2020 school year (its last year of operation by CYC). Enrollment at Futures Academy varies throughout the year—the program typically serves 180 students at any given point, with the number of total students served over the course of the year ranging from 185 to 210. Given these enrollment numbers, the **per-student cost ranges from \$5,714 to \$6,667 per school year.**⁴²

As a GED-focused program, Futures offers limited classes compared with a traditional high school, contributing to its lower costs of operation as compared with some reengagement schools included in this report. Futures Academy students enroll in community college or technical college courses for instruction outside of GED preparation.

Across all programs, CYC receives 64% of its funding—\$2.5 million in 2018—from school districts and the state government. CYC's programs operate on a contract model, meaning that CYC receives per-pupil allocations from school districts based on the number of in-district students enrolled in the

⁴⁰ Massachusetts Department of Education. 2019. "School and District Profiles: Boston Day and Evening Academy Charter School."

⁴¹ Boston Day and Evening Academy. 2018. "Annual Report for School Year 2018."

⁴² Interview with Mary Zanotti and Nick Conner, Colorado Youth for a Change, May 29, 2020.

program. For Futures Academy, CYC received \$5,500 per student per year from APS, with the amount increasing to \$6,000 per student in the 2019-2020 school year.

Outcomes

In the 2018-2019 school year, 16% of the 357 students served at Futures Academy earned a GED. A majority of enrolled students made progress toward a GED—74% took a pre-GED or GED test, 32% passed at least one GED test, and 49% of those who took a test improved their score. A smaller proportion of students took up the co-enrollment options—18% enrolled in community or technical college classes, with 67% of those students earning credit. At the end of the school year, Futures retained 191 of its 357 students (53.5%).^{43 44}

Challenges

CYC staff highlighted that they have worked hard to further the organization’s mission while facing funding pressures that could have potentially led to “mission creep” and a shift in services. Staff noted that public and private grant funds for graduation-focused efforts have declined over the last five years, as funders have moved their focus to other youth education issues, such as access to postsecondary education.⁴⁵

Staff cited challenges in securing supportive services for Futures students as a barrier to ensuring student success. When CYC first began operating Futures, the program did not have the same free breakfast and lunch provided to eligible students in traditional district schools, despite being housed within APS. With staff action, CYC was able to secure nutritional support for these students. CYC faced a similar challenge in serving its students that require special education services. After years of advocacy, CYC succeeded in securing a dedicated special education employee from the district to be housed on-site at Futures Academy. Additionally, the program secured regular visits from a district social worker, further bolstering student supports within Futures Academy.

Equity

Across all programs, the majority of the students CYC serves are students of color. In the 2018-2019 school year, 48% of students served were Hispanic/Latinx, 8% were Black, and 7% multiracial. CYC staff highlighted that they serve many high-need student populations that overlap with racial minority identities due to structural inequities. CYC serves a high number of justice system-involved young people—50% of young people served by the reengagement team had current or previous experiences with the justice system.⁴⁶

⁴³ Colorado Youth for a Change. 2019. “Colorado Youth for a Change: 2018-2019 End of Year Report.” https://youthforachange.org/file_download/inline/b6cad275-c1e9-49c0-9145-85e8e6fod842

⁴⁴ Colorado Youth for a Change. 2020. “Our Programs: Futures Academy.” <https://youthforachange.org/services/futures-academy.html>

⁴⁵ Interview with Mary Zanotti and Nick Conner, Colorado Youth for a Change, May 29, 2020.

⁴⁶ Interview with Mary Zanotti and Nick Conner, Colorado Youth for a Change, May 29, 2020.

LATIN AMERICAN YOUTH CENTER (LAYC)

LAYC is a community-based nonprofit serving low-income young people in Washington, DC and Maryland. LAYC operates four youth centers, three community schools, and a wide range of in-school programs for young people ages 11-24.⁴⁷

Among LAYC's programs for disengaged young people are Career Academy, a public charter school in DC. LAYC Career Academy is open to young people ages 16-24 and offers multiple credential pathways to its students, with a focus on career readiness. These include the opportunity to earn a GED with concurrent enrollment in community college courses or in certification programs in information technology or medical assisting. The school offers advising services to its students, including academic and career counseling and mental health services. Other supportive services offered include health insurance, free health services, free groceries and nutritional support, and free transportation services.⁴⁸ Career Academy staff assist students with college, job, and internship applications, and provide academic and career advising for up to a year after a student graduates.⁴⁹

Costs and Funding

Career Academy's operating budget was \$3.7 million in 2018. With an enrollment of 136 students, Career Academy spent **\$26,895 per student** in 2018. In fiscal year 2019, 97% of Career Academy's revenues came from DC Public Schools allocations, including 69% from per student basic allocations, 13% from per student allocations for targeted supports, and 15% from a per student facilities allowance. Other funding sources include grants and private donations (3%) and federal funds (1%).⁵⁰

Outcomes

In the 2018-2019 school year, 67% of Career Academy students earned some form of secondary school credit, and 85% took at least one GED test. Of students who had earned their GED from Career Academy, 71% were employed or in school.⁵¹

Challenges

While LAYC Career Academy has been recognized in DC for its improvements in student academic and career outcomes, certificate completion rates for students remain low. As of 2018-2019, 50% of

⁴⁷ LAYC Career Academy. 2020. "About Us." <https://www.layc-dc.org/about-us/>

⁴⁸ LAYC Career Academy. 2020. "Student Support Services." <https://laycca.org/student-support-services/>

⁴⁹ LAYC Career Academy. 2020. "Apply." <https://laycca.org/apply/>

⁵⁰ DC Public Charter School Board. 2019. "LAYC Career Academy PCS Budget: FY19 Budget." <https://dcpcsb.org/layc-career-academy-pcs-budget>

⁵¹ DC Public Charter School Board. 2019. "LAYC Career Academy PCS: School Quality Report." <https://dcpcsb.org/sites/default/files/media/file/PMF%20Score%20Card%20SY18-19%20-%20LAYC%20Career%20Academy%20PCS.pdf>

students in its IT and medical assistant pathways had earned credentials, and 60% of students in its college pathway had earned three or more college credits.^{52 53}

Equity

Career Academy serves predominantly students of color—50% identify as Black and 44% as Hispanic/Latinx of any race.⁵⁴ Originally founded as a community center for Hispanic/Latinx youth, LAYC has expanded its scope to all low-income young people, but retains a focus on Hispanic/Latinx young people by offering bilingual programming across its sites. Sixty percent of young people in LAYC programs speak a language other than English at home and 35% were born outside of the US.⁵⁵ Recognizing that structural injustice deeply affects the immigrant communities and communities of color that it serves, LAYC is involved in advocacy and outreach around immigrant rights, racial equity, LGBTQ inclusivity, and civic engagement.⁵⁶

PACE CENTER FOR GIRLS

PACE is a community-based organization in the state of Florida that provides educational and social services to girls who have been or are at risk of involvement in the criminal justice system. PACE currently operates a statewide system of 21 centers and serves over 3,000 girls per year. PACE serves girls ages 11-18 in nonresidential centers, and focuses on gender-responsive programming. While not explicitly focused on students who have left school or are behind on credits, the majority of PACE participants do fall into these categories.

Program participants receive on-site wraparound services, including academic instruction, advising, counseling, life skills training, career exploration activities, and transition/follow-up services. Girls also receive personalized case management, including referral for outside services as needed. While PACE offers on-site academic instruction, it does not grant academic credentials directly. PACE serves girls for a limited period of time, with the goal of connecting them with a traditional high school or other educational program to earn their high school diploma or equivalent.

Costs and Funding

The average cost to serve a student in a PACE program is \$23,498 over 7.9 months—the average length of stay in PACE programs. Providing academic instruction is the single largest cost driver for PACE programs, at a cost of \$10,952 per student over 7.9 months. The cost of providing social services nearly matches academic spending, at \$10,411 per student.⁵⁷

PACE centers are funded by a mix of local, state, federal, and private sources. The largest source of

⁵² DC Public Charter School Board. 2018. “School Quality Report Highlights for Adult Schools.” <https://dcpcs.org/school-quality-report-highlights-adult-schools>

⁵³ DC Public Charter School Board. 2019. “LAYC Career Academy PCS: School Quality Report.”

⁵⁴ DC Public Charter School Board. 2019. “LAYC Career Academy PCS: School Quality Report.”

⁵⁵ LAYC. 2020. “Our Impact.” <https://www.layc-dc.org/about-us/our-impact/>

⁵⁶ LAYC. 2020. “Advocacy.” <https://www.layc-dc.org/what-we-do/advocacy/>

⁵⁷ 2018 dollars; MDRC. 2019. “Focusing on Girls’ Futures: Results from the Evaluation of PACE Center for Girls.”

funding is the Florida State Department of Juvenile Justice (46%), followed by local school districts (20%), which pass through per-student allocations to PACE centers. In all, 46% of PACE funding is from state sources, 22% from local sources, 12% from federal sources, and 19% from private funders.⁵⁸

Outcomes

In 2019, MDRC published an evaluation of PACE that used a randomized controlled trial. Because of the short timeframe of the study (18 months), the authors were unable to measure the impact of PACE participation on graduation rates. However, the study did evaluate other measures of academic and social progress.

In the 12 to 18 months after first enrollment, girls in PACE program were significantly more likely to be on track for on-time graduation than girls in the control group—27.6% of PACE participants were on track, compared with 14.2% of control group members. PACE participation also significantly increased days of school attendance and participation in summer classes. PACE had no significant impacts on any other measures of educational progress or social well-being.

The authors noted that the services received by girls in the PACE programs cost \$10,400 more, on average, than services for girls in the control group. This was attributed to the cost of the comprehensive support services provided to girls at PACE. Without long-term follow-up, it is impossible to know whether the additional costs yield equivalent benefits. The authors note that if PACE were to increase participants' graduation rates by 8% or greater, the program would be net-beneficial in the long-run.⁵⁹

Challenges

The PACE funding model highlights the gap between district-provided educational funding and the costs of providing wrap-around services to high need youth. Providing comprehensive support services nearly doubles the cost of providing educational services, and substantial additional funding sources (in this case, the State's Department of Juvenile Justice) are necessary to make up the gap between what districts provide and what is necessary to truly serve disengaged youth.

Equity

PACE programs focus on providing services to traditionally marginalized girls and young women. Most program participants are girls of color—45% are Black and 16% Hispanic/Latinx. Program participants are typically high need. More than 40% are from families with an income of less than \$28,050; nearly two-thirds had a family member with a criminal history, and more than a third were survivors of abuse or neglect. Research has identified PACE's gender-responsive approach, which focuses on programming that identifies issues specific to girls and women, as a factor in its success at improving educational outcomes for participants.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ MDRC. 2019. "Focusing on Girls' Futures: Results from the Evaluation of PACE Center for Girls."

⁵⁹ MDRC. 2019. "Focusing on Girls' Futures: Results from the Evaluation of PACE Center for Girls."

⁶⁰ MDRC, "Focusing on Girls' Futures: Results from the Evaluation of PACE Center for Girls," January 2019.

YOUTHBUILD

YouthBuild is a national model program for disconnected young people, currently operating at over 250 sites across the US. YouthBuild programs provide services to over 10,000 out-of-school young people between the ages of 16 and 24 each year in the US.⁶¹

The hallmark of YouthBuild programs is vocational training services, provided alongside educational instruction and social services. Traditionally, YouthBuild programs focused on training in construction, but since 2012 programs have expanded to include training in healthcare, transportation, information technology, food service, and more.⁶² Traditionally housed within the community-based or faith-based organizations, YouthBuild sites are now found within government agencies and educational institutions, including alternative and charter schools.

Costs and Funding

A 2018 study involving 75 YouthBuild sites across the US found that the average annual cost of serving a young person in a YouthBuild program is **\$24,521**.⁶³ Providing supportive social services is the highest cost category, averaging \$8,958 per student per year. Job training services average \$7,042 per student per year, while educational services average \$5,517.

YouthBuild programs are primarily funded by federal Department of Labor (DOL) grants. These grants are awarded on a competitive basis and range in size from \$700,000 to \$1.5 million.⁶⁴ DOL dollars fund 46% of YouthBuild program budgets, with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and other federal programs making up an additional 8% of funding. The DOL requires YouthBuild sites to match at least 25% of their grant with state, local, or private funds. Most YouthBuild sites exceed this match—on average, programs receive 38% of their funding from state and local government sources and 6% from private donors.⁶⁵

Outcomes

A four-year nationwide evaluation of YouthBuild programs by MDRC found that 34.5% of program participants across 75 sites had earned a high school equivalency credential 48 months after initial enrollment. In contrast, 23.5% of young people in a control group earned a credential over the same time period. YouthBuild participants were also significantly more likely to have ever enrolled in postsecondary education than control group members—21.3% versus 12.7%, respectively.

The effect of YouthBuild participation on employment is unclear—48 months after enrollment, participants reported higher employment levels and earnings than non-participants, but a review of administrative records showed no difference in employment between the two groups. Finally, the

⁶¹ YouthBuild, “About YouthBuild USA,” 2019. <https://www.youthbuild.org/about-youthbuild-usa>

⁶² YouthBuild, “YouthBuild USA, Inc.: 2016 Annual Report,” 2016.

⁶³ 2017 dollars; MDRC, “Laying a Foundation: Four-Year results from the National YouthBuild Evaluation,” May 2018.

⁶⁴ US Department of Labor, “US Department of Labor Awards Up to \$85 Million in YouthBuild Grants to 67 Grantees,” December 16, 2019. <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/eta/eta20191216>

⁶⁵ 2017 dollars; MDRC, “Laying a Foundation: Four-Year results from the National YouthBuild Evaluation,” May 2018.

study found no effect of YouthBuild participation on criminal justice system involvement.⁶⁶

The study also found that the costs of YouthBuild programs do not outweigh the benefits over four years. The authors note that contributors to the high costs of running YouthBuild programs include their small cohort sizes; their location in urban areas, where services tend to be more expensive; and their provision of multiple services, including educational instruction, vocational training, and support services. Additionally, the authors note that some of the benefits of YouthBuild—including employment and earning outcomes—may take longer than four years to manifest, raising the prospect that the program may be net-beneficial in the long run.

Challenges

Experts highlighted YouthBuild sites' high level of dependence on DOL grants as a major sustainability challenge.⁷² Because DOL funds cover roughly half of program costs for the average YouthBuild site, without a DOL grant or another “anchor” funder, sustaining program services is impossible. Many YouthBuild sites will go “dormant” if they fail to secure a DOL grant in a given grant cycle, and then reestablish services several years later once another grant has been secured. This model means that underserved communities and young people receive inconsistent services, likely hindering the ability of YouthBuild to improve long-term outcomes. To combat the grant cycle issues, some YouthBuild sites have begun partnering directly with school districts, particularly alternative and charter schools in order to maintain more consistent funding over time.

PPS RECONNECTION SERVICES

PPS Reconnection Center staff estimated annual staffing costs of \$1.5 million.⁶⁷ Indirect costs for the Reconnection Center were more difficult to tease out, though a previous evaluation estimated annual per-student costs of Reconnection Services at **\$2,000 to \$10,000**.⁶⁸

Reconnection Services serves more than 1,500 students annually.⁶⁹ Among students who engage with services, Reconnection Services has a **6-month retention rate of 70%**. Of students who received services, approximately **50% have earned a high school diploma or GED**.⁷⁰

Reconnection Center staff highlighted the challenges of serving the district's most vulnerable students with only a portion of the per-student funding allocated to traditional high schools. Ideally, staff would like to offer social and emotional learning supports, on-site drug and alcohol counseling, and services designed to help students with managing anxiety and developing transferable skills.⁷¹

⁶⁶ MDRC. 2018. “Laying a Foundation: Four-Year Results from the National YouthBuild Evaluation.”

⁶⁷ Interview with Elise Huggins, PPS Reconnection Center, May 11, 2020.

⁶⁸ National Dropout Prevention Center. 2013. “Reconnection Services – Portland Public Schools.”

<http://dropoutprevention.org/mpdb/web/program/351>

⁶⁹ Interview with Elise Huggins, PPS Reconnection Center, May 11, 2020.

⁷⁰ National Dropout Prevention Center. 2013. “Reconnection Services – Portland Public Schools.”

<http://dropoutprevention.org/mpdb/web/program/351>

⁷¹ Interview with Elise Huggins, PPS Reconnection Center, May 11, 2020.

⁷² Interview with Louisa Treskon, MDRC, April 27, 2020; Interview with Elise Huggins, PPS Reconnection Center [formerly with Portland YouthBuilders], May 11, 2020.

Equity

YouthBuild programs serve primarily young people of color—63% of participants are Black and 15% are Hispanic/Latinx.⁷³ Since its founding in Harlem in the 1970s, YouthBuild has been focused on serving marginalized communities. Most YouthBuild programs restrict participation to out-of-school young people who come from low-income or migrant families, have been part of the foster care system, have been involved with the criminal justice system, have disabilities, or are the children of incarcerated parents. Many YouthBuild programs have a strong commitment to the well-being of the communities they are housed within, remodeling and constructing low-income community housing as part of their vocational training services.

One expert identified the increase in YouthBuild programs operating as alternative and charter schools—which have arisen out of a need to maintain consistent funding—as a potential equity issue.⁷⁴ Many states restrict the amount of per-student funding that alternative and charter schools receive, meaning that high-need students at YouthBuild school sites receive only a portion—often just three-quarters—of the funding allocated to students at traditional comprehensive high schools. By relying on school district funding, YouthBuild sites face the same equity issues that many public schools face across the US where highest need students receive less funding and fewer services.

⁷³ MDRC, “Laying a Foundation: Four-Year results from the National YouthBuild Evaluation,” May 2018.

⁷⁴ Interview with Louisa Treskon, MDRC, April 27, 2020.