



# STATEWIDE INDICATORS OF EDUCATION SYSTEM HEALTH

*2020 Summary Report and Recommendations*



The Washington State  
**BOARD OF EDUCATION**

*The Washington State Board of Education envisions an education system where students are engaged in personalized education pathways that prepare them for civic engagement, careers, postsecondary education, and lifelong learning.*



## **STATEWIDE INDICATORS OF EDUCATION SYSTEM HEALTH**

### **2020 SUMMARY REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Executive Summary**

Every two years, the Washington State Board of Education (SBE) reports on the health of Washington's educational system. Established in 2013 by the Washington State Legislature, the Indicators of Educational System Health create a common framework upon which to evaluate the overall health of the educational system.

The Board has two important responsibilities in this report. First, to report on the state's progress in meeting the goals established for each indicator and second, to recommend appropriate reforms to bolster the outcomes of the indicators not on track to achieving the goals. In each case, we engaged in this work collaboratively with our partner agencies, which helps ensure that all partners in the educational governance landscape are sharing common strategies and working toward common goals.

The report and the supplemental data tables offer plenty of data showing that Washington's educational system is underperforming in two important ways. First, the rate of improvement is not nearly enough to achieve the long-term goals, and second, disparate measures are evident as children enter kindergarten and persist all the way through the post-secondary engagement data. In some cases, gaps between cohorts are getting wider over time, and in some cases, the gaps are noticeably wider than what we observe in other states. The report instills a sense of urgency about addressing the size and scope of our achievement and opportunity gaps.

This work focuses us on a key question, "What do we need to do to support each and every student in our system to prepare them for fulfilling and meaningful career pathways?" The report includes recommendations framed around three overarching questions about Washington's education system that drive the [SBE strategic plan](#).

- Are young children prepared to learn as they transition into the K–12 system?
- Do students have access to quality schools and programs?
- Do students have the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge to be prepared for civic engagement, careers, postsecondary education, and lifelong learning?

We can and must do better for the youth of Washington.

## Summary and Background Information

In consultation with staff from other state education agencies<sup>1</sup>, the State Board of Education (SBE) reports on the statewide indicators of educational system health every two years. [Legislation](#) passed in the 2013 legislative session directs the SBE to recommend evidence-based reforms to improve the outcomes if one or more indicators are not performing to the desired level. The intent of the legislation was to help the legislature understand whether reform efforts and investments are supporting positive progress in the overall education of students and whether adjustments are necessary.

The Statewide Indicators of the Educational System Health authorizing legislation follows in the footsteps of the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC). The EOGOAC is a workgroup comprised of community leaders and state legislators committed to closing racial opportunity gaps in Washington's K-12 educational system. The data forming part of this work and the recommendations included herein are intended to work in concert with the [EOGOAC recommendations](#) and approach to closing the opportunity gap.

At a time prior to the 2013 legislative session, legislators were considering the potential impacts from the *McCleary* lawsuit on education. In particular, when funding increases were to be made to comply with the *McCleary* decision, legislators wanted assurances that the additional funding was leading to an incrementally improving educational system. Additionally, monitoring the snapshots of the six specified indicators at regular intervals was viewed as the most effective means by which to monitor the Washington educational system. To provide those assurances for the legislature, the SBE requested legislation and ultimately found bill sponsors and support for what would become ESSB 5491, the Statewide Indicators of the Educational System Health.

In the 2013 legislative session, the legislature passed and the Governor signed into law ESSB 5491, directing the state board of education (SBE) to undertake certain tasks regarding the six specified indicators. At the time, the SBE, legislature, and the Governor's office felt that the six indicators sufficiently represented the milestones beginning in kindergarten and continuing through the engagement in post-secondary training, career, and education.

The SBE received considerable feedback on this fifth report regarding the merit of monitoring and reporting on the six specified indicators in our evolving educational environment. To enhance the meaningfulness of the next report due in December 2022, the SBE is convening an accountability workgroup to recommend additional indicators reflective of the current educational environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, Education Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee, Washington Student Achievement Council, Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, Department of Children, Youth, and Families, Education Research and Data Center, Professional Educator Standards Board, and Office of the Governor.

The Washington legislature passed legislation in the 2019 session requiring the graduation class of 2020 to meet the requirements of one or more of the graduation pathways for ELA and math. For the first time in years, a student could earn a standard high school diploma without meeting standards on the statewide high school summative assessment, while still demonstrating the skills necessary for post-secondary success. Even though the COVID health emergency disrupted the full implementation of graduation pathway options, many students used the new graduation pathway options as a means to earn their high school diploma. The accountability workgroup mentioned above will likely consider whether the long-term graduation goals should be reset to reflect the change in graduation requirements.

In the 2017, 2018, and 2019 legislative sessions, new legislation increased educational funding and made other important changes to our K-12 educational system. However, improvements in educational outcomes attributable to funding enhancements may not be evident for years because institutional change requires time. Most of the indicators improved over the prior two or three years, but the improvements are small. Unfortunately, large and persistent performance gaps based on race, poverty, and other characteristics occur throughout the educational system in Washington and across the nation. In Washington, some of the gaps are increasing but in other cases, the gaps are decreasing.

The unit of analysis of this report is the Washington statewide educational system, not student groups or individual schools or districts. That said, understanding system performance requires analysis of how communities served by our schools are performing within the system. Therefore, the enabling legislation requires that we report on the performance of the seven student groups based on race/ethnicity and three program participation groups. A goal for the future is to report on the deeper disaggregation of student groups as data becomes available across the state. In reporting group performance, we are not implying some type of defect, shortcoming, or merit of any particular student group. We report on the performance of student groups to identify and address the educational outcome disparities throughout the educational system, which the Board contends, result from [systemic societal inequities](#). The purpose of this report is to identify systemic issues that lead to the persistent disparate educational outcomes we find in this analysis and to recommend research based policy changes to address those systemic issues and to move our educational system to meet long-term statewide goals.

***Later in this report, we report on disparate educational outcomes as performance gaps based on race/ethnicity. In reporting gaps, we use the White student group as the reference (e.g., the Black-White gap or Hispanic/Latinx-White gap), as this is the most prevalent choice found in educational literature and research. In reporting this way, we are not implying that the White student group is the “model” group or the “standard” to which other groups should aspire. Rather, we use this comparison to allow for comparable information when referencing research and provide the required national comparisons. As a final note, we feel that the use of this reference group results in the comparison most familiar to***

***the readers of this report, making the material more accessible to a wider audience.***

This is the fifth report on the Indicators of Educational System Health. As you read this report, be mindful that this process is not merely to report on the results of each indicator, but to make recommendations about appropriate reforms in the system. The Board has intentionally aligned the recommendations of this report with the [SBE's 2019-23 Strategic Plan and 2021 Legislative Platform](#). The SBE strategic plan includes a comprehensive list of recommendations, while an abbreviated and timely list of recommendations appear later in this report. This summary report assumes some prior knowledge of the previous educational system health reports to the legislature, the Washington educational system, and educational systems in general. You can find the previous reports and other important information about the [educational system health](#) on the SBE website.

We as a nation are in the midst of a well-documented intersection of three life-changing crises. The intersection of incidences of and protests against racial injustice, a fragile economy with the highest unemployment rates in nearly a century, and a global health emergency are causing severe problems in all aspects of life, but none greater than the educational system. State education leaders have the daunting responsibility of understanding and responding to these challenges. They must also address the negative experiences of students arising from these challenges, particularly those leading to the disparate educational outcomes resulting from societal inequities. The time is now for education policymakers to implement bold educational reforms to address societal racial and economic inequities.

### **Impacts of COVID-19 Physical Closure of School Buildings**

On March 13, 2020 and in concert with the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Governor required the closure of all Washington school buildings as part of the COVID-19 public health emergency. Through a subsequent action on April 6, the Governor directed that both public and private school buildings remain physically closed through the regular 2019-20 school year.

After an announcement by the [U.S Department of Education](#) (ED) on March 20, 2020, the OSPI cancelled the spring 2020 summative statewide assessment administration after [ED approved](#) an OSPI waiver request to do so. The cancelled administrations include the Smarter Balanced assessments (SBAs), alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive challenges (WA-AIM), and the English language proficiency assessment (ELPA21). As a direct result of the cancellation of assessment administrations, the reporting of 2020 results on some statewide indicators is not possible. We report on the most recent results (typically the spring 2019 results) in cases where the 2020 results are not reportable.

The physical closure of school buildings in the spring 2020 prompted the SBE and OSPI to enact emergency rules and issue statewide grading guidance policy to ensure that students who were on track to graduate high school would earn the credits needed to graduate. The OSPI preliminarily reported that nearly 3000 high school seniors needed the SBE COVID Emergency

Credit Waiver to graduate. The OSPI also reported that nearly 9000 high school seniors in the class of 2020 applied for and received a waiver of assessment requirements through an Expedited Assessment Appeal (EAA), nearly a four-fold increase from the EAA waivers granted to the class of 2019. Neither of these waivers will be available for the class of 2021 without legislative action this year.

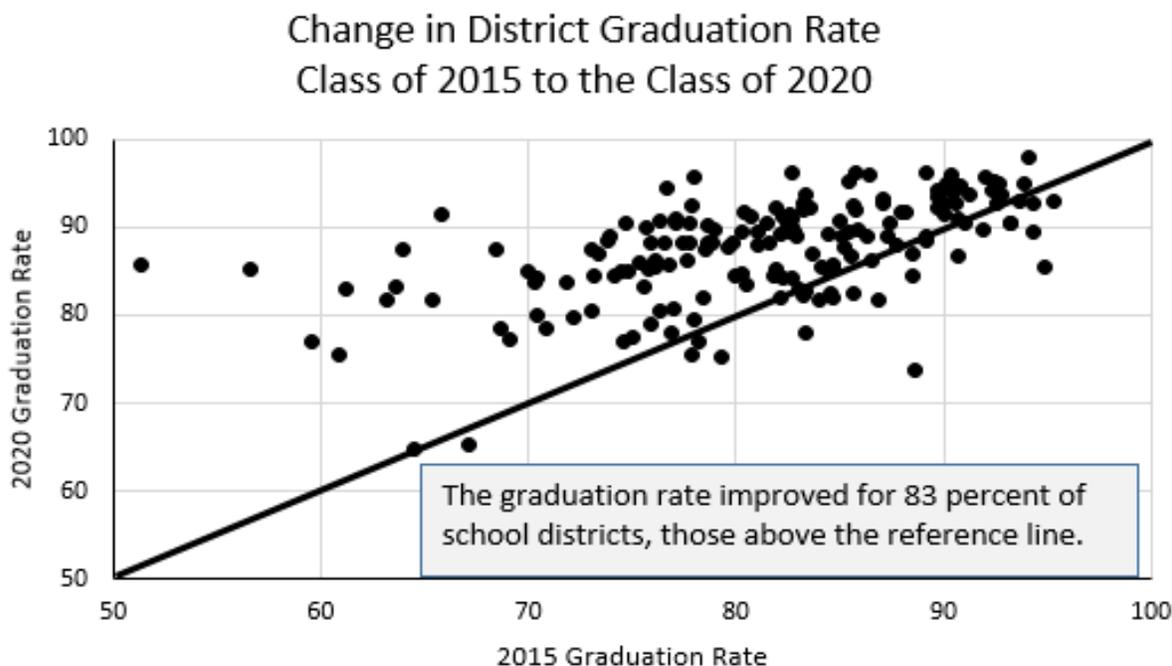
Most students returned to school in the fall 2020 to some form of online instruction and coursework. At the time of this writing, most students continue to attend online classes and a time when all students are back in the classroom fulltime is difficult to predict. Because of the school building closures and the transition to out of classroom learning, [research by the NWEA](#) predicts greater learning loss. This means that more students returned to school in the fall with less knowledge in comparison to previous years. It remains unknown whether or not the statewide assessments will be administered in the spring 2021. Even if the spring testing takes place, the spring 2021 results will almost certainly [not be comparable](#) to previous assessment results. This all means that interpreting the next assessment results will be a challenge because of the spring 2020 closures and the fall 2020 instructional methods implemented to ensure student and staff health and safety.

The COVID-19 public health emergency is shining a light on the enduring societal inequities and disparate educational outcomes. The disruptions to learning caused by the coronavirus-related school closures are most hurtful to the systemically marginalized students experiencing the educational system's institutional racism. The pandemic is a wakeup call to education policymakers and represents an opportunity to transform Washington's education system into an institution serving every student equitably.

### **Educational System Disparities – An Example**

As in all states, disparate educational outcomes found in Washington are a byproduct of the educational system. The statewide four-year high school graduation rate increased approximately 6.3 percentage points from the class of 2015 to the class of 2020. While this is a relatively small annual average change, approximately four of every five school districts graduating students produced improvements on the high school graduation rate. On Figure 1, each dot represents a school district with at least 25 students in the adjusted cohorts for 2015 and 2020 graduation rates. Each dot above the diagonal line represents a district with an increase in the graduation rate from 2015 to 2020. A greater distance from the diagonal line indicates a larger increase. In a broad sense, we are seeing the educational system yielding gains. However, the gains for all student groups are not large enough to meet the long-term statewide goal of 90 percent of students graduating from the class of 2027 four-year cohort.

Figure 1: shows the district graduation rates for the class of 2013 and the class of 2019 for districts with an adjusted graduation cohort of 25 or more students in both graduation classes.



Note: the chart includes only the school districts with at least 25 students in the adjusted cohorts for the classes of 2015 and 2020, and for districts in which the graduation data is not suppressed to protect personally identifying information.

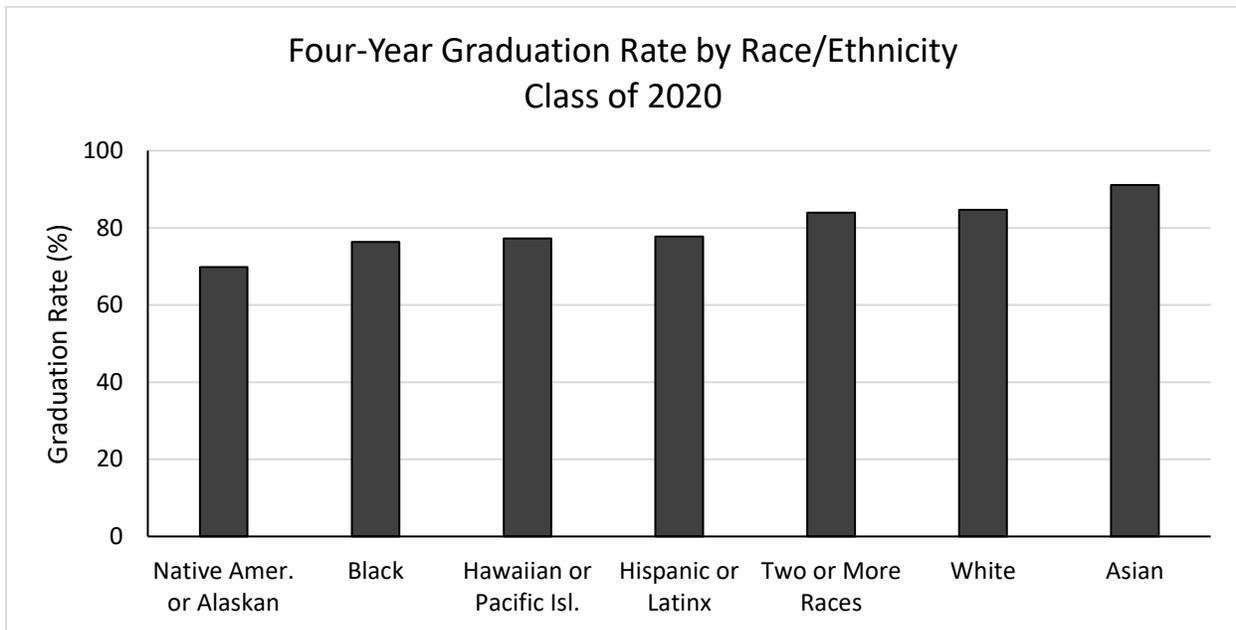
Digging into the class of 2020 graduation rates a little more closely (Figure 2), you can see that the educational system produces disparate graduation outcomes by race/ethnicity and program participation. The statewide graduation rates by race/ethnicity range from a low of approximately 70 percent to a high of approximately 90 percent. The Washington educational system is not serving students of color as well as it serves White and some Asian students. An equitable educational system would eliminate predictability and disproportionality in student outcomes by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic conditions.

Socioeconomic disparities in our society partly explain this type of opportunity or performance gap, but do not fully account for differences in outcomes by race/ethnicity. The education system performs in a manner that generally supports the learning of students from higher-income and some middle-income households. And then, systematically under-supports the needs of students from lower-income households. The educational system performs in the following manner:

- Students from upper- and middle-income households often receive the educational resources and supports they need to be successful.
- Many students from lower-income households often do not receive resources and supports necessary to meet their needs.

- Disparate outcomes based on race/ethnicity continue to manifest, as the not low-income White student group graduates at a rate higher than most not low-income students from other race/ethnicity student groups.

Figure 2: shows the class of 2020 statewide graduation rates by race/ethnicity.



Because of our inequitable societal structures and impacts from persistent systemic racism, students of color are more likely to come from low-income households. This partly explains the disparate graduation rates based on race/ethnicity. However, after controlling for socioeconomic status, disparate educational outcomes remain in the data. The design of the educational system created the gaps, and bold systemic changes are needed to reduce or eliminate the gaps.

Figure 3 shows how the graduation rate performance gaps are changing over time. While the gaps fluctuate a little from one year to the next, the graduation rate gap decreased over the six-year period for all of the groups. It is encouraging that the systemic changes implemented in prior years are working in a manner that reduces the graduation rate gaps. However, we must acknowledge the injustice of allowing disparate outcomes to persist in the system for years. In addition, we must decide whether the gap reductions are occurring quickly enough. The data points below should instill a sense of urgency. We must improve the educational system and bring about improvements much more quickly.

- At the current gap reduction rate of approximately two percentage points per year, it would take approximately eight years to eliminate the Native American-White graduation gap.
- At the current gap reduction rate of approximately 0.8 percentage points per year, it would take 20 years to eliminate the graduation gap based on Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) program participation status.

Figure 3: shows the graduation rate, performance gaps over time for the race/ethnicity and special program student groups.

<b>Graduation Gap</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Change Over Time</b>
Amer. Indian/Alaskan – White Gap	24.6	20.9	21.6	22.5	21.1	14.9	-9.7
Black-African American – White Gap	12.2	10.8	10.4	8.5	9.2	8.4	-3.8
Hispanic/Latinx – White Gap	11.3	9.2	9.2	7.7	7.1	7.0	-4.1
Hawaiian/Pacific Isl. – White Gap	13.9	13.3	13.8	8.8	8.4	7.4	-6.5
English Learner (EL) – Not EL Gap	23.7	22.9	23.0	18.1	20.0	15.9	-7.8
Low-Income* (FRL) – Not FRL Gap	20.8	19.9	19.5	17.9	17.8	16.0	-4.8
Special Education* (SWD) -Not SWD Gap	22.9	23.8	22.8	21.8	21.5	21.0	-1.9

\*Note: low-income refers to the students qualifying for the Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRL) program. Special education refers to the students with a disability who are receiving special education services aligned to the students' Individualized Educational Plans.

Figure 4: shows the graduation rate gaps to the statewide goal of 90 percent graduating, over time for the race/ethnicity and special program student groups.

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Years to Attain the 90 % Goal</b>
Native Amer./Alaskan Gap to Goal	33.6	29.4	29.7	29.6	28.3	20.2	9.0
Asian Gap to Goal	2.2	1.4	2.5	0.0	-0.4	-1.1	Goal Met
Black/African Amer. Gap to Goal	21.2	19.3	18.5	15.6	16.4	13.7	12.7
Hispanic/Latinx Gap to Goal	20.4	17.7	17.3	14.8	14.3	12.2	6.2
Hawaiian/Pacific Isl. Gap to Goal	23.0	21.8	21.9	16.0	15.6	12.7	7.4
White Gap to Goal	9.1	8.5	8.1	7.1	7.2	5.3	8.3
Two or More Races Gap to Goal	12.1	12.1	10.3	9.3	8.8	6.1	6.1
Special Education* Gap to Goal	32.1	31.9	30.6	28.3	27.9	25.5	23.2
English Learner Gap to Goal	34.2	32.4	32.2	25.9	27.6	21.6	10.0
Low-Income* Gap to Goal	22.0	20.6	20.0	17.9	17.8	14.9	12.6

\*Note: low-income refers to the students qualifying for the Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRL) program. Special education refers to the students with a disability who are receiving special education services aligned to the students' Individualized Educational Plans.

From the graduation class of 2015 to the class of 2020, all student groups made substantial improvements and closed the gap to the statewide goal of 90 percent for the class of 2027. Nearly all of the student groups are on-track to meet the statewide goal of 90 percent graduating in the class of 2027. Figure 4 shows that a reduction in the gap to goal means that the graduation rate increased. For the Black/African American student group, the four-year graduation rate increased 7.5 percentage points from the class of 2015 to the class of 2020, but the group remains approximately 13.7 percentage points short of the goal of 90 percent. If the rate of increase going forward remains constant, the group will attain the 90 percent graduation goal in approximately 13 years.

The disparities in graduation outcomes continue to be brought front and center. While the Asian student group has already attained the long-term goal of a 90 percent graduation rate, the remaining race/ethnicity student groups will attain the 90 percent graduation goal after approximately six to 13 years, if the rates of increase remain constant. We must decide how much faster the gap reductions need to occur and reform the educational system accordingly.

### **Status of the Statutorily Required Indicators**

It is important to remember that the unit of analysis of this report is the Washington educational system, not student groups. We report on and use the performance of student groups to quantify the degree to which educational outcome disparities permeate the educational system. In other words, the analysis here is about educational system success or failure to meet the needs of student groups in attaining the statewide goals. The disparate educational outcomes found in this report and slow progress in addressing gaps represent a failure that requires systemic changes.

Statewide, the educational system is seeing some progress on five of the six required indicators of system health when the All Students group is the unit of analysis (Figure 5). However, educational outcome disparities based on race/ethnicity and program participation are widespread, and even when indicators are improving they are rarely moving quickly enough to address gaps in a reasonable timeframe.

- The statewide performance on Kindergarten Readiness as measured by the WaKIDS whole-child assessment is up 4.8 percentage points (pp) over the three most recent administrations. However, Native American, Hispanic, and Pacific Islander children scored approximately 20 percentage points lower than the White student group.
- On the 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading indicator, the Black/African American student group improved 3.0 percentage points from 2018, but all of the other groups' performance declined by 0.1 to 4.6 percentage points from 2018.

- On the 8<sup>th</sup> grade math indicator, the students with a disability group performance increased by 0.6 percentage points from 2018, but the American Indian, Asian, and Black student groups' performance declined by 0.4 to 2.6 percentage points (pp) from 2017.
- The performance on the High School Graduation measure for the class of 2020 is 2.0 percentage points higher than 2019 for the All Students group and up for the Native American (8.1 pp) student group. The four-year graduation rates for all student groups improved by 0.7 to 8.1 percentage points from the class of 2019. Preliminary analyses show disparate usage of the COVID emergency credit waivers, emergency grading policy guidance, and EAAs, and the disparate usage may partly explain the large increases in graduation rates for some student groups. Also, the class of 2020 was the first to meet the requirements of at least one graduation pathway in ELA and math, and the availability of graduation pathways may explain some the increases in the graduation rates.
- Since the class of 2015, the four-year graduation rates for all student groups increased 3.3 to 13.4 percentage points. Over the same time-period, the dropout rates declined for all student groups. So, fewer students are dropping out, more students are graduating, and more of the non-graduating seniors are continuing to a fifth year of high school.

Figure 5: shows the status of each of the six statutorily required indicators of the educational system health for the All Students group.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Change over Three Years*</b>	<b>Met Annual Target</b>	<b>Comparable to Peer States**</b>	<b>Top 10 Percent Nationally**</b>
Kindergarten Readiness	+ 4.8	No	No	No
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	+ 1.7	No	No	No
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	- 1.6	No	Yes	No
High School Graduation	+ 2.0	Yes	No	No
Readiness for College Coursework	+ 4.2	Yes	N.D.	N.D.
Postsecondary Engagement and Workforce	- 0.1	No	N.D.	N.D.

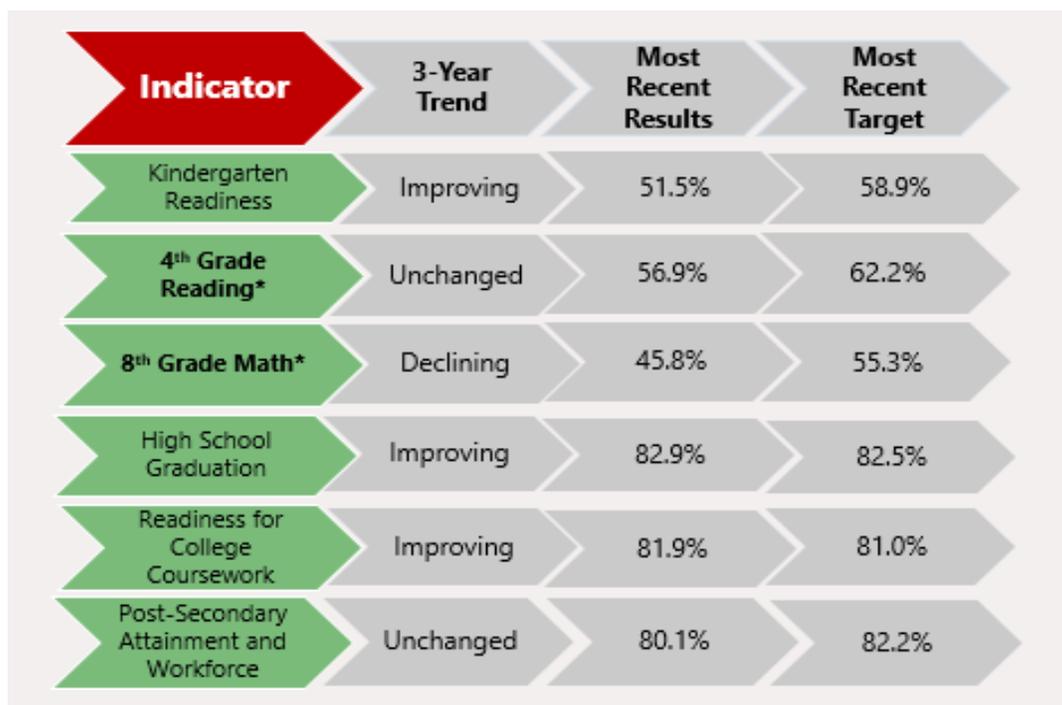
\*Note: change shown as percentage points. \*\*Note: the peer state and national comparisons use a combination of measures comprised of the recommended measures, nationwide administered assessments, and other publicly available information. The peer state comparison is for the most recent year and is included in the Supplemental Data Tables document on the SBE website. A No means that Washington was lower than the peer states. N.D. means no data.

The separate supplemental data tables document provides a great deal of information on the educational system performance through the disaggregation of the indicator performance by race/ethnicity student groups, low income status, and participation in special education or bilingual education. The disaggregated results provide additional context regarding the relative performance of the groups.

The Washington educational system is improving but not to the degree where the outcomes for most student groups are meeting annual targets (Figure 6 and Appendix A). In other words, the outcomes for many student groups are not on track to meet the long-term goals aligned with Washington’s ESSA state plan.

The legislation provides a clear picture of the legislature’s aspirational goals for Washington: an education system ranked in the top ten percent nationally and comparable to the education systems of other high performing states. The legislature and the Governor sent a clear message about what are the important measures for the educational system, and what milestones are important for students to meet.

Figure 6: summarizes the most recent performance for the all students group on the statewide indicators.



Note: Indicators with an asterisk represent data from the 2018-19 school year.

The SBE envisions an education system where students are engaged in personalized education pathways that prepare them for civic engagement, careers, postsecondary education, and lifelong learning. The [2019-2023 Strategic Plan](#) contains six goals for the State Board of Education:

1. All students feel safe at school, and have the supports necessary to thrive.
2. All students are able to engage in their schools and their broader communities, and feel invested in their learning pathways, which lead to their post-secondary aspirations.
3. School and district structures and systems adapt to meet the evolving needs of the student population and community, as a whole. Students are prepared to adapt as needed and fully participate in the world beyond the classroom.
4. Students successfully transition into, through, and out of the P–12 system.

5. Students graduate from Washington State high schools ready for civic engagement, careers, post-secondary education, and lifelong learning.
6. Equitable funding across the state to ensure that all students have the funding and opportunities they need, regardless of their geographical location or other needs.

The indicators are reasonably well suited to address three overarching questions about Washington's education system that drive the strategic plan.

- Are young children prepared to learn as they transition into the K–12 system?
- Do students have access to quality schools and programs?
- Do students have the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge to be prepared for civic engagement, careers, postsecondary education, and lifelong learning?

A comprehensive list of recommendations appear in the 2019-23 SBE strategic plan. The abbreviated list of recommendations that follow are a timely subset with the potential to impact educational outcomes in the near term.

### **What evidence do we have showing that young children are prepared to learn as they transition into the K-12 system?**

The legislature directed the SBE to monitor and report on the percentage of kindergarten students who meet the benchmarks on all six developmental domains of the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developmental Skills (WaKIDS). To provide additional information on this question, the SBE recommended that the state monitor the early childhood education enrollment patterns for young children before entering the K-12 education system.

For a number of years, the percentage of Washington three- and four-year olds enrolling in early childhood education hovered around 40 percent, but that number increased to 46 percent in 2018. The increase coincides with the state expanding the number of Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) full day and part day slots. Slightly more than one-half of all incoming kindergarten students demonstrate the age-appropriate characteristics of kindergarten aged children as measured by the WaKIDS. It is important to note that the impact of COVID-19 on enrollment is not yet clear. However, preliminary [reporting by the OSPI](#) indicates a 14 percent decline in kindergarten enrollment compared to the same time last year.

- In the fall 2019, approximately 58 percent of kindergarteners identifying as White demonstrated the age-appropriate characteristics of kindergarteners on all six domains of the WaKIDS but only 35 percent of Hispanic kindergarteners met the benchmarks, gap of 23 percentage points at the time they are entering K-12 education system.

The percentage of young children who meet the benchmarks on all six developmental domains of the WaKIDS is substantially lower for Native American, Black, Hispanic, and Pacific Islander young children. Because of societal inequities, these young children are less likely to enroll in a private early childhood education and must compete for limited state funded ECEAP slots. The percentage of young children meeting the WaKIDS benchmarks should increase as

Washington's ECEAP continues to expand and as program quality improves under solid funding in the future.

The OSPI reported [preliminary findings](#) on how a cohort of students performed on the WaKIDS and then later fared on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Smarter Balanced assessments (SBA) in ELA and math. For math, the percentage of kindergartners meeting the WaKIDS math domain characteristics was similar to the percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders meeting standard on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade SBA for most student groups. However, on the ELA, the percentage of kindergartners meeting the WaKIDS literacy/ELA domain characteristics was systematically higher than the percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders meeting standard on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade SBA ELA for all student groups. The preliminary results indicate that the performance on the WaKIDS literacy/ELA domain is correlated to but is not a good predictor of performance on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade SBA ELA. The disparate results might be indicative of an ineffective bias review, or possible reliability or validity issues.

***Recommendation on the Kindergarten Assessment:***

- ***Expand access to affordable, high quality early childhood education for all of Washington's children, particularly children of color and children in poverty.***
- ***Support the EOGOAC examination of the WaKIDS for racial bias to ensure the assessment yields valid and reliable results.***

**Do Washington students have access to quality schools and programs?**

The statutorily required indicators are not particularly well suited to address a qualitative question such as this, but the SBE monitors some measures that shed light on the question. It would be consistent with [research](#) to describe a "quality school" is one in which students and parents feel safe, valued, and listened to, and are provided the opportunity to take control of their learning. A quality school would also provide every student with access to an effective and qualified teacher or role model at the school that each student can relate to or connect with.

***Recommendations on Enhancing School Supports and Student Engagement:***

- ***Ensure students and staff return to safe school environments.***
- ***Make sure state policy supports school environments where teacher-student relationships are prioritized and educators and staff are given the time and space to foster these relationships.***
- ***Support the annual administration of a state-funded school climate survey.***
- ***Maintain the state's commitment to rigorous standards and assessment while providing meaningful graduation pathways.***
- ***Create more authentic and meaningful opportunities to engage students, families, and community members as essential partners in the collective process of policymaking.***

- ***Expand availability of mastery-based learning opportunities for students, through personalized learning strategies and project-based and career-connected learning opportunities, including credit for competencies acquired in the workplace, through volunteer work, or other extracurricular activities.***

A large number of schools in Washington administer school climate and culture surveys, parent surveys, and educator surveys as a means to quantify the otherwise qualitative measures of school climate and culture. Analyses are showing that positive school climate/culture has a positive impact on student well-being, student educational outcomes, and teacher and parent/guardian satisfaction. Notwithstanding the demonstrable benefits, Washington has yet to implement a statewide school climate/culture survey to measure and improve climate and culture in school buildings and to help quantify school quality across the state.

***Recommendations on Enhancing Supports to Meet Evolving Needs:***

- ***Develop a statewide framework for school safety and mental health to provide all schools with access to mental health professionals in schools, links to community-based mental health and other healthcare providers, and wrap-around supports for students.***
- ***Provide school staff with professional development in trauma-informed, antiracist, and culturally responsive instruction. In addition, provide professional development to support mental health and social emotional learning.***
- ***Bolster efforts to embed ethnic studies throughout K-12 state learning standards and curricula and to increase ethnic studies offerings in our schools.***
- ***Update the K-12 content area learning standards to explicitly recognize issues of race, culture, and contributions of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.***
- ***Incorporate antiracism and cultural responsiveness into educator preparation and professional development programs.***
- ***Encourage intentional consideration of culturally responsive, flexible calendars and scheduling and alternatives to the traditional 180-day calendar.***

**Do students have the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge to be prepared for civic engagement, careers, postsecondary education, and lifelong learning?**

Like many educational systems across the country, Washington’s educational system is not particularly effective for many, especially students of color, students from low-income households, students with a disability, and students whose home language is not English. In fact, Washington’s educational system is only marginally effective for the “typical” students, as the

percentage of students meeting standard on many assessments hovers around 50 percent. Even the higher performing student groups post success rates in the 60 to 70 percent range, far from the statewide long-term goal. The disparities of the educational system are evident from the educational outcome measures included in the statewide indicators.

- On the WaKIDS whole-student assessment of kindergartener characteristics, 35 percent of children from low-income households demonstrate the age-appropriate characteristics of kindergarten aged children and 62 percent of children not from low-income households demonstrate the characteristics of kindergarteners, a gap of 27 percentage points.
- On the 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading assessment, approximately 65 to 75 percent of the higher performing student groups meet the proficiency benchmark but only 40 percent of Hispanic students meet the benchmark, a performance gap of approximately 25 percentage points.
- On the 8<sup>th</sup> grade math assessment, approximately 52 to 73 percent of the students in the higher performing student groups meet the proficiency benchmark but only 24 percent of Black students meet the benchmark, a performance gap of approximately 28 percentage points.
- On the high school graduation measure, approximately 85 percent of White students graduate in four years but only 70 percent of Native American students graduate from high school in four years, a performance gap of 15 percentage points.
- Of the high school graduates enrolling in higher education, 85 percent of one of the highest performing student groups enroll directly into credit bearing college coursework but only 69 percent of Hispanic students meet the benchmark, a performance gap of approximately 16 percentage points.

***Recommendations on Educational Funding:***

- ***Increase investments to expand high quality, publicly funded learning opportunities including extended day, summer learning opportunities and extracurricular activities as well as transportation and other supports necessary to ensure equitable access.***
- ***Retain and recruit educators and administrators who represent the diversity of the students served, and innovative educational leaders who are committed to eliminating biases, barriers, and opportunity gaps.***
- ***Provide targeted funding to schools and students who need it most, including support for increased access to social-emotional health, mental health services, wrap-around supports, Special Education, and English Language Learners.***
- ***Modernize the school funding model to invest in more social emotional health and related staff.***

***Recommendations on Emerging and Ongoing Needs:***

- ***Ensure every student and educator has access to broadband Internet, an appropriate device for online learning, and technology support.***
- ***Support families, caregivers, and community partners in creating environments conducive for successful distance learning.***

## **Conclusion**

Despite some improvements, Washington has failed to meet the annual targets for the statewide indicators of the educational system health. More concerning, gaps continue to persist and the state has so far failed to eliminate the predictability and disproportionality in student outcomes by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Clearly, more work needs to be done, and the recommendations in this report will help.

The SBE and partners are not at all convinced that monitoring and reporting on only the six specified indicators sufficiently characterizes the educational system health. We understand how it is important to know whether the desired outcomes are attained, but we believe it is equally, if not more, important to determine whether the educational system is equitably providing each and every student with the opportunity to learn. In embracing the work of the EGOAC, we believe the opportunity gaps experienced by many students identifying with systemically marginalized groups cause the large and persistent achievement gaps or disparate outcomes. The SBE is convening an accountability workgroup to explore the merits of and recommend additional indicators reflective of the current educational environment and our evolving and deeper thinking on measuring students' opportunity to learn.

Supplemental data tables, previous reports to the legislature, and other information about the [educational system health](#) are on the SBE website. The SBE adopted the [strategic plan for 2019-23](#), which provides a more complete set of recommended system reforms.

## Appendix A

### Summary Tables for Indicators of the Educational System Health – 2020 Report

<b>Kindergartener Characteristics Demonstrating All Six WaKIDS Developmental Domains</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2019-20 Target</b>	<b>Difference*</b>
<b>All Students</b>	<b>46.7</b>	<b>45.7</b>	<b>51.5</b>	<b>58.9</b>	<b>-7.4</b>
American Indian / Alaskan Native	30.5	30.1	34.6	49.0	-14.4
Asian	56.9	56.9	63.0	65.8	-2.8
Black / African American	40.0	40.0	44.1	55.5	-11.4
Hispanic / Latinx	30.9	29.6	35.4	48.1	-12.7
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	29.1	30.8	33.1	45.9	-12.8
White	52.7	51.4	57.5	63.5	-6.0
Two or More	50.7	50.7	56.0	61.9	-5.9
Limited English	30.7	30.0	35.8	47.6	-11.8
Low-Income*	31.5	30.5	35.4	48.9	-13.5
Students with Disabilities	18.5	18.0	22.4	39.9	-17.5

\*Notes: refers to the students qualifying for the Free and Reduced Price Lunch program. The Difference in percentage points is the actual value (rate) minus the Target value. A negative difference means the actual performance is lower than the Target.

<b>4<sup>th</sup> Grade Smarter Balanced ELA Assessment</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2018-19 Target</b>	<b>Difference*</b>
<b>All Students</b>	<b>57.3</b>	<b>56.9</b>	<b>N.D.</b>	62.2	-5.3
American Indian / Alaskan Native	28.1	26.9	N.D.	40.0	-13.1
Asian	76.0	75.1	N.D.	77.3	-2.2
Black / African American	37.3	40.3	N.D.	46.6	-6.3
Hispanic / Latinx	39.6	39.3	N.D.	47.5	-8.2
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	35.9	33.6	N.D.	44.0	-10.4
White	65.0	64.6	N.D.	68.5	-3.9
Two or More Races	59.8	59.7	N.D.	65.1	-5.4
Limited English	16.6	16.7	N.D.	30.4	-13.7
Low-Income*	41.2	41.3	N.D.	48.3	-7.0
Students with a Disability	23.6	23.7	N.D.	34.9	-11.2

\*Notes: refers to the students qualifying for the Free and Reduced Price Lunch program. N.D. indicates no data. The Difference in percentage points is the actual value (rate) minus the Target value. A negative difference means the actual performance is lower than the Target.

<b>8<sup>th</sup> Grade Smarter Balanced Math Assessment</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2018-19 Target</b>	<b>Difference*</b>
<b>All Students</b>	<b>47.5</b>	<b>45.8</b>	<b>N.D.</b>	<b>55.3</b>	<b>-7.5</b>
American Indian / Alaskan Native	21.0	18.0	N.D.	36.9	-18.9
Asian	72.9	72.9	N.D.	76.8	-3.9
Black / African American	25.3	23.6	N.D.	39.2	-15.6
Hispanic / Latinx	30.1	28.3	N.D.	42.0	-13.7
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	25.9	21.4	N.D.	35.9	-14.5
White	53.7	52.4	N.D.	60.9	-8.5
Two or More Races	48.9	46.0	N.D.	56.5	-10.5
Limited English	10.2	10.3	N.D.	26.5	-16.2
Low-Income*	30.3	30.4	N.D.	41.8	-11.4
Students with a Disability	8.6	8.7	N.D.	24.9	-16.2

\*Notes: refers to the students qualifying for the Free and Reduced Price Lunch program. N.D. indicates no data. The Difference in percentage points is the actual value (rate) minus the Target value. A negative difference means the actual performance is lower than the Target.

<b>4-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate</b>	<b>Class of 2017-18</b>	<b>Class of 2018-19</b>	<b>Class of 2019-20</b>	<b>2019-20 Target</b>	<b>Difference*</b>
<b>All Students</b>	<b>80.9</b>	<b>80.9</b>	<b>82.9</b>	<b>82.5</b>	<b>0.4</b>
American Indian / Alaskan Native	60.4	61.7	69.8	69.2	0.5
Asian	90.0	90.4	91.1	88.2	2.8
Black / African American	74.4	73.6	76.3	77.1	-0.7
Hispanic / Latinx	75.2	75.7	77.7	77.9	-0.2
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	74.0	74.4	77.3	74.7	2.6
White	82.9	82.8	84.7	84.3	0.3
Two or More Races	80.7	81.2	83.9	82.8	1.1
Limited English	64.1	62.4	68.4	67.5	0.9
Low-Income*	72.1	72.1	75.1	76.0	-0.9
Students with a Disability	61.7	62.1	64.5	68.6	-4.1

\*Notes: refers to the students qualifying for the Free and Reduced Price Lunch program. N.D. indicates no data. The Difference in percentage points is the actual value (rate) minus the Target value. A negative difference means the actual performance is lower than the Target. A positive difference means the actual performance exceeded the Target. Numbers may not add up as shown because of rounding.

<b>Readiness for College Coursework</b>	<b>2014-15 Graduates</b>	<b>2015-16 Graduates</b>	<b>2016-17 Graduates</b>	<b>2016-17 Target</b>	<b>Difference*</b>
<b>All Students</b>	<b>77.7</b>	<b>78.7</b>	<b>81.9</b>	<b>81.0</b>	<b>0.9</b>
American Indian / Alaskan Native	68.5	73.1	71.7	76.7	-5.0
Asian	84.5	86.1	88.8	86.1	2.7
Black / African American	68.6	70.1	74.1	74.5	-0.4
Hispanic / Latinx	60.8	63.3	68.7	69.4	-0.7
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	73.5	73.3	80.1	79.0	1.1
White	81.1	81.7	84.7	82.9	1.8
Two or More Races	78.1	80.4	84.5	81.9	2.6
Limited English	46.4	52.0	54.8	61.2	-6.4
Low-Income*	66.2	67.8	72.5	73.0	-0.5
Students with a Disability	55.4	53.6	58.9	62.9	-4.0

\*Notes: refers to the students qualifying for the Free and Reduced Price Lunch program. N.D. indicates no data. The Difference in percentage points is the actual value (rate) minus the Target value. A negative difference means the actual performance is lower than the Target. A positive difference means the actual performance exceeded the Target.

<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Postsecondary Engagement</b>	<b>2014-15 Graduates</b>	<b>2015-16 Graduates</b>	<b>2016-17 Graduates</b>	<b>2016-17 Target</b>	<b>Difference*</b>
<b>All Students</b>	<b>80.2</b>	<b>80.5</b>	<b>80.1</b>	<b>82.2</b>	<b>-2.1</b>
American Indian / Alaskan Native	63.3	65.0	66.5	68.6	-2.1
Asian	86.1	85.4	86.6	86.9	-0.3
Black / African American	79.6	80.0	81.3	81.7	-0.4
Hispanic / Latinx	76.4	76.5	76.3	79.1	-2.8
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	73.8	66.7	72.9	77.0	-4.1
White	80.8	81.4	80.7	82.7	-2.0
Two or More Races	81.0	81.5	79.7	82.8	-3.1
Limited English	69.9	65.4	66.7	73.9	-7.2
Low-Income*	75.5	74.7	74.0	78.4	-4.4
Students with a Disability	59.7	58.9	58.3	65.7	-7.4

\*Notes: refers to the students qualifying for the Free and Reduced Price Lunch program. N.D. indicates no data. The Difference in percentage points is the actual value (rate) minus the Target value. A negative difference means the actual performance is lower than the Target.