

# CREATING GREAT SCHOOLS FOR WASHINGTON STUDENTS



Students in Washington classrooms will soon enter a job market bursting with opportunity. There will be 740,000 job openings in our state in the next five years. Most will be filled by workers with a postsecondary credential such as a technical or industry certification or license, apprenticeship, associate degree, or bachelor's degree.

Overwhelmingly, Washington employers want Washington kids to fill these jobs. However, today only 31 percent of Washington high school students go on to attain a postsecondary credential. The number is smaller for low-income students, some diverse populations, and students with disabilities.

**Our goal: By 2030, 70 percent of Washington students will earn a postsecondary credential by the age of 26.**

Key to reaching that goal is improving the performance of Washington's K-12 system—more specifically, raising achievement at low-performing schools and for struggling students.

The Washington Roundtable and Partnership for Learning worked in collaboration with Education First and Public Impact to examine the challenges of low academic performance in Washington, identify best practices based on research and experiences in other states, and recommend distinct, actionable strategies for raising achievement.

TODAY'S REALITY

31%

of Washington High School Students Go on to Earn a Postsecondary Credential

OUR GOAL: BY 2030

70%

of Washington Students Earn a Postsecondary Credential By Age 26

## KEY FINDINGS:

**WASHINGTON HAS DESIGNATED 255 SCHOOLS AS LOW PERFORMING; THE STATE HAS LIMITED OPTIONS FOR SUPPORTING IMPROVEMENT AT THESE SCHOOLS.**

There is at least one school designated as low performing in more than a third of Washington's school districts. Student performance at these schools significantly trails that of students statewide. The graduation rate is also markedly lower. Options for supporting improvement at low-performing schools are limited, and the state is offering its highest level of intervention in only four school districts.

IN 2014-15:

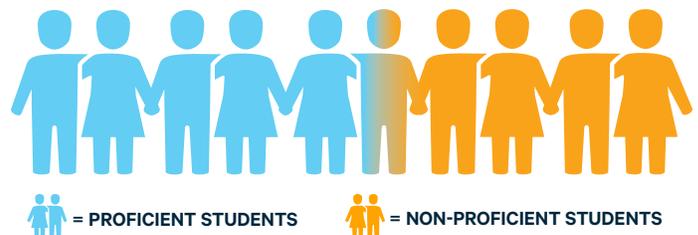
METRIC	STATE AVERAGE	LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS AVERAGE	LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS TRAILED BY:
READING SBAC, GRADES 3-8 MEETING STANDARD	56%	40%	16 POINTS
MATH SBAC, GRADES 3-8 MEETING STANDARD	50%	33%	17 POINTS
GRADUATION 5-YEAR COHORT	80%	51%	29 POINTS

SBAC: Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Source: Public Impact analysis of publicly available data.

**THE CHALLENGES OF LOW PERFORMANCE EXTEND BEYOND LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS.**

Of the approximately 1 million K-12 public school students in Washington, just under 100,000 attend schools designated as low performing. However, approximately 200,000 3rd through 8th graders scored below proficiency on the 2015 Smarter Balanced assessments. Of those, about half scored Level 1 (the lowest level). Given these numbers, it is clear that many struggling students attend schools that may be classified as high or moderately performing.



# FOUR STEPS TO MEANINGFUL IMPROVEMENTS IN STUDENT PERFORMANCE.

To prepare our students for the record number of job openings coming to Washington state—and raise the postsecondary attainment rate for Washington kids to 70 percent—we must improve outcomes at low-performing schools and of struggling students.

**THE WASHINGTON ROUNDTABLE HAS IDENTIFIED FOUR STEPS TO MEANINGFUL IMPROVEMENTS IN STUDENT PERFORMANCE:**

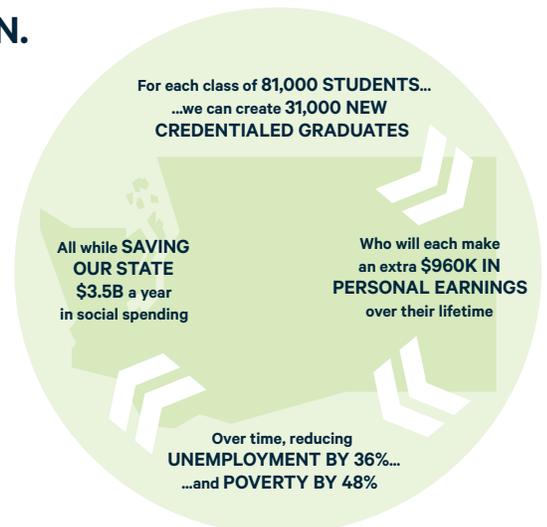


- **1. Improve K-12 Financing:** The state should allocate funds based on student need. A student-based budgeting system would establish a per-pupil level of base funding, which would be adjusted upward for students who have greater needs. Such a model would improve equity and outcomes, and provide sustained resources for schools with greater concentrations of struggling students.
- **2. Enhance Supports & Accountability:** The state must be able to identify low-performing schools and struggling students, and utilize a robust accountability system to target resources. Policymakers should strengthen support and intervention strategies, measure and report on progress, and set clear timelines for performance improvement with concrete consequences.
- **3. Increase Access to Educator Talent:** With excellent teachers, students who begin behind their peers can fully close that achievement gap, and students who begin at grade level can leap ahead and compete with their most advantaged peers. Policymakers should take steps to grow the pipeline of great teachers and leaders for low-performing schools and struggling students.
- **4. Close Achievement Gaps Early:** High-quality early learning programs can shrink achievement gaps and help students start their K-12 careers on equal footing. The state should continue to make targeted investments to expand early learning options for low-income children.

## WE HAVE AN AMBITIOUS GOAL FOR WASHINGTON.

In a class of 81,000 students, 70 percent postsecondary attainment means 31,000 more students will acquire a credential. Each will earn nearly \$1 million more over his or her lifetime. Their success will reduce unemployment, cut poverty, and save our state billions in social spending each year.

Achieving the Roundtable's 2030 goal of having 70 percent of Washington students attain a postsecondary credential by age 26 will have substantial benefits. To get there, the state must take meaningful steps to raise student achievement and improve performance of its K-12 system. This will require an extensive, coordinated, multi-year effort that starts with addressing existing leaks in the skills pipeline, turning around low-performing schools, and improving outcomes for struggling students no matter what school they attend. The Washington Roundtable is fully committed to being part of the effort.



Source: Boston Consulting Group Analysis.

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