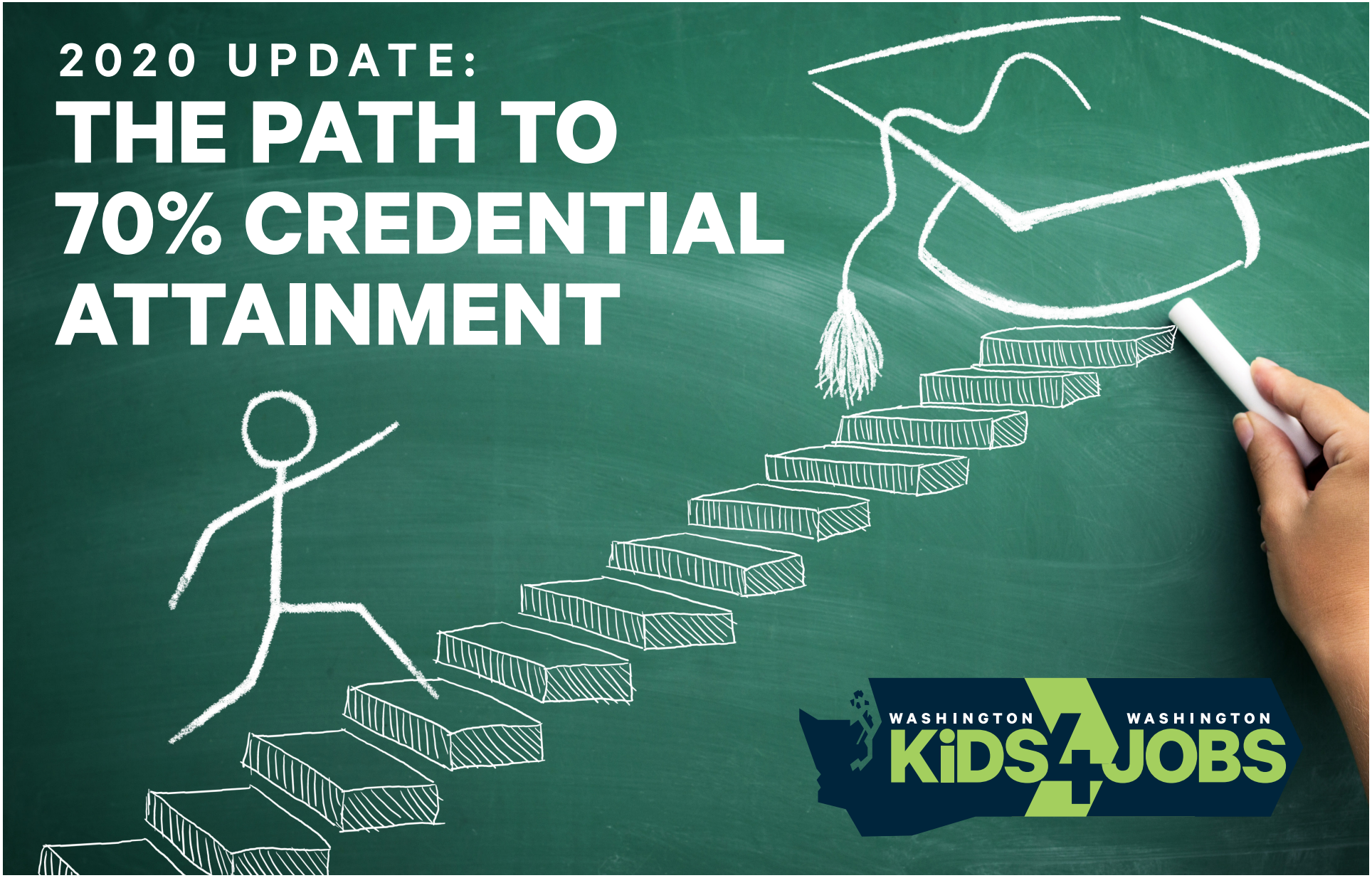


CATALYZING DRAMATIC INCREASES IN POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT & COMPLETION

APRIL 2020

WASHINGTON ROUNDTABLE

Partnership for Learning
EDUCATION FOUNDATION *of* THE WASHINGTON ROUNDTABLE

KINETIC WEST

THE PATH TO 70% CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT

CATALYZING DRAMATIC INCREASES IN POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT & COMPLETION

Washington educators, students, and families are charting new waters in 2020 as students transition to remote learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As we seek to navigate this crisis together, the **Washington Roundtable** and its education foundation, **Partnership for Learning**, remain focused on what it will take to recover and prepare Washington students for the future. We believe more so than ever that completing a credential —such as a degree, apprenticeship, or certificate - is essential to that preparation.

IN 2016 WE SET A GOAL:

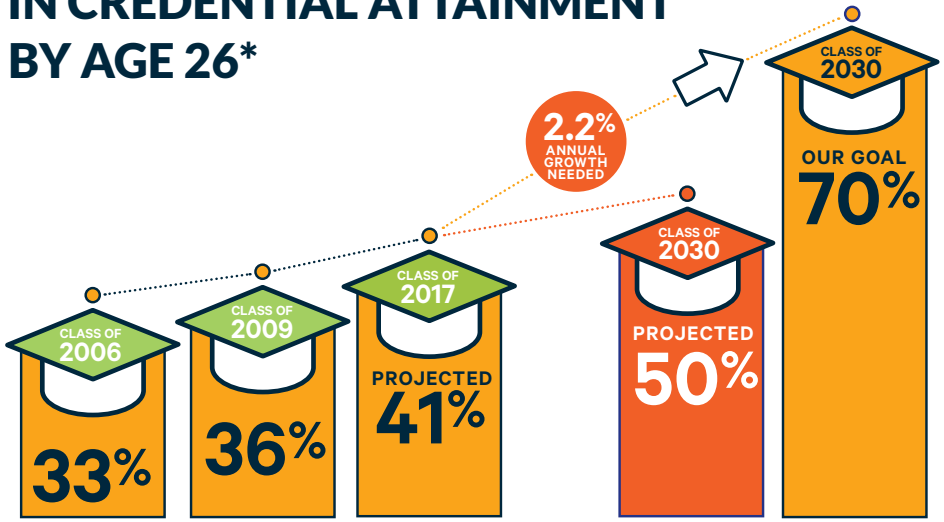
By the high school class of 2030, 70% of Washington students will go on to attain a postsecondary credential by age 26.

Just 33% of students in Washington's high school class of 2006 earned a credential by age 26. That number ticked up to 36% by the class of 2009. (**Education Research & Data Center**, 2019) Analysis by **Kinetic West**, a Seattle-based social impact consulting firm, projects credential attainment by age 26 will increase to 41% for the high school class of 2017. That represents an average annual increase of less than 1%. At that speed, Washington will fall 20 points short of the credential attainment goal, with just 50% of high school students in the class of 2030 attaining a credential by age 26.

To ensure students are prepared for jobs and opportunity, Washington must rapidly increase the rate at which students prepare for, pursue, and complete postsecondary credentials. The annual increase in credential attainment must nearly triple. Far more students—in particular, more students of color, more students from low-income households, and more boys—must enroll in and complete postsecondary programs. The state's K-12 and postsecondary systems also must reengage more students who fall out of the education pipeline prior to credential attainment.

This report assesses Washington's progress across four targets that are pivotal to reaching the 70% credential attainment goal. It highlights the critical role postsecondary institutions play in driving improvement, and it establishes guiding principles for new investments.

DRAMATIC GROWTH NEEDED IN CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT BY AGE 26*



*Source: Kinetic West

MEASURING PROGRESS TOWARD 70% CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT

In 2018, we laid out a **road map to 70% credential attainment.** That road map set ambitious improvement targets at key points in the education pipeline, including high school graduation, postsecondary enrollment, postsecondary completion, and successful reengagement of students who have fallen out of the education pipeline. In the time since, Washington has made substantial policy and investment gains and we continued to monitor progress against those four targets. We also engaged in ongoing, robust conversations with leaders from Washington's postsecondary institutions as well as its K-12 system and state education agencies. We have been pleased to see many of these leaders rally around the 70% credential attainment goal.

WE TOOK FOUR KEY LEARNINGS FROM THESE CONVERSATIONS:

#1 **Washington's postsecondary system is a portfolio. Each institution has its own role to play as part of a collective effort to increase credential attainment and prepare Washington kids for Washington jobs.**

#2 **Washington's postsecondary institutions are working aggressively to optimize and improve current systems in order to maximize enrollment capacity, reduce time to credential, and increase completion.**

#3 **Optimization of current systems will deliver results, enabling the state to realize just over half of the additional enrollments needed to achieve the 70% attainment goal.**

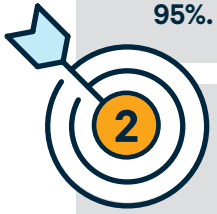
#4 **Bold innovation is needed to make up the remaining gap in projected enrollments and achieve the postsecondary completion gains necessary to achieve 70% credential attainment.**

Based on these learnings, and with input from the state's postsecondary institutions and state education agencies, we reset the target for postsecondary enrollment to 88% (down from 95%) and increased the target for postsecondary completion to 75% (up from 70%). Our targets for high school graduation and reengagement are unchanged. The changes reflect the focus of the state's postsecondary institutions to drive up completion rates among enrolled students as well as current constraints on enrollment capacity at some institutions.

PERFORMANCE TARGETS ON THE PATH TO 70% CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT

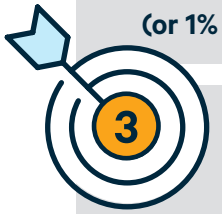
MOVE THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE FROM 83% TO 95%

Seventy-five percent of students in the high school class of 2006 earned a diploma within five years. That number increased to 83% for the class of 2017, a gain of 8 percentage points over 11 years (or 0.7% per year). This is positive growth, but more rapid progress is needed. **To set a course to 70% credential attainment, Washington must raise the five-year high school graduation rate for incoming 9th graders to 95%. That's an increase of 12 points by the high school class of 2030 (or 0.9% per year on average).**



MOVE THE POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT RATE FROM 75% TO 88%

Although the high school graduation rate has been improving, the percentage of those graduates enrolling in postsecondary programs at two- and four-year institutions has not improved. Seventy-six percent of high school graduates from the 2006 cohort enrolled in postsecondary programs. The estimate for the 2017 cohort drops to 75%. **To stay on a path to 70% credential attainment, Washington must make a 13-point gain (or 1% per year on average) in postsecondary enrollment of high school graduates.**



MOVE THE POSTSECONDARY COMPLETION RATE FROM 61% TO 75%

Fifty-six percent of Washington high school graduates from the 2006 cohort who enrolled in postsecondary programs went on to complete a credential by age 26. That number is projected to rise to 61% for the 2017 high school cohort, an increase of 5 percentage points (or 0.5% per year on average). **To stay on the path to 70% credential attainment, Washington must make a 14-point gain (or 1.1% per year on average) in the postsecondary completion rate for students graduating from its high schools.**

MOVE THE REENGAGEMENT RATE FROM 3% TO 7%

If Washington reaches each of the previous targets—95% high school graduation rate, 88% postsecondary enrollment rate for high school graduates, and 75% postsecondary completion rate—it will still fall short of the overall goal. To achieve 70% credential attainment, 7% of Washington students who have fallen out of the education pipeline must be reengaged and go on to earn a credential. Washington is successfully reengaging an estimated 3% of the high school class of 2017. **Washington needs to reengage another 4% (an increase of 0.3% per year on average) of students by the high school class of 2030.**

ENROLLING MORE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES IN POSTSECONDARY PROGRAMS AND INCREASING COMPLETION

Washington needs to make more rapid progress toward all four targets. The largest gains are needed in postsecondary enrollment and postsecondary completion among Washington's high school graduates. The state's postsecondary programs provide access to a broad range of career pathways and credentials such as degrees, apprenticeships, and certificates. Washington needs higher production in all categories.

TO REACH 70% CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT ON THE PATH OUTLINED:

Postsecondary enrollment must increase by an average of 53% across all institutions. That means Washington must enroll 29,000 more graduates from the high school class of 2030 into postsecondary programs than the number projected to enroll from the high school class of 2017. This will require an average enrollment increase of approximately 2,200 students every year between the high school classes of 2017 and 2030. An estimated 15,000 of these enrollments can be achieved through optimization of current systems (i.e., maximizing enrollment capacity, improving time to credential, etc.). Bold action will be necessary to realize the additional 14,000 enrollments still needed. Focus areas to consider include: strengthening partnerships between the K-12 and postsecondary systems; setting and tracking postsecondary enrollment goals; better utilizing high-quality online programs to expand capacity; defining and tracking industry-recognized credentials that feed into high-demand jobs; and supporting career-connected learning.

Postsecondary completion must increase 14% on average across all of Washington's postsecondary institutions. In pursuing this target, our postsecondary system will be challenged to support a larger student population that is more diverse and includes higher numbers of first-generation and low-income students. Expanded guidance and wraparound services will be vital to support retention from the first to second year of postsecondary education and encourage persistence to credential completion.

HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2017: PROJECTED POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT & GRADUATION RATES BY AGE 26

	LOW-INCOME	NON-LOW-INCOME	NATIVE AMERICAN	HISPANIC/ LATINX	BLACK	WHITE	ASIAN	GIRLS	BOYS	GOAL
POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT	63%	83%	55%	66%	75%	76%	91%	79%	71%	88%
POSTSECONDARY COMPLETION	49%	64%	42%	53%	49%	63%	71%	65%	57%	75%
CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT	26%	52%	18%	30%	31%	44%	62%	47%	35%	70%

*Source: Kinetic West

INVESTING TO ENSURE STUDENTS COMPLETE CREDENTIALS

The Washington State Legislature passed the Workforce Education Investment Act (WEIA) in 2019, seeking to increase support for postsecondary education. With new business tax dollars, the WEIA account is slated to substantially increase student financial aid during the 2019-21 biennium and provide additional funding to the state's postsecondary institutions and agencies. Over the long-term, we expect these funds to be used to pursue the highest leverage opportunities available to drive progress toward the 70% credential attainment goal.

The Legislature made its intent for the WEIA clear, stating that funds should:

1. Help students earn postsecondary credentials essential to achieving economic prosperity.

2. Maintain Washington's competitiveness in the global economy by ensuring businesses are able to hire Washington talent.

3. Reduce barriers to postsecondary enrollment for Washington high school students.

To ensure its intent is realized, the Legislature called for creation of an oversight board that will provide guidance and recommendations to lawmakers to ensure WEIA funds produce intended results. Over the last year we have engaged in robust discussions with the presidents of the state's public and private four-year institutions, the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges and two-year college presidents, and leaders from the state's education agencies. Through those discussions we developed the following recommendations to the WEIA board regarding investment principles and accountability metrics.

PRINCIPLES FOR WEIA INVESTMENTS

We urge the WEIA board to make investment recommendations in line with five principles:

- **Help achieve the goal that 70% of students in Washington's high school class of 2030 complete a postsecondary credential by age 26.**
- **Provide support for systemically underserved students** (i.e., first-generation college students; students from low-income backgrounds; and students of color, particularly Black, Hispanic, Latinx, and Native American students).
- **Help Washington businesses fill the jobs of the future with qualified, home-grown talent.**
- **Improve statewide systems and/or test innovative approaches that can be replicated across institutions.**
- **Focus on the most efficient and cost-effective approaches to increase credential attainment.**

MEASURING IMPACT OF WEIA INVESTMENTS

The impact of WEIA investments should be measured by the extent to which each drives progress toward the 70% credential attainment goal. We recommend tracking seven metrics related to postsecondary enrollment and completion.

POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT

WA STUDENT ENROLLMENT

DEFINITION:
% and total number of postsecondary enrollees by WA high school cohort

METHODOLOGY:
Track by high school, district, and postsecondary institution

(Source: ERDC)

FAFSA COMPLETION IN GRADE 12

DEFINITION:
% of WA high school students that completes the FAFSA/WASFA in 12th grade

METHODOLOGY:
Track by high school, district, and postsecondary institution

(Source: WSAC)

WA COLLEGE GRANT-ELIGIBLE STUDENT ENROLLMENT

DEFINITION:
% of students eligible for the WA College Grant that enroll in postsecondary education within one year of high school graduation

METHODOLOGY:
Track by high school, district, and postsecondary institution

(Sources: ERDC/OSPI)

POSTSECONDARY COMPLETION RATE

POSTSECONDARY COMPLETION RATE

DEFINITION:
% of high school cohort that completes a credential within six years

METHODOLOGY:
Track by institution, sector, and program of study

(Sources: ERDC, SBCTC, NSC)

RETENTION RATES

DEFINITION:
% of high school cohort that continues postsecondary enrollment from 1st to 2nd year

METHODOLOGY:
Track by institution, sector, and program of study

(Source: ERDC)

THROUGHPUT—TIME TO DEGREE

DEFINITION:
Average time (years) for a student to complete a credential

METHODOLOGY:
Track by institution, sector, and program of study

(Sources: ERDC, SBCTC)

ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

DEFINITION:
Median salary for graduates five years after credential attainment

METHODOLOGY:
Track by institution, sector, and program of study

(Source: ERDC)

THE CREDENTIAL IS ESSENTIAL FOR WASHINGTON STUDENTS.

Moving from 41% credential attainment to 70% by the high school class of 2030 is a sizeable challenge. Getting there requires intense collaboration and collective action. Targeted institutional strategies and supports are needed to enroll an additional 29,000 Washington high school graduates into postsecondary programs and drive a 14% increase in the graduation rate across all public and private postsecondary institutions in Washington. We all have a role to play in making that happen.

The Washington Roundtable and Partnership for Learning are encouraged by the growing partnership between the business community and the state's postsecondary institutions in pursuit of credential attainment. Funding provided by the 2019 and 2020 Legislatures through the Workforce Education Investment Act presents an opportunity to further catalyze progress. We are committed to making sure those dollars are leveraged to ensure Washington kids get the credentials that are essential to successful futures in our state.

WASHINGTON KIDS 4 JOBS

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