

# PREPARING LOCAL STUDENTS FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION & CAREERS



## CASE STUDY: CHEHALIS STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT INITIATIVE

In 2013, the Chehalis School District and the Chehalis Foundation partnered to launch the Chehalis Student Achievement Initiative (SAI), an effort focused on improving student achievement, modernizing instructional practices, and preparing students for college and careers.

The depth of community engagement and partnership has driven impressive gains over the initiative's 10-year history.

### CHEHALIS STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT INITIATIVE GOAL:

BY THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATING CLASS OF 2035, 75% OF ALL W.F. WEST HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES WILL EARN THE CREDENTIALS THEY NEED TO BE RESPONSIBLE, CONTRIBUTING CITIZENS.



### HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION:

Graduation rate at W.F. West High School, the region's one comprehensive public high school, rose from 77% in 2013 to 95% in 2023, far outdistancing the state graduation rate.



### DIRECT POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT:

The percentage of W.F. West High School students enrolling in a postsecondary program the fall after high school graduation rose from 48% in 2013 to an all-time high of 66% in 2019 (last pre-pandemic class). Like the rest of the state and the nation, the region saw lower direct postsecondary enrollment numbers through the pandemic era, but those rates are showing signs of recovery. In fall 2023, 62% of recent high school graduates enrolled in a postsecondary program.



### COLLEGE-READY DIPLOMA:

The percentage of W.F. West High School graduates completing the high school credit requirements required for admission to the state's public four-year colleges and universities increased from 38% in 2013 to 51% in 2023.

The pandemic greatly impacted efforts to prepare more of the district's students for the postsecondary pathways of their choice. Yet the goals and culture of the initiative remain strong, and efforts are adapting in response to community needs and shifting demographics.

# WHAT MAKES THE CHEHALIS APPROACH WORK: FOUR PILLARS OF SUCCESS

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## #1 POST-HIGH SCHOOL MINDSET

- Middle and high school students have dedicated time during the school day to focus on college and career readiness.
- Students can take one credit-bearing course at Centralia College for free the summer before their senior year, enabling them to earn college credit and experience the college environment.
- Student data and feedback uncovered a need for a 9th-grade transition specialist, who now engages with families in English and Spanish to smooth the transition to high school.
- Dedicated college advisors in middle and high school offer guidance and a growing community mentorship program.
- An SAI specialist connects with graduates for up to six years after they leave high school to offer support when needed.

## #2 RIGOROUS ACADEMIC COURSEWORK

- Intensive, school-wide efforts align courses, particularly math and science, with four-year college entrance requirements.
- Expanded College in the High School course offerings enable students to experience college-level coursework and earn college credit while staying on the high school campus.
- District staff analyze transcripts annually and align course offerings to ensure students are on track and have opportunities to meet four-year college entrance requirements.

## #3 EXPANDED STUDENT & FAMILY SUPPORTS

- Pre-kindergarten scholarships are available for families.
- Student data and family feedback informed the addition and work of two staff members focused on family engagement and education support for pre-K through 5th-grade families.
- Students engage in one-on-one conversations with counselors starting in middle school about how to pay for postsecondary education.
- The district employs Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID), a proven way of teaching that prepares students—particularly first-generation college goers—for postsecondary education and career.
- A career and college counselor works one-on-one with students to complete financial aid forms and hosts information nights for families.

## #4 STRONG PARTNERSHIP WITH CENTRALIA COLLEGE

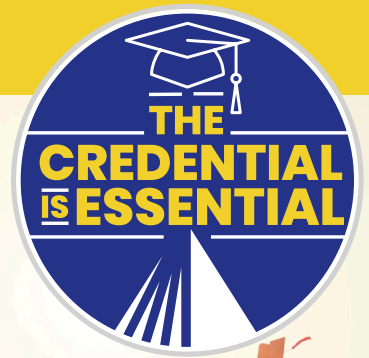
- Full-time high school and Centralia College staff work together to enroll students in college and support their transition.
- Incoming college students get contacted during the summer if they have not registered for classes. These nudges come from community mentors and high school and college counselors.
- Centralia College offers incentives for students to register for courses, such as credit to spend at the bookstore.

# CORNERSTONE PROGRAM OFFERS SIMULTANEOUS SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS & PARENTS

SAI recognizes that student achievement in high school and beyond starts with a strong foundation of skills in pre-kindergarten and elementary school, and entire families thrive when parents and caregivers feel supported and have education and career development opportunities.

Funded by a Regional Challenge Grant from the Washington Student Achievement Council, SAI's Cornerstone Program addresses needs highlighted by initiative data through:

- Flexible funding and family services, including laundry services, food vouchers, key necessities, and pre-kindergarten scholarships.
- Career counseling and one-on-one assistance, including resume writing, college application support, and transportation support.
- Adult education opportunities, including parenting classes, career pathway planning, and support for dual-language households.
- Student supports, including rotating learning kits for academic and sensory development and homework space and assistance.



## BY THE NUMBERS 2022-2023

CHEHALIS SCHOOL DISTRICT  
(W. F. West High School)      WA STATE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

WHITE STUDENTS	71%	49%
STUDENTS OF COLOR	29%	51%
LOW-INCOME STUDENTS	53%	45%
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS	4%	10%
CLASS OF 2023 FOUR-YEAR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE	95%	83%
DIRECT ENROLLMENT IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION THE FALL AFTER HIGH SCHOOL	62%*	50%*
PROJECTED CREDENTIAL COMPLETION RATE EIGHT YEARS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION	63%**	40%***

\* W.F. West data is for the class of 2023; WA state is class of 2021  
 \*\* W.F. West data is class of 2018, as projected by the BEREC group  
 \*\*\* WA state data is class of 2021, as projected by Kinetic West

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