

# Building Bridges Workgroup

Report to the Legislature



**Randy I. Dorn**  
State Superintendent of  
Public Instruction

January 2011

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# Building Bridges Workgroup

## Report to the Legislature

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## **I. Introduction**

One out of five students who start at a Washington high school fail to graduate. This is not news. Washington's extended graduate rate for high school students has hovered at or below 80 percent over time, despite significant education reform efforts. Given the societal costs associated with a high dropout rate and the taxpayer savings associated with reducing the dropout rate, the question is how can Washington make serious and sustained progress on this systemic issue, given the looming budget cuts.

This report outlines recommendations based on the vision of adding a significant new dimension to our school reform efforts. Current research strongly suggests that the dropout problem can only be solved if we collectively expand our efforts in local communities to support children and youth with significant barriers to learning. The recommendations contemplate local school districts working in partnership with families and their local community to address the non-academic, as well as the academic barriers to student success.

Because of budget restraints, significant new funding is not feasible at this time. This is unfortunate. Based on research by the Washington Institute for Public Policy, the annual savings to taxpayers generated by preventing one high school student from dropping out is \$10,500 (for each year of the remainder of the dropout's life).

While substantial progress in improving the graduation rate will only happen with a basic education investment in staffing and additional supports needed to build integrated student support systems statewide, we can begin building these systems through collaborative activities at the state, regional and local level. Also, by making initial investments in a handful of school districts with low graduation rates, the state would help these districts leverage available federal funding while also providing valuable data and experience for building systems statewide.

### **Legislature Directs Pathway to Success**

The Washington Legislature began concerted efforts to address the dropout issue in 2005 when it directed the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to research the reasons behind the dropout issue and to identify promising programs and practices. In the 2007–2009 biennium, the Legislature funded a Building Bridges grant program to implement best practices and established the Building Bridges Workgroup to make annual recommendations to address the dropout issue.

In 2010, the Legislature adopted a definition of a K–12 dropout prevention, intervention and reengagement (DPIR) system, based on lessons learned in the grant program and the recommendations of the workgroup. The same 2010 legislation also asked the workgroup to recommend:

- A state goal for high school graduation and for reengaged youth.
- Funding for the planning and implementation of K–12 DPIR systems in local school districts, including portions of the system that should be funded under the basic education program.
- Expansion of the current school improvement planning program to include state-funded, dropout–focused school improvement technical assistance for school districts in significant need of improvement regarding high school graduation rates.
- A state-level and regional infrastructure for coordinating services for vulnerable youth to support the building of local K–12 DPIR systems.

The workgroup recommendations in this report address these legislative charges.

### **Building School-Based Integrated Student Support Systems**

The Building Bridges Workgroup envisions building a school-based “*integrated student support system*” in local communities throughout the state. The integrated student support system is based on the statutory definition of a K–12 dropout prevention, intervention and reengagement system. The following components need to be in place in local school districts and communities to build this system:

- ***Dropout-focused school district improvement planning.***
- ***A dropout early warning and intervention system (DEWIS).***
- ***Basic education funding for schools to support planning and interventions.***
- ***School/family/community partnerships to support planning and interventions.***

The recommendations provided in this report address actions and funding needed to build the components of this integrated student support system, how we can build an infrastructure at the local, regional and state-level to support the system, and how we ensure accountability for the systems developed at the local level.



Specific Duties: Review and approval of committee structures, work plans, and committee recommendations, and report to the Quality Education Council and Legislature.

### K–12 Dropout Prevention, Intervention, and Reengagement (DPIR) System Development Committee

Charge: To develop recommendations for a comprehensive K–12 dropout reduction initiative designed to integrate multiple tiers of dropout prevention, intervention, and technical assistance through federal and state programs.

Specific Duties:

- Policy, program and fiscal support for the development of a K–12 dropout prevention, intervention, and reengagement (DPIR) system as defined in ESSB 6403.
- Funding needed to support career guidance and the planning and implementation of K–12 DPIR systems in school districts and a plan for phasing funding into the program of basic education beginning in the 2011–2013 biennium.
- A plan for phasing in the expansion of the current school improvement planning program to include state-funded, dropout-focused school improvement technical assistance for school districts in significant need of improvement regarding high school graduation rates.
- Research-based and emerging best practices in dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval programs in Washington State.

### K–12 DPIR Subcommittees

The **DPIR Student Support Subcommittee** was charged with making recommendations for the development of a systematic, student support framework for identifying and addressing the needs of struggling students.

The **DPIR School/District Improvement Subcommittee** was charged with developing recommendations for a dropout prevention focused, school/district improvement planning process.

The **Re-Engagement Program Committee** was charged with advising OSPI on rule-making for dropout reengagement programs related to Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill (E2SHB) 1418.



### Data Committee

Charge: To develop recommendations regarding the improvement of state data systems and state required district reporting requirements that support the development of district-level K–12 dropout prevention, intervention and reengagement systems.

#### Specific Duties:

- Develop recommendations for a dropout early warning data system as part of the statewide student record system.
- Develop recommendations on how to provide needed data for local-level dropout early warning and intervention systems.
- Provide advice on the evaluation of Building Bridges grantees.
- Develop protocols and templates for model agreements on sharing records and data between youth-serving agencies.

### Collaboration Committee

Charge: Identify and make recommendations for the reduction of fiscal, legal, and regulatory barriers that prevent coordination of program resources across agencies to support the development of sustainable dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval partnerships at the state and local level.

#### Specific Duties:

- Identify priorities (per activities identified in ESSB 6403) for youth-serving agencies to work together to support school/family/community partnerships engaged in building K–12 dropout prevention, intervention, and reengagement systems.
- Prepare recommendations on a state-level and regional infrastructure for coordinating services for vulnerable youth.

### Regional Vetting Committee

Charge: To form nine regional, ESD based vetting groups, comprised of representatives from multiple systems and disciplines to review and provide feedback on committee recommendations.

#### Specific Duties:

- Review and respond to proposed recommendations from each of the Building Bridges Workgroup committees.
- Provide consultation and feedback to committee chairs as needed.

### **III. Legislative Background**

#### **Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6403**

In 2010, the Legislature passed Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6403, an act relating to accountability and support for vulnerable students to address dropout prevention, intervention, and reengagement. This legislation expanded the membership and duties of the Building Bridges Workgroup and requires the workgroup make recommendations to the Quality Education Council and the Legislature on the development of a comprehensive K–12 dropout reduction initiative designed to integrate multiple tiers of dropout prevention, intervention, and technical assistance through federal and state programs. It also directs state agencies to work together to support school/community partnerships which build K–12 dropout prevention, intervention and re-engagement systems by collaborating, where feasible, on flexible program eligibility, funding criteria, joint funding, professional development opportunities, and data-sharing.

Specifically the Building Bridges Workgroup is charged with developing the following recommendations:

- Annual proposed strategies for building K–12 DPIR, including implementing emerging best practices, needed additional resources, and eliminating barriers.
- Funding for supporting career guidance and the planning and implementation of K–12 DPIR systems in school districts and a plan for phasing funding into the program of basic education beginning in the 2011–2013 biennium.
- A plan for phasing in the expansion of the current school improvement planning program to include state-funded, dropout-focused school improvement technical assistance for school districts in significant need of improvement regarding high school graduation rates.
- A state-level and regional infrastructure for coordination of services for vulnerable youth.

#### **Quality Education Council**

In the 2010 legislative session, the Quality Education Council (QEC) was charged with making recommendations for specific strategies, programs, and funding, including funding allocations through the funding distribution formula in RCW 28A.150.260, designed to close the achievement gap and increase the high school graduation rate in Washington public schools. In support of this charge the Building Bridges Workgroup provided recommendations to the QEC to assist in their charge to set goals and develop dropout reduction strategies. The workgroup is charged with making recommendations on the parameters of the school system's responsibility to support at-risk or vulnerable students through the program of basic education. Specifically, recommendations relate to 1) graduation and re-engagement goals, 2) funding for critical staff positions to support career guidance and school based, dropout prevention, intervention and reengagement systems, and 3) dropout prevention focused school improvement

strategies necessary to increase the graduation rate and reduce the achievement gap for ALL Washington students.

In September 2010 the Building Bridges Workgroup recommended to the Quality Education Council that legislative enhancements to public education include basic education funding for support systems that motivate students and address academic and nonacademic barriers to learning.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

Current data from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) shows Washington's 2008–2009 on time graduation rate was 73.5 percent with an estimated four year cohort dropout rate of 19.4 percent. Despite decades of school reform initiatives, approximately 20 percent of Washington's students leave school without a high school diploma. These trends have remained steady over time. The annual dropout rate for students from ethnic minority groups represented the highest percentage of students dropping out. Large groups of vulnerable student populations are disproportionately represented in our state's dropout rates. English language learners, low income students, youth transitioning back to the community from incarceration, those who are homeless, in special education, and living in foster care are substantially more at risk. Without effective support from schools, communities, and families and the coordinated effort of agencies that serve these vulnerable youth, these student groups will continue to be left behind.

Historically, both nationally and in Washington State, the strategies to address increased graduation rates have been focused on comprehensive school reform efforts to enhance instruction. Dropout prevention efforts to address non-academic barriers to learning are typically grant funded and not universally accessible to all schools or students. Support for dropout prevention programs and activities are often marginalized in policy and practice. "As a result, they usually are organized and function in relative isolation of each other" (Adelman and Taylor 2010).

The costs associated with the students who are graduating from high school underprepared are also high. A national study conducted by McKenzie and Company reveals that "If the gap between Black and Latino student performance and White student performance had been narrowed, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2008 would have been between \$310 billion and \$525 billion higher, or two to four percent of GDP. The magnitude of this impact will rise in the years ahead as demographic shifts result in Blacks and Latinos becoming a larger proportion of the population and workforce." Other student groups such as homeless students and students in foster care are also disproportionately represented in Washington State's achievement gap. In a 2008 report, *How are the Experiences of Foster Youth in Washington State Related to WASL Assessments?*, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy found that students in foster care score on average 15 to 30 percent lower than non-foster care students on the state assessment tests in reading and math. In Grade 4, 55 percent of foster care students met proficiency in reading and 32 percent met proficiency in math.

In Grade 7, the outcomes worsen as only 36 percent met proficiency in writing and only 20 percent met proficiency in math. The outcomes for homeless students are nearly identical and problematic. Data from Washington State school districts that received McKinney-Vento 2008–2009 grant funding shows that in Grade 4, only 55.1 percent of homeless students met proficiency in reading and only 30.5 percent met proficiency in math. In Grade 7, 40.2 percent met proficiency in writing and only 24.6 percent met proficiency in math.

The 2009 Chapin Hall issue brief, *Underperforming Schools and the Education of Vulnerable Children and Youth*, suggests that the numbers of vulnerable students in underperforming schools can be high. “This is significant because the life experiences of these children can distract their attention from learning, and in more serious cases, lead to cognitive or physical impairment. In the classroom, these students may struggle with basic literacy skills, disengage from instruction, and be difficult for the teacher to manage behaviorally. When several students with this set of issues are present in a classroom, they can influence the opportunities of their peers to benefit from instruction. When several are present in every classroom, their influence on school climate and achievement in that school should be of concern, especially if teachers and school leaders have not been trained to work with vulnerable children. Any comprehensive and systemic agenda for instructional improvement must take these students into account if it is to succeed in turning around underperforming schools.” Meeting the needs of these students is critical when addressing dropout reduction.

Educators often feel underprepared to deal with the complex problems students face that lead to a decrease in student performance and an increase in school dropout rates, especially as students approach middle and high school years. Challenging circumstances are not always student-centric but may often be whole family issues of poor health, chaos at home, and/or living in an unsafe environment that negatively affect a student’s ability to learn or desire to stay in school. According to the Washington’s 2008 Healthy Youth Survey, eighth grade students reporting poor family management were 16 percent more likely to be at risk of academic failure than those students reporting limited family management problems. Additionally, students reporting various health risk factors were at greater risk of academic failure. For example, students reporting current alcohol use were at a 22 percent greater risk of academic failure.

Challenges external to the school also are barriers to educational achievement. Learning takes place in many arenas—before, during, and after school, at home and in neighborhoods, as well as in their respective communities. Therefore, education is an endeavor that requires strong, diverse, and varied levels of participation from schools, families, other community stakeholders and agencies and the students themselves. Schools alone cannot ensure that all children meet challenging academic standards to eventually join the community, ready for living, learning, and working in a changing world.

These challenges also point out the need for both policy and service coordination with other agencies and organizations that serve vulnerable youth. Cross-system coordination of social services and schools is often difficult due to lack of awareness of other agency needs and roles. There may also be specific rules of operation for each agency that limit the ability to coordinate services. Public schools and social service agencies often operate in isolation. Breaking down the walls of this isolation requires adequate knowledge of cross-agency functioning and a coordinated view that allows services to be delivered in a holistic manner, as well as state-level policy coordination.

The research is clear. It is crucial to combine the best components of the following approaches:

- Quality school and community data to drive decision making.
- District and schoolwide reforms (student support systems, district and school improvement planning.)
- Integrated school/family/community/agency partnerships.

### **Recommendation #1 - Building a Dropout Reduction Focused District Improvement Process**

In response to state and national discussions of school accountability, including the passage of the “No Child Left Behind Act” (NCLB) of 2001, the Washington State Board of Education in August of 2002 began to require schools to annually complete a School Improvement Planning process. The Washington State Board of Education (WAC 180-16-220(c)) requires that each school receiving state basic education funds MUST develop a school improvement plan which “shall include active participation and meaningful input by building staff, students, parents, and community members.”

For **all** schools, OSPI developed an eight step School Improvement Planning process that includes the following steps:

- 1) Assess Readiness to Benefit
- 2) Collect, Sort, and Select Data
- 3) Build and Analyze the School Portfolio
- 4) Set and Prioritize Goals
- 5) Research and Select Effective Practices
- 6) Craft Action Plan
- 7) Monitor Implementation of the Plan
- 8) Evaluate Impact on Student Achievement

Schools have used a variety of tools to assist in their planning, and most schools have a plan in place that includes at least a reading goal, a mathematics goal, and often another goal related to culture and climate in the school.

For schools that have fallen under the NCLB School Improvement status, there have been several other targeted programs over the past decade, funded from both federal Title I and state appropriations. Under these programs, administered by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, School Improvement Facilitators and District Improvement Facilitators have worked with small groups of schools. The District and School Improvement and Accountability (DSIA) Office at OSPI currently uses the Washington Performance Management Framework as a way to provide Basic Assistance, Targeted Assistance, Intensive Assistance, and Turnaround Assistance to the most struggling schools in the state. For more information, please visit the Washington Improvement and Implementation Network (WIIN) site at: <http://www.k12.wa.us/Improvement/WIIN/default.aspx>.

While the State Board of Education sets policy for school improvement requirements (WAC 180-16-220), OSPI is responsible for implementation guidelines and oversight of additional requirements for schools under federal School Improvement status.

### **Issue Statement**

Currently, School Improvement Plans are required for all Washington schools, however:

- While *coordination obstacles* and *the absence of economies of scale* can jeopardize individual school plans, school district plans are not required (other than for those school districts in District Improvement status.)
- Current requirements do not include annual dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval goals.
- While student academic achievement may be threatened by non-academic barriers, current School Improvement Planning requirements largely address academic barriers and strategies, and do not reflect the issues raised in a coordinated way by the integrated student support framework.
- While schools do go through a data analysis review as part of the current School Improvement Planning process, the process often addresses largely academic data (vs. both academic and non-academic data) and often addresses largely school-only data (vs. including both school and aggregated community data), overlooking other data that might provide answers to pressing academic challenges at the school.
- While the data analysis review generates information about some of the educational gaps facing an individual school, it can leave school staff guessing about root causes of the larger problems identified in the process.

Schools need self-assessment tools to further delve into these gaps and to identify root causes and limitations that might be built into their systems of educational delivery or community support, especially tools targeted at specific non-academic barriers.

**Recommendation 1a: Each school district should be required to complete (then annually review and adopt) a District Improvement Plan. The District Improvement Plan must align efforts across individual schools and all grades and programs serving students from age 3 to 21.**

- **Recommendation 1a.1:** As one component of the overall District Improvement Plan, each school district should be required to address annual dropout prevention, intervention and retrieval goals.
- **Recommendation 1a.2:** The district plan should address non-academic barriers to improving student achievement.

Our assumption is that school districts, working with community partners, will create robust plans and implementation strategies to address non-academic barriers over the next few years, much as they have for academic needs over the past few years. Our assumption is that both academic and non-academic barrier strategies will be chosen and sustained, based on evidence of effectiveness with students. We also assume that interventions will occur on timelines shorter than the school year covered by the plan, using a rapid-prototyping approach.

To address non-academic barriers, OSPI and many partner organizations have developed the integrated student support framework. Our assumption is that this framework will be provided to school districts in sufficient detail, with sufficient professional development (potentially via a web-based interface with solutions and interventions linked to elements of the model), to promote easy use in regular planning and implementation of a locally-developed integrated student support system.

**Recommendation 1b: School districts should be required by rule to share their District Improvement Plan with the public annually through the current local school board adoption process, and provide an electronic copy to OSPI.**

Currently, the state has no inventory of local plans from which to provide technical assistance, state policy-makers and the public have little idea about the trends and challenges addressed through the plans, and an educator in one part of the state cannot easily review plans from somewhere else.

The primary purpose of the plan is to guide ongoing district improvement efforts, as a living document that pulls together the efforts of school and community partners. An additional benefit of the plan, however, is to show other school communities effective models of planning and implementation. Sharing plans will not reduce their local efficacy, and OSPI must work with districts to assure that this sharing of current plans does not become more onerous.

**Recommendation 1c: OSPI should support district improvement planning in the following ways:**

- 1) **Work with the Educational Service Districts, other state agencies, and other partners to create more seamless avenues for school districts to access data from academic and non-academic sources. District Improvement**

**Plans must be informed by both school-based and populations-based community data, and by both academic and non-academic data.**

- 2) Identify and make available school and school community self-assessment tools, across the issues addressed by the integrated student support framework to enable District Improvement Planning to address not only patterns in data but also address root causes.**
- 3) Develop and maintain a clearinghouse of evidence-based practices (both education and community based) to inform District Improvement Planning (OSPI, the Center for Children and Youth Justice, and other partner organizations.)**
- 4) Increase implementation of district plans through support of professional learning communities, district and building core teams, and other implementation efforts.**

The Building Bridges Workgroup hopes to explore the integration of district improvement data into the comprehensive systems the state already has in place, or new systems under development, all with an eye toward easing the reporting burden and increasing the usefulness of data for district improvement. There are many self-assessment tools currently available, and schools and districts currently use them, especially those that address academic barriers. In addition, we have identified several other tools, such as the Center for Disease Control's School Health Index, the Oregon School Mental Health Index, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's Whole Child Initiative, and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's self-assessment, which school districts can use to do formative assessment of their school health systems. Many similar tools are available across the spectrum of non-academic issues. The goal is not for every district to use every self-assessment, but instead, that each district would choose the tool(s) that most logically would help them unearth root causes from their initial data evaluation process.

Our recommendation is to create a web-based clearinghouse of best practice materials for developing school or community based truancy and dropout prevention, intervention and retrieval programs. In addition to best practice materials, the resource should include information about ongoing truancy and dropout related programs and initiatives in Washington State. For example, visit Washington LawHelp at <http://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/WA/index.cfm>. Washington LawHelp provides legal education materials and tools on a number of legal problems and information on free legal aid programs in Washington.

The web-based clearinghouse should include:

- Best practice materials (reports, research studies, program descriptions, toolkits, etc.) for developing community and school based truancy and dropout prevention, intervention and retrieval programs. The best practices materials will be organized categorically. Categories will be organized around common risk factors for school failure including: teen parenting, foster care, health and wellness, immigration, juvenile justice involvement, school safety and climate,



special education, youth of color, mental health, homelessness, gang involvement, children of incarcerated parents, military youth, middle to high school transition, drug and alcohol abuse, extreme poverty, and child abuse and neglect. There will also be categories devoted to out of school programs and cross systems collaboration.

- Descriptions of ongoing truancy and dropout related programs in Washington State (including program title, target population, service area, and description of program services) and contact information for program staff or administrators.
- An interactive component allowing consumers to give feedback, suggest additional resources for posting and provide information about ongoing programs not already listed on the site.

Please note: The Center for Children and Youth Justice (CCYJ) is developing a prototype for this technical assistance website in conjunction with OSPI. The resources currently on this prototype website were collected and submitted by CCYJ staff, CCYJ project partners, Washington State Becca Task Force Members and Building Bridges Workgroup members. This prototype is under construction and can be accessed at: <http://www.ccyj.org/resources/school-engagement-dropout-prevention/>. The OSPI DSIA office has learned much about the science of implementation of school improvement, such as tiered intervention and the strategies listed above.

In addition, the OSPI DSIA office has a suite of new improvement tools under construction, based on the following key findings over the past few years of implementation:

- The move to rapid improvement and turnaround rather than improvement.
- The move to four 90-day plans rather than an annual plan based on summative test results.
- The concept of performance management to prioritize goals within a district, based on school need and performance.
- The use of the Washington Tracker that has been field tested in over 50 Washington schools and can be scaled to all schools in Washington for a nominal fee. This tool allows for interactive collaboration and comment at the school, district, regional and state levels.
- The availability of validated effective school practices rubrics based on the *Nine Characteristics* that support schools in measuring progress.

**Recommendation 1d: The state should preserve the Healthy Youth Survey and other existing data sets, and improve the use of data, consistent with the data recommendations below.**

The necessary guidelines to preserve the privacy of students and their families will be addressed as the Dropout Early Warning and Intervention System (DEWIS) is developed (see below). One assumption is that many people in education are unaware of the many community data resources that are available (as community partners would be unaware of school-based data) and a focus of ongoing work should be to provide information to school communities on the types, value, and efficacy of various data sources.

## **Recommendation #2 - Building a Dropout Early Warning and Intervention System with Robust Data**

In 2008, Second Substitute House Bill (2SHB) 1573 directed the Building Bridges Workgroup to make recommendations to reduce our state's dropout rate. A Student Identification/Early Warning System Subcommittee prioritized eight separate recommendations ranging from a uniform, consistent attendance data definition to better access to an individual student's statewide assessment history in middle and elementary schools.

The 2008 Building Bridges Workgroup report contained the following recommendation: "Legislative enhancements to public education should include basic education funding for school districts to develop and use quality data in order to implement and maintain early warning data systems." The 2008 report also identified a "lack of common federal, state, and local definitions for critical dropout indicators, such as school absences. Comparison and monitoring of data within and between districts is very difficult as a result."

ESSB 6403 passed during the 2010 legislative session defined a dropout early warning and intervention data system as "a student information system that provides the data needed to conduct a universal screening to identify students at risk of dropping out, catalog student interventions, and monitor student progress toward graduation." (Section 2(2)). Engrossed Substitute House Bill (ESHB) 2261 passed during the 2009 legislative session requires that the statewide K-12 data system include a dropout early warning and intervention data system (Section 202 (3)(e)).

The recommendations follow the path established in 2008 while taking into account work done through the Building Bridges Grant Program, additional legislation passed since 2008, and recent enhancements of data systems at the state and district levels.

### **Issue Statement**

While a statutory definition of a DEWIS system exists, the following basic functions are necessary to build a system at either the local or state level:

- Universal screening to identify students that need to be engaged and are at risk for dropping out.

- Linking the student with an intervention and tracking the time spent with the student on each intervention.
- Reporting features to evaluate the impact of interventions and monitor best practices.

The state now only collects aggregate level discipline data and individual student level data is necessary for a state DEWIS system. Multiple research studies indicate discipline data is foundational to a DEWIS system.

OSPI currently only collects cumulative unexcused absences. Furthermore, districts develop their own board policies on defining and tracking unexcused and excused absences. More consistent and granular data is needed to support and realize the advantages of a state DEWIS system. Multiple research studies indicate attendance data is foundational to a DEWIS.

School counselors and social service caseworkers could serve students better and more efficiently if they had additional information available to them about students. With information on foster care status or other risk information a school counselor will better know which interventions to use with students and how to best serve students within the integrated student support framework.

Additionally, a case worker will better know the context of a child's life and how a family can be served with knowledge of a student's discipline, attendance, grades and state assessment information.

Federal Education Right and Privacy Act (FERPA), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and state laws are recognized challenges to the sharing of needed information. Further, the 2008 Building Bridges Report identified that "data-sharing problems include a lack of understanding about what data can be shared, a lack of policy in place that encourages data-sharing and provides guidance on how to do it, and existing restrictions on data use."

**Recommendation 2a: A Dropout Early Warning and Intervention System (DEWIS) should be developed at the state level to be available to all districts, and funding should be provided to school districts to develop and support a local DEWIS.**

Past and current recommendations call for development of DEWIS and legislation has defined a system. Currently no statewide DEWIS exists, but several districts have implemented systems with varying degrees of sophistication and success. Outside the general Building Bridges grants, no specific funding has been provided to develop or support data systems for dropout early warning identification and intervention tracking systems at either the state or district level. Through state funding to support the work on the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) and Federal Statewide Longitudinal Data System grant funding much work has been done on the core systems necessary for a DEWIS.

The consulting firm retained to determine the critical research and policy questions to be addressed by the statewide K–12 data system and conduct a data gap analysis of the system recommended that the state develop a student drop-out/early warning prevention and reporting module using the ABC indicators recommended in the National Governor’s Association report *Absence, Behavior, Course Grade, and Over Age for Grade*. (See *Washington State K–12 Education Data Gap Analysis*, page 4 available at: [http://www.k12.wa.us/K12DataGovernance/pubdocs/Data\\_Gap\\_Analysis\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.k12.wa.us/K12DataGovernance/pubdocs/Data_Gap_Analysis_Final_Report.pdf).)

### **DEWIS at the District Level**

DEWIS that generally meet the statutory definition quoted above do exist and are being used in districts now. The workgroup heard presentations on three systems and work efforts from districts surrounding dropout early warning identification and intervention tracking. The systems varied in technical capacity, sophistication and ability to provide real time reports and data analysis. Brief findings and observations of these systems are:

- **Everett School District** – Staff at Everett seemed to have evolved a non-distinct solution through a concerted effort focusing on dropouts. Through this work, a series of reports and timely information drawn from their student information system are available to staff who work with at risk students at schools throughout the districts.
- **Franklin Pierce School District** – Franklin Pierce uses a distinct system that is also implemented in a few other districts in the state. The system was developed locally and is supported by a local individual. Numerous reports and data views are available through the system and more are currently being worked on and planned for the future.
- **Washington School Information Processing Cooperative (WSIPC)** – WSIPC has developed a system originally used in Shelton as part of the Building Bridges pilot work. Like the systems and work described above, various reports and data views are available through the system.

Jurisdictions using these systems are heading in the correct direction, using data to analyze and address the dropout issues in their districts. These systems must be maintained and provided support through basic education funding. DEWISs at the district level have the following advantages:

- More data is available at the district level.
- Data is available more immediately.
- Local context data can be used.

- Real time interventions can be crafted and tracked at the local level.

### **DEWIS at the State Level**

The 2008 report recognized that many schools simply do not have the internal capacity—including time, expertise, and technological tools—to analyze student data, select indicators and triggers, identify at-risk students, communicate this information to necessary stakeholders, and train and support school staff to maximize the power of these systems. Inadequate data collection, entry, maintenance, and resources limit the ability of districts to thoroughly analyze the critical indicators and can lead to inaccurate conclusions.

This situation still exists in districts around the state and development of a state system to help small districts, or assist districts with limited data capacity, meet legislative expectations, summarize data and analyze the characteristics around the dropout issue (i.e., provide state-level DEWIS indicators), target pilot programs, research common risk factors, and provide leadership in hard to define risk factors like absences and behavior problems is needed. The state system should be:

- Available through OSPI's Education Data System (EDS).
- Uniformly available.
- Student information system neutral.
- Free to districts.
- Able to filter for state and local comparisons by sub groups (i.e., demographic and grade-level).

Further, the state should look to leverage the work done in other states and explore the option of a transfer system that has been implemented successfully in another state. In addition, the state currently does not collect all the elements necessary for a state wide system (See recommendations 2b and 2c).

### **Recommendation 2b: Individual student level discipline data should be collected at the state level to support a state developed and supported DEWIS.**

Over time, the state collection of discipline data needs to be more detailed. However, at this point, in order to make progress, starting simple is the best strategy. Therefore, it is recommended to simply collect if the student is suspended or not, and if suspended, then collecting the number of days suspended.

Once this collection is accomplished, additional elements should be added, with definitions standardized. Additional elements could include additional disciplinary actions, the reasons for a disciplinary action, information about disciplinary referrals, etc. A natural evolution of data collection would be to collect the individual student level

data necessary to support the aggregate data collections now done to support required federal reporting.

An area that needs exploration is office discipline referrals. Some questions for analysis include:

- How would this data fit into a DEWIS?
- At what level should it be collected?
- Can common definition be adopted?

Further, best practices in other states should be explored for processes for entering data efficiently and accurately at the school level. Finally, funding to support this recommendation should be provided through the new funding formula work currently being conducted.

**Recommendation 2c: The Legislature should enact into state law a uniform definition of “absence” for both daily and class absence, and OSPI should collect daily and class absence data.**

Legislation establishing a uniform definition of “absence” must answer two questions:

1. What is a class absence in the State of Washington K–12 education system?
2. What is a daily absence in the State of Washington K–12 education system?

The definition of absence should disregard the reason for the absence. In collecting absence data, students should be assumed present if a student is not recorded as absent.

Definitions used in other states and any national standards or recommendations adopted from groups like the National Center for Education Statistics should be explored and used to inform the proposed definition in Washington. Finally, funding to support this recommendation should be provided through the new funding formula work currently being conducted.

**Recommendation 2d: The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) should explore innovative mechanisms for sharing information with the common goal of improving outcomes for vulnerable students.**

The Building Bridges Workgroup concurs with the recommendation contained in the 2008 Building Bridges Report on the development of protocols and templates for model agreements on sharing records and data to improve outcomes for at-risk youth.

We foresee the following specific activities to further data-sharing between OSPI and DSHS:

- **DSHS to OSPI** – Information regarding foster care status could be made available through the DEWIS to only a subset of users such as counselors and administrators. Details and legislative restrictions would need to be discussed with and reviewed by the Office of the Attorney General. In the future, a risk flag based on a summary of past DSHS services received could be developed to assist in case planning. Preliminary discussions with the Assistant Attorney General assigned to Children’s Administration indicated that this level of data sharing for children who are NOT in foster care could require changes in legislation.
- **OSPI to DSHS** – All information in the DEWIS could be made available to case workers if the appropriate consent agreements were put in place. Information on attendance, discipline, grades and standardized assessment results are potentially useful for developing integrated and multi-systemic interventions for high risk youth with active DSHS cases.

More information is warranted to identify the most appropriate situations and settings for such information sharing, and to explore the best method that would allow for the most efficient and timely sharing of information. One possibility is the concept of “Tier 3” or “Red Team” staffing meetings as possible venues for data sharing. Using this approach, more complete data would be available to all case workers and educators participating on these teams that target high risk students. To further explore this approach, DSHS and OSPI staff has engaged the appropriate Assistant Attorney Generals (AAG) to examine applicable legislation and potentially design a consent agreement for this process.

Finally, the committee finds that DSHS and OSPI staff should continue working on this recommendation, engaging the appropriate AAG and collaborating with colleagues to drive the recommendation to implementation.

### **Recommendation #3 – Building Support for Integrated Student Support Systems into Basic Education Funding**

If the state is to increase the graduation rate for all students, it needs to address both academic and non-academic systems and supports that impact academic success. Reform efforts to date have failed to recognize that schools have two major education delivery systems: core instruction and guidance and counseling programs. These systems are interrelated in fostering successful student outcomes. Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Programs (CGCP) are critical to student engagement and success as supported by national and Washington State research.

A CGCP, coupled with a support system that utilizes a dropout early warning data system and a tiered intervention framework to address academic and non-academic barriers to learning is a proven approach to improving student success outcomes. Such a system allows for focused strategies for:

- Dropout prevention for all students.
- Targeted academic and non-academic intervention strategies for vulnerable students.
- More intensive intervention for students who need more support and those students who have already dropped out of school.

Washington State school counselor certification standards (WAC 181-78A-270) identify the American School Counselor Association National Model as a preferred approach for delivery of effective guidance and counseling support to students. This systems approach of support identifies four program delivery strategies that are parallel in design with the three tiers of the Student Support Framework design for dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval; guidance curriculum, individual planning, responsive services, and system support (i.e. coordination with other student support systems, evaluation).

School counselors serve as a bridge between parents, schools, students, teachers and community resources. Counselors help students make informed choices about their futures through instruction, guidance, and encouragement to define goals, understand their abilities and preferences, and prepare accordingly. School counselors make a significant, vital and indispensable contribution toward the success of vulnerable students. School counselors, working as a member and leader of a team with other student service professionals, including but not limited to, social workers, school nurses, prevention and intervention specialists and school psychologists, and in liaison with staff and parents/families, identify potential dropouts and other vulnerable students, and work closely with them to help students stay in school and find productive means to further their educations.

School counselors in Washington State have been trained to provide responsive programs such as short-term individual, group, family and crisis counseling, provide curriculum programs for individual planning such as Navigation 101, and to meet academic and career counseling needs. Their training and roles equip them to identify at-risk students, and when appropriate, make informed referrals to other support programs within the school, district and broader community.

The use of graduation specialists to provide intensive, individual services to high-need students is repeatedly cited in the literature as a best practice in dropout prevention and has been implemented with success in several states and local school districts throughout Washington State. These positions are sometimes referred to as advocates, graduation coaches, or mentors and are responsible for providing case management and outreach type services for identified high needs students and outreach to re-engage students who have already dropped out of school. “Best practice” requires close collaboration of these specialists with school counselors within a CGCP.



In order to avoid any unfunded mandates, we also assume that the Legislature will need to address the funding necessary to provide staff to implement District Improvement Plans, provide professional development for that effort, and to implement research-based effective practices reflected in the plan.

### **Issue Statement**

Washington State has not funded school counselors as a distinct position category within Basic Education Funding (BEF), and thereby has not supported their (CGCP) programs as part of basic education, until recent legislation (RCW 28A.410.043). United States Department of Education data indicates that Washington ranks 43<sup>rd</sup> out of the 50 states in counselor to student ratios. Adoption of the following school counselor staffing recommendation would move Washington into the top 20 percent nationwide.

Because of the importance of the school guidance and counseling program in support of healthy student career and personal/social development, as well as academic achievement, a comprehensive guidance and counseling delivery system should be a keystone element in all school dropout prevention, intervention and retrieval efforts. Staffing recommendations for supporting a student support framework should be based upon the role of school counselors providing key leadership in developing and sustaining such efforts, in addition to supporting legislatively funded programs such as the student advisory based program and Navigation 101, as part of a broader comprehensive school guidance and counseling program. Staffing recommendations should also recognize that graduation coaches/advocate positions are most effective within the scope of program services of a comprehensive guidance and counseling program and leadership of a school counselor.

Funding also needs to be provided to assure that the state-required school district improvement process addresses dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval goals in a way that is consistent with the integrated student support framework. While many non-academic barriers can be addressed in a school setting and many resources can be provided by community partners, funding for community partnership and brokering, staff for essential school partnership services and improved professional development to make partnership and service integration possible is not in place. Also, while schools are able to identify and agree upon goals in the improvement plan, and begin to look for research-based effective practices, some of these practices are “academic only” in nature, not geared toward meeting dropout prevention goals or removing non-academic barriers, and demand additional time for research for which school staff may not have available in their busy schedules. Thus, funding should include not only essential school district staffing, but also the cost of providing effective professional development and the cost of offering research-based strategies at the school district level.

**Recommendation 3a: Basic Education funding should include the following funding for building-level staff positions to fully implement the integrated student support system in school districts throughout the state:**

- **Recommendation 3a.1: School Counseling Ratios – School counselors should be funded at the following levels, based on school prototype size outlined in earlier QEC recommendations: Elementary = 1.0, Middle School = 1.7, High School 2.0.**

This recommendation is based upon the consideration and balancing of staffing recommendation standards of the American School Counselor Association (1:250), input from two statewide regional stakeholders meetings, analysis of research and feedback by the Building Bridges Student Support Framework committee membership, and recognition of the contributions of other staff (i.e. teachers in advisory programs, graduation specialists in Tier 2 and 3 support). “Best practice” CGCPs are uniquely specific to supporting all levels of the student support framework. Washington State school counselor training standards equip this group of certified staff to provide leadership in developing and sustaining the student support framework.

- **Recommendation 3a.2: Graduation Specialists – Graduation specialists/advocates should be funded at the following levels, based on school prototype size outlined by the QEC: Middle School = 1.0, High School = 1.5.**

This recommendation is based upon earlier analysis of this position completed by OSPI staff and vetted with regional stakeholders. Our recommendation is based on an understanding that these individual’s primary focus would be on the top 10–15 percent of the students (Tiers 2 & 3) most at-risk of not completing graduation requirements. Schools within Washington that are currently implementing Graduation Specialist/ Advocate models report that effectiveness is linked to managing caseloads that allow such specialists to identify, assess, and support these students.

- **Recommendation 3a.3: Student Support Staff – Student support staffing in districts serving student populations with graduation rates significantly below state average, and high numbers of vulnerable youth (i.e. homeless, foster care, juvenile justice), to provide focused assistance to reduce barriers to learning.**

This should be a high priority for phasing in additional staffing for districts. It should maintain the flexibility for schools based on their student population needs as identified by data and tied to district/school improvement plans.

Additional school supports as well as collaborative efforts with community agencies would be required to insure that these “at-risk” groups were afforded the wrap-around services to identify student needs, and to establish and implement Tier 2 and 3 student support framework treatment protocols within the school, district, and community. This increased volume and complexity requires additional student support staff to plan, implement, and manage in collaboration with school and district leadership and processes (SIP), with family, as well as community supports.

**Recommendation 3b: The basic education program should include funding to assure that the state-required school district improvement process addresses dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval goals in a way that is consistent with the integrated student support framework.**

Basic Education should include funding for District Improvement Planning process staff people at the district level (based on need) to provide:

- 1) Assistance in gathering/analyzing local data (including disaggregation).
- 2) Coordination of school and community partnerships and outreach to communities of color, and support for vulnerable student populations.
- 3) Designing/supporting district plans and structures to implement them (structures can include core teams; family support teams, PLCs; other).
- 4) Monitoring implementation and evaluation of district plans, structures, and organizational culture.
- 5) Funding and sustainability planning.

**Recommendation 3c: The basic education program should fund not only essential school staffing, but also the cost of providing effective professional development and the cost of implementing research-based strategies identified in the District Improvement Plan.**

Funding can be flexible and support staff professional development within the school district provided by coaches or trainers (including the cost of substitutes if necessary), or for districts to contract for staff to attend outside school improvement or integrated student support training and professional development offerings tied to their school plan. Professional development can also support implementation strategies such as core team, (Professional Learning Communities, etc.).

Once a district has identified in their plan the research-based interventions they seek to implement, they should be able to cover the costs of participating in offering those interventions (within an approval process). Funds could cover the cost of subscriptions, web-based support tools, curriculum, curriculum-specific training not covered by Recommendation 3b above, or other material costs not covered by the general categories of staffing or professional development above.

#### **Recommendation #4 – Building School/Family/Community Partnerships**

Beginning with the Building Bridges Grant Program established in 2007, the state has recognized that school districts cannot, by themselves, address all academic and non-academic barriers preventing students from graduating. There is a number of existing school/community/family partnerships throughout the state, funded through a variety of

sources at the state and local level, which already include reducing high school dropouts as a partnership objective. However, in many school districts with high dropout rates, there is no functioning school/family/community partnership that is focused on the dropout issue.

### **Issue Statement**

Success in building integrated student support systems throughout the state will be dependent on building and sustaining effective school/community/family partnerships at the local level. While many such partnerships currently exist, there will also be a need to train new or promising partnerships in communities throughout the state where dropout rates are high.

Because these local partnerships are critical to statewide development of integrated student support systems, a flexible process needs to be established for qualifying the partnerships as “ready to benefit” from regional and state-level support. The strength of local school/community/family partnerships lies in the uniqueness of each partnership as influenced by population, culture, demographics, and available resources; therefore, a “one size fits all” approach is not appropriate.

Criteria for determining “ready to benefit” should be based on research relating to the effectiveness of school/family/community partnerships and the qualifying process should be established that is designed to determine whether local school/family/community partnerships have the capacity and willingness to put an integrated student support system in place with support and participation from community members. Building an effective partnership which is committed to planning and implementing an integrated student support system in the local community should be a prerequisite for the receipt of funding for services for vulnerable youth.

**Recommendation 4a – State agencies and organizations serving on the Building Bridges Workgroup should establish a collaborative process and identify criteria for qualifying local-level school/community/family partnerships as “ready to benefit” from funding and support in building an integrated student support system.**

The collaborative process should set minimum standards/criteria and determine whether individual school/community/family partnerships qualify as “ready to benefit.” School/community/family partnerships that apply and qualify as “ready to benefit” should have the capacity and willingness to build an integrated student support system in their local school community. The state-level council should be able to qualify certain types of new or existing partnerships as “promising partnerships” when they meet a limited number of the criteria. Promising partnerships should receive technical assistance to build the capacity of the partnership to build an integrated student support system. A selection committee should be established to review qualifications of applicants, which assure representation of the regional partnerships.

A school/community/family partnership should be determined to be qualified as “ready to benefit” when it meets the criteria identified below. The criteria should be developed with input from local and regional partners and implemented in a manner that provides adequate flexibility to accommodate local differences and community cultures.

- 1) **Purpose/commitment** as indicated by a commitment to building a local integrated student support system; focus of the partnership is to improve graduation rates with a vision for how that benefits the entire community; written outlines with specific goals and strategies for building an integrated student support system; align with any mission statements already in existence.
- 2) **Readiness of the partnership** as indicated by a clear plan and structure for operation including clear roles of partners and development of clear operating guidelines; culturally competent in the community the partnership serves; an established partnership with clear accomplishments; a clearly articulated method to identify vulnerable students consistent with the definition in ESSB 6403.
- 3) **Comprehensive focus** as indicated by regular, active participation of a number of significant partners in the community, such as school district(s), social service agencies, parents/families, students, local government, law enforcement, juvenile court, local health district, mental health, community-based organization(s), faith-based organizations, local businesses and non-profit organizations and youth-serving organizations (e.g. prevention specialists, chemical dependency, youth mentors).
- 4) **Active partnership** such as regularly scheduled meetings and minutes to discuss strategies for vulnerable children, professional development for partnership members, action planning and follow through, actively leveraging resources from the community and beyond (e.g., letters of commitment to the partnership, signed memorandums of understanding, data-sharing agreements, commitments for financial contribution such as funding, goods, staff, in-kind).
- 5) **Sustainability** – Fund sources and strategies to secure these funds (e.g., public and private dollars, grants and foundations, etc.), in-kind and ongoing resources available, and understanding of how they fit with the role of the partnership; leveraged resources outside of the partnership for students and families defined as vulnerable; a plan and structure for continued operation; strategies for retention of current and recruitment of new partners; a plan for conflict resolution; a plan for meeting desired student outcomes and continuous quality assurance and improvement.
- 6) **Collaboration** – Protocols and necessary agreements to share records and data between agencies; program and funding criteria flexibility; commitment to share assets brought to the partnership by individual members; require partners to reach consensus or mutual agreement, and operating standards to collaborate

with other school district partners; additional credit for creativity in involving non-traditional partners.

- 7) **Action planning** – An understanding of research based and promising practices; an understanding of the school/community assets and resources and how to use them; an understanding of gaps within the community and partnership and a strategy to meet those needs; a clear vision of what they want to accomplish out of their partnership; skills in organizing communities; past experience having run a successful community partnership with a focus on increasing graduation rates.

**Recommendation 4b – Qualified local school/community/family partnerships should be required to commit to building an integrated student support system in their local community in order to receive funding and support.**

It is anticipated that basic education funding, at some point in the future, will include funding sufficient to build integrated student systems in local school communities, including providing some staff support for school/community/family partnerships. Currently, state agencies can work together to leverage resources for supporting local partnerships committed to building integrated student support systems. Local partnerships supported by state agencies should be expected to engage in the following activities:

- 1) Build an integrated student support system in their respective school district and feeder school district communities.
- 2) Conduct dropout-specific school improvement planning and implementation of an integrated student support model, including individual school district assessment, action planning and plan implementation.
- 3) Provide prevention, intervention and reengagement services and programming.
- 4) Provide the necessary data for the state to track indicators of student and partnership outcomes and achieving satisfactory performance on such indicators and outcomes.
- 5) Work with regional consortia to provide coordinated, individualized attention to the neediest children and youth (consistent with identification through a dropout early warning and intervention system.)

**Recommendation #5 – Building a Statewide Infrastructure for Supporting Vulnerable Students**

The Building Bridges Workgroup was directed in ESSB 6403 to make recommendations on a state-level and regional infrastructure for coordinating services for vulnerable youth. The recommendations must address issues such as:

- The development of regional and/or county-level multi-partner youth consortia.
- The development of integrated or school-based one-stop shopping for services.
- Launching a statewide media campaign on increasing the high school graduation rate.
- Developing a statewide database of available services for vulnerable youth.

State agencies in the Building Bridges Workgroup have also been directed by statute to work together, wherever and however possible, on activities to support school/family/community partnerships engaged in building integrated student support systems.

### **Issue Statement**

In order to effectively support local communities building integrated student support systems, state agencies serving vulnerable youth will need to leverage resources, engage in coordinated professional development, develop a statewide database of services, and create model data-sharing agreements.

Support of state agencies can best be provided through a consortium of their respective regional entities, which are charged with coordinating and implementing their services. Regional consortia would have a greater ability than their state counterparts to effectively leverage resources, coordinate activities, reduce duplication of services, and direct resources to identified vulnerable youth.

### **Recommendation 5a – State agencies and organizations serving on the workgroup should engage in collaborative activities to assist local communities in building integrated student support systems, including:**

- 1) **Developing and maintaining a statewide database of available resources and services for vulnerable youth.**
- 2) **Leveraging and coordinating access to programs through relaxed eligibility requirements and prioritized funding for qualified school/family/community partnerships.**
- 3) **Planning and implementing coordinated professional development opportunities.**
- 4) **Creating model data-sharing agreements for use by regional consortia and/or local school/community/family partnerships to address the physical, social, emotional and behavioral needs of vulnerable youth and children.**

The collaborative efforts of state agencies and organizations on the Building Bridges Workgroup over the next year should be focused on activities identified in this recommendation. They can explore leveraging and coordinating access to programs through relaxed eligibility requirements and prioritized funding for qualified partnerships. Priority for services from various funding services should be given to children and youth targeted by qualified partnerships. Significant blended and braided dollars for services should be provided as a result of an integrated student support system developed by qualified partnerships.

Agencies and organizations can provide joint professional development opportunities that provide knowledge and training on research-based and promising practices, the availability of programs and services for vulnerable youth, community organizing, and cultural competence. They can develop and maintain a statewide database of available resources and services for vulnerable youth in coordination with the web-based clearinghouse identified in Recommendation 1c. They can also create model data-sharing agreements for use by regional consortia and/or local school/community/family partnerships to address the physical, social, emotional and behavioral needs of vulnerable youth and children, as suggested between OSPI and DSHS in Recommendation 2d.

**Recommendation 5b – State agencies serving on the workgroup should participate in regional consortia to support and utilize, when appropriate, qualified local school/community/family partnerships by leveraging resources, coordinating activities, reducing duplication of services, and directing resources to identified vulnerable youth.**

Regional consortia should be formed in each of the nine regions defined by the Educational Service District boundaries and should consist of the respective regional entities of those agencies which are charged with coordinating and implementing services for vulnerable youth, in order to provide support and information to local school/community/family partnerships. Membership in a regional consortia should include, but not be limited to, representatives from an educational service district(s), an area workforce development council(s), a skills center(s), a local community and/or technical college(s), a regional DSHS office(s), a health district(s), a juvenile court(s), a county government(s), a Regional Support Network(s), and a tribe(s) if present in the region. A lead entity should be selected from the required membership. Consortia membership could also include representatives of non-profit and social-service organizations, faith-based organizations and parents/families/youth with a regional influence.

**Recommendation 5c – It is also recommended that state-level programs that serve vulnerable youth provide funding or in-kind support, as possible, and authorize staff time and travel for regional consortia activities that assist “qualified” school/community/family communities in building integrated student support systems and that assist entities in the region in developing dropout reengagement programs.**

Funding for local partnerships should be allocated through regional consortia based on readiness to benefit. Regional consortia should be expected to:

- 1) Assist “qualified” school/community/family communities in building integrated student support systems that include coordinated, one-stop shopping for services for youth targeted by a dropout early warning data system.



- 2) Coordinate data to support building local DPIR systems, including getting data release at time of intake.
- 3) Develop common assessment and referral processes and a coordinated system of case managers.
- 4) Provide training, technical assistance and quality assurance as needed.
- 5) Assist school/community/family partnerships in providing data to track indicators of student and partnership outcomes and monitoring such data.
- 6) Conduct regional planning for, and assist entities in the region in developing dropout reengagement programs.

### **Recommendation #6 – Building System Accountability**

The 2001 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) required state education agencies to include graduation rates for public secondary school students (as defined as the percentage of students who graduate from secondary school with a regular diploma in the standard number of years.)

In the state's Consolidated State Application for State Grants under Title IX, Part C, Section 9302 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Public Law 107-110), the state set the graduation goal of 85 percent to be met by 2014. The state plan requires greater improvement when the rate is below the annual goal (see chart below). High schools that do not have the ability to have graduates (e.g., schools serving only Grades 9–10) will use their annual dropout rate as the other indicator. The annual goal for the other indicator in these schools will be met if the dropout rate is seven percent or less of the previous year's rate.

E2SHB 1418, passed in the 2010 legislative session, requires the development of reengagement programs. These reengagement programs coupled with the outreach efforts of graduation specialists will eliminate barriers for students 16 to 21 to re-enter the K–12 system and complete their graduation requirements to prepare for post secondary education and/or the workforce. As directed by the legislation, OSPI is consulting with representatives from the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the Workforce Board, current dropout reengagement programs, school districts, and ESDs to develop a statutory framework for these programs.

The Building Bridges Workgroup was also directed in ESSB 6403 to make recommendations relating to statewide accountability for coordinating services for vulnerable youth. Specifically, they were asked to make recommendations relating to:

- A conceptual approach or framework for all entities working with vulnerable youth.

- The creation of a performance-based management system.

### **Issue Statement**

The Workgroup is confident that the state can meet the federal 85 percent on-time graduation target for 2014 and make significant additional progress in future years if we take action now on the recommendations provided by the workgroup.

With respect to goals for reengaging students who have dropped out, there is currently no baseline data available. Once the reengagement programs authorized under E2SHB 1418 are underway, OSPI can determine the baseline data and set improvement goals.

The workgroup believes that accountability measures need to accompany any investment that the state makes in building integrated student support systems to ensure that we reach our goals. School/family/community partnerships must be effective and accountable for the integrated student support system. District Improvement Plans must include processes to monitor and evaluate the impact upon the dropout-related and non-academic challenges and barriers addressed by the Improvement Plan.

Recommendations 6a and 6b were delivered to the Quality Education Council in September 2010.

### **Recommendation 6a – The Legislature should establish a state level graduation goal of 85 percent on-time graduation by 2014 and 90 percent by 2018.**

These goals can be accomplished by phasing in support for a focused dropout reduction improvement process and an integrated student support system. It can be expected that the on-time graduation rate will remain fairly steady without additional support.

### **Recommendation 6b – State-level dropout reengagement goals should be established after baseline data is developed by OSPI.**

As directed by E2SHB 1418, OSPI will implement contracts for reengagement programs that include performance measures reported to the state, including longitudinal monitoring of student progress and post-secondary education and employment. These contracts will provide the baseline data needed to eventually set goals and targets for these programs.

### **Recommendation 6c – Agencies and organizations on the Building Bridges Workgroup should work collaboratively to identify a common conceptual approach with common outcomes for youth and children based on an integrated student support model, and develop and implement a performance-based management system based on that model.**

The collaborative efforts of state agencies and organizations on the Building Bridges Workgroup over the next year should include a focus on the following activities related to accountability:

- 1) Identifying a common conceptual approach with common outcomes for youth and children based on an integrated student support model for all entities working with vulnerable youth and children that can support coordinated planning and evaluation aligned with a response to intervention approach to the provision of activities and services.
- 2) Developing and implementing a performance-based management system that includes outcomes, indicators, and performance measures relating to the programs serving vulnerable youth and children and measures for partnership development. The system should include outcomes and indicators to assure more youth are graduating and that youth are ready for college, ready for work and ready for life; and monitor and evaluate performance results.

**Recommendation 6d – District Improvement Plans should include processes to monitor and evaluate the impact upon the dropout-related and non-academic challenges and barriers addressed by the improvement plan.**

#### **Investing in an Integrated Student Support System**

To begin building these systems within budget restraints, we have recommended collaborative activities, which agencies serving vulnerable youth can begin without significant additional state funding. Consortia representing these agencies at the regional level and local community partners have the ability to leverage resources, coordinate activities, reduce duplication of services, and direct resources to identified vulnerable youth.

Also, the Legislature should consider making an initial investment in building the recommended integrated student support system in a handful of school districts with low high school graduation rates. Schools in these districts may have access to federal funding as the result of entering the school improvement status under the No Child Left Behind Act. State agencies could also target these same local school district communities through their collaborative support activities.

Investing in building integrated student support systems now will build on lessons learned in the Building Bridges grant program and provide invaluable data and experience for building additional effective integrated student support systems, once the state is in the fiscal position to do so.

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