Adolescent Engagement for Academic Success: Conditions and Policies in Washington State

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Introduction

Many of us probably remember a time when, as students, we were deeply engaged in what we were learning. Maybe it was the moment when we finally understood a difficult math concept. Or perhaps it was when we learned to play that first song on an instrument, or the day we felt inspired by a lively book discussion in an English class, or the time our soccer team won a pivotal match. We may fondly recall the influence of a caring teacher who noticed our talents. A common thread across these experiences is the attention and purpose that we brought to these tasks. When students are engaged they are more likely to learn, which improves their chances for success in school and in life.

Policies and programs aimed at improving student engagement can contribute to President Obama's goal for all Americans to attend at least one year of college. Students who are deeply engaged in high school have higher achievement rates, greater commitment to learning, and are less likely to drop out than students with low engagement. Most importantly, students who are engaged in school are more likely to attend college, an increasingly critical component to future economic security.

> *For every 100 students entering 9th grade in Washington, just 17 will go on to obtain a college degree within six years of graduating from high school.*

Both nationally and in Washington State, current trends suggest that efforts to improve student engagement could have a significant impact. Currently, less than three-quarters (73 percent) of 9th graders in the U.S. graduate in four years.[1] Only 35 percent of our nation's 12th graders score at or above proficiency on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in reading.[2] Further, the achievement levels of U.S. students of all ages lag behind many of their peers around the world. Comparing education statistics from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development[3] nations, 15-year-olds in the United States are ranked 15th of 29 countries for reading and in the bottom six nations in mathematics performance on the Program for International Student Assessment.[4]

Data on Washington's high school students parallel national trends in achievement and attainment, but Washington is doing worse than many states in supporting students through the educational pipeline. **Figure 1** illustrates that a sizable proportion of our students exit school prior to completing high school or college. For every 100 9th graders entering high school in 1996, only 69 earned a diploma, and 33 enrolled in college. Of those 33 students, just

24 enrolled in their second year of college, and 17 ultimately graduated with either an associate's or bachelor's degree. Washington State is ranked 33rd lowest in the country for supporting high school students through the educational pipeline. In highly ranked states like Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and South Dakota, close to 30 percent of 9th graders earn an AA within three years or a BA within six years.[5]

Figure 1: Washington's Leaky Educational Pipeline

For every 100 students entering 9th grade in Washington...
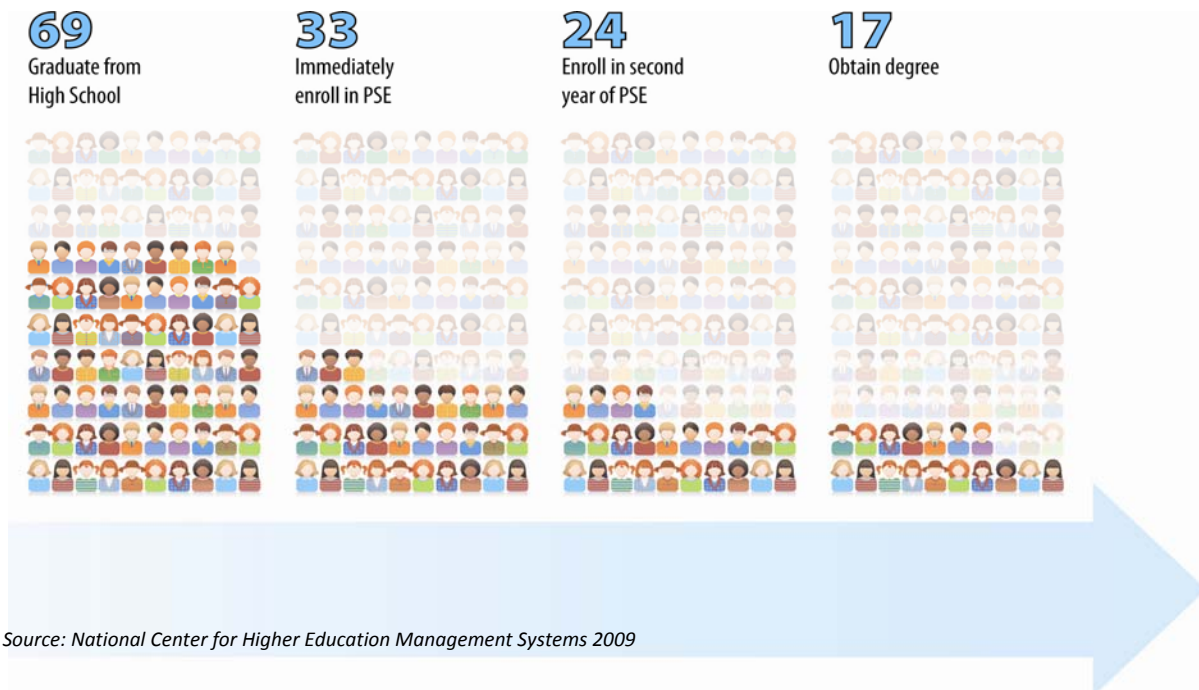
Source: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems 2009

Washington State is making a concerted effort to invest in programs that may influence adolescent engagement and improve high school graduation and college enrollment. For example, Basic Education legislation passed in 2009 authorized an increase in high school graduation requirements. Recent public, private, and philanthropic partnerships will broaden access to Navigation 101 and Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID), two programs aimed at enhancing academic guidance and student study skills. Through the Building Bridges Program, school districts have piloted the use of early warning systems in order to identify students at risk of dropping out and reengage them in school. School's Out Washington is in the process of implementing a number of initiatives to improve out-of-school-time and afterschool programs across the state.

This policy report shares what we know about student engagement in Washington State. To contribute to discussions about state-level educational reform efforts, we first discuss the

concept of school engagement and identify the factors associated with it. We then share evidence from Washington State's Healthy Youth Survey (HYS), a dataset that captures students' perceptions of the conditions influencing engagement in learning inside and outside of school. We summarize current and emerging state policies and programs that will influence adolescent school engagement in the years to come. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of how a focus on student engagement can improve learning opportunities, performance, and attainment.

While dropping out of school is the most extreme form of disengagement, it is often the final stage of a long process of disconnecting from school that begins in the earliest years of learning.

What is Engagement?

School engagement comprises the beliefs and behaviors that demonstrate that students value learning inside the classroom. Engagement has been found to improve students' academic performance,[6] promote school attendance, and inhibit risky adolescent behavior.[7] The concept helps illustrate the complexity of the relationship that students have with their education. By exploring student engagement, we can better understand adolescents' specific actions, values, and investments in learning. Nurturing student engagement is also compelling because research points to numerous effective approaches in schools and communities to improve this condition.

Dimensions of Engagement

There are three interrelated dimensions of school engagement (**Figure 2**).[8] *Behavioral engagement* reflects students' involvement in academic and extracurricular activities. Examples of behavioral engagement include students' school attendance and whether students participate in school clubs or teams. *Emotional engagement* includes positive and negative reactions to teachers, peers, academic subjects, and school overall. Indicators of emotional engagement include the ways that students see their schools as caring, safe environments or the ways they have a voice in important school matters. While behavioral engagement is viewed as critical for fostering positive academic outcomes, emotional engagement can strengthen school ties and influence students' willingness to do their work. *Cognitive*

engagement, which represents students' motivation to exert the effort necessary to master difficult skills, may include measures of participation in rigorous programs.

Figure 2: Dimensions and Key Influences of Engagement
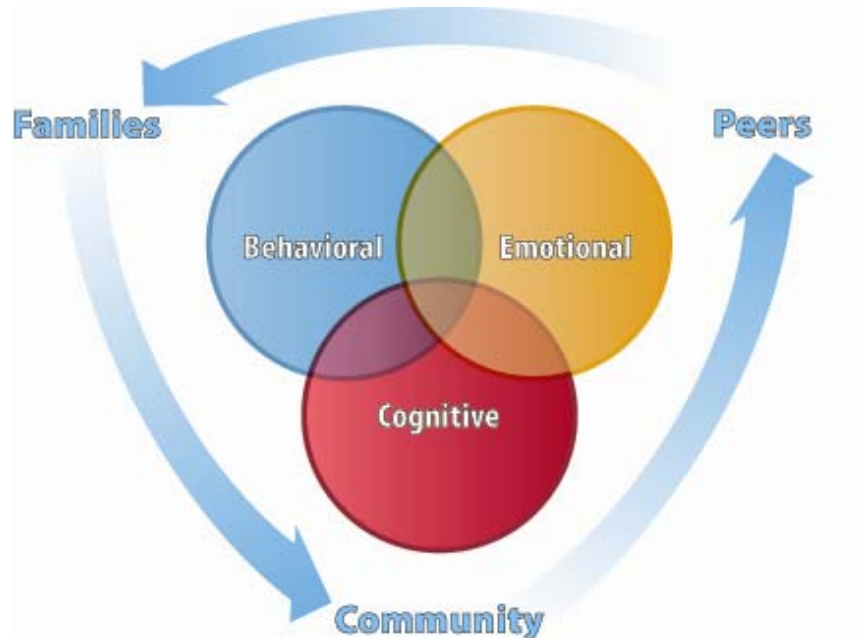
While school engagement is critical for all students, the consequences of disengagement vary a great deal across different groups of students.[9] Disadvantaged students are less likely to get the second chances that their advantaged peers receive when they become disengaged. When disadvantaged students fail to earn basic credentials or develop the skills required to flourish in the labor market, they have an increased risk of poverty, poor health, and involvement with the criminal justice system. While dropping out of school is the most extreme form of disengagement, it is often the final stage of a long process of disconnecting from school that begins in the earliest years of learning.[10]

### *Key Influences of Engagement*

The sense of purpose that comes with school engagement is present when three critical psychological needs among adolescents are met. Adolescents' beliefs about competence and control reflect whether they see themselves as able to master challenging intellectual tasks. Students' values and goals are tied to whether they are motivated to complete school work. Lastly, social connectedness illustrates their sense of belonging in school.[11] Families, peers and communities can all help meet these needs.

Families play a critical role in helping adolescents thrive in school.[12] Warm, responsive parenting,[13] parental attempts to take responsibility for their children's learning, and efforts to bring parents to the school physically,[14] [15] are related to academic success. Parenting styles vary by income level[16] and racial/ethnic background,[17] requiring schools to develop culturally competent approaches to outreach.

Like parents, *peers* can both positively and negatively influence adolescents' school engagement. High school students frequently develop friendships within their academic track or group of courses.[18] One study that followed high school students over time concluded that the positive effects of high-achieving and low-achieving friends were of similar magnitude.[19] In some cases, however, the negative influences of peer relationships may be reinforced when groups of disengaged students spend a lot of time together.[20] Emerging evidence highlights the importance of social media technologies like texting, Facebook, and Twitter in adolescents' lives. Social media may offer unique opportunities to engage peers in cultivating school engagement.[21]

The larger *communities* where students attend school also exert an important effect on school engagement. While disengagement is a challenge in all settings, the problem is greatest in communities that are economically and socially marginalized.[22] A range of approaches, including out-of-school-time programs,[23] school-community connections, and service learning[24] are promising ways to improve student engagement. Not only can these programs decrease the unsupervised activities where adolescents may develop negative attitudes about school, they can offer opportunities for adolescents to demonstrate competence and feel a sense of belonging.[25]

Student Engagement in Washington State

To better understand adolescents' school engagement, we reviewed data about (a) how students characterize their commitment to school and (b) the aspects of their schools, families and communities that are linked to school engagement.[i] **Table 1** provides a summary of the items we reviewed and how they are linked to key school engagement concepts. We summarize responses from all participating grades, but focus specifically on 10th graders when making comparisons based on gender, race, ethnicity, home language, and socioeconomic status. In addition, we report on school engagement, family involvement, and community supports.[26]

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[i] For technical notes on the analysis, please visit http://www.hspc.org/topics/TechAppendixI_HYSData.pdf and http://www.hspc.org/topics/TechAppendixII_HYSVariableCodes.pdf. These notes provide details of the HYS sample, the items we selected for analysis, and the statistical techniques we used to explore the data.

Despite the richness of the HYS, there are two limitations to the analysis in this report. First, less than half of 12th grade students eligible to participate in the survey responded, limiting the reliability of data for this group. Therefore, we interpret the data on 12th graders with caution. Second, the 10th and 12th grade samples do not include the perspectives of students who have already dropped out, so the perspectives of our most disengaged students from learning are not included.

Table 1: Engagement Concepts Included in the Healthy Youth Survey

Dimension of Engagement	HYS Topic
Behavioral	• Days of school student missed in last month • Whether student tried best in school last year
Emotional	• How much student enjoys being in school • How much student hates being in school • Importance of school work for future • Meaningfulness and importance of school work
Cognitive	• Grades last year • Level of interest in school courses
Influences of Engagement	
Peers	• Questions about four best friends
Families	• Parents tell students they are doing a good job • Parents would catch student skipping school • Parents ask student if they completed homework
Schools	• School lets parents know when student is doing well • Opportunities for extracurricular activities • Teacher lets student know he/she is doing a good job • Opportunities for one-on-one time with teachers
Communities	• Opportunities for community activities

The Washington State Healthy Youth Survey (HYS)

Student perspectives are a valuable and underutilized way to gain an understanding of conditions in schools.[i] The Washington HYS is the richest source of statewide data capturing the voices of students in the 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grades. Administered bi-annually, the survey asks students about a range of risk and protective factors, including school engagement. The HYS is used for a range of purposes, including local and state planning, school and community improvement efforts, prevention programs, and research.

Nearly 40 percent of students in 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grades in Washington are at high risk of disengagement from school.

Findings: Behavioral, Emotional, and Cognitive Engagement in School

Adolescents' school engagement decreases in the higher grades. Nearly 40 percent of students in 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grades are at high risk of disengagement from school. This risk is defined through a series of HYS questions about behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement that indicate how students value their experiences in school. Reinforcing conclusions from other studies,[27] **Chart 1** illustrates that a few critical aspects of school engagement decrease in the higher grades. For example, while 81 percent of sixth graders report that they believe what they are learning in school will be important later in life, just 53 percent of 10th graders and 46 percent of 12th graders report this belief. Similarly, declining percentage of students agree that assigned schoolwork is usually meaningful and important. Tenth and 12th graders are also more likely to report they have cut school in the last month than students in lower grades.

Chart 1
Percent of Students Responding "Yes" to Select Engagement Indicators by Grade
Washington 2008

Source: Healthy Youth Survey 2008
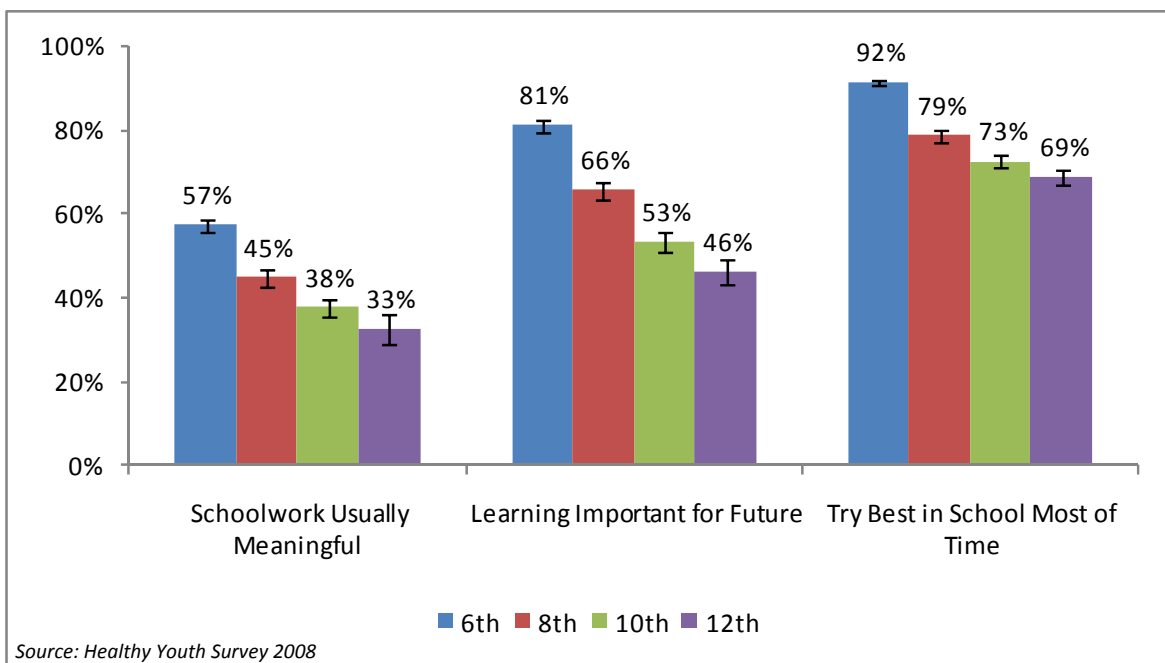
Black, Latino, Native Hawaiian, and Native American students have a more tenuous connection to school than their White and Asian counterparts. Over one-third (38 percent) of 10th grade students report low engagement in school, but students from certain racial and ethnic backgrounds are especially at risk.[28,29] Over 40 percent of Black, Latino, Native Hawaiian, and Native American students reported that their grades last year were mostly Cs, Ds, and Fs, compared to 29 and 14 percent of White and Asian students, respectively. In addition, close to one-third of Black (33 percent), and Latino students (31 percent) and over one-quarter of Native Hawaiian (29 percent) and Native American students (26 percent) reported skipping school at least once in the previous month, as compared with 20 percent of White students and 17 percent of Asian students.[30] Native American (27 percent), Black (25 percent), and Latino (23 percent) students are more likely to report feeling unsafe in school than Asian (20 percent) and White (16 percent) students.

Children in immigrant families see greater purpose in what they are learning in school. By comparing the responses of students who speak English at home to the responses of those who speak another language, **Chart 2** suggests that children in immigrant families may see greater purpose in what they are learning in school.

Chart 2
Percent of 10th Grade Students Reporting "Yes" on Select Engagement Indicators by Language Spoken in Home, Washington 2008

Source: Healthy Youth Survey 2008
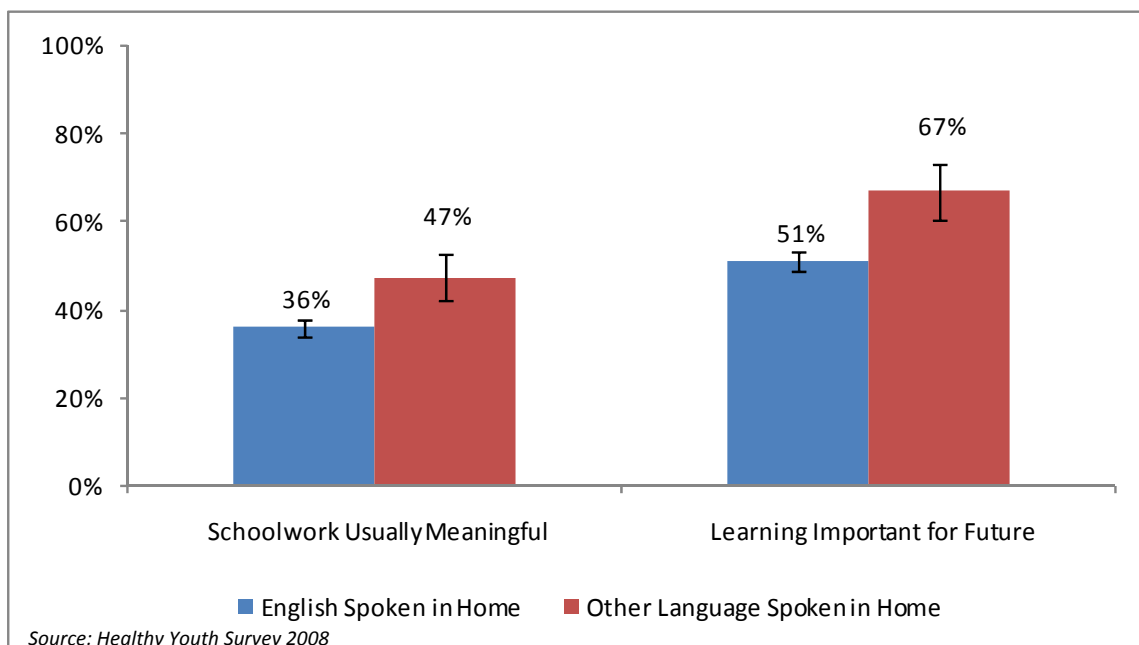
For example, over two-thirds (67 percent) of students who speak a language other than English at home reported that learning is important for the future as compared with half (51 percent) of students who speak English at home. However, students who did not speak English at home also have higher rates of truancy than students living in English-speaking households (33 percent vs. 21 percent). More research is needed on why this might be the case in Washington, but national studies suggest that parental behaviors supporting children's education differ by racial and ethnic background. In addition, students of certain racial/ethnic backgrounds are more likely to work greater than 20 hours per week. Among Washington 10th graders, for example, 9 percent of students from non-English speaking households work more than 20 hours per week, compared to just 2 percent of those from English-speaking households.

Students living in families with lower socioeconomic status (SES) are more likely to report poor grades and skipping school than higher SES students. While students from both low and high SES families reported similar levels of school engagement, survey responses show differences between these groups in school achievement. **Chart 3** illustrates that students from low SES families were more likely to report low grades and skipping school during the previous month, key risk factors for dropping out of school.[31]

Chart 3
Percent of 10th-Grade Students Reporting Low Grades and Skipping School by Mother's Education
Washington 2008

Source: Healthy Youth Survey 2008
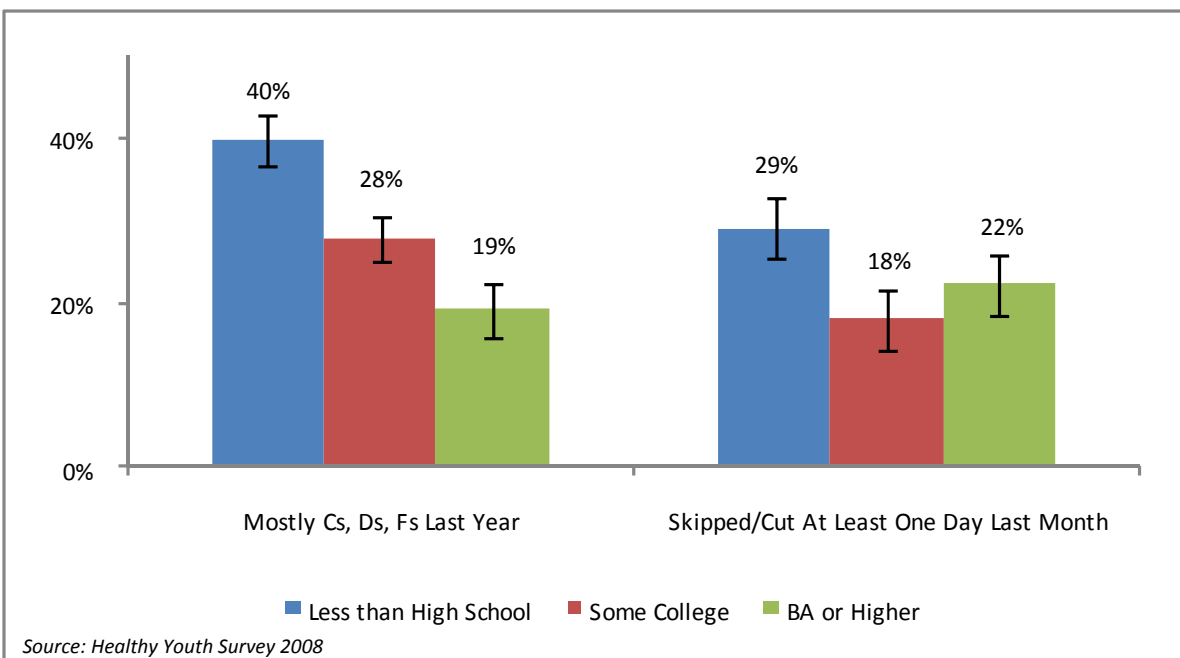
Adolescent boys are less likely to be engaged than girls. Consistent with national concerns about educational disparities between boys and girls,[32] our findings suggest that male 10th

graders are less likely to be engaged in school than their female counterparts. Overall, girls had higher rates of school engagement, with the most pronounced difference shown in students' reports of trying their best in school. Seventy-nine percent (79 percent) of female 10th graders reported they tried their best in school last year compared to 66 percent of male 10th graders (**Chart 4**). In addition, a greater percentage of girls (73 percent) than boys (63 percent) reported good grades (mostly As and Bs) in the previous year.

Chart 4

Percent of 10th Grade Students Reporting They Tried Their Best in School Most of the Time Last Year by Sex, Washington 2008

Source: Healthy Youth Survey 2008
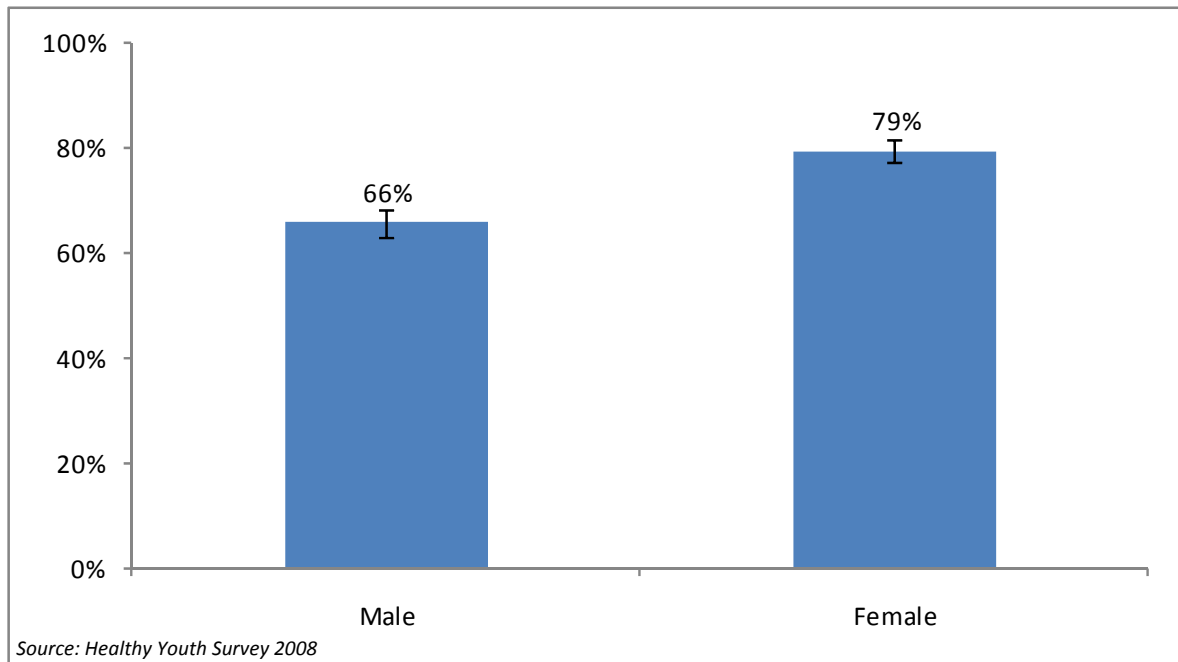
Findings: School and Parent Supports for Engagement

Parent and school supports decline as students get older. Paralleling school engagement trends, parent engagement and school support also decrease in later grades (**Chart 5**). For example, while close to 80 percent of 6th graders report that teachers tell them when they are doing a good job, this is only the case for 70 percent of 10th and 12th graders. Furthermore, students express that schools are not sharing good news with their families. Fifty-one percent of 6th graders report that their school lets their parents know when they have done well compared with 28 percent of 12th graders. Compared to 12th grade students, students in 8th grade are also more likely to report that their parents ask if they have done their homework (90 percent and 75 percent, respectively) or would catch them if they skipped school (85 percent and 62 percent, respectively).

Chart 5

Percent of Students Reporting School Lets Parents Know When They Have Done Well by Grade Level, Washington 2008

Source: Healthy Youth Survey 2008
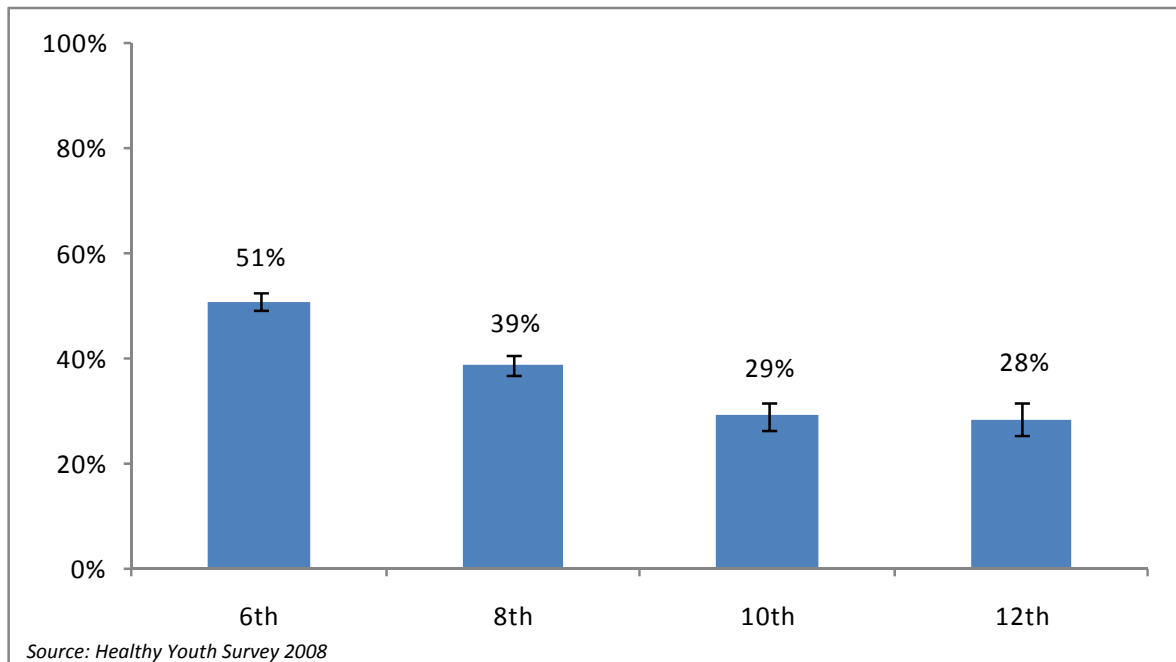
Students of color, low SES students, and female students are least likely to have parents monitoring school work. Disparities in parental monitoring behavior were present for different racial and ethnic groups, SES groups, as well as for girls and boys. While 58 percent of Black students and 67 percent of Native American students reported their parents would catch them if they skipped school, nearly three-quarters (74percent) of students from other groups noted this was the case. Black (72 percent) and Latino (77 percent) students were less likely to report that their parents would ask if their homework was done than the approximately 8 in 10 students from other groups noting this parental behavior.

Economically disadvantaged students also reported lower levels of parental monitoring of their school attendance and school work. For example, students from low SES families noted that their parents were less likely to catch them when they skipped school (68 percent low SES vs. 77 percent high SES students) or ask if their homework was done (79 percent low SES vs. 88 percent high SES students). While nearly 70 percent of high SES students reported their parents noticed good work, this was true for only 56 percent of low SES students. While girls reported

higher levels of school engagement, boys noted more frequently that their parents were proud and noticed good work more often (both questions: 63 percent boys vs. 57 percent girls).

Findings: School and Community Involvement

Less than two-thirds of students report participating in supervised afterschool activities either at school or away from school. While other aspects of engagement decrease in the higher grades, opportunities for school and community involvement appear to be similar across grade levels. **Chart 6** illustrates that a majority of students (84 percent) report that sports and recreational opportunities are available in their communities. Other out-of-school-time opportunities are available to a lesser degree—71 percent of students report the presence of activity clubs (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs or YMCA) 67 percent of students report opportunities to participate in service clubs (e.g., 4-H or Girl Scouts). Despite these opportunities, less than two thirds of students (61 percent, 64 percent, and 65 percent of 12th, 10th, and 8th graders, respectively) report participating in supervised afterschool activities either at school or away from school.

Chart 6
Percent of Students in Grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 Reporting Opportunities for Activities in the Community, Washington 2008

Source: Healthy Youth Survey 2008
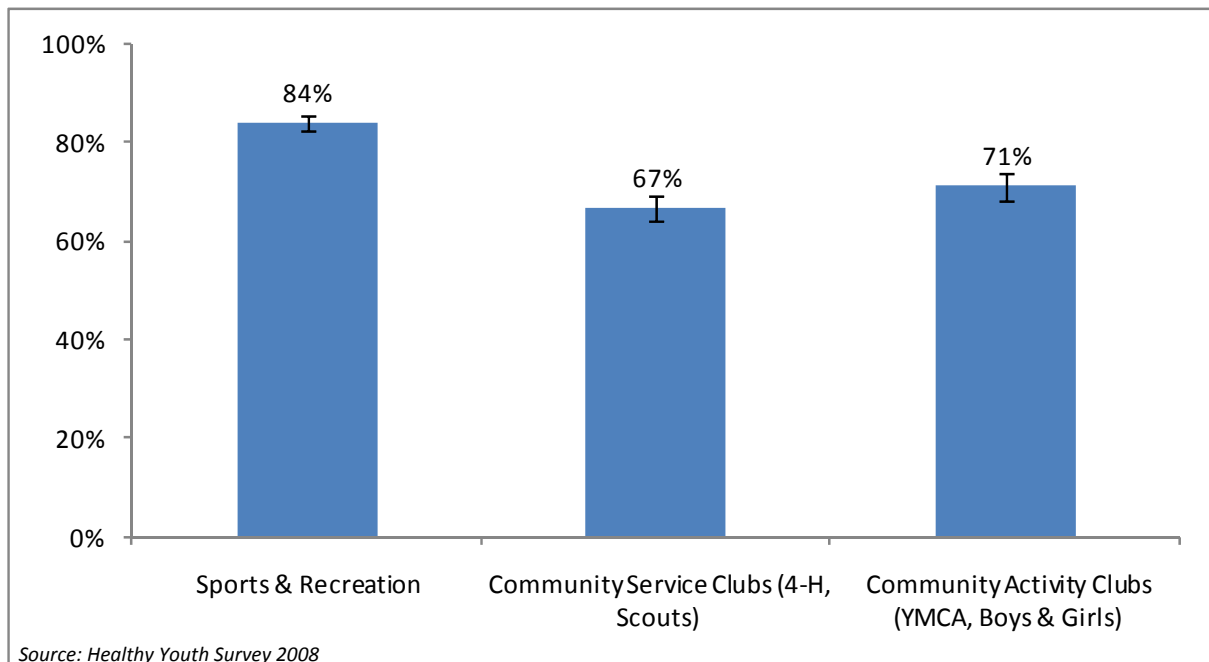
Latino students are less likely to participate in extracurricular activities compared to students from other racial and ethnic groups. Tenth graders from certain racial and ethnic backgrounds were more likely to report a lack of opportunity for community service. Approximately 50 percent of Black, Latino, and Native American students reported the presence of community service opportunities compared with approximately 70 percent of Asian and White students, and 60 percent of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders. While there were slightly lower participation rates in supervised afterschool activities among underserved racial and ethnic groups, the lack of participation among Latinos was striking. Just over half (53 percent) of Latino students reported participation in extracurricular activities compared with roughly two thirds (between 63 percent and 70 percent) of students from other racial and ethnic groups (see **Chart 7**).

Two other demographic groups – low SES students and male students – also noted fewer community opportunities and less extracurricular participation. Three-quarters (76 percent) of high SES students reported participation in weekly supervised after school activities, this was the case for only 56 percent of low SES students. Girls were not only more likely to report opportunities in their communities for athletics, service, and activity clubs but also to note participating in supervised afterschool activities in greater numbers (67 percent vs. 61 percent).

Chart 7
Percent of 10th-Grade Students Reporting They Participated in Supervised Afterschool Activities At Least One Day a Week, Washington 2008

Source: Healthy Youth Survey 2008
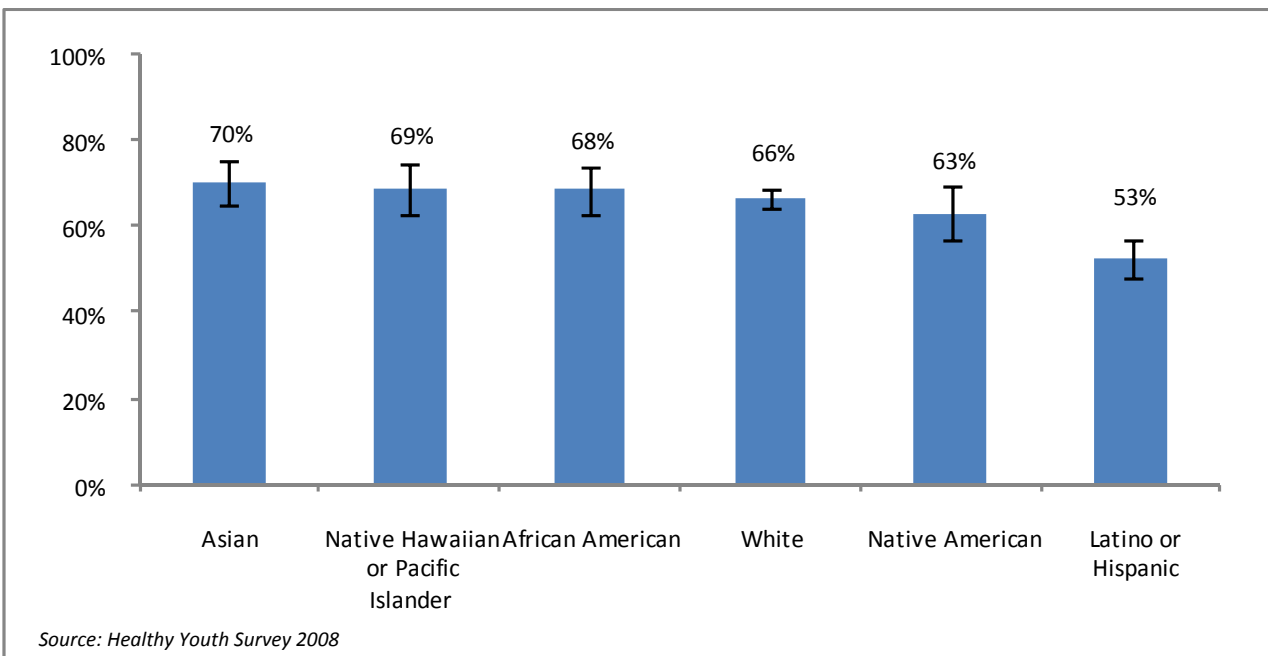
Key Reforms Affecting Adolescents in Washington State

In 2008, more than one in four (27 percent) ninth graders in Washington State did not graduate within four years.[33] To address this concerning trend, Washington State has implemented a number of the reforms listed below to improve adolescents' engagement, achievement, and post-secondary opportunities. The goals of these policies and programs are threefold – (a) to increase the rigor of instruction; (b) to personalize the learning experience for youth and ensure that each has access to a consistent, caring adult; and (c) to seek to improve the system of providing support to youth through professional development and technical assistance for instructors.

A number of K-12 reforms also hold promise for improving adolescent engagement. For example, the Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee has put forward promising strategies for addressing the achievement gap for historically underserved students.[34] Recent legislation was passed to intervene in the state's lowest performing schools. Improvements to Washington State's educational data system will enable analysis of course-taking patterns, linkages across secondary and postsecondary settings, and the use of data in early warning systems to identify students at risk for dropping out of school.

Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID). In 2008, OSPI and College Spark announced a nine-year, $9.5 million College Readiness Initiative that will support widespread implementation of AVID and Navigation 101 (see below). AVID aims to increase students' abilities to succeed in college-preparatory courses. In addition to elective courses, students attend peer tutorials with a trained tutor-facilitator, and participate in time management, study, and organizational skills. AVID teachers also access professional development activities that enable them better support their students in rigorous coursework.[35]

Building Bridges Program. Between 2009-2010, Building Bridges made grants through OSPI to partnerships of schools, families, and communities to support drop-out prevention, intervention, and retrieval systems that identify students who are at "at risk" for leaving school before graduation and to provide timely inventions and supports. Building Bridges served 36 school districts in 85 identified buildings and programs.[36] Beginning in the summer of 2010, Building Bridges will convene a workgroup to make recommendations to develop a state school improvement model that focuses on integrated student supports and interventions that improve student achievement by linking students to community resources to meet their academic and social service needs.

College Success Foundation (CSF). CSF works to expand educational opportunities by growing the number of college graduates among low-income youth. In Washington State, CSF provides academic, informational, and financial supports to students and their families, and advocates for increased college readiness and college access. In 2010, CSF launched Washington College Access Network (WCAN), which was developed to improve preparation and access to higher education through supporting best practices, training opportunities, and public policies.[37]

CORE 24. Core 24 is a set of new high school graduation requirements that is designed to provide students with a solid academic foundation to prepare them for a range of post secondary paths. Part of the Washington State Board of Education's Meaningful High School Diploma Initiative, CORE 24 will increase the number of courses that students will need to take in many school districts to graduate, altering requirements that have not changed since 1985. Currently, the CORE 24 Task Force of educators across the state is working on an implementation strategy for the program's 2013 phase-in.[38]

Navigation 101. Navigation 101 offers personalized support to high school students and their families and helps them explore their postsecondary opportunities. Components of Navigation 101 include curriculum-driven advisory courses, student planning portfolios that set goals and monitor progress, student-led conferences with family members and their advisory leader, and student-driven scheduling, in which students are prompted to select challenging courses and school work. Evaluation of the College Readiness Initiative, critical to program optimization, will inform the integration of Navigation 101 within a comprehensive guidance and counseling program.[39]

School's Out Washington (SOWA). SOWA works to increase the number of affordable and quality afterschool and youth development (AYD) programs for 5-18 year olds in the state through training, advocacy and leadership. SOWA currently supports a range of reform projects. These include efforts to improve the quality of care through revising the minimum licensing requirements for school-age child care, efforts to implement and evaluate professional development for AYD providers through the Pathway to Excellence, and the Improving Program Quality projects that offer on-site coaching support. The Feed Your Brain project supports the state's high-poverty, rural communities through providing literacy activities and nutritious meals during the summer months.[40] SOWA works with 12 school districts through the Refugee School Impact Project to support the academic performance of refugee students.[41]

Three Priorities for Increasing Student Engagement in Washington State

The findings presented in this brief highlight the school engagement needs of Washington State adolescents. A sizable proportion of youth in our state are at great risk of disengagement from school, and this risk increases in the higher grades. Our comparisons across income, race, ethnicity, and sex highlight noteworthy disparities in engagement and related parent and community supports. But the low levels of school engagement among *both* high and low SES 10th graders indicate that disengagement is a problem across the board for the state's schools and communities.

Washington State's policies and programs supporting school engagement are underfunded. Currently, certain promising efforts are not present in school districts or regions, and would benefit more students if they were brought to scale. For example, during the 2009-10 school year, Navigation 101 is being implemented in 82 of the state's school 295 school districts.[42] Forty-one school districts and 128 sites are using the AVID program.[43] Due to the economic downturn, funding for supporting programs through Building Bridges is uncertain after the summer of 2010. Despite cuts to a number of programs in the State Education budget during the last legislative session, both the federal Race to the Top and Investing in Innovation applications could bring new resources into the state that would support school engagement initiatives.

> *The low levels of school engagement among both high and low SES 10th graders indicate that disengagement is a problem across the board for schools and communities in Washington State.*

Both the economic downturn and possibility of new federal funding in education reflect an evolving policy agenda around school engagement. We put forward three priorities for current and future policies and programs in Washington State that emerged from our study findings. Together, these reflect a comprehensive approach which draws on the resources of schools, families, and communities to meet adolescents' needs. First, students need academic supports to be successful in rigorous academic work. Second, students need individualized attention from caring adults in a range of settings. Third, coordination between K-12, postsecondary, and out-of-school time programs can enhance school engagement.

Priority 1: Students need academic supports to be successful in rigorous academic work.

While increasing rigor can help address concerns about boredom among adolescents, many high school students are underprepared for challenging work.[44] In Washington State, 10th grade boys, students of color, and low SES students reported both higher levels of Cs, Ds, and Fs and skipping school, raising serious concern about the risk of disengagement and dropping out among these groups. This may be partially the result of low levels of parental engagement in school, community opportunities, and extracurricular participation. As children of immigrants now comprise close to one-fourth (22 percent) of the state's population under 18,[45] the greater purpose in schooling seen by children with a home language other than English reflects an opportunity for schools and out-of-school-time programs to respond to their optimism.

Statewide policies and programs include a range of approaches aimed at improving student achievement and preparation for postsecondary success. However, some involve only a fraction of the students who can benefit from supports. Black, Latino, and American Indian/Alaskan Native students are significantly underrepresented in AP courses, suggesting that equitable access to rigor is a problem in Washington State.[46] To respond to this issue, AVID includes classes and tutoring designed to improve students' performance in college preparatory coursework.

When implemented, CORE 24 will be poised to increase the rigor in instruction across the state. However, the Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee raises concerns about the implications of this policy because a high percentage of historically underserved students of color are either dropping out or not meeting current graduation requirements. The Committee also recommends a review of the components of the high school graduation policy, including the potential impact on students, funding, and school and district capacity.[47] The CORE 24 Implementation Task Force has also responded to concerns about students working below grade level, and has recommended that the phase-in of CORE 24 include approaches to provide strategies to assist struggling students so they can retrieve academic credits and work toward reaching grade level in their skills.[48]

Priority 2: Students need individualized attention from caring adults in a range of settings.

Youth need greater autonomy as they get older, but the guidance of adults is critical when they are faced with choices that can potentially affect their subsequent opportunities. Our study findings call for a closer look at how high schools in Washington State can effectively reach out to families, especially in the higher grades. Fewer than 3 in 10 high school sophomores report that their school shares with their parents when they have done a good job. Responses to this one question about school communication to parents highlight that schools and districts could

benefit from further investigation of the effectiveness of their broader efforts to communicate and engage families.

A number of policies and programs include features that are designed to enhance adults' role in school engagement. For example, Navigation 101 fosters personal relationships between students and adults in schools. Building Bridges has supported programs that provide individualized health, mental health, and academic interventions when students with high probability of dropping out have been identified. Evidence of the positive effects of adolescent participation in out-of-school-time programs[49] underscores the important role that program leaders can play in providing students with opportunities to discover their academic and nonacademic strengths.

Priority 3: Coordination between K-12, postsecondary, and out-of-school time programs can enhance school engagement.

Research demonstrates that schools cannot work in isolation to nurture engagement.[50] Partnerships between K-12, postsecondary, and out-of-school time programs represent a strategy to capitalize on the expertise of educators and youth development professionals and to cultivate an awareness of opportunities after high school graduation. Evidence from this study raises urgent need to foster and sustain partnerships among schools, parents, community-based organizations, and religious institutions. Supervised extracurricular activities can protect students against disengagement from school and other risky behaviors, but one third of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders do not participate. School's Out Washington's professional networks and projects aim to further professionalize the field of out-of-school-time programs and broaden access to the youth who are in the greatest need. The College Success Foundation provides information and support through schools, colleges, and nonprofits to target supports for economically disadvantaged students. The impact of these programs can be amplified by strong partnerships with schools and districts which may be developed through state required School Improvement Plans.[51]

Conclusion

President Obama's challenge for all Americans to attend at least one year of college will require educators, parents, and communities to consider creative solutions that address student performance, and to make progress on longstanding gaps in achievement and attainment. Such an ambitious goal brings needed attention to improving education for high school students. As the connection between school engagement and achievement has been proven in multiple studies, focusing on school engagement promises to encourage progress towards this national goal. Increasing supports, caring, and coordination across organizations serving youth are critical steps to nurture the sense of purpose that adolescents must bring to school.

Sources and Notes

[1] Planty, M., Hussar, W., Snyder, T., Kena, G., KewalRamani, A., Kemp, J., Bianco, K., Dinkes, R. (2009). *The Condition of Education 2009* (NCES 2009-081). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC.

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[3] OECD nations include… Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States.

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See Ewell, P.T., Jones, D.P., & Kelly, P.J. (2003). *Conceptualizing and Researching the Educational Pipeline.* Retrieved December, 15, 2009, from http://www.nchems.org/pubs/docs/Pipeline%20Article.pdf for a discussion of educational pipeline policies

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[33] While 73 percent of ninth graders graduated on time, 77 percent took greater than four years to graduate. There are significant disparities in graduation rates based on race, ethnicity, sex and socioeconomic status. Ireland, L. (2009). *Graduation and Dropout Statistics for Washington in 2007-08.* Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Olympia, WA

[34] Students from historically underserved racial and ethnic and groups have had less access to high quality public education in the United States than their peers. These populations include students who are African American, Latino, Native American, Native Hawaiian or Asian Pacific Islanders, Southeast Asian and mixed race or ethnic heritage.

[35] See http://www.avid.org/ for more information

[36] See *Building Bridges Workgroup Report to the Legislature* (December 2009) for more information http://www.k12.wa.us/BuildingBridges/pubdocs/BBWrkGrp.pdf

[37] See http://www.collegesuccessfoundation.org/ for more information

[38] See CORE 24 Frequently Asked Questions at http://www.sbe.wa.gov/default.html?tab=4&panel=2#core2 and Flyer, Opening Doors with Core 24 http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/CORE24FinalGraphic_000.pdf for more information.

[39] See *Navigation 101 Frequently Asked Questions* http://www.k12.wa.us/navigation101/FAQs.aspx and *Navigation 101 Multimedia* http://www.k12.wa.us/navigation101/Multimedia.aspx for more information

[40] See http://schoolsoutwashington.org/ for more information.

[41] See http://schoolsoutwashington.org/ for more information.

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