

OSPI/AESD ESSER Attendance & Reengagement Project Evaluation

Baseline Report Summary | May 2023

OSPI/AESD ESSER Attendance & Reengagement Project

Since late 2021, the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Association of Educational Service Districts (AESD) have led the Attendance & Reengagement Project. This project is implemented in partnership with Educational Service Districts (ESDs), school districts, and State-Tribal Education Compact (STEC) schools across the state. The Attendance & Reengagement Project seeks to address the crisis of engagement and disengagement students experienced during and after the COVID pandemic by investing in staff that are:

- Reconnecting youth and families that have disengaged or are at-risk of disengaging
- Proactively increasing attendance by building or enhancing school and district systems

The ESSER Attendance & Reengagement Project includes:

- 23 school district grantees (“priority” districts)
- 39 school districts have project funded ESD direct service staff (“targeted districts”)
- 6 STEC schools
- 9 ESDs

Attendance & Reengagement Project Evaluation

Our central evaluation question is: How is capacity built and systems changed to support engagement and reduce inequities, particularly for BIPOC students and other students who disproportionately experience push out from the education system. We also seek to answer the following questions in this evaluation: what has implementation looked like, why are students disengaging, what keeps them engaged, how is the project helping to improve attendance, and how will this work be sustained.



Baseline Results

Baseline results reflect data from priority/grantee districts and ESDs participating in the ESSER Attendance & Reengagement Project . In future phases of the evaluation, additional data will be collected and reported from participating STEC schools.¹

Supporting Students/Families Results

- Nearly 3,600 students have been served through direct service as of November 2022.
- The most common reasons for disengagement from school are health issues, not having the support needed with schoolwork, not feeling comfortable/welcome at school, and home situations that make it difficult to attend school.
- Students' most common positive experience at school is being with friends.
- Through this project, over 220 students have reenrolled in school.

Implementation, System Building, and Sustainability Results

- Throughout summer 2022, districts and ESDs were laying the foundation for the Attendance & Reengagement Project, including relationship-building and hiring and training staff.
- Districts are building and strengthening their structures and processes, including through teams, tiered approaches, and the use of attendance and other data.
- Developing partnerships within and across organizations was an early focus, and ESDs and districts are interested in expanding and deepening their partnerships.
- Districts and ESDs are also thinking about and planning for what is required to sustain this work.
- There is an overarching focus on integrating attendance and reengagement work into current practices, including in defining/clarifying roles and responsibilities across positions and entities and as an approach to sustainability.

¹ Methods include data from students and families reported by direct service staff; a district survey about students served, priority outcomes, and Tier 1/universal supports; document review including planning and monitoring reports; interviews with OSPI, ESDs, and grantee districts; a feedback survey from statewide training, and meaning-making sessions with evaluation participants.



Implications

The Evaluation Team shared preliminary results with evaluation participants and the ESSER Attendance and Reengagement Advisory Group, who informed priorities for the next phase of the evaluation:

- **Providing timely reports by ESD region and district**, particularly related to students served, reasons for disengagement, positive experiences in school, and progress toward reenrollment
- **Using data for reflection and learning**, such as opportunities to review and discuss data with their peers from ESDs or districts and share approaches to support continuous improvement
- **Understanding progress over time**, including how the work is unfolding within each district, STEC school, and ESD to learn more about the progress being made and barriers and challenges that are arising. This will support a deeper understanding of commonalities and differences among and across districts, STEC schools, and ESD regions
- **Connecting student outcomes and system building**, to examine how changes for students – such as reenrollment in school and improved attendance – relate to the system-building efforts that districts are undertaking

Next Steps

As the evaluation continues, we will **build on and deepen our baseline understanding** of reasons for disengagement; how students and families, particularly those furthers from educational justice, have informed implementation of the project; current cross-system and cross-agency collaborations; characteristics of district, STEC school, and ESD implementation; students served; and sustainability needs. We will also address **additional questions relevant to continued implementation**:

- What systems were created or further developed at STEC schools, priority districts, each ESD and across the AESD network to support attendance and reengagement?
- How did the project contribute to reengagement or engagement of students and families?
- What did we learn about potential future cross-system and cross-agency roles and collaboration?
- What did we learn from students and families that will inform the further development of the model?