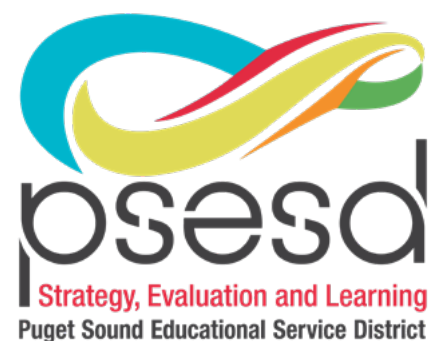




OSPI/AESD ESSER Attendance & Reengagement Project Evaluation

**Interim Report Summary
March 2024**



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 Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund Attendance & Reengagement Project 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, particularly students and families furthest from educational justice. The project aims to expand attendance and reengagement supports across the education system through staff capacity for direct service reengagement and building or enhancing school and district attendance systems.

In 2022-23, the ESSER Attendance & Reengagement Project included:

- » 23 school district grantees (“priority districts”)
- » 40 school districts with project-funded ESD direct service staff (“focus districts”)
- » 6 STEC schools
- » 9 ESDs

Attendance & Reengagement Project Evaluation

The ESSER Attendance & Reengagement Evaluation seeks to tell the story of how this project served, supported and reengaged students with high rates of absences and disengagement and to understand how project districts and STEC schools built or enhanced systems to support engagement and reduce inequities. Evaluation questions address what implementation has looked like, why students are disengaging as well as what keeps them engaged, how the project is helping to improve attendance and how this work can be sustained into the future.

Interim Results

Participating districts, STEC schools, ESDs and OSPI contributed data through a range of qualitative and quantitative methods, including data from students and families, project partner interviews and surveys, site visits, and meaning-making sessions.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS

Students served

Nearly 8,200 students were served with individualized supports through the Attendance & Reengagement Project through the 2022-23 school year. (Individualized supports include one-on-one case management, group supports or light touch support, such as a one-time phone call or visit to walk a student/family through the process to reenroll in school). The project has achieved its goal of serving students furthest from educational justice. Compared to statewide enrollment, the project served comparatively more students who are:

- Native American
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Hispanic/Latino
- Low-income
- Multilingual/English language learners
- Students with disabilities

- Students experiencing homelessness
- Migrant students

Reasons for Disengagement and Engagement

The most common reasons for disengagement among students were:

- Dealing with health (physical or mental) issues (56% of students)
 - » 29% of students indicated they were sick or dealing with a medical issue
 - » 26% of students indicated they were too sad or depressed, or too anxious or upset, to attend school.
- Not having the support students need to succeed with schoolwork (53%)
- Not feeling comfortable or welcome at school (45%)
- Home situations that make it difficult to attend school (45%)
- Among all school levels (elementary, middle and high school), students' most common positive experience at school was being with friends.

Student Outcomes

56% of unenrolled students (412 of 716) supported by direct service staff reenrolled in school. 75% of reenrolled students were still enrolled after three months. The largest proportion of these students reenrolled in Open Doors Youth Reengagement programs (47%). Hispanic students (55%) and low-income students (41%) reenrolled at the highest rates.

School and District Outcomes

Among districts and schools focused on building their attendance systems (teaming, data, and Tier 1 school- or district-wide attendance strategies) through this grant:

- The percentage of all students who regularly attended school in 2022-23 increased by 4 percentage points from 2021-22. (Statewide, the positive change in regular attendance rated from 2021-22 to 2022-23 was 3 percentage points, from 67% to 70%.)
- Rates also increased for almost all racial/ethnic groups, with changes that were equal to or greater than statewide changes for American Indian/Alaska Native students, Hispanic/Latino students, bi/multiracial students, White students and Black/African American students.
- Regular attendance increased for students experiencing homelessness, low-income students, multilingual/English language learner students, students with disabilities and students who are female or "Gender X."
- Nearly all participating districts and schools showed increases in their regular attendance rates from 2021-22 to 2022-23, and the large majority were larger than the statewide increase in regular attendance from 2021-22 to 2022-23. 32 of 40 (80%) participating schools and 22 of 28 (79%) participating districts had increases in regular attendance rates that were greater than the statewide increase.

BUILDING SYSTEMS

Student/Family Input in Design

Project partners—districts, STEC schools and ESDs—used a range of ways to gather student/family input to inform their work, including responding to individual student/family needs. Several districts and STEC schools used input to make system-level changes, including the development of a new class, shifting school schedule structures (e.g., away from block scheduling in one district and toward a more flexible online learning option in another) and changes in curriculum.

Partnerships and Collaboration

Attendance & Reengagement Project partners collaborated in a range of ways through this project, including district/ESD partnerships, community partnerships, peer partnerships (among ESDs, districts and

STEC schools) and within-organization partnerships (within ESDs, districts, Tribes and OSPI).

Implementation in Districts, STEC Schools and ESDs

Implementation varied widely across project partners, but common dimensions included:

- Staffing to support direct service and system-building work
- Relationship-building with students, families and among partners
- Identifying project aims, including priority populations of students and success measures

Building Systems

Through the 2022-23 school year, project partners were building and strengthening attendance and reengagement systems, including attendance structures, tiered interventions, accessing and using data and all school/all-community approaches to support attendance.

Sustainability

Project partners were integrating this work into existing structures, processes, and roles to support sustainability and they highlighted the critical importance of funding or staff capacity dedicated to attendance and reengagement efforts. Partners also noted the challenges the uncertainty and short-term nature of the ESSER funding posed to sustainability.

Implications and Next Steps

The Evaluation Team shared preliminary interim results with evaluation participants and OSPI in August 2023 and feedback and suggestions from these conversations are helping to inform the direction of the evaluation in 2023-24:

- **Local Data:** To relate broad, statewide results to the work in regions, districts or schools, we are expanding our efforts to provide local data back to project partners so that they can connect their own data to statewide results.
- **Student and Family Input:** Meaning-making participants expressed interest in how project partners gathered input from students and families and the ways in which they used this input to inform changes. We are focusing on this area in 2023-24, to better understand the work that project partners have done around student/family input as well as how any learnings can inform future development of this work.
- **Connecting Student Outcomes and System Building:** In sharing data back with project partners, specifically regional direct service reports with ESDs, we hope to strengthen our understanding of how system-building efforts are impacting student outcomes.
- **Balance Breadth and Depth:** Given the expanse of this evaluation, we have so far focused on developing a broad understanding of the work happening across the state. In 2023-24, we will couple this with several case studies for a deeper and more holistic understanding of the work (i.e., by exploring the evaluation questions in a more integrated fashion) in specific contexts.

These implications help inform the next steps of the evaluation for the 2023-24 school year, with data collection activities that include continued direct service reporting, additional data from project partners, case studies, additional data from students and families and data on additional student outcomes.