

SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS' INTERAGENCY RECOVERY CAMPUS BRIEF SERIES:

Recovery Campus Students' Characteristics and Outcomes: 2015–25

This is the second of three related short reports that describe how recovery schools are an evidence-based approach to supporting young people in graduating from high school and building a substance-free lifestyle. Recovery schools' primary goal is to provide a safe and sober environment where young people in recovery pursue their academic and career goals. Staff members typically include substance use counselors, teachers and mental health professionals.[i] Together, the three briefs show the value of recovery high schools for youth in recovery from substance use and co-occurring mental health disorders.

Students in recovery from substance use disorder who attended recovery high schools had substantially higher rates of graduation and sobriety than those attending other high schools.[ii]

Who Attended the Interagency Recovery Campus?

In this report, we share data about the **190 students** who attended the Seattle Public Schools (SPS) Interagency Recovery Campus for at least 90 days between Fall 2015 and Spring 2025.[iii]

Interagency Recovery Campus Brief Series developed in partnership with

Interagency Group Workers

Seattle Public Schools

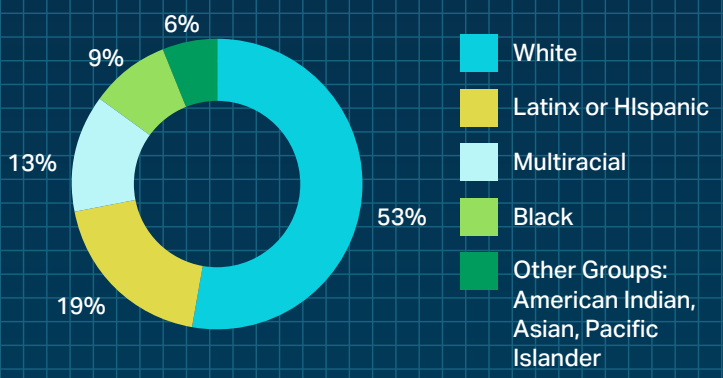
King County DCHS Department of Community and Human Services

psesd Strategy, Evaluation and Learning Puget Sound Educational Service District

Demographics and Characteristics

Figure 1 details the racial and ethnic background of Recovery Campus students. The breakdown of Recovery Campus students as compared with SPS students is as follows: White students (**53%** Recovery Campus, **45%** SPS), Latinx or Hispanic students (**19%** Recovery Campus, **15%** SPS), Multiracial (**13%** for both), Black students (**9%** Recovery Campus, **14%** SPS), and other groups including Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American (**6%** Recovery Campus, **13%** SPS).[iv]

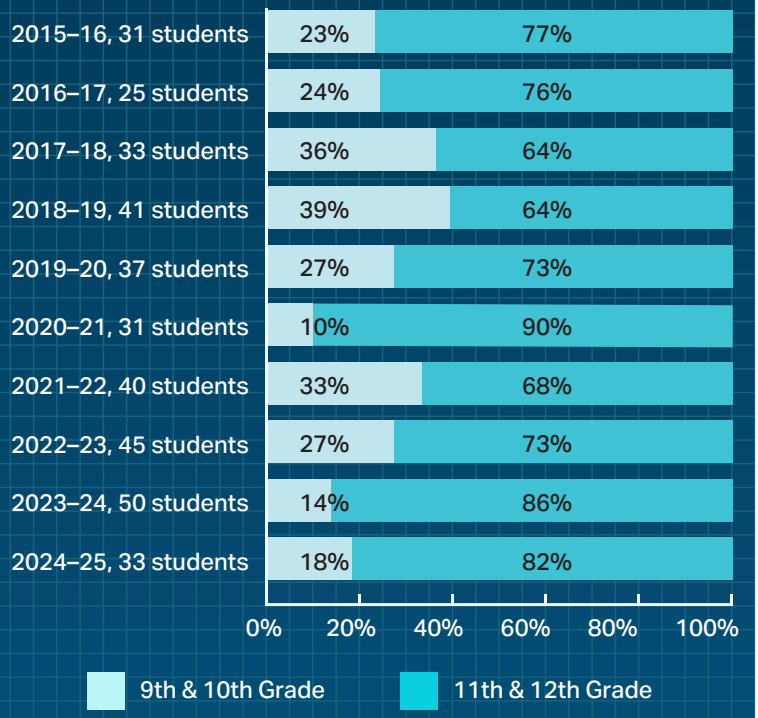
FIGURE 1: Recovery Campus Racial and Ethnic Breakdown, 2015–2025 (N=190)



Students can enroll in the Recovery Campus at any point during their high school career. Between 25 and 50 students attended the Recovery Campus for at least 90 days during each school year. The Recovery Campus enrolls an average of 37 students per year. Figure 2 shows the breakdown by grade level.

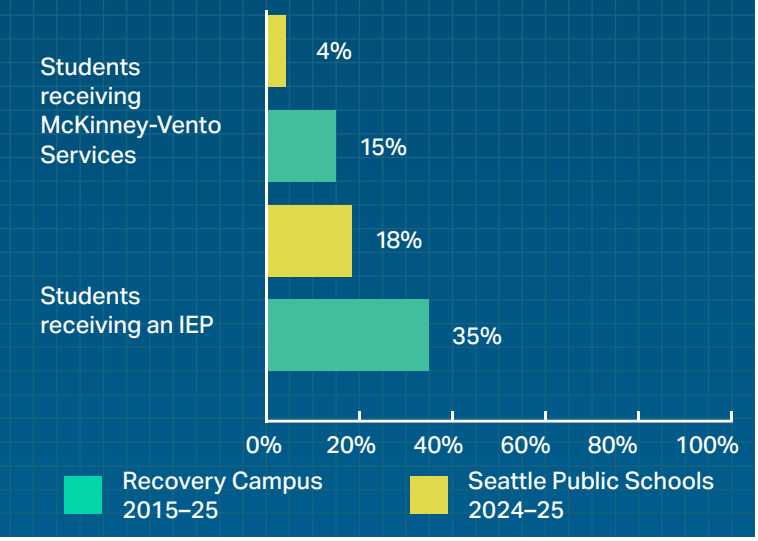
Note: Many students attended the Recovery Campus for more than one year, so the same student may be included in 2016 and 2017, for example.

Figure 2: Recovery Campus Grade-Level Breakdown, 2015–2025 (N=190)



Students at the Recovery Campus had substantially higher rates of homelessness or transitional living, and disability than their peers across the school district. **Fifteen percent** of Recovery Campus students received McKinney-Vento services for students experiencing homelessness or transitional living situations, compared with **4%** of district students. **Over one in three (35%)** Recovery Campus students had an Individualized Education Plan compared with **18%** of students in the district (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Comparison of Students Attending the Recovery Campus and Seattle Public Schools (N=190)



What are the Outcomes of Recovery Campus Students?

NATIONAL DATA While studies show the positive effects of recovery schools, there are only approximately 40 recovery high schools across the U.S.[v] One study of ten substance use treatment programs in three states compared student outcomes of those attending recovery schools with other high schools. Post treatment, national data about recovery school students' high school graduation rates were **61%** as compared to **39%** for other youth. **Over one-third (35%)** of the recovery school students reported they were abstinent from drugs and alcohol for one year while the sobriety rate for those not attending recovery schools was **one in eight (12%).**[vi]

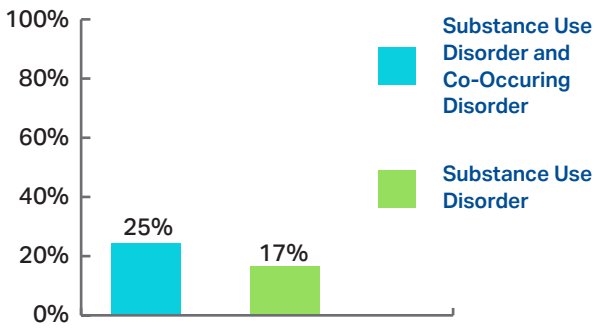


WASHINGTON AND SEATTLE DATA In 2013, the Washington Department of Social and Human Services reported that only **25%** of young people who received publicly funded substance use disorder treatment graduated from high school.[vii] For students with co-occurring mental health disorders, the number dropped to 17%. (see Figure 4)

This report led the King County Behavioral Health and Recovery Division of the Department of Community and Human Services and Seattle Public Schools to collaborate on establishing a recovery school as part of the Interagency Academy system.

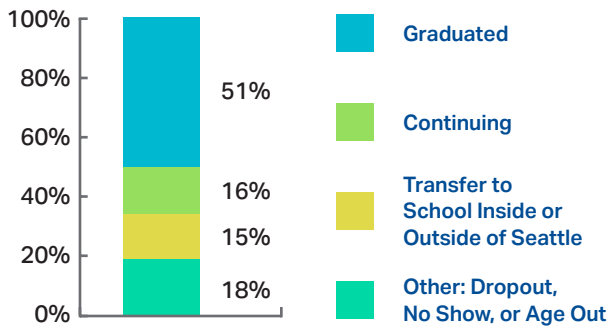
From 2015–2025, **67%** of students at the Seattle Interagency Recovery Campus have earned, or are working toward, a high school diploma in the program. An additional **15%** have transferred to continue schooling elsewhere. (see Figure 5)

FIGURE 4: 25% of Washington Students with Substance Use Disorder Graduated within Six Years (N=1,757)



Note: This is the proportion of students that graduated in six-years for students beginning ninth grade in 2006. Data Source: Behavioral Health Needs and School Success: Youth with Mental Health and Substance Abuse Problems are at Risk for Poor High School Performance.

FIGURE 5: 67% of Recovery Campus Students Have Earned, or are Working Toward, a High School Diploma (N=190)



Note: Students enrolled for more than 90 days between 2015–2025.



More than half (53%) of Recovery Campus students have more than one year of recovery following initial enrollment.[viii]

Data about student substance use demonstrates the power of the Recovery Campus. For a student to be in recovery means that they are building a sober lifestyle in and out of school which involves cultivating connections with sober peers, participating in prosocial activities, and engaging with the recovery community.

Summary

Read together, the national research and this summary of student outcomes at Seattle's Interagency Recovery Campus show the effectiveness of the model. Student perspectives on their time at the school help us understand the power of a drug and alcohol-free place to learn:

"The Recovery Campus gave me a place to fit in and find comfort in a sober lifestyle that not many people my age were doing. It gave me an environment where my ideas were valued, and my problems met with solutions rather than dismissal."

REFERENCES AND NOTES

i Association of Recovery Schools Website (no date). Retrieved from https://recoveryschools.org/what-is-a-recovery-high-school/

ii Finch, A.J., Tanner-Smith, E., Hennessey, E. and Moberg, D.P. (2018). Recovery high schools: Effect of schools supporting recovery from substance use disorders. American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse, 44(2), 175-184 https://doi.org/10.1080/00952990.2017.1354378

iii Student data was provided by both the Seattle Public Schools Research Office and the Recovery Campus staff. We report results for students when there are more than ten students in a category. A total of 190 students attended the school during this time.

iv Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (2025). Washington State Report Card. Retrieved from https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/100229. When a student enrolls in the school district, their family has the opportunity to select multiple racial or ethnic identities that are then rolled up into seven federal reporting categories. For example, a family may select from a list of such groups as Asian Indian, Cambodian, Chinese, and Indonesian, etc. when selecting a race. Please see Nelson, B. & Hough, G.C., Jr. (2024). Reporting on the racial and ethnic identities of Washington public K-12 students. Olympia: Education Research and Data Center for more details about this process.

v Association of Recovery Schools Website (no date). Retrieved from https://recoveryschools.org/what-is-a-recovery-high-school/

vi Weimer, D.L., Moberg, P., Falon French, E. E., et al. (2019) Net Benefits of Recovery High Schools: Higher Cost but Increased Sobriety and Increased Probability of High School Graduation. Journal of Mental Health Policy Economics. 22(3): 109–120

vii Kohlenberg, E., Lucenko, B., Mancuso, D., et al. (2013). Behavioral Health Needs and School Success: Youth with Mental Health and Substance Abuse Problems are at Risk for Poor High School Performance. Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. Retrieved from https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-11-194.pdf

viii The recovery status of 22% of the students is unknown.

SUGGESTED CITATION: Loeb, H., Wyatt, J. G. & Sandoval, N.. (June 2025). Seattle Public Schools' Interagency Recovery Campus Brief Series: Recovery Campus Students' Characteristics and Outcomes: 2015-2025. Renton, WA: Puget Sound Education Service District Strategy, Evaluation and Learning Department and Seattle, WA: King County Department of Community and Human Services, Behavioral Health and Recovery Division.