



We co-create just and humanizing educational communities where every student thrives and succeeds, benefiting future generations.

2025
ANNUAL REPORT

Greetings, and welcome to our 2025 Annual Report.

This year brings a moment of transition and continuity. As we publish this report, Dr. Gustavo Balderas officially becomes superintendent of PSESD, and I step into a role as superintendent in residence through June 2026. This partnership ensures that we maintain momentum in our most important work. During the coming months, Gustavo will build relationships across our program sites, districts, and regional partners as we work together to advance our mission.

This report is a reflection point in how we think about our work. In December, after gathering input from young people, families, community members, and staff, our board adopted a new End statement: We co-create just and humanizing educational communities where every student thrives and succeeds, benefiting future generations. This language shift matters. Our new End emphasizes our longstanding commitment to partnering and co-creating with districts, students, families, and communities. It broadens our understanding of what students need to thrive. While we'll continue to eliminate gaps, we want to emphasize the collaborative work we do to build systems where every student is known, valued, and supported in their growth.

The stories in this report show what this commitment looks like in action. The Accessible Education Collective demonstrates how shifting adult mindsets creates space for all students to thrive. Early Learning programs illustrate the power of relationship-based support—how genuine partnerships with families transform what they believe is possible for their children. Our fiscal dashboard makes financial information transparent to every district, regardless of size or resources, ensuring equity in access to the tools that support informed decision-making. Each of these initiatives reflects our core belief: Change happens through partnership, and when we design systems with dignity and equity at the center, every student benefits.

As I reflect on my 15 years with the agency, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the students, families, and educators across the Puget Sound region. Our collective work to create just and humanizing school communities has been the most important work of my career. It has been an honor to serve as superintendent, and I look forward to all that lies ahead for the region.

We remain grateful for the partnerships that make our work possible. Under the direction of Dr. Balderas and in partnership with you and many across our region, we will continue to create just and humanizing educational communities where every student thrives.

Thank you!

John Welch, Superintendent

PSESD programs, services, and job opportunities are open to all regardless of race, sex, or other protected classes.



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Early Learning Systems of Support & Growth

Brandi Carlson first heard about the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) through a flyer that her daughter's elementary school sent home. At the time, her son Asher was two and a half years old and saw between five and seven medical specialists. Finding the right preschool felt daunting. Brandi needed somewhere that could support her son's unique needs while providing the nurturing environment every parent wants for their child.

"There's a lot of hesitation when you know that your kid has some medical issues going on, and how that's going to be interpreted by a facility that will have to manage that," Brandi explains.

From her very first conversation with a family support specialist, her mind was put at ease. "That just came across so clearly in the interview with her—how they are able to take additional steps ... They were totally not off put by that and seemed extremely welcoming."

The family support specialist's warmth wasn't accidental. She was part of intentional systems PSESD has built across its early learning programs. Johna Rhooms, director of Educare of Greater Seattle sees these systems at work every day. "If you look at our staff, our staff pretty much represents almost all of our families," Johna explains. Intentionally reflecting the communities served creates a foundation of understanding and trust.

Ongoing professional development strengthens that foundation. Each program year at Educare begins with pre-service training where PSESD staff walk through new platforms and resources with all site staff. Throughout the year, coaches highlight both areas of growth and the glows—what's working well in classrooms. "They offer an abundance of professional development for them to attend," Johna says. "And they're very accessible. They're being intentional about supporting educator families."

We hope you continue reading this story online.

Shifting Ways of Being: The Accessible Education Collective at Work

Two years ago, Brad Brown and Erin Stewart sat down to discuss regional data. Brown, the executive director of learning, teaching, and leadership development, and Stewart, the senior director of special services, sparked a conversation that has grown into a statewide partnership focused on disproportionality in special education. That conversation led to a collaborative partnership between PSESD's systems and school improvement and special services teams. The work built on previous regional efforts focused on how deep listening could drive school transformation, particularly for students with IEPs.

The Accessible Education Collective (AEC) was born from this collaboration and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) statewide inclusionary practices aims. These aims focus on improving inclusionary practices for Black students with IEPs and students with intellectual disabilities.

PSESD now partners with Dr. Jamila Dugan and Estelle Acquah to lead the AEC, which supported 22 schools across Washington last year. Eighteen of those schools are continuing as part of an OSPI pilot site for inclusionary excellence, eligible for four years of funding.

We hope you continue reading this story online.

Making School Finance Data Work for Everyone

When districts need to understand their financial health but can't afford expensive data visualization tools, they're at a disadvantage. Before this dashboard existed, districts had two options. They could pay significant fees to software companies for visualization tools, or they could work with data in formats that were difficult to analyze.

Joli Valentino, PSESD's executive director of business and operations, envisioned a fiscal dashboard that would serve all districts. Under her leadership and the direction of Justin Lanting, director of school finance, a team spanning four educational service districts—PSESD, ESD 113, ESD 114, and ESD 171—built a free, interactive fiscal dashboard using data from OSPI.

Assistant Fiscal Officer Stephen Lord led the visualization work, creating a tool that pulls together fund balances, financial health indicators, revenue and expenditure reports, staffing charts, and enrollment data by fiscal year and program type, all organized by National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) object codes.

Before this dashboard existed, districts had two options: pay significant fees to software companies for visualization tools, or work with data in formats that were difficult to analyze. Districts with limited budgets and small fiscal teams had fewer options for accessing such tools.

We hope you continue reading this story online.

Accountability and Transparency

Measures of Progress are one way we are accountable to ourselves and to the communities we serve. Information from these measures helps us to set priorities toward our End: We co-create just and humanizing educational communities where every student thrives and succeeds, benefiting future generations. The Measures also help our Board to assess our progress toward this End. View our full dashboard online.

Looking Forward

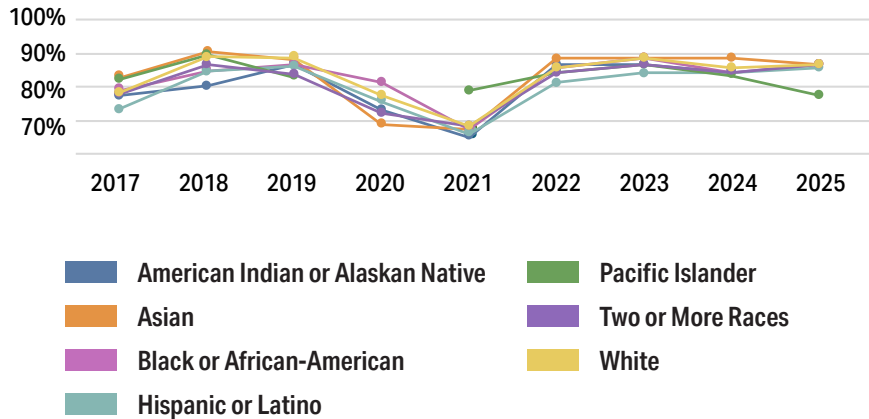
Students and educators are the heart of our work. We work across many areas—supporting reengaged students through career planning, developing professional learning with teachers, creating early childhood programs, and offering specialized services. We design programs and resources by partnering with educators and students, drawing upon their many talents and wisdom to meet the needs we see in our region.

Dr. Gustavo Balderas, our incoming superintendent, understands why this matters. A first-generation son of migrant farmworkers, he brings deep insight into the barriers many students face, particularly those navigating poverty, language, and culture. His track record shows that he builds systems grounded in what communities and students actually need—not from the top down, but by listening and creating space for others to lead. This commitment to equity aligns deeply with where PSESD is headed.

Partnerships make this work possible. Working alongside schools, families, and communities across the region, we have the chance to build education that is responsive, grounded in reality, and designed for all students to not just participate, but to truly thrive and succeed. Our regional diversity is our strength. We're committed to ensuring that every student sees themselves reflected in what their schools offer and feels supported on their path forward.

We welcome your ideas and partnership as we move into this next chapter. The future of education in our region depends on all of us working together—and on systems that genuinely serve every student.

Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding Developmental Expectations



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