



OPEN DOORS PROGRAM PROFILE

Federal Way–Truman Campus

This profile was produced as part of the Community Partnerships for Reengagement Initiative to promote shared learning about promising youth reengagement practices and program models in the Open Doors system. In spring 2023, we collected data from six Open Doors sites (two in each pathway: GED-plus, high school diploma, and college) to develop profiles of programs with evidence of promising student outcomes. Information about this project and the methods used to develop this profile are provided at the end of this report.

Federal Way Open Doors at Truman Campus offers a high school diploma pathway and serves as a connection center. Through partnerships, prospective students can also access online and in-person GED, GED-plus as well as college transition support. The program is mostly focused on the high school diploma pathway and has created staffing and partnership structures to meet the service needs of opportunity youth aged 16–21. In interviews and focus groups, program leadership and staff members reflected on organizational changes over time. While the overall youth demographics and support services have generally stayed the same, the program has seen an enrollment increase overall and among younger students with fewer credits in recent years. This trend and other factors have informed shifts in the program’s approach to its service model.

Federal Way Open Doors

- High school diploma pathway
- District partnership
- In person with online option
- In-person and virtual case management
- **210** students enrolled in 2020–21
- Average age at enrollment: **18**
- Average credits at enrollment: **12.88**



In the time that I’ve been here, there have been structural changes. The actual youth who we serve is still the same. It’s just the way in which we serve youth has changed multiple times ... as the program builds, grows, flexes, COVID, all the things.

Federal Way Open Doors staff member

Staff members and leaders described the program’s shift towards a **pathway and student cohort approach**. In this model an entering class of students are onboarded and youth decide during individual intake sessions whether they want to participate in the on-site high school diploma program or an online pathway provided by partner Graduation Alliance. Federal Way Open Doors is located at Truman Campus along with Federal Way’s Career Academy and Internet Academy—the programs share some staff

members. The site's multiple programs expand service opportunities, but Federal Way Open Doors staff members also reflected on how it can be confusing for prospective students and families to understand what is unique to the Open Doors program as opposed to the broader array of services at the Truman Campus.

Partnership Structure and Roles

In addition to the partnership with Federal Way Public Schools, Open Doors students benefit from many on- and off-site resources. Along with the Career Academy and Internet Academy, Truman Campus is home to a Boys and Girls Club, a teen center, and (through community relationships) a substance use therapist who is on site once a week. Also on site is Multiservice Center which offers the Open Doors GED-plus pathway. Here students can complete a High School and Beyond Plan and state history requirements to meet requirements of their graduation pathway in addition to the GED. Off-site community partners provide wraparound services for enrolled Federal Way Open Doors students and transfer options for enrolled or prospective students who may need types of support not offered at Federal Way. Staff members shared the following informal and formal partnerships which reflect local community services accessible to students:

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS

Northwest Education Access provides college transition and support in navigating financial aid, course taking, and basic needs through a formal partnership with Federal Way Open Doors.

El Centro de La Raza's Sí se Puede Academy serves 18–21-year-olds in King County, providing a year-round GED program into which students can transfer.

WRAPAROUND SERVICES

YMCA Alive and Free provides wraparound services for youth impacted by community violence and the justice system with a focus on goal setting, building a community-based support network, and skill development related to violence prevention.

CAREER AND JOB TRAINING

King County provides Federal Way students with access to an on-site social worker through a formal partnership with its **Career LaunchPad**, a program that also provides 16–24-year-old students with job readiness training, subsidized work experiences, and educational support. Federal Way staff members can access additional youth program placement support through an informal partnership with King County's **Reconnect to Opportunity (Re-Opp)**.

Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship Committee provides pre-apprenticeship training, paid internships, and industry certificates.

Student Population

Federal Way Open Doors aims to provide young people with holistic support, positive relationships, and skills that enable them to pursue whatever they want to do next. The program provides flexible scheduling, tutoring, customized curriculum, competency-based instruction, work-based learning, wraparound services, and skill development focused on continuous learning. Participating youth mostly identify as students of color, and many as multilingual learners. In interviews and focus groups, staff members reflected on the structural impacts of violence and lack of integrated services on the Federal Way community—a context that creates a need for safe places and strong relationships:



There is a lot of violence in the community that our students experience as well ... [The] first day of school this year a student came to school because she knew this would be a place that she could have somebody to talk to.

Federal Way Open Doors staff member

Many enrolled students face one or more barriers such as parenting, housing instability, justice involvement, substance use, and mental health challenges. Staff members and students shared how integrated services and hands-on navigation provided by reengagement specialists have been important for relationship building, service matching, and student retention.

Six academic years of Federal Way Open Doors student data (from 2015–16 to 2020–21) show that most students (90%) were eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, 32 percent identify as Latino/a/x, and 22 percent identify as white. One in four Federal Way Open Doors students have experienced homelessness and 19 percent have received special education services. As in the overall Open Doors student population, more students identify as male (54%) than as female (see tables 1–5).

Tables 1–5. Average student characteristics, Federal Way—Truman Campus Open Doors (2015–16 to 2020–21)

TABLE 1

Gender	Percentage
Male	54%
Female	46%
Non-binary	0%

TABLE 2

Race	Percentage
White	22%
Latino/a/x	32%
Two or more races	12%
Black or African American	21%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%
Asian	4%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	8%
Race not provided	0%

TABLE 3

High school experiences and programs	Percentage
Free or reduced-price lunch	90%
Learning assistance program	18%
Experienced homelessness	25%
Special education	19%
504 plan	6%
English language learner	16%
Migrant education program	<1%

TABLE 4

Previous high school progress	
Cumulative high school grade point average at Open Doors enrollment	1.40
Cumulative high school credits earned at Open Doors enrollment	12.88

TABLE 5

	Age
Average age (first year in program)	18

Note: All data originally came from Comprehensive Education Data and Research System data files and are students' high school records.

Source: Authors' analysis of data from the Washington State Education Research and Data Center.

Program Design and Implementation

STAFFING STRUCTURE

Federal Way Open Doors staff members hold discrete roles, but each discussed the natural **overlap in their daily activities given the importance of strong, stable connections with young people.**

Program staff members and leaders reflected on building an organizational culture of continuous improvement and the **importance of hearing from young people and their families** about their experiences with various service offerings and instructional approaches. This feedback drives the site leadership team's decisions about what's working and what to do next.

- **Principal** - Currently the building lead for Truman Campus which includes Federal Way Open Doors as well as district-run Career Academy and Internet Academy. This position manages partnerships and supports staff members with strategy and role clarity.
- **School counselor** - Develops and maintains relationships with community organizations, supports grants, and provides individualized support and resource connection to both Open Doors students and students in the other programs housed in the building.
- **Teachers** - Certified instructors who use a Big Picture Learning approach and develop course content and student projects as well as teaching the GED and other courses.
- **Advisors/Reengagement specialists** - Each of the three on-staff specialists serves about 50 students and focuses on meeting basic needs (e.g., medical, counseling, food stamps, teen clinic, DMV) and setting specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals with students as well as mentorship, managing course progression, and bringing in community resources.

While partnerships play a significant role in the program’s ability to meet student needs, staff members provide varied hands-on support, serving students as mentors, teachers, motivational coaches, course navigators, and more.



...we have a lot of wraparound supports because students don’t learn without their basic needs being met...on the forefront of their mind is, ‘How am I going to pay my bills? How am I going to take care of my kid? I have to take care of my siblings and get them to school and pick them up.’ So, I have to be available for that. Helping students navigate those barriers is the thing that really builds their trust with us.

Federal Way Open Doors staff members

PROGRAM MODEL

Pre-program

Referral. Most entering students hear about Federal Way Open Doors from peers or family. Others are referred by their comprehensive high school or learn about the program through King County's Reconnect to Opportunity (ReOpp).

Enrollment and onboarding

Enrollment and placement. Onboarding includes iReady testing and a barrier assessment. Intake and program progression information is managed in a Salesforce database. In initial meetings, reengagement specialists and advisors build relationships, set expectations, work to understand capacity constraints (e.g., family or work obligations), and familiarize students with the program (e.g., Canvas, the importance of attendance).

Program experience

Instruction. A personalized learning plan is developed after intake. Staff members review student transcripts and convert them into competency areas within the Big Picture Learning structure. Reengagement specialists may engage with trusted adults in students' prior learning environments to understand more about their interests and challenges. Learning is self-guided and happens in person, but students also have an online option Through Graduation Alliance. Students have access to leadership opportunities, embedded hands-on projects, and site-based activities.

Case management. Begins with relationships and connections with students. Students meet weekly, one-on-one, with reengagement specialists (case managers) in a standing three-hour block. Staff members take a social and emotional learning approach, supporting student self-awareness and confidence as well as promoting opportunities for leadership and agency.

Next steps support

Graduation planning. Staff members provide goal-based progress monitoring and academic support based on Open Doors pathway.

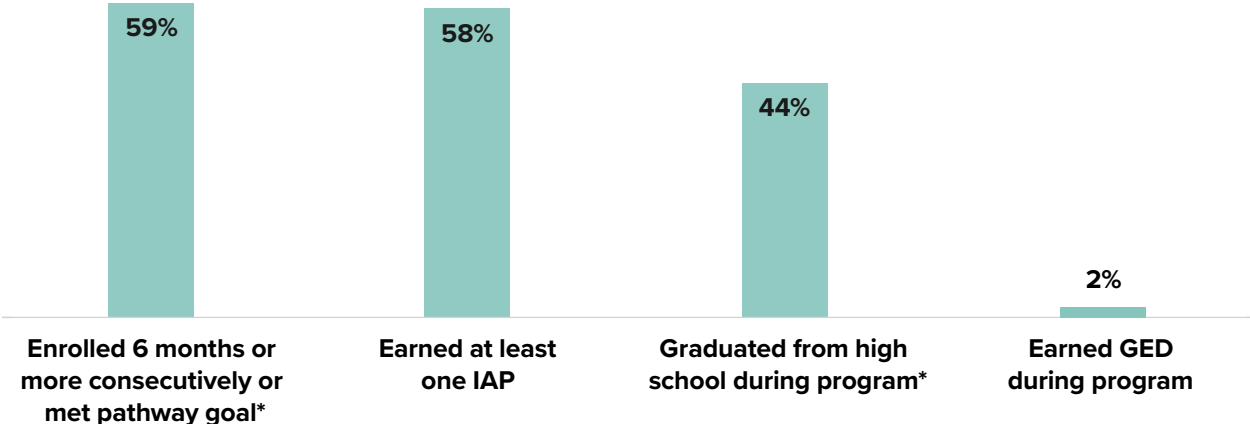
Transition support. Staff members and CBO partners (e.g., Northwest Education Access and King County Career LaunchPad) provide transition support.

Student Progress and Outcomes

SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT AND ACADEMIC PROGRESS

Across six academic years (2015–16 to 2020–21), on average, about **59 percent of students persisted in Federal Way Open Doors for six months or more**—a higher rate compared with an average of 43 percent for Open Doors high school pathway programs statewide. **Fifty-eight percent earned at least one indicator of academic progress.** Federal Way Open Doors also had a higher rate of **students who earned a high school diploma (44%), compared with the average of 18 percent for high school pathway programs statewide.** Additionally, **two percent of students completed their GED** (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Program outcomes, Federal Way-Truman Campus (2015–16 to 2020–21)



*Higher than the statewide average for the Open Doors high school diploma pathway.
Source: Authors' analysis of data from the Washington State Education Research and Data Center.

Student interviews and focus groups made clear how relationships with peers and staff members propelled them academically and increased confidence. Students described how staff members provide individualized support and ongoing encouragement. One program alumna shared how staff members maintained an encouraging relationship with her as she went on to enroll in college and how important self-confidence and efficacy were for her academic success beyond Open Doors:



... after taking that first college class, I was like, ‘I do not belong in this class. This is for kids that know, that [have] already been in high school and middle school here. I don’t know none of this.’ But, just doing it and having these people push me too, be like, ‘You can do it. You can do it.’ Because I didn’t know a lot of English either. So, it was a business English class with big words. I managed to, I got a three-point something on my GPA in that class ... Getting out of my comfort zone was my biggest accomplishment. I think that’s a big one for doing more in life.

Federal Way Open Doors student¹

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

Promoting a sense of belonging and student agency.

Interviews and focus groups also demonstrated that cultivating a culture of student agency and leadership was a clear organizational value. Students and staff members frequently discussed how the program uses “circles” as a practice and student-led platform. Federal Way Open Doors hosts these circles as open spaces for students to get to know one another and discuss current events, their lives, or other topics. “It can be anything the students make it to be,” said one staff member. Staff members shared that students are typically shy when they are new, but begin leading and facilitating circle dialogues as they get more comfortable with the program and their peers. Students have leadership opportunities through a formalized partnership with Northwest Education Access, which staffs a Student Advisory Board. They also have access to program resources such as a library with books selected for and by enrolled students. Students also discussed other peer-to-peer spaces and occasional open-mic nights as being critical for their sense of belonging and academic self-conception.



I’d say the opportunities they give us is how we have our student circles. They give us chances to lead the class sometimes and give us that chance to learn more about opening up, being more communicative, learning how to use your voice, being more confident, and doing the leaving-to-learns. You don’t do a lot of that in any other public school. So, I just think that they give us those chances to get out and go see stuff that we don’t normally see, or things that we would need growing up in the future.

Federal Way Open Doors student

Promotion of a sense of **agency among students can be seen in these peer spaces and embedded in programmatic approaches** such as personal learning plans (PLPs). This collaborative goal-setting work happens one-on-one between students and their reengagement specialists and is one arena where students take the lead in their learning and skill-building. As one student shared:



You set four goals for yourself throughout the year and if you need to change it, you can change [but] it really sets the bar high for us because with goals sometimes it's hard to actually keep up or do it. But with PLPs, it's going at your own pace.

Federal Way Open Doors student

FUTURE ORIENTATION AND CAREER AND COLLEGE SKILLS

Individualized instruction contributes to motivation and future orientation.

Students participating in the in-person high school pathway have a lot of time with case managers and instructors. Instruction is organized in morning and afternoon cohorts with open periods for individualized support services. Staff members shared about efforts to increase structured time for student voice in which they are present to listen to student ideas for program improvement. Staff members and students discussed the positive role of personalized and self-directed learning in the retention and productivity of these young scholars.



... it's different because we're in a much smaller environment—fewer people. I think it is better that way because I feel like more things could get done. Teachers have time to focus on the students [... and] students actually want to come to school.

Federal Way Open Doors student

Staff members and students highlighted the impact of choice, life-relevant course content, hands-on work, and autonomy as motivating factors and tools to spark or deepen student career interests. One student shared:



... We have History, Math, English and normal classes like that, but with Math, they actually teach you taxes and life things like that ... We have presentation projects, they're called exhibitions, and they're mainly focused on either what you've been learning or on a career that you want stuff to do. I feel like those have helped a lot of students actually figure out what they want to do or give them an idea.

Federal Way Open Doors student

Key Strategies

PROGRAM STRATEGIES



Outreach and relationship-building

- Meeting students where they are through **home and work visits**. In some cases, staff members connect with close family members or other caring adults in a student's support system to better understand needs or potential approaches to supporting them.
- Becoming an advocate for students involves **being present** in different ways. As one program staff member said, "We've even attended their events if they're playing sports for another school, and we'll show up and watch their games."



Case management and wraparound support

- Staff members provide essential and varied **hands-on support**, at times driving students to appointments or interviews.
- Reengagement specialists reach out at least once a week and use **multiple mediums of communication** and tools like "Remind."
- **Centralized information** about students is accessible by all staff members in a database.
- Where appropriate, staff members **engage other trusted adults** in students' lives to address or understand student barriers, interests, and aspirations.



Relevant and flexible learning opportunities that build on student experiences and strengths

- A personalized learning plan is developed after intake.
- Student transcripts (if available) are converted into competency areas.
- The program involves self-guided learning with occasional hands-on, site-based activities.



Student voice and choice

- **Advisory circles**, when student-led, are a helpful practice for relationship building and resource sharing.
- **Student surveys and discussions on program experience** inform improvements in program structure, resources, and partnerships.
- Students have access to **leadership opportunities** and paid internships aligned with their interests.

Partnership Strategies

EXPANDING SERVICES AND GROWING PARTNER NETWORKS

Informal relationships and community connections provide access to a broader array of student- and program-level resources. Establishing and **maintaining relationships with one partner can become a doorway to new partnerships** that ultimately improve service and even youth placement. Federal Way Open Doors staff members discussed their own role in connecting students to other education providers and that of King County as an important partner in connecting students to the local landscape of youth providers. Federal Way students have access to an on-site social worker through King County's Career Launchpad and staff members can access additional youth program placement support through King County's Reconnect to Opportunity (Re-Opp).



I'll partner with King County Re-Opp to help place students. [Working with them] is also an opportunity to further assess what the student needs.

Federal Way Open Doors staff member

A SCHOOL EMBEDDED WITHIN A DISTRICT INFRASTRUCTURE

Staff members and district partners reflected on the advantages of Federal Way Open Doors sharing a site with other alternative learning environments offered by the district. This has had advantages for centralized staffing, resource sharing, and access to resources through district and local staff member relationships.



I think one of the strengths is that we, as a district, started treating it like any other school and making sure that we're interviewing and [hiring] folks that want to be there, not placing them there ... The staff are typically from Federal Way or from the area. So, they're aware of the different resources and not afraid to go out and make connections with folks. I think that's one of the things that makes our Open Doors program successful.

District Central Office staff member

About this Project

The Community Partnerships for Reengagement Initiative (CPRI) is a collaboration between Education Northwest and Washington's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to strengthen the capacity of the Open Doors system and to increase equitable education and workforce outcomes for youth. Our purpose is to use data to promote shared learning across the Open Doors system and nationally about promising youth reengagement practices and program models. This project is funded by the Ballmer Group and Kaiser Family Foundation.

Education Northwest worked closely with an advisory committee of local and national experts to identify practices and strategies that make a program effective and successful. We developed a statewide Open Doors Theory of Action in collaboration with the CPRI advisory committee, the Open Doors steering committee, and programs across the state. We also analyzed program and student data (2016–2021) to understand the short- and long-term outcomes for each program site and selected sites doing better than expected in meeting their pathway goal for students historically underserved in education. We also considered issues such as program size, location, provider type, and student characteristics in selecting sites that represent the diversity of program models and communities across the state.

In spring 2023, we collected data from six Open Doors sites (two in each pathway: GED-plus, high school diploma, and college) to develop profiles of programs with evidence of promising student outcomes.

For more information about the CPRI initiative or questions regarding the information presented in this memo, please contact Julie Petrokubi julie.petrokubi@ednw.org.

Methods

Education Northwest developed this program profile from artifact review and online interviews/focus groups with six Federal Way Open Doors staff members, two central office district staff members, two direct service provider partner staff members, and four current or former students. Transcripts and session notes were qualitatively coded and analyzed. We also analyzed quantitative program and student data (2016–2021) from the Washington State Education Research and Data Center to produce the student demographics and outcomes figures.

Thank you to the program team, district partners, and current and former students for taking the time to share your stories and perspectives about Federal Way Open Doors.

Recommended citation

Cooley, S., McLennan, D., Hodara M., & Fujita-Conrads, E. (2023). *Open Doors Program Profile: Federal Way—Truman Campus*. Education Northwest

Endnote

¹ Due to the small sample size and need to preserve anonymity, we do not distinguish between quotations of Open Doors students and alumni in this profile report.