

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR REENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE

Insights and Recommendations from the 2023 Open Doors Summit

Youth reengagement programs are critical community resources for reconnecting young people who are not on track to graduate high school with their cohort, especially as disconnection rates are increasing in many communities across the nation (Lewis, 2023). In Washington state, 10.1 percent of the 85,240 students in the 2022 high school graduation cohort were classified as unenrolled from school, up from 9.5 percent in 2021 (Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2023).

In 2021, **8,719 students across Washington reconnected with learning through [Open Doors Reengagement](#)** (Petrokubi et al., 2023). Administered by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), Open Doors is the statewide youth reengagement system for students ages 16 to 21 who are not on track to complete high school. Open Doors providers include districts, colleges, for-profit companies, community-based organizations, and educational service districts. Students reconnect with learning through one of the system's four pathways: high school diploma, GED-Plus, college, and career.

Community Partnerships for Reengagement Initiative

The Community Partnerships for Reengagement Initiative (CPRI)¹ uses data to promote shared learning across Washington state's Open Doors Youth Reengagement system and nationally about promising youth reengagement practices and program models. A suite of [CPRI reports](#) describe the statewide Open Doors system and outcomes. This includes detailed profiles of six sites with evidence of promising outcomes for the youth most impacted by education, social, and economic injustice.

¹ Education Northwest, Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, National League of Cities, and Achieving the Dream came together in 2021 with funding from the Ballmer Group and Kaiser Family Foundation to launch the CPRI.

Following is a summary of what we learned through this initiative (Petrokubi et al., 2023):

- **Open Doors serves a diverse group of students—with a high proportion impacted by disparities.** Young people say they enroll in Open Doors for a variety of reasons: experiences of negative school climate and bias, insufficient mental health resources, caring for family members or children, and seeking an online learning environment. Analysis of data from 2015–2021 shows that on average, 78 percent of each year’s Open Doors students experienced economic insecurity, 22 percent experienced homelessness, and 50 percent identified as people of color. Students on average entered the program with 9.5 credits and a GPA of 1.3, and most (82%) enrolled when they were 18 or younger. Overall, 38 percent entered the program when they were both 18 years old or younger and had six or fewer of the 24 high school credits required to graduate.
- **Students say that they reconnect and stay engaged with learning when Open Doors programs offer a positive learning environment grounded in relationships and trust.** Analysis of data from 2015–2021 shows that on average 74 percent of each year’s students achieved an indicator of academic progress, 53 percent enrolled for at least six months consecutively or met their pathway goal, and 26 percent earned a high school diploma or GED during the program.
- **More work is needed to address disparities in access and outcomes.** Many students reach their pathway goals despite barriers when Open Doors programs provide case management along with personalized and relevant learning. However, Open Doors students experience disparities in outcomes by race-ethnicity and eligibility for additional educational services (Hodara et al., 2023). Additionally, program models, practices, and outcomes—including access to various pathway options—vary across the state.

2023 Open Doors Summit

In October 2023, 200 providers and partners from across the state came together at an Open Doors Summit to discuss the CPRI findings. Participants’ energy during the summit was high as they examined the data, engaged in peer-to-peer learning, and identified opportunities to strengthen Open Doors program partnerships, data systems, and policy. And providers have ideas for how to keep the momentum going! This brief summarizes **three key sets of recommendations** that emerged from the summit:





1. Increase providers’ opportunities for peer learning and connection.



2. Build state and provider capacity to use data for continuous learning and improvement.



3. Improve policies and guidelines to expand access and equity.

Recommendations	Next Steps Identified by Summit Participants
 <p data-bbox="207 464 561 569">1. Increase providers' opportunities for peer learning and connection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="591 260 1390 373">a. Establish a professional association of youth reengagement providers to support shared learning and advocacy at the state and local levels. <li data-bbox="591 401 1390 514">b. Connect providers through a provider directory, resource repository (e.g., sample tools, materials), and/or local youth reengagement networks. <li data-bbox="591 541 1390 611">c. Hold the Open Doors Summit annually and/or host smaller regional convenings.
 <p data-bbox="207 842 561 989">2. Build state and provider capacity to use data for continuous learning and improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="591 638 1435 793">a. Create an Open Doors data dashboard that reports statewide and program-level data (e.g., IAP progress, stick rates) to help programs contextualize their own data, learn from similar programs, and identify common areas for improvement. <li data-bbox="591 821 1435 976">b. Revisit the required annual data reported to OSPI to ensure the end-of-year report promotes continuous program improvement and accountability. This may include aligning the reports more closely with the theory of action. <li data-bbox="591 1003 1435 1199">c. Develop program capacity to access and use multiple forms of data to strengthen design, implementation, and evaluation. This includes support for programs in collecting and using both quantitative and qualitative data on student priorities, experiences in the program, and post-program outcomes.
 <p data-bbox="207 1430 561 1535">3. Improve policies and guidelines to expand access and equity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="591 1226 1446 1381">a. Develop an equitable funding model for Open Doors that supports 12 months of programming, barrier-reduction resources, increased funding, and incentives for partnerships beyond districts with attention to community-based and local providers. <li data-bbox="591 1409 1446 1522">b. Expand access to Open Doors programs and pathway options to underserved areas across the state so that more young people can find a program that fits their goals. <li data-bbox="591 1549 1446 1661">c. Improve statewide guidance on case management (e.g., staff roles, ratios) and recommended practices (e.g., common intake tools, student orientation/onboarding materials, IAP tracking databases).

The CPRI data demonstrates the need for a thriving Open Doors Youth Reengagement system and the potential for programs to positively impact young people's lives. These recommendations will unlock Open Doors' potential to better serve young people and communities by providing the resources necessary to match the need, promoting continuous learning and improvement across the system, and supporting providers in improving student outcomes.

References

- Hodara, M., Fujita-Conrads, E., & Petrokubi, J. (2023). *The Washington state Open Doors Youth Reengagement system: Students served and program outcomes 2015–2021*. Education Northwest. <https://opendoorssummit.ednw.org/pdf/wa-state-open-doors-report.pdf>
- Lewis, K. (2023). *Ensuring an equitable recovery: Addressing Covid-19's impact on education*. Measure of America, Social Science Research Council. <https://measureofamerica.org/youth-disconnection-2023/>
- Petrokubi, J., Cooley, S., Fujita-Conrads, E., Hodara, M., & McLennan, D. (2023). *Community Partnerships for Reengagement Initiative summary report*. Education Northwest. <https://opendoorssummit.ednw.org/pdf/cpri-exec-summary-report-508c.pdf>
- Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2023, October). *Washington state report card*. <https://washingtonstaterreportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103300>