

Ensuring All Kids Have Opportunities to Succeed

June 2018



About the *State of Washington's Kids 2018* series

The *State of Washington's Kids 2018* looks at how kids of color are leading our state into a more racially diverse future. Through this series of briefs, KIDS COUNT in Washington seeks to address the fact that too many kids have never been well served by old structures that disproportionately channeled opportunity, education and prosperity along lines of race.

For this series, we asked local leaders: *What would it take for Washington to be the best state for kids? How do we make sure young kids have a healthy start, have their basic needs met, and have the opportunity to succeed in school and in life?* Their responses have informed the analysis and solutions we offer in this brief to fuel our common future.



KIDS COUNT in Washington is a partnership between the Children's Alliance and the Washington State Budget & Policy Center.

A high-quality education system – one that empowers children, including children of color, to excel in their early years through higher education – gives kids what they need to reach their full potential in life.

Over the past four years, Washington state has made concerted investments in public schools. It has also sustained or advanced state and federal investments in quality child care and pre-kindergarten, voluntary parent-child home visiting and other services that support the early care and education of Washingtonians from birth to age five.

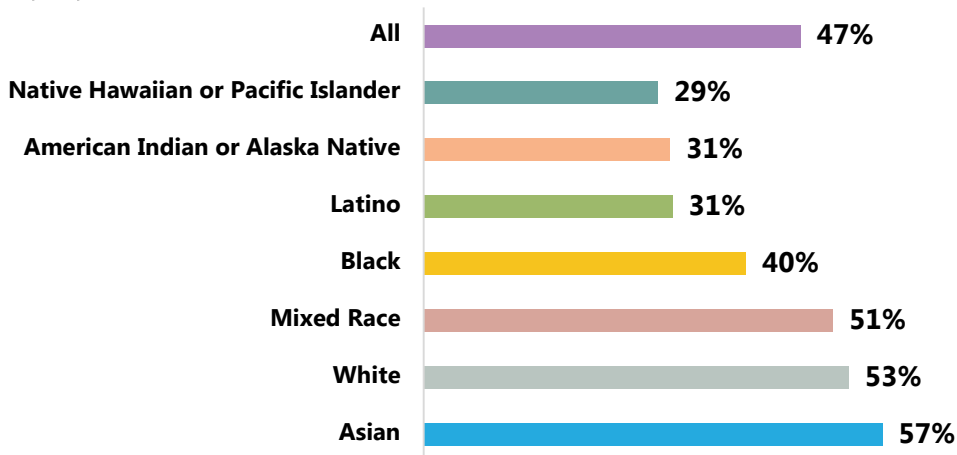
In the coming years, these changes will be put to a crucial test: Will they help children, especially children of color, surmount the barriers to quality K-12 learning and lifelong achievement?

Start Strong:

In order for every child to have the opportunity to succeed in school and in life, we need to ensure that when kids enter public schools in Washington, they start strong with early childhood education, stay strong through the K-12 years and finish strong through graduation so they are ready for college and career.

Chart 1. Many kids of color face the greatest barriers to a strong start in school

Percent of students ready for kindergarten by race and ethnicity, Washington state, 2017-18



Source: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction WaKIDS data, 2017-18.

Note on the data: The data source does not disaggregate Asian by ethnic groups. The Asian population is extremely diverse and there is significant variation in outcomes, and experiences for different Asian subgroups. The broader Asian category often masks the different educational outcomes and multiple barriers facing Southeast Asian students, for example

Fortunately, our state has powerful tools for removing barriers to kindergarten readiness through the Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP) and robust quality standards in child care. A 2017 analysis by KIDS COUNT in Washington found that additional investments in ECEAP to serve more kids would dramatically reduce disparities in kindergarten readiness for kids of color.¹

Another important component in ensuring children have a strong start in life is making sure that kids get high-quality child care when they are not in school. However, for far too many families, child care is not affordable.

Stay Strong

All along the way through school, kids and families should be supported to meet critical benchmarks in reading and math. However, racial disparities persist in our education system because of systemic racism, including factors like inequitable funding between low-income and high-income schools, housing instability and racially disproportionate disciplinary practices. As a result, children of color have lower rates of third grade reading proficiency than the state average. Only 25.9

Caring for Kids:

Family, friend and neighbor care are important for early childhood development

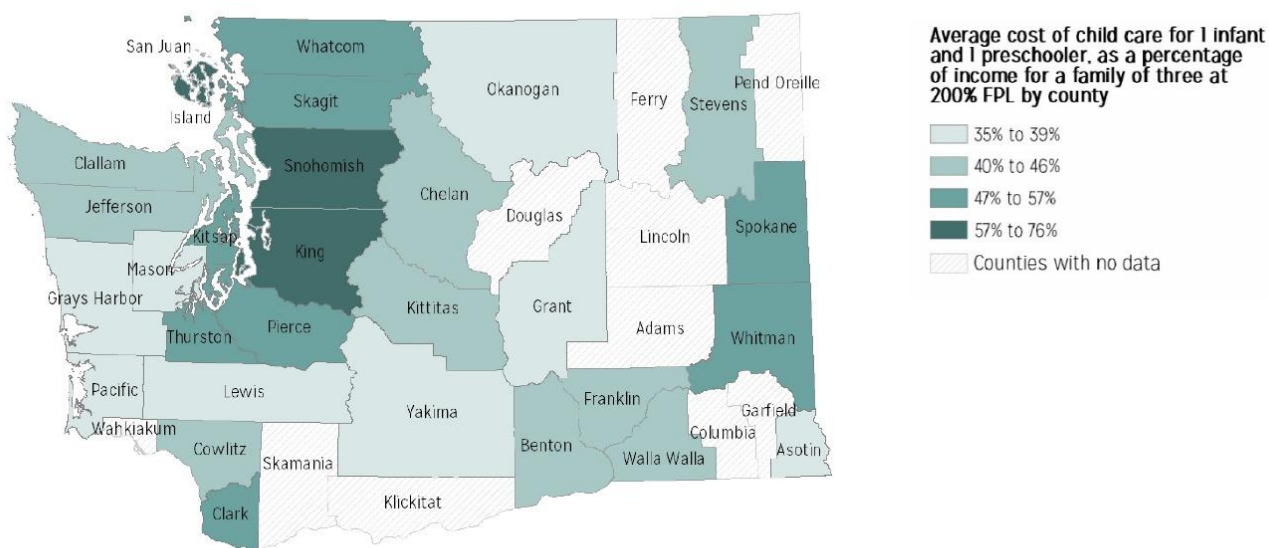
A child's learning doesn't wait for a formal opportunity; every day, especially in the peak years of cognitive development from birth to 3, young children are making the most of the language, cognitive and social experiences they encounter.

While their parents work, an estimated 1 in 4 Washington children ages birth to 5 spends their waking hours in the company of parents and other members of their households, in the homes of friends and relatives, and in less formal care. Family, friend and neighbor care is used by households across all races, ethnicities and socio-economic groups. The majority of young children in our state do not participate in formal early learning programs for a variety of reasons, including the high cost and limited supply of quality formal settings, and because of work schedules that extend beyond traditional operating hours. Studies reveal that the primary reason parents choose to have their children cared for by extended family is that they know and trust these individuals with whom they share culture, language, values and life-long relationships.³

As policymakers look for ways to expand and boost the quality of formal care and pre-K, these other settings will continue to matter. Family, friend and neighbor care and local facilitated playgroup opportunities at parks, libraries and community centers play a key role in providing diverse settings for enriching encounters.

Chart 2. Too many working families across the state cannot afford child care

Cost of child care by county for 1 infant and 1 preschooler, as a percentage of income for a family of three at 200% FPL.



Source: Child Care Aware of Washington: statewide median cost of care per month for one infant and one toddler in 2018 is \$2,037. 200 percent of the federal poverty level in 2018 is \$3,463 a month.

percent of American Indian and Alaska Native, 30.8 percent of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, 33.8 percent of Hispanic/Latinx and 35.3 percent of Black kids are meeting reading standards in the third grade.⁴ As kids progress in school through middle school and high school, this disproportionality persists all the way to graduation.

Education Leader Perspective



MATT CHARLTON

Superintendent of Manson School District in North Central Washington

The Manson School District, serving the unincorporated community of Manson in Chelan County, is making investments early in students' lives, and ensuring they finish school with a strong forward trajectory into college or a career.

Thanks to local voter levies and to the state's Early Childhood Education Assistance Program, the district offers free preschool to every four-year-old residing within its boundaries.

"We looked at the data," said Manson superintendent Matt Charlton, to make this decision. "In terms of readying children for kindergarten and overcoming language and poverty barriers," quality pre-K was the single best investment the school district could make.

The Manson School District also invests in middle and high school students' future careers. Career exploration through business, college and trade experiences start in the sixth grade and continue through students' senior years. In 12th grade, students complete a 30- to 40-hour internship experience and establish a mentoring relationship with a business owner. Whether working alongside a Microsoft engineer, a physical therapist or the manager of a winery, students pick up both job-specific and general workforce-related skills.

Manson's Latinx students are graduating at rates nearly 20 percentage points higher than the statewide average.²

"Our families see education as an important tool in stepping up to the next level of prosperity," says Charlton.

Finish Strong

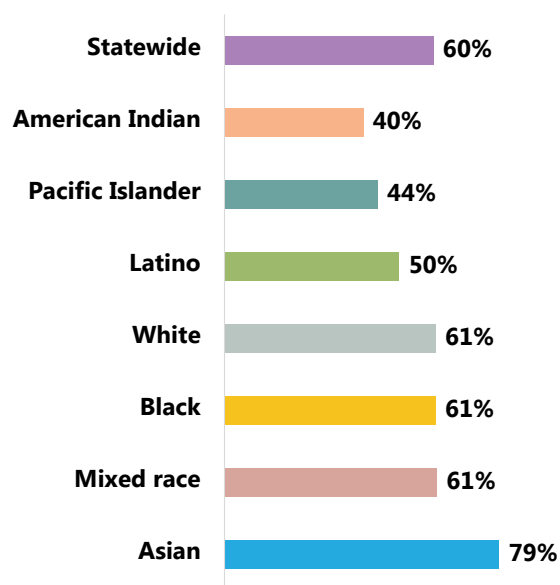
Our state should set every kid up for success as they make the transition to adulthood. A high school diploma is a necessary foundation for higher education and an important foundation for work. Whether or not kids graduate on time from high school is an important predictor of college enrollment and completing a college degree.

Kids of color face the greatest barriers to on-time graduation. An extensive body of research shows that systemic barriers like living in poverty and having low socioeconomic status are leading predictors of whether or not kids graduate on time.⁵

American Indian, Pacific Islander, Black, Latinx and mixed race students are two to three times more likely to live in poverty in Washington state than their white and Asian counterparts.⁶ These same groups of kids are also less likely to graduate on time or enroll in a post-secondary degree program.

Chart 2. Many kids of color face barriers to post secondary enrollment

Postsecondary enrollment by race and ethnicity, Washington state, 2015



Source: Source: OSPI K-12 Data and Reports, Postsecondary Enrollment, 2015

Note on the data: The data source does not disaggregate Asian by ethnic groups. The Asian population is extremely diverse and there is significant variation in outcomes, and experiences for different Asian subgroups. The broader Asian category often masks the different educational outcomes and multiple barriers facing Southeast Asian students, for example

Steps to Progress

State lawmakers, parents, educators and administrators should consider supporting the following steps to boost success of children in school and in life:

- Expand the reach and flexibility of the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program. In addition to ensuring more 3- and 4-year-olds can get quality pre-K, educators can pair ECEAP assistance with other sources of public and private funding, from Head Start to private tuition, to achieve expanded opportunity for a high-quality early childhood education experience.
- Invest in family, friend and neighbor care and facilitated play groups. Boosting the supply and frequency of quality early learning opportunities that match the cultural needs and preferences of parents, and that welcome culturally and linguistically diverse caregivers, is a cost-effective means of increasing school readiness among children from all walks of life; incentivizing school districts to host such groups would help to improve relationships between schools and families who feel excluded by traditional public education systems.
- Expand the state need grant, which provides tuition assistance to all students with a household income below 70 percent of state median income, so all income-eligible students have an affordable path to a degree or certificate.
- Invest in local communities and school districts that are designing programs and policy solutions that remove barriers for students of color to thrive in school, including investing in school board trainings on race and racial equity, ensuring parents of color are included in the hiring of leadership staff and principal leaders and other important steps to create accountability and make progress toward more equitable outcomes for students of color.

Notes

¹ “Early Learning Improves Kindergarten Readiness for All Kids in Washington State and Dramatically Reduces Disparities for Kids of Color” Kids Count Washington, April 2017.

² Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dropout and Graduation Reports, 2017-17, appendices D and J.

³ “Demographics of Family, Friend and Neighbor Care in the United States” National Center for Children in Poverty, 2008.

⁴ Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Report Card data, 2016-17.

⁵ “Factors Influencing High School Graduation: Issue Brief” Washington Student Achievement Council, 2015.

⁶ Washington State Budget & Policy Center analysis of 2016 American Community Survey data.

Acknowledgements

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