With 740,000 projected job openings by 2021, there are great opportunities for young people growing up in Washington state. **One thing is certain:** A postsecondary credential—such as a degree, apprenticeship, or certificate—is essential to compete for most of those opportunities.

However, just 31% of students in Washington's high school class of 2006 earned a postsecondary credential by age 26. That number is projected to increase to 40% for the high school class of 2015. Washington is making progress in better preparing its kids for the jobs being created here, but improvement isn’t coming fast enough.

**THE PATH TO 70% CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT FOR WASHINGTON STUDENTS**

63% of career job openings will be filled by workers with bachelor’s degrees or higher. 11% by workers with two-year degrees.

To get there, annual average growth in the credential attainment rate for Washington students must more than double—increasing from 0.9% to 2% growth per year.

It will require improvement throughout the education pipeline and an unrelenting focus on closing achievement gaps and improving outcomes.
MOVING FROM 40% TO 70% CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT REQUIRES NATION-LEADING PERFORMANCE: To achieve the 70% credential attainment goal for students in the high school class of 2030, Washington must deliver a nation-leading performance on key metrics, including high school graduation rate, the enrollment rate of high school graduates in postsecondary programs and two- and four-year institutions, and the rate at which those postsecondary students graduate and earn a credential. In addition, Washington must effectively reengage students who drop out of the education pipeline prior to credential completion.

Eighty-two percent of students in Washington’s high school class of 2015 earned a diploma. To set a trajectory to 70% credential attainment by age 26, the annual graduation rate must increase to 95%. Work is needed throughout the early learning-to-high school pipeline to make that happen.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS:
• Increase high-quality early learning options for low-income students
• Drive gains in 3rd grade reading proficiency
• Raise achievement at low-performing schools
• Support the 24-credit high school diploma
• Maintain competency-based graduation requirements

An estimated 77% of graduates from Washington’s high school class of 2015 have or will enroll in a postsecondary program at a two- or four-year institution. Raising that number to 95%—in addition to increasing the high school graduation rate—will position Washington to meet the credential attainment goal.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS:
• Improve consistency of “High School and Beyond Plan” implementation
• Make postsecondary education more convenient (e.g. better use of satellite, branch, and digital campuses)
• Reduce financial barriers by extending aid programs
• Increase utilization of programs that enable students to earn college credit while in high school

Sixty-three percent of graduates from Washington’s high school class of 2015 who enroll in a postsecondary program at a two- or four-year institution are projected to graduate and earn a credential by age 26. That number must increase seven points for Washington to hit the credential attainment goal for the high school class of 2030.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS:
• Ensure students enroll in “best-fit” programs to deliver their desired credentials
• Increase support for students transferring from two- to four-year programs
• Expand Guided Pathway programs at community and technical colleges
• Invest in student wraparound supports, especially for systemically underserved populations

If Washington meets the benchmark goals detailed above, 63% of high school students will earn a credential by age 26. To meet the 70% goal, we must also effectively reengage students who drop out of formal education or training and get them on track to credential completion.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS:
• Include them in the P–16 longitudinal data system to better understand and address education pipeline leaks
• Increase access to workforce development programs
• Invest in pathways to high-quality certificates
• Support competency-based diploma programs
• Expand access to high-quality online credential programs

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