

Washington Graduation Pathway Options Stakeholder Feedback Project

Year 2, Volume I



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strobel Consulting collected District Survey and focus group data during the second year of a three-year project. The data will inform the Washington State Board of Education's (SBE) understanding of district stakeholder perceptions regarding the new high school diploma pathways. The analysis will continue to support the Board's required reporting to the education committees of the legislature required in section 202 of Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 1599 (E2SHB 1599) (Chapter 252, Laws of 2019)¹ passed in 2019. Specifically, the Bill requires that the report address:

- 1) Whether changes to the existing eight pathways should be made and what those changes should be;
- 2) The barriers schools and districts have to offering all of the graduation pathways and recommendations to eliminate or reduce those barriers for school districts;
- 3) Whether all students have equitable access to all of the graduation pathways and, if not, recommendations for reducing the barriers students may have to accessing all of the graduation pathways; and
- 4) Whether additional graduation pathways should be included and recommendations for what those pathways should be.²

The three-year project was designed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data so as to provide the Washington State Board of Education with a comprehensive overview of feedback from key stakeholders. The year two (YR2) data gathered is intended to examine district stakeholders' (district and school level personnel, students, and parents) perceptions of the current graduation pathway options, including suggestions for changes, perceived barriers, equitable access, and input on whether or not other pathway options should be added. In addition, information obtained from the year one (YR1) findings of the project informed the project design and areas of deeper focus examined in YR2, as well as the related instruments and protocols for YR2. Data gathered from years one and two will also provide additional insight in the final and third year of the project regarding potential strategies for addressing key findings and implementing related processes.

Please note, that the perceptions of some, or all, of the survey respondents may or may not accurately reflect current state or local policy. Potential discrepancies between the perceptions of respondents and current state or local policy does not make such findings inaccurate. Rather, these types of findings are crucial, because they highlight current challenges in communication, implementation and policy perception. If we want to truly understand the perspective of

¹ RCW 28A.655.260

² These reporting requirements pertain to the final SBE report to the legislature due December 10, 2022. By addressing them all, this report provides more than enough information to address the requirements pertaining to the report due to the legislature by August 1, 2021.



stakeholders, then their perception of the truth, or what is true for them, is a deeply meaningful finding, especially when it comes to the perception of students.

The overarching findings of this analysis indicate that³:

- ◆ Students, parents, and educators agree there is a need to include pathway options that provide students with additional opportunities to develop life and employability skills. Indeed, more than one-half all respondents indicated that an Employability/Life Skills pathway should be added, with students having the highest response rate for adding such a pathway (69 percent). Feedback from parents, students and educators participating in open response questions and focus groups, regardless of students' post high school goals or special education status, indicated this is an important and missing component of the high school graduation pathway options.
- ◆ Similarly, students, parents, and educators agree there is a need to include additional pathway options that provide students with more opportunities for mastery-based learning (MBL). Indeed, nearly half of all respondents indicated that a Mastery-Based Learning pathway should be added, with students having the highest response rate for adding such a pathway (56 percent). Feedback from parents, students and educators participating in open response questions and focus groups, regardless of students' post high school goals or special education status, indicated this is an important and missing component of the high school graduation pathway options.
- ◆ The majority of educators surveyed (60 percent) indicated changes do need to be made to the existing graduation pathways. Specifically, many educators communicated that more flexibility within the pathways was needed to allow students to explore both academic, personal, and future career interests. They also reported that more flexibility within the career and technical education (CTE) pathway was needed in order to offer this as a graduation pathway option and allow students to fully utilize this pathway. Graduation requirements in general were cited as an area needing change and data confirms that many stakeholders feel meeting a graduation pathway requirement is not necessary. Lastly, educator stakeholders also indicated changes need to be made to the pathways to address equity in terms of student access to the pathways.
- ◆ In districts/schools that were not able to offer all of the graduation pathways the transition course, Bridge to College, and CTE were most consistently cited as being the pathways with the greatest number of barriers to offering them. However, while Bridge to College is considered one of several pathway options that falls under the Math/English Language Arts (ELA) umbrella, it is important to note that, for many students the CTE pathway is the only option they are able to utilize. Respondents that reported their district/school did not offer the CTE pathway reported that staffing, both numbers and qualification, was the main barrier to offering the CTE pathway. This

³ Please see the following section for a "Summary of Key Findings" and the "Key Findings" section for more in-depth information on the results of the study).



was especially true for small districts, small schools, alternative learning experience (ALE) schools, remote schools, and other alternative learning programs.

- ◆ Additionally, only 39 percent of educator respondents reported their district/school had a CTE sequence that met the needs of students. Again, other data collected during YR1 and YR2 indicates that the CTE pathway is the only graduation pathway option that some students can utilize to graduate, making the need to offer the CTE pathway crucial.
- ◆ Of student respondents, 18 percent indicated they are “not good” or “not good at all” when it comes to math, 8 percent when it comes to ELA, and 33 percent when it comes to test taking⁴. This is an important finding considering current research shows a correlation between higher academic scores in math and reading when students perceive themselves as being “good at” these subjects. Even when confounding factors are accounted for, a positive attitude toward math and reading is still a strong predictor of performance in these areas (Chen, et. al. 2018 & Hemmings, et. al. 2011). Of the current graduation pathway options in Washington, a large proportion require higher levels of math and reading proficiency and/or are assessment based⁵. Parent perceptions of their child’s/children’s capabilities in math, ELA, and test taking closely mirrored what was reported by students, though in the case of math and ELA capabilities it was
- ◆ A large proportion of students (24 percent) and parents (36 percent) indicated that there are zero to at least one graduation pathway option that would help them (students), or their child/children, achieve their post high school goals. Additionally, another 24 percent of students were unsure if there was a graduation pathway option that would help them achieve their post high school goals.
- ◆ There is lack of alignment between students’ post high school goals and access to pathways that support those goals. Specifically, data collected on open ended survey items and feedback reported during focus groups indicates that the majority of graduation pathway options support post high school goals that include attending a four year college or university, while there are few pathways that offer meaningful preparation for post high school goals that are focused on attending a two year college, entering the work force, entering a trade or trade related apprenticeship, or enlisting in the military.

The YR2 District Follow Up Survey (District Survey) is an attitudinal survey that captures the perceptions of various stakeholders taking the survey. As with any “perception”, each respondent’s individual response reflects their unique experiences and viewpoints.

⁴ Per the Washington State Report Card hosted online by the OSPI there are 345,751 high school students in the state of WA. Therefore, these findings potentially represent 62,235 students who do not believe they are good at math, 27,660 students who do not believe they are good at ELA and 114,097 who do not believe they are good at test taking.

⁵ Five of the eight pathways are assessment based (State Assessment, AP/IB/Cambridge, SAT/ACT, Combination, & ASVAB) and five are course based (Dual Credit, AP/IB/Cambridge, Transition Course, Combination, & CTE).



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The key findings reported below are organized by research questions and highlight findings discussed in more detail throughout the report.

SHOULD CHANGES TO THE EXISTING GRADUATION PATHWAYS BE MADE AND WHAT SHOULD THOSE CHANGES SHOULD BE?

- Most respondents agreed that changes should be made to the current graduation pathway options. However, more high school administrators/personnel than district personnel agreed that changes to the existing graduation pathways should be made.
- Data suggests there needs to be more flexibility within graduation pathway options, especially with regard to the CTE pathway. Stakeholders indicated that high school should be a time of exploration for students and that it's unrealistic to expect students to know what they want to do beyond high school when they are freshman or even sophomores and juniors.
- Stakeholders also reported disliking that there is little option to explore future academic interests or career paths during high school and would rather see more room for exploration included in the graduation pathway options.
- Additionally, respondents noted that there should be more freedom to explore classes within the CTE pathway, rather than requiring students to choose a sequence and stick with it, citing that there is lack of real knowledge about a given CTE sequence until students take the first few classes. Specifically, respondents indicated that students should be allowed to take any combination of courses to fulfil the two credit CTE graduation pathway requirement.
- Stakeholders expressed a desire to reduce graduation requirements in general, stating that students were overburdened with various graduation requirements and that with each additional requirement the barriers to graduation increase. Specifically, many stakeholders indicated they were unclear on the role of the high school diploma, what obtaining a diploma means for students, and whether or not adding additional graduation requirements was truly supporting students in their post-graduation goals or simply making it harder for them to graduate from high school.



WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS SCHOOL DISTRICTS HAVE TO OFFERING ALL OF THE GRADUATION PATHWAYS AND WHAT ARE POTENTIAL STRATEGIES TO ELIMINATE OR REDUCE THOSE BARRIERS?

- The top three reported barriers to offering all of the graduation pathway options are lack of funding, staffing, and resources. These barriers were specifically identified with regards to the CTE pathway and Bridge to College option. Limitations put in place during the current school year (2020-21) due to COVID-19, were also cited as a barrier to offering all the graduation pathways for some districts/schools.
- Results from open ended items on the District Survey and feedback from Focus Group participants indicate that the only graduation pathway option for students who do not test well, do not have a high reading or math proficiency, or are otherwise unable to meet one of the graduation pathway options involving a standardized assessment or other type of test, is the CTE sequence pathway. Therefore, it is unequitable if districts in the state do not have the ability to offer a CTE sequence that meets the pathway requirement. As of the 2020-21 school year, 19 percent of districts reported they are unable to offer a CTE sequence that meets pathway requirements
- Respondents from districts/schools who reported they did not offer all the available graduation pathways suggested changes to address lack of funding, issues with staffing, and scheduling barriers would allow them to offer more pathway options. Additionally, in districts/schools that did not offer a CTE pathway, respondents reported that in order to offer the CTE pathway they would need more funding and flexibility to include CTE credit earned online, or in another type of remote setting. Similarly, respondents in districts/schools that did not offer Bridge to College courses reported they would need additional resources and staffing in order to offer the Bridge to College pathway option.

DO ALL STUDENTS HAVE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ALL OF THE GRADUATION PATHWAYS AND, IF NOT, WHAT ARE POTENTIAL STRATEGIES TO REDUCE THE BARRIERS STUDENTS MAY HAVE TO ACCESSING ALL OF THE GRADUATION PATHWAYS?

- While just over one-half of educator respondents indicated that the graduation pathway options reflect the High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) of 76-100 percent of students, nearly 40 percent of educator stakeholders reported that only 0-75 percent of students had pathway options that reflected their HSBP.
- Data shows that educator respondents felt below grade level students, English Learners (EL), students with disabilities, and students experiencing homelessness were most at risk of not having a viable graduation pathway option.



- The majority of educator respondents from districts that have a CTE sequence/s available did not feel that the sequence/s met the needs of all or most students or did not match their post high school plans. This implies that a large number of students in the state do not have access to a pathway that meets their needs and is relevant to their future goals.
- Nearly one-half of students surveyed, and just over one-half of parents surveyed, were not worried about graduating. However, non-White parents and students, as well as parents and students receiving special education services, were all more likely to be worried about graduation than their counterparts.
- Both students and parents indicated that grades, COVID-19, and hybrid/online learning were the top reasons causing them to worry that they might not graduate. While parents and students were less concerned with COVID-19 health related issues, they indicated they were worried about the impact of COVID-19 policies on access to certain types of testing needed to graduate and the related difficulties with remote learning. There were also concerns expressed about the negative impact of online learning in terms of getting needed CTE courses not conducive to online learning.
- Nearly one-third of students reported that they are not good at taking tests. Parents tended to rate their child(ren) just slightly lower in test taking capabilities. This has evidence-based implications for how realistic it is to expect these students to satisfy any of the seven graduation pathways options that rely on a math or ELA assessment.
- One of the current graduation pathway options requires students to meet the standard on the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) by scoring at least the minimum established by the military for eligibility to serve in a branch of the armed forces. Feedback from respondents indicates that many students are utilizing this pathway option to, “check the box” for meeting a graduation pathway option even though they do not intend to enter the armed forces and the ASVAB pathway does not meaningfully reflect their goals beyond high school.

SHOULD ADDITIONAL GRADUATION PATHWAYS BE INCLUDED AND IF SO, WHAT PATHWAYS SHOULD BE ADDED AND WHAT IS THE ASSOCIATED RATIONALE FOR DOING SO?

- Most educators indicated that additional graduation pathways should be made available to students. Larger districts tended to agree more that pathway options should be increased, while smaller districts reported a higher rate of being unsure.
- Data collected during focus groups and on open ended survey items indicated that, regardless of students’ post high school goals, they would like to see increased opportunities for life skills and career readiness built into the graduation pathway options.



- Data collected during focus groups and on open ended survey items indicated that opportunities for mastery-based learning should be integrated into graduation pathway options and that graduation pathways options should not rely solely upon standardized assessments to measure skill attainment and content mastery.
- Data collected during focus groups and on open ended response survey items also indicated there is a lack of pathway options for students that intend to enter the trades directly after high school. In addition, students with these post high school goals lack opportunities for preparation and are largely unsupported by the graduation pathway options.
- A large proportion of respondents indicated a meaningful pathway option for students receiving special education services needs to be added. Specifically, there is not currently a viable graduation pathway option for most students receiving special education services that is both meaningful and reflective of their post high school goals. Data gathered indicates that a large proportion of students receiving special education services are funneled into the CTE pathway regardless of whether the CTE sequences offered at their school have anything to do with their post high school plans.
- The majority of survey respondents (educators, students, and parents) agreed that an employability/life skills pathway should be added.
- The majority of all respondents (educators, students, and parents) agreed that completion of an industry recognized credential should be added as a graduation pathway.
- More than one-half of students and parents surveyed felt that only a few to none of the graduation pathway options would work for them (students) or their child/children. Additionally, nearly one-fourth of both student and parent respondents were “unsure” if the graduation pathways would work for them (students) or their child/children.
- Qualitative data collected on open response items and during focus groups indicated that a large proportion of respondents believe that meeting the credit requirements for graduation should be enough for a student to earn a diploma.
- Respondents who opted to provide additional feedback indicated that pathways will not be equitable until there are additional graduation pathway options that do not rely solely on a standardized test to measure academic or skill attainment and proficiency.
- Qualitative data suggest that respondents see a need for more student driven pathways, where students have the chance to explore their interests, to engage with their learning, and be an active part of what constitutes a meaningful graduation pathway for them.



- Data shows respondents think graduation pathway options should be added to address the perception that there is a lack of equity for smaller schools and districts when it comes to offering the current graduation pathway options.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES FOR CONSIDERATION & FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The following provides data driven suggestions and potential strategies to consider as future graduation pathway development occurs.

1. Data collected during year two of the project strongly supports the need for additional graduation pathway options, especially pathways that are not assessment based. Specifically, graduation pathways should be added that positively impact both equity for districts/schools in their ability to offer all of the graduation pathway options, and increase the likelihood that *all* students have access to pathways that are meaningful and supportive of their post-graduation goals. Future work on the incorporation, design, and parameters of additional pathways is needed and should be informed by stakeholders such as students, educators, parents, industry professionals and other content experts.

“I’m from a small district with only two CTE pathways and these are not meaningful to most of the students who are taking them, but it’s their only option, so we’re all complicit in making them take courses that mean nothing to them, because we want them to have that diploma.” – Educator

“10 percent of our students are going to be farmers and we don’t recognize these things, there aren’t pathways for them. They actually know what they want to do, and we can’t support them.” - Educator

2. Graduation pathway options and the parameters under which they are satisfied need to be more student driven and incorporate greater opportunities for mastery-based learning. This provides students the opportunity to apply their learning in real world settings, and demonstrate skill attainment and academic mastery in ways that truly reflect their learning experiences, inspire them to be lifelong learners, and honor their post-graduation goals.

“Not every student has the luxury of missing classes for external learning opportunities, but I’ve learned absolutely nothing in school taking and passing my AP tests. The things I’ve learned that matter most to me have all come from the opportunities I have outside of school, in the real world.” – Student



3. Students should have pathway options that truly reflect their High School and Beyond Plan. This requires that the High School and Beyond Plan be a meaningful instrument that informs the supports students receive in planning their coursework, satisfying the requirements of their chosen graduation pathway and ensuring they leave high school with the skills, knowledge and *experiences* they need to achieve their post-graduation goals, regardless of what those are.

“As a student I wish that we worked backwards, where we asked students what they want to do and who they want to be and then built a pathway around that.” – Student

4. Within the context of the research questions regarding the graduation pathway options there is a lack of agreement on what a high school graduate should leave high school with. In order to develop instruments and protocols that fully answer the research questions, it would be impactful to have a consistent definition, at the state level, of what import skills, experiences, and knowledge a high school graduate should leave high school with.

“My son is four-year college bound, but where are the hands on experiences so he knows how to navigate life outside the classroom? I want him to have real world learning experiences in high school. He’s smart and can pass all of the tests, but I worry when he gets to college, he won’t know how to navigate the other important aspects of life.” – Parent

5. Subsequent instrument design should be informed by findings from the first two years of the study, so as to assure research questions are addressed to the highest extent possible by the end of year three. This may mean adjusting research questions, basic timelines (within the bounds of dates previously set for key deliverables), or data collection methods with input from the SBE.
6. Data collection in year three should involve all stakeholder groups and not be limited to any one segment. This can only enhance the viability of the data collected in terms of addressing the overarching research questions. Additionally, there will likely continue to be themes and associated data that diverge when compared in a subgroup analysis and these are important findings to capture. For example, we might want to distill findings down further to subcategories within the larger key stakeholder groups, such as looking at differences in data between industry stakeholders and students or educators to help determine what changes need to occur to make graduation pathway options more relevant to the goals of students beyond high school. Including all stakeholder groups in future data collection activities helps ensure we are collecting useful data.



STUDY BACKGROUND

Per Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 1599 (E2SHB 1599), beginning with the class of 2020 Washington students are required to meet the state and local credit graduation requirements, complete a High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP), and complete one of the following graduation pathway options in order to graduate⁶:

- 1) Meet or exceed the graduation scores on state high school assessments in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math (Smarter Balanced Assessments or Washington Access to Instruction & Measurement);
- 2) Earn credit in dual credit courses (for example, Running Start or College in the High School) in ELA and math;
- 3) Earn high school credit, with a C+ grade, or receiving a three or higher on the Advanced Placement (AP) exam, or equivalent, in AP, International Baccalaureate (IB), or Cambridge International (CI) courses in ELA and mathematics; or receiving a four or higher on International Baccalaureate exams;
- 4) Meet or exceed the graduation scores in the math and reading/English/writing portions of the SAT or ACT;
- 5) Earn credit in a transition course, as defined in E2SHB 1599, (including but not limited to a Bridge to College course, which is a senior course for students who earned a Level 2 on the Smarter Balanced Assessment);
- 6) Meet any combination of at least one ELA and one math option of those options listed in #1-5;
- 7) Meet standards on the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery); and
- 8) Complete a sequence of Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses (Washington State Board of Education)⁷.

⁶ The armed services test (ASVAB) and the CTE course sequence are new graduation pathways; the other pathways described in HB 1599 have been previously approved alternatives to the assessment requirements. Students who pursue these pathways (ASVAB or CTE) do not need to meet English and math requirements separately. English and math content are embedded in both pathways—and both pathways meet the purpose of a high school diploma: to declare that a student is ready for success in postsecondary education, gainful employment, and citizenship, and is equipped with the skills to be a lifelong learner (RCW 28A.230.090). A student who meets either the ASVAB standard or the CTE pathway requirements has met the graduation pathway requirement.

⁷ Washington State Board of Education. Graduation Pathways <http://www.sbe.wa.gov/our-work/graduation-requirements/graduation-pathways>



In order to meet the reporting requirements set forth by the education committees of the legislature, the SBE partnered with Strobel Consulting to design and implement surveys and focus groups that would address SBE's need to collect useful data from district administrators/personnel, school administrators/personnel, parents, and most importantly, students. In the second year of the project Strobel Consulting analyzed the annual Basic Education Compliance Survey, and conducted a School District Follow Up Survey and focus groups during spring of 2021.

Beyond addressing the reporting requirements of E2SHB 1599 the following project goals and objectives include lessons learned and potential strategies to improve the high school graduation pathway options, future data collection, and project planning and implementation. Specifically, the overarching objectives of the project are:

- a. Survey findings and associated reports provide comprehensive and relevant information, including potential strategies that are useful to SBE in making well-informed decisions on what to include in its reports to the legislature.
- b. Data collected as part of this project informs reasonable and valid evidence based decision-making processes.
- c. Survey, interview, and focus group respondents are representative of Washington's population, not only demographically, but also in terms of their role in the education system.
- d. Survey and interview questions, formats, and delivery modes are accessible to diverse potential participants, including, but not limited to: people from communities of color, people whose preferred mode of communication is not email, people whose home language is not English, people with disabilities, and people from households with a range of income levels and geographic characteristics (e.g. urban / suburban / rural / eastern Washington / western Washington).

Prior to the start of the district follow up survey the SBE collected preliminary data regarding the graduation pathway options via the annual Basic Education Compliance Survey. The majority of districts completed the Basic Education Compliance Survey in the fall 2020. The survey questions capture details of pathway implementation for all pathway options except for the SAT and ACT.

Findings from the Basic Education Compliance Survey report regarding the graduation pathway options for the 252 school districts serving high school grades include the following:

- ◆ The majority of districts surveyed had five (27 percent), six (32 percent) or seven (27 percent) pathway options available.
- ◆ Only 2 percent of districts offered only one pathway (Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBA)).
- ◆ An analysis of the number of pathways offered by district enrollment size reveals that districts with higher enrollment are more likely to be able to offer five or more pathways.
- ◆ With regards to the individual pathways, other than the Smarter Balanced Assessment, most of



the districts in the state are able to offer the Dual Credit pathway.

- ◆ The pathways that are available to the least number of districts is Transition Course and AP, IB or CI.

The following report provides detailed information on the findings of the second year of the Washington Graduation Pathway Options Stakeholder Feedback project. Key findings from survey results, gathered from districts, parents and students regarding the graduation pathway options, are presented along with feedback obtained via focus groups. The report concludes by highlighting lessons learned.

STUDY OVERVIEW

The District Follow Up Survey (District Survey) and focus groups were conducted in an effort to understand the high school graduation pathway options available in the state of Washington within the context of the overarching research questions listed below). All respondents were given an opportunity to provide open ended feedback about the graduation pathway options and recommendations for changes or new pathways. As well, all were asked about the addition of pathways options that were identified in YR1 of the project as recommended additions. District and school administrators were asked about the availability of CTE in their school(s) and whether or not the current graduation pathway options provide equitable access to *each and every student*. The following research questions guided the development of the project and subsequent instruments and protocols:

- ◆ Should changes to the existing graduation pathways be made and what should those changes be?
- ◆ What are the barriers school districts have to offering all of the graduation pathways and what are potential strategies to eliminate or reduce those barriers?
- ◆ Do all students have equitable access to all of the graduation pathways and, if not, what are potential strategies to reduce the barriers students may have to accessing all of the graduation pathways?
- ◆ Should additional graduation pathways be included and if so, what should those pathways should be?

To collect data addressing the aforementioned research questions, a District Survey and focus groups were administered to, or hosted with, a wide range of Washington educators, parents and students. Focus groups were centered around three content areas: student voice, mastery-based learning, and student receiving special education services. Dedicated efforts were made to include a diverse scope of participants reflective of the demography of both the state and educators in the state. The online window for District Survey completion was 45 days, during which time 1,593



responses were collected. The largest stakeholder group completing the survey was District/School Personnel (Educators)⁸, comprising 55 percent of the sample which is important, as the original intent of the project in year two, as tasked by the legislature, was to examine feedback from district personnel. The addition of student and parent responses on both the District Survey and in focus groups was done to ensure that the data collected was both meaningful and useful beyond the scope of the three year project. What follows is a description of the methods and measures used to collect the data and a detailed breakdown of the results.

METHODOLOGY

The Washington Graduation Pathway Options Stakeholder Feedback Project Year Two (YR2) commenced in December of 2020 and concluded in June of 2021. In order to collect district stakeholder feedback, stakeholders were invited to participate in an online survey, “WA Graduation Pathway Options – District Survey 2021” (District Survey) and focus groups that gathered feedback on the graduation pathway options as related to students receiving special education services, mastery-based learning, and student perspective. A total of 1,594 stakeholders completed the District Survey and 73 stakeholders participated in one of fifteen focus groups.

In order to ensure the maximum number of stakeholders were able to provide feedback by participating in project activities the Washington State Board of Education (SBE) notified stakeholders of the District Survey and focus groups via email using their listserv. As well, Strobel Consulting reached out to stakeholders directly, by sending direct emails inviting them to participate and share the survey links and focus group information with their colleagues, staff, students and parents.

Additionally, as responses to the surveys were collected, Strobel Consulting contacted stakeholders who opted to share their information and wanted to be included in future project activities, to ask if they would share the survey links and focus group information with their colleagues, students and students’ parents or guardians. This served as a way to inform stakeholders of opportunities to share related feedback and collect additional data from these stakeholder groups.

⁸ The remainder of the report uses “educators” to refer to respondents that categorized themselves as school or district personnel when taking the survey.



QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Quantitative data collected included the District Survey and analysis of the Preliminary Basic Education Compliance Reporting Analysis. In addition, we carefully reviewed the full OSPI HB 1599 School District Analysis, which informed aspects of this work.

DISTRICT SURVEY

School level and district personnel, parents, and students completed an online District Survey between March 29 and May 13, 2021. The survey, created by Strobel Consulting, was available in both English and Spanish and was developed to measure:

- ◆ Whether changes to the existing graduation pathways should be made and what those changes should be.
- ◆ The barriers school districts have to offering all of the graduation pathways and potential strategies to eliminate or reduce those barriers.
- ◆ Whether all students have equitable access to all of the graduation pathways and, if not, potential strategies to reduce the barriers students may have to accessing all of the graduation pathways.
- ◆ Whether additional graduation pathways should be included and ideas on what those pathways should be.
- ◆ Interest in focus group participation; and
- ◆ Demographic information.

Findings from the District Survey will be used to address the reporting requirements of E2SHB 1599 and the overarching project goals and objectives, to include lessons learned and potential strategies to improve both high school graduation pathway options and future project planning and implementation.

QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Qualitative data collected included open ended survey data and focus groups.

FOCUS GROUPS

District stakeholder groups around the state were notified of the Focus Groups via SBE email distribution lists and direct contact with previous survey respondents who indicated they were interested in focus group participation and requested follow up communication by providing their contact information. Contacts on the SBE listserv were encouraged to share the focus group participation information with colleagues, other educators, students and parents. Emails included information about the focus groups, as well as a link to register for attending or hosting (student) focus groups. The focus group registration captured contact information for the individual and their preferred focus group dates and times.



All available dates, times and locations for the online focus groups were provided on the registration form and respondents were asked to indicate their top three choices for attending. Each focus group was capped at seven participants to ensure the likelihood of successful moderation that allowed all participants to have a chance to share their thoughts and feedback. During the registration process participants indicated which of the following themed focus groups they would like to participate in:

- 1) Strengths and weaknesses of existing pathways available for students receiving special education services, what is needed in the future, and ideas participants had to address areas of weakness (open to students, parents and educators).
- 2) Whether or not the current graduation pathway options incorporate Mastery-Based Learning and if not, to help identify what types of pathway options or changes to state law might be needed to include opportunities for Mastery-Based Learning in the graduation pathway options (open to students parents and educators).
- 3) Identifying student needs in terms of graduation pathways and what students feel they aren't currently getting and/or what is really working for them (open to students only).

The mastery-based learning and special education focus groups were open to students, parents, and educators, while the student focus groups were open to students only. Every effort was made to register participants for their top choices. As space in the focus groups filled, participants were contacted via email to select additional dates/times that were still available.

Focus groups took place online. This allowed equitable access for all stakeholders that wanted to participate in a focus group regardless of their physical location. This also allowed for the observance of social distancing measures to mitigate exposure and spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Focus groups occurred over a period of two weeks from May 3, 2021 to May 13, 2021. Focus group times ranged from 9:00 AM to 7:00 PM PDT to accommodate as many stakeholder schedules as possible. In total fifteen online focus groups were hosted, with a total of 73 participants. Focus group sessions ranged in attendance from one to seven attendees.

OPEN ENDED SURVEY QUESTIONS

Survey respondents were given the opportunity to respond to two to four open ended survey questions.

District and school educators who indicated their school or district did not currently offer all the graduation pathway options were asked to describe the changes that need to happen for their school or district to offer all of the graduation pathway options. District and school educators who indicated changes should be made to the existing graduation pathway options were asked to elaborate on what those changes should be. As well, district and school educators who indicated that additional pathway options need to be created to ensure that each and every student has



equitable access to a graduation pathway option that supports their High School and Beyond Plan were asked to list the graduation pathway options they felt needed to be added.

Student and parent respondents who indicated there were no graduation pathway options that would help them (students), or their children achieve their post high school goals were asked to elaborate upon the types of graduation pathway options that would help them (students) or their children achieve their post high school goals.

All respondents were given the opportunity to share any additional feedback they had regarding the survey, or the graduation pathway options in general. Open ended questions asked in response to previously selected answers were required, while the general open-ended question asked of all survey respondents were not. Open ended questions allowed researchers to gain a deeper understanding of certain responses provided.



SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

SURVEY RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Stakeholder Survey respondents included high school students, parents/caregivers, and educators. The majority of respondents were educators, comprising 55 percent of the total sample⁹.

Table 1. Stakeholder Survey Respondent Types

Respondent Types	Count	Percent
Students	256	16%
Parents / Caregivers	467	29%
Educators	870	55%
Total	1,593	

Student respondents were asked to indicate their grade level, as the survey was only open to current high school students; the majority of which were spread quite evenly across the high school grade levels with a higher proportion coming from 12th grade and the lowest proportion coming from 10th grade.

Table 2. Student Respondent Grade Level

Student Respondent Grade	Count	Percent
9 th Grade	63	25%
10 th Grade	57	22%
11 th Grade	65	25%
12 th Grade	71	28%

Parent/Caregiver respondents were asked if they had a child or children in high school (grades 9-12), and if so, they were asked to indicate their child/children’s current grade level/s. The majority of parent respondents (96 percent) had a child or children currently in high school. Of the parent respondents with children in high school, the majority were in 9th grade (27 percent). Many parents had more than one child and therefore may have entered multiple grade spans and were given the option to complete the survey questions for each of their high school aged children, as questions were designed specifically to ask about a single child/student.

⁹ Adult respondents were allowed to complete the survey a second time if they were both a parent and a district or school employee.



Table 3. Parent Respondent Child Grade Levels

Parent/Caregiver Respondent Child Grade	Count	Percent
9th Grade	145	27%
10th Grade	129	24%
11th Grade	136	26%
12th Grade	120	23%

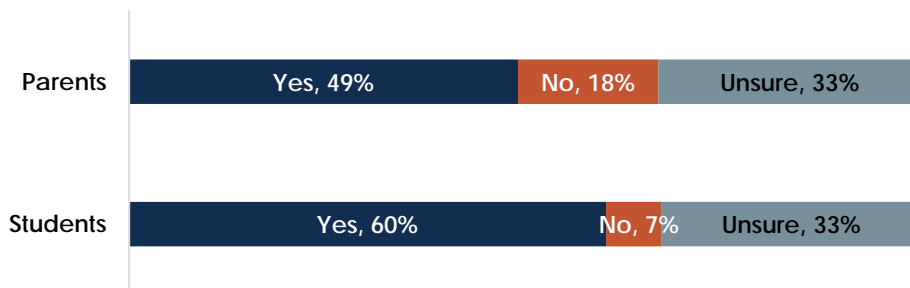
High School personnel, parents/caregivers and students were asked to indicate the type of high school where they worked or where they attended. The majority (<85 percent) of respondents in all categories indicated they worked at, or attended, a traditional public high school.

Table 4. Respondent School Types

School Types	School	Student	Parent
Traditional Public High School	85%	88%	87%
Alternative High School	10%	4%	6%
Other	4%	4%	1%
Charter High School	0%	0%	0%
Prefer not to answer	1%	4%	6%

Both high school students and the parents of high school students were asked to indicate if they (the student) or their high school aged child/children had a High School and Beyond Plan in place. As shown in Figure 1, approximately one-half of all respondents indicated yes, while roughly 33 percent of respondents indicated they were unsure if they/their student has a High School and Beyond Plan in place.

Figure 1. Student and Parent High School and Beyond Plan in Place



To the extent possible, it was important that surveys were collected from a variety of district respondents to ensure that all populations, groups and identities within the Washington school system had a chance to make their voices heard. All respondents were given an opportunity to indicate their gender, ethnicity and racial identification to ensure that the diversity of responses received were indicative of the larger WA education system. Respondents also had the opportunity to decline to



respond to any of the demographic questions. In each demographic category, between 7 percent and 13 percent of respondents declined to respond (Tables 5-7).

With regard to gender, the majority of all respondent types were female, which likely reflects the greater population of Washington educators, where 74 percent of WA educators are female. Students stakeholders had the highest percentage of male respondents at 36 percent and parents had the lowest at 12 percent.

All respondents were asked to indicate the ethnicity and race they most identify as. Student respondents were more likely to indicate they were of Hispanic or Latinx origin (14 percent) than parent (5 percent) or educator (4 percent) respondents. Parents (11 percent) and educators (12 percent) were more likely to decline to provide this information.

With regard to race, the vast majority of respondents were White, with 13 percent of parents and educators declining to provide racial identity. Student respondents were more diverse than the adult subgroups: more likely to select Black, Asian, Native American, Other, or multiple categories. Educators were less likely to be Asian or Multi-racial. However it should be noted, that it is difficult to get a true picture of respondent demographics and therefore diversity with such high numbers declining to respond. Given that sampling parameters are based on the larger population from which data is being collected the student, parent, and educator demographics for the state of Washington are provided in the following tables to help give context to the sampling.



Table 5. Survey Respondent Demographics: Educator

	Demographic	Educator		WA State Educators ¹⁰
		Count	Percent	
Gender	Male	219	25%	26%
	Female	562	65%	74%
	Nonbinary	3	<1%	ND
	Other	2	<1%	ND
	Decline to Respond	84	10%	ND
Ethnicity	Hispanic	32	4%	5%
	Hispanic - Decline to Respond	102	12%	ND
Race	American Indian or Alaskan Native	27	3%	>1%
	Asian	21	2%	3%
	Black, African American	12	1%	2%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	4	1%	>1%
	White, Non-Hispanic	701	81%	87%
	Multiracial	34	4%	2%
	Other	18	2%	1%
	Decline to Respond	117	13%	ND

Table 6. Survey Respondent Demographics: Student

	Demographic	Student		WA State Students ¹¹
		Count	Percent	
Gender	Male	89	36%	52%
	Female	145	58%	48%
	Nonbinary	6	2%	>1%
	Other	3	1%	ND
	Decline to Respond	5	2%	ND
Ethnicity	Hispanic	34	14%	25%
	Hispanic - Decline to Respond	16	7%	ND
Race	American Indian or Alaskan Native	11	4%	1%
	Asian	46	18%	8%
	Black, African American	15	6%	5%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	11	4%	1%
	White Non-Hispanic	156	61%	51%
	Multiracial	24	9%	9%
	Other	17	7%	ND
	Decline to Respond	19	7%	ND

¹⁰ Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2021

¹¹ Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2021



Table 7. Survey Respondent Demographics: Parent

	Demographic	Parent		WA State Adults ¹²
		Count	Percent	
Gender	Male	54	12%	50%
	Female	364	78%	50%
	Nonbinary	2	<1%	ND
	Other	1	<1%	ND
	Decline to Respond	47	10%	ND
Ethnicity	Hispanic	24	5%	13%
	Hispanic - Decline to Respond	51	11%	ND
Race	American Indian or Alaskan Native	9	2%	2%
	Asian	15	3%	9%
	Black, African American	4	1%	4%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2	<1%	1%
	White Non-Hispanic	364	66%	68%
	Multiracial	9	2%	5%
	Other	6	2%	ND
	Decline to Respond	73	13%	ND

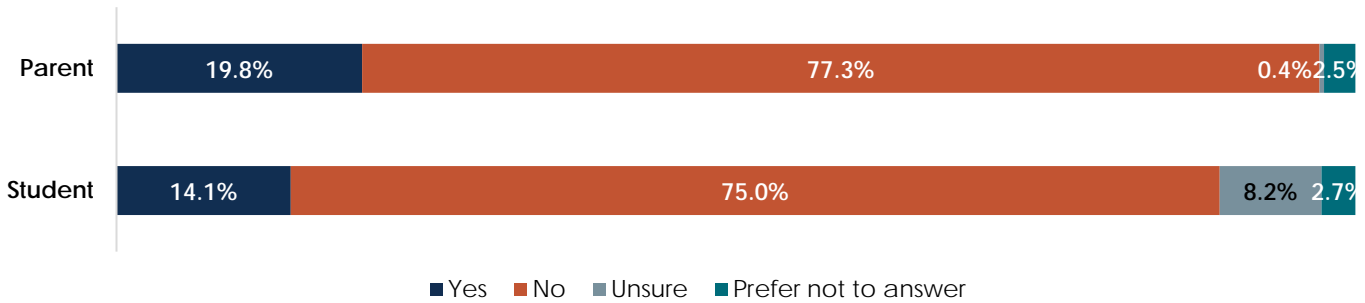
Parents and students were also asked whether or not they or their child(ren) received any special education supports or services at school. The majority of parents (78 percent) indicated their children did not receive special education services. Similarly the majority of student respondents (86 percent) reported that they did not receive special education supports or services. The Washington State Report Card shows that the statewide population of students with disabilities is 14.1 percent indicating that students in this demographic were accurately representative of the larger population of students from which this sample was taken.

Figure 2. Student and Parent Special Education Supports or Services at School

¹² US Census, 2020



WA Graduation Pathway Options – Stakeholder Feedback Project



In addition to demographic diversity, it was important that responses from various districts across the state were received. All educator respondents were asked to identify their district. Of the educator respondents, 174 school districts of the 252 districts in the state that serve high school students, were represented. On average five educators from each district responded to the survey with a range of one to 40. The majority of districts represented in the survey were considered large to very large in size and offered at least five of the available pathway options. In an effort to ensure that all districts, regardless of size were represented real time tracking of data from each district was employed and districts with no responses were contacted directly or sent reminders requesting they have personnel, students, or parents from the district complete a survey.

Table 8. Participating District Demographics

	Demographic	Educator	
		Count	Percent
Size	Small to Very Small	56	7%
	Medium	69	8%
	Large to Very Large	735	86%
Grad Pathways Offered	1-4 Pathways	26	3%
	5-7 Pathways	833	97%
Diversity ¹³	High Diversity	351	41%
	Avg Diversity	264	31%
	Low Diversity	239	28%
Free Reduced Lunch ¹⁴	Low-Poverty	133	16%
	Mid-Low Poverty	345	40%
	Mid-High Poverty	333	39%
	High Poverty	44	5%
	Low-EL	419	50%

¹³ Determined cut points for this category are: Low Diversity >67%; Avg. Diversity 66-47%; Low Diversity <46% of student population is white, non-Hispanic.

¹⁴ Determined cut points for this category are: Low Poverty <25%; Mid-Low Poverty 25.1-50%; Mid-High Poverty 50.1-75%; High Poverty > 75.1% of student population eligible for free or reduced price lunch.



EL¹⁵	Average-EL	155	18%
	High-EL	268	32%
Disability¹⁶	Low Disability	148	17%
	Avg Disability	564	66%
	High Disability	148	17%

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Due to the continued COVID-19 outbreak, all focus groups took place online via Zoom¹⁷ during YR2. The focus groups took place in April and school/district staff, students and parents/guardians were invited to participate in one of the focus groups covering the following topics:

- 1) Strengths and weaknesses of existing pathways available for students receiving special education services, what is needed in the future, and ideas participants had to address areas of weakness (open to students, parents and educators).
- 2) Whether or not the current graduation pathway options incorporate Mastery-Based Learning and if not, to help identify what types of pathway options or changes to state law might be needed to include opportunities for Mastery-Based Learning in the graduation pathway options (open to students, parents and educators).
- 3) Identifying student needs in terms of graduation pathways and what students feel they aren't currently getting and/or what is really working for them (open to students only).

There were 87 stakeholders that registered to participate in one of 15 online focus groups to discuss the graduation pathways in the context of mastery-based learning, special education, and student perspective. Of the registered participants that attended (73) there were 18 students, seven parents, 19 parent educators, and 29 educators.

Student focus group participants were required to have a parent or guardian complete and sign consent form giving permission for their student to participate. Forms were returned directly to Strobel Consulting by the student or coordinating teacher prior to their participation in the focus group.

¹⁵ Determined cut points for this category are: Low EL <9.6%; Avg. EL 9.7-13.7%; High EL >13.8% of student population.

¹⁶ Determined cut points for this category are: Low Disability <12%; Avg. Disability 12-16%; High Disability > 16% of student population.

¹⁷ Zoom Video Communications, Inc. is an American communications technology company headquartered in San Jose, California. It provides videotelephony and online chat services through a cloud-based peer-to-peer software platform and is used for teleconferencing, telecommuting, distance education, and social relations.





KEY FINDINGS

Due to the nature of the response scales utilized across the District Follow Up Survey and focus group protocol items [see Appendices B and C for full District Follow Up Survey and focus group instrumentation], the majority of quantitative data below are shown descriptively using percentages. Based on the categorical response options offered (Yes, No, Unsure), the only inferential test employed was the chi-square test of association to determine if statistically significant differences between groups were present. Cells with standardized residuals greater than $|2.0|$ are influential in these results and noted for their differences.

While inferential tests were used to guide interpretation of the Key Findings to follow, it should be noted that not all “statistically significant” results are presented, though all differences discussed are, in fact, statistically significant. The test results for each are not presented in text, but instead reported in full in Appendix E. The Key Findings below are organized by their practical significance and their relevance to the research questions guiding this study.

All findings and test results are included in the applicable appendices, both those found to be statistically significant and those that were not.

Lastly, there are limitations to using a perception survey as a means for collecting data including:

- The reliability of the data;
- Representativeness (especially in relation to accessibility, gender inequality and representation);
- Interpreting the complexity of findings;
- Different types of biases; and
- Conceptualization of the idea that perception surveys measure perceptions and therefore the type of evidence such surveys generate are just that, the perceptions of respondents, which does not equate to “fact”.

This includes the way certain stakeholders may interpret questions, especially when the unit of reference is different between respondents. For example, while it is likely student respondents are answering questions based on their knowledge of themselves, we cannot be certain educator responses are indicative of their perceptions of all students (in their class, building, district, etc.), or a subgroup of students, or even an individual. Additionally, without implementing costly standardization studies for experimental control, it is challenging to ensure the standardization of instructions, administration, and measurement of variables of theoretical interest.



RESULTS

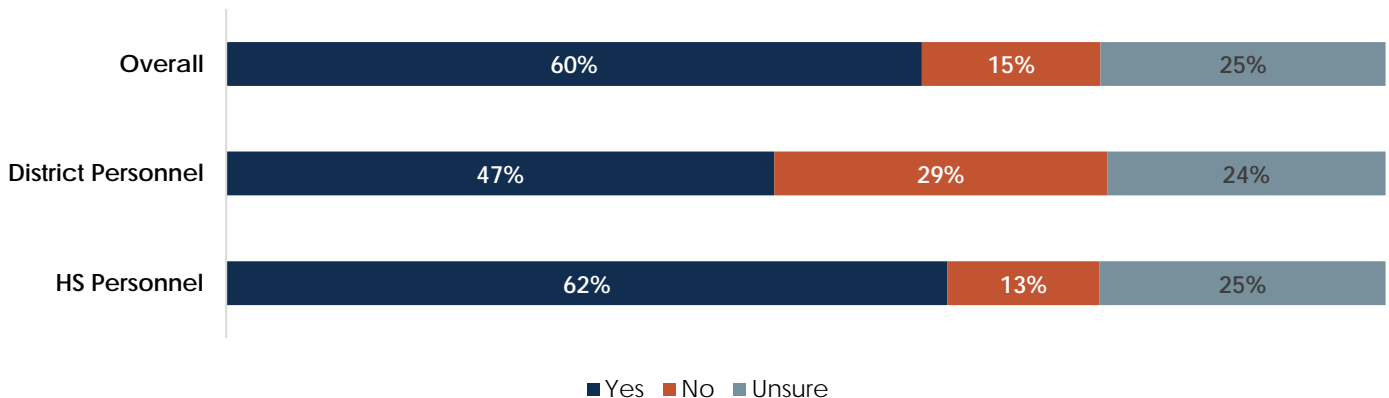
The following are the results of the District Follow Up Survey and Focus Groups. Each of the survey questions are described and results presented in both a narrative and graph or table organized by project research questions.

As previously indicated, in Fall 2020 districts in the state of Washington completed a Basic Education Compliance Survey to provide information on graduation pathways offered as well as district demographic information. Information from this survey was aligned to the responses from the District Follow Up Survey in order to examine differences in responses district characteristics (size, population and graduation pathways offered).

SHOULD CHANGES TO THE EXISTING GRADUATION PATHWAYS BE MADE AND WHAT SHOULD THOSE CHANGES SHOULD BE?

All educators (district personnel and high school personnel) were asked if they thought changes should be made to the existing graduation pathway options. Of educator respondents, the majority (60 percent) agreed that changes should be made, while 25 percent were unsure. An analysis of this item by respondent and district demographic characteristics, showed significant differences in respondent type (High school personnel vs. district personnel), with more high school administrators / personnel agreeing that changes to the existing graduation pathways should be made than district personnel. There were no significant differences regarding district demographic characteristics,. See Appendix D (Full Response Distribution) for the full distribution of responses to this question and Appendix E (Statistical Tables) for the statistical results of each item.

Figure 3. Educator (n=870): Do you think changes need to be made to the existing graduation pathway options?



Educators that responded yes regarding the need for changes to the current graduation pathways were invited to explain in their own words what changes they felt should be made. The majority of responses indicated that there needed to be more flexibility within each of the pathways, specifically with regards to the CTE pathway. Stakeholders indicated that high school should be a time of exploration for students and that it's unrealistic to expect students to know what they want to do beyond high school as freshman or even as sophomores and juniors. Stakeholders reported not liking the fact that there are limited opportunities for many students to explore future academic interests or career paths during high school and would prefer to see more opportunity for exploration included in the graduation pathway options.

“We aren't given the freedom to explore what we want to do. Isn't that what I should be learning in high school? How do they expect me to know what I want to do for the rest of my life when my life is barely starting? High school should be where adults help us figure out what we're passionate about and not just taking tests to get a diploma that you don't even know what it means or what it was all for.” – Student

While not knowing what graduation pathway to utilize in order to best prepare for goals beyond high school is not as consequential for students who opt to utilize the majority of the graduation pathways, it can be problematic for students who want or need to choose the CTE pathway, since this pathway requires more advanced planning and thoughtful scheduling. Additionally, respondents communicated via open response questions and during focus groups that there should be more freedom to explore classes within the CTE pathway, rather than to have to choose a sequence and stick with it citing that there is lack of real knowledge about a given CTE sequence until the first few classes have been taken. Indeed, respondents indicated that students should be allowed to take any combination of two credit courses to fulfil the CTE graduation pathway requirement.

“Counselors should be more adaptive instead of just selecting a class I don't even like and doesn't even have anything to do with what I want to do after school. It makes going to class so hard.” – Student



As well, educator stakeholders expressed a desire to reduce graduation requirements in general, stating that students were over burdened with various graduation requirements and that with each additional requirement the barriers to graduation increase¹⁸. Specifically, data obtained during focus groups supported this finding and many stakeholders indicated they were unclear on the role of the high school diploma, what obtaining a diploma means for students, and whether or not adding graduation requirements was truly supporting students in their post-graduation goals or simply making it harder for them to graduate from high school.

“School should care more about who we are and what we want. I worry that I’m going to be behind a lot because I have to meet all the requirements to graduate, but I miss out on a lot of other important things in life. I don’t want to do homework and not see my parents. They need to be more adapted to who we are as students.” – Student

Other top suggested changes included a variety of responses centered around making the graduation pathways more equitable for all students and not just students that are able to perform with proficiency on high stakes testing. This also included feedback related to giving all students access to graduation pathway options that reflected their post high school goals and provided meaningful opportunities for learning and exploration.

“All students live lives of their own design and that is a commitment to equity when we provide them with interest driven learning based on their needs and not what we need from them.” – Educator

Table 9 shows the range of themes expressed by respondents when asked to describe what types of changes were needed. Please note, individual responses may have covered more than one category.

¹⁸ Many districts have additional graduation requirements beyond the state level requirements, which could account for some stakeholders’ perceptions of graduation requirements.



Table 9. Educator (n=522): Suggested Changes to Existing Graduation Pathways

Changes to Existing Pathways	Percent
Need More Flexibility	27%
Changes to CTE Pathway	22%
Fewer Graduation Requirements	21%
Equitable access for all students/schools	19%
Accommodations/Options for Special Education Students	16%
Standardized Testing Accommodations and/or Revisions	14%
More Counseling / Communication about the Pathways	8%
Add Employability Pathway	6%
Add Internships / Apprenticeships Pathway	5%
Add Fine Arts Pathway	5%
Add College Admissions / College Credit as a Pathway	5%
Revision/Removal of Core 24	4%
More Funding to Provide all Pathways	3%
Exemptions for 2020–21 SY Due to COVID–19	3%
Exemptions/Accommodations for Smaller Districts	2%
Add Portfolio Pathway	2%
Add Foreign Language Pathway	2%
Add Life Skills Pathway	2%
Add Mastery–Based Learning Pathway	>1%

“Every single one of the current options support ONLY students who have good testing skills, or who attend a school that can offer Running Start, Bridge to College, or CTE classes. Not all schools can offer those, such as many alternative schools, and not all students test well.” - Educator

“There need to be more flexible pathways that account for all students' learning styles, not purely white- and middle class-normative high stakes approaches.” - Educator

“Ensure that all schools have an equitable access to multiple options. [district name] has a lot of flexibility, but many other districts lack the resources.” - Educator



WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS SCHOOL DISTRICTS HAVE TO OFFERING ALL OF THE GRADUATION PATHWAYS AND WHAT ARE POTENTIAL STRATEGIES TO ELIMINATE OR REDUCE THOSE BARRIERS?

Forty-six percent of educators that completed the District Follow Up survey were from districts that reportedly do not offer all the graduation pathways. Most of the districts indicated the barriers to offering all the graduation pathways were lack of funding, staffing, and resources (i.e. equipment, buildings, transportation, etc.). These barriers were specifically identified with regards to the CTE pathway and Bridge to College option. Other barriers that were identified included staff lacking an understanding of the pathways and limitations put in place during the current school year (2020-21) due to COVID-19.

Given that the majority of the graduation pathway options involve a standardized assessment or academic achievement in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math, the only pathway options available to students that struggle with standardized tests or do not perform well in math or ELA is the Career and Technical Education (CTE) sequence or Bridge to College course. Therefore, in order for there to be equity in the pathways, it is extremely important that all school districts in the state have the ability to offer a CTE sequence that meets the pathway requirement. As of the 2020-21 school year, only 204 districts (81 percent) offer a CTE sequence that meets the pathways requirement and only 139 (55 percent) offer a Bridge to College course. That leaves 19 percent of districts in the state with limited options for students that struggle with standardized tests.

Educators from districts/schools that reported they did not offer all the available graduation pathways (46.2 percent of educator sample, n=397) on the Basic Education Compliancy Survey were asked to explain in their own words what changes would need to happen for their districts/schools to be able to offer all the graduation pathway options. While many of the respondents did not specifically provide suggested changes that would allow them to offer more pathways, those that did described funding, staffing and scheduling changes. Respondents also indicated that in order to offer the CTE pathway they would need more funding and flexibility to include CTE credit earned online or in another type of remote settings. As well, 7 percent of respondents indicated that they would need additional resources and staffing in order to offer Bridge to College courses. One-quarter of district respondents commented that they felt the state should have fewer graduation requirements and that the pathways should be removed altogether. An additional 16 percent indicated that any standardized testing requirements for graduation should be removed.

"I work with students with emotional behavioral disabilities. Their disabilities often prevent them from being successful on the standardized tests and the college prep classes; so we have to rely on the CTE pathways and these are severely lacking at my school." – Educator



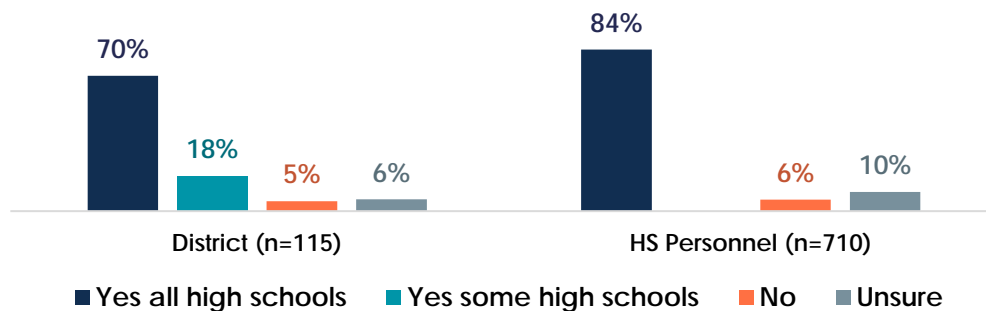
“Students CANNOT fit these pathways into their schedule. It needs to be bigger and more flexible. We also need to hire more CTE and elective teachers. More than half of the programs have been left to die off over the past 30 years. They have been neglected. We need more money from the state to hire these CTE or elective teachers. CTE back in the 1980’s represented 15-20% of all of the teachers in the state. Now, it’s down to 6.2%. Students want to take these classes and explore their options, but the schedule is too restrictive and most CTE programs have been shrunk down.” – Educator

“I had no idea that the graduation pathway requirement existed until now. We have been focused only on meeting the course requirements to graduate. You need to do a much better job of letting parents and students know of this requirement. My child is heavily into theater and performing arts and would benefit from a pathway for this. My child is fairly strong academically (As and Bs) so I don’t understand why doing well grade-wise in high school is not enough on its own to graduate. It seems odd that some external test like smarter balance or SAT, or extra efforts like AP or Running Start are required to graduate.” – Parent

“There is an equity problem for some of our lower functioning students. I am greatly concerned for our low/moderate/intensive special education students. If it is truly about the transition plan into the real world... trust the IEP team to make some decisions and grant the student an individualized pathway that meets state requirements.” – Educator

Educator respondents (92 percent) from school districts that reported offering a CTE sequence that meets the pathway requirement were asked if high schools in their district offered a CTE sequence. While only five to six percent of respondents indicated they did not offer a CTE sequence in their district, a larger portion (6 percent district, 10 percent high school personnel) were unsure if they did or did not.

Figure 4. Educator (n=870): Do the high schools in your district offer at least one Career and Technical Education (CTE) sequence that meets the pathway requirement?



Analysis of this item by district demographic characteristics showed significant differences in responses by district respondent and district EL populations, as well as district diversity by high school



personnel respondents. There were no significant differences regarding district size or other characteristics.

Figure 5. District Personnel (n=115): Do the high schools in your district offer at least one Career and Technical Education (CTE) sequence that meets the pathway requirement? by District EL Population

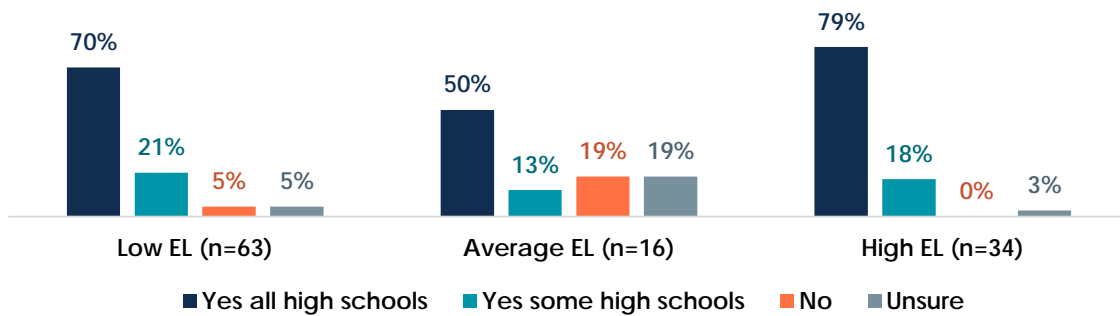
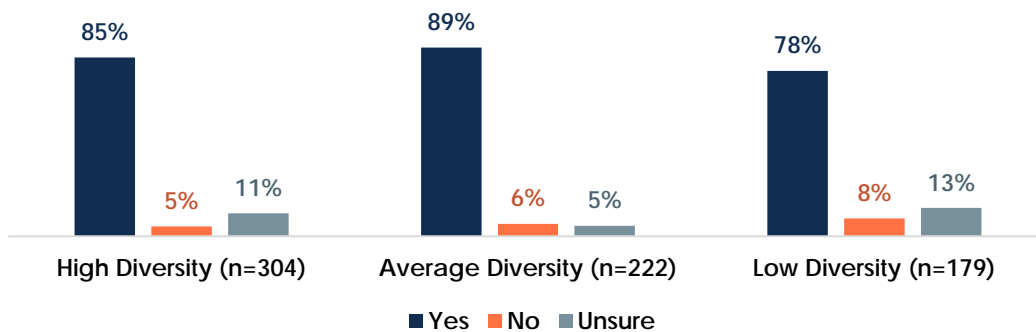


Figure 6. HS Personnel (n=710): Does your high school offer at least one Career and Technical Education (CTE) sequence that meets the pathway requirement? By District Diversity



Educators that indicated their high school or district did not offer a CTE sequence (n=69) were asked to describe the barriers that keep their district/school from offering the CTE graduation pathway option. As shown in Table 8, most of the barriers listed were regarding the availability of qualified staff. Other barriers described included that alternative and remote schools do not align with CTE and small remote schools do not have space, funding or student numbers to be able to offer CTE.



Table 10. Educator (n=69): What are the barriers that keep your district from offering the CTE graduation pathway option at every high school in the district?

Barriers to CTE	Percent
Staffing Numbers	52%
Other	51%
Staffing Qualifications	49%
Lack of Classroom Space	39%
Funding Insufficient	36%
Funding Restrictions	25%
Lack of Classroom Equipment	20%
Course / Bell Schedule	19%
Location	10%

“Graduation pathways are not diverse enough nor are they accessible to all students. My student is a student at an ALE that does not get funded for CTE pathways. This has hindered my school in providing equitable courses to other schools.” – Parent

“It is difficult for small schools to offer Industry Recognized Credentials without the funding to purchase these options. Also, small schools are limited to one or two program areas that may not be in line with a student's careers interests or reflect a student's High School and Beyond Plan.” – Educator

“There needs to be a voice for alternative schools and schools that receive ALE funding in these conversations and planning. The graduation pathways are NOT equitable for these schools or the students.” – Educator

DO ALL STUDENTS HAVE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ALL OF THE GRADUATION PATHWAYS AND, IF NOT, WHAT ARE POTENTIAL STRATEGIES TO REDUCE THE BARRIERS STUDENTS MAY HAVE TO ACCESSING ALL OF THE GRADUATION PATHWAYS?

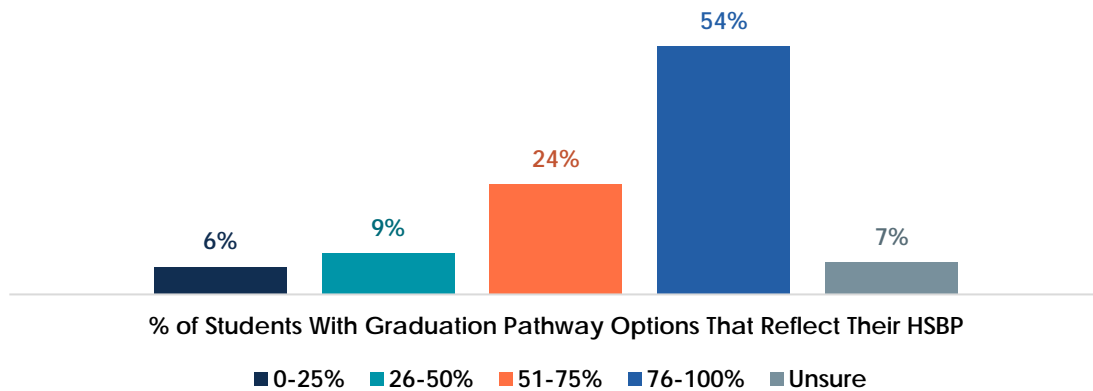
Much of the qualitative data collected addressed the need for all students to have viable pathway options that are not only accessible, but also *meaningful* to them. Educators were asked if the graduation pathway options their district currently offers meet the needs of each and every student by indicating approximately what percentage of students have a graduation pathway option that reflects their High School and Beyond Plan. While just over one-half of educator respondents indicated that the graduation pathway options reflect the High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) of



76-100 percent of students, nearly 40 percent of educator stakeholders reported that 0-75 percent had pathway options that reflected their HSBP.

Respondents communicated on open ended survey response items and during focus groups that simply because a student can satisfy the requirements of a given pathway does not make that pathway equitable if it is meaningless to the individual student and their goals and dreams beyond high school. Respondents also questioned whether or not testing pathways were relevant for students, regardless of whether or not students intended to pursue post-secondary education or enter the workforce directly. This included students who could satisfy testing pathway requirements.

Figure 7. Educator (n=870): Do the graduation pathway options your district currently offers meet the needs of each and every student? That is, approximately what percentage of students have a graduation pathway option they can take that also reflects their High School and Beyond Plan?



“Counselors don’t even know how we access the pathways. All of this should be more clearly articulated, because I don’t even know if I’m on track for graduation. I ask people how to get my transcripts and no one can tell me. We should have more help being shown what we need to do to graduate and what our choices are, and it should start early.” – Student

Respondents taking the District Survey were asked to indicate which student populations were most likely to be at risk of not having a viable graduation pathway option. Data shows that educators felt below grade level students, English learners (EL), students with disabilities and students experiencing homelessness were most at risk of not having a viable graduation pathway option (Table 11).

“So many of the pathways are dependent on students demonstrating college level work. Is that equitable for students that aren’t doing college level work in high school?” – Educator



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Table 11. Educator (n=870): Which student populations are most likely to be at risk of not having a viable graduation pathway option that also supports their High School and Beyond Plan? Please select all that apply.

Populations Most Likely to be At Risk	Response Percent	WA State Student Populations ¹⁹
Below Grade Level Students	48%	No Available Data
English Learners (EL)	48%	12% of WA students are EL
Students with Disabilities	43%	14% of WA students were identified as having disabilities
Students Experiencing Homelessness	41%	2% of WA students experience homelessness
Students from Lower Income Families (Free or Reduced Price Lunch Eligible)	38%	44.5% of WA students were identified as low-income
Migrant	35%	1.9% of WA students were identified as migrant
Students in Foster Care	32%	No Available Data
Highly Mobile Students	32%	2.1% of WA students were identified as mobile
Students of Color	25%	49% of WA students were identified as students of color
Section 504	22%	3.9% of WA students were identified as Section 504
Other	12%	No Available Data
Military Parent	9%	2.5% of WA students were identified as having a parent in the military
On Grade Level Students	6%	No Available Data
Highly Capable	4%	6.4% of WA students were identified as highly capable
Above Grade Level Students	3%	No Available Data

“Allow EL students who are recent arrivals, maybe limited to within their first 2 or 3 years, to US schools to meet standard on SBA in ELA and Math with lower minimum cut scores. This will allow students to stay on an academic track if they choose and NOT force schools and districts to start tracking them into CTE pathways, which may happen if districts see that as a way to get newly-arriving EL students through to graduation.” – Educator

“For EL students, the pathways are NOT accessible. They cannot pass any of the tests in English at the rates you require. (SBAC, SAT, ASVAB, etc.) They also are required to take an ELD support class, as well as the required 17 core classes, which leaves very, very little room to complete two solid years in a pathway elective. My level ones and twos can't access most, so it leaves them

¹⁹ WA OSPI, 2021.



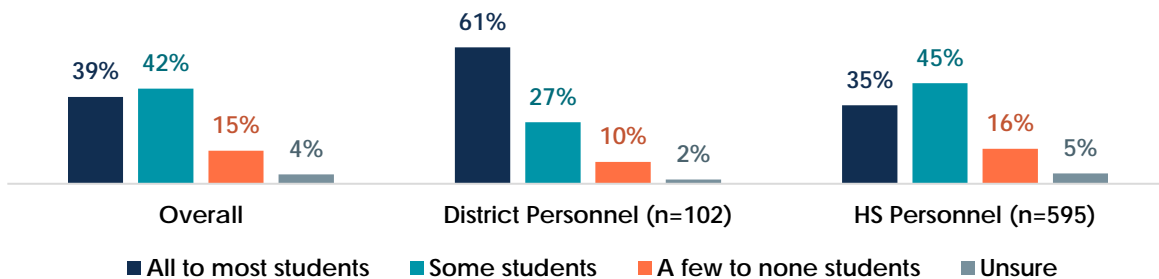
to the end of their schooling to squeeze in two electives in a pathway, often not anything of interest to them. Almost 100% of my ELD seniors are working to fit in pathways currently, as no other options serve them equally.” - Educator



“Given the current pathways approved by the state, there are currently no pathways that are viable for the students with intellectual disabilities, that I work with, that will lead to graduation. Offering a pathway that documents their functional vocational evaluation, along with a documented field of study and vocational training leading towards their high school and beyond plan and/or individual transition plan that includes steps completed that will drive their plan (such as applying for and following through with accessing adult services) should be a viable pathway to graduation.” – Educator

As previously discussed, offering a CTE sequence that meets the graduation requirement is necessary for providing equitable access to all students. Educators from districts that had a CTE sequence per the Basic Education Compliance Survey were asked if they had a CTE sequence that would meet the needs of students in their school/district. Only 39 percent of educators felt that they had a sequence available to meet the needs of all or most students. This implies that the majority of students in the state do not have access to a pathway that is relevant to their goals and future plans. An analysis of this item by respondent and district demographic characteristics, showed significant differences in respondent type (district personnel vs. school personnel).

Figure 8. Educator (n=697): Think about the students in your district that are most likely to take the CTE sequences schools in your district offer. Do you believe the available CTE sequences are tailored to those students' goals and relevant to their postsecondary plans as outlined in their High School and Beyond Plan?



Students and parents completing the survey were asked if they were worried that they (students) or their child/children may not graduate from high school. While the majority of both students and parents (73 percent each) were not worried about graduating, 12 percent of students and parents were worried (Figure 9). An analysis of this item by respondent characteristics showed significant differences in respondent type (Parent vs. student), respondent race (respondents of color vs. white respondents), and receipt of special education support services. As shown in Figure 10, non-white parents and students as well as parents and students receiving special education services were all more likely to be worried about graduation than their counterparts.



Figure 9. Student & Parent (n=810): Are you worried that you / your child might not graduate?

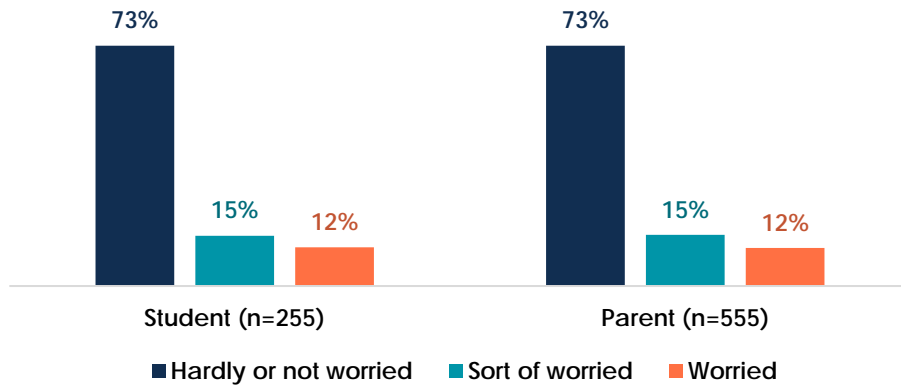
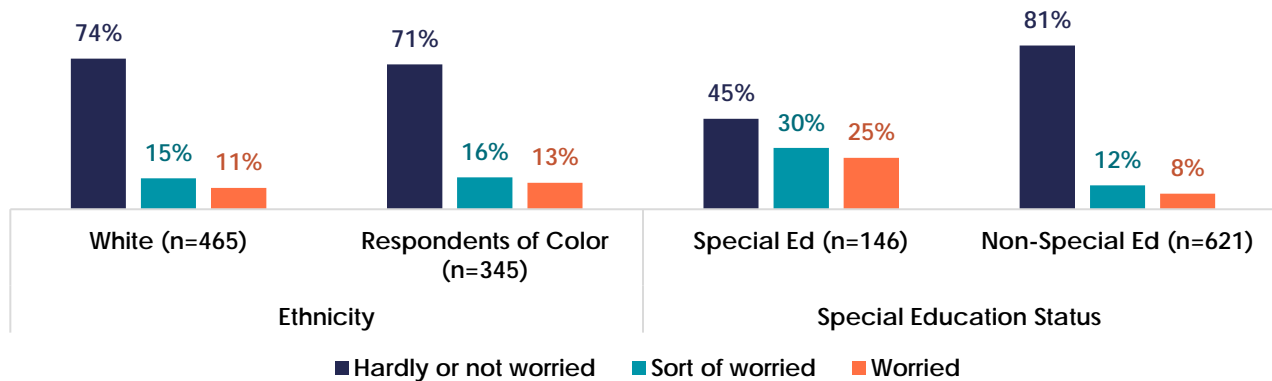


Figure 10. Student & Parent (n=810): Are you worried that you / your child might not graduate? By Ethnicity and Special Education Status



Students and parents that indicated they were worried or extremely worried (parent n= 64; student n=69) were asked to indicate the reasons they (students) or their child/children were worried about not graduating. Both students and parents indicated that grades, COVID-19, and hybrid/online learning were the top reasons causing them to worry about the potential for not graduating (Table 12). While parents and students were not concerned with COVID-19 health related issues, they indicated they were worried about the impact of COVID-19 policies on access to certain types of testing needed to graduate and the related difficulties with learning subjects remotely that they preferred the hands on support of the classroom for. There were also concerns about the negative impact of online learning in terms of getting needed CTE courses that were not conducive to online learning and required the more hands on approach live classes and instruction provided. Please note, students and parents may have selected more than one category.



“Covid threw a wrench in my child's education. Before Covid he was getting A's and B's. After remote learning he has struggled and did not relate to his teachers or classmates. He is now completely turned off by school and does not want to take post-secondary education. I don't know how to get him back on track. I fear this will be the "lost" class of students regarding continued schooling and careers.” – Parent

In third trimester kids started going back to school. Kids who stayed home have kind of been forgotten, as me and a few friends have noticed a considerable increase in difficulty and decrease in mental health and grades.” – Student

Table 12. Student & Parent (n=133): What is causing your worry about not graduating / your child not graduating?

Worries about Graduation	Student	Parent
Grades	68%	48%
COVID-19	55%	47%
Hybrid / Online Learning	52%	50%
Work Load	46%	31%
Test Scores	33%	33%
Credit Related Issues	29%	42%
Lack of Information About Graduation Requirements	25%	42%
Lack of Availability of Graduation Pathway Options	17%	3%
Health Issues	13%	13%
Scheduling Issues	10%	13%
I Don't Know	9%	0%
Prefer Not to Say	3%	3%
Other*	1%	25%
*Other - Graduation requirements, student disability and lack of support, lack of district communication, student lack of interest		

Seven of the eight graduation pathway options are assessment-based or require a high level of proficiency in math and English language arts. It is important to note the number of students and parents that do not identify as being good at math, ELA, or test taking given that existing research shows a correlation between higher academic scores in math and reading when students perceive themselves as being “good at” these subjects. Even when confounding factors are accounted for, a positive attitude toward math and reading is still a strong predictor of performance in these areas



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(Chen, et. al. 2018 & Hemmings, et. al. 2011). Both students and parents were asked if they felt they (students) or their child/children does well in math, English language arts and test-taking.

Figures 11-13 show that of student respondents 18.4 percent indicated they were “not good” or “not good at all” when it came to math, 8 percent when it came to English Language Arts (ELA), and 33 percent when it came to taking tests. Parents tended to rate their child(ren) higher than the students themselves in math and ELA and slight lower in test taking capabilities,.

Additionally, significant difference in responses was also observed among parents/students that indicated they received special education supports/services in all three areas. Of student respondents, 18.4 percent indicated that they were “not good” or “not good at all” at math. Additionally parents reported that 15.5 percent of their students were “not good” or “not good at all” at math.

Figure 11. Student & Parent (n=811): In your own mind, do you feel like you are good at / Does your child do well in Math?

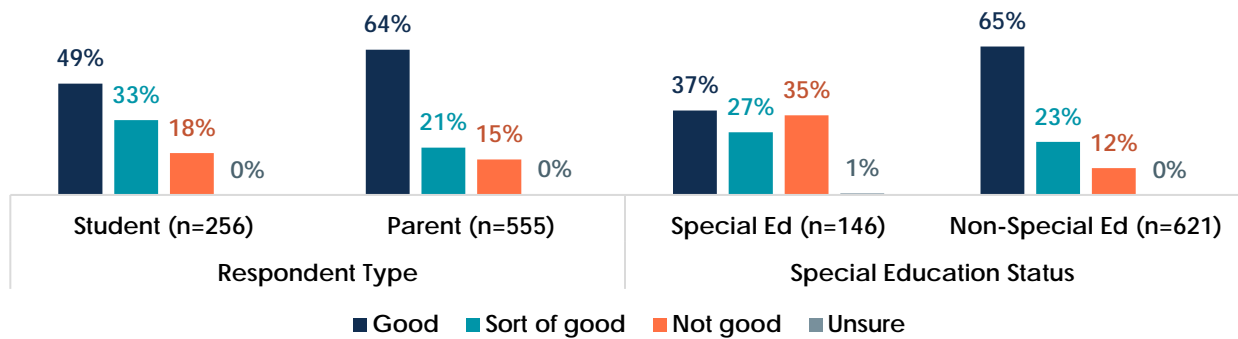


Figure 12. Student & Parent (n=811): In your own mind, do you feel like you are good at / Does your child do well in ELA?

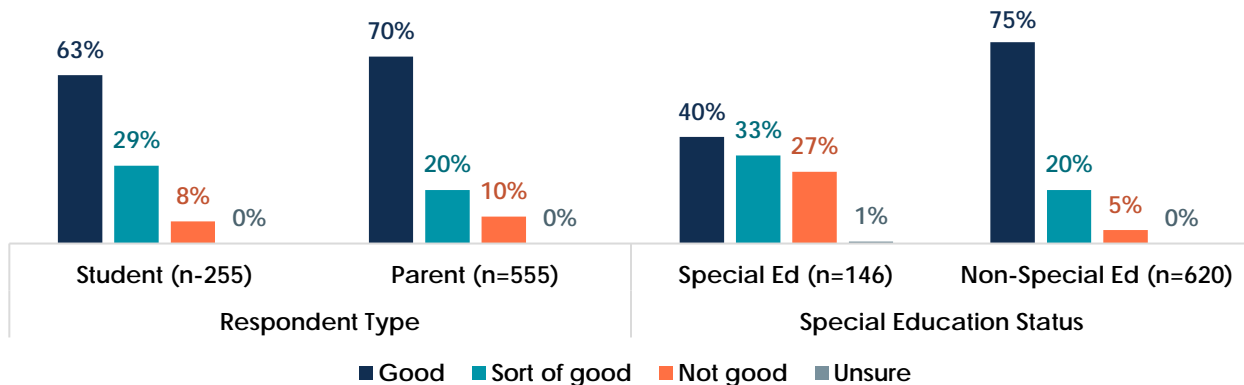
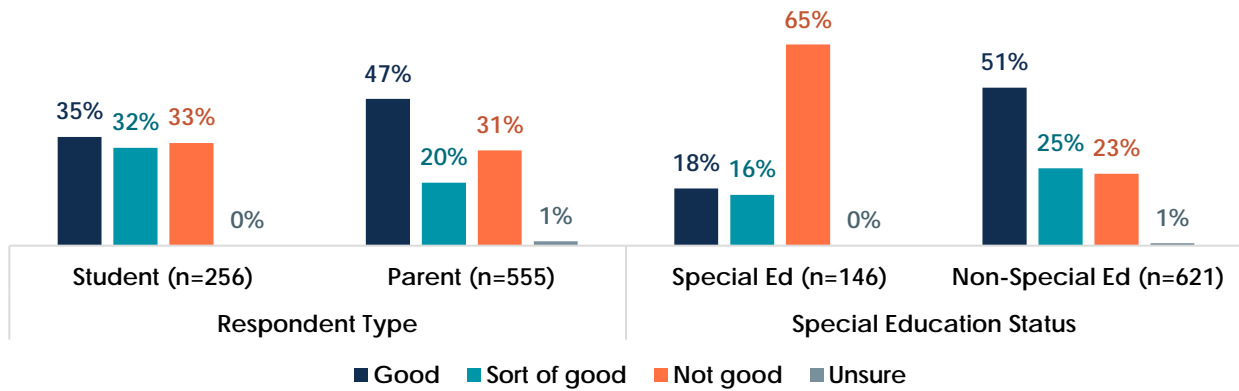


Figure 13. Student & Parent (n=810): In your own mind, do you feel like you are good at / Does your child do well in Test-Taking?



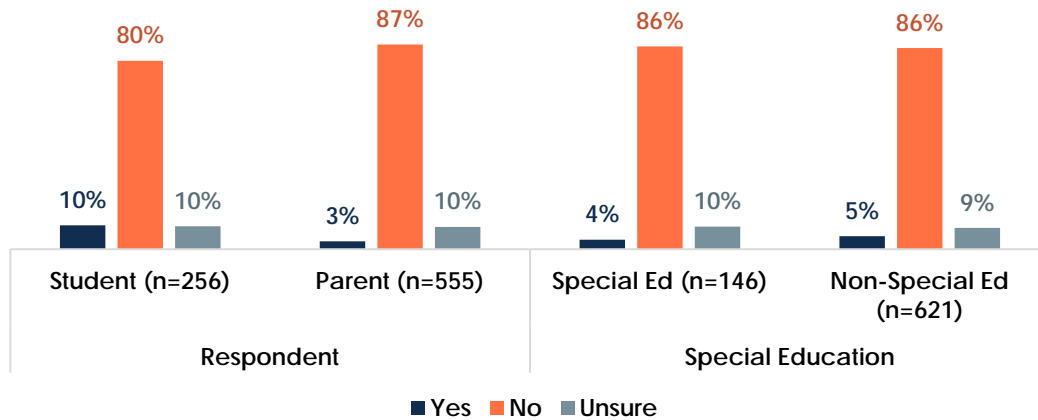
One of the current graduation pathway options requires students to meet the standard on the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) by scoring at least the minimum established by the military for eligibility to serve in a branch of the armed forces. Feedback from stakeholder respondents indicated that many students are utilizing this pathway option as a way to, “check the box” for meeting a graduation pathway option even though they do not intend to enter the armed forces and the ASVAB pathway does not meaningfully reflect their goals beyond high school. To gain a better understanding of whether or not students intend to enter the armed forces post high school parents and students were asked if they (the students) or their children were considering the military after high school. Only 3 percent of parents thought their child was considering the military, while 10 percent of student respondents indicated they were considering the military. An analysis of this item showed significant differences regarding respondent type (parent vs. student) special education services.

“Our counselors treat the pathways as a tiered system to the diploma where ASVAB and CTE are a last resort for students that can’t pass any of the other testing pathways and none of it has anything to do with what students want to do. It’s shameful.” – Educator

“SPED student aren’t eligible for the military. The military won’t take anyone with an IEP, but we use ASVAB for SPED students anyway.” – Educator

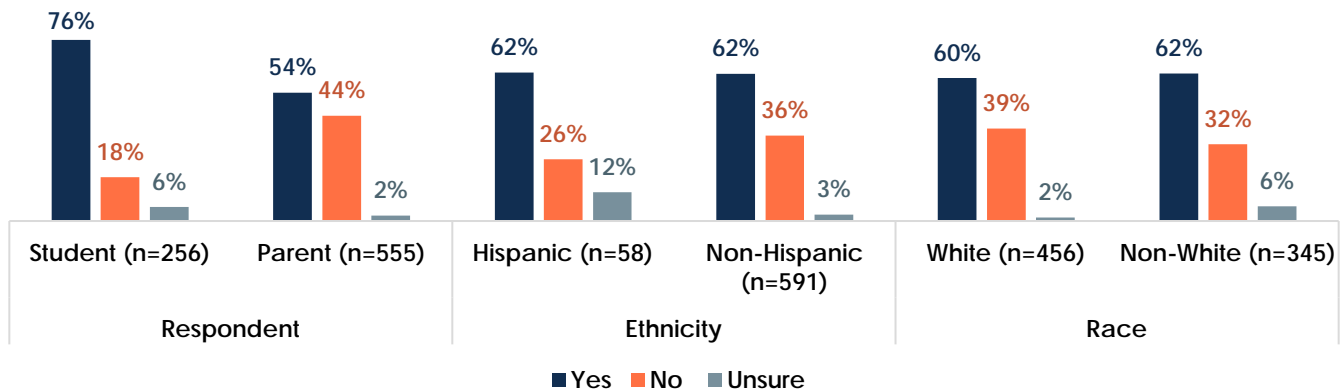


Figure 14. Student & Parent (n=811): Are you / is your child considering the military as an option after high school?



Students and parents were asked if they (students) or the their child/children had ever taken any CTE courses. Results of this item were analyzed by respondent demographics and significant differences were observed regarding respondent type (parent vs. student), respondent ethnicity (Hispanic vs. Non-Hispanic), race (White vs. Non-White) and grade level. Three quarters of students said they had taken CTE, while only about half of parents thought their child had. Regarding race and ethnicity, more non-White students reported taking CTE courses and Hispanic students were more likely to report being unsure if they had.

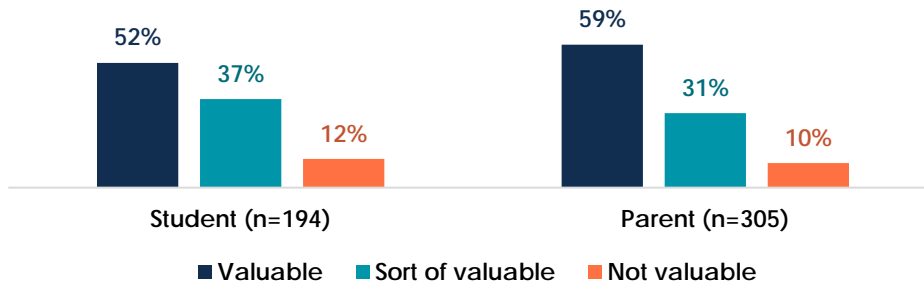
Figure 15. Student & Parent (n=811): Have you ever / has your child taken any Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes like welding, wood shop, culinary arts, business, etc.?



Of those who responded that they (students) or their child/children had taken a CTE course (parent n=305; student n=194), the majority felt they were of value, see Figure 16.

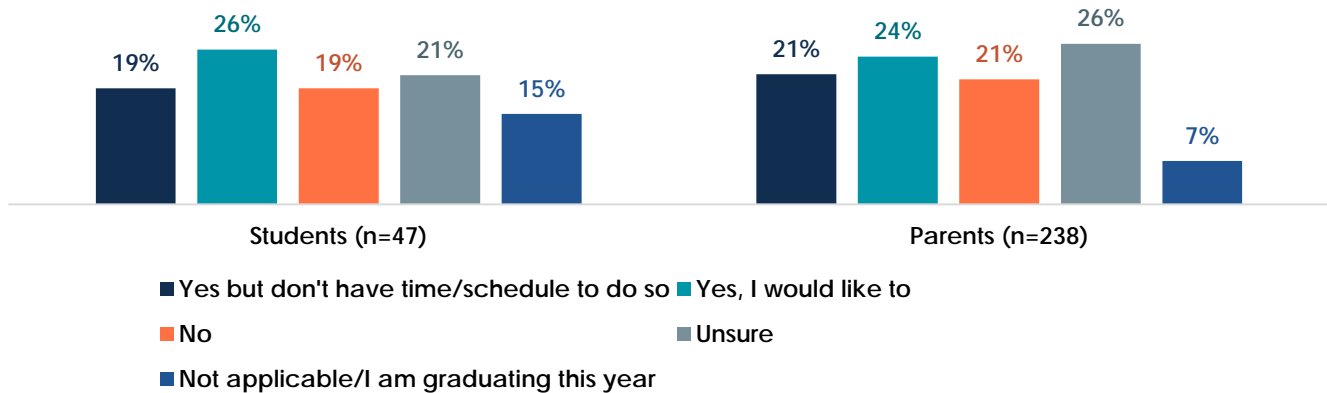


Figure 16. Student & Parent (n=499): Overall, were the Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes you / your child took of value to you / them in some way?



Of those who responded that they (students) or their child/children had not taken a CTE course (parent n=238; student n=47), 25 percent indicated that they would like to in the future and an additional 20 percent said they would but would be unable to accommodate it in their schedule.

Figure 17. Student & Parent (n=285): Would you /your child like to take Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes in the future?



SHOULD ADDITIONAL GRADUATION PATHWAYS BE INCLUDED AND IF SO, WHAT PATHWAYS SHOULD BE ADDED AND WHAT IS THE ASSOCIATED RATIONALE FOR DOING SO?

Educators were asked if additional pathway options should be added to ensure that each and every student has equitable access to the graduation pathway options. The majority of educators (60 percent) indicated that additional graduation pathways should be included. Analysis of this item by district demographics showed significant differences by district size, with larger districts tending to agree more that more pathway options should be added and smaller districts more unsure. This is consistent with the findings previously reported when asked what changes they would make to the graduation pathway and many indicated that additional pathways should be added.



Figure 18. Educator (n=870): Think about the graduation pathway options currently allowed by the state. Do additional pathway options need to be created at the state level to ensure that each and every student has equitable access to a graduation pathway option that supports their High School and Beyond Plan?

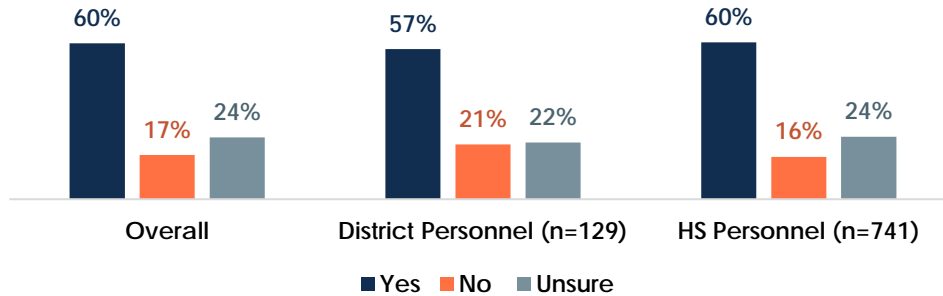
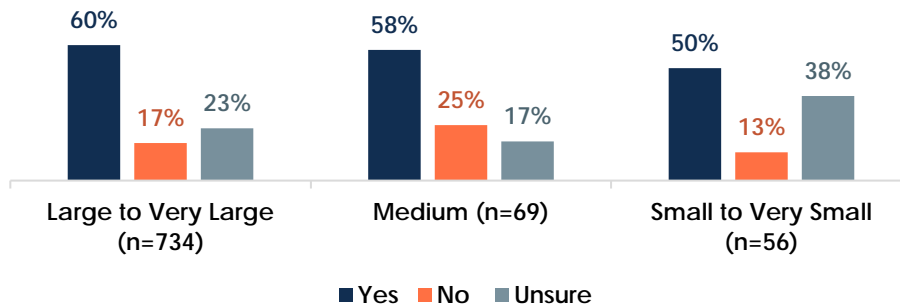


Figure 19. Educator (n=870): Think about the graduation pathway options currently allowed by the state. Do additional pathway options need to be created at the state level to ensure that each and every student has equitable access to a graduation pathway option that supports their High School and Beyond Plan? By District Size



Respondents that answered “yes” in the previous question were asked to describe in their own words the additional pathways that should be added. While responses varied across respondents, several overarching themes emerged. Almost 20 percent of respondents indicated they would like a Life Skills / Career pathway. This was supported by data obtained during focus groups across all district stakeholder groups (students, parents, educators). Regardless of post high school goals the majority of focus group participants indicated they would like to see increased opportunities for life skills and career readiness. As well, nearly 17 percent of respondents indicated that industry credential / trades pathway was needed. Data collected during focus groups and other open response items indicated that there is a lack of pathway options for students that intend to enter the trades directly after high school and that these types of post high school goals lack opportunities for preparation and go largely unsupported.

“If we are going to say as a state we care about equity, why are we assuming employability is a low bar? Where are the pathways that reflect the value of being gainfully employed?” - Educator



A large proportion of respondents indicated a special needs pathway, or rather a meaningful pathway option for students receiving special education services, should be added. Again, data collected during focus groups and on other open ended survey items supports this finding. Specifically, there is not currently a viable pathway for the majority of students receiving special education services in terms of providing a graduation pathway option that is both meaningful and reflective of their post high school goals. Indeed, qualitative data gather during year two of the project indicates that a large proportion of students receiving special education services are funneled into the CTE pathway regardless of whether or not the CTE sequences offered at their school have anything to do with students' post high school plans.

“The norming on tests is not set up for SPED, The norming for most tests is only designed for a portion of the population, making tests in general not at all equitable.” – Parent

“It’s hard to sit in an IEP [individualized education plan] meeting with a parent and tell them there’s no meaningful way to get their student to graduate. Meanwhile our life skills classes that want and need count for nothing.” – Educator

“What happens to students that can’t cognitively qualify for an LD [learning disability], but can’t utilize any of the other pathways? They’re all getting crammed down a CTE pathway that in no way prepares them to be a valued member of the community where they can contribute in a meaningful way.”
- Parent

Other pathway options identified included a custom pathway that allows students to design a pathway aligned to their intended post-secondary goals or career, or allows them to explore potential academic or career interests with the intent they have a better idea of what they would like to do beyond high school. Additionally respondents identified an internship/apprentice ship pathway, fine arts, acceptance into a college or university, portfolio, and foreign language as other pathways that should be added.

“We need an open-ended pathway where students show mastery with a final project or presentation, kind of like a thesis, but with someone to help with scaffolding. This would help serve the person and not just check the box.” – Educator



Table 13. Educator (n=518) - What additional graduation pathway options should be added to ensure that each and every student has equitable access to a graduation pathway option that supports their High School and Beyond Plan?

Additional pathway options	Percent
Other	35%
Life Skills / Career Ready	20%
Industry Credential / Trades	17%
Special Needs	14%
Unsure / None	12%
Custom	10%
Internship / Apprenticeship	9%
Fine Art	8%
College Admission	6%
Portfolio	5%
Foreign Language	3%

“A DDR [Developmental Disabilities Resources] application/conservatorship process should count as a graduation pathway. The High School and Beyond Plan is also a mess. My students do not read or write, either lacking the intellectual capabilities to do so, or the physical ability to do so. It boggles the mind that someone in OSPI thinks that a person who has been ruled unable to manage their own affairs by reason of disability is also capable of semi-independently constructing a portfolio while simultaneously being capable of being tested in a manner, via Zoom, that will generate statistically significant results.” – Educator

“I really think that modified testing options should be allowed based on IEP team decisions. Please restore Basic, Off-grade level, and LDA options. I also think the option of doing a culminating project and/ or presentation should be available for all students.” – Educator

“We really need a workforce entry pathway. Some students with lower income families and homelessness struggle with the balance of work and school at and after the age of 16. Taking a better approach to a lasting education that can benefit those students that tend to not have time for extra classes and do not wish to enter into the building trades may need a pathway that could lead them to being a more educated, productive and involved community member. Providing direction for our struggling youth is a far better answer than allowing them to fail and being a number on a data sheet.” – Educator

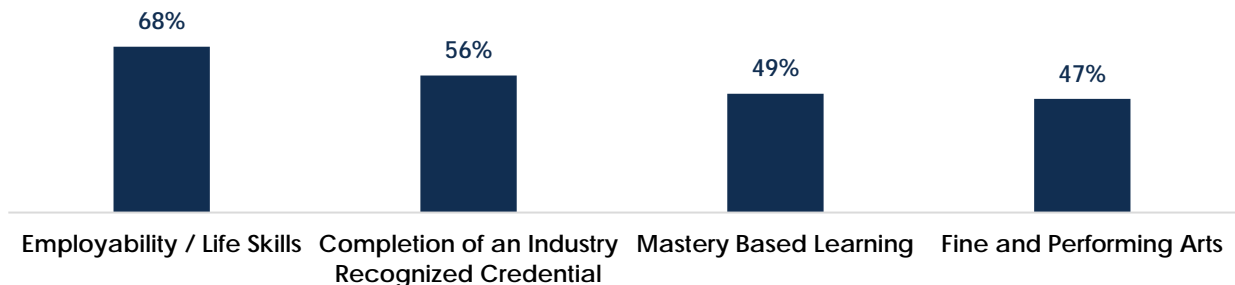


Data collected during year one of this project showed the stakeholders felt the following four pathways should be added to the graduation pathway options:

- 1) an employability and/or life skills pathway;
- 2) a fine and performing arts pathway;
- 3) a mastery-based learning pathway; and
- 4) a pathway that allowed the completion of an industry recognized credential.

Survey respondents (educators, students and parents) during the current year (year two) were asked if these four pathways should be added to the graduation pathway options. The majority of respondents across all stakeholder groups represented in the data categories agreed that an employability/life skills pathway should be added, and over half of all respondent types agreed that completion of an industry recognized credential pathway should be added (Figure 20).

Figure 20. Educators, Students & Parents (n=1681): Feedback obtained during the previous year indicated that the following pathways should be considered for addition to the current pathway options. Which do you think should be added?



“Regular learning is so rigid. Mastery based learning is much more personalized and allows curriculum to be tailored to us, the students. Mastery based learning should be a part of all pathways, not its own pathway” – Student

“We need to bring real world learning back to classrooms to keep students engaged and make learning relevant and exciting. We need to marry academics with hands on skills, not look at them as something separate from one another.” – Educator

“Life skills should be incorporated into the curriculum of all pathways, like professional speech and office language. Things you can use when you graduate.” – Student

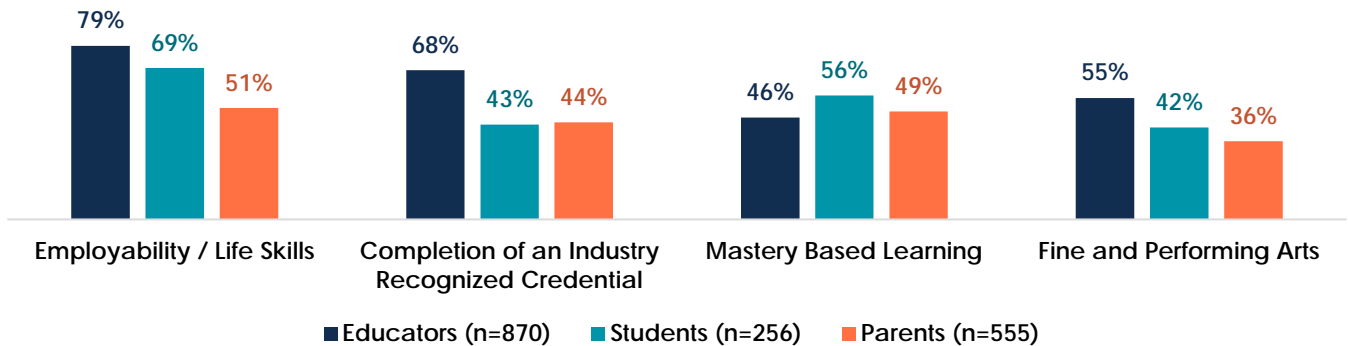
“No matter what you’re going to do you need to know how to cook and not burn the house down. Real life skills are for everyone, every human being needs those skills regardless of what you want to do after high school.” – Student



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“There is a stigma around not wanting to go to college. If you have a grip on the real world, you can be successful.” – Student

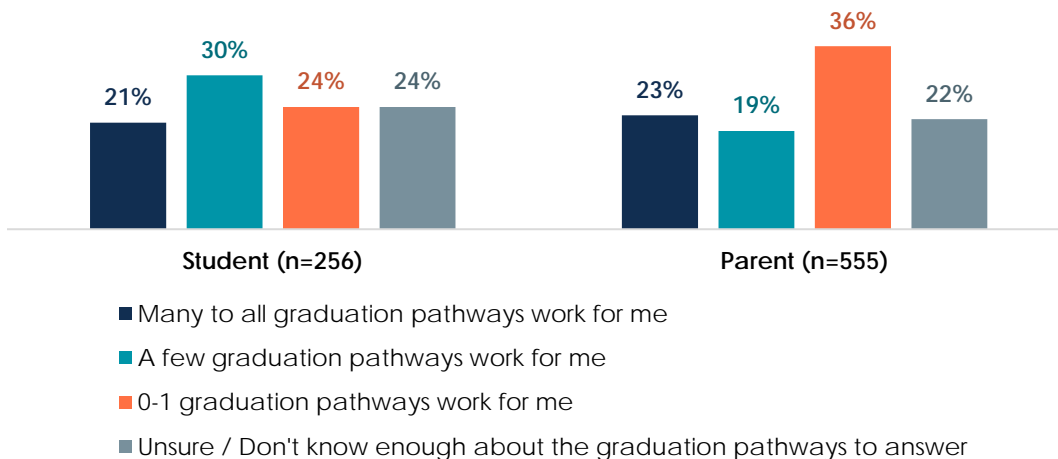
Figure 21. Educators, Students & Parents (n=1681): Feedback obtained during the previous year indicated that the following pathways should be considered for addition to the current pathway options. Which do you think should be added? By Respondent Type



High school students and parents of high school students were also asked to indicate whether or not the current graduation pathway options would help them (students) or their child/children achieve their post-graduation goals. As shown in Figure 22, fewer than one of every four of both students and parents felt that most to all graduation pathways would work for them. As well, a large proportion of both respondents were unsure, indicating the strong need for additional communication regarding the pathways.

“We need life skills to take care of children and life in general or to take care of mental health. They [counselors and teachers] just talk to us and say everything will be ok, but ok is not enough.” – Student

Figure 22. Student & Parent (n=811): Thinking about what you'd like to do after high school, is there at least one graduation pathway option that will help you achieve your goals after high school?



Parent and student respondents who indicated “zero graduation pathways work” were asked to specify a different graduation pathway option that would work. Most respondents said they felt that meeting the credit requirements should be enough for students to graduate (30 percent) and that they need a pathway option that doesn’t involve a standardized test (25 percent). Respondents also expressed a need for a pathway option that allowed them to focus on a trade or technical career (21 percent). Fine arts was another pathway respondents who indicated, “zero graduation pathways work” would like to see added (11 percent). An employability pathway was also listed as an option respondents who felt they had zero graduation pathways options wanted to see added (11 percent). While other options such as an internship, life skills, special education, college admission and mastery-based learning were also mentioned, the aforementioned suggestions emerged as overarching themes for respondents who feel that zero graduation pathways work for them (students), or their child (parents).

All respondents were asked if they had any other feedback to share regarding the graduation pathway options. Once again, many respondents indicated that meeting the credit requirements for graduation should be enough to earn a diploma and that there is a need for more equity in the graduation pathways. Specifically, a large proportion of respondents who opted to provide additional feedback indicated that pathways will not be equitable until there are additional graduation pathway options that do not rely solely on a standardized test to measure academic or skill attainment and proficiency.

“We need less of the standardized testing. It stresses me out and I don’t do well on tests, so the test always says I read at a 5th grade level, but I read at a 9th grade level, so how is that even helpful?” – Student

Additionally, respondents addressed the need for more student-driven pathways, where students have the chance to explore their interests, to engage with their learning, and be an active part of what constitutes a meaningful graduation pathway for them. Other feedback included concerns about viable pathways for students receiving special education services, the need for pathway options satisfied by receiving an industry certified credential, the need for a fine arts pathway, a life skills pathway, the need to incorporate more mastery-based learning and move away from what is perceived as a focus on “testing pathways”. Lack of equity for smaller schools and districts was also a reoccurring theme, along with the need for pathways to incorporate more opportunities for internships and apprenticeships where the process is supported by the state. Respondents also expressed general concerns about the impact of COVID-19 on both students, educators, and lack of availability for certain testing pathways, etc.



“We want teachers with actual life experience, teachers that are better content experts. Where they have experience in the world that they can share with us and show us how to do things instead of just teaching us about things that have nothing to really do with our lives, like they have read a lot of books or know how to do complicated math problems, but they don’t really know anything about stuff that is real.” – Student

Table 14. Do you have any other feedback

Other Feedback	Frequency
Graduation Requirements	28%
Misc. Comments Expressing Dissatisfaction	25%
Lack of or Need for Equity	18%
Less Standardized Testing	14%
Need More Employability Focused Pathways	11%
Need More Student Driven Pathways	9%
Misc. Comments Expressing Satisfaction	9%
Need for Pathway Options for Special Education	8%
Need for Industry Certified Credential Options	8%
General Concerns Related to COVID-19	6%
Need for a Fine Arts Pathway	5%
Need for a Life Skills	5%
More Opportunities for Internships/Apprenticeships	3%
District Size Equity Issues	2%
Need for More Mastery-Based Learning	2%

“Our job as educators is to open the next level of life to students and not be gatekeepers to society.” – Educator



CONCLUSION

LESSONS LEARNED

In order to ensure that the overarching goals and objectives of the project are met, it is important to understand lessons learned and how they impact future years of the project. The following provides an overview of the larger lessons learned as part of this year's research and gives context to many of the potential strategies for future graduation pathway options planning and development, as well as recommendations for general project development.

1. There is continuing concern regarding the availability of pathway options that are meaningful and supportive of post high school plans for each and every student, but especially those receiving special education services, EL, students experiencing homelessness, and other at risk populations.
2. There is a need to more formally define what the obtainment of a high school diploma means in terms of the skills, wisdom, and experiences students should expect to leave high school with.
3. Current graduation pathway options rely heavily on measuring skill attainment with standardized tests, even though norming for such tests is not equitable or reliable for all student populations.
4. Graduation pathway options lack mastery-based or other learning opportunities where students have the ability to demonstrate skill attainment and academic mastery in a variety of ways that accurately represent where students are on their learning path.
5. Washington educators care deeply about students and their success beyond high school. However, there is a deeply engrained stigma that a four year college education is the gold standard of post high school education goals and anything else is seemingly less. It is possible that such thinking unconsciously influences how graduation pathway options are viewed and presented to students. In addition, this may have negative effects on how graduation pathway options are designed and implemented.
6. Students, parents and educators would prefer that employability and life skills are an integral part of high school education regardless of post-graduation goals. Specifically, whether a student is four year college bound after high school or not, employability and life skills are desirable content areas and currently lack representation within the context of the graduation pathway options.
7. As we look forward to year three project planning it is important to ensure that data needed to inform project instruments and protocols is provided as planned or project timelines will need to be adjusted accordingly simply in order to accommodate delays so that project deliverables are not rushed or compromised due to lack of time to successfully implement activities as planned.



8. While actual project activities and deliverables provided during years one and two have exceeded the scope of work in the original research plan, it is important that stakeholders' expectations are framed by the original scope of work, associated deliverables, timelines and budgetary restraints so that stakeholders can focus on the important questions and tasks needed to address the research questions and support future development of the graduation pathway options.
9. Additional strategies are needed to engage a larger number of student and parent stakeholders to ensure these important voices are heard.
10. The majority of stakeholders, across all groups, expressed their gratitude at being included in the feedback process. This says a great deal about the potential for positive growth and awareness around the graduation pathway options and challenges us, as researchers, to assess how we are collecting data, the questions we are asking, and the ways in which we present findings so that we can engage stakeholders in future activities.



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APPENDIX A: BASIC EDUCATION COMPLIANCE SURVEY ANALYSIS

WA Basic Education Compliance Survey Analysis 2021

Graduation Pathways Project

Of the 295 districts that responded to the Basic Education Compliance Survey, 252 served students in high school. All districts offered pathways under the ELA & Math Umbrella Pathway.

Most districts offered 5-7 of the available pathways. Please note that the Basic Education Survey did not obtain information regarding SAT/ACT testing options which is the 8th graduation pathway option.

Table 1: Number of Graduation Pathways Offered by Districts Serving HS Students

Number of Graduation Pathways Offered	Number of Districts	Percent of Districts
1	5	2.0%
2	5	2.0%
3	8	3.2%
4	17	6.7%
5	69	27.4%
6	80	31.7%
7	68	27.0%
Total	252	Avg 5.6

Table 2: Number of Districts Offering Pathway Umbrella Categories

	No. of Districts	Percent of Districts
ELA & Math	252	100.0%
ASVAB	205	81.4%
CTE	204	81.0%

The graduation pathway options that are offered by the majority of school districts are Dual Credit, SBA, and Combination. The graduation pathway that is offered by the least number of districts is Transition Course and AP, IB, or CI.



Table 3: Number of Districts Offering Specific Pathway Options

	No. of Districts	Percent of Districts
SBA State Assessment	240	95.2%
Dual Credit	242	96.0%
AP, IB, or CI	140	55.6%
Transition Course	139	55.2%
Combination	238	94.4%
ASVAB	205	81.3%
CTE Sequence	204	81.0%

The graduation individual items that make up the pathway options offered by the majority of school districts are Dual Credit, SBA, and Running Start. The graduation pathways that are offered the least across all districts are Cambridge and IB.

Table 4: Number of Districts Offering Individual Pathway Items

	No. of Districts	Percent of Districts
Dual Credit	242	96.0%
College in HS	203	80.6%
Running Start	236	93.7%
Dual Credit CTE	217	86.1%
AP	159	63.2%
IB	19	7.5%
Cambridge	7	2.8%
Bridge	139	55.2%
ASVAB	205	81.3%
CTE Sequence	204	81.0%
SBA	240	95.2% ²⁰

²⁰ While all districts (100%) offer the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) state assessment, only 95% of respondents indicated this was available on the district survey.



WA Graduation Pathway Options – Stakeholder Feedback Project

Table 5: Pathway Umbrella Categories Offered by District Size

Number of Pathways	VERY SMALL		SMALL		MEDIUM		LARGE		VERY LARGE	
	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts
ELA & Math	63	100.0%	43	100.0%	55	100.0%	59	100.0%	32	100.0%
ASVAB	54	85.7%	32	74.4%	44	80.0%	48	81.4%	27	84.4%
CTE	43	68.3%	32	74.4%	41	74.5%	56	94.9%	32	100.0%

Indeed, there was a significant relationship between size and pathways offered; as district size increased, so does the number of graduation pathways offered.. Please refer to the Appendix for Chi-square results.

Table 6: Number of Pathways Offered by District Size

	VERY SMALL		SMALL		MEDIUM		LARGE		VERY LARGE	
	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts
1-4 Grad Pathways	17	27.0%	8	18.6%	8	14.5%	2	3.4%	0	0.0%
5-7 Grad Pathways	46	73.0%	35	81.4%	47	85.5%	57	96.6%	32	100.0%

When examining the number of districts that offer pathways by the district size, there is a clear relationship between district size and the number of pathways they offer. Over one-half of the very large districts offer all seven pathway options.

Table 7: Number of Pathways Offered by District Size

# Pathways	VERY SMALL		SMALL		MEDIUM		LARGE		VERY LARGE	
	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts
1	1	1.6%	1	2.3%	2	3.6%	1	1.7%	0	0.0%
2	2	3.2%	0	0.0%	2	3.6%	1	1.7%	0	0.0%
3	5	7.9%	2	4.7%	1	1.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
4	9	14.3%	5	11.6%	3	5.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
5	22	34.9%	21	48.8%	19	34.5%	6	10.2%	1	3.1%
6	15	23.8%	9	20.9%	19	34.5%	28	47.5%	9	28.1%
7	9	14.3%	5	11.6%	9	16.4%	23	39.0%	22	68.8%



Table 8: Number of Districts by Size Offering Pathway Umbrella Categories

	VERY SMALL to SMALL		MEDIUM		LARGE TO VERY LARGE	
	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts
ELA & Math	106	100.0%	55	100.0%	91	100.0%
ASVAB	86	81.1%	44	80.0%	75	82.4%
CTE	75	70.8%	41	74.5%	88	96.7%

The pathways most often offered by very small to small and medium districts included SBA, Dual Credit, Combination. The pathways offered by most large to very large districts included Dual Credit, Combination, and CTE Sequence.

Table 9: Number of Districts by Size Offering Specific Pathway Options

	VERY SMALL to SMALL		MEDIUM		LARGE TO VERY LARGE	
	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts
SBA State Assessment	103	97.2%	48	87.3%	89	97.8%
Dual Credit	99	93.4%	53	96.4%	90	98.9%
AP, IB, or CI	35	33.0%	27	49.1%	78	85.7%
Transition Course	43	40.6%	30	54.5%	66	72.5%
Combination	99	93.4%	50	90.9%	89	97.8%
ASVAB	86	81.1%	44	80.0%	75	82.4%
CTE Sequence	75	70.8%	41	74.5%	88	96.7%

The pathways most often offered by very small to small and medium districts included SBA, Dual Credit, ASVAB and Running Start. The pathways offered by most large to very large districts included Dual Credit, Running Start and SBA. Despite district size, the pathway options that were offered the least were IB and Cambridge.



Table 10: Number of Districts by Size Offering Individual Pathway Items

	VERY SMALL to SMALL		MEDIUM		LARGE TO VERY LARGE	
	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts
Dual Credit	99	93.4%	53	96.4%	90	98.9%
College in HS	79	74.5%	42	76.4%	82	90.1%
Running Start	94	88.7%	51	92.7%	91	100.0%
Dual Credit CTE	83	78.3%	47	85.5%	87	95.6%
AP	41	38.7%	34	61.8%	84	92.3%
IB	1	0.9%	1	1.8%	17	18.7%
Cambridge	1	0.9%	1	1.8%	5	5.5%
Bridge	43	40.6%	30	54.5%	66	72.5%
ASVAB	86	81.1%	44	80.0%	75	82.4%
CTE Sequence	75	70.8%	41	74.5%	88	96.7%
SBA	103	97.2%	48	87.3%	89	97.8%

There was also a significant relationship between a districts percentage of students with disabilities and the number of pathways they offer.

Table 11: Number of Districts by Disability Category Offering Pathway Umbrella Categories²¹

	LOW DISABILITY		AVERAGE DISABILITY		HIGH DISABILITY	
	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts
ELA & Math	40	100.0%	134	100.0%	77	100.0%
ASVAB	37	92.5%	109	81.3%	59	76.6%
CTE	32	80.0%	119	88.8%	52	67.5%

²¹ Determined cut points for this category are: Low Disability <12%; Avg. Disability 12-16%; High Disability > 16% of student population.



Table 12: Number of Districts by Disability Category Offering Specific Pathway Options

	LOW DISABILITY		AVERAGE DISABILITY		HIGH DISABILITY	
	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts
SBA State Assessment	38	95.0%	129	96.3%	72	93.5%
Dual Credit	40	100.0%	131	97.8%	70	90.9%
AP, IB, or CI	26	65.0%	79	59.0%	34	44.2%
Transition Course	20	50.0%	89	66.4%	29	37.7%
Combination	40	100.0%	129	96.3%	68	88.3%
ASVAB	37	92.5%	109	81.3%	59	76.6%
CTE Sequence	32	80.0%	119	88.8%	52	67.5%

Table 13: Number of Districts by Disability Category Offering Individual Pathway Items

	LOW DISABILITY		AVERAGE DISABILITY		HIGH DISABILITY	
	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts
Dual Credit	40	100.0%	131	97.8%	70	90.9%
College in HS	35	87.5%	112	83.6%	55	71.4%
Running Start	37	92.5%	128	95.5%	70	90.9%
Dual Credit CTE	34	85.0%	121	90.3%	62	80.5%
AP	28	70.0%	91	67.9%	39	50.6%
IB	4	10.0%	13	9.7%	2	2.6%
Cambridge	1	2.5%	4	3.0%	2	2.6%
Bridge	20	50.0%	89	66.4%	29	37.7%
ASVAB	37	92.5%	109	81.3%	59	76.6%
CTE Sequence	32	80.0%	119	88.8%	52	67.5%
SBA	38	95.0%	129	96.3%	72	93.5%



Table 14: Number of Districts Offering Graduation Pathway Options by Free Reduced Lunch

	NOT FREE		FREE	
	No. of Districts	% of Districts	No. of Districts	% of Districts
College in HS	91	44.8%	112	55.2%
Running Start	75	31.8%	161	68.2%
CTE – Dual Credit	64	29.5%	153	70.5%
AP	89	56.0%	70	44.0%
IB	11	57.9%	8	42.1%
Cambridge	3	42.9%	4	57.1%
ASVAB	66	32.2%	139	67.8%
CTE Sequence	59	28.9%	145	71.1%

Table 15: Number of Districts with High School and Beyond Plan

	No. of Districts	% of Districts
No	1	0.4%
Yes	251	99.6%

Table 16: Number of Districts with Policy to Award Mastery Competency Based Credit

	No. of Districts	% of Districts
No	78	33.6%
Yes	154	66.4%
Did not Respond	20	--

Table 17: Number of Districts with Permanent and Temporary Policies for Competency Based Credit

	No. of Districts
Permanent Policy	159
Temporary Policy due to COVID-19	16



Table 18: Subject Area Competency Mastery-Based Diplomas Offered

	No. of Districts	% of Districts
Diploma	13	5.2%
All Subjects	56	22.3%
World Language	99	39.4%
Physical Education	31	12.4%
Math	64	25.5%
Science	47	18.7%
English Language Arts	62	24.7%
Integrated Environmental and Sustainability Education	11	4.4%
Social Studies	30	12.0%
The Arts	24	9.6%
CTE/Occupational Education	15	6.0%
Health	21	8.4%
Other	10	4.0%



Appendix Statistical Tables

Chi-Square Analysis of the Relationship Between Graduation Pathways Offered and District Size

			1-4 Grad Pathways	5-7 Grad Pathways	Total
District Size	Very small to small	Count	25	81	106
		% within Size	23.6%	76.4%	100.0%
		% within Pathway	71.4%	37.3%	42.1%
		% of Total	9.9%	32.1%	42.1%
	Medium	Count	8	47	55
		% within Size	14.5%	85.5%	100.0%
		% within Pathway	22.9%	21.7%	21.8%
		% of Total	3.2%	18.7%	21.8%
	Large to Very Large	Count	2	89	91
		% within Size	2.2%	97.8%	100.0%
		% within Pathway	5.7%	41.0%	36.1%
		% of Total	0.8%	35.3%	36.1%
Total		Count	25	35	217
		% within Size	10.2%	13.9%	86.1%
		% within Pathway	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	10.2%	13.9%	86.1%

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.752 ^a	2	<0.001
Likelihood Ratio	22.430	2	0.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	18.580	1	0.000
N of Valid Cases	252		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.64.			



WA Graduation Pathway Options – Stakeholder Feedback Project

Chi-Square Analysis of the Relationship Between Graduation Pathways Offered and FRL²²

			1-4 Grad Pathways	5-7 Grad Pathways	Total
FRL_Cat	Low-Poverty	Count	2	23	25
		% within FRL_Cat	8.0%	92.0%	100.0%
		% within Grad_Pathways_Group	5.7%	10.6%	10.0%
		% of Total	0.8%	9.2%	10.0%
	Mid-Low Poverty	Count	12	87	99
		% within FRL_Cat	12.1%	87.9%	100.0%
		% within Grad_Pathways_Group	34.3%	40.3%	39.4%
		% of Total	4.8%	34.7%	39.4%
	Mid-High Poverty	Count	16	80	96
		% within FRL_Cat	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
		% within Grad_Pathways_Group	45.7%	37.0%	38.2%
		% of Total	6.4%	31.9%	38.2%
	High Poverty	Count	5	26	31
		% within FRL_Cat	16.1%	83.9%	100.0%
		% within Grad_Pathways_Group	14.3%	12.0%	12.4%
		% of Total	2.0%	10.4%	12.4%
Total	Count	35	35	216	
	% within FRL_Cat	14.0%	13.9%	86.1%	
	% within Grad_Pathways_Group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	14.0%	13.9%	86.1%	

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.727 ^a	3	0.631
Likelihood Ratio	1.817	3	0.611
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.415	1	0.234
N of Valid Cases	251		
a. 2 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.49.			

²² Determined cut points for this category are: Low Poverty <25%; Mid-Low Poverty 25.1-50%; Mid-High Poverty 50.1-75%; High Poverty > 75.1% of student population eligible for free or reduced price lunch.



Chi-Square Analysis of the Relationship Between Graduation Pathways Offered and EL²³

			1-4 Grad Pathways	5-7 Grad Pathways	Total
EL_Cat	Low-EL	Count	28	141	169
		% within EL_Cat	16.6%	83.4%	100.0%
		% within Grad_Pathways_Group	80.0%	65.3%	67.3%
		% of Total	11.2%	56.2%	67.3%
	Avg.-EL	Count	2	26	28
		% within EL_Cat	7.1%	92.9%	100.0%
		% within Grad_Pathways_Group	5.7%	12.0%	11.2%
		% of Total	0.8%	10.4%	11.2%
	High-EL	Count	5	49	54
		% within EL_Cat	9.3%	90.7%	100.0%
		% within Grad_Pathways_Group	14.3%	22.7%	21.5%
		% of Total	2.0%	19.5%	21.5%
Total		Count	35	35	216
		% within Size	13.9%	13.9%	86.1%
		% within Pathway	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	13.9%	13.9%	86.1%

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.037 ^a	2	0.219
Likelihood Ratio	3.303	2	0.192
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.364	1	0.124
N of Valid Cases	251		
a. 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.90.			

²³ Determined cut points for this category are: Low EL <9.6%; Avg. EL 9.7-13.7%; High EL >13.8% of student population.



WA Graduation Pathway Options – Stakeholder Feedback Project

Chi-Square Analysis of the Relationship Between Graduation Pathways Offered and Disability²⁴

			1-4 Grad Pathways	5-7 Grad Pathways	Total
Disability_Cat	Low Disability	Count	3	37	40
		% within Disability_Cat	7.5%	92.5%	100.0%
		% within Grad_Pathways_Group	8.6%	17.1%	15.9%
		% of Total	1.2%	14.7%	15.9%
	Avg. Disability	Count	11	123	134
		% within Disability_Cat	8.2%	91.8%	100.0%
		% within Grad_Pathways_Group	31.4%	56.9%	53.4%
		% of Total	4.4%	49.0%	53.4%
	High Disability	Count	21	56	77
		% within Disability_Cat	27.3%	72.7%	100.0%
		% within Grad_Pathways_Group	60.0%	25.9%	30.7%
		% of Total	8.4%	22.3%	30.7%
Total	Count	35	35	216	
	% within Size	14.2%	13.9%	86.1%	
	% within Pathway	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	14.2%	13.9%	86.1%	

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.457 ^a	2	<0.001
Likelihood Ratio	15.165	2	0.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	12.269	1	0.000
N of Valid Cases	251		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.58.			

²⁴ Determined cut points for this category are: Low Disability <12%; Avg. Disability 12-16%; High Disability > 16% of student population.



WA Graduation Pathway Options – Stakeholder Feedback Project

Chi-Square Analysis of the Relationship Between Graduation Pathways Offered and Diversity²⁵

			1-4 Grad Pathways	5-7 Grad Pathways	Total
Diversity_Cat	High Diversity	Count	4	55	59
		% within Diversity_Cat	6.8%	93.2%	100.0%
		% within Grad_Pathways_Group	11.4%	25.5%	23.5%
		% of Total	1.6%	21.9%	23.5%
	Avg. Diversity	Count	8	52	60
		% within Diversity_Cat	13.3%	86.7%	100.0%
		% within Grad_Pathways_Group	22.9%	24.1%	23.9%
		% of Total	3.2%	20.7%	23.9%
	Low Diversity	Count	23	109	132
		% within Diversity_Cat	17.4%	82.6%	100.0%
		% within Grad_Pathways_Group	65.7%	50.5%	52.6%
		% of Total	9.2%	43.4%	52.6%
Total		Count	35	35	216
		% within Size	14.0%	13.9%	86.1%
		% within Pathway	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	14.0%	13.9%	86.1%

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.875a	2	0.144
Likelihood Ratio	4.296	2	0.117
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.804	1	0.051
N of Valid Cases	251		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.23.			

²⁵ Determined cut points for this category are: Low Diversity >67%; Avg. Diversity 66-47%; Low Diversity <46% of student population is white, non-Hispanic.



