

# Educational Landscape and Systems Analysis of Washington State

For Education Leaders



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The Center for Educational Effectiveness

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## Newsletter – January 2021

This is the 7<sup>th</sup> newsletter in a series to keep our valued advisory committee members and colleagues up to date on the progress of the Educational Landscape and Systems Analysis of Washington State. Our work on behalf of the education leaders of Washington State, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, continues amidst the ever-changing COVID-19 pandemic and the return to learning.

### Conference Presentations

In November-2020, our team presented at the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) conference to a virtual audience of 70. The presentation included the public unveiling of the schools participating in Phase 2 of the study. Pre-recorded materials were due on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, therefore the preliminary findings included only district and building administrator perspectives supported by some quotes from teachers. On December 15, 2020, we presented updated findings at the annual Washington Education Research Association (WERA) conference. This presentation focused heavily on the methodology but also expanded the preliminary findings to include the top themes that emerged from the teacher focus groups. We presented on January 21, 2021 at the third WERA Winter Virtual Summit where we shared more complete findings of the study in a roundtable format. The long-term impact of COVID-19 on our participation in conference presentations is unknown.

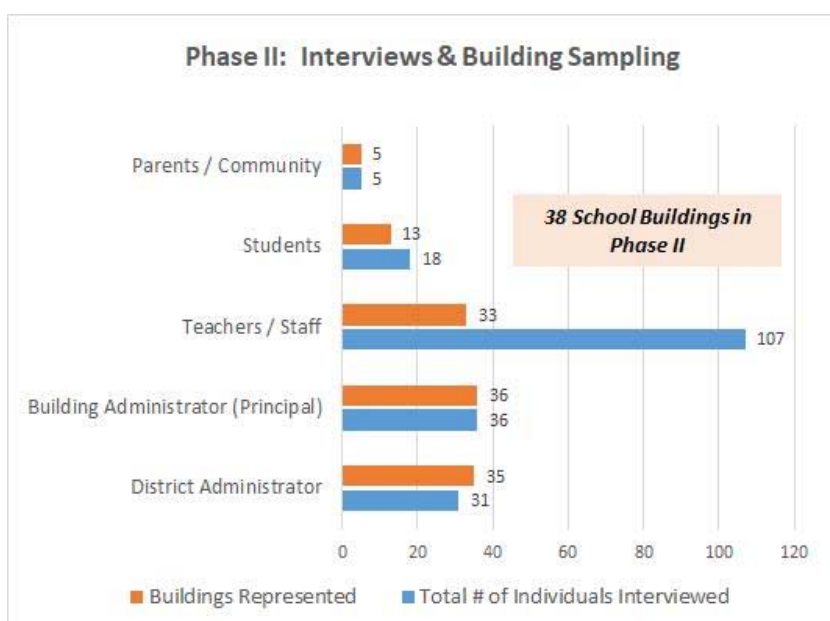
### Data Collection

While our window to conduct focus groups formally closed on November 1, 2020, we continued to schedule interviews and accept written responses through Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>. This afforded us the opportunity to increase the number of student and parent focus groups. The final data are lacking on parent focus groups and absent of the community perspective which will now be noted in the limitations of the study.

### Analysis Update

The 149 focus groups yielded 250 hours of transcription. We are working with a robust data set and are in the final days of the analysis. These schools excel at learning from the strengths of all students. This focus on equity and inclusion permeates all aspects of these schools. The grounded-theory construction and refinement is generating an overall structure to the themes that include:

- Equity and inclusion deeply rooted in school culture and the way it operates.
- Collaborative school culture built on relational trust amongst all staff, students, and leadership with collaboration focused on teaching and learning.





- Engaged school leadership where principals encourage, guide, and protect the teacher’s ability to focus on learning for every student.
- Ultra-high expectations for staff (certificated and classified) and students focused on deep learning and instructional quality.
- Professional development is woven into everyday practice and based on the extensive use of data to inform practice.
- Families and communities as partners in the educational processes.

Working in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and our advisory team we are fine-tuning the communication plan for the final report that is set for release on April 30, 2021.

### Communities of Practice

Through a new grant supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, we are overseeing the formation of Communities of Practice (CoP) to further the work on the outlier study. Two of these communities are composed of schools and districts from the outlier study; one for large high school leadership and one for rural district/school leadership. The other communities are led by the Washington Association of School Administrators and the Association of Washington School Principals. The vision for these communities is to facilitate ongoing communication for leaders to exchange ideas and build upon each other’s work in supporting COVID recovery and ensuring that our new normal is better than pre-COVID.

As part of our work with the two communities from the outlier study, we are engaged in a pilot process facilitated by the Gates Foundation to translate the assets of the outlier study and generate actionable tools for educators. This “Live Build” process will include representatives from CEE, the outlier schools/districts, and a digital content expert. The translated assets will initially be shared and refined within the communities of practice and then released to inform all schools and act as a guide for adopting the practices that led to the success of the outliers. The four-week long process is scheduled for February-2021.

### Critical Reading & Literature Reviews

The following reports and studies inform our work:

- [Getting Real About Race](#). Richard Milner explains why ignoring race equals ignoring the identities of students—including white students.
- [COVID-19 and student performance, equity, and U.S. education policy](#). Lessons from pre-pandemic research to inform relief, recovery, and rebuilding.

### Contact Information

If you have questions about the study, please contact us. We welcome your feedback and value your support!

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*“All the staff there are very open to suggestions and open to talk to students, they love talking to students.”*  
Student - Metro Suburban High School

*“For advisory, and especially this month, we’ve had lessons on diversity. We have lessons on Latinx month, that is this month, we had lessons on Black Lives Matter and what it means, so they really incorporate it during advisory most of the time.”*  
Student - Metro Suburban High School

*“I think that more and more bringing to the forefront, the home life of students has been a huge part in the investment that students in community made in school. They’re seeing themselves in the curriculum in school-wide activities and it’s helping a great deal for some people who maybe in the past felt marginalized by us to be drawn in a lot more.”*  
Teacher - Metro Suburban High School