

Student Voice: High School Leaders Share Insights with Ready WA

Editor's Note: This article was originally published on Ready Washington's Medium page on December 18, 2017. Ready Washington is a coalition of organizations supporting college and career ready goals and standards for every K-12 student in Washington state. See all Ready Washington blog posts on their Medium page: <https://medium.com/@ReadyWA>.

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At Cascade High School in Everett, students have access to a wide variety of courses and career guidance to help them chart their futures, according to Joe, a junior at the school. "Every student should be able to find what sparks their interest," he said. But the most powerful way to support students on their educational journeys is through strong relationships with teachers.

Joe and three other Washington high school students — Asher, a senior at Shorecrest High School, Sophia, a sophomore at Sumner High School, and Dominic, a junior at Kent-Meridian High School — all underscored the critical importance of student-teacher relationships in a wide-ranging discussion at a recent Ready Washington coalition meeting.

The coalition invited the four students, who are board members with the Association of Washington Student Leaders (a division of the Association of Washington School Principals), to share insights about their experiences in the education system.

The students discussed what works well for them in school, including access to classes and academic support from teachers, to what they wish was part of their educational journeys, including more classes focused on the arts and practical skills like budgeting, to stronger



Ingrid with AWSL students Dominic, Joe, Sophia, and Asher.

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relationships with teachers that enable students to share challenges they're experiencing outside of the classroom.

Asher encouraged teachers to be transparent with students about their purpose. "Explain your why," he said. Asher shared that he began excelling in school in ninth grade, when his teachers helped him learn how to believe in himself.

All four students have plans to pursue four-year degrees after high school, and they shared their inspirations for these dreams.

Sophia grew up in a college-going culture, including family members who are lawyers. She's known she wanted to pursue law school since she was young.

Joe figured out he wanted to go to college when he was in fifth grade and his school toured different Washington college campuses on a school field trip. "Seeing the options was illuminating," he said.

Learning self-accountability in middle school set Dominic on his college-going path, which includes pursuing an International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma.

The students also shared their thoughts about new graduation requirements and bell schedules, the challenges of balancing school work, extra-curricular activities, and home life, as well as financial challenges that can come along with pursuing advanced coursework such as the IB and Running Start programs.

When answering a question about the best way to communicate with students, the panelists all noted that personal, one-on-one connections are the best, whether with a teacher or a mentoring program.

Ready Washington would like to thank Asher, Dominic, Joe, and Sophia for sharing their insights with the coalition. We also want to thank AWSL and AWSP for introducing us to these fantastic student leaders. ■