

Ready Washington **PARTNERS WITH PARENTS** to Support Students' Education

Why do education and high expectations matter to Washington parents?



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PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA
Engaging Communities; Closing the Gap



“ I feel more confident. The information I received was excellent and very important to my child’s education.”

“ Freedom of education opens doors in the future,” said Brandon, a Kent School District parent.

“Education and lifelong learning are going to get you where you really want to go,” said Christina, a North Thurston School District parent.

“It’s important to me that my kids get a quality education because it’s setting them up for success with the rest of their life,” said Julie, a parent in the Kent School District.

These are just a few of the reasons parents shared for placing a high value on education for their students.

Brandon, Christina, and Julie are three of more than a dozen parents Ready Washington interviewed for our new Parent Voices video series. We wanted to hear directly from parents about the importance of

education and ways parents support their students in school. Raising the role of families as partners in their kids’ education helps ensure all students are prepared for the pathway of their choice after high school.

Ready Washington is a coalition made up of more than 20 education agencies and advocates (including AWSP). Members work together to raise awareness and support among students, families, and teachers about the value of learning standards, assessments, and readiness for education and training after high school.

‘PARENT PARTNERSHIP’ TO DEEPEN ENGAGEMENT

The Parent Voices video series is one of Ready Washington’s initiatives designed to engage with families. The coalition also launched the Parent



Partnership last year. Ready Washington designed the ongoing project to more deeply engage with families from typically underserved communities.

In the first phase of the project, Ready Washington partnered with 10 Spanish-speaking King County parents. The parents engaged in

shared learning over a series of three sessions. We talked about the Smarter Balanced assessments and online tools to support their students' education. And parents gave us valuable feedback about what they see as the most essential information for other parents to know about the assessments, academic support resources, and engaging with educators.

Over the course of the sessions, parents told us they learned more about Smarter Balanced and why their students take the assessments. They also gained confidence in talking with their students' teachers and other parents. One parent said, "I feel more confident. The information I received was excellent and very important to my child's education." Parents in the partnership designed a flyer to share with other parents with three key messages.

INCREASING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CAPACITY IN SCHOOLS

Based on the success of the project, Ready Washington designed phase two of the Parent Partnership. We wanted the next iteration to impact a greater number of parents, so we included both family workshops and a component to build the family engagement capacity of schools through trainings with the Parent Teacher Home Visit (PTHV) program.

In collaboration with Showalter Middle School in Tukwila and Northshore Middle School in Bothell, we developed a workshop for Spanish-speaking parents about the High School and Beyond Plan, and we set up PTHV trainings for staff.

This phase of the Parent Partnership is still under way, but initial results are positive. Parents have again voiced their appreciation for in-depth, interactive, culturally relevant workshops with information to support their students' education. And educators valued the training

that gave them tools to better engage with their students' families. In the final element of this project, we will bring families and teachers together to debrief about their experiences.

PUTTING LESSONS LEARNED INTO ACTION

Ready Washington developed the idea for the Parent Partnership after a tour of the state last year, during which we connected with nearly 300 parents. We heard great questions about Washington's learning standards and assessments, as well as appreciation for holding the meetings. Based on this feedback, we designed a more intensive partnership to dig into parents' insights and questions. We also recognized it can be more difficult for Spanish-speaking parents to access information, so we decided to conduct the project in Spanish.

As we finish the current phase of the Parent Partnership, we will look at

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what worked best and how we can improve for future projects. Ready Washington is committed to creating clear, easy-to-use information for families to help their students get ready to pursue the career pathway of their choice. We think there is no better way to understand the kinds of information and resources families need than engaging with them as partners. ■



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