

Student Achievement: The Start of a Journey

FRIDAY CONNECT
 May 10, 2024



In 2013, a journey began for the Chehalis School District to increase the number of graduates succeeding in their chosen career pathways. That was the start of the [Student Achievement Initiative](#), an effort that has gone from an idea, to a movement, to an ingrained part of our district's culture in just 10 years.

This year, we are launching a new student achievement goal called 75 by 35. We are working to ensure that, by the W.F. West High School Class of 2035, 75% of all graduates will earn the credentials they need to be responsible, contributing citizens.

Before we look at the next leg of our student achievement journey, it is important we look at the road that got us to where we are today. In this week's Friday Connect, we look at the work that has gone into the Student Achievement Initiative. Tune in to next week's Friday Connect for a look at the next steps in our journey forward.

Beginning to See the Road Ahead

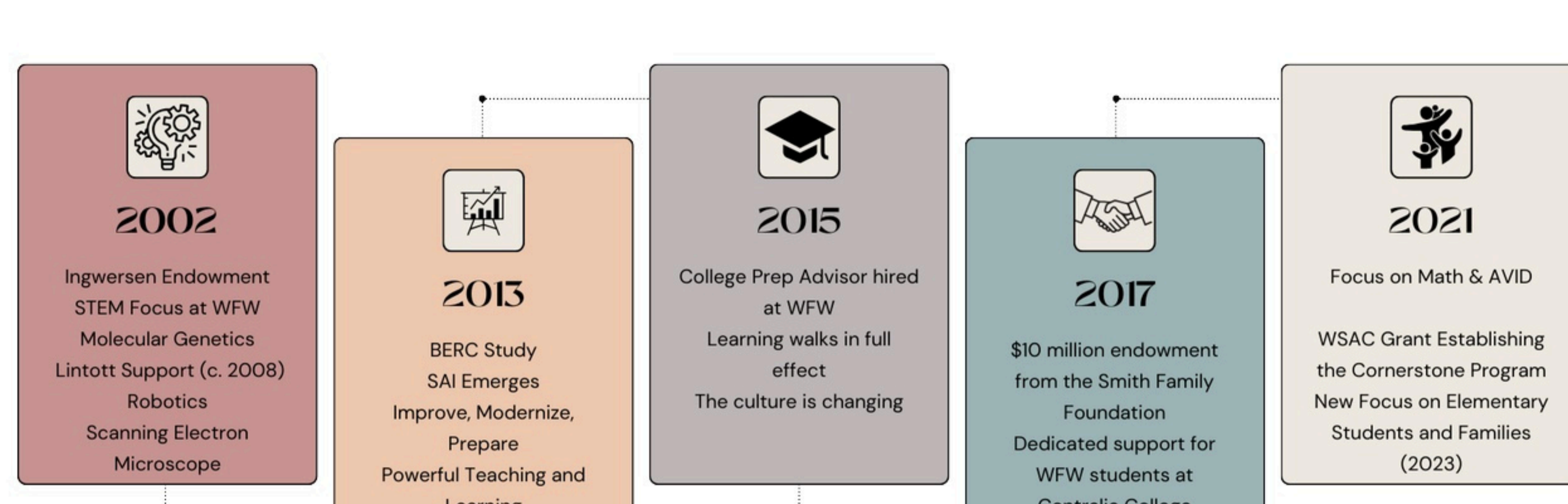
Though the Student Achievement Initiative was started in 2013, its roots go back to a very special gift made in 2002. Ray and Mary Ingwersen made a personal pledge of money to help fund a science teacher position at W.F. West to kick off an emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education. The Ingwersens' gift eventually became an endowment through the [Chehalis Foundation](#) that allowed W.F. West High School to focus on more STEM education and would pave the way for the eventual [addition of a STEM wing](#) to the high school campus in 2018.

This increased emphasis on STEM education spurred questions about how to help students connect with career opportunities supported by their high school studies. This led to the district commissioning a study by the [Baker Evaluation Research Consulting \(BERC\) Group](#) to look at what W.F. West graduates were accomplishing after high school. The study showed that only 20% of W.F. West graduates were going on to complete a degree after high school.

Considering that more than [70% of future careers](#) are expected to require some amount of post-secondary training, the number of Bearcat grads earning degrees was much too low. The Student Achievement Initiative was founded with its first target of 60% of W.F. West graduates attaining a degree, certification or career training by the class of 2022.

KEY EVENTS IN OUR JOURNEY

Along our Student Achievement journey we have had multiple key stakeholders invest their time, energy and dollars into the students of Chehalis. In Chehalis, our staff is focused on preparing our students and supporting them beyond their high school graduation.



Student Achievement Initiative Takes Its First Steps

Through the district's work with the BERC group, we learned that changing our culture from focusing on caps and gowns to career and college readiness required buy-in from staff in every building in our district. While Washington state requires career and college readiness lessons beginning in 6th grade, Chehalis decided that growing a generation equipped to be contributing members of their community meant starting those conversations with our youngest students.

The effort also needed cooperation from our community and strong partnerships. Community donations allowed steps such as adding technology in our buildings, hiring a [college prep advisor](#) for W.F. West High School and putting structures in place to support W.F. West students at [Centralia College](#). Since then, the district has been able to add: a [Career & College Readiness counselor for Chehalis Middle School](#), a [Freshman Transition Specialist](#) and a [Student Achievement Specialist](#) who works with newly graduated students to help remove any roadblocks to them completing their intended degree or certificate.

Last year, a \$1.05 million grant from [Washington Student Achievement Council \(WSAC\)](#) allowed more student achievement work to occur, including the founding of the [Cornerstone Program](#), which is focused on helping Chehalis families find the resources they need so they can help their students focus on learning.

Read More Here

Check out media coverage about the Student Achievement Initiative, WSAC Grant and other exciting honors for the Chehalis School District here.



These photos from about 2015 show some of the early steps of SAI, including added technology, college tours and having career and college readiness conversations at all grade levels.

Celebrating The Journey So Far

In October 2023, community members, stakeholders and potential stakeholders were invited to celebrate 10 years of the Student Achievement Initiative and learn about where the journey had brought us so far. Some of the numbers we celebrated were:

- 48% of the class of 2018 has already received some sort of post-secondary credential, while 63% of them are projected to do so within 8 years of graduation
- 95% of the Class of 2023 graduated (the state average is 83%)
- 62% of 10-12 graders were enrolled in a college level, dual credit or Advanced Placement course during the 2023-2024 school year

A highlight of that gathering was the Student Showcase, where our students got a chance to show Student Achievement goals in action. Check out photos and more information about that event below.



Read More Here

Read the Chehalis School District's Friday Connect newsletter about this amazing event.

Read More Here

Read coverage of the SAI celebration in The Chronicle.

Next Week: The Journey Continues

In next week's Friday Connect, learn about our new 75 by 35 goal and what the path to equip every student to find their passion and purpose may look like.

[Notice of Non-discrimination](#)
[Anti-bullying Policy and Procedure](#)