

# The Student Achievement Initiative (SAI) 10-year Report

Prepared for the Chehalis School District (2024)

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## Introduction

To increase the number of Chehalis School District graduates earning a living wage credential, the Chehalis School District implemented a multi-faceted approach to improving student outcomes. The Student Achievement Initiative (SAI), first conceived over a decade ago, has been a comprehensive plan to accomplish these goals by leveraging public-private partnerships throughout the region. The school district has focused on a series of strategies aimed at improving instruction, providing focused and equitable student support, and strengthening relationships with higher education institutions. The goal over the last decade was to reach 60% of W. F. West High School graduates receiving a living wage certificate within eight years of high school graduation.

The results of the strategies implemented over the last decade have been positive across a series of high-quality indicators. Through the widespread efforts of teachers, support staff, administrators, district leaders, and community members, it is projected that 65% of recently graduated W.F. West High School students will earn some type of living wage credential within eight years after their high school graduation, a large increase from 2014, when it was approximately 30%. Credentials include a college degree, industry certification, apprenticeship, or military enlistment. In addition to an increase in credential attainment, Chehalis School District's high school graduation rate increased from 77% to 95% over the last decade, which is 13% higher than the state average. The percentage of students meeting high school course requirements for admission into a Washington State 4-year university also increased from 38% to 55% since the beginning of SAI implementation. In each of the last four years, 100% of W.F. West graduates were admitted into a college or credentialing program. The close relationship between Chehalis School District and Centralia College has resulted in the doubling of the percent of Chehalis School District graduates attending Centralia College, from 22% to 45%. The share of Chehalis high school graduates enrolling in college also increased, from 55% to almost 70%. As leaders of the initiative and the school district look forward to the next decade of efforts, they have set a new goal of 75% of graduates earning a living wage credential by the Class of 2035, representing a 10-percentage point increase over the coming decade (See Figure 1). This 10-year evaluation was commissioned to help stakeholders understand which elements of the SAI have been working and what new strategies the district and its partners might implement to reach the new goal, *75by35*.

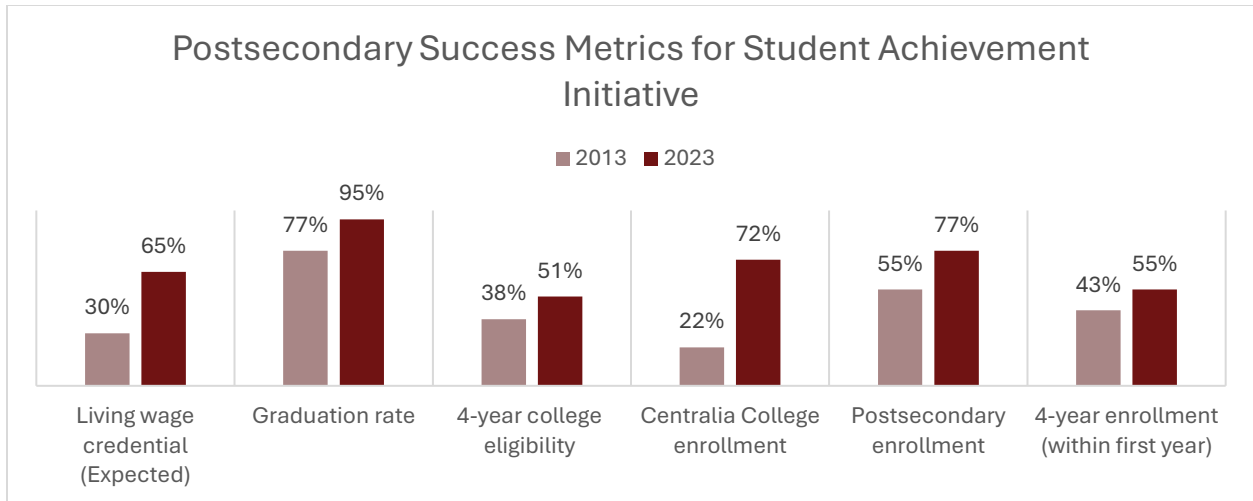


Figure 1

Central to the SAI is the integration of The BERC Group’s Four Habits of Powerful Teaching and Learning (PTL), a framework applied district-wide to improve instructional practices across all grade levels. This instructional framework promotes effective teaching strategies that foster deeper student engagement and learning. The SAI has supported professional development in PTL for all teachers and administrators since the beginning of the partnership. This consistent focus on high-quality instructional practices, and the commitment to implementing these Four Habits with fidelity, are hallmarks of the SAI. Like many other initiative outcomes, there has been a large increase in high-quality, student-centered instruction. During the baseline classroom observation period in the fall of 2013, 36% of teachers were aligned with the PTL framework. In the five most recent years of observations, an average of 85% of teachers were aligned with the PTL framework.

In addition to a focus on instruction, through the SAI the district invested in hiring specialized staff to provide Career and College Readiness (CCR) support for students at all levels. These roles were created to ensure that students received tailored guidance and assistance as they prepared for postsecondary education or careers. The commitment to allocating financial resources and protecting the integrity of these specialized positions allowed the SAI to expand its reach and improve over time, with initiative partners evaluating, reflecting, and adjusting as necessary over the last 10 years. This targeted support was further amplified by the district’s strengthened relationship with Centralia College (CC). Initiative partners collaborated to provide a dedicated staff member at CC to exclusively assist W.F. West (Chehalis School District’s comprehensive high school) graduates, ensuring greater success in navigating college and career pathways.

The SAI was implemented in three phases: Phase 1 – High School to College transition with a focus on College Awareness, College Eligibility, and College Preparedness. Phase 2 – Included

reaching down to the middle school and out to the community to build awareness and support earlier than high school. Phase 3 – Extended comprehensive support through middle school, down to elementary schools, into preschool, and out to the community (the Cornerstone Project).

To measure how the strategies have impacted the Chehalis community and student outcomes, the SAI has prioritized rigorous research and evaluation at each stage of development and implementation. The Chehalis School District commissioned a series of studies conducted by The BERC Group with a focus on continuous improvement<sup>1</sup>. These evaluations have informed the district’s decision-making processes, helping to shape key initiatives and program revisions throughout the duration of the initiative. In addition, The BERC Group has supplied a comprehensive set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that have been critical in tracking outcomes and guiding strategic decisions aimed at improving student achievement. The SAI has driven significant changes in how the district supports its students, emphasizing a data-driven approach, robust partnerships, and a relentless focus on improving teaching and learning across the district. This report will explore and consolidate the impact of these efforts over the past 10 years and provide insights into future directions for continued progress and success.

To reach the new goal of 75% of high school graduates receiving a living wage credential, it will be essential to identify and better understand the portion of students that are historically not enrolling in a postsecondary institution after graduation from W.F. West High School. Chehalis School District staff, many of whom are supported through SAI resources, have created a robust student tracking database at the high school and post-high school graduation levels to allow for the long-term tracking of student outcomes on a student-to-student basis. This individualized, granular level of data collection is unusual in educational research efforts and speaks to the innovation with which SAI leaders have approached their work over the last decade. This type of data collection allows The BERC Group to build a larger database of outcomes by drawing from additional data sources, such as the National Student Clearinghouse and Centralia College, to provide the most complete set of student outcomes, highlighting the approximately 30% of students that typically do not enroll in any postsecondary institution despite the last decade of efforts. Many of these students enter the workforce after high school graduation, which allows much less opportunity to eventually earn a living wage when compared to their peers that earn some type of credential.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for a list and description of reports.

## Research Questions

The following research questions have guided the methodology and analysis of data throughout the evaluation:

1. What have been the greatest impacts of the SAI on the Chehalis School District over the last decade of work?
2. What have been the greatest barriers to fully implementing the SAI in the Chehalis School District?
3. What is the working relationship between the Chehalis School District and Centralia College?
4. What are the most effective and impactful postsecondary training pathways available to W.F. West graduates that do not want postsecondary training or education, such as college, apprenticeships, licensures, or military service?
5. What is the profile of the students that do not enroll in any postsecondary education or professional training programs?
6. Of the students that do not have postsecondary aspirations, what alternative strategies and programs are available to ensure they earn a livable wage after graduation?
7. What is the profile of the students not attaining college eligibility or enrollment?

## Methodology

To perform a sound implementation evaluation, The BERC Group utilized a mixed methods evaluation approach. BERC researchers were guided by a post-positivist theoretical framework, which involves collecting multiple perspectives from stakeholders and employing rigorous data collection methods and analyses for mixed methods evaluations (Creswell, 2022). To conduct the proposed program evaluation, the BERC research team also employed a utilization-focused participatory evaluation model (Patton, 2010). This type of evaluation model is centered on four main standards: utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy. Utility refers to the evaluation and the subsequent deliverables. Feasibility refers to creating an evaluation plan that is realistic and respects the budgetary constraints of the stakeholders and program leaders. Propriety refers to the ethical and respectful collection and presentation of data, keeping in mind the original research questions and aim of the program evaluation. Finally, accuracy refers to the technical adequacy of the methodology and reporting, which is necessary to build trust between the evaluator and the stakeholders of the project. During the course of this evaluation, the BERC team consistently employed these standards in the creation, execution, and reporting of all evaluation related activities to ensure that program leaders received a thoughtful, useful, and fair program evaluation.

## Qualitative Methods

The BERC Group conducted interviews with Chehalis Foundation members, district administrators, school administrators and leaders, Centralia College staff, and all SAI funded personnel to gather detailed data about their experiences and perceptions of the implementation and impact of the SAI. The protocol was designed to elicit responses that could help researchers answer the research questions. Documents related to the SAI from the past decade were reviewed, including reports, press releases, meeting minutes and presentations, and more. These artifacts helped provide context to the report and helped to summarize all of the interventions implemented over the past 10 years of the initiative. To understand the various opportunities available to students who do not enroll in college, researchers conducted a literature review that provided an overview of the effective and impactful postsecondary training pathways available to W.F. West graduates that lead to a livable wage.

## Quantitative Methods

Researchers collected and analyzed data on grades, dual credit participation, program retention, high school graduation rates, college enrollment, and college completion rates for the last five years of W.F. West graduates. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to evaluate program effectiveness and to understand which variables had the highest impact on college eligibility and college enrollment.

## Qualitative Analysis

Interviews, focus group discussions, and observation notes were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis. Themes and patterns were identified to align with research questions. Thematic analysis involved identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data and provided insights into the implementation of the SAI from the varied perspectives of critical stakeholders.

## Quantitative Analysis

To understand the profile of students not meeting the senior quantitative credit requirement for 4-year college eligibility, researchers analyzed the last five years of student data ( $n = \sim 1044$  students). Researchers also merged the data with college enrollment data to understand which variables may have contributed to students not enrolling in college. Variables included in the model were *overall GPA*, *number of credits earned in math and other disciplines*, *discipline incidents*, *FRL status*, *ELL status*, and *IEP participation*. A logistic regression was performed to understand which variables most heavily influenced college eligibility and college enrollment. Within the analysis, researchers provided variables to create a profile of the type of student that falls into either or both categories, providing practitioners the tools to create an early warning system to identify students that may not be on their way to postsecondary career development.

## Employment Summary for Lewis County

When analyzing postsecondary outcomes for graduates of the Chehalis School District, researchers noted that historically, roughly 30% of students did not enroll in any kind of postsecondary institution. If these students plan to go directly into the local workforce after graduation, even with the large investment of resources from the SAI, it is beneficial for program stakeholders to understand the current job market in the surrounding areas. Sharing this information with students may also help provide context to the employment realities for that 30% group of students who are (without further intervention) currently not likely to pursue a credential. This information may serve as further rationale to pursue some type of postsecondary credential. Using publicly available data, BERCC researchers analyzed the most popular and fastest growing industries in the area and compared them to the living wage requirements of Lewis County.

### Postsecondary Entry-Level Job Opportunities in Lewis County

Lewis County offers a diverse range of industries and job opportunities for students who choose not to pursue a college degree or earn a postsecondary certificate. These industries include manufacturing and production, food processing, transportation, warehousing and utilities, retail and customer service, agriculture and forestry, and hospitality and food services. However, many of the positions available to students without postsecondary credentials are concentrated in lower paying jobs, ranging from minimum wage (\$16.28 per hour) to approximately \$22.00 per hour. Without specialized training or a postsecondary credential, entry-level employees in Lewis County industries may find it difficult to achieve financial stability over time (a livable wage).

### Livable Wage

In Lewis County, a livable wage for an adult working full-time is \$20.47 per hour. A living wage is defined as the hourly rate an individual in a household needs to earn while working full time to support themselves and their family. Therefore, as more adults or children live in a household, the living wage needed for financial stability increases. To estimate living wages in Lewis County, the cost of basic needs such as food, childcare, medical, housing, transportation, internet/mobile, and taxes are considered (Living Wage, 2024). The table below shows living wage estimates by the number of adults and children living in the household (See Table 1).



Table 1. Living Wage Estimates

1 Adult				
Category	0 children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children
Living Wage	\$20.47	\$37.51	\$48.29	\$62.36
Poverty Wage	\$7.24	\$9.83	\$12.41	\$15.00
Minimum Wage	\$16.28	\$16.28	\$16.28	\$16.28
2 Adults (1 working)				
Category	0 children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children
Living Wage	\$29.14	\$34.93	\$39.78	\$42.78
Poverty Wage	\$9.83	\$12.41	\$15.00	\$17.59
Minimum Wage	\$16.28	\$16.28	\$16.28	\$16.28
2 Adults (Both Working)				
Category	0 children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children
Living Wage	\$14.57	\$21.13	\$26.77	\$30.70
Poverty Wage	\$4.91	\$6.21	\$7.50	\$8.79
Minimum Wage	\$16.28	\$16.28	\$16.28	\$16.28

## Manufacturing and Production

In Lewis County, the manufacturing and production industry offers entry-level positions that do not require advanced education. With a long history in timber and wood products, Lewis County is one of the largest timber producing counties in the Northwest and has opportunities in sawmills, paper mills, and furniture manufacturing through companies like Cascade Hardwoods, Northwest Hardwoods, and Hardel Mutual Plywood. Additionally, with two major highways and four major railroads, local manufacturing companies produce float glass, tempered glass, plastic piping, netting, and specialized composites. Lewis County also hosts companies that produce chemicals for power plant operations, and companies that recycle carbon. Entry level positions include job roles such as assembly line workers, machine operators, and quality control inspectors. An average entry-level employee in one of these jobs earns between \$16.28-\$24.00 per hour.

## Food Processing

Lewis County includes a large food processing industry. Notable companies include National Frozen Foods, Callisons Inc. and Darigold. Entry-level positions in the food processing industry include food production workers, machine operators, quality control technician, warehouse

associate, packaging technician, and food processing assistant. All positions earn between \$16.28-\$22.00 per hour.

### Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities

Given Lewis County's location along major transportation routes like I-5, logistics and supply chain jobs in warehousing, trucking and distribution are growing. Several large companies, including Fred Meyer, Michaels, and Lowes, have established their distribution centers in Lewis County. Jobs in the industry that do not require postsecondary degrees or certifications include roles such as warehouse associate, shipping and receiving clerk, inventory control specialist, package handler, customer service representative, and dispatcher. An entry-level employee in this industry earns between \$16.28-\$22.00 per hour.

### Retail and Customer Service

Lewis County is home to various retail stores, ranging from small local businesses to larger chain stores. The retail and customer service sectors often require employees to have at least a high school diploma (or be working towards one) and include positions such as sales associates, cashiers, stock clerks, and customer service representatives. In 2020, workers aged 14-24 filled 32.3% of accommodation and food service jobs in the county. An average entry-level employee in this industry earns \$16.28-\$22.00 per hour.

### Agriculture and Forestry

The Lewis County region has fertile soil and a temperate climate which makes it ideal for many types of farming, including dairy farming, livestock production, and crop cultivation. Entry-level jobs in agriculture can range from farm laborers and equipment operators to animal caretakers and produce packers. Similarly, forestry remains a significant industry in the region. Positions that do not require postsecondary degrees or certifications include tree planters, trail maintenance, and fire prevention and control. An average entry-level employee in this industry earns \$16.28-\$20.00 per hour.

### Hospitality and Food Services

With a variety of restaurants, cafes, and hotels in the area, positions such as cooks, servers, housekeepers, and front desk staff are in demand in Lewis County. These jobs require minimal education, and employees can be trained on the job. An average entry-level employee in this industry earns \$16.28-\$20.00 per hour.

In Lewis County, entry-level pay in various industries may not always meet the threshold for a livable wage, particularly in roles such as retail, food service, and entry-level positions in forestry and agriculture. These roles, while providing essential experience, often come with wages that fall short of covering the full spectrum of living expenses, including housing, utilities,

and healthcare. This discrepancy between wages and the cost of living underscores the value proposition of postsecondary credentials and the challenge faced by many workers in the county, who may struggle to make ends meet despite full-time employment. The lack of postsecondary credentials can limit career advancement opportunities and wage growth, making it difficult for employees to build financial security over time. This highlights the importance of access to industry recognized certifications, which can offer pathways to higher-paying positions and improved economic stability.

## Evidence of Impact

Research Questions 1-4 were designed to help stakeholders understand the impact of the Student Achievement Initiative (SAI) on the Chehalis School District over the past decade. The focus was on identifying the greatest impacts of the work, the barriers to full implementation, the working relationship between the district and Centralia College, and the most effective postsecondary pathways for students who opted out of college. Through interviews with district staff and stakeholders, six major themes emerged that illustrate both the successes and challenges of the SAI in shaping student outcomes and preparing them for life beyond high school. Themes included:

1. Personalized Student Support and Long-Term Tracking
2. Career Exploration Through Mentorship Programs
3. Use of Career and College Readiness (CCR) Time
4. Student Engagement in Career Spotlights and Workshops
5. Relationship with Centralia College
6. Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Apprenticeships

### Impacts of the SAI on the Chehalis School District

#### Personalized Student Support and Long-Term Tracking

One of the most significant impacts of the SAI has been the highly personalized and sustained support provided to students from early childhood throughout their high school careers and beyond. Staff members not only assist students with immediate postsecondary planning but also track and guide them for up to six years after high school graduation. This extended involvement ensures that students who may struggle with the transition to college or the workforce continue to receive support, including assistance with college applications, financial aid, or job placement.

The newly implemented Cornerstone Program provides support to the entire community, including students, before they step into a Chehalis School District classroom. The program fosters community engagement through activities such as math and reading nights with the intent of showcasing the available support systems and connecting parents of future students to critical

resources that address basic needs and educational support. The program was also designed to break down barriers by addressing significant community challenges including mental health, food scarcity, housing instability, parenting support, and continuing education. Though it is a relatively new program, staff members have noted the impact and long-term potential, sharing that they have already seen parents of future students taking advantage of services. For example, some parents have chosen to go back to school to earn the type of living-wage credential that the SAI hopes all students will one day attain. One district official said, "The idea behind Cornerstone is not just about the students, but their families too. We've talked about starting something like a parent university, where parents can take college classes, and that helps build a mindset where college is the norm." The Cornerstone Project's focus on early intervention and family engagement is seen as critical to closing achievement gaps and promoting postsecondary success. By involving families in their children's education from an early age, the project creates a foundation for a college-going culture that can have lasting impacts as students progress through the educational system.

A middle school advisor position was also added through SAI support. This staff member provides individual student support, underscoring the importance of recognizing each student's unique needs to best tailor support to ensure their success. One staff member said of the position, "Understanding that every student is individual in their skill set and needs... they do a great job of facilitating that, supporting that growth for them personally.... The students have someone who kind of knows their story." The advisor also works to expose students to various career paths and college opportunities. "Every Wednesday we do a career college focus where students are introduced to different college and career options. These sessions are often supplemented by tools such as college tour videos and career spotlights that align with student interests." The advisor highlights the use of "career interest surveys at the beginning of each year" to tailor presentations and programs based on student preferences, ensuring that activities are student-interest driven. These programs play an essential role in helping students understand their options and how they might fit into different career fields or educational environments. Campus tours, such as those to Centralia College, also provide students with a first-hand look at college life, which is particularly valuable for students who may not have had exposure to such environments. This team member also works closely with the administration to identify the most at-risk students.

The SAI also added a ninth-grade transition specialist at W.F. West High School. This staff member plays a pivotal role in helping eighth graders transition to ninth grade by identifying at-risk students and by providing them with targeted support before they enter high school. Their work includes collaboration with middle school counselors and teachers to address academic, social, and behavioral issues early, setting the foundation for a successful high school experience. Describing the importance of the role one person said, "The transition from eighth to ninth grade is a critical time. If we can catch these kids before they fall behind, we can help them get on track for high school and beyond." The ninth grade transition specialist's work also involves

close collaboration with middle school counselors and parents to ensure a holistic approach to student success. By engaging parents in the transition process and working with counselors to identify students who may struggle with the transition, they ensure that the necessary support is in place as students move into high school. According to the transition specialist, "We're working with middle school counselors and parents to identify kids who might not make it through high school, so we can intervene early. By starting early, we're helping students, and their families understand that college or career training is a real option, even if they think it's out of reach."

An unintended, but valuable, benefit of hiring this staff member as a ninth-grade transition specialist has been their efforts in fostering inclusivity within the high school. One counselor that helped the transition specialist with an informal student listening circle said, "I recently did a student talking session with students of color... I learned so much from that session. I thought we were inclusive, but it turns out we are not. Kids were open and honest, and we need to be more inclusive to non-white students." Though this was from a few listening circles with a small group of students, it brings critical attention to the possible challenges faced by non-white students in the district, ensuring that the SAI's efforts to support all students are inclusive of diverse experiences. By addressing systemic issues of prejudice and discrimination, the SAI can help the school system to foster an environment where students of color feel seen, heard, and supported. This inclusivity strengthens the probability of success of the SAI, as it ensures that the program reaches students who may otherwise feel marginalized.

At the high school level, two additional staff members are dedicated to supporting the SAI goal of earning a living-wage credential. One staff member plays a key role in offering personalized advising to high school students, guiding them through the complexities of postsecondary planning. Their work involves meeting with students one-on-one to discuss their academic goals, career aspirations, and the steps necessary to achieve them. By developing a deep understanding of each student's unique circumstances, this staff member provides tailored advice that is instrumental in helping students navigate the transition from high school to college or career pathways. One of the advising staff members said, "I meet with each senior probably five different times throughout the year, sometimes 20 times, depending on the kid and what supports they have or what they're doing." The intensive, one-on-one approach allows staff to build strong relationships with students, providing tailored advice and intervention when needed. Another staff member emphasized the importance of tracking students after graduation: A district leader described this person as "the heart and soul of everything we do at the SAI."

A second staff member is focused on following students after graduation, ensuring that they have support as they navigate post-high school life. The postsecondary support counselor reported, "I follow them for six years... I reach out to them, every single student like, 'Hey, it's me, how's it going? Do you need help with anything?'" This long-term commitment ensures that students are not left to navigate the complexities of early adult life on their own. The success of this approach is evident in the stories of students who, despite initial uncertainty or challenges, have been able to make the leap into postsecondary education or careers. One interviewee noted, "Sometimes

they just need a bit of support to make that jump into a program. There are at least two a year who are on the fence, and they get moved over because of that support.” This insight highlights the transformative role that personalized advising can play in changing the trajectory of students who might otherwise struggle to transition out of high school and into a postsecondary credential opportunity.

### Career Exploration Through Mentorship Programs

In addition to academic/college advising, the SAI’s career mentorship programs have provided students with valuable early exposure to potential career paths. This has been particularly important for students who may not have clear postsecondary plans or are unsure about their options. By connecting students with community members and alumni who have successfully navigated a variety of career fields, the program helps students explore different pathways and make informed decisions about their futures. One staff member involved in the mentorship program shared, “We’re doing a pilot plan for our juniors.... We’re working with hooking them up with people in our community.” The program pairs juniors with professionals in fields of interest, allowing them to job shadow and conduct informational interviews. For many students, this hands-on experience is a critical step in deciding whether to pursue a particular career.

As another participant noted, “Some kids might go, ‘No, I’m going to change my mind,’ after participating in a job shadow... So, we’re starting with juniors just to give them time to explore the different career paths.” By engaging students earlier in their high school careers, the mentorship program provides them with the time and resources to make thoughtful, informed decisions about their postsecondary plans. This early career exploration has proven especially effective in helping students who might otherwise feel disconnected from traditional academic pathways. One staff member recounted the story of a student who initially showed little interest in postsecondary planning but became highly engaged after participating in the mentorship program: “He wasn’t paying attention in class, but once he saw what the career was really like, his whole attitude changed. Now he’s considering trade school.” This example underscores the importance of early intervention and real-world experience in shaping students’ future aspirations.

### Barriers to Implementation

#### Use of Career and College Readiness Time

While the SAI has had a measurable impact on student outcomes, according to reports its full potential has been limited by inconsistent use of dedicated time to Career and College Readiness (CCR) across the district. Several interviewees highlighted the challenges of engaging teachers in key SAI programs, such as the CCR block. What began as a promising initiative has faced growing resistance over time, with some teachers viewing the program as ineffective or unnecessary or administration allowing the time to be used for other purposes. One staff member described the issue bluntly: “The CCR block has fallen to the wayside, and no one does anything

with it.” This sentiment was echoed by several others, who noted the lack of overall participation has severely undermined the effectiveness of the program. “The teachers didn’t buy in, and admin didn’t make them do it,” one participant explained, adding that without consistent enforcement, the program’s goals have been largely unmet.

The resistance among some teachers stems in part from frustration over the unequal distribution of effort. As one staff member noted, “Even if you have teachers who are kind of on board... why am I putting all this work and effort in when X, Y, and Z do nothing in their classroom, and we get paid the same?” This sense of inequity has contributed to a widespread disengagement from the CCR block, limiting its ability to provide students with the guidance and resources they need to prepare for postsecondary success.

When the CCR block was first implemented, a majority of the time was used towards CCR activities such as Naviance and High School and Beyond Plan work. Students were given a set amount of time on a weekly basis to think about and explore their options and plans post high school, keeping the conversation at the forefront of their time at school. This dedicated time reinforced the importance district leaders were placing on postsecondary success for all students. More recently, this time has been allocated for other uses, such as a study hall for students to visit other teachers in an office-hours fashion, or school-wide business such as announcements and assemblies. These are all activities that are beneficial to students in different capacities but have no bearing on the CCR goals of the district and the SAI.

A similar time block (Wildcat Time) exists at the middle school and was previously used for various CCR activities. This too has transitioned into a social emotional learning (SEL) time. While the middle school does implement other CCR activities such as college trivia, virtual college tours, and consistent community guest speakers, the dedicated weekly time to focus on postsecondary success has become less of a priority over time.

There continues to be an opportunity to align the middle school time block with the CCR block at the high school for better vertical articulation, providing students with dedicated time, year after year, focused on CCR awareness and growth, however, the practices are currently less intentional than at the inception of the SAI.

#### Student Engagement in Career Spotlights and Workshops

In addition to perceptions of teacher disengagement around CCR blocks, low student participation in career spotlights and workshops has emerged as a significant barrier to the full implementation of the SAI. These events, designed to expose students to a range of career options and connect them with professionals in the community, have seen declining attendance, particularly in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic. One staff member reflected on the stark contrast between pre- and post-pandemic student engagement: “Before COVID, I would have no problem getting 50 kids in that room. But after COVID... I would stress and just pull random students in just to have bodies.” The lack of attendance and seeming disinterest that has taken root among students in recent years has made it difficult to fill these workshops with



students who could benefit most from them. One person reported, “The kids that need it most just aren’t coming. They’re skipping, they’re doing whatever they do, and I can’t do it one-on-one.” This lack of engagement has been particularly frustrating for staff members who put considerable effort into organizing these events. One staff member described the challenge of attracting students to career spotlights: “I send them a personal invite, like, ‘Johnny, come on this day,’ but they don’t come. That’s a huge problem.”

### Relationship Between the Chehalis School District and Centralia College

The relationship between the Chehalis School District and Centralia College plays a critical role in the success of the SAI, particularly in helping students transition smoothly to postsecondary education. The structured and formalized relationship between the district and the college remains a fundamental strength of SAI and a component that has helped this initiative to stand out and gain recognition from local and state agencies. This relationship is rare in the educational space and speaks to the importance and strength of community in Chehalis. One staff member noted that, while there are frustrations, the partnership is essential for providing students with postsecondary opportunities: “I think Centralia College does a great job in a lot of areas, but there’s always room for improvement in how we communicate and work together.”

Staff members that directly work with students have stayed in their positions and have often grown the scope of services and support, demonstrating more evidence of the strength of human capital as fundamental to the SAI. During the last decade, a dedicated position at the college has provided direct support for Chehalis graduates. One staff member described the role as, “They are the main person that kind of tracks the students that come from W.F. West. They’re responsible for connecting them with all of the other resources. This role focuses on guiding them through registration, financial aid, and other challenges they might face.” This role has been essential to fostering the relationship between the district and college and to providing students with tailored support during the transition to postsecondary education. Additionally, the district and college recognized the need to hire a Spanish-speaking resource as the diversity of the community continues to increase.

The partnership has played a critical role in increasing the number of W.F. West graduates enrolling at Centralia College. By providing additional outreach, dedicated advising support, and opportunities for high school students to visit and become familiar with the Centralia College campus, many students who might not have pursued higher education are being given the opportunity earn a living-wage credential. One college staff member emphasized, “The partnership has resulted in a significant number of W.F. West graduates attending Centralia College and staying on track to complete their studies.” The strengthening of the relationship over the last decade has helped mitigate some of the challenges that typically prevent students from continuing their education after high school, such as financial difficulties or lack of guidance.



While there is a strong foundation of collaboration between the two institutions, according to reports issues related to communication and responsiveness have at times potentially hindered the effectiveness of the partnership. Although the college has investigated financial aid options, changed orientation and registration requirements, and implemented alternative student placement procedures for math and ELA, some varying perceptions remain. One Chehalis School District staff member expressed frustration over the difficulty of providing feedback to Centralia College, “With Centralia College, I feel like they don’t want feedback from us... All they do is deflect on why it is that way.” Centralia College staff shared that there are mismatches in best practices in college student success and high school student success and that some strategies are not “portable” without the right personnel and conditions in place. Additionally, throughout the decade of SAI investment in the relationship between Chehalis School District and Centralia College, there has been staff turnover in leadership, requiring time to build new, meaningful relationships. To alleviate misperceptions and small frictions between the two institutions, Chehalis School District staff at the middle and high school should continue consistent dialogue with Centralia College staff tasked with helping W.F. West graduates to ensure that both institutions are working towards the same goals of student success and reduce miscommunication.

## Effective Postsecondary Training Pathways for Non-College Bound Students

### Importance of Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Apprenticeships

For students who do not plan to attend postsecondary training, high school Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and apprenticeships offer viable and impactful alternatives. The SAI has made concerted efforts to promote these pathways, exposing students to successful professionals from the local community who followed non-college routes and achieved stable, fulfilling, and living wage earning careers. One staff member highlighted the role of apprenticeship panels in showing students the potential of these career paths, “We do an apprenticeship panel... We have local people come in and talk about how they started their careers, and that really makes a difference for the students who aren’t interested in college.” These panels provide students with firsthand accounts of how individuals from their own community built successful careers without a traditional four-year degree. By connecting students with professionals in fields such as engineering, nursing, and skilled trades, the SAI helps students see the possibilities that exist beyond high school. One participant emphasized the importance of showcasing local success stories, “Here’s an engineer from the area, here’s a nurse, here’s an electrician... Look how comfortable their life is. They came from here, they live here.”

This approach not only validates non-college pathways but also helps students envision themselves following similar trajectories. However, there is still work to be done in expanding access to CTE programs and apprenticeships, particularly in terms of building stronger connections between students and local employers. One staff member noted, “We’re doing a good job, but I think we could do more to make sure every student who’s not going to college

has a clear path.” Ensuring that students are aware of and have access to these pathways will be key to the continued success of the SAI in serving all students, regardless of their postsecondary plans.

The SAI has had a profound and lasting impact on the Chehalis School District, particularly in providing personalized support, long-term tracking, and early career exploration opportunities for students. However, the initiative continues to face significant barriers, including teacher resistance, limited student engagement, and communication challenges with Centralia College. Despite these obstacles, the SAI has successfully promoted career and technical education pathways for non-college-bound students, offering them viable alternatives to traditional four-year degrees. Strengthening teacher buy-in, improving student participation, and enhancing collaboration with Centralia College will be essential for the SAI’s future success and sustainability.

## Student Outcome Analysis

Research Questions 5-7 were designed to help stakeholders identify a profile for students who historically do not pursue a postsecondary credential, so the district could develop an early warning system and additional interventions.

To understand the specific characteristics of the students that are not meeting college eligibility or enrolling in college after graduation, researchers collected student academic data from various sources. The hope was to uncover patterns that can provide school leaders and staff with information to identify these students as early as possible. Through early identification, SAI stakeholders can provide the support and resources necessary to encourage students into pathways that result in living wage earning credentials, and ultimately careers. Researchers analyzed transcripts, discipline data, college enrollment data, and various demographic datasets, including race/ethnicity, ELL status, free or reduced-price lunch status (FRL), and IEP status. Logistic regression was employed to model the variables that might have the highest influence on the outcomes of college eligibility and college enrollment. Logistic regression is well-suited for this analysis because it estimates the probability of a binary outcome (e.g., enrolled/not enrolled, eligible/not eligible) based on predictor variables.

1. College Eligibility: A first logistic regression model was constructed to evaluate the factors that influence college eligibility. The same demographic variables and grades were used as predictors in this model.
2. College Enrollment: The second logistic regression model was developed to assess the impact of demographic and academic variables on the likelihood of a student enrolling in college. The model included the following predictors: race/ethnicity, poverty status, ELL status, migrant status, special education status, grades, and college eligibility.

### College Eligibility Model:

The analysis of factors influencing college eligibility using logistic regression identified several important and statistically significant variables that impact whether a student is eligible for college. These variables were Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL) status, college credits earned in high school, cumulative GPA, hard English credits earned, and dual enrollment credits earned.

1. **FRL Status:** Students who qualified for FRL were found to be less likely to be eligible for college. Students on FRL had reduced odds of being college-eligible compared to their peers who did not receive FRL. For students with FRL status, the odds of being eligible for college decreased by approximately 49% when compared to those not receiving services, making them about half as likely to be eligible for college.
2. **College in the High School:** Earning college credits from College in the High School significantly increased the likelihood of college eligibility. For every additional college credit earned, the odds of being college-eligible increased by approximately 95%. If Student A has a certain chance of being college-eligible with 1 college credit, Student B's chance of being eligible would be nearly double that, just by earning 1 additional college credit, showing that even a small increase in the number of college credits earned during high school can have a significant impact on a student's chances of being college-eligible.
3. **Cumulative GPA:** As expected, cumulative GPA was a strong predictor of college eligibility. For each 1-point increase in GPA, the odds of being college-eligible increased by approximately 139%. For example, if Student A has a GPA of 2.0 and Student B has a GPA of 3.0, Student B would have more than double Student A's chance of being eligible.
4. **English Credits Earned:** The number of English credits were a statistically significant predictor of college eligibility. For every additional hard English credit earned, the odds of being college-eligible increased by about 10.5%.
5. **Dual Enrollment Credits:** Students who earned dual enrollment credits (i.e., credits earned through programs that allow them to earn college-level credits outside of high school, including AP, Running Start, and College in the High School) also had a higher likelihood of college eligibility. For each additional dual enrollment credit earned, the odds of being eligible for college increased by approximately 52%.

The overall strength of this model was measured using a statistic called Cox and Snell's pseudo R-squared, which was calculated to be 0.64. This value indicates that the model explains approximately 64% of the variation in college eligibility across students. In other words, the factors included in the model—such as FRL status, GPA, and credits earned—account for most of what determines whether a student is eligible for college. The model shows that academic performance (GPA, credits earned) has a substantial positive impact on college eligibility, while FRL status (a proxy for economic disadvantage) is associated with a lower likelihood of being eligible. This insight is critical for moving forward in the SAI as it suggests that supporting

economically disadvantaged students and encouraging participation in advanced credit-earning programs can significantly improve college eligibility rates and should be included in the metrics that are tracked.

#### College Enrollment Model:

The logistic regression model examining the factors that influence college enrollment identified several significant predictors. These variables include Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL) status, college credits earned in high school, cumulative GPA, Running Start credits earned, and dual enrollment credits earned. The model's overall goodness-of-fit, as measured by Cox and Snell's pseudo R-squared, was 0.256, indicating that the model explains approximately 25.6% of the variance in college enrollment.

1. **FRL Status:** The analysis showed that students who qualified for Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL) were less likely to enroll in college. This translates to a 35% decrease in the odds of enrolling in college for students receiving FRL compared to those who do not.
2. **College in the High School:** Earning college credits from College in the High School was positively associated with college enrollment. For each additional College in the High School credit earned in high school, the odds of enrolling in college increased by about 20%. If Student A has a certain chance of enrolling in college with 0.5 College in the High School credits, Student B's odds of enrolling in college would increase by 20% just by earning 1 more College in the High School credit.
3. **Cumulative GPA:** Cumulative GPA had a strong positive impact on the likelihood of college enrollment. For each 1-point increase in GPA, the odds of enrolling in college increased by 91%. If Student A has a certain likelihood of enrolling in college, Student B's chances of enrolling would nearly double compared to Student A with a 1-point difference in their GPAs.
4. **Running Start Credits Earned:** Running Start credits, which allow students to take college courses for dual credit while still in high school, were also a significant predictor. Each additional Running Start credit earned increased the odds of enrolling in college by approximately 25%.
5. **Dual Enrollment Credits:** Dual enrollment credits earned outside of the regular high school curriculum had a positive effect on college enrollment as well. For each additional dual enrollment credit, the odds of enrolling in college increased by 26%.

This model suggests that multiple academic and demographic factors influence a student's likelihood of enrolling in college. Notably, cumulative GPA and dual credit-earning opportunities (such as college credits in high school, Running Start, and dual enrollment) are associated with higher college enrollment rates. On the other hand, students on Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL) are less likely to enroll in college, reflecting a potential barrier for economically disadvantaged students.

While these models both represent a meaningful portion of the variance, they also suggest that other factors not included may contribute to whether a student is eligible for or enrolls in college. These findings underline the importance of supporting academic success and expanding access to college credit-earning programs, particularly for economically disadvantaged students, as these factors significantly impact college enrollment decisions.

### Secondary Math

Researchers also analyzed secondary math performance to further understand the impact of math on student success. Two striking data points emerged from this analysis. Figure 2 shows the Spring Math iReady distribution for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students between 2021-22 and 2023-24. For 2021-22 and 2022-23, only about 40% of students were at grade level in math. During the 2023-24 school year, only 28% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students were at grade level in math. Furthermore, 36% of students were more than one grade level below by the time they finished 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Figure 3 shows the percent of 9<sup>th</sup> graders failing at least 1 math course during their freshman year at W.F. West. In the last three years, one in five 9<sup>th</sup> graders failed a math course, which increases the chances of them not enrolling in college. Both the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Spring Math iReady scores and 9<sup>th</sup> grade math failure rates suggest that this crucial transition period could be a factor in overall student success and could serve as an important metric to track for SAI staff.

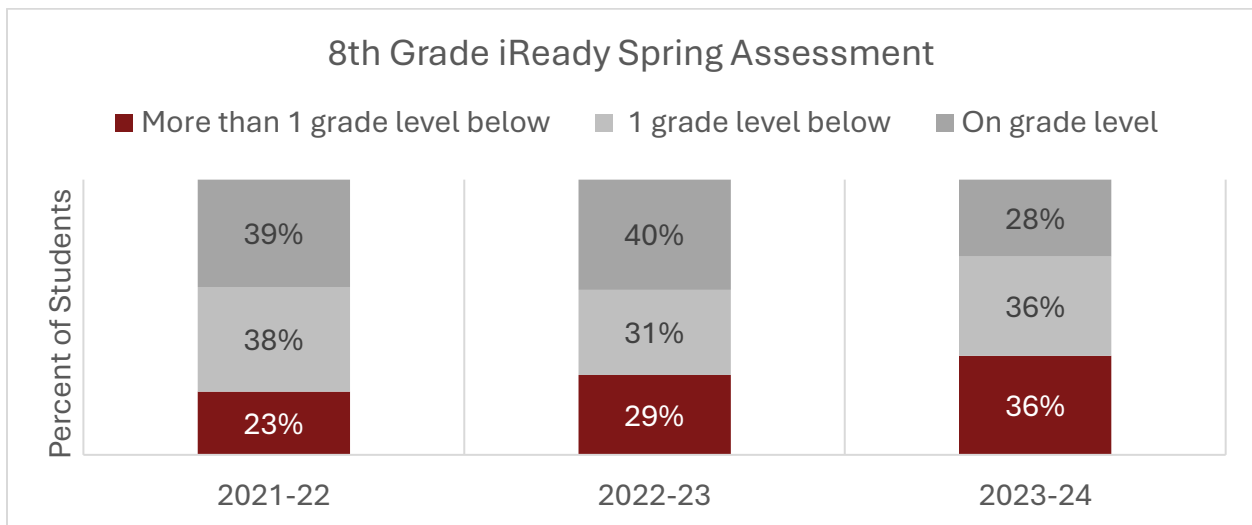


Figure 2

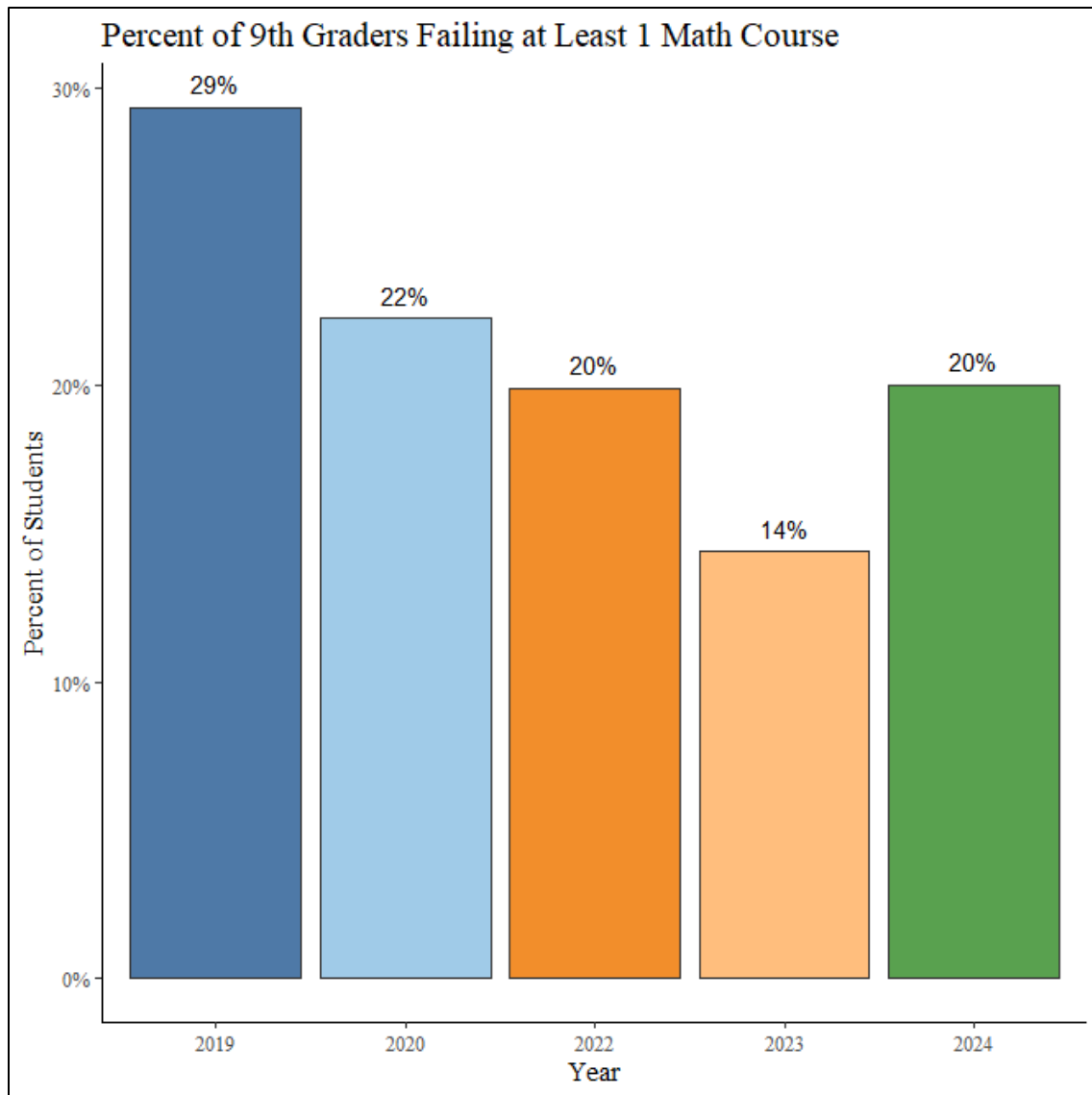


Figure 3

## Recommendations

### 1. Create a CCR Pipeline through Structured CCR Time

More than 30% of graduates tend to not pursue any postsecondary training. To reach the SAI goal of 75by35, it is imperative that students are aware of the value proposition of postsecondary training or high school pathway certification. There are very few opportunities for living wage employment available to graduates without some sort of credential. Creating a coherent College and Career Readiness (CCR) pipeline that spans all grade levels is essential for ensuring that students are well-prepared for their postsecondary pursuits. An effective model for this approach can be found in the “College Bound” program implemented by the University of Chicago’s

Urban Education Institute. This program provides structured CCR time for students from elementary through high school, with a curriculum that includes career exploration, college planning, and skill-building activities tailored to each developmental stage (Nagaoka, 2013).

The program’s success is evident in its outcomes, with participating students demonstrating higher rates of college enrollment and persistence compared to their peers. By providing continuous support and guidance, the College Bound program ensures that students are prepared for the challenges of college and career, regardless of their starting point.

At Chehalis School District, implementing structured CCR time across all grade levels could create a similar pipeline, providing students with the necessary skills and knowledge at each stage of their educational journey. This approach would ensure that all students, regardless of their background, are on a clear path toward college and career readiness. The structure for such a program already exists at the high school and middle school level, requiring some time to be allocated at the elementary level for specific CCR topics. One example of a structure is focusing on providing elementary school students the opportunity to explore the various careers available based on interests, which change regularly, and drive home the importance of thinking about the future. At the middle school level, time could be spent on students understanding their strengths and weaknesses and how that might align with possible careers and interests. At the high school level, students would focus on their High School and Beyond plan, creating solid goals and strategies that lead to a living wage credential. The following provides a possible flow of support throughout the system:

Grades P-2	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12	Grades 11-12	Grades 11-16
Self-awareness	Career awareness	Personal interest Career interest	Career pathways	College awareness	Career development

Along with implementing a structured CCR program across all grades, Chehalis School District should take on strategic communication efforts to educate students, parents, and the broader community about the value of credentials. Nashville Metro Public Schools partnered with the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce for such a communication campaign that educated students and families of the long-term benefits of a living wage credential, promoted CTE pathways and earn IRCs, and bridged the gap between local industries and career preparation. These efforts are already in place at Chehalis School District, but consolidating efforts into a branded campaign of targeted communication and community involvement can have a larger impact.

## 2. Deploy Formalized Student Listening Circles

Incorporating student voice into school decision-making is crucial for creating a responsive and inclusive educational environment. A successful example of this approach is the use of student listening circles in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). In response to concerns about school climate and discipline policies, OUSD implemented student listening circles to gather



input directly from students across different grade levels and demographic backgrounds (Cohen, 2015).

These listening circles provided a safe space for students to share their experiences and offer suggestions for improvement. The feedback gathered from these circles led to significant changes in district policies, including the implementation of restorative justice practices and the revision of the district's discipline code to be more equitable and supportive of all students.

At Chehalis School District, deploying formalized student listening circles could similarly capture a wide range of student voices, providing valuable insights into the student experience. These insights could then inform school policies and programs that directly impact CCR outcomes, ensuring that they are responsive to the needs of the student body. Additionally, involving students in the decision-making process fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment, which can lead to increased engagement and academic success.

### 3. Measure Impact of SAI Partnership at Centralia College

By comparing WF West students with those in the TRiO program, and by gathering qualitative data on student experiences, the college can assess the effectiveness of the initiative and identify strategies to enhance its impact. Support staff in charge of TRiO services use a similar case management approach, including student tracking and regular check-ins on performance. Using existing, longitudinal data, researchers can compare W.F. West student achievement and completion data to similar students at Centralia College that do not receive the same level of support that the SAI partnership provides W.F. West students at Centralia College. Possible metrics to compare include grades, the percentage of students transitioning from developmental courses to college-level courses, total credits earned, graduation with a 2-year degree, and matriculation to a 4-year college or university. The comparison sample could be matched along available variables such as demographics and high school performance to ensure baseline equivalence. In addition to the quantitative analysis, surveys and focus groups with current and former W.F. West students can provide further insight into their experiences with resources that come directly from the SAI. This mixed-methods approach could help SAI leaders understand the impact of this particular segment of the long pipeline that students experience throughout their time at Chehalis School District.

### 4. Early Warning System for Middle and High School Counselors

Early Warning Systems (EWS) are essential tools for identifying and supporting students at risk of academic failure or dropping out. The implementation of an EWS in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is a well-documented example of how data-driven interventions can significantly improve student outcomes. CPS's EWS utilizes a range of indicators, including attendance, behavior, and course performance, to identify students at risk of not graduating. The system then



triggers targeted interventions, such as academic support, counseling, and mentoring, aimed at addressing the specific needs of each student (Balfanz, Herzog, & Mac Iver, 2007).

The results of this system have been substantial. Schools that implemented the EWS saw a marked increase in graduation rates, particularly among students who were identified as at-risk. The success of the CPS model has been attributed to its focus on early identification and intervention, which allows educators to address problems before they become insurmountable barriers to academic success.

Implementing a similar EWS at Chehalis School District would provide middle and high school counselors with the tools to identify students at risk of not meeting the SAI goal by working towards a postsecondary credential. By leveraging data that has shown to predict not meeting college eligibility and future college enrollment, such as the number of failed courses, discipline incidents, and College Bound status, a small committee of counselors and administrators with intimate knowledge of the community and their students can pinpoint these students early, to provide timely and targeted support, helping more students stay on track to meet their academic goals. In addition, these touch points with students, starting from elementary school through high school, should be tracked in a shared database to add another important data point that can help staff understand the threshold of interactions throughout a students' time at Chehalis School District. Some of this work is already being done on a building-to-building basis, but consolidating the databases into a single master resource that then feeds into an Early Warning System means counselors and staff are keeping tabs on students as they move through the district.

## 5. Regular Meetings for SAI Staff

Regular communication and alignment among SAI staff are crucial for fostering a healthy and efficient organization. In *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business*, Patrick Lencioni emphasizes that organizational health is the single most important factor in ensuring long-term success. Lencioni outlines four key components of a healthy organization: building a cohesive leadership team, creating clarity, overcommunicating clarity, and reinforcing clarity (Lencioni, 2012). These principles can be directly applied to the collaboration required among SAI staff.

Building a cohesive leadership team involves ensuring that staff are aligned with the initiative's vision and goals. Through individual interviews with SAI staff, it was clear that each staff member understands the overall vision and goals of the SAI. By holding regular meetings—at least monthly—SAI staff can further their cohesion, allowing each team member to share what they are working on, discuss challenges, and collaborate on innovative ideas. This will not only strengthen relationships but also ensure that staff are working towards the same objectives, which is critical for organizational success. The second and third components, creating clarity and overcommunicating clarity, are about ensuring that all team members understand the initiative's goals and strategies. Regular meetings provide a platform for this communication, ensuring that everyone is on the same page regarding initiatives and next steps. For SAI staff, these meetings can help reinforce the priorities, track progress toward goals, and address any misalignments early on. Finally, the fourth component, reinforcing clarity, is about institutionalizing processes that sustain the organization's focus over time. These regular meetings would serve as a tool for reinforcing the clarity of purpose among SAI staff, ensuring that they remain aligned with the district's goals for student achievement and that their actions are consistently coordinated.

## 6. Clarify Job Descriptions and Consolidate Institutional Knowledge in an SAI Wiki

Clarifying job descriptions and consolidating institutional knowledge are vital for ensuring the smooth operation of educational institutions. A relevant example can be found in the approach taken by the Denver Public Schools (DPS) when they restructured their central office. DPS recognized that many job roles had evolved, with staff taking on additional responsibilities that were not reflected in their original job descriptions. To address this, DPS undertook a comprehensive review of job descriptions, aligning them with the current needs of the district and the specific contributions of their staff. This process not only clarified expectations but also helped in identifying gaps and redundancies in roles, leading to a more efficient organizational structure (Denver Public Schools, 2015).

In addition to revising job descriptions, consolidating institutional knowledge is crucial, especially in large or complex organizations where turnover can lead to the loss of critical information. The Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) in Maryland offer an excellent example of this. MCPS developed an internal knowledge management system to capture best practices, historical data, and procedural guidelines. This system, accessible to all staff, serves as a living repository that not only preserves institutional memory but also facilitates professional development and collaboration across the district (MCPS, 2016).

Implementing a similar approach at Chehalis School District through an SAI Wiki would provide a centralized platform for storing and sharing institutional knowledge. A “Wiki” is a collaborative website or platform that allows multiple users to create, edit, and organize content in real-time. Wikis are designed to be dynamic, enabling anyone with access to contribute to the knowledge base, and the content is typically structured in interconnected pages, making it easy for users to navigate and reference related topics. This would ensure that all staff members, new and existing, have access to the resources they need to perform their roles effectively, fostering a more cohesive and informed workforce. The primary strength and reason for the success of the SAI in its first decade was the human capital that has been invested in different areas of the school district and greater community. The SAI staff that work directly with students, along with district and college administrators that believe in and support the work, are the backbone of the initiative. Despite their dedication and passion, it is reasonable to plan for transitions in staffing so the work can be sustained, and improved, over time. Creating a Wiki database can mitigate lost knowledge and help the initiative to continue to grow and improve so all students are served.

## 7. Expand KPI's

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are critical for assessing the success of educational programs and making informed decisions, including the development of the EWS. Currently, the SAI uses a range of KPI's to understand the progress of the initiative through a wide range of lenses, including standardized test scores, STAR observation scores, college eligibility, and living-wage credential attainment. Moving forward, additional data points should be added. First, KPIs specific to the Centralia College partnership should be included in the yearly update. These could include metrics such as the number of W.F. West graduates participating in and completing developmental and college-level courses, grades, 2<sup>nd</sup> year retention, graduation, and subsequent college enrollment through transfer to a 4-year university. Second, the addition of iReady assessment scores for available grades can provide a more detailed picture of student academic achievement and growth, including the percentage of students at, below, or above grade level in English and math. Third, a collective database could be created that measures the number and type of interactions that Chehalis School District students have with counselors working under the SAI umbrella. In time, these data can be matched with outcome data to understand the threshold for interactions that result in the best postsecondary outcomes for students.

## 8. Counseling Department Meetings with the Math Department

Collaboration between departments can lead to significant improvements in student outcomes, especially in areas like mathematics, which is critical for college readiness. A successful example is found in the Dallas Independent School District (DISD), where the counseling and math departments collaborated to increase student participation in advanced math courses.

Recognizing that many students were opting out of senior-level math, the departments worked together to identify barriers, such as a lack of awareness about the importance of math in college admissions and career opportunities (DISD, 2014).

To address these barriers, the counseling department organized workshops for students and parents to emphasize the value of taking advanced math courses, while the math department introduced support mechanisms, such as peer tutoring and flexible course scheduling. This collaboration led to a significant increase in enrollment in advanced math courses, particularly among underrepresented groups.

W.F. West High School can replicate this model by holding regular meetings between the counseling and math departments. These meetings would allow for the identification of barriers to student participation in senior-level quantitative courses and the development of targeted interventions. By working together, these departments can ensure that more students are prepared for senior quantitative requirements, the quantitative demands of postsecondary education, and demands of the workforce.

## 9. Refine the Non-College Opportunity Database with a Focus on Business and Entrepreneurship

Providing robust non-college opportunities is essential for ensuring that all students have pathways to success, regardless of whether they pursue a college degree. The Youth Apprenticeship Program in Georgia offers a successful example of how focusing on business and entrepreneurship can provide viable alternatives to traditional college pathways. This program partners with local businesses to offer high school students hands-on work experience in fields such as manufacturing, IT, and healthcare, along with entrepreneurship training. Students can earn industry-recognized certifications and, in some cases, even start their own businesses before graduation (Wilson, 2012).

The program has been successful in providing students with the skills and experience needed to secure well-paying jobs or launch their own enterprises, demonstrating that college is not the only path to economic self-sufficiency. Within the Chehalis School District, refining the non-college opportunity database to include more business and entrepreneurship options would empower students to explore alternative career paths that align with their interests and provide the skills necessary to thrive in today's economy.

This could involve building partnerships with local businesses, chambers of commerce, and entrepreneurship programs to offer students internships, apprenticeships, and mentorship opportunities. By expanding the database in this way, the district can ensure that all students have access to opportunities that lead to a living wage, regardless of their postsecondary plans.

#### 10. Add More Industry-Recognized Certification Offerings

Industry-recognized certifications (IRCs) are an increasingly important component of career readiness, providing students with the qualifications needed to enter the workforce directly after high school or college. An Industry certificate measures competency and validates the knowledge base and skills that show mastery in a particular industry. Currently, Chehalis School District offers 10 IRC's, including the Adobe Certified Associate and Automotive Certification through Ford, with plans to add six more in the future.

Further expanding the IRC offerings in the district to include certifications in high-demand fields such as IT, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing could similarly enhance students' career prospects. Possible IRCs to add include Certified Billing and Coding specialist, Python Certification, or FAA Aviation Maintenance Technician. By offering these certifications, the school can provide students with the skills and qualifications needed to secure well-paying jobs immediately after graduation, thereby improving their chances of achieving long-term career success. IRCs related to fields that students are entering after graduation instead of pursuing a living-wage credential can also provide students with the tools and credential to move up in those fields and earn a living wage.

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## Appendix A – Summary of BERC Research Reports to Date

September 1, 2024

October 1, 2013

*BERC Presentation of Qualifications to the Board*

*Chehalis School District Contract: Comprehensive School District Review*

### 1. November 2013: Initial District Needs Assessment

*Chehalis School District Needs Assessment: District-Wide Synthesis Report*

The BERC Group conducted a district review for the Chehalis School District (CSD). As part of this review, we conducted School and Classroom Practices Studies in all six schools within the district, and we aggregated the results into this report. The purpose of the report was to provide information to the Chehalis School District regarding any areas emerging in school studies that may need system-wide focus and support.

### 2. December 2013: STEM Research Report (Addendum)

*W.F. High School Chehalis School District: STEM Education Report*

The BERC Group conducted a district review for the Chehalis School District (CSD). As part of the study, The BERC Group analyzed the extent to which W.F. West High School's (WFWHS) Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Program aligns with proposed STEM national standards. This addendum report included a description of the data sources, the context of STEM education, high school outcomes data for STEM students, the results of the review, and conclusions and recommendations.

February 2014: SAI Treatment Begins



### 3. January 2015 Newsletter

In 2013, Chehalis School District set forth a vision to improve student achievement, modernize instructional practice, and prepare students for college and careers. This vision was embraced by the school board and by community partners, such as the Chehalis Foundation. This newsletter prose highlighted Powerful Teaching and Learning, the district-formed instructional leadership teams in each of the schools, the implementation of the College and Career Readiness Committee, data dashboards, and key performance indicators (KPIs).

### 4. June 2015: SAI Summary and Next Steps

#### *Chehalis School District Education Initiatives Project: Research Report*

The goal of this report was to provide relevant research and analysis of place-based program outcomes emphasizing effective support structures and emerging promising practices relating to college and career readiness, in addition to interpreting current outcomes of the West/Coffman Scholarship. As a result of exploring the benefit of scholarships, the foundation decided to focus on supporting students rather than funding them. By August, the district had posted positions for College and Career Counselors/Advisors.

### 5. January 2017: SAI Summary and Centralia College Partnership

#### *Centralia College Student Services and Academic Program Audit: Research Report*

This study provided an opportunity to assess the economic needs of the country in general and Washington State in particular. It also included a literature review of national promising practices related to school-community-college partnerships. Additionally, an inventory and analysis of current program options and support services at Centralia College provided qualitative data aligned with empirical evidence. Recommendations were offered on how to further develop and expand the college-school district-community partnership. Overall, the goal of this research project was to match current practices at Centralia College with current national promising practices around community partnerships in college readiness programs. In addition to informing current and future work, this study documented past work and provided a blueprint for other communities to consider in their efforts to strengthen their partnerships.

## 6. June 2019 Summer Melt

### *Decreasing Summer Melt and Increasing Persistence and Completion: Evidence from National and Local Efforts*

This study explored college persistence, completion, and summer melt, contemporary terms used in education to address the transition from high school to, and through, postsecondary success. The report provided a review of relevant literature on summer melt, persistence, and completion, local and national best practices on mitigating summer melt and increasing persistence, and current practices being implemented in the Chehalis School District and local community college. Recommendations were included to build upon current efforts.

## 7. April 2020: CTE Needs Assessment

### *W.F. West High School CTE Audit: Career and Technical Education Needs Assessment*

This report described why Chehalis School District is focused on CTE and how this connects to the Student Achievement Initiative. As part of their research-based initiative, district leaders recognized the need to focus efforts on the District's CTE program. The report was intended to guide CTE and school leaders in developing their 5 Year Plan for program implementation and improvement.

## 8. 2021: Reengagement

### *Chehalis School District: Postsecondary Reengagement Study*

Over the past several years, the SAI partnership has expanded to include additional partners, including Centralia College. These partners have continued to build capacity for work around postsecondary education. This study explored reengagement in college, with a focus on the attributes and resources communities leverage to help students return to and complete a postsecondary degree or certification program.

## 9. 2022: Centralia College Federal Loan Feasibility Study

### *Financial Aid Student Loan Feasibility Study*

The purpose of this report is to explore the pros and cons for CC to begin offering federal student loans. Centralia College is among the few colleges in the United States that does not provide federal financial aid in the form of subsidized and unsubsidized student loans. The purpose of this report is to provide guidance to the executive team at CC, so they can come to a decision about whether to provide federal student loans in the future. The report includes research questions and methods, literature review, summary data, and a list of pros and cons for providing federal student loans as part of their financial aid support at CC.

## 10. 2023: Chehalis School District Expansion of College Readiness Efforts

### *The Cornerstone Project*

The Chehalis School District (CSD) is embarking upon the next strategic phase of the Student Achievement Initiative (SAI). College and Career Readiness has been a cornerstone of district work for more than a decade. During this time there have been continuous research efforts embedded into the initiative to make strategic decisions regarding best practices toward district goals. This research has shown that efforts around college and career readiness rely heavily upon a holistic approach to student support, beginning early in life and continuing throughout postsecondary completion. This report is designed to analyze promising practices and to provide guidance to the next phase of district support.

## 11. 2024: Chehalis School District Setting a New Goal: 75by35

### *The Student Achievement Initiative (SAI) 10-year Report*

The results of the SAI in the last decade have been promising. Through the widespread effort of teachers, support staff, administrators, district leaders, and community members, it is projected that 65% of recently graduated Chehalis High School students will earn some type of living wage credential. This includes a college degree, industry certification, apprenticeship, or military enlistment. As leaders of the initiative and the school district look forward to the next decade of efforts, they have set a new goal of 75% of students earning a living wage credential by the Class of 2035, which represents a 10 percentage point increase over the coming decade. This ten-year evaluation was commissioned to help stakeholders understand which elements of the SAI have been working, and what new strategies the district and its partners might implement to reach this new goal.