

April 6, 2021

Honorable members of the Washington State Legislature,

We the undersigned, are education nonprofit organizations gravely concerned about the impact on student learning due to effects of the pandemic, and ready to partner with OSPI and LEAs to address learning recovery. While learning loss is not a new problem, our state and nation has never faced this issue on such a large scale, and the disproportionate impact on our BIPOC students has never been more pronounced.

As we move to re-open schools, we urge our state legislators to consider the following recommendations as you grapple with how to appropriately resource the education continuum:

1. **Reframe to asset-based language such as “learning recovery” or “unfinished learning.”** Students cannot lose something they didn’t have the opportunity to learn. Students are always learning--the current definition of “learning loss” devalues the different modes of cultural, social, and academic learning students have engaged in during long-term school closures and remote schooling.
2. **Center equity in the approach.** Some students thrived in remote learning while still others experienced opportunity/achievement gaps, gaps that existed for many prior to the pandemic. Thus, support and resources should be prioritized for those students furthest from opportunity. Providing ‘equal’ resources, i.e., additional school days for all students, will continue to exacerbate these gaps.
3. **Assess each student for pandemic-related learning and social emotional recovery and acceleration.** School districts should not assume gaps nor need for recovery based on student group characteristics, e.g. race, but rather on individual student need. Use data to drive support and resource allocation.
4. **Prioritize proposals that address students’ socioemotional needs alongside academic needs.** The pandemic has resulted in more than unfinished learning. Our students are also dealing with the deep social and emotional impacts resulting from the isolation and lack of in-person contact with educators and fellow students. Supports could include adjusting counselor to student ratios, partnering with CBO’s to provide trauma-informed professional development for classroom educators, adopting and implementing socioemotional curriculum, etc.
5. **Provide [intensive tutoring](#).** Targeted intensive tutoring, often referred to as high-dosage tutoring, consists of having the same tutor to work over an extended period of time (e.g., all year, every school day) on academic skills, such as math or reading. In the most effective versions, an individual tutor works with one or two students at a time, using a skill-building curriculum closely aligned with the math or reading curriculum used throughout the school and targeted to the student’s academic needs.
6. **Institute [Expanded Learning Time](#).** ELT encompasses programs or strategies implemented to increase the amount of instruction and student learning experience. Other ELT strategies include afterschool, summer, and in-school programs offered by the school district and in partnership with community-based organizations.
7. **Prioritize proposals that promote acceleration over remediation**, ideally, a combination of classroom changes and community-based supports that are critical to priority student populations. “Remediation” has been identified through research to actually prevent academic

growth. We know students of color, students living in poverty, and differently-abled students are over-represented in remediation programs. It is an important anti-racist and equity approach to ensure that all students have support in grade-level and developmentally-appropriate instruction.

8. **Prioritize proposals that address learning needs across the academic spectrum, specifically including science, STEM, and social science.** In 2018, *Washington State Leadership & Assistance for Science Education Reform* [LASER](#) surveyed 68 districts and found a need for strategic support to ensure K-5 students have adequate time in high-quality science instruction. Through our current LASER program implementation, we know science has been further de-prioritized, with several districts indicating only math and language arts will be prioritized as schools reopen. This is in part due to assessment requirements and the Washington School Improvement framework prioritizing math and language arts at the elementary level. Science and STEM literacy are critical to ensuring Washington students are on pathways toward civic engagement and economic self-sufficiency, so a comprehensive K-12 STEM education is critical. We cannot let the pandemic inhibit an entire generation of Washingtonians from gaining basic scientific literacy.

9. **Close the digital divide.** Ensure students furthest from opportunity are given both access to and support for the devices and skills needed to be connected and able to successfully navigate remote learning. Provide staff with the tech support and training they need in order to support a diverse population of students and their families. Ensure both one-time investments have ongoing commitments and support for sustainability.

10. **Ensure high school students stay on the path for post-secondary credential attainment.** Mobilize credit recovery supports to high school students who are behind in credit accumulation and/or graduation requirements. Target specific transitions support for K-12/postsecondary pathways such as postsecondary planning and advising, FAFSA completion, and application supports. Expand access to dual enrollment, and support completion and credit transfer in the 6 dual credit programs offered to WA students.

We stand ready to support legislators, educators, and community in this important work to ensure our students continue to move forward with learning recovery.

Sincerely,

Angela Jones, CEO, Washington STEM

James Dorsey, CEO, College Success Foundation

Tafona Ervin, Executive Director, Foundation for Tacoma Students

Kia Franklin, Executive Director, Stand for Children

Shirline Wilson, Executive Director, Democrats for Education Reform

Steve Smith, Executive Director, Black Education Strategy Roundtable



Angela Jones
CEO
Washington STEM



James Dorsey
President & CEO
College Success Foundation



Tafona Ervin
Executive Director
Foundation for Tacoma Students



Kia C. Franklin
Executive Director
Stand for Children



Shirline Wilson
Washington State Director
Democrats for Education Reform



Steve Smith
Executive Director
Black Education Strategy Roundtable

