

# Open Doors Programs in King County, WA Summary Report

July 2015

*This is a cross-site analysis of 13 Open Doors re-engagement sites in King County. Prepared by Ilona Trofimovich, Intern, University of Washington, M.Ed Education Policy Program for the Road Map Project's Regional Re-engagement Network and Opportunity Youth Advisory Group. Individual program profiles are also available.*

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## Introduction

This report summarizes work happening around the Road Map Region to serve opportunity youth or specifically, youth who are disconnected from school and work and who have not completed high school. These 13 Open Doors programs serve students ages 16-21, providing opportunities to earn a diploma or GED and to enroll in courses in one of many partnering colleges to work towards a college or career certificate or degree. Programs vary in size, in staff, and length of time in operation. Some programs are nested within organizations that provide a broader scope of services to the community; others have evolved specifically to serve the educational and career needs of opportunity youth.

The following sites are documented in this report. Most are within the Road Map Region; two fall slightly outside of it but still serve Road Map Region students.

- Acceleration Academy
- Bellevue CEO
- Career Link
- ELL Excel
- Gateway to College (at both Highline College and Lake Washington Institute of Technology)
- Highline Connection Center/Learning Centers
- iGrad
- Multi-Service Center
- SafeFutures
- Seattle Interagency
- Southwest Education Center
- YouthSource

*\*Note that some profiles have more or less detailed information based on how long the site has been established, as well as the availability of information and feedback while this report was being developed. If questions arise, please reach out to Nicole Yohalem and/or the site director of that program.*

This information is meant to start conversations - to get us talking about common student barriers and needs in our region and how we might systematically approach them. We hope that through the creation of these profiles and the summary report we can better understand what each other is doing and support each other better as we collectively serve opportunity youth in the Road Map Region.

## Overview

The programs profiled in this report function under a variety of operational models. The most common is district - community college partnerships (10 of 13 sites profiled, 3 of which operate as a consortium), followed by district-run models (2 of 13), and one district - community-based organization partnership.

Model	Site	Partners	Enrollment*	Credential Pathways
School District - Community College Partnerships	Bellevue CEO	Bellevue College and Lake Washington IT	300 (annually)	Diploma, GED, and AA
	Career Link	Highline Schools and South Seattle College	154	Diploma
	ELL Excel	Highline Schools and Highline College	31	Diploma/AA
	Gateway to College at Highline	Highline Schools and Highline College	96	Diploma/AA
	Gateway to College at Lake Washington	Various local districts and Lake Washington Institute of Tech	200	Diploma/AA
	iGrad	Kent School District and Green River College	504	Diploma, GED, and AA
	Seattle Interagency	Seattle Public Schools and Seattle Colleges	40	Diploma, GED, and AA
Consortium Sites	YouthSource	Renton Technical College, Renton Public Schools, and King County EER	79	GEDplus
	Multi-Service Center	Renton Technical College, Renton Public Schools, and King County EER	28	GEDplus
	SafeFutures	Renton Technical College, Renton Public Schools, and King County EER	7	GEDplus
District Run Models	Acceleration Academy	Federal Way Public Schools	160	Diploma
	Highline Connection Center/Learning Centers	Highline Schools	80	Diploma
School District - Community Based Organization Partnership	Southwest Education Center	Highline Schools and Southwest Youth and Family Services	54	Diploma and GEDplus

*\*In most cases, number reflects total enrollment as of June 2015 as reported during site interviews.*

## Demographic Trends

### *Student Populations*

Sites note the following trends in the populations of students enrolling in their programs:

- Youth with system involvement
- Youth who are pregnant or parenting
- Youth with special education needs (including IEPs and 504 plans)
- English Language Learners
- First generation students, immigrants, undocumented students, and students of color
- Youth with a history of being bullied

### *Student Barriers*

Sites have found that the following barriers are the most prominent for students they enroll. The first four listed were most common across all sites and noted as the most serious/significant barriers. Barriers in order of prevalence:

1. **Finances/need to work to support self and/or family**
2. **Housing/homelessness**
3. **Drug/alcohol abuse**
4. **Mental health/social-emotional issues**
5. Gang involvement
6. English Language Learners
7. Immigration status/legal issues
8. Low level reading/math skills
9. Lack of transportation
10. Lack of home/family support
11. Lack of food
12. Domestic violence

### *Older Students*

When students are over 21, most sites **refer them to the High School 21 program** (for those who are on community college campuses, or who partner with community colleges). Many students continue to be served by the organization and/or by Seattle Education Access (SEA) on-site, though the program does not bill OSPI for those students.

### *Successful Students*

Sites have noticed that some of the most successful students, despite overcoming significant life barriers, attend regularly, possess or develop **strong social and interpersonal skills, maintain motivation to learn and be successful, and embrace a "clean slate" or "fresh start" attitude**. Many programs have noted that **older students (over 18) tend to find more success**, mainly due to increased maturity, or the motivation of having more peers who have already graduated. This notion was especially prominent at community college sites. Some sites give preference to older students who are closer to aging out of the system.

## Outreach, Recruitment & Enrollment

Programs have tried various methods for outreach and recruitment. Across all sites, **the most effective outreach/recruitment strategy is peer referrals**. Many sites mentioned that this seems to be most effective because students trust their friends, and will be more likely to visit and attend a site where they already have a sense of trust established. The second most common referral source is **school counselors**. Sites have built and maintained relationships with school counselors in a variety of ways: through emails, hosting events, and presentations at various high schools. Many sites find that counselors do a good job identifying students who are a good fit for Open Doors programs.

Finally, while most sites acknowledge that social media would be a beneficial marketing approach to develop, **most sites have limited to no use of social media** at this point, though some are developing this approach. Sites that use social media to date often do so for internal purposes, like communicating with students about meetings, paperwork, and other reminders.

### Outreach strategies in order of popularity:

1. Student referrals (i.e. word of mouth)
2. Referrals from school counselors
3. Presentations at local high schools
4. District drop-out list (used for phone calls, emails/mailers, and home visits)
5. Referrals from principals, administrators, teachers, ELL facilitators, and other school staff
6. Presentations at community organizations (i.e. Kiwanis, Rotary, churches)
7. Information sessions on-site
8. Referrals from other programs (i.e. Highline Connection Center portfolio programs; college departments often refer students to the 1418 programs on site)
9. Peer Outreach Specialists (used at Multi-Service Center and SafeFutures)
10. Referrals from communities (churches, youth groups)
11. Social media (via Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)

### Program Growth Goals

Sites across the region have a range of goals when it comes to growth. Some sites have a large number of open seats, some want to maintain their current capacity/ enrollment, and one currently operates a waitlist. Moreover, for some sites, the growth goal is specific to a certain credential pathway.

Sites with increased growth for Fall 2015	Sites with growth goals for upcoming school year	Sites maintaining current capacity	Sites with student waitlist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bellevue CEO</li> <li>- Gateway to College at Highline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ELL Excel</li> <li>- Gateway to College at LW</li> <li>- iGrad</li> <li>- Seattle Interagency</li> <li>- YouthSource</li> <li>- Multi-Service Center</li> <li>- SafeFutures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acceleration Academy</li> <li>- Career Link</li> <li>- Highline Connection Center/Learning Centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Southwest Education Center</li> </ul>

## *Intake Process*

The student intake process varies across sites. Most often, **sites host information and/or orientation sessions, require students to attend an intake appointment/interview and complete a barrier assessment, and assess student skills through some type of placement test.** Typically, sites use the CASAS and COMPASS tests for placement, and while many do not have a minimum skills requirement, sites commonly report that they struggle to serve students with low academic skills (typically anything lower than 7th grade). Several sites have borrowed paperwork developed by YouthSource, and others have modeled aspects of their intake procedure off of Seattle Interagency's week-long process.

Some of the most common assessments programs use as part of the intake process or early on once students are enrolled include:

- CASAS
- COMPASS
- Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) personality assessment
- Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)
- Career interests inventory (various)
- Personal skills inventory (various)

## *Attendance Requirements*

Sites range from being more flexible to more rigid in their expectations of students when it comes to enrollment requirements and attendance. This impacts the type of students who end up enrolling in the program and whether or not they persist and are successful.

### **Sites requiring daily attendance**

- Bellevue CEO (2 hrs/day with an option of morning/afternoon/evening; 4 days/wk)
- Career Link (M-F; 12-4pm)
- ELL Excel (M-F; approx. 10-3 depending on pathway)
- Gateway to College at Highline (M-F; hours depend on pathway)
- Gateway to College at Lake Washington (M-F; 4 hrs/day, either morning or afternoon)
- iGrad GED pathway (4 days/wk)

### **Sites with other requirements**

- Acceleration Academy (6 hours/week; open 7-7)
- Highline Learning Centers
- iGrad diploma and AA pathways
- Multi-Service Center (M-Th; 1-3:30)
- SafeFutures (M-Th; 9-noon)
- Interagency (M-F; morning or afternoon sessions)
- Southwest Education Center
- YouthSource (M-F; morning or afternoon sessions)

## Services and Supports

### Instruction

Between all sites, students are provided the opportunity to **earn their High School Diploma, GED, and/or an Associates Degree** (or other college credit), and students can do so in a variety of mediums, including **live instruction, blended instruction, or online learning**. Sites that offer blended instruction often provide in-person supports for students doing online work, as well as facilitate large group, small group, and individual instruction to students.

Many programs highlighted their **difficulty serving students with special education needs**, like IEPs and 504 plans. Some sites voiced a desire for professional development for staff in this particular area.

Additionally, programs **struggle to find adequate supports for students with low academic skills** (often below 7th grade), who are struggling to access the level of instruction.

Sites use a **variety of curriculum platforms**, as well as develop their own approaches to instruction. Some of the most common platforms include the following:

- Edgenuity
- APEX
- Plato Courseware
- Naviance (college/career; high school and beyond)
- Steck Vaughn GED prep & I Can Learn and Ed Ready (ENROC) math program
- Cornerstone College Prep curriculum
- Some sites have developed their own curriculum
- Renton Technical College uses a particular GED prep curriculum which partner sites follow
- Southwest Education Center and Seattle Interagency use the same curriculum

### Cross Site Offerings: Pathways and Approaches

	Credential Pathways			Instructional Approach		
	<i>HS Diploma</i>	<i>GEDplus</i>	<i>AA/Dual Credit</i>	<i>Live</i>	<i>Blended</i>	<i>Online</i>
Acceleration Academy	X				X	
Bellevue CEO	X	X	X		X	
Career Link	X		X	X		
ELL Excel	X		X	X		
Gateway to College at Highline	X		X	X		
Gateway to College at LWIT	X		X	X		
Connection Center/ Learning Centers	X				X	
iGrad	X	X	X	X	X	X
Multi-Service Center		X			X	
SafeFutures		X			X	
Seattle Interagency	X	X	X		X	
Southwest Youth & Family	X	X		X		
YouthSource		X			X	

## Case Management

Within their approach to case management, all sites aim to coordinate supports for behavior, social, emotional, and health needs, either providing resources on-site or referring students to partners that can help support students. Additionally, case managers offer guidance in educational and financial planning and navigating the classroom and workplace (i.e. communicating with instructors and employers).

Some of the most common needs for which case managers refer students include:

- Counseling/mental health
- Pregnancy/parenting support
- Drug/alcohol addiction
- Housing needs
- Food services
- Legal services (including immigration status and juvenile justice involvement)

Across all sites, the **prevalence of homelessness and housing instability** was addressed as a major barrier to student success. However, within the realm of case management, it was also one of the most difficult needs for case managers to find referrals.

Some of the common partners and/or referring agencies include:

- NAVOS Mental Health Solutions
- Therapeutic Health Services
- Southwest Youth and Family Services
- Teen Link
- Neighborhood House
- South Mental Health
- Youth Eastside Services
- Auburn Youth Resources
- Kent Youth and Family Services
- Valley Cities

Case Management Ratios		
	1:75	1:30-40
Acceleration Academy	X	
Bellevue CEO	X	
Career Link	X	
ELL Excel		X
Gateway to College at Highline		X
Gateway to College at Lake Washington	X	
Connection Center/ Learning Centers	X	
iGrad	X	
Multi-Service Center		X
SafeFutures		X
Seattle Interagency		X
Southwest Youth and Family Services		X
YouthSource		X

## College/Career Readiness

All sites include some focus on college and career, and are intentional about helping students think beyond high school. Programs that access WIA/WIOA funding in addition to Open Doors tend to have the most explicit focus on job readiness/employment.

The most common college and career readiness approach across all sites is to partner with **Seattle Education Access**. Ten of the 13 sites profiled have or are developing partnership with SEA, and utilize SEA's framework for preparing students for their college/career transition. Some of these sites allow SEA and the assigned Education Advocate to handle all the college/career navigation, while others supplement their own approach as well, which often includes utilizing the WOIS platform. Many sites that partner with community colleges utilize the on-campus career centers, as well as work with college instructors to connect students to internships or voc-tech training opportunities.

Partnering with SEA
Career Link
ELL Excel
Gateway to College at Highline
Connection Center/ Learning Centers
iGrad
Multi-Service Center
SafeFutures
Seattle Interagency
Southwest Youth & Family Services
YouthSource

### Other common resources/opportunities:

- YMCA hot jobs list
- Internships through King County
- Puget Sound Skills Center
- WorkSource
- WIA/WIOA
- YouthBuild
- FareStart

## Data and Reporting

Across all sites, there is **major variation in how data is collected, reported and used**. Ten of the 13 sites profiled use Microsoft Excel for either part or all of their data entry, with many of those sites creating their own spreadsheets and analyzing their own data. However, **data is also a big concern for sites**, many of whom **struggle to maintain their records** in an efficient way, and who are unable to perform the type of data analysis they would like to see on some of their program indicators that go beyond what is required by OSPI. Some sites still find it easiest to track data by hand and then type it up for reporting purposes, and some staff reported **needing help analyzing their data** for trends and that they would benefit from a data staff person or someone to coach them through data analysis.

Across the region, few sites have a data system that they use from their district, community college, or organizational partner (i.e. Skyward, College SMS, or Gateway's National Database). Often, program staff complain **that these systems are not user-friendly, or that they cannot quickly display the type of student-level information that staff would like to see**. Many programs voiced a desire for a **regional data system** that is user friendly, allows for a student-level dashboard to be able to monitor attendance and academic progress, and that generates reports for both the program and OSPI.

## Funding

Across sites, the primary fund source is state Basic Education Allocation (BEA) dollars. Several receive in-kind supports from partners, including community colleges. Seattle Education Access (SEA) is a source of in-kind support for some sites. Many sites supplement BEA dollars from various other sources, including:

- WIA/WIOA
- King County
- United Way
- Personal donors
- Family foundations
- Award/prize money

Sites often use additional funds, donations, and grant money to finance things like bus tickets, student scholarships, student leadership development, school supplies and food.

## Challenges and Future Goals

The following are some of the most prominent themes related to **challenges**:

- Community college programs experience challenges related to Open Doors requirements due to the difficulty of hiring full-time instructors at the partnering colleges, monitoring data like attendance in a college setting, and navigating state testing requirements and the testing schedule.
- Paperwork/reporting requirements seem to be overly complex for some sites, and many programs voiced a desire for a streamlined approach for enrollment paperwork, district transfer paperwork, and state reporting paperwork.
- The lack of a user-friendly data system complicates state reporting requirements and makes it frustrating for sites to track and analyze meaningful data.
- Sites struggle to find ways to support students in overcoming life barriers. Barriers like homelessness and work commitments, especially, are often some of the biggest reasons students cannot attend courses regularly and make academic progress.
- Retention of students and completion of credentials is difficult, often due to student life barriers, lack of attendance, or students who dropout due to difficult life circumstances.
- Low-level math skills and limited math instruction for struggling students inhibits steady academic progress. Programs struggle to support students whose skills are so low that they cannot access the curriculum platform or the instruction.

Common themes in **program goals** include:

- Increased program completion/IAPs
- More staff on site (sites vary in terms of more instructors, case managers, or program managers)
- Increased provision of case management and other support resources
- Expansion of program facilities
- Program growth (enrollment)
- Develop and reinforce partnerships
- Program evaluation/development

- Streamline enrollment process/paperwork
- Regional marketing and outreach support

### *Program-Specific Challenges and Goals*

<b>Program Site</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Future Goals</b>
<b>Acceleration Academy</b>	Need more staff; increase SPED supports.	Increase provision of case management and college readiness resources; increase completions of diplomas; expand site facilities.
<b>Bellevue CEO</b>	Provide more vocational-skill opportunities; state reporting requirements; need professional development for staff.	Expand site facilities; increase public recognition of program.
<b>Career Link</b>	Counselor turnover in school districts; state testing requirements; Open Doors requirements challenging as a college; state testing takes away significant instruction time.	Become a 13th Year Scholarship Program site; increase students earning college credit; offer college-level courses in-house; more integration with voc-tech programs at SCC.
<b>ELL Excel</b>	Open Doors requirements challenging as a college; student life barriers; lack of partnerships with districts outside of Highline.	Increase enrollment by 20-25 students; increase staff (instructor).
<b>Gateway to College at Highline</b>	Retention; state testing requirements; providing math instruction for struggling students.	More community outreach and partnerships; increase enrollment; increase number of students attaining AA.
<b>Gateway to College at LWIT</b>	State testing requirements; serving students with IEPs and 504s; student life barriers.	Program evaluation; increase enrollment; improve graduation/completion rate.
<b>Highline Connection /Learning Centers</b>	Lack of effective data tracking system; student attendance; communication to district; serving students with low reading/math skills (esp. ELLs).	Develop a rolling enrollment process; improve/increase partnerships; increase provision of case management/resources; review/revise intake process; increase attendance and retention.
<b>iGrad</b>	Partner/service coordination; lack of student-level dashboard within the data system; need professional development for staff.	Improve student placement process; review curriculum and service approach for HS Diploma and GED pathways; increase staff understanding of data; increase student retention/completion.
<b>Multi-Service Center</b>	Student life barriers; helping students see the program as relevant/student motivation.	Sustainable funding; build partnership with school district; regional marketing effort.
<b>Safe Futures</b>	Location/facilities; outreach; retention; community partnerships; need more staff; school release paperwork; GED stigma.	Increase enrollment; increase staff; increase GED completion; increase partnerships; regional marketing approach.
<b>Seattle Interagency</b>	Lack of effective data system; student academic progress; student motivation; student life barriers.	Increasing enrollment; increasing student academic progress; improving math scores and services for students with low-level math skills.
<b>Southwest Education Center</b>	Student life barriers; state documentation requirements; staff turnover (and subsequent loss of student trust).	Increase enrollment and overall capacity; increase partnerships; improve supports for students with IEPs.
<b>YouthSource</b>	PR/Marketing; retention; students with low-level math skills; paperwork requirements.	Increase students completing GEDs; increase enrollment; increase staff; regional approach to enrollment paperwork (streamline the process).