



Final Report of the  
**Education as a Path to Economic Growth**  
Implementation Task Force

Andrea Weckmueller-Behringer, Chair

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The following individuals participated in the advocacy process for the *Education as a Path to Economic Growth* study. Their interest and dedication are sincerely appreciated.

Matt Bona  
Samantha Bowen  
Tony Cabasco  
Ben Case  
Chris Crowder  
Gretchen Hormel  
Helen Kim  
Steve Owens  
Jaenemy Perez de Luengas  
Deborah Peters  
Jim Peterson  
Nelly Pilares  
Beth Powers  
Maria Remington  
Katy Rizutti  
Kim Rolfe  
Amanda Trejo  
Nick Velluzzi

**Staff**

Mary Campbell  
Ruthell Martinez  
Catherine Veninga

# Education as a Path to Economic Growth

## Implementation Task Force Report

### Letter from the Chair

As a mom of five and a grandma of one (almost two), education is near and dear to me. I have watched my children grow into successful, inquisitive, and resourceful thinkers and doers. It's been quite a journey to date and far from over. From experience, I know that my children's success depended on my support and encouragement and, most importantly, the immense effort of dedicated educators, whom I could count on for their leadership, commitment, perseverance, and team spirit.

Education and learning is a life-long adventure, and as such, deserves our utmost attention. From the early cornerstones, laid by family interactions at home and/or in childcare; throughout elementary, middle, and high school; and then vocational schools, colleges or universities, each step has a tremendous and lasting impact on an individual's wellbeing, and on the vitality of the entire community.

This belief is shared by many within our region. In different community forums over the past several years, residents have come together and consistently expressed their desire for and support of a strong educational system, which they see as the foundation of a vibrant and resilient region. Building and supporting this strong educational system that fosters the talents of all residents has been, and will remain, a top priority for our region. The *Education as a Path to Economic Growth* study grew out of that conviction and, with it, the accompanying interest in identifying the nexus between education and economic growth, so that investments in education could bring about greater economic and community vitality.

To answer the question – “How can we strategically invest in education as a way to drive economic growth?” – the study committee framed their inquiry around the development of human capital, which encompasses an individual's abilities, experiences, and knowledge. Human capital is critical to economic growth, because it drives innovation and productive capacity. Moreover, investments in human capital can generate returns at several levels: wage returns to individuals, productivity returns to businesses, and wealth and health returns to the community. The human capital framework also recognizes that rapid technological change requires a workforce that is adaptable - one that knows how to be life-long learners.

The recommendations developed through the *Education as a Path to Economic Growth* study process identified opportunities designed to foster the talents of all residents, from birth through retirement. This report summarizes the extent to which each of the recommendations was implemented. In some cases, action in support of implementation was taken independently of the work of the Implementation Task Force (ITF). In other cases, ITF volunteers brought a variety of stakeholders together to encourage collaboration among natural allies in order to achieve positive outcomes. More than once, the ITF introduced and connected individuals from diverse entities to foster new partnerships.

Investing in human capital is an ongoing project. Though the ITF's advocacy phase has been concluded, efforts to build a strong educational culture in our region continue. It is my hope that the collaborations

established through this work flourish, and that our community continues to prioritize investments in education for everyone in the region.

Sincerely,

Andrea Weckmueller-Behringer, Chair

## Recommendations and Outcomes of the Advocacy Efforts

**Recommendation 1:** Improve our community's understanding of and commitment to high quality education in our region.

- A. Establish an educational attainment alliance that will regularly inform residents of the economic, social, and personal benefits of educational attainment.
- B. Actively support investments in learning by educating the public about the necessity of passing local levies and bonds, and by advocating for the region's state legislators to fully fund preK-14 education.

### **Outcomes:**

Subcommittee B: Big Ideas, prioritized the development of an Educational Attainment Alliance (Part A of this recommendation), with the understanding that once formed, this alliance could help move many of the other recommendations faster and further. They also believed that if an alliance were established, it would outlive the three-year implementation term of the Implementation Task Force (ITF), and be able to support bold educational goals in our region for years to come.

The subcommittee began by creating a framework for the alliance that describes, in broad strokes, its aim and purpose. The group felt that an alliance of strong local leaders dedicated to improving educational attainment could create a regional culture that values education and supports investments in education that foster the talents of all residents. As they envisioned it, the goal of the alliance would be to improve educational attainment and increase access, equity, and quality throughout our region, which includes Columbia and Walla Walla counties and Milton-Freewater.

Once they had established an overall vision, the subcommittee researched nascent and established educational alliances in the Pacific Northwest, including: Road Map Project (South King County), Better Together (Bend-La Pine), Chehalis Foundation, Graduate Tacoma, Excelerate Success (Spokane County), and Treasure Valley (Boise). Through web research and phone interviews, the subcommittee learned how those alliances were structured and funded, how they operated, and challenges that they had faced as they were getting established. The subcommittee also met with staff from SVP (Social Venture Partners), a philanthropic network that invests in nonprofits and social enterprises. SVP had invested in and worked with Road Map Project, and provided insight on lessons learned through that effort.

One element that all successful alliances share is a "backbone" organization that provides the staffing and administrative support to help establish the alliance and facilitate its work. The backbone organization's role, in this context, is broadly understood as supporting a "collective impact" approach: facilitating communication and leveraging partnerships and resources in order to amplify impact. There were a variety of backbone structures among the alliances consulted. United Way Worldwide had begun to move towards more collective impact work, and in partnership with Target, created StriveTogether to support collective impact models, such as the Treasure Valley alliance. Other alliances relied on different backbone structures. For example, Bend-La Pine is supported largely by its local Educational Service District, and another, Road Map Project, established a nonprofit to support its work.

Based on the initial interviews with existing alliances, the subcommittee learned some key lessons: work slowly – don't rush the process; a dedicated staff person is crucial to facilitating and administering the effort; getting the right people, including community members, engaged at the start is critical; data is important, but systems are more important; and community engagement is more important than performance outcomes (measurement).

Recognizing the importance and value of having a strong backbone organization that could provide sustainable leadership and administrative support, the subcommittee identified United Way of the Blue Mountains as an organization that could take on that role. Meetings with Christy Lieuallen, Executive Director for United Way of the Blue Mountains confirmed that fit; the organization had recently undergone a shift in its funding practices, and was seeking to pursue a collective impact model that addressed educational needs in our region. United Way of the Blue Mountains recently merged with United Way of Umatilla and Morrow counties, meaning that alliance partners in Milton-Freewater can be equally served within this framework.

Building the steering committee entailed individual meetings with key stakeholders throughout the region. With United Way on board, the ITF subcommittee met with superintendents and college presidents in the region to invite them to participate on the Alliance steering committee. The steering committee is envisioned as a core group of regional leaders who will set big goals and develop strategies. The invitation to participate on the steering committee was well received by all, as everyone recognized the value of working together to better align pathways and leverage resources.

Based on its research, the ITF subcommittee had learned that the steering committee should not be made up solely of educational leaders, but also needed to include students, parents, and representatives from other sectors, including non-profit, philanthropy and business, to build a balanced and effective group. The ITF subcommittee decided to have two students on the steering committee; in order to build consistency, there will always be one high school junior and one senior at the table, with the junior continuing to participate when they become a senior.

The ITF subcommittee also met with business and philanthropic leaders to invite them to participate. To date, Sherwood Trust is represented and Baker Boyer Bank plans to participate. The Port of Columbia and the Port of Walla Walla are represented as well. Finally, the ITF subcommittee engaged the participation of a number of parents from around the region, recognizing the importance of having their involvement at the outset.

The steering committee met several times in the spring of 2019 to establish a collective understanding of what the Alliance is, its purpose, and operational framework:

**Who:**

The Educational Attainment Alliance acts as a catalyst for change, working to eliminate barriers to student success and build better alignment across the educational continuum within our region, which includes Columbia and Walla Walla counties and the Milton-Freewater area. We believe that educational attainment is a shared responsibility of the entire community.

**What:**

To build a strong educational pipeline that recognizes and fosters the talents of all students, from cradle through career.

**How:**

- Build a culture that values and supports investments in educational attainment.
- Establish practices that embrace diversity, build equity, and support inclusiveness for all members of our community.
- Collaborate to leverage resources for maximum impact.

At their May 2019 meeting, the steering committee decided to focus on the middle school years as its first initiative. The group agreed that the middle school years are a pivotal transition from elementary to high school, and success there can lead to success in high school and beyond; and conversely, disengagement at the middle school level often leads to disengagement in high school. The steering committee also noted that there currently is not a lot of external programming devoted to that population in the region, compared to elementary school populations (e.g., afterschool and summer programs) and high school populations (extra-curricular sports and music programs, more educational options, etc.). Overall, the group felt that by working together, there is significant opportunity to leverage a positive impact for this population.

Having identified a focus area, the next step in building the Educational Attainment Alliance is to put together a working group that can help the steering committee identify specific goals and strategies to put in place. Once that is done, implementation of that work can begin. Moving forward, the steering committee will work with the working group to monitor progress and troubleshoot challenges, and then move on to identify another goal that they would like to address. Additional working groups will be convened to support additional priorities as they are identified.

Given the significance of this recommendation and its potential to create a positive, systemic impact, the ITF subcommittee will continue to support the development of the Educational Attainment Alliance for an additional year.

Part B of this recommendation relates to educating the public about the importance of passing local levies and bonds, and advocating for state legislators to fully fund preK-14 education. To a large extent, our community seems to understand the importance of passing local bonds and levies. Towards the end of the study phase, in May 2016, Milton-Freewater voters passed a \$12.5 million bond measure, which was matched by \$19 million in private dollars and state grants. Funds targeted a new elementary school (Gib Olinger Elementary opened in 2018), a new sports complex at Grove school, and repairs and upgrades at other district properties.

During the implementation period (November 2018), voters in Walla Walla passed a \$65.5 million replacement bond, matched with 52.6 million in Washington state dollars, in order to renovate several of Walla Walla Public School district's buildings. (College Place voters passed a \$38 million bond in 2012, which was used to renovate existing buildings and construct a new high school.)

While it remains important to actively support the passage of local levies, the implementation of the McCleary decision in Washington state has changed the funding equation significantly. Local levies are now capped at \$2.50 per \$1,000 in assessed value. The funding formula has created new challenges in rural areas and districts with small student populations. Small student populations mean less money from the state because funding formulas factor in the number of students in a district. Historically, levy dollars have been used to make up for smaller amounts of state funding that comes with smaller student populations, and to provide locally desired programming, salary increases, and school supports. By limiting the amount districts can raise through levies, the new funding formula has created significant budget shortfalls in many districts. (Districts with very small populations, such as Dixie, receive additional state funding to help compensate for their small size; however, significant budget shortfalls remain.)

**Recommendation 2.** Create an educational culture that emphasizes the value of each student, cultivates their talents, develops their skills and supports their aspirations so that they are truly engaged in school and later in work.

- A. Encourage schools to create environments that are physically and emotionally safe for all.
- B. Hire staff and faculty that represent the racial and ethnic diversity of the student population.
- C. Increase the number of guidance and career counselors to at least the levels recommended by the American School Counselor Association (1:250) in middle and high schools.
- D. Expand and support quality non-traditional alternatives to high school completion.
- E. Encourage the development of a formalized education plan for each individual student, K-12.
- F. Invest in the expansion of quality mentoring programs and support their effective utilization.

#### **Outcomes:**

Subcommittee A: All inclusive, focused its efforts on several components of this recommendation, particularly on Part A. The group met with a number of entities working on different approaches to building emotionally safe environments and increasing student engagement.

The ITF subcommittee visited with Walla Walla Public School (WWPS) administrators to discuss the possibility of using a Sherwood Trust-sponsored training on racial equity as a professional development opportunity for district staff. While the district was generally supportive of the proposal, there was not sufficient time to align the event with administrative processing, and the timing of the event (during the day) conflicted with teachers' schedules. WWPS remains open to using community-sponsored events as professional development opportunities for staff, and is willing to be the "institution of record" so that all professionals in the region could participate. Planning for such opportunities will need to take into account alignment with school staff schedules.

The ITF subcommittee visited with Teri Barila of the Community Resilience Initiative (CRI) to learn more about a trauma-informed approach to address behavioral issues and better engage students in learning, and employees in work. As the study committee learned, by better understanding the brain science around adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and strategies for addressing behavioral expressions of trauma, we can create safer learning and work environments and a more resilient community. In order to support its goal of supporting the social and emotional needs of its student population, WWPS has sought



to provide all of its staff with professional development regarding trauma-informed training. The ITF subcommittee found that while WWPS had embraced the trauma-informed approach, other school districts in our region seem less familiar with it.

With a grant from United Way of the Blue Mountains, Community Council provided CRI's Course 1 to a group of community leaders and advocates. The ITF subcommittee felt that if more leaders understand the value and importance of trauma-informed approaches, they will be more likely to advocate for it and support its implementation in a variety of environments. The training was offered to the entire ITF, and because not everyone was available to take advantage of the opportunity, a number of community leaders, including board members from several local foundations, were also invited to participate. Several individuals from Dayton, Prescott, College Place, and Milton-Freewater were able to participate, as well as a number of individuals who work with youth in afterschool and summer programs. All told, 37 community members participated in the full-day training, which was led by Rick Griffin, who is nationally recognized for his expertise in the subject matter, and for his skill as a trainer and leader.

In addition to seeking to expand access to trauma-informed approaches, the ITF subcommittee also visited with others who are working to build emotionally safe learning environments, described below.



*Triple Point Flyer*

The ITF subcommittee met with Heather Rodriguez, who works in the School of Social Work and Sociology at Walla Walla University and facilitates Triple Point, which is a support group for LGBTQ youth, ages 13-18, run through Children's Home Society. Triple Point provides a safe place where LGBTQ youth can receive support, information, referral services, and connect with other youth. Students typically find out about Triple Point through friends that are already attending, flyers, or a school counselor. Heather noted that more could be done in the region's schools to create environments that are physically and emotionally safe for all students; strategies include: non-gendered bathrooms, educating all teachers and students about LGBTQ issues, having students learn about diversity and LGBTQ issues from a younger age, an inclusive and accepting culture that starts from the top administration.

The ITF subcommittee also visited with Mira Gobel, and separately with a WWPS staff member, about Culturally Responsive Training. Culturally Responsive Training is a pedagogical approach that recognizes the ways in which students' culture impacts all aspects of learning. The ITF subcommittee learned that a group of WWPS teachers and staff had organized a self-directed study of culturally responsive training around Zaretta Hammond's book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*.

The group found that the approach provided them with useful tools for improving learning environments.

With regard to Part B of this recommendation, “hire staff and faculty that represent the racial and ethnic diversity of the student population,” the ITF subcommittee met with staff at Walla Walla Community College (WWCC) to learn about their efforts to address “implicit bias” in their hiring practices. Briefly, implicit bias refers to unconscious attitudes and stereotypes that shape our understandings of members of different social groups. Walla Walla Community College engaged experts from Oregon State University to provide training regarding implicit bias, and how it impacts hiring decisions. One outcome of that training was WWCC’s decision to include a “search advocate” on every hiring committee who works with the human resources office and the hiring committee chair to try to help prevent bias from creeping into the process.

The ITF subcommittee also learned that while the overall workforce of public schools is fairly diverse, the labor force seems to be segmented by gender, race and ethnicity, such that women of color, primarily Latinas, are concentrated in lower-wage support positions, such as para-educators and intervention specialists. Recognizing that labor force segmentation by gender and race/ethnicity occurs throughout the Washington state public education system, and a need for a more diverse teaching staff, Washington state has begun supporting “grow your own” programs where school districts and colleges help para-educators obtain a teaching license. Through that program, working para-educators can get up to \$4,000 in loans to pay for tuition and other college expenses, if they agree to teach in Washington for at least two years. Walla Walla Community College is partnering with Eastern Washington University to offer this program locally, and Walla Walla Public Schools is currently participating.

Part C of this recommendation seeks to “increase the number of guidance and career counselors to at least the levels recommended by the American School Counselor Association (1:250) in middle and high schools.” The ITF subcommittee participated in two forums regarding college and career readiness sponsored by the State Board of Education (held in Walla Walla). The community forums focused on



*May, 2017 Meeting of the State Board in Walla Walla*

secondary to postsecondary student transitions and sought to identify ways to make those transitions more successful. Recommendations that emerged from those forums align with many of the study recommendations: counselors and educators checking into how students are doing in life outside of high school; increasing the representation of people of color in the teaching field; introducing postsecondary options to students earlier, in middle school; professional development for educators on understanding implicit bias, cultural

competency, and trauma-informed instruction; the importance of one-on-one student-adult interactions and mentoring; and helping small or remote districts to provide counseling services and career resources to students.

The ITF subcommittee did not focus on parts D, E, and F of this recommendation.

**Recommendation 3:** Reduce or eliminate differences in educational achievement that are associated with race, ethnicity, gender, and income.

## Outcomes:

To some extent, part of this recommendation was addressed through the work that Community Council has done, and will continue to do, on Community Indicators. Community Indicators is an effort to bring relevant, local data into discussions of what community members care about. Since the community identified education as its top priority through the Community Conversations project in 2016, data on education and disparities in achievement and attainment were gathered and shared with the public through a series of public meetings in the summer of 2018. Initial review of the data on achievement suggests that, among our younger population, the largest and more enduring gaps exist between low-income and non-low income populations, rather than between white and non-white populations. For example, the 4-year high school graduation rate (2017) for Latinos and non-Latino whites is the same (81%), but is lower for low-income students (75%) compared to non-low income students (90%); and while there is likely a significant overlap between the Latino population and the low-income population, the low-income population is much larger than the Latino population.

Further reducing and ultimately eliminating differences in attainment is a long-term project that requires action in many different areas. One of the key goals of the Educational Attainment Alliance (see Recommendation 1) is to establish policies and programs that increase attainment and equity throughout the region.

**Recommendation 4:** Enhance outreach, availability, and accessibility of early learning opportunities so that 100 percent of children in the region are prepared to enter kindergarten at grade level by age six.

- A. Increase investments in early learning opportunities in the region.
- B. Educate the community on the importance of early learning programs.

## Outcomes:

Subcommittee E: Early Learning, primarily worked to support the ongoing efforts of the Early Learning Coalition, which plays a central role in advocating for investments in early learning in our region.

There has been significant interest in establishing an “early learning hub” in our region – a place where very young children and their families could access learning opportunities as well as medical and social services. Members of the ITF subcommittee participated in a field trip, organized by the Early Learning Coalition, to Pendleton to visit the early learning hub there. The hub in Pendleton has been largely supported by the Pendleton Public School District, and houses the district’s kindergarten, and provides space for a variety of services such as WIC, SNAP, and a medical clinic. There, the hub is imagined as a community space that provides access to resources for the entire population. Interest in and conversations about an early learning hub in the region continue, and no final decision has been made at this point.

The ITF subcommittee supported the Early Learning Coalition and City of Walla Walla’s application to the National League of Cities for a technical assistance grant, which was awarded in December 2018. By participating in the *City Leadership for Building an Early Learning Nation* initiative, the City of Walla Walla and Early Learning Coalition will receive guidance and support from the National League of Cities to advance early learning efforts and build a strong early learning system.

The ITF subcommittee also met with Matt Bona, Executive Director of Early Learning at the Educational Service District (ESD) 123, to learn more about Washington state's Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and access to those resources in our region. ECEAP is a program that provides preschool as well as family support services to children ages 3 and 4 and their families. Families earning up to 130% of the federal poverty level, and children with developmental challenges can qualify for ECEAP; however, there are not enough resources to serve all families who qualify. (The income qualification changed from 110% to 130% of the federal poverty level during the implementation period, which means that more families qualify for ECEAP services now.)

During the implementation period, the number of ECEAP slots allotted to our region increased, particularly in College Place. As of this writing, ESD 123 provides ECEAP in Prescott (16 slots, including some children from Waitsburg), Touchet (10 slots), Burbank (17 slots), College Place (15 slots), and Walla Walla (97 slots). In addition to adding slots to the program, services were expanded from ½ days to full-days, and from four days per week to five. Extended programming allows more families to participate in the program since they do not have to supplement with additional daycare arrangements. Dayton also has an ECEAP program, which is run independent of ESD 123.

Walla Walla Public Schools was able to extend its HeadStart program through a Duration Grant, awarded in 2019. The grant allows for more classroom time for HeadStart students, with the goal of providing more hours of quality education. As in the case of extended hours for ECEAP programming, longer hours enable more families to be able to participate in HeadStart since they do not have to address as many gaps in childcare.

A preschool has been established in Milton-Freewater through the Milton-Freewater School District. For the 2019-2020 school year, preschool is offered during the morning and the afternoon (two separate sessions), Monday through Thursday. The district decided to allocate some of its federal Title 1 dollars to support a preschool program because they have had among the lowest kindergarten assessment scores in Umatilla County. (Title 1 funds are provided to support basic programs in school districts with high poverty rates.) The program seeks to serve children who do not qualify for HeadStart (a federally-funded preschool program for children whose families earn up to 130% of the federal poverty level), but do not have enough money to pay for a private preschool. During 2018-2019 school year, the program served approximately 40 children.

**Recommendation 5:** Increase and expand trauma-informed practices in all schools, pre-K through postsecondary, and in the community.

**Outcomes:**

In addition to the CRI training provided through the grant from United Way of the Blue Mountain Region (see Recommendation 2), and the extensive training conducted at the Walla Walla Public School District (see Recommendation 2), a number of other educators have also participated in CRI training. In collaboration with the Early Learning Coalition, CRI provided its Heart of the Matter program to licensed childcare providers in our region, and "family, friends and neighbors" – informal or unlicensed childcare providers. The program consisted of a six-week session that addressed trauma-informed practices. In addition, faculty and staff at WWCC have participated in CRI training during the implementation period.

During the implementation phase, the Community Resilience Initiative has sought to broaden its impact in a number of ways. The organization has expanded its training opportunities, and regularly convenes a group of community leaders to share information about ACEs and trauma-informed approaches, not just to education but also to employment. Further, CRI continues to work with partners to assess and share the impact of their work and a trauma-informed approach.

**Recommendation 6:** Expand and sustain professional development opportunities.

- A. Develop schedules that provide professionals time to engage with each other to network and develop their capacity.
- B. Create professional development opportunities that support the incorporation of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and project-based learning into curricula.
- C. Provide professional development opportunities that support trauma-informed learning and student engagement.

**Outcomes:**

Subcommittee D: Development of Workforce, conducted an inventory of professional development opportunities provided region at the primary and secondary school level. To a large extent, professional development for educators in our region is provided through ESD 123. In order to make trainings more accessible, the ESD will begin hosting some trainings in Walla Walla. Those trainings are open to all school staff, including those outside of the service district.

ChildCare Aware of Washington, a state-wide non-profit that supports high quality and early learning opportunities, provides professional development opportunities for childcare providers. Classes include:

- *Emotion Coaching* validates emotions and teaches self-regulation.
- *Guiding Behavior* provided examples of visual schedules, how to teach about classroom expectations (using puppets, role playing, photos of the children demonstrating how to sit at circle time); problem solving when there are conflicts.
- *FLIP-IT* in English & Spanish (more than 60 child care providers attended last workshop) offers four supportive steps to help young children learn about their feelings, gain self-control, and reduce challenging behavior.
- *Activities to Promote Thinking and Talking*, which included many STEM components.

With regard to providing professional development opportunities that grow our region’s teaching labor force, see Recommendation 2.

With regard to Part C of this recommendation (trauma-informed), see Recommendation 2.

**Recommendation 7:** Emphasize the importance of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and enhance their development in all curricula.

- A. Support and expand teaching strategies that promote critical thinking, problem solving, and effective communication skills, and teach students the “hidden curriculum” of schools – how to take notes, keep a schedule, be organized, advocate for yourself, and access resources.

**Outcomes:**

Not implemented.

**Recommendation 8:** Expand dual language education [instruction in both English and a second language from kindergarten to at least fifth grade] to all schools, starting in kindergarten.

**Outcomes:**

During the implementation phase, Walla Walla Public Schools (WWPS) conducted a review of its bilingual programs, with the goal of creating a more aligned approach to better serve students and support teaching staff. An outcome of that process was the decision to consolidate the district's two-way dual language K-5 programming in one building (Edison); and maintain Blue Ridge's one-way dual language program. In 2019-20, WWPS added two additional dual language kindergarten sections at Green Park Elementary, to meet demand for the program.

In 2019, Walla Walla Public Schools was awarded a K-12 Dual Language Grant from the Washington state Office of Public Instruction (OSPI) to support the district's implementation of dual language programming. The award provides \$30,000 each year for two years to fund: professional development for dual and English Language Learning teachers; scholarships for para-professionals and high school seniors planning to go into bilingual education; teacher and principal recruitment efforts; support for alignment of dual language programming throughout the district; and support and engagement for non-English speaking parents of dual language learners in school events.

College Place Public Schools offers Transitional Bilingual Early Exit program (K-3), which serves students whose first or heritage language is Spanish. The program is designed to support students in their native Spanish as they gradually transition to English.

Milton-Freewater Public Schools began offering a dual language program (Spanish and English) in the fall of 2019, to Kindergarten and first grade students.

**Recommendation 9:** Support the incorporation and expansion of project-based learning at all levels of education.

**Outcomes:**

Not implemented.

**Recommendation 10:** Support and expand STEM educational opportunities for all students, kindergarten through postsecondary.

- A. Facilitate partnerships between regional educational institutions and industry partners to support the development of additional STEM curricular opportunities.
- B. Develop or attract a STEM school to our region.

**Outcomes:**

Subcommittee C: Curriculum, met with Peggy Harris Willcuts, who is a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education specialist, to better understand resources available and Washington state's commitment to STEM education. The ITF subcommittee also involved representatives from the Blue Mountain Land Trust (BMLT) and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC), both of which are interested in expanding the ways in which their programs engage STEM education. The group learned that Washington state was developing new science standards, Washington State Science Learning Standards (WSSLS), and Peggy recommended that BMLT and CCLC consider those new standards when developing their programming so that there is already alignment when the new standards are rolled out (which was in Spring 2018). She also noted that the new standards incorporate a larger portion of "fieldSTEM" (STEM education in an outdoor setting, often with a focus on the environment), which may provide new opportunities for outdoor/environmental education.

**Recommendation 11:** Expand opportunities in, and access to, Career Technical Education at the secondary level (grades 9-12).

**Outcomes:**

Not implemented.

**Recommendation 12:** Support and promote digital literacy.

- A. Incorporate more computer/internet-based curriculum.
- B. Expand opportunities for computer certification programs in middle schools, high schools, and adult education programs.

**Outcomes:**

Not implemented.

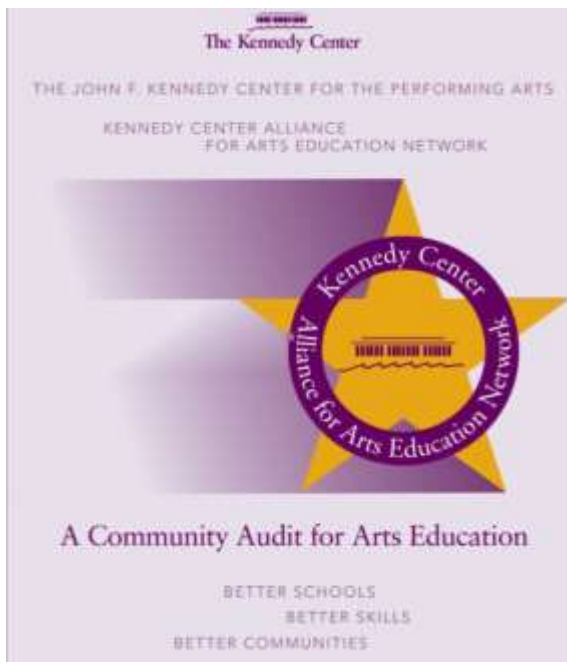
**Recommendation 13:** Support regional economic activity related to the arts and other creative endeavors by increasing opportunities for arts education for all students.

- A. Enhance collaboration between arts programs in schools and the region's arts community.
- B. Increase access to school-based, private and semi-private music and arts programs, particularly for underserved populations.
- C. Develop or attract an arts-based school to our region.

## Outcomes:

Subcommittee C conducted an inventory of arts programs in K-12 public schools throughout the region. The group found that there is a strong relationship between the Walla Walla Symphony and local school districts, especially Walla Walla Public Schools. For example, there is the Youth Orchestra for 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders; Rock 'n Roll Camp, offered during the summer for 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders; Instrument Lending Library, which loans instruments to youth who cannot afford to rent or purchase their own; Musicians in the Schools, which brings visiting professionals into schools; and discounted ticket opportunities for youth. Much of the collaboration between the Symphony and WWPS is facilitated by a dedicated Music Director at WWPS. It is clear that having the staff capacity to build relationships between schools and arts entities greatly enhances collaboration and increases opportunities for students.

The ITF subcommittee visited with ArtWalla and Carnegie Picture Lab to better understand how they support arts education. ArtWalla has two formal grant opportunities: Arts Builds Community grants for organizations, and the Dan Dunn Memorial Grant for individuals. Carnegie Picture Lab, which provides art lessons in schools, would like to expand their engagement, but struggles to find volunteers and access classroom time. The ITF subcommittee discussed ways for Carnegie Picture Lab to work with afterschool programs, such as 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, YMCA, and Camp Fire.



*Community Audit for Arts Education, Kennedy Center*

The ITF subcommittee identified a potentially useful tool to move this recommendation forward: *The Community Audit for Arts Education*, prepared by the Kennedy Center. This tool can be used by community members and educators to better understand existing resources and missing elements in order to build stronger support for arts education. The tool has been successfully used in many other locations to help communities identify deficits and areas of improvement. In locations where the Audit has been conducted, communities have been able to leverage a significant increase in arts education and build their arts economy.

The ITF subcommittee visited the Pendleton Center for the Arts to learn about their role and consider that as a potential model that could be adapted in our region. The Pendleton Arts Center is a multi-venue arts center that acts as a community space and

provides room for exhibitions and performance; offers art classes (for youth, teens, and adults); and supports a gift shop. The goal of the Pendleton Center for the Arts is to “make access to art and art making a regular part of our day-to-day lives.”



**Recommendation 14:** Provide more opportunities for quality summer and afterschool programs that enhance student engagement and support the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills for all students.

- A. Build partnerships to increase access to, and provide better support for, summer and afterschool programs.
- B. Explore the creation of a destination summer education program through collaboration between educational institutions and tourism partners (e.g., outdoor certifications, engineering programs, Walla Walla Valley resources)

**Outcomes:**

During the implementation period, there was an expansion of quality summer and afterschool programs in the region. Within the Walla Walla Public School district, a new 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) grant was awarded, which provided resources for new afterschool programs for 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> graders at three elementary schools: Green Park, Edison, and Sharpstein. Dinner and transportation are provided for participating students. A total of 300 children (100 at each school) participate in this afterschool program. The grant also supports a half-day, 6-week summer program; in 2019, 98 youth participated. CCLC aims to provide high quality academic enrichment, increase resiliency, support family engagement, and improve health and nutrition. The program targets low-income, minority students and students who struggle academically. The program is delivered in partnership with the Community Resilience Initiative, Walla Walla Public Schools, Friends of Walla Walla, Commitment to Community, and the SOS Clinic. CCLC has been working closely with CRI to apply a trauma-informed approach to its programming, and to evaluate the extent to which the program improves student outcomes. Initial research has suggested that the CCLC afterschool program has had a positive impact on individual resilience.

In the summer of 2018, an affordable summer program was established to serve youth in College Place. The program, which was offered four days/week for one month in 2018, was expanded to full-day for the entire summer in 2019. The program is managed by Camp Fire Walla Walla, along with Friday programming from the YWCA's Fun Factory. The program is open to children who reside in the City of College Place and costs \$85 per week, per child (a family can enroll up to three children). The program, which served 45 children in 2019, is funded by the City of College Place and United Way of the Blue Mountains.

During the implementation period, Blue Mountain Land Trust expanded its educational and summer programming for youth by offering several learning opportunities: BioBlitz, Nature Kids, Nature Kids on the Farm (in collaboration with Welcome Table Farm), and Blue Mountain Field Science (in partnership with GearUp and Whitman College). The programs target different age groups (Blue Mountain Field Science is for high school students, while Nature Kids on the Farm is for elementary school-aged children), some are offered for free (e.g., Nature Kids), and others require tuition. In 2019, Nature Kids hosted six events that engaged approximately 1,000 youth and their families; Nature Kids on the Farm ran two weeklong sessions that engaged 32 campers; and the Blue Mountain Field Science program hosted 22 high school students during a weeklong course. Blue Mountain Land Trust's educational programming is designed to encourage an understanding of, and appreciation for, our region's natural and productive landscapes.

**Recommendation 15:** Increase educational attainment in the region by increasing the percentage of adults (age 25 and older) with a postsecondary degree, certificate, or other credential from an accredited institution to 60 percent by 2025.

- A. Define and measure gaps in access and retention at all educational levels, and measure educational attainment (completions) so that schools and colleges develop strategic interventions that are grounded in reliable data.
- B. Shorten pathways to educational attainment by recognizing prior work-based learning.

**Outcomes:**

While no direct action was taken with regard to this recommendation, increasing educational attainment throughout the region is the long-term objective of Recommendation 1, which has been implemented.

**Recommendation 16:** Reduce or eliminate financial barriers for students seeking a postsecondary credential.

- A. Establish an investment fund that enables every high school graduate from regional high schools to access and attend the first two years of college.
- B. Advocate for policy changes to make the first two years of community college free to students who are accepted.
- C. Reduce students' out of pocket expenses for housing, food, and quality childcare.
- D. Encourage employers to support working students by accommodating their course schedules.

**Outcomes:**

Not implemented.

**Recommendation 17:** Support and expand regional postsecondary workforce training programs.

- A. Advocate for state legislatures to fund such efforts.
- B. Foster robust engagement between regional industry and workforce training programs to increase the development and retention of skilled talent.

**Outcomes:**

Not implemented.

**Recommendation 18:** Develop a mechanism through which businesses, governmental agencies, non-profits, educators, and students can engage with one another in a number of partnership activities, including cooperative learning, job-shadowing, mentorships, volunteering, and internships.

- A. Creatively address cooperative teaching opportunities, so that students receive education from teachers and professionals with passion and expertise in their field.
- B. Encourage businesses to offer opportunities for teachers to work as summer interns to expand their skills and vision.
- C. Encourage employers to support flex-time or compensate employees who volunteer as mentors in schools.
- D. Encourage collaborative activities that teach entrepreneurialism, financial literacy, and career readiness (e.g., Junior Achievement).

**Outcomes:**

Not implemented.

**Recommendation 19:** Advocate for public and private investments in educational activities that directly support regional economic development.

- A. Encourage the ports to expand their incubator activities to include STEM-oriented businesses and support value-added agricultural activities.
- B. Address regional internet deserts and increase bandwidth in all areas.
- C. Create and support an entrepreneurial ecosystem that includes access to resources and fosters a culture of innovation.
- D. Cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset and foster related skills in students (K-16) through mentorships, internships, and other opportunities.

**Outcomes:**

Throughout the implementation period, Subcommittee B held several meetings with a variety of individuals and entities interested in creating a stronger entrepreneurial ecosystem in the region. Recently, the ITF subcommittee has convened a large group of individuals and entities interested in playing different roles within an entrepreneurial ecosystem. This group of “sparks” includes entrepreneurs, educators, government representatives, and individuals from the finance sector. Given the renewed interest and emergence of new points of potential alignment (e.g., Mercy Corps Micro-Business Assistance Program), the ITF subcommittee will continue to support advocacy for this recommendation for an additional year.

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