



What Children and Youth are Experiencing

As any parent, guardian, or provider can tell you – young people are struggling. They are facing challenges with learning, on-line connectivity, isolation from peers, trusted adults, and extended family to name a few. More children and youth are in homes experiencing economic insecurity and increased familial health challenges. For students of color, public systems that have not been meeting their needs have become even more unreliable and racial inequities are exacerbated. Homeless and youth in foster care struggle with accessing school along with other critical resources and programs that help their academic, psychological, and basic needs. Words on a page cannot express how the pandemic has changed life for all children and youth in our state – and the daily crisis facing many young people.



What Youth Development Providers are Experiencing

The youth development field (including expanded learning, school-age child care, mentoring, school-based wrap-around programming) has been working for students since the pandemic began including:

- School-age child care has never closed and has become a critical part of the education system.
- Expanded learning (afterschool and summer) and mentoring programs have expanded their reach - addressing needs such as virtual academic support, social-emotional check-ins, tech support with K12 learning, meal distribution, and more.
- School-based wrap-around supports have been working to meet a growing number of basic need challenges for children and families including addressing food insecurity and working with family support systems to ensure critical economic and mental health supports are accessed.
- Creating safe spaces - virtually and in person- to process grief, fear, and uncertainty about the future in culturally responsive ways.

While the K12 system has been mostly virtual and physically distanced – the youth development field has been working overtime, and often in-person, to meet whole child and family needs each day. Funding for these programs is in jeopardy due to an anticipated decrease in public and private funding as well as a decrease in family ability to pay for programming that they used to be able to afford.

How We Move Forward

The Youth Development Strategy Table's legislative agenda is a first step in helping make state policy and budget decisions in a child-focused frame. For our K12 and other youth serving systems to successfully support recovery from this public health crisis, our work must be whole-child focused and integrate partnerships into all aspects of planning. The YDST worked with a range of partners to create the [School-Community Partnership Guide for Students During COVID-19](#) that has numerous concrete examples of using planning, space, funding, and staffing in creative ways to support academic, social-emotional, and whole child needs. The 2021 legislative session provides a first opportunity to profoundly change how that state can support local communities to help get our children and youth, particularly Black, Indigenous, and youth of color, on a successful path to school and life success in spite of an international pandemic and economic crisis. Working together – anything is possible.

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Improve the Learning Assistance Program (LAP) to Meet Student Needs (HB 1208)

Ensuring student success requires partnerships between school, families, and the community, now more than ever. The Youth Development Strategy Table supports increased flexible funding for districts *with transparency in the spending of the funds*, including:

- **Flexibility** for districts while maintaining the intent of supporting academic and social-emotional learning and adding a linkage to the **Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol**.
- **Eliminate the 5% cap** on the amount of funds districts can expend on readiness to learn activities in partnership with community-based organizations. Doing so will provide local control, maximum flexibility, and leveraging of community resources.
- **Sunlight requirements** on how funds are spent at the state and local levels with assurances of no supplantation and clear metrics for student success not limited to assessment scores.

Reinforce funding mechanisms to support the youth development field.

Sustaining youth development programs and providers is essential as we navigate the current pandemic and while looking beyond the COVID crisis. We urge state policy makers to prioritize the preservation of funding streams to support youth development programs, who are working to meet the holistic needs of children and youth furthest from opportunity, including foster youth, homeless youth, justice-involved youth, youth from low-income families and children of color.

- Academic-Innovation-Mentoring funding (**AIM**)
- **DCYF Adolescent Unit FTEs**
- Mentorship Funding (**Mentor Washington, Mentor U, and Military Student Mentoring**)
- **No Child Left Inside** program
- **School-Age Child Care** (sustaining rates)



Support the holistic needs of students through school and community partnerships.

Partnerships between schools and youth development organizations are critical in the areas of building use, data sharing, funding, planning and coordination for school and program reopening, social-emotional learning, and technology access and digital navigation. We will push for **legislation regarding the K12 system to emphasize, enable, and support partnerships between school districts and youth development programs** to meet holistic child needs by leveraging expertise, funding, and knowledge between child-serving systems and programs.

Support equitable state revenue streams that will provide robust, stable, and necessary funding.

We recognize that the economic impact of this pandemic is far reaching and that our state will be facing deep cuts to publicly funded programs that will disproportionately affect children and families of color and those experiencing economic distress. The Youth Development Strategy Table urges elected officials to **address the budget deficit with new revenue that does not create or increase inequities**.

Member Organizations Signing On to Legislative Priorities: After-School All Stars Puget Sound, Arts Corps, Asian Counseling and Referral Services, Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Inland Northwest, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Island County, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Snohomish County, Boys and Girls Club of Washington State, Champions/ KinderCare, College Possible WA, Committee for Children, Communities In Schools of Washington Network, Foundation for Tacoma Students, Friends of the Children- Seattle, Hilltop Artists, Housing Hope, Junior Achievement of Washington, Kids Co., King County Play Equity Coalition, Geeking Out Kids of Color, League of Education Voters, Pacific Science Center, Right At School, School's Out Washington, SOS Outreach, Southwest Youth and Family Services, Washington Alliance of YMCAs, Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center, Youth Development Executives of King County