

Broader,
BOLDER
Approach
to Education

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Vancouver, Washington – A Broader, BOLDER Approach

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Context/Need

Approximately 53 percent of the 23,500 students served in **Vancouver Public Schools** (VPS) qualified for federally subsidized school meals in 2015, up from 39 percent less than a decade prior.¹ Family poverty and in-out migration present significant challenges throughout the district, especially at schools in the inner-urban areas, where more than 80 percent of students, on average, are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Decades of experience and research show that the factors associated with growing up in poverty, such as unmet basic needs, family mobility, inadequate medical and dental care, mental health issues, drug and alcohol abuse, crime, violence, and gang involvement impede student learning. Family engagement in schools also suffers and, as a result, these schools often struggle to ensure that teachers can do their jobs effectively, and that all students can fulfill their potential.

Response

In 2008, as an outgrowth of the district’s **strategic planning** process,² VPS developed a proactive, community-schools approach to turning around poverty-impacted sites: Family-Community Resource Centers (FCRCs). That strategy has proved to build school assets, strengthen neighborhoods, and increase student success. Accordingly, when VPS updated its strategic plan in 2014, it established the goal of providing FCRC services at all of the district’s 35 elementary, middle, and high schools by 2020, based on each school’s needs and depending on available resources.



Strategy for Change

Family-Community Resource Centers (FCRCs) alleviate barriers to student success by leveraging a range of community assets and aligning them with school resources and systems.

Staff

Supporting the FCRCs and the system are six central-office staff members (three with responsibilities focused solely on the FCRCs) and one coordinator at each of the 16 participating schools (11 elementary schools, two middle schools, two high schools, and the Fruit Valley Community Learning Center).³ In addition, the district has purchased and equipped a commercial vehicle as a mobile FCRC to serve children and families at non-FCRC schools and in underserved areas of the community. And in response to the dramatic increase in children experiencing food and housing insecurity, two family engagement coordinators provide district-wide support to address basic needs and enhance parent involvement at schools experiencing an influx of low-income students. Other staff in the district work in partnership with FCRCs to address these specific barriers:

- *Homelessness.* One full-time homeless liaison coordinates transportation for 800 students who are homeless or in transition and works closely with FCRCs to meet basic needs.
- *Chronic absenteeism, direct service.* Two full-time student advocates conduct home visits and provides outreach to address chronic absenteeism—defined as missing 10 percent or more of instructional days in kindergarten and first grade. The purpose of this outreach is to communicate with families about attendance policies, identify barriers to regular school attendance, and offer connections to resources. In-school attendance incentive programs that recognize consistent and improved attendance complement these efforts.

- *Chronic absenteeism, system support.* One full-time AmeriCorps VISTA member joined the team in spring 2015 to help initiate a collaborative project to increase consistent school attendance. The three-year project will develop systems to support the integration of attendance awareness and strength-based interventions in partnership with the Vancouver Housing Authority and the National Alliance on Mental Illness in Southwest Washington. In tandem with this effort, a part-time AmeriCorps member assigned by Clark County Public Health will provide both in-school and out-of-school time soccer and basketball opportunities for students who are enrolled in an attendance awareness strategy group.

Organization/Coalition

To fulfill the mission of ensuring that all student needs are met, and that disadvantaged students, in particular, are well prepared for school and have the support they need to succeed, district leaders collaborate with multiple partners.

- *Public/community sector partners.* Partnerships are central to the Family-Community Resource Center system. Public, private, faith-based, and nonprofit partners work in concert to sustain and deliver high-quality services that contribute to the overall health of the community, and FCRCs have become a place where this work and commitment cross sectors. Public and community partners and service providers include:
 - Education service providers: faith-based organizations, Educational Opportunities for Children and Families, Early Head Start and Head Start, the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (Washington state’s comprehensive preschool program), and Educational Service District 112.
 - Health and recreation support: Healthy Living Collaborative of Southwest Washington, YMCA, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Southwest Washington, the Free Clinic of SW Washington, Dream Team Dental, Southwest Washington Behavioral Health, Children’s Center, and six local mental health care agencies.
 - Family, housing, and workforce support: Vancouver Housing Authority, Council for the Homeless, Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council, Partners in Careers, and Share.
 - Public and higher education institutions: state colleges and universities and various city, county, and state agencies.
- *Private-sector partners.* The private sector also has played a major role in helping to scale up and sustain Family-Community Resource Centers and FCRC-related services to schools. These partners have made it possible to provide children with basic needs assistance and to alleviate barriers to parent involvement in school-based activities and student conferences.
 - Local and national foundations that support this work include the Foundation for Vancouver Public Schools, Community Foundation for Southwest Washington, Fruit Valley Foundation,

Hough Foundation, Hudson's Bay Foundation, Daimler Chrysler, KMR Group Foundation, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

- Local and national businesses that enhance FCRC efforts in a variety of ways include Beaches Restaurant, Umpqua Bank, Target, Waste Connections, Neil Jones Food Companies, Vancouver's Women's Foundation, Humanity First, Altrusa International, Wal-Mart, Payless Shoe-Source, Costco, and Columbia Credit Union.

Comprehensive Services

In order to help children and families build capacity, site coordinators at each FCRC connect them with resources for a range of basic needs, from food and shelter to child care and counseling services. Site coordinators also help organize many of the school-based services described here, which are tailored to schools' unique needs.

- *Early childhood education* offerings are many and cover literacy and social learning.
 - *Federally and state-funded preschool/early learning programs* are offered in or adjacent to seven FCRC schools in partnership with Educational Opportunities for Children and Families and Educational Service District 112.
 - *1-2-3 Grow and Learn* is a weekly 90-minute literacy-rich program for young children and their parent/caregiver. The curriculum promotes early social and education experiences that provide a foundation for school readiness. This program is offered weekly at twelve elementary schools in high-poverty neighborhoods, and approximately 100 children participate with their caregivers. Offered at no cost to the family, 1-2-3 Grow and Learn is a service purchased from Educational Service District 112.
 - *King Preschool* is a *part-day early-learning program* for up to 28 four-year-old children residing within the boundaries of Title 1–designated elementary schools. The district staffs and manages this program.
 - *Literacy Packets* are distributed to more than 6,000 early learners—children birth to age 5—each year. The early childhood preschool packets, which are developed and distributed by VPS, offer fun activities and lessons that families can do at home to support their children's development.
 - *Full-day kindergarten and Kindergarten Jump Start*, a school readiness program, are offered at all 21 elementary school sites. Funded through district and private contributions, Kindergarten Jump Start gives incoming kindergarteners extra time to transition to the activities and rigor of school prior to the start of school each year. In summer 2014, nearly 1,000 of more than 1,500 age-eligible kindergarteners in VPS attended Kindergarten Jump Start.
 - *A new early learning center* opened August 2015 in the Hough neighborhood of Vancouver. Administered by Educational Service District 112, which received a \$1.1 million grant from the Department of Early Learning, the center can serve up to 140 children enrolled in the Early

Childhood Education and Assistance Program. VPS provides hot meals and playground space at the adjacent Hough Elementary School. The Hough Foundation supports both the school and the early childhood center.

- *Child and after-school care* is offered on-site at five schools. Three schools share a campus with Boys and Girls Clubs of Southwest Washington, which offer homework help and enrichment activities and keep children safe during out-of-school time.
- *Afterschool/summer programs* provided by YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, and Boy/Girl Scouts include organized sports, math and book clubs, homework club, and many others. Crafts, theatre, choir, robotics, and science are among the options provided at FCRC schools.
- *Middle and high school enrichment options* include:
 - A set of programs to help students succeed in school and be college ready: Freshman Academy, designed to help freshman students make an easier and more successful transition from middle school into high school by developing the social, academic, and organizational skills necessary for academic success; GearUp, a grant-funded program that follows the entire 9th grade class at Fort Vancouver and Hudson’s Bay high schools through graduation in 2017; AVID, or Advancement via Individual Determination, a college readiness program that equips students with the necessary tools and skills to matriculate through a four-year university program; and College Compass Club, a middle school after-school college-prep program that offers a positive, fun, and encouraging environment where students can grow academically and socially.
 - Other targeted supports: FCRCs also offer Homework Help, groups that offer students a snack and drop-in homework help; DREAMers of Fort Vancouver High School, which supports immigrant youth who face inequalities and other obstacles; coordinated community involvement and volunteer opportunities; and GRADS Teen Parent program, which helps students who are parents remain in school and graduate while developing effective parenting skills.
- *Parent supports* include:
 - Workshops to support parenting (e.g., Love and Logic), parenting groups (e.g., Padres en Alerta, Conversation Circles, Café con la Directora), and courses such as “Kindergarten Concepts” and “First Grade Concepts” to help parents assist teachers in helping children learn.
 - Other programs empower parents and enhance their skills, including equity (e.g., Finding Your Voice), job preparation and searches, adult education classes (e.g., GED prep classes and English as a second language classes), housing assistance (e.g., Rent Well), computer and language classes, a parent lending library, and a parent leadership advisory group that informs needs and guides program interests.
- *Support for families* includes help with food, clothing, shelter, employment, transportation, medical and dental care, childcare, and counseling services. Programs such as Share Friday backpacks, free dental clinics, food and clothing closets, and others, vary by school.

- With approximately \$3.5 million in assets, the Foundation for Vancouver Public Schools supports all FCRCs by providing checkbooks for principals and FCRC coordinators.⁴ At the FCRC sites and throughout the district, foundation resources cover basic needs including clothes, shoes and personal care items; grocery cards; school supplies; bus passes; emergent health needs such as eyeglasses, medications, dental and health care; and emergency rent assistance and utilities when other resources are not available.
- The foundation also supports 500 volunteer-mentoring programs for elementary students, the Kindergarten JumpStart program, the 1-2-3 Grow and Learn early childhood education program, and enrichment opportunities at schools district-wide.

■ *Community engagement.*

- Morning events, such as “muffins with moms” and “donuts with dads,” provide information and activities in support of the curriculum. Coffees with principals enhance trust and dialogue. Daytime opportunities bring community members into schools to participate in activities with students, and evening events include preschool family nights, movie nights, and family literacy and math nights.
- Some schools host neighborhood association meetings, and a Parent Leadership Advisory Group represents the 13 Family-Community Resource Centers.
- A districtwide event added to the roster of community engagement and support in August 2014 was the Go Ready! Back-to-School Festival. This event welcomed 2,128 people and provided 600 backpacks filled with school supplies, 50 haircuts and 50 haircut vouchers, 300 pairs of shoes, 500 pairs of socks, free immunization and dental screenings, and information and resources from more than 33 community partners. The GoReady! festival was held again with even more partner involvement in 2015.

Foundational policies that are or could support the strategy for change

Specific internal practices developed by FCRCs have helped the district to scale up and enhance its work, while recent court actions and other changes create opportunities to create new supportive policies.

Availability and use of data to guide decision-making

The district culls data from several sources to shape programming specific to each FCRC and to identify individual students and families who need additional support. Internal and external stakeholders use data from student, family, and community needs surveys to build programs for their schools. Individual school performance data also guide every FCRC’s annual action plan, and FCRC site coordinators use data to identify students with chronic absenteeism and enroll them in attendance programs. In addition, each FCRC collects and reports data related to program attendance, resources, in-kind contributions and grant awards, connections to agencies, and other metrics, and then uses these data to evaluate its work.⁵

Linking FCRC strategies to address chronic absence

Top reasons why children miss school	What FCRC provides in response
Chronic health issues	Access to health and dental care
Housing (mobility)	Connection to housing stability programs
Child care	Connection to resources for child care, early learning programs, and out-of-school enrichment programs for children and youth
Food	On-site food distribution
Clothing	On-site clothing and shoe distribution
Mental health	On-site mental health services through contracted providers (developing)
Environmental factors (e.g., lice, no clean clothes)	Personal hygiene and cleaning supplies
Parenting support issues	Formal and informal parenting classes, hosted activities and events that inform parents how they can support their children's learning, access to educational/employment resources, transportation so that parents can participate in student conferences, etc.
Cultural issues	One-on-one and group student and parent activities that provide resources and information about the pathways to and importance of education; efforts to dispel fears of undocumented families

Source: Adapted from *The Connection Between Missing School and Health: A Review of Chronic Absenteeism and Student Health in Oregon*, Upstream Public Health, October 2014.

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The district’s comprehensive data systems developed out of a question posed to stakeholders during the district’s strategic planning process: “How would you measure the success of the FCRC initiative?” The answers reflect an understanding that while the barriers to student success often are caused by factors beyond a school district’s control, measuring near-term outcomes at the school level, such as attendance and learning outcomes, can guide strategies that lead to long term impact. For example, third, sixth, and ninth grade reading and math scores predict on-time graduation rates. So VPS has sought to combine those data with data on student needs, and direct resources accordingly.

For example, the district’s FCRC team is exploring the connection between resource coordination, family engagement, and partnership growth to address barriers to consistent school attendance.⁶ With chronic absence defined as missing 18 or more days of instruction, the rate of chronic absence at VPS schools with FCRCs ranges from 17 to 46 percent.⁷ Linking FCRC strategies to the top known causes of chronic absence—as shown in Table 1—provides a way for school districts to measure and understand the value of their investment and, in turn, assess the degree to which that investment is paying off in terms of helping schools to achieve the particular goal.

To follow progress and help FCRCs develop strategies based on data, VPS developed a **District Performance Scorecard**.⁸ Similar to a student or school report card, it keeps track of data for every benchmark⁹ and every indicator. Program data, such as data collected at FCRC sites, measure access to resources (type and quantity of basic needs to be addressed and resources recommended), level of and change in parent involvement (attendance at school-based family engagement activities and parent education opportunities), and extent of partnerships (type of and growth of direct services provided by partners in service to VPS students and their families). These 25 Key Performance Indicators (KPI) tell a more complete story of this district's performance and provide a richer profile of student and school success beyond state assessment measures.

Because developing the right data is key to the district's efficacy, VPS continues to refine and integrate its data systems to link its strategic plan to student outcomes. As shown in Table 2, VPS has developed metrics that apply to its Family Engagement/FCRC goal area.

Recent court decisions regarding school funding inequities that have created the potential for further district expansion of FCRCs

In January 2012, the Washington State Supreme Court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in *McCleary v. State of Washington*. McCleary plaintiffs asserted that state financial support for K-12 education was inadequate and did not meet the state's constitutional "paramount duty" to provide ample funding for its public schools. The ruling instructed the legislature to implement HB 2261 to remedy deficiencies in the K-12 funding system. While this recent change has begun to improve the funding landscape of K-12 education in Washington, it is not yet known how funds will be allocated to school districts. If the state were to provide full funding for basic education, Vancouver and other districts could use more of their local levy funds to support community-based priorities, including FCRCs.

Other/new or enhanced local, state, and federal policies would make FCRCs easier to scale up

Scaling up requires robust support of public and nonprofit wraparound resources to assist children and families in poverty. Areas of potential improvement include:

- *Education funding*—Districts need capacity to dedicate personnel, space, and resources to institutionalize community schools practices in grades K-12.
- *Housing stability*—Families must have increased access to safe and affordable housing in connection with high-quality schools; communities need support for restorative approaches to neighborhood housing.
- *Economic opportunity*—More workforce training and employment opportunities are necessary for pathways to a living wage.
- *Health and mental health*—Mental-health first aid is starting point. Additional expertise is needed to provide continuity of care. Access to bilingual providers is critical.

Linking the FCRC goal area to metrics

Goal area	Metrics
<p>Family engagement/Family-Community Resource Centers</p> <p>Goal statement: By 2020, the district will provide a network of Family-Community Resource Center services that address the broad range of student and family needs at each school.</p> <p>Theory of change: When children attend school consistently and have a stable and supportive environment (at home, at school, and in the community), they will have better learning outcomes.</p>	<p>Parent and community involvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of parents participating in school-based academic events ■ Number of parents participating in school-based enrichment events ■ Number of community volunteer hours served in the school or FCRC <p>Safe and supportive environments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Share of children who attend school consistently ■ Number of children with improved attendance ■ Number of children and families assisted (basic needs, transportation) ■ Number of children identified as eligible for mental health services who are accessing services ■ Share of children with stable housing <p>Student learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Share of children entering kindergarten ready to learn (according to data from DIBELS/Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills and/or WaKIDS/ Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills) ■ Share of children meeting academic expectations at the third-, sixth-, and ninth-grade levels and on-time graduation rates

Source: Vancouver Public Schools Key Performance Indicators

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- *Early learning (universal)*— Because early learning is necessary to level the playing field, children birth to age five and their caregiver must have access to high-quality learning materials and environments. But in Clark County, of the estimated 6,000 children born each year, and 30,000 children under the age of five, most lack access to high-quality learning experiences. Few parents have access to research-based practices that promote healthy brain development and early literacy. One strategy that could be beneficial is to include siblings under the age of five in K-12 student-information sys-

tems. These data systems would allow districts to join with partners to provide early learning outreach and support that is responsive to language and culture in targeted communities.

- *Facilities and natural spaces*—School grounds and nearby parks must be safe and inviting and accessible all year to encourage physical activity and community.
- *Out-of-school time partnerships*—Communities, districts, and partners need support in extending the school day and year with learning, enrichment, and youth (workforce, citizenship) development activities.

Other policies have posed further barriers to the strategy for change

A number of policies at both the federal and state levels that have supported the district's evolution also can pose obstacles to expansion and sustainability.

Federal policies designed to support FCRCs that can also pose impediments

While measuring and tracking poverty is important, designation of poverty or other eligibility status is often too narrow and/or inconsistent from one initiative to another. Even when eligibility requirements are appropriate, funding is often far too little to fulfill program goals and community needs:

- VPS pays for FCRC coordinator positions primarily with Title I funds, which limit the number of schools served to those eligible under the federal rules. Yet, economically disadvantaged families reside throughout the district, and all schools have students who face poverty-related barriers to learning. A long-term, sustainable funding strategy and support are necessary to sustain the practice of FCRCs district-wide.
- Counting just the number of families falling under the federal poverty level (\$23,850 for a family of four in 2014) substantially minimizes family need in the community because it misses families who may not officially be poor but who are struggling for self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency requires approximately \$55,000 in Clark County for a family of four. Schools and nonprofits are called to close the gap for these families to support children's health, well-being, and education.
- The inability to blend federal, state, and local private funding streams to offer universal programming creates separate rather than inclusive environments. Head Start funding, for example, provides for comprehensive services that are not sustainable for community-based early learning services; therefore, early learning classrooms cannot be blended with those that serve families who do not qualify for Head Start. The ability to blend funding streams with local partners would increase the capacity of school districts to connect with more families, building a culture of family engagement in schools.
- The Family Education Right to Privacy Act (FERPA) both supports and impedes the development of partnerships that generate collective impact. While FERPA appropriately ensures a careful approach to protect information, it creates roadblocks to cross-system strategies.

- Funding to sustain nonprofit (direct service) programming is critical to the district’s capacity to assist its most vulnerable children and families, yet funding levels are often insufficient, unstable, or both.
- Federal grants for 21st Century Community Learning Centers are a key funding strategy to create community schools. Funding levels, however, are far too low to implement system-wide strategies throughout the nation.

Fluctuation in state early learning policies that challenge sustainability

For the past several years, early learning has been one of Washington State’s funding priorities. In 2007–08, the state offered funding to support voluntary all-day kindergarten, beginning with schools that serve the highest percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals. The goal was to fund all-day kindergarten statewide by 2017–18. This trajectory was challenged in the subsequent budget cycle as tax revenues fell in response to the economic recession. The state’s investment in early learning found champions, however, among its early adopters, and some schools moved forward with implementation even while state resources failed to keep up with the implementation timeline. The compelling data on all-day kindergarten showed a positive impact on kindergarten readiness; students in all-day kindergarten were scoring higher on reading readiness indicators. Beginning in September 2013, VPS has offered full-day kindergarten at all its elementary schools, boosting FCRC’s early learning component.

While clearly beneficial to students and strongly supported by parents and the district, Washington State’s recent funding of full-day kindergarten has presented a challenge in continuing to accommodate partners that offer early learning programs. Without financial support to add more kindergarten classrooms, the district has found it necessary to reclaim spaces previously occupied by early learning partners at some elementary schools. VPS has communicated with state legislators and federal policymakers about the need for capital funding to provide FCRC-related spaces that accommodate partners and serve as neighborhood hubs for family and community services. A future bond measure to pay for the replacement of several aging elementary schools in Vancouver is anticipated, and it would provide opportunities for leveraging partnerships to expand or enhance FCRC facilities.

Funding

The annual operating budget for centers at eight elementary schools, two middle schools, two high schools, and one family learning center in 2013–14 was approximately \$800,000. The district covered just over half of this amount—which is for operations, but not related services—through Title I and basic education funds.

Funding to support basic needs, student enrichment, and parent engagement programs was generated through cash and in-kind donations. Between August 2014 and June 2015, FCRCs received and deployed nearly \$410,000 in direct support from 240 unique donor relationships with faith-based partners, businesses, associations and social service agencies. Nearly \$260,000 went to support basic needs such as

food, housing, utilities, clothes, shoes, and personal hygiene items; \$70,300 went to assist families during the winter holidays; \$30,000 supported student enrichment and family engagement events; and \$49,000 worth of school supplies were donated to help ensure children were ready to learn.

Community schools (i.e., FCRCs) require stable funding to staff the coordination of resources and support within a school, within a neighborhood, and in relationship to the school district's education goals. In addition, resources from local agencies and nonprofits provide critical services and resources to children and families. A constant interplay of public, private, and nonprofit funds is needed to address the conditions and consequences of poverty. Community schools in suburban areas with urban pockets must be creative to mobilize a breadth of resources. School districts must have the flexibility to allocate resources for family engagement and resource coordination so that they can leverage additional resources for children and families.

Indicators of progress

Across a range of metrics, FCRC schools are demonstrating progress in increasing community engagement, serving more students and families, and improving outcomes for those students and their families. Indicators of progress are evident in:

Increased capacity to provide services and numbers of students and families served

From 2009–10 to 2013–14, as the initiative scaled up to serve many more schools, partnerships and volunteers increased, respectively, from 22 to 733 and from 673 to 2,660.¹⁰

- In 2013–14, FCRCs generated nearly \$3.2 million in partner contributions and grant support. The district's investment of \$800,000 helped draw these additional resources, leading to estimated "return on investment" that grew from 2-to-1 in 2010–11 to 4-to-1 in 2013–14.¹¹
- Scaling up also has led site coordinators to intentionally engage in more recruitment of teachers and to improve outreach and parent engagement. Students receiving assistance with basic needs increased from 10,353 in 2010–11 to 26,450 in 2013–14, while participation in parenting classes or parent academies increased from 2,490 to 26,490.¹²
- Participation in learning programs also increased significantly, with more than 2,000 preschoolers and parents involved in early learning programs in 2012–13. Nearly 2,500 students participated in before- and after-school enrichment and learning programs during the 2012–13 school year, an increase of 72 percent from 2010–11.¹³

Signs that the investments are paying off at the district level

The VPS Office of Assessment and Research has data tracking many measures of progress, and is the source of the highlights below (unless otherwise indicated). While there is no direct link between the changes implemented by VPS and these gains, the combination of the timing of the gains, larger gains among disadvantaged students, and their contrast with smaller gains across the state strongly indicate the influence of the comprehensive approach that the district has implemented.

- High school and middle school core course failure rates have been cut by 31 percent since 2006–07. The failure rate in the largest middle and high school courses has been reduced by 42 percent.
- More poverty-affected students are completing the district’s most rigorous high school coursework. Since 2007, the number of students enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) courses increased from 792 to 1,325, nearly a 67 percent increase. The increase was even greater among low-income students; over the same time period, the number of those students who took AP courses grew from 126 to 367, an increase of nearly 200 percent.
- Since 2009, the percentage of students meeting entrance requirements for placement into college credit-bearing courses has increased by six points in both writing and reading, and 15 points in math.
- Nearly half (49 percent) of graduates in 2013 were eligible for college credit in high school through dual-credit programs.
- VPS students’ scores on the ACT, an indication of readiness for college-level work, have risen faster than the state’s over the past five years, and district students outperformed their peers statewide in all areas for 2014.
- Vancouver’s on-time (four-year) graduation rate increased from 64 percent in 2010 to a projected rate of nearly 80 percent in 2013. Its extended (five-year) graduation rate, 69 percent in 2010, was anticipated to exceed 80 percent in 2015.¹⁴
 - Over the past three years, the district’s extended graduation rate has improved by nearly four percentage points, in contrast to an increase of just 0.6 percentage points across the state.
 - In this respect, too, at-risk students fared even better; from 2011–12 to 2012–13, the extended graduation rate for Black students in VPS increased by 10.4 percentage points, and the extended graduation rate for Hispanic students in VPS increased by 15.1 percentage points.
- The **District Performance Scorecard**¹⁵ was designed to present a broader and more balanced view of performance than just test scores. District Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were selected to track progress and identify opportunities for improvement throughout the K-12 spectrum and beyond, beginning with kindergarteners meeting benchmarks on the fall assessment and ending with graduates enrolled in postsecondary education in the year following graduation. Since 2008–09, 80 percent of VPS student learning KPIs have shown positive trend slopes.

Awards and special recognition

- VPS has won three **Magna Awards**¹⁶ given by the *American School Board Journal*: a first-place award for the GoReady! Back-to-School Readiness Festival (2015), another first-place award for the Jump Start kindergarten readiness program (2014), and an honorable mention award for the FCRCs (2011).
- A 2015 case study by the Urban Institute featured Vancouver as one of three U.S. cities pairing housing solutions with strategies for academic success as a way to help low-income families break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Through a small pilot program, families who met eligibility requirements received housing vouchers. In exchange, they agreed to work with the Vancouver Housing Authority (VHA) on self-sufficiency and with VPS staff on attendance and school-engagement plans for their children. Families are referred to the program through the FCRCs.¹⁷
- VPS was the only Pacific Northwest district to be awarded a School Climate Transformation Grant (SCTG) from the U.S. Department of Education in 2014. The SCTG is one of several federal programs designed to work together to help make schools safer and improve their provision of mental health services.
- VPS was one of approximately 50 school districts from across the country and one of only four Washington state districts honored with an inaugural **District of Distinction** award from *District Administrator* magazine in November 2014.¹⁸ Vancouver's network of Family-Community Resource Centers was recognized in the public/private partnerships category.
- In April 2014, the Data Quality Campaign and the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning (now re-branded as Equal Measure) featured Vancouver Public Schools' Family-Community Resource Centers' use of high-quality data to improve student achievement as a **success story**.¹⁹
- The American Association of School Administrators, National School Public Relations Association, and Blackboard Connect selected VPS Superintendent Steve Webb and Chief of Staff Tom Hagley for the 2011 **Leadership Through Communication Award**.²⁰ The award was given, in part, for their efforts to increase family engagement and to establish FCRCs in poverty-impacted schools.
- In 2010, the Learning First Alliance, a national partnership of education associations with more than 10 million members, featured VPS' efforts to support schools with high concentrations of poverty in its **Public School Success Stories**.²¹

Successes and learning that have been translated into advocacy for smarter policies

- VPS leaders and partners have presented information about the FCRC initiative to Washington State Governor Jay Inslee and members of the House Education Committee, and they have hosted districts from around the region to showcase the district's approach to community schools, and to examine ways to replicate it in other locations.

- The neighboring school district, Evergreen, which adopted a nearly identical model, now has several sites with FCRCs and plans to scale up.
- VPS is also active with **Coalition for Community Schools**, sharing information within that network.

Contact

Contact: Tom Hagley at tom.hagley@vansd.org, or see <http://www.vansd.org>.

Endnotes

- ¹ Source: Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- ² Vancouver Public Schools, “**Design II: Chapter 2. Facilities Planning for Vancouver Public Schools.**”
- ³ Several of the coordinators speak Spanish, and interpreters are available in many of the other schools, according to the Family and Community Resources “Contact Us” page.
- ⁴ This is literally a checkbook provided by the foundation to the principals and coordinators, giving them the ability to write checks to support a child’s specific basic needs, such as for shoes or a coat, etc. This allows the principal to quietly address the need without generating attention. There is an initial dollar limit, but it can often be raised as needed. Source: <http://foundationforvps.org/basic-needs/>.
- ⁵ “Family-Community Resource Centers highlighted by Data Quality Campaign, OMG Center for Collaborative Learning,” *Vancouver Family Magazine*, March 31, 2014.
- ⁶ Research findings on the link between attendance and student learning outcomes can be found in *Absences Add Up: How School Attendance Influences School Success*, Attendance Works, August 2014.
- ⁷ VPS KPI data, 2014. VPS KPI data provided by VPS staff to BBA, September 2015.
- ⁸ “**Performance Data: Text scores, Benchmarks, and More,**” Vancouver Public Schools, (Accessed October 2015.)
- ⁹ VPS uses seven milestone benchmarks: 1) students are ready for kindergarten; 2) third-graders are reading on grade level; 3) sixth-graders are ready for middle school; 4) seventh-graders are ready for pre-algebra or algebra in eighth grade; 5) ninth-graders are ready for high school; 6) tenth-graders are passing the High School Proficiency Exam; and 7) students are ready for college and career. Each of these benchmarks has one or more measures (or indicators) to assist in monitoring progress.
- ¹⁰ VPS internal program data, 2014. VPS internal program data provided by VPS staff to BBA, September 2015.
- ¹¹ VPS internal program data, 2014.
- ¹² VPS internal program data, 2014. Numbers of both students and parents served are “duplicated count.”
- ¹³ VPS internal program data, 2013.
- ¹⁴ Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington State, 2013.

¹⁵ **“Performance Data: Text scores, Benchmarks, and More,”** Vancouver Public Schools, (Accessed October 2015.)

¹⁶ **“Magna Awards,”** National School Boards Association.

¹⁷ Martha M. Galvez and Jasmine Simington, **“Housing and Education Partnerships: A Case Study of Vancouver, Washington,”** Urban Institute, April 2015.

¹⁸ **“Districts of Distinction,”** Distract Administration.

¹⁹ Stephanie Lerner, **“Using Data to Further a Community School Initiative in Vancouver, WA,”** Data Quality Campaign. May 12, 2014.

²⁰ **“Vancouver Public Schools Receives 2011 Leadership Through Communication Award,”** AASA, the School Superintendents Association press release, January 7, 2011.

²¹ **“Public School Success Stories,”** Learning First Alliance, January 9, 2012.