
TIP SHEET – UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL AND STUDENT NEEDS

In order to have the most productive conversation possible with a school partner – or potential partner – it is important to come in with a general understanding of the needs of students in the school. Many partners already have this understanding based on their experience in the community. Others can and should consult a few basic information sources to familiarize themselves with the particular context in which they are working, or hoping to work. This document provides a brief introduction to useful sources of information.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The following kinds of information are publicly available online, and may be worth consulting prior to approaching a school or school district (see *Appendix* for a *Summary of Common Academic Data Types*)

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS:

Student demographics are often available on school district website on a school-by-school basis. Demographic information for students in Washington State public schools is also available at the state, district, and school level through the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. [OSP's school report cards](#) show student gender, race and ethnicity, and participation in special programs such as special education or free and reduced-price meals.

Select a year: 

Student Demographics		
Enrollment		
October 2014 Student Count		1,075,107
May 2015 Student Count		1,070,756
Gender (October 2014)		
Male	554,168	51.5%
Female	520,939	48.5%
Race/Ethnicity (October 2014)		
Hispanic / Latino of any race(s)	233,616	21.7%
American Indian / Alaskan Native	16,221	1.5%
Asian	77,421	7.2%
Black / African American	48,248	4.5%
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	10,680	1.0%
White	612,625	57.0%
Two or More Races	76,274	7.1%
Special Programs		
Free or Reduced-Price Meals (May 2015)	482,024	45.0%
Special Education (May 2015)	143,304	13.4%
Transitional Bilingual (May 2015)	111,325	10.4%
Migrant (May 2015)	19,909	1.9%
Section 504 (May 2015)	28,937	2.7%
Foster Care (May 2015)	8,612	0.8%

STUDENT PERFORMANCE:

OSPI's school report cards also show basic student performance data (i.e. high school graduation rates and aggregate results on State-mandated standardized tests). Use the "Compare my school" feature to quickly see the performance of and individual schools compared to state or district averages, or to other schools.

>Washington State Tools: Compare My School

Compare My School

This page best printed in "landscape" mode

Click "go" to add the district or school to the comparison. Click "Search" to search for a district or school on specific criteria.

School or District 1	School or District 2	School or District 3
<input type="button" value="Search"/> <input type="button" value="Remove"/>	<input type="button" value="Search"/> <input type="button" value="Remove"/>	<input type="button" value="Search"/> <input type="button" value="Remove"/>
District: Kent School District <input type="button" value="go"/>	District: Kent School District <input type="button" value="go"/>	District: Kent School District <input type="button" value="go"/>
School: (Select) <input type="button" value="go"/>	School: Kentridge High School <input type="button" value="go"/>	School: Kentwood High School <input type="button" value="go"/>
Kent School District	Kentridge High School	Kentwood High School
Puget Sound Educational Service District 121 12033 SE 256TH ST KENT, 98031	Kent School District 12430 SE 208th ST Kent, 98031	Kent School District 25800 164th Ave SE Covington, 98042

Additional student performance measures may be published by the school district itself. The Seattle Public Schools, for example, publish their own [school reports](#) that include student growth measures, data from school climate surveys, and student mobility rates.

SCHOOL CLIMATE:

Most schools administer a climate survey to students, staff, and/or parents. If these results are posted on school websites, they can provide rich information on the ways stakeholders perceive the learning environment. Climate surveys typically include questions about safety, student behavior, peer relationships, teacher and/or principal effectiveness, and the extent to which students and parents feel a sense of belonging in the school building.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS:

Information on the health and wellness of students in your target school may not be readily available. While Washington's Healthy Youth Survey (administered every two years to 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th graders) documents everything from substance abuse to bullying to school engagement, its results are not publicly reported at the school or district level.¹ It still may be worth your while as a partner to look at the Healthy Youth Survey's results to identify trends or to ask informed questions of a potential school partner.

INFORMATION ON SCHOOL AND DISTRICT PRIORITIES

In addition to the general information described above, many schools and school districts will provide information on their strategic priorities on their websites. If partners and potential partners can equip themselves with information on these priorities, it can help them to better understand the ways that their agencies can contribute to furthering the school's or district's goals.

¹ For more information on the Healthy Youth Survey, or to see statewide results, visit <http://www.doh.wa.gov/DataandStatisticalReports/DataSystems/HealthyYouthSurvey>

MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS:

School districts and individual schools may have mission and vision statements that guide their work. These are normally posted on websites and documents. Bear in mind that how *visible* a school's mission or vision statement is may be an indication of the extent to which it provides (or does not provide) direction to the institution's work.

STRATEGIC PLANS:

District strategic plans are often posted on school and district websites. In the Road Map region, most districts have posted their current strategic plan, and many acknowledge family and community partnerships as a key strategic priority. You can find information on Road Map districts' strategic plans or planning processes at:

- [Auburn School District Strategic Plan, 2013-2016](#)
- [Federal Way School District Strategic Planning Initiative](#)
- [Highline School District Information](#)
- [Kent School District Strategic Plan](#)
- [Renton School District Continuous District Improvement Goals](#)
- [Seattle School District Strategic Plan](#)
- [Tukwila School District Strategic Plan](#)

At the school level, strategic planning processes vary. You might find school strategic plans posted on school or district websites. For example, Continuous School Improvement Plans (CSIPs) for all Seattle schools can be found on the [school district website](#). These spell out each school's goals for the coming year, and often specify the ways that partners can assist with these goals.

APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF COMMON ACADEMIC DATA TYPES

DATA ABOUT SCHOOLS OR DISTRICTS	DATA ABOUT STUDENTS*
<p>Student Demographics (aggregate): Race/ethnicity, Special program participation, and gender are available by school or district from OSPI.² Districts may also collect data on students' living arrangements and home languages, but do not always report these consistently.</p> <p>Attendance (aggregate): Average daily attendance and/or early warning-type data (attendance, behavior, and course performance) are often reported by districts. Unexcused absence rates are available from OSPI.</p> <p>Performance (aggregate): State assessment data (MSP/HSPE/EOC Exams) is available from OSPI. Growth measures (e.g. "% making typical growth") are sometimes available).</p> <p>Discipline (aggregate): District-level discipline data is available from OSPI.</p> <p>Teacher/Staffing Information: Number of teachers, years of experience, education, and "highly qualified" designation available at the school and district level through OSPI.</p> <p>Climate/Culture Information: Student, staff, and/or parent survey results are sometimes available from districts.</p> <p>Graduation/Postsecondary Enrollment (aggregate): 4- and 5-year cohort graduation rates are available through OSPI; College enrollment information is available through ERDC.³</p>	<p>Student Demographics (individual): Race/ethnicity, special program participation (usually <i>not</i> Free and Reduced-Price Lunch eligibility), home language, and living arrangement are often available from school districts.</p> <p>Attendance (individual): A log of absences from classes, or from full days (sometimes with reasons), is collected by schools regularly, with summary data available at the end of term. Attendance data is not necessarily consistent between schools and districts.</p> <p>Performance (individual): State assessment data (grades 3-12) available from districts; other district assessment results are sometimes available. Grades (current, interim, and/or final) are often available. Growth measures (e.g. "growth percentile") are sometimes available.</p> <p>Discipline (individual): Disciplinary incidents and actions taken may be available from districts.</p> <p>Coursework: Courses in which students are enrolled and their completion/performance status may be available from districts.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"><p>*NOTE: The data types above are the ones that are routinely captured and stored in district data systems; other data may be available from teachers or through student/parent portals (e.g. The Source in Seattle). All identifiable information about students is available only with parent permission and an active Data Sharing Agreement.</p></div>

² Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, <http://www.k12.wa.us/>

³ Education Research and Data Center, <http://www.ercd.wa.gov/data/>