

# WHAT IS YOUTH DEVELOPMENT?

## The Current Landscape:

Access to youth development experiences is uneven and inequitable in Washington State, with many youth lacking fun and engaging learning outside of school.

Youth Development experiences such as expanded learning (after school and summer programs), mentoring, and wrap-around supports can be the difference for young people to stay engaged in their schools and communities by providing high-quality time to learn and experience high-quality academic, social-emotional, and other life skill building in a unique setting with supportive adults and peers.

## Why Youth Development Matters:

Youth development programs can help to decrease risk and involvement in the justice system and can help support young people to thrive.

For all young people, particularly those in foster care or exiting the justice system, access to positive youth development programs can also be critical to build a sense of belonging, and have access to caring adults that can help them to overcome challenges and participate in projects and experiences that provide a path to school and life success.

## Youth Development Fundamentals:



The relationship between young people and their environment is reciprocal and dynamic.



Young people are full of strength and potential to be championed, not problems to be solved.



Young people need to experience connection to family, school, and community.



Young people have both the need and the ability to contribute positively and meaningfully to society.



Young people deserve culturally and developmentally supportive services, opportunities, and supports to transition successfully to adulthood.

### FOR MORE INFO CONTACT:

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# YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY TABLE

## Policy Priorities – 2020

### DCYF Adolescent Program Unit Budget Request

The Youth Development Strategy Table supports the **DCYF Adolescent Program Unit** request that would provide additional staffing and supports to improve cross-system work in youth development, foster care, and juvenile justice. Currently, there is no staffing support to ensure the state has a prevention and promotion strategy to keep kids out of deep-end systems and keep them engaged and learning throughout the day and year in order to thrive.

**Request: \$172,000 GFS (\$246,000 total).**

### Sustain and Grow the Expanded Learning Opportunities

Washington students only spend 20% of their waking hours in the classroom. Learning should continue beyond the school day, and so should young people's access to high-quality expanded learning opportunities (ELOs) – after school and in the summer. Partnerships between schools and ELOs create more time to provide enriching experiences for students with activities that complement and amplify classroom-based instruction, that build critical life and career skills, improve academic performance, and inspire them to discover their passions. The Youth Development Strategy Table supports funding and policies that provide increased access to high-quality ELOs such as the **Academic, Innovation, and Mentoring program (AIM)**, the **ELO Quality Initiative**, **school-age child care**, and other programs that will support our students and working families.

### Investments in Mentorship

Mentoring is a critical strategy to address the opportunity gap in Washington State and support long-term success for young people. Mentorship is an upstream support that have been proven to be effective in reducing involvement in the juvenile justice system and improving long-term life outcomes. A growing body of research focuses on the importance of Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs), particularly the importance of a stable, consistent adult to support long-term health and academic outcomes. Investing in mentoring leverages private philanthropy, has a high return on investment, and addresses critical opportunity gaps in Washington State. The state has a unique opportunity to demonstrate that Washington is invested in mentoring as a proven upstream intervention model that not only promotes the success of our underserved youth, but also saves taxpayer money over the long-term. **The Youth Development Strategy Table supports funding for mentoring programs and mentoring quality.**

### Support the holistic needs of students and provide flexible funding for schools to partner with community-based organizations.

A student's academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health development is influenced by factors inside and outside of the school setting. Ensuring student success requires partnerships between school, families, and the community. As a result, the Youth Development Strategy Table **supports efforts to implement the new state SEL benchmarks with supports for schools and for youth-serving community-based organizations.** Additionally, we support **increased mental and behavioral health supports** for children and youth that have **accountability and transparency in public spending** and **allow for cost-effective partnerships between community-based providers with schools and other government entities.** Finally, we support increased flexible funding for districts, including **expanding the number of schools eligible to receive High Poverty Learning Assistance Program (LAP) dollars and lifting the 5% cap on districts using LAP funding to partner with community-based organizations** to reduce barriers to learning and increase student engagement.