

The logo features a large white circle centered on a solid blue background. The text "Walla Walla Public Schools" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font, centered within the white circle.

Walla Walla Public Schools

Elevating Student Voice

Strategies from the field

Dr. Wade Smith, Superintendent



Walla Walla Public Schools

Developing Washington's Most Sought-After Graduates

WWPS at-a-Glance

- Located in Southeastern Washington
 - 5,600 students
 - 52% White, 42% Hispanic/Latino
 - 60% F & R
 - 14% EL
 - 15% Students with Disabilities

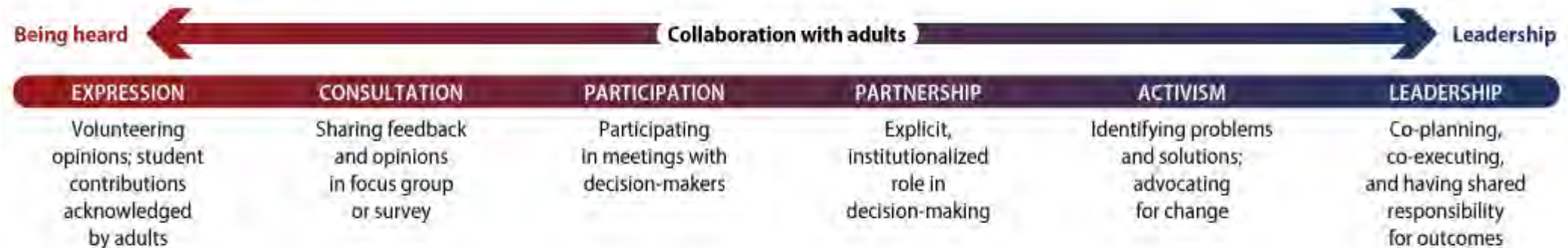


Elevating Student Voice – A Shift From Being Heard to Being Leaders

- Requires cultural, not just technical changes to the way an organization behaves

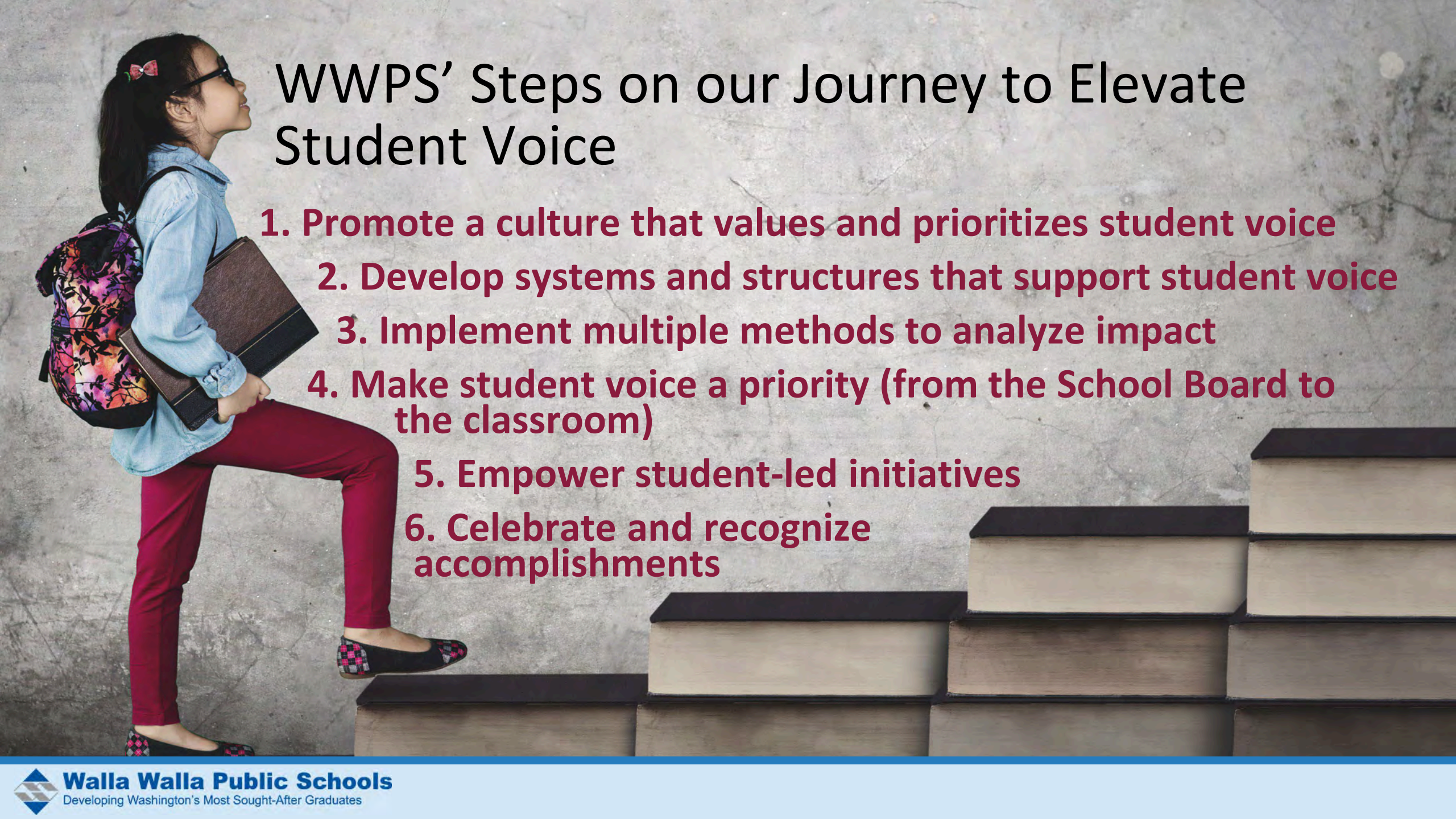
Types of student voice

Adapted version of Toshalis and Nakkula's "The Spectrum of Student Voice Oriented Activity" and Mitra and Gross' "Pyramid of student voice"



Sources: This graph is adapted from Eric Toshalis and Michael J. Nakkula, "Motivation, Engagement, and Student Voice" (Boston: Jobs for the Future, 2012), available at https://jfforg-prod-prime.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/Motivation_Engagement_Student_Voice_0.pdf; Dana L. Mitra and Steven Jay Gross, "Increasing Student Voice in High School Reform: Building Partnerships, Improving Outcomes," Educational Management Administration & Leadership 37 (4) (2009): 522–543, available at <http://www.buildingpublicunderstanding.org/assets/files/increasingstudentvoiceinhighschoolreform.pdf>.



A young girl with dark hair, glasses, and a colorful backpack is climbing a staircase made of stacked books. She is wearing a light blue denim shirt and red pants. The background is a textured, light-colored wall.

WWPS' Steps on our Journey to Elevate Student Voice

1. Promote a culture that values and prioritizes student voice
2. Develop systems and structures that support student voice
3. Implement multiple methods to analyze impact
4. Make student voice a priority (from the School Board to the classroom)
5. Empower student-led initiatives
6. Celebrate and recognize accomplishments



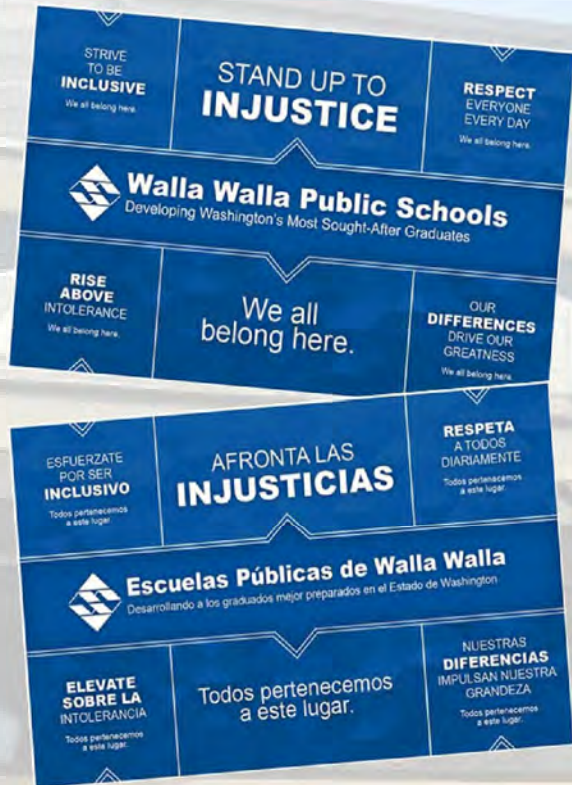
Promote a Culture That Values and Prioritizes Student Voice

A place where diversity of thought, belief, culture, sexual orientation, and ethnicity, is honored and respected in a civil, safe, and compassionate manner.

Diversity in Walla Walla Public Schools continues to be regarded as a remarkable asset, one that provides a rich and glorious tapestry in the fabric of our educational program.

We All Belong Here

- Stand up to injustice
- Strive to be inclusive
- Rise above intolerance
- Respect everyone, every day
- Our differences drive our greatness



Systems and Structures: School & Superintendent Advisory Councils

WHAT IS THE SUPERINTENDENT STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (SAC)?

Consisting of 16 high school students, the advisory council was developed to intentionally seek out and respond to the specific needs of Walla Walla Public Schools high school students. A broad representation of students, reflecting the rich diversity within its student body, SAC members work alongside the Superintendent and other district leaders as they seek out ways to improve the school experience for students.

WHAT IS SAC'S PRIMARY ROLE?

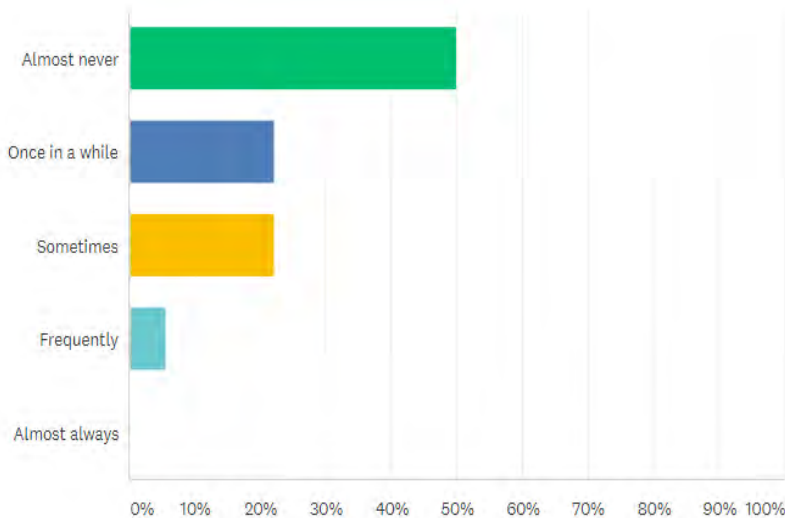
- Identify obstacles and proffer solutions related to student equity, access and culture through a district-wide lens
- Provide input and guidance to the Superintendent and their Cabinet team when changes are being considered by the district
- Advocate and help advance student-led initiatives and ideas that impact districtwide operations and programs
- Work collectively to maximize the experience for current and future Walla Walla Public Schools students



Student Voice in Curriculum: #DiversifyOurNarrative

Survey of graduates of color
revealed a stark and sobering truth:

How often were you encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics with other students?



Student-driven process led to the development of district-wide criteria:

- A minimum of at least one book studied in every English/Lit and Comprehension class be by a person of color AND about a person/people of color's experience(s) grades 6-12.
- Books originate from a dynamic recommended list curated by students and teachers.



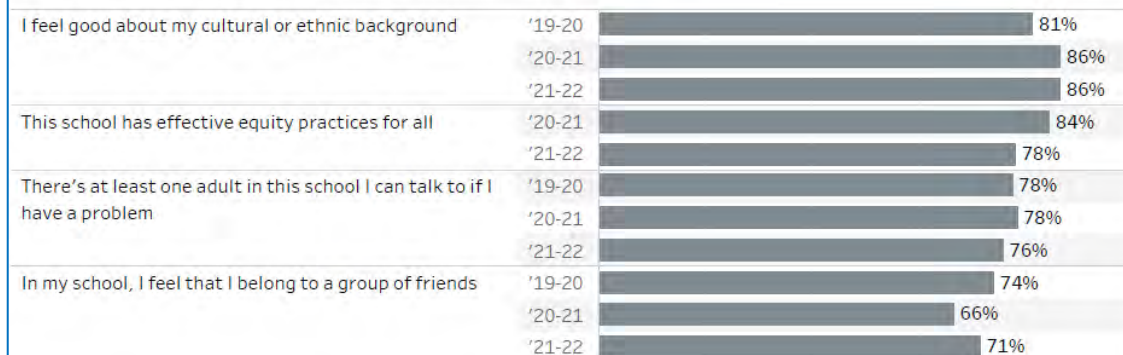
Ensure There are Student Seats “At the Table”

- Equity and Access Committee
 - A committee open to members of the community, board members, staff and students, focusing on our commitment to ensure that all stakeholders have a seat, a voice and a responsibility for change
 - A focus on outreach and voice from our student leadership and advisory groups (SAC, LEAP, Latino Club, ASB)
- Principal Hiring Committees
- Library Book Challenges
- Board/District-level Decisions

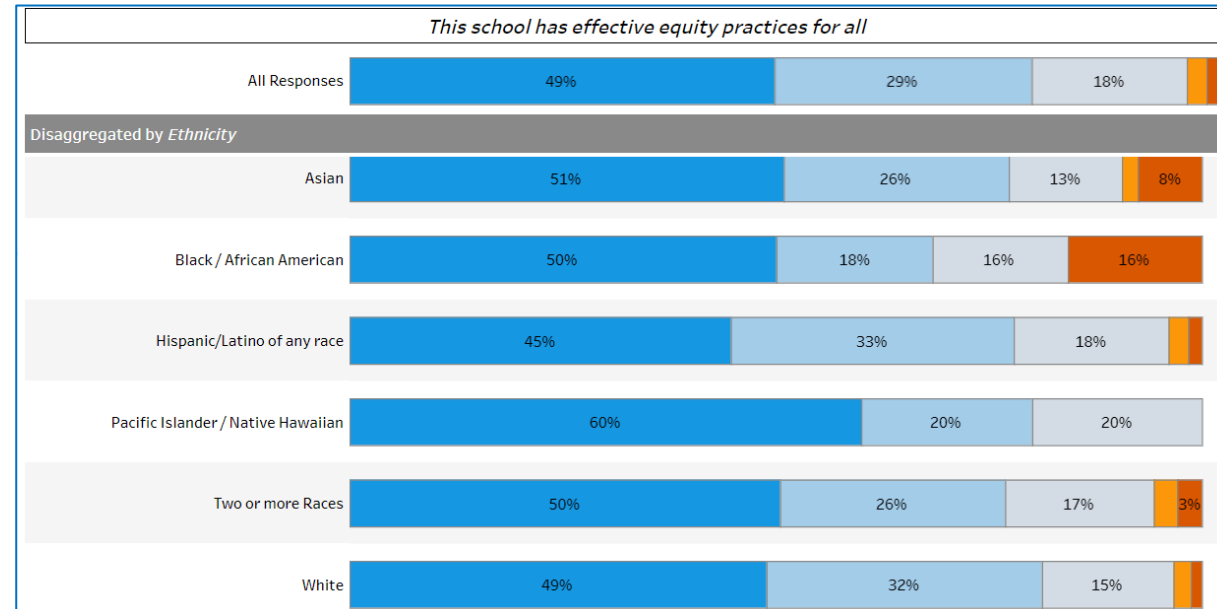
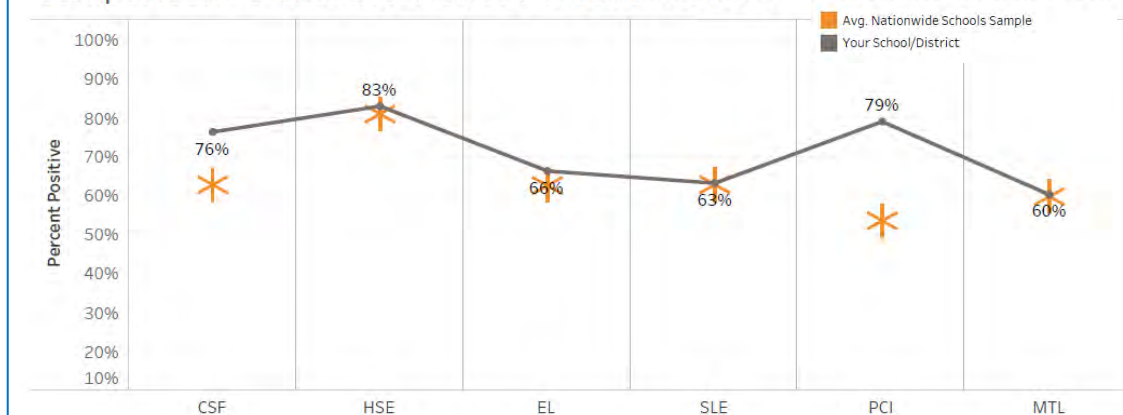


Analyze Impact

Belonging and Identity LONGITUDINAL



Comparison - 9 Characteristics Percent Positive



Characteristics

CSF — Clear & Shared Focus
HSE — High Standards & Expectations
EL — Effective Leadership
SLE — Supportive Learning Environment
PCI — Parent & Community Involvement
MTL — Monitoring of Teaching & Learning

Almost Never True
Seldom True
Sometimes True
Often True
Almost Always True



Include Student Focus Groups

Student focus groups

The **four focus groups with students** included two groups each for grades 6–8 and 9–12. One of the high school focus groups was for “welcomer” students (the term WWPS uses for students recently arrived in the United States) and was conducted in Spanish, and two groups included only BIPOC students. Two of the groups included students who had served on the Superintendent’s Advisory Council⁹ (grades 9–12) and a student ambassador group (grades 6–8). In accordance with district policy for student focus groups, an adult staff member was present in each group (see appendix A for the protocol and assent script). The purpose of the focus groups was to explore student perceptions of the representativeness of the curriculum and teaching practices and to better understand student experiences in accessing and participating in learning opportunities in WWPS.

One thing that we have talked about [is] helping teachers learn how to foster discussion and moderate discourse, which I think could be really, really good ... teachers are kind of scared to have discussions in their classes just because they don't want to be the next teacher who is in these videos or brought up at the next board meeting by the community members.

– Student

I have an older sister, and so my family has relationships with all of my teachers because she took the exact same classes as me ... we know all the tricks and what to say and what classes to take and stuff, but that's a small portion of people that have access to that.

– Student

I think cultural competency training would really help if teachers were willing to understand people's differences and teach from the perspective of knowing that everyone's lived experience is different.

– Student

Make Student Voice & Experience a Priority

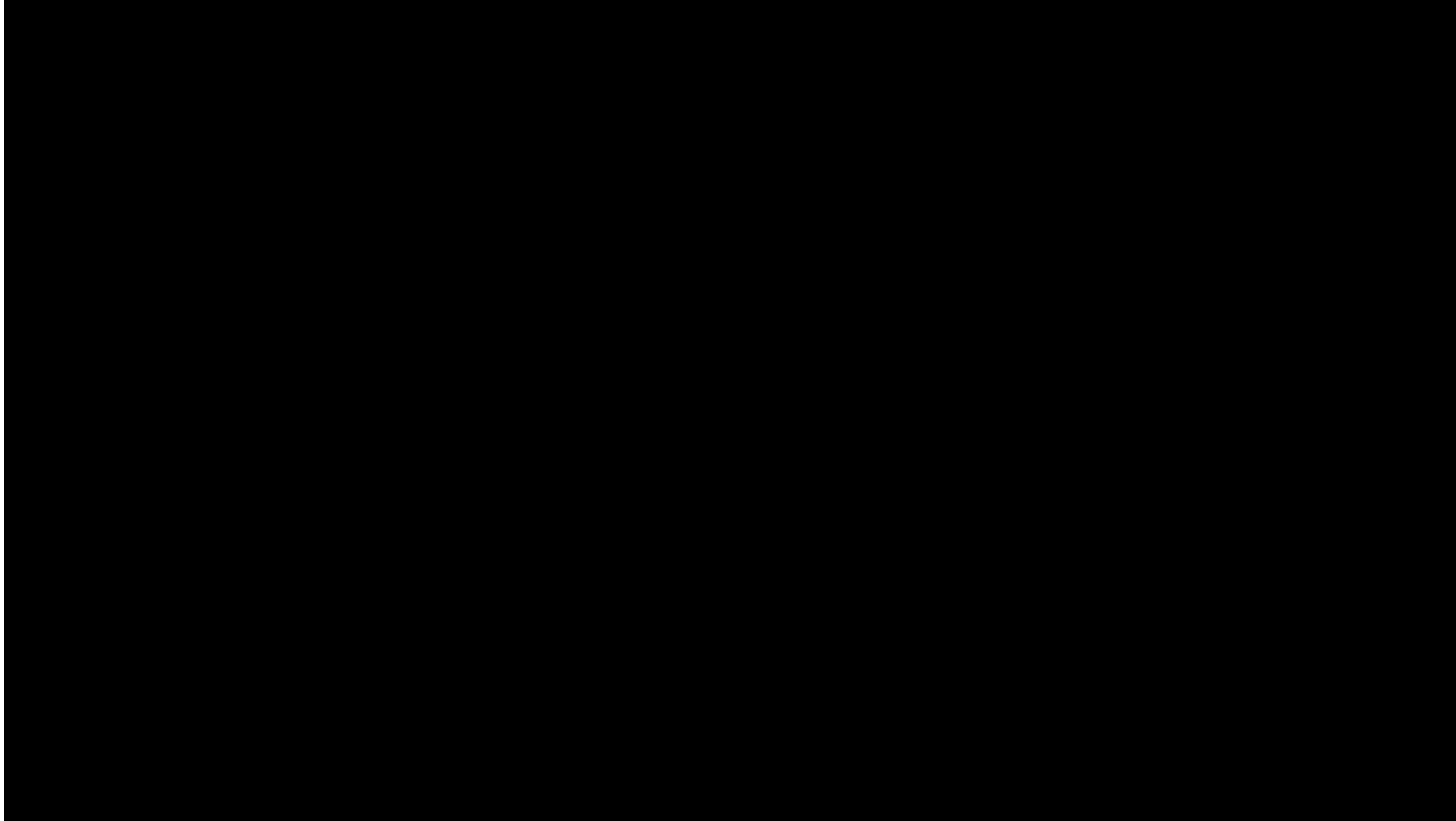
Superintendent & Principal/School Goals

2022-23 Principal Goal Example (Walla Walla High School)

- The building principal will provide the necessary leadership and support so that staff can achieve the following:
 - Incorporate ways to Increase student voice.
 - As evidenced on the EES student survey question: My teachers listen to my ideas and concerns (Currently 68%. Goal 78%).
 - Incorporate instructional techniques and strategies that increase student learning and engagement:
 - As evidenced on the EES student survey question: My teachers help me learn in more ways than the teacher just talking in front of class (Currently 60%. Goal 70%).
 - Implement additional activities and events that celebrate student success.
 - As evidenced on the EES student survey question: Student success is celebrated in this school (Currently 59%. Goal 69%).



Empower Student-led Initiatives



Celebrate & Recognize Accomplishments



The “Building Belonging” Recognition Nomination Form

The Building Belonging recognition is awarded to a student or group of students, at any grade level, who demonstrates a commitment to one or more of the following:

- Promoting activities that create and sustain a sense of belonging, fairness, and justice for all students
- Developing opportunities for students to have a voice in their school community
- Supporting a project that is focused on improving the experiences for historically underrepresented students
- Giving of oneself by way of dedicating efforts to be a resource and a source of strength to fellow students
- Practicing respect while applying an equity lens - finding ways to ensure all are included

One or all of the above areas qualify the student/student group to be nominated.

Nominations can be submitted by students, faculty or community members.

Please include the following information:

Name of Student Group or Student(s):

Advisor (if applicable):

Location of Student Group or Student(s) (school of enrollment):

Your name and contact information:

Briefly describe the ways in which this group of students or an individual student meet the criteria for this nomination. Please provide examples that help us understand their commitment to “building a sense of belonging” that promotes inclusive practices and diversity as our strength. If you wish to submit letters of support, this is encouraged as well.





Dr. Wade Smith

Superintendent
wsmith@wwps.org
509-526-6714
@wallawallasup



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Pause and Integrate

- What systemic and structural strategies did you hear?
- What is resonating?
- 5 minutes

Take a 10-Break



TAKING A
break