

Community Conversations about Early Warning Systems

Deepening Partnerships to Provide Holistic Student Support

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Presenters



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Agenda

- Background of the project
- Community conversation about early warning systems (EWS)
- Preliminary findings from first round of interviews and community conversations
- Q & A



Research Questions

- What are the current **opportunities and challenges** of EWS implementation in the state?
- How can OSPI **refine its approach** to EWS implementation?
- How can **school-community partnerships** support implementation of EWS?



What is an Early Warning System?

- Frequent review of **student data to identify support** that may be needed
- School teams, in collaboration with students, families, and the community, **provide different intensities of support** to meet student needs
- Sometimes called 9th grade on-track success or multi-tiered systems of support (**MTSS**)

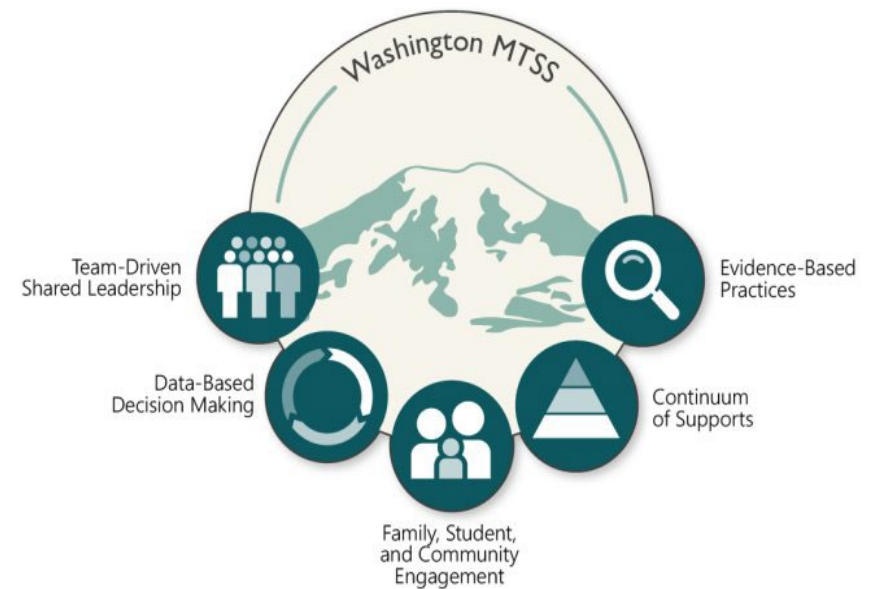


Figure 1. Multi-Tiered System of Supports, from OSPI.



Why Does This Matter?

- Washington's graduation rate is **83.6%**; OSPI is committed to a graduation rate of at least 90%
- Not all students have access to supports, leading to **disparities** in graduation rates
- More students graduate when they:
 - Feel a sense of **belonging** in school
 - Are identified **early** as needing help
 - Are offered timely supports aligned to **students' needs**
 - Are supported by the **community**

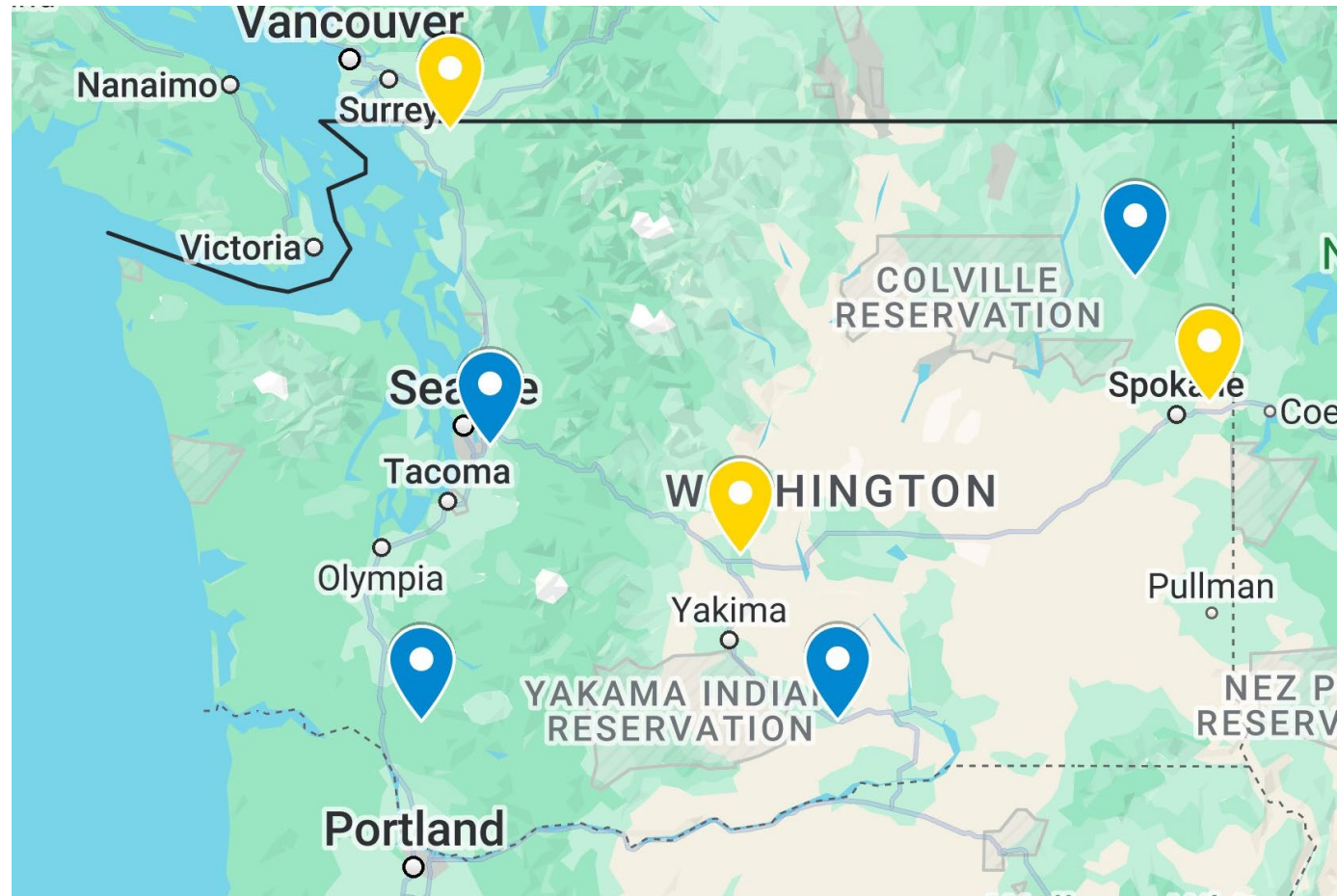
Adapted from Building Bridges Intervention and Early Warning Systems Initiative.



Student, Family, and Community Involvement in EWS

- Students, families, and community members are **essential partners** for schools (Ishimaru, 2020; Mapp et al., 2022)
- Schools benefit from **centering the community** (Khalifa, 2012) and partnering with **community-based organizations** (Baldrige et al., 2017)
- **Community and school buy-in**, teacher leadership, administrative support, and local capacity are critical to the success of EWS (Knight et al., 2022)
- School-based EWS efforts are “**necessary but may not be sufficient** to reduce chronic absence” and schools should consider **partnering with CBOs** to “offer integrated support” such as health, housing, and social services (Canbolat, 2024, p. 18)

Participating Schools and Districts



Community Conversation



Objectives

- Reflect on what EWS looks like at your school.
- Identify ways your school and OSPI can advance outcomes for all students through EWS and tiered systems of support.



Introductions

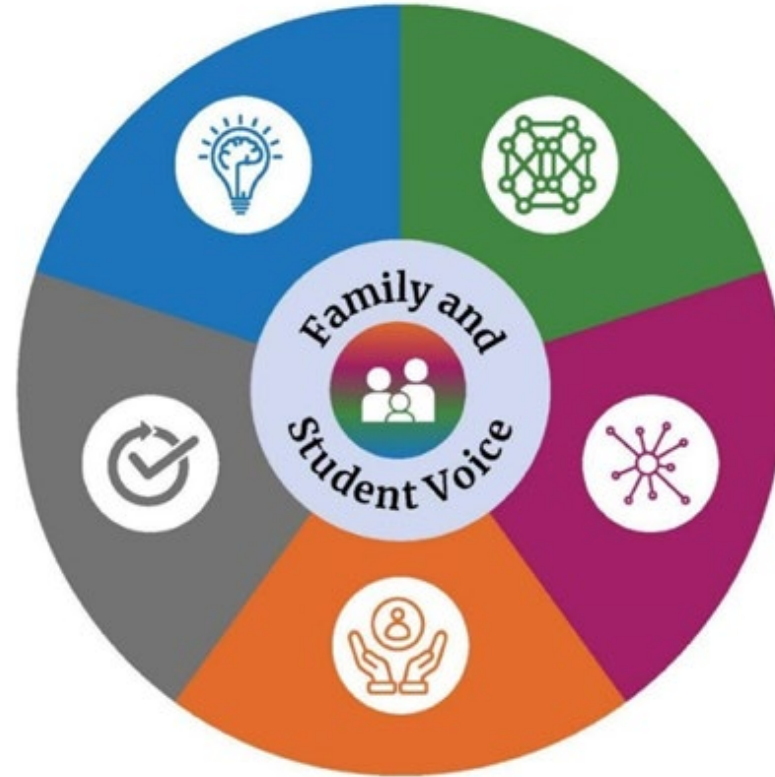
At your table, please introduce yourself and share the following:

- Your name
- School
- What brought you to today's session



Elements of Early Warning Systems

- Develop shared mindsets
- Create systems and structures
- Collect holistic data
- Design student supports
- Monitor progress



Adapted from Education Northwest and FHI 360 (2024).



Small Group Reflection Activity

In small groups, reflect on current implementation of EWS at your school. Please **take notes** using the Padlet on the following questions:

1. What is an aspect of EWS that is **working well** at your school?
2. What is an **area of growth** related to EWS at your school?
3. Do you have any **recommendations** for your school and/or OSPI to address areas of growth?



Whole Group Conversation

1. What is an aspect of EWS that is **working well** at your school?
2. What is an **area of growth** related to EWS at your school?
3. Do you have any **recommendations** for your school and/or OSPI to address areas of growth?

Preliminary Learnings



Why Schools Implement EWS

- Academics
- Attendance
- Student engagement
- Demographic disparities in graduation rates
- Research demonstrating the benefits of EWS

“Our attendance has really been sporadic ... that was probably the number one concern that started the conversations [about EWS].”

– Educator



How Schools Implement EWS

- Mostly done as a part of **9th grade success teams**
- **Collaboration** among staff members
- Regular **review of data** to identify students in need of support
- Addition of a **support course** or study hall for students and **subject-specific supports**, such as math tutoring
- Counseling and other **mental health supports** for students
- Collaboration with **community partners**
- Adjustments to **class instruction and schedules** to align with student needs

Preliminary round of three pre-interviews, community conversations, and post-interviews.



How Schools Measure EWS Success

- Academic GPA
- Attendance rates
- Student sense of belonging and mental health
- State test scores
- Discipline rates
- Educator mindset shifts

“We’ve also done a couple rounds of empathy interviews with the students ... just finding out where they feel connected and supported and where they don’t. And then when we identify students that ... don’t seem to be connected or feel supported, then we have tried to do individual interviews to find out why, what’s wrong, why you don’t feel like you belong in this school or feel safe?”

– Educator

Preliminary round of three pre-interviews, community conversations, and post-interviews.



EWS Successes

School-Identified	Community-Identified
9 th grade success teams are making an impact on student outcomes	Many educators care about students and believe they can succeed
Relationships between staff members and students	Strong relationships with some students and families
Regular review of data to identify students in need of support	Increasing awareness of the need to partner with families and the community
Increased academic success due to additional support courses, tutors, etc.	Some collaboration with community partners

Preliminary round of three pre-interviews, community conversations, and post-interviews.



“There is good relationship building going on ... there’s a lot of teachers that are taking a lot of time and effort to know the kids.”

– Educator

“We’re finally starting to get to that point where we put these systems in place and kids, they’re starting to know that someone is watching, people care ... They’re no longer faceless or anonymous or they can’t slip through the cracks. They know we’re paying attention.”

– Educator



EWS Challenges

School-Identified	Community-Identified
Lack of sustainable funding	Mindsets of some teachers and staff members
School capacity to effectively implement EWS among budget cuts and time limitations	Fair and equitable grading practices
Engagement with families and community partners	Support for multilingual students
EWS supports are primarily determined by educators without input from students, families, and the community	Inclusion of student, family, and community voice in decision-making and two-way communication with families

Preliminary round of three pre-interviews, community conversations, and post-interviews.

“Definitely finances would be our biggest barrier.”

– Educator

***“Community involvement is probably our biggest struggle ...
how do we connect with the community and how do we
communicate with them so that they know what's going on
and how they can jump in?”***

– Educator



EWS Challenges

School-Identified	Community-Identified
Moving from 9 th grade success to schoolwide EWS	Lack of community partners or a need for a coordinated approach
Schools and districts do not always prioritize EWS and MTSS	Students and families do not always know about the supports available
Staff turnover makes it difficult to sustain or expand EWS	Transportation (e.g., buses leave right after school and students are unable to access supports or community-building)

Preliminary round of three pre-interviews, community conversations, and post-interviews.



“I feel like that [support from admin] might be where the communication part is breaking down. Our 9th grade success team, we talk constantly about data and students, but there hasn't really been a platform and we haven't really pushed outside of our group to ... the entire school.”

— Educator

“You're collecting this data and I'm collecting that data. And then what are we doing with it?”

— Educator



Recommendations for Schools

- Strong **relationships** among educators, families, students, and community members are essential to EWS success
- Empower **teachers to lead** this work, but **support from administrators** is needed to move from 9th grade to schoolwide
- Prioritize **two-way communication** and consider tools that can support these efforts
- **Differentiate outreach** to different groups and provide opportunities to hear from and include students, families, and community partners in decision-making
- Support teachers to **meet the needs of students** in the classroom

Preliminary round of three pre-interviews, community conversations, and post-interviews.



“If I could give any school advice ... put a teacher leader in charge of this work and not a principal, not a vice principal, not a director ... find your teachers that have that influential power and that voice and can rally their staff around them because that’s what’s going to make movement.”

– Educator

“When we can do more within the classroom setting on empowering teachers to do their own intervention, we see a bigger impact on students ... how do we increase teachers’ knowledge about how to do that work within their own classroom versus pulling [students] out or hiring someone else?”

– Educator



Recommendations for OSPI

- Sustainably **fund** this work
- Recommend **professional development** on EWS for schools
- Increase understanding of **tiered systems of support** (e.g., MTSS, EWS, 9th grade success, etc.)
- Maintain an **OSPI presence** at schools to increase buy-in among staff members and community partners
- Support schools in planning **ongoing community conversations**

Preliminary round of three pre-interviews, community conversations, and post-interviews.



“I continued to hear, we need to do more of these [community conversations]. This is really validating like this is really good.”

— Educator

“I think we could do with more regular meetings ... I would love to pick different subgroups. So like, next year, we have eight community conversations. And here's your different subgroups. We're going to talk about and then invite different community partners throughout the year. I think that would be really valuable.”

— Educator



Questions?



Thank you!

Contact

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