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Marginal improvement signals urgent need to increase educational attainment

Olympia—Early findings in the Washington Student Achievement Council’s [2015 Roadmap report](#) show that recent gains in attainment are too low to meet the state’s goals. In 2014, Washington adopted statewide educational attainment goals based on projected economic and workforce needs. By 2023:

- All adults aged 25–44 will have a high school diploma or equivalent.
- At least 70 percent of adults aged 25–44 will have a postsecondary credential.

Since these goals were adopted, both high school and postsecondary attainment rates have increased marginally: from 89 to 90 percent for high school completion, and from 50 to 51 percent for postsecondary attainment. To keep pace with a changing population and meet workforce demand by 2023, Washington State needs new investment in strategies to accelerate educational attainment for all students.

Increasing attainment requires our state to overcome sizable challenges. However, strategic state policies and investments can advance these numbers. Findings in the 2015 Roadmap target two areas in need of attention:

1. High school completion, postsecondary access, and postsecondary completion for historically underserved student populations. These include students of color, students with disabilities, English language learners, students from low-income families, and students who are homeless or in foster care.
2. Postsecondary recruitment, retention, and completion for working-age adults.

The council submitted the 2015 Roadmap update to the Legislature and Governor’s Office earlier this week. This update is the first progress report since the state’s educational attainment goals were first proposed in the [2013 Roadmap report](#). The council uses key findings

in the Roadmap reports to propose specific policy and resource recommendations in [strategic action plans](#), which are submitted in alternating years.

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About the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC): Established as a cabinet-level state agency in 2012, WSAC provides strategic planning, administrative oversight and advocacy to support increased student success and higher levels of educational attainment in Washington.

The [nine-member Council](#) includes five citizen members, one of whom is a current student, and one representative from each of Washington's four major educational sectors. The Council proposes improvements and innovations to meet the evolving needs of students, employers and the educational community. In recognition of the economic, social and civic benefits of public education, the council advocates for increased financial support and civic commitment to ensure a thriving Washington.

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