

PERFORMANCE AUDIT



Office of the
Washington
State Auditor
Pat McCarthy

Evaluating How Charter Schools Identify and Support At-Risk Students

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Executive Summary

State Auditor's Conclusions (page 43)

This performance audit asked an important question, whether public charter schools in Washington met state requirements and adopted leading practices to identify and serve at-risk students. The answer is clearly positive, both for the school administrators who have implemented many leading practices in this area and for the families served by the schools we reviewed.

We considered seven leading practices to identify and serve at-risk students, such as offering extended learning opportunities outside regular school hours or providing opportunities for small group learning. All four schools we examined followed, to varying degrees, six leading practices, and three schools followed at least partially all seven of the leading practices.

When we spoke with families in focus groups, we heard that the schools appeared to communicate and connect well. One student reported that his teachers worked closely with students struggling to meet high expectations. In another example, a parent and child expressed appreciation for the level of patience the teachers display with their students.

As positive as these results are, it is always important to be transparent about the scope of our work. For this audit, we limited our focus to four of 17 charter schools in the state for the 2024-25 school year. We examined the processes in place to identify and serve at-risk students, but we did not conduct an analysis of the outcomes of those processes.

While this report is therefore not a close examination of all charter schools, it nonetheless offers examples of approaches that could serve at-risk students in Washington's charter schools and traditional schools alike.

Background (page 7)

Washington charter schools are tuition-free, publicly funded schools open to all students. They must follow most state and federal laws but are exempt from certain laws related to curriculum requirements, school district policies and collective bargaining agreements.

The state charter school law closely mirrors Initiative 1240 passed by voters in 2012, which emphasized charter schools' ability to better serve at-risk students. State law

defines at-risk students as those who have academic or economic disadvantages and require assistance or special services to succeed in school. We focused on three at-risk populations identified in the law: homeless students, English language learners and special education students.

We evaluated four charter schools from across the state to determine how well they met requirements and adopted leading practices to identify and serve at-risk students. We selected schools based on whether they served at least some of our target populations. The requirements in state and federal law are in place to help ensure these student populations are identified and served appropriately. The leading practices we considered can help augment schools' success; they ranged from improved data tracking to better communication with students and families.

Audited charter schools

- Catalyst Public Schools, Bremerton
- Innovation High School, Spokane
- Pinnacles Prep, Wenatchee
- Rainier Prep, Seattle

Audited charter schools met nearly all selected legal requirements for identifying and supporting at-risk students (page 15)

Audited schools met nearly all requirements to identify and serve at-risk students but could improve by documenting all processes. For English language learners, schools mostly met requirements, but some lacked required plans. Schools also had practices to serve homeless students and to provide transportation. However, the schools could improve their written staff guidance to help connect homeless students with community services. In addition, schools generally met requirements to help identify and support special education students. Finally, all schools posted a required online complaint process for students and families.

The charter schools use many leading practices, including some particularly promising approaches other schools may find valuable (page 27)

All four charter schools used many leading practices to identify and serve at-risk students. Their purposes range from achieving better data tracking and analysis to improving connections and communication with students and their families. The seven practices were drawn from both government and nonprofit research organizations.

Practice 1: Provide opportunities for effective small group learning settings.

All four schools provided opportunities for effective small group learning settings.

Practice 2: Offer extended learning opportunities outside regular school hours.

Three schools offered extended learning opportunities outside regular school hours.

Practice 3: Promote a culturally responsive learning environment.

All four schools promoted a culturally responsive learning environment.

Practice 4: Effectively communicate and engage with parents and families.

All four schools effectively communicated and engaged with parents and families, but one may benefit from strengthening engagement with non-English-speaking families.

Practice 5: Use early warning data indicators to help identify and serve at-risk students.

All four schools used early warning indicators to help identify and serve at-risk students, but two could improve their processes.

Practice 6: Promote collaboration between general education and specialist teachers.

All four schools promoted collaboration between general education teachers and specialists.

Practice 7: Implement a multi-tiered system of supports.

All four schools partially implemented a multi-tiered system of supports.

In addition, we asked parents and students at three of the four audited charter schools for their perspectives on the effect the schools' practices had on supporting their children and other at-risk students. While their comments are not representative of all families' experiences at these schools, they described many and varied positive experiences. Some of the supports they mentioned might also be translated to the wider public school system.

Recommendations (page 44)

We made recommendations to all four audited schools to develop more detailed written policies and procedures that would provide greater assurance that school activities will be carried out as intended. These recommendations address both required activities and leading practices intended to identify and serve at-risk students.

Next steps

Our performance audits of state programs and services are reviewed by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) and/or by other legislative committees whose members wish to consider findings and recommendations on

specific topics. Representatives of the Office of the State Auditor will review this audit with JLARC's Initiative 900 Subcommittee in Olympia. The public will have the opportunity to comment at this hearing. Please check the JLARC website (leg.wa.gov/about-the-legislature/committees/joint/jlarc-i-900-subcommittee/) for the exact date, time and location. The Office conducts periodic follow-up evaluations to assess the status of recommendations and may conduct follow-up audits at its discretion. See **Appendix A**, which addresses the I-900 areas covered in the audit. **Appendix B** contains information about our methodology. See the **Bibliography** for a list of references and resources used to develop our understanding of the topic area.

Background

State law grants charter schools greater flexibility to serve students

Charter schools are tuition-free, publicly funded schools open to all students. Each school operates under a charter contract between the school and an authorizer, which specifies the responsibilities and expectations for the school. They must follow most state and federal laws but are exempt from certain laws related to curriculum requirements, school district policies and collective bargaining agreements. These exemptions give the schools more flexibility in how they serve students. **Exhibit 1** summarizes major similarities and differences between charter schools and traditional public schools.

Exhibit 1 – Similarities and differences between charter schools and traditional schools

As of 2024-25 school year

Characteristic	Charter schools	Traditional schools
Education		
Provides tuition-free, non-parochial education that meets state standards	Yes	Yes
Subject to statewide testing	Yes	Yes
Manages school calendar	Managed by individual charter school	Managed by school district
Admissions open to all students	Yes; no zoning boundaries; cannot discriminate on any basis	Yes; students are typically zoned to a school; cannot discriminate on any basis
Teachers		
Subject to teacher certification laws	Yes	Yes
Teachers' union	Not required but allowable	Not required but common practice
Accountability and governance		
School governance	Nonprofit/public agency board of directors, not locally elected	Locally elected members
Reports to or supervised by OSPI and State Board of Education	Yes	Yes
Must adhere to federal, state and local laws on health, safety, parents' rights, civil rights, government transparency	Yes	Yes
Funding		
Funding sources	State (per pupil and per teacher); federal; no local tax revenue; private funds	State (per pupil and per teacher); federal; local tax revenue; private funds
Local levy taxes made available	No, cannot levy local taxes	Yes, can levy local taxes
School and student numbers		
Total number of schools	17	more than 2,250
Total number of students	4,868	1.1 million

Source: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) student and school data.

Each charter school is authorized by either the Washington State Charter School Commission or by a local school district; as of 2025, Spokane Public Schools is the only school district to authorize a charter school. Authorizers are responsible for approving or rejecting, and renewing or revoking charter school contracts. They also monitor school performance and ensure the school is meeting its contractual obligations. In the 2024-25 school year, 17 charter schools served about 4,800 students. This represents less than 1% of the state's 1.1 million public school students.

Washington has always limited the number of charter schools: it allowed a maximum of 40 to open over a five-year period between 2016 and 2021. Far fewer than 40 schools opened during this window, and several have since closed. With the end of the five-year window, no new charter schools may open, although existing schools can still expand by adding additional grades or enrolling more students with the approval of their authorizer.

State law encourages charter schools to focus on serving students with academic or economic disadvantages

The state charter school law closely mirrors Initiative 1240 passed by voters in 2012. The initiative emphasized charter schools' ability to find solutions to problems that affect underperforming schools and to better serve at-risk students. State law includes the initiative's broad definition of at-risk students as those who have academic or economic disadvantages and require assistance or special services to succeed in school. This includes students who are at risk of dropping out, are in low-performing schools, have severe disciplinary issues or have limited economic resources.

The statute spells out few requirements describing how charter schools should serve at-risk students. It does require authorizers to give preference to schools that are designed to serve at-risk students, while charter school applicants had to include their plans for recruiting at-risk students. However, the law specifically states that there is no intent to limit charter schools to those that serve a substantial portion of at-risk students from their communities.

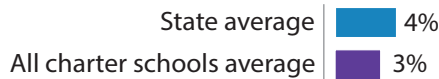
For this audit, we chose to focus on three populations identified in the law: homeless students, English language learners and special education students. These student populations represent a significant percentage of students statewide. During the 2024-25 school year, 15% of students were identified as English language learners, 4% were identified as homeless and 14% received special education services. These groups are not mutually exclusive and there is some overlap between these populations. **Exhibit 2** (on the following page) compares the proportion of these students in the general K-12 public school population to those in all charter schools.

Exhibit 2 – At-risk student groups as a percent of total students, averages for all public schools compared to all charter schools
 2024-25 school year; all numbers rounded

English language learners



Homeless students



Special education students



*Lumen Public School is excluded from the charter school average for special education because its value was suppressed due to a small number of special education students.

Source: OSPI Report Card and special education data.

Charter schools face additional oversight and funding restrictions compared to traditional schools

All public schools, including charter schools, are subject to oversight by two state agencies, but charter schools are subject to additional scrutiny by their authorizing organization and a governing board. **Exhibit 3** sets out their responsibilities and where charter school oversight differs.

Exhibit 3 – Oversight responsibilities for Washington charter schools

Organization	Task	Compared to traditional public schools
Authorizing body	Ensures charter school complies with charter contract and applicable requirements, and evaluates and reports on school performance	Additional oversight
School boards	Responsible for governance comparable to traditional public schools, but are not locally elected	Similar responsibilities, different structure
State Auditor's Office	Ensures schools spend public funds appropriately and comply with applicable requirements through regular accountability audits	Similar oversight
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)	Ensures all schools provide education that meets state standards and reviews school compliance with specific programs for at-risk students such as special education	Similar oversight

Source: OSPI, state law.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) regularly reviews charter schools' special education programs to ensure they meet requirements. It also reviews each charter school's program for English language learners at least once.

Charter schools can access most of the same funding sources as traditional public schools, with important exceptions. Although they receive similar per-pupil and per-teacher funding for general education and special programs, charter schools cannot raise local levy funds. Traditional public schools often rely on levies as a significant source of supplemental funding; the prohibition means charter schools must seek other revenue sources such as private fundraising activities to make up any shortfall.

Furthermore, although charter schools are eligible to receive state facilities funding, the Legislature has not appropriated funds for this purpose. According to charter schools and their advocates, this lack of levy funding and dedicated facilities funding is contrary to the equal funding intended by the original statewide charter school initiative. Federal grants might offer charter schools some additional revenue, but at least one specific grant would require the state to change its funding structure for charter schools.

This audit examined how selected charter schools met requirements and adopted leading practices to identify and serve at-risk students

In 2018, the State Auditor published a performance audit report that evaluated the initial years of charter school operation in Washington. That audit focused on whether charter schools had foundations in place to ensure public accountability. Because such schools were so new at that time, our Office noted them as a topic to revisit in a future audit. In addition, our Office regularly conducts fiscal and accountability audits of all charter schools.

Although state law encourages charter schools to serve at-risk students, lawmakers, families and some charter school advocates have raised concerns about how effectively charter schools serve these populations. We conducted this new audit to assess how well charter schools are identifying and serving at-risk students. We focused on the requirements and practices charter schools should do to best serve these students.

This audit was designed to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do selected charter schools meet requirements and use leading practices to identify and support at-risk students?
2. Have the selected charter schools used promising practices to identify and serve at-risk students that other schools could adopt?

From the 17 charter schools open in the 2024-25 school year, we selected four schools to review in detail, listed in the sidebar and described in more detail on the following pages. Although they are diverse in their student populations and locations, we did not select them to be representative of all charter schools in Washington, nor did we perform detailed reviews of all aspects of school responsibilities.

In addition to our review of the schools' written processes and interviews with school staff and leadership, we conducted focus groups with charter school families to gain their perspectives on how well their schools identify and support at-risk students. Families from all schools except Innovation High School participated in these focus groups. These perspectives represent the families' individual experiences and do not represent the experiences of all families at these schools. The focus group responses provide context for the audited schools' practices, including quotations throughout this report.

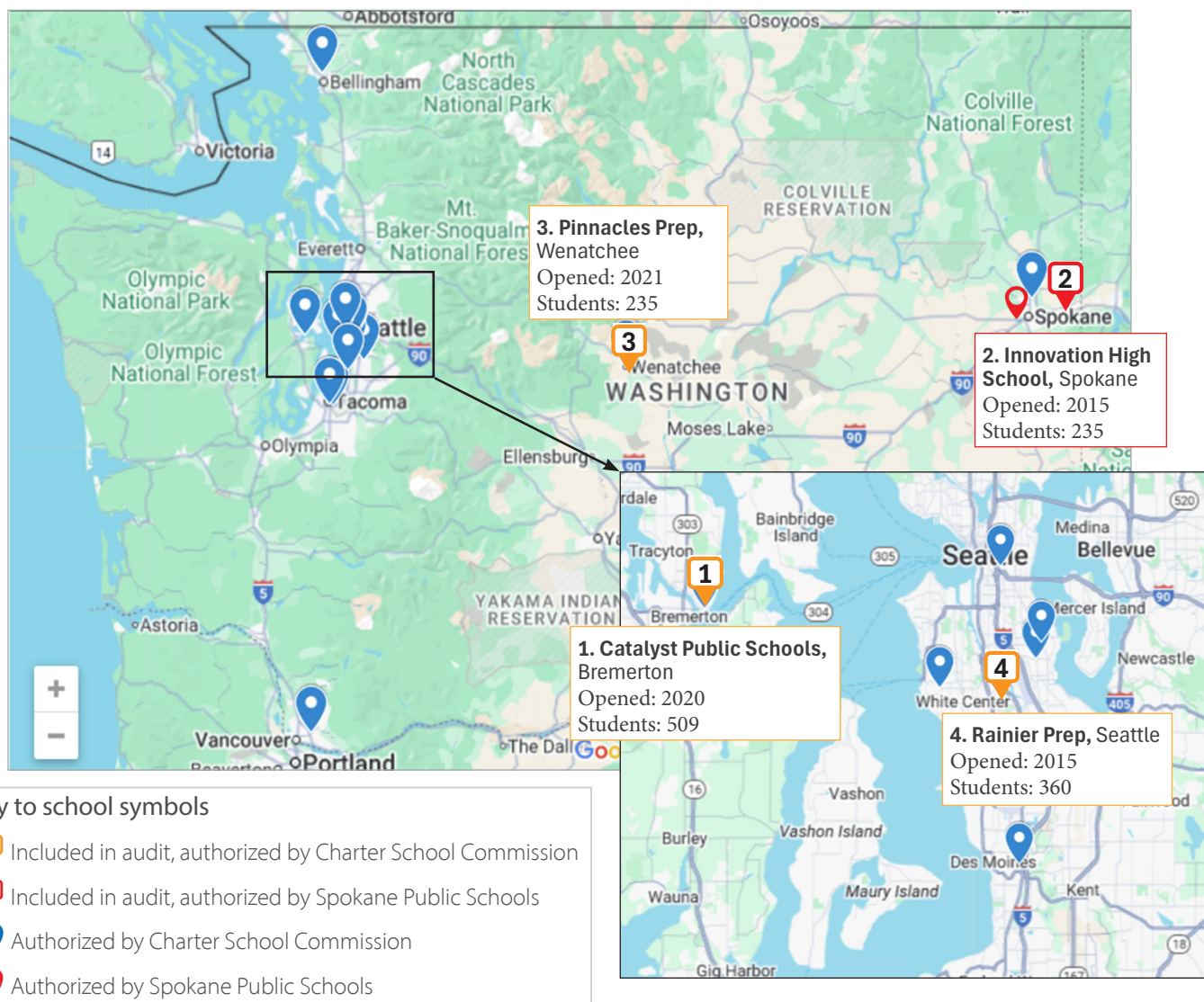
Audited charter schools

- Catalyst Public Schools, Bremerton
- Innovation High School, Spokane
- Pinnacles Prep, Wenatchee
- Rainier Prep, Seattle

About the Audited Charter Schools

We selected four charter schools from across the state to examine for this audit. Each school has its own unique focus area that drives elements of their operations, curriculum and, in some cases, how they support at-risk students. Drawn from both sides of the Cascades, their locations are shown on the map in Exhibit 4.

Exhibit 4 – Map of all charter schools and audited schools



Source: Source: Washington State Charter School Commission, Spokane Public Schools, Google Maps.

Each audited school focuses on tailored service areas

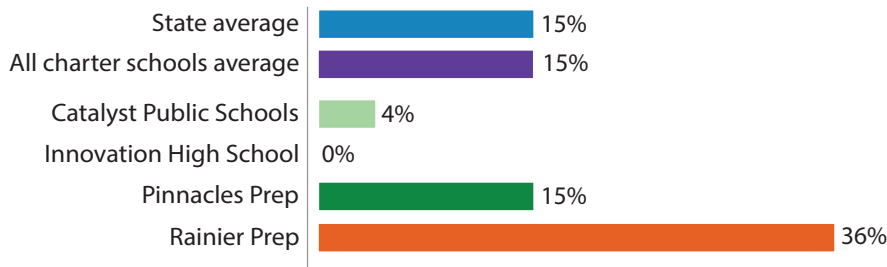
Exhibits 5-7 (on the following page) compare the state average and the overall charter schools' average to each audited school's enrollment of the three types of at-risk students we evaluated: English language

learners, homeless students and students in special education. Each school was above the state average for at least one of the at-risk student populations we focused on.

Exhibit 5 – English language learners as a percent of total students for four audited charter schools

2024-25 school year; all numbers rounded

English language learners

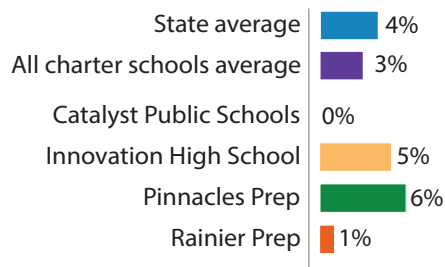


Source: OSPI Report Card data.

Exhibit 6 – Homeless students as a percent of total students for four audited charter schools

2024-25 school year; all numbers rounded

Homeless students

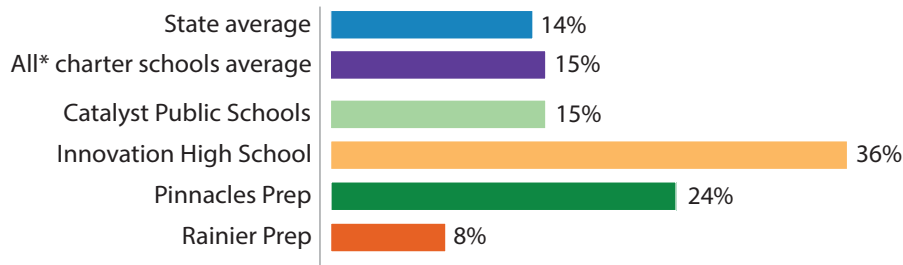


Source: OSPI Report Card data.

Exhibit 7 – Special education students as a percent of total students for four audited charter schools

2024-25 school year; all numbers rounded

Special education students



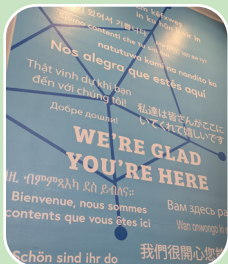
*Lumen Public School is excluded from the charter school average for special education because its value was suppressed due to a small number of special education students.

Source: OSPI Report Card and special education data.

Finally, Exhibit 8 provides a brief overview of each school and its focus area.

Exhibit 8 – Profiles of audited charter schools

Information current for the 2024-25 school year



Catalyst Public Schools, Bremerton. Authorizer: Charter School Commission.

Located near a military base, this grades K-9 school serves a population that includes some families who move often. Its main focus is to serve at-risk students. Other focus areas include: diversity, equity and inclusion; rigorous academics and dynamic supports; and helping students connect with their community to make change.



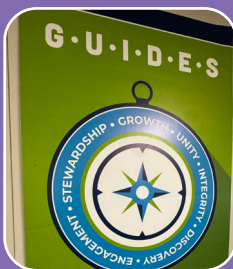
Innovation High School, Spokane. Authorizer: Spokane Public Schools.

Located on the city's east side, this grades 9-12 school offers area teens a project-based approach to academics. Other focus areas include: college preparation, entrepreneurship and specialty classes such as concert music, fashion design, advanced art and career/technical courses.



Pinnacles Prep, Wenatchee. Authorizer: Charter School Commission.

This grades 6-10 school, located in the center of Wenatchee Valley apple country, serves a large Latino population. It emphasizes a place-based education model that connects students to the heritage and culture of the surrounding community. Another focus area is equity.



Rainier Prep, South Seattle. Authorizer: Charter School Commission.

Located in a linguistically diverse neighborhood, this grades 5-8 school chose its site specifically to serve the traditionally underserved populations in the area. Focus areas include: college success and career exploration, community partnerships, and student-led advisor/family conferences.

Source: Auditor assembled, sourced from the Washington State Charter School Commission and the four audited charter schools. Photographs taken by the audit team.

Audit Results

Audited charter schools met nearly all selected legal requirements for identifying and supporting at-risk students

Results in brief

Audited schools met nearly all requirements to identify and serve at-risk students but could improve by documenting all processes. For English language learners, schools mostly met requirements, but some lacked required plans. Schools also had practices to serve homeless students and to provide transportation. However, the schools could improve their written staff guidance to help connect homeless students with community services. In addition, schools generally met requirements to help identify and support special education students. Finally, all schools posted a required online complaint process for students and families.

Introducing *Promising Practices*

Throughout this report, panels like this call out “promising practices” we identified at the audited schools. They surpass the requirements and leading practice criteria we used to evaluate the schools. We consider these practices would likely lead to greater assurance that schools not only meet requirements but also their individual goals. Other schools, including traditional schools, might consider adopting one or more of them, if they have not already done so.

Audited schools met nearly all requirements to identify and serve at-risk students, but could improve by documenting all processes

Legal requirements around identifying and serving at-risk students provide a foundation for ensuring schools provide all students the opportunity to succeed in school. The audit focused on how schools identify and serve three groups of students: English language learners, students experiencing homelessness and students receiving special education services. We examined selected requirements related to each group to assess how well schools met the needs of these at-risk students. Audit criteria used in this chapter of the report were drawn from requirements in federal and state law that could most negatively affect students if not followed and were easily observed. These requirements ensure schools provide equitable access to education and critical supports to help at-risk students overcome barriers and succeed in school. **Exhibit 9** (on the following page) summarizes our results across these criteria.

Exhibit 9 – Requirements assessment summary

Page	Requirement	Catalyst	Innovation	Pinnacles	Rainier Prep
English language learners (all state law)					
18	Collect information on the language families prefer to communicate in	Met	Met	Met	Met
18	Assess student eligibility for English language learner programs	Met	Met, could improve	Met	Met
19	Provide instruction to achieve competency in English, including appropriate staff training and student assessment	Met	Met, could improve	Met	Met
20	Designate a Language Access Liaison and implement a Language Access Plan (unless fewer than 1,000 students and less than 10% English learner enrollment)	N/A	N/A	Partially	Partially
Homeless students (all federal law)					
21	Ensure homeless students can remain in their school of origin	Met	Met	Met	Met
22	Ensure homeless students' right to transportation	Met, could improve	Met, could improve	Met, could improve	Met
22	Coordinate with local service agencies to support homeless students	Met, could improve	Met, could improve	Met, could improve	Met, could improve
Special education students					
24	Ensure families are notified before conducting a special education evaluation (federal and state law)	Met	Met, could improve	Met, could improve	Met
24	Student IEP must include certain required elements (federal law)	Met	Met, could improve	Met	Met
24	Conduct annual IEP meetings (federal and state law)	Met	Met, could improve	Met	Met
24	Ensure that IEP meetings include certain required participants (state law)	Met	Met, could improve	Met	Met
25	Conduct visual and auditory acuity screenings for students in grades K-3, 5 and 7 (state law)	Met, could improve	N/A	Met	Met
All students (state law)					
26	Post a complaint process on the school website	Met	Met	Met	Met

Source: Washington State Auditor assessment of charter school processes and documentation.

Key to Exhibit 9

Phrase and requirement	Key to table
Met requirement: School demonstrated compliance and has processes in place to ensure the requirement is met	Met
Met but could improve: School demonstrated compliance but its processes may not sufficiently ensure the requirement is met	Met, could improve
Partially met requirement: School demonstrated partial compliance, or could not sufficiently demonstrate compliance with the full requirement	Partially met
Requirement not met: School did not meet the requirement or could not sufficiently demonstrate compliance	Not met
Requirement not applicable: School is not subject to this requirement	N/A

The subsequent detailed exhibits in this chapter explain our assessments of how the selected schools met the requirements and summarize our assessments for each of the selected requirements. The selected requirements help schools identify and serve students who are struggling. Each school has met or partially met the requirements, while in many areas, schools have met but could nonetheless improve their processes to ensure specific requirements continue to be met in the future.

English Language Learners: Schools mostly met requirements, but some lacked required plans

Students who speak a language other than English at home may require additional support to learn in classrooms with students whose first language is English. State laws and rules require schools to take steps to identify and address student gaps in acquiring English, including:

- Collect information on families' preferred language
- Assess students to determine need for specialized language support
- Provide additional educational support to help students achieve English competency
- Designate a primary point of contact for language access needs and develop a plan to ensure these needs are met (only applies to schools that meet certain student population thresholds)

These requirements ensure that English language learners' home language is identified and their families receive communication and interpretation in a language they understand. Additionally, these requirements ensure teachers are trained to provide specialized student support.

This report uses 'English language learners' to refer to students whose first language is not English and who thus need additional support to successfully engage with instruction in English. Schools and other educational organizations sometimes refer to these students as "multilanguage learners" or "multilingual learners" to highlight the strength of speaking multiple languages.

Schools met requirements to identify each family's preferred home language

Identifying families' preferred language is an important first step to ensuring they can engage in their children's education. It also helps schools identify students who need additional English language support. All four schools used home language questions to identify families' preferred language for receiving important school notices. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) requires schools to ask all parents a set of questions about the language their child first learned to speak and the language used most at home. **Exhibit 10** (on the following page) shows assessment results for this requirement.

Exhibit 10 – English language learners (ELL) requirement

	Catalyst	Innovation	Pinnacles	Rainier Prep
Collect information on the language families prefer to communicate in (state law)	Met	Met	Met	Met

Each school included these questions in their enrollment documents for new students and used various methods to ensure the survey questions are answered. For example, Rainier Prep's electronic enrollment system prevents parents from submitting the enrollment application until they answer these questions. Catalyst Public Schools allows parents to complete the survey electronically or on a paper form; staff said if the information is missing, they will call the parents until all forms are completed.

Schools assessed student eligibility for ELL programs as required; one school has room for improvement

Schools must screen students to identify those eligible for ELL programs. This is the first step toward ensuring these students develop the language skills needed to access core educational content and fully participate in the classroom. All schools met this requirement, although Innovation High School could improve its documented procedures for the screening process. **Exhibit 11** shows assessment results for this requirement.

Exhibit 11 – English language learners (ELL) requirement

	Catalyst	Innovation	Pinnacles	Rainier Prep
Assess student eligibility for English language learner programs (state law)	Met	Met, could improve	Met	Met

Each school had practices in place to assess newly enrolled English language learners' needs and provide them with proper English language support. All schools used the home language survey to identify students who may need this support. Three had processes to ensure staff assess students consistently such as detailed written procedures. However, Innovation High School lacked detailed written procedures for assessing student eligibility.

Schools met ELL requirements; one had an underdeveloped program plan

Programs for English language learners honor and preserve their primary languages while also helping them develop the necessary skills to perform as well as their peers. Washington schools are required to provide such programs that help English language learners achieve competency in English. Schools must also ensure that teachers and other staff receive appropriate training.

We reviewed the selected charter schools' program plans but did not evaluate their effectiveness. We also determined if the schools ensured staff received appropriate training. **Exhibit 12** shows assessment results for this requirement.

Exhibit 12 – English language learners (ELL) requirement

	Catalyst	Innovation	Pinnacles	Rainier Prep
Provide instruction to achieve competency in English, including appropriate staff training and student assessment (state law)	Met	Met, could improve	Met	Met

All schools offered programs for English language learners, although one school did not have any qualifying students and its program plan was underdeveloped. They all provided programs that include English language learners in general education classrooms with support from a teacher or paraeducator. Although Innovation High School had no English language learners enrolled, it had a high-level plan to help students who might enroll achieve English proficiency.

For the three schools with English language learners enrolled, we found systems in place to ensure educators had appropriate training and certifications. Catalyst Public Schools provided examples of trainings to help teachers support these students in mainstream classroom environments. We also verified the multilingual teaching certifications for teachers at Pinnacles Prep and Rainier Prep.

An essential step in evaluating how best to help an English language learner is for the student to take an English language proficiency test. OSPI has approved only one test, provided by an external organization, to evaluate progress for students in ELL programs. Staff at two audited schools said test results sometimes do not arrive until well into the new school year, delaying their planning for student support and placements. Officials at one school said they have had to conduct their own internal language proficiency assessments so they can plan properly for these students' education.

Rainier Prep and Pinnacles Prep did not fully meet new language access requirements, which were not applicable to the other two schools

Washington's language access requirements are intended to promote culturally responsive family engagement. This includes embedding effective language support and two-way communication in the design of school programs and services. Specifically, a law passed in 2022 requires a designated language access liaison to facilitate compliance with family engagement laws, and a language access plan to guide the school's program. The language access plan must address how the school identifies language access needs, allocates resources, establishes standards for providing services, and monitors program effectiveness. These requirements do not apply to schools whose student populations are fewer than 1,000 and with less than 10% English language learners. Two audited schools did not meet these thresholds

and thus did not have to meet the requirements. The other two schools partially met these requirements. **Exhibit 13** shows assessment results for this requirement.

Exhibit 13 – English language learners (ELL) requirement

	Catalyst	Innovation	Pinnacles	Rainier Prep
Designate a Language Access Liaison and implement a Language Access Plan (unless fewer than 1,000 students and less than 10% English learner enrollment) (state law)	N/A	N/A	Partially	Partially

Although both schools had designated language access liaisons, neither had formally documented plans that fully met state requirements. Pinnacles Prep lacked a formal plan during the audit period, but the executive director said the school is developing a formal plan and guidance document. Rainier Prep's formal plan did not include information about resource allocation or how it would monitor program effectiveness. During the audit, the school updated its language access plan to include a reference to its budget for language access resource allocation. School leaders also said they followed what guidance they could obtain from OSPI; when we looked at OSPI's website, we did not find information on how to put together a plan that would meet all elements of the law.

That said, both had practices in place that appeared to meet or exceed the requirements for language access plans even though they were not expressed in a formal plan. For example, Pinnacles staff said they used a variety of in-person, manual and electronic means to translate school information into families' home languages. Staff identify language access needs through enrollment. They also hold subsequent meetings with students and their families, including one early in the school year to establish good connections with families, which can further address language needs.

Homelessness: Schools had practices to serve homeless students, with two providing detailed information on available services

Students lacking stable housing face significant obstacles to completing their education. Federal and state laws contain requirements intended to lessen the burdens on homeless students by:

- Allowing students to remain enrolled in their current school despite moving
- Ensuring students have access to transportation regardless of living locations
- Requiring schools to coordinate to provide basic services offered by local supportive agencies

All four schools had practices in place to meet these requirements. Schools generally used a housing questionnaire during enrollment to identify students who might face problems related to homelessness. Staff also provided examples of following up through additional meetings with specific homeless students to better understand and address their needs. Three schools each had fewer than 15 homeless students actively enrolled during the audit period, and the fourth school had none. We met with homeless student liaisons at each school and discussed the practices in place to ensure compliance with these requirements. Liaisons demonstrated the practices in place using records from student files. Catalyst Public Schools, which did not identify any enrolled homeless students during the 2024-25 school year, shared written policies and discussed how they would serve any future homeless students.

All schools had processes to support homeless students’ choice to stay at their original school if they moved away

Homeless students’ education can be disrupted if frequent moves to find shelter take them across the geographic boundaries of traditional public schools. Federal law protects homeless students’ ability to remain at their original school – also known as their school of origin – even if their often-fluctuating living location moves across school boundaries. The school of origin must provide transportation for students who choose to stay at the school, even if they now live outside the school’s standard transportation routes. **Exhibit 14** shows assessment results for this requirement.

Exhibit 14 – Homeless students requirement

	Catalyst	Innovation	Pinnacles	Rainier Prep
Ensure homeless students can remain in their school of origin (federal law)	Met	Met	Met	Met

All schools had policies describing how to work with families to ensure students can remain enrolled at their school, regardless of where the family finds housing. As examples of the policies in action, officials at Pinnacles Prep described a conversation in which staff reassured a family that wherever they found housing, their child could remain enrolled at Pinnacles. Rainier Prep officials said they evaluate school-of-origin decisions on a case-by-case basis through conversations with families. Finally, staff at Innovation High School used a list of current and previously enrolled homeless students to demonstrate how they document and stay up to date on changes in each student’s situation or address.

Schools ensured students received transportation, but only one had well-documented procedures

Schools must ensure homeless students receive transportation to and from school no matter where they find housing. These requirements help ensure homeless students receive services comparable to services offered to other students in the

school. This requirement is closely related to the school-of-origin requirement at Exhibit 14. Exhibit 15 shows assessment results for this requirement.

Exhibit 15 – Homeless students requirement

	Catalyst	Innovation	Pinnacles	Rainier Prep
Ensure homeless students' right to transportation (federal law)	Met, could improve	Met, could improve	Met, could improve	Met

Schools used several different forms of transportation to meet the needs of all students, including homeless students. For example, staff at Catalyst Public Schools said they used a flexible school bus route to pick up a student who was moving from hotel to hotel each day to assure consistent attendance. Rainier Prep and Innovation High School used student-specific rideshare apps to help transport homeless students when normal school bus routes could not be worked out.

All schools had activities in place to devise transportation solutions for students facing homelessness. School officials said they keep flexibility in mind to respond to homeless students' transportation needs. For example, Pinnacles Prep staff said they adjusted bus routes to accommodate as many students as possible, then use the school van and public bus routes as necessary to pick up any remaining students.

All schools had general procedures in place stating homeless students will be provided transportation regardless of their location, but only one had more detailed procedures to help guide staff. Rainier Prep had a school-specific checklist with a timeline detailing necessary actions to build the student transportation plan. For example, the checklist includes steps to coordinate with transportation vendors once the school calendar is set, plan bus routes with the homeless student liaison, and confirm transportation with families before school starts.

All schools could improve their written staff guidance to help connect homeless students with community services

Homeless students often need help obtaining basic services such as food and clothing in addition to shelter. To help ensure all students have their basic needs met, schools must help homeless students obtain support from local community services providers. Exhibit 16 shows assessment results for this requirement.

Exhibit 16 – Homeless students requirement

	Catalyst	Innovation	Pinnacles	Rainier Prep
Coordinate with local service agencies to support homeless students (federal law)	Met, could improve	Met, could improve	Met, could improve	Met, could improve

Each school had policies stating staff must work with local agencies on behalf of homeless students and their families. However, all schools lacked documented procedures to guide staff. Having written guidance assures consistent practices are followed despite staff turnover.

Schools had processes in place to connect homeless students and their families with resources, even though their written policies lacked some details. For example, the counselor at Innovation High School described the creative ways staff help homeless students by connecting them with a more appropriate school program, offering detailed lists of social services in the area, and providing clothing at the school for anyone who might need it.

School officials at Pinnacles Prep and Rainier Prep used spreadsheets to track the services requested and provided to homeless students. We could not verify practices at Catalyst simply because no homeless students were enrolled during our audit period.

Promising Practice

Families are better equipped to access the help they need when given detailed service guides. Innovation High School's local service guide provides a level of detail that would help anyone seeking assistance. This robust guide categorizes organizations by need, including contact information and hours of operations. An excerpt of the 2024-25 guide is available in **Appendix C**.

Innovation High School provides gently used and new clothing for any student who might need it.



Credit: Auditor photograph.

Special Education: Schools generally met requirements to help identify and support these students

Students who receive special education services are entitled to individualized instruction that meets their needs. A related service, screening for vision and hearing impairments in young students, is essential for early identification of problems and timely support. Ensuring individualized instruction and early treatment of learning, speech and social development delays can significantly increase the likelihood students will succeed in school. State and federal laws define actions schools must take to ensure these students have appropriate support. Under these regulations schools must ensure that:

- Families are informed and give consent before the school evaluates students for special education
- Specific and important components, such as measurable goals, are included in all Individualized Education Plans (IEP) to provide a transparent and effective process
- Annual meetings are held to discuss student goals, progress and adjustments to educational approaches

- Important participants such as family and school specialists working with students are invited to attend annual IEP meetings
- Students are screened for visual and hearing impairment multiple times before reaching high school

Schools met all IEP-related requirements, but two schools lacked documented procedures for at least one

The IEP is an essential tool schools use to establish, track and adjust educational approaches for students who need additional support. The four IEP-related requirements we reviewed ensure these plans are effective, communicated transparently and conducted with consent from students and their families. Exhibit 17 shows assessment results for this requirement.

Exhibit 17 – Special education students requirements

	Catalyst	Innovation	Pinnacles	Rainier Prep
Ensure families are notified before conducting a special education evaluation (federal and state law)	Met	Met, could improve	Met, could improve	Met
Student IEP must include certain required elements (federal law)	Met	Met, could improve	Met	Met
Conduct annual IEP meetings (federal and state law)	Met	Met, could improve	Met	Met
Ensure that IEP meetings include certain required participants (state law)	Met	Met, could improve	Met	Met

Because the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) performs periodic reviews of school's IEP files to evaluate whether schools are meeting IEP requirements, we only examined the processes schools had in place to ensure they met each requirement and reviewed student IEP files for evidence they did so. All audited schools met the requirements but two could improve their procedures to promote future reliability.

- **Provide notice and obtain written consent before performing student special education evaluations.** Some schools used prompts in their IEP software systems to remind case managers to obtain parental consent before evaluating students. Others had documented procedures that make the special education coordinator responsible for meeting this requirement. Schools provided proof of parental consent in student IEP records.
- **Ensure required components are included in IEPs.** At Pinnacles Prep and Rainier Prep, special education coordinators met weekly with case managers to review student IEP information and ensure all required information is included and up to date. Required components were retained in each student's file, for example the measurable goals with descriptions of progress on each goal.

- **Hold annual IEP meetings as required.** Teachers and staff at Catalyst Public Schools used a shared calendar covering the whole year to schedule annual IEP meetings. Pinnacles Prep used a combination of a tracking spreadsheet and meetings between the special education coordinator and case managers to schedule and prepare for upcoming annual IEP meetings.
- **Ensure required participants are invited to IEP meetings.** As they do for the annual IEP meeting requirement, special education coordinators at Pinnacles Prep and Rainier Prep ensure the school notified all required meeting participants by reviewing the list of participants during weekly case manager check-ins. At Innovation High School, the special education director invited required participants to IEP meetings. All schools retained documentation of annual IEP meetings and sign-in sheets that showed required attendees were invited and attended.

Promising Practice

Catalyst Public Schools developed detailed, documented guidance to help its staff carry out IEP processes. This guidance is written so that anyone can follow it and carry out expected actions. For example, it described specific steps for who to invite to IEP meetings and when to send meeting invitations. It also included links to additional guidance and examples. The level of detail in this guidance helps reduce confusion and ensure consistency even if there is staff turnover.

Two schools could provide greater assurance that they meet these requirements by improving their guidance for staff. Pinnacles Prep lacked written procedures to ensure staff obtained parental consent before conducting student special education evaluations. The director of special education at Innovation High School used tools such as a tracking spreadsheet and a checklist to ensure IEP compliance. However, the school lacked systematic policies that could stand alone to ensure continuity should there be any staff turnover.

Schools met visual and auditory screening requirements, but one could improve by documenting procedures

Vision and hearing screenings for students are important as early detection helps prevent delays in learning, speech, social development and overall success in school. Schools are required to screen students annually in grades K-3, and then in grades 5 and 7. Innovation High School is exempt from this requirement because it only serves students in grades 9-12. **Exhibit 18** shows assessment results for this requirement.

Exhibit 18 – Special education students requirement

	Catalyst	Innovation	Pinnacles	Rainier Prep
Conduct visual and auditory acuity screenings for students in grades K-3, 5 and 7 (state law)	Met, could improve	N/A	Met	Met

Schools used similar processes to meet these requirements, although one could improve by developing written procedures to maintain consistency no matter who leads the process. For example, at Pinnacles Prep, the local Educational Service

District helped the school nurse conduct the required screenings. The nurse also coordinated screenings with another school administrator, who reviews a spreadsheet of all eligible children to double-check none were missed. Catalyst Public Schools used a similar process for its screenings but lacked the detailed documentation that would deliver year-on-year consistency.

General requirement: All schools posted an online complaint process for students and families

Legislation passed in 2023 required all charter schools to prominently post information on their websites regarding the complaint process. The information must explain how to file complaints, how the school will review and resolve the complaint, and how to file a separate complaint with the appropriate charter school authorizer. By doing so, families have a mechanism to complain if they think their at-risk student is not being properly served. **Exhibit 19** shows assessment results for this requirement.

Exhibit 19 – All students requirement

	Catalyst	Innovation	Pinnacles	Rainier Prep
Post a complaint process on the school website (state law)	Met	Met	Met	Met

All four schools placed easy-to-find links on their websites that led to a web page explaining the complaint process. For example, Pinnacles included the link to its complaint process in a prominent list of links on its website home page. The web page for the complaint process included a two-page document describing the steps to follow to file complaints and what parents can expect during the process. Although Innovation High School did not have a complaint process posted when audit work began, it did so during the audit.

Both charter school authorizers give families at their charter schools a way to escalate complaints. Although the law only requires the Charter School Commission to maintain a complaint system of its own, the charter school director at Spokane Public Schools said it typically emulates the commission's practices. Spokane Public Schools notified its authorized charter schools about this requirement during the audit.

The charter schools use many leading practices, including some particularly promising approaches other schools may find valuable

Results in brief

All four charter schools used many leading practices to identify and serve at-risk students. Their purposes range from achieving better data tracking and analysis to improving connections and communication with students and their families. The seven practices were drawn from both government and nonprofit research organizations.

Practice 1: Provide opportunities for effective small group learning settings.

All four schools provided opportunities for effective small group learning settings.

Practice 2: Offer extended learning opportunities outside regular school hours.

Three schools offered extended learning opportunities outside regular school hours.

Practice 3: Promote a culturally responsive learning environment.

All four schools promoted a culturally responsive learning environment.

Practice 4: Effectively communicate and engage with parents and families.

All four effectively communicated and engaged with parents and families, but one may benefit from strengthening engagement with non-English-speaking families.

Practice 5: Use early warning data indicators to help identify and serve at-risk students.

All four used early warning indicators to help identify and serve at-risk students, but two could improve their processes.

Practice 6: Promote collaboration between general education and specialist teachers.

All four promoted collaboration between general education teachers and specialists.

Practice 7: Implement multi-tiered system of supports.

All four partially implemented a multi-tiered system of supports.

In addition, we asked parents and students at three of the four audited charter schools for their perspectives on the effect the schools' practices had on supporting their children and other at-risk students. While their comments are not representative of all families' experiences at these schools, they described many and varied positive experiences. Some of the supports they mentioned might also be translated to the wider public school system.

All four charter schools used many leading practices to identify and serve at-risk students

Effectively identifying and serving at-risk students requires more than following legal requirements. Researchers have proposed many evidence-based practices that schools can employ to better identify and serve at-risk students. These leading practices come from both government and nonprofit education organizations including the U.S. Department of Education and the National Center for Learning Disabilities. (See the Bibliography for a full list of our sources.)

We identified seven leading practices designed to help school staff identify and serve students who are struggling in school. **Exhibit 20** summarizes the leading practices we used as our criteria and the assessment results for each audited school.

Exhibit 20 – Adoption of leading practices summary

Page	Leading practice	Catalyst	Innovation	Pinnacles	Rainier Prep
29	1. Provide opportunities for effective small group learning settings	Adopted	Adopted	Adopted	Adopted
31	2. Offer extended learning opportunities outside regular school hours	Adopted	Not used	Adopted	Adopted
32	3. Promote a culturally responsive learning environment	Adopted	Adopted	Adopted	Adopted
34	4. Effectively communicate and engage with parents and families	Adopted	Met, could improve	Adopted	Adopted
36	5. Use early warning data indicators to help identify and serve at-risk students	Partially	Partially	Adopted	Adopted
38	6. Promote collaboration between general education and specialist teachers	Adopted	Adopted	Adopted	Adopted
39	7. Implement a model of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), with emphasis on evaluating across data sources and monitoring for continuous improvement	Partially	Partially	Partially	Partially

Source: Auditor assessment of charter school processes and documentation.

Key to Exhibit 20

Phrase and requirement	Key to table
Met leading practice: School has adopted the leading practice and has processes in place to provide clear guidance to staff	Adopted
Met but could improve: School has adopted the leading practice but lacks clear guidance for staff	Met, could improve
Partially met leading practice: School has adopted some elements of the leading practice but not all, or could not sufficiently demonstrate adoption of all elements	Partially
Leading practice not used: School has not adopted the leading practice, or could not sufficiently demonstrate adoption	Not used

Some practices are related and more effective when applied in conjunction with others. For example, extended learning time (#2 in the exhibit) can afford room in the school's schedule to provide small group learning (#1), while effective communication with families (#4) involves being responsive (#3) to their culture and heritage. Further, employing a robust multi-tiered system of support (#7) is closely associated with tracking data indicators (#5) and teacher collaboration (#6). More information about each practice follows the exhibit.

Each school adopted the leading practices to a different degree and in accordance with its own purposes, driven in large part because each has its unique combination of focus areas and serves different populations. For example, Catalyst enrolls students from kindergarten through high school and focuses on diversity, equity and inclusion activities paired with rigorous academics. Rainier Prep serves fifth through eighth graders and focuses on preparing students for college success and career exploration. Examples set out below each practice illustrate how each school applies leading practices. In some cases, we observed teachers and staff putting the practice into action during visits to audited schools. We also asked schools to show us the procedures or other documented guidance they use to make sure staff carry out activities consistently. In addition, we held focus group conversations with families at three of the four schools; their remarks appear throughout this chapter and also in a section on this chapter's final page.

1. Provide opportunities for effective small group learning settings

Teaching in small groups allows instructors to guide students on individual goals. EdResearch for Action, an education research partnership between the Annenberg Institute at Brown University and Results for America, promotes small group instruction as an avenue to tailor instruction to each student's skill and ability. Teachers can better respond to individual student needs with fewer students in the group. Small group instruction can take place in general education settings, by pulling students out of classes for separate instruction or in dedicated time specifically for small group work. **Exhibit 21** shows assessment results for this leading practice.

Exhibit 21 – Leading practice #1

	Catalyst	Innovation	Pinnacles	Rainier Prep
Provide opportunities for effective small group learning settings	Adopted	Adopted	Adopted	Adopted

All four schools supported students with small group learning opportunities.

- **Catalyst Public Schools assigns two teachers to each class to deliver small group instruction and provide additional instruction to students who need it.** We observed a whole class working on writing assignments, with students who needed some extra help seated together at one table. Catalyst also uses structured learning time in study hall-style periods where teachers provide additional small group instruction. One teacher said that the emphasis on small groups was one reason for choosing to teach at Catalyst: the small groups offer greater flexibility for teachers to adapt curriculum to student needs.
- **Innovation High School provides extra help to students who need it in smaller, separate core classes.** The school schedules separate math, science and English language arts classes especially designed for students who need help in these core areas. These classes bring together small groups of students who have similar skills and needs. An administrator said that in the most recent school year, Innovation scheduled two small group classes for students with greater needs.
- **Pinnacles Prep schedules small-group teaching time, allowing instructors to focus on individual student learning goals.** This school sets aside structured time four days a week to help students focus on individual goals whether they are behind in their work or ahead. School administrators use student goals and classroom testing data to assign students to these groups so those with similar needs work together. We observed one such period and saw that students sitting in different groups received different levels of support from teachers. For example, one child was practicing reading out loud to a teacher while others worked together on a project.
- **Rainier Prep targets the specific needs of its students through small group instruction as well as one-on-one support.** Four days a week, Rainier Prep schedules structured time periods for reading and math, with students assigned based on testing and teacher observation. Similar to Catalyst, Rainier Prep assigns two teachers to its math and English language arts classes to facilitate this approach. An education specialist with the school said that the reading time serves all students, including students in special education and those working to acquire greater English proficiency.

Promising Practice

Scheduling instructional time that does not increase schoolwork but provides more support for existing schoolwork gives students access to expertise that can help them meet their academic goals.

Three of the schools – Catalyst Public Schools, Pinnacles Prep and Rainier Prep – provide structured periods to help students with individual learning goals.

2. Offer extended learning opportunities outside regular school hours

OSPI has established a minimum number of instructional hours every public school must provide in the regular school week; for the 2024-25 school year, this was 27 hours and 45 minutes a week. Additional learning time beyond what is required lets schools offer more support to students during individual schoolwork. EdResearch for Action says that providing extended learning time when students can receive additional help on foundational skills increases student success. Extending the school day can make the previous leading practice of small group instruction possible. **Exhibit 22** shows assessment results for this leading practice.

Exhibit 22 – Leading practice #2

	Catalyst	Innovation	Pinnacles	Rainier Prep
Offer extended learning opportunities outside regular school hours	Adopted	Not used	Adopted	Adopted

Three of the schools schedule longer-than-required school days.

- **Catalyst Public Schools schedules an extra period four times a week to allow additional learning opportunities for students.** The school week includes four and a half more hours of instruction than the minimum required by state rule. The extra period accommodates structured time when students can work toward their academic goals with teacher support.
- **Pinnacles Prep also schedules more hours each week to accommodate focused learning opportunities.** It provides six hours a week more than the state minimum. This makes it possible for students to focus on individual academic goals with teacher support in small group settings.
- **Rainier Prep's extra hours allow for scheduled, extended math and reading time.** Its standard school week is more than five hours longer than neighboring middle schools. The additional time allows for structured small group sessions in core subjects tailored to each student's needs.

Innovation High School has not added hours to its school day. Administrators said they surveyed families and learned they opposed extending the school day, especially since the school already offers extracurricular activities that extend the time students are on campus.

3. Promote a culturally responsive learning environment

Schools that provide students with culturally responsive environments promote a greater sense of belonging. Culturally responsive education “responds to, incorporates, and celebrates students’ cultural references – engaging families as equal partners,” according to the National Center for Learning Disabilities. Doing so engages students and makes it more likely they can see themselves and their own stories in what they are learning, fostering a sense of belonging at school and in their community. **Exhibit 23** shows assessment results for this leading practice.

Exhibit 23 – Leading practice #3

	Catalyst	Innovation	Pinnacles	Rainier Prep
Promote a culturally responsive learning environment	Adopted	Adopted	Adopted	Adopted

All four schools had practices to provide culturally responsive environments.

Catalyst Public Schools placed welcoming messages in students' languages around the building.



Credit: Auditor photograph.

- **Catalyst Public Schools provides culturally responsive teaching that reflects diverse perspectives.** A school administrator said Catalyst designed its language arts curriculum to offer students multiple perspectives from different cultures. Teachers and staff receive training on the importance of including multiple viewpoints in school and classroom environments. For example, the training material includes an essay about the importance of reading literature from different perspectives to ensure students see that other cultures have many facets. Art displays around the school also highlight different cultures and languages.

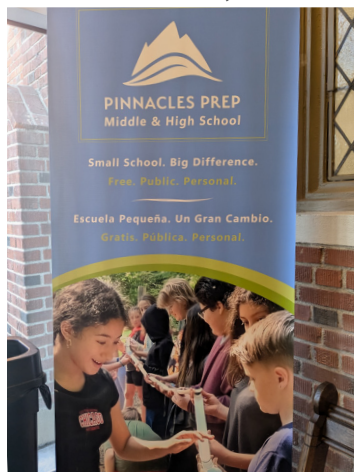
- **Innovation High School surveyed students to gather their perspectives on whether the learning environment was culturally relevant.** Questions included understanding if students felt their culture and identity were evident in the class environment and considered in class procedures. Teachers then responded to survey results by meeting to develop next steps. Innovation also sent several teachers to a training that included content on how to be responsive to all cultures.

Innovation High School asked student artists to create a collage of faces.



Credit: Auditor photograph.

Pinnacles Prep acknowledged its bilingual students, their families and their community.



Credit: Auditor photograph.

- **Pinnacles Prep reflects the bilingual culture of its community.** Because it is located in a neighborhood with many Spanish speakers, the school uses an educational technique that draws on local history and explorations of local cultures known as “place-based education.” For example, students took a field trip to a camp near Lake Wenatchee to learn how to weave traditional pine baskets from a local tribal member. Teachers are trained to be culturally responsive. A teacher workshop emphasized student-centered classrooms where students have a voice in their education and can build social awareness. In addition, the school displays bilingual flyers throughout the building along with art that highlights the neighborhood’s diverse cultures and backgrounds.

- **Rainier Prep chose its location to serve that neighborhood’s diverse community.** Administrators said they seek teachers that use culturally responsive lesson plans when hiring. The school continues to promote a culturally responsive environment through ongoing teacher training that includes topics such as restorative justice and anti-racist practices. Rainier Prep also sponsors cultural events at the school and engages community members to provide their cultural expertise. Finally, the school building displays signs written in the many languages spoken by students and their families, and posters highlighting leaders from diverse backgrounds.

Rainier Prep celebrated leaders from many communities and cultures during Women's History Month.



Credit: Auditor photograph.

Promising Practice

Rainier Prep fosters a shared sense of belonging at the school even though its students come from many different cultures. Staff organize cultural heritage months so students can celebrate their experiences with their classmates. These celebrations might help start wider community conversations that might not otherwise happen.

4. Effectively communicate and engage with parents and families

When school staff engage effectively with students and their families, student success increases, according to multiple education research groups including the Regional Educational Laboratories. Communication is most effective and productive when staff use a family's preferred language, allowing parents to actively contribute to their child's education. The goal is to develop a relationship and build trust between the family and the school, increasing the likelihood the family will tell administrators and teachers about any issues at home that could affect their child's schooling, such as facing housing instability. Effective communication is thus essential for identifying students who could use the services available at a charter school, even before enrollment. **Exhibit 24** shows assessment results for this leading practice.

Exhibit 24 – Leading practice #4

	Catalyst	Innovation	Pinnacles	Rainier Prep
Effectively communicate and engage with parents and families	Adopted	Met, could improve	Adopted	Adopted

Three of the schools effectively communicate with parents and families; one school could strengthen this practice.

- Catalyst Public Schools prioritizes family engagement even before children enroll.** Using outreach materials in both English and Spanish allows the school to reach more families in the community. Families of enrolled students can also take advantage of translation features in the school's smartphone messaging app. Parents can select their preferred language and receive all school announcements already translated, ensuring no one misses important news. One family also mentioned that the teachers are great at communicating by email.
- Pinnacles Prep emphasizes student and family connection through its mentoring program.** Students and their families are each assigned to a mentor at the school who is either a teacher or a staff member. Every school year begins with a meeting between mentors and families to establish their relationship from the start. Mentors check in with their students daily and with families multiple times throughout the year, and this ongoing communication allows the mentor to become one of the trusted adults in the student's life, offering a valuable channel for communication when the student might need additional support. Aside



Teachers are really good at communicating with parents. For example, I'll send them emails if I'm traveling so they know that's going on. They still communicate really well [with me] when that's going on.

*Catalyst Public Schools
focus group participant*



from the mentoring relationship, the school's multilingual front desk staff call families to invite them to school events. This personal connection likely increases family participation in events, making them more meaningful for students when they see their family has been included.

- **Rainier Prep begins each school year with family meetings to discuss their educational rights and resources.** Staff said these early meetings create a welcoming environment, establishing an ongoing relationship between teachers and families. The school also uses multiple methods to ensure families can communicate in their preferred language. Many front office staff are multilingual, allowing parents to call the school directly with their questions or concerns. Additionally, teachers and staff have access to translation and interpretation services for ongoing communication – including their weekly newsletter as well as family meetings and phone calls.

Innovation High School could improve family engagement by including materials in languages other than English. Innovation does not translate any of its recruitment or enrollment information into other languages, which might explain at least partially why it has not currently enrolled any English language learner students. Without translated materials, the school is less able to engage non-English-speaking families in the community sufficiently to identify potential students and those who would benefit from language services. For enrolled students, the school uses a smartphone app to communicate with families. School officials report that parent conferences are well attended. Nonetheless, the school may benefit from strengthening engagement with non-English-speaking families before their children attend the school.

Promising Practice

Pinnacles Prep's mentorship program gives students a trusted grown-up who connects with them daily and with their families periodically. One teacher said a benefit of being a mentor is that if one of her mentees is struggling in a class, the class teacher will let her know so she can connect with the student the same day and offer appropriate support.



The school has been really responsive with my oldest son in setting up and renewing his accommodation plan every year. We've been able to sit down with the plan and review that with teachers, and I get an opportunity to talk to the whole team, as well as his base camp teacher.

Pinnacles Prep focus group participant



5. Use early warning indicators to help identify and serve at-risk students

When school staff evaluate more than one risk indicator, they are more likely to quickly identify and monitor students who need help. The U.S. Department of Education has reported that many high schools nationwide use “early warning systems” that draw upon readily available student data. Teachers and administrators identify patterns of behavior that can help them diagnose the needs of at-risk students by evaluating such data points systematically.

Organizations including the National Center for Homeless Education recommend using student data indicators such as:

- Academic performance
- Attendance
- Behavior
- Discipline incidents
- Justice system or child welfare involvement
- Lack of personal space after school (such as concern for the safety of belongings or loss of supplies)
- Signs of poor health/nutrition

Exhibit 25 shows assessment results for this leading practice.

Exhibit 25 – Leading practice #5

	Catalyst	Innovation	Pinnacles	Rainier Prep
Use early warning data indicators to help identify and serve at-risk students	Partially	Partially	Adopted	Adopted

All four schools described using some data indicators from leading practices. Two were more comprehensive in the indicators they tracked and evaluated; two could improve their processes to better identify and serve their at-risk students.

- **Catalyst Public Schools tracks and documents academic indicators to identify and track student needs but not other recommended indicators.** Teachers who observe a student struggling in school can fill out a referral form that includes many indicators recommended by leading practices, including academic, social-emotional and physical health. Although the school principal described using indicators, including discipline and an internal behavior point system, only academic indicators were documented. An administrator said the school either did not have students who needed other indicators tracked, or the data was tracked in other programs, such as for students in special education.

- **Innovation High School tracks several early warning indicators through the school's smartphone app but could not show how those indicators are used.** Administrators said they track behavior, attendance and academic data through an app that teachers and staff can check throughout the day. This readily available data is meant to be referred to regularly so teachers can offer immediate help in response. However, the school did not demonstrate how it tracks this information to respond to student needs.
- **Pinnacles Prep uses most of the recommended indicators.** Teachers use an electronic referral form that includes indicators for academics, social-emotional needs and physical health. **Exhibit 26** illustrates the referral form's available indicators. The teacher selects which indicator is a concern or fills in a narrative if the indicators do not fully cover the problem. The referring teacher will 'tag' other relevant staff so they can add any further details. The information is automatically added to a tracking spreadsheet. Administrative teams can then review the information and take appropriate next steps.

Exhibit 26 – Checklist of possible indicators from Pinnacles Prep referral form

C. Other Factors?		
Physical Health (can consult w/ nurse)	Social / Emotional / Behavioral (can consult with: clinicians, BCBA, psychs)	Other Qs for Specialists difficulties with...
☐ HEADACHES ☐ EARACHES ☐ ASTHMA ☐ FATIGUE ☐ HYGIENE ☐ STOMACH COMPLAINTS ☐ OTHER:	☐ ANXIETY ☐ GRIEF ☐ SELF ESTEEM/ SELF WORTH ☐ APPEARS DEPRESSED, SAD, WITHDRAWN ☐ AVOIDANT BEHAVIORS ☐ DEFIANCE ☐ RUNNING AWAY ☐ SEXUALIZED BEHAVIOR ☐ DIFFICULTY W/ PEER INTERACTIONS ☐ ANGER MANAGEMENT (IRRITABLE, LOW FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE) ☐ EXPERIENCING BULLYING/TEASING/THREATENING ☐ AUTHORIZING BULLYING/TEASING/THREATENING ☐ CANNOT FOLLOW DIRECTIONS (SKILL DEFICIT) ☐ DOES NOT FOLLOW DIRECTIONS ("WILL" DEFICIT) ☐ OTHER:	☐ FINE MOTOR SKILLS ☐ GROSS MOTOR SKILLS ☐ HANDWRITING ☐ SENSORY PROCESSING ...ask an OT! ☐ UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE ☐ EXPRESSING SELF W/ LANGUAGE ☐ SPEECH /ARTICULATION ☐ FLUENCY (STUTTERING) ...ask a SLP! ☐ SHORT TERM MEMORY ☐ ORGANIZATION OF MATERIALS ☐ TIME MANAGEMENT ☐ MAINTAINING FOCUS ...ask a psych! ☐ OTHER:

Source: Pinnacles Prep.

- **Rainier Prep uses data indicators for academics, behavior and social-emotional well-being.** Teachers use an electronic referral form that presents a list of indicators for academic concerns and social-emotional needs if they have any concerns about a student's well-being. For example, they can mark how well a student can read or whether the student has difficulty considering consequences of their actions. The form has additional sections where teachers can add narrative regarding interventions they might have already tried in the classroom. Completed forms are automatically added to a schoolwide tracking spreadsheet. Administrators use this spreadsheet to identify at-risk students and to determine the best course of action.

6. Promote collaboration between general education teachers and specialists

Bringing together multiple perspectives on student needs means schools can more readily identify problems and support student learning. One important way to achieve this is through active collaboration between general education and specialist teachers, such as those supporting special education students and English language learners. EdResearch for Action says that ongoing collaboration between different educators improves teaching practices and equity for students. Collaboration also helps ensure all teachers implement student accommodations consistently and as intended. Without this collaboration, staff might not fully understand subtle trends in student performance likely to increase the risk that student needs or accommodations have been missed or addressed incorrectly. Exhibit 27 shows assessment results for this leading practice.

Exhibit 27 – Leading practice #6

	Catalyst	Innovation	Pinnacles	Rainier Prep
Promote collaboration between general education and specialist teachers	Adopted	Adopted	Adopted	Adopted

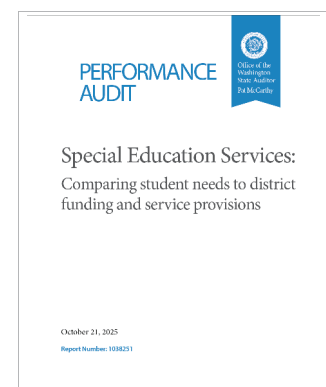
All schools promote collaboration between teachers to support at-risk students.

- **Catalyst Public Schools' teachers collaborate to provide accommodations for students.** The special education director said the school begins the year by reviewing students' needs. All teachers participate in grade-level team meetings to identify where students might face difficulty in upcoming lessons. An administrator also said the administrative team meets with the special education team every other week to ensure all special education IEP requirements are met.

- **Innovation High School’s teachers work together to identify and support students in their classes.** Both general and special education teachers attend biweekly meetings to discuss students’ needs. Meeting agendas showed input from both teachers and special education case managers. These regular meetings help ensure students receive all necessary accommodations and uncover any additional student needs.
- **Pinnacles Prep teachers regularly collaborate to support student needs.** Teachers and specialists meet weekly to review student data and decide if the school should adjust students’ accommodations. For example, meeting notes showed a teacher raised a concern about a student sleeping in class, and other teachers noted the student had been tired in their classes, too. Since sleepiness was a new behavior, teachers asked the student’s mentor to talk with the family to learn more before deciding on next steps. Collaboration among all teachers helps identify where a student is struggling – in this case, it was clearly affecting every class, indicating a broader concern.
- **Rainier Prep’s teacher collaboration is formalized through staff team meetings.** Meeting notes show that general education teachers and specialists (such as special education and English language teachers) discuss data indicators, potential interventions, how to coordinate lesson plans and any administrative issues on a weekly basis. They then coordinate their activities to support students appropriately. One teacher said the grade-level collaboration meetings are essential for helping students succeed because everyone working with them knows how their work aligns with their colleagues’ activities.

7. Implement a multi-tiered system of supports

A multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) brings together many practices to systematically address gaps in educational opportunity for students from all backgrounds. According to OSPI, it is “a framework for enhancing the adoption and implementation of a continuum of evidence-based practices to achieve important outcomes for every student.” This structured framework helps schools both identify and serve at-risk students. A recent performance audit report issued by the State Auditor’s Office, *Special Education Services: Comparing student needs to district funding and service provisions* (see the link in the sidebar), contains more information about MTSS and the state’s progress in implementing it.



Learn more about MTSS in this performance audit on our website <https://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch/Home/ViewReportFile?arn=1038251&isFunding=false&sp=false>

Schools that implement MTSS provide interventions across their whole student population. Interventions range from those universally applied to the benefit of all students, to individual and group interventions designed to address short-term or temporary needs, and finally to more intensive individual interventions that can include special education. MTSS encompasses many of the leading practices already identified in this report, including the use of data indicators and collaboration among general education and specialist teachers.

We specifically reviewed whether schools used the following MTSS elements:

- Intervention decisions are based on student data, reviewed by a team of professionals, and made with input from the student's family
- Schools have a system in place to evaluate how their MTSS process is working and make continuous improvements, as recommended by The Center on Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

Exhibit 28 shows assessment results for this leading practice.

Exhibit 28 – Leading practice #7

	Catalyst	Innovation	Pinnacles	Rainier Prep
Implement a model of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), with emphasis on evaluating across data sources and monitoring for continuous improvement	Partially	Partially	Partially	Partially

All schools described adopting components of a multi-tiered system of support, but none had yet used both elements of our criteria to the full extent set out in leading practices.

- **Catalyst Public Schools is running a pilot on adopting the MTSS model.** Catalyst's documented process guidance includes many of the recommended elements, such as team-driven, data-based, decision-making and family engagement. However, the pilot does not include a way to evaluate the system for continuous improvement. Teachers said MTSS has yet to be codified for use by all staff, and some teachers use forms they brought with them from other teaching jobs. One teacher mentioned that if staff do not follow up on a referral with an administrator, it might not be acted upon; this concern suggests Catalyst should continue to develop strong MTSS processes, such as developing a way for referrals to be electronically filled out and automatically added to a tracking spreadsheet.
- **Innovation High School is in its first year of MTSS implementation but did not demonstrate how it used all recommended elements.** Innovation staff are developing data practices to ensure they have the infrastructure to capture and evaluate data consistently and accurately. As described in the data indicator section, staff capture and review data in a smartphone app, but school officials did not provide documented procedures for MTSS activities or evidence of a process for continuous improvement.

- **Pinnacles Prep’s MTSS program has documented procedures that describe activities to support the full range of student needs.** A team made up of administrators and teachers meet weekly to discuss any teacher referral forms regarding concerns for specific students. An administrator described reviewing the school’s MTSS activities annually for the purpose of continuous improvement. However, the school had not completed the review for the 2024-25 school year at the time of the audit, and it was unable to provide documentation from previous years.
- **Rainier Prep uses its MTSS model and a schoolwide tracker for student data to identify at-risk students and monitor support interventions.** Teachers and specialists meet weekly to discuss at-risk students and track the progress of their interventions. End-of-year meeting notes show that a team of teachers, specialists and other staff reviewed the MTSS process to make improvements. The review could benefit from incorporating more elements directed at continuous improvement recommended by the Center on Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, for example: having procedures in place to monitor goals of the system and its effect on students, as well as the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the system.

Focus group participants shared positive experiences at the schools

We conducted small focus groups with parents and students at three of the four audited charter schools to gain their perspectives about the effect their schools’ practices had on supporting their children and other at-risk students. For the most part, families that chose to participate had children receiving special education or English language supports at Catalyst Public Schools, Pinnacles Prep or Rainier Prep. Their remarks represent their individual experiences and do not represent the views of all families at these schools.

One theme the families spoke to was the benefit of their schools’ inclusive environments on all students, not just at-risk students. For example, one Catalyst family described seeking a school that could serve both their children in general education classes even though one child needs significant support. The child with high support needs has been fully included in a general education setting by using a communication device and a one-on-one aide. The participant said they told the child’s aide at a recent IEP meeting, “you have literally changed this child’s life.” With the school’s support, this child has been able to experience the same programs as other students – some of which would otherwise have been very challenging, such as attending a field trip with their classmates.

Another inclusive element focus group participants highlighted was making low-intensity supports and accommodations available to all students. This practice, an element of “universal design,” identifies accommodations that help at-risk students but also benefit other students. For example, noise-canceling headphones and space for movement breaks that do not require teacher permission to use help with concentration and self-regulation. Families said these supports reduced stigma for students with special needs while benefitting all students.

Families also described the strong positive relationships they had with school staff and teachers. For example, a Rainier Prep student said that at first, he was nervous about the school’s high standards and expectations. He went on to explain that the teachers work closely and kindly to help struggling students meet those high expectations. Similarly, a parent and their child from Pinnacles Prep expressed appreciation for the level of patience the teachers display with their students.

A Catalyst participant described an uncommon but very accessible way students could ask for additional help. The school’s walls display posters with QR codes that lead to a Google form through which students can ask for help of any kind. The parent said that her child asked her to scan it for her and, as a result, received additional help from the resiliency coach at the school. This service also gives the school an additional method for identifying at-risk students.

Overall, these parents described many and varied positive experiences in how their schools supported their children. Some of these experiences might be translated to the wider public school system, such as the low-intensity supports that benefit all at-risk children and other students. The concerns they raised were more directly related to resource constraints that they believed stood in the way of even better services.



With the ‘walking dots’ in the back of the classroom, students can take body breaks and they’re not going to be singled out as the only one allowed to do that. It really helps destigmatize children who have autism or ADHD, but really all kids need movement breaks.

*Catalyst Public Schools
focus group participant*



State Auditor's Conclusions

This performance audit asked an important question, whether public charter schools in Washington met state requirements and adopted leading practices to identify and serve at-risk students. The answer is clearly positive, both for the school administrators who have implemented many leading practices in this area and for the families served by the schools we reviewed.

We considered seven leading practices to identify and serve at-risk students, such as offering extended learning opportunities outside regular school hours or providing opportunities for small group learning. All four schools we examined followed, to varying degrees, six leading practices, and three schools followed at least partially all seven of the leading practices.

When we spoke with families in focus groups, we heard that the schools appeared to communicate and connect well. One student reported that his teachers worked closely with students struggling to meet high expectations. In another example, a parent and child expressed appreciation for the level of patience the teachers display with their students.

As positive as these results are, it is always important to be transparent about the scope of our work. For this audit, we limited our focus to four of 17 charter schools in the state for the 2024-25 school year. We examined the processes in place to identify and serve at-risk students, but we did not conduct an analysis of the outcomes of those processes.

While this report is therefore not a close examination of all charter schools, it nonetheless offers examples of approaches that could serve at-risk students in Washington's charter schools and traditional schools alike.

Recommendations

For Catalyst Public Schools

To provide greater assurance that school processes will be carried out as intended, we recommend Catalyst Public Schools:

1. Develop more specific guidance, such as through documented procedures or desk manuals, for processes to meet requirements related to homeless student services and visual and auditory acuity screening (see pages 22-23)
2. Continue efforts to implement a full MTSS model, including developing specific guidance, such as through documented procedures or desk manuals, to help ensure consistent use by staff and a continuous improvement process, and developing a method to bring together student data from the MTSS referral form in one place where staff can more easily review and act on it (see pages 39-41)

For Innovation High School

To provide greater assurance that school processes will be carried out as intended, we recommend Innovation High School:

3. Develop more specific guidance, such as through documented procedures or desk manuals, for processes to meet requirements related to English language learners, homeless student services and special education services (see pages 18-19 and 21-25)
4. To ensure consistent staff understanding, document early warning indicators, and develop MTSS policies and procedures with monitoring and continuous improvement (see pages 36-38 and 39-41)

We also communicated other potential improvements related to translating website content and application materials with Innovation High School's management and those charged with governance in a letter dated September 16, 2025. Those improvements were not significant enough to include in our report but could still result in improvements for identifying and attracting potential English language learners.

For Pinnacles Prep

To provide greater assurance that school processes will be carried out as intended, we recommend Pinnacles Prep:

5. Develop more specific guidance, such as through documented procedures or desk manuals, for processes to meet requirements related to homeless student services (see pages 21-23)
6. Develop a documented language access plan, as required by RCW 28A.183.030 (see pages 19-20)
7. Develop more specific guidance, such as through documented procedures or desk manuals, for the process of reviewing the MTSS model for continuous improvement (see pages 39-41)

For Rainier Prep

To provide greater assurance that school processes will be carried out as intended, we recommend Rainier Prep:

8. Develop more specific guidance, such as through documented procedures or desk manuals, for processes to meet requirements related to homeless student services (see pages 21-23)
9. Develop a documented language access plan that contains all the elements required by required by RCW 28A.183.030 (see pages 19-20)
10. Develop more specific guidance, such as through documented procedures or desk manuals, for the process of reviewing the MTSS model for continuous improvement (see pages 39-41)

Agency Response

Note: All audited agencies are invited to send a formal response to the final draft of the audit report, to be incorporated in the published report.

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Performance Auditor
Office of the Washington State Auditor
PO Box 40031
Olympia WA 98504

November 5, 2025

To whom it may concern,

We agree with the conclusions drawn by the State Auditor's Office team. We have made adjustments to our practices in the following areas where the team found areas for potential improvement so that we can better serve our families and scholars :

- Vision and Hearing Screening
- Ensuring homeless students' right to transportation
- Coordinate with local service agencies to support homeless students

We thank you for the opportunity to examine our practices.

Sincerely,

Tatiana Epanchin,
Co-Founder

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**Innovation High School**

811 E Sprague Avenue
Spokane, WA 99202

Date: November 5th, 2025

To: Office of the Washington State Auditor

Subject: Response to Final Audit Report – *Evaluating How Charter Schools Identify and Support At-Risk Students*

Innovation High School acknowledges receipt of the **Final Performance Audit Report** and appreciates the thorough review and recommendations provided. We accept the report's findings and will take the following actions to strengthen our practices:

1. **Documented Procedures:**

We will develop written procedures and guidance to ensure consistent implementation of supports for English language learners, homeless students, and students receiving special education services.

2. **MTSS Enhancement:**

We will formalize our Multi-Tiered Systems of Support framework with clear monitoring processes, defined staff roles, and regular training to ensure consistency and accountability.

3. **Language Access:**

We will enhance accessibility of school information for non-English-speaking families through updated communication materials and website resources.

These actions will be addressed in the coming months, with implementation progress reviewed and monitored by school leadership to ensure sustainability.

We appreciate the State Auditor's Office for its guidance and collaboration as we continue strengthening systems that support equitable outcomes for all students.

Sincerely,

Sara Kennedy

Executive Director
Innovation High School



November 5, 2025

The Honorable Pat McCarthy
Washington State Auditor
P.O. Box 40021
Olympia, WA 98504-0031

Subject: Formal Response to State Auditor’s Report — *Evaluating How Charter Schools Identify and Support At-Risk Students (October 2025)*

Dear Auditor McCarthy:

Pinnacles Prep Charter School appreciates the opportunity to participate in the State Auditor’s Office performance audit, *Evaluating How Charter Schools Identify and Support At-Risk Students*. We value the thorough review conducted by your team and the recognition of the positive practices already in place to identify, engage, and support students who experience academic or economic barriers. We share the Office’s commitment to continuous improvement and transparency in serving all Washington scholars, particularly those most at risk.

Acknowledgment of Findings

We are pleased that the audit found Pinnacles Prep to be in full or substantial compliance with nearly all legal requirements related to the identification and support of at-risk students. Specifically, the report acknowledges that Pinnacles Prep: Meets state requirements for identifying and serving English language learners, homeless students, and students with disabilities; Implements six of seven leading practices and partially implements the seventh, demonstrating alignment with research-based strategies to support at-risk youth; Provides culturally responsive, small-group, and place-based learning experiences that foster equitable access and connection to our local Wenatchee Valley community; and maintains proactive communication systems with families and students that promote engagement and trust.

We are also grateful for the recognition of our promising practices, such as the structured small-group periods that support individual learning goals and our mentorship-based advisory model, which builds strong relationships among students, families, and staff.

Response to Areas for Improvement

The State Auditor’s findings identified two main areas where Pinnacles Prep can strengthen its documentation and formal procedures. We appreciate these insights and have taken or are taking the following actions:

Language Access Plan (RCW 28A.183.040): Pinnacles Prep had designated a Language Access Liaison but had not yet formalized its Language Access Plan. Pinnacles Prep completed and adopted a comprehensive Language Access Plan

Pinnacles Prep Charter School | 504 S. Chelan Ave, Wenatchee WA, 98801 | 509.888.6464



in October 2025. The plan includes protocols for identifying language needs, allocating resources, evaluating program effectiveness, and ensuring two-way communication with families. It is available in both English and Spanish on our website and included in our staff handbook.

Written Procedures for Special Education Evaluations: Pinnacles Prep met requirements but lacked written procedures to ensure parental consent prior to student evaluations. In September 2025, Pinnacles Prep formalized Special Education Evaluation and Consent Procedures to provide step-by-step guidance for staff, ensuring consistent adherence to state and federal requirements. These procedures are embedded in our special education handbook and cross-referenced with OSPI compliance monitoring standards.

Homeless Student Coordination: Pinnacles Prep met requirements but could improve written guidance for coordinating with service agencies. The school's McKinney-Vento Liaison has since developed a written Community Resource Protocol, which includes specific contacts, timelines, and referral pathways for local service agencies, including the Women's Resource Center, Chelan-Douglas Community Action Council, and local housing and food security partners. This protocol ensures that supports are consistent and well-documented across staff transitions.

Ongoing Commitment to At-Risk Youth

Pinnacles Prep's mission is to provide a rigorous, inclusive, and community-connected learning environment where every student—regardless of background—achieves at least one year of academic growth each year. We continue to build on the strengths noted in the audit by: Expanding our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to include more explicit progress-monitoring tools and cross-disciplinary data teams; Enhancing professional learning in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Culturally Responsive Teaching, aligned with the Washington State CCDEI standards; and strengthening partnerships with local agencies and families to ensure every scholar's social-emotional and academic needs are met through a coordinated, equitable approach.

We thank the State Auditor's Office for highlighting both our strengths and growth areas. Pinnacles Prep remains committed to upholding the highest standards of accountability, equity, and student-centered innovation. We believe that the audit findings affirm our progress toward building a model of public education that meets the needs of all students—especially those most at risk—and we welcome continued collaboration with OSPI, the Charter School Commission, and the broader state education community.

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Fineis
Chief Executive Officer



Choice, Challenge, and a Pathway to a College Degree

Rainier Prep
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klobos@rainierprep.org
206-494-5979 x703

November 5, 2025

The Honorable Pat McCarthy
Insurance Building, Capitol Campus
302 Sid Snyder Avenue SW
Olympia, WA 98504-0021

Re: Response to Performance Audit

Dear Auditor McCarthy,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and respond to the Evaluating How Charter Schools Identify and Support At-Risk Students Performance Audit on behalf of Rainier Prep. Rainier Prep proudly meets state requirements and implements leading practices to identify and serve at-risk students as defined by this performance audit: homeless students, English language learners and special education students. We appreciate the positive recognition as a result of this audit for both Rainier Prep and our fellow audited public charter schools.

Rainier Prep is proud to have "Met" all of the requirements for identifying and supporting students eligible for McKinney Vento services. Rainier Prep is faithfully implementing the Rainier Prep Board approved and WSSDA recommended policy (3115) and procedure (3115P) which ensures all students eligible for McKinney Vento services are appropriately identified and supported. Rainier Prep appreciates and will work on implementing the SAO's recommendation for Rainier Prep to "develop more specific guidance, such as through documented procedures or desk manuals, for processes to meet requirements related to homeless student services."

Rainier Prep is proud to have "Met" the majority of requirements for identifying and supporting English Language Learners and the SAO's recognition that Rainier Prep "had practices in place that appeared to meet or exceed the requirements." On one item, the SAO reports that Rainier Prep "Partially" met the requirement to "Designate a Language Access Liaison and implement a Language Access Plan (unless fewer than 1,000 students and less than 10% English learner enrollment)." Upon requesting further clarification from the SAO, Rainier Prep appreciates the additional guidance received detailing the specific elements required by RCW 28A.183.030 that Rainier Prep should add to the existing Language Access Plan. As OSPI releases formal guidance on implementing Language Access Plans to all Washington public schools, Rainier Prep will work to adopt all appropriate items.

RAINIER PREP

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Rainier Prep is proud to have "Met" all of the requirements for identifying and supporting students eligible for Special Education services. Above legal requirements, Rainier Prep is recognized for having adopted 6 of 7 leading practices. The SAO reports that Rainier Prep has "Partially" adopted the following leading practice: "Implement a model of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), with emphasis on evaluating across data sources and monitoring for continuous improvement." Rainier Prep will work on implementing the SAO's recommendation to "Develop more specific guidance, such as through documented procedures or desk manuals, for the process of reviewing the MTSS model for continuous improvement."

Please extend our sincere appreciation to members of your staff who worked on this performance audit. We appreciate their collaboration and the SAO's continued partnership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "KL", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Karen Lobos
Executive Director



Dear Auditor McCarthy and Audit Team,

On behalf of the Washington State Charter School Commission, thank you for your thoughtful and balanced examination of how charter public schools identify and support students described in statute as “at-risk,” which the commission deem not *as at-risk but as at-promise*. We deeply appreciate the care, professionalism, and transparency your office brought to this important review.

This audit affirms what families and communities across Washington already know, our state’s charter public schools are delivering on their promise to *educate, empower, and uplift* students who have historically been underserved. The schools highlighted, Catalyst Public Schools (Bremerton), Pinnacles Prep (Wenatchee), Rainier Prep (Seattle), and Innovation High School (Spokane), demonstrate that when autonomy is paired with accountability, innovation can thrive.

Their educators build classrooms where every learner is seen, supported, and celebrated. Small-group instruction, extended learning blocks, and culturally responsive classrooms are not remedial strategies, they are affirmations of belief in the limitless potential of every child.

As we celebrate these results, we must also confront a hard truth: *students who already face systemic barriers too often experience a second inequity when their charter public schools are not equitably funded*.

Charter schools receive no local levy dollars and lack dedicated facilities funding—yet they serve many of the same students whose peers in traditional public schools benefit from those resources. This double inequity, where those furthest from opportunity attend schools furthest from funding parity, undermines Washington’s collective commitment to fairness.

Equity cannot be conditional. The Commission remains steadfast in working with the Legislature, OSPI, and education partners to close this structural gap so that the promise of free, high-quality public education truly extends to every Washington family.

This report rightly reminds us that charter public schools are part of *one* free public education system. The practices identified, multi-tiered systems of support, data-driven early-warning tools, deep family partnerships, and culturally responsive instruction, are models that can and should strengthen learning across all schools in Washington.

The Commission's vision is to build bridges, not boundaries, connecting educators, communities, and policymakers around what works for students and families. We stand ready to collaborate with school districts, authorizers, and the State Board of Education to expand the reach of these promising practices so that success in one part of the system becomes progress for all.

The Commission welcomes the Auditor's recommendations on clearer documentation of school processes and policies. We will continue to refine systems that reinforce compliance, accountability, and transparency, while preserving the flexibility that allows educators to innovate in real time. We view this audit not as an endpoint, but as an invitation to deepen learning and partnership.

We extend our sincere gratitude to your office for shining a light on the dedication of our schools, the strength of our families, and the brilliance of our students. The Washington State Charter School Commission remains steadfast in our mission to ensure that every student, especially those furthest from opportunity, experiences belonging, excellence, and support.

In gratitude and partnership,

Marcus Harden

Marcus Harden-Executive Director



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November 5, 2025

Honorable Pat McCarthy
Washington State Auditor's Office
PO Box 40021
Olympia, WA 98504-0021

Dear Auditor McCarthy:

We appreciate the opportunity to review and respond to the State Auditor's Office Performance Audit on the *"Evaluating How Charter Schools Identify and Support At-Risk Students"* (Report).

As noted in the Report, seven leading practices to identify and serve at-risk students were examined with a focus on four of 17 charter schools in the state for the 2024-25 school year with positive results. Innovation High School, which opened in 2015 and served 235 students in 2024-25, met requirements with suggestions for improvements to strengthen documentation and/or process. As a Charter School Authorizer, the role of SPS is to ensure the charter schools comply with the charter contract, applicable requirements and evaluate and report on school performance. SPS will revise the monitoring process to focus on the areas for improvement in documentation and/or process identified in the report.

We appreciate the information provided in the Report and would like to thank the audit team. The team was helpful, professional, and provided a thorough overview of the audit process.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cindy Coleman".

Cindy Coleman
Chief Finance and Business Services Officer

cc: Kristin Whiteaker, Director Charter School Authorizing
Erich Hahn, Charter School Authorizing Accountant

DREAM ACCESS OPPORTUNITY

Appendix A: Initiative 900 and Auditing Standards

Initiative 900 requirements

Initiative 900, approved by Washington voters in 2005 and enacted into state law in 2006, authorized the State Auditor’s Office to conduct independent, comprehensive performance audits of state and local governments.

Specifically, the law directs the Auditor’s Office to “review and analyze the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of the policies, management, fiscal affairs, and operations of state and local governments, agencies, programs, and accounts.” Performance audits are to be conducted according to U.S. Government Accountability Office government auditing standards.

In addition, the law identifies 10 elements that are to be considered within the scope of each performance audit. The State Auditor’s Office evaluates the relevance of all 10 elements to each audit. The table below indicates which elements are addressed in the audit. Specific issues are discussed in the Results and Recommendations sections of this report.

I-900 element	Addressed in the audit
1. Identify cost savings	No.
2. Identify services that can be reduced or eliminated	No.
3. Identify programs or services that can be transferred to the private sector	No.
4. Analyze gaps or overlaps in programs or services and provide recommendations to correct them	No.
5. Assess feasibility of pooling information technology systems within the department	No.
6. Analyze departmental roles and functions, and provide recommendations to change or eliminate them	No.

I-900 element	Addressed in the audit
7. Provide recommendations for statutory or regulatory changes that may be necessary for the department to properly carry out its functions	No.
8. Analyze departmental performance data, performance measures and self-assessment systems	No.
9. Identify relevant best practices	Yes. The audit identified leading practices related to how schools can effectively identify and support at-risk students, and determined whether and how selected charter schools were using these practices.
10. Analyze the social equity impact of programs or services	Yes. The audit assessed how well select public charter schools served at-risk students, including English language learners, homeless and special education students.

Compliance with generally accepted government auditing standards

We conducted this performance audit under the authority of state law (RCW 43.09.470), approved as Initiative 900 by Washington voters in 2005, and in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards as published in *Government Auditing Standards* (July 2018 revision) issued by the U.S. Government Accountability Office. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

The mission of the Office of the Washington State Auditor

Our mission is to promote accountability and transparency in government. We work with state agencies, local governments and the public to achieve our vision of increasing public trust in government by helping governments work better and deliver higher value. The results of our work are widely distributed through a variety of reports, which are available on our website and through our free, electronic [subscription service](#). We take our role as partners in accountability seriously. We provide training and technical assistance to governments and have an extensive quality assurance program. For more information about the State Auditor's Office, visit www.sao.wa.gov.

Appendix B: Objectives, Scope and Methodology

Objectives

The purpose of this performance audit was to assess how well charter schools identify and serve at-risk students. The audit answered the following objectives:

1. To what extent do selected charter schools meet requirements and use leading practices to identify and support at-risk students?
2. Have the selected charter schools used any promising practices to identify and serve at-risk students that other schools could adopt?

For reporting purposes, the audit results have been organized into key findings. The messages relate to the original objective as follows:

- Audited charter schools met most selected legal requirements for identifying and supporting at-risk students (pages 15-26) – This finding addresses Objectives 1 and 2.
- The charter schools use many leading practices, including some particularly promising approaches other schools may find valuable (pages 27-42) – This finding addresses Objectives 1 and 2.

Scope

This audit examined how charter schools identify and support at-risk students. To answer our audit objectives, we selected four charter schools from around the state to audit, listed in the sidebar. The factors we considered in selecting these schools included geographic diversity, schools with large at-risk student populations, and schools authorized by both the Washington State Charter School Commission and Spokane Public Schools.

Our audit evaluated each school's compliance with relevant federal and state laws and regulations. It also reviewed how each school used leading practices to identify and support at-risk students. Additionally, we evaluated the sufficiency of internal controls each school had in place to ensure these practices took place (see internal controls section). The audit period was the 2024-25 school year.

However, our audit results are not representative of all Washington charter schools. The audit did not evaluate charter schools overall or the role of authorizers in helping schools identify and support at-risk students. The audit also did not evaluate student outcomes, as the State Board of Education and the schools'

Audited charter schools

- Catalyst Public Schools, Bremerton
- Innovation High School, Spokane
- Pinnacles Prep, Wenatchee
- Rainier Prep, Seattle

respective authorizers do this. Finally, the audit did not evaluate the effectiveness or sufficiency of oversight conducted by charter school authorizers.

Methodology

We obtained the evidence used to support the findings, conclusions, and recommendations in this audit report during our fieldwork period (January 2025 through June 2025), with some additional follow-up work afterward. We have summarized the work we performed to address each of the audit objectives in the following sections. The methods described below were used to address both audit objectives.

- Laws and regulations** — We reviewed federal and state regulations that applied to charter schools and identified which requirements related to identifying and supporting at-risk students. We then compared each school's policies and procedures to the requirements. Applicable laws and regulations referred to in Exhibit 9 on page 16 and elsewhere in the body of the report are identified below in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1 – State laws reviewed in this audit

Requirement from Exhibit 9	Applicable laws and regulations
Collect information on the language families prefer to communicate in	RCW 28A.183.050
Assess student eligibility for English language learner programs	RCW 28A.180.040
Provide instruction to achieve competency in English, including appropriate staff training and student assessment	RCW 28A.180.040
Designate a Language Access Liaison and implement a Language Access Plan	RCW 28A.183.040
Ensure homeless students can remain in their school of origin	42 USC Ch. 119, Sub-Ch. VI, Part B
Ensure homeless students' right to transportation	42 USC Ch. 119, Sub-Ch. VI, Part B
Coordinate with local service agencies to support homeless students	42 USC Ch. 119, Sub-Ch. VI, Part B
Ensure families are notified before conducting a special education evaluation	20 USC Ch. 1414 34 CFR 300.304 WAC 392-172A-03020
Student IEP must include certain required elements	20 USC Ch. 1414
Conduct annual IEP meetings	20 USC Ch. 1414 WAC 392-172A-02060
Ensure that IEP meetings include certain required participants	20 USC Ch. 1414 WAC 392-172A-03095 & 03100
Conduct visual and auditory acuity screenings for students in grades K-3, 5, and 7	RCW 28A.210.020 WAC 246-760-020
Post a complaint process on the school website	RCW 28A.710.187

- **Leading practices** — We researched leading practices for identifying and serving at-risk students recommended by major government education agencies and research organizations. We compared each school's practices to the leading practices identified.
- **School staff perspectives** — We interviewed administrators, teachers and other staff at selected charter schools to understand their processes and practices to identify and support at-risk students.
- **Charter school authorizer perspectives** — We interviewed staff at the Washington State Charter School Commission and Spokane Public Schools to learn how their complaint systems worked and the roles they play as charter school authorizers.
- **School policies and procedures** — We reviewed schools' policies and procedures for identifying and serving at-risk students to understand the practices they have in place. We also assessed the design of their processes as part of our internal control work.
- **Student records** — We reviewed student records to corroborate schools' practices for identifying and serving at-risk students. These records included Individualized Education Plans, home language surveys and transportation records.
- **School operations** — We observed school operations to confirm practices like small group instruction, use of early warning indicators and implementing multi-tiered systems of support. To do this, we toured the schools, observed classrooms and observed school staff.
- **Parent and student perspectives** — We held focus groups at or near the audited schools. We invited families from each school to attend so we could hear their perspectives about how well their schools identify and support at-risk students. We discussed families' perspectives about what their schools were doing well and what could be improved. These focus group responses were not representative of all families at each school because attendees self-selected to participate. We also did not receive any attendees from Innovation High School.

Work on internal controls

We determined internal controls were significant to Objective 1. We did the following work on internal controls:

First, we determined the controls in place at each school to ensure they met requirements and followed leading practices. To do this, we interviewed staff at each school and reviewed policies and procedures. We then assessed the strength of each control. We determined that most controls were effective, although some could be strengthened. For all controls schools had in place, we tested implementation of the controls. To do this, we reviewed a nonrepresentative sample of student files, observed classrooms and interviewed teachers.

Appendix C: Copy of Innovation High School Resource List

This appendix presents a copy of the resource Innovation High School provides to families who might need community service help. Auditors identified this as a promising practice because it includes sufficient details that would likely make accessing the services easier. For example, including hours of operation can help people who are transit dependent better plan their routes to access the services they need. Organizing the services by need rather than alphabetically also makes the list more useful.

Auditors did not review this document to check any information such as phone numbers or times of operation. It was current as of May 2025.

innovation

HIGH SCHOOL

RESOURCE INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

General Resources

Washington 211

- Program Information: Calling 211 connects you to a helpline that provides information and referrals to help with various needs, like housing, food, healthcare, and emergencies.
- Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm
- Phone Number: Dial 2-1-1 from a landline or (866) 904-9060 from a cell phone.

Housing

Catholic Charities Spokane (Help for families with Children)

- Program Information: Home | CCEW Housing (cceasternwa.org) Helps families with housing resources.
- Hours: Monday through Thursday, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm
- Phone Number: (509) 358-4250
- Location: 12 E 5th Ave, Spokane, WA 99202

Spokane Resource Center

- Program Information: Spokane Resource Center provides a myriad of programs including childcare assistance, lifeline cell phone program, energy assistance, SSI and SSDI assistance, Chas Health, Spokane Housing Authority, Community Colleges of Spokane, Pioneer Human Services, Career Path Finders, Goodwill, Revive Counseling, Revive Center for Returning Citizens, Goodwill, and the Arc.
- Hours: Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 4:30 pm
- Phone Number: (509) 867-8188
- Location: 130 S Arthur St (2nd Floor), Spokane, WA 99202

Revive Center for Returning Citizens (Justice Involved Individuals)

- Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm
- Phone Number: (509) 412-2950
- Location: 901 N Monroe St, Suite 200, Spokane, WA 99201

Volunteers of America Eastern Washington

- Program Information: Veterans housing, permanent supportive housing, young adult shelter, Hope House, crosswalk youth shelter, foster youth services.
- Hours: Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm
- Phone Number: (509) 624-2378
- Location: 525 W 2nd Ave, Spokane, WA 99201

Housing

Rapid Rehousing (for couples or single individuals)

- Homeless Resources provides households with a single destination to access services that help them stay in their homes or quickly exit homelessness. Homeless Resources connects households that are experiencing or at risk of homelessness with housing and case management services offered by Catholic Charities and our partner agencies in Spokane County.
- Walk-in Hours (Beginning Jan. 1, 2023): Tuesday through Thursday, 8:00 am to 3:00 pm
- Phone Number: (509) 325-5005
- Location: 975 E North Foothills Dr, Bldg. A (SW Corner of Gonzaga Family Haven), Spokane, WA 99207

Goodwill Housing and Essential Needs (Veterans Families and HEN Participants)

- Program Information: Referral from DSHS for HEN and assists participants to obtain VA and or SSID-SSDI related benefits and coordinate the provision of other public benefits.
- Hours: Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 8:30 am to 12:00 pm and 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm
- Income Limits:
- Phone Number: (509) 462-0518 (This number is only for those who have a referral from DSHS) • Location: 130 E 3rd Ave, Spokane, WA 99202
- Any other information:

The Salvation Army Spokane – Stepping Stones Transitional Housing, Way out shelter

- Program Information: Experiencing homelessness as a family with children and having an income at or below the annual median income for Spokane County per HUD standards. All participating families are required to participate in case management and Life Skills classes and can stay in this program for up to 24 months (about 2 years).
- Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm
- Income Limits: Participants must meet HUD's standards of 30% to 50% of Spokane's AMI.
- Phone Number: (509) 325-6810
- Location: 222 E Indiana Ave, Spokane, WA 99207

SNAP (Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners)

- Program Information: Weatherization and energy assistance, affordable internet
- Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, 7:30 am to 4:30 pm (closed between 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm) and Thursday, 10:30 am to 4:30 pm (closed between 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm)
- Income Limits:
- Phone Number: (509) 456-7627
- Location: 4001 N Cook St, Spokane, WA 99207

Housing

YWCA

- Program Information: Spokane's largest state-recognized intimate partner domestic violence program for victims and survivors. Our services are free, confidential, and designed to empower survivors through knowledge and connection to resources. Having a domestic violence charge against you does not mean you cannot access our services.
- Phone Number: (509) 326-2255 (Call), (509) 220-3725 (Text)
- Email: help@ywcaspokane.org

American Indian Community Center

- Program Information: The American Indian Community Center provides resources on a variety of services, such as employment and training, career counseling, education assistance, housing, crisis intervention, family services, alcohol, and drug assessments and more.
- Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm
- Phone Number: (509) 535-0886
- Location: 1025 W Indiana Ave, Spokane, WA, 99205

Carl Maxey Center

- Program Information: The Carl Maxey Center (CMC) is a Black-led and Black-centered non-profit, 501c3 organization, based in the East Central neighborhood of Spokane, Washington. CMC is both a neighborhood cultural center and gathering place, as well as a community-based organization that provides programs and services focused on addressing the needs of Spokane's African American/Black community.
- 3114 East Fifth Avenue, Spokane, WA 99202
- carlmaxeycenter@gmail.com
- 509-867-3043

Employment/Employment Training

Spokane Resource Center

- Program Information: We provide wrap-around services to help you prepare for employment while ensuring that you have stable housing and access to basic needs.
- When you have concluded your work with our employment specialists, you will have the skills, confidence, and knowledge needed to embark on a job search independently.
- Hours: Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 4:30 pm
- Phone Number: (509) 867-8188
- Location: 130 S Arthur St (2nd Floor), Spokane, WA 99202

WorkSource

- Hours: Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm
- Phone Number: (509) 532-3120
- Location: 130 S Arthur St, Spokane, WA 99202

Financial Education

Spokane Resource Center

- Program Information:
- Hours: Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 4:30 pm
- Phone Number: (509) 867-8188
- Location: 130 S Arthur St (2nd Floor), Spokane, WA 99202

Childcare Resources

Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery

- Program Information: Cares for children birth to 6 years of age. During an intake, a Family Support Specialist will talk with you about your situation in a confidential nonjudgmental manner. Together, you will determine how long your children will need care. This gives staff the opportunity to refer you to other community services.
- Hours: 7 days a week 24 hours a day
- Phone Number: (509)353-3155
- Location: 2230 E. Sprague Ave. Spokane WA 99202

NEYC – Northeast Youth Center

- Program Information: A safe and affordable home away from home with caring adults, meals, and engaging activities.
- Email: info@spokaneneyc.org
- Phone number: (509)482-0708
- Location: 3004 E. Queen Spokane WA

Express

- Program Information: Provides on-site care to children 5-12. Children must be potty trained and able to participate in a group setting and adhere to the program rules.
- Phone Number: (509)354-7312
- Location: Multiple locations offered
- Other information: Registration is currently closed.

Head Start/ECEAP

- Program Information: Most children are eligible for ECEAP and Head Start based on their age and family income. Up to 10% of ECEAP and Head Start slots can be filled by children above the income requirement who have multiple support needs.
- Head Start website for more information
- ECEAP Location Finder (pages 7-8)

Spokane Resource Center

- Program Information:
- Hours: Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 4:30 pm
- Phone Number: (509) 867-8188
- Location: 130 S Arthur St (2nd Floor), Spokane, WA 99202

Food, Hygiene & Clothing

Northeast Youth & Family Services

- Food Pantry, Resource Counseling, Clothing Closet, Hygiene Supplies
- Walk in hours Monday – Thursday 10 am- 3 pm
- Computer Lab, Podcast Studio, Recording Studio
- Schedule an appointment: email techandmedia@neyfs.org or text 509-218-6416
- 19 E Queen Ave Suite 300, Spokane WA 99207 (bus line 25 drop off @ Queen & Division #3302)
- (509) 218-6416

Women and Children's Free Restaurant

- Serving hot meals and prepackaged boxes of food. Women and Children only. Males must be 18 and under.
- 1408 N. Washington St. Spokane, WA
- (509)324-1995
- T & W 11-1

Partners INW

- Food Bank, Mobile Food Bank, Diaper Bank, Clothing Bank, Homeless Outreach, and Emergency Assistance
- Food Bank Hours: M-F 9am-3pm
- Clothing Bank Hours: M-TH 10am-3pm
- Emergency Assistance by appointment only

Logan Family Meals

- Served meals at Logan Elementary for the community
- 1004 E. Carlisle Ave Spokane WA 99207
- Tuesdays 5-6pm

Gonzaga Family Haven Meals

- Served to the community on Wednesdays from 4:30-5:30 pm
- 975 E North Foothills Dr., Spokane, WA 99207

Little Free Pantry

- mini pantry movement (littlefreepantry.org)

Salvation Army

- 222 East Indiana, Spokane. WA 99207
- (509)325-6821
- MWF 9-5 distribution

Dr. MLK Jr. Food Bank

- 500 S. Stone Spokane, WA
- (509)868-0856
- M, W. F 1-3

Senior Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

- Providing additional food once a month to seniors. Must be 60+, income limits. • (509)868-0856 for intake/information.

Food, Hygiene & Clothing

Senior Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

- Providing additional food once a month to seniors. Must be 60+, income limits. • (509)868-0856 for intake/information.

Northeast Connect Community Food Pantry

- For 99207 and 99217 zip codes
- 4520 N. Crestline
- (509)487-2781
- Tuesdays 11-12:45 Thursdays 9-10:45
- Non-Food Pantry Items (Hygiene, cleaning supplies)

Mission Community Outreach

- 1906 E. Mission Ave Spokane WA
- (509)536-1084
- M 1-4 W 10-1, Th 1-4
- Clothing, hygiene, and housewares
- Infant Bank: diapers, wipes/infant supplies (every 30 days)

Our Sister's Closet

- 509-326-1190
- Appointments are made on Fridays for the following week.
- oursisterscloset@ywca.org

Teen and Kid's Closet

- (509)534-1151
- Referral needed

Second Harvest Food Pantry

- 1234 East Front Avenue, Spokane, WA 99202- 2.4 miles
- 509-534-6678
- Fresh produce and other groceries will be provided to all families in need of food assistance. This food distribution is open to the public, with no appointment or documentation needed. Please bring a box or bags for your food.

Spokane Helpers Network

- To request help, go to: www.SpokaneHelpersNetwork.org

Legal

Volunteer Lawyer Program

- Program Information/Criteria: The Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP) is a legal assistance program of the Spokane County Bar Association. The VLP recruits volunteer attorneys to provide free legal advice in civil matters (non-criminal) to low-income individuals in Spokane County and four outlying counties, i.e., Pend Oreille, Ferry, Stevens, and Lincoln
- Phone Number/Contact information: (509) 447-6123 SpokaneVLP.org
- Hours: M-F 8:30-12, 1-4

Crisis Services

National Suicide Prevention

- Text: 988
- (800)799-4889
- suicidepreventionlifeline.org

NAMI – National Alliance on Mental Illness

- Text: “NAMI” 741741
- (800)950-6264 namispokane.org

YWCA Domestic Violence Services Spokane

- Spokane Front desk: (509)326-1190
- 24 Hour helpline: Text: 220-3725
- Phone: 326-2255



innovation HIGH SCHOOL

Resources for Families

Housing

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- Hours: Monday through Thursday, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm
- Phone Number: (509) 358-4250
- Location: 12 E 5th Ave, Spokane, WA 99202

Spokane Resource Center

- Hours: Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 4:30 pm
- Phone Number: (509) 867-8188
- Location: 130 S Arthur St (2nd Floor), Spokane, WA 99202

The Salvation Army Spokane– Stepping Stones

- Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm
- Income Limits: Participants must meet HUD's standards of 30% to 50% of Spokane's AML.
- Phone Number: (509) 325-6810
- Location: 222 E Indiana Ave, Spokane, WA 99207

American Indian Community Center

- Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm
- Phone Number: (509) 535-0886
- Location: 1025 W Indiana Ave, Spokane, WA, 99205

Carl Maxey Center

- 3114 East Fifth Avenue, Spokane, WA 99202
- carlmaxeycenter@gmail.com
- 509-867-3043

Childcare

Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery

- Hours: 7 days a week 24 hours a day
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- Email: info@spokaneneyc.org
- Phone number: (509)482-0708
- Location: 3004 E. Queen Spokane WA

Express (ages 5-12)

- Phone Number: (509)354-7312
- Location: Multiple locations offered



NOTICE



IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING A CRISIS PLEASE NOTIFY THE FRONT OFFICE SO WE CAN ASSIST YOU

Utilities

SNAP (Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners)

- Phone Number: (509) 456-7627
- Location: 4001 N Cook St, Spokane, WA 99207

Food, Hygiene & Clothing

Northeast Youth & Family Services

- 19 E Queen Ave Suite 300, Spokane WA 99207
- (509) 218-6416

Women & Children's Free Restaurant

- 1408 N. Washington St. Spokane, WA
- (509)324-1995
- T & W 11-1

Partners INW

- Food Bank Hours: M-F 9am-3pm
- Clothing Bank Hours: M-TH 10am-3pm
- Emergency Assistance by appointment only

CRISIS SERVICES

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION

- TEXT: 988
- (800)799-4889
- SUICIDEPREVENTIONLIFELINE.ORG

YWCA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES SPOKANE

- SPOKANE FRONT DESK: (509)326-1190
- 24 HOUR HELPLINE: TEXT: 220-3725

INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL-AGE YOUTH



IF YOU LIVE IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SITUATIONS:

In a shelter



In a motel or campground due to the lack of an alternative adequate accommodation



In a car, park, abandoned building, or bus or train station



Doubled up with other people due to loss of housing or economic hardship

You may qualify for certain rights and protections under the federal McKinney-Vento Act.

Eligible students have the right to:

- Receive a free, appropriate public education.
- Enroll in school immediately, even if lacking documents normally required for enrollment.
- Enroll in school and attend classes while the school gathers needed documents.
- Enroll in the local school; or continue attending their school of origin (the school they attended when permanently housed or the school in which they were last enrolled), if that is their preference.
 - * If the school district believes that the school selected is not in his/her best interest, then the district must provide the student with a written explanation of its position and inform the student of his/her right to appeal its decision.
- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin, if requested.
- Receive educational services comparable to those provided to other students, according to the students' needs.

If you believe you may be eligible, contact the local liaison to find out what services and supports may be available.



Local Liaison
Ashley Weckerly
509-309-7680

State Coordinator

If you need further assistance with your educational needs,
contact the National Center for Homeless Education:

1-800-308-2145 * homeless@serve.org * <http://nche.ed.gov>

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Ambroso, Eric, Research Assistant, REL West at WestEd; Dunn, Lenay, Deputy Director, REL West at WestEd; Fox, Pam, Consultant, Decision Information Resources, Inc.; Contributors: Kwon, Sylvia, Research Associate, WestEd Ron McCowen, Senior Researcher, Decision Information Resources, Inc. REL West Regional Educational Laboratory at WestEd "Research in Brief: Engaging and Empowering Diverse and Underserved Families in Schools"

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"Our vision is to increase **trust** in government. We are the public's window into how tax money is spent."

– Pat McCarthy, State Auditor

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Office of the Washington State Auditor

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