Chehalis School District

POSTSECONDARY REENGAGEMENT STUDY

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Introduction

In 2014, the Chehalis Foundation partnered with the Chehalis School District (CSD) to implement a comprehensive K-16 career and college readiness initiative: The Student Achievement Initiative (SAI). As part of the SAI, the partnership set a goal for 60% of Chehalis graduates to receive a meaningful post-secondary degree or certification within 8 years of graduation. This goal is similar to the Washington Roundtable's goal of 70% of Washington students having a postsecondary (living-wage) credential by 2030. Currently, less than 40% of Washington students go on to earn postsecondary credentials/degrees.

While the SAI partnership has achieved significant successes, including 100% of the classes of 2020 and 2021 applying and being accepted to Centralia College (CC), and high school graduation rates also approaching 100%, the credential completion rate (although slightly above the state average) remains below the SAI goal of 60% (Figure 1). For the Class of 2014, the 6-year completion rate for W.F. West students was 43%, [1]. This positive trend represents a 10-percentage point increase since the Class of 2011. Figure 2 displays 6-year postsecondary enrollment patterns for the Class of 2014. Although 30% of those enrolled disengaged from college during the 6 years following high school, 8% percent of the graduating class returned to college by Year 6. These trends suggest that many of the efforts of the SAI may be having an impact on postsecondary completion. However, they also show an opportunity to reach even more students by reengaging the 22% who are no longer enrolled.
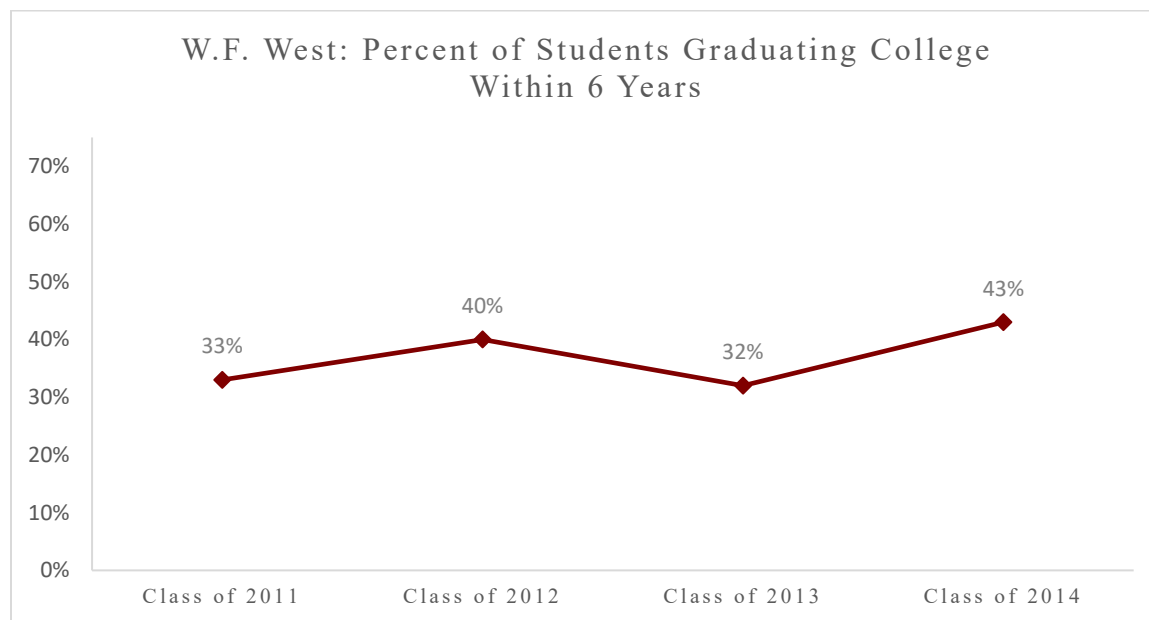

W.F. West: Percent of Students Graduating College Within 6 Years

Figure 1

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[1] Although the goal is to track results for eight years following graduation, at the time of this study only six years of data were available.

Class of 2014 Postsecondary Enrollment Progress

Year 1: 3%, 62%, 0%, 35%

Year 2: 13%, 3%, 42%, 0%, 10%, 32%

Year 3: 22%, 1%, 27%, 2%, 17%, 31%

Year 4: 34%, 1%, 13%, 2%, 19%, 31%

Year 5: 41%, 2%, 6%, 1%, 21%, 29%

Year 6: 43%, 1%, 1%, 3%, 22%, 29%

Years after Graduation

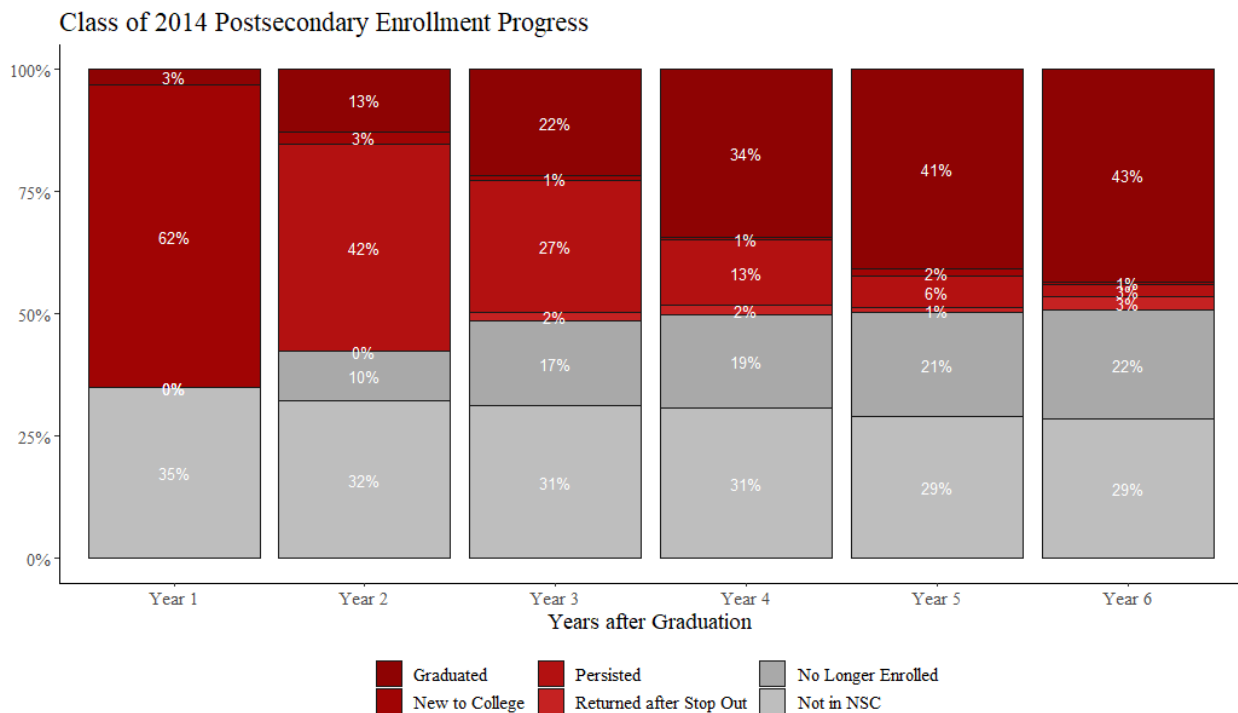Legend: Graduated, Persisted, No Longer Enrolled, New to College, Returned after Stop Out, Not in NSC

Figure 2

Over the past several years, the SAI partnership has expanded to include additional partners, including Centralia College. These partners have continued to build capacity for work around postsecondary education. During this time, The BERC Group has produced several research reports for this collaborative initiative in an effort to guide and support the work. Topics have included college readiness, College Promise Programs, scholarship analysis, guided pathways, and summer melt, in a continuing effort to reach the goal of 60% postsecondary completion. The current study explores reengagement in college, with a focus on the attributes and resources communities leverage to help students return to and complete a postsecondary degree or certification program.

Study Focus: Reengagement

Through a review of relevant literature, and in discussions with national experts on college enrollment, persistence, and engagement, there appears to be consensus that postsecondary reengagement is a construct that cannot be addressed without first understanding the pattens of behavior that young adults exhibit throughout their educational journey. Communities and organizations with a focus on bringing students back to obtain degrees or credentials approach reengagement from multiple perspectives, considering the culture, needs and values of the students they are serving. A specialist working with the Kalamazoo Promise, one of the first college promise programs in the country, shared, "Reengagement is a complex and complicated issue…we need to communicate to students that college is about more than the classes; it is the experience, the relationships, and networking." She continued to note that the work is about building relationships, and helping to connect reality with possibility.

In order to understand reengagement, it is important to first understand engagement; why students choose a specific program or college, what influences in high school and in the community impact their decision making, and what supports students find to be most beneficial along the way. This is particularly important following a year of disruption to the education system. In a recent study of college engagement during the pandemic, researchers found that as of spring 2021, postsecondary enrollment was down 4.2 percent from a year prior, with community college enrollment falling by more than 10%. The study also found that recent high school graduates saw the greatest decline in enrollments during this time period. This trend held locally, with enrollment numbers at Centralia College significantly lower in spring 2021 than during the previous spring.

The SAI has produced significant results over the past eight years and has been nationally recognized as a leader in comprehensive community support for postsecondary success. This report will highlight those successes, including the efforts of the CSD and Centralia College to increase enrollment and completion. Additionally, this report will present research from communities across the country that are leading efforts to increase access to postsecondary opportunities, strengthen reengagement for those who have stopped out, and strengthen the economic opportunities for their students. Finally, recommendations will be provided for SAI stakeholders to consider as they continue to build and strengthen a comprehensive system of support for all students throughout their educational careers.

Study Population and Research Questions

Researchers met with partners from CSD and CC to develop a list of questions and a sample population for the study. These questions were used to guide the development of survey questions and interview protocol. SAI partners were interested in learning from specific groups of students: those that do not go to college; those that enroll, but leave after their first year of college; those that may reengage after stopping out, and those that graduate. Specific questions included:

- Can we identify demographic or socioeconomic trends in these students?
- Can we identify trends in high school course work or GPA?
- What are they doing now, if not in college or graduated? Why did they choose this path?
- How important is career awareness in their decision?
- Do they have plans to enroll in college in the future?
- Are we effective with our Summer Melt Program increasing enrollment?
- How effective is the mentoring program and other wrap around supports?

Methodology

To develop a comprehensive understanding of the current district and community practices surrounding postsecondary engagement, researchers used a mixed-methods approach to collecting and analyzing data. In addition to a thorough review of the empirical literature on college engagement, reengagement, and completion, researchers conducted focus groups with key stakeholders, surveyed Chehalis students from four graduating classes, and interviewed leaders from National Promise programs and state organizations focused on postsecondary outcomes. Additionally, CSD high school transcript data were analyzed for descriptive trends, and a logistic regression was performed to develop a predictive model for postsecondary enrollment.

Interviews and focus groups were conducted via ZOOM Conferencing, and followed a semi-structured interview protocol. The student perception survey, administered to 441 graduates from the classes of 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020, was sent through email and text, with three reminders during a two-week response window. Students who received the survey link had all applied to Centralia College. Researchers achieved a 26% response rate on the student survey, and followed up with 5 students to conduct more thorough interviews based on their responses.

Literature Review

The current focus on career and college readiness throughout the United States has created a need for high quality research to understand trends and best practices. School districts, state agencies, and workforce development organizations have a vested interest in understanding how to help students transition and succeed from high school into their postsecondary options. After conducting a thorough review of the literature on college engagement, reengagement, summer melt, and the economic argument for postsecondary completion, it is evident that efforts to support young adults past high school are complex, multifaceted, and specific to individual circumstances, geographic location, and access. While several articles discuss barriers to postsecondary completion, and many provide strategies to mitigate these barriers and scaffold support, there is a consistent message throughout the literature suggesting that all efforts to engage, and reengage young adults in their education should be considered in context, and should take into account the many systems that interact in a person's life. There is no one answer to the challenge of reengaging in postsecondary education. However, experts note that building

and maintaining relationships with students while in middle and high school is one of the most powerful ways to develop the foundation to reengage students that may have stopped out before earning a living-wage certificate or degree.

College Engagement

College engagement has been defined in many different ways. The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) refers to engagement as the "amount of time and energy that students invest in meaningful educational practices" (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008; McClenney, 2007). Harper and Quaye (2009) define engagement as "participation in educationally effective practices" that occur both inside and outside the classroom (p. 3). These definitions clearly demonstrate the value of understanding engagement in order to begin developing practices to support reengagement.

Significant research efforts have been focused on identifying the characteristics and behaviors of high school students that influence their postsecondary decision making, as well as the programs and incentives communities use to help increase engagement in college and certificate programs. Students have shared that while financial and family obligations often impact their decision to enroll in college, many times they simply feel unprepared for college, or lack a clear understanding of the processes and practices of being a college student. Once enrolled, individual differences and environmental influences play a significant role in postsecondary selection, making engagement in college a challenging concept to quantify and summarize. Students often feel disconnected from the college community, struggle with academics, and experience challenges with housing and transportation that impact their level of engagement. Despite this, understanding how and why students engage in college in the first place is critical to understanding how to help student reengage after they disconnect from college.

In a 2017 report from the Gates Foundation, researchers surveyed over 1000 students eligible for the College Bound Scholarship program, a last dollar scholarship offered to students in Washington State who meet specific requirements based on family income. Approximately 20% of student respondents acknowledged that while they did want to go to college, they were not sure when or how they would make it happen. The students also shared that it would be helpful to start talking about college earlier, to have a mandatory class with a college preparation focus, and to have more help with the application process.

In Buffalo, New York, the Say Yes to Buffalo program has helped postsecondary enrollment increase from 57% in 2012 to 65% in 2018. This comprehensive program serves the community in support of students, focusing on a holistic approach to college and career readiness. The program incorporates mentorship, a mandatory college transition curriculum, college success counselors, and on-campus mental health clinics. Additionally, they offer Saturday academies for students and parents, a 6-week summer camp for pk-6 graders, and legal clinics. Program leaders in Buffalo noted the importance of incorporating a "broad cross-section of stakeholders" to accomplish their mission.

Similarly, in California, the Early Assessment Program (EAP) was developed to determine college readiness and support students in their transition to postsecondary placement. Students who earn a passing score on the 11th grade state assessment do not require any placement exams for CA colleges, mitigating the barrier of taking an additional test. If students do not earn a passing mark on the assessment, they receive a personalized letter guiding them with information on what they need to focus on to be more prepared during their 12th grade year.

Lauren Schudde (2019) researched first-year engagement experiences at community colleges, focusing on peer and faculty interactions. The author looked at specific behaviors, including social contact with faculty, speaking with faculty about academics outside of class, studying with peers, and participating in school clubs. She cited several earlier studies on college engagement, highlighting a 2011 article from Deil-Amen, who used the term "socio-academic" to suggest the need for social and academic integration to strengthen student engagement in community college. The author noted that in order for community college students to feel a level of social comfort, they need an environment that helps them to feel that they belong. This is particularly important since community college students traditionally come from diverse backgrounds and levels of experience. The research for these perspectives is limited in scope, however, as there was no ability to longitudinally track achievement, persistence and attainment based on the student perceptions gathered for the researchers' studies. Schudde's (2019) quasi-experimental study did find that engagement with faculty and peers positively impacts community college short-term outcomes, particularly when talking about academic issues. She noted the need for communities to build longitudinal databases, however, to generate more rigorous studies on the influence of these interactions on student outcomes over time.

College Persistence

In a 2016 National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) report, authors defined college persistence as "continued enrollment or degree completion at any institution" (p.1). Research on community college persistence has revealed low completion rates and degree attainment over time (Fike & Fike, 2008). Hatch and Garcia (2017) discussed the fundamental differences between enrollment issues at 2-year and 4-year colleges, noting that research on the first few weeks of community college engagement highlights the importance of helping new students make immediate connections to the school. The authors suggested that the open enrollment policies and flexibility at many community colleges allow students to enter and re-enter, often without a clear knowledge of how to articulate or accomplish their goals. Additionally, even simple intake procedures and timelines can have a significant impact on college enrollment, persistence, and completion.

In a 2017 publication from The National Academies Press, *Supporting Students' College Success: The Role of Assessment in Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Competencies*, Herman and Hilton presented evidence to support the notion that success in college was complex, relying on the interaction between intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive competencies. The authors focused specifically on student success in STEM fields in four-year colleges, although they

acknowledged the lack of adequate research on successful completion at two-year college was also an area of need.

Herman and Hilton (2017) found significant correlations between college completion and intrapersonal competencies, which they defined as those involving "the ability to regulate one's behavior and emotion to reach goals." (p.1). They identified eight competencies related to persistence, including Positive Future Self; Prosocial Goals & Values; Intrinsic Goals and Interests; Academic Self-Efficacy; Behaviors Related to Conscientiousness; Utility Goals and Values; Growth Mindset; and Sense of Belonging. The authors also noted the importance of intrapersonal skills, defined as the ability for students to express themselves to others, interpret information, and respond accordingly. These interactions between students and their peers, faculty, and the academic environment contribute meaningfully to the discussion of community college persistence (Heller & Cassady, 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2016; Tinto, 2007).

To address a holistic, systems approach to retention and persistence, educators and researchers have explored student level interactions during the first year of community college, looking for patterns of engagement, barriers, stressors, and academic challenges impacting their ability to persist (Fike & Fike, 2008; Greenberg, Ogle, & Sanderson, 2017; Heller & Cassady, 2017). Programs and initiatives have been implemented to support students, with a focus on increasing access to developmental education, offering courses designed to explore the first-year experience, initiating mentor programs, and encouraging students to use campus support services (Greenberg, Ogle, & Sanderson, 2017; Kimbark, Peters, & Richardson, 2017; Tinto, 2007).

In a quantitative study of first time-in-college students at a public urban community college, Fike and Fike (2008) collected data on persistence from 9200 students over a four-year period. Enrollment in student support services, passing developmental math and English courses, and parent level of education were significant predictors of persistence, after controlling for demographic variables including age, gender, and ethnicity. The researchers acknowledged the limitations of their research, specifically the lack of an experimental design. They concluded, however, that developmental education and student supports, consistent with existing literature (Barnett, 2011; Nomi, 2005), were predictors of persistence that warranted more research. Additionally, during a 6-year longitudinal study of college persistence and retention through the Stanford University Bridge Program, researchers found several factors impacting student success, as defined by degree or certificate completion, including a disconnected system of education between K-12 and college, confusing entrance requirements and assessments, policies and procedures at the larger system level, and lack of social supports needed to guide cognitive and behavioral success at the college level (Venezia et al., 2003).

A recent report from the Washington Roundtable suggested five key success factors for postsecondary success (Washington Roundtable, 2018). These include creating a postsecondary culture, providing rigorous academic coursework, engaging in postsecondary and career guidance, developing college going behaviors, and identifying equity resources to align with all

student needs. The Washington Roundtable has collected data from students throughout the state to better understand postsecondary persistence and how this phenomenon impacts the economic and social climate of the region. These success factors align with the research cited throughout this report and provide an outline for school districts and communities taking steps to address postsecondary outcomes in their communities.

A 2019 study from ReUp Education found that students enroll and then leave their postsecondary institutions for a number of reasons, including life balance, financial resources, professional commitments, and health challenges. The authors also cite varied reasons that students decide to return to complete their programs, and highlight the complex nature of student completion patterns.

College Completion

In their 2018 Signature Report on completing college, researchers from the National Student Council (NSC) found that more than one third of first-time freshmen begin their college career at a community college, suggesting that, "Community colleges play a unique and important role in the U.S. higher education system, not only by awarding certificates and degrees, but also by serving as an entry point for many students who ultimately obtain a bachelor's degree" (p.7). Turk (2019) reported that for the class of 2016, approximately 8.5 million students (46% of undergraduates) enrolled in community college, and almost half of all students that earn a bachelor's degree began their education in community college.

One comprehensive program that serves as a model for colleges across the nation is the City University of New York (CUNY) Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP). ASAP requires students to enroll full time and provides a host of integrated support services. The ASAP program, funded partially through taxes, provides students with financial incentives, a consolidated schedule, regular advisement, cohort groups with faculty support, career prep opportunities, and additional academic assistance. In a 2017 report on the CUNY ASAP program, researchers conducted a benefit cost analysis to determine the impact of the program on the community. The researchers found that for the class of 2012, 59.9% of ASAP students earned an associate degree in three years, while 24.1% of their non-ASAP peers earned the same degree. Additionally, for each dollar of investment in ASAP by taxpayers, the return was $3 to $4, and the return on investments made by students was substantially more.

In a 2020 report from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) research Center, researchers explored six-year completion rates for 2014 graduates across the nation. The authors found that the six-year college completion rate has plateaued, with traditional age students and community college students losing ground for the first time in several years. For that same cohort, the percentage of students completing a 2-year degree or certification was even lower; The National Center for Education Statistics reported that 34.1% of students complete these degrees within 150 percent of normal time to completion (US Department of Education, 2019).

In Washington State, postsecondary completion rates fell by 1% (58%) in 2020. Researchers at the Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) conducted a study of Washington "opportunity youth," or those students who were disconnected from their education and the workforce. The study focused on young people who were between the age of 16 and 29 in 2015 and aged to 20 and 33 by 2019. Researchers found that during the time frame studied, the percentage of students earning a postsecondary credential by their early 20s was 32% (11% were 2-year degrees). They also found that young people from low-income families were less likely to stay connected to postsecondary education, but more likely to be employed during the same time frame studied. The study did not address whether young adults in the workforce were making a living wage, although the authors noted that employment in agriculture, construction and public administration saw the greatest increase between 2015 and 2019.

Reengagement

Reengagement in a postsecondary program has become a critical topic in helping to increase postsecondary completion numbers nationwide. There are numerous considerations when attempting to understand why students engage in the enrollment process but then fail to attend or fail to remain enrolled/engaged in college. Since 22% of the CSD graduates for the class of 2014 have disengaged from college, developing an awareness of how to bring these students back into the college community would bring the CSD closer to their goal of having 60% of students complete a postsecondary certification or degree.

In a recent report from ReUp (2020), a for-profit organization focused on bringing students back to college to complete their degrees, researchers identified several reasons that students stop-out, or disengage, from their postsecondary program. Responses from over 1000 students who had left college between 2016 and 2019 revealed that "Life balance: Personal commitments" was the most prevalent reason for their decision (27%). Researchers noted, "This context is key to recognize, because the student is not dismissing their education as unimportant or not valuable, they are acknowledging that their competing priorities have a higher level of immediate urgency." (p.6) Twenty-three percent of students identified "financial resources" as the primary challenge, including navigating the process of financial aid, understanding the true costs of college, and having a plan to fund their education that changed due to unforeseen circumstances.

Additional reasons noted by respondents included professional commitments (15%), physical and emotional health (13%), commitment to persist (9%), institutional relationship (6%), and academics (5%). The authors commented,

> One key factor typically underlying good emotional health is the personal support network (friends, family, groups, and activities) that students have in place during their time in college. Without a support network, college and its associated responsibilities can overwhelm students…The drivers of commitment to degree completion include the value they place in pursuing their education, their understanding of how education fits into their future plans, their desire to be in college, and their sense of connection between current

actions and long-term goals…these students do not have a clear sense of the return on investment (p.7).

They continued by noting, "The situation can emerge from challenges using technical systems required by the institution, struggles with the modality available for their chosen program, difficulty understanding the administrative policies of the institution, or not feeling a sufficient sense of belonging to their college."

The 2020 report also provided the most prevalent reasons that students returned to complete their degrees. Of the student respondents, 34% said their motivation to return was to finish what they had start, while another 18% said it was a personal goal. An additional 18% were hoping that their degree would lead to a promotion, or greater job mobility, and 10% hoped for a career change. Very few students said they went back for earning potential or as a family commitment.

National Promising Practices: Reengagement

Despite the lack of empirical evidence examining reengagement practices, many national, state, and local programs are working to address the challenges students face in completing a degree or certificate program. BERC researchers met with leaders in Washington, Kalamazoo, Tennessee, and Texas to discuss promising practices and lessons learned over time regarding reengagement efforts. There was a consistent message, in reports from programs across the country, and in interviews conducted with experts in the field: Reengaging students is a complex task, dependent on the student, the context, and the system of support already in place.

College Promise Programs provide an opportunity to understand some of the practices in place associated with reengagement. Michelle Miller-Adams, a researcher with the Upjohn Institute, defined promise communities as those "that seek to transform themselves by making a long-term investment in education through place-based scholarships. While these programs vary in their structure, they all seek to expand access to and success in higher education, deepen the college-going culture in K-12 systems, and support local economic development." (Miller-Adams, 2015) Over the past 10 years, many of these programs have been developing and expanding, each offering a unique approach to career and college success. Promise program leaders are experts in the field, with a clear and comprehensive understanding of the barriers and challenges students and families face when considering postsecondary opportunities.

According to Executive Director Bob Jorth, The Kalamazoo Promise, one of the first promise programs in the nation, has changed fundamentally over the past several years. Mr. Jorth shared his perspectives on the Promise, and how Promise leaders are working to develop a more robust program based on data and lessons learned. Jorth identified three pillars of support acting as the foundation for the Promise: Credentials Completion, Community Collaboration, and Business Collaboration. Each of the pillars contributes to the success of the Promise, and is connected to reengagement. Jorth spoke at length about the importance of bringing students back to use their Promise dollars. Students in Kalamazoo have access to funds for up to 10 years or 145 college credits. They can begin, stop out, reengage, and still receive complete tuition reimbursement.

Finding students once they leave the Promise has been a challenge, however. Jorth noted, "I wonder if the best thing you can do is increase the number of 1:1 interactions…The biggest challenge for us with stop outs is finding them and talking to them." In order to do this, the Promise hired a full-time reconnection specialist. The position, fulfilled by a Promise alumni, is dedicated to finding students, starting conversations, and building relationships.

Researchers had the opportunity to interview Kalamazoo's reconnection specialist, Alexia Jones. Ms. Jones shared that she spends the bulk of her time using social media to find and connect with students. She begins with an email database that tracks Promise eligibility status, and uses Facebook and Instagram to find additional connections. When asked about her primary role, Ms. Jones commented, "This position is about outreach and making it personal. They have seen the billboards, and maybe they have gotten a letter in the mail about college…but this is a more persistent type of communication."

Ms. Jones shared several thoughts on reengagement based on her experiences with students, as well as her own experience as a Promise student. She acknowledged that many of the students she has connected with are not sure what they want to do, and are concerned about wasting time and money without a clear plan in mind. While she often tries to explore career options with those students, she also works to help them understand that college can look very different from high school. This, she noted, is important, particularly with students that had a negative experience in high school and believe that all educational opportunities will look similar. She also talked about helping students, particularly first-generation college students, to feel a sense of empowerment and control over their decision to reengage in college courses. She recommended making sure to personalize the interactions with reluctant students, giving them space to voice concerns and fears, and validating their experiences.

During a 2020 interview with Krissy DeAlejandro, Executive Director of TNAchieves, DeAlejandro shared that although their Promise initiative did not deal directly with reengagement efforts, Tennessee Reconnect is a program focused on bringing adults back into the postsecondary pipeline. This program is a last-dollar grant that pays the remaining balance of tuition and mandatory fees after other state and federal financial aid have been applied, and is available for eligible adults who want to pursue an associate degree, technical degree, or technical diploma at a Tennessee community college or technical college. The Tennessee Reconnect Grant can also be used at an eligible public or private college or university towards an eligible associate degree, but it is not a last-dollar grant. Tennessee Reconnect offers community members the opportunity to meet with a *Tennessee Reconnect Navigator* and discuss options for returning to college, and puts prospective students in contact with an *Adult Student Contact* at their chosen school who will help the navigate the return to college process.

Study Findings

During the 2020-2021 school year, researchers collected and analyzed qualitative and quantitative data to better understand implementation and impact from efforts to increase postsecondary completion. CSD and CC leaders were asked to provide a comprehensive list of programs and policies they have implemented since the beginning of the SAI. This work has been the culmination of years of collaboration, research, and development. Over time, a culture of Career and College Readiness has developed within the CSD and surrounding community. District and college leaders have implemented age-appropriate CCR strategies at all levels which emphasize academic excellence, life-long learning, and the cultivation of skills and character traits such as persistence beginning as early as kindergarten. The comprehensive list of activities provided in this report documents a decade of efforts to support all students as they progress throughout their educational careers. SAI leaders have been united in their goal of increasing postsecondary completion, despite transitions in district leadership and a global pandemic. Many of these practices align with national promising practices, demonstrating the CSD's position as a national leader in postsecondary completion efforts.

Implementation
Chehalis School District

In 2020, the SAI focus continued with the arrival of a new school district superintendent, Dr. Christine Moloney. Dr. Moloney led a book study with district administrators using Dr. Carol Dweck's book, *Mindset*. Promoting the power of mindset, district leadership has maintained a strong focus on the goal of preparing students with a belief in themselves as college-going learners. Members of the district's Career and College Readiness Committee (CCRC) also help to maintain the SAI momentum. The committee ensures the district's Guiding Principles have a clear focus: "Ensure career and college awareness, eligibility, and preparedness." The CCR committee continues to meet monthly, generating activities that help to maintain a district focus on career and college readiness, and sharing the information with their schools and the community.

In addition to district level leadership and committees, CCR work have continued at all educational levels throughout the district and community. At the elementary level, students are provided with several awareness campaigns including:

- College of the week facts during announcements and newscasts
- Career and College interviews of teachers and WatchDog Dads
- Assemblies highlighting local businesses and career opportunities
- College campus visits for all second and third grade students

Students at Chehalis Middle School benefit from a dedicated Career and College Counselor. The full-time staff member meets regularly with students to support them academically and discuss post-secondary options. Strategies used at this level include:

- Monthly Career Spotlight featuring guest speakers
- NAVIANCE College Advisory Program
- High School and Beyond Plan – This plan is a graduation requirement initially written in grade eight. The planning revolves around three questions:
    - Who am I?
    - What can I become?
    - How do I become that?

The Chehalis School District and Chehalis Foundation have also made a commitment to providing career and college counseling for students at W.F. West High School, with a full-time College Prep Advisor in addition to three full-time guidance counselors. The College Prep Advisor has established a comprehensive program of student support focused on building a career and college ready culture. Current practices designed to increase college readiness include:

- High School and Beyond Plan – Guidance counselors use this plan with students during each season of registration for classes to ensure alignment with a student's declared pathway.
- NAVIANCE College Advisory Program delivered in a daily block of time with specialized curriculum
- Community Mentor Program for High School Seniors
- FAFSA support and Financial Aid Parent and Student Workshops
- Financial Literacy development using NAVIANCE
- College Cheat Sheet for navigating college enrollment process
- Collaborative College Application Sessions
- Summer Counseling Support

Additional programs at the high school level add depth and breadth to the CCR efforts, and help to address the diversified experiences and interests of CSD students. These programs include:

Achievement Via Individual Determination (AVID)
The district introduced AVID strategies several years ago, providing training for interested certificated staff. As a result, the high school was positioned to begin serving identified students in an AVID elective class in the fall of 2017. The district now supports one AVID elective class for each grade in the high school. The AVID program is designed for students who are academically "in the middle" and have the potential for success in a college preparatory curriculum. Studies of "at risk" high school students have shown how student participation in the

program positively affects student achievement and increased college aspirations and entrance rates. In the spring of 2021, W.F. West will graduate the first class of Chehalis students who have benefitted from this level of support.

Career and Technical Education (CTE)
Per recommendations from The BERC Group in a 2020 audit of the Chehalis School District CTE program, as well as a 2019 report on reducing Summer Melt, the district has begun implementing a plan of improvement in their Career and Technical Education program. It is believed, as a result, that students will realize the benefits of postsecondary education. Recommendations were categorized into four main areas: *Awareness, Engagement, Partnership,* and *Physical and Human Resources.* In the fall of 2020, the following efforts were put in place:
- To promote better awareness:
    - New school board policy was adopted, and directors approved a district CTE Plan for the 2020-2021 school year.
    - New SAI and CTE webpages were designed to feature current and relevant information and develop an online presence.
    - CSD CTE Instagram was established featuring photos of students and their work posted multiple times each week.
- In addition to the existing CTE Program Specific Advisory Committee, to increase the breadth and level of employer engagement and better align CTE programs and courses with skill development relevant to living-wage jobs in the region, the following groups were created:
    - Leonard Trust Committee
    - CTE Advisory Council
- To enhance learning, and maximize the use of existing human resources, the following have been added to the W.F. West CTE program:
    - New laptop for Sign-making course – bringing to industry standard
    - New router for use by several courses – returning loaned item to neighboring district
    - On-going evaluation of current instructional materials and facility

In addition to these policies and practices, the CSD has been tracking student data longitudinally, to understand trends and make informed decisions.

Centralia College
Another integral aspect of the SAI has been the reciprocal and comprehensive partnership between the CSD and CC. With support from the Chehalis Foundation, leaders from the school district and the college have continued to work together to identify best practices and develop programming to meet the needs of the students they serve. When asked to share the ongoing efforts being made to support student success at the college level, CC administrators shared the following list:

- **Academic Planning**
  These planning sessions help students discover what they need beyond their current quarter, prep for advising sessions, and give them an opportunity to ask questions they may have.
- **Building Support Network**
  Helping students identify people in their communities that they would benefit starting, continuing, or formalizing a relationship with, such as college staff, other students, family, and members of the community.
- **Career Exploration/Planning**
  Students may not be sure of their academic or professional path. Reviewing career assessment tools and connecting the student with a career counselor can assist with identifying an academic or career choice.
- **College Transfer Sessions**
  Students wanting to transfer to a university may have numerous questions determining the best college fit. College transfer workshops are available for student viewing. Student meetings aid with highlighting key details for transferring students.
- **Completion Grant (currently developing this idea)**
  We are exploring the development of a "Completion Grant." We will review stop out students and close to degree completion to determine if they qualify.
- **Emergency Grant Application Assistance**
  Students may need additional assistance to accomplish their goals. Referring students to the Emergency Grant Application permits an additional option for student achievement.
- **Encourage Problem Solving for Challenging Situations**
  Students will often face hurdles when navigating college systems. It is important for students to learn problem-solving skills that will help them self-advocate in the future. Student sessions do not always solve the problems for them, but we apply scaffolding techniques to promote initiative for troubleshooting.
- **Financial Aid Appeal Process Assistance**
  When a student needs to write an appeal due to financial aid cancellation, they often are at a loss for where to start. We guide them through the process by letting them know what items need to be submitted and help them complete those items to increase their chances of having their appeal approved.
- **High School to College Transition**
  Visits to the high schools to promote attending Centralia College and helping students see they have support at the college if they choose to attend. Collaboration with high school counselors to help make the enrollment process easier for students.
- **Incentivize College Activities**
  Incentives in the form of bookstore credit for activities that promote student success.

- **Job Search Assistance**
  Helping students search and apply for jobs on and off campus to provide them with extra income and experience. Some students may need help with resumes, applications, references, interview tips, etc.
- **Math Pilot (straight to college level math with a co-req)**
  An opportunity for students to enter a college level math class (Intro to Stats & Pre-calc I) without taking the prerequisites, under the condition that they take the corresponding prep seminar course. This could potentially save the student time and money while giving them added support in their math course.
- **Mentoring**
  Connecting students with peer mentors aids with increasing the student's social community. In addition, students may feel more comfortable asking tough questions to peers versus staff. Furthermore, students can learn additional problem-solving skills from their peers.
- **One-on-ones/Case Management**
  Case management allows us to collaborate with students about future academic and professional while providing support. We help students maintain accountability while achieving their goals. Starting with an initial success assessment, we'll then assist students in creating a success plan, identify barriers, regular goal setting, study skills, time management, study hall, grade check/progress report, academic support, connect with resources and other efforts listed.
- **Personal Finance Planning/Budgeting**
  One on one sessions with students to go help them organize and prioritize their finances. This can be access to financial information in which students may not be aware. Help them see where their money is going and how they could potentially save money. Proactive planning for financial management can alleviate future stress.
- **Promote Student Life (clubs/orgs)**
  Student clubs help students embrace the campus life while helping them feel included in the campus community. We encourage student involvement by introducing them to Student Life staff members and ambassadors with hopes they join a student organization.
- **Scholarship Assistance**
  Funding can be a concern for college students. We help students identify scholarship opportunities and coach them through the process of writing scholarship essays.
- **Social Activities**
  Quarterly activities that promote social interaction between students. This provides an opportunity to unwind, network, and strengthen relationships between themselves and their **Student Success Coach.**
- **Social and Emotional Support**
  Social and Emotional Support is part of the case management process. In addition, we help connect students with on campus counselors for support.

- **Summer Bridge Program**
  The Summer Bridge Program provides a low commitment opportunity for students to get an early start to Centralia College and learn the dos and don'ts of college. The program exposes them to the college's learning management system and an inside look at college level work.
- **Support Navigating College Systems**
  College systems and departments are an ever changing and challenging thing to navigate even for experienced college students. Help them ask the right questions and work their way through hurdles that come up when navigating these systems and processes to help complete their needs or goals
- **Unenrolled Student Outreach**
 Reaching out to stop-out students to discover reasons for stopping and encourage re-enrollment.
- **WF West Canvas Communication Hub**
  A Canvas page exclusive to WF West grads for them to communicate with their Student Success Coach and receive important updates.

Impact

Student Perception Survey
In March 2021, researchers developed and administered a perception survey to W.F. West graduates from the classes of 2017-2020, who had applied to, and shared their contact information with CC. Survey items were designed to understand students' beliefs about their experiences in high school and college related to postsecondary decision making. Students received an email and/or text link to the survey, and were provided a $25 incentive once the survey was complete. The survey logic guided students into one of five response categories: Attending college, Earned a degree, Started college and left, Never attended college, and Started college, left, and returned. Of the 441 students who received the survey link, 26% (n=101) responded and complete the survey. Figure 3 shows the number of respondents by category. The majority of survey respondents were students currently attending college (n = 72).

Post High School Decisions
All Respondents
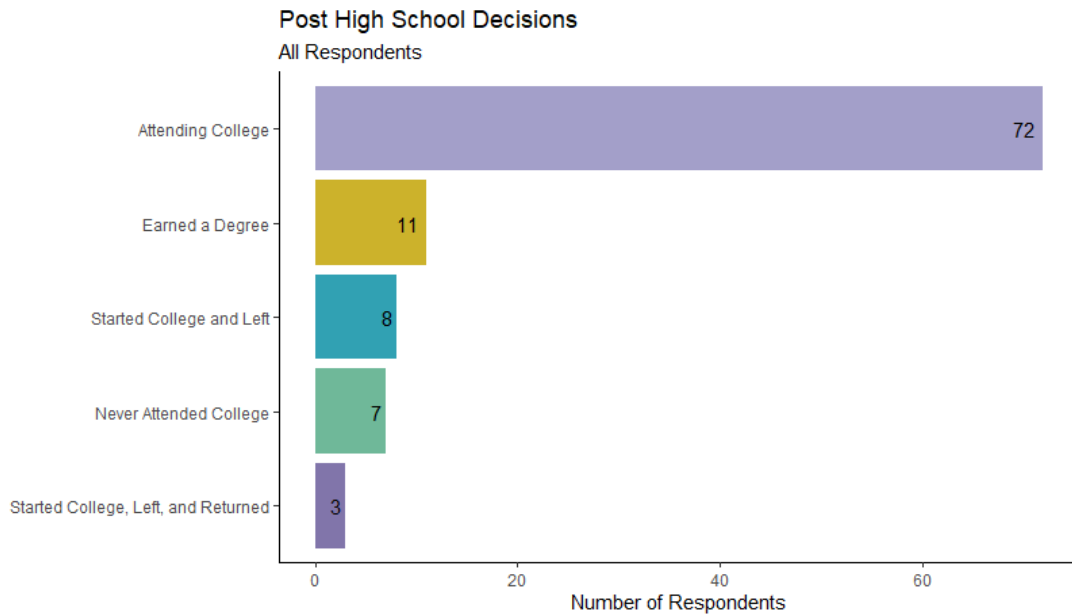
Figure 3

Researchers analyzed survey responses in the aggregate, and by category, to look for trends in the data. When asked to share perspectives on their high school experiences related to postsecondary awareness and support, overall responses were predominately positive (Figure 4). Eighty-seven percent of respondents reported that they believed they could be successful in college, and 86% shared that their high school teachers cared about them. About 28% of respondents shared a non-positive response when asked if they felt ready to go to college, representing the survey item with the lowest positive response rate.

High School Perspectives
All Respondents
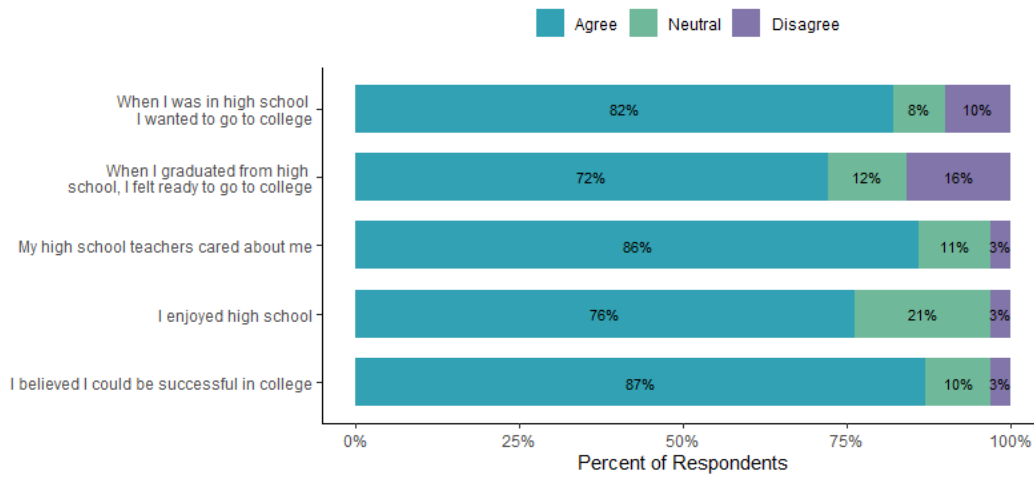
Figure 4

When this same survey item was disaggregated by category, positive responses were more diverse, although the sample size for each category should be considered when making assumptions about responses (Figure 5).

High School Perspectives by Postsecondary Pathway
All Respondents

Figure 5

One notable difference in responses can be seen between students who are attending college or completed a degree, and the others is their perceived readiness and desire to attend college. When asked whether they felt ready to go to college when they graduated high school, 63% of

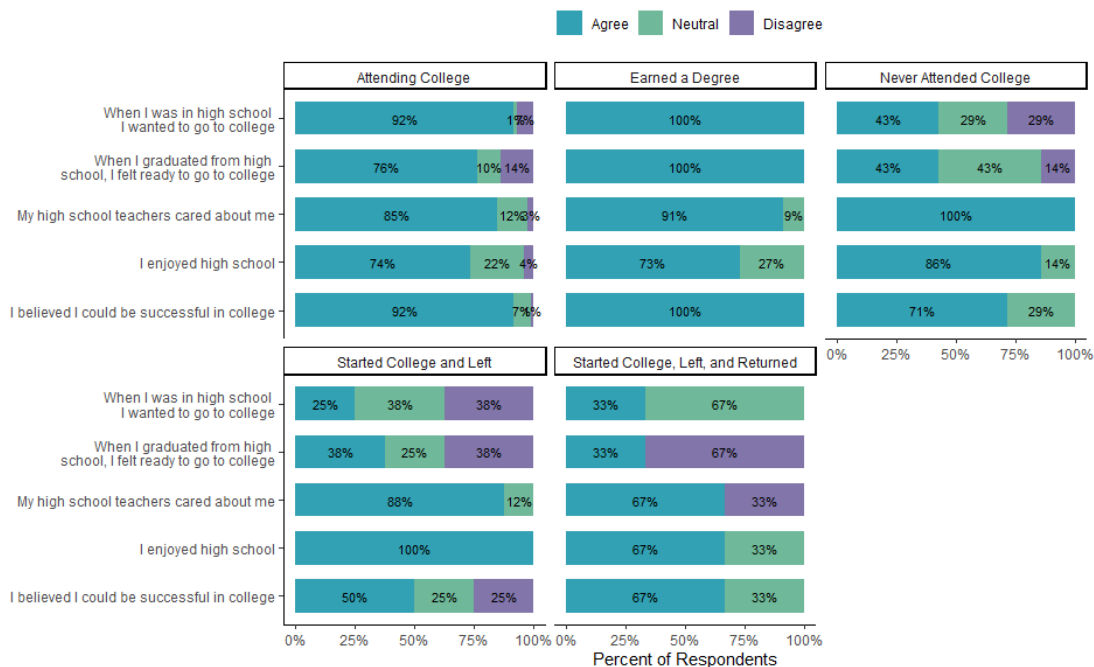students who started college and left responded in a non-positive or neutral way. Only 24% of students in college shared a similar response pattern. Additionally, a higher percentage of students that did not go to college, or did not remain in college, responded non-positively when asked if they wanted to go to college when in high school. Twenty-five percent of the student respondents who started college and left shared that they did not believe they could be successful in college.

Researchers asked students to share their thoughts about the supports they accessed during high school related to postsecondary persistence. Figure 6 displays overall results. Again, these responses were mostly positive. The majority of students talked about college with friends and an adult at the high school, and felt they received help to apply for college.
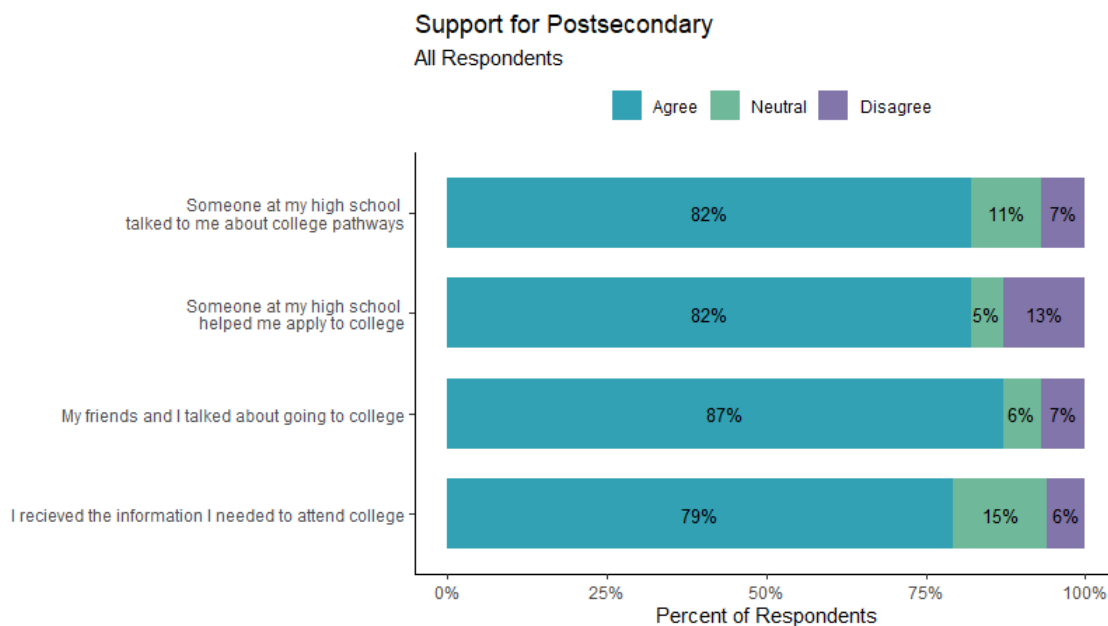

Support for Postsecondary
All Respondents

Legend: Agree | Neutral | Disagree

- Someone at my high school talked to me about college pathways: 82% Agree, 11% Neutral, 7% Disagree
- Someone at my high school helped me apply to college: 82% Agree, 5% Neutral, 13% Disagree
- My friends and I talked about going to college: 87% Agree, 6% Neutral, 7% Disagree
- I recieved the information I needed to attend college: 79% Agree, 15% Neutral, 6% Disagree

Percent of Respondents (0% – 100%)

Figure 6

When disaggregated by category, there are no clear trends in response patterns for each item. Most students felt that someone at the high school helped them to apply to college, and approximately 80% of students from each category, with the exception of those students who left college and returned, responded positively when asked if someone in high school discussed college pathways with them prior to graduation (Figure 7). These results speak to the CSD's consistent and rigorous efforts to engage students in discussions about postsecondary opportunities.

Support for Postsecondary by Postsecondary Pathway
All Respondents

Figure 7
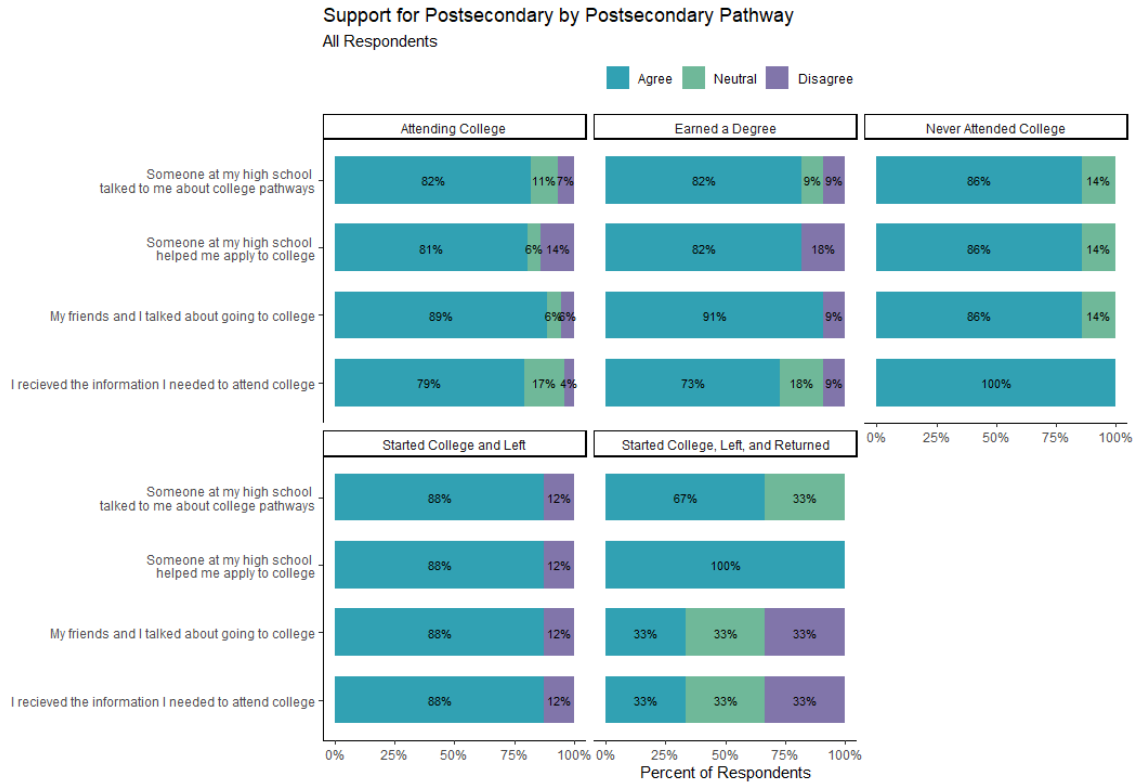
Students were also asked to identify the people they believed to have provided them with support and information about college while in high school. Eighty-six percent of respondents noted that the school counselor provided information, while 68% received information from teachers and 62% from a parent or guardian (Figure 8).
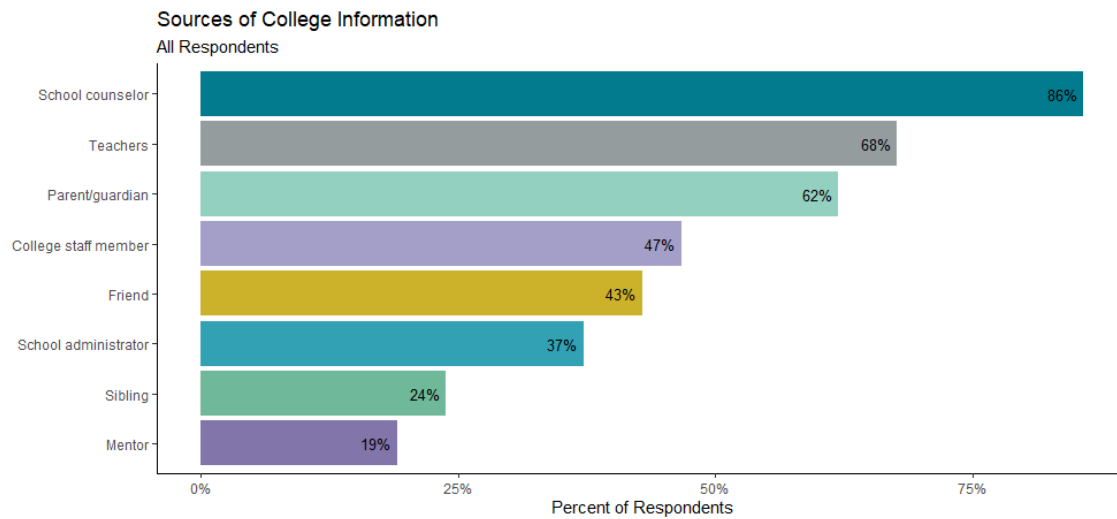

Sources of College Information
All Respondents

Figure 8

Several survey items were included to determine students' existing awareness of the steps to go to college, and their connections to others at a college who might serve as a resource. About 30% of total participants (n=101) responded non-positively when asked if they had at least one meaningful interaction with a college staff member while in high school.
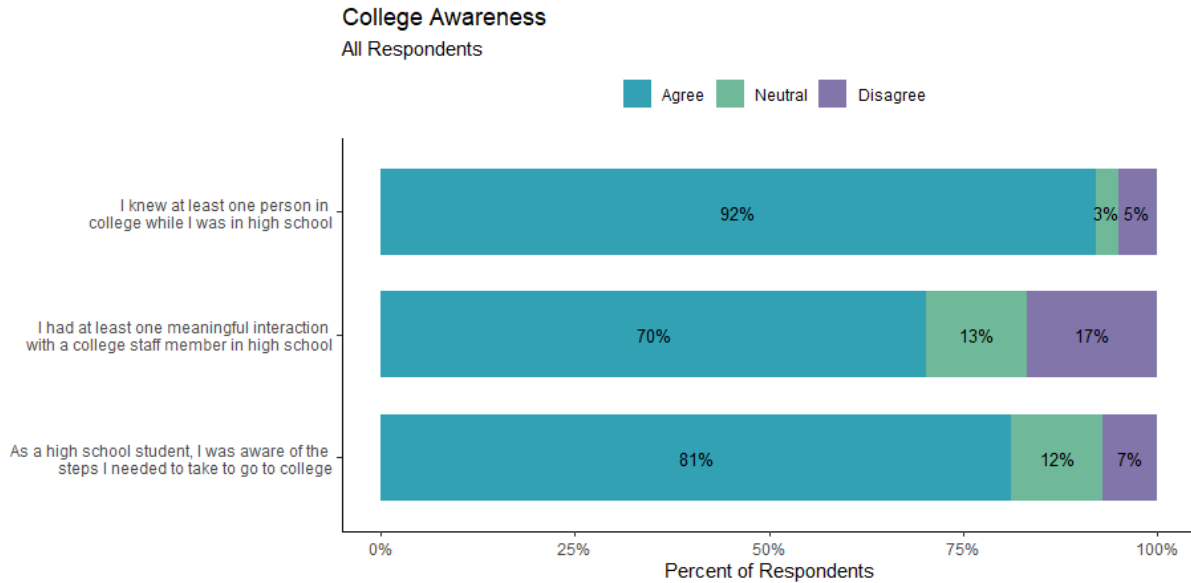
College Awareness
All Respondents

Agree | Neutral | Disagree

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I knew at least one person in college while I was in high school	92%	3%	5%
I had at least one meaningful interaction with a college staff member in high school	70%	13%	17%
As a high school student, I was aware of the steps I needed to take to go to college	81%	12%	7%

Percent of Respondents

Figure 9

Responses disaggregated by category reveal similar patterns across each group of students (Figure 10). Thirty-seven percent of students who left college were either neutral or disagreed when asked if they had a meaningful interaction with college staff while in high school, a similar trend to those that earned a degree.
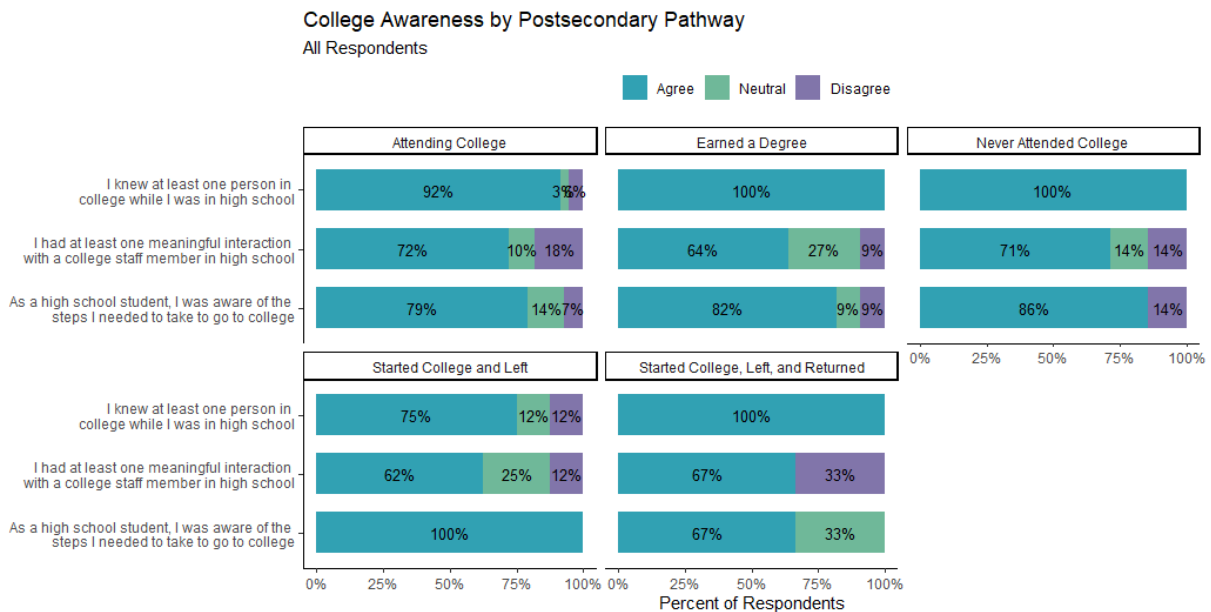
College Awareness by Postsecondary Pathway
All Respondents

Agree | Neutral | Disagree

Attending College		Earned a Degree		Never Attended College	
I knew at least one person in college while I was in high school	92% / 3% 5%	100%		100%	
I had at least one meaningful interaction with a college staff member in high school	72% / 10% 18%	64% / 27% 9%		71% / 14% 14%	
As a high school student, I was aware of the steps I needed to take to go to college	79% / 14% 7%	82% / 9% 9%		86% / 14%	

Started College and Left		Started College, Left, and Returned	
I knew at least one person in college while I was in high school	75% / 12% 12%	100%	
I had at least one meaningful interaction with a college staff member in high school	62% / 25% 12%	67% / 33%	
As a high school student, I was aware of the steps I needed to take to go to college	100%	67% / 33%	

Percent of Respondents

Figure 10

23

In addition to the overall responses from survey participants, survey logic allowed researchers to gather perspectives from each distinct category of respondents to better understand their decision making.

Students who did not enroll in college
Although the sample of participants who did not go to college was small (n=7), researchers were able to identify some potential barriers to college going that should be explored. Almost half of these students shared that they did not go to college because they needed to work, or they did not know what they wanted to study. Additionally, about one third shared that they did not think college was important, or did not understand the application process (Figure 11).
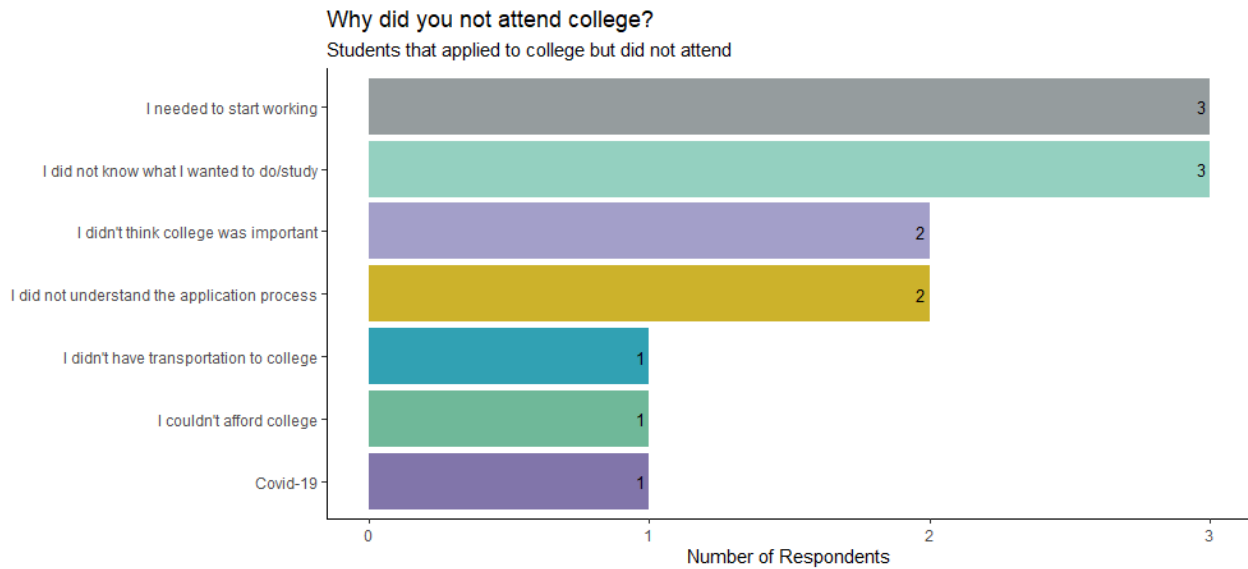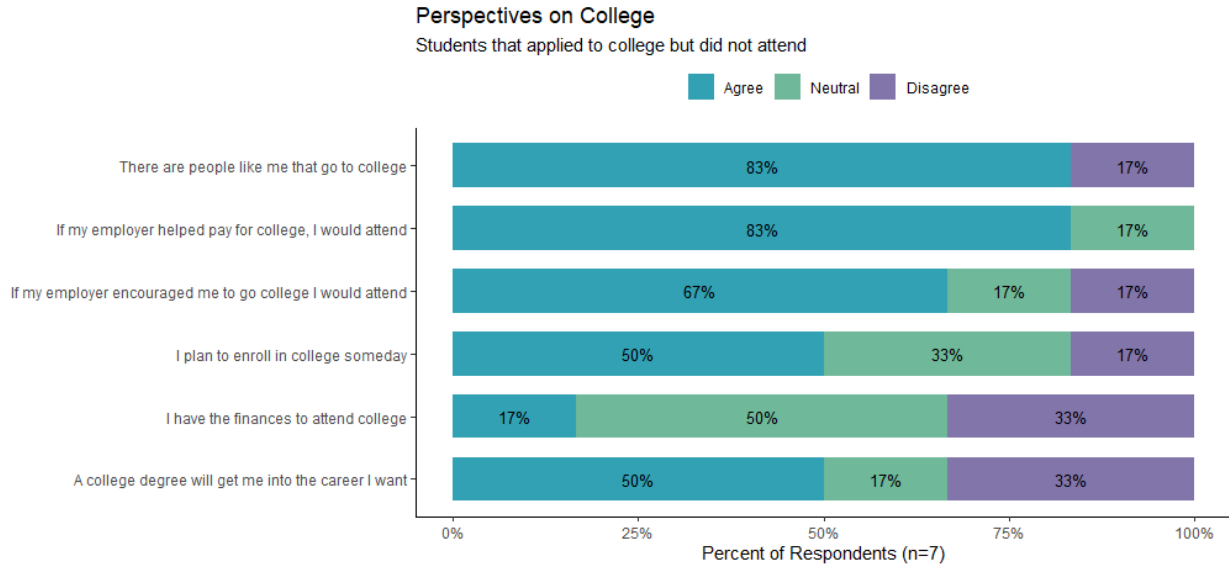
Why did you not attend college?
Students that applied to college but did not attend

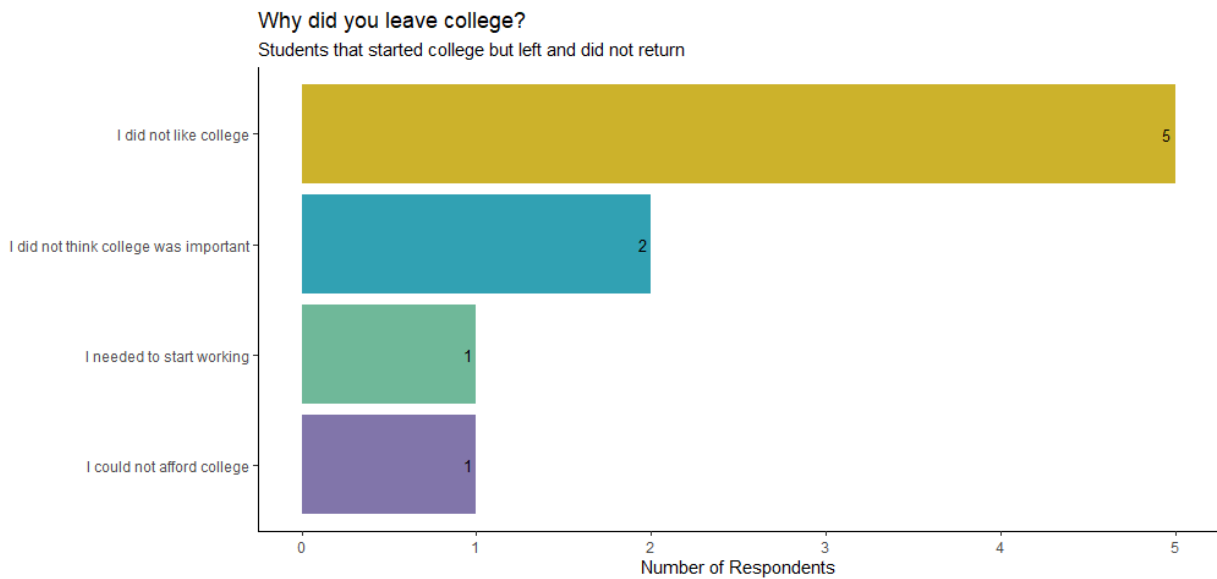| Reason	Number of Respondents
I needed to start working	3
I did not know what I wanted to do/study	3
I didn't think college was important	2
I did not understand the application process	2
I didn't have transportation to college	1
I couldn't afford college	1
Covid-19	1

Figure 11

These students also shared perceptions of circumstances that may have impacted their decision making, or may have an impact in the future. Fifty percent of these students said they plan to go to college someday, and 83% noted that if an employer helped them to pay for college they would go. Most of these students acknowledged that they don't currently have the finances to go to college, although about half also noted that going to college would help them be successful in their preferred career (Figure 12).

Perspectives on College
Students that applied to college but did not attend

Agree   Neutral   Disagree

There are people like me that go to college	83% / 17%
If my employer helped pay for college, I would attend	83% / 17%
If my employer encouraged me to go college I would attend	67% / 17% / 17%
I plan to enroll in college someday	50% / 33% / 17%
I have the finances to attend college	17% / 50% / 33%
A college degree will get me into the career I want	50% / 17% / 33%

Percent of Respondents (n=7)

Figure 12

Students that started college and left, but have not returned
Several survey items focused on understanding why students left college, and what might help them to return to complete their degree or certification. Of the students that met this criteria (n=8), more than half said they did not like college, and approximately 20% shared that college was not important to them.

Why did you leave college?
Students that started college but left and did not return

I did not like college	5
I did not think college was important	2
I needed to start working	1
I could not afford college	1

Number of Respondents

Figure 13

Students in this category were most likely to access academic advising while in college, while social emotional counseling and peer supports were less utilized (Figure 14).
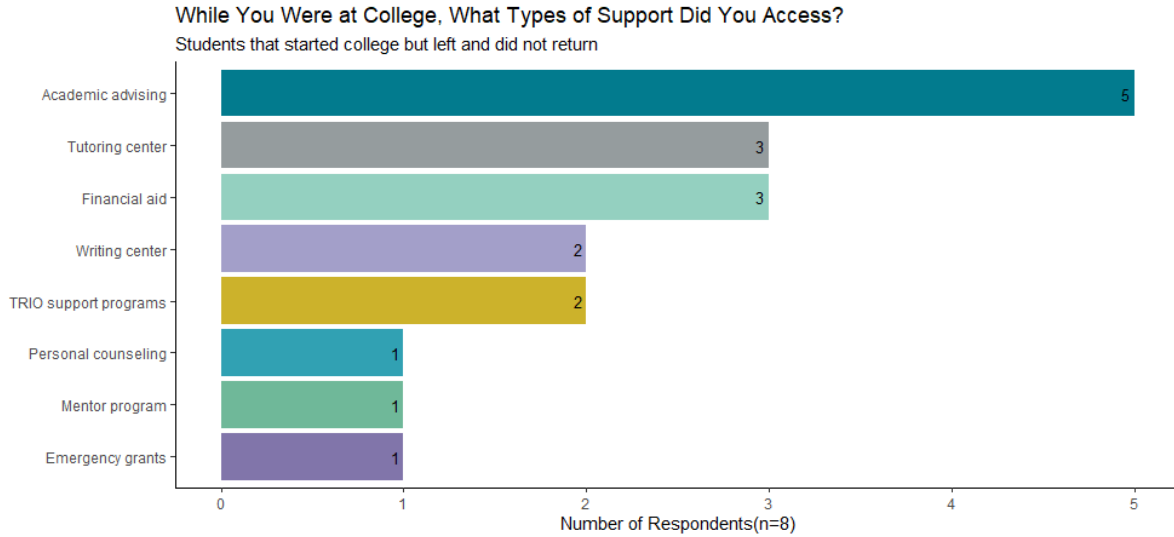
While You Were at College, What Types of Support Did You Access?
Students that started college but left and did not return

Figure 14

About 50% of students who stopped out of college noted that there wasn't anything the college could have done to encourage them to stay, while another 50% shared that they planned to enroll in college in the future (Figure 15). All of the students who identified as having dropped out of college agreed that having a peer mentor in college would not have encouraged them to stay, and 75% did not believe that a call or reach out from college faculty would have helped them stay either.

Perspectives on College
Students that started college but left and did not return
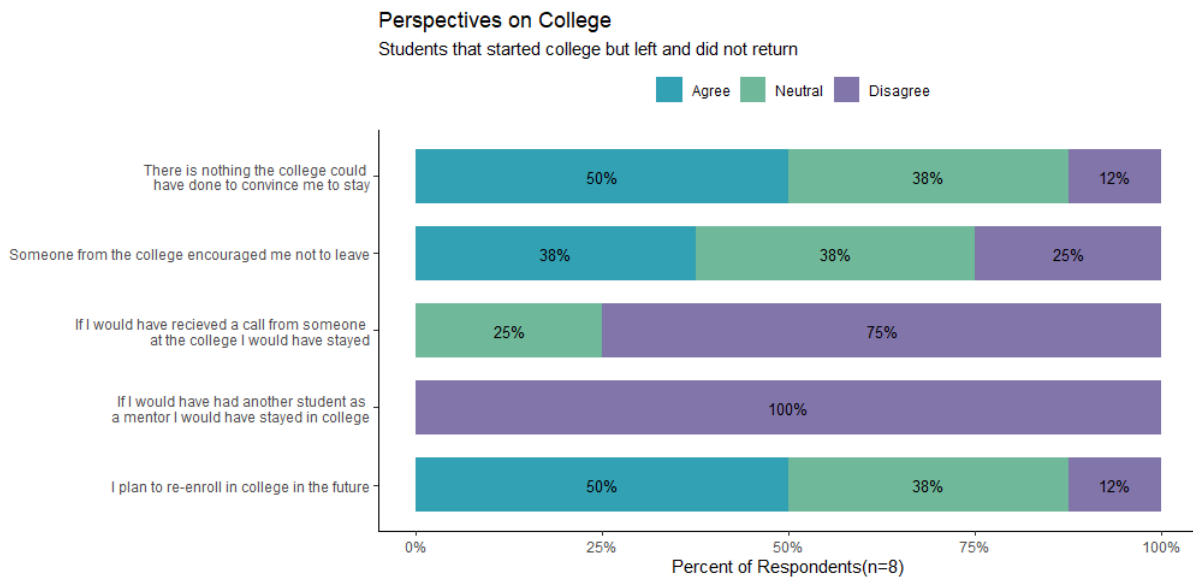
Figure 15

When asked about what might encourage them to return to college, 50% of these respondents shared that the ability to work and go to school at the same time would be influential. About 40%

said they would need more financial resources, and 25% agreed that housing close to campus would be a factor in returning to college (Figure 16).
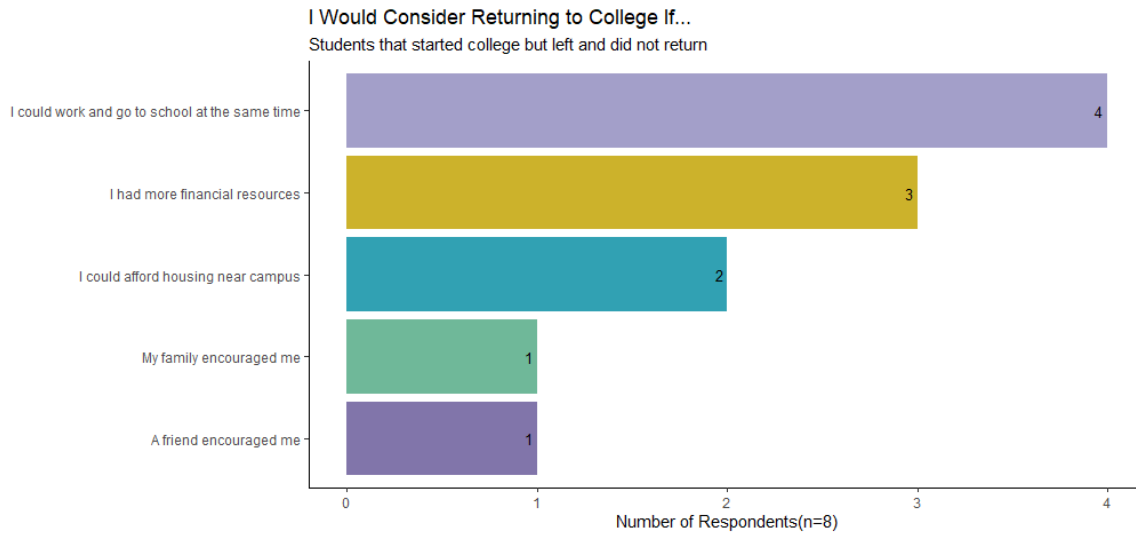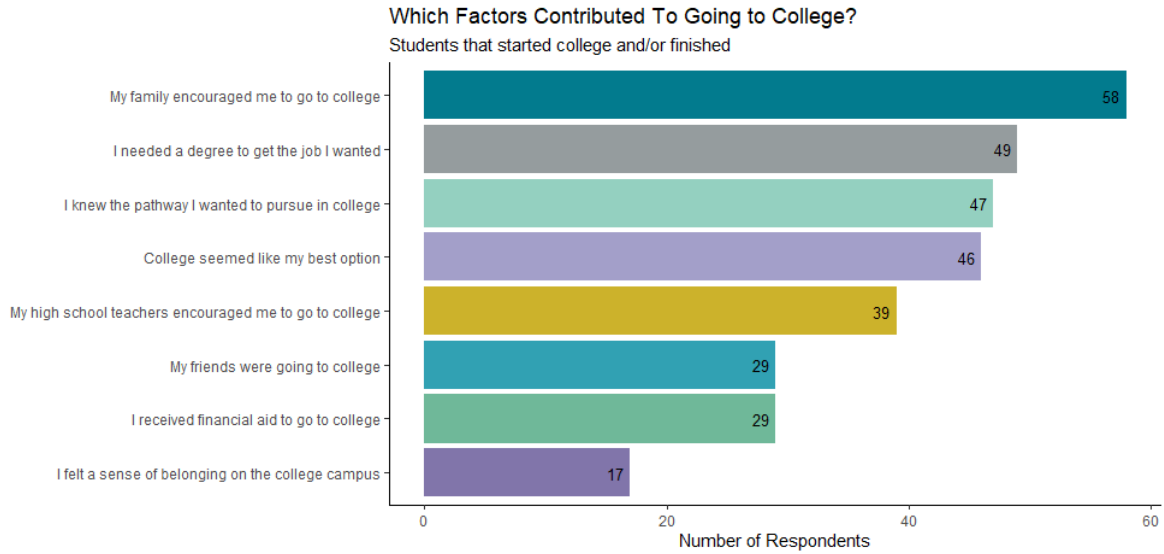

I Would Consider Returning to College If...
Students that started college but left and did not return

Figure 16

Students who attended, left, and then returned to college
Of the total survey respondents (n=101), 3 students were currently enrolled in CC after a stop out from college. While it difficult to identify trends with a small group of students, there were some characteristics all 3 students shared. None of these students took college classes while in high school, and all identified as first-generation college students. Additionally, all 3 students shared that their school counselor, teachers, and a college staff member talked to them about college while in high school. While each student identified a different reason for leaving, and for returning to CC, all 3 noted that they were using academic supports at the college during their current enrollment.
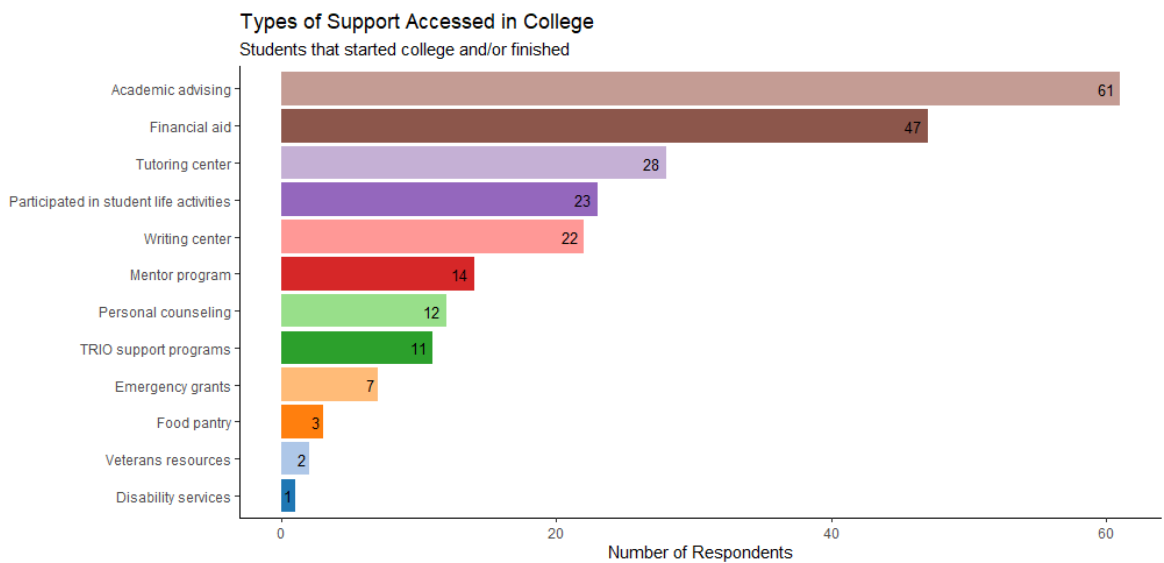
Students that attended or have graduated college
Of the students who identified as having been college students, more than half attended CC. Researchers hoped to learn what resources and supports were the most frequently accessed by these students. Of the 83 students who met the criteria for this category, 70% said that family encouragement was a factor in their decision to go to college. About 60% said they needed a degree to obtain their preferred employment, and a similar percentage shared that college seemed like their best option after high school. About 47% of the students noted that encouragement from high school teachers was a factor in their decision (Figure 17).

Which Factors Contributed To Going to College?
Students that started college and/or finished

	Number of Respondents
My family encouraged me to go to college	58
I needed a degree to get the job I wanted	49
I knew the pathway I wanted to pursue in college	47
College seemed like my best option	46
My high school teachers encouraged me to go to college	39
My friends were going to college	29
I received financial aid to go to college	29
I felt a sense of belonging on the college campus	17

Figure 17

Additional survey items asked college going students to share the most often utilized resources accessed while in college. Approximately 75% responded that they access academic advising, and 56% used financial aid. Many of the social support program were accessed less frequently by these survey respondents. About 14% of college going respondents accessed personal counseling, and 17% met with a mentor. Overall, academic supports appeared to be the most often accessed by survey participants (Figure 18).

Types of Support Accessed in College
Students that started college and/or finished

	Number of Respondents
Academic advising	61
Financial aid	47
Tutoring center	28
Participated in student life activities	23
Writing center	22
Mentor program	14
Personal counseling	12
TRIO support programs	11
Emergency grants	7
Food pantry	3
Veterans resources	2
Disability services	1

Figure 18

Survey respondents were asked to provide insights to peers who might be uncertain about college. Several students noted that college was a personal process, and each individual should

consider their own path. A few students noted the various supports at the college, and shared that finding the right combination of supports was a process, but worth it. One student commented,

> I would tell them that college is extremely valuable because you have the opportunity to explore different interests and any potential career ideas. College is also valuable because it gives you the skills you need to take on a career or a job. For those who don't think college is possible, we have a great school nearby that is fairly inexpensive and filled with people who want you to succeed and will work to make it happen for every student.

Another student shared, "You go through a lot of personal growth in college that you didn't expect. A lot of doors can open both career-wise and for meeting people."

Student Interviews
Survey participants were given the option to receive an additional cash incentive to participate in follow up interviews. Five students responded to researchers' requests to discuss their postsecondary experiences, and interviews took place via Zoom online meetings. The students selected for interviews had gone to college and left, or had returned to college after stopping out. Interview questions focused on experiences in high school and college, including the supports and barriers to college going that impacted each student's decision making.

When asked whether they felt that CSD was a career and college ready district, interview participants all agreed that they discussed career and college often while in high school. Interviewees highlighted the Career and College Readiness (CCR) block that happened each week, and shared that their counselors were extremely supportive and knowledgeable. One interviewee shared,

> Constant talking about career and college, it was super pressed, constant. Always talked about, but it wasn't too much because you're not always prepared for it. I wasn't at first, but looking back they had answers and resources. They were really good about going on to college. College was a big press compared to everything else. Trade schools were mentioned but it was pressed towards a college.

Another student agreed, noting that even though some of the CCR activities were "boring" or "didn't seem useful," the dedicated time did help to maintain the focus on postsecondary options, so it became a part of their learning, not an add on.

During interviews, researchers were also curious about why these students decided college was the right path for them, and what supports influenced their decisions. Although their responses mirrored survey responses, it was clear that decisions around career and college are deeply personal, and include multiple factors. One student discussed the financial support he received, through College Bound and federal financial aid. Another shared that both of his sisters went to college, so it seemed like the path to follow. He continued by noting, "Lots of my teachers telling

me I should go to college, especially with all the new jobs that require a degree, and the higher paid jobs require that…"

Interviewees discussed barriers and concerns about college, specifically around enrolling in college directly after high school. A few of the students shared honestly about their uncertainty related to career interests, agreeing that going to college seemed like a waste of time and money if your path wasn't clear. One student, who was planning to return to college in the fall after stopping out, shared, "thinking about going to college was nerve wracking. [I] was anxious about new situations, like meeting new teachers, what the 1st day would be like, where [I] would go, etc." Another student felt that time to explore interests, earn money and obtain work experience was more relevant than sitting in class after high school graduation.

When asked why she was returning to college after stopping out, one interviewee noted that she wanted to finish what she started. This aligns with research noting that often those that reengage want to feel a sense of accomplish for themselves (ReUp, 2020). She shared, "I know some people my age that have gone back, and that has been inspiring." She said this is giving her a confidence boost, and noted, "The older I get the more I realize what I want to do."

When researchers asked these interviewees to provide some recommendations for students that might want to reengage in college after some time away from school, one student shared that more opportunities to visit the college, and to participate in college life, would probably be useful. She suggested a "fake day as a college student," where high school juniors or seniors could spend a day on campus, with a mock schedule, learning more about how a college schedule works, what the classroom feels like, and how instruction might be similar, or different, to their high school classrooms. She also noted that once in college, she would have loved more peer study groups with students in her same pathway. This, she noted, might have helped to feel less isolated, and more confident.

One interviewee shared that more resources for stress and mental health would have been appreciated. While CC offers many opportunities for students to benefit from these services, very few of the survey participants responded that they accessed them. In addition to emotional support, one student commented on challenges communicating with CC staff. They noted, "friends have shared that they have trouble communicating with teachers…in an ideal world, there would be opportunities to Zoom with teachers during office hours, even once students were back in person. [I] would also appreciate more options for communicating, including maybe texting." She concluded by noting, "Chehalis has a real small business focus. Many of my peers have started their own businesses in the community, and while they manage, they might not realize that getting a degree could help them to be more successful and grow their businesses. CC could fill his gap."

Quantitative School Level Data

In addition to empirical literature and promising practice evidence, and student perception data on postsecondary awareness and experience, researchers gathered and analyzed CSD student

data to develop an understanding of currents trends and outcomes in the district related to postsecondary success. These metrics, tracked longitudinally, may help SAI leaders determine next steps in supporting all students in their postsecondary decision making. Metrics were selected to align with current research.

Based on research citing the importance of participating in at least one college level course prior to high school graduation, researchers analyzed W.F. West student transcripts to understand course taking patterns related to postsecondary enrollment. Graduates from the Class of 2017 through the Class of 2020 were included in the analysis, and researchers disaggregated the data by demographic characteristics, including ethnicity, socio-economic status, and gender. College level courses offered at W.F. West include Running Start, College in the High School, and Advance Placement (AP) courses. Since 2017, the percentage of students taking at least one college level course while in high school has increased, from 52% to 60% (Figure 19). This may be the result of greater awareness of the courses offered, or increased opportunities in the course catalogue. When looking at this data through a socio-economic lens, there appears to be some disproportionality that exists across all years of data collection. Students receiving free/reduced lunch (FRL) benefits appear to take college level courses at significantly lower rates than their non-FRL peers (Figure 20). This trend persists when looking at the data through racial demographics, although the disproportionality is less significant (Figure 21).
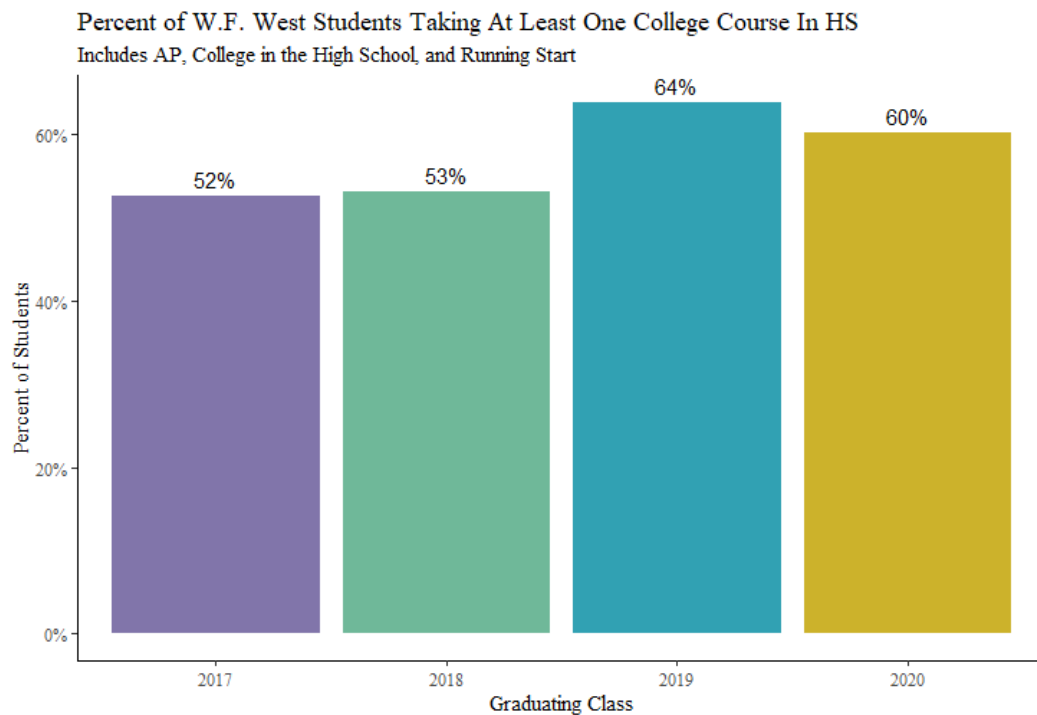

Figure 19

Percent of FRL and Non-FRL W.F. West Students Taking At Least One College Course In HS
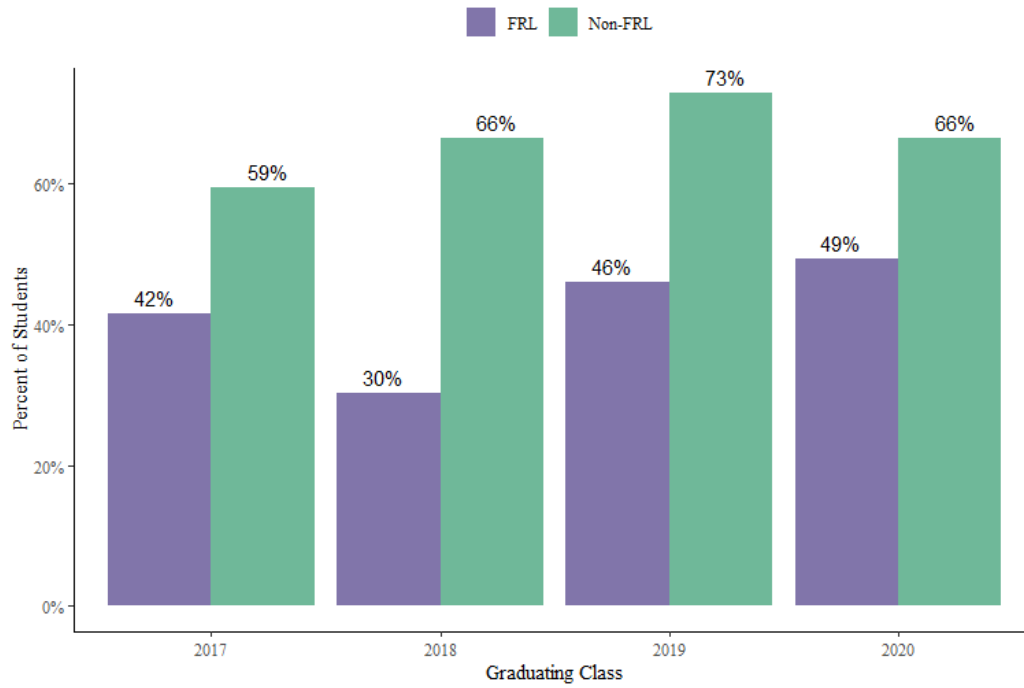
Includes AP, College in the High School, and Running Start

■ FRL ■ Non-FRL

Figure 20

Percent of W.F. West Students Taking At Least One College Course In HS by Ethnicity
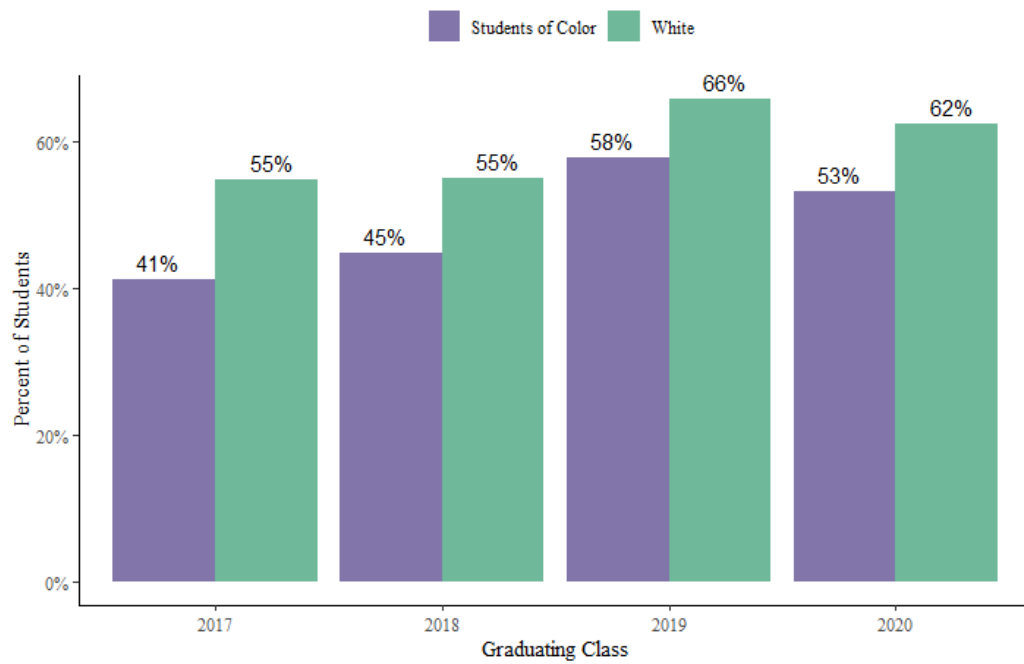
Includes AP, College in the High School, and Running Start

■ Students of Color ■ White

Figure 21

Based on CSD data and empirical evidence, researchers conducted a logistic regression to develop a model that could predict if students would enroll in college after high school. A review of current literature pointed to three predictive variables: number of college credits taken in high school, days absent during senior year, and cumulative GPA. In addition, we added FRL status to the model. The goal was to see how accurately we could predict if a student was going to enroll in college after high school.

The data for the model came from graduate transcripts for the Classes of 2017 through 2020. The final model was 66.4% accurate in predicting if a student enrolled in college after high school. Table 1 shows the number of cases that were predicted enrolled versus the true values.

Table 1

	Truth	
Prediction	Not Enrolled	Enrolled
Not Enrolled	35	23
Enrolled	26	62

Table 2 shows the odds ratios for the predictor variables used in the model. Cumulative GPA was a statistically significant predictor of college going. The number under the estimate column represents the increase in odds of a student enrolling in college if that variable was to increase by 1. For example, an increase in 1 GPA point makes a student 6.2 times more likely to enroll in college after high school. This means that a student that earned a 3.2 is 6.2 times more likely to enroll in college than a classmate that earned a 2.2.

Table 2

term	estimate	std.error	statistic	p.value
(Intercept)	0.0058563	0.7057189	-7.2836865	0.0000000
College credits in HS	0.9827767	0.0211857	-0.8200526	0.4121861
Cum GPA	**6.2425911**	0.2408507	7.6038606	**0.0000000**
Days Absent	1.0028566	0.0083448	0.3418349	0.7324751
Non-FRL	1.4972947	0.2363755	1.7077061	0.0876909

W.F. West College Enrollment Data

In addition to high school level data, researchers explored college enrollment data for W.F. West students who graduated between 2017 and 2020. This data, taken from the NSC, includes 2 and 4-year colleges who report to the NSC, but does not include apprenticeship programs or military enlistment that students may choose instead of college. The percentage of students directly enrolling in college has steadily increased since 2017, but saw a modest decrease in 2020 during the pandemic (Figure 22).

College Enrollment by Graduating Class
Classes of 2017-2020
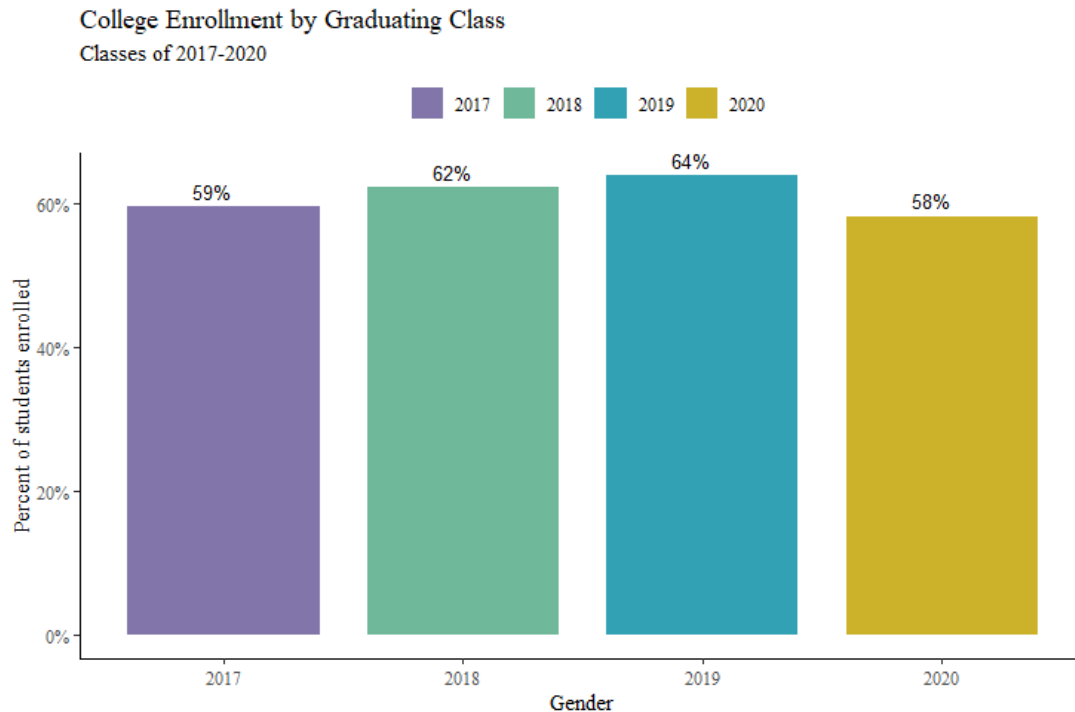
Figure 22

When disaggregated by gender, the data reveals that females are enrolling in college at higher rates than males across all four years of data collection. While the most significant disproportionality was seen in the Class of 2019, the difference lessens to 9-percentage points for the Class of 2020 (Figure 23). A similar patter exists when looking at college enrollment data by FRL status. W.F. West students that receive Free/Reduced Price lunch benefits enroll in college at lower rates than their peers, a trend that exists across all four years of data collected (Figure 24).

College Enrollment by Gender
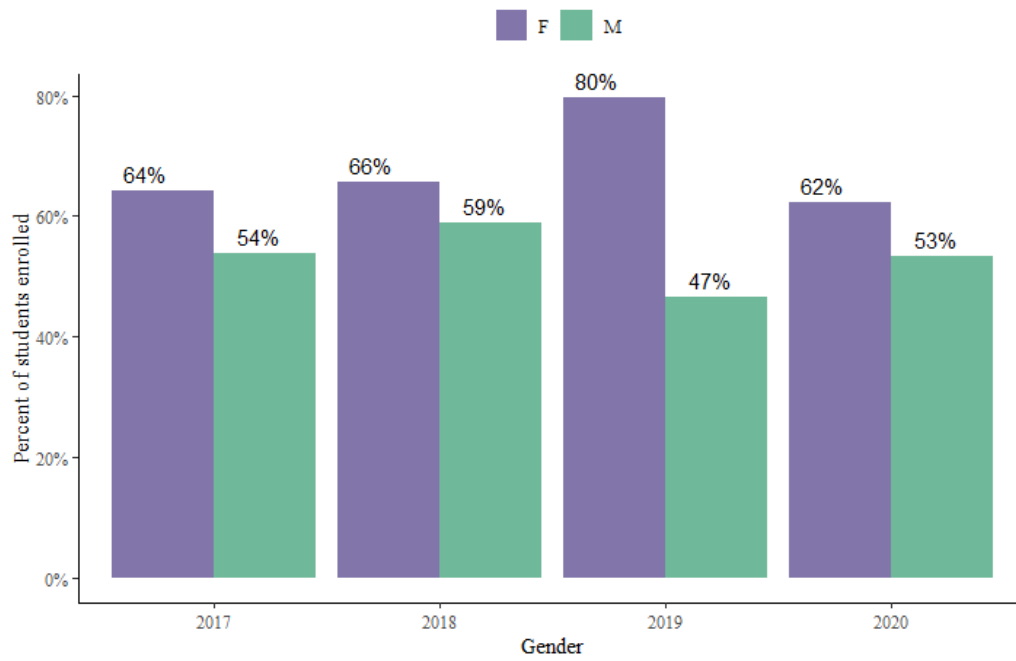Classes of 2017-2020

Figure 23

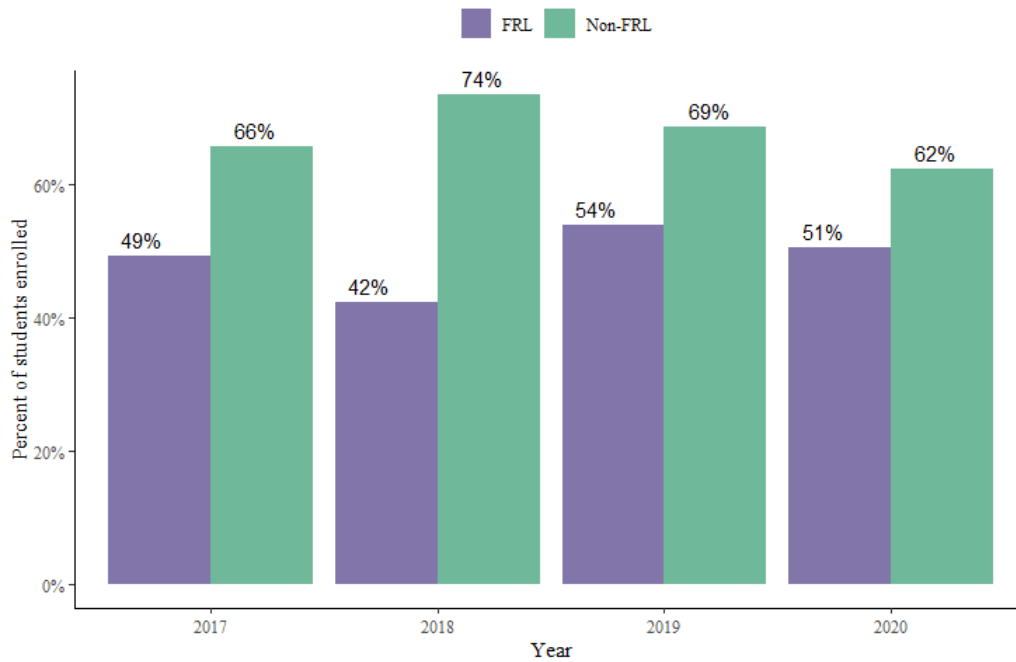## College Enrollment by FRL Status
Classes of 2017-2020

Figure 24

Enrollment by ethnicity is less disproportionate, with a relatively equitable distribution of students across all four years of data collection (Figure 25).
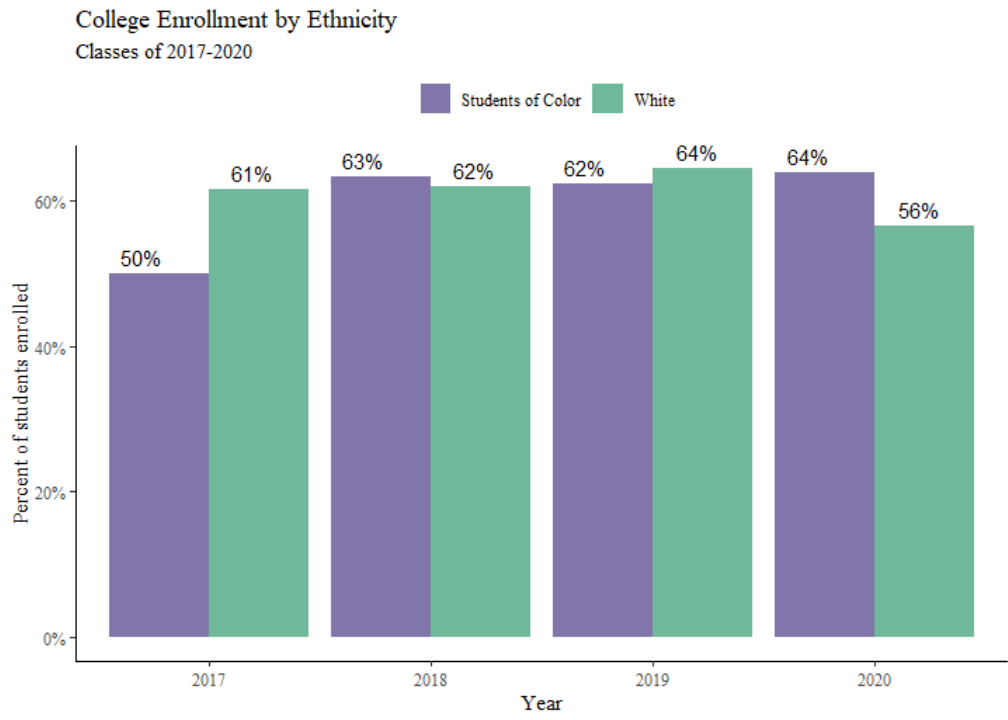

College Enrollment by Ethnicity
Classes of 2017-2020

Figure 25

Researchers also gathered current CC enrollment data for each graduating class between 2017 and 2020 (Table 3). CC, a partner in the SAI, serves the largest percentage of W.F. West students that enroll in 2-year colleges. Enrollment numbers have remained fairly consistent over the past 4 years, however, when disaggregated by gender and FRL, similar patterns of disproportionality exist, with females and non-FRL students enrolling at significantly higher rates (Figure 26, Figure 27).

Table 3

Graduation Year	Enrolled in Centralia College
2017	69
2018	69
2019	64
2020	66

Centralia College Enrollment by Gender
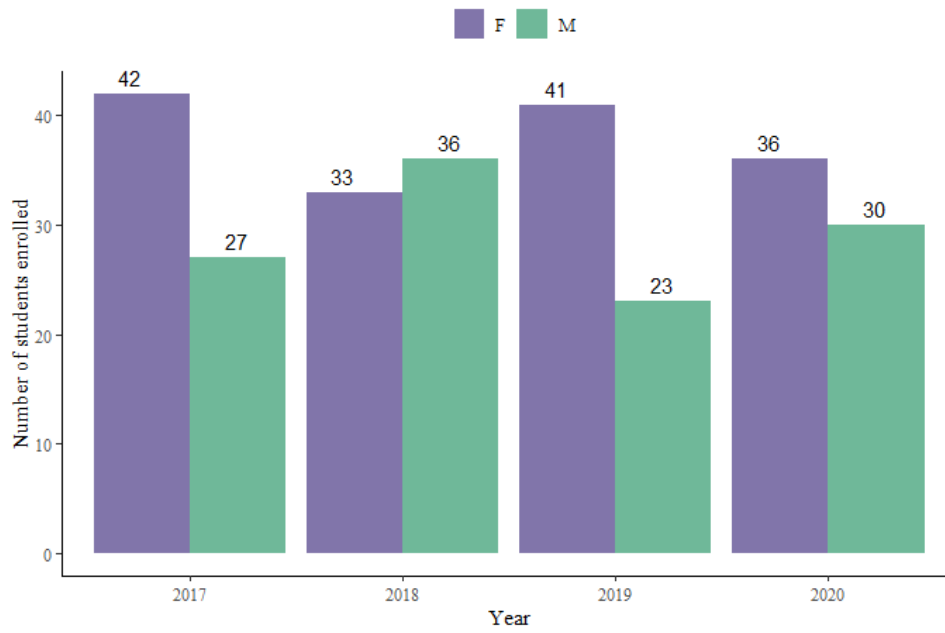### Classes of 2017-2020

Figure 26

Centralia College Enrollment by FRL Status
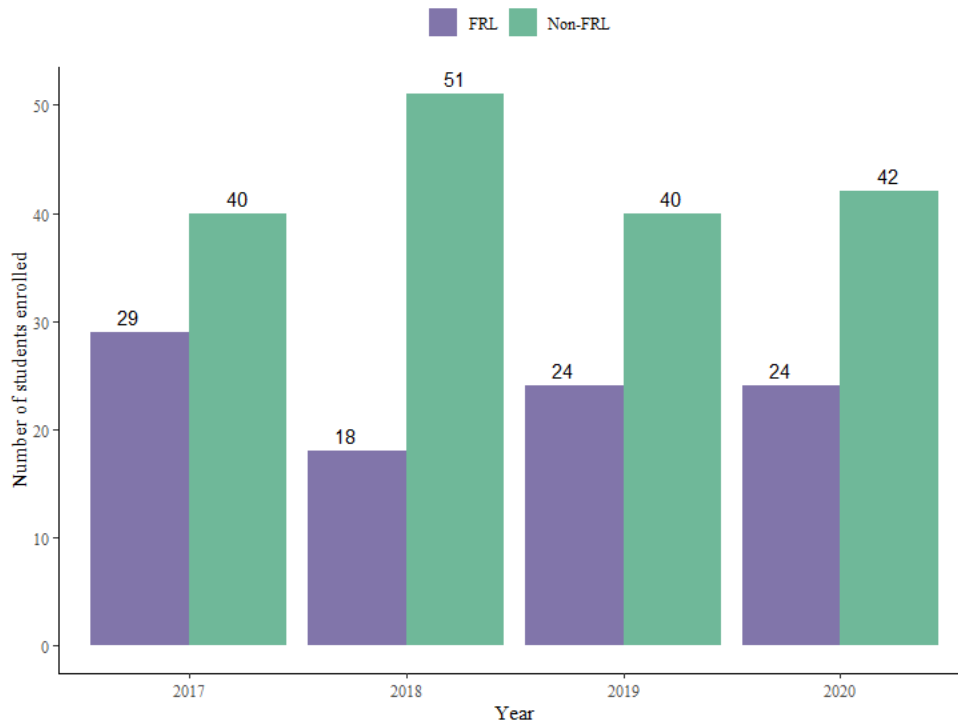### Classes of 2017-2020

Figure 27

Summary

There is a robust national effort to increase postsecondary attainment for all students. The SAI has been leading this work in Chehalis for a decade. Beginning with a district-wide Needs Assessment in 2012, CSD leaders and community members have collaborated, researched, and implemented policies and practices to support all CSD students in developing an awareness of postsecondary options and opportunities. These efforts have yielded significant results; the percent of students graduating high school has increased by over 10-percentage points, the number of students enrolling directly into a postsecondary option continues to rise, and the 6-year college completion rate is at its highest, with 43% of W.F. graduates from the Class of 2014 receiving a degree from a 2 or 4-year college.

SAI leaders have continued to explore and develop research-based practices, including academic, social, and emotional supports for all k-12 students. The district's partnership with Centralia College has allowed for vertical articulation based on evidence from National Promise programs. Each year CSD administrators review student data, and work collaboratively with the SAI team to develop a plan of improvement based upon that data. This continuous cycle of reflection has been an effective, iterative process with stakeholder voice and investment.

Despite the significant progress of the SAI, more than half of the students from each graduating class do not complete a certificate or postsecondary degree, falling below the goal of 60%. SAI leaders remain invested in understanding how to better support these students as they graduate high school and consider their futures. By exploring reengagement, leaders hope to develop new practices to support the students who may be uncertain or unaware of the postsecondary opportunities available.

Although the empirical research on reengagement is scant, there are several programs and communities that are actively working to bring students back into education once they have disengaged. Anecdotal evidence from leaders in the field and student surveys demonstrate that college going is a complex process, making it challenging to quantify methods to improve the process. While high school GPA and 9th grade on track percentages are predictors of college going, and students from this study shared that they use academic supports most often, it is also clear that the ability to feel efficacious in academics comes from a strong social and emotional foundation. Additionally, for each student, a unique set of socio-cultural factors play a role in postsecondary decision making. For these reasons, one of the most influence factors for supporting postsecondary success is relationship building, at multiple stages of academic and social development, and in multiple contexts.

Considerations

The CSD and CC are currently implementing several practices that align with empirical evidence and national promising practices. Additional considerations for continuous improvement are included.

Don't lose connection after graduation

Every national leader included in the study suggested taking advantage of the years in high school to establish relationships with students and to gather personal information that will follow students once they graduate. For example, do not rely upon school email addresses that will expire upon graduation. Gather cell phone numbers and personal email addresses as much as possible. Many recommended a Strategic Communication Plan for post-graduation follow-up.

Develop a robust alumni program

One potential opportunity to build and strengthen relationships to support postsecondary reengagement is through a well-developed and maintained alumni association. Alumni from the school district are a resource for younger adults in the community. One suggestion is to create an internship opportunity for a recent CSD graduate to develop a database of alumni and create a social media presence. The alumni association could also connect with local businesses and colleges, promote opportunities, and spread awareness about the value and process of reengagement.

Targeted, simple messaging

Leaders from Kalamazoo and Tennessee spoke about the importance of clear, simple messaging. In order to reach a target audience of young adults, these leaders recommend a focus on one or two important details, with a simple process for accessing resources. When there are too many paths or steps, students are less likely to reengage. Particularly for students who may have left the education system, messaging that targets why a return would benefit them is important. One thing to consider is a media campaign that highlights the benefits of reengagement, and how to begin the process. Another consideration is to use social media in creative ways. One program leader discussed a TicTok for federal aid completion, and another spoke of a Facebook group for students who had graduated from the district. Leaders also noted that students do not typically initiate conversations about their education, so putting the information out into the community is critical.

Increase the amount of business involvement in education

During interviews with Kalamazoo Promise leaders, discussions focused on partnerships with local business and industry. Bob Jorth and Janet Brown discussed the importance of building reciprocal relationships between the school district and local businesses, to strengthen the sense of community and responsibility. They considered business partnerships one of the three pillars of the Promise. As the SAI continues to expand its reach, one suggestion is to consider authentic

ways to engage local businesses in the work of the initiative. The White House Summary on Community College Report (2011) suggested providing teaching opportunities for community business representatives, in addition to developing mentorship programs. To support reengagement, local businesses that are connected to the education system will be more likely to suggest postsecondary degrees or credentials for their employees. This is another relationship with potential impact for students.

Help to develop training opportunities
By strengthening relationships with local business, the SAI could help to develop the employment pipeline, creating more opportunities for internships and work study programs. During interviews and through survey responses, students shared that one reason for putting off college is not knowing what interests them. Providing authentic experiences to participate in fieldwork could mitigate some of the uncertainty many students feel when faced with leaving the comfort and familiarity of high school. By engaging in short internships that provide insight into what an actual work experience might be like, they can make more informed decisions that feel less risky.

Professional development opportunities for teachers, parents, and community members
Since building a career and college ready system is a community initiative, one consideration is developing a professional development series for all stakeholders involved in postsecondary access and success. In Texas, the state is implementing the Texas OnCourse initiative, which provides training and resources for districts across the state related to Career, College and Military Readiness (CCMR). Texas OnCourse leaders have developed a comprehensive training program with modules designed to address topics including financial aid, college application, and the college experience. Counselors, teachers, administrators, and parents may access the courses, and school staff can receive badges for completing topics, and use these hours for continuing education credits.

Continue to develop college level course taking in high school
Although 60% of CSD students already take at least one college course while in high school, one consideration is to build a CTE Running Start Pathway, providing opportunities for students interested in certification program to earn college credits in relevant CTE coursework. There is currently an underrepresentation of students who receive FRL benefits and students of color in college level coursework, which should be explored more fully to provide equitable support for career and college success to all students throughout the district.

College incentives for reengaging
While CC already has several programs and initiative designed to help students remain enrolled and engaged in college, research on national promising practices shows some additional ways to support students and potentially increase the number of students willing to reengage. One

suggestion is a mandatory college transition course. In one community, this course if offered for free if students take another course in the same quarter. Similarly, another program pays students for their first course back when they reengage in college. Some schools are also working to auto-enroll students into college, which helps to streamline the process and minimize the potential for students to quit.

Stepped reengagement process
Representatives from WSAC discussed the importance of meeting students where they are, and helping them to not feel overwhelmed with the process of returning to education. One consideration is to offer a stepped process into reengagement, where students take a single course, or work towards a short-term goal, and then work with counselors and advisors to understand more complex opportunities once they have experienced success in their first course(s) back.

Develop a comprehensive, collaborative data base capable of predicable analytics
One hallmark of large-scale promise programs is the development and maintenance of comprehensive, longitudinal databases to track students into their postsecondary option. In Tennessee, Krissy D'Alessandro shared that they maintain a database that allows them to understand students holistically, from attendance, grades in high school, contact points with career and college counselors, financial aid information, and any additional data points. She shared that she is able to call up any student, and see their path and progress. This allows those working with students to understand their unique needs and develop a plan specific to those needs. This also helps with relationship building, and provides an opportunity to maintain contact with students who may disengage from their education. Additionally, using a predictive model to better understand which students are less likely to enroll or attend college may help counselors and teachers strategically target those students with early intervention efforts.

Early Reengagement Strategies with at-risk students
When looking at survey responses from CSD students, those that did not enroll, or complete college scored items focused on college relevance and personal efficacy low. Krissy D'Alessandro, from TNAchieves, shared that students need to see the value proposition of reengagement. Although the CSD and CC are already implementing several strategies to engage students in relevant college awareness and career interest activities, there continue to be students that do not see the value in college, or do not believe they will be successful. One strategy to consider would be to use the predictive model during Junior year to determine students at risk for not enrolling. Using this data, school leaders can make a strategic effort to reengage those specific students in their education before they officially disengage.

Begin postsecondary discussions early

Researchers met with many experts on postsecondary engagement who discussed the importance of beginning these discussions early, in authentic and meaningful ways. While it is good for young students to see where their teachers went to school, and wear college gear, it is even more important for them to develop the growth mindset necessary to feel efficacious, and believe that they can be successful if they choose a college or credential program after high school. This foundational knowledge also helps when students do lose that connection to education, and may be considering reengaging. Since relationship building is critical to reengagement, exploring the different relationships young students might benefit from is important. Bringing in current CSD alumni to talk about their career or college path, professors from the local college, and community business leaders could help to build connection at an early age.

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