



PRESS RELEASE

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Center for Educational Effectiveness (CEE) Releases New Study

Characteristics of Positive Outlier Schools:

Illuminating the Strengths of American Indian/Alaska Native, Black, Latino/a, and Students Experiencing Poverty

BELLEVUE, WA – June 8, 2021—Moving beyond a singular focus on academic performance, today the Center for Educational Effectiveness (CEE), with the generous support of the Bill & Melinda Gates foundation, released a seminal study—Characteristics of Positive Outlier Schools: Illuminating the Strengths of American Indian/Alaska Native, Black, Latino/a, and students experiencing poverty. Notably, seven measures of performance were analyzed for over 2,100 schools in Washington state to identify true outliers for systemic performance and improvement:

- Attendance
- Progress for English learners
- English-language arts performance
- Mathematics performance
- Readiness for high school
- High school course rigor (obtaining college credits)
- Graduation rates

Positive outlier schools are prioritizing the development of an “equity culture”, defined by Fullan and Malloy (2019) as “one that centers the voices and experiences of those most underserved in all decisions.”

Using student-level academic and engagement data from 2014 through 2019, this study identified schools in Washington State that have successfully removed barriers and created the conditions that amplified the existing strengths of Black, Latino/a, American Indian/Alaska Native, and students experiencing poverty. District



and building administrators in the 38 schools identified as beating the odds embrace the responsibility to create the conditions for illuminating and building on students' strengths.

Dr. John Steach, CEO for CEE shares, "Phase 2 of the study resulted in the critical understanding of what is happening in the Outlier schools. This provides a blueprint of promising practices, programs, and systems for others to study and possibly implement in their districts. Not only in Washington, but also across the country." Unlike any time in modern history, this study occurred during a time called the "twin pandemics"—the novel coronavirus and intertwined structural racism in America. For the school leaders and educators in this study, the pandemic experience confirmed what they already knew about the qualities of a school environment that illuminate the strengths of diverse students: the unshakable belief that all students can succeed.

Surprisingly, many of the outlier schools were previously in the bottom 5% of Washington state schools.

Greg Lobdell, Chief Research Officer, referred to these as "struggling schools" in the state accountability framework, the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), "...these schools are testimony that all schools can create an upward trajectory for all students."

Schools in the study demonstrated a high capacity and commitment removing barriers for students. "We have a lot of learning experiences where we can contribute our differences within ethnicity, culture or even genders", shared a High School student who participated in a study focus group. The outlier school acted to center students' cultural strengths and identity in courses, invited them to create a school campus that reflected students' identity and culture, embedded opportunities for sharing students' families' oral histories, and offered opportunities for students to hear diverse motivational speakers. Students commonly cited the key elements of their school's success as a school that is inclusive, welcoming, and has a family-like culture. They shared that their teachers provide the necessary support unique to each student because "they just want every kid to succeed."

For more information:

Report Brief—<https://www.effectiveness.org/s/CEE-Outlier-Brief.pdf>

Full Report—<https://www.effectiveness.org/s/CEE-Outlier-Study-Final-Report.pdf>

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The Center for Educational Effectiveness (CEE) develops and delivers quality surveys, data tools and services that catalyze community, district, school and individual growth. Better Data. Better Decisions. Better Schools. For additional information, please contact:

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About the Authors

Greg Lobdell—in 2000, Greg co-founded the Center for Educational Effectiveness (CEE). Greg served as CEE’s President and Research Director from 2001 to 2015, the CEO from 2015 to 2019, and Chief Research Officer from 2019 to current. Prior to founding the CEE, Greg worked for Microsoft Corporation as a developer, program manager, product manager, and as Director of Product Management for Windows NT Workstation and Microsoft Exchange Server. Greg retired from Microsoft in 1998 to pursue his Masters in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment and focus on research and tools to assist schools in improvement and transformation.

Janet Gordon, Ed.D.—currently serves as Vice President of Education at Kauffman and Associates, Inc. and holds a doctoral degree in education. She has over 35 years of experience in research and evaluation of programs including formal education (primary, secondary, post-secondary), teacher professional development, informal education, parent/community outreach, social/emotional development, and health policy. Dr. Gordon leads statewide and nationwide evaluation projects designed to inform legislative decisions, advance understanding, and serve students, families and communities. She works primarily with indigenous and underserved students and communities in the U.S. and in the Pacific Islands with a focus on equitable education and health outcomes.

John Steach, Ed.D.—currently serves as the Chief Executive Officer for the CEE. His educational career spans over 23 years leading as a Board Member, Board Chair, Superintendent in both Washington and Oregon, HR Director, Principal Supervisor, and running all support services. Dr. Steach combines this educational career with 20 years engineering experience in the petroleum and nuclear industries to bring an analytic approach to improving K-12 education. Doctor Steach earned his BS degree in Chemical Engineering, MBA, and Ed.D. in Educational Leadership all from Washington State University.

Gene Sharratt, Ph.D.—currently serves as a Senior Research Advisor for the CEE. He is the past president of the Washington Educational Research Association. His research interests are in equity, measurement, and program evaluation. He served for ten years as a clinical assistant and associate professor for Washington State University. He has 30 years of K-12 experience as a teacher, counselor, principal, school superintendent, and ESD superintendent in public and international schools. In addition to his research work, he serves on the boards of Education Northwest, Complete College America, and the Washington College Promise Coalition. He is the past executive director of the Washington Student Achievement Council.

Ceni Myles (Navajo and Mohegan)—is an independent researcher and evaluator. She has graduate-level research experience in qualitative research designs, including ethnography, grounded theory, narrative inquiry, and case study. She performs primary and secondary research, interviews, focus groups, participant observations, literature reviews, environmental scans, and qualitative narrative analysis. She has worked at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C. as a Public Programs Specialist and later as the Manager of Seminars and Symposia. She also worked as a Researcher for the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement for the Office of Head Start, Administration for Children & Families, HHS.

Erich Bolz, M.Ed.—currently serves as the Vice President of Research and District Engagement for the CEE. Prior to joining CEE, Erich spent 25 years in public education, that included experience as a remedial reading teacher, pre-K-12 principal, central office administrator (small, large, and Educational Service District levels), and Adjunct Professor at Heritage University. He is the 2013 recipient of the Violet Lumley Rau Alumni Outstanding Alumnus Award and currently serves as a Board Member at Communities In Schools of Benton-Franklin, Washington and Partners for Early Learning serving Tri-Cities, WA.

Roni Rumsey, M.Ed.—currently serves as the Director of Professional Learning for the CEE. Prior to joining CEE, Roni spent 30 years as a teacher, principal and central office administrator in public education. She successfully developed a Dual Language Program which has been operating for 15 years and a districtwide job-embedded professional development program that has resulted in empowering teacher efficacy for over 6 years.