Washington State

STEM Education Innovation Alliance

2026 STEM Education Report Card

Science Technology Engineering Math

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2025 STEM Education: The Year in Review

STEM education is vital to Washington's innovation-driven economy, and aligning the state's STEM education system with labor market demand is imperative. This STEM Education Report Card examines how well Washington's education system is preparing students for STEM achievement across the full timeline, from early learning and K–12 to career-connected learning, postsecondary programs, and the workforce.

Washington remains one of the leading states in the country for STEM employment opportunities.

- **#1** In share of workers in STEM occupations as a percent of total state employment.[1]
- **#1** In projected employer demand for STEM workers by 2030.[2]
- **#2** Among states for the number of jobs in science and technology.[3]

Demand for workers in STEM and STEM-related health occupations in Washington is growing.[4]

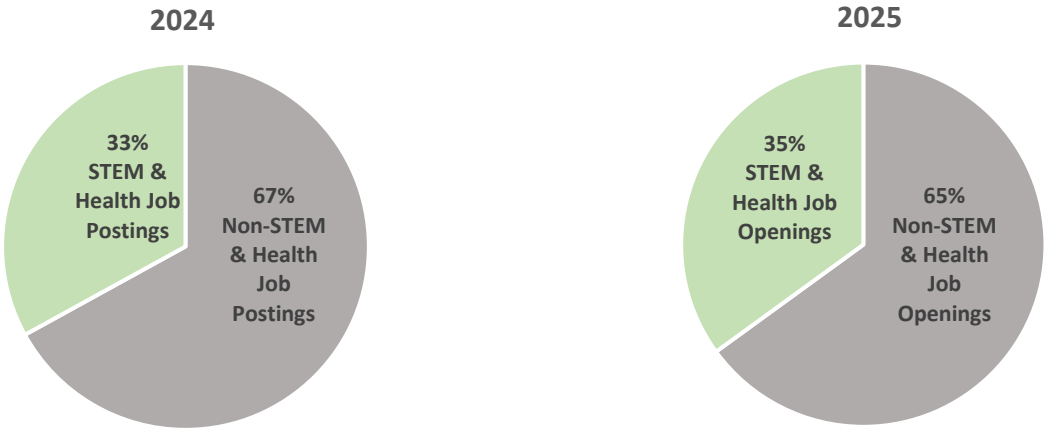
The number of jobs in STEM and health occupations is projected to grow by more than 100,000 over the next 10 years, increasing from 784,369 in 2025 to 889,687 in 2035. STEM and health jobs as a percentage of all jobs in the state are projected to grow from 19 percent in 2025 to over 20 percent by 2035.

Projected Growth in the Number of STEM and Health Jobs and as a Share of All Jobs 2025-2035

Source: WSAC analysis of Lightcast Q4 2025 labor market data set.

Job posting data also shows strong and growing demand. Among all job postings in Washington in 2024, 33 percent were for occupations in STEM or health. In 2025, the STEM and health share grew to 35 percent.

Share of Unique Job Postings in STEM & Health Compared to Its Share of Postings in All Other Occupations in Washington, 2024-25



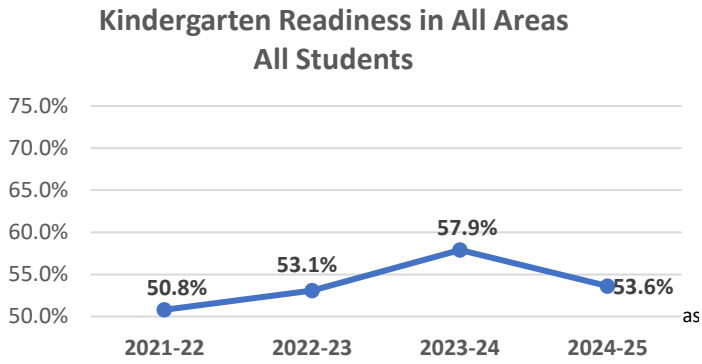
Source: WSAC analysis of Lightcast Q4 2024 and 2025 Data Sets.

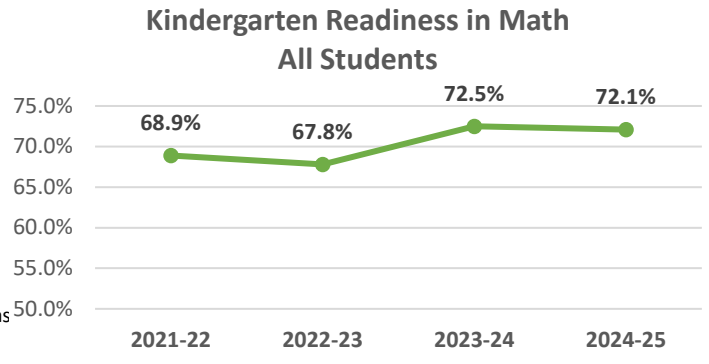
This demand presents Washington with a challenge and an opportunity to help residents attain the education they need to prepare for high wage careers in STEM. It's crucial that the state find ways to ensure residents get a strong start in early learning, meet standards, and stay on track as they progress through K–12 and postsecondary studies.

Overall, the state has been making progress in advancing STEM education but shows room for improvement in some areas. The sections below discuss the state's areas of strength and weakness.

Rates of kindergarten readiness have been rising overall in recent years with occasional fluctuation. There is still more work to be done to ensure that all Washington kids are kindergarten-ready and prepared for academic success. According to the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) assessment, the percentage of students who were kindergarten-ready in all developmental and learning areas rose from 50.8 percent in 2021–22 to 57.9 percent in 2023–24 and then declined to 53.6 percent in 2024–25. The percentage of students who were kindergarten-ready in math rose from 67.8 percent in 2022–23 to 72.5 percent in 2023–24, with a slight decline to 72.1 percent in 2024–25.

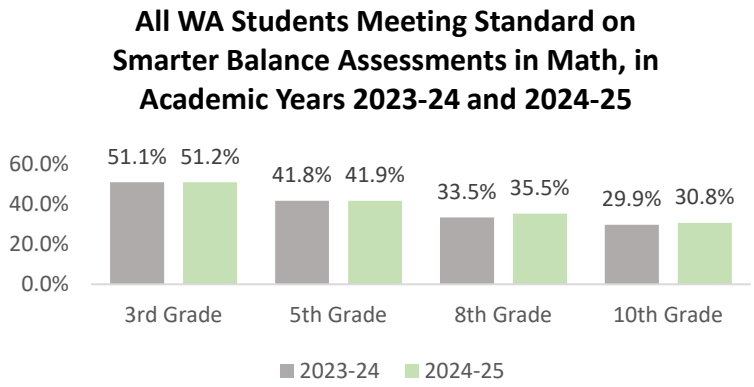
ALL DEVELOPMENTAL & LEARNING AREAS **Percentage of All Students Who Are Kindergarten Ready**	MATH **Percentage of All Students Who Are Kindergarten Ready**

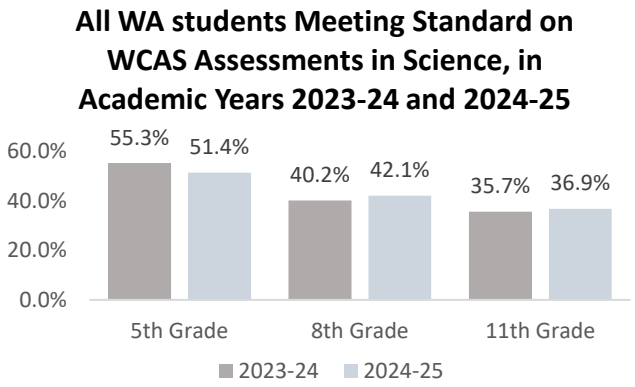




Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Report Card. Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS).

Across Washington's statewide assessments, the percentage of students meeting standard in math and science generally declines at each grade level, from elementary school through grade 11. The percentage of students meeting standard on the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) in math and the Washington Comprehensive Assessment in Science (WCAS) showed modest gains at the key grade levels from 2023–24 to 2024–25, with the exception of 5th-grade science, where there was a decline. But a steady decline is shown in the percentage of students meeting standard at each grade level. In 2024–25, only 30.8 percent in math in 10th grade and 36.9 percent in science in 11th grade were on track to be prepared for college-level studies.

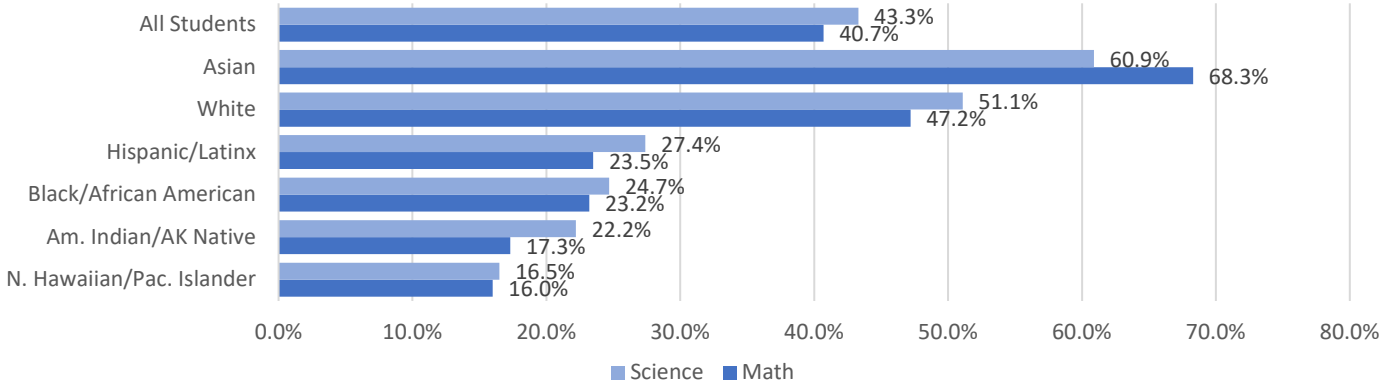




Source: Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Report Card. Smarter Balanced and WCAS Assessments.

The percentage of students meeting standard on math and science assessments varies by race and ethnicity. Among students from racial/ethnic groups that have been historically underrepresented in postsecondary education, the percent scoring 3 or above on the SBA in math and WCAS in science in 10th and 11th grade is significantly lower than the percent for all students, indicating that these students may need more support to prepare for college-level academics. Scoring 3 or above on these assessments indicates that a student is on track for college-level learning without need for remedial classes.

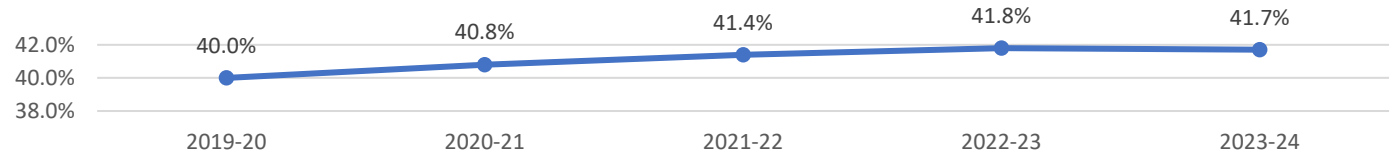
Students Scoring 3 or Above on Assessments in Math (Grades 5,8, & 10) and Science (Grades 5,8, & 11), by Race and Ethnicity, 2024-25



Source: Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Report Card. Smarter Balanced and WCAS Assessments.

Postsecondary certificate and degree completions as a percentage of all completions have been rising consistently in recent years. STEM and health certificates and degrees increased from 40.0 percent of all completions in 2019–20 to 41.7 percent in 2023–24.

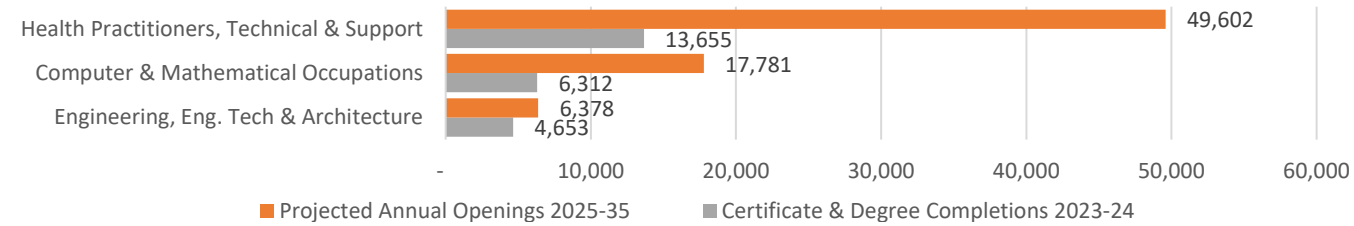
Washington STEM and Health Certificate and Degree Completions as a Percentage of All Completions, by Academic Year



Source: WSAC staff analysis of IPEDS and Lightcast Q4 2025 labor market data.

The STEM education and labor market outlook in Washington shows significant gaps in key fields. In the fields of healthcare and computer and mathematical occupations, projected annual job openings from 2025 to 2035 are outpacing annual certificate and degree completions in academic year 2023–24. A smaller but still significant gap between projected job openings and annual completions is also shown in engineering and related technology fields. However, these projections are based on historical trends that do not account for key emerging developments in AI. Rapidly advancing innovation in AI could have far-ranging impacts on the labor market, but at this stage it is unclear how the effects will play out.

Gaps Between Projected Annual Job Openings (2025-35) and STEM Degree & Certificate Completions (2023-24) in Key Washington Occupational Fields



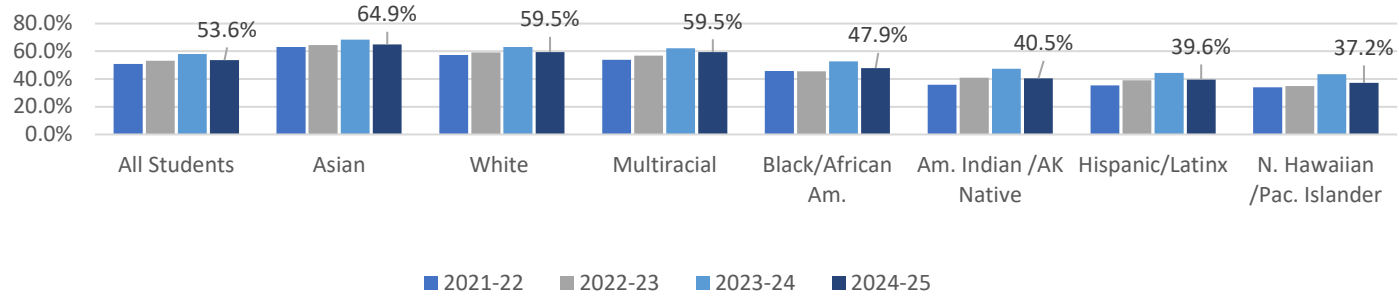
Source: WSAC staff analysis of IPEDS and Lightcast Q4 2025 labor market data.

Early Learning

Kindergarten readiness is a critical transition point. Studies have shown that kindergarten readiness is strongly associated with later academic achievement as students proceed through K–12 education and beyond.[5] Students who demonstrate kindergarten readiness in math, literacy, and other developmental areas on the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) are more likely to meet standards in math and English language arts assessments in 3rd grade and beyond.

Rates of kindergarten readiness have been rising in recent years, but readiness is not evenly spread across racial and ethnic groups. The chart below reveals that Black/African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Hispanic/Latinx, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students are significantly less likely to be prepared with the skills and abilities necessary to succeed as they enter kindergarten. From 2021–22 to 2024–25, smaller percentages of students from these groups have demonstrated kindergarten readiness. More effort is needed to help students prepare fully for kindergarten, particularly students from demographic groups furthest from educational equity.

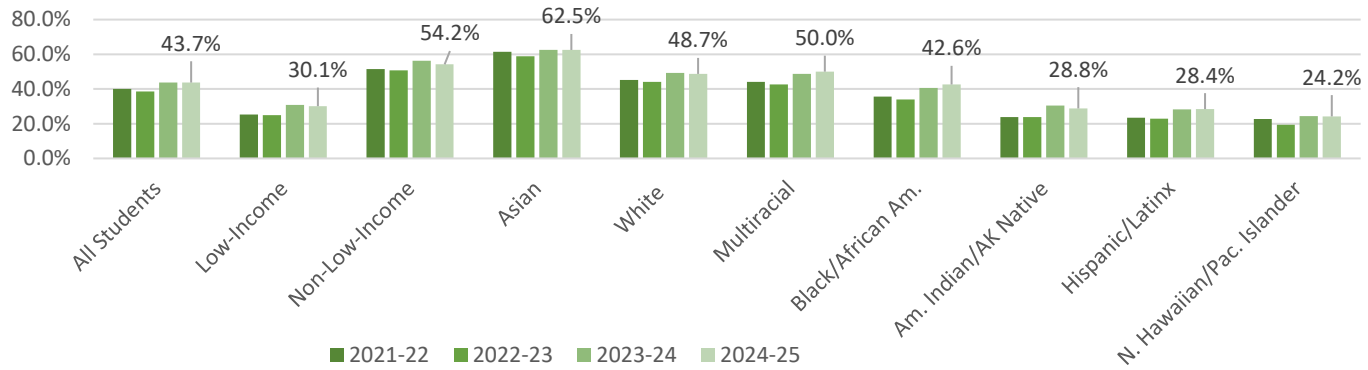
Students Ready for Kindergarten in All Areas of the WaKIDS Assessment, by Race/Ethnicity and Academic Year



Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Report Card. Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS)

A similar trend is shown in the percentage of Washington kindergartners demonstrating math skills typical of kindergartners and up, with lower percentages among students from underserved racial and ethnic groups. This trend is consistent across multiple years, from 2021–22 to 2024–25.

Students Ready for Kindergarten in Math on the WaKIDS Assessment, by Income, Race/Ethnicity, and Academic Year



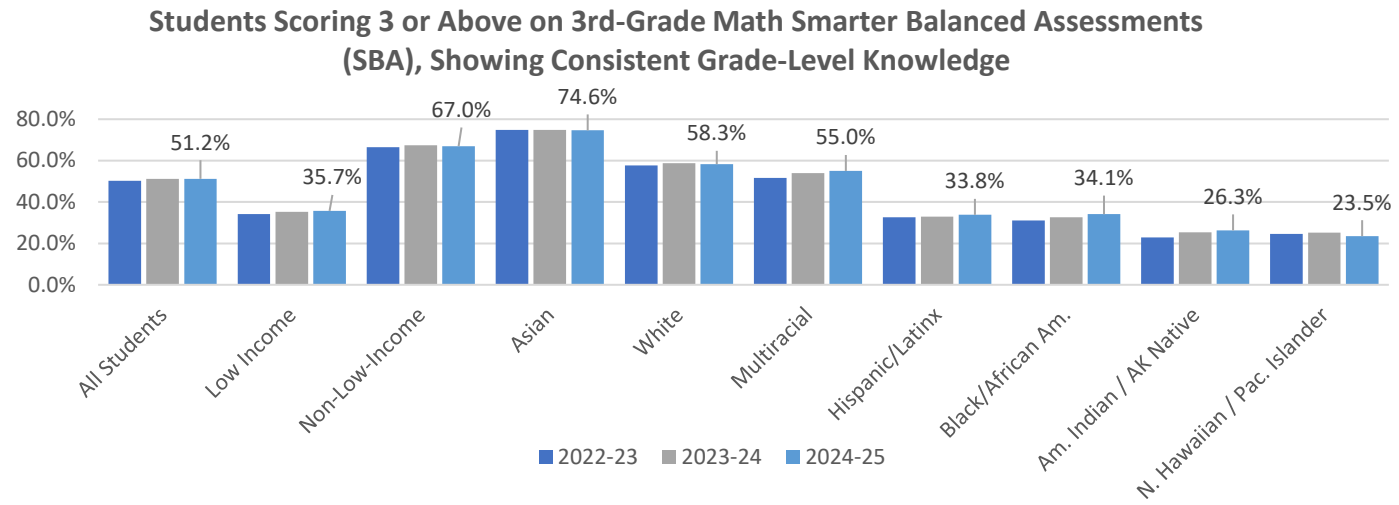
Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Report Card. Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS)

K–12 Education

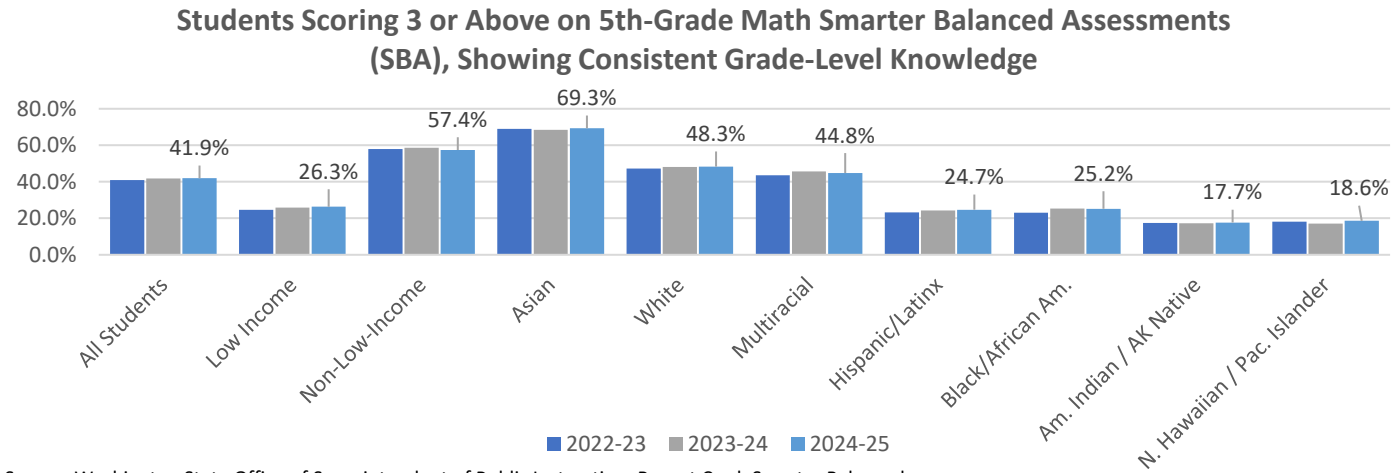
Percentage of K–12 Students Meeting Standard in Science

The percentage of K–12 students meeting standard in math tends to decline through grades 3 to 10.

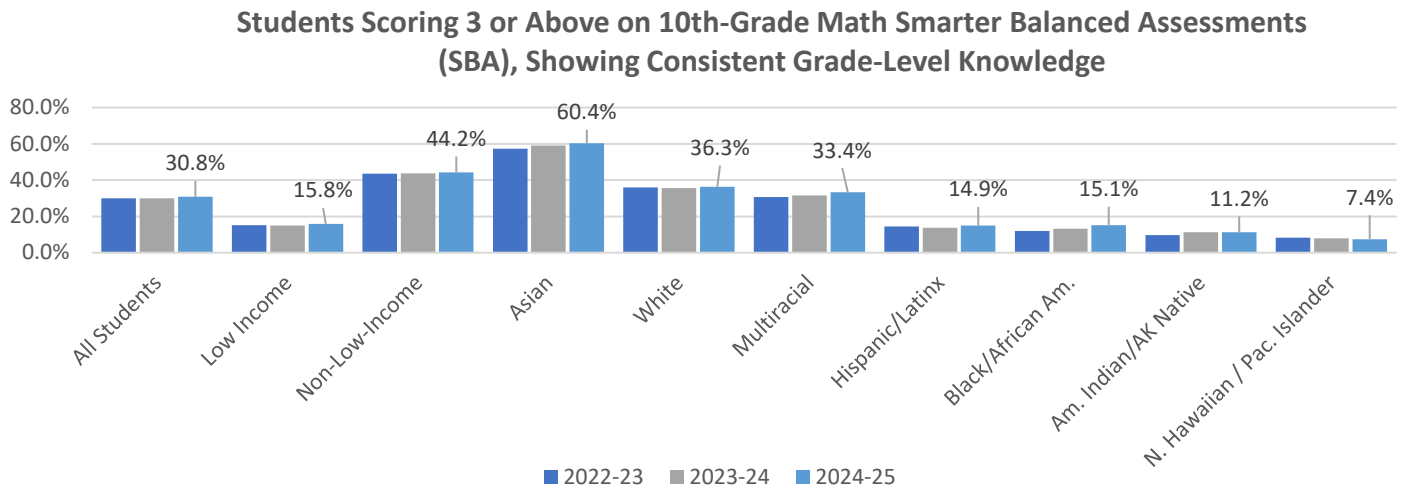
As students proceed through successive grades in the K–12 system, the knowledge and skills they acquire at each level are crucial to their academic success at the next level. The Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) measures student progress to determine if they are meeting established learning standards. From 2022 to 2025, SBA results show a decline across all demographic groups in the percentage of students scoring 3 or above in math. The percentages decreased at each grade level, through 3rd, 5th, 8th, and 10th grades. A score of 3 or above demonstrates consistent grade-level knowledge and, in the upper grades, indicates that they are on track for college-level learning without remedial coursework. In addition, low-income, Hispanic/Latinx, Black/African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students meeting SBA learning standards in math and science remain relatively low. This indicates a need for expanded student support services to help these students get on track and stay there.



Source: Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Report Card. Smarter Balanced Assessments.



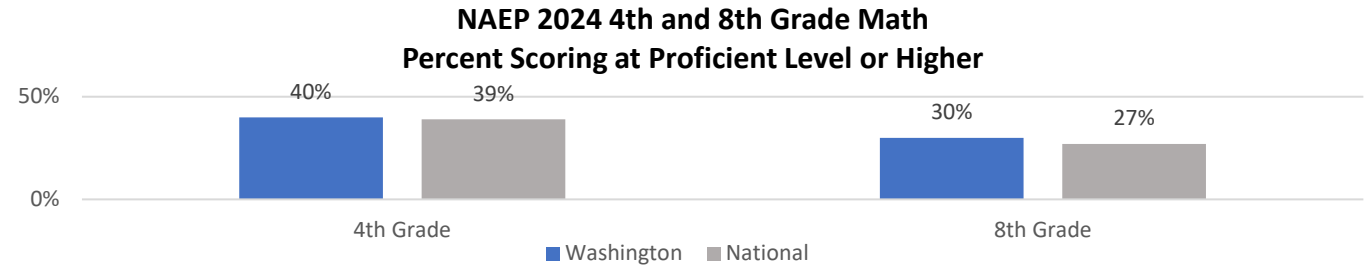
Source: Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Report Card. Smarter Balanced



Source: Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Report Card. Smarter Balanced Assessments.

The percentage of students showing proficiency in math in grade 4 is slightly above the national average, but in grade 8 that percentage is below the national average.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematics assessment is given to students in grades 4 and 8. The assessment measures both mathematics knowledge and students' ability to apply their knowledge in problem-solving situations. The results present a broad view of students' mathematics knowledge, skills, and performance over time. The percentage of Washington students demonstrating proficiency in math in 4th grade was slightly above the national average: 40 percent compared to 39 percent. However, in 8th grade, the percentage of Washington students demonstrating math proficiency was lower than the national average: 27 percent compared to 30 percent.



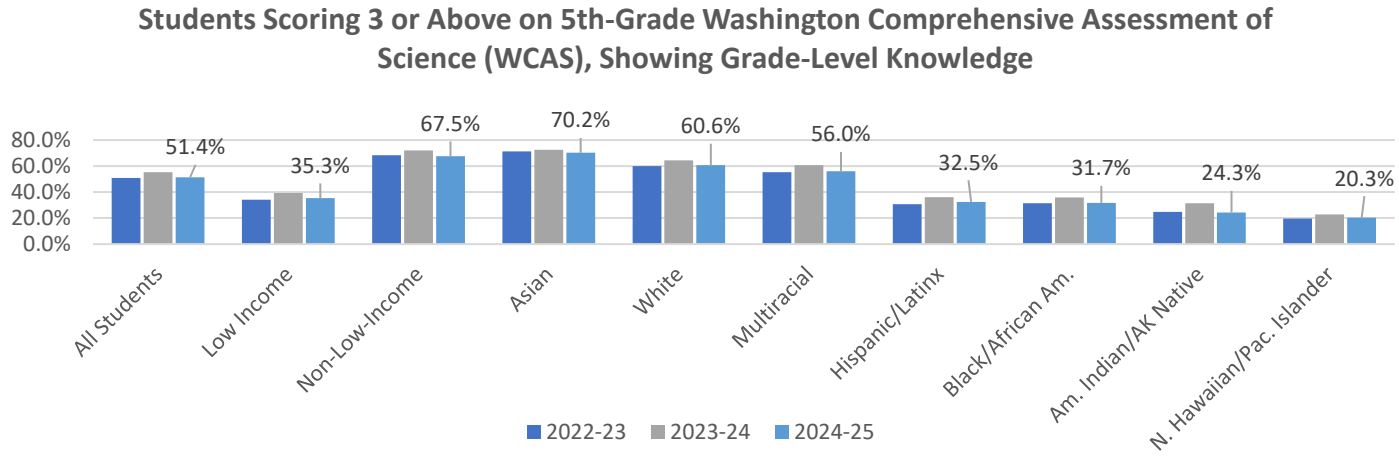
Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP).

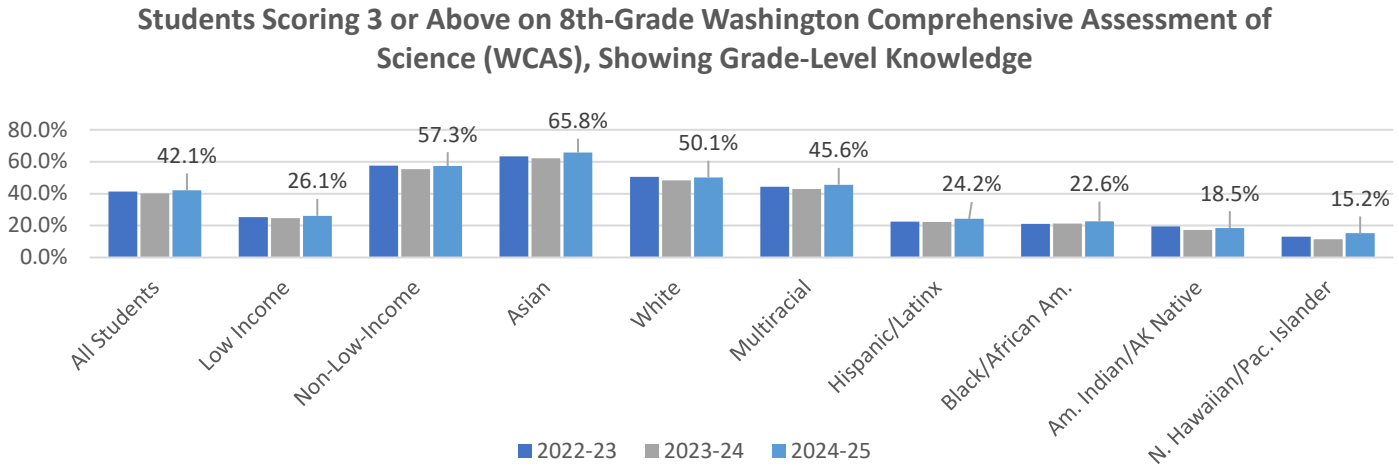
Percentage of K–12 Students Meeting Standard in Science

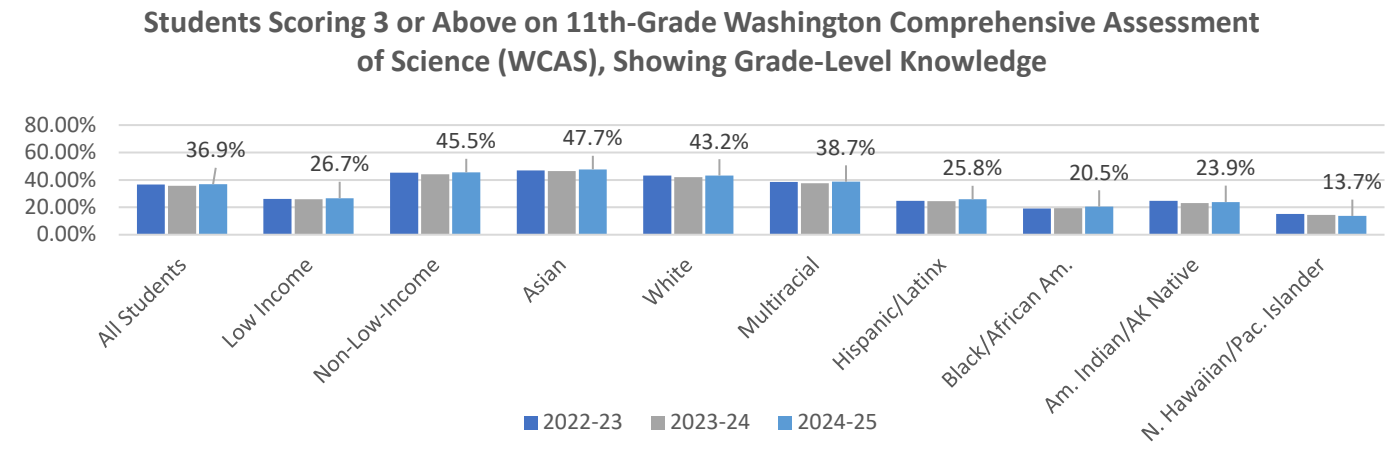
The percentage of students meeting standard in science reveals the challenges that low-Income, Hispanic/Latinx, Black/African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students face.

The Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science (WCAS) measures the level of proficiency that Washington students have achieved based on the Washington State K–12 Science Learning Standards, which match the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). All students are assessed on their knowledge of the standards at grades 5, 8, and 11. As with math assessments, the overall trend in the percentage of students meeting standard in science shows a steady decline in assessments at each grade level from 5th grade to 11th grade. For example, in the 2024–25 academic year, the percentage of all students scoring 3 or above was 51.4 percent in 5th grade, 42.1 percent in 8th grade, and 36.9 percent in 11th grade. At each grade level, the assessments also showed that the percentage scoring 3 or above

among low-income students and students from racial and ethnic minorities (Hispanic/Latinx, Black/African/American, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander) were significantly lower.





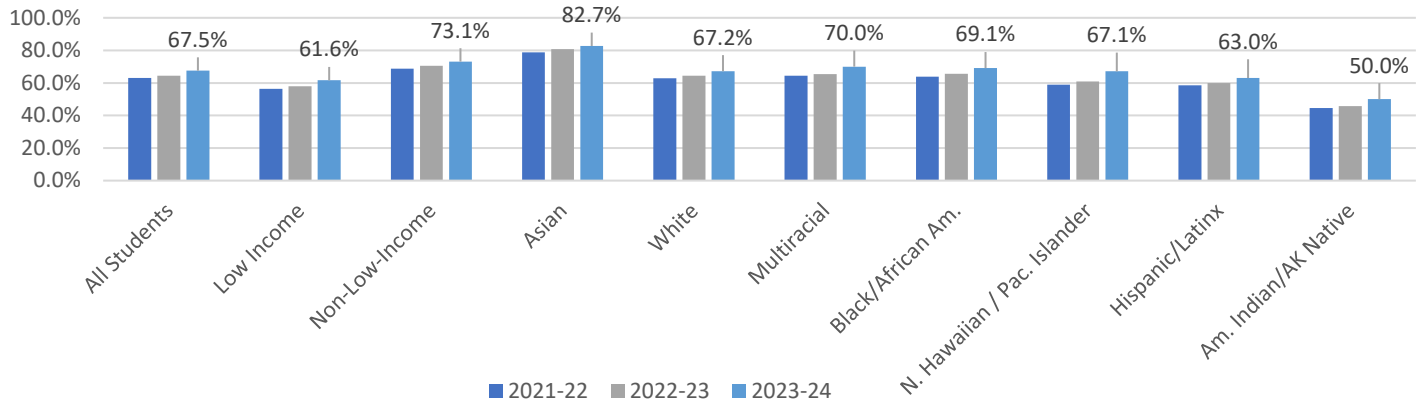


Source: Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Report Card. Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science (WCAS).

Dual-Credit Classes

Dual-credit programs allow students to earn credit for their high school diploma and college at the same time, while helping them prepare for the challenges of college-level work. They include Running Start, CTE Dual Credit (formerly Tech Prep), College in High School, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Cambridge International. The percentage of Washington high school students completing dual-credit courses has increased in recent years, with 63.1 percent completing such courses in 2021–22 and 67.5 percent completing such courses in 2023–24. However, students from low-income households take advantage of dual-credit opportunities less than students from non-low-income households: 61.6 percent vs. 73.1 percent. The chart below shows further variation among racial and ethnic groups. In 2023–24, at the highest level, 82.7 percent of Asian students completed at least one dual-credit course, followed by students who identify as Multiracial (70 percent), Black/African American (69.1 percent), White (67.2 percent), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (67.1 percent), and Hispanic/Latinx (63 percent). A significantly lower percentage of American Indian/Alaska Native students (50.0 percent) completed a dual-credit class.

High School Students Who Have Completed at Least One Dual Credit Course by Income Level, Race/Ethnicity, and Academic Year



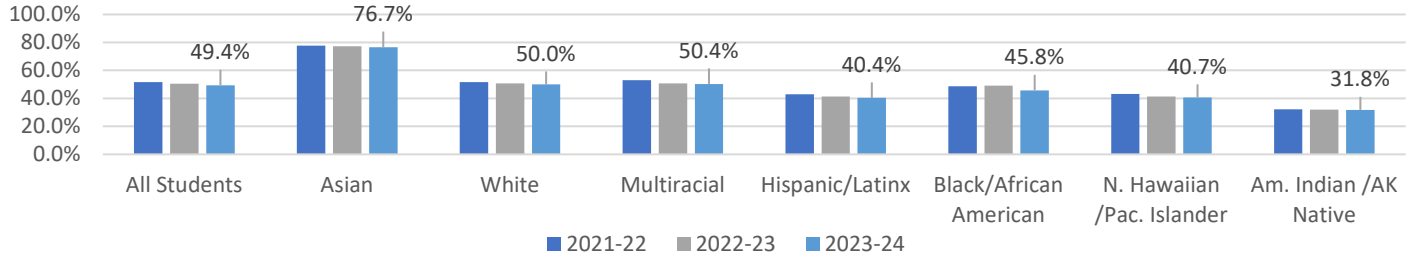
Source: Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Report Card. Note: As of the date this report was written, the 2023-24 was the most recent academic vear for which dual credit data was available.

Percentage of Students Taking Advanced Math Classes

Students from racial and ethnic minorities are less likely to take advanced math classes in high school.

In the 2023–24 academic year, 49.4 percent of all Washington students graduating high school had taken advanced math classes beyond algebra 2, a slight decline from 50.4 percent in 2022–23 and 51.5 percent in 2021–22. More concerning is the trend showing that low-income students and students from racial and ethnic minorities are less likely to take these courses. Studies have shown that students who take advanced math coursework in high school have an easier time transitioning to college STEM courses and are more likely to persist in STEM studies and to enter STEM careers.[6]

K-12 Students in Washington Taking Advanced Math Classes Beyond Algebra 2, by Academic Year



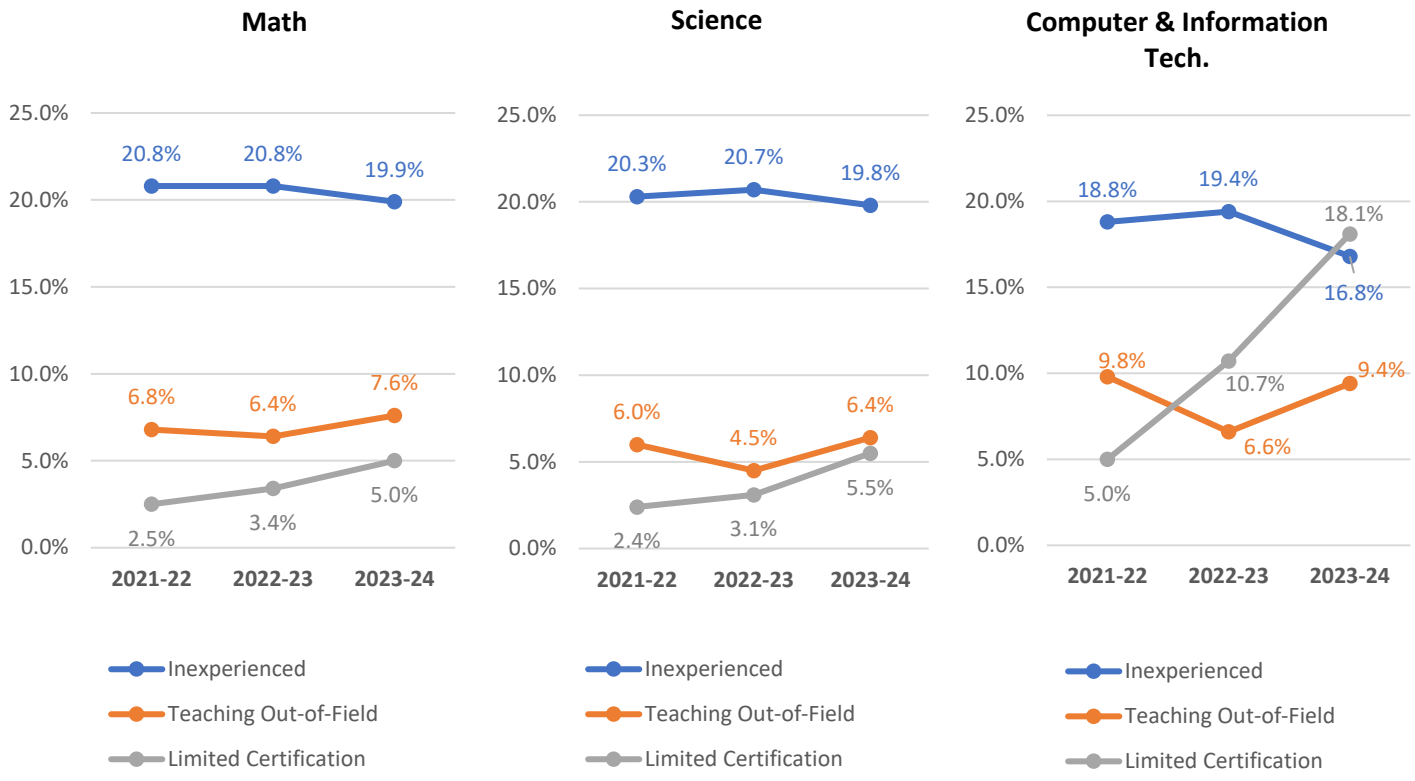
Source: Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) analysis of OSPI data. Note: As of the date this report was written, the 2023-24 was the most recent academic vear for which dual credit data was available.

STEM Teacher Qualifications

Certification and adequate teaching experience is important in the STEM field because of the complexity of the subject matter; teachers must develop an expansive repertoire of strategies and instructional approaches for a diverse range of students with varying levels of preparation. Developing and retaining qualified teachers is crucial to advancing STEM education.[7]

In the 2023–24 academic year, 19 percent of teachers in math, 19.8 percent of teachers in science, and 18.1 percent of teachers in computer and information technology had less than five years of experience in teaching. In the same academic year, a significant percentage were teaching outside of their field in math (7.6 percent), science (6.4 percent) and computer and information technology (9.4 percent); in other words, they were teaching a subject or grade level for which they do not meet the required qualifications. Certification is also an area of concern in the field of computer and information technology. In 2023–24, 18.1 percent of teachers were not fully certified, teaching with a limited certification status. In the same academic year, 5.0 percent in math and 5.1 percent in science were teaching with limited certification status.

Washington High School Teachers with Limited Qualifications, by Subject and Academic Year



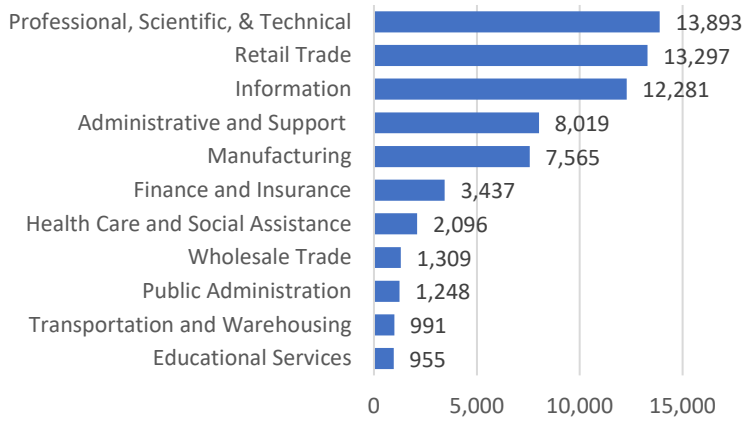
Source: Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Report Card. Note: In the charts above, "inexperienced" refers to teachers who have less than five years of teaching experience.

Spotlight on Computer Science

Demand for computer & information technology skills remains strong in a wide range of industries. [8]

Opportunities for high-wage jobs in computer & information technology remain widespread. Nationally, nine out of ten jobs in computer & information technology are in companies outside the tech sector.[9] Washington data on IT jobs reflects this trend. In addition to retail trade, which is dominated by e-commerce firms such as Amazon, many IT jobs are in industries such as scientific & technical services, manufacturing, finance and insurance, and health care. Operations in many industries are becoming increasingly digital, requiring workers skilled in information technology.

Unique Job Postings in Computer & Information Technology by Industry in 2024



Source: WSAC staff analysis of Lightcast 2025 Q4 data set.

Only 50 percent of high schools in Washington offer foundational computer science courses, compared with 60 percent nationally. Foundational computer science courses go beyond simply covering general elements of computing to integrate the fundamental concepts with a substantial amount of time spent applying those concepts through programming.[10] Examples include Computer Science Principles and AP Computer Science A.

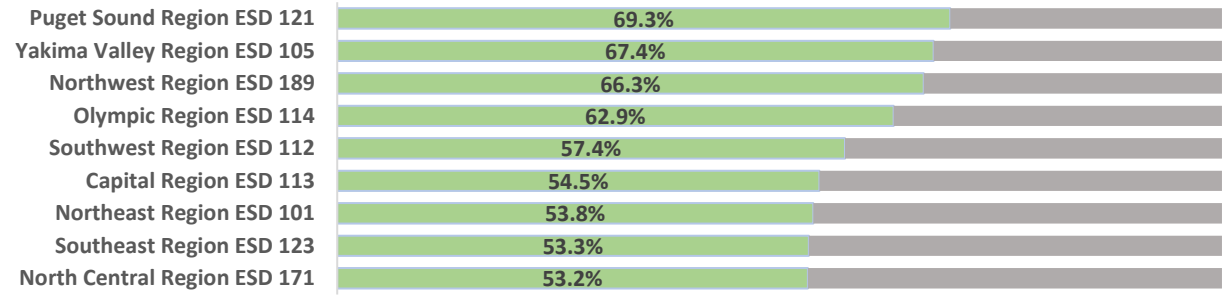
Washington High Schools Offering Foundational Computer Science Courses, 2023-24

Source: Code.org Advocacy Coalition

These are already inadequate numbers to meet the need for access to computer science in the state's high schools. But percentages also vary widely by region, with some areas, particularly in more rural parts of the state, with much lower computer science availability.

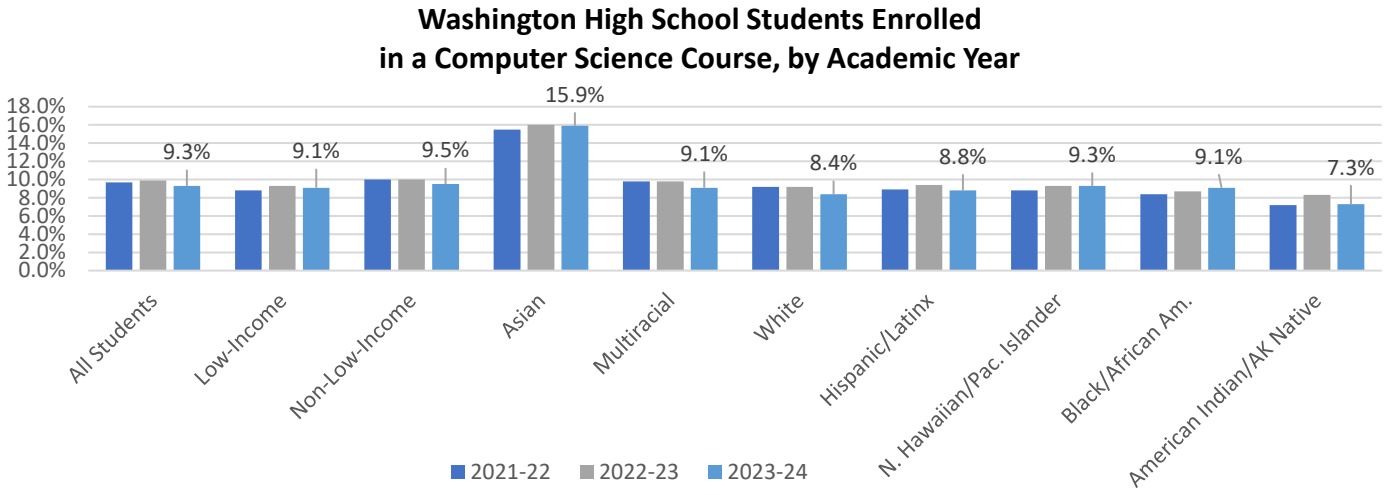
The enrollment numbers have shown variability in recent years. The share of Washington students enrolled in computer science courses increased slightly from 9.7 percent in 2021–22 to 9.9 percent in 2022–23, then declined to 9.3 percent in

Regional Computer Science Course Offerings at Washington High Schools, 2023-24



Source: CS For All Washington

2023–24. During this period, enrollment among students from some groups declined while in others it increased. For example, enrollment among white students decreased from 9.2 percent in 2021–22 to 8.4 percent in 2023–24. In contrast, enrollment among Black/African American students rose steadily from 8.4 percent in 2021–22 to 8.7 percent in 2022–23 to 9.1 percent in 2023–24.

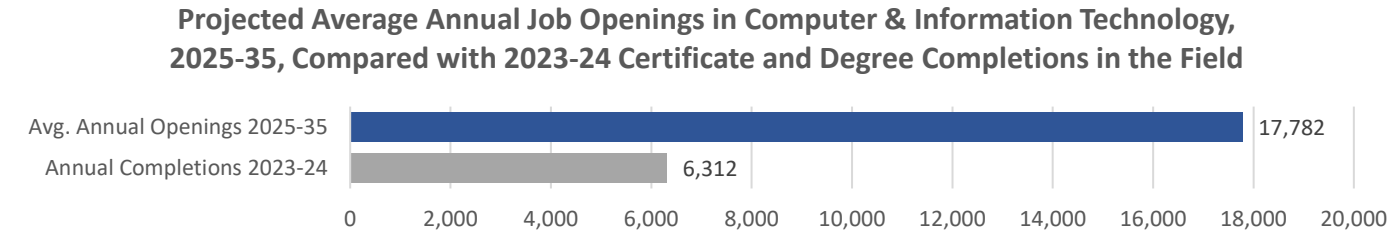


Source: Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), K-12 Computer Science Education Data Summary. Note: Academic year 2023-24 is the latest year that computer science enrollment is available.

Current projections of job openings in computer & information technology remain strong but advances in artificial intelligence (AI) may change the labor market outlook

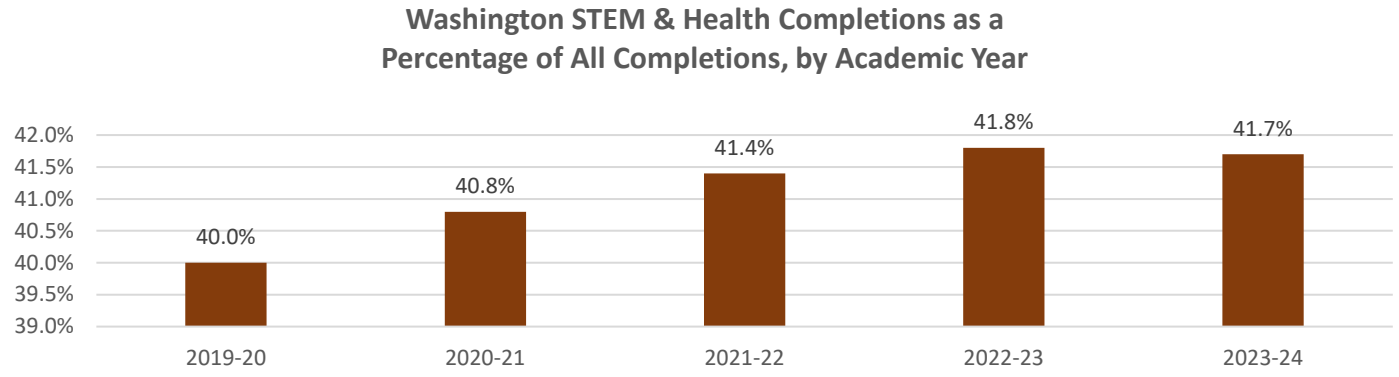
Employer demand for skilled workers in computer and information technology remains strong, with projected annual job openings outpacing annual certificate and degree completions. Projections show that there will be nearly 17,800 annual job openings in computer and information technology occupations over the next ten years, compared to about 6,300 annual certificate and degree completions in 2023–24.

However, it should be noted that these projections are based on historical trends that do not account for emerging developments in AI. Rapidly advancing innovation in AI could have far-ranging impacts on the labor market in this field and others, but at this stage it is unclear how the effects will play out. While some dramatic reports of layoffs in the tech industry have captured readers' attention with compelling headlines,[11] other reports conclude that there is little evidence at this point that the layoffs are directly related to AI-driven efficiencies.[12] Nationally, nine out of ten jobs in computer & information technology are in companies outside the tech sector.[13] Washington data on jobs reflects this same trend. In fact, most information technology jobs are in industries such as professional and scientific services, finance and insurance, retail, healthcare, and manufacturing. Operations in all these industries are becoming increasingly digital, requiring workers skilled in information technology.



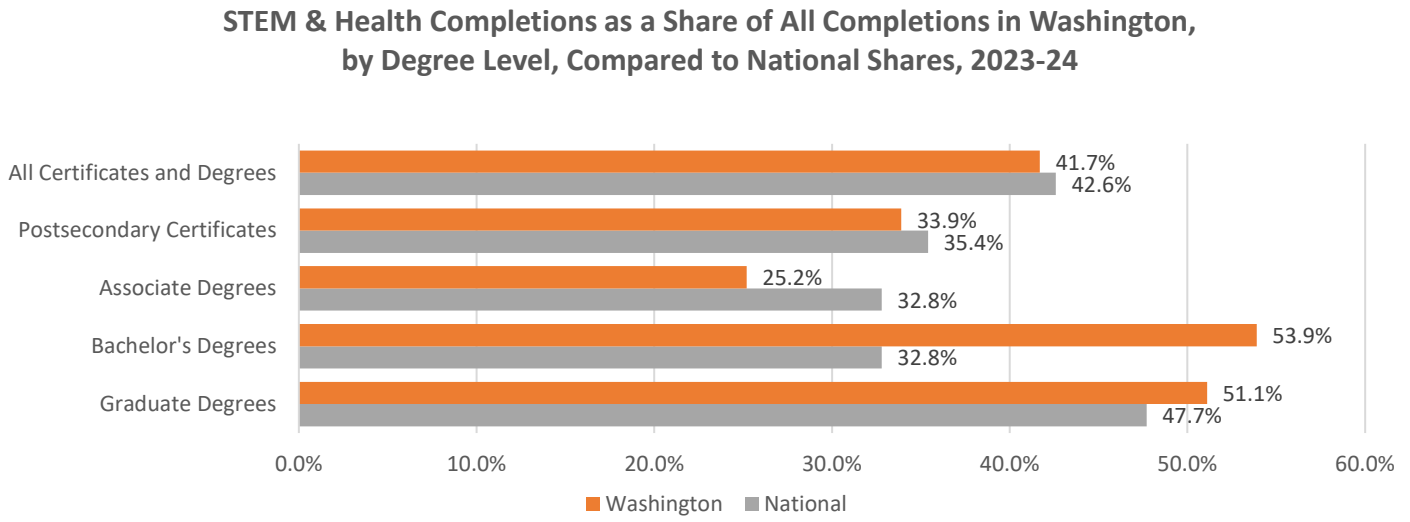
Source: WSAC staff analysis of IPEDS and Lightcast Q4 2025 labor market data.

STEM degree completions as a percentage of all degrees at the associate, bachelor's, and graduate levels have increased in recent years but are still insufficient to meet demand.
STEM degrees and certificates increased from 40.0 percent of all bachelor's and graduate-level completions in 2019–20 to 41.7 percent in 2023–24.



Source: WSAC analysis of Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data.

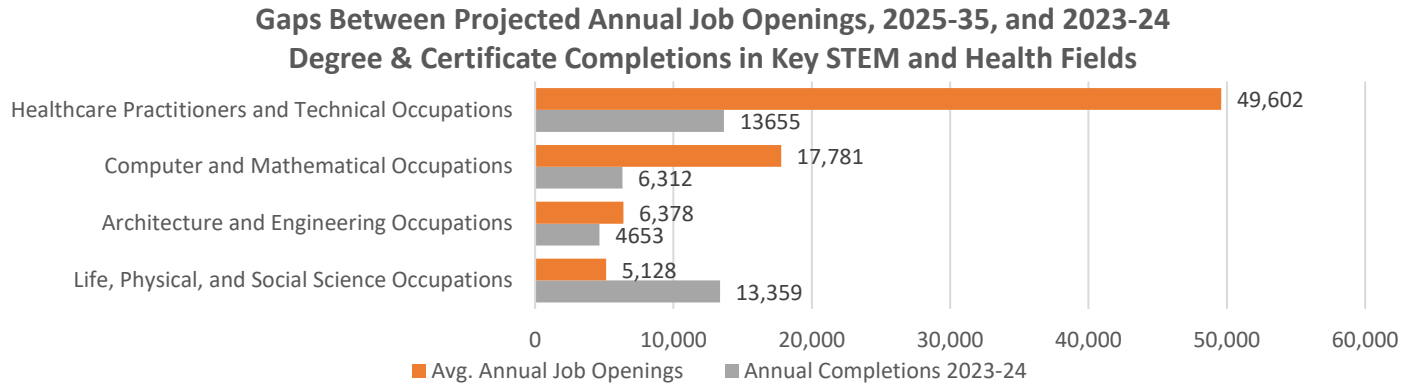
In the 2023–24 academic year, completions in STEM and health programs in Washington represented 41.7 percent of all completions, slightly below the national share of 42.6 percent. STEM and health completion percentages in Washington exceeded national percentages at the bachelor's level (53.9 percent compared to 32.8 percent nationally) and at the graduate level (51.1 percent compared to 47.7 percent nationally). Completions at the certificate and associate degree levels were lower in Washington. STEM and health certificate completions represented 33.9 percent of all certificate programs in Washington, compared to 35.4 percent nationally. STEM and health completions of associate degrees represented 25.2 percent of all associate degrees, compared to 32.8 percent nationally. The lower percentages at the certificate and associate degree levels may reflect the competitive environment of Washington's labor market, in which, to gain advantages in job applications, more students in STEM fields are opting to pursue bachelor's degrees, even though a postsecondary certificate or associate degree may meet minimum qualifications.



Source: WSAC analysis of Lightcast 2025 Q4 Data Set and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data.

Keeping pace with rising employer demand for skilled workers in key STEM fields remains a challenge.
Demand for workers with STEM skills remains strong, with projected annual job openings outpacing the number of students completing STEM degree and certificate programs each year in the fields of health, computer and mathematical, and engineering occupations (see chart below). For example, in health occupations, annual job openings from 2025 to 2035 are projected to be 49,602 compared to only 13,655 annual completions in academic year 2023-24. In computer and mathematical occupations, projections show 17,781 annual job openings compared to 6,312 completions in 2023-24. In architecture and engineering occupations, projections show 6,378 annual job openings compared to 4,653 completions in 2023-24. In these fields, enrollments and completions need to increase to keep pace with employer demand for workers with STEM skills and training and give Washington residents opportunities to compete for high-wage jobs with good benefits. Of course, some openings are due to churn within an industry and employees changing jobs, but many are due to retirement and growth in the field. If Washington does not produce enough new graduates with the qualifications to fill the openings, employers may be left to rely on workers trained in other states.

The data show a different trend in life, physical, and social science occupations. In these fields, annual completions outnumber projected annual openings over the next ten years. There may be more graduates in these majors being produced each year than there are opportunities in the labor market. However, most of the completions in this field are in the social sciences (54 percent), and social science majors tend to pursue a variety of careers. They often find employment in government, public administration, nonprofits, businesses, and educational institutions, depending on their skills and interests.[14]



Source: WSAC analysis of Lightcast 2025 Q4 Data Set and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data.

The advance of artificial intelligence (AI) may have far-reaching effects on the STEM labor market.
It should be noted that these job opening projections are based on extrapolations of historical trends that do not account for recent advances in the field of artificial intelligence (AI). The AI development firm Anthropic has recently published a study concluding that AI has the potential to expose an expanding range of tasks in jobs that previously had been considered relatively safe to workplace automation.[15] This includes occupations in STEM fields. For example, the authors note that 32 percent of tasks in computer and mathematical occupations are currently exposed to AI and up to 96 percent of tasks in these occupations could potentially be automated. In architecture and engineering occupations, 18 percent of tasks are currently exposed to AI and up to 82 percent of tasks could potentially be automated.

These fast-moving developments in AI and their effects on STEM jobs need to be monitored closely as the labor market evolves. Washington may be already feeling the effects. Tech companies in the state, such as Amazon, Microsoft, and Oracle, have experienced significant layoffs recently, with more than 30,000 job cuts reported in 2025 and additional cuts in 2026.[16] At this point, it is unclear how much of this trend is linked to AI-driven efficiencies.

STEM and STEM-related health employment opportunities are prevalent in all regions of the state.

Projected STEM job openings vary by region but share some commonalities. In addition to strong demand for healthcare professionals, projected annual openings in computer and engineering occupations are prominent in many areas of the state. Projected growth rates in STEM fields over the next ten years differ depending on the region. In healthcare practitioner and technical occupations, projected growth ranges from 11 percent in the Puget Sound region to 22 percent in the Southwest region. For registered nurses and nurse practitioners, projected growth ranges from 11 percent in the Olympic and Puget Sound regions to 21 percent in the North Central region. In computer and information technology, projected growth ranges from 17 percent in the Northwest region to 32 percent in the North Central region.

Regional STEM and STEM-Related Job Openings and Projected Growth in Washington

Capital Region

Occupations	2025 Jobs	Avg. Annual Openings	Projected Growth 2025-35
Computer and Information Technology	7,692	715	27%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	6,715	546	15%
Registered Nurse/Nurse Practitioner	4,617	312	13%
Life, Physical, and Social Sciences	3,816	400	17%
Engineering and Architecture	2,810	259	19%

North Central Region

Occupations	2025 Jobs	Avg. Annual Openings	Projected Growth 2025-35
Healthcare Practitioners and Technicians	3,324	263	20%
Registered Nurse/ Nurse Practitioner	2,202	182	21%
Computer and Information Technology	2,040	205	32%
Life, Physical, Social Sciences	1,811	201	8%
Engineering and Architecture	1,551	170	32%

Northeast Region

Occupations	2025 Jobs	Avg. Annual Openings	Projected Growth 2025-35
Healthcare Practitioners and Technicians	12,677	949	16%
Registered Nurse/ Nurse Practitioner	8,926	665	12%
Computer and Information Technology	7,115	615	21%
Engineering and Architecture	4,415	373	13%
Life, Physical, Social Sciences	3,422	358	11%

Northwest Region

Occupations	2025 Jobs	Avg. Annual Openings	Projected Growth 2025-35
Computer and Information Technology	18,662	1,500	17%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technicians	16,653	1,176	12%
Engineering and Architecture	14,815	1,066	7%
Registered Nurses/ Nurse Practitioners	9,268	650	15%
Life, Physical, Social Sciences	6,011	614	14%

Olympic Region

Occupations	2025 Jobs	Avg. Annual Openings	Projected Growth 2025-35
Engineering and Architecture	5,310	427	7%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technicians	5,038	361	13%
Computer and Information Technology	3,869	366	26%
Registered Nurses/ Nurse Practitioners	2,808	204	11%
Life, Physical, Social Sciences	2,384	246	13%

Puget Sound Region

Occupations	2025 Jobs	Avg. Annual Openings	Projected Growth 2025-35
Computer and Information Technology	167,976	14,649	23%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technicians	64,356	4,350	11%
Registered Nurses/ Nurse Practitioners	42,915	3,093	11%
Engineering and Architecture	40,670	3,244	13%
Life, Physical, Social Sciences	25,436	2442	13%

South Central Region

Occupations	2025 Jobs	Avg. Annual Openings	Projected Growth 2025-35
Healthcare Practitioners and Technicians	4,578	343	15%
Registered Nurses/ Nurse Practitioners	2,850	206	15%
Computer and Information Technology	2,569	245	27%
Life, Physical, Social Sciences	2,345	252	10%
Engineering and Architecture	2,001	210	29%

Southeast Region ESD 123

Occupations	2025 Jobs	Avg. Annual Openings	Projected Growth 2025-35
Healthcare Practitioners and Technicians	6,475	471	15%
Registered Nurses/ Nurse Practitioners	4,770	361	14%
Engineering and Architecture	4,748	326	1%
Life, Physical, Social Sciences	4,433	441	7%
Computer and Information Technology	3,540	294	18%

Southwest Region

Occupations	2025 Jobs	Avg. Annual Openings	Projected Growth 2025-35
Healthcare Practitioners and Technicians	9,379	767	22%
Computer and Information Technology	8,795	822	26%
Registered Nurses/ Nurse Practitioners	5,647	481	21%
Engineering and Architecture	4,944	417	15%
Life, Physical, Social Sciences	2,508	245	12%

Source: WSAC staff analysis of Lightcast Q4 2025 labor market data

2025 Legislative Session Highlights[17]

The 2025 legislative session was challenging. Faced with a massive budget shortfall of nearly 16 billion dollars, state lawmakers were forced to make difficult compromises in the field of education. Despite these challenges, key appropriations were preserved to support STEM education in Washington. Although early-learning appropriations are not specifically devoted to STEM, they are included here because of their importance in preparing children to be kindergarten-ready and to succeed academically in elementary school and beyond.

Early Learning

- $127,000,000 appropriated for fiscal year 2026 and $133,386,000 for fiscal year 2027 for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), supporting at least 14,278 slots in 2026 and 14,528 slots in 2027.

Community and Technical Colleges

- $1,610,000 appropriated for fiscal year 2026 and $1,610,000 for fiscal year 2027 from the general fund and $904,000 from the Workforce Education Investment Account (WEIA) for Mathematics, Engineering, and Science Achievement (MESA) programs.

Four-Year Postsecondary Institutions

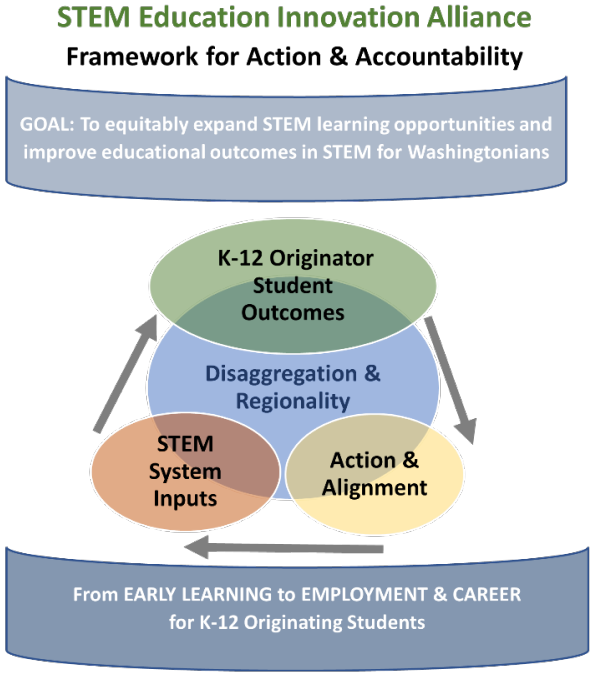
- $240,000 for Central Washington University for expanding cybersecurity capacity by adding additional faculty resources in the department of computer science.
- $1,020,000 for Eastern Washington University to establish and provide operating support for a Mathematics, Engineering, and Science Achievement (MESA) program.
- $2,636,000 for Eastern Washington University to maintain a computer engineering degree program in the college of science, technology, engineering, and math.
- $3,426,000 for Western Washington University to maintain access to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics degrees.
- $4,112,000 for Washington State University to establish a bachelor's degree program in cybersecurity operations.
- $14,000,000 for expansion of the UW school of computer science and engineering to increase capacity to award additional 200 degrees per year focusing on traditionally underrepresented students.

Key Takeaways

- Rapid advances in artificial intelligence are beginning to have an effect on STEM occupations as more and more job tasks are automated.
- This trend should be carefully monitored for emerging impacts on the labor market as things evolve. However, current projections for job openings in STEM continue to show strong employer demand in Washington.
- STEM education is vital to the state's innovation-driven economy; as a result, aligning the state's STEM education system with labor market demand is imperative. The focus must be on improving the full spectrum, from early learning and K–12 to career-connected learning and postsecondary programs. All stages are crucial to helping students develop the key STEM skills and credentials they will need to prepare for good career opportunities in Washington's dynamic and evolving economy.
- Expanding institutional enrollment capacity in key fields may remove barriers that are driving some of the skilled worker supply and demand gaps, particularly in fields such as computer and information technology.
- Another key to advancing STEM education and labor market alignment is addressing equity issues, ensuring that groups that have been historically underrepresented and underserved, including low-income students and students from racial and ethnic minorities, are given the support and resources they need to succeed in their education and career goals.

Washington State
STEM Education Innovation Alliance

The Washington State STEM Education Innovation Alliance, legislatively created in 2013, brings together leaders from a broad range of business, labor, education, government, and nonprofit organizations, with the role of advising Washington's governor and legislature on policy and strategic planning in support of STEM education initiatives.



Measuring Progress

The overarching goal of the Alliance is to provide the Governor with vision, guidance, assistance, and advice on strategies to increase learning opportunities and improve educational outcomes in STEM across the full spectrum from early learning to employment and careers. The Framework for Action and Accountability pictured to the left, which was developed in collaboration with our key partners at Washington STEM, captures the dynamics of how various measures associated with STEM System Inputs, Student Outcomes, and Action & Alignment elements are tracked to monitor progress, with Disaggregation and Regionality acting as guiding principles.

STEM Education Innovation Alliance Members

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Washington STEM
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Washington Student Achievement Council
Isaac Kwakye
Acting Executive Director

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[17] The STEM investments highlighted in this section use a broad definition of STEM that includes healthcare as an important STEM-related field.