Road Map Project

LOCAL IMPROVEMENT NETWORKS

Working together for elementary success

YEAR 1

"You have to be in it for the long haul."

Campbell Hill Elementary School

During a January 2016 meeting, an idea was hatched to better serve a community that, in some ways, had been forgotten. This community was the most diverse in the Renton School District and in unincorporated King County, where there had been minimal public investments over the past 40 years. It was also the community where I was raised from age 10. It was an honor to help launch what was then called West Hill NOW!—the precursor of the Renton Innovation Zone (also known as RIZ, see page 4)—because it was how I continued to serve the community that helped me become who I am today.

While we clearly did not have all the answers when we started the RIZ, we understood that to truly meet the needs of our students and families, we would have to extend our efforts beyond the school. Simply put, the work was too complex and important to do on our own. It is for this reason that we saw Local Improvement Networks as a strategy that held the potential to bring together our schools in a coherent fashion to improve student outcomes, and create partnerships between schools, families, community leaders, and community-based organizations.

Even with a clearly defined strategy, this work is not for the faint of heart. As my dad said to me on the day we announced the creation of West Hill NOW!: "This is going to be tough work. You have to be in it for the long haul." Our leaders at the district offices and schools are committed for the long term. There are no shortcuts or quick fixes when it comes to meeting the needs of our communities. We are learning a lot on this journey and I remain impressed with how far we have come in a little over three years as the RIZ and a year since we began the Renton Local Improvement Network. The progress we have made to date is due to the dedication and commitment of our staff, students, families, and community.

—

DAMIEN PATTENAUDE
Superintendent, Renton School District

> **THANK YOU**

We want to express our appreciation to all those who played a role in the first year of the Renton Local Improvement Network. Special thanks to the Renton School District for saying yes to being our region's initial pilot. We appreciate you going first!

Thank you to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for investing and caring. Thank you to our amazing technical assistance partners: Gillian Williams of Rensselaerville Institute, Stacy Lappin of Sound Discipline, and Teresa Lind of the University of Washington.

Additional thanks to the staff from the four Renton Innovation Zone elementary schools and our nine community partners who constantly asked what more they could do for students and families.

Graphic design for this report is by Teysia Parks. This report was made possible, in part, by Renton School District, who provided data. Information and analyses included in this report were provided by Road Map Project partners and do not necessarily reflect opinions of Renton School District.

An opportunity for the Road Map Project region

Road Map Project partners have always known that the earliest years of a child's life are critical to their education. Yet in South Seattle and South King County, only 35 percent of low-income children are kindergarten ready. By fourth grade, only 36 percent of low-income students are meeting math standards. Disparities by race also exist. While partners work to build more racially equitable systems, we have an obligation to make improvements at the ground level for our youngest students so they have the foundation for success in later years.
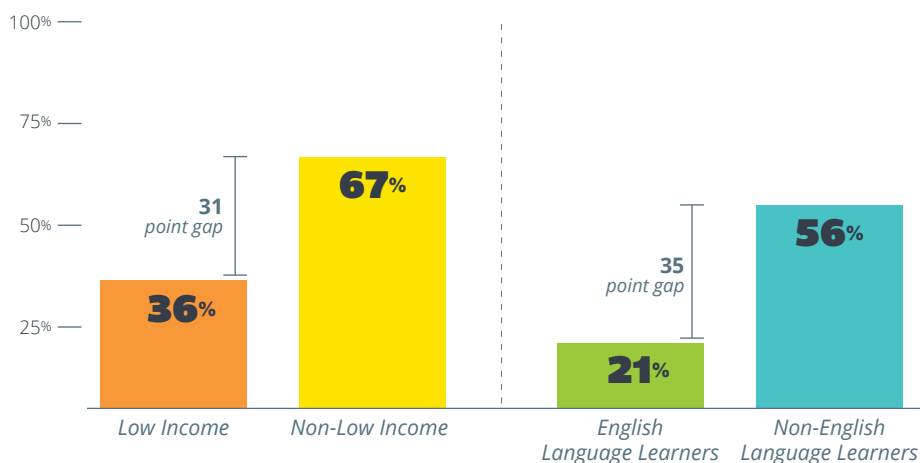
This report highlights innovative work to improve early learning and elementary outcomes for students of color and low-income students in the Renton School District. It describes Lakeridge Elementary School's transformation and showcases the partnership between the district and its community to improve the education experience for its youngest learners.

> ## ABOUT THE ROAD MAP PROJECT
>
> The Road Map Project is a collective impact initiative that began in 2010 to improve student achievement from cradle through college in South King County and South Seattle.
>
> Through multisector and community collaboration, it aims to increase equitable policies and practices in education systems to eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps, and for 70 percent of our students to earn a college degree or career credential by 2030.

Road Map Project Region Fourth Graders Meeting Math Standards
2017-18 Academic Year

- Low Income: **36%**
- Non-Low Income: **67%** (31 point gap)
- English Language Learners: **21%**
- Non-English Language Learners: **56%** (35 point gap)

Source: OSPI Report Card Data File
Note: Math scores are from SBAC, Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium. Washington State adopted the SBAC as the assessment standard beginning in the 2014/15 school year

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Road Map Project Elementary Schools
2017-18 Academic Year

60,784
K-6 Students

73%
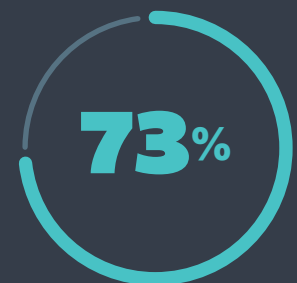
44,518
Students of Color

58%

35,590
Low-Income Students

30%

18,593
English Language Learners

Source: OSPI Report Card Data Files

Lakeridge Elementary and the Renton Innovation Zone

Though part of the Renton School District, Lakeridge Elementary is in Skyway-West Hill, a neighborhood in unincorporated King County. This area is known for being ethnically and socioeconomically diverse—and like the rest of South King County—is facing challenges because of gentrification. Additionally, its unincorporated status means that Skyway-West Hill does not receive municipal services, and has minimal support for local nonprofits to provide services.

In 2011, Lakeridge—then in the bottom 5 percent of academic achievement in the state's schools—received a federal government School Improvement Grant and had to choose among four options: turnaround, restart, closure, or transformation. The Skyway-West Hill community rallied to keep Lakeridge open. The district chose school transformation and this led to the hiring of a new principal and a focus on improving math learning and outcomes. Teachers were given ongoing professional development with school leaders helping them develop skills to teach math to improve a student's conceptual understanding.

By 2014, the percent of Lakeridge third graders who were proficient in math had more than doubled to 60 percent. In addition to improving math outcomes, school staff chose to add a focus on social and emotional learning to foster a community of positive behavior skills with their students.

Renton School District leadership recognized the potential of Lakeridge's approach and wanted to apply it to other elementary schools in the Skyway-West Hill and Sunset neighborhoods. The district calls this geographic area the Renton Innovation Zone, also known as "RIZ."

> **We stood up and said, 'We don't see why the school should close. We see why something has to change in the school system, in the administration.'**
>
> **It's not the walls that are failing the kids. It is the work that is not being done or being done in a way that is adequate."**
>
> **HAMDI ABDULLE,**
> *Executive Director, African Community Housing and Development*

Lakeridge Elementary School

Renton Local Improvement Network forms

As Renton Innovation Zone work was getting under way, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation began exploring how to improve elementary outcomes in math and social and emotional learning using continuous improvement, a cyclical process of setting goals, reviewing different kinds of data, identifying root causes, testing changes, and adopting improvements. The foundation wanted to pilot this work somewhere in South King County, the geographical focus of the Road Map Project.

Because the Renton Innovation Zone's strategy was already focused on social and emotional learning, math, and elementary education, it was deemed a good fit for this pilot. Additional support from the Gates Foundation would enhance the work that Renton School District and the local community were already doing.

As Road Map Project partners, the Community Center for Education Results and the Renton School District worked together to structure, support, and implement a pilot in Renton. Together, they called this initiative the "Local Improvement Network," an approach that brings together schools and community organizations to identify problems and address barriers to student success in math and social and emotional learning, particularly for students of color and low-income students. This Local Improvement Network includes four Renton Innovation Zone elementary schools: Bryn Mawr, Campbell Hill, Highlands, and Lakeridge.

Campbell Hill Elementary School

Lakeridge Elementary School

Highlands Elementary School

How do Local Improvement Networks work?

COMMON SYSTEM OF SUPPORT

Schools work directly with children, families, and partners, but all are not working together.
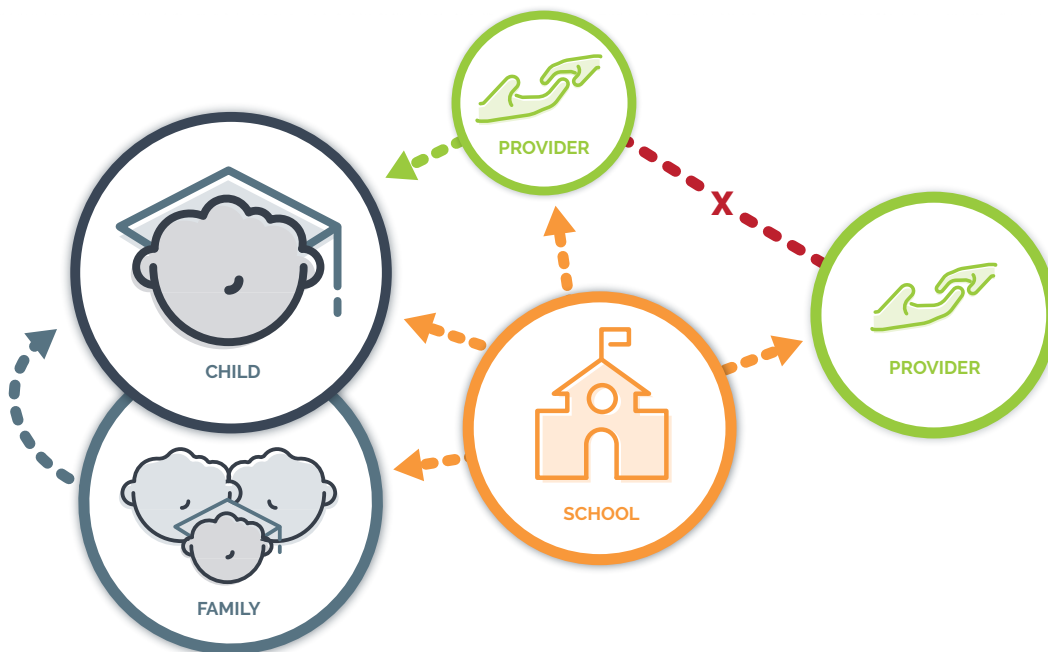
The path to how a student receives support is often unclear. Schools might work directly with families, students, and various community providers, but these providers aren't always working together. What's more, information about a student's needs may not be available to all those who could help.

Consisting of educators and community service providers, Local Improvement Networks emphasize collaboration, transparency, and data usage to accelerate outcomes for students. The current model of school improvement typically involves teams of staff from districts and schools; however, Renton saw early on that schools couldn't do it alone—and neither could community organizations. To build stronger systems for students of color and low-income students, schools and communities need to strengthen their partnerships.

By bringing together district leaders, school teams, and community organizations, Local Improvement Networks allow these groups to provide consistent and quality support for students and their families in and out of school. Siloes are broken down and information is regularly shared between school teams and community organizations.

Core to the Local Improvement Network work is the use of continuous improvement methods, which helps schools and community organizations tackle both small and large problems, increasing the network's effectiveness in delivering equitable outcomes for all students.

LOCAL IMPROVEMENT NETWORKS

All responsible for a child's success are working together and breaking down siloes.
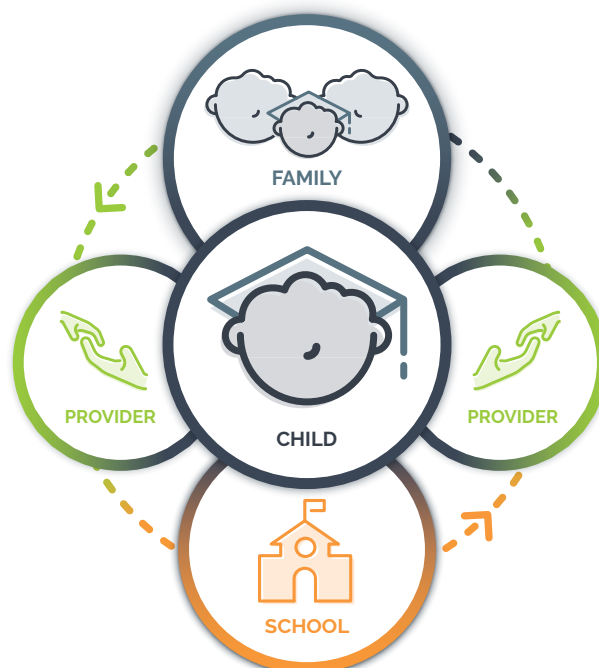
The Renton Local Improvement Network

In the 2018-19 academic year, nine community organizations joined the four Renton Innovation Zone schools to establish a Local Improvement Network pilot.

One key component of the Local Improvement Network is understanding local context. Hence, each network is structured to align with specific community needs. In the first year, the structure of the Renton Local Improvement Network included three groups called "learning networks": Social and Emotional Learning, Math, and Partner.

▶ THE LEARNING NETWORKS

Math
- University of Washington College of Education facilitators
- Math coaches

Social and Emotional Learning
- School administrators
- Counselors
- Behavior interventionists
- Family liaisons
- Social and emotional learning coaches
- Partnership coordinators

Partner
- African Community Housing Development
- Black Child Development Institute
- Centro Rendu at St. Vincent De Paul
- Communities in Schools of Renton
- Renton Area Youth and Family Services
- Somali Youth and Family Club
- Somali Parents Education Board
- Sound Discipline
- Techbridge Girls
- Partnership coordinators

▶ RENTON LOCAL IMPROVEMENT NETWORK
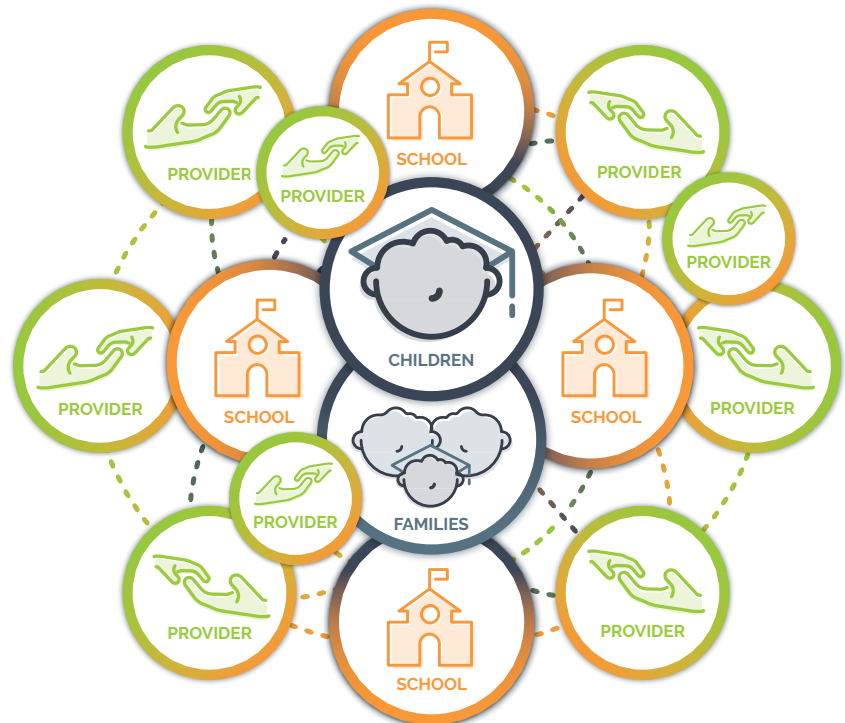
Each learning network had foundational work to achieve before collaboration with other networks could begin.

The **Math Learning Network** worked on curriculum alignment and increasing the capacity of school-based coaches to improve instruction in classrooms.They undertook this endeavor during the first year and didn't connect with the other learning networks until the end of the year.

The **Social and Emotional Learning Network** was the most equipped to start the work of the Local Improvement Network, given the foundational work that RIZ schools had been doing for years. In fall 2018, this learning network used a continuous improvement approach to improve school attendance. Over the course of a month, half of the students the network worked with improved their attendance thanks to early interventions with school staff. Encouraged by the results, school teams saw that if they focused on a specific problem, set goals, and were willing to learn from mistakes and refine their strategies, improvement was possible.

The nine community organizations in the **Partner Learning Network** gained a deeper understanding of how they could work together. Each partner received funding to cover the cost of collaboration, allowing for community organizations of all sizes and scopes to participate. The network also set joint goals and supported the Social and Emotional Learning Network.

Three partnership coordinators joined both the Social and Emotional Learning Network and Partner Learning Network, to facilitate communication between the groups. The coordinator roles were created by the Renton School District specifically for the work of the Local Improvement Network, with partnership coordinators helping to connect families, students, schools, and community partners.

Students in the Renton Local Improvement Network

In the first year, network members focused on prototyping this work, allowing them to try new things, innovate, and learn what strategies worked.

A key decision in the first year of the Renton Local Improvement Network pilot was to have the Social and Emotional Learning and Partner learning networks focus on the same group of students.

In December 2018, school teams identified targets for the first year, including: reducing behavior referrals, increasing attendance, and improving math for English language learners. Each school then developed a strategy with interventions, created goals, and worked with about 15 students per school over the next six months.

> **"It's not just about how we help this cohort of children in front of us. It's learning what works in how we help them and figuring out how we use what we learn to help all kids."**
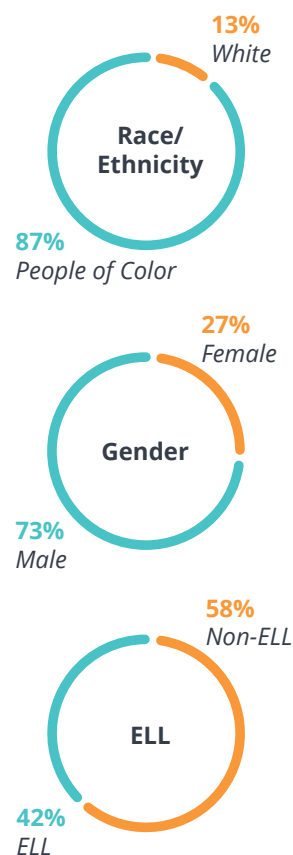>
> **GILLIAN WILLIAMS,**
> *Network Facilitator*

Students Participating in the First Year of the Renton Pilot
2018-19 Academic Year
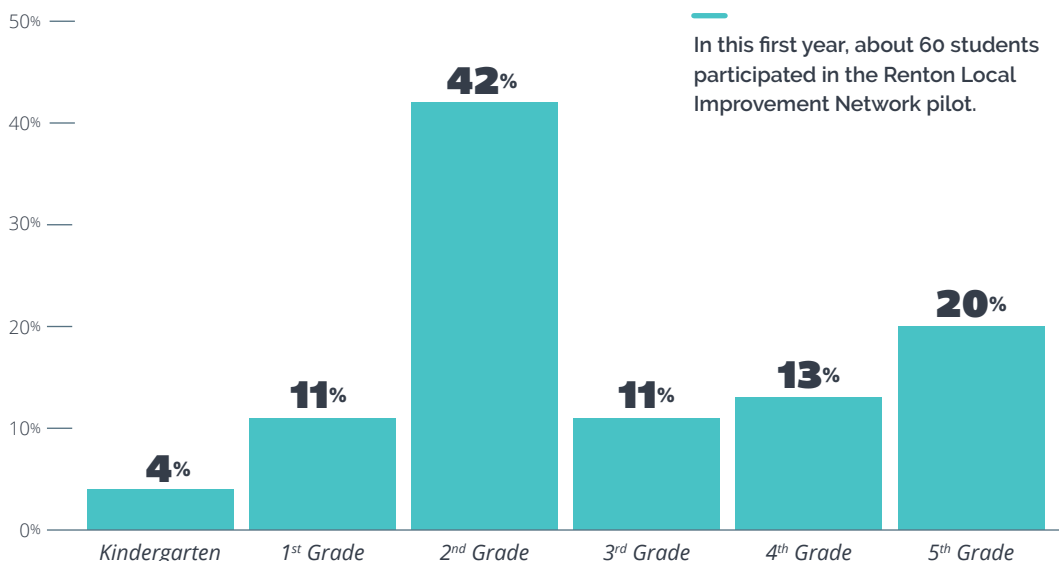
In this first year, about 60 students participated in the Renton Local Improvement Network pilot.

- Kindergarten: 4%
- 1st Grade: 11%
- 2nd Grade: 42%
- 3rd Grade: 11%
- 4th Grade: 13%
- 5th Grade: 20%

Source: Renton School District.

Race/Ethnicity
- 13% White
- 87% People of Color

Gender
- 27% Female
- 73% Male

ELL
- 58% Non-ELL
- 42% ELL

➤ EXAMPLES OF INTERVENTIONS PROVIDED TO STUDENTS IN YEAR ONE

Academics
Tutoring, targeted academic support in class, and assistance with independent work or homework

Transition or re-entry
Supporting students to ease back into the classroom after being removed

Quick check-in
Connecting through planned check-ins at key points during the school day (arrival, recess, and dismissal), and unplanned connections

Basic needs
Supporting students and families with clothing, food, and health services, and connecting to emergency or temporary housing

Peer/social group
Trying small-group activities on the playground and facilitated conversations with peers

Arts
Working on projects with mentors or support personnel to access interests, and low-stress opportunities to support social and emotional learning strategies

Physical activity
Practicing social and emotional learning strategies through physical play, and providing opportunities to express energy or emotion that needs redirection

Affirming, self-regulating, skill-building
Practicing self-regulation, explicitly acknowledging student use of effective strategies, and teaching lessons in small or whole groups around relevant skills

Family engagement
Meeting with families to strategize on interventions, home visits, and workshops for families on supporting their children

Mentor
Meeting one-on-one during the school day with an assigned mentor

Focusing on a specific group of students allowed the Social and Emotional Learning and Partner networks to try new approaches and refine what didn't work before establishing a full model in the second year to help a larger number of students. It increased the accountability of the district, schools, and partners because they had to find more impactful ways to work together. It allowed for a coherent experience for students and their families, and most importantly, kept students and families at the center of the work.

Campbell Hill Elementary School

> **This is triangulation of work with students at the center. The hopes and dreams for students from staff, family, and kids are at the center of the plans for interventions."**
>
> **SARAH MICHELLE LEONARD,**
> *Family Liaison, Communities in Schools Renton*

Early successes

Because the learning networks kept families and students at the center, it allowed for early successes to emerge. These successes and learnings will be carried over in the second year to help a greater number of students.

Below are some of the lessons learned in Year One by the Renton Local Improvement Network.

Increased collaboration is key to improving outcomes

Greater collaboration was now happening between people in schools who previously didn't work together, between schools and those in similar roles, between schools and community partners, and between partners. Learning network members were working differently and schools and community partners mobilized to effectively work together to improve outcomes for students and families in the Renton Innovation Zone.

> "
>
> **The Local Improvement Network allowed us to share the strengths and needs of the four schools, build trust, strategize, and try new ways of working with one another to serve a specific set of students and families in new, deep, and innovative ways."**
>
> —
>
> **EBONY PATTENAUDE,**
> *Director of RIZ Partnerships and Early Learning, Renton School District*

Campbell Hill Elementary School

Campbell Hill Elementary School

Data access and usage can drive change

Another early success of the Renton Local Improvement Network was improved data access and usage. Historically, districts enter data sharing agreements with individual organizations so they can better understand student progress. These agreements tend to be different for each community organization. All nine member organizations of the Partner Learning Network joined together and made one agreement with the school district, allowing them access to the same data to better coordinate supports for students and families. In addition, the Partner Learning Network received parental consent to view more detailed information about students in the Renton Local Improvement Network.

Schools and partners were also challenged to use data in ways that go beyond looking at outcomes. School teams and partners regularly reviewed data relating to daily interventions, attendance, and behavior to see if their efforts were working. Data was now being used proactively to refine strategies and drive change.

When school teams work with families, students succeed

The work of the Renton Local Improvement Network pushed school teams to approach students and families differently. In the beginning of the year, students were asked to set goals and school staff made home visits, allowing families and school teams to work together to help students accomplish their goals. Once families were recognized as partners and experts in the work, school staff and families could provide consistent messaging to students, linking school and home practices for better support.

> **Me sorprendió y la vez me dio gusto que alguien de la escuela había echo ese plan para ir a mi casa, a decirme las metas que mi niña tenía y lo que ella quiere para seguir avanzando. A mi me dio mucho gusto que hayan tomado el tiempo para ir a visitar a un padre de familia e informarle sobre las metas de los niños."**
>
> *It surprised me and made me happy because somebody on behalf of the school had done that plan to get to my house to tell me, so that they could talk about the goals that my daughter had and what she wants so that she can continue advancing and it made me very glad that you had taken your time to go visit a parent and to go over the kids' goals."*
>
> **— MARIA,**
> *Parent of a Campbell Hill second grader*

LESSONS FROM THE RENTON LOCAL IMPROVEMENT NETWORK

As a partnership coordinator with the Renton Local Improvement Network, Kim Shell works at the nexus of schools, families, students, and community organizations. Kim shares three themes that were learned from the first year of the Renton Local Improvement Network.

School culture is very important.
Working at these Renton schools has shown me how a building's level of welcoming matters. It's so necessary for schools to open up spaces for families to feel attachment and belonging. I've heard from so many parents and students who have had negative experiences with school systems, so when they walk into intentional spaces like the Family Room at Bryn Mawr, they feel included and heard. That's a segue into how that culture of belonging can evolve to embed in the system itself.

No matter what the school culture is, you always have control over the relationships you build.
Even in what is perceived as a difficult school culture, there's beauty in the fundamental thing of taking time to build relationships with students, families, teachers, and staff. In a school system, there's so much to do. But taking time to pause and connect with people is crucial and has the power to change systems.

Parents are the experts.
When I took time to build relationships with families, I quickly realized that they need to be behind the wheel, and we need to respond to their needs. When that happened, things worked. Even though it was scary for school staff— including me—to let go of some of that control and give it over to families and students, we trusted that their voices and leadership is something we want to and need to invest in.

Stronger relationships between community organizations and schools lead to tailored support

For community organizations in the Partner Learning Network, early shifts in adult capacity and mindsets could be seen through the enhanced relationships between partners and schools. Community organizations and schools looked for solutions rather than areas of failure. As trust grew over time between partners and schools, student needs took priority. Partners became more willing to share their resources and schools were willing to ask for help. These strengthened partnerships led to an expansion of service offerings that were tailored to the needs of students and families.

> "We had an opportunity to be a partner and have relationships through the schools. The schools originally did not have a clear sense of who is outside and put their walls up. The partners began with their own agenda and pulled back because they perceived that schools do this or that, but this project provided an opportunity to bring down walls."
>
> **STACY LAPPIN,**
> *Director of Program, Sound Discipline*

Campbell Hill Elementary School

> "...I don't know if I have changed, but I'm trying to do different actions. Thinking before I do something, trying to be a good leader for the lower grades so that they're not influenced in doing bad things, so they can actually learn to get smarter and smarter."
>
> **FIFTH GRADER,**
> *Highlands Elementary*

Student outcomes

With schools and partners coming together to improve outcomes for students, data and results could be viewed for a consistent group. Each school identified about 15 students to work with from January to June 2019, and worked on increasing attendance, reducing referrals, or improving math for English language learners. Even though each school had set a different criteria for inclusion in the group, the strategies and interventions put into place allowed for early success and improvements in student outcomes.

The findings on the next page focus on the group of students that were identified by the four schools participating in the Renton Local Improvement Network during the 2018-19 academic year. Schools are not identified to protect the privacy of the students.

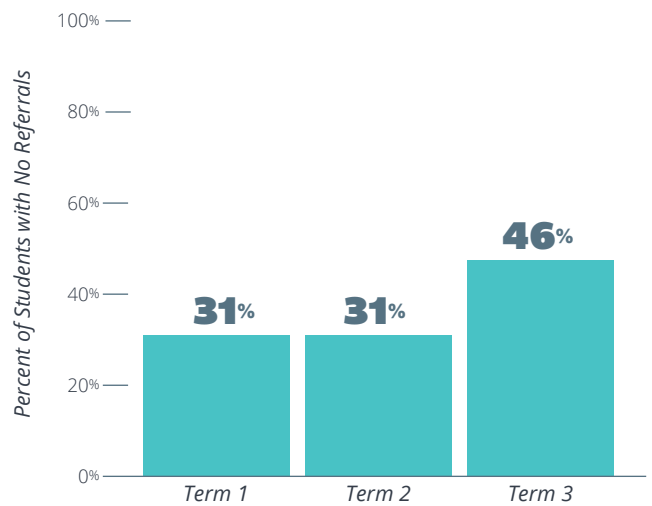## INCREASE ATTENDANCE AND REDUCE REFERRALS

School A chose to focus on increasing attendance and reducing discipline referrals. By the end of the year attendance rates had increased along with the number of students who received no referrals.

'School A': Increase in Attendance

Percent of Students with High Attendance

- Term 1: 23%
- Term 2: 38%
- Term 3: 46%
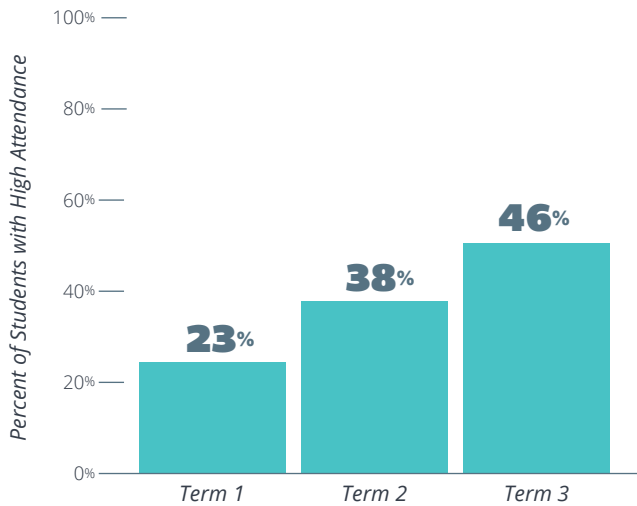
Source: Renton School District.
Note: High Attendance is defined as attending 85% of days enrolled

'School A': Increase in Students with No Referrals

Percent of Students with No Referrals
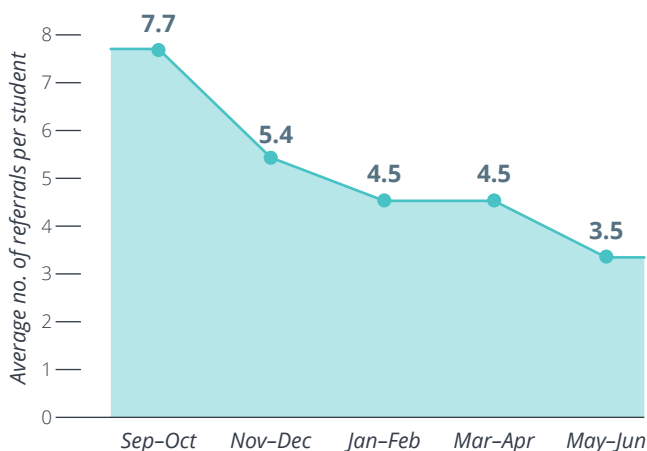
- Term 1: 31%
- Term 2: 31%
- Term 3: 46%

Source: Renton School District.
Note: Attendance and tardiness related referrals are not included in this measure.

REDUCE REFERRALS

Two schools focused on reducing referrals. The schools chose students who were receiving a lot of referrals to participate in the first year. By the end of the year, at both schools, the gap in the number of referrals between identified students and the rest of the school became smaller.

School B's goal was to reduce behavior-related referrals in a two-month window by the end of the year. This school saw a 55 percent reduction in the average number of referrals per student during the last two months compared with the first two months of the school year.

School C chose to reduce major referrals between January and June by 25 percent. By the end of the year, this school had reduced the average monthly number of major referrals per student by 67 percent.

'School B': Reduction in Referrals

Average no. of referrals per student

- Sep–Oct: 7.7
- Nov–Dec: 5.4
- Jan–Feb: 4.5
- Mar–Apr: 4.5
- May–Jun: 3.5

Source: Renton School District.
Note: Attendance and tardiness related referrals are not included in this measure.

'School C': Reduction in Major Referrals

Average no. of major monthly referrals per student

- Sep–Dec: 2.1
- Jan–Jun: 0.7
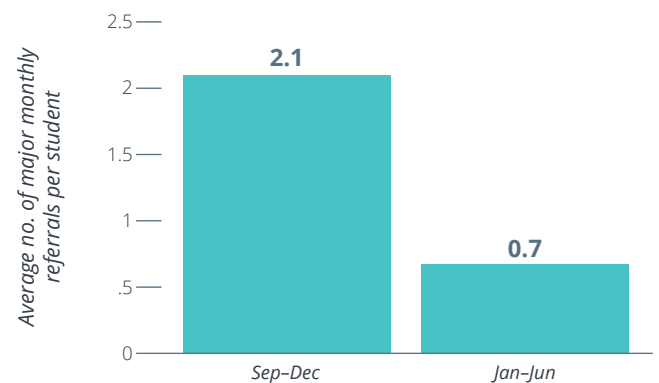
Source: Renton School District.
Note: Major referral includes: any event that caused a threat to physical or emotional safety or resulted in the student missing significant amount of time out of the learning community (classroom or recess), or requires significant administrator time or teacher support. To adjust for the different number of months in the two time periods, these results show the average number of major referrals per student per month during each period.

IMPROVE ENGAGEMENT AND MATH SKILLS

School D chose to improve effort in math and math skills. For the first year, this school worked with second grade students in English language learner program who began the year with low math skill scores. Of note is that these students scored higher in math effort compared to other students in second grade ELL who had higher scores in math skills. By the end of the year, the participating students showed additional improvements in math effort and also improved math skills.
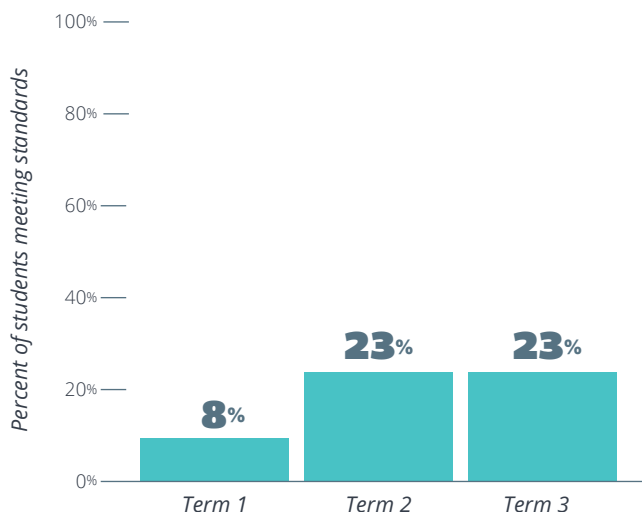
'School D': Increase in Math Effort

Percent of students exceeding expectations

- Term 1: 54%
- Term 2: 69%
- Term 3: 77%
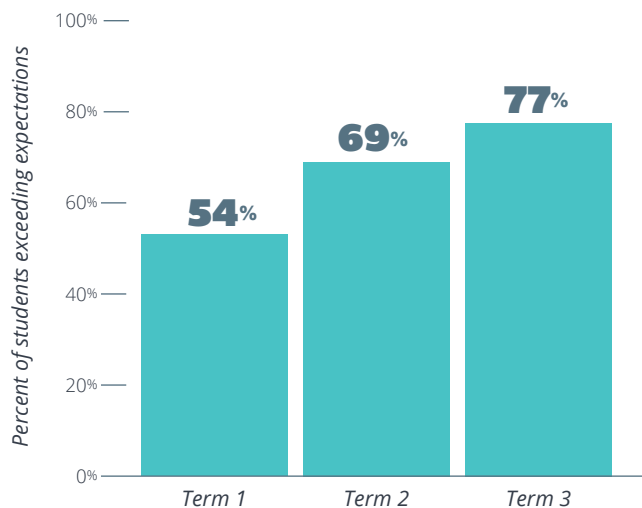
Source: Renton School District.
Note: Exceeding expectations in math effort means completing homework, answering questions, and participation in class.

'School D': Increase in Math Skills

Percent of students meeting standards

- Term 1: 8%
- Term 2: 23%
- Term 3: 23%

Source: Renton School District.
Note: Meeting standards in math skills means getting a score of three on end-of-term math assessments in geometry, measurement and data, number and operations in base ten, and operations and algebraic thinking.

Lakeridge Elementary School

Highlands Elementary School

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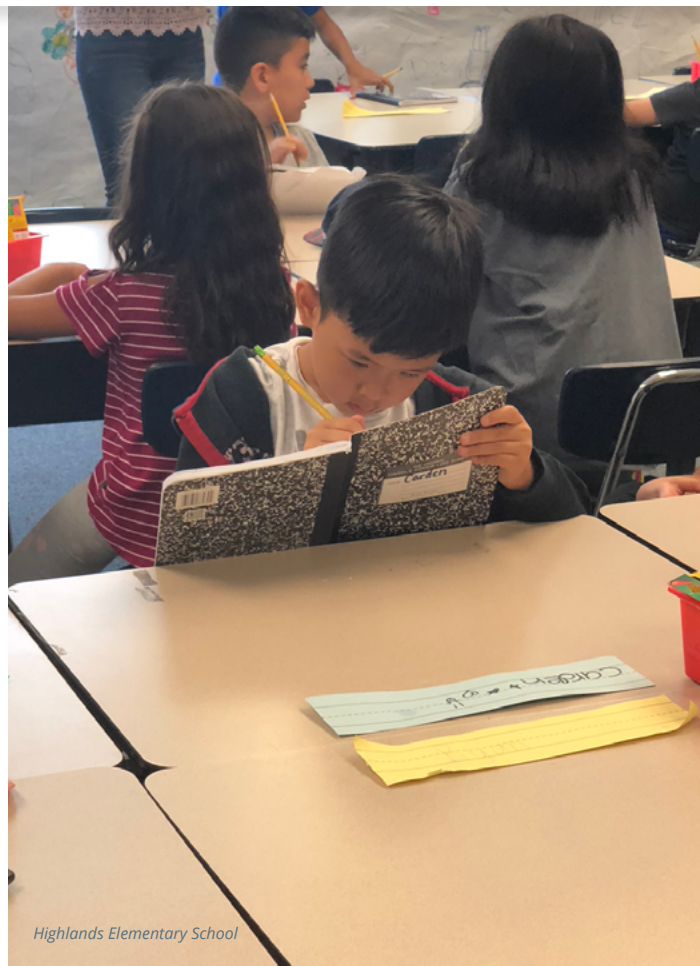
What's next for Local Improvement Networks?

Campbell Hill Elementary School

With the first year in Renton completed, Year Two will build on the lessons learned. In the 2019-20 school year, eleven community providers will have joined the Partner Learning Network and the work will impact more students. The two focus areas remain to raise the math and social and emotional learning success of students with specific interventions and supports, and build the capacity of schools and communities around them to support all children.

The Renton Local Improvement Network's success allows for other districts in the Road Map Project region to launch their own. This fall, Tukwila School District has started the region's second Local Improvement Network, using the lessons captured from Renton and adapting the approach to fit their specific community. Additional networks will launch in the coming years with the goal of accelerating student outcomes by having at least one Local Improvement Network in every Road Map Project region school district.

> " I feel blessed to be part of the Local Improvement Network. We have learned a lot. I hope to not lose track of what we learned, the things we improved, and how we worked together as we begin the second year."
>
> — **JACKIE LLOYD-EVANS,**
> *Education Programs and Data Manager, Centro Rendu*

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