

## Evaluation Report

# Client Lifecycle Analysis Report

## *Assessment of School-to-Work Student Transitions into Adult Services*

Department of Community &amp; Human Services

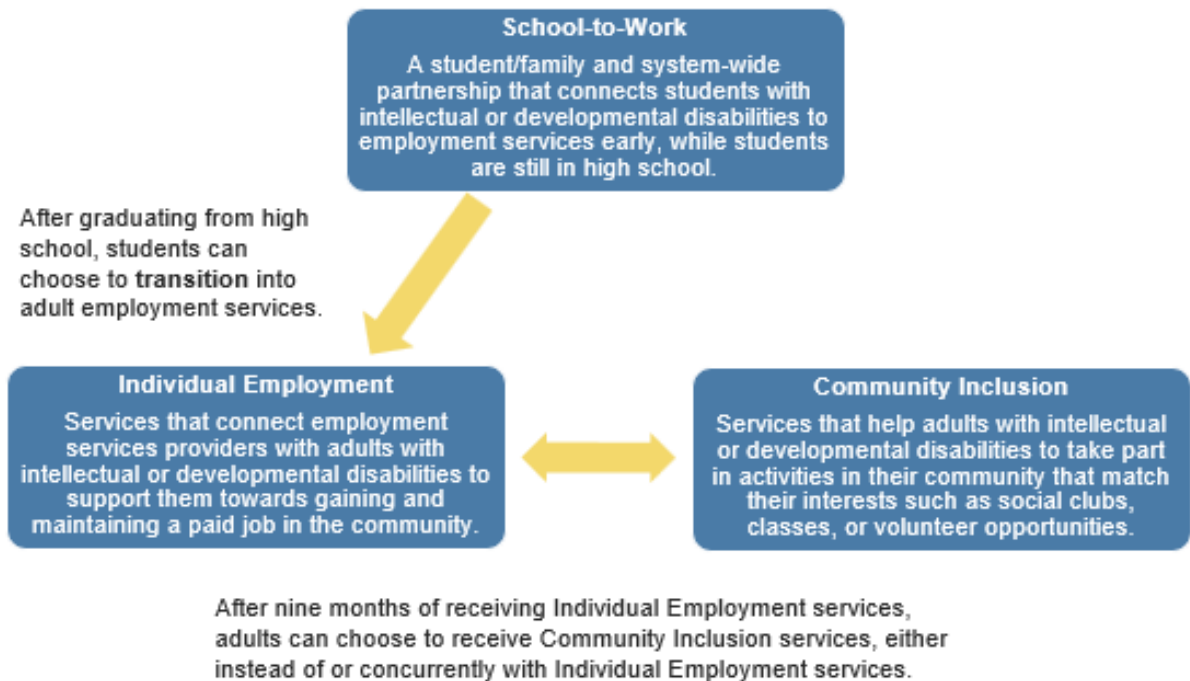
Performance Measurement &amp; Evaluation Unit

July 2026

# Client Lifecycle Analysis Report

The Client Lifecycle Analysis connects data from the School-to-Work and Adult Services programs, Individual Employment and Community Inclusion, to show a client's "lifecycle" through employment services programs, from high school into adulthood. The graphic below visualizes the transition process and describes each of the services.

This report assesses changes in transition rates across various demographics from 2010 through 2024 and gathers input from parents/caregivers of former students and school staff about the School-to-Work experience and what factors contribute to transitions.



## Suggested Citation

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# Acronym Guide

Many acronyms are used throughout this report. The table below provides definitions and descriptions for all acronyms:

| ACRONYM     | DEFINITION                                 | DESCRIPTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>S2W</b>  | School-to-Work                             | School-to-Work is a student/family and system-wide partnership that connects students with intellectual or developmental disabilities to employment services early, while students are still in high school. Throughout this report, this acronym refers to King County's School-to-Work services. More information about these services can be found on the program's <a href="#">public webpage</a> .                                                                                                   |
| <b>IE</b>   | Individual Employment                      | Individual Employment services connect employment services providers with adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities to support them towards gaining and maintaining a paid job in the community. Throughout this report, this acronym refers to King County's Individual Employment services. More information about these services can be found on the program's <a href="#">public webpage</a> .                                                                                           |
| <b>CI</b>   | Community Inclusion                        | Community Inclusion services help adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities to take part in activities in their community that match their interests such as social clubs, classes, or volunteer opportunities. Throughout this report, this acronym refers to King County's Community Inclusion services. More information about these services can be found on the program's <a href="#">public webpage</a> .                                                                              |
| <b>I/DD</b> | Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities | This acronym is used to describe any individual who has an intellectual or developmental disability. A few examples of intellectual or developmental disabilities include cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, and autism. All programs in this report provide services to individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities.                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>DCHS</b> | Department of Community & Human Services   | King County's Department of Community & Human Services offers a wide range of services and programs including behavioral health treatment, affordable housing, childcare, education and employment for youth and young adults, veterans services, supports for seniors, and inclusive resources for people with developmental disabilities. All services highlighted in this report are housed within this department. More information can be found on the department's <a href="#">public webpage</a> . |

# Acronym Guide

| ACRONYM       | DEFINITION                                                     | DESCRIPTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>DDECSD</b> | Developmental Disabilities & Early Childhood Supports Division | King County's Developmental Disabilities & Early Childhood Supports Division is housed within the Department of Community & Human Services. The division offers a range of programs and services to support children, young adults, and adults with developmental disabilities and their families. All services highlighted in this report are housed within this division. More information can be found on the division's <a href="#">public webpage</a> .                 |
| <b>DDA</b>    | Developmental Disabilities Administration                      | Washington State's Developmental Disabilities Administration is housed within the Department of Social and Health Services. The Developmental Disabilities Administration provides support and services to individuals of all ages with developmental disabilities across various programs and is a funding source/partner for King County services highlighted throughout this report. More information can be found on the organization's <a href="#">public webpage</a> . |
| <b>DVR</b>    | Division of Vocational Rehabilitation                          | Washington State's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is housed within the Department of Social and Health Services. This division provides individualized vocational rehabilitation counseling and employment services and supports to individuals with developmental disabilities. This division partners with county School-to-Work programs to provide services. More information can be found on the division's <a href="#">public webpage</a> .                     |
| <b>BIPOC</b>  | Black, Indigenous, and People of Color                         | This acronym refers to individuals that identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. Racial/ethnic groups referenced in this report that are classified under this definition include American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian/Asian American, Black/African/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and Multiracial.                                                                                                                  |
| <b>CIOR</b>   | Community Information, Outreach, & Referral                    | Community Information, Outreach, & Referral programs help to connect people with intellectual or developmental disabilities and their families to the information, skills, and support they need. In this report, this acronym refers to King County's Community Information, Outreach, & Referral services. More information about these services can be found on the program's <a href="#">public webpage</a> .                                                            |

# Summary of Findings

## Improving Transition Rates and Positive Skill Development

- Transition rates are growing over time. From 2010 to 2024, the overall transition rate was 84%. In 2024, 90% of S2W students exiting the program transitioned into Adult Services.
- School staff indicated in a focus group that they have seen transition rates increase over time due to higher numbers of students being eligible for services, expanded outreach efforts, and improved coordination and collaboration between King County, providers, the DDA, and DVR.<sup>1</sup>
- Many parents/caregivers surveyed highlighted that their former students benefited from the skill development, job opportunities, and support system that S2W provides.

## Lower Transition Rates for BIPOC Students

- Students that identify as BIPOC transitioned at a slightly lower rate overall. From 2010 to 2024, the overall transition rate for BIPOC students was 83% compared to 85% for non-BIPOC students. Transition rates are even lower for students identifying as BIPOC and Female. From 2010 to 2024, only 80% of BIPOC Female students

transitioned into Adult Services.

Transition rates for BIPOC and BIPOC Female student populations, however, are improving over time and, in 2024, slightly surpass the overall 2024 transition rate (90%) at 91%.

- School staff noted that differing cultural expectations around employment lead to different levels of engagement from students of diverse backgrounds.

## Lower Transition Rates for Linguistically Diverse Students

- Students that prefer a language other than English transitioned at a slightly lower rate overall. From 2010 to 2024, the overall transition rate for students that prefer a language other than English was 81% compared to 85% for English speaking students. While overall BIPOC student transition rates are improving over time, this is not the case for students who prefer a language other than English, particularly for those who prefer another language and identify as BIPOC. In 2024, only 83% of students that prefer a language other than English and only 82% of BIPOC students that prefer a language other than English transitioned into Adult Services (as compared to the overall transition rate of 90% in 2024).

<sup>1</sup> In this case, improved coordination and collaboration was described by focus group participants as more frequent communications and more regular meetings between partners.

# Summary of Findings

## Program Outcomes Impact Decisions to Transition

- In a survey, many parents/caregivers of former S2W students who did not continue into Adult Services pointed out that the one-size-fits-all approach of the S2W program and lower overall job outcomes informed decisions to leave programming.
- While some parents/caregivers of former students who did not continue into Adult Services felt that the program did not meet their needs due to a lack of a job placement, parents/caregivers of former students that continued into Adult Services highlighted the continued need for support due to a job placement or the continued need for job coaching due to a job loss as reasons for transitioning.
- Many school staff highlighted that job outcomes have been lower lately due to the economy and the current political environment. School staff also indicated that job outcomes can either cause students to be more or less likely to continue into Adult Services (where a lack of a job placement might discourage further engagement or might encourage some to keep seeking employment in Adult Services programs).

## Impact Decisions to Transition

- Many parents/caregivers surveyed pointed out that the capacity for providers and/or schools to engage with their students meaningfully could improve. Some felt that their experiences with specific providers did not meet their students' needs.
- Many school staff highlighted that provider engagement, communication, and consistency could improve and that these factors contribute significantly to decisions to continue or leave programming.



# Summary of Approach & Methods

The first phase of this analysis identified two different client groups:

1. S2W students who enrolled in Adult Services after exiting high school programming
2. S2W students that did NOT enroll in Adult Services after exiting high school programming

This analysis consists of the following:<sup>2</sup>

## Quantitative Analysis

- Descriptive statistics which include program enrollment numbers by demographic characteristics. This data was analyzed for both client groups above and was assessed for all S2W cohorts from 2010 through 2024.

## Qualitative Analyses

- Online survey with parents/caretakers of former students that either identify as BIPOC and/or prefer a language other than English and are from S2W cohorts 2022, 2023, and 2024. The decision to survey only the parents/caretakers of BIPOC and former students who prefer a language other than English was informed by the findings of the quantitative analysis. The survey was translated into 25 different languages based on historical language information provided by DDA.
- Virtual focus group with school staff from the following six school districts across King County that provided services within 2010 to 2024: Kent School District, Snoqualmie Valley, Seattle Public Schools, Federal Way School District, Bellevue School District, and Northshore School District.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Limitations of this analysis can be found in Appendix C.

<sup>3</sup> Not all school staff from the six school districts selected were able to participate in the virtual focus group. Two of the school districts submitted a filled-out form with their answers to the focus group questions instead. See the limitations section in Appendix C of this report for more information.



# Evaluation Goals & Research Questions

1. **Determine whether S2W and Adult Services programs are currently functioning as a connected system of program offerings.** This will help to determine whether there is a typical client lifecycle through employment services programs (i.e., that students choose to enroll in multiple employment services programs from the time they are a student to the time they are an adult), starting in S2W and ending in either IE, CI, or both.
2. **Determine whether there are inequitable program experiences that may be contributing to a client's lifecycle through the employment services programs (i.e., a willingness to enroll and stay in services).** This will show whether there are significant demographic differences in who chooses to continue into Adult Services programs after leaving S2W across race/ethnicity, acuity, gender, or preferred language and if there are any trends in identified reasons for discontinuing services across these demographics.<sup>4</sup>
3. **Learn directly from the parents/caregivers of former S2W students about why they chose to leave or continue into Adult Services programs.** This will reveal

what program practices or other factors impact a student and their family's decision to leave the employment services programs or continue after exiting from S2W. Specific questions around provider and school support will also grant greater insight into how well the employment services system in S2W meets students' needs.

4. **Learn directly from school staff of various King County school districts about the effectiveness of the transition process from S2W into Adult Services and what trends they have observed in their time supporting students.** This will reveal what program practices or other factors school staff (who often have the closest relationship to students throughout the S2W experience) view as having the greatest impact on a student and their family's decision to leave the employment services programs or continue on after exiting from S2W. Specific questions will also provide greater insight into what role cultural relevancy, language access, support needs, and family engagement, play in students' decisions to leave or continue into Adult Services programs.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Acuity is defined as a client's level of support needed per their disability. Acuity levels are measured on a scale of low, medium, and high where lower acuity clients need less support and higher acuity clients need greater support.

<sup>5</sup> In this case, "cultural relevancy" is defined as the degree with which the program meaningfully connects with the values, traditions, and lived experiences of diverse cultural groups. "Language access" is defined as the level of language support provided and resources available to clients and families that speak a language other than English.

# Evaluation Goals & Research Questions

| GOAL                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | TESTABLE RESEARCH QUESTIONS                                                                                                                                                                         | PROPOSED METHODOLOGY                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Determine whether Adult Services programs function as a connected system of program offerings and if this has changed over time.                                                                                                              | What proportion of S2W students continue into Adult Services after exiting? Has the number of students continuing into Adult Services after exiting S2W fluctuated over the history of the program? | Use the DDDECSD data model and historical DDA data to connect client data across programs, count the number of students in each of these areas, and divide by the total number of students at the program-level. Look at these numbers by year to assess trends.                                                                  |
| Determine whether there are inequitable program experiences that may be contributing to a client's lifecycle through the employment services programs (i.e., a willingness to enroll and stay in services) and if this has changed over time. | What do demographics look like for students continuing into Adult Services after exiting S2W versus those that don't? Do they fluctuate over the history of the program?                            | Use the DDECSD data model and historical DDA data to connect client data across programs, count the number of students in these areas by the following demographics and by year to assess trends: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Race/Ethnicity</li><li>• Acuity</li><li>• Gender</li><li>• Preferred Language</li></ul> |

# Evaluation Goals & Research Questions

| GOAL                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | TESTABLE RESEARCH QUESTIONS                                                                                                                                                                     | PROPOSED METHODOLOGY                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Learn directly from the parents/caregivers of former S2W students about why they chose to leave or continue into Adult Services programs.                                                                                     | What do the parents/caregivers of former S2W students identify as their reasons for continuing or discontinuing?                                                                                | Conduct an online survey with parents/caregivers of former S2W students from cohorts 2022, 2023, and 2024. <sup>6</sup> The sample population for the survey is based on findings from the quantitative analysis and includes parents/caregivers of former students that identify as BIPOC and/or prefer a language other than English. This sample population was specifically selected to learn more from the parents/caregivers of former students who were least likely to transition. |
| Learn directly from school staff of various King County school districts about the effectiveness of the transition process from S2W into Adult Services and what trends they have observed in their time supporting students. | What elements of the S2W program and the transition process do school staff highlight as impacting whether a student successfully transitions into Adult Services or chooses to leave services? | Conduct a virtual focus group with school staff from six different school districts across King County. <sup>7</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

<sup>6</sup> Survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

<sup>7</sup> Focus group questions can be found in Appendix B.

# Detailed Program Data Findings

## Year-by-Year Transition Rates

Transition rates are growing over time. The years with the lowest transition rates were 2011, 2020, and 2021. The dips in the number of students transitioning in 2020 and 2021 are expected due to COVID-19 and its impact on employment access, particularly for lower wage jobs.<sup>8</sup> The dip in transition rate for 2011 is the lowest across all years in this analysis and could be influenced by program changes that made the program more accessible for clients after 2011.<sup>9</sup> The 2024 cohort (the most recent year in this analysis) had the highest transition rate by far at about 90%, which is 6% higher than the overall transition rate of 84% from 2010 to 2024 (see Chart A on the next page). This may be positively influenced by the introduction of concurrent CI and IE services in 2023.

## Year-by-Year Transition Rates to Other Washington Counties

Between 2010 and 2024, the percentage of former King County S2W students that transitioned into Adult Services programs in another county in Washington fluctuated between 0-5%. The frequency of transitions to other counties varied across BIPOC and non-BIPOC students. However, overall, non-BIPOC students who left services at King County continued receiving services elsewhere at a slightly higher rate (a difference of 15% compared to 13% for BIPOC students). Students that prefer a language other than English and left King County continued receiving services elsewhere only 2% of the time compared to 16% of the time for students who prefer English (see Chart B on the next page). Although 92% of linguistically diverse students that left services after exiting S2W identify as BIPOC, since 2010, none of these students have continued services in another county in the state.

<sup>8</sup> Raj Chetty, John N. Friedman, Michael Stepner, and The Opportunity Insights Team, "The Economic Impacts of COVID-19: Evidence from a New Public Database Built Using Private Sector Data," NBER Working Paper 27431 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.3386/w27431>

<sup>9</sup> Program changes that most impact S2W enrollment in 2011 and 2012 include eligibility changes that made Community Inclusion more accessible (which programmatically is a better fit for some former students than IE as it allows for participation in the community outside of employment) and the passing of a senate bill which reinforced Washington's employment first policy for people with I/DD. More about the senate bill can be found on the Washington Developmental Disabilities Council's website: <https://www.ddc.wa.gov/ddc-history-and-visioning/2012-employment-first-policy>

Chart A. Transition Rates Over Time

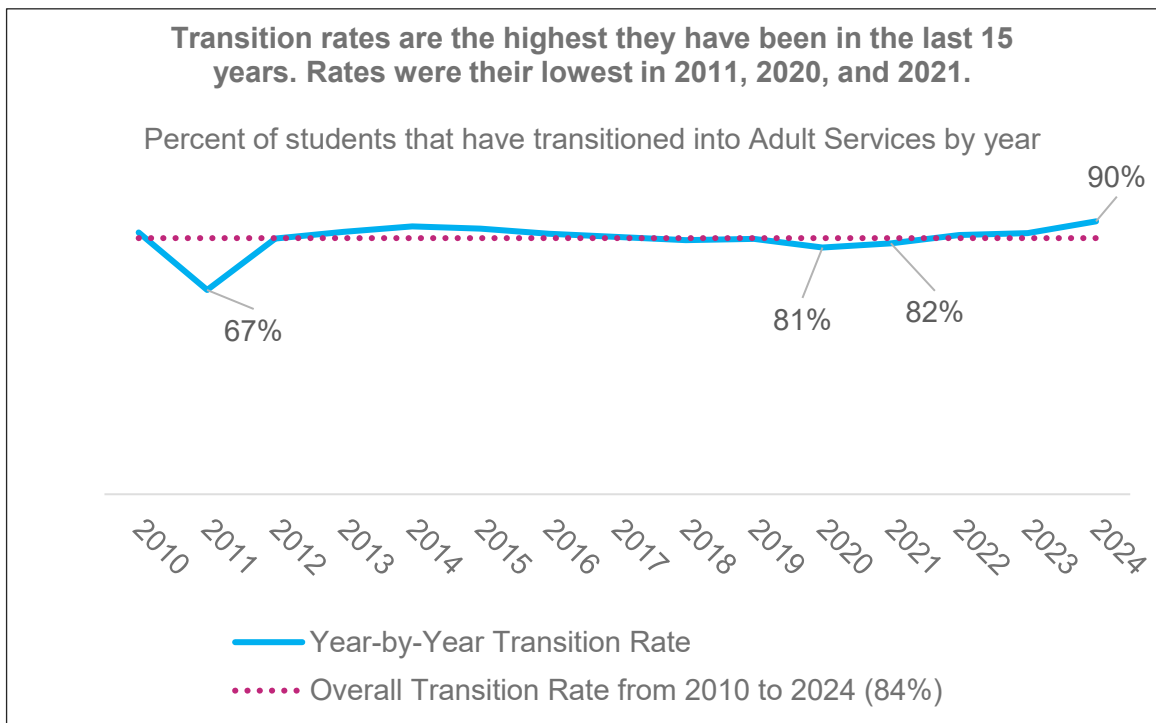
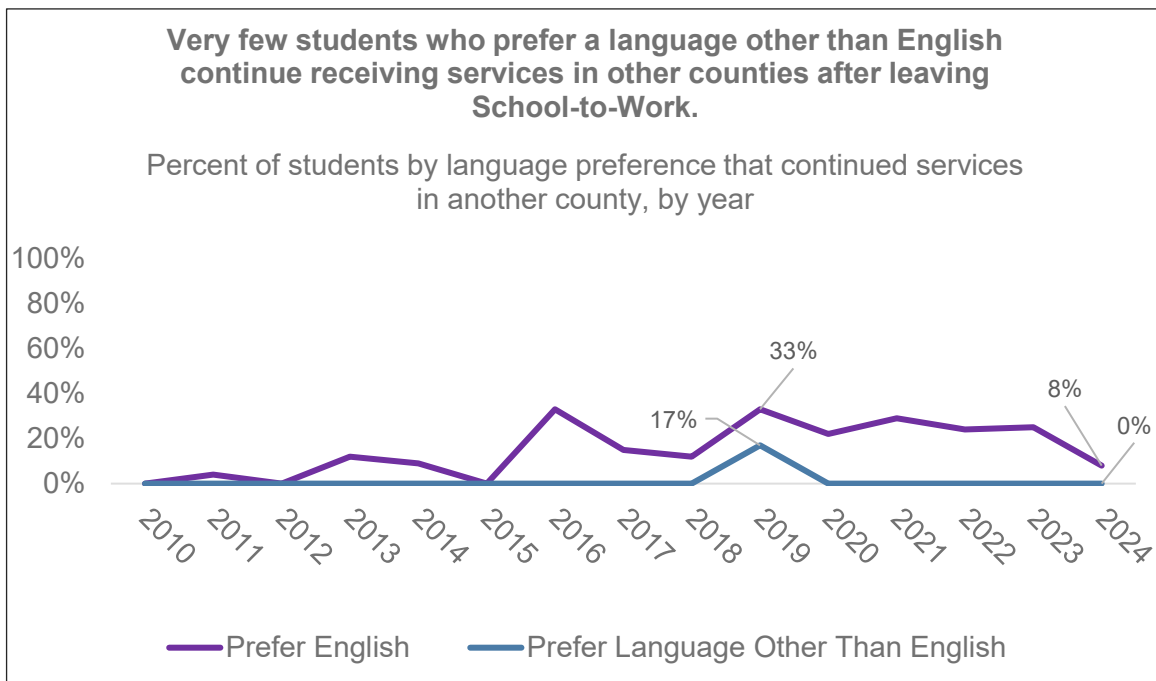


Chart B. Transitions to Other Counties Over Time



## Transition Rates by Race/Ethnicity

Between 2010 to 2024, former S2W students that identify as BIPOC transitioned into Adult Services at a slightly lower rate than non-BIPOC former students (83% as compared to 85%). Most years saw lower transition rates for BIPOC students; however, this improved in 2024 (91%).

Transition rates for some racial/ethnic identities were lower than others. Between 2010 to 2024, American Indian/Alaska Native (63%), Asian/Asian American (83%), and Hispanic/Latinx (78%) students transitioned at lower rates overall than other racial/ethnic groups (see Chart C on the next page). When race is categorized inclusively, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students have a much higher transition rate (88%) than when compared to the exclusive breakdown (75%).<sup>10</sup> This difference is likely the result of high instances of Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students identifying with more than one racial/ethnic identity.<sup>11</sup> Those with Unknown Race transitioned into Adult Services the least of all groups (50%).

Former S2W students that prefer a language other than English and identify as Black/African/African American (79%), Hispanic/Latinx (73%), and Multiracial (74%) have lower transition rates than other groups (see Chart D on page 15). This trend is not improving over time. In 2024, 83% of students preferring a language other than English transitioned as compared to 91% of English-speaking students.



<sup>10</sup> Race/ethnicity categories used for much of this analysis are exclusive, meaning that each client is counted under only one category and if they identify with multiple races/ethnicities, they are counted a 'multiracial.' Inclusive categories were only used as a comparison point for this analysis. Inclusive categories mean that if a client identifies with more than one race/ethnicity, they are counted under both categories and there is no 'multiracial' category.

<sup>11</sup> Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander communities have been documented by the US Census Bureau to identify as multiracial at higher rates than other racial/ethnic groups. More information can be found in this Census report: [Broad Diversity of Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander Population](#)

Chart C. Transition Rates Across Race/Ethnicity Groups

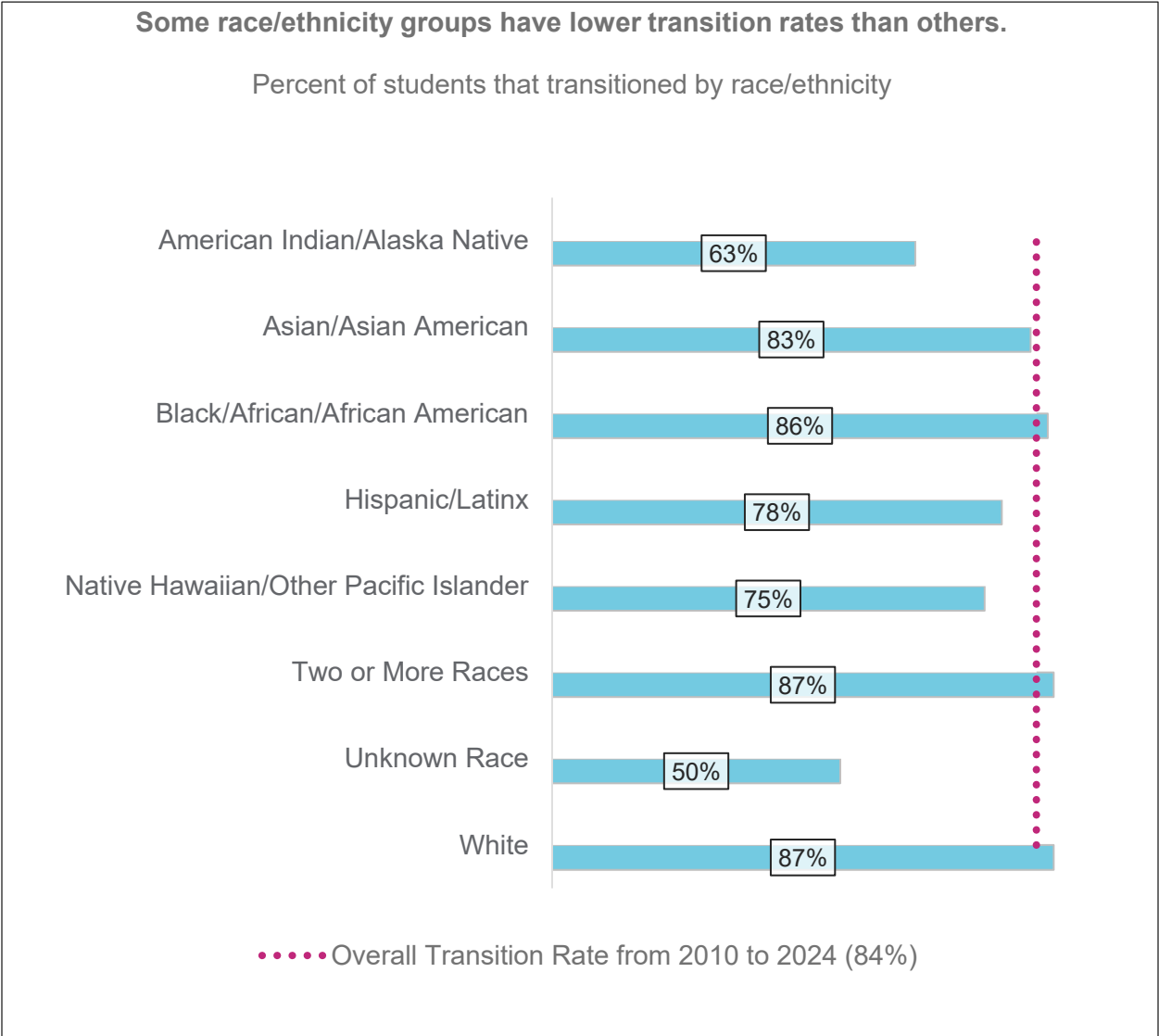
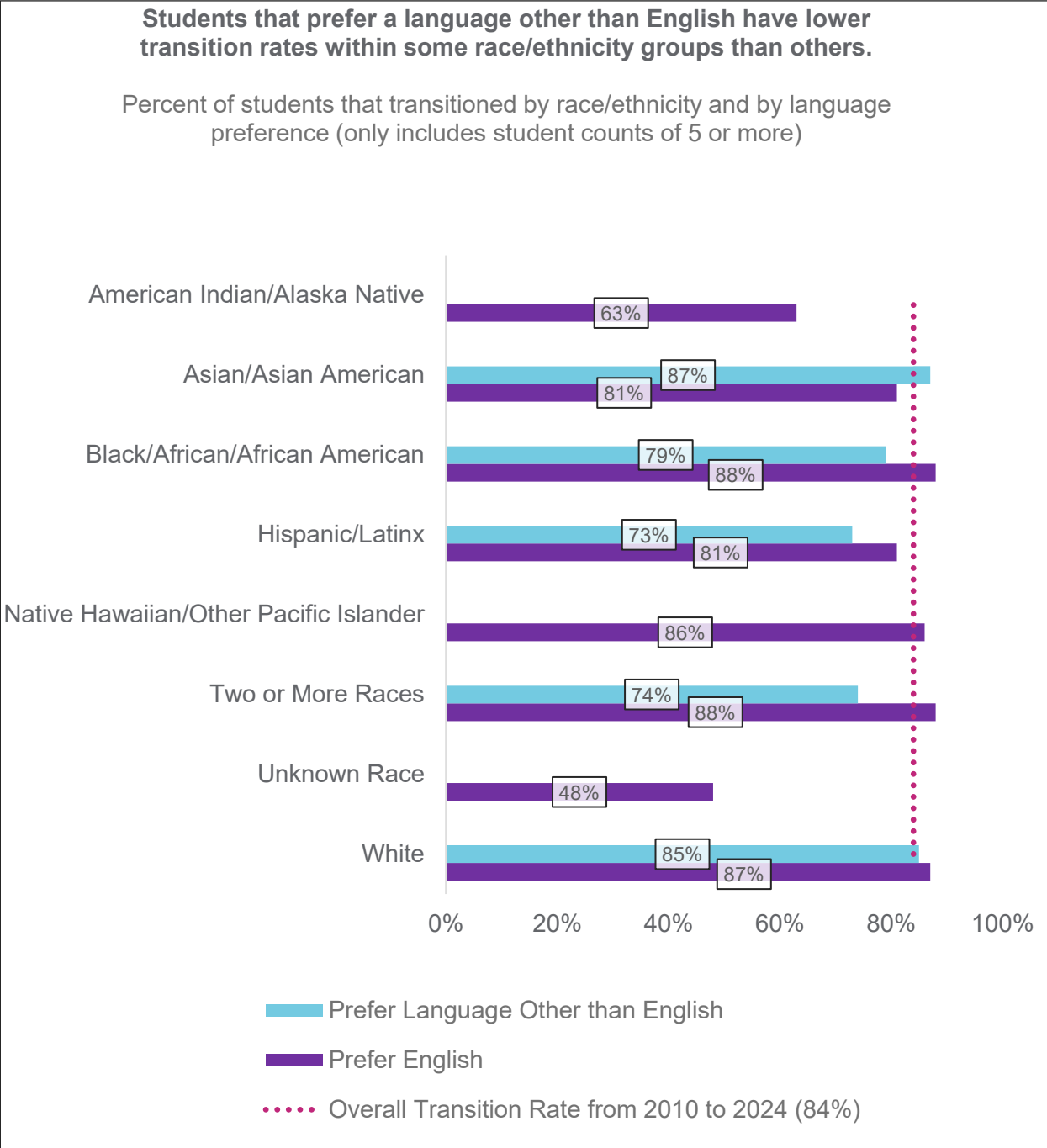


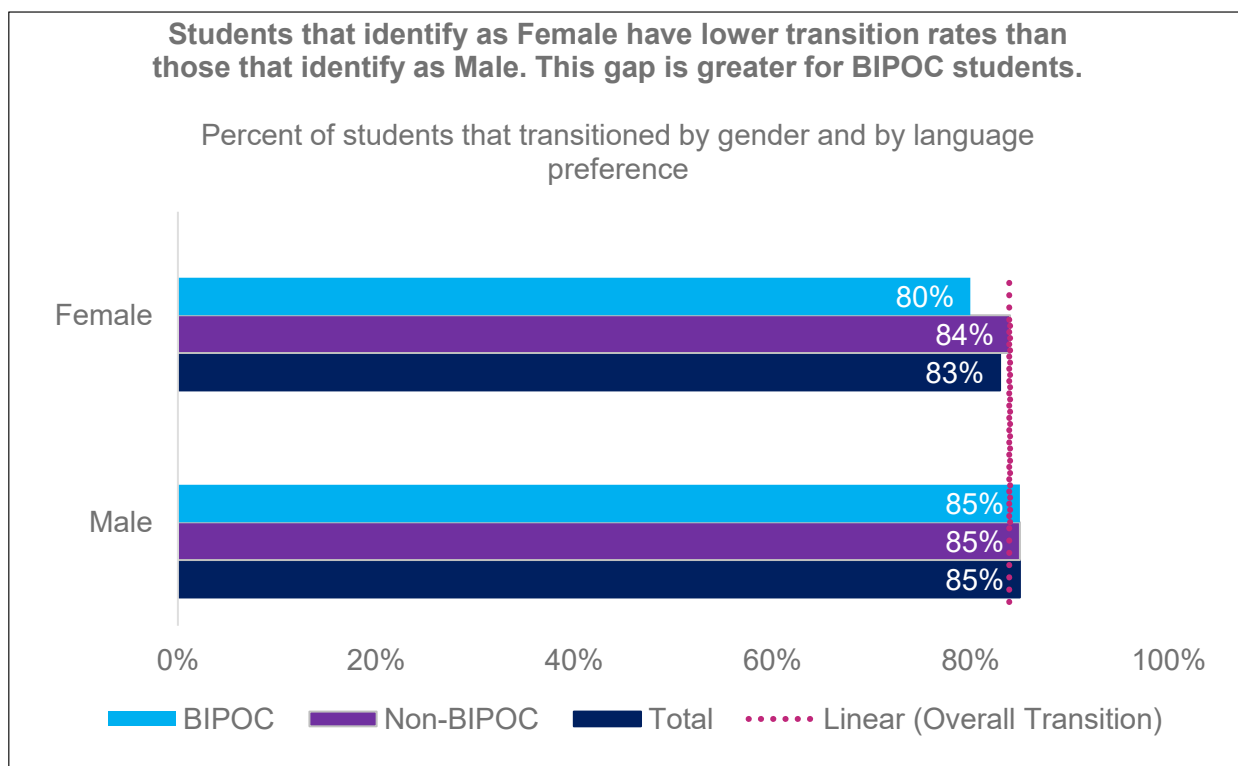
Chart D. Transition Rates by Race/Ethnicity & Language Preference



## Transition Rates by Gender

Between 2010 to 2024, students identifying as Female have slightly lower transition rates (83%) than those identifying as Male (85%). Former students identifying as Female and BIPOC had lower transition rates (80%) than those identifying as Female and Non-BIPOC (84%). The gap in transition rates between BIPOC Males and Non-BIPOC Males is much smaller at less than a percentage point (see Chart E). This trend for BIPOC Females, however, is improving over time and in 2024, the transition rate for this group was 91%.

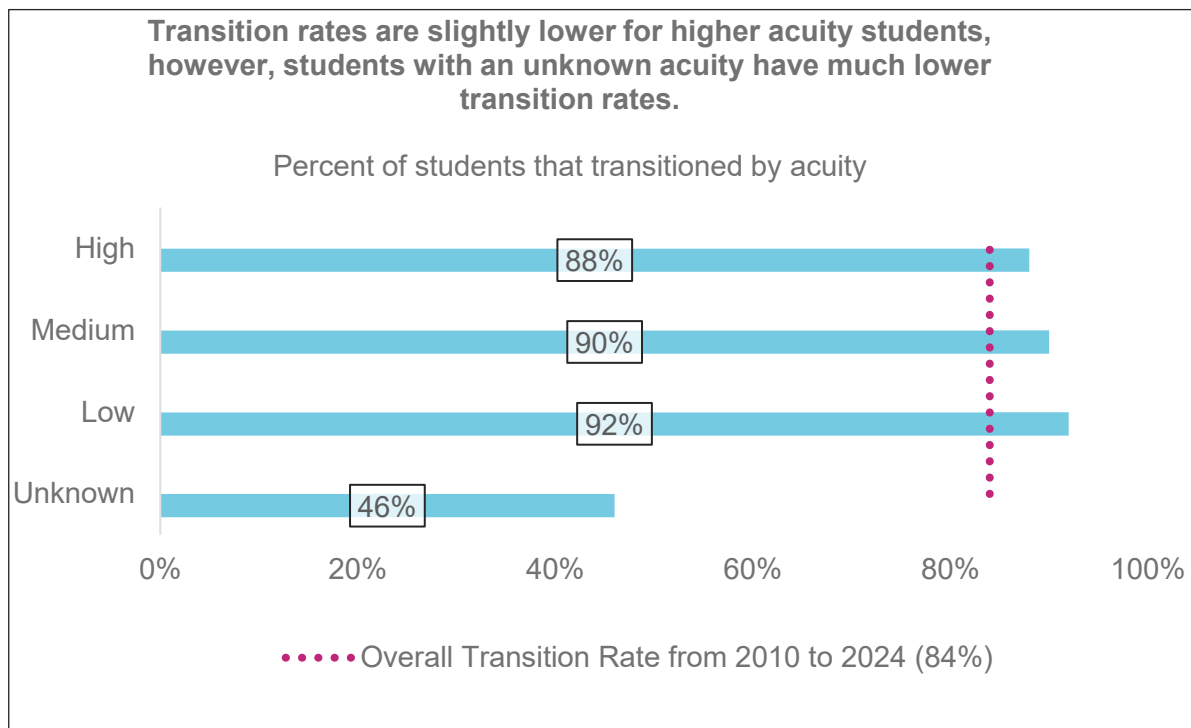
Chart E. Transition Rates by Gender & Race/Ethnicity



## Transition Rates by Acuity

Between 2010 to 2024, students that exited S2W with an unknown acuity had much lower transition rates. Students with identified acuity levels are much more likely to transition into Adult Services, although there does seem to be a slight negative correlation between acuity level and transition rates, meaning that the higher the acuity, the lower the transition rate and vice versa (see Chart F).<sup>12</sup>

Chart F. Transition Rates by Acuity



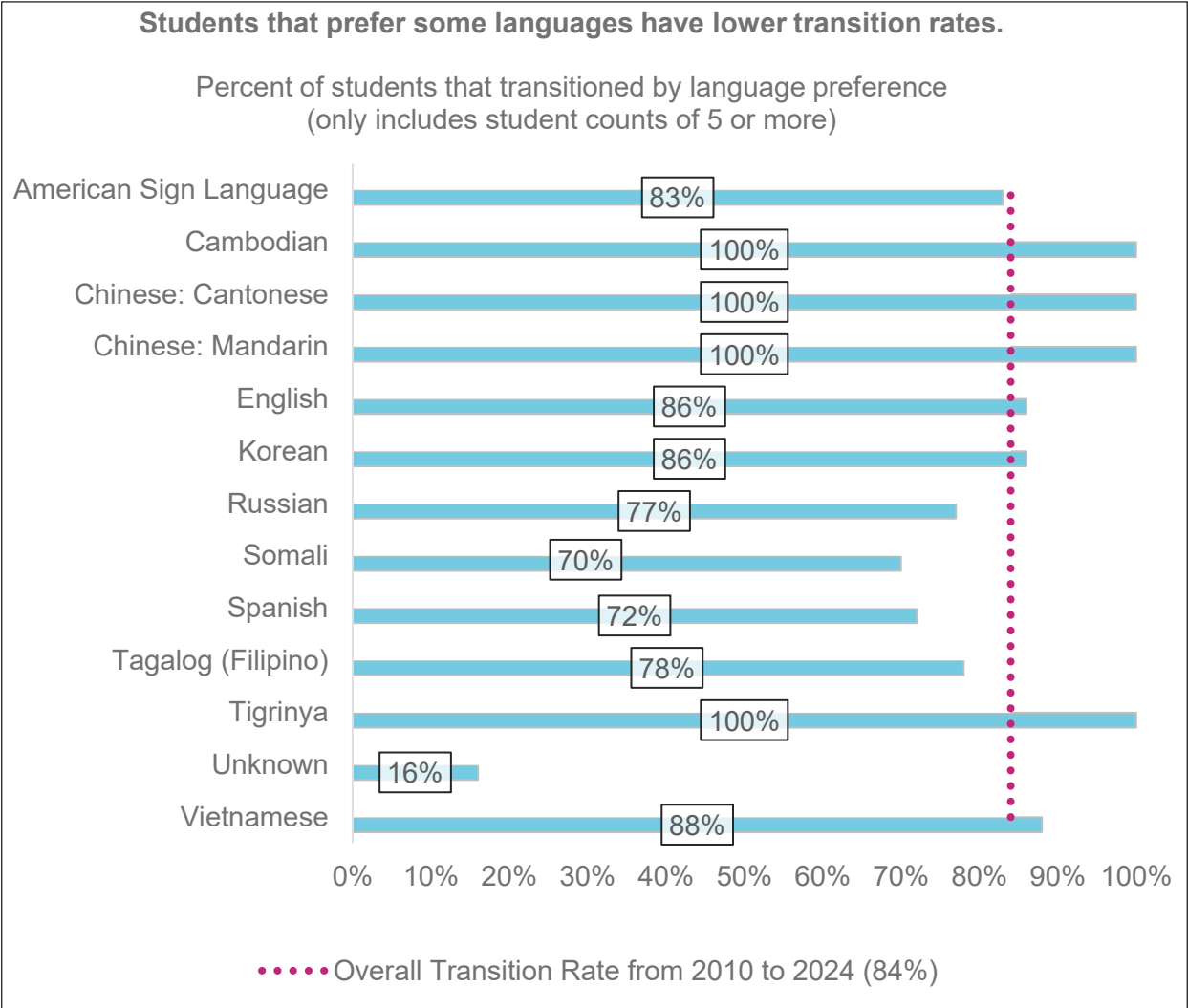
<sup>12</sup> Many S2W students are pre-assessment and do not yet have an acuity level assigned to them per DDA, especially students that do not end up transitioning into Adult Services. These students are listed as having an “unknown” acuity.

### Transition Rates by Language

Between 2010 to 2024, former S2W students that prefer a language other than English transitioned into Adult Services at a lower rate than former students that prefer English overall (81% compared to 85%).

There were lower transition rates for students that prefer specific languages (see Chart G). These languages include American Sign Language (83%), Russian (77%), Somali (70%), Spanish (72%), Tagalog (78%), and those speaking an unknown language other than English (16%). These trends are not improving over time and, in 2024, only 83% of students that prefer a language other than English transitioned into Adult Services as compared to 91% of students that prefer English.

Chart G. Transition Rates by Language Preference



# Detailed Survey & Focus Group Findings

## Parent/Caregiver Survey

An online survey invitation was emailed to parents/caretakers of former students that either identify as BIPOC and/or prefer a language other than English and are from S2W cohorts 2022, 2023, and 2024. The decision to survey only the parents/caretakers of BIPOC and former students who prefer a language other than English was informed by the findings of the quantitative analysis. This sample population was specifically selected to learn more from the parents/caregivers of former students who were least likely to transition. As a result, findings from this survey reflect the perspectives of parents/caregivers who may have more critical program feedback.

Out of the over 250 parents/caregivers that received the survey invitation, we heard from just under 10%. While information provided in this survey is still valuable for this analysis, due to the small number of respondents, none of the information gathered in this survey can be generalized at the program level.

All respondents answered the survey in English. This does not necessarily mean that all respondents are parents/caregivers of a student that prefers English. Parents/caregivers that have a language other than English listed in DDA's database received the survey in their listed preferred language and in English.

## School Staff Focus Group

Four school staff joined a 1.5-hour virtual focus group from Kent School District, Snoqualmie Valley School District, Seattle Public Schools, and Federal Way School District. Four King County representatives also attended the focus group. Two King County program managers listened in on the discussion but did not engage. Two members of the King County evaluation team attended – one as a facilitator and another as a notetaker. Two additional school staff from Bellevue School District and Northshore School District who were unable to attend shared written answers to focus group questions.



**I love supporting students with their post-secondary goal planning** and helping connect them and their families to adult services and showing them what life looks like after school is over.”

**School-to-Work  
School Staff**

# What is working well according to parents/ caregivers and school staff?

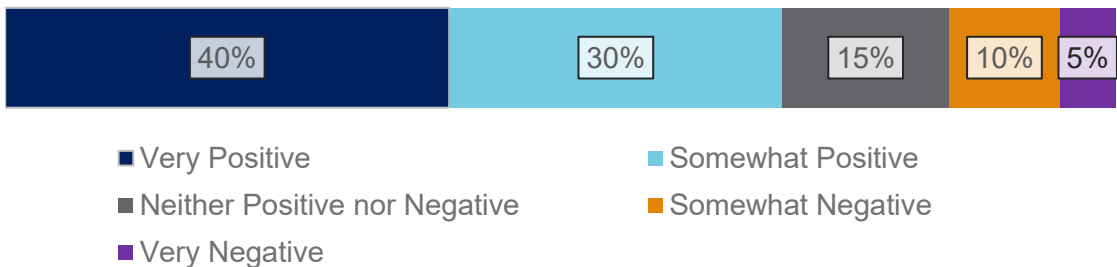
## Overall Parent/Caregiver Program Satisfaction

When asked how they would rate their experience with the School-to-Work program, most parents/caregivers (70%) answered positively (see Chart H). The remaining respondents answered that they would either rate their experience negatively (15%) or that they wouldn't rate their experience as positive or negative (15%).

Chart H. Parent/Caregiver Experience Ratings

**Most parents/caregivers surveyed answered that they would rate their experience with School-to-Work positively.**

70% of respondents answered that they would rate their experience with the School-to-Work program as somewhat positive or very positive.



“

He got to experience real life jobs skills and the basics of him adapting to what it is to work.”

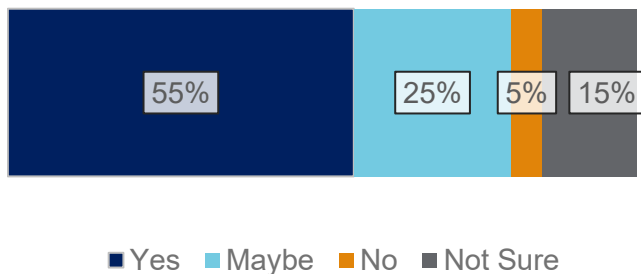
School-to-Work  
Parent/Caregiver

When asked if they would recommend the S2W program to a friend or family member, most respondents (80%) answered either “yes” or “maybe” (see Chart I). Some respondents answered that they weren’t sure if they would recommend School-to-Work (15%). Only 5% of respondents answered “No.”

Chart I. Parent/Caregiver Recommendation

**More than half of parents/caregivers surveyed answered that they would recommend School-to-Work to a family member or friend.**

55% of respondents to the parent/caregiver survey answered that they would recommend the program.



“

**We feel this program is vital to job exploration and eventual success as a first job opportunity.** Coming out of the COVID-19 Era it has been challenging to re-establish community business relationships with the goal of giving adult participants with I/DD "first job" experience. We hope the county will keep investing in S2W while tweaking the program to find success!"

**School-to-Work  
Parent/Caregiver**

## **Job Placement**

In the parent/caregiver survey, several respondents highlighted the importance of job placement in impacting their students' decisions to continue receiving services after S2W. This same theme was raised by school staff in the focus group as well. According to parents/caregivers and school staff, obtaining a job encourages students to transition into Adult Services after S2W due to a continued need for coaching to maintain employment. Some students who don't obtain a job or lose a job by the time they exit S2W decide to continue receiving employment support in hopes of an eventual job.

## **Support Needs and Accessibility**

In the school staff focus group, participants highlighted that strong collaboration and frequent communication between school staff, DVR, King County, and provider agencies is what is most important in helping students with higher support needs to find a job. This level of support and coordination also contributes to decisions to continue services. One focus group participant mentioned that school staff go out of their way to visit potential paid workplaces to identify ways to set these students up for success in their employment.

School staff in the focus group also mentioned how guiding their students with higher support needs to gain skills in autonomy is crucial to their success in

finding employment. One focus group participant noted that they have been working with their school nurse to teach students how to be more independent with their medication and self-care before leaving school.

Additionally, some parents/caregivers highlighted that school staff provide additional supports to their students with more specific support needs. For example, one parent/caregiver shared that teachers taught their child how to use their speech device and supported her to develop communication skills.

## **Overcoming Barriers to Receiving Services**

In the school staff focus group, many different barriers to services were raised as factors in decisions to transition into Adult Services. However, focus group participants also highlighted ways in which school staff have been able to provide additional supports to students to overcome these barriers.

To qualify for a variety of disability services, including employment services, families must submit several forms to DDA. This is a time-consuming process and can be confusing for families to navigate on their own. School staff in the focus group mentioned that they support students and families to identify and gather all the appropriate documentation they need to apply for and access services.

## Early Engagement in S2W

Both parents/caregivers and school staff highlighted the importance of engaging students in S2W as early as possible. This gives students more time to gain skills needed for their employment search while also developing stronger relationships with their job coaches. School staff mentioned how consistent, early encouragement and messaging from the school makes a significant difference in who continues services.

## Relationships, Communication, and Coordination

In the parent/caregiver survey, multiple respondents mentioned the importance of frequent coordination and communication with school staff and job coaches. Having strong relationships with staff helped students to be successful in the S2W program and led to decisions to continue into Adult Services after leaving S2W.

In the school staff focus group, the importance of relationship building, good communication, and high levels of coordination were also raised in reference

to families and program partners.

Most participants noted that recent, significant increases in transition rates were, in part, thanks to greater collaboration and coordination across partners (including DVR, DDA, providers, and King County). Similarly, school staff mentioned that students who frequently coordinated with providers and DVR were most likely to transition into Adult Services. School staff also highlighted how more collaboration across all partners to share lessons learned improves services greatly.

Focus group participants noted that communication with some families can be a challenge, but that families who are more engaged throughout the process are most likely to have success in the employment programs.

**The teacher instructing the school to work program had a positive impact on my brother's work skills."**

**School-to-Work  
Parent/Caregiver**

**...meetings [with partners] are very helpful for getting us all on the same page; Our embedded contract with [provider agency] also allows us to be very cohesive and collaborate a lot outside of just students in S2W"**

**School-to-Work  
School Staff**

## Language Access

In the school staff focus group, participants shared that, King County has contributed to improved language access support for those in the program. School staff shared that more consistent use of communication devices, more interpretation services, and greater translation of resources for outreach has improved the program's ability to reach non-English speaking families.

While the intersectionality of disability and language presents some students with a unique set of challenges, one focus group participant shared how a former student who was a second language speaker and deaf struggled to secure employment at their desired job site because the employer wouldn't allow the use of interpretation devices on the job. However, the student received additional support from the school, their provider, and from DVR to build their English-speaking skills, ultimately leading to the student securing the position at their desired job site.



“

Often, **our team spends more time with students and families with language needs** to ensure they understand all the agencies and support that can be provided to help them make informed choices, whether the student is their own guardian or not.”

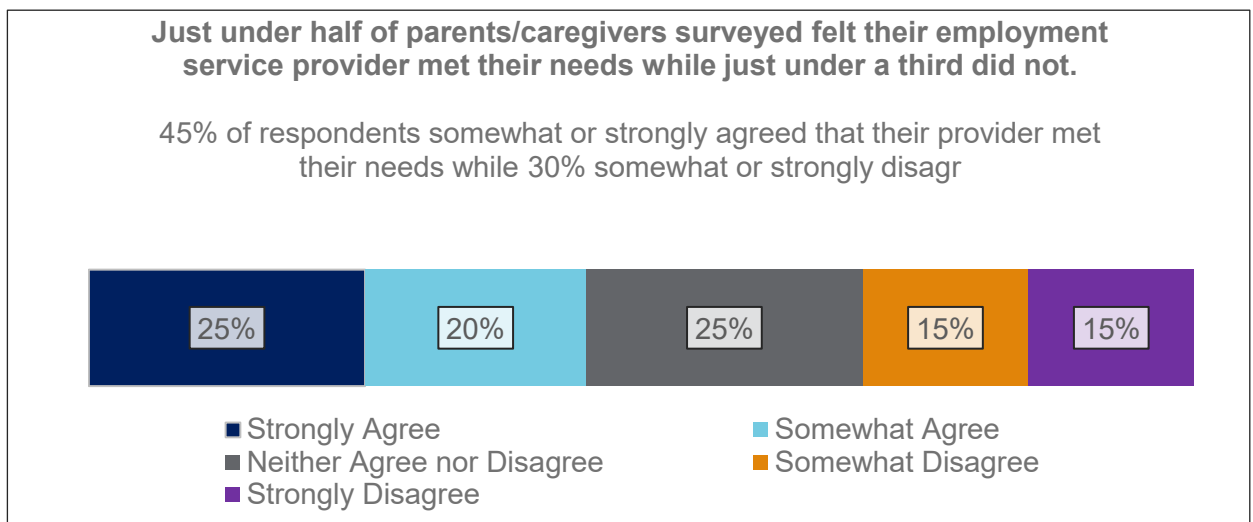
**School-to-Work  
School Staff**

# What opportunities for improvement were raised by parents/caregivers and school staff?

## Job Coach Inconsistency and Turnover

When asked if they felt like their employment services provider met their needs, just under half answered that agreed with the statement while just under a third of respondents answered that they disagreed with this statement (see Chart J). A quarter of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement (25%).

Chart J. Parent/Caregiver Satisfaction with Employment Services Providers



In the parent/caregiver survey, multiple respondents felt that their job coaching experience did not meet their former students' needs. Respondents shared that provider agencies don't always have the capacity to engage with their students at the level that they require, sometimes due to staffing shortages or frequent turnover of job coaches. Low wages were cited a couple of times as a reason for staffing challenges.

In the school staff focus group, participants noted that transitions into Adult Services are dependent on job coach availability which varies significantly by geography. School districts that are more rural have a harder time receiving job coaching services. School staff also highlighted that a potential reason for low paid employment outcomes is that provider turnover has been high and that families of students have shared feedback about how providers don't currently have the capacity to develop strong relationships with their students. For school staff, it was also mentioned that it can be challenging coordinating with newer job coaches, which becomes a more frequent issue with high turnover.

### **Support Needs and Accessibility**

In the parent/caregiver survey, multiple respondents felt that their job coaches and/or teachers could not meet their students' specific support needs. Some felt that the structure of job coaching sessions followed a one-size-fits-all approach with their students that wasn't accommodating of their individual needs. A few respondents felt that the provider agency did not fully consider how their former students' support needs impacted how they would need to receive services. This same feedback was also shared in reference to specific school staff.

In the school staff focus group, similar themes were highlighted around how support needs impact a student's success in the program. Participants noted that higher support needs lead to an even greater need for collaboration between schools and provider agencies which can serve as a barrier. School staff shared that students with more complicated support needs are more likely to leave services. For example, students that have behavioral, hygiene, medical, or personal care needs require more support from both their teachers and their provider agencies, but they also seek employers that will be able to accommodate these needs.

“

**...I'd like to mention that the job coach service provider was understaffed and there were weeks when they had no coach.** This is the current state for many organizations and a huge challenge to service providers. I wonder if the service provider had more funding could they hire more experienced job coaches for higher student success?”

**School-to-Work  
Parent/Caregiver**

## Job Placement

In the parent/caregiver survey, some shared that they decided to not continue into Adult Services after leaving S2W because their former student either didn't obtain a job in the program or lost their job before the program ended. While some students that do not obtain a job in the S2W program decide to continue into Adult Services in hopes of an eventual job placement, some students and families decide that employment services aren't working for them and choose to leave services entirely. School staff also mentioned in the focus group that lack of job placement can contribute to student and family decisions to leave services in search of educational or trade school opportunities instead.

## Barriers to Receiving Services

In the school staff focus group, several different barriers were highlighted as having an impact on a student's success in the S2W program and/or decision to transition into Adult Services. Multiple participants mentioned that transportation is a barrier to obtaining employment in more remote locations and in cases where families don't feel comfortable leaving their students on a bus alone. Participants also noted that access to medications in the workplace can serve as a barrier to obtaining employment since there are legal limitations to who can provide medications to a student. Another barrier that was mentioned both by school staff in the focus group and by parents/caregivers in the survey is eligibility. In this case, eligibility challenges were mentioned for gaining access to DDA services, Supplemental Security Income, and Social Security. School staff noted challenges in gathering all necessary documentation to ensure that students get all the services that they need.

“

**This is the only program for hope as kids finish high school.** I wish we had job placement in the program longer and strong established skills so their resume is stronger to get another role once they get fired or leave a role...”

**School-to-Work  
Parent/Caregiver**

**When asked what challenges they've experienced in the transition process:**

“Slow processes for qualification, completing different applications...”

**School-to-Work  
School Staff**

## Language Access and Cultural Relevancy

In the school staff focus group, participants noted that families and students that speak a language other than English face specific challenges in the transition process. Multiple participants shared that non-English speaking families are recently more reluctant to connect with services out of fear in the current political climate. Participants also shared that, although King County has contributed to improved language access support for those in the program, language barriers often present challenges for families and students in accessing services in general.

In the focus group session, participants also noted that families from diverse cultural backgrounds sometimes have different expectations for their students and about what life should look like for those with I/DD. For example, some cultures do not prioritize employment for these students and would rather their students seek further education. Some of this gap in expectations and program intent may be a result of limited outreach within these communities.



# Recommendations

## Improve Cultural Relevancy in Services

- ***Greater and Earlier Outreach***, informed by program data and in partnership with CIOR providers who have established relationships with I/DD community members of diverse backgrounds
- ***Improving Language Access Practices***, sharing best practices and resources with provider agencies and school partners
- ***More Collaboration Across Provider Agencies and School Partners***, with a focus on Equity, Race, & Social Justice work and capacity development, facilitating more conversations to address findings, and more sharing of best practices and trainings
- ***More Support for Provider Agencies***, setting School-to-Work expectations, standards, and best practices for service delivery, facilitating more conversations around customized job development to address lower job placements

- ***More Input from the I/DD Community***, sharing findings with the Board for Developmental Disabilities as well as potential, current, and former program clients to gather feedback on how to better integrate cultural relevancy into programming<sup>13</sup>

## Implement Client Surveys

- ***Regularly Occurring Surveys***, shared with students and parents/caregivers upon exiting S2W
- ***Accessible Survey Formats***, ensuring that surveys are accessible for students of all support needs and provided in multiple formats for completion
- ***Translated in All Languages Needed***, improving methods for translating all survey materials and ensuring linguistically diverse students and parents/caregivers can participate (not just making translated materials based on language information we have through DDA)

<sup>13</sup> More about the Board for Developmental Disabilities at King County can be found on the public website: [Board for Developmental Disabilities - King County, Washington](#)

# Next Steps

## Based on the findings from this analysis, the DDECSD staff will...

1. Share findings with provider agencies and school districts, create an implementation plan collectively.
2. Host a data and outreach workshop with the DDECSD evaluator and CIOR providers to train King County staff and provider agencies on how to do gap analysis with program data and what resources they can tap into to improve outreach efforts.
3. Host a data walk for the S2W community to review findings and provide input.
4. Present to the Board for Developmental Disabilities to share findings and collect input.
5. Begin planning for the implementation of client surveys, which will launch by late 2026 or early 2027.
6. Conduct further analyses that examine program outcomes for those that continue into Adult Services after exiting S2W.



As a provider, having the wrap around services with DVR/S2W team, teacher, student and family has made all the difference in getting into employment and long-term support services...**It's a comprehensive hand-off from school to employment.**

**School-to-Work  
Caregiver & Provider**

# Appendix A: Survey Questions

1. The School-to-Work program works with schools and families to connect students with developmental disabilities to employment services while students are still in high school. How would you rate your overall experience with the King County School-to-Work program?
  - Very Positive
  - Somewhat Positive
  - Neither Positive nor Negative
  - Somewhat Negative
  - Very Negative
2. What worked well in the King County School-to-Work program?
3. What did not work well in the King County School-to-Work program?
4. Do you feel like your School-to-Work employment services provider met your needs?
  - Strongly Agree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Neither Agree nor Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
5. If you selected “disagree” to the previous question, please explain why.
6. Did you feel supported by your school’s staff while receiving employment services?
  - Strongly Agree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Neither Agree nor Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
7. If you selected “disagree” to the previous question, please explain why.
8. Did your King County School-to-Work student continue receiving employment services after leaving the program?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Not Sure
9. Why did your student continue receiving employment services after leaving the King County School-to-Work program?  
**OR** Why did your student stop receiving employment services after leaving the King County School-to-Work program?

10. Would you recommend the King County School-to-Work program to a friend or family member?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No
- Not Sure

11. Is there any additional feedback you would like to provide about your experience with the King County School-to-Work program?

12. If you would like to be included in a raffle for a chance to win a check for \$75, please provide your preferred email address here. We will reach out to you directly if you win the raffle. This is optional. Please note that you will be requested to complete a W-9 form if you win.

# Appendix B: Focus Group Questions

1. Warm up question – What is your favorite memory from the work you do supporting students?
  - Probe: Do you feel like language access has played a role in any of your former students' decisions to leave services?
2. Have you noticed any changes in frequency of students transitioning into adult employment services over time?
  - Probe: We've noticed in the data we collect on transitions, that the percent of students who to adult employment services has improved significantly over time. Does this finding match your experience?
3. Have you noticed any patterns in the reasons why students decide to continue services after leaving School-to-Work?
  - Probe: What aspects of the program, if any, have contributed to students continuing services after School-to-Work?
4. For the students that decide to stop receiving employment services after School-to-Work, have you noticed any patterns in the reasons why students don't continue services?
  - Probe: Do you feel like cultural understanding or inclusion has played a role in any of your former students' decisions to leave services?
5. Have you received any direct feedback from students or families that decided to leave after finishing School-to-Work?
  - Probe: Have you been able to implement any of the feedback you've received? Why or why not?
6. What challenges have you experienced in the transition process?
  - Probe: Do differing support needs impact your school's ability to assist in the transition process?
  - Probe: Does student or family communication impact your school's ability to assist in the transition process?
7. Are there any lessons learned that you would like to share about the transition process?

# Appendix C: Limitations of this Analysis

## Student Mobility

If students end up leaving services because they moved out of the area, they show up in our data the same as someone who chose to discontinue services even if they continue receiving services wherever they move.

*How this limitation was addressed:* If students move to another county within Washington State and are receiving employment services in their new county, DDA will have record of the continuation of services. King County has access to DDA data for students that moved to another county in Washington and continued services. This data is included in the analysis. Data on students that leave services with King County and move out of state is not available.

## Program Retention

Although some students that exit S2W continue into Adult Services programming, they may not continue receiving services for very long. This analysis does not look at the length of time that former S2W students that transitioned over into Adult Services programs stay in those programs.

*How this limitation was addressed:*

Questions about the length of time spent in Adult Services programs are out of scope for the first phase of this analysis. This analysis is primarily focused on answering whether former S2W students transition into Adult Services. Future phases of this project may look at the length of time spent in Adult Services after transitioning.

## Pre-Assessment Students and Acuity Levels

Many S2W students are pre-assessment, meaning that they do not have an acuity level assigned to them yet per DDA.<sup>14</sup> This is especially prevalent amongst students that do not end up transitioning into Adult Services. This limits King County's ability to look at enrollment data for current S2W students by acuity.

*How this limitation was addressed:* This analysis primarily looks at data for previously enrolled S2W students. Any of these students who stayed through their assessment have an acuity level assigned to their record. This limitation is included as a data note for students who were not assigned an acuity level.

<sup>14</sup> Pre-assessment students are students that haven't gone through the formal DDA assessment process yet, which determines their acuity level and their eligibility for services. More information about DDA assessments can be found on their website: [DDA Assessment | DSHS](#)

## Service Gap Funded Client Data

This analysis does not include any clients prior to the launch of the CORE database (herein referred to as “pre-CORE”).<sup>15</sup> As a result, any clients that continued receiving services through Service Gap County Funding but did not receive a County Service Authorization (CSA) from DDA during this time were not included in this analysis.<sup>16</sup>

*How this limitation was addressed:* The total number of pre-CORE clients that continued receiving services through Service Gap County Funding and did not receive a CSA is very small in comparison to the total population of clients in this analysis and has minimal to no impact on any findings.

## DVR Data

King County receives very inconsistent reporting on clients as they go into and out of state DVR services.<sup>17</sup> As a result, this will not be included as a variable in this evaluation.

*How this limitation was addressed:* For this analysis, the main focus is on King County services and enrollment numbers. While having more data around DVR services might provide additional insight into how Adult Services programs operate as a system of offerings across all possible service providers (not just those funded through King County), this information is not needed for understanding how King County clients are currently moving through employment services programs overall.

<sup>15</sup> CORE is the reporting platform that King County DDECS uses to collect monthly data and billing information from provider agencies. CORE was put into place in July of 2020. All pre-CORE data is saved in a separate database.

<sup>16</sup> CSA refers to the formal approval process that adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities must undergo with DDA to become eligible to receive services at the county level. To transition into adult employment service programs, students leaving School-to-Work must obtain a CSA. More information about eligibility can be found on DDA’s [public webpage](#). For a small number of students that do not obtain a CSA from DDA, King County uses “Service Gap” funding to support their continuation into Adult Services.

<sup>17</sup> More information about DVR services can be found on their website: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr/student-and-youth-vr-transition-services>

## Exclusive Race/Ethnicity Categories

Race/ethnicity categories used for much of this analysis are exclusive to yield a more accurate count for former BIPOC students.<sup>18</sup> For some cultures that are more likely to identify as multiracial, this can obscure findings broken down by race/ethnicity since they are lumped with other multiracial identities.

### *How this limitation was addressed:*

Inclusive race/ethnicity categories were used as a comparison point throughout this analysis to account for cultures that are more likely to identify as multiracial.<sup>19</sup> In any instance where findings using exclusive versus inclusive categories differ significantly, the noted difference is highlighted within the findings.

## Translated Materials

To ensure that the parent/caregiver survey is as accessible as possible, the survey was translated into 25 different languages. These languages were selected from DDA language preference data, which was entered at the time of services. It is possible that language needs have

changed since leaving services for some parents/caregivers. It is also possible that some of this information was entered incorrectly.

*How this limitation was addressed:* The evaluator pulled the most recent language data for parent/caregiver contacts available through DDA. For contacts listed as a preferring a language other than English, survey invitations were provided both in the listed language and in English.

## Response Rates

Since the survey was sent out to parents/caregivers of former S2W students from the years 2022, 2023, and 2024, it is possible that too much time has passed since the program resulting in low response rates. It is also possible that the parent/caregiver contact information that was listed for a former student in the DDA system at the time of services is no longer the correct point of contact for the former student or that the contact information has changed, which impacts response rates.

<sup>18</sup> Exclusive race/ethnicity categories count each client under only one category and if they identify with multiple races/ethnicities, they are counted as a 'multiracial.'

<sup>19</sup> Inclusive categories mean that if a client identifies with more than one race/ethnicity, they are counted under both categories and there is no 'multiracial' category.

*How this limitation was addressed:* King County cannot address potentially out-of-date contact information for former students. To encourage participation, King County offered an optional \$75 raffle for survey participants, sent multiple reminder emails, and worked with provider agencies of former students to send out invites.

### **Focus Group Participation Methods**

Not all school staff from the six school districts selected were able to participate in the virtual focus group. Two of the school districts submitted a filled-out form with their answers to the focus group questions instead. The experiences of filling out a form independently and participating in a focus group are very different and, therefore, the responses from these two methods are not comparable.

*How this limitation was addressed:* Although these methods of data collection are not comparable, all information provided by school staff adds value to this analysis regardless of the format of responses. King County analyzed both the focus group responses and the written responses separately. Findings from both methods are highlighted in this report.

# Acknowledgements

Thank you to the parents/caregivers of former students and to all our King County provider agencies and school district partners for helping to collect and share the stories shown here.

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