



Superintendents from Across Washington state on Best Practices, Data, and Challenges

June 5, 2025 AI Summary

[Watch the LEVinar recording](#)

As the 2024–25 school year concluded, League of Education Voters hosted a powerful webinar featuring five Washington State superintendents. These leaders—Dr. Susana Reyes (Shoreline), Dr. Concie Pedroza (Tukwila), Dr. Ivan Duran (Highline), Dr. Christopher Nesmith (Elma), and Dr. Nik Bergman (Quincy)—shared their districts’ most impactful strategies, data insights, and challenges in advancing student success.

Shoreline School District: Math Innovation and Postsecondary Navigation

Dr. Susana Reyes spotlighted Shoreline’s strategic focus on postsecondary readiness, particularly for students with GPAs under 3.0. Key initiatives include:

- **Co-Requisite Math Model:** A redesigned senior-year math course blends high school instruction with enrollment in Math 107 at Shoreline Community College. Students receive dual credit and support from both high school and college instructors. In its first year:
 - 90% of students earned a transferable college credit.
 - The model significantly closed racial/ethnic achievement gaps in dual credit math.
- **Navigator Program:** In partnership with Shoreline Community College, a college-employed advisor supports students at both high schools two days per week. This role:
 - Provides direct advising to all students.
 - Offers embedded professional development for high school staff.
 - Helps identify and address systemic barriers to college access.

- **Strategic Plan Goals:** Shoreline’s plan includes targets for graduation, literacy, and student belonging by 2029. The district uses ERDC data to track postsecondary outcomes and tailors interventions accordingly.
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Tukwila School District: The Tukwila Promise and Multilingual Equity

Dr. Concie Pedroza emphasized Tukwila’s commitment to equity through access and community partnerships. Highlights include:

- **Tukwila Promise:** A groundbreaking initiative guaranteeing 90 college credits at Highline College for all graduates, tuition-free. Developed in under a year with support from the City of Tukwila and House Bill 1587, the program:
 - Targets students who prefer to stay close to home.
 - Removes financial and logistical barriers to college.
 - Has already influenced students’ postsecondary decisions.
 - **College and Career Center:** In partnership with the Urban League and University of Washington, the district launched a dedicated center to support:
 - FAFSA/WASFA completion (72% completion rate in 2023).
 - Scholarship access and application support.
 - Career exploration and advising.
 - **AVID Expansion:** AVID strategies are being integrated across classrooms to support organization, note-taking, and college readiness.
 - **Seal of Biliteracy:** 43 students earned this recognition in 2024, reflecting the district’s linguistic diversity and commitment to honoring multilingualism.
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Highline Public Schools: Literacy, Belonging, and Systemic Redesign

Dr. Ivan Duran shared Highline’s aspirational promise: to know every student by name, strength, and need. Key initiatives include:

- **Culture of Belonging:**
 - “Living the Promise” recognition program for staff.
 - District-wide messaging affirming equity and inclusion.

- Billboards and storytelling campaigns to highlight student diversity.
 - **Literacy and Language Development:**
 - System-wide use of i-Ready assessments.
 - Quarterly “literacy retreats” where school leaders observe and learn from each other.
 - All teachers are trained as reading instructors, regardless of subject.
 - **Secondary School Redesign:**
 - Each comprehensive high school is piloting a unique model.
 - Emphasis on flexibility, relevance, and student-centered learning.
 - **Growth Data:**
 - 4th and 5th graders showed the strongest gains—critical for students impacted by early pandemic disruptions.
 - Schools like Mar Vista and Chinook Middle School are emerging as models of success.
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Elma School District: Mastery-Based Learning and Global Apprenticeship Models

Dr. Christopher Nesmith presented Elma’s transformation into a mastery-based learning district, inspired by vocational systems in Germany and Switzerland.

- **Mastery-Based Learning System:**
 - Replaces traditional grading with a competency-based model.
 - Students are assessed on what they know, not seat time or assignments.
 - Uses the Empower platform to track every student’s progress on learning standards.
 - Students never “fail”—they are simply “not yet” proficient.
- **Career and Technical Integration:**
 - Students earn credit through apprenticeships, CNA programs, and work-based learning.

- Partnerships with Summit Pacific Hospital and Sierra Pacific Industries provide real-world training.
 - Elma is the only district in Washington to implement the State Board's Mastery-Based Learning Collaborative district-wide.
 - **Data-Driven Equity:**
 - Uses the Opportunity Atlas to track long-term economic outcomes.
 - Focuses on improving life trajectories for low-income students, currently projected to earn \$34,000/year by age 35.
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Quincy School District: Pathways, Partnerships, and Purpose

Dr. Nik Bergman shared Quincy's student-centered strategic plan, developed with over 1,400 community touchpoints. Key initiatives include:

- **Dual Credit Expansion:**
 - 140 dual credit courses available.
 - Students can begin earning college credit in 9th grade.
 - Direct transfer agreements with Big Bend Community College and guaranteed admissions to public universities.
- **Career and College Exposure:**
 - Career and trade expos with 900+ attendees.
 - Guest speakers from diverse backgrounds.
 - Targeted field trips to urban centers and local data centers.
- **Student Voice and AI Integration:**
 - Uses AI to analyze student feedback and design relevant courses.
 - New programs include a CNA certification and a Data Center Technician Certificate (starting salary: \$70–80K).
- **AVID and SEL Integration:**
 - AVID is implemented schoolwide in grades 7–12.

- Advisory periods focus on relationship-building, goal setting, and academic check-ins.
- **Data Highlights:**
 - 80% of 9th graders are on track to graduate.
 - Remediation rates dropped to 10% (4-year colleges) and 15% (2-year colleges).
 - 81% of students persist from year 1 to year 2 in college.

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