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WSIPP's LAP Inventory: *A Brief History and Potential Changes for the Future*

The Learning Assistance Program (LAP) is a statewide education program in Washington that offers supplemental services to K–12 public school students who are not meeting academic standards in reading, writing, mathematics, and/or readiness associated with these basic skill areas.

In 2014, the Washington State Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to create an inventory of evidence-based programs that may be implemented as a part of LAP. WSIPP was also directed to participate in expert panels, coordinated by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), to identify best practices that support students' mathematics, reading, writing, and behavioral development. In 2021, additional legislation was passed to increase the flexibility of LAP funding, which has potential impacts on WSIPP's inventory.

This brief provides a historical review of WSIPP's LAP inventory, potential changes resulting from legislation, and a discussion of the next steps regarding the inventory.

[Section I](#) provides an overview of LAP and WSIPP's inventory, [Section II](#) describes recent legislative changes to LAP and implications for the inventory, and [Section III](#) provides considerations for adapting WSIPP's inventory and research processes.

Summary

The Learning Assistance Program (LAP) provides supplemental services to K–12 students who are not meeting standards in reading, writing, mathematics, and/or readiness in these areas. In 2014, the Washington Legislature directed WSIPP to develop an inventory of programs that could be implemented in LAP and to classify programs as evidence-based, research-based, or promising.

WSIPP's LAP inventory is updated periodically and includes 58 programs related to topics like tutoring, educator professional development, and behavioral supports. WSIPP staff have also coordinated with OSPI staff over the years as they identify best practices to inform school districts about LAP programs in the areas of English language arts, math, and behavior.

Legislation passed in 2021 modifies how school districts approach LAP funding and has potential changes for how WSIPP conducts its inventory and coordinates with OSPI. This brief describes these changes and options for the inventory going forward, including expanding its scope, coordinating efforts with OSPI, or ending inventory updates to redirect our research expertise to other education projects.

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I. The Learning Assistance Program & WSIPP's Inventory

What is the Learning Assistance Program?

Created in 1987, Washington State's Learning Assistance Program (LAP) provides supplemental services to students who are not meeting academic standards in reading, writing, mathematics, and/or readiness in these areas.¹ State LAP funding is provided to school districts and can be used for academic and non-academic supports including (but not limited to) tutoring for students, professional development for educators, outreach to families, and the development of school-and community-based partnerships.² During the 2020-21 school year, 159,576 students received LAP services, comprising 14% of the statewide student population.³

The History of WSIPP's LAP Inventory

In 2013, the Washington Legislature initiated efforts to ensure that LAP programs were grounded in evidence. First, the legislature directed OSPI to "convene a panel of experts, including [WSIPP staff], to develop state menus of best practices and strategies."⁴ As a result, OSPI staff and expert panel members (i.e., school and district practitioners) developed and regularly updated three documents (called Menus of Best Practices & Strategies) that identify activities that support students' English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and behavioral development.⁵ Between 2016 and 2021, school districts allocating state LAP funds were statutorily required to use practices listed in the ELA, math, and behavior menus.⁶

In 2014, the legislature also directed WSIPP to "prepare an inventory of evidence-based and research-based effective practices, activities, and programs for use by school districts in [LAP]" and update it every two years.⁷ WSIPP's LAP inventory lists programs organized into categories of allowable LAP activities like tutoring support, extended learning time, educator professional development, family engagement, and behavioral supports. Inventory users can identify which programs are evidence-based, research-based, promising, or have no effects.

LAP Facts (School Year 2020-21)

Students served: 159,576

Grades served: 24% of all K-4 students were enrolled in LAP, 11% of students in 5th-8th grades, and 6% of students in 9th-12th grades.

Student characteristics: Students who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native (25%), Asian (6%), Black/African American (16%) Hispanic/Latino (23%), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (19%), multiracial (12%), White (10%). Students who identify as male (51%) and female (49%).

Concurrent programs: Over 70% of LAP students are enrolled in the Free or Reduced-Price Meal Program, 26% of students are in the Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program, and 16% of students are in special education.

¹ Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) website. [Learning Assistance Program \(LAP\)](#).

² (OSPI). [Report to the Legislature. Update: Learning Assistance Program Growth Data 2021](#).

³ *Ibid.* Race and ethnicity figures in the text box exceed 100%. Individuals may select more than one category, including multiracial.

⁴ [Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5946, Chapter 18, Laws of 2013](#).

⁵ Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) website. [Menus of Best Practices and Strategies](#).

⁶ [Substitute House Bill 1208](#) repealed the requirement for school districts to use menus of best practices. Districts must still use the ELA menu to implement strategies to assist struggling readers ([RCW 28A.655.235](#)).

⁷ [Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6002, Chapter 221, Laws of 2014](#).

Users can also view the likelihood that a program's benefits will exceed program costs over time. Users who click on individual programs are directed to WSIPP's website for additional information about program effects, benefits, and the citations we used to evaluate the program. To date, WSIPP has published six iterations of the LAP inventory; the current version includes 58 programs.⁸

WSIPP's Program Inventories

In addition to the LAP inventory, WSIPP produces program inventories in other policy areas including [children's services](#), [juvenile justice](#), and [youth cannabis use](#). In every inventory, WSIPP uses a standardized approach to review program efficacy, estimate program costs and benefits, and classify programs as evidence-based, research-based, or promising. This approach allows us to compare different programs on an apples-to-apples basis.

- See [pages 3-4](#) in the most recent LAP inventory report for details about our standard approach.
- See [pages 5-8](#) for information about how we classify programs.

[WSIPP and OSPI Coordination](#)

Along with the 2013 legislative directive for OSPI to convene panels and develop menus of best practices, WSIPP staff have served as panel members since 2014. In this capacity, WSIPP has provided findings from our inventory reviews to help inform program information and classifications on OSPI's ELA, math, and behavior menus. In turn, OSPI LAP program specialists and panel experts have helped identify programs that WSIPP should consider reviewing for each inventory update.

WSIPP's LAP inventory and OSPI's menus are related but independent documents. Over the years, WSIPP and OSPI staff have coordinated efforts and shared expertise to ensure that information between these documents is up-to-date and aligned. For example, "double dose classes" is a practice in which middle and high school students struggling in reading or math enroll in two reading or math courses to increase their instruction time. In our inventory, we found that "double dosing" increases students' academic test scores and high school graduation rates and classified it as an evidence-based practice.⁹ OSPI's ELA and math menus include information from this analysis and offer practitioners additional information to plan and implement "double dosing."¹⁰ There is a lot of overlap between programs on WSIPP's inventory and OSPI's menus, but the information included in each document reflects each group's independent judgement.

⁸ Cramer, J., & Wanner, P. (2020). *Updated inventory of evidence- and research-based practices: Washington's K-12 Learning Assistance Program* (Doc. No. 20-07-2202). Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ See pages 62-64 of OSPI's [English Language Arts menu](#) and pages 58-61 of the [math menu](#).

II. 2021 Legislation Impacting LAP

In 2021, the legislature passed Substitute House Bill 1208 (called SHB 1208 hereafter) modifying LAP expenditures, activities, and reporting requirements.¹¹ In part, this legislation was in response to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on schools and learning; it aimed to make LAP programming more adaptable and better targeted to student needs. Below, we describe some of the main changes to LAP based on SHB 1208 and its influence on WSIPP's inventory.¹²

SHB 1208's Impact on District Expenditures and LAP Activities

The passage of SHB 1208 did not change how the state distributes LAP funding to school districts, but it did change how school districts budget and spend LAP dollars. The list of allowable LAP activities¹³ that districts could previously fund has been repealed and districts can now distribute LAP funds "to address students' academic and nonacademic needs . . . exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic."¹⁴ In the future, districts will be required to use the Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol (WISSP), a framework that uses needs assessments, coordinated school and community supports, and data to monitor student progress and guide expenditure decisions.¹⁵ Using the WISSP framework, school districts will also be able to use 15% of their LAP allocation to coordinate with community partners to provide LAP services.

Prior to SHB 1208, school districts were required to first allocate LAP funding to support reading interventions for children in kindergarten through 4th grade. SHB 1208 repealed this focus for LAP. Further, districts are no longer required to use OSPI's menus of best practices and strategies when making implementation decisions for LAP. Districts must still use OSPI's ELA menu to implement improvement or alternative strategies that "assist struggling students in reaching grade level reading by the end of fourth grade."¹⁶ Though the requirement to use menus has been repealed, districts can still (and are encouraged to) use ELA, math, and behavior menus to implement LAP activities.¹⁷

Finally, the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL), located within OSPI, has been directed to periodically review the efficacy of programs and practices designed to meet the needs of students who are not meeting academic standards. To begin its review, CISL will first assess programs listed on OSPI's ELA, math, and behavior menus. Starting December 2026, CISL will also be required to review school districts' LAP performance data and submit an annual report to the legislature, highlighting innovative practices districts use to serve LAP students.

¹¹ [SHB 1208](#).

¹² We do not provide an exhaustive description of changes to LAP related to SHB 1208. Refer to [SHB 1208](#) for full details.

¹³ These activities included tutoring support, extended learning time, educator professional development, consultant teachers, parent and family outreach, community-based partnership, and behavioral supports ([RCW 28A.165.035](#) repealed in 2021).

¹⁴ [OSPI Bulletin No. 028-21 Special Programs & Federal Accountability](#).

¹⁵ Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) website. [Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol](#). An implementation timeline of SHB 1208 requirements is [here](#).

¹⁶ [RCA 28A.655.235](#).

¹⁷ (OSPI). [House Bill 1208 \(2021\) Implementation Questions and Answers](#).

Potential Impact of SHB 1208 on WSIPP's Inventory Process

We have identified several ways SHB 1208 may influence the LAP inventory process which are outlined below.

Expands the Scope of Programs on the Inventory

Previously, we organized programs on the LAP inventory by allowable LAP activities that were outlined in state statute (e.g., tutoring supports, extended learning time, educator professional development).¹⁸ With SHB 1208's repeal of these activities and a broader focus on students' academic and non-academic needs, we could take a broader review of programs for inclusion on the LAP inventory. For example, school-wide reforms, student mental health and wellness programs, and programs focused on equitable access to resources and learning are all areas that we have not comprehensively reviewed before and could consider (to name a few examples).

Further, SHB 1208 encourages school districts to partner with community-based organizations to provide LAP services. WSIPP has reviewed several programs in this area already (e.g., case management in schools and school-and community-based mentoring) but this may be an area to build out as school districts begin allocating more funding to these partnerships.

Reduces WSIPP Inventory and OSPI Menu Coordination

With the statutory requirement for school districts to use OSPI's menus repealed, coordination between OSPI and WSIPP may become more limited. OSPI LAP program specialists and LAP expert panel members have served as a resource for WSIPP to learn about the landscape of LAP programming, implementation, and student needs in Washington. Their program nominations have been an important step in our inventory process as well. In turn, WSIPP has shared its research findings with OSPI staff and provided evidence-based information for the ELA, math, and behavior menus. Though districts are still required to align improvement or alternative strategies with the ELA menu to serve struggling readers in grades K-4 and will likely continue to refer to programs and practices on the math and behavior menus, there may be fewer opportunities for WSIPP and OSPI staff to share information about evidence-based activities in these areas.

Potential New Ways to Support Evidence-based Programming

SHB 1208 directs CISL to review program efficacy, beginning with programs already listed on OSPI's ELA, math, and behavior menus. If WSIPP continues to update its LAP inventory in the future, and there is interest, WSIPP could share research information from its inventory to support CISL's efforts. Alternatively, if the inventory is no longer useful to OSPI and legislative audiences, WSIPP can redirect its research efforts to focus on other education topics of interest.

¹⁸ [RCW 28A.165.035](#) repealed in 2021.

III. Discussion

Since 2014, WSIPP's LAP inventory has been updated periodically and currently includes 58 programs. Over this period, WSIPP staff coordinated with OSPI LAP program specialists to share information and align inventory and menu documents. In 2021, the legislature passed SHB 1208, modifying how school districts fund LAP activities. These changes were partially a response to COVID-19's impact on student learning and aim to ensure that districts comprehensively assess student needs and coordinate resources in schools and communities to serve students. The passage of SHB 1208 raises questions about the future of the LAP inventory.

Historically, WSIPP inventories have been a resource for legislators, state agencies, and program administrators who want to know which programs have a strong evidence-base and return on investment. The LAP inventory differs from other WSIPP inventories in several ways. For example, the program classifications on the inventory (evidence-based, research-based, and promising) are not tied to funding. In other words, the provision of evidence-based, research-based, or promising programs does not influence the level of LAP funding a district receives.¹⁹ Further, the LAP inventory's most prominent audience to date has been OSPI LAP program specialists and panel members who develop the OSPI menus. The information on the inventory has helped inform the inclusion of evidence-based information on the menus and may indirectly influence school district administrators' decisions about program implementation. Overall, though, the inventory's use among educators, administrators, and legislative audiences is unclear.

If the inventory is still useful to OSPI and legislative audiences and WSIPP continues future updates, SHB 1208's focus on flexible funding allows us to expand the scope of programs on the inventory and increase our review of community-based partnerships. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the education system and learning has highlighted widespread achievement and resource gaps, and students served by LAP have likely been affected by school closures, online learning, and transitions back to in-person instruction. The pandemic has reframed how we think about education, highlighting the need to support students both academically and nonacademically. This provides WSIPP an opportunity to introduce programs to the inventory that focus on serving populations in the wake of the pandemic. For example, programs that focus on students' social-emotional learning and programs that support teachers during the transition phase back to classroom instruction.

Also, while there may be less of a need to coordinate inventory and OSPI menu documents going forward, if there is interest by OSPI and CISL staff, WSIPP may share information from its inventory in order to support CISL staff as they review LAP program efficacy. We'll continue to discuss with OSPI and CISL staff how the inventory is used, potential improvements we could make, and potential coordinating efforts in the future.

¹⁹ This is different than WSIPP inventories like the [Children and Youth Services Inventory](#). For example, Juvenile Rehabilitation is legislatively mandated to use the inventory for service provision. Funds are tied to evidence-or research-based programs.

Finally, if WSIPP moves away from updating the LAP inventory, we can redirect our research efforts to focus on other education projects. Since the 1980s, WSIPP has been conducting systematic literature reviews, meta-analyses, benefit-cost analyses, and program evaluations to evaluate programs for the legislature. To date, we have used our meta-analytic and benefit-cost processes to review approximately 100 education programs and practices.²⁰ One unique feature of WSIPP's research capabilities is our benefit-cost model, which we use to estimate how education program effects lead to changes in test scores, high school graduation, college enrollment, and earnings in a student's life and estimate if the benefits outweigh program costs. Further, WSIPP has conducted program evaluations and comprehensive policy reviews on topics like National Board-Certified teachers,²¹ programs for parenting teens,²² and school safety polices²³ (to name a few). These different research approaches help answer questions about whether education programs or policies work and for whom in Washington State. If assigned by the legislature, WSIPP can use these skills to study other relevant education topics of interest.

²⁰ Washington State Institute for Public Policy. (2019, Dec.). *Pre-K to 13 education programs*. Olympia, WA: Author.

²¹ Cramer, J., Hansen, J., & Bitney, K. (2018). *An evaluation of National Board-Certified Teachers in Washington and review of financial incentives in other states*. (Doc. No. 18-12-2201). Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

²² Lemon, M., Fumia, D., & He, L. (2016). *Graduation, Reality, and Dual-role Skills (GRADS) program for pregnant and parenting teens: Outcome evaluation and benefit-cost analysis* (Doc. No. 16-07-2202). Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

²³ Cramer, J., Lemon, M., Wanner, P., & Hicks, C. (2017). *Funding for safety and security in schools: a fifty-state review*. (Doc. No. 17-12-2201). Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

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