

# WASHINGTON STATE

## FACT SHEET

### OUR MISSION

At the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, we believe every person should have the chance to live a healthy and productive life. We are committed to realizing this goal in Washington state, where the Gates family has lived for generations and the foundation is building its permanent home. Given this deep commitment, Washington is the only state where we are actively coordinating all of our domestic initiatives.

### OUR APPROACH

In Washington, one child in seven lives in poverty—and one child in three is part of a family living dangerously close to the poverty line. These children are less likely to get the support they need to succeed in school and life. In 2008, more than 28,000 students in Washington started their senior years of high school but did not graduate—and research estimates that collectively they would have earned nearly \$7.3 billion (U.S.) more over their lifetimes with a diploma.



*Children playing at a Head Start center funded by the Building Better Futures consortium (Kent, Washington, 2007).*

To date, we have invested more than \$3 billion (U.S.) in Washington state, including more than \$530 million (U.S.) through the Pacific Northwest Community Grants program to support children and families in need. We direct our local investments to four areas where we feel we can have the greatest impact: preventing and ending homelessness among families with children; making sure all children have access to high-quality early-learning opportunities; responding to emerging community needs; and helping young people become college-ready and complete their postsecondary educations. We also continue to invest in public libraries, a key community institution that helps connect people with valuable information online.

### REDUCING FAMILY HOMELESSNESS IN WASHINGTON STATE

The path to opportunity begins with a place to call home—especially for families with children. Strong, productive communities are only possible when families have access to safe, permanent housing. Between 2000 and 2008, we supported the Sound Families Initiative, a \$40 million (U.S.) program that successfully tripled the amount of transitional housing paired with support services in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties.

In 2004, based in part on the success of Sound Families, the Washington State Legislature created the Washington Families Fund (WFF) to replicate the Sound Families model statewide. Over the lifetime of current grants, WFF programs will serve 12,000 children and their parents.

Still, on any given night, more than 22,000 people experience homelessness in Washington state, and half are children and families. We have set an ambitious goal for our ongoing investments: reducing family homelessness in the Puget Sound region by 50 percent over the next 10 years by developing, demonstrating, and deploying promising practices and working with public and private sector partners.



*A single mother and her child in their Vision House transitional housing unit (Renton, Washington, 2004).*

To accomplish this goal, we are working with partners in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties as they develop plans for pilot programs based on five key principles:

- early intervention and prevention
- coordinated access to support services
- rapid rehousing
- tailored programming
- increased economic opportunity

To date, we have committed up to \$100 million (U.S.) to end family homelessness in Washington state. We plan to apply what we learn from pilot communities statewide to ensure that every child has a safe place to call home.

## **MAKING EARLY-LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO MORE CHILDREN**

Experts estimate that more than half the children in Washington state enter kindergarten without the skills they need to succeed. To get off to the right start, children must enter kindergarten emotionally, socially, and intellectually ready for learning. Many of the children who are behind when they start school are likely never to catch up academically. These students are more likely to drop out of high school and face difficulties later in life. The costs—to them and to taxpayers—are enormous.

Early learning is a smart investment in our children's future and the future of Washington state. That is why we are supporting expanded access to high-quality and affordable early-learning opportunities for at-risk children (from birth to 5 years old) as well as support and education for their families.

**Children must enter kindergarten emotionally, socially, and intellectually ready for learning.**

In 2006, we helped create a public-private partnership called Thrive by Five Washington, which brings together our state's top education, government, and business leaders to create evidence-based early-learning services and systems. Thrive by Five is an important information resource for early-learning caregivers and parents and has established Thrive Communities in White Center and Yakima that can serve as models for creating a network of high-quality and sustainable early-learning opportunities. Governor Chris Gregoire co-chairs the Thrive by Five board, on which former board co-chair Bill Gates Sr. serves.

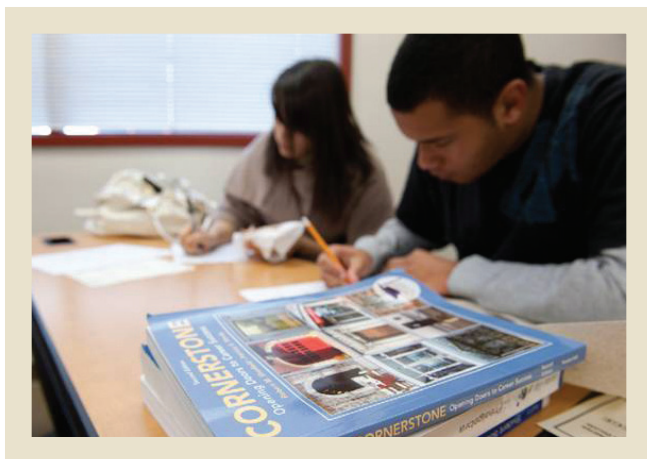
We also work with communities and school districts across the state to support, replicate, and expand school readiness programs already under way and showing good results for Washington's children. To date, we have invested more than \$78 million (U.S.) in early education in Washington. Our hope is that these investments will ensure all of Washington's youngest learners have access to high-quality, affordable early-learning opportunities that prepare them for kindergarten and the rest of their lives.

## **RESPONDING TO EMERGING COMMUNITY NEEDS**

Our Community Grants program in the Pacific Northwest builds upon our long-held commitment to communities throughout the region. The program takes a simple approach to grantmaking: listen, learn, and respond to the local needs of communities in Washington state and in the greater Portland, Oregon, metropolitan area.

Our Pacific Northwest Community Grants program works to improve the lives of vulnerable children and families. The majority of our Community Grants investments support three core objectives:

- connecting families to government support
- supporting promising evidence-based approaches to preventing and reducing violence in our communities
- enhancing academic success through community and school collaboration



Gateway to College student completing a course evaluation form at Lake Washington Technical College (Kirkland, Washington, 2009).

## GETTING YOUNG PEOPLE READY FOR SUCCESS BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL

Nearly a third of our nation's students drop out before graduating from high school. Almost half of young minorities do not earn a high school diploma. We are working to help all students receive the education they need to succeed in high school and beyond. This starts with making sure there is an effective teacher in every classroom—well-established evidence shows that teachers are the most important school-based factor in student achievement.

In Washington state, we also focus on efforts to:

- align the high school diploma with college readiness (Core 24)
- work in public-private partnerships to establish a Washington Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Innovation Center with the goal of doubling the number of Washington students entering related fields in college

**Good jobs increasingly require a postsecondary degree or credential, a trend that is certain to continue.**

Today, high school diplomas are rarely enough to secure career-track jobs that provide sufficient income to support a family. Good jobs increasingly require a postsecondary degree or credential, a trend that is certain to continue. While college enrollment has grown nearly 35 percent

since 1970, the completion rate has remained flat during that same period. Realizing the dangerous economic implications for America's families, the foundation is focused on making sure that young adults can get to college and complete degrees—two-year, four-year, or technical—with genuine economic value.

In Washington state, we are working to:

- support the Student Completion Initiative, with the aim of ensuring that the state's community and technical colleges help more students succeed and graduate from college
- help reduce the barriers that prevent young adults from learning and reinforce students' motivation to learn and succeed
- connect Washington residents to well-paying jobs by improving workforce training programs, providing more flexible course schedules, and working with employers to determine their needs

To date, we have invested \$230 million (U.S.) in high school and postsecondary reform in Washington state.

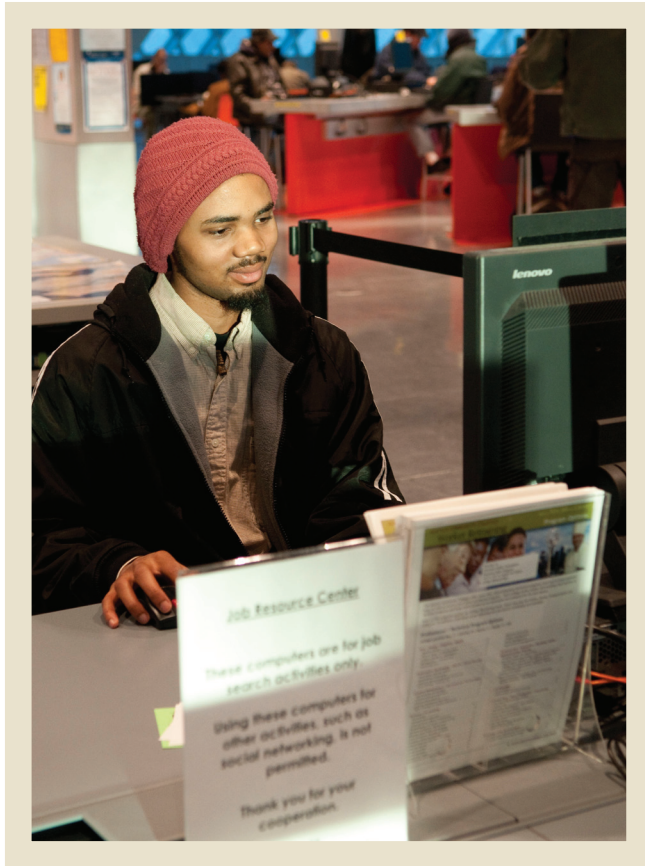
## INCREASING QUALITY INTERNET AND TECHNOLOGY ACCESS IN LIBRARIES

Millions of people rely on computers and the Internet in public libraries for access to vital health, education, and employment information and government services. Today, more than 70 percent of people who use public library computers say libraries are the primary place they access the Internet, but many libraries struggle to maintain the high-quality technology services their patrons need. Our goal is to ensure that public libraries continue to offer free, quality access to computers and the Internet so everyone can benefit from technology.

We support public libraries in Washington state through two programs:

- Our Opportunity Online hardware grants program makes local matching grants to incentivize sustained public investments in technology access in public libraries. The program also trains local library leaders to build the skills they need to advocate for technology access in libraries.
- The Washington State Library's Renew Washington Grant Program helps 17 public libraries across the state offer new or enhanced services that address the specific economic challenges of their communities.





*Patron using a public computer in the Charles Simonyi Mixing Chamber at the Seattle Public Library's Central Library branch (Seattle, Washington, 2009).*

More than 70 percent of people who use public library computers say libraries are the primary place they connect to the Internet.

We are also supporting the Washington State Library's efforts to access federal funding, available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, for improved Internet connections in public libraries.

To date, we have invested \$3.06 million (U.S.) in public libraries in Washington state. Previous investments in Washington's public libraries supported the installation and maintenance of public access computer workstations and Internet connections for patrons in communities across the state.

## TO LEARN MORE

About the United States Program:  
[www.gatesfoundation.org/united-states](http://www.gatesfoundation.org/united-states)

About our work in Washington state:  
[www.gatesfoundation.org/washington](http://www.gatesfoundation.org/washington)

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

For additional information on the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, please visit our web site: [www.gatesfoundation.org](http://www.gatesfoundation.org).

© 2009 Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. All Rights Reserved. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is a registered trademark in the United States and other countries.