

# Transition Practices Case Study

## WELLPINIT ELEMENTARY



Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**



## Case Study Purpose



Transition practices case studies reflect what we learned in 2019 about innovative approaches that cross sector partners use to support effective transitions for children in their communities. We offer these case studies to community-school partnerships exploring possibilities for strengthening transition approaches. Each community we have included has unique strengths and challenges. These case studies demonstrate not a one-size-fits-all approach, but a range of practices and strategies that best serve children and families in each community. For more transition ideas, see the publication *Seeds of Inspiration for Effective Transition Approaches* (EL\_0031) at [www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/EL\\_0031.pdf](http://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/EL_0031.pdf).

### Common and Unique Transition Strategy Characteristics

- Relationship-based Approaches
- Family Voice, Leadership and Advocacy
- Inclusionary Practices
- Culturally Sustaining Practices
- Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment
- Program Alignment

Strategy Characteristics used in this case study:

- Relationship-based Approaches
- Culturally Sustaining Practices
- Program Alignment

## Background

Wellpinit Elementary kindergarten teachers evaluated their learning environment and determined that students needed more space to be independent learners at developmentally gauged learning centers. At the request of the kindergarten team, the district removed the wall between the original two kindergarten classrooms during the summer months before the start of the 2019-2020 school year.





## Current Practice

A visit to the school revealed how this developmentally appropriate and culturally sustaining environment supports rigorous and engaging learning opportunities for kindergartners in Wellpinit. In their newly reorganized space, centers afford a range of opportunities for learning including:

- Low tables with rubber sensory cushions for sitting.
- Traditional height tables with fit balls for seats to improve core muscles and provide for a bit of movement.
- Dramatic play corner with costumes and puppets.
- Quiet cube with cushions for reading overseen by an eagle puppet in a felt hammock nest.
- STEM station with scales, measuring tape, rulers, and magnifying glasses.
- Math station with independent learning options on one side (games, manipulatives, collections to count, five and ten frames) and guided activities for workshop on the other side covered by a curtain when the center is closed.
- Literacy corner labeled in Lushootseed with book displays, bins with books sorted by reading levels, and cushions for seating.
- Emotional awareness center with guided play to help students identify feelings and use strategies for self-expression and behavior management, such as squeezing a ball, pushing the floor (push-ups), drawing, looking at a book, resting, counting, doing a puzzle, or imagining happy thoughts. The table includes sand timers, colored pencils, paper, tennis balls, shaker bottles, and worksheets.
- Writing center with cards, envelopes, wide rule paper, pencils and blank books.
- A live pet rabbit in a cage.
- A chore chart and daily schedule in Lushootseed and English.
- An evolving visual display created by kindergartners demonstrating ways to model respect through Seeing, Hearing, Feeling, and Doing. Examples include, *seeing* more students cleaning up the centers, *hearing* students using their words in a calm voice or saying, “I can help with that,” using a three-inch voice in line, *doing* with actions such as helping other people when finished cleaning up one’s own mess, and *feeling* safe, happy, and empathetic..



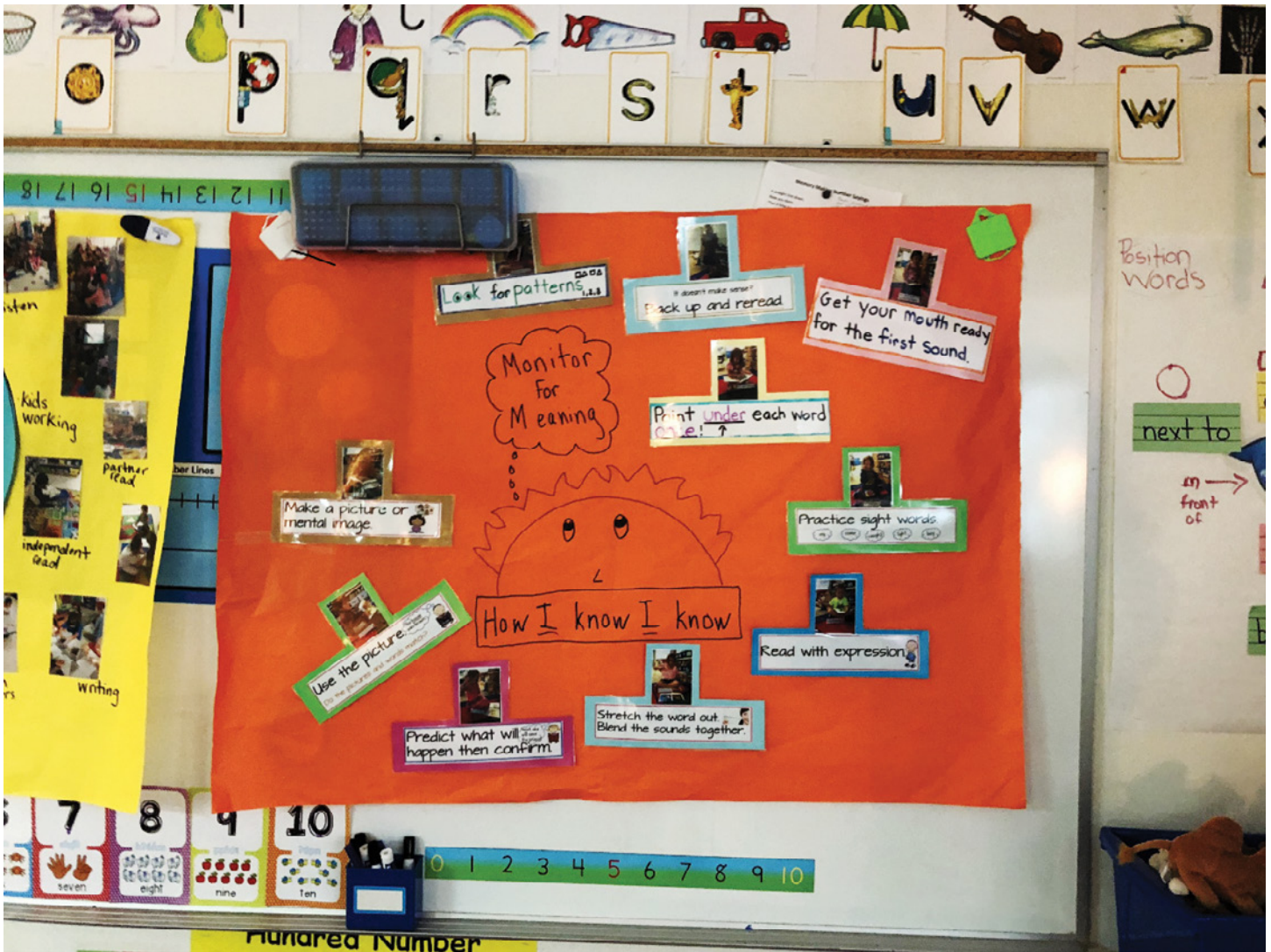


Figure 1: Wellpinit kindergarten classroom “How I know I know” graphic tool

During independent work time, six of the 29 students were reading or listening to one of their peers read aloud. A few students drew pictures on post-it notes to record their ideas and thinking about the books they were reading. Teachers and the paraeducator worked with children individually while others worked independently. Children were deeply engaged in self-directed activities to the extent that there was virtually no evidence of disruption when visitors arrived in the classroom. Several children worked with partners or in small groups and there were multiple examples of spontaneous cooperation and collaboration during work time and clean up.

At the end of the period, there was a three-minute check in before it was time to clean up, with Lushootseed words to confirm that students understood directions. The students earned a class reward of 30-seconds of a silly game of tag – on tiptoes while pinching their noses. The children erupted with glee and immediately launched into the game with quiet feet and quick, but safe movements around the classrooms. Students respected each other’s need for a little space between bodies, and no one ran in the classroom.





Figure 2: Wellpinit kindergarten classroom “Workshop” graphic tool

The kindergarten teachers expressed their deep commitment to the social and emotional well-being of incoming kindergartners:

*“For the first 8 weeks of school our sole focus is building a community of trust, safety, respect, and love. We wait to bring in the heavy curriculum until those relationships have been fostered and we know the students feel safe in their community to work hard, take breaks, fail, and get back up again knowing they are safe to do so in our community. We are a kindergarten family.”*

These children demonstrated the success of this approach unequivocally. The classroom environment was buoyant and joyful as children engaged in quiet activities, in the thrill of a spontaneous 30-second game, and as the teachers lovingly sent the class off to specialist time.

This grounding in social and emotional development enables a range of learning strategies that support differentiation and multiple ways of learning for kindergartners at Wellpinit. The kindergarten team has developed a workshop model for reading, writing and math that includes a mini-lesson aligned to a specific standard, work time and share time. This model facilitates independent work time, allowing for differentiated instruction as well as child-directed academic discussion.

The Wellpinit School engages the K-12 Art Specialist (and prior kindergarten teacher), the Cultural Liaison for push-in Lushootseed language circle times, a drummer who works with each grade level over time, PE, music and library.

## Seeds of Inspiration

The proactive and passionate Wellpinit kindergarten team, with support of administrators and school specialists has created an engaging, developmentally appropriate and culturally sustaining learning environment. This classroom offers relevant activities and materials that foster learning through experiences that are relatable for children and families in their community – and nurture a critical sense of belonging as these young children move through their kindergarten experience.



### Wellpinit Elementary School 2019-20

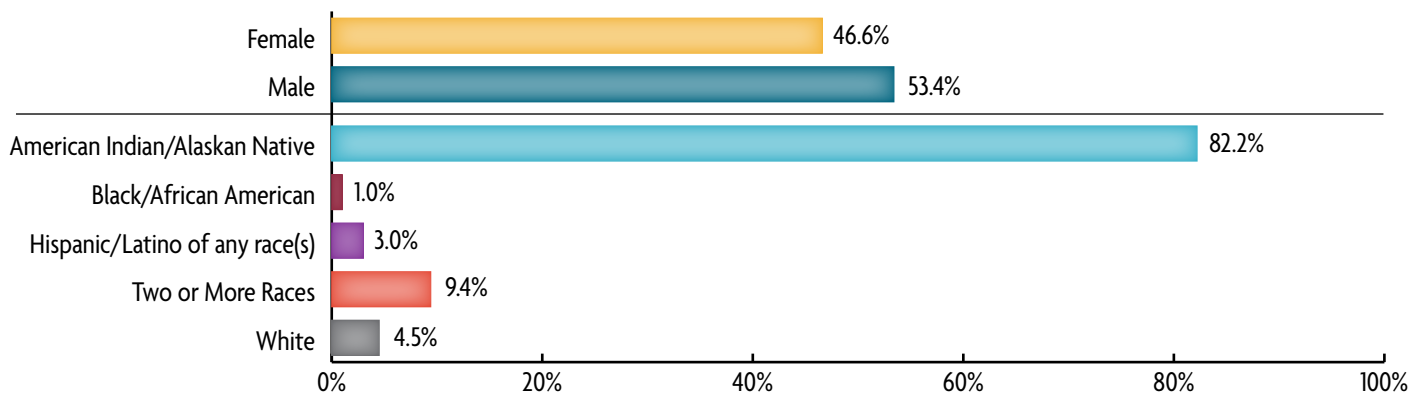


Figure 3: Wellpinit Elementary enrollment by demographic (OSPI, 2020)

## Wellpinit Elementary School 2019-20

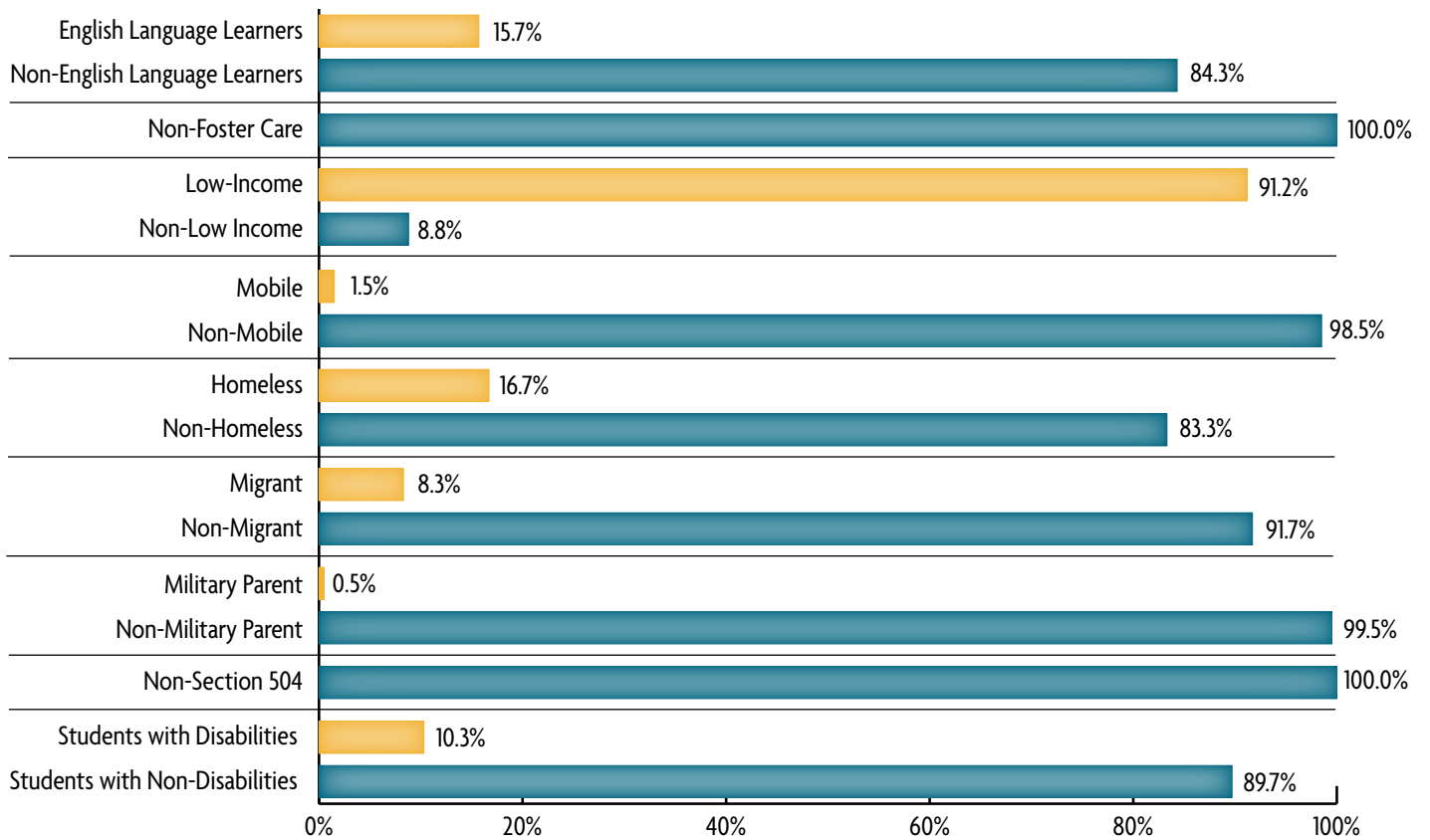


Figure 4: Wellpinit Elementary enrollment by program (OSPI, 2020)

## References:

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2020). Washington State Report Card. Retrieved from <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103832>.