

JANUARY 2021

# TWO PANDEMICS: ADDRESSING THE EXPERIENCE OF RACIAL VIOLENCE AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES OF COLOR

*By the Educational Opportunity Gap  
Oversight and Accountability  
Committee (EOGOAC)*



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## Executive Summary

The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) is a bicameral, bipartisan legislative and community workgroup committed to closing racial opportunity gaps in Washington’s K-12 public education system. The term ‘opportunity gap’ refers to systemic inequity in education that structurally disadvantages certain demographics of students (e.g. students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities). The EOGOAC’s 2021 report provides policy and strategy recommendations for decreasing pervasive racial disparities in education, as highlighted in the past year by the [dual pandemics](#) of the COVID-19 global pandemic and pandemic of racism and hate in this country.

The order in which the recommendations are presented in this report do not imply a hierarchy of priority or a sequence of steps. Since its creation in 2009, the EOGOAC has made recommendations representing a holistic approach toward closing the opportunity gap. The recommendations in this report follow in that tradition and are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

### Table of Recommendations

Note: Some recommendations are in truncated form. See report section for full recommendation.

Recommendation	Audience			
	OSPI	School Districts	Legislature	Others
<p>1. <a href="#">Ending Institutionalized Racism in Schools</a></p> <p>1A. That all school districts be required to engage in the process of writing and adopting an equity policy with accountability measures which include procedures for community engagement and anti-racism training for school board members, school and district staff.</p> <p>1B. That school and district administrations center student voice through authentic engagement that allows students to share their experiences of racism and strategies for solutions.</p> <p>1C. That ethnic studies be embedded throughout all academic content courses in all levels K-12.</p>		<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>		<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>

<sup>1</sup> Cover photo by Allison Shelley for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action.

Recommendation	Audience			
	OSPI	School Districts	Legislature	Others
<p>2. <u>Addressing the Growth of Academic Gaps</u></p> <p>2A. That schools work in partnership with students and families to develop and implement an individualized plan for services to address gaps in academic learning and incomplete grades caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. These plans should be developed using formative assessments of student’s progress. The development and administration of these plans should be led by a COVID-19 recovery task for that includes parents, community members, educator, education experts and agencies.</p> <p>2B. That schools and districts utilize the Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol to identify and partner with community-based organizations to provide supports, such as health referrals, tutoring and expanded learning opportunities, to help close the gaps created by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>2C. That Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) with input from the community, develop and annually update a cross-agency action plan to address the academic needs of students in foster care, with an emphasis on the specific needs of students of color</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>		<p>✓</p>
<p>3. <u>Supports for Students Receiving Special Education Services and Students with Disabilities</u></p> <p>3A. That schools extend services to student who have graduated or turned 21 or “aged out” during the COVID-19 school closures in order to provide any instructional and therapeutic services that were missed during that time. OSPI should provide guidance on the braiding of available funds to support this student group.</p> <p>3B. That schools collaborate with families to systematically review the services that these students did not receive during the shutdown and remote instruction and to create a plan to deliver services through recovery or compensatory services. These plans must be submitted to OSPI for review and included in monitoring processes.</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>		

Recommendation	Audience			
	OSPI	School Districts	Legislature	Others
<p>4. <u>Childcare and Early Learning</u></p> <p>4A. That the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) issue joint supports and guidance on the expectation for coordination of in-school instruction, childcare and early learning services.</p> <p>4B. That the DCYF develop and require trainings on cultural competency and anti-racism for licensed providers of early-learning and school-aged childcare.</p> <p>4C. That DCYF develop and implement a plan to make sure that all program and administrative staff receive trainings on cultural competency and anti-racism.</p>	✓			✓  ✓  ✓
<p>5. <u>Closing the Digital Divide</u></p> <p>5A. That school districts partner with community-based organizations to provide training and technical assistance for families in their native language and accessible format, so that they can support their children in use of remote learning platforms.</p> <p>5B. That the Legislature fully fund a statewide department of educational technology within OSPI, and an allocation of district level education technology coordinators through the prototypical schools model.</p>		✓	✓	
<p>6. <u>Data Needed to Close the Gap</u></p> <p>6A. That OSPI analyze fully disaggregated ethnic and sub-ethnic categories for data points such as graduation rates, discipline, academic progress, and report overall statewide trends.</p> <p>6B. That fully disaggregated data on student outcomes be provided to the following stakeholders: families/communities, educators, principals, district/school boards, and state agencies</p> <p>6C. That OSPI update the Washington State Report Card to allow the public to make comparisons across the system, including school to school, district to district and district to statewide trends.</p> <p>6D. That school districts establish a method of regularly including families and communities in periodic review of disaggregated data and equity-based decision-making discussions grounded in the data.</p>	✓  ✓  ✓	✓		

Recommendation	Audience			
	OSPI	School Districts	Legislature	Others
<p>7. <u>Learning in the Remote Environment</u></p> <p>7A. That the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) update the cultural competency standards to include culturally competent strategies for classroom management in an online environment.</p> <p>7B. The EOGOAC supports House Bill 1113 in its efforts to promote a more culturally appropriate response to student absences.</p> <p>7C. That Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) set the expectation that districts issue guidance to educators that students may not be disciplined or face academic penalties for declining to turn their video on during synchronous remote learning.</p>				<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
<p>8. <u>Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Mental Health</u></p> <p>8A. That schools implement a system of universal screening to identify students in needs of additional supports.</p> <p>8B. That PESB work with the OSPI SEL Advisory Committee and the EOGOAC to review and revise the current SEL standards to explicitly call out strategies to address racism and the experiences of students of color in schools.</p>		<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>		<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
<p>9. <u>Language Access</u></p> <p>9A. That all school districts develop a language access plan that addresses how all Limited English Proficient (LEP) families can access all vital information. Plans should include routine communications as well as a continuity plan for emergencies.</p> <p>9B. That teachers and school staff receive training on how to access and effectively use interpretation, including remote formats.</p> <p>9C. That all schools with an LEP population identify a building point of contact to facilitate access to language access services, supporting families, communities and school staff.</p>		<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>		
<p>10. <u>Mastery Based Learning</u></p> <p>10A. The EOGOAC endorses the recommendations of the Mastery-based Learning Work Group, as presented in their 2020 Report.</p>				

## Background on the Committee

The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) was established in 2009 by [Second Substitute Senate Bill 5973](#)<sup>2</sup> and is charged by [RCW 28A.300.136](#)<sup>3</sup> to:

*“synthesize the findings and recommendations from the five 2008 Achievement Gap Studies into an implementation plan, and to recommend policies and strategies to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Professional Educator Standards Board, and the State Board of Education.”*<sup>4</sup>

Recommendations by the EOGOAC must, at a minimum, encompass the following areas:

- Supporting and facilitating parent and community involvement and outreach.
- Enhancing the cultural competency of current and future educators and the cultural relevance of curriculum and instruction.
- Expanding pathways and strategies to prepare and recruit diverse teachers and administrators.
- Recommending current programs and resources that should be redirected to narrow the opportunity gap.
- Identifying data elements and systems needed to monitor progress in closing the gap.
- Making closing the opportunity gap part of the school and school district improvement process.
- Exploring innovative school models that have shown success in closing the opportunity gap.

Since its inception, the EOGOAC has published annual reports to the Legislature, the Governor, the House and Senate Education Committees, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB), and the State Board of Education (SBE).

Although the EOGOAC focuses specifically on the K-12 education system, committee members are unanimous in their belief that learning is a continuum. From early childhood to higher education, equitable opportunities for students of color must exist in all facets of the education system.

## Governance and Structure

### Committee Membership

Section 4 of RCW 28A.300.136 states the EOGOAC shall be composed of the following members:

- The chairs and ranking minority members of the House and Senate Education Committees, or their designees.
- One additional member of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House and one additional member of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate.
- A representative of the Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO).
- A representative of the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL) in OSPI.
- A representative of federally recognized Indian tribes whose traditional lands and territories lie within the borders of Washington State, designated by the federally recognized tribes.

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<sup>2</sup> Washington State Legislature Second Substitute Senate Bill 5973, *Closing the achievement gap in order to provide all students an excellent and equitable education* (2009). Retrieved from: <http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2009-10/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Passed%20Legislature/5973-S2.PL.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Washington State Legislature (2009) *RCW 28A.300.136 Educational opportunity gap oversight and accountability committee- Policy and strategy recommendations*. Retrieved from <http://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.300.136>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



- Four members appointed by the Governor in consultation with the state ethnic commissions, who represent the following populations: African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islander Americans.

Figure I. Committee Members

Name	Representing
<b>Dr. Renteria Valencia</b> <b>*Dr. Julieta Altamirano Crosby</b>	Commission on Hispanic Affairs
<b>Bill Kallappa</b>	Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs
<b>Carrie Basas</b>	Governor’s Office of the Education Ombuds
<b>Dr. James Smith</b> <b>*Dr. Wanda Billingsly</b>	Commission on African American Affairs
<b>Fiasili Savusa</b>	Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs (Pacific Islander)
<b>Frieda Takamura</b>	Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs (Asian American)
<b>Representative Bob McCaslin</b>	House of Representatives
<b>Representative Lillian Ortiz-Self</b>	House of Representatives
<b>Representative Sharon Tomiko Santos</b>	House of Representatives
<b>Senator Hans Zeiger</b>	Senate
<b>Senator Bob Hasegawa</b> <b>*Senator John McCoy</b>	Senate
<b>Senator Lisa Wellman</b>	Senate
<b>Superintendent Chris Reykdal</b>	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Figure II. Committee Member Alternates

Name	Representing
<b>Dr. Tyson Marsh</b>	Commission on African American Affairs
<b>Tennille Jeffries-Simmons</b> <b>*Jamila Thomas</b>	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
<b>Dr. Julie Kang</b>	Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs (Asian American)
<b>Lydia Faitalia</b>	Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs (Pacific Islander)
<b>Yordanos Gebreamlak</b>	Governor’s Office of the Education Ombuds

\*member has retired from the committee during 2020

#### Committee Co-Chairs

Section 7 of RCW 28A.300.136 states the chair or co-chairs of the committee shall be selected by the members of the committee. The committee co-chairs for 2020 include:

- Fiasili Savusa
- Representative Lillian Ortiz-Self
- Former Senator John McCoy (retired)

#### Committee Staff

Section 7 of RCW 28A.300.136 also states staff support for the committee shall be provided by the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL). Committee staff include:

- Maria Flores, Executive Director
- Heather Rees, Research Analyst
- Robin Howe, Administrative Assistant 4

## Community Engagement

The EOGOAC seeks opportunities to authentically engage with families and communities across Washington, as elevating student, family, and community voice is paramount to their work. Additionally, the EOGOAC believes in modeling inclusive, culturally responsive methods of engaging with communities of color and creating space for members of those communities to see themselves reflected in the leadership of the committee and the focus of the meetings.

The members of the EOGOAC represent the Asian, African American, Latinx, Pacific Islander and Native American communities and in their role, work within their community to gather their voice and share the work of the committee. Additionally, EOGOAC members sit on several other state level committees, representing the voice of students and families of color. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EOGOAC was forced to move its meetings to a fully online environment. This change increased the accessibility of the meetings and resulted in a more varied public attendance and more public comment.

The EOGOAC has a tradition of annually visiting different areas of the state, in order to fully understand the regional needs of our communities of color. The COVID-19 pandemic made traveling impossible. However, the new online format opened the meeting up to attendees from anywhere in the state. The lack of meeting travel times also made it easier for the committee to hear directly from the community and practitioners, a priority in order to understand the challenges of this difficult time. Panel topics included:

- Special education services
- English language learners
- The digital divide and rural/remote learners
- Community support for students in foster care during COVID
- Indian Child Welfare systems of support
- Community support for early learning and childcare

## Family Forum

On Saturday, August 22<sup>nd</sup> from 10am-noon, the EOGOAC hosted their first all virtual family and community forum. The goal of the forum was to be a listening session to discuss the sweeping challenges and changes to the education system due to COVID, and how we can take this opportunity to make education more relevant to children of color, in partnership with families and communities of color. Spanish and ASL interpretation were provided during the forum and registration was provided in Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, Somali and Arabic. The forum was a great success with approximately 95 people attending, including staff and members. A recording of the forum is available on [YouTube](#).

## Youth Voice Day

On October 20<sup>th</sup>, the EOGOAC hosted their first ever Youth Voice Day. The agenda included a presentation from students of the Association of Washington Student Leaders on their Equity Guide and a series of panels on students' experiences. The members spoke with a panel of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) students and a panel of white student allies and then united them to speak about their experience listening to each other. The students shared moving stories about experiencing racism in schools, equity work in their communities and their desire for student voice to be centered in decision making spaces.

A huge thank you to all our panelists, presenters and the public who made this difficult year one of the most engaged and inspiring!

## 2021 Recommendations: Introduction

### Two Pandemics

Since the publication of the last [EOGOAC report](#), our communities of color have faced the heartbreaking challenges of dual pandemics: the COVID-19 global pandemic and pandemic of white supremacy this country. During this time, we have seen an increase in racially motivated hate crimes against Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities; for example, targeting of Asians and the brutal murders of Blacks by the police. Due to systemic racism across our systems, COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on the life and death of people of color. In Washington state, people who are White make up 69% of the population but only 48% of COVID-19 cases. People who are Black, Latinx, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native have higher percentages of cases and/or deaths than their representation in the general population.<sup>5</sup>

The serious logistic challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic do not negate Washington State's constitutional duty to equitably educate students of color. Since the statewide shutdown of schools on March 17, 2020, the families of students of color, including those who are low-income, English Language Learners, in foster care, immigrants, refugees, receiving special education services or experiencing unstable housing, have struggled because of a lack of: timely information from schools, access to internet and devices for remote education and culturally and linguistically appropriate training on the use of technology, increasing already existing opportunity gaps for these students. Despite initial hopes for an in-person opening in Fall of 2020, the continuing conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic has extended the need for remote learning, either in the home or in childcare.

At a time when parents are expected to take charge of their child's education at home, families of color are more likely to both be essential workers on the front lines and to be facing sudden unemployment.<sup>6</sup> These disparities in access to education, healthcare, housing and good jobs are not new and they are the result of systemic racism. The COVID-19 pandemic has only highlighted the gaps that have already existed and that will continue to worsen unless our allies within the system fight for change now. It is the responsibility of the system to put the needs of students first over the needs of the system.

As of January 2021, we are still in the midst of these pandemics, but looking forward towards recovery. In this report, we look to the immediate future coming out of COVID-19 and the long-term future of our students. We must address inequities in each of these areas. For students and families who have been economically, mentally, emotionally and physically harmed by this pandemic, going back to "normal" is not possible nor is it preferred. We must do better than "normal" if we are going to adequately address the social, emotional and academic needs of students as they return to the classroom.

***The COVID-19 pandemic has only highlighted the gaps that have already existed and that will continue to worsen unless our allies within the system fight for change now. It is the responsibility of the system to put the needs of students first over the needs of the system.***

<sup>5</sup> The COVID Tracking Project. (2021, January 28). *Racial Data Dashboard*. <https://covidtracking.com/race/dashboard#state-wa>

<sup>6</sup> Kochhar, R. (2020, June 9). *Hispanic women, immigrants, young adults, those with less education hit hardest by COVID-19 job losses*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/09/hispanic-women-immigrants-young-adults-those-with-less-education-hit-hardest-by-covid-19-job-losses/>

# 1. Ending Institutionalized Racism in Schools

## Background

During this last year, we have seen the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and racism highlight the ways that our educational institutions perpetuate and are ill-equipped to deal with both issues. We have heard this year from students, educators, families and community members who have experienced incidents of racism in schools, which were not responded to in an appropriate way. They report that they have not received training on how to respond when they see racism and did not receive support from administrators.

These experiences are traumatic for both students of color, who can feel isolated from their peers and disengaged with their education, and educators of color, who can become burnt out by the expectation that they represent and support students and families of color while receiving little support from their peers and administration. These experiences become “the norm” of school culture when institutions fail to address them. Without adequate training for both students and staff, they lack the tools they need to address racism when they see or experience it. Thorough and community-informed equity policies are also needed to directly measure and address institutionalized racism. These policies should create mechanisms for centering the voices of students of color who experience racism and are asking for solutions.

Racism is very normalized, because students, like non-Black students, like to throw around the "n-word" as an insult to other students as a way to demean them in a sense and they think it's funny to do that...There was a teacher nearby but they stood still, stood silent and didn't really do anything...It's really clear to me that these students are not really aware of that deep meaning of these derogatory terms that are being thrown around as a joke.

Student testimony, Youth Voice Day 2020

Policies alone are not enough to change hearts and minds. The EOGOAC heard this year from students who recommended that culturally responsive ethnic studies be embedded in all levels of education K-12. Second-generation students from immigrant families found that when ethnic studies reflected the strengths and values of their culture, it helped their parents and community to feel valued and included in the school community. For students of color this can protect against internalized racism and for white students it can open their minds and protect against the fear and distrust that leads to racism.

The EOGOAC has also recommended strategies to increase the cultural competency of current and future educators and administrators since its inception. These recommendations have resulted in the [cultural competency standards](#) for educator preparation programs monitored by the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) and frameworks for trainings. However, the state has not reached the full implementation of cultural competency training for educators, administrators and school board members needed to make significant shifts in our systems.

In summary, our systems **must** do more to both prevent and appropriately respond to racism in our schools, which is still an unacceptably common experience for both students and educators of color.

### Recommendation 1A.

The EOGOAC recommends that all school districts be required to engage in the process of writing and adopting an equity policy with accountability measures which include procedures for community engagement and anti-racism training for school board members, school and district staff.

### Recommendation 1B.

The EOGOAC recommends that school and district administrations center student voice through authentic engagement that allows students to share their experiences of racism and strategies for solutions.

Authentic engagement means regular and ongoing engagement that involves both students and staff. Students should have opportunities to identify what supports are needed and access to resources such as anti-racism training. Significant investments need to be made in youth leadership. The Association of Washington Student Leaders has a helpful [guide](#) for engaging youth in conversations around equity.<sup>7</sup>

### Recommendation 1C.

The EOGOAC recommends that ethnic studies be embedded throughout all academic content courses in all levels K-12. The committee finds that when created and implemented in consultation with communities of color, ethnic studies can help students and families see themselves reflected and valued in the school community, increasing family engagement and addressing the roots of racism.

Implementation of culturally competent ethnic studies will require training for new and current educators with the guidance of the Ethnic Studies Advisory Committee, African American Studies Workgroup and the Since Time Immemorial curriculum approaches.

## 2. Addressing the Growth of Academic Gaps

### Background

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the thoroughly documented opportunity gaps for students of color have persisted and even worsened during remote instruction. Specifically, students experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity, in foster care, in rural/remote locations and in low-income families have difficulty accessing the high-speed internet and devices necessary to access synchronous remote instruction. The provision of other supports has become delayed if not halted altogether. This decreased accessibility and supports will undoubtedly result in gaps in academic development that we will not know the full extent of for some time yet. One study finds that “students of color could be six to 12 months behind, compared with four to eight months for white students.”<sup>8</sup>

Upon initiation of hybrid and full in-person instruction, it will be the responsibility of the system to determine the extent of the gaps in academic progress and to provide the necessary supports to help close the gap.

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<sup>7</sup> Association of Washington Student Leaders. (2020). *Student equity cohort*.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5505d862e4b082eea4c98dcc/t/5f4eafe3677b3c56616b8829/1598992356671/AWSL+Student+Equity+Cohort+Guidebook.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Dorn, E., Hancock, B., Sarakatsannis, J., and Viruleg, E. (2020, December 8). *COVID-19 and learning loss—disparities grow and students need help*. McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-learning-loss-disparities-grow-and-students-need-help>

#### Recommendation 2A.

The EOGOAC recommends that schools work in partnership with students and families to develop and implement an individualized plan for services to address gaps in academic learning and incomplete grades caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. These plans should be developed using formative assessments of student's progress.

The development and administration of these plans should be led by a COVID-19 recovery task for that includes parents, community members, educator, education experts and agencies. The task force should identify strategies, tools and resources needed to implement student learning loss recovery plans. Any data used to inform the work must be disaggregated by sub-ethnic and sub-racial categories.

#### Recommendation 2B.

The EOGOAC recommends that schools and districts utilize the [Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol](#) (WISSP) to identify and partner with community-based organizations to provide supports, such as health referrals, tutoring and expanded learning opportunities, to help close the gaps created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Recommendation 2C.

The EOGOAC recommends that Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) with input from the community, develop and annually update a cross-agency action plan to address the academic needs of students in foster care, with an emphasis on the specific needs of students of color.

The plan must include culturally responsive strategies to address academic and social-emotional needs of students and identify measures for accountability and reporting which are aligned to the values and strategies identified by the work of the EOGOAC. A key goal of this plan is to increase the communication and coordination between agencies to support students in foster care.

### 3. Supports for Students Receiving Special Education Services and Students with Disabilities

#### Background

The EOGOAC is greatly concerned about the lack of supports for students of color who receive special education services and students with disabilities during this time. Families report that their children have difficulty engaging in remote education settings, have less time spent in the general education settings and are not receiving essential therapeutic supports. Many students are not receiving their 504 plan accommodations in the remote format. This puts them at increased risk of slowed, or even regressed, academic and developmental progress. Additionally, many students will have "aged out" of receiving services without receiving the supports they need to reach their goals. These additional hurdles and denial of basic rights are compounded within a system that is already racist and ableist.

It is essential that schools are prepared to evaluate what services were not provided during school closures and remote learning and make modifications necessary to address any resulting delays in progress.

### Recommendation 3A.

The EOGOAC recommends that schools extend services to student who have graduated or turned 21 or “aged out” during the COVID-19 school closures in order to provide any instructional and therapeutic services that were missed during that time.

Districts may use available federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funds, state special education funds, state basic education funds, district-allocated Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds and/or a combination to support the provision of recovery services after a student graduates or reaches maximum age. OSPI should provide guidance on the braiding of available funds to support this student group.

### Recommendation 3B.

For all students receiving special education services and students with disabilities, the EOGOAC recommends that schools collaborate with families to systematically review the services that these students did not receive during the shutdown and remote instruction and to create a plan to deliver services through recovery or compensatory services. These plans must be submitted to OSPI for review and included in Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) monitoring processes.

## 4. Childcare and Early Learning

### Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed a significant challenge to the field of early childhood education and school-age childcare. Prior to the pandemic, the Department of Commerce reported that the state only had enough licensed childcare slots to serve 41% of children under the age of 5.<sup>9</sup> Most childcare centers closed temporarily at the start of the pandemic and reopened with increased costs and decreased enrollment.

As of June 2020, 20% of childcare providers were still temporarily closed.<sup>10</sup> The school-aged care that reopened took on the additional burden of facilitating synchronous and asynchronous learning for K-12 students. The situation left many families choosing between their jobs and the increased health risks of childcare centers during a pandemic and staying home with their children to facilitate remote learning. For families with young children ready to enter the K-12 system during this uncertain time, many have chosen to delay. Kindergarten enrollment saw a decrease of 14% from September 2019 to September 2020.<sup>11</sup>

Given that the childcare industry is disproportionately staffed by women of color, and families of color face the highest barriers to access, these closures and shortages will increase the opportunity gaps for children of color. Affordable access to high-quality, culturally competent early childhood education and school-aged childcare is essential for the welfare of our children and families. Now more than ever, our systems must work together to bridge the gaps.

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<sup>9</sup> Department of Commerce. (2020). *Child care collaborative task force report*. <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Child-Care-Collaborative-Task-Force-Industry-Assessment-Report.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2020, October 7). *Preliminary enrollment numbers show families delaying kindergarten start; more alternative learning*. [Press release]. <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/WAOSPI/bulletins/2a4af8d>

#### Recommendation 4A.

The EOGOAC recommends that the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) issue joint supports and guidance on the expectation for coordination of in-school instruction, childcare and early learning services, including decision making protocols that include early learning and childcare providers. Supports should include training, establishing points of contact and resources for assisting student with disabilities and English Language Learners.

#### Recommendation 4B.

The EOGOAC recommends that the DCYF develop and require trainings on cultural competency and anti-racism for licensed providers of early-learning and school-aged childcare. Development of the trainings should utilize the expertise and experiences of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) childcare and early learning providers.

#### Recommendation 4C.

The EOGOAC recommends that DCYF develop and implement a plan to make sure that all program and administrative staff receive trainings on cultural competency and anti-racism. The plan should include monitoring and transparent reporting of implementation progress. The goal of this training is to embed cultural competency in every interaction between DCYF staff and the public and to eliminate the biases in planning, policy making and implementation that lead to disproportionate outcomes for youth and families of color.

## 5. Closing the Digital Divide

### Background

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, many students and families of color, especially in rural areas, lacked the devices and access to the internet needed to complete such tasks as research, online homework and communication with educators. The disparity created inequitable access to education and a cost burden often placed solely on the family. The switch to remote learning in the spring of 2020 suddenly designated internet access a necessity rather than a “luxury”.

Since then, a massive amount of effort and funds have been expended to get devices for online learning into the hands of students. In April, 16% of students were estimated to not have a device adequate for online learning; by August that was down to 3%.<sup>12</sup> An estimated 705,000 students have a district-issued device to use at home.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, those devices are less useful without full broadband internet service. Thirteen percent of students are estimated to have inadequate internet access and around 6% have no internet access at all.<sup>14</sup>

Even with devices and internet, students need the support of a knowledgeable adult at home to be able to connect and complete their tasks. Parents need culturally competent and linguistically appropriate training and supports on the devices and software that their children are using. Now more than ever, the family-school partnership is essential to make sure that all students have equitable access to education. The use of technology and necessity of access to internet is key part of modern education

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<sup>12</sup> Student Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2020). *Student connectivity and technology*. Contact [CISL@k12.wa.us](mailto:CISL@k12.wa.us) for a copy.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ibid



that not going away. These gaps existed before the pandemic, which has only highlighted this issue, and we must seize the opportunity to dedicate the resources needed to close the gap.

#### Recommendation 5A.

The EOGOAC recommends that school districts partner with community-based organizations to provide training and technical assistance for families in their native language and accessible format, so that they can support their children in use of remote learning platforms.

#### Recommendation 5B.

The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislature fully fund a statewide department of educational technology within the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and an allocation of district level education technology coordinators through the prototypical schools model. Tasks for this program include supporting educator's, administrator's and families' access educational technology with an emphasis on increasing equity. To address the unique needs of small rural districts, additional support should be provided by local Educational Service Districts (ESDs).

## 6. Data Needed to Close the Gap

### Background

In 2016, [Fourth Substitute House Bill 1541](#)<sup>15</sup> passed, outlining strategies to close opportunity gaps in Washington based on recommendations made by the EOGOAC. Part V of this bill specifically addressed student race and ethnicity data disaggregation. It required the convening of the Race and Ethnicity Student Data Task Force and implementation of sub-racial and sub-ethnic categories when collecting race and ethnicity data. Implementation of data collection was designed in a phased-in approach. Starting in school year 2018-2019, student sub-racial and sub-ethnic categories were added as optional data collection points to the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS). This data could be collected during initial student enrollment and transition periods such as middle school to high school. Starting with the 2022-23 school year, districts must report student data using the new disaggregated codes.<sup>16</sup>

The goals and uses for this data include:

- Understanding the student population
- Targeting interventions
- Communicating with the community
- Discovering and exposing hidden opportunity gaps
- Increasing transparency across the system
- Driving allocations of funding and other resources to close gaps

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<sup>15</sup> Washington State Legislature. (2016). Fourth Substitute House Bill 1541 Implementing strategies to close the educational opportunity gap. Retrieved from <http://lawfilesexext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2015-16/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/1541-S4.SL.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2020). *Comprehensive education data and research system (CEDARS) data manual 2020–2021 school year*. [https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/cedars/pubdocs/2020-21\\_CEDARS\\_Manual\\_v13.1.pdf](https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/cedars/pubdocs/2020-21_CEDARS_Manual_v13.1.pdf)

Specifically, for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, disaggregated data will be necessary to understand the extent of growth of gaps and the strategies that will be needed to address them.

Recommendation 6A.

The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) analyze fully disaggregated ethnic and sub-ethnic categories for data points such as graduation rates, discipline, academic progress (credits and grade level progression) and report overall statewide trends.

Recommendation 6B.

The EOGOAC recommends that fully disaggregated data on student outcomes be provided to the following stakeholders:

Stakeholder	Format and Uses
<b>Families/Communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data should be accessible</li> <li>• Presented in a way that is culturally competent and asset-based</li> <li>• Full transparency while respecting privacy</li> </ul>
<b>Educators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educators need training on how to analyze and use the data to make instructional changes and identify students for tier supports</li> </ul>
<b>Principals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify students for support</li> <li>• Use for coaching</li> </ul>
<b>District/School Board</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use data to allocate resources where needed</li> <li>• Evaluate equitable access to qualified educators</li> <li>• Receive periodic updates on progress and gaps</li> </ul>
<b>State</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data should be accessible</li> <li>• Presented in a way that is culturally competent and asset-based</li> <li>• Ability to compare outcomes for specific groups and between school districts</li> <li>• Clear presentation of statewide trends</li> </ul>

Recommendation 6C.

The EOGOAC recommends that OSPI update the Washington State Report Card to allow the public to make comparisons across the system, including school to school, district to district and district to statewide trends.

Recommendation 6D.

The EOGOAC recommends that school districts establish a method of regularly including families and communities in periodic review of disaggregated data and equity-based decision-making discussions grounded in the data.

## 7. Learning in the Remote Environment

### Background

Virtual or remote learning has presented a new challenge to both students and adults, not just for delivery of educational material, but also for the cultural competence and responsiveness of these settings. Two challenges of particular interest to the EOGOAC include:

#### Discipline/Student Behavior Support

Questions include: Are educators prepared to support positive student behavior in a virtual setting? When incidents do occur and students are removed from a remote class, is this reported as exclusionary discipline and the proper procedures followed?

#### Attendance/Truancy/Instructional hours

Due to current circumstances outside of their control, families are unable to support students' regular attendance from home for a variety of reasons, and students should not be punished for lack of access. Under current discipline rules ([WAC 392-400-430](#)) exclusionary discipline (suspensions and expulsion) are not allowed to be used for truanancies and absences.

### Recommendation 7A.

The EOGOAC recommends that the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) update the cultural competency standards to include culturally competent strategies for classroom management in an online environment. These standards apply to all roles for educators across the educator career continuum, including pre-service and professional learning.

### Recommendation 7B.

The EOGOAC supports [House Bill 1113](#) in its efforts to promote a more culturally appropriate response to student absences by:

- requiring attempts at tiered supports/interventions as before a truancy petition is filed,
- giving school districts a longer timeline before requiring filing a petition in order to deliver those supports and
- updating the name of the community truancy board to community engagement board to better reflect its role.

OSPI should continue to monitor the reporting of absences and support districts in using them as an indicator of need for supports and not an infraction requiring discipline.

### Recommendation 7C.

The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) set the expectation that districts issue guidance to educators that students may not be disciplined or face academic penalties for declining to turn their video on during synchronous remote learning. The expectation that students keep their video on during class, or offering extra credit for doing so, violates their privacy, is unjust and assumes that students have the ability, setting and space to do so.

## 8. Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health

### Background

Over the past year, students and educators of color have been faced with the traumatic fallout of both pandemics: COVID-19 and the pervasive institutionalized racism manifested in the murders of Black people by the police. Both have taken a huge toll on the mental and emotional health of people of color.

Students have shared with the EOGOAC that educators often are ill-equipped to help them handle these issues, displaying toxic positivity (e.g. “everything will be alright”) instead of cultural responsiveness. Likewise, educators of color need support from their principals and colleagues. Educators of color are often expected to support students and families of color, and if their own needs are not met, it results in a cascade of systemic failures.

The system must increase its capacity to meet the mental health needs of students and educators and provide culturally responsive social emotional learning. This is as important now as it will be once the COVID-19 pandemic is “over”. If not addressed, the negative repercussions could have long-term impacts on outcomes for students of color. Getting students back in the classroom will be a start, but it is not enough, and these issues cannot be ignored.

### Recommendation 8A.

The EOGOAC recommends that schools implement a system of universal screening to identify students in needs of additional supports. These interventions should be implemented using a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) and in connection with families and communities of color to ensure that the supports are culturally responsive and competent.

### Recommendation 8B.

The EOGOAC recommends that the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) work with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction’s (OSPI) Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Advisory Committee and the EOGOAC to review and revise the current SEL standards (as required by [RCW 28A.410.270](#)) to explicitly call out strategies to address racism and the experiences of students of color in schools.

## 9. Language Access

### Background

The right to basic education applies to everyone, regardless of the language they speak or sign. However, the quickly evolving situation of the COVID-19 pandemic showed the many cracks in the system of language access in education, both for students and their parents. Schools did not appear to have a plan to communicate with Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents during the closures. This often resulted in a lack-of access to resources and the ability to support their student’s online learning. In a survey of Washington parents in the spring of 2020, 39% of non-English speaking parents said their child’s school has not provided information in other languages.<sup>17</sup>

LEP parents and parents who are Deaf, blind or need other communication assistance always have a right to translations of vital documents and qualified interpreters provided at all meetings. Schools have

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<sup>17</sup> Global Strategy Group. (2020, May 12). *Parents’ survey identifies key needs for Washington families navigating new reality.* <https://s3-us-east-2.amazonaws.com/edtrustmain/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/19191517/WA-Public-School-Parents-Memo-F04.28.20.pdf>

a duty to provide these services for equality of access to education, without ever relying on students to interpret for their parents.<sup>18</sup>

Students who are English Language Learners (ELL) have also been greatly disadvantaged during this time. It is unclear the extent to which they have had access to content instruction in the remote format and these gaps must be evaluated and addressed. Teachers need extra support to make sure they can reach and communicate with both ELL students and LEP parents.

#### Recommendation 9A.

The EOGOAC recommends that all school districts develop a language access plan that addresses how all LEP families can access all vital information. Plans should include routine communications as well as a continuity plan for emergencies.

- Through implementation of these plans, school districts should be prepared to provide language access services for all families who request them by utilizing federal funds, as required by the terms of funding. Language access services should include high-quality, non-machine translations, and meetings with qualified professional interpreters, using remote interpretation only when necessary. Use of bilingual staff as interpreters is strongly discouraged and students must never serve as interpreters.
- In emergency situations, school districts should partner with community-based organizations (CBOs) to disseminate important information quickly, but not rely on these organizations or other informal volunteers for translation services.
- Language access services should utilize forms of communication that work for the families in their community (ex. radio, videos, text messages) in a manner that creates accessible two-way communication.

#### Recommendation 9B.

The EOGOAC recommends that teachers and school staff receive training on how to access and effectively use interpretation, including remote formats.

#### Recommendation 9C.

The EOGOAC recommends that all schools with a Limited English Proficient (LEP) population identify a building point of contact to facilitate access to language access services, supporting families, communities and school staff.

## 10. Mastery Based Learning

### Background

The EOGOAC supports the creation of a mastery-based education system which treats each student as an individual, allowing them to set the pace for their learning, as an innovative model that has shown success in closing the opportunity gap. Mastery Based Learning (MBL) is an example of a systemic solution that addresses inequity. When done well, MBL includes authentic family engagement and a centering of student voice and experience. It also has the potential to eliminate the need for gifted and

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<sup>18</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. (n.d.). *Interpretation and translation*. <https://www.k12.wa.us/policy-funding/equity-and-civil-rights/resources-school-districts-civil-rights-washington-schools/interpretation-and-translation>

remedial programs and is focused on inclusion.

Since 2019, three members of the EOGOAC have also served on the [Mastery-based Learning Work Group](#) staffed by the State Board of Education.

Recommendation 10A.

The EOGOAC endorses the recommendations of the Mastery-based Learning Work Group, as presented in their [2020 Report](#), and supports increased flexibility of graduation requirements needed to implement MBL. The EOGOAC will continue to monitor MBL as a strategy to addressing inequity

“Mastery-based learning shifts the focus to the educational needs and interests of each individual student. Through an MBL approach, the education system values the knowledge and skills students already have and engages students through their diverse cultures and communities; students are also supported through authentic relationships with educators to experience rigorous and personally relevant coursework.”

[Mastery-based Learning Workgroup 2020 Report Summary](#), p. 2

## Future Work

### WaKIDS Review

The budget proviso adopted by the legislature in SB 6168 (HB 2325) charged the EOGOAC to “review the Washington kindergarten inventory of developing skills, including professional development available to educators and other assessment materials and tools, and make recommendations to the office of the superintendent of public instruction and the education committees of the legislature on the following topics:

- (A) Opportunities for reducing bias in the observational assessment process and materials; and
- (B) Barriers to implementation of the inventory.”<sup>19</sup>

The EOGOAC will complete this work in 2021, consulting with the following stakeholders named in the bill:

- The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction;
- The Department of Children, Youth, and Families;
- Kindergarten teachers who are representative of or who teach in schools with diverse student subgroups;
- A representative from a tribal school who is currently using the inventory;
- Principals who are currently using the inventory;
- Parents who are representative of student populations that have historically scored low on the inventory, and who are recommended by an organization that serves parents of color;
- District assessment coordinators; and
- Early childhood providers.

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<sup>19</sup> Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6168, Operating Budget—Supplemental § Chapter 357 (2020). <http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2019-20/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/6168-S.SL.pdf?q=20210129111842>

## System Health Report

The State Board of Education is required by [RCW 28A.150.550](#) to work with the EOGOAC and others to identify “realistic but challenging system-wide performance goals and measurements” for each of the indicators outlined in the RCW.<sup>20</sup> The EOGOAC recognizes that “what’s measured is what matters” and hopes to tackle broad questions such as: what exactly do we mean by “system” and “health” and what does system health look like for communities of color?

## Joint work with the SEL Advisory Committee

The Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Advisory Committee is required to have a joint meeting annually with the EOGOAC. Based on the results of the 2020 Joint SEL Meeting, the EOGOAC and the SEL Advisory Committee hope to have a greater connection in 2021 and work to develop guidance related to the importance of culturally responsive SEL implementation.

## Institutional Education

The EOGOAC intends to review the recommendations of the [Improving Institutional Education Programs and Outcomes Task Force](#) and make further recommendations related to the elimination of the school-to-prison pipeline and improved outcomes for the students of color involved with the juvenile justice system.

## Other topics

The importance of these topics was highlighted in the last year. The EOGOAC finds that they need more research and community consultation in order to make recommendations.

School Resource Officer Programs – including data collection, funding and training

Physical Health – including health disparities and food justice

Internet Access – including infrastructure for broadband

## Conclusion

Since 2009, the EOGOAC has sought to dismantle the status quo which has created the opportunity gap in Washington’s K-12 public education system. The events of 2020, while being certainly unprecedented, have not been new in terms of the disproportionate negative outcomes for people of color in everything from health to housing; and education has been no exception. As this year progressed, the EOGOAC pivoted the structure and specific topics of their meetings to center the primary concerns and needs of our communities of color, however their [legislative mandates](#) remained relevant.

The policies and strategies recommended in this report, address the disruption experienced in our education system, not to reset it back to “normal”, but to make changes that will tackle systemic inequalities. Children and families have had a wide range of experiences during this time, both good and bad, and the readjustment and recovery period will be just as long if not longer. We urge policy makers to be bold and future-thinking in their solutions, not defensive. Complacency is what has allowed both pandemics to take hold and spread. Healing will come through action.

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<sup>20</sup>Washington State Legislature. (2013). *RCW 28A.150.550 Statewide indicators of educational system health—disaggregation—use of indicators—status reports*. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.150.550>

## Acronym Glossary

Title	Acronym
Asian American and Pacific Islander	AAPI
Black, Indigenous and People of Color	BIPOC
Center for Improvement of Student Learning	CISL
Community-Based Organization	CBO
Comprehensive Education Data and Research System	CEDARS
Department of Children, Youth and Families	DCYF
Educational Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee	EOGOAC
Educational Service District	ESD
Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief	ESSER
English Language Learners	ELL
Every Student Succeeds Act	ESSA
Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act	FERPA
Fourth Substitute House Bill 1541	4SHB 1541
Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs	GOIA
Governor’s Office of the Education Ombuds	OEO
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	IDEA
Limited English Proficient	LEP
Local Education Agency	LEA
Mastery Based Learning	MBL
Multi-Tiered System of Supports	MTSS
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction	OSPI
Professional Educators Standards Board	PESB
Race and Ethnicity Student Data Task Force	RESD Task Force
Revised Code of Washington	RCW
Social Emotional Learning	SEL
State Board of Education	SBE
State Education Agency	SEA
Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol	WISSP
Washington School Directors Association	WSSDA