

JANUARY 2022

# CLOSING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP IN WASHINGTON'S PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

*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 2022 report provides policy and strategy recommendations for decreasing pervasive racial disparities in education.

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.

Recommendations	Audience			
	OSPI	School Districts	Legislature	Others
<p><b>1. School Board Leadership</b></p> <p>1A. The EOGOAC recommends that the Washington State School Directors’ Association (WSSDA) establish and commit to a goal of school board membership that is representative of their communities and make steps towards supporting this goal.</p> <p>1B. The EOGOAC recommends that WSSDA, the ethnic commissions and Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA), school districts, and local legislators, work with each other and the EOGOAC to build community relationships and a support system to increase connectedness and decrease isolation for current board members of color and to recruit new board members of color.</p> <p>1C. The EOGOAC recommends that WSSDA, Governor’s Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO), Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the State Board of Education (SBE) work together to provide an accessible guide for parents on how and who to engage to connect with school boards.</p> <p>1D. The EOGOAC recommends that WSSDA, in collaboration with community-based organizations, train school boards on how to make their meetings more accessible and how to engage with communities.</p> <p>1E. The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislature require collection and reporting of board member demographics,</p>				<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>

Recommendations	Audience			
	OSPI	School Districts	Legislature	Others
<p>including disaggregated race/ethnic categories and tenure, to be aligned with the student disaggregated race/ethnic categories.</p> <p>1F. The EOGOAC recommends that WSSDA work with OSPI and the EOGOAC to develop guidance for school boards on collecting and displaying data about the demographics of their communities.</p> <p>1G. The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislative provide adequate and appropriate compensation to school board members.</p> <p>1H. The EOGOAC recommends that WSSDA seek to collect additional feedback in the form of evaluation of trainings and support, feedback from members, exit interviews from board members not running for re-election, and actively solicit external family and community input on trainings.</p>	✓		✓	✓
<p><b>2. <u>Ethnic Studies</u></b></p> <p>2A. The EOGOAC recommends that ethnic studies be woven throughout all academic content courses in all levels K-12. The committee finds that when ethnic studies is implemented as a mindset and a methodological framework for incorporating diverse ways of knowing and teaching, it can teach students to love themselves and appreciate others, increase family engagement, and address the roots of racism. Implementation of culturally competent ethnic studies will require listening to educators of color and educators already doing the work and 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.</p> <p>2B. The EOGOAC also supports the addition of a high school graduation requirement that is inclusive of ethnic studies, whether through a stand-alone course or through integrated content. The requirement must be rigorous, meaningful, and measurable.</p>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p><b>3. <u>Mastery-Based Learning (MBL)</u></b></p> <p>The EOGOAC continues to support the work of the MBL Work Group and their recommendations, with several noted areas of ongoing interest and concern.</p>				✓

Recommendations	Audience			
	OSPI	School Districts	Legislature	Others
<p><b>4. <u>Studying “the gap”</u></b></p> <p>The EGOAC recommends that the Legislature fund a recommissioning of the 2008 Achievement Gap studies that are: community led by the Ethnic Commissions and the Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA) and focused on identification of progress and best practices to close opportunity gaps.</p>			✓	
<p><b>5. <u>Data Disaggregation</u></b></p> <p>5A. The EGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) create a plan for how implementation of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) will utilize disaggregated race/ethnicity data to accurately identify students for tiered supports and services.</p> <p>5B. The EGOAC recommends that OSPI create a mechanism to monitor collection and utilization of disaggregated race/ethnicity student data including tools and models for analysis.</p> <p>5C. The EGOAC encourages other state agencies to also collect disaggregated race/ethnicity data for the purpose of creating a statewide system with comparable data sets.</p> <p>5D. The EGOAC recommends that OSPI work with the EGOAC, ethnic commissions, Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA), and others to communicate with communities why this disaggregated data collection is needed and important.</p> <p>5E. The EGOAC recommends that OSPI and Educational Service Districts (ESDs) work to support small and rural districts with data collection and analysis by asking them what they need, identifying mentors, and creating opportunities for collaboration and consolidation.</p> <p>5F. The EGOAC recommends that the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) work with teacher and leadership preparation programs prepare teacher and school leadership candidates to be able to understand and utilize this data collection in an appropriate and responsive way.</p> <p>5G. The EGOAC recommends that school districts provide continued support and involvement of educators, school</p>	✓			✓
				✓
		✓		
	✓	✓		✓
				✓
		✓		

Recommendations	Audience			
	OSPI	School Districts	Legislature	Others
leaders, families, and communities in the data analysis process.				
<p><b>6. <u>Family Engagement for Students with Current and Formerly Incarcerated Parents</u></b></p> <p>6A. The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislature provide funding for a Parent Advocate at each Department of Corrections (DOC) facility to educate incarcerated parents, connect parents to schools, and provide access to community resources.</p> <p>6B. The EOGOAC recommends that the state provide agencies, advocates, and educators free communication access to individuals incarcerated in DOC facilities.</p> <p>6C. The EOGOAC recommends that modifications be made to current policy, similar to those in <a href="#">HB 2220</a> (2019-20), that would increase the access of formerly incarcerated parents to engagement with schools.</p> <p>6D. The EOGOAC recommends to the Legislature and the Governor that the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), and the DOC adopt the same disaggregated race/ethnicity categories and coordinate reporting in order to enable identification of disparities affecting communities of color.</p> <p>6E. The EOGOAC recommends that the Governor’s Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO), the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the DOC, and the Coalition for Children of Incarcerated Parents work together to develop training for all educators on how to support students with incarcerated parents, and their families, including how to minimize trauma and engage with incarcerated parents.</p>			<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	
<p><b>7. <u>Recruitment and Retention of Educators of Color</u></b></p> <p>7A. The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) work with the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) to train principal mentors of color.</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>			<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>



Recommendations	Audience			
	OSPI	School Districts	Legislature	Others
7B. The EOGOAC recommends that OSPI and the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) work together to study the demographics of educators working under an emergency teacher certificate and identify potential impacts on the workforce of educators of color.				
<b>8. Attendance and Truancy</b>  8A. The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in consultation with the EOGOAC, create and implement a culturally responsive communication and community engagement plan for both families and school/district staff to share the specific laws, rules, policies, guidance, implementation practices, and state-level supports that are provided and implemented by OSPI related to attendance and truancy.	✓			
<b>9. Social Emotional Learning</b>  9A. The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) engage in a process to update the Washington School Improvement Framework (WSIF) to include a measure of school climate.  9B. The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislature adopt the Association of School Counselors (ASCA) student to counselor ratio of 250:1 through funding the allocations in the prototypical schools funding model.  9C. The EOGOAC recommends that OSPI with the SEL Advisory Committee, create materials for educators on how the SEL standards, benchmarks and indicators show up in different cultures and how to engage students in a culturally responsive way.  9D. The EOGOAC recommends that the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) work with teacher and leadership preparation programs to ensure the integration of culturally responsive social emotional learning.	✓       ✓		✓	✓   ✓

## Background on Committee

The committee 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*

This year, the EOGOAC authored and adopted operating protocols. The protocols document outlines the policies and procedures of the committee related to membership, finances, decision making protocols, meeting conduct, and communications. The protocols were adopted by a vote of the committee on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022 and a current copy is accessible on [their website](#).

### *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.

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

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

- 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 OEO.
- A representative of the 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.
- Four members appointed by the Governor in consultation with the state ethnic commissions, who represent the following populations: African-Americans, Latino/a Americans, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islander Americans.

Figure I. Committee Members

<b>Name</b>	<b>Representing</b>
<b>Dr. James Smith</b>	Commission on African American Affairs
<b>Frieda Takamura</b>	Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs (Asian American)
<b>Fiasili Savusa</b>	Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs (Pacific Islander)
<b>Dr. Rodrigo Renteria Valencia</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>Representative Alex Ybarra</b>	House of Representatives
<b>Representative Lillian Ortiz-Self</b>	House of Representatives
<b>Representative Sharon Tomiko Santos</b>	House of Representatives
<b>Superintendent Chris Reykdal</b>	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
<b>Senator Bob Hasegawa</b>	Senate
<b>Senator Lisa Wellman</b>	Senate

Figure II. Committee Member Alternates

<b>Name</b>	<b>Representing</b>
<b>Dr. Tyson Marsh</b>	Commission on African American Affairs
<b>Erin Okuno</b>	Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs (Asian American)
<b>Lydia Faitalia</b>	Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs (Pacific Islander)
<b>Dr. Randy Nunez</b>	Commission on Hispanic Affairs
<b>Yordanos Gebreamlak</b>	Governor’s Office of the Education Ombuds
<b>Tennille Jefferies-Simmons</b>	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

*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 2021 include:

- Representative Lillian Ortiz-Self
- Fiasili Savusa

*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 and Policy Development Program Manager

- Robin Howe, Administrative Assistant

## Community Engagement

Every year, the EOGOAC seeks opportunities to authentically engage with families and communities across Washington since 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 in 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.

Due to COVID-19 safety protocols, the EOGOAC was unable to make its traditional visits to different areas of the state. Instead, they continued to utilize the online format to open up meetings to attendees from anywhere in the state and made it a priority to hear directly from the community and practitioners.

### *EOGOAC/SEL Joint Family forum*

On November 4, 2021, the EOGOAC and the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Advisory Committee jointly hosted a virtual family and community forum. The overarching goal of the forum was to discuss how our public schools should work with families and communities of color to create equitable opportunities for positive social and emotional learning.

During the forum, the EOGOAC and SEL Advisory Committee gave brief introductions about the purpose of their respective groups and the definition and purpose of SEL. Then, participants moved into one of nine breakout rooms led by facilitators from the EOGOAC and SEL Advisory Committee to continue conversation on the discussion questions:

1. What helps you feel safe, supported, and welcomed in your school community?
2. What cultural strengths do you want to see recognized in social-emotional learning?
3. What do you want your role or the community's role to be in designing, implementing, and evaluating social-emotional learning?
4. What questions or concerns do you have about social-emotional learning?
5. What do you feel are essential skills and traits teachers and staff should know to help students feel safe and included?

The EOGOAC appreciates forum participants for their honest and open discussions. Insights from the forum informed recommendations on both SEL and ethnic studies.

## Introduction

2021 saw the mass return of both students and teachers to classrooms across the state. However, one year from the [last EOGOAC report](#), our communities are still in the midst of the intense struggle and trauma caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the pandemic of white supremacy in this country. Yet while we are seeing the highest case numbers so far this pandemic,<sup>5</sup> our families and educators have been left to fend for themselves as our leaders and decision-makers seek a return to “normal”. If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything so far, it is that “normal” in the public education system is, and never was, good enough for students and families of color. The flaws in our fragile systems, such as overreliance on teachers to serve as substitutes for their colleagues and a shortage of substitute teachers, have resulted in system-wide collapse when faced with the challenges of the pandemic with staff shortages resulting in school-closures, and parents left scrambling.<sup>6</sup>

During this time, we must not lose sight of families and centering their unique experiences. Our communities are intersectional and never a monolith. Educators and administrators are also parents and grandparents; students are also siblings and sometimes caregivers themselves. Everyone is struggling with the pressure to “keep it together” in the face of immense challenges. However, our communities are also resilient and persistent. The road through this pandemic has been longer than anyone ever thought, but a race to make it to the end is not the solution some might think. We must be intentional, to make space for learning and for making changes to the systems that have failed us along the way.

The “end” will not be a specific date or time. It will not look the same for everyone and it will not leave anyone unchanged. We hold on to the hope that change for the better is possible and worth fighting for. To that end, the EOGOAC will continue to hold space to listen to the voices often silenced, and to identify solutions and the way forward.

## Recommendations

### 1. School Board Leadership

#### *Background*

Within the structure of the Washington state education system known as “local control”, locally elected school boards have broad discretionary power to lead school districts. School boards set policy, provide leadership and community representation, and provide oversight and accountability. Tasks and responsibilities include appointing the superintendent, adopting the annual budget, hearing citizen complaints and appeals, setting performance goals, and establishing curriculum standards.<sup>7</sup> The many emergency decisions needing to be made during the COVID-19 pandemic have brought increased attention to the role of school boards and their members.

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<sup>5</sup> Washington State Department of Health. (2022, January 25). *COVID-19 Data Dashboard*. <https://www.doh.wa.gov/emergencies/covid19/datadashboard>

<sup>6</sup> Daniels, C. (2022, January 10). Short-term closures, remote learning likely for Washington schools due to COVID illnesses. *King 5*. <https://www.king5.com/article/news/education/a-challenging-3-4-weeks-expected-for-washington-schools-as-covid-19-cases-rise/281-bc9455e1-1c6e-48c3-bc24-b4f804d3a4ec>

<sup>7</sup> Washington State Legislature. (2005). *RCW 28A.320.015 School boards of directors—Powers—Notice of adoption of policy*. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.320.015> and Washington State Legislature. (2010). *RCW 28A.150.230 District school directors' responsibilities*. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.150.230>

This attention has highlighted some of the ongoing concerns of the EOGOAC regarding school boards. The first is that although the state lacks comprehensive demographic data on school board members, it is clear that boards are not representative of the communities of color that they represent in their districts. After speaking with a panel of school board members of color, the EOGOAC identified contributing issues to this disproportionality including low or no compensation for the work, a general lack of support for board members, and specifically board members of color feeling isolated. RCW 28A.343.400 allows districts the option of providing \$50 per day for attending board meetings or other activities up to a limit of \$4,800/year.

Communities of color also experience a lack of access to school boards. School boards often fall short in family engagement efforts and the system is set up in a way that expects families to advocate for themselves in a complicated and technical arena without support. Without representative diversity on boards, members might not understand the barriers that communities face.

[SB 5044 \(2021\)](#) required the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) to create and provide a governance training program aligned to the cultural competency, diversity, equity, and inclusion standards (CCDEI). The training will be required of all members once per term despite demonstrated push-back from some members against any anti-racism and equity training. Until elected school boards are representative of communities of color, informed on their needs, and accessible to families and communities, the system will continue to fail our students.

*Recommendation 1A.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) establish and commit to a goal of school board membership that is representative of their communities and make steps towards supporting this goal. Additionally, WSSDA should commit to the goal of having a more diverse and representative staff through an equitable and inclusive recruiting, hiring, and retaining policies and demonstrate progress.

*Recommendation 1B.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA), the Ethnic Commissions and Governor's Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA), schools districts, and local legislators, work with each other and the EOGOAC to build community relationships and a support system to increase connectedness and decrease isolation for current board members of color and to recruit new board members of color.

*Recommendation 1C.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA), Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO), Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the State Board of Education (SBE) work together to provide an accessible guide for parents on how and who to engage to connect with school boards, to be hosted on the WSSDA website.

*Recommendation 1D.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA), in collaboration with community-based organizations, train school boards on how to make their meetings more accessible and how to engage with communities.

*Recommendation 1E.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislature require collection and reporting of board member demographics including disaggregated race/ethnic categories and tenure, to be aligned with the [student disaggregated race/ethnic categories](#) and implemented by the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) and the Secretary of State.

*Recommendation 1F.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) work with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the EOGOAC to develop guidance for school boards on collecting and displaying data about the demographics of their communities.

*Recommendation 1G.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislative provide adequate and appropriate compensation to school board members.

*Recommendation 1H.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) seek to collect additional feedback in the form of evaluation of trainings and support, feedback from members, exit interviews from board members not running for re-election, and actively solicit external family and community input on trainings.

## 2. Ethnic Studies

### *Background*

The implementation of ethnic studies in the K-12 system continues to be an important tool for closing the opportunity gap. Although ethnic studies traditionally “includes units of study, courses, or programs that are centered on the knowledge and perspectives of an ethnic or racial group,”<sup>8</sup> it goes beyond any one specific curriculum. As an intersectional, interdisciplinary, explicitly anti-racist mindset, ethnic studies as a pedagogy seeks to appreciate the diverse roots of our society, teaching students how to love one another and themselves.

Historically, the education system has been weaponized as a tool to divorce children from the cultural context of their families and communities for the purpose of integration and cultural genocide. This legacy continues today, resulting in opportunities gaps for students of color. Ethnic studies, when implemented in the context of authentic community partnerships, can incorporate culturally diverse ways of knowing into all academic subjects, acknowledging students as producers and not just consumers of knowledge. Effective implementation will require new and ongoing professional development for educators.

### *Recommendation 2A.*

The EOGOAC recommends that ethnic studies be woven throughout all academic content courses in all levels K-12. The committee finds that when ethnic studies is implemented as a mindset and a methodological framework for incorporating diverse ways of knowing and teaching, it can teach students to love themselves and appreciate others, increase family engagement, and address the roots of racism. Implementation of culturally competent ethnic studies will require listening to educators of color and educators already doing the work and 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.

### *Recommendation 2B.*

The EOGOAC also supports the addition of a high school graduation requirement that is inclusive of

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<sup>8</sup> Sleeter, C. E. (2011). The academic and social value of ethnic studies: A research review. *National Education Association*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED521869.pdf>

ethnic studies, whether through a stand-alone course or integrated content. The requirement must be rigorous, meaningful, and measurable.

### 3. Mastery-Based Learning

#### *Background*

The EOGOAC continues to support the creation of a mastery-based education system which treats each student as an individual, allowing them to set the pace for their learning and as an innovative model that has shown success in closing the opportunity gap. The State Board of Education's Mastery-based Learning Workgroup (MBL) worked to tackle the implementation challenges of mastery-based learning including development of a profile of a graduate, support of MBL demonstration sites, and making recommendations as outlined in the [MBL Work Group's 2021 Report](#) and [Graphic Summary Report](#).

The EOGOAC generally supports the work of the MBL Work Group and their recommendations with several noted areas of ongoing interest and concern as outlined in the recommendation below.

*Recommendation 3.* The EOGOAC continues to support the work of the MBL Work Group and their recommendations with several noted areas of ongoing interest and concern:

- a) A need for a diversity of schools involved in implementation both in location/setting (urban, rural, suburban) and demographics (race/ethnicity). The needs of communities and students of color must be included in MBL policy development.
- b) The centering of equity and cultural competency in implementation that is developed through authentic partnerships with families and communities. This includes hearing student perspectives and experiences.
- c) A school climate that is supportive of the implementation of MBL including the genuine participation of educators, families, communities, school boards, and school leaders.
- d) Support for partnerships between schools and culturally relevant community-based organizations that have experience in MBL.
- e) The ongoing participation of the EOGOAC through representation on the continuing MBL implementation work, updating the EOGOAC on the collaborative, and meeting with representatives of the demonstration sites.



## 4. Studying “the gap”

### *Background*

In 2009, the EOGOAC was created by [RCW 28A.300.136](#) to synthesize the findings and recommendations from the five 2008 Achievement Gap Studies into an implementation plan. The 10 recommendation categories identified across all achievement gap studies, form the backbone of the focus areas of the EOGOAC.

In the last 10 years, conditions of the K-12 system have significantly changed. Even before the sweeping disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, policy changes have been made in all recommendation areas that affect the opportunity gap. We now have additional language, demonstrated by the use of “opportunity gaps” instead of “achievement gap,” as well as data with which to examine current inequities. A reboot of the original studies with a renewed focus on looking at the current data and examples of best practices and strategies that are working to close the gap, would help to supply the EOGOAC and community partners with the information needed to focus the work of the EOGOAC in the future.

The EOGOAC has discussed the possibility of a future study with the Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs (CAPAA), the Commission on Hispanic Affairs (CHA) and the Commission on African American Affairs (CAAA). At their January 2022 meeting, CHA voted to support the effort.

*Recommendation 4.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislature fund a recommissioning of the 2008 Achievement Gap studies that are: community led by the Ethnic Commissions and the Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA.) The studies should focus on identifying progress and best practices to close the opportunity gap.

## 5. Data Disaggregation

### *Background*

[HB 1541](#) (2016) required school districts to begin collecting and reporting student-level data that includes subracial and subethnic categories. These categories were recommended by the [Race and Ethnicity Student Data Task Force](#) and adopted by the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) Data Governance group. School

## The 2008 Achievement Gap Studies

- [A Plan to Close the Achievement Gap for African American Students](#) (by the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning)
- [Asian Americans in Washington State: Closing Their Hidden Achievement Gaps](#) (Submitted to the Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs)
- [Understanding Opportunities to Learn for Latino Students in Washington](#) (Submitted to the Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs)
- [Growing Presence, Emerging Voices: Pacific Islanders and Academic Achievement in Washington](#) (Submitted to the Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs)
- [From Where the Sun Rises: Addressing the Educational Achievement of Native Americans in Washington State](#) (Submitted to the Governor’s Office on Indian Affairs)

districts are in the final year of implementation of the data collection, to be fully implemented by the 2022-23 school year.

In order for this data collection to be useful for closing the opportunity gap, additional steps need to be taken including:

- Transparent communication with families and communities on the purpose and use of this data collection;
- Creation of uniform practices of accessing and utilizing disaggregated data;
- Training for teachers to use and understand the data on the student-level in order to maximize the use of this data to impact student learning;
- Availability and knowledge of this data provided to communities and community-based organizations in a digestible and transparent way.
- Alignment of data collections across the state to minimize silos and highlight intersections of need.

Appropriate use of disaggregated data is necessary in order to be able to see where students do not have access to educational services and where they need extra support.

*Recommendation 5A.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) create a plan for how implementation of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) will utilize disaggregated race/ethnicity data to accurately identify students for tiered supports and services.

*Recommendation 5B.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) create a mechanism to monitor collection and utilization of disaggregated race/ethnicity student data including tools and models for analysis.

*Recommendation 5C.* The EOGOAC encourages other state agencies to also collect disaggregated race/ethnicity data for the purpose of creating a statewide system with comparable data sets.

*Recommendation 5D.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) work with the EOGOAC, ethnic commissions, Governor's Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA), and others to communicate with communities why this disaggregated data collection is needed and important.

*Recommendation 5E.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and Educational Service Districts (ESDs) work to support small and rural districts with data collection and analysis by asking them what they need, identifying mentors, and creating opportunities for collaboration and consolidation.

*Recommendation 5F.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) work with teacher and leadership preparation programs to prepare teacher and school leadership candidates to be able to understand and utilize this data collection in an appropriate and responsive way.

*Recommendation 5G.* The EOGOAC recommends that school districts provide continued support and involvement of educators, school leaders, families, and communities in the data analysis process.

## 6. Family Engagement for Students with Current and Formerly Incarcerated Parents

### *Background*

All students in Washington have a right to basic education and the support of their parents or guardians to access that education regardless of the criminal history or incarceration status of their parent(s). School staff and advocates need systemic support to be able to engage with the estimated 15,000 parents among the 18,000 individuals in confinement in Washington State Department of Corrections facilities who are parent(s).<sup>9</sup> This includes access to report cards, Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, and parent/teacher conferences. Educators and other school staff need the tools to communicate with incarcerated parents in order to mitigate the possible trauma and stigma faced by the student. Even after incarceration, or other involvement with the justice system, parents who have a criminal history experience continued barriers to family engagement through background check processes that discourage involvement or even discriminate against them.

Due to systemic racism in the justice system and other systemic inequalities, communities of color are more likely to be affected by these barriers. In Washington state, the white imprisonment rate is 224 per 100,000 and compared to the Black imprisonment rate of 1,272 per 100,000.<sup>10</sup> Nation-wide, one in nine black children, one in 28 Latino children, and one in 57 white children had a parent in prison in 2008.<sup>11</sup> While much work needs to be done to address the root causes of this issue, the education system and its partners can work together to support the children and their families and to ensure undisrupted access to educational opportunities.

*Recommendation 6A.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislature provide funding for a Parent Advocate at each Department of Corrections facility to educate incarcerated parents, connect parents to schools, and provide access to community resources.

*Recommendation 6B.* The EOGOAC recommends that the state provide agencies, advocates, and educators free communication access to individuals incarcerated in Department of Corrections facilities.

*Recommendation 6C.* The EOGOAC recommends modifications to current policy, similar to those in [HB 2220](#) (2019-20), that would increase the access of formerly incarcerated parents to engagement with schools. Modifications include:

- Notification of the parent about the process of submitting documentation of a finding of innocence, a finding of rehabilitation, or, with the exception of crimes against children, a certificate of restoration of opportunity (CROP);
- Consideration of:
  - length of time since the last crime for which the parent was convicted or pled guilty
  - whether any crime involved a minor child victim
  - age of the parent at the date of the commission of the crime

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<sup>9</sup> Children and Families of Incarcerated Parents Advisory Committee. (2010). *Children and families of incarcerated parents advisory committee annual report: Recommendations to improve services and a report on progress.*

<https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/incarceratedparents/pubdocs/cfip2008committeereport.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Data from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics as reported by the Sentencing Project (2020). *The facts: State-by-state data.*

<https://www.sentencingproject.org/the-facts/#detail?state1Option=Washington&state2Option=0>

<sup>11</sup> The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2010). *Collateral costs: Incarceration's effect on economic mobility.*

[https://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pes\\_assets/2010/collateralcosts1pdf.pdf](https://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pes_assets/2010/collateralcosts1pdf.pdf)

- whether the parent has been approved by a state agency to have unsupervised access to children or persons with developmental disabilities
- whether providing limited access to children and persons with developmental disabilities within a classroom would give the parent the opportunity to have meaningful involvement in the school.
- Timely notification of the parent of the school’s decision, specific reasons for a denial, and the procedure for appealing the decision;
- The Washington State School Directors’ Association (WSSDA), the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and the Governor’s Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO) should create a model parent volunteer policy and procedure.

*Recommendation 6D.* The EOGOAC recommends to Legislature and the Governor that the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), and the Department of Corrections (DOC) adopt the same disaggregated race/ethnicity categories and coordinate reporting in order to enable identification of disparities affecting communities of color.

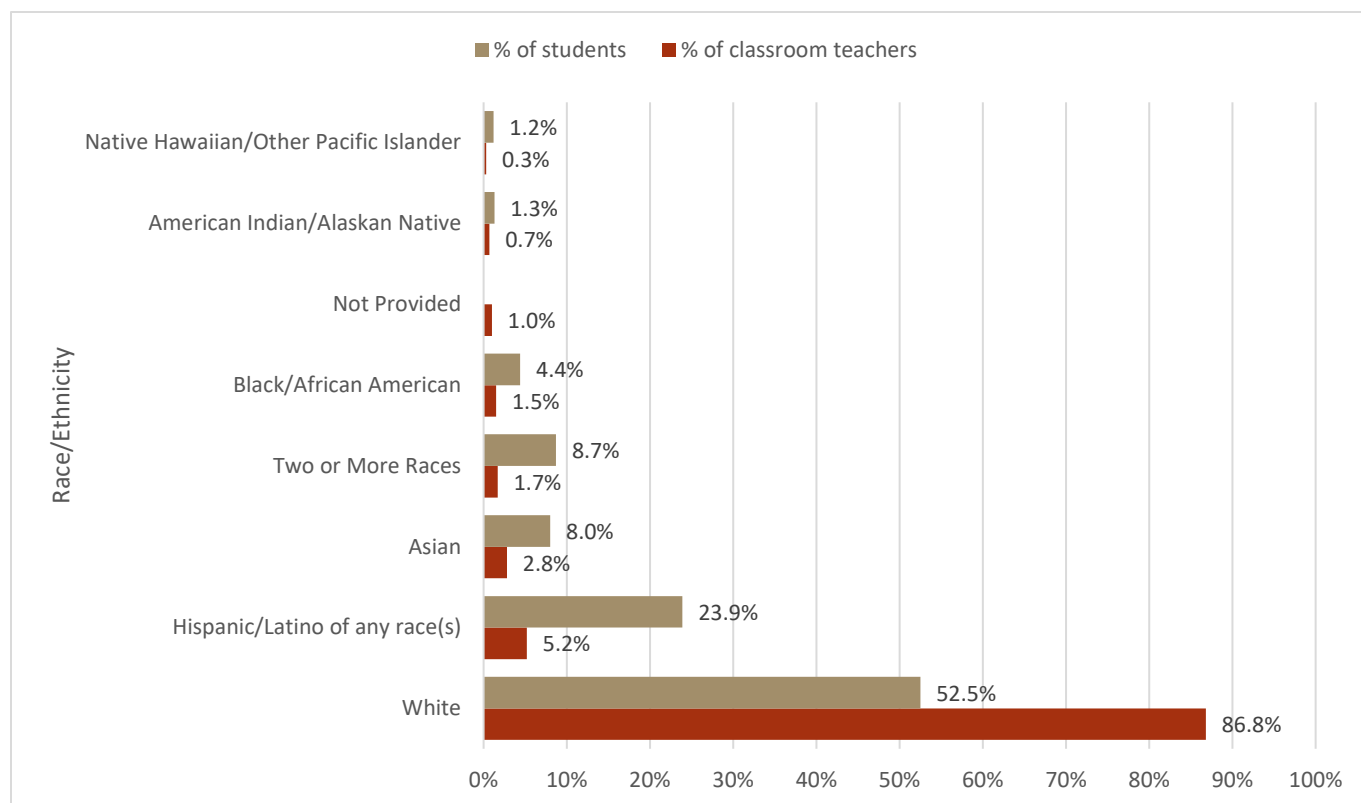
*Recommendation 6E.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Governor’s Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO), the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the Department of Corrections (DOC), and the Coalition for Children of Incarcerated Parents work together to develop training for all educators on how to support students with incarcerated parents, and their families, including how to minimize trauma and engage with incarcerated parents.

## 7. Recruitment and Retention of Educators of Color

### *Background*

In Washington State, there continues to be a significant disparity between student and educator race/ethnicity demographics (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Race/Ethnicity of Classroom Teachers and Student 2019-2020.<sup>12</sup>



Pandemic-related factors have also resulted in hiring shortages and workforce disruptions. The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) identified in their [2021 Educator Shortage Report](#)<sup>13</sup> an increase in the hiring of educators with emergency certificates, a drop in the number of new certificates issued, and shortages in the areas of special education, science, math, and Career and Technical Education (CTE). It is yet to be seen how the increase in teachers leaving the field and the decrease in the number of new teachers have affected teachers of color specifically.

On top of the day-to-day challenges of teaching during a global pandemic, teachers of color have also been affected by the increase in hate crimes against Asians, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the fight against critical race theory and anti-racism curriculum from the public. Because of these high-profile issues and the small numbers of educators and administrators of color, teachers and principals of color can feel isolated and singled out in their communities. Additional supports are needed to both recruit and retain educators and administrators of color.

*Recommendation 7A.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) work with the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) to train principal mentors of color, similar to the [Nakia Academy](#).

<sup>12</sup> Data retrieved from Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (2022). Washington State Report Card [Date set]. <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/>

<sup>13</sup> Professional Educator Standards Board. (2021). *Addressing Washington’s educator shortage: A review of promising practices and systemwide approaches*. [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ETOH1CGsCn4e8O3EB4-6f0YEi\\_YE718m/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ETOH1CGsCn4e8O3EB4-6f0YEi_YE718m/view)

*Recommendation 7B.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) work together to study the demographics of educators working under an emergency teacher certificate and identify potential impacts on the workforce of educators of color.

## 8. Attendance and Truancy

### *Background*

Historically, truancy laws and attendance policies have been implemented in a punitive and biased manner against communities of color, contributing to the school-to-prison-pipeline and negatively impacting trust between schools and communities. While progress has been made through some policy changes (see [HB 1113](#) – 2021-22 Concerning school attendance), additional work is needed to create and communicate policies that adequately honor cultural practices and address root causes through social-emotional learning (SEL), school climate, and multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS).

*Recommendation 8A.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in consultation with the EOGOAC, create and implement a culturally responsive communication and community engagement plan for both families and school/district staff to share the specific laws, rules, policies, guidance, implementation practices, and state-level supports that are provided and implemented by OSPI related to attendance and truancy.

## 9. Social Emotional Learning

### *Background*

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is not defined by a particular curriculum or content area but is a process through which, “individuals build awareness and skills in managing emotions, setting goals, establishing relationships, and making responsible decisions that support success in school and in life.”<sup>14</sup> As a double-strand with ethnic studies, SEL should be woven throughout all academic content courses at all levels, K-12.

To effectively encourage the social and emotional development of a child, it must be done in a welcoming space that recognizes contributions of the family and community. For many communities of color, the climate of our K-12 schools does not provide that welcoming and inclusive space. SEL that is not asset-based and does not include understanding of race, privilege, and bias, will do more harm than good for marginalized students.

The EOGOAC also recognizes that classroom teachers cannot take on the burden of SEL alone. In addition to supports and professional development for teachers, it must be the task of every adult in the system to support the social and emotional development of the child through a team-based model of wrap-around supports.

*Recommendation 9A.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) engage in a process to update the Washington School Improvement Framework (WSIF) to include a measure of school climate.

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<sup>14</sup> Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (n.d.). *Social Emotional Learning (SEL)*. <https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/resources-subject-area/social-emotional-learning-sel>

*Recommendation 9B.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislature adopt the Association of School Counselors (ASCA) student to counselor ratio of 250 students to one counselor through funding the allocations in the prototypical schools funding model.

*Recommendation 9C.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) with the SEL Advisory Committee, create materials for educators on how the SEL standards, benchmarks and indicators show up in different cultures and how to engage students in a culturally responsive way.

*Recommendation 9D.* The EOGOAC recommends that the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) work with teacher and leadership preparation programs to ensure the integration of culturally responsive social emotional learning.

### Future Work

The EOGOAC has identified the following areas as needing further work in 2022 and beyond:

#### *Recruitment and Retention of Educators of Color*

- Investigate the success of residency programs to attract and support educators of color
- Analyze the educator data that is collected and the accountability that is related (Title II, Part A), including trends in demographics, emergency certifications, substitutes, and access to quality, effective educators for students of color
- Explore efforts to provide mentors for new educators of color and the quality and demographics of mentor teachers
- Continue to study hiring shortages, retention, and other challenges to the educator workforce of color, including the impact on preparation programs
- Examine innovative solutions from around the country

#### *Attendance and Truancy*

- Request updates on the use of community engagement boards, cases that are going to them and the demographics of boards, students, and families
- Monitor updates to the Washington School Improvement Framework (WSIF)
- Analyze district implementation of attendance and truancy policies. Where are there disparities and how are they being addressed?
- Request updates from departments at the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) that are addressing the issue

#### *Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Mental Health*

- Monitor implementation of the HB 1363 Workforce Secondary Traumatic Stress Leadership Team
- Examine current SEL professional development available to educators
- Hear from the Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO) about their role and the issues they are seeing in schools related to SEL and mental health
- Continue learning from the specific impacts of COVID-19 pandemic

### *Mastery-Based Learning (MBL)*

- Continue EOGOAC participation in further MBL work
- Receive updates on the MBL collaborative
- Meet with representatives of the MBL demonstration sites

### *Career Pathways*

- Explore career pathways options including those related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), trades, career and technical education (CTE), and apprenticeships, and the representation of students of color
- Examine implementation of high school and beyond plans

## Conclusion

Since its inception in 2009, the EOGOAC has continually taken an asset-based approach to examining the opportunity gap, identifying both the systemic problems and disparate impacts, and the positive progress and opportunities for change. The last two years during the COVID-19 pandemic have presented challenges unlike those we have ever seen before. Despite this, the EOGOAC has not abandoned its duty to hold the system accountable. The individual members of the EOGOAC and the committee as a whole, have persevered during this time to continue to serve as a voice for the communities that have been disproportionately impacted the most.

The recommendations and the future work presented in this report represent the committee's ongoing commitment to their charge and future focus on learning from the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic.