OSPI

OSPI STYLE

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About the OSPI Style Guide

Why do we have an OSPI Style Guide?

Is it email or e-mail? Preschool or pre-school? When do you capitalize state? What's the difference between an en dash and em dash? Ask these questions in a room full of OSPI staff and you'll get many different answers. Why is that?

- We were not all taught the same thing. We've had different teachers, attended different schools, and had professions in a variety of industries. Yes, there is general agreement on many rules, but there isn't agreement on everything.

- Language, including the rules of what's "right" and "wrong," is not static. Like it or not, meanings of words change, and new words appear. Grammar rules change, too.

It's ok to have an opinion about these things, but as an organization, it's critical that OSPI show consistency across all channels of communication: email, newsletters, websites, reports, tweets, bulletins, and anything else in print and online.

This is where the OSPI Style Guide comes in. A style guide is a resource for writers and editors. It helps communicate clearly and consistently across all media to all audiences.

What is the OSPI Style Guide?

The OSPI Style Guide is used by staff, contractors, and partners when they are writing and editing content for OSPI. It ensures effective editorial styles and standards for OSPI print and electronic communications. The guide is organic, meaning it adapts to authors' and editors' needs, as well as the personality of OSPI.

The OSPI Style Guide is housed on the OSPI intranet (under Communications).

Am I required to use the OSPI Style Guide?

Yes. Whenever you are writing or editing on behalf of OSPI, you are required to follow the OSPI Style Guide.

A copy of the OSPI Style Guide should be given to contractors and partners who are writing content for OSPI.

Who is the Style & Brand Committee?

Volunteer members with backgrounds in writing, editing, and communications. Members are well-versed on the organizational structure and dynamics of OSPI and consider the needs of all programs and departments when making rules.

Please visit the OSPI intranet to see the current list of committee members.

The committee:

- Is sponsored by the Chief of Staff and Communications.
- Maintains the OSPI Style Guide.
- Responds to questions related to the OSPI Style Guide and its standards.
- Meets as needed to rule on questions of style and usage.
- Advocates and promotes the work of the committee.
- Communicates to team members regarding updates and changes to the Style Guide.

How are decisions made?

Decisions are made by the OSPI Style & Brand Committee. The committee respects and considers every recommendation and request:

- Discussion and rulemaking is conducted by email or through a committee meeting.
- To inform our decisions, we refer to authoritative guides, including but not limited to The AP Stylebook, The Gregg Reference Manual, dictionaries, and other government style guides.
- A vote of seven committee members (one of which must be from the Communications office) is required to make a change to the OSPI Style Guide.

When a decision is made to change a rule, it is noted in the OSPI Style Guide and is date stamped. We communicate critical changes through the OSPI weekly newsletter.

How do I submit something for Style Guide consideration? Can I ask for clarification? Can I ask for a change?

Any staff person may recommend a change to the OSPI Style Guide, request clarification on something, or suggest a new entry. Send questions and suggestions to style@k12.wa.us. Please be as specific as possible. If you believe something in the Style Guide needs to change, cite references that support the need for the change.

What if I can't find something in the Style Guide?

The backbone of OSPI communication is the Associated Press (AP) style, and if you don't find the answer in the Style Guide, defer to AP style. Generally, you can find these answers through Google, but you can also reach out to Communications at commteam@k12.wa.us for assistance.

Changes can be requested by emailing style@k12.wa.us.

A-Z Reference

abbreviations

If the word is an abbreviation, use a period:

> e.g. Dept. of Education, Rep. Smith, First St.

academic degrees

bachelor's degree, master's degree, associate degree, doctoral or doctorate degree

Bachelor of Arts, Master of Science, Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

Use abbreviations only to identify many individuals by degree:

> e.g. John Smith, Ph.D., Tina Jones, Ph.D., and Lisa Law, Ph.D.

acronyms

Do not use an acronym/initialism if the entity is mentioned only once.

Spell out for first citation and follow with the acronym in parentheses:

> e.g. The Legislature created the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL). CISL works in collaboration with agency staff.

To make an acronym/initialism plural, add an "s": GLEs

Do not use periods between each letter

To form the singular possessive, add an apostrophe:

> e.g. OSPI's staff

To form the plural possessive, add an "s" plus an apostrophe:

> e.g. NBCTs' attendance

ages

Do not spell out. Always use figures for ages.

> e.g. age 16

> e.g. The boy is 5 years old.

> e.g. The 6-year-old girl is in a class for students aged 5–7.

ampersand (&)

Use only if part of a formal name:

> e.g. Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics (STEM)

Otherwise spell out and: science and mathematics

bulleted lists

Use bulleted lists to improve a document's readability.

Use a colon to introduce lists. Capitalize the first letter of each item in the list and end each section of the list with a period, unless the items are only a few words.

Reference lists intended as a menu of options need no punctuation. Lists with complete sentences do.

Keep all items parallel by using the same language structure throughout the list.

Bulletin

Bulletins are official correspondence from OSPI.

To cite a Bulletin:

e.g. Bulletin No. 045-14 School Apportionment and Financial Services, School Apportionment and Financial Services (B045-14)

capitalization

The general rule is to capitalize only when it is part of a proper name or formal title:

Superintendent:

e.g. State Superintendent Chris Reykdal

State: Lowercase *state* when referencing the state of Washington or Washington state

City and county:

e.g. Royal City, city of Olympia, Thurston County

Committee, commission, board, department, or director:

e.g. As the director of the department, XYZ Director Jane Smith will lead the board meeting, county board of commissioners.

Federal:

e.g. Washington receives approximately $950,000 in federal funding each year to support the education of youth experiencing homelessness.

Program:

e.g. Consolidated Program Review, School Construction Assistance Program, BUT not program in Homeless Children and Youth program

If using a proper noun that has embedded caps (capitalized letters that are not the first letter of the word), follow the example of the subject of the noun:

e.g. YouTube, PowerPoint, CorePlus

Avoid ALL CAPS unless for critical information; it is harder to read and
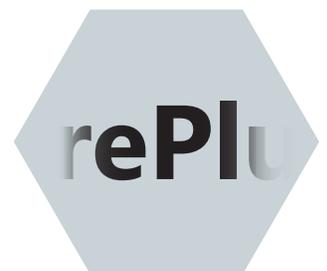
Words or organizations that use **embedded caps** follow the subject's example.

is generally perceived as shouting at the reader.

century

Capitalize "Century" only when it's part of a proper name:

e.g. 21st Century Community Learning Centers

citation style

If citing sources in a document, use the most recent edition of APA to cite. For legal documents, Legal BlueBook citation may be used.

class of (graduating class)

Always capitalize "Class" when referencing a single class:

e.g. Class of 2019.

Use lowercase when referencing a range:

e.g. classes of 2017–19; classes of 2017 and beyond.

Use an en dash for a range:

e.g. classes of 2017–19

commas

Serial comma: Also called the **oxford comma,** it clarifies meaning when placed before conjunctions (and, or, but) in a series of words in a sentence.

OSPI uses the serial comma to avoid ambiguity and to make lists easier to comprehend.

Common Core State Standards, CCSS

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics

CCSS is used to refer to the entire standards set (ELA and Math).

The standards are part of the Washington State K–12 Learning Standards.

composition titles

Use italics for book titles. Do not underline a book title unless it is a hyperlink.

Put quotation marks around computer game, movie, poem, album, song, radio, and television titles, and the titles of lectures, speeches, and works of art.

contractions (can't, we're, you're)

Contractions are acceptable in most informal writing, such as email, newsletters, and webpages.

Do not use contractions in official correspondence, such as bulletins and legislative reports.

curriculum, curricula

Curriculum is a collection of subjects taught.

Don't

Contractions should not be used in formal writing. They may be used in informal writing.

Curricula is the plural of curriculum. Curriculums is also allowed, though not preferred.

dashes

There should be no spaces between dashes and the adjacent material.

hyphen (-):

- Indicates breaks within words that wrap at the end of a line

- Connects compounded words like "data-sharing"

- Connects grouped numbers, like a phone number: XXX-XXX-XXXX

- The hyphen does not indicate a range of numbers, like a date range, which is the job of an en dash

en dash (–):

- Depending on the context, the en dash is read as "to" or "through"

- Represents a span or range of numbers, dates, or time:

  e.g. the 2018–19 school year

  e.g. grades 4–6

  e.g. 11 am–noon

  If you introduce a span or range with words such as from or between, do not use the en dash: e.g. He served as superintendent between 2000 and 2004.

- If the compound modifier is two or more words:

  e.g. high school–level curriculum

  e.g. New York City–area hotels

- Conflict or connection:

  e.g. The liberal–conservative debate

  e.g. The Los Angeles–Seattle flight

  e.g. The railway runs south–north

- To add an en dash, either hold down ALT and quickly type 0150 on the number pad, or hold down the CTRL key and press the minus key on the number pad.

em dash (—):

- Depending on the context, the em dash can take the place of commas, parentheses, or colons:

- In place of commas to enhance readability; dashes are more emphatic than commas:

  e.g. When the patient was finally discovered—nearly three days after his fall down the mountain—he had
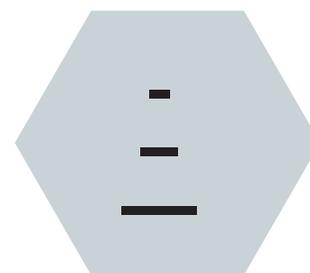
hyphens should be used to wrap words
en dashes should be used in place of 'to' or 'through'
em dashes take the place of commas, parentheses, or colons

severe hypothermia and was barely conscious.

- In place of parentheses to give the content more emphasis:

  e.g. Upon discovering the error in the test booklet, the tests—all 50,000 of them—were recalled.

- In place of colon to emphasize the conclusion of the sentence:

  e.g. The jury finally reached a verdict—guilty.

- To add an em dash, either hold down ALT and quickly type 0151 on the number pad, or hold down the CTRL-ALT-Minus (Minus key on number pad)

data

A plural noun, it usually takes plural verbs and pronouns: The data have been carefully collected.

data-sharing agreement

Always hyphenate.

dates

Strive for consistency. Rewrite or rephrase to keep a consistent style across publications.

Omit the year for a future event if it's the current year, or if it is clear or implied.

Do not use superscripts (*June 12th*).

Do not use a comma between month and year.

Common uses:

February 2009 was a cold month.

The report will be released on Monday, February 26.

On February 26, 2019, the school board presented its materials.

deadlines

Make your deadlines stand out, either by bolding or placing separated from the rest of the content. Avoid wordiness.

Applications are due November 1, 2020

department

Preference is to spell out: e.g. Department of Education.

When abbreviation is necessary, use Dept.

directions and regions

Lowercase when referring to compass direction: east, west, north, south.

Capitalize when they designate regions: e.g. She has a Southern accent. The North was victorious. The students in Western Washington had

several snow days. The students in Southern California never have snow days.

disability

RCW 44.04.280 requires the use of terminology (in state laws) that puts the person before the disability. As a best practice, the terminology listed below should replace the terms disabled, developmentally disabled, mentally disabled, mentally ill, mentally retarded, handicapped, cripple, and crippled.

> e.g. individuals with disabilities, individuals with developmental disabilities, individuals with mental illness, individuals with intellectual disabilities

disaggregated data

Refers to numerical or non-numerical information that has been (1) collected from multiple sources and/or on multiple measures, variables, or individuals; (2) compiled into aggregate data—i.e., summaries of data—typically for the purposes of public reporting or statistical analysis; and then (3) broken down in component parts or smaller units of data.

dollar amounts

$12 million: Spell out and lowercase million, but do not spell out the number.

Abbreviate when tight on space, such as charts and tables, and in headlines (Three Districts Share $10M Grant)

NOT $12 million dollars (redundant)

dropout (n.), drop out (v.)

Schools are trying to reduce the dropout rate.

The number of high school dropouts in Washington decreased.

Students drop out of the program every year.

E-Certification

When referencing the OSPI E-Certification portal, always capitalize both the E and C, and include the hyphen.

e-learning

Lowercase e, unless at the beginning of a sentence: *E-learning is here to stay.*

early learning

From birth through grade 3

Education Data System, EDS

NOT Educational Data System

Elementary and Secondary Education Act, ESEA

The national K–12 education law

ellipsis (…)

An ellipsis (plural: ellipses) is a punctuation mark consisting of three dots without spaces on either side, or between each dot.

Use an ellipsis when omitting a word, phrase, line, paragraph, or more from a quoted passage.

Ellipses save space or remove material that is less relevant:

> Full quotation: "Today, after hours of careful thought, we vetoed the bill."

> With ellipsis: "Today…we vetoed the bill."

email

No hyphen, no capitalization

emphasis

Use **bold** for emphasis. For multiple lines of important text, consider breaking them out from the rest of paragraph.

If the whole sentence is bolded, bold punctuation as well. If only certain words in a sentence are bolded, including the word next to the punctuation mark, only bold those words.

If you have something for emphasis within an emphasized sentence, italicizing is acceptable.

Do not underline or highlight. Underlining should be reserved for links, and highlighting should not be used in formal documents. To denote changes, use ADA compliant red text (#CC0000, R: 192, G: 0 B: 0 is compliant).

ESD, Educational Service District

Spell out on first reference: There are nine Educational Service Districts in Washington.

ESD or ESDs on second reference: The school board in ESD 101 will meet this week.

Use the apostrophe when possessive: The ESDs' phone numbers are listed below.

etc.

Spelled out as et cetera

Use a comma before and after etc. except at the end of a sentence.

Do not use at the end of a series introduced by as such or for example.

> e.g. Please send extra school supplies for the school supply drive, such as pencils, pens, and notebooks.

Every Student Succeeds Act, ESSA

Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In full effect as of the 2017–18 school year.

FAQ, Q&A

FAQ stands for frequently asked questions and implies a short and

targeted list of questions and answers.

Q&A stands for question and answer and is a useful format for dialogue-type questions:

> Q: Do I need to apply for a Washington state license? A: Yes

federal court

Lowercase

financial aid

Lowercase

fiscal year

The 12-month period that a governmental body uses for bookkeeping purposes.

Washington state's fiscal year is July 1–June 30.

The federal government's fiscal year is October 1–September 30.

Form Package

Capitalize: *Form Package 408*

formative assessment

Lowercase

fractions

two-thirds

1/2, NOT ½

For mixed numbers, use 1 1/2 with the space between the whole number and the fraction.

free and reduced-price meals

Add the hyphen, even though the U.S. Department of Agriculture does not.

Do not drop the word "price." NOT: free and reduced meals

full time, full-time, FTE

Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier. Use FTE on second reference.

> e.g. The distribution is based on the average number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students in the school district during the previous year.

> e.g. Parents and guardians of students who were enrolled full time or part time in Washington public schools during state testing may view their child's test.

government

Always lowercase, never abbreviate

> e.g. the state government, the federal government, the U.S. government
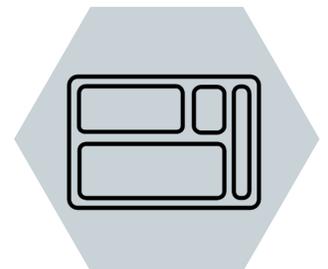
free and reduced-price meals should always include the hyphen.

governmental bodies

Capitalize the full proper name of governmental bodies: The U.S. Department of Education

Also capitalize the name if flip-flopped but omits "of": The Education Department

Governor

On first reference: Governor Jay Inslee

On second reference: the Governor

But lowercase governor in other instances and when not referring to a specific governor: The governors convened in Washington, D.C.

grade level, school grades

kindergarten, 1st grade, 2nd grade, 3rd grade, 4th grade, 5th grade, 6th grade, 7th grade, 8th grade, 9th grade, 10th grade, 11th grade, 12th grade

Do not use superscript (e.g., 3rd).

Do not capitalize grade levels, including freshman, sophomore, junior, senior

Single grade reference:

> 3rd grade: The state assessment is taken in 3rd grade.
>
> 5th-grader (use hyphen): The 5th-graders were excited about graduation.
>
> 5th-grade teacher

Use en dash for sequential grades: The school teaches grades 1–4.

headlines, headings, and subheads

Use title case for headlines, lowercasing prepositions that are three letters or fewer: How to Apply for a Grant

Use numerals for all numbers: 80 School Districts Receive Competitive Grants to Improve Safety

Use single quotes for quotation marks: Michelle Obama Says 'Cheese Dust Is Not Food'

Abbreviate millions/billions figures: 3 Districts to Share $10M Grant

If there is a colon, capitalize the first word after the colon

high- (adj.)

Hyphenate when adjective: high-quality assessments

BUT: The assessments are high quality.

high-need, high need

Hyphenate when it modifies: high-need schools

Do not hyphenate when it does not modify: schools with high need

Always singular: high-need student, student with high need

When referring to students receiving special education services, consider another word choice, because "high need" is an abstract term without specific definition. Would one of these work better or just as well?

> Students who receive special education services

> Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

> Students with disabilities

home school

home school, home schooler, home schooling, home schooled

> The bill would require parents to sign a statement if they plan to home school. A home schooler from Olympia said she supported the bill.

A hyphen is necessary when it modifies: Home-schooling laws are followed by home-school families and home-schooled students.

Also called home-based instruction

iGrants

The 'i' is lowercase. One word. Plural.

> NOT iGrant, Igrants, iGrants system

individualized education program, IEP

Not capitalized. IEP on second reference. The p stands for program (not plan).

in regard to

Do not use 'in regard to' as it is not plain talk. Consider using about, concerning, or on.

internet, intranet

Lowercase

italics

Italicize titles of works (i.e books, magazines, newspapers, movies, albums, etc.) or to introduce technical, foreign, or unfamiliar terms. **Do not** use italics for emphasis.

K–12

Use en dash (not a hyphen), which indicates range (from grade K to grade 12).

Do NOT write K12 without the en dash.

K–20 Education Network

Use the en dash, which indicates range (from grade K to grade 20).

The K–20 Education Network is a high-speed, high-capacity network that links K–12 school districts, libraries, colleges, and universities across 476 locations in Washington.

Both K–20 Education Network and the shortened K–20 Network are
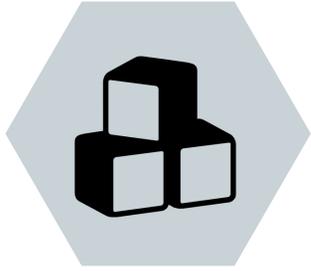
acceptable.

kindergarten

Do not capitalize.

Both kindergartener and kindergartner are acceptable, but keep consistent throughout document.

learning standards

Washington State K–12 Learning Standards

legal citations

On first use, spell out entirely. When citing a chapter, include the word "Chapter" before the chapter number. When citing a section, omit the word Chapter.

Revised Code of Washington (RCW) Chapter 28A.180, Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 28A.320.202, Washington Administrative Code (WAC) Chapter 392-160

On subsequent uses, abbreviate Revised Code of Washington and Washington Administrative Code. When citing chapters in subsequent uses, put RCW/WAC after the chapter number.

Chapter 28A.180 RCW, RCW 28A.320.202

legislative, legislative session

Do not capitalize. The 105-day Washington state legislative session begins Monday.

Annual legislative sessions are identified by the year in which they occurred: Lawmakers wrapped up the 2014 session with a flurry of bills.

Legislature, legislature

Proper titles:

Washington State Legislature: http://leg.wa.gov

Washington State Senate: http://leg.wa.gov/senate

Washington State House of Representatives: http://leg.wa.gov/house

Retain capitalization when the state name is dropped but the reference is specifically to that state's legislature. The Legislature will vote on the K–12 budget this week.

Lowercase state when its needed for clarification. If approved by the state Legislature this year...

Lowercase when used generically: No legislature has approved the amendment. Across the country, the legislatures are discussing this topic.

Legislative Citations

Legislation that passed:

- First reference: House Bill/Senate Bill 1234 (YEAR) Session Law (link to bill page on leg website)

kindergartner and **kindergartener** are both acceptable, but be consistent throughout your document.

Legislative Citations should be spelled out on first reference, and abbreviated on following references.

- Every Reference thereafter: HB/SB 1234 (YEAR) (do not link)

Legislation that has <u>not</u> passed:

- Indicate the version of the bill being referenced, for example:
- Initial reference: Fourth Substitute House Bill 1541 (YEAR) or Substitute Senate Bill 5656 (YEAR) (link to bill page on leg website)
- Every Reference thereafter, use the acronym: 4SHB 1541 (YEAR) or SSB 5656 (YEAR) (do not link)

Key:

House = H	Engrossed = E
Senate = S	Second = 2
Bill = B	Third = 3
Substitute = S	Fourth = 4

liaison

Parent Liaison (is capitalized) when referring to OSPI's Special Education Parent Liaison. This term replaces Ombudsman.

local educational agency, LEA

educational, not education

The local educational agency must submit the application by November 1.

Plural: local education agencies, LEAs (no apostrophe)

long-term, long term

Hyphenate when a compound adjective: We have a long-term solution.

Two words when the phrase modifies an adverb or when it is the object of a preposition: Your solution will not work in the long term.

Memorandum (singular), Memoranda (plural)

Sunset in 2017, Memoranda were official correspondence from OSPI.

There are two ways to cite a Memorandum:

1. Memorandum No. 029-14 Student Transportation
2. Student Transportation (M029-14)

months

Spell out the full month, unless when short on space, such as in tables and graphs.

He was born in January 1993. He was born on January 10, 1993.

Place a comma after the calendar year if it does not conclude the sentence: Submit your application by January 1, 2010, for first consideration.

multi-

multi-agency, multi-state, multi-use

The dictionary's primary spelling will vary on which *multi-* words should have a hyphen, but the hyphen never changes the meaning; use the hyphen when in doubt.

multiple-choice

Always hyphenate.

n-size

The minimum number of students in a particular racial or ethnic group for which disaggregated data must be reported.

Include the hyphen. Lowercase n. No quotation marks.

news release

An official statement published by the OSPI Communications office.

non-public

Hyphenate: non-public schools, non-public agency. NOT: NonPublic

Office of Non-Public Education (U.S. Department of Education)

numbered list

Use numbered lists for instructions. This shows at a glance how many steps there are and ensures the user follows them in order, reducing the chance of missing a step.

To create an account:

1. Log in to EDS
2. Select your application
3. Select My Preferences
4. Select Change My address

Do not use a numbered list if specific steps are not required. Instead, use a bulleted list.

A list does not require end punctuation.

numbers

In general, spell out one through nine. Use figures for 10 or above and whenever preceding a unit of measure or referring to ages of people, events, or things. Also, in all tabular matter, and in statistical and sequential forms.

Abbreviate to no. when indicating position or rank (No. 1).

Expressions: spell out

A thousand times yes!

The bus stop is a quarter of a mile from his house.

Dollar amounts

$12 million (NOT: $12 million dollars, which is redundant)

Lists/sequence of figures:

There were 5 children on the bus and 25 waiting to be picked up.

In this case, 5 and 25 are considered a list/sequence.

Try not to begin a sentence with a number:

Due to bad weather, 10 people canceled. (NOT: Ten people canceled due to bad weather.)

office

Capitalize when part of the proper name: Washington State Office of the Attorney General.

Lowercase all other instances: The office of the attorney general.

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, the

NOT <u>the</u> OSPI

NOT Office of <u>the</u> Superintendent of Public Instruction

Use <u>the</u> only when the proper name is spelled out: According to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction…

On the OSPI website, use OSPI on first reference.

Ombuds

Replaces Ombudsman: The Office of the Education Ombuds

paraeducator

One word, no hyphen

percent

Percent means parts per hundred.

Use percent symbol (%): The poll shows 26% agree with the governor.

Spell out percent with spelled out numbers or for informal uses: five percent; there is a large percentage of students who receive services.

Repeat percent with each individual figure: 10% to 15%.

phone numbers

Use hyphens: XXX-XXX-XXXX

PO Box

Do not use periods.

point of view

Use third-person speech in formal writing at OSPI. Formal writing is any writing that bears the OSPI logo. (OSPI has developed new discipline rules, here's what districts should know.)

Use first-person speech in informal writing. Examples of informal writing include when writing internally, or on social media. (We've developed new discipline rules, and we're looking for internal feedback).

When representing the agency as oneself, informal writing may be

The **percent symbol** can be used in all instances.

used (i.e hosting a webinar, in email, etc.).

policymaker, policymaking

One word

possessive apostrophe

No possessive apostrophe if it is meant in a descriptive sense, and "for" or "by" is implied:

sports for boys = boys sports

Use possessive apostrophe when "of" is implied:

The boys' clothes were soaked (clothes of the boys)

possessive pronouns

Use a person's preferred pronouns when known.

If unknown, or referring to people generally, use "they" in place of he/she, him/her, (s)he, s/he, himself/herself, etc. unless required by policy or law.

Students shall have 24 credits to graduate with their class.

NOT: He/she shall have 24 credits to graduate with his/her class."

post-

postgraduate, postsecondary, postscript

Hyphen is needed only when it precedes a capitalized word: post-Darwinism

prekindergarten, PreK

Lowercase, no hyphen. Spell it out when not listed in a grade span.

All ages before kindergarten, from birth through preschool.

PreK when listed in a grade span, such as PreK–3

prepositions

It's acceptable to end a sentence with a preposition: What did you step on?

Attempts to rewrite (On what did you step?) are admirable, but not necessary.

Don't end the sentence with a preposition when it's not necessary:

Instead of: Where are you at?

Drop the preposition: Where are you?

Don't add a preposition in a sentence when it's not necessary:

Instead of: She jumped off of the rock.

Drop the preposition: She jumped off the rock.

A short list of the more common one-word prepositions

as, at, but, by, for, from, in, of, off, on, onto, than, to, up, with

preschool

The age or grade span that preschool encompasses can vary.

Examples of how preschool may be defined:

All learning and situations prior to the start of formal schooling, anything preschool or birth–age 5.

Educational programs for 3- and 4-year-olds

Lowercase, no hyphen. Spell it out when not listed in a grade span.

professional learning vs. professional development

Professional learning is a comprehensive, sustained, job imbedded, and collaborative approach to improve educational outcomes for all students.

In contrast, professional development is a one-time event without follow-up.

proven

Use only as an adjective: a proven strategy

quotation marks

Use double quotation marks to quote someone, except when it's a headline/title.

Use single quotation marks in headlines to quote someone, or for a title:

'Everybody Stretches' Without Gravity, Says NASA Study

'Spotlight' Wins Big at 88th Academy Awards

Use double quotation marks to emphasize a word:

The term "children" is defined in the program regulations as persons 18 years of age and under.

Select "Next" and then "Submit."

The ending period and comma always go within the quotation marks.

When indicating a spoken quote with a question mark, the dash, semicolon, question mark, and exclamation point go within quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter only:

He asked, "How long will it take?"

They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence:

Who wrote "Gone with the Wind"?

Sometimes rewriting the sentence is better:

She asked who wrote "Gone with the Wind."

ratios

Use figures and hyphens: the ratio was 2-to-1, a ratio of 2-to-1.

reengagement

No hyphen

Report Card

An online database that is maintained by OSPI: http://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us

Also called State Report Card, Washington State Report Card, Washington State School Report Card.

Not to be confused with the Nation's Report Card: http://www.nationsreportcard.gov

rulemaking

One word, no hyphen

school

Capitalize when part of a proper name: Evergreen Elementary School

Capitalize when part of a program name: the Mental Health and Schools Program

Do not capitalize a general reference: Private schools have access to federal supplemental education programs.

school board

When referencing a specific school board, use the proper title.

> e.g. North Thurston Public Schools Board, The Board of Directors of Spokane Public Schools

When in doubt, check the school board's website.

school districts

There are 295 school districts in Washington.

Do not capitalize unless it is in the proper title.

When referencing a specific school district, use the proper title. Some do not use School District, but Public Schools. When in doubt, check the district's website.

schoolwide

One word, no hyphen

Senate, senators

Washington State Senate, the Senate, state senators.

sign-up (n. and adj.), sign up (v.)

Hyphenate when it modifies: The sign-up form is at the back of the room.

Use two words in verb form: Sign up for the newsletter.

spacing between sentences

Use only one space between sentences.
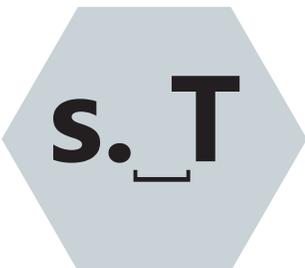
One space only between words, sentences, and punctuation marks.

To remove all double spaces in a document (and replace with a single space), do a global Find and Replace:

> In the "find" field, hit your spacebar twice

> In the "replace with" field, hit your spacebar once

> Select "replace all"

If you're not sure you want to replace ALL, click on "find next" to see what effect the Find and Replace will have before you implement it

state

e.g. the state Legislature, the state Treasury Department

Capitalize when part of a proper name: Washington State School Directors' Association

State Superintendent Chris Reykdal

First reference: State Superintendent Chris Reykdal

Second reference: Superintendent Reykdal

statewide

One word, no hyphen

student-level data

Always hyphenate

superintendent

Capitalize when used as a formal title before a name: State Superintendent Chris Reykdal, Superintendent Reykdal

Do not abbreviate unless to fit a character limit, such as for social media: Supt or Supt.

teacher-leader

Always hyphenate

theatre

As a discipline, use theatre: The arts standards include art, dance, music, and theatre.

BUT: The students toured the new theater.

time, time of day, time zones

am and pm, (NOT a.m. and p.m.)

Use a colon to separate hours from minutes: *3:30 am*

Exclude minutes if it's on the hour: 5 pm (NOT 5:00 pm)

Use the en dash between times, with no spaces before or after the en dash: 9 am–noon.

Noon is 12 pm. Noon is preferred, but the latter is also acceptable. Midnight is 12 am, and is part of the day it begins, not the day it ends.

Title

When introducing it, provide its full, proper name description.

On first reference: Title V, Part A - Innovative Programs

On second reference: Title V, Part A

Consider the reader when referencing; the reader may not be familiar with Title V but know Every Student Succeeds Act.

toward

NOT "towards"

e.g. Teachers are moving toward the new standards.

tribe, tribal

Capitalize tribe when it follows the name of a specific tribe: The Yakama Tribe began the program in 2006.

Retain capitalization when the tribe's name is dropped but the reference is specifically to that tribe: The Yakama Tribe owns the land and rejects calls from local developers for the Tribe to sell the property.

But tribal is capitalized only when part of a formal name. The Muckleshoot Tribal Council approved the agreement, the result of talks between county and tribal negotiators.

underlining

Underlining of text should only be done to signify a hyperlink.

Underlining should never be used to emphasize text.

unfunded

No hyphen

U.S.

Abbreviation is acceptable as noun or adjective for the United States.

Washington state

Omit the word state whenever possible. Often, it's unnecessary.

Lowercase state when it is necessary, such as when discussing the state in a national context: The national Teacher of the Year award went to a Washington state 1st-grade teacher.

Capitalize state when it is part of the proper name: The Washington State Legislature voted on the bill.

Use state when necessary to distinguish the state from the District of Columbia.

Washington State K–12 Learning Standards

The full, all-encompassing name for all learning standards in all content areas, including the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics and the Next Generation Science Standards.

When specifying a content area, use the following construction:

Washington state: do not capitalize 'state.'

[content area] [K–12 Learning Standards]:

> Integrated Environmental and Sustainability K–12 Learning
> Standards
>
> Social Studies K–12 Learning Standards

well-being

> Always hyphenate

who

> who = subject, whom = object
>
> Best analogy is "he" and "him" or "she" and "her" or "they" and "them"
>
> who = he, whom = him. Who hit whom? He hit him.

workgroup, task force

> Either is acceptable, but use one or the other and be consistent.

year, years

> school year 2015–16 (Use en dash)
>
> Use commas with a month and day: On September 7, 2009, she
> celebrated her 5th birthday.
>
> Do not state the year for a future event if it's in the current year, or if it
> is clear or implied: The next meeting is June 5.

year-end (adj.)

> Always hyphenate

yearlong

> One word

Commonly Confused Words

Word 1	Meaning	Word 2	Meaning
Accept	To agree to receive or do	Except	Not including
Adverse	Unfavorable, harmful	Averse	Strongly disliking; opposed
Advice	Noun. Guidance or recommendations about what to do	Advise	Verb. To recommend something
Affect	To change or make a difference to	Effect	A result; to bring about a result
All together	All in one place, all at once	Altogether	Completely; on the whole
All ready	Everything is ready	Already	An action is completed by a certain time
Along	Moving or extending horizontally on	A long	Referring to something of great length
Aloud	Out loud	Allowed	Permitted
Alternately	Taking turns	Alternatively	As an option; instead of
Among	Used for three or more (she had to choose among three colleges)	Between	Used for two things (she had to choose between Harvard and Yale)
Appraise	To assess	Apprise	To inform someone
Assent	Agreement, approval	Ascent	The action of rising or climbing up
Beside	By the side of, separate from	Besides	In addition to; also
Biannual	Twice in one year	Biennial	Every two years
Bimonthly	Every two months	Semimonthly	Twice a month (biweekly)
Capitol	A building that houses a government's legislative branch	Capital	A town or seat that is the seat of state government

Word 1	Meaning	Word 2	Meaning
Censure	To criticize strongly	Censor	To ban parts of a book or film; a person who does this
Cite	To quote or mention	Site	A place
Complacent	Smug and self-satisfied	Complaisant	Willing to please
Complement	An addition that improves something	Compliment	To praise or express
Compose	To make up (the class is composed of students of several grades)	Comprise	To consist of, or include (students of several grades comprise the class)
Concurrent	Simultaneous	Consecutive	Successive; one after another
Continual	Repeated with breaks in between	Continuous	Without stopping
Convince	To cause another to feel sure or believe something to be true	Persuade	To talk someone into doing something
Council	A group of people who manage or advise	Counsel	Advice; to advise
Criterion	Singular (there is one criterion for this job)	Criteria	Plural (several criteria need to be met for this job)
Cue	A signal for action; a wooden rod	Queue	A line of people or vehicles
Currently	At this time; now	Presently	Soon; in a little while
Defuse	To make a situation less tense	Diffuse	To spread over a wide are
Denote	To indicate specifically; to mean (home denotes a place where you live)	Connote	To imply or suggest (home connotes warmth and safety)
Discreet	Careful not to attract attention	Discrete	Separate and distinct
Disinterested	Impartial	Uninterested	Not interested
Elicit	To draw out a reply or reaction	Illicit	Not allowed by law or rules

Word 1	Meaning	Word 2	Meaning
e.g.	For example; to make certain	i.e.	In other words; to give specific clarification
Ensure	To make certain that something will happen	Insure	To provide compensation if a person dies or property is damaged
Envelop	To cover or surround	Envelope	A paper container for a letter
Everyday	(adjective) commonplace, ordinary	Every day	Each day
Fewer	Things that can be counted (fewer students)	Less	Quantities of things that can't be counted (less coffee)
Flaunt	To show something in a very open way to that other people notice	Flout	To break or ignore a law or rule without showing fear or shame
Foreword	An introduction to a book	Forward	Onwards, ahead
Historic	An important occurrence that stands out in history	Historical	Any occurrence in the past, having the character of history
Imply	To suggest indirectly	Infer	To draw a conclusion
It's	It is; is has	Its	Belonging to it
Loath	Reluctant, unwilling	Loathe	To hate
Loose	To unfasten; to set free	Lose	To be deprived of; to be unable to find
Militate	To be a powerful factor against	Mitigate	To make less severe
Prescribe	To authorize use of medicine; to order authoritatively	Proscribe	To officially forbid something
Principal	Most important; the head of a school	Principle	A fundamental rule or belief

Word 1	Meaning	Word 2	Meaning
Quote	To state the exact words someone else said (she quoted Hemingway in her paper)	Quotation	An actual statement being quoted (she read a quotation every day)
Respectfully	Politely; with respect	Respectively	The order in which things are given back
Sight	The ability to see	Site	A location
Sometime	Indistinct or unstated time in the future	Some time	A considerable period of time
Stationary	Not moving	Stationery	Writing materials
Than	Used to compare (she thinks she is smarter than us)	Then	A time that is not now (it would be better to meet Friday because then I'll be ready)
Til	A contraction of until	Till	To cultivate
To	Toward	Too	Also
Versus	In comparison or opposition to	Verses	Plural of verse, a line of poetry
Who	What or which person(s) (who was elected?)	Whom	Used as an interrogative or relative; object of a verb (the man whom you wrote to)

Contract Language

This section outlines contract language that may differ from this style guide. Please contact the OSPI Contracts Office if you have questions about this section.

data-sharing agreement

Datasharing or Datashare is one word.

dollar amounts

Dollar amounts are spelled out, followed by the number in parentheses. The contract/agreement shall not exceed twelve million dollars ($12,000,000).

figures

In agreements and contracts, numbers are always spelled out first and then followed in parentheses. e.g. You are required to facilitate twenty-one (21) meetings.

fiscal year

The twelve- (12-) month period must be spelled out first with the number in parentheses.

numerals

Numbers are spelled out first, then in parentheses. e.g. Nine (9) days.

prepositions

In contract writing, do not end a sentence with a preposition.

shall, will

Shall is a mandatory requirement. Will is a preferred requirement.

spacing between sentences

Double spacing is preferred in agreements and contracts.

Superintendent

Capitalize Superintendent or Superintendent's Designee in agreements and contracts.

time, time of day

Time zone is required in all contract documents, especially RFPs/RFQs/Informal Solicitations. The solicitation audience may or may not be from Washington.

Washington State

All templates and special/general terms have State capped when it follows the state name. Do not capitalize state when it precedes the name of the state: The state of Washington.

Acronyms and Initialisms

Please note: Some terms are not capitalized when used in context. For example, individualized education program (IEP). Contact commteam@k12.wa.us with questions.

21CCLC	21st Century Community Learning Centers
ALE	Alternative Learning Experience
AP	Advanced Placement
AWSP	Association of Washington School Principals
BEAC	Bilingual Education Advisory Committee
BEST	Beginning Educator Support Team
CAA/CIA	Certificate of Academic Achievement/Certificate of Individual Achievement
CACFP	Child and Adult Care Food Program
CBA	Classroom-Based Assessment
CCSS	Common Core State Standards
CEDARS	Comprehensive Education Data and Research System
CEP	Community Eligibility Provision
CNS	Child Nutrition Services
CPR	Consolidated Program Review
CSTP	Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession
CTE	Career and Technical Education
DAC	District Assessment Coordinator
DCYF	Department of Children, Youth, and Families
DOH	Department of Health
DSHS	Department of Social and Health Services
ED	U.S. Department of Education
EDS	Education Data System
ELA	English Language Arts
ELL	English Language Learner
ELP	English Language Proficiency
ELPA21	English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century
EOC	End-of-Course (exam)

EOGOAC	Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee
ESA	Educational Staff Associate
ESD	Educational Service District (There are 9 ESDs in Washington)
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act (replaces *No Child Left Behind*)
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FDP	Food Distribution Program
FEPPP	Financial Education Public-Private Partnership
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
FFVP	Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
GATE	Graduation: A Team Effort
GLE	Grade Level Expectation
HCP	Highly Capable Program
HIB	Harassment, Intimidation, or Bullying
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
HSBP	High School and Beyond Plan
HSPE	High School Proficiency Exams
HQ	Highly Qualified
HQT	Highly Qualified Teachers
IB	International Baccalaureate
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Program (NOT "Plan")
iGrants	iGrant System (the "s" in iGrants stands for "system")
LAP	Learning Assistance Program
LEA	Local Education Agency (not synonymous with school district)
LEP	Limited English Proficient
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and others
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
MOE	Maintenance of Effort
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSP	Measurements of Student Progress
MTSS	Multi-tiered System of Supports
NEA	National Education Association

LGBTQIA+ is the preferred agency acronym.

NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NBCT	National Board Certified Teacher
NBPTS	National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
NCLB	No Child Left Behind (See also: *Every Student Succeeds Act*)
NSLP	National School Lunch Program
OEO	Office of the Education Ombuds (NOT *Ombudsman*)
OER	Open Educational Resources
ONE	Office of Native Education
OSPI	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
PESB	Professional Educator Standards Board
PSE	Public School Employees of Washington
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
QEC	Quality Education Council
REAP	Rural Education Achievement Program
RFP	Request for Proposals
RFQ	Request for Qualifications
RTI	Response to Intervention
RTL	Readiness to Learn
SBAC	Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC is the group, NOT the test)
SBE	State Board of Education
SBP	School Breakfast Program
SCTS	Standard Choice Transfer System (an application within EDS)
SEA	State Education Agency (OSPI is the state education agency in Washington state)
SEAC	Special Education Advisory Committee
SEL	Social Emotional Learning
SES	Supplemental Educational Services
SMP	Special Milk Program
SSFP	Simplified Summer Food Program
SFSP	Summer Food Service Program
SLDS	Statewide Longitudinal Data System
SLE	Supportive Learning Environment
SLP	Student Learning Plan
SMP	Special Milk Program

SQSS	School Quality and Student Support (Indicators)
SSAE	Student Support and Academic Enrichment
SSO	Seamless Summer Option
STARS	Student Transportation Allocation Reporting System
STEAM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TBIP	Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program
ToY	Teacher of the Year
TPEP	Teacher and Principal Evaluation Project
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WAAS	Washington Alternate Assessment System
WaKIDS	Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills
WASA	Washington Association of School Administrators
WEA	Washington Education Association
WEC	Washington Educators' Conference
WELPA	Washington English Language Proficiency Assessment
WINS	Washington Integrated Nutrition System
WISSP	Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol
WRC	Washington Reading Corps (Corps is not an abbreviation, so no period)
WSAC	Washington Student Achievement Council
WSIPC	Washington School Information Processing Cooperative
WSPTA	Washington State Parent-Teacher Association
WSSDA	Washington State School Directors' Association
WTECB	Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

Culturally Responsive Style

The Culturally Responsive Style Guide represents the current collective thinking and research on culturally responsive language, systems, and practices at the time it was written. Our understanding, knowledge, and experiences continue to evolve. While this guide offers suggestions for language to use (or not to use), the larger lesson is to approach issues around culture, gender, equity, and diversity with humility, curiosity, and openness.

The guide will continue to be updated going forward. It is also important for each of us to continue our own learning in order to recognize and respect the diversity of individuals and groups that comprise our communities and our school systems around Washington.

Foundation

Purpose of the Guide

Words matter. At OSPI, we want to ensure we are communicating clearly, consistently, and compassionately with and about those we serve—students, families, educators, staff, administrators, communities—and each other as colleagues. We also want to ensure those we serve feel included, valued, and respected when we speak with or about them. This guide will help provide everyone at OSPI with standards and guidance for how to communicate in a professional manner, while also reflecting OSPI's core values of equity and inclusion. This is important to:

- Establish OSPI as an anti-racist agency

- Identify and dismantle opportunity gaps for students through ongoing analysis and effort

- Value each student, family member, educator, colleague, and stakeholder as people and honor their identities as individuals, as well as members of multiple communities and cultures

It is important to approach this guide, as well as the agency's focus on equity, with a growth mindset. By this, we mean we know our knowledge is not fixed and that we are always learning. Depending on our own unique personal and professional experiences, we will each find ourselves on a different place along the continuum of social and cultural awareness and comfort. Regardless, we can choose to approach our own learning with humility and grace. As we do this, it is critical that we give ourselves—and each other—the time and space to continue to explore new ideas, to listen to and learn from each other, and to give and accept feedback. Above all, we will work together to create a culturally responsive workplace in which sincere questions, curiosity, and growth are honored, expected, and encouraged.

OSPI's Equity Statement

Each student, family, and community possess strengths and cultural knowledge that benefits their peers, educators, and schools.

Ensuring educational equity:

- Goes beyond equality; it requires education leaders to examine the ways current policies and practices result in disparate outcomes for our students of color, students living in poverty, students receiving special education and English learner services, students who identify as LGBTQIA+, and highly mobile student populations.

- Requires education leaders to develop an understanding of historical contexts; engage students, families, and community representatives as partners in decision making; and actively dismantle systemic barriers, replacing them with policies and practices that ensure all students have access to the instruction and support they need to succeed in our schools.

Culturally Responsive Content & Communication

When communicating, we should have a particular audience in mind, use easily understandable plain talk and person-first language or action descriptions, and when appropriate, content and discipline-specific vocabulary. More information about how to use each of the following can be found below.

Plain Talk

In this context, plain talk includes referring to specific groups by name whenever possible versus collective terms or euphemisms, such as "at-risk" or "students furthest from educational justice." Please refer to the section entitled "Plain Talk and Readability" in the OSPI Style Guide.

Person-First Language and Action Descriptions

Writers should take care to use language that is both accurate and respectful to people or groups. Staff are encouraged to use person-first language or action descriptions, each of which is defined below, along with guidance on using person-first language when referencing specific student groups.

The idea behind person-first language is that the writer literally puts the person first, with any characteristics or categories following as a secondary aspect of the person. Person-first language is ideal when the characteristic described has historically been associated with negative stereotypes. The most common example of this terminology is people with *disabilities* or *students with disabilities* rather than *disabled people* or *disabled students*. Describing someone as a disabled person emphasizes their disability as their primary or only relevant characteristic.

Person-first language is also important in describing behavioral health conditions. For example, rather than stating "the student is bipolar," person-first language would state, "the student was diagnosed with bipolar disorder." Again, we are putting the person first and the characteristic language second.

If a person-first option isn't apparent or seems inappropriate in a particular case, another option is to use action words to describe people. Examples would be "students who are undocumented may be eligible ..." or "Susan, who lives with cerebral palsy, faces additional obstacles." Aim to be positive or neutral; for example, we wouldn't say "Susan, who suffers from cerebral palsy..." because the word *suffers* assumes Susan's experience and negatively so. Another example is the term *homeless*. Our preference most often is to use the phrasing "students experiencing homelessness." In this case, we not only put the person first, but we also recognize that most students do not themselves determine their housing status and that it can change. Using action words minimizes unintentional "othering."

Using Person-First Language When Referencing Certain Student Groups

What do we call students who are *not* English language learners, migrant, in foster care, experiencing homelessness, etc.; when comparing data between binary groups? Please refer to the chart below for suggestions:

Group Identified	Group Not Identified
English language learners	Native speakers of English
Students whose native language is other than English	Students whose native language is English
Students in foster care	Students not in foster care
Students experiencing homelessness Students facing housing instability	Students not experiencing homelessness Students experiencing housing stability
Students from low-income families Students eligible for free and reduced-price meal programs	Students from middle- and higher-income families Students not eligible for free and reduced-price meal programs
Students who are migratory	Students who are not migratory
Students with military parents	Students with non-military parents
Students with 504 plans Students eligible under 504	Students without 504 plans
Students with disabilities Students with IEPs	Students without disabilities Students without IEPs

Content Area and Discipline-Specific Vocabulary

In general, when writing about particular groups, **respect how people belonging to these groups talk about themselves.** Person-first language and action descriptions are a good start, and probably the appropriate defaults. However, in a situation where a person or group of people have a different preference—and we are aware of it—their preference should be honored. Below you will find additional guidance on what to consider when writing about gender identity and race/ethnicity.

Gender Identity

In Washington, everyone has the right to be treated consistent with their asserted gender identity and to be addressed by their correct name and pronouns, unless there is a legal reason not to do so. If you do not know what pronouns someone uses, it is appropriate to respectfully ask, "What are your pronouns?" You can also make it easier for people by adding your pronouns to your email signature or by introducing yourself with your pronouns (e.g., "My name is Jane Doe, and I use she/her pronouns."). In terms of general writing or situations where a person's gender identity is unknown or irrelevant, gender-neutral writing is ideal. Start letters or formal emails with "Dear Jane Doe." as opposed to "Dear Ms. Doe" or "Dear Mx. Doe". Doing this for everyone helps ensure that we are treating everyone the same. Now, if someone has shared their pronouns with us, then we will use those out of respect, but still, the formal communication would follow our existing protocol, i.e., Dear Jane Doe.

Gender-Neutral Pronouns. "They," "their," "them," and "themselves" should be used as gender-neutral, singular pronouns. Merriam Webster notes that as English lacks a gender-neutral singular pronoun, "they" has been used for this purpose for over 600 years. The APA blog recommended that the singular "they" is preferred in professional writing over "he or she" when the reference is to a person whose gender identity is unknown or to a person who uses

they.[1]

Data Collection and Reporting. Many OSPI and district forms or data collection documents ask people to indicate their "sex." Usually what that means is that a person is supposed to check a box marked either "male (M)" or "female (F)," depending on the sex they were assigned at birth. However, in Washington, a third option—"other/nonbinary (X)" is now available on documents like birth certificates, driver's licenses, and in student data information systems like CEDARS. So, how does the availability of this additional option change OSPI's data collection practices (e.g., forms, surveys, etc.)? It depends.

- If the form is designed to collect information about a person's sex for purposes of federal reporting, then only M/F should be provided as options (since the federal government does not presently recognize the X gender designation).

- For state or local forms, additional options—including X—may be offered. Further, when developing or revising a state or local form that asks people to indicate their sex, it is also worth considering whether this information is truly needed. If not, then consider removing it altogether. If, on the other hand, it is essential to know a person's sex, then consider asking for it in one of three ways:

    o Write-in option: Allow people to write in their own answer (*e.g.,* Sex: _____). *This option is preferred when the goal is to allow people to self-identify.*

    o Set options: Provide a list of set options for people to choose from (*e.g.,* Sex: (circle one) M/F/X).

    o Hybrid option: Provide a set list of federal or state options when data reporting or analysis is a priority, as well as an open-ended option for anyone who does not want to select one of the options provided or who wants to add a specific descriptor (*e.g.,* Sex: check one or provide your own description: M/F/X/_____).

When determining which approach to use, it is also important to think about the purpose of the form. For example, if the form's purpose is to collect a large amount of information (e.g., a survey with a large sample size) and disaggregating data into different categories (e.g., race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, etc.) is important, allowing people to fill in completely open-ended responses can make the data difficult to disaggregate and report. In that situation, a check box or hybrid checkbox may be preferable.

Note: Asking a person to designate their sex is different from asking them to designate their gender identity, and for some people, being asked to designate their sex assigned at birth can be triggering. (If you're unsure what the difference between sex and gender identity is, please refer to the Culturally Responsive Style Guide's index to access specific definitions for each term.) OSPI's Equity and Civil Rights Office is happy to help you determine how to best phrase your data collection requests (or any other questions you may have): 360-725-6162 or equity@k12.wa.us.

Race and Ethnicity

Race is a social construct without biological meaning. What this means in

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1   Merriam-Webster. (2019). *Word of the year: They*. https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/word-of-the-year

plain English is that rather than being fixed in biology or genetics, race is now understood to be a categorical system created to confer privilege to different groups of people based upon physical appearance (such as skin color), divide people into groups ranked as superior and inferior, and determine which groups are entitled to important legal rights (e.g., citizenship, property rights, voting rights, etc.) in the United States and throughout the world.

Ethnicity is also considered to be a social construct that further divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics, such as a shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history, and ancestral geographical base.

Because of the history of enslavement of Africans and genocide of Native Americans by European colonists, as well as multiple other forms of xenophobia and systemic racism perpetrated in the United States over the last 400 years, issues around race and ethnicity are among the most difficult and uncomfortable to discuss. Yet, they are also among the most important issues impacting students, families, and educators. It is important to communicate clearly and accurately about issues of race and ethnicity, as well as about racial and ethnic identity rather than avoiding or silencing these conversations altogether.

Colorblindness. In an attempt to downplay the above and emphasize our shared humanity regardless of race or ethnicity, some people may adopt or espouse the concept of "colorblindness." However, this approach is misguided for the simple reason that colorblindness ignores and erases the individual and collective experiences of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) living within societies pervaded by systemic and institutionalized racism.

Tribal Sovereignty. Tribal sovereignty refers to the inherent right of tribal nations to self-govern and ensure tribal lifeways of their citizens, lands, waters, and resources are secure and honored. The relationship between tribal nations and other governments (including other tribal nations, nations, federal, state, local) is government-to-government. The identity and historical and legal rights of American Indian and Alaska Native learners are citizens and descendants of sovereign tribal nations and not through the socially constructed designation of race or ethnicity.

Using Bias-Free Language. Writers are advised to consult the [APA Style Guide](#) for more detailed guidance on how to use bias-free language when writing about race and ethnicity. It includes guidance on issues such as:

- Spelling and capitalization of racial and ethnic terms
- Terms for specific groups within the categories of people with ancestries from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, the Americas, and Indigenous peoples from around the world
- Parallel comparisons among groups
- Avoiding essentialism
- Limited use of the term "minority"
- Examples of bias-free language
- Examples of dated terminology to be avoided

Please note the Culturally Responsive Language Index in this guide also includes definitions and discussion of important concepts related to various forms of racism, ethnocentrism, White supremacy, and White privilege.

Ideal Language	Terms to Avoid
Opportunity gap	Achievement gap
Individuals who are undocumented, immigrants Specific race, ethnicity	Aliens, Illegals, Illegal immigrants
Person with a disability, student with autism	Challenged, differently abled, handicapable, handicapped, special needs
People, residents, community members, Washingtonians	Citizens
American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Americans, First People, Tribal Affiliation or Membership	Like other non-tribally specific names used when referring to citizens of tribal nations within the United States, the terms "Indian," "American Indian," "Native," "Indigenous," have historic, political, and legal connections
BIPOC, people of color	Minorities, colorblind, oriental, non-White
Be specific—name the country (e.g., China) or the geographical region (e.g., East Africa). When communicating the level of monetary resources, use low-, middle-, and high-income countries.	Developing nations, developing world, first world, third word, global south
Inequities due to racism	Disparities due to race/ethnicity
LGBTQIA+ people, the LGBTQIA+ community	Homosexual, non-straight
Transgender	Transgendered, Transsexual
Sexual orientation	Sexual preference(s)
Specific, person-first description. Naming the groups according to their preferred term, e.g., "students in foster care"	Marginalized communities, marginalized people, special populations, vulnerable populations, underserved, at-risk
Age: Persons 65 or older	Elderly, aged, middle-aged, old people
Student group	Subgroup
Schools or districts	In the field, to the field

Data Collection & Reporting

Collecting data that is disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and other student groups is important for understanding and addressing opportunity gaps that stem from historical oppression and ongoing discrimination. For example, public districts and schools still operate on geographic boundaries, which means they continue to be impacted by "redlining" and other forms of race-based housing segregation.

Data by itself will not change policies and practices, but it can be an important tool to identify needs and gaps and to support efforts to change policies and practices that have been overtly or covertly discriminatory. It is also important to accurately understand and describe the populations of students and families served by the education system, as well as those who serve them in various communities. Schools continue to be racially and socioeconomically segregated, and the changing demographics of Washington and of the K–12 population mean that there is a growing difference between the demographics of the student population versus the demographics of educators.

For federal reporting, Washington is required to collect student race and ethnicity data using these seven categories: American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, More than One Race, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and White.

As noted above, people have more complex racial and ethnic identities than can be characterized by seven categories. Collection and reporting of data limited to these categories can mask differences within these groups. By disaggregating the information within these groups, disparities that may have remained hidden can be described more accurately.

Students and families must be given the opportunity to self-identify their racial and ethnic identities. Allowing students and families to self-identify increases inclusivity and response rates, resulting in higher quality data. As a result of the recommendations from the Race and Ethnicity Student Data Taskforce, schools are now required to offer and to allow students to self-identify under a larger range of categories and to record any and all racial and ethnic identifiers provided by the student. When it is available, and particularly when referring to individuals, use the specific terms that students, families, or educators use to refer to themselves.

A number of OSPI and district forms or data collection documents ask people to indicate their race and ethnicity. Historically, that meant selecting only one of the seven categories listed above. Beginning with the 2018–19 school year, expanded race categories were added to Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) in alignment with the recommendations of the Race and Ethnicity Student Data Taskforce. Districts will have four years, through the 2021–22 school year, to fully implement the recommendations. The current lists of expanded categories for ethnicity and race can be found in Appendices Y and Z of the CEDARS Data Manual. OSPI staff should be aware of these changes when requesting information about a person's race or ethnicity. Some options to consider when drafting a form, survey, or other collection are listed in the table below.

Purpose	Approach
Data collection is solely for federal reporting purpose	Use a list for respondents to select from the seven federal categories
Data collection includes federal reporting and other purposes	Provide list described above with additional open-ended questions for respondents to select multiple racial/ethnic identifiers and/or specific identifiers that fall within the federal categories (hybrid approach)
Data collection is not for federal reporting purposes but will require quantitative/ statistical analysis based upon race, ethnicity, or other identifying factors	Consult with Student Information on providing a list of standard disaggregated identifiers
Data collection is intended to allow respondents to self-identify and quantitative/ statistical analysis is not needed	Consider providing open-ended choices such as: Race_____ Ethnicity: _____ Tribal membership: _____ National origin: _____

Culturally Responsive Language Index

As language and terminology evolve, people are talking and thinking about identity in new and different ways. Below, we have provided an index of commonly used terms to use as a starting point for conversations about identity.

achievement gap

Any significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of students, such as White students and Black students, for example, or students from higher-income and lower-income households.[2] *See Opportunity Gap.*

antisemitism

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.[3]

anti-racism

Recognizing the impact of racist actions and policies, anti-racist individuals or organizations actively seek to replace racist actions, policies, and institutions with those that support racial equity. (Adapted from: https://nmaahc.si.edu/sites/default/files/downloads/resources/racialhealinghandbook_p87to94.pdf)

assigned sex

Describes the sex a person was given at birth based on their anatomy. Falls within three categories: female, male, and intersex.

assimilation

An individual's or a group's adaptation to a host society or culture. Often this occurs when the non-dominant group adjusts or integrates their behaviors or attitudes in an attempt to be accepted into the dominant group's cultural norms, either willingly or forcibly, for the sake of personal and/or professional survival.[4]

bias

Prejudice or preference toward a thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair. Bias can be explicit/conscious or implicit/unconscious.[5] *See Implicit Bias.*

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2   Great Schools Partnership. (2013, December 19). *The glossary of education reform.* https://www.edglossary.org/achievement-gap/

3   International Holocuast Remembrance Alliance (n.d.) *What is antisemitism?* https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism

4   DEI Foundational Definitions. (2019, November 5). https://ofm.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/shr/Diversity/SubCommit/DEI-Foundational-Definitions-final-draft-w%20citations%20Accessible%2011-5-19.pdf

5   Race Forward. (2015, June). *Race reporting guide.* https://www.

BIPOC

An acronym referring to Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

belonging

When one's well-being is considered and one's ability to design and give meaning to society's structures and institutions is realized. More than tolerating and respecting differences, belonging requires that all people are welcome with membership and agency in the society. Belonging is vital to have a thriving and engaged populace, which informs distributive and restorative decision making.[6] *See Othering.*

cisgender

An adjective that is used to describe a person whose assigned sex aligns with their gender identity and gender expression (e.g., someone who was assigned female at birth whose gender identity is also female).

culture

Encompasses the languages, customs, beliefs, rules, arts, knowledge, and collective identities and memories developed by members of social groups that make their social environments meaningful.[7]

cultural appropriation

"Taking intellectual property, traditional knowledge, cultural expressions, or artifacts from someone else's culture without permission. This can include unauthorized use of another culture's dance, dress, music, language, folklore, cuisine, traditional medicine, religious symbols, etc. It's most likely to be harmful when the source community is a minority group that has been oppressed or exploited in other ways or when the object of appropriation is particularly sensitive (e.g., sacred objects)."[8]

cultural competency

Cultural competency "includes knowledge of student cultural histories and contexts, as well as family norms and values in different cultures; knowledge and skills in accessing community resources and community and parent outreach; and skills in adapting instruction to students' experiences and identifying cultural contexts for individual students."[9]

cultural humility

A construct for understanding and developing a process-oriented approach to competency. Cultural humility is the ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the person. Cultural humility is guided by a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique, a desire to fix power imbalances where none should exist, and the development of partnerships with people and groups

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raceforward.org/sites/default/files/Race%20Reporting%20Guide%20by%20Race%20Forward_V1.1.pdf

6   Balajee, S. S. (n.d.). *An evolutionary roadmap for belonging and co-liberation.* Othering and belonging. http://www.otheringandbelonging.org/evolutionary-roadmap-belonging-co-liberation/

7   American Sociological Association. (n.d.). *Culture.* https://www.asanet.org/topics/culture#:~:text=jpg,make%20their%20social%20environments%20meaningful.

8   Scafidi, S. (2005). *Who owns culture? Appropriation and authenticity in American law.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University.

9   RCW 28A.410.260

who advocate for others.[10]

cultural proficiency

In education, cultural proficiency is about educating all students to high levels through knowing, valuing, and using as assets their cultural backgrounds, languages, and learning styles. This is a transformational approach and an inside-out perspective on change, involving making the commitment to lifelong learning for the purpose of being increasingly effective in serving and integrating the needs of cultural and ethnic groups. Educators must have the capability to recognize their own assumptions in order to retain those that facilitate culturally proficient actions and to change those assumptions that impede such actions. Similarly, educators as a community apply this inside-out process to examine school policies and practices that either impede or facilitate culturally proficient practices. Cultural Proficiency is about being effective thinkers and educators in cross-cultural situations.[11]

culturally responsive teaching

Teaching that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning. Characteristics of culturally responsive teaching include positive perspectives on parents and families, communication of high expectations, learning within the context of culture, student-centered instruction, culturally mediated instruction, reshaping the curriculum, and teacher as facilitator.[12]

English learners (EL)

Students who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds, and who typically require specialized or modified instruction in both the English language and in their academic courses.[13]

equality

Refers to everyone having the same treatment without accounting for differing needs or circumstances. Equality, in the simplest terms, means fairness.

equity

The act of developing, strengthening, and supporting procedural and outcome fairness in systems, procedures, and resource distribution mechanisms to create equitable (not equal) opportunity for all people. Equity has a focus on eliminating barriers that have prevented the full participation of historically and currently oppressed groups.[14]

ethnicity

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10   Waters, A., & Asbill, L. (2013, August). *Reflections on cultural humility*. American Psychological Association. https://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/newsletter/2013/08/cultural-humility

11   The Center for Culturally Proficient Educational Practice. (n.d.). *What is Cultural Proficiency?* https://ccpep.org/home/what-is-cultural-proficiency/

12   Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children.* San Francisco: CA. Jossey-Bass.

13   Great Schools Partnership. (2013, August 29). *The glossary of education reform.* https://www.edglossary.org/english-language-learner/

14   DEI Foundational Definitions. (2019, November 5). https://ofm.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/shr/Diversity/SubCommit/DEI-Foundational-Definitions-final-draft-w%20citations%20Accessible%2011-5-19.pdf

A social construct that further divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as a shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history, and ancestral geographical base.[15]

ethnocentrism

The attitude that one's own group, ethnicity, or nationality is superior to others.[16]

gender binary

The idea that gender is limited solely to two categories, male and female, rather than a more fluid classification of genders that exist along a spectrum.

gender diverse

Describes a person whose gender expression differs from stereotypical expectations about how they should look or act based on the gender they were assigned at birth. People who identify outside traditional gender categories (e.g., as both genders, gender neutral, or as non-binary are examples of gender diverse).

gender expression

The external ways in which a person expresses their gender identity to the world, such as through their behavior, emotions, style of dress, hairstyle, makeup, interests, or choice of toys, colors, or activities.

gender identity

A person's innate sense of their own gender—whether female, male, both, gender diverse, or other—regardless of assigned sex at birth. The most commonly used terms to describe gender identity include, but are not limited to, cisgender, transgender, and nonbinary.

home language

The language used most often in the child's home.

identity

The collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a thing or person is definitively recognized or known or the set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group.[17]

ideology

A manner or the content of thinking characteristic of an individual, group, or culture. The integrated assertions, theories, and aims that constitute a sociopolitical program.[18]

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15   Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). *Racial formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (2nd ed.). Abingdon-on-Thames, England, UK: Routledge.

16   Merriam-Webster. (n.d.) https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethnocentrism

17   Schilsky, M. (n.d.). *Social justice standards: Unpacking identity.* Teaching Tolerance. http://www.tolerance.org/module/anti-bias-framework-unpacking-identity

18   Merriam-Webster. (n.d.) https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ideology

implicit bias

The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness. Rather, implicit biases are not accessible through introspection. The implicit associations we harbor in our subconscious cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance. These associations develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages. In addition to early life experiences, the media and news programming are often cited as origins of implicit associations.[19]

institutional racism

Institutional racism is distinguished from the explicit attitudes or racial bias of individuals by the existence of systematic policies or laws and practices that provide differential access to goods, services, and opportunities of society by race. Institutional racism results in data showing racial gaps across every system. For children and families, it affects where they live; the quality of the education they receive; their income; types of food they have access to; their exposure to pollutants; whether they have access to clean air, clean water, or adequate medical treatment; and the types of interactions they have with the criminal justice system.[20]

interpreter

Certified Interpreter: An interpreter who is certified as competent by a professional organization or government entity through rigorous testing, based on appropriate and consistent criteria. Interpreters who have had limited training or have taken a screening test administered by an employing health interpreter or referral agency are not considered certified. Some programs offer a certificate of completion, but this does not equal certification.

Qualified Interpreter: An individual who has been assessed for professional skills, demonstrates a high level of proficiency in at least two languages and has the appropriate training and experience to interpret with skill and accuracy while adhering to the National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice published by the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care.[21]

Educational Interpreter: School district employees, whether certificated or classified, providing sign language interpretation, transliteration, or both, and further explanation of concepts introduced by the teacher for

19   The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity. (2015). *Understanding implicit bias*. http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias

20   Morgan, J. D., De Marco. A. C., LaForett, D. R., Oh, S., Ayankoya, B., Morgan. W., Franco, X., & FPG's Race, Culture, and Ethnicity Committee. (2018, May). *What racism looks like* [Infographic]. Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. https://fpg.unc.edu/sites/fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/other-resources/What%20Racism%20Looks%20Like.pdf

21   National Council on Interpreting in Health Care. *FAQ – Translators and Interpreters.* https://www.ncihc.org/faq-for-translators-and-interpreters#:~:text=A%20qualified%20interpreter%20is%20an,Ethics%20and%20Standards%20of%20Practice

students who are deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing.[22]

intersectionality

The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (e.g., racism, sexism, classism, etc.) combine, overlap, or intersect; especially in the experiences of historically marginalized individuals or groups.[23]

LGBTQIA+

A An acronym used to refer to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning, intersex, and asexual/aromantic/agender communities.[24] The "+" represents and signifies all the gender identities and sexual orientations that letters and words cannot yet fully describe. While acronyms such as LGBT and LGBTQ[25] are often used as short-hand umbrella terms meant to capture multiple sexual orientations and gender identities, staff members are encouraged to use the acronym LGBTQIA+ since it is ideal due to its more inclusive nature.

internalized racism

The "internalization of racial oppression by the racially subordinated."[26] It can occur when people of color internalize ideas, beliefs, actions, and behaviors that support or further their oppression.[27] It can include, but is not limited to, believing in negative racial stereotypes, adaptations to white cultural standards, and thinking that supports the status quo (e.g., denying that racism exists).[28]

macroaggressions

Large-scale, overt comments or actions that are intentionally directed at a target individual or group (e.g., someone of a particular race, gender, or culture or an entire race, gender, or culture).[29]

microaggressions

Brief, commonplace, and repeated verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, comments, or behavior—whether intentional or unintentional—that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults toward a targeted individual (e.g., a person of a particular race,

22   RCW 28A.410.271

23   Merriam-Webster. (n.d.) Intersectionality Definition & Meaning https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intersectionality

24   Merriam-Webster. (n.d.) LGBTQIA Definition & Meaning. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/LGBTQIA

25   Governor Inslee's LGBTQ Pride Month Proclamation https://lgbtq.wa.gov/about-us/news/2022/governor-inslee-signs-2022-lgbtq-pride-month-proclamation

26   Pyke, K. D. (2010). What is internalized racial oppression and why don't we study it?: Acknowledging racism's hidden injuries. *Sociological Perspectives*, *53*(4), 551–572.

27   Bivens, D. (1995). *Internalized racism: A definition*. Racial equity tools. https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/bivens.pdf

28   Campón, R. R., & Carter, R. T. (2015). The Appropriated Racial Oppression Scale: Development and preliminary validation. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *21*(4), 497–506. https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000037

29   Druery, D. M., Young, J. L., & Elbert, C. (2018). Macroaggressions and civil discourse. *Women, Gender, and Families of Color*, *6*(1) 73–78. https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.5406/womgenfamcol.6.1.0073.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Af19cc706f1b71dbeecb0ac1d12f7e721

sexual orientation, ethnicity, etc.) or group. Because of their persistent and cumulative impact on the target person's physical, psychological, and emotional health, microaggressions can often be even more damaging than overt expressions of racism, prejudice, or bigotry.[30] These can be further broken down into three forms:

microassaults

Conscious and intentional actions or slurs, such as using racial epithets, displaying swastikas or deliberately serving a white person before a person of color in a restaurant.

microinsults

Verbal and nonverbal communications that subtly convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity. An example is an employee who asks a colleague of color how she got her job, implying she may have landed it through an affirmative action or quota system.

microinvalidations

Communications that subtly exclude, negate, or nullify the thoughts, feelings or experiential reality of a person of color. For instance, white people often ask Asian Americans where they were born, conveying the message that they are perpetual foreigners in their own land.

multiculturalism

Cultural pluralism or diversity (as within a society, an organization, or an educational institution) or as a multicultural social state or a doctrine or policy that promotes or advocates such a state.[31]

multicultural education

Any form of education or teaching that incorporates the histories, texts, values, beliefs, and perspectives of people from different cultural backgrounds. At the classroom level, for example, teachers may modify or incorporate lessons to reflect the cultural diversity of the students in a particular class. In many cases, "culture" is defined in the broadest possible sense, encompassing race, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, class, gender, sexual orientation, and "exceptionality"—a term applied to students with specialized needs or disabilities. Generally speaking, multicultural education is predicated on the principle of educational equity for all students, regardless of culture, and it strives to remove barriers to educational opportunities and success for students from different cultural backgrounds.[32]

native language

An older term that the education and linguistic fields are trying to move away from because it lacks clarity and can be considered as "othering" speakers of languages other than English. The term is also sometimes

30   Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist*, *62*(4), 271–286. https://gim.uw.edu/sites/gim.uw.edu/files/fdp/Microagressions%20File.pdf

31   Merriam-Webster (n.d.). https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/multiculturalism

32   Great Schools Partnership. (2013, August 29). *The glossary of education reform*. https://www.edglossary.org/multicultural-education/

confused with a tribal language spoken in the home. "Home language" is the term that replaces "native language."

nonbinary

An adjective that can be used to describe a gender identity that does not fall into one of the two traditional (binary) categories—male or female. It can indicate a gender identity that is something other than male or female, that is neither entirely male nor entirely female, or that blends elements of being male or female.

opportunity gap

The ways in which a variety of factors—such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, community wealth, familial situations, or others—contribute to or perpetuate different educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment for different groups of students. *See Achievement Gap.*[33]

othering

To view or treat (a person or group of people) as intrinsically different from and alien to oneself. Opposite of belonging.

race

A "social construct without biological meaning".[34] What this means in plain English is that rather than being fixed in biology or genetics race is instead understood to be a categorical system created to confer privilege to different groups of people based upon physical appearance (such as skin color), divide people into groups ranked as superior and inferior, and determine which groups are entitled to important legal rights (e.g., citizenship, property rights, voting rights, etc.) in the United States and throughout the world.

racial equity

The condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. When we use the term, we are thinking about racial equity as one part of racial justice, and thus we also include work to address root causes of inequities not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.[35]

racial equity policy

An organizational policy that confirms the importance of an explicit focus on the eradication of racial inequities to improve people's lives—especially the lives of BIPOC. Ibram Kendi, a best-selling author, historian, and a leading anti-racist voice, refers to these as "anti-racist policies."

racial inequality

Differential opportunities and outcomes reinforced by systemic policies (official and unofficial) and practices based on race. Examples of racial inequality are numerous and interconnected. Policies such as redlining,

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33   Great Schools Partnership. (2013, September 3). *The glossary of education reform*. https://www.edglossary.org/opportunity-gap/

34   Gannon, M. (2016, February 5). *Race is a social construct, scientists argue*. Scientific American. https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/race-is-a-social-construct-scientists-argue/

35   Racial Equity Tools. (n.d.). *Glossary*. https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary

environmental racism, unequal access to healthcare, and others contribute to unequal outcomes between members of different racial groups, such as disparities in rates of infant mortality, lifespan, wealth, and home ownership. (Adapted from the [Racial Equity Tools Glossary](#))

racial injustice

The systematic unfair treatment of people based on race, resulting in unequitable opportunities and outcomes for all. Racial injustice is the reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce inequitable access, opportunities, treatment, impacts, and outcomes for all.

racial microaggressions

See Microaggressions.

racism

The belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race; a doctrine or political program based on the assumption of racism and designed to execute its principles; a political or social system founded on racism; racial [prejudice](#); or discrimination.[36]

Racism is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination. Racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices.[37]

sexual orientation

A collection of terms (e.g., straight, bisexual, gay, lesbian, queer, asexual, etc.) used to describe to whom one is emotionally, physically, and/or romantically attracted. *Note: Gender identity terms (e.g., cisgender, transgender, nonbinary) are not sexual orientation labels.*

stereotypes

False, oversimplified, prejudiced, or exaggerated generalizations about an individual or group.

transgender

An adjective used to describe a person whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth (e.g., someone who was assigned female at birth, but whose gender identity is male).

transitioning

A verb describing the process through which a transgender person begins to live in congruence with their gender identity. Each person's transition is distinct, but possible steps may include any combination of legal, medical, or social changes (e.g., changing their name and pronouns, identification documents, appearance, etc.).

tribal consultation

Government-to-government relationship building, planning, and agreements between tribal nations, districts, or other educational entities. Tribal consultation is to be meaningful, timely, and ongoing.

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36   Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/racism

37   Dismantling Racism Works Web Workbook. (n.d.). *What is racism?* https://www.dismantlingracism.org/racism-defined.html

tribal sovereignty

Refers to the inherent right of tribal nations to self-govern and ensure tribal lifeways of their citizens, lands, waters, and resources are secure and honored.

universal interventions

Programs or approaches that promote the mental health and well-being of everyone in a group or community rather than just a particular individual or group (e.g., a whole school program to prevent bullying or to promote resilience rather than a more targeted intervention focused on one particular group).

white fragility

Discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice.[38]

white privilege

White privilege is the unearned, mostly unacknowledged social advantage white people have over other racial groups simply because they are white.[39] It is a set of advantages and/or immunities that white people benefit from daily that are not available to BIPOC. White privilege exists both with and without white people's conscious knowledge of its presence, and it helps to maintain the racial hierarchy in this country.[40] White privilege is when white people have greater access to power and resources than people of color in the same situation do.[41]

(This definition is under development.)

white supremacy/white supremacy culture

A political, economic, and cultural system in which white people are believed to be the normal, better, smarter, and holier race over all other races. This system entitles whites with overwhelming control, power, and material resources. Conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread. White dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings. A white supremacy mindset is perpetuated when elements of this system are not named, agreed to, or actively undone.[42]

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38   Lexico. (n.d.). *White fragility*. https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/white_fragility

39   Dictionary.com (n.d.) *Pop culture dictionary: White privilege.* https://www.dictionary.com/e/pop-culture/white-privilege/

40   MtHolyoke.edu (2003, May 10). *What is white privilege?* https://www.mtholyoke.edu/org/wsar/intro.htm).

41   Collins, C. (2018). *What is white privilege, really?* Teaching tolerance. https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/fall-2018/what-is-white-privilege-really

42   OFM DEI Glossary of Terms Version 3 https://ofm.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/shr/Diversity/SubCommit/DEIGlossaryofEquityRelatedTerms.pdf

Okun, Tema. The Emperor Has No Clothes: Teaching about Race and Racism to People Who Don't Want to Know. Educational Leadership for Social Justice. Charlotte, N.C: Information Age Pub, 2010.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé, ed. Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement. New York: New Press, 1995.

"Dismantling Racism Works Web Workbook." dRworksbook. Accessed September 16, 2022. https://www.dismantlingracism.org/

Overview of Applicable Civil Rights Laws

Federal and state civil rights laws prohibit discrimination and discriminatory harassment in K-12 public schools. State and federal civil rights laws also protect people who are perceived to belong to a protected class. For example, if a student is bullied for being gay (because people think he is gay), but he isn't actually gay, that could still be construed as discriminatory harassment.

Discrimination and Protected Classes

Discrimination is the unfair or unequal treatment of a person or group because they are part of a defined group, known as a "protected class." A protected class is a defined group of people who share common characteristics. Discrimination can occur when a person is treated differently or denied access to programs, services, or activities because they are part of a protected class. Discrimination can also occur when a school or school district fails to accommodate a student or employee's disability. Protected classes are protected from discrimination and discriminatory harassment under federal and state civil rights laws. In Washington, discrimination based on the following protected classes is prohibited:

- Age*
- Disability
- Families with children*
- Gender identity and expression
- Honorably discharged veteran or military status
- Marital status*
- National origin
- Race and color
- Religion and creed
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Use of a trained dog guide or service animal

Age and marital status are protected classes under RCW 49.60 (the Washington Law Against Discrimination), which is the general nondiscrimination statute in Washington but not under RCW 28A.642 (the Equal Educational Opportunity Law), which specifically prohibits discrimination in Washington K–12 public schools.

Discriminatory Harassment

Discriminatory harassment is also prohibited in Washington public schools. When harassment is based on protected class and creates a hostile environment, schools must take steps to protect students and investigate—as soon as they know or reasonably should know—even if a parent or student does not file a complaint. This rule applies to sexual harassment, too.

Harassment creates a hostile environment when the conduct is so severe, pervasive, or persistent that it limits a student's ability to participate in, or benefit from, the school's services, activities, or opportunities. A hostile environment could impact a student's school life in many ways. Physical illness, anxiety about going to school, or a decline in grades or attendance could signal a hostile environment.

RELEVANT FEDERAL NONDISCRIMINATION LAWS		
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 34 C.F.R. Part 100	Prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in all programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance	**U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights** 206-607-1600 TDD: 206-607-1647 OCR.Seattle@ed.gov
Title IX of the Education **Amendments of 1972** 34 C.F.R. Part 106	Prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance	www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html **U.S. Department of Justice**
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 34 C.F.R. Part 104	Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in all programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance	**Civil Rights Division** 202-514-4609 TTY: 202-514-0716 www.justice.gov/crt
Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act 28 C.F.R. Part 35	Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by public entities	

RELEVANT STATE LAWS		
Chapters 28A.642 and **28A.640 RCW** Discrimination Prohibited/ Sexual Equality **Chapter 392-190 WAC** Equal Educational Opportunity	Prohibits discrimination in Washington K–12 public schools on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, veteran or military status, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability	**OSPI Equity & Civil Rights** 360-725-6162 TTY: 360-664-3631 equity@k12.wa.us https://www.k12.wa.us/policy-funding/equity-and-civil-rights

RELEVANT STATE LAWS		
Chapter 43.376 RCW Government-to-Government Relationship with Indian Tribes	Establishes state agency duties for establishing government-to-government relationships with Indian tribes, establishes tribal liaison positions in each state agency, requires training of state agency employees for effective communication with Indian tribes, and requires annual meetings by governor and other elected officials with Indian tribes.	**Governor's Office of Indian Affairs** 360-902-8825 https://goia.wa.gov/
Chapter 49.60 RCW Discrimination—Human Rights Commission **Title 162 WAC** Human Rights Commission	Prohibits discrimination in places of public accommodation—including K–12 public schools—on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, honorably discharged veteran or military status, sexual orientation (which includes gender identity and gender expression), or the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability	**Washington State Human Rights Commission** 800-233-3247 https://www.hum.wa.gov

If you have questions about state or federal civil rights laws, you can contact the Equity and Civil Rights Office at OSPI, which works to ensure that each student has equal access to public education without discrimination by raising awareness of rights and responsibilities under civil rights laws, developing tools and resources to facilitate equal access to all school programs and activities, and monitoring and enforcing school district and charter school compliance with state and federal civil rights laws. You can reach the Equity and Civil Rights Office at 360-725-6162 or equity@k12.wa.us.

Standards and Guidance

Coming Soon

Forms & Templates

Image and Language/Vocabulary Checklist

For any document, presentation, or publication developed for internal or external audiences, review for inclusivity based on the following:

	Images	Vocabulary	Language	Data	Notes
Gender					
Gender Expression and Identity					
Race					
Ethnicity					
Sexual Orientation					
Religion					
Socio-Economic Status					
Disability					
Age					
Family Structure					
Native Language					
Occupation					
Body Shape/Size					
Culture					
Geographic Setting					

Additional Resources

Coming Soon

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Writing for the Web

Creating Content for Web-Based Audiences

The goal of most websites is to create dynamic content that engages the intended audience and answers their questions. At OSPI, our content is of interest to a variety of audiences, with varying levels of knowledge about the public education system and our role as a state agency. This presents opportunities and challenges in creating web content—the most easily accessible type of content for these audiences—to develop greater understanding of OSPI's roles, priorities, and programs.

Content Process

Creating content is a five-step process.

Content Governance

Web content at OSPI is governed through five core levels:

1) Content Leads
2) Content Contributors
3) Communications
4) Website Governance Committee
5) Executive Leadership

The roles and information about these groups will be expanded and included here as final decisions are made.

Before You Write Your Content

After identifying the need to create new content for your page, or create a new page entirely, you'll need to take a few minutes to plan your content. While this step may seem unnecessary, it is a vital step to identify the goal, organization, and layout of your content.

Identify Your Audience

Before you begin, take some time to identify the audience for your content. If you need to create a page outlining the program requirements for a grant, understand that parents and families are not likely going to read it (nor should they). We are invested and interested in our work—that's why we're here. But not everyone is, and it's best to develop content specific to the people who'll be using it.

So, who are our audiences?

During the web redesign project, OSPI used survey data to identify five main audiences. In your planning process, identify one or two audiences who needs this information, and develop the content with them in mind. The five audiences are below.

District Staff: This audience makes up about a quarter of traffic to the website. They are often looking to log in to EDS, or need to find school or district performance data. They are interested in up-to-date

information that is easy to find, as they know information often changes.

Educators: Educators make up nearly half of the people who visit our website. They are looking primarily for licensing and certification information, learning standards, and professional development opportunities. They like to be able to easily find what they are looking for.

Educational Support Staff: This group does not visit the site often. When they do, they are looking for licensing information, professional development, and health services information. They want information that is visual and has people-friendly language.

Families: One of our smallest audiences, families are often visiting our site when they have not been able to find answers at their local district level. They are looking for testing information, learning standards, help with civil rights issues, and dual credit information. They want to find their information quickly, so the fewer clicks, the better.

Community Members: Making up a small portion of our audience, this group is often looking for data, learning standards, and licensing or certification information. They are interested in the tangible work that OSPI is doing, why we do it, and how it helps students.

Plan Your Content

After you have identified the audience you will be writing for, the next step is to plan your content. Think about why your audience is coming to your webpage and what they are looking for. Then think about what they need to know. Your goal is to combine these two things into a neat, helpful package that is easy to read and understand.

Chunk Your Content and Identify Meaningful Headings

Many people, especially here at OSPI, are used to developing technical assistance documents and guidance, and are tempted to create long, wordy webpages that include hundreds of words on every scenario that may arise.

Don't do that.

Focus on the most important information, the things that your audience will need to know, and break your information down into manageable sections. These sections should have two to three sentences, and address something specific. Spending some time identifying your headings is an important step and can serve as a guide for your audience to the information. People will be scanning your page for what they are looking for. Give it to them in the heading and provide the answer in the two or three sentences below.

A Note on Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

For years, people have developed Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) documents as a way to easily share the most pertinent information for their audience. They have provided this information as a shortcut around their lengthy, dry content. The FAQ has become so common, in fact, that recent research has shown that it is losing effectiveness, because people increasingly will not read a lengthy, 30-word question to understand what the section is about.

Instead of developing a FAQ, use information that would be in the document on your webpage, separated by meaningful headings, with the topic of the section as close to the beginning as possible.

Inverted Pyramid

The inverted pyramid is a style of newswriting that is very helpful when developing content for the web. When writing in the inverted pyramid style, you should start with your key point. Users will often only read the first few words in a section before deciding if it is going to answer their question. If they do not immediately see the answer they are looking for, they may jump down to a bulleted list, or they may just leave.

Most Important Information

Somewhat Important Information

Least Important Information
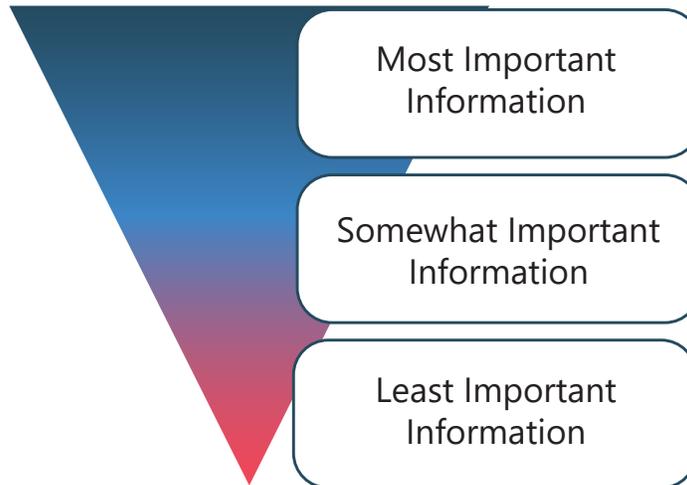
Once you have created your meaningful headings, organize them logically, but with the most important sections first. Begin with broad sections that the largest portion of your audience will be interested in knowing about, and provide specific and detailed information further down. Few will get to the end, but those who do will be the ones who need the information and have found it on your page.

Writing Your Content

Write for Your Audience

Remember to focus on your intended audience. What do they need to know to complete their task? Do they need to know about the history of the program? If you provide links to resources and examples, will your audience realistically be able to use them? Avoid providing too much information because you know someone will want it *occasionally*. Keep your page clean and concise, and let them contact you if they cannot find what they need.

Active Voice

Use active voice whenever possible. Writers should put the action first when writing in active voice.

For example, *"The report was reviewed in draft form by about a dozen people"* is written in the passive voice. The subject, about a dozen people, are being acted upon by the action, the review of the report.

Putting the subject first gives us: *"About a dozen people reviewed the report in draft form."*

This is much more readable and adds credibility. Here is another example of active voice.

> *ACTIVE: Melanie will lead the discussion.*
> *PASSIVE: The discussion will be led by Melanie.*

Learn more about active voice on plainlanguage.gov

Plain Talk

For more on Plain Talk, check out the Plain Talk section, but remember these basic guidelines:

- Understand your audience's needs
- Include only relevant information
- Use words your customers use
- Use active voice
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short
- Design clear pages

Keep Content Current/Write for Medium-Term

While your content does not need to be 'evergreen,' or applicable during any time, it is good to realistically think about how often you will update this page and how the information will look the day before it's updated. If you are looking at this page in three months, or six months, will it still make sense? Will it be outdated?

Use Templates and Style Guides

Refer to the OSPI Style Guide and make sure your content aligns with agency style, tone of voice, level of professionalism, and Plain Talk and readability guidelines outlined in this guide. If you are unsure, ask for help from a Content Contributor or check in with the Communications office at commteam@k12.wa.us.

After You Have Written Your Content

Check for Understanding

When you have finished writing your content, provide it to someone in your audience and have them review it. Do they understand it? You can also provide it to someone elsewhere in the agency who does not know your program very well. Do they learn what you want them to know? Do they know what steps you want them to take? If not, you will need to revise your content.

Revise

Revise your content to make sure it is optimized to answer the questions your users have when they come to your webpage. When you finish, check for understanding again.

Update Content Often

Programs are always changing. It is imperative that you go back and review your content every few months. When you post your content, set a calendar reminder for three months to go back and review your updates to make sure the content is current, and make additions and removals as necessary.

The new website also has an option to automatically unpublish your page after a certain amount of time. If the information on your page is time-sensitive, set the unpublish function, and don't worry about broken links. The web team monitors for them and can help you get them updated when your content expires.

Become a Content Wizard

This Writing for the Web section is only a starting point for OSPI staff. Some other incredible resources include:

- ***Letting Go of the Words* by Ginny Redish.** Copies of this book reside around the agency. Communications also has a couple, so reach out to them if you want to check out a copy.

- **Writing for the Web training.** Provided by the Department of Enterprise Services (DES), this one-day training features a ton of helpful information and hands-on instruction.

- **Hemingway App.** This web-based text editor can help you test your content for readability using Plain Talk principles. It doesn't save content though, so make sure you take it with you!

- **Flesch-Kincaid checker in Word.** This feature analyzes your text to let you know the grade level for your content. Learn how to turn it on.

Plain Talk and Readability

What is Plain Talk?

Also known as *plain language,* Plain Talk messages are clear, concise, and visually easy to read. Plain language uses common words, rather than jargon, acronyms, or unnecessary legal language.

A popular plain language myth is that you have to "dumb down" content so everyone can read it. That's not true. Plain language allows you to write for your audience using language the audience understands and feels comfortable with.

Plain Talk is Required

- Plain language is not optional—*it is required.* OSPI will use Plain Talk guidelines in all communication with customers, including website content and email.
- In Washington state, Executive Order 05-03 requires all state agencies to use simple and clear language when communicating with constituents and businesses.
- At the federal level, U.S. federal departments must comply with the Plain Writing Act of 2010. The Federal Plain Language Report Card evaluates compliance.

Basic Guidelines of Plain Talk

- Understand customer and audience needs
- Include only relevant information
- Use words your customers use
- Use active voice
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short
- Design clear pages

Tools and Resources

- To help you "Plain Talk" your text: HemingwayApp.com Editor and StoryToolz Readability Checker
- State and federal guidance: Washington Plain Talk Guidance and Federal Plain Language Guidelines
- For government agencies: Center for Plain Language and Usability.gov

Plain Talk Tips

Aim for an average of:

- < 3 sentences per paragraph (< 2 for web copy): Readers skip long paragraphs.
- < 14 words per sentence: Sentence length is one of the top two predictors of readability. When sentences are fewer than 14 words, comprehension is 90 percent higher. Vary your sentence

length to build drama, create rhythm, and make your points powerful.

- < 2 syllables per word: Words of three or more syllables add to reading difficulty.
- < 5 characters per word: Word length is one of the top two predictors of readability.

5 Steps for Making Your Text Readable

Sources: The Center for Plain Language and Plainlanguage.gov

Step 1. Identify and describe the target audience.

Know your audience. Take your audience's current level of knowledge into account. Know the expertise and interest of your average reader and then write to that person.

- Research and define the target groups that will use the document or webpage.
- List and prioritize top tasks or goals by audience group.
- List what people need or need to know.
- List characteristics of the groups that should influence design (e.g., age, computer experience, students, teachers, families, community members, etc.).
- Address the user
    - o Use pronouns to speak directly to the reader (e.g., "you must provide a copy of the grant application")
    - o Define pronouns clearly, ensuring that readers understand what pronouns refer to.
    - o In a question-and-answer format, use "I" in the question to refer to the user
    - o Avoid using "he" or "she," and address the reader directly
- Address audiences separately.

Step 2: Structure the content to guide the reader through it.

Organize the information so readers can quickly and confidently find the information they are looking for.

- Organize the content so it flows logically
- Present important information first in each section, subsection, and paragraph. Break content into short sections that reflect natural stopping points
- Write headings that help readers predict what is coming up
- Have a topic sentence
- Place the main idea before exceptions and conditions
- Use transition words
- Use lists

Step 3: Write the content in plain language.

Readers should understand the words and grasp the intended message quickly and confidently. **Choose your words carefully and be consistent in your writing style.**

- Keep it short and to the point
    - o Write short but logical sentences
    - o Write short paragraphs that cover one topic per paragraph
    - o Minimize abbreviations
    - o Minimize definitions
    - o Use the same terms consistently
    - o Include the details that help the reader complete the task
    - o Leave out details that don't help or may distract readers, even if they are interesting
- Set a helpful tone—use a conversational, rather than legal or bureaucratic, tone
- Use positive language
- Pick the right words
    - o Use strong verbs in active voice
    - o Use present tense
    - o Use contractions
    - o Use examples
    - o Use "must" to indicate requirements
    - o Use words the audience knows—use technical language appropriate for audience
    - o Avoid jargon—words that are unnecessarily complicated used to impress, rather than inform
    - o Make elements of titles or lists parallel (for example, start each with a verb)

Step 4: Use information design to help readers see and understand.

Writing that is legible and well-organized is far easier to read. You can use design elements to help users read and understand information.

- Use headers and sub-headers to organize the information
- Use typography (font size, color, bold, etc.) to guide the reader's attention
- Use whitespace to organize the information
- Use images (e.g., charts, tables, visuals) to make content easier to understand
- Highlight important concepts using bold or italics (underlining draws attention but is harder to read)—but don't overdo it
- Minimize cross-references

Simple Words and Phrases: Instead of… Try…

Instead of…	Try…	Instead of…	Try…
Additional	More, added, other	In accordance with	By, per, under
Assist, assistance	Aid, help	In the process of	(omit)
Attempt	Try	Is applicable to	Applies to
Commence	Begin, start	Modify	Change
Comply with	Follow	No later than	By
Continuing ongoing efforts	Efforts	Previously	Before
Critically important	Critical or import-ant	Prior to	Before
Currently	(omit), now	Provided that	If
Demonstrate	Show	Request	Ask
Eliminate	Cut, drop, end	Require	Must, need
Employ	Use	Subsequently	After, later, then
Ensure	Make sure	Successfully complete	Complete, pass
Expedite	Speed up, hasten	Terminate	Stop
Finalize	Complete, finish	The month of	(omit)
Frequently	Often	Utilize	Use
Identify	Find, name, show	Validate	Confirm
Implement	Carry out, start	We would appreciate it if…	Please

Get more at PlainLanguage.gov, or visit ScienceGeek for a list of education jargon to avoid (and to have a little fun with the "jargon generator").

Font Standards

OSPI's primary official font: Segoe UI (Sans Serif)

Segoe UI 11: The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. 12345678910 **BOLD** *italics*

Segoe UI 12: The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. 12345678910 **BOLD** *italics*

Segoe (SEE-goh) is a typeface, or family of fonts, that is best known for its use by Microsoft. The company uses Segoe UI in its online and printed marketing materials, including recent logos for a number of products. Additionally, the Segoe UI font sub-family is used by numerous Microsoft applications.

Use:

- General email communications (Outlook and GovDelivery)
- Print and online publications
- Templates

OSPI's secondary official font: Palatino (Serif)

Palatino 11: The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. 12345678910 **BOLD** *italics*

Palatino 12: The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. 12345678910 **BOLD** *italics*

Palatino has larger proportions, increasing legibility. Palatino was particularly intended as a design for trade or 'jobbing' use, such as headings, advertisements and display printing, and was created with a solid, wide structure and wide apertures that could appear clearly on poor-quality paper, when read at a distance or printed at small sizes. Linotype licensed Palatino to Adobe and Apple who incorporated it into their digital printing technology as a standard font.

Use:

- Official correspondence
- Contrasting font option for design
- Available as an alternative to Segoe UI

Using an application that does not offer the OSPI font standard of Palatino or Segoe UI? When in doubt, contact communications.

Email Signature Block

A standard email signature block presents a professional and consistent image for OSPI. The information we ask you to include will help the public and other agencies recognize your email as OSPI correspondence. If this guidance does not address your specific need or question, contact commteam@k12.wa.us. For a quick video on how to create your signature in Outlook, go here: Outlook Help. Create an email signature block in Outlook. See page x for technical instructions.

OSPI Signature Standard:

Mx. Firstname Lastname *he/him/his*
[Title], [Program or Division]
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
p: xxx-xxx-xxxx | **c:** xxx-xxx-xxxx

All students prepared for postsecondary pathways, careers, and civic engagement.

*Honorifics and Gender Pronouns are optional.

Click here to open the signature and copy and paste it into your Outlook.

Requirements:

- At minimum, include your full signature when you initiate an email or when replying to an email string for the first time.

- Your email signature block may vary based on the recipient(s) of the email. You may want to create more than one signature (see examples on page 76).

- Email sent from your mobile device should follow the standard as closely as possible. Instructions are available on page 75, and an image-light version is available on page 76.

- Use the ADA-compliant, printer-friendly, agency standard: Black, Segoe UI, size 10*.

- A signature is required on mobile devices. Because of limitations of the iOS and Android mail apps, a text-only version of the signature is included in the examples below.

*Take audience accessibility into consideration. E.g., if your audience needs larger font for visual impairment, continue to use Segoe UI in a larger size consistently.

DO NOT:

- Do not include backgrounds, quotations, images, nonstandard fonts or colors, additional hyperlinks (including to webinars, events, etc.), or social media hashtags to your signature.

OPTIONAL:

- Questions about special exceptions to your signature should be directed to the Communications Office.

- If your program/department uses GovDelivery for bulk communications, you may include a customized "Sign up for the [your program or division] newsletter" link. You may also link to your webpage using the text "Visit us online at [your webpage]". Remember to use descriptive text for your link for accessibility. Contact the Communications Office for support.

- The nondiscrimination statement and legal disclaimer are optional, but is added when the email content and/or audience requires one or both. Visit the intranet for nondiscrimination statement guidance and translations: http://insideospi/sites/PoliciesForms/Pages/NonDiscriminationStatement.aspx

- Gender pronoun preference is optional for inclusion on OSPI's standard signature. See the example for Alex Conley.

- Email sent from your mobile device should follow the standard as closely as possible. See page 4 for iPhone instructions, or refer to your email client's instructions.

Additional Disclaimers

These disclaimers are optional, and may be recommended in specific circumstances. If used, text size may be decreased to 9 point, but no smaller.

Nondiscrimination Statement

Include the nondiscrimination statement when an email, announcement, publication, or other communication is widely distributed, such as on the website, or when sent to all program participants, all members of a list serve, all superintendents, etc.

> OSPI provides equal access to all programs and services without discrimination based on sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, honorably discharged veteran or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability. Questions and complaints of alleged discrimination should be directed to the Equity and Civil Rights Director at 360-725-6162/TTY: 360-664-3631; or P.O. Box 47200, Olympia, WA 98504-7200; or equity@k12.wa.us.

Legal Disclaimer

> This communication, including attachments, is intended solely for the use of the individual to whom it is addressed, and may contain information that is privileged, confidential, proprietary or otherwise exempt from disclosure under applicable state and federal laws. If you are not the addressee, or are not authorized to receive for the intended addressee, you are hereby notified that you may not use, copy, distribute or disclose to anyone this communication or the information contained herein. If you have received this message in error, immediately advise the sender by reply email and destroy this message.

Legal disclaimer (abbreviated)

This information is for informational purposes only. It does not provide legal advice or establish an attorney–client relationship. Please contact an attorney for legal advice specific to the facts and circumstances of your individual situation. All communications with OSPI are subject to public disclosure under state law (Chapter 42.56 RCW).

Notice of public disclosure

Public documents and records are available to the public as provided under the Washington State Public Records Act (RCW 42.56). This email may be considered subject to the Public Records Act and may be disclosed to a third-party requester.

ADA Notification for events

Include the ADA notice on all communications for events, training sessions, workshops and conferences.

To arrange accommodations for persons with disabilities, please contact [First Name Last Name] at [phone number], TTY 360-664-3631 or by email, [email address] within three business days of this event - [date here]. Please note that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not require OSPI to take any action that would fundamentally alter the nature of its programs or services, or impose an undue financial or administrative burden.

How to Customize Your Signature in Outlook

1. Home tab > New Email

2. Insert tab > Signature dropdown > Signatures... [This opens the Signature dialog box]

3. Click New

4. Type a name for the signature – such as "Full Signature" or "Internal" or "Sig with Legal Disclaimer–whatever label works best for you.

5. Create the signature block according to the OSPI signature standards.

6. Click OK when finished.

To set your default signature, follow steps 1 and 2. Then, under "Choose default signatures", select your default signature for "New messages" and "Replies/forwards."

When you need to insert a signature other than your default into a message: Insert > Signature > Select the one you want to use from the dropdown. It will take out the default signature and replace it with the one you selected.

On an iPhone

You can create one custom signature per email address.

1. Settings
2. Mail, Contacts, Calendars

3. Signature
4. If you have more than one email address on your iPhone, select 'Per Account.'
5. Customize the signature field.

The signature will auto-populate when you create a new email and when you reply to an email.

Alternate Option

The signature may not display correctly on mobile phones, rich text emails, or plain text emails. In these instances, this lighter version of the signature may be used.

Mx. Firstname Lastname *they/them*
[Title], [Division or Program]
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
p: xxx-xxx-xxxx | c: xxx-xxx-xxxx
All students prepared for postsecondary pathways, careers, and civic engagement.

Signature Examples

Standard with all required elements

Firstname Lastname
[Title], [Program or Division]
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
p: xxx-xxx-xxxx | **c:** xxx-xxx-xxxx
All students prepared for postsecondary pathways, careers, and civic engagement.

Standard with connect link, fax, and gender pronouns

Mx. Firstname Lastname *he/him/his*
[Title], [Program or Division]
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
p: xxx-xxx-xxxx | **f:** xxx-xxx-xxxx
All students prepared for postsecondary pathways, careers, and civic engagement.

Visit us online on the [program] webpage!

When writing on behalf of someone else, such as a director

Firstname Lastname, on behalf of Director Lastname
[Director's Title], [Director's Program or Division]
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
p: xxx-xxx-xxxx
All students prepared for postsecondary pathways, careers, and civic engagement.

Revision Log

October 21, 2022

Added definition for antisemitism

Updated definitions for LGBTQIA+ and white supremacy/white supremacy culture

Updated sections on Person-First Language and Action Descriptions, Gender Identity, Gender-Neutral Pronouns, and Overview of Applicable Civil Rights

April 9, 2021

Updated Signature Standard

Added Table of Contents

Added Two Acronyms (SQSS & HSBP)

January 26, 2021

Added Culturally Responsive Style Guide

October 2, 2020

Added entries for legal citations, PO Box, agency citation style, emphasis, underlining, italics.

July 17, 2019

Newly rewritten guide

Added to Guide:
- Writing for the Web (May 2018)
- Email signature block standard (May 2018)
- Agency Font Standards (May 2018)

Updates to Guide:
- am/pm (March 2019)
- percent (June 2019)
- He/she vs. their (June 2019)
- First vs. Third person speech (March 2019)
- Legislative Citations (May 2018)
- Latinx (October 2018)
- Executive Correspondence standards

Removed from Guide:
- Punctuation, Grammar and Usage (added to A-Z Reference)
- OSPI Departments and Programs
- Language Use for Individuals with Disabilities (will be in Culturally Responsive Style)
- Usability and Digital Content
- Educational Service Districts (ESDs)

- School District/ESD Lookup
- Basic Education Act
- Style Sheet Template
- How to Request a Change to the Style Guide (added to About)
- Removed 'percentage point' entry as Style now allows the use of the percent symbol (%) in writing.