

# *The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) Position on OSPI Funding Requests*

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The SEAC has conducted a multi-year engagement effort to explore inclusion through a racial equity lens. For all students to be truly included in basic education without barriers, the SEAC recognizes that family engagement and language access are essential. The SEAC acknowledges in all education settings, culturally and linguistically diverse families continue to experience barriers to meaningful and equitable family engagement practices in Local Education Agencies (LEAs). The COVID-19 pandemic has widened the opportunity gap for immigrant/refugee, deaf/hard of hearing and blind/low vision students, and families who have been disconnected from communication with their schools. Families need access to qualified interpreters and translation of school documents as well as digital literacy training to support their students.

The SEAC is supportive of the OSPI operating budget requests with recommendations. The Budget Provisos explicitly state and integrate the following components:

### **Closing Gaps in Access to Learning Devices and Connectivity**

OSPI has requested funds to close the digital opportunity gap to learning. In addition to devices and the Internet, families need access to digital literacy training to learn how to use the devices and the software used to access remote learning. This includes attending meetings, submitting assignments, monitoring their student's progress, and staying connected to the school. OSPI's budget request currently only includes learning devices, mobile hotspot devices and services, residential broadband connection, and childcare facility connections. The SEAC requests the addition of accessible digital literacy training for families. Devices and Internet access are worthless if a family cannot access them. Without digital literacy training for families, the opportunity gap will only continue to widen.

### **Inclusionary Practices Professional Development Project (IPP)**

OSPI has requested funds for the continuation of the IPP which provides critical professional development to increase inclusionary practices. The SEAC is supportive of funding the continuation of the IPP. However, family and community engagement, language access and digital literacy for families are topics that are underrepresented. There are multiple factors tied to successful inclusion including family support and engagement, and equitable access strategies. Weaving consistent threads through the IPP work will only strengthen the effort and build a foundation of success for all



learners in Washington schools. The SEAC recommends a requirement to expand the required components of the IPP to explicitly include professional development and technical assistance for family and community engagement, language access, and digital literacy training.

### **Supporting Students through Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)**

OSPI has requested funding to support statewide development of a multi-tiered system of supports. The SEAC recognizes family and community engagement and language access as a critical component of the MTSS tier 1 foundation. The SEAC is in support of the funding request and recommends that the regional capacity building and professional development is inclusive of family and community engagement, language access, and digital literacy training for students and families.

### **Supporting Families with a Special Education Family Liaison**

OSPI has requested funding to add capacity to support families with the addition of a special education family liaison. The SEAC strongly supports this recommendation and recommends that the liaison is qualified to support culturally and linguistically diverse families.

### **Building Staff Capacity to Support Student Well-Being**

OSPI has requested funding to implement the first phase of the Staffing Enrichment Workgroup's recommendations. The proposal increases the funding allocation for family and community engagement staffing. The SEAC strongly supports this funding request.

The SEAC is dedicated to improving student outcomes and believes that meaningful and equitable language access practices are an essential component of addressing opportunity gaps.