

JANUARY

2026

CLOSING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP IN WASHINGTON'S PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

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

PREPARED BY
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¹ Cover photo by Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for EDUimages

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Executive Summary

The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) is a bicameral, bipartisan legislative and community workgroup committed to closing racial opportunity gaps in Washington's K-12 public education system. The term "opportunity gap" refers to systemic inequity in education that structurally disadvantages certain demographics of students (e.g., students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities).

The EOGOAC's 2026 report is focused on an initial review of the 2025 Opportunity Gap Studies. These studies, funded by the Washington State Legislature, use quantitative and qualitative data to examine the current state of the opportunity gaps for each community and successful strategies and recommendations to close those gaps.

Commissions on African American Affairs

- A Plan to Close the Opportunity Gap

Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs

- Stories of Educational Wayfinding: Supporting the Educational Voyages of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Students
- Centering Asian Diasporic Voices and Shaping Policy: The Educational Experiences and Well-being of Asian and Asian American youth in Washington schools

Commission on Hispanic Affairs

- Hispanic and Latinx Students Educational Opportunity Gaps Study

Governor's Office of Indian Affairs

- Relationships, Relationships, Relationships: Native American Education Opportunity Gap Study in Washington State

This report provides a high-level synthesis including the identification of the following themes:

- Progress made
- Representative staffing
- Culturally responsive curriculum
- Data disaggregation
- Social emotional learning and mental and behavioral health
- Whole child, whole system

Since its creation in 2009, the EOGOAC has made recommendations representing a holistic approach toward closing the opportunity gap. This year, as part of its analysis of the renewed opportunity gap studies, the EOGOAC has chosen to take a retrospective look at their work. The [Historical Recommendations](#) section presents previous recommendations made by the committee on these themes and their implementation status.

Lastly, the EOGOAC offers one new recommendation for this year:

Recommendation 1.

The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislature expend time and resources addressing the current inequalities in school funding, specifically in meeting the needs of each student according to their needs.

More information can be found in the [recommendation background](#) section.

Background on Committee

Unique in structure and purpose, the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) was established in 2009 by [Second Substitute Senate Bill 5973](#)² and is charged by [RCW 28A.300.136](#)³ to:

“[S]ynthesize the findings and recommendations from the five 2008 Achievement Gap Studies into an implementation plan, and to recommend policies and strategies to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Professional Educator Standards Board, and the State Board of Education.”⁴

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

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

In summary, the EOGOAC's explicit purpose is to monitor and make recommendations to close the opportunity gap for **students of color** in Washington, recognizing intersecting identities and experiences that add additional systemic challenges. The EOGOAC submits recommendations in the form of annual reports to the Legislature, the Governor, the House and Senate Education Committees, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB), and the State Board of Education (SBE).

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

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

⁴ Ibid.

Governance and Structure

The EOGOAC Operating Protocols document, which outlines the policies and procedures of the committee related to membership, finances, decision making protocols, meeting conduct, and communications, can be found on [their website](#).

Committee Membership

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

- The chairs and ranking minority members of the House and Senate Education Committees, or their designees.
- One additional member of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House and one additional member of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate.
- A representative of the Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO).
- A representative of the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL) in the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- A representative of federally recognized Indian tribes whose traditional lands and territories lie within the borders of Washington State, designated by the federally recognized tribes.
- Four members appointed by the Governor in consultation with the state ethnic commissions, who represent the following populations: African-Americans, Latino/a Americans, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islander Americans.

Table I. Committee Members 2025

Name	Representing
Dr. James Smith	Commission on African American Affairs
Frieda Takamura	Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs (Asian American)
Fiasili Savusa	Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs (Pacific Islander)
Dr. Randy Nuñez	Commission on Hispanic Affairs
Bill Kallappa	Governor's Office of Indian Affairs
Erin Okuno	Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds
Representative Lillian Ortiz-Self	House of Representatives
Representative Matt Marshall	House of Representatives
Representative Sharon Tomiko Santos	House of Representatives
Tennille Jefferies-Simmons	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Senator Paul Harris	Senate
Senator Bob Hasegawa	Senate
Senator Lisa Wellman	Senate

Table 2. Committee Member Alternates 2025

Name	Representing
Dr. Tyson Marsh*	Commission on African American Affairs
Brianne Ramos	Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs (Asian American)
Lydia Faitalia	Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs (Pacific Islander)
Michael Peña	Commission on Hispanic Affairs
Yordanos Gebreamlak	Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds
Maria Flores	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

*Dr. Tyson Marsh served as both alternate and primary member in 2025

Committee Co-Chairs

Section 7 of RCW 28A.300.136 states the chair or co-chairs of the committee shall be selected by the members of the committee. The committee co-chairs for 2024 include:

- Representative Lillian Ortiz-Self
- Fiasili Savusa

Committee Staff

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction provides administrative and research staff support to the committee. Committee staff include:

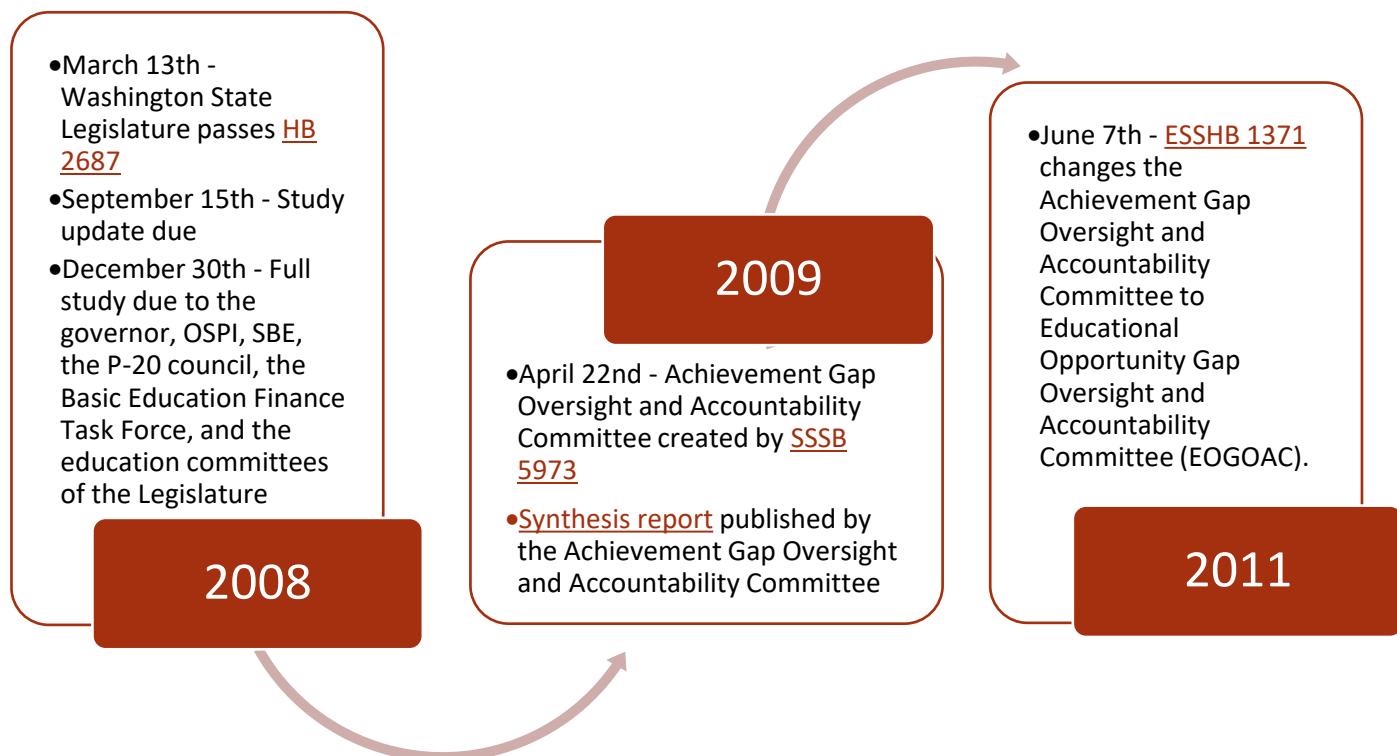
- Anna Hernandez-French, Policy Analyst and Implementation Manager, Government Relations
- Heather Rees, Research and Policy Development Program Manager, Government Relations
- Jenny Plaja, Chief Policy and Legislative Affairs Officer
- Mikhail (Misha) Cherniske, Acting Director, Policy and Legislative Affairs

Introduction

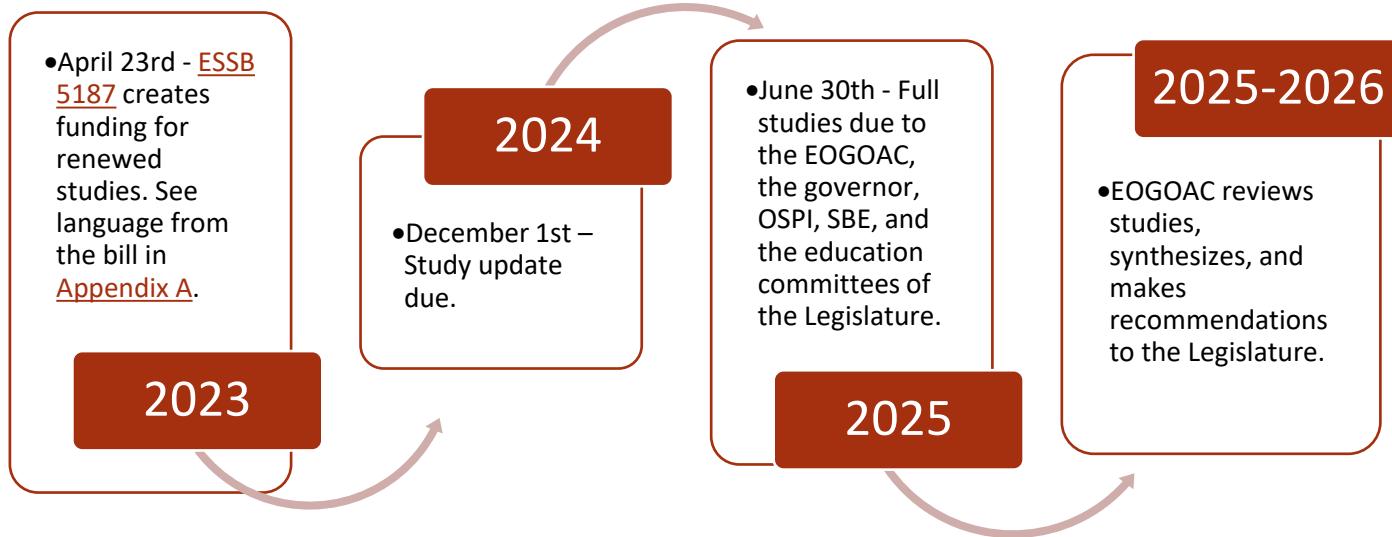
In March 2008, the Washington State Legislature commissioned the 2008 Achievement Gap Studies.⁵ Building upon the work of the Multi-Ethnic Think Tank and other groups, the selected researchers were charged with analyzing the extent of and reasons for the existence of an achievement gap in academic performance between racial and ethnic student groups. Five studies were commissioned for (as referenced in report titles): African American students, Asian American students, Latino students, Pacific Islander students and Native American students. The reports made recommendations for closing the achievement gap for their communities.

The following year, the Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee was created by [SSSB 5973](#) to synthesize the recommendations from the 2008 reports into a plan for closing the gap for all students of color. The recommendation themes the committee identified became the backbone for the Committee's work from then on. A notable shift occurred in 2011 when the name of the committee was changed to the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC). The purpose of this was to convey that the achievement gap existed, not due to the students' abilities, but because of lack of opportunities for students of color to succeed and that the system is responsible for closing that gap.

Figure I. Timeline 2008-2011 and 2023-2026

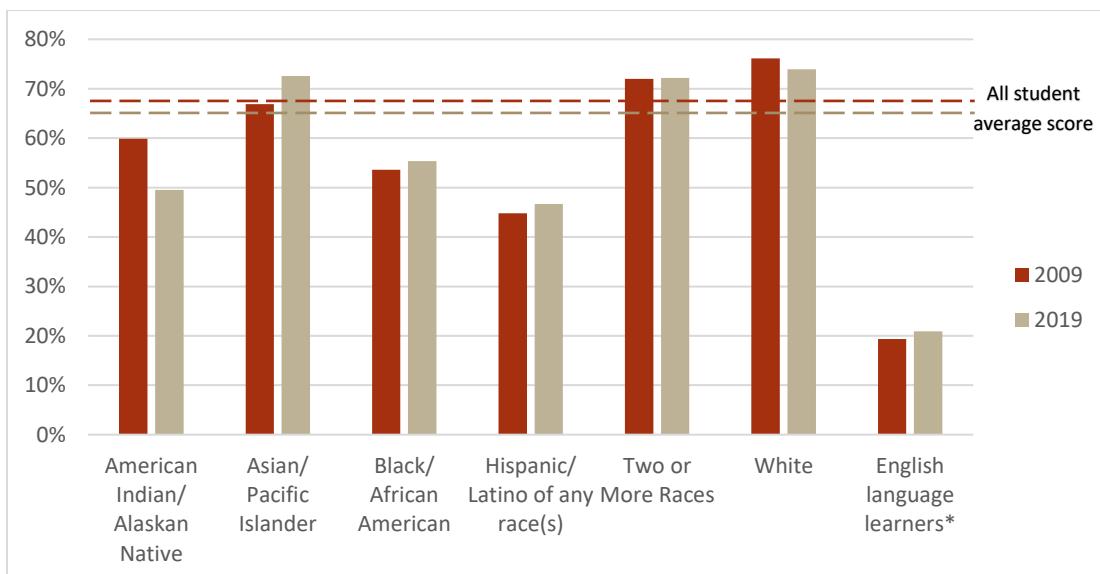


⁵ See bill language in [Appendix A](#).



Since 2009, the EOGOAC has met to review policy, research, and data, and make ongoing recommendations to close the opportunity gap. Prompted by the 10th anniversary of this work, interest grew in updating the original 2008 reports. In 2023, the Legislature commissioned five new studies from the ethnic commissions and the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA), to be submitted to the EOGOAC by July 2025. Recognizing that a whole generation of students has passed through the education system since the original analysis, the new reports serve as a check on the progress that has been made and an opportunity to recalibrate the next steps.

Figure 2. 4th Grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading at or Above Basic in 2009 and 2019 in Washington State.⁶



⁶ Report Card NAEP Data (2019) retrieved from <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2023-06/report20card20naep20data.xlsx> on January 13, 2026. Note: NAEP data is collected using the Federal race/ethnicity categories and is not available at the level of disaggregation currently used in Washington State.

*English language learner scores do not include Advanced scores for 2009 and 2019 due to data privacy suppression.

The committee recognizes that the 12 years since the initial reports have not followed a steady upward trajectory, with progress interrupted by periods of economic instability, political unrest, and a global pandemic that completely disrupted the K-12 system. The 2025 reports are being released into a caustic political atmosphere that is actively hostile to focusing on the needs of students of color. Therefore, the resulting recommendations must take into account the outside threats to the public education system.

Opportunity Gap Studies High-Level Synthesis

Beginning July 2025, the EOGOAC reviewed the five Opportunity Gap Studies. Comprising over 160 recommendations across 595 pages, these reports represent an extensive amount of work by the researchers, educators, and community involved and deserve a thorough and detailed review. Readers can find the executive summaries and links to the full reports in [appendices B-F](#) of this report. After initial reading, presentation, and discussion with the research authors, the EOGOAC's initial synthesis is as follows:

Contents of each report included:

- Synthesis of the exiting research literature
- Original data collection through interviews, focus groups, and surveys
- Engagement with the communities impacted by the opportunity gap including students, families, educators and administrators
- Analysis of administrative data collected by school districts and state agencies such as graduation rates and state testing outcomes
- Identification of opportunity gaps
- Recommendations and goals for eliminating gaps.

Some reports also included statistical analysis of individual student-level data.

Themes

The EOGOAC identified the following common themes of analysis and discussion presented in the Opportunity Gap Study reports. In the [recommendations](#) section, the report themes will be connected to existing committee recommendations.

Progress Made

Through the analysis of disaggregated student data, the reports commonly identified that while some progress has been made on closing the gap in one or more student outcome areas, significant gaps persisted even after over 10 years of effort. The trends also showed both slides and gains made during the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted the previous change trajectory.⁷ Recommendations and strategies are provided in the reports to close these gaps and accelerate progress.

Representative Staffing

In addition to student academic progress, the reports examined the demographic representativeness of school staff, specifically classroom teachers. All communities identified that their students benefit from

⁷ See Washington State Commission on African American Affairs, 2025, p. 25; Halvorson & Camacho, 2025, p. 26; Higheagle Strong, 2025, p. 48; Le et al., 2025, p. 33 & p. 45; Nguyễn et al., 2025, p. 21.

having the experience of educators who look like them in the classroom and positions of leadership. The researchers asked, “does the race and ethnic make-up of the school staff reflect the diversity of our student community?” and the answer is across the board “no.” In some communities, progress has been made in having student and staff representation be more aligned, but the gains are small and slow.⁸ Connection to culture and community often extends beyond the classroom teacher to include roles for family members, elders, and other cultural knowledge holders who add valuable perspectives. Recommendations in this area are targeted at increasing recruitment and retention of educators of color as well as integrating and supporting cultural knowledge holders.

Culturally Responsive Curriculum

The reports addressed if the curriculum received by students reflected their specific cultural and identity backgrounds. Often referred to as culturally responsive, culturally appropriate, or culturally relevant curriculum, the concept is that educational content has often reflected the perspective and values of the dominant culture, whereas those of students of color, with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ students are left out of academic narratives.

The reports argue that students who see themselves reflected in educational content are more likely to be engaged in their education, more academically successful and have positive self-view. This includes having opportunities to learn in their native or heritage language. Recommendations on this theme span from improving the curriculum content itself, to educator preparation and professional development aimed at making sure teachers can accurately and appropriately deliver the content.⁹

Data Disaggregation

The availability and quality of fully disaggregated race and ethnicity data at the student level was frequently addressed by the reports. The researchers recognized that while gains that have been made since the 2008 studies to expand on the federally reported race/ethnicity categories, limitations still exist when it comes to extending these categories beyond the K-12 system. This continuity is needed to examine early learning and post-secondary outcomes. The reports identified that progress still needs to be made to ensure that system inputs and outputs can be analyzed across the continuum of learning, specifically where the use of current federal roll-up categories can result in amplification of racial stereotypes, the masking of both assets and challenges, as well as under identification of certain student groups. The recommendations seek to improve the quality and availability of the data and ensure that it reflects the experiences of our communities.¹⁰

Social Emotional Learning and Mental and Behavioral Health

Since the completion of the 2008 studies, the educational system has continually invested more time and attention to nonacademic support of students. This includes supports for students’ mental, behavioral, and emotional health, which in turn allow students to succeed academically. The reports

⁸ See Washington State Commission on African American Affairs, 2025, p. 71; Halvorson & Camacho, 2025, p. 58; Higheagle Strong, 2025, p. 21 & p. 59; Le et al., 2025, p. 40; Nguyẽn et al., 2025, p. 27.

⁹ See Washington State Commission on African American Affairs, 2025, p. 62; Halvorson & Camacho, 2025, p. 52; Higheagle Strong, 2025, p. 19; Le et al., 2025, p. 139; Nguyẽn et al., 2025, p. 8 & p. 34.

¹⁰ See Washington State Commission on African American Affairs, 2025, p. 16; Halvorson & Camacho, 2025, p. 15; Higheagle Strong, 2025, p. 38.

emphasize the importance of these supports being delivered in partnership with communities and families in a way that is culturally appropriate. The report data shows that students of color often experience worse behavioral and mental health outcomes than their white peers that can be exacerbated by cultural factors such as racial stereotypes, stigma, and racism. Additionally, access to culturally appropriate services and mental health providers is often limited. Recommendations seek to increase access to services as well as a sense of belonging and cultural connection.¹¹ Support for the whole individual was identified as essential to closing achievement gaps.

Whole Child, Whole System

While the domain of the EOGOAC rests within the public K–12 system, the reports' analysis included cross sector inputs such as early learning, postsecondary engagement, and workforce participation. Data analysis in the reports demonstrated that students of color often start their educational path with a measurable disadvantage (ex. WaKIDS assessment scores) and the opportunity gaps experienced along the way impact their long-term success after graduation.¹² The EOGOAC acknowledges that opportunity gaps are experienced by students of color and their families in all domains such as health care, housing, criminal justice, and the workforce. These experiences influence how students learn and vice versa. Culturally and linguistically accessible engagement between the education system and families and communities is essential to address these external challenges. The connections between these domains will continue to be a future focus of the EOGOAC.

The EOGOAC recognizes that the over 160 recommendations presented by the Opportunity Gap Studies are both interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The EOGOAC will continue to conduct a detailed synthesis of the Opportunity Gap Studies in 2026, with a focus on the recommendations. See [Future Work](#) section for more information.

¹¹ See Washington State Commission on African American Affairs, 2025, p. 39; Halvorson & Camacho, 2025, p. 45, Higheagle Strong, 2025, p. 129; Le et al., 2025, p. 134; Nguyễn et al., 2025, p. 31.

¹² For data analysis see Washington State Commission on African American Affairs, 2025, p. 35; Halvorson & Camacho, 2025, p. 34; Higheagle Strong, 2025, p. 129; Le et al., 2025, p. 33, 65, 80, & 129; Nguyễn et al., 2025, p. 22.

Historical Recommendations

The themes presented by the Opportunity Gap Study reports (see above) are not new to the committee. In fact, the EOGOAC has continually made recommendations on these topics since their inception. The tables below display recommendations made by the committee since 2010 organized by topic and with indicators of implementation status.

Table 3. Index of status of recommendations

Icon	Status
	Recommendation is marked as completed.
	Recommendation has been partially completed or achieved.
	Recommendation has not been implemented, or implementation status is currently unknown.

Representative Staffing

Year	Recommendation	Status
2022	The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) work with the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) to train principal mentors of color, as well as continued support of other projects to recruit, hire, and retain educators and other leaders of color.	
2023	7A. The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) work with the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) to train principal mentors of color.	
2018	5B: The PESB—in consultation with ethnic commissions, GOIA, and the EOGOAC—must review the cultural competency of exams that teacher candidates are required to pass in order to enter a teacher preparation program and to exit into the educator workforce (i.e. WEST-B and edTPA).	
2024	8C. The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislature make continued investments in mentorship programs for educators and principals of color.	
2023	1D. The EOGOAC recommends that the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) monitor the success of Grow Your Own and alternative route programs in supporting students of color to attain licensure and hold them to the same standards as colleges of education.	
2023	1E. The EOGOAC recommends that school districts review their disaggregated educator workforce data and complete the workforce secondary trauma checklist to determine what additional supports are needed for educators of color in order to address the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and to improve retention of educators of color.	
2022	7B. The EOGOAC recommends that OSPI and the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) work together to study the demographics of educators working under an emergency teacher certificate and identify potential impacts on the workforce of educators of color.	
2017	2A. Expand Pathways to Teacher Certifications The EOGOAC supports the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) and the	

Year	Recommendation	Status
	OSPI budget request to expand teacher certification pathways and recommends the Legislature approve this budget request.	
2017	2D. The EOGOAC recommends the Legislature increase teacher salaries at the level identified by CTWG and by the OSPI with the necessary adjustment due to inflation	
2017	2G. Increase the Capacity of the Grow Your Own Teacher Strategy The EOGOAC recommends expanding the capacity and reach of the Grow Your Own Teacher strategy in Washington.	
2017	2H. Due to the limited number of educators of color, the EOGOAC recommends the PESB provide guidance and statewide resources to school districts on how to develop and implement policies and programs that mentor, encourage, and support the educator workforce of color.	
2016	3A. Increase funding for Educator Retooling Grant Program	
2016	6A. Increase access for candidates of color to become educators	
2016	6B. Increase Support for school staff, teachers, and administrators of color	
2016	6C. Reduce barriers through partnerships, scholarships, and loan forgiveness	
2015	6B. The EOGOAC recommends Stafford and Perkins loans be used as an incentive to serve in low performing schools or teacher shortage areas.	
2015	6C. Therefore, the EOGOAC recommends additional funding for the Recruiting WA Teachers program through the Professional Educators Standards Board (PESB).	
2013 2014 2015	6A. The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee recommends that the educator workforce more closely reflects the students they teach by creating a cohesive and comprehensive career path to provide incentives and greater access for candidates of color to become educators.	
2014	6B. The EOGOAC recommends that criteria one and two under the TPEP model embrace a focus on hiring and retaining educators of color within the building: 1) Creating a school culture that promotes the ongoing improvement of learning and teaching for students and staff. 2) Demonstrating commitment to closing the opportunity gap.	
2013	6B. The EOGOAC recommends that in addition to support services, additional focus should be placed on the recruitment of qualified educators of color, particularly targeting ethnic serving higher education institutions.	
2011 2012	7A. Programs should increase efforts to attract and retain students of color.	
2024	5C. The EOGOAC recommends that paraeducators who support students with disabilities are paid a living wage and receive ample training in cultural competency and support for multilingual students. The EOGOAC supports OSPI's-Advancing a Living Wage for Washington's Paraeducators 2024 Supplemental Operating Budget Decision Package and recommends passage of SB 6082-Increasing compensation for Washington paraeducators.	

Year	Recommendation	Status
2023	1A. The EOGOAC recommends that state agencies including Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), and Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) work in partnership with the Washington Education Association (WEA) and the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to support the work of 2-year colleges to encourage diverse recruitment of students into the teaching profession.	<input type="radio"/>
2020	5C. The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislature provide funding to expand incentives provided by PESB to recruit and retain school counselors of color.	<input type="radio"/>
2017	2B. Mandatory Teacher Certification Requirement The EOGOAC recommends the PESB add a graduation requirement that all teacher preparation programs in Washington must adhere to: All students must take and pass the Washington State teacher certification test before graduation.	<input type="radio"/>
2017	2C. Mentorship Programs in Higher Education. The EOGOAC recommends all teacher preparation programs in Washington provide mentorship programs to teacher candidates of color.	<input type="radio"/>
2017	2E. The EOGOAC recommends the Legislature convene a workgroup tasked with identifying roles, types of bonuses, and differential compensation options that incentivize working at high needs schools.	<input type="radio"/>
2017	2F. Fund a Washington State Loan Forgiveness Program for Teachers. The EOGOAC recommends the Legislature fund this loan forgiveness program.	<input type="radio"/>

Culturally Responsive Curriculum

Year	Recommendation	Status
2020	6B. The EOGOAC recommends that PESB reconvene a cultural competency workgroup in collaboration with the EOGOAC, to reexamine and revise the cultural competency standards.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2018	5A: All cultural competency training for educators, developed or provided by a state agency, must align to the Professional Educator Standards Board cultural competency standards.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2015	2B. Certificated administrative and classified staff are recommended to receive cultural competence training based on the cultural competence standards.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2010	Designate the existing state-funded Learning Improvement Days (LID) for research-based professional development in the area of cultural competence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2010	Allocate funding for cultural competence professional development of administrators, teachers, and other school staff.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2010	Provide additional funding for enabling the teaching and maintaining tribal languages, history and culture, as identified in RCW 28A.410.045.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2010	Provide continued technical assistance and professional development for teachers to incorporate cultural competence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2020	5B. The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislature fund the recommendation from the Staffing Enrichment Workgroup to provide mandatory professional development on racial literacy and cultural responsiveness for certificated instructional, classified and certificated administrative staff.	<input type="radio"/>

Year	Recommendation	Status
2017	4D. Incorporate Community and Family Resources into Cultural Competence Professional Development and Training. Hence, the EOGOAC recommends school districts and the WSSDA (see Recommendation 4A) reach out to families, communities, and the CISL when creating and implementing cultural competence training programs. Moreover, all training programs shall include best practices for schools and school districts regarding family and community engagement.	
2016	2A. The state must provide cultural competence training for all staff	
2013	2A. The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee recommends that teachers who received their Residency or Professional Certification before the cultural competence standards were enacted receive additional cultural competence training.	
2014	2B. EOGOAC recommends that cultural competence training is provided first to challenged schools in need of improvement (as identified under RCW 28A.657.020).	
2013	2B. Additionally, certificated administrative and classified staff are also recommended to receive cultural competence training based on the cultural competence standards.	
2011	6A. The standards have not adequately been vetted for cultural competence or relevance and, therefore, should undergo a bias and fairness assessment prior to adoption.	
2010	Commit to system-wide training and accountability for administrators, including superintendents, school boards, principals and counselors, as well as all supporting staff (bus drivers, paraprofessionals and classified staff) for cultural competence.	
2010	Align and infuse cultural competence standards across academic categories in order to show how they interrelate across the teaching continuum.	
2024	8B. The EOGOAC recommends that the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) develop and implement requirements for educators who received educator certification outside the state of Washington, to meet in-state Cultural Competency, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CCDEI) standards and the training necessary to implement Since Time Immemorial (STI) curriculum.	
2022	2A. The EOGOAC recommends that ethnic studies be woven throughout all academic content courses in all levels K-12.	
2022	2B. The EOGOAC also supports the addition of a high school graduation requirement that is inclusive of ethnic studies, whether through a stand-alone course or through integrated content. The requirement must be rigorous, meaningful, and measurable.	

Data Disaggregation

Year	Recommendation	Status
2018	3A. Schools and school districts—under the guidance of the OSPI—must collect, use, and protect student data according to the best practices outlined in the RESD Task Force’s Guidance.	

Year	Recommendation	Status
2017	6A. Adopt Training and Guidance Proposed by the Race and Ethnicity Student Data Task Force. The EOGOAC supports the work of the RESD Task Force, and recommends the Legislature adopt their proposed race and ethnicity guidance published in July 2017.	✓
2016	5A. Deeper Disaggregation of Data	✓
2016	5B. Creation of a Race and Ethnicity Collection Task Force within OSPI	✓
2016	5C. Reduce N-size Requirements for reporting and school accountability	✓
2014 2016	5D. Provide technical assistance, guidance, and reporting guidelines for disaggregating student data	✓
2015	1D. The EOGOAC recommends that the revised elements of the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System be used to drive improvements at the school and district level to foster a positive and supportive school culture that reduces the disproportional discipline of students of color.	✓
2014 2015	5A. The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) recommends that school districts gather and report expanded sub-ethnic and sub-racial categories in addition to the minimum federal ethnicity and racial categories.	✓
2013 2014 2015	5B. The EOGOAC recommends that a revision of the race and ethnicity guidance is completed by a taskforce convened by OSPI with representation from the EOGOAC, the Ethnic Commissions, Governor's Office of Indian Affairs, and diverse parents.	✓
2013 2014 2015	5C. The EOGOAC further recommends that under the federal race category of Black/African American, that the following sub-ethnic categories are included to provide for disaggregation of that category: Black: National origin from a country in the continent of Africa (indicate Country of Origin) African American: National origin from the United States of America, with African ancestors.	✓
2013 2014 2015	5D. The EOGOAC recommends that the race category Asian be disaggregated into the following categories: Burmese, Cambodian/Khmer, Cham, Chinese, Filipino, Hmong, Indian, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Lao, Malaysian, Mien, Pakistani, Singaporean, Taiwanese, Thai, Vietnamese, and Other Asian.	✓
2013 2014 2015	5E. The EOGOAC recommends that the race category of White is disaggregated to include sub-ethnic categories that include Eastern European nationalities that have significant populations in Washington (Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Romanian, etc.).	✓
2014	5A. The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) recommends that school districts gather and report the minimum federal ethnicity and racial categories, as well as sub-ethnic and sub-racial categories.	✓
2011 2012	2A. The Committee expressed concern about the need for accurate, useful data that should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaggregated by ethnic subgroups to provide a more accurate picture. • Organized so that schools can track students and their credits as they transfer from one school to the next. 	✓

Year	Recommendation	Status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presented so that families and educators can ensure appropriate supports and interventions. Listed in ways that can identify damaging patterns in a school or district that will require technical assistance. 	
2010	Respond to racial and ethnic subgroup concerns within the Data Governance Work Group	
2010	Develop a system within the Data Governance Work Group that is consistent with privacy restrictions while permitting disaggregated student data to be available to everyone who wants to use it (teachers and administrators, including government, education researchers, schools, families, community groups, etc.) in order to assure more transparency and accountability in the educational system.	
2024	4C. The EOGOAC recommends that the Healthy Youth Survey, collaboratively administered by the Health Care Authority - Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR), the Department of Health (DOH), the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the Liquor and Cannabis Board (LCB), and Looking Glass Analytics, collect and report fully disaggregated student race/ethnicity.	
2024	4E. The EOGOAC recommends that training be provided to educators, districts, and community-based organizations on the use of disaggregated student data to impact student growth and eliminate gaps.	
2024	8A. The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent work with the Washington Education Association (WEA), the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB), educator preparation programs, and other stakeholders to collect and analyze fully disaggregated educator data. The data should be used to support districts in recruiting, hiring, and retaining educators of color in a culturally competent manner.	
2022	5B. The EOGOAC recommends that OSPI create a mechanism to monitor collection and utilization of disaggregated race/ethnicity student data including tools and models for analysis.	
2022	5E. The EOGOAC recommends that OSPI and Educational Service Districts (ESDs) work to support small and rural districts with data collection and analysis by asking them what they need, identifying mentors, and creating opportunities for collaboration and consolidation.	
2022	5G. The EOGOAC recommends that school districts provide continued support and involvement of educators, school leaders, families, and communities in the data analysis process.	
2021	6D. That school districts establish a method of regularly including families and communities in periodic review of disaggregated data and equity-based decision-making discussions grounded in the data.	
2018	3C. All educator workforce data—including data for teacher candidates, current teachers, principals, and classified staff—should be disaggregated by race and ethnicity to promote the continued diversification of the educator workforce.	
2014 2015	5G. Additionally, the EOGOAC recommends that OSPI reduce the N-size requirement for reporting and school accountability of subgroup data from an N-size of 20 students to an N-size of 10 students	

Year	Recommendation	Status
2025	12. The EOGOAC recommends to the Legislature and the Governor, that the state provide funding and leadership for a coordinated approach to disaggregated race and ethnicity data collection, including reconvening the Race and Ethnicity Student Data Task Force to collaborate with other state agencies.	<input type="radio"/>
2024	4A. The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) reconvene the Race and Ethnicity Student Data Task Force to review the initial reported data, make recommendations on updates to the data collection and to guide reporting.	<input type="radio"/>
2024	4B. The EOGOAC recommends that schools and school districts provide all publicly reported data fully disaggregated by sub-racial and sub-ethnic category, as described in RCW 28A.300.042, with an "n-size" of 10.	<input type="radio"/>
2024	4F. The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislature require all agencies who work with students and families to collect and report disaggregated student race and ethnicity categories and subcategories as described in RCW 28A.300.042.	<input type="radio"/>
2024	6B. The EOGOAC recommends that all entities at the state-level responsible for serving students who are incarcerated, homeless or in foster/kinship care, develop an organized structure of connected data systems and records transfers that includes collecting and reporting disaggregated student race and ethnicity categories and subcategories as described in RCW 28A.300.042.	<input type="radio"/>
2022	1F. The EOGOAC recommends that WSSDA work with OSPI and the EOGOAC to develop guidance for school boards on collecting and displaying data about the demographics of their communities.	<input type="radio"/>
2022	5A. The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) create a plan for how implementation of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) will utilize disaggregated race/ethnicity data to accurately identify students for tiered supports and services	<input type="radio"/>
2022	5C. The EOGOAC encourages other state agencies to also collect disaggregated race/ethnicity data for the purpose of creating a statewide system with comparable data sets.	<input type="radio"/>
2022	5D. The EOGOAC recommends that OSPI work with the EOGOAC, ethnic commissions, Governor's Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA), and others to communicate with communities why this disaggregated data collection is needed and important.	<input type="radio"/>
2022	5F. The EOGOAC recommends that the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) work with teacher and leadership preparation programs prepare teacher and school leadership candidates to be able to understand and utilize this data collection in an appropriate and responsive way.	<input type="radio"/>
2022	6D. The EOGOAC recommends to the Legislature and the Governor that the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), and the DOC adopt the same disaggregated race/ethnicity categories and coordinate reporting in order to enable identification of disparities affecting communities of color.	<input type="radio"/>
2021	6A. That OSPI analyze fully disaggregated ethnic and sub-ethnic categories for data points such as graduation rates, discipline, academic progress, and report overall statewide trends.	<input type="radio"/>

Year	Recommendation	Status
2021	6B. That fully disaggregated data on student outcomes be provided to the following stakeholders: families/communities, educators, principals, district/school boards, and state agencies	<input type="radio"/>
2021	6C. That OSPI update the Washington State Report Card to allow the public to make comparisons across the system, including school to school, district to district and district to statewide trends.	<input type="radio"/>
2020	3B. The EOGOAC recommends that OSPI create longitudinal data reports on students with disabilities for cohorts of students of color and students who receive English learner services.	<input type="radio"/>
2018	3B. The OSPI must identify school districts that exhibit frequent use of observer identification in collecting student race and ethnicity data and must work with those districts to reduce that rate.	<input type="radio"/>
2017	6B. Require the Use of Cross Tabulations when Analyzing Student Outcomes. To effectively identify opportunity gaps, the EOGOAC recommends the Data Governance Group provide guidance to schools, school districts, and the OSPI on how to use cross tabulations with the variables listed above when analyzing student outcomes.	<input type="radio"/>
2017	6C. Annual Training on How to Collect and Analyze Student Data To help implement Recommendation 6B, the EOGOAC recommends the Legislature adopt a requirement: All school district employees and school staff that collect and/or analyze student level data must receive annual training.	<input type="radio"/>
2017	6D. Community Engagement with Student Data. To ensure uniformity in data sharing practices across school districts, the EOGOAC recommends the OSPI use the guidance published by the RESD Task Force to create a mandatory annual training for all principals and superintendents, as well as representatives from every ESD in Washington.	<input type="radio"/>
2014 2015	5F. The EOGOAC recommends that students selecting two or more races are reported not only as “two or more races” but in discrete categories for their racial and ethnic combination (See Appendix A).	<input type="radio"/>
2015	5H. The EOGOAC recommends guidance be developed on the required use of data to inform instruction for Priority, Focus, School Improvement Grant (SIG), and Required Action District (RAD) schools.	<input type="radio"/>

Social Emotional Learning and Mental and Behavioral Health

Year	Recommendation	Status
2025	6. The EOGOAC recommends continuation and expansion of the current pilot BIPOC School Counselor Mentor Program with expansion to all mental and behavioral health support roles.	<input type="radio"/>
2016	7D. Allocations for social workers, guidance counselors, psychologists, and nurses must be increased through the prototypical schools model to improve the capacity of these positions to provide the supports to students in need.	<input type="radio"/>
2015 2016	8D. The EOGOAC recommends the development of an articulated pathway to recruit, train, and retain school counselors into the profession. Additionally, the Legislature must invest in more school counselor programs in Washington public universities.	<input type="radio"/>

Year	Recommendation	Status
2015	7D. The EOGOAC recommends that the allocation for the social workers, guidance counselors, psychologists, and nurses be revised to reflect professional guidelines for appropriate caseloads and staff to student ratios to improve the capacity of these positions to provide the supports to students in need.	<input type="radio"/>
2025	9. The EOGOAC recommends that the Health Care Authority (HCA) work with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to ensure that Washington meets the expectations of Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Department of Education by creating a plan that maximizes the ability of schools and districts to utilize Medicaid covered services.	<input type="radio"/>
2021	8A. That schools implement a system of universal screening to identify students in need of additional supports.	<input type="radio"/>
2025	11. The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislature increase allocations for school psychologists in alignment with the ratio recommended by the National Association of School Psychologists.	<input type="radio"/>
2024	7C. The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislature support development and implementation of ongoing professional development for educators, administrators, and paraprofessionals on culturally responsive implementation of SEL that is aligned to the Social Emotional Learning Standards, Benchmarks and Indicators and Cultural Competency, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (CCDEI) Standards for Educators.	<input type="radio"/>
2015 2016 2020 2022	9B. The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislature adopt the Association of School Counselors (ASCA) student to counselor ratio of 250:1 through funding the allocations in the prototypical schools funding model.	<input type="radio"/>
2025	2. The EOGOAC recommends that school districts complete periodic equity audits that include the cultural and linguistic responsiveness of mental and behavioral health services and curriculum. The results should be provided to the district board of directors and local and school community and result in an action plan to close any opportunity gaps.	<input type="radio"/>
2025	4. EOGOAC recommends that the number of pathways into school-based mental and behavioral health careers be expanded, including accessible routes for career changers.	<input type="radio"/>
2025	5. The EOGOAC recommends establishment of scholarships to support the recruitment and retention of diverse staff in mental and behavioral health support roles including school counselors and school psychologists. These scholarships should provide a livable wage, and the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) should organize and evaluate the impact of the scholarship program.	<input type="radio"/>
2025	7. The EOGOAC recommends that the Educational Service Districts (ESDs), with guidance from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), create uniform, regional partnership processes for community-based organizations (CBOs) working with Local Education Agencies to provide mental and behavioral health services to students.	<input type="radio"/>
2025	8. The EOGOAC supports Recommendation #2 of the School-based Behavioral Health & Suicide Prevention Subgroup "Strengthen statewide guidance and	<input type="radio"/>

Year	Recommendation	Status
	direction for behavioral health in schools" and #8 "Establish a Technical Assistance & Training Network (TATN)" with the addition that cultural competency be added as a key component of the definition of minimum expectations, strategic direction and capacity, and training and technical assistance provided.	
2025	10. The EOGOAC supports recommendation #3 of the Youth and Young Adult Continuum of Care Subgroup "Expand the Bridge Residential housing program" and #5 "Support expansion of recovery high schools" with the expectation that both programs work with families and communities to be culturally responsive.	
2025	15. The EOGOAC recommends support for school-based health centers that partner with community-based organization and public health to get mental and behavioral health services into schools.	

Whole Child, Whole System

Year	Recommendation	Status
2020	4D. The EOGOAC recommends the passage of HB 2631, which establishes a workgroup to create an age zero- 21 family engagement framework, across the pre-k, K-12 and post-secondary educational continuum.	
2014	3F. The EOGOAC recommends that schools be prohibited from using students as primary interpreters or translators.	
2022	6B. The EOGOAC recommends that the state provide agencies, advocates, and educators free communication access to individuals incarcerated in DOC facilities.	
2021	9A. That all school districts develop a language access plan that addresses how all Limited English Proficient (LEP) families can access all vital information. Plans should include routine communications as well as a continuity plan for emergencies.	
2021	9B. That teachers and school staff receive training on how to access and effectively use interpretation, including remote formats.	
2021	9C. That all schools with an LEP population identify a building point of contact to facilitate access to language access services, supporting families, communities and school staff.	
2015 2016	8A. The EOGOAC supports the Early Achievers program and recommends that the Department of Early Learning creates a community information and involvement plan to inform home-based, tribal, and family early learning providers of the Early Achievers program.	
2015 2016	8B. The EOGOAC recommends that WaKIDS is implemented in a culturally responsive manner to support families to engage in school and helps identify and connect students and families to support services.	
2016	8E. The EOGOAC supports the Washington Student Achievement Council's plan to provide dual credits to students in high school and recommends: The legislature must remove the parent or guardian witness signature requirement. The Washington Student Achievement council should/must:	

Year	Recommendation	Status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on the retention and persistence of students of color in obtaining college degrees. Refine their communication on scholarship requirements for undocumented students and other ineligible students. If a student is not eligible, they should not receive an acceptance certificate producing false promise. Focus on community and family training on how to pay for college (e.g. filing the FAFSA and applying for grants, scholarships, and loans). Develop and distribute materials about college and financial aid for Middle and High Schools to provide students. 	
2014	<p>3C. The EOGOAC supports the recommendation of the Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO), ensuring language access for all families: to meet schools' growing needs for interpretation and translation services, required to ensure equity for all students, the legislature should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require districts to establish a means for staff to access telephone interpreters; Convene a task force to explore ways of ensuring access to quality interpretation and translation services in all schools; and Develop language access policies and procedures to ensure clarity and consistency across the state. 	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
2014	3D. the EOGOAC further recommends comprehensive training for school personnel utilizing interpreters and translators.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
2025	17. The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislature invest in providing increased linguistically and culturally sustaining early learning and childcare programs to support both younger students and their older siblings.	<input type="radio"/>
2022	1C. The EOGOAC recommends that WSSDA, Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO), Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the State Board of Education (SBE) work together to provide an accessible guide for parents on how and who to engage to connect with school boards.	<input type="radio"/>
2022	6A. The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislature provide funding for a Parent Advocate at each Department of Corrections (DOC) facility to educate incarcerated parents, connect parents to schools, and provide access to community resources.	<input type="radio"/>
2022	6C. The EOGOAC recommends that modifications be made to current policy, similar to those in HB 2220 (2019-20), that would increase the access of formerly incarcerated parents to engagement with schools.	<input type="radio"/>
2022	6E. The EOGOAC recommends that the Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO), the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the DOC, and the Coalition for Children of Incarcerated Parents work together to develop training for all educators on how to support students with incarcerated parents, and their families, including how to minimize trauma and engage with incarcerated parents.	<input type="radio"/>
2021	2C. That Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) with input from the community, develop and annually update a cross-agency action plan to address	<input type="radio"/>

Year	Recommendation	Status
	the academic needs of students in foster care, with an emphasis on the specific needs of students of color	
2021	4A. That the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) issue joint supports and guidance on the expectation for coordination of in-school instruction, childcare and early learning services.	<input type="radio"/>
2021	4B. That the DCYF develop and require trainings on cultural competency and anti-racism for licensed providers of early-learning and school-aged childcare.	<input type="radio"/>
2021	4C. That DCYF develop and implement a plan to make sure that all program and administrative staff receive trainings on cultural competency and anti-racism.	<input type="radio"/>

Annual Recommendations

Recommendation 1.

The EOGOAC recommends that the Legislature expend time and resources addressing the current inequalities in school funding, specifically in meeting the needs of each student according to their needs.

Background

During this time of uncertainty on the Federal level and great strain on the State budget, continued attention is needed on the current and future stability of school funding. Underfunded schools widen opportunity gaps for students of color. Specifically, student groups that have increased financial needs such as multilingual learners, parents with limited English proficiency, students who are migrant, refugees, homeless or in foster care, are disproportionately made up of students of color. The increased costs of meeting the needs of these students must be taken into account in financial models. For more details, please see the [K-12 Funding Equity Workgroup 2025 Annual Report](#) section Subgroup #2: Student Weighting Factors. Several identified themes expand on this issue including:

- Students at the Margins Reveal Strengths and Weaknesses of Our Current Funding Model
- Centering Students and Community Voices in the Process
- Education Funding is About Investment, Not Costs
- Early Intervention and Prevention is an Equitable Investment
- Cross-Agency Collaboration is Essential¹³

Future Work

In 2026, the EOGOAC will be reviewing the recommendations of the Opportunity Gap Studies in detail, looking for overall themes, implementable strategies for change, and opportunities to update the work of the EOGOAC. The EOGOAC will also seek to leverage the studies as a point of collaboration between the EOGOAC and other agencies and organizations. The EOGOAC plans to meet jointly with the Social

¹³ K-12 Funding Equity Workgroup 2025 Annual Report pg. 17 <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2025-10/k12-funding-equity-workgroup-2025-annual-report.pdf>

Emotional Learning Advisory Committee (SELAC) and the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities and hopes to have other conversations across the systems that serve our students.

The committee intends to lean more heavily on the “accountability” side of this work. Recognizing that many of the recommendations they have made over the years have resulted in policy changes that are not being implemented. Intentional noncompliance must have consequences.

Conclusion

Despite the number of seismic shifts and unprecedented events that have happened in the years since the first set of Achievement Gap Studies, such as the end of No Child Left Behind, two efforts to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Black Lives Matter movement, many things remain the same. Opportunity gaps still exist. Systemic racism still impacts our communities.

Today, cuts to social support systems, direct attacks on the immigrant community and other harms outside the educational system impact the way that students show up and learn. Our schools are expected to pick up the slack: feeding children, providing a safe physical and mental space, and holding communities together. The committee is committed to focusing on the assets and strengths of the community at this time. Going backward, failing our students, is not an acceptable response to these challenges. Success for each and every student of color is the aspiration that the EOGOAC will keep centered going forward.

It is clear that we should not wait another 15 years to complete the next set of comprehensive studies on the opportunity gap. In a cyclical path, the original work created the structure of the EOGOAC today, which then informed the new studies and reports, which will result in change for the EOGOAC. Additionally, the studies will spawn new lines of inquiry and answers.

The submission date was not the end of these reports, but rather the beginning of a conversation between systems and the communities that authored them. Commissioned by the State on behalf of the taxpayers, these reports are “owned” by their communities, and they deserve to have their voices heard. The EOGOAC will continue to center and uplift this work.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who made the 2025 Opportunity Gap Studies a success: the organization and leadership from the ethnic commissions and GOIA, the Legislature for providing funding, the community leaders who provided expert guidance, the students, families, educators, and administrators who voiced their experiences, and the hardworking researchers and their organizations the Washington State University, the University of Washington, and Imago LLC. Thank you.

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Appendix A Achievement/Opportunity Gap Studies Bill Language

2008

Washington State Legislature Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2687, Operating Budget—Supplemental Appropriations (2008). <https://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2007-08/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/2687-S.SL.pdf?q=20251117132813>

Governor's Office of Indian Affairs

Sec. 118 (2)

\$150,000 of the general fund--state appropriation for fiscal year 2009 is provided solely for the office to engage a contractor to conduct a detailed analysis of the achievement gap for Native American students; analyze the progress in developing effective government-to- government relations and identification and adoption of curriculum regarding tribal history, culture, and government as provided under RCW 28A.345.070; recommend a comprehensive plan for closing the achievement gap pursuant to goals under the federal no child left behind act for all groups of students to meet academic standards by 2014; and identify performance measures to monitor adequate yearly progress. The contractor shall conduct the analysis starting with the call to action paper by the multi-ethnic think tank and as guided by the tribal leader congress on education, the Washington state school directors association, and other appropriate groups. The contractor shall submit a study update by September 15, 2008, and submit a final report by December 30, 2008, to the governor, the superintendent of public instruction, the state board of education, the P-20 council, the basic education finance task force, and the education committees of the legislature.

Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs

Sec. 119 (1) and (2)

(1) \$150,000 of the general fund--state appropriation for fiscal year 2009 is provided solely for the commission to engage a contractor to conduct a detailed analysis of the achievement gap for Asian American students; recommend a comprehensive plan for closing the achievement gap pursuant to goals under the federal no child left behind act for all groups of students to meet academic standards by 2014; and identify performance measures to monitor adequate yearly progress. The contractor shall conduct the analysis starting with the call to action paper by the multi-ethnic think tank and as guided by the former members of the Asian Pacific Islander American think tank and other appropriate groups. The contractor shall submit a study update by September 15, 2008, and submit a final report by December 30, 2008, to the governor, the superintendent of public instruction, the state board of education, the P-20 council, the basic education finance task force, and the education committees of the legislature.

(2) \$150,000 of the general fund--state appropriation for fiscal year 2009 is provided solely for the commission to engage a contractor to conduct a detailed analysis of the achievement gap for Pacific Islander American students; recommend a comprehensive plan for closing the achievement gap pursuant to goals under the federal no child left behind act for all groups of students to meet academic standards by 2014; and identify performance measures to monitor adequate yearly progress. The

contractor shall conduct the analysis starting with the call to action paper by the multi-ethnic think tank and as guided by the former members of the Asian Pacific Islander American think tank and other appropriate groups. The contractor shall submit a study update by September 15, 2008, and submit a final report by December 30, 2008, to the governor, the superintendent of public instruction, the state board of education, the P-20 council, the basic education finance task force, and the education committees of the legislature.

Commission on Hispanic Affairs

Sec. 131

\$150,000 of the general fund--state appropriation for fiscal year 2009 is provided solely for the commission to engage a contractor to conduct a detailed analysis of the achievement gap for Hispanic students; recommend a comprehensive plan for closing the achievement gap pursuant to goals under the federal no child left behind act for all groups of students to meet academic standards by 2014; and identify performance measures to monitor adequate yearly progress. The contractor shall conduct the analysis starting with the call to action paper by the multi-ethnic think tank and as guided by the Latino/a educational achievement project and other appropriate groups. The contractor shall submit a study update by September 15, 2008, and submit a final report by December 30, 2008, to the governor, the superintendent of public instruction, the state board of education, the P-20 council, the basic education finance task force, and the education committees of the legislature.

Commission on African American Affairs

Sec. 501

(aa) \$150,000 of the general fund--state appropriation for fiscal year 2009 is provided solely for implementation of Second Substitute House Bill No. 2722 (achievement gap for African-American students). The center for the improvement of student learning will convene an advisory committee to conduct a detailed analysis of the achievement gap for African-American students; recommend a comprehensive plan for closing the gap pursuant to goals under the federal no child left behind act for all groups of students to meet academic standards by 2014; and identify performance measures to monitor adequate yearly progress. A study update shall be submitted by September 15, 2008, and the committee's final report shall be submitted by December 30, 2008, to the superintendent of public instruction, the state board of education, the governor, the P-20 council, the basic education finance task force, and the education committees of the legislature. If the bill is not enacted by June 30, 2008, the amount provided in this subsection shall lapse.

2023

Washington State Legislature Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5187, Making 2023-2025 fiscal biennium operating appropriations and 2021-2023 fiscal biennium second supplemental operating appropriations (2023) <https://lawfilesextract.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2023-24/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Passed%20Legislature/5187-S.PL.pdf?q=20230518135102>

Governor's Office of Indian Affairs

Sec. 121

(2)(a) \$125,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$125,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for the office to engage a contractor to:

- (i) Conduct a detailed analysis of the opportunity gap for native American students;
- (ii) Analyze the progress in developing effective government-to government relations and identification and adoption of curriculum regarding tribal history, culture, and government as provided under RCW 28A.345.070;
- (iii) Develop recommendations for continuing efforts to close the educational opportunity gap while meeting the state's academic achievement indicators as identified in the state's every student succeeds act consolidated plan; and
- (iv) Identify performance measures to monitor adequate yearly progress.

(b) The contractor shall submit a study update by December 1, 2024, and submit a final report by June 30, 2025, to the educational opportunity gap oversight and accountability committee, the governor, the superintendent of public instruction, the state board of education, and the education committees of the legislature.

Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs

Sec. 122

(1)(a) \$125,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$125,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for the commission to engage a contractor to:

- (i) Conduct a detailed analysis of the opportunity gap for Asian American students;
- (ii) Develop recommendations for continuing efforts to close the educational opportunity gap while meeting the state's academic achievement indicators as identified in the state's every student succeeds act consolidated plan; and
- (iii) Identify performance measures to monitor adequate yearly progress.

(b) The contractor shall submit a study update by December 1, 12 2024, and submit a final report by June 30, 2025, to the educational opportunity gap oversight and accountability committee, the governor, the superintendent of public instruction, the state board of education, and the education committees of the legislature.

(2)(a) \$125,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$125,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for the commission to engage a contractor to:

- (i) Conduct a detailed analysis of the opportunity gap for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students;

- (ii) Develop recommendations for continuing efforts to close the educational opportunity gap while meeting the state's academic achievement indicators as identified in the state's every student succeeds act consolidated plan; and
- (iii) Identify performance measures to monitor adequate yearly progress.

(b) The contractor shall submit a study update by December 1, 2024, and submit a final report by June 30, 2025, to the educational opportunity gap oversight and accountability committee, the governor, the superintendent of public instruction, the state board of education, and the education committees of the legislature.

Commission on Hispanic Affairs

Sec. 138

(1)(a) \$125,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$125,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for the commission to engage a contractor to:

- (i) Conduct a detailed analysis of the opportunity gap for Hispanic and Latinx students;
- (ii) Develop recommendations for continuing efforts to close the educational opportunity gap while meeting the state's academic achievement indicators as identified in the state's every student succeeds act consolidated plan; and
- (iii) Identify performance measures to monitor adequate yearly progress.

(b) The contractor shall submit a study update by December 1, 2024, and submit a final report by June 30, 2025, to the educational opportunity gap oversight and accountability committee, the governor, the superintendent of public instruction, the state board of education, and the education committees of the legislature.

Commission on African American Affairs

Sec. 139

(1)(a) \$125,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$125,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for the commission to engage a contractor to:

- (i) Conduct a detailed analysis of the opportunity gap for African American and Black students;
- (ii) Develop recommendations for continuing efforts to close the educational opportunity gap while meeting the state's academic achievement indicators, as identified in the state's every student succeeds act consolidated plan; and
- (iii) Identify performance measures to monitor adequate yearly progress.

(b) The contractor shall submit a study update by December 1, 2024, and submit a final report by June 30, 2025, to the educational opportunity gap oversight and accountability committee, the

governor, the superintendent of public instruction, the state board of education, and the education committees of the legislature.

Appendix B Relationships, Relationships, Relationships: Native American Education Opportunity Gap Study in Washington State Executive Summary

Full report:

Higheagle Strong, Z. & Equally Contributing Colleagues (2025). *Relationships, relationships, relationships: Native American education opportunity gap study in Washington State*. Governor's Office of Indian Affairs. <https://native.wsu.edu/native-american-education-study-2/>

Executive Summary:

RELATIONSHIPS, RELATIONSHIPS, RELATIONSHIPS: NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY GAP STUDY IN WASHINGTON STATE

Over the past 50 years of serving in Native education, I have come to believe that our children need holistic, interdisciplinary, and culturally grounded education. Our children must experience the joy of learning, and they cannot do this in isolation. They need their language, culture, and support for their overall health and wellbeing. This is how our people have always learned to survive—and it's why we are still here today.

Dr. Patricia Whitefoot (Yakama Nation), valued and respected tribal Elder

The 2025 *Relationships, Relationships, Relationships: Native American Education Opportunity Gap Study in Washington State* builds upon the 2008 *From Where the Sun Rises: Addressing the Educational Achievement of Native Americans in Washington State Report*, originally commissioned in response to Tribal and education leaders in the state of Washington who were very concerned about the ongoing achievement gap between Native and non-Native students. The report examined the educational achievement gap and persistent disparities between American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) students and other student groups in Washington state and highlighted the importance of honoring tribal sovereignty and integrating tribal culture and history, including language, into the education system to improve outcomes for Native American students.

As part of state appropriations for fiscal year 2024-25 (State Proviso Section 121.2.a.), Washington State Governor's Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA), subcontracted Washington State University's (WSU) Office of Tribal Relations and Center for Native American Research and

Collaboration, led by Dr. Zoe Higheagle Strong (Nimiipuu, Nez Perce), Ph.D., Vice Provost and Tribal Liaison to the President, Associate Professor in Educational Psychology, College of Education, to conduct an updated analysis of the educational opportunity gap for Native American students in Washington State. In alignment with guidance from Tribal leaders and educators, Dr. Higheagle Strong and her research team facilitated listening sessions, interviews, writing and feedback sessions across tribal communities and invited subject matter experts to join the study team to contribute to writing study sections.

The research focus, priorities, recommendations, and strategies provided in the 2025 report and shared with members of the Educational Opportunity Gap and Oversight Accountability Committee include:

- Centering Language and Culture: Pathways to Tribal Education Sovereignty and Self-Determination
- Our Children, Our Most Valuable Resource: Native American Student Identification and Data Sovereignty
- Legislation That Honors Our Children and Tribal Educational Sovereignty
- Legislation in Action:
 - John McCoy (Iulilaš) Since Time Immemorial Curriculum Implementation
 - State-Tribal Education Compact Schools
 - Government-to-Government Relationship and Educational Trust Responsibility

We invite you to read the entire report and join our tribal communities in collaboration to continue educational transformation and secure opportunity and futures for every Native American student in our schools, now and for generations yet to come. The report is available at <https://native.wsu.edu/native-american-education-study-2/>

Appendix C. Centering Asian Diasporic Voices & Shaping Policy: The Educational Experiences and Wellbeing of Asian and Asian American Youth in Washington Schools Executive Summary

Full Report:

Nguyễn, J., Halvorson, M. A., Ledesma, A., Lee, J. J., Tian, Z., Camacho, S. G., Beck, K. L., Seto-Myers, D. K., Diaz, T. P., Sun, M., & Spencer, M. S. (2025). *Centering Asian diasporic voices & shaping policy: The educational experiences and wellbeing of Asian and Asian American youth in Washington schools*. Committee for Asian Pacific American Affairs.

https://issuu.com/socialwork.uw.edu/docs/centering_asian_diasporic.voices_shaping_policy

Executive Summary:

CENTERING ASIAN DIASPORIC VOICES & SHAPING POLICY

The Educational Experiences and
Wellbeing of Asian and Asian American
Youth in Washington Schools

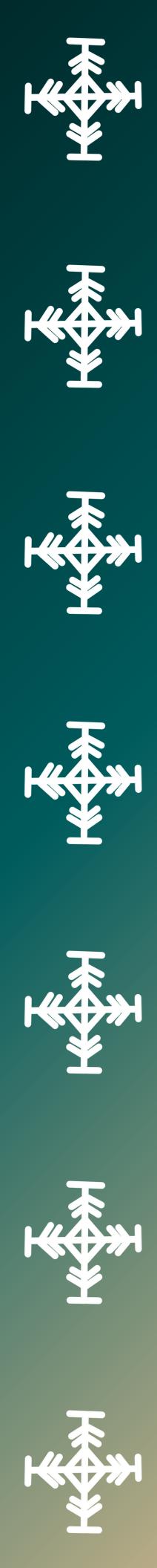
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W COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

 **CAPAA**

Washington State Commission
on Asian Pacific American Affairs





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The following core contributors assisted in data collection, cleaning, coding, and literature review for the report: Dani Canaleta, Zixin Chen, Roberta Collison, Marcus Conde, Whitney Lane, and Sydney Ying-Tuing Lin.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

Our Community Advisory Board, consisting of *Jen Chong Jewell, Erin Okuno, Ay Saechao, and Frieda Takamura*, provided critical input to the design, execution, and interpretation of the studies, and reflected and represented the views of their communities in these roles. We also acknowledge the Community Advisory Board for our sister study on Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander youth – *Sui-lan Ho'okano, Kiana McKenna, Inez Olive, Sili Savusa, and Adrianna Suluai* – for their involvement in the overall conception and design of the study.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is with care, humility, and commitment to community well-being that we share this report on educational opportunities among Asian and Asian American (As/AsAm) students in Washington's K-12 schools.

This report will provide the Committee on Asian Pacific American Affairs (CAPAA) and the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) with quantitative and qualitative data, along with community-driven recommendation to inform policies, strategies to close educational opportunity gaps for As/AsAm students. This report reflects a broad collaboration.

Researchers from both the As/AsAm and NH/PI communities came together from across the University of Washington's College of Education and School of Social Work to produce two distinct reports. While our teams shared resources, we centered the specific histories, contexts, and needs of each community to ensure that their voices and experiences are not collapsed into a single narrative.

We thank Leah Forester and the UW School of Social Work Marketing and Communications team for their design and layout support, which helped bring this report to life.

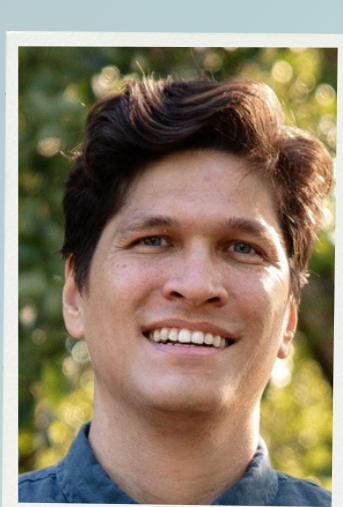
We are also deeply grateful to CAPAA and EOGOAC for championing this work and continuing the legacy of the foundational study by Drs. David Takeuchi and Shirley Hune in 2008. We hope this updated report will serve not only policymakers but also educators, families, and communities as a resource for advocating for systemic change and celebrating community strengths.

We also thank the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the Education Research and Data Center (ERDC), and the Healthy Youth Survey (HYS) team for their partnership, data sharing, and consultation. Their commitment to advancing data disaggregation has been vital to deepening our collective understanding of As/AsAm students' diverse educational realities.

Above all, we extend our appreciation to the students, families, educators, and community advisory board members who contributed their insights, stories, and aspirations. Their voices illuminate not only the challenges faced such as erasure, stereotypes, and pressures As/AsAm communities experience, but also the resilience, creativity, and visions for thriving that shape the future of As/AsAm youth in Washington.



JENN NGUYỄN



MAX HALVORSON

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MORE THAN A MONOLITH: SUPPORTING WASHINGTON'S DIVERSE ASIAN DIASPORA

Asian and Asian American (As/AsAm) youth and families are integral to their communities and come from a diversity of 49 Asian countries with distinct languages, cultures, religions, migration histories, and lived experiences that shape their identities and contributions to their communities in the United States. These diasporic roots form interconnected communities with interwoven histories that foster shared spaces of belonging, collective resilience and solidarity. However, this interconnectedness is often oversimplified by outsiders, where the richness of collectivist resilience is flattened into a singular narrative, leading to persistent misrepresentation of the As/AsAm experience as a monolithic one that erases the breadth and depth of the As/AsAm experience. This report presents an urgent call to schools, districts, and state policymakers to strengthen equity-driven educational policy for As/AsAm students by recognizing their rich diversity, diasporic roots, and complex needs.

THE CURRENT UPDATE: DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

In collaboration with the NH/PI Opportunity Gap Report, we used a mixed-methods approach and collected both quantitative data and qualitative data to describe opportunity disparities for As/AsAm youth and to develop recommendations based on community input.

Quantitative data consisted of formal metrics

such as grades, graduation rates, and standardized testing scores provided by the Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction (OSPI). We also examined student well-being via the Washington Healthy Youth Survey, a survey administered to all students in a probability sample of schools in Washington. Qualitative data consisted of focus groups and interviews with students, educators, and administrators in which they shared their thoughts on the needs and challenges faced by As/AsAm youth.

In analyzing quantitative data, we disaggregated data based on subethnic groups and examined their experiences separately (e.g., Laotian, Punjabi), and for qualitative data, we aimed for representation across the Asian diaspora.

To ensure that recommendations were community-driven and informed by those who know communities best, we convened a Community Advisory Board (CAB) made up of community and educational leaders in the Washington As/AsAm community to collaboratively interpret data and craft recommendations.

KEY LEARNINGS: REFLECTIONS AND REALITIES WITHIN THE ASIAN DIASPORA

Washington's As/AsAm population grew significantly over the past several decades, increasing by 55% between 2000 and 2020, making it one of the fastest-growing racial groups in the state. This growth reflects migration from across the Asian Diaspora, with

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONT.

communities representing a wide range of languages, religions, and migration histories, including long-established families, recent immigrants, and refugee populations. Yet, despite this demographic expansion, many subethnic groups, particularly those within Central Asian, Southeast Asian, and refugee communities, remain underrepresented in education policy conversations and decision-making processes. Their unique needs — multilingual education access, culturally responsive mental health and classroom practices, and equitable funding for under-resourced schools — are often overshadowed by aggregated data and stereotypes of academic success. For example, multilingual language learners from many Asian communities underperform academically relative to monolingual speakers. For example, Cambodian/Khmer multilingual learners have lower median GPAs than non-multilingual learners (2.6 vs. 3.2).

Mental health challenges among As/AsAm youth are underacknowledged due to cultural stigma, underreporting, and the lack of culturally and linguistically responsive mental health services in schools. Disaggregated survey data from the 2023 Washington State Healthy Youth Survey reveal that certain As/AsAm ethnic subgroups report higher rates of emotional distress, anxiety, and depression. For example, Filipino youth reported a higher prevalence of depression at 32% compared to Chinese youth at 22%. As there may be a variety of factors that impact rates of prevalence, As/AsAm youth focus group findings further highlight experiences of social

isolation, invisibility, and identity-based bullying, particularly among youth who hold intersecting identities, including queer, transgender, disabled, neurodivergent, and multiracial students. Without culturally responsive and linguistic practices, these stressors compound, posing long-term mental health risks.

“And also, healthy to me is—I know that there's people supporting me, such as my parents and friends. And yeah, and also, like, being surrounded by the people that bring you down is kind of, like, makes your energies go away and how you don't want to go to school either. And so **I feel like being around the people who you feel comfortable with and who bring you positivity will help you be healthier and also happier in your life.”**

-Vietnamese Student

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONT.

Culturally affirming curriculum and pedagogy are vital levers for equity and belonging. Educational environments that reflect the histories, languages, and identities of As/AsAm youth are essential to fostering both academic success and holistic well-being. Strategies such as ethnic studies, dual-language programs, and culturally responsive teaching foster identity development, strengthen student engagement, and counter feelings of invisibility. Focus group data revealed the importance of affinity spaces and

ethnic studies courses in helping students feel seen, validated, and empowered to navigate complex social and cultural dynamics. As/AsAm educator representation also remains disproportionately low across Washington State's K-12 workforce, limiting students' access to culturally reflective role models and mentors. In educator interviews, As/AsAm educators emphasized that representation benefits both students and other educators. Increasing recruitment, retention, and leadership opportunities for As/AsAm educators is essential to fostering more inclusive school climates and ensuring that the diverse experiences of As/AsAm communities are reflected in education.

"I would say, **that's my dream as well, I think, to have the opportunities to connect with people who like, who are the same as me who had the same experiences. I think the way I would do it have the same interest that I do and having those kinds of opportunities to connect with people, to link up with people, to get to know people better that are like me, that come from the same experiences will be really beneficial."**

-Chinese Student

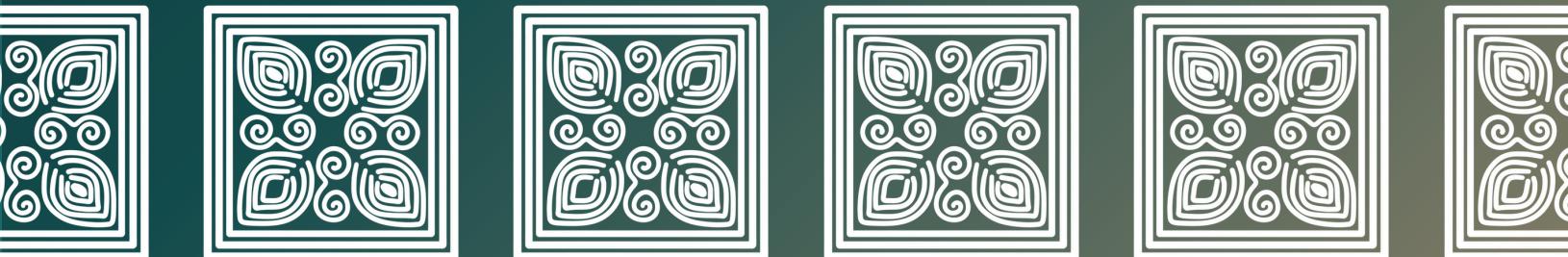
Finally, authentic collaboration with As/AsAm subethnic communities, including refugee and immigrant populations often overlooked in aggregated approaches is essential. Community-based organizations play a critical role in bridging schools with families by providing culturally and linguistically accessible resources, mental health supports, and academic programming tailored to the specific needs of subethnic communities. By intentionally partnering with community organizations and amplifying their voices and expertise, schools can better address barriers to access and improve student wellbeing.

Washington's educational systems must evolve to meet the needs of a multiracial, multilingual, and intersectional student population. By grounding policy in both data

and lived experience, we can ensure that As/AsAm students succeed academically, define success on their own terms, and experience a deep sense of belonging.

OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Mandate data disaggregation by race, ethnicity, and language to inform equitable decision-making.
2. Expand cultural and identity programs such as dual language and ethnic studies to honor cultural languages, affirm identity, and promote belonging.
3. Increase representation and retention in the As/AsAm educator workforce.
4. Invest in wellness initiatives and programs to support As/AsAm youth mental health
5. Build collaborative partnerships with community-based organizations.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Section 2. Who are Asian/Asian Americans (As/AsAm)?

Recommendation	Recommendation Notes
Recommendation 2.1: Continue and expand statewide conversations on Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) educational equity. These conversations should actively engage MENA communities, researchers, and policymakers to ensure their unique educational experiences and needs are recognized and addressed.	Youth from Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) backgrounds should be recognized as a distinct group in state data systems and educational reporting. A dedicated MENA report would increase visibility into their unique educational experiences and inform targeted policy responses.
Recommendation 2.2: Include and educate about Central Asian communities (e.g., Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen), with a focus on amplifying community voice in As/AsAm data reporting and conversations.	Central Asian communities (e.g., Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen) should be intentionally included in As/AsAm educational reporting and discourses. Their distinct cultural and migration histories require dedicated attention for policy and program design.
Recommendation 2.3: Provide high-quality culturally responsive language support services in diverse Asian languages (Hmong, Mien, and Laotian) to strengthen family-school partnerships. Districts should use enrollment and administrative data to assess language needs and prioritize resources for smaller language groups often overlooked in mainstream services.	Language access plans, as required by state and federal law, should guide this work. Translation and interpretation services should be high quality and delivered by trained professionals familiar with educational terminology related to curriculum, instruction, and special education services. Additionally, dual-language programs should be expanded beyond urban areas to meet the needs of rural schools with diverse language populations.

Section 3. Data Disaggregation for Equitable Data Policy

Recommendation	Recommendation Notes
Recommendation 3.1: Continue to disaggregate A/AA and NH/PI data to avoid masking disparities within broad categories.	For solidarity purposes and the unique narratives and histories within the As/AsAm and NH/PI communities, data on these two racial groups should continue to be reported separately. Disaggregation elevates each group's narratives and perspectives.
Recommendation 3.2: Present educational data on As/AsAm students in a maximally disaggregated format down to the level of individual ethnic communities (e.g., Hmong, Mien) whenever possible.	To account for the diverse and specific needs and experiences of each ethnic subgroup of As/AsAm communities, continue to provide opportunities for visibility and representation in data, and inform future policy and program decisions.
Recommendation 3.3: Collaborate directly with communities whose data are suppressed to better understand their unique needs, priorities, and preferred ways of being represented.	Engaging with communities whose data are suppressed ensures that their voices guide how they are represented. This approach fosters trust within communities and helps develop more culturally grounded, accurate, and meaningful interpretations that inform equitable practices.

Section 4. K-12 Student Learning Outcomes

Recommendation	Recommendation Notes
<p>Recommendation 4.1: Districts and state agencies should not only disaggregate As/AsAm student data by ethnicity, but also actively use it to inform decision making and to ensure programs and policies are responsive to specific communities.</p>	<p>Disaggregated data reveals important differences in educational outcomes, language needs, and access to resources. When used effectively, this data prevents one-size-fits-all approaches and promotes equity by addressing the unique strengths and challenges of As/AsAm subgroups.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4.2: Even when sample sizes are small, find responsible ways to include these groups in published data. When suppression is necessary, explicitly name the communities whose data are omitted to maintain visibility.</p>	<p>Excluding small population groups from public data without acknowledgment contributes to their invisibility in policy and practice. Naming suppressed groups affirms their presence, upholds transparency, and signals a commitment to addressing their needs through future data-informed efforts.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4.3: Expand culturally linguistically responsive supports for MLL students by increasing access to culturally responsive language programming (such as dual language) and invest in culturally linguistic teacher training.</p>	<p>Expand culturally and linguistically responsive supports for MLL students requires increasing access to dual language and heritage language programs, including those for less commonly taught languages, and investing in recruiting, retaining and teacher training that integrates culturally responsive pedagogy.</p>

Section 6. Curriculum and Instruction (Culture and Identity): Building Culturally Grounded Education Systems

Recommendation	Recommendation Notes
<p>Recommendation 6.1: Support educator and community-led initiatives to integrate cultural knowledge and histories into school curriculum and offer course credit for learning rooted in cultural participation through Mastery-Based Learning models.</p>	<p>Formal recognition of cultural knowledge and history builds on the informal support already provided by educators and staff, and fosters institutional understanding of the communities represented in schools.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6.2: Disaggregate ethnic studies content so As/AsAm communities are not flattened under broad categories like "Asian" or "AAPI." Ensure curriculum includes nuanced representation of multiple Asian diasporic histories and experiences.</p>	<p>Disaggregated ethnic studies content enables students to see their specific cultural and ethnic identities, histories, and resiliencies reflected in the curriculum. This approach disrupts monolithic narratives and supports meaningful cross-cultural understanding among students.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6.3: Expand dual-language programming to affirm Asian youth's cultural identities, support multilingualism, and promote access to cultural curriculum.</p>	<p>Dual-language programming promotes opportunities for As/AsAm youth to engage in culturally sustaining practices by connecting academic learning with cultural languages, family values, and community-rooted values. These programs help validate their cultural identities within educational spaces.</p>

Section 7. Cultural Humility and Culturally Responsive Practices

Recommendation	Recommendation Notes
<p>Recommendation 7.1: Avoid collapsing As/AsAm and NH/PI into the single term “AAPI” in cultural competence training. Trainings should reflect the unique barriers, strengths, and racialized experiences of specific communities.</p>	<p>Using the umbrella term “AAPI” without distinction can erase the distinct colonial histories, migration patterns, and sociopolitical realities of As/AsAm and NH/PI communities; culturally competent training must center these differences to ensure accurate representation and support for these communities.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7.2: Culturally responsive initiatives should highlight the diversity of migration histories and generational identities within As/AsAm communities in Washington State.</p>	<p>As/AsAm history is extensive and distinct, especially in each ethnic subgroup within the As/AsAm communities in Washington State in addition to national and international contexts. Migration histories and generational identities should be considered baseline requirements—and efforts must go beyond this minimum to truly meet community needs.</p>

Section: 8. From Shadows to Strength: Uplifting Asian Youth and Wellness

Recommendation	Recommendation Notes
<p>Recommendation 8.1: Equip and train educators on social-emotional learning (SEL) practices that pertain to cultural values, mental health stigmas, and community-specific understandings of wellbeing among As/AsAm youth.</p>	<p>As/AsAm students navigate mental health stigmas and cultural expectations not addressed by mainstream SEL approaches. Culturally responsive training can help educators support students through frameworks that honor both individual and collective concepts of mental health, such as family interdependence and cultural responsibility.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8.2: Recognize that academic pressure, cultural obligations, and racialized stereotypes can create high stress and anxiety among As/AsAm students—even if this is not always captured in existing data systems.</p>	<p>As/AsAm youth often experience invisible stressors, and it is essential to create supportive school environments, as unrecognized mental and emotional burdens can negatively impact students' engagement and overall wellbeing despite appearing outwardly successful in traditional metrics.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8.3: OSPI should invest in hiring and retaining a racially and linguistically diverse educator workforce, including staff who reflect the ethnic and linguistic backgrounds of As/AsAm youth.</p>	<p>A sense of belonging is rooted in representation and visibility. OSPI is currently recruiting a racially and linguistically diverse workforce, but must invest in retaining and providing support for its workforce across the state to better support and reflect students' communities and wellbeing throughout their K-12 experience.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8.4: Acknowledge that multilingual staff and paraprofessionals often provide informal emotional support for As/AsAm students. These roles should be recognized, compensated, and supported with access to training and development opportunities.</p>	<p>Districts should continue to implement practices and compensate multilingual staff and paraprofessionals who work beyond their official duties to build trust, offer culturally and linguistically affirming emotional support, and serve as bridges between schools, students, and families.</p>

Section: 9. Intersectionality	
Recommendation	Recommendation Notes
Disability and Neurodivergence Youth Recommendation 9.a.1: Address racial and cultural bias in special education by ensuring that learning needs in As/AsAm students are not misinterpreted, and that language differences or cultural behaviors are not pathologized.	Cultural and linguistic differences are often misinterpreted in special education evaluations, particularly in districts lacking adequate multilingual language programs or culturally responsive staff. Furthermore, meeting only the minimum CCDEI compliance is insufficient without additional investments in school psychologist training, lower caseload ratios, and evaluation models that move beyond behaviorism to reflect diverse family, cultural, and disability contexts. These should align with standards around Disability and Accommodations from the Washington State Association of School Psychologists.
Multiethnic and Multiracial Youth Recommendation 9.b.1: "Double count" multiracial and multiethnic youth so they are not excluded from their communities' data. Continue to develop guidance, with community input, on how the growing number of multiracial and multiethnic youth should be represented in the statewide discourse on achievement and opportunity gaps.	Multiracial and multiethnic people encompass all aspects of their identities and should not be excluded in data reporting, as such exclusion contributes to inconsistent reporting and erasure of their narratives across systems. Data practices should follow community initiatives and evolve to reflect more inclusive and accurate ways of representing multiracial and multiethnic youth.
Queer and Transgender Youth Identity Recommendation 9.c.1: Support LGBTQIA+ Asian youth by integrating Queer and Trans Asian stories, histories, and perspectives into ethnic studies curricula and school-based programming. Educator training should include awareness of community resources and affirming spaces for Queer and Trans As/AsAm youth.	Aligning with OSPI and Superintendent Reykdal's commitments to supporting LGBTIA+ students, there should be continued inclusive curricula and educator training that center their identities to help validate their experiences, reduce isolation, and foster safer, more affirming school environments for LGBTIA+ As/AsAm youth who often navigate layered experiences of cultural stigma, racial invisibility, and gender-based discrimination. Furthermore, partner with As/AsAm LGBTQIA+ communities to improve the ways schools collect data on gender and sexuality. Ensure data systems create space for culturally specific gender and sexual identities beyond binary categories.

Section: 10. Educator Representation and Cultural Competence	
Recommendation	Recommendation Notes
Recommendation 10.1: Increase efforts to recruit, retain, and support As/AsAm educators, especially those from underrepresented ethnic communities such as Southeast Asian, West Asian, Central Asian, and South Asian groups.	As/AsAm educators tend to serve outside of their classroom through various extracurricular and/or community-led programs (i.e., Vietnamese Student Association, Asian Student Associations, Multicultural night, etc.) due to lack of representation in the curriculum or school climate and must be compensated, as a lack of recognition and added labor contribute to higher attrition and dissatisfaction among educators.

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR STUDY:

The QR code below leads to our research website containing a full report for this research endeavor, *Centering Asian Diasporic Voices & Shaping Policy The Educational Experiences and Wellbeing of Asian and Asian American Youth in Washington Schools*. Or go to the following website: <https://tinyurl.com/uwaanhpireport>



FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS?

Please reach out to Dr. Max Halvorson (maximum2@uw.edu) or jenn Nguyễn (jngyn@uw.edu) for inquiries and questions about the project.

Appendix D. Stories of Educational Wayfinding: Supporting the Educational Voyages of Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander Students Executive Summary.

Full Report:

Halvorson, M. A., & Camacho, S. G. (2025). *Stories of educational wayfinding: Supporting the educational voyages of native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander students*. Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs.

https://issuu.com/socialwork.uw.edu/docs/stories_of_educational_wayfinding_supporting_the

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Executive Summary:

STORIES OF EDUCATIONAL WAYFINDING:

Supporting the
Educational Voyages
of Native Hawaiian
& Pacific Islander
Students



Washington State Commission
on Asian Pacific American Affairs

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AN INTRODUCTION TO NH/PI YOUTH: GROWING, DIVERSE, & INTERCONNECTED

Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NH/PI) youth and families are full and engaged participants in their learning communities. NH/PI persevere in the face of social and economic challenges, historical underrepresentation in the educator workforce and the school curriculum, and stereotypes about their personalities and academic skills. In recent years, strides have been made in NH/PI representation and equity in education systems for racial and ethnic identity, including disaggregation of NH/PI data in federal and state systems from the antiquated "Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI)" category. Though there is an increasing awareness of NH/PI communities as a distinct group from Asians and Asian Americans with specific cultures, educational experiences, and learning, NH/PI continue to experience challenges in their education and wellbeing.

The NH/PI population is the fastest-growing racial or ethnic group in Washington state, with 114,189 total residents as of the 2020 census, compared to 27,654 as reported in the 2008 Education Disparities Report. When considering the welfare of NH/PI students nationally, Washington is one of the most important states to consider, as Washington ranks in the top 5 by population share for Native Hawaiians, Samoans, Tongans, Chamorros, Marshallese, and Fijians. Due to differing histories of settler colonialism and Pacific nations' political relationships with the US government, citizenship within NH/PI communities varies

greatly depending on the island(s) families are from. Citizenship status can impact access to economic benefits and healthcare in the US, which have direct impacts on the educational experiences of youth. Moreover, the challenges of navigating multiple cultures and political statuses are compounded by significant socioeconomic challenges, as over one-third of NH/PI families experience food insecurity.

NH/PI youth are also diverse, with NH/PI in Washington being indigenous to many different nations, states, and territories across Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia. In addition, 43% of NH/PI individuals in Washington identify as multiracial and an estimated 14% of NH/PI youth in OSPI schools identify as Queer or Transgender Pacific Islanders (QTPI). Rather than ignoring this diversity, we highlight it as a strength of the NH/PI community and acknowledge the complex ways in which NH/PI youth navigate systemic oppression within the education system.

In the current report, we sought not only to assess the current state of NH/PI educational achievement in Washington state as of 2025, but also to uplift the voices of students, educators, and community members in shaping recommendations to close achievement gaps and advance OSPI's mission to serve all students.

THE CURRENT UPDATE: DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

Using a mixed-methods approach, we collected both quantitative data and qualitative data to examine education disparities among NH/PI

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONT.

youth and to develop community-informed recommendations. Quantitative data included formal metrics such as grades, graduation rates, and standardized testing scores provided by the Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction (OSPI), as well as measures of student wellbeing from the Washington Healthy Youth Survey administered to a representative sample of students statewide.

Qualitative data were gathered through focus groups and interviews with students, educators, and administrators who shared their perspectives on the needs and challenges of NH/PI youth.

To ensure that recommendations were grounded in community expertise, we convened a Community Advisory Board (CAB) composed of leaders in the Washington NH/PI community to help interpret findings and shape recommendations.

In our quantitative analysis, we intentionally disaggregated NH/PI data from Asian/Asian American (As/AsAm) data, and when possible, we examined data on specific NH/PI communities (e.g., Yapese, Chamorro). For qualitative data, we prioritized representation across diverse Pasifika backgrounds and regions within the state.

NH/PI ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT CONTINUES TO LAG BEHIND PEERS

Notwithstanding rich histories and ways of knowing among NH/PI communities, K-12 academic achievement data reveal persistent

and concerning disparities in educational outcomes for NH/PI youth that have not improved since the 2008 report. Whereas data on standardized test scores appear to reflect widening disparities across the intervening years, graduation data may provide some evidence of progress. Disaggregated data reflect variability in academic outcomes, with challenges for non-Chamorro Micronesian youth and relatively fewer challenges for Native Hawaiian and Chamorro youth.

These disparities start early – only 1 in 3 NH/PI youth enter kindergarten with the skills needed for a smooth transition. They persist through K-12 education – between 2010 and 2024, approximately 3 in 4 NH/PI students (73%) enrolled in OSPI high schools graduated within 4 years, as compared to 79% of all students. And when considering postsecondary outcomes, NH/PI youth were less likely than most other racial and ethnic groups to complete a 2-year degree (14%) or 4-year degree (21%) in the years following high school graduation. Among those who did complete these programs, however, wages were comparable to members of other racial and ethnic groups during the first few years in the workforce.

In interviews conducted for this 2025 study update, educators acknowledged (and at times perpetuated) the pervasive stereotypes and lack of representation that students often work against: “I hope that they can see it within themselves and getting out of that categorized mindset that just because you’re a Poly boy doesn’t mean you have to play football. Just because you’re a Poly girl doesn’t mean you have to play volleyball. Get into another career path. You don’t have to fall under the

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categories of what society tells you are...go be a frickin' scientist." While educators expressed hope for their students' long-term success, they noted that there needed to be "more creative, more flexible ways that students can earn a diploma" because academic standards do not always align with to students' goals or interests.

BUILDING STUDENTS' SENSE OF BELONGING & WELLBEING THROUGH CONNECTION & REPRESENTATION

Pasifika cultures share a holistic sense of wellbeing that values relationships with family members, ancestors, community members, land, oceans, and skies. This worldview can conflict with the American education system, leading to disidentification and disconnection. Students and educators drew a parallel between a lack of wellbeing and a feeling of disconnection to the school environment. One educator shared "they're not reflected in the curriculum at all. Or celebrated in their buildings for who they are..." A student shared, poignantly: "It just brings me back to my cousin's school. He goes to Utah, and...it's one of the most populated state of Tongans...they had the Tongan mat on the wall decoration 'cause there's that many Tongans and just seeing that...almost made me cry...I wish I had that."

NH/PI students in Washington experience significant challenges to their wellbeing, contrary to stereotypical beliefs that NH/PI youth are carefree,. Statewide, NH/PI youth exhibited the highest rate of depression symptoms of all major racial and ethnic groups, with 2 in 5 (40%) reporting a period of feeling

depressed in the past year. Chamorro (53%), Marshallese (42%), Native Hawaiian (39%), and other combined NH/PI (Chuukese, Kosraean, Palauan, Yapese; 45%) youth were especially prone to depressive symptoms. Anxiety problems were also common among NH/PI youth, with more than 1 in 3 (34%) NH/PI youth reporting at least mild anxiety. Perhaps most alarmingly, nearly 1 in 5 (19%) NH/PI youth report having thoughts of suicide at least once in the past year. QTPI students, particularly Transgender QTPI students, had greater disparities in mental health outcomes compared to straight and cisgender NH/PI students where more than 1 in 3 (35%) of QTPI and more than half of Transgender QTPI (67%) reporting having thoughts of suicide at least once in the past year.

INFUSING NH/PI CULTURES AND HISTORIES INTO K-12 EDUCATION

A consistent and emphatic theme shared by our NH/PI student and educator interviewees, as well as by our Community Advisory Board, was the importance of bringing Pasifika culture and history into the educational environment to build student belonging, engagement, and investment in their school communities. During our interviews, students and educators shared how NH/PI students had challenges connecting with their classes because they did not see much of their Indigenous cultures and histories represented in the standard curriculum. As one student shared, "You want to feel included and represented. We mostly hear about bad events, but I also want to learn how we came together as people – how we survived and thrived." Despite these challenges, schools can build

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connection with NH/PI students and communities by honoring Pasifika identities and allowing these identities to be celebrated in the school setting.

Fortunately, NH/PI communities have worked together to create outstanding models for integrating community and culture into schools. Creating institutional support through formal partnerships and acknowledging staff who go above and beyond can advance OSPI's mission of increasing student belonging and, in turn, educational outcomes.

For example, the United Territories of Pacific Islanders Association Washington (UTOPIA WA) partners with King County and Pierce County schools to engage youth in programs that cultivate leadership, safety, and cultural identity among QTPI, QTBIPOC, and NH/PI youth.

These programs teach Siva Samoa (traditional Samoan dance) and other cultural practices through their Nuanua knowledge corner. Through our interviews, we learned about efforts in Eastern Washington, where Marshallese community members implemented a culture and language elective course that allowed students to engage academically with topics around their Marshallese genealogical practices, family, storytelling, language, and culture.

Finally, in the Enumclaw school district, an immersive educational experience based on Pacific Northwest Tribal Canoe Journeys emerged as a key program to increase engagement and graduation rates among Native youth. The potential for NH/PI youth to benefit from similar programs, given shared culture as seafaring Indigenous peoples, is high.



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CONFLICTING SCHOOL AND FAMILIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Having to choose between family, culture, and school is an impossible decision to make for NH/PI students in the Washington K-12 education system. Death, funerals, and grief are sacred moments in the lives of NH/PI peoples. Across Oceania there are distinct practices and ceremonies that are held to commemorate the life of a loved one and grieve their passing. These ceremonies can last anywhere from 1 week to 1 month. To our knowledge, there are currently no formal policies in Washington's K-12 education system that address student needs for extended bereavement, including accommodations for the length of time needed for cultural bereavement ceremonies. Creating an education system that cares for these cultural needs and celebrates NH/PI students is likely to have profound effects on their academic achievement.

UPLIFTING EDUCATOR REPRESENTATION & DEVELOPING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EDUCATORS

When NH/PI students worked with NH/PI educators, paraeducators, and non-NH/PI teachers who had culturally responsive pedagogical practices, both students and educators noted the support, safety, and trust that these educators provided. NH/PI educators are severely underrepresented in identified as NH/PI (US Bureau of Labor

Statistics). In Washington's OSPI schools, these numbers are higher, but NH/PI students still struggle to see themselves represented in the educator workforce. Across districts, the percentage of teachers who identify as NH/PI ranges from 0.0% to 2.6%.

As one NH/PI paraeducator shared, "I think having teachers that represent our students is really important...students need to see that there are people who look like them, who understand their culture and are in places... where they can look up to, or people they can look up to...it does make a difference when there are teachers who truly represent their students". Having positive role models can help to counter harmful stereotypes experienced by NH/PI youth that can label them as unintelligent, aggressive, lazy, and/or exotic. Increasing NH/PI representation in schools also help call attention to these damaging beliefs.

DISABILITIES & ACCOMMODATIONS FOR NH/PI YOUTH

During the 2023-24 school year, the number one request from parents to the Washington State Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO) was for assistance related to special education, inclusion, and equitable access. NH/PI families were no different, with the highest proportion (60%) of requests to OEO involving special education. NH/PI students with disabilities face unique discrimination in special education spaces when these intersections interweave with NH/PI stereotypes that create perceptions of NH/PI students as aggressive and disruptive. One

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teacher even noted that NH/PI boys are sometimes put in special education classes when there isn't evidence to support that change because the threshold for "misbehavior" is lower for NH/PI boys. In addition, stigma remains within NH/PI cultures and other communities of color. Continued recognition, education, and endorsement of a strengths-based perspective when working with families, can address these challenges. In addition, high-quality language navigation services are critical for discussing these complex topics.

ROOTING LEARNING IN EDUCATIONAL DREAMS

NH/PI students dream of futures filled with growth, achievement, and the ability to uplift their families and communities. One student expressed, "For me, it's...my older sister. She just recently graduated college, and she's also going towards the medical field...If I can dream it, then I can do it." Some students dreams were also tied to wanting greater representation in their education: "I've been wanting to be a teacher...I've never seen a Marshallese teacher...It influences me because like I could start something." These dreams also encompass certain non-negotiables in caring for family and community, as captured by a student: "You know, the Fa'a Samoa way. Take care of your own. Take care of your grandmother, you know they brought you here, so help them...Help them where they are."

NH/PI educators all shared dreams of generating an education system that centered Pasifika Indigenous cultural values: "Working harder to make more money is not the end

goal. But it's the other things that feel important...how are you in community with each other and with yourself, and what are the things you need to learn in order to do that? And what are the ways in which we need to think about our planet and like non-human parts of like how we interact with the world? I wonder if we were in a place, that with more of the aligned values...how our Pacific Islander students and families would show up differently, and what success would look like."

These educational dreams challenge us to reflect on whether our systems align with the values that we claim to hold: growth, achievement, family, and community. Within many NH/PI worldviews, right relationships with family, community, the natural environment, and ancestors are critical for wellbeing and, in turn, educational success. The following pages offer policy and program recommendations informed by students, educators, data, and community input, to transform Washington's K-12 education system to better support these dreams.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. BOLSTER LANGUAGE SERVICES FOR NH/PI FAMILIES.

Effective language navigation services in NH/PI languages (e.g., Marshallese) are essential for family engagement and educational support. Schools and districts should use administrative data and engage communities to identify language needs and share resources across districts, especially for less commonly spoken languages.

2. DISAGGREGATE NH/PI FROM AS/ASAM DATA IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES AND DISAGGREGATE NH/PI DATA TO THE ETHNIC GROUP LEVEL WHEN POSSIBLE.

Aggregating data can obscure inequities. Educational data on NH/PI should be disaggregated by ethnic group (e.g., Tongan, Yapese, Kosraean) whenever possible. OSPI and ERDC should offer training and guidance on disaggregation practices for educators and administrators. If small group data must be suppressed or combined, name the communities represented and consider qualitative approaches or partnerships with community-serving organizations to understand community needs and priorities.

“Double count” multiracial youth in educational data so they remain visible in community-specific data, and continue to develop guidance, with community input, for representing the growing number of multiracial youth in the statewide discourse on achievement and opportunity gaps.

3. PROMOTE CULTURAL HUMILITY FOR ALL EDUCATORS AND NH/PI HISTORICAL AWARENESS

All educators should receive training on NH/PI history, values, and relational wellbeing and reciprocity for Indigenous and NH/PI students. Incorporating frameworks such as Indigenous Connectedness can strengthen student bonds to school. Minimally, educators should meet the Professional Educator Standards Board's (PESB's) Cultural Competency, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CCDEI) standards. Pre-service and in-service training for educators and administrators should heighten awareness of NH/PI students' high rates of mental health challenges.

4. INVEST IN AND SUPPORT THE MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE AND NH/PI STAFF

Expand investments in school mental health, with attention to hiring, training, and retaining NH/PI professionals.

NH/PI educators and paraprofessionals often serve as informal counselors and should be supported and compensated for this work. Offer financial and professional development pathways, especially for paraeducators without 4-year degrees.

5. EMBED NH/PI CULTURE INTO SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS.

Support initiatives that bring NH/PI culture into schools, including credit-bearing activities through Mastery-Based Learning. Ethnic studies courses should include NH/PI histories, aligning with Washington State's ethnic studies graduation requirement.

6. INCREASE NH/PI REPRESENTATION IN THE EDUCATOR WORKFORCE.

NH/PI teachers are the most underrepresented of all teachers. Invest in recruiting, training, and retaining NH/PI educators. Opportunities supported by the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) and Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) should be highlighted in particular: Recruiting Washington Teachers, Bilingual Educators Initiative, Paraeducator Certificate Programs, and Apprenticeship Programs. Cultural competence training should not rely on the "AAPI" umbrella term, but address the distinct experiences of NH/PI communities. Consistent with HB1541 (the Nothing About Us Without Us act), partner with and compensate NH/PI community organizations to develop these educational opportunities.

7. APPROACH DISABILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS WITH CULTURAL AND STRENGTHS-BASED PERSPECTIVES

When assessing disability and crafting individualized education plans, professionals should work against biases that may lead to overdiagnosis of behavioral problems and underdiagnosis of learning challenges. Embrace strengths-based approaches and address stigma within communities of color. School psychologists and service providers should use self-assessment tools to reflect on their practices.

Recognize cultural obligations (e.g., bereavement practices) and provide flexible accommodations so students and families are not forced to choose between school and family.

8. SUPPORT AND AFFIRM QUEER AND TRANS PACIFIC ISLANDER (QTPI) YOUTH

In line with OSPI's commitment to LGBTQIA+ students, interweave QTPI narratives into the development of NH/PI studies curriculum, cultural programs, and educator training. Collaborate with QTPI community groups to expand and improve data gender and sexual orientation data categories and ensure culturally specific identities are acknowledged. Provide school districts with community-driven resources and training.



Appendix E A Plan to Close the Opportunity Gap Executive Summary

Full Report:

Washington State Commission on African American Affairs. (2025). A plan to close the opportunity gap.

<https://caaa.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/documents/OfficeDocs/A%20Plan%20to%20Close%20the%20Opportunity%20Gap%20~%20Washington%20State%20Commission%20on%20African%20American%20Affairs%20%26%20Imago%2C%20LLC%20%28June%2030%2C%202025%29%20-%20Oct%202025%20update.pdf>

Executive Summary:

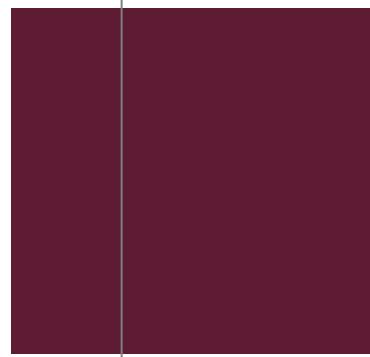


Washington State Commission on

African American Affairs



A Plan to Close the Opportunity Gap



Report Summary

Introduction

For far too long, Black students in Washington state have navigated an education system that was not built with them in mind. Despite decades of reform, community organizing, and policy investment, the opportunity gap remains wide, and in some cases, is deepening. This report is both a mirror and a map: it reflects the lived realities of Black students and families across the state, and it charts a course forward rooted in community truth, systemic accountability, and a belief in what is possible.

What's needed now is not incremental reform. It's transformation: a shift from "achievement gap" narratives that blame students, to a bold reckoning with the systems that have failed to deliver on their promise.

About the Study

In 2024, the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC), in partnership with the Washington State Commission on African American Affairs (CAAA), commissioned an update to the landmark 2008 report on the state of African American education in Washington. This report is the outcome of that call.

The plan emerges from a deeply engaged, statewide research effort led by Imago, LLC in partnership with Refraction Consulting and Majors Leadership Group. The work centered:

- A statewide survey of over 200 community voices
- In-depth interviews with educators, advocates, and stakeholders
- A focus group with caregivers
- Statewide data from OSPI and other public sources
- A scan of more than 40 recent research sources

Every recommendation is grounded in both data and the wisdom of lived experience. In order to develop recommendations, the CAAA convened the Study and Outcomes Workgroup, composed of eleven individuals representing a wide cross-section of experience, geography, and roles across the education and public policy sectors.

What We Heard: Eight Core Themes

The voices of families, educators, and community members consistently surfaced eight critical needs:

1. Hire and Support Black Educators

Students need to see themselves reflected in those who lead, teach, and guide them.

2. Deliver Culturally Responsive Curriculum

Curriculum must tell the truth, affirm identity, and spark curiosity, rather than erase or sideline Black experiences.

3. Confront Racism in Schools

Racism is not an isolated incident; it is a system. And it's still showing up in school hallways, playgrounds, and policies.

4. Address Discipline Disparities

Exclusionary practices push students out of learning. Fairness must be restored, and harm must be acknowledged and addressed.

5. Expand Educational Pathways

Black students deserve more than a one-size-fits-all approach. College, career, trades, entrepreneurship: all must be viable and visible.

6. Listen to Students and Families

Too often, Black voices are invited but not heard. That must change.

7. Surround Students with Support

When students feel safe, seen, and supported, they rise. Every child deserves that foundation.

8. Tackle Systemic Change

The problem isn't isolated programs. It's the systems themselves. And they must evolve.

Five Interdependent Goals for Impact

In alignment with the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC), this project and the CAAA advances five interdependent goals designed to dismantle systemic inequities:

1. Increase Representation and Support for Black Educators

Build and sustain a diverse, affirmed teaching workforce.

2. Ensure Equitable Access to Early Learning and Kindergarten Readiness

Expand access to high-quality early learning and affirming environments from the very start.

2. Improve Student Engagement and Reduce Exclusionary Discipline

Reduce pushout and disproportionate exclusionary practices, and invest in humanizing school cultures.

3. Provide an Anti-Racist Curriculum and Fair Assessments

Replace biased systems with ones that measure and reflect Black students' brilliance.

4. Expand Postsecondary Pathways and Career Readiness for Black Students

Ensure every student sees a future, whether that's college, trades, business, or the arts, and has the support to get there.

Each goal includes measurable benchmarks, a policy roadmap, and immediate strategies that schools and districts can begin using now.

What's Already Working

Across Washington state and beyond, there are bright spots to build from, such as:

- Teach253 (Tacoma): recruiting local youth into teaching pathways.
- Rainier Prep (Seattle): culturally responsive curriculum and small class sizes.
- ACE Academy (Seattle): supporting Black boys and building Black educator networks.
- Seattle Public Schools' Black Studies and Liberatory Ed work: centering joy and justice in curriculum.

These examples, and numerous others outlined in this report, prove that when we lead with purpose and persistence, transformation is not only possible, it's already happening.

Conclusion: A Call to Act

Black students are brilliant. They are creative, driven, and full of possibility. They are not lacking in talent or will. What's missing is an education system fully committed to their success.

This report is a call to courage, for policymakers, educators, and community leaders alike. The time for half-measures has passed. We must move with urgency and vision, informed by those who know the stakes best.

Washington state can lead. But only if we commit, not just to better outcomes, but to the deeper work of redesigning the systems that shape them.

Appendix F. Hispanic and Latinx Students Educational Opportunity Gaps Study Executive Summary

Full Report:

Le, L., Rueda, R. A. A., Chen, R. H., Johnson, J., & Arreguin, A. I. A. (2025). *Hispanic and Latinx students educational opportunity gaps study*. Commission on Hispanic Affairs.
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5915f65ed482e94b3f60b25f/t/68e04eb0396f5f1ef1487e00/1759530673016/HGAP24_Hispanic_Latinx_Opportunity_Gaps_Final_Report.pdf

Executive Summary:

Hispanic and Latinx Students

Educational Opportunity Gaps Study

Prepared for:

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Acknowledgement of America's First Peoples

Washington State University acknowledges that its locations statewide are on the homelands of Native peoples, who have lived in this region from time immemorial. Currently, there are 42 tribes, 35 of which are federally recognized that share traditional homelands and waterways in what is now Washington State. Some of these are nations and confederacies that represents multiple tribes and bands. The University expresses its deepest respect for and gratitude towards these original and current caretakers of the region. As an academic community, we acknowledge our responsibility to establish and maintain relationships with these tribes and Native peoples, in support of tribal sovereignty and the inclusion of their voices in teaching, research and programming. Washington State University established the Office of Tribal Relations and Native American Programs to guide us in our relationship with tribes and service to Native American students and communities. We also pledge that these relationships will consist of mutual trust, respect, and reciprocity.

As a land grant institution, we also recognize that the Morrill Act of 1862 established land-grant institutions by providing each state with "public" and federal lands, which are traced back to the disposition of Indigenous lands. In 1890, Washington State received 90,081 acres of Indigenous Lands designated to establish Washington State University. Washington State University retains the majority of these lands to this day. We acknowledge that the disposition of Indigenous lands was often taken by coercive and violent acts, and the disregard of treaties. For that, we extend our deepest apologies. We owe our deepest gratitude to the Native peoples of this region and maintain our commitment towards reconciliation.

PROJECT TEAM

Principal Investigator: Lena Le, Ph.D.

Dr. Lena Le is the Director of the Social & Economic Sciences Research Center at Washington State University. With a Ph.D. in Natural Resources Management, a M.Sc. in Statistics, and a MBA in Strategic Management, and 20 years of research experience, she has a diverse research portfolio. Dr. Le is well-versed in applying qualitative and quantitative methods to social science research. Demonstrated by her publications, one of Dr. Le's research foci was on access and equity among minority groups and underserved populations in the U.S.

Project Manager - Lead Researcher: Rubén Ángel Arias Rueda, Ph.D.

Dr. Rubén Ángel Arias Rueda is a Project Manager at the Social & Economic Science Research Center at Washington State University. With a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and Literature Studies, an MA in Literature and Literary Science, and an MA in Teaching Secondary Education. He has been teaching Spanish Language and Literature for 14 years at all levels of the curriculum in different countries (U.S., Mexico, and Spain). He has also actively collaborated with different schools, universities, and programs dedicated to fulfilling the educational needs of underserved communities as African American descendants, Latinx immigrant population, and Spanish heritage speakers.

Project manager - Lead quantitative data analyst: Ruby Hui-Chun Chen, Ph.D.

Dr. Ruby Chen is the project manager and data analyst of the Social & Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC) at Washington State University. With a Ph.D. in Kinesiology specializing in Occupational Therapy and Occupational Science, Dr. Chen has received comprehensive training in quantitative methods throughout her academic journey. This training has provided her with a solid foundation in data collection, data management, statistical analysis, and report writing. Since joining SESRC in January 2023, Dr. Ruby Chen has contributed to data mining, data analysis, and report writing for several projects in various research fields, including education, healthcare, and economics.

Project Manager - Lead qualitative data analyst: Jair Johnson, M.A, Ph.D. Candidate in Sociology

Jair Johnson is a project manager with the Social & Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC) at Washington State University. With a Masters degree in Sociology, Mr. Johnson is currently working towards earning a Ph.D. in Sociology from Washington State University. Mr. Johnson has developed both qualitative and quantitative skills through his Ph.D. journey. Mr. Johnson has been employed with the SESRC since March of 2022 where he has worked previously as a program support supervisor with the Data Collection Unit. He is well-versed in numerous different operations within the SESRC.

Research Assistant: Ana Isabel Alcocer Arreguin, M.S., M.A.

Ms. Arreguin earned a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education and a Master's Degree in Foreign Language Teaching. Originally from Guadalajara, Mexico, she is currently working as a Spanish instructor at the University of Idaho. She had contributed to several research efforts in education for Hispanic and Latinx populations. Among which she had received special recognition for her contribution to I STEM Education Innovations: Introducing STEM Experiences to Head Start Children in Jerome County, Idaho project.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study cannot be conducted without the incredible support from staff and faculty at Washington State University, staff and community partners at Commission on Hispanic Affairs, and Hispanic and Latinx community advocates such as LETI (Latino Educational Training Institute), CAFÉ (Community for the Advancement of Family Education), the Migrant Education Program from Educational Service District 123, and many others.

Special thanks to Dr. Eulalia Gallegos Buitron for reviewing the literature synthesis. We thank our experts on the Delphi panel for their important contributions and insights. The expert profiles are included in the Delphi study section.

We are especially grateful to Dr. María Morales-Sánchez and Dr. Samuel Rodríguez Flecha for their thoughtful review and feedback on the final draft. Appreciation is also extended to the ERDC team for reviewing Chapter 4.2 on early learning to K-12 data.

*

This study was reviewed and approved by the Washington State University Institutional Review Board (IRB #20634-002) on November 22, 2024. The IRB determined that the study posed minimal risk to participants and qualified for expedited review under applicable federal regulations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to a legislative mandate, the Commission on Hispanic Affairs (CHA) contracted the Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC) at Washington State University in March 2024 to conduct this updated study. The CHA had previously commissioned the 2008 study that led to the creation of the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) within the Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Since its inception, EOGOAC, of which the Commission is a member, has issued a series of policy recommendations aimed at addressing systemic inequities in Washington's K-20 education system.

The current study revisits the opportunity gap with three primary objectives:

- (1) to analyze the extent and nature of the opportunity gap affecting Hispanic and Latinx students today;
- (2) to develop actionable policy recommendations aligned with state ESSA goals;
- (3) to identify performance measures for monitoring equitable progress over time.

In 2008, Dr. Frances E. Contreras and Dr. Tom Stritikus, in collaboration with the University of Washington's College of Education, presented a landmark report for the Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs: *Understanding Opportunities to Learn for Latino Students in Washington State*. While the current study introduces new data, approaches, and areas of focus, the key findings and recommendations from the 2008 report continue to resonate today as a valuable point of reference. In some cases, we expand upon the previous conclusions with updated evidence; in others, we offer alternative perspectives or revisit them through a different analytical lens. Most importantly, several of the original recommendations remain meaningful and urgent.

Nearly two decades later, the projections of the Hispanic and Latinx population outlined in the 2008 report have been significantly surpassed. As of 2022, Washington's Hispanic and Latinx population reached approximately 13.5% of the state's total population, exceeding the earlier projection of 12.4% by 2030. Between 2017 and 2022 alone, Washington's Hispanic and Latinx population grew by 17.3%, nearly double the national growth rate of 9.2%. Washington is today one of 13 states where the Hispanic and Latinx population exceeds one million, underscoring the community's relevancy and influence.

Drawing on the most recent and significant literature, this study adopts a conceptual shift from an **"achievement gap"** framework to an **"opportunity gap"** perspective. In comparison, the

achievement gap focuses on outcomes (such as test scores, graduation rates, and college enrollment), while the opportunity gap centers on the systemic conditions that produce those disparities. These include access to qualified teachers, culturally relevant instruction, rigorous coursework, and supportive school environments. Rather than relying on deficit-based narratives, the opportunity gap framework focuses on how institutional practices, resource allocation, and historical exclusion influence educational outcomes.

This report, titled "Hispanic and Latinx Students Educational Opportunity Gaps Study", is structured into seven chapters that collectively define, measure, and analyze educational opportunity gaps in Washington State.

Chapter 1 presents a summary of indicators extracted from 97 relevant sources, including peer-reviewed articles, policy briefs, and evaluations. This review identified a broad set of indicators across five key domains: academic outcomes; formal school practices; student aspirations and attributes; family and community characteristics; and school attributes and resource availability. These indicators informed the development of a framework to assess the systemic conditions shaping opportunity gaps for Hispanic and Latinx students. The comprehensive literature synthesis is available in a separate report, SESRC technical report 25-19.

Chapter 2 describes how a panel of experts reviewed, expanded, refined, and ranked the list of indicators of opportunity gaps using a Delphi process to ensure the relevance of the indicators within the specific educational context of Washington State.

Chapter 3 summarizes the demographic and educational profile of the state's Hispanic and Latinx population, utilizing data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

Chapter 4 presents findings from secondary data analyses using student-level data obtained through formal data use agreements with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Education Research and Data Center (ERDC). These analyses were conducted in accordance with the approved data share agreements with the data distributors and under the oversight of the Washington State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the ethical handling of confidential information.

Chapters 5 and 6 complement the quantitative findings by incorporating qualitative insights from Hispanic and Latinx families and students. **Chapter 5** outlines the focus groups conducted with parents and guardians across Washington State. These conversations explored dimensions of educational opportunity (such as cultural identity, language use, school climate, and family engagement) that are not captured by administrative data. **Chapter 6** builds on this work

through one-on-one interviews with middle and high school students, whose perspectives offered generational insights into how institutional practices support or constrain their aspirations. These qualitative findings revealed systemic barriers, as well as resilience and gestures of cultural affirmation, while also providing direct suggestions from families and students for improving school environments. The focus groups and interviews were also conducted under the oversight of the Washington State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the ethical handling of confidential, sensitive information.

Chapter 7 brings together findings from all previous chapters to identify key areas of concern and provide actionable policy recommendations. These recommendations are designed to inform ongoing efforts to close educational opportunity gaps. They are aligned with the academic achievement indicators outlined in Washington State's consolidated plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). In addition to suggesting targeted reforms, Chapter 7 offers guidance on developing performance measures to track progress and ensure accountability in delivering equitable educational experiences for Hispanic and Latinx students. The chapter also returns to the 2008 *Achievement Gap* report to compare findings, expand on earlier recommendations, and assess how the educational landscape has evolved.

At its core, this report represents a critical step in shifting the focus of educational equity efforts in Washington State from outcome-based assessments to the systemic conditions that shape opportunity. By combining a rigorously developed framework of indicators with state-level data and the lived experiences of Hispanic and Latinx students and families, the study provides a multidimensional understanding of the barriers and enablers that affect educational trajectories. The findings underscore the importance of grounding policy decisions in both data records and community voice, and of committing to long-term structural change. As Washington continues to grow and diversify, the recommendations outlined here provide a roadmap for creating a more inclusive and responsive education system.

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