
Office of the Education Ombudsman

Recommendations for
the Improvement of the
Public Education
System

2009-2010

Online Learning	Page 1
Special Education	Page 6
LEP/ELL Language Access	Page 8
Anti-Bullying/Harassment	Page 12
Family Involvement in Education	Page 14



WASHINGTON STATE

Office of the Education Ombudsman

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Recommendations for Improving K-12 Public Education

2009-2010

The Office of the Education Ombudsman (OEO) resolves complaints from parents and students regarding K-12 public schools. In the course of our work, we collect data and identify system-wide factors that contribute to a breakdown in fair and equitable processes which are fundamental to the academic success of all students. According to its legislative mandate, under RCW 43.06B.050, OEO is required to make annual recommendations to the Governor, the Legislature, and the State Board of Education for improvements in the education system. Our recommendations are based on the frequency and depth of state-wide concerns brought to our attention over the course of each fiscal year.

Online Learning in Washington K-12 Public Education

Online learning has joined the landscape of educational choices available to Washington K-12 students and is becoming an increasingly popular option for students and school districts alike.

OEO believes this to be a promising alternative learning system for meeting the temporary and ongoing needs of students who: are excluded from school due to expulsion or long-term suspension, need to recover or supplement credits, need extra support to learn English, need a different learning environment than most regular classrooms, are at risk of dropping out, or who need access to curriculum from home.

Since the passage of Substitute Senate Bill 5828 in July, 2005 (the original Washington law that established online learning as a full-time option for public school students), the utilization of the virtual school system in Washington has grown. In 2008-2009, approximately 15,800 students took an online course (which represents 1.6% of all students, and a 13% increase from the previous year); 13,000 of those students were enrolled in a mix of part-time and full-time programs, with the remaining 2,800 students taking individual supplemental online courses.¹

School districts either partner with private online educational providers or provide their own online programs. The number of school districts offering online learning options has been increasing; at least 37 districts are currently offering online options to students, while as many as 160 school districts have written policies allowing them to do so (which suggests that the number of participating districts may increase significantly in the future).²

¹ "Keeping Pace with K-12 Online: An Annual Review of State-level Policy and Practice," November 2010, p. 143. Available at <http://www.kpk12.com>.

² Statistics provided by the OSPI Department of Digital Learning.

In 2009, the Washington State Legislature passed Substitute Senate Bill 5410,³ creating a Digital Learning Department (DLD) within The Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction (OSPI). This represents the Legislature's first attempt to create state oversight and assure the quality of online learning. The new law states that essential first steps towards these goals include:

- Providing objective information on programs, curricula, and registration processes to students, parents, and educators.
- Enhancing statewide equity of student access to online opportunities.
- Ensuring that all districts have online policies and procedures in place by the 2010-2011 school year.

The DLD is responsible for managing a new statewide approval process for multi-district online learning providers in Washington, as well as providing information to students and parents on multi-district online courses, course providers, school programs, and school program providers. When individual school districts offer these same options exclusively to students who reside in-district, they are exempt from the state approval process and are responsible for providing parents with all relevant information.

Since the passage of SSB 5410, great gains have been made by the DLD in providing information about online learning in Washington. The DLD has developed a website that is extensive and well organized. School districts however, are struggling to provide clear information to parents and students.

SSB 5410 also requires that school districts develop, and submit to OSPI, policies and procedures regarding student access to online learning by September 15, 2010. The DLD is still collecting policies from school districts. As a result, OEO cannot do a complete review of district-level policies. However, OEO has received considerable input from both students and parents regarding their challenges when navigating online learning opportunities as well as pursuing the actual online learning process. OEO is thus able to provide important feedback from the perspective of these key constituent groups.

Online Learning and Special Education Students

Online learning is part of public education and, as such, is required to meet the same basic legal requirements as "brick and mortar" schools. In working to ensure that essential educational rights are protected, special attention should be paid to how complex, federally mandated laws like IDEA⁴ and Section 504 of the Civil Rights Act⁵ are being interpreted and implemented in the new online environment. Are special education students safe from discrimination and able to access a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) in the online learning context?

Neither IDEA nor Section 504 were written to address unique aspects of online/remote instruction, nor are there clear guidelines explaining what compliance looks like in the context of the online learning environment.

Both laws are characterized by a high degree of individualization and/or modification of curriculum and the learning environment. Both depend for success on a high degree of

³ See RCW 28A.250 and WAC 392-502.

⁴ See generally, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et.seq.; WAC 392-172.

⁵ See generally, Section 504 regulations: 34 C.F.R. § 104 et.seq.

communication and coordination between parents, students, and educators at various levels of the system, and often a myriad of related professionals, inside and outside the school system. OEO is concerned that there are not clear answers to the following questions that impact students with disabilities:

- Are online schools and their districts adequately and consistently meeting the full educational needs and due process rights of individual students with disabilities?
- What does it mean to provide behavioral supports to an IEP (Individualized Education Program) student who works only from their computer at home?
- If the IEP team must include one educator who knows the student well, how is this requirement met if none of the online teachers have ever met the student in person?
- How can “related services” be guaranteed if providing such services requires the school to contract with a local district that can refuse to enter into this contract?
- Could district policies that bar students from enrolling part-time in online learning discriminate against special education students for whom LRE includes a half-day in the classroom with peers?

Recommendations

OEO’s recommendations to support students’ success with online learning are as follows:

1. Improved information and communication for parents and students.

- Develop a communication system for students and families that is comprehensive, clear, and user-friendly such as:
 - Regular in-person information sessions in each district to provide parents with current information on the options available to their student and common procedures (with interpretation provided for Limited English Proficiency [LEP] parents).
 - Detailed information related to online learning included in all school/district Student Handbooks, so that online students can understand the equivalent school/district rules that apply to them.
 - Inclusion of all online educators and providers in the Washington Education Directory, or creation of an equivalent directory for online-related educators that lists names, job titles, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses.
- Create a comprehensive statewide “Online Learning Manual & Catalog” for students and parents, which would be:
 - A compilation of all the information and online learning options into one easy-to-use reference tool.
 - Written in simple, user-friendly language, with a glossary of terms.
 - Made available in both electronic and print formats (to accommodate families without computers at home).
 - Located on both the DLD and all district websites.
 - Translated into Spanish and eventually other common first languages of parents in Washington.

- Include information for parents on how to support and supervise their student in this new learning environment, including guidelines for student organization and time-use.

2. Clear guidelines on factors affecting student rights and eligibility/access to online learning.

- Examination of whether the general requirement that students have access to computers at home (or assumptions about levels of parent supervision necessary) to access online learning options creates patterns of disparate access that could be found to be discriminatory, whether to students of color, those with disabilities or other groups of concern.
- This inquiry should extend to a review of school-based use of technology that presumes online access at home, and whether this disadvantages certain students and/or creates disparate impact.

3. Complaint and dispute resolution processes for parents and students.

- Develop a complaint resolution process delineating the steps involved for students, parents, school administrators, and online providers.
- Collect and analyze complaint data to improve central accountability mechanism for online learning.

4. Clarify guidelines and procedures for Special Education students

- Clarify guidelines and procedures for provision of services that are not available in the online format or that, due to geographical factors, must be provided outside of the student's district of enrollment.
- Detailed, standardized procedures that multi-district programs and districts should follow when sharing responsibility for providing support of special education students.
- Guidelines and requirements for multi-district programs and districts regarding contracting with other districts to provide proximity-based services.
- Increased training for all online educators (including general education teachers) in providing FAPE and LRE for students in the online learning context.

5. Improve WSSDA's model policy for online learning.

- Model policy should include detailed standards, procedures, and required timelines for:
 - registration, enrollment, and transfers.
 - access to student activities and athletics.
 - procedures to identify and handle student truancy.
 - guidelines for involving parents to ensure student success.
- Designation of a district-level staff person to be the point person for students and families to contact with questions about local policies/procedures and general online learning concerns.

6. Study the possibility of utilizing the on-line learning system for students attempting to graduate from high school but who have exited the K-12 system.

- Students in the Juvenile Justice System.
- Students getting their GED.
- Students who need credit retrieval.
- Students who have been expelled.

7. Study the possibility of developing a state-wide on-line tutoring program focusing on math and science and available to students who need temporary extra help to do better in those subjects or understand a particular concept.

Special Education

Parent Access to Special Education Classrooms

While one of the purposes of the IDEA Amendments of 1997 is to “strengthen and expand the role of parents of children with disabilities in their identification, evaluation, and educational placement,” the determination of who has access to observe children in the special education setting is currently not federally legislated but left to individual state laws and school district policies.⁶

In addition, pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, parents may be entitled to a second opinion about the efficacy of their child's program and ask for an independent evaluation. Those evaluations are often conducted by an outside professional who requires access to observe the student at the school. Such evaluations can only be collaborative and productive when the evaluator can observe how the student functions and interacts in the actual learning environment in order to take advantage of the opportunity of an independent fresh look at the school program.

Unfortunately, in our state many district policies related to classroom access result in a barrier which prevents parents and/or their private evaluators from observing students in the special education setting.

Having discussed this issue with many school officials, OEO understands their concerns, such as: the privacy⁷ of the other children in the classroom, the potential disruption of the learning environment, the student “acting up” when being observed, and teachers’ concern that parents would in effect evaluate them.

However, this impasse directly impacts students by causing serious delays in solving problems, identifying concerns and modifying IEPs.

Since the inception of the OEO, Ombudsmen have addressed a great number of disputes and conflicts between parents and schools regarding access to special education classrooms. These cases require persistence and the ability to navigate through districts’ written and unwritten policies, confusing processes, and arbitrary decisions that render some cases impossible to resolve in a manner that fully benefits the student.

We believe that parents, as equal partners with schools, must be involved in decisions that affect their children and must have timely and reasonable access to observe their children’s classrooms, particularly in cases where a child is unable to communicate what may be happening within the educational environment.

Onerous procedures that require parents to sign lengthy and legal statements of confidentiality, schedule several days in advance, or be unnecessarily restricted in terms of when they can observe the classroom cause delays in the delivery of appropriate educational services and undermine the trust needed for families and schools to work together. These concerns are significantly compounded for families of color and/or non-English speaking families.

When necessary, evaluators should also be allowed access to the classroom to observe and

⁶ <http://www.wrightslaw.com/law/osep/idea.classrm.observe.pdf>

⁷ The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in [Owasso v. Falvo](#) establishes that students have no expectation of privacy.

assist the school and the parent in ensuring that students with special needs receive an appropriate education.

Recommendations

OEO recommends an amendment to the current RCW (28A.605.020) that governs Parent Access to the Classroom. Currently it reads:

“Every school district board of directors shall, after following established procedure, adopt a policy assuring parents access to their child's classroom and/or school sponsored activities for purposes of observing class procedure, teaching material, and class conduct: provided that such observation shall not disrupt the classroom procedure or learning activity.”

A language change should be enacted as follows:

“To ensure that parents of children with disabilities can participate fully and effectively with school personnel in the consideration and development of an appropriate educational program for their child, each school district shall, upon written or verbal request by a parent, afford timely access to the child’s current program or any proposed educational program prior to any IEP meeting or meeting to discuss the child’s educational program, in any case no later than 10 days after the parent’s request. This includes access to any current or proposed educational program by an independent educational evaluator or a qualified professional retained by or on behalf of a parent. Such observations may be for the purposes of assessing the child's performance, viewing the child's current educational program, considering the appropriateness of the child’s placement, services, or least restrictive environment being provided to or proposed for the child. The school district may limit interviews of personnel having information relevant to the child's current educational services to meetings or conferences scheduled separately from the observation in the current or proposed classroom, program or placement.”

Language Access in K-12 Education

Unmet interpretation and translation needs of LEP/ELL parents and students in “high-stakes situations”

Families with limited English proficiency (LEP) across the state cannot obtain key school notifications and critical student information in their home language from most K-12 schools and districts. LEP parents complain regularly to OEO that they are not provided with sufficient interpretation or translation services when their children are involved in “high-stakes situations” at school, or that the only interpreter available to them was their own child who was directly involved in the situation and is an English Language Learner (ELL), rather than a qualified interpreter. Under such conditions, there can be no guarantee that crucial information was understood or interpreted correctly.

“High-stakes situations” include, but are not limited to, those where a student is involved in, or is at risk of becoming involved in: disciplinary action (suspension, expulsion); legal consequences (juvenile justice); emergencies (immediate health or safety); truancy proceedings; dropping out; bullying/harassment; and Special Education meetings.

It is vitally important that parents receive timely notification, in their primary language, regarding the incident, its impact on their child, and what they need to do to respond and support their child’s interests. Parents need to make informed decisions regarding the education of their children. Effective communication with parents on these points is crucial to minimizing the time which a student spends out of school, missing valuable classroom instruction.

OEO recognizes that this issue presents a daunting challenge for schools and districts, as they struggle to find sufficient funding and staff resources. In raising this issue, OEO seeks to help the Washington public school system to better understand the needs of immigrant and refugee families, explore what schools could be doing to better meet those needs with the resources they currently have, and most importantly, provide practical and reasonable recommendations for everyone involved.

Both the problems and solutions are complex and deserve close scrutiny and thoughtful collaboration across the entire education community.

Demographics

According to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), more than two-thirds of Washington’s schools serve LEP students.⁸ The number of foreign languages spoken by all Washington students and their families has increased by 25 percent over the last 5 years to include over 200 different languages.

Of the more than one million students enrolled in Washington’s K-12 public schools in 2008-2009, 9.4% of them (97,021 children) were classified as Limited English Proficient.⁹ Spanish-speakers accounted for approximately 67% of LEP students and their families and are the fastest growing group in the state. An additional 17% of LEP students and families speak either: Russian, Vietnamese, Ukrainian, Somali, Korean, or Tagalog.¹⁰

⁸ http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass0708_2009321_s1s_02.asp

⁹ “Educating English Language Learners in Washington State.”
(www.capaa.wa.gov/documents/ELLReportBrochure2010.pdf)

¹⁰ “Educating English Language Learners in Washington State.”

Broader efforts to improve the performance of Washington's students must take into account LEP students. National test data shows 4th grade LEP students in Washington were 50% more likely to score at or below the basic level in reading than their peers; a gap that grows to 57% by 8th grade.¹¹

LEP students are also more likely to drop out of high school than the general student population (8.3% vs. 5.1%), contributing to a cumulative dropout rate (which refers to the combined effect of these dropouts over a four-year period) of nearly 32%, and an on-time graduation percentage rate of just 50.7%.¹²

Closing the Achievement Gap

Ensuring that their parents correctly understand school proceedings levels the playing field for LEP students and contributes to closing the achievement gap. Research has shown that effective home-school communication focusing on helping parents understand the school system is an essential component of student academic success.¹³

LEP students are also entitled to due process in accessing their state constitutional right to an education. Washington public schools thus have both an educational and legal responsibility to communicate effectively with parents and students and ensure that they understand their options and how their actions and school actions may affect their future. Both federal and state laws echo this imperative, by requiring that information be provided to parents of LEP students in a language they understand.

Currently, too many LEP families receive little to no information in their primary language to make sound decisions about their children's education. If the achievement gap is to be closed in the state of Washington, we need to eliminate inequities and ensure that all parents, legal guardians, and students are able to fully participate in and benefit from public education.

Current Practices

OEO is concerned that many districts rely on individuals without training to provide interpretation and translation services, thus compromising the accuracy and quality of interpretation, as well as putting student confidentiality rights at risk.

OSPI reports: "the practice and quality of translation [and interpretation] is not consistent among districts." Some try to ensure that a bilingual staff person is available on-site to help parents with limited English proficiency. Often this person is a school secretary, instructional assistant, family involvement coordinator or other school staff member.

While having "go-to" language resource staff is very helpful, it can be a limited solution unless they receive training to provide education interpretation and translation and they speak the various languages represented in the school.

In the worst cases, schools rely on students, as young as 5th grade, to act as interpreters on behalf of their own parents. Using students as interpreters is highly problematic as it places them in the position of interpreting on matters they are the subject of (a clear conflict of interest);

¹¹ http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_124.asp

¹² <http://www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/pubdocs/GradDropout/08-09/GraduationDropoutWashington2008-09.pdf>

¹³ Joyce Epstein, National Network of Partnership Schools

they may have limited vocabulary in English and in their home language to explain complex educational situations, and it upsets cultural standards regarding the proper hierarchy of parents and children. This further contributes to the negative change in family dynamics that refugee and immigrant families experience in a new country.

Key Legislation

Federal and state statutes and regulations protect parents' rights to language access:

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964¹⁴

- Prohibits differential treatment on the basis of race, color, or national origin.
- Directs School districts to communicate with and provide public notification materials to limited English proficient parents in a language they can understand.¹⁵

Executive Order 13166

- Requires that programs and activities operated and/or funded with federal monies be made meaningfully accessible to limited English proficient persons.

RCW 49.60 (Washington Law against Discrimination)

- Prohibits discrimination on the basis of numerous protected classes, including: creed, color, national origin.

ESEA Title I, Part A (Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged)

- Requires local education agencies (LEAs) to implement effective means of outreach to parents of LEP students to inform those parents of how they can be involved in the education of their children and be active participants in assisting their children to attain English proficiency, achieve at high levels in core academic subjects, and meet the state academic standards. (Title I, Part A, Sec. 1118)

ESEA Title I, Part C (Migrant & Bilingual Education)

- Requires an LEA to conduct parental involvement activities "in a manner that provides for the same parental involvement as is required for programs and projects under Title I, Part A, Sec. 1118, unless extraordinary circumstances make such provision impractical."
- Parental involvement activities shall be conducted in a format and language understandable to parents. (Title I, Part C, Sec. 1304)

ESEA Title III (Language Instruction for LEP & Immigrant Students)

- LEAs using funds provided under ESEA Title III shall implement an effective means of outreach to parents of LEP children to inform such parents of how they can be involved in the education of their children, and be active participants in assisting their children to learn English, to achieve at high levels in core academic subjects, and to meet the state academic standards. (Title III, Sec. 3302)

Revised Code of Washington 28A.180.040 (2)

- States that school district board directors shall: "wherever feasible, ensure that communications to parents emanating from the school are appropriately bilingual for those parents of pupils in the bilingual instruction program."¹⁶

¹⁴ 42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.; See also: 35 C.F.R. 100.3(b)(2).

¹⁵ See: Office of Civil Rights, May 25, 1970 Memorandum; provides clarification that "adequate notice" may entail notice in "language other than English."

¹⁶ RCW 28A.180.040. School board duties.

Washington Administrative Code 392-160-010 (2)

- Further states that school district board directors “shall communicate, whenever feasible, with parents of students in the bilingual program, or alternative instruction program in a language they can understand.”

State statutes are specific enough to require translation or interpretation in particular contexts, or list various factors that must be considered when determining the schools’ legal obligation. However, much of the statutory language is not written to provide detailed guidance regarding when and how such requirements are to be implemented, leaving the day-to-day procedures to local schools and districts to develop.

Existing laws and regulations thus provide a clear imperative that interpretation and translation services are essential, but leave schools and districts to try and understand what this mandate looks like in practice.

Recommendations

- 1. Develop a sample Language Access Policy and Procedure for school districts to adopt.** This will help their compliance with federal and state laws and ensure equity for LEP students. The sample policy should include:
 - Standards for interpretation/translation in “high-stakes situations” impacting student learning.
 - Provisions to ensure that interpreters utilized in schools are trained adults who understand the public education system.
 - Provision to ensure that in schools with high LEP/ELL student enrollment, all staff is trained on how to work with interpreters and translators.
- 2. Develop a state clearing house of translated materials for school districts.**
 - Conduct a state-wide inventory of all existing translated materials in school districts.
 - Facilitate inter-district collaboration to identify those materials that still need to be translated.
 - Determine a prioritization system and devise strategies for overcoming proprietary issues among districts.
 - Publish all translated materials online for school districts to download.
- 3. Develop a resource manual and a website for Washington school districts.**
 - This will help schools implement their policies, know where community resources are available and find creative approaches and practical solutions to balance the high cost of interpreters and translation.
- 4. Develop a state certification program for Education Interpreters/Translators similar to the ones for Court and Health Care interpreters.**

Anti-Bullying/Harassment

The 2009 Legislature made significant improvements to the original Anti-Harassment Act with the passage of SHB 2801. This new legislation requires that school districts add procedures for the enactment of their district anti-harassment/bullying policy and also includes:

- The requirement that a district review of anti-bullying procedures must be done by a committee that includes school staff, parents, students, and community members.
- The requirement that each district hires or appoints a Compliance Officer as a point person to monitor effectiveness of the procedures.
- That district policy and procedure is widely communicated to parents and students and staff.

Each of these improvements is designed to reduce the incidence of bullying in our schools and ensure that school districts have a response process in place when incidents do happen.

The law tasked OEO, The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Washington School Directors Association with developing a model policy and procedures document for school districts to adopt. In the last few years, OEO has submitted two recommendations regarding this important issue and this office is pleased that one of those recommendations was heard and addressed by the Legislature.

Cyber bullying

There is wide discrepancy from school district to school district of the response to cases of cyber bullying that occur outside of school. Many students and parents are told by school officials that what happens outside of school is beyond their jurisdiction.

However, although the phone or internet harassment occurs elsewhere, the targeted youth experience the effects during the school day, at home, and potentially throughout their lifetime. Students subject to repeated acts of cyber bullying lose self-esteem and may become depressed, suicidal, and/or abuse drugs and alcohol. Their grades go down; they might become truant or drop out of school.

The issue of cyber bullying has not yet been fully addressed by state legislation and only a few school districts have expanded their policies to include cyber bullying provisions.

While future improvements to legislation would bring uniformity in practice around the state OEO hopes that, in the meantime, school districts anticipate that these kinds of acts will occur and work to further strengthen their anti-bullying/harassment/intimidation policies and procedures.

Recommendations

Given the number of cases involving bullying, harassment, and intimidation of students in Washington schools that come to OEO's attention, we believe that this issue is of the highest

priority and that legislation can be further enhanced. We recommend **improving current legislation to include:**

- Expanding the anti-bullying state law to include a definition of the school district's role in cases of cyber bullying, especially in off campus use of the Internet and cell phones.
- Directing the Professional Education Standards Board to initiate efforts to include anti-harassment and bullying prevention and intervention skills as a learning unit for pre-service certification in teaching, administration, and school counseling.
- Providing funding for school districts to implement tested and effective anti-bullying programs for students, staff, and families.
- Providing funding for school districts to develop a common data collection system to capture student-to-student harassment and bullying incidents and the demographics of students involved. School districts can utilize data to monitor the implementation of their policy and procedures and determine the effectiveness of their prevention programs.
- Providing funding for OSPI to collect and analyze data from school districts and provide targeted technical assistance.

Family Involvement in Education

The participation of families in the education of their children is a key element in student academic success and the closing of the achievement gap. When parents and schools form partnerships that are student centered, academic focused, and viewed as a shared responsibility, everyone reaps substantial rewards.

Our data shows that lack of trust, communication breakdowns and weak or non-existent family-school partnerships consistently appear as the contexts within which the majority of conflict between parents and educators arise. Parents frequently call OEO feeling that their voices are not being heard by school officials and educators tell us they want to be able to share their perspectives and be heard by parents. Most of the complex cases we have solved, which include issues of bullying, discipline and special education, have had an underlying component of broken relationships between school officials, students and parents.

While many Washington school districts value and prioritize family involvement, we still find that many educators and families are unclear about their roles as education partners and many do not know how to effectively communicate and collaborate to support students. This is particularly evident in low performing schools with a high rate of diversity.

If we are serious about closing the achievement gap, as a state we must develop a clear vision and definition of how families and educators should work together. Families need to know that they belong in public schools and need to understand the system. Educators need to have parent involvement knowledge and skills to guide their professional practice.

In past years, OEO has issued several family involvement recommendations and has worked around the state to bring awareness of its importance to school districts, parents, communities, elected officials, and other stakeholders. We are pleased to say that progress has been made:

- A sample family involvement model policy for school districts was developed by the Washington School Directors Association (WSSDA) and OEO and it has been adopted by many school districts.
- The Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL/OSPI) and a group of stakeholders is working on developing a state definition of school-family partnerships.
- Several pieces of legislation included family involvement in their provisions:
 - **ESSB 6403** – The “building bridges” dropout prevention bill recognized the importance of family and community involvement as a prevention mechanism and requires state agencies to work together to support school/family partnerships.
 - **E2SSB 6696** - The education reform bill requires:
 - School districts to annually provide a school performance report to the parents of students in the school and the community served by the school.
 - Principal and teacher evaluations to have criteria that include collaborating with parents and the community to support student learning.

- Each school to conduct outreach and seek feedback from a diverse range of parents and community members regarding their experience with the school beginning in 2010-2011.
- **SHB 2776** –The K-12 funding distribution formula bill includes family involvement coordinator positions in schools.
- **HB 5973**– Created the Achievement Gap Oversight Committee which makes recommendations from the reports generated by the African American, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific, and Native American Commissions which include family involvement as a critical strategy to close the gap.

Recommendations

Much work still needs to be done statewide to develop consistent and uniform processes for schools and parents to partner for student achievement. We recommend the following:

1. **Develop a state school-family partnerships blueprint for school districts** that serves as a guiding document focused on closing the achievement gap and drop-out prevention with sample practices, policies and strategies, a performance assessment tool, parent and teacher surveys, goals, and an evaluation system for schools.
2. **Improve teacher, principal, and superintendent preparation programs** to include family partnerships and cultural competence curricula as required coursework.
3. **Require that educator certification and certification renewal exams include questions regarding** forming effective partnerships with families, cultural competence, and conflict prevention and resolution.
4. **Update current teachers on family involvement and cultural competence** by providing funding for ongoing continuing education credits through in-service trainings provided by school districts and ESDs.

The Office of the Education Ombudsman

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