

Annual Report 2017-2018

Promoting equity in education by working with families and schools to remove barriers so that every student can fully participate in and benefit from public education in the State of Washington.

Washington State
Governor's Office of the

Ombuds

We listen. We inform. We help solve problems.

Phone: 1-866-297-2597 Web: www.oeo.wa.gov



September 1, 2018

LETTER FROM THE STATE EDUCATION OMBUDS

TO: The Honorable Jay Inslee, Governor

Chris Reykdal, Superintendent of Public Instruction

Randy Spaulding, Executive Director of the State Board of Education

Members of the Legislature

For this year's annual report, we have focused on making the format family and community-friendly. If we are going to honor the demands that families and teachers in our state face, we have to reflect that in our publications. We would love your feedback on this new approach.

This year, our office made great strides in maximizing our resources to serve students most affected by opportunity gaps. In the over 900 concerns we received this year, we saw that special education, discipline, and harassment, intimidation, and bullying were prominent. In our outreach and trainings, we reached over **19,150 people** with **fewer than seven full-time staff** and **\$703,000**. And in our policy work, we provided leadership on topics ranging from social emotional learning to language access, family engagement to discipline.

I remain deeply proud of my teammates. Each year we do more with less. Everywhere we go, people ask us: Why haven't I heard about you before? Can you come back?

In the coming year, we are excited to expand our student voice and co-design work based on our [recent report and quick-start guide](#), launch our new disability history learning resource called "[One Out of Five: Disability History and Pride Project](#)", and continue our focus on listening to shape creative problem-solving between schools and families. Thanks again to our partners for putting relationships and students first. We continue to learn from you.

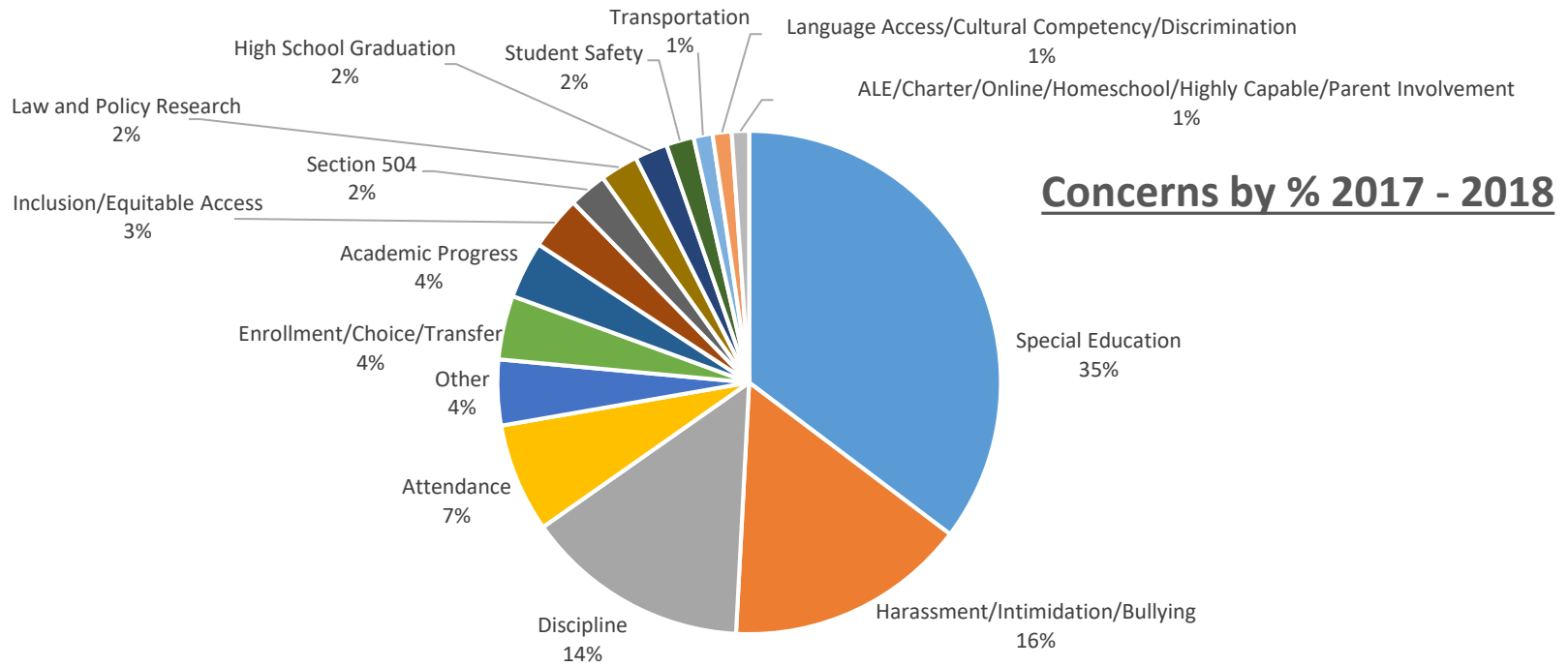
Carrie Griffin Basas, JD, MEd,

Director



2017-2018 Data Overview

OEO received a total of **901** education-related concerns during the 2017-2018 fiscal year. Of those 901 concerns, **488** involved **OEO Strategic Plan categories**. The primary categories of concern continued to center around Special Education, Discipline, and Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB).



OEO's Strategic Plan Categories	% of Strategic Plan Issues
HIB	29%
Discipline	27%
Inclusion/Equitable Access	16%
Attendance	13%
Academic Progress	7%
Special Education Transition	4%
High School Graduation	4%
Language Access	1%

Lost learning:

Of the 234 attendance concerns reported to OEO, 47% of students were out of school between one week to one month and **26% longer than one month.**

Districts Collaborating with OEO on 20+ Issues included:

Seattle, 59; Kent, 29; Tacoma, 27; Federal Way, 26; Northshore, 24; Renton, 20; Yakima, 20

Who Called OEO:

- 89% Parents/Legal Guardians
- 6% Grandparents/Other Relatives
- 3% Community Professionals
- 2% Students/General Public/Other
- 1% Educators/School Staff

Referrals to OEO:

- Community Professionals: Over 40%
- OEO Website: 20%
- Other Parents/Friends: 17%

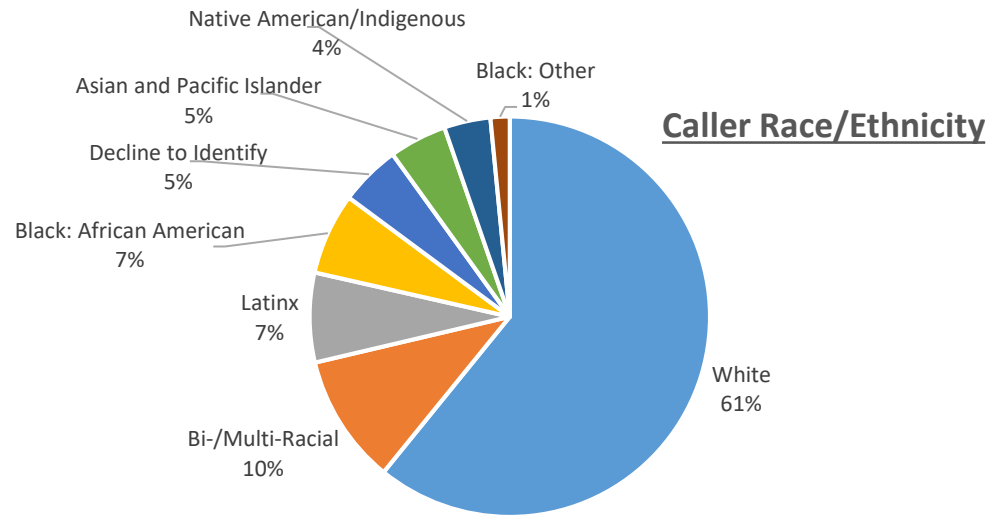
For all student issues that OEO heard about from families of different races and ethnicities, **special education** was the largest concern, along with **discipline** and **harassment and intimidation and bullying**.

For students experiencing *foster care* or *homelessness*, **special education** and **attendance** were the biggest issues.

In 2017-2018, **8%** of OEO callers spoke a **primary language other than English** at home.

5% of families requested phone interpretation. Callers' languages in 2017-2018 included:

- | | | | | | | |
|---------|--------|-----------|-------|----------|-----------|------------|
| Amharic | Arabic | Cantonese | Hindi | Khmer | Korean | Kurdish |
| Russian | Somali | Spanish | Thai | Tigrinya | Ukrainian | Vietnamese |



Student Race/Ethnicity	% of Their Concerns Involving: Special Education	% of Concerns: Discipline	% of Concerns: HIB
White	39	17	17
Black	37	14	21
Latinx	30	23	26
Asian	44	17	14
Native American	51	16	14
Pacific Islander	50	20	30
Bi-/Multi-Racial	30	26	26
<i>Other Groups</i>			
Students with Disabilities	51	16	11
English Language Learners	42	19	21
Students Receiving Free and Reduced Meals	38	20	17
Foster & Homeless	29 (Attendance: 26%)	<1	<1

Policy Recommendations

Each year, OEO makes recommendations to Washington State’s policymakers on ways to reduce opportunity gaps, foster family and school collaboration and shared-decision making, and improve outcomes for every student. We carry forward our recommendations from last year’s [2016-2017 annual report](#) and offer new recommendations:

Provide Funding for Learning Resources that Amplify Student Voice:

Earlier this year, OEO asked students with disabilities to share their stories in our schools. This spring, we partnered with Rooted in Rights to record the stories of two middle school students. This summer, we developed a discussion guide and learning resource to support October as Washington’s Disability History Month in schools this year. The legislature enacted this requirement almost ten years ago and did not provide funding. Our learning resource called “[One Out of Five: Disability History and Pride Project](#)” (because people with disabilities are 20% of the US population) will be available to schools this September on the OEO [website](#). We welcome opportunities to partner with schools and districts for launch parties and piloting of the learning resource. If you are interested in partnering, please email us at oeoinfo@gov.wa.gov.

Our project is just the beginning of how student voice can shape curricula and learning resources. This project has shown us how powerful stories can be in tackling complex issues like identity, bias, and stigma. We know similar efforts can be useful to elevate other marginalized student voices and support schools in teaching about racial equity, the experiences of students affected by incarceration, immigrant and refugee history, and the importance of home language, for example. **To increase understanding of disability in our schools, we ask the state to provide funding for disseminating, supporting professional development opportunities, and growing the disability learning resource for future grade levels. The legislature should also support the creation of other student-driven resources to address education equity moving forward.**

Create Pilot Programs for District Collaboration to Improve Language Access:

Since we began, OEO has worked to make our services available in families’ home languages. We have partnered with districts and community organizations to support their efforts. We have seen districts make significant improvements in facilitating meaningful two-way communication with Limited English Proficient (LEP) families. We also hear from districts and families that they need more resources for language access. In many cases, they have to rely on existing personnel—from paraeducators to office staff—to interpret for meetings or translate vital documents.

We ask the legislature to provide more leadership, coordination, and funding to support effective and cost-efficient language access in all schools in our state. **The state should invest in pilot projects that would support or expand efforts already underway in some districts and Educational Service Districts, including training for school and district staff on when and how to utilize translation and interpretation services, the costs and benefits of implementing specific language access services (e.g., dedicated phones line for Spanish-speaking families, shared interpreter pools, collaborative translation projects for commonly used forms). The state should support partnerships between districts that have led language access resources and those that are seeking to expand.**

Promote Partnerships between Schools and Dispute Resolution Centers to Reduce Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB):

In recent years, OEO has received more calls about harassment, intimidation, and bullying (HIB). In many cases, we hear from families that worry bullying is continuing even after they report it, but they do not know what else they can do. We also hear frequently from school administrators that they believe some families do not have a good understanding of what bullying is and what it is not.

Recently, OEO developed short videos in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) for schools to use with students and families. Educators and families provided valuable input. These videos explain what HIB is and how to address it. We hope that these videos can be part of coordinated media campaigns to support shared understandings of HIB and build greater trust among families, students, and schools. All OEO videos and recorded webinars can be found on the OEO YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheWAEdOmbudsman>

The next step is for the legislature to provide resources for schools and local dispute resolution centers to create pilot programs that offer free mediation services and anti-bias resources to tackle HIB in schools. This year, the state allocated funds to expand anti-bias programming in schools. We know that in many regions, schools are collaborating with Dispute Resolution Centers to foster restorative practices and conflict resolution for students. The state needs to bring these two efforts together and invest more in this type of programming to improve school climate and student engagement, especially in smaller districts where resources can be limited and leaders juggle multiple roles.

In addition to the annual report, OEO shares policy recommendations while serving on many Policy Committees and Stakeholder Groups, such as:

[Becca Task Force](#)

[Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee \(EOGOAC\)](#)

[ESD 105 Youth Advocates](#)

[Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) Consolidated Plan Team](#)

[Kittitas County Parent to Parent](#)

[Kittitas County Transition Council](#)

[OSPI Student Discipline Task Force](#)

[OSPI's Graduation: A Team Effort \(GATE\) Workgroup](#)

[OSPI Race and Ethnicity Student Data Task Force](#)

[Results WA: Goal 1 Council \(World Class Education\)](#)

[OSPI Social Emotional Learning Advisory Workgroup](#)

[South King County Discipline Coalition](#)

[OSPI Special Education Advisory Committee \(SEAC\)](#)

[Washington State Coalition for Language Access \(WASCLA\)](#)

Outreach to Families, Students, Educators, and Community Stakeholders 2017-2018

OEO conducted workshops, trainings, panels, and outreach for 104 events this year, reaching more than 19,150 people through these events as well as blog posts, radio, and other media outlets.

This year, OEO offered **16 separate events** in **Spanish**, including *Ask an Ombuds* webinars, Commission on Hispanic Affairs radio interviews, and in-person workshops. OEO facilitated **14 listening sessions** reaching 213 attendees, with interpretation in Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Somali, and Arabic. OEO also held **4 in-person clinics** with Open Doors for Multicultural Families and offered interpretation in Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and Arabic. OEO partnered with Disability Rights Washington for its new “One Out of Five: Disability History and Pride Project”. OEO also offered facilitated conversations and trainings for state agencies on disability diversity.

OEO focused on using media to share information to a larger audience with its limited resources. OEO relaunched its YouTube channel, and had 1,419 views of recorded webinars and videos, such as:

- *Ask an Ombuds* Webinars (in English and Spanish)
- *Powerful Partnerships*
- *Social Emotional Learning and Racial Equity*
- *Special Education High School Transition*
- *Student Transition Interviews*
- *What is OEO* (in English, Spanish, and Tigrinya)

How Satisfied Are Our Stakeholders?

- Of the 20% of returned surveys for Ombuds, **86% liked their experience with OEO’s Senior Ombuds as they assisted with concerns.**
- Of the 11% of returned surveys for Intake/Associate Ombuds, **94% liked their experience with OEO’s intake process and Associate Ombuds.**

OEO values continuous improvement and the trust of the families, students, and educators that work with us. Please reach out if we can be of assistance.

Questions and/or comments about this report can be sent to:

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Or emailed to: oeoinfo@gov.wa.gov

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