

Annual Report 2019-2020



**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.**



September 1, 2020

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

This fall will mark my fifth year leading the Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds. I have learned so much from my team, community partners, and other state agencies, but the most from families, students, and educators. They have taught me that my experience is not theirs and we all care deeply about making schools better together.

Our world has changed and we are all reeling from it. There are tremendous pressures to return to business as usual, but we cannot do that because our old models never honored those of us who see and live the injustices of power, racism, ableism, and other forms of oppression. We have an opportunity now to ask more of ourselves.

Our work changed, too, last quarter as we saw families, students, and teachers try to attend to most basic of needs, such as food, shelter, and healthcare. They also tried to access technology, understand new learning tools, and keep track of school assignments while supporting their families. That work is not over. Rather, faced with a deadly virus and ongoing violence against Black people and communities of color, the world was forced to confront the disparities always present. In our conversations about seeing a socially just society, we returned to the question of, "If not now, then when?"

Familiar education justice issues heightened during the crisis. Last year as a team of fewer than 7 full-time employees working statewide, we reached almost 128,000 Washingtonians through outreach. We launched four new student voice videos for our [One Out of Five: Disability History and Pride Project](#). We provided information and conflict resolution resources to more than 600 Washingtonians. That number was a significant decrease for us, not because things got easier, but because everything was so much harder for students and families to meet basic needs. We expect an avalanche of calls this fall as we all try to figure out what the future, week by week, might look like.

We were founded to address opportunity gaps for K-12 students. As we create our three-year strategic plan this summer, we will respond to how COVID and racism shape our work. We will do better and we will continue to learn. We might not always get it right, but we will keep trying. We invite you to try with us—and to keep trying.

We would like to celebrate some examples from our team of what gave our work meaning this year:

- Carrie: “I learned so much from collaborating with professors, students, and teacher candidates at the University of Washington as we consider how teaching about disability and intersectionality in K-12 classrooms can shift attitudes and school climate.”
- Danielle: “The highlight for me this year has been facilitating discussions with the following communities and community organizations about the education system and the way our work at OEO intersects with the work they do: Congolese Integration Network; Open Doors for Multicultural Families; BPC and APICAG at Stafford Creek; Seattle Children’s Hospital Autism Family Support Group; Somali Bantu Community; Iraqi Community Center Family Support Group; and Kinship Care Support Group.”
- Rose: “Seeing the two largest school districts in our state promise concrete steps toward dismantling systemic racism, including plans to move away from a policing approach to school safety.”
- Sam: “I was invited to help welcome members to a newly developed Interagency Transition Network covering the Yakima area by providing a presentation highlighting the challenges both individually and systematically for young adults with disabilities to successfully transition out of high school.”
- Sean: “We were able to get information about school issues to incarcerated parents.” (We also got school supplies for their homework program with their children. Thank you, [Puget Sound ESD!](#))
- Stephanie: “Facilitating the launch of OEO’s new multi-lingual website, adding new content, and seeing the increasing number of views by various language browsers.”
- Yordanos: “One of my highlights is working towards a strategic plan that will help use the limited resources we have in supporting students furthest away from educational justice.”

You can find our [COVID-19 resources on our website](#) in multiple languages. We are here to listen to and support you,

Carrie Griffin Basas, JD, MEd,

Director



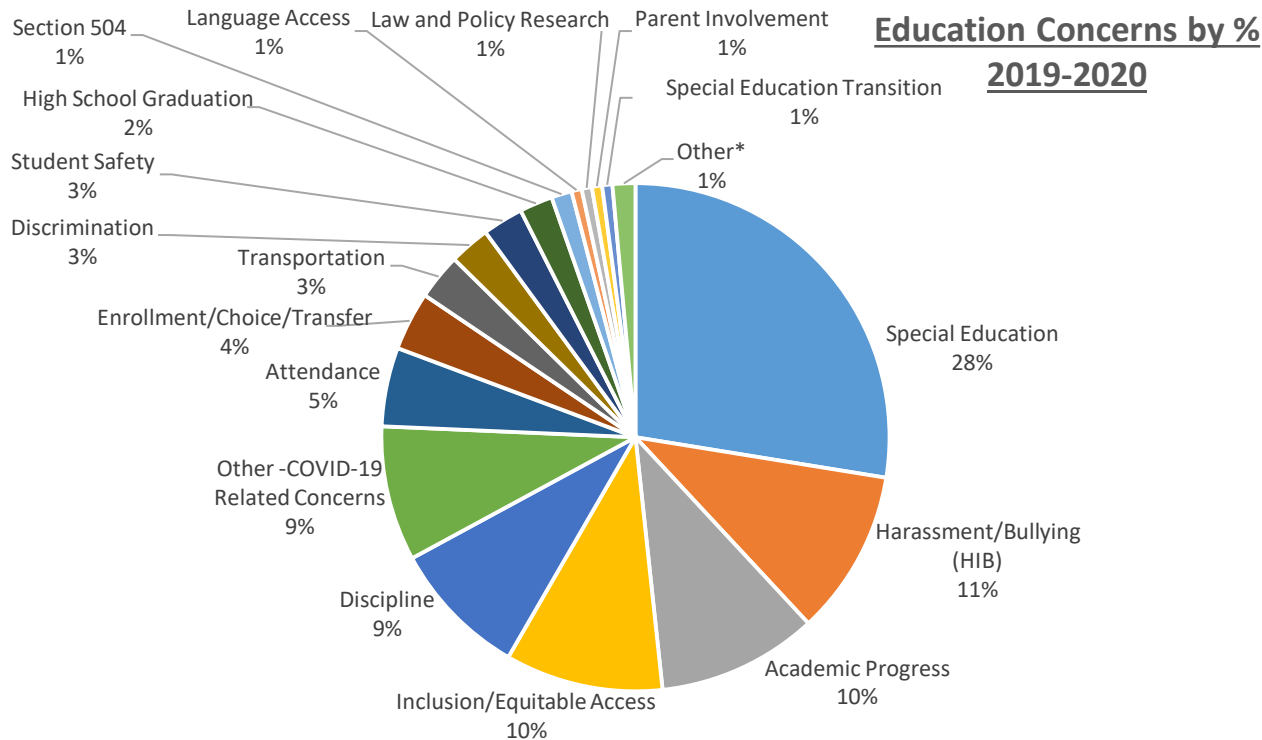
Figure 1: Washington State Governor’s Office of the Education Ombuds new website – <https://oeo.wa.gov/en>

2019-2020 Data Overview

OEO received a total of **617** education-related concerns during the 2019-2020 fiscal year. Of those 617 concerns, **355 involved OEO strategic plan issues**. The primary strategic categories of concern were **Inclusion/Equitable Access for Students with Disabilities, Academic Progress, Harassment/Bullying (HIB) and Discipline**. Many students encountered multiple strategic plan issues. The most common combinations of multiple strategic plan issues in 2019-2020 were: **Academic Progress and Inclusion/Equitable Access, Discipline and Inclusion/Equitable Access, and Discipline and Harassment/Bullying (HIB)**.

OEO saw a 42% decrease in calls during the second half of the year as a result of COVID-19 and mandatory school closures. Primary concerns during the COVID-19 school closures were services and remote learning for students with disabilities during school closures; access to remote learning for families without technological devices or internet; inconsistencies in remote learning instruction from district to district, and within districts from one classroom to another; and academic progress (or lack thereof).

Education Concerns 2019-2020



The chart to the left represents the overall kinds of concerns brought to OEO, but OEO provides direct intervention for a subset of issues within its strategic plan: discipline, graduation barriers, academic failure, chronic absenteeism, harassment or bullying, inclusion for students with disabilities, transition from high school for students with disabilities, and language access.

OEO's Strategic Plan Categories	% of Strategic Plan Concerns
More Than One Strategic Plan Category Identified	34%
Inclusion/Equitable Access	21%
Academic Progress	15%
Harassment/Bullying (HIB)	11%
Discipline	10%
Attendance	6%
High School Graduation	1%
Special Education Transition	1%
Language Access	1%

Figure 2 *Less than 1% of concerns were received in the following areas: ALE/Charter/Online/Home, School Climate, Highly Capable, and Incarcerated Parents

How People Contacted OEO:

During 2019-2020, people called OEO's toll-free phone number to discuss concerns and questions they had about their students in public schools. OEO has an online intake process, which is now available in ten languages: Arabic, Chinese Simplified, Chinese Traditional, English, Korean, Russian, Somali, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. During 2019-2020, 15% of concerns were submitted via online intake. The new online intake is available at: <https://services.oeo.wa.gov/oeo>.

Most of the people who contacted OEO were families.

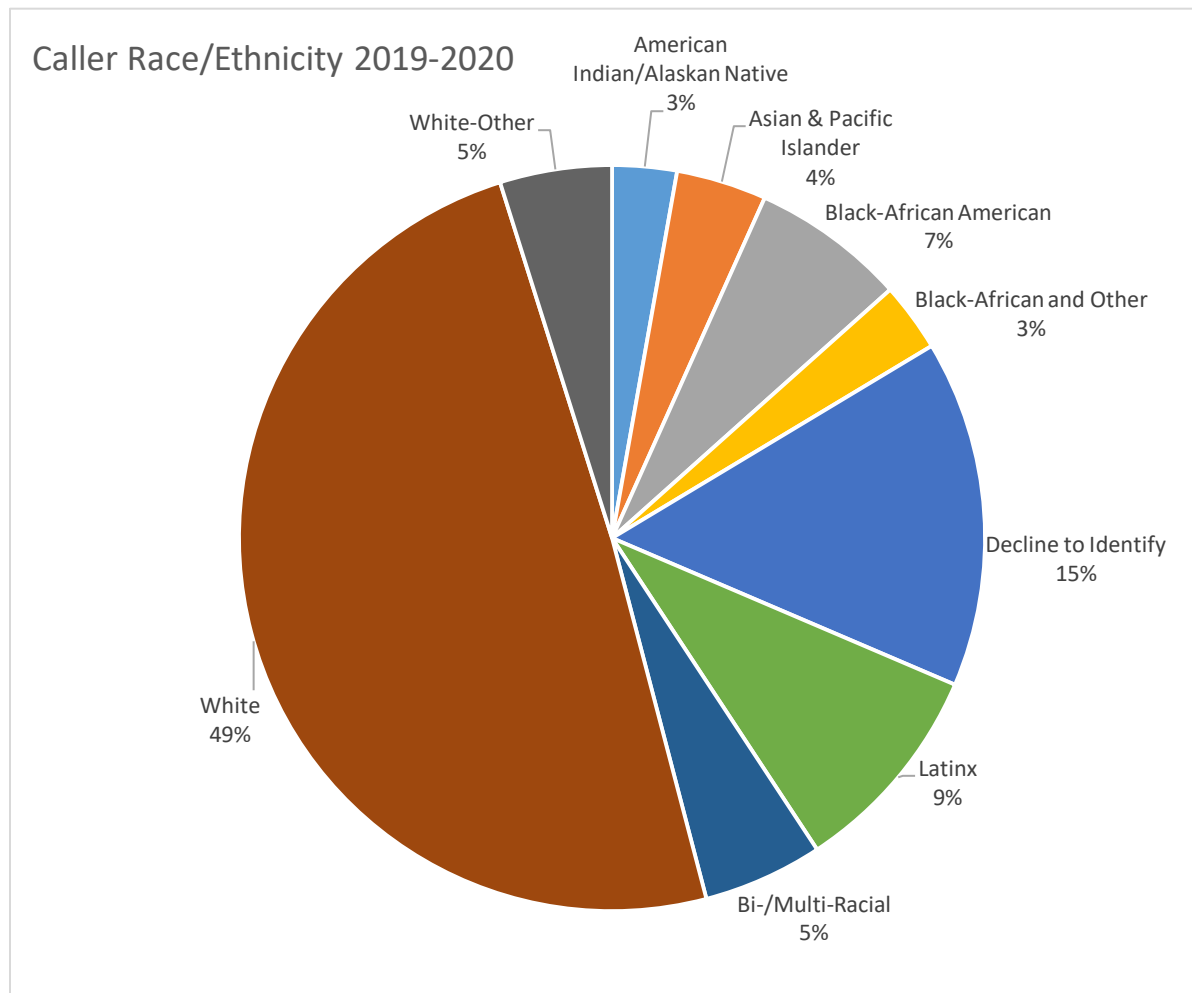


Figure 3 Caller Race/Ethnicity 2019-2020

Referrals to OEO:

Community Professionals: 26%

OEO Website: 17%

Self-Referral: 17%

Other Parents/Friends: 8%

Language Access

3% of families requested phone

interpretation in the following languages:
Spanish, Russian, Amharic, Arabic and Farsi.

Callers' and Students' languages used in the

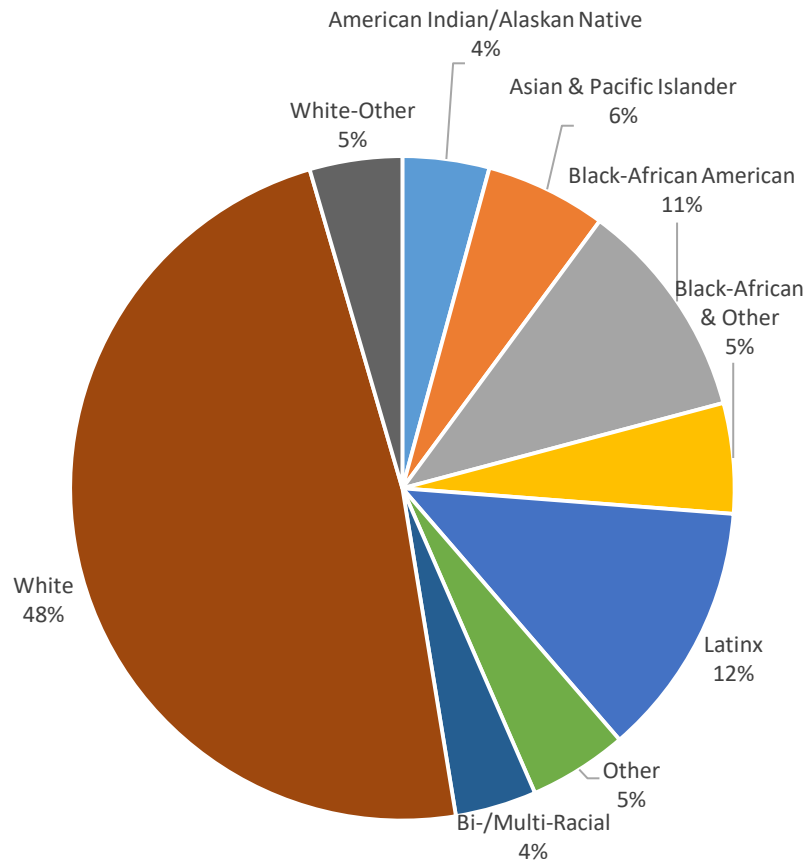
home in 2019-2020 included: Spanish, American Sign Language, Amharic, Arabic, Farsi, French, Ilokano, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Tigrinya, and Vietnamese.

Districts Collaborating with OEO on 15+ Issues included:

Seattle, 47; Kent, 25; Bellevue, 17

Figure 4. Not all callers provided student race/ethnicity information. Of that provided, we see the following race/ethnicity breakdown for students.

Student Race/Ethnicity 2019-2020



Student Race/Ethnicity	#1 Concern	#2 Concern	#3 Concern
American Indian/Alaskan Native	Special Education / Inclusion/Equitable Access 38%	Academic Progress 19%	Harassment /Bullying (HIB) 14%
Asian & Pacific Islander*	Special Education / Inclusion/Equitable Access 36%	Discipline 24%	Harassment /Bullying (HIB) 20%
Bi-/Multi-Racial	Special Education / Inclusion/Equitable Access 48%	Harassment/ Bullying (HIB) 20%	Discipline 12%
Black: African American	Special Education / Inclusion/Equitable Access 51%	Discipline 13%	Academic Progress 9%
Black: African & Other	Special Education / Inclusion/Equitable Access 57%	Discipline 14%	Academic Progress 10%
Latinx	Special Education / Inclusion/Equitable Access 32%	Harassment/ Bullying (HIB) 20%	Academic Progress 13%
White	Special Education / Inclusion/Equitable Access 44%	Harassment/ Bullying (HIB) 15%	Academic Progress 12%
White: Other	Special Education / Inclusion/Equitable Access 47%	Harassment/ Bullying (HIB) 11%	Discipline 11%

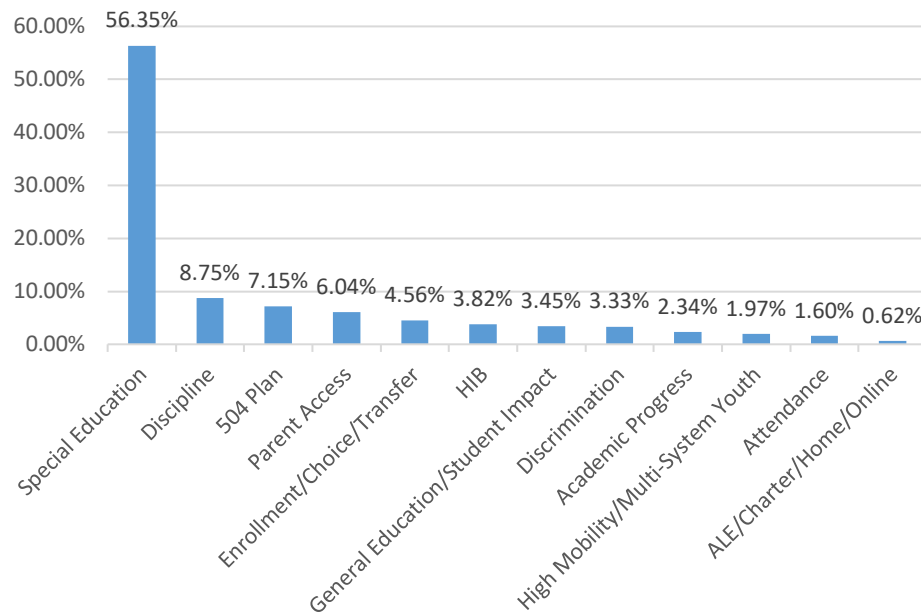
*Due to small n-size in 2019-2020, Asian and Pacific Islander Student Groups are combined.

Other Groups	#1 Concern	#2 Concern	#3 Concern
Students with Disabilities	Special Education/Inclusion/Equitable Access/Transition: 54%	Discipline: 13%	Academic Progress: 9%
Linguistically Diverse Learners	Special Education/Inclusion/Equitable Access: 53%	Transportation: 19%	Discipline: 6%
Students Receiving Free and Reduced Meals	Special Education/Inclusion/Equitable Access: 43%	Harassment/Bullying: 14%	Academic Progress: 12%
Students in the Foster Care System or Without Housing	Special Education/Inclusion/Equitable Access: 48%	Academic Progress: 28%	Enrollment: 12%

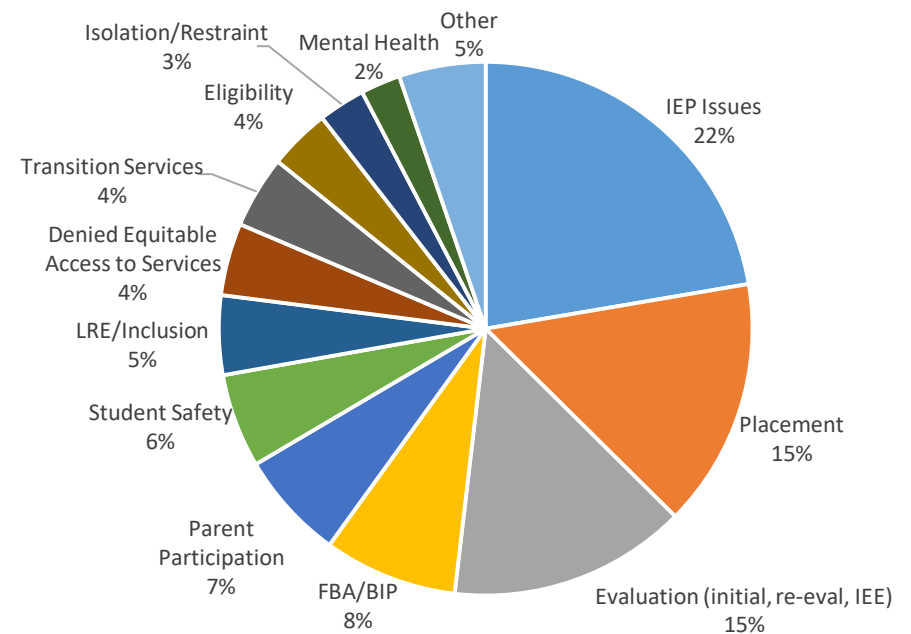
Figure 6 Education Concerns for Students with Disabilities 2019-2020.
HIB = Harassment/Intimidation/Bullying

Figure 5 Education Concerns within Special Education 2019-2020

Education Concerns for Students with Disabilities 2019-2020



Education Concerns within Special Education 2019-2020



Policy Recommendations

For more than a decade, OEO has offered annual policy recommendations focused on reducing opportunity gaps, fostering family and school collaboration, and improving outcomes for students. Last year we took a step further toward justice – setting goals for ourselves and calling on other state leaders to directly address racism, ableism, and other forms of oppression while learning from communities, families, and students' experiences.

This need is more pressing than ever. Many families, students, and communities are asking us to learn from COVID and racism to envision new systems and schools that start with their needs and wisdom. To see something new and just, we must change who is making decisions, including diversifying our educator and public agency workforce and listening to and being guided by families and students.

Invest in Youth, in Families, in Black, Indigenous, and Communities of Color to Lead Education Policy Change Discussions

First, we should be clear that we do not mean that the state should create more task forces or workgroups and extend invitations to community organizations and youth representatives to provide feedback or hold a seat. Rather, the state should re-think processes and invest in community-based co-design that shifts structures and power to learn from and be led by students and communities. We need to change the process of policy development, putting more power and trust directly in the communities that have been most negatively impacted by generations of structural racism.

To do this right, we will have to learn how to be humble as professionals and question whether we actually “know best.” We will have to rethink how we write fiscal notes and spend money to create ways to compensate a more diverse group of individuals from communities most impacted by structural racism. We will need to ensure resources are allocated for language and disability access, as well, while recognizing that the resources it takes to invest in communities are very little compared to the costs of structural racism.

Require Racial Equity Impact Analyses and Tribal Consultation for Model Policy Development and Grant Programs

As part of community-based and community driven policy development, the state should require that any model policy or procedure, and any pilot or discretionary grant program to support innovation in education, begin with a racial equity impact analysis and Tribal consultation. In our state education system, many organizations and agencies, such as WSSDA, OSPI, DCYF, and PESB set standards, write model policies, and allocate grant funding for districts, schools, teacher education programs, and community services.

Through a Racial Equity Impact Assessment, these lead agencies should engage in the community-centered process from our first recommendation and with the race and ethnicity commissions, as well as the new Washington State Office of Equity once it is funded and staffed. Finalized model

policies and procedures need to be available to the public in English, Spanish, and other languages used by substantial numbers of families of public school students.

Insist on Community-Centered Processes and Knowledge to Interpret Student Data and Change Schools

School districts generate and maintain a lot of data about students and families. Student data have grown in both quality and quantity over the past decade, in part because of community advocacy for transparency and accountability. While data focus on students (e.g., age, gender, race, absences, disabilities, supports, discipline), they also reflect educators' decisions, such as about which students to suspend and when, how attendance is encouraged, and how students are tracked into certain programs and not others.

With these data now available, districts are required in some circumstances, and encouraged in others, to review their data to look for evidence of potential discrimination.¹ Not surprisingly, districts rarely conclude that stark disparities in their data are due to discriminatory practices or policies. However, they might still work to reduce disparities. That work will not be as effective unless families, students, and communities provide their perspectives. Educators have opportunities to learn from the impacts of their decisions, as well as their decisions' impacts on students. We will not see significant shifts in data and outcomes unless these stories about belonging, basic needs, discrimination, and other experiences are told by the students and families closest to them and heard by educators. Therefore, the state should require districts to engage the community-centered process outlined in our first recommendation when conducting their data reviews, especially for yearly reviews of discipline data. The state can develop models while ensuring student privacy and engagement.

Respond to Young People Advocating for Full, Accurate Histories and Curricula about Their Communities, Identities, and Experiences

Young people want to know how we got to this moment in history. They want to understand choices made, voices lifted up and those suppressed. Youth of all races and ethnicities want to be part of building a different kind of society, one not seeped in systemic racism. To do that, they need to understand the full history of our nation and state.

We owe a debt to Tribal leaders and Native American educators, communities, families, and students who advocated for the teaching of tribal history, government and culture in our public schools.² They led the development of the *Since Time Immemorial* curriculum. They ensured the integration of this history into teacher preparation programs and continue to support training of current teachers and school administrators. Their

¹ State anti-discrimination rules, at WAC 392-190-048, require at least annual review of discipline data to determine whether there are disproportionalities, and if so, must "take prompt action to ensure that the disproportion is not the result of discrimination."

² <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.320.170>

work on integrating tribal history and culture into our classrooms and curricula is ongoing and needs continued investment. It also serves as a model for accurate, responsive curricula.

It is time to require that a basic public education include a hard look at the institution of slavery, the legacy of racism through Jim Crow, modern systemic racism, and the generations of resistance, advocacy and leadership in Black communities and others who have called on our nation repeatedly to live up to its promises of freedom, equality and justice. Black communities must be our teachers, which will require changes in processes and funding to make this overhaul possible.

The state should also include the histories of the many immigrant communities that have built the state we are today. We saw a step forward last year, with the legislature declaring that schools that teach students in grades 7-12 are “encouraged to offer an ethnic studies course” to help prepare students to be global citizens.³ Similarly, another law passed just last year focused on teaching about the Holocaust to “[e]xamine the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and intolerance; [and] prepare students to be responsible citizens in a pluralistic democracy.”⁴ Two decades ago, the state established the [Kip Tokuda Memorial program](#) to ensure that students learned about the imprisonment of people with Japanese ancestry during World War II, and “the fragile nature of our constitutional rights.”

As the state develops ethnic studies materials, we should follow the model of the *Since Time Immemorial* curriculum development, and be sure that immigrant communities tell their own stories. The state should make funds available to immigrant organizations to collaborate in the development of a core curriculum designed for statewide use. Students want to see themselves and their pride in their textbooks and classrooms. Adults will need to keep pace, which will require re-education of educators, schools leaders, and policymakers.

³ <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.300.112>

⁴ <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.300.115>; and providing financial support to train teachers to teach about the Holocaust: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.300.116>.

Work with Policy Committees and Stakeholder Groups

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

[A Human Workplace: Seattle \(state co-sponsor\)](#)

[Becca Task Force](#)

[CEEDAR Team: Washington State](#)

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Training](#)

[Workgroup, Department of Enterprise Services](#)

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

[ESD 105 Youth Advocates](#)

[Kittitas County Parent to Parent](#)

[Kittitas County Transition Council](#)

[Office of Administrative Hearings Suitable](#)

[Representative Advisory Committee](#)

[OSPI Dispute Resolution Group](#)

[OSPI Language Access Workgroup](#)

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

[School Safety and Student Well-Being Advisory Committee](#)

[Social Emotional Learning Advisory Committee](#)

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

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

[Yakima County Interagency Transition Network](#)



Figure 7. A. J. Gammons-Reese and Principal Michelle Siadal present with OEO to Governor Inslee at a September 2019 Results WA meeting.

Outreach to Families, Students, Educators, and Community Stakeholders 2019-2020

Types of OEO Outreach and Audience Data 2019-2020

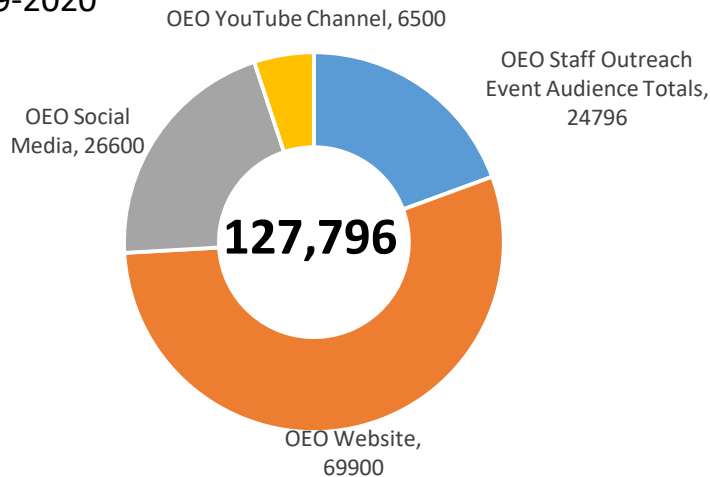


Figure 8 Types of OEO Outreach and Audience Data 2019-2020

OEO Website

OEO launched a new website in August 2019, with an emphasis on language access and accessibility. The new website is available in English and 9 other languages: Arabic, Chinese Simplified, Chinese Traditional, Korean, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. Visit <https://oeo.wa.gov/en> and take a look through the new website. Select from the language picker to view the translated pages.

As a result, the OEO website has received over 69,900 views during 2019-2020. Top pages viewed included over 10,000 views of OEO's new [Attendance and Truancy FAQ](#), and over 6,170 views of the [One Out of Five: Disability History and Pride Project](#).

With newly translated materials published, the OEO website was viewed with the following language browser settings – Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese Simplified and Chinese Traditional, Russian, Arabic, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Indonesian, Danish, and Polish.

Top pages viewed in other languages included: “Education Issues” in Tagalog, “COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus Information and Resources for Families” in Spanish, OEO “Welcome” in Spanish, “Attendance and Truancy” in Vietnamese, “Restraint and Isolation” in Spanish, and the OEO “Welcome” pages in Korean, Russian, Amharic, and Arabic.

OEO Social Media

OEO continued to use social media to share information to a larger audience with its limited resources. OEO began live-streaming some of its webinars on its Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/WAEducationOmbuds>, and reached over **26,600** viewers during 2019-2020. OEO also had over **6,500** views on its [YouTube channel](#), and added new webinars and informational videos, such as:

[School Discipline Rules Update and Review](#)

[Disability Teaches Us: Disability Justice in Schools](#)

[One Out of Five: A. J.'s Story](#)

[One Out of Five: Anna's Story](#)

[One Out of Five: Charlotte's Story](#)

[One Out of Five: Julian's Story](#)

[One Out of Five: Kenassa's Story](#)

[One Out of Five: Warren's Story](#)

OEO Staff Outreach Categories 2019-2020

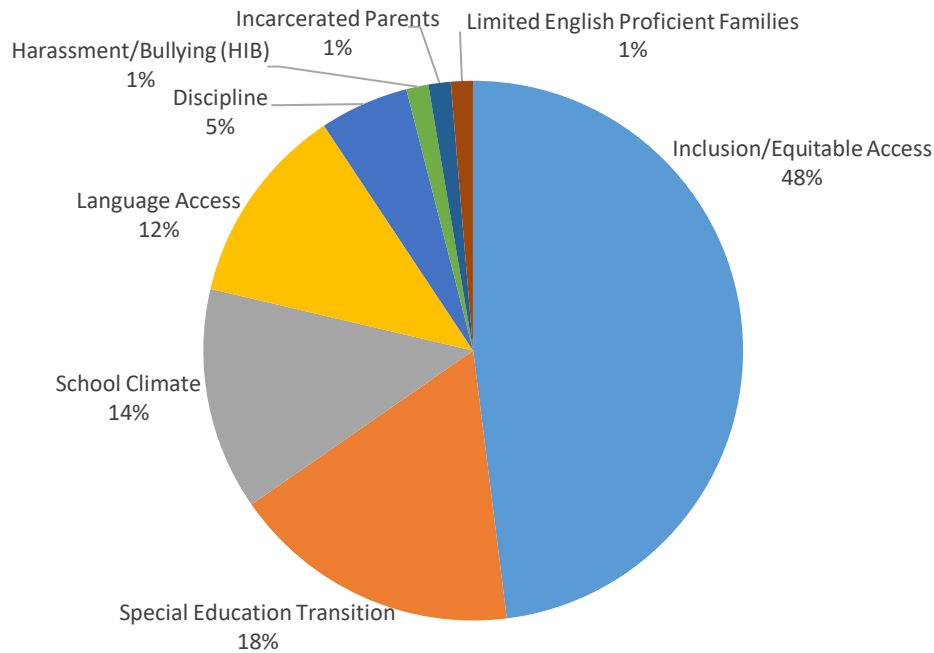


Figure 9 OEO Staff Outreach Categories 2019-2020

Outreach through OEO Staff-Led Events

OEO staff participated in 75 in-person presentations, workshops, webinars, blog posts and outreach events this year, reaching more than **24,790** people. COVID-19 impacts included the cancellation of several in-person events during OEO's busy spring season; however, when possible, events were held on-line.

OEO offered presentations in **English, Spanish, Portuguese**, and offered interpretation of presentations in **Spanish, Somali, Vietnamese, and American Sign Language (ASL)**.

Presentation categories included Inclusion/Equitable Access, Special Education Transition, Language Access, School Climate, Discipline, Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying, Supports for Incarcerated Parents, and Issues Facing Limited English Proficient Families.

OEO often reached joint audiences of families, community professionals, educators, government leaders, and others.

One Out of Five: Disability History and Pride Project

In the fall of 2018, OEO launched its learning resource for celebrating disability history and pride in Washington State called [One Out of Five: Disability History and Pride Project](#). In 2019, OEO continued its partnership with Rooted in Rights to produce four more student videos, bringing the total number of student videos to six. In October of 2019, OEO publicized the new One Out of Five: Disability History and Pride videos through a coordinated media campaign, and included Facebook watch parties to premiere the videos on social media, resulting in over **29,000 views**.

Over the 2019-2020 school year, OEO began to collaborate with researchers at the University of Washington's College of Education to better understand how educators are using the resources, as well as to observe the impacts on school climate and attitudes. In-classroom research began just before the COVID-19 school closures, but we anticipate continuing this work in the upcoming school year.

Disability Teaches Us Webinar Series

OEO also began a 3 part webinar series on Disability Justice, called "Disability Teaches Us." The first event, "[Disability Teaches Us: Disability Justice in Schools](#)" occurred this spring, and has been viewed over 1,460 times so far. Planning is in the works for the next two webinars, which should take place later in fall 2020.

OEO Publications

OEO produced the following new or revised publications, which are available on the OEO website:

- *Supports for Students Experiencing Homelessness* ([English web page](#)) ([English PDF](#)) ([Spanish web page](#)) ([Spanish PDF](#))
- *School Enrollment* ([English web page](#))
- Revised Student Discipline Manual, *Discipline in Public Schools* ([English web page](#)) ([English PDF](#)) ([Spanish web page](#)) ([Spanish PDF](#))
- *COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus Information and Resources for Families* web page in 35 languages – Use language picker or drop down menu to select your language ([English web page](#))
- Revised *Language Access* web page in 10 languages. Use the language picker or drop-down menu to select your language ([English web page](#))
- *Functional Behavioral Assessments & Behavior Intervention Plans (FBAs & BIPs)* ([English web page](#)) ([English PDF](#))
- *Restraint and Isolation of Students* ([English web page](#)) ([English PDF](#)) ([Spanish web page](#)) ([Spanish PDF](#))

How Satisfied Are Our Stakeholders?

- Of the 19% of returned surveys for Ombuds, **97% liked their experience with OEO.**

Contact Us

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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Seattle, WA 98103

Or emailed to: oeoinfo@gov.wa.gov

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