

## How Educators and the Washington State Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO) Work Together for Student Success

The Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO) was established in 2006 to share information about the public school system with families, educators, and other community stakeholders; facilitate productive communication between schools and families to help resolve conflicts and concerns; and identify and recommend strategies to reduce opportunity gaps. OEO is independent of OSPI and districts to maintain confidentiality and impartiality.

### Educators Should Contact OEO For:

- ✓ Impartial Advice
- ✓ Resources for Families
- ✓ Informal Conflict Resolutions
- ✓ Trainings and Workshops
- ✓ Opportunities to Collaborate and Share Educators' Best Practices

Our strategic plan priorities concentrate on education justice, especially for communities most affected by COVID-19, such as K-12 students who are:



- Out of school, including students with disabilities receiving partial school days
- People of color, Black, or indigenous
- Experiencing homelessness
- In kinship or foster care
- Involved with the juvenile justice or juvenile rehabilitation systems
- Immigrant, refugee, asylee, or migrant, or students or families whose primary language(s) is not English, or
- Receiving Wraparound with Intensive Services (WISE) or Children's Long Term Inpatient Programs (CLIP) supports.

### Examples of Our Work:

*Educators are invaluable partners in this work. OEO can field questions and concerns about any K-12 issue. These topics range from discipline to special education, discrimination to enrollment. The following examples provide a snapshot of how we work together to facilitate improved school-family relationships:*

#### Supporting Highly Mobile Students with Disabilities

An educator invited OEO to continue collaborating with them to support a family of a student with disabilities new to their district. The educator had developed a strong connection with the new family, and recognized that the family's familiarity with OEO gave them extra confidence in navigating the special education process. As the student's IEP team prepared to meet to update goals and services and consider placement options, the Ombuds listened and helped make sure each of the parent's questions and concerns was addressed, and that the team's explanations of evaluation results and progress data were clear. The team completed the IEP update feeling positive about the goals and plan for the next year.





### Supporting Students in Foster or Kinship Care

Educators and social workers have invited OEO to continue participating when students in care were expected to transition from one foster home to another and the teams wanted to ensure as much continuity in the educational services as possible.

### Student Safety, Discrimination, and Enrollment/Transfer

A parent whose first language was not English contacted OEO about what he felt to be discrimination towards his daughter at school. The father had already transferred her to another school out of safety and wellness concerns. The Ombuds learned that the district had gone through a fair process in addressing these concerns. After the Ombuds conveyed this information to the parent, the parent decided that he would like his daughter to return to the neighborhood school. Working with the school team, the Ombuds helped to shape strategies and supports for the student’s safe return to the neighborhood school. The principal, student, and family approached the return with openness, clarifying their expectations and deepening trust.



### Improved Communication and Family-School Engagement

At the closing of a complex concern, the Ombuds shared with a school leader involved in its resolution that OEO is intended to be a resource for educators and families. She invited him to contact her if future issues arose, either for this student or others. A year later, the Ombuds received a phone call from the school leader. He described an ongoing challenging situation and asked whether the family could contact OEO directly. Once the family began working with OEO, the Ombuds facilitated communication among the school, district, and family to clarify goals for the student.

**We encourage educators to call us to address issues preventatively and brainstorm strategies and solutions, including best practices we have learned from other educators.**



*We listen. We inform. We help solve problems.*  
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