



WASHINGTON STATE

Office of the Education Ombudsman

www.waparentslearn.org

Extended Quarterly Report | February – June 2007

The Office of the Education Ombudsman (OEO) is a public service agency within the Governor's Office. It was created by House Bill 3127 and approved by the Legislature in 2006. OEO is staffed by a group of diverse professionals with expertise in K-12th education, family/community involvement in schools, and complaint resolution, who are dedicated to the academic success of Washington students.

New Seattle Office

OEO now has offices in Olympia and Seattle to serve you better.

Office of the Education Ombudsman 1110 Capitol Way South – 304 Olympia, WA 98504-0004	Office of the Education Ombudsman 155 NE 100th Street - 210 Seattle, WA 98125-8012
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OEO provides information and referrals regarding the public school system, training and workshops on family involvement in education and conflict resolution, and helps resolve conflict between schools and families. Visit OEO's website www.waparentslearn.org or call OEO toll-free at 1-866-297-2597 (for both offices) to learn more. Immediate language interpretation is available for over 100 languages.

Information for All

OEO's new brochures are free, full of information, and are easy to understand.

Brochure titles:

- OEO Guide to Services – A Voice for Everyone
- Resolving Conflict with Schools
- Parent and Student Rights
- Participate in Your Child's Education
- Make the Most of Parent-Teacher Conferences
- Bullying at School
- How Does a School District Work?

Brochures are available in Spanish, Somali, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Russian and Korean. Download a brochure from OEO's website www.waparentslearn.org, or call OEO toll-free at 1-866-297-2597 to have one mailed to you free of charge.

OEO Website

OEO's website: www.waparentslearn.org offers information about the elementary and secondary public education system and resources for students and families in an easy-to-understand format.

Fact-Finding

What is missing in education

OEO routinely identifies missing pieces in the K-12th education system that negatively affect the academic success of Washington State students. The ombudsmen review education research and policy, and hear directly from families, students, and educators. These are recent findings:

Truancy - The Becca Bill requires schools to meet with families of truant students to address unexcused absences before filing a truancy action. Some school districts and courts send truant youth to detention without attempting to address unexcused absences prior to filing a case in juvenile court. In some jurisdictions, students and parents are not represented by legal counsel at the initial truancy hearing and are encouraged to sign agreed orders without sufficient opportunity to have their rights expressed to them.

Bullying Policy – RCW 28A.300.285 requires all school districts to adopt policies that prohibit bullying. Many districts have anti-bullying policies on their books but do not include implementation guidelines. Other districts have not yet established bullying policies.

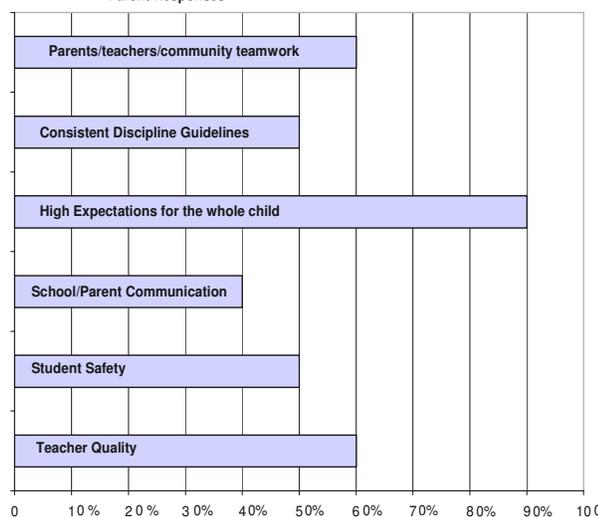
WASL Test Retake System – State timelines for releasing WASL test results do not provide adequate lead-time for parents or students to register for test retakes and remedial coursework. Many parents miss registration deadlines due to lack of information.

What Parents Say About Good Schools

During OEO's parent forums in Yakima and Pasco, ombudsmen asked 48 parents of elementary and secondary students what they think makes a public school highly desirable.

90% of parents said that good schools have high expectations for the whole child.

What Makes A Public School Good?
Parent Responses



Customer Satisfaction

"When I received a call from one of the Education Ombudsmen, at first I felt threatened. Then after hearing what your office has to offer, I felt that I could really use your assistance and you can help me resolve a long-time conflict with a parent that is impacting the achievement of the student in question. I think this can be a win-win situation for all!"

Principal, Seattle Public Schools

Improving the System

OEO staff made the following important contributions to improving the K-12 education system in Washington State:

- Provided input on the development of OSPI's new website so it will be more accessible to students and families.
- Provided input and advocated for the inclusion of family involvement practices in the revision of the State Teacher Certification Standards.
- Contributed to the family involvement chapter of OSPI's "Nine Characteristics of Highly Effective Schools" publication.

What Creates Conflict Between Parents and Educators?

OEO assists in resolving complaints between school personnel and parents and/or students of elementary and secondary public schools. OEO has identified the five most common reasons why problems between parents and educators escalate into full-blown disputes. Conflict intensifies between parents and educators when:

1. Promises are not kept. Either parents or educators do not do what they said they would.
2. Educators dismiss parents' concerns or ignore their input about their children's education.
3. Neither parents nor educators acknowledge that they made a mistake and do not apologize.
4. Parents make excuses instead of assuming responsibility for their own actions or for their children's actions.
5. Educators do not comply with their own school or school district policy.

Ombudsmen Consult with Families, Community Members and Education Leaders Statewide

June

Ombudsmen Train Educators at OSPI Summer Institute

Spokane, June 19-22

OEO staff presented several workshops for educators at the OSPI sponsored Summer Institute in Spokane. OEO Director, Adie Simmons, presented ways teachers can involve bilingual families in school. Ombudsmen, Maria Flores, Kelly Warner-King and Heidi Henderson-Lewis presented strategies to prevent and resolve conflicts with parents in a number of workshops. Participants discussed common conflicts they encounter with families and left with new approaches they can bring back to their schools and school districts for the coming school year. The Ombudsman will present several workshops for educators at OSPI Summer Institutes across the state this summer.

May

Ombudsman Discusses Authentic Family Involvement with Educators at UW Race Literacy Forum

University of Washington, Seattle, May 31

Heidi Henderson-Lewis, Ombudsman, spoke about culturally relevant ways to involve families in schools at the Washington State Teachers for a New Era's Race Literacy Forum. The forum provided a professional development opportunity for educators seeking ways to address race issues in their schools.

Ombudsmen Listen to Members of Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians

ATNI Annual Conference, Squaxin Island, May 21

Adie Simmons, OEO Director, and Maria Flores, Ombudsman, met with tribal leaders, educators and families at the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians' annual conference. Participants discussed family involvement issues in their schools, and challenges to meaningful partnerships between families and schools. The Ombudsman also provided participants an overview of OEO services.

Ombudsmen Listen to Parents at Pasco Forum

Pasco School District, May 14-15

Adie Simmons, OEO Director, and Kelly Warner-King, Ombudsman, attended a parent forum held by the Pasco School District to discuss parents' perspective on meaningful family involvement in their schools, to hear parents' concerns about K-12 education and to discuss OEO's services. Parents expressed that meaningful family involvement happens in their schools when communication between parents and the school is thoughtful and coordinated. Parents shared general concerns about safety issues, discipline, bullying, testing requirements, and the need for deeper teacher cultural competence training.

Ombudsmen Provide Workshops for Parents

Annual Washington State PTA Convention, Sea-Tac, May 4-7

The Education Ombudsmen presented several workshops to the Washington State Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members at their annual conference in Sea-Tac. Education Ombudsmen Heidi Henderson-Lewis, Maria Flores, and Kelly Warner-King presented ways to prevent and resolve conflict with schools. OEO Director, Adie Simmons, presented ways PTA members can help involve bilingual families in schools. The PTA is the largest parent organization in the state.

April

Ombudsmen Listen to Members of the Washington State Indian Education Association

WSIE Annual Conference, Kamilche, April 12

Adie Simmons, OEO Director, and Maria Flores, Ombudsman, met with members of the Washington State Indian Education Association at their 23rd Annual Conference. The Ombudsmen listened to participants' perspectives on involving Native American families in schools, and provided an overview of OEO services. Participants highlighted that thoughtful, positive and clear communication is crucial for creating partnerships between families and schools in their communities.

March

Ombudsmen Present Culturally-Relevant Strategies to Involve Families in Schools at OSPI Conference

Side by Side: Supporting Student Success Conference, Yakima, March 28-30

Education Ombudsmen Maria Flores and Heidi Henderson-Lewis presented strategies to involve diverse families in education to an audience of parents, educators, and community members attending the OSPI sponsored "Side-by-Side: Supporting Student Success" conference. The Ombudsmen emphasized that meaningful family involvement requires a partnership between families and schools. Participants discussed ways to work together to improve student achievement in their schools and school districts.

February

Ombudsman Supports Latino Academic Achievement

Latino Educational Achievement Project's (LEAP) Annual Education Conference, Olympia, February 22-24



Adie Simmons, OEO Director, spoke about the importance of family involvement in education at LEAP's Seventh Annual Education Conference and Legislative Day to an audience of over four hundred participants. Simmons also taught workshops for parents and students regarding their rights in the public education system. At the conference, outstanding parents, students, and state policymakers were recognized for their efforts to improve Latino academic success across the state. LEAP was founded in 1998 to improve academic achievement of Latino students in Washington.