

# **A Roadmap to Reducing Barriers to Educational Justice in Washington State Road Map Report – July 2021**

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This document provides a road map summary on a jointly funded Washington Education Association (WEA) and National Education Association (NEA) project undertaken by researchers from the University of Washington (UW) and including community partners and colleagues from Washington State University (WSU), focusing on issues of equity and educational justice in Washington state.

## **I. Project Statement**

Researchers and community partners collaborated mainly with families, communities and educators invested in racial equity from across Washington state to create a bold, direction-setting “roadmap” for reducing barriers of institutional racism in Washington state’s P-12 education system. This project aimed to understand the level and types of investments and practices (i.e., policies, decision-making, and actions, and within Washington’s specific historical context) needed to address and eliminate systemic educational inequities from the perspective of families, students and communities that have been historically underserved. In order to understand which investments have been effective and to learn from ongoing family engagement efforts, we sought to discover what might be done to reduce inequities for students from non-dominant groups. We engaged with communities of color,<sup>1</sup> including students of color, families of color, teachers and administrators of color and their networks, Indigenous communities as well as other educators throughout the state through various research efforts, focus groups, and other forms of data collection. This research was driven by the fact that non-dominant communities have lacked authentic opportunities to describe and influence the types of investments and policies they believe are most needed to address educational justice in P-12 education in our state.<sup>2</sup>

A multifaceted team of researchers and community members with specific expertise and commitment to advancing educational equity and justice in our schools and communities were engaged in this project. Team members participated in ways that leveraged their individual areas of expertise, while also contributing to whole group discussions about the specifics of the study design, data collection methods, and drafting of project deliverables. Many project partners had existing connections to this work through ongoing community engagement activities and many are also part of the national conversation about educational justice.

To facilitate community engagement, we partnered with the Equity in Education Coalition, a non-profit community-based organization to support the work with communities of color,

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<sup>1</sup> We use the term “of color”, recognizing that it is an imperfect descriptive term and especially fails to acknowledge anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity, and for many Indigenous peoples it is not a term in which they feel included.

<sup>2</sup> Washington state’s ethnic commissions produced a 2009 report which resulted in the Washington State Legislature statutorily creating the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) to address educational inequities. This document builds on the work of these organizations.

Native/Indigenous, refugee and immigrant communities. In addition, we had community partners who are supporting specific faculty projects, such as Dr. Melodi Wynne from the Spokane Tribal Network and Laina Phillips, a principal from Wellpinit Public Schools who collaborated on the project focused on Indigenous perspectives. We also consulted with UW College of Education doctoral student, Aditi Rajendran, whose area of expertise involves teachers' associations and their affiliates, and issues of educational justice.

## **II. Adaptations under COVID-19**

The project was underway for only a few months when the COVID-19 crisis upended plans and activities. The pandemic further revealed systemic injustices that were worsening conditions for historically underserved students, students with special needs, communities of color, as well as Indigenous, immigrant and refugee communities. Consequently, the project pivoted to alternative approaches in reaching out to education communities through Zoom, online surveys and other strategies. The scope of the project also expanded to include an examination of the types and scale of inequities that were emerging regarding educational services and supports in response to remote learning and other COVID-19 related challenges. Throughout this time, the UW leadership team met with the WEA point person to provide updates, share a draft report outline and receive feedback, and ensure continuity in the transition to a new WEA lead.

## **III. Research Questions and Conceptual Framing**

Since the project's inception, the research team has expanded to include new partners and organizations in order to support the statewide breadth of the work. Each of these efforts has produced an appropriate smaller product which contributes to the collective final report, and informs other forms of dissemination. As a whole, these individual projects helped us address the study's key questions:

1. What current state investments have been effective in reducing inequities in inputs and outcomes for students of color, Indigenous students, and students in poverty? What types of investments and activities are not effective, and at what levels of the P-12 system?
2. How have marginalized communities previously mobilized around school investment levels and priorities? What kinds of claims and challenges have been successful and what strategies have they identified as having potential?
3. What additional investments are needed? These investments include consideration of educational standards and assessments informed by non-dominant groups, staffing, professional learning, curriculum, community engagement, and other supports and resources.
4. What recommendations can be made about changing systems that perpetuate inequities in systemic ways?

Through this review of literature and by prioritizing the perspectives especially of racially disenfranchised communities, including families, students, and community-based organizations in policymaking and professional development, we offer a set of concepts that supports and guides our thinking and how they relate to positionalities, pedagogies, organizations/systems.

The conceptual foundations of this report rest on an understanding that public schooling and education in the United States, including Washington state, have from their inception been founded and built on a large-scale unjust and unequal system for communities of color (Anderson, 2015), and especially (although, not only) Indigenous, Black, Latinx, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander students and families. Major historical structural realities contributing to educational injustice have been the seizure of lands and genocide of Indigenous peoples; the forcible migration and enslavement of Africans; and territorial conquest, including most notably, areas of the western U.S. by European colonizer/settlers. Schooling has participated in the process as an economically (through capitalism), racially, culturally, linguistically assimilative and often destructive mechanism during, after, and since. At the same time, these communities have creatively engaged throughout in sustaining and nurturing their ways of knowing and living (Sabzalian, 2019).

We start by proposing the term, *education debt*, (Ladson Billings, 2006) instead of the achievement gap to frame why students of color have by and large not been able to meet the same levels of standardized ways (e.g. standardized testing, discipline, attendance, and drop-out rates, postsecondary outcomes) of educational attainment as their white counterparts. Education debt takes into account these historical, economic and moral injustices and frames this as a debt that is accrued over time due to various forms of injustice and impacting students and families of color, disproportionately. It is important to note neither terms, however, challenge the inherent validity of the standards themselves.

Education debt can be buttressed by two connected foundational and structural concepts of *Settler Colonialism* (Grande, 2015), and *Critical Race Theory* (Crenshaw et. al, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) (especially its notions of counter-storytelling, interest convergence and whiteness as property) with understandings of countering *Anti-Blackness* and *Anti-Indigeneity*.

The concept of Settler Colonialism posits how the contemporary United States, including its public education system, came to be through a relentless vision of replacement of Indigenous peoples and colonization of their lands and ways of life. This was mainly done through genocide, and the invasion and continued assertion of state sovereignty and juridical control by White European settlers driven by an underlying assumption of White Anglo racial superiority. Although not originally inclusive of the racially motivated genocide of Indigenous peoples, Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides a similar and related structural explanation of how U.S. society is basically structured by racism; it is embedded in legal and educational practices, policies, and institutions. Connecting both Settler Colonialism and CRT as conceptual foundations in educational (in)justice provides powerful and far-reaching explanatory power to how structural and material racism have historically and contemporaneously driven inequities experienced by students, families and communities of color. Moreover, both frameworks center the perspectives and experiences of those who have not been listened to when instituting educational policies and practices.

Along with centering the importance of race and racism, challenging dominant perspectives and with a commitment to transformation, three tenets of CRT, relevant to the work illustrated in this report and therefore, worth mentioning, are that of the paramount importance of *counter-storytelling*, as well as the insights of the constructs of *whiteness as property* and *interest*

*convergence*. Counter storytelling within CRT is viewed as a way to emphasize experiential knowledge, especially how the stories told by people of color are of prime value and essentially proof of evidence in describing racial oppression in opposition to majoritarian accounts and modes of accountability. The construct of whiteness as property proposes that to examine the effect of whiteness, we must go beyond looking at it as a particular set of phenotypes and ancestry and view it as a racialized system of meaning and domination. In such a system, interests of communities of color are only validated in mainstream society when there is interest convergence; that is, when they intersect with or at least are not viewed to impede the interests of white communities.

Proposals such as linguistic and cultural *revitalization* and *resurgence* (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006) through Indigenous ways of knowing and being and *liberation* and *abolition* and (Love, 2019) *Afro-futurism* by Black activists, thinkers, and educators all embed a desire for something that has been anti-assimilative and not defined in and through racial and capitalist settler colonialism. These all constitute invitations to *reimagine* education in ways that have been articulated by and through their communities and in service of their sustenance, health and healing, and ultimately, their reinvention.

## **IV. Developing a Road Map for the Future**

### **A. Core Principles**

The research studies undertaken under the umbrella of this project provide clear direction and a path forward for reducing inequitable practices and institutional racism in Washington state's P-12 system. The fundamental premise underlying all the studies is the need to change our assumptions and beliefs about education and how it is currently practiced and financed in Washington state. The studies' overlapping areas for change were summarized into *four core principles* which need to be considered *simultaneously and interactively* to guide ongoing and future work. Within each of the four principles discussed below, we draw from and reference the individual studies which provide deeper insight and examples of how changing assumptions, beliefs, and materialities, invite opportunities for action toward more just educational practices.

#### **Principle #1: Disrupting Settler Colonialism, Racism, and Whiteness in Educational Structures and Values**

The structural inequities that permeate Washington's current education system have historical roots in Settler Colonialism and segregationist policies and practices. Prior to western expansion in the 1840s and 1850s, Indigenous communities had tribal sovereignty over their own territories and responsibility for the education of their youth. The importance of tribal sovereignty and the acknowledgment of Washington state as a settler colonial government are important basic assumptions in understanding Indigenous practices and knowledge systems that shape ways of life for Native students, their families and communities [[Native Ed Report](#)]. The expansion of white settlers and appropriation of Native land increased the federal government's involvement in and concerns for how to govern new territories and integrate them into a nation state, with education playing an increasingly important role. When Washington became a state in 1889, it adopted what still is the strongest constitutional principle of "paramount duty" for education in

the country. Yet the founding of the state also brought racism and white supremacist values in education policy and practice. This included the historical challenges of organized teachers in advancing or contesting white supremacy in education policy that have prevented prioritizing educational justice and efforts to decolonize practice [[Beadie](#)].

Across the individual studies in this series, researchers found racism and white supremacist values as normalized and perpetuated in schools and curriculum, and in policy and practice, as well as a general lack of will by many white educators to address it. The studies found a denial of racism and a marginalization of students of color by a number of educators [[Elfers & Plecki](#)], and many schools having a climate of normalized racism that is evident in disproportionate discipline [[Park & Li](#)], rampant microaggressions, lack of accountability and empathy, and isolation of students of color [[Washington et al.](#)]. In schools and even in student handbooks, there is often a failure to name racism. Many educators do not have standards of anti-racism that are meaningful to students of color, and they have not provided reporting systems that produce justice for students of color [[Roidad & Srinivasan](#)]. Researchers found misunderstandings of the difference between cultural competency and anti-racist education, and the need to resist harmful notions of “competence” that position children with disabilities [[Beneke et al.](#)] and children of color outside the bounds of schooling and enriching learning opportunities [[Headrick Taylor et al.](#)].

## **Principle #2: Building an Equity-Based School Finance System**

The Washington state constitution clearly asserts that providing for education is the “paramount duty of the state” and specifies that the level of support be “ample.” It further declares that this ample provision be made for all children “without distinction by race, color, caste, or sex.” Simply put, a high quality education in Washington state should be amply and fully funded by state sources, and must be non-discriminatory in implementation. However, structural inequities have been built into state finance policies, and Washington has never fully provided the resources necessary to deliver on these constitutional requirements [[Beadie](#)].

The lack of ample funding for education is coupled with longstanding inequities in the distribution of education resources. While the majority of revenues for education in Washington come from state sources, thereby making education revenue less reliant on local property taxes, local community wealth is still a determinant of the amount and quality of educational services provided by districts and schools. To this day, students who are low-income and students of color lack access to some of the resources available to students residing in communities with higher property tax valuation [[Knight & Plecki](#)].

In our research, we heard from a number of leaders at state and local levels, especially leaders of color, who assert that radical changes are needed in the state’s finance system to address both the adequacy of funding and the equitable distribution of resources [[Elfers & Plecki](#)]. These changes include: (1) eliminating funding inequities related to the difference in property values across school districts, (2) providing ample additional resources for culturally and linguistically diverse students and for students with a disability, (3) forming cross-sectoral partnerships with other agencies to support students and their families experiencing financial hardship, housing instability, food insecurity, or a lack of access to digital devices or mental health resources

[[Elfers & Plecki](#)], and (4) creating a system of school funding that is centered on the needs of students and families [[Johnson](#); [Navas](#); [Varghese](#)].

While the *McCleary* decision did increase the level of school funding, it was not focused on the equity of the distribution of education resources. Instead, the state's policy response to *McCleary* was primarily focused on increasing educator compensation, which represented the vast majority of new dollars infused into the state funding model. Improvements in educator compensation were certainly warranted, but these compensation investments do not address the lack of other necessary resources for students and their families. In fact, the recent implementation of the regionalization factor has driven additional dollars to those districts with higher property valuations in an attempt to address differences in cost of living [[Knight & Plecki](#)]. Addressing the lack of equity in funding remains as a central challenge. The state needs to target far more funding to school districts that enroll greater proportions of students from low-income households. This could be done either through expanding the Learning Assistance Program or by creating new funding streams that directly support communities of color and low-income students. Eliminating reliance on local property taxes for school funding is another way to address one of the structural inequities and advance equity.

### **Principle #3: Being Led by Students, Families and Communities of Color/of Indigenous Backgrounds**

For all children and youth to thrive, the state's education system must be reimaged in ways where students and families of color and other marginalized groups lead with their experiences and voices. This recentering principle applies also to organizations and agencies that primarily serve educators and calls for leadership and decision makers that puts students first, instead of educators. Rather than educators making decisions for others, decisions are made together in authentic partnerships with or actually being led by families and communities. Recentering students and families towards educational justice requires listening to and amplifying community voice, acknowledging the history of discrimination, learning what families and communities need, perceive, and know, and then taking action based on their direction [[Native Ed Report](#); [Navas](#); [Park & Li](#)]. The studies in this series document the broken trust with communities and the need for safe spaces that invite community self-determination, activism, and healing [[Washington et al.](#)]. For families of children with disabilities, it involves pushing back on status quo systems that promote whiteness and fail to recognize and value ability differences [[Beneke et al.](#)].

Despite these challenges, researchers found pockets of support for immigrant, indigenous and refugee youth and other marginalized students, and spaces that invite problematizing and re-imagining education [[Headrick Taylor et al.](#); [Native Ed Report](#); [Washington et al.](#)]. These redefined spaces of learning are culturally sustaining, holistic, and student-centered, and empower youth to co-create their education. Beyond these spaces, students deserve authentic opportunities to engage in educational decision-making processes and anti-racist work in ways that aren't burdensome [[Roidad & Srinivasan](#)]. This becomes particularly apparent when examining geographic differences across the state in supporting linguistically and culturally diverse students [[Johnson](#)].

## **Principle #4: Creating an Interdependent System of Supports for Students, Families and Educators of Color/of Indigenous Backgrounds**

A fourth principle borne out of these research studies is the need for a web of support and care for students, families [Navas] and educators of color [Varghese]. A web of supports assumes an expansive and holistic view of care, with multiple avenues for addressing well-being [Washington et al.]. Children cannot learn if they are hungry, homeless or in unsafe situations, and schools already attend to issues beyond education. Addressing these multifaceted needs resulting from their intersecting identities in holistic ways requires breaking down the silos of services that exist within and among fragmented state agencies and organizations to increase their capacity to assume joint responsibility [Elfers & Plecki]. As the crises of the pandemic and the most recent racial reckoning have brought to light, educators have been inflexible and unresponsive to the needs of children and families. Much of what we have seen during the pandemic in terms of access to food, health care, and technology are dependent on a family's zip code and language skills, and leadership responses often have been technical rather than bold and adaptive [Navas]. Many students of color feel that the Black Lives Matter movement has not been addressed with urgency, empathy or accountability [Roidad & Srinivasan].

A web of supports also extends and encompasses educators of color at all levels of the system. It is disingenuous to promote the recruitment and retention of educators of color without such a web of supports for them that is explicitly anti-racist. Educators of color face the challenge of racism within a white system of dominance that actively works against them [Varghese]. Much of the emotional labor and cost of doing anti-racist and educational justice work is borne by leaders of color [Elfers & Plecki], and a web of support necessarily centers Black-led, People of Color, Indigenous, and immigrant organizations and spaces [Washington et al., Native Ed Report]. For educational organizations like the WEA and others to be included in a web of support, they would need to address their own current and historic complicity in racism and restructure the organization to center students, families and educators of color in setting legislative agendas, policies, and practices [Park & Li]. The web of support extends to the lack of racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in the educator workforce and the need to change hiring and retention practices and changing what is valued within organizations and schools. Differences in retention rates exist among teachers of color (and Black teachers specifically) with known factors that impact it [Elfers et al.]. Linguistically and racially diverse educators often come to their work with a rich understanding of the community and have cultural and linguistic skills that enable them to form deep connections to students, and support for their work is necessary [Varghese].

### **B. Guidance for Enacting Sustainable Organizational Practices toward Educational Justice**

We invite the WEA, state agencies and other educational organizations, as well as district and school leaders to critically evaluate their organizational structures, policies, and practices and to authentically reorient their mission and purpose toward anti-racism and educational justice. This requires a top-to-bottom, complete systemic overhaul, and a willingness to confront and root out embedded beliefs, values, and practices of racism, discrimination, inequities, and other barriers to educational justice. Sustainable change requires putting in place a mechanism that triggers a continuous improvement cycle at all levels of the system to address inequities when they occur.

Using the four principles outlined above, we offer the following critical questions as a guide to begin that process.

**1. Where in your organization have white, ableist, settler colonial values and ways of doing, being, and knowing resulted in structures, processes, and practices that diminish the educational rights and opportunities of non-dominant students, families, and communities?**

Illustrative examples include the following:

- Acknowledge the history of settler colonialism in which settler schools were built through the expropriation of Native lands and ongoing attempts that have been made to destroy Indigenous lives and ways of life.
- Define and articulate an anti-racist perspective for your organization and create a plan for communicating and valuing this as well as reviewing and resolving policies regularly, both horizontally and vertically, and across all departments and units. Reduce silos to increase accountability and cooperation among those with overlapping responsibilities.
- Eradicate policies and practices that allow systems to rank and categorize children, and which rationalize the exclusion of children for whom the system wasn't made and doesn't work.
- Change hiring practices and require professional development to support educators who are anti-racist and invite students and community members to participate in the creating job descriptions, recruitment and hiring.

**2. In what ways can your organization prioritize finance equity by investigating structural inequities in school funding?**

Some areas to consider are listed below:

- Change the current finance model to build or support a finance model that is fully adequate and equitable (not equal) for every child.
- Analyze the ways in which the newly implemented regionalization factor creates inequities for school districts with low assessed property valuation.
- Examine how funding for students, families, and staff of color are prioritized in your organization's funding model.
- Support and prioritize staffing of family engagement coordinators when staffing schools, particularly schools with high percentages of students in poverty, students with disabilities and multilingual students.
- Advocate for and prioritize additional resources for counselors, nurses, social workers, and other mental health professionals who use culturally and linguistically sustaining mental health practices to address the multiple needs of students, particularly in schools with high percentages of students who are low-income and multilingual.
- Examine how the funding system can be streamlined to support the whole child rather than providing support in piecemeal fashion.
- Consider how your organization can work interdependently with other educational agencies and other state and local organizations providing health, housing, and other forms of support in service of students and families.

**3. How can your organization reimagine, prioritize, and be led by the needs of children and families, particularly those from racialized and otherwise underrepresented communities, throughout your organization's structure and system?**

Examples to consider include the following:

- Discuss and challenge the narrative of what school is and who it is for.
- Reimagine an educational system that centers the whole lives and experiences of students of color/from Indigenous backgrounds, immigrant, refugee, ability/disability, and non-English dominant students and their families.
- Treat family and community as meaningful teachers and partners in creating their child's education and build genuine relationships with them outside of traditional structures.
- Prioritize care for the whole child's well-being by providing support for socio-emotional health and communication to families that is both proactive and responsive.

**4. What can your organization do to become an anti-racist learning community that values care-centered practices?**

Consider the following examples:

- Invite a critical self-reflection of organizational and personal values and beliefs which challenge settler colonialism and racism
- Redefine qualified or competent educators to be anti-racist and to be accountable to students and to foster and participate in a learning/unlearning community.
- Implement a reporting system for incidents of racism that is accountable, respectful, validating, urgent, brings a sense of justice to those harmed, and which students and staff of color/from Indigenous backgrounds can feel comfortable using. Allow those who have been harmed to have a voice in determining what accountability and justice looks like for them.
- Value each child as unique and beloved without reference to grades or proximity to whiteness or ableism. Seek to understand and respect students within their full context, including mental health, home life, and marginalization of identity.
- Work to eliminate tracking and other structures that diminish learning opportunities for all.
- Support the creation of spaces for students of color/from Indigenous backgrounds to build their own communities and coalitions.
- Decenter educator expertise and resist schooling practices that stress assimilation to adult expectations, and institutionalized practices that emphasize fixing children and educational exclusion.

**5. How can your organization prioritize the recruitment, retention, and promotion of linguistically, racially, and ethnically diverse staff, and create educator-centered spaces that support a redistribution of power?**

Illustrative examples include the following:

- Hire educators with a strong racial justice lens who come from non majoritarian racial, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds at all levels of the system and who are representative of the students and communities they serve.
- Create hiring, professional development, and retention practices that ensure all educators and staff possess the mindset and skills to serve students effectively and compassionately regardless of how schooling is delivered.
- Acknowledge and address diversity and differing needs among early career educators and differentiate induction supports.
- Value and respect educational staff at all levels of the system and involve them in decision making.
- Change reduction-in-force policies such that educators of color/from indigenous backgrounds are not displaced or disadvantaged in the process.

### **6. How can student voice be elevated and where are students partners in decision making in authentic ways in your organization?**

Examples are included below:

- Create ways for students of color/from Indigenous backgrounds, and those from marginalized communities to be meaningful partners in creating their education.
- Give students of color/from Indigenous backgrounds power in all decisions that affect them. Open up all spaces of learning, development, leadership, and decision-making to students.
- Insist that white educators in your organization take on the responsibility of doing anti-racist work and do not burden students of color/from Indigenous communities with it.
- Ask students how they feel about attending school.

### **7. How can your organization support or participate in curriculum development that reflects, is relevant to, and responds to communities of color and the needs, interests, and community contexts of students of color?**

Some examples are included below:

- Decenter individual, meritocratic approaches, and invite collaborative, caring configurations of teaching and learning.
- Consider how mandatory P-12 ethnic studies can be integrated into all subjects.
- Create or support curricula that engages students and allows them to explore and extend on their whole selves, interests, and real world problems.
- Support greater flexibility in course structures that move away from seat-based models and toward community (care) and learning growth models.
- Rethink how outcomes are defined and change assessment practices, such as a statewide move toward more formative assessments in lieu of summative assessments

## **V. Conclusion and Potential Directions For Future Work**

Developing a roadmap for the future begins by anchoring the core principles as the bedrock that supports the weight of the work to be done. Our collective studies communicate a unified set of principles that include addressing past systemic educational injustices. These educational

injustices will continue to haunt us until they are confronted and changed (Principle #1: Disrupting Settler Colonialism, Racism, and Whiteness in Educational Structures and Values). The roadmap requires reordering our priorities with regard to the use and distribution of resources. We can fulfill the “paramount duty of the state” with ample funding for all children in the state without discrimination (Principle #2: Building an Equity-Based School Finance System). Reimagining an educational system that works for all requires centering the work around historically marginalized children and families and including their voices in all aspects of decision making (Principle #3: Being Led by Students, Families and Communities of Color/of Indigenous Backgrounds). Finally, those who have been marginalized in our educational system need to experience a web of support and care that is expansive, antiracist, and embraces collaborative approaches to serving one another (Principle #4: Creating an Interdependent System of Supports for Students, Families and Educators of Color/of Indigenous Background).

The principles, strategies and guiding questions we have posed for enacting sustainable practices toward educational justice do not and cannot operate in isolation in bringing about lasting systemic change. Rather, they must be considered *simultaneously* and *interactively* to guide ongoing and future work. Like a three-legged stool, if one element is missing or impaired, the structure will not be stable or sustainable. The studies conducted in support of the roadmap reflect restorative attempts to erode the cumulative ‘education debt’ and create a starting point for reimagining just schools in Washington state. While the task may seem daunting, it should be emphasized that these recommendations are feasible within the confines of our current systems. Many educators already possess a deep understanding of these issues, and some have even experienced pockets of exemplary and refreshing possibilities for change. As a state, Washington can be at the forefront of leading for educational justice and addressing racial inequities, but it requires individual and collective will to do so, and trust in allowing historically marginalized children, families, and communities to lead.

### **Potential Directions for Future Work**

While we have examined numerous challenges and barriers to achieving educational justice in Washington state, we acknowledge that there are additional issues, systems, and policies to be explored. For example, our inquiry has focused on the P-12 educational system, but we note that significant barriers to educational justice occur in higher education settings as well. In the higher education context, this includes issues such as access to opportunities, financial aid, persistence, and graduation for students of color, indigenous students, immigrants, students with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. Similarly, challenges exist in providing equitable access to education and other essential resources for infants and toddlers, where racial disparities exist prior to their enrollment in formal preschool or kindergarten settings.

Yet another area of future work would involve a deep examination of the policies and supports surrounding teacher, principal, and other educator preparation programs, including how these programs can help prepare educators who represent especially the racial, cultural, and linguistic characteristics of the students they serve and who are fully prepared to make the necessary systemic changes to achieve educational justice. Additionally, it would be important to conduct further work on the deep inequities inherent in the areas of student discipline, testing and assessment, dual language, programs for highly capable students and students with disabilities.

Conducting this research during the Covid-19 pandemic meant that our approach and outreach efforts were significantly altered, resulting in fewer opportunities to engage with students, families, and communities across the state. Because of those limitations, further inquiry into the perspectives of those most impacted by educational policies and decision-making should be pursued, and by vetting these findings and recommendations with broader communities.

We emphasize that all future work addressing educational justice should include, or rather, be led by students, families, and communities in authentic and empowering ways. Our hope is that this will start by the way this work is shared and disseminated, and we look forward to continuing our collaboration with WEA in this next phase of the project.

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**Appendix: List of Project Reports (in alphabetical order of authors)**

**[Native Perspectives on Educational \(In\)equity in Washington State: Reclaiming Educational Sovereignty](#)**

Dana Arviso, University of Washington, Seattle; Anne Marie Guerrettaz, Washington State University, Pullman; Laina Phillips, Wellpinit High School; Melodi Wynne, Spokane Tribal Network

**[Paramount Duty of the State: A Brief History of Educational Equity and Inequality in Washington State](#)**

Nancy Beadie, University of Washington, Seattle

**[Who Gets to be a Child? Mothering Young Children of Color with Disabilities and the Politics of Resisting Normalcy](#)**

Maggie Beneke, University of Washington, Seattle, Shayla Collins, The Arc of King County, and Selma Powell, University of Washington, Seattle

**[Working Towards Educational Justice at State and District Levels: Perspectives of Educational Leaders](#)**

Ana Elfers and Marge Plecki, University of Washington, Seattle

**[How Retention and Mobility Outcomes Differ for Teachers of Color in Washington State](#)**

Ana Elfers, Marge Plecki, Ni Bei and Youngwon Kim, University of Washington, Seattle

**[STEM Learning as Care Work](#)**

Katie Headrick Taylor, Jiyoung Lee, Erin Riesland, and Mack Ikeru, University of Washington, Seattle

**[Resources, Challenges and Possibilities in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse School Districts](#)**

Eric J. Johnson, Washington State University, Tri-Cities

**[Establishing Priorities for Education Finance Under Fiscal Uncertainty: Recommendations for Washington State Policymakers](#)**

David S. Knight and Marge Plecki, University of Washington, Seattle

**[A Community Perspective on Educational Justice in the Time of COVID](#)**

Sharonne Navas, Equity in Education Coalition

**[Restoring the 'Education Debt': Equity Priorities for Children and Families in BIPOC and Immigrant Communities in Washington](#)**

Soojin Oh Park and Kaixin Li, University of Washington, Seattle

**[Achieving Educational Justice for Washington's Students of Color](#)**

Aneesa Roidad and Dhani Srinivasan, Seattle, WA

**["We know what's right for kids": Washington State Educators for Racial Justice Speak Up and Speak Back](#)**

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**[Spaces of Belonging: Learning with and from Black-Led Community Organizations and Community Members of Color](#)**

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