

18.38 Equitable Education Opportunities to Close Gaps Across the Achievement Spectrum

Resolution pass 2019

Whereas, the term opportunity gap (the inputs) refers to the ways in which the education system continues to provide disparate outcomes for students when their educational experience intersects with race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English language proficiency, community wealth, familial situations, or other variables, and the term achievement gap (the outcomes) refers to any significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of students; and

Whereas, Washington state has opportunity and achievement gaps evident in kindergarten readiness, high school graduation rates, and state assessment scores across all subjects and grades, especially related to race, income and special need. These gaps impact a large percentage of students based on the statewide student enrollment as of the 2017-18 school year which consists of 30% students of color, 46% students of low-income families, 11.7% English Language Learners (ELL), 7.5% highly mobile students (homeless, foster, migrant, and military), and 14.6% special education students; and

Whereas, PTA advocates that every child must be provided with a well-rounded, high-quality education, which will ensure that all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential and become productive members of society and that access to a free public education is the most effective method of securing this opportunity and should not be denied to any child; and

Whereas, PTA is committed to removing systemic inequities, institutionalized racism, and disparate educational opportunities faced by students of color, students with socioeconomic disadvantages, and students with special needs; and

Whereas, every absence is a learning opportunity lost and can have long-term impacts on student success in school. Recent state data shows disproportionate rates of student discipline and exclusion related to race, income and special need; and

Whereas, students benefit from high-quality learning opportunities in which their cultures and experiences are valued and reflected in their learning, families who are engaged in their educational experiences, and quality expanded learning opportunities to complement the school day to help build lifelong skills and achieve academic goals; and

Whereas, when social emotional learning (SEL) and trauma-informed care and healing centered engagement are used in public schools, students do better academically and emotionally, and school climate improves; and

Whereas, the Washington State Constitution states that it is the “Paramount duty to make ample provision for the education of all children without distinction or preference on account of race, color, caste or sex” and further directs the legislature to “provide for a general and uniform system of public schools.”

Therefore, be it

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils believe great educational outcomes are possible for all students, including, but not limited to:

- students of color
- students of diverse cultural or linguistic backgrounds
- students of lower-income status
- students of high mobility (e.g. homeless, foster care, migrant, incarcerated, and military families)
- and students with special needs; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils shall spread the awareness of and support equitable access to high quality:

- health care
- preschool and early learning
- K-12 schools
- post-secondary and higher education
- effective and diverse educators that represent the students and communities they serve
- and expanded learning opportunities; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils shall support research-based instructional supports and best practices shown to close gaps, including, but not limited to:

- multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS)
- positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS)
- professional development on unconscious bias, cultural competence, social emotional learning, and school to prison pipeline impacts of disparities in discipline for educators and administrators, including academic and disciplinary intervention staff
- culturally relevant and responsive curriculum, instruction, policies, attendance policies and school calendars
- meaningful language access and dual language programming
- social emotional learning (SEL) instruction
- trauma-informed care and healing centered engagement
- deficit-based dropout prevention and intervention systems and practices and alternative pathways
- metrics based on adult accountability rather than student achievement
- and authentic family and community engagement; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils shall advocate for allocation of funding for education and other services that close opportunity and achievement gaps for Washington's most vulnerable students so that they may all reach their highest potential.