

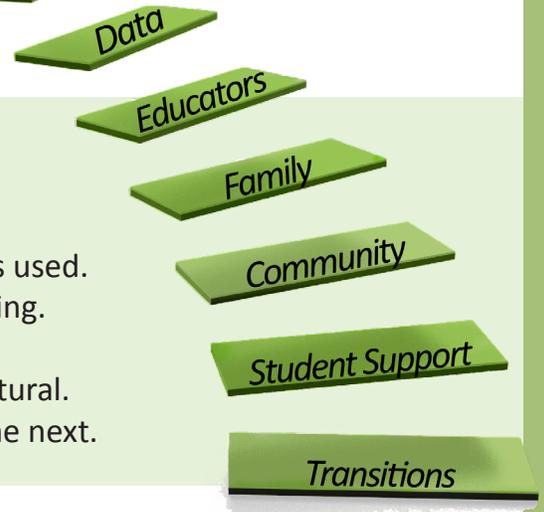
# Eliminating Gaps

*Eliminating gaps will require the collaboration of all members of a community, not just staff in a school building and students' families.*



## Families

December 2010



**Eliminating gaps will require changes in how I think about and work in the following areas:**

- Data** — what and how data is collected; who sees it and how it is used.
- Educators** — recruitment, hiring, placement, retention, and training.
- Family/community** — engagement in students' education.
- Student support** — academic, physical, social-emotional, and cultural.
- Transitions** — students' transitions from one academic level to the next.

## What families do makes a difference!

**Data: I need to understand the information the school gathers about my student and what to do with it to help my student.**

- **Test data:** Do I know how my student has performed on the state and district assessments? Do I know what the scores mean for my child—if he or she needs help or maybe a more challenging program? Do I know if my child is reading at grade level? Is s/he on track to graduate on time? Will s/he have the necessary credits to get into a technical or four-year college? Will my student be prepared to enter the workforce?
- **Classroom data:** Do I know where to go to see my child's grades, attendance, and discipline records? Do I ask my child about his/her grades? Do I check my child's grades regularly (at least once a week)? Do I know where to call if I have a question about my child's grades or about missing work?
- **School data:** Do I know where to go to get general data about my school—scores, attendance, graduation rates at the high school level, etc.? Do I know how to tell if my school is "doing well" or not?
- **Assets:** Do I know what my student is good at doing in school and out of school? How is my student involved in activities outside of the classroom and/or school?

**Educators: I need to provide feedback to educators about how they work with my student and help educators become the most effective they can be.**

- **Class work:** Does my student's class work seem too easy or too hard? It should be challenging without being overwhelming. Do I ask my child if he is able to do the work? Does she want to do it? Does he seem willing to work hard? Is he confident in his ability? Does she want to complete what she starts? Do I know what to do if my child is not learning in the classroom?
- **Enjoying school:** Does my child like her teacher? Does my child have a variety of friends at school, or does s/he spend most time alone? Do I ask how my child feels about class and school? Do I know what to do if someone or something is making my child unhappy in school? Is school a place where my child feels cared for and is learning how to show concern for others? Is she learning teamwork and how to solve problems?
- **Communication:** Do I know what to do if I am concerned about something that is happening or not happening in my child's classroom? Do I feel comfortable talking with my child's teacher? Is there someone I can ask to help me? If my child's teacher is doing a great job, do I know who to tell?

# What families do makes a difference!

## Family/community: I need to partner with the school in my child's education.

- **Welcoming environment:** Have I been personally invited to participate in activities at my child's school? Do I feel welcome when I come to the school building? Do I feel like the staff at the school enjoy seeing me and provide ways for me to be involved in the school community?
- **Student expectations:** Do I understand the school's expectations of my child in academics and behavior? Do I know who to call if I have a question about how my child is being treated by a student or teacher? Do I have conversations with the staff at my child's school about the things I would like my child to learn in school?
- **Supporting learning at home:** Do I ask my child each day to share what s/he has learned? Do I ask my child to do some homework each night? Do I read with my child or have him/her read to me every day?

## Student support: I need to give my student the necessary support to be successful.

- **Academic supports:** Do I know who to talk with or where to go to get help for my child when s/he is having a problem with school work? Do I know how to get tutoring support for my child?
- **Physical supports:** Do I know where to go if I need help with housing, food, clothing or school supplies?
- **Social supports:** Do I know where to go to find a mentor or role model for my child? Do I know where to get help if my child exhibits inappropriate or destructive behavior that is not part of normal development?

## Transitions: I need to help my student transition from one academic level to the next.

- **Classroom expectations:** Do I attend Open House meetings at the beginning of each year to make sure my child and I know what to expect in the upcoming year?
- **Extended learning:** Do I know where to go to find activities for my child to do during the summer to make sure s/he continues to learn and grow?  
Do I have a library card, so my child can get reading books during summer and during other breaks in the year?
- **Inner preparedness:** How am I preparing my child to become more responsible, to take initiative and persevere in solving problems, and to care about and work cooperatively with others?

## I can get help when I need it:

The Office of the Education Ombudsman helps families and schools resolve disputes and problems that affect student learning.

### Contact OEO

1-866-297-2597

[www.waparentslearn.org](http://www.waparentslearn.org)



**For more information about  
addressing opportunity gaps:**

[www.yourlearningcenter.org](http://www.yourlearningcenter.org)  
360-725-6503

Washington State Report Card:  
[www.k12.wa.us](http://www.k12.wa.us)