

# Cultural Competence Training & Family and Community Engagement Needs for Community Truancy Boards

Presented by the Educational Opportunity Gap  
Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC)

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## Executive Summary

The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) is required in [Second Substitute House Bill 2449](#), to: “...conduct a review and make recommendations to the appropriate committees of the legislature with respect to:

- (a) The cultural competence training that community truancy board members, as well as others involved in the truancy process, should receive;
- (b) Best practices for supporting and facilitating parent and community involvement and outreach; and
- (c) The cultural relevance of the assessments employed to identify barriers to attendance and the treatments and tools provided to children and their families.”<sup>1</sup>

The EOGOAC reviewed community truancy board training materials and the Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) tool to develop the recommendations below.

**FIGURE 1. Summary of Community Truancy Board Recommendations**

Recommendation	Description
<p><b>1. Community Truancy Board Membership</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendation 1A:</b> To ensure authentic community participation, school districts must develop a community truancy board membership menu of individuals, from various professional and personal backgrounds, that are representative of and reflect the ethnic/racial makeup of students’ communities.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 1B:</b> To promote more diverse and inclusive membership, school districts should explore the possibility of providing stipends to CTB members as a means of offsetting the costs of membership (i.e. expenditures for time, travel, childcare, etc.).</p> <p><b>Recommendation 1C:</b> Districts should provide a sufficient number of family engagement coordinators as they are instrumental in involving families and communities to promote student attendance.</p>
<p><b>2. Community Truancy Board Training Content &amp; Process</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendation 2A:</b> The community truancy board training manual should explicitly define cultural competence, incorporating language from both <a href="#">Second Substitute House Bill 2449</a> and the EOGOAC’s <a href="#">2017 Report</a> to the Legislature (see <a href="#">Cultural Competence Definitions</a>).</p> <p><b>Recommendation 2B:</b> Training for community truancy board members should be infused with culturally competent strategies that emphasize community representation and local expertise.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 2C:</b> All community truancy boards should perform a culturally competent mapping of community needs and resources.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 2D:</b> When possible, a community truancy board should involve institutions of higher education (IHEs) in its efforts to build diverse membership and to map community resources.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 2E:</b> Community truancy boards should incorporate or reference existing resources in their cultural competency training.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 2F:</b> Schools boards must be a part of the CTB training process in order to promote CTBs as a district-wide priority and to ensure accountability.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Section 18 (1). Washington State Legislature. (2016). Second Substitute House Bill 2449. Retrieved from: <http://lawfilesexst.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2015-16/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/2449-S2.SL.pdf>.

Recommendation	Description
<p><b>3. Risk Assessment Tools</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendation 3A:</b> The WARNS tool (and any risk assessment tool used with students) should operate with an equity lens—from development through to adaptation and application.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 3B:</b> Developers of the WARNS tool should conduct a deeper test on invariance that includes comparisons beyond two student groups (i.e. White and Latinx students).</p> <p><b>Recommendation 3C:</b> In collaboration with community representatives, WARNS tool developers should review and adjust assessment questions to be culturally sensitive/responsive while avoiding assumptions and expectations that are culturally bound.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 3D:</b> To increase accuracy and valid student responsiveness, assessment tool developers should incorporate positive scaling so there are neutral and positive answer options in the assessment.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 3E:</b> Districts and schools should ensure school staff are equipped with standardized guidance on how best to implement and use a risk assessment tool.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 3F:</b> The Legislature should prioritize and fund the development of a risk assessment tool for the elementary school level, as the current WARNS tool is designed for middle and high school age youth.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 3G:</b> While the EOGOAC recognizes that the WARNS tool is mentioned specifically in statute, it recommends the Legislature require an analysis of other research-based risk assessment tools that can be used by community truancy boards.</p>
<p><b>4. Funding</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendation 4A:</b> The Legislature should adequately fund treatment and wraparound services for students as outlined in the <a href="#">Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol</a>, including the professional positions required to deliver these services.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 4B:</b> The Legislature should support the use of a risk assessment tool at the school and district levels by providing universal funding for access.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 4C:</b> To reduce disproportionate discipline rates and the reliance on the juvenile justice system, the Legislature must provide training funds for all school districts to undergo community truancy board development.</p>

## The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC)

The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) is a bicameral and bipartisan committee devoted to closing racial opportunity gaps in Washington’s K-12 education system. Opportunity gap refers to systemic inequity in the education system that structurally disadvantages certain demographics of students, such as students of color. The EOGOAC is committed to alleviating these structural inequities, institutionalized racism, and disparate educational opportunities faced by students of color.

The Committee was established in 2009 by [Second Substitute Senate Bill 5973](#) and is charged by [RCW 28A.300.136](#) to: “synthesize the findings and recommendations from the five 2008 Achievement Gap

Studies into an implementation plan, and to recommend policies and strategies to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Professional Educator Standards Board, and the State Board of Education.”<sup>2</sup>

Recommendations by the EOGOAC must, at minimum, encompass the following areas:

- Support and facilitate parent and community involvement and outreach.
- Enhance the cultural competency of current and future educators and the cultural relevance of curriculum and instruction.
- Expand pathways and strategies to prepare and recruit diverse teachers and administrators.
- Recommend current programs and resources that should be redirected to narrow the gap.
- Identify data elements and systems needed to monitor progress in closing the gap.
- Make closing the opportunity gap part of the school and school district improvement process.
- Explore innovative school models that have shown success in closing the opportunity gap.
- Use a multidisciplinary approach (e.g. family engagement and social emotional learning).<sup>3</sup>

The EOGOAC focused on the following areas of their statutory charge in the review of the community truancy board process:

- Support and facilitate parent and community involvement and outreach.
- Enhance the cultural competency of current and future educators and the cultural relevance of curriculum and instruction.
- Identify data elements and systems needed to monitor progress in closing the gap.

The EOGOAC conducted a thorough review of the community truancy board process, including the [Community Truancy Board Training Manual](#) and [Washington Assessment of Risks and Needs of Students \(WARNS\)](#) tool to fulfill the requirements of [Second Substitute House Bill 2449](#).

## Cultural Competence Training & Family and Community Engagement

As outlined in [Second Substitute House Bill 2449](#), the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) must:

“...conduct a review and make recommendations to the appropriate committees of the legislature with respect to:

- (a) The cultural competence training that community truancy board members, as well as others involved in the truancy process, should receive;
- (b) Best practices for supporting and facilitating parent and community involvement and outreach; and
- (c) The cultural relevance of the assessments employed to identify barriers to attendance and the treatments and tools provided to children and their families.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Washington State Legislature. (2009). Second Substitute Senate Bill 5973. Retrieved from: <http://lawfilesexst.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2009-10/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/5973-S2.SL.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Section 18 (1). Washington State Legislature. (2016). Second Substitute House Bill 2449. Retrieved from: <http://lawfilesexst.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2015-16/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/2449-S2.SL.pdf>.

## Community Truancy Boards (CTBs)

A community truancy board (CTB) is defined as “...a board established pursuant to a memorandum of understanding between a juvenile court and a school district and composed of members of the local community in which the child attends school.”<sup>5</sup> Community truancy boards were added to the truancy process to be an alternative to filing a truancy petition with the juvenile court system, while allowing for the issues surrounding a student’s truancy to be addressed and resolved.

Community truancy board duties include:

- identifying barriers to school attendance;
- recommending methods for improving attendance such as connecting students and their families with community services, culturally appropriate promising practices and evidence-based services such as functional family therapy;
- suggesting to the school district that the child enroll in another school, an alternative education program, an education center, a skill center, a dropout prevention program, or another public or private educational program; and
- recommending to the juvenile court that a juvenile be offered the opportunity for placement in a HOPE center or crisis residential center, if appropriate.<sup>6</sup>

Community truancy board membership must “...include members who receive training regarding the identification of barriers to school attendance, the use of the Washington assessment of the risks and needs of students (WARNS) or other assessment tools to identify the specific needs of individual children, cultural responsive interactions, trauma-informed approaches to discipline, evidence-based treatments that have been found effective in supporting at-risk youth and their families, and the specific services and treatment available in the particular school, court, community, and elsewhere.”<sup>7</sup>

## The Truancy Process

In Washington State, mandatory attendance for students “requires children from age 8 to 17 to attend a public school, private school, or to receive home-based instruction (homeschooling) as provided in subsection (4) of [RCW 28A.225.010](#). Children who are 6- or 7-years-old are not required to be enrolled in school. However, if parents enroll their 6- or 7-year-old, the student must attend full-time. Youth who are 16 or older may be excused from attending public school if they meet certain requirements.”<sup>8</sup> Students who are absent from school without a valid excuse may be considered ‘truant.’ Washington’s compulsory attendance law sets out a process that starts with notification to parents and can lead to referral to a community truancy board or to a court if a student has five or more unexcused absences in a month or ten unexcused absences in an academic year.

In Washington, the truancy process for school districts is outlined in [RCW 28A.225.030](#), known as the ‘Becca Bill’ (see [Figure 2](#)). It provides specific requirements for schools, school districts and the juvenile court to take when youth are truant.

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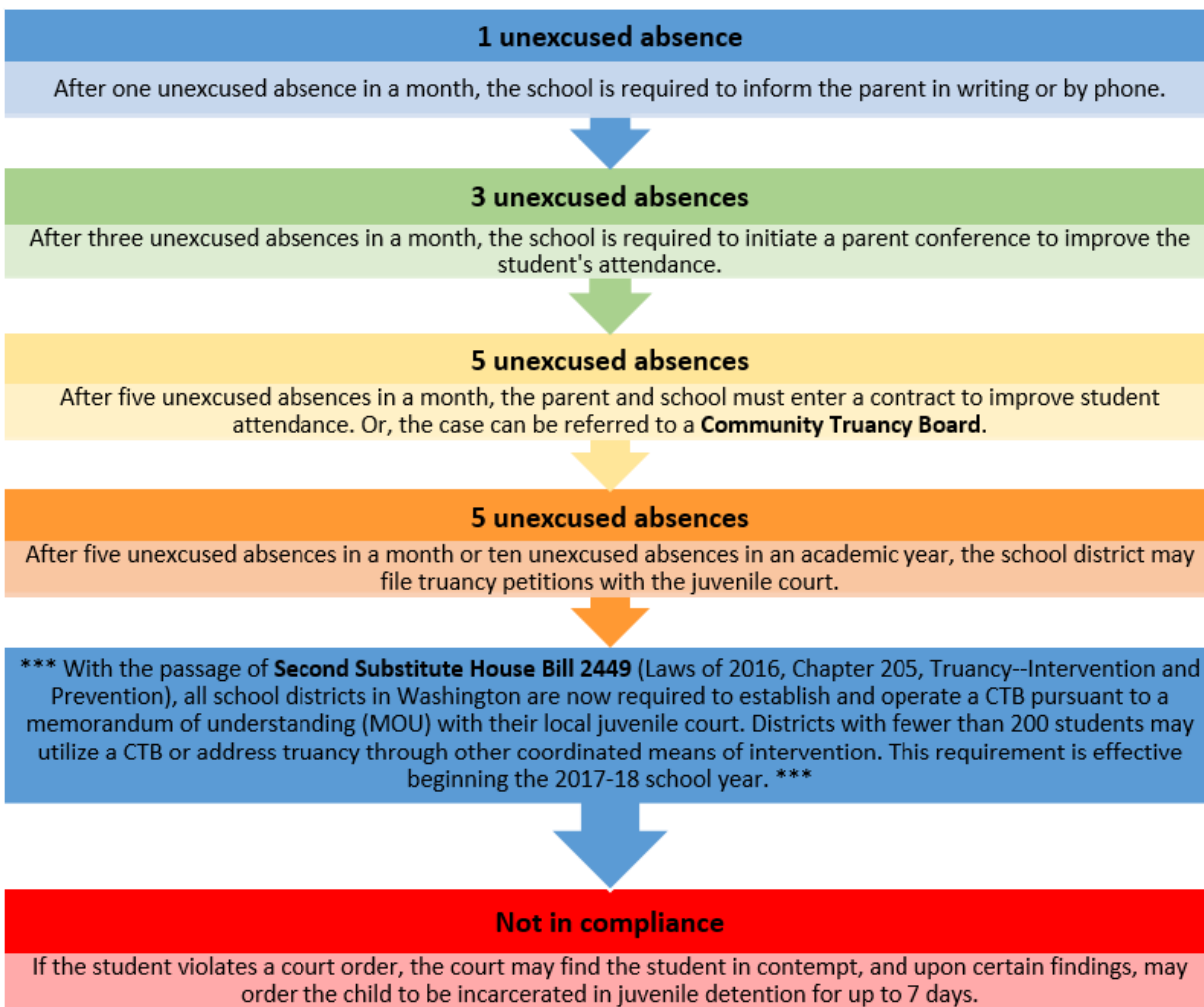
<sup>5</sup> Washington State Legislature. (2016). RCW 28A.225.025 (Community truancy boards.). Retrieved from: <http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?Cite=28A.225.025>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Washington State Legislature. (2016). RCW 28A.225.025 (Community truancy boards.). Retrieved from: <http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?Cite=28A.225.025>.

<sup>8</sup> OSPI. (2017). Truancy (Becca Bill) and Compulsory Attendance. Retrieved from: <http://www.k12.wa.us/GATE/Truancy/>.

**FIGURE 2. The Previous Truancy Process in Washington State<sup>9</sup>**



The truancy process has been expanded to include community truancy boards, with the Washington Legislature stating it “...intends to encourage and support the development and expansion of community truancy boards.”<sup>10</sup> Additionally, “[t]he Legislature finds that utilization of community truancy boards is the preferred means of intervention when preliminary methods to eliminate or reduce unexcused absences as required by [RCW 28A.225.020](http://www.wa.gov/legislature/RCW/28A.225.020) have not been effective in securing the child's attendance at school.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> OSPI. (2017). Truancy (Becca Bill) and Compulsory Attendance. Retrieved from: <http://www.k12.wa.us/GATE/Truancy/>.

Washington State Legislature. (2017). RCW 28A.225.090 (Court orders—Penalties—Parents’ defense.). Retrieved from: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.225.090>. Washington State Legislature. (2016). Second Substitute House Bill 2449. Retrieved from: <http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2015-16/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/2449-S2.SL.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Washington State Legislature. (2016). Second Substitute House Bill 2449. Retrieved from: <http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2015-16/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/2449-S2.SL.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Washington State Legislature. (2016). RCW 28A.225.025 (Community truancy boards.). Retrieved from: <http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?Cite=28A.225.025>.

## The EOGOAC is Concerned that the Current Truancy Process can Lead to the Unintended Result of Pushing Students into the School-to-Prison Pipeline

In the EOGOAC's [previous reports](#) to the Legislature and in [Fourth Substitute House Bill 1541](#), the Committee focused extensively on reforming student discipline laws that can result in students of color being disproportionately disciplined and entering the 'school-to-prison pipeline.' Exclusionary school discipline is associated with increased risks of contact with the juvenile or criminal justice systems. Washington's current truancy process can lead directly to a youth's first contact with the juvenile court, and even to incarceration in juvenile detention. This means that the state's truancy system can put students directly into the 'school-to-prison pipeline,' without the student ever having engaged in criminal conduct.

Detailed data on truancy filings and outcomes, disaggregated by race and ethnicity, is not yet readily available, but existing information shows disproportionate impacts for students of color in truancy court proceedings.<sup>15</sup>

In reviewing the CTB process, the EOGOAC reasserts that our education system should engage students and provide integrated student supports as outlined in the [Washington Integrated Student Support Protocol](#). Ideally, the complex issues underlying a student's absences would be identified through

### The School-to-Prison Pipeline<sup>12</sup>

The school-to-prison pipeline refers to school policies and practices that push students out of classrooms and into the juvenile and/or criminal justice system.<sup>13</sup> One study found that, of incarcerated youth in a state facility, 80% had been suspended and 50% had been expelled from school prior to incarceration.<sup>14</sup> In Washington, students of color (especially African American and American Indian/Alaska Native males) are suspended and expelled at a much higher rate than their White peers (see [Figure 2](#)). In effect, students of color are at a greater risk of falling victim to the school-to-prison pipeline. Dismantling the persistent school-to-prison pipeline is dependent upon improving the reintegration process for students who have been suspended or expelled.

A comprehensive and integrated support system specifically designed for students who have been suspended or expelled will increase reengagement rates and decrease dropout rates, thus dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline. In its [2017 Report to the Legislature](#), the EOGOAC recommended the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL) at the OSPI work in collaboration with the juvenile justice system, local truancy boards, and alternative high schools and institutions to create comprehensive and integrated student supports that reengage youth who have been suspended, expelled, and/or are at risk of dropping out of school.

<sup>12</sup> The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC). (2017). 2017 Annual Report: Closing the Opportunity Gap in Washington's Public Education System. Retrieved from:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/Workgroups/EOGOAC/pubdocs/EOGOAC2017AnnualReport.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> National Council on Disability. (2015). Breaking the School-to-Prison Pipeline for Students with Disabilities. Retrieved from [https://www.ncd.gov/sites/default/files/Documents/NCD\\_STPP\\_Report.docx](https://www.ncd.gov/sites/default/files/Documents/NCD_STPP_Report.docx)

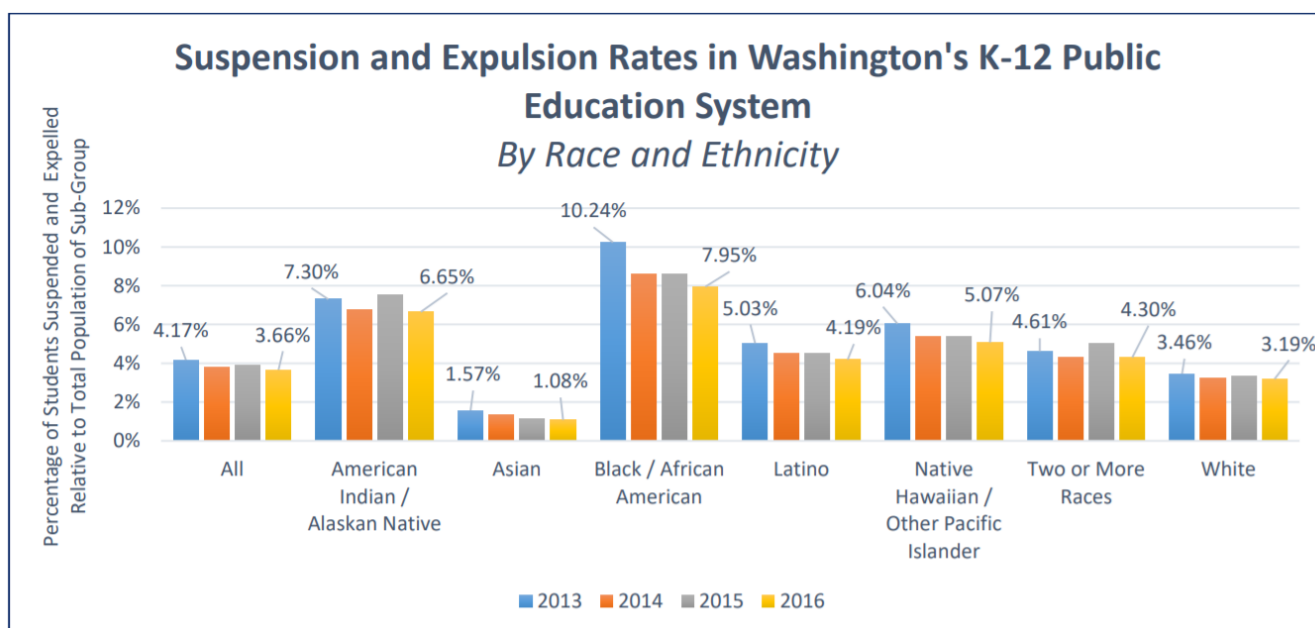
<sup>14</sup> Leone and Weinberg. (2010). Addressing the unmet educational needs of children and youth in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> See data presented at the 2017 Becca Conference by Dr. Amanda Gilman for Washington State Center for Court Research. Slide 15 shows data for all 'Becca' petitions, including truancy, ARY, and CHINS. Gilman, Amanda and Rachael Sanford. Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR). (2017). Becca Petitions and the use of Detention in Washington State. Retrieved from: <https://ccvj.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Becca-Petitions-Slides.pdf>.



collaboration and engagement between schools and families, without requiring a referral to a separate system. Student and family needs should be met in a culturally responsive manner within the school and district, so that a student would never find themselves truant and referred to a community truancy board or juvenile court proceeding. When schools working directly with families are not successful in reengaging a student with regular attendance, referral to a community-based problem-solving board, rather than to a formal court proceeding, is preferable. While CTBs are not the answer to the systemic educational inequities that create the opportunity gap for our students of color, CTBs can be used as a tool to avoid sending students into the school-to-prison pipeline. They serve as an improvement on the formal truancy process that is reliant on the juvenile justice system—which is neither funded for, nor is in a position to authentically engage both families *and educators* in problem solving to eliminate barriers to school engagement for students of color.

**FIGURE 3. Suspension and Expulsion Rates in Washington’s K-12 Public Education System**



*\*Source: OSPI, Student Information Department. \*Note: Currently, student race/ethnicity data are limited to the federally mandated race/ethnicity categories. Further disaggregation would reveal additional opportunity gaps. \*Suspended and Expelled' include long term suspension, short term suspension, and expulsion.*

Given the known adverse impacts for students’ long-term engagement and success in school associated with exclusionary discipline, it makes no sense to permit schools to use suspensions or expulsions as a disciplinary response for student absences. The EOGOAC is concerned about the continued suspension and expulsion of students of color for being truant. Many school districts still maintain truancy as a discipline offense in their policies and student handbooks, which can result in a short or long term suspension or expulsion. This practice of exclusionary discipline for truancy is nonsensical and fails to address the root cause of the absences, exacerbating student disengagement, academic loss, and a widening of the opportunity gap. OSPI’s proposed revisions to student discipline rules would take an important step forward on this, prohibiting schools from imposing suspension or expulsion for absences

See the most recent legislative report on Truancy, explaining that disaggregated data was first collected at the state level for the 2016-17 school year. OSPI. (2016). Update: Truancy Report. Retrieved from: <http://www.k12.wa.us/GATE/Truancy/pubdocs/2015-16TruancyReport.pdf>.

and tardies.<sup>16</sup> If those rules are promulgated as proposed, there will still be the need to provide training for families and professional development and technical assistance to school districts to ensure student absences are recognized as a potential signal of a need for problem solving, not punishment.

The CTB process, if implemented with culturally responsive engagement of families and community members, can support authentic engagement built on an understanding of a student and family’s cultural backgrounds and strengths. Situated within communities they serve, CTBs can support implementation and coordination of integrated supports to meet the individual needs of the student and the family. They can also support educators’ efforts to ensure culturally responsive school environments that pull students and families in, rather than push them out.

## Definitions of Cultural Competence

The EGOAC has led the development of cultural competence definitions for Washington, contributing to the standards for [educator cultural competence](#) under the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB). Under [2SHB 2449](#), cultural competence “...includes knowledge of children's cultural histories and contexts, as well as family norms and values in different cultures; knowledge and skills in accessing community resources and community and parent outreach; and skills in adapting instruction and treatment to children's experiences and identifying cultural contexts for individual children.”<sup>17</sup>

While worded differently, the Legislature’s definition of cultural competence in 2SHB 2449 is compatible with the EGOAC’s definition (see quote to the right). The EGOAC believes that its definition, although previously used in reference to the educator workforce, can apply to training for CTB members. It is important that all training developed for CTB members explicitly defines cultural competence and includes language from both sources.

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### The EGOAC’s Definition of Cultural Competence

*“Quality public education for all students requires all educators (e.g. school board members, superintendents, principals, teachers, and para-educators) to be effective in diverse settings. To achieve this, the educator workforce must first, be cognizant of systemic racism and the inequities of the public education system, and second, develop culturally competent skills and mindsets. **Cultural competence is a professional and organizational development model designed to promote reflective, inclusive, and culturally relevant practices by school professionals and school systems. Training in cultural competence provides educators with a set of attitudes, respect, awareness, knowledge, and skills that enable effective work in cross-racial, cross-cultural, diverse contexts.**”*

Source: The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EGOAC). 2017. 2017 Annual Report: Closing the Opportunity Gap in Washington’s Public Education System. Page 28. Retrieved from: <http://www.k12.wa.us/Workgroups/EGOAC/pubdocs/EGOAC2017AnnualReport.pdf>.

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## Recommendations

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<sup>16</sup> See proposed WAC 392-400-430. OSPI. (2017). Proposed Rules, Chapter 392-400 WAC, Student Discipline. Retrieved from: <http://www.k12.wa.us/StudentDiscipline/Rules/ProposedDisciplineRules.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Washington State Legislature. (2016). Second Substitute House Bill 2449. Retrieved from: <http://lawfilesexext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2015-16/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/2449-S2.SL.pdf>.

## 1. Community Truancy Board Membership

**Recommendation 1A:** *To ensure authentic community participation, school districts must develop a community truancy board membership menu of individuals, from various professional and personal backgrounds, that are representative of and reflect the ethnic/racial makeup of students' communities.* An expanded membership menu will allow CTBs to be targeted and tailored in a flexible manner to the unique student and family needs that are affecting the truancy situation. For example, if it is discovered that the family is struggling with housing, the CTB could include staff from the local housing authority who could connect the family with housing resources. CTBs should also include members who can help navigate a district's own resources to ensure a student is receiving needed supports available from the district or school, and to facilitate efforts aimed at establishing or strengthening positive relationships between adults at the school and the student and family.

**FIGURE 4. Diversifying Community Truancy Board Membership to Meet Student Needs and Reduce Truancy<sup>18</sup>**

Students who are truant:	CTBs can help reduce truancy by:	Possible CTB members include, but are not limited to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ tend to have increased social and emotional difficulties;</li> <li>➤ are 4 to 6 times more likely to have run away or have been kicked out of their homes on multiple occasions; and</li> <li>➤ tend to have a higher level of depression-anxiety, aggression-defiance, substance abuse, school disengagement, and family problems than non-truant youth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ developing a system for finding solutions to prevent truancy;</li> <li>➤ improving school engagement;</li> <li>➤ reducing drop-out rates;</li> <li>➤ improving access to service providers; and</li> <li>➤ using an interdisciplinary approach to collaborate and coordinate with local community businesses, nonprofit organizations, schools, and court staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ school district administrators;</li> <li>➤ school district truancy coordinator;</li> <li>➤ follow-up support;</li> <li>➤ school staff;</li> <li>➤ guardians of youth;</li> <li>➤ community service providers; and</li> <li>➤ community leaders and volunteers.</li> </ul>

**Recommendation 1B:** *To promote more diverse and inclusive membership, school districts should explore the possibility of providing stipends to CTB members as a means of offsetting the costs of membership (i.e. expenditures for time, travel, childcare, etc.).* This will allow for participation from individuals who are not already employees of the school district, but are community leaders, family members, and other individuals connected to students.

**Recommendation 1C:** *Districts should provide a sufficient number of family engagement coordinators as they are instrumental in involving families and communities to promote student attendance.* The Legislature should provide adequate funding through the prototypical school

<sup>18</sup> Bush, Bonnie and Scott Stevens. Spokane Juvenile Court. Community Truancy Boards. Presented on September 19, 2017.

funding model to ensure all school districts in Washington have at least one family engagement coordinator at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

In other words, all school districts in Washington, regardless of size, should have three family engagement coordinators. From there, a revised prototypical schools funding model should be used to determine how many more family engagement coordinators would be allocated to each school district. This will ensure large school districts receive sufficient state-level funding to hire the necessary number of family engagement coordinators for their student body.<sup>19</sup>

The critical need for family engagement staff is intensified by the inclusion of chronic absenteeism as a school quality and student success indicator in the Achievement Index, as outlined in [Washington's Consolidated Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) Plan](#).

Data has shown that every year, for each student referred to a truancy board, there are thousands more who are missing more than ten days of school.<sup>20</sup> For example, in the most recent year's data, districts reported having filed 3,950 petitions referring students in grades 1-8 to the truancy court process, while 14,728 students in those grades had ten or more unexcused absences in the school year (the threshold for filing a petition). Additional data now available on 'chronic absenteeism'—which includes both excused and unexcused absences—shows that, on average, schools are missing more than 16% of their students for more than 10% of school days, and the percentages are higher for students of color.<sup>21</sup>

Some of those students who are missing school and referred to the truancy process might have been able to avoid contact with the juvenile court system if their schools had had staffing time allocated to early identification and positive engagement with their families at the first unexcused absence. (Current rules require notification after the first unexcused absence, which is often in the form of a robo-call). In order to reengage students at the earliest sign of a pattern of absences, schools need sufficient allocation for family engagement coordinators.

## 2. Community Truancy Board Training Content and Process

***Recommendation 2A: The community truancy board training manual should explicitly define cultural competence, incorporating language from both [Second Substitute House Bill 2449](#) and the EOGOAC's [2017 Report to the Legislature](#) (see [Cultural Competence Definitions](#)).***

***Recommendation 2B: Training for community truancy board members should be infused with culturally competent strategies that emphasize community representation and local expertise.*** After reviewing the [training manual for community truancy board development](#), the EOGOAC finds the manual lacks specificity on how a CTB can engage communities in a culturally responsive manner. Training should include strategies for community outreach that serve to diversify CTB membership, so that it is ethnically and racially representative of local communities (see [Recommendation 1A](#)). Members should receive training on the needs of local communities, incorporating expertise from community groups and membership organizations (e.g. Washington State

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<sup>19</sup> The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC). (2017). 2017 Annual Report: Closing the Opportunity Gap in Washington's Public Education System. Pages 32-22. Retrieved from: <http://www.k12.wa.us/Workgroups/EOGOAC/pubdocs/EOGOAC2017AnnualReport.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> See pages 3-4 of the most recent legislative report on Truancy. OSPI. (2016). Update: Truancy Report. Retrieved from: <http://www.k12.wa.us/GATE/Truancy/pubdocs/2015-16TruancyReport.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> OSPI. (2017). K-12 Data and Reports: Chronic Absenteeism, 2016 School Year. Retrieved from: <http://www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/PerformanceIndicators/ChronicAbsenteeism.aspx>.

School Directors' Association – [WSSDA](#), Washington Association of School Administrators – [WASA](#), Association of Washington School Principals – [AWSP](#), Washington Education Association – [WEA](#), etc.).

**Recommendation 2C: All community truancy boards should perform a culturally competent mapping of community needs and resources.** This requires collaboration with local groups that work with communities of color (e.g. nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, faith-based agencies, etc.) and individual parent leaders and other trusted community leaders of color. Community truancy boards should coordinate and leverage local resources as they engage students and their families in building individualized plans to increase attendance. Family engagement should be an ongoing conversation that prioritizes what is most appropriate for the student and their family. For example, if lack of childcare for younger siblings is causing a student to be truant, the CTB should use the community resource map to offer options that account for the family's childcare needs and financial reality.

**Recommendation 2D: When possible, a community truancy board should involve institutions of higher education (IHEs) in its efforts to build diverse membership and map community resources.** Students, staff, and faculty at IHEs could serve on a board, assist in mapping community needs and resources, and lend expertise in shaping interventions and strategies to reduce/prevent truancy. For example, individuals affiliated with schools of social work may have specialized knowledge and field experience related to the social dynamics that contribute to truancy. Community truancy boards could also investigate how schools of nursing can help identify common undiagnosed mental health and physical conditions that contribute to truancy.

**Recommendation 2E: Community truancy boards should incorporate or reference existing resources in their cultural competency training.** These resources could include: the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's cultural competence training modules, the [Office of Education Ombuds'](#) training on family engagement, expert knowledge of a population from the local health department, and civil rights requirements that cover the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), language access, etc.

**Recommendation 2F: Schools boards must be a part of the CTB training process in order to promote CTBs as a district-wide priority and to ensure accountability.** Washington is a local control state, which places responsibility on locally elected school boards to implement education laws through policies and procedures at the school district level. It is problematic if district leaders are unaware of a CTB's training, work, and performance. The Washington State School Directors' Association ([WSSDA](#)) should develop culturally responsive model policies and procedures for community truancy boards.

### 3. WARNS and Other Risk Assessment Tools

**Recommendation 3A: The WARNS tool (and any risk assessment tool used with students) should operate with an equity lens—from development through to adaptation and application.** To that end, users of the Washington Assessment of Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) tool or other risk assessment tools should be trained on the concept of cultural competence and its significance. Training should explicitly convey that there are different student perceptions and family

responses possible based on the student and family’s background and that the wording of the assessment questions may have loaded cultural meaning in different contexts.

**Recommendation 3B: Developers of the WARNS tool should conduct a deeper test on invariance that includes comparisons beyond two student groups (i.e. White and Latinx students).** Further testing of the tool’s validity and fairness should involve a statistically relevant sample, which would require developers to include student groups that are representative of the racial and ethnic demographics in Washington.

**FIGURE 5. Washington Assessment of Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS)**

<p>“The Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) is a brief (53 to 74-item) self-report measure for 13 to 18-year-old youth designed to allow schools, courts, and youth service providers to assess individual risks and needs that may lead to truancy and/or school failure, and to target interventions accordingly (see <a href="#">Appendix B</a>). The WARNS takes approximately 10 to 30 minutes to administer and measures both the past and current experiences in several domains that are critical to healthy social, emotional, and educational development... The Learning and Performance Research Center at WSU is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the administration and use of the WARNS.”<sup>22</sup></p>	<p>The WARNS tool includes six <i>Needs Scales</i>, each consisting five to nine questions (40 questions total). WARNS tool developers state these six areas “...have been linked to truancy, delinquency, and/or dropping out of school. Scores on a scale are used to determine whether a youth has a <i>Low, Moderate, or High</i> need for intervention in that area.”<sup>23</sup></p> <p>The six scales include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Aggression-Defiance</li><li>➤ Depression-Anxiety</li><li>➤ Substance Abuse</li><li>➤ Peer Deviance</li><li>➤ Family Environment</li><li>➤ School Engagement<sup>24</sup></li></ul>
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**FIGURE 6. The EOGOAC’s Response to Questions Used in the WARNS**

<sup>22</sup> Washington State University. (n/d). Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students. Retrieved from: <https://warns.wsu.edu/>.

<sup>23</sup> Washington State University. (n/d). What is the WARNS? Retrieved from: <https://warns.wsu.edu/warns-measures-and-score-report/>.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

After reviewing the questions used in the WARNS to assess students' truancy risk level, the EOGOAC is concerned about the following elements:

- Certain question in the Family Environment section could be offensive to families because they assume a Eurocentric and middle class background. For example, the question "My parents would help me with my homework if I asked" makes unwarranted assumptions of time availability, educational attainment levels, family and cultural norms surrounding homework, and the primary language of parents and guardians.
- Usage of the term 'parents' (and not 'family members' or 'guardians') neglects the variety of kinship with which a student interacts.
- Questions in the Peer Deviance section could be offensive to families and counterproductive in assessing a student's risk for truancy. Family and cultural norms surrounding the role of peers and peer influence might affect how students answer questions and how families perceive these questions. In general, the term 'deviance' is problematic.
- Other questions throughout the assessment can be perceived as offensive when they contain language that stereotypes groups (e.g. "I lied, hustled, or conned someone to get what I wanted").
- WARNS tool developers should consider explicitly including mention of prescription and over-the-counter drugs in the section on Substance Abuse.

The EOGOAC recommends developers of the WARNS instrument review assessment questions to ensure they are culturally sensitive and responsive. This work should be done in collaboration with families and community representatives (see [Recommendation 3C](#)).

***Recommendation 3C: In collaboration with community representatives, WARNS tool developers should review and adjust assessment questions to be culturally sensitive/responsive while avoiding assumptions and expectations that are culturally bound.***

The EOGOAC believes it is both possible and imperative to adjust questions to be culturally sensitive and responsive while preserving the scientific integrity of the questions used in the risk assessment.

***Recommendation 3D: To increase accuracy and valid student responsiveness, assessment tool developers should incorporate positive scaling so there are neutral and positive answer options in the assessment.*** Many of the questions included in the WARNS are asking about negative behaviors. Accuracy in student response rates may increase by incorporating neutral and positive response options. Moreover, positive response options can be used to identify a student's strengths and assets, enhancing the role of protective factors and resiliency in the truancy board process.

***Recommendation 3E: Districts and schools should ensure school staff are equipped with standardized guidance on how best to implement and use a risk assessment tool.*** Staff who conduct the WARNS (or any risk assessment) must adhere to strict guidelines, in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy ACT ([FERPA](#)), on who can access the data generated by the assessment and how that data can be used. Families and communities must be formally informed in writing that the information collected through the assessment will comply with FERPA and will not be used to target or victimize students, families, and communities.

**Recommendation 3F: The Legislature should prioritize and fund the development of a risk assessment tool for the elementary school level, as the current WARNS tool is designed for middle and high school age youth.** In addition to ensuring that the questions are asked in a developmentally appropriate manner for elementary aged students, research suggests that earlier interventions are more effective in preventing truancy.

**Recommendation 3G: While the EOGOAC recognizes that the WARNS tool is mentioned specifically in statute, it recommends the Legislature require an analysis of other research-based risk assessment tools that can be used by community truancy boards.** Additionally, an analysis of the Washington Healthy Youth Survey and the WARNS tool should be conducted to determine areas of overlap and to identify questions from the Healthy Youth Survey that could be adapted to the one-on-one diagnostic nature of the WARNS tool.

#### 4. Funding

**Recommendation 4A: The Legislature should adequately fund treatment and wraparound services for students as outlined in the [Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol](#), including the professional positions required to deliver these services.**

**Recommendation 4B: The Legislature should support the use of a risk assessment tool at the school and district levels by providing universal funding for access.** Currently the WARNS tool is not state-funded and is provided to school districts on a fee-for-service basis. This results in inequitable access to the risk assessment tool that school districts and community truancy boards are required to use. The Legislature must fully fund WARNS access for all school districts and educational service districts (ESDs).

**Recommendation 4C: To reduce disproportionate discipline rates and the reliance on the juvenile justice system, the Legislature must provide training funds for all school districts to undergo community truancy board development.**

#### Conclusion

This report has outlined the EOGOAC's recommendations on cultural competence training and family and community engagement needs for community truancy boards (CTBs). Washington's current truancy process can lead directly to a youth's first contact with the juvenile court, and even to incarceration in juvenile detention. This means that the state's truancy system can put students directly into the 'school-to-prison pipeline,' without the student ever having engaged in criminal conduct. Furthermore, data on truancy filings and outcomes shows disproportionate impacts for students of color in truancy court proceedings.<sup>25</sup> In reviewing the CTB process, the EOGOAC reasserts that our education system should engage students and provide integrated student supports as outlined in the [Washington Integrated Student Support Protocol](#). Ideally, the complex issues underlying a student's absences would be

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<sup>25</sup> See data presented at the 2017 Becca Conference by Dr. Amanda Gilman for Washington State Center for Court Research. Slide 15 shows data for all 'Becca' petitions, including truancy, ARY, and CHINS. Gilman, Amanda and Rachael Sanford. Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR). (2017). Becca Petitions and the use of Detention in Washington State. Retrieved from: <https://ccyj.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Becca-Petitions-Slides.pdf>.

See the most recent legislative report on Truancy, explaining that disaggregated data was first collected at the state level for the 2016-17 school year. OSPI. (2016). Update: Truancy Report. Retrieved from: <http://www.k12.wa.us/GATE/Truancy/pubdocs/2015-16TruancyReport.pdf>.



identified through collaboration and engagement between schools and families, without requiring a referral to a separate system. While CTBs are not the answer to the systemic educational inequities that create the opportunity gap for our students of color, CTBs can be used as a tool to avoid sending students into the school-to-prison pipeline. In order to eliminate barriers to school engagement, especially for our students of color, community truancy boards must be culturally responsive in their development, membership, and application.

## Appendices

### **Appendix A: Developing Effective Community Truancy Board Workshop Series (Revision 3)**

<http://www.psesd.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/CTB-Manual-Rev-3-Full.pdf>

Appendix B: Questions Used in Washington Assessment of Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS)  
Categorized by Six Needs Scales

## Aggression – Defiance ( $\alpha = .82$ )\*

	Low (0 – 4)	Moderate (5 – 7)	High (8+)
2. I got into physical fights	Never (0)	Sometimes (1)	Sometimes (1)
7. I lost my temper and hit or yelled at someone	Sometimes (1)	Often (2)	Often (2)
24. I threatened to hurt someone	Sometimes (1)	Sometimes (1)	Sometimes (1)
27. I lied, disobeyed, or talked back to adults	Sometimes (1)	Sometimes (1)	Often (2)
36. I picked on or bullied other kids	Never (0)	Never (0)	Never (0)
41. I got so angry I hit or broke something	Never (0)	Sometimes (1)	Sometimes (1)
43. I lied, hustled, or conned someone to get what I wanted	Never (0)	Sometimes (1)	Often (2)
45. I damaged or stole something on purpose	Never (0)	Never (0)	Sometimes (1)
<b>Aggression-Defiance Scale Score:</b>	Score: 3	Score: 7	Score: 10
<b>Females:</b>	74%	13%	13%
<b>Males:</b>	68%	21%	21%

\*Cronbach's alpha indicates how closely related a set of items are as a group; scale internal consistency, above 0.7 is acceptable

## Depression – Anxiety ( $\alpha = .88$ ) (continued)

	Low (0 – 6)	Moderate (7 - 10)	High (11+)
9. I felt like nothing could cheer me up	Never (0)	Sometimes (1)	Often (2)
14. I felt down, sad, or unhappy	Sometimes (1)	Often (2)	Often (2)
16. I was so worried or bothered by things it was hard to concentrate	Sometimes (1)	Sometimes (1)	Sometimes (1)
25. I had trouble sleeping or eating because I couldn't get something off mind	Sometimes (1)	Sometimes (1)	Often (2)
29. I felt hopeless about the future	Sometimes (1)	Sometimes (1)	Sometimes (1)
31. I felt more tense, irritated, or worried than usual	Sometimes (1)	Often (2)	Often (2)
37. I got so nervous I felt sick, had trouble breathing, or felt shaky	Never (0)	Sometimes (1)	Often (2)
39. I didn't care about anything or anyone	Never (0)	Never (0)	Sometimes (1)
<b>Depression-Anxiety Scale Score:</b>	Score: 5	Score: 9	Score: 13
<b>Females:</b>	61%	26%	23%
<b>Males:</b>	65%	18%	17%

Appendix B: Questions Used in Washington Assessment of Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) Categorized by Six Needs Scales (continued)

## Substance Abuse ( $\alpha = .82$ )

	Low (0 – 1)	Moderate (2 - 4)	High (5+)
15. I got sick, passed out, couldn't remember things because of alcohol or drugs	Never (0)	Never (0)	Sometimes (1)
22. I drank two or more alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor) in a day	Sometimes (1)	Sometimes (1)	Sometimes (1)
34. I used drugs such as cocaine, ecstasy, meth, or pills	Never (0)	Never (0)	Never (0)
38. I missed or skipped school to use or recover from drugs or alcohol	Never (0)	Never (0)	Sometimes (1)
40. I smoked or used marijuana (pot, weed)	Never (0)	Sometimes (1)	Often (2)
<b>Substance Abuse Scale Score:</b>	<b>Score: 1</b>	<b>Score: 2</b>	<b>Score: 5</b>
<b>Females:</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Males:</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>12%</b>

## Peer Deviance ( $\alpha = .85$ )

	Low (0 – 4)	Moderate (5 – 8)	High (9+)
11. My friends got drunk or high from alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs	Sometimes (1)	Often (2)	Always (3)
19. My friends did things that could have got them arrested	Sometimes (1)	Sometimes (1)	Often (2)
30. My friends got into trouble at school	Sometimes (1)	Often (2)	Often (2)
35. My friends skipped or cut class	Sometimes (1)	Sometimes (1)	Often (2)
47. My friends got into physical fights	Never (0)	Never (0)	Sometimes (1)
<b>Peer Deviance Scale Score:</b>	<b>Score: 4</b>	<b>Score: 6</b>	<b>Score: 10</b>
<b>Females:</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Males:</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>16%</b>

Appendix B: Questions Used in Washington Assessment of Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS)  
Categorized by Six Needs Scales (continued)

## Family Environment ( $\alpha = .79$ )

	Low (0 – 6)	Moderate (7 – 9)	High (10)
3. I felt close to my parents*	Often (1)	Sometimes (2)	Never (3)
6. If I wanted to do homework, my parents' home was a good place to be*	Often (1)	Often (1)	Sometimes (2)
21. I got into arguments with my parents	Sometimes (1)	Often (2)	Often (2)
28. I could talk to my parents if I had a problem*	Sometimes (2)	Sometimes (2)	Never (3)
50. My parents would help me with my homework if I asked*	Always (0)	Often (1)	Often (1)
<b>Family Environment Scale Score:</b>	<b>Score: 5</b>	<b>Score: 8</b>	<b>Score: 11</b>
* Reverse scored			
<b>Females:</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>Males:</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>17%</b>

## School Engagement ( $\alpha = .85$ )

	Low (0 – 13)	Moderate (14 - 17)	High (18+)
1. I liked going to school*	Often (1)	Sometimes (2)	Sometimes (2)
8. I felt supported and respected by the adults at school*	Often (1)	Often (1)	Sometimes (2)
13. I could talk to an adult at school if I had a problem*	Sometimes (2)	Sometimes (2)	Never (3)
17. I learned things in class that will be important later in life*	Often (1)	Sometimes (2)	Sometimes (2)
23. I studied for my quizzes and tests*	Often (1)	Sometimes (2)	Sometimes (2)
26. I thought about dropping out of school	Never (0)	Sometimes (1)	Sometimes (1)
32. I got my homework completed and turned in on time*	Often (1)	Sometimes (2)	Sometimes (2)
42. My teachers cared about me*	Often (1)	Sometimes (2)	Sometimes (2)
44. My classes were interesting*	Sometimes (2)	Sometimes (2)	Never (3)
* Reverse scored			
<b>School Engagement Scale Score:</b>	<b>Score: 10</b>	<b>Score: 16</b>	<b>Score: 19</b>
<b>Females:</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>Males:</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>29%</b>