



What Makes for Quality Education for English Learners in the 21st Century?

What Needs To Be Included and What Actions Can We Take:
Lessons Learned from the Past and New Ideas for Today

Open Space Report: Seattle

As a convener, we would like you to put together a short report from your group describing the following:

1. Names of group members

Betty Lau, Deressa Gonfa, Wei-wei Lou, Susan Read, Leigh Anne Scherer, Karen Schotzko, Gabriel Sandoval, Margaret Ho, Carmen West

2. Issue/Topic/Activity

Office of Civil Rights – Information about the OCR particularly as it relates to Title VI

3. Highlights of Discussion/Recommendations/Next Action Steps

The Office of Civil Rights is a neutral, fact-finding organization. There are 12 Regional Offices (including one in Seattle) and an office in Washington, D.C. They respond to complaints and investigate potential discriminatory practices from a number of different perspectives. Specifically for English Learners, the violations they investigate would be related to Title VI, National Origin Discrimination. They do not provide Title III funding oversight. The OCR works closely with the Department of Justice to review complaints.

Besides investigating complaints, the OCR provides technical assistance.

Nation-wide OCR received 7,000 complaints last year. There are most often complaints related to Special Education or 504 Plans. One of the more common recent Title VI complaints the OCR has been receiving is related to communication concerns from parents of English Learners; either parents are not receiving information in a language they can understand or the communication is incomplete. Most Title VI complaints come from staff members, not parents.

Complaint Process:

1. A person files a complaint, this must be in writing and must be within 180 days of the incident
2. OCR follows up with the person making the complaint to get more information, this could be a phone call, email, or in writing
3. After gathering more information, the OCR determines if the complaint could be a possible violation; if yes and within 180 days, then they move on to the next steps
4. OCR notifies the organization the complaint was made against and begins the process of resolving the issue. This could be:
 - a. A full investigation by the OCR
 - b. A move to immediately begin the resolution process without going through an investigation (OCR describes what the organization would need to do in order to be in compliance)
 - c. An early complaint resolution which is a sort of mediation process

5. **Settlement Agreement:** the district is out of compliance and the OCR tells the district what it must do to get in compliance
 - a. The OCR can withhold funding if the district remains out of compliance, but this rarely happens
6. **Resolution:** the district meets the requirements from OCR and is released from the finding

7. **Available Resources**

If there are questions an individual can call the main number (206-607-1600) and the person on duty will respond to the question. Requests for technical assistance, for example presentations, must be made in writing. Depending on the nature of the request, the appropriate individual will follow up on the request, ask for more information, etc.

8. **Follow-up requests**

NA

9. **Next steps/Action Items/Recommendations**

Feel free to contact the OCR with questions or concerns

An organization can make a complaint on behalf of a group of students, it does not have to be the individual his/herself making the complaint. Complaints cannot be anonymous with the exception of complaints about discriminatory practices against a group, but retaliation against a person making a complaint is not allowed.