

As superintendents of the Puget Sound region, representing nearly 40% of students across Washington state, our unwavering focus is on students. Our legislative priorities are aimed to create opportunities for each and every student to succeed in school and in life, and to eliminate opportunity gaps based on race, income and other factors that have historically disadvantaged young people.

The Legislature has made great strides in increasing funding for education, for which we are thankful. The state must continue to adjust the funding system to match student needs today – particularly student wellness, safety, special education and equitable access to modern school facilities.

## CRITICAL ISSUES

### Special Education

State funding for students with disabilities continues to be underfunded, forcing many districts to use limited local levy funds to backfill the state's funding gap. Small districts, in particular, do not have capacity in their general education budgets to cover these costs.

**Proposed Solution:** Fund the actual cost of basic special education services. Increase access to special education safety net funding to fund high-cost services or programs. Implement a tiered multiplier that will target funds to individual student needs and promote inclusionary practices.

### Levies and Local Effort Assistance (LEA)

Inequities between districts were exacerbated by capping levy authority of property rich districts at a higher level than neighboring property-poor districts – while simultaneously diminishing levy capacity for most districts.

**Proposed Solution:** As an immediate fix, we recommend allowing districts to continue to collect the 2018 voter-approved dollar amount into calendar year 2019. Longer term, we support continued evaluation of school and tax funding plans and an increase in the per-pupil LEA threshold.

### Simple Majority

Many districts have difficulty passing local requests for capital improvements.

**Proposed Solution:** Advance a constitutional amendment to the people authorizing school district bond issues to be approved with a simple majority vote.

### Student Wellness & Safety

Students need a wide range of support before, during and after crises occur. Mental health services, school nursing, guidance counseling, social emotional learning, and family and community engagement are critical for student success. Washington state is well below the ratio recommended by the American School Counselor Association of one counselor for every 250 students, and below the staffing levels recommended by the National Association of School Nurses (one nurse to every 750 healthy students, with ratios decreasing as student need increases).

**Proposed Solution:** Enhance funding for student health, counseling and social-emotional services that support student learning.

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## ISSUES OF HIGH CONCERN

### Salary Allocations

Elimination of the statewide salary schedule created further inequities. Districts with higher-cost/senior staff need additional dollars. Furthermore, state funding is not adequate to cover classified and administrative salaries.

**Proposed Solution:** The Experience Factor set by the 2018 Legislature should be expanded and improved.

### Regionalization

Neighboring districts across Puget Sound have been put in the position of competing with one another. The cost-of-living adjustments for school districts are unclear and inconsistent.

**Proposed Solution:** Take a broadened approach to regionalization based on larger geographic areas such as the Puget Sound region.

### School Safety

Safe facilities, resources and support structures for managing school crises are necessary at the local and regional levels.

**Proposed Solution:** Improve coordination between schools and regional mental health providers, community partners, emergency management and law enforcement.

### School Facilities

Districts struggle to raise funds for, build and maintain modern school facilities.

**Proposed Solutions:**

- Flexibility in K-3 Class Size Compliance – Due to limited classroom space, allow districts to meet the certificated staffing ratio of 17:1 by investing in additional types of certificated staff.
- Update Construction & Space Formulas – Enhance the state’s investment in K-12 construction by updating the current, outdated funding formulas for the Construction Cost Allowance and Student Space Allocation to ensure funding more closely reflects actual costs.

### Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account (PSTAA)

Created by the Legislature in 2015 and affirmed in the Sound Transit 3 vote of the people in 2016, PSTAA was created to improve educational outcomes in King, Snohomish and Pierce Counties for children and youth who are low-income, homeless, and/or in the foster care system. Approximately \$518 million in funding for children and youth will be collected and distributed between 2019-2035. Work is underway to determine the best ways to invest these funds at the county levels.

**Proposed Solution:** Adopt legislation that will protect these funds long-term.

## Success for Each Child & Eliminate the Opportunity Gap by Leading with Racial Equity

Auburn | Bainbridge Island | Bellevue | Bethel | Carbonado | Clover Park | Dieringer | Eatonville | Enumclaw | Federal Way | Fife | Franklin Pierce | Highline | Issaquah | Kent | Lake Washington | Mercer Island | Orting | Peninsula | Puyallup | Renton | Riverview | Seattle | Shoreline | Skykomish | Snoqualmie Valley | Steilacoom | Sumner-Bonney Lake | Tacoma | Tukwila | University Place | Vashon | White River | Puget Sound ESD