



As superintendents of the Puget Sound region representing nearly 40% of students across Washington state, 55% of whom are students of color, our unwavering focus is on student learning and wellbeing. Our legislative priorities are aimed to create opportunities, address inequities and mitigate barriers for each and every student to succeed in school and in life. We ask the Legislature to support our efforts to eliminate opportunity gaps based on race, income and other factors that have become even more urgent and acute during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that have historically disadvantaged our young scholars and our communities.

Student Funding Stability

In recent years, the Legislature has provided significant investments to K-12 education. The Legislature must maintain the integrity of the public education system, including current funding formulas, to ensure students can succeed. In fact, school districts are incurring additional costs associated with COVID-19 response to ensure the health and safety of students and staff. These new costs are on top of an existing special education funding gap of approximately \$300 million that was not fully addressed in the previous sessions. Our students need continued support and resources now, more than ever. The pandemic continues to present an education-delivery challenge to our students and all school districts. The system pivoted from a full in-person learning model to a fully on-line model and has returned to full in-person learning while the pandemic maintains its grip on society. School districts require funding stability during these extremely challenging times.

Proposed Solutions:

- Maintain school district funding based on the greater of the October 2019 enrollment count or the current count, so that districts can maintain adequate instructional and staffing throughout this challenging year
- Revise the student transportation funding statute to fully cover the actual costs of student transportation. The formula must include all costs related to transportation employee benefits mandated by the state through the School Employee Benefits Board (SEBB)
- Increase state funding for special education to a rate that fully funds the actual costs of special education as part of the state's obligation to fully fund basic education
- Establish a labor-market regionalization funding mechanism statewide and eliminate the funding disparities among the districts in similar metropolitan areas

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Student Wellness & Health

Students have and will continue to experience trauma through the pandemic. The impacts of COVID-19 are greatest among communities of color, who are facing the highest risks as essential workers, highest infection rates, and highest food and housing insecurity. With increased isolation at the same time, social and emotional learning and mental health supports and programs are a more important part of school infrastructure than ever before.

Proposed Solutions:

- Increase behavioral and mental health and wellness supports for students including staffing for nurses, counselors and other health professionals needed to serve children
- Invest in statewide mental health infrastructure to support healthy communities

School Facilities

Many districts continue to have difficulty passing local requests for building and maintaining modern school facilities. The need is even more urgent now to upgrade ventilation and HVAC systems in response to COVID-19. School construction bonds currently require 60% supermajority to pass. This constitutional provision puts districts in jeopardy of being able to adequately provide updated and safe instructional space for students. Additionally the current school construction allocation program does not adequately reflect the true costs of school construction.

Proposed Solutions:

- Advance a constitutional amendment to the people authorizing school district bond issues to be approved with a simple majority vote
- Update the construction and space formulas to ensure funding more closely reflects actual costs and educational space needs

Legislative Statutes & Provisos

Each legislative session the list of provisos OSPI must implement continues to grow. Some provisos have been on the “education books” for many years – but add minimal value to the education system and/or are not aligned with the Legislature’s or Superintendent’s current vision and direction yet live on in a budget proviso.

Proposed Solutions:

- Review, consolidate and reduce the number of education provisos and allow OSPI and by extension school districts, to focus on the most important work needed for students in our state and allow OSPI the flexibility to align and streamline their efforts