As superintendents of the Puget Sound region representing nearly 40% of students across Washington state, 58% of whom are students of color, our unwavering focus is on student learning and wellbeing. Our legislative priorities aim to create opportunities 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 due to the pandemic, and that have historically disadvantaged our young scholars and their families. The solutions proposed make a significant investment in our educational system that will lead to student success.

Increase Special Education Funding

In the last four years, the Legislature has: increased the special education excess cost multiplier (2019); provided additional funding for safety net awards (2020); and provided funding for additional transition services, for professional development, and for family liaisons (2021). While these incremental steps to reduce the special education funding gap are positive and appreciated, the 2023 Legislature must take more deliberate action to provide full funding of special education costs and align funding with best practices. Washington State remains near the bottom of all national federal reports regarding the success of Special Education.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:

Increase state funding for special education to a rate that fully funds the actual costs. Full funding is necessary in order to implement inclusionary practices and provide students with the mental health supports they need as part of the state’s obligation to fully fund basic education.

Fix Pupil Transportation

Under STARS, the current Pupil Transportation funding model, many districts experience significant funding gaps; in the last five years, many districts received an allocation below their costs. OFM recently found in most situations, the STARS model is not going to provide adequate resources to school districts and recommends, at the very least, that more funding be provided to the system. We appreciate the 2022 Legislature’s provision of additional funding to address excess costs to transport special passengers; however, it is time to comprehensively fix the pupil transportation formula to ensure it is more transparent, predictable, and adequately funded.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:

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).
Update Staffing allocations

We applaud the 2022 Legislature for beginning a phase-in of enhanced staff allocations, specifically investing in staff to meet students’ needs for social, emotional, safety, and behavioral health. This action implements a portion of the Phase I recommendations of the Staffing Enrichment Workgroup (2019). We urge the 2023 Legislature to continue the implementation of the Phase 1 recommendations (see proposed solutions). In addition, we request the legislature to plan for and invest in the Prototypical School Funding Model in order to reduce the reliance on local levies for basic education staffing.

**PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:**

Improving Prototypical School Funding Model (PSFM) levels for school principals to promote school cultures of learning and growth, support students by regularly meeting social-emotional and mental health needs and address increased responsibilities in supervisory duties of their staff members; providing additional professional development to close achievement gaps; and adding continuous improvement coaches as an enhancement to the PSFM.

Support Capital Facilities

We urge the Legislature to give Washington’s citizens the opportunity to decide whether school district bond issues should be approved with a simple majority vote; and 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 construction costs and educational space needs.

**PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:**

Advance a constitutional amendment to the people authorizing school district bond issues to be approved with a simple majority vote,

› School construction bond votes currently require a 60% supermajority to pass. This constitutional provision puts districts in jeopardy of being able to adequately provide updated and safe instructional space for students.

Update the construction and space formulas to ensure funding more closely reflects actual costs, inflation, and educational space needs,

› The current school construction cost allocation program does not reflect the true costs of school construction—with no meaningful increase in the funding formula since 2005 despite dramatic increases in construction costs.

Support Basic Education Compensation Rebase

Current law (adopted in 2017’s EHB 2242) requires the Legislature, beginning in 2023, to regularly review and rebase minimum salaries, including regionalization and experience factors, to ensure salary allocations continue to align with staffing costs for the state’s program of basic education. As the compensation system is being rebased, we urge the Legislature to make necessary adjustments to address inequities in state allocations for educator compensation and implement solutions that focus on the core components required to increase student access to a diverse and highly skilled educator workforce.

**PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:**

› Adjust the calculation and application of regionalization factors using school districts’ labor markets, rather than cost of housing alone and,

› Adjust calculation and application of experience factors making the system more transparent and equitable and,

› Return to the use of CPI as the inflationary factor

CONTACTS:

John Welch, Superintendent
425-917-7602
JWelch@p sesd.org

Lori Pittman, Early Learning and K–12 Policy, Advocacy and Government Relations
425-917-7759 LPittman@p sesd.org