

Northshore School Board Summary/Impact of 2024 Washington State Legislative session

Well, it was a very busy, very active legislative session this year. Well over 300 bills were pre-loaded to be considered before the session even started, and many of them had great promise to support public education, so the Northshore School District Board of Directors geared up for full throttle advocacy for as long as the legislature was in session.

We went into the session knowing that the legislature does not, traditionally, make substantive changes to the state budget in a short session. The 2-year budget had been set the previous year and the second year of a biennial budget is typically just small adjustments and corrections. But this is not an ordinary year. Many school districts around the state are in financial crisis, on top of budget shortfalls from the previous year. So any potential increases in school funding to the supplemental budget was a focus for us. And, given the state budget surplus, there was real hope that our legislators would hear the community and make progress righting the ship. We found engaged and supportive legislators for the Northshore School District and continue to develop and build on those relationships.

For an idea of what the board was engaged in over the 8 weeks of the session:

1. We attended & supported the WA state PTSA Council FOCUS day in Olympia.
2. We attended the WASA/WSSDA/WASBO Day on the Hill, going en masse (PTSA partners, students, parents, administrators, and all board directors) to advocate for full, if not ample, funding for the Free and Appropriate Public Education our students deserve and have a right to expect. We fought long and hard. Our students fought long and hard, as did our community.
3. As a group, we met with every single legislator who represents the Northshore School District, plus multiple Education and Finance Committees/members and some of us gave testimony in support of bills to try to move the needle.
4. For the entire 8 weeks of session, we were engaged with our legislators, writing letters, making phone calls, with support from WSSDA, the PTSA Council, our intrepid Deputy Superintendent Berge, Superintendent Tolley, our district lobbyist Cliff Traisman, and so many more.

Some take-aways:

1. There were many bills passed in support of public education (e.g., [SB 5882](#)—an adjustment to the prototypical school funding model in support of paraeducators and certificated staff), some potential unfunded mandates that were avoided (additional graduation requirements) and some bills that were improved due to input from our community, such as the electric bus transition bill that became an optional grant [[HB 1368](#)].
2. There were inflationary adjustments to salaries, school nutrition funding and Special Education Safety Nets.
3. Inflationary pressure on the cost of MSOC alone (Materials, Supplies & Operating Costs) is an enormous drain on district budgets and for which we hoped to make a material

difference [[HB 2494](#)]. Although we were not able to close the funding gap in this category, the legislature did pass a significant increase to the budget for this year. We are appreciative of any gains and the valiant efforts of our legislators to provide even more.

4. The resulting supplemental budget that was passed is definitely an improvement over the previous year, including another small increase to the cap (from 15% to 16%) for the funding of special education services [[HB 2180](#)]. And, as some of these funds are already being provided to districts it can help to ease the budget deficit.

However.

While there was much positive intent and support, for which we are extremely grateful, and some progress in impressing the direness of the situation upon our legislators, we must say that this legislative session was a disappointment. In spite of our nearly continuous advocacy and presence in Olympia during the session, as well as the limited funding increases that were gained, Northshore School District, and public education in WA state, will experience a further deficit in the 2024-2025 school.

This is not a new situation. It has long been known that the public education funding model in WA is unsustainable. And it has finally hit a crisis point.

As an example of the exacerbation of budget shortfalls that will result from the state 2024-2025 budget:

- a. The greatly appreciated, and hard won, increase to MSOC funding (simple, maintenance funding to cover the increased cost of supplies and operating costs over the last year and projected for the coming year), [HB 2494](#), was passed, providing an increase of \$21 per student for all districts, to be awarded this year. Awarding the amount this year, instead of withholding until the start of next year, is very welcome. However;
- b. This \$21/student (far less than the \$48/student that was requested) comes to ~\$475k for NSD.
 - i. Given the \$20M in budget cuts required last year and \$26M this year, due to state under-funding, this MSOC inflation increase would cover only ~1% of the funding necessary to recover from these cuts, IF that 1% gain was not offset by further increased expenses. But it is.
 - ii. For example, insurance premiums are only one component of MSOC. NSD have been informed that our insurance premiums, alone, are increasing over \$600k next year. And MSOC is only one component of the budget.

Below, for far more details and information about the outcomes of the legislative session than you ever wanted to know (and certainly more than can be included here), and what it means to us, please find a list of links and attached documents. This includes summaries from OSPI and WSSDA, with corresponding individual bill analyses, and a link to a detailed dashboard of special education programs across the state.

1. OSPI fiscal overview presentation of the 2024 legislative session: <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2024-03/2024legislativesessioninreviewpptmarch27.pdf>
2. OSPI review of fiscal impact of 2023-2025 supplemental operating budget by bill: <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2024-04/2024-end-session-overview.pdf>
3. OSPI's budget priorities for 2024; <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2023-10/ospi-2024-supplemental-operating-budget-request.pdf>
4. WS Special Education Funding Dashboard—an interactive map of WA school districts and associated special education funding; <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNzg5NGQ3OTUtNDI2Mi00ZGVILThhMDItMGJkZDE0NGI1YTVMliwidCI6IjBiZmY3NTgxLTVkZWUtNDFlkZC1iZDRmLWYyYTI4NTI4YTU2NSJ9>
5. Leg Rep Network WSSDA overview of session—highlights of education-related legislation: [2024SessionOverview WSSDA \(1\).pdf](#)
6. WSSDA bill passage overview--a summary of education-related bills that passed, their timeline, requirements and funding (or not): [2024 Bills Overview \(1\).pdf](#)
7. WSSDA Sine Die summary: [WSSDA Sine Die 2024.pdf](#)

The financial crisis in Washington State public education was not averted with the 2024-2025 Supplemental Budget. The resulting funding gap will be larger, which means that it continues to negatively impact our students and families and will grow even worse in 2025. So now we plan our activities for the Interim and the 2025 Legislative Session. If we have learned anything in this past session, it is that we are not alone. And working together as a community we can accomplish great things. The work of our valued community partners, legislators and educators across the state and country is inspiring and so greatly appreciated. We will all continue our advocacy efforts year-round, not just to prevent further budget deficits and cuts, but to make Northshore School District whole again and to work for the ample education funding the future of Washington requires and deserves.