



Washington State School
Directors' Association

Washington Public Schools Funding

Frequently Asked Questions

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Washington Public Schools Funding: The Basics

01. Who is responsible for the financial management of Washington public schools?

The school district board, elected by local people, handles the district's finances. They hire a superintendent to manage daily operations.

Public schools have to follow rules from different levels of government:

-  Laws from the [U.S. Congress](#)
-  Regulations from the [U.S. Department of Education](#)
-  Laws and budgets from the [Washington State Legislature](#)
-  Rules from the [Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction \(OSPI\) and State Board of Education](#)
-  Guidelines from the [Professional Educator Standards Board](#)

Public school finances can get tricky because they fund many programs, each with its own reporting, accounting, and auditing rules.

Charter schools in Washington operate differently. They have an appointed board and are overseen by the Washington State Charter School Commission.

Tribal Compact Schools act like their own governments. They work under agreements with OSPI and are managed by tribes.

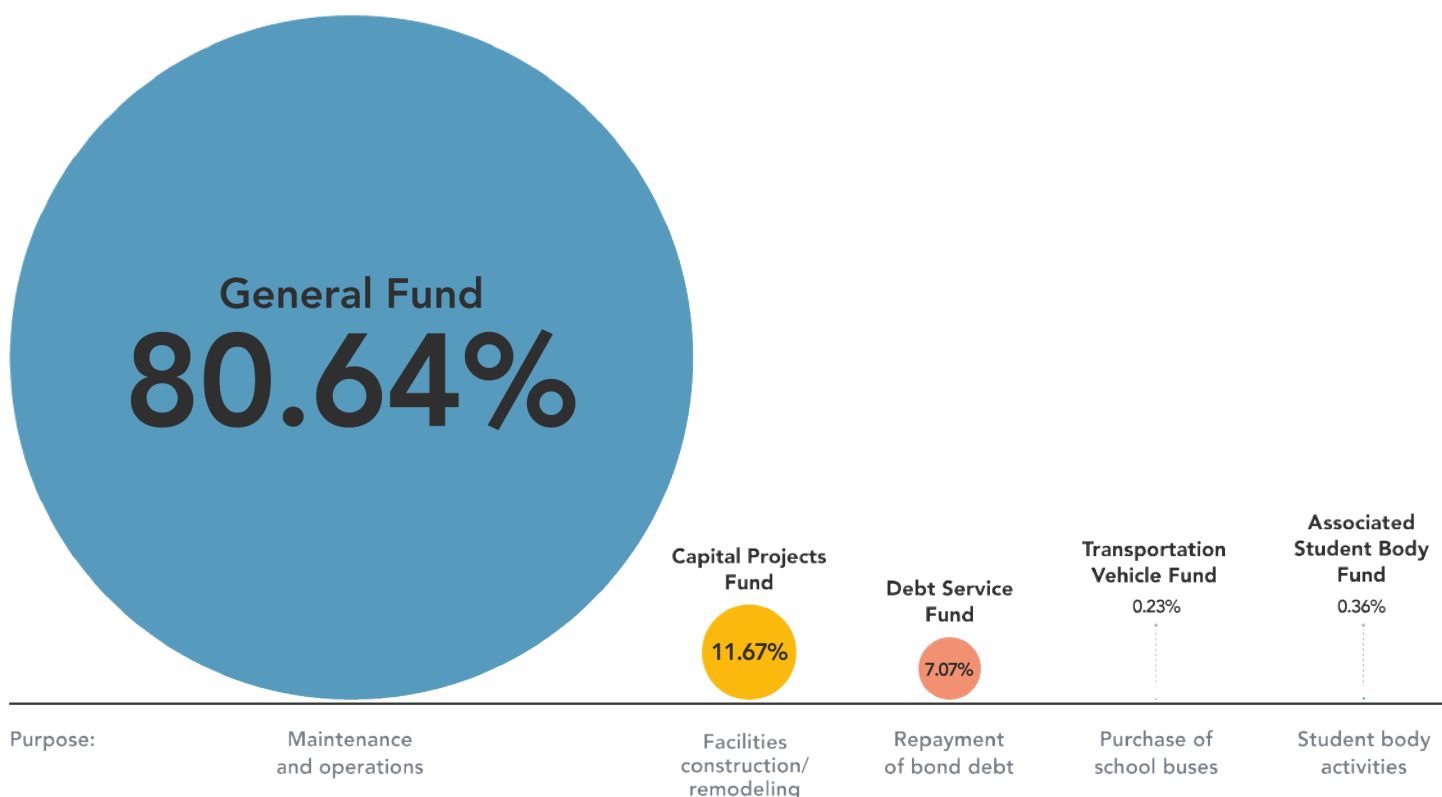
Every year, by July 10th, schools and charters create a budget that the public reviews. The school board must approve it before the year begins. Small districts must have their budget approved by August 1, while large districts need theirs approved by August 31. Since 2018–19, they've also been planning budgets for four years ahead.

They use the same codes to track money. All spending is noted by program, activity, and type, with reports sent to OSPI.

The state auditor ensures schools follow state and federal rules.

Nine Educational Service Districts (ESDs) support OSPI. They help schools with policies, data collection, and shared services, saving them money and allowing them to access special funding.

02. How do Washington public schools spend their money?



Washington's public schools manage their finances through five distinct funds. The majority, roughly 80%, is directed towards daily operations and maintenance, tracked within the General Fund.

Here's a breakdown of their expenditure:

01

General Fund:

This fund caters to daily operations and maintenance expenses. It's primarily utilized for operating costs such as salaries, supplies, utilities, and anything not recorded in another fund.

02

Capital Projects Fund:

This fund is exclusively reserved for constructing or renovating school facilities. It cannot be utilized for daily operations or other unrelated purposes.

03

Debt Service Fund:

Funds in this category are solely allocated for repaying debt, typically bonds, incurred by the school district for capital projects or other approved endeavors.

04

Transportation Vehicle Fund:

These funds are designated for purchasing or maintaining school buses or other transportation vehicles and cannot be repurposed.

05

Associated Student Body Fund:

Managed by students, this fund supports student-related activities and expenses like clubs, events, and student organizations. These are non-curricular, optional activities. They are cultural, athletic, social, or recreational.

Within the state General Fund, the largest part is for basic education. It's about 50.14% of the fund. Other notable programs funded include special education, vocational/skills center education, compensatory education instruction, student transportation, and food services.



The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) releases an annual report online. It breaks down spending by district. [You can find the report here.](#)

03. Can these funds mix?

Typically, these funds cannot be mixed. Each fund has its own rules for spending money.

However, there are exceptions. Here are some examples:

**Loans Between Funds:**

Sometimes, one fund might lend money to another within the same school district. For instance, if the Capital Projects Fund needs extra cash, it could borrow from the General Fund temporarily.

**Joint Projects:**

Funds might be combined for projects serving multiple purposes. For example, if a project involves building new facilities and buying buses, money from the Capital Projects Fund and the Transportation Vehicle Fund could be used together.

**Grant Rules:**

Some grants or outside money might allow schools to mix funds to meet certain requirements. This could include using money from different sources to match a grant or meet its conditions.

**Emergencies:**

During emergencies like natural disasters or health crises, special rules might allow funds to be mixed to meet urgent needs.

**Changes by Lawmakers:**

Sometimes, laws or special rules made by government bodies might allow funds to be mixed for specific reasons, like when there's not enough money for the budget or special projects.

But, it's important to note that mixing funds without proper authorization or violating legal restrictions can lead to financial mismanagement, audit findings, and potential legal consequences.

04. Where does the money for Washington public schools come from?

Public schools in Washington get their money mainly from four sources, each with its own set of rules about how much money can be received and how it can be spent.

Here's a breakdown:



State Funding:

This is money that comes from taxes collected by the state, like income and sales tax. The state decides how to distribute this money to schools using certain formulas. This is a critical source of school funding, usually covering the biggest part of their budget. It pays for things like teacher salaries, classroom supplies, and keeping the school running.



Local Property Taxes:

Homeowners in the school district pay these taxes. The collected money goes to the local government, which then gives it to schools for educational purposes. How much comes from property taxes can change based on how much properties are worth and the tax rates decided by local officials.



Bonds:

Schools sometimes borrow money by selling bonds to investors. This is mainly for big projects like building new schools or updating old ones. The money from bonds is a loan the school district has to repay over time, usually with interest. Property taxes often help pay back these bonds, meaning local taxpayers are responsible for both the loan and the interest costs.



Federal Funding:

This is money from the national government, given to states and schools through grants and specific funding programs. It supports certain educational initiatives and programs, like helping schools with a lot of low-income students or funding special education and school meals. Federal funds usually add to what state and local funding provides and come with specific rules from the government.



Other Local Sources:

This is money from the national government, given to states and schools through grants and specific funding programs. It supports certain educational initiatives and programs, like helping schools with a lot of low-income students or funding special education and school meals. Federal funds usually add to what state and local funding provides and come with specific rules from the government.

05. Are there any limitations to these sources of revenue for schools?

Yes, Washington public schools do have limits on where they can get money from.

Here's what you need to know:



State Funding Limits

Schools get a certain amount of money from the state, but this can change. If the state's budget changes or if they decide to spend money differently, schools might get less money.



Local Property Tax Limits

Schools also get money from local property taxes, but there's a cap on how much they can ask for. State laws set these limits, which means schools can't always get more money from property taxes, even if they need it.



Federal Funding Rules

The money schools get from the federal government comes with specific rules. Schools have to follow these rules to use the money, which might limit what they can do with it.



Bonds and Debt

Sometimes, schools borrow money for big projects by selling bonds. This money has to be paid back with interest, which can take away from other things the school needs money for.



Economic Changes

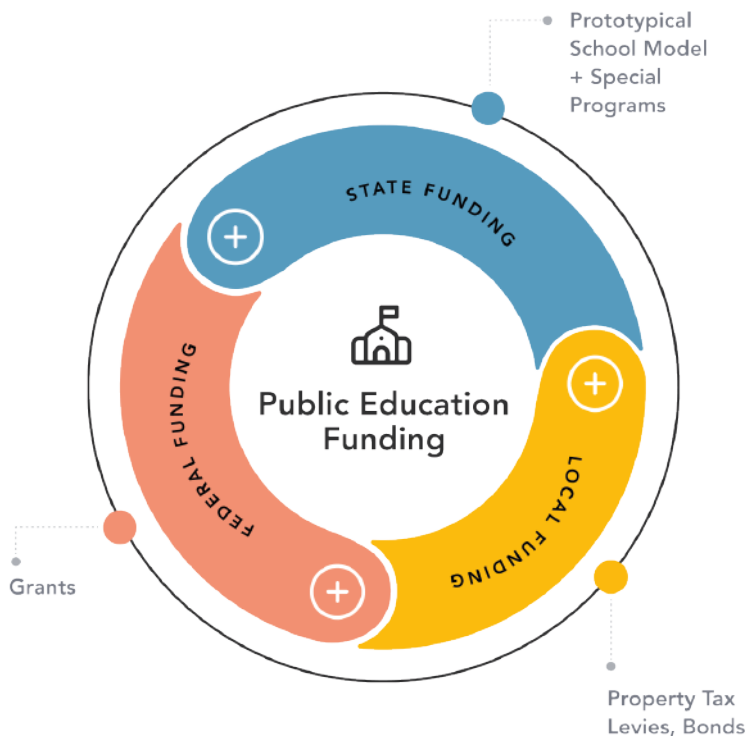
The economy can also affect school funding. If the economy is doing poorly, there might be less tax money coming in, which means less money for schools.

Because of these limits, **school districts need to be smart about how they use their money. They have to figure out what's most important to spend on and look for other ways to get money to make sure students have what they need for a good education.**

06. How is public education funded in Washington state?

In Washington state, funding for public education is quite intricate. It comes from three main sources: local, state, and federal. The state government uses a system called the prototypical school model. It provides money for basic education. It also funds special education and other programs based on student enrollment.

Local communities also play a part by voting for property tax levies. Voters approved these taxes in special elections. They pay for things like school lunches, field trips, and library fines. Property taxes make up the biggest chunk of money from local sources.



Yet, some school districts struggle to raise enough money through local taxes. This is especially true for those near military bases or tribal lands where property taxes are limited. In such cases, these districts can receive Impact Aid from the federal government.

Federal funding boosts Washington's education budget through grants. These grants support programs like

✓ **Title I**, which aids students from disadvantaged backgrounds,

✓ **Title II**, which focuses on improving teaching quality, and

✓ **Title III**, which helps students who are learning multiple languages.

Additionally, federal support goes to programs like tribal and migrant education.

Getting federal funds involves several steps. First, the federal government decides how much money the state gets. Then, the state divides that money among school districts. It does this based on factors like student eligibility and poverty rates.

Each year, school districts have to apply for federal grants. They ask for money to cover expenses, and if they're approved, they get reimbursed. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction oversees this. They make sure everything follows the rules.

In sum, public education funding in Washington State is a joint effort. It involves local, state, and federal levels. Local property taxes and state funding are the main sources. Federal aid offers extra support, especially for districts that struggle to raise enough money locally.

Understanding the Prototypical School Funding Model

07. What's the prototypical school funding model, and how is it funded?

The prototypical school funding model in Washington State is a system that determines how much money schools get based on student enrollment and specific categories.

These categories include:



Elementary schools, with grades kindergarten through six,



Middle schools, with grades seven and eight, and



High schools, with grades nine through twelve.

Each type of school is defined by a specific number of students:

400

for elementary schools



432

for middle schools



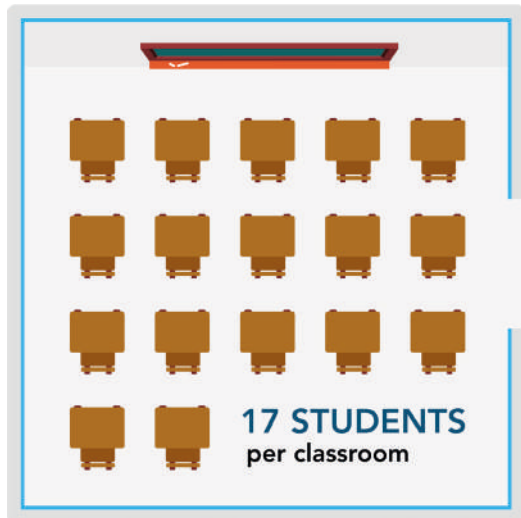
600

for high schools



The funding model came from translating past district funding practices. It is mainly funded through state allocations based on enrollment numbers and staff position categories.

The model covers various positions, like principals, librarians, counselors, and support staff. The number of staff funded adjusts based on enrollment. For instance, a high school with 600 students would get funding for 1.88 principals. You find this by dividing the enrollment by 600 and then multiplying by the right factor.



Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC) are also assigned based on enrollment. Moreover, the model funds teachers based on class sizes. For grades K through three, funding is based on a class size of 17 students, while for other grades, it varies. Districts have some freedom in how they use the funds as long as they follow certain rules, such as maintaining class size ratios.

The state legislature updates the model periodically to adapt to changing educational needs. The model aims for fair funding across districts. But, critics say it doesn't fully address the needs of high-poverty schools. It also fails to support schools serving students with special needs.

08. How is it determined how much districts will receive under the prototypical school model?

In the prototypical school model, funding for districts relies mainly on how many students are enrolled and the types of staff positions they need. Students are divided into elementary (grades K-6), middle (grades 7-8), and high schools (grades 9-12), with specific student numbers for each group.

These enrollment figures and funding categories come from how districts used to get money before this model. Before, the state-funded different types of administrators, teachers, and other staff. Now, funding is calculated by multiplying the number of students by set factors for each staff position.

Although the model aims for fairness in funding across districts, it's been criticized for not fully considering the needs of schools in high-poverty areas or those with special needs students. Still, the state government reviews and updates the model regularly to adjust funding based on changing educational needs.

Districts can move money around within limits to meet specific school needs, like hiring more counselors, as long as they follow rules like keeping class size ratios. But overall, funding is based on the prototypical school model's formulas and allocations.

09. What are the inherent deficits/gaps of the prototypical school model?

The prototypical school model faces several significant challenges. First, **its formula is outdated, nearly 15 years old, and hasn't been properly updated to meet current needs.** This means the money schools get might not be enough for what students really need because it's based on old assumptions rather than evolving needs.



01



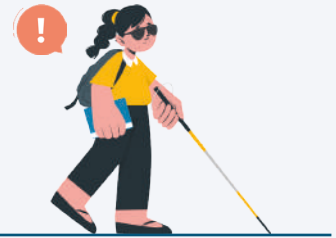
Outdated funding formulas

02



Insufficient support for smaller districts

03



Shortcomings in funding programs like special education.

Another issue arises in smaller districts. Because they have fewer students, the state's funding might not cover crucial positions like a full-time superintendent or principal.

Even though these roles are vital for smaller districts, the funding might not be enough to sustain them.

Furthermore, **while the state offers extra funding for programs like transitional bilingual education or special education, the amounts given may fall short of covering the actual costs.** For example, the funding for special education might not fully consider the high expenses associated with certain students' needs. This leaves districts struggling to provide necessary services without adequate financial backing.

The system also doesn't take into account that students from poorer families need more support to do well in school. According to a report from the Education Law Center in 2023, Washington state's way of funding schools is one of the most unfair in the US. It gives more money to districts with richer families and less to those with poorer families.

Lastly, the state relies on the prototypical school model to determine what qualifies as fully funded basic education. However, this definition doesn't truly show the current costs of education because the model hasn't been updated much over time. As a result, **some may wrongly think that districts have enough money simply because they meet the outdated model's standards, even if they actually need more funding to meet their real needs.**

Understanding the School Construction and Assistance Program (SCAP)



10. What is the school construction and assistance program (SCAP)?

The SCAP program, short for School Construction Assistance Program, is a method the state uses to offer extra funding for various school construction projects. This includes building brand-new school facilities, renovating and updating older buildings, or adding extensions to existing ones.

11. How is the School Construction and Assistance Program (SCAP) funded?

SCAP funding comes from the state's biannual capital budget, which is different from the budget used for basic education and other programs. It is the only state funding schools receive for capital projects.

The state raises money for the SCAP program and others by issuing bonds through its bonding authority.

12. How is it determined how much districts will receive from the School Construction and Assistance Program (SCAP)?

Districts receive funding based on a multi-part formula. First, the number of students in each grade determines how much educational space is needed. For instance, elementary students need 90 square feet each, while high schoolers need 130. These figures are multiplied by the school's projected enrollment.

Then, the maximum allowable cost per square foot is figured out, which is set each year in the capital budget. For projects after July 1, 2024, it's \$271.61 per square foot.

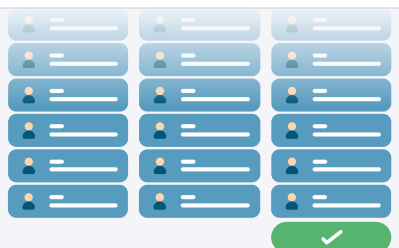
Lastly, each district has a funding percentage, ranging from 20% to as high as 95%, that the state will assist with for each project. This percentage represents the part of the calculated cost that the state will help with, which is often less than the total project cost.



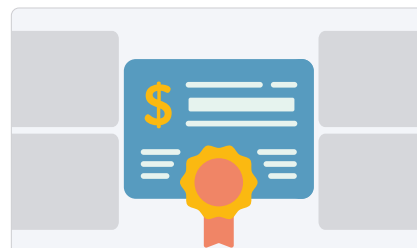
YOUR GUIDE TO SCAP FUNDING

01 Assessing Eligibility

Before starting construction, districts must see if they can get SCAP help:



Show they need more space by looking at projected student enrollment.



Secure local funds, through selling bonds, for instance.

02

Crunching The Numbers

Once districts know they qualify, it's time to figure out how much money they can get:

- Figure out the maximum allowable cost per square foot, which is set each year in the capital budget.*
- Compare how much educational space they have now with how much they'll need in the future.
- Raise local funds.

03



With the right numbers, districts need to get the okay from OSPI:



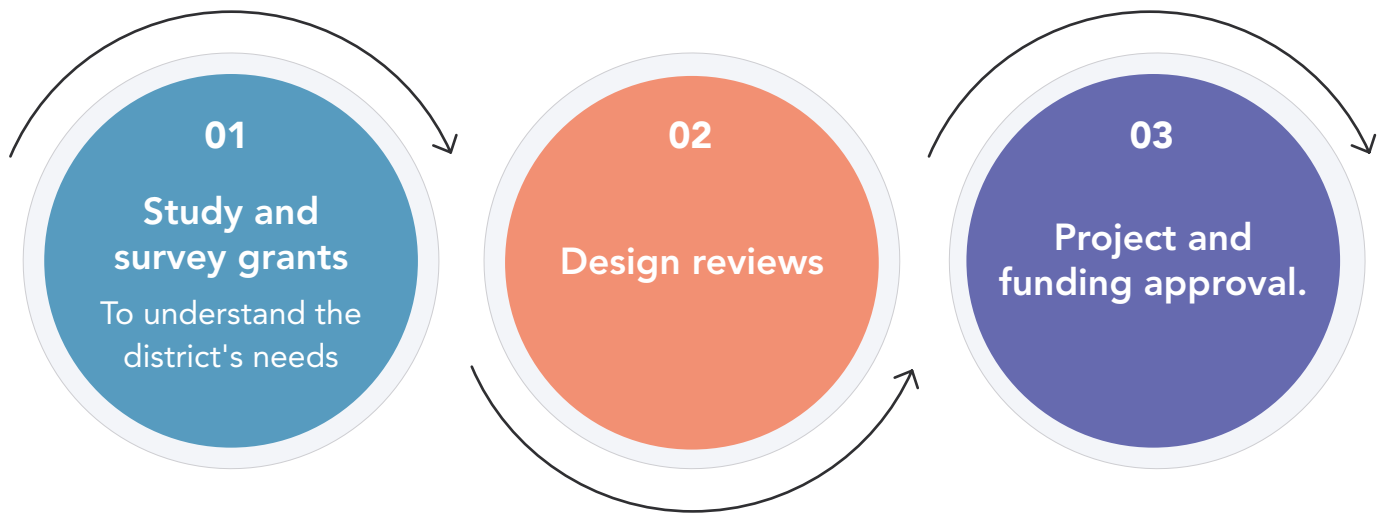
Send in their plans.



Wait for approval to start the construction project.

* For projects after July 1, 2024, it's \$271.61 per square foot.

Getting construction funds involves a long process of filling out forms. It starts with study and survey grants to understand the district's needs, moves to design reviews, and finally to project and funding approval.



State funding only comes after the district covers its share of the project cost. Then, the state reimburses the district for the costs. Essentially, districts must have enough cash on hand to cover project expenses before receiving state funds.



13. What is the school construction and assistance program (SCAP)?

Levies are local property taxes used to support a school district. They need a simple majority vote (50% +1) from the residents of the district to pass.

Before running a levy, districts must get approval from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). They have to explain what the levy will be used for and how it will enhance educational opportunities for children in the district.

By law, levies can't be used for basic education but can fund enrichment activities like special programs or smaller class sizes. Most levies are used for competitive salaries and other costs to keep the district running smoothly.

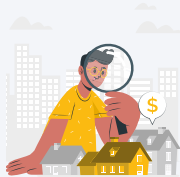
Districts can also run levies for capital projects and technology funding. This money can go towards building new facilities, renovations, or buying technology for students. There's also a levy for buying buses. These levies have no set limits other than what voters agree to.

Levy Type	 Can be used for	 Can't be used for
Maintenance & Operations Levy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competitive salaries for teachers and staff. Classroom supplies Building maintenance Transportation costs Enrichment programs Securing smaller class sizes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic education. Capital construction projects. Major renovations.
Technology Levy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchasing computers and software. Securing internet access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building, construction or school renovation.
Capital Levy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building new schools Renovating existing facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating costs. Teacher and staff salaries.

\$2.50
LEVY RATE



\$1,000
OF ASSESSED VALUE



Homeowner with a property valued at \$200,000 would pay

\$500

14. How are levies funded?

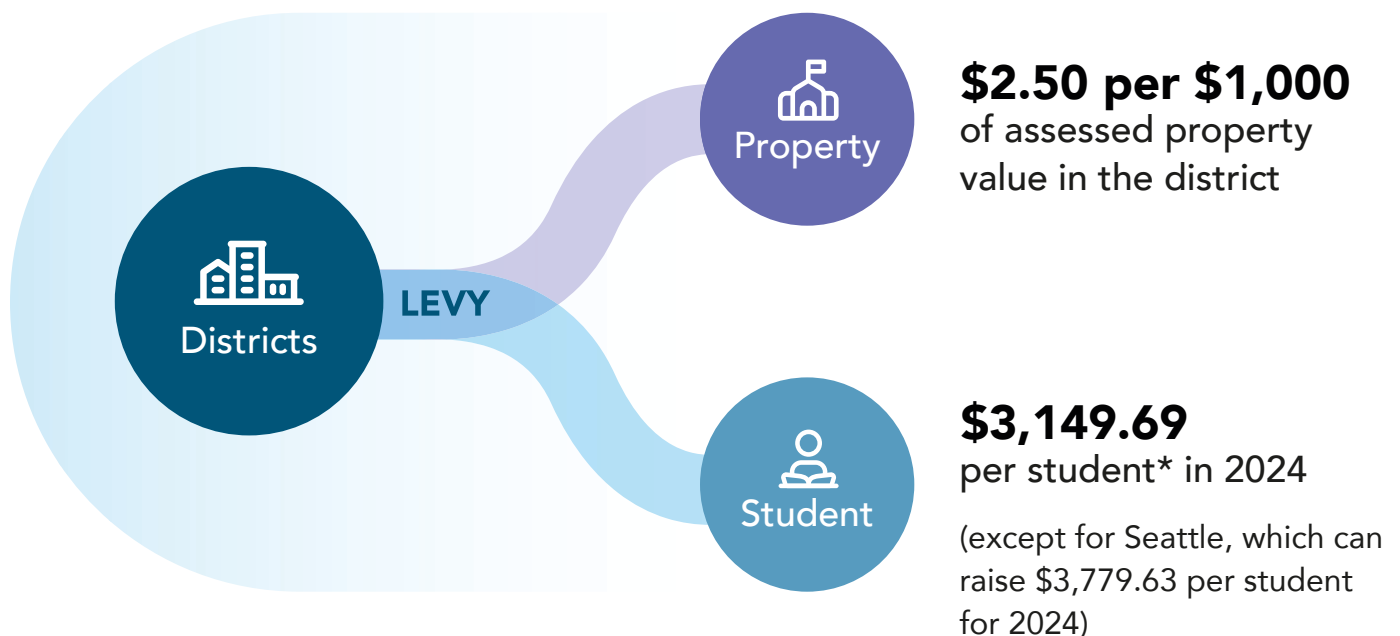
Levies are funded by gathering property taxes from every resident or parcel owner in the district. The levy rate is determined as an amount collected per \$1,000 of assessed property value. For instance, if the levy rate is \$2.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value, a homeowner with a property valued at \$200,000 would pay \$500.

Certain properties like federal lands (military bases, national forests), tribal lands, and those owned by senior citizens may be excluded. The levy rate is then applied equally to all taxable properties within the district.

15. How is public education funded in Washington state?

The amount that districts can get from a levy is limited by the Legislature. Districts can collect a levy that is either \$2.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value in the district or \$3,149.69 per student in 2024 (except for Seattle, which can raise \$3,779.63 per student for 2024). The per-student amount increases each year with inflation.

UNDERSTANDING LEVY CAPS



*The per-student amount increases annually to account for inflation.



Voters decide whether to approve dollar amounts for the levies based on forecasts of student growth or rising property values. However, the final amount collected cannot exceed the cap. Some districts may ask for less than their maximum to keep property taxes lower, hoping to win more votes.

16. Are there limitations on how levies can be spent?

Yes, there are limitations on how levies can be spent.

Here's why:



Specific Purposes:

Voters typically approve Levies for specific purposes outlined in the ballot measure. School districts must use the levy funds only for the purposes specified in the ballot language. These purposes may include funding for technology upgrades, facility improvements, extracurricular activities, or other specified programs.



Time Limits:

Levies are usually approved for a limited duration, often ranging from one to four years. School districts must spend the levy funds within the timeframe specified in the ballot measure. Once the levy period expires, the district must seek voter approval for a new levy if additional funding is needed for the same purposes.



Accountability:

School districts are accountable to voters for how they spend levy funds. Districts are required to provide regular reports to the community detailing how the levy funds are being used and the impact of the levy on educational programs and services.



Supplemental Funding:

Levies are intended to provide supplemental funding for educational programs and services beyond what is covered by state funding for basic education. School districts cannot use levy funds to replace or supplant state funding for essential educational requirements, such as teacher salaries, basic instructional materials, or other core educational expenses.

17. I've heard that even though levies are restricted from use in basic education they are still used to fund basic education needs. Is this true?

Even though levies are usually not meant for basic education needs, there are times when they end up being used for them.

Here's why:



Funding Gaps:

Sometimes, the money schools get from the state isn't enough to cover all the basic education requirements, like hiring enough teachers or buying necessary supplies. When there's a gap between what's needed and what's provided, schools might turn to local levies to fill in the shortfall.



Extra Programs and Services:

Schools often want to offer extra programs or services beyond what basic education covers, such as music or art classes, sports teams, or advanced placement courses. Funding for these additional offerings may not be fully covered by state funds, so schools might use levy funds to support them.



Maintaining Quality:

Levies can also be used to maintain the quality of education in a district. This could include things like upgrading technology, improving school facilities, or providing professional development opportunities for teachers. While these expenses aren't strictly for basic education, they're important for ensuring students have a high-quality learning environment.



Community Support:

In some cases, local communities are willing to pass levies to support their schools, even if the funds aren't strictly designated for basic education. This reflects a desire to invest in education and provide students with opportunities to succeed, even if it means going beyond the minimum requirements set by the state.



So, while levies may technically be restricted from use in basic education, they can still play an important role in supporting schools and ensuring students have access to a well-rounded education.

18. Why is the timing of levy initiatives on the ballot important, and what should districts consider when running them?

The first thing to remember is that levy initiatives can only happen during specific election dates according to state law.

For example, a district can't choose to hold a levy election in the middle of June because the state allows only four dates for most elections: February, April, August, and November.

The timing of levy initiatives on the ballot is critical for school districts, and there are several things they need to consider when running them:



Voter Turnout:

The timing of the election can significantly impact voter turnout. School districts often aim to schedule levy initiatives during general elections when more people are likely to vote. Higher voter turnout increases the chances of the levy passing, as more community members have the opportunity to voice their support.



Community Engagement:

Districts should consider the timing of levy initiatives in relation to community events, holidays, and other factors that may influence voter engagement. Holding informational sessions, town hall meetings, and outreach efforts prior to the election can help educate voters and garner support for the levy.



Budget Cycle:

School districts operate on specific budget cycles, and the timing of levy initiatives should align with these cycles to ensure smooth financial planning. Districts need to consider when current levies expire and when new funds will be needed to maintain operations and programs.



Tax Implications:

Understanding the tax implications of levy initiatives is key. Unlike other entities that may have levies based on a percentage of property value or in perpetuity, school levies typically end at a fixed amount. Districts need to carefully calculate the impact on taxpayers and communicate this information transparently to voters.



Collection Schedule:

It's important to remember that tax collections for levies typically start in the year following the passage of the levy. Districts should consider the timing of these collections and plan their budget accordingly. Additionally, tax collections may occur on specific dates throughout the year, so districts need to be aware of these timelines.

Understanding the Local Effort Assistance (LEA)

19. What is Local Effort Assistance (LEA)?

LEA, or Local Effort Assistance, also known as levy equalization, is a supplemental funding stream provided by the Legislature. **LEA offers extra funding for districts whose levy cap restricts how much they can collect per student.**

20. How is Local Effort Assistance (LEA) funded?

LEA, funded by the Legislature in the biennial budget, receives funding based on projected needs for the two-year period. It's not classified as part of the state's definition of "basic education." This means **if there's a severe budget shortage, the Legislature could cut or suspend LEA funding to districts.**

To qualify for LEA, a district must first pass an enrichment levy with its voters. Capital project and transportation vehicle levies aren't eligible for LEA funding.

21. How is it determined how much districts will receive for Local Effort Assistance (LEA)?

LEA funding is determined by comparing the amount a district's levy would generate per student, set at \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, with the LEA threshold of \$1,941.74 per student for 2024 (increased annually with inflation)

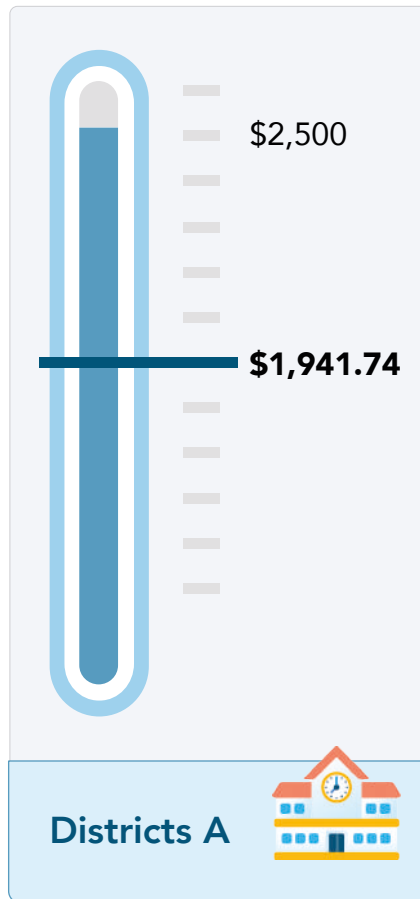


If a district's calculated amount is lower than this threshold, it receives enough LEA funding to reach the \$1,941.74 level. Districts calculated above this threshold do not receive any LEA funding.

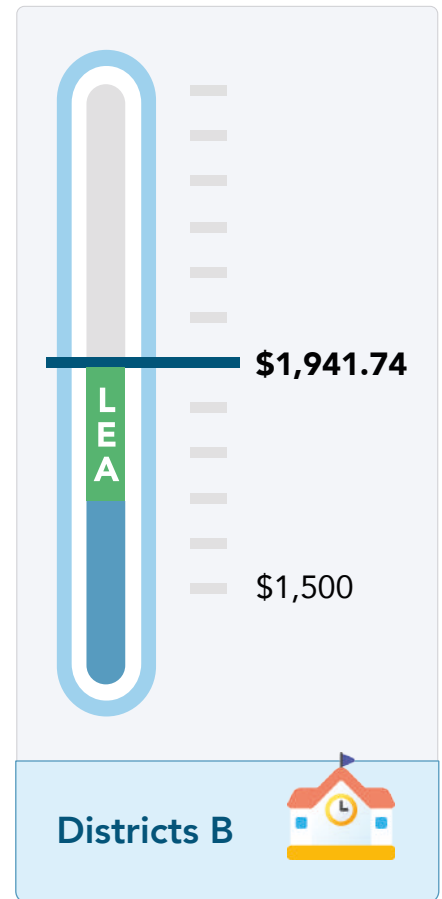
HOW LEA THRESHOLDS WORKS

Funding Determination

LEA funding is determined by comparing the amount generated per student from a district's levy, set at \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, with the LEA threshold of \$1,941.74 per student for 2024.



Districts calculated above this threshold do not receive any LEA funding.



If a district's calculated amount falls below the threshold, it receives enough LEA funding to reach the \$1,941.74 level.

Understanding Regionalization and the Experience Factor



22. What is regionalization?

Regionalization is a recent addition to school funding, beginning in the 2018-2019 school year. It's a way for the Legislature to give extra money to districts with much higher property values than the statewide average. The thought behind it is that because these districts have expensive property, they need to pay more to hire staff who can afford to live there.

23. How is regionalization funded?

Regionalization is shown as a percentage and has three tiers: 6%, 12%, and 18%. These percentages represent the extra funding the state will give to that district.

For instance, if a district would normally get \$1,000,000, it would receive an extra \$60,000 - \$180,000 from the Legislature.

Regionalization also affects how much districts can pay their teachers. For example, in 2023-2024, the minimum a district can pay a teacher is \$47,137. This amount goes up based on the regionalization factor. So, a district with 18% regionalization would have a minimum salary of \$55,622.

24. How is it determined how much districts will receive for Local Effort Assistance (LEA)?

Regionalization is decided by the state Department of Revenue, which looks at property values within a school district's borders and nearby areas, about 15 miles outside the district. They compare these values to the statewide average and then sort districts into one of four tiers (1.0, 1.06, 1.12, 1.18) based on those averages. These numbers aren't updated every year but every four years instead.



25. What is the Experience Factor, and how is it determined how much districts will receive?

The Experience Factor is extra funding given by the state to districts with more experienced staff, like teachers and librarians.

It's based on the old funding model before McCleary. Back then, each teacher got a staff mix factor, from 1.0 for new teachers to 1.88482 for those with master's degrees, 90 extra education credits, and 16 or more years of experience. The idea was to pay more to experienced teachers and those who got more education. Each district's staff mix was the sum of all factors divided by total number of teachers.

When the state changed to the new funding model after McCleary, the staff mix ratio disappeared. It came back in a revised funding formula (the "McCleary fix"). Districts with:

01



Teachers with more experience than the state average, and

02



More teachers with advanced degrees than the state average.



If a district met both, its funding would increase by 4%. So, a district with 18% regionalization and this experience factor would get 22% more funding. This factor is reviewed only when the state looks at regionalization factors.

Funding for Special Education



26. What is the Special Education (SPED) Shortfall?

The Special Education shortfall happens when a district's special education funds aren't enough to cover all the costs of special education programs.

Federal special education funding comes from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Part B of the law covers school-age kids (ages 3-21), while Part C covers kids from birth to age three. In Washington State, most Part C services are handled by groups other than school districts. The funding amount is set by formulas in the federal law.



The law originally said the US would fund 40% of special education costs. But, it's currently around 20%.

State special education funding is separate from basic education funding. The state sets how much funding a basic education student gets in the district. It then multiplies that by a factor based on how much time a student spends in special education classes. Students spending 80% or more of their time in basic education get a factor of 1.12, while those spending less get 1.06.

But there's a limit:

The state only funds up to 15% of a district's students for special education. Even if a district has identified more students as needing special education, the cap still applies to them.

27. What are the resources required for inclusive practices?

Inclusive practices are all about fairness and embracing differences, believing that every child can learn and grow in their own way. While there's no single solution, focusing on these resources can create an inclusive environment where all students can succeed:



Classroom integration:

Including students with disabilities in regular classrooms is beneficial for everyone. Research shows that when all students learn together:

- They do better in their studies.
- They make more friends and feel more accepted.
- They have more chances to develop their skills.

School districts are financially incentivized to include students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in regular classrooms.



Comprehensive professional development (PD):

Teachers need training in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to adapt to diverse learning needs in their classrooms.



Robust technology support:

It's vital to have enough help for assistive technology. This ensures that students with disabilities can use the tools they need to learn effectively.



Sufficient support staff:

There should be plenty of staff available for models like co-teaching, especially for students with special education (Sped) needs and English language learners (MLL). These approaches help all students learn better.



Adequate support for socioeconomic needs:

Students from low-income families need extra help. This might include free meals, school supplies, counseling, and academic support programs to help them overcome any challenges they face.

Other Questions

28. What is the role of property taxes in funding public schools in Washington?

Property taxes are key for funding public education in Washington:



State property tax:

The state imposes a property tax to fund some educational programs. However, this tax alone isn't sufficient to cover the state's entire education funding. Additional state revenue sources make up the remaining amount.



Local levies:

School districts can also pass levies to fund extra programs for students. These levies are entirely dedicated to the district's educational programs.

29. What is the McCleary decision, and how did it impact education funding in Washington?

The McCleary decision was a case in the Washington State Supreme Court. It argued that the state wasn't giving enough money for basic education.

According to the State Constitution, it's the state's paramount duty to provide ample funding for the education of all students within its borders. The court agreed with the lawsuit. It said that relying too much on local levies for funding (which were much bigger back then) made the funding unstable, and the state was not fully funding education.

The Legislature changed things by adjusting the funding formula. They gave more money to staff across the state and cut back on local levies, among other things. They also passed laws outside of the McCleary case. These laws said that certain funding levels in the law, like having 17 students per class in grades K-3, would fully fund education. The court agreed, and that became the goal. But even though the funding levels are called "fully funded," many districts argue they still don't get enough money.

30. How does Washington's funding compare to other states?

Based on data from the Education Policy Institute (using info from the National Center for Education Statistics), in the 2017-2018 school year, Washington was 28th among all states in funding per student and 30th in spending per student. (This is the latest data available from the NCES website.)

31. What efforts are being made to reform or improve education funding in the state?

Consistent advocacy is crucial for changing or enhancing education funding. Many statewide education groups have their own plans and ideas for where more funding is needed. Business officers, teachers, principals, and administrators all contact legislators. They share their experiences and try to influence votes for more funding.

Other groups also push their own ideas. For instance, unions push for better pay and working conditions. Special interest groups fight for more funding in their areas. Some groups want to change the current model to support parent choice, such as private or charter schools.

32. What is the McCleary decision, and how did it impact education funding in Washington?



Around 70-80% of school funding comes from the state.

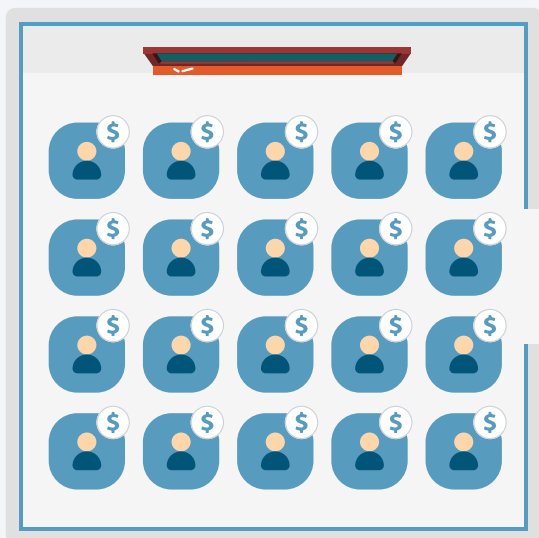
The state uses a “resource-based” formula, which means it gives money based on the number of students and what they need. The rest of the funding comes from local levies and federal money.

33. How does the resource-based formula work?

The formula looks at a few things, like:

How many students there are:

01



Each student gets a basic amount of money.

Student needs:

More money goes to students with disabilities, from low-income families, or facing tough situations.

02



03

Size of the district:

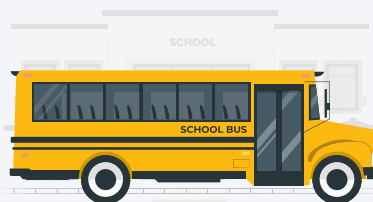
Bigger districts get more money for different programs.



Where the district is:

Rural or faraway districts might get extra money for transportation costs.

04



34. Can local communities raise extra money for their schools?

Yes, school boards can ask voters to approve property tax levies. The levies are for specific needs like maintaining buildings or hiring more teachers. But how much money they get from local sources can change a lot depending on property values.

35. What resources are available to help me understand the funding system better?

WSSDA's website and publications offer many resources. These include data, analyses, and explanations of the funding formula.



OSPI publishes "[Organization and Financing of Washington Public Schools](#)", which is also a great resource.

36. How can I advocate for more funding for my school district?

Advocating for more funding for my school district

01



Build relationships
with your state
legislators and attend
their events.

02



**Learn about the
legislative process**

They will raise awareness about funding
issues and their impact on students.

03

Gather data and evidence.

Use them to support funding requests.

*For example, use data on student
achievement or district needs.*



**04**

Collaborate

with other school directors, teachers, and parents to create a united voice.

**05**

Use media outlets

They will raise awareness about funding issues and their impact on students.

Additional Resources:



WSSDA Website:

<https://www.wssda.org/>



Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI):

<https://ospi.k12.wa.us/>



Washington State Legislature:

<https://leg.wa.gov/>











Citizen's Guide to K-12 Finance:

https://leg.wa.gov/Senate/Committees/WM/Documents/Citizen%27s%20guides/K12%20Booklet_2022.pdf



Organization and Financing of Washington's Public Schools,
[OSPI](#)

	Regionalization	Experience Factor	Levy	Local Effort Assistance (LEA)
What is it?	Mechanism by which the Legislature provides additional funds to districts with significantly higher property values than the statewide average.	Additional state funding allocated to districts based on the experience and educational qualifications of their staff, such as teachers and librarians.	Local property tax utilized to support a school district, requiring a simple majority vote from district residents to pass.	Supplemental funding stream provided by the Legislature for districts whose levy cap restricts how much they can collect per student. Also known as levy equalization.
What districts are impacted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 1.00-190 ✓ 1.090-2 ✓ 1.015-10 ✓ 1.12-28 ✓ 1.06-26 ✓ 1.135-5 ✓ 1.075-3 ✓ 1.18-31 	<p>26%</p> <p>77 out of 295</p> <p>• Impacted districts</p>	<p>96%</p> <p>285 out of 295</p> <p>• Impacted districts</p>	<p>43%</p> <p>126 out of 295</p> <p>• Impacted districts</p>
What is the funding source? (Local, state, federal)	<p>From the state as a part of apportionment (funding model)</p>	<p>From the state as a part of apportionment (funding model)</p>	<p>Local</p>	<p>State outside of apportionment (funding model)</p>
How is the funding determined?	<p>Legislature</p>	<p>Legislature</p>	<p>Local voters</p>	<p>Passage of a levy at 1.50/\$1,000 or more with the amount of that levy below the LEA threshold (\$1,941.71, in 2024).</p>
How are dollars utilized?	To offer better salaries for teachers and staff.	<p>To support and compensate educators with more years of experience and advanced degrees.</p> <p>Districts may invest Experience Factor funds in professional development programs to</p>	To fund various educational initiatives and enrichment activities, including hiring additional staff, purchasing resources, maintaining facilities, supporting extracurricular activities, and providing specialized student services.	<p>To bridge the gap between their local property tax revenue and the state's funding target.</p> <p>These funds are typically allocated to support essential educational services and programs, including hiring</p>

How are dollars utilized?		further enhance the expertise and effectiveness of their staff.		teachers and staff, purchasing educational resources such as textbooks and technology, maintaining school facilities, and providing students with additional academic and extracurricular opportunities.
How do districts benefit?	 <p>Additional money for staff</p>	 <p>Additional money for staff.</p>	 <p>Money for enrichment activities.</p>	 <p>Money for enrichment activities.</p>
What are the shortcomings?	 <p>Unsure how additional money is determined, adjacent districts with different regionalization amounts.</p> <p>Not all needed employees are funded.</p>	 <p>It narrows the focus on credentials, which could exacerbate inequities between districts. It also highlights the need for more flexibility to address diverse student needs.</p> <p>Relying solely on years of experience and degrees may undervalue alternative pathways to teaching excellence and could disrupt staffing decisions within districts.</p>	 <p>Used to pay for existing requirements due to gaps in state funding.</p> <p>Not all needed employees are funded.</p> <p>Not all districts can pass (and fewer are able to do so).</p>	 <p>It is not considered part of the program of basic education, so it is not protected from state-level cuts.</p>
Proposed solution/ask of the legislature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate based on actual need. • If the lid is increased/ lifted, helping some districts, other solutions are offered for districts that do not receive regionalization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More frequent updates are needed for those districts that are eligible. • Ensuring districts with more experienced teachers or more teachers with advanced degrees are eligible. • One enhancement for experience, one for advanced degrees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase state funding, so districts aren't so reliant on levies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full equalization up to the per pupil cap.