

Effective Education Advocacy

Talking School with State Legislators

Overview

- What to Say
- Who to Say It To
- How to Say It

Key Issues in Education

- SPED Shortfall Impacts All Students
- Materials, Supplies, and Other Cost Inflation Crunch
- Outdated Prototypical Model Forcing Cuts
- Transportation Formula is Out of Date
- Inclusive Transition to Kindergarten is On the Chopping Block
- Decrease in Investment in Education since McCleary

SPED Shortfall

The Federal and State governments currently provide additional funding for up to 16% of students in a district, while some districts provide SPED services for 25% or more of their students.

Districts are required to provide SPED services for all students who qualify, and the difference in funding comes from general education.

There have been improvements in this funding, but it's still falling almost 20% short for 2023-2024 (statewide).

MSOCs

Materials, Supplies, and Other Costs includes insurance, utilities, equipment, classroom supplies, and more. Last year the legislature increased MSOC funding by 1.9%.

Since 2018, the cost of electricity in Western Washington has gone up 37%.

Since 2020, the cost of insurance for Washington's school districts has increased by nearly 60%.

Prototypical School Model

Legislature designed “prototypical” schools (elementary, middle, and high) and what staff a school would need for that many students. Funding is determined by enrollment compared to those prototypical schools.

The model provides 1 certificated teacher for every 17 students at K-3, but that includes specialists, so classes are never that small, and every 27-29 at 4-12.

The model provides an elementary school our size with a little over 75% of a librarian, 1 teaching assistant, 2.33 office folks/non-instructional aides, a little over 75% of a counselor, 15% of a social worker, 5% of a psychologist, just under 2 custodians, and less than a third of a school nurse.

And that is after *improvements* to the model for mental and physical health. It's badly broken.

Transportation Costs

Costs for replacements for school buses and especially fuel costs have gone up significantly faster than increases to transportation funding has.

This is honestly one area that I have to educate myself a little further – I know that the legislature did some work to provide coverage for loss in ridership during and after COVID, but I don't know exactly what else needs to be done here.

Administrators mentioned that this is the area where actual costs are closest to funding at the moment, and not a crisis point for our district.

Inclusive Transition to Kindergarten (ITK)

This Kindergarten preparatory class has been really important for our district, to help students who need it get ready for school. It's need-based, focusing on those students and families it will have the biggest impact for.

Last year the legislature was going to take funding away from ITK programs and give it to ECEAP (which does similar things, but which is no longer available to this district). We (and many other districts) fought to keep it, and the legislature kept it funded – except so many districts are using it, the funding runs out in March. We need it to stay funded this year, next year, and beyond.

Decreasing Investment

Immediately following the “McCleary Solution,” state funding for K-12 education (the constitutional “paramount duty” of the state) was just over 52% of the operating budget. Now it’s 43%, and that number is well below the national average.

Our Legislators

Senator Ron Muzzall - Senate Ways and Means Committee

Representative Dave Paul - Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Committee

Representative Clyde Shavers - Vice Chair, House Education Committee

Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee:

Sens. Lisa Wellman, Twila Nobles, Claire Wilson, Brad Hawkins, Perry Dozier, Sam Hunt, Jim McCune, Mark Mullet, & Jamie Pedersen

House Education Committee:

Reps. Sharon Tomiko Santos, Clyde Shavers, Skyler Rude, Joel McEntire, Steve Bergquist, Travis Couture, Carolyn Eslick, Paul Harris, Stephanie McClintock, Greg Nance, Lillian Ortiz-Self, Gerry Pollett, Mike Steele, Monica Jurado Stonier, & Joe Timmons.

Senator Ron Muzzall

Has been resistant to talking about increasing education spending because his caucus doesn't control the budget.

No on:

LGBTQ+ Education, Electric School Bus Purchases

Yes on:

Expanding Free School Lunch, Opioid Overdose Reversal Meds, Computer Science as Grad Requirement, Legal Protections for Public Libraries

Office Contact Number: (360) 786-7618

Online Contact: <https://ronmuzzall.src.wastateleg.org/contact-me/>

Representative Dave Paul

Always willing to listen, went to bat for ITK Program last year.

Yes on just about everything for schools (except for two Did Not Votes on Prohibiting Restraints and Isolation and Teacher State Residency Program).

Office Contact Number: 360-786-7914

Online Contact: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/pbc/memberEmail/10/2>

Representative Clyde Shavers

Very responsive, really pushed hard for ITK, spends much of his time on education issues.

Yes on all education votes.

Office Contact Number: (360) 786-7884

Online Contact: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/pbc/memberEmail/10/1>

How to Advocate - How to Say It

Making it personal is key. Board members and financial specialists can bring all the numbers we want, but what really makes a difference is a student, staff member, or guardian's story.

Thank them for something they've done recently on the topic you want to talk about, tell them how it impacts you, and have a specific ask for them.

Ex: We really appreciate you pushing to fund Inclusive Transitional Kindergarten last year, but funding runs out in April or May, and we need these programs to keep going. <Personal Story>. So I hope you can push to ensure that ITK is funded alongside other pre-K options in this budget. Thank you for your hard work.

How to Advocate - When to Say It

Washington State runs on two-year budgets – the first year is the major budgeting year, the second year is just tweaks. This is the first year of a new biennium.

You can contact our legislators via email or phone (an aide will take a message, this is best to simply support a particular bill). You can even try to arrange a meeting with them for a 15-20 minute conversation. Be sure to say that you're a constituent of theirs.

You can email the entire Education Committee about a particular bill.

You can even offer to testify at a committee meeting about a given bill – this is usually done via Zoom.

How to Advocate - When to Say It

Check on the progress of bills (during the January-February legislative session) and see which ones are important to education efforts on the Washington State School Directors Association's Bill Tracker:

<https://wssda.org/advocacy/legislative-updates/bill-tracker/>

You can sign up to testify and track *all* the bills on the Washington State Legislature's own website:

<https://leg.wa.gov/bills-meetings-and-session/bills/>

How to Keep Advocating

Working with legislators is not a one-and-done thing usually. The most effective way to advocate is to create a relationship with them. After all, they represent you.

This can be particularly powerful when you speak to them in favor of a particular bill, it passes, and you can contact them afterwards to tell them how it passing affects your family. Give them positive stories of their work impacting students, and they'll want to hear from you again.

tl;dr

Want a simple, straightforward way to make a difference?

- Pick a cause (MSOCs, Prototypical School Funding, SPED, etc).
- Tell a personal story about how that cause affects your family.
- Email or send a letter to your legislators about it with a specific ask (support this bill, make sure this point is in that bill, oppose the other bill, etc).

Questions?