



# FEDERAL WAY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## 2025 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Federal Way Public Schools is proud to be the most diverse district in Washington state. With this diversity comes both immense opportunity and a critical need for equitable resources. Our legislative priorities are focused on ensuring that every student, regardless of their individual background or where they live within Washington state, has equitable access to high quality education, resources, and opportunities to thrive and succeed.

### Fully fund the cost of special education services.

School districts have a moral and legal obligation to serve all students with disabilities in Washington, regardless of cost of services, yet they do not have the resources to provide those services. **The unfunded educational needs of students receiving specially designed instruction in Federal Way Public Schools totaled roughly \$6 million for the 2023-24 school year.** Even with recent funding enhancements, the gap between school district expenditures for special education and related services substantially exceeds funding—and continues to grow. Districts must rely on local funding sources, such as levies, to meet essential costs. **In FWPS, 14.8% of our local levy went toward filling this gap in the 2023-24 school year.** The state must fully fund special education programs and align funding with inclusionary practices, remove the artificial caps on funding, and increase the funding factor to meet the actual cost of special education.

### Comprehensively fix the pupil transportation formula.

**The formula must be more transparent, predictable, and adequately funded.** The intent of the current Student Transportation Allocation Reporting System (STARS) is to allow the Legislature to allocate funding to districts that aligns with actual costs of providing school transportation services. However, this formula has consistently underfunded districts' pupil transportation expenditures and does not consider school districts' obligation to provide transportation to McKinney-Vento scholars, which often must occur through private carriers. **Since 2019-20, FWPS has increased from serving 863 McKinney-Vento scholars to 1,781 in the 2023-24 school year. McKinney-Vento transportation alone generated approximately \$3.8 million in unfunded costs for the 2023-24 school year.**

### Immediately address the underfunding of Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC)

While staffing represents the largest expense for school districts, there are many costs to running a school district which are non-staff related. The Legislature provides an allocation to cover these costs by providing for Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC) at a specific rate per student; however, **state funding for MSOC has not kept pace with actual school district costs. Property & Liability insurance alone has increased over 160 percent (or \$4 million) in the last five years, while utility costs have increased more than 40 percent. Other costs, such as food and fuel, have also increased dramatically.** Current per pupil rates for Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs simply do not come close to matching the costs of running a school district. When required costs of running a school district exceed state funding, local revenues, mostly levies, must be used to fill the gap, reducing local resources for school district and community expectations.

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### Reform Levy/Local Effort Assistance

Inequities between districts were exacerbated by capping levy authority of property rich districts at a higher level than neighboring property poor districts—while diminishing levy capacity for all districts at the same time. Spiking housing values are negatively impacting many districts' efforts to adopt levies and are causing many districts eligible for Local Effort Assistance (LEA) to lose funding—or lose eligibility all together. **Legislators have consistently stated their intent to “reform” levy/ Local Effort Assistance (LEA) policies; however, action has yet to be taken. In 6 years, LEA funding for Federal Way Public Schools has decreased 77 percent, or over \$8 million.**



### Address Regionalization Inequities

The legislature must immediately update the methodology of regionalization and experience factors to ensure school districts receive more consistent and equitable resources. True labor market regions are not defined by a school district's boundaries, and the implementation of experience factors has exacerbated existing inequities between districts. **The current model is flawed. It creates a significant disadvantage for some districts to attract and retain teachers and leaves Federal Way Public Schools short by over \$10 million of funding each year, as compared to other school districts in King County (\$50 million collectively over 5-years).**



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**Dr. Dani Pfeiffer, Superintendent**