

How We Got Here:

Funding Realities and Tough Choices in Yakima Schools

A Message from Yakima School Board President Ryan Beckett

As Board President, it is important to share how Yakima School District arrived at its current financial position—and what we're doing to responsibly manage public resources while protecting the programs and people that matter most.



→ A Broken Funding Model

The 2017 McCleary decision was meant to fix Washington's school funding system. It did raise teacher salaries statewide—an overdue and important change. But it also introduced new inequities. It failed to fund essential operational costs like transportation, security, technology, and mental health services. Then came “regionalization,” a legislated formula that increased state salary funding for some districts and not others. Yakima was left behind.

Then the pandemic hit.

Enrollment dropped sharply. At first, it seemed temporary. But birthrates are falling, homeschooling is on the rise, and—according to a Stanford University study—many of those enrollment losses have proven permanent. Yakima's student count has not recovered and YSD revenue is based off of our enrollment count.

→ Staffing Didn't Adjust Fast Enough

While enrollment declined, staffing remained flat. Prior administrations did not adjust personnel to reflect new enrollment levels. Over the past five years, the current district leadership has worked to bring the system back into alignment. That work began with attrition. More recently, it has included the formal—and legally required—process of reduction in force.

These are complex and often unpopular situations requiring tough decisions. But they are the right decisions. Yakima's long-term financial health depends on it.

We are watching the state and Federal realities closely. Most recently, on June 25, 2025, the revenue forecast for our state was released predicting a \$720 million shortfall.

→ A Lean Central Office and Shared Sacrifice

Yakima School District already operates with the region's lowest central office staffing ratio, and one of the lowest in the state according to OSPI data. That lean team has now been reduced even further. Over 80 management-level employees—including executive directors, department leads, and program managers—have taken voluntary furlough days or adjusted their vacation buy-back benefits to protect services for students.

This isn't just about management. It's about stewardship. These choices reflect a disciplined, long-term approach to preserving our district's core mission.

→ Leadership Matters

I recognize that the superintendent's salary is a frequent point of conversation. Yakima School District is not an average system—it is one of the most complex educational environments in Washington. Our district serves high numbers of students from poverty, many students with special education support, bilingual support, and migrant assistance. We manage 11 labor unions and lead extensive family and language access programs. These layers of complexity demand strategic leadership and relentless advocacy.

Superintendent Dr. Trevor Greene is doing both. He is a bilingual instructional leader, a legislative voice, a visible community partner, and an astute operational leader. He has led the district he graduated from through historic funding challenges while uniquely protecting classroom instruction and investing in bilingual education, school safety, and mental health.

His compensation reflects the scale of that complexity and responsibility—and the board's confidence in his leadership.

→ Looking Ahead

I know these decisions are not easy. But they are necessary. Yakima's students deserve a financially stable, academically excellent public education system. On behalf of the Yakima School Board, I want to thank you for your continued trust, engagement, and partnership as we do this work together.

Ryan Beckett

President, Yakima School District Board of Directors

