

2026 Legislative Priorities

from the Lakewood School Board



“It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders...”

Article IX, Section 1, Washington State Constitution



The Lakewood School Board of Directors firmly believes that the 2026 Legislature must act this session to fulfill its obligation to Washington children. Without additional funding, meeting the needs of children in our state will become increasingly dependent on voters in local communities and lead to increasingly inequitable outcomes. Our own experience has led us to recommend three Legislative priorities.

Special Education

Lakewood School District has both a legal and moral obligation to serve all students with disabilities, regardless of the cost of those services. We appreciate the actions taken by the 2025 Legislature to remove the cap on student percentages and increase the funding multiplier for special education services. These are important steps forward. However, the special education funding we receive still does not cover our special education expenses.

This reduces resources for other programs and services that our community has come to expect. To ensure school districts receive funding

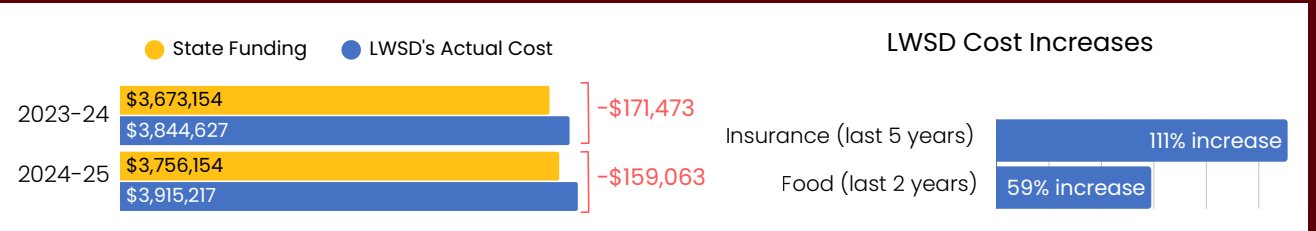


that reflects the actual cost of service delivery, the Legislature must increase special education funding to match what districts are legally required to spend.

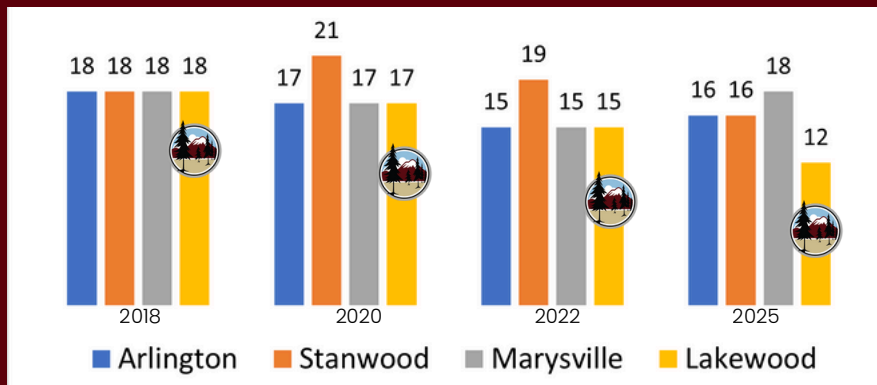
Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC)

While staffing is Lakewood School District's largest expense, costs for Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC) have increasingly outpaced the funding we receive. Many of these expenses—such as utilities and insurance—are essential and non-negotiable components of operating a school district.

Although the Legislature provides a per-student allocation for MSOC, state funding has not kept pace with the actual costs districts face. When the basic costs of running our schools exceed what the state provides, local levies must be used to fill the gap—reducing resources available for the programs and services our community expects and values.



Modify Regionalization/Experience Factor



The regionalization factor was originally intended to reflect a community's housing costs. In 2018–19, Lakewood School District was assigned a regionalization factor of 18%, matching that of our neighboring districts. It's important to note that Lakewood does not have its own city government—our residents have home addresses in Marysville, Arlington, and Stanwood. Since then, Lakewood's regionalization factor has been reduced to 12%, while neighboring districts continue to receive between 16% and 18%. This disparity places a greater burden on our community to fund staff salaries through our local levy. The current regionalization methodology lacks transparency and has deepened funding inequities. We urge the Legislature to revamp the regionalization and experience factor formulas to ensure school districts receive consistent, equitable, and predictable resources.