

Lawmakers, you did not make a ‘significant investment’ in WA schools

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As the 2025 legislative session concludes, those of us who serve and advocate for Washington’s public schools are once again grappling with a painful truth: The Legislature has failed to uphold its constitutional duty to amply fund K–12 education. That is not an opinion; the data says so.

Some legislators may try to spin the outcome as a “significant investment” in public education. Don’t buy it — it’s simply not true.

School districts across the state are grappling with a severe and ongoing funding crisis. Yet lawmakers missed a chance to meaningfully invest in students. A potential moment for bold leadership became another example of political inaction.

This is not about hypothetical impacts. Across Washington, school closures, rising class sizes, and cuts to programs and services are becoming the norm. Last year, districts were forced to make painful reductions due to funding shortfalls and inflation. Now, with little to no progress this session, schools face another round of potentially severe cuts.

The impact is real, and kids are paying the price.

Three areas of longstanding underfunding — special education, materials, supplies, and operating costs and student transportation — remain unresolved.

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Special education remains significantly underfunded, forcing districts to divert resources from other services to meet legal obligations and most importantly, serve some of our most vulnerable students. The current statewide funding deficit for school districts is over \$1 billion. The Legislature's 2025 response? \$274 million — just a quarter of what's required to fully fund special education.

MSOC funding, meant to cover basic operational needs such as food, electricity, and insurance, hasn't kept pace with inflation or the evolving costs of running schools. The current estimated shortfall stands at over \$1 billion statewide. The Legislature's response this session? Just \$90 million.

And finally, student transportation continues to be funded by an outdated formula that fails to meet the needs of many communities. Access to reliable transportation is foundational to equitable education. Yet again, the Legislature offered no policy reform — and then increased the gas tax.

These shortfalls are not new, and the solutions are not unknown. What's missing is not information or clarity, it's the political will to act.

Some lawmakers may cite [House Bill 2049](#) as “victory” for schools by increasing the local tax authority for school levies. But this proposal predominantly benefits affluent districts with higher property values — one of the primary arguments behind the school funding lawsuit known as McCleary. So here we go again, further widening the disparity gap.

Our state constitution is clear: it is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children. It's not a suggestion — it's the law. Yet most legislators continue to treat K-12 education as just another budget item, diminishing its importance with

half-measures and delays.

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Yes, the state faces fiscal pressures. Yes, the economy is cooling. But none of that justifies turning away from our children. The resources are available. The failure to act is a choice — a choice that prioritizes other interests above public education.

This session, a majority in the Legislature once again chose to walk away from its paramount duty, leaving schools vulnerable to the very crisis it had the power to address.

While deeply disappointed in what has transpired this session, WASA is more determined than ever to continue advocating for schools so they have the resources necessary to provide the educational experience our students need and deserve. To the public: your voice is essential. Don't be misled by political spin. The crisis is far from resolved.

The next legislative session is almost a year away, but the time to act is now. Visit waschoolfunding.org. Ask your legislators: How are you fulfilling your constitutional obligation to our students?

WASA remains committed to the students and schools of Washington state. We will continue pressing for lasting, meaningful change in education funding. Our schools are still waiting. Our children still deserve better.

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