

Federal Policy Focus

Puget Sound Educational Service District • 2026-27

PSESD delivers instructional and administrative support to early learning, pre-K through post-secondary schools, and direct service to students and families across the Puget Sound region.

Who We Serve

- 35 school districts, nine charter schools, and two Tribal Compact Schools across King and Pierce counties and Bainbridge Island.
- **424,562 K-12 public school students*** and 267 private schools serving 48,393 students.**
- **39% of Washington's K-12 public school students** (62% of the K-12 students we serve are students of color)*.
- **More than 5,000 early learners** (Early Head Start, Head Start, and ECEAP models).

Our Funding

More than \$29 million in federal funding supports early learning, special education, child nutrition, and student and family programs across our region, primarily through Head Start and Early Head Start.

Our Districts & Tribal Compact Schools

- Auburn
- Bainbridge Island
- Bellevue
- Bethel
- Carbonado
- Chief Leschi
- Clover Park
- Dieringer
- Eatonville
- Enumclaw
- Federal Way
- Fife
- Franklin Pierce
- Highline
- Issaquah
- Kent
- Lake Washington
- Mercer Island
- Muckleshoot
- Northshore
- Orting
- Peninsula
- Puyallup
- Renton
- Riverview
- Seattle
- Shoreline
- Skykomish
- Snoqualmie Valley
- Steilacoom
- Sumner-Bonney Lake
- Tacoma
- Tahoma
- Tukwila
- University Place
- Vashon Island
- White River

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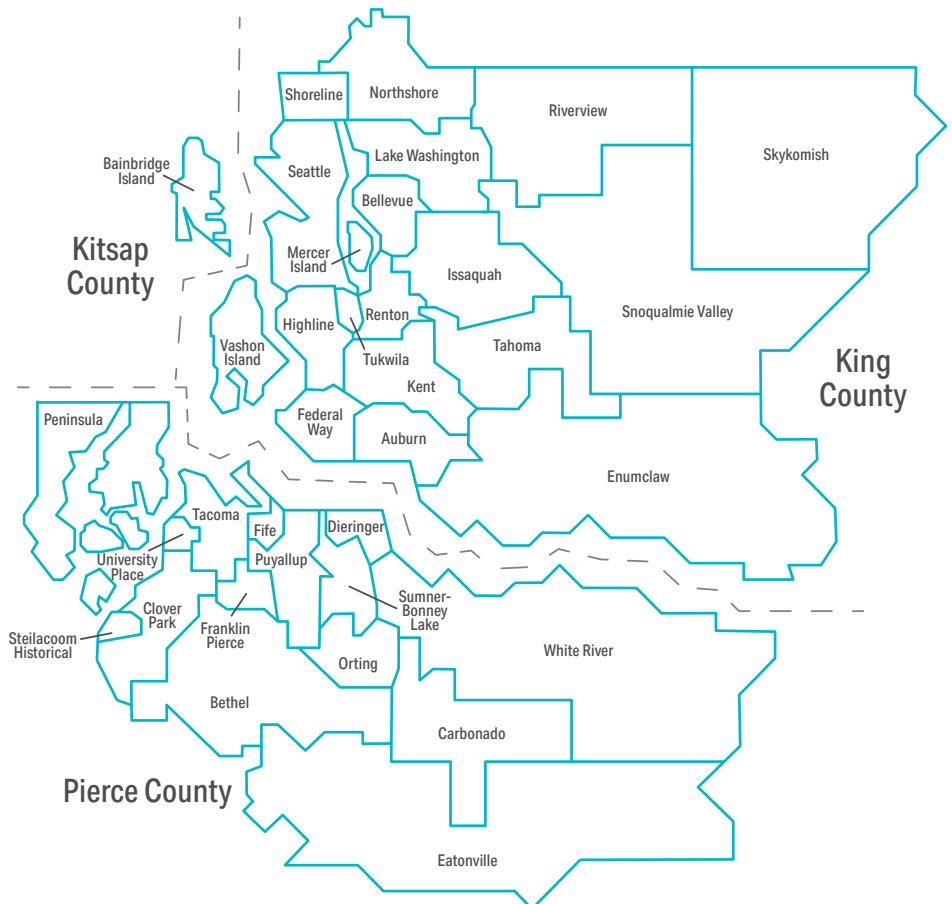
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Our Federal Priorities

Protect and Strengthen Head Start and Early Head Start

Head Start and Early Head Start provide early education along with health, nutrition and family support that strengthen children and families. PSESD serves over 5,000 early learners across Head Start, Early Head Start, and ECEAP, though eligible families in our region far outnumber available spots. Federal investment should protect and strengthen these programs, expand access for families who earn too much to qualify but too little to afford quality care, and address the workforce shortage caused by low pay.

Sustained federal investment in the early learning workforce, inclusive services for children with disabilities, and coordinated birth-to-five systems is critical to ensuring more children enter kindergarten healthy, supported and ready to succeed.

Provide Stable and Adequate Federal Investment in Public Education

Federal funding helps school districts serve students and helps regional systems like PSESD use resources efficiently, strengthen programs and respond to emerging needs. Current fiscal year 2027 proposals put that funding at risk, including a nationwide cut of about \$1.9 billion to Title I, Part A, elimination of Title II-A and Title III-A funding, and only a modest increase for IDEA Part B. These cuts would be felt by students in poverty, multilingual learners and students with disabilities. Congress should provide stable, predictable funding, fully fund IDEA and protect Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV.

Stable federal investment must also include E-Rate, which helps schools and libraries afford broadband and Wi-Fi. The FCC has opened a rulemaking asking whether E-Rate should be narrowed, restructured or phased out, with comments due October 13, 2026. PSESD-area districts received nearly \$49 million in E-Rate commitments over the current 5-year cycle, with 63% in the two highest discount bands (80% and above), serving our highest-poverty districts.

Ensure Every Student Has a Supported Path Beyond High School

Students need advising, financial aid, career exploration and transition support, not just access to postsecondary education. In our region, 96% of surveyed South King County high school students say they want education beyond high school, but only about 30% earn a degree or credential by their mid-twenties. Federal policy should strengthen advising, simplify FAFSA and Pell Grant access, invest in scholarships and career pathways, and support partnerships among schools, colleges, apprenticeships, and employers.

Students and families should be able to navigate a clear, affordable pathway from high school to a two- or four-year degree, apprenticeship, industry credential, or other meaningful postsecondary opportunity, with the support needed not only to enroll, but to complete.

Source: Road Map Project, “Let Us Succeed: Student College and Career Aspirations” (June 2019).

