

ESD 112 REGION SUPERINTENDENTS

2022 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



COVID-19 continues to have a tremendous impact on Washington Schools. While in-person learning has been prioritized and students are back in the classroom, staffing shortages and underfunding of areas like school nurses, transportation and special education continue to create monumental challenges for the education system. The 30 school district superintendents of the ESD 112 region appreciate the past investments our elected officials have made in education, however the school districts we lead

face significant issues and need your assistance to ensure students have equitable access to essential education and programming. Student enrollment continues to be lower than anticipated, essential staff positions remain difficult to fill, funding continues to fall short in areas of great need, and a super majority requirement continues to prevent schools (especially small rural ones) from modernizing their facilities. As superintendents, we urge the 2022 Legislature to address the critical K-12 needs outlined below.

PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS



1. Enrollment Stabilization

School Districts across Southwest Washington continue to see enrollment losses into the 2021-22 school year. The ESD 112 region is one of the hardest hit areas in the state. A total of 6,200 students, or 6.16% of the FTE students, have not returned since the last pre-COVID enrollment reports from 2019. With the return to in person learning it was predicted that enrollments would increase to pre-pandemic levels, obviously this has not occurred.

ACTION REQUEST: Continue enrollment stabilization into the 2021-22 school year to provide adequate funding for school districts to meet their contractual obligations. These funds were already appropriated by the legislature in the existing budget. We are simply asking to use the 2018-19 enrollment totals to fund the 2021-22 school year.



2. Transportation Funding

The STARS transportation funding formula is underfunded, lacks transparency, consistency and needs to be replaced. Transportation costs are not sufficiently funded by the state and districts cannot easily determine how their funding is calculated. As a result, local levies continue to be tapped to cover funding shortages.

ACTION REQUEST: Fully fund a simpler and more transparent transportation funding formula.



3. Special Education Funding

Despite the McCleary Decision investment, Special Education remains woefully underfunded. The pandemic has both exacerbated and highlighted the inadequacy in funding. Staff shortages plague the program as paraprofessionals and specialists are very difficult to hire. Funding shortfalls do not allow for an increase in wages to help fill these positions. Once again, local levies are tapped to make up for state/federal shortfalls.

ACTION REQUEST: Special education is a basic education responsibility and thus we implore the state to fully fund the education of our most vulnerable students.



4. School Nurse Funding

The prototypical school funding model does not adequately fund school nurses and local levies are making up for the state funding shortfall. The current model funds .232 nurses for a district of 1,400 students. 1-1351 staffing levels indicate this number of students should generate 2.297 school nurse FTE. The pandemic has further exposed the inadequacy of the funding. School nurses have many regulatory duties and the pandemic has required a dramatic increase in nurse workload as they support contact tracing, COVID testing, ill student assessment, and serve as the district health expert.

ACTION REQUEST: Please support the OSPI request for additional funding to increase nursing staff ratios in schools.

Continued

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES FACED BY SCHOOLS



1. Address staffing shortages

Over the past year many school positions have gone unfilled, including certified specialists, bus drivers, food service workers, and para professionals. Substitutes for all positions, including teachers, are also very scarce. With staff shortages across all parts of our economy, the private sector is offering hiring bonuses and increased pay as incentive to attract new employees. In order to alleviate overburdened remaining school staff and fill unfilled positions, we request that you:

PLEASE CONSIDER:

- ✓ Reform retire/rehire retirement rules to allow retired individuals to work more hours.
- ✓ Increase substitute teacher pay as well as increase the number of days for which substitutes are funded.



2. Support simple majority for school district capital projects

The requirement of a super majority to pass bonds

for capital projects is making it nearly impossible for districts to modernize, update or build new facilities to support 21st century education. Very few bonds have passed since the pandemic began.

Smaller communities simply cannot afford nor do they have the tax base to support the cost of new facilities. The 60% threshold is proving to be an enormous obstacle to modernizing school facilities and students are suffering the consequences of dilapidate school buildings.

ACTION REQUEST: Please support a simple majority requirement for the passing of school district capital projects and remove the super majority requirement.



3. Pause unfunded mandates

The pandemic has created a huge amount of additional work and reporting for school personnel.

ACTION REQUEST: Please either fully fund or delay any added requests for information or job responsibilities until such time that school personnel can better manage the duties.

THE 30 SCHOOL DISTRICTS OF SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON



THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DISTRICT 112 REGION SUPERINTENDENTS REPRESENT:

Battle Ground
Camas
Castle Rock
Centerville
Evergreen
Glenwood
Green Mountain
Hockinson
Kalama
Kelso
Klickitat

La Center
Longview
Lyle
Mill A
Mount Pleasant
Naselle-Grays River Valley
Ocean Beach
Ridgefield
Roosevelt
Skamania
Stevenson-Carson

Toutle Lake
Trout Lake
Vancouver
Wahkiakum
Washington School for the Deaf
Washington State School for the Blind
Washougal
White Salmon Valley
Wishram
Woodland

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