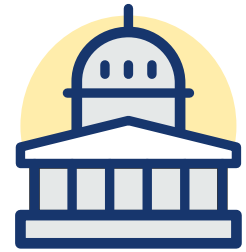


2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



Washington State schools are returning to normalcy following years of pandemic disruption.

Mental health challenges continue to plague students of all ages, but thanks to the Legislature's support, schools are better equipped to provide life-saving intervention.

Other, persistent issues remain, including underfunding for essential services and positions: special education, classified positions, and materials, supplies and operating costs.

The super-majority requirement and eligibility restrictions also hinder school facility modernization, especially in districts furthest from opportunity.

We urge the 2024 Legislature to address these ongoing K-12 challenges.

PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS



1. Fully Fund the Prototypical Model and Address Staffing Shortages

Classified staff are an essential part of our schools, yet the prototypical model funds only roughly 50% of the classified positions school districts require. The other half must be supplemented by local levies. With staffing shortages across all parts of our economy, the private sector is offering hiring bonuses and increased pay as incentives to attract new employees, leaving school districts with shortages in critical classified positions like certified specialists, bus drivers, food service workers, substitutes, and paraprofessionals. If the Legislature chooses to focus on paraeducator salaries as a standalone item, please consider adding those positions through the prototypical model rather than mandating a salary range and creating requirements at the local level.

ACTION REQUEST:

- ☞ Increase the number of state-funded classified positions in the prototypical model to provide additional units for support staff. Paraeducators are an essential part of our school system, just like all classified staff including nutrition staff, bus drivers, office personnel, and custodians.
- ☞ Increase pay for substitutes in the prototypical model and increase the number of days for which substitutes are funded.



2. Cover Basic Education MSOC Costs

School Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC) such as technology, utilities/insurance coverage, curriculum, library materials, professional development, facilities and maintenance, and other supplies and supports remain unfunded or underfunded, despite being categories in basic education. Current MSOC revenues provided by the state have not kept up with historic inflation since the inception of McCleary. School districts are left to pay for these essential, basic education supports out of local levy funds.

ACTION REQUEST:

- ☞ Fully fund important MSOC categories as part of basic education funding through the prototypical model and put parameters around this funding to designate its use.

Continued



3. Address Special Education Funding Shortfall

School leaders are thankful that the Legislature raised the Special Education funding limit to 15%. While this investment is a good “down payment” on a longstanding underfunding issue, the funding still falls about \$500 million short of fully funding this basic education service. Once again, local levies are tapped to make up for state and federal deficits.

ACTION REQUEST:

☞ Special education is a basic education responsibility and thus we implore lawmakers to fully fund the cost of education for our most vulnerable students. Remove the 15% funding cap, increase the per-student multiplier, and provide ample safety net funding.



4. Create Equitable Access to 21st Century School Facilities

OSPI’s capital facility grant programs allow school districts to update failing infrastructure and extend the life of a school facility by decades. These grants have been successfully utilized; however are grossly underfunded and the 1,000-student enrollment cap to access this grant prevents many small schools from accessing these funds. Further, the requirement of a supermajority to pass bonds for capital projects makes it nearly impossible for districts to modernize, update, or build new facilities. Smaller communities cannot afford, nor do they have the tax base to support passage of a bond. The 60% threshold is an enormous obstacle to modernizing and updating the safety of school facilities.

ACTION REQUEST:

- ☞ Increase funding for OSPI’s capital facility grant programs and expand eligibility from the current 1,000-student cap to 1,500 students enrolled so that more schools can leverage this resource to make necessary infrastructure, and safety and security updates.
- ☞ Support a simple majority requirement for the passing of school district capital projects and remove the supermajority requirement.

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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