

## 2019 Local Funding Work Group Priorities Required Updates to New Education Funding Policy



The *Local Funding Work Group* was established in 2014 and represents the voices of nearly 8,000 school district leaders from our state's 295 school districts. We bring a front-line understanding to the issues facing the Legislature as progress is made in revising Washington's K-12 education financing system.

Over the past several years, the Legislature has made great strides in recognizing need for greater alignment, accountability, and funding. Some work is on track, more needs to be accomplished. We appreciate that many are tired of the education funding mandate; however, a well-educated populace adds value to the lives of every citizen, to our economy, and to our future. Our students await your leadership.

To that end, we propose that these immediate priorities be acted upon by the 2019 Legislature:

➤ **Update the Prototypical School Funding Model to align with Initiative 1351**

Comprehensive student supports, and services are a clear need yet, the currently funded staffing levels are not meeting our student needs; especially for critical health, social services and safety personnel. In the 2011 transition to the Prototypical Funding model these areas were funded at low ratios to keep within targeted funding amounts, without regard to appropriate staffing levels. Since then, the need for student supports in local school districts has grown exponentially, yet the funding ratios provided for mental health professionals, counselors, and nurses have remained at the same values used in 2011.

**Here are just a few examples of the funded staffing levels Statewide that are inadequate to address the student needs within our school system:**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>1 Psychologist per 38,857 students</b>  | <b>1 school nurse per 6,442 students</b> |
| <b>1 Social Worker per 15,841 students</b> | <b>1 safety staff per 5,378 students</b> |

➤ **Fully Fund Legal Requirements**

We urge the Legislature to address the following financial components of education funding:

**Fund the full cost of Special Education** – Providing a free and appropriate public education for students with Individualized Education Plans is required and should not be subsidized with local levies. State funding for students with disabilities continues to be underfunded by nearly \$400 million. The special education safety net must fully support high cost programs and services.

**Fund the full cost of the School Employees Benefits Program (SEBB) Implementation:** If the State cannot afford the full cost of providing benefits to all eligible employees, the current tentative agreement should not be ratified.

**K-3 Staffing Requirements - K-3 relief:** Allow districts to meet certificated staffing ratios of 17:1 by investing in additional types of certificated staff as requested in the first bullet.

➤ **Temporarily Return to a Levy structure Based on a Percentage of State & Federal Revenues until Basic Education is Truly Fully Funded**

Inequities between districts was not solved by the now in place “property tax swap.” The current system, when using the \$1.50 per thousand rate vs. \$2,500 per student, whichever is lesser, creates significant inequities between property rich and property poor districts and fails to recognize the differences in district market costs. In addition, our communities want the opportunity to support their schools and interests through the local levies. Districts should be allowed to collect higher levies than currently constrained so that no district experiences an overall revenue shortfall. And, it is imperative, that the continued inequity this temporary fix would create be addressed by an increase in the per pupil LEA threshold. Any additional levy capacity provided must include clear limits to ensure that levy funding doesn’t get bargained away.

➤ **Address Salary Allocations and State Schedule**

Elimination of the statewide salary schedule and mix factor created significant inequities. Districts with senior staff need additional monies to support these higher costs. In addition, state funding is not adequate to cover classified and administrative salaries. In 2019, we urge the Legislature to expand and improve the experience factor set by the 2018 Legislature and to begin work on development of a future state salary allocation schedule.

➤ **Advance a constitutional amendment that would empower voters to approve school bonds by a simple majority**

These are the combined priority recommendations of the following organizations: Washington State School Directors’ Association (WSSDA), Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA), Washington Association of School Business Officials (WASBO), Washington School Personnel Association (WSPA), Alliance of Educational Associations (AEA) and Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP).

Adopted: 01/18/2019