



2020 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

In recent years, our State Legislators have made major financial investments in Washington's public education system. We acknowledge and thank them for their dedication to quality instruction and meaningful learning experiences for all students.

As the 2020 legislative session gets under way we, the Washington Association of School Business Officials, look forward to working with policy-makers to continue strengthening our K-12 public education finance system.

Our members have identified the following issues of immediate concern:

SCHOOL EMPLOYEES BENEFITS BOARD (SEBB) POLICY AND FUNDING

The SEB Board policies and related funding need to be revised to eliminate the current fiscal impact on school district programs. We appreciate that SEBB policies expand the number of employees eligible for health benefits and recognize that this comes with a cost. State allocations for health benefits cover only a portion of school district staff. To pay the increased costs for **all** staff, districts must divert other funding from current programming negatively impacting resources available for instruction and other support services.

Recommended Solution:

- Provide funding to cover the full cost of the SEBB program. This would require new allocations for: substitutes and temporary employees, and all actual staff including those not represented in formula staffing units generated by the Prototypical School Funding Model.
- Increase benefit eligibility to 960 hours per year, aligning SEBB eligibility with the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) policies.

PROVIDE CONSISTENT, EQUITABLE & AMPLE EDUCATION RESOURCES

The new policies for Local Effort Assistance (LEA) and Levy collections have created larger inequities between "property-poor" and "property-rich" districts. The 2019 increase in the levy rate from \$1.50 to \$2.50 did assist many districts, while further exacerbating inequities for other districts. In several instances, equalization funding per student has been cut 60-70% because districts are limited to \$1,593 per student. In order to address the large gap that has been created, consider changing the LEA formula back to a percentage of budget model or reinstate small school factors into LEA and increase the per pupil Levy amount from \$2,565 to \$3,078 for all districts.

DEFINE TEACHER DUTIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Following state funding enhancements and local collective bargaining over the past two years, teacher salaries have increased to competitive, market levels; however, the Legislature has not clearly defined the minimum professional duties and expectations for teachers.

Recommended Solution:

- Clearly define that the professional responsibilities and time required to provide the state's statutory program of basic education exceed the required number of instructional hours to include such integral and essential activities as preparing, planning and coordinating instruction; collaborating with other teachers or staff; meeting with parents; and evaluating student learning.
- Continue to allow supplemental contracts, but tie additional compensation to defined extra time or responsibilities that are uniquely associated with a specific assignment above and beyond the tasks of all other teachers.

SPECIAL EDUCATION UNDERFUNDING

Programs to support the additional costs of students with disabilities in school districts continue to be underfunded. Prior to the 2019 session, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction identified special education funding needs of more than \$300 million. The 2019-21 budget provided less than \$80 million to increase the excess cost multiplier. While appreciated, this still leaves a significant funding gap, requiring local school districts to back-fill the underfunding with levy funds.

Recommended Solution:

- Fully address the persistent underfunding of programs to support students with disabilities in this supplemental budget.

STAFFING ALLOCATION IMPROVEMENTS

When implemented in 2011, the conversion to the new Prototypical School Funding Model was cost neutral, based on actual average statewide staffing configurations at the time with no additional dollars. Improvements to the staffing ratios were anticipated in future years as funds became available. We encourage the continued use of the allocation-only model allowing districts to respond to their unique student populations. However, we are concerned that the ratios have remained substantially unchanged and no longer align with current needs.

Recommended Solution:

Improve the staffing ratios in the Prototypical School Funding Model, using the phased-in approach recommended by the 2019 Staffing Enhancement Workgroup. In addition, address the inadequacy of the allocation for substitute teachers. Implement a regular Legislative review of staffing ratios within the funding model and adjust as necessary, to ensure staffing allocations support the contemporary needs of students, staff and families.