

School Funding: Providing Ample, Equitable & Stable Resources

The Goal: Ensure Students Have Access to Ample, Equitable & Stable Resources in School

If we are truly committed to providing each student in our state with a world-class education, we must invest in it. Fully funded schools mean more programs that help struggling kids succeed, enrichment for students that are excelling and support for teachers and staff to be their best. In particular, the state must live up to its constitutional “paramount duty... to make ample provision

Washingtonians spent \$35.07 per \$1,000 of personal income on K-12 in 2009-10, ranking the state 49th nationally. The national average was \$43.43.

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2010)

for the education of all children residing within its borders” by making sure state funds cover all costs of basic education. Our state’s citizens must also make the commitment to support their schools through local levies that supplement state funds. Through a united effort, we can make sure all students, regardless of their family’s income or where they live in our state, have the opportunity to attend an excellent school and get an exceptional education.

The Problem: Current School Funding in Washington

Despite our state constitution’s declaration that education is the “paramount duty” of our state, Washington ranks 49th out of 50 states in spending for public K-12 schools relative to individual income. We are not putting in the public effort needed to support a world-class education system. The Washington State Supreme Court agrees. In its 2012 *McCleary v. Washington* ruling, the court

found that the state is not fulfilling its constitutional responsibility to fund basic education, and required the legislature to take action.

The legislature expanded the definition of basic education with a bill in 2009 (HB 2261). In the bill, legislators adjusted the previous definition of basic education, which included provisions for programs like K-12 instruction, transportation, supply and operating costs. The new bill includes or increases funding for those elements. It also establishes full-day kindergarten, smaller class sizes for students in grades K-3, and the opportunity to earn a 24 credit high school diploma as part of the basic education instructional program. Additionally, the bill adds special education, English Language learner support, the highly capable program, and the Learning Assistance Program as part of the definition of basic education.

The Solutions:

- *Create sustainable, reliable, and equitable funding sources for education*

In order to create an education system that fully supports our students, the system must be funded with a consistent source. Any revenue generated for education must come from a source that does not disproportionately affect low-income families.

In 2009-10, the state provided 66% of K-12 funding, a 5% decrease from 2007-08. While the state average of local tax contribution was 17%, some districts had a local tax contribution as high as 28% of their district revenues (excluding local fees).

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2010)

- *Increase the state contribution to basic education funding and decrease the reliance on local levies*

The state must live up to its constitutional duty to fully fund basic education programs as defined by the legislature. Right now, nearly half of the state's students go to a school supported by levies above the cap established to keep funding of schools equitable. This is because state funding is no longer sufficient to cover basic programs, and communities are increasingly relying on local dollars to fill gaps. The state must take action to ensure that state funding is sufficient and that local levy money is used as a supplement to basic education programs.

- *Make sure resources go to solutions that really work for kids*

As part of creating an ample, equitable and stable funding system, we must make sure that our investments stay student-centered. Our resources must go to supporting student achievement and improving outcomes for our kids. At the League of Education Voters, we are committed to fully funding and working on:

- Meeting the demand and access for quality early learning programs
- Full-day Kindergarten implementation
- Creation of meaningful 24 credit high school diploma
- Continued support for quality professional development for educators and successful implementation of the new teacher and principal evaluation system
- A transparent and effective accountability framework for K-12 investments
- Implementation of the Common Core State Standards and assessments
- Protect student aid and expand access to quality post-secondary opportunities
- Support for programs to close the achievement gap (i.e. academic acceleration, English Language Learners, extended school day/year)

Resources for More Information

- Visit LEV's website for the latest updates on court and legislative action on school funding

Want to Get Involved?

- Contact us at info@educationvoters.org
- Connect with us on
 - Facebook (facebook.com/educationvoters),
 - Twitter (twitter.com/edvoters),
 - and online at www.educationvoters.org