



Funding for Education

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 and the Washington State Supreme Court agrees. In its *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.

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In 2012, the state convened the Education Funding Taskforce, which determined that \$4.5 billion in every two-year state budget is needed to meet the state’s existing obligations to fund education.

In the time between the 2012 *McCleary* ruling and the court-imposed 2018 deadline, the state will pass three two-year budgets. In June 2013, the Washington legislature passed the first of those three budgets.

2013–2015 Education budget

In passing their first post-*McCleary* budget, the legislature put \$1 billion more funding toward education, or 23 percent of the needed educational increases determined necessary by the Education Funding Taskforce.

The majority of resources, \$840 million, went toward funding that will apply evenly across the system regardless of educational need, while \$195 million, or 19 percent, is targeted to programs that provide additional support to students with greater educational needs. The additional \$195 million is targeted to low-income students, struggling schools, and English Language Learners in order to close our state’s opportunity and achievement gaps.

2013–2015 K–12 Education increases	
K–1 Class Size Reduction	\$104M
Full-day Kindergarten	90M
Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs	374M
Additional Instructional Hours	97M
Transportation	132M
Guidance Counselor/Parent Engagement Coordinators	23M
Teacher and Principal Evaluation Program	20M
Learning Assistant Program*	144M
Improving Struggling Schools*	10M
Transitional Bilingual Instructional Program*	19M
Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program*	22M
Total	\$1,035M

*Programs targeted at closing the opportunity and achievement gaps

Updated January 2014

Working to improve public education in Washington state from cradle to career with ample, equitable, and stable funding



Creating an equitable K–12 funding system

In 2013, the legislature made significant steps toward a more equitable funding system by increasing funding for the Learning Assistance Program, the Transitional Bilingual Instructional program, and the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), but more is still needed.

States that provide additional funding to low-income students tend to provide more substantial funding than Washington’s \$466 per student. Research indicates that low-income students require additional funding of 25–35 percent above the baseline student funding to provide the academic support needed to meet state educational goals. Currently, Washington state provides average additional funding of 8.8 percent per low-income student.

An additional 23–32 percent above the base student funding is needed to support English Language Learners as they acquire English language proficiency. Currently, the state is providing an additional 15 percent to help English Language Learners achieve language proficiency through the Transitional Bilingual Instructional Program.

Further, the legislature took steps toward fulfilling its obligation to fully fund ECEAP, which provides free preschool to low-income three- and four-year-olds. There is overwhelming research that demonstrates the significant and lasting impact that high-quality preschool opportunities have on overcoming the opportunity gap. The legislature increased funding for ECEAP by 1,700 slots in the 2013–15 budget, as well as increased the reimbursement rate for childcare providers as part of their plan to increase quality. To meet the requirements in law, Washington must add funding for an additional 6,000 slots for ECEAP by 2019.

What does equitable funding mean?
At the League of Education Voters, we believe that K–12 students with greater educational needs require additional resources, beyond the state’s base funding, to graduate college and career ready.

Get involved

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Students have different levels of academic proficiency, English language knowledge, and barriers to learning that impact the type of supports needed to provide them with a high-quality education. Our state made progress during the 2013 legislative session in better supporting students with greater educational needs, but we still are not providing enough funding to fully support these students in reaching their educational goals.

Learn more

Since the 2014 legislative session is a short 60-day session in a non-budget year, we do not anticipate that there will be many, if any, changes to our state’s K–12 education budget.

LEV activists are already busy planning for the 2014–15 legislative session. Contact us to learn more or get involved.

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