



2022 – 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Kalani, 3rd grade



Tibyaan, 1st grade

LETTER FROM OUR INTERIM CO-CEOS

Dear Community,

This annual report spotlights the important work that League of Education Voters Foundation (LEV) is doing to support students in Washington state. As an organization, we are committed to ensuring that each and every student has access to a high-quality education and the resources they need to succeed.

We want to emphasize our commitment to supporting students from the most historically and systemically underserved populations in Washington state. We know that students who face systemic barriers to success need additional support and resources to achieve their full potential. That's why we are working to ensure that our programs and initiatives are intentionally designed to meet the needs of these students.

One of the ways we are working towards this goal is through our Student Potential Advisory Council (SPYAC) and Youth Advocacy Hub. These projects lift up student voices and empower youth to advocate for themselves and their peers. Through these programs, we are providing opportunities for students to engage in policy discussions and to share their perspectives on issues that affect their lives.

We have also been building deeper partnerships through the School-To-Prison Pipeline Legislative Table, which focuses on addressing the systemic issues that contribute to the over-criminalization of youth in our state. By working together with community organizations, educators, and policymakers, we are advocating for policies that will keep students in school and out of the criminal justice system.

These specific examples demonstrate ways that LEV is striving toward our vision that every student in Washington state has access to an excellent public education that provides equitable opportunities for success.

Thank you for your continued support of League of Education Voters Foundation. Together, we can create a brighter future for every student in Washington state.

Sincerely,

Arik *Jacob Vela* *Eric Holzapfel*

Arik Korman, Jacob Vela, Eric Holzapfel
Co-Interim Chief Executive Officers
League of Education Voters Foundation and League of Education Voters

LETTER FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

At League of Education Voters Foundation, we value and prioritize creating authentic relationships with individuals, communities, and partners most impacted by inequalities in our education system. It’s an approach that I’m proud of, and am honored to continue in my role as Board Chair for LEV.

We ground our work at LEV by asking: how are students experiencing their education? Our schools should be a place where every child first and foremost feels safe, included, and that their identities and abilities are valued, supported, and affirmed. When our students are well and truly experience their education in this way, then they are better set up for academic success.

LEV is committed to creating the right system conditions to make big educational changes that students will experience at the school level.

The spring of 2023 has been a season of leadership transition for LEV. Following the departure of our former CEO Lauri Hennessey in March, our Board elevated our existing Senior Management Team to assume shared responsibility for the duties and responsibilities of the CEO. This interim structure allowed us to address our leadership needs quickly while maintaining continuity of our work.

We thank the LEV staff for their work and dedication to the organization and our mission. We are lucky to have a fantastic team of passionate education leaders at LEV, and they have our full confidence as a Board.

I’m proud to be a part of this work in service to students and their families, and helping to achieve our vision that every student in Washington state has access to an excellent public education that provides equitable opportunities for success. Thank you for your support.



Ben Mitchell
Board Chair
League of Education Voters Foundation and League of Education Voters

OUR VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

OUR VISION

Every student in Washington state has access to an excellent public education that provides equitable opportunities for success.

OUR MISSION

League of Education Voters (LEV Foundation) acts to serve the interests of students and families across the state of Washington to improve education access and quality, particularly those who have been harmed by historical and systemic inequities, by:

- Developing community-informed, targeted policy solutions to benefit students impacted by racism, poverty, disability discrimination, and other forms of oppression.
- Advocating for ample, equitable, and stable resources to meet the needs of every student.
- Mobilizing families, businesses, youth, educators, communities, and other stakeholders to understand and remove the systemic barriers to each student’s success within the public education system.
- Partnering with stakeholders to advocate for equitable, high-quality, and fully-funded education.
- Highlighting research-driven and promising educational practices that prepare students to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to our democracy and economy.
- Providing voters, stakeholders, policymakers, and the media with strategic, accurate, and timely information about public education in Washington state.

OUR VALUES

At League of Education Voters, we base our work on the following values:

Put Students First

Students have an important voice in shaping the education system. Families are critical partners in student success. We commit to working with students, families, and communities – especially Black, Indigenous and students of color, students with disabilities, students gaining English proficiency, students who identify as LGBTQ+, students experiencing homelessness, foster youth, and other historically marginalized students – to identify barriers and formulate solutions together, and we support them in organizing to advocate for their future.

Honor Community Knowledge and Experience

LEV recognizes that communities themselves offer the best definition of the challenges they face and often the best pathways for addressing them.

Embrace Anti-Racism

We are committed to understanding and dismantling historic and systemic racism which creates stark inequities in education and being held accountable for our own action or inaction. We are also committed to looking inward at LEV’s history, committing to changes, and being accountable for them.

Operationalize Equity

We believe equity should lie at the heart of our decision-making. We must employ approaches and build structures and policies externally and internally that will be designed to embed equity at every decision point.

Advocate for Educators Who Better Reflect the Students They Serve

We believe students need teachers and school leaders who reflect them, understand their lived experiences, and are equipped to help them succeed.

OUR VALUES, CONTINUED

Pursue Collaboration

We believe we are most effective when we work across the lines of difference toward common solutions. We will learn from the community and acknowledge the power of lived experience.

Act with Courage

We will have the courage to act, to learn from our actions, and to strive to improve our practice with innovation and humility.

Remain Nonpartisan

We believe education is not a partisan issue. We are deeply engaged in the political process but do not align ourselves with any political party.

OUR WORK

- **We advocate** at the state level for community-driven, student-focused education solutions.
- **We build capacity** for partners and coalitions by providing Policy, Field, and Communications expertise.
- **We share trusted information** with students, families, communities, educators, partner organizations, policymakers, and the media.
- **We convene education stakeholders** such as students, educators, community-based organizations, and policymakers.
- **And we do this through an equity lens.**

SOME OF OUR INITIATIVES IN THE NEWS

Education | Education Lab | Local News | Local Politics | Northwest

Special education spending, oversight top priorities for WA lawmakers

Jan. 17, 2023 at 6:00 am | Updated Jan. 17, 2023 at 3:39 pm

[View article](#)

Senior at Chiawana High wins award for STEM club

Karlee Van de Venter Digital Content Producer Oct 20, 2022 Updated Nov 3, 2022

[View article](#)

OPINION > GUEST OPINION

Mandy Manning and Kenji Linane-Booey: We must value students’ identities and teach a complete and accurate curriculum

Tue., Sept. 13, 2022

[View article](#)

South Shore School highlights

This year’s report highlights the unique methodology that makes South Shore PreK-8 a model for school transformation across Washington state.

We hope you are inspired by these highlights and by the portraits of some of our amazing and diverse PreK-8 students, photographed by Jerry and Lois Photography. www.jerryandlois.com



Andrew, 6th grade

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY: STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

One of LEV’s primary goals is to help ensure all early learners, students, and educators have the necessary supports they need to address both immediate mental health needs and the longer-term impacts of the mental health crisis. This is a priority that intersects with many others, as wellness is at the center of any child’s ability to develop and grow. We went into this session knowing we must continue to drastically increase the amount of mental health resources in schools, as well as ensure real access and accountability to these resources, too. We left the session knowing that system leaders care about this topic, but there is more work to be done to ensure young people are really getting what they need and have been asking for, especially since the pandemic.

One of highlights as it relates to mental health came from the work of our partners in the early learning space, who secured \$500K in additional funding for infant and early childhood mental health consultation services, as well as over \$20M for complex needs funds for child care and the Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP). By investing in mental health during these early developmental stages, where forming strong bonds with others and expressing healthy ranges of emotion are critical, we can lay the foundation for healthy emotional well-being and optimal overall development throughout a child’s life. Similarly, complex needs funds increase access to quality early learning experiences for

children and are inclusive of those with more complex and resource-intensive needs, including mental, social-emotional, and behavioral supports.

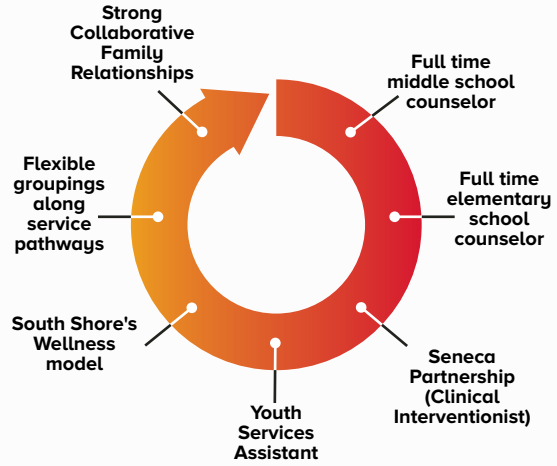
In addition, LEV worked this year to support the responsible implementation of new funding from last year’s *House Bill 1664* (2022). HB 1664 allocated new funding for school mental health professionals across the state, which was one of the biggest wins from last session. This year, Senator Lisa Wellman (D-41) introduced *Senate Bill 5019*, a bill that aimed to clarify implementation and ensure schools use these new funds to hire mental health professionals – like counselors, nurses, and school psychologists – and not to hire School Resource Officers (SROs) instead. LEV and others collaborated closely with the Committee for Children, advocating for this issue both at the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and in the legislative session. The bill moved through the process, with support from legislators and OSPI until the very end of the session, when it died in the House. We remain committed to addressing this issue and continuing our work to ensure that dedicated mental health funding is appropriately directed to support students’ mental and social-emotional well-being.

With the ongoing work, collaboration, and dedication to this critical issue, we and our partners hope to create a future where mental health is recognized as an essential component of student success and overall well-being.



South Shore School: Supports that enable success

By prioritizing the well-being of students and implementing innovative practices, South Shore has provided a practical model for transforming education at both the district and the state level.



OPINION · GUEST OPINION

Kenji Linane-Booey: Legislature needs to end isolation and restraint in schools

Wed., March 29, 2023

[View article](#)

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY: SAFE AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Every early learning, K-12, and postsecondary classroom should be able to foster a safe, welcoming, and inclusive space for all students. This requires us to prioritize the needs of students of color, students gaining English proficiency, students with disabilities, and other historically marginalized individuals who have often been pushed into the school-to-prison pipeline. This year, we focused significantly on eliminating the harms of isolating and restraining students in schools, a practice that has disproportionately violated Black students and students with disabilities in Washington. We will continue this work in the year ahead, along with our commitment to fostering a greater sense of inclusion and belonging in school communities.

House Bill 1479, introduced by Representative Lisa Callan (D-5) and championed by LEV, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Washington, Disability Rights Washington (DRW), Team Child, Roots of Inclusion, and The Arc of King County, marked a significant step towards establishing safer learning environments in our state. The bill aimed to provide training on alternate practices and ban schools from implementing isolation, which is when a staff person locks a child in a room, often small and confined, with no way out. It also aimed to reduce the use of restraint used on children, such as tying them to a chair or using a chemical restraint. LEV actively supported this bill alongside our partners, mobilizing broad-based support through our School-to-Prison Pipeline Legislative Working Table, statewide reach, and legislative relationships. The bill underwent multiple changes over the course of the legislative process. Although facing resistance, particularly from

some school staff, the bill garnered substantial support from survivors, students, parents, other school staff, and advocates across the state. Unfortunately, the bill fell short in the Senate education committee, and legislators instead allocated some funds (\$5M) to further study the matter and pilot successful elimination strategies in select schools. We will continue advocating for the elimination of harmful practices, recognizing that the work this year is the foundation of ongoing efforts to eliminate harm and create safer learning environments for all students.

There were other bill proposals this session that aimed to promote diversity, inclusion, and representation within school communities. Although many of these did not pass, LEV worked with advocates to bolster their efforts, such as by publishing **blog posts** by student advocates, hosting **LEVinar** panel discussions on key topics, and supporting individuals with legislator meetings. The Washington state Legislative Youth Advisory Council (LYAC) put forth a bill that aimed to hold more schools accountable for including underrepresented identities in their curriculum, and while it did not pass, LEV has and will continue to support their important work.

Despite the disappointment of many bills not passing this session, we remain deeply committed to creating safe learning environments for students and imagining what could be if our education system truly put students, their safety, and their wellness first. We must continue to challenge systems that perpetuate harm and foster environments that embrace, not marginalize, their students.

South Shore School: an inclusive community

Our Philosophy
We focus on the whole child. This means that even though learning is incredibly important, we know that relationships are the foundation of that learning. We dig into our social-emotional learning, and we do that not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom.

We have support staff who help us ensure that students feel safe, are able to regulate their emotions, and can be their best selves so that they can focus on learning.



Three education bills to watch as 2023 Legislature continues
League of Education Voters urges parents to contact lawmakers on them

[View article](#)

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY: ESTABLISHING EQUITABLE RESOURCING STRUCTURES CENTERED ON STUDENT NEED

Students and families experienced challenges during the pandemic that have amplified the urgent need for a better and fairer funding system that truly supports under-served students. All students deserve a quality educational experience, which means creating a funding system rooted in equity for students of color, students with disabilities, students gaining English proficiency, and students from low-income families.

Federal COVID recovery stimulus funding from recent years will play a significantly smaller role this upcoming budget cycle than it did for the most recent cycle. Though some districts have remaining federal stimulus dollars, most have been spent. Districts must adjust back to the historically small role federal funding has played in school budgets, accounting for less than 10% of school district funding on average.

The legislature made two increases of note to K-12 education funding in 2023. The legislature allocated an additional \$261 million for the upcoming biennium for additional inflationary increases to K-12 staff salaries and increased special education funding by \$361 million (see below) over the next two years. In addition, qualifying State Tribal Education Compacts and charter public schools will be able to access up to \$1,550 per student in additional funding resources for the 2022-23 school

year. These additional resources will, in part, address the fact that these schools are not allowed to access the more than \$2,900 per student in local levy funding many districts are able to access.

While the increases to special education funding formulas take a step towards centering the needs of students in how we resource schools, the depth and breadth of inequity in our current approach to funding K-12 schools remains largely intact as we move into the 2023-24 school year. LEV will continue to work with partners towards establishing state and local funding structures that are designed to support the diverse learning needs of all students.

South Shore School: a flexible and effective teaching team

Our Philosophy
The most impactful intervention moving our students towards success is a flexible and effective teaching team. Our school culture is that all students are general education students. More importantly, all students are an important and valuable part of their school community.



LEV discusses proposed budgets impacts on kids

Under the radar items could make a big difference for kids

[View article](#)

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY: STUDENTS RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ARE GENERAL EDUCATION STUDENTS FIRST AND MUST BE SUPPORTED AND INCLUDED

Our education system must be designed to accommodate the needs of all learners and enable each and every student to access their education, including the more than 155,000 students receiving special education services. Washington's current approach to providing special education services leaves many students unable to truly access their education.

The 2023 legislative session made a few important changes to how we serve and support students receiving special education, including taking a step towards better resourcing the special education needs of students.

For many years, advocates have been working toward improving how we fund special education services in Washington state. This sustained advocacy helped raise awareness and turn legislators' focus toward this important issue. The legislature responded by passing **House Bill 1436** which made two main changes to special education funding, which overall will add an estimated \$361 million over the next two years to better support the provision of special education services. The first change will increase the special education funding formula generating more funding support for all districts across Washington. The second change increased the special education funded enrollment cap. The enrollment cap limits how many students can generate state special education funding in a district. Unfortunately, the enrollment cap remains in place, but was increased with the passage of HB 1436.

Advocates have worked hard to see the progress made this session come to pass, but even with the enhancements from last session, the state of Washington continues to underfund special education by over **\$400 million per biennium**.

As important as increased funding for special education is, it is also critical to improve how students are supported, valued, and included during their educational experience. To that end, legislators also included some support for the **Inclusionary Practices Project** in the budget to sustain Washington's work to create more inclusive and supportive learning environments for all students. In addition, the legislature passed **Senate Bill 5315**, which gives responsibility to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) for accountability and oversight of organizations that school districts contract with to provide special education services to students when the district is not able to provide the services themselves. OSPI is also charged with the responsibility to authorize, monitor, and investigate these organizations.

The LEV-led **Investing in Student Potential** (ISP) coalition held our fifth annual Advocacy Day virtually in February 2023 to support advocates in telling their stories to legislators. The events also provided an opportunity for the Student Potential Youth Advisory Council, which consists of youth with lived experience in Washington's special education system, to share their vision for how we can do better.

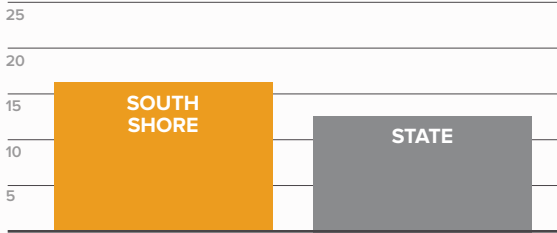
Also, LEV supporters collectively sent over 6,200 emails to legislators to advocate for fully funding special education for all of Washington's students. LEV is continuing our advocacy through ISP to ensure our state continues working to improve how we support the needs of students with disabilities, especially those who are also marginalized at school due to race, gender identity, language, income, or other factors.



South Shore School: a special education team that puts our students first.

Our Philosophy
Our special education team does not limit itself to service pathways. We serve all students in all settings. We don't divide students based on grade levels but rather who they work best with. Putting students first allows them to achieve their best outcomes.

Special Education Services
South Shore vs. Washington State



SOUTH SHORE PREK-8

The LEV partnership with the Opportunities for Education (OFE) Foundation has prioritized the well-being of students at South Shore PreK-8 in South Seattle over the past 12 years. Innovative practices implemented at South Shore have given LEV a practical model for transforming our education system at both the district and the state level.

South Shore is one of the most diverse schools in both Seattle Public Schools and Washington state: 45.5% of the 602 students are Black/African American, 16% Asian, 15.5% White, 10% Two or more races, 12% Hispanic/Latino, .7% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and .5% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander. 22.5% of the students are English Language Learners and 16.5% of the students qualify for Special Education Services.

Funding for mental health support, additional support staff and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) instruction has been a huge part of ensuring that students have the skills they need to be successful. One of the priorities at South Shore was to decrease, if not eliminate, the harmful practices of isolation and restraint. Because of the funding from the Opportunities for Education grant, the disciplinary and exclusion rates have decreased dramatically over the last five years. We are proud to report that there were zero instances of isolation and restraint during the 2021-22 school year.

The grant has supported:

- **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS):** When students are identified by a staff member to be struggling, the Wellness Team convenes to determine the best support to offer. The support could range from additional SEL instruction to stronger intervention such as a referral to South Shore’s mental health support

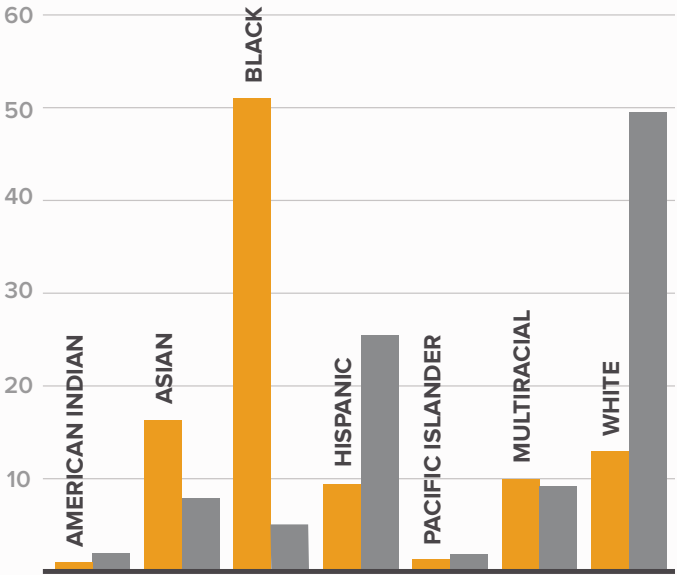
partners. The grant-supported contract with Seneca Family of Agencies has been instrumental in the work to eliminate isolation and restraint by providing mental health counseling, social workers, and behavior interventionists.

- **Additional Support Staff:** Students who have qualified for special education for behavior are assessed by the Special Education department to determine their level of need. Students new to South Shore may require spending some time in a resource room being taught strategies to aid them in the general education classroom. The goal is to mainstream the student and provide an instructional assistant for the student when needed.
- **Training:** Staff and administration have been trained in de-escalation techniques to reduce the time that a student might need to be physically restrained. The only time a child would be restrained is if there is an imminent threat to themselves or another person.

The South Shore staff and administration feel strongly that students belong in the classroom, supported by adults who understand their needs. Because of this, they opted to participate in the Seattle School District’s Extended Resource Pilot for the 2022-2023 school year with the intent to implement an inclusion model that “upholds students and family’s dignity and rights to a high-quality education.” The staff and administration are passionate about the work they are doing. Both Principal Justin Hendrickson and Special Education Teacher Kayla Korves-Bishop chose to testify about their work to the Washington state Legislature in support of *House Bill 1479* so that all students in Washington state could feel safer in their schools.



South Shore School Demographics
South Shore vs. Washington State



EMPOWERING YOUTH VOICES: INTRODUCING THE STUDENT POTENTIAL YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL (SPYAC) AND THE YOUTH ADVOCACY HUB!

At LEV, we know that students are the people most impacted by education policy and advocacy, and we want to create more space for youth voices in this important work. We are committed to leveling the advocacy playing field and empowering young people to become our state’s key thinkers, advocates, and leaders in the education space. As part of this, we are thrilled to share about the launch of two new initiatives this year: the *Student Potential Youth Advisory Council* (SPYAC) and our *Youth Advocacy Hub* website. Both of these initiatives aim to engage and empower young people across the state to get involved and lead on education issues that matter to them. By co-creating these platforms with students and providing them with opportunities to participate in advocacy activities, we strive to foster a sense of ownership and agency among young individuals, enabling them to shape the education landscape to better serve their needs.

At the heart of our efforts is the Student Potential Youth Advisory Council (SPYAC) program. We launched this program alongside our partners in the *Investing in Student Potential* (ISP) coalition, focusing specifically on students with disabilities, the value of their unique perspectives, and the importance of including them in education advocacy work and coalition decision-making. After receiving dozens of applications, we accepted 11 students to join the first cohort of the program, get compensated for their time and expertise as part of our coalition, and learn about education advocacy work inside and outside of the legislative session. Our SPYAC members come from school districts all over Washington and bring a diversity of experiences as it relates to race, gender, and disability.

One notable event in which SPYAC members were involved was *ISP Advocacy Week*, during which students participated in a town hall made up entirely of youth panelists who had experiences with the special education system in Washington. Guided by their passion for sharing their experiences and ideas for change, SPYAC members ultimately advocated for things like lifting the funded enrollment cap on education, increased training and support for teachers so they routinely use inclusive practices, and the desire to feel loved and embraced by their communities. In addition, SPYAC collectively decided to collaborate on another advocacy project in the form of a podcast titled "A Day in the Life." This podcast serves as a powerful platform for sharing personal stories, shedding light on the challenges they may face as students with disabilities within the education system, and honoring and celebrating who they are.

In addition to the SPYAC program, we have also launched the Youth Advocacy Hub, a dynamic website designed to facilitate and streamline education advocacy information, resources, and opportunities for young people. One key feature of the Youth Advocacy Hub is the provision of policy resources on important bills from the legislative session that may be of particular interest and relevance to young people. Select bills are summarized, updated, and presented in a manner that is easy to understand. In addition, the hub provides points to consider with each bill, empowering youth with more knowledge and a critical take to help them react, be informed, develop their own opinions, and engage in meaningful conversation and even action around education policies that are actively being debated by legislators.

Furthermore, as part of the Youth Advocacy Hub, LEV has also introduced the Youth Education Advocates series, an opportunity for young people to delve into education topics they are passionate about by authoring a blog post, video essay, or another advocacy piece. Youth participants have the opportunity to make their voices heard, contribute to ongoing dialogue around education and get published (and get paid!) by working with LEV’s Policy Team. It is crucial that the voice and face of education advocacy work belong to the youth themselves, and the Youth Advocacy Hub seeks to amplify their perspectives and empower them as leaders in shaping educational policies.

By fostering collaboration, co-design, and engagement with young people, we are eager to support youth leaders and create meaningful change in education policies and practices. As we move forward, it is our hope that these initiatives serve as an inspiration for other communities and regions to prioritize and uplift the voices of youth in shaping their own educational journeys.

South Shore School: supporting English Language Learners

Our Philosophy
The goal of the ELL program at South Shore is to educate all students to the highest standards regardless of their national origin, native language, or previous educational experiences.

English Language Learners South Shore vs. Washington State



STORIES FROM THE FIELD

FIELD TEAM INTERVIEWS

The Field Team conducted their annual statewide legislative platform interviews around four policy issues: student mental health, improving school climate and school climate data surveys, removing the special education enrollment funding cap, and ending isolation practices.

For our 2022 *Field Team interviews*, which guided our *2023 Legislative Platform*, we decided to engage students, parents, educators, advocates, and school administrators in group interview formats. We conducted 10 group interviews, with 60 participants in Western, Central, and Eastern Washington. The interviews were a concentrated effort by the Field Team to develop a clear vision or roadmap of what education experts and participants are experiencing in the Evergreen State. After three years of significant challenges to the public education system of our state due to COVID-19, many communities are focusing on how we recover and come back stronger. The pandemic highlighted the inequities in our public education system, and that is where the Field Team focused our discussions.

Below are some of the top mentioned items across our four policy issues.

- 1. When discussing the mental health of students, interviewees repeatedly brought up the lack of staffing and long wait times to access social services.

“ We can’t find people to fill nursing, mental health, and counselor positions in our district. We need flexibility in funding these positions. And we need more attention paid to the profession pipelines of these positions.”
— Parent advocate

- 2. As we discussed where funding for *House Bill 1664* should be centered, interviewees agreed that it should be targeted toward the roots causes of the mental health crisis in school and not toward school resource officers (SROs), with some parents and students highlighting the disproportionate effect of SROs on students of color.

“Latino students in my district are routinely racially profiled. We are heavily scrutinized for the specific type of clothing we wear and are disproportionately searched.”
— Latino student in Central Washington

- 3. During our discussions of eliminating the practice of isolation, there was broad agreement among participants that banning isolation was the correct measure, but that the ban should be accompanied by proper training to school staff (Social-Emotional Learning training, self-calming training for students, and appropriate de-escalation spaces).

“25% of legislation focus should go towards banning isolation, 75% of the focus should go towards needed supports for educators and students.”
— Special education advocate in Eastern Washington

- 4. Unanimous support was given among interviewees toward raising or eliminating the special education enrollment cap and increasing investments for students receiving special education services.

“Under-identification of special education students is our biggest issue, not over-identification.”
— Parent of a student who receives special education services in Eastern Washington

The process for developing our Legislative Platform and agenda exemplifies LEV’s commitment to grassroots advocacy and to having community voice guide our

priorities. Those who serve and are directly impacted by the public education system are the experts, and we should uplift their experiences and knowledge.

HOUSE BILL 1479

The LEV team came together this year to support House Bill 1479, a bill intended to ban the use of isolation and limit the use of restraint by making investments in social emotional learning and technical assistance. HB 1479 was born out of a cooperative effort from LEV’s convening of the School to Prison Pipeline Legislative Working Table and its key partners — ACLU Washington, Disability Rights Washington, Roots of Inclusion, and Team Child. LEV’s Field staff worked with community partners in our respective regions to push the legislation through the appropriate committees. The LEV team leveraged our communications channels to ensure that proper messaging and deep knowledge of the issues were distributed to legislators, legislative staff, educators, and administrators. The bill unfortunately died in the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Committee, but the work of the team was kept alive through a \$5 million budget proviso that will allow districts to start implementing the groundwork needed to eliminate isolation and limit the use of restraint.

LEVinar focused on eliminating isolation:
<https://educationvoters.org/get-involved/previous-levinars/#ending-isolation-practices>

Recap of budget provisos supported by LEV:
<https://educationvoters.org/get-involved/previous-levinars/#2023-budget-provisos>

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SPOKANE REGION

Over the past year in the Spokane region, LEV engaged with the community on important issues in several different ways. We continued to work closely with Every Student Counts Alliance, The Community School, and Spokane Public Schools in many different capacities. The

Spokane Future Educators of Color Consortium (SFECC) was able to continue meeting with diverse parts of the community and partner directly with Spokane Public Schools and their Teacher Diversification Task Force. We also engaged directly with policy and legislation at both the local and state levels. Topics ranged from Spokane Public Schools campus safety procedures to legislation around raising the special education funding cap. To end the year, LEV and SFECC will be partnering to present at NorthEast Washington Educational Service District 101’s Regional Equity Summit around education advocacy and teacher diversity.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE TRI-CITIES REGION

Tri-Cities Regional Field Director Ruvin Jimenez’s most rewarding highlight was seeing the new Ambassadors of Lakeview Achieving Success (ALAS) Student Leadership Group return to action after COVID. Together we knocked on 83 doors in their community and put sticky notes on registered voters’ doors reminding them to submit their ballots for a school levy vote and the importance of the levy to the ALAS students. The school levy passed,

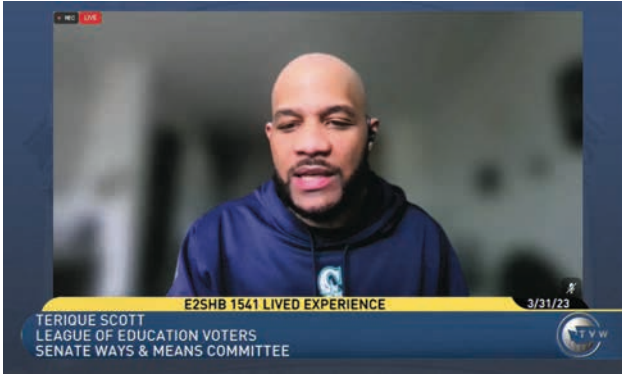


which was a testament of the students’ work and the importance of voting. As we exposed the ALAS students to different opportunities and experiences, we saw immense growth in them and their interest in post-secondary education grew.

In addition, impactful work continued with leading or supporting Senator Bob Hasegawa’s office in planning the People of Color Legislative Summit for the 2023 Legislative Session, Benton Franklin Counties Special Education (BFCSPED) PTA, League of Women Voters of Benton Franklin Counties, Pasco School District’s levy, Ambassador Program and mock interviews, and the Digital Connectivity Work Group with the Yakima Valley Partners for Education.

LEGISLATIVE ASSOCIATE RECAP

One of the highlights for the year was engaging with advocates and legislators around *House Bill 1541* – establishing the Nothing About Us Without Us Act. HB 1541 would ensure meaningful inclusion of people who have direct lived experience with policy issues in workgroups created by the legislature. Supporting one of LEV’s key partners, Disability Rights Washington, Legislative Associate Terique Scott testified on HB 1541 in the Senate Ways & Means Committee and in the House



Appropriations Committee. We were also able to talk to legislators including Senator Javier Valdez (D-46) who sponsored the Senate version, *Senate Bill 5616*. Even though Nothing About Us Without Us did not move forward this past session, the final operating budget included a \$300,000 budget proviso to allow progress to be made on the issue before the legislature reconvenes in Olympia next year. ■

STUDENT PROFILES

ADAR ABDI



Adar Abdi is a senior at Evergreen High School in Highline Public Schools, a Running Start student at South Seattle College, the Director of Community Outreach for the *Washington*

state Legislative Youth Advisory Council (LYAC), and a current King County Equity Cabinet member.

The following interview was edited for length and clarity. You can hear the entire Putting Students First podcast interview with Adar at educationvoters.org/podcasts

Adar, besides what has already been shared, how would you like to introduce yourself?

I can add that more recently I have joined the Y.M.C.A. of Greater Seattle as a after school instructor. I get to work with more kids, younger kids, which is great and amazing, a new perspective. And I'm going to be an incoming freshman at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. That's exciting.

How did you become connected with League of Education Voters Foundation?

Well, when I first joined LYAC, I was a part of the community outreach group, because we're cut up into four different sections. The prior communications outreach director, Carissa Crum, introduced me to Arik, who works with League of Education Voters. I was introduced to the different LEVinars that you guys have, the different work that you guys do. And then seeing the different policy makers, people in education who came onto the LEVinars.

In your personal education journey, what has worked for you and what hasn't worked so well?

I think what has worked for me more recently has been to advocate for myself. I was the type of person to not

send an email like, let's say I have a late assignment or an extenuating circumstance. I had this thought process of “Oh well, I should have just done the work a week prior. And sometimes it just doesn't happen.” And I had to realize that my teacher is a human, too, and they probably understand what I'm going through. Most likely.

There's this saying that you lose every shot that you don't take, or something like that. And I try to embody that more recently. Honestly, in the beginning of my high school career, or even in middle school, I really struggled with asking for help and asking for support. And anyway, I'm not the best person in math and science. So I'd shrivel away in those classes and not ask for support. I would take the late assignment, and like not get those points. But then I started to realize that people are human, and most likely my teacher wants the best for me. Hopefully.

What has not worked for me is keeping quiet and not accessing the limited resources in my high school that I had not taken advantage of or being scared to ask for support. Speaking up has worked and not speaking up has not worked.

Was there somebody who inspired you to speak up? Or was it self-realization?

I think it was a little bit of both. When I was a freshman in high school, prior to that in my eighth grade year, I just came back from Africa. And then, prior to that, I was in a bunch of different schools. I was in this weird place in my life where I didn't really go to any school consistently. I felt like I didn't know how to communicate with teachers, with the administration, with anybody if I needed support. I did my own thing. And then slowly, when I realized that I wanted to go to college, or do an internship, or research, I didn't know who to ask, or I was too scared to ask.

When I would talk to my social worker, she would say to speak up for yourself. You hear people say that to you all the time. For me personally it was easier said than done. I'm part of the Upward Bound program which is a federally funded program that supports low-income

students. I had a teacher named Eric Burns. He's a math guy, and I'm not good at math. Mr. Burns really supported me in that. And he helped me see that I’m not going to get the support I need if I don't ask. I used to think that there's somebody that needs it more than me. And then realizing no, I am the person that needs it the most.

If you were in charge of our state's education system and there were no budgetary constraints, what would you change?

I think I'd change everything. In my mind, I'm automatically, like, yeah, give every student the support they need. But the very root of the issue is that so many schools, or the schools that I've attended personally, are very underfunded. The first thing is that if we have no budget constraints, give everybody the support they need. The kids who are working and can't be at school and fully focus on school, maybe get them a stipend so they don't have to work. Think about the ESL students who come to America when they're like 15-16 years old, and they're thrown into a random chemistry class or random English class, not speaking any English, get them aides who can follow them to each class and support them. Get those students who have IEPs (Individualized Educational Programs) or their families who don't even know what IEPs or 504 plans are, get them the support they need.

"I really want to work more in policy, especially supporting my own community. Low-income students, students who come from the same background as me."
— Adar Abdi

Raise teacher salaries, so that we can have teachers who want to teach or are able to teach because they can afford their life in the education field. Also, as I'm thinking about it, my school is renovation-wise not the best building. Updating that so students don't feel – I've heard the sentiments in my school – where it feels like a prison. If we had a better building, bathrooms that work properly, better school lunches, maybe students would

want to show up. They might not want to skip. After school programs that students want to be a part of, or internships after school where students can earn money instead of having to work another minimum wage job. Maybe schools could help foster what they want to do career-wise or college-wise. There are so many things.

What do you envision yourself doing after high school?

If you asked me this a year ago, I would have told you I'm going to major in government, and then maybe for a year work for a local or federal government. And then a year after that, go to law school. But I think now that I've started to calm down, or I'm trying to, I really want to go to college and learn to learn. Find something I fall in love with a passion and learn to learn. And if law school is the next step, yay. If it's not, okay, but also just be very content with my life. I really want to work more in policy, especially supporting my own community. Low-income students, students who come from the same background as me.

I also really want to work on a more international level and especially see education in other countries and communities. Because, as much as I say that I've come from a marginalized background, I have the privilege that I've been given. My parents are from Somalia, and they fled a civil war. If I lived where my mom was, I don't think that I would have had the opportunity to go to Harvard.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

For any students who are listening, know that nothing is out of reach. And I know it's corny to say, but I think for me personally, a lot of things felt out of reach like even applying to school like Harvard. Nobody I knew got in or applied, and I think there's nothing out of reach. Find what you're passionate about. Do that, and don't let anybody stop you. ■

JEREMIAH AUDET



Jeremiah Audet is a sophomore at Rogers High School in Spokane Public Schools and a member of the *Student Potential Youth Advisory Council* (SPYAC), part of the Investing in Student Potential coalition

that was created to design systems to give every learner what they need, when they need it.

The following interview was edited for length and clarity. You can hear the entire **Putting Students First** podcast interview with Jeremiah at educationvoters.org/podcasts

Jeremiah, besides what has already been shared, how would you like to introduce yourself?

I am 16 and I'm autistic. I'm trying to explain this in the best words I can. I've been able to pass a couple of bills for better funding of special education.

How did you become connected with League of Education Voters Foundation?

It's a funny story, actually. My mom was more connected than I was before I joined. She was helping me in my elementary years, because stuff was happening. And that's when I started advocating for myself, too. I started with the small stuff. But then when I got to middle school, I started advocating for the bigger-type stuff – special education equity, not having segregation in the classroom for people who think differently and people who think normally. Which, in my opinion, nobody thinks normally.

In your personal education journey, what has worked for you and what hasn't worked so well?

Definitely the fact that I've been able to redefine the lines of what somebody with autism can and cannot do. Because not only does that bring victory to me, but I'm

told it brings victory to a lot of other people in special education. We can do a whole lot more than you think we can. And that goes into what hasn't worked so well.

In my elementary school, I was pushed beyond my breaking point. My second grade year was one of my better years in elementary. Yeah. Who am I kidding? One of my only better years in elementary. It's like I've always said. Without elementary, I wouldn't have been the person I am today. Because of elementary, I am what most people call a phoenix. I rose from my ashes and I am a beautiful creature who is doing beautiful things in the world.

If you were in charge of our state's education system and there were no budgetary constraints, what would you change?

What wouldn't I change is the real question. First of all, I'd get rid of the entire cap for special education. Because that seems like a stupid decision that was put in place because people were scared. And I don't know why they were scared. But you can't fix the past. All you can do is fix the future.

" But it's not how the people who are bullying you treat you. It's how you treat your future. "
— Jeremiah Audet

The other thing I would do is I would make it mandatory for every teacher to know how to co-teach. Because for you to co-teach means you can teach A: more people. And B: you can teach one subject to one side of the class that is neurotypical, and you can teach to the other side who is not neurotypical, if you know where I'm going.

And third, I'd say bring back the junk food. No, nobody wants that. You know, it's hard. Being a student for so long, you wonder what could I do? The real question for me is, what shouldn't I do? Because if you make one wrong move in the education system, it just crumbles to pieces.

Would you redesign it from the ground up?

Redesign it from the ground up with certain things still in place. I'd redesign the foundation, so not only would there be better education, but there would be equity in education, not only for different races and different genders, but for different learning capabilities or different thought processes. It's kind of hard telling a young brainiac like my sister that you have to be at the rate of their class, who is just now learning multiplication, when she has started division.

So meet every student where they're at?

Essentially.

What do you envision yourself doing after high school?

Depending whether or not if the military doesn't deny me, I will enlist in the Air Force for four years, go to college, get my psychology degree. This is gonna get very controversial for most people — and then I will join the Space Force and be the very first autistic U.S. Space Force Guardian. I wanted to be the first U.S. Air Force fighter pilot with autism. But I can't get it through my normal flight school without issues.

Aim for outer space?

If not outer space, then aim for other people's minds. Help them get through tough times.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

For those of you who are thinking, “I will never do anything great” or are having a tough time, I came from a tough educational background. I was bullied a lot in elementary school, I stayed alone by myself. But it's not how the people who are bullying you treat you. It's how you treat your future. If you decide to just give up then and there, you've basically told your bullies, “You win. I give up.” But if you decide to keep going and you decide to stand up, wipe the dust off your face, and get back in the arena of life, you will essentially be beating society and life's statistics at their own game. ■

ABOUT LEAGUE OF EDUCATION VOTERS FOUNDATION

League of Education Voters Foundation (LEV Foundation) is a 501(c)3 charitable organization that provides strategic, accurate, and timely information about research-driven education policies and practices to citizens, educators, policymakers, and the media. We partner with community-based organizations to support parents and community members in improving public education systems in their communities and across the state. Our programs include coalition building, grassroots organizing, training, policy research, and analysis. We work to improve opportunities for every public school student in the state, and especially students and families who are systemically and historically underserved, and disproportionately affected by failing systems.

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We apologize for any errors or omissions in this list. Please contact info@educationvoters.org to make any corrections.



Maybelle, 1st grade

2022 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW
YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2022 (AUDITED)

Statement of Activities

Revenue

| | | |
|-------------------------------|----|-----------|
| Foundation & nonprofit grants | \$ | 2,750,336 |
| Corporate contributions | | 7,310 |
| Individual contributions | | 41,510 |
| Events and other | | 14,601 |

Total Earned Revenue \$ 2,813,757

Expenses

| | | |
|------------------------|----|-----------|
| Program | \$ | 2,079,615 |
| Management and general | | 134,966 |
| Fundraising | | 188,057 |

Total Expenses \$ 2,402,637

Change in net assets \$ 411,120

Statement of Position

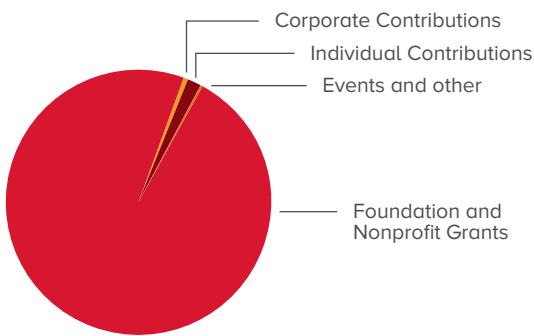
| | | |
|-------------------|----|-----------|
| Cash | \$ | 1,378,128 |
| Grants receivable | | 1,414,731 |
| Other assets | | 257,807 |

Total Assets \$ 3,050,666

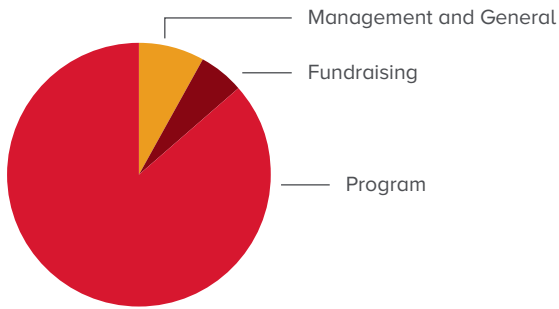
| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|-----------|
| Liabilities | | 630,372 |
| Net Assets | | |
| with donor restrictions | | 1,145,667 |
| designated for operating reserve | | 500,000 |
| without restrictions or designations | | 774,628 |

Total Net Assets \$ 2,420,295

Total Liabilities and Net Assets \$ 3,050,666



LEV Foundation Revenue



LEV Foundation Expenses

ABOUT LEAGUE OF EDUCATION VOTERS

Working closely with League of Education Voters Foundation, a separate advocacy arm was formed in 2001. League of Education Voters (LEV), founded in 2001, is a 501(c)4 non-partisan organization that partners with parents, students, and civic leaders who believe in a quality education from cradle to career. LEV is a Washington-based organization working to improve public education from early learning through higher education. We shape the debate, build powerful coalitions, and grow the grassroots to achieve meaningful reform and equitable, ample resources for education. Working with and on behalf of students, League of Education Voters has successfully led the charge on many of the landmark funding and policy decisions helping to improve the education landscape in Washington.

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Demeko, 3rd grade

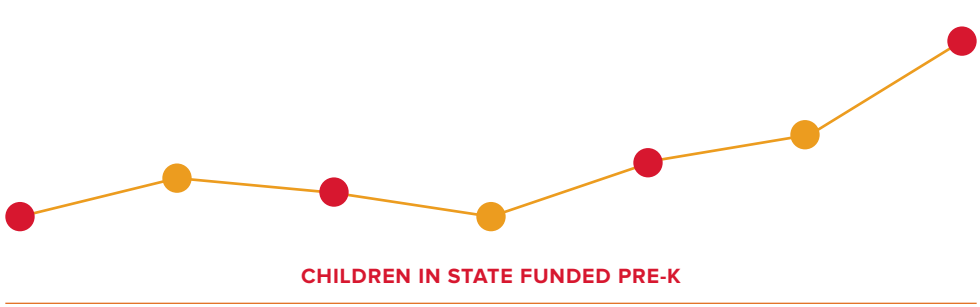
OUR IMPACT

FOUNDING

2001: League of Education Voters Founded

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- 2013: League of Education Voters helped pass House Bill 1723, which expanded the state Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP) and the use of the Washington Inventory of Kindergarten Readiness (WAKids) for 14,500 low-income children to attend high-quality preschool.
- 2015: League of Education Voters helped pass the Early Start Act (House Bill 1491), which increased access to high-quality ECEAP early learning for 1,600 children and dramatically increased the quality and viability of our childcare system.



- 2018+: League of Education Voters work at South Shore PreK-8 led to Seattle’s citywide preschool program, which has prepared more than 6,300 children for kindergarten since 2015.
- 2019: League of Education Voters successfully advocated with Early Learning Action Alliance partners for 1,171 spots in the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and a 6% state reimbursement rate increase for childcare providers.
- 2021: League of Education Voters successfully advocated with Early Learning Action Alliance partners to pass the landmark Fair Start for Kids Act (Senate Bill 5237), which significantly increases access to essential early learning programs like Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) and the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), strengthens child care programs by expanding access to support services, and grows recruitment and retention for child care businesses.

#1491
1,600
CHILDREN

6,300
CHILDREN
PREPARED FOR
KINDERGARTEN
SINCE 2015

1,171
SPOTS
IN THE ECE
& ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM

1,820
2019-2020
SEATTLE PRE-K
ENROLLMENT

K-12 FUNDING

- 2000: Founders of League of Education Voters work to pass Initiative 728, which brings nearly \$500 per pupil into every school across Washington state.
- 2007: League of Education Voters helped pass House Joint Resolution 4204, an initiative that amended the state constitution to allow a simple majority of voters to authorize local school district levies. More than \$14 billion in local school district funding would not have passed as of June 2021 without this bill. This includes maintenance and operations, transportation, and capital (predominately tech) levies.

#728
\$500
PER PUPIL

#4204
\$14
BILLION

K-12 FUNDING

- 2009: League of Education Voters led the advocacy to pass House Bills 2261 and 2776, which defined basic education. These are the laws on which the Washington Supreme Court’s *McCleary* education funding decision was based.
- 2010: League of Education Voters was the lead plaintiff in the successful effort to overturn Initiative 1053, the initiative requiring two-thirds legislative approval to raise revenue or close tax loopholes.
- 2017: League of Education Voters led advocacy efforts through the Campaign for Student Success to drive \$8.3 billion of state money into our education system to address the Washington Supreme Court’s 2012 *McCleary* ruling.
- 2023: League of Education Voters successfully advocated with Investing in Student Potential coalition partners for a state budget increase of over \$ 180 million annually for special education in 2023-2025.

#1053
2/3
OVERTURNED

\$180M
FOR
SPECIAL
ED

STUDENT SUPPORTS

- 2012: League of Education Voters was the key driver in passing Initiative 1240, which created Washington’s charter public school system.
- 2016: League of Education Voters worked with the Senate Education Chair to help pass the Opportunity Gap Bill (House Bill 1541), in which students will no longer be suspended or expelled for discretionary offenses, and better statewide data on student demographics will ensure that the system is working to keep all students on track and in school.
- 2016: League of Education Voters helped pass Senate Bill 6194, which saved Washington’s charter public schools. The new charter public school law increases accountability while still allowing flexibility and innovation to address student needs.
- 2019: League of Education Voters 2019 successfully advocated with Investing in Student Potential coalition partners for a one-time special education investment of \$25 million in professional development for educators on inclusive practices.
- 2020: League of Education Voters work at South Shore PreK-8 led to Multi-Tiered System of Supports [MTSS] teams in every Seattle school.

MTSS in Seattle Public Schools Year Six (2021–22) Highlights: All 104 Seattle schools required to put Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) plans into their public-facing Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP) documents based on increased performance in prior years.
- 2019 – 2023: League of Education Voters has successfully advocated with Investing in Student Potential coalition partners for sustained professional development and technical assistance support for schools and educators to support inclusive practices.

4,500
+
ENROLLED IN
CHARTER PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

19 AUTHORIZED
CHARTER SCHOOLS
17 OPERATING
CHARTER SCHOOLS
2 TO OPEN FALL
OF 2023

50
SCHOOLS NOW USING
THE RULER SEL
CURRICULUM IN
SEATTLE, FIRST
ADOPTED AT
SOUTH SHORE

POST-SECONDARY

- 2007: League of Education Voters helped pass and protect the College Bound Scholarship to provide state financial aid to low-income students who may not consider college a possibility due to the cost.
- 2014: League of Education Voters helped pass the REAL Hope Act (Senate Bill 6523, our state’s version of the Dream Act), allowing qualified undocumented students to apply for federal student aid and participate in the State Need Grant. An additional \$5 million was apportioned for 2014-2015 to serve newly eligible Dreamers.
- 2019: League of Education Voters worked with partners to help pass the Workforce Education Investment Act (House Bill 2158), which fully funds the State Need Grant, now renamed the Washington College Grant, in the 2020-2021 school year — meaning that every eligible student will have access to the funding they need to access postsecondary opportunities.

#6523
REAL
HOPE ACT

#2158
WASH.
COLLEGE
GRANT

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