

# FINDING A WAY FORWARD

LEAGUE OF EDUCATION VOTERS FOUNDATION  
2015 ANNUAL REPORT

We can and must do better  
for Washington's students.



LEAGUE OF  
**EDUCATION  
VOTERS™**

WASHINGTON STATE HAS  
THE PEOPLE, RESOURCES,  
AND INNOVATIVE SPIRIT  
TO CREATE THE BEST PUBLIC  
EDUCATION SYSTEM  
IN THE WORLD.

BUT IT'S GOING TO  
TAKE TOUGH DECISIONS  
FROM EACH OF US TO  
MAKE IT A REALITY.





2015 was a successful year for those of us working to improve public education in Washington state. Thanks to your support, the League of Education Voters (LEV) and the LEV Foundation worked with partners to shape education policy debates, build powerful coalitions, and grow the number of grassroots advocates in order to improve education outcomes for all our students.

During 2015, LEV partnered with the Early Learning Action Alliance (ELAA) to pass the Early Start Act, which will create more high-quality childcare, help more families make better informed choices, and, ultimately, help more children be ready for kindergarten. The Legislature expanded the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), providing access to the program for 1,600 more children beginning in 2015.

Thanks to advocacy from LEV and our partners, the Legislature also put \$1.3 billion toward basic education by fully funding full-day kindergarten and

# 2015

Passage of the Early Start Act (HB 1491), legislation that provides an opportunity for all children to arrive at school ready to learn and for families to break the cycle of poverty.



the state's obligation toward K–12 materials, supplies, and operating costs (MSOC) by the 2016–2017 school year. The budget also funded class-size reduction in grades K–3. In addition, the Legislature funded cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for teachers per Initiative 732, as well as an additional \$153 million COLA for teachers. And tuition was reduced at all public two- and four-year colleges, along with \$41 million added to the Opportunity Scholarship.

LEV trained over 850 parents, families, and community members to advocate for education improvements and issues impacting our kids and schools. We expanded our Lunchtime LEVinar series to offer webinars on timely issues, including the Smarter Balanced Assessments and school strikes.

The stories that follow are just a few of the highlights from 2015 made possible through the generous support of our donors.

## Activists of the month

In our monthly e-newsletter, *Ed Advocate*, we highlight the work of parents and community members who advocate with LEV on behalf of all Washington students.

During 2015, Tony Vo was one of LEV's Activists of the Month. He testified at a hearing for Rep. Sharon Tomiko Santos' bill on closing the opportunity gap (HB 1541) and mobilized six others to attend and testify. He also worked on the All Students Count campaign, which sought better disaggregation of student educational data for all ethnic groups, so that programs and services can be better targeted toward the students who need them most.

Tony Vo graduated from the University of Washington (UW) with a degree in public health and American ethnic studies. While at the UW, Tony began working with underrepresented minorities as a Student Ambassador, and he noticed that Southeast Asians tended to get lumped into the "model minority" stereotype.



Funding cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for teachers per Initiative 732, as well as an additional \$153 million COLA for teachers.



Increase of \$1.3 billion in education funding for the 2015–17 biennium, which includes fully funding full-day kindergarten, K-3 class size reduction and K-12 materials, supplies and operating costs (MSOC).

Tony says, "I didn't see myself in that stereotype. I grew up in White Center. Vietnamese was my first language. Many of my peers have similar stories—we come from low-income, refugee backgrounds." So Tony started doing advocacy work on behalf of Southeast Asian American communities.

In an editorial for the International Examiner, Tony writes: "High school dropout rates are as high as 40 percent for Hmong, 38 percent for Laotian, and 35 percent for Cambodian students. A cycle of poverty forms for Southeast Asians when there is not a clear path to higher education."

At the Opportunity Gap bill hearing, Tony and the others testified about their experiences as English Language Learners, the importance of data disaggregation, cultural competency, and more. Tony also worked with five student interns to collect 300 cards signed by community members from across the state in

### 2015 Activists of the Month

Sharon Taubel

Emma Margraf

Tony Vo

Dakoda Foxx

Gabriel Portugal

Ambassadors of  
Lakeview Achieving  
Success

support of recommendations by the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC), specifically regarding the use of better data disaggregation, which they then delivered to legislators after the hearing.

Tony is also a council member of the Southeast Asian Education (SEAeD) coalition, which formed in 2011 to raise awareness of how the opportunity and achievement gaps affect Southeast Asian American students.

Tony is an “amazing activist” according to League of Education Voters Community Organizer Joyce Yee.

What’s next for Tony? Well, Tony says he wants to continue his advocacy work and mobilize others to advocate, as well. He is considering graduate school in either social work or education. But, wherever Tony ends up, he says that he will always be involved and active in the Southeast Asian American community.



Expansion of the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), providing access to the program for 1,600 more children beginning in 2015.



### Leaps forward in Early Learning

Washington state has made steady progress over the years in increasing access to high-quality early learning. While that progress has been meaningful, it has also left far too many children without care and far too many in poor care.

By passing the Early Start Act (HB 1491) in 2015, our Legislature increased access to high-quality early learning and dramatically increased the quality and viability of our childcare system.



\$41 million added to the Opportunity Scholarship, which helps low- and middle- income Washington state residents earn their bachelor's degrees in the high-demand fields of science, technology, engineering, math and health care.



Tuition reduced at all public two-year and four-year colleges—by 15 percent for University of Washington and Washington State University students, 20 percent for regional four-year university students, and 5 percent for two-year community and technical college students.

## Great strides in Higher Education

Given where we were a few short years ago, when higher education was used as the ATM machine to balance the budget (higher education took a 50 percent cut between 2008 and 2013), the change is as positive as it is breathtaking.

Tuition was reduced at all public two-year and four-year colleges. Faculty and staff at both two- and four-year institutions received long-delayed increases in pay. Targeted investments in high-need areas were made.

Although the Legislature did not increase funding for the State Need Grant, they did allow higher education institutions to maintain all current services while increasing affordability and access to postsecondary education for approximately 200,000 students across the state. And the Legislature added \$41 million to the Opportunity Scholarship.

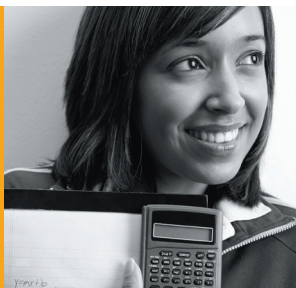


## **DEMOCRACY IN ACTION: LEV travels to Washington, DC**

In January 2015, League of Education Voters Community Organizer Ruvine Jiménez and two Tri-Cities education advocates, Quontica Sparks and Gabriel Portugal, traveled to Washington, DC, to attend a U.S. Senate Education Committee hearing and speak with legislators. Here is Ruvine's account of her trip:

I am so appreciative for the opportunity to visit Washington, DC, and attend a U.S. Senate Education Committee hearing on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization, as well as speak to our senators, representatives, and their legislative aides. I enjoyed hearing from Senator Patty Murray about her hopes for all Washington kids and speaking with my 4th Congressional District Representative Dan Newhouse, who hails from Sunnyside, Washington.

We were given the opportunity to stand up and testify on behalf of all children. But most importantly, I was grateful for the opportunity to explain why accountability,



"LEV empowers me to find and use my own voice." —Sharon Taubel





fair and reliable assessments, and equal access to high-quality public education is important for all kids. The legislators and aides were receptive to our message.

My own grandson experienced trauma at the age of three — a time when children’s brains are rapidly growing. Thanks to my work with the Department of Early Learning and supporting childcare providers, I learned about developmental guidelines and benchmarks. I became concerned with his cognitive skills when he turned four, and I began making a concerted effort to make sure his development was progressing as it should.

He is doing much better socially and emotionally now as a second grader. Nonetheless, when he starts third grade, it is imperative that he be tested so that we can request additional supports through the special education department if needed.

I am deeply concerned not just for my own grandchildren but for all children. They are our future leaders.

“My work with LEV has raised my awareness to the systemic issues we face in public education. LEV has provided me with valuable tools to speak up, step up, and enact change.”  
—Juliet Perry



“I advocate for kids because it matters. I have always cared about education but LEV gave me the tools and knowledge to translate that concern into meaningful action.”  
—Betsy Cohen

When we left Representative Newhouse’s office, we walked outside to see tens of thousands of people marching down the National Mall, and the first thought that came to me was that this is democracy in action. I am humbled to be a part of it.

**LEV Foundation by the numbers in 2015**

314	Attendees participated in our online Lunchtime LEVinars
850	Parents and community members attended LEV trainings
1,630	Grassroots “actions” taken by LEV advocates
12,583	Readers of <i>ED ADVOCATE</i> , LEV’s monthly e-newsletter
23,430	Unique visits to the LEV website

## How we're finding a way forward in 2016

We believe the pathway to providing a high-quality public education for all students begins with identifying and funding what works.

For LEV, this requires a new definition of basic education, which includes early learning, strategic investments in teacher compensation and professional learning, and a postsecondary degree or certification for each Washington student.

During 2016, LEV will continue to work with our legislative champions and partners in Olympia to achieve ample, equitable, and sustainable funding for public education. To fund the League of Education Voters' vision of an education continuum, we must overhaul how we fund public education in our state. To be successful will require us to think differently about the investment we make to support education and prepare each of our state's students for the future.



## We can and must do better for Washington's students

Our work with community partners will continue to expand in eastern Washington, from the Tri-Cities to Spokane and beyond. Our parent and community trainings across the state will identify new partners, such as early learning childcare providers, and we will work side by side with them to advocate for higher-quality learning opportunities for all our students.

We look forward to working with higher education partners to identify opportunities to promote postsecondary access and completion.

With your support, we will continue to partner with parents, community members, business leaders, and educators to ensure that Washington has a high-quality public education system, from early learning through higher education.

## Financial overview

Total all funds	2015	2014	2013
	(unaudited)		
<b>Earned revenue</b>			
Foundation & nonprofit grants	\$ 1,200,125	\$ 2,936,647	\$ 2,041,351
Individual contributions	826,493	463,047	349,121
Corporate contributions	80,000	95,350	78,164
Events, net of expenses	97,455	128,364	121,162
Other	21,241	181,145	204,750
<b>Total earned revenue</b>	<b>\$ 2,225,313</b>	<b>\$ 3,804,553</b>	<b>\$ 2,794,548</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Overhead	\$ 584,210	\$ 600,314	\$ 463,562
Fundraising	134,679	176,439	153,312
Direct program	1,512,260	1,374,170	1,310,640
South Shore School	918,852	971,816	994,540
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$ 3,150,001</b>	<b>\$ 3,122,739</b>	<b>\$ 2,922,054</b>
<b>Total change to reserves</b>	<b>\$ (924,688)</b>	<b>\$ 681,814</b>	<b>\$ (127,506)</b>
<b>Balance sheet</b>			
Total assets	\$ 1,824,629	\$ 2,869,466	\$ 3,634,501
Total liabilities	522,125	627,029	2,073,876
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>\$ 1,302,505</b>	<b>\$ 2,242,437</b>	<b>\$ 1,560,625</b>
<b>Liquidity</b>			
<b>Cash &amp; investments</b>	<b>\$ 1,058,146</b>	<b>\$ 1,232,511</b>	<b>\$ 661,228</b>
<b>Unrestricted net assets</b>	<b>\$ 84,229</b>	<b>\$ 355,544</b>	<b>\$ 529,997</b>
<b>Board operating reserve</b>	<b>\$ 200,000</b>	<b>\$ 100,000</b>	<b>\$ 50,000</b>



## About the LEV Foundation

The LEV Foundation (LEVF) 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.

LEVF partners with community-based organizations to educate parents and community members about how they can improve public education systems in their communities and across the state.

LEVF's programs include coalition building, grassroots organizing, training, policy research, and analysis. LEVF works to improve opportunities for every public school student in the state, and especially, students and families who are historically underserved and disproportionately affected by failing systems.

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We apologize for any errors or omissions to this list. Please contact [info@educationvoters.org](mailto:info@educationvoters.org) to make any corrections.

## About the League of Education Voters

Founded in 2001, the League of Education Voters (LEV) is a non-partisan 501(c)4 organization that partners with parents, students, and civic leaders to advocate for a high-quality public education system in Washington state. LEV is the only statewide organization working to improve public education from early learning through higher education and to ensure ample, equitable, and stable funding.

Working on behalf of students, LEV 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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