



2019 School Board Candidate Guide

Dear School Board Candidate,

Greetings from League of Education Voters! Congratulations on your decision to run for school director. Voters across Washington will be making key choices in school board races this fall to elect stewards of their district's resources and to guide and support district leadership.

We are happy to provide you with our first-ever League of Education Voters School Board Electronic Candidate Guide, with key background materials that address common contextual questions and interests of school board directors, based on our experience working with directors across the state. We hope that this guide will help you as you prepare for discussions with school district constituents and as you join the board. In addition to this electronic guide, please visit our [website](#) for more information and to sign up for alerts or follow us on social media. League of Education Voters regularly provides Podcasts and webinars on 'hot topics' in education in our state.

League of Education Voters works statewide on policy issues related to education, including supporting parent and student voices to advocate on key issues, providing factual research and analysis of policy proposals, and highlighting emerging and best practices in schools and districts. For the past 17 years, we have advocated to put students first and make Washington's education system one of the strongest states in the US. We have worked to see needed increases in funding, address inequities in funding models, and promote student achievement and supports. The legislature has invested heavily in K12 education over the past several years, as well as in early learning and the Washington Promise College Scholarship Program. Yet, there is much left to be done, as many students are being left behind. School district directors play a key role in ensuring that all students have the supports needed to achieve their goals. The resources provided in this guide help to highlight some of the policy and system challenges that our state still faces, with research, data, and information to inform decision-making.

Thank you again for your candidacy. Please feel free to reach out to us if you have questions or would like more information about any of our issue areas, the statewide education landscape, or the legislative process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura Hitchcock".

Laura Hitchcock
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Overview of Washington State Education System & Benchmarks

Roles & Responsibilities of Different Policy-Making Bodies

Produced by the Washington State House of Representatives Office of Research, this handbook contains helpful overviews of different levels of education policy responsibility, definitions, as well as legislative, funding and legal overviews prior to 2015. While slightly outdated, background information can be helpful to candidates running for office.

<http://leg.wa.gov/House/Committees/ED/Documents/K12HandBook.pdf>

Resources to Monitor Education Outcomes in Washington

The State Board of Education sets statewide education policy, through rules, to implement state law. They also track and monitor Indicators for our educational system's overall health/strength in the state of Washington.

<https://www.sbe.wa.gov/our-work/education-system-health>

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the state agency responsible for implementing state education policy, produces a school Report Card each year. You can check certain measures of how your district's schools are doing and compare to other districts.

<https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/>

Policy and K12 Finance Issue Briefs - 2019

League of Education Voters establishes a statewide policy agenda through tracking national research, engaging with community members, parents and students, and monitoring legislative debates. We are providing the following issue briefs and analyses with web links to support school board candidates' understanding of key topics and issues in education policy.

Issue Area: Fair Local Funding to Support Student Needs

- **Issue Brief: Fair Local K-12 Funding**

Did the legislature's approach to fulfil their obligation under the state supreme court's McCleary decision result in equitable funding across Washington? Find out here, along with details about how local funding flows from the legislature to local education agencies in Washington and to be aware of ongoing debates about whether state funding provides different levels of funding based on geographic location are continuing, as are key questions regarding whether the funding model really supports each student's needs and assures strong student outcomes.

For additional information, please view these League of Education Voters webinars on fair local K-12 funding, some of which feature interactive maps to see how your district is doing relative to others:

- **The Current State of K-12 Education Funding** (July 2019) – Updated discussion of how state dollars will flow to local education agencies, after the 2019 legislative session additional investments.
- **Education Funding Inequities Across Washington** (May 2018) – Focus on legislative funding ‘fixes’ in response to WA Supreme Court decision in the McCleary case.
- **Education Funding Inequities Across Washington: A Deeper Dive** (May 2018) – Detailed focus on impacts of the legislative ‘fixes’ in response to WA Supreme Court decision in the McCleary case, including maps to show how funds are distributed differently to local education agencies.
- **Issue Brief: Special Education Funding**
Funding formulas for special education in Washington result in deep challenges for some local education agencies to be able to access funding in time to meet the needs of special education students. Is your district one of them? In addition, special education professional development has been called out as a statewide need, with a down payment, but not full payment in 2019. What are some key professional development funding needs that would support a stronger and better system of delivering special education services in our state?

Issue Area: Supportive School Climates & Enhanced Out-of-School Supports

- **Issue Brief: Supportive and Safe Schools**
In order to be able to learn, many students need support to promote their strengths, and address unique life needs. Do schools and districts have the resources to ensure that students receive the support in the K12 system so that they can learn? What are the policy issues that are paramount? A key topic is access to school counselors and nurses, along with behavioral health supports for students. Ongoing concerns about student resiliency and the need to meet students where they are is increasingly discussed at the district and school levels. Stronger supports can help boost student strengths and outcomes.
- **Issue Brief: Expanded Learning Opportunities**
Not all learning takes place during the school day. To help ensure that students in need of support maintain and continue academic gains and promote student well-being, they need quality after school supports. Expanded learning opportunities – afterschool, weekend, or summer programming for school-age students – promote academic achievement, leadership skills, and involve youth in their communities. Unfortunately, youth from low income families get the least exposure to family reading time, weekend day trips, preschool, summer camp, and afterschool programming, compared to their peers from non-low income households. It adds up to a 6,000-hour learning gap by 6th grade – and only gets wider as they enter junior high and high school. This learning gap has an impact on school attendance and performance, as well as students’ opportunity to be fully prepared for college or career.
- **Issue Brief: Special Education**
Washington has over 155,000 students who qualify for special education services, including individualized education plans (IEPs), 504 plans, and more. Yet Washington’s student graduation outcomes for special education students, is one of the lowest in the nation, with exclusion from the general education classroom one of the highest. What are special education services and who is covered? What does Washington need to do assure that we

meet student needs, increase graduation rates, decrease disproportionate discipline rates, and follow best practices?

- **Issue Area: Student Discipline**

Students can't learn if they aren't in the classroom. Every year, thousands of Washington students are excluded from school. Higher rates of suspensions and expulsions lead to higher dropout rates, increases in grade repetition, and a rise in incarceration rates. Students of color, low-income students, and special education students are disciplined at higher rates than other students, which contribute to Washington's opportunity and achievement gaps. How do we make sure that kids are supported and kept in the learning environment? How do we make sure that students of color and students with disabilities are not disproportionately excluded? Since 2013, LEV has supported the work of partners to change student discipline laws, support districts in implementing best practices, and ensure that better data is collected. Two specific bills to review are:

- [2013 SB 5946](#)
- [2016 HB 1541](#)

Issue Area: Assuring Strong Pathways to College & Post-High School Opportunities & Jobs

- **Issue Brief: Access to Postsecondary Opportunities**

A credential after high school—either a certificate, two-year, or four-year degree—will be necessary for 70% of Washington jobs by 2020. In order to prepare students for family-wage jobs, we need to increase access to, enrollment in, and completion of postsecondary programs—particularly for students who are historically and systemically underserved and underrepresented in our postsecondary institutions.

Issue Area: Early Childhood Education & Preparation for School

- **Issue Brief: Early Childhood Education (overview)**

Early learning in and out of the home ensures students arrive at kindergarten ready to learn and thrive. State investments in early learning close opportunity and achievement gaps by focusing on students who otherwise have limited access to affordable, high-quality, early learning opportunities.

- **Issue Brief: Early Childhood Education – Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP) – state supported preschool**

Our state has a 30-point kindergarten readiness gap – only 31% of kindergarteners from low income families are fully school ready, compared to 60% of their non-low-income peers. To achieve readiness for all Washington children, some kids need more support, earlier. Washington has initiated a high-impact, research-proven early childhood education intervention program: Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP).

- **Issue Brief: Early Childhood Education – Reimbursement Rates for Working Connections Child Care for Eligible Families**

Children from low-income families whose parents are working may be eligible to attend a high-quality childcare program whose provider is reimbursed by the state to support their care. High-quality care can be crucial to support children to be ready for kindergarten. However, providers in their area may not offer this care due to the current low reimbursement rates offered by the state, putting quality care for some families out of reach.

Additional Helpful Resources

League of Education Voters also invites you to read our 2019 state legislative budget [summary](#), 2019 legislative session wrap-up [blog](#), and see our [Legislative Bill Tracker](#) for further information about recent state policy work on education. We update these resources every year.

Our backgrounder on local levies is intended to provide answers to Frequently Asked Questions for voters and policymakers. [Washington School Levies FAQ](#)

League of Education Voters is proud to be part of the [Investing in Student Potential coalition](#), which advocates for every student, especially students with disabilities, to receive the supports they need, when they need it. We particularly like this [video](#) on inclusive learning, which can be found on their [Resources page](#).

We are also a partner in the [Early Learning Action Alliance](#) is a broad coalition of organizations representing a diverse array of Washington nonprofits, professional associations, businesses, and industries. We are united by the belief that all children in Washington state deserve to have the opportunities and support they need in their first five years of life to be prepared for school and a bright future.

The Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA) has issued these guiding principles to highlight the important role school boards have in ensuring that all students achieve our state's high academic standards: [The role of school boards in improving student achievement](#).

[Rural Alliance](#) is a birth through College/Career collaboration with a clear focus on post-secondary program completion & career readiness for rural students. Their mission is in partnering to increase options and opportunities for rural students, families and communities. Their values are student-centered, relationship-based, equitable innovative, and inclusive vision. Their vision is success for every rural student, family and community. For rural districts, Rural Alliance can provide helpful information.

Today there are nearly 3 million students nationwide attending charter public schools and over 3,300 in Washington state. To learn more about charter public schools in Washington, read the Washington State Charter Schools Association's [FAQ](#).

Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) provides support and advocacy to school principals. Generated by the work and vision of AWSP's Diversity and Equity Committee, [diversity resources](#) offered by the Association provide members with content focused on complimenting, and building upon, current equity best practices within school communities. These can also be helpful to school district directors.

Background on League of Education Voters

League of Education Voters (LEV) 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. LEV was founded in 2001 by Washingtonians to support an education system that provides every student an equal opportunity for success from cradle to career. Working on behalf of students, League of Education Voters has successfully led the charge on many of the landmark funding and policy decisions helping improve the education landscape in Washington. We have offices in Seattle, Spokane, and the Tri-Cities.

We believe **students come first**. We are focused first and foremost on meeting the needs of every student.

We are dedicated to designing an **equitable education system** that serves all students based on their strengths, supports their needs, and provides the resources they need to be successful.

We are committed to working to **close gaps experienced by historically and systemically underserved students**— including students of color, students in poverty, students qualifying for special education services, students learning English, and students impacted by trauma. We believe this will lead to all students experiencing greater success and reaching their full potential.

At League of Education Voters, we value school board directors and look forward to working with you should you join your local board. Good luck in your candidacy!