



LEAGUE OF
EDUCATION
VOTERS
FOUNDATION™

2019–2020
ANNUAL REPORT



Student at South Shore PK-8



Students at South Shore PK-8

LETTER FROM OUR CEO

Dear Community,

I came to this organization in November of 2019. In the seven months since then, our office quickly closed while we all worked from home. The streets of our cities are deserted. Our economy is crumbling and unemployment soaring. And now our nation is gripped in protest over the murder of George Floyd, after decades of systemic racism and rights denied to the Black community.



But as I write this, I do not feel despair, but the beginnings of hope.

I hope that we experience, like civil rights activist and scholar Angela Davis said recently, an historic moment that **“holds possibilities for change we have never before experienced.”**

I hope we make changes to our educational systems, providing better systems for students with disabilities, students who live in historically under-resourced communities, and students who have not even started school yet — but are already falling behind because of the lack of early childhood education.

I hope we don't hesitate at this opportunity to reinvent education. Schools were not built for everyone, and they still don't work for everyone. Our funding structures perpetuate and promote a resource disparity between schools in predominantly white communities and those in communities of color. Students of color do not see themselves represented in their teachers or their curricula. These are all forms of systemic racism that continue to exist. Every child has a right to an excellent public education because gaining tools to navigate and transform your world is power. But without radical change, school systems will continue to deny power to Black children and other students of color.

I hope we build broad and robust grassroots movements around the state, from Seattle to Spokane, Bellingham to Walla Walla, speaking up for students who deserve our help and support.

I hope we can somehow create from this time of chaos, challenge, and isolation a new world in which we truly do ask tough questions, be innovative, and “reinvent” public education.

And ... **I hope** white people learn from and listen to our colleagues in the Black community and amplify their voices. We have our own work to do and will continue to push ourselves.

It's not going to be easy, but we need to take action. We have a team of talented staff, dedicated board, and volunteers ready to help. In the coming year, we will lead when it is right, walk beside when it is practical, and fall behind and support when we should. We all have the same goals — making every student feel safe and valued. **In the end, that is truly what we hope for.**

Thank you so much for putting your faith in us here at League of Education Voters. Let's do this together.

Sincerely,

Lauri Hennessey
Chief Executive Officer
League of Education Voters Foundation and League of Education Voters

LETTER FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

Greetings,

This coming year, we will have an important anniversary. A little more than 20 years ago, a group of dedicated, concerned parents and community members created League of Education Voters. The goal was to “support an education system that provides all students an equal opportunity for success from cradle to career.”



A lot has changed in our world since August 2001, when those dedicated volunteers decided to create a statewide force to fight for equal education opportunities. Sadly, all too much is still the same.

We still see tremendous gaps in learning opportunities between different communities, economic groups, and races. We still fight to advocate for kids with disabilities. Our public schools are still hit and miss, depending on where you live. Much of this was thrown into stark relief with COVID-19 in 2020, showing us that distance learning truly did work differently based on where you live and attend school.

And, in 2020, the entire nation has been swept up into concern around racial equity and police brutality. But we have always known that our educational systems were not equitable and that systemic racism exists.

Yet, in this time of great challenge, there is hope. We know there is a need for even more advocacy for students in the coming year as we work our way through these unprecedented challenges and distance learning. There are stories of true heroes amongst us, from those working with youth in foster care to helping students who don’t have the technology to access the internet when schools are shut down.

In this report, you will hear more about our work at South Shore PreK-8 in South Seattle, doing great work around social-emotional and mental health support of students in these critical times. You will read more about some of our coalition-building work in the special education and early learning communities. You will also read about our megaphone, which grew exponentially in size over the last six months. We offered LEVinars on everything from mental health supports for students to distance learning to early childhood education, from special education resources to reinventing our educational systems with greater equity. And, we became the “go to” place to hear from State Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal, who offered updates on COVID-19 and school reopening plans to thousands of information-seeking families during the spring of 2020. Add to this hiring a new CEO during the holiday in 2019. 2020 was a busy year for us!

2020 has not been an easy time, but it has been a critically important time. You can rely on LEV to keep asking tough questions of our public officials and ourselves. We will keep growing and doing better, advocating for those who need us, amplifying the voices of historically and systemically underserved students and programs that are effective, organizing and leading when we need to, and supporting and stepping back when we should.

It has been an honor and privilege to work with League of Education Voters for the last 7 years. Thank you so much for your support. Here’s to the next 20 years for this organization.

Best,

Betsy

Betsy Johnson
Chair, League of Education Voters Foundation and League of Education Voters Board of Directors

OUR VISION

Our vision is that every student in Washington state has access to an excellent public education that provides an equal opportunity for success.

OUR MISSION

To achieve this vision, League of Education Voters will have the will, courage, and commitment to:

- **Develop** community-informed, targeted policy solutions to benefit students impacted by racism, poverty, disability discrimination, and other forms of oppression.
- **Advocate** for ample, equitable, and stable resources to meet the needs of every student.
- **Mobilize** 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.
- **Partner** with stakeholders to advocate for equitable, high-quality, and fully-funded education.
- **Highlight** research-driven and promising educational practices that prepare students to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to our democracy and economy.
- **Provide** 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.** We first ask “What is the impact on students, particularly those furthest from opportunity?” We want every student to feel respected and cared for in their schools. We believe the public education system should be centered on what works to make students successful, healthy, and happy. Our policy-centered approach puts students first, and we want students to be at the center of their learning.
- **Pursue Equity.** Every student brings with them different strengths and needs. Students should get the resources they need when they need them. Systems must adapt to serve students, especially those most impacted by historic and systemic oppression, in the ways most effective for them.
- **Support Teachers and Leaders.** Every student deserves and needs teachers and school leaders who believe in them and are equipped to help them succeed. We endorse quality education, training, support, and evaluation for teachers and leaders as well as ample, equitable, and stable resources to pay for them.
- **Engage Students, Families, and Communities.** 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 to identify barriers and formulate solutions, and we support them in organizing to advocate for their future.
- **Foster Collaboration.** We commit to engaging with individuals and advocacy organizations supporting communities impacted by historic and systemic inequalities. We are most effective when we work with others toward common solutions, when we share credit for accomplishments, and when we focus on our collective goals.
- **Achieve Impact.** We believe that every student can succeed and have high expectations for both the public education system and the students. We pursue ambitious, meaningful outcomes that lead to access and opportunity for all children. We continue to advocate for the resources needed to meet those expectations. We make data-informed decisions, and orient to long-term success.
- **Act Courageously.** We are an organization of learners; our work requires intellectual curiosity and solutions that challenge the status quo, and the commitment to learn in public. We will have the courage to act, accept responsibility, and strive to improve our practice.
- **Nonpartisan.** Education is not a partisan issue; it is the paramount duty of our state government as required by our state constitution. Therefore, we are not allied with any political party but are an independent organization that focuses on policies and practices that put students first.

INTRODUCTION

League of Education Voters Foundation engages in our work in multiple ways — soliciting feedback from communities across Washington state about their needs, researching best practice and impact of existing policies, providing robust and nuanced information to the public and decision-makers about the issues most impacting students in our system, and working with partners and communities to push for change.

Across all of our policy issue areas in 2019 – 20, showcased in the following pages, we endeavor to create systems that serve and support students furthest from opportunity and most impacted by systems that do not recognize or are not designed to address their needs. Throughout this report, you will see these approaches in our community work, research, and policy advocacy — whether it's through advocating a restructure of our funding systems, increasing access to programs, or rethinking how we design school. In order to do this work authentically and effectively, we are also embarking on our own internal organizational journey around racial equity, how we engage and walk alongside and with communities and families, and our role in making institutional changes.

We believe that education is a tool for justice. The project of dismantling the systems that perpetrate the violence and oppression experienced by communities of color begins in schools. We believe every child deserves an excellent public education that provides an equal opportunity for success. In order to achieve this, we must pursue radical change in our school systems for equity, justice, and liberation. We must build schools and systems that honor the humanity in every student.

To create the permanent change our students deserve, we at LEV know that we have much to learn and work to do as an organization and as individuals. We commit to:

Start with the self — We will work to uncover and dismantle the racism within ourselves and the racist structures and practices within our own organization.

Listen and amplify — The voices of the Black community and people of color are the center of this movement, and we must listen, learn, and amplify their messages in our own circles.

Support — We will actively seek opportunities to support the work of organizations led by and serving communities of color, contributing our capacity and resources to support their work in dismantling unjust systems.

Be Accountable — We also call upon our networks to hold us accountable. We know we will take missteps and are grounded in our dedication to doing better for the students of Washington.

The urgency of this work requires us to seek solutions that challenge the status quo. And we must fight for a world in which true educational and economic equity exists.

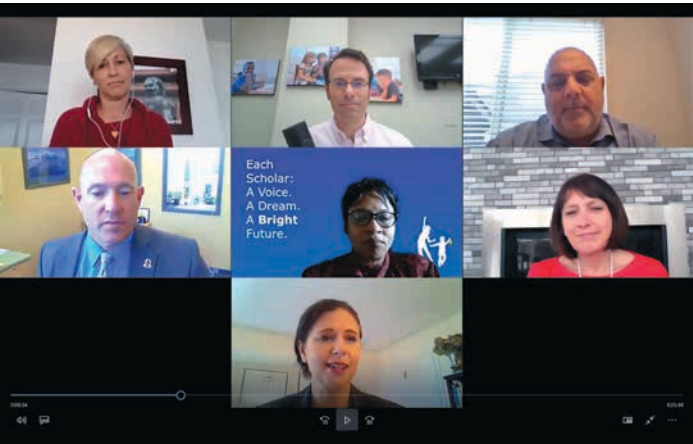
We are excited about the work we have accomplished together, eager for the work ahead, and happy to reflect on it with you.

OUR WORK

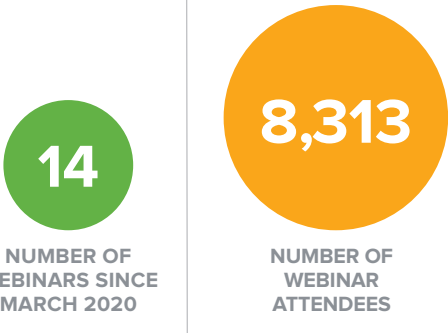
RESPONSE TO COVID-19

COVID-19 has illuminated many areas of inequity in our educational system. Not every student has the same access to devices and internet. Not every family is provided the support to enable their student’s learning. Not every student is provided the supports they need to access their education. But families and community leaders in conversations around educational equity have long known that our schools are not equitable. COVID-19 has given us an opportunity to have critical conversations and develop solutions together.

In the weeks after COVID-19 school closures began, League of Education Voters quickly reprioritized our work to gather critical resources for our community, present informative webinars, participate in statewide workgroups, convene partners, and engage in advocacy efforts.



Superintendents webinar on June 11, 2020

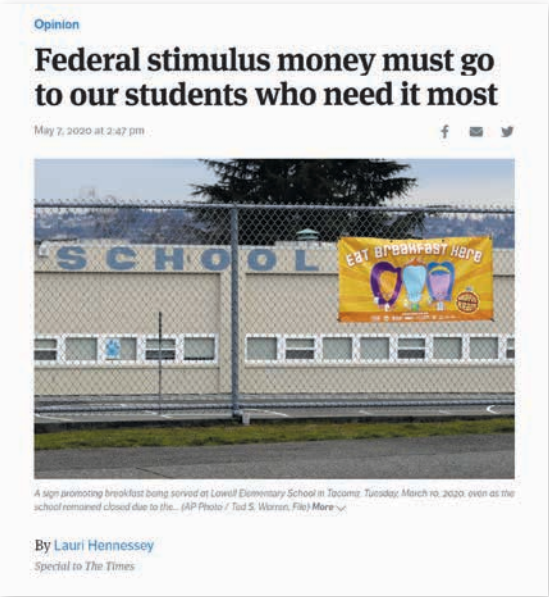


On our COVID-19 Resources page, we gathered information on services being provided in the 295 school districts across Washington, as well as resources available in communities to help students and families through this difficult time – including meal services, distance learning resources, school guidance from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), college and scholarship supports, mental health supports, internet and technology resources, child care, and employment resources.

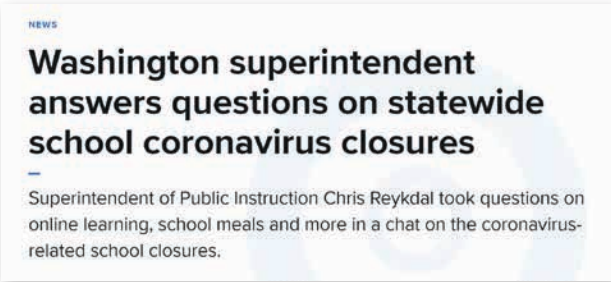
Webinars featured:

- State Superintendent Chris Reykdal [View Webinar](#)
- Superintendents from school districts across Washington state [View Webinar](#)
- Washington state Teachers of the Year [View Webinar](#)
- Mental health experts and school counselors [View Webinar](#)
- Trish Millines Dziko of Technology Access Foundation (TAF) [View Webinar](#)
- Statewide early learning providers and advocates [View Webinar](#)
- Parent educators from the Yakima Valley — our first Spanish language webinar [View Webinar](#)
- South Shore PreK-8 in Seattle and The Community School in Spokane [View Webinar](#)

We also brought together partners to advocate for transparency and authentic stakeholder and family engagement in school reopening conversations and use of federal CARES Act funds to ensure that the guidance and planning centers the needs of the students and families most impacted by the crisis. Our efforts included individual and joint letters to OSPI, collective meetings with the Superintendent and his cabinet, and working with community-based organizations to inform their constituents about the federal stimulus funds and opportunity for district level advocacy. This work was only possible because of the leadership and partnership of organizations that serve and represent the communities and families most impacted by the crisis and who are underserved by our current systems. We are continuing work supporting and collaborating with our partners to reimagine our education system, as the crisis has laid bare the need for a new vision for how schools serve and center students.



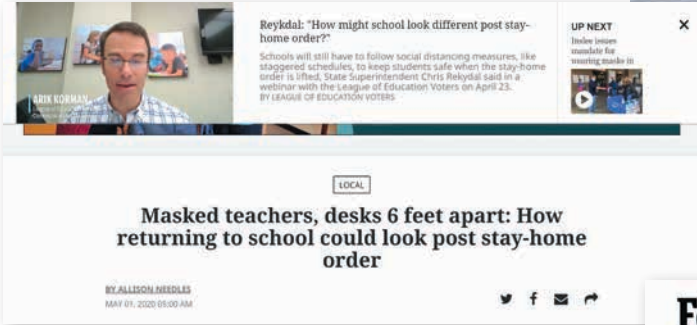
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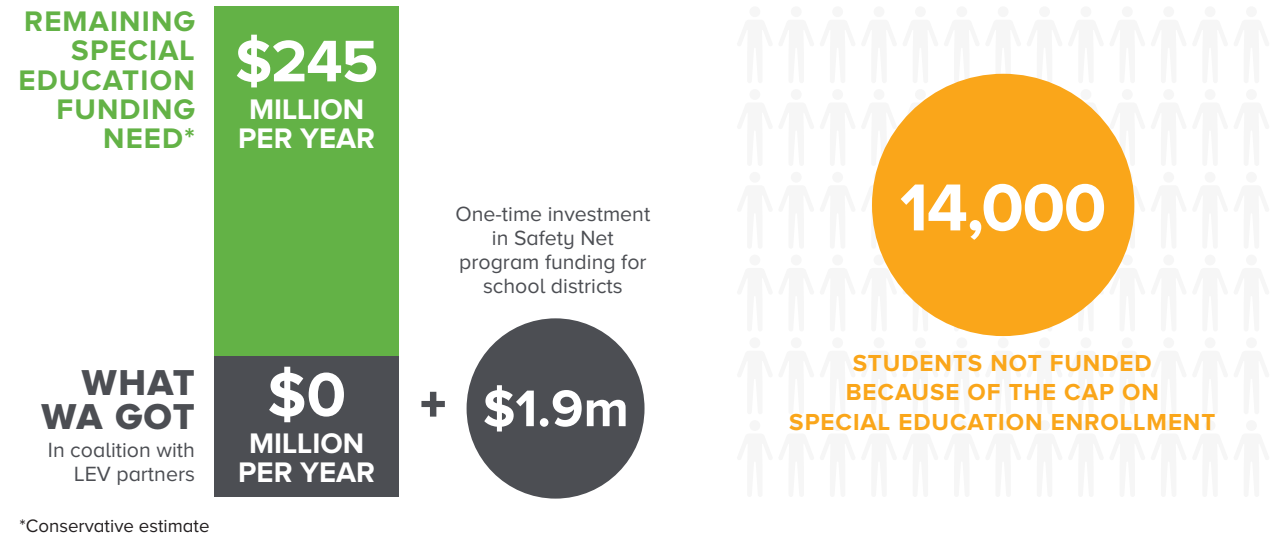
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OUR WORK

SUFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE RESOURCES FOR EVERY STUDENT RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Our current system of providing programming to the 155,000 Washington students requiring special education services is insufficient in both the funding and outcomes for students. Washington lags behind other states in graduation and rates of inclusion for our students with disabilities, all of whom are capable of advancing in their learning. For the 2020 legislative session, LEV and partners continued working in the Investing in Student Potential coalition ([StudentPotential.org](#)) to create comprehensive changes to the funding structures for special education, creating equity for students in small local education agencies (school districts, charter public schools, and tribal compact schools), reducing stigma, and educating and supporting legislators to provide services that promote inclusion and transition.

In the summer and fall of 2019, the Investing in Student Potential coalition held eight regional listening sessions around the state to create a new vision for special education in Washington (read more on page 16). These sessions informed the coalition’s legislative agenda and three-year plan for helping that vision become a reality. In 2020, we advocated for a state funding system that provides sufficient funds for students with disabilities, improving how we support and prepare educators to better meet the needs of students with disabilities, as well as increasing the accessibility and transparency of information on special education funding, spending, and data (i.e. improved reporting of student outcome data disaggregated by race and/or disability type to better understand how students are being served).



At the beginning of the 2020 legislative session, there seemed to be significant momentum in continuing to address the shortfalls and challenges in special education funding and services in our K-12 schools. Throughout the session, League of Education Voters and partners in the Investing in Student Potential coalition advocated to include the lifting of the 13.5% cap on funded enrollment, as well as an increase to the multiplier in the funding formula. Ultimately

no bills made it through the final stages to passage, which resulted in no additional funding for special education services, outside of a small increase (\$1.9 million) in Safety Net funds, which provides districts meeting the criteria with additional funds to meet higher than expected costs for providing a program of special education.

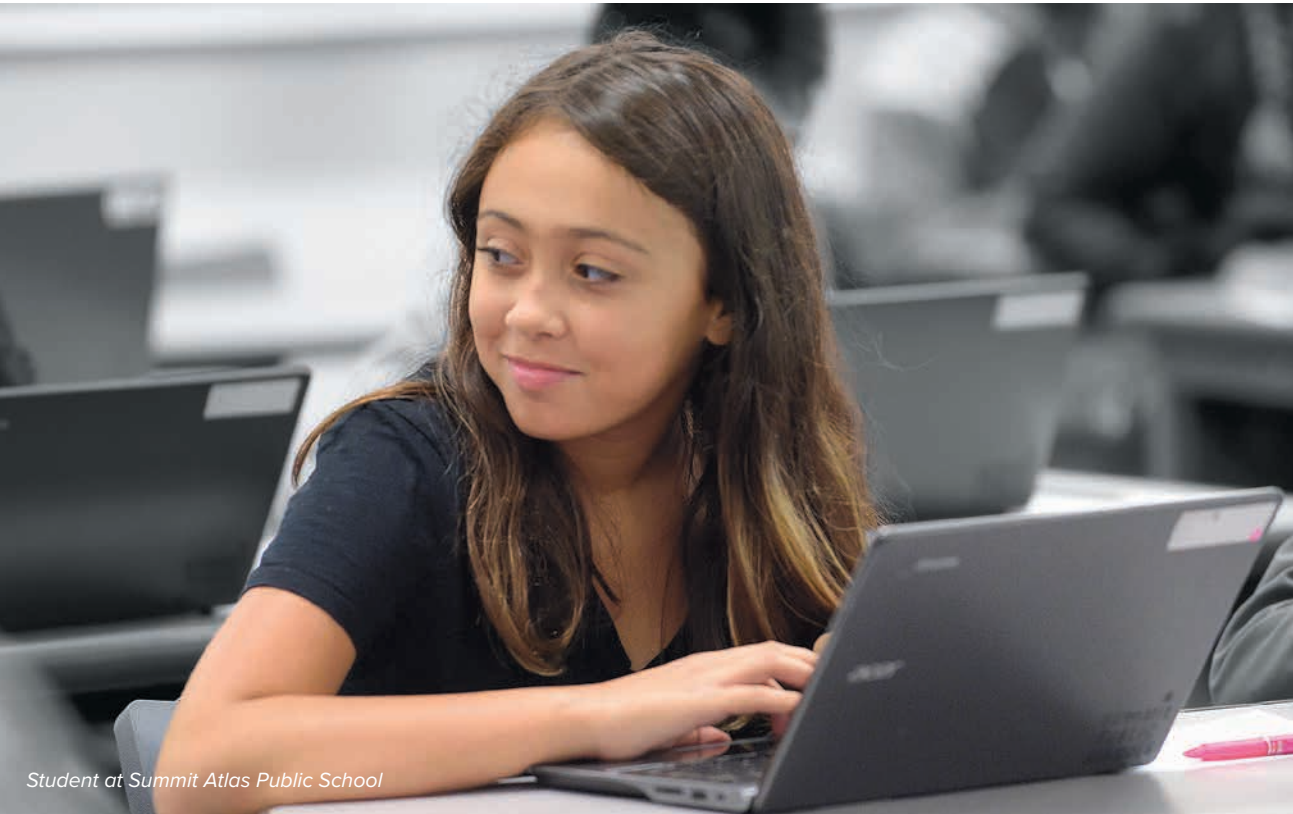
Editorials

Fully funding special education remains a work in progress

March 1, 2020 at 12:01 pm

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To support our advocacy efforts, LEV worked with statewide media on stories advocating for lifting the funding cap on special education enrollment and published podcasts featuring 2020 Washington state Teacher of the Year Amy Campbell, a special education teacher in the Camas School District. The Investing in Student Potential Advocacy Day brought nearly 200 parents and students from across the state to meet with legislators. During the 2020 session, LEV supporters contributed by sending over 17,600 emails to legislators — the highest engagement of any of our issue areas.



Student at Summit Atlas Public School

OUR WORK

SUPPORTIVE AND SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS FOR EVERY STUDENT IN K-12 SCHOOLS

Students learn most effectively when their schools feel safe, inclusive, supportive, and respectful. Creating positive school climates and providing student supports (caring adults with specialized skills and access to targeted resources that meet students where they are) can mitigate the impacts of trauma, mental health needs, and other non-academic factors that affect a student’s ability to engage in learning. These are instrumental in closing opportunity and achievement gaps and improving student outcomes.

In the 2020 legislative session, we advocated for increased support staff such as nurses, counselors, and social workers, training for school staff in social emotional learning (SEL) and addressing trauma, and increased access to student mental health services. In 2020, we advocated for increasing capacity in schools and districts to successfully implement specific strategies to address these needs. We supported protocols and benchmarks that, when fully implemented, will assure that students receive wrap-around supports.

WE ADVOCATED FOR ADDITIONAL:



COUNSELORS, NURSES, SOCIAL WORKERS

WHAT WASHINGTON GOT:



COUNSELORS, NURSES, SOCIAL WORKERS



LEV Director of Policy and Research Julia Warth testifies in Olympia (Courtesy of TVW)

LEV also continued to promote broad public awareness of opportunities to improve school climates through podcasts on Implicit Racial Bias, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Through our field work, we supported the Every Student Counts Alliance (ESCA), a group of advocates, parents, and community leaders seeking to reform school discipline in Spokane, and convened parent training sessions and roundtables where students met with local legislators in the Tri-Cities area. During the 2020 session, LEV supporters contributed to our school climate advocacy efforts by sending over 7,000 emails to legislators.

The legislature debated a number of different approaches to better support students in K-12 schools in the 2020 session. In the budget, the legislature made a significant investment in student supports by funding additional counselors for high-poverty elementary schools and investing in the development of a family engagement framework. The legislature also provided the Washington State Governor’s Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO), which provides training and outreach to support education equity and provides collaborative conflict resolution with the K-12 education system, with an additional \$100,000 in funding to expand their efforts. OEO will also be provided with \$50,000 to develop a plan to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion among families with school-aged children.

Upon signing and in response to the looming budget implications of the COVID-19 crisis, the Governor vetoed the investment in additional counselors for high-poverty schools and additional paraeducator training that was included in the budget that passed the legislature.

OUR WORK

EQUITABLE LEVY AND LOCAL EFFORT ASSISTANCE STRUCTURES TARGETED TO STUDENT NEEDS

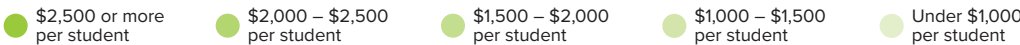
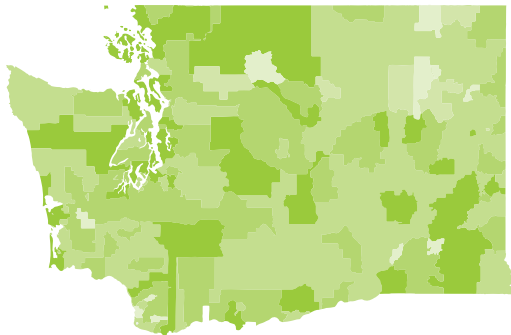
The changes made to the K-12 funding system in recent years increased the role district property value plays in education funding and reaffirmed inequities in the local levy system — directing more funding to high-property value districts rather than high-need districts. This impacts the types of programming and opportunities students have access to. LEV is committed to creating an equitable funding system that targets resources based on student needs.

In 2020, the legislature provided an additional one-time amount of \$45.8 million in Local Effort Assistance (LEA) to help districts cope with higher than anticipated assessed property values for calendar year 2020. The higher than expected property values made impacted districts eligible for less LEA support than had been expected when award amounts were budgeted for 2020. This does not change the LEA formula and is not expected to continue in future years. No changes were made to how much local revenue districts can raise through the local levy system — though a couple of bills were introduced that would have increased the allowable amount — and none of the proposals would have addressed the continued inequities in our local levy and LEA systems when considering student needs.

WASHINGTON’S EDUCATION FUNDING

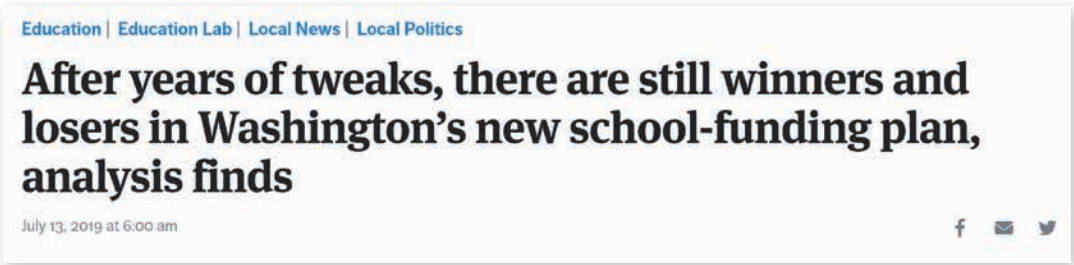
- Basic education is funded by the state of Washington, as defined by the legislature.
- Additional funding can be levied by school districts to support enrichments to the program of basic education, but not for basic education itself.
- Local Effort Assistance funds are additional dollars provided by the state for districts to supplement levy funds for enrichments in low property value districts.

2020 LEVY RESOURCES BY DISTRICT



Includes both local levy property tax revenues and Local Effort Assistance funding for 2020.

Because we believe communities deserve and need full information about how education is funded, LEV utilized interactive maps, produced a Local Levy FAQ, and hosted educational webinars to educate policymakers and communities around Washington on the impact of the funding changes and continued inequities. We also argued our case in media submissions.



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OUR WORK

HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOR EVERY EARLY LEARNER

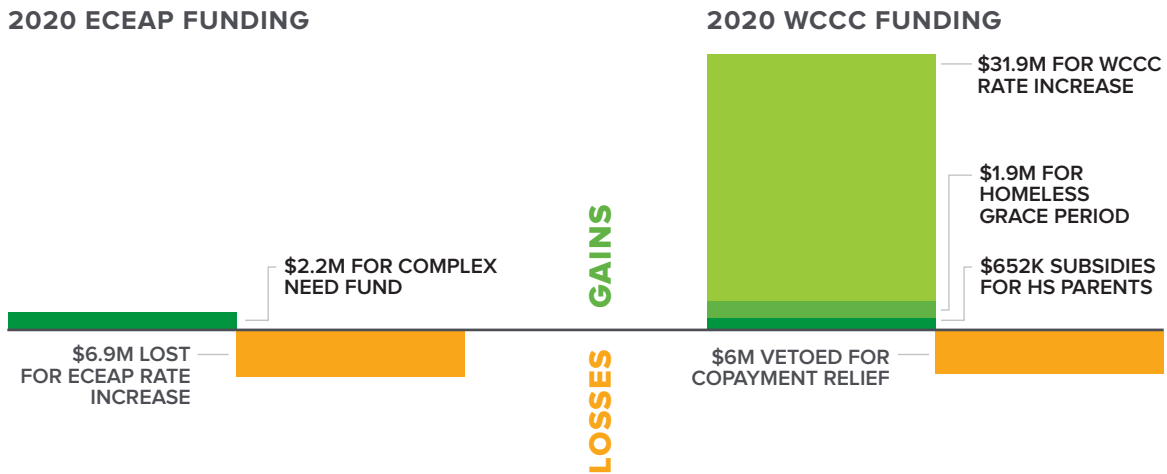
The 2020 legislative session brought both small gains and visionary groundwork to Washington’s early learning landscape. Both the House and Senate produced omnibus early learning bills that staked out monumental and essential changes to childcare across the state, focusing especially on expanding the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), Working Connections Child Care (WCCC), accessibility in childcare, and supporting struggling providers. Although neither bill made it to the Governor’s desk this session, with each one requiring investments in the billions from the state, they helped forge pathways for other legislation and investments for this session and sessions to come.

Most notably, the House and Senate agreed to dedicate nearly \$39 million to the ECEAP and WCCC programs to increase subsidy rates for childcare. Other gains this session included an increased support and urgency around some of Washington’s most underserved populations of young children. After much debate, the legislature passed House Bill 2456 and its accompanying almost \$2 million investment, which will provide a 12-month grace period of childcare subsidies through WCCC for families experiencing homelessness. In addition to adding \$6 million in funding to help smooth the WCCC copay cliff (when copays suddenly rise due to an increase in family income), lawmakers also agreed to waive one year of childcare copayments for teen parents pursuing a high school degree. The legislature also established a complex needs fund with \$2.2 million to support ECEAP providers serving children with special needs, and we also saw them make investments in more dual-language programs, supports to rural communities, scholarships for young professionals seeking licensure or Early Achievers milestones, and community-based pathways for providers with the passing of House Bill 2556.



Preschool students at South Shore PK-8

To support our early childhood education advocacy efforts, LEV hosted our October 2019 Seattle Luncheon with the theme “Why Investing in Ages 0-8 Is a Game Changer” that featured Governor Jay Inslee, 2020 Washington state Teacher of the Year Amy Campbell, and keynote speaker Marquita Davis, the Deputy Director of Early Learning — U.S. Program at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. LEV also presented a webinar featuring State Representative Tana Senn, Chair of the House Human Services and Early Learning Committee, and hosted a podcast interview with Marquita Davis, Deputy Director of Early Learning — U.S. Program at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. During the 2020 session, LEV early childhood learning supporters sent nearly 5,900 emails to legislators calling out the importance of early education and family support.



Upon signing the budget, the Governor vetoed the \$6 million to smooth the Working Connection Childcare copay cliff, eliminated the reimbursement rate increase for ECEAP, and vetoed the dual language grant program. However, ECEAP funding for programs serving students with disabilities was preserved.

OUR WORK

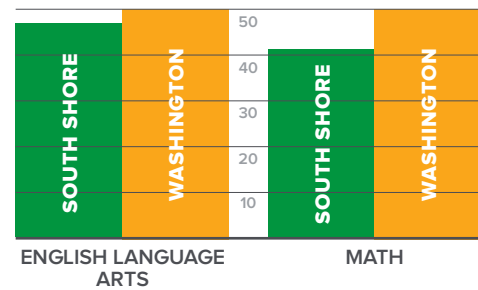
SOUTH SHORE PREK-8

League of Education Voters is able to see advocacy in action through its partnership with the Opportunities for Education Foundation. This partnership provides a grant to South Shore PreK-8, a Seattle Public Schools Choice school in Seattle’s Rainier Valley. South Shore PreK-8 continues to be one of the most diverse schools in the state: 45% of the students are Black, 20% are Asian, 13% are two or more races, 11% are White, 10% are Latinx, 1% are Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and .3% are Native American. One fifth of the students are English Language Learners, 65% are low income, 8% are experiencing homelessness, and 15% are students with disabilities.

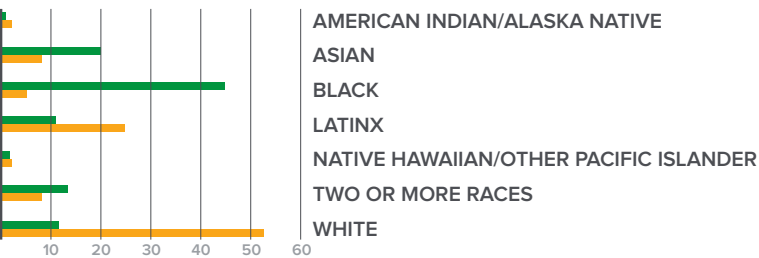
Student Growth

The focus for the 2019-2020 school year was to increase student growth in both English/Language Arts and Math. Assessment scores in 2018-2019 showed that South Shore PreK-8 students were below the Washington state student growth average of 50% for both English/Language Arts and Math. In English/Language arts, 48% of students’ skills were growing, where only 42% of students saw an improvement in their test scores in Math for the year 2018-2019.

STUDENT GROWTH



STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



English Language Arts

The Opportunities for Education Foundation Grant supported the hiring of a Literacy Coach. The role of the literacy coach is to work with teachers, instructional assistants, and students to increase competency in English Language Arts.

In the Spring of 2018, the school implemented the SIPPS (Systematic Instruction in Phoneme Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words) program for its K-5 students and beginning Fall 2019, fully implemented it throughout the school. The goal of the SIPPS program is to target the specific needs of each student and work to increase fluency through phonemic instruction, spelling, and sight word recognition. Students break apart into groups based on skill level and work with trained instructional assistants to increase their skills. Students are periodically tested and instruction is modified to their new level. The Literacy Coach closely monitors students to ensure they are progressing through the program.

Math

In order to increase student comprehension and fluency in math, the school brought on a Math Coach. One aspect of her role is to work with teachers to improve their delivery of math concepts to students. Part of the Math Coach’s professional development is to work with the University of Washington’s Center for Educational Leadership. The goal of this partnership is for teachers to develop a shared vision for complex instruction, particularly with attention to student competencies and status with classroom teachers. They then can develop strategies to plan

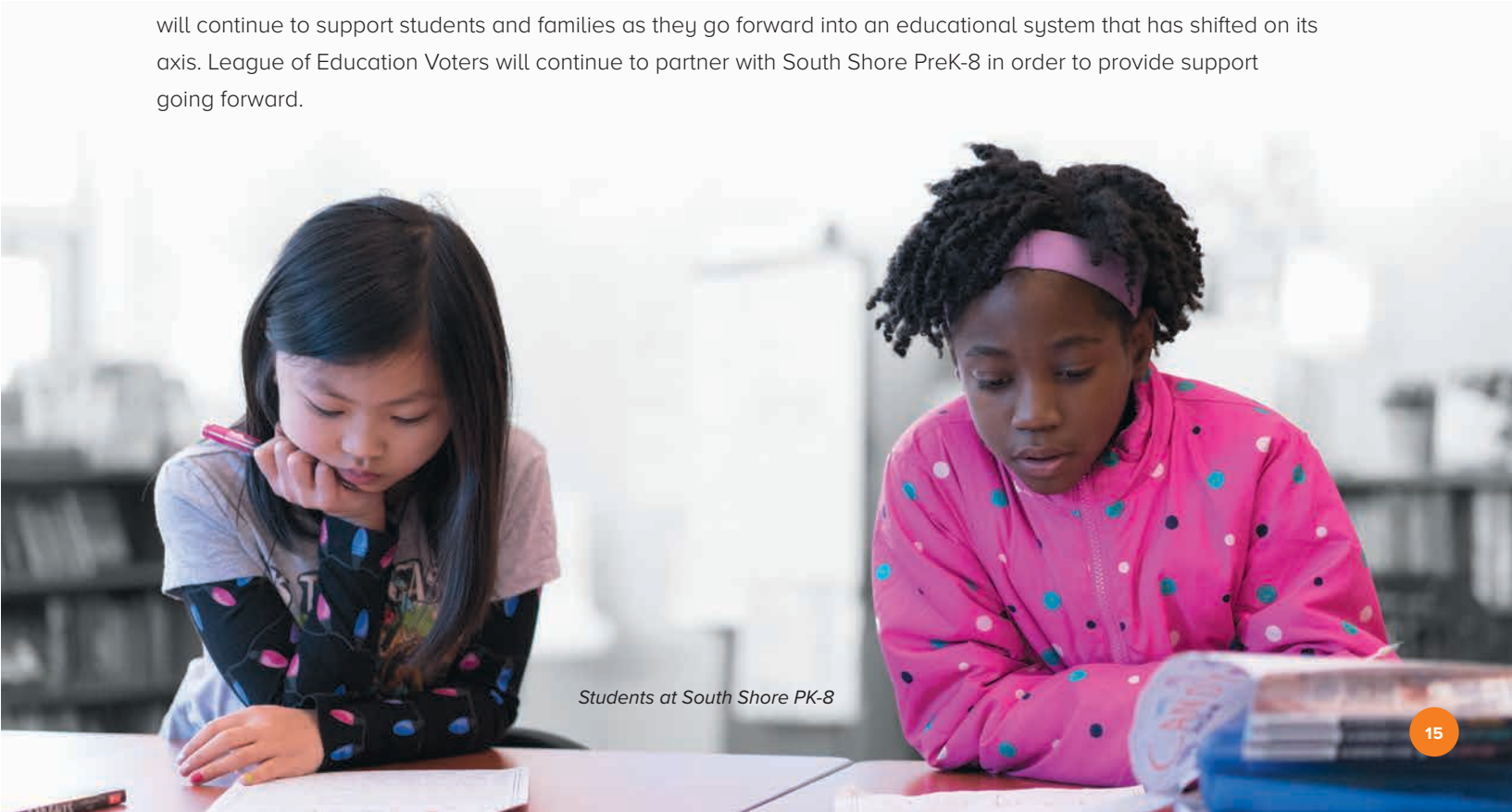
for an inquiry-driven, strengths-based coaching based on observation. She works with teachers as a model teacher, as instructional support in the classroom, and as a coach who offers concrete feedback to improve delivery of math concepts.

COVID-19 and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

The Opportunities for Education Foundation Grant also continued to support the MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) program during the 2019-2020 school year which was instrumental continuing to support students during the COVID-19 school closure. The Multi-Tiered System of Supports allowed for continued engagement of students by:

- **Closure:** The Administration did not wait for direction from the district before it began reaching out to students and families. They began almost immediately, and were able to connect with families.
- **Identifying who may be at risk:** Throughout the school year, the support team met regularly to identify students who were struggling either emotionally or academically prior to the closure so were able to pivot to supporting them remotely.
- **Identifying possible issues:** They identified the root cause of the struggle during the Wellness Meetings and already knew what issues may appear with the COVID-19 closure.
- **Development of Relationships:** Because South Shore began interventions at the time of issues becoming identified, they were able to build relationships with families. They had developed strong lines of communication with the families of their most at-risk students early on.
- **Contact:** There were multiple contact points for parents and extended family members because of the relationships built.

Because of COVID-19, education is changing. The Multi-Tiered System of Supports that South Shore has put in place will continue to support students and families as they go forward into an educational system that has shifted on its axis. League of Education Voters will continue to partner with South Shore PreK-8 in order to provide support going forward.



Students at South Shore PK-8

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

INVESTING IN STUDENT POTENTIAL STATEWIDE LISTENING SESSIONS

The Investing in Student Potential coalition (StudentPotential.org), which LEV co-convened in late 2018, advocates for system and policy reforms for students who require special education services. The coalition’s vision is that every individual thrives in a learning-friendly environment where they feel safe, supported, and challenged.

In the summer and fall of 2019, the Investing in Student Potential coalition conducted eight regional listening sessions with partners across Washington in Olympia, Walla Walla, Tri-Cities, Yakima, Spokane, Vancouver, Burien, and Bellingham. The sessions were a venue for community members to share their experiences with special education in Washington state and their vision for a system that will meet the needs of every student in schools across Washington — so that every student can thrive. These listening sessions represent the kind of statewide work that LEV performs, both as a standalone organization thanks to our Field Team, and with partners.

“I want my teacher to say, ‘It’s okay that you don’t understand this lesson, and I’m going to help you get there.’”

More than 150 current and former students, parents, teachers, counselors, administrators, and education leaders came out to hear from others and share their thoughts and experiences. We have compiled and summarized our findings from the listening sessions, and these will inform the work of the coalition going forward. The conversations focused on two areas:

- 1. What is working in our education system and community now that allows students to thrive?
- 2. What does it look like, sound like, and feel like when a student is thriving in their school and community?

Students said that most of all, they want to be in a classroom where teachers acknowledge where they are at with curriculum and provide the resources they need to learn. One student said, “I want my teacher to say, “It’s okay that you don’t understand this lesson, and I’m going to help you get there.”

You can read more takeaways at <https://bit.ly/ISP2019Listening>

The experiences shared and vision for the future that was articulated highlight many areas where we as a state can better serve students, families, and educators. This process will inform the areas of focus for the Investing in Student Potential coalition, both for the upcoming legislative session and for our long-term advocacy efforts, as we work with communities across the state to ensure that every student thrives.

In addition to League of Education Voters, the Investing in Student Potential steering committee member organizations include the Washington State Charter Schools Association, The Arc of King County, Open Doors for Multicultural Families, and Roots of Inclusion. To date, an additional 16 organizations and nearly 200 individuals have joined the broader coalition.



Student at South Shore PK-8

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

ANDRE MENCHAVEZ

I’m Andre Lawes Menchavez (he/him). I’m a queer Filipinx, Indigenous, first generation activist in higher education pursuing journalism as a tool of activism. However, if you were to tell my younger self where I am right now at 21, I wouldn’t believe you. My education played a big part in that.

I was raised in Catholic private schools and, as a queer student, I was silenced. My education was met with constant policing of my identity. I was subjected to conversion therapy as punishment for my queerness in middle school, outed by my principal to my parents without my consent, and met with strict rules on not being allowed to speak openly about queerness in high school due to the San Francisco Archdiocese’s stance on homosexuality. Alongside this, I never felt growing up that people in my educational spaces believed in me.

I was specifically told by my college admissions counselor to “aim lower” when I told her I wanted to apply to the University of Washington. Flash forward four years later and I am now attending the UW on a full ride scholarship and was recently recognized as a Husky 100: an honor given to a hundred students by the university for those making the most of their time while at the UW.

This summer, I connected with League of Education voters through the University of Washington’s First Year Programs where I teach a class to freshmen in the fall quarter on their advancement, retention, and adaptation to higher education on their behalf. I realized through teaching my students, especially the ones of color, and in my own experiences that educational spaces and active allies within them play an influential role in marginalized students’ ability to combat systematic barriers.

.....

“I look at my journey to this point and see resiliency, having to self-start and fight my way to be heard in the face of doubt.”

.....

I always imagine where I’d be if I’d listened to what my educational spaces told me I was, or who I couldn’t be.

I am currently an incoming senior at the UW, working towards a BA in Law, Societies, and Justice with a double minor in Diversity and English: Writing. I served as a Lead Junior Editor at GLAAD, a national non-profit LGBTQIA+ media organization, uplifting queer narratives of color to combat white western media. I recently interviewed the 2020 Democratic presidential candidates at the LGBTQ Forum last September as a News Correspondent. I am a columnist and Opinion Editor at The Daily, the UW’s student newspaper. My column, Equity Inaction, critiques how my university can better alleviate the issues felt by minority communities on campus.

Last summer I spearheaded a project called SOGIE Equality Now, working to both push for the enactment of the SOGIE (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Expression) Equality Bill in my home country of the Philippines as well as increase western knowledge on the lack of queer protections internationally. The SOGIE Equality Bill is a twenty-year-old bill that has continuously been blocked from enactment; it would provide legal protections for discrimination

cases on the bases of sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression in the Philippines. When transgender woman Gretchen Diez was arrested for using the women’s restroom, she ignited a movement for transgender protections. I collaborated with her and Philippine Governor Kaka Bag-ao, one of the original authors of the bill, on my initiative as an act of international solidarity.

I look at my journey to this point and see resiliency, having to self-start and fight my way to be heard in the face of doubt. I want to be a beacon of hope for the next generation of marginalized youth who are going to face the same barriers I did to higher education and in being heard in this world.

I hope for an education system that actively creates safe spaces for students, aware and accountable in its steps to combat its oppressive flaws. We also often compartmentalize institutions of power that oppress: prisons, schools, government, and society as a whole. However, I envision an educational system that actively seeks to understand how these institutions intertwine with one another to collectively oppress communities. I’ve seen through LEV’s work how this organization has aligned with my envisioned goals for educational systems. LEV uses their positionality and privilege to continue to put students first, ensuring that especially during this time of heightened racial traumas that diversity and equity are at the forefront of these conversations.



LEVINAR SPOTLIGHT

NOW IS THE TIME TO REDEFINE SCHOOL

In May 2020, we featured Trish Millines Dziko in a Lunchtime LEVinar, our online webinar series designed to share information and build knowledge about the issues at the core of LEV’s policy priorities. Dziko is Executive Director at the Technology Access Foundation (TAF), a Seattle-based non-profit organization aimed to uplift students of color through transforming education. TAF has established three schools in Federal Way, two schools in Tacoma, a school in the Highline School District, recently signed a joint operating agreement to establish schools in Seattle, and also has transformation schools across the state. They hope to expand their schools into Kent, Renton, and in Eastern Washington.

This LEVinar made space for an important conversation on how our return to school after the COVID-19 closure should not be a return to a new normal, rather an opportunity to redefine schools. In the LEVinar, Dziko spoke on how TAF has proposed a vision to reimagine education with intentional steps towards addressing disparities found in our current system. “Our mission is to build collaborative relationships with public education to create access to transformative systems of learning for students and teachers of color to eliminate race-based disparities in an increasingly diverse society,” Dziko said.

TAF wants to promote academic success through a social justice lens, primarily focusing on the areas of philosophy, culture, pedagogy, content, diversity in staff, and the expanding of the community.

Dziko stated the importance of having philosophies inside of schools that emphasize the value of all students, while maintaining a culture within the community that allows students to believe in their value as well. She proposed that philosophy must be addressed by prompting administration and staff to have these important conversations within themselves, defining what it means to believe in each student, then creating an onboarding protocol for new staff;



TAF believes this can’t be done unless every single member of the school’s administration and staff subscribes to the philosophy in place. “We owe every student the opportunity to be the best that they can be,” Dziko said. “They can’t be when we have different standards for different kids.”

Racial disparities in education include the different standards for students of color opposed to their white peers. TAF wants to create a restorative culture, moving away from punitive measures and divisive treatment and rather create a cohesive culture of learning at the same high standard.

Over time this will create an educational culture of belonging for all students, energizing students to learn. TAF believes this can’t be done unless there are active steps taken to combat the oppressive culture that exists: the belief that every student has value must be accepted and academic tracking that disproportionately impacts students of color must be removed.

Dziko outlined TAF’s plans on addressing pedagogy in order to adopt new methods of teaching to uplift students in new ways. Dziko mentioned this can be done by moving towards performance and competency-based assessments. This feeds into the commentary she mentioned on assessing the content in education, combatting “colonizer mindset.” The “colonizer mindset” seeks to explain our educational system’s ingrained approach to education that centers whiteness on many levels. “Our education system was built for middle class white kids,” Dziko said. “It wasn’t built for poor kids. It wasn’t built for kids of color.”

TAF promotes that content must be an accurate representation of the diversity of the country. They call for schools to choose all curriculum with a lens of equity and inclusiveness, and with a willingness to unlearn and improve the system.

Dziko concluded her presentation with a call for a diverse staff and the expanding of the community. “Our schools are not great environments for teachers of color,” she said.

TAF aims for schools to diversify their hiring while creating an unprecedented space where underrepresented communities can actually be seen. This includes improving retention as TAF calls for going beyond equity training by giving more roles to teachers of color and the creation of a statewide system intended to recruit and retain teachers of color in educational positions.

The expansion of community envisioned by TAF also includes a statewide initiative to help students of color, as Dziko stated it would “bridge the gap between school and community.” TAF outlines the importance of a statewide initiative on enabling external stakeholders a direct pipeline of communication to schools in order to create a reciprocity of learning and resources.

Dziko and TAF need teachers to deeply consider these propositions towards redefining schools, because now more than ever we are seeing the ways Black and non-Black students of color are being further marginalized by the faults of institutions of power. Now is the time for a change in equity — in these students’ educational value.

“We want to have kids growing up believing that every person has value, and every person can achieve,” Dziko said.

You can watch the full LEVinar at <https://bit.ly/RedefineSchool>

CONCLUSION

It is tempting to see 2020 as a year of historic challenge for public education in our state. Inequities we already knew existed were seen even more starkly as districts grappled with distance learning. But at LEV, we want to see this year as a time of opportunity for changing some of these historically inequitable systems. Everyone in our state saw how little it worked to just encourage kids to get online, whether they had access to the internet, computers at home, family members there to help, and much more. In the coming year, we know much of this will continue as we face this unknown territory around COVID-19. LEV will be here to advocate for students. We will be pushing that communities are involved in decision-making and that processes are made publicly available and easy to access. We will call questions out when critical audiences are not at the table. And we will help drive conversations long overdue around our public education system—how does it work? Who benefits? How can we do better?

In addition to that, as we have done for years, LEV will continue to support an equitable, rigorous program of instruction that supports access to college and post-secondary training. We will advocate for students at all levels who need more support to have more support, so that we continue to work toward closing opportunity gaps. We will continue to support strategies that expand access to high-quality early learning and expanded learning environments. We will continue our research on implementation of these strategies, identifying opportunities to close gaps in access, so that students of every race, gender, income, zip code, and ability can fulfill their dreams. We need your support more than ever so that every student has positive learning environments, support, and a plan, and can work toward fulfilling their dreams. Please join us, and thank you for reading our report!



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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Student at Summit Atlas Public School

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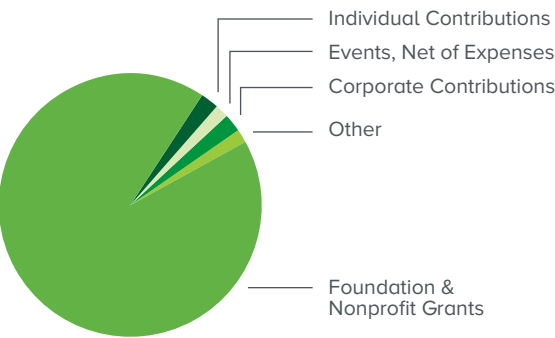
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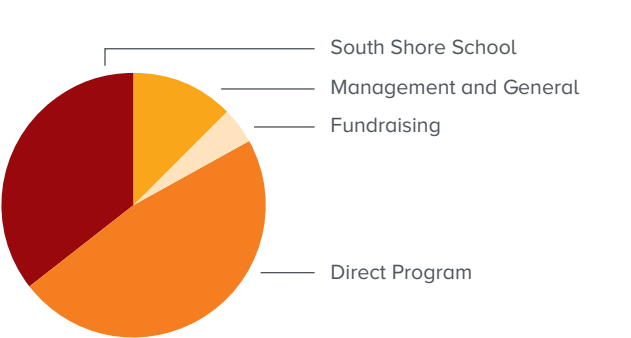
TOTAL ALL FUNDS	2019
EARNED REVENUE	
Foundation & nonprofit grants	\$ 1,610,047
Individual contributions	37,039
Corporate contributions	32,152
Events, net of expenses	38,470
Other	25,057
Total Earned Revenue	\$ 1,742,765
EXPENSES	
Management and general	\$ 328,138
Fundraising	115,549
Direct program	1,238,220
South Shore School	924,957
Total Expenses	\$ 2,606,864
Total Change to Reserves*	\$ (864,099)
BALANCE SHEET	
Total assets	\$ 2,391,358
Total liabilities	412,607
Net Assets	\$ 1,978,751
LIQUIDITY	
Cash & investments**	\$ 1,684,119
Unrestricted net assets	\$ 1,978,751
Board operating reserve	\$ 350,238

* Funds received as part of a 2-year grant - released from temporary restriction in 2019.
** Includes Board Reserve

FOUNDATION INCOME



FOUNDATION EXPENSES



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

OUR IMPACT

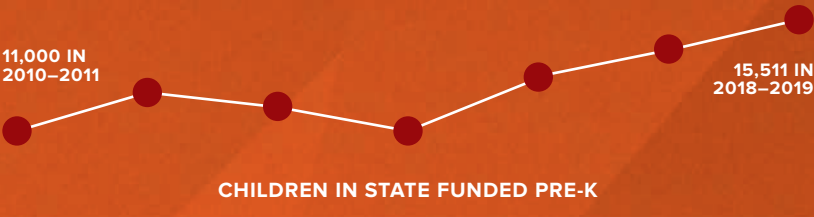
FOUNDING

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.



#1491

1,600
CHILDREN

1,820

2019-2020
SEATTLE PRE-K
ENROLLMENT

2018+: League of Education Voters work at South Shore PreK-8 led to Seattle’s citywide preschool program.

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.

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. \$9.8 billion in local school district funding would not have passed as of February 2018 without this bill. This includes maintenance and operations, transportation, and capital (predominately tech) levies.

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.

#728

\$500
PER PUPIL

#4204

\$9.8
BILLION

#1053

2/3
OVERTURNED

K-12 FUNDING

2019: League of Education Voters successfully advocated with Investing in Student Potential coalition partners for a state budget increase of \$63 million annually for special education in 2019-2021.

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.

2018+: 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 Five (2020–21) Highlights:
This is the first year that all 104 Seattle schools are required to put Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) plans into their public-facing Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP) documents.

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.

3,599

ENROLLED IN
CHARTER PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

18 AUTHORIZED
CHARTER SCHOOLS

9 OPERATING
CHARTER SCHOOLS

3 TO OPEN FALL
OF 2020

6 TO OPEN FALL
OF 2021

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

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 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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