

2022

LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM



FIELD REPORT



Students at South Shore PreK-8

During September and October 2021, the League of Education Voters (LEV) Field Team interviewed 85 unique individuals and organizations throughout Washington state. Interviewees were primarily located in the following regions or counties: Puget Sound, Clark, Tri-Cities, Yakima, Walla Walla, and Spokane.

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. The last two years, due to COVID-19, have brought on unexpected and unique challenges to the public education system of our state; but in other ways the pandemic has highlighted long term issues and inequities in our system.

LEV started with two basic questions: “What education issues are you facing, locally?” and “How can LEV support you in addressing these education issues?” LEV used these questions and an analysis of the answers to inform the development of our [2022 Legislative Platform](#) by pulling out the top issues mentioned in our interviews, analyzed them through our equity rubric, and the Policy Team formalized the language into our rough platform. Finally, we engaged in a round of feedback from interviewees on our rough agenda and implemented the feedback to produce our final platform. **In the final weeks of 2021 and the first weeks of 2022, we will use our platform to develop our specific legislative agenda and determine the legislative bills and budget provisos we will pursue.**

The LEV Field staff asked a third question during our interviews: “Where do you see promise in local programming, legislative efforts, or grassroots movements?” We captured strategies and quotes from some of the answers to this question.

In addition to driving the development of our 2022 Legislative Platform and agenda, the Field Report will serve as a roadmap for LEV’s legislative work for the next three to five years.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF INTERVIEWEES

LEV’s Field Team made a concerted effort to reach out and interview individuals and organizations that accurately reflect or represent the constituents who LEV serves – students and families in public education, particularly those who have been harmed by historical and systemic inequities.

- **65% of interviewees were people of color**
- Interviewees broke down in the following groups and respective percentages:
 - Students: 12%**
 - Parents: 4%**
 - Teachers: 15%**
 - School administrators: 10%**
 - Appointed/election officials: 6%**
 - Community-based organization reps: 53%**
- Interviewees broke down along the following policy focuses and respective percentages:
 - Civil rights: 30%**
 - General education: 65%**
 - Special education and disability rights: 25%**
 - Early learning: 10%**
 - Youth advocacy: 15%**
 - Foster / homeless youth: 10%**
 - After school programming and expanded learning: 5%**
 - Parent advocacy: 5%**
- For community-based organizations (CBOs), they stated they explicitly serve:
 - People of color: 60%**
 - Immigrant and refugees: 25%**
 - Special education: 25%**
 - Homeless / foster youth: 10%**

ISSUES

Below are the issues mentioned by interviewees. **These issues were raised as items in need of reform or in need of improved policy and funding**, listed in order of frequency mentioned:

- Social emotional learning / mental health (41)
- Universal design for learning (30)
- Student ability to chart their course/individualized teaching (23)
- Language access (22)
- Equitable funding mechanisms (21)
- More funding for expanded learning / CBO partnerships (21)
- Suspension ban / school exclusion (20)
- Youth and the criminal justice system (14)
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion training for school staff (14)
- Isolation / seclusion and restraint (13)
- School staff diversification (13)
- Expanded support staff in schools (13)
- Improved school district communication with parents (13)
- Major funding package / McCleary 2.0 (13)
- Special education funding cap (12)
- Multi-tiered system of supports (12)
- Learning loss (12)
- Dual credit / college preparedness (12)
- School Resource Officers (11)
- Increased homeless youth support staff (11)
- Charter public school funding (10)
- Capital gains defense (10)
- Eliminate unfunded mandates (4)
- Digital equity (4)
- Pandemic retrofitting (4)
- Individualized Educational Program (IEP) Adherence (4)
- Equitable access to Olympia (4)
- Increased paths to post-secondary education (4)
- Teach our history (4)
- Reforms to school boards – diversification and professionalization (4)
- Hybrid approach to education – virtual vs. in-person (3)
- Lowering barriers for childcare providers (3)
- Transitional kindergarten (3)
- Lessen focus on standardized testing (2)
- Basic income (2)
- STEM Funding (1)

“My big fear as the pandemic winds down and school becomes normal is that digital equality doesn’t get paid attention to”

- Equitable education advocate

“Unfunded mandates are the number one thing that really hurts small and rural districts”

- Rural education advocate

“I do think that the state could put more attention to understanding the changes in the student learner, and they have done some of this (small classes in K-3). But we need investment in how to make these changes across K-12”

- Spokane Public Schools teacher

“What I am hearing from the community is there are large language barriers. For example, at parent-teacher conferences the child is expected to be the translator”

- Latino community advocate

“I would like to see more inclusion work done around students in special education. My nephew is an 11th grader with autism who is often left out of sports and extracurricular activities as well as academic rigor. He is always saying that he wants more of a challenge but is not given the opportunity to be challenged”

- Special education advocate

STRATEGY

Interviewees had different approaches to effect change in education. Broadly the approaches to reform can be placed in three categories: 1) direct action in Olympia, 2) empowering youth and families to advocate for themselves, and 3) creating model policies and engaging in local reforms.

Lobbying in Olympia

Many interviewees are active participants in education advocacy and lobbying in Olympia, many through grassroots and community movements. LEV aims to support their efforts to make the promise of equity in education a realization.

“We are trying to make sure those with disability really have representation through [HB 1566](#) (Concerning access and representation for individuals with disabilities in the legislative process)”

- Disability rights attorney

“We originally advocated for [SB 5433](#) (Requiring Washington’s tribal history, culture, and government to be taught in the common schools), but it lacked accountability and teeth. Six years later we were able to pass [HB 1426](#) (Specifying minimum continuing education requirements for administrator and teacher certificate renewals that focus on equity-based school and classroom practices), which applies to all teachers in Washington and is being overseen by OSPI”

- Native youth advocate and school principal

Empowering Youth & Families

About a third of interviewees described a desire or direct actions to empower and train youth and families to advocate for themselves within schools and different levels of educational institutions. Interviewees described a particular sense of urgency to train and empower more people of color, including empowering them to run for school boards and other elected offices.

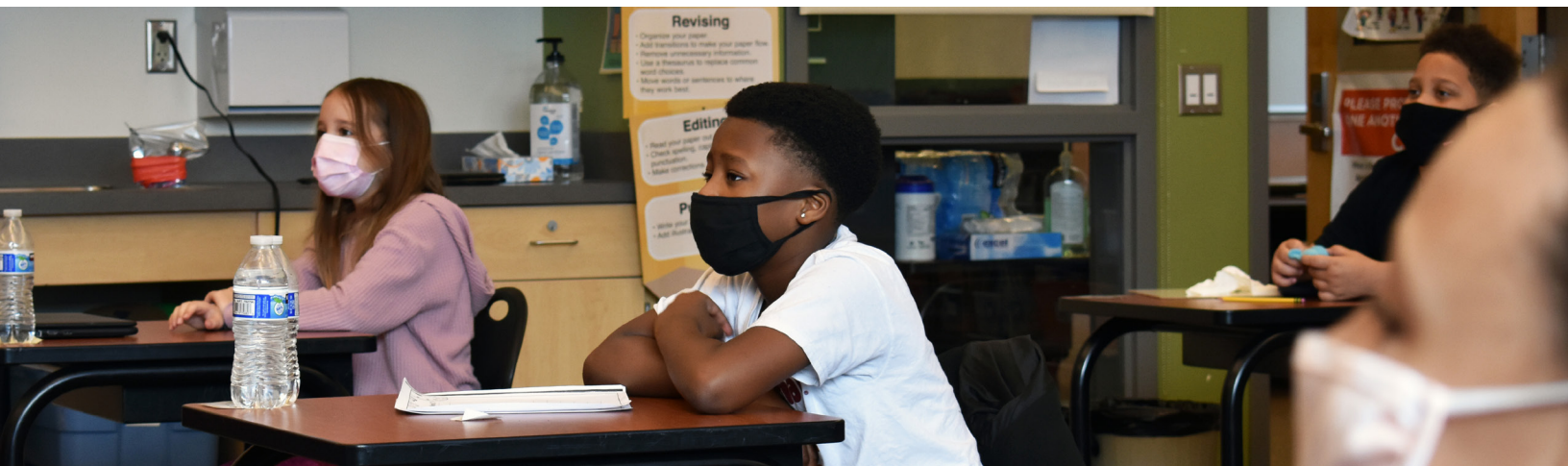
Youth and family empowerment strongly resonates with LEV. In 2022, the Field Team will launch its student and parent advocacy training — the Promotora Model Education Advocacy Training. Modeled after promotora health trainings in the Latino community, our training aims to help families learn to advocate for themselves in our bureaucratic and often complicated public school system. Many families, often from low-income, underserved, and disenfranchised communities, lack knowledge about the available resources in each school district, and this program brings to light what exists. The Promotora Model also helps families learn to advocate for new services when there are gaps.

“We as adults have to think students are experts at being students”

- Youth advocacy leader

“How can we effectively get families involved in the local political scene? That’s what we’re working on”

- Immigrant & refugee advocate



Students at South Shore PreK-8

Local Promise

While many of our conversations centered on how Washington state education leaders, particularly the legislature, can better serve Washington students, we also wanted to discuss where folks have seen promise through legislative reform or local efforts. While interviewees often felt excluded or a lack of knowledge around education reform in the Capitol, they felt empowered by the endeavors or reform they were engaging with locally.

“We are creating a solution in the Campus Safety Policy [at the district] and different community members are at the table”

- Spokane equitable education advocate

“We are building independence in students. Many students have agency, but it is removed from them when they enter the school doors. We are restructuring discipline to take this into account and allow students more independence in the classroom. Most are responsible and are pushing back on unfair limitations”

- English language arts coach

“The district’s partnership with community organizations. The new Shaw Middle School is a great example of these partnerships”

- Spokane public school teacher

“Investments in a behavioral interventionist through a grant and local levy”

- Seattle assistant principal

“I have also seen that taking the initiative (on the parent side) to get to know the teacher, principal, and office staff can be really helpful. And the more communication, the better, especially when your student does have needs”

- Spokane parent

CONCLUSION

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. We thank all those that participated in our community interviews, we could not do this work without you.