

# 2022 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM



*Students at South Shore PreK-8*

The past two years have been unlike any others for the students and families of Washington state. New challenges and opportunities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and greater racial reckoning have laid bare the inequities in our society.

We see in even starker relief the need to build **equitable early learning, K-12, and postsecondary education systems** in which **students come first** — systems that are designed to serve every student based on their strengths, support their needs, and provide the resources they need to be successful. The needs and solutions reflected here have long been identified by students, parents, educators, community-based organizations, and school administrators. The ongoing crises of the pandemic, mental health among young people, and systemic racial violence and inequity reinforce just how critical these priorities continue to be for Washington families.

**We must change the very foundation of our education systems and build the infrastructure to implement student-centered, equitable solutions. We must focus on community-driven solutions to support students and families who have been historically and systemically underserved** — including students of color, students in poverty, students receiving special education services and students with disabilities, students learning English, students experiencing homelessness, and students impacted by trauma. We must use this moment as an opportunity to create meaningful and lasting change. **Together we can build better systems for the future of Washington students and families.**

The following priorities will help us respond to the impacts of the pandemic and move us toward a more equitable and just education system. »

## ADDRESSING THE STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELLNESS CRISIS

The need for mental health supports among students was growing prior to the start of the pandemic and has only increased over the last two years. We must support and resource students and educators to meet this growing crisis and work to address the long-term impacts of this mental health and social-emotional emergency on young people. **In 2022, LEV will prioritize:**

- Providing adequate resources and funding to schools to enable them to meet the immediate mental health needs of students, including developing specific roles for mental health providers in schools and partnerships with community-based organizations to meet student needs.
- Building a K-12 mental health workforce that is reflective of the diversity of the students they serve.

## ESTABLISHING EQUITABLE RESOURCING STRUCTURES CENTERED ON STUDENT NEED

How we resource and fund education - from early learning through high school and beyond - is reflective of the values at the foundation of our education system in Washington state. To create systems that value and support all students, we must work towards funding structures that are centered on student needs.

**In 2022, LEV will prioritize:**

- Ensuring that students experiencing homelessness, youth in foster care, students receiving special education services, students with disabilities, students gaining English proficiency, and other historically marginalized students are resourced to enable schools to meet their social-emotional and academic needs.
- Establishing a local levy system that works in concert with our state funding structures to ensure that they work together to further equity in funding for all students, including public charter school students.
- Supporting the implementation and resourcing of the Fair Start for Kids Act to ensure access to high-quality early learning opportunities.
- Allowing a simple majority of voters to approve school district construction bonds.



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## **SAFE, INCLUSIVE, AND WELCOMING SCHOOL COMMUNITIES**

Cultivating early learning, K-12, and postsecondary classroom environments that are safe, welcoming, and inclusive spaces for students of color, students gaining English proficiency, students receiving special education services, students with disabilities, and other students and families historically marginalized from school communities is essential to a young person's ability to grow, learn, and thrive. Safe and inclusive learning environments start with the disruption of harmful practices that contribute to the traumas of the school-to-prison pipeline. They are restored and sustained when all students and families feel included, welcomed, and a valuable part of the community. **In 2022, LEV will prioritize:**

- Ensuring families have access to qualified interpreters in their home language and translated materials to enable meaningful family engagement and two-way communication with school districts and school staff.
- Developing an educator workforce that better reflects the racial, cultural, and other identities of the students and families they serve. Resource and support ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings that allow school staff to engage deeply with the impacts of internalized bias and institutional racism in schools and better support all their students.
- Supporting educators, districts, and schools in adopting and implementing Universal Design for Learning and other inclusive practices that make learning environments more accessible and engaging to all types of learners and thinkers.
- Ending punitive discipline practices that disproportionately impact students of color, students experiencing homelessness, students receiving special education services, and youth in foster care through trauma, exclusion, or disengagement from learning and community, and contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline.

## **STUDENTS RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ARE GENERAL EDUCATION STUDENTS FIRST AND MUST BE SUPPORTED AND INCLUDED**

Our education system was not designed to meet the needs of all students, but we can build one that does. We must work towards a system of special education that creates a safe, accessible, and welcoming environment for all students. **In 2022, LEV will prioritize:**

- Ensuring that all students have access to the supports and services identified in their Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) as they continue their re-engagement in learning, and ensure students and families know their rights concerning IEPs.
- Creating a funding structure that will equitably support the systems and services needed for students receiving special education services and students with disabilities to meaningfully access their education, including lifting the 13.5% cap on funded enrollment.