



How We Fund K-12 Schools in Washington

A brief FAQ to address common questions about how schools are funded in Washington state. This is the first in a series to better help people navigate the complex funding system Washington has established to fund K-12 schools.

1. What is the Prototypical School Funding Model?

This is the formula that determines most state K-12 funding that districts receive. “Prototypical” means the state starts with a hypothetical school – a model that estimates the staff, materials, and resources required to run an average school.

The state then uses district-specific information, such as how many students are in a district and how much the state provides that district to hire school staff, which varies by district, to determine how much funding a district gets through the formula.

The prototypical formula is the main way schools receive money from the state, but several supplemental formulas direct additional funds to districts.

2. What are some examples of the costs the state identifies to run an average school?

1. The types of staff needed (e.g. classroom teachers, counselors, custodians, etc.)
2. The student-to-staff ratio for each position (e.g. one teacher for every 17 students, or one school nurse for every 750 students, etc.)
3. The salary level required to hire staff (e.g. the state identifies a competitive wage for each district and type of job)
4. The materials and supplies needed to operate a school, including books, curriculum, and the cost of utilities, among other items

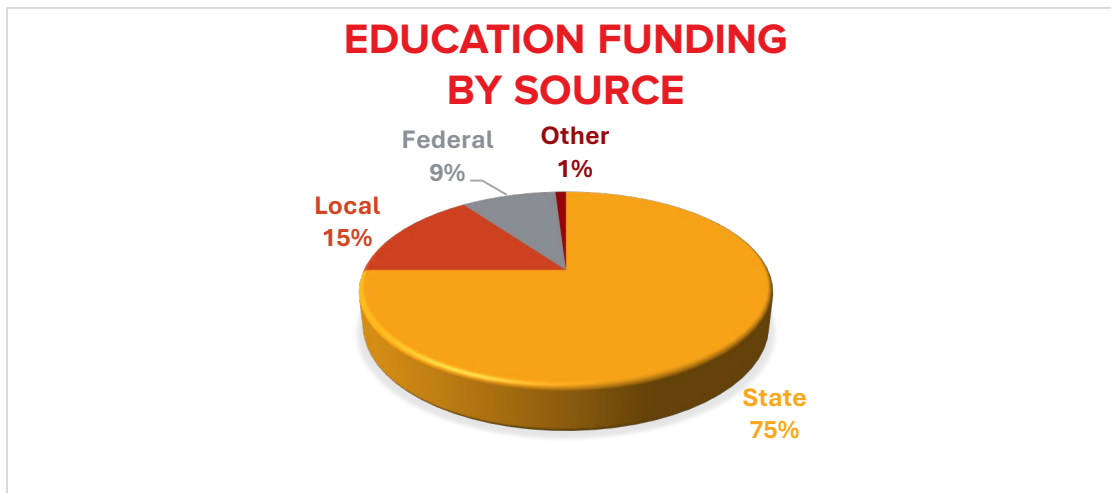
3. Do all districts receive the same level of funding in the prototypical school funding model?

No. Districts receive different funding levels based on property values in their area. For example, districts with single-family housing values above the state median get more funding to hire K-12 staff – sometimes up to 18% more funding than districts with lower property values. [More info here](#)

4. How much education funding does the prototypical school funding model send to schools?

About 60% of total state K-12 funding is directed to public schools across Washington through this formula.

5. Where does most K-12 funding come from in Washington?



6. Are districts required to spend the state education funding in a specific way?

Districts decide how to spend the money once they receive it from the state. For example, if a district gets funding to hire four counselors, they aren't required to hire four counselors. They can hire as many or as few as they decide they need or their budget allows.

7. How do student needs impact the prototypical school funding model?

Student needs do not impact how much funding a school receives through the prototypical school funding model, but there are supplemental funding formulas that do provide funding based on student needs. In total, these student need-based formulas account for under 20% of state K-12 funding.

8. How do student needs impact other, supplemental K-12 funding formulas?

The state has three funding programs outside of the prototypical model that direct money to schools based on student needs:

1. [Special Education](#) (13% of state funding) – is provided to districts to fulfill individualized education programs (IEPs) for students who qualify for special education services
2. [English Proficiency](#) (2% of state funding) – is provided to students who are working toward gaining English Proficiency
3. [Learning Assistance Program](#) (3% of state funding) – is provided to districts based on students eligible for the federal school meals program and is intended to provide support for students who need additional academic support