



Strategic Plan Vision

At LEV, we see an opportunity to build a stronger, more coherent education continuum that delivers on the promise of ensuring every child has equitable access to an excellent education. But today, Washington's early learning, K-12, and postsecondary systems are fragmented and disconnected. Insufficient investments continue to widen opportunity gaps for students and families furthest from educational justice, and policies often fail to reflect the lived experience of those most impacted. And notably, our collective efforts to drive change are too often siloed, and policymaking remains disconnected from the voices of students, families, and communities of color.

LEV's mission is to dismantle these systemic barriers by transforming how education systems are funded, designed, and held accountable, and also how advocates, communities, and systems come together to act in coordinated, aligned, and sustained ways. Through our four strategic pillars —Support Advocacy Ecosystem in Navigating Landscape Challenges, Create the Conditions for System Change, Community & Youth Leadership, and Research & Data to Drive Policy Change—we will work toward aligning the field, amplifying the power of youth and communities, and working with education leaders to identify specific policy approaches that can improve how we support students, families, and educators.

The approach outlined in our strategic pillars is grounded in our long-term vision for a student-centered, equitable funding system that fully reflects and resources the diversity of student needs across Washington, including supporting the mental and behavioral health of Washington's students. During the five years of the strategic plan, we aim to build the conditions for this shift by aligning advocates across sectors, strengthening community and youth leadership, and advancing more coherent, equity-centered investments in the near term. We have identified a five-year timeline for the strategic plan to allow us to make meaningful progress toward system change in a challenging policy and fiscal environment. As a backbone organization in the sector, LEV is well-positioned to help create a stronger infrastructure for coordinated action and shared purpose in Washington's education advocacy space. We believe this strategy will move Washington closer to a funding system and education system that truly serves all students.

The Challenges & Opportunities

Our strategic plan will work to address five critical barriers to a well-resourced, equitable education system, leveraging the most effective use of our position, influence, expertise, and reach in the education equity space.

1. Inequitable & Insufficient State and Public Investment

Our approaches to resourcing our early learning, K-12, and higher education system are not meeting the needs of children, students, families, or staff. Washington's outdated funding approaches fail to acknowledge the growing depth and diversity of student needs, especially in supporting student mental and behavioral health, disproportionately harms marginalized communities and deepens existing inequities.

2. Systems Fragmentation Across the Education Continuum

Current approaches to improving and supporting our early learning, K-12, and higher education systems remain siloed, with little acknowledgement of how these systems are interdependent parts of one system. This fragmentation reduces the overall effectiveness of the system and limits the impact of our investments. Transitions between systems reflect this and create barriers to opportunity, especially for students furthest from opportunity.

3. Policy Solutions Don't Often Address Root Causes

Our education system is a complex, dynamic system that requires a broad understanding of the challenges and root causes of issues we face to develop effective policies. We must approach system improvements and system change with a mindset that builds shared understanding and recognizes the need for more proactive support, interventions, and shifts in policy and practice that better support students before they feel disengaged or disconnected from school.

4. Underrepresentation of Community, Youth, and Family Leadership

Policy continues to be made for, not with, the communities most impacted. Youth, families, and grassroots organizations are excluded from decision-making, resulting in solutions that do not reflect lived experience or root cause understanding. This is especially true for Black, Indigenous and students of color, students with disabilities, students gaining English proficiency, students who identify as LGBTQ+, students experiencing homelessness, foster youth, and other historically marginalized students. We must employ approaches that are grounded in and affirm importance of building systems that are designed to meet the needs and honor the humanity of the diversity of Washington's communities as we work towards developing an education system that is designed to provide high-quality educational experiences to all students.

5. Incomplete Accountability: Missing Student Experience and Equity in Measures of Success

Many students and communities feel the education system is not responsive to their needs or lived experiences. We must expand our indicators of educational success to include student well-being, belonging, and opportunity, which are prerequisites for academic achievement. An overly narrow focus on how we measure school and student success in Washington masks systemic inequities and allows a status quo that is not working for many students to become accepted practice.

Strategic Plan Goals

1: Support Advocacy Ecosystem in Navigating Immediate Landscape Challenges

Goal: Drive coordination efforts within the advocacy community to help navigate the current financial challenges, policy uncertainties, and system stressors

By the end of the strategic plan, LEV along with partners will have provided advocacy coordination and support in understanding and navigating the implications of federal level changes and state-level budget cuts for advocacy organizations across the education continuum.

- **1.1: Build shared understanding of the importance of supporting and sustaining the education continuum from early learning through higher education:** Create common ground to reaffirm the need to see the education continuum as one system that is interconnected and interdependent to prevent disinvestment across the continuum, grounded in racial equity and educational justice.
 - **Indicator of Success:** Partners in early learning, K-12, and higher education are aligned around common messaging and engage in coordinated advocacy actions that affirm the importance of sustaining investment across the education continuum.
- **1.2: Support the advocacy community as we navigate an uncertain policy environment:** Ensure state and federal policy changes and their implications are shared and communicated in an accurate and timely manner across the education advocacy community.
 - **Indicator of Success:** Establish a bimonthly convening to share accurate and timely communication of federal and state policy shifts so that the advocacy community can be better prepared to navigate policy and fiscal uncertainties. The convening will include advocacy organizations, federal policy experts, representatives of Washington's congressional delegation, and state agency representatives.

2: Create the Conditions for System Change

Goal: Mobilize and align communities, youth, and partners to build collective power for educational justice.

By the end of the strategic plan, we expect to have created a more cohesive, cross-state, coordinated advocacy environment with strong partnerships across

community-based organizations/advocacy organizations, legislative champions, and community advocates (individuals) including youth and families most impacted by educational injustice.

- **2.1: Drive and lead strategic coordination to create system change:** Convene advocacy leaders across education and youth focused advocacy organizations to co-create a “North Star” vision and coordinate statewide strategies that work towards creating a well-resourced, student-centered education funding system. Underlying conditions for a healthy and effective statewide network include: representative of Washington’s communities most impacted by educational inequities; includes and de-silos early learning, K-12, higher education; geographic diversity; shared purpose and definitions; intentional relationships that can be rallied to support change; continuous engagement with community groups.
 - **Indicators of Success:** The network’s success will be defined by its impact on public policy demonstrated through metrics such as opinion polling, legislative wins, or ballot measure victories.
- **2.2: Grow legislative partnerships:** Empower sustained political leadership focused on education justice by cultivating and supporting values-aligned elected officials dedicated to education system change.
 - **Indicator of Success:** Identify, support, and sustain collaboration with six legislative champions to advance legislation.
- **2.3: Grow statewide advocates ready to act:** Mobilize community-based advocates and youth to engage in the policy making process.
 - **Indicator of Success:** Hold regional mobilization groups in at least 3 regions that can mobilize within a 48-hour window.

3: Community & Youth Leadership

Goal: Shift power by creating infrastructure and opportunities for students, youth, and families to lead education advocacy and systems change.

By the end of this strategic plan, we expect to have at least double the reach of our youth and family programming to help ensure youth are able to raise their voices for issues they care about. We also anticipate ensuring that all advocacy work at LEVF is informed by those closest to the issues we are addressing.

- **3.1: Expand youth advocacy engagement, support, and leadership opportunities statewide:** Strengthen programs that center student voices,

especially students who are historically marginalized at school, while ensuring geographic representation across Washington's diverse communities. Our advocacy training programs like SPYAC provide participants with legislative literacy and systems understanding, advocacy toolkits, public speaking practice, and networks of peers, advocates, and system leaders that sustain engagement and influence on special education issues and more beyond program participation. Develop and share replicable models of student-led advocacy initiatives (such as school board candidate forums and youth-designed workshops and events) that schools and other organizations can adapt for their communities.

- **Indicator of Success:** Participants show growth in advocacy knowledge, skills, and confidence through post-program surveys and reflections. Staff follow up with alumni to identify evidence of youth continuing to advocate in their schools and communities. Participation data across our programs highlights broad geographic and demographic representation across Washington. Schools and organizations replicate or adopt youth-led advocacy models developed through our programs, showing the reach of our work. Our team maintains records of alumni and partner collaborations that demonstrate a growing network of mentorship and shared advocacy efforts statewide.
- **3.2: Grow advocacy support for families and communities:** Facilitate advocacy leadership development for families and communities most impacted by educational injustice through community education forums.
 - **Indicator of Success:** Develop Advisory committee in Central Washington and expand Advisory committee in Eastern Washington to guide regional work while also developing an education advocacy Promotora program to strengthen community driven advocacy across the state.
- **3.3: Improve System accountability:** Enhance the role of students, families, and the advocacy community in holding the educational system accountable for student outcomes, student experience, and community & family engagement.
 - **Indicator of Success:** State education agencies, elected officials, and local education leaders will implement community engagement practices that include advocacy organizations, students, and families as they develop and adopt administrative rules, identify policy priorities, and design policy solutions.

4: Research & Data to Drive Policy Change

Goal: Use qualitative research, quantitative data, and lived experience of students to illuminate systemic barriers and drive solutions that prioritize equity and belonging.

By the end of this strategic plan, we anticipate publishing at least three milestone reports that will help inform the development of an inclusive, student-centered education system with particular emphasis on creating equitable funding structures and developing an effective and coordinated system to support student mental and behavioral health.

- **4.1: Conduct and Publish Original Research:** LEV will work with subject matter experts to conduct and publish research that addresses specific barriers to policy advancement.
 - **Indicator of Success:** LEV will translate research findings and policy analysis into accessible tools for advocates, educators, and decision-makers. Research findings will position LEV to collaborate with system leaders in identifying and implementing system improvements.
- **4.2: Improve Washington state's use of educational data to drive improved academic outcomes and a better student experience:** LEV will identify more opportunities to use Washington state's P-20 data system to identify and understand how our education continuum can better serve students. LEV will work toward improving how we use school climate survey data and other student experience data to understand how our education system is meeting the needs of students.
 - **Indicator of Success:** LEV will identify and cultivate two legislative education data champions to consistently incorporate our P-20 data system and its resources into education system improvement.
- **4.3: Create more Knowledge Resources:** Increase LEV's sphere of influence with policy makers, practitioners, and community members.
 - **Indicator of Success:** LEV will annually increase the number of elected officials and nonprofit partners who request issue briefings on education funding and student support issue areas.