

2026

LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM



FIELD REPORT



Students from South Shore PreK-8

Across Washington state, 2025 proved to be a challenging year for many of our communities. Through our Field Interviews, we heard directly from people about the concerns they are facing and the support they need. We maintained our wide-ranging, intersectional approach to education by engaging with students, parents, educators, administrators, educational partners, and community members whose experiences shape — directly or indirectly — our education system.

This year, we interviewed 106 individuals representing nearly 50 groups and organizations.

More than half of the participants were students.

The majority of conversations took place in the Greater Spokane region, the Yakima Valley, and across the Puget Sound region.

See the interview format, key findings, and the list of participants. »

FORMAT

Community members shared both their professional and lived expertise on a range of issues affecting education in Washington state. Key areas of concern included the impacts of federal actions targeting immigrant and LGBTQ+ communities, state-level effects on programming and funding, equitable funding, safe and inclusive schools, and special education.

Each interview typically lasted about an hour and included 10 minutes to review background and expectations, 30–45 minutes of dialogue guided by the questions listed below, and a concluding recap summarizing participants' feedback and perspectives.

SUMMARY

Across Washington state, communities expressed deep concern about the direction of the federal government and the continued impacts of budget deficits. Participants described instances of bullying and discrimination, highlighting the critical need for expanded mental health and counseling services. Others shared fears for immigrant families who feel compelled to prepare their children for the possibility of detention or other harm.

Although 2025 was a difficult year, community members also voiced a strong desire to create positive change. We heard stories of courageous individuals working to ensure that students thrive despite challenging circumstances. The call for an equitable funding structure — and meaningful reform — was a consistent theme in every conversation. And our students, in particular, are insisting on having a seat at the table.

KEY FINDINGS

Federal Impacts

- Communities are in fear, especially if they are immigrants or part of the LGBTQ+ community.
- Impacts on the community are being felt everywhere from food access to childcare and disability rights.
- “We are concerned that disability and special education rights will be rolled back to pre-1970s, where full segregation was widely practiced and accepted.”
– Disability Rights Attorney
- Immigrant families and their students are expressing concerns with leaving their house.

KEY FINDINGS, CONTINUED

Federal Impacts, continued

- For students who identify as LGBTQ+ and students from families with mixed immigration status, even conversations about where to go to college have become very difficult.
- “Even our absolute best attendance students are still struggling to show up because of the fear in the migrant/immigrant community.”
 - District Administrator, Spokane Region
- “Early learning is seeing a huge cut to funding and resources. We lost **ECEAP** (Washington state Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program) and Early ECEAP spots.”
 - Educational Service District 101 staff
- In areas where support for the LGBTQ+ community was already strong we have seen communities increase their support.

State Impacts

- “Unfunded Mandates feel like punishments from the state.”
 - Multiple Educators in Eastern Washington
- Funding issues and budget cuts are starting to feel like the new normal for many educators.
- Across the state, we are hearing that Arts and Social-Emotional Learning programs are losing funding and going away all together.
- “It’s not necessarily that they have cut, it’s that that they have continued to inadequately fund basic education.”
 - Superintendent, Puget Sound Region
- “If there wasn’t outside funding, the school would look a lot different.”
 - Principal, Puget Sound Region
- Many different communities in all regions requested a new funding system that fully and adequately funds education in an equitable manner.

KEY FINDINGS, CONTINUED

Equitable Funding

- “Each unique community has a unique set of needs, and we need to fund school districts in a way that prioritizes need.”
 - Principal, Yakima Valley
- Community members in districts across the state reported cuts to music, art, and SEL (social-emotional learning) programs. None of them saw cuts to major sports programs.
- “Yakima is being impacted by state cuts in the communities outside of the school system as well.”
 - OneAmerica, Yakima Valley
- “An equitable funding structure means that we have a framework and category of resources that interact with a hierarchy of need, so everyone gets the resources they deserve.”
 - District Administrator, Spokane Region
- “It means we aren’t dependent on a levy passing to support our most impacted students and communities.”
 - Parent, Spokane Region

Safe and Inclusive Schools

- There are not enough mental health counselors for the number of students and staff who need or want to access them.
- “I have noticed principals and educators self-censoring themselves to avoid blowback by certain parents.”
 - Teacher, Southwest Washington
- Educators across the state in public preK-12 and higher education have reported fear of backlash and physical threats of violence.
- Partners across the state are reporting an increase in bullying and discrimination in schools.

KEY FINDINGS, CONTINUED

Special Education

- Families and students often feel that their IEP (individualized education program) or 504 plans are not as comprehensive as they should be or aren't being followed as they should be.
- Educators are feeling stuck between wanting to serve their students and not having the staffing or resources to properly do that.
- State and federal budget cuts are making big impacts on Special Education.
- “Schools do the best they can, but if something is in the plan that schools can't provide, access becomes a problem. Language is often another barrier because not all schools provide full [ELD](#) (English Language Development) services.”
 - Communities In Schools of Benton-Franklin

CONCLUSION

The process of conducting Field Interviews and developing our legislative agenda depends deeply on community engagement. By incorporating voices from across diverse sectors, we strengthen our ability to advocate for an equitable public education system. The insights gathered through this work reinforce the importance of continued collaboration and investment in education policies. As we navigate the evolving landscape of education policy advocacy, these community conversations — and many others — help ensure that our organization remains grounded, informed, and moving in the right direction.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The work of League of Education Voters Foundation (LEV) and the advocacy we pursue is only possible because of the support we receive from our community partners, educators, students, and community members. By giving your time and sharing your stories, you provide us with the knowledge we need to engage meaningfully in Washington state's public education system. Your contributions guide and inspire our efforts every day.

PARTICIPANTS

- Community Partner, Yakima Valley
- Community Partner, Statewide
- Community Partner, Tri-Cities

PARTICIPANTS, CONTINUED

- High School Principal, Yakima Valley
- Community Partner, Statewide
- Superintendent, Yakima Valley
- Superintendent, Tri-Cities
- Superintendent, Tri-Cities
- Education Partner, Statewide
- Community Partner, Yakima Valley
- Community Partner, Yakima Valley
- ESL Students, Yakima Valley
- Principal, Yakima Valley
- Civil Rights Attorney
- Community College Advocate
- Disability Rights Attorney
- Education Lobbyist and Parent
- Education Researcher
- Community Partners, Statewide
- Homeless Youth Organizer
- Special Education Advocate
- Teacher, Southwest Washington
- School Counselor, Seattle
- Instructional Coach, Seattle
- Education Partners, Seattle
- Superintendent, North Puget Sound
- Superintendent, South Puget Sound
- Principal, Seattle
- District Administration, Seattle
- Asst. Superintendent, Highline
- District Administration, Highline
- District Administration, Highline
- Community Partner, Statewide
- Special Education Teacher, Seattle
- Literacy Coach, Seattle
- Principal, Seattle
- Community Partner, Spokane
- District Administrator, Cheney
- District Administrator, Spokane
- University Professor, Spokane

PARTICIPANTS, CONTINUED

- University Professor, Spokane
- Student Support Specialist, Spokane
- English Language Development Teacher, Spokane
- Educational Service District 101 Staff
- 301 class The Community School, Spokane
- 401 class The Community School, Spokane
- Educator, Spokane
- Community Partner, Spokane

The names of the groups and participants are anonymous in order to allow participants to give unfiltered responses to our prompts and legislative issues.