

February 15, 2007

WASHINGTON STATE PTA FOCUS DAY

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The following five issues have been selected by PTA members statewide as the highest priorities for the 2007 Legislative Session.

1. K-12 Education Funding

Position: The Washington State PTA shall initiate and/or support legislation and/or policies that establish an updated definition of basic education and a basic education funding formula that reflects current education practices and requirements. The redefinition and funding formula must fulfill the State's obligation to fully fund education as its paramount duty by providing ample opportunities for all students to achieve higher learning levels consistent with standards-based education reform. The funding system must ensure accountability by generating consistent and transparent accounting processes.

- Making ample provision for the education of all students is our state's paramount duty and it is time for Washington State to fully fund education – including education reform.
- The basic education allocation formula has not changed substantially since 1977 and does not completely fund the Learning Assistance program, school transportation, Special Education, and English Language Learners, nor does it cover technology proficiency.
- By redefining basic K-12 education to include all essential elements, our children are more assured of an equitable educational experience.

ACTION: There are various bills that would redefine basic education and provide additional funding for K-12 schools. We urge you to make this the Legislature's highest priority this year.

2. Math & Science

Position: The Washington State PTA shall initiate and/or support legislation and/or policies that strengthen scientific and mathematical education in Washington State, including but not limited to enhanced pre-K through college education in mathematics and the sciences; advance professional development and ongoing assistance for math and science teachers, community involvement in the selection of math and science curricula, and family collaboration in teaching math and science.

- Scientific and mathematical education in Washington State, as in the nation as a whole, is critical to our students completing school ready for a knowledge based economy.
- Currently children in our state are not receiving the best possible education in mathematics and the sciences. Scientific and mathematical education in Washington State (as in the nation as a whole) at all levels is critical to our national and state economies and security.
- Last year, nearly half of the state's 10th graders failed to pass the math section of the WASL.
- All students, regardless of race, ethnic group, gender, socioeconomic status, geographic location, age, language, disability, or prior mathematics achievement, deserve equitable access to challenging and meaningful mathematics learning and achievement.

ACTION: There are many proposed bills making their way through the legislature. We ask that you give careful consideration to all bills that will build the capacity for great math teachers, quality math instruction, and greater access to math courses for students.

3. Simple Majority for Levies and Bonds

Position: The Washington State PTA shall initiate and/or support legislation and/or policies that allow the people to vote on Simple Majority for excess levy and bond ballot measures run at any of the six election dates. These ballot measures include but are not limited to school levies and bonds.

- It is past time to allow the voters of Washington State to decide if they wish to change their constitution to allow the voters to decide if they wish to amend their state constitution to allow simple majority passage for school levies and bonds.
- Since 1944, the voters of Washington State have not been afforded the opportunity to decide if they wish to change their constitution on this issue.
- Our children are negatively impacted by over-crowded, under-maintained schools, and the loss of resources that results from failed school levy and bond measures.

ACTION: REPRESENTATIVES: Please support HJR 4201 allowing simple majority for school levies. SENATORS: Support SJR 8207, allowing simple majority for school levies AND SJR 8203 allowing simple majority for school bonds.

4. Reduce Class Size

Position: The Washington State PTA shall initiate and/or support legislation and/or policies that support funding and policies that secure smaller class sizes for students.

- Washington is 46th in the nation in class size. We would need over 11,000 more teachers to reach the national student-to-teacher average.
- Reducing class size in early grades improves student learning in all subject areas. This is particularly true for children living in poverty.

ACTION: Urge budget writers to support or enhance the Governor's budget proposal to further reduce class sizes. The Governor's budget reaches the \$450 per student allocation the voters approved in Initiative 728 for the 2007-2008 school year and increases per student funding by inflation in subsequent years. School districts are expected to prioritize this funding for class size reductions in grades Kindergarten through third. Additional funding will enable districts to allow for class size reductions in other grade levels.

5. School Recess

Position: The Washington State PTA shall initiate and/or support legislation and/or policies which require regular recess periods, supervised unstructured breaks, throughout the school day; ensure and support additional research on the effects of recess on the developmental domains (social, emotional, physical, and cognitive), and on the effect of recess on academic achievement; develop policies and resources necessary to support an awareness of the importance of recess and of active, free play in the development of children; and support research and professional development that facilitate every educator's and school staff member's skills in observation and assessment of the developmental growth of children through the play process.

ACTION: REPRESENTATIVES: Support HB 1188, requiring physical education (including recess) every school day. SENATORS: Support legislation requiring regular recess and physical education opportunities during the school day.