

Top 5 Legislative Priorities for 2015

Fully Fund McCleary

The McCleary Decision is a promise made to the children of Washington State to provide ample funding for basic education. It is critical that we fully fund basic education so that our state can be competitive in a changing world. The Washington State PTA supports the whole child both in and out of the classroom. The solution to McCleary needs to follow these two, key principles:

- Raise significant revenue for education, not merely redistributing existing education funding resources.
- Use progressive funding strategies and refuse to divest funding from health, human services, higher education or early learning programs.

Promoting Social and Emotional Learning

Our education system needs a comprehensive look at school climate to deliver standards, guidance, resources and support that provides our kids access to a better future. Washington's children have diverse experiences and abilities and by giving them tools to improve their social and emotional skills, we can help improve the outlook for their future.

Increasing Capital Funding

The Washington State PTA advocates for a change in our capital funding policies to alleviate our school construction crisis through utilization of the following tools (but not limited to):

- Allow for simple majority passage for school bonds.
- Adjust school construction assistance formula to make more matching funds available.
- Requiring local impact fees to embed the cost of growth within development and better address the long term costs of school construction.

Increased Access to Higher Education

The increases in tuition rates and the inability of the government to fully fund our "State Need Grants" requires action. The Washington State PTA urges our legislators to fully fund our state need grants and seek opportunities like the "Pay It Forward" and "College Bound" programs to help make college affordable.

Breakfast after the Bell

Washington State currently ranks 39th in participation for the federal school breakfast program and only 1/3rd of eligible children are currently allowed to access this program. The Washington State PTA supports the proposal offered by the United Way and urges its passage.

2015 WSPTA Supported Issues Platform

Access, Equity, & Opportunity for Special Needs Students

Advocates for students with special needs must be engaged in this effort and we need to expand the discussion and work around special education accountability and improved outcomes.

Closing Opportunity Gaps

We support efforts to eliminate the state's achievement gaps by creating equitable opportunities for all students. When our educational system fails to serve half of our kids, everyone suffers. More than \$3.1 billion would be added to Washington's economy by 2020 if graduation rates were constant across all ethnic and economic demographics.

Equal Access for ELL Students

ELL students bring great strengths and resources to our communities and the future workforce. Adequate funding and equal access to quality instructional support for these students is key to helping them achieve academic success.

Family and Community Engagement

Effective family engagement must be systemic, integrated and sustained utilizing programs purposefully designed to act as a core component of student achievement and school turnaround. Family engagement needs to be embedded into structures and processes from training and professional development to teaching and curriculum.

Inclusive Special Education

An inclusion classroom allows students with special needs to be educated alongside same age peers while giving appropriate supports and services. Curriculum and strategies should be brought to the student, instead of relocating the student to another room in the school. Inclusive learning will help prevent bullying and encourage greater educational outcomes for all students.

Increase Playground Safety

While classroom ratios are set in statute, staff to student ratios on our playgrounds only requires a minimum of two adults on school playfields with up to several hundred children. Child safety should be a priority of every school, community, organization, and government.

Invest in Teacher Professional Learning

We support 10 days of professional development; include mentors and instructional coaches in the basic education funding formula; and align the salary allocation model to the career continuum for educators.

Regulating Child Restraint and Isolation in Schools

Students in Washington are being subjected to traumatic and potentially damaging uses of restraint and isolation as a means of addressing and managing challenging behaviors in school. Each and every student in our schools, including those with challenging behaviors, deserves to be treated with respect and dignity.