



## WSPTA Proposed Legislative Priority Issues - 2004

- Title:** **Access to Health Care for Children and Youth**
- Text:** The Washington State PTA shall initiate and/or support legislation or policies that promote the growth of health care coverage for children.
- Background:** One of the results of this last legislative session is that, by design, fewer children will have access to health care. This is wrong. All children deserve access to health care. The following quote from the Children's Alliance report published in June 2003 describes the problem: *After this last legislative session, Washington will become one of eight states to impose premiums for medical coverage on Medicaid children who live at 150% or below the federal poverty level. The monthly premiums will range from \$15-25 per month and apply to children who live between 100-250% of Federal Poverty Level. This is estimated by the legislature to result in the loss of health care coverage for 20,000 children. This drop-off is not unintended, as legislators banked on the drop-off to provide the \$33 million state savings, not the premium collection itself. We are going in the wrong direction.*
- Submitted by:** Kim Howard, Peter G. Schmidt PTA, Olympia (Region 4)
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- Title:** **Alternative Assessments to the WASL**
- Text:** The WSPTA shall initiate and/or support legislation and/or policy that provides for the development and/or use of alternative assessments to the WASL.
- Background:** The lack of an alternative to the state WASL assessment for students greatly inhibits the ability to accurately assess student achievement. An alternative assessment to the WASL would help 1) district and building WASL scores to more accurately reflect the abilities of our students, and 2) more accurately assess the student's level of knowledge and academic progress. Such alternatives might include, but not be limited to: assessments conducted in a student's native language; an adjusted assessment scoring system (a system where strengths in one area of the WASL might offset, to a certain degree, weaknesses in another); a portfolio or other type demonstration assessment, etc.
- Under the current system, WASL scores will continue to inaccurately reflect student learning in our districts. This will impact individual school buildings' ability to demonstrate adequate yearly progress among all the disaggregated student groups that are required to be measured. This will in turn likely result in more schools undergoing progressive sanctions as defined in the "No Child Left Behind" act, and contribute to good schools being labeled as failing schools. Having an alternative assessment to the WASL will permit all students the opportunity to accurately demonstrate their abilities. Currently, students must take a test they may not adequately comprehend and produce results that they, their teachers, and their parents know does not accurately reflect their abilities.
- Submitted by:** WSPTA Legislation Committee
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- Title:** **Children with Developmental Disabilities**
- Text:** The Washington State PTA shall support/initiate legislation or policies that provide adequate funding for family support services for children with developmental disabilities.
- Background:** There is a large increase in the number of children identified with developmental disabilities (DD). When these children screen into the DD program, they are told that

there is at least a one-year wait to receive family support allocations. This money provides resources for respite support, equipment, dietary supplements, special clothing needs, ramps for wheelchairs, and any other item related specifically to the disability that a family needs to keep their child safe and supported in the home and community.

Submitted by: WSPTA Legislation Committee

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**Title: Commercialism in Schools**

**Text:** The Washington State PTA shall initiate and/or support legislation or policies that address the adverse effects on children of commercialism in the schools, specifically name brand advertising and exclusive contracts for the advertising and sale of commercial products, and the naming of school buildings, facilities and areas by a commercial enterprise, with the aim to ban or significantly curtail such activities.

**Background:** The problems of commercialism in the schools and the adverse effects of advertising to children in a captured environment are statewide and affect all children so exposed across the state.

Submitted by: John Stokes, Bellevue High School PTA, Bellevue (Region 2)

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**Title: Education Funding Study**

**Text:** The WSPTA shall support/initiate legislation or policies that fund a study regarding how our state funds education, which would include an analysis of fairness and adequacy. It would also provide suggestions for changes to the current system and alternative funding mechanisms. The study should consider the 2003 report, 'What Will it Take?' produced by the Rainier Institute as a guide for determining the amount of money necessary to adequately fund a quality education system.

**Background:** Since the passage of HB 1209, implementing a performance-based education system for all K-12 students, schools have made tremendous changes and student achievement has substantially improved. Additional resources are required to sustain student achievement and "leave no child behind". Referring back to the court's language, the education system is evolving and changing. The Legislature has a responsibility to review the adequacy and appropriateness of the school funding formula.

Submitted by: Kim Howard, Peter G. Schmidt PTA, Olympia (Region 4)

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**Title: Eliminating the Achievement Gap**

**Text:** The WSPTA shall initiate and/or support legislation that provides assistance and/or financial incentives to school districts as they explore proven research-based options for improving student learning and eliminating the achievement gap. Such options might include, but not be limited to:

Seeking to create or maintain smaller school environments of student populations in support of improved student learning, but not at the cost of current small school districts or existing small learning environments.

OR

Converting to a modified annual calendar (commonly referred to as a year-round calendar), which uses the existing 180 days spread out across the year in a more balanced manner.

**Background:** As schools and school districts explore options for improving student learning and eliminating the achievement gap, support for these exploration efforts must come from existing limited budgets. Professional development and planning time are critical elements in any educational conversion process. Educational budget shortfalls threaten the professional development funding necessary to make such wholesale changes in the educational process. In an era of high expectations for students, it is critical that educational systems explore a variety of instructional methods to ensure student success. In these times of tight educational budgets, programmatic conversion and maintenance funding is difficult to sustain and the success of the program and the students within it are dependent on that funding.

Submitted by: WSPTA Legislation Committee

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Title: **Fair and Ample Tax System**

Text: The Washington State PTA shall support/initiate legislation or policies that design and enact a tax system for Washington State that is fair, equitable, stable, straight-forward, easily complied with and administered; provides ample revenue to meet the needs of all children for education, health, and human services; and, promotes a health economy.

Background: The regressive and unstable nature of Washington State's current tax system has been a high profile issue for the WSPTA for several years. The tax system needs to provide adequate revenue to meet the public needs of our State. The revenue must be sufficient to provide for growing needs, such as the cost of educating all students in a K-12 performance-based system, as opposed to simply maintaining current levels of service. The current tax system is also highly unstable because it relies too heavily on the Retail Sales and Use Tax. When consumption drops, this revenue source drops also. General fund programs, including education, are always vulnerable to budget cuts and cannot depend on stable funding from year to year. Lower income families pay a much larger percentage of their total income in taxes than do middle and upper income families. This disparity has increased during the past ten years.

Submitted by: John Stokes, Bellevue High School PTA (Region 2)

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Title: **Funding and Support of Mental Health Services for Children and Adolescents**

Text: The Washington State PTA shall initiate and or support legislation that supports children with mental illness through early detection and services that meet individual needs and adequate funding that includes better health insurance and reimbursement for mental health needs.

Background: Mental health is now the single most common reason for hospitalization among Washington teens. By 1999 Mental illness accounted for 1 in 8 hospitalizations among children ages 5-14 and 1 in 5 among adolescents ages 15-19. Despite the rapid need for mental health services, there appears to be a significant lack of services and insurance reimbursement.

Submitted by: Rachel Thompson, Frank Wagner Middle School PTA, Monroe (Region 7)  
Stacy Shown, Kapowsin PTA, Graham (Region 5 )

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Title: **Funding for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate honors programs.**

Text: The WSPTA shall initiate and/or support legislation and/or policies that provide identified funding for Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) honors programs.

Background: The minimal funding that districts formerly received to support these higher-level curricular offerings was eliminated during the last legislative session. In order to meet the challenge of closing the achievement gap we need to increase the numbers of students who have access to our AP&IB honors programs. Staff members must be able to access professional development opportunities in order to become skillful in the methodologies and appropriately deliver the curriculum of these highly regarded honors programs. In addition, students, especially low income students, need the financial support necessary to test in the programs. Funding for these programs must come out of existing general funds, thereby shortchanging other programs and potentially diluting the honors curriculum. As Washington state students rise to the higher standards that have been set, more and more students each year must be able to enter the most challenging honors programs we can provide.

Submitted by: WSPTA Legislation Committee

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Title: **Funding of Traffic Safety Education**

**Text:** The WSPTA shall initiate and/or support legislation and/or policies that will use fees added to the driver's licensing process to be dedicated to the support of Traffic Safety Education in the state's schools.

**Background:** The loss of state financial support for the Traffic Safety Education program has resulted in fewer students participating in this program through the public high school system. Some districts have eliminated the program; others have drastically scaled back their offerings. Because limited budgets are forcing public school districts to raise the fees charged for traffic safety education, many students are choosing to take driving instruction from local private vendors who do not provide the quality of curriculum or instruction available through the public school programs, but whose fees are typically not as high.

The loss of state financial support for Traffic Safety Education has impacted each school district that offered the program, forcing some to eliminate the program entirely. Fewer and fewer students are participating in public school district because of the increased costs. Potentially, because of declining traffic safety education enrollment, certificated staffing adjustments, reassignments, or reductions may occur. Students choosing to take their training from local private vendors will continue to receive curriculum and driving instruction of lesser quality. The opportunity for students to participate in district programs, taught by certificated staff, results in a better trained beginning driver.

**Submitted by:** WSPTA Legislation Committee

**Title:** **Junk Food and Beverages in Schools**

**Text:** WSPTA shall support/initiate legislation or policies that would reduce or eliminate the selling of junk food and beverages in our public schools.

**Background:** The Center for Disease Control and Prevention predicts that one-third of children will ultimately contract obesity-linked diabetes, and a World Health Organization study published in April, 2003 links obesity to soft drink consumption. Gary Goldbaum, MD, MPH, a physician representing Public Health in Seattle and King County stated, "Public schools MUST provide an environment where kids can learn to eat healthy foods. School boards must develop policies to improve the school environment. The key is to offer competitive foods that are healthy, affordable, reflect what is being taught through nutrition education curricula." With the decrease in PE requirements in the schools resulting in less exercise, we must address the eating habits of students in the school environment. Public schools should be a healthy and safe environment for the children of Washington. We should not sell our kids' health to raise money for the schools. It has been shown in several states that removing soda drinks and other sugar drinks and replacing those with water, milk, yogurt, bagels, 100% juices increases the money raised for the schools. The myth has been that kids won't buy these items and the school will lose out that money. As Russ Lehman, Olympia School Board member said "We fail our prime responsibility to our school children when we not only provide, but in fact attempt to profit from, the exact foods that we teach them are unhealthy."

**Submitted by:** Sandy Livingston, Sammamish High School PTSA, Sammamish (Region 2)

**Title:** **Life-Threatening Allergies and Asthma**

**Text:** The Washington State PTA shall support/initiate legislation or policies that require school personnel (including volunteers and contractors) in charge of, or having contact with, a child with a life-threatening allergy and/or asthma, to be educated regarding these conditions.

**Background:** This is a significant health and safety issue for children because: 1) exposure to a small amount of allergen (major allergens include food, insect venom, latex, and medications) can cause anaphylactic shock and/or death in an allergic individual; 2) exposure by touch or smell can cause an allergic reaction and/or death in very sensitive individuals; 3) allergic individuals with asthma are at increased risk for anaphylaxis; 4) asthma itself can be deadly; 5) the prevalence of asthma, food-related allergies, and latex allergies is

on the rise nationally. (One example: the prevalence of food allergies doubled in the United States and Britain from the early 1980's to the early 90's – source NY Times); 6) it is impossible to achieve 100% avoidance of allergens or asthma triggers; therefore, anaphylactic reactions or asthmatic episodes will eventually occur; 7) prompt recognition and treatment of the allergic reaction and/or asthma are essential to the survival of allergic/asthmatic individuals; 8) young children, in particular, rely on the adults who care for them to protect them from harm.

Submitted by: Laura Burress, Whitman PTSA, Tacoma (Region 10)  
Kerrie Schurr, Schmitz PTA, Seattle (Region 6)

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**Title:** **Negative Effects of Current Grandfathering of Teacher Salaries and Levy Lids**  
**Text:** The WSPTA shall support legislation that ends financial discrimination against children in school districts that are negatively affected by current grandfathering of teacher salaries and levy lids.

**Background:** The current funding of schools is inequitable, in fact discriminatory to those who do not gain the financial benefits of grandfathering. There is no logical reason that some districts have a higher levy lid or higher teacher salary base. This grandfathering is not connected to need. There is no rhyme or reason to the grandfathered districts. Inequities based on need make sense. If a school district has more children who are struggling to learn to read, they should have more money for intervention programs. However, the current inequities are not based on need, therefore they are simply discrimination. Supporting any legislation that abolishes grandfathering will create a more equitable, sensible funding system.

Submitted by: Issaquah Council (Region 2)

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**Title:** **P-16: Early Childhood, K-12 and Post Secondary Education in Washington State.**  
**Text:** WSPTA shall support/initiate legislation or policies regarding the development of a coherent strategy for P-16 education system in Washington State. A P-16 system connects three largely disconnected levels of public education: preschool, K-12 and postsecondary, ensuring a smooth transition from one level of learning to the next. WSPTA shall also support the first implementation of this strategy and the additional revenue needed to support additional investments to early childhood, K-12, and/or higher education.

**Background:** There are 80,000 three year olds in this state, 80,000 four year olds, one million children in the K-12 system, 350,000 young adults in our community college and university system. In Washington's preschool world multiple, disconnected providers offer uneven services to our young children, with little or no connection to the K-12 system. The K-12 structure was designed 100 years ago to educate some, but not all kids. K-12 schools remain largely isolated from the preschool and post secondary worlds. Higher education is a multi-layered, fragmented system with not enough capacity to serve the number of young adults who want to continue their education. Increasingly, policy makers, researchers, educators and child advocates are realizing that there is a positive relationship between school readiness, better integration of early childhood learning, K-12, post secondary education, and vocational training, and increased student achievement.

Submitted by: Lisa McFarlane, Whitman Middle School PTA, Seattle (Region 6)

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**Title:** **Prevention and Intervention Programs**  
**Text:** The Washington State PTA shall initiate and/or support legislation or policies that maintain the funding of established, data-driven prevention and early intervention health and human service programs for all children and youth.

**Background:** Prevention and early intervention programs are often thought of as investments in the future; spending money today on successful prevention programs can produce taxpayer

and other savings for years into the future. By investing in the healthy development of children and families, we save money and we save lives. When the State faces a budget shortfall prevention and early intervention programs such as Readiness to Learn, Continuum of Care, Family Reconciliation Services, and Parent Trust for Washington are some of the first programs to experience proposed cuts.

Submitted by: John Stokes, Bellevue High School PTA (Region 2)

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**Title: Simple Majority for Levies and Bonds**

**Text:** The Washington State PTA shall support/initiate legislation or policies that allow the people to vote on Simple Majority for school funding measures.

**Background:** If this issue does not get resolved it will continue to deplete the community and school districts financial resources. Further, it will continue to depress the morale of our parents, teachers and district administrative personnel. Local levy and bond campaigns are expensive, thus running multiple campaigns is an additional burden on communities. Our schools are getting more overcrowded and run down. Allowing levies to pass with a simple majority vote would allow districts to have more stable sources of funding.

Submitted by: Wendy Ness, Pinewood Elementary PTA, Marysville (Region 7)

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**Title: Safe and Healthy Schools**

**Text:** The Washington State PTA shall support/initiate legislation or policies that create safe and healthy schools by reducing environmental hazards.

**Background:** Evidence shows that children in Washington State are exposed to environmental factors at school that can and do produce illness and injuries that are preventable. Children are more vulnerable to environmental hazards than adults and require special protection from many contaminants, including those commonly found in the school environment. Children are susceptible to these contaminants because their bodies and organs are growing and developing. This vulnerability and the amount of time children spend in school demand standards for school construction, maintenance, and operations to be specially tailored to be protective of children. Existing evidence demonstrates that many schools in Washington have serious environmental health problems which are causing health concerns among students and staff, reducing teaching and learning effectiveness and draining resources away from the core functions of schools.

Submitted by: WSTPA Legislation Committee

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**Title: Safe Storage for Guns**

**Text:** The Washington State PTA shall initiate and/or support legislation or policies that promote safe storage for firearms.

**Background:** This issue serves to protect all children and youth from dangerous weapons and handguns in the home, school, and community by promoting responsible handgun storage by adults. All children must be safe to learn, yet children are still bringing loaded firearms to school. By reducing access to weapons by youth, incidents of students bringing weapons to school can be minimized.

Submitted by: France Giddings, AG Bell PTSA, Kirkland (Region 2)

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**Title: Sustainable Focused Assistance**

**Text:** The WSPTA shall initiate and/or support legislation and/or policies that will provide a sustainable focused assistance process that provides adequate funding, professional consultant support, and achievable goals throughout the improvement process and for two years after a school is out of improvement status. The program must be student-centered and focused on improved student learning. Such focused assistance must honor local authority and expertise and focus on local needs.

**Background:** Trends indicate that more schools will move into improvement status as NCLB requirements must be met. In order to help ensure that these schools successfully emerge from improvement status, there must be some maintenance level funding to help support them. As more schools move through the improvement process,

the strain on limited district budgets to maintain their level of effort will be unacceptable. Current focused assistance funding provides educational staff with professional development training and new strategies for addressing improved student learning. Failure to provide maintenance level funding for these activities could jeopardize future school success.

Submitted by: WSPTA Legislation Committee

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