

### School Funding Study

After several years of advocating for a legislative school finance study, the 2005 Legislature enacted SB 5441, directing a comprehensive education finance study. This study will look at all three sectors of education – early learning, K-12, and higher education.

**K-12 School Facilities** - The final Capital budget includes \$600 million for K-12 construction, **which is \$217 million more** than the current funding level. This represents a 20 year high for state level school facilities support. Among the enhancement items included in the Capital Budget:

- Increased state-match for student space allocation and area cost allowance;
- Significant resources for school modernization, skill center equipment and buildings; and emergency repair grants;
- Grants for “High-Performing” school buildings.

### Support for Highly Capable Programs

Funding of the per-student allotment for highly capable programs was not only maintained, but increased. During the first year of the biennium funding is \$347.25 per student and second year is \$349.48. **This is a total increase of \$14.59** over the current funding of \$334.89.

### Graduation Rates and Drop-outs

- The Superintendent of Public Instruction will review and evaluate promising programs for dropout prevention. The Superintendent will report to the legislature by Dec. 1, 2005 and recommend most promising comprehensive dropout prevention programs.
- A joint select committee is convened to study the basic structure of middle schools and high schools and to report back with recommendations for more effective organizational structures.

## HEALTH AND WELL-BEING SUCCESSES!

- Children’s Health Care Access -- Premiums are delayed; several administrative barriers are removed; and healthcare **coverage is restored to over 38,000 immigrant children** who lost coverage in the last biennium.
- Children’s Mental Health Services Mental Health – \$80 million of lost Medicaid revenue for community mental health services is restored; \$20 million is provided to implement the mental health omnibus act of 2005; and the **Mental Health Parity was enacted early in the session.**
- Life-Threatening Allergies and Asthma – Mandates a **uniform policy** for all school districts regarding the training of school staff about children with asthma, and adoption of policies regarding asthma rescue procedures and prevention policies. Plus, all elementary and secondary schools must authorize any student to self-administer medication to treat his or her asthma or anaphylaxis where appropriate.
- Children’s Protective Services Program Improvements - **\$10.1 million is provided for improving child protective services** by implementing 24 hour responses to allegations of abuse and neglect and for 30 day face-to-face visits with children in foster care.

## SAFETY SUCCESSES!

- An **Internet Safety Education** program is funded;
- A bill regulating **parent information regarding the rating system for video and computer games** is enacted;
- The **School Mapping project** is funded for the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase (middle/junior high schools);
- The Washington Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect will conduct a proactive, public information and communication outreach campaign concerning the

significance, **signs and treatment of postpartum depression**; and

- The Dept. of Transportation is directed to issue a license plate recognizing efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect – **Keeping Kids Safe** license plates will be available soon.

### BUDGET AND REVENUE SUCCESSES!

- Child advocates successfully worked to ensure a final budget that **balanced program cuts with new revenue**;
- A total **new revenue package of \$481** was adopted, primarily for the purposes of funding education initiatives. This was the third year the state began session with a budget deficit, and there were no further child-related programs that could sustain severe cuts without compromising the quality of life for children in our state; and
- The adopted tax package uses a combination of taxes and fees, which are **generally progressive** rather than regressive taxes.

### PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT SUCCESSES:

- Many bills included PTA specifically as members of task forces and/or study committees. Additionally, **parent friendly language** was included in various education bills;
- **The Family Leave Act** was introduced, and will be worked during the second year of the biennium. The bill establishes and administers a family leave insurance program and family leave insurance benefits as directed in the act.

To learn more about the Washington State PTA Platform visit:  
<http://www.wastatepta.org/programs/Legislation/legintro.htm>

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## Washington State PTA 2005 Legislative Session **SUCCESSFUL VOICES!**

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### EDUCATION SUCCESSES:

**Student Achievement**: Several funding changes were approved during the session, with the goal of driving more money to those students at risk of not being successful in the current standards-based learning environment:

- A budget item of **\$3.2 million for assessment System** changes that will provide for district grants for WASL re-takes, state development of alternative assessments, and creation of appeals process for WASL;
  - The Learning Assistance Program funding formula is changed to use a factor of **100% poverty**. Previously the formula used a mix of 50% test scores and 50% poverty;
  - **Initiative 728 step-up is fully funded** - changes from the current level of \$253 to \$300 in the '05-06 school year; and \$375 in the '06-07 school year;
  - Focused Assistance for Schools -- \$2.0 million (with a matching grant of \$2 from the Gates Foundation) to **support schools in need of improvement**; and
  - WASL Results must be returned to schools and parents by June 10<sup>th</sup> of the year test was taken.
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