

18.5 Funding for Basic Education

Resolution passed 1986; amended 2007; amended 2013

Whereas, Washington state’s constitution and certain court decisions and legislative acts have provided a strong and enduring foundation for the state’s K-12 public education system; and

Whereas, the Washington state constitution provides that:

- “It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders...” (*Article IX, Section 1*); and
- “The legislature shall provide for a general and uniform system of public schools. ...” (*Article IX, Section 2*); and

Whereas, state courts in School Funding I and II interpreted these articles of the state constitution and established important funding principles for the state, including that:

- The legislature is required to define “basic education” and provide ample funding for it from regular and dependable tax sources. *School Funding I*
- Programs considered basic education are Regular Apportionment, Vocational Education, Special Education, Pupil Transportation, Transitional Bilingual Education, Learning Assistance, and Institutional Education. *School Funding II*
- The legislature is “required to continually review, evaluate, and revise, if necessary, the educational system of the state and the program of education and its funding to meet the current needs of the children of the state.” *School Funding II*
- Once the legislature has established what is considered 100 percent funding of basic education needs, it cannot reduce that funding level due to state revenue problems. *School Funding II*
- The legislature may not use special excess levies to fund basic education, although such levies may be used to fund enrichment programs. *School Funding I*; and

Whereas, in 1977, the legislature passed the Basic Education Act in response to the pending court decision of School Funding I. The Basic Education Act established:

- “Basic Education” in terms of broad educational goals, and specified minimum hours, days and instructional programs that school districts were required to offer; and
- State funding formulae consisting of staff-per-student ratios; and

Whereas, in 1993, the legislature passed the Education Reform Act to place greater emphasis on how well students learn rather than on time spent learning. The act established four basic education goals for all students:

- Read with comprehension, write with skill, and communicate effectively and responsibly in a variety of ways and settings;
- Know and apply the core concepts and principles of mathematics; social, physical, and life sciences; civics and history; geography; art; and health and fitness;

- Think analytically, logically, and creatively, and to integrate experience and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and solve problems;
- Understand the importance of work and how performance, effort, and decisions directly affect future career and educational opportunities; and

Whereas, Washington State PTA believes that the 1993 Education Reform Act’s four basic education goals together with the Essential Academic Learning Requirements and the Grade Level Expectations redefined basic education and provided a solid foundation for an updated program of basic education; and

Whereas, in 2009 the legislature adopted a new basic education funding formula based on a prototypical school funding model that includes small K-3 class sizes and staff mixes for elementary, middle and high school; established a new funding formula for student transportation; created workgroups to define funding details for levies, levy equalization and salary models; and broadened the definition of basic education to include the categorical programs of highly capable, special education, transitional bilingual and learning assistance; and changed the program of instruction to include full-day kindergarten, an additional 80 hours of instruction in grades 7-12, and the opportunity for all students to complete the 24- credit career- and college-aligned graduation requirements; and

Whereas, despite the 2012 Supreme Court decision in the McCleary case that said the state was not amply providing for the education of all children, but that reform passed in 2009 (ESHB 2261) would satisfy the court, the legislature continues to delay implementation of the funding structure it designed to ensure full funding of the program of basic education, including educational requirements and challenges of the future; and

Whereas, funding is still lacking, despite legislative intent declared in 2009 (ESHB 2261) and 2010 (SHB 2776) that redefined the program of basic education and funding, so that it would be fully implemented by 2018, and despite the court order in 2012 that it be funded by 2018.

Therefore, be it

Resolved, that Washington State PTA urges the legislature to review the implementation of the revised basic education funding formula to ensure that it fully funds the definition of basic education created in 2009 and gives all children the opportunity to complete the 24-credit career- and college-aligned graduation requirements by 2018; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA support revisions to the basic education funding formulas that are clear and transparent to taxpayers, allowing them to understand how funding is tied to the costs of educating different types of students and all students; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA supports regular and timely revision of the state’s education programs and funding systems, including the basic education funding formulas.