

WSPTA recognizes that even after the infusion of funds from the McCleary decision in 2017, K-12 education is not fully funded in Washington state. There are critical funding gaps related to services for certain student populations, COVID recovery, and district functions that must be addressed.

Background

- COVID-19, school closures and remote learning caused significant learning disruption and negatively impacted student physical and emotional health in the 2020 and 2021 school years. Data from the 2020-21 school year showed a 42% increase in high school students receiving grades that did not earn credit, more students starting the year behind grade level, and many students losing the equivalency of 2-3 months of instruction in core subjects during remote learning.⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾
- Students faced significant emotional trauma during the pandemic. A new study revealed that between January 2020 and May 2022, 8 million kids worldwide, ages 18 and younger lost a parent or primary caregiver to the pandemic.⁽³⁾ Student mental health was already a growing concern before the pandemic and needs to be addressed now more than ever.
- For years a gap in special education funding has remained between what districts receive from the federal and state government, including safety net dollars, and what it costs to provide services to students with disabilities. During the 2020-21 school year, district expenditures for special education and related services in Washington state exceeded the federal and state special education funding by more than \$400 million, or nearly 18%.⁽⁴⁾ This gap requires school districts to use voter-approved enrichment levies to cover the excess costs of special education.
- Washington State Report Card Data for the 2020-21 school year shows the following gaps: ⁽⁵⁾
 - Students facing homelessness were more than 20 percentage points below their peers in all areas of kindergarten readiness.
 - There were attendance disparities of 12.2% for students of migrant families and a whopping 29.1% for students facing homelessness.
 - Students in foster care, students facing homelessness, and students in migrant families all have lower four-year graduation rates, higher rates of needing additional time to graduate, and higher dropout rates than their peers.
 - During Fall 2021 assessments, students in foster care, students facing homelessness, and students in migrant families tested at least 20 percentage points below their peers in all categories and grade levels.
- The student transportation funding formula is complicated, and many districts' actual costs for student transportation is consistently underfunded. Any costs above those reimbursed by the state must come from district general funds, special levies or enrichment levies.

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For More Information

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For more information on the WSPTA advocacy program, please visit our website.

- Unfunded mandates are legislative acts that require a school district to implement some practice or procedure for which no monies in the state budget have been allocated, requiring districts to stretch existing staff and resources to implement them or face non-compliance. State funding or resources should accompany changes to state policies and activities that must be implemented by school districts.
- The state provides some financial assistance for school construction projects, but to be eligible a school district must first secure voter approval of a school bond or capital levy for the local share of a project. Between 2012 and 2021, SCAP funding contributed between 9.7% to 17.41% of the total school construction projects each year, with the 10-year average being 12.54%.⁽⁶⁾ This leaves the larger burden of cost to the local level. Some districts can pass capital bonds and levies while others cannot. Between 2017 and 2020, 130 school bonds were run, and only 62 - or 47.6% - actually passed the 60% supermajority threshold.⁽⁷⁾ This results in inequitable learning environments for students around the state.

Proposed Solutions

Washington State PTA shall advocate for legislation or policies that help resolve critical education funding gaps and inequities with predictable, progressive, and sustainable revenue sources including, but not limited to:

- Resources for students needing additional academic/physical/emotional support.
- Services for students with disabilities.
- Categorical funding to support highly mobile students.
- Student transportation.
- Unfunded mandates to school districts.
- School construction.

Citations

- (1) [2021-03-30-COVID-Learning-Disruption-Report.pdf \(wa.gov\)](#)
- (2) [The COVID Academic Slide Could Be Worse Than Expected \(edweek.org\)](#)
- (3) [Study: Nearly 8 million kids lost a parent/primary caregiver to the pandemic : Goats and Soda : NPR](#)
- (4) Email from Tania May, OSPI Assistant Superintendent of Special Education - contact WSPTA Advocacy Director for citation (PTAadvocacydir@wastatepta.org)
- (5) [Report Card - Washington State Report Card \(ospi.k12.wa.us\)](#)
- (6) Email from the School Facilities & Organization/Government Relations department at OSPI - contact WSPTA Advocacy Director for citation (PTAadvocacydir@wastatepta.org)
- (7) Bond and levy spreadsheet from DA Davidson - contact WSPTA Advocacy Director for citation (PTAadvocacydir@wastatepta.org)