



Puget Sound Educational Service District
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Education Funding Position Paper
Submitted by Superintendents of the Puget Sound Educational Service District

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As superintendents of Puget Sound Educational Service District, we represent school districts in King and Pierce Counties, along with Bainbridge Island, serving a large proportion of the state's total K-12 population. We offer the unique perspective of how education funding directly impacts students, families, staff and communities.

At the beginning of the 2017 legislative session, we shared with you our legislative priorities, which centered on meeting the state's paramount duty to fully fund education. We appreciate your work thus far, and proposals for thoughtful, substantive solutions. Rather than taking a position on any one of the proposals altogether, we would like to constructively point out the issues we believe are most essential to be included in the final compromise plan. As you work together to negotiate the McCleary fix, we urge you to consider the following positions.

There are three major areas that are most important for the Legislature to address: Allocation & Funding Model; Compensation; and Levies.

Allocation & Funding Model

We support a structure that allocates resources primarily utilizing the per-pupil prototypical school model, because it is an objective, research-based model and it can be adjusted based on a multitude of factors such as poverty, school size, class size targets and student programs such as special education, bilingual, highly capable and career/technical education. Such a model should be periodically reviewed and modified over time to meet changing needs.

Compensation

We support continuation of a state salary schedule and allocation model to assure consistency, uniformity and equity. We support simplifying the current model with fewer educational, certification and/or experience steps.

It is critical that the compensation system attract and retain high-quality candidates. Beginning Teacher Pay must be significantly increased to at least \$45,000 annually to appropriately recognize a comparable market value and attract a larger pool of high-quality candidates to the teaching profession. Regular cost of living adjustments should be a component of basic education to assure that salaries remain competitive to attract and retain a high-quality workforce. The compensation system should include regionalization and poverty factors to recognize the unique challenges of attracting and retaining staff members to high-cost, remote and/or high-poverty districts, continued salary increments for advanced degrees and years of service, as well as continued salary recognition for teachers who obtain National Board Certification. Finally, in order to retain teachers and deliver high-quality education, teachers need at least 10 days annually of professional development outside the 180-day school year with local flexibility to schedule some or all of the equivalent professional development time within the 180-day school year (e.g. Extended work day, Saturdays, evening, etc.) as a component of basic education.

Table with 5 columns: Highline Head Start Greenbridge, Educare Early Learning, Transportation, Relife School, Highline Head Start Soola Gardens. Each column lists address and phone number.

We are very concerned about the proposed expenditure limitation for salary and benefits. This proposal does not allow us to respond to the unique and varied circumstances and expenditure drivers across 295 school districts.

Compensation for basic education duties and responsibilities is the obligation of the state; school districts should not subsidize this out of local enhancement levies. Therefore, we strongly support limiting the use of local levy resources to time worked outside of the 180-day school year and for duties and responsibilities that are clearly distinguishable from those basic education functions routinely expected of teachers. At a minimum, statutory limitations must be in place for future collective bargaining agreements, that prohibit bargaining of local levy resources for basic education duties and responsibilities.

Levies

We can support the elimination of grandfathered levy lids and salary allocations over a two- to three-year period, if there is a sufficient infusion of state resources to fully and amply fund basic education and competitive, market-rate salaries. It is also crucial to hold districts harmless such that at no time during the transition any district loses resources compared to 2016-17 funding levels due to funding formula changes. Furthermore, it is necessary to ensure a smooth transition that does not result in teachers earning less than they do today. The current proposals would in fact cut or freeze current salaries for some teachers, at a time when we already have a recruitment and retention challenge.

With a consistent and ongoing State maintenance of full and ample funding of basic education and sufficient "guardrails" to assure that local levy funds only support locally determined enhancements to basic education, we believe a lower local levy lid of 10-15 percent of total state and federal dollars is supportable. We do not support repurposing current local levy capacity to fund the State's basic education obligation ("levy swap") without significant new funding provided by the State.

It is important to continue Local Effort Assistance for qualifying districts. Even after full funding of basic education, local levies will provide for additional "enrichment" activities. In context of equity, continued Local Effort Assistance recognizes school district differences in their ability to levy local funding for important student services.

Again, thank you for your attention and effort to fully funding education in Washington state. We stand ready to offer help and expertise, should you need any assistance as you work toward a final solution. Please do not hesitate to contact any of us if we can be of assistance with more information.

Respectfully,

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