

# 2017 Prioritized To-Do List for Education Funding



**Our associations have come together** to offer ourselves as resources to the Legislature in their task of meeting the state's constitutional "paramount duty" for providing and funding a program of basic education for every K-12 public school student in the state. **We represent nearly 8,000 school district leaders** from all of our state's 295 school districts.

State policy makers have **created and authorized in-depth "blueprints"** for this work over the past decade; it is time to take the steps necessary to assure every one of our state's 1.1 million students is provided with the highest quality public education.

**We recommend** these first three steps for 2017 as essential to assure a strong foundation for our state's full program of basic education.



## Checklist

### **Fund Basic Education Compensation First**

**Fund the actual cost** of basic education salaries before adjustments to state levy or levy equalization (LEA) policy

**Limit locally bargained compensation** to time worked outside the program of basic education to assure a more equitable system

### **Do No Harm**

**Transition carefully** from reliance on local funding for basic education costs

**Fund basic education compensation** first then gradually reduce local levy authority

**If a levy "swap" is part of the solution**, it must be carefully executed and include additional funding

### **Update and Use the Prototypical School Model**

**Retain the Prototypical School Model.** It is a transparent guide to assure equitable attention to student needs (it is not a mandate)

**Update the model** to include missing basic education elements and regular labor market adjustments that accounts for cost of living

**Establish a regular and ongoing review process** to maintain the state's basic education obligations

# 1. Fund Basic Education Compensation

- The actual cost of basic education salaries must be funded first before any reforms or reductions are made to state levy policy (including levy authority rates and levy equalization).
- Align the salary allocation model to a teacher career continuum as proposed by the Compensation Technical Working Group (2012) per E2SHB 2261 to address the need for sufficient compensation for teachers.
- Reduce overreliance on local levies to pay the market rate for basic education salaries.
  - Between 2008 and 2017, state funding for beginning teachers increased 3.7% (from \$34,426 to \$35,700) while the market rate for beginning teachers is approximately \$53,000.
  - In the 2015-16 school year school districts spent an average of 57.7% of local levy money just to cover underfunded labor costs.
  - Between 1987 and 2015, the local school district burden for funding the average salary necessary to support the program of basic education increased 23.2% (with the state's portion of funding reduced from 99.2% to 76%).
- Limit locally bargained compensation to time worked outside the program of Basic Education to assure a more equitable compensation system.

**RESOURCES:** Compensation Technical Working Group Report (2012) Recommendations: <http://www.k12.wa.us/compensation/>

# 2. Do No Harm

- Our state's students, teachers, and families need stability as the state and districts transition from the overreliance on local funding to meet basic education obligations.
- The funding sequence is critical. The Legislature must fully fund its basic education compensation obligation first, and then gradually reduce local levy authority as appropriate after the new funding is provided to districts. If local levy authority and/or levy equalization is reduced before or concurrent with the appropriation of new state funding (aka, the "levy cliff") the likely result in many districts will be reductions in staff, increased class sizes and dismantling of existing programs.
- While proposals to fund basic education compensation by "swapping" state and local property tax authority may be part of the solution, a "swap" by itself, without providing additional funding will not solve the problem (as there is only about \$1 billion per year of unused capacity in the state property tax, whereas the estimated need is \$2.5 billion per year).

**RESOURCES:** 2017 Levy Cliff Analysis Spreadsheet (<http://bit.ly/2gJkUks>) and other resources: <http://www.k12.wa.us/SAFS/default.asp>

# 3. Update and Use the Prototypical School Model

- In 2010 the Legislature adopted SHB 2776 to implement basic education funding staffing level recommendations (the prototypical school model) made by the Quality Education Council (RCW 28A.150.260).
- This model was designed as a transparent guide to allocate funds, not to mandate specific staffing levels; and as a way to assure equitable attention in every district to accommodate student needs.
- Updates to the existing model should include:
  - Several basic education elements that are currently missing or underfunded such as special education, substitute costs, healthcare benefits, student support services, and professional development; and
  - A labor market adjustment that includes a Cost of Living index and a factor for areas hard to recruit and retain staff.
- It is critical that a mechanism is established for regular review to ensure the long-term sufficiency of K-12 school funding in accordance with the state's constitution.

**RESOURCES:** Quality Education Council Report and Recommendations (2010): <http://www.k12.wa.us/qec/>