

# ESD 112 REGION SUPERINTENDENTS

# 2019 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



## WE GREATLY VALUE LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS TO MAKE INVESTMENTS IN K-12 PUBLIC EDUCATION

As you know, EHB 2242 has created unintended consequences and inequities among Washington's school districts. We look forward to working together during the upcoming session to ensure equitable and sustainable funding for all school

districts. The 30 superintendents and their school boards in the ESD 112 region urge the legislature to address three priorities so we can continue to serve the best interests of all students.



## 1. FIX FUNDING INEQUITIES AMONG SCHOOL DISTRICTS

### a. Provide sustainable funding for small school districts

Of the state's 295 school districts, over two-thirds have 2,000 or fewer students. Under the new funding plan, small school districts are among those most negatively impacted due to teacher longevity, large cuts to Local Effort Assistance and reduced authority to collect local funding. In several instances, levy/LEA funding per student has been cut 60-70% because districts receiving equalization are limited to \$1,500 per student.

#### PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:

- » Reinststate small school factors into LEA funding to recognize the loss of small school factors in the current \$1,500 levy/LEA per student. (Estimated cost is less than \$15 million.)
- » Reevaluate the new formula for providing teacher experience funding, which currently allows districts to receive additional funding if experience (longevity) **AND** educational attainment (master's degrees) exceed the statewide average.
- » Allow districts to receive experience funding if it exceeds the statewide average for longevity by 15%, rather than requiring a district to exceed state averages in both categories.

### b. Evaluate and correct regionalization methodology

EBH 2242's regionalization plan forced inequities among even neighboring districts, creating teacher recruitment and retention challenges and unfairly pitting school districts against one another.

#### PROPOSED SOLUTION:

- » Modify the current methodologies used to calculate and apply factors for district regionalization funding.

### c. Support school capital facility needs

Many school districts have difficulty passing local requests for capital improvements. We urge the Legislature to invest in construction/modernization and security-related facility costs.

#### PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:

- » Advance a constitutional amendment authorizing school district bond issues to be approved with a simple majority vote.
- » Update the current formula for the Construction Cost Allowance and Student Space Allocation to reflect actual construction costs and educational space needs.

## 2. FULLY FUND SPECIAL EDUCATION

The minimal increase per student in the cost multiplier in 2018-2019 does not cover the actual cost of providing services. As the state continues to underfund special education, many districts are forced to use decreasing local levy funds to backfill the gap. It will cost \$21 million to make up the special education shortfall in the 112 region.

#### PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:

- » Increase the multiplier for each special education student.
- » Fund the safety net with state monies to lower the threshold required to attain the funding.
- » The safety net process needs to recognize regionalization factors when providing funding to districts. Higher regionalization districts will receive a disproportionate share of a fixed amount of funding.
- » The legislature could restrict the formula so districts cannot collect more than they spend on special education.

## 3. FULLY FUND THE SEBB

In the proposed plan, the state does not fund what districts actually pay for employee health benefits, creating an unfunded mandate. While we recognize the importance of providing health benefits for all employees and their families, funding is not sufficient.

#### PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:

- » Fully fund employee health benefits costs for all eligible employees.
- » If unable to fully fund employer costs, adjust eligibility criteria to reduce costs and align revenues and expenditures for the SEBB.

# OTHER PRIORITIES OF THE KELSO AND LONGVIEW SCHOOL DISTRICTS

## **1. OPPOSE REVISING THE LEVY LID BEYOND ESTABLISHED \$1.50 PER THOUSAND**

- This promises to provide property rich districts the ability to raise significantly more money per student which exacerbates the inequities already found in the system as a result of regionalization.
- Shifts the burden back to local taxpayers and away from the state which was the basis for the McCleary decision.
- Will confuse taxpayers and erode the trust taxpayers have in school districts who have assumed the \$1.50 lid in their tax projections when seeking facilities bond requests and technology and maintenance levies.

## **2. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STATE ASSESSMENTS AND HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION – STATE BOARD OF ED**

If the legislature reconsiders policies related to mandatory state assessments linked to graduation, the State Board of Education supports legislation that delinks the passing of statewide assessments from graduation requirements, provided that 1) State standards in Math, English Language Arts, and Science are not diminished; 2) State assessment results are still used as part of the Washington School Improvement Framework; 3) Assessment participation rates remain a focus of emphasis consistent with the expectations of ESSA; and 4) student-level assessment results will be used to inform student course taking in subsequent terms to focus on growth and progress to achieve high school proficiency and career and college readiness.

## **3. IMPROVE SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY – WASA**

School districts need to support their students and staff before – and after- a crisis occurs. Providing sufficient nurses, mental and behavioral health counselors, and school security is an effective strategy. Unfortunately, current funding does not provide sufficient staffing support for schools. WASA urges the Legislature to enhance staff allocations, with a priority of providing additional staff in the categories of Health and Social Services (including school nurses and mental health counselors), Guidance Counselors, and Student and Staff Security.

