

# Alliance of Educational Associations (AEA)

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## 2026 Legislative Session Report

AEA was a bit disappointed with the 69<sup>th</sup> Legislature's response to our 2026 priorities during the 2026 session, but, with the lack of resources, their response was understandable.

This report will review (1) a statistical view of WAMOA's and WSNA's involvement in the 2026 legislative session; (2) [ESSB 5998, 2026–27 Supplemental Operating Budget](#); (3) [ESSB 6003, 2026–27 Supplemental Capital Budget](#); (4) bills that AEA supported or watched which passed and didn't pass, and (5) WAMOA's and WSNA's interim plans.

### A Statistical View of AEA's Involvement in the 2026 Session

- **WAMOA:** 28 individual meetings were held with legislators or their assistants re: WAMOA's 2026 priorities
- 68 WAMOA members participated in some aspect of legislation on sending emails to legislators, attending meetings, meeting with their own legislators, emailing and/or meeting with legislative staff.
- 11 bills were testified on re: AEA's 2026 priorities.
- **WSNA:** 23 individual meetings were held with legislators or their assistants re: WSNA's 2026 priorities.
- 38 WSNA members participated in some aspect of legislation on sending emails to legislators, attending meetings, meeting with their own legislators, emailing and/or meeting with legislative staff.
- 11 bills were testified on re: AEA's 2026 priorities.

### ESSB 5998 Supplemental Operating Budget

#### General Elements of Supplemental Operating Budget (\$80.2B)

- Increased \$5B from 2025–27, an increase of 11 percent from 2023–25, with required Maintenance Level spending of \$3.2B, and discretionary Policy Level of \$621.3M.
- It's over \$80B for the first time ever. Appropriates unrestricted reserves of \$2.3B, including \$880M from the Budget Stabilization Account (Rainy Day Fund).
- Projects to end the 2025–27 biennium with \$1.3B in total reserves, including \$1B in the BSA.

### K–12 Budget

#### General Observations

- K–12 operating is decreased by -\$42.048M.
- In 2019, K–12 was 52 percent of the operating budget, in 2023–25, it was 43.4 percent, and now it's 42.2 percent, lower than at the time of the 2012 McCleary court ruling.
- However, Gov. Ferguson has said that K–12 funding is a priority for his administration, but funds weren't available this year to give any increase.

#### K–12 Expenditures (Selected)

##### Special Education (No Increase) (AEA Priority)

##### MSOC Increase (No Increase) (AEA Priority)

##### Pupil Transportation Funding - TVF reduced by (-\$21M) (AEA Priority)

- Transportation Vehicle Fund is reduced by \$-21M, as full bus depreciation is extended from 12 to 15 years.

##### Transportation Vehicle Fund (\$6K)

Funding is provided by the implementation of [SB 5922](#), which allows a s.d. to transfer vehicle depreciation payments and earned interest from its TVF to its Capital Projects Fund when reducing its vehicle fleet.

##### Federal Bus Grant Depreciation Adjustment (-\$4.6M)

- Bus depreciation payments are reduced by removing federal grants and rebates for electric bus purchases from the state depreciation schedule.

**Levy/Local Effort Assistance (Reduced by \$26.8M)**

- Current LEA is \$150 per student and is scheduled to increase to \$250 per student in 2027, but funding remains at \$150 per student. (-\$25.1M)
- LEA funding is reduced for Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) Program enrollments from 33 percent to 25 percent of total enrollment. (-\$1.7M)

**School Food Services (No Reductions) (AEA Priority)**

**Note:** The intent section of [ESSB 6346](#), Millionaire's Tax, states that in 2029–31 funds are assumed to be provided (about \$230M) for access to breakfast and lunch for all children served without charge in schools.

**ESD Funding (No Reductions)****Sales Tax Exemption**

- No retail sales tax on K–12 services as found in [ESSB 6346](#)

**High School and Beyond Plan (\$1.8M)**

- Funding for 2.0 FTE at OSPI to run the program.

**Grad Success Program (Treehouse) (\$3.5M)**

- Restores half of the funding that was cut last year.

**Ninth Grade Success (\$1.5M)**

- Funding is provided in FY 2027 for grants to s.ds. for the Nine Grade Success program, which helps 9<sup>th</sup> grade students stay on track to graduate from high school.

**Homeless Student Support (\$1.2M)**

- Funding is provided in FY 2027 for the Homeless Student Stability on Education program.

**K–12 Other Funding Reductions**

- OSPI pass-through grants and staff (-\$695K).

**Transition to Kindergarten (-\$25M)**

- Reduces slots for qualifying students in SY 2026–27.

**Running Start (-\$7M)**

- Reduces funding cap for Running Start students from 1.4 FTE to 1.3 FTE until 2028–29, and then sunsets at 1.3 FTE.

**In the Dept of Agriculture section (\$79K) (AEA Priority)**

Funding is provided for [ESHB 2238](#), Statewide Food Security Strategy.

**In the Dept of Health section (AEA Priority)**

- Regarding the implementation of the revised School Environmental Health Rule, the State Board of Health may begin the rule-making process on subsequent phases but shall not implement any new or amended rules pertaining to public school facilities until the rules and a final cost estimate have been presented to the Legislature, and the Legislature has formally funded the implementation of the rules either in budget or by statute. (Underlined is new language).

**Current Status: Delivered to Governor on March 13, 2026.**

**2026–27 K–12 Supplemental Capital Budget****School Construction Assistance Program (SCAP) (\$445.578M)**

- Study and survey grants and for inventory and building condition assessments every six years (\$5.204M).

**Healthy Kids / Healthy Schools Grant (\$15.5M) (AEA Priority)**

- Projects must be consistent with healthiest next generation priorities.
- No single district may receive more than \$200,000 for total grants.

- Districts receiving funding must demonstrate a consistent commitment to addressing school facilities' needs.
- Applicants with a high percentage of free/reduced price students may be prioritized.
- Purchase equipment or make necessary repairs to (a) playground or physical education equipment or covered play areas equipment or renovation; and
- (b) Child nutrition, including school gardens, greenhouses and kitchen equipment or upgrades (Total \$12M).
- (c.) Replacement of lead-contaminated pipes, drinking water fixtures, and purchase of water filters, including labor costs of remediation design, installation and construction (\$3.5M)
- WAMOA has consulted with OSPI and the Department of Health on this grant in the past.

### **Small District and Tribal Compact Schools Modernization Grants (\$273.457) (AEA Priority)**

- Modernization grants for small districts less than 1,000 FTE with significant building system deficiencies and limited financial capacity as approved by OSPI's small district modernization grant advisory committee (\$245.282M).
- Planning grants not to exceed \$50K per district, with OSPI able to prioritize grants for districts with the most serious building deficiencies and most limited financial capacity (\$804K).
- Modernization and planning grants for state-tribal compact schools with same criteria (\$27.371M),
- WAMOA is a member of the grant advisory committee which submits a prioritized list of the small district modernization projects to the Legislative and the Governor by 9/15/26.
- Please note that the CCA appropriation (\$18M) with the (\$245.282M) is provided solely to fund construction projects and building equipment that improve energy efficiency or reduced greenhouse gas emissions, such as HVAC systems.

### **School Seismic Safety Retrofit Program (\$165.351M) (AEA Priority)**

- The 2025–27 capital budget funded four projects: (1) Cape Flattery-Neah Bay Campus Relocation project; (2) Taholah – K–12 School Relation Project; (3) North Beach – Ocean Shores Vertical Evacuation Tower project; (4) North Beach – Pacific Beach Elementary Relocation project; **(5) North Beach Junior/Senior High School project; (6) Hoquiam K–6 Consolidation project.**
- **Note: It is the intent of the 2026 Legislature to provide \$14.520M for the design costs of Hoquiam Junior/Senior High School Consolidation project in 2027–29 biennium.**

### **SCAPR Transitional Projects: (\$15.872M)**

- Funds the Pe Ell SD K–12 school modernization of \$5.304M, the Bridgeport SD Bridgeport Elementary School project of \$4.568M, and for the Inchelium SD K–12 school modernization project of \$6M.

### **SCAP Enhancement Program Pilot (\$3.786M)**

- OSPI must award pilot grants to \$1.429M for Garfield SD elementary/middle school project; \$1.507M to the Wellpinit SD elementary school project; \$850K to Wahkiakum SD for the Julius A. Wendt elementary school project.
- OSPI shall award the remaining SCAP Enhancement Program Pilot funds to qualifying districts under the given criteria.

### **Distressed Schools (\$20.370M)**

- Whitworth Orca K-8 Roof Repair Project, Seattle PS (\$3.6M).
- Eatonville High School West Retaining Wall and Access Project, Eatonville SD (\$140K).
- Eatonville High School South Retaining Wall Improvement Project, Eatonville SD (\$166K).
- Finley SD HVAC Project (\$1.5M).

### **Dept. of Natural Resources – School Seismic Site Class Assessments (\$1.093M)**

**Current Status: Delivered to the Governor on March 13, 2026.**

## **Bills which AEA Supported or Watched that Passed**

### **[SSB 5922](#) – Authorizing Transportation Vehicle Fund Transfer (\$6K)**

- Allows a school district to transfer pupil transportation vehicle payments with earned interest to the Capital Projects Fund when reducing its transportation fleet, subject to the approval of OSPI.
- Signed by the Governor on March 16, 2026.

### **SSB 6065 – School District Transportation Funds**

- School districts that are in binding conditions or under OSPI financial oversight, may take a temporary interfund loan from their Capital Projects or Transportation Vehicle Fund which must be paid back in full in one calendar year, and approved by their local school board.
- Delivered to the Governor on March 12, 2026.

### **ESSB 6113 – Taxes Administered by the Dept of Revenue**

- Exempts certain temporary services from the retail sales tax. Does not directly apply to K–12.
- Delivered to the Governor on March 12, 2026.

### **ESSB 6260 – Implementing Efficiencies & Programming Changes in Public Education**

- Requires OSPI to use a minimum anticipated lifetime of 120 or 180 months for school bus depreciation schedules, depending on the category of the bus.
- Requires OSPI to adjust a school district’s bus depreciation reimbursement payment if the district is awarded a federal grant or rebate to purchase an electric school bus.
- Reduces the funded maximum enrollment for Running Start students to 1.2 FTE, rather than 1.3 FTE, and sunsets in SY 2028–29.
- Lowers the count in ALE programs for reducing LEA from 33 percent to 25 percent.
- Limits funding for the Transition to Kindergarten Program to the amount specified in [ESSB 5998](#).
- Delivered to the Governor on March 13, 2026.

### **SSB 6346 – Establishing a Tax on Millionaires**

- Creates a 9.9 percent income tax on earnings above \$1M starting in 2028, using federal adjusted gross income as its base.
- Less than 5 percent of the projected \$3-4B on annual revenue would go toward tax relief.
- In K–12, excludes before and after school care provided in person and onsite by elementary and secondary schools, as well as school districts and ESDs from the retail sales tax.
- For K–12, includes a severability clause so if the bill were struck down by the courts, the K–12 exemptions would remain in place and begin on July 1, 2026.
- In the intent section, the Legislature intends to fully fund special education and school meals beginning in FY 2029–31.
- Delivered to the Governor on March 13, 2026.

### **SHB 1796 – School Districts’ Authority to Contract Indebtedness for School Construction**

- Authorizes school districts to contract indebtedness and issue bonds without a vote of the people for the purpose of new construction, and the districts must agree to delay receiving SCAP funds for two years.
- Delivered to the Governor on March 12, 2026.

### **SB 5994 – Preserving Timber Tax Distributions for School Districts with Recent Levy Failures**

- Authorizes school districts without qualifying excess levies in a given calendar year to use the highest levy rate in the two previous calendar years, if any, for the purpose of calculating local timber tax.
- Delivered to the Governor on March 9, 2026.

### **ESHB 2238 – Developing of Statewide Food Security Strategy**

- Directs the WA State Dept of Agriculture to coordinate hunger resources, food system performance, and recommend measures to make food more affordable. The Strategy would attempt to reduce the amount of people in need of assistance as well as to identify the root causes of hunger.
- Signed by the Governor on March 17, 2026.

## **AEA Policy Bills which AEA Supported or Watched which Did Not Pass**

### **SSB 5918 – Funding for MSOC**

- Would have provided a one-time MSOC increase, with a guarantee that each school district receives at least \$100,000 or \$100 per student, whichever is greater, and would have ensured equitable support for both large and small districts.
- Died in Senate Ways & Means Committee.

### **SB 5858 – Pupil Transportation Safety Net Funding for Special Passengers**

- Would have provided pupil transportation safety net awards for school districts that show excess cost in serving special education, homeless and foster care students.
- Died in Senate Ways & Means Committee.

### **SB 6320 – Alternative Learning Experiences**

- Would have prevented OPSI from approving a private or pro-profit organization as an online or multi-district provider; and would have directed OSPI to rescind the approval of any such providers by 8/1/26.
- Died in Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee.

### **SSB 6351 – Increasing Fiscal Resources for Student by Providing Targeted Sale Tax Exemptions for Schools, Before and After School Care programs , and Arts and Cultural Classes**

- Would have exempted services from the retail sales tax if the sale is made to an elementary or secondary school.
- Died in Senate Ways & Means Committee.

### **E2SHB 2636 – Requiring Reviews of Performance Operations and Funding of the State’s Education System**

- Would have created a 15-member Public Education Performance, Operations and Funding Review Commission to examine on policy requirements and funding for public schools enacted through legislation.
- Died in Senate Ways & Mans Committee.

### **ESSB 6247 – School District Financial Management**

- Would have directed ESDs to provide additional budget oversight to school districts who in binding conditions of show indicators of financial distress.
- Died in House Appropriations Committee.

### **HB 2551 – Maintaining the Financial Solvency of School Districts**

- Would have allowed school district board of directors to meet their fund balances and other requirements by selling real property if authorized by OSPI.
- Died in House Rules Committee.

### **SHB 2593 – Addressing School District Accounting, Budgeting and Reporting Requirements**

- Would have required school districts to have a restricted minimum fund balance level within their general fund and to submit this information to OSPI on a monthly basis.
- Died in House Rules Committee.

### **SSB 5943 – Use of School Impact Fees**

- Would have allowed expiring impact fees to be used to modernize school facilities and comply with federal and state laws regarding student safety, campus security, emergency responses and energy efficiency standards.
- Died in Senate Rules Committee.

### **SB 6263 – Updating School District Public Bid Limits**

- Would have increased the school districts’ public bid thresholds relating to purchasing for building improvements and repairs.
- Died in Senate Ways & Means Committee.

### **SSB 5901 – SCAP Facilities Support for On-Base Schools**

- Would have excluded school facilities located on military bases from a school district’s inventory for available instructional space for determining SCAP eligibility.
- Died in House Rules Committee.

### **SHB 2369 – Promoting the Use of Local Foods in Public Schools**

- Would have codified a current practice in which OSPI facilitates the distribution of WA grown food to local schools via USDA food distribution system.
- Died in House Appropriations Committee.

### **AEA 2026 Interim Plans - WSNA**

- Rep. Roger Goodman (D-Kirkland) will be visiting the Northshore SD in the fall to observe their nutrition programs, as well as speak to several classes regarding his work with the Legislature.
- WSNA will be reaching out to Sen. Marcus Riccelli (D-Spokane) during the interim to discuss his interest in codifying language in RCW 28A.235.300. This no-cost ask is something WSNA is hoping that Sen. Riccelli might be willing to help with. It pertains to his original bill, “hunger-free school act,” which increases access to Community Eligibility Program (CEP), and is something that Senate Ways & Means Committee would address.
- The intent of the bill was to increase access to CEP, and have the State reimburse the difference between the USDA free rate and the USDA paid & reduced rate. Unfortunately, this RCW left out any funding language. Therefore, OSPI must estimate and request the amount needed from the Legislature prior to approving schools for the year, without having any way to know how many students will eat meals at school or what USDA’s increase to the reimbursement rate will be. Typically, OSPI has to go back to the Legislature and request more funding, and it may delay funding to schools. As well, there is always the chance their request would be denied. Nutrition programs rely on the reimbursement monthly to pay their expenses. Most programs don’t have revenue in reserve to cover delayed reimbursement.
- If the RCW language was changed to add funding language similar to RCW 28A.235.135 “School meals at no charge to young students,” it would allow the funding to be considered entitlement funding and would eliminate any delay in funding or denial of funding.

### **AEA 2026 Interim Plans - WAMOA**

- Travis Bown and Mitch met with 28 senators and representatives during the session to share WAMOA’s 2026 priorities, and most of them expressed interest in fall school visits. Senators include Sen. Ron Muzzall (R-Oak Harbor); Sen. Matt Boehnke (R-Kennewick); Sen. Leonard Christian (R-Spokane Valley); Sen. Mark Schoesler (R-Ritzville); Sen. Keith Wagoner (R-Sedro Wooley); Sen. Chris Gildon (R-Puyallup); Sen. Yasmin Trudeau (D-Tacoma), chair of Senate Capital Budget; and Sen. Nikki Torres (R-Pasco) (8 senators).

Representatives include Rep. Carolyn Eslick (R-Sultan); Rep. Chris Stearns (D-Auburn); Rep. Lisa Callan (D-Issaquah); Rep. Alicia Rule (D-Blaine); Rep. Stephanie McClintock (R-Vancouver); Rep. Mari Leavitt (D-University Place); Rep. Peter Abbarno (R-Centralia); Rep. Jim Walsh (R-Aberdeen); Rep. Joel McEntire (R-Cathlamet); Rep. Mary Dye (R-Pomeroy); Rep. Kevin Waters (R-Stevenson); Rep. Omar Salahuddin (D-Kirkland); Rep. Janice Zahn (D-Kirkland), Rep. David Hackney (D-Tukwila); Rep. Stephanie Bernard (R-Pasco) and Nathasha Hill (D-Spokane) (17 representatives).

- WAMOA is participating in the AIAWA work group on School Construction Funding. This architects’ group has developed a position paper on this topic. Devlin Piplic, Travis and Mitch serve as WAMOA reps on this work group. It meets monthly during the school year.

WAMOA will be working with IOEU regarding their interest in state-wide school district boiler operator certification, as referenced in [ESSB 5694](#).

**Prepared by Mitch Denning, AEA Consultant**