



TWIO

This Week In Olympia

Special Edition: Opening Day

January 9, 2023



In This Issue:

- 2023 Session Preview
- 2023 WASA Legislative Platform

About TWIO

This Week in Olympia (TWIO) is published by WASA in support of our members and members of our partners in WASBO, WSPA, and WAMOA.

TWIO is emailed each Friday during the Legislative Session and archived on WASA's website at <https://wasa-oly.org/WASA/TWIO>.

2023 Session Preview

This afternoon, January 9, 2023, the Legislature convened its first year of the 68th Biennial Session. During this “long” session, limited to 105 days, the major job facing legislators will be to adopt a 2023–25 Operating Budget (and presumably a 2023 Supplemental Operating Budget to update the current 2021–23 Operating Budget, which closes out June 30). Additionally, they will adopt a new two-year Capital Construction Budget and a new two-year Transportation Budget. With budget requests from all state agencies—including OSPI—and a budget proposal from Governor Jay Inslee, the stage is set to begin another complicated session.

As expected, the 2022 November election changed the face of the Legislature. The projected “Red Wave” never materialized in Washington State—in fact, Democrats gained seats in both the Senate and House of Representatives, expanding their previous majorities. In 2022, the Democrats controlled the Senate with 29 members to the Republican’s 20 members. (Note, however, that one dissident Democrat caucused with Republicans, effectively lessening the Democratic majority to 28–21.) In 2023, Democrats continue to control the Senate with 29 members to the Republican’s 20 members. (The one Republican-caucusing Democrat retired from the Legislature, so Democrats now have a “real” 29–20 majority.) In the House, Democrats held 57 seats to the Republican’s 41 seats in 2022. Following the election, Democrats increased their majority with 58 seats to the Republican’s 40 seats.

The Democratic majorities increased slightly, but of more importance is the number of new legislators. More than two dozen lawmakers—many of them long-time members—chose not to run for re-election this past November. Most retired from the Legislature, while a few of them chose to run for different elected positions. Today, 29 new legislators—7 in the Senate and 22 in the House—were sworn in. Considering our Legislature has 147 members, 29 new members could have a major impact. More consequential are the number of legislators that left who were either in leadership positions or were Committee Chairs, which forced a shuffling of the deck. While these changes will impact priorities and the approach to many issues, it should be noted that many key positions remain status quo, including the two Education Committee Chairs (Senator Lisa Wellman, D-Mercer Island; and Representative Sharon Tomiko Santos, D-Seattle); and the Chairs of the two budget-writing committees, the Senate Ways & Means Committee and the House



This Week in Olympia**Special Edition:
Opening Day***Continued***WASA Legislative Report Podcast**

The Podcast will be available on a regular basis on the [WASA website](#), or [subscribe to the Report](#) via multiple podcast apps.

Appropriations Committee (Senator Christine Rolfes, D-Bainbridge Island; and Representative Timm Ormsby, D-Spokane).

With Democrats continuing to lead both houses (in addition to Democrat's continued control over the governor's office), they will control the agenda. The assumed list is lengthy, but includes issues such as: homelessness and housing; climate change; behavioral health; public safety; salmon recovery; reproductive health care; and gun control. Certainly, this is not an exhaustive list of issues that will be dealt with in the 2023 Legislature; however, they are issues that consistently are being raised as legislators meet with the press or issue newsletters. Whether you support or oppose—or even care about—any of these issues, you should take note one major priority that is seldom discussed: K–12 education.

One example of the focus away from K–12 education is Governor Inslee's 2023–25 Operating Budget request. His request, released in December, included a heavy focus on each of the issues listed above. That's fine; however, there was a distinct lack of discussion on the state's only constitutional paramount duty. In Olympia, the Operating Budget is often referred to as the biggest policy document adopted each session. And it is often said issues funded in the Operating Budget are a reflection of the Legislature's priorities. Understanding that, it is not a stretch to say that K–12 education is not a priority of the governor.

Governor Inslee's two-year budget request, if adopted, would increase spending by \$6.26 billion above the current 2021–23 budget. Of that total increase, \$4.85 billion would be provided for "Policy Level" items—that is, discretionary spending on new and/or expanded programs. For K–12 education, the governor requests \$276.9 million in Policy Level increases. Check those numbers again: the governor proposes \$4.85 billion in increased spending, but only \$276.9 million of this total—less than a one percent increase—would support public education.

While Superintendent Reykdal presented a bold education budget package in September, pulling out all the stops and requesting an increase of approximately \$5.9 billion, Inslee's budget request largely rejected Reykdal's requests. As an example, Reykdal requested \$971.9 million to finally fully fund special education by: eliminating the current, arbitrary 13.5 percent funding cap; increasing the special education tiered multiplier to fully cover the cost of special education services; and maintaining funding to continue support of the Inclusionary Practices Project (IPP). Inslee, in turn, requested: \$74.7 million to increase (not eliminate) the cap to 15.0 percent; \$10.0 million to support IPP; and absolutely nothing to increase the current special education multiplier. (For information on Reykdal's budget, see the [Nov. 3 issue of TWIO](#); for information on Inslee's budget, see the [Dec. 16 issue of TWIO](#).)

Fortunately, Governor Inslee's proposal is just one budget; we will see at least two more proposals coming from legislators before they adopt a final package. Even so, it is clear our work will be cut out for us this session. The competition for resources will be fierce, as every interest group will be at the trough—and K–12 education is in a unique and difficult position. Many legislators still suffer from so-called "*McCleary* fatigue," with a misguided belief K–12 education has been given all that is needed from the *McCleary* "solution" adopted in 2017 and 2018. And those that were not in the Legislature when HB 2242 (2017) and SB 6362 (2018) were adopted have different reasons for believing that K–12 "got theirs" and school districts have more than enough resources to provide a world-class, equitable education to each of our students. In the 2021–23 Operating Budget adopted last session, K–12 education received a substantial funding increase of almost \$4.0 billion—almost \$3.0 Billion of the investment was due to an influx of federal pandemic-related funds. Those funds were welcomed; however, legislators have trouble acknowledging those resources are one-time funding and are expiring soon, even though much work remains to be done to support student learning recovery and address students' mental and behavioral health issues.

**Join us at the 2023
WASA•WSSDA•WASBO
Legislative Conference,
February 26. Register now
at www.wasa-oly.org/LegCon23**

This Week in Olympia
Special Edition:
Opening Day
Continued

Compounding the governor’s and legislators’ shift in focus away from K–12 education is the public’s view on public education. Last week, the annual [Crosscut/Elway Poll](#) was released with some sobering results. Each year, Elway Research conducts a poll of registered voters prior to the start of the legislative session. One of the standard, open-ended benchmark questions asked in each poll for almost 30 years is: “In your personal opinion, what are the most important issues the Legislature should focus on during this session?” In December, thirty-four percent responded “Economy,” while only five percent of respondents mentioned “Education.” Education fell to last place, below “Economy,” “Public Safety,” “Homelessness,” “Taxes,” “Government,” “Environment,” and “Health Care.” (“Budget/Spending” tied “Education” being the least important issue, with each receiving five percent of mentions.)

If legislators do not believe K–12 education needs more than what we have already been given and the public is focusing on priorities other than K–12 education, school administrators have even more of a reason to actively engage in this session. If we do not keep K–12 education on legislators’ radar and in their minds, we have little hope of our issues being addressed.

What is on WASA’s list? [WASA’s 2023 Legislative Platform](#), developed by WASA’s Legislation & Finance Committee and adopted by WASA’s Board of Directors includes seven planks, as described below.

2023 WASA Legislative Platform

WASA has once again established a set of bold legislative priorities which clearly request what we believe our students and districts NEED, rather than asking for anything less than what is essential. Of course, we will be strategic and pragmatic in an effort to achieve as many “wins” as possible—but not at the expense of being honest with legislators and the public about what is needed to provide each of our students with a quality education. Ultimately, it is a question about how “success” is defined. Asking for less than what is needed and achieving it is a defeat. We will ask for exactly what we need, and try to gain as much from those requests as possible, all the while laying the groundwork and building momentum for a real win later.

Advance Equity

WASA’s 2023 Legislative Platform comprises specific requests that we believe are needed to ensure each and every student is provided with equitable learning environments where they can learn and achieve their educational goals and aspirations. The overarching theme of the Platform is embodied in the first plank: Advance Equity. Under this plank, WASA is focusing on two equity issues. One is needed assistance from the Legislature to ensure districts have the appropriate tools, resources, and flexibility to ensure each student has the opportunity to achieve successful outcomes. The second is the need of resources to recruit, support, and retain effective classroom, building, and district staff who reflect the diversity of our student populations. The remainder of the Platform links with this overarching position (which mirrors WASA’s [Educational Equity Statement](#), adopted last year).

Support Basic Education Compensation Rebase

The so-called *McCleary* “solution” adopted in 2017 (and adjusted in 2018) completely overhauled Washington’s education finance system. In adopting the bill, however, the Legislature understood their new funding system would need to evolve. To ensure the system was able to be revised as appropriate, legislators built in a required, regular review and “rebase” of the components of the new system. The first rebase, addressing regionalization, experience factors, educator compensation, and pathways to recruit and retain diverse staff (among other things) is required in 2023. Hopefully, this not a new issue, as WASA (in cooperation with WASBO and WSPA) has been communicating about the work of the K–12 Basic Education Compensation Advisory Committee since April and have provided numerous resources: an initial [set of our recommendations](#) in

This Week in Olympia
Special Edition:
Opening Day

Continued

April; a [PowerPoint presentation summarizing our recommendations](#) in May; a [comprehensive response \(and call to action\) to the draft recommendations](#) of the Advisory Committee in August; and a [webinar to review and summarize the final recommendations](#) from the Advisory Committee in December. (We also provided a comprehensive summary of the Advisory Committee's recommendations in the [Nov. 3 Special Edition of TWIO](#).)

While there are multiple components contained in the necessary rebase, WASA will mainly be focusing on: regionalization factors (with the request to calculate and apply regionalization factors using school districts' labor markets, rather than cost of housing alone); experience factors (with the request to make the system more transparent and equitable); the annual inflationary factor (with the request to return to using CPI, rather than IPD, as adopted by I-732); and the development and implementation of multiple educator pathways and incentives to ensure sufficient and diverse staff are available to districts.

Fully Fund Special Education

While the Legislature has provided incremental increased support for special education in the last few years, the WASA Platform specific urges the Legislature to take a major and deliberate step to provide the substantial financial support that special education requires. To ensure WASA could move flexibly during the Legislative Session, the Platform does not specifically address how to accomplish this plank. We will be following the lead of Superintendent Reykdal, however, who has requested: the elimination of the current, arbitrary 13.5 percent funding cap; an increase in the special education tiered multiplier to fully cover the cost of special education services; and maintained funding to provide ongoing support of the Inclusionary Practices Project (IPP). Reykdal's request totals \$971.9 million. While complete success with this issue in 2023 seems unlikely, Reykdal's request follows WASA's strategy to ask legislators for what our students and districts NEED, rather than undercutting our request by asking for anything less.

Fix Pupil Transportation

Like special education, pupil transportation—another basic education item—is underfunded, requiring many districts to backfill the gap with levy funds. Our request is to fix the current system, ensuring it is transparent, predictable, and adequately funded.

Updating Staff Allocations

We—and the other education management associations in the [School Funding Coalition](#)—have been supporting the recommendations from the [Staffing Enrichment Workgroup](#) (2019). Their recommendations included two phases. In 2022, the Legislature provided funding for a three-year phase in of enhanced staff allocations in the Prototypical School Funding Model for Physical, Social, and Emotional support staff (i.e., nurses, counselors, social workers, and psychologists). This addressed a major portion of one of the recommendations in Phase I. We are advocating the 2023 Legislature complete Phase I by: enhancing the staffing ratio for school principals; increasing professional development; and adding continuous improvement coaches into the Model. This is one of the long-term issues we will have to continue to keep on legislators' minds. Even if they moved to complete Phase I of the Workgroup recommendations, Phase II still needs to be addressed.

Invest in Learning Recovery

Our request for the Legislature is to maintain—if not enhance—funding to support students negatively impacted by the COVID pandemic. In the last two years, the Legislature has provided substantial state and federal funds to support learning recovery; however, most of those funds are one-time resources. Additional investments are needed to address the long-term impacts of the pandemic.

Support Capital Facilities

We will again be asking the Legislature to give our citizens the opportunity to finally decide whether school district bonds should be approved by a simple majority vote.

This Week in Olympia
Special Edition:
Opening Day

Continued

We will also again be pushing for reforms of the outdated funding formulas (Student Space Allocation and Construction Cost Allocation) for school construction. The Legislature has “fully funded” school construction for decades; however, they have been fully funding antiquated and inadequate funding formulas. Fully funding an inadequate formula does not appropriately address school district needs.

As a reminder, these seven issues that comprise WASA’s 2023 Legislative Platform are our highest priorities; however, it does not mean that we will not fight for—or oppose—other pressing matters that are not included on our short list of priorities.

For additional information and background on the individual planks of WASA’s Platform, we encourage you to review our “Finding Your Voice” Lunch & Learn webinar. Part I of the webinar is a comprehensive overview of WASA’s 2023 Legislative Platform. The presentation slides and recording of the webinar is available [online](#). While you are at it, you are also encouraged to review Part II of the webinar, which focuses on how to effectively engage with your legislators. All administrators need to be active in the legislative process if we expect to be successful. “Finding Your Voice” Part II is a reminder that advocacy does not have to be hard, time-consuming, or intimidating. The presentation slides and recording of the webinar, Part II, is also available [online](#).



Dan Steele, Government Relations dsteale@wasa-oly.org
Washington Association of School Administrators
PO Box 14459 | Tumwater, WA 98511
P: 800.859.9272 | P: 360.489.3642 | www.wasa-oly.org