



# TWIO

*This Week In Olympia*

Special Edition: Governor Inslee Releases Budget Proposals

December 16, 2022



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## 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 AEA.

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## Addendum to November Interim Update

In November's Interim Update ([TWIO, November 2, 2022](#)), there were a few unanswered questions in our review of the Basic Education Compensation Rebase. The first question was about [Superintendent Reykdal's request](#) for a six percent base increase to staff salaries. It has been unclear if this requested six percent increase is before, after, or inclusive of the upcoming required inflationary increase. It has been clarified that the requested increase is *before* the required inflationary increase is added to the statewide minimum salary allocations.

Linked with Supt. Reykdal's six percent base salary increase is his proposal for a revision of regionalization. Remember, [WASA/WASBO/WSPA](#) urged—and the [K–12 Basic Education Compensation Advisory Committee](#) agreed—regionalization factors to be based on a wider geographic area, rather than 295 individual districts, using school districts' labor markets. Specifically, we requested regionalization factors be based on metropolitan and non-metropolitan labor market data by region (as developed by the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)), rather than housing costs. Supt. Reykdal's recommendation would eliminate the current district-by-district system but, instead, would assign regionalization factors by county. What has been unclear is HOW the regionalization factors would be calculated in this proposal. It has been clarified that under Reykdal's budget proposal, regionalization factors would continue to be based on housing costs alone.

Superintendent Reykdal's regionalization proposal would also establish a maximum regionalization factor of 12 percent, reducing all districts currently above 12 percent downward. All districts within the county would be provided with the same factor as the highest district within the county. There has been significant concern that districts currently assigned a factor above 12 percent would face a reduction in funding. This is problematic, but is also directly contrary to the statutory language that prohibits any district from receiving less funding due to regionalization adjustments ([RCW 28A.150.412](#)). By first increasing base salaries by six percent, Reykdal's proposal would result in increased funding, even for those districts currently with a regionalization factor above 12 percent ([see a breakdown of Reykdal's proposal](#); note that is chart does NOT include the required inflationary adjustment to salaries).

The concern that remains is the fact that Reykdal's regionalization proposal is really a two-part package: increasing base salaries by six percent, then adjusting

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regionalization factors. What happens if the Legislature accepts Reykdal’s proposed regionalization restructure, but rejects his request for a six percent base salary increase? That potential scenario WOULD result in districts losing funding.

[EHB 2242](#) (2017) and [E2SSB 6362](#) (2018), adopted in response to the *McCleary* education funding lawsuit, were intended to eliminate funding inequities between school districts, while fully funding the actual cost to districts to offer an appropriate basic education program for all Washington school children. As we have seen since that legislation has been adopted, many of the inequities between districts have actually intensified, rather than being eliminated (and there are serious questions about whether K–12 education is “fully funded”). With the required “review and rebase” of the current education finance system created in 2017–18, the 2023 Legislative Session provides us with the first major opportunity to address specific deficiencies of the system and the opportunity to reduce—or eliminate—many of the inequities between districts that were created or exacerbated.

Currently, there has been little talk among legislators about the required rebase (and Governor Inslee’s budget proposal is essentially silent on the issue—see details below), so **it is incumbent on school administrators to be involved in this conversation. Understand, if legislators do nothing, or perhaps more distressing, make matters worse, we will be locked into the “updated” funding system for another four years until the rebasing process returns.**

For further details on “rebase” proposals, review: the [final recommendations](#) from the K–12 Basic Education Compensation Advisory Committee (the linked report includes Supt. Reykdal’s more targeted recommendations); and the materials from the December 13 WASA/WASBO/WSPA/OSPI webinar summarizing the Advisory Committee and OSPI recommendations (the [presentation slides](#) and [recording](#) are available online).

## State Budget Update

Shortly after the November *TWIO* newsletter was released, the [Economic & Revenue Forecast Council](#) (ERFC) unveiled its fourth and final quarterly revenue update for 2022. Governor Inslee’s 2023–25 budget request, discussed below, is based on this forecast. As we have seen in previous forecasts this year, the November update was a mixed bag. Positively, state revenues continue to be collected above projections, with \$66.2 billion in estimated total funds available in 2023–25, in addition to a projected \$3.9 billion in the Beginning Fund Balance, for a total of \$70.1 billion. (In comparison, the final revenue collection for 2021–23 is expected to be \$66.4 billion). Unfortunately, the rate of growth is continuing to slow and fears of a recession and an economic slowdown continue to cloud the forecast. While revenues are projected to increase by 3.5 percent in the next biennium, if you adjust for inflation, revenues are estimated to decrease by 2.6 percent.

Speaking of inflation, just this week we saw further mixed signals on the economy. Inflation, nationally, based on the Consumer Price Index, dipped slightly in November and many predict inflation will drop further in December. First, understand that the reduction was a very minor decrease (but any reduction is positive); second, remember that inflation is calculated annually, so a small drop in November and December will not have a major impact on the annual inflation number, due to the historic highs we saw this summer. ANY reduction in inflation is good news and is a potential sign the Federal Reserve’s effort to cool the economy may be working; however, the day after it was reported that inflation dipped a bit, the Fed moved again, to raise interest rates—its seventh time this year—bringing the current rate to its highest level in 14 years. This will make it even more costly to borrow money to buy a house or a car or other major purchases. One of the reasons revenue growth is slowing in Washington is due to the high mortgage rate, which has caused our previously hot housing market to cool, which in turn has caused a reduction in the collection of Real Estate Excise Taxes. (Note: commercial building

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has also slowed, partially due to interest rates, but also because of the continued use of teleworking, making office space less necessary.)

The fact that state revenues will not buy as much as the in the past will limit legislators' ability to fund their priorities—and our priorities—even with significant currently available revenue. Revenues are even greater if you include the state's healthy reserves (at least \$5.0 billion); however, with an estimated \$1.5–\$2.0 billion required inflationary adjustment for K–12 (the governor has something to say about that, as discussed below), increased caseload costs, approval of new state employee collective bargaining agreements, and action on over \$10.0 billion in agency requests, available revenue will not go very far. Further complicating the situation is the constitutional requirement to have a balanced budget over a four-year period—both the 2023–25 and 2025–27 biennia.

The governor's budget proposal (and the Legislature's final budget) is not developed in a vacuum, so we think it is important to put his release in context.

## **Governor Inslee's 2023–25 Budget Proposals**

Each year, by law, the governor is required to submit budget proposals (Operating Budget, Capital Construction Budget, and Transportation Budget) to the Legislature by December 20. On Wednesday, December 14, Governor Inslee held a [press conference](#) to roll out his required budget proposals. We will focus on the Operating Budget proposal below.

In discussing his 2023–25 Operating Budget proposal, Governor Inslee sounded aggressive and was ready to grapple with the Legislature to advance his priorities. He immediately noted that his budget “addresses the real needs of the state of Washington, that acts with urgency and with audacity.” He said, “There is a lot of great things going on in Washington, but despite our best efforts in the last several years, we still have some challenges yet unmet.” As he spoke, you could hear the governor talking about K–12 education having issues that need to be urgently met, and many challenges still to be addressed. He wasn't talking about K–12 education, however. He was discussing “the challenge of homelessness.”

As Inslee pontificated about homelessness (certainly an important issue), he continued to use words and phrases that would be well-suited to a discussion about K–12 education. Almost banging the podium, he exclaimed, “We need to increase our efforts dramatically, not just incrementally, but dramatically.” Yes, we wish the governor would say the same about special education.

Inslee urged the Legislature to “make a substantial and audacious change in our education efforts.” Wait, strike that, he said “housing,” not “education.” He said his ‘substantial and audacious’ move on homelessness and housing was to request a \$4.0 billion investment over the next four years (and seek a referendum to the people to approve additional bonds to pay for it). After he mentioned his budget request, he stated, “the reason for that number is that is what is required to get the job done.” Unfortunately, when we ask for \$972 million to fully fund special education, because that is what is required to get the job done, or when we ask for \$1.0 billion to complete the funding of the Phase I recommendations of the Staffing Enrichment Workgroup, because that is what is needed to ensure staffing ratios are realistic, we are told to go back to the drawing board because that it just not realistic. Well, homelessness is an important problem and certainly needs to be addressed; however, special education is an underfunded basic education program that is required by state and federal law. And increases to staffing allocations were overwhelmingly adopted by the voters in Initiative 1351, yet it continues to be pushed to the back burner (credit to the Legislature, which only took ten years to make a partial step to address this issue last session).

The governor continued to talk about homelessness, closing his comments by noting, “This is a reality-based budget. It is not based on wishes or hopes or dreams.

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This is important to do this now. We can't spend a decade with small bites of the apple; we need to get going right now." Wow. If only Governor Inslee would have that same passion for the only constitutional paramount duty in the state, K-12 education.

After ten minutes of focusing on homelessness, Inslee shifted to his next "challenge." K-12 education? No, behavioral health. He noted his Capital Budget request to rebuild Western State Hospital—a major capital expense which will gobble up a significant portion of the available bonding capacity.

Finally, he closed out his "top three," which, of course wasn't K-12 education. His third major talking point was on climate change.

The governor's written materials were lacking in a discussion of K-12, as well. While he has "highlight" documents for the various sectors of government, including [K-12 education](#), his "[overview](#)" document is entitled, "*Renewed focus on pressing needs: Gov. Jay Inslee's proposed 2023-25 budgets prioritize housing and homelessness, behavioral health, climate change, salmon protection, public safety.*" (Similarly, the [press release](#) announcing the budget release is entitled, "*Housing, homelessness and behavioral health top Inslee's budget priorities for 2023-25.*") Noticeably absent again is the paramount duty. In Olympia, we often talk about how the Operating Budget is the biggest and most important policy bill that is adopted every year, and budget proposals are a reflection of priorities. Unfortunately, it is not difficult to decipher what Governor Inslee prioritizes—and by virtue of their absence, what he doesn't prioritize.

As he was rounding home, Inslee listed out a series of other issues. And K-12 got a nod. Unfortunately, his only talking point was about Social Emotional Behavioral Health supports, noting the need to "continue investments." What he was talking about was funding the Physical, Social, and Emotional support staff as part of the Prototypical School Funding Model. Positive...but this was required funding due to adopted legislation last year. You'll recall the Legislature provided for a three-year phase in for increased allocations in a new category of Physical, Social, and Emotional support staff—which included nurses, social workers, counselors, and psychologists. 2SHB 1664, as adopted, phases in over three years—2022-23 school year, 2023-24 school year, and 2024-25 school year— increases in minimum allocations for Physical, Social, and Emotional support staff. The 2022 Supplemental Operating Budget provided \$90.6 million for 2022-23, with a projection of \$548.3 million still due. Inslee's budget takes credit for providing a portion of that in his budget highlights: \$314.0 million—even though this is technically a required Maintenance Level item that he has to fund whether he wants to or not.

Inslee also noted "bookend" supports for K-12, with support for three to five-year-olds in early learning, and additional funding for higher education institutions to address shortages in health care fields by supporting the expanded provision of degrees for nurses and behavioral health specialists.

Below is an overview of the major details of the K-12 education portion of Inslee's budget proposals. This is a fairly high flyover in order to get this to you in short order. Additional details will be provided in future *TWIO*'s, after we have a chance to delve into the budget language and better understand the governor's recommendations. In the meantime, complete details of the budgets (including [highlights](#), [recommendation summaries](#), and [appropriation bill text](#)) is available on the website of the governor's budget office, the [Office of Financial Management](#).

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Budget Proposals***Continued***Governor Inslee's K–12 Education Proposals**

Following are the key K–12 investments in Governor Inslee's 2023–25 Operating Budget:

**Educator Compensation—\$951.9 million**

Governor Inslee's budget proposal provides funding to provide for statutorily required inflation, currently based on the Implicit Price Deflator (IPD). There is some curious budget magic here. \$600.0 million is provided to support a forecasted IPD of 2.6 percent for the 2023–24 school year and 2.0 percent for the 2024–25 school year. Inslee's plan, however, also provides an additional \$351.9 million (for a total of \$951.9 million) to fund inflation at 4.5 percent in the 2023–24 school year and 2.0 percent in the 2024–25 school year. So, what's the game? The "statutorily required inflation" is technically a Maintenance Level issue (\$600.0 million), but by providing funding to increase the inflationary factor, Inslee can drop this "extra" funding (\$351.9) as a Policy Level decision. His K–12 budget proposal is abysmal, so why he felt the need to take credit for a \$351.9 million add is unclear.

Budget magic or not, it is also unclear why the governor chose to use 4.5 percent and 2.0 percent as inflationary numbers. The most recent quarterly report ([November 2022](#)) from the Economic & Revenue Forecast Council (ERFC) projected IPD to be 5.2 percent in 2023 and 2.6 percent in 2024—both numbers are above either set of numbers the governor used. (Consumer Price Index is even higher, if the Legislature changes the inflationary factor, as recommended by the K–12 Basic Education Compensation Advisory Committee and requested by Superintendent Reykdal: 6.8 percent in 2023 and 3.0 percent in 2024.)

As you might imagine, WEA is furious. Even before the governor released his budget, they were strongly hinting that they would be asking for additional funding beyond the baseline IPD. With a proposal that falls below the baseline, they are sure to go on the attack. WEA has been making the case that the current law inflationary factor (adopted in 2017's EHB 2242, the "*McCleary* solution") is simply a "minimum." They also have been making the case that because school years do not sync with inflationary index calendar years or the state's fiscal years, the provision of IPD has not kept pace with actual inflation. (Understand that IPD/CPI are calculated on calendar years, January to December; the state's fiscal years run from July to June; and school years run from September to August.) By the way, this "disconnect" is why WASA/WASBO/WSPA requested the K–12 Basic Education Compensation Advisory Committee include in its recommendations (which they did) that statutory language be amended to specifically clarify the inflationary factor (whether IPD or CPI) is to be determined by the "previous calendar year's annual average" inflation index.

Regardless of what numbers are used here, remember this is only a projection. Legislative budget proposals will use updated numbers from the ERFC in March (although they may consider a "political" adjustment as they did last year). The second-year factor, a really early estimate, will also likely be adjusted in a 2024 Supplemental Operating Budget.

It is important to remember the inflationary factors (whatever they end up being) are used to increase funding for the statewide minimum salary allocations, which are provided to school districts to be distributed via your locally bargained salary schedules. The inflationary factor is NOT a so-called "COLA." I-732 COLAs, which were provided to all (state-funded) education employees were repealed in 2017 (in EHB 2242, the *McCleary* "solution") and replaced with the provision of statewide salary allocations.

For the 2022–23 school year, minimum salary allocations for Certificated Instructional Staff, Certificated Administrative Staff, and Classified Staff were: \$72,728 for CIS; \$107,955 for CAS; and \$52,173 for CLS. Using the governor's proposed inflationary factors of 4.5 percent and 2.0 percent, these minimum salary allocations are inflated to: \$76,001 (CIS); \$112,814 (CAS); and \$54,521 (CLS) in

2023–24. In 2024–25, minimum salary allocations are further inflated to: \$77,521 (CIS); \$115,070 (CAS); and \$55,611 (CLS).

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#### **Special Education—\$121.6 million**

Governor Inslee’s budget proposal provides \$121.6 million for special education services and supports. The proposal would raise the current 13.5 percent cap on state special education funding to 15.0 percent and provide \$74.7 million to support the change. The current special education multiplier would not change—except for special education students, ages three to five years old. Another \$7.1 million would be provided to support these additional Pre–K students. \$10.0 million would be provided to sustain the state’s investment in the Inclusionary Practices Project (IPP). To provide additional support to the special education safety net, another \$31.0 million would be appropriated. Finally, federal funding (\$221,000) from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 is reappropriated for students qualifying for special education preschool services.

While additional support for special education is needed and appreciated, providing a \$74.7 million to increase the arbitrary special education funding cap and not providing for any necessary increase in the special education multiplier is horribly disappointing. Special education has been woefully underfunded for years—forcing school districts to use local levy dollars (technically, illegally) to backfill the state’s obligation. The token amount of funding provided in this section is appreciated; however, it simply adds to the incremental funding that’s been provided in the last few years, while the core of the problem is ignored. Superintendent Reykdal’s request of \$971.9 million to ensure the cost of special education services is fully covered would go a long way to fulfill the state’s legal (and moral) obligation and would allow school districts to spend their local levy dollars as their voters intended. To borrow Governor Inslee’s words, Reykdal’s request “addresses the real needs of the state of Washington” and would “increase our efforts dramatically, not just incrementally.” A \$971.9 million request is daunting, but “that is what is required to get the job done.” And, finally, this request “is not based on wishes or hopes or dreams. This is important to do this now. We can’t spend a decade with small bites of the apple; we need to get going right now.” Amen.

#### **Residential Outdoor School—\$63.6 million**

The budget provides funding to support and expand outdoor education and student leadership programs. Funding in the 2021–23 budget required OSPI to prioritize providing the programs to fifth and sixth grade students in high poverty schools, expanding to other fifth and sixth grade students subject to available funds. Additional funding is provided in the 2023–25 budget and requires school districts to ensure that 100 percent of fifth or sixth grade students can participate in educational outdoor programs.

#### **Community Eligibility Provision—\$60.0 million**

The governor’s budget provides increased resources to fully fund the expansion of Washington’s participation in the federal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). Under this program, free meals are provided to all students in school districts that are required to participate in the program, as stipulated in HB 1878 (2022); however, federal funds do not cover the full costs.

#### **Future Teacher Residency—\$16.7 million**

The governor’s budget proposal provides funding to OSPI to administer a teacher residency grant program in public schools. The program would expand options in Washington for preservice teachers to spend a full school year learning on the job from an effective cooperating teacher in a classroom while also completing coursework toward their certification starting in the 2024–25 school year. OSPI would be required to award grants to school districts who have demonstrated partnerships with approved preparation programs, with grant funds prioritized for teachers seeking endorsements in special education, multilingual/bilingual education, and/or those working in high poverty schools.

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Budget Proposals***Continued***Mastery-based Learning—\$10.0 million**

The governor's budget proposal provides funding to the State Board of Education to expand Mastery-based Learning at school district demonstration sites. Funds are required to be used for grants to school districts, professional development of school district staff, and implementation support provided by the State Board.

**Language Access in Schools—\$6.0 million**

The budget provides sufficient funding to OSPI to staff the Language Access Advisory Committee and provide training and technical assistance to support the implementation of language access programs in school districts, pursuant to E2SHB 1153 (2022).

**BEST Program—\$4.0 million**

Governor Inslee's budget proposal provides an additional \$4.0 million to expand the current Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST), which provides mentoring and induction supports to beginning educators. The program must prioritize first year educators in the mentoring program. School districts and/or regional consortia may apply for grant funding. The program provided by a district and/or regional consortia is required to include: A paid orientation; assignment of a qualified mentor; development of a professional growth plan for each beginning educator aligned with professional certification; release time for mentors and new educators to work together; and educator observation time with accomplished peers. Funding may be used to provide statewide professional development opportunities for mentors and beginning educators.

**Next Generation Science Standards—\$4.0 million**

The governor's proposal provides additional funding to OSPI to provide grants to school districts and ESDs to support continued professional development in the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), including training in climate science standards. At a minimum, school districts must ensure that teachers in one grade level in each elementary, middle, and high school participate in this science training. A portion of the funding is provided for community-based nonprofits, including tribal education organizations, to partner with public schools for Next Generation Science Standards.

**IT Academy—\$3.0 million**

The governor's budget proposal provides funding for a statewide Information Technology Academy program. This public-private partnership will provide educational software, as well as Information Technology certification and software training opportunities for students and staff in public schools for the 2023–24 school year only. OSPI must evaluate other options that may be available in the state for a future public-private partnership to deliver similar services to students and staff of public schools at no cost to the state.

**ESD Fund Transfer—\$2.7 million**

The budget transfers funding from the Employment Security Department to OSPI for grants to the nine Educational Service Districts to provide one FTE position to support the expansion of Career Connected Learning. There is no change in total expenditures in the budget.

**Institutional Education Oversight—\$2.0 million**

Funding is provided to add seven FTEs to support state-level institutional education collaboration, oversight, and data collection to implement E2SHB 1295 (2021). These positions will work collaboratively with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

**Peer Mentoring—\$816,000**

The governor's budget provides funding to OSPI to administer a peer support competitive grant program in Washington public schools. Funding will support up to six school districts to develop peer-to-peer support programs that include identifying students and staff who have the trust of students, providing peer support training, and evaluating the program. Support programs should be designed to be

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primarily youth-led and aim to increase youth school engagement and support personal/cultural identities, and reduce risks associated with depression, school violence, and bullying.

**Bilingual Educator Initiative—\$762,000**

The governor's budget provides funding to the Professional Educator Standards Board to implement and expand the Bilingual Educator Initiative Pilot Project. Funding will support five additional teacher academy cohorts, statewide programmatic support, and professional development.

**OSPI Revenue Adjustment—\$100,000**

The budget provides \$100,000 as a result of a technical adjustment in budget driven revenue due to the enactment of E2SSB 5796 (Cannabis Revenue appropriations) in 2022.

**Education Commission of the States—\$92,000**

Funding is provided to support the State Board of Education's ongoing membership in the Education Commission of the States.

**Federal Funds**

Governor Inslee's 2023–25 Operating Budget includes a series of reappropriations of federal COVID relief funds. This is not "new" money, and expenditures over two biennia still may not exceed the federal grant amount, but reappropriating unspent federal funds provides agencies (in this case OSPI) with flexibility to expend funds in either the 2021–23 biennium or the 2023–25 biennium.

**Extended Transition Supports—\$5.0 million**

ESSER III funding is reappropriated to extend transition supports for students with disabilities.

**ARPA IDEA—\$2.6 million**

Funds are reappropriated from federal funding allocations for students with disabilities as authorized in Section 2014 of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021.

**ESSER III Learning Loss Subgrants—\$33.3 million**

Federal funding is reappropriated from Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III funds, as authorized by Section 2001 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, for subgrants to local education agencies for learning loss.

**Children Experiencing Homelessness—\$3.0 million**

Federal funding authority is reappropriated for the purpose of identifying children and youth experiencing homelessness and for providing them with wrap-around services due to the challenges of COVID-19 or with assistance to enable them to attend school and participate in school activities.

**Learning Loss & After School—\$3.7 million**

Federal funding is reappropriated to OSPI from ESSER III state amounts to support after-school programs.

**Learning Recovery—\$53.9 million**

Funding is reappropriated to OSPI to administer grants to school districts for the purposes of learning recovery due to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**ESSER III Subgrants—\$266.8 million**

Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) allocations are reappropriated to local education agencies from ESSER III subgrants.



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Federal funding is reappropriated to OPSI from ESSER III state amounts to support community-based organizations (CBO) in addressing impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

**ESSER Set Aside – Dual Language—\$2.0 million**

Federal funding is reappropriated to OSPI from ESSER III state amounts to support dual language grants to address impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

**ESSER Set Aside – OSPI Admin—\$2.6 million**

Federal funding is reappropriated to OSPI from Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III state amounts to update the apportionment and financial reporting systems to administer grant programs funded with the COVID relief funds.

**Final Notes on the Budget**

Historically, the governor’s budget proposal is the high watermark. In almost all cases, the governor’s budget package has included more spending (sometimes significantly more) than either the House or Senate budgets that are developed and released after the session begins. This was not the case in the last two sessions; however, the pandemic threw the whole process out of whack, so when considering a historical trend, you can throw the last two years out as an aberration.

This question about whether Governor Inslee’s 2023–25 Operating Budget will be the high watermark is important for us because the K–12 portion of his budget is underwhelming, for the lack of a better description. Inslee’s proposed K–12 budget would increase from \$26.59 billion in 2021–23 to \$29.01 billion—a 9.1 percent increase. That seems pretty healthy... until you realize that the projected Maintenance Level budget is \$28.74 billion. When you take that into account, you see that Inslee’s proposed increase is less than one percent above the Maintenance Level. As a comparison, look at the Human Services (e.g., Department of Social and Health Services, Department of Health, Department of Children, Youth and Families) budget. Inslee’s proposed Human Services budget would increase by 18.8 percent and almost 14 percent above the Maintenance Level. How about Higher Education? Nearly an 11 percent increase from 2021–23 and 5.4 percent beyond the Maintenance Level.

The point? While K–12 education grows in Inslee’s proposed budget, growth is less than other areas of government and an overwhelming amount of the growth in the K–12 budget is due to required Maintenance Level changes, not discretionary Policy Level decisions. Said simply, and to echo the first part of this newsletter, Governor Inslee fails to prioritize the only constitutional paramount duty in the state: K–12 education. (By the way, K–12 education’s portion of the overall Operating Budget peaked at 52 percent in 2019, then plummeted to 43 percent last year. Inslee’s proposed K–12 budget stays at the 43 percent mark—due to a healthy Maintenance Level. So, I guess we’ve got that going for us?)

Fortunately, the governor’s budget request is just one budget. There will be at least two other budget proposals, so it is incumbent on school administrators to engage and “tell your story.” Legislators need to listen to you and not follow the lead of the governor. The governor’s request has put us in a hole and it is up to us to claw our way out.