



PRESS RELEASE



## WASA Launches Website to Highlight Core Funding Issues in K-12

*As student needs and costs rise, K-12 funding isn't prioritized by lawmakers.*

**OLYMPIA (July 8, 2024)** — A new website launched by the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) aims to explain why so many public school districts are experiencing major financial challenges, and the changes that need to be made to support K-12 education in Washington.

The new site, [www.waschoolfunding.org](http://www.waschoolfunding.org), was created to highlight the issues creating financial pressure on K-12 school districts and the need for state funding allocations to reflect these increasing costs, according to WASA Executive Director Joel Aune.

“Increased student needs, rising costs, unfunded requirements and declining state funding have created a perfect storm of financial conditions in Washington’s public schools” said Aune. “We’ve launched this website to educate the public about why this is happening and to provide some context around the specific stressors that require school districts to make difficult and painful budget reductions – cuts in programming and supports that impact students in a most negative way. Ultimately, it all comes back to the core issues with state funding of K-12 education and a failure by the Legislature to live up to the state’s paramount duty.”

Although Washington’s operating budget has increased, the percentage dedicated to funding K-12 education has lagged behind. Just five years ago, about 52.4% of the state’s general fund budget was dedicated to K-12 education. Now, it’s down to about 43.1%, even though it is the state’s constitutional responsibility to provide ample funding to support basic education services for students.

Other major factors impacting school budgets include:

- The persistent underfunding of essential and required programs like special education. In the 2022-23 school year alone, unfunded special education expenses amounted to \$529.8 million;

- The increase in student needs, coupled with the sunset of pandemic relief funds that have supported resources to address student mental and behavioral supports. The funding is going away, yet student needs remain; and
- The ongoing impacts of record inflation and rising costs, coupled with state funding allocations for basic school district necessities like electricity, fuel and insurance. These costs are dramatically underfunded by the state.

WASA is proposing the following short and long-term solutions to address chronic underfunding of K-12 education:

Short-term support needed from the state now:

- Fully funding the actual costs of special education & student support needs.
- Increasing funding allocations for materials, supplies, insurance, and other school operating expenses to match actual, rising costs.
- Increasing funding for transportation to align with actual, rising costs.

Long-term solutions include:

- Reexamining the McCleary “Solution” to fix some of the structural issues and develop a school funding mechanism that recognizes the unique needs and differences of Washington’s 295 school districts. One size does not fit all.
- Addressing the underfunding of education through an insufficient funding model. The current format is hurting our schools, our students, our communities, and ultimately our state’s future.

“Despite the McCleary decision, state funding of K-12 education is not ‘fixed.’ In fact, it’s quite the opposite. Too many districts are struggling to meet the growing needs of students with too few resources. It’s not equitable, and it’s heading for a breaking point,” added Aune.

“It is time to get to the core issue – state funding of K-12 education.”

To learn more, visit <https://www.waschoolfunding.org/>.

### **About the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA)**

WASA ([www.wasa-oly.org](http://www.wasa-oly.org)) is a non-profit organization committed to the development of quality education through professional leadership. Members benefit from a supportive community of professional leaders working to provide insightful, valuable training support, and resources. WASA also strives to sustain a positive impact on legislative and community leaders. Membership is open to education administrators in Washington state.

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