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WASA 2026 Legislative Platform Reaffirms Persistent Need for Basic Education Funding

*Materials/supplies/operating costs (MSOC), special education and
transportation all still underfunded to sufficiently support student
outcomes*

OLYMPIA — May 27, 2025 — The Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) unveiled their [2026 legislative platform](#) Tuesday with a continued emphasis on the persistent need for basic education funding. The announcement comes one month to the day after the 2025 Legislature adjourned without making the necessary investments in K-12 education, as prescribed by Article IX, Section 1 of the Washington State Constitution.

“School districts across the state are grappling with a severe and ongoing funding crisis. Unfortunately, lawmakers missed their chance this session to make meaningful investments in K-12 education,” said WASA Executive Joel Aune. “We needed bold action this session; what we got was cautious acknowledgement of the financial anchors dragging down districts. Yes, there was some new money for special education, but it represents just a quarter of what’s really required. Even with increased investments in materials, supplies, and operating costs (MSOC), funding remains woefully inadequate and falls far short of covering the real and rising expenses required to operate a school district,” said Aune.

“Districts are bracing for another tough round of budgeting in preparation for the next school year. That means program and staffing cuts that directly impact student learning – these are cuts to both social-emotional supports for students and classroom instruction. Some of the ‘extras’ like music, art, or athletics have already been reduced or eliminated in some districts,” Aune added. “Many districts are now at a breaking point where these cuts will have a direct impact on a student’s well-being and academic performance. Students will definitely pay the price of the Legislature’s continued indifference to amply fund K-12 education.”

WASA's 2026 platform again highlights the core areas where funding is most urgently needed:

- **Materials, Supplies and Operating Costs (MSOC):** The 2026 Legislature must immediately increase MSOC allocations—including additional support for small school districts with unique needs—to more closely match the costs of running a school district. The Legislature's per pupil allocation to cover school districts' non-staff related costs, including utilities, insurance, curriculum, and technology, has not kept pace with inflation or the actual costs of running a school district; these costs are increasing through no fault of school districts, superintendents or school boards and their decisions. When required costs of running a school district exceed state funding, local revenues, mostly levies, must be used to fill the gap, reducing local resources for school district and community expectations.
- **Special Education:** The 2026 Legislature must immediately complete the job of fully funding the cost of special education services. School districts have a legal obligation to serve all students with disabilities in Washington, regardless of the cost of services. Entering the 2025 session, the statewide funding deficit for school districts was over \$1.0 billion and the Legislature's provision of additional funding for special education in the 2025–27 Operating Budget is appreciated. The downpayment of \$300 million will assist districts in meeting their legal obligations to serve some of our most vulnerable students; however, special education remains significantly underfunded. This gap requires districts to continue to use local funding sources, including local levies, to cover necessary costs.
- **Pupil Transportation:** The 2026 Legislature must promptly fulfill its obligation to comprehensively fix the pupil transportation formula to ensure it is more transparent, predictable, and adequately funded. The current Student Transportation Allocation Reporting System (STARS) formula consistently underfunds districts' actual pupil transportation expenditures. The STARS formula cannot forecast allocations with credible accuracy, calculates a final allocation in February which complicates budget decisions for school districts and the Legislature, and uses an efficiency rating that is detrimental to efficient districts because they are at risk of less funding in the model. The 2025 Legislature failed to adopt any policy reform; in 2026, the Legislature must finally address the inadequate funding of pupil transportation.
- **K-12 Ample and Equitable Finance:** This is a **new** addition to the platform for 2026, and was included given the financial straits so many more districts now find themselves navigating. The 2026 Legislature should immediately convene a stakeholder workgroup to fully review the adequacy of the current funding structure, ensuring ample and equitable funding of school districts. The Legislature made significant changes to the K–12 finance system in response to the 2012 McCleary decision, including adding substantial funding in 2018–19. However, many school districts are struggling financially, and inequities between districts continue to grow. Proposed workgroup recommendations would address changes to the Prototypical

School Funding Model, salary allocations, Regionalization and Experience Factors, and equitable reforms addressing local school district levies and Local Effort Assistance.

“If the priorities outlined in our 2026 legislative platform look familiar, it is because these issues continue to go unmet by legislators,” said Aune. “WASA is more determined than ever to continue advocating for schools, so they have the resources necessary to provide the educational experience our students need and deserve.”

About the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA)

WASA (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.