

By Kelly Munn

WSPTA Convention May 2008

The first and last point is that citizens like you can make a tremendous difference. The challenges are huge, but the truth is you (individually and collectively) can make a difference. You do not need to be a financial analyst or a school finance expert. You do need to be willing to work hard, you need to recognize what you do not know, and you need to be passionate about learning more. Come up with good ideas and people will take you seriously - fast.

But for those of you that have not done advocacy before, please take note: Lots of good ideas do not get traction. At the end of the day, what wins is not necessarily the best idea. What wins is the idea that gets 50%, plus one vote. On the School Board that means ___ votes, at the City Council that means ___ votes, and in Olympia that means 75 votes.

I like to ask “how many of you have worked on school levy campaign before” If lots raise their hands, thank them. Either way, remind everyone how important these votes are for your district and your community.



How do we compare?

- *State - 42nd in per pupil funding*
- *State - 45th in class size*
- *School districts in state - 295*

Source: 42nd – Education Week
46th – National Center for Education Statistics

State – 42nd in per pupil funding – this ranking is adjusted for Cost of Living. If we used the raw numbers we would fall just below the middle of the pack. The WEA’s take the Lead campaign also uses these numbers.

State – 45th in class size came from the national center for educational statistics

List your school district or districts here (data comes from OSPI, ask your school district financial officer for a current listing of school district per pupil rankings)

The differences can come from: One district has more children that generate federal funds or state grant funds for underperforming, special needs, poverty, or ELL programs.

But a lot of the differences are just inequities in the system, although the system is equal at the “big picture” level, its unequal when comparing school district to neighboring school district, levy lids, staff salaries and levy equalization all play into the funding differences.

Optional – you might want to explain that this presentation is intended to teach people about the current funding system and support changes in Education funding.

For example, although we rank miserably at the above numbers, we also rank in the top 5 for SAT scores across the nation. This is fantastic! And therefore we look like we don’t need more money, we are doing fine without the money. But the trick is in the details of the numbers.

Taking SAT tests are self selecting in this state. Only the students who believe they will go to college take the test. We are competing with states that have mandatory SAT test taking. So we are comparing apples to oranges. It’s our goal to give you enough information to understand the current Washington state ed funding system and to trust that you know enough about it to read articles in the paper and talk to people and understand the crises we are facing.



The “Paramount Duty”

- *“It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children...”*
- *“The Legislature shall provide for a general and uniform system of schools...”*
 - *Washington State Constitution, 1889*

- In Washington State, school funding is “state-driven,” meaning the main responsibility for funding education lies with the state, not local school districts and also means that the state provides most of the funding.
- Our state constitution establishes that education is the “paramount duty” of the state, meaning it is the state’s responsibility to provide an appropriate education for all children.
- The system must also be equitable and “uniform” for all children - students in poor districts must be provided with the same education as children in wealthier districts.
- Washington has the strongest constitutional language on education in the nation.
- Court decisions were early and decisive. 1977 Seattle and other districts had double levy failures and sued state.
- Doran court ruled that finance system dependent on unstable levies was unconstitutional
- Legislature must define “basic education” and fund it.
- 1983 added special education and in 1988 special ed safety net
- Doran decision set up framework we still have today. Legislature has on-going duty to review, define, and fund “basic education”

Education Funding Crises How did we get here?



- 1993 Education Reform Act
- No Child Left Behind
- More Students with Greater Needs
- Much Higher Community Expectations
- 71% of High School Students Graduate
- Examples of Broken Funding System

Standards gave us a goal. Standards gave us a goal for content and proficiency. Grade Level expectations were created to meet the goal. The standards are measured using the WASL test.

Whether you are for or against the WASL and standards, they have changed education. And the change is dramatic, it is a 180 degree turn in the way the state educates.

There were two main changes: that teachers all across the state are teaching the same thing at each grade level. This had never happened before. And, that the focus on teaching was on critical thinking, problem solving

One example of what needs to happen under Education reform in the area of curriculum and teacher training is; previously each school, each school district could decide what was taught at each grade level. A child could easily take salmon two years at the same school, or if they switched schools within the district or across the state see salmon yet a third time during elementary school.

School districts had to purchase new curriculum for every grade level for every subject that matched the new standards.

10th grade biology curriculum for a mid sized school district that includes teacher training, textbooks and teacher guides can cost a half million dollars.

Teachers had to be trained to this new curriculum.

Very little, close to none, of this was funded by the state. For example: The state funded three training days for teachers a year (lid days) and dropped that to two teacher training days. The state funded some curriculum purchases, but this was only through some grants that went to a few districts.

School districts across the state had to find the money to purchase curriculum and train teachers through their existing local budgets.

Education Reform 

- **1993 Education Reform Act**
 - High standards of achievement for Washington students, teachers, and schools

- **August 2007**
 - Still waiting for an education finance system that is “ample, flexible, stable, equitable, straightforward and accountable”

Standards gave us a goal. Standards gave us a goal for content and proficiency. Grade Level expectations were created to meet the goal. The standards are measured using the WASL test.

Whether you are for or against the WASL and standards, they have changed education. And the change is dramatic, it is a 180 degree turn in the way the state educates. There were two main changes: that teachers all across the state are teaching the same thing at each grade level. This had never happened before. And, that the focus on teaching was on critical thinking, problem solving

One example of what needs to happen under Education reform in the area of curriculum and teacher training is; previously each school, each school district could decide what was taught at each grade level. A child could easily take salmon two years at the same school, or if they switched schools within the district or across the state see salmon yet a third time during elementary school.

School districts had to purchase new curriculum for every grade level for every subject that matched the new standards.

10th grade biology curriculum for a mid sized school district that includes teacher training, textbooks and teacher guides can cost a half million dollars.

Teachers had to be trained to this new curriculum.

Very little, close to none, of this was funded by the state. For example: The state funded three training days for teachers a year (lid days) and dropped that to two teacher training days. The state funded some curriculum purchases, but this was only through some grants that went to a few districts.

School districts across the state had to find the money to purchase curriculum and train teachers through their existing local budgets.



No Child Left Behind

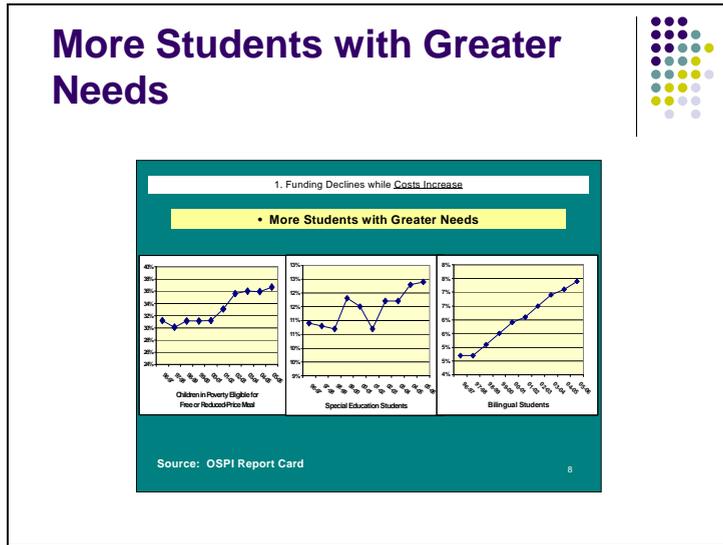
- **Stronger Accountability for Results**
 - Shifts responsibility for education
 - No additional money

The federal Government implemented No Child Left Behind. It's intention is to create strong accountability for results. To make sure that the achievement gap for all students, including those who are disadvantaged achieve a level of academic proficiency. There are annual state and school district report cards that inform parents and communities about state and school progress. Schools that do not make progress must provide supplemental services, such as free tutoring or after school assistance, take corrective actions; and, if still not making adequate yearly progress after 5 years, make dramatic changes to the way the school is run.

This is a dramatic legislative difference in how schools work. Since Brown vs. the US government we have worked under the principles of every child deserves an equal opportunity at an education. The Brown act promised equal access, not equal results.

No Child Left Behind changes this, now, every child is promised to meet academic standards. The responsibility has changed from equal access to equal education. Schools and school districts are accountable for children learning. This is completely different from equal access and places much more of the responsibility on schools and teachers.

And this is all done within the context of existing funding. There has been some additional funding, but not much. The federal dollars that districts receive have been some what freed up so they can be used where they are most needed, but not many additional dollars have been added. And those districts who do not comply are faced with losing their federal dollars. So schools that are the most needy may have the least funds.



Expectations have changed. So have our students.

ELL – English Language Learners

We have over a million students in our K-12 schools, and increasing numbers of them face challenges due to poverty, special education needs, and limited English skills. Page 4 of LEV book – source Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

State Funding Formula



- *Formula computed in the 1970's*
- *Security and technology not considered*
- *Community expectations are now higher*
 - *Security*
 - *AP/IB classes*
 - *Nurses*
 - *Counselors*
 - *Librarians*
 - *PE teachers*
 - *Music teachers*
 - *Foreign languages*
 - *And more*

The state education funding was redefined in the 70's due to a lawsuit by the Seattle school district called the Doran decision.

This new funding formula is still in existence today. There have been a few modifications, but all of the assumptions are based on school expectations of the 70's.

Think back to the 1970's. Many of us were in school. We had one phone line into the school, we hadn't heard of columbine, obesity wasn't an epidemic, the US was a global superpower superior in every category, healthcare, education, technological innovation.

The world has changed, but the education funding system hasn't.

Security – no security guards, no cameras in schools or buses,

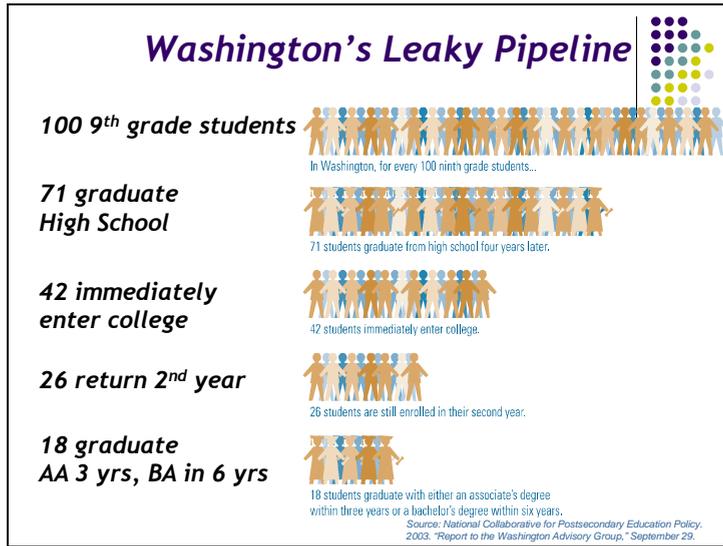
Technology – no computers, no computers in the central admin office nor software to support the computers, one phone line into the school rather than into every classroom, no document cameras, no smartboards. We all had film projectors that usually didn't work.

Counseling – counselors were expected to help students get into college or vocational school. Our communities expectations have grown enormously, the community demands that counselors not only counsel for beyond high school, but they intervene and support students who are threatening suicide, bulimic, anorexic, troubled by divorce etc. Our community has changed what counselors are required to do without really increasing the number of counselors needed to do the job.

Nurses – are now legislated to dispense all medications including insulin, eppy pens etc, none of this existed in the 70's, some schools have defibrulators. Nurses helped when a child fell or got a stomach ache. Again, the community expects so much from the nurses.

The formula for funding schools hasn't really changed since the 70's. The assumptions that were valid then are not valid now. Communities expect so much more from schools, and yet they are not funded to support the services.

The funding formula funds high schools with the assumption that they fund to be able to earn a high school diploma (NOT to get into college). The Washington state requirements don't require a foreign language or more than 2 years of math and so on. The funding formula only pays for a 5 hour day. Most high schools have a six hour day. That sixth hour is NOT funded by the state, you local levy dollars are funding it or you are increasing class size to fund it.



This is the picture that we need to change.

Out of 100 9th grade students,

71 graduate

42 immediately enter college

26 come back for a second year

18 graduate with AA (3 years) or AA (6 years)

This at a time when 88% of jobs being created require skills and knowledge beyond high school.

PTA and LEV leaders believe there is a real need to get more parents and community members aware of these challenges. People need to understand and buy into the fact that there is a problem before they will roll up their sleeves and/ or open their wallets for solutions.

Teacher & Staff Salaries State Allocations



- School budgets
 - Salaries and benefits – 75-89% of total

- “Salary schedule”
 - Negotiated locally – “tri-days”
 - Approximately 75% of teachers on state salary schedule

75-89% of school budgets go to salaries and benefits, this is a national norm, not just a state norm.

In Washington State, teachers are paid on a salary schedule in the form of a grid. Teachers step up the grid for number of years teaching experience and for amount of higher education. A brand new teacher with just a BA starts at the low end of the grid and a teacher with 20 years experience and a PHD is at the highest end of the grid.

The state funds a school district for its teachers. But the local district can give additional pay to their teachers.

Remember that the state funds teachers by a formula. Foreign language, elementary PE, extra counselors, reading teachers etc are not covered by this formula. Local levy dollars or federal dollars allows a district to hire additional teachers.

These “extra” teachers aren’t considered part of the state funding system. When the state gives the teachers a cola increase, they only give the increase to the “state funded” teachers. Which means that about 25% of teachers in any school district aren’t getting the raise. The district has to find money to cover the difference. They make “cuts” in order to give all teachers the COLA. This is how broken the education funding system has become. We try to do something that is generally considered “good” by giving the teachers a raise, but it ends up costing the local districts money they don’t have.



Base Staff Salaries 2005-2006

	Teacher	Admin	Classified
Lowest	\$31,386	\$46,485	\$22,454
Highest	\$33,377	\$77,924	\$33,970

70% of staff salaries paid by state
30% of staff salaries paid by local levies or federal dollars

Source: OSPI Organization and Financing of Schools

Info for presenter: You can find tons of finance information in a document called *OSPI Organization and Financing of Schools*. This document can be found on the OSPI website. Google Office of the superintendent of public instruction:

- select business/grants from the top line
- select apportionments
- select publications
- select the document

Some districts receive the lowest amount of money for their teachers, or administrative staff, or classified staff and the range goes from the lowest to the highest. There are school districts that receive the highest amount of salary. There is no rhyme or reason to who receives more money.

In the 70's when education funding was redefined they tried to give all teachers, admin and classified staff more money. They raised the bar for most of the state, but there were pockets of areas all across the state that were already paying their people at a higher rate. So, the state didn't want to take money away from anyone, so they "grandfathered those districts in" they got to keep their higher rates.

Originally this was supposed to disappear after 10 years. But it didn't. In 2007 legislation was passed that starts to get rid of the inequities in salaries, but it's a long term process (approx. 6 years).

You'd think that the higher salaries would center around western Washington, they don't, the higher salaries are spread all across the state.

The spread increases as the salaries go higher on the grid because its all percentages. This money is collected through taxes that are paid to the state. The state turns around and gives school districts money for their staff. The money should at least be the same across the state, if not also account for cost of living and other issues. It should at least be a logical distribution.

Although a 2,000 difference in teachers pay may not seem like a lot, in a medium sized district of 1,000 teachers, this translates into 2 million dollars more going into a school district. If you have a school district that has 1000 teachers, 50 admin and 500 classified the total difference coming into that district is \$8,780,000. (which is around the typical staffing for a school district with 16,000 students) That's a huge chunk of money that a school district isn't getting.

Average salary numbers do not include extra compensation for TRI days. Teacher Training and Incentive, or other forms of supplemental compensation, like coaching contracts.

Statewide salary schedule does not account for the huge variance in cost of living in this state or shortages in specific subjects (math, science, and special education)

Local Levies



- Property taxes paid by citizens within a school district

- M&O (misnamed maintenance and operations)
- Technology
- Capital
- Bus

This slide is an example of a broken funding system. Use the levy example only if it works in your community.

A levy is simply a tax that is applied based on your assessed property value. The tax can be in existence typically for 1- 7 years. And it can be voted on again to “replace” the tax.

A bond is basically a mortgage and funds expensive projects, like remodeling buildings or building new schools. It Typically last 7-20 years.

Operating levy (used to be called M and O) are renewed every 2-4 years in. In theory, but not in practice, operating levies are for “supplemental” / extra things because the state is meeting its paramount duty of funding education. In reality, operating levies are paying for everything from teachers, to light and heat, to special education and transportation costs.

Operating levies have “caps” or “lids” set by the legislature in the 70’s and bumped up from time to time, but at the same rate. Can be a 2-4 year levy

- M&O Levy currently pays for what the community decides is “Basic Ed” (special ed needs, PE, transportation, foreign language etc)
- Technology purchases computers, software, smart boards, etc. 2-4 year levy.
- Capital is a tax that can pay for small repairs like replacing the septic tank, fixing the roof, recarpeting. 2-4 year levy.
- Bus – can purchase buses, but not pay for maintenance, drivers or gas. 1 year levy.



Local Levy Lids

- “Caps” or “lids” M&O levy tax
- Every district allowed to raise 24%
- Some districts “grandfathered” at higher rates
 - Highest rate 33.78%
- Fundamental inequities
- **Region 10**

	Allowed	Collected
● Steilacoom	24.87%	24.87%
● Clover Park	26.76%	23.32%
● Tacoma	31.47%	31.47%
● Peninsula	24.91%	23.40%
● University	28.29%	27.61%

All districts are allowed to raise up to 24% of their general fund. Most do not raise to their allotment.

An M&O Levy is computed by taking the % that will be raised of the general fund.

The general fund consists of all the money the state and the federal government gives to a district for education.

Use a standard. Pretend that every school district has a 100 million dollar budget.

Discuss the financial differences between the highest district and your districts (if they can raise the full amount of the levies)

Then use the levy lid caps to figure out how much money each school district in the region can raise. Example:

Issaquah 24.97 million

Shaw Island 33.78%

If both school districts were the exact same size, with the exact same general fund. Shaw Island could raise almost 9 million dollars more than Issaquah.

The majority of this money is used to fund basic education. Those districts that can't raise the full amount to their levy lid have a disadvantage, those who have lower levy lids have a funding disadvantage, those who can't pass the M&O at all are at a disadvantage.

And remember that teacher, admin and classified salaries all go into the general fund. So if your school district receives the lowest salaries, your general fund is smaller, which means that you will collect less levy dollars. For example, if both your school districts are the same size, and both should have general funds of 100 million. But one district receives higher teacher/admin/classified salaries, let's say this district receives 110 million. Well, if they both have a levy lid of 25%, one district will receive 25 million dollars, but the other will receive 27.5 million.

The teachers salaries in the general fund not only affect what salaries your school community receives but effects how much money you can raise from you levies. A double whammy.

Local Effort Assistance (LEA)



- Goal is to help create funding equity
- 12% M&O levy passes, receive 12% from state (theoretically)
- 215 out of 296 districts receive LEA

Use this slide as an example of the broken funding system only if it works in your community.

LEA Helps school districts with above average tax rates due to low property valuations.

If 12% raised, receive 12% form state, if raise less, receive less.

The funding formula uses adjusted assessed valuations to bring property assessments to 100% of market value. These hypothetical numbers create inequities.

Although this helps to create equity across the state, it creates inequities in application

Ed Funding Crisis



- 1993 Education Reform Act
- No Child Left Behind
- More Students with Greater Needs
- Much Higher Community Expectations
- 71% of High School Students Graduate
- Broken Funding System

Summary of how we got to the education funding crisis that we are in.



What You Can Do!

- Help spread the word
 - Tell your friends at least one fact that you learned today
 - Schedule this presentation at your local PTA, service organization, school foundation etc.
- Email, call legislators
 - www.leg.wa.gov, 1 800 562-6000
- Sign up for Action Alerts
 - www.wastatepta.org

Changing education funding is not going to be easy. Our legislators need us to help make the change, we need to educate our communities on the crises and motivate the community to change the current funding.

We need to do two different things:

- Inform our community
- Contact our legislators

Talk it Up – soccer field, grocery store, book club, gym, daycare.....

Legislators like to hear from us, particularly from people they have not heard from before. It gives them the “pulse” of their community.

You can also call your legislators toll free. They make it very, very simple, you don’t need to know anything except your address, they will figure out who your legislators are and they will simply take a message. Very effective.

Sign up for Action alerts with the Washington State PTA- The PTA sends out emails during the legislative session to encourage our legislators to support our agreed upon legislative issues.