

# DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS EDUCATION FUNDING TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS



The education funding challenge provides an opportunity to build new schools across the state, put high-quality educators in every classroom and give 1.1 million Washington school kids opportunities to learn and reach their dreams. House and Senate Democrats will work to achieve those goals.



## 1) Compensation that is sufficient to hire and retain state-funded basic education staff

**House & Senate Democrats** – Great classrooms require great educators. It's the state's responsibility to pay those educators. House and Senate Democrats will move forward with educator compensation solutions that align with our constitutional responsibilities.

**Recommendation:** Maintain an allocation-only system and eliminate the formal salary allocation model. The state allocation for staff salaries will be increased to an average market rate comparable to similar staff types as identified by the Employment Security Department and in the Governor's K-12 funding proposal. Re-alignments of the salary allocation system will be made based on a market-rate review and revision every six years. A labor market adjustment is included for all three categories of staff. A temporary district-wide hold-harmless provision is provided if needed, assuring that no district receives less funding and that the National Board Certification bonus is maintained.

## 2) Help school districts support state-funded all-day kindergarten and K-3 class-size reduction

**House & Senate Democrats** - In addition to having a great educator, kids need adequate classrooms to reach their full learning potential. Dilapidated portables don't cut it.

**Recommendation:** The capital budget committees will recommend proposals to address the additional classroom and facility needs necessary to fully support the existing and planned investments in state-funded all-day kindergarten and K-3 class-size reductions that have been made in the operating budget.

## 3) Improving and expanding existing educator recruitment and retention programs

**House & Senate Democrats** - Every classroom should be led by a high-quality educator. Unfortunately, the teacher shortage crisis has made it difficult to recruit and retain enough high-quality educators to meet the demand. Progress was made last session in Senate bill 6455 and through increased investment in the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program.

**Recommendation:** Fully fund the components of SB 6455 and increase investments in the BEST program. Additional recruitment and retention recommendations will be developed in the House and Senate education policy committees.

## 4) Maintenance and Operations levies and Local Effort Assistance (LEA)

**House & Senate Democrats** – The current “levy cliff” problem is already creating uncertainty with districts across the state. Local districts need flexibility to continue being responsive to the needs of their communities.

**Recommendation:** Establish a long-term levy policy that brings the levy lid to 24% for all districts by 2021 and maintains the existing levy equalization policy, including the existing ratios.

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## 5) Local school district collective bargaining for salaries and health care

**House & Senate Democrats** – One size does not fit all when it comes to education. Every community has unique needs that require flexibility in order to provide the best education possible for every child. **Statewide collective bargaining does not produce any measurable benefit to students.** No other state (except Hawaii, which has one statewide school district) has a statewide bargaining process.

**Recommendation:** Local control over school-district collective bargaining for salaries and health care is maintained.

## 6) Clarifying the distinction between basic education and local enrichment services

**House & Senate Democrats** – Washington’s paramount duty is to provide a basic education for every child in the state. The elements that are required to ensure every child has opportunities to learn have evolved, therefore our state’s support of basic education needs to evolve as well.

**Recommendation:** Additional investments are needed in the following basic-education programs. It will be the state’s responsibility to fully fund:

- CTE class size reductions to a level of 19:1 and skills center class-size reduction to 16:1.
- Additional support for the Learning Assistance Program, Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program, early learning, and Special Education to help address the opportunity gap.
- Increased investment in the Highly Capable program
- Increased allocations for guidance counselors and parent-involvement coordinators

## 7) District reporting, accounting, and transparency of data and expenditures

**House & Senate Democrats** – **The lack of good data and clear accounting of funds are factors that contributed to the current education funding problems.** Having a clearer accounting picture and higher-quality data will allow state and local policymakers make better-informed decisions.

**Recommendation:** Create additional, more robust accounting requirements, create a new accounting system that tracks state and local funds separately, require OSPI to align their online reporting system with the new accounting system, and provide increased transparency of local school district data.

## 8) Reliable, sustainable revenue options that will fully fund basic education

**House & Senate Democrats** – Our kids are too important to say no to. Washington’s 7 million residents are counting on lawmakers to make the tough decisions that will ensure our schools are fully funded. The current challenge provides an excellent opportunity to make improvements to the country’s most regressive tax system, which unfairly hurts working families and mom & pop businesses. Democrats will not support massive cuts to critical state services, shell games, or excessive account sweeps in an attempt to avoid the revenue discussion.

**Recommendation:** All revenue options must be on the table for discussion, including the four-tier nexus (Marketplace Fairness Act), tax-preference closures, B&O tax changes, state property tax changes, capital gains excise tax, and carbon pricing.