

The School Boards of Mason County collectively support three priorities for the 2017 legislative session. These are to fully fund basic education, address the shortage of quality teachers, and enhance school construction assistance. Each of these areas of concern impact our Districts in a different way. Ultimately, the impact is the lack of equitable educational opportunity for the students of our County.

## Fully Funding Basic Education

In the 2012 McCleary ruling, the Washington State Supreme Court found the state's method of funding our public schools unconstitutional. The state has taken steps to increase funding by fully implementing full-day kindergarten, lowering K–3 class sizes, and more fully fund transportation, and MSOC costs. However, the key finding in the Supreme Court cases was the unconstitutional use of local levies to fund basic education costs that are the state's responsibility. OSPI has calculated that in 2014-15 school districts paid nearly \$2.5 billion in basic education expenses from local levies:

Added staff above allocation	\$ 436.6 million
Supplemental salaries	\$ 1,310.8 billion
Special education program costs	\$ 269.5 million
Materials, supplies, operating costs (MSOC)	\$ 405.2 million
Student transportation	\$ 41.3 million

**TOTAL \$ 2,465,368,593 billion**

Fully funding salaries is one of the biggest remaining steps to meet the Court's requirement. Because of the local bargaining that's occurred since 2014–15, even more local funding has been devoted to supplemental salaries. Given our historic teacher shortage, however, current salaries even with local supplements appear insufficient to attract and retain a quality workforce.

## Address the Shortage of Quality Teachers

According to the Professional Educator Standards Board, Washington has experienced a 250% increase in demand for new teachers. This is due to three intersecting factors: 1) Decline in enrollment in teacher preparation programs, 2) Increase in retirements, and 3) Increasingly complex teacher licensure requirements. A more subtle factor may be a decades-long assault on the teaching profession by popular press, movies, television and government reports like 'A Nation at Risk'. Regardless of the causes, principals and superintendents agree the shortage of qualified applicants remains a significant challenge. In a recent survey conducted by OSPI, 32% of HR directors rate the shortage of qualified applicants as a 'crisis'. A few outcomes of this 'crisis' are critical vacancies in mathematics, science, special education and early learning remain unfilled and principals are frequently required to provide substitute coverage. While some districts, primarily near I-5, who provide significant additional days in their base contracts may feel a pinch, our rural, remote and small school districts are especially hard hit, and are unable to provide competitive compensation packages, leverage partnerships with higher education, or retain teachers once hired.

## Enhance School Construction Assistance

To ensure all school districts have the resources to secure additional facility space necessary to accommodate all-day Kindergarten and K-3 class size reduction, we urge the Legislature to: advance a constitutional amendment to the people authorizing school district bond issues to be approved with a simple majority vote; enhance the State's investment in K-12 construction by updating the current, outdated funding formulas for the Construction Cost Allowance and Student Space Allocation to ensure funding more closely reflects actual construction costs and educational space needs; and provide a significant increase in capital funds to assist school districts with necessary new construction or modernization.