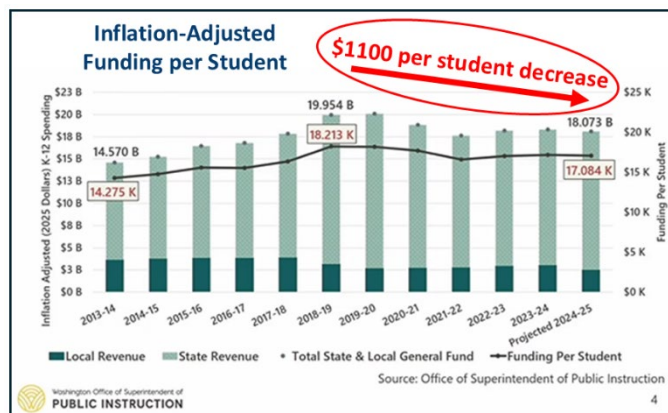*WSPTA recognizes that K-12 education is not fully funded, and an increasing number of school districts are currently in financial crisis. Critical funding gaps persist in basic education related to services for students with disabilities, Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC), and student transportation. These must be addressed to ensure fiscal stability of districts and avoid budget cuts that negatively impact student outcomes.*

Background

- The historic McCleary lawsuit in 2018 added billions of dollars to school funding. Since those investments peaked, K-12 education has decreased from 52% to only 44% of the state operating budget and inflation-adjusted funding has gone DOWN more than $1,100 per student since 2019.[1]

- An increasing number of school districts are currently in financial crisis[2], due to a variety of factors out of their control, including the COVID-related decline in enrollment that has not bounced back and declining birth rates; ESSER dollars that were used to support student learning have ended; and persistent gaps in state apportionment. These gaps require school districts to use voter-approved enrichment levies or reserves to cover the excess costs.

- Schools have legal obligations to serve students with disabilities, regardless of the cost. District expenditures for services related to special education exceed the special education funding by about $435 million.[1]

- The MSOC allocation is not indexed for inflation and has not kept pace with the actual costs required for basic requirements like insurance, utilities, technology, and curriculum adoption.[3] The difference between what the state funded for MSOC in 2023-24 and the actual cost was over $456 million or over $400 per student.[1]

- The student transportation funding formula is complicated, and many districts' actual costs for student transportation are consistently underfunded.[1,3,4] Any costs above those reimbursed by the state must come from district general funds, special levies or enrichment levies.

Proposed Solutions

Washington State PTA shall advocate for legislation or policies, and budgets that ensure the financial stability of all school districts, by prioritizing K-12 education in the state's operating budget, and by closing existing gaps in basic education funding for MSOC (Materials, Supplies and Operating Costs), special education services, and student transportation, so that state funding reflects and keeps pace with actual costs.

For More Information

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For more information on the WSPTA advocacy program, please visit our website.

Washington State
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every child. one voice.

Citations

1. Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2025, January 16). Press Conference
   https://www.tvw.org/watch/?clientID=9375922947&eventID=2025011128

2. Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. School district budget challenges and financial insolvency.
   https://ospi.k12.wa.us/policy-funding/school-apportionment/instructions-and-tools/school-district-budget-challenges-and-financial-insolvency

3. Issues at the Core of Washington State's School Funding Dilemma. https://www.waschoolfunding.org

4. Student Transportation Allocation (STARS) Operations Allocation Detail Reports available from
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