



Washington Education Association

2016 Legislative Priorities

As public school educators in Washington, WEA members are committed to the success of every K-12 and higher education student. Here are the Washington Education Association's student-centered priorities for the 2016 legislative session.

Competitive Professional Compensation

All students deserve caring, qualified and committed teachers, education support professionals, and higher education faculty and staff. WEA members support legislation to:

- Make significant and measurable progress towards a professional salary for all educators that is comparable with professions requiring similar education and training.
 - Increase funding for active and retired educators' health and pension benefits.
 - Continue the state policy of providing salaries on an allocation basis, allowing local districts to determine how best to distribute and enhance that funding to meet local needs.
 - Convert the one-time state increase of 1.8 percent to a permanent increase to the base salary for all K-12 educators.
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Lower Class Size and Increase Student Support

Class size is the way to ensure students receive attention and feedback from a quality teacher. Students also need access to other education professionals to succeed in schools. All students, regardless of economic status, learning ability, or grade level, benefit from reduced class sizes and increased support. WEA members support legislation to:

- Provide additional teachers and educational support professionals for students in every grade to ensure more one-on-one attention -- starting in high-poverty schools.
- Provide additional opportunities for high-demand STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) courses, with lower class sizes to support hands-on experiential learning.
- Provide full funding for a comprehensive basic education program that meets the needs of all students, including:
 - Support for struggling students
 - School-based wrap-around services to address student health, social and emotional needs that have a direct impact on learning.

Reliable, Predictable and Sustainable School Funding

If we're serious about every child's future, let's get serious about doing what works. This means resourcing all schools so students have more one-on-one attention, engaging classrooms and a well-rounded curriculum. WEA members support legislation to:

- Change Washington's tax structure to:
 - Provide sustainable revenue sources for the ample provision of basic K-12 education, higher education, and all necessary services for Washington's citizens.
 - Provide resources to support and protect Washington's most vulnerable residents.
 - Create a system that is fairer for middle and low-income individuals and for small businesses.

Testing

Every Washington student has the right to a high-quality public education that provides an opportunity for success. Good education inspires a student's natural curiosity, imagination and desire to learn. Too much testing takes time from learning. WEA members support legislation to:

- Eliminate the high-stakes nature of state standardized tests, including using them as a graduation requirement, and reduce the number of standardized tests where possible.
- Support the rights of students to opt out of standardized tests with impunity.
- Assure that tests are developmentally, culturally, cognitively, and linguistically appropriate for all students.

Protecting and Strengthening the Education Profession

Professional educators are best equipped to make school and classroom decisions to ensure student success, and they should be the primary voice in education policy decisions at every level. WEA members support legislation to:

- Protect the rights of public school workers to engage in union activities, including full rights to organize, bargain and advocate for public education in the political process.
- Ensure teacher and principal evaluations use appropriate student growth data and that use of standardized tests is allowed but not mandated.
- Provide consistent and stable funding to ensure every educator has professional development, resources and support.
- Prevent the privatization of public schools by any method, including the unconstitutional authorization of charters or the use of vouchers.
- Prohibit school districts from requiring school employees to monitor student social media, which inappropriately diverts needed resources away from students.

Find this document and other information about WEA's legislative goals and actions at www.OurVoiceWashington.org.