

SCHOOL FUNDING COALITION | 2025 Legislative Priorities



School Funding Coalition

The School Funding Coalition is comprised of eight statewide education associations, representing almost 8,000 school district leaders from our state's 295 school districts. We bring a front-line understanding of school district financing and education funding issues. This Coalition convened to speak with one voice on common funding priorities that each of our associations will support on behalf of the 1.1 million students who attend our schools.

For More Information, Please Contact:

AEA: Mitch Denning
medenning@comcast.net

AESD: Tim Merlino
tim.merlino@esd112.org

AWSP: Roz Thompson
roz@awsp.org

WACTA: Tim Knue
tim@wa-acte.org

WASA, WASBO, and WSPA: Dan Steele
dsteele@wasa-oly.org

WSSDA: Marissa Rathbone
m.rathbone@wssda.org

The School Funding Coalition was established to advocate for the necessary update of staffing allocations in the Prototypical School Funding Model, ensuring state-funded staffing levels in all schools are more realistic. While enhanced staffing ratios continue to be a critical need, the School Funding Coalition is also concerned about the chronic underfunding of basic education. In 2025, the Coalition will be focusing on school districts' current underfunding and will be urging the Legislature to promptly provide ample funding of basic education, specifically:

- Special Education
- Materials, Supplies and Operating Costs (MSOC)
- Pupil Transportation

2025 Legislative Session

Continuing to update Prototypical School Funding Model staffing ratios to at least meet the recommendations of the 2019 Staffing Enrichment Workgroup remains a priority. (The Workgroup's full recommendations are available at: <https://bit.ly/3r6byIP>) However, the members of the School Funding Coalition believe the ample funding of Special Education, Materials, Supplies and Operating Costs (MSOC), and Pupil Transportation is an urgent concern and the 2025 Legislature must positively address these funding issues immediately.

2026 and Beyond

The 2022 Legislature provided needed and overdue funding to begin the phase-in of enhanced staffing allocations in the Prototypical School Funding Model (PSFM) to ensure state-funded staffing levels in all schools are more realistic. This first investment provided for enhanced ratios for nurses, counselors, social workers, and psychologists to meet students' needs for mental, social, emotional, and behavioral health. The 2024 Legislature modified the Prototypical School Funding Model by increasing staff allocations for paraeducators, office supports and noninstructional aides. The 2022 and 2024 investments, which addressed a major portion of Phase I of the recommendations provided by the 2019 Staffing Enrichment Workgroup, are appreciated.

In 2026 and beyond, the Legislature must complete Phase I of the recommendations, continuing to invest in Prototypical School Funding Model staffing ratios by improving support for school principals, supporting additional professional development, and adding continuous improvement coaches to the PSFM.

After the Legislature implements Phase I of the Workgroup's recommendations, we urge the Legislature to begin implementation of the second (and final) phase of the Workgroup's recommendations to ensure the Model includes more realistic state-funding staffing levels in all staffing categories. Phase II focuses on class size reduction, further needed increases in school principal allocations, additional professional development for all staff, and increased prototypical staffing ratios for school level staff that are not addressed in Phase I. These increases recognize the important role that all school district personnel play in serving students and their learning.

The Prototypical School Funding Model

In 2009, the Legislature adopted a new education funding system, establishing a distribution formula based on minimum staffing in “prototypical schools.” Legislation adopted in 2010 implemented the new Prototypical School Funding Model (PSFM), providing new staffing allocations. The new allocations were intended to translate then-current levels of funding into the different staff classifications in the PSFM, with no adjustments, to ensure the conversion was cost neutral. While the conversion was revenue neutral, there was a commitment to regularly review and update the adopted staffing ratios.

In 2014, Washington’s citizens approved Initiative 1351 which provided for phased-in increases in staffing allocations in the PSFM. The Initiative required funding for increased staffing allocations to begin in the 2015–17 biennium, with full funding by the end of the 2017–19 biennium. Legislation adopted in 2015, however, delayed the funding of I-1351 by four years. In 2017, as a part of the “McCleary solution” (EHB 2242, Sections 903-905), the I-1351 implementation schedule was repealed. OSPI, however, was charged with convening a Staffing Enhancement Workgroup to review staffing allocations detailed in I-1351 and make recommendations on a possible phase-in plan of staffing enhancements. The School Funding Coalition’s long-term priorities mirror the 2019 Staffing Enrichment Workgroup recommendations; however, in 2025 we are advocating that the Legislature first address the underfunding of basic education, specifically Special Education, Materials, Supplies and Operating Costs (MSOC), and Pupil Transportation. Ample funding these constitutionally required basic education programs will positively benefit all school districts and assist those districts that continue to be in financial distress.

As described in the Staffing Enrichment Workgroup report (<https://bit.ly/3r6bylP>), Phase I recommendations to meet student needs are:

- Increasing staffing ratios related to the safety and social, emotional, mental, and behavioral health of students. Specifically, enhanced funding would be provided for school counselors, school nurses, social workers, psychologists, family engagement coordinators, and student and staff safety. (The 2022 Legislature began a three-year phase-in of this component of Phase I.)
- Increasing the ratio of school principals to promote school cultures of learning and growth, support students by regularly meeting social-emotional and mental health needs, and address increased responsibilities in supervisory duties of their staff members.
- Ensuring additional professional development that is essential to closing achievement gaps and for building racially literate, culturally responsive practices in all adults serving schools, in order to better serve all students.
- Adding continuous improvement coaches to the PSFM for implementation of initiatives and professional learning to benefit all students.

Phase II recommendations to meet student needs are:

- Increasing all remaining PSFM staffing ratios not addressed in Phase I, including the class size reductions needed for teachers to meet the needs of all their students.
- Further enhancing the allocation of school principals in order to support supervision of increased staff.
- Building on the professional learning in Phase I by providing additional, necessary professional learning days for all staff to support their learning and growth and improve their ability to serve all students.