



# 2024 Legislative Priorities

The Board of Directors (the "Board") of Olympia School District No. 111, Thurston County, Washington (the "District") identifies that the Olympia School District will face funding shortfalls in the 2024-25 school year and beyond. The shortfalls are caused, in part, by long-term structural inequitable funding mechanisms and underfunded state or federal requirements. These shortfalls are exacerbated by enrollment declines. To address these financial realities, the Board supports necessary legislative action this session at the state level as follows:

## Levy Reform

Local Enrichment Levies are intended to be *enrichment* to basic education. Until the state fully funds its commitments, school districts are forced to supplement basic education with local levies rather than make programmatic choices that fit the needs and values of each diverse community. The cap on local levies is hindering communities from supporting their schools and is depleting the K-12 system from having meaningful enrichment programs including after school programs and small schools.

We urge the Legislature to address the inequities in the current levy system and support communities working with their districts to provide the educational needs of their students. Maintaining the ability for school districts to access local, voter-approved levy funding and, revising how levy authority is calculated to be based on a designated percentage of each school district's budget, and reinstating and fully funding LEA as originally conceived in 1989 (50 percent levy equalization as a 'floor' for equalization funding) with the goal of equalizing 100 percent of the total amount levied.

Olympia School District is set to rollback \$7.4 million in 2024. That is taxes our community voted for, that cannot be collected since the 2018 McCleary Reforms.

## Special Education

The Legislature has made significant investments in Special Education over the last several years. But new funding and reform has yet to fully cover the cost of providing the federally mandated educational supports for students with disabilities. In 2022-23, Olympia diverted more than \$8,155,000 from other programs to support the special ed program. These are funds that should be providing rich curricular programs for all students, engagement with families, support for teachers and leaders, and other supports to ensure all students are prepared for the future they choose.

## We encourage the Legislature to look at the following solutions:

- **Funding Multiplier & Cap:** Districts should be funded for all the students they serve by increasing the multiplier and eliminating the cap. Olympia School District serves 126 more students with IEPs than state formulas recognize.
- **Safety Net:** The threshold for safety net funding should be lowered. Safety net funding should be allowed for system-wide improvements that benefit multiple students, at a lower per-student cost, in addition to focusing on expensive, direct services to students.
- **Inclusionary Practices:** Support and expand the Inclusionary Practices Project by adding up to 5 days of paid training to allow staff at all levels to learn and practice inclusion. This project provides support and training for school staff to fully implement inclusionary practices in their schools, resulting in learning spaces that meet all students' needs, but as inclusion increases training needs increase for all staff as well.
- **Grant Program:** Create a "Transition to Inclusion" grant process to support districts moving to a full inclusion model because it takes resources to build a new model while dismantling the old, exclusionary model.



**Olympia School District**

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# 2024 Legislative Priorities (cont.)

## Fully Fund the Prototypical Model

The prototypical funding model is the basis of basic education funding in our state. It must be fully funded and remain flexible. The Legislature is urged to continue to make progress by increasing allocations for school principals and paraeducators. As the Legislature makes investments, we ask for flexibility so that investments do not result in cuts to other programs as our local funds are at capacity.

## As the state continues to fall short, Olympia has used local resources to support our students:

- **Principals and assistant principals:** The state funds 24.5, we staff 32.1 FTE.
- **Librarians:** The state funds 10.7, we staff 11.6 FTE.
- **Nurses and social workers:** The state funds 7.3 FTE, we staff 15.6 FTE.
- **Paraeducators (General Education):** The state funds 14.8, we staff 41.7 FTE.
- **Custodians:** The state funds 34.6, we staff 53 FTE.

## Livable Wages for Classified Educational Support Professional Staff

All staff are essential to serving our students, whether that be the paraeducator, bus driver, or food service worker. We support providing a professional livable wage (aligned with MIT Living Wage Calculator) for classified staff along with increasing the number of positions funded to better align with students' needs.

## Equitable Funding of State Salary Allocations

- **Fully fund the cost of basic education staffing**, including full funding for the premium associated with a highly experienced and highly educated teacher workforce, or increase levy authority for impacted school districts commensurate with this cost.
- **Revise the regionalization model to address inequities among school districts** and ensure that Olympia School District can compete with neighbors for high-quality staff.
- **Increase state staffing allocations** to reflect that inflation has been much higher than originally anticipated in the state budget, and districts have front-funded inflation-related salary increases.

## Feed All Students

We believe that good nutrition is a part of readiness to learn and urge the Legislature to adopt policies that fill the gap between federal funding and local costs, so that no child goes unfed.

*ADOPTED by the Board of Directors of Olympia School District No. 111, Thurston County, Washington, at a regular open public meeting thereof, of which due notice was given as required by law, held this 11th day of January 2024, the following Directors being present and voting in favor of the resolution. OLYMPIA SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 111, THURSTON COUNTY, WASHINGTON.*

