

Talking points

**“It’s Basic: First you have to define it”**

- **We don’t have a clear definition of basic education, and without it we can’t tell legislators how much schools need**

The state isn’t coming through with adequate funds, and districts are forced to rely on unpredictable and non-uniform local funds. This affects whether kids get equitable access to education.
- **This process opens the door to reform, but whether any happens is far from certain.**

Many ideas in the preliminary proposals tie in with the Washington PTA’s advocacy platform: 1) Redefine and fully fund basic education. 2) Strengthen math and science education. 3) Improve the Washington State Assessment System. 4) Support CORE 24 (more rigorous graduation standards). 5) Support rational approaches to teacher compensation. ... This is a unique chance to push for reforms we feel so strongly about.
- **This process is not just about asking for more money**

It’s about defining what kids need; pricing it; and making sure the money comes through.
- **The state doesn’t pay for enough teachers, and kids aren’t getting the help they need.**

Experts hired by the Washington Learns committee recommend 71 certified instructors for every 1,000 students; the state funds 46 per 1,000.\*

That’s 35 percent fewer staff than what’s shown to be effective.

To ensure kids meet state and federal standards, many districts use local funds to pay for more teachers. But not all districts can pass levies, and many districts are already at the levy limit; they can’t ask for more money.

  - **Statewide, local funds pay for 22 percent of our teaching corps.**
- **Washington doesn’t even come close to fully funding non-employee costs.**

In 2006-07, districts spent \$500 million more on utilities, maintenance, technology and other “non-employee related costs” (NERCs) than the state funded. Any new finance model needs to cover the real costs of running facilities.

For utilities alone, districts spent \$259 million; the state funded \$118 million. That’s money from your local levies that didn’t fund enrichment programs or teacher aides.
- **Washington’s constitution says the state’s “paramount duty” is to make “ample provision” for the education of all children, and yet:**
  - K-12 education is only 41 percent of the general fund budget
  - K-12 education is only 25 percent of the total operating budget

*\*All budget figures come from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.*

*These talking points accompany the November 2008 article of the Washington PTA’s “It’s Basic” campaign.*

*Our goal: Make sure Washington kids have stable, secure and sufficient funding for basic education.*

*Campaign materials are posted at [www.wastatepta.org/leg/funding.htm](http://www.wastatepta.org/leg/funding.htm)*