



THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

A high-quality education system that prepares all students for college, career, and life.

November 3, 2015

DRAFT

Dear Governor Inslee:

On behalf of the State Board of Education, thank you for the opportunity to share some of our priorities with you as you prepare your budget proposal for the 2016 legislative session.

Our first priority remains preparing a budget that makes ample provision for public schools, as required in the state's Constitution. The Supreme Court has been clear that in order to satisfy the Court's order in *McCleary*, the budget must make additional progress in funding lower class sizes, as well as providing for the facilities assistance necessary to support implementation. It will also be imperative that the budget make substantial progress in funding salaries at a level that attract and retain the high quality educators we need to reach our basic education goals as a state. The issue of educator salaries has taken on a recent sense of urgency as districts across the state experience teacher shortages that require an immediate remedy.

Fundamental to any *McCleary* budget will be the establishment of a reliable and dependable revenue source for our education budget; one that will sustain basic education programs through good economic times and bad, and will eliminate our systemic dependence on local excess levies to fund vital programs and services that our students need to graduate and succeed in post-secondary opportunities. We appreciate your prior efforts in this regard, and we encourage you to persist in your efforts to persuade the legislature to identify viable new revenue sources for education.

The legislature will also need to address a strategy for ensuring the separation of local levy funding from basic education obligations that is properly the state's responsibility. As you consider the parameters of local levies, know that the Board's primary concern is that our system maintains a commitment to equitable funding for all students. Our collective belief is that resources do play an important role in improving student achievement. Data seem to suggest that persistent and wide gaps in resources tend to manifest in opportunity and achievement gaps for students. It is not necessary to eliminate local levies in our future system. It is only necessary to have a thoughtful plan for what programs and services they are allowed to support, and for local levy opportunities to be reasonably equitable across wealthy and poor communities.

We call upon you to take a leadership role in ensuring that Washington state has a thoughtful plan for making ample provision for our education system. Nothing could be more important.

Sincerely,

Kevin Lavery, Acting Chair
State Board of Education