

Vancouver Public Schools 2024 Legislative Priorities

Vancouver Public Schools appreciates the work of our Legislature in the 2023 session.

We are grateful for the progress towards fully funding the cost of special education.

We appreciate the progress made by honoring the three-year prototypical plan for increasing physical and emotional wellness positions.

We also appreciate the early learning opportunities and flexible pathways to graduation that support student success.

While we acknowledge the collaboration and progress made during 2023, there are still several ongoing challenges that we ask the 2024 Legislature to address.

PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS

1

Continue to Address Special Education Funding Shortfall

In the last five years, the Legislature has increased the special education excess cost multiplier and provided additional funding for safety net awards. These steps forward in fully funding the cost of special education are appreciated and we urge lawmakers to continue to pursue incremental and creative approaches toward fully funding special education especially as the number of students needing these services continues to increase.

ACTION REQUEST:

- Special education is a basic education responsibility and thus we implore lawmakers to fully fund the cost of education for our most vulnerable students. Remove the 15% funding cap, increase the per-student multiplier, and provide ample safety net funding.

2

Fully Fund the Prototypical Model and Staff Allocation Formulas

Continue to make progress in updating unrealistic and outdated staff allocation formulas associated with the Prototypical School Funding Model. Funding should be aligned with the current needs of student wellness, transportation, safety and security personnel and other essential positions and funding should reflect the current job market. Even for the staff that is recognized in the limited state formulas, VPS is forced to augment salary and benefit costs by an average of 20%. We still struggle to fill essential positions. Our students deserve a professional staff.

ACTION REQUEST:

- Increase the number of state-funded classified positions in the prototypical model to provide additional units for support staff. Paraeducators are an essential part of our school system, just like all classified staff including nutrition staff, bus drivers, office personnel, and custodians.
- Increase pay for substitutes in the prototypical model and increase the number of days for which substitutes are funded.

Continued

Additionally, we advise policy-makers to:

- Continue to invest in supporting students to address their academic, mental health and social-emotional learning needs.
- Help communities close the technology/connectivity gap.
- Adjust the gaps in current funding formulas in the State Construction Assistance Program, which fails to recognize the true cost of construction and/or educational space needs.
- Ensure that all K-12 education policies are enacted with a commitment to equity, excellence and innovation and a focus on the needs of the whole child.
- Support local school boards in overseeing school and district improvement efforts and meeting the unique learning needs of the students they serve.
- Provide greater flexibility of resources by limiting unfunded requirements that must be supported by local funding sources.

Vancouver Public Schools serves 21,000 students and employs 3,600 educators and staff members in Southwest Washington.

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