

2026 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Vancouver Public Schools



VPS Strategic Plan



Our Mission

Inspiring Learning.
Growing Community.
Each Student, Every Day.

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Vancouver Public Schools thanks the Legislature for their work in 2025. We appreciate their progress towards fully funding special education and enhancing the prototypical school funding model. While we acknowledge the collaboration and progress made during 2025, there are still several ongoing challenges that we ask the 2026 Legislature to address.

PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS



Address Rising School Costs with Increased MSOC Funding

The 2026 Legislature must immediately address the critical underfunding of Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC) allocations for school districts. While staffing is our largest expense, non-staff costs, such as liability insurance, utilities, food, and fuel, have risen significantly. State MSOC funding has not kept pace with these increases, forcing us to rely on local levies to cover the gap. This limits resources for other essential priorities and undermines the ability of schools to meet the needs of our community.

ACTION REQUEST:

- Adjust the school district MSOC funding levels for the upcoming 2026-27 school year in an amount that covers the actual projected MSOC costs, not just the usual Implicit Price Deflator increase.



Continue to Address Special Education Funding Shortfall

In recent 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. Increase the per-student multiplier, and provide ample safety net funding.



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.



Ensure Student Transportation is Accessible & Equitable

Under STARS, the current Pupil Transportation funding model, many districts experience significant funding gaps. We appreciate the 2022 and 2023 Legislature's provision of additional funding to address excess costs to transport special passengers; however, it is time to comprehensively fix the pupil transportation formula to ensure it is more transparent, predictable, and adequately funded.

ACTION REQUEST:

- Allow additional types of vehicles to qualify for funding to provide more flexibility and stabilize operations, particularly for students requiring specialized transportation to accommodate disabilities indicated in students' IEP or 504 plans and for students in other protected categories, such as students experiencing homelessness and students in foster care.

OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE:



Update the Prototypical Model & Staff Allocation Formulas

The current way funds are calculated and allocated is unrealistic and based on outdated 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.

School funding should reflect the current job market and real world costs to hire qualified staff and run schools well. 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.

PRIORITY 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, custodians, and safety personnel.
- Increase pay for substitutes in the prototypical model and increase the number of days for which substitutes are funded.