



WSPTA STATEMENT SUPPORTING BASIC EDUCATION FUNDING

On January 14, 2009 the Legislature's Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance (JTFBEF) issued its final report, laying out a framework for dramatically reforming the funding of public education in Washington State. Many education funding studies have been conducted, but none have held this much promise for meeting the challenges of preparing our children for the 21st century. The Washington State PTA strongly endorses this report and encourages the Legislature to follow through on its recommendations.

Many of the Task Force's proposed solutions to today's funding problems are closely aligned to WSPTA's principles. Some highlights include:

- A redefinition of Basic Education to provide early learning programs for students from low income families, and implement more rigorous high school course and graduation requirements;
- An identification of the staffing and resources needed to meet the needs of all children.;
- An easy-to-understand method to allocate state funding to school districts, so their communities can understand and hold them accountable for locally based decisions;
- Elimination of the existing irrational levy and teacher salary inequities
- A common fiscal and student data system,
- A substantial increase in funding phased in over a reasonable time period, beginning in the next biennium.

PTA applauds the work of the 14 Task Force members and their staff for producing a framework for addressing the very complex changes needed to align our education funding system with the goals of education reform.]. PTA also thanks the Governor for her leadership and continued efforts to bring a world-class education to the children of Washington State.

Both PTA and the Task Force recognize that the current plan needs more work; it will be added to and amended as discussions about the various topic areas reveal additional considerations. For example, we recognize that funding for transportation and facilities are being addressed by different legislative task forces whose work is not yet complete. We look forward to participating in the ongoing conversation about this plan with all education stakeholders.

The challenge before PTA members and truly every public education advocate in our state is to keep the momentum going so that education finance reform becomes a reality. Our kids can't wait for another study. Now is the time to take action to make change happen.

Be a part of the solution. Advocate!