

2017 WASHINGTON STATE PTA GUIDE TO PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS AND LEGISLATIVE ISSUES



During the annual Legislative Assembly, delegates decide the public policy positions that guide state and local advocacy work for Washington State PTA and its associated local PTAs and Councils.

WSPTA Legislative Assembly will take place on October 20-21, 2017 at the Hotel Murano in Tacoma. Delegates will vote on the following 4 long-term Resolutions and 7 short-term Legislative Issues.

RESOLUTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1) MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS FOR CHILDREN

Whereas, mental health issues for children and young adults are misdiagnosed or never identified; and

Whereas, according to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) up to one in five youth experience a mental health disorder, which is described as “serious deviations from expected cognitive, social and emotional development”—such as anxiety, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, alcohol or substance abuse and depression; and

Whereas, research also shows that most mental health conditions will emerge or begin to manifest symptoms by age 14 and the prevalence of mental health illness among children is a critical issue due to the effects on the child, their family and the community; and

Whereas, it is imperative that parents and families are part of any school-based or medical decision-making team that provides early intervention, preventive programs and/or mental health services. A strong and trusting relationship among the providers, school, school-based mental health professionals, school leadership, educators and parents is essential to support positive student mental, behavioral, interpersonal and academic outcomes.

Therefore, be it

Resolved, that state and local policies prioritize the use of school-based mental health interventions, services and personnel—especially at pre-kindergarten and elementary school levels—and ensure access to community-based services. Schools are uniquely situated to provide mental health prevention and intervention models

and provide appropriate connections to mental health services and providers, as they have daily contact with students and families; and be it further

Resolved, that greater attention and resources should be provided for mental health early intervention and prevention services for non-school aged youth and their families. Early intervention and prevention can help to address a child's behavioral and mental needs before symptoms exacerbate into more detrimental social, emotional or academic behaviors or activities; and be it further

Resolved, that WSPTA urges policymakers to prioritize mental health education, early intervention, prevention and access to school and community-based mental health personnel and services.

Persuasive Statement:

Washington State PTA believes every child deserves the opportunity to grow into a happy and healthy adult, which includes mental, physical and overall well-being.

Too often, however, mental health issues for children and young adults are misdiagnosed or never identified. WSPTA supports robust federal, state and local policies that provide mental health services to all children, youth and their families so every child can reach their fullest potential.

Furthermore, WSPTA believes in greater outreach and education to parents, families and related groups so they can be advocates for their children and ensure their child's mental health needs are met under the letter of state and federal law.

2) TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

Whereas, a positive school climate improves students' ability to learn and grow; and children should come to school excited to learn in a safe and nurturing school environment, without the fear of bullying, hunger or violence; and

Whereas, an estimated 46 million American children will be affected by violence, crime, abuse or psychological trauma in a given year—referred to as an adverse childhood experience (ACE); and

Whereas, ACEs significantly harm a child's brain development; and are the root cause of most chronic and mental illnesses and future violence in their adult years; and

Whereas, research shows that childhood exposure to ACES significantly impacts

both mental and physical health through adulthood, and early research highlights the promise for family and community-based interventions to reverse the negative impact of ACEs.

Therefore, be it

Resolved, that Washington State PTA will support public policy that advocates for all schools to be trauma-informed or sensitive schools; providing resources and supports so that all adults within the school community can recognize and respond to those who have been impacted by traumatic stress, so that the school can provide evidence-based interventions and access to necessary services for students affected by ACEs; creating connected communities, positive school climates that keep students healthy and in school; and be it further

Resolved, that WSPTA supports continued efforts to research and promote evidence-based systemic prevention and intervention programs that enhance youth development, growth and safety. Furthermore, WSPTA will continue to call attention to the importance of family engagement in the development and implementation of school policies, positive school climate, family-focused inventions for youth involved in the juvenile justice system and mental health services and delivery to maintain a safe and healthy environment for all students; and be it further

Resolved, that WSPTA urges state and local jurisdictions to seek a comprehensive approach to addressing the needs of children exposed to violence and trauma.

Persuasive Statement:

A groundbreaking Center of Disease and Prevention Centers (CDC) and Kaiser Permanente study in 1997 found that ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) significantly harm a child's brain development, and that they are the root cause of most chronic and mental illnesses and future violence in their adult years.

To combat the negative effects of violence and trauma, WSPTA advocates for providing significant resources and incentives to states and local jurisdictions to create connected communities, positive school climates and trauma-informed schools that keep students healthy and in school.

3) INCREASING ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY OF POST-SECONDARY/HIGHER EDUCATION DEGREES AND CERTIFICATES

Whereas, in WA State about 70% of all jobs require some type of higher education but currently (2015) only 44% of WA adults have an AA degree or higher

and only 31% of high school 9th graders complete a certification in 7 years. These trends are leaving students without appropriate training/education and employers without qualified employees. Will employers import talent or relocate to fulfill their needs?

Whereas, in WA State, job growth is averaging about 150,000 jobs per year, and 70% (103,000) will require a certification (certificate or degree). The ability to graduate certificated students is about half of the demand for qualified, certified, employees; and

Whereas, WA State has shifted the costs of tuition from the state to the students. In 2001, students paid only 21% of the higher ed costs (WA State paid 79%), but as of 2017 students pay almost half (48%) of tuition costs. Washington has the 10th highest tuition increase (at 50%) in the country and WA state tuitions are higher than Oregon and Idaho. Tuition (2017) is less affordable than it was in 2008 (despite recent tuition freezes). Nationally tuition costs have tripled while incomes remain flat; and

Whereas, the high costs for campus housing or rentals contribute to the inaccessibility of post-secondary education, especially if you are not able to commute to one of the six public state universities. Cost (2017) for 4-year tuition, books and housing/food range from \$88,400 to \$110,000 for a BA/BS degree. Students cannot work enough hours to pay for their education. Nationally, 70% of college students have an average of \$30,000 in student debt and total US student debt more than \$1.3 trillion which exceeds all car and credit card loans (2016 data); and

Whereas, currently (2017) and for the upcoming years, demand for BA/BS degree graduates exceeds the State's capacity to meet employer needs, especially in STEM fields. Options to expand access for BA/BS degrees include expanding local community & technical colleges (CTC) with staff and courses so they can provide BA/BS degrees. Another option is to expand the number of CTC who offer "Applied" BA/BS degrees and to expand WA State College/Univ. regional locations; and

Whereas, WA State Need Grants (SNG) help low-income students defray some costs but it suffers from inadequate State funding as over 30,000 **qualified** students cannot receive grants due to lack of state funding (2017 data); and

Whereas, the College Bound Scholarship program which targets at-risk, low-income and foster youth who enroll in middle school and meet program requirements, works. College Bound students have a 33% higher high school graduation rate, as compared to qualified students who did not enroll. However, enrollment is limited to middle school, regardless if students become income-eligible in the 9th or 10th grade and that should change; and

Whereas, in 2011 Washington State passed the “Launch Year Act” into law that encouraged all public high schools to increase the number of dual credit courses offered to maximize a student’s 12th year. Within existing resources, districts shall expand & inform students/families, especially under-represented groups about options to earn at least one year of post-secondary credit towards a CTE certificate, apprenticeship, BA/ BS degrees, thereby, “Launching” their careers while still in high school. However, funding was to come from existing school districts budgets and therefore, this was an “unfunded suggestion”; and

Whereas, dual credit opportunities expand access to post-secondary credits/certificates in high school at little or no cost to the student. Options include national exam courses at the local high school such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) and Cambridge International (CI) plus College in the High School (CIHS) and Tech Prep. Dual programs. High School programs also include off-site programs such as Running Start to start an AA/AS degree while in high school, innovative programs such as “Career Start” that allow students to earn a CTE certificate, many apprenticeships program including “Core Plus” which teaches basic manufacturing skills applicable to industries across the state. There are many other intern programs and partnership program but they vary district by district and are therefore, not accessible by all students.

Therefore, be it

Resolved, that Washington State PTA initiate/support legislation that helps to increase access to higher education/post-secondary degrees and certificates by increasing state funding for tuition, books and affordable student housing (on and off-campus) without taking funds away from K-12 education or other social/health programs and are not regressive funding sources. Also support “Free Community and Technical College for All” that includes wrap-around support services to ensure graduation success; and be it further

Resolved, that the Washington State PTA initiate/support legislation that the specifically targets low-income students by expanding College Bound Program and State Need Grants. Also support legislation that provides relief for middle-income students by expanding State Need Grants with higher eligibility thresholds and support services; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA initiate/support legislation and community partnerships that increases access to BA/BS degrees by expanding the number of regional campus of our State Universities, and also expand the number of CTC colleges that can offer BA/BS and Applied BA/BS degrees; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA initiate/support legislation and community partnerships that realizes the “Launch Year Act” to provide every high school student with at least one year of dual credit thereby allowing them to earn college credit while in high school and to help launch their career. Options include AP, IB, CI, and CIHS programs, plus Tech Prep, Running Start, Career Start, Core Plus, AJAX and many other dual credit or vocational/intern programs.

Persuasive Statement:

WA State PTA members cannot sit on the sidelines as Post-Secondary costs skyrocket and are unaffordable to middle/lower income families.

Did you know that 2017 costs for a WA State University 4-year BA/BS Degrees now average \$100,000 per student for tuition, books and housing?

Even getting an Associate’s (AA) degree first and then finishing their BA/BS at the local university (no housing) costs about \$30,000+ per student. Running Start programs allow high school students to start their AA/AS but opportunities to finish their BA/BS degree are limited. WA State enacted the “Launch Year Act” that encouraging all high schools to provide 1 year of dual credit to every student, however, this is an unrealized and unfunded suggestion.

We advocate for lower tuitions, affordable housing, expanded Running Start to include Career & Technical Certificates, increased funding for College Bound and State Need Grants. Also a commitment to fund & implement the “Launch Year Act” at all high schools plus free Community & Technical College for all.

Kids cannot work their way through college, financial aid doesn’t go far enough, student loans have surpassed U.S. credit card debit and are a student’s first “mortgage”. WA State has shifted tuition from the state to the student. In 2011 students paid only 21% of tuition, as of 2017 they pay 48% and tuition increased by 50.4% from 2008 to 2016.

Looking forward, by 2020 70% of all jobs will require higher education – will employers find qualified employees, will they import talent or leave our state and look elsewhere?

4) LGBTQ INCLUSION

Whereas, all children, youth, and teens should be able to attend school in a safe, accepting, and inclusive environment free from discrimination, be able to freely access their school campus, facilities, and community environment, and freely participate in school and community programs; and

Whereas, all families, guardians, and foster parents should have the right to be safe, included, and free to participate in schools and community programs and

Whereas, History has shown that civil rights laws are effective in contributing to such environments; and

Whereas, explicit federal statutory protections currently address discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, but not gender identity. However, Washington State law prohibits discrimination against any person based on his or her sexual orientation or gender identity; and

Whereas, the lack of awareness and understanding of issues facing LGBTQ children, youth, teens and families has contributed to a higher rate of isolation, depression, drug and alcohol use, suicidal ideations and attempts; and

Whereas, one of WSPTA's purposes is to promote the collaboration and engagement of all families and educators in the education of children and youth; and

Whereas, education regarding LGBTQ issues increases understanding, cultivates acceptance of and respect for LGBTQ children, youth, teens, and families; and

Whereas, harassment and bullying policies that specifically mention sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression are associated with: students feeling more safe; lower levels of bullying; decreased incidents of harassment related to sexual orientation; increased teacher/staff intervention; and a greater reporting of incidents;

Therefore, be it

Resolved, that WSPTA supports the right for all children, youth, teens, families, guardians, and foster parents to be safe, included, and free to participate in schools and community programs; and be it further

Resolved, that WSPTA encourages state, councils and local PTAs to review school policies in regard to bullying, and supports revisions and amendments to those policies that specifically address the topics of sexual orientation and gender identification/expression as they relate to harassment, intimidation, and bullying; and be it further

Resolved, WSPTA will work with OSPI to incorporate standards regarding age-appropriate, medically accurate and culturally sensitive information on LGBTQ issues into existing health and other appropriate curricula; and be it further

Resolved, that WSPTA and its constituent associations seek and support legislation that creates a safe, supportive and accepting environment in schools, specifically with training for educators and other school-related professionals to support all

students, updating health education standards that deal with the issues of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Persuasive Statement:

LGBTQ youth, teachers, family, and community members continue to experience discrimination in the classroom, campus, and when out in the community. Not feeling safe and welcome in the school environment causes less inclusion, engagement, and families with community participation at all levels. This translates to lower success for students. All children have the right to learn in a safe, inclusive, accepting, supportive, and nurturing environment as well as the right to privacy and self-determination.

Washington State PTA is a powerful voice and advocate for the whole child. This includes the well-being and education of all children in a safe, inclusive and civil environment. The need for protection and equity for Washington's LGBTQ students is well established and serves to improve learning and inclusion for the entire classroom.

Furthermore, the State of Washington and individual school districts should foster a respectful and embracing environment for all students, educators, families and community members. Policy solutions, including civil rights legislation, the rights of a protected class, and development of instructional curriculum that teaches the difference between harassment, intimidation, and bullying and when it crosses the line into criminal harassment, intimidation, and bullying, bias and hate, would provide safer and improved educational outcomes for all students, especially high risk, homeless or foster youth.

PROPOSED LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

1) BEST PRACTICES FOR SCHOOL LUNCH POLICIES

The Washington State PTA shall initiate and/or support legislation or policies that

- use CDC and USDA recommendations to clearly define a minimum lunch period for students of a minimum of 20 minutes of *seated* time;
- promote Recess Before Lunch;
- prohibit meal debt policies that shame or punish students.

Persuasive Statement:

Schools play a critical role in establishing healthy dietary behaviors in students. Proper nutrition and healthy eating habits are a cornerstone to a child's growth, development and learning.

The current regulation "Time for Meals" (WAC 392-157-125) is vague, and does not specify a minimum amount of time to be designated for school lunch times. Guidelines from the CDC, USDA, and University of Washington indicate that giving students recess before lunch, and at least 20 minutes of seated time to eat, increases consumption of fruits and vegetables, decreases food waste, reduces student discipline referrals, and increases student academic performance.

For too many Washington students, meals at school are their only food for the day. In some school districts, students with insufficient money in their account are denied a hot meal, given a cheese sandwich, or made to do chores in the cafeteria. These meal debt policies cause humiliation to students, and are prohibited in other states.

WSPTA, as the oldest and largest grassroots children's advocacy association in Washington state, aims to improve the quality of our children's health, welfare, safety and education. As such, WSPTA should support a research-based healthy lunch period for all students, a lunch period that maximizes the benefits of lunch by scheduling recess before lunch, and a prohibition of meal debt policies that shame or punish students.

2) SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AND CLASS SIZE REDUCTION

The Washington State PTA shall initiate and/or support legislation or policies that provides stable and timely financing for school construction, modernization, and safety needs; updates the square footage allocation formula, which recognizes modern educational needs and actual cost; replaces the 60 percent super-majority with a simple majority requirement for passage of school bonds; and extends the K-3 grant program.

Persuasive Statement:

It's important that families with children have schools for their children to attend, and our public duty is to fund school facilities. Students cannot learn effectively in standing-room only classrooms. Schools with more portables than permanent structures do not have adequate bathroom and lunchroom facilities, or proper recess supervision or safety. These factors and more indicate a health, safety and well-being problem for the kids of Washington, many from our underserved populations.

Current funding is insufficient for districts to build permanent structures to provide the appropriate environment. Without local funds, districts cannot access the School Construction Assistance Program. Recent school bond measures have garnered a majority of Yes votes, but not the required 60 percent to pass.

Most districts do not have sufficient building capacity to meet the needs of state mandated reduced class size and high school requirements. And, since the passage of the Growth Management Act of 1990 wherein growth is directed toward population centers, some districts are disproportionately impacted by growth.

Districts add “temporary” portables, but many districts are maxed-out by zoning limits or ability to find and fund them. One portable costs \$300,000 to install and \$200,000 to move. Tax payer money would be better spent on permanent structures.

Simple majority for school bonds would give bonds a fighting chance to pass and return control of our children’s future to the majority of voters, not the minority. Adjusting the school construction assistance formula could make matching funds more available.

3) REDUCING THE IMPACTS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The Washington State PTA shall initiate and/or support legislation or policies that

- present awareness and prevention programs that address sexual harassment and violence and engage students in mandated respect and consent curriculum;
- provide support services for victims of sexual harassment and violence;
- include training on the responsibilities of educational institutions, and the rights of victims, under Title IX.

Persuasive Statement:

Washington's children WILL experience sexual violence in their lifetime, whether directly as a victim; or indirectly as a community member bearing the burden of a culture that remains passive, as pop culture, media, commerce, labor, laws, and policies continue to tell our communities that the objectification of women and vulnerable populations is OK. As the largest children's advocacy organization in the state, we need to prioritize all aspects of positive societal change in this area. Perceived thinking (rooted in actual evidence) that their voices won't be heard; and direct action won't be taken, makes victims' vast under-reporting the norm.

Real, accurate data is unavailable because of the lack of true victim support and follow-through.

WSPTA needs to leverage current policy implementation and advocate for more aggressive victim-centered laws that:

- provides support services for victims of sexual harassment and sexual violence; and
- presents awareness and prevention programs that address sexual harassment and sexual violence affecting students; and
- includes training on the responsibilities of educational institutions, as well as the rights of sexual violence and sexual harassment victims under Title IX and other laws and regulations.

4) EQUITY FOR HIGHLY CAPABLE

The Washington State PTA shall initiate and/or support legislation or policies that achieve proportional, equitable, and full representation of all demographic groups in Washington State public school Highly Capable (HiCap) programs, especially for: low-income students, students with learning disabilities, English Language Learners, and students of color.

Persuasive Statement:

There is a large and disproportional under-representation of low-income students, students with learning disabilities, English Language Learners, and students of color in our HiCap programs statewide.

This is because most districts use outdated, biased identification practices that favor parents who can successfully navigate the complex HiCap identification process.

Better universal identification practices exist, but they cost more money. Now that EHB 2242 provides a substantial increase in funding for HiCap programs, it is time to focus on policy legislation to ensure that this money will be used by districts to implement better, more equitable identification procedures - such as universal screening for all 1st and 5th graders. Without clear policy guidance, it is unlikely that many districts will implement the substantial identification changes needed to improve equity in HiCap.

HiCap programs are a vital “whole child” intervention for unique students who would likely not be successful with a conventional approach. Hence, we have a moral duty to proactively seek out EVERY child who needs that intervention. HiCap

students have challenges in social development, emotional regulation, delayed development of executive function, and are at significant risk of not developing grit or a growth mindset if school is always “easy” for them. Behavior problems and underachievement are rampant. Talented students are getting lost in the system, and that has a direct impact on our increasingly high-tech economy.

Some of our state's most vulnerable children are habitually overlooked for HiCap programs, which makes this inequity that much more painful. This is a social justice issue.

5) CAREER CONNECTED LEARNING, CTE & STEM

The Washington State PTA shall initiate and/or support legislation or policies that support Career Connected Learning K-12 programs that inspire, provide training, CTE, and weave real-life career options in STEM, manufacturing, etc. into K-12 classrooms. The new 2017-19 budget expanded CTE and we need to build on that to implement new programs at the state and local levels.

Persuasive Statement:

For students, Career Connected Learning (CCL) can turn the promise “to deliver a K-12 education that prepares WA students for career, college and life” into a reality. By incorporating real-life, hands-on education into everyday lessons K-12 students can explore career options and envision a successful future. High schoolers can better prepare for post-secondary options with college or Career & Technical Education (CTE) pathways, whether at on-campus, off-campus, with apprenticeships, or through their local community or technical college. For some, CTE provides a tangible reason to stay in school as it increases graduation rates by 13%.

While the current budget greatly increased funding, lowered class-size and expanded CTE programs, there's more to do. Missing is elementary CCL programs to inspire and engage students into STEM and other careers. Competitive school district grants were proposed but the specifics are TBD. There are plans for expanded “High School and Beyond Plan” but will there be sufficient counselors, will our school districts implement, innovate and support CCL and CTE opportunities? By 2020, 2/3 of all jobs will require more than a high school diploma and yet, only 31% of 9th graders attain certification/degree in 7 years – not enough to meet demand. We have an aging workforce and the largest skills gap in our state history. Support CCL, CTE and STEM pathways for our kids' and our state's future.

6) ADDRESSING THE TEACHER SHORTAGE

The Washington State PTA shall initiate and/or support legislation or policies that improve the teacher pipeline, to recruit and retain effective educators, especially in high demand, hard to fill positions, in remote locations, or high-poverty schools through

- funding of recruitment and conditional scholarship programs;
- expansion of alternative routes to certification;
- addressing reciprocity;
- phased-in expansion of BEST grants to all schools

Persuasive Statement:

School districts are reporting increased difficulty in finding teachers in Special Ed, STEM and elementary education, a situation that makes it hard to staff full-day kindergarten, reduce class sizes, and which ultimately impacts student learning. In Fall 2016, 90% of Principals and 97% of School District HR Directors surveyed said they were in struggling- or crisis-mode due to the certificated teacher shortage in Washington.

The teacher shortage is a result of many factors, including:

1. Implementation of state-funding for full-day kindergarten
2. Continued phase-in of K–3 class size reduction funding
3. An increase in school district hiring of teachers since the "Great Recession"
4. Increased retirements of the "baby-boomer" generation
5. Enrollment growth
6. A smaller number of individuals completing teacher preparation programs relative to past.

The 2016, the legislature passed a bill to address the teacher shortage, but left many of its provisions unfunded.

WSPTA should actively advocate for the funding of the teacher recruitment initiatives in E2SSB 6455, and support strategies and funding to

- expand the pool of teachers in high demand, hard to fill positions and schools, and in remote locations or high-poverty schools;
- address teacher reciprocity issues between states;
- remove barriers to the alternative routes to certification;
- and expand the "beginning teacher mentoring program" grants to all schools, starting with districts that have more than 10% beginning teachers in its teaching force.

7) DUAL CREDIT EQUALITY & SUPPORT

The Washington State PTA shall initiate and/or support legislation or policies that

- establish a coordinated, evidence-based policy for granting as many undergraduate credits as possible to students who have received a passing grade on any dual credit course exam; and
- support adequate funding & the expansion of these programs to cover family outreach, supplies, staff, and staff training.

Persuasive Statement:

Dual-credit courses allow students to earn high school and college credit simultaneously by taking High School classes and scoring a passing grade on the national exam. The number and classes offered for Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) and Cambridge International (CI) vary across the state and within districts. Dual-credit programs offer college tuition savings, increase graduation rates and degree completion rates. But, there is a lack of consistency and transparency on what exam scores are required to earn college credit.

ESB 5234 (2107) works to maximize the number of students getting AP credit in WA State colleges/universities who earn a score of 3 or higher. Passing policies must be posted on each institution's website. An IB follow-up bill (SB 5917) is poised for next session, Cambridge was over looked.

Also, the "Launch Year Act" law (2011) encouraged all public high schools to increase the number of dual- credit courses offered to maximize a student's 12th year. Within existing resources, districts shall expand & inform students/families, especially under-represented groups about options to earn at least one year of post-secondary credit towards a CTE certificate, apprenticeship, BA/ BS degrees, thereby, "Launching" their careers while still in high school.

The WA State PTA's advocacy opportunities include:

- Passing a "Dual-credit equity bill" so IB and CI have the same benefits AP courses.
- Increasing state funding so local districts can:
 - o Fund dual credit programs with materials, staff training and staff
 - o Fulfill the "Launch Year Act" with outreach to students/families about Dual-Credit programs, especially under-represented groups, and expand their offerings to reach the potential that the act encourages.