

# OSPI's 2024 Supplemental Operating Budget Priorities

Washington's students experienced opportunity gaps long before the COVID pandemic. The problems and solutions put forward the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) supplemental budget request speak to deep, systemic issues. As our state and nation continue to place higher demands on our K–12 public schools, these additional dollars could be a distinguishing factor in our schools' ability to meet those demands. Our students deserve a public education system energized by the same values that define our state and drive our industries; a focus on equitable opportunity for every Washingtonian, a commitment to innovation, pride in and respect for the unique offerings of different communities across the state, and adaptable, future-forward thinking.

## Fully Funding Equitable, High-Quality Services for All Students with Disabilities

*\$18.5M in FY25, \$44M in the 2025-2027 Biennium*

Across the state, many Washington schools do not have the necessary resources to provide students with disabilities with the services to which they are legally entitled. At the same time, students with disabilities who are served outside of traditional K–12 public schools in authorized (nonpublic) agencies do not currently benefit from consistent state oversight. Washington has made recent policy shifts to support the inclusion of students receiving special education services in general education settings, but the financial support needed to implement these shifts with fidelity has not kept pace. OSPI is requesting that the Legislature remove the 15% cap on state special education funding, further invest in inclusionary practices, and fund state-level oversight of authorized nonpublic agencies serving our students.



## Progress on Free Meals for All: Feeding All Students in Elementary School

*\$26.9M in FY25 \$53.7M in the 2025-27 Biennium*

Hungry students cannot focus fully on learning. While Washington has made great strides in expanding access to free school meals, the state must continue to invest in feeding students until it provides universal free meals to all students as part of the school day. OSPI is requesting funding to provide healthy school meals to all of Washington’s elementary school students as the next step toward the goal of universal free meals for K–12 students. Funding will supplement federal reimbursement and cover costs for schools who are not eligible to participate in federal universal meal options to ensure every student has the same opportunity.

## Advancing a Living Wage for Washington’s Paraeducators

*\$193.6M in FY25, \$511.4M in the 2025-27 Biennium*

Paraeducators are critical members of a student’s learning and instructional support team. Despite their necessity, paraeducators across Washington state are not compensated equitably, and for many of them, compensation is not a living wage. This makes it difficult for school districts to hire and retain talented paraeducators. OSPI proposes providing school districts with an allocation equal to \$7 per hour plus benefits for all paraeducators hired in the 2022–23 school year, adjusted for inflation and the same regionalization adjustments provided for school districts under RCW 28A.150.412. These dollars are intended to be added to the current salary for paraeducators.

## Overcoming Barriers to Student Success Through Integrated Supports

*\$8.7M in FY 25, \$17.4M In the 2025-27 Biennium*

Many Washington students experience incredible barriers to completing their K–12 education, including needing support with basic needs, inadequate transportation, high rates of mobility, social-emotional challenges, and more. Students facing these struggles have high rates of disengagement from the classroom expressed through chronic absenteeism, disruptive or dissociative behaviors while in school, and exiting school before graduating. OSPI is requesting funding for a suite of targeted and integrated student supports aimed at reengaging and supporting students who need the most support to fully engage with their learning and exit the K–12 system with a diploma.

## **Recruiting and Retaining Special Education Teachers Through Effective Teacher Residencies**

*\$7.3M in FY25, \$12.1M in the 2025-27 Biennium*

Washington students learn best from dedicated and prepared educators. Students receiving special education services, especially those in rural communities, are the most likely to be served by out-of-endorsement teachers and emergency substitutes. OSPI is requesting funding to support special education teacher residencies, and to offer professional development and career support and guidance to the 15,000 substitute teachers currently serving in Washington classrooms.

## **Improving OSPI Customer Service Through Key Investments in Staffing**

*\$5.1M in FY25, \$10.6M in the 2025-27 Biennium*

OSPI serves a wide customer base across the K–12 system, from school districts to community partners and state lawmakers. To maintain the service the agency provides to all of its customers, OSPI is requesting funding for salaries that are competitive with the other major employer of like-skilled workers in the state: school districts. To further develop the level of service OSPI is able to provide, the agency requests funding to ensure staff salaries are competitive and for three positions focused on serving customers who come to the agency for data and fiscal expertise.

## **Developing and Sustaining Strong School Leaders in Every District**

*\$1.9M FY25, \$3.7M in the 2025-27 Biennium*

Principals have a unique and critical role as building-level school leaders. Day-to-day, principals supervise students and educators, set the tone for school culture, and hold the responsibility for fostering learning environments that advance the academic and behavioral success of each student. On a broad scale, principal leadership makes or breaks state education policy implementation. OSPI is requesting increased funding for programs that serve new and incoming principals, while also funding centralized supports for new and veteran school leaders seeking guidance on academics, student discipline and behavior, and implementation of K–12 education policy.

## **Bolstering College Enrollment and Postsecondary Success**

*\$8.9M in FY25, \$17.7M in the 2025-27 Biennium*

Washington's public K–12 education system is charged with preparing each and every student for postsecondary success in alignment with their goals, skills, and interests. Currently, Washington's high school graduates do not seek postsecondary credentialing at sufficient rates

to take advantage of many high-paying career opportunities in the state. To fill the gap, many Washington employers recruit workers from other states and countries to meet their hiring needs. OSPI is requesting funding for data-driven strategies that both prepare students for postsecondary pathways and help them navigate onto those pathways as they transition out of the K–12 system.

## Embracing New Technologies with Washington IT Academy

*\$3M in FY25, \$6M in FY 2025-27 Biennium*

The Microsoft IT Academy provides Washington students with a unique opportunity to gain industry certification while enrolled in a public middle school or high school. Home to some of the leading technology companies in the world, Washington students have unique access to these high-paying jobs in their own communities if they are given access to the pathways and skills that lead to career opportunities in technology. OSPI is requesting increased funding for the Microsoft IT Academy to expand the reach of services they provide, building a stronger bridge between Washington students and high-paying Washington jobs.

## Fully Funding the Community Eligibility Provision

*\$15.2M in FY24, \$15.2M in FY25, \$30.2M in the 2025-27 Biennium*

State law (RCW 28A.235.300) requires that school districts participate in the federal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) in all eligible schools, and to group schools to the maximum extent possible. The program allows schools to provide school meals at no cost to all school in the school, regardless of their income status. Since the 2023 Legislative Session, state cost has increased due to changes at the federal level and the addition of new CEP schools. OSPI is requesting additional funding to continue reimbursing CEP school districts, in accordance with state law.

## Federal Funding Adjustments

*\$227.4M in FY24, \$263.2M in FY25, \$274.6M in the 2025-27 Biennium*

OSPI receives federal funds primarily from the Departments of Education and Agriculture. The majority of those funds (approximately 96%) are expended as grants to school districts. OSPI's expenditures are a function of the federal award amounts and the grant draw rates by school districts. When OSPI's federal expenditure authority is less than that of the anticipated awards and disbursement rates of federal funds, the agency is unable to grant funds to school districts at the maximum allowable capacity.

## **Funding the Special Education Safety Net**

*\$44.2M in FY24*

The state budget provides funding dedicated to serving students with disabilities in Washington's schools. The funding is based on an enhanced basic education rate that varies depending on the learning environment in which students with disabilities participate in learning activities. The Safety Net program provides additional funding to address extraordinary costs associated with the services provided to students with exceptional needs. OSPI is requesting that the Legislature provide additional funding for state fiscal year 2024 to align with the actual expenditures paid in August 2023.

## **Meeting Projected Central Services Costs for the Attorney General's Office**

*\$465K in FY24*

OSPI is requesting a maintenance level increase to cover additional expenses due to the Washington State Attorney General's Office (AGO). These costs are related to pending litigation which defends Washington's statutory implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and OSPI's oversight of Northwest School of Innovative Learning (NW SOIL), a Nonpublic Agency serving students with disabilities. OSPI and the AGO believe costs related to litigating this matter will exceed our historical appropriation when compared to historical spend.