

EDUCATION

Education is the single most important investment we can make for our children, our state, our economy and our future.

During the 2007 legislative session, the Governor and Legislature made major new investments in all levels of the education system, from early learning through the K-12 system and continuing through college, job training and beyond. These investments grew out of the Governor's Washington Learns initiative, which is dedicated to building a world-class, learner-focused, seamless education system.



The two-year budget approved in 2007 was designed to fundamentally change educational expectations, delivery and results with a substantial investment at all levels. The budget included an education funding increase of nearly \$900 per student in kindergarten through 12th grade and \$2.5 billion overall.

Many of the budget authorizations in the 2007–2009 enacted budget are already scheduled for growth in the 2008–09 school year, and other initiatives will be implemented as scheduled.

EARLY LEARNING

In 2006, the Legislature granted Governor Gregoire's request to create a Department of Early Learning to improve high-quality early learning opportunities for young children and their families. The agency is working with its private-public partnership, Thrive by Five, to better serve children from birth to the age of 5 and their parents.

The department is carrying out a number of initiatives proposed by the Governor and approved by the Legislature in the 2007 session. These initiatives include providing early learning information to parents and families; developing a quality rating and improvement system for child care; expanding access to pre-kindergarten programs; and improving wages for early learning providers.

For the first time, the state invested in voluntary all-day kindergarten programs, starting in our most economically challenged schools. Recognizing that children in kindergarten through third grade learn differently, three K-3 demonstration projects were created to showcase best practices.

K-12

A major piece of the education investment was Governor Gregoire's effort to dramatically strengthen math and science education. The budget called for more funding for teacher training and development, increased pay for teachers who are certified in math and science, and more opportunities for students to participate in hands-on science learning.

Other key education measures included investments to increase equity among school districts and giving voters the opportunity to lower the threshold for school levy approval from 60 percent to a simple majority, or 50 percent-plus-1 vote, which the voters approved in November. The budget also made additional key investments in programs to support struggling students and those students participating in special education programs.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The Governor and Legislature took significant funding and policy actions to open college doors to more high school graduates. In particular, the budget created nearly 10,000 new slots for incoming students over the next two years, including nearly 3,700 targeted at high-demand fields such as math, science and nursing, offered more scholarship opportunities, expanded eligibility for grant programs, and capped tuition increases at the college level. The budget also made additional investments in research programs at state universities with the goal of boosting innovation in fields in which the state has already made critical progress.

Finally, the Governor and Legislature moved forward on the establishment of a new University of Washington campus in the North Puget Sound region. The new campus will serve as another point of access to higher education for students from Snohomish, Island and Skagit counties.

FOCUS ON SAFETY

The supplemental budget provides a platform to address urgent and emergent issues. Taking lessons learned from the Virginia Tech shootings, Governor Gregoire proposes to invest in key technologies to keep students, faculty and staff safe on our college and university campuses. Institutions of higher education should be safe communities that promote the exchange of ideas and prepare students for careers after graduation.

In addition, Governor Gregoire will increase accountability for and improve the safety of children served in child care. Targeted investments will be made to develop additional learning opportunities for students, enhance the assessment system to provide teachers with classroom tests that can give immediate feedback on student learning needs, guide the content of the next state assessment system contract, and increase educator salaries to keep pace with inflation.

Governor Gregoire's Budget for Education:

Keeps students and others safe on college and university campuses. College and university campuses will purchase equipment and complete facilities mapping services that will help first responders react to emergencies accurately and efficiently. These investments, in addition to technology and software purchases, will help expedite communication to students and staff by improving on- and off-campus notification and alert systems. These items correspond with the recommendations of campus security experts in our state and nationwide, and bolster the efforts each campus has made to improve safety. In addition, colleges and universities will be required to update campus plans for emergency preparedness and response procedures. They will sign agreements with local jurisdictions that designate who will be in charge in the event of a campus emergency as well as what resources and equipment are available to respond to such emergencies. (*\$2.9 million GF-State; \$11.4 million Capital*)

Improves child-care safety. To boost safety and increase accountability for our children, five employees in the Department of Early Learning will lead quality improvement teams to facilitate planning and implementation of a team approach to licensing review. These employees will also train licensing staff to improve documentation practices and adherence to statewide safety and health standards. (*\$435,000 GF-State*)

Increases teacher salaries. Consistent with the latest Seattle-area inflation forecast as required by voter-approved Initiative 732, public school staff and faculty members at community and technical colleges will receive an additional 0.8 percent salary increase. This brings the total cost of living adjustment for 2008–09 to 3.6 percent. (*\$31.2 million GF-State*)

Serves the first class of students for University of Washington – North Sound campus. The University of Washington will begin serving students at a Snohomish County interim site in fall 2008 while the permanent campus site, to be selected by the Legislature, is developed. The first class of students will include up to 30 nursing student FTEs and up to 30 teacher education student FTEs. (*\$1.1 million GF-State*)

Boosts achievement for English Language Learners. Integrating English-language instruction with workforce training at the community and technical colleges has proven successful. Students are 15 times more likely to complete the I-BEST (Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training) program than basic skills and training programs offered separately. Students also post greater academic gains. Grants will be provided to bring these quality practices to the K-12 system. Five skills centers will design and develop programs that integrate career skills education and English-language instruction. (*\$250,000 GF-State*)

Maintains and improves the assessment system. The Superintendent of Public Instruction will develop tests that teachers can use in their classrooms to identify student learning needs. These tests will give more immediate and targeted information to teachers anytime during the school year. Having this information readily available to teachers will allow many of the current annual assessments to be shortened.

Students who are not native English speakers can struggle to demonstrate their knowledge of math and science on tests that are written in English. The Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) for math and science will include translation assistance for six of the most frequently occurring languages. In addition, enhanced accommodations for students in special education will be developed, such as improved Braille forms of the tests and read-aloud CDs for students with dyslexia.

Since the passage of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, each state has been required to administer assessments in multiple grades covering multiple subjects, increasing the demand for testing services. The current contract to administer Washington's assessment system expires in October 2008. Consistent with

the experience of other states, new contract bids received by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction indicate the future cost for administering Washington's assessment system will increase. (*\$17.3 million GF-State*)

Adjusts K-12 student enrollment. The number of students served in public schools and the mix of services needed for students are one factor used in determining funding for public schools. Updated information indicates that the amount needed for K-12 funding is reduced. (*-\$7.7 million GF-State; -\$1.6 million Other Funds*)

Provides services for visually impaired library patrons. The Washington State Library will assume responsibility for the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library, which provides library services each year to 13,000 Washingtonians with vision limitations and reading disabilities. (*\$341,000 GF-State*)