



EQUITY IN EDUCATION

C O A L I T I O N

The Equity in Education Coalition strongly supports an additional investment into the Learning Assistance Program (LAP) as well as allowing greater flexibility for the use of LAP funds.

In addition to funding teacher salaries to recruit and retain excellent educators in every school district, EEC requests that the Legislature fully fund ALL of the basic education obligations that local levies currently supplement. One of the gaps that exists is within the Learning Assistance Program (LAP).

The EEC makes the following recommendations:

1. In the 2015-17 biennium, the legislature appropriated \$453 million for LAP, spread out across 295 school districts, bringing the average to just \$1.54M/school district.

EEC recommends an additional \$1 billion investment into LAP for the 2017-2019 biennium, bringing the average to \$4.93M/school district.

The additional \$3.39M/school district would ensure that outcome based Readiness to Learn programs, currently underfunded due to mandatory prioritization on K-4 reading (SB 5946), receive sufficient funding for activities such as:

- Intensive family outreach
- Case management
- Gang diversion
- Parent support and education
- Individual, group, community activities/services
- Help with food, clothing, housing, jobs
- Transportation/financial support
- Mental health services
- Help for substance abuse
- Health services
- Mentoring
- Social-emotional skill building

2. In 2013, the Legislature passed SB 5946, which restricted the use of LAP dollars to be spent first on addressing the needs of students in grades kindergarten through four who are deficient in reading or reading readiness skills to improve reading literacy. While the mandate to improve K-4 literacy was well intentioned, school districts were forced to cut LAP funded programs in higher grade levels in order to meet the statutory requirement to focus first on K-4 reading.

EEC recommends the following statutory change:

CURRENT

School districts implementing a learning assistance program shall focus first on addressing the needs of students in grades kindergarten through four who are deficient in reading or reading readiness skills to improve reading literacy.

NEW

School districts implementing a learning assistance program *may* focus first on addressing the needs of students in grades kindergarten through four who are deficient in reading or reading readiness skills to improve reading literacy, *in districts where any school where more than 40 percent of tested students score Below Basic (Level 1) OR Basic (Level 2) on the 3rd grade ELA assessment the prior year.*

EEC recommends the following statutory change:

CURRENT

The Learning Assistance Program model primarily pays for teachers and instructional aides to provide tutoring, small group instruction, and extended learning time. LAP's funding formula relies heavily on a school districts staff mix ratio – creating a system of inequity between school districts that are a few miles apart but serve very different demographics of children with language needs and assets, poverty and literacy levels.

NEW

The EEC strongly supports the removal of the staff mix ratio from the LAP funding formula so that school districts with high poverty, high needs students can get a more fair and equitable distribution of the LAP investment made by the Legislature.

EEC strongly supports the additional LAP funding and flexibility this statutory change provides for school districts utilizing LAP funding for a variety of integrated student support services across all grade levels. We look forward to working with you and other legislators to promptly advance this budget request and legislation.

Thank you for your leadership.