

A Record-Breaking Year: Superintendent Reykdal Provides Update on K–12 Education in Washington

WA State Superintendent shares information about student learning and well-being, school funding, and transformations over the next year including the use of AI

OLYMPIA, WA, USA, January 10, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, State Superintendent Chris Reykdal detailed the state of Washington’s K–12 public education system in an annual public address from the Old Capitol Building, where the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is headquartered, in Olympia.

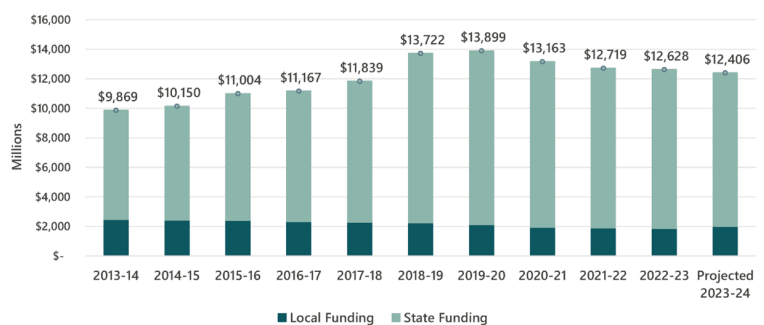
As policymakers are gathered in Olympia for the first week of the 2024 Legislative Session, Reykdal provided updates on student learning and postsecondary readiness, student health and well-being, school funding, and more.

“Every day, our schools are filled with dedicated professionals who support our students’ learning and well-being,” Reykdal said. “The progress made by our students, educators, and school and district staff over the past year is incredible. I am so proud of Washington’s public schools and the impressive accomplishments of our students.”

“It is our state’s paramount duty to provide a high-quality public education to all students,” Reykdal continued. “Schools need resources so that they can provide students with access to challenging learning experiences, support their health and well-being, and prepare them for the



K–12 Spending Over Time – Inflation Adjusted to 2013 Dollars



Source: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

future. I have submitted proposals for consideration by the Legislature that would build on our state's progress and ensure schools in every community have access to the resources they need."

Brief descriptions of some of the topics covered by the Superintendent are provided below.

STUDENT LEARNING AND POSTSECONDARY READINESS

On measures of student learning, Washington's public-school students continue to perform similar to or better than their peers from other states. Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—the only indicator of student learning that is comparable across all states—show that Washington's students make gains in both math and English language arts (ELA) over time. The data also place Washington's eighth graders in the top 15 states in the country for their math and reading abilities.

Data from the 2022–23 school year show that Washington's public schools are seeing increased rates of students enrolling in public school, attending school regularly, completing advanced coursework, and graduating from high school on time. The Class of 2023 saw a record-high graduation rate of 83.6% at the same time that more and more students have been completing dual credit courses that provide students the opportunity to earn college-level credit while still in high school.

STUDENT HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

All students need to feel safe, healthy, supported, and challenged in order to thrive, and schools play an impactful role in this community responsibility. As the mental and behavioral health needs of young people across the country have increased and evolved since the peak of the pandemic, school districts across Washington have been implementing programs and initiatives to meet these needs.

OSPI leverages a combination of state funds, federal grant awards, and a significant portion of federal pandemic relief funding to support these efforts. One of OSPI's larger programs is the regional mental and behavioral health services initiative.

The initiative, operated through the Association of Educational Service Districts (AESD) and delivered in every region of the state, provides trained staff to schools across the state who provide foundational prevention education and training for students, staff, and families; as well as coordinated intervention supports directly for students.

Over the past two school years, this initiative provided direct behavioral and mental health services to more than 3,600 students in over 100 schools across the state. This legislative session, OSPI is working with Rep. Alicia Rule and the AESD (House Bill 2280) on legislation that would maintain and expand the critical services being provided to students statewide through

this initiative.

SCHOOL FUNDING

Schools need resources to serve their students, families, and communities, especially as student needs continue to increase and evolve. We know that students need access to counselors and nurses, small class sizes, highly effective teachers, safe and modern learning spaces, and rigorous coursework.

While our state has made significant gains in recent years in school funding, the funding provided by the state is not keeping up with inflation. As the impact of inflation reduces school districts' buying power, they are also balancing the impending expiration of emergency relief funds and the fiscal impact of declining student enrollments at the height of the pandemic. These factors have placed many districts in a challenging financial situation.

In addition, many districts are unable to obtain sufficient Capital Budget resources to fully fund necessary school construction projects. School construction bonds provide needed funding to repair and update school buildings, helping to keep learning environments safe and healthy. While local levies require 50% voter approval (a simple majority) to pass, school construction bonds require a passage rate of 60% (a super-majority).

At this threshold, only 45% of the bonds in Washington have passed in the last 10 years. If the bond approval threshold were a simple majority, 72% of the failed bonds would have passed and nearly 85% of all bonds would have passed. OSPI continues to advocate for the Legislature to eliminate the super-majority requirement for bonds.

TRANSFORMATIONS OVER THE NEXT YEAR

Over the next year, OSPI is addressing two system changes that are directly connected to preparing students for the careers of the future.

Learning Standards Review

Last fall, OSPI began an initiative to review, refine, and prioritize Washington state's K-12 learning standards, which define what each student should know and be able to do at each grade level. State law requires OSPI to periodically review and update the learning standards to align with current best practice, and the learning standards in several content areas have not been updated in many years.

Through this project, OSPI aims to make the learning standards more accessible and usable for both educators and families, and more aligned to the knowledge, skills, and abilities that employers are seeking from Washington's graduates. Currently, OSPI is gathering feedback from educators, students, and families to inform a review of the standards in English language arts, math, and science – the first standards under review.

Artificial Intelligence in the Classroom

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is evolving rapidly, and young people are already using it in their daily lives. OSPI has gathered a team of internal and external experts to develop guidance, professional learning opportunities, and other resources to support educators and school districts in implementing the use of AI tools in classrooms.

Next week, OSPI will be publishing initial guidance for educators, which will focus on principles and standards for using AI in schools, the opportunities and risks, maintaining academic integrity, and more. By the end of the school year, OSPI will have published full, formal guidance and best practices for the use of AI in schools, covering topics including data privacy, ethical use, equitable access, and teaching resources.

By supporting students in embracing AI, Washington is supporting students to be prepared for the future.

ACHIEVEMENTS FROM THE PAST YEAR

Washington's students, educators, and school and district staff have made significant achievements in the past year. Following are just a few examples:

- Washington's public schools have served nearly 90 million meals to Washington's students.
- Every student received more than 1,000 hours of instruction, totaling more than 1.1 billion hours of learning provided by Washington's educators.
- The graduation rate for the Class of 2023 reached a record high, with more than 85,000 Washington students earning a diploma.
- Nearly 225,000 high school students participated in at least one dual credit course, earning them high school and college-level credit at the same time.
- Across Washington, 143 schools offered dual or heritage language instruction to about 50,000 students.
- More than 5,600 graduates from the Class of 2023 earned the Seal of Biliteracy for demonstrating literacy in multiple languages. Students earned the Seal in 87 different languages, the highest number of languages offered in any state in the country.
- Washington's Imagination Library, which provides a free book each month to children from birth through age 5, expanded to statewide coverage in 2023 and provided more than 780,000 books to nearly 115,000 of Washington's youngest learners.
- More than 5,200 preschoolers who needed additional support to be successful when entering kindergarten were served by Washington's transitional kindergarten program.

For More Information

- [View a recording of Superintendent Reykdal's address](#)
- See state- and district-level enrollment, attendance, and graduation data on the [OSPI Report Card](#)

[- OSPI Legislative Priorities](#)

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