

Parents are demanding schools reopen; the state should provide parents \$3,000 education vouchers for each child

By LIV FINNE | Aug 13, 2020

BLOG



Most schools in our state will not be opening this fall. Schools will continue the practice of online instruction, putting the teaching burden on parents. In Thurston County parents have filed a lawsuit demanding the state provide the 180 days and 1000 hours of instruction required by law. In Gig Harbor parents are holding a rally demanding schools open. In Seattle, the school board criticized Superintendent Juneau for failing to provide school outdoors. Parents are upset, but the schools are not listening.

Working parents are complaining the schools are expecting parents to supervise and teach their children this fall. They already have full-time jobs.

People are asking if they have to pay their property taxes when schools are closed. It's a reasonable question, because most of people's property taxes go to the schools. In 2019-20 Washington state schools received \$15,800 in total revenue on average per student, from all state, local and federal resources, yet the schools were closed for one-third of the last school year. The 2020-21 budget for Seattle Public Schools will spend \$20,200 per student, yet Seattle schools will remain closed.

The pandemic has underscored the inability of the traditional schools to innovate or nimbly respond to crises like this health crisis. Parents have had to step in and make up the difference. Parents are paying hundreds and thousands of dollars to hire tutors, to buy technology, and even to pay tuition at private schools. Some parents are creating micro-schools and hiring teachers. Many families are planning to homeschool their children. The children of low-income families are the hardest hit from the decisions to keep schools closed.

All parents in Washington need more education options, right now. The legislature should provide families an education voucher of \$3,000 per student, so they can hire tutors and buy technology. Over half the states in the country provide direct aid to parents to help them educate their children. These states provide scholarships to pay private school tuition, especially to low-income, minority families whose children are assigned to failing and unsafe urban schools.

The time has arrived to respond to the pleas of parents. We can no longer allow the pandemic to harm the education of the 1.2 million students in our state.