

Legislature Hits Halfway Point as Support for Public Education Continues to Grow

Just as February Special Election results showing resounding support for public education are certified, the Legislature is hitting the halfway point of the 2019 Legislative Session. Below is Superintendent Chris Reykdal's statement.

OLYMPIA—March 5, 2019—In the February Special Election, a majority of voters across the state approved nearly 98 percent of school operating levies and 85 percent of school construction levies and bonds.

This strong voter support serves as a powerful reminder that despite the Legislature's important progress in education funding, the work is not over. Public education—our state's paramount duty—is the engine that powers the long-term success of our state.

Last spring, more than 30,000 Washingtonians shared their budget priorities for public education. There was broad consensus around five top priorities:

1. Student support services, such as counseling, advising, and mental health.
2. Greater efforts to recruit and retain educators.
3. Increased access to career and technical education opportunities.
4. Enhancements to school safety.
5. Effective buildings and facilities for learning.

As the focus of the legislative session shifts from policy development to budget adoption, I strongly encourage bipartisan efforts to further invest in our public schools. A key piece of this is the need for unprecedented investments to support our students with disabilities.

In addition, the Legislature needs to further empower local communities to go beyond the state's program of basic education. The cut to levy authority made last year was too deep and has left many school districts struggling to maintain critical support services for students.

I am confident that legislators can make substantial progress for public education over the next two months before the legislative session ends. For direction, they need only listen to their voters.

