

Proposed Legislative Principles, Issues, and Resolutions

During the annual Washington State PTA (WSPTA) Legislative Assembly, delegates decide the public policy positions that guide state and local advocacy work for WSPTA and its associated local PTAs and councils.

The legislative assembly will take place on October 24-25, 2020. Delegates will vote on one new legislative principle, eight new legislative issues, eight new resolutions, and one amendment to an existing resolution. Only the parts in **shaded boxes** are open for amendment and debate. Changes are shown as a ~~strike through~~ for deletions and as **underlined bold font** for additions. Legislative issues will also be ranked by delegates to determine a Top 5 for the 2021 and 2022 legislative sessions.

LEGISLATIVE ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

There are eight new proposed legislative issues for consideration. **Only the title and description statements (in the shaded boxes) can be amended.**

Proposed New Legislative Issue #1 (Member Submission)

WSPTA Board of Directors' recommendation: Adopt

Safe School Plans and Emergency Preparedness

Washington State PTA shall support legislation or policies that support emergency preparedness in schools through:

- Funding the regional school safety centers to provide training and technical assistance for the development, annual updating and implementation of comprehensive safe school planning including continued operations plans.
- Providing resources to districts for emergency supplies and equipment.
- Verifying compliance of emergency planning coordination between districts, local and regional emergency management, including first responders.

Persuasive Statement from the Submitter

Safe School Plans and Emergency Preparedness should be in the Top 5 supported issues for WSPTA as proper emergency planning in our schools will save lives.

Many school districts in Washington state do not have adequate emergency equipment and supplies as well as response and continued operations plans. Emergency plans may not be communicated properly to local emergency management and first responder groups or families. The RCW 28A.320.125 requires districts to have plans in place but no updates are required unless funds are available. Lack of funding for regional school safety centers is one roadblock to proper emergency planning. Emergency planning is ever changing, and schools must evaluate their plans yearly with detailed guidance the regional school safety centers, local emergency management and first responder groups to meet federal standards.

With the recent crisis of COVID-19, it is evident that our schools are not adequately prepared for response and recovery for this type of emergency. This is likely the case for many medium to large-scale emergencies. Our communities rely heavily on schools for continuation of services after emergencies, including education and food services.

Proper emergency planning will save lives and support our communities.

Proposed New Legislative Issue #2 (Member Submission)

WSPTA Board of Directors' recommendation: Adopt

Increase Access to Nursing, Mental Health, and Social Emotional Learning Staff

Washington State PTA shall support legislation or policies that support the medical and mental health of all students P-12 with innovative funding solutions for increased non-teaching staff including but not limited to nurses, counselors, psychologists, and social workers in schools, provided in-person or according to the best practices in telehealth access.

Persuasive Statement from the Submitter

Washington state urgently needs to address the insufficient funding for mental health, nursing, and social emotional learning staff in our schools. The recommended ratio for school nurses is one for every 750 students, but state funding only allows for a ratio of one to every 5,200 students. This leaves districts and PTAs to bridge the gap, causing significant inequities across our state.

We rely on school health professionals to care for our children through everyday bumps and bruises. We also rely on them for students who need regular medical attention, many of whom have to travel outside of their neighborhood to attend schools that have a full-time nurse. School health professionals are key in early detection of child abuse and suicidal behavior, the rates of which have been on the rise among our youth for several years. Every student deserves access to these services, and we are not meeting those needs.

The COVID-19 crisis has only further illustrated the urgency of this issue. We rely on school nurses to implement public health guidelines to keep our children safe and healthy. In this time of extreme transition, those guidelines are evolving, and so consistent nursing staff is paramount. This also means that social emotional learning staff, such as school counselors, psychologists, and social workers are crucial in meeting the evolving mental health needs of all students.

Proposed New Legislative Issue #3 (Member Submission)

WSPTA Board of Directors' recommendation: Adopt

Equitable Identification and Services for Highly Capable Students

Washington State PTA shall support legislation or policies that:

- Achieve equitable representation in highly capable (HiCap) programs via universal screening, including students who are low-income, Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), highly