NEWS ADVISORY
June 30, 2017

McCleary plan a start, but fixes will be needed early next session

SEATTLE – The Seattle Public Schools (SPS) issued this statement about the state’s proposed budget:

“We thank the Legislature for their effort to create a new basic education funding model. It is no small task, and those of us in the field of education recognize their challenge.

“As we review the budget and McCleary plan, we have been evaluating whether the money we get from the state will meet constitutional needs and district needs.

“We appreciate the increase in learning assistance funds, and that the budget retains the funding model based on staffing allocations.

“The budget shows a net increase for Seattle, and we are appreciative. The challenge is, most of these new dollars are restricted to spending in certain categories. This puts us behind because we lose the flexibility to use local levy dollars where needed and the state doesn’t backfill the gap.

“As we continue peeling back the layers of the budget and McCleary plan, we see major gaps that need to be addressed early in the 2018 legislative session. If these gaps aren’t fixed by then, basic education for some of the most vulnerable students will be at risk.

“One example is that SPS uses $60 million in local levy funding to meet the needs of its students in special education, costs that aren’t covered by state or federal funding. The proposed budget provides the district $16 million in new special education money but takes away the ability to use local levy dollars to fill the remaining $44 million gap. This is untenable.

“We see a similar gap for our English Language Learners and in transportation, although to a lesser degree, where the redefinition of basic education sends some new state funds but not enough, and we are prohibited from filling the gap with local levies.

“In terms of salaries, the proposed budget doesn’t meet today’s required compensation levels, and we risk losing support staff and educators in an already challenging market.
“We appreciate that the Legislature retained its staffing allocation model. However, they did not fully fund it. That means a lack of resources for our most vulnerable students.

“We will work with our delegation so the needed fixes are made in the 2018 session.”

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