



## 2008-09 Statewide Policy Platform

We are committed to achieving statewide policy changes that result in:

- More skilled, dedicated teachers, particularly in acute shortage subject areas
- Stronger training and support for new teachers
- More students prepared for college and career

Washington's pre K-12 public education system is not preparing our children to succeed in the global economy:

- Fewer than 50% of children enter kindergarten ready to learn
- Only 60% of black and Hispanic students graduate with their peers
- Nearly one-quarter of employers report difficulty finding qualified job applicants

Source: *Washington Learns: Word-Class, Learner-Focused, Seamless Education*

Washington also compares poorly to other states in public education access, investment, and achievement. Washington ranks:

- 40<sup>th</sup> for publicly funded pre-K access
- 48<sup>th</sup> for K-12 spending relative to personal income
- 42<sup>nd</sup> for K-12 share of total state spending
- 29<sup>th</sup> in high school graduation rate

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### Progress on the state's paramount duty to provide ample funding for education

True or False? Because the state constitution declares that "It is the paramount duty of the state to provide ample funding for basic education," Washington is among national leaders in terms of investment in public schools.

**FALSE:** Despite the constitutional promise, the state is failing to meet its paramount duty. Washington ranks 42<sup>nd</sup> in the U.S. for K-12 total spending and 48<sup>th</sup> for K-12 spending relative to personal income. The current definition of basic education, last updated in 1977, is inadequate and outdated. It is time to update the definition, and develop and implement a plan to adequately fund public education.

**Recommendation:** Stand for Children seeks a **2009-2011 K-12 legislative budget that brings the State closer to meeting its constitutional responsibility for funding a basic education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

### Meaningful high school diploma and 6-period days

True or False? Washington students who meet all state graduation requirements and graduate from high school with a decent GPA are prepared for a university, community college, or work.

**FALSE:** A student can graduate from high school with a 4.0 and still not have the credits required for admission to any public, four-year college or university in Washington. The credits required to graduate from high school in Washington should match the minimum admissions standards for any public Washington college or university.

**Recommendation:** Stand for Children wants to see the **Legislature fully fund 24 core credits, which, at a minimum, means funding a six-period day in place of the current five-period day.** This change will better equip students for entry into and success at college or university, a trade or technical school, and 21<sup>st</sup> century careers. These 24 core credits define the skills necessary to create a meaningful high school diploma that addresses the fundamental knowledge and skills a student will need after graduation.

### Bold reforms to recruit, support, and reward high-quality teachers and principals

- 1) More and better candidates entering the teaching profession, particularly in acute shortage subject areas

True or False? Washington is a world leader in science and technology. Accordingly, we are preparing our K-12 students for success in those professions.

**FALSE:** Washington students are not being well-prepared to succeed in our increasingly technological world. About one-third of Washington high school math and two-thirds of physical science students have teachers who did not major in the subject in college and/or are not certified to teach it.

*over, please*

## What's Next for Washington Stand for Children:

- August 5<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup>: Washington Stand for Children members will vote to ratify this policy platform.
- By August 25<sup>th</sup>: Local chapters will make endorsements in state legislative races.
- September and October: Stand for Children Legislative Task Force members will conduct meetings with education leaders, partners and elected officials to develop a specific legislative agenda.
- November: Stand for Children's First Annual Summit to inspire, educate and prepare Stand members to advocate for our legislative agenda during the 2009 session.
- December: Stand's Legislative Task Force will look closely at the Basic Education Task Force's (BETF) recommendations, which are due December 1<sup>st</sup> 2008.



Recent studies show those who enter teaching later in their careers and recent, accomplished college graduates outperform traditionally prepared middle and high school teachers – even during their first year of teaching – if they receive thorough training in effective teaching strategies and classroom management. Washington does not allow non-traditional training programs to operate here.

**Recommendation:** Stand for Children seeks **legislative support to enable effective alternative certification programs to license teachers in Washington.** Knowing that not all teacher preparation programs are created equal, we will work with the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) and others to invite only proven alternative certification programs to operate in Washington.

### 2) Improved mentorship and support for new teachers

True or False? Approximately 2,500 new teachers are hired each year in Washington. Because we want them to hit the ground running so no students fall behind while they get accustomed to this challenging job, our state has a great new teacher support system.

**FALSE:** High-quality mentoring of new teachers takes place in only a limited number of school districts. Washington loses about 25% of its new teachers within their first five years. There is evidence the best and brightest new teachers are the first to leave, and high-poverty, low-performing schools are likely to have higher turnover. The research is clear: effective teacher mentoring and support allows new teachers to move beyond “survival”, make positive impacts on student achievement, and stay in the profession.

**Recommendation:** To improve student learning and increase teacher retention, **Stand for Children seeks \$20 million per year\* to fund an effective new teacher support program for all first and second year teachers** that requires one full-time mentor for every 15-17 new teachers. This program features rigorous teacher mentor selection and training, a best practice mentoring curriculum, and an emphasis on the first months in the classroom. Allowing mentors to concentrate on new teachers full-time keeps focus on training without adding to the duties of a teacher still responsible for a classroom.

### 3) Appropriate rewards for high performing teachers and principals

We will closely follow the Basic Education Task Force's (BETF) recommendations, due December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. The 2007 Legislature created the BETF to review the definition of basic education and all current basic education funding formulas. The purpose is to develop options for a new funding structure and all the necessary formulas, as well as to propose a new definition of basic education. **Stand for Children will pay particularly close attention to and prioritize reforms that address recruiting, supporting and rewarding high performing teachers and principals.** Once these recommendations are made, our legislative task force will review these reforms. If they are feasible and fair, we will bring a proposal to the membership for a vote by December.

## A smarter investment in early education

True or False? Washington's children are entering kindergarten ready to learn.

**FALSE:** More than half of the children entering kindergarten are not ready for school. Children who enter kindergarten unprepared are more likely to fall behind and stay behind throughout their time in school. If we invest in quality early education, we will all benefit later as more of our students graduate from high school, become and stay employed, and earn higher wages.

**Recommendation:** Stand for Children proposes to support the Children's Alliance and other organizations' effort to win **stronger state support for universal access to high quality preschool and full implementation of voluntary full-day kindergarten.**

*\*This figure is widely accepted as the cost to provide a high quality mentoring program in Washington*