



## From the Frontlines

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A survey of six sample districts was made to provide further insight into the realities of education funding. This sample of districts includes both small and large districts, property-poor and property-rich districts, districts that traditionally pass levies and districts that struggle to pass them, and districts from both eastern and western Washington. Like their districts, the comments from superintendents and administrators varied. However, they all agreed on one thing: school funding is not adequate to meet the challenges they face as educators.

### What is the greatest challenge you from the existing system of school finance?

*“Our student body is 40 percent minority and we have a high poverty rate. The biggest challenge will be in 2006, when students will be taking the WASL when it counts. The danger is that the profile of students passing WASL will be no different than it’s ever been.”*

- Tom Murphy, Superintendent  
Federal Way School District

*“Wabluke is almost at the top statewide in the portion of students on the free and reduced-cost lunch program. Our student growth rate in the last five years has been 27 percent and was even greater in the preceding five years. Almost all the new students have limited English skills.”*

- William Miller, Superintendent  
Wahluke School District

*“School districts are forced to make up for deficiencies in state support. Washington’s unique teacher salary structure imposes a statewide ceiling, not a floor. In our district, minimum monthly rents are about \$900 and a new teacher takes home about \$1700. Most new teachers quit or take a second job.”*

- Michael Riley, Superintendent  
Bellevue School District

*“Promises made, promises kept’ – this is the motto we live by and pledged as we got the levy. Yet we may not be able to stand by those promises. We’re hearing talk of state cuts in the 10-15 percent range. This would make it almost impossible for us to maintain smaller class sizes, even with passage of a four-year levy.”*

- Bev Cheney, Superintendent  
South Kitsap School District

*“For me, the word that comes to mind is sustainability – being able to finish the programs we launch. Three of these are specifically related to increased student achievement: reduced class size, new curriculum, and professional development.”*

- Rick Schulte, Superintendent  
Oak Harbor School District

*“A critical problem for us is special education. Because Spokane is a regional center for medical services, parents of high-cost high needs children move here from a large surrounding area. Yet, the state formula for special education assumes no distinction between the kid who needs only ten minutes of mental therapy a day and one who need two classroom attendants.”*

- Mark Anderson, Assoc. Superintendent  
- Neil Sullivan, Exec. Director of Finance  
Spokane School District