

March Micah Moment: Systemic Problems in Washington public schooling

A decade of change in Washington State

Changing Everything: McCleary vs. the State of Washington

- January 5th, 2012
The Washington State Supreme Court held that the State of Washington was failing to meet its obligation of adequately funding public education.¹
- August 3rd, 2015
A fine of \$100,000 per day began to be collected by the Court for lack of compliance, although the money was put in an account to fund public education.²
- June 7th, 2018
When the State Court finally approved State of Washington school funding plan, and halted the fine and judicial oversight of school funding.²



"State funding is not ample, it is not stable, and it is not dependable." Judge John Erlick, of the King County Superior Court.³

¹ *McCleary v. Washington*, 84362-7 (majority) (Washington Supreme Court January 5, 2012). ² *Supreme Court Order No. 84362-7 - McCleary v. State of Washington* (PDF), January 9, 2014, retrieved February 3, 2019 ³ "Court's Findings of Fact & Conclusions of Law", *King County Superior Court*, CONCLUSION, February 4, 2010, retrieved January 29, 2019

So why isn't everything fixed, or at least better, now?

One of the problems with school funding was that it was wildly unequal. The State distributed money per student to schools, but as that amount was inadequate, local schools passed their own levies, usually in the form of property taxes, to close the gap.



When the State submitted its new “adequate funding plan,” it placed a limit on how much money local school districts could collect to add to the State’s money,¹ so that local school districts could not supplement the state money beyond a certain point, and create massive inequalities again.

BUT...

¹ “For school systems, McCleary decision gave with one hand and took with the other”. *The Spokesman-Review*. September 9, 2018. Retrieved April 12, 2019.

... the State is NOT matching the previous level of funding

- So the State increased funding to public schools, but not enough to match most school district's previous formula of minimum State funding + significant local funding. So in at least in 253 of the State's 295 districts, including Clark County, school funding **WENT DOWN**.²
- However, the 42 severely underfunded districts who had never been able to raise much money locally did receive increases.²



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¹ *A Guide to School Levy Taxes Under the State's New Education Funding Plan* (PDF), January 23, 2018, retrieved March 14, 2022

² Molly Solomon, *NWPB*, "More Than 50 Teachers And Staff Could Be Cut At Vancouver Schools,"

<https://www.nwpb.org/2019/02/28/more-than-50-teachers-and-staff-could-be-cut-at-vancouver-schools/>, February 28, 2019, retrieved March 14, 2022

So then what?

Recognizing the shortfall, in 2020 the State moved back toward its previous inequitable system, allowing school districts to raise up to \$2.50 per \$1000 of assessed property value instead of capping all districts at a universal \$1.50/\$1000 of local property tax funding. So a school district COULD raise money to fill the gap— **IF** its levies passed and **IF** the property in its district was assessed at enough value to produce a significant income.¹

BUT the State has a fund called the Local Effort Assistance, (LEA funds) to help districts with lower property values, right? **BUT** the State reduced these funds in 2018, when it finally received court approval on its spending plan.²

The big
Ifs
and Buts

¹ *A Guide to School Levy Taxes Under the State's New Education Funding Plan* (PDF), January 23, 2018, retrieved March 14, 2022

² *ESD112, "Getting to the core of school funding in Washington State,"* <https://www.esd112.org/schoolfunding/>, June 26, 2019 retrieved March 14, 2022

2021 School Property Tax Rates within Clark County

School District	EP&O Levy	Technology Levy	Bond	Capital Levy	Total Local Bond & Levy*
Camas School District	\$2.50	\$0.27	\$1.97		\$4.74
Washougal School District	\$2.18		\$1.85	\$0.25	\$4.29
La Center School District	\$1.50		\$2.65		\$4.15
Woodland Public Schools	\$2.36		\$1.56		\$3.92
Evergreen Public Schools	\$1.72	\$0.42	\$1.76		\$3.90
Vancouver Public Schools	\$2.01	\$0.33	\$1.37		\$3.71
Hockinson School District	\$1.50		\$1.77		\$3.27
Ridgefield Public Schools	\$1.50		\$1.68		\$3.18
Battle Ground Public Schools	\$2.32		\$0.56		\$2.88

* These rates do not include the State Schools property tax rate (\$2.94 per \$1,000 of assessed value in 2021).

¹ *Battle Ground Public Schools*, "Property Taxes and School Funding," <https://www.battlegroundps.org/taxes>, retrieved March 14, 2022

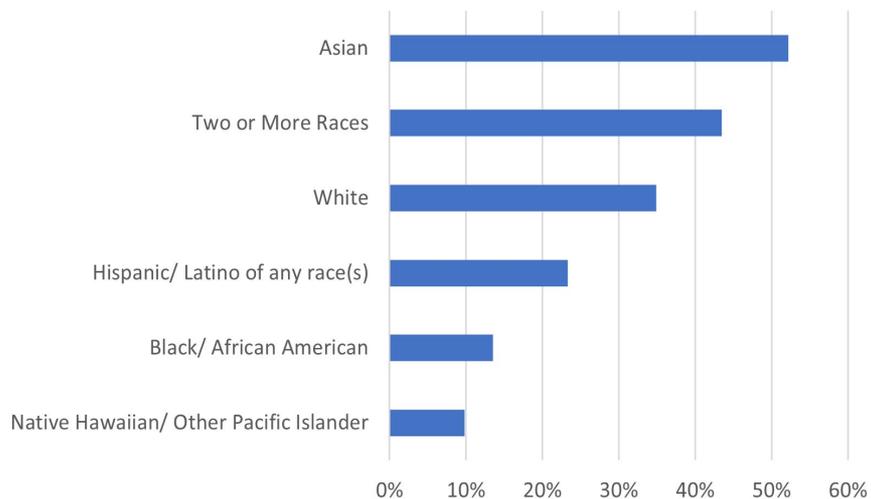
Every 4 years

That's the maximum length of time a local school levy can last, many only last 2 years. So a school district can not even count on ANY local levy money when long term planning.

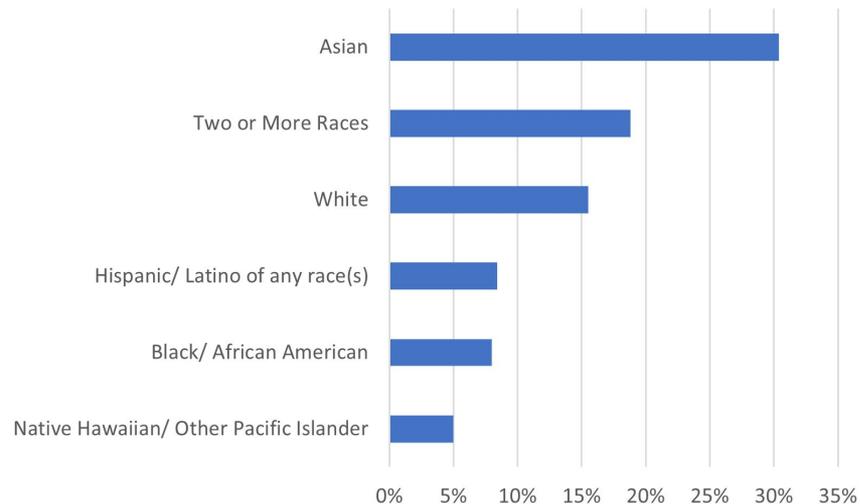
This means inequity is being built into the Washington State education funding system. (Again.)

AND there are racial achievement gaps within every school

% of students who met state standards
in English/Language Arts by race
McLoughlin Middle School, Fall 2021



% of students who met state standards
in Math by race
McLoughlin Middle School, Fall 2021

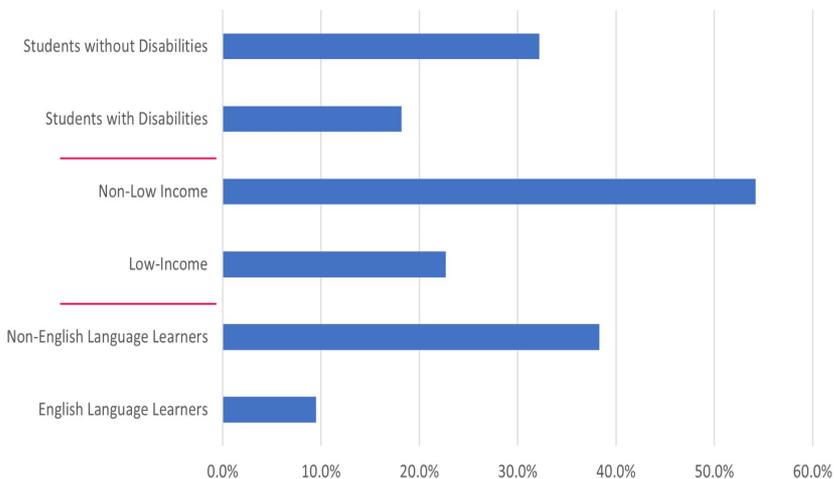


¹ Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, "Assessment by Student Demographics,"

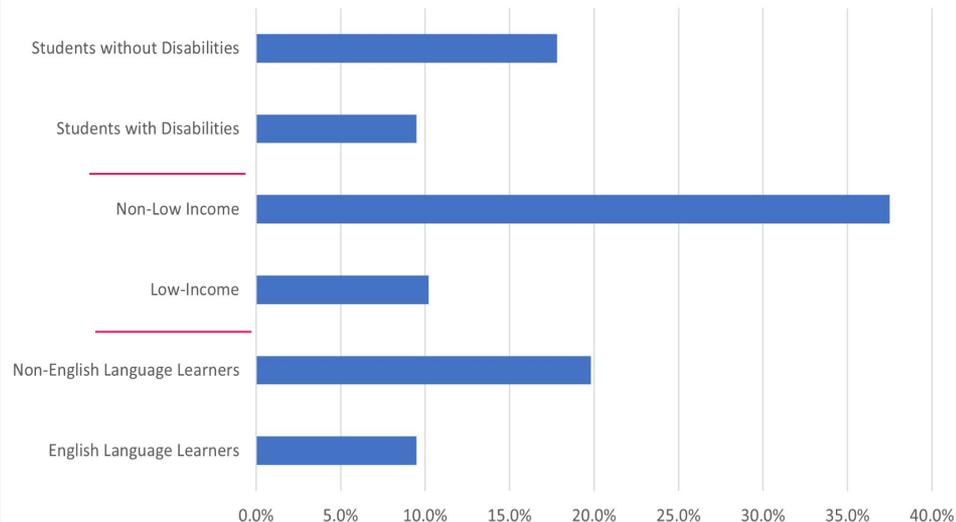
<https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/100539/>, retrieved March 14, 2022

AND achievement gaps by student circumstances

% of students who met state standards
in English/Language Arts by Student Circumstance
George C. Marshall Elementary School, Fall 2021



% of students who met state standards
in Math by Student Circumstance
George C. Marshall Elementary School, Fall 2021



¹ Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, "Assessment by Student Performance and Characteristic," <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/100541/>, retrieved March 14, 2022

So how can we help?

There are several votes and lawsuits-in-progress coming up that we can support, and specific committee members within the State Legislature that need to hear from us! An additional *Micah Moment* presentation on ways to help make systemic change in schools will be given in April.

But in the meantime...

Start Locally: VHUMC + local schools + Vintage Books drive

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The neighborhood schools of VHUMC are George Marshall Elementary, McLoughlin Middle School and Fort Vancouver High School.

We have partnered with the Librarians of these schools and Vintage Books on E. Mill Plain Blvd in Vancouver to run a Book Drive. Wish lists from each school librarian are available on www.vintage-books.com and behind the counter at the Vintage Books store, just ask for the school book drive list.

Stop by and purchase or order online whatever books you can, this will allow the Librarians to spend their allotments on improving bigger budget items.

You can drop purchased books off in the VHUMC annex, or if a book is ordered, I will be picking up special orders for the Book Drive every week. The Book Drive will run through the end of April.

