



## Stepping Up for Smarter, Safer Schools

### Our Schools are Changing

We are raising standards and expecting more from students. At the same time, our schools, from kindergarten to college, are taking on more responsibilities, and dealing with new problems. **The people that support our teachers and faculty – educational support professionals – are more important than ever.**

**In the last 30 years, we've added security and technology, and highly-qualified paraeducators in the classroom.**

### Unfortunately, School Funding Isn't Keeping Up

Under our state constitution it is state government's "paramount duty" to provide for a basic education, **yet the state funds less than half the cost of these critical educational support programs – only 43%.**

**In our K-12 system, local school districts are forced to rely on levies** and often have to make painful and unnecessary choices in their budgets when money is tight.

**The problem is similar in our college system.** When budgets are tight, dedicated support professionals are often the first to be let go.

### It's Time to Step Up

It is time to modernize and reform school funding, take care of the basics first, and give our kids Smarter Safer Schools.

Washington needs adequate, stable funding for our colleges and universities in order to attract and retain outstanding support staff.

And, we need to change funding formulas so school districts have adequate resources for these critical, basic programs, rather than relying on the uncertainty of levies.

### Action Steps:

- **Call the Legislative Hotline:** 1-800-562-6000.  
(Talk to an operator to leave a message for your elected officials)
- **Explore the Legislative Web site:** [www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov)  
(Look up bills, email your Representatives and Senator and sign up for email alerts)

### Talk About:

- How your job/school has changed.
- How the uncertainty of levies threatens student services and your job

## 2008 Stepping Up Legislative Priorities

- 1. Modernize the classified staffing ratio:** For decades the ratio of classified staff to students remained at one staff per 60 students. This is completely inadequate given the new roles classified staff have assumed. Last year the Legislature worked with us to lower the ratio to 59:1; now we are asking them to take the next step and lower the ratio to 58:1.
- 2. Ensure fairness in school employee salary increases:** Classified employees should receive at least the same percentage salary increases as certificated staff. In 2007-08, virtually all certificated staff will receive increases of 4.32%, while most classified employees received less. Employees working in the same school district should receive the same level of salary increases. Further, employees should receive these increases as actual salary and not as an allocation to school districts.
- 3. Make health care more affordable:** Rising health care costs have disproportionately eroded wages. PSE supports funding increases based on the medical inflation rate for all state employees; health care benefits for part-time classified staff, and a pilot project with the PEBB to ensure that every employee has access to affordable health care.
- 4. Modernize compensation for paraeducators:** PSE strongly believes highly-trained paraeducators, working with teachers in the classroom, are the key to addressing our state's class size dilemma. PSE supports a modern salary model that recognizes the additional standards and roles paraeducators must meet.

## Higher Education

- 1. Reform the October 1 bargaining deadline:** If state employees working at our higher education institutions have not reached bargaining agreements by October 1, management can implement their last offer. This arbitrary requirement provides a disincentive toward real collective bargaining.