

# THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

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## Editorial: Slowly, state improving funding for our schools

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If you need tangible proof that education funding is being fixed, head over to your favorite school supply depot and behold the lists.

So much shorter than a couple of years ago!

The state is releasing more money each year to meet the 2018 deadline of fully funding basic education. Last year, Spokane Public Schools got an \$11.5 million infusion. This year, it's \$15 million, which helps pay for everything from full-day kindergarten to pencils and glue sticks.

In tougher budget times, parents were asked to pick up the costs of basic supplies, such as pencils, pens, notebooks, tissue paper, crayons, glue, rulers, erasers, scissors and folders. The total cost was in the neighborhood of \$60 to \$100, not counting backpacks. The lists varied widely from school to school and teacher to teacher.

In an area where about 60 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price meals, that was an August shopping trip filled with anxiety.

But with additional state funding, school districts have pared those lists and trimmed some student fees in middle school and high school. To limit variation from school to school, the district queried teachers and assembled master lists of mandatory supplies. Because the state has kicked in more money, parents are asked to contribute less.

For instance, Roosevelt Elementary School, where 58 percent of students qualify for free lunches, is asking students in kindergarten through second grade to bring a backpack and gym shoes for Fitness & Health. That's it. For third grade, add a three-ring binder and a box of colored pencils. The lists, which can found at each school's website, get longer as the kids get older, but they're more affordable than in the past.

Still, some families need assistance, and local charities are ready to help. For instance, The Salvation Army on Thursday will give away backpacks filled with school supplies at its

Community Center, 222 E. Indiana Ave. The distribution is first-come, first-served. Parents or caregivers need to bring photo identification, proof of address and identification for each child.

Developments in the Legislature's struggle to meet its obligations to finance basic education can be confusing, because the issue is complicated. But lawmakers are coming up with more education dollars, despite the fact that the Washington Supreme Court has fined them for moving too slowly.

School supplies are just one way households are affected. Transportation is another concrete example. When the bus no longer shows up, parents have to find another way to get their kids to school. The Supreme Court has ruled that the state can no longer push these basic responsibilities onto local school districts and/or parents.

So when you see that short list of supplies and the return of the neighborhood bus, know that while progress is slow, fundamental change is coming.

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