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Lawmakers seek input on education funding in Everett on Tuesday

By [Jerry Cornfield](#)

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EVERETT — A band of state lawmakers is coming to Everett on Tuesday in search of opinions on the best ways to pay for Washington schools.

Lawmakers are hoping parents, teachers and taxpayers will offer their ideas on how the state can meet its constitutional mandate to cover the cost of basic education in Washington and to do so by a 2018 deadline set by the state Supreme Court.

The two-hour forum will begin at 5 p.m. in the Everett School District offices at 3900 Broadway.

Everett will be the second stop on a seven-city listening tour for members of the Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee. The first took place in Vancouver on Sept. 30 and the last is set for Oct. 27 in Yakima.

The Supreme Court, in the McCleary case, ordered the state to cover the cost of a basic education for public school students by the 2017-18 school year. In its decision, the court also directed the state to provide enough funding so that school districts no longer need to rely so heavily on local property tax levies to pay for salaries and operations.

On Aug. 13, justices started [fining the state \\$100,000 a day](#) until they get a plan from lawmakers showing how that deadline will be met,

On Tuesday, education committee staff [will outline proposals under consideration](#) to reduce school districts' reliance on local property tax levies to help pay teachers and administrators. One of those is a Senate bill to shift the financial burden onto state's property tax. This approach, known as a levy swap, requires increasing the state's property tax rate.

Also, there will be discussion of whether the method of setting and negotiating teacher salaries needs changing if the state winds up covering most of the cost.

Representatives of teacher unions, parent organizations and statewide associations of superintendents and school district directors are being asked to share their views and then it will be opened up for public comment.

Jared Kink, president of the Everett Education Association which represents roughly 1,100 teachers in the Everett School District, and David Iseminger of the Lake Stevens School Board are among those expected to speak.

“There's an overreliance on levies now because they haven't provided a compensation schedule that attracts and retains quality teachers,” Kink said. “Swapping one pot of money for another and saying there's more is a failed policy from the start.”

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, Gov. Jay Inslee and members of the House and Senate from each party caucus will meet behind closed doors to tackle similar questions. This will be the second meeting of the so-called McCleary work group.

The goal is to fashion a plan to improve the quality of education and ensure ample funding for schools, Inslee said Thursday. If they accomplish that it should help persuade the Supreme Court to lift its sanction, he said.

If Democratic and Republican leaders reach agreement on such a plan by mid-November, Inslee has said he'll call them into special session to approve it.

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