



## Separate is not equal — let's give every child a chance



9 HOURS AGO • [REP. J D ROSSETTI, D-LONGVIEW](#)

Our kids and grandkids deserve a fair shot at the best jobs in the world. That means giving them a world-class education.

Today, the odds are stacked against our students from the start because the system is rigged.

Students in wealthy zip codes get a better education in their public schools. School districts that happen to have high property values, especially commercial properties, can afford to pass local levies to subsidize their districts.

Over the years, this unequal system has led to winners and losers, with some of the poorest areas paying higher property taxes than rich school districts. Seattle and Bellevue actually pay less than 30 percent of the median property tax rate, which is a

fancy way of saying homeowners like you and I get taxed more under this unfair system.

### Finding another way

Just as it was wrong for schools in the South to deny children an education because of the color of their skin, it is wrong for children from Aberdeen, Longview and Raymond to get an inferior education simply because of where they live.

The state Supreme Court agrees. They ruled our system of funding public schools as unfair and unconstitutional.

It also runs counter to a cornerstone of our great American experiment in democracy: a decent education not just for the sons and daughters of the wealthy, but for all children.

Fully funding our public schools will take creativity and courage, with Democrats and Republicans working together. But nothing worth doing is easy, and giving all of our kids a shot at the American dream is worth it.

### High skills for high wages

When it comes to college, working families in small towns also are starting the race 10 yards back. They simply cannot afford the skyrocketing cost of tuition, room and board.

A high school diploma just isn't good enough anymore, but college isn't only about four-year degrees.

Washington state is experiencing a shortage of workers skilled in the trades. We have to import brick masons, electricians and welders from other states.

Those aren't average-joe jobs where you wear a hairnet and get paid minimum wage. Those are great careers with great paychecks.

### **Local students deserve a shot**

The 19th District is home to shipyards, mills, timber jobs, agriculture and industry. We will always need skilled trades to build fishing boats and maintain and repair the diesel engines in our forests and fields.

More opportunities in the skilled trades would help local kids stay in their hometowns after they graduate instead of heading to Seattle or Portland for a job.

Making that happen means bigger investments in our local colleges, plus partnerships with local unions and businesses.

The great thing about our small towns and communities is that we know each other. Our kids play on the same baseball and soccer teams. We see everybody on Friday nights at football games.

Forming partnerships to get things done is easier here than in big cities where people don't know their neighbors.

I hope we can come together on public school reforms and higher education opportunities to give our kids a better life than we had.

I hope we can give every child, rich or poor, the same great education in our public schools and colleges.

Because they're counting on us. And as the father of three sons, I think all of our kids deserve a fair chance.

Rep. J D Rossetti lives in Longview with his wife and three sons. He is a small business owner who also serves on the Longview School Board.