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[OPINION01](#)

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In Our View / K-12 education funding

## Stop-gap measures needed with I.O.U.

By The Herald Editorial Board

“I.O.U. one comprehensive plan for amply funding basic education and ending reliance on local school levies to provide a significant portion of teacher and other school staff salaries.”

Earlier this week, the [state House passed](#) what is essentially a promissory note — payable by next year's Legislature — to repair the state's system of funding K-12 education and get out from under a state Supreme Court mandate and a \$100,000-a-day fine. The bill now moves on to the Senate, which could bring it to a vote later this week or early next week.

Recognizing that they weren't likely to resolve the issue during a 60-day session, lawmakers instead have drafted [a plan that they say will help them reform](#) the funding system next year.

Continuing the work of an informal group assembled by Gov. Jay Inslee, the bill would establish a bipartisan education funding task force of eight legislators to review data and make recommendations for pay and benefits for teachers and other staff, use of local school levies and collective bargaining with employee unions. The bill also requests that the state Superintendent of Public Instruction and local school districts provide data on what teachers and others are paid and how much is funded through school levies.

The Legislature made progress last year, establishing full-day kindergarten statewide, increasing funding for transportation and supplies and providing funding to reduce K-3 class sizes, but it would have been that much further along if it had taken this step last year to begin gathering information and developing a plan.

Resolution, then, is at least a year off. The problem with the delay is that one million students and the state's taxpayers are left to muddle through with the current situation. It's one thing for lawmakers to give themselves more time, but another to let the current situation slide without making a few patches until their work is finished.

The Legislature should pass two stop-gap measures along with the I.O.U. to itself:

[The levy cliff](#): Working under the assumption it would fix the funding crisis, the Legislature approved a reduction in the maximum that many school districts could request of their voters. That lid is scheduled to be reduced from 28 percent of a district's budget to 24 percent in 2017.

Absent a funding solution from the state and without an extension, districts would have to start

planning for the loss of funding this year and begin the process to lay off teachers and others. The Everett School District, as an example, stands to lose \$10.1 million in funding over a two-year period.

Teacher shortages: State [Superintendent of Public Instruction Randy Dorn spoke](#) this week before both House and Senate in support of [legislation that would address the state's shortage](#) of qualified teachers. A recent survey by the University of Washington found that 80 percent of the state's school principals reported having to hire under-qualified teachers and 54 percent were unable to find enough substitute teachers on most days. Dorn told lawmakers emergency substitute certificates, which require only a fingerprint check and a character and fitness questionnaire, have increased 255 percent in the past three years.

Legislation endorsed by Dorn would provide “signing bonuses” to teachers hired in small and rural school districts and districts with high percentages of low-income students; allow recently retired teachers to serve without restrictions; increase the salary rate for beginning teachers; increase funding for a loan forgiveness program; and make it easier for teachers with certification from other states to teach here.

Lawmakers can give themselves more time, but they shouldn't allow the problem to get worse while students wait.

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