Wanted: Leadership on McCleary to fund K-12

Here are key players in the Legislature drafting Washington’s new plan to amply fund K-12 schools across the state. Let them know we’re tired of waiting.

By Seattle Times editorial board

The Seattle Times

All 147 legislators and Gov. Jay Inslee share responsibility for Washington state’s [continuing failure](#) to fix its unconstitutional, inequitable public K-12 school funding system.

But it’s largely up to a handful of leaders in the state House and Senate to end the tiresome partisan standoff that is halting progress. They must start compromising — and negotiating — to get the Legislature across the finish line.

State Rep. Frank Chopp, D-Seattle

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Speaker of the House Chopp is the Democratic-controlled chamber’s leader of 15 years. A former community organizer and executive director of the Fremont Public Association, Chopp has served in the House since 1994.
State Sen. Mark Schoesler, R-Ritzville

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The powerful leader of the Senate’s majority party, Schoesler is a fifth-generation wheat farmer who has served in the Legislature since 1993.

This editorial board is counting on these smart and capable leaders to do their paramount duty and fully fund K-12 schools. Washingtonians should contact these representatives directly and encourage them to negotiate a solution.

State Rep. Pat Sullivan, D-Covington

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Sullivan, a former Covington mayor and legislative staffer, is now a key player in education-funding negotiations. He’s House majority leader, a member of the budget-writing Appropriations Committee and part of the Governor’s Education Funding Task Force.

State Sen. John Braun, R-Centralia

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Chair of the Ways & Means Committee, Braun is the Senate majority party’s lead budget writer this year. A Navy veteran, he’s president of a family-owned company near Chehalis that builds emergency vehicles.

Various proposals are on the table during this overtime legislative session that began April 24. Here are some key principles:

• Draw on the best ideas for a school-funding plan that provides equal opportunity for every Washington child to learn and excel. Provide dependable and fair funding, without disproportionately burdening taxpayers, and end the state’s overreliance on local levies to fill gaps. The state Supreme Court has highlighted that as a major contributor to the vast difference in school resources across the state.

• Ensure that additional spending is invested in proven methods to improve outcomes for students, particularly those falling behind.

• Provide enough money to attract and retain quality educators to the schools who need them most, while creating a funding structure that ensures state dollars are spent appropriately at the local level.

• Put aside political grudges, suspend tactical moves and forget about polls and election forecasts. The House needs to vote on a reasonable revenue plan, and the Senate needs to end its “no new revenue” charade.
This is a defining moment for legislators. There is widespread support for school funding reforms and an opportunity to improve the state’s fortunes for generations to come. This task should be the apex of their public service.

Over to the right is a list of the majority leaders in each chamber and lead education-funding negotiators — the people who can break the logjam, finish this interminable job and start helping every child in Washington succeed.

Let them know it’s time to get it done.

Editorial board members are editorial page editor Kate Riley, Frank A. Blethen, Donna Gordon Blankinship, Brier Dudley, Mark Higgins, Jonathan Martin, William K. Blethen (emeritus) and Robert C. Blethen (emeritus).