



EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DISTRICT 112

LEGISLATIVE BRIEF FOR CONGRESSIONAL VISITS, OCTOBER 2017

Serving children, schools and communities



THANK YOU for your support of STEM education in schools and communities. Continuing to support and broaden the reach of these programs is critical to providing all teachers and students with equal opportunities to be empowered by the knowledge and practices that will help them be STEM literate citizens.



THANK YOU for your support of our Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant and for working so hard to ensure access to high quality preschool and child care for vulnerable children and families in Southwest Washington!

Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Initiatives

ESD 112 operates several STEM Initiatives that create powerful opportunities for teachers and students to engage in problem solving, collaboration and critical thinking necessary for college and career readiness.

- » **STEM Materials Center:** Produces models of K-8 STEM kits that utilize local, authentic STEM problems, co-developed by business and industry partners. The STEM lessons engage students in career-related learning.
- » **CS@112:** Offers professional development in partnership with Code.org and Lego Robotics, and seeks additional funding to focus on K-2 teachers to integrate coding into core content areas. We will work to develop a model computer science pathway for early learning that specifically addresses the needs of rural districts.
- » **nPower Girls:** Trained 20 teachers in 8 high-needs schools on instructional strategies for girls in STEM. nPower teachers developed 13 STEM learning units, which will be published as Open Educational Resources in 2017-18. Teachers participated in seven career-related mini-externships, and have six more lined up for this year. This year, staff will be developing training modules to share nationally and will publish their research.
- » **SW WA STEM Network:** First ESD to establish a STEM Director position and more than doubled its district memberships for 2017-18. Districts work together to develop strategic plans for implementing their unique STEM vision in collaboration with local industry to bring career-related learning to students.

Secure Rural Schools – Federal Timber Funds for Schools

The **Secure Rural Schools (SRS)** program was intended as a safety net for forest communities in 41 states, including 4,400 school districts in rural communities. SRS payments are based on historic precedent and agreements removing federal lands from local tax bases and from full local community economic activity. The SRS legislation provides funding for many of Southwest Washington's smaller school districts. When the authorization for SRS lapsed in 2014 school districts began the intense struggle to cover the budget shortfall caused by this cut. Without Congressional action on forest management and SRS, forest counties and schools face the loss of irreplaceable and essential services for students and communities. In fact, school districts in the ESD 112 region lost in excess of \$2 million with the loss of SRS funds.

In our region, the Stevenson-Carson School District is most greatly impacted. Because SRS funds have dried up, the district will sustain cuts totaling \$1.4 million. This means teachers, custodians, para-professionals and administrator positions are on the chopping block, as well as programs that provide well-rounded opportunities for students like drama, music, art, and athletics. The SRS funding is critical to maintaining a level of student support and programs that are comparable to other districts in the region. We encourage Congress to act quickly to reauthorize the SRS program.

Early Care and Education

ESD 112 offers a robust menu of services in early care and education that support children, families, early learning staff and child care providers. For example:

- » The Early Head Start home visiting program serves 55 pregnant moms and their children aged birth to three in Clark County.
- » ESD 112 received the EHS-Child Care Partnership and Expansion grant to add 84 slots in blended programs throughout Southwest Washington.
- » 209 child care programs are enrolled in Early Achievers in SW Washington; 80 of those programs are rated, with 72 rated level 3-5.
- » The Southwest Washington Child Care Consortium (SWCCC) serves nearly 1,700 children ages birth to 12 at 34 centers; 17% of our families are accessing child care subsidies.

Your continued support of early care and education programs is critical. We urge Congress to continue its work to support programs that benefit our youngest learners, their parents and their care givers. Specifically:

Supporting the integration of child care, preschool and family support services as much as possible.

Our state and federal funds come with cost allocation restrictions which prohibit the use of these funds for children outside of these programs. In a blended classroom, this can mean that a child who is just above the poverty line does not have access to all of the resources and supports that may be necessary for his/her success. Other programs cannot share the services due to restrictions on funding.

Sustaining the EHS home-based program. Cost of living increases are not covered so our program costs increase each year. As a result, we were forced to reduce our slots from 60 to 55 this year to sustain the program.

Pushing for approval of the Child Care for Working Families Act. Due to minimum wage increases as well as increasing costs for rent, utilities and materials we were forced to increase our child care rates by 15% this year. This placed a huge burden on the families we serve. The reimbursement rate for child care subsidies does not cover the true cost of child care and often the private pay families are asked to pay more to offset the difference. The proposed Child Care for Working Families Act would improve training and compensation for child care workers, ensure affordable child care for families, and support universal preschool for three and four year olds.

Teen Suicide and Mental Health

Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death among youth ages 10-24 in our nation. Ninety percent of those who died by suicide had an underlying mental illness. One in five children ages 13-18 have, or will have a serious mental illness. Mental illness has a serious impact on students and families in schools and communities across the state of Washington.

Battle Ground, one of our region's largest school districts, just completed its third year of a SAMSHA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) federal grant that provides school based mental health services. Called Project AWARE, Washington is one of 20 states to receive this grant. During the last year in Battle Ground, 465 students were referred, and 368 were enrolled in mental health services. Overall, youth who received these services showed significant reductions in problem severity across all areas of concern.



THANK YOU for your hard work to get SRS reauthorized. We urge Congress to adopt legislation to actively manage and restore SRS funding to promote social and economic stability in local communities that rely on this critical resource.



THANK YOU for supporting programs that address teen mental health, including Project AWARE. To reduce the barriers of accessing mental health services and to implement early prevention programs, more funding is needed to serve the 30 school districts in Southwest Washington.



THANK YOU for supporting adequate funding resources for our most vulnerable students. We urge Congress to follow through on their original commitment to fund special education at 40%. Increased federal funding was initially promised but has not materialized.



We are committed to working collectively to bring equity and opportunity to children and families throughout the region.

MAIN OFFICE

Educational Service District 112
2500 NE 65th Avenue, Vancouver, WA 98661-6812

PH (360) 750-7500
FAX (360) 750-9706
TDD (360) 750-7510

VISIT US ONLINE: www.esd112.org

ESD 112 is an Equal Opportunity Employer

IDEA Reauthorization

The **ESD 112 ESA** is a unique consortium of 26 member districts across Washington State. ESD 112 staff provide all special education services to these districts including planning, delivering, monitoring, evaluating and supervising specially designed programs to meet the needs of children identified with disabilities. Serving 1,800 students, the ESA is committed to working collaboratively with families, schools and communities to increase academic achievement and prepare children for college and a career – regardless of their disability status.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was originally enacted by Congress in 1975 to ensure that children with disabilities have the opportunity to receive a free appropriate public education, just like other children. The law was revised in 2004. However, special education services under this law have never been funded at the original legislation's commitment of 40%. In fact, federal contributions for special education services are approximately 18%. To bridge this gap, districts are forced to use local levy taxes to pay for special education, causing inequities in services and learning opportunities for students. Other trends we are seeing: skyrocketing incidences of mental health issues in young children, more special education students moving into rural school districts where services are more difficult to obtain, and a tremendous teacher shortage among special education teachers and professionals. Funding at the 40% level would add \$2 million to the ESD 112 ESA budget to help fund required special education services.



Every Student Succeeds Act

The 2017-2018 school year inaugurates the full implementation of ESSA legislation. **THANK YOU** for your bipartisan efforts to get this bill approved in a way that redefines the federal role in elementary and secondary education. The passage of ESSA enhances the authority of states and school districts, focuses more on academic achievement than punitive actions and acknowledges that decisions are best made by those closest to the 1.1 million students attending Washington State's schools.