

# Washington State Students in Crisis

## Washington State Public Schools:

- 295 School Districts
- 2,393 Public Schools
- Over one million students

“Far too many bright, motivated kids are being badly served by their educational experiences—ones at elite, wealthy schools as well as underfunded ones.”

— Sal Khan, MS, MBA, Founder and CEO, Khan Academy



**Center for  
Inspired  
Learning**

**THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION**

# Our Mission

The [Center for Inspired Learning](#) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Our mission is to work with Washington State school districts to implement an education model that is tailored to each child's unique needs, interests and strengths using existing infrastructure, budgets, and staffing. To this end, we created the [Inspired Learners Model](#). Our current focus is on elementary schools since it is vital to start children off on the right foot during these critical developmental years.

The [education model currently used](#) in Washington schools is over 100 years old! It is characterized by the all-too-familiar concepts of sorting children by age, randomly placing them in groups of 20 to 30, then teaching them the SAME material, at the SAME time, at the SAME pace, in the SAME way, by the SAME teacher.

**“It is lunacy to claim that every child should learn the same thing, at the same time, in the same way, for 14 or more years of their life. This was not true for me as a learner, nor for my two sons or the thousands of students I have taught in my career as an educator.”**

- Kapono Ciotti, PH.D., Executive Director, [What School Could Be](#)



Over the past decades, as the failures of this 100-year-old system became obvious, policymakers implemented multiple [reforms](#) in futile attempts to improve student outcomes. Since it is the education model itself that has exacerbated the low test scores, teacher burnout, and student mental health challenges, these reforms have utterly failed to make the course correction needed.

Extensive [research](#) shows that by switching to a [learner-centered](#) model, we can address these concerns in significant and meaningful ways. The solution has been at our fingertips all along.



Our failure to replace the [obsolete education model](#) with a learner-centered one has been a massive waste of human potential and [taxpayer money](#). Most Washington students fail to meet state proficiency standards in math, science and reading. Additionally, children are not taught the good habits and the social, emotional, and physical skills required to live happy, healthy, fulfilling adult lives.

# Washington State Public Schools Student Test Scores & Taxpayer Trends

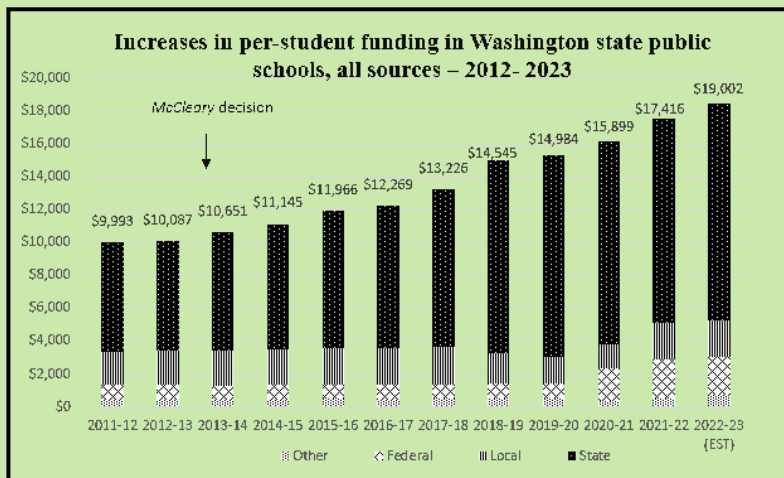
Academic Year	English (% of students that passed the state test)	Math (% of students that passed the state test)	Science (% of students that passed the state test)	Spending PER STUDENT!
2022-23	<b>50.7%</b>	<b>39.1%</b>	<b>42.9%</b>	<b>\$19,002</b>
2021-22	<b>50.7%</b>	<b>37.7%</b>	<b>42.7%</b>	<b>\$17,416</b>
2020-21	<b>47.7%</b>	<b>30.4%</b>	<b>45.8%</b>	<b>\$15,899</b>
2019-20	-----Covid year, no state testing-----			<b>\$14,984</b>
2018-19	<b>59.6%</b>	<b>48.9%</b>	<b>46.7%</b>	<b>\$14,545</b>
2017-18	<b>59.4%</b>	<b>49.5%</b>	<b>46.3%</b>	<b>\$13,226</b>

One 25-student WA State public school classroom in 2022-23 cost taxpayers a whopping \$475,050, and THESE are the test results? **As we invest more and more money in education, shouldn't outcomes improve?**



**“America spends more money on education than any other country; the problem is, it is ALL going in the wrong direction.”**

**- Sir Ken Robinson, Ph.D.**



[Source](#)








**“Education is the only billion dollar industry that tolerates abject failure.”**

**- Geoffrey Canada, M.Ed.,**




# Student Mental Health Crisis

A 2021 Study from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found the disturbing mental health trends among US high school students.

- **42% felt persistently sad or hopeless.**
- **29% experienced poor mental health.**
- **22% seriously considered attempting suicide.**
- **10% attempted suicide.**
- **10% attempted suicide.**

The Percentage of High School Students Who:*	2011 Total	2013 Total	2015 Total	2017 Total	2019 Total	2021 Total	Trend
Experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness	28	30	30	31	37	42	
Experienced poor mental health†	–	–	–	–	–	29	–
Seriously considered attempting suicide	16	17	18	17	19	22	
Made a suicide plan	13	14	15	14	16	18	
Attempted suicide	8	8	9	7	9	10	
Were injured in a suicide attempt that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse	2	3	3	2	3	3	

\*For the complete wording of YRBS questions, refer to the appendix.  
†Variable introduced in 2021.

 In wrong direction  
 No change  
 In right direction

The CDC, echoing findings of teen mental

health experts, stated that the best way to address this crisis is to promote connectivity between children, their school community, and their family. Such prevention strategies even help prevent drug use and violence. **One of the core principals of learner-centered education is that all children feel a**

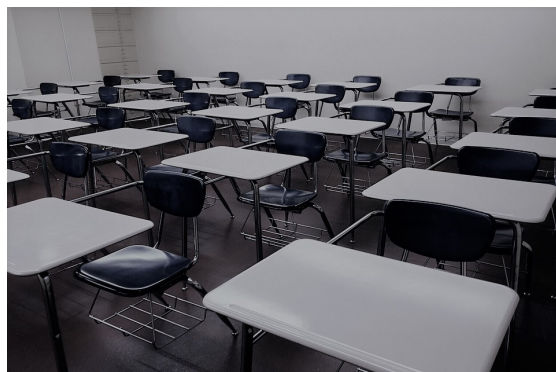
**sense of connectiveness and belonging throughout their school years.**

Washington State should do the right thing by implementing multi-age learner-centered education in all public schools.

Aside from most Washington State students failing to meet basic academic proficiency,

**WE HAVE NEGLECTED TO HELP THEM LEARN GOOD HABITS AND LIFELONG SKILLS.**

The result of these deficiencies is that many face otherwise avoidable mental, emotional, physical, and financial hardship as adults. **A better education model would include this critical skillset!**



# We Are Sadly Wasting Billions of Dollars & Untold Human Potential Trying to Fix a Broken Model

See our list of a century of public school reforms [HERE](#).

The impact of the vast majority of these initiatives, acts, and programs on student outcomes have been marginal at best.

**“I’ve seen 1000’s of people trying to change education and nothing has really changed. They have been looking at symptoms.”**

**John Merrow, Ed.D**, distinguished, award-winning journalist who spent most of his career focusing on public education and how to improve it. He served over 40 years as the Education Correspondent for PBS, and hosted his own PBS docuseries, **The Merrow Report**. His many awards and honors include two Peabodys, three Emmy nominations, four CINE Golden Eagles, a Polk Award, the McGraw Prize in Education, numerous awards from the Education Writers Association, and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Academy of Education Arts and Sciences. Merrow authored several [books](#) on education and currently writes an education [blog](#).



**John Merrow** discussing his book, **Addicted to Reform**, with former NEA President **Lily Eskelsen García**.

Watch the video [HERE](#).

## Excerpt from **Addicted to Reform**

**“We are in denial.** We have deluded ourselves into believing that superficial steps will reform our schools, even though the overwhelming evidence continues to prove otherwise. The process of school reform is unquestionably addictive. It’s goals---such as improving graduation rates, creating pre-school opportunities, or raising academic standards---always feel good and sound right. Moreover, each reform is narrow enough to be seen as achievable within a reasonable period of time... Like drug addicts, they get high on the work, their apparent success, and adulations from the media and the public. Unfortunately, as with drug addicts, the high is temporary, lasting only until reality intervenes and it becomes clear that the problem persists.”

# The Need for an Education Transformation



"Our 'leaders,' on both sides of the aisle, continue to claim that our schools are failing and need to be reformed, while in reality our education is obsolete and needs reimagining."

— **Tony Wagner, PH.D.**, Senior Research Fellow at the Learning Policy Institute



"The education policies our country is pursuing to 'fix' schools only serve to harm students and disillusion teachers."

— **Ted Dintersmith, PH.D.**, Public Education Advocate, Recipient of the Highest NEA Award (2018)



"Transforming our educational system won't be easy, but I believe that it is the most important and strategic path towards creating more just, peaceful, and sustainable societies."

— **Zoe Weil, M.A., M.T.S.**, President & Co-founder, Institute for Humane Education

"What we are doing is such a disservice, it is worse than a disservice... the whole system is broken...SO broken! You need to tear away the whole system and rebuild from the ground up...the unfortunate thing is that all of the public money that is supposed to go for the public good is going to that broken system. Most people in the (education) ecosystem got their job to pay the bills and support their families, so the ecosystem reinforces itself...but the system is actually harming children! We need to create environments where the kids are embraced and supported and can blossom in their own way because the ground is fertile. It is really, really, really important!"



- Chris Unger, PH.D., [The Need for a New Education Ecosystem Podcast](#)

"We believe that the current system's one-to-many approach to teaching, standardized curriculum, age-based cohorts, and classroom-contained instruction are all limitations on our children's opportunities to learn and thrive in this changing world. Too often these system components leave teachers exhausted, parents frustrated, and children uninspired. We see that it is not enough to continually measure, tweak, and improve the system bit by bit. Such adjustments will not ultimately produce the results we want because they iterate a system fundamentally structured for standardization. In order to fulfill the purpose of education for all children and create extraordinary learning for each and every child, our system must be entirely transformed."



- Education Reimagined, [A Transformational Vision for Education in the US](#)

# Comparison of Education Models

	WA's Age-Based Standardized Model	Waldorf Schools	Montessori Schools	Our Learner- Centered Model
Learner-centered	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Multi-Age Classrooms & Peer Mentoring	No	No	Yes	Yes
Flexible Curriculum	No	No	Yes	Yes
Personalized Student Growth Plans	No	No	No	Yes
Online Learning	Limited	No	No	Yes
Extended School Days & Longer Year	No	No	No	Yes
Extracurricular Activities Built Into School Day	No	No	No	Yes
Project & Activity Based Learning	Rarely	Yes	Yes	Yes
Emphasis on Meeting State Standards	Yes	No	No	Yes
State Assessments	Yes	No	No	Yes
Uses Existing Public School Budget	Yes	No	Rarely	Yes
Foreign Language Acquisition	Rarely	Yes	Sometimes	Yes
Authentic Assessment based on Mastery	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Emphasis on Life Skills & Good Habits	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Global Citizenship Education	No	Yes	Yes	Yes



**“Because we have failed to come to grips with schooling’s fundamental design flaw, every aspect of our schools falls short.”**

**— John Merrow, Ed.D.,**

# A Non-Partisan Movement

After meeting with hundreds of people in Washington State, we realized that people of all political persuasions and all faiths are generally in agreement that:

- The 100-year-old standardized, teacher-centered, age-based education model is obsolete and harmful.
- Spending more money on a broken education model, or further attempts to “reform” it, will not significantly improve student outcomes. **Our education budget shortfall can be addressed by changing the education model!**
- Implementing a 21st century, learner-centered, multi-age education model has the potential to vastly improve children’s school experience, mastery, preparedness for their life as adults, and society as a whole.

The mission of the [Center for Inspired Learning](#) is to change the classroom model. Since this transformation appeals to people across the political and ideological spectrum, we do not take sides or get bogged down in divisive issues such as religion in the classroom, who can use what bathroom, responses to pandemics, sex education, or the other hot button political issues of our day.

We accept EVERYONE of all faiths, political parties, philosophies, and walks of life into our movement. In fact, we believe that working together on this one issue that shares such wide support can help heal the factious divisions in our country and the world.



**Our goal is to help every child reach their full potential and lead a happy, fulfilling life.**

## Symptoms of Washington State’s structurally flawed education model:

- Low test scores
- Failure for students to learn good habits and lifelong skills
- Anti-social behavior (classroom disruptions, bullying, intolerance, violence, etc.)
- Mental stress (anxiety, depression, substance use, suicidal ideation, suicide, etc.)
- Teacher stress and burnout
- Unequal access to classroom and extracurricular opportunities



# Misplaced Blame



People often put the blame for mediocre student performance on insufficient parenting skills, unskilled teachers, the COVID pandemic, lack of funding, class size, or the children themselves. We now know that it is none of these.

The true culprit has been an education model that was designed over a century ago. Policymakers have tinkered around the edges of this flawed model, believing they could make the wrong system right via education reforms, throwing money at the problem, and blaming anyone and everything but the structure of school .

We now know we need an entirely new education model that is learner-centered and sees the potential in each child.



## Help Us Build a New Education Model for Washington State Elementary Schools!

By continuing with the current education model, Washington State's education policymakers are not acting in the best interest of students or teachers. By changing the model, they could significantly increase test scores, improve student's mental health, create better opportunities for all children, reduce teacher burnout, and give students an education that promotes lifelong skills and good habits. They could do this within the next two years. **You can help us make that happen.**

For the same amount of money, [learner-centered education](#) can significantly improve student performance and outcomes, including increased test scores, better attendance, and a more positive mental health outlook.

All of the [components](#) of our 21<sup>st</sup> century, multi-age, individualized model have been implemented in schools across the globe, and the results have been positively astounding.

Read the [conclusions of 28 widely respected U.S. education leaders](#) supporting this approach.

Visit our [website](#).

Call us at [360-585-5900](tel:360-585-5900).

Message us [here](#).

