

2022 AAUW-WA WA Quick Facts on Education

Education Legislation

School Choice / School Vouchers

School choice is a hot topic in some political races. We need to know a candidates position on **school choice or school vouchers**. Candidates who use the term "school choice" in their campaign materials generally indicate support for school vouchers or similar programs that allow public school education funds to be spent on private education, including religious schools.

In WA state, several bills to support school vouchers were introduced in 2022 but did not moved out of committee.ⁱ The [National School Board Association](#)ⁱⁱ opposes school vouchers and similar programs, as does the American Association of University Women ([AAUW](#)). In Washington state public K-12 education system supports "choices" within the systems such as alternative programs: charter schools, "learning choice" options; a master-based learning pilot program is underway.ⁱⁱⁱ

School Choice Question: What is your position on "school choice" and the current learning options offered within our state public educational system today? What legislative changes would you consider supporting or opposing related to school choice?

Federal legislation was introduced in June 2022 to support school vouchers: the [Educational Choice for Children Act](#) would create a tax credit scholarship such that a corporation or individual can make a donation to a scholarship granting organization, which in turn offers vouchers to students to attend select private schools including religious schools.^{iv} The donors get a credit against their tax liabilities.

Federal School Choice Question: What is your position on "school choice". How to you think it will impact WA state public schools if enacted?

Funding Education.

We need to know candidate's position on **funding public education**. It's a complex topic that is difficult to capture in a sound bite. Knowing their position on, and understanding of, funding related legislation provides some clues. The newly enacted capital gains tax ([SB 5096](#)) has the first \$350 million dedicated to the Education Legacy Trust Account; the bill had bipartisan opposition.^v Levies continue to be used to support public schools despite inequities associated with them. Note LWV candidate forums often ask a Levy funding question.

Funding Education Question - State: What ideas do you have to support public education funding in the future?

Student Debt Reduction and Affordable College

A federal pause on loan repayment during the pandemic and recent loan forgiveness federal actions will help many Washingtonians. In 2018 Washington passed the Student Loan Bill of Rights [SB6029](#). In 2022, we passed [HB1736](#) which established a 1% state student loan program (by partisan vote), as well as many other bills that provides specific assistance to targeted groups like the military and public employees, as well as homeless and foster care students.^{vi}

Washington state is one of [19 states](#) that has a "free" community college program, the [College Bound Scholarship](#) program that automatically enrolls low-income students in 7th, 8th and now 9th grade.^{vii}

State Question: What is your position on student debt? Do you support the state providing low-interest student loans? What about the free community college programs?

Federal Question: What is your position on student loan debt forgiveness?

Curriculum and Parental Rights

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What is being taught in schools has become a hot topic. Candidates who include curriculum transparency and parental rights in their campaign platforms usually oppose sexual health education curriculum as well as a nonexistent critical race theory curriculum.

Make sure you understand a candidate's position on [public school curriculums](#). During the 2021-2022 session there were over 20 curriculum bills introduced. See [Curriculum and School Policy 2021-2022](#).

The Movement Advancement Project (MAP) tracks [Curriculum Censorship & Hostile School Climate Bills](#) and identified 5 bills in Washington state: two parental bill of rights bills, a transgender student athlete ban, a ban on teaching critical race theory in public schools.^{viii}

In 2021, our Congressional Rep. Newhouse (CD4) and Rep. Herrera Beutler (CD3) co-sponsored bills to prohibit critical race theory in public schools ([H.R. 3235](#) and [H.Res. 397](#)).^{ix} Parents' Bill of Rights Act and the The Protect Equality and Civics Education Act have also been introduced.^x

Washington state bills introduced in 2022 included repealing the comprehensive sexual health education bill. We chose Comprehensive Sexual Health Education (CSHE) as our curriculum issues example as it is often used as an example in campaign statements that include parental rights.^{xi}

Curriculum Question: What is your position on the legislature's role in establishing curriculum in public schools compared to school board's role, a parent's role or an educator/professional's role.

Sexual health education question: What is your position on the comprehensive sexual health education curriculum in public schools?

Federal Question: What is your position on "parental rights" with regards to school curriculum and sexual health education, critical race theory or gender identity?

ⁱ AAUW-WA tracks legislation related to school vouchers and voucher-scholarship bills. See [School Choice" related legislation 2022](#). See AAUW School Vouchers [Quick Facts 2017](#).

ⁱⁱ See AAUW [Where We Stand on School Vouchers](#). One major concern is that civil rights are not guaranteed at voucher schools. See the [National School Board Association](#): vouchers do not raise student achievement for all, they drain away critical infrastructure dollars for public schools, they do not require accountability including civil right protections, they leave behind the most vulnerable students.

ⁱⁱⁱ See OSPI [Learning by Choice](#) and Washington State Board of Education [Our Work](#). For a review of school choice legislation see the National Council on State Legislature [Interactive Guide to School Choice](#).

^{iv} [Bishop Thomas Daly of Spokane](#) announced support.

^v Eslick voted against capital gains tax bill. Wadhams said "she wants to eliminate the business and occupation tax and is only mildly supportive — "more for than against" — of the capital gains tax now facing a legal challenge" from Herald interview: <https://www.heraldnet.com/news/eslick-faces-3-foes-and-new-voters-in-bid-for-another-house-term/>.

^{vi} See Crosscut article [WA Preps State low interest loan program](#). AAUW [Deeper in Debt 2021 Update](#); AAUW [Fast Facts: Women and Student Debt](#); AAUW [Fast Facts: Occupational Segregation](#).

^{vii} The College Bound Scholarship is an early commitment of state financial aid to eligible students who enroll in middle school and meet the pledge requirements. It covers average tuition at public college rates, some fees, and a small book allowance at over 65 colleges, universities, and technical schools in Washington.

^{viii} Movement Advancement Project (MAP) tracks [bills](#) related to LGBTQ+ equity.

^{ix} Critical Race Theory serves as a prejudicial ideological tool, rather than an educational tool, and should not be taught in K–12 classrooms as a way to teach students to judge individuals based on sex, race, ethnicity, and national origin. [Rep. Newhouse public statement](#).

^x The Protect Equality and Civics Education Act prohibits the use of FY2021 federal education funding for the priorities noticed in the Department of Education's proposed rule ... related to the teaching of critical race theory under a grant, contract, or cooperative agreement.

^{xi} See OSPI [Comprehensive Sexual Health Education \(CSHE\)](#).