

The Seattle Times

February 8, 2022

Public school foundations are an essential part of the funding puzzle

A recent Seattle Times editorial, “**School levies are a Band-Aid for stable, equitable K-12 funding**” [Jan. 28, Opinion], highlights issues in Washington state regarding equitable funding of our public school system. The board’s opinion — that current levies on the ballot are subsidizing the failure of the state Legislature to uphold its own constitutional obligation to fully-fund public K-12 education — was insightful, giving attention to underfunding issues Washington has been struggling with for over 10 years.

That said, there was one significant funding source omitted from the conversation: public school foundations. The many foundations found in districts across King County should be acknowledged when talking about the full funding picture of many public schools.

In districts like Seattle, Issaquah, Everett, Edmonds, Mercer Island, Renton, Shoreline, Bainbridge, Lake Washington, Bellingham, Auburn, Edmonds, Northshore, and Bellevue, school foundations exist for the sole purpose of bridging a funding gap that exists in our public school system. Without foundation funding, students and educators could be left without the arts, computer science, early learning, teacher certifications and the opportunity to pilot innovative — and vital — new programs.

The first foundation dedicated to supporting public K-12 initiatives in Washington state, the **Bellevue Schools Foundation**, has been an integral part of Bellevue schools’ innovation.

Bellevue schools Deputy Superintendent Melissa deVita notes, “The Bellevue Schools Foundation not only provides funding to support innovation and new programs, much of which could not be pursued without their funding, but it also provides a strong link between the district and the community at large. There is something positive to be said about a community that voluntarily invests in our schools.”



Since its inception, BSF has raised more than \$37,000,000, providing **myriad programs** such as culturally-responsive literature libraries in classrooms, preschool tuition assistance, enhanced computer science curriculum and innovation grants, allowing teachers to spark creativity in learning within their individual classrooms.

With the pandemic anxiety and interruption in learning, educational foundations in Washington have felt the funding crunch. Many donors could or would not continue donating because of economic hardship, frustration at the COVID-19 response and virtual learning environments, or other stressors. Yet BSF has been able to pivot nimbly, making significant, targeted donations to families in crisis, while continuing support for programming like districtwide mental-health support and suicide prevention, **key to combating rising adolescent suicide rates**.

All sources of funding are imperative to students as the roles and responsibilities of schools and education change with the times. In addition to federal funding, and state and local levies, the role of school foundations must be acknowledged. With the challenges of the pandemic, the ubiquitous nature of technology, and the growing support students need to maintain well-being, entities like BSF have been imperative to the academic success of nearly 20,000 students. Until the Legislature can fully fund schools, levies and bonds will continuously need to be renewed to keep the schools standing and staffed. But even with these renewals, school foundations will continue to be called upon to bridge funding gaps, ensuring students receive the education they need — and deserve — to thrive.

Read the full article [here](#).

ABOUT THE BELLEVUE SCHOOLS FOUNDATION: Established in 1979, Bellevue Schools Foundation (BSF) is the 1st foundation dedicated to supporting public K-12 initiatives in Washington State. Our mission is to promote and fund the best possible learning opportunities for all students in Bellevue’s public schools. As a pillar in the community, the Foundation is uniquely positioned to be a catalytic agent of positive change and advancement in the public education sector. The Bellevue School District serves approximately 20,000 students, enrolled in 29 schools, and the Foundation’s investments allow students to achieve higher levels of academic success and social-emotional well-being, regardless of language, gender, race, socioeconomic status, and special needs. With over 100 languages spoken in the District and 125 countries of birth represented, Bellevue Schools Foundation is committed to expanding funding for racial equity and amplifying the diverse voices and strengths of students and families within the Bellevue community.

To learn more about our work and/or make a contribution, click [here](#).