

WSCC 2014 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

PRINCIPLES

Parents—the first and most important educators—have a fundamental right to choose the education best suited to the needs of their children, including public, private, and religious schools. Government, through such means as tax credits and publicly funded scholarships, should help provide resources for parents, especially those of modest means, to exercise this basic right without discrimination. Students in all educational settings should have opportunities for moral and character formation.

~ Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB, 2011

SAFE ENVIRONMENT: In 2013 a bill was passed that requires all teachers earning initial certification to complete a course on abuse that includes methods in teaching prevention. The WSCC is monitoring implementation of the new law and working with other advocates in developing the next steps to achieve prevention training for all students. At the present time there are no effective mandatory state requirements for teachers to provide instruction to students on the prevention of child abuse. However, there are effective programs that prevent and reduce child abuse, which could be integrated into existing curricula. WSCC has been working to require effective, age-appropriate education programs on the prevention of child abuse for all public and private school students.

EARLY LEARNING AND CARE: Catholic schools and Catholic Charities in Washington State provide an array of early learning and care programs, including pre-kindergarten programs, pre-school, and before and after school programs. 2013 legislation created an early learning system reform effort. The goals include safe, healthy and quality programs for children, reasonable licensing requirements for early learning and care programs, pre-school standards, and support for low-income families. WSCC will monitor the recommendations to ensure that any standards or requirements do not impede Catholic schools or Catholic Charities from serving low-income families.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION: With limited exceptions, Washington State law requires teachers in private schools to have the appropriate state certification. The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) is responsible for the rules and process of certification. The Board has no private school representation. WSCC will work with private school advocates to add a private school representative to the PESB.

TAX CREDITS: Legislation introduced in 2013 provides for an education investment tax credit for businesses that fund private school scholarships. The scholarships would be for students from low-income families and the tax credit would be equivalent to the scholarship. The bill was introduced too late for consideration in 2013, but advocates will seek to have it heard in 2014.

RECOMMENDATIONS

WSCC SUPPORTS:

- Mandating and funding child abuse prevention education programs for all students in K-12 schools
- Monitoring policy proposals relating to early learning programs (child care: pre-school, before and after school)
- Adding a private school representative to the Professional Educator Standards Board
- Creating a tax credit for businesses that fund private school scholarships