1. **Improve the Learning Assistance Program (LAP):** Ensuring student success requires strong partnerships between school, families, and the community—now more than ever. The Learning Assistance Program (LAP) aims to provide additional learning and social-emotional supports to increase student success. SOWA and our partners in the Youth Development Strategy Table encourage making several improvements to ensure that LAP is targeted, supplemental, and increases school-community partnerships. We seek the following changes to LAP:

   - Flexibility for districts while maintaining the intent of supporting academic and social-emotional learning and adding a linkage to the Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol.
   - Eliminate the 5% cap on the amount of funds districts can share with community-based organizations. Doing so will provide local control, maximum flexibility, and leveraging of community resources.
   - Sunlight requirements on how funds are spent at the state and local levels with assurances of no supplantation and clear metrics for student success not limited to assessment scores.
   - Tiered funding for High-Poverty LAP so that more students can benefit in more districts.

2. **Protect Funding for Youth Development:** Expanded learning and youth development professionals provide essential academic and social-emotional learning supports for youth while working to deliver the highest quality programs. Before and especially during the COVID pandemic, providers regularly face limited funding to pay staff living wages and benefits, while putting themselves at risk to work with youth in-person when school buildings closed. Protecting the small, but critical funding streams for expanded learning and youth development programs is still key to student success.

Specific budget items include, but are not limited to:

   - Sustaining and increasing school-age childcare rates
   - Academic-Innovation-Mentoring funding (AIM)
   - No Child Left Inside program
   - Dept. Of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) Adolescent Unit FTEs
   - Youth Recreational Fund and the Building Communities Fund for capital projects

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**What is Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELOs)?**
Afterschool, summer, and out-of-school-time programs that engage young people in high-quality enrichment, academic support, and overall development – vital opportunities to help them learn and grow outside the school day.
3. **Support for School-Age Child Care**: School-age childcare is a vital expanded learning opportunity (ELO) supporting academic growth and social-emotional learning for children ages five through 12. Most school-age childcare programs have been open throughout the pandemic making less than their K-12 counterparts. In order to sustain this field and to support their essential worker status, we are calling on lawmakers to approve the following requests for the 2021-23 biennium:

- **Subsidy**: Childcare subsidy rates are still below market value and families still pay a portion of childcare costs. At times, policymakers have required providers to be in Early Achievers (EA) for rate increases, but school-age only childcare is exempt from EA. The cost of childcare is much more than the subsidy, and providers struggle to stay in business and provide a living wage, especially during the pandemic. **Rate increases are needed and should be made available to all childcare providers.**

- **Quality**: Quality supports are urgently needed now. We request the state reinstate funding for the Expanded Learning Quality Initiative to provide appropriate supports for school-age providers in partnership with the Early Achievers system.

- **State Infrastructure and Support**: We urge our legislators to support the Fair Start for Kids Act and any legislation regarding childcare that includes specific language to support and strengthen school-age childcare along with early learning-focused childcare.

4. **Amplify School-Community Partnerships**: A student’s ability to be successful happens in and beyond the classroom. Access to additional learning time, social-emotional skill building, and basic need support is critical. This session, SOWA and our partners seek to encourage school and community partnerships in legislation related to early learning, K-12, and post-secondary pathways. Our state, district, and community partners have numerous tools to support students. When we work together, these tools become more effective and dynamic to meet every student’s needs.

5. **Support New Revenue**: Cuts to programs that support children and families will not only set our state back but will also hurt our economy. New and modernized revenue proposals are needed to ensure our state is strong for all Washingtonians – especially children and youth.

*School’s Out Washington* provides services for organizations to ensure all young people have safe places to learn and grow when not in school. SOWA is dedicated to building community systems to support quality afterschool, youth development, and summer programs for Washington’s children and youth ages 5 through young adulthood.