

King County Democrats 2024 Endorsement Questionnaire

Candidate name
Chris Reykdal
Candidate name pronunciation
Rake-Dahl
Candidate pronouns
He/Him
Campaign Filer_Name
Friends of Chris Reykdal
Campaign email
Chris4wakids@gmail.com
Campaign phone
(360) 790-3151
Number we can text or call if we have questions about this form
(360) 790-3151
Campaign website
https://www.chrisreykdal.org
Campaign Facebook page
https://www.facebook.com/chris4wakids?mibextid=ZbWKwL
LinkedIn
https://www.linkedin.com/feed/
Instagram
https://www.instagram.com/
X/Twitter
https://x.com/chrisreykdal?t=-4uklg5NvafPQScr9Amnxg&s=03
Link to candidate headshot
https://www.chrisreykdal.org/gallery
Campaign manager name
Sammi Payne
Campaign manager email
paynesamantha24@gmail.com
Campaign manager phone
(360) 918-1716
Consultant name
John Wyble
Consultant email
john@winpowerstrategies.com
What type of position are you running for?
State Executive

What position are you running for?

Superintendent of Public Instruction

Are you a Democrat?

Yes

Have you ever been a member of another political party?

No

Does your campaign have a code of conduct for staff and volunteers?

Yes

Will you share a link to your code of conduct?

<https://www.chrisreykdal.org>

How do you propose we fix the special education funding gap?

My team built a full "McCleary" funding plan six years ago. Much of it was adopted by the Legislature. A core element was to completely fund special education with state funds with no dependence on local levies. We have nearly doubled special education funding from \$2.2 billion per biennium to \$4.1 billion per biennium since I became Superintendent. My plan completely removed the funding cap that limits formula funds to districts based on 13.5% of their students needing specialized instruction. The Legislature has moved that to 16% (better), but it's artificial! The only legal answer is to completely remove the cap. Learning accommodation are a federal and state civil right. There should be no cap, and I will once again submit that to the next Governor and Legislature. We also need to increase the special education "Multiplier" again so that it is high enough to completely remove any dependence on local levies to funds student IEPs. Finally, we have keep growing inclusionary practices. A record high number of students with disabilities are now getting 80% or more of their learning time with the peers in general education classrooms. It requires funded PD for staff!

How will your office develop a funding formula for public schools and capital projects that distributes funds equitably across districts regardless of tax base?

The Legislature used parts of my budget plan to address the McCleary case. We added \$5 billion annually to basic education, but \$1 billion of that (\$1,000 per student) has been lost to inflation since 2019. My plan used progressive, reliable revenue – capital gains was the major piece. The Legislature ultimately chose the State property tax; but eventually we got capital gains to support early learning and school construction. The new model relies much less on local tax base differences – levies used to fund 30% of school budgets, now it is 17% on average.

My next biennial budget request will seek to fix the regionalization model (while still using state funds, not levies), will complete the task of fully funding special education, and will add a new student-weighted factor to drive more money to communities most in need. It's the most progressive action we can take to further close opportunity gaps.

For capital budgets, we must remove the 60% bond supermajority, I proposed this year – it's how districts access progressive state matching funds. My office has also led the charge to double small district modernization grants for our property poor districts.

What are your thoughts about how OSPI manages student and parent concerns regarding civil rights?

Since I became Superintendent, we have grown our general civil rights office and increased our special education team. The primary driver of this was to address more effectively civil rights concerns raised by parents and advocacy organizations. We haven't got everything we have sought from the Legislature, but those teams are better resourced today to respond to families, offer guidance and technical assistance to districts, and to investigate and intervene when cases require that action. This oversight role includes our school districts, educational service districts, and some private providers.

Where we have to get better is clearer information, language access, and other supports to help students, parents, and guardians to know the processes for raising concerns and complaints at the building, district, and state level. We will do this work as part of a massive review we are launching to ensure every district is adhering to all statutes related to student rights. The Legislature funded this project in the 2024 supplemental budget.

What oversight will you bring to homeschooling?

Our state is the ONLY state in the nation that does not require families to tell us what choice they are making for their child's learning until age 8. Most states require families to at least notify their local public school district where they will enroll their child in public school, private school, or homeschool at age 5 or 6. My office has requested this change of the Legislature multiple times. There have been bills over the last several years to fix this, but the right-wing explodes with propaganda that the bill will force families to enroll in public schools (not true), or that the "government" will track families once they notify districts (also not true).

So the truth is, Washington State does not have a record of homeschool students ages five, six, or seven unless a family has volunteered the information.

That said, we do attempt to provide homeschool families access to open educational resources, standards-based instructional materials, some access to professional learning, and more. We currently have very little statutory oversight of homeschooling in Washington State. Legislative Democrats only need simple majorities to strengthen these laws. It's time!

What will your office do about student absenteeism?

Washington students have an average daily attendance of 94%. However, there has always been a small group of students who miss a lot of school – chronically absent is defined as missing 10% over the year (18 days), even if they are excused absences. What gets reported is a rise in chronically absent students. The average student is missing 2-5 more days of school per year (a 1-3% average increase). So, if you were a student who missed 14 to 17 days of school pre-pandemic, but now you stay home when you have a fever, consistent with public health guidance, you likely trip over the 18-day threshold. Most of these kids "became a statistic" for doing the right thing. "Chronically absent" is a binary number (18+ days you are counted, 17 or fewer you aren't counted).

We researched this extensively over the last year and found that over 90% of kids who are newly defined as "chronically absent" triggered the 18 days because of excused absences (staying home when sick), not because they were unexcused (skipping school, etc.). That said, we have doubled down on our early warning indicator systems and family engagement about the importance of regular attendance. Attendance matters!

How will you address the lingering effects of the pandemic on students' learning loss and social skills?

Like "chronically absent", "learning loss" is a dangerous term without context. Average test scores dipped 2-4% in scale score points (one question on some tests). But we draw a binary line with tests. Most kids cluster at the average so even a 2-4% average score decline might cause 10-20% more kids to be "not proficient". Kids didn't "lose" learning, they grew in their learning, but for some of them at a slower pace of growth than the statistical pre-pandemic average. With targeted state and federal dollars, we are seeing gains once again in average math and readings scores. Losing \$1 billion in buying power is not helping. We need fully funded schools to maintain our interventions and learning recovery momentum.

Declining mental health and anxiety are the biggest risks for many kids when social skills are weak. At our request, the Legislature funded 600 staffing positions across the state, we built regional mental health networks, doubled down on our social-emotional learning standards, and have increased professional learning for adults in schools to identify kids at-risk or in crisis using early warning systems and referral networks.

Who are your primary advisors on public education issues?

My primary advisors are an executive team and cabinet team with experiences all across the education system. We have diversified that team from 7% people of color when I arrived to between 33% and 40% at any given time. They have deep knowledge of districts, communities, labor relationships, and an unwavering commitment to PUBLIC education. I have multiple advisory groups including students: I have two student groups that meet with me regularly. I also have formal advisory groups related to Special Education, Native Education, Multilingual and bilingual education, and more.

I also meet with a CBO roundtable comprised primarily of leaders of color who head statewide or regional education non-profits in partnership with local school districts. And of course, I meet regularly with all of the professional association leaders in the education sector — teacher and classified staff labor associations, superintendents, school directors, principals, and others who are hands-on in districts. I travel statewide to engage parents and leaders in their communities.

I also meet with several environmental groups related to my role on the Board of Natural Resources.

How will you support collective bargaining?

I have been a member of three unions, (Teamsters, Woodworkers, and WEA). There is no higher political value for me than the rights of workers to organize, bargain, and withhold their labor! So not only does my staff not intervene in local collective bargaining, but we also don't join legal actions when requested by districts against local bargaining units. Local control means local policy decision making AND local bargaining of flexible dollars.

We provide data and technical budget assistance to management and labor upon request. We focus on legislative intent of budget items, state accountability systems, and budget reporting requirements. We do not give bargaining advice or offer tactical strategy.

We have partnered over seven years on major budget and policy issues with WEA, PSE, SEIU 925, Teamsters, AFT, and others. Our budget processes include labor check-ins, and my executive team has a regularly scheduled labor roundtable meeting with statewide education-related labor leaders (and those on the management side). Impactful collective bargaining begins with ample resources and persistent open communication! We build budget requests that support kids and educators.

CERTIFICATION: The candidate hereby certifies that, to the best of their knowledge, the provided information is true and accurate.

Yes