WSCC 2010 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, 2007

SAFE ENVIRONMENT: State law requires adults in the education system to report suspected abuse. However, there are no mandatory state requirements for teachers to provide instruction to students on the prevention of child abuse. There are effective programs that prevent and reduce child abuse, which can be integrated into existing curricula. WSCC is working to gain passage of legislation previously introduced to require effective, age-appropriate education programs on the prevention of child abuse for all public school students.

BACKGROUND CHECKS: Private schools currently do not have access to full background check reports under state statute, and previously have paid more than public schools for State Patrol and FBI processing. Last session, legislation was adopted making the cost of background checks equal for public and private schools. WSCC will be working in collaboration with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to make permanent statutory amendments that allow private school administrators to receive and/or access the full background reports.

EARLY LEARNING AND CARE: Catholic schools and 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. The Department of Early Learning will present to the legislature a set of recommendations that outlines a plan for early learning from ages birth to eight. The goals include safe, healthy and quality programs for children, reasonable licensing requirements for early learning and care programs, the quality ratings and improvement system, pre-school standards, and support for low-income families. Legislators will be reviewing these recommendations in the session.

HEALTH AND SAFETY RULES: The State Board of Health has adopted a set of new health and safety rules for public and private schools. These rules include improvements to air quality, water quality, exposure to pesticides, etc. The costs associated with the improvements have been estimated to be in the hundreds of millions for public schools. Private schools will also have to incur the expense of school building changes to meet the new rules, which are a requirement of school approval in Washington State. Due to cost, the rule implementation has been delayed for public schools. WSCC will be monitoring implementation legislation to ensure that the rules are delayed for private schools and are equitably applied to them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

WSCC SUPPORTS:

- Mandating and funding child abuse prevention education programs for all students in K-12 public schools Changing the background check process to provide access to law enforcement reports
- Monitoring the state's eligibility and reimbursement system for state-subsidized child care
- Monitoring policy proposals relating to early learning programs (child care: pre-school, before and after-school)
- Monitoring legislation and rule-making relating to health and safety rules for all K-12 schools