

Learning Assistance Program (LAP)

What is LAP? – Washington’s Learning Assistance Program (LAP) was established in statute in 1987, and is part of the legislative definition of basic education. The program was designed to enhance educational opportunities for public school students in kindergarten through ninth grade who have been determined to be lacking in basic skills in reading, mathematics, language arts and readiness associated with those skills. These students needing additional services and support are identified through any of the established local or statewide norm-referenced assessments. In 1995 the Legislature allocated additional LAP funding based on socioeconomic status, though funding was still based largely on academic achievement. In 1999, the Legislature extended LAP funding to tenth and eleventh grade students.

Recent Changes–

With the passage of SB 5877 in 2004, LAP was reorganized to focus on the utilization of assessment data when developing programs. The intent was to help school districts understand the nature of their achievement gaps and guide districts in their efforts to provide effective and efficient program practices. Also, beginning in 2007-08, participating students will be expanded to kindergarten through twelfth grade. In 2005, lawmakers adopted HB 1066, which modified the distribution formula for LAP so that funds are now distributed based entirely on family income factors rather than assessment scores.

In 2008 SB 6673 added an additional enhancement for school districts in which more than 20 percent of students are eligible for and enrolled in the Transitional Bilingual Program and the percent of K-12 enrollment who are eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch also exceeds 40 percent. The legislature also authorized the use of LAP funds to support an “Extended Learning Opportunities Program” to help students in 11th and 12th grade who are not on track to meet graduation requirements.

Requirements on School Districts and the Superintendent of Public Instruction-

School districts must apply for LAP funds and must annually submit a program plan for use of those funds to the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) by July 1 of each year. A program plan must include specific elements that are listed in statute (28A.165 RCW.) This includes furnishing appropriate data and strategies for learning plans, how students will be identified for the program, how resources will be coordinated, and how the program is to be evaluated. The statute also lists the activities that may be supported by the Learning Assistance Program. Those activities are (1) extended learning time opportunities for students, (2) professional development for certificated and classified staff, (3) consultant teachers to assist in implementing effective instructional practices by teachers serving participating students, (4) tutoring support for participating students, and (5) outreach activities and support for parents of participating students. Once a program is approved by OSPI, the school district is eligible to receive state funds that are appropriated in the state budget for the LAP program. The current biennial budget provides about \$560 million for LAP. OSPI must monitor school district programs no less than once every four years to ensure that districts are meeting the requirements of an approved program.

Similarity to Title I – The LAP program is in many aspects parallel to the federal funding program Title I. Funding for Title I comes to school districts based on the number of children from low-income families enrolled, then the district distributes to its schools based on the same criteria. Title I funding is provided for similar projects to those that qualify for LAP funding, in addition to school improvement funds and services for neglected children. The programs work together to assist low-income, low-achieving students.