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Sen. Arnie Roblan
Rep. Jodi Hack

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Anne Bryan
Jessica Classen
Darin Drill
Gary Humphries
Krina Lee
Jeffery Matsumoto
Paula Nelson
Brian Reeder
Collin Robinson
Johanna Vaandering

JOINT INTERIM TASK FORCE ON CLASS SIZES
(HOUSE BILL 2928 (2015))
State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

To: Members of the 78th Legislative Assembly
Senate Interim Committee on Education
House Interim Committee on Education
Daron Hill, Legislative Administrator

From: Joint Interim Task Force on Class Sizes

Date: January 20, 2017

Re: Executive Summary and Progress Report

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE JOINT INTERIM TASK FORCE ON CLASS SIZES
AS REQUIRED BY HOUSE BILL 2928 (2015)**

Background

The Joint Interim Task Force on Class Sizes (Task Force) was established by House Bill 2928 (2015) and directed to study and report on the following:

- (a) Determine appropriate class sizes based on grade, types of students and subject area content.
- (b) Identify options to reduce class sizes, while taking into consideration:
 - a. The optimization of student learning outcomes and long-term impacts.
 - b. The enhancement of efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of educational services to students at all grade levels.
 - c. The allowance of sufficient flexibility for individual school districts and schools in determining maximum class sizes, particularly within the confines of budgetary limitations.
 - d. Cultural and historical appropriateness.
 - e. The incorporation of best practices for teaching students.

- (c) Identify the costs associated with the options identified under paragraph (b), above.
- (d) Submit this report by September 15, 2016.

Task Force Activity to Date

Appointments to the Task Force were not complete until June of 2016, rendering it impossible for the Task Force to complete its mandate by the report deadline in September. The members were able to meet seven times between July and December and agreed as to recommended class sizes and preparing this progress report in December, when the Task Force is scheduled to sunset.

At its meetings, the Task Force reviewed background materials, heard public testimony on the impact of large class sizes on students, educators, parents, administrators and communities, and engaged in open discussion.

Task Force Findings and Recommendations

1. Appropriate class sizes and costs estimates to achieve reductions have already been determined by the Quality Education Commission as reported in the [2016 Quality Education Model](#) (QEM). The Task Force wholeheartedly endorses the QEM and recommends the Legislature adopt and follow it.
2. Education is chronically underfunded and significant investment is required for course correction to undo systemic, interwoven, cumulative issues developed over decades. Crowded classrooms are one result, *and* an embedded, root contributor to these issues. The Task Force recommends the Legislature acknowledge these facts, follow the QEM, and make the investment needed to fund education appropriately: at least an additional \$1.992 billion for the 2017-2019 biennium above current service levels, whatever those levels are determined to be. (See [discussion of cost to maintain current service levels](#) at page 7.) The Task Force further recommends ongoing work among stakeholders and policymakers about the calculation used to determine the amount of funding needed to maintain current service levels, until consensus is achieved.
3. The Oregon Constitution requires funding at the QEM level, or in the alternative, a report explaining why not. The Task Force recommends constitutionally-required funding at the QEM level outright.
4. The Task Force appreciates that funds are not unlimited and recommends the Legislature consider all possibilities, and immediately redesign, redirect, and/or develop anew, sustainable, stable sources to fund education appropriately. The Task Force Further recommends prioritizing Oregon's most vulnerable children.

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This concludes the Executive Summary pursuant to ORS 192.245. This Executive Summary and the full Progress Report of the Joint Interim Task Force on Class Sizes are available electronically on the [Task Force's website](#) and through [Legislative Administration](#).

PROGRESS REPORT OF THE JOINT INTERIM TASK FORCE ON CLASS SIZES AS REQUIRED BY HOUSE BILL 2928 (2015)

Introduction

The following constitutes a full progress report from the Joint Interim Task Force on Class Sizes (the Task Force) as required by House Bill 2928 (2015). The complete record of Task Force meetings and all meeting materials can be found on [the Task Force's web pages](#).

As detailed below, appointments to the Task Force were not completed until June of 2016. Despite an ambitious schedule, it was simply not possible for the Task Force to complete its mandate and submit a report by the September 15, 2016 deadline specified in the measure. This progress report includes four parts: a Background section, a section on Impacts and Stories as related by Task Force members and stakeholders, a Conclusion, and Task Force Findings and Recommendations.

Part 1 - Background

Task Force Establishment and Mandate

In the late spring of 2015, the Legislature passed, and the Governor signed into law, House Bill 2928. That bill created the Task Force, described its membership of 15 persons, and directed it to do the following:

- (e) Determine appropriate class sizes based on grade, types of students and subject area content.
- (f) Identify options to reduce class sizes, while taking into consideration:
 - a. The optimization of student learning outcomes and long-term impacts.
 - b. The enhancement of efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of educational services to students at all grade levels.
 - c. The allowance of sufficient flexibility for individual school districts and schools in determining maximum class sizes, particularly within the confines of budgetary limitations.
 - d. Cultural and historical appropriateness.
 - e. The incorporation of best practices for teaching students.
- (g) Identify the costs associated with the options identified under paragraph (b), above.

The measure further directed the Task Force to submit a report, including any recommendations for legislation, to the interim committee of the Legislative Assembly related to education no later than September 15, 2016.

Task Force Membership

House Bill 2928 (2015) required the Task Force to be comprised of 15 members, with four of those to be legislators appointed by the House Speaker and Senate President. The remaining 11 members were to be appointed by the Governor. The legislative appointments were completed by July, 2015. The Governor appointed 10 members in June, 2016. Shortly thereafter, the Task Force began meeting. The 14 members listed here operated as the full membership of the Task Force:

Sen. Herman Baertschiger, Jr., Senate District 2
Anne W. Bryan, Chair, Beaverton School Board
Jessica Classen, Teacher (grades 9 – 12)
Darin Drill, District Superintendent, Cascade School District
Rep. Jodi Hack, House District 19
Gary L. Humphries, Teacher (grades 6 – 8)
Krina K. Lee, Salem Keizer Education Foundation
Jeffrey K. Matsumoto, Elementary Teacher, Forest Grove
Rep. Susan McLain, House District 29 (Chair)
Paula T. Nelson, Teacher (grades K – 5)
Brian D. Reeder, Oregon Dept. of Education
Collin A. Robinson, President, Oregon Parent Teacher Association
Sen. Arnie Roblan, Senate District 5
Johanna R. Vaandering, President of Oregon Education Association

Task Force Meetings and Activity to Date

The first meeting was held on July 19, 2016. At that meeting, the members adopted procedural rules and elected Representative Susan McLain as Task Force Chair. The Task Force met six more times, on the following dates: July 27, August 2, August 26, October 25, November 21, and December 6, 2016. Those meetings included multiple informational hearings, public hearings and work sessions. The informational hearings served to inform the members, and included invited testimony from educators, administrators, education experts, agency representatives and other education stakeholders. The public hearings provided an opportunity for anyone who might not otherwise have a chance to have input on the work of the Task Force; many educators and other members of the public took advantage of the opportunity and submitted testimony. Finally, the Task Force used the work sessions to draft the outline for the basis of this final report, as well as to adopt the report itself.

The Task Force reviewed literature, expert testimony, and research findings on the impact of class size in two distinct phases. First, objective studies and expert testimony were reviewed. This information contained national-level, as opposed to Oregon-specific, information. Most of

the information was based on research on class size including: the [Tennessee Study of Class Size in the Early School Grades by Frederick Mosteller](#) in the 1990s, the Tennessee Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio project (STARs), and research by Charles Achilles, the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), and Richard Rothstein. The reviewed testimony and literature indicated that increased class size generally has a negative impact on almost all metrics tracked, including retention, achievement, engagement, teaching evaluations and teaching effectiveness.

The Task Force then reviewed testimony, stories and information provided by various Oregon-specific sources, mostly current and former educators and administrators, including educators, principals and Task Force members working in the field. The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) provided information and reports based on their annual data collection. ODE also provided the work of the Quality Education Commission (QEC), as related to the Quality Education Model (QEM). This block of information indicated that while there was no single metric dramatically impacted by larger class size, there were many smaller negative impacts that combined to create a large negative impact. This negative impact was experienced by all who participated in the daily activities of schools, most notably Oregon students. The members of the Task Force found this information to be especially valuable and persuasive.

Appropriate Class Size as Determined by the Quality Education Model

House Bill 2928, directs the Task Force to “determine appropriate class sizes based on grade, types of students and subject area content.” The Task Force has determined that appropriate class sizes are already captured by the QEM and the work of the QEC.

From the Executive Summary of the [Quality Education Model 2016](#) Final Report:

The Quality Education Model (QEM) was developed as a research and data-driven tool to evaluate educational practices and estimate the level of funding required to meet Oregon’s educational goals. The model provides information that promotes a more informed dialogue among policy-makers, educators, the public, and other stakeholders, using national research as well as lessons learned from the analysis of Oregon schools. The goal of the Quality Education Commission, which maintains and enhances the QEM and assists others using the model for policy analysis, is to promote a better-informed decision-making process that leads to better prepared students, a more equitable system, more successful citizens, and a more productive economy in the state.¹

The Task Force discussed the QEM recommendations, and an appropriate definition of class size. The members concluded that class size should refer to the number of students in a given course or classroom. Class size as such is different and distinct from student to teacher ratio, which is calculated by dividing the number of students who attend a school by the number of

¹ Quality Education Model 2016 Final Report, (Quality Education Commission, 2016), 9.

teachers in the institution. While both measures are important, the Task Force followed the direction of the enacting legislation to focus on class size.

The QEM includes models for school facilities identified as Individual Prototype Schools. “The Individual Prototype Schools incorporate what research and best practices have shown to be most effective in improving student achievement and provide a level of resources that adequately promotes and sustains that goal.”²

The QEM recommends the following regarding class sizes in prototype schools³:

Elementary School, 340 Students:

Class size average of 20 in kindergarten and grade 1

Class size of 23 in grades 2-3

Class size of 24 in grades 4-5

Middle School, 500 Students:

Class size average of 22, with a maximum of 29 in core classes

High School, 1,000 Students:

Class size average of 21, with a maximum of 29 in core classes

Testimony heard by the Task Force indicates that most schools include class sizes above the recommended average. In fact, it is quite common – most Oregon students are in classes far larger than recommended:

- 82% of K-1 students are in classes with more than 20 students
- 72% of 2-3 students are in classes with more than 23 students
- 75% of 4-5 students are in classes with more than 24 students
- 95% of 6-8 students have at least one core class with more than 22 students,
and 53% of 6-8 students are enrolled in core classes that are *all* over the threshold
- 95% of 9-12 students have at least one core class with more than 21 students,
and 45% of 9-12 students are enrolled in core classes that are *all* over the threshold
- 73% 6-12 students have at least one core class with more than 29 students (QEM max),
and 9% of 6-12 students are enrolled in core classes that are *all* over the maximum

Testimony also indicated that additional pressure at the higher grade levels resulted in even larger classes. For example, the desire to keep core class sizes smaller (below 22 students), often resulted in very large non-core classes, sometimes as great as 40 to 60 students.

Because class size research has examined the impact of the difference between regular (22-25) versus small (13-17) class sizes, little is known about the specific impacts of class sizes as large as those that are typical in Oregon. The Task Force recognizes that Oregon has both the largest class sizes and the fourth lowest graduation rates in the nation.

² Ibid, 51.

³ Ibid

Cost to Reduce Class Sizes to Recommended Levels

The Task Force concluded that the QEM provides accurate guidance for the cost of reducing class sizes. The QEM anticipates a \$1.992 billion “funding gap” for the 2017-2019 biennium based on current service levels, as identified in the Governor’s 2017-2019 budget. Of that amount, the QEM estimates that \$361 million would be required to reduce class sizes in elementary schools to levels recommended by the model.⁴ While additional work is needed to determine costs for any specific methods recommended to reduce class sizes (as required by House Bill 2928), this figure provides a valuable baseline for future discussions.

The Task Force acknowledges that estimating the amount of funding necessary to maintain current service levels is challenging. Estimated costs to maintain current service levels range from \$8.015 billion (Governor’s 2017-19 budget) to \$8.4 billion (Oregon Association of School Business Officials (OASBO)). A subgroup of Task Force members met to try and determine the most accurate figure to maintain current service levels, and endorsed the larger amount calculated by OASBO (\$8.4 billion). The larger Task Force engaged in robust discussion and recognized the importance of arriving at an accurate, agreeable figure. The Task Force recommends continuing the conversation until agreement is obtained. Regardless of what the most accurate cost is determined to be, the QEM report anticipates at least an additional \$1.992 billion for the 2017-2019 biennium, over and above that cost, would be required to reduce class sizes to recommended levels.

Part 2 - Impacts and Stories

The following represents the findings of the Task Force based on materials reviewed and testimony received:

Oregon’s class sizes have been far too high for far too long. According to the 2016 QEM, Oregon is still far from meeting our class size goals. In the short time that this Task Force has met, we heard numerous stories from educators, parents, administrators, and community members. Each story exemplifies the various outcomes of large class sizes on students, on parents, and on educators. Every educator wants every student to succeed, but when there are too many students in the room it becomes impossible to meet every need.

Relationships

Students

The student-teacher relationship is central to the classroom setting. The number of students for which a teacher is responsible changes that relationship. It is difficult to create crucial one-on-

⁴ Ibid, 57.

one time with students class size increases. As hard as teachers try to connect, there is only so much time in each day.

The Task Force heard numerous examples of how teachers and students missed out on creating lasting relationships because there simply was not time in the day. Representative McLain was a teacher for 42 years. She mentioned one student in a class of over forty who said upon returning from an absence, “I didn’t think you would miss me.” Student engagement hinges on student-teacher relationships.

These relationships are central to education no matter the setting. Sarah Coyle, an online and in-class teacher for the Hillsboro School District, testified before the Task Force: “The majority of students that participate online are more fragile than traditional students.” She spoke about students who have mental and physical health issues, have working families, are working to take care of their families, or are parents. “Even online, it is important that teachers create deliberate connections with students to provide support.”

Parents

Education happens beyond the classroom. It is important that teachers know their students and their home lives. Kristen Manning, a teacher in the Salem-Keizer School District, explained, “You see, as teachers, we do so much more than teach. We provide social services, family services, we love the children, we hurt with the children. We deeply care.”

As hard as teachers try, they cannot meet every parent or guardian. The more students in the classroom, the more parents or guardians to meet. Teacher Kathy Newman explained,

Another common casualty due to large class sizes includes our most important partners – parents/legal guardians. When I have a 50% increase in student load . . . that 50% doesn’t just represent the student, each student comes with their own system – parents (sometimes multiples), siblings, etc. I try to communicate with and get to know each system because I understand each system has an impact on my students. Twenty-four or twenty-five systems are manageable – over thirty, not so much. The result? **Parents receive less communication or the communication is short** – or I focused on the ‘high-flyers’ – I have to cut out the “happy news” – there are fewer newsletters and class-wide communications or the communication happening is more one-size-fits-all, as opposed to individual follow up and verbal progress updates on individual students. Our children are missing out!

Community

Our schools are a part of our community. Interactions between our students and other parts of the community are incredibly important in terms of educational field trips, job shadows, career fairs and other opportunities. Task Force member and elementary school teacher Jeff Matsumoto explained that community partners are less likely to invite a class of students to

visit a facility if the class size is large. The ease of access to facilities is very different when there are fifteen students versus forty.

Absentee rates

In May of 2016 the Chief Education Office issued a [Chronic Absenteeism Report](#), identifying factors and recommendations to begin to address chronic absenteeism in Oregon. A lack of positive relationships was linked to chronic absenteeism and large class sizes were identified as a systematic barrier.

In preparation for the report, the Chief Education Office interviewed parents, students and teachers about why students may be absent. Parents identified class size because smaller classes offered an opportunity for teachers to stay in touch better with families and provide additional one-on-one support. One mother shared her frustration by saying,

[My daughter] is not able to get [individual attention] sometimes, because there are so many students. She might be scared to ask a question or something sometimes, because they are just going to say, “We will get to the questions later,” or the teacher is busy to where she doesn’t have the time to sit down and actually explain something to her. She has to come home and I have to hear it later, that she is having challenges in math or something. Luckily, there are the afterschool programs, like [the culturally specific program she attends], helping her to work on that, because in the classes it is hard to get that explanation sometimes, because the teacher has to move on. One student has a question and then others have questions, too. Sometimes a teacher will make that time to answer that, but with the large amount of students, it is hard to get to everyone.⁵

The students interviewed for the Chronic Absenteeism Report complained of similar problems. Students were compassionate towards their teachers who were unable to manage classroom dynamics. They recognized that class size makes a teacher's job even harder. They said it would be “easier to learn with less people” and that large class sizes take their toll. One student explained what it was like to have twenty-eight students in a class, “I didn’t even know everybody’s name. Show up to class when the bell rings, this is what the work is, do the work and then go home. Then I started to just hate school.”⁶

(Also in 2016, the Legislature passed House Bill 4002, directing the Department of Education and the Chief Education Office to jointly develop and implement a collaborative statewide plan for tackling chronic absenteeism, prioritizing pilot programs that use trauma-informed approaches. [A report summarizing the plan can be found here](#). It was not discussed by the Task Force.)

⁵ Chronic Absenteeism Report, 56

⁶ Ibid

Space

One of the most visible impacts of large class sizes is the physical limitations of putting too many students in one classroom. There are challenges associated with whole-class activities due to physical limitations of the room. One teacher, Gene Trowbridge, explained some limitations she has seen, "I often cannot have a traditional circle time; the room does not allow 30 wiggly 5 year olds to sit down safely together."

Teachers are not the only ones to notice the crowded space. Steve Frank submitted written testimony about his elementary-aged daughter's experience in school. She told him, "It's hard to walk around because there wasn't enough room" and "It would get really noisy really easily." These spaces are unwelcoming to students and counterproductive to a productive learning environment.

Resources

Larger class size limits access to resources. Teachers testified that their students often have to share materials in the classroom, like books and other instructional tools. Teacher Kathy Newman testified about her experience:

The year my colleague and I had 36 and 37 students, when we got to the computer lab during our allotted time, several of the students had to double up with others.

Doubling up on computers is only part of the problem. Large class sizes make it too dangerous for certain labs or projects. Many of the hands-on-projects that are central to science and engineering projects are not possible in large class size situations.

Safety

Oregon's classrooms are currently experiencing an explosion of classroom safety issues, impacting both students and staff, due to a complex mix of factors that at least in part is exacerbated by overcrowded classrooms, especially in the lower elementary grades. These problems have caused young children to run out of the classroom, have violent behavioral outbursts that lead to "room clears" and injuries, and have resulted in property damage and interruptions of student learning. While solving this cluster of problems must be multi-faceted, at least one part of the solution will be an infusion of resources that enable districts to bring down class sizes and enable these students to have more personalized learning and interventions as needed.

Ability to adapt to student need

As the number of students in a classroom increases, the individual attention decreases. Robert Havrilla was one of the first teachers to testify. Before testifying, he spoke with eight other teachers at his high school. Robert spoke of how teachers recognized that large class sizes changed their ability to recognize and adapt to students' life circumstance:

With more students, **the needs of each student can get lost**. I have personally had the experience that I find out that I have a student who is homeless, has a parent in prison, a parent going to prison, are the only working member of their family, has been subjected to different types of abuse, harming themselves, or have learning challenges that have not yet been identified. I have found out this information later than I should, and there have been times I've found out too late. Why? With the focus on standards, the increased evaluation, and the large class sizes, there is just simply not enough time to quickly get to know each student as we should. The whole student should be our focus.

Aside from life circumstances, there are other individualized educational needs that can present themselves in any classroom. Educators need the time to adapt to each student, to their learning styles and needs, to their personal backgrounds and home life.

Feedback

Robert Havrilla's conversation with eight of his colleagues revealed that class sizes affected all subjects in similar ways. He is a Social Studies teacher, but he also spoke with Math, Science, English, Art, PE, Advanced Placement teachers. The effects of large class sizes are clear; students receive less from teachers because they are spread more thinly. Robert described this with a detailed example:

Students are unable to get the timely and quality feedback necessary for sustained learning. Most of the teachers I talked to have the same class load as I, about 200 students. If my students write one paragraph, it will take me about two minutes to read that paragraph and assess what feedback is needed and another one to three minutes to give the quality feedback. There is no way for me to have those paragraphs completed to give students feedback the next day. If I am doing nothing else after school like preparing for future classes, helping students, taking care of responsibilities that go with being a husband and a father, it might take two to three days to write that feedback which goes against the need for prompt feedback for sustained learning.

Teacher Kathy Newman also spoke to feedback in her testimony. As a teacher with over 25 years of experience in classrooms of first through sixth graders, Kathy said:

Students need deep, meaningful practice and quality verbal and written feedback. They are learning how to do things in different ways with different expectations. The additional individual attention that is needed is probably not happening at a level that teachers or students find adequate. Our children are missing out!

Student achievement

Graduation rate

Oregon's graduation rates are among the worst in the nation. There are a number of measurable and unmeasurable ways that graduation rate is influenced by large class size. Absentee rates are a direct link. The Chronic Absenteeism Report states that chronic absenteeism as early as 6th grade negatively impacts high school graduation rates.

Test scores

Because no current research exists on class sizes as large as those in Oregon, the Task Force did not see direct evidence that larger class size lowers test scores. We did hear that large class sizes decrease one-on-one instruction time, hurt relationships, lead to sharing limited resources, and other factors that affect test scores. One teacher, Kathy Newman, warned that even if test scores were unaffected, test scores themselves are "a very narrow window into the experiences of students for that year."

Teacher/Educator experience

Educators are passionate people who want to help students succeed. Large class sizes have a negative impact on educator experience. Task Force member and teacher Jeff Matsumoto explained, "This is what keeps teachers up at night." Many teachers suggested that the feeling that they are not doing all they can for students leads to burnout.

Multiple members of the Task Force pointed to increased class size as a reason why their profession has a retention problem. Teacher Jim Maniback testified that stress and large class sizes were the reason teachers left the classroom. Another teacher, Kristen Manning, that came to testify explained why,

[My son's] teacher was amazing. She was patient, kind, and worked much harder than she would have had to with fewer children in her care. She was admirable under pressure and her students got her best every day. However, if she continues to have those kind of numbers year-over-year, how much longer before she burns out? How much longer before we lose from our ranks an educational superstar?"

The increased workload is tiring. Many teachers testified that the workload increases that come with larger class sizes are exhausting. It means teachers stay late, work at home, and lose

precious time with their own families. It means teachers are constantly working in high stress conditions.

When class sizes are reduced, the entire school benefits. Task Force member Darin Drill told his district's story. As Superintendent of Cascade School District, he saw the change in school culture. All staff were less stressed and happier to be at work. By reducing class sizes, Oregon can help students and educators reach their full potential.

Equity

Large classes have different impacts on different students. For those students that have involved parents with the ability to tutor their children, they can adapt to large class sizes. Unfortunately, many children do not have that opportunity. Mother and teacher Gene Trowbridge spoke to the task force about the difference in her children's class size. Her eldest had a kindergarten class of twenty-two students with an aide and her youngest, seven years later, had a class of twenty-five students with no aide. She brought up an incredibly valuable point. While her son's classroom experience was much more ideal, her daughter would be fine. Gene understood things could have been worse for her daughter:

We know that the students in higher income communities have resources and supports that children in poverty do not have, we have this opportunity to give these children additional supports through smaller class sizes.

Teacher Jim Maniback made the same point that smaller class sizes benefit low income students the most. This point was reiterated by Task Force members and nearly every teacher that testified. Large class sizes disproportionately disadvantage at-risk-youth. Teacher Kristen Manning emphasized this point to task force members as well:

All children suffer with large class sizes. They all need more. But those who are most vulnerable, those most likely to drop out later, those most likely to fall behind, our youngest students, they need reduced class sizes the most. They need a fighting chance at success.

Oregon's education system should utilize our equity lens to ensure ALL students have the support they need to succeed. The state has developed and implemented programs that work towards that goal. Class size may be one of the most effective ways to address this problem.

Miscellaneous

At its final two meetings the Task Force heard a variety of additional information, including: information about a pending report from the Department of Education looking at expenditure variations among school districts, as required by Senate Bill 1541 (2016), that is due to issue

December 15, 2016; revisiting QEM staffing suggestions for higher-needs children and youth; receiving additional testimony on blended classrooms and classroom composition; and information on the [Oregon Rising](#) public outreach project and the [TELL Oregon](#) survey. Much of both the anecdotal and the evidentiary data is mutually reinforcing, complementary, and supportive of the QEM and the Task Force’s findings and recommendations; particularly as to the systemic and integrated nature of the class size issue.

Part 3 – Conclusion

House Bill 2528 (2015) required the Task Force to accomplish four things: determine appropriate class size, identify costs, identify specific options for the reduction of class size, and submit a report with recommendations. As of the writing of this report, only the third task remains.

In the limited time available, the Task Force endorsed the recommendations of the Quality Education Model for Individual Prototype Schools (QEM) with regard to appropriate class sizes and the corresponding cost estimates to achieve recommended class sizes (\$361 million for elementary schools). The Task Force endorses the QEM and recommends that it serve as a baseline for future discussions.

Large class size is a systemic problem – a root contributor to other problems – and it requires significant investment to repair. It is embedded and interwoven with other challenges, creating a complex, *cumulative* negative impact across the breadth of the educational community: student/teacher, parent/teacher and student/parent communications and relationships suffer; opportunities for direct interactions are lacking or don’t exist; opportunities to engage the community are lost; resources and teachers are stretched too thin and exhausted; students, parents and teachers experience anonymity, frustration and futility; large class size is linked to chronic absenteeism; safety is compromised; learning is compromised; achievement and test scores are affected; graduation rates are affected; and the list goes on.

Of particular concern to the Task Force is the disparate impact on Oregon’s most vulnerable children: all the negative cumulative effects of large class size are compounded for children with the least resources and opportunity. These are also the children who could benefit the most from education, which in turn would result in the greatest gains for society as a whole.

While the Legislature has taken steps to solve some issues in isolation, such as absenteeism and graduation rates, the Task Force strongly recommends that the state acknowledge that large class size is a systemic, integrated, root problem that should be addressed directly rather than by applying Band Aids to individual symptoms; that education is chronically underfunded and changing course demands significant, immediate additional investment of \$1.992 billion above current service levels for the 2017-2019 biennium, whatever those levels are determined to be (see [discussion of cost to maintain current service levels](#) on page 7); that all possible funding

sources and alternatives should be explored and developed without delay; that Oregon should prioritize its most vulnerable children; and that, so long as the state’s Constitution allows for an “out” in the form of a reporting requirement in lieu of adequate funding, education may never be adequately funded.

Part 4 – Task Force Findings and Recommendations

1. Appropriate class sizes and costs estimates to achieve reductions have already been determined by the Quality Education Commission as reported in the [2016 Quality Education Model](#) (QEM). The Task Force wholeheartedly endorses the QEM and recommends the Legislature adopt and follow it.
2. Education is chronically underfunded and significant investment is required for course correction to undo systemic, interwoven, cumulative issues developed over decades. Crowded classrooms are one result, *and* an embedded, root contributor to these issues. The Task Force recommends the Legislature acknowledge these facts, follow the QEM, and make the investment needed to fund education appropriately: at least an additional \$1.992 billion above current service levels for the 2017-2019 biennium, whatever those levels are determined to be. (See [discussion of cost to maintain current service levels](#) at page 7.) The Task Force further recommends ongoing work among stakeholders and policymakers about the calculation used to determine the amount of funding needed to maintain current service levels, until consensus is achieved.
3. The Oregon Constitution requires funding at the QEM level, or in the alternative, a report explaining why not. The Task Force recommends constitutionally-required funding at the QEM level outright.
4. The Task Force appreciates that funds are not unlimited and recommends the Legislature consider all possibilities, and immediately redesign, redirect, and/or develop anew, sustainable, stable sources to fund education appropriately. The Task Force Further recommends prioritizing Oregon’s most vulnerable children.

* * *

We can do better. - Kristen Manning
Our children are missing out! - Kathy Newman
The whole student should be our focus. - Robert Havrilla