

3/7/17

Chair Doherty and members of House Committee on Education,

As Executive Director of Special Programs for the Bend- La Pine Schools, I am providing testimony in response to HB 2543 and providing you with information on how it might unfairly treat school districts that have systematically decreased their Special Education enrollment through successful implementation of Response to Intervention (RtI) and other strategies.

During the 2008-2009 school year, the Bend – La Pine Schools identified 14.6% students as having a disability under the IDEA. That year, we implemented a Response to Intervention system. Our system has put supports in place to ensure great core academic instruction, as well as systematic interventions for student that struggle academically and behaviorally. The result is that student academic outcomes have improved and we have seen a sharp decline in our Special Education enrollment. For the past two years, we have held steady at 10.8% students identified with a disability under the IDEA (see attached chart). The decrease SPED enrollment is a direct result of improved instruction and curricula in the classroom, improved and systematic interventions, data based decision making, and a laser focus on professional learning and best practices. We have restructured departments and created new roles to support the ongoing work of RtI. We have and hired teachers and administrators specifically to help implement this work. RtI is the framework by which all programs and initiatives are applied.

Without additional funding, HB 2543 unfairly penalize school districts that have worked to improve services and decrease Special Education enrollment. Moreover, it would de-incentivize these types of initiatives in the future and I predict we will start seeing a steady rise in our Special Education population statewide.

That said, we all know there are higher costs associated with educating students that experience disability, and I applaud any effort to provide more financial resources. For example, the increased funding in the high cost grant has been very beneficial for the Bend – La Pine Schools. It targets specific cost drivers and helps ease the burden when we have students that need intensive programming. Targeted support, rather than broadening the cost pool is a better strategy in the long run because it directly benefits students by incentivizing districts to provide comprehensive programming to high needs students.

Thank you,

Sean Reinhart
Executive Director of Special Programs
Bend – La Pine Schools

Bend - La Pine Special Education Enrollment Trend

