



PRESENTATION FOR THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON STUDENT SUCCESS

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By John Larson, OEA President

Oregon's public schools have weathered wave after wave of education reforms over the years, answering the question of what our students need in different ways, with various approaches, and in keeping with changing politics and demographics. Along with the new policy ideas have come new expectations, new standards, and new accountability metrics. Oregon's mid-2000s update on its proficiency standards have modified how the state determines student success in this system. The standards are grounded in the goal of **maximizing student achievement** in a broad range of fundamental skills and coursework leading to high-school diploma attainment, post-secondary education, technical/professional training, and good citizenship. These are good guiding objectives of Oregon's public education system.

Changes to Oregon's revenue system, which have occurred concurrently with the implementation of education reform, have not kept pace with the educational expectations, however. This has resulted in **reduced budgets**, even as expectations for success have ratcheted up. To add to the challenge, our student demographics are changing:

- More than 50% of our students are low income.
- Nearly 23% of our students fit the federal poverty definition.
- Two-thirds of our kids have an "ACES" score of 4 or higher.
- Nearly 23,000 of our children are homeless.
- Our classes are impossibly crowded in some places, options limited in others, and time on task challenged by a short school year – all of which impact these other problems students face.
- Disrupted learning has reached a crisis proportion in all areas of the state, with the social determinants of health manifesting in student outbursts, distraction, fleeing, and chronic absenteeism. Our children are hurting.

In addition to our academic desires for our youth, educators realize that an increasingly critical part of our education mission must be to address these needs in the school setting. These add additional cost pressures.

As this joint committee considers its work, we ask you to keep these facts in mind.

We also ask you to rely on a tool that has often been ignored in policy circles, even though the Legislature has invested in its creation and updating every year since its 1999 inception. The **Quality Education Model** is a cost-estimating system developed specifically to advise policymakers of the price of our educational ambitions. **This monumental effort, into which the state devoted many hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars in research, resulted in a nationally recognized estimating tool** which serves as a means of calculating the cost impacts of educational best practices and optimal service delivery. In short, it already answers many of the questions this body was created to explore. More importantly, the QEM relies on the contributions of policy experts and educators to base its recommendations on a blend of optimal educational strategies to

meet student needs. It combines, in academic terminology, the best of the “market basket” and “professional judgment” models of costing approaches.

A note of caution, however: its list of recommended strategies **is not to be cherry-picked**. It is the combination of best practices that makes for a comprehensive educational program able to serve diverse student needs and diverse communities. This is also in keeping with the federal “ESSA” vision of comprehensive educational programming.

Based on the QEM’s recommendations, Oregon’s current biennial budget is \$1.6 billion less than the investment level recommended to help 90 percent of students achieve our educational benchmarks. We have long urged lawmakers to commit to closing this gap between actual and more-sufficient funding. (A parenthetical: we have never authentically estimated how much it would cost to truly meet a 100 percent goal, because that “last mile” – the 10% whose needs are so severe – is inestimably costly. Though we have a 40-40-20 “aspirational” goal that aims for the 100% mark, it has come with silence as to the cost of attempting to attain that marker.)

As you move forward to answer the question of what our public-school students most need from their education system, how much it would cost to offer it, and where to find the resources to close the **investment** gap, we ask that you make sure that your solutions align with the QEM, and not steer us on a course that abandons, competes with, or distracts us from reaching its ambitions for Oregon’s school children.

Some of the key elements of the QEM are these:

- * Full-day Kindergarten
- * Smaller class sizes
- * Extra staffing supports (librarians, counselors, etc.)
- * Equity for diverse student groups (ELL, sped, SES)
- * Data/Formative Assessment
- * Time on task (targeted help)
- * Professional Development
- * Staff planning/collaboration
- * Rich/varied enrichment and Extracurricular activities
- * Personalized education plans
- * 1:250 counselor/student ratios

Additionally, we would add that summer learning, school nutrition, a diverse array of enrichment and extra-curricular programs, and career-technical programs ought to be a part of any comprehensive educational program in order to meet the current needs of our children’s interests and capacities and demands of the 21st century U.S. economy. On the support side, our children need more wraparound services, mental health services, and school nurses.

Thank you for considering the thoughts of our 47,000 members as you do this important work.