



WORKING PAPER

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A Post-COVID-19 Blueprint for State Education Policy and Oregon Children

About Us

Foundations for a Better Oregon (FBO) is a nonprofit organization jointly led by a coalition of Oregon's largest philanthropic foundations. Since 2004, FBO has championed a strong and equitable public education system through the Chalkboard Project. Working in partnership with community, policymakers, and philanthropy, Chalkboard uses the power of advocacy, convening, research, and storytelling to ensure Oregon's public systems support every child to learn, grow, and thrive.

Letter to Governor Brown

On April 29, Chalkboard joined over twenty community-based organizations, culturally specific service providers, statewide education advocates, and business groups in a letter calling on Gov. Kate Brown and state leaders to put children at the forefront when mapping Oregon's road to recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

Facing a \$2.7 billion shortfall in the current budget cycle and a possible special legislative session, the coalition is urging state leadership to uphold their commitment to educational equity, and take steps to mitigate COVID-19's disproportionate impact by directing resources to Oregon's most vulnerable children.

The letter outlines the core values that must drive Oregon's short- and long-term recovery plan for children and public education: **deep commitment to equity; meaningful community engagement; cross-sector partnership; culturally responsive and sustaining approaches; and holding ourselves accountable to making progress for children.**

A Post-COVID-19 Blueprint for State Education Policy

Rooted in the joint letter's core values, Chalkboard has developed a blueprint of critical, interconnected policies to help Oregon rebuild and reimagine key system elements that will put children, families, and the state in a stronger position to recover.

This blueprint envisions state education policy setting the course for a recovery that is both universal and targeted. After listening to and collaborating with a broad array of education stakeholders and community partners, we know Oregon must address what every child needs right now and prioritize reaching children with the greatest need for support.

Chalkboard has identified **critical policy priorities that address interconnected challenges** across the public education system during this crisis. Many of these policy priorities draw from the Student Success Act (HB 3427), and call for strategies to **eliminate unacceptable disparities** in our early learning and K-12 systems and provide a well-rounded education to every child.

Together, these policy priorities will form **a cohesive statewide blueprint for our children's long-term recovery**, and guide **a collaborative approach** to designing specific policy mechanisms and making difficult budget decisions. When strong state policy is matched with local innovation and implementation, we can move together as one state to ensure an even, equitable recovery.



Invest in Early Learning

Ensuring children truly recover from the disruption and trauma of this crisis requires supporting children during their most critical years of childhood development. To that end, **Oregon needs to keep making progress on building out our early learning system and building alignment with the K-12 system.**

Oregon's early childhood programs, services, and workforce are examples of the kind of **family-centered supports** that we need throughout our public education system. The state must continue investing in the early childhood system with programs and strategies that **target children and families most at risk**, and **expand culturally specific and culturally sustaining services.**

Support Educators

Helping students sustain strong, supportive relationships with their teachers is critical to children's mental health and learning during this crisis. State policy must consider:

- Keep up Oregon's momentum toward building a **diverse educator workforce** that reflects our student population.
- **Support educators of color** who are best positioned to support historically underserved students and families through this crisis and beyond.
- Create and bolster structures that **support teachers to innovate and adapt to distance learning**, particularly in rural Oregon.

Ensure Continuity of Learning During COVID-19

Historically underserved children and families are disproportionately bearing the brunt of this crisis and more likely to face barriers to access distance learning. We also know that nutrition services and mental health supports are critical to ensuring children can continue to learn during this crisis.

Oregon must help educators in every corner of the state meet the academic and social-emotional needs of our most vulnerable children by mandating and investing in local adoption of distance learning models that:

- Are **developed and delivered in partnership** with students, families, community-based organizations, and educators.
- Ensure **access to curriculum** via multiple modalities and languages.
- Prioritize the **physical, mental, and social-emotional health** of students and educators.
- Expand opportunities for **meaningful connection** between students and educators.

Build State-Level Frameworks for Equity in Education

If guided by a statewide strategy framework, school districts and communities can address local complexity and design unique solutions while ensuring we're all moving in tandem to support an equitable recovery for children.

Oregon's statewide equity plans—the African American/Black Student Success Plan, the American Indian/Alaska Native Student Success Plan, and the Latino Student Success Plan—are essential strategy frameworks that **support vulnerable children while reinforcing the value of community engagement and self-determination**. We must sustain investment in these plans and continue developing their infrastructure.

The Student Success Act is another critical statewide strategy framework for advancing equity, but its impact will be severely constrained by a sharp decrease in corporate activity tax (CAT) revenue. **To avoid exacerbating the inequities laid bare by this crisis, it is more important than ever that state policy ensure school districts are:**

- **Directing resources** to children with the greatest need for support.
- **Meaningfully engaging students, families, and communities** in decision-making and budgeting processes—especially those who are historically underserved and disproportionately impacted by this crisis.
- **Partnering with community-based organizations** to deliver learning supports and other critical services, such as food services and mental health supports.
- Gauging how we are making **meaningful and equitable progress** for our children.