

Rotating EAC Director Melissa Wilk  
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Education Advancement Council: Co-Chair Supporting Novice Educators Work Group

Writing in support of Education Advancement Council

My name is Melissa Wilk and I am a first grade teacher with Glide School District in Douglas County. I also am one of seven teachers serving on the Educator Advancement Council (EAC). We serve to continue work uplifting teacher voice and creating more equitable access to state supports for all new teachers. As a public educator serving in a rural community, the work being done by the Council is extremely important in understanding how to best provide for Oregon's educators in small and remote school districts.

I am thankful for the committee for inviting the public to be a part of this process as you learn more about the work of the Educator Advancement Council and regret not being there in person today. At this very moment I am serving our students in a classroom similar to the ones of my colleagues. While our district is extremely supportive in assisting our educators many of the items in the room used for teaching were bought out of my own pocket. \$1,523.00 to be exact. I spend an additional \$30.00 a month on healthy snacks and teaching materials to provide a best practice learning environment for some of my most vulnerable students totaling up to an additional \$300.00 out of pocket.

While traveling around the state and collecting stories from our EAC listening sessions, I learned my experience as a new educator was not only the norm, it was accepted by many as simply, 'part of the job description'. We are asking our educators to come early, stay late, come in on weekends, provide the best education possible, and often without coaching and support or job embedded time for ongoing professional learning. But what I have come to understand is that teachers are in a good position to help identify where parts of the system are not working effectively to attract, retain, and support educators. With disruptive classrooms, a third of Oregon's teachers considering retirement in coming years, low retention rates of incoming teachers, and competitive salaries in neighboring states, it is imperative we stop and listen to what teachers most need to support all of their students!

Holding listening session with various groups including superintendents, teachers of color, mentor projects, community liaisons and early childhood practitioners-we have documented similar experiences of fatigue and disillusionment. Whether it be a new teacher with too many preps and large class sizes or a teacher of color experiencing racist statements and generalizations with fear of retribution, our listening sessions have become a foundation of our work at the EAC.

So how do we solve this? With these stories of fatigue came also great experiences of success from pockets of our state. Creating a system of supports built around and upon the teacher voice is the foundation. The Education Advancement Council is working to create equitable access for funding for our workforce including areas that have historically not benefited from competitive grants. The purpose of the EAC is to ensure all Oregon public school teachers and administrators and early learning professionals have access to high-quality professional learning and support. This begins from the time they are considering the profession to their first teaching job to becoming a school or district leader. This work will be achieved through educator networks, which will rely heavily on teacher voice and shared leadership to drive decision-making and share resources, expertise and equity driven practices across schools and districts.