

**From:** [dawson walker](#)  
**To:** [JCSS Exhibits](#)  
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I am art teacher at Southridge High School in Beaverton, and Oregon's education funding has been on my mind every day the last couple months. I was born and raised in Alaska, which is where I also received my first art teaching license. I love Alaska, but the reason I am not teaching there is due to the constant cutting and underfunding of education in the state. An art teacher who was planning on retiring after teaching for 40+ years even reached out to me after I graduated, who decided that I would be a great replacement, but ended up not retiring due to the fact that the superintendent refused to hire a new art teacher if she left due to the budget. The reason why she was planning on retiring is that she had recently gotten in a serious accident and had severe medical issues, but she was forced to continue teaching or see the art program disappear. After this I knew I had to look elsewhere if I wanted to be able to teach art.

Moving to Oregon and teaching here has been one of the greatest and most fulfilling experiences of my life. I feel so lucky to be able to teach in Beaverton, and to be able to work with the kids in my classes. I have heard from students, administrators, and parents that kids not only enjoy the art classes they take, but that it gives them a much needed space to be creative and successful in school. I have seen underserved and struggling kids find their place in school within the art room, and I have seen the impact it can have on their lives.

Because I am a recent hire, my job is on the line due to the upcoming budget cuts. What is so painful about this is that I have seen the difference I can make as a teacher, and I also really enjoy my job, I just really enjoy spending time with my students and getting to know them as artists and people. Investment in education can have a huge positive impact on peoples lives, certainly my own, but I know that my story is not unique. The ripple effect that great teaching can have on students and their communities is impossible to measure, and funding is crucial to supporting great teaching, whether it is preventing layoffs, keeping class sizes low, or giving teachers the resources they need. The proposal of the Joint Committee on Student Success is critical to the funding of our school, and needs all the support it can get.

-Dawson Walker