



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor



OREGON
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Oregon achieves . . . together!

Colt Gill

Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction

LC 199

House Education Committee

January 11, 2022

Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chairs Neron & Weber, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you so much for making time for me to share at the end of your meeting today. For the record, I'm Colt Gill; I serve as the Director of the Oregon Department of Education.

When I was first appointed to this post I quickly realized that our staff at ODE were not considered mandatory child abuse reporters, unlike all other educators in Oregon. Thankfully, we were able to work with Sen. Gelser Blouin and the Legislature to change that. Now our staff are also mandatory reporters.

During my time at ODE I have instituted three hiring principles. The first of these is: **"Diversity is a critical asset needed to meet our goals."** In sharing this principle with our staff I quote ORS 342.437 – The Educator Equity Act, *"that the percentage of diverse educators employed by a school district or an education service district reflects the percentage of diverse students in the public schools of this state or the percentage of diverse students in the district."*

I name that in new hiring I am holding our agency to this goal, even though it does not apply to us. Three years ago, about 16% of ODE's staff identified as people of color; that was an improvement over the previous biennium and outpaces Oregon's percentage of teachers of color (currently approximately 11%). At the last formal review since implementation of our hiring principles, we are at 21.3% staff of color and our executive leadership team (E-Team) includes 40% people of color (and 73% women).

That is reasonable progress on diversifying the workforce at ODE. We are outpacing the diversification of the statewide educator workforce. However, to meet the goal the state has set for school districts and ESDs, we still have a long way to go. Forty percent of our students are students of color.

A quick side note - I shared the percentage of female identifying leaders, because that has also not always been the case at ODE. The educator workforce is majority female, but the educator leadership – at the highest levels - remains majority male. This is also problematic. I hope that

we can come back to you with our partners at COSA, OSBA, OCFW, and EdNW and share some critical equity efforts in education leadership in the coming weeks.

I believe this committee knows the research on the importance of having teachers of color in our schools:

[From Education Week](#): *All students benefit from having teachers of color, research shows. A report by the Learning Policy Institute revealed that when taught by teachers of color, students of color have better academic performance, improved graduation rates, and are more likely to attend college. Research from the [Center for American Progress](#) provides insight into these effects, noting Black teachers are less likely than non-black teachers to perceive Black students' behavior as "disruptive," and more likely than non-black teachers to have a higher opinion of Black students' academic abilities. All students, regardless of race, report feeling cared for and academically challenged by teachers of color, according to the Learning Policy Institute report.*

Here is my concern and simple ask of the Committee: ODE is the state of Oregon's education agency. It is the one controlled by the state. It is the one that administers nearly every education program offered in Oregon, it distributes more than half of the state's general fund, it works with the State Board of Education to set policy that holds our schools accountable.

The agency does not currently reflect the population it serves. We are working hard to bring an antiracist lens to our work. I believe our staff is dedicated to this. But, we all have implicit bias, including myself. In a bureaucracy this unconscious bias leads to institutionalized racism. Again, we have taken concrete steps to reverse this and operate with an antiracist stance. We have these hiring practices that are working. We have thrown out the old strategic plan and replaced it with an equity strategic plan. We have affinity group advisors that help represent the voice of students, families and staff that have been marginalized and underserved in our public schools –

- Students who experience disability
- Tribal members
- Emerging bilingual students
- American Indian and Native Alaskan
- Black and African American
- Latino, Latina, Latinx and people indigenous to lands below the US border
- LGBTQ2SIA+
- And, soon, with your support, Pacific Islander students.

But the bottom line is that the Oregon Department of Education would do better serving today's diverse student body (which is more diverse than the adult population in Oregon) if our staff and leadership reflected the racial and ethnic demographics of the students we serve.

I ask that you support adding ODE and other state K-12 education agencies to the Educator Equity Act and hold us to the same levels of accountability that we hold our schools and ESDs to.

Thank you,
Colt Gill