

I spent several stressful weeks working with the Lincoln County school district to have my son "released" so he could enroll in Baker Web Academy. I provided the "Notice of Intent" on January 20, 2021, and he was denied on January 21, 2021, due to the 3% cap being met. The District had already released my son to another school outside the District, which he attended the Fall semester (August - January). Therefore, whether the cap had been met or not wasn't even relevant to the situation as he was not being counted in their numbers anyway. I appealed the decision on January 27 and was told the District had ten days to respond. This was a very stressful time for both my son and I.

My son's mental health provider, from OHSU, was gracious enough to write a letter supporting that he needed to return to Baker Web Academy (BWA). He had more support, stability, and one on one attention with BWA and had regressed after leaving with the pandemic increasing his anxiety, social phobia, and depression. I spent many hours collecting documentation, completing forms, emailing school officials, etc. to advocate for my son's needs to return to BWA. Many parents might not have the time or resources to have done that for their student or would have just accepted the denial and not continued in their efforts to seek the best solution for their child.

On January 29, I received an email from a Lincoln County School district official which stated she had "made a mistake" and that my son was approved to enroll at BWA. I completed the enrollment paperwork and, although he missed his first week of the new semester, my son is doing better now. I shudder at the thought if I had not been so determined that he would be stuck at a school that was not able to meet his needs. This would probably have led him to drop out and instead of a success story, a few years from now it would have been a much different narrative.

As a parent, I am the authority (with input from my child) on what is best for my student. Not the Department of Education, not the Oregon government, or the Teacher's Union. Parents should have more choices to place their children in the best environment they feel is best. I do not like a cap at all but if there must be one, it should be increased to allow for more students to be moved to the school they learn best at. Our children are not a "one size fits all" and therefore should be given the chance to learn in an environment that best fits their needs. Removing the cap will allow for this and, I truly believe, we will begin to see many more students blossom into productive, confident, and smart citizens.

If you need additional details about our situation, please contact me. I appreciate you lobbying for parents who believe in freedom of school choice and finding the best way to support the most precious gift - our children.

Thank you,

Andrea D. Summerlin
Parent, Tenth Grader