



March 14, 2011

Defending the status quo? No!

By Kevin McCann, OSBA executive director

In Oregon education today, who's fighting against the status quo? The answer is we all are!

Some have suggested that the Oregon School Boards Association, superintendents, teachers and other educators are merely guarding the status quo and rejecting all ideas for improving our schools. Nothing could be further from the truth!

Our most fundamental belief is that for any education setting to be successful, we need well-equipped and passionate educators who are committed to making a significant difference for students. Once the right players are in place, education leaders must create an environment that promotes personal and professional growth, allowing teachers to tap into their passion for kids. The result will be success beyond anyone's wildest dreams.

Unfortunately, in the present "reform" climate, these educators are attacked and maligned on a daily basis. They are barraged with a mountain of mandates that do not necessarily contribute to student success – and often have not been backed by sound research. At the same time, they are hamstrung by decreasing resources.

In the current legislative session alone, OSBA is tracking more than 500 bills that are designed to improve education. Some of these have merit; others chip away at the very foundation of public education. Some propose that the education process will be improved by creating one board to oversee all levels, from birth through graduate school. Others aim to merge school districts, consolidate ESDs or give public funding to students to attend private schools. And there are proposals to mandate full-day kin-

dergarten or add curricular requirements, all without providing new funding.

OSBA believes that rather than adopting more mandates and ideas based on political rhetoric, the legislature needs to roll back some of the current mandates which are draining vital resources and allow schools the freedom to innovate. To borrow an example from the private sector, Intel would never have become a world leader in technology development if their strategy for inventing and manufacturing had been to slash research and development funding while diverting the focus of the very employees they expect to make unprecedented breakthroughs. In what alternate universe does this make sense for our schools?

What will help improve our schools is to encourage ideas from educators. Despite accusations to the contrary, no one wants to improve teaching and learning more. No one! They wouldn't be teachers, superintendents, principals or school board members if they didn't have a passion for educating children. Give them time to think and plan and learn from each other. Give them resources to develop new ways to enhance learning for students. Let them partner with parents, local communities and businesses.

But above all, do what any good manager does when he wants to see huge and continuous improvements....include your workers and staff in the conversation. Seek input from and listen to your locally-elected school board partners, superintendents, teachers and educators who have devoted their lives to the profession. They know how to spark that life-changing fire in a young learner.

Busy week in House Education Committee

Last week the House Education Committee held hearings on a smorgasbord of bills that ranged from allowing the use of alcohol and wine in culinary arts classes to open enrollment between school districts. A few of the bills heard this week:

House Bill 2180 – Each school district in Oregon is already required to have a written plan of instruction for talented and gifted

children (TAG). This bill would require districts to submit their plan to the Oregon Department of Education TAG coordinator.

House Bill 2649 – Due to the continued decrease in the number of school librarians and media specialists in Oregon schools, the House is considering the establishment of a Task Force on School Libraries to develop

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Legislative Update Webinar
March 30, 8:30-9:30 a.m.

Hear from your OSBA legislative team about the status of the state budget and key education issues impacting schools.

[*Register now!*](#)

Charter school bill in committee

Senate Bill 100, passed in 1999, opened the door to public charter schools in Oregon. Ten years later, charter school growth has far exceeded the projections of legislative leaders who, at the time, believed that "success" would be 20 charter schools in operation by 2010. The state now has 106 charter schools serving approximately 18,000 students. This represents about 6 percent of the schools in the state and 3 percent of Oregon's students.

The evolution of charter schools has meant more diverse learning opportunities for students. It also has meant new challenges for school leaders. Both charter school advocates and local school districts are finding situations that the law never envisioned or doesn't adequately address. Such situations were inevitable, especially with a law that was designed to spur innovative educational approaches and choice. It is good public policy to clarify confusing laws, and the Oregon School Boards Association took the initiative on this issue by creating a statewide 10-Year Charter School Review Committee.

The Charter Review Committee represented public schools, charter schools, the Legislature and other education partners. Beginning in January 2010, the committee studied how the law is working and discussed needed changes. In November, the committee completed its work, making legislative recommendations that generally are designed to clarify procedures for public school district sponsors, charter applicants and charter schools.

Senate Bill 255 is the product of the Charter Review Committee's work. The bill will be heard Tuesday, March 15, at 1:00 p.m. in the Senate Education and Workforce Development Committee.

Education bills for the week of March 14

HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Monday, March 14

1:00 p.m., Hearing Room E, State Capitol

HB 2832 – *First public hearing*

Expands prohibited acts related to harassment, intimidation, bullying or cyberbullying to include actions by or against school employees.

HB 3474 – *First public hearing*

Creates Educator Preparation Improvement Fund to improve preparation of teachers and administrators.

HB 3455 – *First public hearing*

Changes amount of school district local option taxes that are not considered local revenues for purposes of State School Fund distribution formula.

HB 3524 – *First public hearing*

Reduces amount of general purpose grant for school district that does not

maximize rate of allowable taxes dedicated to funding public schools.

Wednesday, March 16

1:00 p.m., Hearing Room E, State Capitol

HB 2220 – *First public hearing*

Requires assessments to measure student progress based on student's proficiency in knowledge and skills of student's grade level.

HB 2234 – *First public hearing*

Extends for two years authority of Department of Education to grant waiver to school district to enter into contract for alternative provider of nationally normed assessments.

HB 3134 – *First public hearing*

Limits use of personality tests when education employer is making employment decisions related to person who will provide educational services.

HB 3106 – *First public hearing*

Requires school district to give priority for participation in Expanded Options Program to at-risk students who are eligible students if school district has met credit hour cap.

HB 3417 – *First public hearing*

Specifies requirements of financial management system for public charter school.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, March 15

1:00 p.m., Hearing Room B, State Capitol

SB 255 – *First public hearing*

Modifies contents of and process for proposal to establish public charter school. Modifies processes for renewal and termination of charter for public charter school. Clarifies list of laws that apply to public charter schools.

Busy week – *Continued*

policy recommendations for improving school libraries and library staffing.

[*House Bill 2750*](#) – Teachers and supporters of high school culinary arts classes have proposed this bill to allow school district boards to decide whether or not wine and other spirits can be used in recipes and dishes prepared by high school students training in the culinary arts. Currently, wine and other spirits are not allowed in cooking classes.

[*House Bill 3117*](#) – As part of the continued discussion about state mandates on public schools, this bill proposes exempting districts from any state mandate imposed by the Legislature or State Board of Education until there is funding provided to pay for it.

[*House Bill 3197*](#) – In the wake of the Kyrion Horman tragedy, the legislature is proposing a requirement that all school boards adopt a “same day” notification policy when a student has an unexcused absence.

[*House Bill 3550*](#) – This bill would create an “open enrollment” system by allowing districts to enroll out-of-district students without the approval of the resident district via an interdistrict transfer.

OSBA Legislative and Public Affairs Specialist Morgan Allen was joined by representatives of the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators and the Oregon Education Association in expressing concern about an open enrollment policy that does not consider the voice of the resident school district and introduces further instability

into the K-12 system. OSBA Legislative and Public Affairs Associate Executive Director Tricia Yates joined superintendents in support of reviewing current state education mandates and eliminating those that are redundant or unnecessary, to provide relief to school districts across Oregon.

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