



Four Rivers Community School
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TO: Joint Committee on Student Success
FROM: Chelle Robins, Superintendent & Executive Director, Four Rivers
Community School
RE: HB 2019, Student Success Act
DATE: April 11, 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on equitable funding of the School Improvement Account. My name is Chelle Robins and I am the Superintendent and Executive Director of an accredited K-12 Dual Language Immersion School in Ontario. Four Rivers Community School is one of the first start-up charter schools in the State of Oregon and is completing its 16th year of fulfilling its mission of “. . .whole-family education” and the vision of: “Building generations of bi-literate and culturally engaged learners who envision a future of possibilities.” Four Rivers actively engages in research partnerships, has been recognized as a “High-Achieving Dual Immersion Program” in the State of Oregon, and has long-term data to support our students’ success in K-12 and beyond.

We are so excited about the legislature’s attention and understanding of the need for additional funding to support expanded learning time, student health and safety, class size reduction and expansion of well-rounded learning experiences in schools across the state. This funding is an important turning point in public education and it is critical that we get it right from the start and this includes ensuring access to the funding for ALL public education students, including public charter school students.

If provided the school improvement funding Four Rivers would support all of our grade levels (K-12), but I would like to specifically speak to you about our Sr. Prep Early College High School and how this funding would significantly improve the opportunities for historically underserved students.

Four Rivers student population is approximately 85% Latino, 45% Ever English Learners and 100% of our student qualify for free lunch through USDA’s Community Eligibility Provision. We work with families to create a culture of “college-going families” and support our students and families through the migrant Head-Start, through K-12, and college/career. We do this through home visits, grade level workshops, family science nights and whole family cultural events.

As an early college model, Four Rivers Sr. Prep is making college accessible for ALL of our students. Every student in grades 10 and above have some college credit and about 1/3 of our students will be able to earn their AAOT and transfer to an Oregon 4-year university of their choice upon graduation. They have visited over 10 colleges/universities throughout their time at Four Rivers. While we are able to provide these college-level opportunities, there is more we could do to provide a well-rounded education if we see funding from the School Improvement Account. Even though we are a small high school, Four Rivers Sr. Prep is unable to access the Small High School correction through the State School Fund (SSF), because we are a charter. This funding provides all other Oregon Small High School additional weighting through the SSF for the school’s be able to offer a comprehensive high school experience.

Comprehensive high schools with engaging programming are extremely expensive to run and we are already at a disadvantage without the Small High Schools Correction, and limiting the access to the School Improvement Account would further widen the funding equity gap for our students. We provide opportunities for college coursework to our students for free, paid through our State School Fund, this means that we have less financial resources for many other student opportunities. We are working to provide educational pathways that meet the needs of all of our students and engages them in their education. We have a plan for this funding and know this is an awesome opportunity for legislation to work for *all* Oregon public education students.

Here are the ways the School Improvement Account funding could improve the educational experience for students at Four Rivers:

1. Ability to hire a .5 FTE High School Career Counselor. This is essential as we are providing Early College opportunities alongside meeting students Oregon graduation requirements. Again, this opportunity isn't just for some, it is for all at Four Rivers.
2. The start-up funding for a CTE Program of Study to support students that want to be educators. Oregon needs more teachers and our students are bilingual and biliterate at the highest academic areas. We want to provide early opportunities in our Grow Your Own program.
3. Additional AP courses (we currently have 2). We are one of 2 schools in Malheur County that is providing a Computer Science class and we would like to offer an AP computer science class within the next two years
4. Music-Four Rivers is currently unable to offer music instruction at any grade level
5. Summer programming, this would be critical to increase student achievement and activity in the summer as many of our families are employed in the agricultural workforce.
6. Professional Development for staff as we learn more about best practices and current research around student health and well-being.

We are very grateful for the opportunity to share our important work in the education field and we are extremely hopeful that together we can come to an equitable funding solution that includes *all* Oregon public school students. Thank you for your time and consideration.
Respectfully Submitted,

Chelle Robins

Chelle Robins, Ph.D.
Superintendent