

While I am a K-12 finance officer, this comment is my own and does not reflect any official position of my employer.

Each year the legislature asks schools for the bare minimum amount that is needed to maintain current service level (and in most years, tells us we are wrong about that number). Each year our governor gives speeches about how our schools are not good enough. Why is there such a disconnect? After passing meaningful revenue reform, rather than fund the Quality Education Model, schools received funds with more strings attached; a clear signal from Salem that congress is better equipped than local educators to solve the greatest challenges facing students and families in Oregon.

Why do we talk about current service level every year, when every one of us acknowledges that current service level is inadequate? Why do school districts have to beg for current service level funding every single year while listening to our governor and lawmakers disparage us publicly? Why is the legislature considering caps on class sizes while also decreasing our year-over-year funding?

Every district office administrator I know wants smaller class sizes. Every one wants more comprehensive wrap-around services. Every one wants adequate facilities (a critical part of our operation that relies on local funding). Every one wants robust co-curricular, extra-curricular, and CTE offerings. And the list goes on. The legislature consistently pits unions against families against administrators, but unions, families, and administrators want the same things for our students and our staff!

Every year districts make difficult decisions about how to prioritize our funds due to the most pressing needs today. Maybe my district will prioritize an equity study and CTE programs, while our neighbor prioritizes 3rd-grade literacy. A few years from now, we will switch places on those priorities, as the consequences of under-investment in a critical area begin to take shape. By then, we will have both graduated three classes of seniors who were shortchanged in their education. We will have three more classes of third graders who moved on without meeting standard.

Enough! The state needs to stop balancing its budget on the backs of our students. If we want globally responsible students ready to help our state be economically competitive while innovating the solutions to tomorrow's problems, we must invest in them today.

Every year since 1992, school districts have been asked to do more with less. We have been frogs in slowly heating water. The water is now boiling. The legislature either needs to remove requirements from districts or add funding; you can use 1750s math or Common Core, and you will arrive at the same conclusion. The only districts where we see consistently better outcomes are in cities of affluence with local option levies (more unrestricted funding).

If we want nationally competitive schools with equitable outcomes for all of Oregon's students, the legislature needs to fund the Quality Education Model. Stop tying strings to the funding, start applying accountability metrics. Absolutely make us prove we are doing good work, but give us the funding to do good work. If you insist on funding the current service level or below, expect current outcomes or worse to persist. Please fund the QEM.

Thank you for taking time to consider my comments. I am happy to discuss further. My email is included in the web form, and I would welcome the opportunity to discuss further, either as a parent or in my official capacity.