

Submitter: Gregg Heacock
On Behalf Of:
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Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB786

This bill, by focusing on public institutions of higher education giving academic credit to students taking courses or engaged in activities like speech and debate, provides a pathway to higher learning that others might travel now that we have Career and Technical Education personnel positioned in every public school district in Oregon. I believe this bill could expand the number of internships to expand the number of graduates preparing to enter such fields as nursing, education, and law, where working as public defenders, reading and language arts teachers, childcare providers, and nurses might, lower the cost of their education as they provide services needed to across our state.

I would like to suggest another expansion of services by providing courses for students' family members whose home language is not English so that with dual-language instruction they might support the education of their own children at home and might serve as teacher-aides in their children's schools.

I had the good fortune to teach such a class as part of the Even Start Program set up by the Bush administration. This program also funded childcare in a classroom at the elementary school, where I worked with Spanish-speaking parents (a few fluent in English) who lacked the reading and writing skills needed to advance themselves in their own communities. I was surprised to see that nearly a third of my students had dropped out after 1st grade, another third after 2nd grade, and another after the 5th grade, leaving 2 who had made it to their junior year in high school, one who had enrolled in college before coming here, and two grandmothers who were functionally illiterate in their home language. These family members, once they learned to create letterheads for themselves on computers, realized they now had parity with the other parents whose first language was English. It was an amazing transformation!

Including similar preparation for family members whose home language is not English so they might help teachers and office personnel deal with attendance and work with students in small groups as they develop essential skills needed to move forward, we can address problems of high absenteeism and address the social-emotional-cognitive needs of students so they can engage in learning activities in ways that can develop their confidence and desire to learn from their mistakes and discover solutions to what puzzles them and the rest of us.