



SCHOOL FUNDING TASK FORCE

March 21, 2014

Hearing Room A, State Capitol Building, Salem, OR

Members Present:

Sen. Richard Devlin, Chair
Sen. Fred Girod
Rep. Betty Komp, Vice-Chair
Rep. Sherry Sprenger
Kelly Devlin
John W. Hayes, Jr. PhD.

Steven Isaacs
Claire Hertz
Bobbie Regan
John Rexford
Heidi Sipe
Michael Wolfe

Members Excused:

Sena Norton

Staff:

Brian Reeder, Asst. Supt., Research & Data
Analysis, ODE

Jan McComb, Legislative Coordinator, ODE
Michael Elliott, Fiscal Analyst, ODE
Michael Wiltfong, Director, School Finance, ODE

The task force convened at 1:07 pm. Heidi Sipe participated by phone.

NOTE: Additional testimony was submitted to the task force prior to the meeting and may be found on the task force's website. <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=4122>

Chair Devlin reviewed the agenda. Testimony was time limited to 3 minutes.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Mark Witty, Superintendent, Grant School District, testified regarding small and remote schools and the importance of maintaining the existing grants. In small and remote areas, economy of scale becomes an issue. It is difficult to create equity of opportunity. He would like to see the small high school grant in the law be permanent; it sunsets now and must be renewed. The distribution formula needs to be equitable for rural schools. Schools are a major driver of the local economy. It's difficult in some districts to pass bond levies that keep schools up. His district has a lot of old schools.

Robin Morris Collin, Oregon Commission on Black Affairs testified on behalf of equity in Oregon's education investment. Oregon's demographic trends show a significant increase in retirees and an increase in ethnic groups that is faster than the national average. An increasingly elderly white population will come to depend on an ethnically diverse young population to support economic growth through taxes. Public policy must take a long view. Equity in education is critical for a prosperous future for all Oregonians (written testimony).

Michelle Vlach-Ing, Oregon Commission on Asian Affairs, testified on the importance of a workforce that is multilingual and adept in cultural understanding. The needs of the Asian and Pacific Islander community are varied. They are a resource for the state. She encouraged the task force to keep in mind the value of funding ELL, language immersion, early learning, and support teacher diversity for all students. (written testimony).

Alberto Marino, Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs, testified that equity in education is determined by how it invests in the learning of all its students. He encouraged that task force to build equity into its school investments and track funds to targeted groups clearer, and tie investments to the outcomes of communities of need. If equity is not at the core of our investments in education and if improvement in outcomes for struggling students is not the measure of our success we have little hope of achieving the goals of education reform (written testimony).

Sue Levin, Stand for Children, testified regarding the sub-par outcomes for Oregon students. She noted Oregon has seen a tremendous growth in the number of students for whom English is not their first language. The achievement gap between ELL students and native English speakers is large. The distribution formula provides an additional half weight to ELL students, yet the academic results are stagnant. Districts have an incentive in keeping students in an ELL program. A new ODE study shows that students who exit ELL programs before high school graduation are successful. Districts must focus on exiting students from ELL programs in a timely fashion (written testimony).

Rev. Joseph Santos-Lyons testified on behalf of the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO). Brought several folks with him. APANO is concerned about ELL achievement. The current formula does not drive success. We need better results. Some districts have made great strides in ELL, such as Salem-Keizer with improved graduation rates. Others are not as successful. ELL kids are not graduating on time. Oregon needs increased accountability from school districts. The Oregon Department of Education should encourage school districts to use the English Language Learner weight for the benefit of ELL students.

Bridget Cook, Adelante Mujeres, testified regarding English Language Learners. Her organization serves the Forest Grove School District with English language support services. Parents come to America go provide their children with opportunities they didn't have in their home country and education is the key to that opportunity. Parents do not understand ELPA scores, and what it means to be in ELL courses. Parents don't understand the difference between ELL and dual language services. There needs to be better understanding.

Wei-Wei Lou, Beaverton Public Schools, testified that she is the English as a Second Language for the district. Beaverton has about 12,800 language minority students. The funding formula is critical for student success in this population. The achievement gap is a symptom of something—probably a funding gap for English Language Learners.

Tnach Nguyen, Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon, testified that English Language Learners do not have access to mainstream classes. Parents of these children do not realize they have the right to bypass the English Language Learner programs.

Kathleen Jonathan, Salem-Keizer School District, works closely with the Marshallese community in Salem. Marshallese is the third largest language spoken within the school district. Budget reductions she is the only staff person to serve 250 Marshallese students. She was parent of three boys who were

English Language Learners; they graduated on time. One challenge is that the school district needs more bilingual and bicultural staff, particularly for Marshallese island students.

Doug Riggs, Oregon Alliance of Children's Programs, testified about the funding of long term care and treatment programs. Funding these programs has been a topic before the Legislature for a number of years. In 2008, the "Parrish Report" was authorized. There have been a succession of budget notes since then. Children served by these programs are disproportionately affected by poverty and are in communities of color. When school funding goes up, these kids are left behind. He stated that he wanted to work with legislators and any work group created on this topic. The Alliance recommended moving Long Term Care and Treatment education services into the State School Fund; amending the funding formula to make it more consistent with the SSF distribution formula; and increasing funding for LTCT programs from 2x to 3x weighted ADM.

Josh Graves, Catholic Community Services, talked about three of their programs that serve youths. The Catarino Cavazos Center helps Hispanic-Latino youth who have been adjudicated to learn skills and behaviors for healthy relationships and to lead productive lives. Another is a supportive apartment community where young people are helped to transition into adulthood from foster care. The Community Homes for Children provide children living in long-term foster care a nurturing home. These are children who do not thrive in a typical setting. They need additional support. They can become re-traumatized in a regular school setting. Many are wards of the state; their parents are not involved in their lives. They are our children and we need to advocate for them. This funding is critical to the academic success of these children.

Dr. Mark Lewinsohn, LifeWorks NW, testified regarding long term care and treatment funding. LifeWorks NW is one of the largest providers of mental health, addition, and prevention services in Oregon and operate three psychiatric day treatment programs serving children, youth, and families. Their goal is to return children to a regular education setting. These types of settings have a longer school year and have to stretch dollars out over more time. The current level of funding is inadequate, not ost-based, and does not resemble the overall k-12 model (written testimony).

Chuck Bennett, Confederation of Oregon School Administrators, testified regarding the funding formula. COSA opposes major changes to the funding formula. The formula recognizes that some students will cost more to educate than others, and it is reflected in the weights in the system. While these broad categories reflect cost differentials among students, it has not been used to instruct local boards on expenditures. It is up to local budget committees how to allocate funds. He included some historical documents created when the funding formula was created (written testimony).

Jim Green, Oregon School Boards Association, testified regarding the distribution formula. He echoed Mr. Bennett's comments. OSBA supports the local boards' decision-making authority and would oppose efforts to dictate how those funds should be spent. When the formula was created, they wanted to involve parents and the community to determine how best to spend the dollars. The districts all have different needs. If changes are made, it should be made based on accurate data. The LTCT organizations want to be in the formula; they are not now. They get funds through the grant-in-aid programs. OSBA would like to see the levels increased to what they need to serve those kids. The distribution formula recognizes average costs. The small school high school correction comes up every two years for renewal and should be made permanent. It's a small fraction of the total budget. They have unique needs. We will work with advocates on the budget note concerning LTCT.

Patrick McArthur, Multnomah Education Service District, testified about long term care and treatment funding. The ESD served 241 students last year, almost all wards of the state. They have success through a calm, therapeutic setting and individualized instruction. Their ESD has experienced 30% budget cuts in the last biennium. They have a highly successful program, but need adequate funding. He requested that these programs have extended ADMw that school districts and juvenile correction programs receive to stabilize funding (written testimony).

Kendra Wasson, Positive Advancement Center for Education, testified about long term care and treatment funding. PACE is serves children have significant disabilities. PACE operates under the purview of Northwest Regional ESD. Most students have experienced trauma, abuse, and multiple placements. All students have a developmental disability. Each experiences severe emotional/behavioral disabilities. Through the use of Positive Behavior Intervention and Support they were able to decrease use of restraints by 59%. These students need to be prioritized and need adequate and stable funding, such as with a 3x weight. If they don't get these services the children will need other social services (written testimony).

Chris Panike, La Grande School District, testified regarding special education. La Grande has a pocket of group homes for the developmentally disabled, yet they do not get additional funding. Once students are placed in these group homes within their school district, they are resident students and the responsibility of the district, despite their parents living in other districts. He asked that the formula be modified such that the high cost disabilities threshold is lowered to \$20,000 or \$25,000 (from \$30,000) and the 11% cap waiver formula on special education be eliminated. The district doesn't qualify for a lot of other programs; they need funding assistance (written testimony).

Torri Lynn, Oregon Juvenile Department Directors Association, testified about youth in corrections settings. These kids have been traumatized. Education programs need funding stability. Rather than spend more money on adult corrections programs, more should be invested earlier. He asked that Juvenile Detention Education Program funding weight be increased from 1.5 to 2.0 and include youth who are participating in a retention-based Youth Care Center as part of the population served within a Juvenile Detention Education Program. Their school year is longer—the same pot of money gets stretched thinner (written testimony).

Austin Hayes, Sauvie Island Academy, testified in favor of greater funding for charter schools. He described the advantages of the small school and how he has benefited. The charter school should get the full 100% of funding that other schools receive. If they had greater funding, they could have more and better teachers.

Halee Hopkins, Sauvie Island Academy, testified in favor of greater funding for charter schools. She described her school and the special opportunities she has by attending the small charter school. She enjoys a close relationship with her teachers and has one-on-one assistance. Charter schools often cannot afford quality teachers. Students get to learn via exploration. It isn't logical that charter schools get less funding—students aren't worth less.

Matt Radich, a teacher at Sauvie Island Academy, testified that the statute has a funding at 80% of the school district's per student funding at a minimum for a charter school serving grades K-8. His chartering district has chosen that minimal level. He'd like to see it closer to a full 100%. Some students need alternatives and charter schools offer those alternatives.

Andrew Mason, Open Meadow Alternative Schools, testified regarding funding for alternative schools. They serve students who don't succeed in regular schools. Alternative schools help keep kids out of jail. He suggested that Oregon has a substantial number of marginalized students that aren't graduating. Customized interventions for teens will help increase graduation rates. He suggest Response To Intervention could provide a framework for weighted funded or possibly the use of an actuarial algorithm that looks at the odds of graduating on time and fund that way. The task force should revisit the weights; they are a blunt instrument.

Bill Wellard, The Child Center in Springfield, testified about long term care and treatment funding. His facility has 1150 "slots" or 2000 kids. He has been involved in day treatment programs for 43 years. It has been discouraging to see education funding for long term care and treatment dwindle. The children have severe emotional disorders and needs. Their funding is separate, not part of the State School Fund. When the SSF increases, these programs don't see similar funding increases. The children already have many challenges, they don't deserve funding shortages. He urged the task force members to review the Parrish Report.

Margaret Delacy, Oregon Association for Talented and Gifted, noted that there is no funding for TAG students in the formula. These students are within many of the other student categories that have been discussed today. There's no mechanism to provide extra services. While TAG services are mandated by law, they are not funded. The large education groups have not supported TAG funding in the past.

Marta Guembes, APANO, described her experiences with Portland Public Schools. Students are kept in English Language Learner classes too long. There's a lack of appropriate identification and services. ELL students don't have access to regular classes and counselors. Parents aren't always communicated in language they understand. PPS has violated the students' civil rights. PPS does not serve ELL students well. Parents work hard to provide better opportunities, yet ELL students are treated like second class students. ELL has not worked for decades. Districts are not accountable.

Simon Levear, Director of Fiscal Services, Cascade School District, reminded task force members that the distribution formula is a distribution formula of a fixed amount of money; if someone gets more, someone else gets less.

NEXT STEPS, MEETING SCHEDULE

Chair Devlin thanked Rob Saxton for attending. He noted that there might be a need for more subcommittees, such as Long Term Care and Treatment and juvenile facilities. The task force may need another public hearing, especially if there are recommendations; the public will want to provide feedback on the recommendations. The task force may need to meet more often to make up for lost time.

Wolfe suggested formal outcomes for the subcommittees. The task force may need ODE to make presentations about the areas mentioned. Rep. Komp asked about how many LTCT programs existed, the reported differences in funding (2.0 and 1.75), and small schools funding.

Chair Devlin announced that the next meeting would be the week of 20th or maybe 27 in April. Staff will poll members.

ADJOURN

Chair Devlin adjourned the committee at 3:30 pm