

“Educating Our Children to Succeed in the Global Economy”

**Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate**

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Senator Merkley- It is an honor to be invited here today to present our views to you and your team on the reauthorization of the ESEA. Thank you for the opportunity.

In considering the reauthorization of the ESEA we would offer the following from Salem Keizer Public Schools:

College and work ready is our primary goal for our 40,000 + students in Salem-Keizer District. We want our students prepared for the rigor of post secondary college or university experience or to have them possess the skills (academic, technology, and relational) to enter the work force in a living wage job.

We know that quality teaching is the epicenter of our success with our students and the means of achieving our goal with our students. In Salem- Keizer we know what it takes to recruit, retain and support a high quality and vibrant teaching team. Our student results in the past five years demonstrate that our plan is working.

It is our hope that the reauthorized ESEA will support our efforts and help us by providing the resources for:

- Professional development for our teams that is relevant and a part of the day to day school process so that the application of new strategies and programs are embedded in the classroom where they are needed and there is the support of instructional coaches (peers) to help sustain those new programs and strategies.
- Continuation of a mentor program to support teachers within their first two years in the classroom (especially those in our high need schools) and provide them with monthly network seminars that help them problem solve and build a professional cohort that they can call on when needed. The expansion of this program to a third year would strengthen what we are currently doing. In addition re-induction and intensive work with struggling teachers is also a priority.
- Time for teachers to work in professional learning communities so that they can problem solve and plan interventions together for students who are not being successful or showing the growth that we desire. We know this works when teachers can collaborate.

- A renewed meaningful and relevant performance evaluation system for teachers, administrators and other members of our educational team. One that is current, validated and reliable in providing information on performance and growth aligned to the goals and objectives of our district strategic plan. We are currently engaged in this work with the CLASS Project with Chalkboard with funding from the Teacher Innovation Fund Grant. We are hoping to link this to a performance based incentive pay system. One major concern is the sustainability of this work.
- Extended day programs for our students such as second language learners and students from poverty who need more opportunity and time to be successful. Saturday school and summer academy programs provide rich opportunities for our students who need extra time and for doing deeper training with our teachers. Last year alone 400 teachers received additional training in our summer academy programs.
- Increased resources for technology so that we can stay current in our efforts to have our students become comfortable with and successful users of technology.
- Common professional standards and licensing requirements from state to state so that teachers can be more mobile and we can access the staffing resources we need to be successful.
- Higher standards for Supplemental Education Service Providers if they are to continue to be used.
- Funding for all day kindergarten programs and pre-K programs so that all children have the opportunity to be ready for school. Currently we have tuition based parent funded opportunities that often leave out our neediest students.
- Focus on additional funding to level the playing field for our lowest performing schools. Making these options available through competitive grants often directs the focus of the team to grant writing and management rather than the planning and execution of the “work.” Frequently the timeline requirements of the grants are too short and do not allow us to produce quality products and validated long term results.
- Elimination of the school choice provision. It is not used as much as it was anticipated to be used and is often used not for academic opportunity but for sports and extra curricular under the guise of academics. It is in fact at times causing a “resegregation of our schools.
- Elimination of or at least reduction of the high stakes multiple choice testing requirement. It does little to inform instruction and consumes too much instructional time and a hefty amount of financial resources. We want to be accountable. Replace this type of testing with performance based and authentic assessment along with multiple measures that provide a more balanced picture of student growth. The current assessment system focuses the school’s energy on math and reading often to the exclusion of other content areas that are not tested in this format such as: writing, science, social studies, art and foreign language, not to mention PE and Music.

- Elimination of the requirement for the portion of the Title I funds that are based on levels of per pupil spending by the state. This only reinforces the wealth based inequalities that already exist between districts.
- A couple other measures built into the current Act do not serve us well in communicating clear results to the public on our schools and should be eliminated: the designation of persistently dangerous schools (the rules are different depending on the state and/or the district) and thus any meaning that might be gained is lost; and attendance is too big a factor in a school's performance report card and there is no accountability for parents.

A closer return to the original purpose of the Act would be our preference where the conditions of the Act respond to the neediest of our students who need access to opportunity. Again thank you for this opportunity to share our ideas.