



Chalkboard Project Focus Group Highlights

– SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS –

Summary of research methodology: Five school board members participated in a focus group discussion. The board members were from different schools in the three county Portland metropolitan area.

Highlights of research findings: The findings emerge from the major areas discussed with the school board members.

Barriers to Student Achievement

- “I want to see stable funding...don’t keep using it as a trump card.”
- “What works for one [student] does not necessarily work for another.”
- “[Funding to meet special needs] is a budget crisis within a budget crisis.”
- “Lack of understanding by the general public of demands on [the] system.”

The school board members identified a number of issues when asked for their frustrations with Oregon’s K-12 system and what could improve student achievement. Overall, they rated student achievement in their districts somewhat average to positive.

- ◆ *Stable and adequate funding* was of paramount concern
- ◆ *Changing student demographics and cultural diversity* requiring different instructional strategies and relationships with families
- ◆ Demands, especially on teachers, to be *human service providers*
- ◆ *Mandates* that are unfunded, inadequately funded, or not relevant or connected to what their school districts are trying to accomplish
- ◆ *Lack of parental support* at home, especially among families who may not be in a position to do so because of language or other barriers
- ◆ *Testing* that does not directly result in raising standards in education
- ◆ Need for *higher academic standards* for all students
- ◆ Need for *better teacher training and preparedness*
- ◆ Lack of *legislative and public knowledge*

– SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS Continued –

Accountability

“There’s not much more room for waste.”

“Reach out to the public more extensively – make the taxpayers part of the solution.”

School board members generally rated their districts as not being overly wasteful and inefficient. Asked what they thought “accountability” means, they emphasized that the *entire community* – not just the schools – needs to be accountable for supporting children and knowing what is going on in the schools.

Role for Chalkboard and School Board Members

“Conveying the need for a common focus with a common definition of what critical state public education is in.”

“Communicate the value of public education, therefore adequate, stable funding.”

Asked the single more important thing Chalkboard can do to improve K-12 education, they saw a very important role in communicating with legislators and the public at large. The Board members described their role as engaging the community, articulating goals and responsibilities, developing a “laser focus” on literacy, and fostering public support.