



Chalkboard Project Focus Group Highlights

– TEACHERS –

Summary of methodology: Six focus group discussions were held with 36 teachers from three regions: Southern Oregon and the Willamette Valley (including Medford, Corvallis, and Eugene), Central and Eastern Oregon (including Bend, Pendleton, Baker City, and Klamath Falls), and the three county Portland metropolitan region. Three of the groups were grades K-8 teachers, and three were grades 9-12.

Highlights of research findings: The findings emerge from the major areas discussed with the teachers.

Student Achievement Assessment

Teachers were positive (but not as positive as principals and parents) when assessing student achievement in their district. They credited the quality of teachers, individual student contact, smaller class sizes, and visible commitment from teachers and the district for high student achievement levels. Many noted achievement drops off in upper grades and the challenges of “harder” student demographics.

Problems with the K-12 System

“I find the increasing demands without commensurate support to be quite taxing.”

Teachers expressed these frustrations with the K-12 system:

- ◆ Inadequate and unstable funding
- ◆ Large class sizes, outdated technology, and poor or run-down facilities
- ◆ Increasing demands of mandates, testing and classroom needs
- ◆ Insufficient resources
- ◆ Lack of public understanding and support for their work in the classroom
- ◆ Limited time and resources to take advantage of new ideas and practices

-TEACHERS Continued-

Best Practices

“Students need more individualized attention. Smaller class sizes. We know from all of our research that kids learn better if they get individualized attention. Yet our numbers are going up. I have had 38 seniors in one room together. . . Yeah, and time. Time for teachers to collaborate and discuss things that are working, and so gain various energies. Time gives energy and inspiration. With the amount of students in the classroom and time constraints, it’s oftentimes just survival.”

When asked, teachers identified these best practices:

- ◆ Promoting collaboration and teamwork with peers and others
- ◆ More one-on-one attention with students, including more classroom aides and school volunteers
- ◆ Curriculum and flexibility that allow for different learning styles (e.g. project-based approaches and experiential learning)

Role for Chalkboard

Two key themes emerged for a role for Chalkboard from these teachers:

- ◆ Address the adequacy of school funding
- ◆ Communicate effectively the challenges and successes of teachers and schools

They also say Chalkboard as a source for teachers to strengthen their own skills, connections to the community, and access to innovative programs and curricular practices.

Role for Teachers

“Don’t give up.”

“Keep the faith.”

“To change we need to participate.”

“Collaborative solutions can be found. We are stronger together.”

When looking at their own role, teachers focused on:

- ◆ Maintaining their optimism and commitment in spite of competing pressures they face daily
- ◆ Greater teacher participation in administrative and educational decisions
- ◆ More involvement with students’ families
- ◆ Great collaboration among teachers