



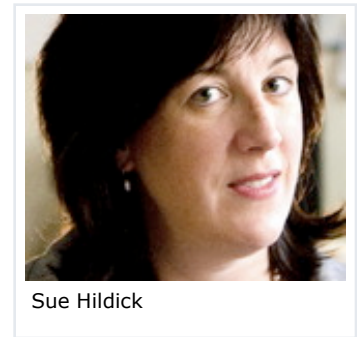
## Investing in success in our classrooms

### By Guest Columnist

November 23, 2009, 9:30AM

Teachers need support in order to best serve their students. The Oregonian's Susan Nielsen heard this loud and clear in the feedback to her recent column ("What tired Oregon teachers say (when parents aren't listening," Nov. 15). The Chalkboard Project also heard this message across Oregon from educators, parents, community members and students. The voices may be different, but the message is the same. Unless we invest in the professional practice of educators, we are letting down our teachers and our students.

The research is clear: An effective teacher is the most important factor in student achievement. In fact, research shows that assigning effective teachers to a class of disadvantaged students for five years in a row could close the achievement gap between those students and their privileged peers.



Sue Hildick

Twelve school districts in Oregon are now participating in a Chalkboard initiative to support effective teaching in every classroom. Three districts -- Sherwood, Tillamook and Forest Grove -- are implementing expanded career paths, relevant professional development, effective performance evaluations and new compensation models through the CLASS Project.

These four components get at the core of teacher effectiveness by giving educators the tools and support they need to be most successful. Using job-embedded professional development, collaborative learning teams, smart goals and instructional coaches as some of the means, teachers in these three districts are seeing the end results of being recognized and rewarded for their professional practice. They are also seeing initial signs of success through multiple measures of student achievement. The Chalkboard Project is cautiously optimistic that by funding these first districts we are in the process of creating a statewide model for supporting effective educators.

CLASS is not an initiative that is done to teachers, it is done by teachers. As Nielsen's column captured, each district serves a unique community with student and staff needs that are not restricted to the classroom. Through the CLASS Project teachers are empowered to think big about how to meet those needs and foster a community of collaboration within the district.

At the Chalkboard Project, we appreciate the tremendous work of the educators in our state. But the research and public opinion cannot be ignored: Educators need our support in order to do their best work for our students. As an advocacy organization or a parent, we can all do our part to strengthen teacher effectiveness and raise student achievement in Oregon.

*Sue Hildick is president of the Chalkboard Project.*

© 2009 OregonLive.com. All rights reserved.