



September 8, 2009

## Chalkboard Project deserves our support

### CLASS program provides path to educational success

More than one-sixth of Oregon's public school teachers are on the path to gaining the support, appreciation and training they deserve.

They work in school districts, including Salem-Keizer, that are working on classroom improvement through a partnership with the Chalkboard Project.

In its first five years, the independent Chalkboard Project has emerged as the most trusted voice on education reform in Oregon. It has done so by supporting effective, research-based strategies; honoring Oregonians' passion for public involvement; and respecting local decision-making.

The time-honored formula for student success sounds simple: good teacher + dedicated student = excellent education.

But education in the 21st century is profoundly more complex than in preceding generations.

We now understand much more about brain development. We know that if children haven't gotten a good start in their early months and years of life — thanks to parents who talk and read to them — that they will have difficulty in developing the linguistic skills needed for academic success.

We recognize that students are individuals, who learn in different ways, and that teachers must employ a variety of instructional styles to meet students' needs. We expect more from teachers each year, as their students encompass an ever-wider range of abilities, behaviors and family interactions.

Against that backdrop, Chalkboard wisely has focused on teacher effectiveness as the path to student success.

The Tillamook, Sherwood and Forest Grove school districts already have experience with Chalkboard's CLASS Project — Creative Leadership Achieves Student Success. The project amounts to teacher- and community-driven education reform that encompasses professional development, career paths, performance evaluations and incentive pay for teachers.

"We're seeing transformational success," Chalkboard Project Sue Hildick said.

Teachers receive relevant, effective training. Good teachers are encouraged to stay in the classroom, instead of having to go into administration to make more money. Weak teachers are helped to improve; and if they can't, they're weeded out. Rigorous evaluation systems measure teacher effectiveness and enable districts to reward outstanding teachers.

CLASS overcomes traditional barriers in how it requires collaboration among district administrations, unions and individual educators. One result has been increased community support for local schools.

Chalkboard has awarded planning grants this year to nine other districts: Bend-LaPine, Crook County, High Desert Education Service District, Lebanon, Oregon City, Redmond, Salem-Keizer, Sisters and Vernonia. Together they cover more than 80,000 students and involve more than 4,400 teachers.

The 12 participating districts are at differing stages of CLASS. But they all have great opportunities to reduce teacher turnover and build student success. Their efforts deserve Oregonians' support.

## Additional Facts

### Background

The Chalkboard Project is the single initiative of the Foundations for a Better Oregon, which five respected Oregon foundations created in 2003. They are the Collins Foundation, Ford Family Foundation, JELD-WEN Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust and Oregon Community Foundation. The James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation joined the consortium last year.

The foundations made a five-year commitment and have renewed that commitment for an additional five years.

CHALKBOARD PROJECT: [chalkboard.org](http://chalkboard.org)

FOUNDATIONS FOR A BETTER OREGON: [betteroregon.org](http://betteroregon.org)

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