



The Daily Astorian



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Letter: Progress made

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Astoria High School has just completed its seven-year review for the Northwest college and university accreditation. I am proud to say AHS met or exceeded standards in all 120 areas reviewed.

As a high school principal, I see the future walking down the halls of our school every day. I feel a keen sense of responsibility to this community to make sure the resources they offer to enhance the learning of our students is spent in the most effective way possible. I have watched with dismay over the years as our state has disinvested in our schools and lost sight of our true goals.

It was with great pride I watched Astoria buck this trend and help define AHS as the hub of this community. I am heartened by work on the state level by the Chalkboard Project, an independent, nonpartisan group searching for research-based pragmatic solutions to the challenges our schools face.

Oregonians have argued for too long about how much we spend on our schools. The far more important question is, what do we want to buy? Oregonians have made it clear they want their schools to be among the best in the country. They also want accountability for how schools are spending tax dollars, and assurance that their investment is paying off in student achievement. This is a fair request.

Chalkboard has spent the past three years researching what has worked in other places and what can be done to make a difference in Oregon now. Chalkboard advocates are putting more money into kindergarten and first grade classes to reduce class size, and they believe in providing reading tutors for K-3 students where research shows our money will make the biggest difference.

They advocate investing in mentors for new teachers and administrators to make sure staff will get stronger and we will not lose large numbers of young teachers who are overwhelmed by the job. We need to continue to look to community partnerships to show we are serious about maximizing use of our school dollars to benefit students and community. We need to continue to find creative ways to save dollars even if they are not the most popular.

Chalkboard Open Books Web site (www.openbooksproject.org) is a great resource to help Oregonians better understand where your schools spend their dollars. Astoria schools welcome this site, and our public's opportunity to review how we spend your money. We believe in working to improve to build public trust.

I am proud to be part of the Chalkboard Project, a new voice in Salem, and we are sending the message loud and clear to Oregonians: We support more money for schools as long as it is targeted in areas we know will get results, in terms of both student achievement and public confidence. As an educator, I wish we could immediately solve all the

challenges our schools face, but problems that took decades to create will take more than one legislative session to solve. Chalkboard's plan is a great place to start, and legislators should use it as a foundation for the future of Oregon's K-12 schools.

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Principal, Astoria High School

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