



# The Daily Astorian



Monday, April 17, 2006

## Chalkboard Project submits a new list

*Proposals for school districts contain valuable suggestions for change*

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Pay for performance is a hot button in the discussion of educational reform. Some teachers and teachers' unions resist it. Others are willing to give it a try. This innovation is one of the Chalkboard Project's just-released recommendations for Oregon schools.

The Chalkboard Project is a consortium of 20 Oregon charitable foundations, united in an effort to explore ways to improve our public schools. Founded in 2003, this extraordinary collaboration conducted the largest, most comprehensive statewide poll ever done on education. Chalkboard followed that survey with in-depth research and citizen engagement in all 36 Oregon counties as well as work groups with teachers and administrators.

Chalkboard's new list of priorities span two areas, education funding and quality/accountability. Specific proposals include the following:

- Mentoring for every new teacher and school principal.
- Enhancement of professional development.
- Performance-based financial awards to schools and teachers. Chalkboard will "launch voluntary pilot programs in select schools to test new ways for evaluating and paying educators." Districts in Minnesota, Arizona and Colorado are trying this.
- Reduction of class size in kindergarten and first grade.
- Providing a reading tutor to every student who is not reading at grade level in grades K-3.
- Identification and implementation of savings in all districts. Chalkboard asserts that "savings of approximately \$202 per child per year should be achieved by 2014-2015 based on better business practices (such as purchasing cooperatives and uniform data systems), reducing student transportation costs and eliminating early retirement contracts."
- Begin school audits by the state Board of Education.
- Make fixed grants to school districts for transportation costs and encourage efficiency. Chalkboard notes that Oregon's school transportation costs are "second highest among Western states, \$57 per student above Washington expenditures and \$15 per student above the national average."

- Adopt an OpenBook\$ project that would put school districts' spending plans on a Web site.
- Double the size of the state's school stability fund.
- Establish a new guaranteed level of state school funding per student. Chalkboard believes the schools funding conversation needs to be changed to focus on how much we spend per student.
- Repeal laws that prohibit some communities to raise money through school levies.

Nothing stays the same in this world. If a business isn't innovating and improving, it is falling behind. The same is true for the public sector, and certainly for education.

In its most recent proposals, the Chalkboard Project has given every school district as well as state officials a set of substantial ideas. Every Oregon school district as well as statewide policy makers should study this list and the data behind them.

This is a good set of aims. We urge the state, school districts, administrators and teachers to give the ideas a try.

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