



TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS MEASURES FIND SUCCESS DURING OREGON SESSION

For Immediate Release: June 29, 2009

Contact: Sue Hildick, President, (503) 542-4325 or Merry Ann Moore, Communications, (541) 549-2468

At the close of the legislative session, Chalkboard Project, an independent nonprofit working to move Oregon's K-12 schools into the top ten nationally, reports significant progress on initiatives centered on improving the effectiveness of the classroom teacher and school principal.

"The most important factor driving student learning is the effectiveness of the classroom teacher. Oregon has terrific teachers and we are very encouraged that today the Oregon legislature strengthened the tools available to them," notes Chalkboard President Sue Hildick. "We saw lawmakers pass bills to continue funding for mentors for new educators and to put resources behind critically-needed teacher professional development support. The competition for funding was fierce, so to see the state investment in research-based interventions that offer a high return on investment for the state dollar inspires confidence."

While there were numerous education champions during the session, Hildick singled out Representative Betty Komp and Senator Richard Devlin for their strong support and leadership in pushing for needed educator quality measures. "We were also pleased with our collaboration with the Oregon Education Association and Stand for Children, which resulted in strong, combined grassroots advocacy at crucial moments," added Hildick.

Chalkboard provides the following summary of results on legislation advocated by the nonprofit.

Mentoring for New Oregon Educators. This past year, the statewide beginning teacher/administrator mentor program reached nearly 1,000 beginning teachers and administrators. Schools have already submitted 962 applications for mentoring grants for the coming school year. Chalkboard worked hard throughout the session to keep the program from being disassembled, and persuade lawmakers that an investment of \$10 million for the biennium to continue the novice teacher/administrator mentoring

program would result in a much larger return. Close to 40 percent of Oregon teachers leave the profession in their first five years at an annual cost of \$45 million. In contrast, 99 percent of mentored educators stay in the profession. The mentor program was renewed at a level of \$5.07 million. So while not fully funded, the program will continue to benefit thousands of students.

Professional Development for Educators. To make ends meet, many school districts have slashed professional development budgets, which were already meager. Senate Bill 443 funds an easy-access, web-based clearinghouse listing high-quality professional development programs for teachers, professional development coursework standards, and other common-sense approaches to improve the professional practice of teachers. The bill passed into law with the support of both Chalkboard and OEA, with an allocation of \$130,000.

More Efficient Business Reviews for Schools. Chalkboard advocated for more cost-effective business reviews for schools wishing to evaluate their food service, transportation, financial management and other practices. As a result, \$800,000 which was to be allocated for state-provided reviews was eliminated from the state spending plan, and business evaluations are now being offered by non-governmental and private groups. The nonprofit Oregon Association of School Business Officials (OASBO), for example, provides such voluntary reviews for under \$15,000 to school districts. Chalkboard funded pilot reviews in six school districts this year to underscore the value of such public-private partnerships.

Wrapping up the 2009 legislative session, Chalkboard chairwoman Orcilia Zúñiga Forbes concludes, "We want Oregon student achievement to be among the very best in the nation, and we understand we must take a long-term view on school improvement. The work is not easy, but many groups and individuals are dedicated to this goal. We're satisfied that despite this session's budgetary challenges we have gained support for our approaches to moving Oregon education forward."

Chalkboard Project was founded in 2004 to inspire Oregonians to do what it takes to make the state's K-12 public schools among the nation's best. Chalkboard aims to help create a more engaged public which understands and addresses the tough choices required to build strong schools.

###