

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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CHALKBOARD ANNOUNCES MAJOR NEW GRANT OPPORTUNITY FOR OREGON SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Funds aim to raise student achievement via new career opportunities for teachers

May 12, 2009 - With school districts facing sharp budget cuts, education leaders could find some relief with the news of major new grants from school reform nonprofit Chalkboard Project. The organization is requesting proposals from districts statewide for grant monies worth up to \$68,500 in combined direct funding and in-kind technical support. Grants will be made to as many as three school districts or collaborating districts.

The monies represent the expansion of the successful CLASS program being piloted in three Oregon school districts. CLASS (Creative Leadership Achieves Student Success) is an educational reform project that offers teachers expanded career options, performance evaluations, professional development and compensation.

Chalkboard president Sue Hildick says the new round of funding comes in light of the successes of the first CLASS projects, launched in 2007. "The preliminary results in Sherwood, Tillamook and Forest Grove are exciting in the areas of student achievement, teacher retention and teacher recruitment. We'd like to duplicate these successes in other parts of the state."

Research shows the best way to achieve student learning gains is to make sure there's a great teacher in every classroom. When teachers do better, students get a better education. CLASS provides seed money for career-building programs that local educators design and build themselves. They make their own plans for improving their skills.

"This is a large commitment for our organization, and one that is commensurate with the tremendous promise we're seeing in the three districts that are trying the approach," explains Chalkboard board member Charlie Walker. "We're all about raising student achievement, especially at this moment in history, when students have to get more from school to succeed in a knowledge-based new age. We know that both teachers and students must become lifelong learners. CLASS is moving Oregon education in the right direction."

The CLASS project also positions Chalkboard to leverage federal stimulus money that is coming to support education in the state. "The innovations, accountability and results-driven

aspects of CLASS are right in line with the education priorities and goals of the federal government," says Hildick. "So we're hopeful about leveraging federal dollars for participants, on top of the funds we're putting behind CLASS ourselves.

"We believe schools are facing a stark reality, given the severe economic challenges we face in our state. Those that stay tethered to the status quo face the prospect of deeper cuts to staff and programs. Those with the determination to move forward and innovate will be positioned to thrive. We want to help."

Chalkboard invites teachers, superintendents and schools from across Oregon to apply for the new CLASS grants. Full details are available at <http://www.chalkboardproject.org>.

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CLASS by the Numbers

- * Low teacher retention rates cost Oregon \$45 million a year in teacher turnover costs.
- * More than a third of Oregon teachers leave teaching within the first five years of beginning.
- * Studies have shown a definitive link between continued improvement of a teacher's professional practices and
 - a) student achievement, with student outcomes as much as 30 percent greater than the national averages as measured by normative assessments, and
 - b) teacher retention rates, with improved retention of up to 20%.
- * Over a three-year period, Chalkboard is investing about \$100 per year per student in CLASS programs in three pilot school districts, Sherwood, Tillamook and Forest Grove.
- * New CLASS planning and design grants will be for up to \$28,500 for up to three school districts, with an additional \$40,000 more in technical assistance available to each.

About Chalkboard Project

Launched in early 2004, Chalkboard Project exists to inspire Oregonians to do what it takes to make the state's K-12 public schools among the nation's best, while strengthening our school system's financial accountability to taxpayers. Chalkboard aims to help create a more informed and engaged public that understands and addresses the tough choices and tradeoffs required to build strong schools, and to enable statewide programs that can be applied at the local level to improve school quality, accountability, and funding. For more information about Chalkboard and to learn how to get involved, call (877) YOUR-K12 or visit www.chalkboardproject.org.