

Superintendent Board Report
April 19, 2016

Loan Forgiveness:

During the fall “listening session” tour, many of our employees complained that they have not been eligible for federal loan forgiveness available to educators in school districts. This was a surprise to me, and we set out to see if we could find a way to make our employees eligible for this benefit.

We did find one loan forgiveness program available for anyone working for a non-profit for 10 years. It entails reporting on taxable income to determine repayment rates for 10 years (120 payments), and then 100% loan forgiveness. We have communicated to employees they can work with a for profit company to help them navigate this opportunity. They can also choose to work through the process independently. This arrangement is similar to paying for tax preparation or electing to do your own taxes.

Recently, we also heard from ODE that they will be listing ESDs as employers whose employees are eligible for the more typical loan forgiveness. In this scenario, an employee who works in a high poverty school setting for 5 years qualifies for \$17,500 in loan forgiveness. Our ESD meets the high poverty threshold, meaning our employees are/will be eligible. This has implications for employees who work in ESDs across the state who meet the high poverty threshold.

Northwest Promise:

We continue to move forward with the NW Promise work. On the funding front, all Superintendents have agreed to pay a per student amount to participate next year. We are keeping the price low, less than \$3.00 per student, to ensure everyone is getting a good deal. Several of our districts are only paying \$1.00 per student because they were deeply committed to the Willamette Promise, and will need to continue that work next year paying Willamette \$4.00 per student. At this funding level we should be able to sustain the project at least until the 18-19 school year, when we likely will need to go up to \$4.00 per student.

We are in the process of recruiting high school teachers to teach the classes. We would like to sign up 100 for next year. That is probably an aggressive goal, but if we don't aim high we might not have the needed sense of urgency.

We are also working to get the college instructors lined up. It is incredibly important for us to ensure the content of the classes students take are at or above the appropriate level for college credit. We also need to ensure any assessment of student work is robust enough, and graded appropriately, to certify the student has mastered the content.

We believe when we are able to get the high school teachers together with the college instructors in their Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) they will develop the technical requirements and the trust in one another to make everyone comfortable with the process. Now we just need to get enough of them all in the same room!

Oregon Rising:

The Confederation of Oregon School Administrators (COSA), in partnership with OSBA and OEA has begun a communication campaign called "Oregon Rising." They have stated the campaign is designed to inspire and inform the public regarding what is possible in Oregon schools.

COSA leaders have been travelling the state sharing the campaign message with school leaders. They are asking the school leaders to then hold meetings in their communities and share the information with parents, teachers, community members, and business leaders. They have set a goal to have over 1,000 such community meetings across the state over the next couple of months.

Part of the plan is to ensure the target audience will mobilize during the upcoming 2017-2019 legislative budget setting session.

The community meetings will start off with a video of Oregon students and school leaders providing brief statements about their hopes for Oregon schools. Participants then take a short survey through an electronic format indicating what they would like for Oregon students if they could be allowed to dream. Next, a second video is shown expanding on the theme similar to the first. And finally, more survey questions are asked.

The data collected will be compiled and will form a basis for lobbying during the upcoming session. The positioning for funds at the legislature is sure to be intense as higher education, K-12 schools, and social service agencies brace for PERS increases slated to begin July 1, 2017. The colleges have already been in the press stating how dire their situation will be without significant funding increases.

The financial worries expressed are a cause for true concern given the robust economy Oregon seems to be experiencing currently. Unemployment is down, wages are up, real estate is up, and Oregon has among the highest move in percentages in the country. A downturn in the economy would only deepen any economic woes.

Preschool Promise:

In the next two weeks we will be negotiating the details of our contract with the state to use the grant funds we have been awarded to provide preschool to students who live in poverty. You might think we would just get the money and then deliver what we promised. The state (ELD - Early Learning Division) however, is quite directive about exactly how this work gets done.

In order for them to actually release the money to us they want to now negotiate a contract to have us deliver to the students in the way they had imagined when they lobbied the legislature for the dollars they have awarded Hubs. The good news is that we were involved enough prior to submitting our application to know fairly clearly what they will demand in the contract. We are mostly comfortable with what they will ask of us and we should be able to reach an agreement in short order.

Our total award on this is likely to be \$1.1 million! We want to do a great job so the next time money is available we get even more, and more kids in our region get the support they need.

CTE STEM:

It sounds like we are going to receive a \$200,000 award to support the CTE Mobile FabLab that John Niebergall (Sherwood Teacher) has used to teach CTE teachers how to infuse high tech into their programs. John provides professional development (PD) on technology controlled cutting equipment and 3D printers, then leaves the machines at the school for the teacher and students to use.

Superintendent Meeting:

We continue to get good feedback from the regional superintendent meetings. These are important meetings because they bring all of the superintendents together, and they form an opinion of how well we are doing based partly on how these meetings go. Certainly their experience with the services we provide their students is a significant influence too, so we need to make sure everything we do is at a high standard.

In our most recent superintendent meeting we lead with a presentation by Andy Gardner, Superintendent in North Santiam SD. He presented on the professional development work he has underway with administrators and teachers designed to improve the instructional delivery in his district. His process and thinking on this is very strong. I could tell he caught the attention of the superintendents at the meeting and gave them all a lot to think about. He also provided them with resources they could use to do similar work in their districts.

Next, we provided an update on our leverage initiatives (Early Learning, CTE/STEM, and NW Promise work). Finally, Tim Nesbitt presented on IP 68. IP 68 is an initiative likely to be on the ballot in November which would focus funding at the high school level on programs designed to improve preparation and graduation rates. The superintendents were very interested and the presentation was informative. Tim is a former advisor/chief of staff to governor Kulongoski and then the first year of the Kitzhaber administration. At times he writes a column for the Oregonian, so you might be familiar with him. He is doing this work as a consultant for Stand for Children.

Next Board Meeting:

Remember, our next Board Meeting is at the Clatsop Service Center – 3194 Marine Drive, Astoria, 97103. After the board meeting that night we have an executive session we think will start at about 7:15.