

## Quality Education Commission's Best Practices Panel Talking Points

### Background:

*Six years of research in Oregon's most diverse high schools by the Quality Education Commission shows that it is the groundbreaking way in which teachers work together with the support of administrators and other staff to implement a continuous school improvement process that is the key to their students' success. This new leadership role for teachers is a significant break from the practices of the past century when teachers had few opportunities to consult with peers, and implementing systemic change was not within their purview.*

*Our schools now also welcome greater numbers of increasingly diverse student populations with needs teachers cannot adequately address in the existing "one size fits all" educational system. At the same time, our schools continue to experience a decades-long period of declining state school funding. Some diverse schools and districts in Oregon, however, have secured outside funding and other resources to implement school improvement innovations during this century. They dedicate these resources to providing staff with the time and space to develop their professional capacity in high need areas such as personalization of instruction, and to build partnerships within and outside of their local community to help address a wide range of challenges to student learning.*

*As a result, Oregon currently has some very effective diverse schools with the resources necessary to perpetuate a highly collaborative process where teachers continuously improve their effectiveness, and students have an increasingly better chance of reaching their educational goals and graduating ready for work and further education.*

### What Teachers, Administrators and Other Staff in Oregon's Most Successful and Diverse Schools Do to Improve Student Outcomes:

- 1. Schools and districts dedicate resources to support regular collaboration time for teams of teachers. Through this process, teachers consult with team members to analyze student progress, determine if their teaching strategies are keeping their students on track to graduate college ready, and address any problems of practice they need help resolving. They also use this time to assess the progress they are making in the implementation of systemic school improvement goals related to such issues as attendance, home/school communication, school safety, and college transition.*
- 2. Schools and/or districts protect and ensure that the continuous school improvement process is organic and has not been mandated, imposed or appropriated by outside forces. This is a grassroots teacher-guided process that reflects and is responsive to local context. It is driven by the passion of teachers who relentlessly seek to ensure social justice and equitable outcomes for all their students.*
- 3. Teachers take charge of their own professional development and work continuously on becoming more effective. They believe they must continuously improve their capacity to meet the needs of all students, and they are confident that given enough consultation time with each other, they will make this happen. They believe that tapping into each other's expertise to solve teaching challenges is the best form of professional development. When teachers feel they need additional expertise, they seek outside resources to help them develop their collective skills.*

4. *Administrators, teachers and other staff persist in fostering a culture of trust and support that gradually extends to whole system reform.* Administrators collaborate with their entire staff in making operational improvements to the system (e.g., daily schedule, attendance/discipline policies, freshman academies) to ensure students are known well and have a net of supportive adults in the school who will not let them “fall through the cracks.” Students in these schools report that they feel strongly connected to their teachers. This connection fosters a school culture of trust, respect, collaboration, and full engagement in learning.
5. *Teachers develop an increasingly sophisticated skill set that can be readily observed when they are at work in their collaborative teams.* This skill set includes but is not limited to: 1) small group facilitation; 2) accurate analysis of a wide range of individual student achievement data/evidence; 3) strategic planning to counteract the root causes of student underachievement; and 4) expansion of social capital by successfully collaborating across classrooms, departments, and the local community to develop a stronger support network for the school’s continuous improvement agenda.

**Burning Questions and Next Step for the QEC Best Practices Research Panel:**

1. *How prevalent are these practices in Oregon’s diverse schools that have successfully increased their graduation and postsecondary enrollment and completion rates?*
2. *How have schools secured and allocated resources to implement and sustain these practices?*
3. *What are the current costs of implementing and sustaining teacher-guided continuous school improvement processes?*
4. *What are the implications of these findings for the 2018 Quality Education Model?*

**Stay Tuned:** The Quality Education’s Best Practice’s Panel will answer these questions through its next round of case studies.