Best Practices Panels' Composite Report

> The society that scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted activity will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy. Neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water.
>
> *John Gardiner, Excellence*

> I know what makes a successful school. Really, really, really good teachers, who teach what you are supposed to know, and students who want to learn.
>
> *Abigail Bidegain, 10-year-old Portland student*

Everybody, it seems, has an idea about what makes for a quality education. Bill Gates, big foundations, business leaders, education organizations, higher education academics, teachers, parents, students, and journalists, they all have their conjectures and speculations. And Oregon's Quality Education Commission has paid attention to them all, preparing a model that can assure both our theories and practices can hold water.

The Quality Education Model (QEM) is more than a tool for determining the funds required to provide a quality education for all students. The model is also a model for high performance instructional improvement. It stimulates focused discussion on exactly what a quality education is, what it would cost on a statewide basis, and what we can expect from students if the QEM is implemented.

It is clear that we know and have known what to do to educate students to the state standards. It is also clear that resources make a difference.

No matter what angle is used to approach the issue of quality education, two themes come forward again and again – leadership is one, and time is the other.

In past years, best practices were determined in three ways. First, literature was reviewed to determine current, researched-based best practices. Second, national experts were consulted and assessments were made about approaches being implemented in other states. Finally, focus groups of Oregon experts – superintendents, principals, and teachers – were presented with these practices to determine what they thought, if instituted in Oregon schools, we could expect the impact to be on improving outcomes for Oregon students.

This year, to accomplish the charge of determining what best practices to include in the prototype schools, that are the heart of the Quality Education Model, the Commission instituted several geographically based regional review panels. These panels, rather than just synthesizing national research, reviewed data on Oregon schools and interviewed staff in schools that are successfully educating students to the Oregon standards.

Method

Five panels were established with the membership made up of superintendents, principals, teachers, and local school board members (See Attachment A). Each member was nominated by his or her respective professional organization: Confederation of Oregon School Administrators (COSA), Oregon Education Association (OEA), and Oregon School Boards Association (OSBA).

Finding an acceptable definition for "successful" schools was challenging. While no simple characterization was really adequate, the panels eventually settled on four factors that were determined to be of interest in selecting schools to interview. Data were drawn from the Oregon Department of Education Data Base and sorted by these four factors:

1. Schools that had high "status" (RIT) scores for math and reading in benchmark assessment years,
2. Schools that had been rated "Exceptional" on the Oregon Report Card,

3. Schools that had improved the percentage of students meeting or exceeding benchmark in one or more of the federally defined assessment cohorts (American Indian/Alaskan Native, Black, Hispanic, Special Education, Economically Disadvantaged, Limited English Proficient). These schools instituted practices that led to improvement that "earned" their way out of the federally defined "School Improvement status,"
4. Schools that were either finalist or award winners in the Superintendent's Closing the Achievement Gap (CTAG) Celebrating Student Success Award.

Schools selected for direct interview are listed in Attachment B.

An interview schedule was developed (see Attachment C). The panels were exploring what factors were present in schools that matched best practices already identified in the model. They also wanted to determine what factors were not in the model but were considered important in the success of a school and should therefore be added to the model. Finally, they looked for factors that were in the model that schools thought really did not make a significant difference for students.

The Quality Education Commission understands Oregon's and the country's current economic downturn. It would have been reasonable for the panels to evaluate the model in light of the sliding economy, and to make modifications that would conform to the dismal fiscal reality. Instead the panels chose to maintain their focus on the importance of providing a world-class education to all Oregon students, and of maintaining the goals of continued improvement in student performance and achievement. As a result, this panel report urges a model that reflects proven research and current best practices in Oregon's own successful schools. We believe the revised document will improve the design and maintain the goals of the legislative charge given to the Commission.

This panel report continues to present a roadmap for improvement in student achievement. Adequately funding the model requires strong leadership and significant resources. State educators are using the QEM as a benchmark for best practices, staffing, and activity levels. The requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and Oregon's own education goals will *not* be met with a widening funding gap.

Resources alone will not ensure high-quality schools, but high-quality schools will not exist with inadequate funding. Quality education requires a combination of sufficient resources, effective educational practices, and local decision making.

The QEM uses education research, classroom practice, professional judgment, and public values to identify important characteristics that lead to high student achievement. Schools and students need a stable education environment to thrive. Each year of a student's education is linked to what he or she learned before, and what will come later. Effective education practices are disrupted when the funding gap becomes too wide, or when resources are provided and then cut.

Findings

Time. You have to appreciate that so much depends on time. In some way or another every successful school told us about the importance of time. Time for teachers and teams to plan, time for students to work on task, time for staff to focus on their professional development, time for interaction among and between staff – across disciplines, across grade levels. Time is recognized as the most important ingredient in improving results for all students but extra time on task is especially necessary for lower-performing students to make progress in closing the achievement gap. Time issues appear in three ways: time for individual teachers to communicate with parents and others, time for teacher-to-teacher exchange, and time for students on task. Schools must be able to provide teacher planning time, team discussion and student review time, data analysis and interpretation time, school-day professional development time, time for students to focus on and improve core subject learning.

Time is needed for staff collaboration because this is a key to creating leadership capacity. Sharing what we know and taking the time to value this sharing (collaboration) as a means of creating leadership

capacity is critical. We note that Mike Geisen (2008 National Teacher of the Year) is in a district (Prineville) that is a "Continuous Improvement" district where collaboration is a key element to creating teacher leaders.

How do successful schools capture *more* time for teachers and students? If a student is in school from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm, there are 6½ available classroom hours. Lunch generally takes 45 minutes, and in middle and high schools six passing times between seven classes can be seven minutes each. These two things reduce the available teaching-learning time in the typical school by 87 minutes and leave 303 minutes, or just over five hours for classes. Some schools have reduced passing time to five minutes, gaining 12 minutes each day, or an hour each week. Some schools have extended the day by starting at 8:00 am and ending at 3:15 pm, gaining 45 minutes a day, or 3¾ hours a week. Some schools have reduced the lunch period to as few as 20 minutes, gaining 25 minutes a day or a little over two hours a week. There are many variations but the controlling factor is the finite number of minutes to use for the state-required subjects: mathematics, English/language arts (learning to read, write, listen, and speak), science, social sciences, physical education, health education, second language, social science, and the arts.

To gain the time needed for in-building professional development, successful schools are increasing class size for non-core area subjects, teachers are giving up prep time, staff are voluntarily and on their own initiative working outside contract hours, staff are using their own time for team meetings.

- *Talent Elementary School has "double-dose" classes – extra class time in specific subjects – for students needing help in meeting standards. So, for instance, for students performing below standard in reading, in addition to their regular 90-minute class, they get another 45 minutes with a reading specialist. And, some also have special after-school instruction.*

- *McNary Heights Elementary School (Umatilla) has used grants to map a reading program. They have a Reading First program after school with 200 students attending (in a 630 student population). They have used staff development time to prepare reading coaches. They offer first graders through third graders 90 minutes of reading instruction per day. Forth- and fifth-graders get 60 minutes of reading instruction per day. As well, they offer night school for adult reading classes for parents.*

- *The Bend-La Pine Schools have, for the past three school years, made collaborative time a high priority for teachers through either late-start or early release for School Improvement Wednesdays. This has allowed more collaboration between grade levels and within departments. It has also allowed teachers from around the district to gather together from time to time for collaboration between buildings and for ongoing training with newly adopted curriculum.*

- *Hoover Elementary School (Medford) uses grade level and core subject teams for planning and collaborative work. They have early dismissal one day each week to provide time for team meetings. They have a weekly "rule review" where they alternate focus on rules and climate (e.g., restroom behavior, hallway behavior, playground behavior, classroom behavior).*

- *The Forest Grove High School principal captured one half of a teaching FTE and funding from outdated programs to free up a school site fund to support school improvement goals. It is called the "Say Yes Fund." This is money that goes to respond to teacher requests for material, training, student improvement grants, or whatever a teacher believes will make his or her students more successful. He says he has never had to refuse a request – they are always well focused on goals.*

- *Gervais teachers are organized in subject-area teams (their own version of Professional Learning Communities) and teach each other to teach subject matter to students (e.g., vocabulary to be taught as an integrated portion in math or science classes).*

- *Heppner has a four-day school week. But on Fridays they provide classes for students who have missed assignments during the week, who have failed assignments, or who are struggling with a subject.*

- *Talmadge Middle School (Central SD) provides all students a reading class each day. To do this they have given up almost all electives. They instituted Professional Learning Community training and have spent funds to send teacher teams to a Differentiated Instruction Conference in Las Vegas. These teachers must do research, write lessons, provide feedback, and post it all on the web for other teachers to use. They also must agree to lead differentiated instruction teams when they come back.*

- *At Stoller Middle School in Beaverton the central office initiates teacher training with content focus. They learn to become lead teachers and to lead groups in the content areas. They return to the school to transfer their learning to the other teachers in their building.*

- *At Crook County Middle School, using their "flexible schedule," specialists and elective teachers cover for core class teachers. This schedule allows every grade level team (6, 7, 8) to have a common prep time while specialists and elective teachers are working with their students.*

- *Linus Pauling Middle School (Corvallis) provides a reading class for all seventh and eighth graders who are not meeting benchmark. Sixth-grade elective have been eliminated in order for all students at that grade level to have an additional reading class. They offer English Language Development classes, assign two Instructional Assistants for ESL students, and train all staff in Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) which is an approach for teaching content to English language learners in strategic ways that make the subject matter concepts comprehensible while promoting the students' English language development. They offer counseling for their Hispanic population with the use of mentors from Oregon State University and continue to raise the bar of performance expectations.*

- *Harold Oliver Primary Center in the Centennial School District has all teachers trained in GLAD (like SIOP it provides visual strategies for language development for primary grade students). They also use late start Wednesdays for team meetings, once a month for administrative issues, and after-school time on Mondays for their Professional Learning Community teamwork.*

- *Clackamas High School has a comprehensive staff induction and support program led by a master teacher and professional development specialists (two half-time FTEs). They mentor, build, coach, and facilitate best practice conversations, collegial connections, and professional growth for all probationary first-year, second-year, and third-year teachers.*

- *"Double (and triple) dosing" is common parlance in almost all schools. It is a concept that conveys a number of second and third offerings of core subject teaching and learning time. Successful schools have numerous ways to capture the time needed and reduce class size for effective delivery. Often it comes by some teachers taking extra students in order for others to have small class sizes. In lower grades it sometimes means all teachers teaching a class in reading. Often it means non-core subject teachers are helped to integrate and assimilate core subject work in their subject delivery.*

Needed in the Model for Time

It is recommended that the model add time by adding three hours per week (about 108 hours per school year) for in-building staff study, collaboration, team meetings, and data review. This would be in addition to prep time and the "professional development days" already in the model.

The model should also provide one added certificated FTE for use within the school schedule for "double-dose" classes and other interventions for students who are not meeting state standards. Successful schools have figured out ways to extend the day (before- and after-school activities) or to extend the week and year (Saturday School, Summer School). Often this has put pressures on other parts of the school schedule and has taken resources from other important school offerings.

There is a need for extended contract time outside of the school day and school year. Students need quality time outside of a 191-day school year. The model should include the ability to extend teachers' time without taking away prep time or necessitating their use of personal non-duty time to make it happen. It should be paid time.

Leadership matters. In practically all the successful schools interviewed, the leadership of the principal and the affiliated leadership of some key teaching staff were cited as a key – and usually the primary factor – in the schools' accomplishments. It seems almost a truism that noteworthy gains will not be made without significant leadership in the building. And what is leadership? From these interviews it appears to be something coming from *both* the principal and at least a few skilled teachers. According to these schools, leadership that facilitates student learning occurs when:

- The school community is focused on goals and has a sense of vision or purpose
- State standards are a part of the school's goals, and there is a clear, realistic plan to enable an increasing numbers of students to meet standards over time
- There is broad-based involvement in decision making and it is clearly focused on student learning
- Leadership roles are shared in the school community, and results in all staff being committed to enhanced student learning
- The school community has a healthy organizational climate and a minimum of political "in-fighting"
- Employees hold themselves to be accountable to high performance standards
- There are resources and time devoted to ongoing professional training

A school community focused on established goals and an articulated sense of vision or purpose characterizes such leadership. This leadership results in a cohesive and focused staff group that works together and collaborates with each other.

- *One teacher interviewed at Willagillespie Elementary School (Eugene) made explicit what was implied at most of the successful schools interviewed: she credits the principal for a major contribution to their success. "She (the principal) does the research, develops the data, helps analyze the data, leads in professional development, models collaborative behavior, and is just there for us when we need her."*

- *At McNary Heights Elementary School (Umatilla) they have an adopted "Literacy Plan" that includes leadership as a component. They describe that as beginning with the principal but also involving a reading coach, specialists, and targeted grade level teachers. The specialists ensure coordination/integration of services for all students. They have identified building leaders (Early Reading Team) to guarantee that components for implementation of their reading model are in place and aligned with research.*

- *At Harold Oliver Primary Center (Centennial) the principal says she has lots of teacher leaders. The teachers say the principal models the collaborative behavior that makes the school special.*

- *Crooked River Elementary School in Crook County credits the fact that the principal has had seven years at the school. This stability has led to development of common understanding among staff and the ability to put systems in place. They worked on relationship building and "taking time to honor the teaching profession." The principal states that leadership is not enough, you need "followership" and people ready to commit and believe that change is possible. "With change there will be pain but misery is optional."*

- *The principal at Armand Larive Middle School in Hermiston attributed much of their success to "teacher attitude and commitment," while teachers recognize the principal for providing for "a strong leadership team." Every teacher meets with the principal to talk about how each of his or her students is doing. Each time they meet they talk about every student.*

- *At Stafford Elementary School (West Linn-Wilsonville) the staff talks about the excellence of the district leadership. High-quality staff is hired and then they let the folks do their work. Teachers say the principal fosters collaboration in the building. They all acknowledge the superintendent's support and leadership.*

- *A math teacher interviewed from McLoughlin High School in Milton-Freewater said, "The principal's leadership is the main ingredient in our success." The principal made a point to acknowledge the support he gets from the superintendent.*

- *An example, one among many, was seen at Hoover Elementary School in Medford. The staff states, "Failure is not an option." They have established and spelled out core values and have created "strategic parameters" that include no tolerance for: "Anything that jeopardizes the health and safety of the school environment; anything less than full participation, support, and growth toward the school improvement goals; anything to diminish the worth and dignity of any individual; anything distracting from the opportunity of all students to learn; and, any behavior that does not conform to the school's Positive Behavior Support guidelines."*

Needed in the Model for Time

It is recommended that the model add funding, beyond the current days per year allocated, for professional development and protected for leadership training. This would usually be funds for some, not all staff, to train and become trainers for the remaining staff.

Communication, relationships, and unity of focus are highlighted in practically all the successful schools interviewed. This includes regular contact with parents – and not just at times when there is trouble. Communication practices include newsletters, e-mail contact, phone calls, gatherings at the school, and sharing of plans for each student. Respect, trust, and unity among all staff are the concepts used to describe the work environment in successful schools. Another feature in schools that do well is maintenance of a safe and orderly learning environment. The adage is, "Nothing improves until the school climate feels safe to the student and is perceived to be safe by the parent." Things that support this goal are: making sure all students are on task within their classrooms, the hallways and public spaces are in order at all times, violent incidents are rare and dealt with immediately and effectively, the perception of the parents and the general community is that the school is safe and orderly, and the school cooperates with community agencies and enforces its own rules by providing programs for disruptive students.

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is used in many of the successful schools. It must be staffed, requiring a team leader and staff team members, who in most cases are paid a stipend. All are trained in PBS. An important ingredient in the PBS model is the use of student rewards and incentives, which means that someone has to solicit these resources or there has to be a school fund set aside for purchasing them.

Staff members in successful schools talk about the trust levels among all the school community. This means relationships of trust and respect between the principal and the teachers, among the staff for each other, between the staff and the students, and between the staff and parents. Respect involves having a basic understanding of tasks, completing projects on time, fulfilling obligations consistently, being a team player, and generally being the kind of person others trust and rely on. Trust involves learning how to listen and communicate effectively. Developing respect from the students requires extending them the same courtesy. Adults can be adults, but they can do it with respect towards the students. Children who are respected understand how to extend respect to others. Children who are well-respected have strong self-esteem, which helps them to perform well in all areas of their life. This factor basically relies on the leadership and modeling of the principal and of key teaching staff members. It requires discussion and focus so that the entire staff recognizes this is what the school climate requires of them.

- *In Gervais High School, where there are many Spanish-speaking and Old Russian families and approximately 63 percent of the parents do not speak English as their first language, they use numerous approaches to communicate with families. One successful method is to use student-led conferences. The students are the translators (but a school translator also sits in) as well as the directors of the conference. Each student has a portfolio and a Personal Education Plan.*

- *At Pacific High School in Port Orford-Langlois they report that everyone "buys into" their high standards. Parents (even those in homes that experience poverty) expect their children to do well in school. There is a very high level of adult connection with students. The community wants to maintain a place for their graduates in the community, wants them to come back after college. Adults from the community offer a good number of the enrichment classes – a resident who is an artist offers art classes to students, a photographer known throughout the Northwest offers*

photography classes, they have a community member doing video production classes, a retired jet propulsion lab scientist works with some vocational technical classes…and the list goes on.

- *At McLoughlin High School in Milton-Freewater the staff members for every class make progress reports to parents every two to three weeks. The principal calls every senior's parents at grading time, three times in the year, after having talked with teachers about each student's standing (social as well as academic) in the school. He makes extra calls if any senior falls behind in work toward needed graduation requirements. [A side-note: The principal, not really bilingual, has learned enough Spanish to respond to a student who answers the phone with, "My parents don't speak English so I'll just convey your message." He has a stand-by interpreter for talking with parents who do not understand English.]*

- *At McKay High School (Salem-Keizer) a family college night is held once a month. They encourage and make families aware of college opportunities and are proud of the graduation rate and percentage of students going on to post-secondary studies.*

- *At Eagle Point High School they have a "Parent Connect" web-based grade reporting system to give progress reports. A website and printed newsletters are used to communicate with parents. Parent information nights, such as scholarship night for seniors, federal Gear Up (following a student cohort from grades 7-12), TRIO (a program to encourage and help students who would be the first generation to attend college), ASPIRE (helping students sort through and apply for scholarships), and open house events are a part of the connection with families and the community. The staff also goes to feeder middle schools for outreach activities.*

- *Winston Middle School has trained staff to use Positive Behavior Support. PBS is an approach aimed at helping students improve difficult behavior based on four things: **understanding** that people do not control others but should seek to support others; a **belief** there is a reason behind most difficult behavior and people exhibiting difficult behavior should be treated with compassion and respect, and are entitled to lives of quality as well as effective services; **application** of a large and growing body of knowledge about how to better understand people and make humane changes that can reduce recurrence of troubled and difficult behavior; and **conviction** to continually move away from coercion or the use of unpleasant events to manage behavior.*

- *McNary Heights Elementary School (Umatilla) staff members say they feel the best word to describe their success is trust. Everyone involved needed to be willing to trust the vision, the programs, the people involved, and the students.*

- *Talent Elementary School (Phoenix-Talent) works with low-income and families with low English proficiency at home by offering parents classes. They provided parents a "learning toolbox," a kit that helps them so they can work with their children on schoolwork at home.*

- *Waldo Middle School (Salem-Keizer) has one person who organizes student data and meets regularly with teachers to look at disaggregated data for each student. They plan two days a year off-campus to go deep into the data. Waldo also has a community outreach coordinator funded through Title I money. They offer parenting classes, ENGLISH NOW!, and other parent and community involvement activities.*

- *Forest Grove High School uses multiple approaches to engage and communicate with parents. They have a Back-to-School Night, Monthly Ninth Grade Parent nights, a monthly Latino Parent Advisory meeting, Quarterly Latino parent meetings, Latino College Fair, College Night, Financial Aid Night, Booster Bash, Oregon University System (OUS) visits, the Viking Connection newsletter, and a website with a calendar of events. They provide assistance with scholarship information, research, and applications.*

- *Clackamas High School is similarly motivated. They have ELL nights, Open House events, newsletters (both hard copy and e-mail), Senior Notes, a web page, and an eSIS family group.*

- *Staff at Heppner Elementary School report they work together on developing common expectations. They spend as much time on the emotional/social side of the student's life as they do on the*

academics. They have developed a huge reward and recognition program that is broad enough so each student is included.

- *At Taft Elementary School in Lincoln County the school focuses on data review at regular staff meetings. They use e-mail for administrative communications. They develop family involvement plans. They do fundraising to raise money for art classes by selling parent, community member, and student art.*

- *At Harold Oliver Primary Center in the Centennial School District, with a 42% mobility rate, nearly 30% Limited English Proficiency, and a 62% economically disadvantaged student population, the staff say they have learned that events with food available help the parent participation. They combine a school fair night with student conferences. They offer prizes and give-always at evening events for families. They report that staff-to-staff communication, teamwork, and collaboration are hallmarks of their success.*

- *Several schools reported doing book studies; reading on their own time and discussing books (like "Creating a Culture of Excellence in Teaching & Learning" by Aaron Brower) help them focus on their task of teaching all students.*

- *Waldo Middle School (Salem-Keizer) has a community outreach coordinator funded through Title money. They offer parenting classes, ENGLISH NOW!, and other parent and community involvement activities.*

- *Stoller Middle School in Beaverton said they have a non-stop emphasis on student learning. They offer before- and after-school classes: a test-prep class that mirrors the Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS), a zero period math class, and a homework club.*

- *Washington Elementary School (Woodburn) offers before- and after-school and summer school core classes, open school-wide for double-dosing, improvement, and benchmark test readiness.*

- *Armand Larive Middle School (Hermiston) reports a strong positive teacher attitude and commitment to students. Their teacher teams work together, with some giving up prep time to help others. For instance, the science and math teachers incorporate reading goals and time in their classes. Teachers confer with the principal on how each student is doing and each sends a personal card to parents four times a year. Low-performing students are targeted with extra time for reading, math, and science. They have a family focus and a whole-school goal that encourages a positive atmosphere and polite and courteous behavior.*

- *Stafford Primary School (West Linn-Wilsonville) confirms the importance of staff professional development with a commitment of the district to pay for 15 credit hours per year for every teacher. The superintendent never puts this on the table in budget planning and the board never questions the expenditure. It is considered an important ingredient in keeping staff current with research and practice.*

Needed in the Model for Communication

To recognize there is a cost to communication and relationship building with parents and community members, the model should add funds for activities and programs before and after school. School budgets are now manipulated, often at the expense of elective courses or even class size, to afford the many things they now do to provide newsletters, web information, special family nights, mentor training and supervision, English language classes for parents, study kits for parents to provide home aid, and after-school activities including a triple dose of time for students performing below standards on assessments. These should not come at the expense of the regular school program for students. The model should include funding for extended duty and communication.

Students feel a connection to their school. This is really a sub-part of the relationships category of characteristics but is focused enough to have its own mention. Each of the successful schools interviewed works to ensure that student interactions occur on a human and manageable scale, and that the adults in the school know all students. They provide opportunities for

students that are numerous and varied enough to ensure that all students can become involved, and that involvement is not restricted to a particular group of students. They have award and recognition programs designed to include a wide range of students, so that the same students are not repeatedly selected for recognition. They work on ways to identify and engage students who may otherwise fall through the cracks, drift through school anonymously, or drop out. Many have alternative education programs and ways for students to connect to the broader school programs and the community.

- *At Eagle Point High School each student has a six-year plan. This plan has been in place for two years prior to high school. Upper grade level students are assigned to each 8th grader at the eighth grade orientation and serve as mentors for the incoming student through the freshman year. The school is proud of having something to offer every student after the school day ends – Future Farmers of America (FFA), auto shop, painting booth, greenhouses, speech club, debate club, drama, band(s), and athletics. The school maintains a "hot list" of students who need special attention. The staff meets weekly and all staff sign up as mentors for a student.*

- *At Ashland Middle School the principal says his job is to "hire good staff and then get out of the way."*

- *Pacific High School in Port Orford has an "all play" rule. Any student who wants to be on a school athletic team participates; there are no rejects. If there are more students reporting for a sports team, they create a second team. They do not offer baseball or football (!!) but they do offer volleyball, soccer, basketball, tennis, and track. The Port Orford Rotary Club raises about $100,000 each year for scholarships and they emphasize that every student will have the opportunity to go to college – 93% of their graduates do.*

- *At Talent Elementary School one of the teachers who has been at the school for 17 years said, "The school is doing well because of respect, and it all starts with people. We are collaborative, focused, and centered on the success of our students."*

- *Hoover Elementary School named as one of the most important set of features in their success "teamwork, relationships, collaboration, and mutual support, all revolving around our people."*

- *The Clackamas High School arts program has been expanding to meet student requests. Music, drama, and survey of the arts serve over half of their student body. Connections are particularly strong in these programs.*

- *Harold Oliver Primary Center has a massive after-school program that is self-supporting. They have an instructional assistant who does all the leadership recruiting for a fee-based set of programs. Student participation is very strong.*

- *Asked to identify some key elements of success, the administrators at Clackamas High School said, "Kids must feel like they belong. To this end the school has a public goal of 'Connecting Kids' and it is important. The passion of teachers makes a difference for the kids; they intervene with kids when there is a special need. It comes down to the relationship of teachers and other staff to the students."*

- *Stafford Elementary School staff say that stability of staff is a major positive influence in their building. It takes a long time to build relationships and good relationships both foster and come from a high level of trust.*

Instructional adaptability is a characteristic of the successful school. The successful schools we visited are flexible and regularly review their goals and methods. They review practices and update them with some regularity. They use task forces, study groups, and *ad hoc* committees for student success evaluation. Most have a formal planning process to examine internal and external data on student progress and accomplishment of goals. These schools appear to focus on identifying new challenges, rather than recounting old accomplishments. It was noted that the speed with which a school can implement adaptations may be enhanced in small schools – they know every student, know all the parents, and nothing goes unnoticed. This advantage can, in some degree, be replicated in larger

school populations by implementing a small learning community concept, looping the students through the grade levels and looping the instructional staff with a student group.

- *When Ashland Middle School determined they were not getting maximum efficiency from their classroom assignment of paraprofessionals they changed their staffing by hiring a certified teacher, assigning all but the ELL and special education assistants to that teacher and setting up a classroom to which any team may assign any student for extra help. It is used minimally for behavior assistance and maximally for added time for students needing help in math, language arts, and other core subjects.*

- *Stoller Middle School has built a "neighborhood" structure with teams that include a math, science, and humanities teacher. Each team has 90 students assigned to it. The teachers do not loop (stay with the students through all grades) but the students stay together as a group through the grades.*

- *While most schools avoid "tracking," Hosford Middle School successfully uses a "levels" system for reading. The teachers are committed to it and they use criteria based on research to establish the levels and place the students. Their flexibility comes to the fore in their quarterly assessment of each student, and building a creative schedule that allows upward movement for students as they improve.*

- *LaPine Middle School cut back on electives in the seventh and eighth grades to be able to double-dose in language arts and reading. They shifted resources because they felt a need to teach language arts and study skills in tutorial-type classes. They also have some targeted students in grades 7-8 staying after school and taking the elementary bus home an hour later in order to work individually with teachers.*

- *At Clackamas High School all freshmen and sophomores are part of a Small Learning Community. For the past several years they have had science, language arts, and social studies teamed. Next year, partly because of anticipated funding changes and partly because of program evaluation, they will uncouple science and expand support, connections, and flexibility for the new partnered teams. They also use data to establish their School Improvement Plan yearly and to inform the work both within departments and school-wide.*

- *McLaughlin High School in Milton-Freewater reports that everything they do is linked to the state standards. Pre-Algebra is the lowest math they offer. Every freshman has a combined science class that includes biology, earth science, chemistry, and physics. Staff is dedicated and work well together – "We are like family." Some classes are large in order for others to be small enough to focus on students behind in performance. Each teacher in a discipline uses the same syllabus. They focus on curriculum alignment with mapping and time for staff reflection.*

- *Crooked River Elementary School developed benchmark teams and focused on the bottom 20% of students. They drill down into the data to see how best to support them. They utilize homework clubs before and after school, calling them benchmark focus groups. The students engage and became a support group to each other. The staff use tutoring/coaching skills and provide incentives and external motivators.*

- *Talmadge Middle School in the Central School District has given up most electives so they can include a reading period for all students – every teacher has one period of reading each day.*

- *Waldo Middle School has also given up electives to meet reading needs.*

- *Linus Pauling Middle School offers only track, all other athletics are run through community resources like the Boys & Girls Club.*

- *McKay High School has redistributed FTE to provide more math and additional instructional assistants for after-school tutoring. They have decreased electives for students who are below benchmark in reading and math and have increased resources for writing labs for freshmen.*

Data and Formative Assessments are tools that have helped successful schools obtain high standards of achievement (or are named as a significant need that would support greater success but that they cannot afford).

Primary aspects of these tools are access to good formative assessment data, the ability to manage the data once collected, and the training necessary to "mine" the data sources. The Quality Education Model should consider the benefits and costs of access to data systems for all districts. At present, data are stored in a variety of systems and are being collected in "data warehouses." In the current model, costs for accessing these warehouses are the responsibility of districts. These warehouses provide an availability of data that can be scaled down to the teaching level or up for district analysis. This gives educators the ability to combine numerous types of data in a single resource. The model needs to reflect the importance of this type of information for Oregon schools, and it should not be paid for out of instructional dollars.

Repeatedly the importance of data-driven decision making has been the focus of initiatives, yet the fundamental issue of establishing a priority for funding the additional personnel and cost of the data systems has been overlooked. The consequence of recognizing the value of data while limiting direct funding has often led to state tests, designed for program assessments, being used to assess individual students or used for informing growth models, which they are not designed to do. Districts that have placed an emphasis on directing reform based on additional formative assessments believe information on individual students allows for more appropriate direction. Successful schools need access to assessments that can track growth over time and they also need assessments that apply a standard that is unchanging. The model needs to recognize the benefit of – and fund – formative assessment systems such as those that have been adopted in many of the successful districts. These districts use assessment data and analysis to provide teachers with valuable information on current students that can be applied within the scope of their teaching. With this assistance, instruction can be modified for students quickly rather than requiring them to dig for information through periodic summative assessments.

We cannot talk about the data and assessment activities without recognizing that technology plays a central role. It does so in terms of teaching, accountability, and communication, as well as in the data collection and analysis. This means there is a need for sustained "real" funding in this area. The $130 allocated in the current model works if it is targeted and sustained. But, best practices in technology need to be added to the model in terms of definition, tools, use of databases, and supporting assessment.

The Oregon Department of Education is developing one promising structure that should be further supported. This is the Teaching Learning Connection (TLC), which should provide a statewide framework of tools, processes, and support to help districts and schools implement effective school practices. (See Attachment D.) Training in data-driven decision making is developed and offered through TLC to form a foundation for professional development training. Still, there will be a need to go deeper to the classroom level, but the availability of the data does not necessarily mean that a local district will have the talent or resources to develop a system that links to the data. The panels believe the ESDs could play a major role in this area.

- *McNary Heights Elementary School reported that learning how to use data to drive instruction made the biggest impact on their educational process. They implemented an assessment system to provide teachers with multiple data sources and then trained them in interpreting the assessments to make instructional changes in a timely manner.*

- *Stoller Middle School in Beaverton uses a data team to examine, analyze, and interpret student data, and then assist teachers in looking at varying instructional strategies.*

- *LaPine Middle School sent a team of ten to the IPSE technology conference. They held an all-staff session presenting four main things to "transfer" from their learning. Staff at the school then split into small groups and the IPSE team members presented workshops for professional development, with staff choosing which workshop would have the most relevance to their teaching. They used early release Wednesdays for this series of workshops.*

- *Waldo Middle School (Salem-Keizer) has one person who organizes student data and meets regularly with teachers to look at disaggregated data for each student. They plan two days a year off-campus to go deep into the data.*

- *Pacific High School stated that the next thing they need for even greater success is to have access to data in a useful form. Presently they find what they have takes too long to distill and does not give them enough information on students.*

Needed in the Model for Data and Formative Assessments

Districts need to reduce the cannibalizing of instructional funds, which they do in order to acquire data tools. This is simply a sacrificing of funding other equally important direct academic programs. Data-driven decision making requires the appropriate tools as well as the training and FTE to accomplish its goals. To this end the model should include funding for formative assessment tools as well as costs associated with data warehousing. Additional support FTE should be assigned to help with this work.

ATTACHMENT A: <u>Regional Best Practices Panels</u>

Co-Chair: Frank McNamara, QEC/Retired President & CEO Willamette View, Inc., QEC
Co-Chair: Yvonne Curtis, Director for Student Achievement, Eugene School District 4J, QEC
Don Bacher, School Board Member, Greater Albany SD
Mark Burrows, Superintendent, Morrow County SD
Kevin Campbell, High School Principal, Medford SD
Mark Coleman, High School Teacher, Hillsboro SD
Jill Conant, Elementary School Teacher, Nyssa SD
Aaron Cooke, Middle School Principal, Brookings SD
Brian Gander, Superintendent and PK-12 Principal, Long Creek SD
Susie Garrison, Elementary School Teacher, John Day SD
Beth Gerot, School Board, Eugene, QEC
Jim Golden, High School Principal, Crook County SD
Mark Grief, High School Principal, Klamath Falls SD
Rick Hensel, Superintendent, Gervais SD
Jason Hoffert-Hay, Elementary Principal, Greater Albany SD
Kathi Holvey, Elementary Principal, Crow-Applegate-Lorane SD
Teresa Ketelsen, Middle School Principal, Gresham-Barlow SD
Dave Krumbein, School Board Member, Pendleton SD
Tim Labrousse, Superintendent, Malheur ESD
Tricia Nelson, Middle School Principal, Salem-Keizer SD
John O'Neil, High School Principal, Forest Grove SD
Nancy Olson, Elementary School Teacher, Phoenix-Talent SD
Erin Potampa, Elementary School Teacher, Madras SD
Carol Sanders, Elementary School Principal, Oregon City SD
Don Schrader, Superintendent, Glide SD
Elizabeth Scheeler, School Board Member, Pendleton SD
Kelly Schloer-Beaudry, Middle School Teacher, Bend-LaPine SD
Kathleen Spinks, Middle School Teacher, John Day SD
Cheri Stroud, High School Principal, Corvallis SD
Dawn Tarzian, Superintendent, Corvallis SD
Bryan Trendell, Upper Elementary School Principal, Coos Bay SD
Karen Weiseth, Middle School Teacher, Medford SD
Ron Wilkinson, Superintendent, Bend-LaPine SD
Paul Young, Superintendent and K-12 Principal, Spray SD

ATTACHMENT B: <u>SCHOOLS INTERVIEWED</u>

Armand Larive Middle School, Hermiston SD
Ashland Middle School, Ashland SD
Bear Creek Elementary School, Bend-LaPine SD
Clackamas High School, North Clackamas SD
Crook County Middle School, Crook County SD
Crooked River Elementary School, Crook County SD
Eagle Point High School, Eagle Point SD
Forest Grove High School, Forest Grove SD
Gates Elementary School, Santiam Canyon SD
Gervais High School, Gervais SD
Haines Elementary School, Baker SD
Harold Oliver Primary Center, Centennial SD
Heppner Jr./Sr. High School, Morrow SD
Hoover Elementary School, Medford SD
Hosford Middle School, Portland SD
Jefferson County Middle School, Jefferson County SD
Joseph High School, Joseph SD
LaPine Middle School, Bend-LaPine SD
Lincoln Elementary School, Woodburn SD
Linus Pauling Middle School, Corvallis SD
Madras High School, Jefferson County SD
McKay High School, Salem-Keizer SD
McLaughlin High School, Milton-Freewater SD
McNary High School, Salem-Keizer SD
McNary Heights Elementary School, Umatilla SD
Nyssa Elementary School, Nyssa SD
Nyssa High School, Nyssa SD
Obsidian Middle School, Redmond SD
Pacific High School, Port Orford-Langlois SD
Pine Ridge Elementary School, Bend-LaPine SD
Redmond High School, Redmond SD
Stafford Elementary School, West Linn-Wilsonville SD
Stoller Middle School, Beaverton SD
Taft Elementary School, Lincoln County SD
Taft High School, Lincoln County SD
Talent Elementary School, Phoenix-Talent SD
Talmadge Middle School, Central SD
Vern Patrick Elementary School, Redmond SD
Waldo Middle School, Salem-Keizer SD
Washington Elementary School, Woodburn SD
Willagillespie Elementary School, Eugene SD
Winston Middle School, Winston-Dillard SD

ATTACHMENT C: <u>Best Practices Critical Questions</u>

1. Which of the QEM best practices do you use in your school (page 22 in the December model report) to help make your growth and improvement?

2. What trade-offs have you made to make your growth areas? How have you shifted resources in unique ways to address your problems?

3. What added programs or interventions (e.g., instructional time, activities, remediation, support) do you offer for students having trouble meeting standards?

4. Are you using any extended learning time (outside the contact day/school year) for any students who need additional help? How many students are participating in this?

5. What are you doing specifically for ELL students? Special education students? Economically disadvantaged students?

6. What role do art, music, PE, and other non-core subjects contribute to your improvement?

7. Is there something you think might make your school more effective that you are not currently doing?

8. Paraprofessionals: What role do they play? What kind of training do they receive?

9. How are you focusing professional development money and time? What is your rationale for staff development expenditures? Do you use data to drive this decision?

10. What on-site instructional improvement do you offer?

11. What is the availability for instructional purposes of computers in your school?

12. How do you use technology to help your students?

13. How do teachers use technology for instruction?

14. What types of data do you use and how are you using data for school improvement?

15. What do you do to invite and engage family involvement in your schools? What is your outreach model?

16. What role do volunteers play in your school? Do they provide students with additional opportunities to develop skills in areas of difficulty?

17. What role do co-curricular activities play in your success? How do you use them? How are they funded and what percentage of your students is involved in co-curricular activities?

18. If you are a middle or high school, what type of a schedule do you use?

19. If you are a middle or high school, what are your class sizes in core subjects?

20. If you are a high school, what is the number of credits required for graduation? What type?

21. What do you think you are doing differently to improve student learning, behavior, retention, and school completion?

APPENDIX D: <u>OREGON'S NEED FOR AN INTEGRATED EDUCATIONAL DATA SYSTEM</u>

Schools can only become high-performance organizations if they are provided sufficient data on a wide range of critical factors related to student learning and organizational functioning. The business of providing data from state benchmark testing, school demographics, and instructional practices, as well as continued development of measurements for the Quality Indicators, is imperative.

Currently, Oregon's school data system is not sufficiently developed to allow conclusions to be drawn about system functioning beyond rudimentary observations, nor does it provide diagnostic data that allow those who seek to improve their performance to do so promptly.

In order for schools to make data-driven decisions that affect practices and performance, they must have the capacity to collect or be provided frequent formative and summative data that they have access to throughout the school year.

The data should be used to prescribe and evaluate the effectiveness of instructional efforts and set priorities for school improvement activities. If no data are collected on a performance area, it is not possible to judge if it is being conducted effectively or whether improvement is occurring.

After high-quality, comprehensive data have been provided, the individuals within the system at all levels can then be motivated to utilize the data to make systematic improvements toward achievement of state goals. Each stakeholder plays a role in creating and maintaining an effective data system.

A data system that allows educators, policymakers, and parents to make informed decisions for improving student performance and school functioning must include the following seven elements:

Integrated: It must include information from multiple K-12 school districts to capture student mobility, and it must bring together all aspects of the student's learning trajectory, from prekindergarten through post-secondary education.

Individual: It must utilize student-level information instead of school averages in order to make accurate determinations about student progress in relation to processes.

Informative: It must include relevant and comprehensive indicators from detailed inputs and processes to a variety of performance measures, and those indicators must be verified to ensure accuracy.

Independent: It must allow for flexibility so schools can customize the system for local needs. For the system to be cost-effective, it must replace current school and district data systems, so it must be able to meet the needs of the current users.

Interactive: It must recognize that different users have different needs and make the data transparent in an easy-to-access format for students, parents, teachers, principals, superintendents, policymakers, and other educational stakeholders.

Instant: It must present data to users in a timely manner so the information can motivate students, engage parents, inform instructional practices, and improve the quality of educational service in real time.

Interconnected: It must promote organizational capacity to analyze the data once they have been collected and presented, not just at the state level, but also within schools and districts so data can become a useful tool for educators.

It is not cost-efficient to have multiple school districts and regional Education Service Districts create, maintain, and pay for their own data systems when the state needs district data in one centralized location. Reducing the cost of multiple systems and simplifying the process of connecting those systems will provide an enormous amount of savings in cost and person-hours for all recipients of educational dollars, even though it requires an up-front investment of resources. **(From June 2008 Oregon Department of Education "Statewide Data System: FACT SHEET.")**