



Charting a Path Forward on K-12 Education

In November, Oregon experienced the first ever strike in our state's largest school district. The difficult negotiations to reach resolution reflect larger systemic challenges that districts are facing. One out of three school districts in our state will engage in labor negotiations during the 2023-024 school year. As other districts and communities navigate similar dynamics, we must be clear about our shared interests to create the conditions for student success. Let's build upon the common ground we share and partner to chart a path forward. Students are counting on us.

Common Ground

Our Shared Beliefs

1. Students should be in school.
2. Every student should be given equal opportunity to graduate from high school ready to succeed.
3. Schools should be physically and emotionally safe places for students, teachers, and school employees.
4. Teachers, school employees, and administrators care about the success of each student and recognize the negative impact that prolonged school closures for any reason can cause on students' learning.

Our Shared Reality

1. The pandemic has deeply impacted students' learning and connections to school. We lost ground on key academic outcomes, enrollment dropped by more than 30,000 students statewide, and nearly 40% of students in Oregon's public schools did not regularly attend school in the 2022-23 school year.
2. Education spending is historically one of the largest areas of spending for the State's general fund, but we know that the amount of money dedicated to education is equally as important to how those dollars are spent. The state's funding methodology needs review, and much has changed in K-12, including pervasive teacher shortages that relate to compensation.

Common Ground

Our Shared Beliefs

5. Smaller class sizes and more planning time mean teachers can spend more high-quality time with students.
6. Classrooms should be sanitary environments and have functional HVAC systems.
7. Trust and respect are essential components of productive negotiations in any district.

Our Shared Reality

3. Teachers' and school employees' salaries have not kept up with wage growth in the private sector. Their work must be valued, and competitive salaries must be offered if we are going to make up for lost ground from the pandemic.
4. Many school facilities across the state have lacked funding for necessary upgrades, leading to a backlog of needed improvements.

Governor Kotek's Commitments

To begin to address the underlying structural needs facing teachers, school employees, and district leaders, Governor Kotek is committed to taking the following steps:

- 1 Convene a multidisciplinary group of leaders to develop a statewide action plan to support the social-emotional health needs of students** in school settings and strengthen the resources and capacity of school staff to meet these needs.
- 2 Partner with the legislature on their work to establish minimum teacher salaries and review funding for schools.**

Salary Schedules: The Governor will closely monitor and review the recommendations of the legislature's Task Force on Statewide Educator Salaries. She wants to see a proposal for minimum teacher salary schedules that make Oregon competitive with our neighboring states, mitigate competition between neighboring districts, and reflect local cost of living. She also wants to see a plan to fund that proposal over the next several years.

Funding: While the legislature ultimately adopts the budget, the Governor's office must be a partner to ensure the methodology makes sense for today's realities. The Governor will direct the Chief Financial Officer and the Oregon Department of Education to partner with the legislature and education stakeholders to review and revise the methodology for school funding.

- 3 Create the Office of Transparency within the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to make budget information that the State already collects from districts more accessible and easier to understand.** This is intended to ensure labor and district partners and the public have the same budget information that the State does and strengthen transparency and improve customer service to Oregonians. ODE will include data about future estimated revenues that districts may have, the share of district funding that comes from State sources compared to local sources, and the share of district expenditures spent on administration. This work will draw from the work of states such as [Arizona](#), [Illinois](#) and [Michigan](#), and from [ODE's ESSER dashboard](#).