

CHRISTY PERRY, Superintendent  
2450 Lancaster Drive NE • PO Box 12024  
Salem, Oregon 97309-0024  
503-399-3001

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December 11, 2014

Oregon State Board of Education,

**This testimonial is submitted on behalf of Christy Perry, Superintendent of the Salem-Keizer School District.**

We, the Salem Keizer School District, agree that the conversation around increasing instructional minutes is one that we should be engaging in. There is no disagreement with the essence and desire to increase the instructional minutes that our students experience each year. However, we are in disagreement with both the timing of this proposal and with the structure around which the desired increase in instructional minutes has been created. A meaningful and thoughtful dialogue must be undertaken before arbitrarily moving forward.

Student learning is not solely dependent on seat time. Research has consistently shown that it is the quality of the teacher that is the highest indicator of student academic learning and success. Therefore, it is what a quality and high skilled teacher does with the time that counts. Because of this, it is our desire to begin a real dialogue about how best to increase the quality of our current instructional time, so that when we are truly ready to extend the instructional time throughout the state there is a guarantee that the time will be used to truly impact student learning.

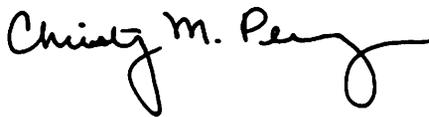
We understand the desire and appeal to have student's sit in school longer as it would, on paper and by identified minutes, look good. We are also more than aware that the state of Oregon has one of the shortest school years in our country. However, without adequate funding and a thoughtful discussion about what constitutes quality instruction and instructional minutes, adding seat time will rearrange priorities and add to a current list of initiatives that schools around the state of Oregon are working hard to meet. Are we adding another unfunded initiative to an already underfunded and stressed system? Yes. Is January 2015, with the target implementation of September 2015, really what is best for our schools, our teachers, and our students at this time? No.

The Governor's budget which was just released is inadequate to meet the current educational demands and initiatives that are underway. Common Core State Standards, a new assessment system (SBAC), full day Kindergarten, new evaluation and accountability systems, and college and career readiness initiatives are just a few that all school districts are working to implement in an era of increasing and diversifying student and community needs and inadequate funding. All of these effect teacher work load, educator effectiveness, and student learning. Furthermore, this proposed change will cause the Salem-Keizer School District, and possibly many other School Districts, to analyze our collective bargaining agreement and potentially reopen contract negotiations. It will also require us look at a potential daily start time changes, analyze our transportation schedules and costs, and take a close look at our student to teacher staffing ratios to determine if they need to be increased even further. Likewise, there will be master schedule impacts, costs for instructional material, and, given that this initiative is also tied to the requirement that 90 percent of students must be fully scheduled, there will be budgetary impacts that draw funds away from our most vulnerable students at the early grades. The net effect of this will be potentially drawing us away from Oregon's established 40-40-20 goal. In essence, this rule change will dictate our decisions around resource allocations and results.

Therefore, it is the Salem-Keizer School Districts desire to begin the conversation on increasing instructional time by first and foremost discussing how we, as a state, will support appropriate class sizes for optimal learning. In fact, we contend that if we would simply lower class size to pre-recession figures it would have the same impact on student learning as an increase in daily instructional time. Let's continue this discussion to include how we will shore-up and guarantee that our teaching education programs not only prepare our future teachers properly, but that teaching is a profession that is desired and sought after by our best and brightest. Let's discuss how to celebrate and retain our best teachers. Let's discuss how to build and sustain mechanisms to provide ongoing professional development and coaching to ensure that our teachers have all the skills needed to support all student learning needs. Let's discuss and define what we mean by quality teaching and quality instructional minutes. Let's finalize and holdfast to a plan that creates guarantees around adequate, and above adequate, funding from now and into the future. Finally, once these conversation are done and the plans in place, then, and only then, let's talk about an increase to the instructional calendar instead of simply talking about minutes in a day.

Let me be clear, the conversation around instructional minutes is needed. The Salem-Keizer School District is excited that we, as a state, are recognizing the fact that our instructional minutes need to be addressed. But we, the Salem-Keizer School District, do not think that this is the right time nor do we believe that this revision is the correct solution to the problem. The discussion and vision is framed around the right topics in order to allow for ongoing discourse between all stakeholders, but this interaction needs to be ongoing and thoughtful. A rule change allow will not result in the overarching goals that such a measure is intended to meet for the betterment of all children.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christy M. Perry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Christy Perry  
Superintendent