



BEFORE THE: State Board of Education Hearings Officer
REGARDING: OAR 581-022-1131; 581-022-1620; 581-022-0102
BY: Morgan Allen, Legislative Specialist
DATE: 1-22-14

Chair Henry and members of the State Board of Education, for the record, my name is Morgan Allen and I am offering testimony on behalf of the Oregon School Boards Association regarding the proposed changes to administrative rules that define the number of instructional hours in Oregon K-12 classrooms.

General Comments from School Board Members

After so many years of program cuts and lost school days, it is a great relief to be engaged in a serious discussion about increasing instructional time for students and extending the length of the school year. The latest proposed changes to the administrative rules impacting hours contain thoughtful and well-reasoned improvements to earlier drafts. Your staff have done an excellent job of taking input from all sides and giving stakeholders an opportunity to ask questions.

However, OSBA continues to have concerns that as drafted the proposed changes are too much too soon. There has not been enough time to analyze the impacts and costs of these changes. Right now, school districts in Oregon have achieved a fragile financial stability that will be severely disrupted without resources and time to implement.

The Latest Proposal

The latest version of proposed changes to Oregon's instructional hours were released last Thursday. While there are several elements of the proposal that we support, our members urge you to give due consideration to the ability of our schools districts, boards, teachers and staff to make any proposed changes to the school calendar in a timely fashion that will not disrupt our ability to serve students.

I hope you take a few moments to read the Oregonian Editorial Board piece from January 1st I have included with my testimony titled "*Oregon Must Make a Deeper Case for 'Seat Time' Requirements.*" The piece closes by asking the State Board to, quote, "...hit the brakes and drill more deeply" regarding proposed changes.

The Oregon School Boards Association is asking the State Board of Education to spend more time refining parts of the proposal, specifically:

- Increasing minimum instructional hours in K-3 from 810 to 900 in 2015-16 will only give school districts who would fall below this new benchmark about 6 months to make schedule and staffing adjustments; currently close to 70 districts offer less than 900 hours in these grades. Districts need more lead time to add instructional hours and adjust student, staff and transportation schedules.
- While there is a strong commitment to fund full-day kindergarten at the Legislature, there has been no discussion about the funding and resources needed to add time for students in grades 1-12. In fact, the Governor's proposed budget for K-12 would mean more cuts for the vast majority of school districts in Oregon. The Board should

spend more time trying to understand the resources, both financial and state level supports, our districts will need to successfully make the types of changes you are considering regarding the percentage of students attending full time.

- Due to the recession, collective bargaining between districts and staff has been strained for several years. Without adequate time to engage in cooperative bargaining sessions and discussion of fair compensation for additional work, we may see more strained relationships between school districts and their staff. We believe the current timeline in the proposal is too short to hash out any necessary contract changes in a collaborative and constructive way.

Our locally elected school board members have appreciated the broad spectrum of education partners and constituencies, parents, students and staff you have listened to in this process. Again, our members share your goal of adding more time to our school calendar, particularly for our most vulnerable students who would reap the most benefit.

We ask you to take the additional time necessary to refine the proposal so districts won't end up scrambling while our students bear the brunt of the rush.

We urge the Board to consider taking the following actions today:

1. Approve OAR 581-022-1131, which updates and improves credit options for students and eliminates the 130 hour rule.
2. Approve OAR 581-022-0102, which clarifies and streamlines Oregon's definition of instructional time; and
3. Table OAR 581-022-1620 for today and spend more time getting feedback about the implications increasing hours and changing schedules will have on the K-12 system.

Thank you for your consideration



Oregon must make a deeper case for student 'seat time' requirements: Editorial Agenda 2015

banks elementary.JPG

Students tackle schoolwork in a first-grade room at Banks Elementary. The state is considering changing rules governing instructional time. *(Betsy Hammond/The Oregonian)*

The Oregonian Editorial Board By **The Oregonian Editorial Board**

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Many educators have found that seat time can be empty time if the class is poorly configured or oversized and if the student is disinclined to learn.

Thanks to a group of dedicated Portland parents, the **state Department of Education** last year found **Portland Public Schools** to be shorting students on classroom instruction time and in creating an environment in which students could take less than a full course load. The obvious price of the practice is that students ultimately graduate having had significantly less instruction than peers in other states, putting them at a disadvantage. PPS said it had reduced its capacity owing to funding cuts.

Since then, PPS has worked to change its ways and the education department has worked hard to strengthen instructional minimums with a decision on them by the state's **Board of Education** set for mid-January. But several discoveries about how things actually play out in Oregon public schools were made along the way.

At the time the parents filed their complaint against PPS, in late 2013, a state official noted that school districts statewide had enjoyed a pass for two years against submitting any paperwork to the state to document their compliance with instructional time requirements. More recently, at a state hearing in November, the **Oregon School Boards Association** claimed that the education department had in its possession data showing "around 70 school districts" were falling short of instructional time in the early grades. The OSBA went on to suggest that the apparent deficiencies "are likely linked to locally driven education decisions for funding insufficiency. For example, some districts have chosen to keep class sizes small (20-25) in the early grades. They may have chosen to keep art, music, PE, counselors or librarians instead of offering more class time. Or they may simply lack the resources to add more time." Separately, **The Oregonian's Laura Frazier** reported that several high schools near Portland – in Lake Oswego, Beaverton and Hillsboro – had been found also to be in violation of meeting state minimums. It's fair to say the Portland parents opened a can of worms.

Instructional time is sometimes referred to as "seat time." It is valuable and represents the time a student is in class learning subject matter and participating in teacher-led discussions that deepen understanding. But many educators



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have found that seat time can be empty time if the class is poorly configured or oversized, and if the student is disinclined to learn because of problems at home or lacks an imperative to learn at all. The result is that best learning outcomes are sometimes fostered by non-class efforts that shore up a student's sense of purpose or allow teachers to ensure the instruction time they provide is cogent, compelling and lasting.

Steve Callaway, principal at **Tobias Elementary School in Aloha**, told state officials in November that financial strain on schools had forced difficult choices, and he asked that the state slow down and learn the terrain better to get things right. He argued that students at Tobias were seeing measurable achievement not only because of seat time but because teachers were planning together and, a hearing officer's report states, "receiving professional development that is targeted, specific and purposeful."

Callaway also testified that a key predictor of student success at Tobias is the partnership between parents and teachers. More than anything, however, he went straight to the heart of what we mean when we talk about seat time. The hearing officer's report assigns to Callaway this summation: "If definition of instructional time does not include time for professional development and collaboration or parent-teacher conferences, these things that are having the most impact on student achievement may be reduced or eliminated."

Several school districts, along with the OSBA, have asked the state to study more deeply the things that work and do not work before ordering up new instruction minimums or requiring that more students take full course loads. They also ask, predictably, for a delay by the state board to see how much money the Legislature ponies up for education in this year's session. The first request is alone sufficient for the state Board of Education to hit the brakes and drill more deeply. Money will always be in play, but no amount of it can turn empty time into time well-spent.

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