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To: Members of the Oregon Board of Education

My public comment for the June 19-20 Board meeting:

On your agenda, as I now understand, is my proposal that the Board of Education consider adopting the following rule as Oregon Administrative Rule 581-023-0250: High School Study Abroad:

"For the purpose of calculating Average Daily Membership (ADM) used in the distribution of State School Funds, a school district may count high school students studying abroad on programs approved and paid for by the school district."

I have previously commented to you about the global geopolitical and economic trends that make it important to get more Oregon high school students studying abroad. How Oregon should respond to these trends is on your June 19-10 agenda in this proposal.

Some high school students do now study abroad. They currently get no state or local school district financial support. Most have their parents pay for it or raise funds themselves. A few get federal scholarships. There is an equity issue embedded here. For the most part, high school students who study abroad have affluent parents. The low income stay home. You have an opportunity to change that and to make a high school year abroad a possibility for all income, racial and ethnic groups.

For example, this fall, for the 2014-15 school year, Portland Public Schools will open a Mandarin immersion program at King Elementary School (K-8) in northeast Portland. It will open with 25 students each in two kindergarten classes and 25 students each in two first grade classes (100 students total). Most of those students will be African-Americans, either coming from the Albina Headstart program or the King neighborhood. Most will also be low-income.

In nine years, when those first graders are in tenth grade, will they have the opportunity, having studied Mandarin for so long, if they want it, to spend their eleventh grade year studying at a high school in China? Will PPS then be paying for a high school year studying abroad in China? This, too, is on the your June 19-20 agenda.

Will those King kindergarteners and first graders, as they progress up through the Mandarin immersion grades, know or know of other older, NE Portland African-American students who have spent a high school year in China? And came back to talk about it? Students, like themselves, who can speak to the excitement and adventure of learning Mandarin. This, too, is on the your June 19-20 agenda.

Thank you - Dave Porter