



Date: September 24, 2014
To: The Task Force on School Funding 2013-14, Chair Devlin and Members
From: Laurie Wimmer, Oregon Education Association
RE: *Draft Report to the Legislature and Recommendations*

On behalf of OEA's 42,000 members, I am submitting this written testimony to the School Funding Task Force to offer final comments on the draft ***Report to the Legislature***, containing the task force and subcommittee recommendations for possible improvements to the State School Fund distribution formula.

First of all, we would like to offer our gratitude to the chair, co-chair, and task force members for their diligence and thoughtfulness on this project. This group worked through complex and sometimes contentious topics in a remarkably competent and balanced fashion. Thank you so much for devoting your time to this important enterprise.

Second, we believe that the recommendations of the task force reflect not only smart thinking, but also notable engagement with stakeholders and other interested parties, offering a very balanced analysis of the formula's purpose, ability to yield fair distribution, and related issues.

We are particularly glad that the English Language Learner Subcommittee took extra time to review the best approach for considering the needs of our students who are developing their English language skills while also attaining the skills and knowledge they need to progress in content areas. The September 11 ELL amended recommendations track with the input received and the actual issues identified by those most knowledgeable about this area. We also support the suggested language of task force member Kelly Devlin, which provides richer context.

We would suggest only minor edits to the narrative of that subcommittee report: In the first paragraph, an implication that bad teaching is the reason just 49% of ELL students obtain a diploma is conveyed by the sentence "*The state will not meet its 40-40-20 Goal without improvement in teaching students English.*" We note that under Observation 7, the actual rate for students who have ever been in an ELL program is 58%; the lower number refers only to those students who, for whatever reason (special education needs, high poverty, frequent absences or moves are a few examples) have a lower success rate. It would be better to use the 58% number in this opening paragraph, as it reflects the total ELL student experience in our schools – including both those who have succeeded and those who have been more challenged. Finally, we believe that ascribing the failure to graduate as solely due to poor teaching is unfair, untrue, and without evidence.

With that one correction aside, we believe that the work of this committee has been commendable and will help guide an informed policy discussion in 2015.