



Leap from the Bottom 5 to the Top 5 in Education in 5 Years:

Boost Student Achievement, Restore Hope and Graduation Rates,
Solve the Classroom Funding Crisis, Extend CTE/STEM to
All Students and Support Teachers

Governor Kate Brown

The failing status quo

For too long, Oregon's elected leaders have tolerated too many poor-performing schools. Diminished expectations not only rob thousands of young Oregonians of a better shot at a brighter future; Oregon also has been denied the full potential of its greatest resource – talented young people ready for college, work, careers and the world. Undoubtedly, good things are happening in many schools across Oregon, but it is also undeniable that we are failing too many kids and families.

Under Governor Kate Brown, despite record funding levels and numerous attempts at state staff changes, Oregon schools and students today face a menacing triple-threat: an ongoing crisis in high school graduation levels, a lingering crisis in academic quality and a growing crisis in classroom funding.

The Oregonian

October 17, 2017

“If Brown Is Serious About Digging Out Of This Educational Crisis, She Must Figure Out How To Back Up Her Words With The Policy, Funding And Follow-Through That So Far Has Eluded Her.”

A Student Achievement, Graduation Crisis

Since 2015, roughly 25% of Oregon students have failed to graduate from high school on time and Oregon's high school graduation rate has been ranked 48th or worse in the nation. That means nearly 7,000 young Oregonians who should have graduated each year from high school since Kate Brown took office – did not. And that's just the average. Among communities of color, the graduation crisis is even more alarming – with roughly 30% of students failing to graduate on time.

A Quality Crisis

In addition to an intolerable graduation rate, Oregon ranks low for academic achievement and quality. The Education Week Research Center gives Oregon a “D” and Education Week's Quality Counts project ranks Oregon 34th in the nation for educational quality. Oregon has the dubious distinction of having one of the shortest school years along with some of highest absentee rates and largest class sizes in America.

A Classroom Funding Crisis

On average, Oregon currently spends \$12,833 per K-12 student – 21st in the nation. Under Governor Brown, Oregon has never spent more per pupil on K-12 education, adjusted for inflation, up more than 10% in the last five years.

Unfortunately, while spending for K-12 is on the rise, school districts across Oregon continue to face cuts in teaching positions and critical education programs. This is Oregon's classroom funding crisis. The cause is runaway pension and health insurance costs – with no relief in sight because Governor Brown has refused to pursue real, cost-saving reforms. Brown stonewalled reforms even in the face of PERS assessments that consumed almost half of new K-12 spending in her 2017-19 budget.

Those assessments are costing teachers their jobs and children the opportunity for a better education. Last year, for example, the Beaverton School District received a \$21 million increase in state funding but still faced the prospect of cutting 300 teaching positions to finance \$14 million in new state pension costs. The district ultimately went to voters with a tax levy to help save the teaching positions. The Salem-Keizer School District, the state's second-largest district, received \$31 million in additional state funding, but its state pension assessment jumped by \$10 million, so they were forced to eliminate 67 teaching positions.

Statewide, by 2023-25, pension costs are projected to escalate more than 70% and will absorb, on average, more than 25% of the typical Oregon school district budget. Health insurance premium costs are expected to grow by 7% over the next two years and will soon consume 10% of the average school district budget. Simply put, under Governor Brown, Oregon's classroom funding crisis has grown worse and she has demonstrated no political courage or leadership in seeking to solve it.

“As Governor, I’ll challenge the unacceptable status quo and restore high expectations. I’ll combine the best Republican, Independent and Democrat ideas to move Oregon schools from some of the lowest performing in the nation to some of the highest.”

– KNUTE BUEHLER

Knute Buehler

Independent leadership where Kate Brown has failed

As Governor, Knute Buehler will make improving public education in Oregon his top priority by challenging the status quo, restoring high expectations, putting students first, and by pushing for evidence-based change, innovation and accountability from Oregon educators at all levels. He will combine the best Republican, Independent and Democrat ideas with the goal of moving Oregon from some of the lowest performing schools in the nation to some of the best within 5 years.

Unlike some Republicans, Knute believes we need both innovative academic reforms and more funding to boost the graduation rate and to achieve breakthroughs in overall student achievement. That’s why, in his first two K-12 education budgets as Governor (2019-21, 2021-23), he will propose a minimum of a 15% funding increase. In exchange, Governor Buehler will expect meaningful, bipartisan pension and health insurance reform legislation on his desk in both two-year budget cycles. Reversing Oregon’s student achievement and classroom funding crises will take at least two budget cycles and multiple bipartisan budget and legislative reforms.

— 5 —

Big Important Goals to Leap
to the Top in Education

1

Advance From Bottom Five to Top Five in Five Years

Advancing Oregon schools from some of the lowest performing in the nation to some of the highest will require focusing state and local educators on achieving a handful of critical, evidence-based proficiency standards. These standards, combined with enhanced resources and professional development opportunities for teachers, are widely recognized as key ingredients for students graduating from high school on time and with the knowledge and skills needed to advance to a four-year college, a community college or the workplace. **Governor Buehler will lead on education reform and student achievement where Kate Brown has failed.**

Improved Education Standards Include:

- By 2022, every child a proficient reader by 3rd Grade.
- Triple the number of 7th grade English Language Learners who are English-proficient by 2022. (In 2015-16, only 12% of 6-8th grade English Language Learners were English proficient.)
- Provide access to individual success plans or other targeted supports for every 9th-grade student, to ensure they are on-track to graduate.
- To better reflect the growing diverse student population, move toward one-third of classroom staff representing culturally and linguistically diverse groups.
- Repeal the standardized testing opt-out law in order to inform parents and hold schools accountable; make sure teachers have access to meaningful measures of progress that they can use in practice.
- Allow academically qualified high-school students to use K-12 dollars to enroll in college classes.

Improved Teacher Supports Include:

- Expand ongoing, individualized professional development opportunities, mentorships and other training for teachers and aides, especially in support of reading and language instruction.
- Give each teacher a \$250 debit card each year for unbudgeted classroom needs, to use at their own discretion.
- Provide grant funds, based on demonstrated district need, for grade school reading aides.
- Eliminate certification barriers to allow teachers certified in another state or who are military spouses with experience teaching within the Department of Defense Education Activity system, one of the best K-12 systems in the world.
- Direct the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission to encourage co-teaching training models in order to draw workforce experts to teaching without having to quit their jobs. For example: Make it easier for an automobile body shop worker to teach a body shop class, or a Ph.D. mathematician in the tech industry to teach high-level math.
- Close staff diversity gaps through intentional recruitment from among under-represented populations, including a new, ROTC-style college scholarship program for prospective teachers.

2

Restore the Lost School Year

It is well known and unfortunately has become too long accepted that Oregon has some of the shortest school years in the nation. On average, Oregon students have 165 days of classroom instruction each year. The national standard is 180 instructional days a year. Put another way, by the time the average student in Oregon graduates from high school, he or she will have had 180 total fewer school days than a student in neighboring Washington state – that’s an entire school year less. It’s time to give Oregon students a complete, 12 years of education (plus kindergarten) instead of 11 years. **Governor Buehler will lead to restore the lost school year where Kate Brown has failed.**



KGW8

May 30, 2018

“OREGON HAS ONE OF SHORTEST SCHOOL YEARS, LOWEST GRADUATION RATES IN U.S.”

- Provide increased funding to buy back five days each year to reach 180 by 2021-22. Under current formulas, that means an additional investment of nearly \$400 million a year in public K-12 education.
- Return to a consistent, five-day school week: Require staff training time to be scheduled to minimize instructional disruptions. No more “no-school Novembers.”
- Pass a law requiring all school districts to implement a 180-day school year.
- To balance education opportunities with the ability to participate in summer camps and other pursuits outside of school, a 180-day school year should be from after Labor Day to mid-June.

3

Provide Career & Technical Education for Every Student Who Wants it

Career and technical education (CTE/STEM) is proven to not only combat absenteeism and drop-out rates, it is a key ingredient in providing education opportunities to prepare students for jobs and careers that require specific hands-on knowledge and skills. There is increasing student interest, societal recognition and economic demand for well-paying skills and trade-based career paths in areas ranging from health care to technology and construction. The seeds of these future jobs and careers are planted and nurtured in middle- and high-school years. Oregon voters recognized the importance of career education when they approved Ballot Measure 98 by 66% in 2016. In her first budget, Governor Brown cut voter-approved funding for Ballot Measure 98 by 43% in her budget. **Governor Buehler will lead for career and technical education where Kate Brown has failed.**

- Fully fund Measure 98 (currently just 57% funded).
- Recruit non-traditional teachers for CTE/STEM fields. Reduce barriers to teaching certification for experienced CTE/STEM workers, emphasizing co-teaching and other techniques over full-time education studies, to enable non-traditional workers to pursue teaching on a part-time or apprenticeship basis while continuing another career.
- Encourage school districts to engage with community based organizations and local industry to share CTE/STEM resources and expertise.



4

Solve Oregon's Classroom Funding Crisis

Improving education in Oregon requires stronger funding to support innovative classroom reforms. In his first two K-12 education budgets as Governor (2019-21, 2021-23), Knute will propose a minimum of a 15% funding increase, paired with essential cost-saving reforms to PERS and health benefits for all state and local government employees. In addition, according to PERS' own actuaries, fair and legally permissible reforms would save up to \$1.2 billion each biennium that could be redirected to classrooms. Simply piling more dollars into a broken and unreformed system will perpetuate Oregon's classroom funding crisis that each year diverts a greater percentage of education dollars away from classroom learning to fund pension and health insurance obligations. ***Governor Knute Buehler will lead to solve Oregon's classroom funding crisis where Kate Brown has failed.***

- Boost K-12 General Fund education budget by 15% in the 2019-21 and 2021-23 budgets.
- Require that the legislature approve fair and legally permissible pension reforms that could redirect up to \$1.2 billion to classrooms prior to signing any new spending bills. Cost-saving pension and health insurance reforms for all state and local government employees that would include at least the following features:
 - Protect pension benefits already earned.
 - Cap salary amount used to calculate benefits at \$100,000 per year.
 - Eliminate vacation and sick leave salary "spiking" for calculation of final-year salary.
 - Require all state and local government employees to contribute toward their own retirement benefits.
 - Enroll all new employees in a 401(k)-type plan with a reasonable match and encourage current employees to opt into it.
 - Reform PEBB and OEGB health benefits to be comparable to health benefits offered by Oregon's most desirable employers, such as Nike and Intel.

Require:

- o Employee contribution to premium on a sliding scale, based on ability to pay.
- o Offer a partially funded Health Savings Account paired with a modest, HSA-qualifying deductible.

5

Modernize Funding and Contracts to Achieve Outcomes

Spending for K-12 education is nearly 40% of the state General Fund budget. For most school districts, the state provides about half of total funding, with the balance coming from local and federal sources. With 198 school districts across Oregon, the challenge – and the opportunity – is to drive desired student improvement by reforming the state school funding formula to better reflect desired aspirations, goals and outcomes. The status quo of pumping more dollars into an inadequate and outdated formula, disconnected from cost, quality, performance and accountability is no longer acceptable. ***Governor Buehler will lead to modernize education funding and accountability where Kate Brown has failed.***

- Provide base funding to support 180 instructional days by 2021-22. Direct additional funding toward specific programs and activities that improve graduation.
- School districts will be given global base budgets and a capped annual inflation target of 3.4% per year – the same target as the state’s giant Medicaid program. District labor agreements could not exceed the cap.
- Implement state-set parameters of “qualified economic offers” of total compensation (base pay plus district share of benefits costs), which would be within districts’ global budget limitation. An offer that provides an increase of at least CPI and not more than 3.4% is a “qualified offer” not subject to arbitration. In other words, local unions would have to accept qualified offers.
- Districts could apply for multi-year grant funds in support of transformative activities or innovation pilots, awarded based on targeted uses and demonstrated financial need.
- Make it illegal for any school district in Oregon to negotiate a contract that allows the purging or destruction of personnel files that could be critical in a future investigation.