



**SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE
HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 29, 2023

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BACK TO SCHOOL: What Oregon Students and Parents Need to Know Ahead of the 2023 School Year

Democrats took action in 2023 to make schools stronger, healthier, and safer.

SALEM, Ore - During the 2023 Legislative Session, lawmakers made several key changes and investments that will make a positive impact for Oregon students, teachers, school faculty, and parents in the upcoming school year and beyond. These include record investments in school funding and early literacy programs, initiatives to support educators and solve the substitute teacher shortage, upgrades for healthier school ventilation systems, new school safety measures, protections for students with disabilities, and more.

“We made tremendous progress this year for Oregon students, teachers, faculties, and families. The legislation we delivered will make our schools safer, healthier, and more effective for every Oregonian. I’m excited for our communities to start seeing and feeling a positive difference,” said **Senator Michael Dembrow (D - Portland)**, chair of the Senate Education Committee.

“By investing in our schools and students, we’re investing in Oregon’s future,” said **Representative Courtney Neron (D - Wilsonville, Sherwood, King City, Tigard/Bull Mountain & Parrett Mountain)**, chair of the House Education Committee. “From stable

school funding and support for our educator workforces to school safety, the actions we took this session are going to set our students up for success for years to come.”

Record K-12 School Funding ([House Bill 5015](#))

HB 5015 makes a historic \$10.2 billion investment in the K-12 State School Fund for the 2023-2025 biennium, nearly \$1 billion higher than the current service level. When paired with local property tax revenues, total resources for K-12 schools for this biennium reach an unprecedented \$15.3 billion. This record investment makes sure Oregon schools have the tools they need to set students up for success inside the classroom.

The State School Fund is the primary funding source for the general operations of school districts and education service districts, paying for a range of needs, including teacher salaries, textbooks, school supplies, desks, and building maintenance. These 197 districts serve more than 552,000 Oregon students in K-12 schools.

As of this month, districts have already begun to receive funding.

Cleaner Air, Heating and Cooling in School Buildings ([House Bill 3031](#))

HB 3031 works to improve air quality and eliminate airborne pathogens in schools around the state, keeping Oregon students and faculty safe and healthy. The legislation helps Oregon schools receive federal funds to upgrade their HVAC systems, assess ventilation systems, place carbon dioxide monitors in each classroom, and submit a report on ventilation and carbon dioxide levels to a mechanical engineer for review. Districts will then implement any improvements recommended by the engineer.

Free or Reduced Cost School Meals for Low-Income Students ([House Bill 5014](#))

HB 5014 will help cover school meal costs for more students starting this fall, responding to [food insecurity across the state](#) and filling in the gap created after federal COVID school funds expired. Students who are on Medicaid will qualify for free or reduced cost meals. Oregon is one of 12 pilot states using Medicaid funds to cover meal costs.

Early Literacy Success Initiative ([House Bill 3198](#))

HB 3198, the Early Literacy Success Initiative, invests in culturally-responsive and research-aligned reading instruction in Oregon classrooms. It also develops and expands student and family-centered early literacy supports. In-school funding for the

initiative goes toward literacy coaching and professional development for educators, tutoring, curriculum implementation and adoption and summer learning programming.

Being able to read is what makes all other learning possible. Investing in early literacy has been shown to have long-term [positive impacts](#) on state graduation rates, preventing dropouts and helping students succeed.

The Early Literacy Success Initiative invests \$144.3 million across three new grant programs: the Early Literacy Success School Grant, the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan, and the Early Literacy Success Community Grant.

[According to the Oregon Department of Education](#) (ODE), school districts can now use any current funds they have to implement these programs. Districts will still need to apply for the grant programs to be reimbursed.

Strengthening Oregon's Educator Workforce ([Senate Bill 283](#))

SB 283 addresses Oregon's K-12 educator workforce shortage. A key part of improving student success is making sure educators have good salaries, healthy working conditions, and the resources they need to help Oregon's children learn.

The bill addresses the concerns and suggestions raised by educators and administrators across the state by:

- Creating a robust, statewide educator workforce data system and regular workforce surveys to improve collection, quality, and availability of data related to Oregon's education workforce;
- Establishing apprenticeship and mentorship grants to pay Oregonians to become teachers and improve diversity in the state's educator workforce;
- Allowing school districts to boost pay for teachers and classified staff who work in special education;
- Addressing the issue of districts under-employing workers serving students with the highest needs by requiring a minimum of 25 hours per week and just cause protections for classified jobs;
- Paying for substitute teacher training and allowing recently retired teachers to convert to substitute licenses at no charge;
- Directing ODE to study and plan for statewide minimum salaries for education workforces.

Improving School Safety (House Bill 5014, House Bill 3584)

Alyssa's Law ([House Bill 5014](#))

Included with the historic investment in the K-12 State School Fund is \$2.5 million for schools to install mobile-based silent panic alarm systems that when activated, will send an immediate alert to law enforcement and Emergency Medical Services when there is a safety threat at a school building.

Known as [Alyssa's Law](#), this investment is in memory of Alyssa Alhadeff, who was just 14-years-old when she tragically lost her life to gun violence at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in 2017.

In addition to responding to violent threats, states with this system have used the alarm in instances where a student or faculty was experiencing an allergic reaction, seizure, or heart issues.

ODE will set up a grant program for school districts to be able to apply for funds to implement the alarm system.

School Emergency Notifications Act ([House Bill 3584](#))

Starting in 2024, schools and school districts will be directed to electronically notify parents and guardians of students and school district employees during a school emergency and keep them informed throughout the incident.

The bill comes in response to the [Lane Middle School shut down](#) earlier this year that left many parents in the dark without concrete information or updates. HB 3584 would require schools to notify and inform parents of an emergency within 24 hours.

Abbreviated School Days ([Senate Bill 819](#))

Oregon has over 1,000 students with disabilities in shortened school day placements, denying them access to full-time school. SB 819 requires ODE to enforce the current law by prohibiting school districts from offering students with disabilities fewer hours than non-disabled peers unless a parent provides written consent.

ODE is currently hiring investigators to enforce this new law and has offered more than 50 hours of training for districts, schools, and families.

Parents of students currently on a shortened school day schedule who want their children to attend full time should notify their school districts as soon as possible.

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