



SCHOOL EFFICIENCY AND
QUALITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

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Contact: Ed Sheets (503)222-1700

School Oversight Council Issues Report on Use of County Tax Money by Schools, Student Achievement

The independent oversight committee established to oversee how school districts use the funds generated by the Multnomah County personal income tax has issued its report to the community on the 2004-2005 school year. The report covers the districts' use of the money for the current school year, and also reports on student achievement and school performance plans.

The School Efficiency and Quality Advisory Council reports that school districts used the local income tax money to keep schools open for a full year this year, maintain 880 teachers countywide, and restore a number of academic and student programs. "We will continue to monitor the school districts' budgets to ensure the funds are being used as intended, but the Council has found again that the money is still being used properly," said Judy Pepler, president of Qwest Oregon and co-chair of the 20-member oversight committee that is made up of parents, educators, taxpayers, business and government leaders.

The report also found that student achievement was improving. Multnomah County School districts are generally showing growth in the percentage of students that meet or exceed the state standards; however, there has been a slight decline in the percentage of students that meet the eighth and tenth grade reading standards. School districts are also making progress at closing the achievement gap. The gains for African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Hispanic subpopulations generally exceed the increase in the white student population.

"The school districts are making progress in student achievement and in closing the achievement gap, but minority students are still significantly below the majority population." said co-chair Baruti Artharee, who is regional director for diversity initiatives at Providence Health System and the former chair of the Urban League of Portland.

The report can be seen on the Council's website, www.seacinfo.org. Representatives of the council will report its findings to the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners and Portland City Council.

The Council was created with passage of Ballot Measure 26-48 by Multnomah County voters in May 2003. The measure created a three-year County income tax. About 70 percent of the money from the measure goes to the eight Multnomah County school districts, distributed on a per-pupil basis, and the council is charged with ensuring the money is spent as intended and making a positive difference in the classroom. Among its other findings, the Council reports that:

- The local measure accounts for twelve percent of total funding for the eight County school districts
- The local measure accounts for 16 percent of all funds they expect to spend on direct instruction
- 98 percent of the funds are being used for direct instruction and school based support, with the rest going to central support to operate school buildings over the full school year, purchase books and computers and improve instructional services.

For more information, visit www.seacinfo.org.

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