



SCHOOL EFFICIENCY AND
QUALITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

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School Advisory Council Issues Report on Use of County Tax Money by Schools, Impact of Potential Repeal

The independent oversight committee established to oversee how school districts use the funds generated by the Multnomah County personal income tax has issued its second report to the community. The report covers the districts' use of the money for the 2004-2005 school year, and also reports what the impacts would be if the tax is repealed in the November 2nd election.

The School Efficiency and Quality Advisory Council reports that the money from the tax will keep schools open for a full year this year, will 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 22-member oversight committee that is made up of parents, educators, taxpayers, business, union and government leaders.

If the tax is repealed in November, all Multnomah County School Districts report that they face some combination of reducing school days, laying off teachers, reducing reserves and/or eliminating programs. The repeal would result in \$81 million in cuts from the schools' 2004-2005 budgets half way through the school year. The school districts report that they would face similar impacts in the 2005-2006 school year, and would face budget cuts of an estimated \$94 million.

"It is clear that the level of cuts required would likely adversely affect student performance if there is a tax repeal." said co-chair Baruti Artharee, who is regional director for diversity initiatives at Providence Health Systems 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 in coming weeks.

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 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.

The council will issue another report in March 2005 on how districts are doing in meeting their goals on student achievement and efficiency.

For more information, visit www.seacinfo.org.

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