



SCHOOL EFFICIENCY AND
QUALITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

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NEWS RELEASE

March 18, 2004

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School Advisory Council Issues First Report on Use of County Tax Money by Schools

The independent oversight committee established to oversee how school districts use the funds generated by the Multnomah County personal income tax has issued its first report to the community. Among its main findings, the School Efficiency and Quality Advisory Council reports that money from the tax helped keep schools open for a full year this year and allowed districts to maintain or add 780 teachers countywide.

“We will continue to monitor the school districts’ budgets to ensure the funds are being used as intended, but there’s no doubt that money from the first year of this tax has helped all Multnomah County districts provide a full school year and meet basic classroom needs,” said Judy Pepler, president of Qwest Oregon and co-chair of the 23-member oversight committee that is made up of parents, educators, taxpayers, business, union and government leaders.

“There are other issues that we will be watching over the next few years, such as how schools are doing to boost the performance of all students, but we have concluded that in the first year schools have used the money as intended by County voters,” 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 Portland City Council and the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners in coming weeks.

The council was created with passage of Ballot Measure 26-48 by Multnomah County voters last May. The measure creates 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 nine percent of all funding for the eight County school districts
- The local measure accounts for 12 percent of all funds spent on school-based activities countywide
- 97 percent of the funds are being used for 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.

In addition to reporting how they used money from the local measure this year, County school districts submitted plans to the council on plans to improve operational efficiencies and the performance of all students. The council will report next year on how districts did in meeting their goals on performance and efficiency.

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