



OREGON HOUSE REPUBLICANS

In Case You Missed It

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IN CASE YOU MISSED IT:

HOUSE DEMOCRATS BLOCKED EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY REFORM IN 2007

Bend Bulletin Editorial: Schools Need Audits

The Beaverton School District just got what every school district in Oregon could use. A team studied how the district does business to see if it is spending tax money wisely and if there is room for improvement.

Beaverton, headed up by former Redmond Superintendent Jerry Colonna, got good reviews. It does a good job of putting its money where it has the greatest need, and has found a way to save money in purchases and maintenance. It also has room for improvement in reducing high levels of staff turnover, its food service and in keeping bus drivers.

Three groups — the Oregon Association of School Business Officials, the Oregon School Boards Association and the nonprofit Chalkboard Project — have joined forces to do reviews of five school districts in Oregon. It's a look at business practices, not teaching methods. The idea is to help districts identify problem areas and to identify best practices that other districts can learn from. After all, the public wants schools that are good at teaching children but they also want to know schools are responsible with tax dollars.

It's such a good idea it's the kind of thing the state of Oregon should make mandatory. But Oregon isn't.

Why not?

Democrats voted against it in a party-line execution in 2007. The bill never got out of a House committee.

The Legislature was more interested in voluntary audits. The Oregon Education Association, representing teachers, and the Oregon School Employees Association, representing other public school employees, don't like their status quo being challenged. You can get a sense of that from the pablum from Tricia Smith, a lobbyist for the Oregon School Employees Association. She said of the Chalkboard Project: "They are setting themselves up as people coming to whip those schools into shape. They think they don't need to learn how things work in schools; their methodology is better."

Things may have been different if the House Democrats had been listening to what voters want,

instead of the OEA and OSEA.

The Chalkboard Project wasn't about to let its idea die. It gave the Oregon School Boards Association an \$87,500 grant to set up the pilot program that studied Beaverton. Maybe it will be able to prove to Oregonians and to legislators that mandatory audits are worth it.

We hope so. Looking for best practices in the schools is a good thing for the Legislature to invest in.

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