



145 SE Salmon Avenue, Redmond, Oregon 97756 / P 541.693.5600 F 541.693.5601 www.hdesd.org

February 3, 2015

We are writing to inform you of an initiative the High Desert Education Service District (HDESD) is advocating for in this upcoming legislative session - adequate funding for Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) services.

As you are aware, Oregon's EI/ECSE services have been significantly underfunded for many years. Contractors have cut budgets, eliminated positions, and slashed classroom days for our most vulnerable population of kids. While K-12 districts have weathered this last major economic storm and are now seeing funding restored, there is no effort to restore services to our youngest children with developmental delays and disabilities.

The HDESD has drafted a white paper illustrating the negative effect this reduction in funding has had on our kids and its impact on our K-12 partners. We have been working to inform our community and our Central Oregon legislative delegation about this challenge. We also have been working with our partners at Oregon School Boards Association, Oregon Association of Education Service Districts, Oregon Education Association, and Confederation of Oregon School Administrators to raise this as a statewide issue. It has been included in many of their legislative priorities for the upcoming session.

Oregon is focusing a great deal of attention on the goal of improving 3rd grade reading outcomes. One of the populations with the largest deficit to overcome is students with disabilities. Yet, these are precisely the children and students who are seeing services slashed and program days eliminated.

We have asked the nine EI/ECSE contractors in the state to work with us to reach out to their communities and their legislators. HDESD will be advocating for at least a 15% increase in the overall funding for EI/ECSE services. This increase would restore basic services lost during the recession, including a full school year and additional student support, and it would be comparable to K-12 funding increases from last session. Additionally, we will be asking that EI/ECSE funding be regularly reviewed and updated, so we do not see another gradual erosion of programs and services in future years.

We believe this is a critical statewide issue and will need a collective and coordinated voice to ensure children with developmental delays and disabilities are given equal opportunity to thrive.

Sincerely,

Scott Reynolds
HDESD Board Chair
scott@allstarlabor.com
541-389-1718

Bob Moore
past HDESD Board Chair
bob_moore1@msn.com
541-815-3113

John Rexford
HDESD Superintendent
john.rexford@hdesd.org
541-693-5600



Early Intervention (EI) Birth to 3 years old

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) 3-5 years old

EI/ECSE programs are efficient in outcomes vs. cost

- Over the past 5 years, 20-25% of all ECSE students qualify for articulation-only services (that is, qualify for special education in speech sound development/intelligibility only). In 2012, students who graduated to Redmond and Bend-LaPine School Districts-**100% of students in Redmond and 93% of BLP students met or exceeded their 3rd grade reading benchmark**. These scores were both higher than all same-age (non-disabled) peers.
- As of June 5th 2014, **24.3% of children in the EI program met their goals and no longer needed services** when they turned 3 years old. These children received services at the critical stage of brain development.
- Harvard University research demonstrates that **every dollar spent on early childhood services has a return of \$9** not needing to be spent in K-12. These cost savings are documented to be even higher for children receiving EI/ECSE services.

Decreased funding threatens EI/ECSE outcomes

- EI/ECSE has not grown in **financial support** at the rate of student growth. This translates to a steady statewide reduction of services since 2004. **57% reduction for EI and 34% reduction for ECSE** (State Interagency Coordinating Council 2011).
- Instructional days per year not mandated for EI/ECSE. **Decreased funding cuts instructional days.**
- ODE contract **does not cover current cost** of the program. Medicaid dollars are used to supplement. These dollars are not generated at the rate we are spending them. If funding stays the same, by the 2016/2017 school year, we will have over \$100,000 shortfall.
- Different EI/ECSE programs have **unique costs** that may **not be reflected in the funding formula**. For example, Rural geographic areas need to travel extensive miles – cost of travel and regional site programs are expensive
- All EI/ECSE certified staff (unlike other pre-K programs) are TSPC or professional board licensed professionals. The focus of licensure is literacy/numeracy and kindergarten readiness. **High quality staff** requires competitive salaries with K-12 districts.
- K-12 was given an additional \$1Billion investment in the 13-15 biennium. EI/ECSE does not receive state school fund dollars.
- EI/ECSE (unlike all other pre-K programs) is required to **serve all children** regardless of level of funding received.

Why we should invest in EI/ECSE

- **Close generational gaps.** Disparities in vocabulary begin to appear by 18 months of age. By 3 years old, there is a 2-3 times difference between children of differing parents' abilities and education.
- **Family support and training** are critical components to EI/ECSE services; **parent engagement** is a proven strategy to increase outcomes for kindergarten readiness.
- Developmental screening in early childhood is deemed important toward the governors 40-40-20 goal. EI/ECSE has been doing **developmental screenings for all children** since its inception.
- While there have been state early childhood initiatives, none of them target ECSE specifically.