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Legislative Update

October 20, 2026 | MESD Board of Education



Major State Races

- All 60 House seats + half (15) Senate seats up, and some statewide offices, including the Governor, are on the ballot
- Potential for changes to legislative leadership and budget & policy committee chairs

Implications for K-12 education

- State budget and policy direction depending on new leadership, the outcome of the Governor's race, political party margins, and economic outlook

Upcoming Interim Legislative Dates



- **General Election:** November 3
- **December Legislative Days:** December 1-3
- **Governor's Recommended Budget release:** December 1 (tentative)
- **Pre-session filing deadline:** December 11
- **Quarterly Revenue Forecast:** November 18
- **Long Session** convenes January 19, 2027 and Constitutional Sine Die is June 27



Challenges

Federal uncertainty: Funding cuts and policy changes create additional pressure.

State budget pressure: Federal cuts will hit the 2027–29 budget.

Rising district costs: PERS, health insurance, wages, special education and other costs continue to grow.

Labor tensions: Increasingly difficult local bargaining conditions, in some cases similar bargaining timelines.

Student outcomes under scrutiny: Growing concern about whether Oregon's system is delivering results.

Instructional time: New requirements are creating additional pressure and uncertainty.

Growing mandates: Reporting, data collection and compliance requirements strain capacity.

Political pressure: Public education remains under significant political scrutiny.

Election year: State and federal politics will shape the policy environment.



Opportunities

Broader legislative attention: More lawmakers are engaging on education beyond traditional education committees.

Tell the real cost story: Help lawmakers understand the drivers behind rising education costs.

Look “under the hood”: Examine funding including PERS, special education, and the funding formula, governance and accountability, not just spending.

Elevate the local voice: School boards can bring the student, family and district perspective directly to policymakers.

Opportunity for bold action: Renewed attention to education creates an opening for meaningful and transformative system improvements.

The opportunity: Help legislators understand what drives costs, where funding goes, and what investments can help improve student outcomes, and how to strengthen alignment across systems.

Budget Context Heading Into 2027



- **State School Fund is under scrutiny:** The largest General Fund investment faces competing demands in a challenging budget environment.
- **SSF CSL rises 10.5%:** Initial 2027–29 CSL is **\$12.6B**, up from \$11.4B in 2025–27.
- **CSL ≠ funding:** The \$12.6B figure is a starting point, not a guaranteed appropriation. Final funding is a legislative decision.
- **A significant funding gap remains:** QEC estimates a **\$1.2B gap just to maintain status quo funding** and **\$3.9B more to fully fund the Quality Education Model**.
- **Financially unsupported initiative costs continue to grow:** Mandates such as unemployment insurance add pressure without dedicated funding.
- **CAT remains under scrutiny:** The Corporate Activity Tax funds SIA, \$800M of SSF, High School Success and other education programs.
- **The narrative is shifting:** More policymakers are asking whether **funding alone will improve outcomes**.

State Level Hot Education Topics



- **State School Fund Formula and Quality Education Model (QEM)**

Potential changes to how state education funding is calculated and distributed. Renewed debate over what it actually costs to deliver a quality education in Oregon and how the state can accurately model this cost.

- **Chronic Absenteeism**

Continued focus on attendance, accountability and strategies to improve student engagement.

- **Ed Tech, Screen Time & Artificial Intelligence**

Potential limits and statewide guidance around student device and AI use.

- **OTIS Investigations**

Continued scrutiny of investigation processes, timelines and district impacts.

- **Class Size, Caseload & Safety**

Potential changes to mandatory subjects of bargaining.

2027 East Multnomah County School Districts' Legislative Priorities



- **Protect education funding:** Fully fund current services; preserve education reserves, Corporate Activity Tax revenues, and Student Success Act investments.
- **Modernize the funding system:** Establish a statewide commission to update the funding formula and Quality Education Model by June 2029.
- **Address rising costs:** Reduce unemployment insurance costs and pursue sustainable solutions to PERS and other mandated expenses.
- **Reduce unfunded mandates:** Fully fund requirements and streamline grants, reporting, and compliance.
- **Strengthen specialized services:** Address the special education cap; fully fund high-cost disability services; strengthen early intervention and regional services.
- **Protect alternative pathways:** Sustain alternative education and expand access to recovery schools statewide.
- **Fully fund Outdoor School:** Support the **\$63 million** Current Service Level request.
- **Strengthen assessment participation:** Reform the opt-out law to improve reliable data for instruction and student support.

How We Will Review Legislation



Every bill should strengthen a coherent, equitable, and effective education system.

- **System alignment:** Does it connect statewide goals, policies, and investments while clarifying responsibilities?
- **Student opportunity:** Does it improve instruction, expand access to support, and close opportunity gaps?
- **Adequate resources:** Are full implementation and ongoing costs identified and sustainably funded?
- **Capacity to deliver:** Are staffing, guidance, training, and timelines sufficient and realistic?
- **Accountability and improvement:** Are outcomes measurable, data reliable, and supports in place to improve results?

Support bills that advance these goals. **Seek amendments** to improve alignment and implementation. **Oppose** unfunded obligations, fragmentation, and duplication without credible student benefit.

Engagement and Advocacy Opportunities



- **Build relationships early:** Meet with legislators before session and maintain regular communication throughout the legislative session.
- **Invite legislators into schools:** Host a legislator for a district tour and visit to see classrooms, programs, student supports, and district operations, so we can share the East County School districts' story firsthand.
- **Participate in regional engagement:** Attend legislator town halls and events, and engage in East County advocacy opportunities.
- **Stay connected during session:** Respond to key developments and opportunities for testimony, meetings, and public input.
- **Build an accessible advocacy toolkit:** Launch a Multnomah County parent advocacy toolkit in November with resources families can use and engage with on their own time.
- **Bring the board and superintendent voice to families:** Create short videos featuring Board members and Superintendents explaining key education issues and priorities for use in family newsletters, district communications, and social media.