



COALITION OF
OREGON SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATORS

Workgroups Report

2024



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Letter from COSA's Executive Director

Dear COSA Leaders,

Over the past seven months, COSA convened two workgroups to help develop our top priorities for K-12 leaders as we approach the 2025 Legislative Session. This important work began in April 2024 at Oregon Association of School Executives' Statewide Off-the-Record convening in Portland. These discussions among 125 Superintendents and COSA leaders helped set the tone for the months ahead. Superintendents and COSA Leaders shared their top issues – adequate and stable funding, supports for student mental and behavioral health needs, support for aging facilities, and funding for extended learning opportunities – which became the foundation for our two workgroups.

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to our incredible Policy and Advocacy Team, Morgan Allen and Parasa Chanramy, for their thoughtful guidance and expertise throughout this process. Additionally, I'd like to recognize the exceptional leadership of the superintendents who facilitated the 2024 Workgroups, fostering intense, collaborative conversations that shaped the final priorities and recommendations:

Funding Workgroup

Darin Drill, Cascade
Aaron Duff, Milton-Freewater
Dr. Ryan Noss, Corvallis
Dr. Candace Pelt-Perez, Central Linn

Student Supports Workgroup

Michael Carter, Lakeview
Dr. Alisha McBride, Vale
George Mendoza, La Grande

More than 115 Superintendents and COSA Leaders committed their time and expertise to one or both workgroups. These groups developed COSA's top 10 recommendations and priorities, which were then vetted through a series of 11 regional meetings across the state. Over 320 COSA leaders participated in these regional meetings, providing invaluable feedback that affirmed the final priorities outlined in this report.

The challenges facing public education in Oregon are significant, but so is the incredible work happening in our schools and districts. By working together, superintendents and school leaders can shift the narrative about public education, build trust within our communities, and champion a shared vision for well-funded schools that meet the diverse needs of every student. The success of the Student Success Act is a powerful reminder of what we can accomplish through collaboration and unified advocacy.

Your support and active engagement will be crucial as we prepare for the 2025 Legislative Session. In the coming weeks and months, there will be numerous opportunities for COSA members to get involved. I encourage each of you to stay connected, share your voice, and continue the incredible work you do every day on behalf of Oregon's students.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment and dedication. Together, we are making a difference.

Warm Regards,

Dr. Krista Parent
Executive Director
Coalition of Oregon School Administrators

Overview

2024 COSA Workgroup Process

Shortly after the April 26th Statewide Off-the-Record convening in Portland, the OASE Executive Committee and COSA team conferred and created a process to convene two COSA workgroups: one on K-12 Funding and the other on Student Supports. Internal work plans were drawn up, superintendent facilitators for each work group stepped forward, and members of the COSA Policy and Advocacy team were assigned to staff each workgroup.

The workgroups would each meet five times with recommendations due in September based upon the following calendar, starting with the 2024 Session debrief in March:

Key Dates

March 12
April 26
May-August
September 10
September and October 2025
November
December
January 21, 2025

Tasks and Deliverables

Statewide OTR: 2024 Session Debrief
Statewide OTR: Policy and Advocacy Kick-Off
Convene COSA 2024 Workgroups
Finalize Workgroup Recommendations (Virtual)
Fall Regional OTR Meetings (11 in-person)
Finalize 2024 Workgroup Report
Bill Draft Return and Filing Deadline (pre-session)
Tentative Start of 2025 Legislative Session

On May 1st, an invitation was sent out to all superintendents, members of the COSA Board of Directors, and members of the COSA Equity Board with a summary of the April 26th meeting and an invitation to sign up to participate in one of both of the COSA workgroups. Less than three weeks later, the first meetings were convened on May 21st and engagement began in earnest.

Why Workgroups?

For both the COSA K-12 Funding Workgroup and the COSA Student Supports Workgroup, our facilitators and participants set out to achieve several key goals. For some participants, the 2024 Workgroups were a continuation of the success of workgroups convened by COSA in 2018 that focused on three key topics dominating K-12 policy conversations: Early Learning, Education Workforce Development, and Social and Emotional Determinants of Health and Education. The recommendations that came out of those workgroups became the foundational elements of the Student Success Act in 2019, like the Student Investment Account, the focus on focal student populations, and funding for early learning programs.

COSA leaders identified three key goals and outcomes for the 2024 Workgroups:

- Help COSA leaders articulate a clear vision about meeting the academic, social-emotional, and mental health needs of our students;
- Give COSA leaders the tools and skills to help change the narrative and conversation about public schools in Oregon; and
- Guide the development of our 2025 legislative priorities and ensuring COSA is responsive to the needs and goals of our members.

2025 COSA Legislative Priorities

Thank you again to all the Superintendents and COSA Leaders who participated in the 2024 Workgroups this year. Your time and service to this process supported the COSA team in developing COSA's 2025 Legislative Priorities. Here are the top priorities that emerged from our work together.



Special Education Funding

- **Special Education Cap.** Raise the cap from 11% to 15%: \$500 million (estimate). Funding must be additive to the State School Fund.
- **High Cost Disability Account.** Fund 100% of the cost reimbursement: \$150 million (estimate). Funding must be additive to the State School Fund.
- **Early Intervention, Early Childhood Special Education, and Regional Inclusive Services.** Fund all three programs to Adequate Service Levels.



Unfunded Mandates

- **Fund Unfunded Mandates.** Prioritize and focus on attaining funding for a new K-12 specific mandate: the expansion of unemployment insurance to all classified employees during school breaks .
- **Address new unfunded mandates during the 2025 Session.** Advocate to fund, or oppose, the unfunded mandate.



K-12 Facilities

- **Aid Districts in Need of Bond Funding.** Create a funding source for districts that cannot pass bonds for facility emergencies and new construction/upgrades to buildings. Keep funding options flexible (for example: general fund, lottery-backed bonds, and corporate kicker) to maximize total K-12 investments.
- **Initial proposal.** \$100 million in lottery backed bonds that do not require local district bond passage to receive emergency or matching funds.



Student Mental and Behavioral Health

- **Support Partnerships and Programs.** Strengthen partnerships and expand existing programs and efforts (Community Schools, School Based Health Centers, Treatment and Care Programs, for example), with a focus on service desert regions. Leverage Medicaid billing, whenever possible.

2025 COSA Legislative Priorities



Summer Learning & Expanded Learning Opportunities

- **Full Funding.** Secure additive, stable, and adequate funding for districts and ESDs. Ensure that minimum funding floors for smaller districts are adequate to staff and support summer learning programs.
- **Streamline Current Efforts.** Streamline planning, programming, and reporting. Explore future options to further investments in expanded learning opportunities.



Early Literacy

- **Full Funding.** Secure additive, full funding for early literacy success for all districts, and ensure that ESDs have access to funding.
- **Further Investments.** Bolster efforts around professional learning and capacity building.
- **Streamline Current Efforts.** Advocate to permit the spending of Early Literacy Success dollars in upper elementary grades; and streamline the application and reporting requirements.
- **Protect Other Complementary Funding.** Support the continued funding for Birth through Five Literacy Grants, Kindergarten Partnership and Innovation, and Jumpstart Kindergarten.



Attendance

- **Grow Current Investments and Efforts.** Increase investments in multi-tiered systems of support. Increase capacity building through more targeted technical assistance and communities of practice.
- **Implementation Improvements.** Consider improvements in transportation and coding absences.



Workforce Diversity and Hard-to-Staff Assignments

- **Protect and Grow Efforts around Workforce Diversity.** Continue to invest in scholarships and efforts to increase educator workforce diversity.
- **Continue Investments in Hard-to-Staff Positions.** Support efforts around Grow-Your-Own, Apprenticeship, Pathway programs, and On-Going Mentoring, especially in Special Education, ESOL, Dual Language, Reading, Advanced Math, and Mental Health and Behavioral.

COSA Funding Workgroup

From early on, it was clear that the COSA K-12 Funding Workgroup would focus its work extensively around the Current Service Level Calculation (CSL) and funding issues related to the State School Fund (SSF), special education funding, and facilities funding.

Like the COSA Student Supports Workgroup, this initial list of topics for workgroup engagement was drawn from feedback received during the 2023 Fall Regional Meetings and the OASE Statewide Off-the-Record Meeting held in Portland on April 26, 2024.

Current Service Level

For the past several years, COSA has worked diligently to bring attention to the process used to calculate the “Current Service Level” (CSL) for the State School Fund (SSF). Our members believe that the CSL calculation should provide a cost estimate for the continuation of K-12 programs and staff that are currently being paid for by the SSF. Time and again, we raised concerns about the inputs used to calculate the CSL as not accurately reflecting our true budget roll-up costs.

In November 2023, Governor Kotek committed to superintendents and other education partners that she would put together a [process to review and update the CSL calculation](#). Over the course of several meetings, COSA and other K-12 partners were able to meet with representatives from the Governor’s Office, the State Chief Financial Officer (CFO), the Oregon Department of Education, and others to engage in a review of the CSL.

Shortly after the June 2024 workgroup meeting, Governor Kotek’s team shared the following memo – [State School Fund Current Service Level Crosswalk – Governor’s Office](#) – which describes the key issues related to the review of the CSL process and a crosswalk of important topics discussed at the meetings. In summary, the Governor’s office directed three significant changes to the CSL process that will inform the Governor’s Recommended Budget due in early December of 2024.

These changes to the CSL include:

- Structuring the CSL calculation based on a 49/51 split, rather than a 50/50 jump off point;
- Updating the state’s compensation model to better account for personnel costs; and
- Using the most current local revenue forecast to calculate the CSL.

In total, these three changes increase the CSL by an estimated \$515 million for the 2025-27 biennium, for a total CSL increase of about \$1.1 billion over the 2023-25 SSF allocation of \$10.2 billion. Improving the CSL calculation was the clear top priority for workgroup participants and after this announcement by the Governor, the workgroup quickly coalesced around three key findings and five recommendations.

COSA Funding Workgroup

Subsequently, the PERS Board adopted the final PERS rates in October 2024 which raised the rate used to calculate CSL by a percentage point (from 19.47% to 20.45%). Based on the updated CSL calculation formula, we believe this rate increase adds about \$85 million to the CSL calculation. On October 28, COSA sent a letter to Governor Kotek asking her to update the CSL calculation to reflect the increase in the final PERS rate adopted by the Board in October. At the time of this report, we are waiting for the release of the Governor's Recommended Budget in early December and are optimistic the CSL will be updated.

Stable and Adequate Funding for Addressing Unfunded Mandates

The COSA K-12 Funding Workgroup meeting finalized three key findings and identified multiple goals related to each finding. These served as the foundation for the final recommendations of the Workgroup.

Finding 1: Oregon's public schools need adequate, equitable, and stable funding that accurately accounts for the resources necessary to meet the increasingly complex needs of our students in every school district and education service district.



- The CSL process will be regularly updated with input from K-12 partners to accurately forecast inflationary costs.
- New K-12 requirements must be funded – our K-12 system cannot keep absorbing new unfunded mandates.
- Future funding decisions must consider academic outcomes and include resources to meet the social, emotional, and mental health needs of all students.
- Schools are facing paperwork and data collection overload. Grant applications, data collections, and other reporting mechanisms must be streamlined and consolidated.
- Funding for critical programs, like Summer Learning, should not be competitive grants. Every community has students who need these extra supports and services.

Special Education Funding

Finding 2: Special education funding models need updating. Funding is based on outdated and inequitable models that do not account for the true costs of special education services.

Funding Workgroup members were adamant that funding for the staff, services, and programs that serve our students with disabilities does not account for the real costs school districts and ESDs incur. Rather than just adding more money to the State School Fund, the Funding Workgroup members believe that formulas need to be changed, and additive funding must be included to cover the additional weights in the SSF. It is not enough to improve the formulas, additional funding is needed to account for true costs.

COSA Funding Workgroup

The Funding Workgroup identified four policy goals in support of Finding 2:



Goals in Support of Finding 2:

- The State School Fund will move toward providing weighted funding for all students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
- Oregon's High Cost Disability Account will fully reimburse the costs needed to meet the educational needs of each eligible student.
- Regional Inclusive Services (RIS) will be fully funded to ensure students who are medically fragile and vulnerable receive the services and supports they need.
- Oregon will provide the funding necessary to support our youngest children with disabilities through Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education programs.

K-12 Facilities

Finding 3: K-12 facilities needs are significant across Oregon. Dozens of school districts across the state face significant barriers to passing a construction bond and cannot benefit fully from programs like the Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching (OSCIM) program.

Funding Workgroup members acknowledged the significant investments the Oregon Legislature has made to help address the growing backlog of deferred maintenance, safety issues, and increased number of buildings that have exceeded their useful lifespan. With the creation of the Office of School Facilities at ODE, and more than a billion dollars invested in OSCIM and Seismic Rehabilitation Grants over the past decade, K-12 facilities have been positively impacted. Unfortunately, year after year, there continue to be districts that struggle to pass a bond to be eligible for an OSCIM matching grant. Funding Workgroup members believe we need to identify resources to support those districts as the gap between “haves” and “have-nots” in school facilities continues to widen. In conjunction with this finding, the Funding Workgroup identified four policy goals in support of Finding 3.



Goals in Support of Finding 3:

- Oregon will increase funding for OSCIM matching grants and Seismic Rehabilitation Grants to help incentivize local communities to invest in their school facilities.
- Oregon will create a grant program and funding mechanism for school facilities improvements that does not require a local bond match to support districts that struggle to get voter approval for a construction bond.
- Oregon will ensure there are emergency funds available to support school districts that endure natural disasters, wildfires, or other circumstances outside their control
- The forthcoming statewide facilities assessment should help guide prioritization of future state investments.

COSA Funding Workgroup

K-12 Funding Workgroup Recommendations

The K-12 Funding Workgroup discussed and approved five recommendations.

Recommendation: Address Unfunded Mandates

Funding Workgroup participants highlighted the growing number of laws and policies that have impacted the finances of school districts and ESDs that have not come with additional funding and recommended that COSA focus additional effort on responding to proposed unfunded mandates during the 2025 Session. The Funding Workgroup wants new requirements to be funded, or COSA to register their opposition.

There was also a robust discussion on the multitude of unfunded mandates that have been added recently. The Funding Workgroup decided to propose a first-of-its-kind focused effort to seek funding for an unfunded mandate: unemployment insurance for classified employees. As a result, COSA and the Oregon Association of School Business Officials surveyed school districts and ESDs this fall, and more than 110 responded. The districts and ESDs reported additional costs for unemployment insurance totalling \$5.5 million between the summer of 2023 and the summer of 2024. As a first step in our advocacy to receive funding for this mandate, COSA was able to include this data and information in our budget request letter sent to Governor Kotek on October 28th. We identified this as a new cost for districts and asked for the additional funding to be included in the CSL calculation.

Recommendation: Raise the Special Education Cap in the SSF to 15%

After a robust discussion about increasing the SPED cap, including a comprehensive discussion about concerns removing the cap, the Funding Workgroup recommended that the SPED Cap be raised to 15%. This is in line with the state and national average (both about 15%). The Funding Workgroup also emphasized the need to pay for the additional

Background

Special Education Weight

- The special education weight in the State School Fund is capped at 11% of ADMr (student enrollment).
- The 11% cap has not changed since the formula was developed in the 1990s.

Cap Waiver Weight

- The cap waiver provides weights above the 11% cap.
- ODE conducts a comparative analysis to distribute the cap waiver weights to school districts that have an especially high numbers of students on an IEP and/or especially high expenditures to support their students in special education.

School Year	ADMr	# Students in Special Education	Special Education Weight (capped at 11%)	# Unfunded Special Education Weight (due to 11% cap)	Cap Waiver Weights (above 11%)	# Unfunded Special Education Students
2022-23	543,685	79,025	59,578	19,447	7,064	12,383

Source: [Oregon Department of Education](#)

weights to move from 11% to 15% (about 20,000) and maintain the cap waiver for districts above the 15% threshold. Based on data shared by ODE, we estimate that the SSF would need an additional \$500 million to raise the cap to 15%, pay for the additional weights, and, most importantly, pay for the cap waiver weights that are currently carved out of the SSF.

COSA Funding Workgroup

Recommendation: Increase Funding for the High Cost Disability Account

The High Cost Disability Account is designed to reimburse school districts for the costs to provide special education services for students when those costs exceed \$30,000. The current funding (\$55 million per school year/\$110 million per biennium) is significantly oversubscribed and is projected to reimburse school districts only about 40% of their eligible expenses (ODE prorates reimbursements when they exceed available funding). Funding Workgroup members recommend adding \$150 million to the biennial funding amount for the High Cost Disability Account to get the reimbursement rate in future school years back between 90% and 100%.

Reimbursement Rate – Preliminary vs Actual Comparison

School Year	Preliminary Reimbursement Rate	Actual Reimbursement Rate	Change in Rate
2020-21	71%	58%	12.3%
2021-22	70%	50%	20.7%
2022-23	59%	41%	17.9%

School Year	Total Preliminary Claims (Eligible Expenses)	Total Actual Claims (Eligible Expenses)
2020-21	\$77,927,582	\$94,437,427
2021-22	\$78,147,517	\$110,759,252
2022-23	\$93,791,884	\$134,942,908

Oregon Department of Education 27

Source: [Oregon Department of Education](#)

Recommendation: Provide K-12 facilities funding for districts that cannot pass bonds for facilities emergencies and upgrades to buildings

While COSA will continue to advocate for continued investments in the OSCIM Grants and the Seismic Rehabilitation Grants, Funding Workgroup members acknowledged the need to create a funding source for districts that cannot pass bonds for facility emergencies, new construction or safety upgrades to buildings.

During the 2025 Session, COSA will propose legislation authorizing \$100 million in lottery backed bonds to fund two new programs:

1. A \$50 million matching grant program for facilities improvements or upgrades that allows for any non-bond dollars to qualify for matching funds if the district can demonstrate their struggles passing a bond; and
2. \$50 million dollars to help pay for facilities emergencies that require immediate attention (like a roof collapsing in a snowstorm) for districts that have historically been unable to pass a construction bond.

COSA Funding Workgroup

Recommendation: Fund Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) and Regional Inclusive Services (RIS) at Adequate Service Levels

Regional Inclusive Services (RIS) supports children and students who experience low incidence disabilities, including: Autism Spectrum Disorder, Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Visually Impaired, Deafblind, Orthopedic Impairments, and Traumatic Brain Injuries; many of these children experience multiple disabilities and require highly specialized equipment and trained staff to access their education program.

Early Intervention Services (EI) serves children birth to age 3 and Early Childhood Special Education (ESCE) serves children aged 3 to 5. Both programs prepare children with disabilities and delays for Kindergarten and beyond. These services are federally mandated and there are no waitlists allowed.

Both RIS and EI/ECSE provide invaluable services to students and their families. Unfortunately, funding for the ESDs and school districts who serve as state contractors for these programs has been inconsistent, flat, or has lagged behind caseload growth. Both programs have Adequate Service Levels that have been developed with the input of experts, providers, and stakeholders. The Workgroup recommends funding at these levels: \$122 million for RIS and \$432 million for EI/ECSE.

Source: [Oregon Department of Education Regional Inclusive Services \(RIS\) Funding Adequate Service Levels](#)

Source: [Oregon Department of Education Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education \(EI/ECSE\) Adequate Service Levels \(ASL\)](#)

COSA Student Supports Workgroup

The COSA Student Supports Workgroup initially identified more than half a dozen issues to explore. These issues were drawn from our 2023 Fall Regional Meetings, as well as our Statewide Off-the-Record Meeting in April of 2024.

After reviewing all of the key information, research, data, and potential recommendations, the Student Supports Workgroup had the difficult task of narrowing down which issues to prioritize for the 2025 Legislative Session.

To support our prioritization process, workgroup members considered two key factors: i) impact (level of impact on students); and ii) viability (level of support / viability of passage) of each of the recommendations. Workgroup members also factored in where there was existing momentum behind a particular issue.

Through this exercise, the Student Supports Workgroup identified that the COSA Funding Workgroup priorities are also priorities that the Student Supports Workgroup shared.

In addition to the COSA Funding Workgroup Priorities, the Student Supports Workgroup refined five key priorities around: student mental and behavioral health; summer and expanded learning opportunities; early literacy; attendance; and workforce diversity and hard-to-staff positions.

Here's a more detailed overview of each of those key priorities.

Student Mental and Behavioral Health – Key Information and Findings

The role of districts and schools has expanded significantly to keep up with the needs of our students today. In the context of student mental and behavioral health, our current system of care and service is inequitable across the state.

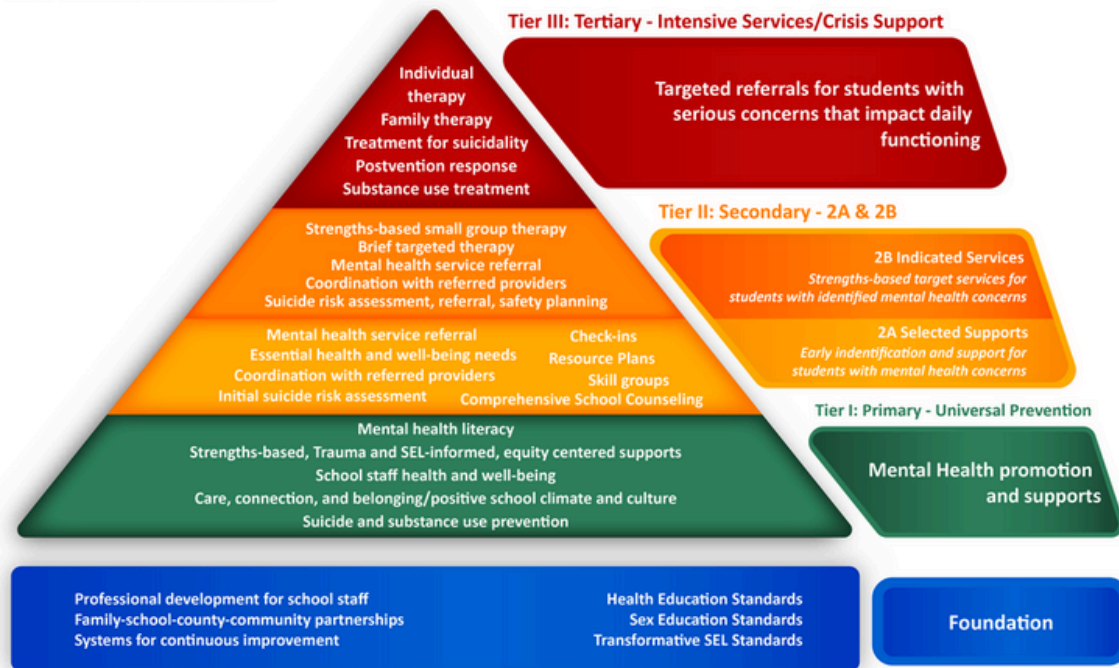
We recognize that stronger partnerships and collaboration are needed among state (ODE, OHA, DHS, System of Care Council), regional ([CCOs](#), ESDs, local public health providers), and [local partners](#) to better streamline a comprehensive continuum of care and service for students and families.

In addition to early prevention and intervention efforts before students enter the K-12 system, tailored and timely services must be provided equitably, especially for our students who are part of key focal populations in service desert regions.

COSA Student Supports Workgroup

Multi-tiered systems of support for social emotional learning and mental health can support students' well-being.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) in Education



Source: [ODE's MTSS Framework for Organizing Mental Health Systems](#)

Throughout the Student Supports Workgroup process, we also noted that there is momentum and interest in supporting and expanding a "[community schools approach](#)" and wraparound service models.

To expand efforts that bolster supports for student mental and behavioral health, we must ensure that there is stable and adequate funding, collaborative partnerships and providers, well-trained staff, and updated facilities.

2025 Platform – Student Mental and Behavioral Health

- **Support Partnerships and Programs.** Strengthen partnerships and expand existing programs and efforts (Community Schools, School Based Health Centers, Treatment and Care Programs, for example), with a focus on service desert regions. Leverage Medicaid billing, whenever possible.

Current / potential momentum and partnerships aligned with this priority: COSA Professional Learning, Governor's Student Social Emotional Health Workgroup, ODE Accountability Workgroup, AASA Learning 2025 – Social Emotional Learning Workgroup, ODE/OHA Medicaid Billing Workgroup, and ODE's Youth Leaders Considerations around Mental Health and Chronic Absenteeism.

COSA Student Supports Workgroup

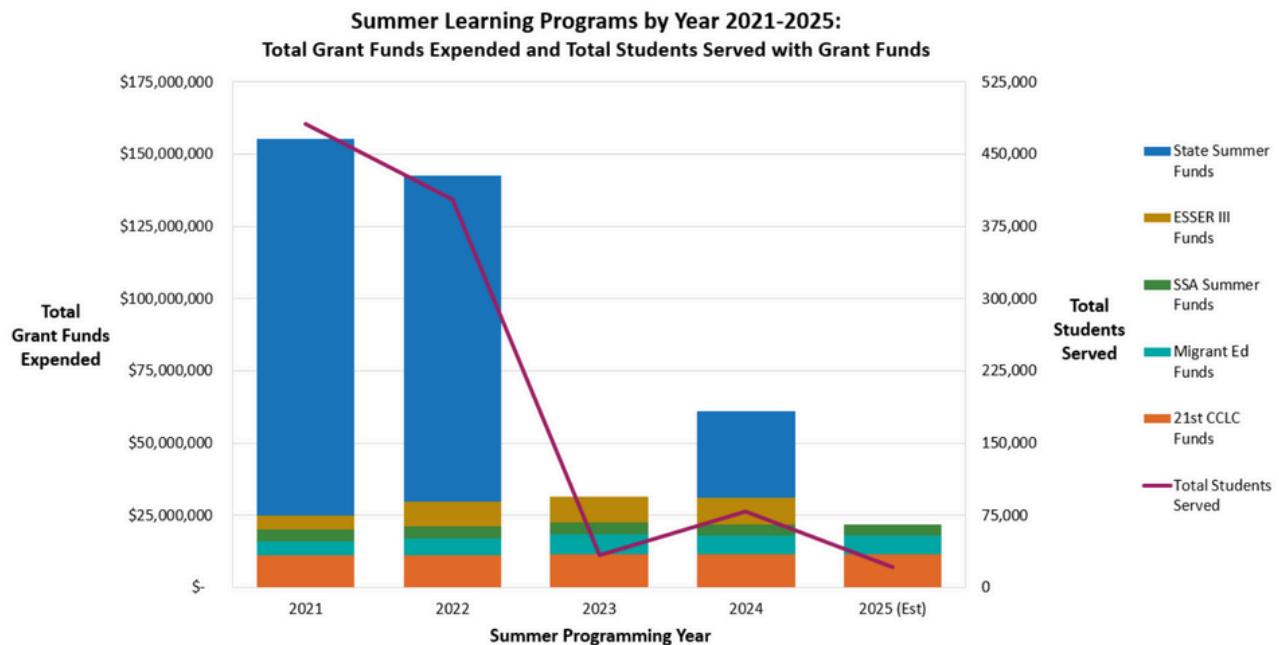
Summer Learning and Expanded Learning Opportunities – Key Information

Students across Oregon need access to on-going, high-quality summer learning programs. Summer learning programs offer students important academic and enrichment experiences, as well as access to important wraparound services.

With state funding for summer learning being unpredictable, inadequate, and distributed later in the school year, school districts have limited time to plan, partner, and implement high-quality summer learning programs.

High-quality summer learning programs are reliant on high-quality conditions, such as: predictable funding, a strong workforce, and collaborative partnerships.

The Student Supports Workgroup noted that when the Oregon Legislature earmarked federal funding during the pandemic for summer learning, the state had a glimpse of what implementation could be statewide. Should the funding pipeline be like this in the future, we have a model to build on, in addition to the work laid by House Bill 4082 (2024).



*State Summer Funds include District and CBO grant figures.

*21st CCLC Funds include afterschool program figures.

*ESSER III Funds include District formula grant and SEA set aside figures.

Students served by District funds are estimated.

Source: [ODE's Interim Report on Summer Learning \(HB 4082\)](#)

COSA Student Supports Workgroup

As we reflect on the last few one-time investments in summer learning, the Student Supports Workgroup highlighted several implementation challenges to consider as we developed our priority for 2025:

- **Funding.** Without permanent and additive funding for summer, it will continue to be challenging for districts to staff high-quality programs, and secure partnerships to stand up and maintain programs – further impacting student access to programming.
- **Staffing.** Recruiting and retaining licensed and classified staff, especially given the new unemployment law.
- **Current school calendar.** Summer break continues to remain the longest time where students are disconnected from a structured learning environment across Oregon schools, which impacts student learning and growth over time, especially when students are unable to access high-quality summer learning programs. A number of workgroup members expressed an interest in exploring a balanced calendar model to address the length of breaks, and minimize learning loss.
- **Facilities.** Given summer construction, some facilities will be available for summer learning programs, and some may not, due to scheduled construction.

2025 Platform – Summer Learning and Expanded Learning Opportunities

- **Full Funding.** Secure additive, stable, and adequate funding for districts and ESDs. Ensure that minimum funding floors for smaller districts are adequate to staff and support summer learning programs.
- **Streamline Current Efforts.** Streamline planning, programming, and reporting. Explore future options to further investments in expanded learning opportunities.

Current / potential momentum and partnerships aligned with this priority: Governor’s Office Priority, ODE Summer and Afterschool Learning Workgroup, ODE Accountability Workgroup, and Legislative Workgroup on Chronic Absenteeism, Summer and Afterschool Learning Coalition.

Early Literacy – Key Information and Findings

Investments and support in early literacy continue to be critical for the success of Oregon students. In 2023, COSA partnered with the Governor’s Office, the Oregon Department of Education, and a broad coalition of early literacy advocates to pass the Early Literacy Success Initiative (HB 3198 (2023)).



Source: [ODE Early Literacy Success Initiative Resources](#)

COSA Student Supports Workgroup

As we reflect on the implementation of the Early Literacy Success Initiative, particularly the School District Grants, here are some key takeaways:

- 100% of eligible districts and charter schools submitted applications for the Early Literacy Success School District Grants.
- Most districts (80%) are using core curricula from the State Board of Education approved curriculum list.
- Many grantees plan to invest heavily in professional learning and coaching.
- Many grantees plan to hire coaches, interventionists, and other specialized staff (e.g. tutors), representing almost 400 FTE in 2023–24 and almost 500 FTE in 2024–25.

Among the Student Supports Workgroup, several challenges were raised as we prepared our 2025 platform around early literacy. Those challenges include:

- **Funding.** Workgroup members raised a number of concerns and issues related to funding: 1) stability in funding for literacy, especially around making sure that funding continues to be additive. They also reinforced how literacy work begins at birth, and the need to continue investments in Birth through Five, and Kindergarten Transition efforts that help support strong literacy foundations for all children; 2) they noted that the funding floor for small districts is not sufficient to hire staff, and many small districts had to roll dollars over to hire staff for the following year; 3) without direct funding for ESDs, there are limited technical assistance supports that could be provided around early literacy coordination and implementation, especially, for smaller and more remote districts.
- **Spending.** Literacy learning and work must continue beyond third grade – workgroup members expressed concern around the sunset on spending in fourth and fifth grade. The workgroup members also expressed a need to consider more funding for adolescent literacy efforts as well. They also highlighted some of their concerns regarding the spending limitations on professional learning/coaching for instructional assistants.
- **Requirements.** Workgroup members highlighted how applications and reporting requirements continue to be a heavy lift for districts. They also raised concerns about meeting literacy specialist/coach/interventionist licensure requirements by July 1, 2025.
- **Workforce needs.** Workgroup members shared that they have concerns about meeting the needs of our workforce and requirements in the early literacy rules, especially in more rural, hard-to-staff regions.
- **Adoption cycle.** The current curriculum adoption cycle is challenging with Language Arts and Math occurring back to back. Workgroup members expressed a need to see the timelines for those adoptions be staggered in order to support high-quality implementation.

COSA Student Supports Workgroup

2025 Platform – Early Literacy

- **Full Funding.** Secure additive, full funding for early literacy success for all districts, and ensure that ESDs have access to funding.
- **Further Investments.** Bolster efforts around professional learning and capacity building.
- **Streamline Current Efforts.** Advocate to permit the spending of Early Literacy Success Dollars in upper elementary grades; and streamline the application and reporting requirements.
- **Protect Other Complementary Funding.** Support the continued funding for Birth through Five Literacy Grants, Kindergarten Partnership and Innovation, and Jumpstart Kindergarten.

Current / potential momentum and partnerships aligned with this priority: Governor’s Office Priority, ODE Accountability Workgroup, and ODE Summer and Afterschool Learning Workgroup, and Early Literacy Coalition.

Attendance – Key Information and Findings

Students across Oregon need to feel like they are part of our school communities, and that their learning is relevant. They need to feel seen, heard, and valued.

Root Causes of Chronic Absenteeism

Barriers	Aversion	Disengagement	Misconceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chronic and acute illness• Family responsibilities or home situation• Trauma• Poor transportation• Housing and food insecurity• Inequitable access to needed services• System involvement• Lack of predictable schedules for learning• Lack of access to tech• Community violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Struggling academically and/or behaviorally• Unwelcoming school climate• Social and peer challenges• Anxiety• Biased disciplinary and suspension practices• Undiagnosed disability and/or disability accommodations• Caregivers had negative educational experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of challenging, culturally responsive instruction• Bored• No meaningful relationships to adults in the school (especially given staff shortages)• Lack of enrichment opportunities• Lack of academic and behavioral support• Failure to earn credits• Need to work conflicts with being in high school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused• Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning• Lose track and underestimate TOTAL absences• Assume students must stay home for any symptom of illness• Attendance only matters in the older grades• Suspensions don't count as absence

Source: [Attendance Works](https://www.attendanceworks.org)

In order to boost attendance throughout the state, we must improve positive conditions for learning in schools:

- Relationships and partnerships with students, families, staff, and community (shared vision and collaboration)
- Belonging, connection, and support
- Physical and emotional health and safety
- Academic challenge, enrichment, and engagement
- Student and adult well-being

COSA Student Supports Workgroup

The Student Supports Workgroup identified opportunities to improve and expand our multi-tiered system of support at the state, district, and school level; working across silos; aligning supports and interventions, and investing in wraparound services.

- Continue to grow investments in current initiatives like Every Day Matters and Oregon's Early Indicator and Intervention System to improve efforts around monitoring and leveraging data to inform supports for students and families, while working to streamline reporting; and supporting re-engagement efforts
- Leverage work around communities of practice – AASA's Learning 2025 Oregon Cohort, and ODE's Community of Practice around attendance
- Boost communication and public campaign efforts with partnership at the state, regional, and local level

The Student Supports Workgroup also surfaced a number of considerations in current policies and models:

- Seat time approach vs. proficiency models with flexible approaches to attendance (hybrid).
- Current school calendar vs. a balanced school calendar.
- Consider adding growth in attendance to also focus on progress over time.
- Consider how absenteeism is coded, and allow for more flexibility around medical appointments and school activities, especially in rural areas.
- Amend a current rule to permit the use of Type 20 Activity vehicles for home to school transportation.
- Remove access and financial barriers to school activities.

Lastly, the Student Supports Workgroup reinforced the need for stable and adequate resources, staffing (including staffing around transportation), and partnerships.

2025 Platform – Attendance

- **Grow Current Investments and Efforts.** Increase investments in multi-tiered systems of support. Increase capacity building through more targeted technical assistance and communities of practice.
- **Implementation Improvements.** Consider improvements in transportation and coding absences.

Current / potential momentum and partnerships aligned with this priority: COSA Professional Learning, AASA Learning 2025 – Oregon Cohort, ODE's Attendance Initiative, ODE Summer Learning and Afterschool Learning Workgroup, and ODE Accountability Workgroup.

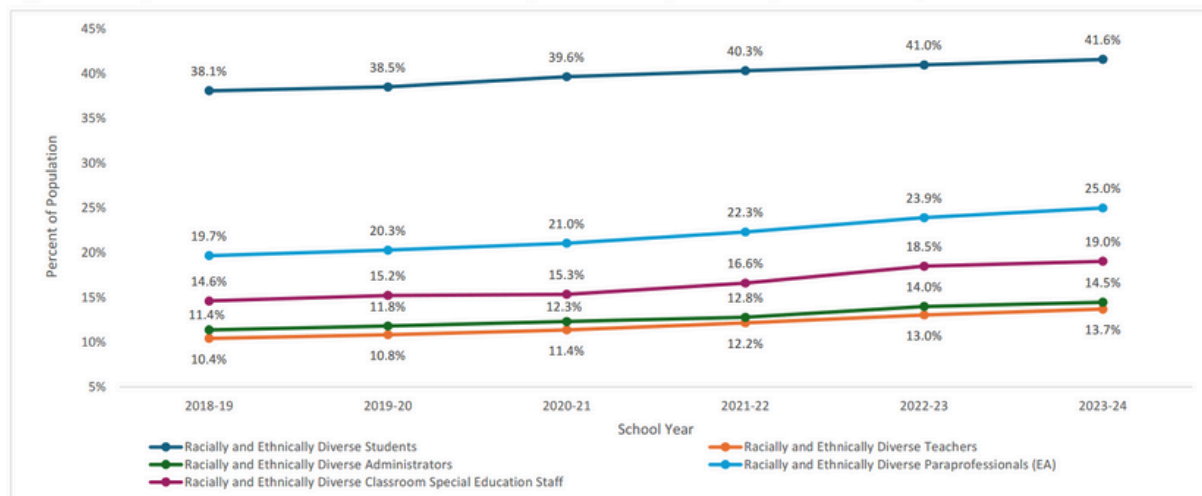
COSA Student Supports Workgroup

Workforce Diversity and Hard-to-Staff Assignments – Key Information and Findings

A diverse educator workforce is critical to helping support the academic success, and social and emotional development of every student in Oregon. As Oregon’s student diversity continues to increase over time, we must also continue to support efforts to address the conditions that impact diverse educator recruitment, retention, and career advancement, so that Oregon continues to build a diverse workforce for all students.

Data from the 2024 Educator Equity Report

Figure 18. Proportion of Educators Identified as Racially and Ethnically Diverse by Educator Role, 2018-19 to 2023-24



Source: ODE Staff Position Collection and ODE Fall Membership (2018-19 - 2023-24)

Note: Count for 2023-24 staff roles identifying as racially and ethnically diverse: Teachers n = 4,412, Administrators 383, Educational Assistants n = 3,891, Classroom Special Education Staff 2,436.

Source: [2024 Educator Equity Report](#)

Over the last 15 years, the University of California Irvine has conducted longitudinal research for the Educator Advancement Council that demonstrates:

- “Over the past decade, Oregon has more than doubled the proportion of first-year teachers identifying as people of color, reaching 20.6 percent in 2023. However, these new teachers are often placed in schools with few experienced colleagues, high staff turnover, and student populations that potentially need more support – factors that likely contribute to higher turnover rates in this group.”
- “Although teachers generally have the lowest turnover rates among all employee groups in Oregon public schools, this masks significant variations. Special education teachers, teachers of color, and novice teachers all exhibit higher turnover rates than their counterparts.”
- “Coming out of the pandemic, teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and other staff experienced record high turnover rates between the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years, marking a significant departure from previous trends and suggesting that schools are facing unique post-pandemic challenges.”

COSA Student Supports Workgroup

Hard-to-Staff Positions

In reflecting on the growing needs of our students across Oregon, the Student Supports Workgroup also considered specific positions where we are experiencing acute shortages in:

- **Special Education** (including, special education teachers and staff, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists)
- **Specialized Endorsements** (such as, English as a Second Language, Dual Language, Reading, and Advanced Math)
- **Mental and Behavioral Health** (for example, school social workers, psychologists, counselors, and other specialists)

It was also noted that in more rural and remote districts in Oregon, all positions can be hard-to-staff positions.

Among the Student Supports Workgroup, several key issues were shared. For example, the need for:

- Strong partnerships (ODE, TSPC, EAC, HECC, EPPs, Membership Organizations, and more) in developing a shared vision for our educator workforce, as well as building coherence across the different workforce initiatives in the short-, mid-, and long-term.
- Continuing to maintain and expand current scholarships programs (OTSP and OASP), Grow-Your-Own programs and initiatives, and mentoring efforts to support the recruitment, preparation, and retention of our workforce.
- More investments and support in accessing and affording higher education, housing, and childcare that impact the growth of our workforce.

2025 Platform – Workforce Diversity and Hard-to-Staff Assignments

- **Protect and Grow Efforts around Workforce Diversity.** Continue to invest in scholarships and efforts to increase educator workforce diversity.
- **Continue Investments in Hard-to-Staff Positions.** Support efforts around Grow-Your-Own, Apprenticeship, Pathway programs, and On-Going Mentoring, especially in Special Education, ESOL, Dual Language, Reading, Advanced Math, and Mental and Behavioral Health.

Current / potential momentum and partnerships aligned with this priority: COSA Professional Learning team, Educator Advancement Council, Teacher Practices and Standards Commission, and 2024 Educator Equity Report.

Closing and Next Steps

The broad participation of more than 115 Superintendents and COSA leaders in the workgroup process presents a real opportunity to make major advancements in both K-12 funding and policy that will deliver demonstrable support for all students and improved academic outcomes across the state. We are pleased to share a few key updates since the ten workgroup recommendations were finalized on September 10th, along with a few insights into next steps as we prepare for the 2025 Session.

Key Updates

Our Priorities are being Drafted. The COSA Policy and Advocacy Team is in the process of implementing several of our K-12 Funding Workgroup recommendations. Legislation for 2025 is being drafted to raise the Special Education Cap to 15% (and fund the added weights), add \$150 million to the High Cost Disability Account, and create the framework and funding for the proposed investments in facilities. Additionally, the Team is drafting a placeholder bill to do additional work on COSA legislative priorities as needed.

Our Fall Regional Meetings are Complete. The COSA team recently wrapped up 11 in-person Fall Regional Off-the-Record meetings. We are pleased to report record interest in these critical member conversations, with over 320 attendees at the meetings. We were able to use these meetings as a sounding board to get real-time member feedback on the proposed workgroup recommendations. The feedback we received indicated broad agreement and a general consensus that the recommendations are truly reflective of the needs identified by our membership.

Alignment with the Governor's Key Initiatives. Governor Kotek is set to release her proposed Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB) in early December. After reviewing the Agency Request Budget (ARB) from the Oregon Department of Education, we are pleased to report that there is clear alignment between the Governor's key initiatives and funding proposals for 2025-27 with both Workgroup's recommendations. Most importantly, the COSA team has met regularly with the Governor's Education and Budget team members to reinforce the need to increase the Current Service Level (CSL) for the SSF to reflect the increased PERS rates released on October 4th. This reflects an additional \$85 million on top of the \$515 million CSL increase already proposed by the Governor this past summer.

Further Impact. The input of the COSA workgroups has also provided valuable insights into other related work. For example, superintendents, COSA Leaders, and the COSA team were able to provide feedback during the Department of Education's Accountability Workgroup process that is reflective of what we heard in the workgroups. We were able to highlight the need for: coherence and clarity in our accountability system; reciprocal accountability; and more streamlining of the 138 grant programs and 320 grant reports and data collections managed by ODE. Many of the issues and recommendations we shared in the Accountability Workgroup process are part of ODE's final report.

Closing and Next Steps

November 20th Release of December Revenue Forecast. As we finalized this report, the December Economic and Revenue Forecast was released. The Forecast showed significant surges that are projected to generate an additional \$982.5 million in Net General Fund and Lottery Resources for the 2023–25 biennium (compared to the September 2024 Forecast).

Growth in projected general fund and lottery revenues in 2025–27 is significant. Projected Net General Fund and Lottery Resources for the 2025–27 biennium have increased by \$2.337 billion from the September 2024 forecast, which includes an additional \$945 million in revenue in 2023–25 being carried over to the 2025–27 budget cycle. This is good news for Governor Kotek as she works to finalize her Governor’s Recommended Budget for release in early December and is a positive development in our work towards increased investments in K–12 education in the 2025 Session.

Next Steps

The COSA team continues to prepare for the start of the 2025 Legislative Session in January. We are finalizing our shared legislative agenda, and developing messaging resources and other materials for Superintendents and COSA leaders to use in their advocacy efforts. There will also be multiple opportunities in December and January to participate in legislative briefings and training to sharpen and refine your advocacy skills in advance of the critical 2025 Legislative Session.

As we prepare for the 2025 Legislative Session, here are our recommendations for Superintendents and COSA Leaders:

Relationship Building (on-going). Connect with the state lawmakers who represent your district/ESD. Make a goal to try to connect at least once a month before session starts.

- Getting to know one another. Building trust and relationship capital.
- Develop you/your team as their “go to” resource on education.

Story-Telling and Connecting (on-going). Share your local stories that showcase the power of public education and the everyday work that districts, schools, and ESDs do to support student success. What impact is your district/ESD having on student success? What are your priorities?

- Share 2–3 key successes your students are experiencing.
- Identify 2–3 priorities/initiatives for the upcoming year.
- Share 1–2 challenges your district is facing.

Attend an Upcoming Advocacy Training. In December, January, and during session, we plan to organize a few Advocacy Training opportunities (in person and online) to:

- Help support your relationship building with lawmakers;
- Practice and plan for meetings with lawmakers in and outside of the Capitol;
- Focus our storytelling and messaging around our shared priorities;
- Support your advocacy for our shared priorities using a variety of strategies and tactics.

Thanks to the foundational work of the COSA workgroups, and the singular focus on funding investments and policies that meet the needs of all students across Oregon, we are better prepared and well-positioned to make real progress. Thank you for all of your work on behalf of students and here's to a successful 2025 Session!



Appendix

April 26, 2024 OASE Statewide Off-the-Record Meeting Summary

After a briskly paced and strongly bipartisan 31 days, the 82nd Oregon Legislative Assembly adjourned on March 7th, 2024. On March 12th, the COSA Policy and Advocacy team provided a 2024 Session debrief to Superintendents and COSA leaders. Seeing the serious challenges on the horizon for Oregon's public education system and the students we serve, our organizational leaders asked the COSA team to prepare for an in-person Off-the-Record meeting to be held at the Airport Sheraton in Portland. The primary topic: how do we collectively engage COSA's leaders to develop a common set of priorities to guide our legislative advocacy work through the 2025 Session.

On April 26, more than 125 Superintendents, COSA leaders, and state level education partners gathered in Portland for a four hour meeting that included a wide-ranging presentation and discussion of topics such as:

- The power of collective legislative engagement and advocacy;
- An overview of the current structure of the OASE Executive Committee;
- A review of 2024–25 state-level workgroups and task forces, including a key update on the Joint Task Force on Statewide Educator Salary Schedule from OASE President Dr. Alisha McBride;
- Early projections of 2025 Legislative Session challenges and opportunities;
- An analysis of feedback from the 2023 Fall Regionals;
- A review of “Must Do” issues related to funding and other critical policies; and
- Engagement of attendees in a Thought Exchange asking for feedback on the following question: What are the top three issues your district or ESD is facing?

After these important presentations to ground participants with the same essential information, the meeting shifted to engaging members in two key areas: K–12 Funding and Student Supports.

Participants received the latest updates on the State School Fund Current Service Level calculation discussions with Governor Kotek's team and other education partners and learned about early discussions in the House Education Committee about potential changes to the SSF funding formula. We then spent time in small group discussions at each table discussing and reporting out on two questions:

- What are the top three K–12 funding issues COSA should prioritize in 2025?
- Describe why it is an issue, and what the focus of each priority should be.

The focus then shifted to key themes for improving student supports and outcomes that rose to the top of the list based on 2023 Fall Regional meeting feedback, including: attendance and chronic absenteeism, declining enrollment, mental health, special education, early learning, literacy, extended learning opportunities, and workforce needs and challenges.

Appendix

April 26, 2024 OASE Statewide Off-the-Record Meeting Summary, Cont'd.

Each table then spent time in small groups discussing and reporting out on two questions:

- What are the top three student support issues COSA should prioritize in 2025?
- Describe what each issue is, and what the focus of each priority should be.

Each table discussion was robust and offered great insights into the challenges and opportunities COSA members and statewide leaders are facing in these moments. The COSA team took extensive notes and collected comprehensive feedback for review from the conversations to help frame future work. And most importantly, it became readily apparent in these table discussions that the issues facing our public schools and challenges in meeting the needs of all students were very similar, if not identical, no matter the size of the district or the region of the state it was located in.

The April 26th meeting closed by sharing a proposed schedule of workgroup meetings beginning in May and concluding in September with recommendations to help frame COSA's 2025 Legislative Agenda.

Appendix

COSA Funding Workgroup

[May 21, 2024 Agenda](#)

- What is 'Current Service Level' and Why Is It So Important? (Morgan Allen, COSA)
- State School Fund Overview and Information on Weights (Mike Wiltfong, ODE)

[June 7, 2024 Agenda](#)

- EI/ECSE (Early Intervention/Early Childhood Education) and RIS (Regional Inclusive Services – Program Overviews and Funding Challenges. (Dana Hepper, Children's Institute; Superintendent Mark Mulvihill, Intermountain ESD; Superintendent Paul Andrews, HDESD)
- Office of School Facilities and the OSCIM Bond Matching Grant (Michael Elliot, ODE)

[July 31, 2024 Agenda](#)

- COSA K-12 Funding Workgroup Facilitators (Superintendent Darin Drill, Superintendent Ryan Noss, Superintendent Candace Pelt Perez, and Superintendent Aaron Duff) shared three proposed Workgroup Findings and Goals centered around: K-12 Funding Adequacy, Special Education Funding, and School Facilities and led a large group conversation to provide initial reactions and feedback.
- The workgroup convened jointly with the COSA Student Supports Workgroup where both COSA workgroups provided updates to members and engaged in small group discussions and jigsaw activities to gather feedback and input from participants in both workgroups.

[August 22, 2024 Agenda](#)

- Workgroup members approved the COSA K-12 Funding Workgroup Findings and Goals.
- Superintendent Darin Drill, Superintendent Ryan Noss, and Superintendent Candace Pelt Perez led a presentation presenting five proposed workgroup recommendations.
- After reviewing the proposed workgroup recommendations, workgroup members engaged in breakout group discussions and reported out their feedback and proposed edits, changes or additions to the list.

[September 10, 2024 Agenda](#)

- After reviewing the proposed recommendations, workgroup members engaged in a large group discussion to provide feedback and suggest changes, edits, or additions to the proposal. After workgroup discussion, five proposed recommendations were approved by a consensus of the members.

Appendix

COSA Student Supports Workgroup

[May 21, 2024 Agenda](#)

- Student Mental and Behavioral Health (Kati Moseley, ODE)
- Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism (Superintendent Heidi Sipe, Umatilla SD and Parasa Chanramy, COSA)

[June 7, 2024 Agenda](#)

- Special Education (Dr. Danielle Hudson, Clatskanie SD; Dr. Candace Pelt-Perez, Central Linn SD, and Parasa Chanramy, COSA)
- Summer Learning (Dr. Tricia Mooney, Hermiston SD and Parasa Chanramy, COSA)

[July 31, 2024 Agenda](#)

- Learning Acceleration (Superintendent Michael Carter, Lake County SD and Parasa Chanramy, COSA)
- Educator Workforce (Dr. Krista Parent, COSA and Parasa Chanramy, COSA)
- Conducted a jigsaw activity to review a working draft of priority issue areas and initial recommendations.
- Received an update from the COSA Funding Workgroup regarding their initial recommendations.

[August 22, 2024 Agenda](#)

- Early Learning (David Mandell, DELC and Lauren Sigman, DELC)
- Early Literacy (Angelica Cruz, ODE)
- Continued jigsaw activity to further refine and prioritize the Student Supports Workgroup's goals and recommendations.

[September 10, 2024 Agenda](#)

- Received an update from the COSA Funding Workgroup regarding their final recommendations for 2025 priorities.
- Completed a prioritization exercise to narrow down the Student Supports Workgroup's priorities based on what would have the highest impact on students, and what has the highest level of support, or momentum, as we prepare for the 2025 Legislative Session.