OUR VOICES
OUR SCHOOLS

2008-2009 Education Report to Oregonians
In 2004, the Chalkboard Project was formed by Oregon’s most influential charitable foundations with a mission to make our K-12 schools among the nation’s top 10 in student achievement. Our research-based approach, non-partisan action plan, and early results in pilot projects across the state recently led the Statesman Journal to endorse Chalkboard as “the best, clearest path for improving K-12 schools.”

We’re on our way. But we can’t do it without you. Speak out for change.
Oregonians are independent by nature, yet often share core values. Foundations for a Better Oregon, Chalkboard’s parent organization, was formed with a desire to preserve the quality of life Oregonians value.

There has never been a more important time to focus on improving Oregon’s K-12 public education system to assure student achievement and support high-quality teaching and learning. Chalkboard began as an effort to hear directly from Oregonians. Now, our collaboration and commitment have grown in order to ensure Oregon ranks as one of the top 10 education systems in the United States.

The Chalkboard Project provides a unique opportunity to support achievement for all Oregon students. We welcome you into Chalkboard’s story and invite your involvement in 2009.

Orcilia Zúñiga Forbes, Board Chair

Since Chalkboard’s inception in 2004, we have witnessed the powerful effect an independent voice can have in raising key issues for Oregon’s public schools. By commissioning unbiased research and comprehensive public opinion studies, Chalkboard has raised the bar about what we know about K-12 education—all while listening and learning from those on the front lines. But we see even more urgency today than we did when we first formed.

Among the 50 states, Oregon is currently about average in terms of student achievement. When it comes to the big issues, we have a policy process that is largely broken. Oregon has a record of pushing for increased funding while failing to recognize the quality we want and the accountability we need.

Chalkboard’s evidence has brought us to a crossroads: Does Oregon continue to be satisfied with the status quo or do we invest in interventions that are proven to increase student achievement?

If we choose the latter, then now is the time to invest in K-1 class size reduction. Now is the time to inspire teachers to stay in the professional by expanding career opportunities. Now is the time to make reading tutors available to K-3 students. Now is the time to shrink the achievement gap and ensure that every child is afforded an equal playing field of quality to define their future. Now is the time. Oregon cannot afford to wait.

The six foundations behind Chalkboard have given Oregon a unique gift—nothing else quite like it exists in this country. We must use this opportunity to increase student achievement and make the future better for our children. We must make a promise to every child in this state that their public school education will be high quality, accountable for their learning, and paid for in a stable and adequate way. It is certainly the promise I want for my baby girl.

Chalkboard has identified a proven path to get us there. We need your help. We can only make change with the support of a growing chorus of voices across this state who wish for something better and who have the will to make it happen.

Sue Hildick, President
Chalkboard was founded with a goal of not just improving K-12 education in Oregon, but making our public schools among the nation’s top 10 in student achievement. We conducted the largest statewide poll ever done on K-12 education issues. We published reports on best practices for raising student achievement. We issued an Action Plan for reaching our legislative goals. But despite Chalkboard’s progress, the situation has only become more urgent.

Oregon has one of the most unstable school funding systems in the country. But even with adequate, secure funding, the public is skeptical about whether the state is capable of improving our schools. High teacher turnover, increased dropout rates and a persistent achievement gap between minority students and their peers are just a few of the challenges Oregon must meet to be one of the best.

HERE’S THE GOOD NEWS:
Chalkboard is committed to the long-term goal of raising student achievement in Oregon, and we have learned how to get the job done.

What makes Chalkboard unique? Funded by six of Oregon’s most influential charitable foundations, we decided early on that our approach would be committed to neutrality and independence. We are not a special interest group but a general interest group representing all Oregonians.

Oregonians have voiced the most urgent priorities for strengthening our schools: quality teachers, good readers, parental involvement, funding stability and budget accountability. These priorities are the foundation for Chalkboard’s work in advocating for legislation, funding grants and financing quality independent projects. By combining the spirit, values and beliefs of Oregonians with the hard data of the most relevant research, we are on the right path to raising student achievement and improving K-12 public education in Oregon.

Better schools mean a better-educated workforce, better jobs and a thriving economy. The result is lower crime rates, stronger communities and improved quality of life for all.

As relentless and passionate as we are about moving our agenda forward, we can’t do it without you. Chalkboard is lighting the way. Now it’s your turn. It’s time to use your voice in support of the kind of K-12 schools our communities deserve.
For years, Oregon’s most influential foundations had been spending millions on education reform by fighting individual battles with isolated results. Frustrated by the slow pace of change that failed to impact the system statewide, they decided to come together to form an independent, nonpartisan, charitable organization for Oregon schools. The Chalkboard Project was founded in 2004 on the idea of a bottoms-up, grassroots engagement with Oregonians to raise student achievement in grades K-12.

In its first two years, Chalkboard collected data nationally and internationally on best practices in raising student achievement. We had over 400 conversations with citizens in every one of Oregon’s 36 counties to learn what priorities they have for Oregon schools. Our independent approach won over skeptical editorial boards across the state, and our June 2005 Action Plan emerged from this intersection of public will and best practices.

Chalkboard’s work continues on three fronts—advocacy, independent projects and public education—to promote teacher quality, accountability, early learning and parental involvement. We have created quality tools, like Open Books, to better inform the public about exactly what’s going on in Oregon schools and how education dollars are being spent.

We are committed to tackling the difficult, often-contentious work of education reform and confronting the system’s most deeply rooted problems head on. Our goal is to be the voice of Oregonians, to advocate for higher student achievement in K-12 education on your behalf, and to help facilitate the urgent change you demand for our children and for our state.

CHALKBOARD’S FOUNDERS

Chalkboard is Foundations for a Better Oregon’s only current initiative. The foundations are committed to neutrality and independence, a comprehensive understanding of the problems and solutions surrounding our K-12 public schools, engaging Oregonians in genuine dialogue, a long-term perspective, and ultimately facilitating solutions.
One of the biggest challenges facing our schools is that Oregon loses more than a third of our new teachers within the first five years. Research clearly states that teaching quality is the most effective and efficient way to boost student achievement.

On average, students taught by our most effective teachers are up to one grade level ahead of their peers academically. 75% of Oregonians say the best system for teacher career enhancement supports new roles and responsibilities for being leaders and mentors, developing skills, and staying current on the newest teaching methods—not just seniority.

What Is Chalkboard Doing About It?

INDEPENDENT PROJECTS
Chalkboard launched the Creative Leadership Achieves Student Success (CLASS) Project, a pilot program driven by teachers in Forest Grove, Sherwood and Tillamook school districts to raise student achievement by expanding new career and compensation options for teachers. Local staff call CLASS “transformational” because it promotes expanded career paths, professional development, more comprehensive performance evaluations, and new compensation models.

ADVOCACY
In 2007, Chalkboard and partners worked to enact a $5 million Statewide Mentoring Program to provide new teachers and administrators with a high-quality mentor for two years. Chalkboard will pursue quality professional development and support for the teacher and administrator mentoring program to be continued in the 2009 Legislature. Chalkboard applauds the State Board for making Educator Quality one of their six strategic priorities and for adopting quality standards for professional development.

What Can You Do About It?

★ TAKE 9 MINUTES to watch a YouTube video about how the CLASS project could transform the teaching profession.
★ CONTACT YOUR LOCAL TEACHER/ADMINISTRATOR Say thanks for all they do for Oregon’s kids, ask how you can help in the classroom or support the school.
★ CONTACT YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVES and tell them you support teacher/administrator mentoring and professional development.
★ JOIN CHALKBOARD’S CITIZENS’ CORPS and serve as a community ambassador to support your teachers and encourage them to stick with the profession.

Sherwood Teachers Union President Terrel Smith has been committed to raising student achievement as a teacher for 30 years. His pivotal role in developing the CLASS Project is inspired in part by his daughter, Jennica, a second year elementary teacher.

“By focusing on working together as professional teams of teachers, we’re identifying effective practices and then replicating them throughout the district to increase every student’s success. Our ultimate intention is that teachers are excited about teaching and our kids are excited about learning.”

TEACHER ADVOCATE: Terrel Smith & Jennica Smith
Oregon’s K-1 classes average 25 students and are among the top five largest in the country.

Tennessee and other states have shown that kindergarten and first grade students in small classes of 15 outperformed their peers in regular classes of 22. More importantly, those gains persisted through eighth grade. Targeted investments in critical early age initiatives are particularly important in tackling the achievement gap between Black and White students. Chalkboard’s research shows that the gap is relatively unchanged from third grade to graduation, suggesting that Black and White students are learning at the same pace. Schools must reach these children by third grade.

What Can You Do About It?

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD members, administrators and union representatives and tell them you want your children and grandchildren in grades K-1 to have smaller class sizes.

EMAIL YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS and let them know you support smaller K-1 classes.

TAKE CHALKBOARD’S LATEST PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY and voice your views about K-1 class size at our web site, ChalkboardProject.org

VISIT OUR WEB SITE CHALKBOARDPROJECT.ORG for the latest legislative updates on the K-1 class size initiative.

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What Is Chalkboard Doing About It?

ADVOCACY
In 2007, state legislators included early childhood initiatives as an approved use for a $260 million school improvement fund. Chalkboard will continue to advocate research and best practices by reducing K-1 class size and provide reading support so all kids read by grade 3.

INDEPENDENT PROJECTS
Chalkboard is investigating African American student achievement in Multnomah County in partnership with the Black Parent Initiative to see which schools are doing the best job of closing the achievement gap. Next up: Hispanic student achievement statewide.

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SPEAK OUT for K-1 LEARNING

Chalkboard’s research has found very few gold standards when it comes to improving student achievement. However, focusing on our earliest learners—those children just entering the school system—is one consistently proven method for raising the bar.

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EDUCATION ADVOCATE: Eduardo Angulo

Woodburn parent Eduardo Angulo is a longtime education advocate. Back in Los Angeles, he worked in juvenile probation camps and with gang-affected youth in the volatile Watts district.

“When I came to Oregon fifteen years ago, I started asking, ‘How many Latino and Black kids are going to college?’ It was horrible. I knew we had to do something about it right away.”

Latino students were doing particularly poorly in Eduardo’s Salem-Keizer school district, where only 20 percent of Latino students in tenth grade met state standards in reading in 2005, compared to 53 percent of White students. Eduardo helped found the Salem-Keizer Coalition of Equality, a community group that promotes equality in education. The coalition has fought for smaller kindergarten and first grade classes so teachers can give more personalized attention to students.

“The majority of poor and Latino students come into kindergarten one, two or even three years behind. They need a lot of extra help at the beginning. If we can get kids up to grade level by third grade, we can eliminate half of the achievement gap and dropout rate.”
Tutored students read more proficiently than approximately 75 percent of their untutored peers. Oregonians are alarmed that schools are failing to provide students with the most basic tool for success. Most say we must provide tutors for K-3 students who aren’t reading at grade level to raise student achievement.

In August 2008, Chalkboard commissioned new research that underlines the urgency of solving the reading crisis in Oregon. It showed that low-achieving students are unlikely to ever meet state standards, even though they are often the ones making the biggest learning gains in school. By ensuring that all Oregon students are proficient readers by fourth grade, we are building a case for future success.

What Is Chalkboard Doing About It?

ADVOCACY
In 2007, the Oregon legislature put reading tutors on the list of initiatives school districts could undertake with $260 million in school improvement money. Chalkboard will ask that reading tutors be a district requirement.

GRANTS
In partnership with Libraries of Eastern Oregon and Tutor.com, Chalkboard is providing free online tutors to K-12 students. The service is available at 51 eastern Oregon libraries and online at LibrariesOfEasternOregon.org.

What Can You Do About It?

★ FIND OUT IF THE LITTLEST LEARNERS IN YOUR LIFE — children, grandchildren, nephews and neighbors in grades K-3—are reading at grade level. If not, offer to read with them one-on-one for an hour each week.

★ CONTACT YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS and let them know you support additional reading tutors for grades K-3.

★ CONTACT SMART (Start Making a Reader Today) at GetSmartOregon.org and volunteer to read with students at your local school.

★ PURCHASE BOOKS from the SMART bookshelf at Powells.com. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to SMART.

STUDENT ADVOCATE:
Shereé Bull

Shereé Bull is a senior at Portland’s Jefferson High School. She is president of the Black Student Union, vice president of the student body and takes additional classes at Portland Community College. But despite her own academic success, it’s been disheartening to watch her peers fall behind over the years.

“Kids can get swept away in a corner when they’re not doing well in school, but we all have potential. When kids fall through the cracks, it means our teachers have to teach students who are at different levels. If those kids got help early on, that wouldn’t happen.”
The biggest obstacle to the success of K-12 schools is a lack of parental support. Chalkboard is committed to working with Oregon school districts to facilitate the most effective ways to involve parents. This means realistic assistance for hard-to-reach families and user-friendly resources to ensure that all parents know what to expect from their schools, what their children should be learning, and how they can help get them there.

What Is Chalkboard Doing About It?

ADVOCACY
Chalkboard wants each school district to report parental involvement as part of Oregon’s statewide report card.

INDEPENDENT PROJECTS
Chalkboard’s Running Start is a set of online materials, including outreach plans, aimed at facilitating communication between schools and parents. Chalkboard partnered with Libraries of Eastern Oregon and Tutor.com to provide free online tutoring services to K-12 students.

Chalkboard’s technology grants help fund software that enables parents and teachers to communicate through the Internet. Parents have instant access to attendance records, homework assignments, test scores, grades and more.

What Can You Do About It?

★ OFFER TO BABYSIT for neighbors, coworkers or other time-strapped single parents so they can attend their next parent-teacher conference, PTA meeting or school event.

★ IF YOU ARE AN EMPLOYER, allow workers occasional time during the work day to attend school conferences or volunteer at their children’s schools, or check their child’s progress on the school website.

★ IF YOU ARE BILINGUAL, volunteer to be a translator for parent-teacher conferences at schools in your area.

SPEAK OUT for PARENTS

While most Oregon parents want to participate in their child’s education, work schedules, financial pressure, and language and cultural barriers often stand in their way. The result is a growing sentiment of distrust between schools and parents.

Annette Hunt is a single parent living in the Portland metro area. Today, she is studying to become an accountant while supporting and raising her twelve-year-old daughter, Troi. But the path to get here wasn’t easy.

As a child, Annette never knew what it was like to have an adult care about how she did in school. Her grades suffered, she dropped out before graduation, and eventually landed in prison. It turned out to be the wake-up call she needed.

Annette fought hard to stabilize her life following her release. After her daughter was born, she passed the GED and made a point to become actively involved in Troi’s education.

“Do I have a right to complain if I’m not involved and others are making the decisions?” she says. “It makes a world of difference for her to know people care about whether or not she’s smart.”

Annette meets her daughter after school most days so they can do their homework together. She also checks in with Troi’s teacher twice a week to help her stay on track. And it’s working. Now Troi tells her mom she wants to go to college, too.
Are you getting your money’s worth?

Oregon has one of the most unstable school funding systems in the country. When schools do get additional resources, as with the $260 million school improvement fund in 2007, the state is inclined to pass accountability on to local districts. Oregonians want stronger state leadership and statewide accountability. Chalkboard launched the OpenBooks website to help Oregonians see where their dollars go. Scholastic Administrator called it “one of the top 10 radical ideas at work in education.”

What Is Chalkboard Doing About It?

> OPEN BOOKS

OpenBooksProject.org reveals up-to-date school district spending on everything from average class sizes and test scores to food services and per-student expenses for Oregon’s 198 school districts.

Statewide spending on district business operations is higher than the national average. Chalkboard partnered with the Oregon Association of School Business Officials to review business operations in five Oregon school districts.

> ADVOCACY

Chalkboard helped create Oregon’s first-ever rainy day fund for public schools supported by Oregon’s corporate kicker tax refund, and will continue to push for more revenue. Chalkboard will advocate to reform school transportation spending based on an Oregon Dept, of Education study of our current system.

What Can You Do About It?

> VISIT OPEN BOOKS — OpenBooksProject.org and see for yourself how Oregon’s school dollars are being spent. Check out how your community’s school spending compares to other districts in the state.

> EMAIL STATE LEGISLATORS and ask them to support best business practice reviews as well as a process for sharing best practices across the state.

> CONTACT YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD members, administrators and union representatives and tell them that evaluation of student performance should be based on academic growth from year to year rather than test scores.

Oregonians want better schools, but Chalkboard’s research tells us they don’t think a blank check is the answer. Currently, half of the state’s General Fund is spent on K-12 education, but more than 40 percent of Oregonians don’t believe schools are spending their money efficiently.

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Chalkboard can get us there. But not without your help. Join our Citizens’ Corps and use your voice to support Oregon schools.

**WHAT IS CHALKBOARD’S CITIZENS’ CORPS?**
A 500-plus strong group of concerned citizens around the state of Oregon who support Chalkboard’s long-term K-12 education reform efforts. Volunteers include parents, teachers, businesspeople, civic volunteers and leaders, retirees, philanthropists and students from nearly all of Oregon’s 36 counties.

**WHAT DOES THE CITIZENS’ CORPS DO?**
Members help promote Chalkboard’s school improvement proposals in their local communities through speaking engagements, guest columns and letters in local newspapers, participation in Chalkboard print advertising, and calling, writing and meeting with legislators. The Citizens’ Corps is our eyes and ears in local communities, and we rely on our members to keep us aware of local opportunities to connect and inform fellow citizens. Members do not do any fundraising.

**HOW CAN I JOIN?**
You can join by emailing us at info@ChalkboardProject.org, calling us at 1-877-YOURK12, or by visiting our web site: ChalkboardProject.org. We’ll send you the latest edition of Chalk Talk and include you in our growing list of supporters.

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Now is the time for Oregonians to speak out in support of raising student achievement in K-12 public education. This isn’t simply about people who have kids in school—it’s about all of us, and about Oregon’s future. Chalkboard has made real progress, but the job is too big for any one organization to take on alone.

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**5 Ways to Take 5 Minutes to Speak Out for Change**

- **SIGN UP FOR OUR MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER, Chalk Talk at ChalkboardProject.org.**
- **SEND A GROUP EMAIL to your Oregon friends and family members introducing them to the Chalkboard Project. Include a link to ChalkboardProject.org.**
- **TAKE OUR LATEST PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY at ChalkboardProject.org.**
- **FILL OUT THE ATTACHED POSTCARD and become a member of Chalkboard’s Citizens’ Corps.**
- **PASS THIS REPORT ON to a local parent, teacher, principal or elected official with your endorsement.**

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**CITIZEN CORPS MEMBER:**
**Steve Corey**

Pendleton businessman Steve Corey has been an active member of Chalkboard’s Citizens’ Corps since 2004. As Chair of the board of The Oregon Community Foundation (OCF), Steve was an integral part of the leadership council that led to the founding of Chalkboard.

‘Education has always been number one on OCF’s list of priorities for Oregon. That’s why Chalkboard is one of the most valuable investments OCF has made. I want to make sure that people at the grassroots level know how important education is—not only for their own families but also for the community. Strong schools mean a better economy and a better community for all of us.’
what it means: do n't believe everything you read . schools that receive low ratings may in fact be achieving the greatest learning gain s . advise teachers about academic progress from year to year . not all students score on standardized tests .

class size
75% say reducing class sizes for kindergarten and first grade from year to year is the best indicator of whether students are learning .

what it means: there is no evidence that smaller class sizes improve learning .

career opportunities
59% of Oregonians say teachers should be made individually from year to year is the best indicator of whether students are learning .

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Our research at a glance

our research at a glance

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HOW OUR RESEARCH IS USED

our research is used

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Now is the time to speak out for our children, our schools and our state. Together, we can raise student achievement in Oregon and make our K-12 schools among the nation’s best. Join us.

**BECOME A CITIZENS’ CORPS VOLUNTEER**

Chalkboard’s Citizen Corps is 500+ members strong, including Oregonians from the coast to the eastern plains. Members support Chalkboard’s school improvement proposals in their communities and help connect us to local opportunities to engage fellow citizens.

Join by calling us at (503) 542-4325 or emailing us at info@chalkboardproject.org. You may also join online by visiting: [ChalkboardProject.org](http://ChalkboardProject.org)