

## Improving Public Education: 2012 Priorities

Stand for Children believes all children, regardless of their background, should receive a quality public education. Education is the key that unlocks the door to future success in life. Many children are learning in vibrant, well managed schools filled with skilled and supported educators. But there are troubling trends in Oregon.

Our **achievement gap** is not closing. English Language Learners, students of color and low-income students are less likely to graduate from high school and move on to higher education. This achievement gap, researchers say, has the same impact on our state and community as a long-term recession. **Education funding** is inadequate and unstable. Oregon spends fewer dollars per student today than in 1990. **Teachers and principals** are not receiving the support and meaningful feedback they deserve. Less than half of teachers receive mentoring or coaching. Finally, Oregon does not have a clear **plan to identify and intervene in struggling schools**.

We call on Oregonians and state leaders to prioritize these issues and tackle them head-on. We want to work collaboratively to find solutions to these challenging issues. Here are the areas we think need the focus of our community and the leadership of our elected officials:

- **Closing the Achievement Gap**  
English Language Learners, students of color, and low-income students account for an increasing share of Oregon's children – more than half. In order to reach our 40-40-20 goal, Oregon needs a targeted strategy to better serve these historically underrepresented and underserved youth. They are currently less likely to graduate from high school, attend college and earn a college degree. These students need and deserve a strong and supportive school community.
- **Creating an excellent system of support for principals and teachers**  
Effectively preparing students for college depends on the interactions teachers and principals have with students on a daily basis. Teachers who work with historically underserved children will need additional time and resources to help their students make the significant learning gains they need. A strong, well run Department of Education will be critical to creating a comprehensive and effective system of supports for principals and teachers.
- **Identifying, supporting and intervening when schools/districts struggle**  
Every child deserves to attend a well-run, well-funded school that is preparing students for college. Parents and community need access to clear, comprehensible information on whether their local school meets those expectations (the school report card). Community members, partners and organizations should play a critical role in helping to make needed improvements and should be meaningfully engaged in turnaround plans and actions. When schools struggle, there should be a plan for district and state support and intervention.
- **Improving school funding**  
Oregon schools are underfunded. Our large class sizes and short school year are unacceptable. For nearly ten years, Oregon schools have been receiving a decreasing share of state general fund revenues. We know there are few viable options for new revenue. The legislature needs work strategically to improve the stability and adequacy of school funding.

