
SLIDE 1:

We need to put pressure on our lawmakers at the state level, to **fully fund the Quality Education Model (QEM)** this year. According to the [2024 QEM Report](#), we need the legislature to allocate \$13.526 billion from the General Fund (combined with the Student Success Act funding) to provide a quality education over the next two years. Many of us have been hearing from our legislators that we can't ask for the full QEM and should advocate for the Governor's \$11.3 billion school funding request. But during the last biennium (2023), the legislature told advocates that they could **not** ask for the full QEM amount, effectively letting them off the hook. "We gave you what you asked for", they said. In Portland, that left PPS with **\$33 million in cuts last year**. The Governor's current Budget would mean **another \$40 million in cuts to our schools this year**. We will all feel this.

SLIDE 2:

Portland Public Schools were pretty darn good prior to 1990. At that time, approximately 65% of PPS's funding came from local property taxes and the remaining 35% came from the state. In 1990, 3 wealthy anti-tax advocates campaigned for what became known as Ballot Measure 5. It passed with support from 52% of Portland area voters.

Measure 5 significantly reduced public school funding for PPS by drastically limiting the amount of property taxes that could be levied for schools. This meant that the state's General Fund became the main source for funding public schools in Oregon. Funding essentially flip-flopped.

SLIDE 3:

So, let's look at what that funding looks like - where does it come from?
The Funding: Here's what makes up the different sources of funding...

*and I do want to point out that *each district keeps their local funding in their own accounts. The state then decides the formula number based on the info of what each local district has in local funding, so the formula is different depending on the district. (Each district therefore has a different per student contribution from the state.) Some districts rely completely on state funding, and some districts don't rely on it at all.

The Decisions: this is where decision-making happens at 3 different levels... The closest to home are the decisions being made at the building level. This would be how to best use the funds available, and there are very specific guidelines for most of it, but we won't go into that now. The next level would be the decisions being made at the district level. This takes into consideration how to best allocate funds to run the district as well as how to fund our school buildings. Again - there are many factors that go into that, that we can table for tonight. And lastly, the umbrella that we all fall under, is the state level. These decisions take into consideration the needs of the entire state - not just for education, which will bring us to the next slide, but first notice that all the decisions, plus local bonds & levies, have an effect on the School Day Experience. (*point out that local bonds and levies are completely outside of the state and local funding. Not all districts have pass bonds and levies.)

SLIDE 4:

Remember when I mentioned Measure 5, and how it shifted the proportion of funding coming from the state versus local funding? What it did was significantly reduce public school funding for PPS by drastically limiting the amount of property taxes that could be levied for schools. This meant that the state's **General Fund** became the main source for funding public schools in Oregon. Which means what?

Now schools have to heavily compete with every other government service that's also funded by the legislature including over 80 state agencies that support transportation, public safety and the environment, among many other services.

SLIDE 5:

Let's take a look at this graphic...

- We start with the State's entire budget, this includes all expenses to run this state. (FULL PIE)
- Then we pull out the piece of pie that is state funding for our schools. (SOLID PIE PIECE)

- From that, we divide up the pie pieces into slivers that represent the different districts. There are 197 districts in Oregon. (SLIVERED PIE PIECE)
- From there we pull out our district. This is PPS. (SMALL SLIVER)
- This sliver we take our PPS sliver of state funding and combine it with our local taxes. From that they apply a dollar per-student formula in order to have a base amount for every student. (SLICED UP SLIVER)
- Once we get to the school level we are dealing with the base funding that every student gets, which is then supplemented with equity funds, in order to accommodate the needs of each specific school community, and also with other funding that might apply, such as SpEd and Title funding. And that becomes the budget that our school is working with.

SLIDE 6:

Now, let's get into the QEM, or Quality Education Model:

In Nov 2000, 66% of Oregon voters approved Ballot Measure 1, which amended the Oregon Constitution to **require** that the legislature fully fund our public schools and write a report outlining how those schools are fully funded or, if not funded, identify the reasons for not funding schools.

Ballot Measure 1 also created The Quality Education Commission (QEC) which is assigned the task of determining (air quotes) **“the amount of monies sufficient to ensure that the state’s system of kindergarten through grade 12 public education meets the quality goals.”** But remember the loophole I just mentioned - if they didn't fund the QEM, they just had to submit a report. “We didn't fund the QEM because we didn't fund the QEM.”

Since 2001, the Quality Education Commission has released its QEM report which gives the legislature a target goal to fully fund our schools. And every single biennium, the Joint Education Appropriations Committee has written the Ballot 1 required report telling Oregonians that **it cannot fund the QEM due to lack of revenue in the General Fund**. If you're interest, I can give you talking points for refuting that claim.

SLIDE 7:

As a result, the Oregon Public Schools have been underfunded by over \$22 billion since 2001. That's money our schools needed, but never received. It is the equivalent of every school in Oregon receiving \$800,000 additional dollars every year since 2001. That's an enormous hole - so when we wonder why our schools aren't keeping up, it's because we're miserably behind and unsupported in digging ourselves out.

SLIDE 8:

This is a visual of what that gap in funding looks like, and how the gap is growing.

SLIDE 9:

The 2024 Education Omnibus bill funded a study and report/ recommendations on school funding in Oregon. This is part of an effort to analyze and update Oregon's QEM. They looked not only at the adequacy of funding but the extent to which education investments are going to the kids who need them most in a way that leads to student success.

SLIDE 10:

The House and Senate Education Committees recently received the presentation from the American Institutes for Research (AIR) on the QEM. Not only did AIR's study of the QEM vindicate the commission's prior reports on education funding requirements for Oregon students to receive a quality education, but AIR concluded that the QEM budget recommendations fell **short** of what is actually needed for all students to improve academic outcomes. This is arguably the most important Oregon education story in the past 30 years. We're being told that the QEM is the ideal goal, when even that is too low to make noticeable change in our schools.

So when we're offered \$11.36 Billion, not only should we be demanding QEM, but the state should be paying more attention to what it would ACTUALLY take to properly fund our schools, as shown by the AIR's report, that the state ordered themselves.

SLIDE 11

So what does that look like when our state's revenue comes from taxes, and we depend on 65% of funding to come from the state? These are the issues that need to be addressed and corrected...

- Oregon has an income tax that fluctuates like a roller coaster and is an unstable primary revenue source for funding schools.
- We are one of five states that have no sales tax.
- Measure 5 and 50 capped property taxes.
- Oregon is the only state with a Kicker Credit. The law states that if revenue over a two-year period is at least 2% above what state economists predicted at the start of the budget cycle, the surplus must be sent to taxpayers. The majority of Oregon's kicker credits go to wealthy taxpayers, which can worsen wealth inequality, and does nothing for our schools.

The only way to reform our tax system to increase revenue is through a statewide ballot measure voted on by all Oregonians or for a legislative Supermajority to pass the legislation. So, right now, our only chance at shifting this abysmal mess is to convince our elected leaders to prioritize public education, and fund it properly, so we can start climbing out of the \$22 Billion dollar hole and off the “worst of education” lists.

SLIDE 12:

So, now what?

Now we do whatever we can to advocate for real funding. Not funding to “current service levels” that will put us back further than we are now, but real funding that will help us start to climb out of the hole. We need to fund to at least QEM!

So, then the question is HOW?

Remember when I pointed out the different levels at which decisions are made? Let's look at that quickly - (CHANGE SLIDE)

SLIDE 13:

We are past the level of advocating at the building level. We are past the point of advocating at the district level. One of the harsh truths learned during the teacher strike is that the district just doesn't have the funds to address the issues our schools are facing, let alone fully fund our schools, which is what's needed to help us climb out of the \$22 BILLION hole. (I'm just going to keep saying that number so it sticks.)

Where does that lead us? Here - at the state level. WE ARE HERE.
(point to the state level box)


Now let's look at a list of things we can do...

SLIDE 14:

On our Vernon PTA website we have a starter page, with basic concepts and resources for getting involved. We have a few action item opportunities coming up here quickly -

- The first is this weekend - there is the first of the Community Budget Hearing Roadshow, with a hearing on 3/22 - **2025 COMMUNITY BUDGET HEARINGS: MARCH 22, GRESHAM at Mt. Hood Community College. Bring signs to make your presence known!**
- The Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Education will have a public hearing on the budget proposal specific to the State School Fund on Thursday, March 27 at 1pm and you can testify, in person or in written testimony.
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- In April, we are organizing a Parent Lobby Day in Salem on Wednesday April 30th. Parents, caregivers, and community advocates from across Oregon are heading there to advocate for fully funded and equitable public schools. This is a powerful opportunity to **build community, meet with legislators, and ensure our voices are heard** for the future of Oregon's children.

This event is organized by [Oregon PTA](#) and [Community and Parents for Public Schools \(CPPS\)](#) with support from parent and community organizations statewide.

On our website there is a link to register for the event, and then more info will be shared.  RSVP here: https://bit.ly/OregonPTA_LobbyDay

All this info and more is on the Advocacy page of our PTA website. What I do want to reiterate is that now is the time. We're facing unprecedented threats to education from the federal government, and PPS is facing a \$40 mil budget cut next year. The only way to change that is to show up in Salem, and send as many letters as possible to our elected leaders. There's really no time to waste. Next, I'm going to pass the meeting off to Ben, so he can discuss what these cuts look like for us here at Vernon.