



Advocate

October 2, 2019

PORTLAND ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS

Renew the Portland Teacher Levy! Yes for Teachers, Yes for Kids

This November, Portland Voters will be asked once again to renew the Teacher Levy. The Levy renews the current rate that has funded an average of 825 teaching positions a year in Portland Public Schools.

It is crucial for our students and our schools that the Levy passes. As educators, we are its best spokespeople. Here is some information to help you talk to community members about the Levy.

Maintains Over 800 Teaching Positions:

Renewal of the levy funds over 800 high quality teaching positions across the District, a third of all teaching positions in PPS.

Funding Programs for a Comprehensive Education:

Levy funds help support a well-rounded program, with enrichments for elementary and middle grades and electives in varied interest areas and disciplines for high school students.

Maintains Current Tax Rate:

This levy is a renewal. Meaning taxpayers would continue paying the same local option tax rate of \$1.99 per \$1,000 assessed value they pay today.

Independent Oversight:

The levy renewal requires independent oversight by the Citizen Budget Review Committee to ensure tax dollars are used for purposes approved by voters.

Want to Learn More? Visit YesForTeachersYesforKids.org

Shaping PPS Priorities for Student Success Act Dollars

Once it's fully implemented, ***the Student Success Act could inject an additional \$39 million dollars a year into PPS.*** The District has to submit its priorities to the state by December 5th, but under terms of the new law the District is required to seek input from PPS educators and staff, as well as historically underserved communities, regarding how PPS should invest these additional resources.

We're going to make sure ***the District gets a clear picture of how educators across PPS think the new funds should be utilized,*** and there are many avenues for providing your input.

Keep in mind that Student Success Act dollars are divided into three "pots." Twenty percent of the funds are going into the Early Learning Account, which will expand Pre-K and other early education initiatives around the state. Thirty percent of the funds are going into the Statewide Initiatives Fund, which will expand statewide nutrition programs, provide new resources for school safety, and fully fund Measure 98's career and technical education programs.

Educators and community members will have a say over the remaining fifty percent of Student Success Act dollars, which will be in the Student Investment Account. These funds have two main purposes:

1. Meet students' mental and behavioral needs;
2. Increase academic achievement and reduce academic disparities for: students of color; students with disabilities; emerging bilingual students; students navigating poverty, homelessness, and foster care; and other students that have historically experienced disparities in our schools.

These funds can be used for anything from reducing class sizes, to increasing offerings needed to create a more well-rounded curriculum, to increasing instructional time, or meeting students' mental and behavioral health needs.

There are so many ways for you to get involved and make your voice heard—now's the time to speak up! Here are a few ways you can participate in the process, but please know we will communicate all opportunities many ways, many times:

In-Person, In Your Building: Sometime after October 16th, your building reps should host a meeting in your building soliciting input from you and your colleagues. Please attend this meeting and let us know what you think is important. We will be compiling everyone's feedback and presenting it to PPS.

PPS Forum for Educators and Staff: Plan on attending the PPS-sponsored forum for PPS staff, including union members in PAT and PFSP. This forum will be held in late October. More details to come.





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Not receiving important PAT updates or has your home email changed? Give us your home email address to receive the latest bargaining information, member benefits, and other news you need.

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PAT Community Forums: PAT will be hosting a series of forums about the Student Success Act and priorities for new funding. Our first event is a Facebook Live forum on Tuesday, October 8th, at 6:30 PM. We are also hosting community-specific events to gather input from our historically underserved communities on Wednesday, October 23rd; Thursday, October 24th; Monday, October 28th; and Tuesday, November 5th, so save these dates (location and more details to follow).

*Please note, **the District** will also be hosting community forums in October and November in conjunction with groups like Stand for Children. We need to make sure this process is driven by authentic community concerns, not the priorities of corporate education reformers.*

Online: PPS will be launching a survey to gather input throughout October. Please fill it out so that we ensure educators are part of the process.

The new funding from the Student Success Act couldn't come at a more important time. We have heard from so many of you how challenging this year has been, with so many educators trying to "hang on" with great hopes for next year.

I'm feeling very hopeful for our future, but it's imperative that educators, families, and students help direct the PPS priorities. Please plan on giving input at least once, if not in many ways!

In Solidarity,

Suzanne Cohen
PAT President

Racial Equity Focus: Wilson High School Students Hold Community Conversation to Address Racism and Harassment

On Thursday, September 26th, students from Wilson High School organized a conversation for parents and community members regarding the racism they have experienced on campus. This event was sparked by an OPB article this summer highlighting racism at three PPS high schools. In this article, students reported enduring blatant racism such as, "N-words" carved into desks, swastikas drawn on lockers, native languages being mocked, and tokenism for many students of color. Last year, in response to these incidents, students from the Black Student Union, Muslim Student Association, Asian-Pacific Islander Student Union, Jewish Student Union, and Latinx/Hispanic Student Union organized a walk out and wrote a letter listing several demands.

In preparation for this coming school year, these same student groups organized the September 26th community conversation. First and foremost, they wanted to inform their parents and community members about their experiences. They believe that many families are simply unaware of what's been happening on the predominantly White campus. Students also hoped this event could lead to better transparency and communication between school leadership, the District, and the Wilson community.

Thursday's event was incredibly powerful. One by one, eleven students shared stories of racism, anti-Semitism, shame, fear, and cultural assimilation, forming a sharp, collective account of their experiences. The audience, comprised of parents, community members, Wilson High School administrators, several PPS School Board members, and local media, listened intently to what each student shared.

Nichole Watson, co-chair of the PAT Racial Equity Task Force, helped organize the event and facilitated the conversation. You can read more of the media coverage on the PAT website.

Racial Equity Focus will be an ongoing feature in the Advocate this year. Please contact Nichole Watson, nichole.watson@oregoned.org, for more information or ideas for future items. Nichole is on full-time release this school year, thanks to a one-year grant from the NEA designed to support racial equity organizing like the Wilson High School forum.