



Staff photo by E.J. Harris/East Oregonian  
**Hermiston High School teacher Erika Keefauver passes out worksheets during a Oregon Teacher Pathways class in September in Hermiston.**

## School Success Committee draws up \$3 billion wish list

By **PARIS ACHEN**  
OREGON CAPITAL BUREAU

**SALEM** — In an effort to put more Oregon students on track to graduate, the Legislature’s Joint Committee on School Success has proposed everything from expanding access to preschool to expanding the school year to 180 days.

The committee’s wish list of education reforms totaled 50 and together cost more than \$3 billion, according to rough estimates by the Legislative Fiscal Office. “It just illustrates the need that is out there,” said Rep. Julie Fahey, D-Eugene.

Committee leaders will draft a report on the recommendations by the first day of the legislative session, which begins Jan. 22, said Committee Co-Chair Sen. Arnie Roblan, D-Coos Bay. The report will provide a foundation for later developing policies, a cost containment plan and a spending plan to improve graduation rates and school attendance — measures where Oregon lags behind most of the nation.

The committee is unlikely to offer a legislative spending package equal

to that amount. “We are going to really quickly have to start thinking about how to prioritize all of the things on this spreadsheet,” Fahey said. “My prioritization personally is going to be what has the biggest bang for buck in terms of increased student outcomes ... and then what is the best return on investment for our taxpayer dollars.”

Investment in early learning typically delivers the strongest results in overall educational outcomes, said Michael Griffith of the Education Commission of the States who spoke to the committee Thursday night, Dec. 13.

Sen. Kathleen Taylor, D-Portland, pushed back on the idea of prioritizing the recommendations. “If we want to see the outcomes ... I don’t see how we are going to have these great improvements without doing basically all of this,” Taylor said.

Rep. Greg Smith, R-Hepner, said the committee needs to craft a long-term vision for what they want a prized educator and prized student to look like and draft legislation to gradually accomplish that goal.

## ‘Tis the season of giving (and receiving)

Bill Belichick is the National Football League’s version of the Grinch. The head coach of the New England Patriots recently said Christmas is very inconvenient — coming in the middle of the football season.

Whatever. I enjoy the Christmas season — the festive music, holiday parties, tasty treats and the approaching NFL postseason.

But mostly, I like to give. I love finding the perfect gift for those that are special in my life. I enjoy seeing people open a gift I chose especially for them or hearing them share about what it means to them.

One thing I purchased/created for my mom this year was a special Christmas ornament. Since John and I only have canine kids, my mommy is grandma to Lucifer and the General.

I found an ornament that had a picture frame opening and underneath is written, “Grandkids.” I decided to alter it to say, “Granddogs.”

I decided it would be best to sand

down the raised letters before writing “dogs.” How appropriate that I ended up using our doggie pedicure nail grinder — it worked perfectly. I can only imagine the look on grandma’s face when she opened it.

In addition to giving, I also like to receive. When the package came from my parents last week, I rifled through the box. My mom had hinted about sending money as one of our gifts.

I look at monetary presents as an opportunity to purchase something that I may not otherwise buy. Since I still had some shopping to do on Amazon, I wanted to know how much I might have in case something caught my eye.

I found two identical gifts in the box. I told John I suspected they contained checks for each of us and suggested that we open them. He was more than happy to take a peek.

My parents enjoy knowing what we buy with our present money. The first year, we pooled our money and

bought a flat screen TV. Last year, we spent half of it on heavy-duty dog harnesses (and I also purchased some titanium earrings and John got some vinyl records).

While I have yet to spend this year’s gift money, John ordered a really nice Hamilton Beach electric countertop stand mixer. I don’t think my folks will be too upset that he already spent the money. He promptly used it to make several dozen cookies, which were shipped off to them the next morning.

Despite Grinch Belichick’s sentiments about the holiday season, I’m looking forward to the regular season wrapping up. While my friends that are Seahawks fans are still on the edge of their seats, my Rams and Saints have already punched their tickets to the postseason.

*Tammy Malgesini is the community editor. Her column, Inside my Shoes, includes general musings about life. Contact her at malgesini@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4539.*



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