2027 Session Proposed Legislative Agenda

The 2027 Legislative Session represents a critical juncture for **Salem-Keizer Public Schools (SKPS)** as the district navigates growing student needs, increasing operational costs, and significant budget challenges. The SKPS Board is committed to partnering with legislators, education stakeholders, and community members to advance policies that strengthen public education, expand educational opportunities, and improve outcomes for all students.

Topic 1	Modernize Oregon's K-12 Funding System
Description	Oregon's K-12 funding system was largely designed more than three decades ago and has not evolved to meet the needs of today's students, schools, and communities. The state's approach to determining educational adequacy and distributing resources has become increasingly disconnected from the actual costs of delivering educational services and the needs of today's students while decades of incremental policy changes have added complexity without addressing underlying structural challenges. A comprehensive modernization effort should evaluate both how Oregon defines an adequately funded education system and how resources are distributed among school districts. Sustainable reform will require a thoughtful and systemic approach rather than isolated adjustments to individual funding weights or formula components.
Impact on SKPS	As one of Oregon's largest school districts, SKPS serves a diverse student population with complex needs including poverty, multilingual education, special education, and mental health. While incremental funding adjustments may provide temporary relief, they do not address the structural mismatch between educational costs and available resources. Modernizing Oregon's funding system is critical to ensuring that resources follow student needs and that districts serving concentrations of poverty are not disadvantaged by outdated funding assumptions.

	One notable example is Oregon's poverty measure, which has been widely criticized for failing to accurately capture the number of students experiencing poverty. As a result, many high-poverty districts, including Salem-Keizer, may not receive funding that fully reflects the level of student need. In the 2026 recalculation, the formula's estimated that the count of students in poverty in Salem-Keizer fell from 6,553 to 4,696, resulting in an estimated mid-year revenue reduction of approximately $14 million. This example illustrates how reliance on outdated measurement methodologies can create significant funding volatility and inequitable resource distribution.
Proposed Policy Statement(s)	The Board urges the legislature to create a statewide School Funding Modernization Commission to evaluate and update Oregon's school funding system. The commission should engage wide range of stakeholders including educators, families, business leaders, policymakers, and community members and operate under clearly defined legislative timelines and deliverables designed to improve transparency, equity, adequacy, stability, and sustainability. The modernization effort should: ● Review and update the state's measure and method of educational adequacy. ● Review and modernize the State School Fund distribution formula, including, but not limited to, ○ Revising Oregon's poverty measure and poverty weight. ○ Addressing structural funding issues associated with the 11% special education funding cap. ○ Reviewing funding mechanisms for High-Cost Disability services and other student support services.

Topic 2	Protect and Strengthen K-12 Funding
Background	School districts across Oregon are facing growing financial pressures as increasing student needs and expanding service expectations continue to outpace available resources. Recent federal reductions to Medicaid and SNAP have further increased demands on schools and community partners, while state and local resources remain constrained.

Impact on SKPS	To preserve current student programs and services in the 2027-28 school year, SKPS anticipates an expenditure growth of nearly 11%. It is important to note that while school districts develop annual budgets, the state calculates the Current Service Level (CSL) cost estimate for the entire biennium. CSL represents the funding level for the biennium that the Oregon Department of Education determines is necessary to preserve current educational programs and services, not to expand them. Even if CSL is fully funded, SKPS anticipates the need for continued cost reductions and operational efficiencies to maintain long-term fiscal sustainability. However, funding below CSL would require SKPS to make deeper budget reductions, increasing the impacts on educational programs, staffing, and student services in both years of the biennium.
Proposed Policy Statement(s)	The Board calls on the legislature to fully fund the Current Service Level (CSL). CSL should be viewed as the minimum funding threshold needed to maintain educational services rather than a measure of educational adequacy. The Board also supports utilizing the Education Stability Fund for its intended purpose: protecting students and schools during periods of economic uncertainty and providing districts with greater budget stability and planning certainty. Additionally, the Board urges the Legislature to preserve Corporate Activity Tax revenues for Student Success Act investments and other dedicated Pre-K through 12 education purposes.

Topic 3	Address Cost Pressures Outside District Control
Background	School districts have limited ability to control many of the fast-growing costs in their budgets. As retirement costs, unemployment expenses, and other mandated expenditures increase, fewer resources remain available for educators, student support programs, instructional materials, and academic interventions. Addressing these external cost pressures will help districts maintain financial stability, improve long-term planning, and maximize investments in student success.

Impact on SKPS	For example: Salem-Keizer's unemployment costs have risen dramatically, from about $200,000 in the fiscal year 2023 to approximately 3.72 million in the fiscal year 2026. Continued growth of unemployment costs and other outside cost pressures threatens educational investments and the district's long-term financial planning.
Proposed Policy Statement (s)	The Board supports state investments and policy reforms that reduce significant cost pressures on school districts and ensure educational resources remain focused on students. For the 2027 session, the Board specifically supports legislative solutions that reduce the burden of unemployment insurance costs on Oregon school districts.

Topic 4	Strengthen Early Learning and School Readiness System
Description	Access to high-quality early learning opportunities plays a critical role in preparing children for success in kindergarten and beyond. Early Intervention (EI), Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), and early learning and preschool programs can help reduce achievement gaps before students enter school and reduce the need for later academic interventions and support services.
Impact on SKPS	District data suggests an estimated 15% of students enter kindergarten needing additional academic, language, behavioral, or developmental support. There are roughly 2,200 kindergarten students in the 2026-27 school year at SKPS.
Proposed Policy Statements	The Board supports strategic state investments that strengthen Oregon's early learning and school readiness system, including preschool access, Early Intervention (EI), Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), and family engagement programs. The Board encourages policies that improve coordination between early learning providers and K-12 schools, expand access for underserved communities, and ensure children enter kindergarten ready to learn.

Topic 5	Restore Meaningful Student Participation in State Assessments
Background	State assessments provide critical information about student learning, academic progress, and educational opportunities. High

	participation rates are essential to supporting educational accountability, informing school improvement efforts, and ensuring that all student groups are visible in state and local performance data.
SKPS Impact	While SKPS participation rate in 2025-26 were relatively high in every grade level, in both English and math, we recognize that low participation rates can limit the district's ability to analyze achievement trends, evaluate program effectiveness, and accurately identify student needs. In SKPS, we estimate that district staff devoted about 700 hours annually to managing opt-out procedures, conducting outreach efforts, and meeting reporting requirements.
Proposed Policy Statements	The Board supports legislative changes that strengthen participation in statewide assessments and ensure Oregon's accountability system is built on complete, reliable, and representative student data. Appropriate accommodations and protections for students should remain in place.

Topic 6	Streamline administrative and compliance requirements
Background	School districts are facing increasing administrative and compliance requirements without corresponding resources to support implementation. Every hour spent on duplicative reporting, complex complaint procedures, and unfunded mandates is time and funding diverted from student learning, student services, and direct classroom support.
Impact on SKPS	Example: During the 2025-26 school year, SKPS processed approximately 124 complaints, an increase from an estimated 100 complaints the prior year. While complaint volumes vary from year to year, the growing complexity of complaint investigations continues to place additional demands on school and district staff. In some cases, a single concern required review through multiple statutory complaint pathways, resulting in duplicative administrative processes, increased costs, and longer timelines for resolution.
Proposed Policy Statements	The Board supports the legislative efforts to streamline grant administration, reporting requirements, and compliance processes Area of Focus:

	The Board supports a Complaint Process Reform by consolidating overlapping complaints systems and reducing duplicative investigations while ensuring accountability and transparency and protecting the civil rights and all the legal protections afforded to all students

Topic 7	Virtual Charter School Accountability and Oversight
Background	Statewide virtual charter school enrollment has grown substantially in recent years with roughly 27,000 current total, making virtual charters as a whole equivalent to the fourth largest district in the state. At the same time, Oregon has a decentralized charter authorization structure that provides limited statewide consistency in academic expectations, performance oversight, and accountability.
Impact on SKPS	Approximately 1700 SKPS resident students are currently enrolled in statewide virtual charter schools.
Proposed Policy Statement	The Board urges the legislature to establish stronger statewide oversight of virtual charter schools, including consistent authorization and renewal standards, performance-based charter agreements, academic accountability, and enrollment growth parameters tied to student outcomes. Oregon should ensure that rapidly growing statewide virtual charter schools are subject to clear expectations and meaningful accountability compared to the public resources they receive. The Board supports legislative actions that task the relevant state agency with investigating why families opt for non-traditional schooling, including virtual charter schools.

In addition to the legislative priorities outlined above, the SKPS Board adopts the following policy positions on education-related policy issues consistent with the district's educational mission, values, and adopted practices.

High-Quality Instructional Materials

- The Board recognizes that high-quality instructional materials are critical to improving student outcomes and supporting effective teaching and learning. The Board supports sustained state investments in the adoption, implementation, and ongoing use of high-quality instructional materials that are aligned with Oregon academic standards and grounded in evidence-based instructional practices.

Instructional Time

- The Board supports policies that expand instructional time when accompanied by adequate and sustainable funding to fully implement and support the resulting operational, staffing, and student services requirements.

Attendance Supports

- The Board supports statewide strategies to improve student attendance, including investment in policies and programs that strengthen family engagement, early intervention, and supports that address barriers to regular school attendance.

Class Size

- The Board recognizes that class size affects student learning, educator effectiveness, and school climate and supports investments that enable districts to reduce class sizes. The Board opposes making class size a mandatory subject of collective bargaining and supports maintaining local flexibility in staffing and resource allocation decisions.

Technology Usage

- The Board supports policies that encourage the thoughtful and intentional use of technology in schools when it enhances instruction, improves access to learning, supports student engagement, or meets specific student learning needs. The Board recognizes that technology is an important instructional resource when aligned with clearly defined instructional goals and opposes broad prohibitions that limit educators' ability to use valuable educational tools in the classrooms.

Medicaid Reimbursement for Student Support Services

- The Board supports expanding Medicaid reimbursement opportunities for school-based student support services, including services provided by Community Health Workers, Peer Support Specialists, and roles. The Board also supports pathways that allow school districts to train and certify eligible staff to provide reimbursable services that connect students and families with essential health, behavioral health, and community-based support.

Public Employee Retirement System (PERS)

- The Board supports legislative actions that provide meaningful PERS cost relief to school districts while protecting the retirement commitments made to current and

retired employees. The Board opposes changes to employee eligibility requirements or benefit structures that shift the cost to school districts without adequate state funding to offset those costs.