

## An Open Letter to Oregon Public School Educators

The Education Caucus of the Democratic Party of Oregon, whose mission is to support and enhance public education in the state, thanks all teachers, administrators and school support staff who have struggled through the last year and a half to provide a quality education for our students. While we have all experienced unprecedented change in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we celebrate educators who have done so publicly. You have been forced to adapt to virtual classroom settings, to learn new methods of engaging your students, and to develop and accept new standards of classroom participation that take into consideration the circumstances of the child's home, personal resources, and familial surroundings. Pivoting into a digital classroom meant you had to think and learn quickly, then rethink and relearn as conditions changed. Despite these challenging circumstances, you have remained dedicated to maintaining some semblance of normalcy in the education of our youth.

When you chose to work in the field of education, you could not have known you would be expected to abandon most of your training and to reinvent the practices to which you were accustomed. The transition has been abrupt, unclear, and uncharted. You have juggled virtual, in-class, or hybrid teaching environments. You have confronted and tried to address the deep divides arising from differences of opinion regarding vaccination and mask-wearing. You have adjusted to asynchronous schedules, the creation of learning pods, and periodic requirements for quarantine and contact tracing. You have dealt with confused students and frustrated parents (who sometimes act out their understandable frustrations and concerns) while trying to preserve some sense of continuity and familiarity.

You worked with kids during the day, trying various strategies to form the personal connections with each young face that are such an integral component of in-person learning, enabling every child to feel seen, supported, and important. Behind the scenes, you continued late into the evenings. Whether spending countless hours learning innovative teaching techniques, redesigning lessons to better adapt to the new conditions, ensuring that every student has access to the curriculum, troubleshooting digital tools for families of varying technical literacy, or taking telephone calls to share your students' progress, you went above and beyond what even in normal times is largely under appreciated.

For these reasons and more, we thank you. We thank you for sticking by your students. We thank you for creating an environment of safety and regularity in their days. We thank you for communicating with families beyond your normal working hours. And we thank you for your empathy, patience, and perseverance.

From the bottom of our hearts, we teachers (active and retired), administrators, and members of local communities statewide who comprise the Education Caucus of the Democratic Party of Oregon extend appreciation and well wishes for all you have done and all you will continue to do.

Sincerely and with heartfelt thanks,

The Democratic Party of Oregon Education Caucus