



SUBJECT: Civic Assembly Policy Recommendations re: Education

DATE: April 2025

SUMMARY: Bend-La Pine Schools reviewed the final policy recommendations from the Civic Assembly on Youth Experiencing Houselessness in Central Oregon, in relation to our policy, advocacy, and equity work. 30% of the Assembly's recommendations relate to school district policies or practices. The following describes relevant state and local policies, current practices, and commitments for each of the Assembly's education-related policy recommendations. Bend-La Pine Schools appreciates the collective work on this topic, and is committed to ongoing efforts to support our students experiencing houselessness, as well as to side-by-side advocacy with our local partners in breaking down barriers and lifting up innovative solutions.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS #4 and #6:

The Assembly recommends the school district allow staff to overrule the "10-day drop" practice in which a school unenrolls a student who has been absent for over 10 consecutive school days. The Assembly asserts the 10-day drop policy is a violation of the federal McKinney-Vento Act. The Assembly also recommends schools follow up with students not present in school for 10 days on a more 'case-by-case' basis.

School district notes:

The 10-day drop practice is required by Oregon state statute (ORS 581-023-0006 (4)(b)&(11)(c)). A school district may not permit their employees to violate state law. Therefore, we are obligated to unenroll a student who does not attend school for 10 consecutive days. This state statute is not a violation of federal law. The McKinney-Vento Act does not require a McKinney-Vento qualifying student who is not attending school to be enrolled indefinitely by a school district, but rather requires that the district make efforts to remove barriers to regular attendance.

We certainly recognize the importance of prevention and intervention prior to the point of unenrollment. Efforts underway in this regard:

- Prevention: Our district-wide effort to increase the inclusion, belonging, and dignity of all students and families is intended to make school feel safe and welcoming for students experiencing houselessness. Curriculum support like life and career readiness K-12 lessons, Source of Strength programming, and

academic intervention systems are designed to keep students in school and to minimize disruption when they experience life transitions. Washers, dryers, and showers are available at some school sites, for students to wash their clothes. School-based health centers maximize access to healthcare on campus. Our partnerships with agencies such as FAN and the Giving Plate ensure basic needs are met (food, rental and utilities assistance, clothing, etc) so students can focus on school.

- Teachers, counselors, specialists, and administrators do individual calls, texts, and emails home, and even do personalized home visits to check on students who are not attending school. FAN Advocates and Family Liaisons take meals and school work to families' homes as needed. The transportation department individualizes routes and stops for students experiencing homelessness. By no means do we catch every student or get it just right, but we are deeply committed to continuing to improve. This is based on relationships and on knowing our students as individuals, both their strengths and their needs.
- Our IT team has been building and has just published a tool that alerts school staff to each student's cumulative absences. This allows us to run regular reports to identify students who are approaching the 10-day absence mark and increase the frequency of contacts and the interventions for student and family support.
- Referrals by school staff to community-based services, mental health support, and basic needs resources are higher than they have ever been. We have more counselors, family liaisons, FAN advocates, and social services support staff in the school district than ever before. We have strong formal partnerships with Deschutes County, J-Bar-J, and other local providers. And, we acknowledge our partnerships can always be strengthened. In accordance with the Assembly's recommendations, we commit to continuing to develop direct partnerships with additional community-based agencies and services for wrap-around support for students and families. Of particular interest to us is the upcoming opportunity to engage with these expert partners as we revise policies such as our fundraising and extracurricular activities policies.
- Our "Compulsory Attendance" policy has been in the review and revision cycle during the 2024-2025 school year, to update our commitments and best practices regarding attendance. Currently our policy drafting group is using the book *Re-Thinking Chronic Absenteeism* to inform a more ecological approach to our attendance efforts. We commit to incorporating the Assembly's recommendations to the fullest extent possible, and we will alert the Assembly leadership when a draft is ready for community input later this spring.

II. RECOMMENDATION #10:

The Assembly recommends the school district allow FAN Advocates to give hotspots or internet access to families with students and to provide funding for this.

School district notes:

Since the pandemic, Bend-La Pine Schools has invested a portion of our general fund money into hot spots for this exact purpose. We issue them to students in need via the FAN Advocates at the schools.

III. RECOMMENDATION #13:

The Assembly recommends vocational schools and/or programs for students who need job skills and high wages right away.

School district notes:

The school district offers over 30 Career and Technical Education programs, with nearly half of those offering industry certification for students. Students are completing these programs in our high schools and entering industry jobs with high wages right out of graduation. From automotive to forestry to health sciences to engineering, our schools have a huge variety of vocational programs available for free. Details [here](#).

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS #14 and #17:

The Assembly recommends education on houselessness and human trafficking starting as early as feasible in schools. The Assembly recommends the school district requires mandatory financial literacy and critical thinking courses.

School district notes:

In 2023, the state of Oregon passed legislation requiring financial literacy courses for high school graduation. The district has developed curriculum and begun offering these courses to high school students effective this school year.

As part of the Health Education state standards for instruction, the state of Oregon requires that public schools educate students on human trafficking beginning in 5th grade and continuing through high school. This is a theme of learning that develops in complexity over the secondary school years, incorporating issues of personal safety, violence and abuse, trusted adults, mental health, digital and online safety,

and more. Critical thinking is built into the curriculum and instruction of these delicate and complex topics of study.

As part of the Social Sciences state standards for instruction, Oregon requires public schools to educate students on issues of oppression, marginalization, justice, and how different groups have traditionally experienced these themes in a way that impacts economic freedom, personal choice, access to resources, and civic engagement. These standards begin in kindergarten and continue through high school. Critical thinking and financial literacy are expressly called out as required foundations of these learning standards.

Bend-La Pine Schools actively supports teachers in understanding and applying these standards to their instruction in the classroom. We offer training, coaching, and curriculum to continually improve students' learning of these important topics. We commit to continually making this curriculum and training accessible to community partners. Further, we commit to continuing to encourage teachers to invite guest speakers with expertise in these social sciences and health related standards to partner in the collective education on this topic, in accordance with our guest speaker policy and practices and in alignment with state standards and curriculum.

V. RECOMMENDATION #15:

The Assembly recommends training for adults who interact with unhoused youth to help with identification and support.

School district notes:

While this recommendation mentions many non-educator adults, we find this training component to be critically important in ensuring our educator workforce is informed and aware. To that end, here are a few of the trainings we conduct:

- Every single school year, every employee must take a virtual training on McKinney-Vento youth, including identification, qualification, and educator obligations.
- Our McKinney-Vento Liaison and FAN Advocates do ongoing training with school staff on identification, support, and resources.
- Recently we ran a training for all administrators and leaders across the district, where we reviewed the statistics regarding our students experiencing houselessness, unaccompanied youth, and other vulnerable populations, and reviewed ways that leaders can engage and support at the individual student and broader school-wide community level. We commit to sharing this information with any interested community partners, including the personal

commitments our administrative team made regarding their leadership practices.

- Currently underway is a new structure of strategic support for our front-office registrar staff, who are the first faces welcoming new students and families, and sometimes the first employees to engage with a homeless student (very key roles in the enactment of our enrollment and attendance policies and practices that students experience day-to-day). This new strategic structure will increase our ability to train and support our front-office team, to ensure they can quickly and respectfully identify students experiencing houselessness and effectively engage our systems of support, with an approach centered on dignity and belonging in our schools.
- We have updated our “Fees and Fines” policy to prohibit the assessment or collection of fees to students experiencing houselessness, and we have trained our school administrators on this expectation and the budget process for covering those costs internally.