

# Local innovation creates opportunities for student success

**BY REP. BARBARA SMITH WARNER AND SEN. TIM KNOPP** | June 24, 2018

As the school year was winding down for Oregon students earlier this month, the Legislature's Joint Committee on Student Success continued its statewide tour in Southern Oregon.

We spent two days touring facilities and talking with students, parents, administrators, teachers, and community members in Medford, Eagle Point, Phoenix and Grants Pass. At each stop we saw a community that wasn't afraid to use innovative approaches to help students be successful.

Educators at Kids Unlimited Charter School have succeeded by embracing an entire neighborhood and working to meet the needs of its students beyond the classroom. KU works with parents and families to make sure children are getting health care and other social services, in addition to classroom instruction.

At McLaughlin Middle School, administrators and teachers made a concerted effort to remake the school's culture into a place where children want to be. Students there told us the school was like a big family. As a result, test scores and attendance have both shown a dramatic increase over the past four years.

Kid Time Children's Museum runs a preschool for 3- to 5-year-olds that integrates a mix of students from Preschool Promise, private pay and early intervention programs. The classrooms use Oregon's early learning framework and play-based learning practices to make sure students are Kindergarten-ready.

At Phoenix Elementary, educators are developing science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM) classes for younger students. We saw students learning about subjects ranging from robotics to making cookies. The small school also boasts a School Based Health Center that serves K-12 students across the area.

Eagle Point High School's career technical education offers an unusual MT1 certification option for its students. The program gives high school students the opportunity to document mastery of critical skills standards in math and measurement; spatial reasoning and manufacturing technology; and business acumen and quality. The certification gives students an advantage in securing a place in the labor force or in post-secondary education.

At New Bridge High School in Grants Pass, we saw how important modern facilities can be to student success. NBHS serves young men incarcerated in the Oregon Youth Authority's Rogue Valley Youth Correctional Facility. Before the new high school facility was funded by the Legislature in 2015, students studied in the common area of their living space. Studying in a new school facility provides a positive learning environment and is a source of pride for students and their families. And, they said, the mountain views through the large windows in the school's commons are inspiring.

Since beginning its tour in March, the committee has toured 23 schools — in Eastern Oregon, Clackamas and Lane Counties, the Mid-Willamette Valley and Southern Oregon. We have seen success everywhere we have been. Each school has showcased programs preparing students for their next step, whether that next step is kindergarten, an alternative high school or life after graduation. We saw a clear focus on ensuring students are ready for college or the workforce when they graduate — and we want that to be happening in every school across the state.

Still, we know we have a long way to go to reach our goal of success for every student. Our job is to find ways to apply the lessons learned in successful schools and programs to those which are less successful. Our tour continues in Washington County July 11 and will take us to Central Oregon, the Southern Coast and Portland in the fall.

*Rep. Barbara Smith Warner, D-Portland, is the co-chair of the Joint Committee on Student Success. Sen. Tim Knopp, R-Bend, is the Senate co-vice chair of the committee.*