PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

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Robert Ford- Director

Dear Governor Kitzhaber,
I want to first commend you for the work you are doing to improve and stream line the serves to young children and their families. I am very hopeful about the direction we are heading as a state and so appreciate your commitment to Early Childhood Education and to addressing these difficult issues and status quo.

I am one of the Assistant Directors in the Special Education department at Portland Public Schools. My primary focus and back ground is early childhood special education. Our Early Childhood Evaluation Team conducts initial and ongoing evaluations for EI/ECSE eligibility, approximately 1200 evaluations last school year. The children who meet the eligible criteria are then sent to Multnomah Early Childhood Program to receive their EI/ECSE services. Our team also coordinates the transition of 350-400 young students with disabilities into kindergarten every year. We see the gap between what is "expected" for kindergarten and the reality of many incoming students. The EI/ECSE system is not a seamless system into kindergarten. It is very disjointed and traumatic for parents and our students. Portland Public Schools would like to be at the table in discussions about EI/ECSE services in our District and how we can be a part of the new structure in serving our students with disabilities.

Portland has made Early Childhood education a priority and is working to align our early education programs to maximize outcomes (Pre-K and Head Start). We have also created an Early Learners Group whose focus is the align our programs within PPS and collaborate with our community partners to create continuity for families and program alignment. Portland is very interested in early childhood services, kindergarten readiness skills, assessment and how these services align and support our district milestones, enter 1st grade ready to read, end 3rd grade reading to learn, end middle school ready for high school, enter 10th grade on track to graduate and 12th grade graduating on time and ready for college and work.

I have attended two of your council meetings and am excited about the work. In the last meeting, 1/26/12, it was mentioned that there may be some opportunities to help pilot some of this work. We would be interested in learning more about this opportunity and any future opportunities to be involved or have input.

Thank you!
Mary Pearson
Assistant Director, Special Education
Early Childhood