

Dear Colleagues,

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information and resources regarding the film “Waiting for Superman.” EEA and its Executive Board believe it is important to outline pertinent points for your consideration. EEA leaders have discussed the film within a variety of contexts this year including monthly Superintendent meetings in both districts, the EEA Executive Board retreat and meetings, EEA Building Representative Council meetings, informal conversations with OEA leaders, and meetings with United Way and Stand for Children. Your EEA building rep will have additional written material if you would like more information.

In October 2010 EEA President, Dayna Mitchell, and Sarah Drew, fourth grade teacher and EEA building representative for Willagillespie Elementary School in 4J, were invited to participate in a panel discussion following a showing of the film at the Bijou. The panel and showing were organized by Stand for Children and United Way. United Way did not financially support this event, but assisted with organization of the gathering. Stand for Children purchased tickets in advance for audience participants. There were about 100 people in the theater including teachers from Bethel and 4J, charter school personnel, educators, parents, legislators, and community members. The panel, facilitated by Bethel Superintendent Colt Gill, also included a 4J School Board member (Jennifer Geller), a Springfield School Board Member, and the Co-Director of EC (Early Childhood) CARES.

We have had questions from our members about the involvement of United Way and Stand for Children and sponsorship of the film. Our local United Way of Lane County has not financially supported the film in any way, though they helped Stand for Children sponsor and organize the panel discussion at the Bijou. Each United Way Chapter across the Nation has handled their support, sponsorship and endorsements differently so you may have heard of other chapters that have more actively supported the film. United Way for Lane County has posted its position on this film on its website. Stand for Children sponsored a panel discussion in Portland in which only two OEA representatives were invited. Our local Stand for Children chapter sponsored and organized the panel discussion at the Bijou in Eugene. Local teacher Association leadership was invited to the panel discussion.

EEA welcomes the opportunity to promote and highlight the work, we, as educators, are doing to build great public schools. We encourage dialogue about the issues raised in the film. Clearly the film cannot define the conversations that we have locally about how to improve public education and address the needs of our students. We need to avoid the impulse to recommend simple, silver-bullet solutions. We need to separate the hard facts from the hype and myths. The film does have some inaccuracies and clearly bashes unions at one point. It doesn't depict an accurate view of the public education we experience in our schools everyday.

The film has been touted as a way to engage the community in conversation about public education. However, the dialogue won't be very constructive if we don't look at all perspectives and include the positive examples of good work going on everyday in public education. We believe you will form your own viewpoints and opinions, but it's important for you to be aware of this type of media that attempts to portray our profession in a negative way. For further information about the film and this topic, please explore the sites listed below.

<http://www.oregoned.org/superman>

<http://neatoday.org/2010/10/05/waiting-for-superman-resources/>

<http://www.rethinkingschools.org/opt-in/100921.shtml>

<http://voices.washingtonpost.com/answer-sheet/school-turnaroundsreform/why-superman-film-should-be-wa.html>

Thank you for your dedication, commitment and expertise that make a difference every day. You are the true super heroes.

Sincerely,

Dayna