



RYAN WALTERS

STATE SUPERINTENDENT *of* PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT *of* EDUCATION

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Contact: Dan Isett
405-570-9203

**Walters Rolls Out Back to Basics Initiative, Addresses Failing Schools,
and Announces Draft Budget Request**

Oklahoma City, Okla – The Oklahoma State Board of Education (OSBE) moved forward with State Superintendent Ryan Walters Back to Basics proposal to focus on student outcomes in four key subject areas: Reading, Math, Science, and Civics.

“Schools have been too focused on social experimentation and not on basic instruction that lies at the heart of our schools’ mission,” said Walters. “That’s why we are launching \$8 million worth of initiatives focused on improving student outcomes. We will focus on the Science of Reading, implement the most comprehensive tutoring program in the nation, and pay our best teachers for growth in student outcomes and achievement. I look forward to expanding these programs into the future.”

Walters announced new initiatives aimed to addressing failing schools: “We must reject the status quo. We cannot – and will not – allow our schools to fail our students because too much is at stake. My administration will do whatever it takes to help schools succeed, but schools will not be allowed to continue to fail for multiple years. We will think outside the box, and we will innovate.”

Walters also introduced a draft budget request for FY25: “Thanks to the Biden administration, inflation remains high, and Oklahoma has suffered its share of economic challenges. We are being responsive to the fiscal reality in our state and are taking historic action to direct funding toward a singular goal: student outcomes. Under my administration, OSDE will be fiscally responsible and maintain a constant eye on the return on investment of taxpayer money. We are maintaining funding levels for classroom instruction and helping to ensure that more money reaches the wallets of teachers around the state.”

2500 NORTH LINCOLN BOULEVARD, OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73105-4599
PHONE: (405) 521-4885 • SDE.OK.GOV • RYAN.WALTERS@SDE.OK.GOV

Background:

Following the historic investment in education passed by the Legislature last year, there was an FY24 appropriation of \$3.97 billion. However, \$160 million of that appropriation was the School Security and Reading Initiative pilot programs. This \$160 million appropriated in FY24 was to be split evenly between FY24, FY25, and FY26, which meant of that \$160 Million appropriated for those programs, only \$53.3 was spent in FY24. Consequently, \$3.86 billion was actually spent on education in FY24.

For FY25, OSDE is asking for \$3.92 billion in funding. The \$53.3 million that was designated for FY25 for school security and reading initiatives from the FY24 appropriation is automatically added to this request. This leads to the total amount OSDE is requesting in FY25 to be \$3.97 billion. The amount SDE is requesting to be spent in FY25 is an increase of \$112.9 million compared to the amount that was spent in FY24.

Every functional category of education spending is either constant or increasing for the FY25 budget request compared to the FY24 budget, including a 56.9% increase in spending for teachers and students.

The FY25 requested appropriation is smaller than the FY24 appropriation is because the FY24 appropriation included \$160 Million in 3-year pilot programs, but \$106.7 million of that appropriation is to be spent in FY25 and FY26.

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