

Building Strong Schools through ESSA

Cross-agency Collaboration Key to Oregon Education Association's Success

The Oregon Education Association (OEA) is working closely with their Oregon partners in education to lay the groundwork for ESSA engagement through a multi-year, multi-partner collaboration to design a balanced system of assessment for meaningful student learning. In a recent webcast presented in collaboration with NEA and ASCD, educators discussed student assessment and opportunity, school equity, how strong relationships resulted in a cohesive message and vision for assessment in Oregon, and how these structures for collaboration put Oregon's education partners ahead of the game in ESSA implementation.

Presentation Outline:

OEA employs a student-centered approach to create a foundation for collaboration.

- Oregon establishes a history of working collaboratively to keep students at the center with work that started in 2014 when educators launch a joint assessment team which includes: OEA, the governor's office, chief education officer, Oregon Department of Education, and 18 other educators from all levels of academia.
- The group publishes "A New Path for Oregon" in July 2015. To access report, click: http://www.oregoned.org/images/uploads/blog/FINAL_July_2015_Assessment_Document_a.pdf
- OEA gathers feedback from teachers, parents and students regarding the New Path document.
- They survey members about the first administration of the Smarter Balanced Assessment, and launch an extensive assessment literacy pilot, a project that received additional funding from an NEA grant, to spread the work even further across the state.
- The pilots are collaborative efforts with local affiliates partnering with their district administration and OEA for teacher-led professional learning and action research on quality assessment practices in the classroom.

The Student Assessment Bill of Rights (House Bill 2655) further clarified student and family rights to receive timely and accurate information about statewide summative assessments and to exercise their right to opt out, if they wish. The goal: Build a system of assessment all students and families want to opt in to.

Legislation

Two other key legislative actions were HB 2680 and the Secretary of State audit of the first administration of SBAC. HB 2680 called for a multi-stakeholder group to determine how to implement the results of Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) and if the assessment provides the information educators, school leaders, and policy makers need to make decisions. The Secretary of State audit makes suggestions for how to improve the administration of the assessment. Both reports found that all students should have the opportunity to succeed, that the test should have minimal disruption on student learning, and that Oregon needs to do better to build understanding of both the purpose of the test and the appropriate uses of the results of the test.

The following points about student opportunity and equity were discussed by **Judy Harris, an NEA Director, OEA board member, teacher.**

“We knew a key first step in getting ESSA right in Oregon would be educating our members as to what ESSA says and how it is different from NCLB. And we wanted to also use this opportunity to link ESSA to our work.” The following steps were taken by OEA to accomplish this:

- Set up a website, you can see the URL at the bottom
- Modeled a series of one-page informational documents off of NEA’s toolkit, adding sections that explained how the legislation affected Oregon.
- Built Decision Grids for key areas of ESSA to help members understand what decisions need to be made, at what level and where educator voice is required and where opportunities exist.
- Published a regular blog exploring different aspects of ESSA and how ESSA connects to ongoing work in OEA
- Sent a monthly newsletter with information, calls to action, various opportunities for participation, and tools for organizing at the local level.
- Used these tools and the three questions we use to frame ESSA at a variety of events and with different audiences.

Eleven Recommendations Resulted From *A New Path for Oregon*

The first recommendation from the document was to reauthorize ESEA, which was done last year. See the 11 recommendations at the bottom of this outline.

Oregon Department of Education (ODE)

ODE could have just written a plan and requested public input, but officials made a decision to reimagine education in Oregon. They framed their approach to ESSA through the three questions above.

Legislative Hearing

By engaging directly with educators, team members can view policy choices that are presented through ESSA through the lens of practice, and this is important because students and their learning are at the center of what is our shared work.

In other words, effective practice can and should inform policy, and effective policy supports and removes barriers to effective practice that improve learning and opportunity for every child.

Hanna Vaandering, OEA president

“We used the NEA Accountability report as the guiding document for our Symposium. Our goal was to start exploring how Oregon could change accountability system under ESSA to better reflect schools and what indicators of school quality and student success Oregon educators valued.” The themes that emerged from the symposium included:

- Rigorous, relevant, well-rounded, engaging educational experience
- Personalized and individualized learning

- Embrace equity; engage the community
- Multiple measures of student success
- Support culturally responsive services

“We also had a panel with key education leaders including our 2016 Oregon Teacher of the Year and the 2016 Oregon Superintendent of the year, Chief Education Officer and our Deputy Superintendent of Instruction, panel so all voices were heard.”

Lindsey Capps, Chief Education Officer and Education Policy Advisor to the Governor

“As we have engaged with teachers and administrators to articulate a plan to develop high quality assessments to inform instruction in the classroom, we as state policymakers view this as part and parcel of a broader state strategy to improve student outcomes.

High-quality formative assessments can help teachers have a deeper impact on the learning of every student, and ultimately empower students in their own learning. It is through these classroom assessments that we can more continuously engage and involve parents in the learning, growth and progress of their child.”

The State has been an active partner in following *New Path* recommendations by:

- Investing directly through the governor’s leadership in professional learning around high-quality classroom assessments, including an assessment pilot project being undertaken through our State Department of Education.
- Providing ongoing leadership to bring system-wide focus to this work through collaborative partnership. It has been through our role as a convener across our education system, that we have taken the voice of educators articulate in the New Path and brought together leaders of our K-12 schools, teacher preparation institutions, other professional associations and non-profit organizations and historically underserved communities to communicate, connect and align systemic support for this effort. This is ongoing work.

“Lastly, continuing to articulate this focus and reflecting our partnership with educators is important, and is strengthened through communication and coordination with other key policymakers, at the federal and state level.”

Dawne Huckaby, Assistant Superintendent, Office of Teaching and Learning, Oregon Department of Education

“Like OEA, ODE was eager to talk to our constituents about what matters most to them when it comes to our schools. In March we began holding a series of community forums all over our state.”

The team asked questions at the community forums and then engaged in small conversations. They collected information from the forums and published a report on the themes from those forums.

Vaandering

“Informing our members about ESSA was just the first step. We also wanted to help members know how to organize using ESSA as the foundation of improving teaching and learning. Working with NEA, we held a three-day Pacific Region workshop at the end of June. Educators from seven states in the Pacific region, plus Oklahoma, attended. Twenty-four Oregon teams attended. The workshop included sessions on identifying community allies, bargaining for the common good, and how to use the NEA Opportunity Dashboard to lead meaningful conversations in your communities about what makes a school great.

Craig Hawkins, Executive Director, Confederation of Oregon School Administrators

“In the spirit of partnership and with ODE’s lead through the community forums and the ESSA workgroups, four the leading state education organizations came together to issue a joint statement on stakeholder engagement.”

“This fall, we were able to release another seminal report on the state of Oregon education, *Oregon Rising*.” The report, released in September, echoes themes we’ve heard from the OEA Education Symposium and the ODE Community Forums. Oregonians recognize the important of having adults in schools working with students, forming relevant, rigorous relationships, and the importance of a well-rounded education that inspires students.

Vaandering

“So what’s next? OEA has moved from informing our members to engaging and organizing our members while also pushing forward on the recommendations from A New Path. Our message is that Oregon students deserve quality schools regardless of zip code. Optional: This message is crucial right now since Oregon faces a \$1.3 billion budget shortfall. Local organizing efforts can elevate what is most important for students, put pressure on local and state policy makers to raise revenue, re-prioritize budgets, and advocate for resources that make the biggest differences for students.”

“We will keep moving forward to unite our vision! As we hope you heard tonight, there is far more that unites us than divides us. We believe working together is key to student success. There is much work to be done in this transition year, but we look forward to the continued collaboration in Oregon.”

Andrea Shunk, Education Policy & Practice Strategist, OEA

“We’ve spent this year listening and talking with our members, hearing their concerns as they learn about ESSA. We have built a suite of tools for members to use drawing upon the great work done at NEA, ODE, CCSSO and other organizations. The tools include decision maps, logic models, a set of meeting agendas for ESSA teams and more. A tool we are especially excited about helps locals use the NEA Opportunity Dashboard or the NEA Great Public Schools Indicators to audit their own schools using state and district data in order to set priorities and create an action plan. We have an on the ground professional practice organizer supporting locals through this process and will have it available electronically on our website for locals to use on their own.”

Eleven Recommendations from *New Path for Oregon*:

1 - ESEA Reauthorization: Actively engage in the reauthorization of the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to allow states flexibility to develop a system of assessment that accurately reflects student learning through greater emphasis on developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, valid, reliable and unbiased high quality classroom and interim (i.e. periodic) assessments.

2- Student's Assessment Bill of Rights: Make the "Student's Assessment Bill of Rights" operational in schools and classrooms to ensure students and their families know and understand the purpose of assessments, the learning targets that make up the assessments and how the results will be used. Ensure that students and educators work collaborative on designing assessment targets and ensure students and their families understand how to self-assess, and to use assessment results to track progress and know what progress and success means.

3 - Assessment Literacy: Develop, fund, and implement multi-year aligned and differentiated professional development programs for pre-service and in-service educators to develop and/or enhance educators' (teachers, school and district administrators and education support professionals), and other assessment users (students, families, local and state policy makers, community members, etc.) culturally responsive understanding of assessment. These efforts should lead to a more balanced system of assessment in school districts, be based on promising practices, and be culturally responsive.

4 - Assessment Audit: Create a taskforce including educators at all levels to conduct an audit of the type and number of assessments currently administered in Oregon schools including the additional testing given to students who are receiving Special Education services and emerging bilingual students receiving English Language Learner services.

5-Accommodation of Learning Needs: Examine all assessments for cultural, linguistic and developmental appropriateness to accommodate the learning needs of all students. A variety and appropriate level of assessment should be used to honor the diverse language and developmental learning needs of students in order to identify and assess the growth and achievement of each and every student.

6 - Assessment Resource Bank: Seek grants, state and federal funds to create and support resource banks of standards-based assessments for formative or summative use in classroom, interim or annual assessment context.

7 -Technology Use: Invest equitably in the technological infrastructure that supports access for overall teaching and learning to ensure all students are critical thinkers to help them pursue a career and post-secondary education. Invest in developmentally appropriate technology to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of assessment development, storage, administration, scoring, recordkeeping and reporting results for classroom, interim and annual assessments used both in formative and summative contexts. Transparency and confidentiality of the data must continue to be a priority.

8 - Frequency of Assessment: Research the feasibility of reducing the frequency of required annual statewide standardized summative assessments while ensuring the availability of accurate, yearly disaggregated information for all student groups by

effectively utilizing valid, reliable and unbiased formative and interim (i.e. periodic) assessments.

9 - Opt-in: Allow high school students to opt-in to the Math or ELA section(s) of the statewide standardized summative assessment earlier than 11th grade so that they take the assessment as it coincides with their actual academic course load rather than the current system which may have students taking a test on content they have not studied for two or more years. Allow students to “bank” portions of the assessment and create an effective means to communicate the information to students and families.

10 - Assessment of Essential Skills: Enhance and expand options to demonstrate essential skills. Determine if other measures of essential skills exist, promote them as options for students and allow students and families more control over ways to demonstrate essential skills and college, career and life readiness.

11 - Suspending Use of Smarter Balanced: Suspend the use of Smarter Balanced Assessment results during 2015 for school ratings on report cards, but allow students to use their 2015 Smarter Balanced Assessment results to demonstrate essential skills for high school graduation. Allow time for comprehensive analysis of Smarter Balanced to determine the value in relation to student learning. Continue to suspend the use of Smarter Balanced Assessment results for educator evaluation during 2015-16 while developing a more balanced system of assessment.

To view November 17 webinar, click: <http://getessaright.org/webinars/>