Last month, we released our state’s first results on the new Smarter Balanced assessments. I want to thank and commend all of you for the hard work and dedication required to implement these new higher standards. Your support to students through the transition to new standards and a new assessment is evident in the results we received. While it’s clear that we have room to grow in preparing all students to graduate ready for the demands of college and the workplace, there is much to celebrate.

Students exceeded initial projections by 10 percentage points. This is encouraging and speaks to the excellent work happening in classrooms across the state. Teachers are refining their practice, schools are providing more targeted professional development to support and align instruction, and districts are focusing on areas of need and high leverage strategies that directly impact student learning and achievement.

When I talk to superintendents, especially from districts like McMinnville and Beaverton that are significantly outperforming the state, they are encouraged by these results and are motivated to improve on current practices to see greater gains in student achievement. They see this data as one of the tools in their toolbox to help guide and inform district improvement efforts and ultimately help improve instruction, expand proven programs, and support student outcomes.

It’s also important to understand that these results are one of many important measures of students’ and schools’ progress. We all know that there isn’t a single test that can capture everything there is to know about student learning. However, when used with other tools as part of a balanced assessment system, these results can help us identify achievement gaps, target resources, replicate proven programs, and most importantly improve classroom instruction and better support student learning.

These results are not the end of the story. They are the beginning of the next stage in our journey of improvement. I am very pleased with the performance of our students this first year of the test and proud of the hard work of our educators in helping them achieve to this level. But I am most excited by the promise for continued growth and improvement in the years to come. Our students are capable of great things. We are challenging them to achieve at higher levels, and they are rising to that challenge. Now we must rise to the challenge of continuing this good work and support all students in reaching for these new expectations so that they can graduate ready to achieve their dreams.

With gratitude for all you do every day,
Common Core Testimony
Tammy Fisher, Umatilla 6-8th grade English and Robotics Teacher

Looking back now, my experience with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) has been an extremely positive one. When we were first exposed to the CCSS as a staff, it was frustrating and difficult to understand. We thought that many of the standards were too rigorous and often convoluted. However, as we begin to wade through and try to raise the bar for students, it became clear that more rigorous standards are what is right for kids. When I look back at the work my first group of 8th graders did 5 years ago versus the work that my 8th graders now do, it is astounding. I would have never thought that the level of close reading, writing, and thinking that happens daily in my classroom would have been possible then. It’s been (and continues to be) a tough road, but it’s one that I think is 100% worth it.

Our district began implementation in 2010. Our Superintendent, Heidi Sipe, gave us the thrilling, yet terrifying, news that we were no longer going to place intense focus on OAKS scores. She knew that in order for our students and staff to be successful implementing the CCSS, we would need a running start and we couldn’t be weighed down by the pressure to teach to two different sets of standards at once.

We started by weeding through our current curriculums with the standards in mind. We kept what fit, adapted what could be adapted, and threw out the rest. This was perhaps the most difficult process. Not being exactly sure what was and wasn’t “Common Core” was frustrating and confusing. We used the analogy of “playing in the mud” frequently to keep up morale. We realized that when you’re playing in the mud, you’re going to get dirty. We made mistakes. We tried and failed. We often lamented, “Why are we wasting our time on this when the textbook companies are just going to do it for us in a few years?”

However, I couldn’t be more thankful for my time playing in the mud. To a large extent, we are still playing in the mud. We don’t get it right all the time, but we are getting better. We learned that our best work, the projects that engaged students and got results year after year met the Common Core State Standards. We also learned to discern which textbook companies really were on track and which weren’t. Unfortunately, there are a lot of materials out there that are being labeled CCSS that do not meet the rigor of the standards. And because we did the hard work, we can see that easily now. I’m proud of the work we do – and continue to do – for students in Umatilla.
Districts across Oregon will release reports with test results that explain their child’s progress in Math and English based on the Oregon Smarter Balanced assessments taken earlier this year. Complementary to these reports, parents now have access to the GreatKids Oregon State Test Guide for Parents to inform how they can use these test results to collaborate with teachers and help their children learn. The online tool is free and available in English and Spanish. The Guide content was informed by best practices in parenting for education success and has been carefully vetted by education experts. To use and/or share the guide, go to www.oregonstateguide.org.

Oregon Extended Assessment Administration Manual

The 2015-16 Oregon Extended Assessment Administration Manual is now posted on the Statewide Alternate (Extended) Assessment webpage. This manual is intended for educators and parents who are interested in a general overview of Oregon’s Extended Assessments - including a description of its architecture (organization and format as well as a review of decision-making for implementation), general administration, and scoring procedures. For questions or additional information, please contact Brad Lenhardt at 503-947-5755.

Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments & Digital Library Access

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) has received several questions regarding whether districts will have access to the Smarter Balanced interim assessments and digital library in 2015-16. ODE did not receive any funding to make these resources available to districts, either to purchase centrally for the state or to make available for districts to purchase their own interim assessment resources. ODE has worked with Smarter Balanced and with Oregon’s test vendor, American Institutes for Research (AIR), in order to make this option available for districts in 2015-16; however, AIR required a firm commitment (not just an expression of interest) that a minimum number of students statewide would use these resources.

To determine whether there was a sufficient level of commitment statewide to pursue this option, districts test coordinators were asked to respond to a survey representing a district’s firm commitment to purchasing these resources. The survey was used for ODE to determine whether or not Oregon could meet the minimum participation requirement set by our test vendor, AIR. Unfortunately, the minimum participation requirement was not met, and these resources will not be available for Oregon districts to purchase in 2015-16.

For questions, please contact Holly Carter at holly.carter@state.or.us; 503-947-5739.
## Teacher Talk

**Articles and Resources Relating to Curriculum, Instruction, Special Programs, and More...**

### iSchool Initiative

“Technology is the key to helping our students succeed in the 21st Century,” said Travis Allen, the young visionary promoting digital learning in the classroom through the iSchool Initiative. “We need to ask ourselves: What is possible today that was impossible yesterday?” The Oregon Department of Education recently hosted the iSchool bus and staff of the iSchool Initiative at the Public Service Building. School staff and students were invited to visit the iSchool bus and learn more about digital learning opportunities available through the program. Before graduating from high school, Travis created a viral YouTube video on revolutionizing America’s education through the use of mobile technology. Successful implementation of digital learning requires strong professional development, a shift in school culture, and a solid infrastructure on which to run the equipment. For additional information on the initiative or to invite the iSchool bus to your school, click here.

### Teacher Advisory Committee

The Office of the Deputy Superintendent at the Oregon Department of Education is creating a state Teacher Advisory Committee (TAC), responsible for advising Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction Salam Noor on education initiatives and policies and to provide feedback on how the state can best support Oregon educators and students. Committee members will be selected based on their experience as teacher leaders in Oregon with an eye to ensuring representation of the state’s diversity. The TAC will meet four times a year, and meeting dates will be determined following the selection of the committee.

We strongly encourage educators across the state to consider this opportunity, complete the fillable PDF application, and send it back to Jenni.Knaus@state.or.us by Friday, October 23, 2015. If you have questions, please contact Meg Koch at 503-947-5990.

### Odyssey Input

The ESEA Odyssey Conferences are behind us for the year. Thanks to the presenters who gave their time to share information, and more importantly, thanks to the participants who came to learn and to share their combined expertise. Video recordings of nearly all of the sessions are available online at http://goo.gl/zNH6EQ. Department staff are already preparing for next summer’s conferences and would like anyone who attended this year to complete our online evaluation at https://goo.gl/VsyaRo. We look forward to seeing you again next summer and to supporting your efforts throughout the coming year!

### Grant Reviewers Needed

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) is seeking volunteers to serve as grant proposal reviewers. Ideally, reviewers will come from a variety of backgrounds – business, industry, education, trades, labor – and from a wide range of experiences – partnerships, equity, sustainability, counseling, etc. ODE staff will attempt to match grant proposals to reviewer expertise, and reviewers will receive reimbursement for travel expenses at per diem rates. Requirements include: Access to computer, internet, and phone; Expertise and time to review 4-8 proposals; Participation in online training from 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm on Friday, October 23 or Monday, October 26, 2015; All-day attendance at a meeting in Salem, Oregon on Thursday, November 6, 2015.

If you are interested in being a reviewer, please click here to complete your online application. Applications will be accepted through Monday, October 12, 2015. Please contact Donna Brant at 503-947-5622 with any questions.
Legal Corner

Articles and Resources on Rules, Statutes, Policy, Numbered Memos, and More…

Legal Assistant/Paralegal Scholarship Opportunity

The Association for Legal Professionals (NALS) of Oregon Scholarship Fund, Inc. offers scholarships to students that will be or are attending a college with a Legal Assistant/Paralegal program. The student will need to be taking classes to achieve a Legal Assistant or Paralegal degree. Click here to access the scholarship form, or visit the website for more information: http://www.nalsor.org/.

Executive Numbered Memoranda 004-2015-16

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) is very excited about the passage of Senate Bill (SB) 447 (2015). This piece of legislation will enable the Department to work in partnership with school districts to more effectively address the facility needs of Oregon’s schools. Through the implementation of SB 447, ODE will provide technical assistance, information, and grant programs that support school districts in addressing local facility needs. Click here to review the full information. As ODE progresses on the implementation of this important piece of legislation, we will continue to provide updates on our status and progress. In the meantime, if you have any questions or need further information, please contact Michael Elliott at (503) 947-5627 or visit our website.

Senate Bill 612

Senate Bill 612, which was passed by the 2015 legislature, is now in effect as of July 3, 2015. The Legislature has charged the Oregon Department of Education with developing a plan regarding the dyslexia bill by September 15, 2016. ODE is preparing now to hire a Dyslexia Specialist to coordinate the plan development, and subsequently to support districts in the implementation of the SB 612 requirements. Click here to review details on what the plan will address. School districts will need to ensure that at least one K-5 grade teacher in each K-5 or K-8 school has received training related to dyslexia by January 1, 2018. If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Darnold, Director of Regional Programs/Best Practice at (503) 947-5786 or via e-mail at: lisa.darnold@state.or.us.

September 2015 State Board Actions

- Adopted June 25, 2015 meeting minutes
- Adopted Art Standards of Dance, Media Arts, Theater, & Visual Arts
- Adopted Period for Math Instructional Materials
- Adopted Supplemental Plans for Beaverton School Districts
- Adopted: State Board of Education 2016 Meeting Calendar
- Approved OSBA Annual Conference: Jerry Colonna & Jessica Nguyen-Ventura
- Adopted Programs for Children at Residential Youth Care Centers
- Adopted: Essential Skills Achievement Standard on Smarter Balanced
- Adopted temporary rules for K-12 Biliteracy Pathway Rules
- Adopted temporary rules for OAR’s for Regional Promise Grant Program
- Adopted temporary rules for District Collaboration Grant OARs
- Adopted temporary rules for Long-Term Care & Treatment (LTCT) Education Program Funding Formula
- Adopted temporary rules for STEM Hubs & Fiscal Agents
Upcoming Opportunities

Articles and Resources on Scholarships, Grants, Professional Development, and More…

2015 Great Oregon ShakeOut

The Great Oregon ShakeOut is an annual opportunity to practice how to be safer during big earthquakes: “Drop, Cover and Hold On.” The ShakeOut, being held on October 15, 2015, at 10:15 a.m., has also been organized to encourage you, your community, your school, or your organization to review and update emergency preparedness plans and supplies, and to secure your space in order to prevent damage and injuries. By participating in the Great Oregon ShakeOut, schools can satisfy their annual requirement for an earthquake drill. Don’t forget to go to www.shakeout.org/oregon and register to participate. Then on October 15, 2015, at 10:15 a.m., Drop, Cover, and Hold On!

Art of Excellence Contest

The Oregon Department of Education and the Oregon Arts Commission call all student artists to participate in the Art of Excellence 2015 contest. Online submissions are due November 30, 2015. Themes include landscapes, symbols, history, students in action, and STEAM topics. All contest information can be found here. Please share the site and contest information with art teachers, schools, students, and families across the state! For questions, contact: artofexcellence@oregonlearning.org.

Oregon Writing Project Online Professional Development

Writing Process: Explore the writing process, help K-12 students draft their ideas and polish their message, and connect with other dedicated teachers ...all from the comfort of your own home. The online format allows participants to work at their own pace and according to their own schedule. No special computer skills are required. This six hour course is offered between October 8 and 22, 2015 for a $100 fee (contact your school district for information about possible reimbursement). Find additional details here. To register contact: artofexcellence@oregonlearning.org.

Writing to Learn: Explore writing tasks in the K-12 classroom that can help students explore ideas, concepts, and resources to increase content area learning. This course is also offered online, allowing participants to work at their own pace and according to their own schedule. No special computer skills are required. This six hour course is offered between October 8 and 22, 2015 for a $100 fee (contact your school district for information about possible reimbursement). Find additional details here. To register contact: artofexcellence@oregonlearning.org.

Prudential Spirit of Community Awards

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program is the United States’ largest youth recognition program based exclusively on volunteer community service. The program’s goals are to applaud young people who already are making a positive difference in their towns and neighborhoods, and to inspire others to think about how they might contribute to their communities. If you’ve made a difference by volunteering in your community over the past year, you could win $1,000 and a fabulous trip to Washington, D.C. Click here for details on how to apply by or before November 3, 2015 or contact info@applyists.com.

Spark Portland 2015

Spark is an event for leaders in education, which includes an afternoon of talks from four speakers whose ideas are at the forefront of the digital learning culture. This event is an invitation to draw a breath of fresh air and focus on the big ideas. The event will be held at the Kennedy School in Portland on Friday, November 13 from 12 – 5 pm. Click here to register and learn more about the event.