



Oregon Department of Education

Kate Brown, Governor

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September 8, 2016

Oregon Secretary of State

ATTN: Sheronne Blasi, Performance Audit Administrator, Audits Division

255 Capitol St. NE, Suite 500

Salem, OR 97310

Dear Ms. Blasi:

This letter provides a formal response to the Secretary of State Audit Report for House Bill 2713 (2015). First and foremost, I want to commend the Secretary of State audit team for their thoughtful and comprehensive approach to collecting information, synthesizing results, and producing the final report. We appreciate the opportunity to assist in data collection and review efforts. Moreover, we believe the report provides key insights that will enable us to further improve the state testing system. Ultimately, we are committed to continuous improvement actions that lead to improved student outcomes, and believe this report captures important information that will assist us with those goals.

Based on the feedback provided by survey participants included in the report, as well as the overall recommendations, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) will take the following actions:

1. Communication

We will connect with school district leaders and education partners to determine additional communication needs relative to the statewide assessment system. Specifically, we will ask what additional resources would be useful in their local efforts to communicate the purpose of statewide summative assessments with students, parents, and community members. Furthermore, we will establish additional communication channels to provide information and resources in the most timely and effective manner possible. In addition, we will conduct an internal review of the technical documentation that explains how the tests are organized, aligned to academic content standards, administered, scored, and reported, to ensure consistency and accessibility of critical information to schools and educators. Lastly, we will provide additional information on test administration training protocols and ODE help desk support structures in place to support test administrators during the state testing window. We will begin these actions immediately and complete them by February 1, 2017.

2. Technical Assistance

We will continue to work with our test delivery partner, American Institutes for Research, to identify opportunities to improve the turnaround time of summative assessment results back to school districts. It is important to note that the feedback provided as part of this report is based on the first operational year (2014-15) of Smarter Balanced English language arts and math tests in Oregon. ODE made significant improvements in test results delivery time in the second year of administration (2015-16). For example, most test results were scored and returned to school districts no later than 14 days from the time a test was completed, with many scores returned within a matter of days. In fact, more than 99 percent of the tests that were started prior to May 15, 2016 were returned to school districts by June 1, 2016. This represents a significant improvement over the turnaround time in the first year when ODE and its test vendor were in the process of implementing the new scoring and reporting specifications for the Smarter Balanced assessments.

In addition to improving test result delivery times, ODE is leading two assessment literacy projects designed to increase local capacity for performance-based and formative assessment practices. These initiatives are consistent with the language in the report recommending increased emphasis on assessment tools and resources beyond statewide summative assessments. The overarching goal of these projects is to provide resources which support high quality local assessment practices that can be freely used by any educator to identify individual students' progress and inform instruction practices in real-time. There are currently 16 school districts participating in pilot projects begun during the 2016-17 school year, and ODE intends to scale these projects up and move toward statewide implementation in the 2017-19 biennium. More information about these projects is available at <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=5503>

3. **Balanced Assessment System**

This report highlights the importance of assessment systems that enable educators to collect evidence in a variety of ways to support student learning throughout and across school years. This information is consistent with information and feedback provided by other groups, including the Oregon Education Association (“A New Path for Oregon: System of Assessment to Empower Meaningful Student Learning”), the House Bill 2680 Work Group, and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Standards and Assessment Work Group. Therefore, we are actively pursuing opportunities to engage with education partners to clarify the role played by different types of assessments (formative, interim, and summative). We will provide resources and capacity-building for Oregon schools in using both formative and interim assessment practices as well as statewide summative assessment results. This will allow local educators to both inform instructional decisions at the individual student level and engage in meaningful evaluation of program effectiveness to drive improved student outcomes for Oregon students. In addition, ODE will actively seek the resources necessary to provide these tools statewide in the 2017-19 legislative session.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with the Secretary of State on this important work. If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Derek Brown, Assistant Superintendent of Assessment and Accountability (derek.brown@ode.state.or.us) at (503) 947-5841.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Salam Noor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Salam" and last name "Noor" clearly distinguishable.

Salam Noor, Ph.D.
Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction
Oregon Department of Education