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The Every Student Succeeds Act — the path to Oregon’s State Plan *A recap of the First Convening of the ESSA Advisory Committee*

BACKGROUND

Capturing the spirit of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) affords the state of Oregon the opportunity to continue making tremendous strides towards achieving educational equity and excellence for all Oregonians. Unlike the previous No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, ESSA returns a great deal of autonomy and authority back to states, including the flexibility to design and enhance state education systems that actually work for *all* students, while maintaining and reassuring our commitment to *every* child.

As Oregonians, we’ve set ambitious goals around clear student outcomes in our dedication to building a seamless system from early childhood through higher education— a system focused on closing both our achievement and opportunity gaps for a better Oregon. Empowered with the new opportunity of ESSA, in January 2016 the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) began leading in the design and implementation of an equitable, student-centered State Plan that honors the priorities of Oregon students, families, educators, and community stakeholders.

To date, ODE has brought together four central groups to help inform the development and implementation of the State Plan in four key areas: (a) Standards and Assessment; (b) Accountability; (c) School Improvement; and (d) Educator Effectiveness. These four workgroups were comprised of a wide spectrum of partners and diverse stakeholders including educators, administrators, parents, and community-based organizations all of whom were chosen primarily for their technical expertise and insight. After holding three joint-meetings of these workgroups, ODE staff worked to identify and compile the key leanings and recommendations based on input and feedback received around a variety of topics and focused-discussions during the workgroup meetings.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

Serving as a “critical friend” to the four groups of content experts, the Advisory Committee represents a second layer of stakeholder engagement by providing feedback directly to the Deputy Superintendent around possible policy implications and implementation considerations. This input is then reported back to the workgroups and is used to strengthen and refine their recommendations that will ultimately guide the development of the State Plan.

Comprised of both education and community leaders from across the state, the forty individuals appointed to the Advisory Committee serve in a variety of roles such as higher education professionals, state and local education partners, superintendents, district-level administrators, principals, assistant principals, and teacher leaders.

Organizations represented include:

- The Higher Education Coordinating Commission
- Oregon School Boards Association
- Oregon Parent Teacher Association
- Confederation of Oregon School Administrators
- The Chief Education Office and Governor’s Office
- The Children’s Institute
- Self Enhancement, Inc.
- Stand for Children
- Teacher Standards and Practice Commission



The Advisory Committee convened initially in June 2016, and will meet again in July to hear final recommendations of the four workgroups, with future meetings to be held on an as-needed basis.

MEETING DETAILS – JUNE 9, 2016

Prior to the meeting, committee members were prepped with developed meeting materials including: background information and resources, a summary document of the [four workgroup charters](#), and both [Edition I](#) and [Edition II](#) of summary reports documenting details of the workgroup’s previous meetings. This information was shared with Advisory Committee members in order to establish baseline knowledge about ESSA and to recap the progress to date in developing Oregon’s State Plan. This pre-reading was essential in generating critical dialogue and guided much of the discussion during this first meeting of the Committee.

The meeting consisted of three major components: a brief overview of the federal legislation, a share-out of the workgroups’ progress, and a facilitated discussion featuring a panel of the workgroup leads. Committee members were provided a graphic organizer to record their thoughts and questions regarding each of the workgroup leads’ presentations. They were also prompted to capture on Post-It Notes any more directed

clarifying or lingering questions, ideas, and suggestions that were then used to guide the concluding panel discussion with workgroup leads.

Following the meeting, ODE staff collected and compiled the committee members' feedback by category for [analysis](#) by comment type, keywords, and comment theme. This analysis yielded several emergent themes that were then grouped into key considerations summarizing the Advisory Committee's feedback. To ensure the integrity of this data analysis was free of reviewer bias or interpretation, multiple ODE staff members reviewed all of the data and collectively developed the following emergent themes presented in the compiled feedback data.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Through the coding and analysis of the data, four key considerations were identified in the Advisory Committee's feedback to the workgroups' proposed recommendations and leanings:

- a reassurance to elevating equity throughout the education system
- a commitment to identifying school quality measures that offer a more holistic view of local systems
- the need for an assets-based accountability tool rooted in the growth of students and teachers
- the desire to leverage and integrate other state plans and strategic initiatives into the State Plan

Committee members identified stakeholder engagement and the assurance of uniform implementation across the state as critical to the success of the Oregon Plan. These key considerations are further explained by the thematic titles and brief descriptions presented in the text below.

THEME 1: Equity must be foundational to Oregon's State Plan

As evidenced by committee members' questions and suggestions, there is a strong desire to increase attention and recommit state and local efforts to closing the achievement and opportunity gaps among Oregon's lowest performing students.

Committee members expressed desire for Oregon's State Plan to clearly articulate under each area of flexibility how the work will meet the needs of all students. When considering equity and access to resources and opportunities, committee members' comments included calls:

- Offering greater flexibility in terms of alternative assessments at the high school level
- Developing assessments free of bias and ensuring accessibility for all student groups, including students with disabilities, students requiring accommodations, English learners, students of color, and students experiencing poverty
- Ensuring both comparability and reliability across the system by accounting for the variance of rigor across school districts
- Supporting culturally responsive practice and pedagogy
- Ensuring engagement with stakeholders whose voices are historically underrepresented

THEME 2: A quality district system is stronger when based on multiple measures of student and school outcomes

Committee members' feedback implied strong support for a multiple measures dashboard, rather than a school rating. Committee members recognized the punitive nature of ratings and the stigmatization that comes along with schools identified for targeted and comprehensive supports. When discussing how student achievement and school quality should be measured, they offered suggestions such as:

- Incorporating measures like the safety of a school, the impact of school leadership, the equitable distribution of resources, kindergarten readiness, successful completion of algebra in 8th grade, 3rd grade reading proficiency, and parent and student satisfaction survey data
- Utilizing additional sources of student achievement data to guide professional learning to improve instructional practice as well as to provide more reliable student performance data that is reflective of all content areas
- Providing better supports, resources, and interventions for schools and districts serving our most vulnerable student populations based on a system of reliable, accurate, and relevant student data

THEME 3: Oregon's education goals and priorities must be integrated

Committee members identified workgroups, task forces, initiatives, and other state plans that inform and support the work under ESSA. They posed questions about how these external bodies of work could be integrated, leveraged, and utilized to ensure improved outcomes for students, educators, and schools. Specifically, committee members' input suggested:

- Incorporating key elements of other state plans associated with strategic initiatives such as the English Learners State Plan, the African American/Black Student Success Plan, the Oregon American Indian/Alaska Native Education State Plan, and Oregon's Equitable Access to Educator Plan
- Creating opportunities to intentionally connect large state initiatives or workgroups (i.e., Governor's Council on Educator Advancement, Graduation) to ESSA and Oregon's State Plan

CONCLUSION

Since first launching in January 2016, ODE's multipronged stakeholder engagement strategy has proven a key success in the development and implementation of Oregon's State Plan for ESSA; moreover, a sound plan rooted in community engagement and collaboration that is truly student-centered and honors the priorities of all Oregon students, families, educators, and community stakeholders.