



# Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor



OREGON  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

*Oregon achieves . . . together!*

**Colt Gill**

Director of the Oregon Department of Education

To Educators:

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) is seeking the wisdom of students so that state leaders may learn from their experiences, imaginations, courage, and hopes to inform planning for the future of Oregon, the world's nations and the planet. We believe that by listening to the voices of children and young people we can transform what we are learning - as we face the challenges of COVID-19 - into a new vision for the future.

In the spirit of inquiry and respect for student voice, ODE is inviting educators to facilitate conversations with students and then post a shared statement that captures what your students would like Oregon leadership to know. ODE will manage a website that offers back and can elevate student insights, ideas, and needs to government, school, business, and community leaders.

We know this invitation to educators comes at a time when you are being asked to completely rethink the way you connect with students and families, provide instruction and a multitude of other supports. We hope this invitation provides you with a meaningful way to hold space for students and their families. We hope this invitation feels purposeful and heartening.

The information gathered will be curated by ODE staff and shared back on the website. We will invite and imagine powerful statements from your students being read out and shared in public spaces like the floor of the legislature prior to their work sessions, in front of board meetings, and community forums. Each time creating an opportunity to elevate the voices of young people and shape the decisions that will impact our future.

Collectively, we can each play a role in realizing a beautiful and powerful opportunity to give our students sheltering at home a voice in this world.

If you choose to accept this invitation, here is how to proceed:

**Step 1:** Determine a way to have a good and thoughtful conversation with your students. This could be by phone, online, or even letter exchange.

**Step 2:** Select at least one question from [the list](#) that you feel will engage your students, or write a new one. Selecting the question may be part of your conversation with students. Teachers are encouraged to modify the questions provided as is appropriate for the ages and experiences of the children.

**Step 3:** Facilitate a conversation around the question(s) selected using the [Facilitation Guide](#). Students (as a group, when possible) collaborate with peers to find agreement to a short, inclusive and thoughtful response (about a paragraph in length) to their selected question that they agree captures the meaning of what the group would like Oregon leadership and community to know. The group's response is in the words of the students and welcomed in any language or format (poems, stories, etc). Please use the submission form for all written submissions. If you would like to submit a video or photo, please contact [ElevatingVoices@state.or.us](mailto:ElevatingVoices@state.or.us) for more information.

**Step 4:** Post the collective student statement to the website along with the school name, location, ages/grade levels of the students and teacher contact information.

As a state and as peoples of many nations, we have choices to make and a chance to discover new paths to follow. Children and young people should be centered in these decisions as we consider a future for the generations ahead.

It is my sincere hope that this effort might help us make the most of these difficult times and not squander the powerful reflections and visions of our children.

Sincerely,



Colt Gill

Director of the Oregon Department of Education