

August 2015

[www.osba.org](http://www.osba.org)

[facebook.com/osba.org](https://facebook.com/osba.org)

503-588-2800

800-578-6722

[info@osba.org](mailto:info@osba.org)

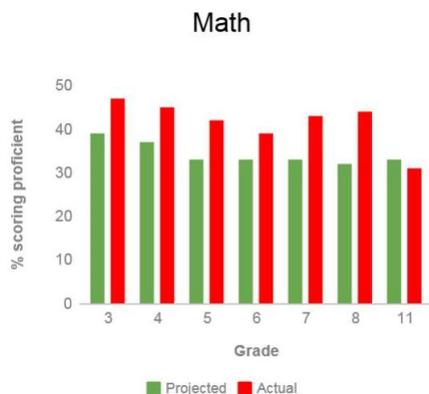
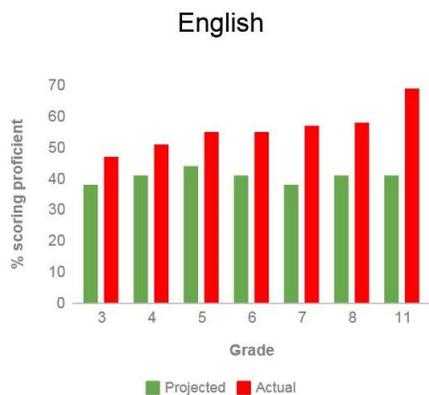
## Smarter Balanced results exceed expectations, provide challenges

Statewide test results from the new Smarter Balanced Assessment will be released Sept. 17. These results measure academic growth and establish a new baseline for Oregon students.

Based on preliminary data compiled by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), the release should bring ample measures of optimism and concern, as well as plenty of questions.

### Exceeding projections

At nearly every grade level, more Oregon students gained proficient scores (a 3 or 4) in the Smarter Balanced Assessment in spring 2015 than had been projected.



Source: Oregon Department of Education

On the bright side, the preliminary results show that with the exception of 11th-grade math, students scored higher – in some cases much higher – on the spring 2015 assessment than the state had predicted (see accompanying charts). The projections were based on field tests from the previous year.

It must be noted, however, that across all tested grade levels, fewer than half of students managed to score a proficient grade in math. English results were significantly higher. Test scores are rated 1 through 4, with students receiving a 3 or 4 considered to be on track to graduate from high school as college- and career-ready.

Furthermore, district testing participation rates hovered just above the 95 percent threshold required by federal authorities. Earlier this month, Salam Noor, Oregon's deputy superintendent of public instruction, wrote superintendents and principals to express his concerns about Oregon's participation rate jeopardizing \$344 million in federal funding.

That participation rate could drop even further when Oregon's new opt-out testing law (see accompanying story) takes effect in January.

Smarter Balanced ([www.smarterbalanced.org](http://www.smarterbalanced.org)) is aligned to Oregon's standards, and is one tool for measuring where students are on their path to college- and career-readiness. Because the standards and test are more rigorous than their predecessors, ODE has asked for patience and persistence from Oregon educators, students and parents as they adapt to a new, higher bar.

Derek Brown, ODE's interim assistant superintendent for assessment and accountability, says one of the hurdles surrounding the switch in state tests is communicating how students did on this year's Smarter Balanced compared with the previous Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS) test.

The new tests, given once at the end of the school year, go beyond multiple-choice and allow students to explain their answers, interact with texts, and build equations. In turn, these tests measure more complex skills and are designed to give parents and educators a deeper understanding of where kids are on their career and college paths.

"We've been working hard to understand the relationship between this year's results and align them with previous state tests," Brown said, but variances in standards and measurement make comparisons difficult.

"We know parents and school boards want to have that conversation," he said, "but it's risky and might lead people down the wrong path."

Brown acknowledged that possibly the biggest challenge in relating scores year-over-year rests in Oregon's Essential Skills high school graduation requirements. Those state that to graduate, students must demonstrate proficiency in reading, writing and math.

A primary method of proving that mastery is surpassing a "cut score" derived from a standardized test. That score has not been determined yet for Smarter Balanced, but Brown said it was possible that a 2 would become the "cut score" across the board.

But both he and Meg Koch, ODE's Common Core communications coordinator, emphasized that a score below 2 on Smarter Balanced would not in and of itself prevent a student from graduating. Districts have the option of trying other assessments to show mastery, as well as using locally administered and scored work samples.

Koch said the department will support schools and districts in their communication efforts. Last week, ODE sent out a toolkit of resources, which can be found at <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=4302>, to help communicate the results. One of the resources is a cover letter for parents to understand their child's results. The results pages show student raw scores in the different subject areas, as well as a breakdown on what are called "claim levels." An example for math would be discreet scores in "concepts and procedures," "problem solving/modeling and data analysis," and "communicating reasoning."

The results pages show parents where their child's score places them, between levels 1 and 4, and includes a description of the skills contained within the level in which their child scored.

Another issue stemming from the new assessment is the testing participation rate. The U.S. Department of Education's participation standard is 95 percent.

In an Aug. 17 email to school district leaders statewide, Noor, Oregon's schools chief, said participation statewide had barely met that 95 percent level. He noted that two key subgroups – African-American students and disabled students – had fallen below the participation standard in English and math testing.

Even more troubling, Noor wrote, is that 21 of Oregon's 197 K-12 districts – over 10 percent – had overall participation rates below 95 percent.

"I am deeply concerned by this decrease in participation for a number of reasons," Noor wrote.

Among them, he wrote, are the \$344 million in federal funding at risk, as well as the potential to limit the state's and districts' ability to identify and address achievement gaps. Noor said ODE would be contacting districts in coming weeks with plans on how to improve participation.

"With the passage of House Bill 2655, (which) goes into effect on Jan. 1 and gives parents and adult students the right to annually opt out of statewide summative assessments, it will be more important than ever that districts communicate with their parents and communities about the purpose and value of these tests," he wrote, "so that we can address parents' concerns and help them understand the impact of opting out."

### **Smarter Balanced key dates**

**Sept. 17:** Public release of scores – will include results by school, district and student demographic group

**Oct. 15:** School and district report cards released – will include student performance on state tests, but schools will not be rated this first year

**Jan. 1, 2016:** House Bill 2655 takes effect, requiring that schools notify parents about opt-out options from tests at least 30 days before state assessments are administered

### **Smarter Balanced Assessment Opt-Out FAQ**

Wondering how and when to comply with House Bill 2655, Oregon's new "opt-out" law on state testing? OSBA's policy staff has created a series of questions and answers to assist schools.

The new law, which takes effect in Jan. 2016, requires the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to develop an opt-out form for parents. Districts and charter schools will be required to inform parents about their options in having students opt out of state testing at least 30 days before the tests are administered in 2016.

Such notice must also be sent to parents at the beginning of the 2016-17 school year and beyond, and again at least 30 days before testing.

#### **Some frequently asked questions include:**

- What is opting out of state testing?
- Is opting out allowed?
- When does the law go into effect?
- Why are students opting out?
- How can a student opt out?
- What must districts and charter schools do?
- What about federal requirements?

The complete question-and-answer sheet can be found on the OSBA website. [Click here](#)

## Speaker unravels knots during ‘Summer Camp for School Boards’

Keynote speaker Mike Weber tied his audience in knots during OSBA’s annual “Summer Camp for School Boards” conference to demonstrate an important point.

Nearly 200 people attended the event in Bend, and many of them found themselves unable to unravel a mystery: how to escape from a partner when both were attached by strings looped around the wrists. After much twisting and turning, Weber showed them an easy trick to escape.



*Summer Board Conference attendees learn a valuable lesson from a keynote address on “Breaking the Unwritten Rules.”*

The lesson? “Most of the things that seem impossible are possible if they are important enough,” Weber said.

His keynote address on “Breaking the Unwritten Rules” focused on looking at problems from a different perspective to create solutions and provide more effective leadership.

Other notable speakers at the conference, pre-conference and Administrative Professionals Workshop included Margaret Bird (Children’s Land Alliance Supporting Schools), who discussed the need to maximize returns from land held in trust for schools, and Ann Macfarlane (Jurassic Parliament), who coached attendees on parliamentary procedure.



*Ann Macfarlane of Jurassic Parliament coaches attendees on parliamentary procedure.*

OSBA staff and guest speakers also addressed issues ranging from “The Promise of Oregon” campaign to recent legislative actions to school law to board chair responsibilities.

## In the Loop: Want to fill the gaps? Demonstrate them first

We are entering a new school year with all the optimism that comes with a fresh start. In Oregon we have set optimistic goals for public education to fulfill our children’s dreams of a promising future. The 40-40-20 goals aim for a 100 percent high school graduation rate by 2025 – very much on our horizon at 10 years away. As we start the new school year it is important to summon the urgency to meet that vision, confront new challenges and always keep our goals in sight.

Among the challenges we face? The state Supreme Court’s ruling on the 2013 PERS reforms means that rates will increase substantially in the 2017-19 biennium. The higher cost for districts takes money from the classroom. Health insurance premiums are also expected to rise, and in 2017 Oregon school districts will be subject to the “Cadillac tax” on health plans. Many plans offered by the Oregon Educators Benefit



*Betsy Miller-Jones  
Executive Director*

Board appear to trigger the tax. Oregon students have the second-highest class sizes in the country and spend one year less than the national average in first through 12th grade. Oregon is 46th in the nation in taxable resources going to K-12 education and our on-time graduation rate ranks 49th nationally.

Our challenges are clearly immense. As school board leaders it is important that we keep a clear vision and challenge our staff, students, community and state leaders to work together to get us there. We need to fulfill our promise to our students for an education that will prepare them for their future.

How do we do that?

As you plan for coming years, keep a running comparison of what it would take in your district to meet national averages on class size, full school year and days. What would it take to mentor, counsel and motivate for a 100 percent graduation rate? Build that model on paper, and identify the gaps. Where they don’t cost money, implement. Where they do cost money, we need to demonstrate the gap to the community and legislators and advocate for funding to meet our targets.

The Quality Education Model, designed to demonstrate what it would take for Oregon to reach a target of 90 percent high school graduation, would require about \$9.2 billion per biennium – \$1.8 billion more than the \$7.4 billion allocated for 2015-17. That would just get us to about the national average for class size and length of year.

The conversation with the public and legislators must be about where we want to be, and our commitment to that goal. Keep data at the forefront. Those data include student achievement test scores, class sizes, graduation

2015 Fall Regional Meeting Schedule

Date	City	Counties
Wed., Sept. 16	Seaside	Tillamook, Clatsop
Tues., Sept. 22	Roseburg	Douglas
Wed., Sept. 23	Bandon	Coos, Curry
Thurs., Sept. 24	Medford	Jackson, Josephine, Klamath
Tues., Sept. 29	Portland	Multnomah
Wed., Sept. 30	Clackamas	Clackamas
Wed., Sept. 30	Hillsboro	Columbia, Washington
Thurs., Oct. 1	Eugene	Lane
Thurs., Oct. 1	Salem	Marion, Polk, Yamhill
Mon., Oct. 5	Burns	Harney
Mon., Oct. 5	Vale	Malheur
Tues., Oct. 6	Paisley	Lake
Tues., Oct. 6	Pendleton	Morrow, Umatilla
Wed., Oct. 7	Enterprise	Wallowa
Mon., Oct. 12	John Day	Grant
Tues., Oct. 13	La Grande	Union, Baker
Thurs., Oct. 15	Redmond	Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson
Mon., Oct. 19	The Dalles	Hood River, Wasco
Tues., Oct. 20	Condon	Gilliam, Sherman, Wheeler
Thurs., Oct. 22	Albany	Benton, Lincoln, Linn
Thurs., Oct. 29	McMinnville	Yamhill

rates, educational achievement gaps and, perhaps most importantly, exactly what your district knows how to do if given additional resources to close those gaps. And how much it costs.

Student achievement data, and, yes, the Smarter Balanced Assessment tests, are part of that picture. We need to demonstrate clearly where we are in Oregon in relation to our expectations, and to other schools, communities and states. Those data give us leverage to close the achievement gap and properly prepare our students for their future. Share your successes as well – for example, the clear demonstration of what we can do with Career Technical Education, early education and improving high school graduation. But we must have the necessary resources to expand these programs to reach all children.

Without a clear expression of the gaps, and the urgency and motivation to provide the resources, we are only going to stay mired where we are. That will not meet our commitment to our students. Your leadership is vital in conveying this message and expressing it with the data and positive examples from your district and students.

Save the date for the 2015 Fall Regional Meetings



Keeping School Boards Informed, Engaged and Relevant

*The pace of change in public education is rapid. Fall Regionals give you a leg up.*

OSBA invites you to attend the 2015 Fall Regional Meetings to discuss opportunities and challenges facing boards and districts across our state.

Fall regionals are a great opportunity to meet fellow board members in your region, exchange ideas and build support for local education initiatives. And we need your help as well. Feedback from board members and school leaders helps guide our advocacy work and allows us to better address the service needs of our constituents: YOU. This is your opportunity to help shape the work of OSBA and impact the policies and programs we advocate for in Salem.

For more information, visit the Fall Regionals webpage: [www.osba.org/Calendar/Events/Fall\\_Regionals-2015.aspx](http://www.osba.org/Calendar/Events/Fall_Regionals-2015.aspx)

**Note:** Online registration and purchases through OSBA's website will be unavailable until Monday, Aug. 31 due to a scheduled upgrade.

## Promise update: New phase begins this fall with videos, photos

Less than a year after its official launch, “The Promise of Oregon” campaign is gearing up for its next phase.



OSBA staff and videographers from Blue Chalk Media will be visiting four school districts in the coming two weeks to shoot a video that will debut Nov. 13 at OSBA’s Annual Convention in Portland: [www.osba.org/ac](http://www.osba.org/ac)

In the next few weeks, the Promise team will also visit six more districts statewide to take photographs of at least 150 students for posting on the Promise website ([www.promiseoregon.org](http://www.promiseoregon.org)). The students will again be asked to say in their own words why they represent “The Promise of Oregon.”

Also coming in early 2016 will be the debut of four new videos showcasing cutting-edge programs – STEM, CTE, the arts and more – at four districts from around the state. Look for more information on those programs, as well as a list of forward-looking programs statewide, in a future issue of School Leader News.

During its first year, the campaign celebrated the accomplishments of Oregon students and helped galvanize support for increased funding for public schools. Legislators ultimately settled on a State School Fund figure of \$7.4 billion for 2015-17 – up \$850 million from the last biennium.

## OSBA Convention focuses on Promise, best practices

If you haven’t already done so, now is the time to reserve your spot at OSBA’s 69th Annual Convention Nov. 12-15 in downtown Portland. The theme is “Celebrate the Promise of Oregon: Sharing Best Practices.”

Keynote speakers include Nicholas Kristof, a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner and graduate of Yamhill Carlton High School. Kristof is also the celebrity face of the Promise campaign, which celebrates the accomplishments of Oregon students and promotes funding public education so they can reach their potential.

Other keynote speakers are John-Michael Keyes, who has promoted school safety since his daughter’s 2006 death in a school hostage situation, and Donna Hartley, an author and motivational speaker.

New board members elected since Dec. 1, 2014, receive a significant discount – it’s only \$75 total to register. All others receive \$50 off registration fees through Oct. 9.

Room blocks at the Portland Marriott Downtown Waterfront open Sept. 14, and are on a first-come, first-served basis. Attendees must register for hotel rooms directly – lodging is not part of convention registration.

Registration materials can be found at:

[www.osba.org/ac](http://www.osba.org/ac)

Questions? Contact our event staff at [info@osba.org](mailto:info@osba.org) or 800-578-6722.



**Note:** Online registration and purchases through OSBA’s website will be unavailable until Monday, Aug. 31 due to a scheduled upgrade.

## OSBA elections are approaching – be sure to vote

OSBA elections will be held this year from Nov. 16 to Dec. 18. Thirteen seats are open on the OSBA Board of Directors, as well as all 19 seats on the Legislative Policy Committee (LPC).

Open this year are all even-numbered Board positions (except position 2), as well as Board seats 1, 3, 9, 17 and 19. OSBA Board terms are for two years, and LPC terms are for one year.

Nominations are open through Oct. 2. Boards wishing to nominate must do so by formal resolution and timely submittal of nomination forms to OSBA.

Local boards will be voting on OSBA Board and LPC representatives for each region, as well as any resolutions. Fall Regionals, which begin in mid-September, offer a good chance to meet the candidates.

OSBA reminds members to ask board chairs to place the election on board meeting agendas.

Election materials and a calendar can be found on the OSBA website at:

[www.osba.org/About%20OSBA/LeftNav/Election\\_Center.aspx](http://www.osba.org/About%20OSBA/LeftNav/Election_Center.aspx)

## ODE advances District Improvement Partnership plans

---

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) has released plans on how it will partner with districts that are not meeting benchmarks in achievement, growth and graduation.

The plans are an outgrowth of a task force ODE convened earlier this year, and district improvement funding from the Legislature. The task force, which included school board members, provided recommendations on how to best spend the funding.

The department plans to begin identifying districts in September; they will be contacted in October by Salam Noor, deputy superintendent of public instruction. The District Improvement Partnership will operate similarly to the cycle of improvement for Oregon Priority and Focus schools, emphasizing turnaround principles and strategies, and accelerated timelines for evidence of improvement.

The ODE Office of Learning, Assessment and Accountability Unit will be coordinating the work. Additional updates are expected in early fall.

For more information, please contact:

Tim Boyd, ODE, School Improvement Specialist  
[tim.boyd@state.or.us](mailto:tim.boyd@state.or.us) | 503-947-5621

Shawna Moran, ODE, School Improvement Specialist  
[shawna.moran@state.or.us](mailto:shawna.moran@state.or.us) | 503-947-5944

## Legal Assistance Trust seeks three Board members

---

Three seats are coming open on OSBA's Legal Assistance Trust Board. They are open to any board member whose district is a member of the trust.

Since its founding in 1991, the trust has provided districts with financial support for litigation that has statewide impact. For example, it paid for legal fees associated with lawsuits stemming from reform of the Public Employees Retirement System in 2003 and 2013. The trust is supported by dues based on enrollment.

Two of the positions will have three-year terms beginning Jan. 1, 2016. One will have a one-year term beginning Jan. 1, 2016.

Trustees are appointed by the OSBA President, subject to approval by the Board of Directors. Trustees are reimbursed for expenses to attend meetings, which normally are held twice a year. Some meetings are held by conference call, but an annual meeting in April or May is held in Salem at OSBA offices.

Qualified board members interested in serving should contact Jane Leonhardt at 1-800-578-6722 or [jleonhardt@osba.org](mailto:jleonhardt@osba.org) by Sept. 15.

Information about the Legal Assistance Trust can be found at: [www.osba.org/Resources/Article/Legal/Legal-Legal\\_Assistance\\_Trust.aspx](http://www.osba.org/Resources/Article/Legal/Legal-Legal_Assistance_Trust.aspx)

## PACE trustee meeting recap: Trustees formulate strategic plan

---

Property and Casualty Coverage for Education (PACE) Trustees spent much of their July 24 meeting discussing the insurance pool's three- to five-year strategic direction and goals.

Although the plan was not finalized, trustees exchanged their ideas of where they would like to see PACE in the next several years. They specifically addressed three areas: coverage, trust stability and member services.



In other business, the trustees appointed Phil Wentz, facilities manager at Tigard-Tualatin School District, as trustee chairman, and Debbie Laszlo, risk manager at Redmond School District, as vice chairwoman.

Three trustees were appointed to the PACE staff evaluation committee: Sharla Andresen, risk manager at Central Oregon Community College; **Craig Prewitt**, Phoenix-Talent School Board member; and Wentz. The evaluation's purpose is to ensure that OSBA and Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO) staff who facilitate PACE are meeting the trust's expectations and needs adequately.

Additionally, the trustees received the annual investment update from PACE's investment services company, Russell Investments. Russell Client Executive Greg Coffey briefed the trustees on PACE's investment portfolio and provided educational information about the current state of the global economy and investment styles, strategies and options.

## Upcoming OSBA Events

---

**2015 OSBA Fall Regionals**  
September 16-October 29, 2015

**OSBA Board of Directors Meeting**  
September 18-19, 2015

**OSBA Annual Convention**  
November 12-15, 2015