



What Oregonians tell us

Chalkboard public opinion research highlights regarding accountability

For the past three years, Chalkboard has undertaken extensive public opinion research to gauge Oregonians' views of their public schools. Research has included telephone and web-based surveys and numerous large and small group discussions.

Accountability was a major issue in that research. The public demand for accountability goes much further than student performance on standardized tests. Based on input from Oregonians, here is our definition of accountability:

“Oregon schools will serve community priorities and will be accountable to their communities for student achievement results and efficient use of resources.”

Three key areas in which Oregonians would like to see greater accountability:

- **Budgets and funding.** Oregonians are split on whether schools need more money. A majority either believe the state *is providing enough money* to K-12 education or are soft in their support for more money. These soft supporters are easily persuaded to think otherwise when people call for things like less waste and changes in teacher compensation, evaluation and/or curriculum.

Citizens believe there is still too much waste and that administrative costs are too high – more than two-thirds of Oregonians agree waste and inefficiency are a *very big* obstacle to school success.

Nearly two-thirds of Oregonians believe that they would have greater confidence in Oregon's public schools if they "...could easily find standardized budget information about school districts I could compare and contrast." Chalkboard has started the Open Book\$ Project to meet this interest in knowing more about how education dollars are spent.

Generally, we learned the public values the following budget accountability information:

- ♦ Per-student spending by type and revenue source
 - ♦ Relationship of spending to academic achievement
 - ♦ Comparable national and other Oregon district data
- **Student achievement.** Oregonians believe schools are not teaching the basics and don't have high enough standards – three-quarters of citizens think helping all students meet state academic standards is a *high or urgent* priority.
 - **Teaching.** Oregonians feel strongly that teachers who don't perform well need priority attention – 75% see improving teacher quality as a *high or urgent* priority.

More key accountability statistics

Recent polling shows that **59%** of Oregonians want increased K-12 funding focused on those programs and services that have been proven to raise student achievement, versus **29%** who want funds spent to restore what has been eliminated in previous years due to budget cuts.

Other public opinion numbers of note:

- **82%** agree there need to be better processes for reviewing teachers' job performance and setting clear expectations and consequences for those in need of improvement
- **78%** agree that too many students in their local public schools are falling through the cracks
- **75%** think teacher salaries should be based on performance, not seniority
- **69%** agree principals should be able to hire and fire teachers in their schools
- **67%** believe that more experienced and more qualified teachers should teach in low-performing schools
- **61%** believe Oregon students should be able to attend any public schools they want in the state
- **60%** believe it is too hard to fire bad teachers
- **28%** believe all the waste and inefficiency have been eliminated in their school district, and just **25%** disagree with the statement, "There is too much waste and inefficiency in the local public schools"

Percentage of Oregonians who say the following should be "high" or "urgent" priorities:

Supporting the basics, like reading, math and writing	93%
Making sure district spending directly supports classroom teaching and learning	86%
Helping parents be direct partners in their child's education	83%
Creating effective "leadership teams" of principals, teachers and parents in every school	81%
Helping students develop good values	78%
Helping students develop strong work ethic	77%
Helping all students meet state academic standards	76%
Improving teacher quality	75%
Helping parents get involved as leaders in their schools	74%
Ensuring equity of facilities and resources among all schools	72%
Ensuring all schools have effective principals	71%
Equalizing resources/opportunities between affluent and low-income schools	71%
Providing high-level math and science programming	71%
Closing the achievement gap	68%
Increasing vocational programs to enhance work-related skills	65%
Recognizing and publicizing outstanding efforts of teachers and effective schools	62%
Providing more discipline in schools	61%
Improving the entire system of schools rather than dealing with one school at a time	61%
Creating peer mentoring programs for all new teachers	61%

Percentage of Oregonians who see these conditions as obstacles to school success:

Central administration waste and efficiency	70%
School districts not holding individual schools accountable	64%
Ineffective school board leadership	61%

Source: Davis Hibbitts & Midghall, 2004-06 public opinion research