



February 19, 2015

The Honorable Kate Brown  
Office of the Governor  
State Capitol Building  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Governor Brown:

Chalkboard Project supports the need for maintaining a highly effective assessment system aligned with our state's education standards. We are encouraged to see an emphasis placed on a balanced approach and on the need for assessment literacy among educators as presented in a recent white paper by the Oregon Education Investment Board, Oregon Department of Education, and the Oregon Education Association. We look forward to adding our voice to this critically important discussion.

Our work with educators confirms teachers want better support and professional development in assessment literacy, especially to meet the demands of the new state standards. In fact, Chalkboard this year has been providing assessment literacy training to educators as part of its commitment to support them as they adjust their instructional practice to meet the higher expectations. Teacher response and participation has been significant, underscoring the urgent need among educators to build a strong knowledge and practice base around assessments.

Teachers overwhelmingly support the new standards. In a recent survey, we asked more than 2,000 teachers about the Common Core standards and more than 70 percent endorsed the new standards as learning goals that will prepare students for college and career readiness; 63 percent agreed that with time most students should be able to achieve these standards.

Any assessment system we design must align with these new standards and must include the use of annual summative assessments for all students in grades 3-8 and once in high school. We are concerned, however, with the recent movement of downplaying the importance of statewide annual assessments for measuring overall student achievement, closing achievement gaps, and holding our public education system accountable for the significant state investment in it. While teachers must be well versed in formative and classroom summative assessment procedures to help make adjustments to daily instruction, this alone is not enough. Every healthy system needs an outside check to monitor progress and a statewide assessment given annually to all students as currently required does that.

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Furthermore, it is the cornerstone of a public accountability system that ensures that students historically underserved by public schools and who are most at risk are not forgotten or minimized. Statewide assessments provide transparency and are a tool to further equity of access to quality teaching and opportunities to learn for all students. This is why we unequivocally support the continued use of annual statewide summative assessments.

While we can support a one-year moratorium on using state assessments in school ratings and as a factor in teacher evaluations, we would like to participate in a deeper dialog of all stakeholders if there is consideration of excluding these measures beyond the 2014-15 school year. Strong teacher professional growth and evaluation systems benefit both teachers and students. A strong process must measure outcomes through multiple measures, including measures of student growth and learning. Again, more than 70 percent of teacher respondents in our survey agreed that their recent performance evaluation—based on multiple measures—represented a fair and accurate measure of their teaching and student’s learning.

The goal of assessment is to improve how our students learn and to ensure we are providing the best learning environment possible for all students. We support a deep look, involving a wide group of stakeholders, at how many assessments are currently being used in our schools and districts, while recognizing that statewide summative assessments of learning have a valid place in a balanced system. We cannot dismiss accountability nor can we accept mediocrity. We are committed to joining you and other stakeholders in helping create a highly effective assessment system and one that takes a balanced approach to the many purposes of assessment—improving student learning and education outcomes, providing transparency, and maintaining accountability. We owe it to our children, teachers, parents, and taxpayers.

Sincerely,



Sue Hildick  
President  
Chalkboard Project

cc:

Nancy Golden, Chief Education Officer, OEIB  
Rob Saxton, Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, ODE  
Dani Ledezma, Education Policy Advisory, Office of the Governor  
Senator Peter Courtney, Senate President, Oregon State Senate  
Representative Tina Kotek, House Speaker, Oregon House of Representatives  
Senator Arnie Roblan, Chair, Senate Committee on Education  
Representative Margaret Doherty, Chair, House Committee on Education