



HB 4051: Rural Education Task Force

Background

Today one-fourth of all public schools in Oregon are located in rural communities and combined these schools serve nearly 50,000 students. While Oregon has worked to understand disparities in educational outcomes for a variety of student populations, there has been little focus on understanding barriers faced by Oregon's most rural schools and the impact those barriers have on educational outcomes for this significant student population.

Recent research indicates that there are substantial disparities not only amongst rural students when compared to their urban peers in Oregon, but additionally when comparing rural students in Oregon to rural students across the country. In the "Why Rural Matters 2015-16" report conducted by The Rural School and Community Trust, researchers compared an array of measures and outcomes among rural students across the United States. The report concluded:

- **Oregon has the second highest rate of rural mobility in the country**—meaning Oregon rural students are more likely to change households at least once in 12 months in Oregon than in 48 other states.
- **Oregon has the third lowest graduation rate of rural students in the country**
- **Fewer than 1 in 4 rural Juniors and Seniors in Oregon take the ACT or SAT—the second lowest rate in the country.**
- **Oregon has the fifth lowest ratio of instructional expenditures to transportation expenditures**—meaning, compared to other states, Oregon is spending a higher percentage on transportation costs for students.

Additionally, we know that:

- **Rural students in Oregon are more likely than their nonrural peers to be chronically absent**
- **Rural students are less likely to have access to college credit bearing courses in high school than their nonrural peers**
- **Oregon's rural students are less likely to enroll in post-secondary education**
- **Once in a post-secondary institutions rural students are less likely to persist to the second year of college**

Policy Proposal

Convene a Task Force to include legislators, educators, administrators, and other key stakeholders to review data related to student outcomes in rural schools and review and recommend policy to support rural schools. Policies should support and emphasize impacts related to chronic absenteeism, graduation rates, student mobility, outcomes for underrepresented student populations, and advancement on to post-secondary education.

Sources:

Showalter, Daniel, et al. "Why Rural Matters 2015-2016." The Rural School and Community Trust, June 2017, www.ruraledu.org/user_uploads/file/WRM-2015-16.pdf.

ECNorthwest. Rural Education in Oregon - Overcoming the Challenges of Income and Distance. Chalkboard Project, Children's Institute, 11 Jan. 2016, chalkboardproject.org/sites/default/files/Rural%20Education%20Report%20FINAL_0.pdf.

