

IMPROVE THE RETURN ON OREGON'S EDUCATION INVESTMENTS

The Case for a Unified, Performance Based PreK-20 Education Budget

The Stakes Are High for Oregonians and the Oregon Economy

- Oregon's economy and social stability depend on well educated citizens. Higher levels of education create greater individual opportunity, a stronger economy, stable communities, and lower remedial social costs.
- Oregon needs to raise the bar in the educational attainment of its citizens.

Current Outcomes Are Not Acceptable, Especially at the High School Level

- The academic proficiency of Oregon children in elementary and middle school is passable but not impressive; it falls off in high school where fewer than half of tenth graders meet state benchmarks in writing and math, critical prerequisites for success in postsecondary education and employment.
- There is now too much attrition: only 15 of every 100 ninth graders persist past high school to an associate's degree or a bachelor's degree. Oregon has mediocre national ratings in higher education.

Our Balkanized Public Systems Are a Problem

- Oregon's public education investment is divided among four systems: PreK-12, community colleges, the public university system, and state opportunity grants.
- Their separate governance, budgeting, and funding obscures comparative policy choices and inefficiencies, and makes student pathways to completion more difficult.

We Need a Policy and Investment Vision of Public Education as a PreK-20 Continuum

- In postsecondary education, student success and failure start in earlier grades. From preschool through high school, the main aim of our public schools should be to prepare students for postsecondary success.
- Over the full education continuum, student attainment of proficiencies when ready should be favored over credits based on uniform seat time.
- In all postsecondary education, from apprenticeships to graduate programs, students should have wide choices and smoother pathways to their educational goals.

We Should Use the Budget as a Tool for Policy and System Transformation

- The Governor and Legislature should use budgeting and distribution of funds to make conscious policy choices and trade-offs.
- There should be one state education budget, transparent and performance based.

We Should Focus on These Immediate Issues:

- Produce a unified PreK-20 education budget defining dollars per student, numbers of students to be served, and expected outcomes.
- Charter the study of potential high-impact efficiencies and improvements through high school redesign, need-based aid responsive to tuition increases, a student-centered integrated data system, reassessment of K-12 transportation, and intensive management of rising costs in special education and healthcare benefits.
- Use the budget to identify and achieve critical public priorities, such as proficiency benchmarks at various K-12 levels, higher education engineering investments, and adequate need-based student aid to improve access to postsecondary education.
- Deploy the integrated data system to inform students about requirements and options, to smooth student transfers among schools and systems, to measure student and school performance, to gather longitudinal data on student and school success, and to use that data for system improvements.

If We Do This Right:

- Students will attain more education with fewer barriers. Employers will get the skilled workers they need to be competitive. The economy and public service revenues will grow. Citizens will understand and value their investment in education. Institutions will be more responsive to students and more accountable to the public.