



CONFERENCE

At an afternoon session at Tom McCall Elementary School in Redmond, teacher data teams from three schools in the district come together to unwrap science standards and share ideas on teaching strategies.

# DATA DRIVEN

## A STATEWIDE GRANT TURNS TEST SCORES INTO TEACHING STRATEGIES

By **MEGAN MONSON** / Photos by **JOSEPH EASTBURN**

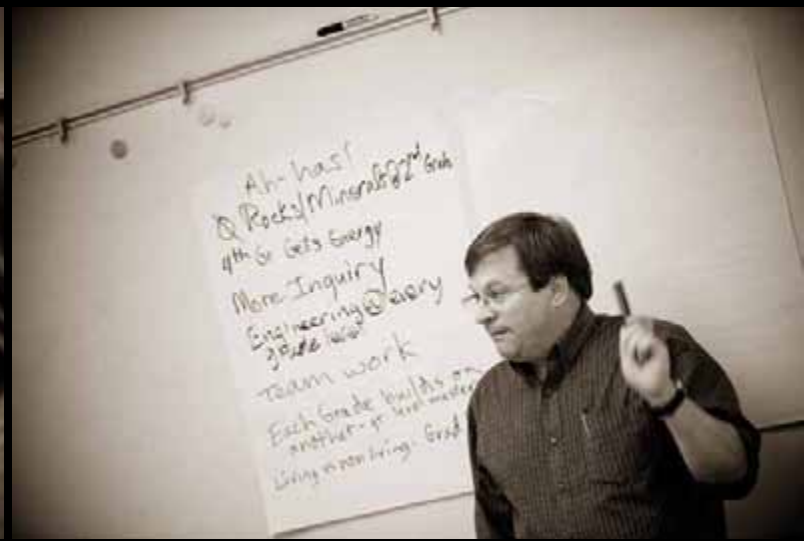
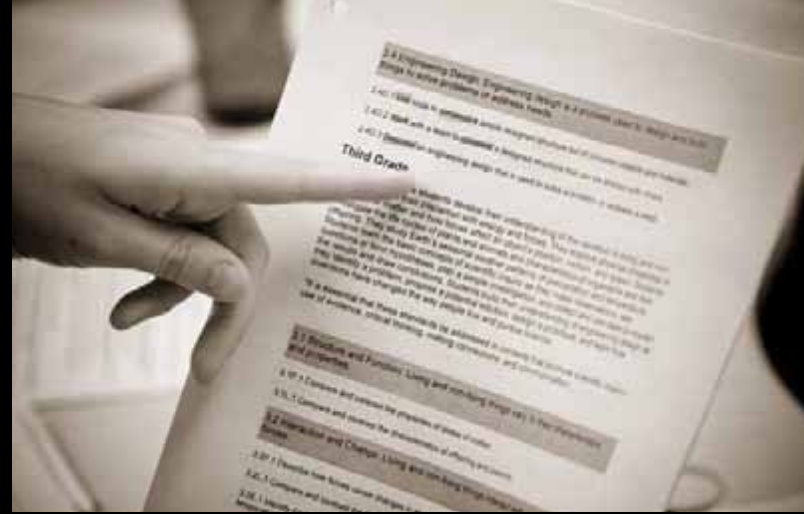
**I**t is precisely 8 a.m. on a Thursday morning, and all four third-grade teachers at Tom McCall Elementary School are gathered in Mrs. Alexander's classroom. For the next 55 minutes, the topic — as it is three times a week at different grade levels in the Redmond School District — is data. Specifically, how to use the conclusions drawn from test results to adjust teaching strategies, so students become more successful at building their vocabulary.

The teacher data team began by using OAKS data and classroom observations to identify literacy and math vocabulary as a weak spot in their students' learning. The word walls in this particular

classroom bear mute testimony to the work already being done: colorful vocabulary charts offer a matrix of math words, nonlinguistic clues and their definitions.

Today, the team is looking at recent test results and discussing teaching strategies on how to build lessons so students understand the words in context, aren't just writing sentences, and will continue to use them outside of school. By the time they're done, the teachers have spent nearly an hour in a productive collaboration, sharing lesson ideas, methodologies and brain power — all focused on math and reading.

This scene is happening in classrooms across the state, as



teachers are increasingly using data to make decisions about curriculum strategies, with the ultimate goal of increasing achievement.

### THE OREGON DATA PROJECT

Much of that activity can be credited to the Oregon “Direct Access to Achievement” Project, a grant-funded initiative offering a full slate of professional development that teaches strategies for accessing, analyzing and using data to target instruction to the needs of individual students.

The Oregon DATA Project, funded with a \$4.7 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences, is a highly collaborative effort with a design based on the needs of educators in the field. The project, now in its third year, is recognized nationally as a leading model of professional development on data use. It is a project of the Oregon Department of Education, with support by the Education Enterprise Steering Committee (EESC – see sidebar, next page).

“The project has benefited enormously from the grassroots support it has received from the very beginning, when we traveled to school districts across the state to ask people what they needed to use data effectively,” says Mickey Garrison, the project’s training director; she is also the school improvement director for the EESC.

Thousands of teachers have been trained through the project, along with administrators, ESD personnel, school board members,

state education officials, higher education representatives and members of the public.

The Oregon DATA Project’s current focus is on building sustainability by supporting the efforts of regional centers to build strong data teams and professional learning communities in participating districts. About 160 educators from all corners of the state have been certified to teach the training developed by the project. The training is also available on-demand through the project’s website ([www.oregondataproject.org](http://www.oregondataproject.org)) and through instructional DVDs, about 1,000 of which have been distributed to date.

The project’s funding comes to an end in September of 2011, and organizers are exploring grants and other funding options to extend the work.

### DATA IN THE CLASSROOM

In today’s world of educational accountability, teachers have access to a dizzying amount of information. Having access to data is not the same as using it effectively to influence instruction, however—that takes knowledge, practice and skill.

Session evaluations from teachers attending Oregon DATA Project training have included comments such as these: “For the first time, I understand data and how to use it to improve student learning,” and “I have felt my teaching to be much more focused and deliberate and I believe that this is what data collection is supposed to do for both myself and the students.”

At Humbolt Elementary, a K-5 school in the tiny Eastern Oregon town of Canyon City, teachers are harnessing the power of that data to make informed decisions about what they teach.

After attending training through the Oregon DATA Project, district testing coordinator Susie Garrison began working with the elementary staff at Humbolt on writing. “We decided early on that there would be no preconceptions, that we would let data drive all of our decisions.” Garrison guided the team through a careful process of gathering and studying test results and other data, and identifying the problem (writing conventions). The data team set a goal of increasing the conventions score on writing samples, and strategies included writing in complete sentences and doing daily oral language at all grades.

At the mid-year data collection, teachers had already exceeded their yearly goals. At the end of the year, fourth grade teachers got the results of state writing assessments — the conventions score was high. “They were so excited to see their results,” Garrison says.

As soon as school administration started seeing the positive results, Garrison says, “they started seeing it as a way to make really good curriculum decisions.” A high school/middle school teacher went to DATA Project training and became certified as a trainer

Redmond School District. “They have to have the data to narrow in on what the kids need.”

## BUILDING THE FUTURE

One of the most important features of the model is its focus on teachers, and on job-embedded professional development. “One of the best things about the project is that the training is done on-site with the whole staff, as opposed to sending a teacher or two to an off-site workshop and then sending them home,” says Analicia Santos, an instruction and assessment specialist for Douglas ESD who is working with data teams from the Oakland School District. “It’s an opportunity for teachers to direct — they look at the data, make the inferences, investigate it and actually become part of the strategy and goal-setting.”

Daymond Monteith, secondary curriculum supervisor for the Klamath Falls City School District, agrees. “We’re really targeting every classroom teacher,” he says. “It’s not just one key individual who deserves to hear this, but everyone who participates.”

The collaborative nature of the model, where K-12 and ESD trainers do the bulk of the training, is also helping build a statewide network that breaks down the barriers of geographic isolation. Teachers across the state are contacting each other to share ideas and resources, transforming the state of Oregon into one large professional learning community.

At a recent training in Klamath Falls, for example,

### For more information about the Oregon DATA

**Project**, visit the website at [www.oregondataprotect.org](http://www.oregondataprotect.org), or contact your local ESD. Training resources, including Instructional Guides and more than 40 video clips, are available online and also can be requested on DVD through the website.



herself. Since then, she’s started a language arts data team that includes middle and high school teachers. “We’ll be doing this district wide next year,” Garrison says.

“The things we are doing are really making a difference to our students and that is the bottom line,” Garrison says.

In Redmond, the results are also compelling. Since data teams were formed two years ago, the district has seen a 15.7 percent gain in math and 11.7 percent gain in language arts for all students. For students with disabilities, the numbers are even more dramatic: a 47 percent gain in both math and language arts. At the elementary level, there is no achievement gap between students in poverty and the general population; at one school, this demographic actually outperforms the general population.

“We have teachers now who can’t do their lesson plans without looking at their data,” says Becky Stoughton, a teacher trainer from

a teacher team from Redmond is helping Southern Oregon districts map out the infrastructure needed in order to have effective data teams. The approach resonated with many attendees. “It’s not about how we are going to use this data to improve OAKS scores,” says Shawn Spillane, a sixth-grade teacher at Mills Elementary School in Klamath Falls. “It’s more like how do we use the data to improve our teaching so all students benefit.”

The Klamath Falls event is just one of several taking place around the state recently, as the sustainability phase of the project heats up. Districts in seven geographic regions of the state, represented by Education Service District partnerships, are receiving financial support from the project in return for taking the training deeper. In addition, three ESDs have been chosen to study implementation considerations, including evaluation of the effectiveness of the project.

“I think teachers realize that this isn’t just another program or one more thing to do,” Spillane says. “It’s really about using skills and curriculum to improve student achievement, and that’s what teachers want to do — they want students to be successful and do well.” ■

## COLLABORATION IS KEY

The Oregon DATA Project's collaborative nature begins with its supporting organization—the Education Enterprise Steering Committee. The EESC is a partnership between the Governor's Office, Oregon Department of Education, Oregon University System, K-12, and Oregon Association of Education Service Districts. The EESC provides oversight to the DATA Project, and the group's school improvement director, Mickey Garrison, serves as the project's training director.

The DATA Project's work complements the strong work going on at the state level through the Oregon Department of Education. ODE recently wrapped up Phase III of the KIDS project, which created a framework that allows a school district to electronically transfer student records to another district, as well as transcripts from school districts to Oregon universities and colleges.

The Oregon School Board Association has taken its support on the road. Two OSBA employees have become certified DATA Project trainers, and they offer the training to school boards across the state.

The Oregon Association of Education Service Districts has been an invaluable asset to the project, and is driving the sustainability phase of the project. Teachers polled in the early stages of the project said they wanted the training to be delivered regionally, and ESDs in all corners of the state have delivered, providing impressive support and training to their component districts.

Higher education has also been involved with the DATA Project. Teachers can earn college credit for the work they are doing in their data teams, and several private universities are using the content from the project in their course work to strengthen the collaboration between K-12 and higher education.



### SUMMARY ANNUAL REPORT FOR OEA CHOICE TRUST

This is a summary of the annual report of the OEA CHOICE TRUST, EIN 93-0243443, Plan No. 501, Welfare Benefit Plan, for period July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009. The annual report has been filed with the Employee Benefits Security Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, as required under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA).

#### Insurance Information

The plan has contracts with UNUM LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY OF AMERICA, OREGON DENTAL SERVICE and KAISER FDN HEALTH PLAN OF THE NORTHWEST to pay Dental, Health, Life Insurance, Temporary disability, Long-term disability claims incurred under the terms of the plan. The total premiums paid for the plan year ending June 30, 2009 were \$68,369,507.

Because they are so called "experience-rated" contracts, the premium costs are affected by, among other things, the number and size of claims. Of the total insurance premiums paid for the plan year ending June 30, 2009, the premiums paid under such "experience-rated" contracts were \$35,120,769 and the total of all benefit claims paid under these experience-rated contracts during the plan year was \$31,213,745.

#### Basic Financial Statement

The value of plan assets, after subtracting liabilities of the plan, was \$32,147,944 as of June 30, 2009, compared to \$39,169,461 as of July 1, 2008. During the plan year the plan experienced a decrease in its net assets of \$7,021,517. This decrease includes unrealized appreciation and depreciation in the value of plan assets; that is, the difference between the value of the plan's assets at the end

of the year and the value of the assets at the beginning of the year or the cost of assets acquired during the year. During the plan year, the plan had total income of \$39,517,164 including employer contributions of \$42,001,916, employee contributions of \$664,012, and earnings from investments of \$(3,372,192).

Plan expenses were \$46,538,681. These expenses included \$4,866,438 in administrative expenses and \$41,672,243 in benefits paid to participants and beneficiaries.

#### Your Rights To Additional Information

You have the right to receive a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof, on request. The items listed below are included in that report:

1. an accountant's report;
2. financial information and information on payments to service providers;
3. assets held for investment;
4. transactions in excess of 5% of the plan assets; and
5. insurance information, including sales commissions paid by insurance carriers.

To obtain a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof, write OEA Choice Trust, 6900 SW Atlanta Street, Bldg 2, Tigard, OR 97223, (503) 684-3300.

You also have the right to receive from the plan administrator, on request and at no charge, a statement of the assets and liabilities of the plan and accompanying notes, or a statement of income and expenses of the plan and accompanying notes, or both. If you request a copy of the full annual report from the plan administrator, these two statements and accompanying notes will be included as part of that report.

You also have the legally protected right to examine the annual report at the main office of the plan (OEA Choice Trust, 6900 SW Atlanta Street, Bldg 2, Tigard, OR 97223) and at the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington, D.C., or to obtain a copy from the U.S. Department of Labor upon payment of copying costs. Requests to the Department should be addressed to: Public Disclosure Room, Room N1513, Employee Benefits Security Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20210.