

Superintendent's UPDATE

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Stimulus Update

By Susan Castillo

As you all know, Oregon will be receiving federal stimulus dollars to help our students weather these tough economic times. The investment in education through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) is designed to do two things:

1. help our schools make it through this current budget crisis and;
2. invest in the long-term strength of our nation through school reforms that boost student achievement

We are fighting together every day to get the best budget possible from the State Legislature and the most funding from the Congress so that we can do our work and focus on our students. I know how hard your job is right now. You are building budgets based on limited resources and limited information.

It may feel like you are walking a tightrope as you attempt to balance speedy investments that will help schools this school year, plan for the next biennium, and invest in strategies that will have real, long-term impacts on students.

Earlier this week, I was in Washington, DC, meeting with my colleagues from around the country. Much of our discussion centered on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. We met with Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and President Obama. Both delivered a very strong message, directing us to target the dollars we receive in this unprecedented help from the federal government. The president encouraged us to use these funds to expand programs that raise student achievement and to stop funding those that aren't delivering the results we want. They both reiterated the message delivered to state superintendents about a week ago at the White House that they expect transparency and accountability and that they are presenting us with a unique window of opportunity for our children. While this window comes at a time when we are facing an unprecedented state budget crisis, we must make every effort to invest the federal dollars in what we know will make the biggest difference for Oregon's students.

Oregon Education ARRA Website Launch

A new [website](#) by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) is available to provide school districts with up-to-date Oregon-specific information on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

"The Oregon K-12 ARRA implementation website is a good starting place for districts to get accurate and current information on stimulus funding, what it means for their schools, and how it will impact their budgeting decisions in the days to come," said Superintendent Castillo. "Districts should check in regularly as this website will be updated on a nearly daily basis."

The website will include specific funding information for school districts by program area. It will allow for easy access to USED guidance regarding these funds, including how they should be used, the submission of waiver requests, and the reporting requirements.

The website currently has all the latest communications and guidelines from the US Department of Education organized by funding type with basic allocations by school district. Plans for the Oregon K-12 ARRA Implementation website include a blog feature so educators can leave their questions. Educator questions will be used to keep up-to-date FAQ and Q&A information posted on the website.

[Click here](#) to go to the ODE K-12 ARRA Implementation website.

Free Data Trainings Help Schools and Students

By Susan Castillo

I am incredibly proud of the ways in which our school system uses data to improve instruction and better serve kids. By analyzing data, teachers, administrators, and district staff can refine programs, target scarce funds, and put their energies into techniques and strategies that have shown results. Around the state, educators are embracing data as a means of understanding what works and what needs improvement in their classrooms and schools.

But as wonderfully rich and useful as assessment data can be, it can also be very complicated. The key here is professional development – training that provides the knowledge and tools teachers and administrators need to use data to positively affect learning at the classroom level and help close the achievement gap.

This week, educators in Southern Oregon and Lane ESDs had just such an opportunity.

Thanks to the Oregon DATA Project (which is supported through a partnership among the Oregon Department of Education, Oregon Education Service Districts, K-12 school districts, the Governor's Office, and Higher Education) educators around the state have had access to high quality, free professional development.

During these tough economic times, professional development is especially vital. We are asking our schools and teachers to do more with less, to survive on fewer resources but to continue to raise the quality of education offered to our youth. Training in how to fully utilize data is one way to improve educational outcomes without increased spending.

The two-day training this week is one of eight trainings occurring around the state this spring and I am happy to say that we have seen a great deal of interest in participating in these opportunities. These trainings are offered at no cost to the schools and funds are provided to cover substitute costs. They are also not drawing on state funds as they utilize an existing federal grant.

These trainings offer participants a chance to evaluate common assessments used in Oregon and also create assessments aligned to instructional goals. Participants receive in-depth training on formative and summative data from a classroom and student perspective; practical instruction on how to organize, analyze, and tie data back to improved instruction; and tools for progress monitoring of student learning.

This is exactly what our schools need right now – free, hands-on, and practical tools that can be put to work right away in our classrooms. I commend both the experts offering these trainings and all of the teachers and administrators taking the time out of their busy schedules to learn how they can best utilize data to help their students succeed.



Oregon Diploma Talk

This weekly item highlights actions taken, various questions, and background relating to the Oregon diploma.

Part of the focus of the Oregon Diploma is getting students more actively engaged in their communities and world. The goal is that students will engage in education outside of the classroom, seeing the connection of what they are learning in school to their future goals and aspirations.

One opportunity for students to think critically about the future comes from the historic celebration of Oregon's 150th birthday.

The Oregon 150 Youth Legacy Symposium - Project 2059: The Future is Ours to Create is a unique youth legacy project designed specifically to involve Oregon's high school students in Oregon's future.

Below is a message from Henry Balensifer, who is the youngest member of the Oregon 150 Board and Chair of its Youth Legacy Projects.

Dear Educators:

I'd like to bring to your attention a Sesquicentennial Project that is geared toward high school students. It's called Project 2059: The Future is Ours to Create. Our ambitious mission is to "Actively engage today's youth to envision Oregon's next 50 years and create a blueprint for realizing that vision."

This is a great way for students to demonstrate that they are not just young people still learning. Rather, that they are a powerful force, a generation of people who want to help reshape politics and policy to make Oregon a safer, sustainable, and more livable place.

Project 2059 empowers high school students to create a collaborative vision of what Oregon should look like in the year of our bicentennial. They will consider issues that will shape our state over the next 50 years. They will use innovative technology to present their ideas and identify the best thinking of their peers.

In the summer of 2009, a select group of participants from around the state will gather at Willamette University to craft this input into a visionary platform for Oregon's future.

To get more information and to find out how to participate go to: <http://www.oregon150.org/projects/youth-legacy/>.

Thanks for involving your students in a process they will never forget.

Regards,

Henry A. Balensifer III



Opportunities and Financial Resources for Schools

Oregon's 9-12 Mathematics Academic Content Standards

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE), in concert with stakeholders, is currently revising Oregon's 9-12 Mathematics Academic Content Standards. Draft 6.0 is now posted for public comment and can be found [online PDF](#). The final draft will be provided to the State Board of Education for first review in April and adoption in May 2009. Input or comments about these standards should be sent to Paul.Hibbard@ode.state.or.us by March 31st.

Scholarships for Future Med Students

The OHSU School of Medicine student senate is sponsoring three \$500 scholarships for graduating high school seniors interested in becoming doctors. Applicants should be:

- A high school senior attending an Oregon high school
- Planning on becoming a medical doctor (MD degree)
- Planning to attend a four-year college and/or university
- Enrolling as a full-time college freshman in 2009-2010

Interested? Email Travis at geracitr@ohsu.edu for an application.

Deadline: All completed materials must be postmarked by April 1, 2009. Recipients will be notified by June 1, 2009.

Test Fee Program Grant Funded

The Oregon Department of Education has received notice from the USDOE that the Oregon Test Fee Program proposal has been funded for the 2008-2009 school year. This program pays the Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate examination fees for income-qualified students. Information about the Test Fee Program is posted at <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=884>. Contact [Andrea Morgan](mailto:Andrea.Morgan@ode.state.or.us) at 503-947-5772 for further information.

Susan's Schedule

Week of March 9th – Susan Castillo attended the Council of Chief State School Officers Legislative Conference in D.C. which included meeting with Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan and a visit by President Obama; met with US Senator Jeff Merkley, met with US Senator Ron Wyden; and attended a State Commission on Children and Families meeting.

Week of March 16th – Susan will meet with Representative Larry Galizio; host a statewide Diploma Summit sponsored by America's Promise; participate in a live US Department of Education TV interview for "Education News Parents Can Use" on the subject of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act; and participate in the State Board of Education monthly meeting.

The [March 2009 issue](#) of Superintendent's Pipeline is available on the ODE website.

For scheduling inquires, please visit our website at: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?=848>

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