



From the Desk of Susan Castillo State Superintendent of Public Instruction

"The decisions we make in life, ultimately, determine our destiny." How true this is. This unattributed quote sits on my office desk under a picture of Rosa Parks as a reminder of what a vital role we play in the lives of the children we have chosen to serve. It reminds me to never give up on, or make excuses for, the students I've

dedicated my energies to support. As leaders and educators in this state, we have made an unspoken promise to serve all of our students as we strive to ensure they have the knowledge and skills necessary to guide those life decisions and the destinies they will create.

I know that as part of that promise, you have been sharply focused on closing the achievement gap in your classrooms. These efforts are beginning to pay off as several new reports indicate. In the 2008-09 OAKS assessments, test scores rose for our Hispanic middle school students. In both math and reading, Hispanic achievement grew faster than their white peers in all but one grade this year. In high school, we saw graduation rates for Hispanic students increase by six percent in the 2007-08 school year. But there is more work to be done; the data clearly illustrates that the achievement gap is still pervasive in our state. While our Hispanic students and other historically underperforming groups made some commendable academic gains, these gains need to be more consistent and must include all of our student groups.

Oregon school districts have been working to close the achievement gap in many different ways. They are participating in the Oregon Leadership Network to train their leaders in the best methods of reaching minority students. They are incorporating school-wide Response to Intervention systems to better differentiate instruction based on individual student needs. They are exploring credit-for-proficiency options in their schools because they know that this method of teaching and learning has shown great success with students who have fallen short under traditional models. They are working in professional learning communities and data teams to guide targeted interventions and instruction to students. In all these ways, they are proving that when we couple a "no excuses" attitude with proven strategies for boosting student achievement – we can bridge that achievement gap.

At the Department of Education we are focused on helping schools increase achievement by continuing to improve our assessment tools and providing the best data and information possible about student performance. We do a good job at generating data. We need to do a better job at making the data more useful and transparent for our districts to support that teaching and learning so vital for academic success. For more information on the work underway, see information included in this newsletter and go to: www.oregondatapoint.org.

We remain committed to partnering with you on Oregon Diploma implementation. The Oregon Diploma stands as the single best means for ensuring that all students, regardless of race or economic status, have the tools they need for success. The State Board of Education has [shifted the proficiency skills timeline](#) for Apply Math (2014) and Writing (2013) Essential Skills due to current economic constraints; however, school districts are still required to provide instruction, administer state assessments, and document student performance to prepare students for the Essential Skills proficiency requirements.

Regardless of the economic challenges we've experienced this year, it has been an historic year for our nation. Our students can look to our first African American President and our first female Hispanic Supreme Court Justice and see that anything is possible. Both stand as wonderful examples of what we are working so hard for today in our public schools—believing in the potential of every child and working to help each and every student leave school prepared to fulfill their destiny. That work begins with each of us believing that we can make a difference. No excuses.

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New 6th Grade Sexuality Education Program for Oregon Schools

The Department of Human Services, in partnership with ODE is offering a new program this year titled "My Future – My Choice". This curriculum takes components from the peer-lead STARS Program and combines it with additional adult-lead lessons creating a comprehensive sexual health education package. "My Future - My Choice" provides practical tools, resources, and methods for educators and practitioners and meets Oregon Law and administrative rule on sexual health education that support youth making healthy choices.

Portland State University will assess the implementation process of "My Future - My Choice". PSU will invite schools to participate in online teacher surveys, open-ended written responses, and student feedback. More specific information regarding teacher, and peer educator training will be sent out in the October Pipeline.

If you have questions please feel free to contact: [Brad Victor](#), Sexuality Education Program Specialist, 503-947-5655.

Oregon DATA Project makes training available online

The professional development offered through the Oregon DATA Project is now available through its website, www.oregondataproject.org.

Over the last year, more than 1,000 educators from throughout the state have attended workshops aimed at increasing the use of data by instructional staff to improve student achievement. Now that training is available on an on-demand basis.

The training consists of video segments from the actual workshops, as well as PowerPoint presentations and supplementary materials. The online training is designed to be viewed whenever and wherever it is convenient for ESDs, districts and schools.

The professional development is also available through regional ESDs via certified trainers. More than 100 people from all over the state completed a rigorous three-day session that certified them to teach Strand 2 or Strand 3. Contact your ESD for details.

In other DATA Project news, a series of technical professional development sessions kick off in October. The one-day "Building a Culture of Data Quality" workshop will be held in eight locations across the state. The increased use of data by instructional staff to improve student achievement, in part a result of the DATA Project's instructional strands of training across the state, demands accurate data. This workshop helps meet that need on the technical side by providing a model to assist all districts in helping ensure the accuracy of data.

Training location and dates: Malheur ESD, Oct. 20; Umatilla-Morrow, Oct. 21; Southern Oregon, Oct. 27; Douglas ESD, Oct. 28; High Desert, Nov. 3; Willamette, Nov. 10; NW Regional, Nov. 17; Multnomah, Nov. 18.

