

# OREGON LEARNS: Executive Summary

## Report to the Legislature from the Oregon Education Investment Board

Never has education been more important to the lives and fortunes of Oregonians and our communities. Yet Oregon is falling behind. Our current generation of young adults—ages 25-34—is less educated than their parents' generation, with fewer earning a certificate or degree beyond high school. And almost a third of our students are failing to graduate with a regular diploma after four or even five years in high school.

These are troubling trends, made all the more challenging by increasing rates of poverty among households with children and persistent achievement gaps for children of color.

But there are encouraging signs of progress in schools throughout the state. At every level of education in Oregon, leaders and teachers are pioneering new practices that have enabled students to achieve their potential as lifelong learners and contributors to our economic and civic life. We need to connect these examples of excellence to create a culture of excellence across the system.

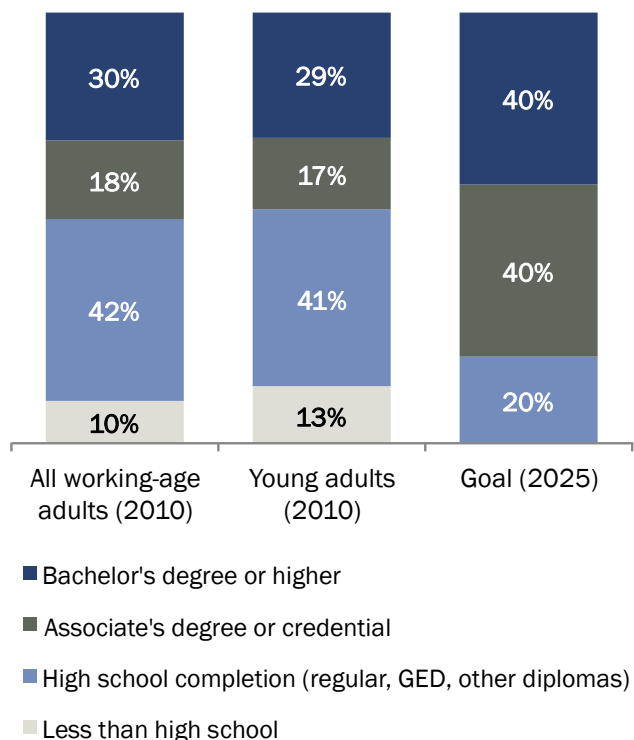
The 2011 Oregon Legislature addressed these challenges and opportunities head on, marshalling strong bipartisan majorities to enact:

- [Senate Bill 253](#), which established the most aggressive high school and college completion goals of any state in the country; and,
- [Senate Bill 909](#), which called for the creation of a unified, student-centered system of public education from preschool through graduate school (P-20) to achieve the state's educational outcomes.

SB 253 defines our goal: by 2025, we must ensure that 40 percent of adult Oregonians have earned a bachelor's degree or higher, that 40 percent have earned an associate's degree or post-secondary credential, and that the remaining 20 percent or less have earned a high school diploma or its equivalent. We refer to these targets as our "40/40/20" goal.

SB 909 created the Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB) and charged us, its members, with the

Oregon's 40/40/20 Goal



Notes: working-age adults are 25-64 years old; young adults are 25-34 years old. Only about two thirds of Oregon high school students now graduate within four or five years. These figures are higher for several reasons: they include other diplomas such as the GED, educated adults who have moved into the state, and adults who earn a diploma or GED in their 20s or later.

Source: ECONorthwest analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau (American Community Survey), Oregon Department of Education, and National Student Clearinghouse.

responsibility of “ensuring that all public school students in this state reach the education outcomes established for the state.” It directed us to report to the legislature with recommendations for the February 2012 legislative session.

The reference to “all public school students” in SB 909 is central to our mission and essential to the achievement of our 40/40/20 goal. Children of color are the fastest growing demographic group in Oregon. We must address and overcome the barriers that too often deter students of color and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds from achieving success in our education system. By doing so, we can accelerate progress to our goal. Indeed, we cannot get there otherwise.

This report summarizes where we are today and how much of a stretch it will be to reach the state’s educational goals. It identifies critical elements and strategies, and proposes decisions for the Legislature to consider in 2012. It describes excellent educational practices in place today and proposes new ideas for improving student success in the future. And it outlines the next steps that will allow the state to invest in better outcomes for learners.

The sense of urgency that motivated the passage of Senate Bill 909 animates this report as well. If we are to fulfill the promise of educational opportunity and keep pace with the world around us, we must find ways to improve the teaching and spark the learning of all students, now and every year hereafter.

## Key Strategies

Our plan is founded on three key strategies.

**1. Create a coordinated public education system,** from preschool through college and career readiness, to enable all Oregon students to learn at their best pace and achieve their full potential. At the state level, this will require better integration of our capacities and smarter use of our resources to encourage and support successful teaching and learning across the education continuum.

**2. Focus state investment on achieving student outcomes.** We define the core educational outcomes that matter for students, their families, and our state:

- All Oregon children enter kindergarten ready for school
- All Oregonians move along the learning pathway at their best pace to success
- All Oregonians graduate from high school and are college and career ready
- All Oregonians who pursue education beyond high school complete their chosen programs of study, certificates, or degrees and are ready to contribute to Oregon’s economy

These will drive our investment strategies, as we ask ourselves how to achieve the best outcomes for students. In turn, we must provide educators with the flexibility, support, and encouragement they need to deliver results. That mutual partnership—tight on expected outcomes at the state level, loose on how

*Oregon’s public education investment: 2011-13 budgeted (in millions)*

	General/ Lottery	Local Property Taxes	State and Local Subtotal	Tuition, Fees, Other	Federal	Total
Early Learning	\$316	-	\$316	\$55	\$456	\$827
K-12 Education	\$5,816	\$3,151	\$8,967	\$61	\$861	\$9,889
Post-Secondary	\$1,286	\$284	\$1,570	\$2,675	\$117	\$4,363
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,418</b>	<b>\$3,435</b>	<b>\$10,853</b>	<b>\$2,791</b>	<b>\$1,435</b>	<b>\$15,079</b>

Data from the State Budget and Management Division, Oregon Department of Education, community college websites and financial offices, and OHSU financial office.

educators get there—will be codified in annual achievement compacts between the state and its educational entities.

**3. Build statewide support systems.** The state will continue to set standards, provide guidance, and conduct assessments, coordinated along the education pathway. To enhance these efforts, SB 909 commits the state to build a longitudinal data system—tracking important data on student progress and returns on statewide investments from preschool through college and into careers. These data will help guide investment decisions and spotlight programs that are working or failing. As this system is integrated with school-based systems, it will enable teachers to shape their practice and students and families to take charge of their education. Beyond data systems, we envision the state will expand on the successful local model of professional learning communities to increase support for collaboration among educational entities and their educators. And we look forward to new efforts that will bridge the gaps that now exist between classrooms and community service providers, as the state and local governments work to coordinate health and human services with the needs of students and their families.

## Work Underway

Our plan to meet Oregon’s new education goals begins today. The remaining 18 months of this biennium will be the foundation-building period for improving teaching and learning across the education continuum.

We have developed a demanding job description for the state’s new Chief Education Officer. We have launched a national search to fill that position. And we will ask the 2012 Legislature to give the Chief Education Officer the authority that leader will need to draw on the resources and capacities of the state’s education agencies to organize a newly integrated state system of education from preschool to college and careers. (See “Legislation for 2012.”)

We will also ask the 2012 Legislature to authorize new initiatives to better organize, connect, and

upgrade a diversity of programs now serving infants and early learners, beginning in July 2012.

Every year about 45,000 children are born in Oregon. Roughly 40 percent of these children are exposed to a well-recognized set of socio-economic, physical, or relational risk factors that adversely impact their ability to develop the foundations of school success. These include poverty, unstable family backgrounds, substance abuse, criminal records, and negative peer associations. Moreover, Oregon’s history of delivering results for children of color is particularly disappointing, as exhibited in the well-known “achievement gap.”

SB 909 created the Early Learning Council under the OEIB to improve learning outcomes for children through the age of five. As part of this effort, the Council will inaugurate the use of kindergarten readiness assessments to better align early learning with the goal of having young children enter kindergarten ready for school, beginning with eight to 12 pilot projects in 2012-13.

At the same time, we will start receiving measures of the state’s return on investments in early childhood and K-12 from the implementation of a new longitudinal data system. This system will be built out over time to form the backbone of a coordinated information system to guide state investments and support all learners from preschool to graduate school.

## Legislation for 2012

Our Board has approved and describes herein two packages of legislation for the February 2012 session.

### **1. Organize a High-Functioning and Well-Coordinated System of Early Childhood Programs**

- Transfer programs operated by the state Commission on Children and Families (Healthy Start, Great Start, Relief Nurseries, and Home Visiting) and the Child Care Commission under the Early Learning Council.

- Establish a Youth Development Council under the OEIB and transfer all functions of the Juvenile Crime Prevention Advisory Committee and Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee.
- Remove all statutory requirements currently imposed on counties related to county Commissions on Children and Families, including requirements for establishment, operation, membership, and planning.
- Establish accountability hubs to serve as administrative agents for coordination of early learning services across Oregon, beginning July 1, 2012.

## 2. Organize a System of Accountability and Support to Ensure Student Success from Pre-K to College and Career Readiness

- Achievement Compacts: Beginning in the 2012-13 school year, we propose to have in place a system of achievement compacts that will engage all educational entities in the state in a coordinated effort to set goals and report results focused on common outcomes and measures of progress in all stages of learning and for all groups of learners. These achievement compacts will become new partnership agreements with our educational institutions, and living documents that will continue to evolve and improve over time. These achievement compacts will enable us to:
  - Foster communication and two-way accountability between the state and its educational institutions in setting and achieving educational goals;
  - Establish a mechanism to foster intentionality in budgeting at the local level, whereby governing boards would be encouraged to connect their budgets to goals and outcomes; and,
  - Provide a basis for comparisons of outcomes and progress within districts and between districts with comparable student populations.

- Chief Education Officer: Give the Chief Education Officer the authority needed to organize the state's integrated P-20 education system from pre-K to college and careers.

## Plans for 2013-15

During 2012 and in preparation for the 2013 Legislative Assembly, we will:

- Work with the Chief Education Officer to reorganize and focus state resources and management systems on the needs and priorities of the P-20 system, streamline governance and administration, arrive at one entity for the direction and coordination of the university system, develop legislation for independent boards for universities that opt to establish them, and free up resources to better support teaching and learning;
- Develop budget models for the 2013-15 biennium that provide sustainable baselines of funding for all educational entities and investment models that encourage innovation and reward success;
- Continue to reach more of our neediest children and prepare them to enter kindergarten ready for school; and,
- Develop agendas for student success by promoting the expansion of best practices and pursuing promising new ideas to motivate students and engage communities.

Our hope is that this new direction for Oregon offers to the student, a promise; to the educator, an invitation to lead; to the taxpayers, a return on investment; and to legislators, employers, community leaders, and educational organizations, a new partnership for educational achievement in Oregon.

[Click here to read complete report.](#)