

K-12 Systemic Risk Report

State Leaders and Policymakers Must Address Persistent System Risks to Improve K-12 Equity and Student Success

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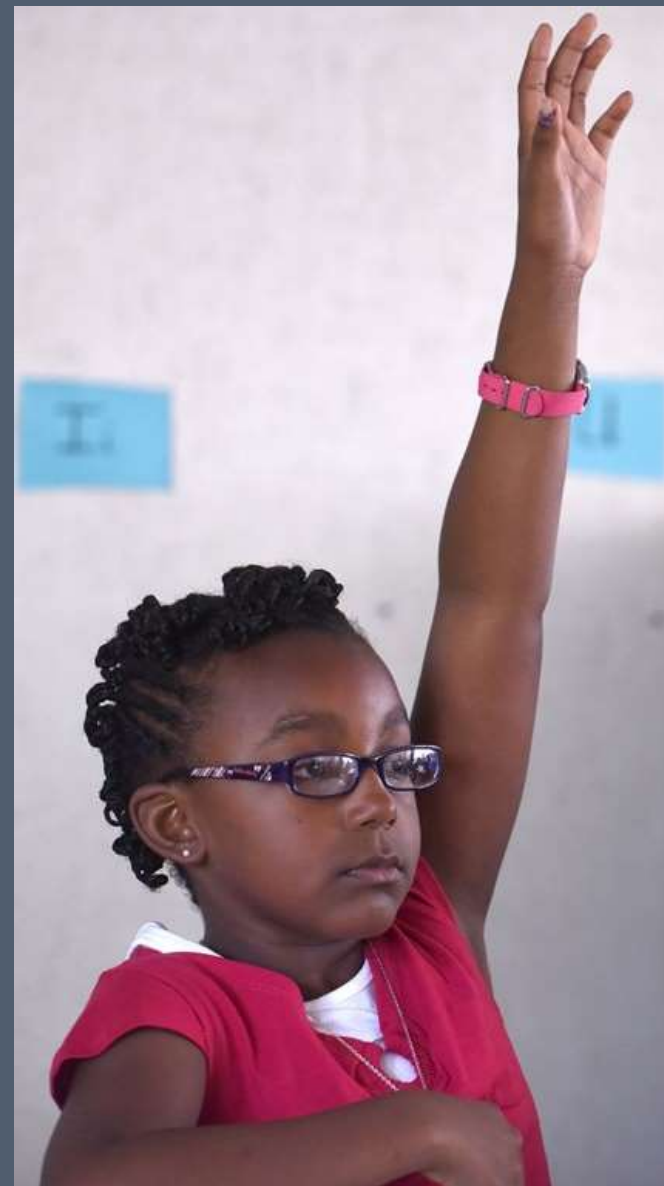
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Why this report matters

- The Student Success Act provides an extra \$1 billion of tax money a year for early childhood education and K-12 school improvement.
- Oregon's previous three major K-12 improvement efforts were all abandoned, underscoring the importance of addressing risks early on
- This advisory report identifies five key risks we found that could undermine K-12 system improvement as the state implements the 2019 Student Success Act



Objective & scope

- Our intent with this systemic risk report is to highlight systemic risks these state leaders can address to improve the K-12 system.
- Highlights key risks found while conducting our audits and follow-up reports.
- The report covers reports we released between 2016- 2021

What we found

Risk #1: Performance Monitoring and Support

1

Our audits have repeatedly found gaps in how ODE tracked performance and steps in when schools or districts struggle

2

The Student Success Act added staff and requirements that could help ODE improve in this area

3

State leaders must work with ODE to ensure monitoring of district performance and state support

Suggested Leadership Actions Risk #1

1. Closely track ODE's performance monitoring of grants and the agency's interventions when needed to support district or contractor success, including monitoring and intervention under the Student Success Act, and development of new Title I support and school improvement procedures. Clarify in statute where ODE's responsibility is weak or unclear
2. Similarly, closely track work by ODE's new Office of Education Improvement and Innovation, including how the office is monitoring and measuring performance of districts and its own efforts to help districts
3. Monitor and support ODE's efforts to improve inadequate performance measurement of alternative and online schools, and adopt statutes that hold public district and charter online schools, particularly statewide and regional online schools, to stronger standards
4. Ensure ODE has adequate staff to monitor grant and district performance and to support districts and schools in improving performance.
5. Provide funding and, where needed, statutory authority for ODE to collect data from districts on course grades and specific credits attained by middle and high school students, a key to pinpointing graduation roadblocks

What we found

Risk #2: Transparency on Results and Challenges

1

Reporting results effectively is one of the best ways to improve the K-12 system.

2

Oregon's reporting of student outcomes had important gaps.

3

ODE should report challenges to implementing the Student Success Act, and other programs

Suggested Leadership Actions- Risk #2

1. Require and support thorough ODE reporting and highlighting of both school improvement progress and challenges to effective implementation to the State Board of Education and the Legislature, including concerns raised by districts and stakeholders. Provide additional staff if necessary.
2. Ensure results — or the fact that results have not yet been measured — are clearly reported and discussed in the Legislature for key ODE programs. Include the Student Success Act, Measure 98, Title I and other efforts under ESSA, and additional grants aimed at student success and equity, such as African American Black Student Success grants and grants for American Indian/Alaska Native and English learner students.

What we found

Risk #3: Spending Scrutiny and Guidance

1

Rapid increase in school district costs could reduce the impact of the Student Success Act

2

ODE has made progress evaluating spending

3

ODE needs support from state leaders to publicize and meaningfully follow up on results

Suggested Leadership Actions- Risk #3

1. Support ODE in providing more analysis of effective and efficient school district spending and in providing additional information and useful tools for districts to benchmark and evaluate their spending. Ensure the agency details the most substantial findings in the Quality Education Commission's annual report.
2. Monitor the depth and effectiveness of ODE's interaction with school districts on spending.
3. Ensure ODE works with districts and other stakeholders to enhance transparency and analysis of district spending, develop academic return on investment models, and increase financial training for district administrators.

What we found

Risk #4: Clear, Enforceable District Standards

1

Division 22 standards lacked clarity and enforceability

2

ODE's assurance of district compliance was limited and largely complaint-driven.

3

ODE had begun efforts to improve Division 22 standards and assurance

Suggested Leadership Actions- Risk #4

1. Monitor and support improvements in Division 22 standards for clarity and enforceability and in ODE's assurance and support efforts under its Division 22 improvement process.
2. Provide more staff if necessary to build a robust assurance effort that supports and meaningfully monitors districts in complying with the standards and assures compliance.

What we found

Risk #5: Governance and Funding Stability

1

ODE administered more than 108 state and federal grants, with new grants and initiatives added each legislative session.

2

Oregon's two-year legislative cycle often pushes leaders to request reports on grant programs before there's enough time to see results.

3

Many separate programs, unrealistic timelines, and frequent changes in funding priorities and leadership can undermine reform effort.

Suggested Leadership Actions- Risk #5

1. Support ODE in developing a comprehensive road map of programs to improve K-12 education that includes student populations served, funding, scale, district reporting requirements, performance measurement requirements, and performance expectations over time. Focus particularly on programs supporting struggling schools and vulnerable students.
2. Use the road map to ensure new K-12 initiatives and requirements are aligned with existing ODE school improvement work, and track the number of new programs introduced each legislative session. This important step by the Governor and Legislature would help foster coordinated action at ODE, reduce duplication, and reduce administrative burdens on the agency and school districts
3. Require programs to have strong performance measurement plans and robust interim updates, then focus on incremental improvements, maintain adequate long-term funding, and allow time for meaningful analysis of results.

Questions?

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