

HB 2009, SB 141



Accountability

Chair Frederick, Vice-chair Weber, Committee members

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Oregon PTA regarding SB 141 and its corresponding House bill HB 2009.

Oregon PTA represents thousands of parents, family members, and educators from all across the state. With over 125 years of advocacy for the well-being and success of Oregon's children, we proudly represent thousands of parents, family members, and educators across the state.

Role of families in accountability

Families are essential stakeholders in school accountability. Parents engage year-round by consulting with teachers, counselors, and school administrators when their children face challenges. Parents participate in local school site councils, tasked with school improvement by statute,¹ where we help to analyze interim test results and explore potential improvements. Our voices at district committees and school board meetings consistently advocate for all students.

No one feels more urgency in addressing student outcomes than families. We experience firsthand the struggles our children face in the classroom. Engaging families in accountability processes leads to stronger partnerships between families and schools, fostering shared responsibility for educational success.

Support for the bill in general

We support several elements of HB 2009 and SB 141, including the following provisions:

- The addition of K-2 attendance and 8th grade math as additional metrics.
- Stronger support for timely interim assessments that can inform teaching and learning.
- Reduction of redundancies in reporting requirements.
- Streamlining and re-focusing the work of ODE.

While we largely support the legislation, we see opportunities to strengthen it further through additional amendments and revisions, outlined below. Additionally, we wish to highlight potential improvements to the -1 amendment and express our significant concerns regarding the proposed "Directed Spending" language.

¹ [ORS 329.704](#)

Additional adjustments to the -1 amendment

- **Expanding local metrics**

District, school staff, and parents understand the importance of nonacademic information about their students. Factors such as students' sense of belonging and overall wellbeing often directly influence attendance and academic success. Cognitive skills that go beyond reading and mathematical comprehension are essential building blocks for lifelong learning.² **School districts should be able to include more nonacademic data into the local metrics**, especially as those skills are foundational to ensuring that they are prepared for success in the classroom and beyond.³

- **Role of family engagement and shared responsibility**

Educational success must be built on a genuine partnership between families and schools. Parents and caregivers need accurate, timely, and easily understandable communication from schools to be a good partner⁴ and to hold themselves, students, and schools, accountable. Improved student outcomes won't come from sweeping changes at ODE but many little changes in classrooms and homes across Oregon.

Yet, budget constraints severely limit resources available for successful family engagement initiatives.

For example: in at least one Oregon school district, the costs of printing and distributing students' quarterly report cards have led to a shift to online-only access, navigated by parents.⁵

Legislative action must include provisions to improve family-school communication and bolster family engagement efforts.

- **Student-focused accountability measures and growth targets**

Currently, most aggregated accountability data and annual changes/growth targets associated with it don't account appropriately for changes in underlying student demographics. Comparing test results from e.g. last year's 4th graders to this year's 4th graders ignores that these are different groups of students with different needs, backgrounds, and group dynamics.

² Anya Kamenetz, "[Nonacademic Skills Are Key To Success. But What Should We Call Them?](#)", NPR, May 28, 2015.

³ Danielle Ewen and LeighAnn M. Smith, "[Fostering School Success with Standards for Nonacademic Skills](#)" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2015).

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https://bealearninghero.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/B-flation_Gallup_Learning-Heroes_Report-FINAL.pdf

⁵ <https://secure.smore.com/n/j67hm-lee-family-bulletin-january-6?ref=email>

For example: Last year's 4th grade cohort at an elementary school might have been exceptionally large resulting in a class size of 35 students, this year's cohort might be much smaller and have only 24 children in the classroom and we would expect it to score higher on tests simply because of the change in demographics. This makes comparisons or drawing further conclusions from the data next to impossible.

Even in the rare cases of cohort comparisons, it is typically impossible in the existing systems to account for changes within this cohort (which can be significant for individual schools, especially Title 1) when making time-over-time comparisons. It's also difficult to track cohorts across school changes (ie elementary to middle to high school).

Student progress must be tracked longitudinally to build a truly student-focused accountability system. Growth based models ensure that each student makes meaningful progress every year, regardless of their beginning proficiency level.

- **Interim assessments**

Working with interim assessment data in school site councils, we would like to note that those systems (e.g. MAPGrowth, iReady, DIBELS) are often not designed to easily provide aggregated trend data as they are focused on individual student progress.

However, these systems often lack transparency in methodology, making it difficult for schools and districts to interpret and use the data effectively. We recommend that ODE conduct a study on best practices in interim assessment use and develop clear transparency guidelines for testing providers.

Significant Concerns About State Takeovers

Regarding the proposed state takeover of certain funding decisions, several outstanding issues need attention to ensure that our students' needs remain the priority.

- a) A significant share of "general purpose grant expenditures" is federally mandated, particularly for students in special education. **ODE should not have unchecked discretion to divert funds from students with disabilities or otherwise make it impossible for a district to meet other federal and state mandates** such as PERS.
- b) To consistently implement best practices statewide, ODE must align their identification across programs, through close collaboration between the coaching program and the Quality Education Commission. **Practices recommended by coaches should integrate into or become part of the Quality Education Model.** This approach ensures these practices are factored into district financial planning and promotes consistent advice, regardless of changes in coaches, ODE leadership, or gubernatorial administrations.

- c) The legislation includes no clear mechanisms to hold **ODE accountable** for the spending decisions it will be making on behalf of the districts. This reduces, rather than increases the overall accountability of the system.
- d) The absence of clear timelines or exit criteria to unwind oversight is a significant flaw. Without these safeguards, **there is no recourse if ODE interventions fail to provide outcomes.**

We would also like to point out that state takeovers of school districts are not evidence-based⁶ or research-aligned⁷, on the contrary.⁸

“Studies have found that takeovers don’t increase academic achievement. [...] further] ‘On average, we find no evidence that takeovers generate academic benefits.’”⁹

Rather than promoting unproven practices - such as state takeovers¹⁰ -, we strongly support focusing on strategies that are research-aligned and evidence-based: Study after study has shown, student success begins with supports, programs and funding that is truly adequate to meet their needs.

An actual investment in schools is needed

The Governor’s proposed budget of \$11.36 billion, while presented as a “historic” investment¹¹ in our schools, only sustains current service level funding. Current service level (CSL), it is by definition simply maintaining the - inadequate - status quo. It further makes the \$500 million in cuts to school CSLs from the 2023-25 biennium¹² permanent instead of reversing them.

⁶ Beth Schueler, Melissa Arnold Lyon, and Joshua Bleiberg. (2023). [Do state takeovers of school districts work](#). Brookings Institution.

⁷

<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/state-takeovers-of-school-districts-still-happen-new-research-questions-their-value/2024/04>

⁸ Schueler, Beth E., and Joshua Bleiberg. (2021). [Evaluating Education Governance: Does State Takeover of School Districts Affect Student Achievement?](#)

⁹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/08/04/school-takeovers-questionable-benefit-houston/>

¹⁰ <https://www.idra.org/resource-center/state-takeovers-of-school-districts-dont-work/>

¹¹ <https://mailchi.mp/oregon/governor-kotek-introduces-bill-to-boost-student-outcomes-support-schools>

¹² Exhibit 2 in

<https://www.oregon.gov/ode/reports-and-data/taskcomm/Documents/M000266%20DOE%20Quality%20Education%20Model%20Report%202024.pdf>

This level of funding does not address the significant cuts made in prior years or align with the deeply-researched Quality Education Model or the adequacy benchmarks set by the AIR study commissioned by the legislature.

Schools and parents aren't asking for a "blank check"¹³ but for resources that reflect educational best practices and allow districts to address long-standing needs, be accountable to their communities, and hopefully, fix some leaking roofs as well.^{14 15 16}

We look forward to continuing this important conversation and working collaboratively to create policies that improve student outcomes, strengthen family engagement and ensure equitable access to a quality education for all students.

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¹³

<https://oregoncapitalchronicle.com/2025/03/10/state-education-officials-would-have-power-to-intervene-in-struggling-schools-under-governors-plan/>

¹⁴

<https://www.athleticbusiness.com/facilities/gym-fieldhouse/article/15737019/damaged-oregon-hs-gym-closed-due-to-thousands-of-pounds-of-snowfall>

¹⁵

<https://www.oregonlive.com/education/2019/10/beaverton-school-closed-due-to-roof-leaks-on-track-to-open-the-first-week-of-november.html>

¹⁶ <https://katu.com/news/local/roof-leaking-at-n-portland-elementary-school>