

ODE Video Explains Achievement Standards Review

by Bend Weekly News Sources

SALEM — State Schools Superintendent Susan Castillo today released a web-based video program giving educators and members of the public an overview of the recent review of the state's Educational Achievement Standards. This review, conducted in a three-day, mid-December meeting, recommended adjustments to the standards that will be considered, and possibly adopted, by the State Board of Education at their March meeting. Over 300 participants from around the state—teachers, administrators, parents and members of the public—comprised over a dozen panels organized by subject area and grade level to conduct the review. The video was prepared by ODE as a convenient way to inform their statewide audience about the process and the methods used. The ten-minute video can be accessed at <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=849>

How students compare to the achievement standards is an important measure of the success of Oregon schools, and a large part of public perception of how local schools are doing. The standards were first set in 1996 by groups of Oregon educators and citizens who carefully considered where to establish the point that divides acceptable from unacceptable performance. “Periodic adjustments in the achievement standards are desirable, as the state content standards have changed. Also, longitudinal data across grades is available now that didn't exist in 1996 that can help inform our decisions,” according to Tony Alpert, Director of ODE's Assessment Office. “We firmly believe that if schools are given adequate resources, all students can learn the rigorous material included in the state content standards,” said Susan Castillo, Oregon's Superintendent of Public Instruction. “But we need a statewide consensus on what evidence we'll accept to show that students have learned the content. By reviewing the achievement standards at this time, we have an opportunity to learn how people all around the state answer that question.”

Alpert also noted the role of the Federal government's No Child Left Behind regulations. “When the Federal government reviewed our statewide assessment system during the 2005-06 school year, they told us it was time to look at the achievement standards. We already knew that updating needed to be done; they just said ‘do it now.’”

The video is also being used in a series of field reviews of the proposed standards being conducted in January and February at seven locations throughout the state by ODE staff. ODE's assessment testing program originated in the 1970s when it tested a sample of Oregon students as a way to identify strengths and weaknesses in the state's curriculum. The program expanded to testing every student at grades 3, 5, 8 and 11 in 1991. The high school test moved from grade 11 to grade 10 in 1996. Currently, all students in grades 3-8 and 10 are tested in Reading and Math every year, while Writing is tested at grades 4, 7 and 10 and Science is tested at grades 5, 8 and 10. The content of the tests is determined by an existing set of Statewide Content Standards. Applying the Performance Standards to the test performance determines whether students and schools are classified as meeting, exceeding, or not meeting state standards. Those designations, in turn, factor into the federally required reports of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). They also are used in calculating the ratings given to schools on the state report cards.

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