

Oregon schools return to paper-and-pencil assessments

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

TESA testing is suspended until the end of the 2006-07 school year, Vantage TESA contractor claims \$2.8 million is owed by ODE

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) announced this week that all Oregon schools will use paper-and-pencil assessment tests in math and reading for the remainder of the 2006-07 school year. This action is necessary because ODE's contractor for TESA (Technology Enhanced Student Assessment), Vantage Learning, has declined to continue performing services required under the contract. ODE exhausted every option to continue with TESA until the end of the school year. ODE is working with the Oregon Department of Justice to explore its legal options.

Vantage, in a statement on their web site, claims that they have terminated their contract with ODE because of ODE's failure to "pay for past and continued TESA service". ODE says Vantage has submitted "past-due" invoices for \$2.8 million.

Moving forward, ODE has two goals: the first is to provide a valid, reliable test score for every student in the state; the second is to ensure that all schools and school districts meet their obligations under state and federal law.

TESA testing in reading, math and science is suspended until the fall of 2007. No further use of the Vantage TESA system is authorized. ODE understands the impact of this decision on students, teachers and schools. In order to minimize the negative impact of the transition to paper-and-pencil, ODE makes the following commitments:

ODE is moving to produce test booklets and answer sheets in reading and math and have those sorted and distributed to districts by May 4th. Science testing will be suspended until next year; juried assessments in science at the CIM-level are still available. The paper and pencil multiple-choice testing window will be extended until May 31. Schools that have already received paper and pencil assessments may begin testing immediately or can choose to wait and test later in the year. By May 4th, districts will receive a paper-and-pencil assessment that is intentionally designed to reduce the impact on class-time by allowing

completion within a single class period. These tests will provide a valid and reliable overall score with the least impact possible on the classroom. Districts will determine who will be tested. Scores received on TESA assessments may be used. If a student has a passing score, the district may choose not to re-test. Students with disabilities may use the same accommodations with paper-and-pencil testing that they used with TESA. ODE will provide hard copies of administration manuals for teachers. ODE will make training materials available on the ODE website by April 16th. More information will be coming as it is available. ODE will create a page on the ODE website with updates and frequently asked questions (FAQ) to keep schools and districts informed every step of the way. The decision to move to paper-and-pencil is not one ODE takes lightly, and they are highly aware that the burden of the decision falls on students and classroom teachers. ODE will make every effort to finish the year on a positive note, with every student tested and all schools meeting their obligations to the state and federal government.

Background:

Vantage Learning, Oregon's testing contractor since 2001, was not selected to continue as our contractor in a competitive process that occurred late last year. A new contractor will be in place for the 2007-08 school year. Following the notification that it had been disqualified from the selection process, Vantage produced "past due invoices" in the amount of \$2.8 million dollars. ODE immediately notified Vantage that ODE disputed those additional invoices. On January 23, Vantage informed ODE that because of this dispute, Vantage would terminate its work with Oregon before the end of our scheduled testing window in mid-May. Negotiations immediately began to continue TESA and complete the school year. ODE's Deputy Superintendent traveled to Vantage headquarters in an effort to resolve the dispute. It was Vantage's decision to terminate all services effective March 9, 2007, by posting an electronic notice on the TESA system. ODE made the decision to go with paper-and-pencil tests, and ODE will sign a contract with a new vendor and TESA will be online for testing next year.

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