

Chalkboard's K-12 Action Plan

#8: CREATE A STATEWIDE STUDENT DATA SYSTEM

Goal: Create a single, statewide student tracking system to manage critical performance and business data, and to save money.

Recommendation: Oregon needs one statewide Student Data System to reduce overhead costs and eliminate duplicated services. By consolidating individual district student tracking systems and payroll systems into a single, statewide system, the state will have more education dollars to spend in the classrooms.

Success Measurement: Completing a consolidated system on time and on budget. The tracking system will provide accountability at all levels—local, intermediate, state and federal. Business managers will report greater ease in transferring personnel and student records across districts. The system will also produce improved student performance benchmarks, including longitudinal data that track performance of a student cohort over time.

Concept: School districts and Education Service Districts (ESDs) currently operate independent data systems to track student attendance and achievement levels and process their payrolls. A number of larger districts have selected common student tracking systems, and as a result, data on more than half the students in the state are in compatible systems. However, schools use unique district payroll accounting, human resources, budget and purchasing systems and processes. There is no good reason to support the diverse hardware and software products used across the state. A single, statewide student tracking system, which should also include payroll tracking, makes good business and education sense.

Public Opinion: In response to Chalkboard's Citizen Feedback Guide survey, Oregonians rated "consolidating payroll and student tracking into a single, statewide system" at 3.8 on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Supportive Research: The state requires all districts to report accounting and budget data under a uniform chart of accounts. Districts also report student and human resource data in a common format. Because districts already report most information in a uniform manner, a statewide, system would streamline the reporting process. Full consolidation of student tracking and business systems would require an upfront capital investment, but efficient implementation would generate long-run savings for individual districts.

During the past three years, districts have spent an average \$93 million annually on acquiring and maintaining hardware and software. These individual district investments become costlier as they must be adapted to report student and business data in a common format. Staff training also adds to the cost, and when teachers and staff move between districts, they require retraining. These types of expenditures are included in a number of administrative and staff support cost categories, not in the technology line item.

Oregon Department of Education (ODE) envisions an integrated system with a common technical infrastructure built on the needs of small, medium and large districts. The system would eliminate statewide duplication of technology and decrease local costs. As an information tool, it would produce a range of data and reports on student learning—from individual student to classroom, school, district, and state performance. These could be created in formats suitable for parents, students, educational practitioners and policymakers. The system would also track financial expenditures to the lowest feasible level.

ODE has contracted with a consulting firm to develop a "Business Case for Change," which will assess the feasibility, costs and potential returns of a Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 16 Integrated Data System—known as the KIDS project. ODE will inventory current educational data systems used by school districts, identify best practices in educational data systems nationally, determine where efficiencies could be gained in Oregon, assess implementation feasibility, and estimate the return on investment of an integrated system.

This project would create a more efficient educational data system that would manage critical business and performance data at a reduced cost. Simultaneously, it would improve the accuracy and utility of reported data.

(Please visit the "Download Center" section of www.chalkboardproject.org to see source data: Citizen Feedback Guide Survey Results; and ECONW Report: Condition of K-12 Education in Oregon, pp. viii to x, 4-1 to 4-15; Finance Full Report, Ch. 6, p. 6-3; K-12 Business Practices: Issue Paper, pp. 6-7.)