

NEWS RELEASE

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More Oregon Students Take Oregon’s English Language Arts and Math Assessments

(Salem, Ore.) – More Oregon students participated in the state’s English language arts and mathematics summative assessments in the 2018-19 school year than 2017-18, [according to data released today](#) by the Oregon Department of Education.

Overall, nearly one percent more students took the tests in 2018-19 than in the previous school year. Scores are within the range they have been over the five years the tests have been administered. The assessments are taken by students in grades three through eight, plus high school.

“It’s important to note that more students are participating. The higher the participation, the more data we have to identify areas of statewide need,” said Oregon Department of Education Director Colt Gill. “This data should be used to inform the state and school districts in how they target resources. It is clear improvement is needed in these two subject areas. Thanks to the historic Student Success Act passed by lawmakers and signed by Governor Kate Brown, we will eventually see more resources targeted to help students graduate high school ready for college or a career.”

This assessment data is important. As a state we should know how our students are doing in reading, writing, and math and we should strive to improve these outcomes. These are gateway skills that allow students to access other learning and succeed in life. But, we need to emphasize that this does not describe the whole of our children’s skills or assets.

It is important to keep this assessment information in context. This is a snapshot in time of student performance, narrowly focused on two important subjects taught in our schools. These assessments do not measure or reflect the breadth of student learning and well-being in our schools. They do not measure the ability of students to think critically or analytically, use technology effectively, understand civic responsibility, or demonstrate the personal management or teamwork skills we know are vital for lifelong success. These assessments also do not provide a measure of the social and emotional well-being of our students.

We must be careful to ensure this incomplete data does not skew our thinking or our actions. It can cause us to overemphasize what little data we have both when it is released and later as it is applied to our accountability systems. Having data limited to only a few subjects can send the wrong message to local educators that these tested subjects are the most important subjects, when we know Oregonians value a well-rounded education.



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Colt Gill

Director of the Oregon Department of Education

What would most help educators and families meet the needs of students is feedback that comes back to the classroom during the same school year, not a year later. Solutions to better support teaching and learning in the classroom, where it matters most, include a statewide interim assessment system or formative assessment practices for all of our teachers. The data from these assessment sources would help drive day-to-day instructional decisions and can improve outcomes for students. Some districts do provide these resources, however we are not yet able to offer these important instructional tools statewide.

In 2018-19 most grade levels saw similar or lower scores compared to the 2017-18 results. The 2017-2018 results were up nearly across the board from 2016-17.

Additional highlights:

- Participation was up four percent in Portland Public Schools and nine percent in Bend-La Pine Schools.
- Hispanic students showed gains in several districts including Lake Oswego School District, Ashland School District and Cascade School District.
- American Indian/Alaska Native students achieved gains in several districts including Reynolds School District and Roseburg School District.
- Students with disabilities demonstrated gains in several districts including David Douglas School District, La Grande School District and Medford School District.

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