

# Education reform plan gets criticism, praise

PORTLAND (AP) — Superintendent of Public Instruction Verne Duncan is drawing a mixture of praise and sharp criticism from Oregon educators for his school-reform plan.

As the state Board of Education moves toward public hearings next month on two parts of the eight-point plan, representatives of the state school boards association and Oregon's largest teachers union are lining up against it.

Even supporters express doubt that the Legislature will provide the \$70 million-plus per year that Duncan wants lawmakers to authorize for some of the reforms. Critics chastize Duncan for vagueness and for making his proposals just to take advantage of current nationwide concern over the quality of schools.

Duncan, who outlined his proposals in a speech Sept. 15, presented them to the state Board of Education last Thursday. Among other things, he proposed a state-set curriculum, testing of basic skills at three grade levels and an increase in the length of the school year from 175 to 190 days.

"I think Verne's stuff is full of crap and nothing but his own opinion as to what might be done to improve education," said Tom Rigby, executive director of the Oregon School Boards Association. "We ought to look at research-based studies."

Sandy Ellis, president of the Oregon Education Association, said Duncan's proposals "are so broad-based that it's hard to give a reaction."

But Don Peterson, superintendent of the Pendleton School District, said he is "generally very supportive" of the state superintendent's recommendations.

Adding 15 days to the school year is expected to cost \$70 million to \$80 million a year, said Al Davidson, Duncan's executive assistant. He said the longer year was proposed to enable "more learning" to take place.

Of Duncan's eight proposals, three — the longer school year, diagnostic tests at three grade levels, and mandatory state standards for evaluating school personnel — will require legislative action, Davidson said.

The state Board of Education has authority to extend the school year, but Duncan has proposed that the Legislature, not local districts, put up money for teachers' salaries during the extended year.

Tests at the third, sixth and tenth-grade levels are expected to cost about \$500,000 a year, Davidson said. That money will be sought either from the full Legislature or the Emergency Board, which approves appropriations between sessions.

An eighth-grade test aimed at making sure students have a thorough grounding in basic skills might require money from the Legislature, but officials are studying ways to finance the testing even if lawmakers don't agree to pay for it, he said.

The Education Department will ask lawmakers to revise state law to grant the department authority to require that districts follow state standards in evaluating teachers and administrators, he said.

Duncan also proposed a uniform statewide curriculum for kindergarten through 12th grade. Such a curriculum, which requires approval from the state Board of Education, would probably be phased in course by course over several years, Davidson said.

The state board on Thursday endorsed Duncan's plan in principle and gave tentative approval to the proposals to award honors diplomas to some students and to stiffen high school graduation requirements by adding a second year of math and science and a fourth year of English.

Five meetings aimed at obtaining public comment on the honors and graduation requirements proposals will be held around the state next month. Additional instruction to satisfy the tougher graduation requirements would have to be financed by local school districts, Davidson said.

Rigby said school board members around Oregon are likely to support stronger coordination of school curriculums. But he accused Duncan of long ignoring authority he already has to develop techniques for evaluating teachers.

## Fisheries face bad year

ANCHORAGE (AP) — Despite the second-largest catch on record, Alaska's salmon industry faces a difficult marketing year, state officials warned Monday.

"It's a dilemma," said Rodger Painter of the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute. "A good salmon season doesn't always mean a good season for marketing."

Besides the sheer volume of fish — 123 million — marketing officials must cope with a variety of factors beyond their control. Among other things:

- The strength of the dollar in international money markets means

foreigners have less purchasing power to buy Alaska salmon;

- There's still a significant amount of salmon left on the shelves from the 1982 season;

- Although the Japanese have dropped their prices, demand by Japanese consumers continues to decline;

- Strong competition from Norway is hurting Alaska salmon in the European market.

The problems are reflected in the figures showing that although fisherman caught 12 million more salmon this year, they got only \$4 million more for them.

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