

# Life *in the* Valley

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Richard Moles, 80, of Silverton plays his accordion at the Mt. Angel Oktoberfest in Mt. Angel on Friday. The town's annual Oktoberfest continues Saturday and Sunday. PHOTOS BY ANNA REED/STATESMAN JOURNAL

## EARLY OKTOBER



People gather to watch the glockenspiel as it plays at the Mt. Angel Oktoberfest on opening day Friday.



The glockenspiel clock tower and Die Fruchtsäule are at the heart of the Mt. Angel Oktoberfest.

## School tests show mixed results across student groups

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Oregon student test scores dropped in most grades with the exception of high school, according to a review of statewide data.

The state is in its third year administering the end-of-the-year Smarter Balanced Assessment for English and Math, and Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills to students in grades 3 through 8 and juniors in high school.

In the Salem-Keizer School District, participating students districtwide had lower scores in English language arts, mathematics, and science.

Roughly 49.4 percent of students received a 3 or 4 rating in English. Students who receive a 3 or 4 of the four possible ratings are considered to be on track to graduate high school, ready for college and prepared for the workplace. Last year, 50.7 percent received the same level.

Mathematics scores dropped by less than a point, from 36.5 percent to 36.1 percent, and science scores went from 54.9 percent to 54.5 percent.

The district's 11th- and eighth-graders, however, improved in all three areas.

The percentage of Salem-Keizer 11th-graders scoring 3 or 4 improved from 45.2 to 45.3 in science, from 31.4 to 36.5 in math, and 70.1 to 72.4 in English.

In eighth grade, 56.2 percent of students received a 3 or 4 rating this year in English, an increase of about two per-



A social studies class meets at Straub Middle School in West Salem on Sept. 5. ANNA REED/STATESMAN JOURNAL

centage points; math scores improved by roughly one point; and science scores improved by roughly two points.

"That may be attributed to the number of students in accelerated math last year, but there may be other factors as well," said Matt Biondi, the Salem-Keizer School District Middle School Level director. "There is quite a bit of growth improvement in students."

Biondi said the score boosts may also be explained by the district's focus on monitoring student learning and intervening to help students catch up to their peers in reading or other subjects.

Kelly Carlisle, the Salem-Keizer School District Assistant Superintendent, said the improvements to the high school assessment results may be attrib-

uted to more rigorous learning opportunities in math instruction.

"That seems to be paying off," Carlisle said. "We have high aspirations for where these scores can go in the future, and we believe we have a path for that."

While the district's elementary school results vary by grade, with some grades improving and others decreasing, Carlisle said there is student growth occurring that may not be best observed through assessment scores.

"We're excited about initiatives around literacy that are helping our students grow over time," Carlisle said. "It's important to remember that from year to year to the next that we're not looking at the same kids in these assessments."

Carlisle said the district is currently working on a strategy that relies on using periodic measurements of student learning in order to develop an intervention framework when helping kids reach grade-level goals.

"Our teachers have been utilizing interventions for quite a while, but what we've not been able to do is provide a process or structure around the intervention that is a framework," Carlisle said. "Once that takes place, it takes a leap forward in terms of our ability to diagnose an issue and respond with a specific kind of intervention."

Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction Salam Noor said, "We are confident that as we work with school and district leaders to implement the Oregon Plan, we will see more students attending school regularly, more students

graduating and more scoring in the proficient category on these assessments."

Noor said in a statement he hopes Oregon's plan on prioritizing student attendance and strengthening district systems can help improve proficiency in all subjects on annual assessments.

While roughly 95 percent of Oregon students took the English language arts assessment and 94 percent of students took the math assessment, Noor said participation rates were down from last year. That change in participation could impact the overall accuracy of student performance results.

"Continued concentration on participation rates is critical, so our statewide assessment of school performance can more accurately reflect overall student performance," Noor said.

He said the assessment is one of the few reliable instruments the Department of Education has to review overall student performance. CQ Noor said he plans on working with school district officials to improve participation over the next few years.

"We have an important opportunity, through the Oregon Plan under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, to focus on providing a culturally relevant, well-rounded education for every student," Noor said.

To read the full report breakdown by district, school and student group, visit <http://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/assessment/Pages/Assessment-Group-Reports.aspx>