

Top Calculators

Math: Report Warns That Rankings Can Be Deceiving

Oregon eighth-grade pupils rank near top in mathematical skills, according to a study

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Oregon students performed better than students in the rest of the nation on the first state-by-state comparison of mathematics proficiency conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

The study was scheduled to be released in Washington D.C., by the National Assessment Governing Board and U.S. Education Secretary Lamar Alexander. The National Assessment, known as "the nation's report card," has tracked student achievement in various subjects for more than 20 years.

Oregon scored above the national average in all five categories in which eighth-graders were tested—overall proficiency; numbers and operations; measurement; geometry; data analysis, statistics and probability; and algebra and functions.

This is the first time there has been such state-by-state information on student performance.

The comparison includes data from 37 states, the District of Columbia, Guam and the Virgin Islands, all of which volunteered to participate in the study. Washington state did not participate.

Portland School superintendent Matthew W. Prophet, a member of the National Assessment Governing Board, said he was delighted to learn that poor students in Oregon's urban areas were ranked at the top when compared with other poor students.

Oregon also ranked fifth in Hispanic students' math skills.

"We serve the disadvantaged students better than we do the advantaged urban student," Prophet said, noting that Oregon ranked 15th in that listing. "This says we apparently do as well as anywhere else in America in serving the disadvantaged."

The study defined disadvantaged children as those whose parents were on welfare or not regularly employed; advantaged children had professional or managerial parents.

In overall math mastery, Oregon's eighth-graders ranked 10th. However, the report cautioned that rankings could be deceiving. While Oregon was 10th from the top, it was statistically lower than only North Dakota, Montana and

Iowa, and on about the same level as another 11 states.

"The simple example gives an incorrect sense of precision," the report said.

Oregon ranked 12th in simple problem solving, 10th in measurement proficiency, ninth in geometry and algebra skills, and eighth in data analysis, statistics and probability skills.

Students in Guam, the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands ranked at the bottom of the list.

Oregon was 11th in per-pupil expenditures, according to the most recent information available from the National Center for Education Statistics.

A total of 2,708 students in 106 Oregon Public schools were tested in February 1990.

Among the study's other findings: * A total of 99 percent of the eighth-graders in Oregon, compared with 97 percent in the nation, have skills in simple reasoning and problem solving.

* Only 18 percent of Oregon students, and 12 percent nationally, have skills to deal with fractions, decimals, percents, basic geometry and simple algebra.

* There appears to be no difference in the average math skills of eighth-grade boys and girls in Oregon. Both boys and girls in Oregon did better than their counterparts across the country.

* States whose students watched the most television had the lowest average math skills. Nationally, most eighth-graders reported watching at least three hours of television a day. About one-third of the students in the District of Columbia said they watched six or more hours a day.

Nationally, the study found that Asian and Pacific Islander students had the highest levels of performance, followed by white, American Indian, Hispanic and black students, a result reflected in most state statistics.

The study also showed that students attending schools in middle-class urban areas had the highest math skills, while those in poor urban areas had the lowest scores. Catholic and other private school students outperformed public-school students, although the difference was reduced by the time students reached grade 12.

The better-performing students also had parents with some education be-

yond the high school, has access to a greater number of reading and resource materials at home, did more homework, missed less school, and had both parents at home.

MATH PROFICIENCY: HOW OREGON RANKS

Oregon ranks near the top nationally in mathematics, according to a new state-by-state comparison of math skills among eighth-grade students.*

The Top 10

States ranked by average mathematics proficiency of public-school eighth-graders:

RANK

1. North Dakota
2. Montana
3. Iowa
4. Minnesota
5. Nebraska
6. Wisconsin
7. New Hampshire
8. Wyoming
9. Idaho
10. Oregon

OREGON BREAKDOWN RANK 1

Urban disadvantaged

Students who live in metropolitan statistical areas and attend schools where a high proportion of the students' parents are on welfare or are not regularly employed.

RANK 15

Urban advantaged

Students who live in metropolitan statistical areas and attend schools where a high proportion of the students' parents are in professional or managerial positions.

RANK 5

Hispanic Americans

Students who identified themselves as being of Hispanic origin.**

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

*Authors of the report said overall rankings are not a precise reflection of a state's performance. However, Oregon students scored at about the same level 11 other states and statistically higher than all others listed except for those in North Dakota, Montana and Iowa.

**The study's samples of other ethnic or racial minorities in Oregon were too small to evaluate separately.

Justice Thurgood Marshall Retires

continued from front page

Negro leaders in every Northern city were pointing out that the reason given by the Supreme Court against segregation in school imposed by law were just as valid against "de facto" segregation caused by residential segregation. The effects on the "hearts and minds" of the children were the same, it was claimed. In every large city most Negro children went to school only with other Negro children."

Proceeding from this concept of educational and residential segregation as the most traumatic social pathologies of the American scene, came the bitterly-fought tactic of "Bussing" to implement the "Brown Decision." And based upon the precedent-shattering victories over institutionalized racism previously considered as American as "motherhood and apple pie," others seized upon the legal and social momentum to make further gains. For instance, in 1969, black economist Julius Hobson won a key victory for "equal education" in federal court, "Hobson vs Washington, D.C. Board of Education." Using a significant amount of the data amassed by Attorney Marshall in the Supreme Court case, Hobson forced the government to demand equality in the administration of funds

supplied to school districts for "Disadvantaged Education" (Textbooks, laboratory equipment, audio/visual techniques).

We also wish to remember that it was the inspired briefs of attorney Marshall that won Supreme Court approval of the "1965 VOTING RIGHTS ACT." And that it was in his first year as a young practicing lawyer, that he participated in a successful effort by the NAACP to require the University of Maryland's law school to admit a black student. I can identify with this for in my home state of Missouri, blacks were not admitted to any of the law schools before World War II. But, as in many southern states, the state would PAY THE TUITION OF ANY "QUALIFIED" BLACKS STUDENT AT A NORTHERN INSTITUTION THAT WOULD ADMIT HIM. Justice Marshall graduated from the Howard U. Law School.

We should consider, too, the severity of the impact that this retirement is proving to have upon the hopes and ambitions of African Americans from every walk of life. And, certainly, upon the mind set of all Americans as demonstrated by the broad and intense media coverage. It is not just about the type of "litmus test" the administration will apply in selecting a new justice--conservative, liberal, "Roe" position, "Miranda" position--but about the deep fears and apprehension of those Americans who have the most to lose from an escalation of the illiberal trend of the present Supreme Court.

This attitude of the "disadvantaged" is best put by retiring Justice Marshall himself: "The majority sends a clear signal that essentially all decisions supplementing the personal liberties protected by the Bill of Rights and

the 14th amendment are open to re-examination. Power, not reason, is the new currency of this courts decisions." The media pundits are circulating the names of several possible minority nominees; Amalya Kearse, a black female federal appeals court judge in New York City; Ferdinand Fernandez, a Hispanic who holds the same office in Los Angeles; Clarence Thomas, a black judge in Washington who once was chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (He didn't like "Affirmative Action").

We don't know just how President Bush will play this super-political hand. Will he appoint another "Souter"--another "Scalia"? And Chief Justice Rehnquist is clearly seen to abhor that traditional advice given in the comic opera by Gilbert and Sullivan; "Let the punishment fit the crime!" It is no wonder that so many of us, white and black, are viewing the future of this country with apprehension as the Supreme Court overturns precedents fundamental to the liberties and aspirations of all.

This blow has come on top of the loss of black congressional whip, William H. Gray, democrat of Pennsylvania. We do not yet despair but it is a blow to the supposed citadel of liberty as we lament the departure of our noble warrior, Thurgood Marshall.

Footnote, Monday, July 10: President Bush has just nominated the aforementioned Judge "Clarence Thomas" to fill that vacancy on the court. Surrounded by administration stewards at a hastily called press conference, Mr. Thomas expressed his gratitude for the "honor." Director Benjamin Hooks of the National NAACP anticipated this turn of events and has promised "THE MOTHER OF ALL BATTLES"

Bank of America Blazer Slam 'N Jam '91

Just when you thought it was safe, along comes another shot of Blazermania. This year's version of the Blazer Slam 'N Jam will pick up right where the season left off. Plan on an entire afternoon and evening of action and entertainment Saturday, July 20, at Civic Stadium beginning at 4 p.m. The Blazers have turned the Slam 'N Jam into a fund raiser for former teammate Ramon Ramos who was critically injured in an auto crash in December 1989. The 1991 event features a three-point shootout with several of the league's greatest players. Following the game, the Kingsmen, Body and Soul, and John Day and Valerie Day of Nu Shooz will lead the Oregon all-star jam. Tickets are available from the Civic Stadium, Memorial Coliseum, Civic Auditorium and Performing Arts Center ticket centers as well as other G.I. Joe's Ticketmaster locations. Or, charge your tickets by calling 248-4496.

DMV to Reopen Lloyd Center Express Office

The Motor Vehicles Division's Lloyd Center Express office will reopen July 9. The office was closed in October as part of the mall-wide reconstruction project. The new office will be located on the Multnomah level near Lamont's and J.C. Penny, adjacent to the northeast parking structure. The office will be open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Friday

and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays.

DMV Express offices handle simple transactions, such as driver and vehicle license renewals and uncomplicated vehicle title transfers. The offices do not offer drive license testing or complicated vehicle title transactions, such as title transfers requiring vehicle identification number (VIN) inspections.

I Have A Dream

Program Offers More Than College Funding

(Taken from "For The Record," June 1991 issue)

Nine months after learning that three Portland attorneys wanted to sponsor their college educations, more than 100 fifth graders from Northeast Portland's Martin Luther King Elementary School are boasting higher grades, higher reading levels and improved attitudes.

Last September bar members Ken Lewis, Leonard Girard and Pat Jacklin announced their formation of a local I Have a Dream Foundation, patterned after an experiment by New York businessman Eugene Lang. Lang promised to pay the college tuition for a group of Harlem sixth-graders if they graduated from high school.

Each founder of the Oregon program is contributing \$10,000 a year for 10 years, establishing a \$300,000 down payment on a college tuition for King School's 1991 fifth grade class. A recent court settlement by Pacific Power and Light provides the foundation with another \$1.3 million, guaranteeing college educations for another five classes, according to founder Ken Lewis. The utility has also pledged \$875,000 in

matching funds.

"Our dream is to have many classes around the state," says Lewis.

The program does more than guarantee college tuition to children who finish high school. I Have a Dream provides children with educational enrichment, emotional support, self confidence and an anchor.

In a class that would normally have a 30 percent transiency rate from children moving and leaving school, only six percent of the students have left, according to Lewis.

Foundation board members and founders regularly visit the school and participate in field trips and special gatherings. They have hired a program coordinator, Tim Seidle, to provide daily support and motivation to the children.

"The more success these kids have in school, the more school will be a positive experience," says Seidle. "That will lower their drop-out rate and increase the likelihood they will go to college."

For the fifth graders, Seidle coordinates tutoring sessions, field trips, and a Saturday School that features Portland

Trail Blazers and other professionals as guest speakers.

Teachers report that the fifth graders' report cards reflect higher grades this year than last. Grades for the fourth quarter are higher than for the first quarter.

"I remember one child who didn't care if he got Fs," recalls Seidle. "I literally had to chase him off the basketball court to get him to tutoring sessions. Now he's earning Bs and he comes to tutoring on his own."

Attitudes have improved too. "There's less anger now and they've learned more constructive ways to deal with it," says Seidle.

The program has also provided children with a goal. "A guest speaker recently asked the children what they would do after high school," says Lewis. "We're going to college! they cried. 'Haven't you heard?'"

The foundation welcomes volunteers and contributors. For more information, contact Lewis at 227-7447, Leonard Girard at 464-8814, Pam Jacklin at 294-9406, or Susan Sandor at 227-2439.

Oregon Dome Team To Discuss NFL Expansion And Stadium Efforts

Members of the Oregon Dome Team (ODT) Executive Committee revealed findings from a recent trip to the NFL spring meetings and how Oregon stacks up on the expansion team selection. ODT founders, Roger Breezley, Chairman and CEO of U.S. Bancorp, and Ted Runstein, law partner at Kell, Altman & Runstein, gave a complete overview on what has been accomplished in the process to gather support for a domed stadium and NFL franchise in Oregon.

Participants will include corporate and government representatives, and individuals who have purchased Founder Seat rights, which is the Dome Team's first step in gathering private support.

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