

# Grades down in English, math, science countywide

## Performance mirrored other schools around state

By Betsy Hammond  
The Oregonian

Oregon students lost ground in reading, writing and math over the past year, according to test results released Thursday, Sept. 14.

Particularly in the elementary grades, fewer students achieved proficiency on end-of-year exams designed to show whether they are on track to be ready for college and the world of work.

No grade level showed substantial improvement from 2016.

Clatsop County schools mirrored the state, with most grades showing declines in college and career readiness in English, language arts, mathematics and science.

Astoria fifth- and 11th-graders largely outperformed the state average in English and language arts but fell behind in math, with a third- or fewer students college and career ready.

Seaside fifth-, eighth- and 11th-graders outperformed the state average on English and language arts, but fewer than 30 percent of those grade levels reached proficiency in mathematics. Warrenton-Ham-



DANNY MILLER/EO MEDIA GROUP

**Clatsop County schools mirrored the state in test results, with most grades showing declines in college and career readiness in English, language arts, mathematics and science.**

mond students fell behind on English and language arts but nearly matched state averages in mathematics, especially in later grades.

How well Oregon schools prepared high school juniors, who have just a year before they face college or the job market, was less than clear.

Roughly 6,000 students, or about 15 percent of the junior class, skipped the tests, which are more demanding than the previous generation of year-end exams. That was a tad more than ducked testing in 2016.

The new tests, titled Smarter Balanced, were developed by a consortium of 13 states to measure reading, writing, listening, math and reasoning skills that panels of teachers, professors, employers and other experts agreed were needed at each grade level.

Overall, in the three years the exams have been given, students in Oregon and most other states have struggled to reach the standards they set.

This year, roughly 60 percent of Oregon public school students fell short in math-

ematics as did 45 percent in reading and writing. It was the worst showing yet by Oregon schools, particularly in language arts.

Statewide, all four major race and ethnic groups — whites, Latinos, Asians and blacks — registered lower proficiency rates than in 2016. Scores for Asian-American students, already the top-performing group, dipped least; scores among white students fell the most.

How well students performed on the Smarter Bal-

anced tests this year will be the primary factor driving the school performance ratings that the Oregon Department of Education plans to issue in October.

But those ratings will require a more sophisticated determination than whether a school posted low, average or high scores. Instead, the ratings will be based primarily on how much the school helped individual students progress in English and in math from where that particular student scored a year or two before. Performance ratings also give extra weight to how well schools succeeded with students who historically have struggled in Oregon schools: minorities, low-income students, those with disabilities and students still learning English as a second language.

Very few Oregon students still learning to master English do well on the exams, which require reading complex passages and following multistep math instructions. But a higher share of them registered as proficient on both English and math exams this year, making them the only demographic group to show strong gains.

Smarter Balanced tests are designed to measure how well students have been taught to master the Common Core State Standards, a set of rigorous expectations for reading, writing, math and reasoning skills adopted by nearly all U.S. states.

Still, the tests have remained controversial. At some Oregon schools, parents or students decide that it's best for the student to sit them out. That's particularly true at some schools where students generally do well on standardized tests.

This year, only 16 percent of juniors at Portland's Cleveland High, known for its academically rigorous International Baccalaureate program, took the math portion of the test. More than half the juniors at Lake Oswego High and Portland's Wilson High skipped one or both exams, and nearly half skipped both subjects at Portland's Grant High.

Students at Lake Oswego and some other schools organized to urge fellow students to boycott the tests. They say they do a poor job of measuring readiness for college. They also complain they place an undue burden on juniors, given that many take the ACT, the SAT, Advanced Placement exams and other standardized tests that year.

Test-taking rates among elementary pupils were generally very high. But dozens of Portland-area elementary schools — mostly ones in comfortably middle-class Portland neighborhoods — fell short of testing 95 percent of students.

Edward Stratton of The Daily Astorian contributed to this story.

## School building repairs put on back-burner

Schools from Page 1A

to open for students in 2020. Meanwhile, existing schools continue to house students.

During the summer break, maintenance crews polished all school floors and painted at Gearhart, Seaside Heights and Broadway schools.

Loesch said the district's maintenance team also performed integrated pest management this year on all school buildings.

"By trimming the trees up and back and from all the buildings and all the shrubbery so it does not collect leaves and trash and rodents so it doesn't create problems," he said.

Leaks in the high school computer rooms "are in the works to be patched," he added, but pipe repairs at Gearhart are unlikely to get attention before students are moved to the new campus.

At the start of the school year, Seaside High School Principal Jeff Roberts said staff focuses on safety "by being proactive and making



DANNY MILLER/EO MEDIA GROUP

**Seaside School District Superintendent-emeritus Doug Dougherty shows the conditions of the boiler room at Gearhart Elementary School in 2016.**

necessary repairs after routine checks."

"We continue to feel blessed that this community supported the initiative to build new schools that will support student learning and keep kids safe," Roberts said.

"Upon passing of the bond we have been diligent in our spending to ensure that our building is functional and safe

for students and will be very thoughtful in any significant investments we make in capital improvements."

Meanwhile, the district cleared a hurdle for construction of the new school by winning approval for zoning changes to bring the campus within the city's urban growth boundary.

Work is not expected to



R.J. MARX/CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

**Seaside School District Superintendent Sheila Roley at the start of the 2017-18 school year.**

begin until next spring and the first classes are expected in 2020.

For now, the existing buildings will not be likely to see much in the way of upgrades or construction.

"We probably would defer unless it was really critical doing it," Roley said. "There are always things. It's a continual process."

## Local Realtor is honored

Alaina Giguere with RE/MAX Coastal Advantage is among the 2,506 RE/MAX agents and teams featured in this year's REAL Trends "America's Best Real Estate Agents" survey. The agents included in the survey represent less than one percent of all real estate professionals in the United States.



Alaina Giguere

The REAL Trends "America's Best Real Estate Agents" survey ranks participating agents in the United States based on residential transaction sides and sales volume

of the previous year. To qualify, an individual must have closed 50 transaction sides or \$20 million in closed sales volume and a team must have closed 75 transaction sides or \$30 million in closed sales volume last year.

Giguere has nearly 17 years of experience in the coastal real estate marketplace. This is the first year Giguere has been recognized among "America's Best." She is also the No. 1 agent in the Clatsop MLS and the No. 2 agent for RE/MAX in the state for 2016.

## Writing lab at Hoffman Center

Join writers interested in submitting to the next issue of the North Coast Squid for a writing lab, Sunday, Oct. 8, from 10 a.m. to noon, at the Hoffman Center for the Arts.

Writers get feedback from fellow writers and offer insights to other participants.

Submissions are accepted for fiction, nonfiction and poetry with a young writers category for those 18 and under.

All submissions are selected in a blind judging by authors and poets outside the coastal area. Submissions

of art, photos and photos of sculptures will also be solicited for cover art and inside art, with final art chosen by a committee.

RSVP by emailing northcoastsquid@gmail.com. Space is limited.

The North Coast Squid, a program of the Hoffman Center for the Arts and the Manzanita Writers Series, showcases the work of writers and artists who live on the North Coast or have a strong connection to the area. The next issue will be published in April.

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