Oregon Investment Board Report to the Legislature
Comments Regarding Assessments

Dear Members of the Oregon Education Investment Board,

We have reviewed the Draft Report that was handed out dated 12/7/2011 and understand there may be a new draft available that may address our concerns. Additionally, we understand that the topic of assessments will be addressed at the Special Meeting tomorrow. While much of the Draft Report is excellent, the portion on Section 2 relating to Standards and Assessments is misses the mark.

Here are specific suggestions relating to the topic of assessments (all page references are to the 12/7/2011 draft.)

1. Move language from page 14 under Principles to the section under Standards and assessment in Section 2, Page 11. This language reads, *"Testing, largely for school accountability purposes, has consumed enormous amounts of time and money. Students disengage from a narrowed curriculum, as relevant and motivating classes, projects and opportunities disappear from constrained schools. Too many teachers, feeling blamed for broader societal trends, set back by budget reductions and indicted by high-stakes standardized testing report they are demoralized and disrespected."* This sets the tone that Oregon needs to move in a different direction. **Language should be added that under the OAKS test, Oregon has fallen from 20th to 40th in state rankings under the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP).** NAEP is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas. The Commissioner of Education Statistics, who heads the National Center for Education Statistics in the US Dept. of Education is responsible by law for carrying out the NAEP project.

2. Section 2, Page 11, beginning with the forth paragraph, delete *"and assessment"* from the list of state functions, to allow local control and innovation in districts or regions through the achievement compacts of the future. This sentence could read, *"Through a coordinated effort under the OEIB and Chief Education Officer, the state will establish system-wide standards, a longitudinal data system, and coherent support and guidance."* By making this change, the document would be consistent with the goal to achieve relief from unnecessary regulatory burdens such as repetitive testing.

3. Section 2, Page 11, Paragraph 5, Delete the sentence, *"We are also a leader in the "Smarter, Balanced Coalition" developing next-generation student assessments designed to support proficiency in content and higher level thinking skills, transition skills and academic behaviors."* There is no evidence to support the assertion that the SBAC assessments will support proficiency or assess higher level thinking skills. In Paragraph 6 delete *"We will in time replace OAKS with Smarter Balanced assessments."* There are many reasons why it is ill advised for the OEIB propose that

the state adopt this yet-to-be-written SBAC assessment system with its yet-to-be-determined costs to the state. First, Oregon has been a leader in summative assessments and acknowledges that this path of high stakes accountability testing has been a failure. While Oregon has agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding with SBAC, education leaders should evaluate the usefulness of SBAC assessments and costs prior to mandating them for Oregon students. There is another consortium called PARCC, which is also developing a national standardized accountability test, and Oregon may wish to adopt the PARCC assessment system if it proves to be superior. Last session, the Legislature took up the issue of membership in the SBAC consortium and the current Legislative Task Force on Accountability (HB 2289) is examining this very issue in greater depth. To our knowledge, the OEIB has not held hearings, received testimony or materials about the national consortia. We urge you to take the time to address this issue with rigor and thoughtfulness.

4. Section 2, Page 11, Paragraph 6 Replace, *"We will also need to develop local formative assessments to be used in our classrooms to evaluate evidence of student's proficiency, and which are normed at the state level using common rubrics and external validation."* **Substitute the language from the Chalkboard Project** focus groups **"Adopt assessments that help teachers determine more often and more accurately where individuals are in their learning, and how they can effectively target instruction. This also helps students, and their families, understand and take charge of their own education."** The state does not need to bear the high cost of developing assessments. They exist in the marketplace, and are tempered by competition among multiple providers. The state's role may be to approve assessment systems that support state goals and to provide local district with financial and technical support to select an appropriate system.

Thank you again for all the work you are doing on behalf of Oregon's children.

Sincerely,

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