

# Achievement Compacts: Questions and Answers

Oregon Education Investment Board, January 2012

## ***What is an achievement compact?***

An achievement compact is a partnership agreement between the state and a school district or other institution of public education that defines key measures of student success and sets targets for achievement, as defined by the district or institution.

## ***Why does Oregon need achievement compacts?***

Starting in 2012-13, school districts and other institutions of public education would enter into achievement compacts, which would:

- Define key measurements and set goals for student progress, with two-way accountability in setting and achieving those goals.
- Help Oregon achieve its high school and college completion goals of 40/40/20, by measuring progress and uniting educational institutions around those goals.
- Allow comparisons of outcomes among educational institutions – spotlighting best practices to share and expand, and allowing diagnosis and intervention to overcome obstacles.
- Encourage local boards and educational leaders to connect their budgets and improvement plans to shared goals of high school and college completion and career readiness.
- Help state and local leaders determine how much progress they can make with the best use of state and local funds – and how they might invest funds in ways that deliver better results for students.
- Provide parents and students with clear information about how educational entities are performing, allowing comparisons based on the most significant outcomes.
- Allow Oregon to replace provisions of No Child Left Behind with a more supportive and flexible state K-12 accountability system.

## ***Who will participate in these achievement compacts?***

All K-12 school districts, education service districts, community colleges, the university system and Oregon Health and Science University will participate in these compacts. The Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB) will enter into these compacts for the state. The 2012-13 school year will provide baseline information in the first year of the compacts.

## ***What are you measuring, and who sets the targets?***

Oregon's school boards, teachers and college and university leaders are not new to the idea of setting performance indicators or identifying key measurements in their school improvement or strategic plans. The Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB) incorporated their suggestions and best thinking into draft templates for achievement compacts for K-12 school districts, community colleges and the university system (see attached). Each one-page compact contains a limited number of outcome measures, including: measures of completion (e.g. diplomas and degrees), validation of knowledge and skills along the education pathway (e.g. middle school reading and math proficiency) and ultimately, connections to the economy and community (e.g. job placements). The compacts will track these measures not only for all students, but also for groups of students who historically have not been well served by Oregon's public education system: English language learners, students from lower-income homes, those with disabilities and students of color. The OEIB will define the key outcomes, while the boards of each of the state's

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educational partners will set targets for those outcomes for the coming year. Local boards may also suggest additional measures of student success, tailoring their compacts to their student populations and district programs.

***What about No Child Left Behind?***

Oregon is applying for a waiver from the punitive provisions of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. That waiver application relies on K-12 achievement compacts to replace NCLB's system of measurements and sanctions with a new, Oregon-designed accountability model. A customized system of school supports and interventions will replace the arbitrary and ineffective mandates of NCLB, with emphasis on an individual students' growth in learning.

***Will this just mean more high-stakes testing, or something different?***

The achievement compacts take stock of other measures of student success – such as students earning college credit before graduation. They also measure the individual growth of all students, challenging schools to meet the needs of all learners, not just helping them over a benchmark hurdle. Local classroom-based assessments (validated against statewide norms) will complement the state assessments, which themselves will evolve. The achievement compacts will be adjusted and refined over time.

***Is the state taking more control over school district and college decisions?***

No. The Oregon Education Investment Board will hold school districts and other educational institutions accountable to the goals contained in achievement compacts – but will allow flexibility and creativity in how to reach those goals. The compacts will highlight successful school districts and colleges, and encourage others to adopt their effective practices. So while many might agree on some key strategies (professional development and evaluation for educators, parent engagement in their children's education, cultivating a college-going culture from a young age, to name just a few), the compact will measure only student achievement outcomes, not the inputs themselves.

***How will students, parents, educators and the public be involved?***

The OEIB proposes that school districts and other education institutions communicate with students, teachers, faculty, other staff and their employee unions, community partners and representatives as they define their achievement compact targets, much as they are required to do while developing their K-12 school improvement plans or while setting their budgets.

***What does this mean for funding for school districts, colleges and universities?***

Achievement compacts can work with any level of funding, however structured. Funding levels and funding formulas will continue to be determined by the legislature. But setting targets for statewide goals and reporting on the progress made in meeting those targets will provide valuable information to shape future discussions about funding levels and funding formulas.

***What about the Quality Education Model?***

At both the K-12 and post-secondary levels, we expect the results of the achievement compacts to provide tangible evidence of cost-effective strategies that produce strong student outcomes. This data will help inform the QEM process, providing data on costs and results that help define how much it would cost to meet the state's goals at the K-12 and college levels.

More information: [www.education.oregon.gov](http://www.education.oregon.gov), [education.investment@state.or.us](mailto:education.investment@state.or.us) or 503-378-0206.