



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Series of education bills gain Senate approval

Legislation includes ESD reform, help for rural schools, streamlining oversight

SALEM – The Senate approved a number of education bills this morning that illustrate significant reform of the state’s education system. The collection of bills complements work already done this session by Senate Democrats to increase oversight and set high standards for Oregon’s long term education goals.

“These continue to be challenging times for the state and for Oregonians. This is why it is more important than ever to use this session as an opportunity to reexamine how we deliver services in Oregon,” said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland). “Every session, Senate Democrats renew their commitment to fight for the best possible education for Oregon kids. This session is no exception and these bills are good examples of putting our words into action.”

Bills passed this morning include:

- **ESD Opt Out:** In these challenging times, it’s more important than ever that Oregon schools have more say in where they direct their resources. SB 250 is an incremental reform that will give some school districts more freedom to decide whether to participate in an Educational Service District.
- **CLASS funding:** SB 252 establishes the School District Collaboration Grant Program, which will help school districts raise student achievement by empowering educators. This bill will provide funding for the voluntary collaboration of teachers and administrators to design and implement integrated approaches to professional development for educators. The bill is based on successful programs in Forest Grove, Sherwood and Tillamook.
- **Help for Rural Schools:** SB 453 will help Oregon’s smaller, rural schools qualify for the funds they need to provide a quality education. This bill drives money to twenty-two small elementary schools that wouldn’t otherwise qualify.
- **Oregon Education Investment Board:** SB 909 establishes the Oregon Education Investment Board to oversee a unified public education system. This is critical to eliminating the silos in the current education system and moving toward an education model that coordinates the full spectrum of education, from pre-kindergarten to post secondary.

“This session is not short on transformative change, as these education bills and other policy breakthroughs have demonstrated,” said Senator Mark Hass (D-Beaverton), chair of the Senate Education and Workforce Development Committee. “These bills are indicative of our work this session to providing Oregon children with a quality education while laying the groundwork for systemic reform that gets the greatest value out of every dollar.”

Other major education reform bills this session that have already received Senate approval include:

- **Full Day Kindergarten:** Sets the stage for providing free, full-day kindergarten for Oregon children. More hours spent learning earlier in life is commonly cited as a significant long-term benefit to children and society.
- **40-40-20 Goals:** Sets the stage for higher education reform by codifying the 40-40-20 standard that has long been discussed in Oregon. SB 253 provides direction for the Legislature and other policy makers to reinvest and commit to higher education in Oregon by meeting the goals of at least 40 percent of Oregonians having a bachelor’s degree or higher, 40 percent with an associate’s degree or post-secondary credential, and 20 percent with a high school diploma or equivalent as their highest level of education.
- **Appointed Superintendent of Public Instruction:** SB 552 will restructure educational oversight in Oregon by designating the Governor as the Superintendent of Public Instruction and allowing him or her to appoint a deputy to lead the Department of Education. This is important to improving leadership and accountability in Oregon’s education system.
- **Higher Education Restructuring:** Just Friday, the Senate approved landmark reform of the Oregon University System that will give Oregon’s seven public universities greater autonomy and control over their finances. SB 242 restructures the Oregon University System (OUS) as a public university system rather than as a state agency. Additionally, SB 242 creates the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, led by 15 members appointed by the Governor. The Commission will work to develop a statewide, comprehensive vision for higher education and workforce development at all levels, putting community colleges and universities at the same table for the first time.

All bills now await consideration in the House.

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