

## QuickPoint! - Oregon Ranks 35th Nationally in Return on Investment for Education Spending

By Kathryn Hickok

Is more money the answer to Oregon's abysmal K-12 academic rankings?

The Heritage Foundation annually releases an Education Freedom Report Card, which ranks states according to school choice, academic transparency, regulatory freedom, and education spending. The report assesses what each state does well, identifies where it can improve, and suggests how local leaders can better address education issues.

Oregon ranks at or near the bottom of all states in each category, including 51st overall and 35th in return on investment for education spending. Oregon students' National Association of Education Progress (NAEP) scores rank 42nd in the country, even though Oregon spends above average per pupil annually (the 21st-most at \$17,374 per student). Oregon also has a high ratio of non-teaching to teaching staff: There is one non-teacher for every two teachers in Oregon public schools.

In early October, the Portland Tribune reported that Oregon elementary students' academic proficiency remains "significantly lower than pre-pandemic levels, with only 31% of all Oregon students testing at proficiency in math, 43% in English and 29% in science." The Tribune noted that while every state "experienced a decrease in average assessment scores...between spring 2019 and 2022," "compared to every other state, Oregon was third last for improvement in reading test scores...."

All children deserve effective educational options that meet their learning and developmental needs. Spending more money—in the same district schools that haven't helped students succeed for decades—isn't the answer. To show we're serious about improving education outcomes, Oregon should reinstate graduation requirements, provide school choice including open enrollment across public school districts, and minimize time and expenditures focused on non-academic services and initiatives.

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