

Summary of Oregon’s “Equitable Graduation” Report

By [Oregon Association of Scholars](#) & [Save Oregon Schools](#) – September 2023

This document summarizes the Oregon Association of Scholars (OAS) and Save Oregon Schools (SOS) report that critically examined the assumptions and directives of Oregon Senate Bill 744 (SB744) and the subsequent Oregon Department of Education (ODE) report on equitable graduation outcomes. This only touches on the issues and fraudulent nature of ODE’s report, so it is highly recommended you read the entire OAS/SOS report.

Download the OAS/SOS 27-page report here: <https://bit.ly/OR-Grad-Report>

Background Information on SB744 & ODE Report

- In 2021, Oregon Governor Kate Brown signed Senate Bill 744 (SB744) into law.
- SB744 suspended all essential skills requirements for a high school diploma until Fall 2024.
- SB744 also required ODE to review the "causes of disparities" in high school diploma attainment, research graduation models in other states, and produce a report to the legislature with findings & recommendations by September 1, 2022.
- The bill's purpose was to address "equity, accessibility, and inclusivity" in education. Its changes to Oregon law were aimed at prioritizing "educational justice," focusing on the performance of different student groups rather than the overall school system performance.

Key Findings in OAS/SOS “Fact-Check” of SB744 & ODE Report

- SB 744 is criticized for making assertions about the causes of differential educational attainment without evidence. The bill's focus on race is also highlighted, with the report suggesting that variations in cultural and social norms within groups might be a more likely explanation for disparities in educational attainment.
- It illustrates how ODE violated the terms of SB744, misused and misrepresented research findings, engaged in plagiarism, and made racially biased statements. The report dives deeper into these topics and more:
 - ODE's violation of SB 744's political neutrality requirements.
 - ODE's racist claim that graduation requirements are "White".
 - ODE's unfair attack on Oregon teachers.
 - ODE's misrepresentation of research on the discipline of Black students.
 - ODE's erroneous citation of research on student belonging research.
 - ODE's attempt to dumb-down education for Black and Hispanic students.

Was ODE’s Report ‘Biased & Fraudulent’ or ‘an Honest Mistake’?

It is important to understand not just **what** was in ODE’s report for the legislature, but **who** was involved and the instructions they were given. Our team obtained and reviewed many public records related to ODE’s extensive, year-long project that involved people at all levels in the organization, including Colt Gill, Director of ODE.

One key document was ODE’s Work Plan for SB 744 (link: <https://bit.ly/3n01TOe>). This 12-page plan showed the very detailed and thorough planning process ODE had: six project work teams, many senior ODE leaders & employees, detailed project plans, and more. **ODE’s report was fraudulent by design, not by mistake.**

See next page for examples of ODE’s fraudulent claims and a summary of our conclusions & recommendations

Examples of “Fact-Checking” from OAS/SOS 27-Page Report

ODE Claims	Actual Evidence
<p>Several claims of systemic, cultural, and educator bias causing graduation disparities.</p> <p><i>“Because ODE does not have capacity to implement a monitoring system to help ensure that those work samples are being scored reliably, they may be a source of educator biases.”</i></p> <p>“Any update to the Essential Skills must also be defined by community, as they may become vehicles for perpetuation of cultural biases if there are not shared, inclusive understandings for terms”</p>	<p>ODE's report lacked evidence of bias, only including an anonymous statement from one Oregon Superintendent.</p> <p><i>“Grades are completely subjective and an unreliable measure of student growth and potential from one year to the next. Grading is inconsistent from teacher to teacher. Bias is heavily present in grading ESPECIALLY at the high school level. You will need to regulate grades [in the absence of a secondary validation system].” – Oregon Superintendent</i></p> <p>ODE’s claims are unsupported & fraudulent.</p>
<p>Many claims that “student belonging” must be addressed to improve grad rates & achievement.</p> <p><i>“Student’s sense of belonging at school can have a large impact on achievement. A recent meta-study examined 82 separate studies of student belonging, and described a sense of belonging as a prerequisite to a successful high school experience.”</i></p> <p><i>“Improving high school graduation outcomes for students first involves ensuring that all students in Oregon feel a strong sense of belonging with their school, among their peers, from their educators, and in their communities.”</i></p>	<p>ODE distorted and misrepresented the research to support their claims.</p> <p>The cited study showed a very low correlation between a student’s sense of belonging and their academic achievement.</p> <p>The cited study also clearly stated, “conclusions about causality cannot be drawn”. In other words, this study can’t prove a “cause & effect” relationship exists in the data it analyzed, but ODE claimed it did.</p> <p>ODE’s claims are unsupported & fraudulent.</p>

Conclusions and Recommendations

ODE’s *Community-Informed Recommendations for Equitable Graduation Outcomes* report fails to respond to the requirements of SB744 and should be rescinded. The report is unscientific, deplorably written, and poorly researched. It also imposes ideological biases that are not contained in the legislation.

Oregon’s legislature should reject the ODE report and call for an immediate investigation into this report, other recent ODE reports, and the people involved any of this fraudulent activity. Processes and systems should also be established to ensure no public agency is able to similarly publish fraudulent information to influence and mislead legislators and the community at large.



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