Better Oregon
By the Numbers

We’re close to halfway towards our signature-gathering goal for the Better Oregon Campaign. If we are going to get corporations to pay their fair share in taxes, we know Portland is going to have to do lots of the heavy lifting. As of February 19th our results are:

Total Signatures: **4,802**
(48% towards our goal)

PAT Member Signatures: **844**
(21% towards our goal)

We still have **22 schools where fewer than 5 percent of our members have signed**. Sign the petition and give it to your building organizer today!

Take the TELL Survey

This month, the ODE has once again asked all educators to participate in the statewide TELL Survey.

This is your opportunity to weigh in on topics such as the allocation of time, facilities and resources, student learning, community engagement, school leadership, professional development, and mentoring.

Given the serious safety and discipline issues we’ve had this year, your participation is vital.

Documenting what’s happening in our schools is a key part of how we can change things for the better. The survey is completely voluntary, confidential, and anonymous.

If you haven’t taken the survey, please visit the website: http://telloregon.org/surveyko/index

Making Headway on Assessments

Earlier this month, over a dozen Portland educators and administrators spent two days examining the work of our peers at the New York Performance Standards Consortium. The results of this work could put PAT and PPS on the cutting edge of developing alternatives to high-stake standardized tests.

Instead of one-size-fits-all standardized tests like the Smarter Balanced Assessment, Consortium schools have developed a method for evaluating students based on their performance, including the preparation and presentation of in-depth research projects, papers, and portfolios.

This was my second visit to the Consortium, and it was amazing to see the process in action. For example, one student presented a detailed report on how the Constitution reflects attitudes about race, gender, and class, both historically and contemporarily. In addition to talking about the document’s framers, their lives and potential biases, she even presented a count of every time he, his, or him appears in the Constitution. We saw another student discuss possible pathways to peace for India and Pakistan.

A PPS administrator noted that performance-based assessments require an incredibly complex process of investigation and inquiry, reflecting a much higher level on Bloom’s taxonomy. It’s the kind of engagement we want for all our students, and it’s clear the system works. Despite a higher incidence of poverty, and more special needs and ELL students, Consortium schools have much higher graduation rates, much lower dropout rates, and far fewer suspensions than the rest of the city’s public schools.

That’s why our delegation—which also included several PAT educators as well as PPS Board member Amy Kohnstamm, PPS Superintendent Carole Smith, the Director of Assessments for the Oregon Department of Education and OEA President Hanna Vaandering—couldn’t have come at a more important moment. We’re continuing to advocate at both the state and national level for Oregon’s participation in the pilot program, created as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act, where a handful of states will test alternative assessment systems at the local level.

We’re also working with the District to identify areas where we can implement performance-based assessments. For example, if a high school student does not pass the SBAC test, then they are required to submit a work sample to graduate. Why not use work samples or performance assessments at the high school level in the first place, instead of wasting valuable time on SBAC? When families opt out of SBAC at any grade level, why not have students develop work samples or performance assessments as an alternative? In the past, the state has said direct writing assessment was too expensive because you had to pay certified teachers to grade them, and they were double-scored. But how much time and money are we sinking into SBAC?

Fortunately, parents aren’t waiting for politicians in Salem or Washington, D.C., they are opting their children out of high-stakes tests like the Smarter Balanced Assessment at higher and higher rates each year. Now, more than ever, we need to keep up the pressure, so we can finally put an end to nearly two decades of test-driven education policy.

In Solidarity,

Gwen Sullivan
Watch Out for the Wrong Rubric

I got a call from a member last Friday asking me what we could do about her evaluation. She told me that she was marked down in “Domain 4G” of the Rubric. At first I was confused. Our contract clearly states that the Rubric used to do educator evaluations will be developed jointly between PAT and the District. The Rubric cannot be changed unless it’s by mutual agreement. I knew our Evaluation Committee has worked hard to develop a fair process, and I knew that the Rubric they developed didn’t have a “Domain 4G.”

Imagine my surprise when I found out that, at this member’s school, she was being evaluated with a Rubric that PAT has never seen nor would we ever agree to. We are working to get to the bottom of what this is all about, but it seems like someone in the District has added a section—Domain 4G—to our evaluation Rubric. Not only does this violate our contract, but this unsanctioned element addresses a controversial subject—the educator’s progress on meeting state-mandated goals vis-à-vis student test scores. Amazingly, the inappropriate inclusion of Domain 4G not only violates the Evaluation Handbook because it is not mutually agreed to, but it also violates the contract which clearly states that educators won’t be evaluated using student test scores. To make matters worse, PAT, the PPS Board, and District leaders all agree this is an area where the state is going in the wrong direction, and where PPS will try to chart a different path.

We are filing a class action grievance and will make sure the District abides by our contract, but you should all be aware that Domain 4G is not a legitimate subject for educator evaluations. Report any effort by your administrator to use a Rubric containing Domain 4G to your building PAT representative.

PAT-PAC Endorsements

Last week the PAT-PAC interviewed over 30 candidates running for a variety of state and local offices. We will conduct additional interviews on March 9th. Through the interview process, it was clear that people across Portland are engaged and active, committed to making our city, and our state, a better place. You can read a full description of our process and criteria on the PAT website. The PAT-PAC Board recommends candidates who:

- Discuss strong public schools as a key feature in planning for the city’s growth;
- Publicly support the Better Oregon Campaign and for corporations to pay their fair share to support families and schools;
- Advocate for labor rights through policies and actions;
- Demonstrate a commitment to helping our most vulnerable students, particularly the homeless and hungry;
- Present a viable campaign to win their election;

The PAT-PAC Board’s initial recommendations include the following candidates:

Local Races

Mayor of Portland: Jules Bailey
Metro Council: Sam Chase, District 5; Bob Stacey, District 6

Oregon House of Representatives

Alissa Keny-Guyer, District 46; Kathleen Taylor, District 41; Margaret Doherty, District 35; Mitch Greenlick, District 33; Barbara Smith Warner, District 45; Rob Nosse, District 42; Ann Lininger, District 38

Oregon Senate

Diane Rosenbaum, District 21; Michael Dembrow, District 23; Lew Frederick, District 22