



Superintendent's Report
August 25, 2025

Upcoming Important Dates

- August 25, 2025
 - Board Meeting @ 5:00 PM!
- September 1, 2025
 - Labor Day, No School!
- September 22, 2025
 - Board Meeting @ 5:00 PM!
- October 6-10, 2025
 - Homecoming Week!!
- October 15-16, 2025
 - Parent Teacher Conferences!
- October 27, 2025
 - Board Meeting @ 5:00 PM!
- November 6-8, 2025
 - OSBA Annual Convention in Portland!
- November 10-11, 2025
 - Non-contract day and Veteran's Day, No School!
- November 24-28, 2025
 - Thanksgiving Break, No School!

Upcoming August Economic and Revenue Forecast Could Be Concerning

Based on recent forecasts from Oregon's Office of Economic Analysis, the upcoming budget outlook is mixed. While the state is not facing a "bad" forecast in terms of a deficit, there are some significant concerns.

Here's a breakdown of the key points:

- **Slower Revenue Growth:** Recent forecasts have revised down the expected revenue collections for the current and upcoming biennia. This means the state will have less money to work with than previously anticipated. For instance, the May 2025 forecast indicated that the state would have about \$500 million less to spend in the 2025-27 budget cycle than was projected just three months prior.
- **Economic Headwinds:** Oregon's economy is showing signs of struggle. State economists have noted that Oregon's GDP has been growing more slowly than the national average, and the state's population growth has stagnated. There are also concerns about a "manufacturing recession" and slower job creation.
- **National and Global Uncertainty:** A significant factor in the more cautious forecast is uncertainty at the national and global levels, particularly concerning federal

policies, trade tensions, and potential tariffs. Oregon's economy is highly dependent on trade, making it particularly vulnerable to these issues.

- Still a Healthy Budget: Despite the downward revisions, the overall picture is not one of a budget crisis. The state is still expected to have billions more to spend in the next biennium than it did in the current one. The governor's recommended budget for the 2026-2027 biennium calls for a 10.5% increase in spending from all funds compared to the previous biennium. The state also has healthy reserve funds, including its "Rainy Day Fund" and "Education Stability Fund," which are a cushion against a potential recession.

In summary, while the forecast is not "bad" in the sense of a major shortfall, it is more cautious than in previous years. It may lead to a reduction in the scope of some planned investments and will require lawmakers to make some difficult choices as they finalize the budget.

Summary of Oregon K-12 School Transportation Rules

It's that time of year when we have a few parents upset with us for not transporting their students. So here is the lowdown!

Public school transportation in Oregon is a state-regulated service designed to ensure the safety and efficiency of student travel. The rules, which are guided by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and enforced by local school districts, define who is eligible for bus service, how students must behave, and what happens when schools transport students outside of standard eligibility rules.

Eligibility for Bus Service

Eligibility for bus transportation is primarily based on the distance a student lives from their designated school.

- Elementary Students (K-5): Must live more than one mile from their school.
- Secondary Students (Grades 6-12): Must live more than 1.5 miles from their school.

Transportation is also provided for students who live within these distance limits but require bus service due to special circumstances. This includes students with an approved Individualized Education Program (IEP) that specifies transportation as a necessary service, as well as students whose health or safety needs are outlined in a supplemental transportation plan approved by the local school board and the ODE.

Student Conduct and Safety

Riding the school bus is considered a privilege, and strict rules are in place to ensure the safety of all passengers. Students are under the direct authority of the bus driver while on the bus and at bus stops.

- General Rules: Students must arrive at their bus stop on time, remain seated while the bus is in motion, use a normal tone of voice, and be respectful to the driver and other students.

- Prohibited Actions: Students are not allowed to fight, extend limbs out of windows, damage bus property, or use profane language.
- Disciplinary Action: Violations of these rules can lead to disciplinary measures, including the temporary or permanent loss of bus riding privileges.

Consolidated bus stops are essential for creating an efficient transportation network.

- Shorter Route Times: Stopping at every house would make bus routes incredibly long, increasing ride times for every student. By using central stops, transportation officials can create shorter, more direct routes that get students to and from school in a reasonable amount of time.
- Substitute Drivers: With a set number of established stops, substitute drivers can easily follow a consistent, pre-determined route without having to figure out the specific location of every student's home.

Transportation of Ineligible Students

While schools can transport students who do not meet the standard eligibility criteria, there are significant policy and financial consequences. The state views this type of transportation differently and places the burden on the local school district.

- Financial Consequences: The primary consequence is the loss of state reimbursement. The ODE's transportation funding is specifically for "approved transportation costs," which only includes eligible students. If a school district transports an ineligible student, it must absorb the full cost of that transportation and cannot seek state reimbursement for those trips.

In summary, Oregon's system for public school transportation is a structured service that prioritizes the safety and needs of eligible students, while also providing a framework for how schools can manage the transportation of students who fall outside of the standard eligibility rules.

Off and Away, All Day!

On July 2, 2025, Oregon Governor Tina Kotek signed Executive Order 25-09, which establishes a statewide policy to prohibit student cell phone use in Oregon's K-12 public schools during the school day. The goal of the order is to improve student mental health and academic outcomes, as research suggests a link between cell phone use and negative consequences for young people, including mental health issues, safety concerns, and distraction from learning.

Key details of the executive order include:

- Statewide Requirement: It requires all Oregon school districts to adopt a policy prohibiting cell phone use by students. This applies from the beginning of the school day until the end, often referred to as a "bell-to-bell" ban.
- Implementation Timeline: Districts must adopt their policies by October 31, 2025, and have them fully in effect no later than January 1, 2026.
- District Flexibility: While the order sets a statewide standard, it allows for some local flexibility. Districts must outline how phones will be stored and what consequences will be for violations.

- **Exceptions:** The order allows for certain exceptions. Students may be permitted to have their phones for medical reasons or to support students with disabilities who have an individualized education program (IEP).
- **Discipline:** Disciplinary measures for violating the policy cannot result in a loss of instructional time, such as suspension or expulsion.

The executive order was issued after a similar bill failed to pass in the 2025 legislative session. Governor Kotek has stated that the move is a priority for her administration to address what she sees as an education crisis and a teen mental health epidemic.

Fortunately, OSD schools have been implementing our own restrictions on cell phones for a few years now, so this won't be a major shift for our students and families.



EXECUTIVE ORDER 25-09

Thank you for helping us support your students' learning

OFF AND AWAY, ALL DAY

In accordance with the Governor's Executive Order, OSD will be implementing an "Off and Away, All Day" cell phone policy beginning at the start of the 2025-2026 school year (August 15th).



**PHONE FREE,
OSD**

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STUDENTS?

Executive Order 25-09 requires all Oregon school districts to implement a "bell-to-bell" ban on cell phone use for students. This includes class time, passing periods, field trips, and lunch. Schools may extend the ban as they see fit based on their policies.

KEY DETAILS OF THE NEW POLICY

- **What's Banned?**
 - The policy applies to all personal electronic devices that can send or receive a message or notification; **including cell phones, smartwatches, gaming devices, etc.**
- **How do I contact my student during the day/if there's an emergency?**
 - Call the main office to reach your child.
 - In urgent situations, school staff will facilitate immediate communication.
 - In emergencies, the District has safety protocols to protect students and staff. Though students using cell phones during events like lockdowns might seem helpful, it can pose risks—revealing location, spreading misinformation, or disrupting emergency efforts.

WHY NO CELL PHONES DURING INSTRUCTIONAL TIME?

Research and feedback from educators across the state have consistently shown that cell phones are a significant distraction in the classroom. Here are a few of the reasons for implementing a cell phone ban:

- **Human brains are wired for connection,** communication, and learning, amplified through real interactions. Schools are key for building cognitive and social skills via face-to-face engagement. While digital tools can help, overuse may hinder these connections, decreasing social interaction and increasing isolation.
- **Student mental health and safety** should guide technology use in schools. Excessive screen time, especially social media, can cause anxiety, depression, and other issues. Limiting device access during school can reduce risks, encourage face-to-face interaction, and lessen online pressure.
- **A distraction-free environment is vital for student success.** Personal electronic devices can disrupt focus, reduce engagement, and impede deep learning. To foster critical thinking and presence, schools must minimize distractions and encourage sustained attention.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

www.ontario.k12.or.us/District/Cell-Phone-Policy

The Ontario School District is not responsible for any personal devices that are lost, stolen, or damaged.

Online Education Growing in Popularity

Online schooling for K-12 students has seen a significant surge in popularity, especially accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and this trend appears to be continuing. Several factors contribute to its growing appeal:

1. Flexibility and Convenience:

- Tailored schedules: Online learning allows students to learn at times that work best for them, accommodating diverse family schedules, extracurricular activities (like sports or arts), travel, or even jobs. This can reduce stress and make learning more enjoyable.
- Pacing: Students can learn at their own pace, spending more time on challenging subjects and moving ahead quickly in areas where they excel. This personalized approach can lead to deeper understanding and improved engagement.

2. Personalized Learning:

- Individualized instruction: Online platforms often leverage adaptive learning algorithms and digital content that adjusts to individual student performance. This helps provide a customized learning path that caters to each student's needs and preferences.
- Reduced distractions: For some students, the home environment, free from traditional classroom distractions, can be more conducive to focused learning.

3. Safety and Environment:

- Safe learning environment: Parents often appreciate the security of their child learning from home, alleviating concerns about bullying, peer pressure, or other safety issues present in traditional school settings.
- Controlled environment: Students can dictate their learning environment, choosing a setting that helps them concentrate best.

4. Access and Variety:

- Broader course offerings: Online schools can provide a wider range of courses, including advanced studies, arts, vocational skills, and dual enrollment opportunities, which might not be available in local brick-and-mortar schools.
- Access to certified teachers: K-12 online schools employ certified and experienced teachers who are often specifically trained for online instruction.
- Geographical flexibility: Online learning breaks down geographical barriers, allowing students to access quality education regardless of their location.

5. Development of Key Skills:

- Self-discipline and time management: Online learning inherently requires students to develop strong self-discipline, time management, and independent learning skills, which are valuable for future academic and professional success.
- Technology literacy: Students develop essential technology and digital citizenship skills as they navigate online learning platforms and resources.

6. Parental Involvement:

- Increased oversight: Parents can be more directly involved in their child's education, monitoring progress, accessing grades, and communicating easily with teachers.

Post-Pandemic Trends: While the initial surge in online enrollment during the pandemic was a necessity, many schools and families have continued to embrace elements of virtual learning. The pandemic accelerated the adoption of technology in education, leading to:

- Increased familiarity with digital tools: Both teachers and students are more comfortable and proficient with learning management systems, video conferencing, and educational software.
- Blended learning models: Many institutions are exploring hybrid models that combine online and in-person instruction, offering the best of both worlds.
- Focus on social-emotional learning (SEL): Schools are increasingly investing in SEL programs and tools to address student well-being, which gained prominence during periods of remote learning.

However, it's also important to acknowledge potential drawbacks:

- Social interaction: Concerns exist about limited in-person social interaction, which is crucial for development.
- Self-motivation: Online learning requires a high degree of self-motivation and discipline, which can be a challenge for some students.
- Technical difficulties: Reliance on technology means potential issues with internet access, device compatibility, and technical support.
- Distractions at home: While a home environment can be less distracting for some, for others it can be filled with distractions.

Despite these challenges, the numerous benefits and the continuing evolution of online learning technologies suggest that K-12 online education will remain a popular and growing option for families seeking flexible, personalized, and accessible educational experiences.