



Determining Similar Districts (SB 141)

Overview

The 2025 Education Accountability Act ([Senate Bill 141](#)) requires the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to set metric targets for “similar school districts” and requires school districts to use these metric targets when setting performance growth targets for:

- K-2 Regular Attenders
- K-12 Regular Attenders
- 3rd Grade ELA
- 8th Grade Math
- 9th Grade On Track
- Four-year Graduation
- Five-year Completion
- Local Metrics

Similar District Method

For the identification of similar districts, ODE utilized a clustering method to calculate the statistical “nearest neighbors” of districts based on student demographic and community attributes.

The selection of the student demographic and community attribute variables was informed by past ODE accountability work on similar-school groupings, engagement with the Accountability Reporting Advisory Committee ([ARAC](#)), the Assessment & Accountability Technical Advisory Committee ([TAC](#)), and the performance of the variables in the model, in combination with other variables of interest.

Before clustering, districts were first categorized into different Groups (e.g., Group 1, Group 2, etc.) based on student enrollment¹ and NCES² geographic locale. Subsequent “nearest neighbors” statistical clustering was conducted only within each Group and not across Groups. For example, all districts in Group 1 were further classified into Cluster 1 or Cluster 2 within that same Group.

¹ Student enrollments as of the 1st school day in May 2025.

² National Center for Education Statistics [Locale Classifications](#)

Student Demographic and District Variables

After the initial categorization, districts in each of the Groups were further separated into two Clusters (e.g, Group 1, Cluster 1 or Group 1, Cluster 2). The calculation and identification of similar district Clusters within each Group relied on the following student demographic and community attributes:

- The percent of students identified as navigating poverty³
- The percent of students identified as ever English learners⁴
- The percent of students identified as belonging to a racial/ethnic group that has historically experienced academic disparities⁵
- The percent of students identified as mobile within the school year⁶
- The distance to the nearest 2- or 4-year public higher education institution,⁷ as a proxy measure for service and community organization availability

Calculation of Similarity and Clustering

Within each Group, the combination of the demographic and community variables is the basis for similarity. A statistical distance was calculated between each district and every other district in the same Group using the selected variables. To identify the cluster of similar districts in each Group, a hierarchical cluster analysis was conducted. This method organizes districts into clusters by minimizing differences within each cluster and maximizing differences between clusters. Thus, the districts in Cluster 1 should be more similar to each other than they are to the districts in Cluster 2. Through this clustering technique, districts with the least statistical variation (e.g., the most similar to one another) are grouped together.

As a result, districts may have similar districts in their cluster that have similar percentages to them on all variables, and they may also have similar districts that are nearly identical to them in one variable and quite different from them in another variable.

³ These are students who participate in SNAP, participate in TANF, are foster students, homeless students, and/or migratory students.

⁴ These are students who participated (and were reclassified) or are currently participating in a program to acquire academic English.

⁵ These are students who are American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, Multiracial, or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

⁶ These are students who experience one or more of the following: (a) attends more than one Oregon public school during the school year, (b) enters the Oregon public education system late (i.e., after the first school day in October), (c) exits the Oregon public education system early (i.e., on or before the first school day in May without earning a diploma, certificate, etc.), and (d) have significant gaps in enrollment during the school year totaling ten or more consecutive week days. See [Student Mobility User Guide](#) for details.

⁷ The Euclidean distance (in miles) to the nearest 2- or 4-year public higher education institution, including institutions in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, California and Nevada.