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October 6, 2001

Protect children's gains: Improvements have come slowly, and could be lost

A Register-Guard Editorial

Two things strengthen the meaning of Children First for Oregon's yearly "report card" on the well-being of the state's children.

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The report card is based on an array of statistics that can be compared to the Oregon Progress Board's state-sanctioned benchmarks, allowing Oregonians to see whether their performance matches their aspirations in regard to children's health, safety and welfare. And though Children First is unabashedly an advocacy group, the nonprofit organization's pro-child agenda is one that Oregonians can easily embrace: Anything that improves the lives of children will make Oregon a better place, now and in the future.

Both the credibility and the importance of Children First's evaluations contribute to the significance of the group's latest report card. For the first time since it began issuing its reports nine years ago, Children First gave Oregon an above-average grade for the overall well-being of the state's children. The B-minus grade doesn't qualify Oregon for any sort of honor roll, but steady improvements have allowed the state to rise above mediocrity.

The B-minus grade is an average of marks in five broad categories: education, child safety, public investment in families, early childhood and teenagers' well-being. Children First gave the state a C grade in the teenagers' category, the lowest on the report card. The state received a grade of B in the early childhood category, the highest of the five grades.



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