



ELEVATING STUDENT VOICE

Student Educational Equity Development (SEED) Survey

In Their Own Words: Analysis of Student Short Answers

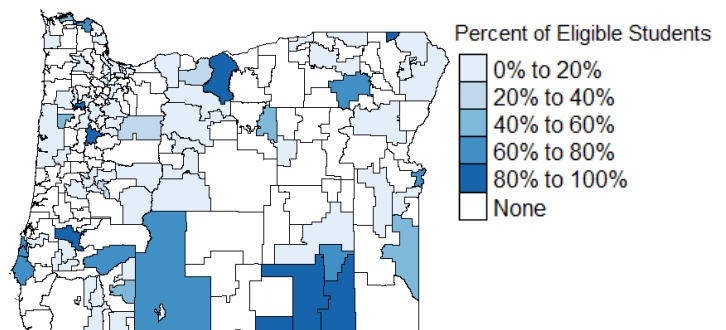
Student voice is critical to understanding of student experiences in Oregon’s public schools, including challenges, opportunities for investment and support, and chances to make stronger relational connections that enhance student learning. Students express themselves in [many ways](#), some of which can be a challenge to adult assumptions, unpredictable, or reveal inconvenient truths; and, there is much to [learn](#) from all of these types of self-expression. In this brief, we analyze student responses to a simple question: “Is there anything else about your school you would like to share?”¹ This question was posed to students in grades 6-11, as part of the 2021-22 Student Educational Equity Development Survey (SEED). ODE received over 2,000 responses² to this question from students in 87 schools across the state. Responses ranged from concerning descriptions of student experiences of bullying and bias to more positive comments describing the things (and people) they love about their schools. Students shared feelings of belonging or disconnection, described ways they could be better served in terms of both academics and mental health, and gave us a window into their experiences in school and what they would need in order to feel safe, comfortable, and supported.

Student Educational Equity Development Survey (SEED)

Since 2020-21, ODE has developed and administered the [SEED Survey](#) to collect information about the educational experiences of students in grades 3-11. SEED enables ODE to gather data on student experiences, including:

- access to learning resources
- opportunity to learn
- sense of self-efficacy
- sense of belonging.³

Who Responded to SEED in 2021-22?



This survey, which provides universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations, as well as multiple language versions, that students need for access, is available to all Oregon public schools and districts, but is optional for schools and districts to administer. Response rates to SEED have increased from 2020-21 to 2021-22, and ODE anticipates expanded use as the survey matures. These data should not be considered representative of all Oregon students, but should be examined for their ability to shed light on common student experiences that may be happening across the state. ODE encourages school and district leaders who read this brief to examine their own institutions for similar experiences, and to review best practices included here for opportunities to enhance their connection to and services for students.⁴

Note to Readers: Throughout this brief, we present student responses, paired with resources we hope will enable schools and districts to better support students experiencing these and similar issues. The presence of resources is not intended to indicate that the issue has been solved – rather, it should indicate recognition of its importance, and of solving it as worthy of additional attention and concerted effort. Schools and districts should [engage](#) with their students, families, and communities, using these responses and resources as a starting point for identifying, understanding, and addressing issues raised by student voice in each local community.

¹ Of note, there are two other short answer questions on the survey – one asking students in grades 6-11 about barriers to participation in extracurriculars, and another asking students in grades 7-11 about courses not available at their school that they would like to take. Their inclusion has likely reduced the number of responses on those topics provided in response to this question.

² More than 16,000 students took SEED in 2021-22, but not all students provided a response to this question. The question was not presented to students in lower grade levels, and all students were able to skip any items they did not wish to answer.

³ A full list of items asked on each grade level’s version of the survey is [available](#) online.

⁴ One suggested option for reviewing this brief is to use the School Reform Initiative’s ["4A"s](#) protocol.

Relationship and Connection

Many students shared how much they loved their school, with comments like “I have loved being here,” “it’s an amazing school!”, and “I’m glad I can be a part of it.” The joy, belonging, and sense of community were evident in many responses.

A large number of students described specific staff members whom they liked or disliked, often as the only response provided, reinforcing the fact that much of education is relational. One student noted that their school has “the nice[st] teacher I ever met.”

“Recognition of the relational nature of teaching should enhance the experience of both students and teachers. The reactions of students invited into a caring relation often include increased interest in the subject matter (if she is interested, it must be worth exploring); enhanced self-esteem (if she sees something in me, I must be worth something); and concern for others (if she cares about them, perhaps I should too).” – *No Education without Relation*⁵

Sense of Belonging

A main focus of the more specific responses was on student sense of belonging or disconnection from school. ODE received both positive and negative responses⁶ here, including some student descriptions of unmet needs.⁷

“The teachers are very nice and understanding. I learn [a lot] every day when I walk into school.”⁸

“[T]he faculty are very kind and all try their hardest”

“My teachers say [I] am really helpful and that makes me [feel] really happy to hear and it makes me [feel] better if [I] am having a bad day.”

“[B]y far the best [school I] have ever been to. [I] feel like the teachers truly care for the student[s] and it has been a welcoming and good [environment] to transfer into”

“Everyday I look forward to coming to school. The teachers are nice and smart. The students are entertaining. My friends are so kind and supporting. I love it very much!”

“I have a [problem] making friends”

“[I] just wish people were more kind is all”

“I don't feel very confident or valued here. I've had...to take time off school....None of it was my fault, and It wasn't in my ability to take care of. I was treated like my missing work and lack of understanding was my fault.”

“Most teachers could do a better job caring for their [students'] grades and if they aren't [performing] well then understanding there could be another reason.”

“[P]eople are very disrespectful and make me hate school, teachers never believe you and always tell you [you're] lying”

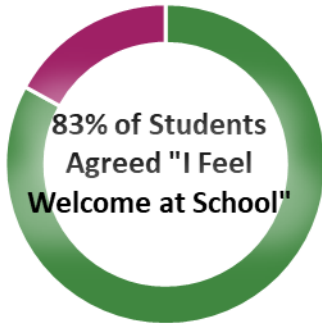
Students talked about the importance of building and maintaining trust between school staff and students, with one student commenting that they felt “safe” learning at their school because concerns could be expressed and addressed by staff. They go on to mention that “[My school] protects their students and sets them up for success and they [don't] shame you even if

⁵ Bingham, Charles Wayne, and Alexander M. Sidorkin, eds. *No Education without Relation*. Vol. 259. Peter Lang, 2004, pg vii.

⁶ Note that, due to the optional nature of the survey and of this item, students may have been more likely to respond when they had specific issues to raise. The subjects raised by students may also have been impacted by the constructs included in earlier portions of the survey.

⁷ The survey administration process included a procedure for rapidly identifying responses that indicated a student was in crisis and connecting them to appropriate sources of assistance.

⁸ Edits, denoted with [square brackets], have been made to the quotes included only for the purposes of spelling and grammar to improve readability. No alterations have been made to the students' meaning or word choice, except where necessary to preserve student confidentiality.



2021-22 SEED Survey, grades 3-11, among students who responded to the question. Percent who selected "agree" or "strongly agree."

you do fail, because you can learn from these failures." Conversely, another student expressed mistrust of school staff, noting that "when [mental health] was brought up...they provided no reason why we can talk to them they just stated that we can...So I don't understand why they think anyone going through depression would talk to them about it."

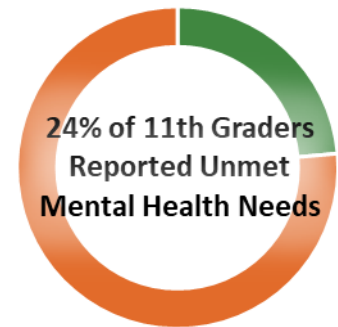
It is important for schools to create structures that support healthy relationship development to enable each student to be known well and to be connected with other students and adults.⁹ Healthy relationships between students and adults are reciprocal, attuned, culturally responsive, and trusting.¹⁰ Both positive and negative relationships between teachers and their students have been found to have a significant effect on both school engagement and student achievement.¹¹ Furthermore, one study found that positive student-teacher relationships are the second most important school climate factor related to school satisfaction, exceeded only by academic support.¹²

ODE's [Care & Connection](#) campaign encourages all of Oregon's schools and districts to focus on fostering healthy, supportive relationships and communities, and create welcoming spaces for everyone.

Mental Health¹³ Supports¹⁴

Students made several comments about mental health needs and lack of access to appropriate counseling services, including, "if you need to talk to someone there is no one to talk to." Students also expressed concerns about the confidentiality of what they discuss in schools, with one criticizing a school's reporting of a student mental health need and another saying "I feel like we should have a [therapist], because...we want someone [adult] we can trust that won't tell anyone else."

Oregon's [Comprehensive School Counseling Standards](#) lay out ODE's vision for school counseling, which includes access for every student – districts and schools should review the resources available through these standards to ensure that student needs are met.¹⁵ Funding to expand counseling and mental health staff may be available through the [Student Investment Account](#). Students may also benefit from information



2020 Oregon Student Health Survey, grade 11. Responses to question about unmet mental or emotional health needs within the past 12 months.

⁹ The Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (2018). *From a nation at risk to a nation at hope: Recommendations from the national commission on social, emotional, and academic development*. The Aspen Institute.

¹⁰ Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2020). *Reunite, review, and thrive: Social and emotional learning (SEL) roadmap for reopening school*. Chicago, IL: CASEL

¹¹ Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2020). *Reunite, review, and thrive: Social and emotional learning (SEL) roadmap for reopening school*. Chicago, IL: CASEL

¹² Huebner, E. & Patton, J. (2011). Relationships among school climate domains and school satisfaction. *Psychology in the Schools*, 48. 133 - 145. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20532>

¹³ SEED was not designed to capture student mental health experiences or needs.

¹⁴ Oregon Student Health Survey Results courtesy of the Oregon Health Authority at <https://www.bach-harrison.com/SHSDataPortal/Default.aspx>.

¹⁵ Districts and schools should also review the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) [Ethical Standards](#), which lay out standards for confidentiality, including that school counselors should promote awareness of ethical standards and legal mandates related to sharing of student information, and should maintain confidentiality as much as possible, with consideration to legal requirements or the necessity of preventing serious harm.

around Oregon’s [Behavioral Health Crisis Response System](#), including the 988 lifeline.¹⁶ Additional resources are available from ODE’s [Mental Health Toolkit](#).

“It gives me [anxiety] being here sometimes, as if everyone were judging me.”
“[It’s] decent, I learn stuff but I [sacrifice] my mental health and [I’m] always tired”

In 2022, ODE launched the [Community Care Demonstration Project](#) in response to the requests of Oregon’s school communities, including concerns similar to those expressed here. The effort is designed to strengthen mental health, health, substance use, and crisis supports, and link students and their families to needed health and behavioral health resources in their local communities. One component of this project, [Oregon Classroom WISE](#) is a suite of resources including free, online, self-guided modules for adults and youth interested in strengthening mental health and well-being. It includes a host of print and video resources, guided tutorials and role plays, and interviews with youth and school personnel. The content covers many important topics such as how to build safe, healthy relationships, best practices for supporting children and adolescents experiencing life challenges and distress, and skills for handling challenging behaviors.

Bullying

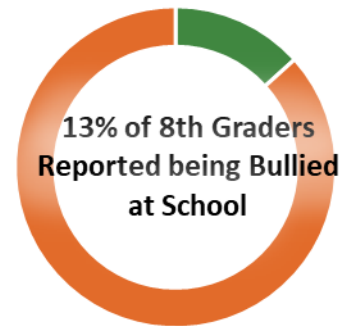
Many students described ongoing bullying: both specific events that they had witnessed or suffered and general climates within their schools. Some asked specifically for intervention, expressed a lack of trust that adults would intervene on their behalf, or expressed hopelessness that anything could be done about the [bullying](#)¹⁷ they faced.

“There is a lot of bullies and no one does anything about it and people [don’t] support or like you for who you are. My friends and I [were] at lunch a group of girls [were] taking pictures of us and posting them on the internet and they are [still] doing it...[no one’s] done anything about it.”

“[I]t can sometimes be scary to walk through the halls because the older boys are really rough and [I’ve] been shoved by them a lot”

“If there is bullying here, there is no way to stop it. Period. You can ignore it to keep it from getting worse, but talking to an adult always makes it worse-every single time. The mean/rude/bullying person just holds a grudge. [S]tanding up to kids gets you bullied, too. The only solution that ever worked was when a chaperone accompanied one of the bullies-they stopped completely.”

“Most of the kids here are total [jerks]. I can’t walk down the hallway without being called names, being hurt/shoved, or being laughed at.”



2020 Oregon Student Health Survey, grade 8. Responses to question about bullying at school within the past 30 days.

Students who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, gender-expansive, American Indian/Alaska Native, Middle Eastern/North African, Native Hawaiian, or Black/African American, and students with disabilities, reported even higher rates of bullying; more detail is available through the SHS crosstab tool.

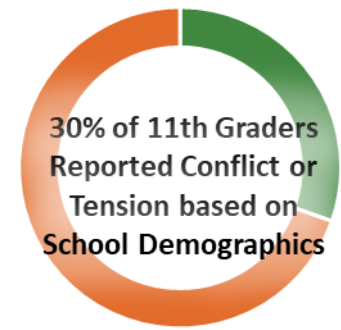
¹⁶ For additional crisis, mental, and behavioral health resources, see <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Pages/Mental-Health.aspx>.

¹⁷ Oregon law defines bullying, harassment, or intimidation to include any act that substantially interferes with a student’s education, takes place in a school or school-adjacent setting, and has the effect of harming a student or their belongings, placing a student in fear of harm, or creating a hostile educational environment. Full definition and guidance available at <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/bullyingguidance.pdf>.

With 13% of 8th grade students reporting recent experience of bullying, and as much as twice that rate reported by students from non-dominant cultures¹⁸, it is clear that substantial work remains to be done to ensure that schools are safe for all students. ODE’s anti-bullying [guidance](#) includes resources and a summary of Oregon law regarding school and district responsibilities around bullying prevention and response.

Experiences of Racism, Sexism, and Other Bias

Students are experiencing overt acts of racism in Oregon’s schools, and many students described their awareness of overt and explicit racism in their schools in great detail. While there may be training on [implicit bias](#) or professional learning about the real effects of racial [microaggressions](#), Oregon’s education leaders may be tending to important nuances without enough focus on outright racist behaviors in Oregon’s schools. Students described specific slurs used against them by other students, sometimes within earshot of school staff. One student mentioned the use of a racially-specific school mascot that they found offensive. These experiences shared by students show that there remains a great deal of work to be done to ensure that our schools are safe and welcoming environments for all learners.



2020 Oregon Student Health Survey, grade 11. Students who agreed “At this school, there is conflict or tension based on race, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability.”

“Almost everyone here is racist, [misogynistic], and homophobic. It distracts me from learning when [I’m] being made fun of.”

“There[’]s a lot of racism among the students and some adults (not all) it honestly discourages me from wanting to come to school.”

“[The kids] say the n-word and other [racist] jokes all the time and the [adults] say nothing [to] them but god [forbid] a girl wear a [cropped] top”

“[A teacher] referring to the time women didn't have rights as [’]The good ol' days[’] may have been a joke but that does not in any way mean it was ok.”

“...For instance, I have witnessed students pulling their eyes back mimicking Asian eyes, saying that they are Chinese since they pulled their eyes back. I have also witnessed many students...saying [’]ching chong[’]. As a person who is Asian, I find this extremely rude to my culture and being. I would like to address this issue in order to have this problem resolved or at least fixed better.”

“...[Students] don't receive any punishment for saying things homophobic, or even racist... The kids...make a lot of homophobic and racist remarks in class, loud enough for the teacher to hear, and NOTHING is done about it.”



The [Every Student Belongs](#) (ESB) page includes rules regarding hate symbols, and guidance around creating safe and welcoming schools and responding to [incidents](#). The ESB rule was [initiated](#) by an Oregon [student](#) in response to student reports of hate symbols in schools, serving as both an important policy and an example of the positive change that can be effected by student voice. Oregon’s [Student Success Plans](#) include specific recommendations for creating safe and inclusive learning environments for a number of focal populations, including [African American/Black students](#) and [Hispanic/Latino/a/x students](#). See page 6 for resources specific to LGBTQ2SIA+ students.

Students also expressed interest in learning more about other cultures, in order to combat racism and other bias within their schools. Oregon law defines ethnic studies as the instruction of K-12 students in the histories, contributions, and perspectives of individuals who are Native American or Americans of African, Asian, Pacific Island, Chicano, Latino, or Middle Eastern

¹⁸ 2020 Oregon Student Health Survey [crosstab](#).

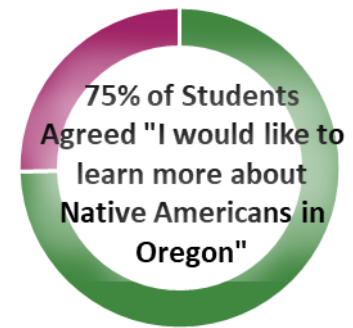
descent. It also includes the histories, contributions, and perspectives of the women, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

“The school is very negative, a lot of the students spew hate instead of kindness and we don't learn enough about topics such as race and racism, [N]ative [A]mericans, and other stigmatized communities.”

“While there is representation of people from different cultural backgrounds, I have never read any school assigned article about lgbtq+ people. In fact it has never been mentioned in any of the assignments I have done. I have read 1 book series in the school library that includes lgbtq+ people. This makes me rather frustrated as I would like to see more representation of people like me at school.”

“I have never been genuinely taught about Native [A]mericans and their culture. The ONE time I did...It was about the colonization, and even then schools don't go into detail about just how truly disgusting and atrocious the actions towards [N]ative [A]mericans were.”

Oregon districts and schools must implement the 2021 [Social Science Standards integrated with Ethnic Studies](#) no later than the 2026-2027 school year. The ODE Ethnic Studies [website](#) includes links to resources to support implementation. Another Oregon law, Tribal History/Shared History, requires implementation of Native American curriculum by districts and schools. The ODE Office of Indian Education has developed an [Educator Toolkit](#) to support the implementation of Tribal History/Shared History. More information, including links to lesson plans, can be found on the ODE Tribal History/Shared History [website](#).



2021-22 SEED Survey, grades 3-11, among students who responded to the question. Percent who selected “agree” or “strongly agree.”

LGBTQ2SIA+

In addition to the biases described above, many students described specific needs for additional education and respect around LGBTQ2SIA+¹⁹ issues, most particularly pronouns. The majority of complaints were around student behavior and complimentary of the more supportive school staff, but some students reported bias from teachers as well.

“I feel like this school could use more acceptance of LGBT, like how some schools do where they let the students fill out a name and pronouns sheet, and if they should use the name around classmates or around parents.”

“[Teacher] doesn't respect my pronouns and somehow think this will make me listen to him. [If] he was nicer [I] would listen more, but for some reason he thinks [I] am a girl.”

“[S]tudents [at my school don't] respect lgbtq and gender pronouns, we NEED to learn more about that.”

“My school is not very safe for LGBTQ people (who face [harassment] daily with acts of physical violence, verbal [harassment], microaggressions, and vandalization) and generally most people that aren't heterosexual, white, and male.”

¹⁹ “LGBTQ2SIA+” encompasses multiple gender identities and sexual orientations including lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, transgender, nonbinary, queer, questioning, two-spirit, intersex, and asexual.

As the ODE resource [Supporting Gender Expansive Students: Guidance for Schools](#) explains, equal access to public education is a civil right rooted in both state and federal law. Students are protected from discrimination, which includes “any act that unreasonably differentiates treatment, intended or unintended, or any act that is fair in form but discriminatory in operation, either of which is based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, marital status, age, gender identity, or disability” ([ORS 659.850\(1\)\(a\)\(A\)](#)). Districts and schools have a responsibility to ensure that every student is accepted, supported, and safe in school every day. The ODE [website](#) provides tools for school staff, students, and families to foster educational environments that are safe, free from discrimination, and aligned with state and federal laws.

Additionally, Oregon’s LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Advisory Group has created a [plan](#) with specific policy recommendations to create safe, supportive, and equitable school environments for all LGBTQ2SIA+ students, including through the development of inclusive curriculum.

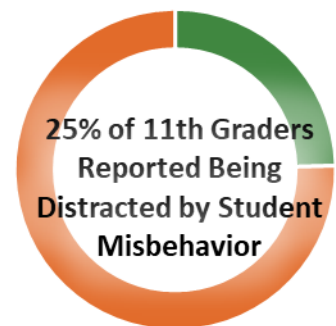
Safety

Students, and all people, have a right to feel safe and respected at school. In multiple cases, however, students described feeling unsafe due to sexual harassment, fights, or other negative behaviors.

“There is lots of harassment at my school that gets out of hand and makes me and people like me feel unsafe and unwelcome. ...There have also been numerous occasions of people I know and myself included being sexually harassed by mostly boys at the school and that [also] makes me and my friends very uncomfortable about going to school [here]”

“A lot of the boys here make me really uncomfortable.”

“There are constant fights, and I feel unsafe just being here. I am treated poorly by students, and people vape and fight every chance they get. [School] is an unsafe place, I'm lucky I get to leave soon.”



2020 Oregon Student Health Survey, grade 11. Students who agreed “In my classes I am often distracted from doing schoolwork because other students are misbehaving, for example, talking or fighting.”

Sexuality education in Oregon requires that healthy relationships and violence prevention are taught from K-12, in ways that are culturally responsive, inclusive, positive, and not fear- or shame-based. Sexuality education supports young people with skills to promote their own health, and to reduce sexual violence, harassment, and bullying. More information and resources can be found in [ODE's director's letter](#). Resources for sexual harassment prevention and response are also available from ODE’s [Title IX](#) resource page.

Some students described feeling safe and well supported as a positive about their school:

“[I] like [coming] to school [I] feel safe here [I] love the teachers [they’re] very sweet and kind....”

“I feel safe here, the students are well supported, despite the school shootings that happened everywhere else, here feels safe. (I like how the local police just stop by to say hello to us and just check up)”

ODE works towards ensuring that all students feel as safe in school as these students. Students may find it difficult or impossible to focus and learn from a place of danger, if they feel that their physical or emotional health is placed at risk. Conversely, discipline practices designed to protect students may in fact lead to students feeling more marginalized, and may disproportionately negatively impact students from focal populations. Resources for fostering safety can be found at the [School Safety and Prevention System](#) guidance page and through the [Fordham Institute](#).

Bathroom Privacy, Safety, and Access

Many students described needs around improved school bathroom facilities. Some indicated a lack of privacy or safety in the bathrooms, while others described the impacts of school policies intended to curb vandalism or other misuse that result in students being left with insufficient bathroom access. Some students shared that their bathrooms were old, “scary,” or didn’t have doors.

“please open all the bathrooms in each building because people need to use them!!! If we are worried about people vaping and smoking in the bathrooms we should install vape detectors and stuff.”

“The bathrooms are shut 99% of the time and are closed during lunch.”

“I would love to have doors back on the bathrooms”

“...closing down bathrooms doesn't stop the vandalism, it just reduces the places where it happens; it's the same amount of vandalism in a smaller place. Having to leave class for 15 minutes just to go to the bathroom is unacceptable.”

“the bathrooms are unsanitary and [I] feel like mine plus others personal space and privacy is being violated because the door is open to the boys bathroom so people can just watch you go to the bathroom.”

Oregon defines bathrooms as private places ([OAR 591-21-0587](#)) and requires that the products within remain accessible to students ([OAR 591-21-0590](#)) – removing privacy protections or excessive closure of bathrooms may violate these rules. Local building codes²⁰ may also govern bathroom construction and access. Additionally, [ADA standards](#) for bathroom access and design need to be consulted to ensure compliant facilities. All students should have access to safe, clean, and private restrooms, available with a minimal amount of instructional time lost or disrupted.

Students also mentioned availability of menstrual products as an unmet need:

“We don't even have menstrual products, teachers buy them with their own money to put in bathrooms for students.”

“I wish that this school had free feminine products because some [low income families] don't have enough money to help their daughters with it.”

A [survey](#) by Thinx and PERIOD found that 25% of menstruating students²¹ have missed class because of a lack of access to period products, and more than half have used a single product for longer than the recommended safe amount of time because of lack of access to replacement products. In response to these concerns, Oregon passed the Menstrual Dignity Act ([HB 3294](#)) in 2021, which requires that menstrual products are available at no charge in all school restrooms beginning in 2022-23. A [toolkit](#) is available for districts and schools to help implement this law.

²⁰ For example, [Portland City Code](#) specifies the number of bathrooms to be provided based on the number of students served, and requires doors on bathrooms

²¹ Although the survey only included teens, younger students may also menstruate, and may face even greater barriers than teens.

Facility Quality and Maintenance

Students commented that facilities were sometimes dirty, outdated, poorly ventilated, or in disrepair. Correcting these issues can be a relatively quick and visible way to indicate to students that their voices are being heard and their opinions respected. Additionally, some research connects quality school facilities to both teacher retention²² and student success.

“[W]e are a small school so we have some of our [classrooms are] in portables which can get really cold or really hot”

“[We don’t] have enough playground equipment”

“We could use some drinking fountains in the new building.”

“...we have to clean more...the school is very dirty.”

“This school needs to be renovated there is cracks all in the floors of classrooms.”

“People litter often, or don't throw their garbage away.”

“[It’s] not that bad of a school but [it’s] pretty old and a lot of things [don’t] work like one time it was really cold and we ask my teacher to turn on the heater and they said that it was broken.”

One study of New York schools found that student absenteeism was correlated with a number of measures of facility quality, including visible mold, poor ventilation, and structural problems.²³ Another study of Los Angeles schools found that updated school facilities were associated with improvements in test scores and student attendance.²⁴ The [Office of School Facilities](#) has resources for facility assessment and improvement, specifically the Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching Program ([OSCIM](#)), which provides supporting funds for this work when districts pass bonds for school facility improvement.

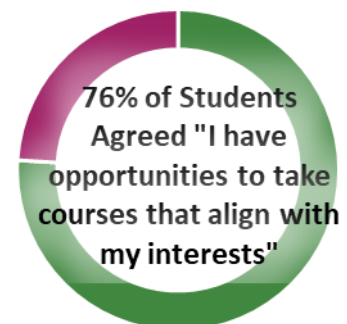
Poor facility ventilation is linked to a number of impacts, including spreading and exacerbating respiratory illness in students and teachers, and difficulty concentrating in uncomfortable classroom environments.^{25,26} Multiple [studies](#) have linked improved ventilation, climate control, and other facility improvements to improved cognitive performance, higher assessment results, and lower absenteeism. Best practices for clean indoor air are available from the federal [Clean Air in Buildings Challenge](#).

Well-rounded Education

Students wrote about classes they would like to see more of, with a particular emphasis on STEAM courses, or about new course offerings they found engaging.

“[O]ur new 3d modeling and tech [design] class is great and is [something] [I] would like to see more of.”

“One thing I wish we had more of, was more art classes. I also wish we had AP [Calculus] BC.”



2021-22 SEED Survey, grades 7-11, among students who responded to the question. Percent who selected “agree” or “strongly agree.”

²² Buckley, Jack, Mark Schneider, and Yi Shang. "The Effects of School Facility Quality on Teacher Retention in Urban School Districts." *National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities* (2004).

²³ Simons, Elinor, Syni-An Hwang, Edward F. Fitzgerald, Christine Kielb, and Shao Lin. "The impact of school building conditions on student absenteeism in upstate New York." *American Journal of Public Health* 100, no. 9 (2010): 1679-1686.

²⁴ Lafortune, Julien, and David Schönholzer. 2022. "The Impact of School Facility Investments on Students and Homeowners: Evidence from Los Angeles." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 14 (3): 254-89.

²⁵ Mendell, Mark J., and Garvin A. Heath. "Do indoor pollutants and thermal conditions in schools influence student performance? A critical review of the literature." *Indoor Air* 15, no. 1 (2005): 27-52.

²⁶ Fisk, William J. "The ventilation problem in schools: literature review." *Indoor Air* 27, no. 6 (2017): 1039-1051.

“I think [there should] be advanced classes that are fun and [interesting]. Like [choosing] biology and not having to do [regular] science. Or doing poetry instead of English”

“I love my school, but I wish they had a class for learning business/economics”

“At my school we have a lot of cool classes we take like foods, design and modeling, robotics, art, [S]panish, and foods.”

Resources and support for offering well-rounded education are available through ODE’s [Well-Rounded Access Program](#).

Academic Rigor and Differentiated Instruction

Students wrote that courses were either easy and boring or too difficult, and that they did not receive enough support to complete tough assignments.

“...we need to step up the assignments. they are getting pretty easy...could be just me but you know [I] want a challenge, respectfully.”

“I think there should be more support for advanced/excelled students. Many times, we end up finding resources for ourselves because our school does not provide them.”

“[I] love my social studies and language arts class. [T]hey are the advanced or tag classes and [mostly] everyone in the class really enjoys them.”

“[T]he work is [too overwhelming] for me and even the kids with good grades...told me even they have...stress about it [which] makes me hate going to school but [I don’t] want to miss it because then [I] will miss even more work.”

“One thing is the teachers are really nice and they help you when you don’t understand something to the best of their ability.”

“I have asked [my teacher] to help me with something and he told me I can figure it out by myself.”

Guidance for schools and districts to increase their offering of differentiated instruction within classrooms is available from ODE’s [Talented and Gifted](#) resource page, specifically the guides to creating district-level plans. Oregon’s [Core Teaching Standards](#) include standards around recognizing and supporting individual patterns of learning and development. The [Mentoring Program](#) provides tools (13a) for mentoring teachers towards planning differentiated lessons. [Digital Learning Resources](#) and this [guide to Multi-tiered System of Support](#) for advanced learners may also be helpful in supporting differentiated instruction to meet the needs of every learner.

Other Concerns

As a result of the open-ended nature of the question, we received comments on a wide range of areas. Although we are not able to address the content of every comment, all comments were read by ODE staff. A summary of some of the remaining themes is presented here.

- Meals and Schedules: Students criticized the quality of school lunches, with some also commenting on the short amount of time they have to eat. Students also complained about start times and insufficient break times, particularly in the context of limited bathroom availability as described above. Resources around meal planning, farm to child programs, and school gardens are available from ODE’s [Child Nutrition](#) programs.
- Technological Barriers: Students struggled with their school-issued devices, or with the school’s learning management system or virtual meeting software.

- Extracurriculars: Students described events, teams, clubs, and other extracurriculars that they love, or that they wish their school offered, such as theater, dance, music, and art clubs.²⁷
- Discipline: Students wrote in complaints that rules are too strict or unfairly enforced. Students also complained that rules weren't enforced when they were bullied. A number of students criticized their school's dress code or cell phone policy.
- Accommodations: Students described ways that the school could better accommodate disabilities and dietary needs, such as noting that some areas of the school are inaccessible, or that the school does not offer food options for students with gluten or dairy intolerances. Resources around disability accommodation can be found in ODE's [Special Education](#) and [Section 504/ADA](#) guidance.

Discussion

Providing opportunities for student voice to shape school decision-making can empower and engage students, as well as highlight areas where improvements are needed. Schools and districts have a range of options available to them to capture student voice, including [surveys](#), [empathy interviews](#), and other [community engagement](#) strategies. While student constructed responses from the SEED are not available directly to districts (in order to protect student confidentiality), districts and schools should examine the responses and themes presented here, and use them as a starting point to evaluate whether their students have similar concerns and needs. Additionally, ODE encourages school and district participation in SEED in order to gather unique state-level student experience data to support effective and well-tailored policymaking.

With thanks to ODE's SEED team; our colleagues in the Office of Enhancing Student Opportunities, the Office of Education Innovation and Improvement, the Office of the Director, and the Office of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment; the Student Advisory Panels; and the thousands of students who bravely and vulnerably shared their honest experiences with us

²⁷ Barriers to extracurricular participation will be addressed in future work.