



Data Snapshot Part I: Virtual Learning in Oregon

Purpose and Overview

In order to move toward a vision of creating equitable access to high-quality remote learning options for students across Oregon, it is critical to have an understanding of the landscape of currently operating remote schools and programs. This snapshot will serve as the first in a series of data snapshots with each including an overarching research question and an in-depth data analysis.

For this first data snapshot, the data included is quantitative in nature in connection with enrollment patterns and academic outcomes asking the questions:

1. *What are the characteristics of full/focus virtual schools and the students enrolled?*
2. *What are some of the academic outcomes for students attending full/focus virtual schools?¹*

Given that this is the first snapshot in this series, additional information regarding the dimensions of program models, definitions of terms, and limitations of datasets are included in order to provide context.

While these data are important in creating shared understandings of the current landscape of remote and online learning by highlighting patterns and trends, they are only one part of the larger picture of remote learning in Oregon. They do not tell the nuanced stories of students attending remote and online schools nor do they help us understand student, family, educator, and community experiences with remote and online learning.

Dimensions of Program Models within Oregon Schools

Figure 1 and Table 1 illustrate some of the varying dimensions of a school within Oregon in terms of their governance, alternative status, virtual designation, and operations (remote or non-remote). For example, based on their program model, a school can be non-alternative charter, with a focus virtual designation and operate remotely on the basis of their program model. Alternatively, a school may be a district-run alternative school that offers supplemental virtual learning and operates in-person for more

¹ This Data Snapshot includes an analysis of graduation data. It is important to acknowledge that additional outcomes are associated with remote learning that help to tell the story of student experience. Future Data Snapshots will include an analysis of additional data outcomes.

than 50% of the time. While there are many other dimensions and characteristics of a school or program, this brief considers available data based on these four dimensions.

Figure 1. Dimensions of Program Models within Oregon Schools

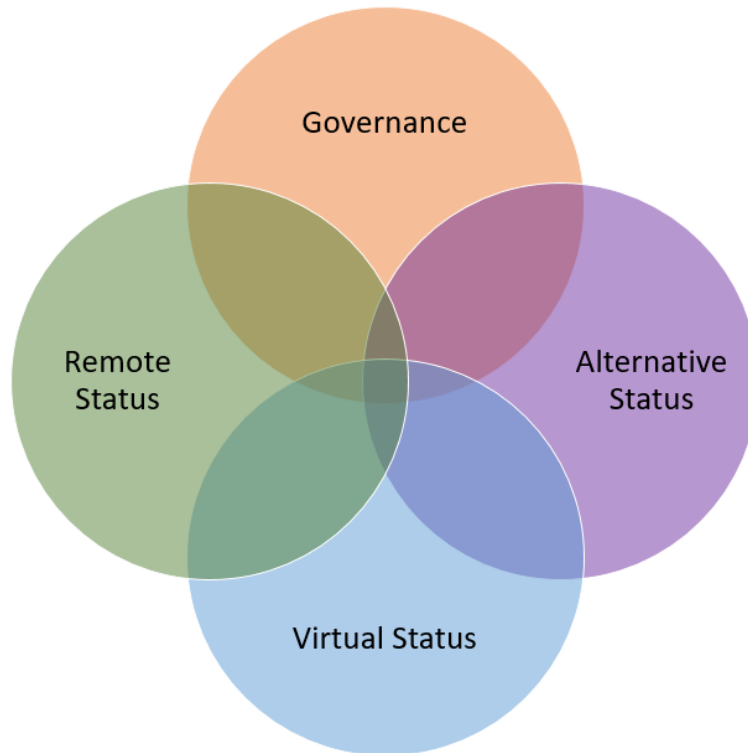


Table 1. Dimensions and Designations of Program Models in Oregon

Dimension	Designations
Governance	ESD, District, or Charter
Alternative Status	Alternative or Non-Alternative
Virtual Status	Not Virtual, Supplemental Virtual, Focus Virtual or Full Virtual
Remote Status	Remote or non-remote

Data Sample

For the purposes of this data snapshot, data analyzed includes alternative status, virtual status, and governance aligning with the dimensions represented in *Figure 1* and *Table 1*. As there are remote learning models wherein virtual learning is not a core component of their program model, the data presented here include only those schools that self-report as full or focus virtual. Therefore, these data do not capture all remote schools and programs; rather they include schools wherein virtual learning is a main component of their program model. Future data snapshots will include an analysis of data regarding remote status; however, remote status will not be central to this data snapshot.

Key Terms

Governance

ESD: Education Service Districts (ESDs) assist school districts and the Department of Education in achieving Oregon’s educational goals by providing equitable, high quality, cost-effective and locally responsive educational services at a regional level, including supporting remote learning. ([OAR 334.175](#))

Virtual public charter school: a public charter school that offers online courses and does not serve students from a primary physical location. The online instructional activities are integral to the academic program of the school as described in the charter contract. [ORS 338.005\(5\)](#), [ORS 338.120](#), [OAR 581-026-0300](#), [Virtual Public Charter School Determination Flow Chart](#).

District: Districts may establish virtual schools or programs. For more information regarding the distinction between virtual schools and programs, please see the [Remote & Online Learning FAQ](#).

Alternative Status

Alternative School: Oregon Law defines Alternative Education as a school or separate class group designed to best serve students' educational needs and interests and assist students in achieving the academic standards of the school district and the state ORS 336.615.

Virtual Status

The virtual status of a school is a school-level designation of how much of a school's instruction is provided virtually. *Virtual* is defined by federal data reporting guidelines as “instruction in which students and teachers are separated by time and/or location and interaction occurs via computers and/or telecommunications technologies.” *Virtual* is thus not as expansive a descriptor as remote or distance learning, as described more extensively in the next section. All district and charter schools may update their information annually and it is recommended they do-so, however schools only have to notify ODE of a change in status. The four designations as defined by the federal government are:

Full Virtual: The school has no physical building where students meet with each other or with teachers on a regularly scheduled basis; all instruction is virtual.

Focus Virtual: The school focuses on a systematic program of virtual instruction but includes some regularly scheduled in-person meetings including students and teachers as part of the instructional program.

Supplemental Virtual: Students at this school have access to virtual courses, but virtual instruction is not the primary means of instruction.

Not Virtual: The school does not offer any virtual instruction.

More information about the various virtual school status designations can be found here: [Virtual Status FAQ](#).

Remote Status

Remote School: While there is no definition in Oregon rule or statute of a remote school, ODE operational defines “remote” as instruction where the student and teacher are not in the same physical location for more than 50% of a students’ instructional time.

Non-Remote School: Instruction is delivered in person for more than 50% of a students’ instructional time.

The Distinction Between Virtual & Remote

Remote learning encompasses a variety of instructional models; from full use of online modalities (“Full Virtual”) to remote learning that uses little if any online instruction (“non-virtual remote learning”). This nuanced distinction between “remote” and “virtual” is important in understanding the data presented in this snapshot. There is a plethora of data around student enrollment and academic outcomes for virtual and online schools in Oregon. However, for non-virtual remote learning models, less data is available based on current reporting practices. As virtual learning is not a main component of these models, many of these schools are designated as *supplemental virtual* and are thus encompassed within aggregated brick and mortar school data.

New for the 2021-22 school year, schools and districts are required to report whether individual students receive more than half of their instructional time in a *remote* instructional model. This designation is required by the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act, which established the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) fund. Schools and districts report this data using the “Distance Learning Flag” in cumulative ADM. This new designation may allow for better understanding of remote versus virtual learning experiences in the future.

As highlighted in *Figure 1* and *Table 1*, both of these determinations serve as separate dimensions of a program model with variations of remote status and virtual status impacting the structure of the school and the ways in which data are reported. These nuanced distinctions create challenges in clearly understanding and communicating the full picture of school characteristics of remote learning.

Data Invisibility for Remote Programs

Online *programs*, operated by either a district or ESD, generally do not receive an institution ID and students are reported in all data collections as either enrolled in the district (their “school” is the district), or at their neighborhood school. This data is only available when combined with other students in educational settings within that school or district. As a result, online programs do not have independent accountability at the state or federal level. **Data in this snapshot do *not* capture students enrolled in online programs, which represent a significant percentage of students who engage in online instruction throughout the state.** Notably, it is a district or ESD decision to establish an online school or online program, through there are not clear distinctions between an online school or program to guide the decision. A more extensive description of schools and programs can be found in the [Remote & Online Learning FAQ](#).

Full & Focus Virtual Schools in Oregon Compared to Statewide Data

What are the characteristics of full/focus virtual schools and the students enrolled?

This section presents foundational data for understanding the statewide landscape of student characteristics and academic outcomes for students enrolled in public schools in Oregon that self-designate full/focus virtual schools². **Throughout this section, full/focus virtual schools are compared to statewide totals wherein “statewide” encompasses all schools, including brick-and-mortar schools and schools that are designated full/focus virtual.**

Table 2 and *Figures 2* and *3* illustrate the increase in student enrollment in full/focus virtual schools over time as well as the expansion of full/focus virtual schools across Oregon.

² Additional information specific to the schools included in this snapshot are included in Appendix A.

Table 2. Fall Membership for Full/Focus Virtual School Enrollment in Oregon Over Time as a Percentage of Total Enrollment, 2016-17 to 2021-22³

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Full/Focus Virtual Enrollment	12,115	12,585	14,317	15,571	26,735	25,029
Statewide Public School Enrollment	578,947	580,690	581,730	582,661	560,917	553,012
Percentage Full/Focus Virtual Enrollment of Statewide Totals	2.1%	2.2%	2.5%	2.7%	4.8%	4.5%

The data in Table 2 show that enrollment in full/focus virtual schools is increasing at a more rapid pace than statewide enrollment in that while students enrolled in full/focus virtual schools represented 2.1% of statewide enrollment in 2016-17, during the 2021-22 school year they represent 4.5% of statewide enrollment.

Figure 2. District and Charter Full/Focus Virtual School Enrollment Over Time: 2017-18 to 2021-22

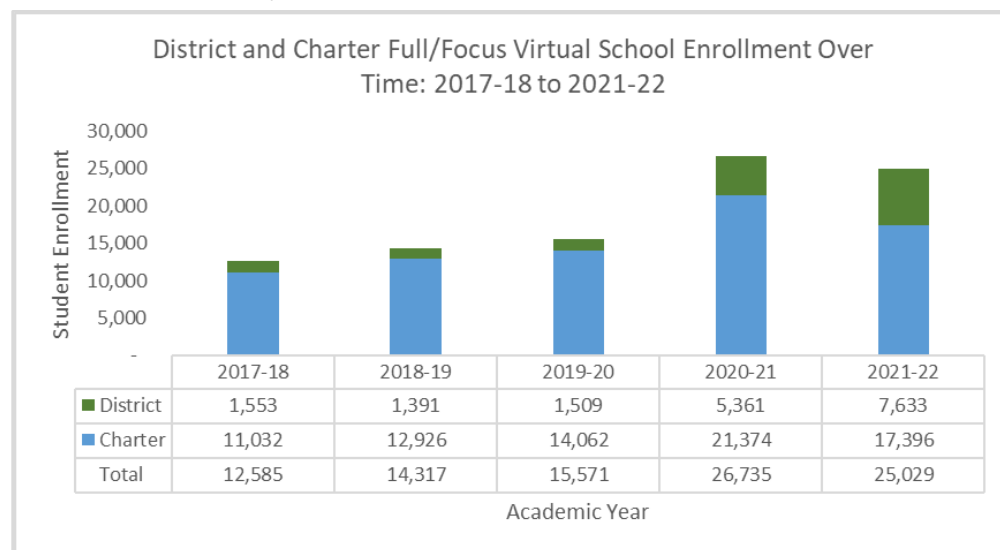
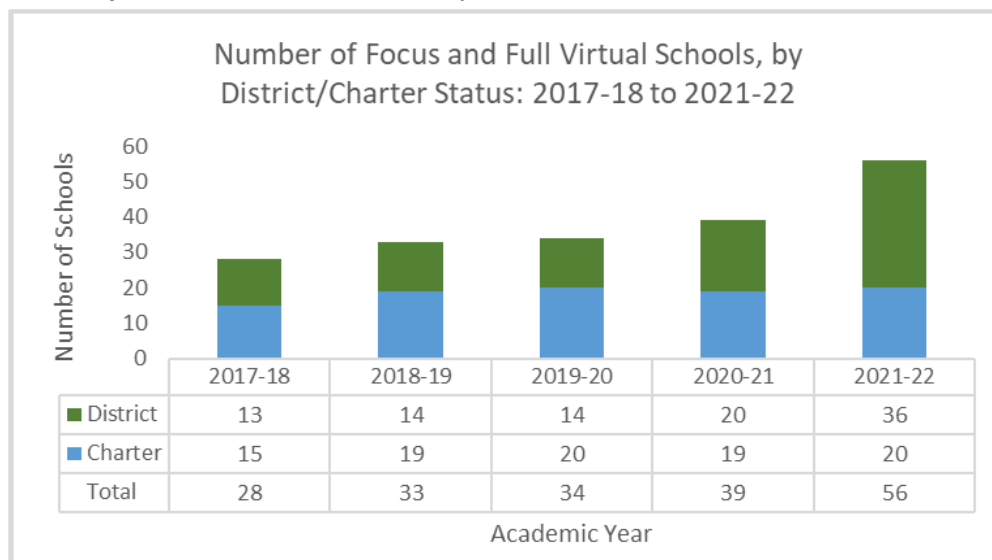


Figure 2 shows the percent enrollment of students in full/focus virtual schools by district or charter status while Figure 3 illustrates the number of schools in operation by district and charter status. Although full/focus virtual school enrollment remains less than 5% of the total enrollment of Oregon public schools, there was a drastic increase in student enrollment in full/focus virtual schools beginning in the 2020-21 school year. This increase has continued into the 2021-22 school year with much of that increase attributed to enrollment in full/focus district schools.

³ The data for this table are drawn from fall membership counts. For the 2020-21 school year, there was a large drop in overall public school enrollment.

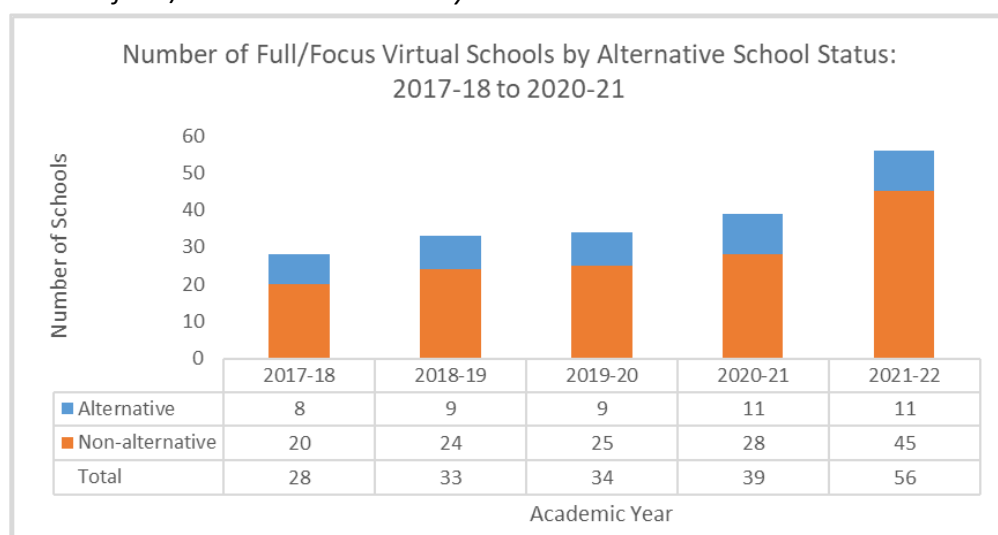
Between the fall of 2017-18 and the fall of 2021-22, Oregon saw a 392% increase in enrollment in district full/focus virtual schools. While full/focus charter schools are continuing to grow at a steady rate across the state, the rate of growth has been slower with full/focus virtual schools seeing a 58% increase between fall of 2017-18 and fall of 2021-22.

Figure 3. Number of Full/Focus Virtual Schools, by District/Charter Status: 2017-18 to 2021-22



The data highlighted in *Figure 3* further illustrate the growth occurring within district full/focus virtual schools. While only five virtual charter schools opened between 2017-18 and 2021-22, 23 district full/focus virtual schools were opened during the same time span. *Figure 3* coupled with *Figure 4* demonstrate that beginning in 2020-21, the growth of district full/focus virtual schools has outpaced virtual charter schools. This has led to a shift in who is operating full/focus virtual schools across the state, with the growth likely being a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although district schools make up a large part of the growth in the number of full/focus virtual schools, full/focus virtual charter schools continue to see the majority of student *enrollment*; however, enrollment in virtual charter schools decreased between the 2020-21 school year while enrollment in full/focus district schools increased.

Figure 4. Number of Full/Focus Virtual Schools by Alternative School Status: 2017-18 to 2021-22⁴



The data highlighted in *Figure 4* illustrate the number of alternative full/focus virtual schools and the growth of those schools over time. Historically, and continuing into the 2021-22 school year, only 20% of full/focus virtual schools receive alternative school status. Given Oregon’s school designation process, these 11 alternative full/focus virtual schools are district schools, as a school cannot be designated as both an alternative school and a charter school. While there has been growth of full/focus alternative schools over the past 5 years as illustrated in *Figure 4* the majority of growth has come from non-alternative full/focus virtual schools.⁵

⁴ The data for the 2021-22 school year are based on preliminary data received September 2021. It is possible that there could be a change in this data in Spring 2022 based on institutional validation.

⁵As charter schools cannot be designated as alternative schools in Oregon, this represents a limitation of the data in that current reporting practices only allow for district schools, not charter schools, to be designated as alternative.

Figure 5. Full/Focus Virtual School Enrollment in Oregon by Grade Band: 2016-17 to 2021-22

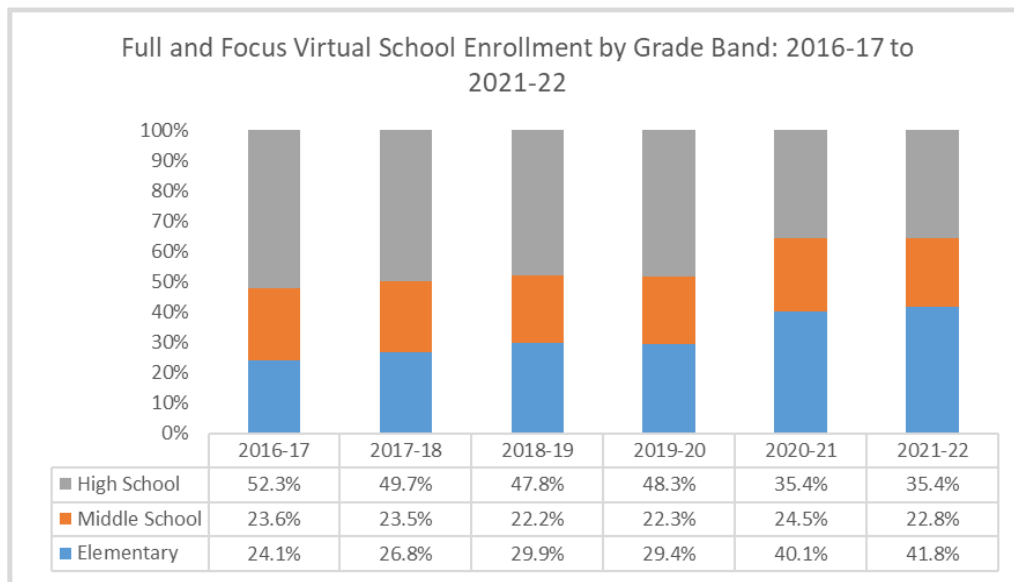


Figure 5 highlights the growth across grade level bands between 2016-17 and 2021-22. While high school enrollment has historically made-up the majority of student enrollment in full/focus virtual schools, there was a shift in the 2020-21 school year with rapid increases in enrollment occurring at the elementary level. As illustrated in Figure 5, there was an increase of 17.7% of total enrollment between 2016-17 and 2021-22 at the elementary level compared to a decrease in enrollment percentages at both the middle school and high school level. During the fall of 2021-22, there were 10,471 elementary aged students enrolled in full/focus virtual schools compared to 5,695 middle school students, and 8,863 high school students.

Figure 6. Percentage of Students Enrolled in Full/Focus Virtual Schools Receiving Educational Services Under IDEA: 2016-17 to 2020-21⁶

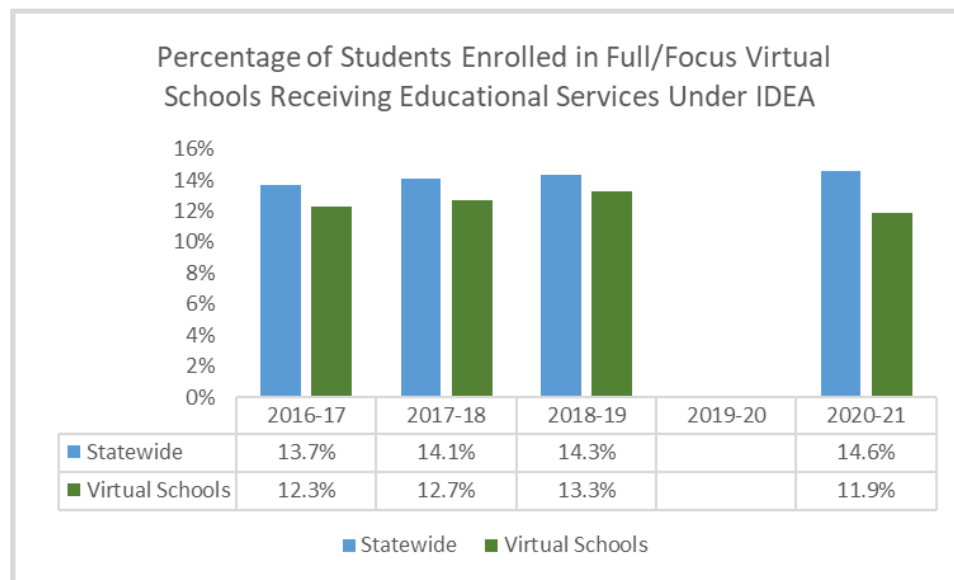
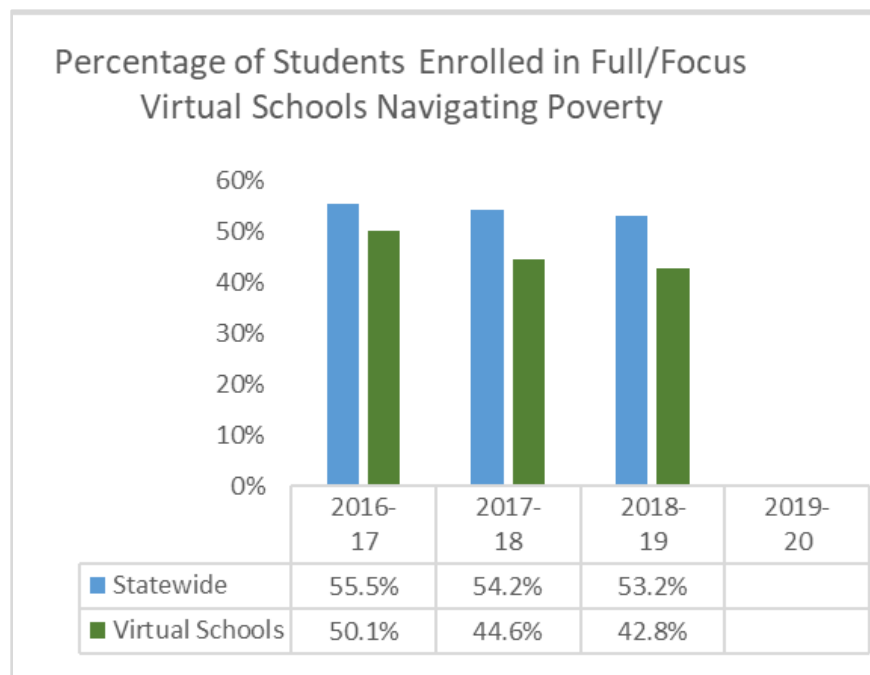


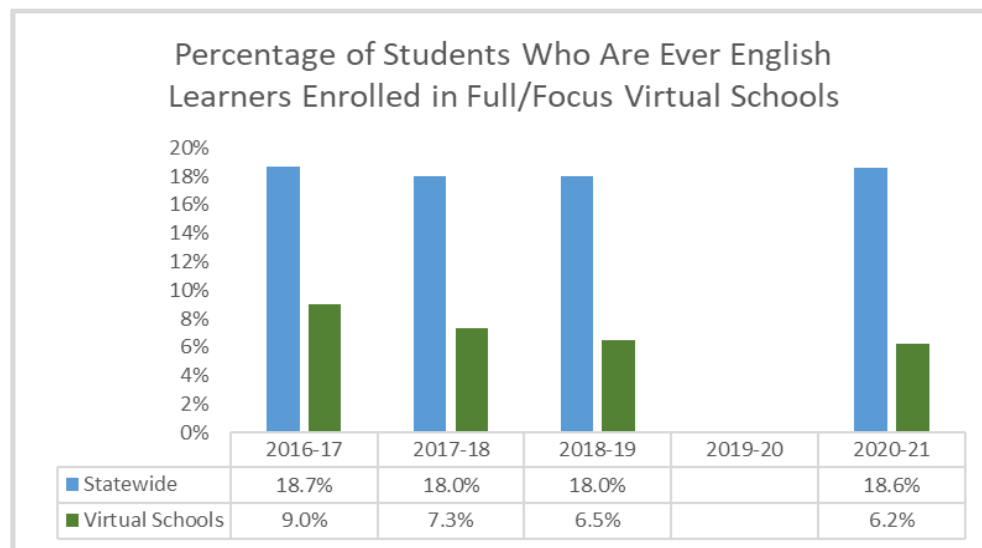
Figure 7. Percentage of Students Enrolled in Full/Focus Virtual Schools Navigating Poverty: 2016-17 to 2019-2020⁷



⁶ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, accurate data is not available for the 2019-20 school year.

⁷ In 2020-21, the U.S. Department of Agriculture allowed most schools to provide free meals to all students. As a result, ODE does not have accurate poverty data for this school year.

Figure 8. Percentage of Students Who Are Ever English Learners Enrolled in Full/Focus Virtual Schools: 2016-17 to 2020-21⁸



Figures 6 through 8 show patterns of student enrollment based on data reporting categories of students enrolled in full/focus virtual schools designated as belonging to the following categories⁹:

- receiving educational services under IDEA, including students who have IEPs and students who are on 504 plans
- navigating poverty, and
- currently designated as English learners or who are ever English learners (a focal group of both current and former English learners)

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, enrollment characteristics were not reported for the 2019-20 school year and thus there are no data included in the below figures for that year. Across these data reporting categories, there are notable enrollment disparities between students statewide and those attending full/focus virtual schools. While the determination of sending a child to a virtual school is up to the parent/family, these disparities bring up important questions regarding equitable access to full/focus virtual schools and the opportunities and challenges of a virtual model for students experiencing disabilities, students navigating poverty, and students who are emergent bilingual.

⁸ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, accurate data is not available for the 2019-20 school year.

⁹ It is important to note that within each of these figures, data is not included for the 2019-20 school year as data is not available for that time frame given the COVID-19 pandemic and the constraints on reporting.

Table 3. Percent Difference in Oregon Statewide and Full/Focus Virtual School Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity for the 2020-21 SY

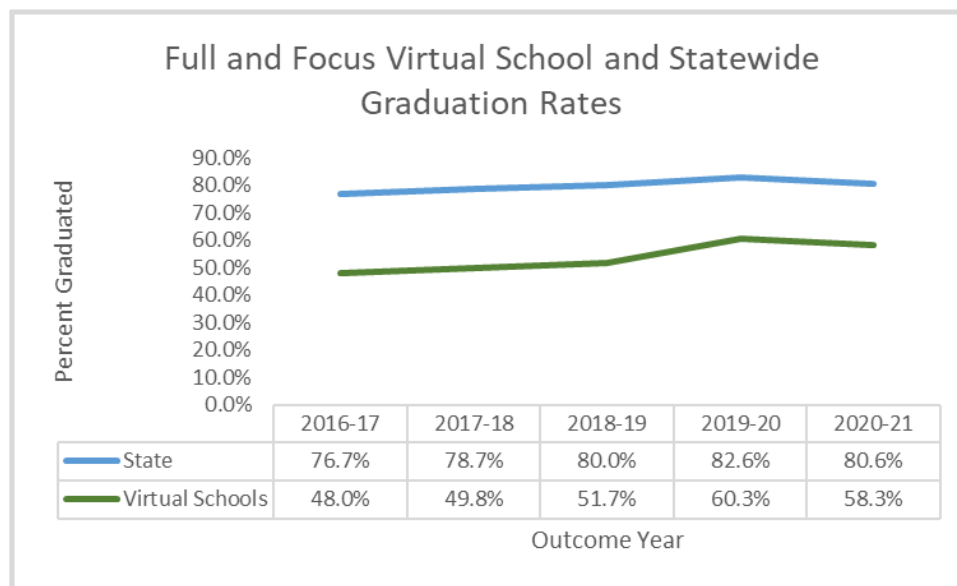
	% of Full/Focus Virtual Enrollment	% of Statewide Enrollment	Percent Difference
Hispanic/Latino	13.5%	24.9%	-11.4%
Asian	2.3%	4.1%	-1.8%
Black or African American	1.9%	2.3%	-0.4%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.5%	0.2%	-0.3%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1.1%	1.2%	-0.1%
Multi-Racial	6.9%	6.9%	0%
White Students	73.8%	59.8%	14%

The most profound disparity in virtual school enrollment when compared to statewide enrollment is race/ethnicity as illustrated in *Table 3*. When comparing student enrollment in full/focus virtual schools to statewide enrollment during the 2020-21 school year, white students were overrepresented in enrollment while all other race/ethnicity groups were underrepresented in enrollment. Latino/a/x students were the most underrepresented race/ethnicity enrolled in full/focus virtual schools wherein they represent 13.5% of students enrolled in full/focus virtual enrollment compared to 24.9% of statewide enrollment.

What are some of the academic outcomes for students attending full/focus virtual schools?

While the data in this section presents a picture regarding disparities in graduation rates between full/focus virtual schools and statewide data, it is important that we look further than quantitative data to more deeply understand student experiences with remote and online learning. Additional qualitative learnings regarding remote learning can be read in the [Fall and Winter 2021-22: Remote Learning Engagement Summary](#). As expressed throughout these engagement sessions, graduation rates may not portray an accurate representation of student learning and proficiency within full/focus virtual schools due to the concern that students enrolling in virtual schools are often credit deficient. While there are limitations to this data, it is included here to highlight trends and patterns as well as to set the stage for policy recommendations.

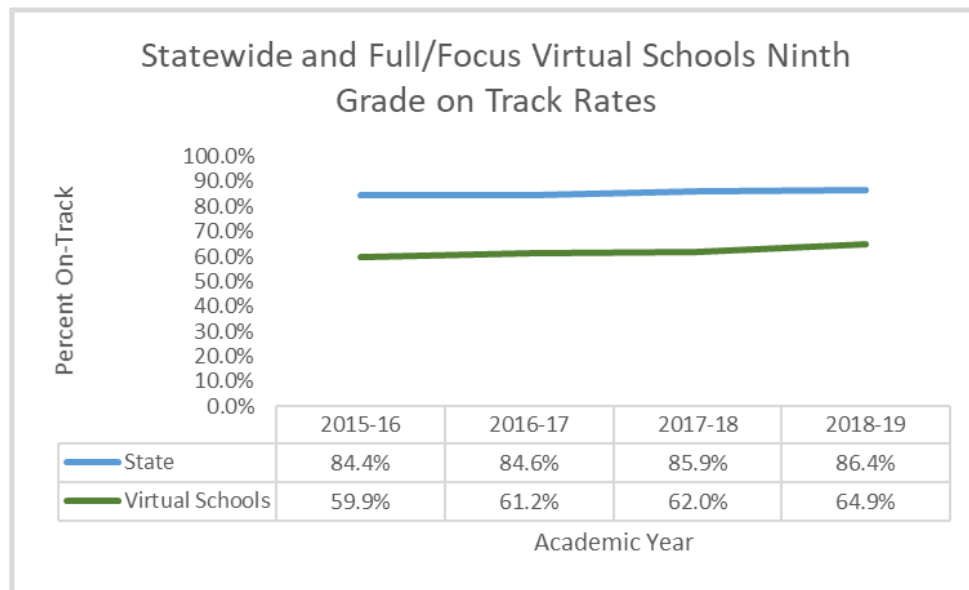
Figure 9. Full and Focus Virtual School and Statewide Graduation Rates: 2016-17 to 2020-21



According to statewide data, there are disparities in academic outcomes for students attending full/focus virtual schools in Oregon with a 22.3% gap. These data mirror nationwide trends regarding lower graduation rates for students attending full/focus virtual schools¹⁰. Graduation rates for students attending virtual schools in Oregon continued to increase between the 2016-17 and 2019-20 school years (as represented in *Figure 9*) with the average graduation rate for students attending full/focus virtual schools growing at a faster rate than the statewide average. While graduation rates for students attending full/focus virtual schools declined during the 2020-21 school year, the decrease mirrored the statewide decline in graduation rates.

¹⁰ Molnar, A. (2021). Virtual Schools in the US 2021. University of Colorado, Boulder.

Figure 10. Statewide and Full/Focus Virtual Schools Ninth Grade on Track Rates: 2015-16 to 2018-19



Ninth-grade on track data, which represent students on track at the end of their ninth grade year based on credits earned, are important to consider when analyzing graduation rates. As illustrated in *Figure 10*, which includes data most recently pulled from the 2018-2019 school year, 64.9% of students attending full/focus virtual schools are on track to graduate at the end of their ninth-grade year whereas 86.4% of students statewide are on track to graduate at the end of their ninth grade year. These data mirror the concerns discussed during engagement regarding the fact that many students who enroll in full/focus virtual schools are credit deficient and thus four-year cohort graduation rates do not always represent an accurate picture of educational attainment for students attending full/focus virtual schools.

Figure 11. Graduate Rate Range, Statewide Compared to Full/Focus Virtual Schools (Spring 2020)

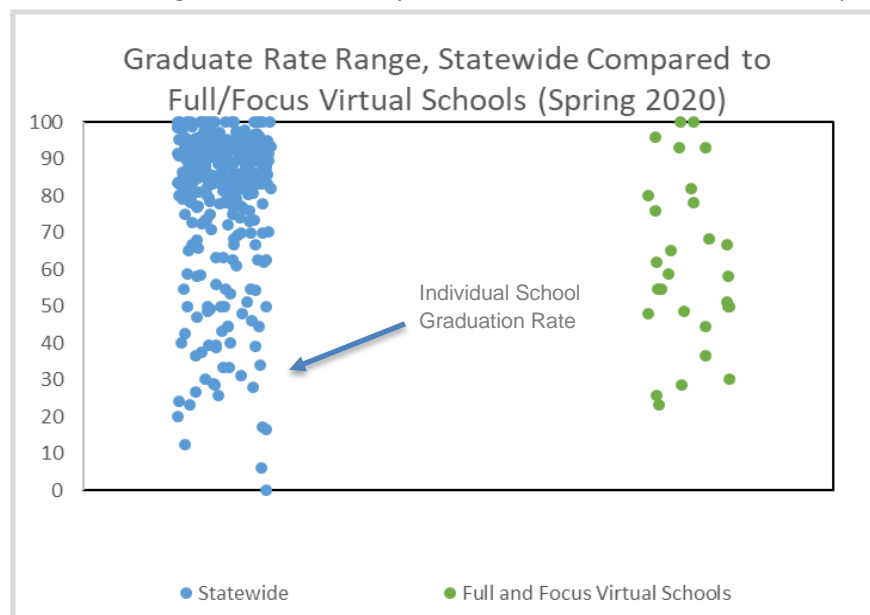


Figure 11 illustrates the range in graduation rates for students statewide and students enrolled in full/focus virtual schools. As with the previous charts, the statewide data encompasses all schools, including brick-and-mortar schools and schools that are designated full/focus virtual. Each of the blue dots in Figure 11 represent the graduation rate of a school in Oregon while each of the green dots, include a subset of those schools that are designated as full/focus virtual. As demonstrated by Figure 11, while the average graduation rate for full/focus virtual schools is lower than the statewide average, there is a wide range of academic outcomes in both categories with a number of full/focus virtual schools graduating students at the same rate as non-virtual schools.

Figure 12. 2021 Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity

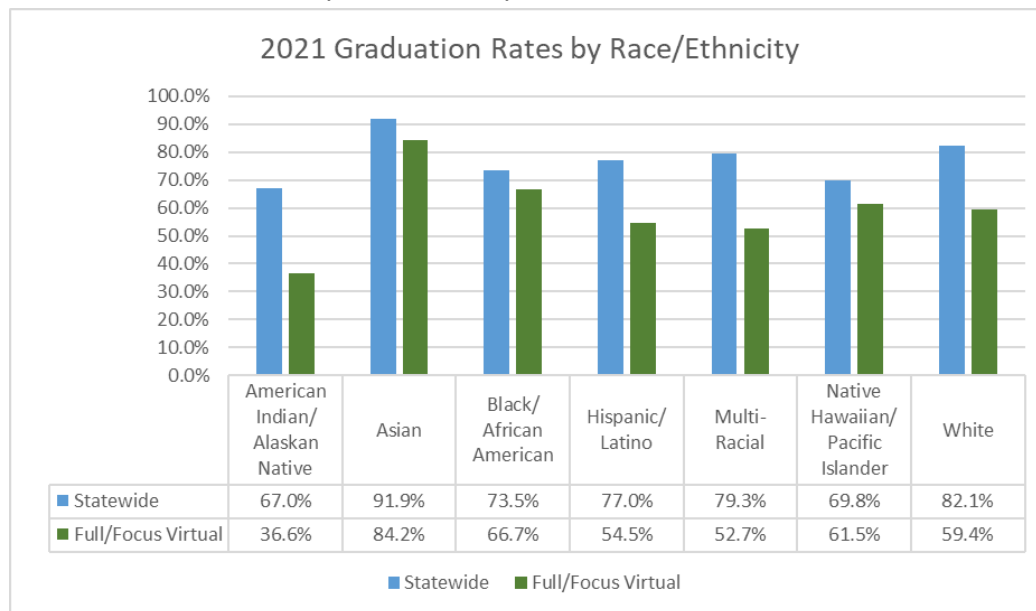


Figure 12 illustrates disparities in graduation rates by student group with significant differences in graduation rates for all student groups with the most profound disparity in graduation rates occurring for American Indian/Alaskan Native students attending full/focus virtual schools. Figure 12 illustrates that while addressing the disparities in graduation rates in full/focus virtual schools, it is critical to also keep in mind that these disparities exist across all educational systems with American Indian/Alaskan Native, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Multi-Racial and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students continuing to be systemically marginalized by our schooling systems.

Table 4. Graduation rates by student group during 2020-2021 school year

Student Group	Statewide	Full/Focus Virtual Schools	Percent Difference
Students Receiving Educational Services Under IDEA	66.1%	45.0%	-21.1%
Students Navigating Poverty	77.0%	51.0%	-26%
Ever English Learners	78.7%	66.9%	-11.8%

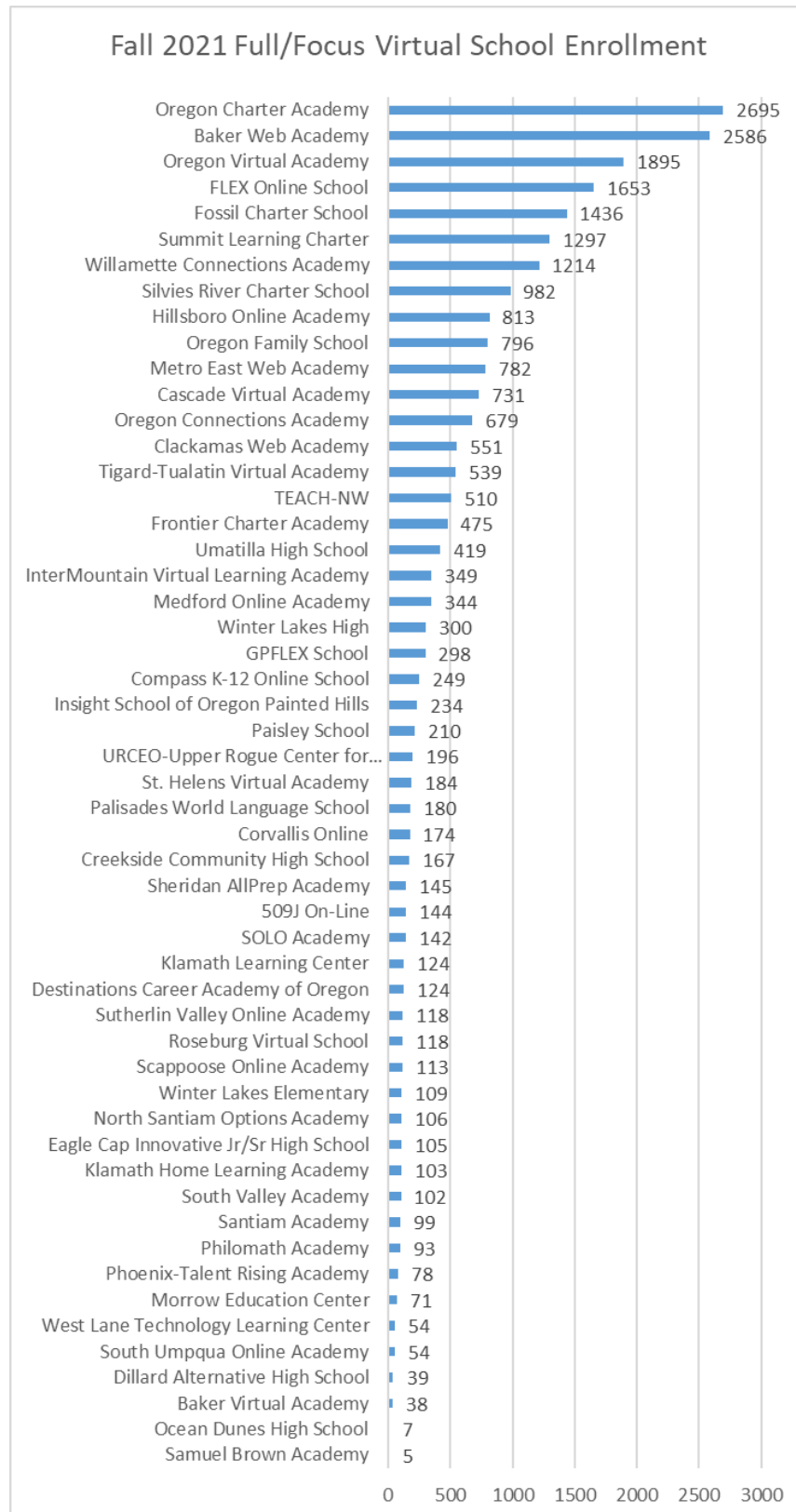
Table 4 illustrates the percent difference in graduation rates between particular student groups (students receiving educational services under IDEA, students navigating poverty, and Ever English learners). As with the previous tables and figures, it is important to note that while there are disparities between students attending full/focus virtual schools and statewide enrollment, these data are nuanced and do not tell the entire story.

Conclusion

The data presented in this snapshot do not present the full picture of student, family, and educator experiences; however, they do provide information regarding statewide trends and patterns. Additional data including the perspectives of educators and nuanced stories of student experiences are being gathered through continued engagement efforts.

This data snapshot is the first in a series of snapshots providing information about the landscape of remote learning across Oregon. Additional data snapshots will be developed and communicated on the basis of available data.

Appendix A: Full/Focus Virtual School Enrollment (2020-21)



Note: The schools listed on this figure do not represent all schools that may be operating within a remote program model (with more than 50% of their instruction occurring outside of a physical school building). Rather, this list of schools includes those schools that are designated and full or focus virtual based on their program model.