Reimagining Education in Oregon

A recap of the 13 Community Forums held across Oregon

The Every Student Succeeds Act and Stakeholder Engagement

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaces No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and offers Oregon the incredible opportunity to reimagine education in our state by refining Oregon's strategic vision for education. ESSA does so by encouraging education leaders and stakeholders to rethink accountability, funding, school improvement, and grant-making systems by gathering input from stakeholders around the state in order to implement a State Plan that represents Oregonian's shared vision and values for students, educators, and schools.

ESSA creates an opportunity for stakeholders to play a more active role in the creation of state policy and for the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to build new relationships that will strengthen implementation and the launch of new initiatives. To ensure that Oregon's State Plan is rooted in the day-to-day needs of educators, students, and communities, ODE designed a stakeholder engagement process that relies on participation from diverse audiences, thought partners, practitioners, and leaders.

Meaningful Engagement

Seeking public input through meaningful stakeholder engagement is an opportunity for the Oregon Department of Education to not only connect with current education advocates, but to seek out those who feel disconnected or who have not been historically engaged in a public education dialogue. In an effort to ensure opportunities for an array of stakeholders to help shape Oregon's vision for education and provide feedback on how the state can achieve its shared vision, ODE created a plan for communicating and engaging stakeholders, including offering thirteen regional community forums.

While ESSA requires extensive outreach and engagement efforts to everyone from policymakers to educators to tribal organizations to parents, ODE is committed to not engaging stakeholders simply out of compliance, but rather, through two-way communication that allows shared-decision-making and support of the state's vision and plan.

Community Forums

In partnership with Educational Service Districts and school districts, the Oregon Department of Education held thirteen regional community forums throughout the state. The purpose of the community forums was to hear directly from Oregonians –educators, school staff, parents, business leaders, higher education professionals, and community members – about their values, priorities, hopes, and aspirations for education in our state. Feedback collected from the community forums helped inform the work underway to develop a State Plan. Over 850 Oregonians contributed to the conversation and provided valuable insight.

Data Collection & Analysis

Participants' hand-written notes, as well as their verbal comments and feedback were the primary sources of data. Data analysts compiled the notes collected during the thirteen community forums into one dataset for coding and identifying themes. The Oregon Department of Education facilitated the community forums in rural and urban areas across the state. The events were attended by a range of stakeholders including students, parents, educators, business leaders, school board members, and community members. Data analysts coded the data separately for the three questions posed during the town hall forums:

1. What school characteristics are important?
2. How should we measure school success?
3. How do we ensure all students are successful?

Data analysts read and coded over 2,000 words and phrases that participants used to describe their own thinking and experiences related to education in Oregon to identify common themes. Content analysis procedures were used to organize the data into major themes and subcategories. The results of this analysis can be open to other interpretations and therefore, cannot be gerneralizable. A summary of the major themes found for each discussion question is in the table below.

Number and percentage of comments by main content area, by question

What school characteristics are most important?	NUMBER OF COMMENTS (N = 839 comments)	PERCENTAGE OF COMMENTS
INSTRUCTION	349	42%
SCHOOL CLIMATE	156	19%
LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATOR WORKFORCE	74	9%
ACCOUNTABILITY AND ASSESSMENT	69	8%
COLLABORATION	60	7%
SYSTEM, DISTRICT, AND SCHOOL	52	6%
EQUITY AND CULTURAL AWARENESS	40	5%
OTHER	39	4%

How should we measure school success?	NUMBER OF COMMENTS (N = 603 comments)	PERCENTAGE OF COMMENTS
SYSTEM, DISTRICT, OR SCHOOL SUCCESS	313	52%
STUDENT SUCCESS	165	27%
ASSESSMENTS OR MEASURES	97	16%
OTHER	28	5%

How do we ensure all students are successful?	NUMBER OF COMMENTS (N = 569 comments)	PERCENTAGE OF COMMENTS
STUDENTS AND FAMILIES STRATEGIES	318	56%
SYSTEM, DISTRICT, OR SCHOOL STRATEGIES	115	20%
ACCOUNTABILITY STRATEGIES	66	12%
EDUCATOR WORKFORCE STRATEGIES	56	10%
OTHER	14	2%

Community Forum Themes

From the data collected – including what participants said and wrote – five themes emerged, which include:

1. A desire for each and every student to receive a rigorous, relevant, well-rounded, engaging educational experience;
2. A call to personalize and individualize learning in order to ensure students acquire knowledge and skills best suited for their next steps;
3. A desire for school communities that embrace equity and are intentional in their efforts to engage students and collaborate with families, businesses, and community members;
4. A commitment to establishing the conditions necessary for educators to provide effective and culturally responsive services to students, families, and communities;
5. A desire to measure the success of students and schools in multiple ways including academic, social-emotional learning, and the capacity of the school to prepare students for their next steps.

Theme 1: A desire for each and every student to receive a rigorous, relevant, well-rounded, engaging educational experience

Throughout the community forums, stakeholders consistently talked and wrote about the educational experiences of students in Oregon, and how the experience needed to look and feel different than what our system currently provides. They used words like *rigorous*, *relevant*, *well-rounded*, and *engaging* when referring to what a student's educational experience should look like.

When participants talked or wrote about **"**rigorous, relevant, and well-rounded education" they consistently expressed the following:

- Holding high expectations and standards for all kids
- Establishing a school culture and climate that approaches teaching and learning from an **asset-based lens and a belief that all students can learn,** regardless of where they're from, their socioeconomic status, or their racial / ethnic background
- **Enrichment opportunities – within the school day and after school** – to support a comprehensive learning experience
- Inclusivity and ensuring all students come to safe and welcoming schools that **meet the social and emotional needs of students**
- A belief **that every student should have access to high quality, caring, effective teachers and school leaders.**

Theme 2: A call to personalize and individualize learning in order to ensure students acquire knowledge and skills best suited for their next steps

A second emergent theme is the call for personalizing and individualizing a student's education. Participants noted that not all young adults who graduate high school in Oregon matriculate into college, and therefore, need access to alternative pathways. Personalizing a student's education was also mentioned relative to how prepared students are when entering pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and through the transition years – from elementary school to middle school, and middle school to high school. Participants noted how critical it is for school staff to differentiate instruction and provide the supports necessary to ensure all students – regardless of their current achievement level – are put on a path to grow, learn, and thrive.

When participants talked or wrote about "personalized and individualized education" they often expressed the following:

- The need to **move away from a one-size-fits-all model** and **towards a K-12 system of options that meet the needs of our diverse student population**
- **Engaging students early** on in their education journey in a variety of college and career opportunities
- **Access to alternative pathways and real-world experience**, through internships and apprenticeships, at the middle and high school levels
- **Support through mentorship**, including an individualized plan for "next steps" that begins well before high school.

- **Providing customized interventions and individualized supports** to ensure each student achieves success in school and in adult life.

Theme 3: A desire for school communities that embrace equity and are intentional in their efforts to engage students and collaborate with families, businesses, and community members

Participants stressed the value of establishing school communities that are inclusive and welcoming to all students, their families, and community members. They said schools should be **safe** for each and every student by not just welcoming diversity, but **creating opportunities for students to learn about and honor different cultures** and backgrounds. The participants identified the importance that **positive relationships among teachers, students, families, and community members** have toward building a community of learning for all. They also emphasized the value that connections to the community have on increasing the **richness and relevance of students' school experiences,** and organizing community services to support students who may need additional help to grow, learn, and thrive in their school.

When participants talked about, or wrote about "school climate, family engagement, and collaborating with community members" they often expressed the following:

- Establishing inclusive and welcoming school communities that **value diversity, create opportunities to learn the perspectives of all (student, family, community), and support social and emotional learning**
- **Ensuring schools are safe**, both physically and psychologically, for each and every student and adult
- Teaching students to **celebrate diversity and learn to honor each other's differences**
- Providing **mentorship and coaching that promote positive relationships** among educators, students, and families
- Building **connections with community members, businesses, and industries** to increase educational opportunities for students
- Engage community partners to address barriers to education including **hunger, medical, dental, and housing.**

Theme 4: A commitment to establishing the conditions necessary for educators to provide effective and culturally responsive services to students, families, and communities

Participants discussed the importance of having **a high quality educator workforce**—school administrators, teachers, and other education professionals—that reflect the diversity of the students they serve. They discussed the need for school leaders to establish a **community of learning** for all as characterized by **collaboration and systems that support learning** for each and every student. The participants also emphasized the need to provide **professional development opportunities and differentiated support** to teachers that supports their professional growth, retention, and continued excitement about teaching. Finally, the participants stated that educators should be allowed **flexibility to be innovative** and **adapt school systems to meet the needs of their local communities.**

When participants talked or wrote about "institutional and school conditions that foster success" they often expressed the following:

- Creating conditions that **support retention of teachers new to the field and diverse teacher community**
- Providing professional development to educators on **differentiating instruction**, selecting **evidence-based** curriculum, and using **culturally responsive** curriculum and instruction
- Promoting **smaller class sizes, a teaching workforce that reflect the diversity of their students, and specialists** (librarians, school counselors, behavior specialists, mental health workers) to address the wide range of student needs
- Setting up systems that promote **effective communication and collaboration** among administrators, teachers, and other education professionals

Theme 5: A desire to measure the success of students and schools in multiple ways including academic, social-emotional learning, and the capacity of the school to prepare students for their next steps

Participants stressed the importance of using measures beyond academic achievement to evaluate student and school success. They stated that school success should gather information about student growth in core academic skills as well as a range of other **academic and non-cognitive skills** including citizenship, critical thinking, perseverance, and involvement in the variety of offerings outside of academic classes. The participants suggested several measures of school success that provide **information about the system and schools** that offer services to students, families, and communities. In addition to graduation and attendance rates, they suggested information on **educator absenteeism, family engagement, extracurricular activities, curriculum offerings, and supports to students** who experience barriers to their education as important indicators of school success. They also encouraged **gathering information from students, families, and community members** on their perspectives about their school.

When participants talked or wrote about "measures of school success" they often expressed the following:

- **Using multiple measures of student success** including academic performance, attendance, graduation rate, student engagement, proficiency in relevant skills, or the percentage of students entering and succeeding in postsecondary education and career
- Focusing on **individual student growth and achievement toward their personal goals**
- **Measures of school quality that go beyond academic achievement** including school climate, staff absenteeism, extracurricular activities, family engagement, the variety of offerings outside of academics, and support to struggling students
- Supporting the use of **formative assessments** that provide **relevant, immediate, and effective feedback** that informs instruction and supports student learning
- Using data to **identify problems and make adjustments** early for all students and different student groups.

Conclusion

To ensure the design and implementation of a well-rounded, student-centered State Plan that best represents the diverse communities Oregon serves, the Oregon Department of Education is committed to engaging stakeholders in meaningful dialogue. The themes included in this summary help provide insight into Oregonians' hopes, values, and priorities for education and will serve an important role in the development of the plan. Additional data will be collected and analyzed through targeted stakeholder outreach and engagement efforts.