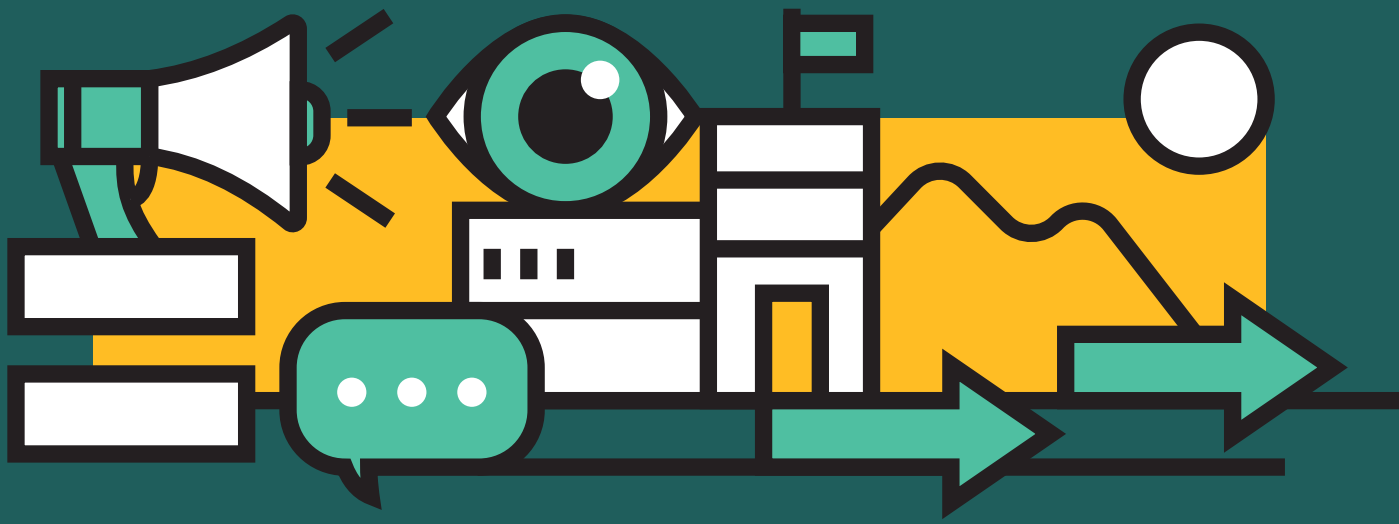
State of Our Schools

Examining Oregon's high schools through students' eyes



About us

Oregon Student Voice (www.oregonstudentvoice.org) is a student-led organization that empowers students to be authentic partners with education decision makers. Our mission is to reframe Oregon's understanding of the student's role in their learning by empowering all students to be active agents in shaping their education. We foster a space for students to express their voices, realize their individual and collective power, and lead change in Oregon's K-12 education system. We provide students with the tools and support to partner with education stakeholders and develop innovative ways to ensure all students have equal opportunities and access to achieve their full potential.

Report edited by: Sarah Ali (Junior), Abigail Alvarez (Senior), Jared Cetz (Sophomore), Grace Didway (Senior), Amelia Ernst (Junior), David Goncharuk (Senior), Alexa Fuhrer (Sophomore), Serena Johnson (Sophomore), Gwen Kaliszewski (Junior), Raja Moreno (Junior), Deja Preusser (Sophomore), Dana Smiley (Sophomore), and Chloe Wright (Junior)

Research conducted by: Ebado Abdi (Senior), Abigail Alvarez (Senior), Jared Cetz (Sophomore), Grace Didway (Senior), Amelia Ernst (Junior), David Goncharuk (Senior), Gwen Kaliszewski (Junior), Nicholas Paesler (Junior), and Chloe Wright (Junior)

Acknowledgments

This report was made possible by the generous support of Chalkboard Project and DHM Research. Thank you for helping us harness the power of student voice.

Chalkboard Project

Chalkboard Project (www.chalkboardproject.org) aims to create systemic reform in the quality, accountability, and funding of Oregon's K-12 public schools. Driven by the conviction that all Oregon students deserve a high-quality, equitable education system, we strive to improve the effectiveness of classroom teachers, school leaders, and school board members in order to increase student achievement and success. More recently, we have expanded our emphasis to include the perspectives and input from those directly impacted by teachers and school leaders: their students.

DHM Research

DHM Research (www.dhmresearch.com) is a trusted independent, nonpartisan opinion research firm. We are passionate about working with our clients to provide sound, actionable, strategic insights. These insights are backed by high quality data and over 40 years of experience. We are a certified woman, minority, and disadvantaged business enterprise, located in Portland, Oregon, with offices in Seattle, Washington and Washington, D.C.

Design and illusustration by Bethany Ng (www.bethanyng.com). A Portland-based artist with a passion for learning, creativity, and making the world a better place.

Table of Contents

Executive summary 4

Introduction 6

Experience in school 8

Relationships with teachers 12

Involvement in decision making 15

Evaluation of K-12 policies 18

Conclusion + recommendations for change 21

Appendix A: Survey results + methodology

Appendix B: Focus group questions + methodology

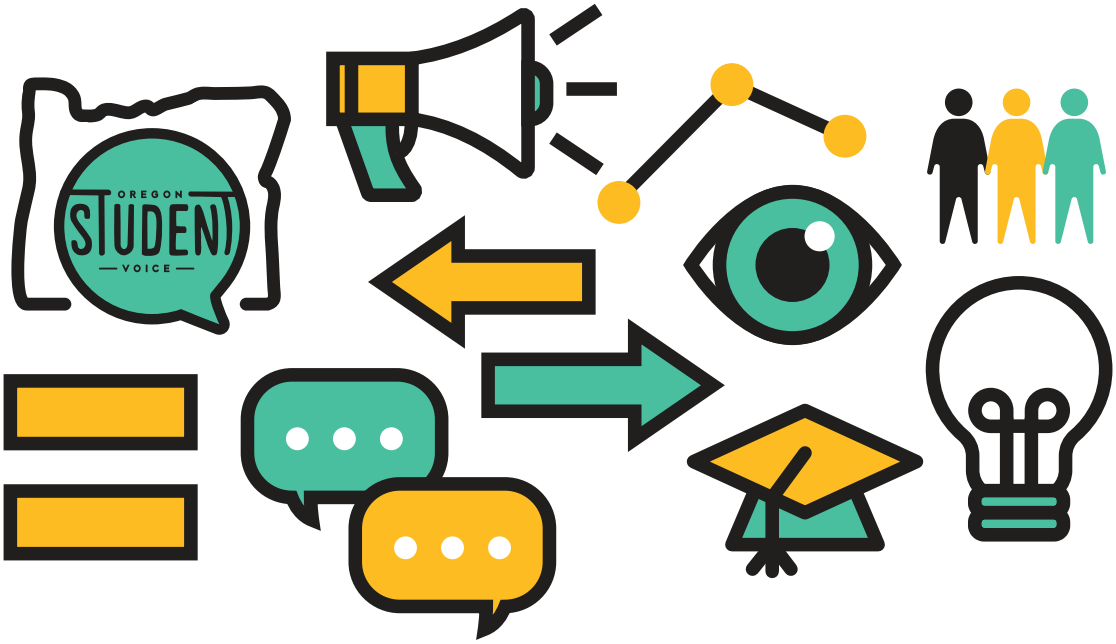
Executive Summary

Written by: David Goncharuk, Senior

Oregon Student Voice (OSV) is a student-led organization that empowers all students to be authentic partners with K-12 education decision makers. Taking an initial step to elevate student participation in decision-making processes, OSV listened to high school students across Oregon to attain a better comprehension of their perceptions of our education system. More than 2,200 students shared their experiences in an online survey or during focus group discussions. In this report, written by high school students, we analyze responses around different aspects of schooling. We conclude with recommendations for how Oregon's K-12 education system can better support students.

- ***Experience in school:*** **Students generally like going to school and feel safe in the environment; however, students feel that their schools lack an atmosphere of respect and resolution.**
    - While most students agree that they enjoy going to school (68 percent agree and 25 percent disagree), only 58 percent of students agree that there is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in their schools (32 percent disagree).
    - Students report several concerns that may be influencing how they experience their school culture: (a) limited supports to overcome challenges, (b) a disconnect in communication between administrators and students, (c) inconsistencies in school discipline, and (d) failure to prevent prejudicial actions and behavior.
- ***Experience with teachers:*** **Students revealed that caring, passionate, and engaging teachers who use diverse teaching practices and solicit student feedback provide better supports for student learning and engagement.**
    - A vast majority of students have positive experiences with their teachers: 81 percent of students agree that the quality of teachers in their school is good (15 percent disagree) and 79 percent of students agree that teachers respect their individuality (13 percent disagree).
    - Supports for learning and engagement diverge based on future educational plans. Seventy-seven percent of students agree that they feel engaged and included in class discussions and activities (16 percent disagree), but only 49 percent of students who do not plan to attend college, military, or vocational school agree (34 percent disagree).
    - Students desire instructors who welcome feedback and adapt as needed. However, only 29 percent of students agree that they are regularly asked by their high school teachers to provide written feedback (58 percent disagree and 12 percent do not know).

- *Involvement in decision making:* **While they generally feel included in decisions that directly affect their personal education, students struggle to make use of existing structures available for impacting classroom, school, and district decision making.**
    - Students describe a range of experiences in affecting change at their high school. There are students who have direct experience with bringing about change in their school. However, many students share experiences in which school leaders were dismissive of their concerns, sometimes to extreme degrees.
    - Students feel that student participation in district decision making is necessary to beget positive change, but only 37 percent of respondents agree that students communicate with and influence school boards (38 percent disagree and 25 percent do not know).
- *Evaluation of K-12 policies:* **Students want to learn more about the resources available at their school and, if inadequate, request that policymakers expand access to these resources.**
    - A majority of students agree (85 percent) that career and technical education is important to prepare for their careers after high school (5 percent disagree). However, only 51 percent of students agree that there are a sufficient number of career and technical education courses offered in their school (31 percent disagree and 17 percent do not know).
    - Forty percent of students report that access to mental health resources is the most important issue K-12 policymakers are currently considering. Just over half of students of students agree (52 percent) that students can easily access mental health resources through their school (23 percent disagree and 25 percent do not know).
- *Recommendations for change:* **Based on student responses and our own experiences, we developed five recommendations for consideration that we believe will enable Oregon's K-12 education system to better support students.**
    - Provide students with an authentic seat at the table in school and district decision making.
    - Educate students about how schools and districts make decisions.
    - Create clear avenues of communication between administrators, teachers, and students.
    - Ensure that all students are engaged in classroom and school activities.
    - Make sure that students are aware of the resources available to them.



Introduction

Written by: Victoria Siegel, Junior

Founded in August 2016, Oregon Student Voice (OSV) is a student-led organization that empowers all students to be authentic partners with other stakeholders in making decisions that affect their K-12 learning experience. For students to be authentic partners in decision making, Oregon must reframe its understanding of the student's role in education. Currently, students are not seen as active agents who directly communicate and collaborate with decision makers to address Oregon's challenges in K-12 education. Over the past decade, adults have been striving to remove systemic inequities and address low student engagement and graduation rates with limited success. OSV believes it is time for students to become more involved in shaping reforms in hopes that further progress can be made to improve our schools.

Taking our first step to include students in decision-making processes, OSV reached out to high school students across the state to gain a better understanding of their perceptions of Oregon's K-12 education system. We asked students to share their experiences in an online survey. We also facilitated student focus groups to obtain a deeper comprehension of opportunities and challenges students encounter in Oregon's schools. In this report, we analyze the quantitative survey and qualitative focus group data to explore Oregon's schools through the eyes of high school students. OSV members, who are all high school students in Oregon, conducted the research, analyzed the data, and wrote this report with limited support from adult advisors.[1] In hopes of achieving equitable and successful schools, OSV expects policymakers, administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community members to come together and use these analyses and recommendations to dramatically reform the ways in which our state educates students.

[1]OSV's adult advisor (Samantha Holquist) and Chalkboard Project staff members (Tonia Holowetzki and Perla Sitcov) assisted in providing research, data reporting, and editorial support.

Online survey

After listening to students over the course of a year, we designed an online survey to broadly assess the experiences of high school students in Oregon's K-12 education system.[2] This survey is unique in Oregon as it is one of the first tools to empower students across the state to voice their thoughts in regards to their education. It opened August 5, 2017 and closed December 15, 2017. The survey was taken by 2,130 students from 42 high schools located across Oregon.

Respondent demographic breakdowns for age, race, ethnicity, and gender match that of the state. The responses skew toward 12th graders, who made up 31 percent of the unweighted responses. We believe this senior skew provides a more accurate representation of the entire high school experience as these students have nearly graduated. Thirty-four percent of unweighted student respondents came from communities with a population of 35,000 or less, 23 percent from 35,001 to 100,000, 26 percent from 100,000 or more, and 17 percent did not report their school. This is a sufficient sample size to assess high schoolers' opinions generally and to review findings by multiple subgroups. For more information about the survey questions and methodology, see Appendix A.[3]

Focus groups

Knowing survey data would not fully capture the student experience, we also held focus groups with high school students to better represent the perspectives and desires of Oregon's diverse population.[4] Expanding on our online survey questions, we held focus group discussions to explore students' experiences with teachers, administrators, school culture, and involvement in decision making. We conducted 12 focus groups and heard directly from more than 150 students from 22 high schools located across Oregon. This qualitative data provided us with a more nuanced understanding of the quantitative data collected from the online survey. For more information about the focus group methodology and guiding questions, see Appendix B.

Preview of what's ahead

Our report is divided into four sections: (a) experience in school, (b) experience with teachers, (c) involvement in decision making, and (d) evaluation of K-12 policies. Each section includes data and analyses of questions and responses related to the aspect of schooling. The experience in school section relates to students' views about the culture and environment of their school. Experience with teachers covers student relationships with teachers and how high schoolers feel about the inner workings of their classrooms. Involvement in decision making concerns how or if students feel included in decisions relating to their education. Evaluation of K-12 policies covers student perceptions toward Oregon's course requirements, career and technical education offerings, standardized tests, technology resources, and mental health supports. In each section, we also offer recommendations for improvement. We conclude the report with a wrap up of our findings and detail recommendations for how our K-12 education system can better support students.

[2] DHM Research provided support for survey design, methodology, programming, hosting, and data reporting. Oregon Student Voice managed survey recruitment and distribution.
[3] For demographic breakdowns across survey questions, visit our website: https://www.oregonstudentvoice.org/amplify
[4] DHM Research provided support for focus group discussion question design and conducted three of the focus groups. Oregon Student Voice members received facilitator training and conducted an additional nine focus groups.

Experience in school

Written by: Amelia Ernst, Junior

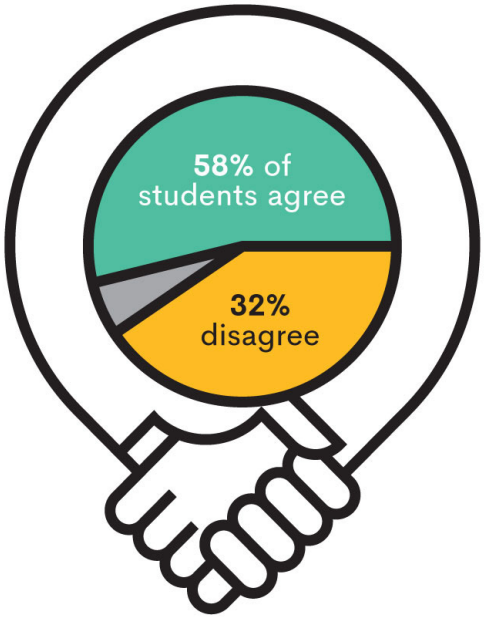
"We have a close-knit community as we have grown up together. Many of us have been together since kindergarten or elementary school."

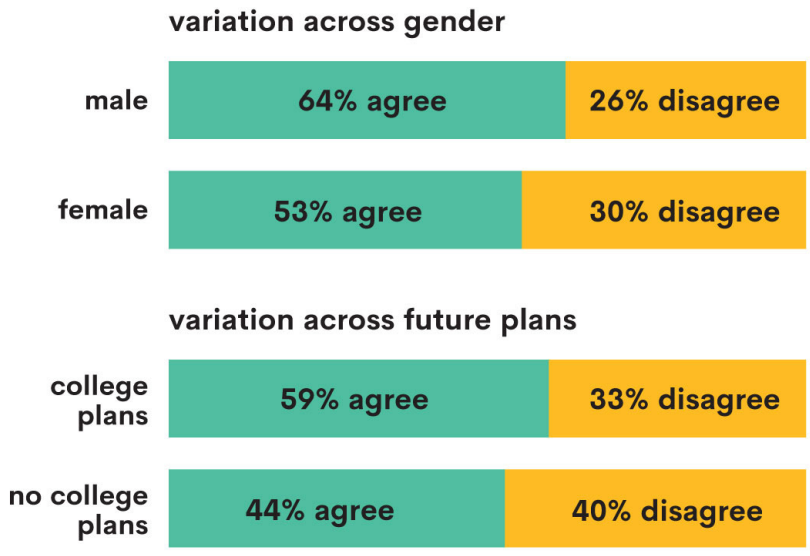
- Student from Eastern Oregon

A positive school environment is conducive for an engaged student body and how students experience their school has a large impact on their academic growth. Students responded to questions on school atmosphere, safety, and cleanliness. Responses indicate that students generally enjoy going to school and feel safe in their environment. A majority of students agreed that they like going to school (68 percent agree and 25 percent disagree) and that they feel safe at school (78 percent agree and 15 percent disagree). These positive experiences in school are largely impacted by students feeling a sense of belonging in their school community and holding a strong desire to learn.

Students did report, however, that there are many aspects that could be improved upon. One of the biggest concerns for students is their school culture, particularly whether the environment is trusting and respectful.

There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in my school.





Students report that administrators, teachers, and peers all impact the atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within their school. In the following, we explore several concerns that may be impacting how students experience their school culture.

"There is this mold, and if you fit into the mold then school is going to be great... you come from a background where your parents have money to pay for tutoring and extra help. You super apply yourself at school. You play three sports year-round. For those outside this mold, school is really tough."

- Student from Central Oregon

Limited supports to overcome challenges

Exclusionary cliques, social tensions, and bullying are all present within schools. Students assert that those who do not fit into the typical high school student mold do not receive the respect, stability, and support needed to succeed in their school. Students believe that high schools are oriented towards helping those already on a path to success, leaving behind everyone else. This is particularly true for students that face additional challenges, such as past trauma, financial hardship, or familial responsibilities. Students wish that administrators and teachers were doing more to assist struggling students, particularly to make them feel more respected and included in the school. Even with these challenges, students found that friendships and healthy relationships with teachers and other adults can serve as sources of security.

Disconnection from administrators

Students assert that their principal and administrators often do not help cultivate a school atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. Students report that administrators are more concerned with running the school than supporting students. Students across the state wish that their principal and administrators "show[ed] more respect to students" and "treated everyone equally." Principals were consistently described as "dictators" and "authoritarians." Students believe that if there was a more respectful environment, they would enjoy going to school more.

"If you are in the super popular cliques, or if your family is really known throughout the town, gives money to the school, no one really ever disciplines you or says, 'Oh, you are doing some-thing wrong.'"

- Student from Southern Oregon

Inconsistencies in school discipline

Another concern students have within their school environment is how school discipline policies are enforced. Sixty percent of students agree that student conduct rules are consistently enforced, 27 percent disagree, and 13 percent do not know. In analyzing the data along race and ethnicity breakdowns, 65 percent of Hispanic students agree (21 percent disagree), 61 percent of students of color, non-Hispanic agree (24 percent disagree), and 59 percent of white, non-Hispanic students agree that rules are consistently enforced (29 percent disagree).

Students report that schools "give up on students way too quickly," labeling them as "problematic right away," which results in students disengaging or dropping out of school. Students also described administrators and teachers treating students divergently, playing favorites for some while harshly reprimanding others. Students feel that popular students, especially those with wealthy or well-known parents, get preferential treatment. Students offered ways in which administration could work with students to build positive relationships, including prioritizing resolution over discipline.

"I have a friend who is African American, and she was called the N-word on the bus all of the time. The school didn't really do that much about it because they weren't there to really witness it, but she was picked on a lot for her color."

- Student from Southern Oregon

"There was a certain teacher that...constantly made comments about how girls can't do 'man-jobs' and stuff like that. So, it took a lot of girls reporting him, and even guys were reporting him because they didn't think that was right. But a lot of people were reporting him before there was anything finally done."

- Student from the Portland Metro

Prevention of prejudicial actions and behavior

Many students have direct experiences with or witnessing incidents of racism, sexism, queerphobia, and other biases within their school environment. Students regularly encounter prejudicial actions and behavior from peers, teachers, and administrators in schools across Oregon. Several students stated that these actions and behaviors increased after the 2016 presidential election. While 65 percent of students agree that teachers interrupt students that use prejudicial, discrimination, or disrespectful language toward other students (24 percent disagree), students in the focus groups did not report the same experience. Students stated that teachers and administrators rarely interrupt prejudicial actions or speech, which has empowered perpetrators to continue causing harm to impacted students. Overall, students believe that their schools will become an environment where all students can succeed only when students of all races, ethnicities, genders, orientations, identities, and backgrounds feel welcome.

Wrap up

While students generally like going to school and feel safe in the environment, students feel that their schools lack an atmosphere of respect and resolution. There are several actions students believe schools can take to improve school culture. The first is to create an environment that is respectful to all members of the community, where all students feel valued. One way to do this is to ensure administrators and teachers actively listen to the challenges students face and strive to provide them with the supports they need. Students need to know that administrators and teachers are taking their concerns seriously and are making changes when necessary. Therefore, administrators and teachers need to construct clear mechanisms (such as an online form, email, or in-person meeting) for students to safely report concerns and receive specific information on how their concern is being addressed. Additionally, administrators, teachers, and students must work together to interrupt prejudicial actions and speech to ensure that all students feel safe and welcome.

The second action is to adopt a more restorative discipline system. Students feel that schools focus too heavily on punishment and not enough on addressing the challenges students are encountering. A more restorative discipline system will decrease the number of incidents as well as eliminate the combative environment that stems from punitive actions. These changes will lead to a school environment that is focused on communication and respect, which students have described as essential for fostering a positive learning experience. Creating a more positive school culture increases the likelihood of students being engaged in the school's community.

"I have several teachers that I have an amazing relationship with. They make every day better. At the same time, I have teachers who don't seem to care about our students."

- Student from Central Oregon

"I love some of my teachers, but some of them make me not enjoy the subject. I feel as if some of my teachers barely teach me. I'd love to learn more this year at school."

- Student from the Portland Metro

Relationship with teachers

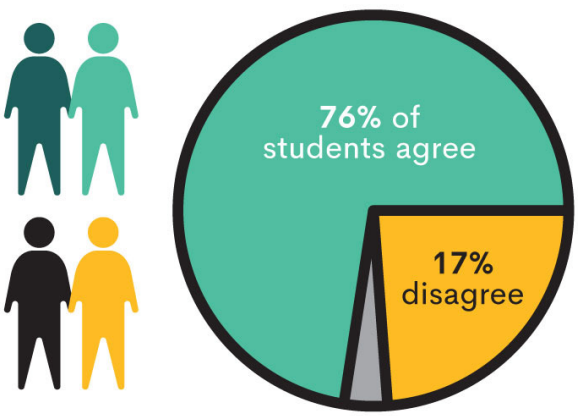
Written by: Maisie Roberson, Senior

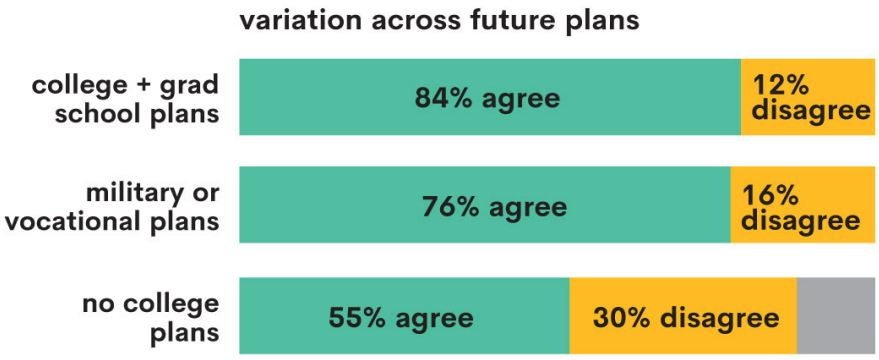
Students' relationships with teachers have enduring implications on students' academic and social development. Teachers not only directly impact students' academic progress in the classroom, but also can serve as advocates, mentors, and counselors. A caring, passionate, respectful teacher can set a student up for success. Acknowledging the importance of the student-teacher relationship, we asked students to share their experiences with Oregon teachers.

A vast majority of students report having positive relationships with their teachers. Eighty-one percent of students agree that the quality of teachers in their school is good (15 percent disagree). Seventy-nine percent of students agree that teachers respect their individuality (13 percent disagree). Seventy-seven percent of students agree that they feel engaged and included in class discussions and activities (16 percent disagree).

However, there are still several areas in which students could feel further supported by their teachers. Students report feeling that some of their teachers are not passionate about teaching, are not responsive to feedback, and do not always support their learning. This is particularly true when examining demographic breakdowns, as students who do not plan to attend college describe receiving less support from teachers than students with plans to attend college or graduate school.

I have a teacher or staff member at my school that I trust as a mentor.





Teachers as mentors

"The teachers that respect me, I find my classes to be a lot easier and better connection between me and the teacher. Teachers that don't respect me, I usually don't respect them. And that's where I have problems in the classroom."

- Student from Central Oregon

While 76 percent of respondents agree (17 percent disagree) that they have a teacher or staff member at their school who they can trust as a mentor, only 55 percent for students agree (30 percent disagree) who do not plan to attend college. There are several factors contributing to whether students feel they have a teacher or staff member they can trust as a mentor in their school. Students report wanting teachers to be passionate, caring, understanding, and respectful. Teachers who work with students through active and empathetic communication and strive to understand students' lives outside the classroom have stronger relationships with students. However, some teachers do not attempt to understand their students outside the classroom. Students assert that respect is the foundational component for a healthy student-teacher relationship, and not all students feel respected by their teachers.

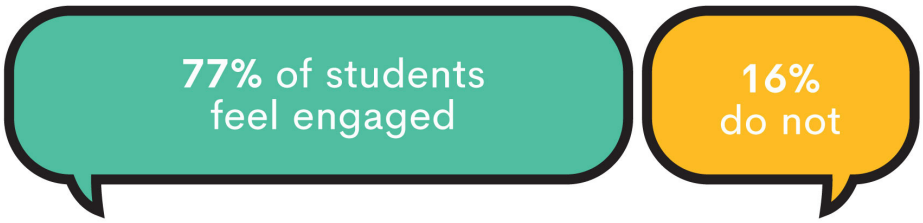
Support for student learning and engagement

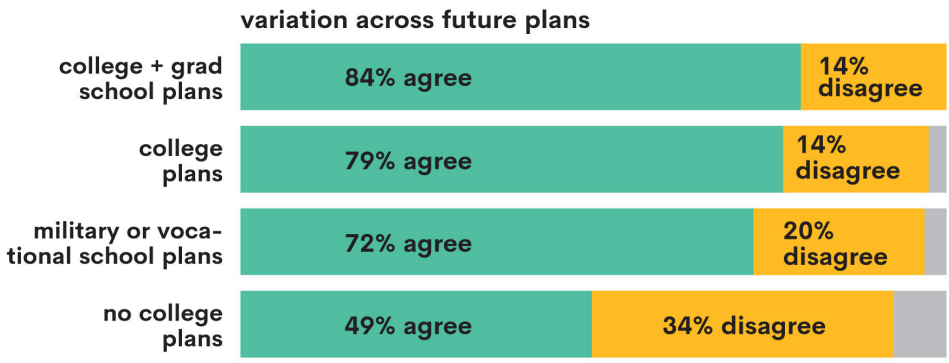
"When teachers don't care about your well-being outside of school, it's hard to learn."

- Student from Southern Oregon

Eighty percent of students agree (13 percent disagree) that their teachers consistently support their learning. This number increases to 85 percent agreeing (12 percent disagreeing) for students planning to attend college and graduate school, but decreases to 67 percent agreeing (22 percent disagreeing) for students not planning to attend college. Eighty-two percent of students planning on attending college agree (12 percent disagree) that their teachers support their learning, and 73 percent of students planning to attend military or vocational school agree (15 percent disagree). Responses concerning classroom engagement follow a similar pattern.

I feel engaged and included in class discussions and activities.





"Some teachers just feel like it is their class and it is their way of teaching... That is what gets kids to have the mindset of, 'I don't care no more. If this is how you're going to be towards us, then we will be like this towards you.'"

- Student from the Portland Metro

Students assert that teachers who use diverse teaching styles, pedagogies, and practices within the classroom provide better support for student learning and engagement. Students want to learn in interactive, collaborative, and hands-on environments. Students are critical of rote memorization and inflexible approaches that favor higher-achieving students while leaving others behind. Students also note that they want teachers who care deeply about student learning and are enthusiastic about what they are teaching. When teachers are disengaging, unenthusiastic, and inflexible, students do not feel supported in the classroom and are concerned that their teacher is not committed to their success.

Potential to offer feedback on teaching

"Teachers need to collect feedback. I think it is good just to show that they want to get better at teaching you, and they also want to see what they can do for future classes."

- Student from Southern Oregon

The ability to offer feedback to teachers based on their instruction is extremely important to students. Students clearly desire instructors who put the needs of their students first by welcoming feedback and adapting as needed. However, only 29 percent of students agree that they are regularly asked by their high school teachers to provide written feedback on their instruction (58 percent disagree and 12 percent do not know). Students shared a common tale of teachers unwilling to take feedback, leading to a breakdown of respect and causing disengagement in the classroom. Students across the state related stories of teachers collecting student feedback and throwing it in the trash. On the other side, teachers who took student feedback into account and adapted were lauded for their willingness to meet students' needs.

While in-person feedback is seen as useful in some cases, students want more formalized and anonymous channels, such as electronic surveys, to provide their feedback. Current efforts to survey students are on an ad-hoc basis by individual teachers seeking to assess their own effectiveness at the end of the school year. Students desire more proactive feedback mechanisms where teachers are gathering student input at the beginning and middle of the year, and are changing their teaching styles to better enable students to learn. When unable to provide feedback to teachers, students feel like they currently do not have an effective way to address negative learning situations.

> **"I've seen teachers who have given out a survey halfway through the year or the semester. And then after that, you can see a change in them."**
>
> - Student from Central Oregon

Wrap up

Generally, students seem to be used to the status quo in terms of how they interact with their teachers and how they learn in the classroom, but that does not mean that there is no room for improvement. As shown throughout this section, students repeatedly express a desire for caring, passionate, and engaging teachers who support their learning and enable them to provide feedback on their instruction. However, not all teachers are currently meeting this need. This is particularly true for students who do not plan to attend college, military, or vocational school after high school. As these students have no plans to continue their formal education, it is especially important to ensure that they are fully equipped for life after high school.

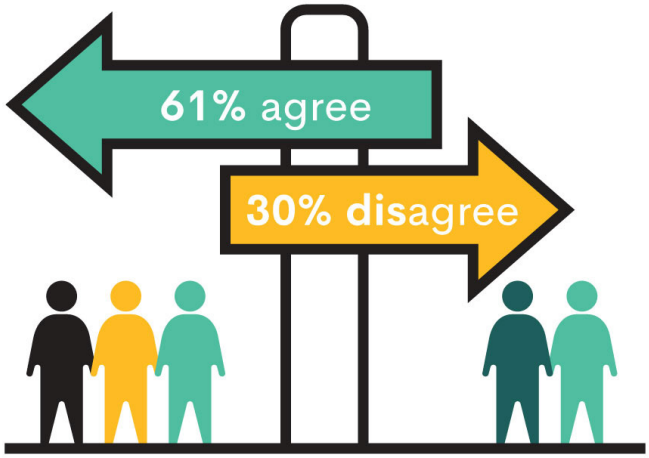
We have several recommendations for enhancing the student experience with teachers. First, we need to provide teachers with better training in developing relationships with students, especially with students who do not have plans to attend college, military, or vocational school. It may also be beneficial to provide students with easier access to counselors with whom they can discuss challenges in school and plan for the future. Second, teachers need to be provided with the opportunity and flexibility to use different instructional styles, curriculum resources, and engagement techniques in order to ensure that all students feel supported in their learning. Finally, we need to create formal mechanisms for students to regularly (at least twice a semester) provide feedback to their teachers on their instruction and curriculum. These mechanisms can be through anonymous online surveys, written evaluation forms, or in-person meetings with teachers. These changes will enable students to feel more engaged and invested in their learning.

Involvement in decision making

Written by: Grace Didway, Senior

Empowering students to have a voice in education decision making has a significant impact on youth development outcomes and education reform. Students directly experience the outcomes of policy decisions and can respond with meaningful feedback and critique. Students participating in local, district, and statewide education decision making can lead to increased academic achievement and social engagement. Additionally, providing students an opportunity to participate in decision making creates meaningful conversation and fosters a more trusting environment for all K-12 stakeholders. Therefore, we explored the outlets available for students to express their perspectives and have authentic influence in the decisions that affect their learning.[5]

I agree that students are involved in decisions that affect them and their education at their school.



I feel comfortable speaking with teachers and/or administrators about school issues.

I feel that teachers and/or administrators in their school take action based on student concerns.

Involvement in school decision making

Students describe a range of experiences in communicating with and influencing decisions at their high school. On one end of the spectrum, there are students who have direct experience with bringing about change in their school. However, many students share experiences in which school leaders were dismissive of their concerns, sometimes to extreme degrees. These findings show that students generally feel involved in decisions that directly affect their personal education; however, may not feel as involved in decisions for making change in their classroom or school. Students believe that school administrators need to be proactive in opening up access for more students to communicate with and influence them. Students want administrators to demonstrate that they are actively listening to students from all walks of life and taking their perspectives into account when making decisions.

[5]To learn more about the research, visit our policy brief on the importance of student voice on our website: https://www.oregonstudentvoice.org/amplify

"I can select my courses, but there is no real opportunity to voice our opinions on changes we need in schools. Only select students get a voice. We need more opportunities for everyone."

- Student from Eastern Oregon

"We really did nothing for the school. We never went to the school board meetings. We never set any official meeting for the student government. Nothing got accomplished. There were no goals set."

- Student from Southern Oregon

"It would be super good education to have a student there. Just to be able to not only educate the school board on what is going on inside the school, but also to be able to educate other students on what the school board is doing."

- Student from Central Oregon

Perceptions of student leadership

There is a common perception that student governments or similar institutions provide opportunities for students to influence changes in their schools. However, many students do not believe that their student government functions in this role, instead viewing these institutions as fundraising and event planning organizations. Additionally, some students believe that there is an issue with access to these leadership positions. Students report that student government roles—and other leadership opportunities—are largely held by the popular and privileged. Many described elections as "popularity contests," where humor and visibility are held above substance. Having friends in student leadership is seen as a prerequisite to having your voice heard. Further, students believe that many in leadership positions use their influence for their own self-interest rather than for the greater good. Numerous students assert that the current structures of student government limit the voices of non-leadership students in their school. Students feel that student representatives are necessary for participation in school decision making; however, these representatives must be transparent in communication, available for feedback, and attune to the needs of the entire student body.

Involvement in district decision making

Students are also disengaged from education decision making at the district level. Only 37 percent of respondents agree that students communicate with and influence school boards (38 percent disagree). One in four respondents (25 percent) do not know whether or not students communicate with and influence their local school board. It is clear that a significant portion of students feel incapable of using current outlets to express their concerns at the district level, or believe those outlets are non-existent. Students are generally unfamiliar with and feel disconnected from district leadership. Some are aware of superintendents and school board members, but most are unsure of the responsibilities of these roles and who fills them. Even students with prior knowledge used broad, vague descriptions of district leaders and their purposes.

Most students feel removed from district-level conversations and only a few shared that they have attended a school board meeting to advocate for an issue or speak to a board member. Students recognize that their lack of awareness about the roles of district leaders contribute to their perceived inability to influence decisions. They are supportive of directly involving students in decision-making processes. They believe that adult board members may have divergent priorities as they do not directly experience the challenges faced by administrators, teachers, and students in schools. However, students are also concerned about the tokenization of student

participation. Students assert that leaders will have to build structures to ensure authentic student representation, genuine feedback, and clear communication around decisions. One possible solution discussed by students is to have student representatives who can vote sitting on school boards. [6]

Wrap up

While students generally feel included in decisions that directly affect their personal education, students do not feel involved in decisions for influencing change in their classroom, school, or district. Students express difficulty accessing existing outlets, such as student leadership, to express their voices and ideas for change and are enthusiastic about the development of new structures to participate in education decision making. Not only do students struggle to make use of existing structures, students also feel disempowered by a lack of knowledge about how the school system functions.

Considering the results of this research, there are several potential solutions to these difficulties. To address the lack of understanding students have about K-12 education governance, teachers could incorporate lessons on how education systems function into the social studies curriculum. If students are aware of how school districts are run, what the leaders' roles are, and who fulfills these roles, it is possible that they may feel more capable of partnering with school and district administrators to improve their schools. Not only is it important to provide students with the necessary understanding of education governance to work with administrators, it is also imperative that structures are established to create clear pathways for students to effect change.

One effective model of student engagement with policy is direct student participation in decision making through student advisory councils. These councils provide students with an opportunity to learn about school governance; a forum to collect information and discuss challenges impacting students; and a pathway for student ideas to be heard by school and district administrators. Student advisory councils should be representative of the entire student body and welcoming of participation from all students. At the school level, a member of the student advisory council should be present at all administrative team meetings to represent students in school decision making. At the district level, members of the student advisory council should participate in relevant district-wide administrative team meetings and school board work sessions. Further, the student advisory council should have the ability to cast an advisory vote on school board decisions to represent students in district policy making. With a concerted effort from school and district leaders, students can share their experiences and meaningfully participate in policy decisions.

[6]To learn more about student involvement in district decision making, visit our report on how school boards engage student voices on our website: https://www.oregonstudentvoice.org/amplify

Evaluation of K-12 policies

Written by: Alex Lue, Junior

Every new school year brings freshly introduced policies that affect students' experiences in school. Students, administrators, and teachers must constantly adapt to changing curriculum, standards, expectations, and rules. While many of these changes improve education, they also make navigating school policies difficult. Therefore, Oregon Student Voice endeavored to understand student perceptions on issues that affect their education. We looked specifically at issues that K-12 policymakers are currently discussing: (a) course requirements, (b) career and technical education, (c) school technology resources, (d) standardized tests, and (e) mental health.

The most important issues to students currently being considered by K-12 policymakers.

In digging deeper into these policy issues, we find that students desire increased knowledge of and access to resources that support their learning and educational experience.

Course requirements

Seventy-seven percent of students agree that the quality of teaching in their required courses is good (16 percent disagree). However, only 51 percent of students agree that their course requirements are relevant to their future, 33 percent disagree and 16 percent do not know. Students want courses that teach them to thrive in the "real world," such as learning to pay taxes, buy a house, or apply for a job. Only 36 percent of students agree that they learn how to manage their personal finances in at least one of their courses (52 percent disagree and 12 percent do not know). Students want policymakers to consider altering the course requirements to ensure that they are prepared for success after graduating high school.

"We don't learn anything to be successful in the real world, like you get knowledge, but you don't know how to apply that to the real world, after you get it."

- Student from the Portland Metro

Career and technical education

Eight-five percent of students agree that career and technical education is important to prepare for their careers after high school (5 percent disagree and 10 percent do not know). Further, 63 percent of students agree that they take and/or want to take career and technical education courses (20 percent disagree and 17 percent do not know). However, only 51 percent of students agree that there are a sufficient number of career and technical education courses offered in their school (31 percent disagree and 17 percent do not know). Additionally, 73 percent of students wish their school offered different types of career and technical education courses (11 percent disagree and 15 percent do not know). As Oregon begins to expand access to these courses, policymakers should consider the needs of students who desire increased and diversified course options that will better enable them to plan for careers after high school.

"Everything is due on technology and if you don't get it done, then you don't get it done. Some of us don't have access to Internet, so how can we learn if everything is through technology."

- Student from the Willamette Valley

School technology resources

Access to up-to-date school technology resources impacts students' abilities to succeed both inside and outside the classroom. Eighty-two percent of students agree that they have sufficient access to school technology resources to complete their assigned work (13 percent disagree), and 70 percent of students agree that their school's technology resources are up to date (19 percent disagree). However, only 57 percent of students agree that the Internet connection at their school is reliable and fast enough to support their learning (38 percent disagree). Across the state, students assert that access to Internet is difficult in their school and sometimes their community. Students state that without Internet they are unable to complete their schoolwork as almost all assignment are due electronically. This results in lower learning outcomes for some students as teachers do not work with students to overcome technology challenges. Policymakers should ensure that all Oregon schools provide students with access to reliable and fast Internet to support student learning.

Standardized testing

A minority of students (35 percent) agree that standardized tests are able to measure their success as a student, while 56 percent disagree. There are many reasons why students either agree or disagree with the efficacy of standardized tests in measuring student success. Those that agree may feel that standardized tests provide a clear, comprehensive measurement for their success. Those that disagree argue that standardized tests take too much time away from their regular schedule (60 percent agree and 27 percent disagree) and negatively impact their self-esteem (60 percent agree and 29 percent disagree). Students believe that it may be time for policymakers to rethink how they are evaluating student success and use broader measures outside of standardized tests.

"Counselors are extremely helpful for when you have problems. They provide a space to talk and sometimes will refer you to the school-based health center. The only thing is you have to wait to try and talk about what's wrong with you, which can be a long time."

-Student from the Portland Metro

Mental health

Easy access to mental health and counseling services is the most important policy concern of students today. However, only 58 percent of students agree that there are services for mental health available at their school (21 percent disagree and 22 percent do not know). Additionally, only 52 percent of students agree that students can easily access mental health resources through their school (23 percent disagree and 25 percent do not know). Mental health and counseling services in schools can help students feel supported and protected, which can often increase attendance rates, decrease behavioral issues, and boost engagement in school.

However, numerous students report either not knowing about or not having easy access to these resources. Many schools hold programs for mental health, but some students are unaware of them. Schools need to propagate this information regularly to ensure that all students know about services available. Further, students request that policymakers consider increasing the availability of resources to assure that students have services when needed, especially when they are in a crisis. By raising awareness and accessibility, students believe that Oregon can increase attendance rates and ultimately graduation rates.

Wrap up

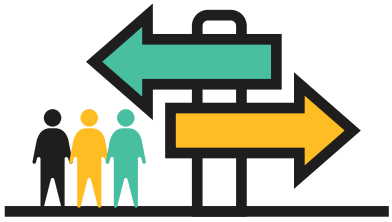
Across all policy issues, students want to learn more about the resources available at their school and, if inadequate, request that policymakers expand access to these resources. Keeping in mind that increasing the availability of resources is difficult due to financial constraints, we provide several recommendations for addressing students' concerns with the discussed policy issues. First, policymakers, administrators, and teachers should authentically involve students in the creation or refurbishment of required and career and technical education courses. This will ensure that courses meet the needs of students as they prepare for life after high school. Second, policymakers should consider alternative assessment techniques, such as portfolio-based assessments or multiple measures approaches, to evaluate student learning and school success. Finally, administrators, teachers, counselors, and students should work together to notify students about the availability of mental health and counseling services in their schools. They should also work with policymakers to expand these resources to ensure all students have access in a crisis. A marginal increase in the services available to students will greatly impact Oregon's youth.

Conclusion and recommendations for change

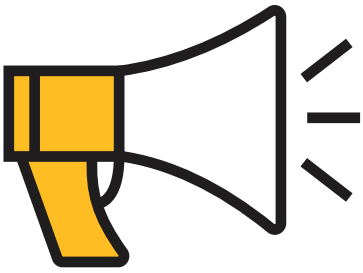
Written by: Jared Cetz, Sophomore

Oregon Student Voice believes that all students should feel empowered to dramatically reform our education system through authentic partnerships with K-12 education decision makers. This report serves as our first step to including students in decision-making processes as we strive to understand Oregon's high schools through the eyes of its students. We gathered the raw perspective of more than 2,200 high school students learning in Oregon's school system through an online survey and focus group discussions. In analyzing students' experiences in school, we found that students enjoy going to school and feel safe; however, students also feel that their schools are missing an atmosphere of respect and resolution. In discussing their experiences with teachers, students asserted that they learn better and engage more with caring and passionate teachers who practice diverse teaching techniques and welcome feedback from students. In exploring student involvement in decision making, we discovered that students struggle to use existing structures available for impacting classroom, school, and district decision making. Finally, when addressing current K-12 policies, students stated that they need to learn more about the resources they have access to at their schools and request policymakers create access to these resources if insufficient. After careful and thoughtful analyses of students' experiences, OSV offers five recommendations for consideration that we believe will enable Oregon's K-12 education system to better support students.

1. **Provide students with an authentic seat at the table in school and district decision making.** Students have an authentic seat at the table when they are present, active, and equal members in the systems that make decisions and change. An authentic seat is not having a student present during discussions just to create an image of student participation; this is tokenization, which results in students feeling devalued and disrespected. When students have an authentic seat, they provide important perspectives on school and district decisions. To create an atmosphere of respect and to increase the quality of decisions being made, we recommend that school administrators and school boards create student advisory councils to represent the views of students. Further, we advise that at least one student be present and provide an advisory vote at all school administration and school board meetings.



2. **Educate students about how schools and districts make decisions.** The majority of students are unsure about how their schools and districts make decisions, which leads to an absence of partnerships between education decision makers and students. Information on how the system works is not easily accessible or made aware to students. This lack of knowledge is disempowering to students, and causes students to mistrust the school system. We recommend the implementation of at least one lesson on K-12 governance in the social studies curriculum to educate students on how education decisions are made.



3. **Create clear avenues of communication between administrators, teachers, and students.** It goes without saying that students succeed in environments where they feel welcome. Students need to know that the school condemns acts of prejudice committed by peers, teachers, or administrators; however, this is rarely the case. Students also feel that administrators and teachers do not take their concerns seriously and as a direct effect, feel disrespected and belittled. These feelings stem from the vague responses and lack of visible action administrators and teachers take to address concerns. We recommend that schools construct easily navigable mechanisms for students to report concerns and receive information on how their concerns are being addressed. These mechanisms can come in the form of an online forum, email, or in-person meeting. No matter what, each time a student expresses a concern, they need to be taken seriously. Administrators and teachers need to provide specific information when requested, following up with updates in a timely manner.

4. **Ensure that all students are engaged in classroom and school activities.** Not all students feel that they have a strong relationship with their teachers, which may lead to disengagement in classroom and school activities. To address this concern, we recommend that teachers be provided better training in developing relationships with students, specifically those who do not plan on furthering their education after high school. We also suggest that teachers be afforded the opportunity and flexibility to take advantage of different instructional styles, curriculum resources, and engagement techniques to ensure every student in their classroom feels supported. Finally, we advise teachers to use feedback mechanisms, which can be in the form of anonymous surveys, written evaluation forms, or in-person meetings, at least two times a semester for students to provide input on instruction and curriculum. This process of giving feedback leads students to feel more engaged and more invested in their learning. Further, we recommend that teachers share positive feedback received from students with each other to strengthen the overall instruction of the school.

5. **Make sure that students are aware of the resources available to them.** There needs to be clear and easy access to any resources available to support student learning. Students should not have to jump through hoops or go out of their way to find these resources. Due to a lack of communication, many students are left unaware of the resources available for: mental health, school counseling, graduation requirements, career and technical education courses, career development opportunities, school technology, or the availability of a gender-neutral bathrooms. We recommend that information about resources be communicated to students through multiple approaches, such as posting flyers in bathrooms and classrooms, daily announcements, the school website, and a weekly bulletin. Further, administrators should educate teachers on available resources so they can supply this information to students.

Appendix A:

Survey results + methodology

Appendix A

High School Student Survey Results and Methodology
n = 2,130
August 5, 2017 - December 15, 2017

Survey Questions[1]

[*Questions 1-7 are demographic questions. They are included following Q52.*][2]

What is your level of agreement with each of the following statements? **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS]**

8. Class sizes are reasonable for my teachers' abilities to meet the needs of all students.

Strongly Disagree	6
Disagree	23
Agree	53
Strongly Agree	11
Don't Know	7
Total	100

9. My teachers respect my individuality.

Strongly Disagree	4
Disagree	9
Agree	60
Strongly Agree	19
Don't Know	8
Total	100

10. I like going to my school.

Strongly Disagree	9
Disagree	16
Agree	52
Strongly Agree	16
Don't Know	7
Total	100

[1] All numbers are percentages and may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.
[2] For demographic breakdowns across survey questions, visit our website: https://www.oregonstudentvoice.org/amplify

11. I feel engaged and included in class discussions and activities.

Strongly Disagree	4
Disagree	12
Agree	63
Strongly Agree	14
Don't Know	7
Total	100

12. Instructional time is sufficient for my teachers to meet the needs of all students.

Strongly Disagree	5
Disagree	17
Agree	57
Strongly Agree	11
Don't Know	10
Total	100

13. My teachers consistently support my learning.

Strongly Disagree	3
Disagree	10
Agree	62
Strongly Agree	18
Don't Know	7
Total	100

14. I feel safe in my school.

Strongly Disagree	4
Disagree	11
Agree	57
Strongly Agree	21
Don't Know	8
Total	100

15. I feel comfortable speaking with teachers and/or administrators about school issues.

Strongly Disagree	7
Disagree	21
Agree	49
Strongly Agree	15

Don't Know	8
Total	100

16. Students have up-to-date textbooks and other learning materials.

Strongly Disagree	6
Disagree	21
Agree	49
Strongly Agree	12
Don't Know	12
Total	100

17. I am regularly asked by my high school teachers to provide written feedback on their instruction.

Strongly Disagree	19
Disagree	39
Agree	26
Strongly Agree	3
Don't Know	12
Total	100

18. Rules for student conduct are consistently enforced in my school.

Strongly Disagree	6
Disagree	20
Agree	50
Strongly Agree	10
Don't Know	13
Total	100

19. Teachers and/or administrators in my school take action based on student concerns.

Strongly Disagree	7
Disagree	23
Agree	48
Strongly Agree	8
Don't Know	13
Total	100

20. The school environment is clean and well maintained.

Strongly Disagree	5

Disagree	13
Agree	59
Strongly Agree	18
Don't Know	5
Total	100

21. I have a teacher and/or staff member at my school who I trust as a mentor.

Strongly Disagree	5
Disagree	12
Agree	44
Strongly Agree	32
Don't Know	7
Total	100

22. There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in my school.

Strongly Disagree	7
Disagree	25
Agree	49
Strongly Agree	9
Don't Know	9
Total	100

23. I am involved in decisions that affect me and my education at my school.

Strongly Disagree	8
Disagree	22
Agree	47
Strongly Agree	14
Don't Know	10
Total	100

24. My teachers interrupt students that use prejudicial, discriminatory, or disrespectful language towards other students.

Strongly Disagree	6
Disagree	17
Agree	47
Strongly Agree	17
Don't Know	12
Total	100

25. My race and/or cultural background is represented in classroom curriculum.

Strongly Disagree	6
Disagree	14
Agree	40
Strongly Agree	16
Don't Know	23
Total	100

26. Students communicate with and influence my district's school board.

Strongly Disagree	13
Disagree	25
Agree	32
Strongly Agree	5
Don't Know	25
Total	100

27. The overall quality of teachers in my school is good.

Strongly Disagree	4
Disagree	10
Agree	62
Strongly Agree	19
Don't Know	5
Total	100

28. My high school makes accommodations for students who would like to use a bathroom and/or locker room different from the gender they were assigned at birth.

Strongly Disagree	9
Disagree	14
Agree	28
Strongly Agree	7
Don't Know	42
Total	100

29. I feel that my schoolwork is meaningful and important.

Strongly Disagree	8
Disagree	23
Agree	48

Strongly Agree	15
Don't Know	6
Total	100

30. Which of the following topics being discussed by K-12 education policymakers do you care most about? Please rank them from most important to least important. [**RANDOMIZE ITEMS**][3]

	Ranked Most Important	Ranked Second Most Important
Course requirements (e.g., relevance of state required courses and electives)	20	24
Career and technical education (e.g., courses such as computer science, woodshop, and auto mechanics that prepare students for a career in these areas)	22	25
School technology resources (e.g., computers, iPads, and other resources)	8	14
Standardized tests (e.g., time spent taking standardized tests and the ability for them to gauge knowledge)	10	17
Mental health (e.g., the resources provided to support students struggling with anxiety, depression, loneliness, and other mental health concerns in schools)	40	19
Total	100	100

*Respondents will receive the following questions based on the topics **(most and second most important)** that they selected from Question 30.*

What is your level of agreement with each of the following statements? **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS WITHIN SETS]**

Course Requirements (n = 859)

31. Oregon's course requirements are relevant for my future.

	Low Priority[4]	High Priority[5]	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	12	7	9
Disagree	23	24	24
Agree	42	45	44
Strongly Agree	5	8	7
Don't Know	18	15	16
Total	100	100	100

[3] Due to a programming error, only some participants received the follow-up questions for the topics they ranked as most or second-most important in Q30. In the following pages, responses are broken out comparing those who ranked each topic as a high priority and those who ranked them as a lower priority. In all, about 50% of responses to the follow-up questions were provided by those who said the topic was a high priority for them.

[4] Participants who ranked topic as third-, fourth-, or fifth-most important in Q30.

[5] Participants who ranked topic as most or second-most important in Q30.

32. The quality of teaching in my required courses is good.

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	6	4	5
Disagree	11	12	11
Agree	62	63	62
Strongly Agree	12	12	12
Don't Know	9	10	10
Total	100	100	100

33. I learned how to manage my personal finances in at least one of my courses.

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	27	22	23
Disagree	28	30	29
Agree	30	30	30
Strongly Agree	7	6	6
Don't Know	9	13	12
Total	100	100	100

34. I struggle to find time in my schedule to take art and/or performing arts courses along with other courses that I am interested in.

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	14	12	12
Disagree	36	35	35
Agree	26	29	28
Strongly Agree	14	13	13
Don't Know	19	11	11
Total	100	100	100

35. I struggle to find time in my schedule to take physical education courses along with other courses that I am interested in.

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	18	12	14
Disagree	37	39	38
Agree	25	28	27
Strongly Agree	10	12	11
Don't Know	11	9	10
Total	100	100	100

Career and Technical Education (n = 1,026)

36. I take and/or want to take career and technical education courses at my school.

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	6	2	3
Disagree	26	12	17
Agree	43	46	45
Strongly Agree	9	23	18
Don't Know	16	17	17
Total	100	100	100

37. There are a sufficient number of career and technical education courses offered at my school.

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	4	6	5
Disagree	26	27	26
Agree	44	42	42
Strongly Agree	9	10	9
Don't Know	18	16	17
Total	100	100	100

38. Career and technical education courses are important for students to prepare for a career.

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	2	1	1
Disagree	5	3	4
Agree	58	52	54
Strongly Agree	21	36	31
Don't Know	15	8	10
Total	100	100	100

39. I wish my school offered different types of career and technical education courses.

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	1	1	1
Disagree	12	9	10
Agree	46	49	48
Strongly Agree	21	27	25
Don't Know	19	13	15
Total	100	100	100

School Technology Resources (n = 896)

40. My school's technology resources are up to date

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	4	7	4
Disagree	14	19	15
Agree	58	51	56
Strongly Agree	15	12	14
Don't Know	9	11	10
Total	100	100	100

41. My school has an appropriate number of computers and/or iPads to serve the needs of teachers and students

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	3	6	4
Disagree	13	16	14
Agree	59	54	57
Strongly Agree	20	15	18
Don't Know	5	10	7
Total	100	100	100

42. The Internet connection at my school is reliable and fast enough to support my learning.

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	13	20	15
Disagree	25	19	23
Agree	45	46	45
Strongly Agree	13	10	12
Don't Know	4	4	4
Total	100	100	100

43. I have sufficient access to school technology resources to complete my assigned work.

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	3	6	4
Disagree	9	11	9
Agree	64	61	63
Strongly Agree	20	16	19
Don't Know	4	6	5
Total	100	100	100

Standardized Testing (n = 803)

44. Standardized tests are able to measure my success as a student.

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	35	23	30
Disagree	26	27	26
Agree	23	40	30
Strongly Agree	6	4	5
Don't Know	10	7	9
Total	100	100	100

45. Questions on standardized tests align with the content that I learn in the classroom.

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	17	15	16
Disagree	31	26	29
Agree	34	48	39
Strongly Agree	5	5	5
Don't Know	13	6	11
Total	100	100	100

46. We spend too much time taking standardized tests during school time.

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	4	3	4
Disagree	22	25	23
Agree	30	34	32
Strongly Agree	31	25	28
Don't Know	13	13	13
Total	100	100	100

47. Standardized tests negatively impact my self-esteem.

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	9	7	8
Disagree	20	23	21
Agree	29	36	32
Strongly Agree	31	23	28
Don't Know	10	10	10
Total	100	100	100

Mental Health (n = 546)

48. There are adequate mental health and counseling services at my school.

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	4	8	7
Disagree	10	15	14
Agree	50	48	49
Strongly Agree	12	8	9
Don't Know	23	21	22
Total	100	100	100

49. Students can easily access mental health resources through my school.

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	4	8	7
Disagree	8	18	16
Agree	48	43	44
Strongly Agree	12	7	8
Don't Know	39	23	25
Total	100	100	100

50. My school offers education for students around mental health.

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	5	9	8
Disagree	10	14	13
Agree	54	50	51
Strongly Agree	14	11	12
Don't Know	17	16	17
Total	100	100	100

51. Teachers in my school understand and accommodate students experiencing mental health concerns.

	Low Priority	High Priority	Total Answered
Strongly Disagree	4	10	9
Disagree	12	16	15
Agree	45	48	48
Strongly Agree	14	8	10
Don't Know	25	16	19
Total	100	100	100

52. Do you have any final comments or advice for Oregon Student Voice as we work to raise student voices and positively impact Oregon's education system? **[OPEN]**

Major Themes:

- Desire to be more involved in education decision making and voicing opinions on school issues
- Request for more communication between administrators, teachers, and students
- Teachers equipped to instructing students using diverse teaching styles
- Concerns about discipline and suspension rates
- Need for increased counseling services for school and future planning
- Desire for more mental health resources and courses
- Access to Internet and use of phones in the classroom for schoolwork
- Delay of school start time as many students are starting before 8am
- Increased offerings for electives, such as art and music
- More classes to provide students with "real world" experiences, such as finances and voting
- Decreased amount of time spent on homework

Demographic Questions

1. How old are you?

14 years old	17
15 years old	24
16 years old	25
17 years old	27
18 years old or older	7
Total	100

2. What grade are you in this year?

9th	18
10th	18
11th	17
12th	19
Did not answer	28
Total	100

3. How do you identify?

Male	50
Female	46
Non-binary or gender non-conforming	1
Other **[SPECIFY]**	3
Total	100

4 & 5. How do you identify in terms of race/ethnicity? **[CONDENSED QUESTIONS 4 & 5. Percentages do not add up to 100-percent as students could choose multiple options.]**

White	75

Hispanic	21
Black or African American	4
Asian	7
American Indian or Alaska Native	3
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	2
Multiracial	7
Other **[SPECIFY]**	2

6. What school do you currently attend? **[Students from 42 high schools located across Oregon participated in the survey. Results are condensed into a new variable to show the population size of the city in which the school is located.]**

School in city with population of 35,000 or less	38
School in city with population of 35,001 to 100,000	24
School in city with population of 100,001 or more	20
Did not answer	18
Total	100

7. Which of these best describes your school plans? Please choose one.

I would like to quit school as soon as I can.	2
I plan to finish high school but won't go to college.	6
I'd like to join the armed forces immediately after high school.	4
I'd like to go to some kind of trade or vocational school after high school.	4
I'd like to go to college after high school.	59
I'd like to go to college and then to graduate school.	24
Total	100

Survey Methodology

From August 5 to December 15, 2017, Oregon Student Voice, with the assistance of DHM Research, conducted an online survey of high school students across Oregon. The purpose of the survey was to assess the experiences, perceptions, and priorities of Oregon's high school students.

Methodology: The online survey consisted of n = 2,130 high school students age 14 and older, and took approximately 7 minutes to complete. This is a sufficient sample size to assess high schoolers' opinions generally and to review findings by multiple subgroups, including grade, gender, race and ethnicity.

Respondents were contacted through outreach by Oregon Student Voice to members, students, and schools across the state. In gathering responses, a variety of quality control measures were employed, including questionnaire pre-testing and validation. Quotas were set by location, grade, gender, race, and ethnicity to ensure a representative sample.

Statement of Limitations: Due to self-selection bias, there is no margin of error for this study. While efforts were made to distribute the survey to students across the state or Oregon, there still may be a bias in those who chose to participate.

Appendix B:

Focus goup questions + methodology

Appendix B

Focus Group Methodology

Oregon Student Voice, with the support of DHM Research, held focus groups to explore students' experiences with teachers, administrators, school culture, and involvement in decision making. Twelve focus groups were convened between March 2017 and November 2017. Three of the focus groups were conducted by DHM Research and led by a professional moderator. Nine of the focus groups were conducted by OSV and led by high school members who were trained in focus group facilitation. We heard directly from more than 150 students from 22 high schools located across Oregon. Approximately 9 to 15 students participated in each focus group. The focus groups ranged between 60 and 90 minutes.

DHM Research Methodology: DHM Research's three focus groups were held with current and recently graduated high school students across the state in August 2017. The Portland Metro group, held on August 9, consisted of participants from Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington counties (n=10). The Redmond group, held on August 13, drew participants from nearby high schools, including those in Bend (n=9). A final group was held in Roseburg on August 15, and consisted of high school students from the surrounding area (n=10). Participants were recruited from random sampling, pre-existing databases, and by community outreach. Efforts were made to ensure that the participants were representative of Oregon's student body on the bases of gender, racial, and ethnic identities. Where possible, efforts were made to ensure participants came from a variety of high schools in the region.

Oregon Student Voice Methodology: OSV's nine focus groups were held with current high school students across the state from March 2017 to November 2017. Five of these focus groups were held in Eastern Oregon, three in the Portland Metro, one in the Willamette Valley. OSV reached out to school administrators to request support for conducting a focus group in their high school. Once receiving approval, we provide the administrators with a guide for selecting participants. Participants were recruited through administrators, teachers, and students. Efforts were made to ensure that participants were representative of the school's student body on the bases of gender, racial, and ethnic identities as well as engagement in school.

Statement of Limitations: The focus groups were led by a professional moderator and trained students. They consisted of both written exercises and group discussions. Although research of this type is not designed to measure with statistical reliability the attitudes of a particular group, it is valuable for giving a sense of the attitudes and opinions of the population from which the sample was drawn.

Focus Group Guiding Questions: These questions are utilized to guide the focus group discussions.

Introduction

- We are new to your campus. What would you like to tell us about your school? What are some things we should know? How would you generally describe it here?

Experience in School

- What comes to mind when you think about high school and your experience in school?

- What would you say works pretty or exceptionally well here? What are some of your school's greatest strengths? To what or to whom do you attribute those strengths?

- Any unique challenges to this school? Are there any glaring, recurring problems you notice within or beyond the classrooms?

- How would you describe the relationships among students with each other? Do people get along for the most part or do you notice tension?

Experience with Teachers

- How would you describe the general relationships between teachers and students in this school?

- What role, if any, should student voice have within the classrooms of your schools? Should students have a say in what or how teachers teach? Why or why not?

- Do your teachers interrupt students that use prejudicial, discriminatory, or disrespectful language towards other students?

Your Ability to Express Your Voice to School Leaders

- What about beyond the classroom? Should students have a say in how their schools work? Why or why not?

- Is there a system or process in place for students to express their voice to school leaders about issues that affect your education? Describe it?

- Is there a student government or council here? If so, can you describe how it works and whether or not you think it's effective?

- Any small or big examples you can point to of students making a difference in the way things are run at this school?

Your Ability to Express Your Voice to District Leaders

- What about beyond the school? Should students have a say in how their school district is run? Why or why not?

- Is there a system or process in place for students to express their voice to school district leaders about issues that affect your education? Describe it?

- Is there a district-wide student advisory council? Tell me about it.

Final Thoughts

- What is the most important education policy or issue that you want something done about?

OREGON
STUDENT
VOICE