
Oregon RISING

Education in Oregon
OREGON RISING
a Public Outreach Project

SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS // SEPTEMBER 2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EARLIER THIS YEAR,

10,894 Oregonians
spoke their minds – and hearts – about education.

AND THEY ARE IN REMARKABLE AGREEMENT:

***Simply, the gap between what Oregon students need
and what we are giving them
is far too large.***

THEY ASKED THAT WE CLOSE THE GAP.

**They believe that focusing on two essential things
will help students be successful:**

1



Add teachers and staff to make classes smaller and provide an education that better engages students so that they are able to learn what they need to be successful.

2



Provide a broad education. Move beyond science, to technology and engineering (STEM/STEAM). Restore art and music. Offer hands-on experiences. Provide vocational and career technical opportunities. Offer more reading and writing. Teach civics and culture.

In fact, the vast majority of the dreams people shared can be reached if we focus on teachers and programs.

For instance, with more teachers we can provide each student with the attention needed for success.

And with a broader education we can better engage students. We are all interested in a variety of subjects. Imagine if every child had that favorite class, that favorite teacher, to help pull him or her through the rough spots that every student experiences.

We would surely improve graduation rates. We would undoubtedly improve motivations. We would certainly set Oregon students up for success.

We think it's astonishing that such a coherent vision could come out of so many diverse voices. 10,894 people are rarely in agreement about anything, yet here we are, all focused on Oregon, rising. The will of the people is strong and supportive when it comes to education.

In fact, **97% of them consider a good education "very important" to the future of each student.**

And **94% consider it "very important" to the success of the state as a whole.**

Perhaps it's not a mandate for improvement. But what we heard was about more than dreams. The language was direct. People voiced hopes, fears and worries. **And then they described education as the solution to many of the challenges that face us.**

We learned a tremendous amount by reading the words of our neighbors. **Read on** for details of the Oregon Rising survey findings.

Ensuring All Voices Are Heard – And Equal

Oregon Rising was devoted to hearing from as many Oregonians as possible. It was also important to ensure that those surveyed reflected the state's demographics.

Because of the way the survey was administered – through an open, mass invitation rather than to people of particular age, ethnicity, and gender – we used statistical methods to ensure that results were representative and valid. To accomplish this, the research firm randomly selected 1,800 responses that mirror Oregon in terms of geography, ethnicity, age and other characteristics. Details are available on pages 17-19.

The Story Behind Oregon Rising

Oregon Rising was initiated and supported by three organizations that dedicate their work to the education of Oregon's students – Oregon Education Association (educators), Oregon School Boards Association (school board members), and the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators (principals, superintendents and other administrators).

The power of this trio rests in our shared, long-term devotion to the education of Oregon students. Such a collective effort toward improving education is ground-breaking in Oregon, and a model nationally.

The name for our effort – Oregon Rising – is intentionally aspirational. Oregon Rising is about hearing and sharing Oregonians' hopes and dreams for the schools our students deserve. The decision to remove the funding element from the equation was also intentional: We find that as soon as the conversation turns to money, aspirations are tempered. ***Oregon Rising is focused on defining what Oregon students need to be successful, and how we can ensure those needs are met and that all dreams are within reach.***

Oregon Rising is about hearing and sharing Oregonians' hopes and dreams for schools.

That Oregon's public education system has been under stress since the 1990s is well understood and widely accepted*. Fights for funding are no longer the exception, but the rule, and resources are always scarce. Arguments over sources for revenue, or opportunities for cuts, are well-worn paths through territory that is increasingly partisan.

Oregon Rising sought to disrupt the pattern by inviting Oregonians to temporarily ignore the funding discussion and, instead, to envision what they would like an Oregon education to be. We urged respondents to "dream unencumbered..."

When the project launched, **we had no predictions of what might be learned**. All of us worried that the effort could become a lightning rod for financial reform, particularly given the heightened sensitivities related to national elections and several education funding initiatives on the November 2016 ballot.

Yet the invitation to dream was met with what meeting sponsors consistently characterized as "relief" and "gratitude" for the opportunity to focus on outcomes and pathways to success, rather than spreadsheets and budgets. Conversations in the Oregon Rising gatherings and comments provided in the survey were sharply focused on students and Oregonians' dreams for their children, grandchildren and future citizens.

Oregon Rising sought to disrupt the pattern...
We urged respondents to dream unencumbered.

* In all three Oregon Values and Beliefs surveys (1992, 2012, and 2013), funding for public education was one of the most important problems Oregonians wanted their government officials to do something about. — DHM Research

Specific Findings

In two months, 10,894 people participated in Oregon Rising by attending more than a hundred community gatherings or completing a survey. The survey posed 23 questions. Of those, 11 were geographic or demographic. The core 12 questions included 6 open-ended questions, allowing free-form, unlimited responses. In those, respondents got specific about their dreams for the kind of education they want for Oregon's children. Responses ranged from a few words to a full page or more.

When the results were processed, tabulated and analyzed, what we learned was shockingly simple. Regardless of home town, age, gender, education or background, feedback could be generalized as the following: **Oregonians want more for their children and grandchildren and they believe in the power of education.** Specifically...

- **Oregonians are not satisfied** with education as it is today.
- **Oregonians value a "well rounded" education** that includes a range of offerings from classical to technical skills.
- **Oregonians make the connection** between more teachers and lower class sizes.
- **College attendance** remains a high priority.
- **But college is not the only priority:** there is strong support for vocational training and pathways that lead to destinations other than college.

Oregonians know there is a connection between education and individual success; their community's quality of life and future; and the future of Oregon.

97%

Believe that good schools are **very important for the future of their children**, grandchildren or any young person they know.

94%

Believe that good schools are **very important to the future of Oregon.**

93%

Believe that good schools are very important for **their community's future.**

92%

Believe that good schools are **very important to their community's quality of life.**

Statistically Dreaming

Nearly 9,000 respondents answered our first open-ended question, what we called the “Big Dream question.” Reviewing a randomly selected sub-sample of 1,800 responses, this is what they reported:

The question: Please describe the education you want for your children or grandchildren. If you don't have children or grandchildren, think of any young people you know. You can describe this however you'd like...anything that reflects your hopes for their education.



33% Be prepared for life after high school



Students prepared for life after graduation regardless of path	9%
Skills that prepare students for life after high school	6%
College prep (AP, IB, more rigor)	5%
Fosters curiosity and lifelong love of learning	5%
More career exploration	5%
More technical/vocational	3%

33% Well-rounded, broad education



More STEM/STEAM (Curriculum that includes Science, Technology, Engineering, Math and Art)	6%
Well-rounded, broad education (general)	5%
More art	5%
More reading/writing	4%
More civics/community awareness	4%
More culture/viewpoints	3%
More electives	3%
More music	3%

29% Encourage student engagement and learning



Encourages critical thinking	8%
Schools support and challenge all learners	5%
Center on student needs/personalized education	4%
Incorporates student interests	3%
Makes schools/learning fun	3%
Keep kids interested/motivated	3%
More experimental/hands-on learning/exploration	3%

21% Good schools and education (general)



8% Teachers – quantity and quality

More teachers/staff per student	8%
High quality teachers	5%

3% Other Eliminate or reduce standardized testing 3%

Rating the Elements of Education

One question provided respondents with a list of categories and asked that they indicate which would achieve quality schools. The respondents could choose as many or as few as they wished.

The question: The following categories are often discussed in conversations about education. Please mark those that you think need to be addressed in order to achieve quality schools.



- 1** *Career technical education and vocational training*, and increased opportunities for hands-on, real-world experiences such as field trips and job shadows. (82%)
- 2** *Smaller class sizes*, with more educators and support staff so students receive more personal attention. (78%)
- 3** *Increased elective courses* during middle and high school, including greater emphasis on music, drama and art. (72%)
- 4** *A focus on closing opportunity and achievement gaps*, and on making sure all students are successful regardless of income level, race, first language, or advanced or special needs. (69%)
- 5** *More science, technology, engineering, and math* (STEM) education for students. (68%)
- 6** *Access to more rigorous programs* that enable students to earn college credit while in high school, such as AP, IB and dual-credit. (65%)
- 7** *Access to extended learning time*, such as summer-school and after-school programs, for students who need it. (62%)
- 8** *Greater student access to health care and counseling*, and more mental health services to ensure the health and safety of our students. (61%)

- 9** *Opportunities for students to graduate fluent* in two languages, if they choose. (61%)
- 10** *Improved communication* between parents and school staff. (58%)
- 11** *Programs to help improve attendance* for students who are chronically absent. (55%)
- 12** *Access to a tablet or laptop* for all students to enhance their learning. (49%)
- 13** *A longer school year* so that Oregon students have as much learning time as students in other states. (43%)
- 14** *School-based programs* to prepare preschoolers for kindergarten. (41%)
- 15** *A longer school day* so that Oregon students have as much learning time as students in other states. (31%)

Education Priorities

Although we asked respondents to stay away from solutions or causes for the financial challenges related to schools, we did ask that they identify priorities for use. This open-ended question was presented in three steps, as first, second, and third priorities. Reviewing a randomly selected sub-sample of 1,800 responses, this is what people said:

Responses to Questions 9-11



68% Teachers-quantity and quality

More teachers/staff per student	44%
Pay teachers more	10%
Teacher training/professional development	7%
Teacher support/resources	4%
Good teachers	3%



50% More well-rounded, broader education

More electives	9%
More athletics	8%
More art	8%
More STEM/STEAM	6%
More technical/vocational	6%
More music	4%
More languages	3%
More civics/community awareness	3%
Well rounded, broad education (general)	3%



16% Up-to-date resources

Schools that support technology	5%
Up-to-date curriculum/books	4%
Access to Internet, devices for all students	4%
Up-to-date equipment in schools	3%



14% Increase instruction time

More school days/longer year	8%
Longer school day	6%



14% Health, wellness and student safety

Better/free healthy lunches	7%
Mental health counseling	4%
Schools that are safe	3%



7%

Facility improvements

Upgrade the buildings	4%
Better school facilities	3%



6%

Focus on family

Parents	3%
Family/parental involvement	3%



6%

Enrichment activities

After school opportunities	3%
Field trips	3%



9%

Other

College prep	3%
Support for students with disabilities/special needs	3%
Experiential/hands-on learning/exploration	3%



The words that appeared most in the open-ended responses are telling.
Asked for dreams, people used these terms most often:

**LEARN, KIDS, TEACHERS, SKILLS,
ABLE, COLLEGE, FUTURE.**



Others that were often used are:

**ARTS, MUSIC, MATH, LIFE, WORLD, READING,
STUDENT, WELL BEING, OPPORTUNITIES,
CLASSES, TEACHING, TEACH, SYSTEM, SCIENCE,
PROGRAMS, COMMUNITY, BEST, OREGON,
CURRICULUM, BETTER, SUPPORT, HOPE.**

Sampling of Representative Comments

Small enough class sizes so teachers have time to pay attention to the needs of all students and in environments that communicate to students that their education, safety, and wellbeing are important. Also, schools should provide an enriched environment that exposes students to a broad array of subjects in a manner that appeals to all learning styles, preparing students to fulfill their goals and realize their potential. Schools should create a culture of respect for all individuals, foster an environment of community involvement and global stewardship.

Mother, Age 50-64, Willamette Valley

I want my children to be able to attend a safe school where they are made to feel valued and cared for by the staff. Where children are challenged and have expectations, but are also guided with patience and an understanding that there will be differences between children. Where they get the basic skills to succeed academically, but also are taught in ways that promote grit and persistence. Where there are a variety of classes (PE, art, music, foreign language, sciences, advanced math). Where parents are engaged in their child's education.

Mother, Age 25-35, Willamette Valley

I want kids to look forward to going to school most days. I want them to feel proud that they are learning important things.


Woman, Age 65-74, Portland Metro

Well rounded, but an education that complements the individual child's talents and abilities, but still offers opportunities to challenge the student. An education that gets away from the cookie-cutter mentality that says every student must go to college or every student must excel in certain things to be a success. With all this, students must know that not everything they undertake is going to be an overwhelming success, that life is made up of successes and failures, and that what makes us winners is what we do in the face of those failures.


Father, Age 50-54, Coast/South/East

I would love to see an education where kids come out of school with a sense of purpose and feeling that they are important and can do anything.

Mother, Age 50-64, Willamette Valley




I want the sort of education you can get only when society funds education properly. Where we're not one of the states that funds at the lowest level in the country. When people understand that you get what you pay for, and that you can't get great education without money. When people realize that teachers are professionals and should be paid at a professional level. When education is valued, period.



Mother, Age 50-64, Portland Metro

I want them to not be held back by any limits because of funding, and to be able to study anything that they want to. This will help them learn important skills for the future.

Male, Under 18, Portland Metro



Industrial technology that relates to the manufacturing, construction, mechanical, electrical and civil technologies. I feel the emphasis is now on digital technology, which is a maturing market, but other "hands on" trades, skills and so forth are lacking in schools.

Man, Age 50-64, Portland Metro

No boundaries. Technology that is current.

Father, Age 50-64, Coast/South/East



Interactive and small classes, hands-on activities ... art, music and technical programs for high schoolers.

Woman, Age 36-49, Willamette Valley



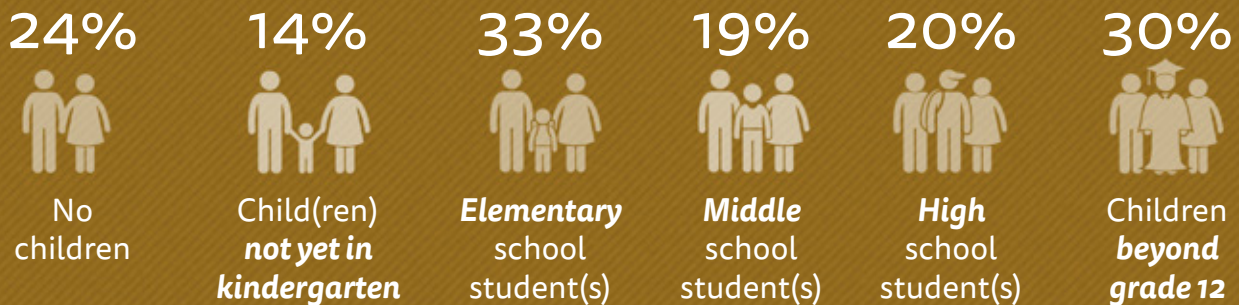
Who Responded

Weighted samples are reported here. The 'weighting' reflects the statistical adjustments made to the survey data analysis to ensure that the findings were representative of the state's population. For example, slightly more women than men took the survey, so slightly more weight was applied to the male responses so that, taken as a whole, the responses were in line with the state's 50/50 male/female population.

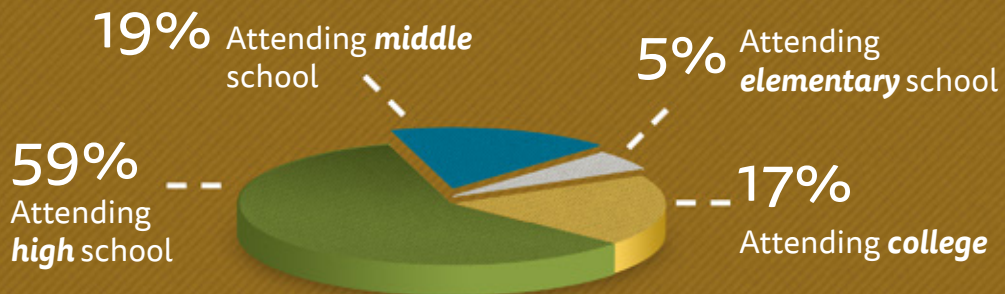
WHERE RESPONDENTS LIVE



PARENTAL STATUS



IF THE RESPONDENT WAS A STUDENT, HE/SHE WAS



RACE OR ETHNICITY

White	82%
Hispanic / Latino	9%
American Indian /Alaskan Native	4%
Asian	4%
American Indian /Alaskan Native	4%
African American	3%
African	1%
Middle Eastern	1%
Slavic	1%
Pacific Islander	1%
Unknown	1%
Other	1%
Decline	1%

These percentages add up to more than 100% because some respondents selected multiple answers to more fully represent their race/ethnicity.

EDUCATION LEVEL

Graduate degree or more	30%
Bachelor's degree	27%
Associate degree	6%
Some high school, no diploma	13%
No high school	4%
Some college, no degree	12%
High school diploma, no college	8%

FIRST LANGUAGE

English	91%
Spanish	3%
Chinese	2%
Russian	1%
Arabic	1%
"Other"	2%

It was important to hear from people from all backgrounds. To make that possible, the survey was available in six languages and additional efforts were taken to engage a representative sampling of Oregon's population.

GENDER

Male	50%
Female	50%

AGE

Under 18	17%
18-24	10%
25-35	15%
36-49	26%
50-64	18%
65-74	8%
75-84	5%
85 and over	2%

Survey Methodology

The discussion in this report summarizes responses to Oregon Rising's first survey. That survey was fielded from March 30, 2016 until June 25, 2016. The survey was taken during gatherings at schools and attended by parents, community members and staff, and it was also available online.

Respondents were invited to participate by superintendents, principals, school board members, educators and other partners. They were also alerted to the site by media coverage and a social media campaign. It was open to anyone who wanted to respond.

Several other groups helped reach out to engage communities of color, and to invite participation by those whose first language is not English. The survey was available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Russian and Somali.

Over the course of the survey's availability – approximately two months – 10,894 Oregonians participated. Approximately 70% responded online, and the balance took the survey in an Oregon Rising gathering.

The survey instrument was administered electronically except in cases during community gatherings when technology was limited or users preferred a traditional paper copy. In those cases, the responses were collected and later entered into the same online survey collector.

Answers were not required for any question on the survey, yet completion rates were extremely high, suggesting a very high level of engagement.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents voluntarily provided their email address to be kept apprised of Oregon Rising's efforts. For purposes of privacy, these email addresses were removed from the responses before analysis.

About the Independent Analysis

An independent, non-partisan research firm, DHM Research, was hired to process the data and analyze the responses to the survey.

They first divided the responses into two main groups – those who work for a school district and those who don't. This was done to ensure that if a high number of people employed by school districts responded to the survey, they didn't skew the results. The two sets of data were then processed and analyzed. This document reports the weighted findings. This ensures you are receiving the numbers that most accurately reflect Oregon's demographics of geography, age, ethnicity and other characteristics, including district employment. For the open-ended verbatim responses, 1,800 responses that represented the state's statistics in terms of geography, ethnicity, age, gender, district employment and parenthood were randomly selected, ensuring a statistical balance that is reflective of Oregon demographics, geography, ethnicity, age and other characteristics.

“

I haven't seen anything like Oregon Rising in my 40 years of doing opinion research and public outreach across the state. It is special for both the number of Oregonians who participated, and the quality of their responses.

— Adam Davis, DHM Research

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Consistency Across Demographics

DHM Research conducted analysis of the variances between the two largest subgroups – employees and non-employees of school districts. Both have the same dreams about the kind of education system they want for our children and what the funding priorities should be to improve education in their communities.

They also marked most often the same two (out of fifteen) areas of importance to achieve quality schools: “Career technical education and vocational training, and increased opportunities for hands-on, real world experiences such as field trips and job shadows” and “Smaller class sizes, with more educators and support staff so students receive more personal attention.” And finally, both felt similarly about the relative value of longer school days and school years.

There were some variations, but they were not as significant or surprising as some might have anticipated. For example, though both groups felt they were important, school district employees were more likely to be strong in their sentiments about the importance of more teachers/staff per student and school-based programs to prepare preschoolers for kindergarten.

The firm also analyzed differences between respondents of various geographies, genders, age, education level, parent status, and all other demographics requested. There were surprisingly few variances between the groups. Some differences were thought-provoking, though again perhaps not surprising:

- **Respondents with no children felt differently about some of the areas needed to achieve quality schools than those with children.** Those with no children were more likely to feel that programs to improve attendance were important.
- **Hispanic/Latino respondents felt differently about some of the areas of importance compared to White respondents,** including being more likely to feel that having school-based programs to prepare preschoolers for kindergarten was important.
- **Portland Metro respondents were more likely than Willamette Valley and Coast/South/East to prioritize more teachers/staff per student as a funding priority.** (It is worth noting that class sizes in smaller and rural districts are likely to be smaller than in more urban settings.)

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the ongoing support of the members of the organizations who created Oregon Rising. This project would not be possible without their shared commitment to hearing from the people of Oregon.

As deeply as people care about education, it still took significant effort to spread the word about Oregon Rising. We appreciate the commitment and expertise of Verb Marketing + PR. The firm guided all aspects of outreach, from helping to name the effort, to creating the videos and inspiring participation. We consider them a true partner.

We are indebted to Adam Davis and his team at DHM Research. We did not anticipate the number of responses received, nor did we expect the complex verbatim responses to the questions. When we realized that a professional research group was going to be essential to processing the feedback and reporting back on it with an independent view, we sought help. Adam and his team contributed a significant amount of time to process and analyze the survey. DHM also included a series of our questions in their independent polling, helping us to identify variations between the self-selecting respondents and the general public.

We extend thanks to the following organizations for their help: Oregon PTA, Oregon Association of School Business Officials, Oregon Association of Education Service Districts, Oregon Association of Student Councils. Some groups played a vital part in reaching into all the communities of Oregon. Others shared their specialized knowledge as we translated the dreams we heard into action items for Oregon schools.

Most of all, we thank those who responded. This was not an easy survey, and it typically took 15 minutes or more to complete. Respondents provided long and thoughtful answers to our questions. They answered an uncommon number of the questions, skipping few. More important, we were awed as we witnessed a true willingness to set aside politics, policies and traditional financial discussions in order to dream, unencumbered by the complications of reality. That is, we believe, where solutions take root.



Confederation of Oregon School Administrators

The Confederation of Oregon School Administrators (COSA) serves Oregon students by developing and supporting those who guide the state's schools and programs. These leaders are our members – more than 2,200 school administrators, managers and executives. COSA was founded in 1974 to help educational leaders collectively shape public policy, advocate for schools, and speak on behalf of students. COSA also serves members with professional development, administrative licensure, and master's and doctoral degree programs.



Oregon Education Association

The Oregon Education Association represents 44,000 educators in every community across our state. Founded more than 150 years ago, OEA's pre-k, k 12 and community college members are united in a shared vision "to improve the future of all Oregonians through quality public education."



Oregon School Boards Association

The Oregon School Boards Association (OSBA) is dedicated to improving student achievement through advocacy, leadership, and service to locally elected volunteer Oregon public school boards. Today the association provides services in board development, policy, labor relations, legislative, litigation, communications, and liability and property insurance. OSBA's "The Promise of Oregon" campaign helped set the stage for Oregon Rising.



www.oregon-rising.org

For More Information

The data and insights collected through the Oregon Rising survey effort are sure to have value and use for many other users. For more information, or for a more detailed reporting, please email info@oregon-rising.org or visit the Oregon Rising website at oregon-rising.org.