

Helping Oregon Students Become College and Career Ready

Helping prepare high school students graduate College and Career Ready is the responsibility of every sector in education as we strive to meet Oregon's 40-40-20 goal. This includes increasing collaboration between K-12 and higher education institutions to create a strong, shared understanding of the knowledge and skills students need to enter a college or career pathway. Key partners in Oregon like Gear Up, Core to College, Achieve, American College Application Campaign, ASPIRE, and the Office of Student Access and Completion are also helping promote a broader awareness of the importance of students' transitions to college and career.

Meeting the College and Career Readiness challenge on a statewide scale requires a comprehensive state action agenda with goals, involvement of all key education and political stakeholders, a plan for implementation, and recommended state policies. Our office also convenes an Oregon College and Career Readiness Cross Sector Planning Group that meets monthly to share and update a State Action Agenda reflecting real time progress that can be shared with the boards of OEIB, ODE, HECC as well as legislators and advocacy groups. The group adopts a stance of being "critical friends" to those who are in positions to make changes and to move agendas.

College Ready Starts Early

Students can start getting college and career ready long before they reach high school. Schools that support a college-going culture fully maximize Oregon's required Individual Profile and Career Plan, career education tools like the Career Information System and Naviance, and they provide clear information for students and their families on available resources and pathways to postsecondary education.

In Eastern Oregon, a regional approach called Eastern Promise has now expanded to serve 45 school districts creating additional opportunities for high school students to participate in college-level courses, earn college credits while still in high school, and build college-going attitudes and culture with students and their families as early as 5th grade.

Example: in Eastern Promise program, students:

- start in 5th grade thinking about their strengths and interests,
- in 6th exploring why college is important,
- in 7th get an emphasis on financial literacy and visit college campuses
- in 8th focus on HS transition
- in 9th College Success course for dual credit
- in 10-12th earning up to 45 hours college credits

Smoothing the Transition from High School to College

With the adoption of Common Core State Standards that are aligned with College and Career expectations, Oregon’s students get clear feedback on their progress towards being college ready. High school instructors are working in collaboration with college faculty to align high school course curriculum with college expectations.

Earlier Access to College Credit While Still in High School

Research results from local, state, regional, and national studies overwhelmingly support a variety of benefits resulting from increased access to college level coursework for high school students. For example, students shift their conceptions of the role of college and develop a greater awareness of the requirements of college and skills conducive to college success. And researchers have found that students who are historically underrepresented in higher education who participated in dual enrollment had higher graduation rates, were less likely to take basic skills courses once they enrolled in college, were more likely to attend and persist in college once they completed high school, and were more likely to earn more college credits than their peers who did not participate in dual enrollment.

Compared to other states in the nation, Oregon has been forward thinking in terms of accelerated college credit opportunities, starting in 1997 with Oregon Revised Statute 341.450 that stated every community college district must make at least one such program available to each interested school district that is within the boundaries of the community college district. Although many Oregon districts and postsecondary institutions already collaborate on agreements to honor Advanced Placement coursework, International Baccalaureate coursework, dual credit/dual enrollment courses, and other options including Early College, the offerings are still fragmented and often vary substantially by district and even by school within districts.

Whereas some dual credit programs are more geared to serving students who are already viewed as “college-ready,” Oregon needs accelerated learning offerings that serve as pathways to college for students who may need to “try out” college level coursework and obtain guidance and supports needed to help them transition from high school to postsecondary education more successfully.

Regional Promise Sites

The Regional Promise grant made possible by HB5016 is intended for the development and/or expansion of consortia of educational service districts, school districts and post-secondary institutions building collaborative, innovative, and flexible ways to foster a college-going culture across the region and to create additional opportunities for high school students to participate and earn credit in college-level courses. Funded sites will increase the alignment of high school curriculum with post-secondary expectations, while preparing students for post-secondary experiences. By preparing students earlier in their academic careers, we increase the likelihood that a larger number of students will be prepared to enroll and succeed in post-secondary education.

All new or continuing Regional Promise Grants will demonstrate:

- (a) A commitment to closing opportunity gaps and funding services to historically underrepresented students.
- (b) A commitment to fostering a college-going culture, which refers to the environment, attitudes, and practices in schools and communities that encourage students and their families to obtain the information, tools and access to post-secondary education, as well as building a strong academic foundation to support success in accelerated college credit.
- (c) A commitment to providing all students with a variety of accelerated college credit options. The project should increase the range of students participating in accelerated college credit courses by identifying opportunity gaps and historically underrepresented populations and designing programs to prepare and encourage these students to participate and succeed. There should be strong guidance and intentional planning of accelerated college credit course taking to further students' individual educational goals.
- (d) A commitment to cross-sector collaboration between post-secondary institution(s), education service district(s) and districts where each partner is engaged as an equal.
- (e) A commitment to developing a diverse range of cross-sector professional learning communities including faculty and teachers from post-secondary and K-12 institutions to ensure alignment of instruction and to participate in establishing appropriate curriculum and parallel assessment of outcomes. This alignment work should reach beyond accelerated college credit courses to build a strong academic foundation and success for all students.

For more information see: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?=5411>

Placement Test Changes

The earlier students know if they are college ready, the earlier they can start earning college credits and transition seamlessly into college. That's why we need to work together to define fewer and more consistent eligibility criteria for placement tests that

give priority consideration for admission to institutions and that automatically place students into credit-bearing coursework in the discipline upon college entry.

Students who are not college-ready (reflected by low placement test scores) must then use valuable time and financial resources to take developmental education courses before proceeding with required college coursework in their majors.

Example: A school district that serves mostly migrant, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students in McAllen Texas is achieving outstanding results with four-year graduation rates of over 90%. Over 50% of their high school students are graduating having earned college credits and the local community college is reporting a drop of 42% points in high school students' placing into developmental education. One of their strategies is to give students multiple opportunities starting in 8th grade to take a placement test proxy that then is used to provide students with the skills and supports they need to become college ready.

Use of SBAC scores as better predictors of CCR

Currently, universities and community colleges in Oregon are piloting an approach to use the eleventh grade Smarter Balanced scores to exempt students from an additional placement test with the caveat that the student continue on with related coursework in their senior year. This will help more students become eligible earlier to take college courses while in high school since they won't have to wait until after they graduate to take a placement test.