

Fostering K-12 Student Success: Out-of-School Programs

Some projections indicate that by 2020, 60 percent of Oregon's jobs will require a college credential.ⁱ Currently, only 31 percent of Oregon's college-age young people are attending college; this number drops to 18 percent in rural communities.ⁱⁱ Oregon ranks 47th among all states in the number of high school graduates going to college, and for the first time in history, the younger generation is less educated than the generation before.ⁱⁱⁱ Minority populations have even lower levels of educational attainment, with only 29 percent of African Americans, 16 percent of Hispanics, and 20 percent of Native Americans in Oregon having at least an associate degree.^{iv} Although 68 percent of all Oregon high school students graduate, the graduation rate is only 51 percent for Native Americans, 53 percent for African Americans, and 60 percent for Hispanic students.^v

The Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB) has identified key benchmarks for Oregon's educational success, which span early childhood education through post-secondary attainment. Achieving success on several of the OEIB benchmarks, including ninth-grade attendance and post-secondary enrollment, necessitates interventions starting as early as middle school. Increasing ninth-grade attendance and course passing rates are the most important levers for increasing graduation rates. Intervening with students in middle school, and supporting programs that serve students who are at the greatest risk of dropping out, is necessary to ensure meeting these benchmarks.

Benefits of Out-of-School Programming

Quality out-of-school programs can increase engagement with school (youth engaged in afterschool programs are more likely to come to school) and boost academic performance, both of which are associated with the key educational benchmarks of ninth-grade attendance and post-secondary enrollment. To succeed in school, children also need positive relationships with caring adults. Family involvement can help to prepare middle and high school youth for college. And in cases where a parental relationship is strained or unhealthy, children often benefit from having positive relationships with other adults either to supplement — or to substitute for — a parent relationship.

Thirty-six percent of Oregon's K-12 children have working parents and no adult supervision after school.^{vi} Studies show that most juvenile crime — including alcohol and drug experimentation — is committed between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.^{vii} These risk factors are known to contribute to academic failure and school absences. Afterschool programs can tailor academic enrichment to student needs more effectively than curricula offered during the traditional school day. Quality afterschool curricula reflect a diversity of enrichment topics, ranging from sorely lacking arts activities, to science and reading programs that supplement what children learn during the school day. Out-of-school programs have proven to be most effective for traditionally underserved youth — such as ethnic minorities and lower-income youth — whose graduation rates are much lower than the national average.^{viii} Further, quality out-of-school programming is positively associated with the development of soft skills such as student confidence and a sense of leadership and ownership, and this programming can also provide positive adult role models to at-risk youth.

In addition to afterschool programming, providing quality summer programs is an important component of fostering academic success and closing the achievement gap. Low-income students lose approximately two months of reading achievement over the summer, while their higher-income peers often gain ground.^{ix} This summer learning loss is cumulative; over time, it can contribute significantly to the

achievement gap. Quality programs blend academic learning and enrichment activities, allowing for innovative approaches to learning that may not be available during the school year. Evaluations of robust summer learning programs have shown that they mitigate summer learning loss and can even lead to two to five months of achievement gains in math and reading. Moreover, positive effects can last for at least two years after a student engages in a summer program.

Quality out-of-school programming should include family engagement and mentoring components. Family involvement can prepare middle and high school youth for college. Parents who monitor academic and social activities have adolescents with lower rates of absenteeism and delinquency and higher rates of social competence and academic growth.^x In addition, youth are most likely to graduate from high school and to pursue post-secondary education when their parents are aware of college preparation requirements and engaged in the application process.

Family involvement has been shown to benefit children from diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds. For example, low-income African American children whose families have high levels of involvement in elementary school are more likely to complete high school. However, as noted above, when a parental relationship is strained or unhealthy, children often benefit from having positive relationships with other adults.

Mentoring programs provide a promising approach to promoting positive youth outcomes. The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's evaluation of high-quality mentoring programs shows that participating youth have fewer unexcused absences from school than do similar youth not participating in mentoring programs.^{xi} Mentored youth had better attitudes and behaviors at school, and better chances of attending college. Youth in mentoring programs also have less drug and alcohol use (especially among minority youth), and — in some studies — fewer delinquent behaviors.

ⁱ The Alliance for Science and Technology Research in America. (2011). Oregon's K-12 STEM ed report card 2011. Retrieved from

<http://www.nmarion.k12.or.us/cms/lib05/OR01000613/Centricity/Domain/31/STEMEdOregon2011.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ Oregon University System. (2010). Institutional Research.

ⁱⁱⁱ Office of the Chief Operating Officer. (2012, April). 10 year plan for Oregon project: Education policy vision. Retrieved from <http://www.oregon.gov/COO/Ten/docs/educationoutcome.pdf>.

^{iv} U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). 2011 American community survey 1-year estimates.

^v Oregon Department of Education. (2012). Summary of 2011-12 four-year cohort graduation rates. Retrieved from <http://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/data/schoolanddistrict/students/docs/summarycohortgrad1112.pdf>.

^{vi} OregonASK. (n.d.). Oregon's vision for supporting student success through expanded learning opportunities. Retrieved from http://www.oregonask.org/external_files/ask.S3.Official%20Final..pdf.

^{vii} Afterschool Alliance. (2012). Afterschool essentials: Research and polling. Retrieved from http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/2012/Essentials_4_20_12_FINAL.pdf

^{viii} Redd, Z., Boccanfuso, C., Walker, K., Princiotta, D., Knewstubb, D., and Moore, K. (2012, August). Expanding time for learning both inside and outside the classroom: A review of the evidence base. Retrieved from http://www.childtrends.org/files/Child_Trends-2012_08_16_RB_TimeForLearning.pdf

^{ix} McCombs, J.S., Augustine, C.H., Schwartz, H.L., Bodilly, S.J., McInnis, B., Lichter, D.S., and Cross, A.B. (2011). Making summer count: How summer programs can boost children's learning. Retrieved from: http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND_MGI120.pdf

^x Harvard Family Research Project. (2006). Family involvement makes a difference in school success. Retrieved from http://www.hfrp.org/content/download/1263/48766/file/family_involvement_success.pdf.

^{xi} Jekielek, S., Moore, K.A., and Hair, E.C., (2002, January). Mentoring programs and youth development: A synthesis. Retrieved from <http://www.childtrends.org/files/MentoringSynthesisFINAL2.6.02Jan.pdf>.