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SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES

College. It's Not a Dream, It's a Plan

Oregon GEAR UP 2012–13 Evaluation Report
Ford Schools

February 2014

About Education Northwest

Founded as a nonprofit corporation in 1966, Education Northwest builds capacity in schools, families, and communities through applied research and development.

Education Northwest conducted this external evaluation of Oregon's statewide GEAR UP program at the request of Oregon GEAR UP program administrators. The intent of the evaluation is to support implementation of GEAR UP in rural middle and high schools across the state.

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Executive Summary

The Oregon GEAR UP model has five dimensions: Rigor, Right Classes, Relevance to Career, Relationships, and Raising Awareness. The Five R framework aligns with Oregon's new high school diploma that requires schools to strengthen math, writing, and reading instruction; provide career awareness activities; and help students plan their pathway to enroll and succeed in postsecondary education.

Education Northwest collaborated with the Oregon GEAR UP team to design an external evaluation plan of the six-year GEAR UP program funded by The Ford Family Foundation. The focus of this report is the first two years (2011/12–2012/13) of Oregon GEAR UP implementation.

Oregon GEAR UP strives to increase college enrollment of rural students while building a college-going culture in participating schools. To accomplish this, implementation of GEAR UP services focused on supporting the 2017 graduating class as they progress from grade 7 to high school graduation while maintaining services for younger grades. In Year 1, funds were used to support students in grade 7; in Year 2, funds supported grades 7 and 8. To maximize the efficiency of GEAR UP services, the schools included high school educators and students in GEAR UP activities whenever possible.

Several indicators of awareness and knowledge of postsecondary options increased for the students in grades 7–8. Compared to the first year, the percentage of students who said they were more aware of college and career options because of GEAR UP increased substantially for students in grades 7–8, the grade levels targeted during this project period. To a lesser degree, the percentage of high school students who said GEAR UP helped them learn about career options also increased. The percentage of middle school students who said they were familiar with the entrance requirements of 4-year institutions remained about the same, but increased in reference to two year colleges and trade or business institutions. In high school, the percentage of students who said they were familiar with the entrance requirements increased for all three postsecondary options.

The percentage of parents who said they talked with their students about college and who were familiar with college entrance requirements also increased. Last year, over half of the parents said they were familiar with four-year colleges and about two-thirds said they knew about two-year colleges. The percentage of parents and students who said they talked to school staff members about financial aid also increased, as did the percentage of parents who said college was probably or definitely affordable for their family.

Nearly all educators agreed that their school provides challenging courses to students, but the percentage of students who agreed decreased. During the two year period, the percentage of educators who said students were encouraged to take challenging courses that would prepare

them for college increased. In contrast, the percentage of students who agreed that their school provided challenging courses and that they received encouragement to take them decreased between 2012 and 2013. Likewise, the percentage of students who said they did at least an hour of homework each day also decreased. Fewer students also thought their school helped them get a clear sense of what they would like to do in the future and provided useful hands-on experiences to help them learn.

Over three quarters of students said their parents expected them to attend college regardless of their perceived academic ability, gender, and race/ethnicity. However, there were differences in the percentage of students who said their teachers expected them to attend college. A higher percentage of female students, White students, and students who said they usually earned "A" or "B" grades said their teachers expected them to attend college. However, the percentage of students who said they received encouragement from their teachers and that their parents were actively involved in their learning was highest for American Indian students. This finding is encouraging due to the large achievement gap of this student group, but the results should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size for this population.

GEAR UP schools have made progress toward building a college-going culture for students. Educators increased their time and involvement in college and career activities. In particular, they became more actively involved in giving students information on financial aid, scholarships, and college choices. They also spent more time familiarizing students with college environments. During the two years of grant operation, the average graduation rate of GEAR UP schools increased, and dropout rates declined. The percentage of seniors who completed OSAC and FAFSA applications also increased. Because of the many education reforms and other factors that influence schools, it is difficult to know whether these improvements are associated with GEAR UP services or other factors. Nevertheless, the GEAR UP schools have made some progress in changing beliefs and behaviors of educators, parents, and students.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

College and career readiness is at the forefront of education reforms in Oregon. Significant legislation guiding these efforts is the aspirational "40-40-20" goal that 80 percent of Oregon working adults will have a postsecondary degree or certificate by 2025 (Oregon Department of Education, 2011). The expectation is that 40 percent of adults will hold at least a bachelor's degree, 40 percent will have an associate's degree or postsecondary certificate, and the remaining 20 percent will hold a high school diploma or equivalent (Oregon Department of Education, 2012).

Access to higher education remains a challenge for many students who face barriers to college entry and persistence. Low-income students and students who are potentially the first in their family to attend college have lower college enrollment rates than other students (Choy, 2002; NCES, 2008). Although academic preparation accounts for some of these differences, the disparities in college-going rates persist for these groups of students, even when controlling for academic preparation (Ellwood & Kane, 2000; Smith, et al., 1997). College access outcomes have important economic and social consequences—college graduates earn more than those with a high school degree and are more active in their communities (Baum & Ma, 2007; Kane & Rouse, 1995; NCC, 2006; U.S. Census, 2002).

What is GEAR UP

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) is a federal initiative that provides early college awareness and support activities to prepare low income students for success in postsecondary education. Many of the students served are disadvantaged first-generation students who have few family and community resources to help them navigate their pathway to college. The program mandates cooperation among K-12 schools, institutions of higher education, local and state education entities, businesses, and community-based organizations to promote the students' educational aspirations and success. GEAR UP funding provides critical early college awareness and support activities such as tutoring, mentoring, academic preparation, financial education, and college scholarships.

The Ford Family Foundation

The Ford Family Foundation is committed to providing resources to individuals that will facilitate their capacity to become *successful citizens* and, in turn, their ability to contribute to the *vitality* of their community. Through its long-standing Ford Scholars program, the Foundation encourages high school seniors to attend college who would not have attended due to limited financial resources. The Foundation also helps community college graduates go on to four-year higher education institutions. In 2011 The Ford Family Foundation partnered with Oregon GEAR UP to expand GEAR UP in 10 rural districts in Douglas, Coos, and Curry counties. Through a competitive process, the school districts applied for a six and one-half year matching grant to increase the college-going rates of their students. The Oregon GEAR UP at the Chancellor's Office of the Oregon University System Oregon GEAR UP is the fiscal agent and administrator of the program.

Oregon GEAR UP

Oregon GEAR UP believes that postsecondary education is possible for each and every student regardless of economic background and strives to empower each to realize that ambition. The statewide program has worked for more than a decade to bring this message to middle and high schools, students, their parents, and the community through early college and career awareness activities, scholarships, financial aid information, and improved academic support to help raise the expectations and achievements of students in grades 7–12.

Oregon GEAR UP, in essence, serves as the backbone organization that helps build a college-going culture in participating rural schools and communities. Effective college and career readiness programs are dependent on community partnerships to facilitate smooth transitions from high school to postsecondary settings (Boroch & Hope, 2009; Kirst, Antonio, & Bueschel, 2004). For this reason, GEAR UP provides services to community-based clusters that include a high school, one or more middle schools, a higher education institution and, if possible, one or more business partners. The services include technical assistance and coordination activities that aim to promote a college-going culture among the clusters as a whole and within each cluster individually. Many of these activities are essential features of effective backbone organizations and collective impact initiatives (Turner, Merchant, Kania, et al., 2012).

Guide Vision and Strategy

The mission of GEAR UP is to significantly increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. The aim is to help communities create new, or expand existing, school programs and provide educational opportunities for students. The program addresses academic rigor, linking educational and career choices to course-taking behaviors, opportunities for students to explore

career interests, family and community engagement, and information about applying to and paying for college. The model also supports intentional efforts to promote high expectations of each student—a protective factor that promotes student achievement and contributes to a college-going culture.

Five "R's"

Oregon GEAR UP organizes its college and career readiness strategies into a framework of practices, referred to as the "Five R's," that guides annual planning for the program and each cluster (Figure 1). Program administrators provide clusters with a brief description and suggested strategies for each "R." Each cluster is responsible for developing an annual plan that includes needs assessment data, strategies, and progress indicators for each "R."

- Rigor: Provide appropriately rigorous courses for all students as well as necessary academic support programs.
- Right classes: Ensure that all students understand early in their school careers what curriculum is necessary to prepare them for college-level work and future careers.
- Relevance: Link students' career aspirations with their educational goals.
- Relationships: Foster relationships that encourage students' academic success.
- Raising awareness. Promote awareness of college selection, admissions, financial aid, and other critical steps for college entry.

Figure 1
Oregon GEAR UP's Model for Change
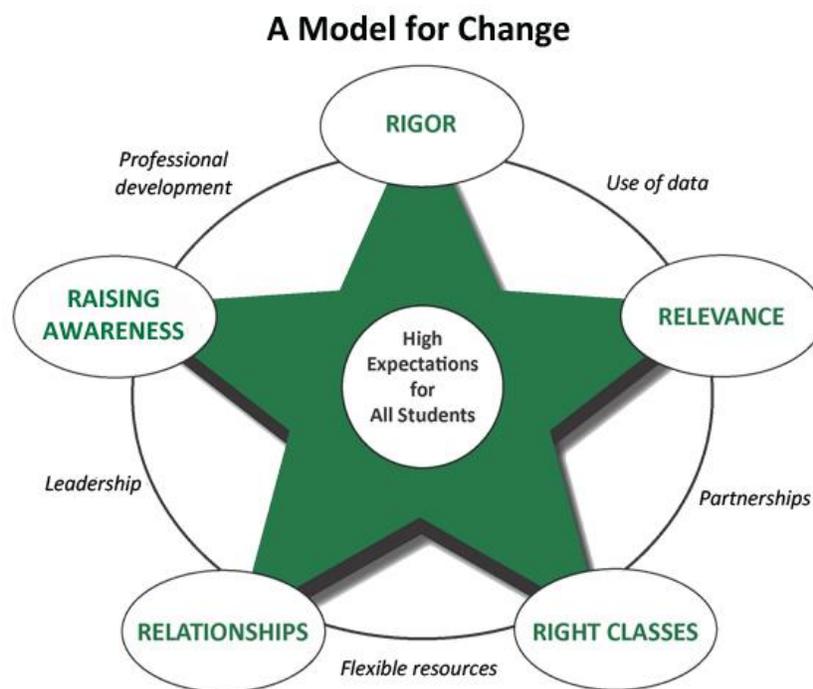
Support Aligned Activities

The structure of Oregon GEAR UP activities aims to help community clusters achieve its mission through planning and implementation of the "Five R's." These activities include an annual SUCCESS retreat, well-executed communication plan, coordinating attendance at state and national events, and targeted technical assistance.

SUCCESS Retreat

Oregon Gear UP hosts an annual two-day retreat, Supporting Unique Community Coalitions Engaged in Student Success (SUCCESS), which is attended by school teams that include administrators, GEAR UP coordinators, teachers, academic counselors, family, and/or community members. The event has two purposes. It provides presentations about research and innovations to re-energize participants around GEAR UP's goal and to deepen participants' understanding about strategies that build a college-going culture. The event also provides time and technical assistance for cluster teams to develop their annual GEAR UP plan.

Communication Plan

The communication plan provides on-going information about state and national GEAR UP activities to program clusters. The program uses a multimedia strategy that disseminates e-newsletters and annual reports to stakeholders statewide. Oregon GEAR UP developed and maintains a website that provides resources, success stories, and informational video clips. Table 1 provides examples of research briefs and toolkits that program participants and the general public can access on the GEAR UP website (www.gearup.ous).

For program participants, GEAR UP provides a weekly news bulletin focused on grant management that shares information about events, research, resources, and program expectations.

State and National Events

Oregon GEAR UP organizes two statewide meetings for program participants—the SUCCESS Retreat, attended by school teams, and a mid-year meeting attended by principals, GEAR UP coordinators and key supporters of the program. Both events provide participants with program information and opportunities to network with peers about successes, challenges, and promising practices.

GEAR UP also supports attendance and travel arrangements of educators, parents, and students at national and regional conferences. For several years, a student from Oregon has been selected to participate in the Youth Leadership Summit at the National GEAR UP Conference.

Table 1
Oregon GEAR UP Website Resources

Research Briefs	Toolkits
• A Collaborative School • Alternatives to Suspension • Best Practices in Grading • Coaching Teachers • Common Core State Standards • Dealing with Budget Cuts • Dropout Prevention • Flipped Classrooms • Formative Assessment • High Level Thinking and Questioning Strategies • High School Mentoring Programs • Motivating Math Students • Meaningful Teacher Evaluation • Importance of High Expectations • Parent Engagement • Pathways to College • Rigorous Schools and Classrooms • Poverty and Rural Schools • Small Schools, Big Results • Economy's Impact on Schools	• Advocacy—Building Partnerships by Telling Your GEAR UP Story • Career and College Day Toolkit • College Preparation: Timeline an Resources for School Leaders • Community Engagement Toolkit • Creating a SUCCESS Team • Developing a College and Career Center • GEAR UP Informational Handout • GEAR UP Week Toolkit • GEAR UP! A College Guide for Students and Parents • Gearing Up: Helping Your Middle School Student Prepare for College and Career • Highlighting a College-Going Culture • Job Shadow Guide for Students • Parent Newsletters • Planning a Successful College Visit • Preparing and Paying for College: Presentations for Parents and Students • The High School Transition: Strategies to Help Students, Staff, and Parents • Undocumented Students in Oregon

Note: The list of resources includes a sample of available resources developed and available through Oregon GEAR UP.

Source: Oregon GEAR UP website (www.gearup.ous)

Targeted Technical Assistance

The Oregon GEAR UP team members provide on-going telephone and email support to program participants regarding grant expectations, budget, data collection, and program implementation. GEAR UP also supports on-site, targeted technical assistance to principals and program coordinators to support implementation, sustainability, and outreach to community and family members. Each cluster receives on-site technical assistance to encourage active engagement in GEAR UP work, provide encouragement, and address concerns early. Program participants may also request technical assistance as needs arise. The site visit conversations also help Oregon GEAR UP identify common resource needs across the clusters that guide the creation of research briefs and toolkits (see Table 1).

Oregon GEAR UP also provides targeted technical assistance to promote principal and community engagement. Principals have enormous influence on the success of new initiatives in their school. As such, GEAR UP contracts with a skilled leadership

consultant to support and provide information to principals about topics relevant to building a college-going culture. The consultant provides site visits at each school and facilitates two face-to-face principals' meetings each year. The technical assistance provides opportunities for principals to network, keeps them informed about strategies other schools are using, and supports their continued engagement in GEAR UP.

Schools also received technical assistance on strategies to increase community engagement in GEAR UP. The specialist provided consultation on how to plan and conduct events and/or communication campaigns to tell parents and community members about the program and invite their active support. Business and community members supported GEAR UP schools in many ways such as participating in career fairs, conducting guest presentations, mentoring students, and providing job shadow opportunities.

Establish Shared Measurement Practices

Oregon GEAR UP provides each cluster ongoing and annual data reports to track progress and inform planning. Each cluster receives an annual report that summarizes college and career readiness indicator data for the cluster, as well as averages of GEAR UP schools, and the state. The reports include academic achievement, high school graduation, college enrollment, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application, and Oregon Student Access Commission (OSAC) scholarship application data. Each cluster also receives the individual reports of the Oregon GEAR UP student, parent, and educator survey data that provides information about attitudes and behaviors related to college and career readiness. Finally, participants have ongoing access to the Oregon GEAR UP Events and Cost Share Database that stores information about the services and events that each cluster has provided to students, parents, and educators. The database also stores federal annual performance report data, including enrollment in college preparation, Advanced Placement (AP), and other accelerated learning options.

Build Public Will

Oregon GEAR UP is an active participant in state and local efforts to increase college and career readiness for each and every student. The program director has strong relationships with key public agencies that lead the state's education reform efforts, e.g., the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), Department of Community College and Workforce Development (CCWD), Oregon Student Access Commission, and Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB). Team members also have strong partnerships with community organizations, including Access to Student Assistance Programs in Reach of Everyone (ASPIRE), Oregon Career Information System (CIS), and The Ford Family Foundation. Two GEAR UP staff members sit on the board of the Oregon College Access Network (OrCAN), a nonprofit organization committed to helping Oregonians "overcome barriers to education and training beyond high school"

(Oregon College Access Network, 2014). See http://gearup.ous.edu/about/partners for a list of Oregon GEAR UP's partners.

Program team members actively support state and regional events that support college access programs. For example, the program director is on the planning committee for GEAR UP West, a collaborative conference designed to support practitioners' efforts to help low-income and underrepresented students prepare for, and succeed in, college. Attendees include GEAR UP and other college-access program staff members; evaluators; higher education professionals; and middle and high school teachers, counselors, and administrators.

Mobilize Funding

The Oregon University System (OUS) has been the leader in obtaining and administering two federally funded GEAR UP projects. The first six-year grant funded the development of college and career programs in 16 clusters, including 39 schools, from 2002–2008. The second six-year grant provides services to 12 clusters, including 20 schools, from 2008–2014. In 2011, a third group of 10 clusters joined Oregon GEAR UP, including 16 schools concentrated in Curry, Coos, and Douglas counties. These 10 clusters receive funding support from The Ford Family Foundation and are the focus of this evaluation report.

Summary

Oregon GEAR UP aims to increase college and career readiness opportunities for low income students who reside and attend school in rural communities. The remaining chapters of this report describe the evaluation methods deployed and the findings for the 2012–2013 school year. Chapter 2 describes the evaluation questions and design. Chapter 3 summarizes the progress data for the Oregon GEAR UP program. Chapters 4 and 5, organized by the five "R's," include a description of each "R," a summary of the interventions implemented by the 10 clusters, and relevant findings from the student, parent, and educator surveys. The final chapter reports data disaggregated by student group, including perceived academic ability, gender, and race/ethnicity. The intent of this report is to provide information that will support the important work of Oregon GEAR UP schools and community partners.

Chapter 2
Program Management and Evaluation

In partnership with The Ford Family Foundation, Oregon GEAR UP provides support to 16 schools in 10 rural communities or clusters. The aim of the partnership is to help schools build college-going cultures that will increase the awareness, preparation, and college enrollment of rural students. Oregon GEAR UP provides each school with funding based on the number of students served. Schools are required to contribute a dollar for every dollar received. These monies are used only to implement new strategies that promote the goal of GEAR UP and may not supplant funding for existing activities.

The allocation of funding for student activities used a modified cohort model that focuses on supporting the 2017 graduating class as they progressed from grade 7 to grade 12. Because the overarching goal of Oregon GEAR UP is to build a college-going culture in the school, funding is not limited to the 2017 graduating class. In Year 1, funds were used to support students in grade 7; in Year 2, funds supported grades 7 and 8, and so forth (Table 2). To maximize the use of program services, the program also encouraged schools to include other students and educators in GEAR UP activities whenever possible. For example, programs invited older students to participate in College Application Week, presentations by guest speakers, or college visits. Clusters also invited educators from all grades to attend funded professional development such as learning about poverty, curriculum alignment, or common core state standards.

Table 2
Oregon GEAR UP Service Implementation Model

Grade Level	Project Year					
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Grade 7	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Grade 8		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Grade 9			▓	▓	▓	▓
Grade 10				▓	▓	▓
Grade 11					▓	▓
Grade 12						▓

Note: Shaded areas indicate grade levels that Oregon GEAR UP directly funded during each project year.

Evaluation

Oregon GEAR UP has implemented both internal and external evaluation processes to provide information for program management and to make program improvement

decisions. The program team prepares annual progress reports that summarize student achievement, college preparation, and college enrollment data.

Education Northwest is the external evaluator that gathers information from students, parents or caretaking adults, and educators. The Education Northwest evaluation team worked with Oregon GEAR UP staff members to develop a formative evaluation plan that would provide information about program implementation and progress toward establishing a college-going culture in the school. This year's evaluation report summarizes findings for the following questions:

1. How has the Oregon GEAR UP 5 "R's" model been implemented in rural schools?
2. How have the attitudes, expectations, and engagement in college readiness activities of Oregon GEAR UP students, educators, and parents changed over time?
3. How has student enrollment in academic rigorous classes, FAFSA completion, high school graduation, and college enrollment in Oregon GEAR UP schools changed over time?

Participants

The participants in the evaluation include students, their parents or caretaking adults, and educators in 16 middle and high schools organized into 10 clusters (Table 3). School staff members administered the surveys schoolwide to students in grades 7–12. All educators in participating schools were asked to complete the survey. Schools distributed the survey to parents by mail or at school events.

Data Sources

The evaluation gathered information about Oregon GEAR UP from key stakeholders using multiple measures. During this year, the stakeholders included students from all grades, parents or caretaking adults, and educators. Table 4 summarizes the measures, data sources, and informants for the evaluation.

Program Documents and Reports

Oregon GEAR UP provided the evaluation team with copies of the annual GEAR UP plans and the progress reports for each cluster. The plans, organized by the five "R's," outline the strategies that the schools will implement during the year and data they will use to measure progress. The progress reports include aggregated state test scores, dropout/graduation rates, college enrollment rates, Free Application for Free Student Aid (FAFSA) completion, and Oregon Student Assistance Commission (OSAC) application data. The data sources for the reports are Oregon Department of Education

(ODE), National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), OSAC, and the U.S. Department of Education for FAFSA reports.

Table 3
GEAR UP Participating Schools

Cluster	Schools	Town
Camas Valley	Camas Valley School	Camas Valley
Coquille	Coquille Valley Middle School Coquille High School	Coquille
Elkton	Elkton Charter School	Elkton
Myrtle Point	Myrtle Point Junior/Senior High School	Myrtle Point
North Douglas	North Douglas Elementary/Middle School North Douglas High School	Drain
Port Orford and Langlois	Driftwood Middle School Pacific High School	Port Orford
Powers	Powers Junior/Senior High School	Powers
Reedsport	Reedsport Community Charter School	Reedsport
Roseburg	John C. Fremont Middle School Joseph Lane Middle School Roseburg High School	Roseburg
Yoncalla	Yoncalla Elementary K-8 School Yoncalla High School	Yoncalla

Table 4
Oregon GEAR UP Evaluation

Evaluation Question	Data Variables	Measures/Data Resources
1. How has the Oregon GEAR UP been implemented in rural schools?	• Schoolwide interventions • Individual student interventions • Family interventions • Community and higher education partnerships	• Administrator interviews • Cost share database • Site visit protocol • School GEAR UP Plan
2. How have the attitudes, expectations, and engagement in college readiness activities of Oregon GEAR UP students, educators, and parents changed over time?	• Self-reported attitudes and participation in college readiness activities (parents, students, educators) • Educator involvement in college readiness activities • Student enrollment/grades in core classes	• Cost share data base • Educator, student, and parent surveys
3. How has student enrollment in academic rigorous classes, number of AP/IB/dual credits, FAFSA completion, and high school graduation changed over time?	• Dual Credits (College NOW credits) • FAFSA and OSAC completion • High school graduation rate	• Cost share database • ODE/CCWD data • OUS FAFSA completion
4. How do district and school administrators view the benefits and challenges of implementing a college and career readiness culture in their school? How do district and school administrators view the services provided by Oregon GEAR UP?	• Description of services • Perceived benefits of services • Challenges related to program implementation or operation • Lessons learned	• Administrator interviews • Cost share database • Site visit protocol • Administrator surveys
5. What percentage of students at GEAR UP high schools enrolled in a dual credit course?	• Dual credit – number of dual credits per school	• CCWD Data • GEAR UP APR data
6. What percentage of students at GEAR UP high schools, who attended community college, enrolled in a developmental education course?	• Student enrollment and completion of developmental education course by subject and course level • Student enrollment in credit-bearing, college-level coursework	• ODE • National Student Clearinghouse • CCWD

Note: ODE=Oregon Department of Education; CCWD=Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development; FAFSA=Free Application For Federal Student Aid; NSC=National Student Clearinghouse. This report comprises findings for questions 1–3. Shaded cells indicate questions that the Education Northwest evaluation will address during the 2013–2014 school year.

Participant Surveys

The purpose of the Oregon GEAR UP surveys is to provide information that cluster teams can use to plan and monitor progress toward building a college-going culture. Education Northwest and Oregon GEAR UP designed the surveys to learn how students, parents, and educators view the college and career readiness programs at participating schools. The findings provide information about academic expectations, early awareness of college opportunities, and the extent to which students engage in college and career planning. English and Spanish language versions of the student and parent surveys were available on-line and in paper form. The educator survey was available on-line and in English only. All surveys gathered information about the respondent's background information and specific performance measures.

The grant activities began in September of 2011, and the baseline survey data was collected between September–December 15, 2011. During Year 2, schools administered surveys in late March to allow time for compilation and dissemination to schools at the annual GEAR UP SUCCESS retreat. Each year, the evaluators provided written instructions and ongoing guidance to administer surveys schoolwide. Table 5 provides a brief summary of the number of schools and participants for each survey administration. Appendix A contains detailed information about the student, parent, and educator survey participants.

Table 5
Number of Schools and Survey Participants, 2012–2013

	Schools		Respondents	
	2012	2013	2012	2013
Student	16	16	3,055	3,253
Parent	12	16	284	476
Educator	16	16	168	196

Technical Assistance Visits

Education Northwest and Oregon GEAR UP conducted technical assistance site visits to review each district's plan and progress data. We also gathered more in-depth information about implementation of activities, GEAR UP successes, and challenges schools were experiencing.

Analyses

This evaluation report provides frequencies and percentages of the archival data collected from 2011/12–2012/13. We also calculated the percentage change between 2012 and 2013 data.

Limitations

Several factors limit the generalizability of the evaluation findings to schools outside of the sample. This is particularly true for the parent surveys that were completed by a non-representative, voluntary sample of parents. While a useful too for collecting data on attitudes, beliefs, and actions, the responses reflect the respondent's perceptions and are not validated by other means.

Chapter 3
Creating a College-Going Culture

Establishing a school culture that ensures each and every student has access to college and career readiness opportunities is a challenge for schools across Oregon. Accomplishing this goal requires educators to increase their time and involvement in GEAR UP activities. It requires the provision of professional development opportunities to help educators learn how they can create classroom environments that promote students' interest and knowledge about postsecondary education. Building and sustaining a college-going culture also requires a shared commitment and belief in the mission of GEAR UP and the state's 40-40-20 goal among educators, parents, and students (McDonough, 2004). This chapter describes the involvement of educators in GEAR UP activities. It also shares findings about the college expectations of educators, parents, and students. The final section reports the rate of dropout, graduation, OSAC applications, and college enrollment for participating schools.

Educators Increased Their Participation In GEAR UP

The percentage of educators who said they spent one or more hours on GEAR UP activities each month increased between 2012 and 2013, especially in middle school (see Table 6). Between 2012 and 2013, the percentage of middle school educators who said they spent at least one hour on college and career readiness activities each month increased from 40 percent to 75 percent—a 88 percent change.

In high school, there was a 37 percent change in the percentage of educators who spent one or more hours on GEAR UP activities each month. In 2012, 41 percent of the high school educators said they spent time on GEAR UP and 56 percent said the same in 2013.

Table 6
Percentage of Educators Who Spent Time One or More Hours on GEAR UP Activities Each Month

| | Survey Year | | Percent change between 2012 and 2013[a] |
	2012 (n=168)	2013 (n=196)	
Grades 7-8	40%	75%	88%
Grades 9-12	41%	56%	37%

a.   Percent change was calculated by ((y2–y1)/y1) x 100.

Source: GEAR UP Educator Surveys, 2012 and 2013

For most college and career readiness activities, the percentage of educators who said they participated sometimes or often increased between 2012 and 2013 (Table 7). This was particularly true for middle school educators. The activities that showed the highest percent

change were providing information on admissions requirements for various higher education institutions and on available financial aid and scholarships for postsecondary education opportunities. The only activity with decreased participation in both middle and high schools was counseling students to take more rigorous courses. In 2013, 56 percent of the middle school educators and 75 percent of the high school educators said they participated in this activity.

Table 7
Educators' Involvement In College and Career Readiness Activities, 2012 and 2013

	Middle School Grades 7–8			High School Grades 9–12		
	2012 (n=60)	2013 (n=71)	Percent Change[a, b]	2012 (n=108)	2013 (n=125)	Percent Change
Providing direction and extra instruction for at-risk students	82%	85%	*4%*	87%	83%	*−5%*
Counseling students to take more rigorous courses	62%	56%	*−10%*	81%	75%	*−7%*
Providing information about postsecondary work, training, and educational opportunities	42%	65%	*55%*	60%	73%	*22%*
Informing students of admissions requirements for various institutions of higher education	38%	61%	*61%*	62%	70%	*13%*
Familiarizing students with college environments	33%	50%	*52%*	54%	61%	*13%*
Providing information and counseling about college choices	28%	44%	*57%*	57%	59%	*4%*
Providing information on financial aid and scholarships available for postsecondary education	30%	48%	*60%*	53%	62%	*17%*

a. Percentage of educators who said they participate in the activity "often" or "sometimes" at their school.
b. Percent change was calculated by ((y2–y1)/y1*100.

Source: GEAR UP Educator Survey, 2012 and 2013

College Expectations: Students, Parents, and Educators

Students and parents have higher postsecondary goals for students than teachers and school staff members. Nearly 90 percent of the students said they expected to attend some college across the two project years (Figure 2). Between 2012 and 2013, the percentage of students who

expected to get a two- or four-year college degree increased from 81 percent to 87 percent in grades 7–8 and from 79 percent to 85 percent in grades 9–12.

Figure 2
Percentage of Students Who Expected to Attend Some College or Get a College Degree, and the Percentage of Students Who Expected to Get a College Degree, 2012–2013
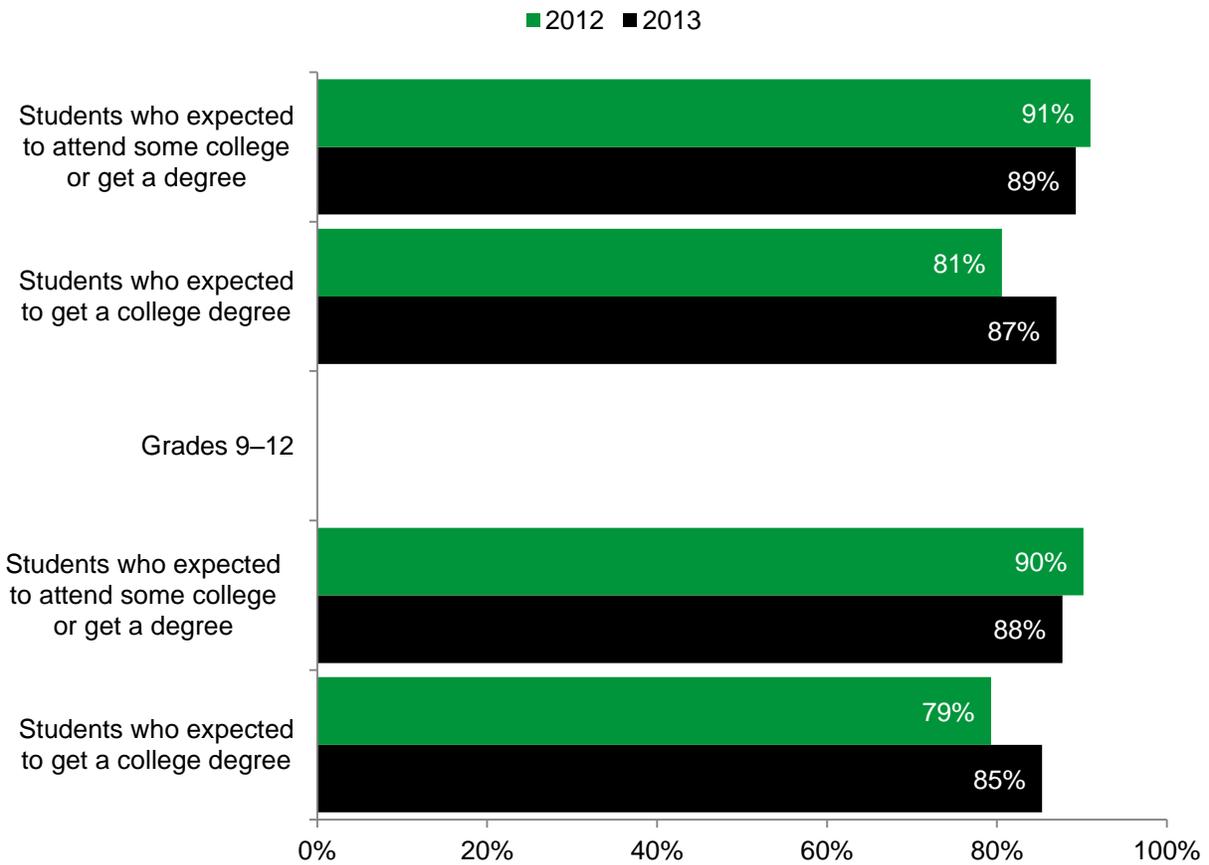
About 90 percent of parents who completed a survey expected students to attend at least some college (Figure 3). Similar to students, the percentage of parents who expected students to get a two- or four-year college degree increased across the project years. In 2012, 72 percent of the parents said they expected students to get a college degree, and 87 percent had these expectations in 2013.

Figure 3
Percentage of Parents Who Expected Students to Attend Some College or Get a College Degree, and the Percentage of Parents Who Expected Students to Get a College Degree, 2012–2013

■ 2012 ■ 2013

Expected students to attend some college or get a college degree
- 2012: 87%
- 2013: 90%

Expected students to get a college degree
- 2012: 72%
- 2013: 87%
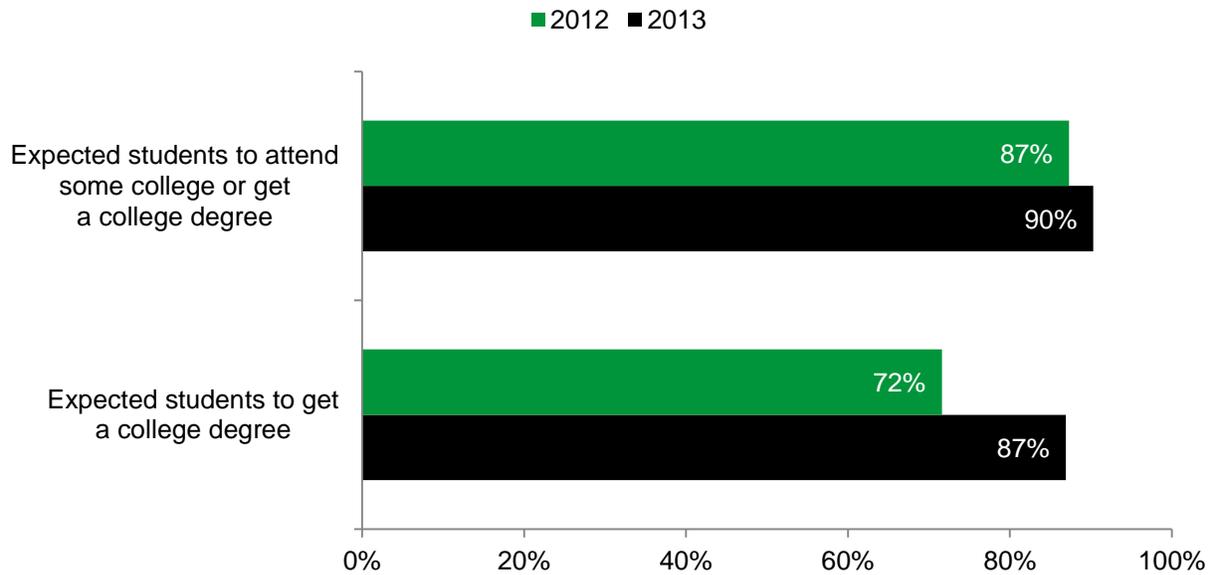
In 2011/12, at the start of GEAR UP services, 77 percent of the educators said they expected students to enroll in college (Figure 4). In 2013, 84 percent said they expected their students to enroll in college. Between the two project years, the percentage of educators who said they expected their students to get a college degree decreased from 58 percent to 46 percent.

Figure 4
Percentage of Educators Who Expected Students to Attend College or Get a College Degree, and the Percentage of Educators Who Expected Students to Get a College Degree, 2012–2013

■ 2012 ■ 2013

Expected students to attend some college or get a college degree
- 2012: 77%
- 2013: 84%

Expected students to get a college degree
- 2012: 58%
- 2013: 46%
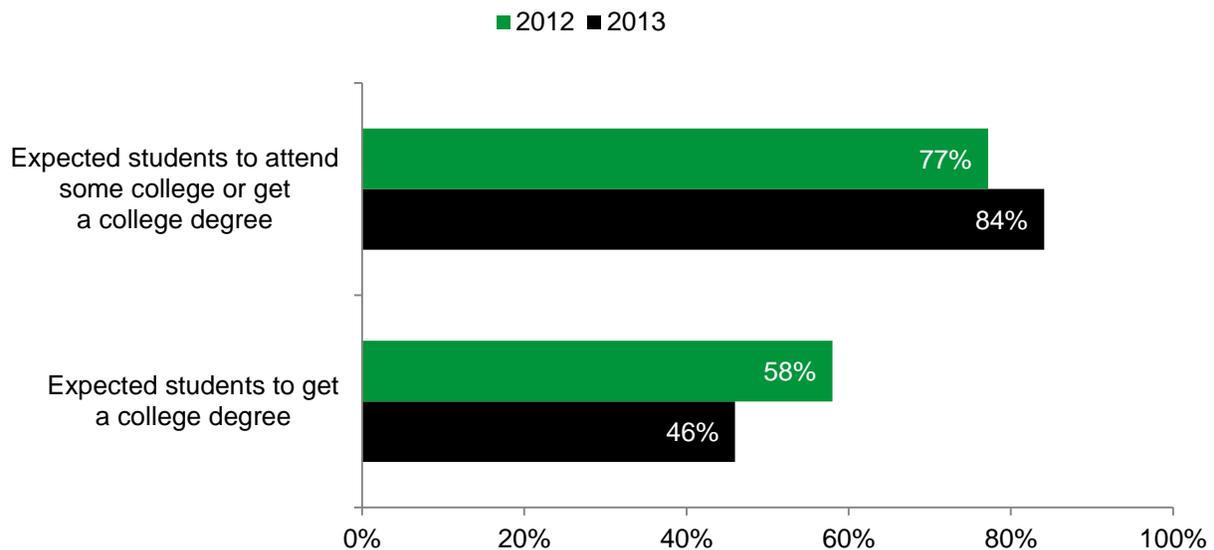
On the educator survey, less than three quarters of the educators said at least half of their students were capable of completing a college preparatory curriculum (Table 8). The percentage of educators who said at least 80 percent of their students could reach this goal decreased from 33 percent to 27 percent.

Across both years, about half of the educators said at least half of their students would go to college. However, the number of educators who said at least 80 percent of their students would attend college was too small to report.

Table 8
Percentage of Educators Who Believed At Least 80 Percent of Their Students Could Complete a College Preparatory Curriculum or Go to College, 2012 and 2013

According to educators, the percent of students who are	Percentage of educators who agreed or strongly agreed		Percent change from 2012 and 2013[a]
	2012 (n=157)	2013 (n=180)	
Capable of completing a college preparation curriculum			
At least 50 percent	72%	73%	1%
At least 80 percent	33%	27%	−18%
Will go to college			
At least 50 percent	50%	51%	0%
At least 80 percent	*	*	*

a. Percent change calculation was calculated by ((y2–y1)/y1*100.
* Data are not reported because the cell size is less than 10.

Source: GEAR UP Educator Survey, 2012 and 2013

Student Outcomes

Table 9 summarizes the average graduation rate and dropout rates of GEAR UP and the state in 2011–2013. The table also reports, for the same time span, the percentage of GEAR UP seniors who completed applications for OSAC and FAFSA, and who enrolled in college.

In 2011 and 2012, the four-year graduation rates for GEAR UP schools was higher than the state average and the dropout rate was lower. (Table 9).

The percent of seniors who completed the Oregon Student Access Commission's (OSAC) application increased from 26.3 percent to 31.4 percent following implementation of the GEAR UP program (Table 9). Following implementation of services, the percentage of GEAR UP seniors who completed OSAC application increased from 26.3 percent to 31.4 percent. The rates of Free Application for Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA) applications were first available in 2011. The percentage of GEAR UP seniors who completed applications was 46.1 percent in 2011 and 49 percent in 2012.

Because the expected 4-year graduation date of the first cohort of GEAR UP students who received GEAR UP services from grade 7–12 is 2017, the college enrollment rates in this table should be considered baseline data. The first year that the association between GEAR UP and college enrollment can be analyzed is 2018. Between 2011 and 2013, the fall college enrollment baseline data for GEAR UP schools was 73.8 percent and 72.4 percent, higher than the state average.

Table 9
Graduation, Dropout, OSAC Applications and College Enrollment Data, 2011–2013

Student Outcome	Graduation Year		
	2011	2012	2013
Four–year graduation rate[b]			
Ford GEAR UP schools	73.8%	72.4%	NA
All Oregon schools	67.7%	68.4%	NA
High school dropout rate			
Ford GEAR UP schools	2.2%	1.8%	NA
All Oregon schools	3.3%	3.4%	NA
OSAC application completion: Ford GEAR UP	26.3%	31.4%	NA
FAFSA completion: Ford GEAR UP schools	NA	46.1%	49%
SAT—Baseline data [c]			
Ford GEAR UP schools	39%	42%	39%
All Oregon schools	56%	57%	34%
College enrollment rate—Baseline data[c, d]			
Fall term	56.7%	–	–
Within 12 months	61.2%	–	–
More than a year	69.3%	–	–
College enrollment rate[e,f]			
Fall term	–	55.3%	51.0%
Within 16 months	–	63.2%	54.2% *
More than 16 months	–	63.4%	54.2% *

* Preliminary numbers; complete 16 month numbers available after October 2014.

a. GEAR UP services started in 2011.
b. In 2012, the Oregon Department of Education modified its list of high school graduations to include four–year graduates.
c. Because the expected graduation date of the students who received GEAR UP services is 2017, the SAT test taking in this table summarizes baseline data. The first year that the relationship between GEAR UP services and these indicators can be analyzed is 2018.
d. Because the expected graduation date of the students who received GEAR UP services is 2017, the college enrollment rates in this table summarize baseline data. The first year that the association between GEAR UP and college enrollment can be analyzed is 2018.
e. The National Student Clearinghouse may not include all high school graduates who attended college because it includes approximately 93 percent of students enrolled in colleges and universities nationwide. Colleges in Oregon with enrollments over 1,000 that do not report enrollment data to NSC are: Apollo College, The Art Institute of Portland, Pioneer Pacific College, Western Business College, and Western Culinary Institute.
f. In 2012, the reporting timeline for college enrollment changed from "within a year" to "within 16 months."

Source: Oregon Department of Education graduation and dropout data, 2011–2013. National Student Clearinghouse and Oregon Student Access Commission (OSAC) application, 2011–2013.

Conclusion

Since the beginning of GEAR UP services, educators have increased the amount of time and their involvement in college and career activities. By 2013, three-quarters of the middle school and over half of the high school educators said they spent one or more hours on GEAR UP activities each month. In particular, educators spent more time providing information on postsecondary career and education options. The percentage of educators who informed students about financial aid, scholarships, and college entrance requirements also increased.

Students and parents have higher postsecondary goals for students than teachers and school staff members. Across the two years, the percentage of students who said they expected to enroll in college decreased slightly in both middle and high school. However, the percentage of students who expected to get a degree increased. In 2013, nearly 90 percent of the students said they planned to attend college and over 80 percent said they expected to get a degree. Most parents also had high expectations of their students. The percentage of parents who expected their students to complete a college degree increased substantially during the two years of GEAR UP implementation.

Educators who set high expectations and believe their students can succeed is associated with higher student achievement. Achieving the 40–40–20 goal will require educators to believe that the goal is attainable. During the past two years, the percentage of educators who expected their students to go to college increased, but the percentage who expected students to obtain a degree decreased. Few educators believed the 40–40–20 goal was possible for their students. In 2013, less than a third believed that 80 percent of their students could complete a college preparatory curriculum and few believed 80 percent of their students would go on to college.

During the two years of grant operation, the graduation rates of GEAR UP schools have increased and dropout rates have declined. The OSAC and FAFSA rates have also increased. Because of the many education reforms and other factors that influence schools, it is difficult to know whether these improvements are associated with GEAR UP services or other factors. Nevertheless, the GEAR UP clusters have made some progress in changing beliefs and behaviors of educators, parents, and students.

Chapter 4
Rigor, Relevance,and Right Classes

The mission of GEAR UP is to significantly increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. The program addresses academic rigor, linking educational and career choices to course-taking behaviors, opportunities for students to explore career interests, family and community engagement, and information about applying to and paying for college.

The Oregon GEAR UP model has five dimensions: Rigor, Right Classes, Relevance to Career, Relationships, and Raising Awareness. The model is based on the findings of the white paper, *Reclaiming the American Dream* (Bedsworth & Colby, 2006) and aligns with the recommendations outlined in the Institution of Education Sciences (IES) Practice Guide "Helping Students Navigate the Path to College: What High Schools Can Do" (Tierney, Bailey, Finkelstein, et al., 2009). The model also aligns with Oregon's adoption of more rigorous high school diploma requirements and its interest in expanding the accessibility of accelerated college credit programs—including dual-credit, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate programs—that award college-level credits to high school students. The full Oregon GEAR UP Planning and Evaluation Rubric is in Appendix B.

Oregon Diploma Requirements

In 2007, the State Board of Education voted to adopt new high school graduation requirements. The changes in the diploma were phased in over several years with full implementation required in 2014. A detailed description of Oregon's diploma requirements are summarized in Table C–2 in Appendix C. Students will need to meet the following requirements to earn a diploma in 2014:

- **Credit requirements.** Students must earn a minimum of 24 credits including four credits in English/Language Arts and three math credits in Algebra I or higher.

- **Essential skills requirements**. Students must demonstrate proficiency in writing, reading, and applied math.

- **Personalized learning requirements**. Students must meet a set of personalized learning requirements intended to help students plan for their post-high school education and career goals.

The five "R" framework that guides implementation of GEAR UP services aligns with Oregon's new diploma requirements. Strategies related to "Rigor" help schools strengthen math, writing, and reading instruction. Strategies related to "Relevance" provide career awareness activities and those related to "Right Classes" help students plan their pathway to enroll and succeed in postsecondary education. Table 10 and the remaining sections of this chapter describe the

strategies that clusters implemented and progress indicators for "Rigor," "Relevance," and "Right Classes."

Table 10
Rigor, Relevance, and Right Classes: Action Steps and Implementation Strategies

Oregon "R"	Five "R's": Action Steps and Implementation Strategies
RIGOR	1. Implement a curriculum that prepares all students for college and includes opportunities for college-level work for advanced students 2. Identify existing assessments, standards, and data available to provide an estimate of college readiness 3. Utilize performance data to identify and inform students about their academic proficiency and college readiness 4. Create an individualized plan for students who are not on track
RELEVANCE	1. Provide hands-on opportunities for students to explore different careers, and assist them in aligning postsecondary plans with their career aspirations 2. Provide students with opportunities to explore their career interests and engage business and community partners in the process
RIGHT CLASSES	1. Develop a four-year course trajectory with each ninth-grader that leads to fulfilling a college-ready curriculum 2. Ensure that students understand what constitutes a college-ready curriculum

Note: Oregon 5 R's framework is based on the findings of the white paper, *Reclaiming the American Dream* (Bedsworth & Colby, 2006) and aligns with the recommendations outlined in the Institution of Education Sciences Practice Guide, *Helping Students Navigate the Path to College: What High Schools Can Do* (Tierney, Bailey, Finklestein, 2009).

Rigor

Oregon GEAR UP schools have implemented a range of strategies to ensure all students have access to rigorous curriculum that will prepare them for life beyond high school. They have invested in professional development, technology (both hardware and software), and curriculum development. Clusters have also strengthened partnerships with their communities and higher education institutions to increase dual credit offerings. Some clusters developed schoolwide interventions, others targeted certain grade levels, and some increased services for struggling students. The following paragraphs describe strategies that aim to increase rigor.

- **Extended learning time/out-of-school time.** Some clusters implemented strategies to add extended learning time, before school, after school, or during the summer, in core subjects. The instruction was provided through tutoring by teachers or students.

- **Additional instruction time.** Many clusters added instruction time in core subject areas and study skills. The content areas that clusters addressed were math, reading, writing, and study skills. The strategies used to increase instruction time included student workshops and individualized tutoring.

- **Professional development.** Many clusters used grant funding to increase quality teaching in writing and other core subjects. The professional development strategies

included organizing in-service training for their teachers and creating professional learning communities.

- **Online and Accelerated Learning options.** Several clusters expanded their course offerings through online courses and dual credit options for students. Dual credit courses allow students to earn both high school credit and required or elective college credits. Although most courese were taught on the K–12 school campus, some clusters arranged for students to attend courses at the community college.

Progress Indicators—Rigor

Educators' Perceptions

More educators reported providing challenging courses and encouraging students to enroll in challenging courses in 2013 (Figure 5). Between 2012 and 2013, the percentage of educators who said their school provides challenging classes increased from 91 percent to 93 percent. The percentage of educators who said their school encouraged students to take challenging classes increased from 79 percent to 88 percent.

Figure 5
Percentage of Educators Who Said Their Schools Provided Challenging Courses and Encouraged Students To Take Them or Believed That Middle and High School Curriculum Was Aligned, 2012 and 2013
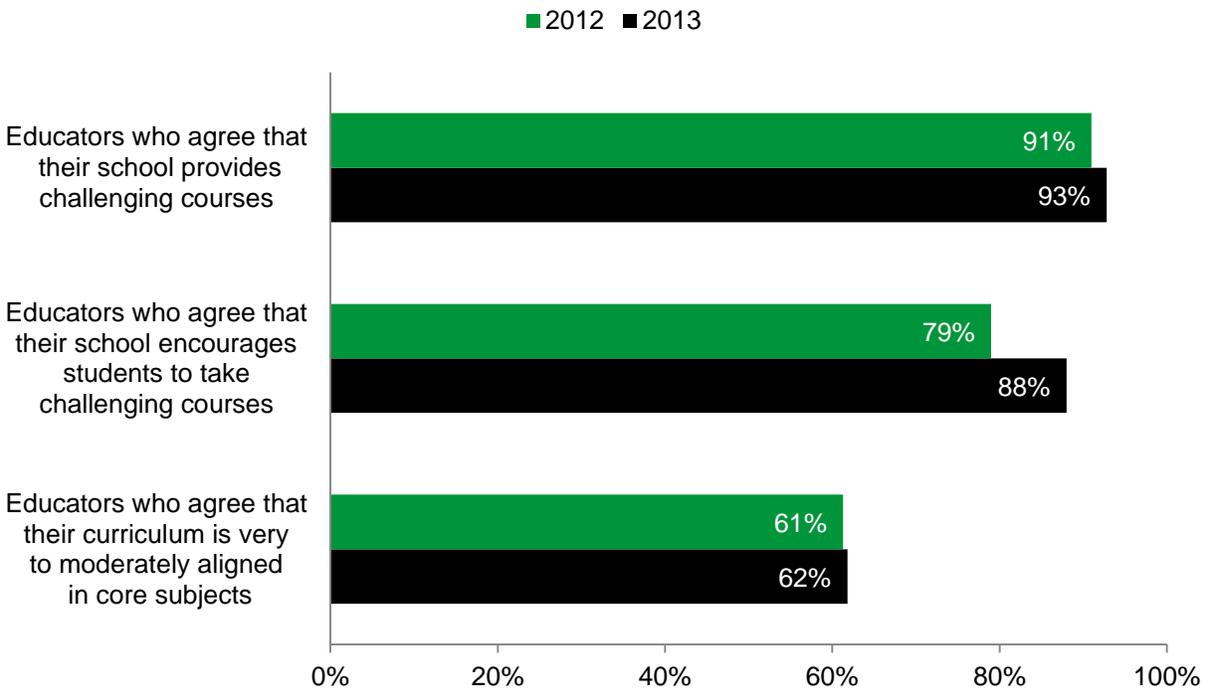
The percentage of educators who said the middle and high school curriculum was moderately to very aligned was similar across the project years. In 2012, 61 percent of the educators agreed their curriculum was aligned and 62 percent agreed in 2013.

Students' Perceptions of Rigor

The percentage of students who said their school provided challenging courses and the percentage of students who were encouraged to take challenging courses decreased in 2013 (Figure 6). In 2012, 86 percent of students in grades 7–8 agreed that their schools provided challenging courses and 65 percent said that educators encouraged them to take these challenging courses. In 2013, 73 percent of students in grades 7–8 said that their schools provided challenging courses and 57 percent reported being encouraged by staff to take these challenging courses. The percentages of students in grades 9–12 who reported access to challenging courses and being encouraged to take challenging courses also decreased (Figure 7).

The percentage of students who said they did at least one hour of daily homework also declined in 2013 (Figures 6 and 7). In 2012, 97 percent of students in grades 7–8 and 93 percent of students in grades 9–12 said they did at least one hour of homework each day. In 2013, 86 percent of the middle school students and 76 percent of the high school grade students said they did at least one hour of homework each day.

Figure 6
Percentage of Students Who Said Their Schools Provided Challenging Courses and Encouraged Them to Take Them, and Said They Did Daily Homework, 2012 and 2013, Grades 7–8
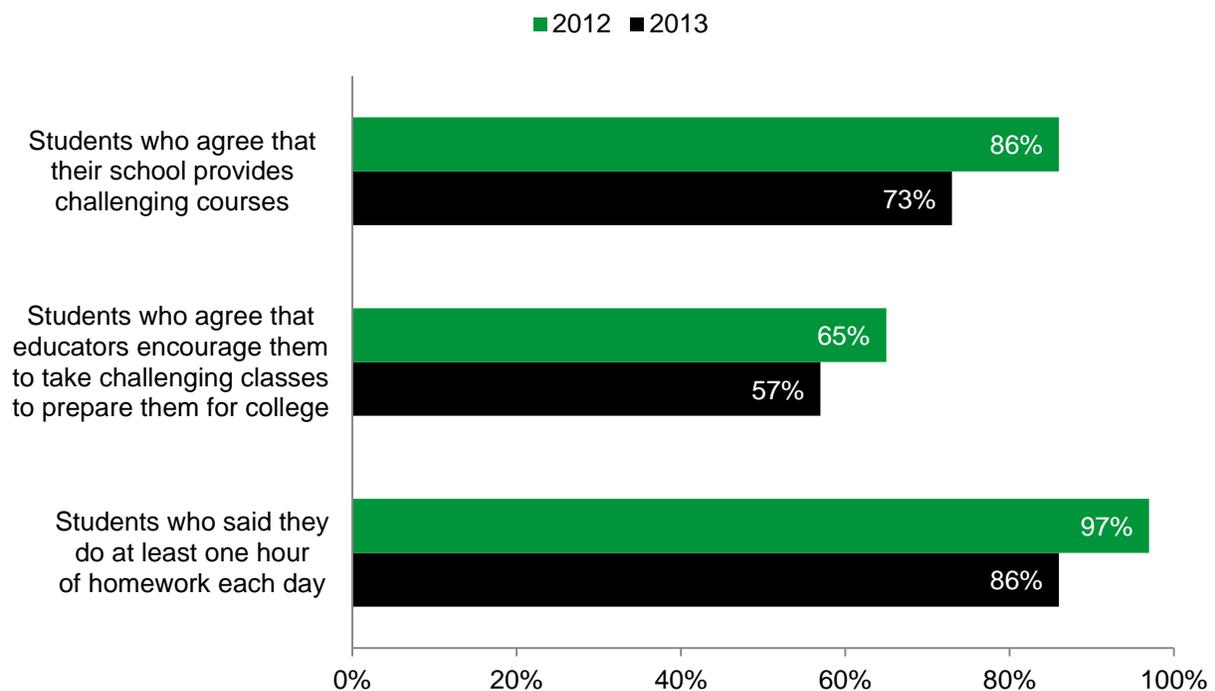
Figure 7
Percentage of Students Who Said Their Schools Provided Challenging Courses and Encouraged Them to Take Them, and Said They Did Daily Homework, 2012 and 2013, Grades 9–12
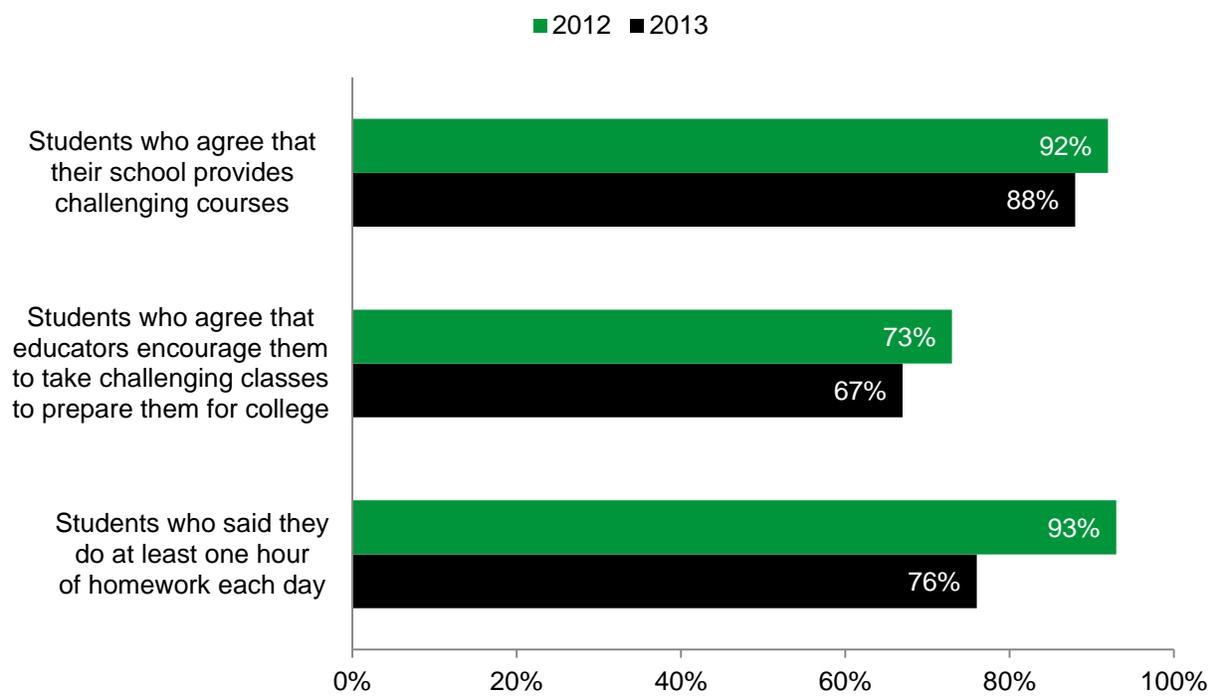
Relevance

Each school district in Oregon is expected to have a comprehensive guidance and counseling program that supports each student's transition throughout school, achievement of the diploma requirements, and preparation for post-high school next steps (Oregon Department of Education, 2013). Strategies related to "Relevance" help students participate in experiences that connect classroom learning with real life experiences in work, college, and community settings. The following paragraphs describe the ways that clusters helped students explore and plan postsecondary education and career goals.

- **Job shadowing and internships.** A few clusters created opportunities for students to experience job shadowing or internships at local businesses. In addition to the real life experience, students completed assignments to help them reflect on their experience and possible career paths.

- **Career classes and clubs.** Some clusters offered career classes or clubs to help students explore career and postsecondary options. The clusters offered the career classes to middle school and ninth-grade students.

- **Career fairs and guest speakers.** Several clusters hosted career fairs for middle and high school students. Clusters in smaller communities often co-planned one event for several

schools to promote participation from a wide variety of businesses, professionals, and colleges. The events provided opportunities for students to talk with local businesses and college representatives about their postsecondary options. A few schools also arranged for guest speakers to share information about different career paths and to encourage students to dream and plan for college. The clusters sponsored a variety of speakers, including business leaders, professionals, and recent alumni who had moved on to college.

- **Career Information System (CIS).** Some clusters used online resources to help students learn about, plan, and set up career folders and portfolios, and plan for success after high school. Generally, clusters provided instruction and opportunities for middle school students to use the online system and encouraged them to update their career portfolio in high school.

Progress Indicator—Relevance

Between 2012 and 2013, the percentage of students who said GEAR UP improved their awareness of career options increased (Figures 8 and 9). The percentage of students in grades 7 and 8 who said they became more aware of career options increased from 52 percent to 65 percent. Among students in grades 9–12, the percentage of students who said they became more aware of career options increased from 31 percent to 36 percent.

The percentages of students who said their school helped them identify a clear direction for the future and who said their school provides hands-on learning experiences that helped them learn both decreased (Figures 8 and 9). In 2013, 54 percent of students in grades 7–8 and 51 percent of students in grades 9–12 said their school helped them to get a clear sense of what they would like to do in the future. The percentage of 7th and 8th grade students who said their school provided useful hands-on learning experiences decreased from 80 percent to 68 percent. The percentage of students in grades 9–12 who said their school provided useful hands-on learning experiences decreased from 69 percent to 61 percent.

Figure 8
Percentage of Students Who Said GEAR UP Helped Them Learn About Career Options, Think About the Future, and Have Hands-on Experiences, 2012 and 2013, Grades 7–8
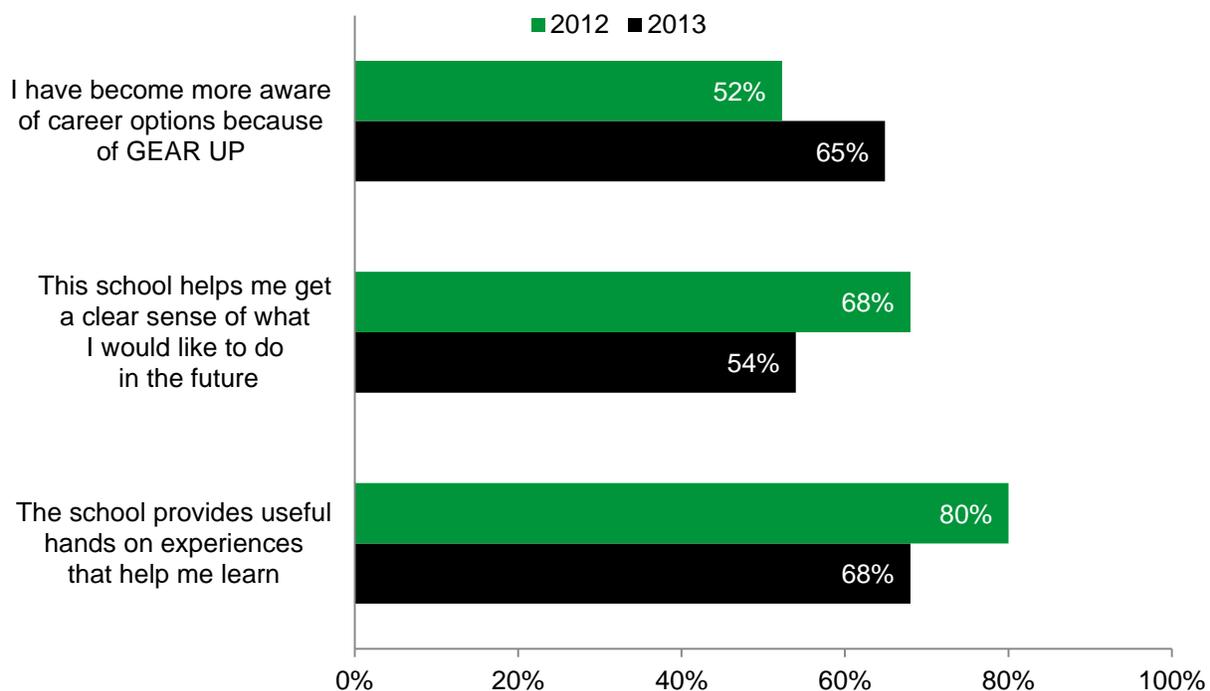
Figure 9
Percentage of Students Who Said GEAR UP Helped Them Learn About Career Options, Think About the Future, and Have Hands-on Experiences, 2012 and 2013, Grades 9–12
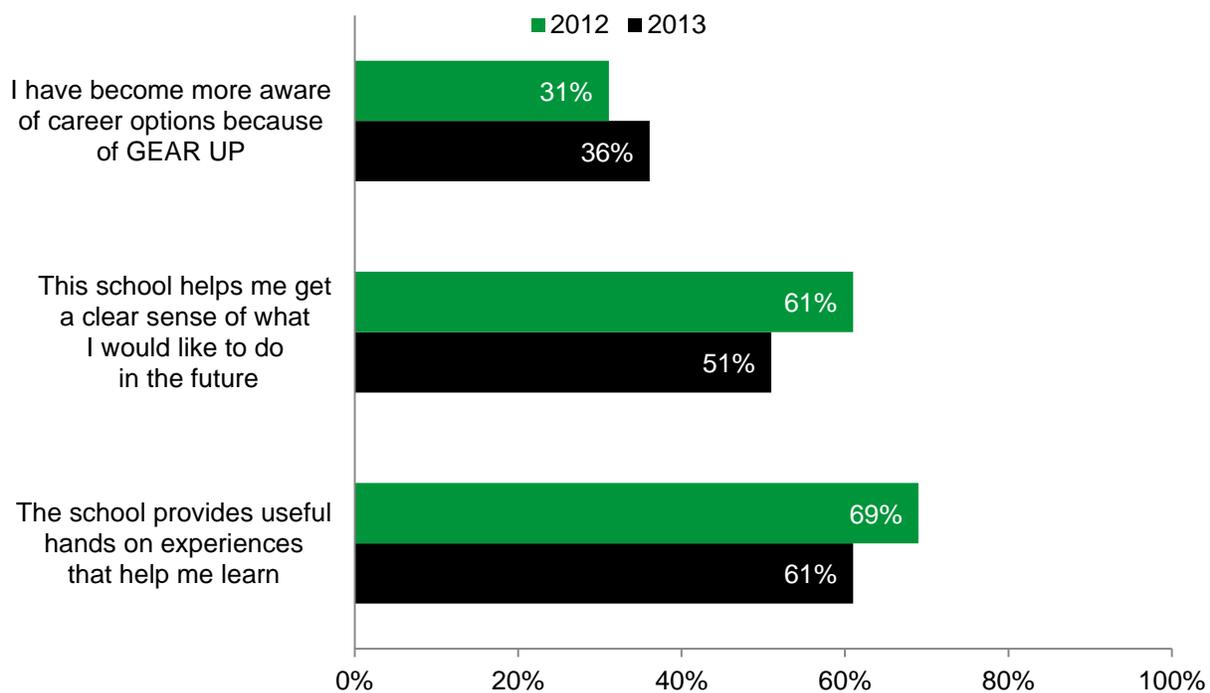
Right Classes

Schools are required to help each student plan the coursework needed to successfully pursue their postsecondary goals (Oregon Department of Education, 2013). The education plan serves as a guide for preparing students to transition to their chosen college or career paths. The student is responsible, with guidance, to develop and manage his or her personal plan and profile. The school is responsible for providing a process and guidance to students. The process should begin no later than seventh grade and continue until 12th grade, with regular reviews and updates. The process should allow students the flexibility to adjust their education plan as their career interests change or evolve. The following paragraphs describe strategies that support the "Right Classes" component of Oregon's model.

- **Meetings and events to support transition from middle to high school.** Several clusters held orientations for middle school students and their parents. The purpose of these meetings and events was to emphasize the benefits of postsecondary education. The orientations also emphasized the importance of planning high school course work early so that students are prepared to achieve their postsecondary goals. Many events included activities to orient students to high school routines, rules, and culture.

- **College advisory classes.** Clusters increased the opportunities for students to help students plan the right classes, learn about college requirements, and increase their financial aid literacy. Some clusters included information about college and career preparation during advisory periods.

- **Online courses.** Some clusters provided students with expanded course offerings by subscribing to online courses. The online courses also provided students with opportunities to enroll in higher education courses.

Progress Indicators—Right Classes

In grades 7–8, the percentage of students who talked with someone from school about college increased across the project years (Figure 10). During 2012, 46 percent of the students said they discussed college with someone from school. In 2013, 68 percent of the students said they had talked with someone from school about college.

In grades 9–12, the percentage of students who said they talked with someone from school about college decreased slightly (Figure 10). In 2012, 66 percent of the high school students said they had talked to someone about college. In 2013, 68 percent of the students said someone from school had talked to them about college.

Compared to students, the percentage of parents who said they had discussed college with someone from school was lower across both project years (Figure 10). In 2012, 23 percent of parents said they had talked to someone from school about college. This increased in 2013, when 39 percent of parents reported talking to someone from school about college.

Figure 10
Percentage of Students and Parents Who Talked With Someone From School About College, 2012 and 2013
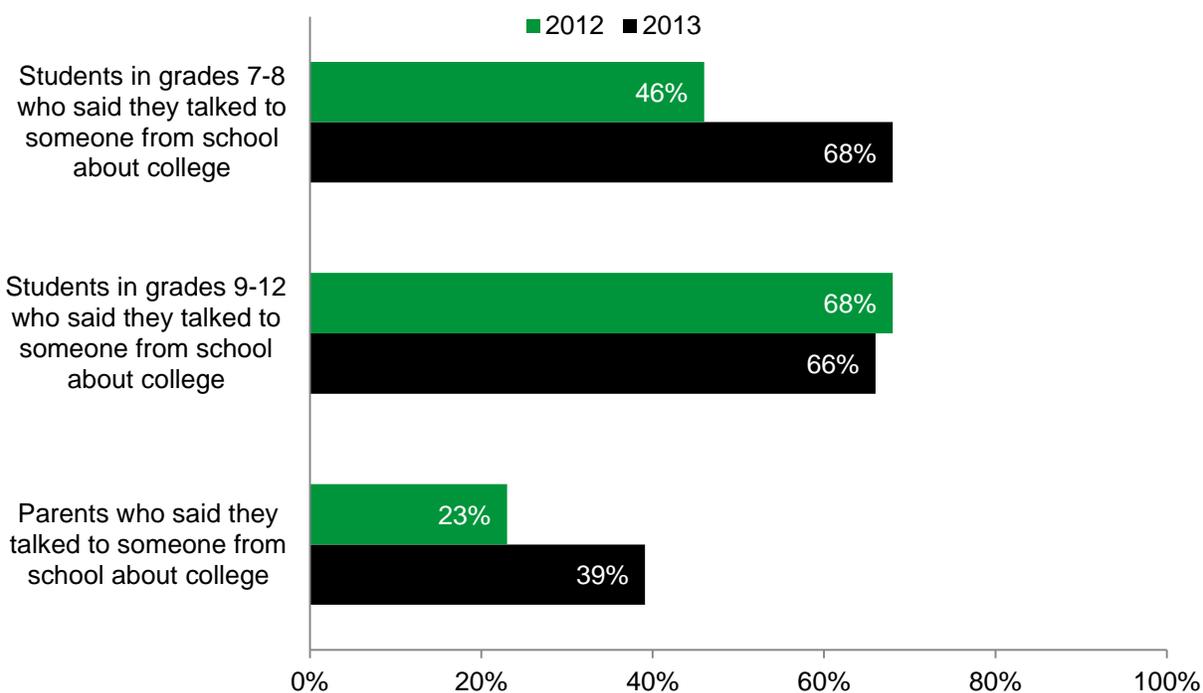
Students' Awareness of Postsecondary Options

The percentage of students who said they were familiar with the entrance requirements of four-year colleges increased in 2013 (Figures 11 and 12). During the first year of the project, 62 percent of students in grades 7–8 and 72 percent of students in grades 9–12 said they knew about four-year colleges. In 2013, 63 percent of students in grades 7–8 and 80 percent of students in grades 9–12 said they knew about four-year colleges or universities.

In 2012, slightly more students said they were familiar with the requirements for four-year colleges than for two-year colleges, but in 2013 a higher percentage of students said they were familiar with the requirements for two-year colleges.

The lowest percentage of students said they were familiar with the entrance requirements of technical, trade, or business institutions (Figures 11 and 12). In 2013, 34 percent of students in grades 7–8 and 38 percent of students in grades 9–12 reported being familiar with the requirements for technical or trade schools.

Figure 11
The Percentage of Students Who Said They Were Familiar With the Entrance Requirements of Postsecondary Education, 2012 and 2013, Grades 7–8
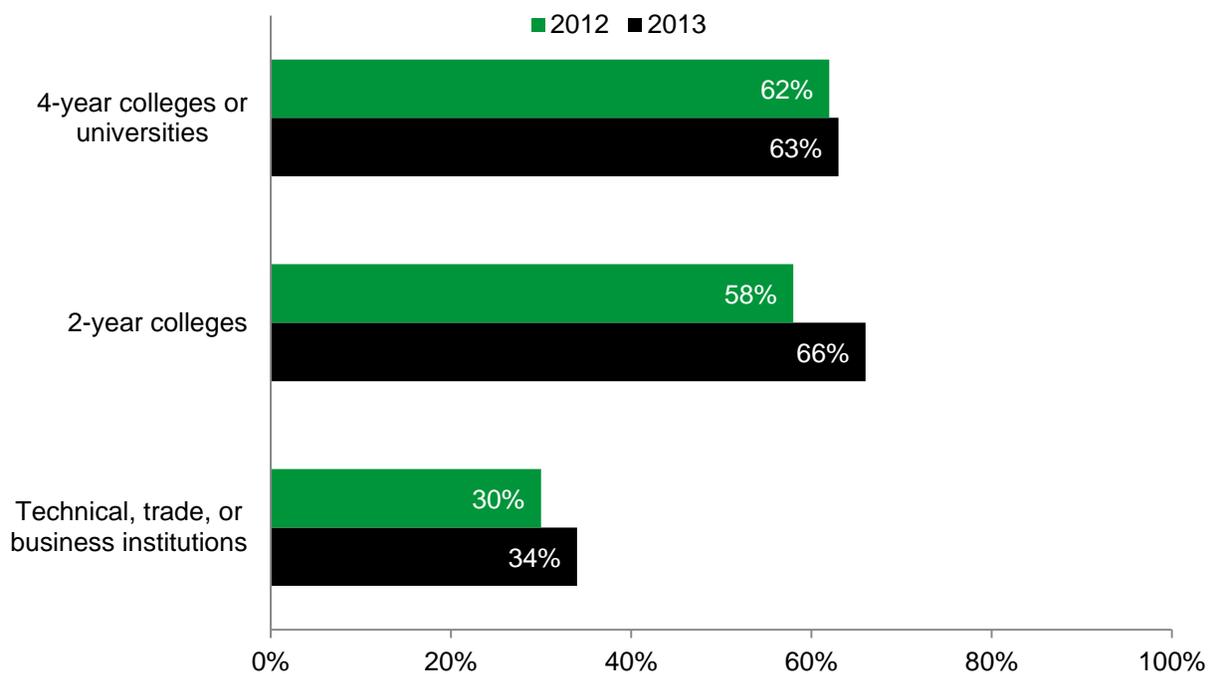
Figure 12
The Percentage of Students Who Said They Were Familiar With the Entrance Requirements of Postsecondary Education, 2012 and 2013, Grades 9–12
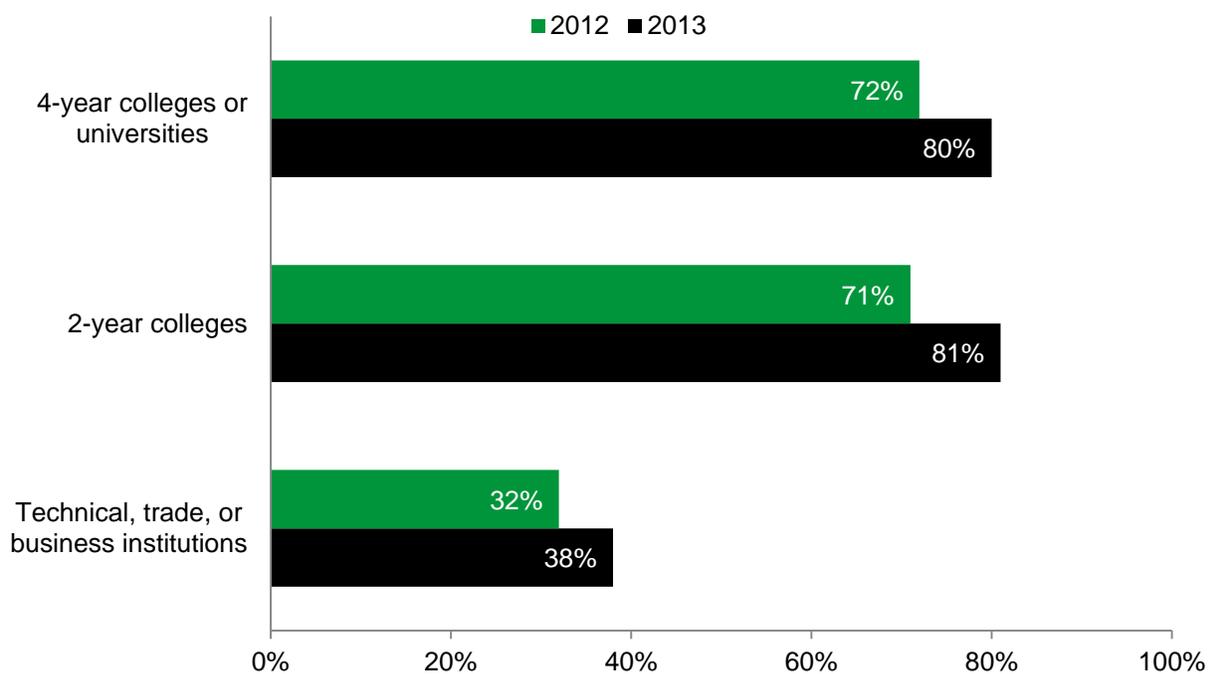
Parents' Awareness of Postsecondary Options

In 2012, 45 percent of the parents said they knew about the entrance requirements of four-year colleges or universities (Figure 13). In 2013, the percentage increased to 64 percent. The percentage of parents who said they were familiar with the requirements of two–year colleges was highest across the three postsecondary options. This percentage increased from 59 percent in 2012 to 68 percent in 2013.

Of the three postsecondary options, the lowest percentage of parents said they knew about technical, trade, or business institutions. Between 2012 and 2013, the percentage increased from 43 percent to 47 percent.

Figure 13
Percentage of Parents Who Said They Knew About the Entrance Requirements of Postsecondary Education, 2012 and 2013
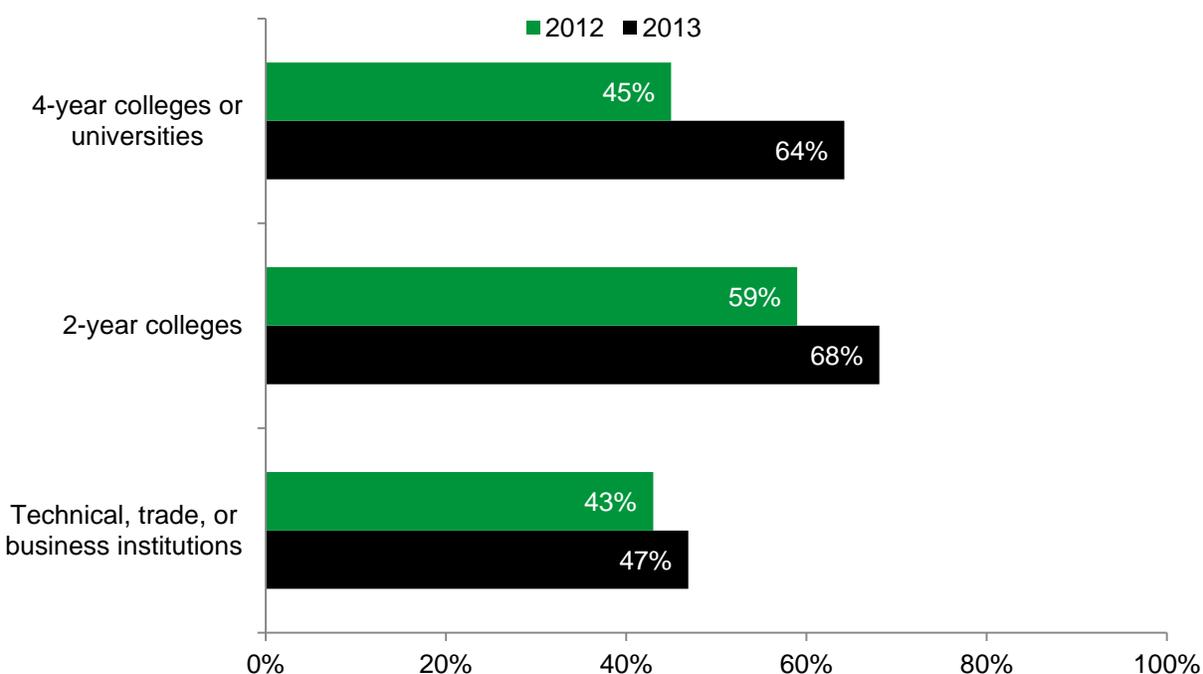
Conclusion

The percentage of students who said the school provided challenging courses decreased across project years. Among educators, however, there was an increase in the percentage of people who said the school provided challenging courses and that students received encouragement to take challenging courses. There was a decrease in the percentage of students who said they were encouraged to take challenging classes and the percentage of students who did daily homework decreased.

During this past school year, almost two-thirds of the students in grades 7–8 and about one third of the high school students said they were more aware of college and career options because of GEAR UP. This was an increase compared to 2012. In contrast, the percentage of students who said their classes helped them identify a clear direction for their future and provided hands-on learning experiences decreased in 2013.

A core value of GEAR UP programs is to increase college and career awareness among students and their parents or adults at home. Among students in grades 7–8, the percentage of students who said someone from school talked to them about college increased substantially. For high school students, the percentage of students who said they had discussed college with someone from school declined slightly. Compared to students, the percentage of parents who said someone had talked to them about college was lower but had increased substantially. In 2013, 39 percent of the parents said someone discussed college with them. In 2012, only 23 percent of parents said the same.

During this past year, at least 80 percent of students in grades 9–12 said they were familiar with the entrance requirements of two- and four-year colleges. Among students in grades 7–8 and among parents, about two-thirds said they were familiar with four-year colleges and two-year colleges. In 2013, 34 percent of students in grades 7–8, 38 percent of students in grades 9–12, and 47 percent of parents said they knew about the entrance requirements of technical, trade, or business institution

Chapter 5
Relationships and Raising Awareness

Many students do not take the necessary steps to prepare for and enter college because they are not aware of these steps or because they lack the guidance or support needed to complete them. In addition to meeting graduation requirements, students need take steps in high school to ensure college enrollment. These steps include taking college entrance exams, searching for colleges, applying for financial aid, submitting college applications, and selecting a college. In their senior year, students have to decide where to go, how to apply, and, most important, how to pay for college. Although many students received information about these issues in earlier years, as seniors, they must make their decisions.

Strategies related to "Relationships" support peer networks, engage families, and develop positive relationships with students. Strategies related to "Raising Awareness" help students and their families understand ways they can pay for postsecondary education (Table 11). The remaining sections of this chapter describe the strategies that clusters implemented and progress indicators for "Relationships" and "Raising Awareness."

Table 11
Relationships and Raising Awareness: Action Steps and Implementation Strategies

Oregon "R"	Five R's: Action Steps and Implementation Strategies
RELATIONSHIPS	1. Provide mentoring for students by recent high school graduates who enrolled in college or other college-educated adults 2. Facilitate student relationships with peers who plan to attend college through a structured program of extracurricular activities
RAISING AWARENESS	1. Ensure students prepare for, and take, the appropriate college entrance or admissions exam early 2. Assist students in their college search 3. Coordinate college visits 4. Assist students in completing college applications 5. Organize workshops for parents and students to inform them prior to 12th grade about college affordability, scholarship and aid sources, and financial aid processes 6. Help students and parents complete financial aid forms prior to eligibility deadlines 7. Ensure student awareness; provide financial aid information to students, families, teachers, and counselors 8. Parents Family Community Education and Support: Ensure that parents, families and community members understand how to pay for college and support for students in doing so

Note: Oregon 5 R's framework is based on the findings of the white paper, *Reclaiming the American Dream* (Bedsworth & Colby, 2006) and aligns with the recommendations outlined in the Institution of Education Sciences Practice Guide, *Helping Students Navigate the Path to College: What High Schools Can Do* (Tierney, Bailey, Finkelstein, 2009).

Relationships

Students and their families need guidance from knowledgeable school staff members if they are to successfully navigate the college application processes. Unfortunately, many students lack adequate advice, particularly if no one in their immediate families has completed a two- or four-year college degree. As a result, the responsibility for helping students gain the academic, social, and cultural skills to successfully enroll in college falls upon teachers, counselors, and school administrators (Savitz-Romer & Bouffard, 2012; Tierney, et. al. 2009). The following paragraphs describe strategies that aim to promote relationships that support students as they plan and prepare for postsecondary education.

- **Access to Student Assistance Programs In Reach of Everyone (ASPIRE).** Four clusters participate in ASPIRE, Oregon's official mentoring program, to help students access education and training beyond high school. Students receive information about college options, admission, and financial aid from trained and supportive ASPIRE volunteer mentors who work one-on-one with them throughout the year. ASPIRE serves students and families by helping middle and high schools build a sustainable community of volunteer advisors; educating students and families about the scholarship application process and other options for paying for postsecondary education; advising; and providing resources and encouragement to help students access education and training beyond high school.

- **Contact with recent alumni.** Three clusters hosted events for current college students to return to the high school to share their experiences, and one cluster displayed posters of alumni labeled with their colleges and the degrees they are completing. Another cluster matched freshman college students with seventh and eighth grade classes for their "Adopt a Grad" program. These classes maintain regular contact with the college students through correspondence, care packages, and monthly Skype calls.

- **Peer mentoring.** Two clusters implement peer mentoring that matches high achieving high school students with middle school students. The high school mentors provide tutoring and support to help the middle school students prepare for high school.

- **Student orientations and parent nights**. Several clusters conducted student orientations and parent nights to orient students and families to the school environment and to GEAR UP. The topics addressed strategies to help students graduate from high school and prepare to transition to their postsecondary education or career choice.

- **Summer enrichment programs. GEAR UP programs** helped students to attend summer enrichment programs, including summer camps and seminars hosted by colleges. For example, students participated in the mobile engineering camp conducted by Oregon State University during this past summer.

- **Communication with parents and community members.** Clusters implemented creative ways to communicate college information to families and community members. In one cluster, the GEAR UP coordinator periodically presents GEAR UP news at school staff meetings and district board meetings. One cluster planned to create a GEAR UP website

with information about school activities, scholarships, and college entrance requirements. Another cluster created a "communications intern" position for a 12th grade student to assist the GEAR UP coordinator. This intern will help to update the school's website with GEAR UP information, write articles about GEAR UP for the school and local newspapers, and help to manage communciation with families and the community.

Progress Indicators—Relationships

Students' Perceptions

Although the majority of students said their school was safe and they had positive relationship with teachers, the percentage of students who agreed with these statements decreased during the project years (Table 12). In 2013, most students reported positive feelings about their school and teacher. The highest percentage of students said they felt safe in school. The percentage of students who felt respected by their teachers, said that their teachers were interested in their learning, and reported receiving the help they needed ranged from 75 percent to 88 percent. For both grade spans, the lowest percentage of students said they felt comfortable talking with their teachers.

Table 12
Percentage of Students Who Feel Safe in School and Had Positive Relationships With Teachers, 2012 and 2013

	Grades 7–8			Grades 9–12		
	2012 (n=818)	2013 (n=1,153)	Percent change	2012 (n=2,139)	2013 (n=1,993)	Percent change
I feel safe in the school	91%	84%	-7.7%	92%	88%	-4.3%
I feel respected by my teachers	89%	79%	-11.2%	89%	79%	-11.2%
My teachers are truly interested in my learning	88%	80%	-9.1%	81%	75%	-7.4%
I feel comfortable talking with my teachers	76%	63%	-17.1%	77%	73%	-5.2%
I have received the help I need from my teachers	87%	81%	-6.9%	83%	79%	-4.8%

c.   Percentage of educators who said they participate in the activity "often" or "sometimes" at their school.
d.   Percent change was calculated by ((y2–y1)/y1*100.

Source: GEAR UP Student Survey, 2012 and 2013

The percentage of students who said they talked with friends about college, at least sometimes, was higher in upper grades (Figure 11). In 2013, about half of the students in grades 7–8 said they talked with friends about college, and about two-thirds of the students in grades 9–10 said the same. In grades 11–12, over three quarters of the students said they talked about college with a friend.

Figure 11
Percentage of Students Who Talked With Friends About College, 2012 and 2013
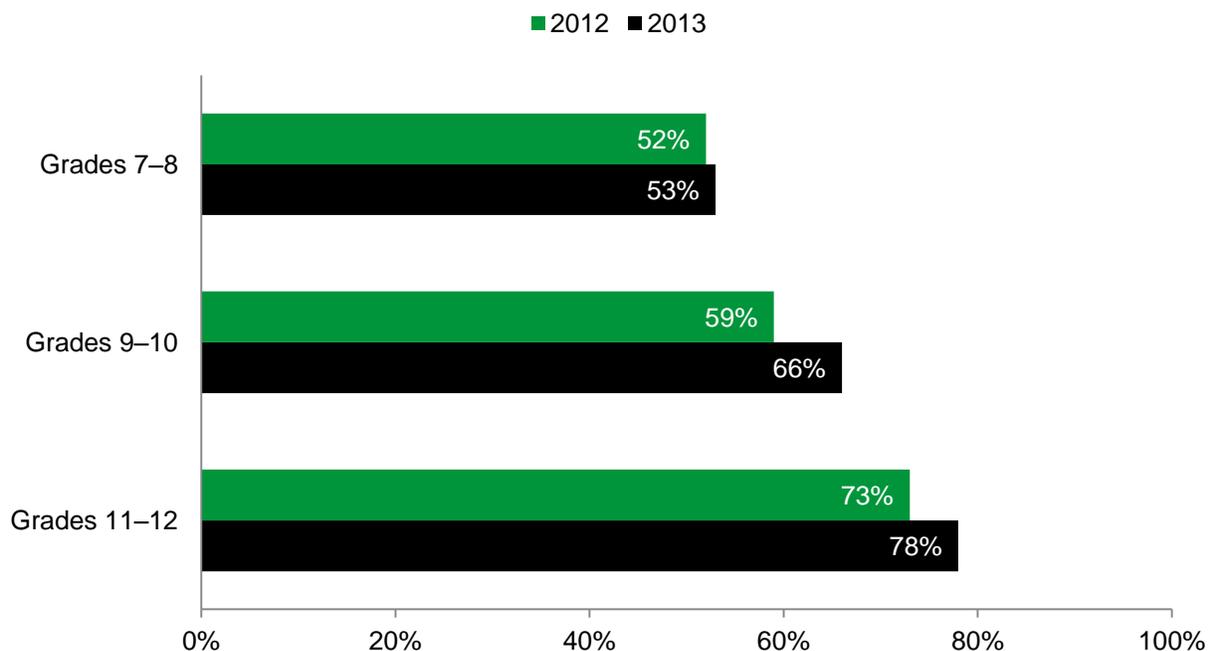
Parents' Perceptions

Nearly all parents said they talked with their students about college, but about one-third of parents reported visiting colleges with their students (Figure 12). The percentage of parent survey respondents who had talked to their students about college increased from 77 percent to 97 percent. The percentage of parents who said they had visited a college with their student also increased from 24 percent to 35 percent.

Figure 12
Percentage of Parents Who Talked With Their Student About College or Visited Colleges With Them, 2012 and 2013
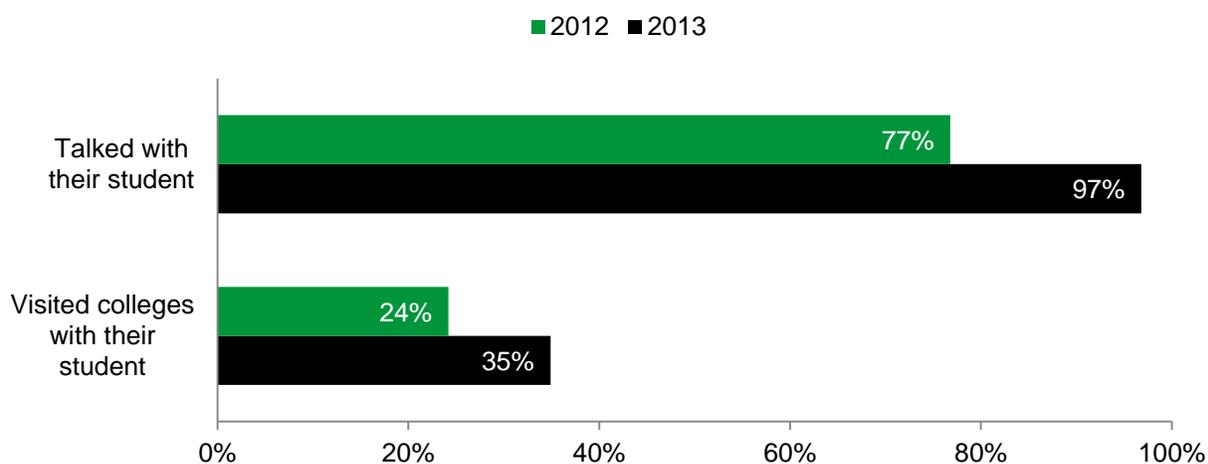
Raising Awareness

The high cost of a college education has increased the urgency of providing students and their families with financial aid, student loan, and scholarship information. During the last several years, school counselor positions have been cut and/or the ratio of students to counselor has greatly increased. In response, schools have had to design solutions to get students the college and career information they need, and to get this information to students and parents earlier in their educational career. The following paragraphs describe strategies that aim to promote the affordability of college for students and their families. Each cluster implemented one or more of these strategies with the support of GEAR UP funding and services.

- **College site visits**. All clusters provided students with opportunities to tour colleges. Most clusters organized and scheduled visits to four-year colleges, two-year colleges, and trade schools for both middle and high school students. In addition to helping students learn more about career opportunities, site visits provide students with information about financial aid and other funding support. The institutions that students visited included
    - Colleges and universities. University of Oregon, Western Oregon University, Southern Oregon University, and Oregon State University.
    - Community colleges. Southwestern Oregon Community College, Rogue Community College, Southern Oregon Community College, Lane Community College, and Umpqua Community College.
    - Trade, technical, and business schools. Digipen Institute and Oregon Institute of Technology.
- **College preparation classes.** Some clusters developed and implemented classes or special events to provide students with instruction and support to prepare for postsecondary education. The classes required students to participate in college preparation activities including completing a college application, FAFSA forms, OSAC application, and career planning.
- **Financial aid meetings**. Clusters conducted meetings that provided information and/or real-time assistance to students and parents. The aim of the meetings was to help families learn about and complete applications for financial aid, scholarship opportunities, and student loans. Some clusters partnered with local businesses, credit unions, or community organizations to share information about college savings plans, Dream$avers and organizations that help families develop financial plans for college.

Progress Indicators—Raising Awareness

Students
The percentage of students who said someone discussed financial aid with them increased for all grade spans (Figure 13). In 2013, the percentage of students who said someone from school had talked to them about financial aid ranged from 38 percent to 62 percent.

Figure 13
Percentage of Students Who Talked To Someone About Financial Aid, 2012 and 2013

■2012 ■2013

Grades 7–8	23% (2012) / 52% (2013)
Grades 9–10	24% (2012) / 38% (2013)
Grades 11–12	40% (2012) / 62% (2013)
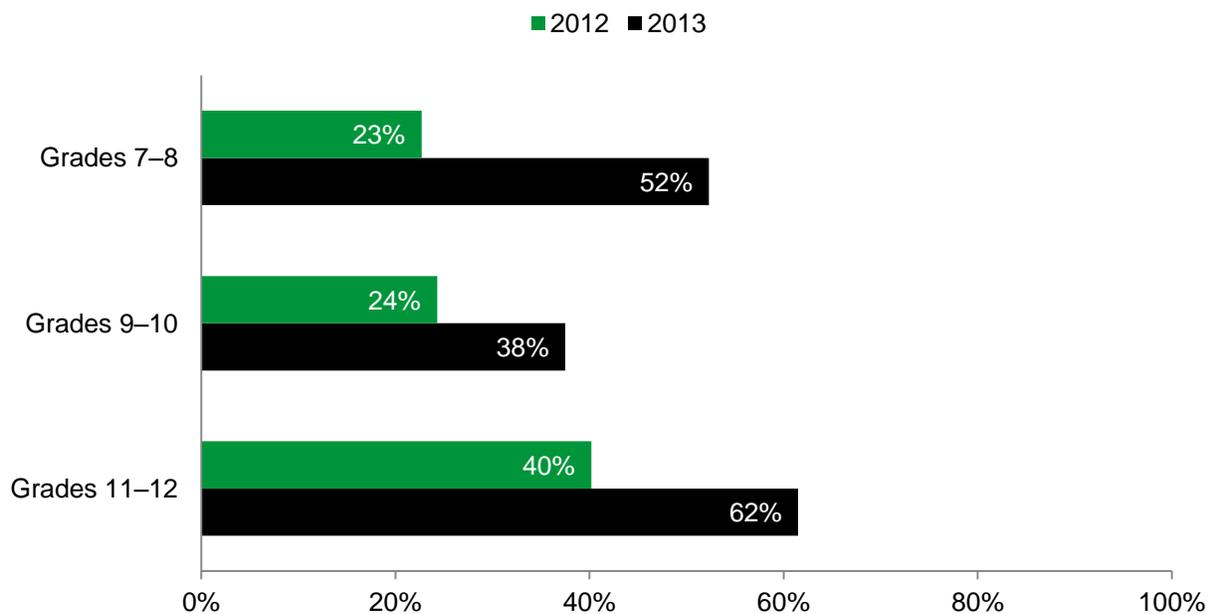
The percentage of students who said that college was probably or definitely affordable with financial aid, scholarships, and family resources decreased between the two project years (Figure 14). In 2013, the percentage of students who said college was probably or definitely affordable ranged from 54 percent to 56 percent.

Figure 14
Percentage of Students Said College Was Definitely or Probably Affordable With Financial Aid, Scholarships, and Family Resources, 2012 and 2013

■2012 ■2013

Grades 7–8	60% (2012) / 54% (2013)
Grades 9–10	60% (2012) / 54% (2013)
Grades 11–12	61% (2012) / 56% (2013)
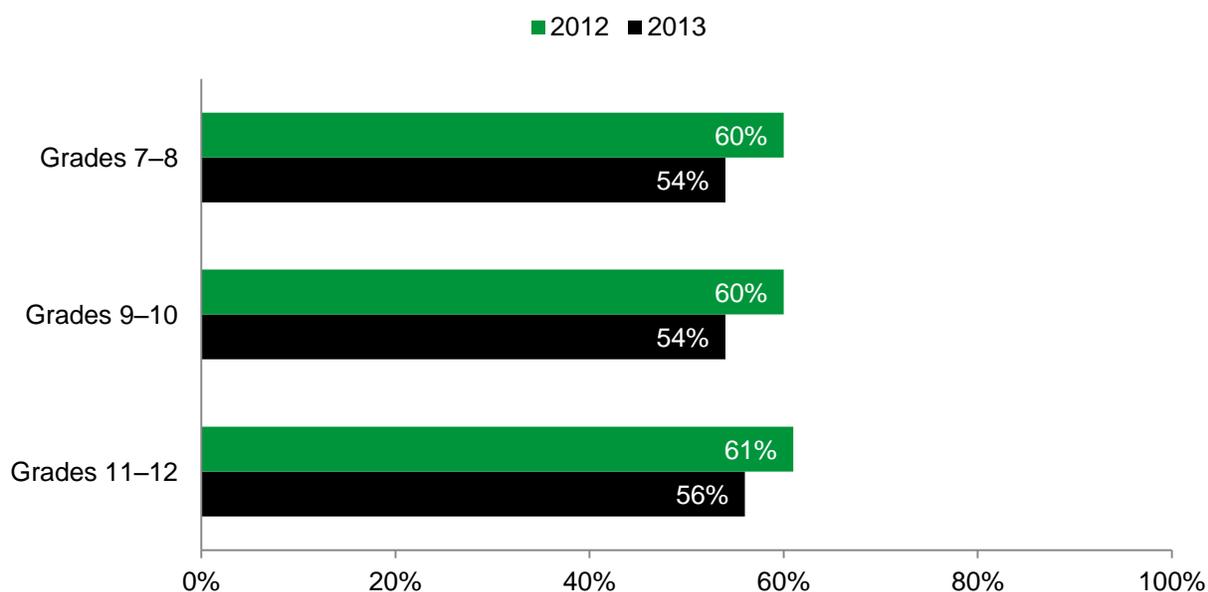
Parents

The percentage of parents who discussed financial aid with someone from school increased substantially, especially in upper grade levels (Figure 15). In 2013, the percentage of students who said someone had talked to them about financial aid was 26 percent, 42 percent in grades 9–10, and 53 percent in grades 11–12.

Figure 15
Percentage of Parents Who Had Talked With Someone from School About Financial Aid, 2012 and 2013
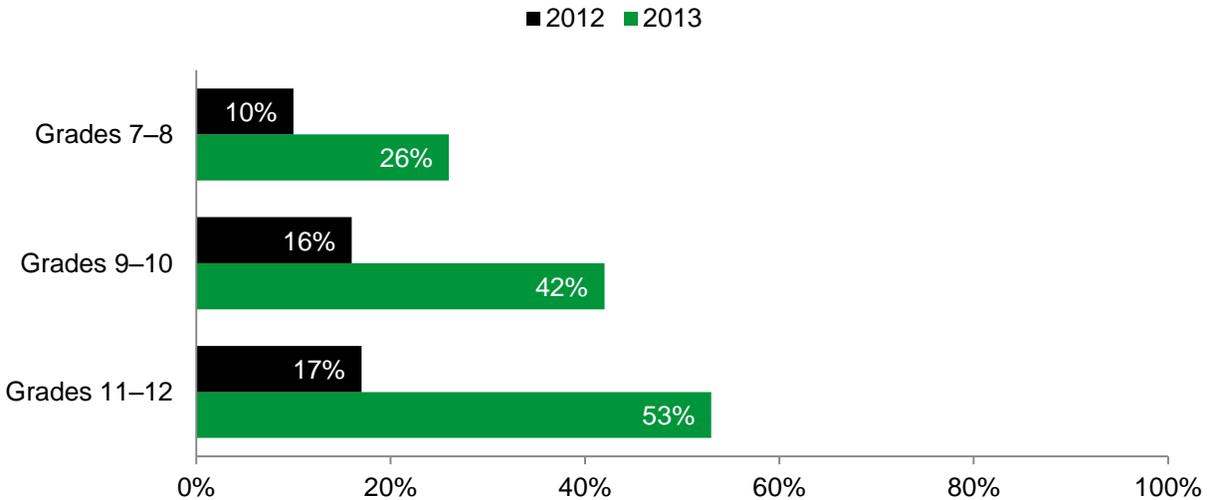
During this last year, the percentage of parents who agreed that college was probably or definitely affordable with financial aid, scholarships, and their family resources ranged from 57 percent to 65 percent (Figure 16).

Figure 16
Percentage of Parents Who Said College Was Affordable With Financial Aid, Scholarships, and Their Family's Resources, 2012 and 2013
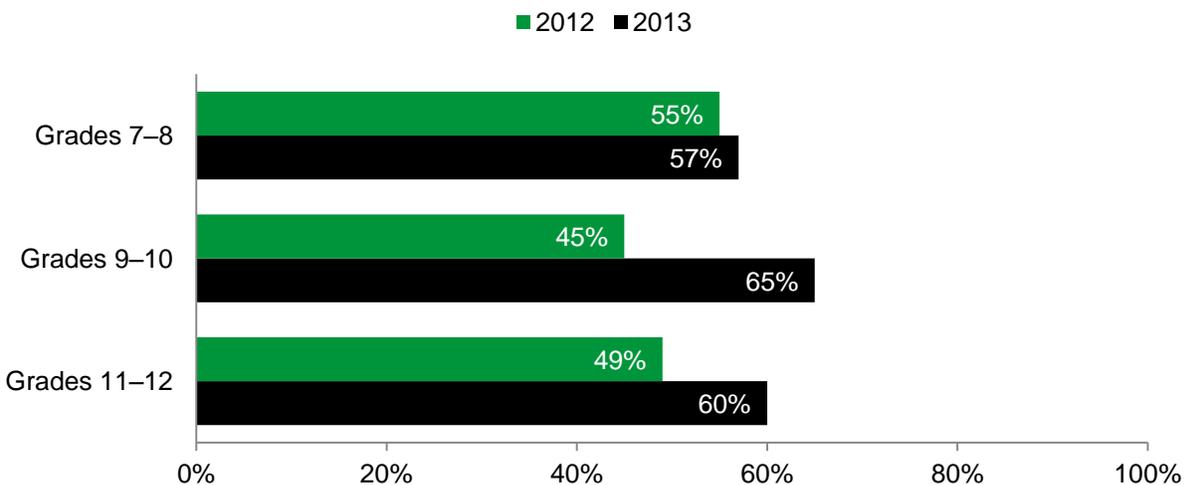
Knowledge About Financial Aid—Students, Parents and Educators

Educators said they were more knowledgeable about financial aid than parents and students (Figure 17). On a scale of 1 to 5, survey respondents were asked to rate how knowledgeable they were about financial aid. A rating of "1" indicated they had "no knowledge" and a "5" rating indicated they were "extremely knowledgeable." Educators rated themselves as moderately knowledgeable (3.5). The average rating for parents and students was also in the moderately knowledgeable range, 3.1 and 2.8 respectively.

Figure17
Level of Knowledge Educators, Parents, and Students Had About Financial Aid, 2013
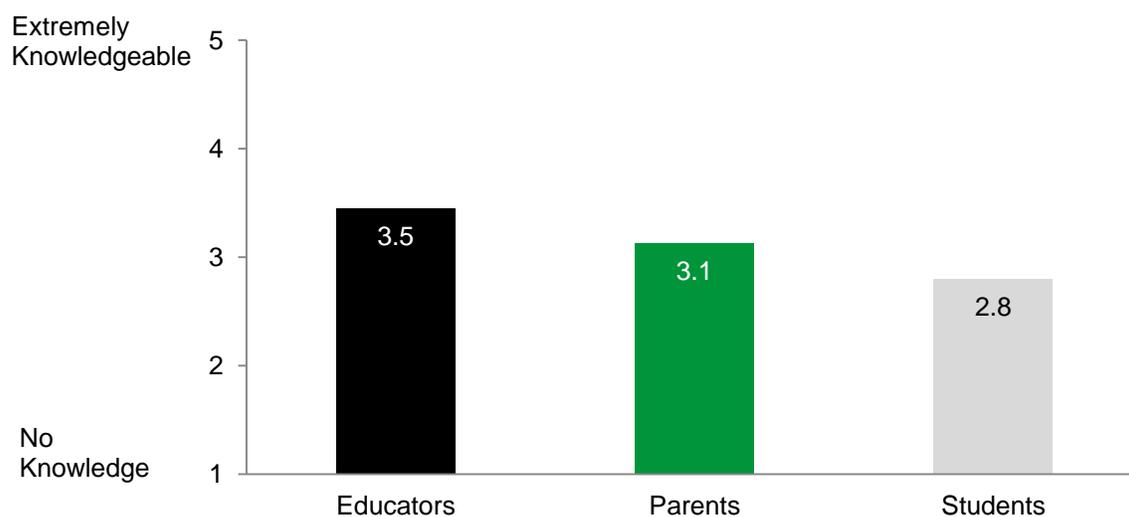
Conclusion

Students generally reported positive feelings about their school and teachers. About three-quarters or more of the students felt safe in school, respected by their teachers, and believed they received the help they needed. Almost two-thirds of students said they felt comfortable talking with their teachers. However, the percentage of students who agreed with these statements decreased during the project years.

The percentage of students who reported talking about college with their friends increased between the two years. In 2013, over three quarters of the students in grades 11–12 discussed college with friends. About two thirds of the students in grades 9–10 and about half of the middle school students also said they talked to friends about college "sometimes" to "almost always." The percentage of parents who said they discussed college with their students increased substantially. In 2013, 97 percent of the parents who completed surveys said they had talked to their students about college. Although more parents said they had talked about college with their student, less than a third of parents in 2013 had been on a college visit with their students.

The percentage of parents and students who said that they talked to school staff members about financial aid increased substantially. For students, the percentage who said college was probably or definitely affordable decreased across all grade spans, however. For parents, the percentage who thought college could be affordable with scholarships, financial aid, and their family resources increased.

The clusters have begun, and are in various stages of, developing a sequence of college and career activities across grades 7–12. All of the clusters organized college visits for students and their parents. College site visits are a very powerful experience for the students, and serve as a positive motivator for students to set goals for a postsecondary college experience. A challenge reported by many schools was engaging the support and participation of parents. To address this problem of practice, several schools created events for parents to learn more about college—special parent or family events, transition activities, college prep nights, and/or financial aid nights. They also provided college and career awareness information at regularly scheduled events including ninth-grade orientation or elementary school carnivals. Schools reported it was difficult to get a large number of parents to attend.

Chapter 6
Who Needs More Support

Leaders of Oregon's education identify the need to use resources strategically to maximize the return on our investment in education. They also stress the importance of examining our practices through an "equity lens" to ensure that each and every student has access to educational opportunities that promote his or her success in postsecondary education (OEIB, 2012). Oregon GEAR UP focused its resources on rural schools because of their high rate of poverty and need for resources. This chapter reports what students with different characteristics —academic level, gender, and race/ethnicity—said about their teachers' and parents' expectations, the adults who talked with them about college, and their own postsecondary aspirations.

Perceived Academic Ability

Students, in grades 7–12, were categorized into four groups according to how they responded to the survey question, "How would you rank yourself academically—as an "A" student, "B" student, "C" student, or "D" student. The percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed that their teachers and parents expected them to go to college, adults talked to them about college, and they expected to go to college was highest for "A" students, and declined steadily for students who ranked themselves as less academically able (Figures 18–21).

Across all groups, the percentage of students who said their parents expected them to attend college was higher than the percentage of students who said the same about their teachers (Figure 18). The percentage of students who said their parents expected them to attend college ranged from 56 percent to 95 percent. In contrast, the percentage of students who said the same about their teachers ranged from 26 percent to 91 percent.

Figure 18
Percentage of Students, by Perceived Academic Ability, Who Agreed Their Parents and Teachers Expected Them to Attend College, 2013.
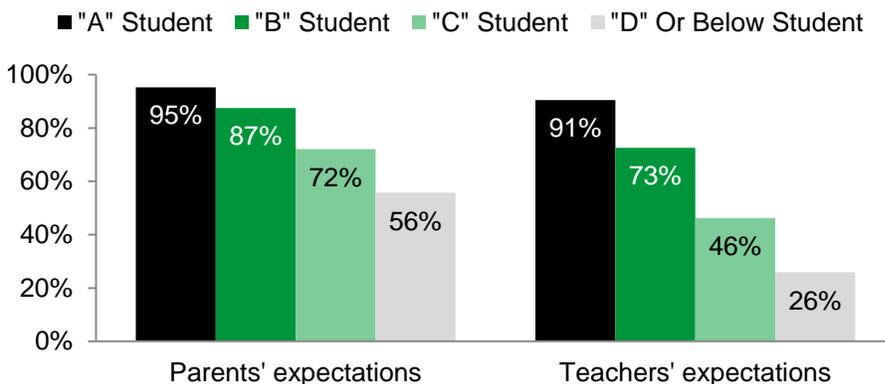
With the exception of one group, the majority of students said their teachers and counselors encouraged them to take challenging classes and their parents were involved in their learning (Figure 19). About a third (34 percent) of the "D" students said their teachers and counselors encouraged them to take challenging classes.

Figure 19
Percentage of Students, by Perceived Academic Ability, Who Agreed Their Teachers, Counselors and Parents Encouraged Their Learning, 2013

■ "A" Student ■ "B" Student ■ "C" Student ■ "D" Or Below Student
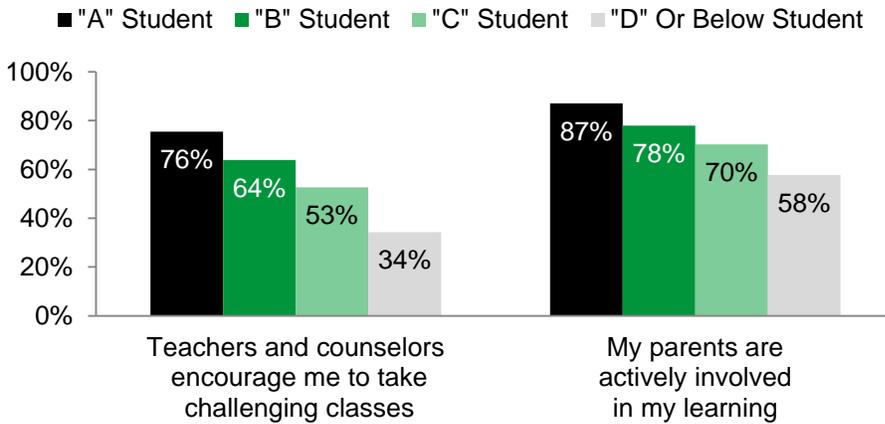
The percentage of students who said someone had talked with them about college entrance requirements increased with their perceived academic ability (Figure 20). Three-quarters of the "A" students said they had talked with an adult at home about college and 70 percent said they had talked with someone at school. For "C" and "D" students, the opposite was true. A higher percentage said that they had talked about college with someone from school and fewer said they had discussed college at home.

Figure 20
Percentage of Students, by Perceived Academic Ability, Who Talked About College With an Adult at School or Home, 2013

■ "A" Student ■ "B" Student ■ "C" Student ■ "D" Or Below Student
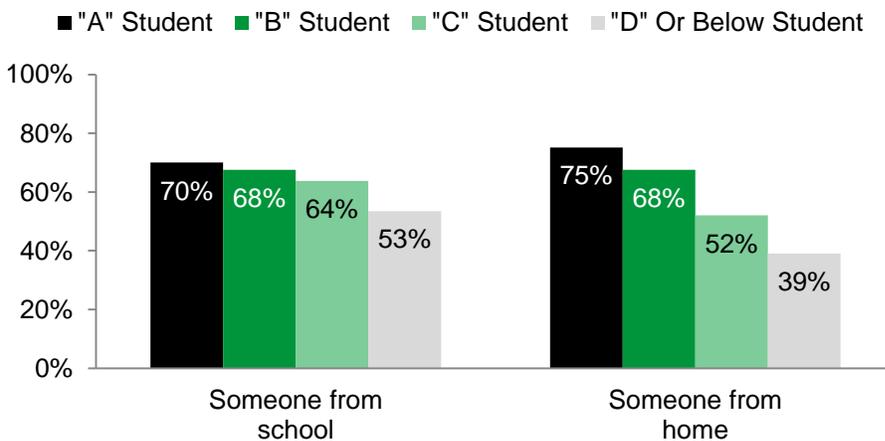
Over 90 percent of the "A" and "B" students expected to get a two- or four-year college degree and 72 percent of the "C" students said the same (Figure 21). For "D" students, 43 percent said they did not expect to attend college.

Figure 21
Percentage of Students, By Perceived Academic Ability, Who Expected to Get a College Degree, 2013
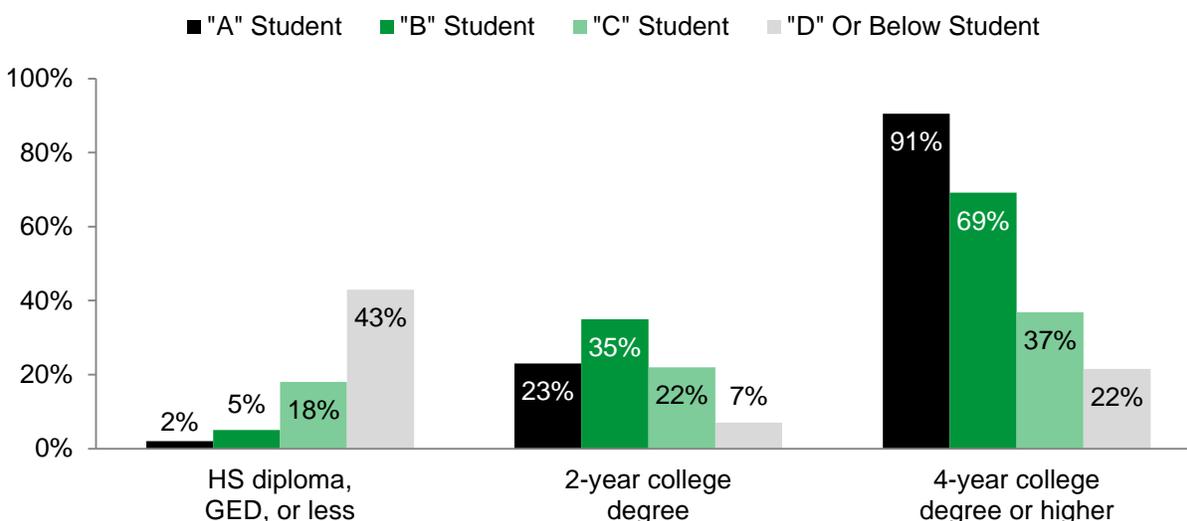
Note: The percentages of students who said they expected to attend a one-year trade school or attend some college but would get less than a college degree are not reported due to the small number of responses.

Gender

The disparity in college enrollment among males and females has raised concerns about equity. In 2012, 48 percent of undergraduate enrollment in four-year universities in Oregon were male and 52 percent were female (Oregon University System, 2013). This section will report the 2013 Student Survey results disaggregated by gender. Compared to male students, more female students said their teachers and parents expected them to go to college. A higher percentage of female students also expected they would get a college degree. However, the percentage of male and female students who said they received encouragement and support from teachers, counselors and their parents was about the same (Figures 22–25).

For both groups, the percentage of students who said their parents expected them to the attend college was higher than the percentage of students who said the same about their teachers (Figure 22). Over three-quarters of the female students said their teachers expected them to go to college and 62 percent of the male students said the same. The percentage of female students who said their parents expected to attend college was 90 percent and 79 percent for male students.

Figure 22
Percentage of Students, by Gender, Who Agreed Their Parents and Teachers Expected Them to Go to College, 2013
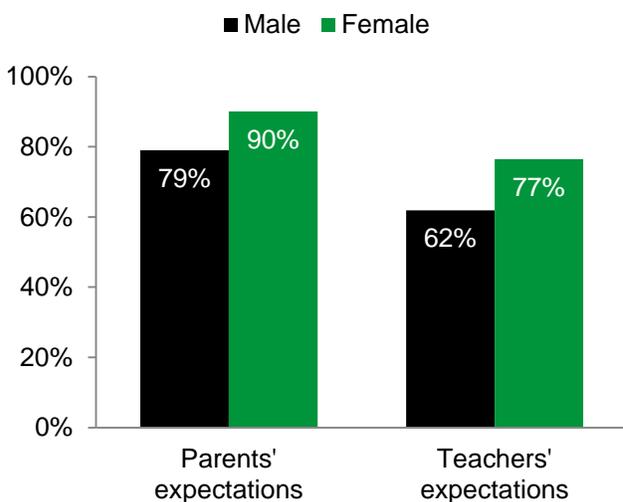
The percentage of male and female students who said they received support from teachers, school counselors, and parents or other caretaking adults was about the same (Figure 23). Nearly two-thirds of the students said their teachers and counselors encouraged them to take challenging courses, and 78 percent said their parents were actively involved in their learning.

Figure 23
Percentage of Students, by Gender, Who Agreed Their Teachers, Counselors and Parents Encouraged Their Learning, 2013
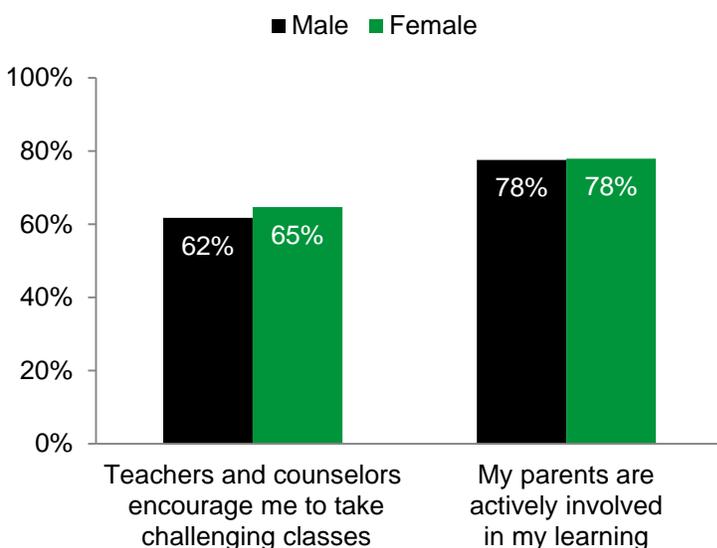
For both genders, about two thirds of the students said they had talked with someone from school about college entrance requirements (Figure 24). More female students than male students (70 percent and 60 percent, respectively) said they had talked to someone at home about college.

Figure 24
Percentage of Students, By Gender, Who Talked About College With Someone from School or Home, 2013
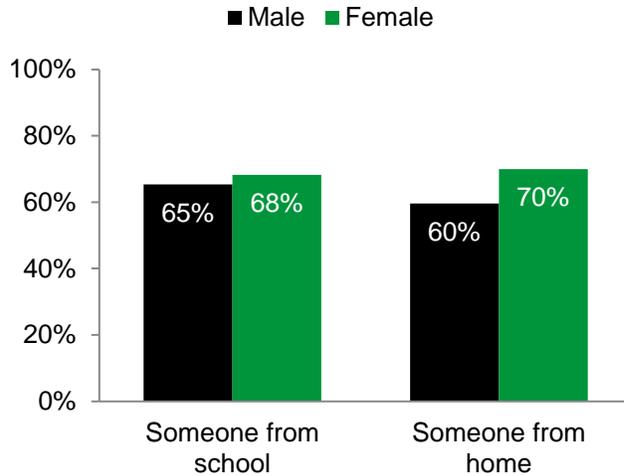
About 90 percent of the female students said they wanted to get a two- or four-year college degree and 81 percent of the male students said the same (Figure 25). The percentage of students who said they expected to get a high school degree or less was 13 percent for male students and 6 percent for female students.

Figure 25
Percentage of Students, by Gender, Who Expected to Get a College Degree, 2013
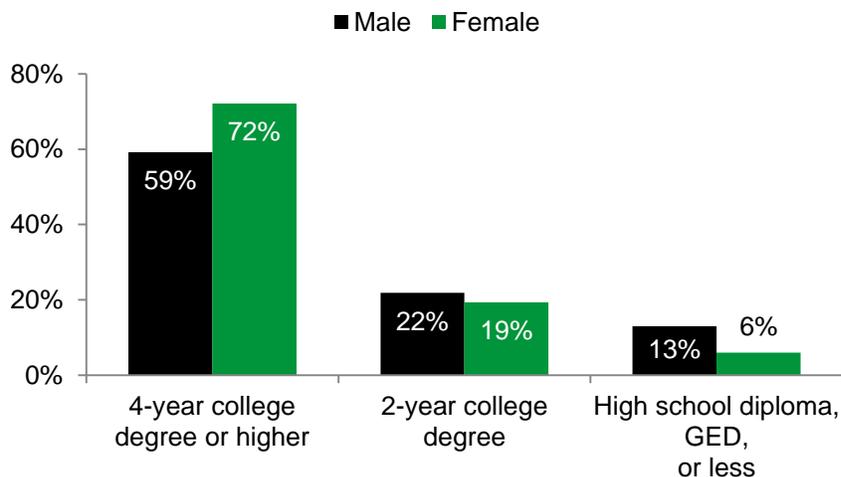
Race/Ethnicity

Although disparity in college enrollment rates for students of color remains a concern, the gap has narrowed steadily since 2002 (Oregon University System, 2013). Figures 26–29 report, by race/ethnicity, the percentages of students who said their teachers and parents expected them to go to college, they had conversations with adults about college, and they expected to complete college.

Over three quarters of White, Hispanic, American Indian, and Black students said their parents expected them to go to college (Figure 26). Hispanic students had the highest percentage of students who said their parents expected them to go to college. The percentage of students who reported that their teachers expected them to go to college ranged from 51 percent to 72 percent. The racial group with the highest percentage of students was White and the group with the lowest percentage was American Indian/Alaskan Native. Across all racial groups, a higher percentage of students said their parents expected them to go to college

Figure 26
Percentage of Students, by Race/Ethnicity, Who Said Their Parents and Teachers Expected Them to Attend College, 2013
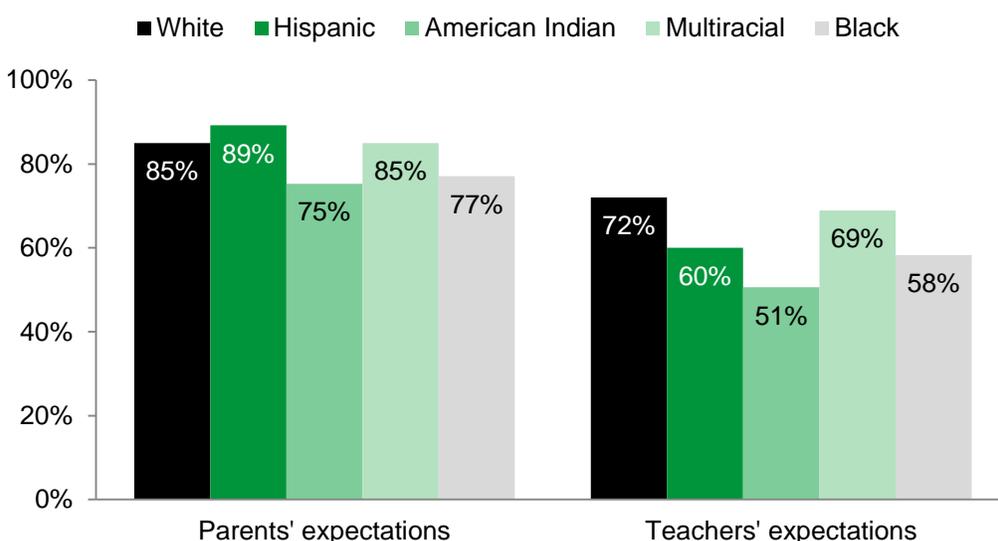
With the exception of Black students, over three quarters of all racial/ethnic groups said their parents were actively involved in their learning (Figure 27). The percentage of students who said their teachers and counselors encouraged them to take challenging courses ranged from 58 percent to 72 percent. The group with the highest percentage of students agreeing they received encouragement from school staff members was the American Indian student group. Two thirds of the White student also said they were encouraged by teachers and counselors. For the remaining groups, the percentage of students who said their teachers encouraged them to take challenging ranged from 58 percent to 61 percent.

Figure 27
Percentage of Students, By Race/Ethnicity, Who Said Their Teachers, Counselors, and Parents Encouraged Their Learning, 2013
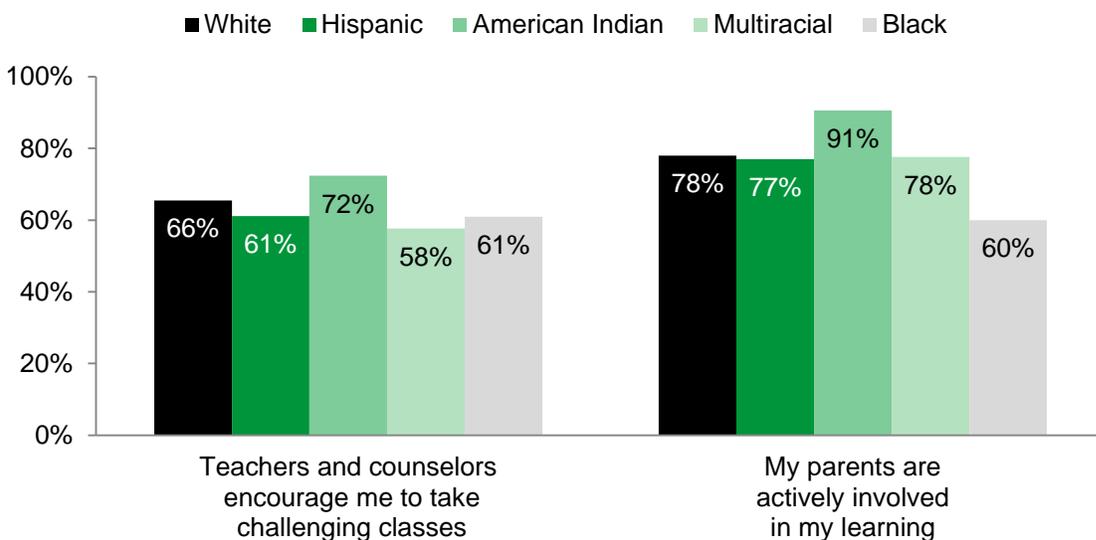
Over 60 percent of the students said they had talked with someone from school and/or home about college requirements (Figure 28). The exception to this was Hispanic students; 58 percent of the students said they discussed college with someone at home. Between 62 and 73 percent of the students said they had talked with someone from school, and between 58 and 69 percent said they had talked with someone at home.

Figure 28
Percentage of Students, by Race/Ethnicity, Who Talked About College With Someone at School or Home, 2013
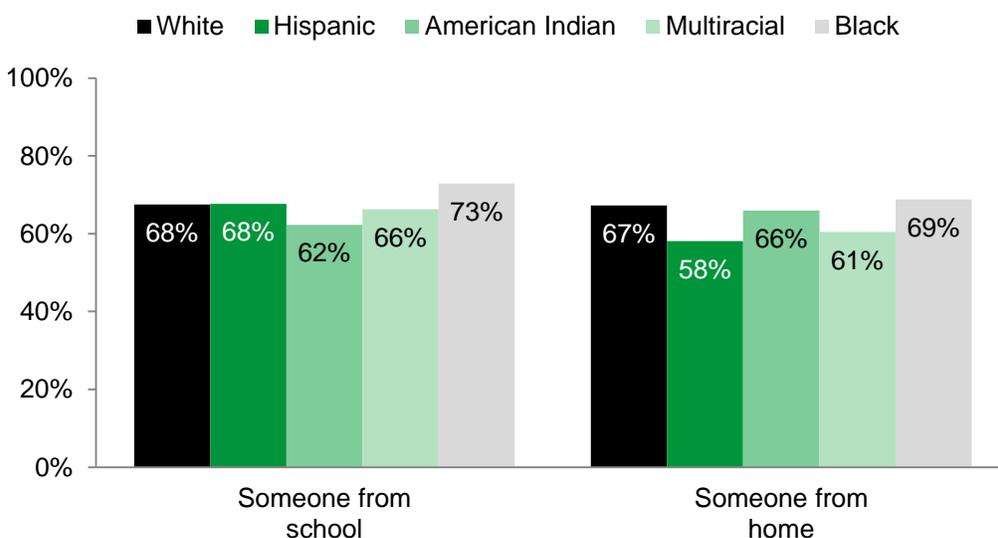
Over 80 percent of all students expected to get a two- or four-year college degree (Figure 29). The percentage of students who expected to get a four-year degree ranged from 56 percent to 67 percent. The percentage of students who expected to get a high school diploma, GED, or less was 8 percent for White students and American Indian students. For the remaining racial/ethnic groups, the percentage of students ranged from 9 percent to 17 percent.

Figure 29
Percentage of Students, by Race/Ethnicity, Who Expected to Get a College Degree, 2013
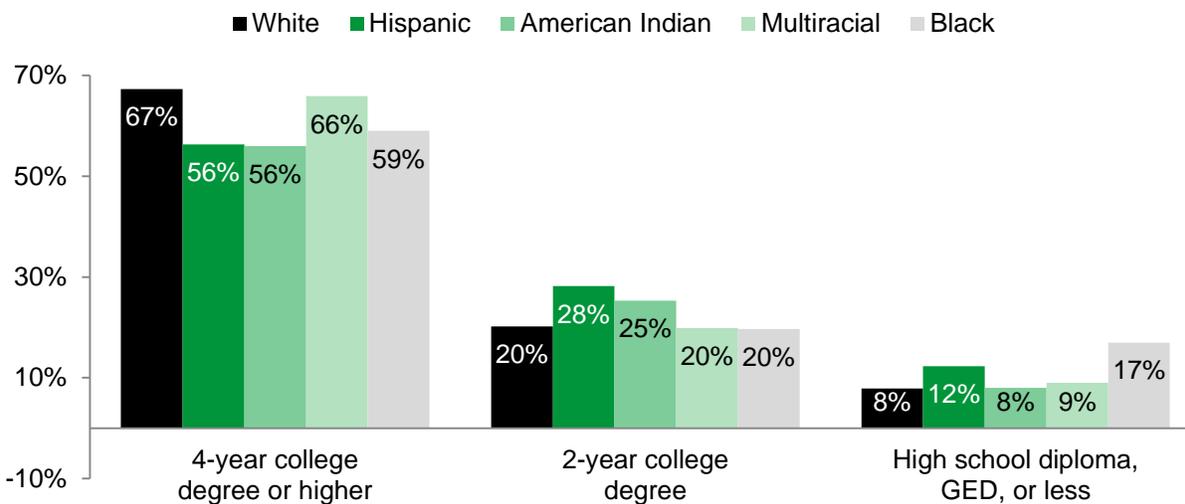
Conclusion

The highest percentage of students who agreed that their parents and teachers not only expected them to go to college, and that they received encouragement and support to prepare for college, rated themselves as "A" or "B" students. Although the majority of "C" and "D" students said their parents expected them to go to college, less than half said their teachers expected them to do so. A larger proportion of "C" and "D" students also reported that they were not encouraged to take challenging courses and had not talked with an adult, at home or in school, about college entrance requirements.

Compared to male students, a higher percentage of female students said the adults in their life expected them to attend college and that their goal was to get a college degree. The percentage of female students who said they had talked with someone at home about college was also higher than for male students. However, for both groups, the percentage of students who said their teachers and counselors encouraged them to take challenging classes, and that their parents were actively involved in their learning was about the same.

At least three quarters of all students, regardless of race or ethnicity, said their parents expected them to go to college. The percentage of students who said their teachers expected them to go to college was lower within each racial/ethnic group. In Oregon, the achievement gap is largest

among American Indian students than any other racial group (). However, in GEAR UP schools, the American Indian group had the highest percentage of students who said their teachers expected them to go to college, that their teachers encouraged them to take challenging courses, and that their parents were actively involved in their learning.

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Appendix A:
Survey Participation Tables

Table A–1
Characteristics of GEAR UP Student Survey respondents, 2012 and 2013

Characteristic	Survey Years	
	2012[a] (n=2,916)	2013[b] (n=3,253)
Gender		
Male	51%	50%
Female	49%	50%
Race/ethnicity		
American Indian or Alaska Native	2%	3%
Asian	1%	1%
Black or African American	1%	2%
Hispanic or Latino	4%	4%
White	66%	58%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	*	1%
Multiethnic/multiracial	23%	30%
Other ethnicity	2%	3%
Grade level		
Grade 7–8	28%	36%
Grade 9–10	37%	35%
Grade 11–12	34%	29%
Perceived Academic Ability		
"A" student	33%	31%
"B" student	43%	39%
"C" student	21%	25%
"D" student	3%	5%
Family members who obtained a degree		
Mother/female guardian	51%	54%
Father/male guardian	42%	44%
Brother or sister	23%	31%
Grandparents	27%	29%

a. For the 2012 survey, percentages of missing data ranged from >1 percent to 7 percent.
b. For the 2013 survey, percentages of missing data ranged from >1 percent to 6 percent.

Source: GEAR UP Student Survey, 2012 and 2013

Table A–2
Characteristics of GEAR UP Parent Survey respondents, 2012 and 2013

	Survey Years	
Characteristic	2012[c] (n=284)	2013[d] (n=476)
Gender[a]		
Male	20%	21%
Female	80%	79%
Race/ethnicity[b]		
White	94%	94%
Non-White	6%	6%

    a.   For the 2012 survey, the percentage of missing data ranged from 4 percent to 11 percent among the characteristics.

    b.   For the 2013 survey, the percentage of missing data ranged from 3 percent to 11 percent among the characteristics..

Source: GEAR UP Parent Survey, 2012 and 2013 t

Table A–3
Characteristics of GEAR UP Educator Survey respondents, 2012 and 2013

	Survey Year	
Characteristic	2012[a] (n168)	2013[b] (n=196)
Race/ethnicity		
White	93%	90%
Non-White	7%	10%
Position		
Teacher	77%	69%
Counselor/Administrator	8%	8%
Other	15%	23%
Subject taught most often		
Math	14%	12%
English	21%	15%
Science	13%	16%
Social Studies	13%	8%
I do not teach	27%	21%
Other Subject	12%	28%
Years working at current school		
Less than one year	7%	11%
One to five years	27%	26%
Six to ten years	21%	30%
Eleven to twenty years	29%	22%
Over twenty years	16%	11%
Highest level of education		
Paraprofessional	9%	15%
Bachelor's Degree and some graduate work	20%	16%
Master's Degree or higher	71%	69%

a. For the 2012 survey, the percentage of missing data ranged from 1 percent to 7 percent among the characteristics.
b. For the 2013 survey, the percentage of missing data ranged from 0 percent to 5 percent among the characteristics..

Source: GEAR UP Educator Survey, 2012 and 2013 **t**

Appendix B: Oregon GEAR UP Planning and Evaluation Rubric

GOAL 1. RIGOR *for all students: Provide appropriately rigorous courses for all students*		
Objective 1.1 EQUITY: Explore the equitable availability of courses for all students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds		
Early Steps	Growing Innovation	New Paradigms
Attempts are made to provide open enrollment to most courses. However, some students still face barriers to enrolling in rigorous courses, and forms of tracking still exist. There is growing awareness of how equity issues impact student learning and opportunities.	All course offerings are aligned with college admission requirements; barriers to course enrollment are mostly removed. Policies, practices, and support systems provide rigorous opportunities for nearly all students.	School structure and culture fosters challenging and relevant learning opportunities for students from all cultural, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, linguistic, and special needs backgrounds. There are no students assigned to low-achieving classes. Demographics of individual classes reflect demographics of the entire school. Each student receives unique support and academic preparation to achieve college-readiness. All students have equal access to highly challenging coursework that is relevant and connected to real life experiences. Sample strategies: - All students are provided with multiple college-prep options during their high school career. - Regular tutorial periods help all students access additional support. - Every student is provided with an adult mentor. - Summer school is provided for enrichment and remediation. - Strategic use of distance learning tools - Rigorous performance standards are upheld for all students in all classes. - Professional development explicitly addresses issues of equity in the classroom. - A rigorous college-preparatory curriculum is provided for all students - Dual credit programs are offered.

Objective 1.2 TEACHING AND LEARNING: Improve the quality of teaching and learning through professional development.		
Early Steps	Growing Innovation	New Paradigms
Teachers have limited repertoire of instructional strategies. Many teachers rely heavily on direct instruction strategies such as lectures and text-based activities. Curriculum tends to be broad and shallow.	Teachers learn and use a variety of effective instructional practices. Curriculum becomes more focused and in-depth.	School has adopted and consistently employs a variety of engaging and effective teaching strategies. Learning goals and expectations are clearly articulated and understood by all students. Curriculum supports in-depth study. Teachers are knowledgeable about cultural, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, linguistic, and special needs characteristics that affect learning and capitalize upon students' backgrounds when designing curriculum to meet individual learning needs. Sample strategies: • Utilization of teaching strategies, such as differentiated instruction, project-based learning, community-based or service learning • Exhibitions or public demonstrations of learning • Internship and mentorship programs • Staff meetings regularly used for discussions and demonstrations of best practices • Professional development providing opportunities to learn effective teaching strategies • Curricula / school activities that incorporate students' cultural, linguistic, and historical knowledge • Postsecondary and high school staff members who collaborate, align coursework, team teach • Understanding that cognitive development depends on repeated exposure to inquiry-based and problem-solving learning over time; courses and teaching are designed to contribute to these skills

Objective 1.3 CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT: Curriculum aligned between middle and high school to ensure a seamless and effective transition for students.		
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Some alignment with standards, some teachers begin to engage students in complex problems or projects.	Curriculum increasingly aligned with standards. Academic challenge is growing but remains uneven throughout the school.	Instruction is aligned with state and district standards and community expectations to prepare students for post-high school education. Students actively explore, research, and solve complex problems to develop a deep understanding of core academic concepts. Students are given multiple opportunities to engage in sophisticated and reflective learning experiences. Sample strategies: - Curricular mapping is used to ensure alignment with local and state standards and expectations. - Course sequences are carefully articulated with lower grades to eliminate gaps and overlapping. - Students are supported to produce work that approaches industry standards. - Courses regularly pursue depth over breadth. - Courses are aligned with college courses; articulation agreements allow for college credit to be counted. - Middle/high school teacher teams facilitate understanding of competencies students need for success in high school college-preparatory and advanced level courses.

GOAL 2. RELEVANCE: *Link students' career aspirations with their educational goals*		
Objective 2.1 CAREER AWARENESS: Provide students with opportunities to explore their career interests, and engage business and community partners in the process		
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
A few classrooms build employer partnerships in school- and work-based settings, but connections mostly limited to guest speaking appearances.	Community and employer partners provide most students with at least one in-depth learning interaction each school year.	Community and employer partners develop rich learning experiences for all students and staff and reap tangible rewards from their relationships with students and the school. Partners actively work to bring school vision to fruition. Partners have opportunities to influence curriculum and program development. Partners receive regular updates on key curriculum and policy changes. Sample strategies: • School supports work-based learning, student internships, and job shadowing. • Employer and community partners work with teaching teams to develop community-based projects. • Employer and community partners regularly serve as audience members for student exhibitions. • Student internships and projects target real needs of employers and community organizations. • School communication plans target employer and community partners. • Integrated use of career information system.

GOAL 3. RIGHT CLASSES: *All students understand early in their school careers what curriculum is necessary to prepare them for college-level work and future careers.*

Objective 3.1 INFORMING and PLANNING: Inform students and their families about college entrance requirements and how to apply, and ensure that students have the information necessary to take the right courses for their chosen academic/career path.

Early Steps	Growing Innovation	New Paradigms
Few students and parents understand the full impact of class choices on college and career access. Few students and parents know the class requirements for graduation and college entrance.	School is aware that some community subgroups are not informed about the importance of class choices. Efforts are made to educate students, family, and community about the impact of class choice, and graduation and college entrance requirements.	Students and parents from all cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, special needs, and socioeconomic backgrounds are informed about graduation and college entrance requirement as well as the importance of making informed class choices. School staff talks to students and parents about the importance of class choice. Sample strategies: • All school personnel coach students to take the right classes. • Eighth-grade requires that 5-year plans are made for all students, with parents involved. • Integrated use of career information system in planning course selection • All school newspapers and communications offer options for translation into different languages. • Parent volunteers coach peers on the importance of college and choosing the right classes. • Student panel made up of recent graduates now attending college informs students of the importance of academic preparation for college. • Special service announcements educate the community about class choice

Objective 3.2 EMPOWERING: Create a school environment, policies, and teacher expectations that support all students pursuing a postsecondary education		
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Few school staff members believe that all students are capable of completing a college-prep curriculum. Few staff members believe that a majority of students have the skills to be successful in college. Many students believe that college is only for a select few.	Teacher expectations are changing, with more staff recognizing that college is an option for all students. More students see themselves as college students.	All students expected to take a college-prep curriculum. All students are expected to achieve at high levels. All students understand that college is possible, even for those students who don't come from traditional college-going families. School and community create open and explicit dialogue regarding issues of student achievement, equity, diversity and empowerment. Sample strategies: • Staff and faculty verbalize that college preparation is a goal for every student. • A rigorous core curriculum is the norm for all students. • All students have access to the type of curriculum that will prepare them for college. • School reaches out to underrepresented parent and community groups, gathers their views, and uses them. • Postsecondary institutions help to create high expectations and clear pathways to postsecondary education.

GOAL 4. RELATIONSHIPS: *Foster relationships that encourage students' academic success*		
Objective 4.1 PEER NETWORKS: Develop peer networks that encourage college-going aspirations.		
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
A college-going culture does not exist in the school. Peer groups are not used to assist or encourage students to stay in school, excel academically, or prepare for college.	There is a growing realization of the importance of peer networks on a student's decision to go to college. Steps have been identified for creating a school-wide college-going culture.	An overall college-going culture pervades the school. College access programs target as many students as possible (whole-school model). Peer student supports are in place. Structures have been developed that facilitate supportive relationships for students with caring adults and peers. Sample Strategies: - Structures are provided that allow students to know each other well. - Peer connections are developed and fostered through advisory groups, project teams, and student clubs centered around academics and college attendance. - Recent graduates serve on panels that address the importance of preparing for and pursing postsecondary education. - Peers are used as tutors (college or high school students). - Recent graduates at local colleges give tours to students.

Objective 4.2 PARENT, FAMILY and COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: Involve family and the broader community in supporting students' academic pursuits.		
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Parents are welcome in the building. Notification of events is sent in home language. Parents are involved primarily on "booster" level, but still may not connect to curricular issues or school change process.	Some parents aware of school change plans. Parental involvement extends to governance and limited instructional connections. Parents attend informational events with students.	Parents and community members form all cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, special needs, and socioeconomic backgrounds are involved in all aspects of the school. Parents understand the vision and are active partners in curriculum design, student learning plans, school improvement, and school decisions. School understands and respects the various cultural communities represented in the building and tap into values that support student achievement and college aspirations. Sample Strategies: - Schools seek guidance from families about what information and resources they need in order to support their children's college aspirations. - Communication plans target parents from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds. - Parents are active and meaningful participants in school governance bodies. - Parent representatives serve in key roles on committees throughout the school and are voting members on school decision making bodies. - Parents partner with students and school staff members to develop student learning plans for all students. - Parents go on college site visits. - Schools actively engage community through forums, town hall meetings, and visits to community organizations and events. - Community groups are used as a method of distributing school information.

Objective 4.3 PERSONALIZATION: Personalize education through school policy and relationships with teachers and counselors.		
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Some structured attempts at grouping or creating long-term adult contacts may be in place such as advisory programs or limited small learning communities.	Advisories, teaming, and small learning communities provide connections for a majority of students.	Student interests and passions drive learning opportunities. Students from all cultural, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, linguistic, and special needs backgrounds develop meaningful, long-term connections to peers and adults. Mentors guide students to develop a post-high school plan. Sample Strategies: • School staff visits the homes of incoming ninth-grade students to welcome them to the school. • Enrollment limits are used to maintain small size. • Course offerings are based on student interests. • Every student is paired with adult mentor. • Small or personalized learning environments are provided and used. • School staff members, including counselors, are given time to help each students develop an academic program that meets their needs and prepares them to meet postsecondary goals.

GOAL 5. REALITY OF AFFORDABILITY: *Address perceived and real affordability concerns of students and families.*		
Objective 5.1 STUDENT AWARENESS: Provide financial aid information to students, families, teachers, and counselors.		
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
College affordability seen as a significant barrier to attending a postsecondary institution by most students and their families as well as school staff.	There is growing awareness among underrepresented students of the actual cost of attending college and the various methods of paying for it.	Students from all cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, special needs, and socioeconomic backgrounds understand the means available to them to pay for postsecondary education. College affordability is not seen as a barrier to attending college. Sample strategies: - School provides help with college applications, financial aid forms, and applying for loans and grants. - School curriculum addresses college affordability/paying for college - College partners provide information on paying for college. - Staff members work with students to build financial planning skills. - Students understand the cost-benefits of attaining a postsecondary education.

Objective 5.2 PARENT, FAMILY, COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND SUPPORT: Parents, family and community members understand how to pay for college and support students in doing so.		
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Parents and community are uninformed or misinformed about the cost of college and how to pay for it. Education around paying for college is left to the student or school.	Parents receive information in their home language on paying for college. Parents attend informational sessions with their students.	Parents, family, and community members understand the options available to pay for college and are active participants in helping students plan and pay for college. Parents, family and community members are resources for students and each other. Parents help plan the FAFSA evenings. Sample Strategies: • Community partners support financial aid nights. • Local college financial aid directors are available to parents and students. • Financial planning is available for parents and students. • Local scholarships are available to students. • Students are supported in creating individual development accounts and other forms of savings. • Bi-lingual scholarship information is readily available early in high school.

Appendix C:
Oregon: Background Information

Access to higher education remains a challenge for many students who face barriers to college entry. Low-income students and students who are potentially the first in their family to attend college have lower college enrollment rates than other students (Choy, 2002; NCES, 2008). Although academic preparation accounts for some of these differences, the disparities in college-going rates persist for these groups of students, even when controlling for academic preparation (Ellwood & Kane, 2000; Smith, et al., 1997). College access outcomes have important economic and social consequences: college graduates earn more than those with a high school degree and are more active in their communities (Baum & Ma, 2007; Kane & Rouse, 1995; NCC, 2006; U.S. Census, 2002).

Economy and State Revenue - Implications for Oregon Education

To understand the challenges that Oregon GEAR UP schools face, it is important to understand what is happening throughout the state in terms of the economy and state revenues for education.

Oregon Economy Overview

According to the Oregon Bluebook, Oregon's economy shadowed the national slowdown that began near the end of the decade. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for Oregon bottomed out at 5 percent in the spring of 2007 and climbed during the next two years to a near-record high of 11.6 percent. The national unemployment rate fluctuated around 4.5 percent in the first half of 2007 and then climbed to 10.1 percent near the end of 2009, the highest level seen in decades. Both the Oregon and national unemployment rates have fallen slightly from their peaks, but stay persistently high.

During the past two decades, Oregon attempted to make the transition from a resource-based economy to a more mixed manufacturing and marketing economy, with an emphasis on high technology. Oregon's hard times of the early 1980s signaled basic changes had occurred in traditional resource sectors—timber, fishing and agriculture—and the state worked to develop new economic sectors to replace older ones. Most important, perhaps, was the state's growing high-tech sector, centered in the three counties around Portland. However, rural Oregon counties were generally left out of any shift to a new economy. When the boom of the 1990s collapsed, Oregon was again confronted with high unemployment, widespread hunger, and a diminishing safety net of social services. The state lost about 43,000 payroll jobs from 2000 through 2003—many of them high-tech manufacturing jobs in the Portland area. As with the nation, Oregon's expansion from 2004 through 2007 was fueled by growth in construction and services. The "Great Recession" erased construction's job gains and devastated the economy to

the extent that employment in 2010 was at roughly the same level as in 2000. (Oregon Secretary of State, 2010).

Since 2000, Oregon has experienced two recessions which kept the state from seeing employment growth during the decade. Nearly every industry was hit hard, but a few were able to grow despite the turbulent economy. Employment in some of Oregon's traditional industries did not fare so well during the recessions of the decade. Mining and logging, industries with employment in steady yet slow decline for decades, lost 30 percent of employees. The manufacturing industry shed one quarter of its jobs during the decade. Wood products workers lost the most jobs, followed by computer and electronic workers, and then by transportation equipment workers. Food manufacturing was the only manufacturing sector that was able to add jobs in the midst of the recession. The information industry was hit hard by both recessions of the decade and lost 17 percent of its workers during that period of time.

According to state rankings from the 2000 U.S. Census, Oregon had the 27th lowest percentage of population living with incomes below the federal poverty level. Back then, 11.6 percent of Oregon residents were living in poverty. As the decade came to a close, the poverty rate in Oregon began to rise. Recently, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated Oregon's poverty rate to be 13.4 percent, which is about the same as the national poverty rate of 13.2 percent, ranking Oregon 33rd among the states for lowest poverty rate. Oregonians in 2009 earned $35,667 per person, which is $112 less per person than in 2000. (Oregon Secretary of State, 2010).Education Funding in Oregon

Oregon schools have faced huge and painful budget cuts. Education's share of the state budget has declined steadily. Oregon schools have already been cut by more than $1 billion over the past few years, and the K-12 share of the state budget has declined since 2004 from 45 percent to just 37 percent. According to an Oregon Education Association (OEA) report, districts across the state have been forced to cut school days, lay off educators, increase class sizes, and eliminate valuable courses such as music, art, and physical education. Oregon has already lost more than 9 percent of classroom teachers because of budget cuts. As a result, class size has increased by nearly 12 percent in the elementary grades alone. Increased class sizes mean less individualized attention and less instructional time for all students. (OEA, 2011)

Oregon's Quality Education Model (QEM)
The Quality Education Model (QEM) was initially developed in 1999 to establish an objective and research-based connection between the resources devoted to schools and levels of student achievement and to guide efforts to fund Oregon schools adequately. In 2001, the Legislative Assembly created the Quality Education Commission (QEC) to serve as a permanent body to regularly update and improve the original QEM. The Commission's work in 2010 is linked to the changes and challenges for K-12 schooling associated with the ongoing implementation of the Oregon Diploma. The Best Practices Panel examined successful math programs in Oregon schools, building on an Oregon Department of Education (ODE) analysis of math course-taking patterns in Oregon high schools. The Cost Panel updated the QEM with the most recent data,

evaluated the cost implications of the Best Practices Panel recommendations, and estimated the costs of fully implementing the QEM.

Best Practices. Given that mathematics skills and knowledge are increasingly in demand in higher education and the workplace, ensuring that students have sufficient math preparation by the time they leave high school is an important goal for Oregon schools. Based on the observations and interviews conducted in schools throughout the state, the Best Practices Panel recommends that the following components of successful math programs be reflected in the Quality Education Model:

1) Include time for new teacher induction programs and job-embedded professional development that is directly related to the curriculum and building goals. Investing in the development of teachers as effective instructional leaders promotes student success.

2) Provide adequate resources and staff so that schools can offer Algebra courses for high school credit in the seventh or eighth grade, with teachers who hold advanced math endorsements. There is evidence that introducing algebra concepts at this stage may foster higher levels of math achievement in high school.

3) Include adequate classroom spaces, smaller class sizes, early identification of struggling students, and additional instructional time with licensed math teachers.

4) Allocate time and resources for districts to develop frameworks for the articulation of math programs for fourth-grade through high school. Such articulation will help schools to provide continuous instruction that builds skills and knowledge cohesively over time.

Course-Taking. As the phase-in of the Oregon Diploma continues, schools and districts must carefully consider how to best prepare students to meet high school graduation requirements. The ODE analysis of course-taking patterns in Oregon high schools helped the Commission to develop an understanding of how students can be kept on track to meet math graduation requirements throughout the grade levels. The following recommendations can be applied to other subject areas as well:

1) Develop a strategic focus on practices that build a solid academic foundation in the early grades. Excellent preparation in the early grades will equip students to achieve the standards established by the Oregon Diploma when they reach high school. If students are not at grade level when they reach high school, they will be unable to take full advantage of the rigorous coursework required to meet the new diploma requirements.

2) Align the timing of student course-taking with the timing of state assessments to avoid the problem that many Oregon students currently face—state assessments test them on content that they have not yet learned. The State Board of Education has already taken a critical first step by moving the high school assessments from the 10th to the 11th grade. This will give schools more time to fully prepare students for the state assessments, while still leaving sufficient time for students to earn all the credits required for graduation. (Quality Education Commission, 2010)

Costs. The Commission's Cost Panel updated the Quality Education Model to include the most current data (school finances, enrollment and other student information, and economic and price information) and for the first time incorporated information about the capital costs associated with providing and maintaining school buildings and facilities. The Cost Panel also carefully evaluated the recommendations of the Best Practices Panel to determine if additional resources were needed in the QEM in order to implement these recommendations. The Cost Panel concluded that the QEM already contains sufficient resources to implement the Best Practices Panel recommendations. TableA-1 shows the Commission's estimates of state funding levels required to maintain the current service level in Oregon schools (the Baseline) and to fully fund a system of highly effective schools as recommended by the Quality Education Commission—the Fully Implemented Model. (Quality Education Commission, 2010)

Table C-1
QEM Funding Requirements (Millions of Dollars)

	2009-2011	2011-2013	2013-2015
Actual State Funding	$5,783.0	$5,725.0	
State Funding Requirement for the Baseline	$5,981.1	$6,710.9	$7,410.1
Percent Change from Prior Biennium		12.20%	10.42%
State Funding Requirement for Fully Implemented Model	$7,879.1	$8,747.7	$9,626.5
Percent Change from Prior Biennium		11.02%	10.04%
Funding Gap: Fully Implemented Model minus Baseline	$1,898.0	$2,036.8	$2,216.5
Percent Change from Prior Biennium		7.28%	8.82%

Source: Quality Education Commission, 2010

School Funding Facts
State appropriations over last decade are as follows:
    2001 biennium: $5.2 billion, reduced to $4.75 billion through five special sessions
    2003 biennium: $5.2 billion, reduced to $4.9 billion
    2005 biennium: $5.263 billion
    2007 biennium: $6.3 billion, reduced to $6.185 through allotment cuts
    2009 biennium: $6 billion, reduced to $5.783 billion through allotment cuts
    2011 biennium: $5.725 billion ($3 billion below the state's own QEM adequacy mark)

Using the U.S. Inflation Calculator, the 10-year inflation rate (2001–2011) was 28 percent. The amount of $4.75 billion, the ultimate resting place of the 2001-03 biennial budget after cuts, would inflate to $6.08 billion for the 2011–2013 biennium. The current budget is not only $3 billion below QEM target of $8,747.7 billion, it is $355 million less than the 2001 recession-level budget, adjusted for inflation.

Public Employee Retirement System (PERS)

An additional cost for school districts was published September 28, 2012. PERS announced that hundreds of millions of dollars in higher pension costs in the budget starting July 1, 2013, is the result of an unfunded liability that has grown to $16 billion. PERS investment income comes from investment earnings on PERS $55 billion in holdings and the employer contributions from most of the state and local government agencies within Oregon, including school districts.

PERS assumes an average investment earnings of 8 percent, but last year those earnings came closer to 2 percent, continuing a trend that started when investment earnings began dropping in 2008. To make sure there's enough money to pay the pensions of PERS retirees in the future, PERS is increasing the amount public employers have to contribute. For next year's budget, contributions for all of the PERS employers will increase by a total of $1 billion—about $130 million of that just for the 51,000 employees in the state budget.

This creates an even larger cost for K-12 schools. The $130 million increased state PERS costs will come from the $15 billion state General and Lottery fund, which provides a major source of K-12 funding ($5.8 billion statewide), and the school districts will also directly bear the impact of their own PERS increases. Across the state, employer contributions will increase by five percentage points, from about 16.3 percent of total payroll to about 21.4 percent of payroll. In 2013, school districts will pay more—on average about 26.7 percent of their payroll. (Oregonian, 2012)

Changes in High School Graduation Requirements: Essential Skills

Starting with the senior class of 2012, it will be tougher to graduate from high school in Oregon. To earn a diploma, students will need to successfully complete the credit requirements, demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skills (ES), and meet the personalized learning requirements. The Essential Skills (ES) are 21st century skills needed for success in college, the workplace, and civic life. Oregon will be the 27th state to require students to pass a state high school graduation exam. California began requiring students to pass state reading and math exams in 2006. In 2008, Washington graduated its first class of students who were required to pass state reading and writing exams to get a diploma. Oregon will be one of just two states (the other one is New Jersey) to allow students to substitute a locally graded essay or work sample if they choose not to take the state test. Oregon's class of 2012 is the first class required to pass a reading test to graduate. The class of 2013 will be required to pass both a reading and a writing test, and the class of 2014 will need to pass reading, writing, and applied math tests in order to graduate. These new requirements are designed to better prepare each student for success in college, work, and citizenship.

The new Oregon Diploma requirements were adopted by the State Board of Education in 2008, and the roll-out for the requirements was described in terms of a student's high school graduation year (e.g., class of 2012, 2013, etc.). To avoid creating additional requirements for students whose graduation year changed when they decided on a fifth year of high school,

requirements are described in terms of the year the student first entered the high school system. In this way, the diploma requirements are applied to students based on the school year they were first enrolled in grade 9, also referred to as the cohort year.

Table C-2 shows the implementation timeline based on the year first enrolled in grade 9. The State Board has approved three assessment options for students to demonstrate Essential Skill proficiency: (1) OAKS state test, or (2) work samples using official scoring guides, or (3) other approved standardized tests (e.g., SAT, PLAN, ACT, PSAT, Work Keys, Compass, ASSET) (Oregon Department of Education 2010).

Table C-2
Oregon Department of Education Graduation Requirements, by Students' Cohort Year

2009–2011	Requirements for students by expected graduation year		2014 and beyond
	2012	2013	
English/LA – 4 credits	English/LA – 4 credits	English/LA – 4 credits	English/LA – 4 credits
Math – 3 credits	Math – 3 credits	Math – 3 credits	Math – 3 credits; content at Algebra I and above 2
Science – 2 credits	Science – 3 credits Scientific inquiry and lab experiences1	Science – 3 credits	Science – 3 credits
Social Sciences – 3 credits	Social Sciences – 3 credits	Social Sciences – 3 credits	Social Sciences – 3 credits
PE – 1 credit	PE – 1 credit	PE – 1 credit	PE – 1 credit
Health – 1 credit	Health – 1 credit	Health – 1 credit	Health – 1 credit
CTE/Arts/2nd Lang. – 1 credit	CTE/Arts/2nd Lang.– 3 credits	CTE/Arts/2nd Lang.– 3 credits	CTE/Arts/2nd Lang.– 3 credits
Electives – 9 credits	Electives – 6 credits	Electives – 6 credits	Electives – 6 credits
24 Credits	24 Credits	24 Credits	24 Credits
NA	Essential Skills Reading	Essential Skills Reading Writing	Essential Skills Reading Writing Applied Math
Personalized Learning Requirements	Personalized Learning Requirements	Personalized Learning Requirements	Personalized Learning Requirements

Source: Oregon Department of Education, 2010

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Another challenge Oregon schools face in the near future is K–12 curriculum alignment changes and the resulting adjustment to instructional materials. Adopted by 45 states in the U.S., the Common Core State Standards are a set of shared K-12 learning expectations for students in English-language arts and mathematics. These two new sets of content standards replace Oregon's current standards in English language arts and mathematics. While the new standards are similar in ways to Oregon's current standards, some content has been shifted and the level of rigor has increased to ensure college and career readiness at the end of high school.

For English Language Arts, the CCSS expect students to independently read and understand texts that are more challenging than traditionally used in the classroom. College reading material has maintained or increased its complexity; reading materials in K–12 have become less complex and easier to read. The reading difficulty level of workplace material is also often greater than that required of grade 12 students.

The CCSS includes standards written at grade levels 9/10 and 11/12. The CCSS include standards at grades 6–12 for literacy across subject areas. Reading a science text requires different skills than reading a novel. In CCSS, literacy is a shared responsibility within the school across all subjects. The literacy standards are designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to be able to read and write effectively in all of their classes.

For over a decade, international achievement comparisons, such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), have shown the United States to have mediocre achievement in mathematics. Research also indicates that high performing countries organize math content around fewer concepts. CCSS was modeled after international standards, which allows for a shift away from the "mile-wide, inch-deep" curriculum, and prepares students with the skills they need to be competitive in the global marketplace. This content focus at each grade allows for in-depth study. The CCSS for mathematics also provides a balanced combination of math skills and understanding.

The 6–8 mathematics content standards are organized by grade level, but are designed more like high school standards with a primary emphasis on algebra, geometry, and statistics. The high school content standards are organized by Conceptual Categories rather than grade level, with the goal of preparing all students for advanced mathematics.

With these new standards comes a new assessment system that will replace Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS) in 2014-15. Oregon is a member of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced), a state-led consortium working to develop next-generation assessments that accurately measure student progress toward college- and career-readiness. Smarter Balanced is one of two multistate consortia awarded funding from the U.S. Department of Education in 2010 to develop an assessment system aligned to the *Common Core State Standards (CCSS)* by the 2014-15 school year.