

OREGON GEAR UP TOOLKIT



Community Engagement

build partnerships and gain support
for college and career readiness programs

REACHING HIGHER

RIGOR

RELEVANCE

RELATIONSHIPS

RAISING AWARENESS

7 8 9 10 11 12 13+

Parents **Community** Teachers



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REACHING HIGHER

Create a school environment, policies, and teacher expectations that support all students' pursuit of a postsecondary education.

RELEVANCE

Link students' career aspirations with their educational goals.

RELATIONSHIPS

Foster relationships that encourage student success.



DOWNLOAD PRINT-AND-USE RESOURCES: bit.ly/2jGfCXz

Look for the printer icon and green text throughout the toolkit!

· Partner Pledge Form

· Partner Poster

· Thank You Poster

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Sources & More Information

University of Kansas, [The Community Tool Box](#)

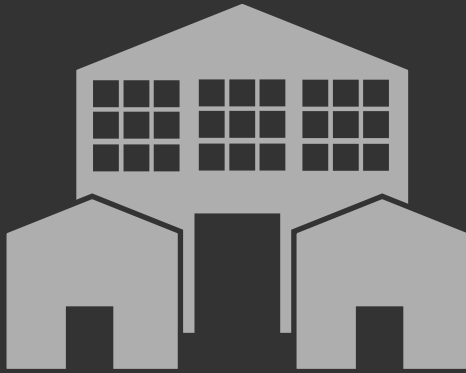
Alleman & Holly, 2013: [Multiple Points of Contact: Promoting Rural Postsecondary Preparation through School-Community Partnerships](#)

Kladifko, 2013: [Practical School Community Partnerships Leading to Successful Educational Leaders](#)

Southerland, Behringer & Slawson, 2013: [Using the Give-Get Grid to Understand Potential Expectations of Engagement in a Community-Academic Partnership](#)

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

A strong connection between the school and the community can positively impact school climate and provide support for high academic expectations for students. In addition,



community partners can contribute to the college aspirations and readiness of students by supporting academic and career success, providing information and advising, donating resources and supplies and reinforcing a college-going culture. Successful school and community partnerships are created through leadership, trust, stability, readiness and consistent outreach.

The school and the community have a common goal: to create a safe and healthy environment that allows all individuals to be productive and happy. In many places, the school is the center of the community.

Therefore, it's natural to engage community partners in supporting the school. Community partners can provide their time as mentors or volunteers, their influence with a broader audience and their resources in the form of physical space or donations.

Building community partnerships is especially critical for college and career readiness efforts. The whole community can help support students' futures and sustain a college-going culture.

This toolkit provides a simple guide to identify potential partners and needs as well as communication strategies to build long-term, successful partnerships between the school and the community.

Partnerships between
schools and communities
help reinforce and
sustain a college-going
culture.

► PARENT ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

Looking to engage parents? Our toolkit offers strategies and resources to assess school climate and communicate with families.

oregongearup.org/resource/parent-engagement-toolkit



WHO IS OUR COMMUNITY?

1. IDENTIFY PARTNERS

The first step in engaging community is identifying potential community partners that have an interest and/or ability to help students and families prepare for college and career. One way to do this is through **community asset mapping**: listing people, places, services, and businesses that have the ability to make your community better.

First, gather a small team of dedicated stakeholders connected to your school—consider including parents, students and community partners as well as teacher and administrators.

Next, brainstorm a list of potential partnerships as a team. Note if a team member or others have a connection to partners that will allow you to build on existing relationships.

Consider a wide variety of assets (see a sample list of ideas to the right), both large and small. Use your community's website or directory to come up with assets. If your community is fairly small, consider driving or walking around to catalog organizations, businesses and places.

Use the [planning guide on page 8](#) or consider using a white board or large poster board.

► MAPPING COMMUNITY ASSETS

For a more robust process, use this comprehensive guide to identifying strengths in a community.

resources.depaul.edu/abcd-institute/resources/Documents/DorfmanMappingCommunityAssetsWorkbook.pdf

COMMUNITY ASSETS

- **Local businesses or services:** restaurants, banks and credit unions, grocery stores, hospitals
- **Postsecondary institutions:** trade or technical schools, community colleges, universities
- **Organizations:** Chamber of Commerce, Boys & Girls Club, 4-H, Rotary, Kiwanis, churches, library, parent associations, school alumni groups, student leadership groups
- **Elected officials:** school board, mayor, city council, state and federal representatives
- **Media:** local newspapers, magazines, websites, TV and radio stations
- **Individuals:** influential/connected/talented people in your community, religious leaders, local celebrities
- **Places:** community center, library, place of worship, natural or historical attraction
- **Events:** weekly, monthly, or annual events such as farmer's markets, festivals, parades, concerts and sporting events



WHAT ARE OUR NEEDS?

2. IDENTIFY NEEDS

What can you use help with to prepare students and families for college and career?

With your team, brainstorm a list of needs related to implementing a college-going culture in the school and community. Use the [planning guide on page 8](#) or consider using a white board or large poster board. Consider the examples to the right.



Local businesses can encourage student success with discounts, like this District Taco restaurant in the Washington D.C. area.

3. CONNECT PARTNERS WITH NEEDS

Using the [planning guide](#) or a white board, draw a line between partners and the need(s) they might be able to help address. It might get messy!

Discuss the needs that are the biggest priority and on the partners that may be able to address them. Alternatively, it may be easiest to start with “low-hanging fruit”: simple requests and/or partners that have contributed in the past to programs at your school (sports, leadership, etc.) However, be careful not to overburden dedicated partners or poach their resources from other programs.

TIME

- Work as a **mentor** with one or more students
- **Guest speakers/presenters** for a Career Day
- Offer **internships, volunteer and job shadow** opportunities
- **Volunteer** in school and at events
- **Present** information about college, financial aid
- Serve as a **judge** for college decorations or other contests
- Host a **field trip** or other supplementary learning experience
- Serve on a **school committee** or college and career readiness team

PUBLICITY

- **Hang posters** and other information in local businesses
- Join in **college t-shirt days**, offer discounts to participating students
- Offer **free advertising** in newspaper, magazines, TV, websites, social media, company newsletters, reader boards and signs
- Elected officials give **proclamations**

SUPPLIES

- Offer **space** for an event or fundraiser
- Donate **food** for an event
- Endow **scholarships** for students for summer programs or college
- Provide **funding** for field trip transportation or other supplies



HOW DO WE ENGAGE?

4. PERFECT YOUR “ASK”

Once you’ve identified your priority partners, your team should spend some time developing your “ask”—the information you provide that will compel partners to help you out.

For each partner you’re hoping to engage, ask:

What do they care about?

Consider an organization’s mission or an individual’s role. What are the common goals you share?

Think about their perspective. For example, local businesses may need specially trained or educated workers. Local events may care about portraying the community in a positive way.

Community members often wear many hats: an elected official may also be an alum of the school as well as a grandparent to a student. Consider all these roles!

What do they need to know?

Tell a story or anecdote that helps illustrate your point and frame it in relation to something they care about. For example, ask a student to share their goal of attending college so he or she can come back and help the community in some way.

Some audiences may appreciate data. For example, a Chamber of Commerce or school board may wish to hear state statistics about [the percentage of jobs that will require postsecondary education](#).

What do you want them to do?

Be specific in what you’re asking for. Include dates and times, specific costs and other details. Have them complete a [Partner Pledge Form](#) to participate while you have their attention.

SCHOOL ASSETS

- Provide student volunteers for an event or organization
- Showcase or advertise businesses
- Give a [Partner Poster](#) to display
- Offer physical space at the school for meetings or events
- Create a classroom project on a specific need of the partner or in the community (e.g. a digital media class creates a video for a local business)
- Offer workshops or classes for community members
- Free or discounted passes to school events like sports games or concerts
- Give a “Partner Welcome Kit” with a small gift and ways to get involved

What can you do for them?

Consider ways you can support your community partners so it’s a mutually beneficial relationship.

Have a conversation with the community partner to identify their needs and brainstorm creative ways to support each other. The Give-Get grid can be a way to frame and record the conversation.

	GIVES	GETS
SCHOOL	What the school gives	What the school gets
PARTNER	What the partner gives	What the partner gets

Use the [planning guide on page 9](#) or consider using a white board or large poster board.



HOW DO WE ENGAGE?

5. COMMUNICATE REGULARLY

Successful school-community partnerships are based on trust and on-going, effective interpersonal communication. Even though you will be asking your community partners for one specific action, remember to focus on building a long, collaborative relationship.

Regular and prompt communication is key in building and maintaining a good relationship. Decide how you will stay in touch with community partners and who's responsible. Initially you may need to spend more effort (in person, on the phone) to build relationships. One option: host a "Friendraiser", a special event that brings together community members, parents and students.

► COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

Explore additional tools to create a strategic work plan to reach students, parents and community.

oregongearup.org/resources/communications-toolkit

Recognize and thank the organizations, businesses and people who support your school. Share with them the impact of their contribution and additional ways they can be involved in the future.

SAY & SHOW THANKS

- Have students write thank you notes
- Invite community partners to events and publicly thank their contributions
- Create a wall in a visible place at the school acknowledging partners with a **Thank You Poster** 📄
- Recognize partners in social media posts and in the school newsletter
- Hold an event to thank all partners and honor a "Partner of the Year"

Use the [planning guide on page 10](#) or brainstorm on a white board.

MORE RESOURCES

Partnerships By Design: Cultivating Effective and Meaningful School-Family-Community Partnerships, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/pbd.pdf

Beyond the Building: A Facilitation Guide for School, Family, and Community Connections, National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools

sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/fam40.html

Creating Collaborative Action Teams: Working Together for Student Success, SEDL

sedl.org/pubs/fam18/

Business Engagement in Education: Key Partners for Student Success, College Summit

thelearningpartnership.ca/files/download/e38d0dcca60c456

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLANNING GUIDE

1. IDENTIFY PARTNERS

With a group, brainstorm a list of community assets in each category.

LOCAL BUSINESSES/SERVICES:

POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS:

ORGANIZATIONS:

ELECTED OFFICIALS:

MEDIA:

INDIVIDUALS:

PLACES:

EVENTS:

2. IDENTIFY NEEDS

With a group, brainstorm a list of needs related to implementing a college-going culture in your school and community.

TIME:

PUBLICITY:

SUPPLIES:

3. CONNECT PARTNERS WITH NEEDS

With a group, draw a line between the partners and the need(s) they might address. What are the biggest priorities? What are the “low-hanging fruit”?

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLANNING GUIDE

4. PERFECT YOUR “ASK”

Choose one need and the partner that may be able to help fulfill it. Answer the following questions for each need and partner.

WHAT IS OUR NEED?

WHO CAN HELP US WITH THIS?

WHAT DO THEY CARE ABOUT? WHAT ARE OUR COMMON GOALS?

WHAT DO THEY NEED TO KNOW? WHO/WHAT WILL THEY LISTEN TO? (e.g. students, data, etc.)

WHAT DO WE WANT THEM TO DO?

WHAT CAN WE DO FOR THEM?

Have a conversation with the community partner to identify their needs and brainstorm creative ways to support each other.

	GIVES	GETS
SCHOOL		
PARTNER		

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLANNING GUIDE

5. COMMUNICATE REGULARLY

Regular communication is key in building and maintaining a good relationship with community partners.

HOW WILL WE COMMUNICATE WITH PARTNERS? Choose all that apply.	HOW OFTEN?	WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?
<input type="checkbox"/> E-mail		
<input type="checkbox"/> Phone		
<input type="checkbox"/> In person ("Frienderaiser" or one-on-one meeting)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Printed newsletter		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:		

HOW WILL WE THANK OUR PARTNERS? Choose more than one!	HOW OFTEN?	WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?
<input type="checkbox"/> E-mail		
<input type="checkbox"/> Phone		
<input type="checkbox"/> At events		
<input type="checkbox"/> Social media		
<input type="checkbox"/> School newsletter		
<input type="checkbox"/> Student thank you		
<input type="checkbox"/> Display at school		
<input type="checkbox"/> Special event		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:		



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COLLEGE. It's not a dream, it's a plan.