

OREGON GEAR UP

YEAR 2 (2023-24) EVALUATION REPORT

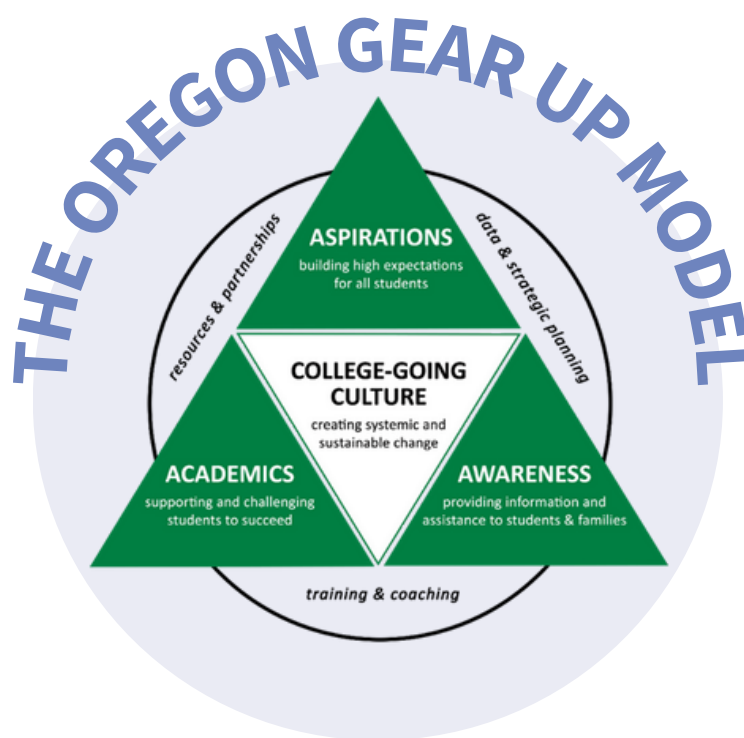
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September 2022, the state of Oregon was awarded a seven-year federally-funded Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) state grant. Oregon GEAR UP is designed to prepare rural and low-income students for postsecondary education and careers.

The initiative is grounded in an evidence-based framework developed by Oregon GEAR UP that relies on three key research-based focal areas, titled the “3As”: Academic Preparation, Awareness, and Aspirations. During the 2023-24 school year, Year 2 of the grant, Oregon GEAR UP was implemented in 17 middle and high schools and served 3,810 students in grade 6 through grade 12 and 258 students in their first year of college.

Oregon GEAR UP retained Metis Associates to conduct an evaluation designed to document the initiative’s successful practices, challenges and lessons learned and assess its impact on students, staff, families, and schools. Data for the Year 2 evaluation was obtained from student, parent/guardian and staff surveys, a senior exit survey, a college and career readiness inventory, and the Oregon Department of Education and National Student Clearinghouse.

This executive summary is intended to serve as a stand-alone document that summarizes key findings for Year 2; the full results are presented in more detail in subsequent sections of this report.



YEAR 2 IMPLEMENTATION AT A GLANCE



10
Clusters



17
Schools



3,810
Students
Enrolled



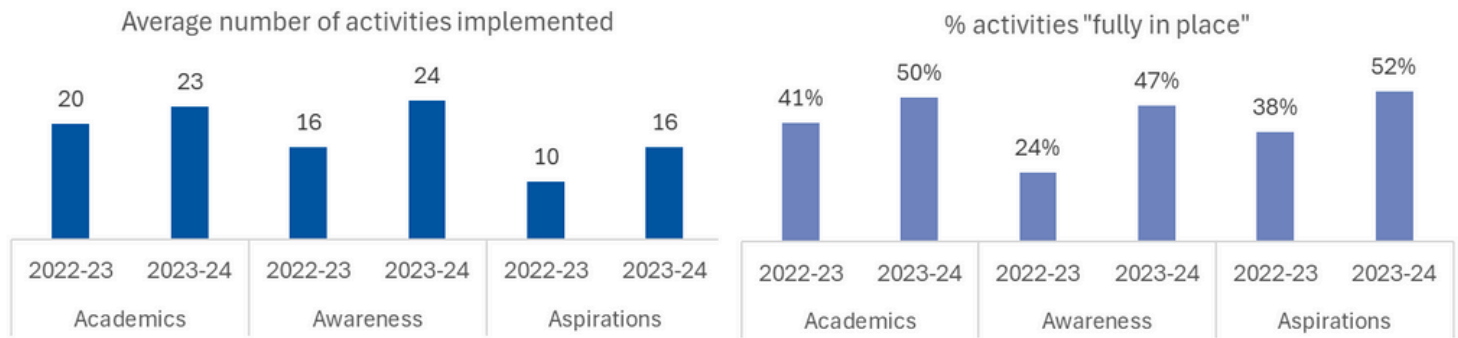
222 staff
participated
in GEAR UP
trainings



In Year 2, the number and level of implementation of college and career readiness activities in participating schools increased considerably; coordinators and administrators reported GEAR UP has had the largest impact on raising awareness and aspirations.

In Year 2, GEAR UP schools continued to implement a wide breadth of GEAR UP activities for students, staff, and families. Results from a College and Career Readiness Inventory showed increases in both the number of activities/interventions implemented and the extent to which they were “fully in place.”

Figure 1. GEAR UP Activity Implementation



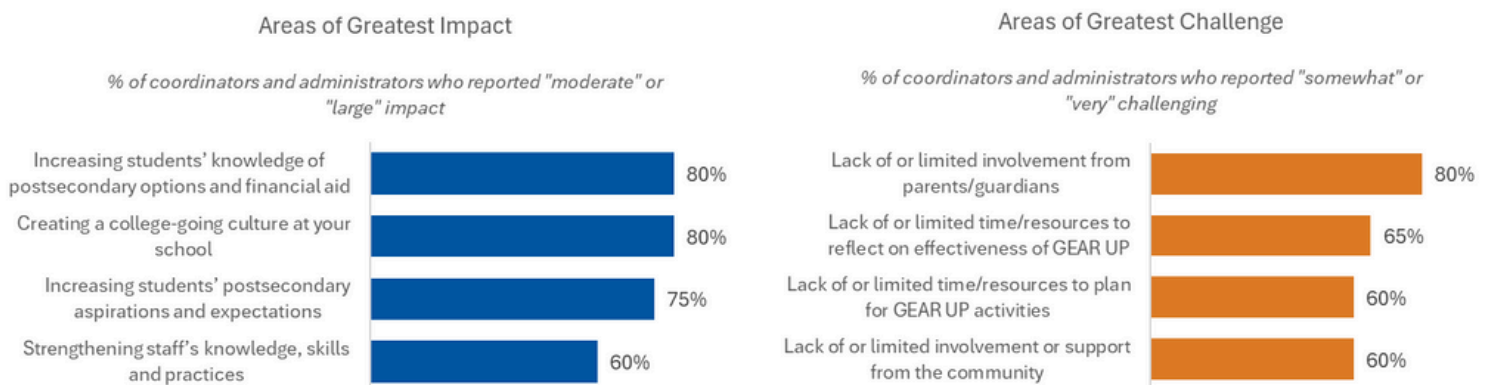
The large majority of coordinators and administrators reported that GEAR UP has already had a “moderate” to “large impact” in increasing students’ knowledge of postsecondary education options and financial aid and creating a college-going culture. The main challenges they reported were family and community engagement and finding time to plan for GEAR UP activities and reflect on their effectiveness.

“Having the opportunity to take students to colleges has been great, but the best is when several students have had ‘aha’ moments that they could see themselves going to college and that it is possible for them!”

“Students realize the ‘college going culture’ we have at our school thanks to GEAR UP.”

School staff

Figure 2. Areas of GEAR UP’s Greatest Impact and Greatest Challenges





School staff were very satisfied with the supports and professional development that GEAR UP has provided, including materials and resources, support from GEAR UP’s success coach, and the spring planning retreat, among others.

All coordinators reported the weekly coordinator bulletins and meetings with GEAR UP’s school success coach have been “helpful” or “very helpful.” Almost all coordinators and administrators were also satisfied with all the other resources they used, particularly with other supports and communications from the success coach, the planning retreat, and the Oregon Goes To College website.

Sixty-one school staff attended the planning retreat in spring 2024. During this 3-day gathering, school teams participated in professional development, learned about available resources, reviewed key data for their schools, and worked on their GEAR UP plans for the following year. Participants provided very positive feedback about the experience and reported they particularly enjoyed learning from one another and having team time to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts to date, reflect, and plan.

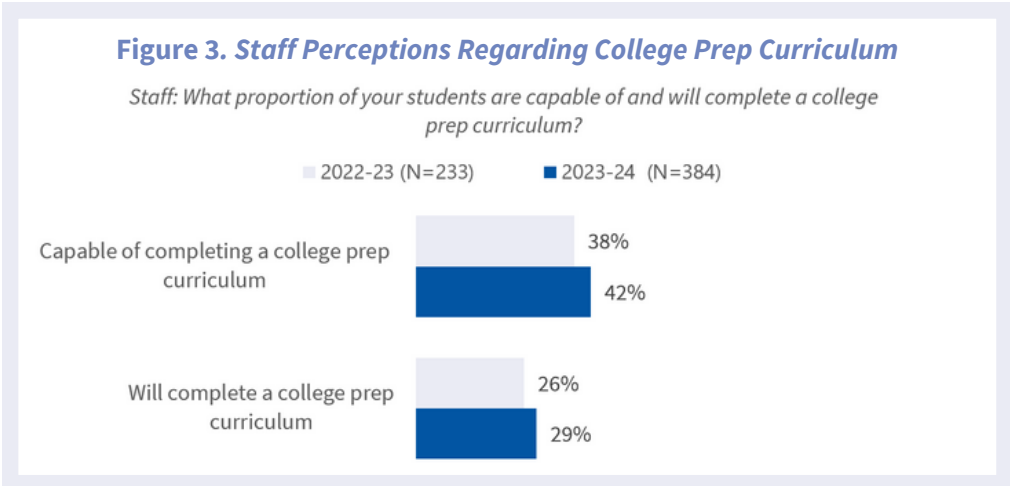
87%
of planning retreat participants said they have learned something new, valuable or necessary during the event.



Many students in GEAR UP schools are struggling academically. Attendance has also been a challenge in many schools. These should remain key focus areas moving forward.

Data from the Oregon Department of Education show that, consistent with statewide trends, less than half of the GEAR UP students are meeting grade-level standards in mathematics and English language arts; and attendance has been declining sharply since the COVID pandemic. Furthermore, school staff believe only a minority of their students are capable of and will complete a college prep curriculum. Perceptions around school climate were less favorable for students than staff, and they have somewhat declined over the past two years. All of these findings highlight the importance of GEAR UP supporting schools in this area. GEAR UP has taken important steps to address this, including offering schools the services of Center for High School Success (which focuses on tracking and improving metrics for 9th grade students) and access to the Oregon Data Suite (a student information system that allows schools to identify students at risk). Oregon GEAR UP also offered a Summer Institute for Educators in partnership with Safe and Civil Schools, which focused on classroom engagement and attendance.

54%
of GEAR UP students attended school regularly in 2022-23; a significant decline from 74% of students pre-COVID.





Evaluation findings revealed important gains in student knowledge of postsecondary options and financial aid over the first two years of the grant.

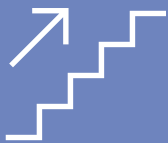
Survey results show gains from Year 1 to Year 2 in a number of important areas:

- Students and staff participation in college visits
- Students' and staff's self-reported knowledge of entrance requirements to 4-year colleges and universities, community colleges, and technical schools
- Students' self-reported knowledge of financial aid terms and sources, particularly OSAC scholarships and FAFSA/ORSAA

5 percentage point increase

in the percentage of students who reported their school helps them figure out which college matches their interests and abilities (23% to 28%).

Yet, in Year 2, only a very small proportion of students, staff, and parents or guardians knew the approximate cost of “attending a community college in Oregon (including tuition, books, housing, and food) without any financial aid” (14%, 10%, and 9%).



Student and staff educational expectations have slightly increased from Year 1 to Year 2; but staff expectations remained much lower than students. Results also suggest schools are making strides in building a college-going culture.

In Year 2, 78% of students reported they think they will achieve a college degree, certificate, or apprenticeship; staff believe fewer students (57%) will do so.

Schools are building college-going cultures: from Year 1 to Year 2, there were increases in both the extent to which staff believe they promote a college-going culture, as well as the extent to which staff believe their school has a college-going culture in place.

Figure 4. Student & Staff Educational Expectations

Students: What is the highest level of education you expect to achieve? [% who said a college degree, certificate, or apprenticeship]



Staff: What proportion of your current students will achieve the following? [% who said a college degree, certificate, or apprenticeship]

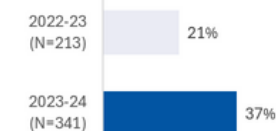


Figure 5. Staff Perceptions of Promoting a College-Going Culture

% staff who reported they promote a college-going culture "often" or "always"



% staff who reported their school has college-going culture "partially" or "fully" in place



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OREGON GEAR UP:

Continue to devise interventions, supports, and resources for schools focused on: 1) improving students' academic performance and school attendance; 2) fostering greater family and community engagement; 3) raising staff expectations for students; and 4) strengthening school-wide college-going cultures. To accomplish this, Oregon GEAR UP may consider providing additional PD for educators, establishing partnerships with other organizations, and promoting the sharing of promising practices across schools.

INTRODUCTION

OREGON GEAR UP IS A SEVEN-YEAR FEDERALLY-FUNDED INITIATIVE DESIGNED TO PREPARE RURAL AND LOW-INCOME STUDENTS FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND CAREERS.

In September 2022, the state of Oregon was awarded a seven-year federally-funded Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) state grant. During this time, Oregon GEAR UP is working with a cohort of 10 rural communities (referred to as “clusters”) made up of middle schools and high schools to foster a college-going culture by providing funding and technical assistance, professional development for staff, and enrichment opportunities for students.

The initiative is grounded in an evidence-based framework developed by Oregon GEAR UP that relies on three key research-based focal areas, titled the “3As”: Academic Preparation, Awareness, and Aspirations. During the 2023-24 school year, Oregon GEAR UP was implemented in 17 middle and high schools and served 3,810 students in grade 6 through grade 12 and 258 students in their first year in college.

This report summarizes the key findings for Year 2 (2023-24) from the evaluation conducted by Metis Associates, an independent research and evaluation firm. The evaluation is designed to document the initiative’s successful practices, challenges, and lessons learned and to assess its impact on students, staff, families, and schools.

Data for the Year 2 evaluation was obtained from student, parent/guardian and staff surveys, a senior exit survey, a college and career readiness inventory, the National Student Clearinghouse and the Oregon Department of Education student data system. The evaluation methodology is discussed in more detail in the next section.

A STRONG NETWORK OF PARTNERS



REPORT ORGANIZATION

- Executive Summary (Pages 1-4)
- Introduction (Page 5)
- Methodology (Pages 6-7)
- Oregon GEAR UP Model (Page 8)
- Implementation at a Glance (Page 9-10)
- Evaluation Findings (Pages 11-27)
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 - Academic Preparation (Pages 12-15)
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THE EVALUATION DESIGN OF OREGON GEAR UP

Guided by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Standards Handbook (v. 4.1, 2020) and the WWC’s Transition to College Review Protocol (v. 4.0, 2019), Metis is conducting a rigorous evaluation that is participatory, systematic, and cumulative—with links between activities, outcomes, and contexts that can yield definitive insights into the nature and extent of implementation fidelity and project impact. The evaluation includes formative and summative components and uses multiple sources of quantitative and qualitative data and methods of analysis.



THE GEAR UP IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION IS GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- 1 Is GEAR UP’s research-based 3As model being implemented as designed (with fidelity)? To what extent does implementation fidelity vary by school and by core strategy under each A?
- 2 What are promising practices, successes, and factors facilitating implementation?
- 3 What are challenges, lessons learned, and recommendations for improvement?

THE GEAR UP OUTCOME EVALUATION OF GEAR UP’S EFFORTS ARE GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- 1 To what extent, if any, does GEAR UP increase the academic performance and preparation for post-secondary education of GEAR UP students?
- 2 To what extent, if any, does GEAR UP increase the rate of high school graduation and participation in post-secondary education? What are positive and negative predictors of high school graduation and college enrollment?
- 3 To what extent, if any, does GEAR UP increase student and family expectations and their knowledge of post-secondary education options, preparation, and financing?
- 4 What overall impact does GEAR UP have on students’ high school graduation and college enrollment rates as compared to a well-matched sample of non-participants?

STUDENT SURVEYS



2,718 students from 17 GEAR UP schools completed a survey (63% response rate) assessing their educational expectations, college-related knowledge, self-reported learning about college and career information, participation in different college and career oriented activities, and perceptions of their school's climate.

STAFF AND COORDINATOR/ADMINISTRATOR SURVEYS



418 staff at GEAR UP schools completed a survey assessing their perceptions of GEAR UP, their expectations for their students, their knowledge of college cost and entrance requirements, their participation in college and career-related activities, their perceptions about their school, and suggestions for improvements. Twenty-two coordinators and administrators completed a survey later in the spring reflecting on GEAR UP implementation and outcomes.

PARENT/GUARDIAN SURVEYS



699 parents with children at GEAR UP schools completed a survey assessing their educational expectations for their children, their college-related knowledge, their participation in college and career-related activities, their perceptions of their child's school, self-reported learning about college and career information, and reasons why their child might not be able to continue their education.

SENIOR EXIT SURVEYS



383 GEAR UP seniors completed an exit survey. Students were asked to report their plans for the fall, reflect on their high school experiences, and provide detailed contact information for a Life After High School Survey, to be conducted in the fall.

PLANNING RETREAT EVALUATIONS



53 participants attending the planning retreat responded to a survey designed to obtain their feedback on the event (87% response rate). Participants were asked about the quality and effectiveness of the retreat's activities, what they achieved at the retreat, topics of interest for future retreats, and suggestions for improvement.

CCRI DATA



Each year, clusters are asked to complete the College and Career Readiness Inventory (CCRI) to better understand the extent to which each cluster is implementing relevant activities and for which grade levels. All 10 clusters completed it in Years 1 and 2.

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (ODE) AND NATIONAL STUDENT CLEARINGHOUSE (NSC) DATA



Metis collected baseline and 2022-23 information from the Oregon Department of Education, including students' demographic characteristics and achievement/attendance. Metis also obtained data about GEAR UP alumni through the National Student Clearinghouse, including college enrollment and persistence.

OREGON GEAR UP MODEL

THE OVERARCHING GOAL OF OREGON GEAR UP IS TO CREATE A COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE IN PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS AND PREPARE THEIR STUDENTS FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND CAREERS.

According to the Center for Educational Partnerships at UC Berkeley, the relationships between and among students and staff in the school are the foundation upon which the school's college-going culture is built. Oregon GEAR UP developed a framework, unique to their particular cohort of schools, by which all program activities are rooted in the idea that students need sufficient **academic preparation**, as well as **awareness** of and assistance with the college-going process in order to achieve their **aspirations**.

ACADEMIC PREPARATION

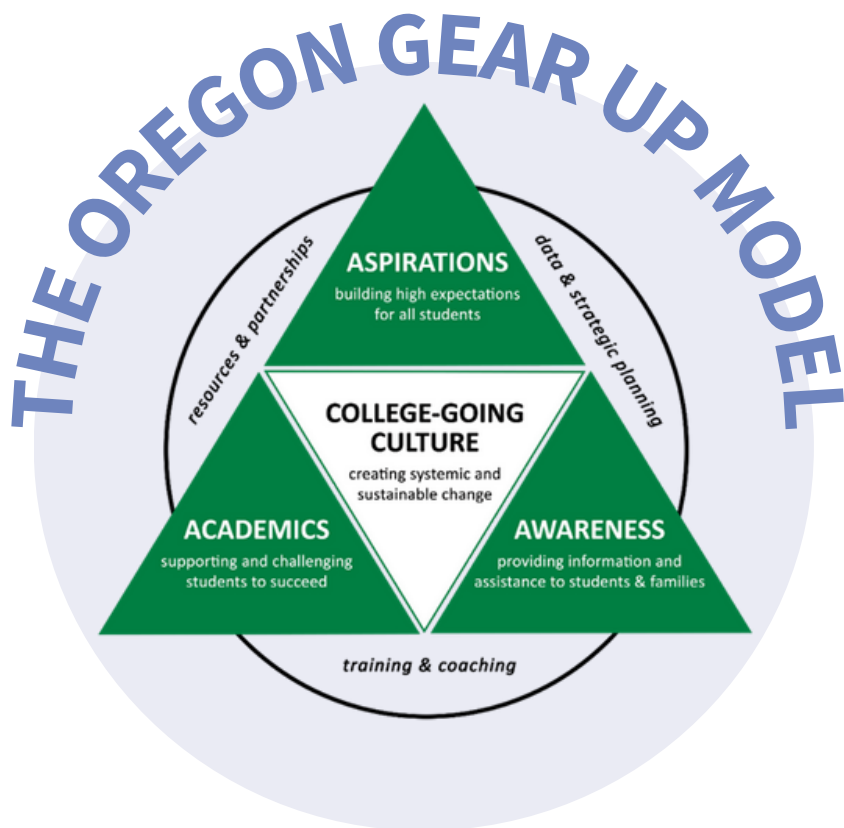
Students will be academically prepared to succeed in postsecondary education.

AWARENESS

Students and their families will be knowledgeable about careers and the college-going process. They will also receive support and assistance with the college-going process.

ASPIRATIONS

Students will feel supported and encouraged by the school environment, policies, and relationships that promote high expectations for all students.



The rationale for the theoretical framework is based on research about college access and success for low-income students as well as evidence from work with prior GEAR UP cohorts. Applying this model and widely disseminating the wealth of resources and materials Oregon GEAR UP has created over the years will lead to long-term improvements and systemic reforms, ensuring the work is sustained beyond the life of the grant.

IMPLEMENTATION AT A GLANCE



10
Clusters



17
Schools



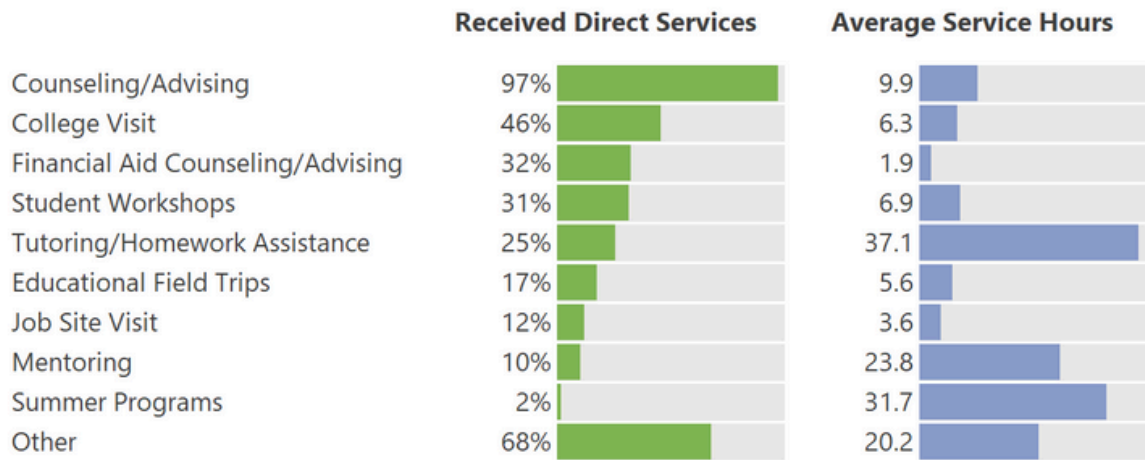
3,810
Students
Enrolled
in 2023-24



222 staff
participated
in GEAR UP
PD in 2023-24

In Year 2 (2023-2024), Oregon GEAR UP served 3,810 students in grade 6 through grade 12 enrolled in 17 GEAR UP middle and high schools. As shown below, almost all students across GEAR UP schools received counseling or advising (for an average of almost 10 hours per student). And about half of the students participated in one or more college visits. Tutoring/homework help and summer programs were the most intense GEAR UP activities; participating students received on average over 30 hours of programming in each of these categories. GEAR UP schools also provided postsecondary services to 258 students in their first year of college (these students are not included below).

Figure 6. Student Participation in GEAR UP Activities*

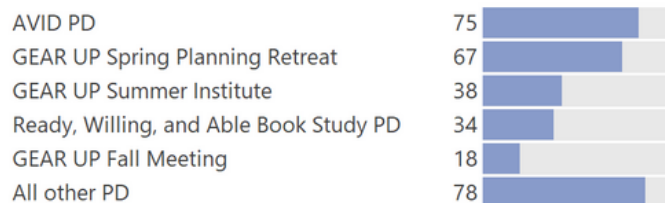


*Preliminary data from Events and Cost Share Tracking database (unduplicated counts by category)

In Year 2, approximately 222 unduplicated staff across schools participated in GEAR UP-sponsored PD, and parents or guardians of about 960 students took part in GEAR UP activities.

Figure 7. Staff and Family Participation in GEAR UP Activities

Number of Staff Participating in GEAR UP-Sponsored PD



Number of Students with Families Participating



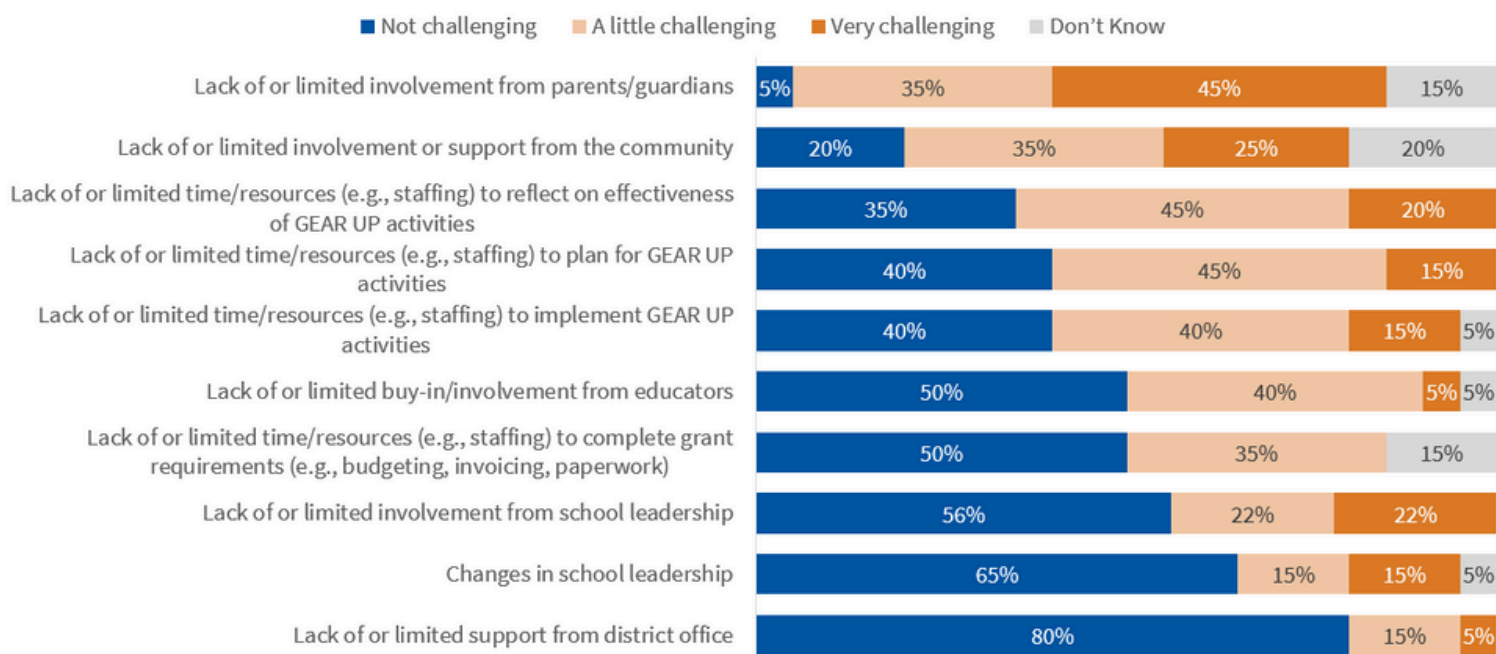
*Preliminary data from Events and Cost Share Tracking database.

SCHOOLS APPEARED TO STRUGGLE THE MOST WITH INVOLVING PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND THE COMMUNITY IN THEIR SCHOOL’S COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS EFFORTS. LACK OF OR LIMITED TIME FOR GEAR UP PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION, AND REFLECTION WERE ALSO CITED AS CHALLENGES IN MOST SCHOOLS.

As shown in the graph below, the majority of GEAR UP coordinators and administrators indicated that the following have been “a little challenging” or “very challenging”: lack of or limited involvement from parents/guardians (80%) and the community (60%), and lack of or limited time/resources to plan (60%), implement (55%) and reflect (65%) on GEAR UP activities.

Figure 8. Coordinators and Administrators’ Perceptions Regarding Implementation Challenges

To what extent have any of the following been a challenge for you or your school with regards to GEAR UP?



When asked about their school(s)’s biggest challenge, responses differed based on position. Principals reported time, financial barriers, student and parent involvement, understanding how to use all of the different systems and programs, and communication with GEAR UP staff. Assistant principals felt that transportation and space for a college and career center are their greatest challenges. Lastly, GEAR UP coordinators struggled with funding, community and parent involvement, finding time to meet with their teams, communicating a need for and receiving support, and balancing pulling students out of class for GEAR UP opportunities.

“

Time. Time is a challenge for everything. Keeping all the different programs and systems afloat. Learning the ins and outs. Spending money. -- Principal

Acclimating to working in a school, getting comfortable with students, and having to do things that are outside of my comfort zone. -- GEAR UP Coordinator

”

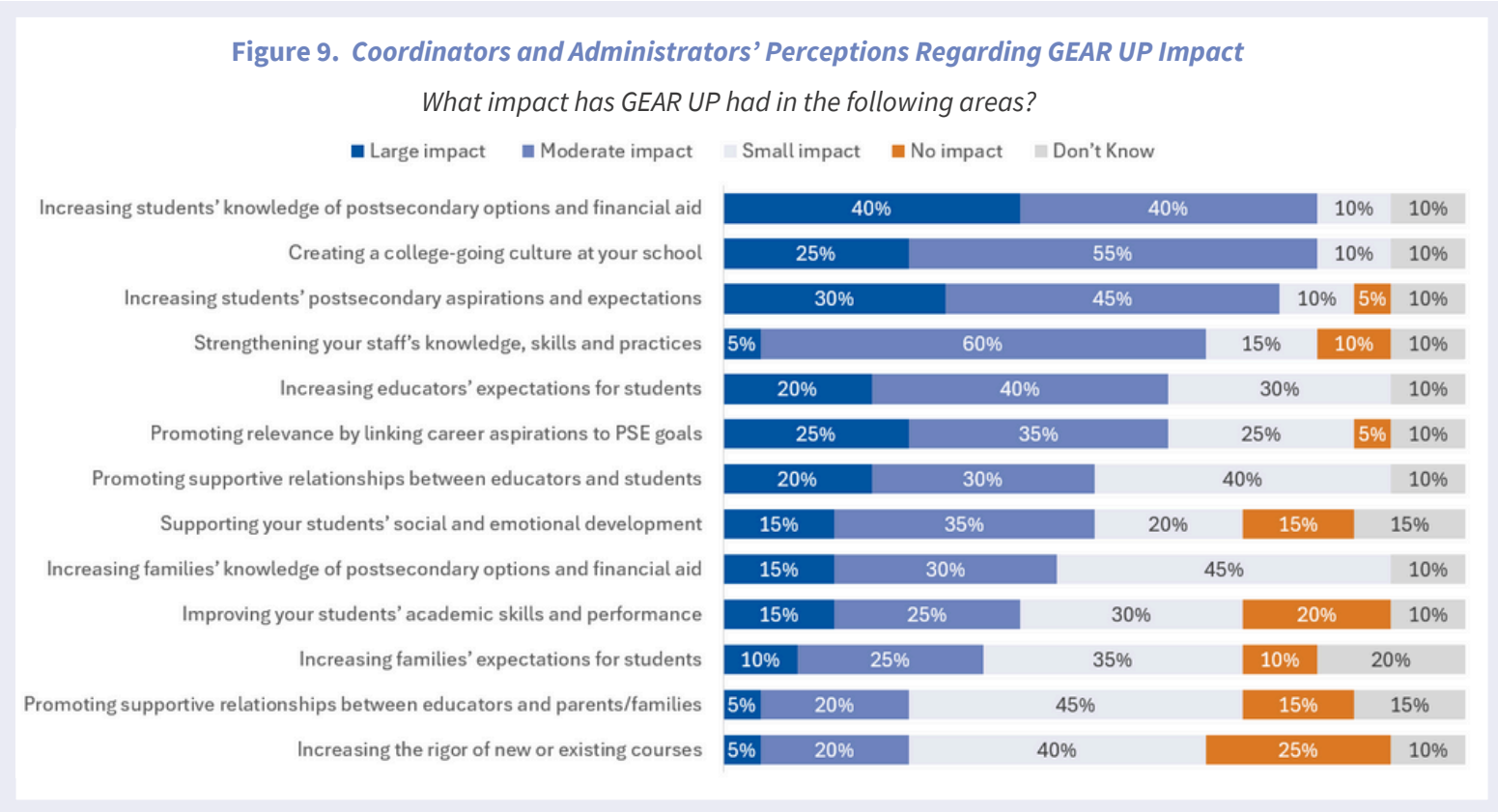
EVALUATION FINDINGS

The sections that follow contain relevant information pertaining to the overall impact of the GEAR UP grant in Year 2 and the impact it has had on each “A” (academic preparation, awareness, and aspirations), gathered primarily from stakeholder surveys. Additional information about graduation and college enrollment was gleaned from administrative, student-level data files. Coordinators/administrators and staff also provided feedback on the various supports provided to them by GEAR UP staff and consultants.

OVERALL IMPACT

ACCORDING TO GEAR UP COORDINATORS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, GEAR UP HAS HAD THE GREATEST IMPACT IN AREAS RELATED TO AWARENESS AND ASPIRATIONS.

As shown in the graph below, the largest percentage of GEAR UP coordinators and administrators indicated that GEAR UP has had a “moderate” or “large” impact on: increasing students’ knowledge of postsecondary options and financial aid (80%), creating a college-going culture (80%), and increasing students’ postsecondary aspirations and expectations (75%). The areas with the least impact included increasing the rigor of new and existing courses (25%), and items related to family engagement (ranging from 25% to 45%).





ACADEMIC PREPARATION

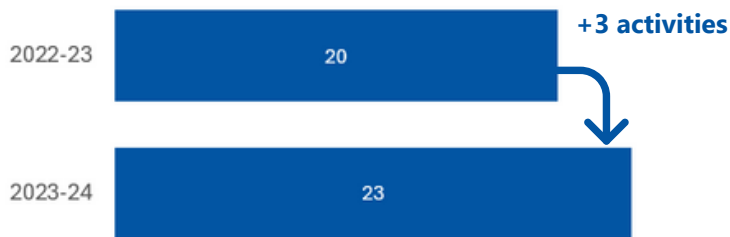
ONE OF THE KEY GOALS OF OREGON GEAR UP IS TO ENSURE THAT STUDENTS ARE ACADEMICALLY PREPARED FOR THE RIGORS OF POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTION.

As part of the evaluation, GEAR UP clusters were asked to complete a College and Career Readiness Inventory (CCRI) to indicate the extent to which they are implementing activities designed to support students academically for postsecondary education. Data were collected as baseline during the schools' application process to become a GEAR UP school and again in 2023-24 (Year 2).

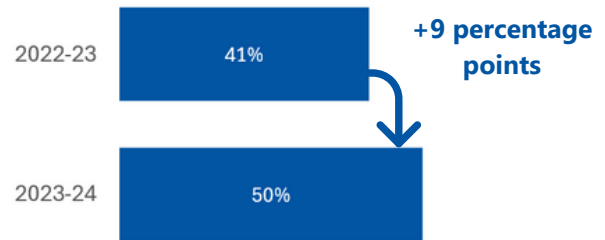
RESULTS SHOW INCREASES FROM YEAR 1 TO YEAR 2 IN THE NUMBER OF ACADEMIC PREPARATION ACTIVITIES THAT SCHOOLS WERE IMPLEMENTING AND THEIR LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION.

Figure 10. Implementation of Academic Preparation Activities

Average number of activities implemented per cluster (out of 26 activities)



Percent of activities implemented that were "fully in place"



HIGHEST IMPLEMENTATION IN YEAR 2*

- Summer school/credit recovery classes
- Curriculum that meets entrance requirements for Oregon's public universities
- Offering Dual Credit courses
- Encouraging students to enroll in rigorous and challenging curricula and coursework
- Exploring disaggregated school data for disproportionate disciplinary practices
- Providing Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses
- Tutoring and homework help before/during/after school
- Technology that promotes effective and rigorous teaching and learning

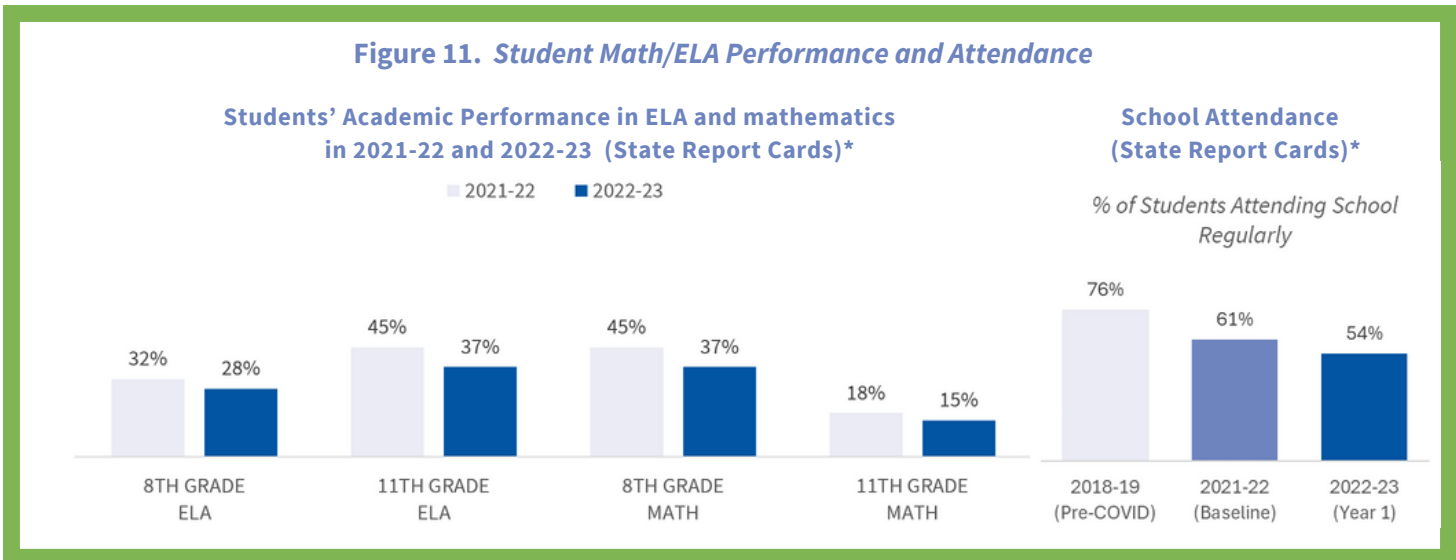
*Based on the percentage of activities that were "fully in place"

LOWEST IMPLEMENTATION IN YEAR 2*

- PD for staff on how to coach students to take the right classes necessary for postsecondary goals
- Mentoring from older to younger students
- Academic co-curricular activities
- Summer academic enrichment programs
- Activities to help students understand their learning preferences and teach skills such as study habits, organization, and note taking.
- Offering AP courses
- Student-led conferences

DESPITE THE INCREASE IN BREADTH AND DEPTH OF ACADEMIC PREPARATION ACTIVITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS, MANY STUDENTS IN GEAR UP SCHOOLS ARE STILL STRUGGLING TO MEET GRADE-LEVEL STANDARDS IN ELA AND MATH, AND ATTENDANCE HAS CONTINUED TO DECLINE.

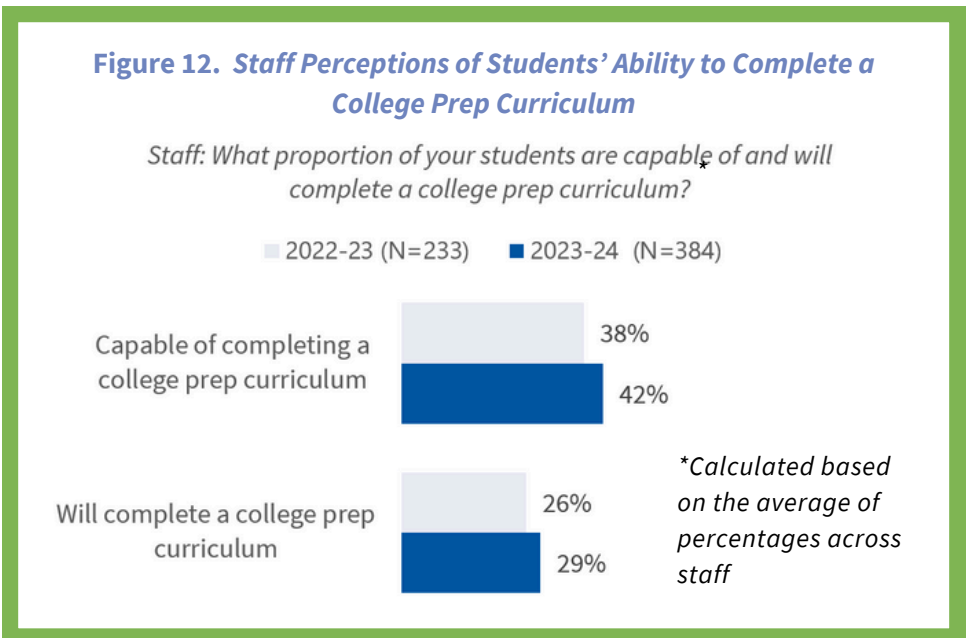
Data from state report cards show that only a minority of GEAR UP students in participating schools scored at or above proficiency in ELA and mathematics in 2022-23 (data for 2023-24 were not yet available at the time this report was written). Specifically, only 28% of 8th grade GEAR UP students and 37% of 11th grade GEAR UP students scored proficient in ELA (compared to 42% of 8th grade students and 46% of 11th grade students statewide). In 2022-23, 37% of 8th grade GEAR UP students and 15% of 11th grade GEAR UP students scored at or above proficiency in math (compared to 25% and 20% statewide). The percentage of GEAR UP students attending school regularly has also declined over time from 76% in 2018-19 to 54% in 2022-23. These results underscore the importance for Oregon GEAR UP to encourage schools to strengthen their academic and attendance supports for students to ensure they are prepared for the rigors of postsecondary education.



*Unweighted averages across GEAR UP schools (does not take into account differences in student enrollment).

FURTHERMORE, STAFF BELIEVE LESS THAN HALF OF THEIR STUDENTS ARE CAPABLE OF COMPLETING A COLLEGE PREP CURRICULUM AND JUST OVER A QUARTER WILL ACTUALLY COMPLETE IT.

As shown on the right, staff think that less than half of their students (38% in Y1 and 42% in Y2) are capable of completing a college prep curriculum, and even fewer will actually do so (26% in Y1 and 29% in Y2). Although there were some gains from Year 1 to Year 2, percentages remained very low.



In spring 2024, students and school staff were asked survey questions about their perceptions of their school’s efforts to prepare students academically for postsecondary education, as well as their perceptions of their school’s climate.

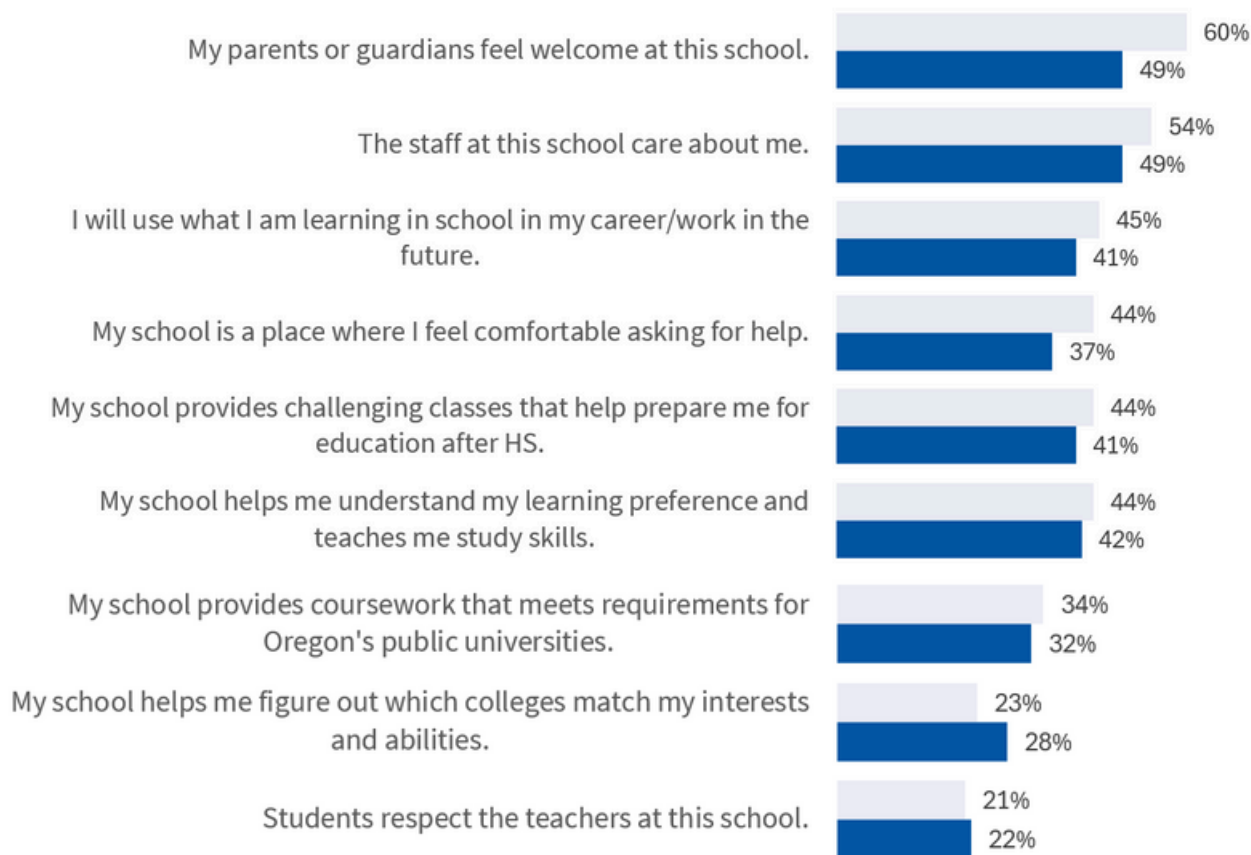
SURVEY RESULTS REVEALED THAT MOST STUDENTS DO NOT HAVE FAVORABLE VIEWS OF THEIR SCHOOL’S CLIMATE AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS DECLINED SLIGHTLY FROM YEAR 1 TO YEAR 2.

Students showed most agreement with items about the extent to which their parents/guardians feel welcome at their school and that the staff at their school care about them (49%). However, low percentages of students agreed with each of the other statements about school climate, with particularly small percentages agreeing that that their school helps them with developing budgeting and finance skills or that students respect the teachers at their school. Furthermore, student agreement with almost every statement about school climate was lower in 2023-24 compared to the prior year. This indicates a need for GEAR UP to help schools focus on improvements to school climate and academics.

Figure 13. Student Perceptions of their School’s Climate

% of students who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with each statement

2022-23 (N=2082) 2023-24 (N=2193)



STAFF PERCEPTIONS WERE MORE FAVORABLE THAN THEIR STUDENTS. FURTHERMORE THEIR VIEWS SLIGHTLY IMPROVED FROM YEAR 1 TO YEAR 2.

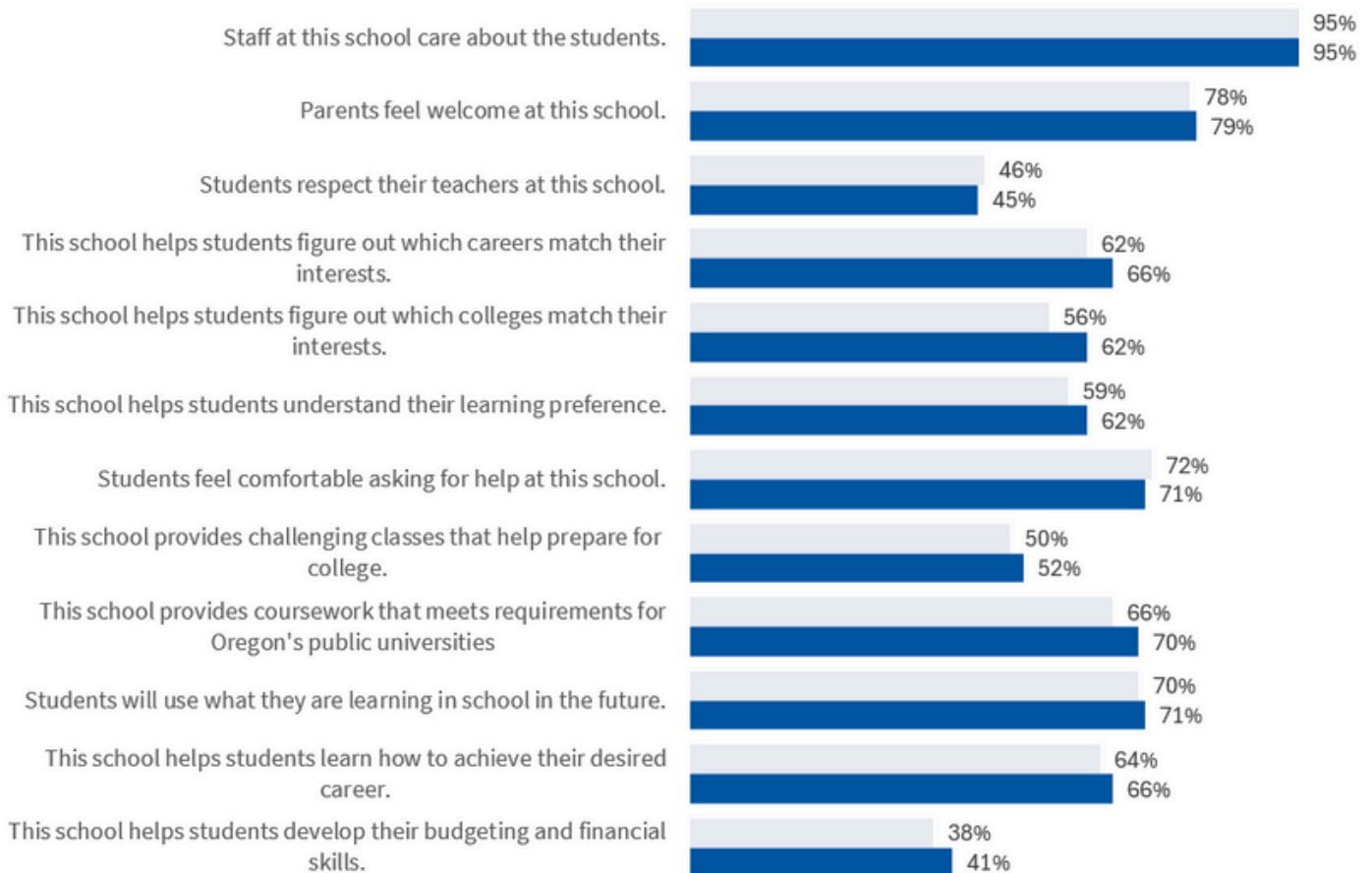
Overall, the majority of staff reported that they either “strongly agree” or “agree” with most of the statements regarding school academics and climate. Staff perceptions were generally more positive than those for students, but staff and students were closely aligned in terms of the areas with most and least agreement. Specifically, staff also reported the highest level of agreement for the statements regarding whether staff at their school care about the students and whether parents feel welcome at their school. The smallest percentages of staff reported that their school helps students with developing budgeting and finance skills and that students respect teachers at their school.

Results presented below also show that staff perceptions improved slightly from Year 1 to Year 2 on several survey items. The largest increase was seen in the percentage of staff who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their school helps students figure out which colleges match their interests (6 percentage point increase from 56% to 62%).

Figure 14. Staff Perceptions of their School’s Climate

% of staff who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with each statement

■ 2022-23 (N=212) ■ 2023-24 (N=350)



AWARENESS

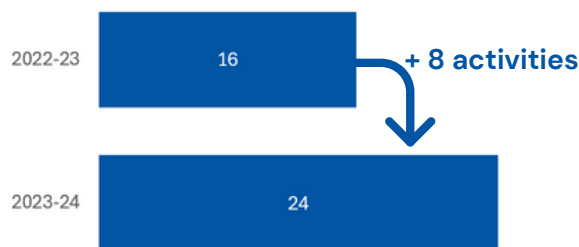


OREGON GEAR UP AIMS TO INCREASE STUDENTS' AND FAMILIES' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CAREERS AND THE COLLEGE-GOING PROCESS AND ENCOURAGES SCHOOLS TO PROVIDE THEM WITH A WIDE RANGE OF SUPPORTS AND ASSISTANCE WITH THE COLLEGE-GOING PROCESS.

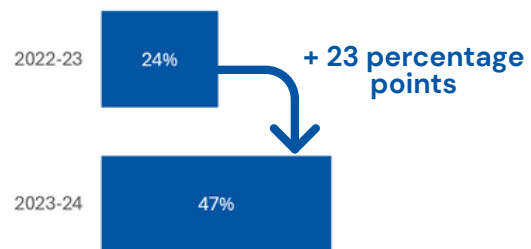
RESULTS FROM THE CCRI SHOW INCREASES FROM YEAR 1 TO YEAR 2 IN THE NUMBER OF AWARENESS ACTIVITIES THAT SCHOOLS WERE IMPLEMENTING AND THEIR LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION.

Figure 15. Implementation of Awareness Activities

Average number of activities implemented per cluster (out of 32 activities)



Percent of activities implemented that were "fully in place"



HIGHEST IMPLEMENTATION IN YEAR 2*

- College Application Week
- Activities to provide information about financial aid to families
- Activities to help students and families complete financial aid application forms
- College Exploration Week
- Career interest inventories/tracking
- Dedicated career center in visible location with resources and assistance for students to research careers and required training
- Guest speakers related to career exploration

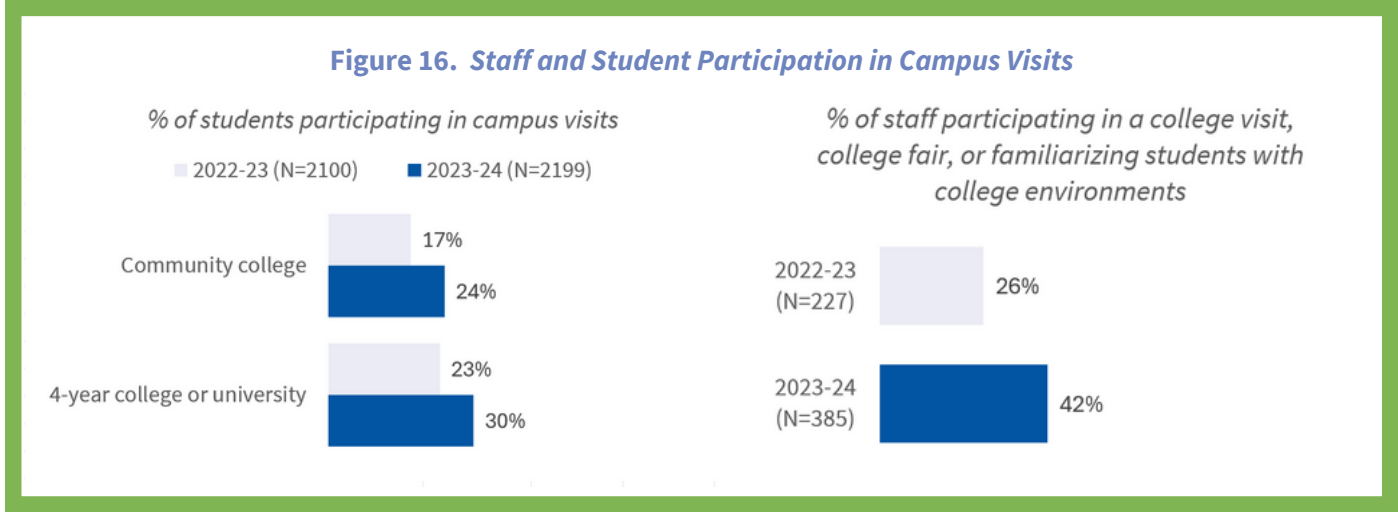
LOWEST IMPLEMENTATION IN YEAR 2*

- College entrance and placement test preparation activities/classes
- Activities to help students "try on" the role of college student
- Regular email and text check-ins with recent alumni enrolled in college
- Student clubs with a career focus
- Activities/supports for students during the summer before high school graduation and college matriculation.
- Care packages for alumni in college

*Based on the percentage of activities that were "fully in place"

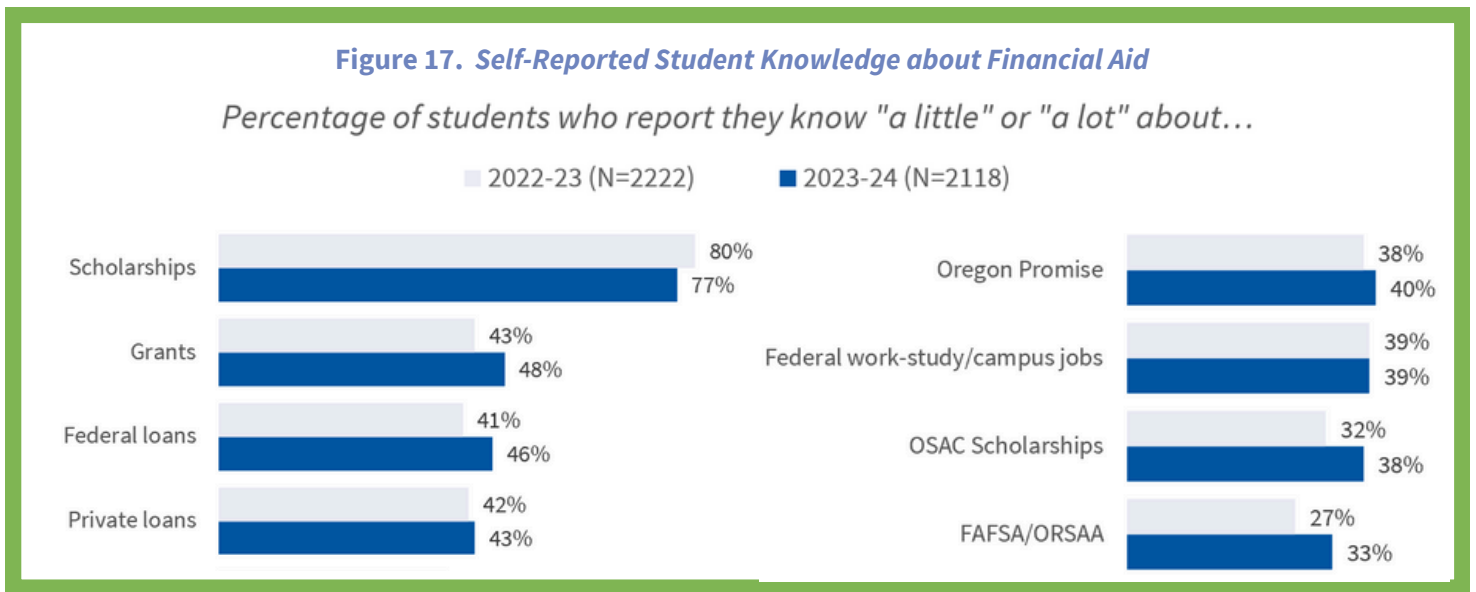
SURVEY RESULTS SHOW CONSIDERABLE INCREASES IN THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS VISITING COLLEGES AND STAFF PARTICIPATING IN COLLEGE AWARENESS ACTIVITIES.

As shown below, the percentage of students participating in college visits increased from 17% to 24% (for community colleges) and 23% to 30% (for 4-year colleges or universities). Staff participation in college visits, college fairs and college awareness activities increased from 27% in Year 1 to 41% in Year 2.

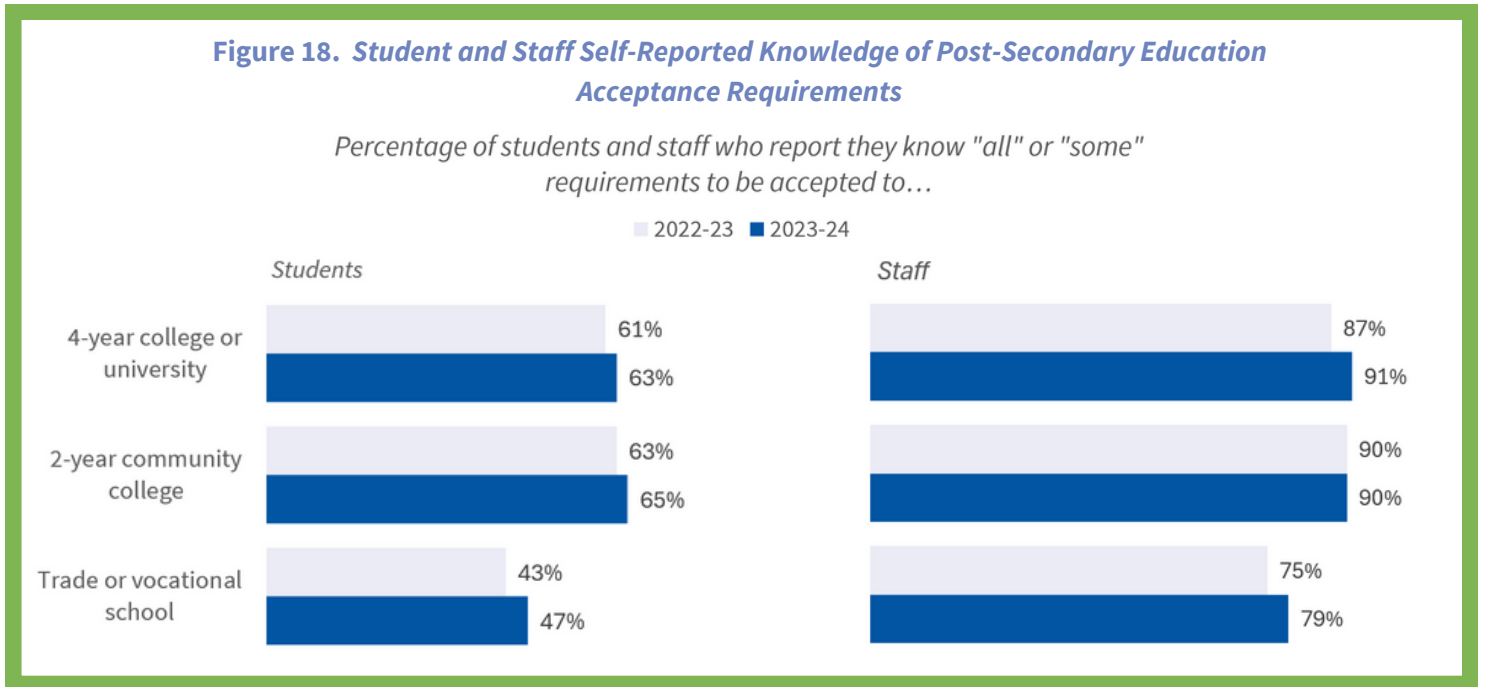


ALSO NOTEWORTHY, THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS AND STAFF WHO REPORTED KNOWING ABOUT FINANCIAL AID TERMS AND COLLEGE ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS INCREASED FROM YEAR 1 TO YEAR 2.

As shown in the graph below, the largest increase in the percentage of students who reported being knowledgeable was observed for FAFSA/ORSAA (6 percentage point increase from Year 1 to Year 2) and OSAC Scholarships (6 percentage point increase from Year 1 to Year 2).

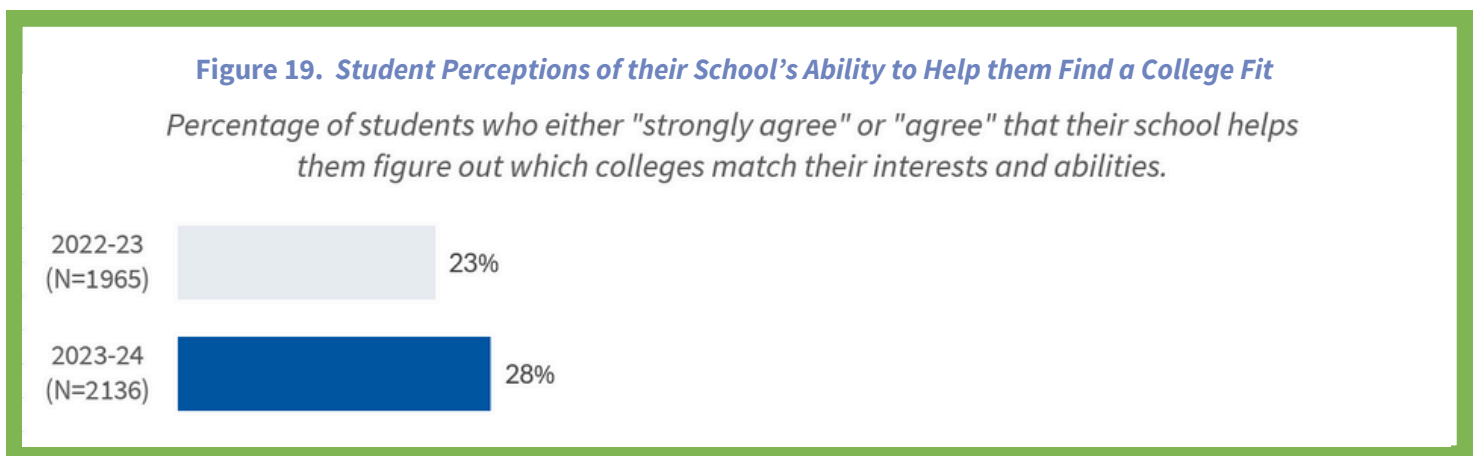


Results also show that the proportion of students and staff reporting they know “all” or “some” of the requirements to be accepted to different types of post-secondary education institutions increased across the board from Year 1 to Year 2. Students seemed to know the most about community colleges (65%), followed by 4-year universities (63%), and lastly technical, trade or vocational schools (47%). Staff results showed a similar pattern; however, staff were significantly more likely than students to know the requirements to be accepted to each form of post-secondary education.



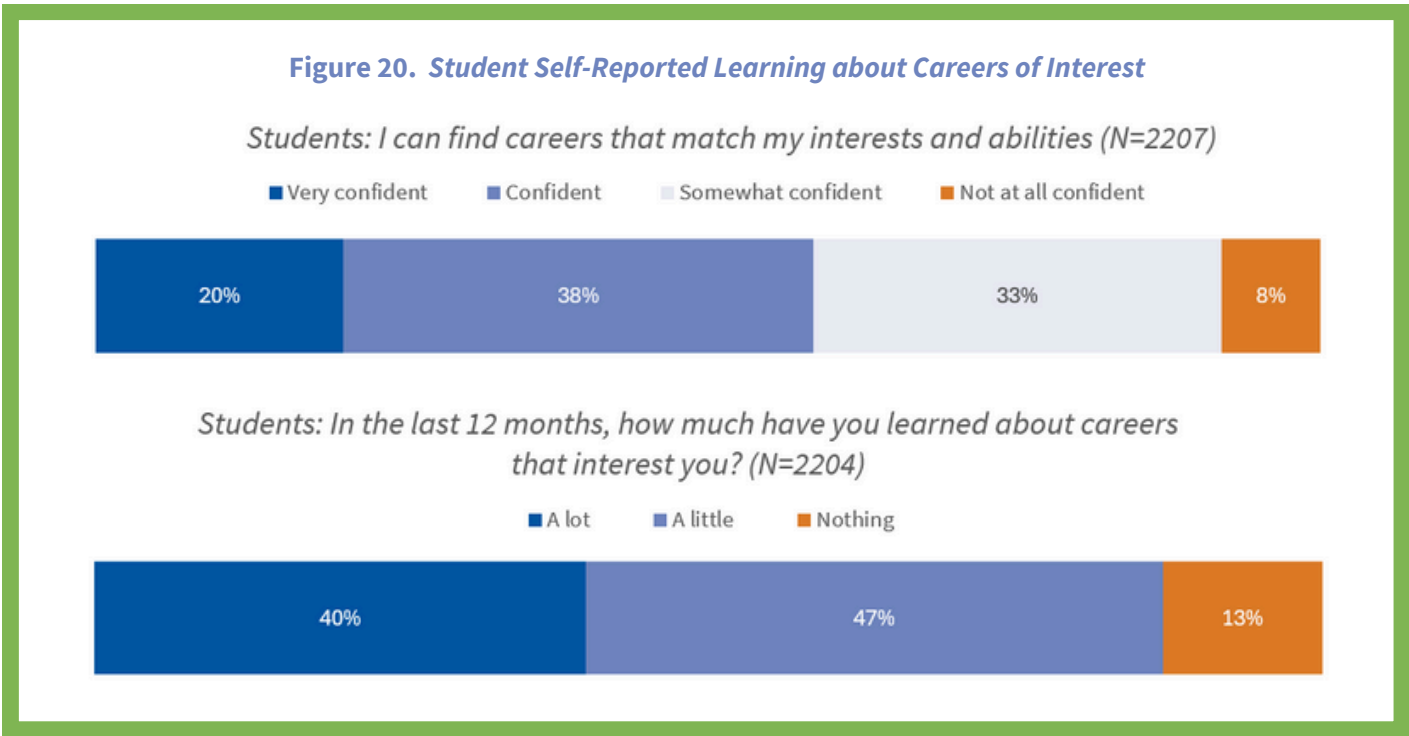
THERE WAS ALSO AN INCREASE IN THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO THINK THEIR SCHOOL IS HELPING THEM WITH COLLEGE FIT AND MATCH, ALTHOUGH THIS PERCENTAGE WAS STILL SMALL IN YEAR 2.

Specifically, as shown below, the percentage of students who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their school helps them figure out which colleges match their interests and abilities increased from 23% in Year 1 to 28% in Year 2.



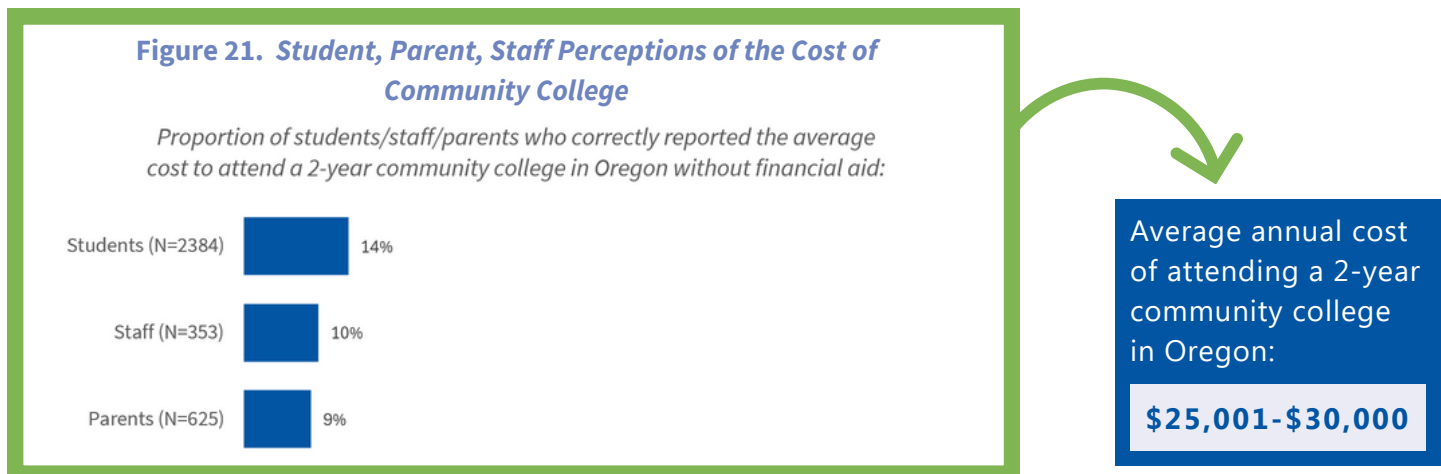
STUDENTS REPORTED LEARNING ABOUT CAREERS THAT INTEREST THEM AND MORE THAN HALF SAID THEY WERE “CONFIDENT” OR “VERY CONFIDENT” THEY COULD FIND CAREERS THAT MATCH THEIR INTERESTS AND ABILITIES.

Specifically, most students reported that they are “very confident” or “confident” in their ability to find a career that matches their interests and abilities (58%), and almost all students reported learning about careers that interest them during the past year (87% reported “a lot” or “a little”).



HOWEVER IN YEAR 2, ONLY A SMALL NUMBER OF STUDENTS, PARENTS OR GUARDIANS, AND STAFF AT GEAR UP SCHOOLS KNEW THE APPROXIMATE COST OF COLLEGE.

As shown below, Year 2 survey results indicate that the large majority of students and school staff do not know the approximate cost of “attending a community college in Oregon (including tuition, books, housing, and food) without any financial aid.” Most students, staff, and parents underestimated the cost or reported that they have “no idea.”



ASPIRATIONS

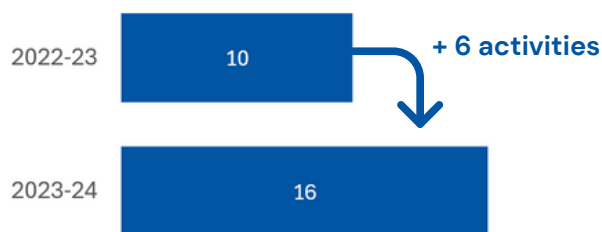
OREGON GEAR UP SUPPORTS SCHOOLS IN PROMOTING THE VALUE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATING HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL STUDENTS.



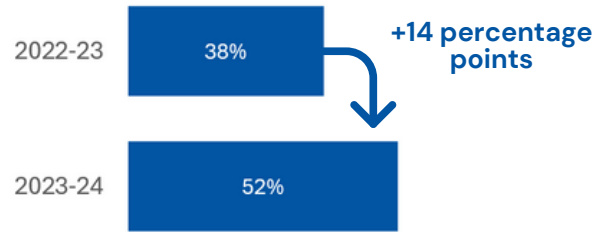
AS WITH ACADEMICS AND AWARENESS, RESULTS FROM THE CCRI SHOW INCREASES FROM YEAR 1 TO YEAR 2 IN THE NUMBER OF ASPIRATIONS ACTIVITIES THAT SCHOOLS WERE IMPLEMENTING AND THEIR LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION.

Figure 22. Implementation of Aspirations Activities

Average number of activities implemented per cluster (out of 24 activities)



Percent of activities implemented that were "fully in place"



HIGHEST IMPLEMENTATION IN YEAR 2*

- Grad walks where seniors parade through elementary and middle school in their caps and gowns
- Decision Day
- Assess educator expectations for students
- GEAR UP Week
- Formal opportunities for all students to have a meaningful relationship with at least one staff person
- Award nights and similar activities to celebrate students' academic accomplishments

LOWEST IMPLEMENTATION IN YEAR 2*

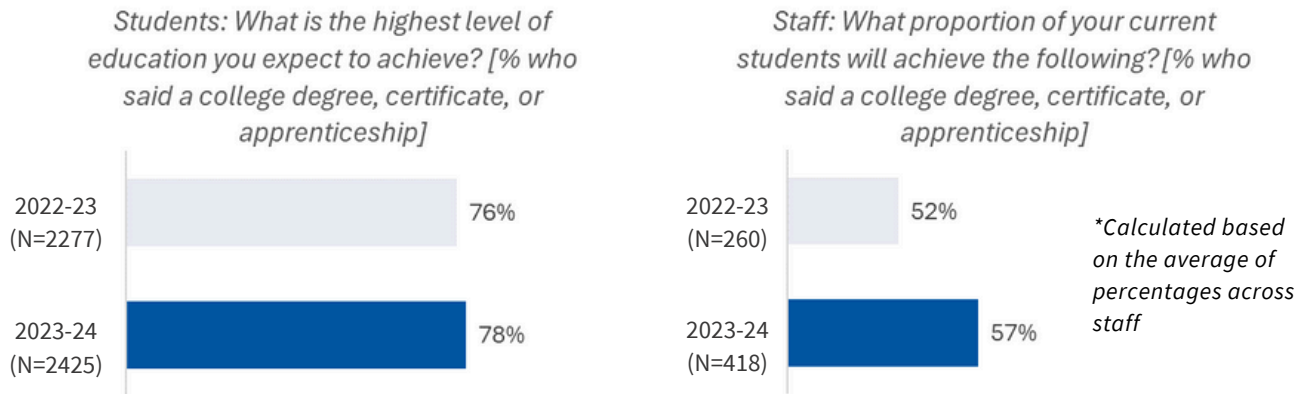
- "Near peer" mentoring opportunities between college students and secondary school students
- Clubs centered on college going process/identities
- Encourage local businesses to promote college awareness and celebrate going to college
- College corner in every classroom
- Adult mentors
- Staff book discussion "Ready, Willing and Able; A Developmental Approach to College Access and Success"

*Based on the percentage of activities that were "fully in place"

OVER THREE-QUARTERS OF GEAR UP STUDENTS EXPECT TO ACHIEVE A COLLEGE DEGREE, CERTIFICATE OR APPRENTICESHIP; STAFF BELIEVE ONLY 57% OF THEIR STUDENTS WILL DO SO. YET THERE WERE SLIGHT INCREASES OVER TIME FOR BOTH STAFF AND STUDENTS.

Slightly more students in Year 2 compared to Year 1 reported that they expect to achieve a degree, certificate, or apprenticeship (78% in Year 2 to compared to 76% in Year 1). Staff results showed a similar trend; in Year 2, staff reported that 57% of their students will achieve a degree, certificate or apprenticeship, up from 52% in Year 1. However, these results also show a stark contrast between what staff think students will achieve and what students think.

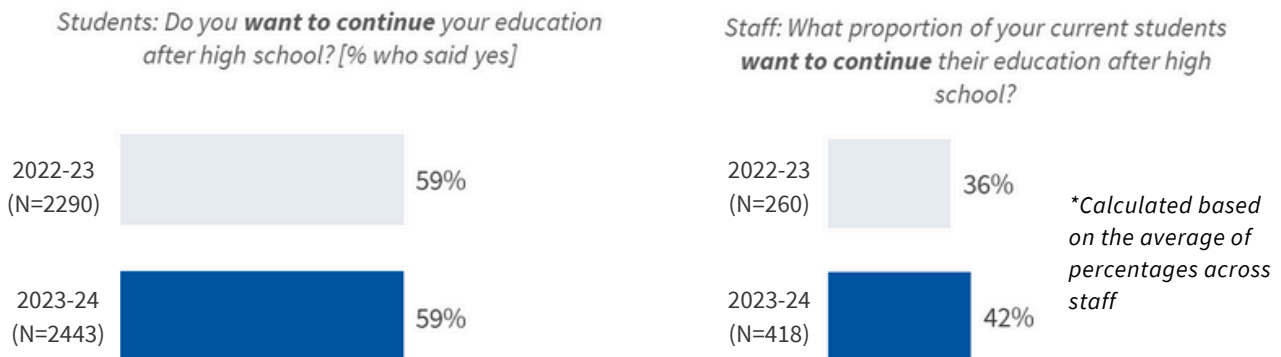
Figure 23. Student and Staff Expectations of Student Degree/Certificate/Apprenticeship Achievement



Although many students expect that they will continue their education and receive a degree or certificate after high school, fewer students reported **wanting** to do so (see below).

The majority of students surveyed reported a desire to continue their education after high school (59% in Year 1 and 2). While staff believe that lower proportions of their students want to continue their education, this percentage has increased from Year 1 to Year 2 (36% in Year 1 and 42% in Year 2).

Figure 24. Student and Staff Perceptions of Student Desire to Continue their Education

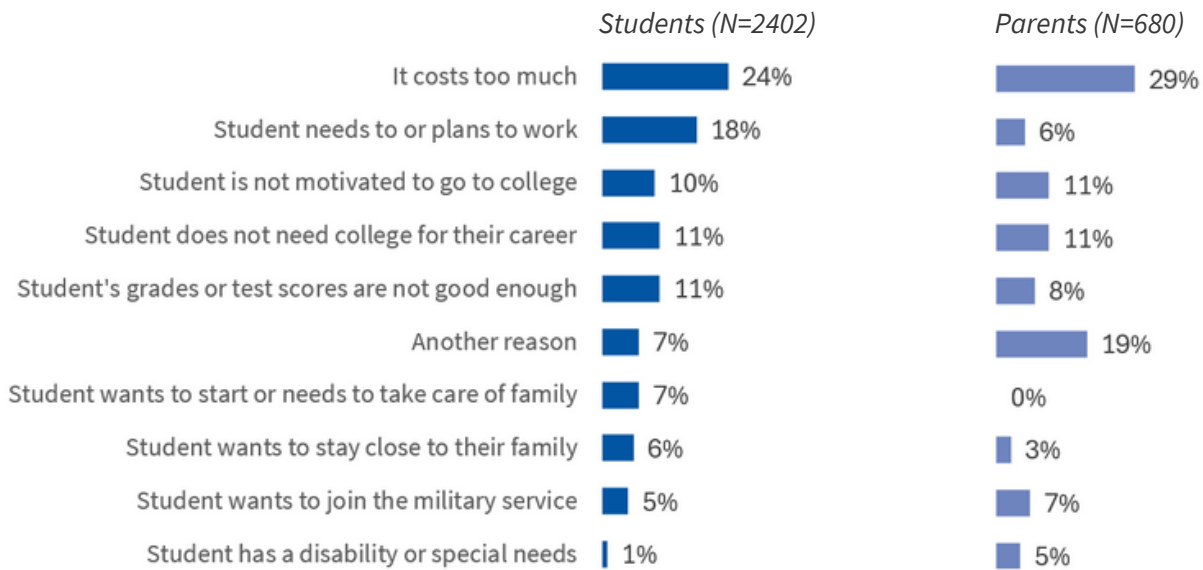


THE COST OF COLLEGE IS THE MAIN REASON WHY STUDENTS MAY NOT CONTINUE THEIR EDUCATION AFTER HIGH SCHOOL.

Similar to Year 1, in Year 2 the cost of college was the reason most commonly cited by both students and parents as a potential barrier to postsecondary education (24% of students and 29% of parents or guardians).

Figure 25. Student and Parent Perceptions of Barriers to Postsecondary Education

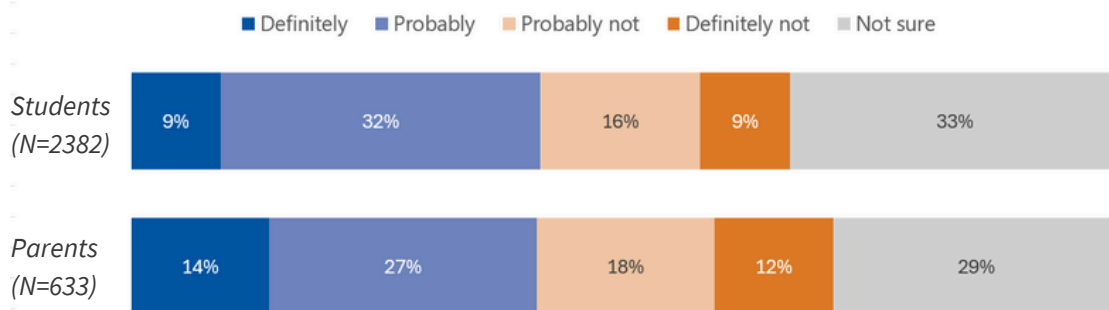
Students & Parents: What is the main reason you (students)/your child (parents) MIGHT not continue your/their education after high school?



Furthermore, most students (58%) and parents (59%) reported that they were either unsure if they/their student could afford college or believe they/their student “probably” or “definitely” cannot afford college. These results suggest that students may be in need of resources and support to help them figure out ways to overcome cost as a barrier to postsecondary education enrollment.

Figure 26. Student and Parent Perceptions of Ability to Afford a 4-Year University

Do you think you (students)/your student (parents) could afford to attend a public 4-year university using financial aid, scholarships, your/your student's resources, and/or your family's resources?



PROMOTING A COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE IS ONE OF THE AREAS IN WHICH SCHOOLS HAVE SHOWN THE GREATEST IMPROVEMENTS FROM YEAR 1 TO YEAR 2.

Specifically, Year 1 (baseline) and Year 2 surveys asked staff to report the extent to which they believe **they** promote a college-going culture, as well as the extent to which they believe **their school** has a college-going culture in place.

As shown below, the percentage of staff who reported they promote a college-going culture “often” or “always” increased considerably from 46% in Year 1 to 63% in Year 2. Furthermore, the percentage of staff who indicated that their school has a college-going culture “mostly” or “fully” in place also increased from 21% in Year 1 to 38% in Year 2.

Figure 27. Staff Perceptions Regarding Their Role in Promoting a College-Going Culture

Staff: Please rate the extent to which you promote a college-going culture.

■ Always ■ Often ■ Sometimes ■ Rarely ■ Never

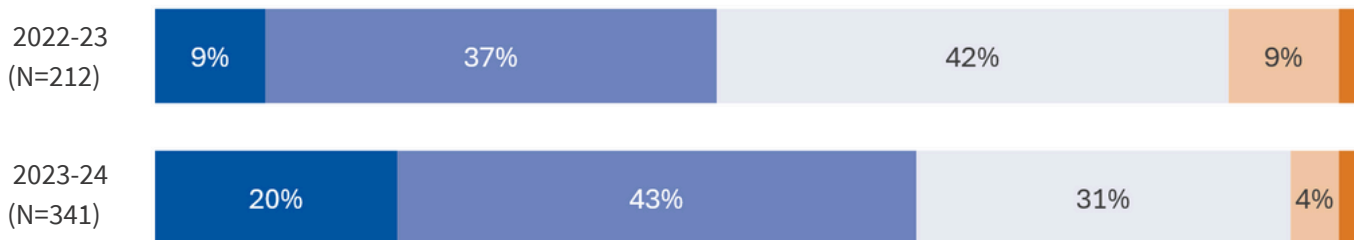
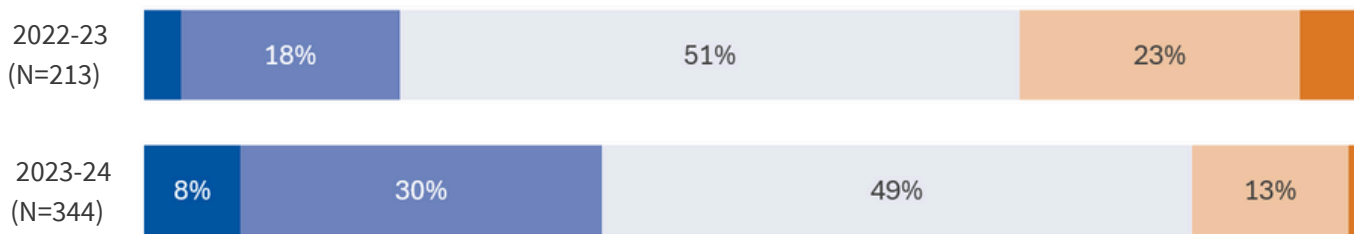


Figure 28. Staff Perceptions of School’s College-Going Culture

Staff: Please rate the extent to which your school has a college-going culture.

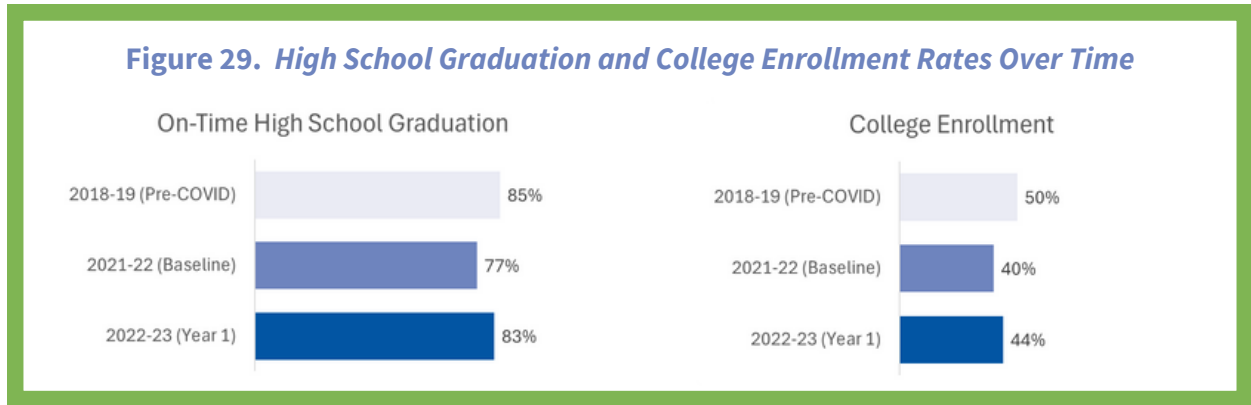
■ Fully in place ■ Mostly in place ■ Somewhat in place ■ Barely in place ■ Non-existent



HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION AND COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

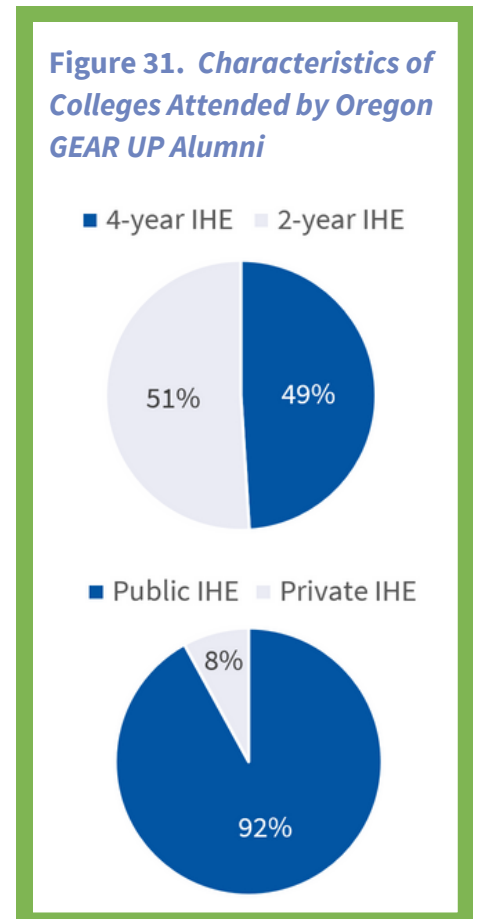
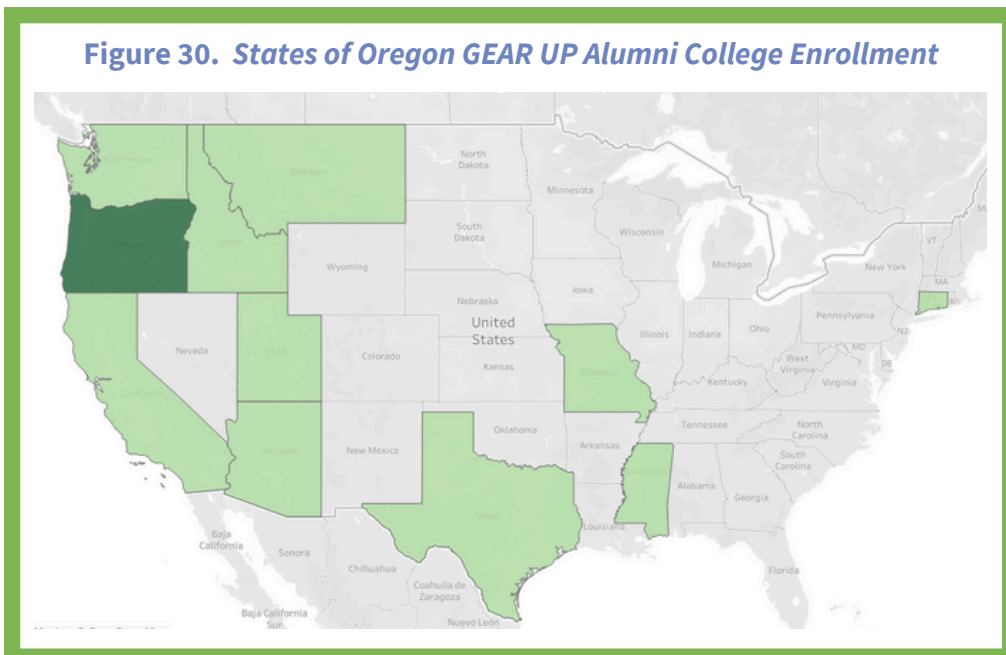
OREGON GEAR UP SCHOOLS ACHIEVED POSITIVE GAINS IN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION AND COLLEGE ENROLLMENT RATES, YET THESE ARE STILL LOWER THAN PRE-PANDEMIC.

High school graduation data from ODE and college enrollment data from NSC were collected and are presented below for 2018-19 (pre-COVID), 2021-22 (before this GEAR UP grant started) and 2022-23 (Year 1). Year 2 (2023-24) data were not yet available at the time this report was written. Results show positive trends over time in both key measures, yet rates were still lower than before the pandemic.



WHERE ARE THE 2023 GEAR UP GRADUATES?

Additional analyses were conducted for the first GEAR UP graduating cohort (2023). Staying in state for college was a popular choice for 2023 Oregon GEAR UP graduates: 91% of students who enrolled in the fall did so at an Oregon college or university. The large majority of college-enrolled students (92%) chose a public institution, and just over half (51%) enrolled in a 4-year institution.



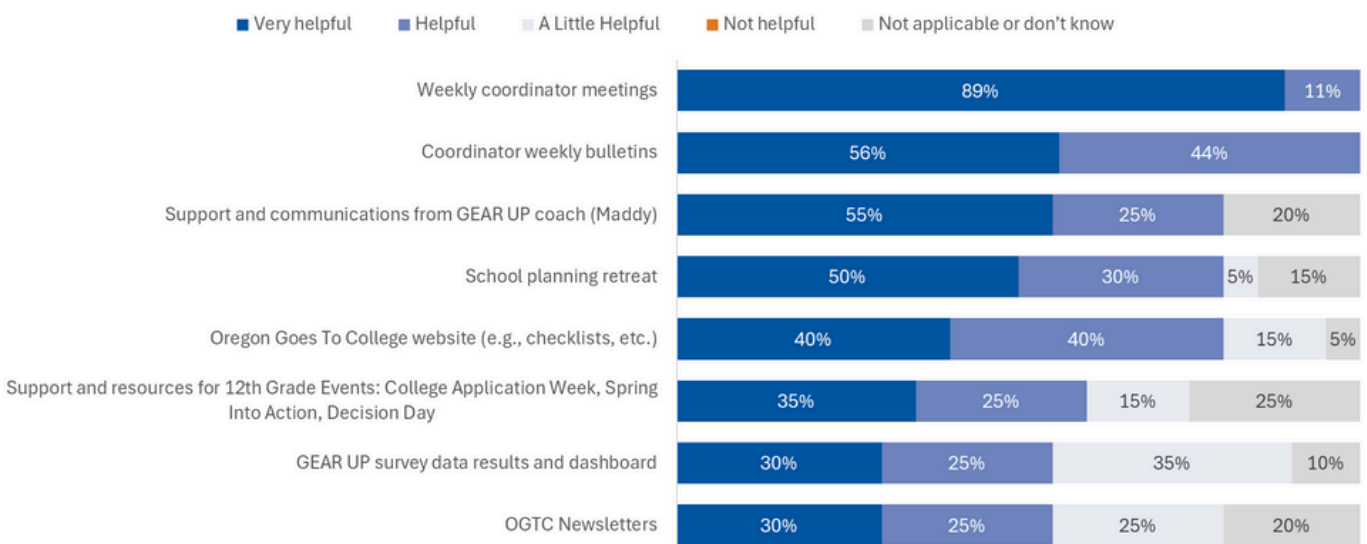
FEEDBACK ON SUPPORTS

OREGON GEAR UP PROVIDES A WIDE RANGE OF SUPPORTS TO PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS, INCLUDING MATERIALS AND RESOURCES, PLANNING RETREATS, AND SUPPORT FROM A SCHOOL SUCCESS COACH. GEAR UP COORDINATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS PROVIDED VERY POSITIVE FEEDBACK ABOUT THESE SUPPORTS.

As shown below, all GEAR UP coordinators indicated that weekly coordinator meetings and bulletins have been “very helpful” or “helpful” (100%). The majority of coordinators and administrators found the support and communications from the GEAR UP coach, the school planning retreat, and the Oregon Goes To College website “very helpful” or “helpful” (80%).

Figure 32. Coordinator Perceptions of GEAR UP Supports and Resources

How helpful have the following GEAR UP supports and resources been in helping your school implement GEAR UP effectively?



When asked what resources and support would help them in their role, principals reported needing more communication and information from their GEAR UP coordinators, more support in budgeting and financial accountability, and increased mailings from GEAR UP. GEAR UP coordinators had a variety of responses, including having more GEAR UP working sessions with support from GEAR UP staff, getting examples and templates to aid in coordinators’ efforts for required events and other activities, lessening the administrative load for coordinators, and providing GEAR UP “swag” for students.

“

Budgeting has been a challenge this year. It would be nice to have monthly meetings with the admin, GEAR UP coordinator, and finance person for GEAR UP and district at least in the first year to get used to the accountability piece. Every district has their own way of doing the financial tracking.

Principal

”

MOST PARTICIPANTS ATTENDING THE SPRING 2024 PLANNING RETREAT INDICATED THAT THE EVENT PROVIDED THEM WITH VALUABLE EXPERIENCES, INFORMATION, AND INSIGHTS THEY CAN USE IN THEIR SCHOOLS.

The 2024 Oregon GEAR UP planning retreat was a 3-day opportunity for GEAR UP teams from each school to engage in knowledge-sharing activities, review key data on their schools and students, and begin developing their Year 3 GEAR UP plans. The retreat was attended by 61 school staff, which included GEAR UP coordinators, administrators, counselors, teachers, and students, and 8 GEAR UP retreat facilitators.

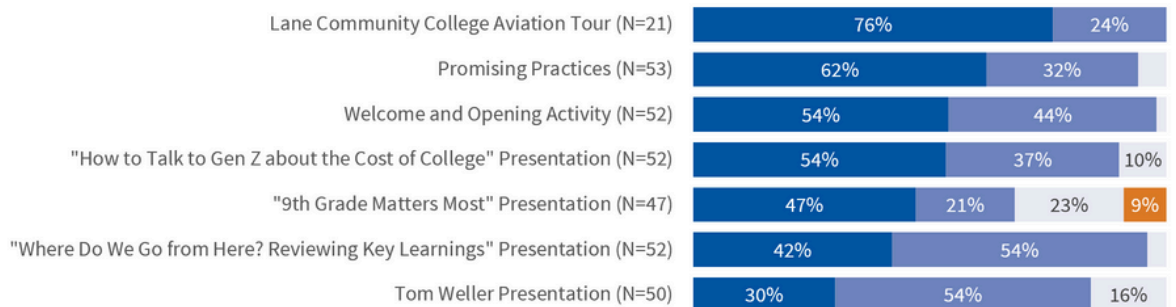


Fifty-three participants completed an evaluation form at the end of the event (response rate of 87%). Overall, respondents rated the quality of the retreat highly (4.4 out of 5 stars) and the majority reported that each of the activities was “excellent” or “good,” with the highest percentage of respondents reporting that the retreat’s Aviation Tour and the “Promising Practices” segment were particularly excellent (76% and 62% respectively).

Figure 33. Planning Retreat Activities’ Quality/Effectiveness According to Participants

Please rate the overall quality/effectiveness of each activity

■ Excellent ■ Good ■ Fair ■ Poor

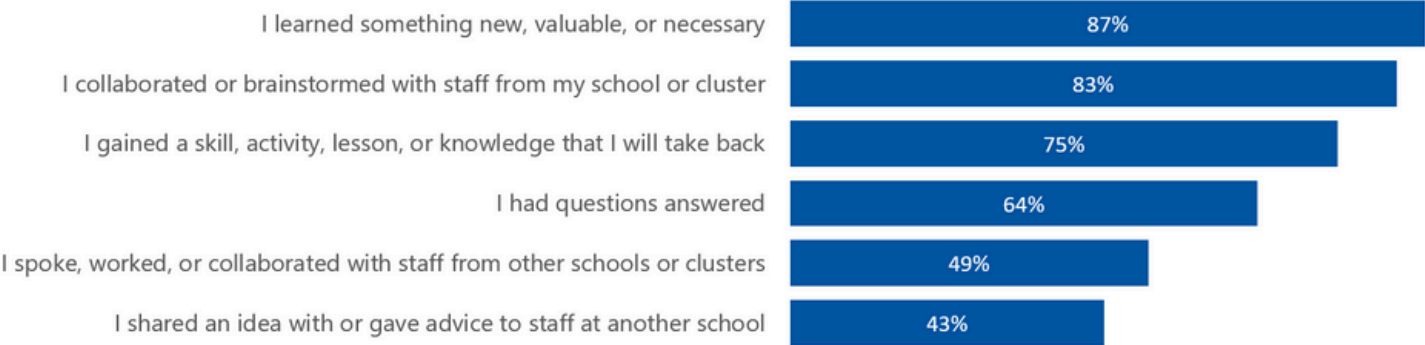


MOST PARTICIPANTS REPORTED LEAVING THE PLANNING RETREAT WITH NEW KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND VALUABLE EXPERIENCES SHARED WITH THEIR TEAM.

The large majority of participants who completed the evaluation form indicated that the retreat taught them something new, valuable, or necessary (87%), that they collaborated or brainstormed with staff from their school/cluster (83%), and that they gained a skill, activity, lesson, or knowledge that they will take back (75%).

Figure 34. Participant Take-Aways from the GEAR UP Planning Retreat

Which of the following did you achieve at this GEAR UP Planning Retreat?

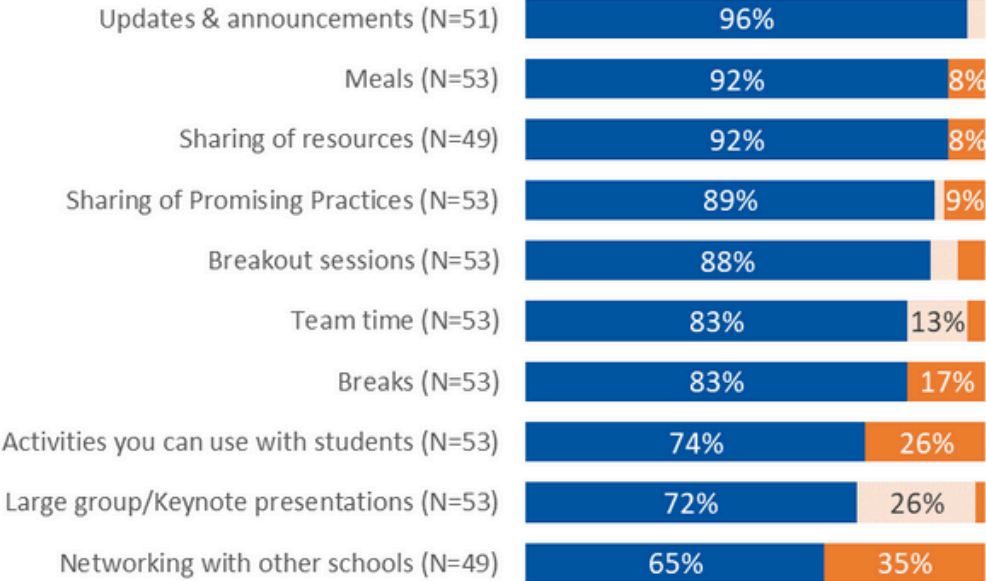


FUTURE PLANNING RETREATS COULD BENEFIT FROM ALLOCATING MORE TIME TOWARD NETWORKING WITH OTHER SCHOOLS, ACTIVITIES THAT CAN BE USED WITH STUDENTS, AND BREAKS.

Figure 35. Participant Perceptions of Activity Time Allocation

Would you have liked more or less time for any of the following?

■ Amount was good ■ Too much time ■ Not enough time



Although most respondents felt the allocation of time across activities was good, a substantial number felt more time could be allocated to networking with other schools (35%), activities that can be used with students (26%), and breaks (17%). About a quarter of participants felt that less time could be spent on large group/keynote presentations (26%).



RECOMMENDATIONS

1 CONTINUE TO DEVISE INTERVENTIONS TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THE ACADEMIC RIGORS OF SCHOOL AND POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION.

Evaluation findings indicate that many students in GEAR UP schools are struggling academically, and staff believe most of their students are not capable of and will not complete a college prep curriculum. To address this, Oregon GEAR UP is offering a number of supports to schools, including the services of Center for High School Success (which focuses on tracking and improving metrics for 9th grade students) and Oregon Data Suite (a student information system that allows schools to identify students at risk) and a Summer Institute for staff focused on Essential Strategies for Positive Behavior, Attendance, and Engagement.

Other future supports could include: 1) PD on curriculum development and alignment and pedagogical practices; 2) sharing of best practices in the area of attendance improvement and academics (for example by asking educators who participated in the Summer Institute to share their progress and promising practices during the spring retreat; 3) deeper exploration of why students are not completing college prep curriculum; and 4) expansion of rigorous and dual credit courses.

2 PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS AND RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS TO INCREASE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.

Results from the coordinator and admin survey indicate that schools are struggling with family and community engagement. Oregon GEAR UP should continue to promote the use of existing resources, such as the Community Engagement and Parent Engagement Toolkits and Parent Workshop resources (for example through hands-on activities and planning at weekly coordinator meetings and/or fall/spring retreats), and the sharing of promising practices across GEAR UP schools.

3 SUPPORT SCHOOLS IN RAISING STAFF EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS AND INCREASING THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN CREATING A COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE.

Results show considerable gains from Year 1 to Year 2 in how often staff promote a college-going culture and the extent to which schools have a college-going culture in place. Yet, only 8% of staff said their school has a college-going culture fully in place, and staff had much lower expectations than students with regards to the percentage of students who will achieve a degree, certificate, or apprenticeship.

Priority areas include: 1) providing PD for staff on how to promote high expectations and integrate college readiness in their classes (for example by training coordinators and administrators on how to conduct data placemat activities with their staff); and 2) encouraging schools to broaden their implementation of Aspirations-focused activities such as having college corners in each classroom, providing mentoring opportunities from alumni and college students; and developing college clubs.