

August 21, 2019



KATE BROWN  
Governor

## **The Student Success Act Community Planning and Engagement**

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Every Oregon student has the fundamental ability to learn, grow, and reach their full potential. Giving our children the opportunity to thrive is at the core of the Student Success Act.

Across Oregon, we continue to see a great difference in the opportunities available to students, their learning, and achievement. In response, the Student Success Act (SSA) makes significant new investments to improve education for every child, with a clear goal to help children who have long been underserved.

The SSA invests resources to improve outcomes for our children and youth of color, and those navigating poverty, homelessness and foster care; for children and youth from tribal communities, emerging bilingual students, students with disabilities, and other students that have historically experienced disparities in education.

Every community is eligible to receive new, additional funding through the SSA. These funds must be dedicated toward fully addressing child and student needs and advancing long-term education goals. To receive funds, the SSA requires planning processes that include members from across the community.

### **A Historic Call to Action**

Maximizing this historic investment in Oregon's children and youth requires collaboration, partnership, and participation. School districts are responsible for developing plans that promote well-rounded education, student health and safety in public schools, and for other dedicated purposes specified in the SSA. Early Learning Hubs are responsible for plans to expand access to early care and education programs for children and families, including preschool and infant-toddler services.

These planning processes required of school districts at the local level, and Early Learning Hubs at the regional level, to receive new SSA funds run parallel to one another. In both cases, an application

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must be submitted to the State reflecting a plan that clearly details how the new resources will be used to achieve clear, measurable goals. When decision-makers at the local and regional level partner and plan together, we can maximize the positive impacts for our students and families.

## Key Principles for Community Engagement

Lifting up each and every Oregon student is at the heart of these community-wide planning processes, and it begins with engagement. The SSA importantly requires that our underserved students and their families participate in planning. Educators in our classrooms, program partners, community-based and culturally-specific organizations, civic leaders, tribal governments and higher education institutions bring expertise and impact to these processes.

Reaching out within your local community to invite community-wide participation into planning processes is an important first step. Working to strengthen and form new relationships with underserved parents and families while building trust is necessary and important. This is where partnerships with community-based and culturally-specific organizations can be invaluable.

Working together in this way, every community has an opportunity to create a shared vision for educational success. All participants involved in these planning processes have an ongoing role to play, and responsibility, in helping each and every student achieve their full potential.

When connected, coordinated, and aligned, the strategies developed through these planning processes have the ability to create and expand opportunities for all our children. Communities who participate in planning are more likely to create better solutions, which ultimately creates a space for new ideas, innovation, and equitable outcomes. Our communities are at their best when every student succeeds.

To guide successful community planning, these four principles are important to follow:

- **Promote Equitable Engagement:** Equity is foundational to community engagement. All aspects of community engagement must recognize, honor, and respect the diversity of the community—including its many cultures—through an inclusive and representative process that brings forward the assets and needs of the communities you serve.
- **Partner Up:** Partnering with the community is necessary to create change and improve opportunities for all children. Connecting with the community in meaningful ways is possible in partnership with trusted groups and organizations, especially those that serve and support children, youth and families who are less often included.
- **Mobilize and Empower Decision-Making:** Community engagement can only be sustained by mobilizing, strengthening, and empowering diverse community partners and their knowledge. Maintaining and sustaining these connections requires an ongoing openness to new approaches, and flexibility in meeting changing needs.
- **Keep Going!** Collaboration requires a commitment over time to working together and building relationships toward the creation of collective solutions.

## Action Steps for Community Planning

Equity must be at the center of all our community planning processes, and an integral part of our children’s education—from the very start of early learning connected all the way through their K-12 experience. As leaders in your community, it’s up to you to create broader, sustained community engagement in a way that ensures all our children and families are set up for success, especially those from underserved communities.

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| 1 | <b>Start with relationships.</b>  | Effective community engagement and planning begins with building relationships and trust.  |
| 2 | <b>Ensure the community has clear expectations for engagement.</b>  | Effective community engagement and planning requires clarity and mutual understanding of purpose and goals for the planning process.       |
| 3 | <b>Create a plan for data collection and analysis that is attentive to and reflective of participant voice.</b> | Effective community engagement and planning results in participants feeling valued and having an impact on decisions.                      |
| 4 | <b>Build in several and recurring feedback loops.</b>   | Effective community engagement and planning is an ongoing process attentive to evolving community needs and refining strategies over time. |

## Additional Resources for Community Planning and Engagement

Community planning requires specific action steps. Resources for how to work through and achieve these steps are available through Student Success Act (SSA) toolkits and resource guides available online through the:

- [Oregon Department of Education](#)
- [Early Learning Division](#)