High School as a Key Transition
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Introduction
A growing number of states are examining how they can do a better job of connecting the various levels of their education system – early learning, K-12 and postsecondary. Driving these efforts are new challenges and pressures, including changes in the economy and workplace, demographic shifts, and advances in technology and telecommunications. There is also widespread and growing concern over the enormous number of young people who move from one level of the system to the next without the knowledge and skills they need to succeed at that level. Creating a more integrated, seamless education system involves addressing many complex issues, including standards, assessment, teacher education, college admissions policies, governance, funding streams and institutional turf issues. Over the past decade, states have begun to move away from dealing with such issues on a piecemeal basis toward a more comprehensive approach known as "P-16." This term reflects the vision of a coherent, flexible system of public education that stretches from preschool through postsecondary.

The following topical policy brief is from the second phase of a statewide P-16 analysis on the state of Oregon completed by ECS. The first phase of the analysis is a broad policy brief called Oregon State Policies Aligned to the ECS P-16 Policy Framework. The brief presented a compilation of Oregon education policies and statewide programs organized under the ECS P-16 framework described in What Is P-16 Education: A Primer for Legislators, A Practical Introduction to the Concept, Language and Policy Issues of an Integrated System of Public Education (ECS, 2001), which designates specific policy goals and recommendations for each level of education – early learning, K-12, and postsecondary. The policy brief compiled relevant Oregon policies within each goal of the P-16 framework to showcase Oregon's current policy system through the P-16 lens.

The second phase of the analysis includes six topical briefs focused on issues determined by the Oregon State Board of Education as priority topics: early learning, aligning standards, high school as a key transition, articulation and transfer, postsecondary access and affordability, and P-16 finance. These briefs include Oregon-specific information about each topic, including: current Oregon policies related to the topic; relevant performance data for Oregon; examples from other states and policy questions; and issues to consider as Oregon determines the next steps for their P-16 priority topics. The recommendations and policy questions are intended as starting points for discussion and deliberation among Oregon's education policy stakeholders. While each brief is a stand-alone document on a specific topic related to P-16 education, when taken together the briefs represent a broad, cross-cutting series on P-16 education issues in Oregon. As such, specific policies and performance data may appear in multiple briefs.

Data Sources and Methodology
ECS used a variety of sources to obtain the data and information reported in this document, including staff in several departments and agencies within the state of Oregon as well as a number of national education policy organizations and research reports. This document presents a sample of the available data on Oregon performance related to high school redesign; it is by no means an exhaustive representation of Oregon's efforts. Many additional data sources exist and are worth examining.
High School As a Key Transition

The high school years are a key transition point within the P-16 pipeline. During these critical years students prepare themselves for postsecondary education, whether that will be career training, community college or a four-year university. Current research shows the significant importance of postsecondary education for young people to advance and be successful in today’s society. "Knowledge and skills, schools and education" are critically imperative to the economic growth in the 21st century, and to ensuring that students can participate in and contribute to an increasingly global and multicultural world (National Commission on the High School Senior Year, 2001).

State policymakers and educators are recognizing the need for a different perspective on education for students in their high school careers. States are exploring and implementing a variety of learning options for high school students, such as internships, apprenticeship programs, early enrollment in college, technical training and certificate programs. Oregon is moving toward a more personalized high school experience for each student, thus providing options for the high school-postsecondary transition. The following section describes the Oregon policies or programs already in place.

Oregon Policies and Programs Related to High School as a Key Transition

- Oregon Administrative Rules 81-022-1130 requires all students to complete a minimum of 22 specified units and to complete a unit of “applied arts, fine arts or second language” to graduate from high school. In 2007, students must also “build a collection of evidence, or include evidence in existing collection(s), to demonstrate extended application…[and] career-related knowledge and skills in the following areas: personal management, problem solving, communication, teamwork, employment foundations, and career development…[and] must participate in career-related learning experiences outlined in the education plan.” In December 2002, the State Board adopted a policy that gives school districts the option to grant graduation credits based on proficiency (demonstrated knowledge and skills). Guidelines are provided to assist school districts in developing local credit for proficiency policies and procedures on the ODE website (http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=35, retrieved 2004).

- Oregon’s graduation requirements (as adopted by the State Board of Education in March 2002 to be implemented in 2006-07) require that all students have an education plan and education profile that prepares them for postsecondary opportunities in college or work (OAR 581-022-1120 – 581-022-1130). Students must also build a collection of evidence, or include evidence of existing collections, to demonstrate extended application, demonstrate career-related knowledge and skills, and participate in career-related learning experiences outlined in the education plan. Local boards may set a proficiency standard for graduation with regard to the extended application and career related learning standards, but such a standard is not a statewide requirement.

Oregon Certificate Programs.

- State policy requires districts to offer the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) and the Certificate of Initial Mastery subject area endorsements to high school students – students are not required to participate. Under the legislation, students are able to collect credentials over the course of their K-12 career and “culminating in a project or exhibition that demonstrates attainment of the required knowledge and skills that have been measured by a variety of valid assessment methods,” including work samples and tests (Oregon Revised Statutes § 329.465).

State Board policy specifies that a Certificate of Initial Mastery must be awarded to all students who: “achieve all grade 10 performance standards in the academic content areas of English, mathematics, science, and the social sciences, and additional local district CIM requirements, if any, as defined by district board policy; and (b) demonstrate proficiency in the areas of second language, the arts, and physical education based on performance standards as defined in district school board policy.” Students may also earn CIM subject area endorsements by meeting state and local standards in the following subjects: social sciences, arts, second language, physical education and technology.
### Subject Area | CIM Requirement
--- | ---
English, reading | CIM knowledge and skills test
English, speaking | 3 CIM speaking work samples
English, writing | CIM on-demand writing test
 | 3 CIM writing work samples
Mathematics | CIM knowledge and skills test
 | CIM on-demand math problem solving test
 | 2 CIM math problem solving work samples
Science | CIM knowledge and skills test
 | CIM scientific inquiry work sample

- **Certificate of Advanced Mastery with career endorsements:** Each school district must “institute programs that allow students to qualify for a Certificate of Advanced Mastery with career endorsements that prepare students for postsecondary academic pursuits and professional technical careers.” District programs may be established “in a public education institution such as a public school, education service district, community college, public professional technical school or institution of higher education, or any combination thereof, that enrolls the student and meets the requirements of the state board of education.” Courses must be available to all students, “must provide a combination of work-related learning experiences and study”, and must “include a comprehensive educational component that meets rigorous academic standards.” The Department of Education may provide technical assistance to assist school districts in the implementation of the Certificate of Advanced Mastery programs. In establishing the requirements for Certificates of Advanced Mastery with career endorsements, the State Board of Education shall adopt rules that facilitate movement among the endorsements and shall encourage public school choice and mobility so as to enhance a student’s opportunities for a full range of educational experiences (Oregon Revised Statutes § 329.475).

Requirements for the Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM) are as follows:
1. Develop an education plan and build an education profile.
3. Demonstrate career-related knowledge and skills based on state adopted performance standards.
4. Participate in career-related learning experiences as outlined in the education plan.
5. Meet the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) academic requirements. Students pursue both the CIM and CAM simultaneously during grades 9-12. The CIM standards provide the academic foundation for success in next steps. As students pursue their personal and career interests in preparation for next steps, CAM experiences provide relevance and meaning to CIM academic learning.

Although districts must, prior to September 1, 2008, establish programs permitting students to qualify for the Certificate of Advanced Mastery, districts are not required to award the Certificate of Advanced Mastery until September 1, 2008. The department of education is required to establish incentive programs to encourage school districts to implement the Certificate of Advanced Mastery prior to September 1, 2008. The incentive programs must provide a variety of models for implementation of the Certificate of Advanced Mastery in school districts that vary in size and location in the state. The incentive programs must also provide a variety of models for career endorsement areas [www.leg.state.or.us/ors/329.html](http://www.leg.state.or.us/ors/329.html), retrieved, 2004).

- **Districts are to make available to students, in addition to a diploma, “Career endorsements, which are focus areas that identify a high quality career related course of study which informs students about future choices and simultaneously prepares them for further education, lifelong learning and employment”** (ORS § 329.447, [http://www.leg.state.or.us/ors/329.html](http://www.leg.state.or.us/ors/329.html), retrieved, 2004).
Senate Bill 919 established the Proficiency-Based Admission Standards System (PASS), the OUS means of admitting students based on demonstrated proficiencies. When the State Board of Higher Education directed the development of the Proficiency-based Admission Standards System (PASS) in July 1993, PASS was expected to become the primary admission policy when K-12 reform and OUS alignment made that feasible. The purpose of PASS is to clarify and define the relationship between the standards-based reform agenda for K-12, including CIM and CAM, and college admission. PASS defines the knowledge and skills necessary for success in higher education and includes academic standards and criteria for six content areas defined at the K-12 level: English, math, science, social science, second language, and visual and performing arts. Full implementation of PASS is expected by 2005. Although PASS is strongly recommended, it is not a requirement for OUS admission.

Oregon Community Colleges, Two Plus Two and Dual Credit/Enrollment Programs.

College High School programs are voluntary cooperative educational program agreements between high schools and colleges to offer college-level courses for credit in the high school. CH programs were first developed in Oregon in the 1970s. Courses are taught by high school teachers and result in students earning dual credit – both high school credit and college credit. The colleges are responsible for the curricular content and standards, administrative support, and program monitoring (http://www.ous.edu/aca/earlyoptions.htm, retrieved 2004).

The Oregon University System/Oregon Community College Dual-Enrollment and Co-Admission Programs maintain formal bilateral agreements among the state’s community colleges created to ease the transition for students transferring to an Oregon University System (OUS) campus from an Oregon community college. Dual enrollment and co-admission programs aid student mobility and enhance baccalaureate completion. They vary from agreement to agreement, but typically include: (1) a single application process for admission to both institutions, (2) availability of student advising on both campuses, (3) increased scheduling flexibility with access to classes on both campuses, (4) opportunity to access services and participate in college life on both campuses, (5) an integrated system of financial aid administration, and (6) access to library and computer resources on both campuses (Oregon University System, Key Academic Partnerships, 2003).

The Tech Prep program of study joins a high school academic and professional technical education (PTE) program with a similar community college program through a non-duplicative sequence of courses. Completing this planned sequence of study can lead a student to a community college PTE certificate, an Associate degree, transfer to university-level education and finally, placement in appropriate employment (http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=222, retrieved 2004).

Linking Assessment Data Directly to Entry Standards (LADDER PK-16) proposes a model for linking high school assessment data to college admissions and to subsequent class placement decisions at all seven universities that comprise the Oregon University System (OUS). This alignment of assessments represents the second stage in Oregon's process of building a PK-16 standards-based system. The first stage was accomplished through a grant from The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), U.S. Department of Education, in 1994-97. The Proficiency-based Admission Standards System (PASS) developed college-entry standards and aligned them with PK-12 standards for high school completion. LADDER PK-16, which is the second stage, aligns high school assessment data with college admission. Assessment Moderation Panels comprised of high school teachers and college faculty in English, math, and science, ensure validity and comparability of high school ratings of student proficiency. Teams of higher education faculty and admissions officers then align these ratings as well as state and national assessment data on incoming applicants with class placement decisions (www.ous.edu/pass/pk16/ladder, retrieved 2004).
School-to-work transitions and work experience programs.

- Oregon’s Workforce Development: The Governor’s Workforce Initiative directs state agencies to tie together supply and demand-side workforce services to better meet the needs of businesses and workers. That means understanding and connecting employer needs, gaps in skills in the market place and projections of where and what the jobs will be in the future (demand) to training and support programs that prepare Oregonians for work (supply) (http://egov.oregon.gov/WORKSOURCE/governormain.shtml, retrieved 2004).

- The Governor has also established the Oregon Employer Workforce Training Fund that will apply some federal workforce resources to solve statewide workforce challenges. The statewide funds will be focused in five Opportunity Areas. The Oregon Workforce Investment Board advises the Governor on workforce policy. The Workforce Policy Cabinet is a forum where state agency leaders work together to increase efficiency and integration of services. Among the agencies working together to produce a skilled workforce for Oregon are the Oregon Department of Education and the Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (http://egov.oregon.gov/WORKSOURCE/fundguidelines.shtml, retrieved 2004).

- Oregon state policy makes clear a link between school and career: “Career-related learning experiences” are defined as “structured student activities in the community, the workplace, or in school that connect academic content and career-related learning to real life applications.” These experiences extend, reinforce and support classroom learning. They include, but are not limited to: (1) workplace mentoring; (2) workplace simulations; (3) school-based enterprises; (4) structured work experiences; (5) cooperative work and study programs; (6) on-the-job training; (7) apprenticeship programs; (8) service learning; and (9) field-based investigations (OAR 581-022-0102).

- State policy encourages educational institutions and businesses to develop, in partnership, models for programs related to school-to-work transitions and work experience internships directed by the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century. The Department of Education may allocate funds to any education service district, school district, individual secondary school or community college grants to develop such model programs. To receive a grant, a business must demonstrate that the program will: (a) identify groups that have been traditionally under-represented in the programs and internships, particularly in health care, business and high technology employment positions, and encourage students who belong to these groups, particularly students in secondary schools and community colleges, to apply for consideration and acceptance into a model program. Model programs should develop academic skills, attitudes and self-confidence necessary to allow students to succeed in the work environment, including attitudes of curiosity and perseverance and the feelings of positive self-worth that result from sustained effort (ORS § 329.885).

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1 (A) Opportunities to address major skill gaps in specific occupations/industry across the state and have an impact in at least five workforce regions. (B) Opportunities to build capacity statewide in a traded-sector industry. (C) Opportunities that implement cross-industry, transferable skills training projects statewide. (D) Opportunities to replicate a successful project(s) previously funded by the Current Worker Grant Program and expand to more regions and/or to a statewide scale. (E) Opportunities to develop alternative training delivery systems that provide just-in-time training, training in remote areas, or training designed around the needs of businesses and workers (evenings, shortened schedules, sequential modules rather than academic schedules).
The Education and Workforce Policy Advisor, in consultation with the Department of Education, the Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development, the Bureau of Labor and Industries, the Economic and Community Development Department and the Department of Human Services, shall propose policies and strategies that take into account that: (a) The state must promote innovative thinking with respect to the curriculum and educational delivery system of Oregon public schools; (b) The state must require of all youth a level of achievement that prepares them to pursue college, professional technical programs, apprenticeships, work-based training and school-to-work programs; (c) Greater employer investment is essential in the ongoing training of all workers to meet workforce needs; (d) The state must encourage Oregon businesses to improve productivity by creating high performance work organizations that provide high skills and high wage opportunities for youth and adults; and (e) All employment-related training, education and job placement services and sources of funds must be coordinated among state agencies and boards and must complement the state’s overall efforts on behalf of youth and adults (ORS § 329.850).

### Oregon Data and Performance Related to High School as a Key Transition

Oregon’s performance on high school redesign is highlighted below using several data indicators. The following data points are a sample of potential indicators and are not meant to be an exhaustive listing.

- As of June 2003, Oregon’s Integrated P-16 Data System has not been implemented statewide. The system does not include Oregon’s pre-kindergarten programs ([http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/specialty/certificates/cam/pdfs/ccpdedplanprofile_sec1.pdf](http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/specialty/certificates/cam/pdfs/ccpdedplanprofile_sec1.pdf), retrieved 2004).

- Oregon does not have a 12th grade benchmark or a high school exit exam. Performance on state assessment is not linked to high school graduation. Oregon statute limits the development of standards and assessments to grade 3 through grade 10. In order to complete the state’s own LADDER program, the development of standards and assessments through grade 12 is necessary ([http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/certificates/cam/pdfs/SectionIIPhase1Jan28.pdf](http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/certificates/cam/pdfs/SectionIIPhase1Jan28.pdf), retrieved 2004).

### Curriculum

An important component of any P-16 system is the development and implementation of a rigorous college preparatory curriculum to ensure that high school students are adequately prepared for postsecondary coursework. Many college freshmen end up in remedial courses because their high school courses did not prepare them for the challenges of college. How does Oregon perform?

- Oregon does not have high school course standards (Oregon stakeholder comment, 2004).

- High-level course-taking ([Sources: 2002 data: Education Trust, EdWatch Online, 2004 State Summary Reports; 2003 data: Staff, Oregon Department of Education]):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Oregon</th>
<th>Top States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th graders taking Algebra, 2002</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th-12th graders taking at least one upper-level mathematics course (algebra 2, calculus)</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th-12th graders taking at least one upper-level science course (chemistry)</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th graders taking Algebra</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th graders taking Geometry</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th-12th graders taking pre-Algebra</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th-12th graders taking Algebra 1</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th-12th graders taking Algebra 2</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th-12th graders taking Geometry</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th-12th graders taking more advanced classes</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Top states = median of top five performing states*
Oregon’s science and social studies requirements for high school graduation are partially aligned with college entrance requirements, while the state’s high school graduation requirements in English, math and foreign language are not aligned with the state’s college entrance requirements (NASH, October 2002).

**Participation and Persistence in Postsecondary Education.** Many high school students believe that getting into college is the “hard part,” when, in fact, completing college is the more difficult achievement. Persistence in postsecondary education is an important indicator of how well students are prepared and continue to be supported through postsecondary education. One of the best predictors of earning a bachelor’s degree is getting to the second year of college.

The following data represent information and methodologies using different sources, therefore the results may also differ. The Oregon University System and the Education Trust use similar methodologies to arrive at their figures: enrollment rates of both part-time and full-time students enrolled in either a two- or four-year university as reported by NCES (NCES uses data as reported by institutions). ECS’ “Chance for College” uses Census data and follows a 9th grade cohort so that states can be compared with each other (Census data is not self-reported). This data reflects the proportion of college age participants as opposed to the numbers that are enrolled.

- **College Participation (ECS, 2003)**
  - Current participation rate for Oregon students age 18-24: **30.8%**
    - Benchmark: 47.7% (National average: 34%)
  - Current participation rate for Oregon students age 25+: **4.6%**
    - Benchmark: 6.5%

- **“Chance for College” in Oregon = 34.3%**. “Chance for college” is measured in this way: for every 100 students who enter 9th grade, about 67 are likely to graduate high school four years later. Of those 67 students who graduate high school, about 34 (or 51%) are likely to enroll in college within a year. That means for every 100 students who enter 9th grade, about 34 are likely to graduate high school four years later and enroll in college within a year (Ruppert, 2003).

- The Oregon University System reports that nearly 75% of Oregon’s high school graduates go to some form of postsecondary school within one year of graduation (www.ous.edu/pass/documents/current/IBppt.ppt, retrieved 2004).

- According to the Oregon University System, the percent of Oregon postsecondary freshmen who continue to sophomore year was **79.7%** in school-year 2000-01.

- The Education Trust, in *EdWatch Online*, reports almost identical data: Oregon freshmen at four-year colleges return for their sophomore year at a rate of **78%**, compared to the “top” states* at 84%.

**Additional information reported by The Education Trust:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Oregon</th>
<th>Top states*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The percentage of high school freshmen enrolling in any U.S. college within four years</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The percentage of first-year community college students returning to their second year</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The percentage of first-time, full-time freshmen completing a Bachelor of Arts degree within six years</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Top states = median of top five performing states
Completion.
Earning a high school diploma, an associate’s degree or a baccalaureate degree – persisting to completion in each segment of the P-16 pipeline – indicates that students are moving through the system. Various data on completion rates for high school, community college and university follow:

- **High School**
  - 2001 high school graduation rates for Oregon: 73.6%, 20th in the United States (Urban Institute, 2004)
  - Oregon high school graduation rate, 1998-2000: 82.3%, National high school graduation rate: 85.7% (Oregon Department of Education, 2003)

- **College**
  - According to the Oregon Department of Education: “About 63% of Oregonians had completed some college in 2002, up from 53% in 1992.”
  - Postsecondary credentials: About 30% of Oregonians have professional-technical credentials.
  - According to the Oregon Department of Education, “Oregonians with a bachelor’s degree climbed steadily from 25% in 1992 to 31% in 2002. Oregonians with advanced degrees increased from 7% in 1990 to nearly 12% in 2002.”
  - According to the Oregon University System (March 2003), in school-year 2000-01, 55.5% of enrolled freshmen completed a bachelor’s degree within six years of enrollment, which is a slight improvement over previous years (54.9% in 1996-97, 55.1% in 1999-2000).
  - Another data source, Measuring Up 2002: The State-by-State Report Card for Higher Education, supports these completion rates for the state of Oregon. According to Measuring Up, a fair percentage of first-time, full-time college students in Oregon earn a bachelor’s degree within five years of finishing high school. The proportion of undergraduate students completing certificates and degrees relative to the number enrolled has increased, but remains fair compared with other states.

- Related to completion, the “college readiness rate” is yet another measurement of how well students are prepared to move through the postsecondary pipeline. The rate is based on three criteria: (1) high school graduation; (2) student transcripts – student has taken four years of English, three years of math and two years each of natural science, social science and foreign language; and (3) basic reading skills – a student’s NAEP reading score was at least 265 (score considered by NAEP to be required for a basic level of achievement). Oregon’s college readiness rate: 24%, compared to the national average of 32% (Green and Foster, 2003).

Partnerships and Postsecondary Connections.
Programs and practices that connect high school to postsecondary institutions – for example, community college programs or early enrollment opportunities – represent an important indicator of how well a state has implemented a P-16 system. Communication, especially, between high school and postsecondary education is crucial. High school students need to know what is required for college admission and college completion, as well as what options, services and support are available to them when they advance to the postsecondary level.

- The Oregon Educational Improvement and Innovation Office provides leadership in coordinating professional technical instruction, academic content, and career-related learning experiences to prepare secondary (grades 9-12) and postsecondary (community college and higher education) students for further education and entrance into the workforce (http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=147, retrieved 2004).
- College High School (CH) programs are voluntary cooperative educational program agreements between high schools and colleges to offer college-level courses for credit in the high school. 14 community colleges and 3 OUS institutions participate in CH around the state, working with about
175 high schools. Some 6,368 students participate annually in CH programs (an increase of 87% in student enrollments since 1993) (www.ous.edu/aca/earlyoptions.htm, retrieved 2004).

- In 2002-2003, 13,641 high school students were enrolled in college credit courses. Collectively they earned over 98,000 college credits with a total of 260 participating high schools. In 1998-1999, 16,863 high school students were enrolled in college credit programs. While each program differs slightly, most of Oregon’s dual enrollment programs occur during regular school hours, offer low course fees (these programs either do not charge tuition or it is paid by the high school district), provide guidance counselors, equip students with essential skills in math, science, technology, and written and oral communication, and gives students the ability to solve problems, think critically and work well with others. Upon completion, participants receive both high school and college credit that can transfer toward other two-year or four-year public colleges and universities (http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=232, http://www.ode.state.or.us/links/orcclinks.aspx, retrieved 2004).

- The Oregon Tech Prep program is a “high school-plus” program that prepares students for high-skill, high-wage careers. Each student has an individual plan that blends rigorous academics with career-technical courses. The progressive program connects high school studies to at least two years of postsecondary study in a college, technical school or apprenticeship. Tech Prep generates higher graduation rates: 90% of Tech Prep students graduate from high school compared to an 85% graduation rate for all students. Each year approximately 10,000 Oregon high school students are involved in Tech Prep (Oregon Department of Education, 2004).

- In order to ensure the rigor of the high school coursework that Oregon students complete in the process of preparing for college, The OUS Course Approval Process was redesigned to require high schools to map course content to college entry standards. High school staff can map high school course content to PASS standards and indicate students’ opportunity to meet varying levels of proficiency. OUS requires every Oregon high school to list the courses in all six content areas in which students have full or partial opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in each standard. High school administrators are encouraged (but not required) to use this process as an opportunity to align curriculum within departments and across content areas (www.ous.edu/enroll/CAPforms.doc, retrieved 2004).

- Oregon participates in the federal program GEAR UP – Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs – that provides access to low-income and at-risk students. GEAR UP is designed toward the goal of increasing the number of low-income students who attend college. In academic year 2004-05 the Oregon GEAR UP project will serve 12,000 Oregon students from the state’s lowest-income communities located across the state, both urban and rural. (The latest state data available reports that 16 high schools and 22 middle schools participate in GEAR UP, but those numbers are no doubt higher for the 2004-05 academic year) (OUS, Key Academic Partnerships, 2003).

CIM, CAM, PASS and Other Programs and Assessments
- Oregon’s 10th grade benchmarks (CIM, CAM, and PASS) are not statewide high school graduation requirements (although schools can choose to make them one) nor is PASS required for admission to the OUS system. According to the First Year Study, students and some teachers consider them low-stakes (http://www.ous.edu/aca/1stYrExecSum.pdf, retrieved 2004).

- While PASS is a planned postsecondary transition program, some say that few teachers are involved in the program at the school and state level. Most high school students do not attend classes in which they can earn PASS credit. Further, the process of gathering, reviewing, and issuing PASS credits is thorough and rigorous and requires a great deal of time for teachers. There appears to be little local incentive for teachers to participate; as a result, they do so on a volunteer basis. As a result, higher education faculty rarely participates in the review of student work with the PASS Moderation panel of teachers. There are no mechanisms in place to ensure that the composition of the PASS Moderation panel includes all stakeholders. Finally, the number and composition of teachers and students that engage in and/or benefit from the PASS process is unclear relative to the total number of teachers and students (comments from Oregon stakeholders and http://www.stanford.edu/group/bridgeproject/oregoni.pdf, retrieved 2004).
According to the *First Year Study*, students who “meet” or “exceed” the 10th grade benchmark are more likely to earn a higher college freshman GPA in related courses.

- Performance on the 10th grade benchmark assessments and SAT I were comparably correlated with first-year college GPA. With a freshman year GPA of 2.5 in OUS, a student has a 40% probability of earning a degree in six years. Eighty-two percent of students who “met” or “exceeded” the 10th grade benchmark assessment returned for the second year of college ([http://www.ous.edu/aca/1stYrExecSum.pdf](http://www.ous.edu/aca/1stYrExecSum.pdf), retrieved 2004).


According to Oregon’s 2002-03 Report Card, 12.3% of Oregon’s graduating seniors took the ACT. Nationally, 40% of students were tested. 57% of Oregon’s graduating seniors took the SAT in 2002-03. The average score for Oregon students who took the ACT was the highest in the nation – 22.6 compared to a national average of 20.8; Oregon’s average score increased one-tenth of a point from 2002. Oregon’s average scores on the SAT in 2002-03 were a 526 in Verbal and a 527 in math compared to a national average of 507 in Verbal and a 519 in Math. Oregon’s average math score decreased by one point for Math and increased by two points for Verbal as compared to the previous year.

AP courses are offered within high schools with the option that students may take AP examinations offered by the College Board; if students pass at a score of 3 or better, they typically will be awarded college credit once they matriculate to college. About 143 high schools in Oregon have AP test takers (out of 340 high schools in the state). The cost to the student for each AP examination is $74. Although the number of seniors in Oregon high schools taking AP exams make up only about 6% of the year’s graduating class, they do make up 17% of those enrolling in a four-year college the fall following graduation ([http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=118](http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=118), retrieved 2004).

In 2003, OUS and ODE partnered in a grant designed to increase the number of IB and AP programs in schools by providing fee-waivers, teacher professional development and online courses for students. To access grant money supporting adoption of program, eligible schools must have 40% or more of their students on the free/reduced-cost lunch program (OUS, August 2003).

- From 2002 to 2003, Oregon experienced a 10% increase in the number of students participating in AP classes. From 1998-2002, participation among under-represented minority students increased 77% and participation by low-income students increased 101% (OUS, August, 2003).
- Half of Oregon’s schools participated in the Advanced Placement program in 2001, compared to 45% regionally and 57% nationally.
- In 2001, more AP exams were taken in Oregon, however, the proportion of exams receiving a passing score of 3, 4, or 5 declined from previous years.
- In 2001, only 3% of AP tests taken in Oregon were taken by low-income students; this is below the regional average of 15%.
- In 2001, nearly 82% of the AP exam takers in Oregon were white non-Hispanic and 8% were Asian/Pacific Islanders.
- In 2001, Asian/Pacific Islanders on average took more exams than other racial/ethnic groups.
- White non-Hispanic students were more likely to get a passing grade of 3, 4, or 5 than other racial/ethnic groups ([www.wiche.edu/Policy/WCALO/indicators/state.asp?id=11](http://www.wiche.edu/Policy/WCALO/indicators/state.asp?id=11), retrieved 2004).
- Six high schools in Oregon offer IB programs. Students who take the full range of IB examinations pay about $600 ([www.ous.edu/aca/earlyoptions.htm](http://www.ous.edu/aca/earlyoptions.htm) retrieved 2004).
**Workforce Development.**
Ideally, students who are well prepared in high school for college will likely continue achievement to be well prepared for a career. How satisfied are employers with the preparation and knowledge of employees? A joint report from the Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development, the Oregon Employment Department, and the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department – *Upgrading the Skills of Oregon’s Current Workforce: Strategies for the 21st Century* – reports that the four areas of concern that emerged from Phase I of the project, including (1) “trainable worker” skills (basic academic skills, computer skills, and the ability to solve problems and think critically), (2) soft skills (interpersonal and teamwork skills), (3) supervisory/management skills, and (4) small business needs were generally validated, with few regional exceptions, as the most pressing issues facing employers with respect to workforce development. For many employers, the lack of “trainable worker” skills represents their greatest challenge. The lack of soft skills, particularly with respect to customer service, also ranked high (July 2000).

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**High School as a Key Transition ~ Examples from Other States** (American Diploma Project, 2004)

- **New York’s** Board of Regents has phased out the general diploma option and implemented technical endorsement instead. Schools have to meet stringent criteria to earn the right to award technical endorsements. Also, the City University of New York for several years has used data from the New York Regents exams for placement purposes. Despite predictions that doing so would cause applications to decline, applications have increased steadily since the implementation of the policy.

- Starting with the graduating class of 2008, all students in **Texas** will be required to complete the state’s college and workplace readiness curriculum, known as the Recommended High School Program (RHSP), to graduate. Texas requires the approval of both a counselor and parent for a student to opt out of the RHSP and into the Minimum Graduation Program.

- Additionally in Texas, last year the state department of education revised all of its assessments to reflect the state’s more rigorous content standards, which compare favorably to ADP benchmarks. State officials then set two different “cut scores” on the revised high school assessments — one score to determine whether a student is ready to graduate and another to determine whether a student is ready for college. The revised assessments eventually may replace the less rigorous test now used for college placement.

- **Indiana’s** Education Roundtable has taken a similar step with its college and workplace readiness curriculum (the “Core 40” curriculum), and other states such as **South Carolina** and **Tennessee** are considering doing so as well. The Indiana plan will require all students in the state to follow a college and workplace readiness curriculum. The state is revising the content of both its 10th grade Graduation Qualifying Exam and its Core 40 end-of-course assessments to reflect the fullest possible range of content deemed necessary by Indiana postsecondary faculty and employers.

- **The Massachusetts** Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) weathered a barrage of criticism when only 68% of the class of 2003 passed the 10th grade exit exam on the first try. Some urged the state to lower the passing standard or delay the graduation requirement, but officials instead concentrated on providing resources and support to students who hadn’t passed. By August 2003, the passing rate for 2003 seniors had climbed to 95%. Although the MCAS exit exam does not sample all of the rigorous content in the ADP (American Diploma Project) benchmarks, it is very strong compared to most other states’ exams.

- **California** education officials and faculty from the California State University (CSU) system have developed an early assessment for use in CSU placement decisions. Grounded primarily in California’s standards-based tests for 11th grade, the early assessment also will provide students diagnostic information so that they have time to receive the help they may need to be ready to enter credit-bearing courses.
Because a University of Washington study showed that the Washington state high school assessment is as good a predictor of college GPA as the SAT, postsecondary officials have agreed to use the state’s high school assessment data in scholarship, admissions and placement decisions. Several technical revisions are being made to the K–12 and postsecondary systems before the new system is implemented.

Two efforts are under way in Kentucky to connect secondary and postsecondary expectations through assessments. The Kentucky Early Mathematics Testing Program (KEMTP) offers a voluntary, online test to help high school sophomores and juniors see if they are on track for college math and close any learning gaps. Data have demonstrated a correlation between students’ KEMTP scores and their college mathematics grades. School districts in Oklahoma, Tennessee and Washington are using KEMTP or developing similar online testing models. Some districts and postsecondary institutions in Kentucky also are piloting the use of the state writing assessment as a placement tool for freshman English courses, which may prompt similar statewide use.

As Nevada refines its high school proficiency exam to sample more of the college- and work-ready content in its state standards, the University and Community College System of Nevada (UCCSN) Board of Regents is working to address college readiness in other ways. The UCCSN gained legislative authority last year to define a core high school curriculum as part of the eligibility requirements to receive the state’s Millennium Scholarship for college. Using the ADP benchmarks to inform the process, the UCCSN will send a clear signal about what students need to have learned to be successful in college. Previously, the scholarships were awarded based primarily on grade point averages (American Diploma Project, 2004).

The National Association of System Heads (NASH) K-16 State Network helps states to build a common framework among higher education and K-12 leaders (such as chancellors, CEOs and superintendents) by creating a K-16 approach to education reform; and to build capacity of senior staff leaders (for example, vice chancellors of academic affairs, deputy superintendents, etc.) participating in K-16 to carry out the tasks of K-16 initiatives.

The following 22 states participate in the Network, each represented by “teams” that include leaders from higher education, K-12, business and community organizations.

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High School as a Key Transition Policy Questions

- How well are teachers and counselors prepared to advise and assist students and parents on how to prepare for, apply for and succeed in postsecondary education?
- Is there a way for students to progress through the high school system as they meet established goals and achievement criteria, rather than as they complete standard classes?
- What types of programs exist for early outreach to students regarding postsecondary options? Is there a way to systematically embed these outreach programs across Oregon?
- How does the Oregon Workforce Investment Act Youth Opportunity System link to K-12 standards and graduation requirements? Consider aligning this program with CIM/CAM/PASS to create multiple pathways to postsecondary success and as a way to balance high standards with varied choices and options for students.
- Are there adequate financial aid systems in place for low-income students to attend college? How well are financial aid options communicated to students and their parents/guardians?
How do the numerous financial aid initiatives in the state of Oregon – More Better Faster, ASET, GEAR UP, Oregon Opportunity Grants – align?

How do higher education institutions and high schools identify and communicate to students and their parents about the academic skills needed to prepare for postsecondary education?

If it makes sense to link K-12 exit exams to college entrance exams, what policies and programs need to be developed to assure that this happens?

High School as a Key Transition Considerations for Discussion

- Ensure that students believe they can go to college, both academically and financially.
- Ensure equal access and student financial assistance to postsecondary education. Ensure students know how to navigate the financial aid system.
- Embed early outreach (before 9th grade) in the education system (admissions, courses, graduation requirements, application processes and deadlines).
- The highest challenge should be integrated into the curriculum – that being one that assures graduates can go to college after graduating from high school. Appropriate support (tutoring, extra classes or learning experiences, double periods, after-school programs, summer school, etc.) should be provided to students who currently are not achieving at grade level.
- Align K-12 high school exams with college standards and entrance exams. Eliminate unnecessary duplication and over-assessment.
- Upgrade high school teacher quality.
- Share performance data across high school and postsecondary systems and teachers (LADDER?).
- Develop common transfer procedures from high school to community colleges and from community colleges to universities.
- Develop incentives for postsecondary institutions to collaborate systemically with high schools on matters of standards, curriculum, transfer agreements and performance feedback.
- Consider funding the dual or concurrent enrollment of upper-division high school students in community college courses and provide incentives to students to accelerate their educational progress.
- Take advantage of growing academic offerings available through distance-learning systems as a means to bridge the gap between high school and college.

References


• Ruppert, Sandra (2003). *Closing the College Participation Gap: State Profile for Oregon*, Education Commission of the States, Denver, CO.


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**Research and Resources**


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