



OREGON'S STUDENT SUCCESS ACT

ILLUMINATING FIVE YEARS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

OREGONIANS EMBRACE SHARED VISION FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

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A new statewide survey conducted by the Oregon Values and Beliefs Center (OVBC), an independent, nonpartisan opinion research organization, shows Oregonians overwhelmingly support the vision and promise of the SSA, finding exceptional levels of common ground across the state.

The survey, commissioned and co-designed by Foundations for a Better Oregon (FBO), shows Oregonians embracing a shared vision of a high-quality, inclusive, and community-centered public education system where high hopes for children and high expectations for schools go hand in hand.

BACKGROUND

Six years ago, a bipartisan group of Oregon legislators kicked off a statewide listening tour to better understand the challenges facing Oregon students and schools. From Baker City to Bend to Coos Bay, they visited dozens of communities to hear directly from youth, families, educators, administrators, and civic leaders about opportunities to strengthen public education.

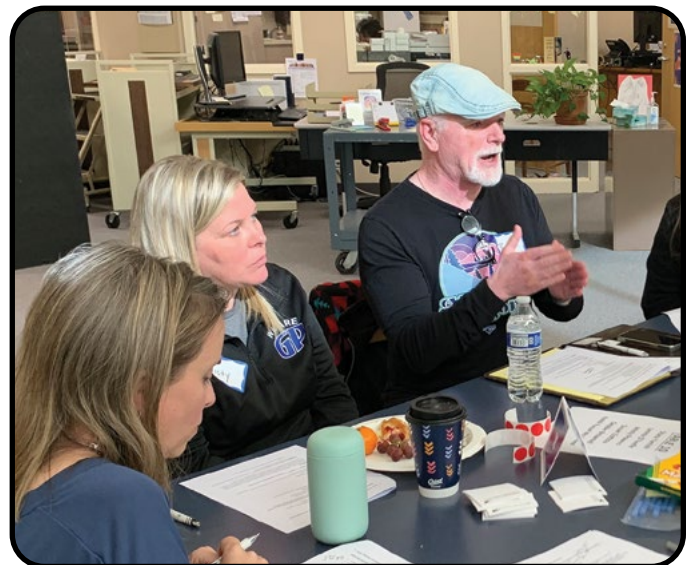
That listening tour—and the solutions that emerged along the way—formed the basis of what would become the SSA, a historic \$1 billion annual investment to expand early learning and strengthen K–12 public schools for all students.

Since then, we’ve witnessed how a global pandemic, an ongoing national reckoning with racial justice, and painful ideological polarization have shaken public schools and shattered conventional wisdom about public education. Five years after the SSA’s passage, we wanted to know: Do Oregonians have the same hopes and dreams for children they shared with legislators back in 2018? Do the SSA’s strategies to support and improve K–12 schools still resonate? Is there sufficient public support for the values the SSA represents to apply its lessons systemwide?

METHODOLOGY

In a 30-question survey, FBO and OVBC tested Oregonians’ support for the SSA’s animating values, goals, and strategies to improve K–12 schools; 1,626 Oregon adults participated in the survey in April and May 2024, with data weighted by gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, and geographic region to provide a statistically valid and representative sample of statewide opinions. With a 2.43% margin of error, the final survey data is independently validated, analyzed, and reported by OVBC.

OVBC’s full survey questionnaire, analysis of findings, and cross tabulations are available at oregonvbc.org/oregon-education-priorities-and-planning/.



A community engagement session about local Student Success Act investments in Grants Pass. Image Source: Grants Pass School District.

NOTABLE SURVEY DATA TRENDS

In these contentious times, we're inspired to see Oregonians express strong and often overwhelming agreement at levels seldom seen in statewide opinion research (90% and above). The levels of agreement also far exceed the 60% threshold that political strategists believe is pivotal to successfully advance public policy and pass ballot measures.

Similarly, we're encouraged by the very low levels of uncertainty among respondents, who almost universally answered "I Don't Know" significantly below the 10% rate typically observed in opinion research. This suggests that Oregonians are clear in their shared values and vision for students and schools, willing to engage with the nuts and bolts of public education systems, and ready to grapple with the nuances of public education policy.

OREGONIANS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

The FBO/OVBC survey shows most Oregonians value the opportunity to engage in local school district decision-making and agree that community engagement helps schools make better decisions.

Many survey respondents emphasized that fully understanding student needs and developing solutions requires listening to a community's diverse perspectives, breadth of knowledge, and lived experiences. They also discuss community engagement as a way to hold school districts accountable.

Still, some Oregonians expressed mixed or negative feelings about community engagement in school districts' decision-making. Some cited respect for and deference to the expertise of district leadership and school staff, while others raised concerns about polarizing voices that aim to stoke division—rather than offer solutions—through public processes.

The quotes featured throughout these pages offer a window into how Oregonians think about working with schools to support every child.

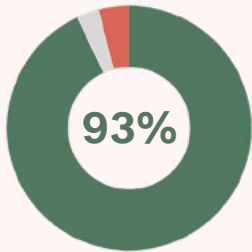
"I believe [community engagement] helps because we are able to hold the districts accountable and make sure they do what is in the best interest of our children."

**—Woman, age 30–44,
Klamath County,
White**

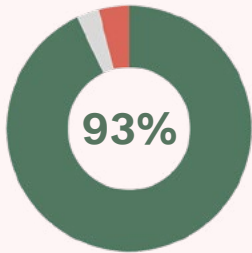
KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

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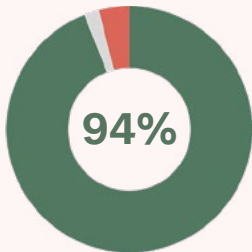
Oregonians are deeply committed to public education and emphatically share the SSA's vision of high-quality learning in safe and inclusive schools for all students.



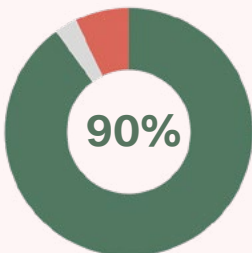
93% agree every student deserves to access high-quality educational experiences, including options to take accelerated and advanced courses.



93% agree students should receive a well-rounded education, including world languages, arts, civics, physical education, and life skills.



94% agree students, communities, and businesses all benefit when education includes hands-on learning through science, technology, engineering, arts, and math as well as career and technical education (CTE).



90% agree it's important for schools to support students' health, safety, and sense of belonging.

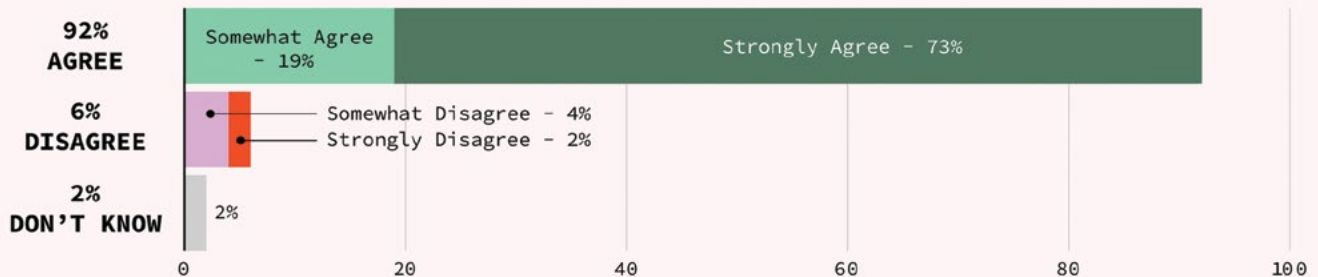
"School districts should reflect the needs of the communities they serve."

—Man, age 30–44, Umatilla County, Native American, American Indian/Alaska Native, White

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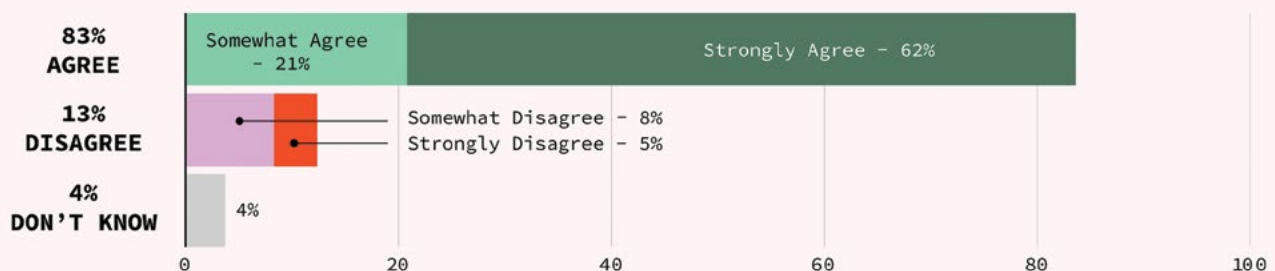
A strong majority of Oregonians value a public education system that gives every student the same chance and support to succeed in school, no matter their background or circumstances.

92% agree every student deserves a rich academic experience, fully including students who experience disability.



OVBC survey of Oregon adults, April 29-May 28, 2024 (representative sample, N = 1,626)

83% agree schools must focus on ending persistent academic disparities so every student has the same chance to succeed in school, no matter their background.



High levels of agreement hold across urban and rural communities, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and households with and without children.

OVBC survey of Oregon adults, April 29-May 28, 2024 (representative sample, N = 1,626)

77% believe targeted strategies to improve how schools support historically underserved students will ultimately create learning environments that better support all students.



The highest level of strong agreement is seen among Democrats, respondents earning less than \$25,000, those who speak a first language other than English, people with a high school diploma or less, women, people ages 18–29, BIPOC respondents, and people who work (or have family members who work) in the education field.

OVBC survey of Oregon adults, April 29–May 28, 2024 (representative sample, N = 1,626)

“Education should be decided by experts and those employed in education.”

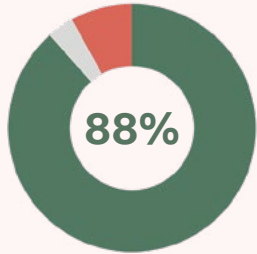
—Man, age 30–44, Multnomah County, Asian and Hispanic or Latino/a/x

“Education doesn’t happen in a vacuum. Community engagement is needed, and the needs/wants of that community should be supported—as long as it is in the best interest of the students and equitable.”

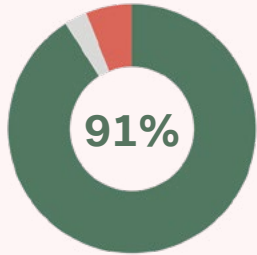
—Nonbinary/gender non-conforming, age 18–29, Tillamook County, White



Oregonians widely support a more cohesive and coordinated statewide approach to accelerate and measure K-12 school improvement.



88% agree school districts should be required to set clear strategies, plans, and budgets to improve schools and better serve all students.



91% agree schools and districts should be required to set attainable, realistic, and ambitious goals for academic progress, attendance, and graduation for the next five years.

“Community engagement helps schools make better decisions and improve...[S]tudents can learn better when their families and local community organizations are engaged in schools.”

—Woman, age 18-29, Wallowa County, Black/African American

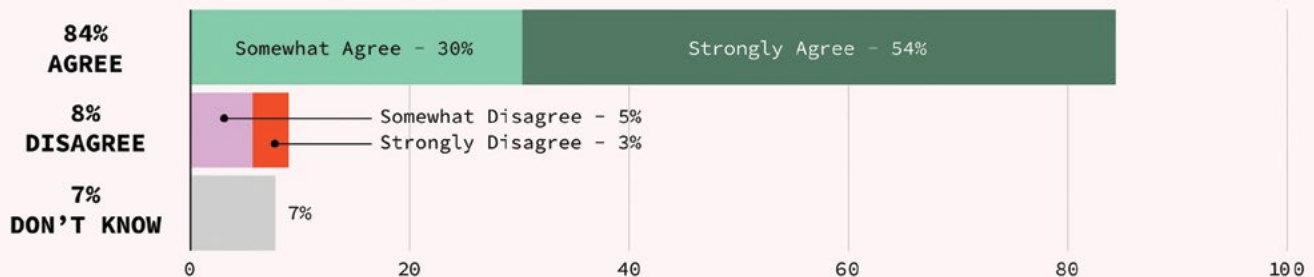
“My greatest hope is that the adults in our local communities can come together and agree on common goals and standards for our children to work toward, removed from political strategizing and social engineering.”

—Woman, age 45-54, Yamhill County, White

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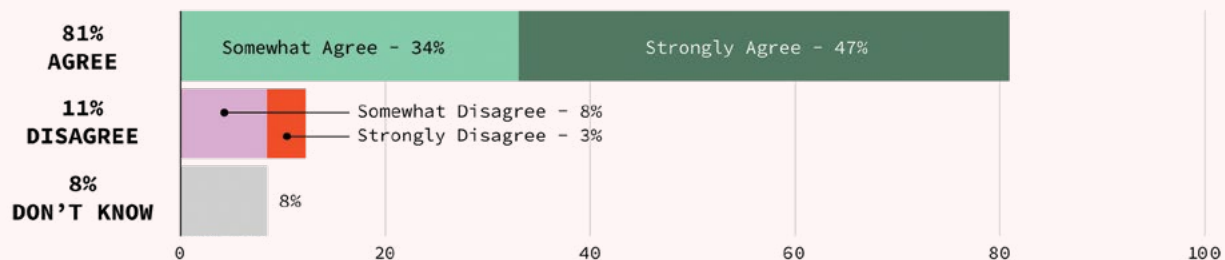
To improve K-12 schools, Oregonians favor policies that leverage community wisdom to address unique local contexts.

84% support state education policies that ensure schools rely on community knowledge, experience, and partnership to make sure students from all backgrounds receive a high-quality education.



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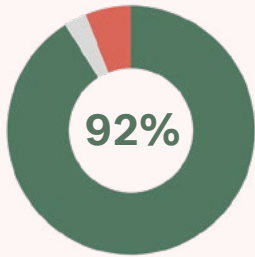
81% support state education policies that honor rural communities and recognize what makes them distinct from urban and suburban communities.



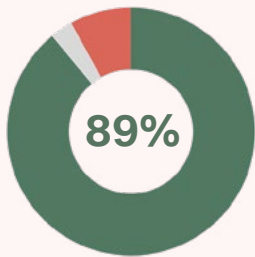
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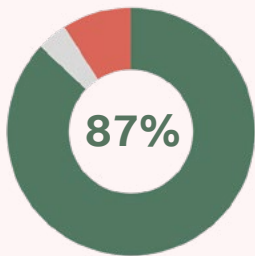
Oregonians highly value transparency and accountability as essential to K-12 improvement.



92% agree it's important that school and district plans and budgets are transparent and easy to understand for the general public.



89% agree it's important to see evidence that school leaders are making equitable decisions about where and how to invest public education funding.



87% agree it's important to hold schools and school districts accountable for whether they reach their improvement goals over the course of five years.

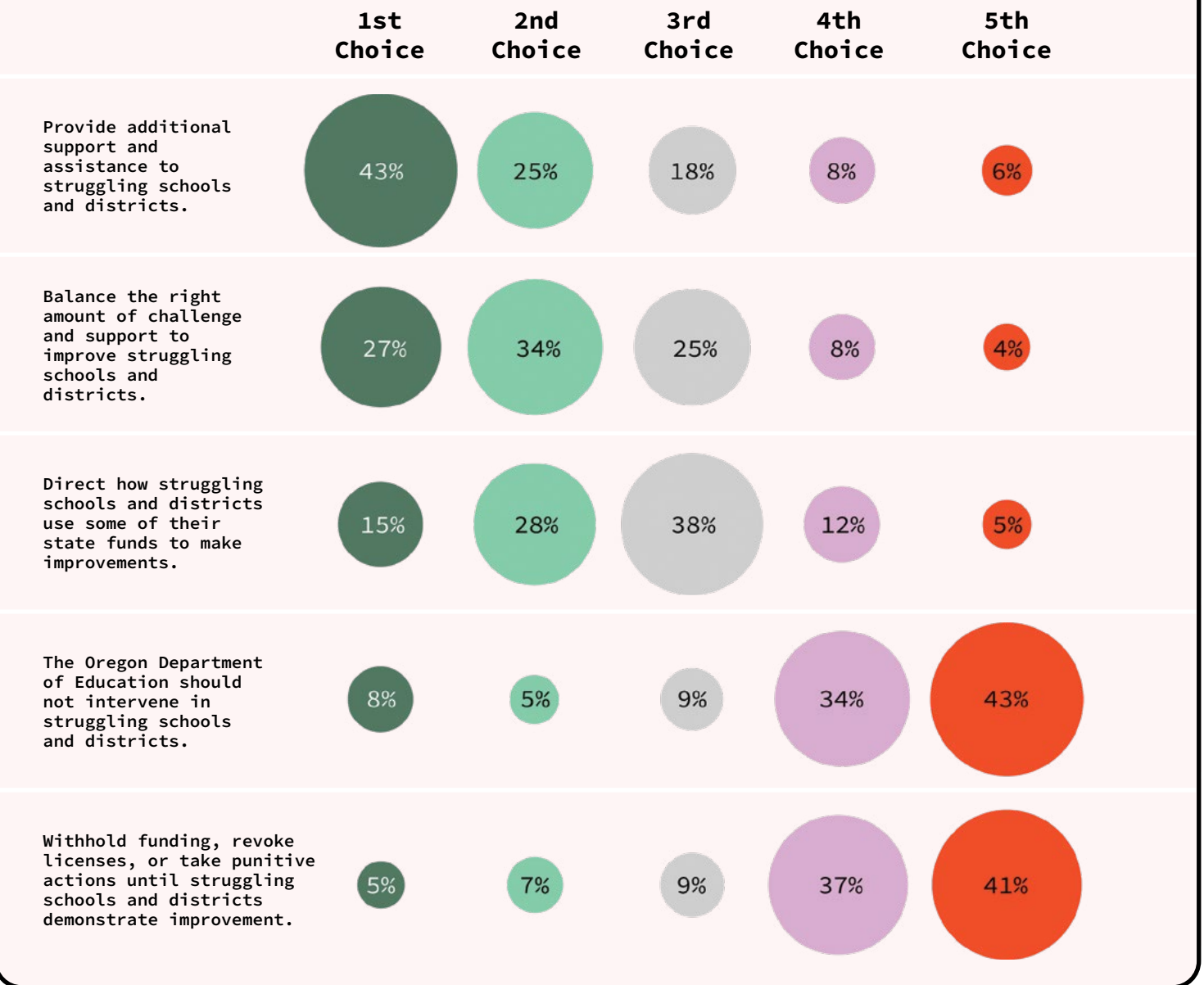
“Most do not want to do the hard work of learning about school finance, debt/debt service, collective bargaining, or the myriad state and federal regulatory requirements to be fluent enough to participate, let alone contribute... [F]or better or worse, relying on elected boards and volunteer budget committees remains the best source for outside input.”

—Man, age 65–74, Multnomah County, White

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When a school or district is struggling, Oregonians expect the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to intervene and collaboratively support improvement.

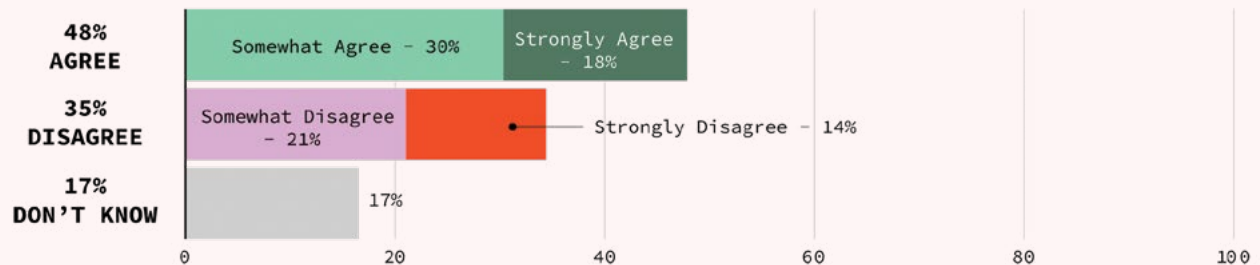
In a ranked-choice vote, most Oregonians believed ODE should provide additional support and assistance to struggling schools and districts, followed closely by those who believe ODE should balance the right amount of challenge and support. Meanwhile, Oregonians resoundingly rejected a punitive or hands-off approach to accountability.



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Oregonians are more divided when asked whether they see schools and districts actually taking steps to improve.

Are Oregon schools and school districts taking steps to improve and make better use of their resources?



Respondents with children in their household are more likely to say that K–12 schools are taking steps to improve, with 54% generally agreeing compared to 45% of respondents without children in their household. In addition, only 10% of those with children in their household say they don't know, compared to 20% of those without children in their household.

Results also differ by age range, with 29% of respondents ages 18–29 strongly agreeing, compared to only 13% of those who are 55–64, 7% of those who are 65–74, and 11% of respondents 75 and over.

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“[It’s] not just parents and teachers...education involves an entire community. The success of students impacts everyone. There is a wealth of knowledge within the community that should be heard and considered.”

—Man, age 75+, Multnomah County, White

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Taken as a whole, the FBO/OVBC survey shines a light on Oregonians' enduring support for a shared vision, a set of values, and a range of solutions that live at the heart of the SSA. These ideas so thoroughly embraced by Oregonians are far greater than any one education policy, program, or budgetary line item.

At a time when K–12 students' learning and well-being remain starkly impacted by pandemic disruptions, this survey shows how Oregonians believe K–12 schools can—no, *must*—improve to meet the moment and bring a brighter future. As our state grapples with questions about public education funding, spending, goals, and priorities, these powerful points of common ground should guide Oregon's way forward.



Foundations for a Better Oregon's report on the Student Success Act is available online at www.betteroregon.org/ssa.

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