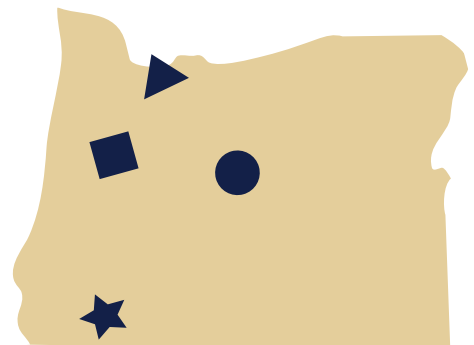




Student Voice in Oregon Drives Change

Incorporating the unique perspectives of students into decision-making creates happier, healthier school systems with higher academic achievement. Emboldened by this principal, and newly captured by law in the state's Student Success Act, Oregon educators are amplifying student voices to support positive school climate and improve academic outcomes.

Four school districts across Oregon have volunteered their experiences gathering school climate data, setting goals, and tracking progress around issues such as students' emotional and mental health, chronic absenteeism, college and career readiness, and equity to help others do the same. These districts share their stories with the design of providing inspiration and practical assistance as educators across the country declare student feedback a priority.



- **Corvallis School District, Corvallis**, Linn Benton Lincoln ESD
- **Crook County School District, Prineville**, High Desert ESD
- ★ **Medford School District, Medford**, Southern Oregon ESD
- ▲ **North Clackamas School District, Milwaukie**, North Clackamas ESD

"We use the words 'student truth' in our district, which is of course informed by who students are, what their gender identity, faith, or first language is.

All of that is shaped by how the world sees students and how students see the world. To understand the students' experiences, we have to ask them questions and authentically accept the answers."

*- Shelly Reggiani,
Executive Director of Equity and Instructional Services,
North Clackamas School District*

OREGON AT A GLANCE

Schools

1,200 public K-12 schools
100 public charter schools

Students

560,000 students

Districts

197 districts

Education Service Districts

19 ESDs

Staff

63,000 teachers, administrators,
and other school and district
staff

Corvallis uses student feedback to monitor students' emotional and mental health



Corvallis School District (CSD), located south of Portland, serves approximately 6,500 students across 13 schools. The district uses YouthTruth surveys to track progress around goals including students' emotional and mental health.

"We wanted ways that we could get really clear data beyond the individual conversations system wide," says Superintendent Ryan Noss. "It's really important to hear from students. Their experiences matter and allow us additional insights into the things that are happening in our schools that we are able to address. The survey is easy to implement and gives you a ton of information."



Principals from Corvallis School District unpack YouthTruth data during summer professional development

Supporting students' emotional and mental health

District leaders in CSD learned from the data that secondary students' responses to the emotional and mental health questions on the YouthTruth Survey were less positive than at the typical school in the YouthTruth aggregate dataset. Based on this insight, the district began an investment in the form of additional staff, skill training, and communication about available services at the elementary level as a proactive way of meeting students' social and emotional needs. Here's how the district is taking action using the baseline, comparative, and disaggregated data:

Staffing

The district hired multiple full-time district therapists to increase the availability of trained school staff and programs.

Staff skill development

CSD also hired "skills trainers" to help students improve their ability to cope when feeling upset, stressed, or having problems (where the district ranked near the bottom quartile in the YouthTruth survey).

Communication

The central office worked with counseling services to heighten the quantity and reach of messaging about the programs and services available to students at their local campus.

Resources to help educators move from data to action

- ✔ Visit Social and Emotional Learning at www.edutopia.org
- ✔ Explore the Great Body Shop curriculum (Pre-K - 6th grade) at www.thegreatbodyshop.net



RYAN NOSS
Superintendent

Ryan Noss began his career as a Special Education teacher in the Tigard-Tualatin school district. He then taught for the Lebanon Community Schools before working as Special Programs Consultant. Since, he has served as principal at Pioneer School and Administrator of Program and Student Support and Assistant Superintendent in Lebanon. He became Superintendent of Corvallis School District in 2016.

CROOK COUNTY uses student feedback to fight chronic absenteeism



Crook County School District (CCSD) serves just over 3,000 students across eight schools. Among other things, the district uses YouthTruth school climate data to track the experiences and social-emotional learning (SEL) of middle school students as they transition into high school. CCSD also uses students' feedback to address chronic absenteeism.

“Students don’t like to go where they don’t feel safe and supported, and we believe that the YouthTruth data ties directly to attendance,” says Superintendent Sara Johnson. “The work we’re doing in attendance should be reflected in the student voice through YouthTruth.”



Addressing bullying and harassment to boost attendance

The Oregon Department of Education defines chronically absent as missing 10 percent or more of school days between the school year’s start and the first school day in May – for excused or unexcused absences, as well as suspensions. While CCSD’s rate of absenteeism is slightly lower than the state’s average 20 percent, the district takes students missing any unnecessary class time seriously. Here's how they are incorporating student voice into solutions:

Looking for other trends

The district team began by asking questions about how the strength of their school culture might impact attendance. For example, could the high rates of bullying and harassment observed in the data have an effect on whether or not students enjoy coming to school?

Seek specific clues


To understand the relationship between how safe students feel from bullying and harassment at school, the district’s team dove into students’ open-ended comments. CCSD’s team found evidence of bullying and harassment as a reason students didn’t like coming to school. Peer relationships and students’ struggles outside of school also emerged as reasons that students either choose or felt obligated to miss school.

Put their anti-bullying curriculum to work

The district is working to reduce bullying with targeted curriculum focused on building empathy. They hope to reduce stigmas around different identities and students’ struggles outside of schools to make sure students feel supported when they are able or choose to come to school.

“YouthTruth helps reveal some of those core issues and makes you aware of what kids are dealing with. Really going to the heart of why kids would be chronically absent keeps you empathetic,” says Johnson. The district team is hopeful as they look towards next year to see the impact of interventions in the data.

Explore a range of free playbooks spanning emotional intelligence, gratitude, growth mindsets, and more with **Character Lab**. Each playbook includes strategies and actionable advice based on science for adults looking to build character in students.



Start exploring by visiting www.characterlab.com.



SARA E. JOHNSON
Superintendent

Dr. Sara E has served as a teacher, principal, Director of School Improvement, Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent. She was a teacher and principal in Burns for six years and completed a Doctorate in Educational Leadership at George Fox University. She then served as a principal in McMinnville until moving to Prineville with her husband to serve as CCSD superintendent.

MEDFORD uses student feedback for college and career readiness

Medford School District (MSD), nestled in Southern Oregon, serves over 13,000 students and has gathered school climate data through YouthTruth surveys since 2016. The district's data show that only three quarters of seniors plan to attend a four-year college — a number MSD hopes to increase. Here are the network-wide changes that MSD is implementing to increase students' perceptions of how prepared they are for the future.



College and career readiness action steps

Allocate funding

Dedicate budget to add more support staff who specialize in college and career advisory counseling

Build awareness

Rename relevant course titles to include “college” and “career” in the 9th, 11th, and 12th grade catalogue

Partner with local college

Create a career and technical college class dual enrollment program that students can participate in free of charge at Southern Oregon University and included public transportation

Get the word out

Market college and career counseling opportunities more proactively by displaying posters around school campuses that share information about various regional and national colleges and how to get help applying from school staff

MSD hopes that future data will show an increase in students' perceptions of whether or not staff are advocating for their future. The district team will be watching carefully to see whether students are utilizing available programs and services more actively due to increased visibility, in addition to tracking the number of seniors who are planning to pursue a four-year degree.



Resources to help educators put data to action

- Check out Edutopia: College & Career Readiness at www.edutopia.org/topic/college-readiness
- Take a look at the American Institute for Research's College & Career readiness toolkits at www.air.org/topic/education/college-and-career-readiness



When MSD began its first listening journey through the YouthTruth Survey in 2016, the district felt that gathering feedback from students — without the voices of other stakeholders in the school community — would be enough. After unpacking the insights that came to light in Year One of surveying, the district now surveys families and school staff members. The YouthTruth Family Survey and Staff Survey allow MSD the benefit of a 360-degree roundup of what is working and for whom.

NORTH CLACKAMAS uses student feedback for racial and gender equity

North Clackamas School District (NCS D) uses the YouthTruth survey to learn about the experiences of groups with shared identities and demographic characteristics, make adjustments, and track progress over time. "There is no other way to get outside of ourselves and ask students on a grand scale across the system about their experiences and measure the health of our school through the student lens," says Shelly Reggiani, executive director of equity and instructional services.



Since their first year of surveying, the district has applied their climate data to both their equity work and chronic absenteeism initiatives. In year two of surveying, NCS D added staff and family surveys to their practice to hear from more voices in the community.

Aking the right questions about academic rigor and equity

NCS D prioritizes academic rigor for targeted improvements. In partiuclar, the district is focusing on equity for students with different identities and backgrounds in math class. While unpacking results in the first year of surveying, the team observed that a greater proportion of female secondary students felt that academic rigor was strong in the district when compared to their male peers. Here are the district's action steps:

Looking for trends

The district team looked deeper into the data to see if they could identify any other trends correlating with students' gender identities. They noticed that students who identified as female also feel less positively about relationships.

Asking nuanced questions

The dissonance between male and female students' feelings about rigor and relationships prompted NCS D to ask more detailed questions. For instance, does the fact that the math teaching team is majority male play a role? Do female students feel they have to work harder than male students in their classes? What stereotypes and preconceived notions could teachers and school staff have that might impact this?

Implementing interventions

As an intervention, a series of professional development workshops are in motion across the district to address biases that may cause school staff to treat students differently based on subject and gender.

Next year, the district team will dive deeper into the experiences of students who are both Black or African-American and female. They will also look more closely at the experiences of students who identify as LGBTQ – whose ratings of the YouthTruth Survey question "I try to do my best in school" were lower when compared to their peers.



"We use the words 'student truth' in our district, which is of course informed by who students are, what their gender identity, faith, or first language is. All of that is shaped by how the world sees students and how students see the world. To understand the students' experiences, we have to ask them questions and authentically accept the answers," says Reggiani.



ABOUT SHELLY REGGIANI

Executive Director, Equity & Instructional Services

Shelly Reggiani, Ed.D., has served as Executive Director of Equity and Instruction since 2010, leading North Clackamas School District's equity-focused programs. She has led work spanning educational professional development, instructional design, community engagement and outreach, and English Learners and Emergent Bilingual student advocacy and programming throughout her career. She was awarded her Ed.D. in Education from George Fox University.



MORE ABOUT SCHOOL CLIMATE IN OREGON

Oregon legislators are prioritizing strong school climate and student voice.

Here's what you need to know.

Oregon's statewide absenteeism plan

Nationally, Oregon's chronic absenteeism rate is consistently ranked within the bottom 20 percent of states. See Oregon's plan designed to help educators address this issue.

[Learn more](#) (or use bit.ly/36njLIV)

To help educators across the state, Oregon's Department of Education has also launched a collection of toolkits and resources to help educators and family address chronic absenteeism called Every Day Matters. Explore the toolkits to find posters, hand-outs, radio PSAs, and more in English, Russian, and Spanish.

[Explore the toolkit](#) (or use bit.ly/2MQTBqk)

SSA in Oregon

Oregon's Student Success Act focuses on advancing equity, promoting a well-rounded education, strengthening district systems, and fostering ongoing engagement. The state is taking a system-wide approach that prioritizes strengthening school environments using metrics beyond test scores like school climate data to support and monitor schools' efforts to improve student outcomes in schools.

[Read the Plan](#) (or use bit.ly/35nWbKP)

ABOUT YOUTHTRUTH

YouthTruth is a national nonprofit that harnesses student and stakeholder perceptions to help educators accelerate improvements. Through validated survey instruments and tailored advisory services, YouthTruth partners with schools, districts, states, and educational organizations to enhance learning for all students. For a tour of our interactive, online reports, sign up to join a webinar here: youthtruthsurvey.org/get-started/#webinar.

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