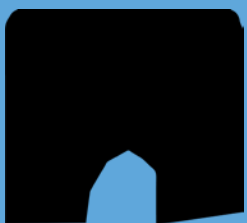


OREGON'S STUDENT SUCCESS ACT



**Illuminating Five Years of
Implementation and Impact**



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A LETTER AND INVITATION

To our fellow Oregonians,

Five years ago, Oregon took a historic step on the path to providing a high-quality public education to every child in every community. The landmark [Student Success Act of 2019](#) (SSA) not only brought the largest new investment in public education in a generation but also launched a bold new vision where school districts, their communities, and the state work together to improve how public schools support every child to learn, grow, and thrive. For many, it was a new era of hope.

Five years later, our team at Foundations for a Better Oregon is reflecting on how much has happened—and changed—since the SSA passed. As families, schools, and the state navigated extraordinary challenges, we wondered whether most Oregonians know how the SSA has unfolded in the fog of these turbulent times. As an organization that championed the bill and tracked its implementation, we even found ourselves seeking a clearer picture of the SSA's earliest impacts.

The Oregon Legislature passed the SSA first and foremost to remedy decades of underfunding for public education, raising and investing \$1 billion more for K–12 and early learning every year. Equally important—but less well known—are the law's sweeping provisions designed to ensure that these new funds are improving K–12 schools and student outcomes.

The SSA has focused new spending on strengthening students' academic success and well-being from preschool through high school graduation, including targeted support for students of color, students experiencing disability, rural students, students navigating poverty, and far too many more who are underserved by Oregon public schools. The law also enshrined robust requirements for school districts to authentically engage youth, families, educators, and community members before deciding how to invest SSA dollars, and has catalyzed a long-overdue effort to align how Oregon school districts set goals and report on improvement.

Over the coming weeks, we hope you'll join us to explore how the SSA is reshaping Oregon's public education system and what it means for Oregon children. Through listening, documentation, research, analysis, and stories, we gathered insights and lessons from the SSA's first five years to illuminate what's working and what's not. With so much recent attention on K–12 funding, spending, and accountability, Foundations for a Better Oregon has developed a five-part series to build shared understanding and help guide our state's way forward.

1

Part 1 begins with an overview of the SSA’s history, goals, and architecture, paying special attention to initiatives designed to scale improvement across school districts and boost K–12 student outcomes.

2

Part 2 features a new public opinion survey showing Oregonians’ overwhelming support for the SSA’s animating values, K–12 investments, and systems change strategies.

3

Part 3 dives deeper into how school districts and communities are working together to put SSA dollars to use and make a difference for K–12 students.

4

Part 4 examines how the SSA has established critical but often invisible new systems change infrastructure to support K–12 improvement and accountability.

5

Part 5 builds on lessons from the SSA to offer recommendations for the future, ensuring Oregon stays laser focused on the most promising strategies to accelerate progress for children.

While five years is a short time in the long-term arc of systems change, there is already much to learn from the SSA and much reason for hope. And while we at Foundations for a Better Oregon can’t possibly capture the full breadth and nuance of SSA implementation and impacts, which represents the work and experience of thousands, we also believe this is a critical moment to shine a light on what it takes to create meaningful, lasting change across the K–12 education system.

In this spirit, we invite our partners across state, school, tribal, community, and civic leadership to join us in dialogue, reflect on the SSA’s early impacts, and continue making progress toward an Oregon where every child can learn, grow, and thrive.

With hope and deep resolve,

The Foundations for a Better Oregon Team



OUR APPROACH

Foundations for a Better Oregon employed mixed methods research and analysis to illuminate key components and early impacts of the Student Success Act. Although the law’s implementation involves billions of dollars and vast infrastructure across Oregon, we strategically focused our inquiry on investments and strategies that seek to advance a more modern, integrated, and effective model for K–12 funding, spending, and accountability.

To assess the SSA’s theory of change and impacts, we grounded ourselves in the research and science of sustainable systems change and childhood development. Our work also benefited from robust documentation and existing analysis provided by school districts, education service districts, the Oregon Department of Education, and the Oregon Secretary of State’s Audits Division.

For quantitative analysis, we gathered and analyzed statewide and disaggregated data on student outcomes, SSA investments, and school district improvement goals. We also commissioned statewide opinion research from an independent and nonpartisan research partner. Using qualitative methods, we listened to those most closely connected to SSA implementation and elevated lessons from three place-based spotlights. Our efforts included interviews and focus groups with school district, education service district, and community-based organization leaders across Oregon.

As we synthesized our findings and developed recommendations, we solicited outside review of our findings in this series from a cross-section of partners with distinct vantage points and expertises. Although this series was shaped by a range of voices and nuanced perspectives, the synthesized findings and recommendations represent the views of Foundations for a Better Oregon and do not necessarily reflect the views of our many contributors, partners, or member foundations.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND GRATITUDE

This series examining the Student Success Act is only possible because of the steadfast work of school and community leaders across Oregon doing the hard work of implementation through and beyond a global pandemic. It is also indebted to the work of the staff at the Oregon Department of Education and the Audits Division of the Oregon Secretary of State.

Foundations for a Better Oregon is deeply grateful to the more than two dozen state, school district, education service district, and community-based organization leaders who hold unique insights into the SSA and generously shared their expertise and feedback. We also extend enormous gratitude to Scott Nine, whose guidance and contributions were essential to the development of this series, as well as our sincerest appreciation to our research partners, including Monica Cox / Ten02 Consulting, Amaury Vogel / Oregon Values and Beliefs Center, and Tanisha Tate Woodson / DHM Research.

Additional thanks to Brandan Kearney and Jenni Kotting for their support in preparing this series for release, to former state Senator Mark Hass for his thoughtful review, and to the Umatilla, Medford, and Grants Pass school districts for generously contributing photography to this series.

Foundations for a Better Oregon’s series on the Student Success Act can be found online at: www.betteroregon.org/SSA

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