

***FINAL ANALYSIS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
WILL BE INCLUDED IN FORTHCOMING BOOK OF ALL
BRIDGE PROJECT RESEARCH (JOSSEY BASS 2004)***

**The Bridge Project
Oregon — Phase II Research
In Portland Area High Schools**

**Andrea Conklin Bueschel
Andrea Venezia
Stanford University
April 2002**

DRAFT — NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Context

Phase II Research Design and Methodologies: This phase of the research examines how the standards and policies developed and implemented by Oregon’s education agencies, the University of Oregon, and Portland State University are understood, interpreted, and acted upon by parents, students, and secondary school personnel. Project staff surveyed and conducted focus groups with students and surveyed their parents/guardians and interviewed district and school-level administrators, counselors, and teachers. Four high schools in the greater Portland metropolitan area were included. In each of the schools, researchers surveyed classes of 9th graders and 11th graders, including one honors and one nonhonors class for each grade.¹ Bridge staff also conducted two focus groups per school with 11th graders – one with students from an honors class and another with students from a regular track class. Researchers chose 9th graders because they could speak retrospectively about their 8th grade experiences (generally considered a “gateway” year in terms of whether students take college preparation courses or not); 11th grades were included because they are generally at a stage in which they are thinking about their postsecondary options. Survey instruments, interview protocols, and focus group questions are included in Appendix B.

The schools were chosen on a variety of factors, including their level of student diversity, percent free or reduced lunch, scores on K-12 student achievement tests, college-going rates, scores on the SAT or ACT, proximity to an urban area and

¹ “Honors” classes included courses called honors, college preparation, advanced, college, Advanced Placement classes and courses that were the highest in the sequence for that subject and grade level; “nonhonors” classes included regular track courses that

involvement in K-16 reform efforts. Researchers sought as diverse a group as possible, within the constraints of the project (i.e., four high schools in one metropolitan area). Two of the high schools are categorized as more urban, while two are more suburban. While researchers were interested in discussing policies at both the University of Oregon and Portland State University (the two institutions studied in the first phase of the research), they selected schools from around Portland, rather than including high schools near the University of Oregon in Eugene. Portland students might have some knowledge of the two universities because Portland State is near them and the University of Oregon is a flagship. High school students near Eugene would probably not have received as much information about Portland State University and, therefore, might not be able to engage in useful discussions about the two institutions.

Researchers conducted field research prior to the annual statewide K-12 test administration in the spring of 2000.² Most of the quantitative data reported in this paper are the result of a 30-item survey administered to 9th and 11th graders, most in their English classes (included in Appendix B). Researchers attempted to balance the honors and non-honors course representation, though there were higher response rates in the honors classes. The classroom-level response rate from the four schools ranged from 41 percent to 97 percent. In some cases, supplemental surveying was conducted to ensure high enough response rates from all schools. The students' parents were surveyed prior to the student survey, with a similar survey of 19 items to determine socioeconomic background and parental perceptions of their children's aspirations and of admissions-

were not designated as college preparation courses, but were not the absolute “bottom” level course in each school.

related policies. There were a total of 334 student responses and 341 parent responses. A subset of 318 of the survey responses matched parent to child. That subset is used for certain of the analyses.

State Context: The first half of this report offers a full description of the educational reform context in the state. Additional information here provides more general context for the survey responses.³

The median income for a four-person family in Oregon in 1999 was \$53,909. Average pay in 1998 was \$29,542, ranking Oregon 21st in the nation, below Western regional averages. However, also in 1998, the average pay in the Portland metropolitan area – the region in which the survey respondents reside – was the highest in the state at \$32,846. Washington County, where one of the participating schools resides, had the highest average pay at \$36,668. In this study sample, the both the median and the mean average reported income was between \$50,000 and \$59,999, which appears to be roughly representative of the region.

Oregon is a less racially and ethnically diverse state than the national average. Statewide, white, non-Latinos make up 86.6 percent of the total. The Portland area is more diverse; approximately 78 percent of Portland area residents are white, non-Latino. The largest racial group, besides white, non-Latino, in the Portland area is African American; statewide, Asians comprise the largest such group. There is a greater percentage of each racial and ethnic group in the Portland area. Below, descriptions of

² Students who were juniors during the field research (1999-2000 academic year) are the first class that can be awarded a Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM).

³ All of the data in this section come from U.S. Census records.

the schools in the study are also compared to the regional average. Overall, the sample is slightly whiter than the regional and overall school averages.⁴

School Descriptions: There are four high schools in the Oregon case study. **School A** is an urban school and offers both Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. School A also has two teachers participating in PASS. It is among the higher performing schools in its district. **School B** is in the same district. It is among the lower performing high schools in the district. Both schools are ethnically and racially diverse, given Oregon’s demographics.

School C is mostly White, non-Latino, but is comprised of a variety of ethnic groups, particularly Eastern European and Russian. Interviewees often described it as serving a predominantly “blue-collar” population. Before the state reforms were fully implemented, School C designed and implemented its own version of the certificates of mastery. This school is in a different district from Schools A and B, as is School D.

School D is a largely White, non-Latino high-performing school that is often viewed as preparing students well for college. It is the largest school in the study. In Schools C and D, the minority population is primarily Asian-American students (unlike Schools A and B which have a balance of racial groups represented). School D also developed its own version of the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM).

Below is a table with general school characteristics, including state-reported data on student performance on state tests and the percentages of students who have taken the

⁴ There were twelve race categories on the surveys. After initial analysis, researchers determined that, given the small cell sizes for some categories, it made sense to collapse some of them. Table X shows the final race categories.

SAT by March of their senior year. Although these schools will not be categorized as "high-" or "low-performing" in our study, School D stands out as the “highest-achieving.” Each of the other three schools has specific strengths, but do not have the same overall level of high achievement and focus on postsecondary attendance. There is some evidence that School B might also stand out, though for lower achievement. Although this is a regional study, this range of schools is relatively representative of the Western part of the state, namely the Willamette Valley.

Below is a table with general school characteristics for this sample. In this case, performance measures reveal some early evidence of the stratification noted above.

Table X – High School Characteristics

	# of students	# of teachers	% students of color	Performance on state tests*	% of seniors taken SAT
School A	1255	65	26.2	Average	48
School B	1239	66	40.8	Below avg.	34
School C	1956	113	16.6	Average	40
School D	2288	100	22.9	Above avg.	73

Source: 1998-99 State Report Cards; <http://www.nces.ed.gov>

*Labels were assigned by the Oregon Department of Education.

The school-by-school breakdowns of the populations surveyed are below. Specific student demographic data are presented in the next section. "Honors" and "nonhonors" designations are based either on school labels or course content. Students received the "honors" label if they were surveyed in an "honors" designated course.

Table X – Sample Characteristics by School

	# of students surveyed (% of total sample)	# of 9th graders	# of 11th graders	# of “honors” students	# of “nonhonors” students
School A	83 (25.1)	27	56	52	31
School B	65 (19.7)	30	35	42	23
School C	97 (29.4)	47	50	59	38
School D	85 (25.8)	47	38	42	43
TOTAL	330	151 (45.8)	179 (54.2)	195 (59.0)	135 (40.9)

*This table was produced from the larger sample of all students who completed the survey. Later tables include only those students who could be matched to parents who had also completed surveys (n=318). The sample characteristics are consistent between groups.

This table highlights the overrepresentation of 11th graders and honors students in this sample. Honors students were more likely to return permission slips than were nonhonors students; the same patterns occurred with 11th and 9th graders and with girls as compared to boys. Also, some of the 11th grade classes were larger than the 9th grade classes. An in-state researcher was hired to return to all sampled classes, particularly the nonhonors classes, to include as many students as possible.

Student Demographics: The student respondents in the Oregon study are fairly representative of the overall regional population. In our sample, however, girls are the majority, and White, non-Latino students are overrepresented compared to school

averages.⁵ Below are the self-reported data regarding student demographics and other similar characteristics.

Table X – Aggregate Student Demographics and Other Characteristics

Student Demographics and Other Characteristics	N=334 (percent of total sample)						
Race/ethnicity*	African American	White	Latino	Asian	SE Asian	American Indian	Multi-racial
	5 (1.5)	249 (74.6)	12 (3.6)	23 (6.9)	17 (5.1)	3 (.9)	25 (7.5)
Gender*	Female			Male			
	201 (60.2)			130 (39.3)			
Grade level*	9th grade			11th grade			
	151 (45.2)			179 (53.6)			
Class surveyed*	Non-honors			Honors			
	136 (40.7)			198 (59.3)			
High School Grade Point Average* (self-reported)	A		B		C		D
	156 (46.7)		122 (36.5)		48 (14.3)		3 (.9)
Language Spoken at home	English			Other Language			
	275 (82.3)			59 (17.7)			
Place of Birth	US			Outside of US			
	295 (88.3)			39 (11.7)			

*some missing data means totals do not reach total N.

Socioeconomic status (SES), derived from parent education and income, provides and additional view of the sample.⁶ The subset of 318 surveys – those for which there is a match of parent and student respondent – was used to calculate the SES variable.

⁵ White, non-Latino students may be overrepresented because this study sampled an even number of honors and nonhonors classes, with a higher response rate in honors classes. Students of color tend to be underrepresented in honors classes.

⁶SES is a composite variable derived by adding the scales of parental education (the higher of the two parents) and family income. For the Oregon survey, this creates a 19 point composite (7 education levels and 12 income levels) variable. The three SES categories were labeled as follows: “low SES” (score of 2-7); “mid SES” (score of 8-13); and “high SES” (score of 14-19).

Parent education, income, and SES within school are presented below in tables X, X, and X, respectively. Parent education was determined by taking the higher of the mother's, father's, or guardian's highest self-reported educational achievement.

Table X – Parent Education Level (percent in parens total by column)

Education Level (%)	Total N=318	School A	School B	School C	School D
Less than high school	15 (4.7)	3 (3.6)	4 (6.5)	6 (6.1)	2 (2.7)
High school graduate	20 (6.3)	3 (3.6)	5 (8.1)	9 (9.2)	3 (4.0)
Some education after high school	34 (10.7)	5 (6.0)	8 (12.9)	19 (19.4)	2 (2.7)
Some college	84 (26.4)	17 (20.5)	20 (32.3)	28 (28.6)	19 (25.3)
College graduate	64 (20.1)	25 (30.1)	7 (11.3)	16 (16.3)	16 (21.3)
Some study after bachelor's degree	31 (9.7)	7 (8.4)	3 (4.8)	5 (5.1)	16 (21.3)
Graduate/professional degree	52 (16.4)	19 (22.9)	3 (4.8)	14 (14.3)	16 (21.3)
Don't know	3 (.9)	0	3 (4.8)	0	0
Missing	15 (4.7)	4 (4.8)	9 (14.5)	1 (1.0)	1 (1.3)
Total	318	83	62	98	75

Although a majority of the parents in the sample report at least some postsecondary study, a large percentage of the students in this sample can be considered "first generation" students, or those whose parents did not attend college. Because parent education is a measure of socioeconomic status (SES), it is possible that students in the lower SES levels may receive less information about college from their parents, given their parents' more limited experience with college. Parents from Schools A and D have the highest levels of educational attainment. School B appears to be the lowest, though it also has the most missing data on this measure.

The parent survey also included questions about family income. Below are the self-reported responses for the entire parent sample of 341. The median and mean of the sample is also calculated. When the missing data codes are removed, the median and the mean are very close, both falling within the \$50,000-\$59,999 range. This level is representative of the statewide median income of recent years.

Table X – Family Income

Income Level (in dollars)	N=341 (percent in parens)
Below 15,000	14 (4.1)
15,000-19,999	4 (1.2)
20,000-24,999	23 (6.7)
25,000-29,999	12 (3.5)
30,000-39,999	37 (10.9)
40,000-49,999	29 (8.5)
50,000-59,999	47 (13.8)
60,000-69,999	41 (12.0)
70,000-79,999	23 (6.7)
80,000-89,999	19 (5.6)
90,000-99,999	13 (3.8)
Over 100,000	39 (11.4)
Missing data	40 (11.7)
Average, median	Both are within \$50,000-\$59,999 range

SES by school is presented below. Following a pattern discussed earlier, School D has the highest percentage of high-SES families, while Schools A, B, and C have primarily mid-SES families in their populations. School B has the highest percentage of low-SES students, confirming state and national reports on SES in these schools. Because SES appears to be a more stratifying variable than race, and because many

racial/ethnic groups have a small sample size, SES will be used, along with school, grade and honors status, in further analyses.⁷

Table X – SES by School (percent in parens by row)

	Low SES	Mid SES	High SES	Total
School A	11 (16.2)	36 (52.9)	21 (30.9)	68
School B	10 (19.6)	35 (68.6)	6 (11.8)	51
School C	14 (15.2)	57 (62.0)	21 (22.8)	92
School D	3 (4.4)	24 (35.3)	41 (60.3)	68
Total	38 (13.6)	152 (54.5)	89 (31.9)	279

Note: Missing data not included: 12.3 percent of sample did not respond to SES variable.

One additional point of analysis on student demographics focuses on honors status and SES level.

Table X – Honors Status by SES Level (percent by column)

	Low SES	Mid SES	High SES
Nonhonors	63.2	38.8	31.5
Honors	36.8	61.2	68.5

Chi-square .008

This table reveals that mid and high SES students are overrepresented in honors classes, with a slightly higher percentage of SES students in these classes. Low SES students are overrepresented in nonhonors classes, a trend confirmed by other research.

⁷ The statistical analyses conducted for the quantitative sections of this report were primarily crosstabulations. When noted, chi square statistics were calculated to test the level of significance of the relationships investigated in the crosstabulations.

In addition to the descriptive statistics above, the sections below provide contextual information for each school.

School A. School A is racially, ethnically, and economically diverse, though not the most diverse school in the area. A vice principal described it by stating that, “It’s primarily Caucasian. Probably 60 percent Caucasian. And then we’ve got like 23 different nationalities in our ESL group. Increasing numbers of Somali students and probably the next biggest group is Hispanic, but that’s right around 10 percent. And then it’s like smaller percentages of other nationalities, so it’s not as diverse as some of the other high schools in Portland” (vice principal, School A). A teacher echoed the vice principal, stating that School A is “about 40 percent free and reduced lunch program...we have a large ESL series of groups: Russians, Samoans, Hispanic, Asian – which makes it real exciting. It makes it real diverse, offers a lot of culture to the school and to everyone else. We [also] have some folks...[from] more of an upper middle class environment” (honors 11th grade teacher, School A). There are probably 15 different language spoken by students at School A (counselor, School A). In terms of average family income level, School A is about in the middle for the district, but “the middle class [around School A] is a little stronger than in other middle class areas” (nonhonors 11th grade teacher, School A).

Between 85 and 90 percent of School A’s students attend some form of postsecondary education after high school. Approximately 40 percent of its students go to four-year colleges, 40 percent attend community colleges, and another 5-10 percent go to technical schools. School A has a higher college-going rate than almost all the high schools on its side of town. “Parents who knew our school and who had checked out

other schools kept calling us the best kept secret in Portland because we really do have a fine teaching staff and kids who come and want to work and have some who do really well and get selected, get admitted, to very selective schools, but we [also] have a lot of other kids. We have a very strong special ed department here... We have a big ESL program here, too” (counselor, School A).

Of the 40 percent of the students who go to four-year colleges, “probably three-quarters of those go to schools in the northwest, inter-state schools, or private schools. We know those schools very well. Now there are certainly some schools in the Midwest and East that we don’t have much contact with that we have to do more reading up on or call them or call my colleagues in the other high schools that do more of this sort of thing” (counselor, School A).

In terms of its course offerings, School A has general education, honors, advanced classes, and IB classes, but no AP courses. English tends to have three or four sections of honors courses each year, while math is more inconsistent, and sometimes the faculty believes honors classes should be eliminated (vice principal, School A). Its English program is considered one of the best in the state (honors 9th grade teacher, School A).

School A’s IB program is new; students who were 9th graders in 1999-2000 were the first ones to go through the program. It has been somewhat controversial because, “There are a lot of teachers in the building that [sic] don’t perceive that School A’s neighborhood kids are ideal IB students. And so the concern is that we don’t want to bring in a bunch of people that aren’t in the neighborhood and turn School A into something that it’s not” (vice principal, School A). Similarly, the lead counselor stated that, by starting the IB program, “We don’t want to become some kind of collegiate

school that only worries about that top little few percentage and ignores others. But it will mean more advanced classes being offered which other kids can take, too, so it should help the overall effort to raise the academic standards of everybody” (counselor, School A).

In addition to the above options, School A has a business marketing magnet, so students from across the district transfer to it for the magnet program. The district allows administrative transfer, through which students can apply to go to “any other high school for whatever reasons” (vice principal, School A). Other unique offerings include Japanese (it is one of two high schools in the district to offer the language), and a very strong vocal and instrumental music program. School A usually gets about 20-25 transfer students per year for the magnet, 30 or so this year for IB, and maybe 15-25 per year for other reasons (counselor, School A).

Some interviewees believed that there are few tensions within the school, while others thought it was a fairly contentious environment. One vice principal stated that, “I would say, for the most part, that the groups really get along well here. I mean, there are no tensions...the English teachers would say that there are some students in the building that have cultural capital, and I’m not sure that it causes tension between the groups as much as maybe it alienates the groups that don’t have the cultural capital. So it’s not that the groups necessarily interact, but there doesn’t seem to be tensions between the groups. You know, people...feel pretty safe here” (vice principal, School A).

As she predicted, an English teacher stated, “I would characterize School A as very divisive...that there’s a smaller population of kids that are going to be IB directed...they are definitely more of a minority and I feel that many of our regular

students have flunked a class and not enough attention is given to those kids...” She does not feel as though School A is a community. She thinks it’s missing its heart, and that the academic tracking is extreme by race/ethnicity and income level (nonhonors 9th grade teacher, School A).

When asked to describe School A and compare it to other schools in the district, some students thought that the district’s top academic school is a rival. The following dialogue ensued:

Student: “I don’t think we’re looked upon as, like, a really academic school. Like, my friend goes to Grover [pseudonym] and he wants to come to School A, but his dad doesn’t think our school is, like academically sound enough for him...I guess he thinks that colleges aren’t going to look at School A as, like, a good school for him to go to.”

Student: “I think School A is a good school.”

Student: “It depends on what you make of it. I mean there’s definitely room to, like, excel at this school, but they don’t really push you as far.”

Student: “I think it kind of depends on what middle school you’re from.”

Student: “Well, I think if the school’s really self-motivated, like, if you’re really motivated, you’ll do good. Like, here, but, like, I see a lot of people that aren’t really self-motivated. They need that extra help that I think you can get here, too” (School A non-honors focus group).

School C. School C – both the school and its district – is viewed as a very stable, yet innovative, place. It has only had five superintendents in the history of the district (since the 1950’s). The school board is very supportive in providing extra time for many school activities, including credit retrieval and summer school. The school was one of the first high schools in the nation to be named a New American School. The principal believes that it was chosen because it developed its own CIM and CAM. The staff enjoys being a research site and it plans to become involved in widescale research and

evaluation efforts with national research firms from the Research Triangle and Berkeley, California, so that it can learn more about itself (principal, School C). One of the teachers said that many of the teachers attended School C as students (9th grade teacher, School C).

Its lead counselor stated that, “We don’t feel state-driven. We feel School C-driven by our own standards. Our negotiation power is that we have been successful with what we’ve done so far and they are willing to listen because we have been successful” (counselor, School C).

As indicated earlier, School C developed its own CIM and CAM; it administers the state’s CIM tests as well. The state CIM was legislated in 1991 and everyone thought it would happen fairly quickly. It did not go into effect until 1998, with the graduating class of 1999. Meanwhile, without much knowledge of what was happening in the Capitol, the educators at School C decided to create the school’s own CIM, and, later its own CAM. The principal described the process by stating,

The School C CIM as we know it today is an attempt to raise the academic expectations of our kids and, specifically, as it relates to graduation... The problem was there was no game plan for it. There was no manual... I think our School C CIM today reflects the spirit of what was being called for in 1991 and I think we maintained that. The state has really watched – they give a passing acknowledgement to work samples as a part of the state CIM, but the reality is the numbers have been drastically reduced and there is no way in which they can authenticate it anyway. They can not even stay on top of their state assessment tests (principal, School C).

As mentioned earlier, School C has its own CAM as well. The principal believes that in the CAM classes is where they have seen the most positive change. The first year of the CAM, 82 percent of the school’s graduates attended community college and university. Approximately 50 percent attended two-year or four-year institutions in the

early 1990s. All of this change has been a bit overwhelming for the school; in response to all new policies, the school eliminated the California Achievement Test in 1999-2000 because it was one more test and they “just couldn’t absorb it any longer” (principal, School C).

When students were asked how School C compares to the other high schools in the area, the following discussion ensued:

Student: “People think we are prep, kind of.”

Student: “I think they think we are better than we really are.”

Student: “I think that people respect us, I think.”

Student: “I think we respect the students. We have such high standards.”

Student: “I think generally well-respected if they have ever heard of us.”

Student: “I think we are ranked, like, second.”

Student: “We are in the top ten of academic high schools” (honors focus group, School C).

School D. School D is mostly white, non-Latino; Asian; and Latino (11th grade honors teacher, School D). A large percentage of the Asian and Asian-American students are of Korean descent (nonhonors focus group, School D). Over 80 percent of the school’s students go on to college (vice principal, School D).

School D has a partnership with Portland State University (PSU) in which faculty from PSU and School D teach a thematic, interdisciplinary course called Capstone⁸. There are two classes with 60-90 students total each year. They pick a theme, develop a curriculum, and teach together. They include aspects of Literature, History, Science, and

Art. They have PSU students as section leaders. The classes are open to seniors in good standing (students who do not have an F on their transcript). One of the Capstone teachers said that, “Portland State has been very, very adamant that it should not be an elite course and so have we. I know that the sign-up thing says that you have to have a teacher’s signature, but we have emphasized that all we want is to make sure the kid is a senior and not missing credits” (Capstone teacher, School D).

When asked what students at other high schools would say about School D, students in both focus groups were fairly positive. The “nonhonors” group said, “Preppy.” “The technology school.” “Well, we are one of the top schools. I mean we are not the top. We have to compete with [a private school], but we hold our own.” “We are better than some.” Students in the “honors” group said, “I don’t care how it’s ranked. School D has pretty much given me every single opportunity that I could possibly hope for.” “School D is an environment where you can pretty much act on your own desires for your own education. It’s all up to you. Every door is open” (honors focus group, School D).

School B. School B is about two-thirds white. The largest population of students of color is Asian and there is a growing Latino population. It is about ten percent African American, and there are sizable proportions of Haitians, Samoans, Ethiopians, Russians, and Eastern Europeans. A couple of years ago, the staff was told that School B is the most diverse high school in the state (counselor, School B). One teacher described School B by saying that, “It’s pretty blue collar. Low to middle [income]. [The students are] not necessarily expected to go to college” (9th grade nonhonors teacher, School B).

⁸ The name of the program has been changed to protect the anonymity of participating

The student body is fairly transitory. Some interviewees stated that there are a lot of Asian families that move to the area for jobs and relocate often. The “regular track” Global Studies teacher signs approximately 40-50 course withdrawals a year, whereas in his previous school, a higher performing high school in the area, he used to sign one or two a year. A large proportion of the students who withdraw from courses end up leaving the school (9th grade nonhonors teacher, School B).

The 1999-2000 academic year was the principal’s first year at School B. She came to School B from a private girls’ preparatory high school. She stated that, “...a fundamental difference here is the learning culture itself and how students view learning and how they view school and how they view learning as a lifelong process...And, for whatever reason, I think the mindset for some students, which is probably a reflection of family, learning stops at 12th grade” (principal, School B). She and the lead counselor were disappointed by a recent low college night turn-out. The counselor explained that, “It’s our community. Basically, we don’t get good turnouts for anything” (counselor, School B).

One of the long-time teachers (he has been there approximately 17 years) said, “I like School B. I like the staff. I, they have excellent principals. We’ve had wonderful principals...I really, this is going to sound racist, but I don’t like teaching in an all white school...And we have the most diverse student body you’ve ever seen” (9th grade honors teacher, School B). The lead counselor echoed his statement by saying, “School B is the place that very few people leave once they get here. People retire from School B...This is the fourth principal in my dozen years here, but the first one died immediately after I

schools.

came. Our current principal is the first one to come in totally new [the others rose from within]" (counselor, School B). The staff is quite proud, too, of its level of educational attainment; 50 to 60 percent of the teachers have Master's degrees (9th grade honors teacher, School B).

In terms of student achievement, there is a "handful" of students who reach Calculus. There are no AP classes at School B (11th grade nonhonors teacher, School B). School B's students' SAT scores are "terrible." An English teacher described the situation by saying, "We have 4.0 students who are getting 1100...because our kids don't have any money, they don't sign up for the expensive SAT prep courses. I have been after our counselors or somebody...to teach [an SAT prep course]...even though I have given the SATs a bazillion times, I don't know enough about them to tell them the real tricks. I know that when you take those classes they teach you some of the real tricks" (11th grade honors and nonhonors teacher, School B).

According to a school survey, about 25 percent of seniors say they are going to a four-year college and 35 percent or higher say they will attend a community college. The lead counselors thinks that the 25 percent figure is accurate because the survey is conducted at the end of the year after people have made plans. The 35 percent might be too high, because students are not admitted to community colleges in the same way; they might intend to attend community college at the end of the year, but might not follow through. School B does not track their students after high school (counselor, School B). One of the teachers interviewed believes that many School B students who go to community college do not make it through, but the ones who go to four-year institutions are well-prepared. He could not think of any student he knows who went on to the UO;

most of the students he knows who go to college stay near Portland (11th grade nonhonors teacher, School B).

While staff at all of the schools mentioned that resources are scarce in Oregon, School B seems to be struggling the most. Several of the staff said that the situation has become worse since the Legislature passed Measure 5. Teachers are “fighting to maintain” their classes, the Vice Principal for Curriculum and Instruction is half-time, they can not afford a mathematics lab, psychology is the only social studies elective, there is no school band, and the art offerings are limited (11th grade honors and nonhonors teacher and 9th grade nonhonors teacher, School B).

When comparing School B to other high schools, students in the “honors group” had the following discussion:

Student: “...any class at [richer/higher performing high school] is, you know, more rigorous than classes here at School B.”

Student: “They’d probably call us white trash.”

Student: “They’d probably call us ghetto.”

Student: “In the hierarchy of schools, we’re kind of in the lower edge.”

Student: “I think we’re in the middle.”

Student: “I know compared to the bathrooms here and the bathrooms at [richer/higher performing high school], it’s a humungous difference. Just, like, bathrooms.”

Student: “That’s something that makes me angry. We still have the faucets that this one is for hot and this one is for cold. So when I’m washing my hands I have to walk back and forth so the water’s not too hot.”

Student: “We have graffiti.”

Student: “We don’t have paper towels...they have liquid soap.”

Student: “They have signs that say, ‘don’t walk on the grass.’”

Student: “They have, like, little decorative soaps on the counter.”

Student: “A couple of years ago, [richer/higher performing high school] was going to lose a teacher...all the parents, like, pooled together and they bought basically a teacher and they paid her salary” (11th grade honors focus group, School B).

Aspirations

Students articulated their post-high school aspirations in focus group discussions and in response to a survey question; their parents expressed their aspirations for their children on the parent surveys; and the many educators interviewed discussed their hopes for their students, in addition to their perceptions of the students’ hopes for themselves. Understanding their aspirations helps provide the context for such issues as students’ involvement in college preparation activities and their knowledge of college policies.

Almost all the educators interviewed for the study stated that they hope that all of their students will attend postsecondary education; however, many said that, realistically, their honors students are more likely to go to four-year institutions and their nonhonors students are more likely to attend community colleges (PASS math teacher, School A; 9th grade honors teacher, School A; vice principal, School D; 9th grade nonhonors teacher, School D; 11th grade nonhonors teacher, School D; counselor, School C; and 9th grade honors teacher, School B). At School D, one teacher was concerned that students’ aspirations are so high that they are putting too much pressure on themselves (9th grade nonhonors teacher, School D). At School C, a teacher said he tries to convince all of his students to go out of state for college, but his students do not want to be too far from

home. He stated that, “It’s weird. I just don’t understand. I have had kids go to very prestigious schools and they couldn’t handle it an they came back and go to the community college and it’s like, I miss my friends and, like, the friends are gone pretty quickly...Even in my AP class, a lot of kids that are really smart and they get good scores on the AP test. They are not applying to really prestigious schools” (9th grade teacher, School C).

From a student perspective at School C, the majority of the students in the honors focus group thought, as one student said, that School C, “is very limiting because, I mean, they promote Mt. Hood [Community College] so much it is like [they are saying] don’t go to the university. The graduating class goes to the community college. Or they promote Portland State or University of Portland or Oregon State or University of Oregon. And other than that it is like nothing. That is what I hate because I don’t want to go to an in-state college.” Approximately two-thirds of the focus group (N=10) said they wanted to attend an out-of-state college. A few students began discussing the pros and cons of in-state schools (cheaper, better for teacher preparation) and out of state schools such as Harvard and Pepperdine (“I’m in Journalism...and Pepperdine is basically recruiting with the top few in our class. They want us to go there. I’ve read a bunch of stuff and it’s supposed to be a really good program”) (honors focus group, School C).

At School B, a teacher expressed concern that students’ aspirations are very low. He said that,

I tell my kids all the time...they may not remember anything I taught them in history, but I hope they remember how to show up on time and be responsible for themselves and bring a book every day. That’s the biggest chore...Because we deal with a different kind of kid here...some kids will go into, like, a tech

program and, of course, they're talking about how they will graduate from college...when I was in school, I never would have considered that being some huge honor or something, but a lot of kids around here think that's very much an accomplishment, which it is. But I remember, I don't think my friends and I would have thought it was an accomplishment back when I was in high school (11th grade nonhonors teacher, School B).

Some of the group discussions with students focused on differing aspirations. One in particular exemplified some of the views when students talked about students other than themselves:

Student: "I think that the students [in advanced classes] tend to have more initiative so they are thinking about college earlier where other students might wait until senior year and I don't know how they talk to them senior year, but my guess is the senior year is when they [other students] most actively start thinking about it."

Student: "And a lot of people in regular classes want the information. I mean, when you look at the number of people in advanced classes, I can't believe the people who aren't are just all slackers because there are hundreds of them."

Student: I think it's really stereotypes or something because I think there's, I don't know, I think that there are secret smart people in those regular classes and they just don't pride themselves. And I don't think that our school pays enough attention to that" (honors focus group, School C).

In another group, students focused on their own aspirations:

Student: "I have already picked out the school that I would just love to go to. And you know I don't know if I will get accepted there and that is Yale. And that's pretty high ambition and so I know that there is a pretty good chance that I won't get accepted there, so, you know, I am doing a lot of research now on schools that are like Yale."

Student: "I think for me, prestige matters to a certain point, but when it gets right down to it, if I am going to school and I am one of, like, 35 thousand people, I am not going to feel like I am getting as much out of it. As if I am in a smaller school with a professor and not the teacher in my core classes. And I plan on going to graduate school and so I think prestige is more a matter for graduate school" (honors focus group, School D).

According to the survey responses, a vast majority of students in the sample aspires to matriculate into college after high school. 93.1 percent report planning to attend college – 78.3 percent full-time; 14.8 percent part-time. In addition, 29.5 percent plan to work part-time, most in conjunction with full-time college studies. A small percentage reported plans to enter the military or work full-time.

Students are considering a wide range of types of institutions for their postsecondary plans. Of the two universities included in Phase I of our study, students favored the University of Oregon (UO). Portland State University (PSU) enrolls many more adult and returning students, which may contribute to why 22 percent of the students sampled indicated that they plan to apply to PSU, as opposed to 43 percent for UO. Perceived differences in selectivity and prestige might also contribute to the discrepancy. Prestige issues might be a factor in the percent of students reporting interest in colleges and universities outside of Oregon. The table below lists the percentage of the total student sample that is "thinking about attending" each type of institution or option after high school.

Table X – Postsecondary Options Considered by Student SES Group

Postsecondary Options*	Low SES (%)	Mid SES (%)	High SES (%)	Total (N=279)
A 4 year college or university outside of Oregon	13 (35.1)	86 (56.6)	64 (71.9)	163
University of Oregon	20 (54.1)	64 (42.1)	38 (42.7)	122
Another public university in Oregon	12 (32.4)	47 (30.9)	27 (30.3)	86
A 4 year private college or university in Oregon	6 (16.2)	42 (27.6)	34 (38.2)	82
Portland State University	15 (40.5)	50 (32.9)	14 (15.7)	79
A 2 year junior or community college	11 (29.7)	38 (25.0)	10 (11.2)	59
A technical/trade school (e.g., ITT Tech)	5 (13.5)	9 (5.9)	3 (3.4)	17
A U.S. military academy	3 (8.1)	13 (8.6)	4 (4.5)	20

Other type of school (e.g., music, art)	1 (2.7)	4 (2.6)	3 (3.4)	8
Haven't considered any schools	5 (13.5)	6 (3.9)	4 (4.5)	15

*multiple responses accepted; some SES data missing

Despite interest in the in-state colleges and universities, most students express a preference for four-year out-of-state institutions. That number may be large in part because the out-of-state option includes both public and private institutions, and the in-state options were disaggregated. When aggregated, the total number identifying some kind of in-state institution exceeds the out-of-state total. Higher SES students are more likely to express aspiration to four-year and private schools, while slightly more low SES students overall checked the two-year option. However, the most dramatic finding is the high number of students who expect to enroll in some postsecondary institution, as noted above. The school-level analysis reflected the SES levels of the schools, as seen in the previous table.

Table X – Student Aspiration by School (percent of each school sample in parens)

Postsecondary Options*	School A	School B	School C	School D	Total (N=316)
A 4 year college or university outside of Oregon	47 (58.0)	27 (43.5)	56 (57.1)	54 (72.0)	184
University of Oregon	35 (43.2)	30 (48.4)	46 (46.9)	23 (30.7)	134
Another public university in Oregon	34 (42.0)	24 (38.7)	23 (23.5)	15 (20.0)	96
A 4 year private college or university in Oregon	20 (24.7)	21 (33.9)	29 (29.6)	16 (21.3)	86
Portland State University	21 (25.9)	27 (43.5)	29 (29.6)	10 (13.3)	87
A 2 year junior or community college	17 (21.0)	18 (29.0)	29 (29.6)	7 (9.3)	71
A technical/trade school (e.g., ITT Tech)	7 (8.6)	5 (8.1)	10 (10.2)	2 (2.7)	24

A U.S. military academy	4 (4.9)	5 (8.1)	8 (8.2)	8 (10.7)	25
Other type of school (e.g., music, art)	2 (2.5)	3 (4.8)	2 (2.0)	1 (1.3)	8
Haven't considered any schools	5 (6.2)	4 (6.5)	6 (6.1)	4 (5.3)	19

*multiple responses accepted

School D emerges in this analysis as having the most distinct responses, specifically in the high rate of response for four-year colleges outside of Oregon. School D has the highest percentage of high SES students; these students may be more comfortable aspiring to schools out of state – i.e., schools that are likely to be more expensive. School D also had the lowest percentage of students aspiring to community college. School B had the highest percentage of students aspiring to Portland State. School B is in the urban school district and has a lower SES profile. Portland State is the in-state institution that most reflects these demographics.

Table X – Schools Considered by Students after High School by Grade and Honors Status (percent of category marked in parens)

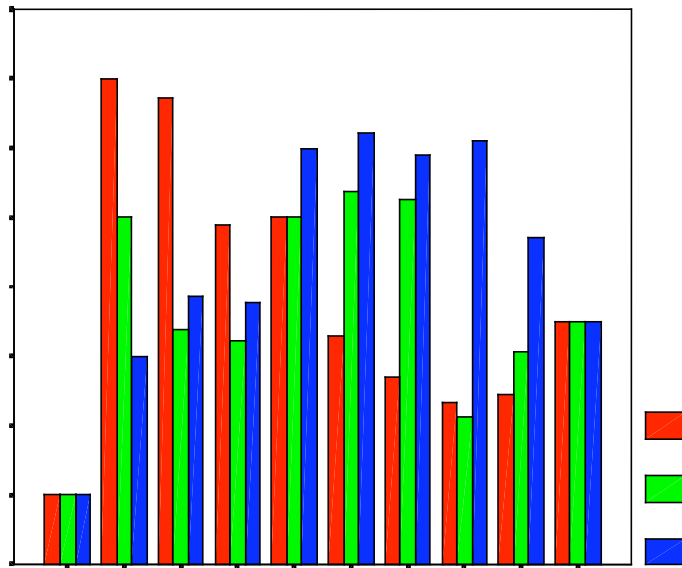
Postsecondary Options* (N=316)	9th Grade	11th Grade	Honors	Nonhonors
A 4 year college or university outside of Oregon	78 (59.4)	106 (61.6)	128 (67.7)	56 (44.1)
University of Oregon	60 (42.3)	74 (43.0)	84 (44.4)	50 (39.4)
Another public university in Oregon	27 (19.0)	69 (40.0)	65 (34.4)	31 (24.4)
A 4 year private college or university in Oregon	32 (22.5)	54 (31.4)	67 (35.4)	19 (15.0)
Portland State University	40 (28.2)	47 (27.0)	48 (25.4)	39 (30.7)
A 2 year junior or community college	22 (15.5)	49 (28.0)	28 (14.8)	43 (33.9)
A technical/trade school (e.g., ITT Tech)	9 (6.3)	15 (8.7)	11 (5.8)	13 (10.2)
A U.S. military academy	9 (6.3)	16 (9.3)	11 (8.7)	14 (7.4)
Other type of school (e.g., music, art)	8 (5.6)	0	5 (2.6)	3 (2.4)
Haven't considered any schools	16 (11.3)	3 (1.7)	9 (4.8)	10 (7.9)

*multiple responses accepted

The grade-level analysis suggests that 11th graders were more likely to aspire to more institutions – and only 3 students reported not considering any schools, suggesting that they've thought more about their postsecondary options. The more dramatic differences were the honors-level responses, most significantly in the four-year outside of Oregon option. Also, nonhonors students were more likely to consider two-year schools.

Figure X - Aspiration to UO, PSU and Community College by HSGPA

HSGPA not marked A/A+ A-B+ B-B- C+C- D or lower Mean 1.71 .61 .51 .41 .31 .21 .11 .09 CCF



There is a trend in the figure above of GPA relating to level of postsecondary aspiration. Those students reporting a lower GPA are more likely to aspire to a community college; PSU seems appropriate for a range of GPAs, and those with the highest GPAs tend to choose the UO. This expectation corresponds appropriately to the selectivity of these institutions. Among these three institutions, the UO requires the highest GPA for admission.

Analyses of parent responses regarding their expectations for their children after high school (they were asked where they "hoped" their children would go) suggest that no parents in this sample want their children to work full time or go to technical or trade school immediately after high school. The greatest number of parents (74 of 304) responded that they wanted their child to go to a four-year college or university outside of Oregon. The institutions in Oregon – public and private – were also popular choices.

Table X – Parents' Aspiration for Their Children's Postsecondary Plans by SES (percent marked)

	Low SES	Mid SES	High SES
Full-time work	0	0	0
Military Academy	0	2.7	1.1
Community College	13.5	13.6	3.4
University of Oregon	13.5	10.9	6.7
Portland State University	13.5	8.8	4.5
Other Oregon Public University	10.8	12.2	12.4
Oregon Private Institution	8.1	9.5	13.5
Four-year Institution outside of Oregon	10.8	24.5	38.2
Technical/Trade School	0	0	0
Other	2.7	1.4	1.1
Undecided	27.0	16.3	21.3

*multiple responses accepted

The most notable distinctions by SES are the small percentage of high SES parents who want their children to attend community college. Also, relatively more high

SES parents hope their child will go to a four-year institution outside Oregon. Given a likelihood of greater discretionary income for out of state tuitions, this finding is not entirely surprising.

Opportunity to Learn

Throughout the interviews and focus groups, while discussing issues such as academic preparation for college and dissemination of college-related information, the issue of opportunity to learn arose repeatedly. Students often talked about their perceptions of their academic opportunities as compared to their peers' (in this case, students not in honors classes sharing their views on honors' students opportunities and vice versa). Teachers, counselors, and administrators often contrasted what they would like to see in their schools, and in society, with what they perceive is their school's reality.

At Schools A, B, and C course offerings and the placement processes were in a state of relative flux. School C recently eliminated all of its AP course offerings except for AP mathematics and AP English; teachers believed that AP classes were too demanding to teach, AP Chemistry consistently had less than ten students, and many students were not taking the AP exams. The school now has College Chemistry, College Biology, College English, College History, and College Government. Students can receive community college credit for those courses. The principal stated that, the reduction of AP courses has been a "non-issue" and that, since the change, "the teachers are more enthusiastic about it and the kids don't know the difference. It doesn't make any difference to them, really. They can still take the AP test if they want to" (principal, School C).

To place students into courses, the school relies on a forecasting process in which 8th grade teachers send recommendations to School C's counselors regarding their students' 9th grade course options. Students and their parents can request placement in a different level, but, "the majority of them are recommended and appropriately [so]" (counselor, School C). The principal believes that, "by and large most kids at this point in their academic career have sort of sorted out in their own mind where they should be. I think probably we've had more problems through the years maybe with parents demanding [higher level courses for their students]...And then it works itself out by the time you get to high school" (principal, School C). Students are usually only turned away from US History due to class size constraints, and from AP or College English because of writing skill problems (counselor, School C). One student's perception of the placement process, and a related issue of motivation, is that, "It seems that the advanced classes are the ones that are more interested in academics because they are actually trying. Because it is not something that you just get in. You have to be asked in" (advanced focus group, School C).

School B has many tracks within the "non-college bound track"; the principal stated that there are courses for at-risk students, general education students, and students who would be best suited for technical or vocational education. For example, there are Science- and Health-related Academies for students who plan to go into medical occupations, but not to medical school (principal, School B). It does not have any AP classes. The teacher who taught AP English retired and no one filled her shoes. Students can go to other schools for AP mathematics. One teacher believed that there were four students who were ready for AP math, and that the school might have enough students for

one AP English class (9th grade honors, School B). The principal, who just started at School B this year, stated that, “Last year we had one student take an AP test. One AP test. And, frankly, this fell in my lap very late. It’s just, this was one of these things – I just assumed the mechanisms were in place and I didn’t get involved in the day-to-day. This year we have zero. Not acceptable.” She wants to start talking to the honors teachers more to make sure they are providing opportunities for all students. There is one student who got an 800 on his math SAT and she wants him to have the opportunity to take an AP Calculus test, even though he won’t have access to the appropriate curriculum before the test (principal, School B).

At School B, there are honors courses in English, global studies, and US History. Students can decide which courses they want to take – there is no formal placement process – though an English teacher who has taught at School B for 28 years said that the honors classes have a disproportionate number of white, non-Latino and Asian students. One student in the honors focus group stated that, “Most of us have been together since freshman year.” Another student responded, “Except for me because I just joined the whole academic scene my sophomore year” (honors focus group, School B).

Like School B, School A has no AP courses. A counselor explained the situation by saying:

Some students will take AP tests...with Lincoln [pseudonym] or other high schools. Our best chemistry teacher refers to [his classes] as AP chemistry and they are pretty well-prepared for that test, but, for a variety of reasons, some of which are still obscure to me, we really never got going on Advanced Placement classes per se...It is my understanding – I am not positive about this – but I think part of it is that a teacher has to have a master’s degree in her field or his field to teach an AP class. Well, we have a lot of fine teachers, but many of them do not have that master’s degree. And that’s why it didn’t ever get started (counselor, School A).

School A is starting an IB program, has several PASS classes in English and mathematics, and offers honors classes in core subject areas. Currently, in order to place into high level courses, 9th graders need to get recommendations from their 8th grade teachers and earn good grades in previous courses. Students can protest their placement, however, and enter an honors course. Over the next two years, School A will be working to de-track its 9th grade classes (9th and 11th grade honors teachers, School A). One of the teachers interviewed stated that she actively tries to recruit “nonhonors students” into her honors courses. Of those efforts she said, “I think, socially, it’s more difficult. There’s a stigma on people, and so you kind of fit in one or the other. And I also, I’ve had a lot of students this year to whom I’ve said, ‘I want you to be in the honors class next year,’ and it freaks them out. They see that as a whole different world. And I think that’s hard” (9th grade honors teacher, School A).

School D, unlike the other three schools, is not in the process of changing its curriculum or its course placement processes. Its teachers, counselors, and administrators believe the school’s course offerings are of high quality and help prepare students well for college. School D offers general education, honors, and AP courses in core areas, in addition to the Capstone program. In order to place into honors courses, students need a teacher recommendation, they must have completed honors courses in the past, and they should be earning “As and possibly Bs in their courses.” In addition, “They should have a genuine liking or love for the discipline” (11th grade honors teacher, School D). The “nonhonors focus group” discussed this issue by stating,

Student: “You have to have a teacher’s signature to get into those higher level classes and if they don’t feel that you are ready to go into that class or that you would be able to manage that class, then they don’t sign you up.”

Student: “It’s a really dumb system because you have different types of teachers. You have teachers who don’t really care and just sign your thing and then you have teachers who won’t sign...and then you have teachers that have kind of higher expectations for all their students” (nonhonors focus group, School D).

College preparation

The student surveys gathered data regarding activities students are involved in, and courses they are taking, that they believe will help prepare them for college. The parent survey asked about what activities parents have participated in to prepare for their child’s postsecondary opportunities. Many of the school-based opportunities, particularly with regard to college preparation curricula, were discussed in the Opportunity to Learn section. This section focuses more on when participants believe students should start preparing for college, what students are doing to prepare, and how well they think their schools are helping them prepare for college.

College Preparation Actions/Behaviors

Testing. Oregon’s high school students participate in a variety of standardized assessments. Many of the students in the sample had not taken the optional “college preparatory” tests (e.g., the SAT and AP exams). The surveys were administered in the spring, allowing for reporting on the survey by eleventh grade students who have taken the PSAT – administered in the fall. The PSAT is also the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test, so those not reporting taking the PSAT might be missing scholarship opportunities. Over two-thirds of 11th graders who responded report having taken the PSAT, an important step for admission to many four-year institutions.

Below, the testing data are disaggregated by grade. As expected, more 11th graders have taken more tests than 9th graders. One hundred and sixty-six of the 318

student respondents reported taking none of these tests. Of the remaining 152, 127 of the students are 11th graders (i.e., most non-testers are 9th graders). A total N of 318 is used to demonstrate what percentage of the total sample took that test.

Table X – Student Testing by Grade

Tests Taken*	9th Grade (percent of grade n=24)	11th Grade (percent of grade n=127)	Total (N=152) (percent)
ACT	1 (4.2)	8 (6.3)	9 (5.9)
AP	10 (41.7)	5 (3.9)	15 (9.9)
PLAN	8 (33.3)	3 (2.4)	11 (7.2)
PSAT	8 (33.3)	117 (92.1)	125 (82.2)
SAT I	10 (41.7)	44 (34.6)	54 (35.5)
SAT II	2 (8.3)	6 (4.7)	8 (5.2)

*multiple responses accepted

It is important to note that the majority of ninth graders surveyed did not respond (only 24 of 151). Many more of the eleventh graders responded (127 of 179). Some of the findings by grade are surprising. It is highly unusual, though not impossible, that 9th graders would have taken AP tests. It is only somewhat less unlikely that 9th graders would have taken the SAT I or II, though some summer programs do request it of younger students. These results might stem from confusion in self-reporting as well. As was expected, it is clear that the vast majority of PSAT and SAT I takers were 11th graders.

Below are data on student testing behavior by SES.

Table X – Student Testing Behavior by SES

Tests Taken*	Low SES (percent of the	Mid SES (percent of the	High SES (percent of the	Total (N=133)
---------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------

	12 low SES who responded)	77 mid SES) who responded	44 high SES) who responded	(percent)
ACT	0	4 (5.2)	4 (8.7)	8 (6.0)
AP	2 (16.7)	7 (9.1)	5 (10.6)	14 (10.5)
PLAN	2 (16.7)	4 (5.2)	4 (8.7)	10 (7.5)
PSAT	10 (83.3)	63 (81.8)	39 (84.8)	112 (84.2)
SAT I	3 (25.0)	25 (32.5)	20 (43.5)	48 (36.1)
SAT II	1 (8.3)	2 (2.6)	5 (10.9)	8 (6.0)

*multiple responses accepted

A striking feature of this table is the overall small number of low SES students who report having taken any college preparatory tests. Despite the fact that some of these students aspire to two-year institutions that generally do not require standardized entrance exams, many low SES students expressed an interest in four-year colleges both in and out of Oregon, the majority of which require an entrance exam for admission.

The testing patterns by school are below. Again a total of 152 students responded that they had taken at least one test; 166 did not. School A has the highest rate of PSAT taking, but no AP tests were reported because the school does not offer AP classes.

School A does participate in the International Baccalaureate program that many students take as an alternative to advanced placement courses and tests.

Table X – Student Testing Behavior by School

Tests Taken*	School A (percent of school n=83)	School B (percent of school n=62)	School C (percent of school n=98)	School D (percent of school n=75)	Total (percent of total N=318)
ACT	1 (1.2)	0	6 (6.1)	2 (2.7)	9 (2.8)
AP	0	3 (4.6)	7 (7.1)	5 (6.7)	14 (4.4)

PLAN	0	2 (3.2)	4 (6.5)	5 (6.7)	10 (3.1)
PSAT	42 (50.6)	21 (33.9)	33 (33.7)	30 (40.0)	112 (35.2)
SAT I	16 (19.3)	6 (9.6)	22 (22.4)	10 (13.3)	48 (15.1)
SAT II	1 (1.2)	2 (3.2)	2 (2.0)	3 (4.0)	8 (2.5)

*multiple responses accepted

Preparatory behavior. Several questions on the survey asked students what they are doing to familiarize themselves with postsecondary opportunities. At the aggregate level, the sample suggests that a minority of students have engaged in any of the preparatory steps listed on the survey.

- 13.3 percent have taken an SAT or ACT test prep course.
- 24.7 percent have attended a "college night."
- 40.4 percent have visited a college or university campus.

Below are student responses disaggregated by grade and honors status. It is not surprising that 11th graders report an overall higher rate of activity. More interesting is the higher rate of activity by honors students, particularly given that these activities occur outside the classroom.

**Table X – Exposure to College since Entering High School
by Grade and Honors Status**

Activities	Student Yes Responses			
	9 th Grade n=142	11 th Grade n=173	Nonhonors n=129	Honors n=189
Attended a college information workshop/ "college night"	45 (31.7)	81 (46.8)	47 (36.4)	80 (42.3)
Visited a college or university	7 (4.9)	35 (20.2)	9 (7.0)	34 (18.0)
Took and SAT/ACT prep course	7 (4.9)	72 (41.6)	19 (14.7)	62 (32.8)

Below are the same responses by SES There is less distinction of activity between low and mid SES categories than between high SES and either of them. This finding is most easily explained in the SAT/ACT prep course question given that most courses require a fee.

Table X – Exposure to College since Entering High School by SES

Activities	Student Yes Responses		
	Low SES n=38	Mid SES n=152	High SES n=89
Visited a college or university	10 (26.3)	38 (25.0)	22 (24.7)
Took an SAT/ACT prep course	13 (34.2)	51 (33.6)	48 (53.9)
Attended a college information workshop/ "college night"	3 (7.9)	16 (10.5)	16 (18.0)

The parent survey also asked about what activities parents have participated in since their children started high school. Below are their responses by SES.

Table X – Parent Behavior and Activities by SES (percent "yes" response)

	Low SES	Mid SES	High SES
Read a college's brochure	40.5	56.1	53.9
Attended a college fair	2.7	15.5	29.9
Read a college guide (e.g., Barron's)	10.8	22.3	29.2
Read a magazine with rankings	10.8	24.3	40.4
None	27.0	14.9	7.9
Hired a private counselor	0	.7	1.1
Saved money for child's education	35.1	39.2	71.9
Spoken to teacher about child's prep.	21.6	29.1	43.8
Visited a college campus	13.5	24.3	41.6
Volunteered at child's school	10.8	30.4	37.1
Looked at college or univ. website	13.5	27.0	47.2

There are some specific differences by category, most dramatically in saving for college. The high SES parents are most likely to have been able to do that. And in general high SES parents report a higher level of activity around their children's future plans.

“College Talk.” Another survey question asked students how often they have "discussed the admission requirements to get into college (any institution)" with several different categories of people (e.g., parents, friends, counselors). The student surveys and focus groups provide data regarding with whom students talk about college-related issues, how frequently they talk, the usefulness of those discussions, and the first time they received advice about college. Teachers and counselors talked about when and whether they discussed issues such as college preparation, college options, admission, and placement with their students. Often, school staff compared the content and frequency of their discussions with students they perceived as honors students versus with students they viewed as not honors students. This section provides qualitative and quantitative data about the discussions.

Several teachers voiced the opinion that students talk to them more often than they talk with their counselors. One teacher stated that, “The students consider their teacher far more often than they consider going to their counselor because if they have established a connection with a teacher, this is the most believable person to them and the one that they have the most frequent contact with and the one that is easiest to have contact with and the one that knows them the best” (11th grade nonhonors teacher, School D). Teachers cited talking to students about academic issues relating to college readiness, filling out applications, academic planning for college, higher education options, college “survival,” their own experiences in college, the need for financial aid, college visits, SAT preparation, and goal-setting (vice principal, School D; honors math teacher, School D; 9th grade honors teacher, School D; 9th grade nonhonors teacher, School D; 11th grade honors, School D; 11th grade nonhonors, School B; 9th grade

nonhonors teacher, School B; 9th grade honors teacher, School B; 11th grade nonhonors teacher, School A; 9th grade honors teacher, School A). Two teachers mentioned that they embed college preparation activities, such as writing college essays or using SAT vocabulary words, into their curricula (11th grade honors/nonhonors teacher, School B; 11th grade nonhonors teacher, School A).

While a couple of the teachers said they talked to all of their students equally about college (11th grade honors teacher, School D; 11th grade nonhonors teacher, School B), the majority said that the amount of time spent, and the topics discussed differ, depending on whether they are talking to honors or nonhonors classes. Their statements about this issue included the following:

“Certainly my message to the AP student is not, ‘Well, let’s take a look at Mt. Hood Community College.’ I mean, I’m sure they’re not looking [at them]” (11th grade nonhonors teacher, School D).

“Open conversation about college seems to happen a lot in advanced classes...on my wall there is this whole thing on how you get ready for college, what to do when you are a freshman, sophomore, junior, senior year. It’s posted and occasionally I will refer to it” (11th grade nonhonors teacher, School A).

“I bring up college quite a bit here and there...[With her nonhonors 10th grade students], that’s – a really different population of kids. I’ll talk to them about I [college], but a lot of them don’t see themselves as successes...My goal for them is to start making goals for themselves. And they have these big ideas, like, I want to be a masseuse, or I want to be a doctor, and then they don’t know how to take the steps to get there” (9th grade honors teacher, School A).

“Only honors. I never talk about it with the other kids. I tried it before and a lot of kids will say, ‘No, I’m not going to college.’ And sometimes you’ll, they’ll be so adamant that it’s like, ‘ok, twelve years here is enough. I don’t want a longer sentence’” (9th grade honors teacher, School B).

None of the teachers stated that they had talked with their students about placement exams. As one teacher said, “I, to be honest with you, never talk to students

about placement exams and so I guess the only way that they would know is maybe through their counselor. But I've certainly never talked about it to my advisory council. I never talk about it in my math class. To be honest with you, I don't even know if Portland State offers placement exams" (honors math teacher, School D).

In terms of quantitative findings, in the overall sample, 53.6 percent and 47.3 percent report talking "many times" with parents and friends, respectively. At the other extreme, 9.6 percent and 16.3 percent report never talking to parents and friends about admission requirements. The overall response frequencies to that question are presented in the Table below. It appears that most students have spoken to someone – at least once or twice – about what is required for college.

Table X – Discussed Admission Requirements (in percentages by row)

People	Many times	Once or twice	Never
Parents	53.6	36.4	9.6
Friends	47.3	35.2	16.3
Counselors	18.1	48.5	32.8
Teachers	12.7	52.7	33.1
College recruiters	3.3	23.8	72.2
Coach(es)	6.3	20.2	73.2
Private counselors	0.6	6.6	91.9
Brother/Sister	20.1	31.1	47.5
Clergy	1.9	9.7	88.1
Family friends	14.8	33.0	51.3
Relatives	15.7	36.8	47.2

Additional analyses reveal that high SES students are talking most about college admissions in general. Below are the people students were likely to talk with "many times."

Table X – Discussed Admissions Requirements "Many Times" for most common responses by SES (in percentages)

People*	Low SES	Mid SES	High SES
Brother/Sister	18.4	15.8	28.1
Counselor	21.1	21.7	14.6
Friends	44.7	43.4	56.2
Parents	42.1	53.3	62.9
Relatives	10.5	17.8	15.7
Teachers	10.5	13.8	14.6

*multiple responses accepted

Because high and mid SES students are more likely to have had parents and siblings who have attended college, it is not surprising that more of them report talking with those people about college requirements. Also, high SES students are not talking to counselors as much as others, but are talking to teachers. Given the high SES/honors relation, this pattern emerges in the next table. Below are further breakdowns by honors status. Honors students are more likely to talk with parents, teachers and counselors about college admission.

Table X – Frequency of Student Conversations about Admission Requirements with Others by Honors Status (percent marked)

Significant Others	Many Times		Once or Twice		Never	
	Nonhonors*	honors	nonhonors	honors	nonhonors	honors

Your parents/guardians	47.3	58.2	36.4	36.5	15.5	5.3
Your brother or sister	22.5	18.5	23.3	36.5	53.5	43.4
Another relative	20.2	12.7	33.3	39.2	45.7	48.1
Friends/other students	43.4	50.3	38.0	32.3	16.3	17.5
A high school counselor	17.1	20.1	41.9	52.9	40.3	26.5
A high school teacher	10.1	15.9	48.8	54.0	39.5	28.6

*Nonhonors n=129; honors n=189

Disaggregations by grade reveal that 11th graders are more likely to be talking about college requirements. This difference is most dramatic in interactions with parents and friends.

Table X – Frequency of Student Conversations about Admission Requirements with Others by Grade (percent marked)

Significant Others	Many Times		Once or Twice		Never	
	9 th Grade	11 th Grade	9 th Grade	11 th Grade	9 th Grade	11 th Grade
Your parents/guardians	40.1	65.3	45.1	29.5	14.8	4.6
Your brother or sister	16.9	23.1	34.5	30.1	48.6	45.7
Another relative	13.4	17.9	33.1	39.9	53.5	41.6
Friends/other students	29.6	62.4	39.4	30.6	29.6	6.4
A high school counselor	7.7	27.3	41.5	55.2	50.7	17.0
A high school teacher	6.3	19.3	45.8	57.7	46.5	22.1

Note: due to rounding, totals do not always equal 100 percent.

The parents in the sample were also asked about whether they talked with their children about college. Below are the findings by SES.

Table X – Parents' Responses to College Topics Discussed with Their Children by SES (percent marked)

	Many Times			Once or Twice			Never		
	Low SES	Mid SES	High SES	Low SES	Mid SES	High SES	Low SES	Mid SES	High SES
Discuss plans after high school	73.7	86.8	89.9	23.7	11.2	10.1	2.6	1.3	0
Discuss interest in attending college	60.5	77.0	85.4	18.4	11.2	7.9	0	2.0	0
Discuss specific college requirements	15.8	37.5	57.3	60.5	44.7	31.5	21.1	15.8	10.1
Discuss child's course planning	28.9	54.6	69.7	44.7	28.9	19.1	15.8	10.5	10.1

Overall, parents report a lot of discussions, but when the topic becomes more specific (e.g., courses and requirements), there is more discussion among mid and high SES families. It may be that those parents with more education have a clearer understanding of the specifics of requirements and what is needed to meet them, that they know the general topic areas, or that they feel more comfortable discussing those topics. Below are parents' responses by honors status. There appears to be more discussion with honors students, particularly as the topics get more specific.

Table X – Parents' Responses to College Topics Discussed with Their Children by Honors Status (percent marked)

	Many Times		Once or Twice		Never	
	Non-honors	Honors	Non-honors	Honors	Non-honors	Honors
Discuss plans after high school	77.5	87.8	17.8	8.5	2.3	0
Discuss interest in attending college	69.0	78.8	13.2	9.0	2.3	0.5
Discuss specific college requirements	34.9	43.4	45.0	39.2	16.3	12.7
Discuss child's course planning	45.0	68.0	30.2	26.5	14.7	6.9

Advice Received. The survey also asked students when they first received advice about appropriate course-taking for college. The highest percentage reported getting advice in 8th grade or earlier, which seems to be good news, as one of the obstacles for many students in the college admission process is not having completed the proper course sequence in high school. Students cannot complete the necessary college prep courses if they do not start early enough with the appropriate sequence. There is a slight trend to suggest that mid and high SES students are receiving advice earlier than low SES students, though the high SES students report the highest percentage of students who haven't received advice.

Below is a table that displays when students report first receiving advice, by SES.

Table X – Coursetaking Advice Received by SES

Grade Advice Received	Low SES	Mid SES	High SES	Total (N=318) (percent)
Haven't rec'd	1 (2.6)	20 (13.2)	14 (15.7)	35 (11.0)
11th grade	3 (7.9)	5 (3.3)	2 (2.2)	10 (3.1)
10th grade	1 (2.6)	13 (8.6)	7 (7.9)	21 (6.6)
9th grade	20 (52.6)	56 (36.8)	20 (22.5)	96 (30.2)
8th grade/earlier	13 (34.2)	58 (38.2)	46 (51.7)	117 (36.8)

Note: totals do not equal 100 percent or total N because of missing data.

Disaggregating by school did not reveal major differences in coursetaking advice received.

Pre-College Counseling

Counseling was a major area of focus throughout the interview and focus group discussions. Researchers interviewed one counselor per school – usually the lead counselor or, when there was one, the college counselor. Counselors discussed their frustrations at not being able to spend time on college issues, and students sometimes mirrored those frustrations. Teachers often took on a college counseling role, and some students went to teachers first to ask questions about which courses to take, and how to study for college admission tests. This section explores these, and related, issues. As with some of the other issues, the services and resources offered at the four schools span across a relatively wide range with School B at one end (relatively poor resources), School A and School C in the middle, and School D at the other end.

School B does not provide individual college counseling for their students. The lead counselor said that she tries to target juniors she believes are potentially college-bound and give them information about college preparation. The student to counselor ratio is 500 to one; there are 3.6 counselors whose responsibilities include providing general academic counseling, going to middle schools to do course forecasting, scheduling, crisis management, and oversight of internships. They divide the students up by English class and follow the students for four years. The principal came to School B from a private school that had a very thorough, personal, counseling program that covered all aspects of counseling well, including college counseling. She said that would be impossible to replicate at School B. “I don’t think public schools in general have the funds to be able to support that kind of a program.” She believes the school is not doing as much as is could be doing for college-bound students. She cited as an example that at junior parent night, 15 parents attended (there are 1350 students total across four grade

levels). She thinks that if they were doing a better job, they would have more parents actively involved in their programs (principal, School B). The teachers interviewed were split about their role; an honors teacher said she was actively involved in providing college counseling for students, while a nonhonors teacher said he was not (11th grade honors/nonhonors teacher and 11th grade nonhonors teacher, School B). Students interviewed said that, while they had not received any information about course requirements or the SATs, they believed the resources are there and the counselors are accessible (honors group, School B).

Like School B, School A does not provide individual college counseling for its students. There are four counselors, one of which works primarily with “alternative students” and has a caseload of about 100 students. The other three have caseloads of about 375 each and focus mostly on academic counseling, scheduling, group counseling, running student elections, and planning homecoming. The counselors divide up the students by global studies class and each visits a class once a month. Students who are struggling academically are required to meet with a counselor once a year, but some students initiate additional meetings. Counselors begin talking to students about college during the junior year, although students have to fill out a four-year plan in 9th grade (vice principal and counselor, School A). All interviewees stated that there is not enough college counseling at School A, but several students said they knew they could make an appointment with a counselor to talk about college. They do not find the counselors as helpful as their parents and written materials when they want to learn about a specific college (honors group, School A). Teachers often step in and offer college counseling,

but the vice principal said, “the counselors actually get a little upset when the teachers step on their territory” (vice principal, School A).

One counselor focuses on senior year activities, scholarships, and college planning. He goes to every senior English class once a month and hands out college-related information, including financial aid, testing, and recruiting materials. In the fourth quarter, he talks to each junior who has a 3.0 or higher to talk about post-high school plans. He said that it is not possible to talk with each student about her/his college plans. Two volunteer parents talk with all juniors about their post-high school plans and, in May or June, encourage them to take the SAT. Every OUS institution and three local community colleges visit School A each year, and the staff tries to focus on students who intend to attend two-year and four-year institutions (counselor, School A).

School C has six counselors, and each one is responsible for general counseling and guidance, CIM- and CAM-related work, scheduling, testing, creating college fun packs and scholarship materials, and college counseling. The counselors also staff the Resource Center that has college materials such as guide books, computers with college-related websites marked, meeting spaces, college recruiting opportunities, videotapes, and financial aid materials. The counselor interviewed believed that students use the information in the Center, but are overwhelmed by all the materials at their disposal. Each counselor has a caseload of about 300 students and students are divided up alphabetically by grade level. Each year, the counselors meet with students individually to discuss course-taking plans, making sure that if a student is college-bound, s/he takes the appropriate sequence of courses. In 10th grade, they talk about loans and financial aid

and make their CAM choices. In 12th grade, they re-assess the students' plans and make sure they can be met (counselor, School C).

Some of the students expressed conflicting views of the school's resources. A student gave an example, saying, "Well, I had regular English the first semester instead of Advanced English and we really didn't get all that much information. And then second semester [I had] Advanced English [and] a counselor came and talked to us and it was a lot more clear...I guess they think that advanced students are more likely to be college-bound. But regular classes, they are made for the majority." Another student responded by saying, "If you are looking for it, you will find it. The career center has a lot of stuff and the counseling office is just right there if you need it. Just ask someone and they will show you." The group was relatively split between the two views (honors group, School C).

School D's counseling staff, like those at the other schools, is responsible for a wide range of activities, including college counseling, scheduling, and general academic counseling. In addition to the counselors, every teacher and administrator at School D is assigned an advisory group of about 22 students. They meet once every three to four weeks to talk about course planning for high school and college, logistical issues regarding college applications, and other similar issues. The vice principal said the groups are an attempt to help the large school feel smaller (vice principal, School D). School D's advisories are set up so that the advisor and students are together for four years. "Most of the advisors that we have are given an agenda to cover so they're all, for example, all the senior advisors in the school will be talking about the same thing...And then information regarding college, what they advise you to do for transcripts, colleges

that require you to submit an eight semester transcript, so we given them information on how to handle that. Take a self-addressed, stamped, envelope into the counselor so they can check on your transcripts and mail them” (vice principal, School D). Parent volunteers staff the Career Center. School D offers two college scholarships for its students. One is funded from community donations, and the other receives its money from Pepsi kickbacks (honors math teacher, School D). As with the focus groups at the other schools, School D students would like to see their counselors more, but say they also need to use more initiative (honors and nonhonors groups, School D).

Who is responsible for college preparation? Parents were asked about who should be responsible for certain parts of their children's college preparation – the family or the school. Below are the responses by school.

Table X – Parents' Responses if School or Family Responsible for Student College Preparation by School (percent marked)

	Agree Somewhat or Strongly (by School)				Disagree Somewhat or Strongly (by School)			
	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
School primarily responsible for college application preparation	59.0	64.5	63.3	62.7	34.9	22.6	36.8	36.0
Family primarily responsible for college application preparation	81.9	69.4	91.8	94.6	3.6	11.3	7.1	4.0
School should inform child of course requirements for college	88.0	80.6	86.7	88.0	6.0	6.5	13.3	10.7
Family should inform child of course requirements for college	50.6	56.4	60.2	72.0	36.1	21.0	36.7	25.3

Chi-square .001

There are not major differences by school, except for the less strong agreement from School B parents about the family being responsible for application preparation. School D parents felt more strongly about an active family role. Given that School B has the most low SES families and School D has the most high SES families, the table below sheds further light on this SES connection.

Table X – Parents' Responses if School or Family Responsible for Student College Preparation by SES (percent marked)

	Agree Somewhat or Strongly (by SES)			Disagree Strongly or Somewhat (by SES)		
	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High
School primarily responsible for college application preparation	92.1	63.1	48.3	5.3	35.5	50.6
Family primarily responsible for college application preparation	76.3	88.8	91.0	10.5	4.6	7.9
School should inform child of course requirements for college	89.4	89.5	84.3	7.9	9.2	14.6
Family should inform child of course requirements for college	68.4	61.2	59.6	21.0	31.6	37.0

Chi-square .000

It is not a huge surprise that low SES parents (those with less education) think that the school should take care of more of the college application process. In general, those with greater educational attainment say they should take on more responsibility for these tasks.

K-16 Connections

A major component of this project is to explore connections between high schools, community colleges, universities, and the state agencies that govern them. Researchers collected data on information dissemination; high school staff exposure to, and involvement in, K-16 reform efforts; innovative connections; and college recruiting on high school campuses.

Overall, at all four schools, teachers, counselors, and administrators commented that there is a disconnect between expectations at the high school and college entry levels, and there is a gap in communication between educators at both levels. These views were relative, however, because some schools were actively involved in innovative collaborative, while others were not. A couple of interviewees expressed concern that students experience a huge culture shift when they leave interactive high schools and enter universities that are lecture-based (9th grade honors teacher, School B; 9th grade honors teacher, School A). While many interviewees received data such as first year college grades on their former students, most would like a more formalized and comprehensive data collection and reporting system (11th grade nonhonors teacher, School B; principal, School C; 9th grade honors teacher and 11th grade nonhonors teacher, School A).

In terms of visible connections to higher education, at one end of the scale, School B's counselor keeps OUS newsletters on file, but says that:

Sometimes it's almost more frustrating to us that we preach their gospel to our kids and then somebody gets admitted anyway when we said you cannot go if you don't take Algebra 3 and 4 absolutely positively...and then I feel like we have a little bit of egg on our face [when an underprepared or underqualified student gets in to an OUS institution] because we try to tell the students what they need according to what the state system tells us and there are exceptions and maybe there are good reasons for them (counselor, School B).

None of the teachers interviewed at School B receive information from institutions of higher education or from OUS (except one teacher who is also a coach and receives information about eligibility requirements). One teacher expressed doubt that K-16 collaborations could work, stating, “I don’t know that the colleges want to rely on high school. A professor is not going to want some high school teacher to...I think maybe there is a food chain – that they are not going to want us calling the shots by any means. But I’m not opposed to it. I think probably could happen, but I think it would have to start from their level” (11th grade nonhonors teacher, School B).

At the other end of the spectrum, School D has a Capstone class (described earlier) that was started by a group of teachers who wanted to offer an interdisciplinary course in conjunction with a college or university, a bridge course for high school students. The course is open to seniors who do not have an F on their transcript. It focuses on a period in history, and explores the interstices between Literature, History (mostly intellectual history), Science (mostly physics), and Fine Arts (art, music, and dance). There are three teachers – two from School D and one from PSU and several PSU interns who run small break-out sessions. It is, “very student-oriented, very discussion-oriented, and we get into some heavy personal subjects and the trust level gets very high” (vice principal, School D).

A Capstone teacher believes the model is the best one in terms of connecting K-12 and higher education, because it is not based around giving high school students credit for taking college-level courses. She believes that, “What is important is creating a partnership among the teachers involved. That is the only way to make it seamless. And the same thing goes for us in the middle school. It is not going to be seamless unless we

meet with the middle school teachers at least once a year.” While Capstone was PSU’s brainchild, all School D teachers involved in the program feel a sense of ownership. This teacher’s evidence that it works lies mostly in feedback from former students, “Every fall we get a lot of emails [saying], ‘thank you, thank you, thank you – I hated X, Y, and Z when it was happening, but my roommates are freaking out and I have this research paper to do and I know exactly how to go about it and I am not worried at all.’ Or, ‘In my English class, we are doing the exact same stuff. I was so well-prepared,’ or, and these are the worst, ‘My English class is so boring compared to what it was last year.’ Those are heart-breaking” (Capstone teacher, School D).

School A and School C fall between School B and School D in their connection to higher education institutions and involvement in K-16 reform. Both receive limited amounts of data from OUS regarding their former students’ grades in college, and both counselors attend OUS informational sessions (counselor, School A; counselor, School C). Both cited an active presence of community colleges on campus (something that many students thought was limiting their options and “tracking” them toward two-year institutions, rather than four-year institutions). School A has a 2+2 program with PCC, while School C has an articulation agreement with Mt. Hood Community College in which students can earn college credit in Spanish, History, Electronics, and business classes (counselor, School A; counselor, School C). Staff members at both schools indicated that they learn a great deal about college expectations and how well they prepare students for college when their former students return and talk to them about their experiences in college (11th grade nonhonors teacher, School A; 9th grade honors/nonhonors teacher, School C).

Students in the honors focus groups at School C and School B reported receiving a great deal of unsolicited college brochures in the mail; they assumed that institutions received their addresses from the College Board after they took the PSAT. Most of them were dissatisfied with the quality of the brochures and found them to be glossy, but not very informative (honors groups, School C and School B; nonhonors, School A).

In terms of recruiting, students, teachers, and counselors from School A and School C voiced dissatisfaction that most of the recruiters are from local, or in-state, campuses. A student in the honors focus group at School A said, “Hardly any, like, good schools that are, like, out of state schools or anything come to School A ‘cause we have, like 10 people every time that would go out of state so they don’t even come here anymore.” Another student replied, “Yeah, we don’t get anything from out-of-state schools. I don’t think. I mean, if we do, it’s not advertised to us” (School A, honors focus group). In the School D nonhonors group, three of the ten students had gone to a recruiting session for Oregon institutions and found it beneficial. One student summed the experience up by saying a recruiting session, “is a wake-up call, basically. The brochures are all these pretty pictures and then you talk to, like, a student who goes there and they are still trying to sell it, but they give you a more realistic point of view, which is nice” (nonhonors focus group, School D).

College Knowledge

The student and parent surveys, and the interviews and focus groups, collected extensive information regarding participants’ knowledge of UO’s and PSU’s admission and placement policies, tuition, and level of selectivity.

In terms of adults' knowledge, counselors stated that they receive information about admission policies for OUS universities and for institutions that recruit at their schools, but no one had knowledge of placement exams. Similarly, several of the teachers expressed both a lack of awareness of placement exams and an interest in learning more (11th grade nonhonors, School B; 11th grade honors teacher, School A; and honors math teacher, School D). One teacher said, "I don't know [about placement exams]. I'd be interested – I mean, is it the same kind of test every year? The same types of topics or do they change it from year to year? I mean is it something we can actually gear toward or not?" (11th grade nonhonors teacher, School B).

Some teachers stated misconceptions about college preparation, such as students need to take two years of math to be prepared for an OUS institution (honors math teacher, School D; 9th grade nonhonors teacher, School D), and that colleges east of the Mississippi require students to take Western Civilization in high school, while colleges west of the Mississippi do not (11th grade honors teacher, School D).

Specific policy issues and related understandings discussed in the student focus groups included:

- Admissions requirements. Students believe they need, "four years of math, and, like, you need to take English and Economics and stuff" (honors group, School A; honors group, School D); good SAT scores (honors group, School A); approximately a 3.0-3.5 for UO and a 2.5-3.0 for PSU (honors group, School B; honors, School A); and athletic prowess, community service, and letters of recommendation. (nohonors, School B) Several groups discussed how colleges want students to be well-rounded and that they don't, "expect you to be a genius

when you get there” (honors group, School A; nonhonors group, School A; honors group, School D).

- Placement. Many students seemed to understand the concept of placement exams, but were not clear about how to prepare for the tests, or how to learn about them (nonhonors, School D; honors, School D; nonhonors, School B).
- Preparation. Several honors students voiced concern that if they took difficult classes, their GPAs would suffer. (honors group, School D; honors, School A)
Several students were confused about the differences between honors classes and AP courses (honors group, School B).

Overall, in most groups, while students said they would like to know more about college policies, they admitted to a bit of apathy in terms of seeking out information, and were often confused about admissions and placement standards. Two dialogues illustrate the variety of focus group discussions:

Focus group A:

Student: “I have never heard a college say it, but they ask for, we are told that we have to take three [math classes] beyond Algebra.”

Student: “But...I mean, naturally, somebody is going to look more attractive to a college if they have taken AP Calculus and all these AP classes and everything than someone who has just done the minimum.”

Student: “On the other hand, they also look at what you did outside of class.”

Student: “Yes, it’s the Harvard solution – take the people who are well-rounded, not just bookworms.”

Student: “It’s also how you did in the class because if you take AP Calculus and end up with a C, it doesn’t look as good as if you take the next lower and get an A” (honors focus group, School D).

Focus group B:

Student: “Not everyone passes their SATs.”

Student: “What does it mean to pass your SATs?”

Student: “820.”

Student: “I am scared to take the SATs.”

Student: “You can’t fail your SAT” (nonhonors group, School B).

Survey data provided more specific information regarding student understandings of admission, placement, and tuition costs. Those are presented below.

Admission Knowledge. The survey asked students about the importance of specific items for admission to UO and PSU. Out of 17 items, the 3 factors cited by students as “most important” most often were, in order, for each institution:

UO

1. High school grades
2. SAT I
3. SAT II

PSU

1. SAT I
2. High school grades
3. SAT II

Because there were seventeen items listed in the question, it is interesting that the top three are the same for both institutions, although ordered slightly differently in terms of perceived level of importance. The admission policies for UO and PSU (as specified by the admission officers who filled out the same survey items for comparison purposes) cite high school course pattern (see below) as most important, as well as student performance in those courses. Only if a student does not meet the minimum GPA requirement for admission (3.0 for UO and 2.5 for PSU) do the admissions offices look at

SAT scores. Because these institutions do not consider seriously other factors – like essays, recommendations or extracurricular activities – the fact that students realized the relative importance of grades and test scores is significant. The Oregon University System (OUS) institutions have capacity for all qualified students, so admission requirements are a standard to be met, rather than factors to use in selectivity. An important finding is that PSU may need to think about how to communicate to its prospective students that courses and grades are more important than SAT scores.

The survey also asked students to offer their best guess as to how many years of specific subjects were required for admission to the UO and PSU. Although the UO and PSU require the same number of courses, students tended to report that the UO required more years in each subject. Student responses and the actual requirements are in the table below. Percentages reflect correct responses and overestimations.

Table X – Student Knowledge of Course Sequence for Admission (percent marked that answered correctly or overestimated)

	UO		PSU	
	Percent right or above	Actual requirement	Percent right or above	Actual requirement
English	88.0	4	83.0	4
Math	73.3	3	62.2	3
Social Sciences	50.3	3	41.5	3
Science	94.4	2	92.1	2
Foreign Language	95.3	2	90.9	2

Students were most likely to underestimate social science requirement and overestimate science requirements. And despite identical course requirements, students assumed more years were required for admission to the UO. The averages below reveal that trend.

Table X – Knowledge of Course Requirements for Admission to UO and PSU by SES (averages of responses, in years)

	UO				PSU			
	All	Low SES	Mid SES	High SES	All	Low SES	Mid SES	High SES
English	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.6	3.8	3.8
Math	3.0	3.2	3.1	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.7
Social Science	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.5
Science	2.5	2.8	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.9	2.3
Foreign Language	2.3	2.5	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.1	1.9

There are few differences by SES, as seen in the table above. Although school-, grade-, and honors-level analyses were conducted, they revealed little difference in students' understanding of course requirements for the UO and PSU.

Parents were also asked about their knowledge of course requirements for admission to the UO and PSU. In general, their responses were similar to the students. They were most likely to overestimate the science requirement and underestimate social science. Also, parents tended to assume a greater number of years of all subjects were required for admission to the UO.

Table X - Parent Knowledge of Course Sequence for Admission (percent marked that answered correctly or overestimated)

	UO			PSU		
	% right or above	Average	Actual requirement	% right or above	Average	Actual Requirement
English	81.7	3.8	4	79.0	3.7	4
Math	71.2	3.0	3	61.8	2.8	3

Social Science	51.8	2.7	3	46.3	2.5	3
Science	90.6	2.7	2	86.9	2.6	2
Foreign Language	88.6	2.1	2	82.8	1.9	2

Placement. PSU currently does not have its new students take placement exams. It has offered them in the past, but eliminated them due to financial and capacity concerns. The UO requires them in mathematics and English for students who do not score above a cutoff score on the SAT. Students interested in taking a foreign language at the UO must take a test in that language. In general, students thought there were more placement tests at the UO than PSU, an accurate perception, though most students believed that PSU still required placement tests. Given the relatively recent changes in PSU's policy, and an overall lack of information about placement directed toward students, some confusion was expected. The data are presented below.

Table X – Placement Policy Knowledge

	PSU		UO	
	Student response (%)	Actual policy	Student response (%)	Actual policy
No placement exams (yes = no exams)	16.0 yes	yes	10.2 yes	no
English (yes = exam)	69.3 yes	no	76.2 yes	yes
Math (yes = exam)	74.7 yes	no	81.3 yes	yes
Foreign Language (yes = exam)	42.2 yes	no	50.9 yes	yes

One clear trend does emerge in considering admission and placement policies at the UO and PSU. In general, students and parents seem to have the overall sense that UO is more difficult to get admitted to than PSU. They stated higher admission and placement requirements in several categories.

On paper, the UO and PSU have somewhat similar admission policies. Both require the same course sequence (number of years in specific subjects) and only use SAT scores if students do not meet minimum GPA requirements. The UO does have a higher GPA requirement than PSU (3.0 vs. 2.5). Both institutions admit a large majority of their applicant pool, suggesting that there may be self-selection occurring given the perceived difference in admission difficulty. PSU promotes itself as more of a commuter school focused on access, while UO promotes itself as a flagship institution. It appears that students are receiving those messages.

Tuition. Students were also asked about tuition costs for the UO, PSU and local community colleges.⁹ Interpreting the data is difficult because there can be confusion about annual tuition vs. overall costs (despite efforts to limit confusion); Bridge researchers focused on overall trends in the analysis of tuition responses, rather than actual dollar amounts.

The actual annual tuition costs for the UO and PSU in the academic year 1999-2000, the year students were surveyed, were \$3,771 per year for the UO and \$3438 per year for PSU for in-state residents. Community colleges averaged around \$1200. The categories in the table below offer ranges, each roughly doubling the one it succeeds. For both the UO and PSU, \$8,000 was a popular response, so the choice to break the categories as listed tipped more responses into the "above" category instead of the "far above" category.

Table X – Student and Parent Estimates of Yearly Tuition Costs

⁹ In the classes where students were surveyed, researchers called students' attention to this question, explaining that tuition does not include room and board costs. Although this was not possible with parents, who completed the survey at home, this point was also made in writing on both student and parent surveys.

(percent in parens by column)

Estimate Comparison with Actual Costs	Two Year College			Four Year Institutions				
	Est. of Yearly Tuition Costs	Community College		Est. of Yearly Tuition Costs	Univ. of Oregon		Portland State University	
		St.*	Par.*		St.	Par.	St.	Par.
Below Target	Less than \$1,000	17 (5.4)	8 (2.5)	Less than \$3,000	14 (4.4)	8 (2.5)	24 (7.5)	12 (3.7)
On Target	\$1,001-\$2,000	99 (31.1)	111 (34.9)	\$3,001-\$4,000	44 (13.8)	48 (15.1)	50 (15.7)	57 (17.9)
Above Target	\$2,001-\$4,000	57 (17.9)	76 (23.9)	\$4,001-\$8,000	63 (19.8)	71 (22.3)	66 (20.8)	90 (28.3)
Far Above Actual Costs	\$4,001 or greater	137 (43.1)	60 (18.8)	\$8,001 or greater	190 (59.7)	139 (43.7)	169 (53.1)	95 (29.8)
Blank Response		8 (2.5)	63 (19.8)		7 (2.2)	52 (16.4)	9 (2.8)	64 (20.1)

*St. = Student; Par.= Parent

Overall, parents, not surprisingly, have a better understanding of what postsecondary education costs. There is also a clear understanding by all that community colleges are a less expensive alternative to the four-year institutions. Also, they believe that the UO is more expensive than PSU, when in actuality their tuition costs are quite similar. It could be that the perceived – and actual – status and selectivity differences between the campuses (flagship vs. urban commuter campus) are driving these responses. Below are the averages of the tuition responses for each category.

Table X - Average Tuition Responses from Students and Parents for UO, PSU and Oregon Community Colleges (annual cost, in dollars)

	Student Response	Parent Response
Community College	7,218	4,729
Portland State University	15,829	11,203
University of Oregon	17,592	12,728

In the table below, students in both grades continue to overestimate, but 11th graders had a closer approximation than did 9th graders.

Table X – Average Student Tuition Responses by Grade

	9 th Grade	11 th Grade
Community College	10,431	4,776
Portland State University	22,770	10,466
University of Oregon	24,089	12,666

Student averages by SES do not reveal significant differences between groups; all responses were within approximately \$1,000 of each other. However, the parent responses showed greater overestimation at the lowest SES levels.

Table X – Average Parent Tuition Response by SES

	Low SES	Mid SES	High SES
Community College	9,235	4,033	2,913
Portland State Univ.	15,305	9,529	8,284
Univ. of Oregon	20,029	11,126	9,162

State Education Policy Knowledge

Over the past ten years, Oregon’s education policy environment has evolved fairly constantly, with the development of new reforms and the refinement of current policies. This has affected K-12 stakeholders in many conflicting ways – namely, confusion, optimism, frustration, excitement, and resignation. This project explored participants’ understandings of, and attitudes toward, the state’s major high school-exit level policies –

the CIM, CAM, and PASS. Amidst the policy turmoil caused by the development of three reforms almost simultaneously is a concern for resources and a feeling that the state is not supporting the existing infrastructure for either K-12 or higher education (PASS Coordinator, School A; 11th grade nonhonors teacher, School D). One participant expressed resentment that the K-12 system is doing all the changing, while higher education watches from afar (principal, School C). Most interviewees expressed pessimistic opinions about the reforms, though there were a few people who supported the state's efforts. The sections below explore interviewees' knowledge and views regarding the CIM, CAM, and PASS reform efforts.

CIM. Two schools, School C and School D, have their own CIM in addition to the state's CIM. Both schools began developing their CIMs during the initial stages of the state's CIM and were quite excited about the promise of proficiency-based, authentic, assessments. Staff members at both schools are pleased with their own CIMs. When people ask what the students and staff think about the school having its own CIM, the principal said he replies,

Well, you gotta be careful in how you ask that question because if [you ask a student], 'Do you enjoy working harder than you did before?' who's going to say yes? The purpose of [our school's] CIM was intended to raise that D/D+ student to an acceptable level...for the A/B student, it really should be business as usual. So my gut feeling is if you asked an A [or] high-flying A+ student what they think of the CIM, no doubt you'll get some kids who say this is stupid. These are your intellectual elite who just – I think you understand. The D+ student [who says], 'Well, I think it's dumb, it's stupid,' in essence, they're saying, 'I have to work harder than I did before where I could slide through.' We've had so many, many kids [say they feel] positive about it and are willing to speak publicly (principal, School C).

The development of its own CIM, along with the adoption of the state's CIM-related policies and practices, has not been seamless. Because 70 percent of Oregon's

students could not achieve a score above the state's cut score, School C made its cut score on its own CIM lower. Students have to earn C's in seven core areas in 9th and 10th grade, and they each have to earn at least a 4 out of 6 on one work sample per core area per semester, to be able to earn a "School C CIM." If students do not complete one or more of those requirements during the year, they must attend summer school (principal, School C).

The staff believes that the school's CIM is improving teaching and learning. One teacher said that, "I think it [School C CIM] has been successful...And I think that the tasks that they have to do are good tasks...I think the teachers have, I think we have all bought into it and it's part of our kind of culture in the school and I think it's pretty successful and I think that the only thing is the paperwork" (9th grade honors/nonhonors teacher, School C). At the schools that had their own CIM, there was more buy-in and support for the school's CIM than for the state's CIM. Across all four schools, there was a great deal of hostility about the state's CIM.

When asked about their view of the state's CIM (process and content), most participants at the four schools started listing off negative attributes. Many interviewees responded initially with comments such as,

"I can honestly say the only thing that the CIM stuff has done to my teaching is frustrate me because it takes so much time and I don't feel like it's valuable time" (PASS Coordinator, School A).

"I don't teach any differently because of the CIM...It doesn't make any difference to me, other than all the paperwork that goes along with it and that is a joke and they're going to have to figure that out because it simply is overwhelming and nobody can manage it" (11th grade nonhonors teacher, School D).

"I've really negative feelings about it [the CIM]. I mean, I have, I believe in high standards and I think that it's really neat and important for students and educators to have high standards and benchmarks. But the CIM is terrible. It has been top-

down implemented from non-educators, pushed on to educators and to students. And it's been incredibly punitive, disorganized. And, in some ways, a destroyer of good curriculum and good teaching" (9th grade honors teacher, School A).

Students were very aware that many of their teachers do not support the CIM. In one focus group, students discussed their impressions of their teachers' and counselors' views of the CIM. One student stated, "I have talked to teachers here and they say that if you have never done any CIM in my entire time at high school that it wouldn't affect anything...From what I have seen from the teachers and the counselors, nobody knows what it means. They said that you have to try and do this and nobody really figured out how." A second student responded that, "I haven't talked to one English teacher that has liked it. They feel obligated to do it and so they are forced to do it...They just do it real quickly and get it out of the way and get to the stuff they want to teach which is actually more important than just write a paper and then grade on the CIM proficiencies" (nonhonors focus group, School D). Other students echoed those concerns (honors focus group, School B).

In terms of specific problems, the most frequently cited issues regarding the CIM were that it is difficult logistically and is in a constant state of flux. For example, the schools were supposed to give the social studies CIM test two weeks from this project's field research dates, but staff found out the week before the researchers' arrival that the administration was cancelled. After the first administration of CIM tests, schools and teachers have not received test scores in enough time to use them for course placement or to change its curriculum. Also, many stated that the scoring guides were months late (9th grade nonhonors teacher, School A; 11th grade honors teacher, School D; vice principal,

School A). One principal summed his school's experiences up by saying, "We've been through this so many time that the credibility is just really shot" (principal, School C).

Many adult participants were disappointed that the tests had evolved from authentic assessments to a series of multiple choice assessments (Capstone teacher, School D; vice principal, School A; 11th grade honors/nonhonors teacher, School B). Some students were equally as vocal and relatively savvy about the development of the CIM. One stated, "I think that in the beginning – when I was in 8th grade was when I first heard about the CIM and I was told that it was a portfolio of our work and so there would be actual work samples in there for whoever to look at and I think that would have been a good idea, but [now] it's just a sheet of, oh, they got fours on this assignment" (honors focus group, School D).

Another major issue for all interviewees is the lack of stakes; students must take the CIM tests, yet there are no consequences for students if they do not meet the proficiencies. It is not required for graduation or promotion from grade to grade, and is not tied to higher education admission or placement. No interviewees believed that the CIM is at an appropriate level for college admission and placement. Most focused their concern on the lack of stakes as related to high school graduation or grade-level promotion. Common sentiments were:

"Well, the first things the kids want to know is do I need this to graduate? Well, no you don't. Okay, so please care anyway. I always just say no, you don't, but it's insurance. How do you know that five years down the road, the job that you want is between you and another person and they have it and you don't. Maybe that's the deciding factor. I don't know. And probably that is not likely, so then what?" (PASS math teacher, School A).

"We don't have to meet CIM requirements. Like, we're not required" (School A non-honors focus group).

“We have been doing some pilot testing on CIM for several years, but a lot of our kids would skip the test or wouldn’t care how they did – even some of our top students, because it didn’t have any impact” (counselor, School A).

“Well and who cares whether you need them or you don’t need them? I mean, will it have any effect on the rest of your life? No...do any bosses know what you’re talking about? No. They don’t. I mean, I ask my husband or I ask any of the men I know who run businesses. Do you ask if a student has a CIM? Well, they laugh at me. They could give a rip. It’s not important to them” (11th grade nonhonors teacher, School D).

Students’ discussions about the relationships between the CIM and college admission and placement are below.

Focus Group #1:

Student: “I have even talked to college admission people in Oregon colleges and they say that the CIM doesn’t matter. They don’t even look at the CIM.”

Student: “Yeah, in college, if you are going out-of-state which I know I am not, they really don’t know what it is.”

Student: “People in Oregon don’t know what it is and don’t care about it.”

Student: “I have never seen it listed under any of the requirements for any of the colleges.”

Student: “Even in-state” (nonhonors focus group, School D).

Focus Group #2:

Student: “I’m getting mixed interpretations of it all the time. People tell me it’s good for college, but then it really doesn’t matter for college.”

Student: “It doesn’t matter for admissions necessarily, but wouldn’t you feel better prepared in comparison if you did take it?”

Student: “Well, how does it prepare you? It’s a test?”

Student: “I think it’s more like a work portfolio” (honors focus group, School B).

When this study took place, CIM subject assessments were required for tenth graders in English and mathematics. The survey asked students if they had taken a CIM test and if they believe that earning a CIM will help them be more academically prepared for college. Slightly more than 70 percent report having taken a CIM assessment. Approximately 33 percent believe that earning a CIM will help them be more academically prepared for college. Below are the responses to the survey questions about CIM by school.

Table X – CIM Responses by School (percent of school n)

	School A n=83	School B n=62	School C n=98	School D n=75
Taken CIM	80.7	71.0	52.0	81.3
Believe the CIM helps prepare for college	15.7	43.5	49.0	24.0

One of the major school-level differences is that School C reports fewer students taking the CIM. This may be because School C developed its own CIM and there could be some confusion about which CIM they were responding. Alternatively, they may be clearer about CIM as a result of their school, which could explain why their rate is more on target. More students responded that they had taken a CIM assessment than could have taken one, given that it is only required for tenth graders. Students Schools A and D are less likely to believe that CIM will prepare them for college, an accurate perception. These schools also had the highest parent education levels, which may contribute to the notion of being critical of this educational reform. The table below presents CIM survey data by grade and SES.

Table X – CIM Responses by Grade and SES (percent marked)

	9 th Grade	11 th Grade	Low SES	Mid SES	High SES
Taken CIM	45.8	90.2	68.4	69.7	74.2
Believe CIM helps prepare for college	47.9	20.8	52.6	34.9	25.8

The grade-level responses to "taken CIM" reflect that it is 11th graders who should have taken it. It is less clear why so many 9th graders believe they have, unless they are remembering statewide assessments they may have taken in 8th grade. The 11th graders also seem to have a better understanding that CIM is not to measure preparedness for college. Higher SES students share that perception of the CIM, which fits the overlap with Schools A and D. Parent responses to questions that paralleled those asked their children are below.

Table X - Parents' CIM Responses by School (percent "yes" response)

	School A	School B	School C	School D
Child taken CIM	71.1	62.9	66.3	81.3
Believe CIM prepare for college	28.9	43.5	60.2	41.3

There are not major differences in parent responses by school, though like their children, parents from Schools A and D don't believe the CIM will prepare for college. This suggests that parents may have talked with their children about the CIM. For many parents, as with students, the non-yes responses regarding the CIM questions were usually "no" (rather than "I don't know").

The surveys asked students and their parents questions about the CIM program as a whole. In the interviews, there were many specific concerns about the content of the social studies test. Many believe that it demands too much of sophomores. As one

teacher – who said she is seen as one of the school’s three “CIM Queens” because of her responsibilities surrounding the CIM – stated, “Well, the [social studies] content standards include five disciplines: World History, US History, Government, Economics, and Geography and you are supposed to get kids up to a standard to all five areas by the end – well, not even the end of their sophomore year. How can you possibly do that?...This is not education reform” (Capstone teacher, School D). A School A counselor stated that covering so many disciplines in a short period of time, “is just the opposite of what we have always said was a good thing to do. But to cover enough history and government and econ to at least make somewhat of a good appearance on the social science test, which, by the way, has not been approved yet – the social science teachers are up in arms about [this]” (counselor, School A).

Although participants stated mostly negative views about the CIM, most appreciated one or more aspects of the tests or certificate process. These include views that the math test is at an appropriate level (PASS Coordinator, School A); the scoring guides are well-constructed and useful (Capstone teacher, School D); it started with a good idea, but is now “a sinking ship” (11th grade nonhonors, School B); and it has raised standards in writing (counselor, School B). Out of 27 interviewees, one person self-identified as a CIM proponent. He summed up his view by stating, “I believe that if this is what the kids are being assessed by, whoever it is, the powers that be, say, ‘This is what you’re accountable for,’ then you fall into line and you do it until it changes...you need to push this to the kids and say, ‘Hey, this is what’s important today’” (9th grade honors math teacher, School D).

While many respondents cited a willingness to “do what they need to do,” several expressed a cynicism about the cyclical nature of reforms. The most common sentiment was that, if they held tight and waited long enough, this too will pass (9th grade nonhonors teacher School B; 11th grade nonhonors teacher, School B; 9th grade nonhonors teacher, School A; vice principal, School D; and 11th grade nonhonors, School D).

Everyone who was interviewed had an opinion about CIM; the CAM, however, was not as controversial a topic. This is probably because the CAM has not been fully developed or implemented across the state.

CAM. All participants had heard of the state’s proposed CAM (and one of the participating high schools had its own CAM), but no one believed it would be developed and implemented any time soon. One principal stated that it will happen after his retirement, “so I don’t need to worry about it,” while a student remarked, “It’s like this thing that our little brother will get” (principal, School C; honors focus group, School D). There was concern that the ODE was trying to accomplish too much with the CAM – that one single reform can not effectively address preparation for college and for entering the workforce (counselor, School A; principal, School C). Similarly, many were concerned that having CIM, CAM, and PASS would overload an educational system that was already functioning with an acute lack of resources (PASS math teacher, School A). Students summed up many of the concerns during a discussion in one of the focus groups:

Student: “We have heard of it and that’s it.”

Student: “This is not going to happen in our lifetime.”

Student: “[If it does happen,] it would have to be scorable.”

Student: “[It would be] another GED.”

Student: “[It would be] a hideous little thing. A second diploma” (honors focus group, School B).

School C, along with having its own CIM, had its own CAM. To earn a School C CAM, students decide upon their CAM path at the end of the sophomore year and then must take two years of CAM classes and earn a C or better in each of the classes. They also must complete 20 hours of community service. English teachers supervise all the CAM activities. Prior to that, students enter 9th grade in a preliminary CAM career path (one of seven offered at the school). They spend 2 years in career exploration classes. All 9th graders go on company tours, create resumes, and write cover letters; in 10th grade, they do some job shadowing (principal, School C).

A couple of students voiced frustration with School C’s CAM because they think it limits their course-taking choices. They want to take more electives and college preparation courses, and they want more specific information, rather than the more general information they’ve learned in their CAM classes. They said it’s hard to fit in all the college preparation courses, journalism, band, choir, and CAM classes. A couple of other students, though, said they were in smaller CAM courses and were really enjoying them and gaining information that will help them decide what to focus on in college (honors focus group, School C).

Although the CIM and CAM are legislated reforms run through the ODE, they are connected with the PASS System. ODE and PASS staff members have worked together

to align standards in an effort to create a seamless system across K-12 and public higher education. The next section explores participants' knowledge of PASS.

PASS. PASS is a proficiency-based reform developed by the OUS. In contrast to CIM, its focus is on ensuring that students develop the necessary skills and abilities for success in college-level work. Currently, PASS is in about sixty-five Oregon high schools, and in most cases it has been implemented in two to four few classrooms in each of those schools.

Of the four schools in the study, one is designated as a PASS school (staff members have attended PASS training sessions, there is a PASS Coordinator, and there are at least four PASS teachers – two each in English and mathematics); one is not a PASS school and has not been involved in PASS activities; and two had been PASS schools, but had withdrawn from the reform effort.

Teachers, administrators, and counselors at School A, the PASS school, had mixed reactions to the implementation process. Researchers interviewed the school's PASS Coordinator, the lead PASS English teacher, and the lead PASS mathematics teacher. The PASS Coordinator was the most positive, stating that, "I went [to the initial PASS meeting] and I got hooked. I really got hooked by it. I thought, ok, if this is going to happen, I want to be in on the ground floor making decisions and, you know, writing these proficiencies and I decided it was in my best interest to really get involved and I've been very involved." Her enthusiasm has not waned. The PASS English teacher has been involved in PASS for six years (at several schools), and is feeling as though the effort might not succeed. He said that he has "lost steam and energy and desire [toward PASS]. PASS is getting hard to bring to the staffs of the schools I have been at.

Standards are overwhelming people and the CIM standards in the state are still enough to keep occupying people's minds... So it's not catching on and I am just tired of dragging and pulling people." The PASS math teacher provided a relatively pragmatic view that fell between the others. All three shared similar positives and negatives about their relationship with PASS and their efforts to implement PASS at School A.

They were enthusiastic about PASS' content and expectations for students, stating that PASS reinforced their work, provided high standards for their students, and gave them the opportunity to collaborate with teachers from across the state (PASS Coordinator and PASS math teacher). They all believed that PASS had not changed their fundamental teaching styles. They stated that, "PASS is not very much different than what I would do anyway. It sharpens what I think," "It's really similar [to what they do with IB] and so kids do the same work for IB as they do for PASS. They just have two portfolios," and, "I don't think it has changed the way I teach. It may have made me pay a little more attention to content...or, I'm short on time and I have to choose between these three topics – what is expected at the college level? And I'll choose that one" (PASS Coordinator, English teacher, and math teacher, respectively, School A). They are appreciative that PASS staff has aligned its standards with the CIM, IB, and AP; that has made PASS less time-intensive for teachers and students. They are concerned that CIM is overshadowing PASS; PASS is not required and, consequently, will not "catch on;" and educators have a difficult time understanding a system without assessments.

At the other end of the PASS spectrum sits School D, the school that has never participated in PASS. Its staff members were very aware of PASS and the content of its reforms, but felt that School D had little to gain from the effort. The majority of School

D's students attend college, and the staff is fairly confident that its students enter college well-prepared. In addition, many teachers, counselors, and students held the view that School D's students prefer to attend out-of-state institutions of higher education; consequently, they did not see PASS as a useful reform. One teacher voiced her skepticism by stating, "I know that the state system keeps saying we are going to do it [use PASS proficiencies for admission to Oregon public universities]. But I find myself saying, right, you are going to tell somebody who graduates from this school with a 3.5 – that you are not going to let them into the University of Oregon? Right. I don't think so...I think we are doing a tremendous job and what is wrong with the grades our kids get?" She also believed that PASS was very top-down and required too much from high school teachers (Capstone teacher, School D).

Those concerns were echoed by teachers and counselors from Schools B and C – the high schools that had discontinued their involvement in PASS. Until two years ago, School B had a PASS Coordinator and a PASS teacher in each content area (English and mathematics). The staff members became overwhelmed with bookkeeping, especially in conjunction with CIM's administrative requirements. They were concerned about the prospect of having multiple scoring systems and keeping track of CIM scores and PASS proficiencies (counselor, School B). The principal of School C offered a more critical assessment of their involvement in PASS:

I'd have to say that more than a couple of them [the 12-15 teachers he sent to the first PASS summer training session] were some of our best in the school. I said that it would probably be at the very least a nice gesture, and since we had sort of put ourselves at the front end of the parade in a lot of the school improvement efforts, that probably should be reason enough why we have a presence. After the first year, probably, we dropped...I think the thing that really bothered out crowd the most was that it was the level of expectation – the standards that were being set, and really currently being driven by university people, were not realistic...I

think you will see our name probably still listed somewhere, I suspect, on a PASS project [brochure], but, in reality, we've been out for three or four years.

His view was similar to those of the staff members who had been involved in PASS. One teacher who was involved with PASS that first year said:

And so first of all, we sat down and we wrote these competencies with the college professors. And that was very frustrating because they were so amorphous that there would be a statement and there would be all of these bullets beneath it, but they were all extremely amorphous. They weren't all really specific. And so we developed the PASS competencies and then the next year we had to apply a specific one in our classroom...and then take a product that the kids had completed that you thought exemplified this PASS standard and then you would ship it to the university and a professor would analyze it and then give it back to you. And then you would see how well you did...And I was just aghast when I got it back...universally, our reaction was that the college people were requiring things that were graduate level...We would compare it to people who are in regular classes going off to college and saying, 'whoa.' ...That is what college is for. So at that point, everyone said forget it, we are not going it. It was universal. Everybody pulled out of it at that point (9th grade honors/nonhonors teacher, School C).

Several School C teachers and counselors believed that PASS might be useful for other schools, particularly for small schools in which teachers teach a variety of courses and might want to know how their top students compare to top students from other schools. PASS provides a standard, informs teachers and students about how well the students are meeting the standard, and adds to the integrity of letters of recommendation (counselor, School C).

From a student perspective, when asked whether they planned to submit a PASS transcript, 80.2 percent of the students surveyed responded that they didn't know what a PASS transcript was. When asked whether they thought PASS would prepare them to be academically successful in college, 73.2 percent said they didn't know what PASS was.

The slight different in responses suggests that some students might think that PASS is useful without knowing what it is.

According to the OUS, PASS will be the preferred mode of admission starting in 2005. Below are the responses to the student survey questions about PASS by school, grade, and SES and to the PASS questions from the parent survey.

Table X – PASS Responses by School (percent of school n)

	School A n=83	School B n=62	School C n=98	School D n=75
Plan to submit PASS	12.0	11.3	4.1	4.0
Believe PASS helps prepare for college	18.1	25.8	15.3	2.7

The non-yes responses were more likely to be "I don't know what PASS is." By school, the "I don't know what PASS is" responses were approximately 58 percent for School A, 57 percent for School B, 72 percent for School C, and 73 percent for School D.

Table X – PASS Responses by Grade and SES (percent marked)

	9 th Grade	11 th Grade	Low SES	Mid SES	High SES
Plan to submit PASS	12.0	4.0	7.9	10.5	4.5
Believe PASS helps prepare for college	16.9	13.9	13.2	19.7	12.4

Table X - Parents' PASS Responses by School (percent "yes" response)

	School A	School B	School C	School D
Believe PASS prepare for college	16.9	19.4	16.3	18.7
Submit PASS	16.9	14.5	21.4	18.7

Given the generally low affirmative responses across several analytical cuts, it is clear that PASS has only minimally saturated the consciousness of most students and parents, regardless of whether their school is a “PASS school” or not.

Summary

Oregon has persisted with its education reforms for 10 years – throughout prosperous and resource-thin times. As a small state, it is able to develop and implement reforms that would be much more difficult to sustain in a larger state. From a school-site and student perspective, these reforms have caused confusion, anxiety, and uncertainty. This study analyzed the relationships between those reform efforts and college preparation, and students', teachers', counselors', and K-12 administrators' knowledge of those reforms.

Students and teachers were concerned that the current focus on the CIM will not help prepare students for college; this is an accurate perception, since the CIM was not developed as a mechanism to connect high school and college academic expectations. The CAM was developed to make that link, but, when this research was conducted, it had not been fully implemented. Many respondents were concerned that the CAM would have a more vocational bent and, consequently, there would be no embedded, articulated, connection between K-12 and postsecondary education standards. Additionally, the timing of the CAM assessments in the twelfth grade would be too late for most four-year university admission cycles.

PASS is supposed to fill that gap, but its implementation plan called for thin and wide filtration in the schools. PASS’ goals and objectives are laudable, but it remains to be seen whether it truly changes the way Oregon students prepare for college. When this

research was conducted, PASS had trained approximately 2 teachers per school in about 65 schools throughout the state. While those schools educate the majority of the state's students, the "Teach the Teacher" model of implementation was not spreading quickly. Also, many interviewees were concerned that PASS served only the "college bound" students, and that it added too much to already overburdened schools.

A major set of findings from this study focus on inequalities with regard to the courses students take, the people with whom they talk about college, and even aspirations. Because Oregon is less diverse racially than other states, socioeconomic status (SES) became the stratifying variable. Students from lower SES backgrounds (lower parent education and family income) were:

- less likely to aspire to four-year institutions: 71.9 percent of high SES aspired to four-year institutions outside of Oregon; only 35.1 percent of low SES did;
- less likely to be in honors or advanced classes where college is more often discussed: 68.5 percent of high SES kids were in honors classes; only 36.8 percent of low SES were;
- less likely to talk with parents, siblings or teachers about college, though they were more likely to talk with counselors.

The good news is that there were not differences in PSAT-taking rates, a process that tends to be highly structured by schools, though some differences emerged in SAT I-taking patterns. Also, the majority of all students report receiving coursetaking advice in 9th grade or earlier. And there was little differences between student subgroups in responses about Oregon University System course requirements for admission.

Similar trends emerged in parent responses, especially in aspiration for their children and their own behavior and activities for their child's college preparation, from talking with teachers to researching guidebooks or websites. High SES parents were much more likely to be involved and have participated in pre-college activities. Interestingly, while all student tuition responses were fairly similar, there was a much larger difference in parents' responses by SES on average tuition guesses; low SES parents overestimated costs much more dramatically than high SES parents.

Overall, this study points to a set of very exciting reforms that have not yet reached their potential; concern, confusion, and anxiety about college preparation on the part of students, teachers, and counselors; vague student college knowledge; inequalities between student groups; and some promising local school-college connections. Oregon's reforms, and their impact, should be studied over the years to see if they reach their goals.

Recommendations

Forthcoming in book on all Bridge Project research will include policy recommendations. (Jossey Bass 2004).

Appendix A: List of Participants

School A High School:

PASS math teacher – teaches pre-Algebra, pre-Calculus, and Geometry (did not include any of her classes).

Vice Principal for Curriculum and Instruction.

College counselor

PASS Coordinator – also is the IB Coordinator, math teacher

9th grade nonhonors English teacher

9th grade honors English teacher

11th grade nonhonors English teacher. Involved in PASS.

11th grade honors English teacher

11th grade Non-honors focus group

11th grade Honors focus group (Honors class)

School B High School:

Principal

Lead Counselor

9th grade nonhonors social studies teacher – Global Studies.

9th grade honors English teacher

11th grade nonhonors social studies teacher – US History and psychology

11th grade honors and nonhonors English teacher and Activities Director

11th grade honors focus group

11th grade nonhonors focus group: combination from the two teachers – 7 from one and 5 from the other because the nonhonors classes are mixed grade level, so there was not one nonhonors class with enough 11th graders

School C High School:

Lead counselor

Principal

School Improvement Coordinator

English Teacher who coordinated interviews

9th grade honors/nonhonors English teacher

11th grade honors/nonhonors English teacher

11th grade nonhonors focus group (Advanced course)

11th grade honors focus group

School D High School:

Principal – unrecorded informational discussion

Vice Principal and student advisor for 22 students

Capstone teacher – one of three “CIM Queens”

math teacher –AP Calculus, Geometry, and Algebra I.

9th grade nonhonors math teacher –Algebra I.

9th grade honors math teacher – geometry

11th grade nonhonors social studies teacher

11th grade honors social studies teacher – AP US History, American Studies II, and American Studies I.

11th grade nonhonors focus group – American Studies II

11th grade honors focus group – AP US History

Appendix B: Survey, Interview, and Focus Group Instruments