



March 2017

Senate Bill 183: GRADUATION EQUITY FUND

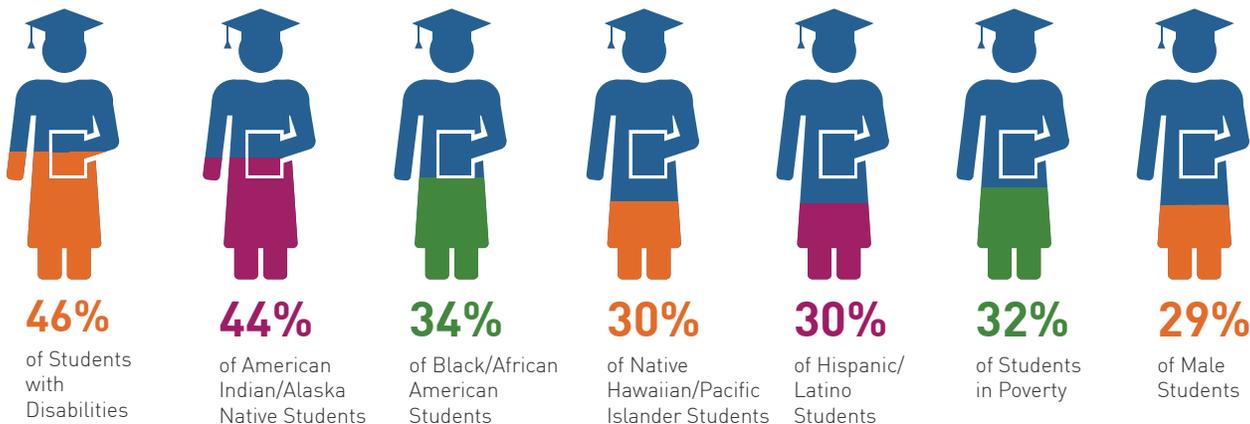
POLICY BRIEF / March 2017

THE STAKES

In 2016, 11,665 students did not graduate on time in Oregon. These students account for more than 25 percent of the student population and are disproportionately students of color, students living in tribal communities, students with disabilities, students navigating poverty and male students¹. Oregon consistently has among the worst on time graduation rates in the nation.

Oregon's schools and communities are becoming more diverse, an increasing proportion of students are English Language Learners, from communities of color, or from recently immigrated families. This brings a tremendous depth and variety of culture and perspective to our communities and regions. Without intentional approaches to engage and support our changing student populations we will not make meaningful progress on graduation outcomes.

Students Who Did Not Graduate On Time in 2015-2016



This reflection of Oregon's education system is notable at a time when the impact of high school graduation on an individual's future is perhaps greater than it has ever been in the United States. Generally education impacts lifelong employment, income, civic engagement, and overall health.² Students who earn a high school diploma are more likely to be employed and contribute to the state and local tax base, benefitting the individuals, their families, and the communities within which they live.³ Earning a diploma is the primary pathway to continued education and a living wage job.

WHAT WE VALUE

Inclusive, engaging and supportive school communities that create multiple pathways to meaningful opportunities.

THE VISION

Governor Brown has established a vision that every Oregon student graduates high school with a plan for their future.

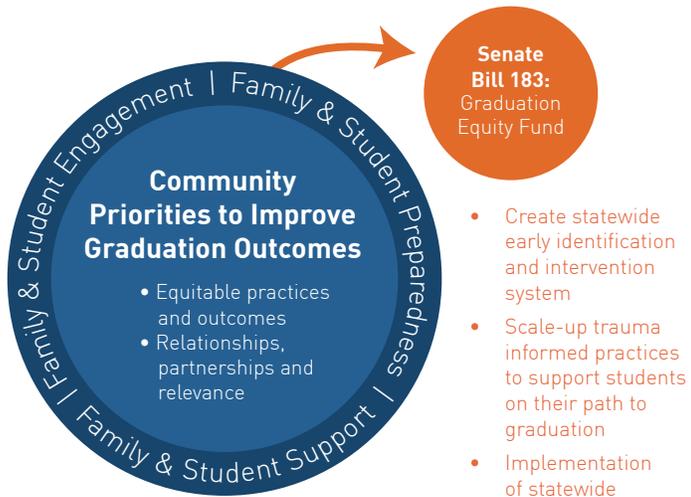
¹ (Oregon Department of Education [ODE], 2016)

² (Burke, 2015).

³ (Sum, Khatiwada, McLaughlin, & Palma, 2009).



THE GRADUATION EQUITY FUND (Senate Bill 183) aims to implement promising practices [we heard](#) from across the state in a way that allows schools and communities to tap into the resource and implement with local flexibility. The \$20 million investment provides high leverage practices to districts and support to students across Oregon.



The Graduation Equity Fund supports students and districts in three ways:

Early Indicator and Intervention Systems (EIS)

- EIS systems go beyond state test scores and look at a student’s attendance, behavior, and academic performance. Then they apply longitudinal data and research to predict whether the student’s current data shows them to be on track for graduation or falling behind.
- EIS systems are designed to keep students on track; increase communication between schools, students, and families; develop partnerships to shift practices to support students; and help students stay goal-oriented toward graduation.
- The Graduation Equity Fund is the first step to providing this powerful tool to Oregon districts of all sizes.

Trauma Informed Practices

- Trauma informed practices help students who have endured adverse experiences, like a death in the family or abuse, children who are part of a marginalized group in Oregon, or even children navigating extreme poverty or homelessness.
- A trauma informed approach is designed to improve attendance, graduation, and other education and health outcomes for students. This includes policies and practices that create safe school environments and training on the signs and symptoms of trauma, how to promote resiliency, and reduce the likelihood of re-traumatization.
- Through the Graduation Equity Fund districts can choose to opt-in to training and implementation of trauma informed practices, much like the Oregon Response to Instruction & Intervention (ORTII) project was scaled-up.

Curbing Chronic Absenteeism

- In the 2015-16 school year, nearly 102,000 students in Oregon -or more than 1 in 6 children- were chronically absent from school. Nationally, Oregon consistently ranks within the bottom 20% of states for chronic absenteeism rates. Chronic Absenteeism has a clear connection with reduced graduation rates.
- The statewide [chronic absenteeism plan](#) recognizes that this is a complex issue. Schools and students cannot fix this problem alone. Cross-sector partnerships with local and state health agencies, community based organizations, community and business members, along with families must be leveraged to provide essential wrap around support to address the root causes of chronic absenteeism for all students.
- The Plan is built around a continuum of supports for both schools and families so that each is provided with the level of support they need to successfully curb chronic absenteeism.
- The Graduation Equity Fund calls for specific support for schools with the highest rates of chronic absenteeism and provides for regional support systems to serve schools across Oregon in ways that make sense for their local context, with a statewide support network to inform local practice.

“People were made to be a community and hold one another up. You cannot make a company on your own - how are you supposed to graduate on your own?”

- Student, Medford