

THIS WAY FORWARD ›

BEND-LA PINE SCHOOLS
EXCELLENCE & EQUITY REVIEW

WE BELIEVE IN

EXCELLENCE

FOR EVERY STUDENT



Bend-La Pine Schools' Excellence & Equity Review is a big swing with a big goal: to gain a deep understanding of students' and families' experiences in our schools and to use that information to direct change.

Excellence in Bend-La Pine Schools includes rigorous, challenging coursework to propel our students to success in career and college. Excellence includes opportunities for students to dive into enriching activities from art to athletics. Excellence also goes beyond academics and touches on our students' character. Excellence means developing not just good students, but good people.

Throughout Bend-La Pine Schools, we are preparing students for the next steps in their lives: honing their ability to think critically, work creatively, communicate, and collaborate.

Our aim is to develop future-ready students: the next generation of thinkers, doers, and leaders.

Our Excellence & Equity Review process aims to take those values of excellence and ensure they are being applied equitably for all of our students. While Bend-La Pine Schools has much to celebrate, there is still much to be done.

We are at a time in history when we have the power to do something profound and can truly change the educational experiences of our students.

— Superintendent Shay Mikalson



EVERY STUDENT IS AN

INDIVIDUAL



At Bend-La Pine Schools, equity means looking at every student as an individual and providing them what they need.

Our students come to school with vastly different life experiences and it is the job of our schools to meet them where they are. Our students speak 34 languages. More than 360 of our students are considered homeless. Many of our students have experienced painful trauma in their young lives. Every student has a unique story that informs their experiences at school.

We are proud to see our students shine on many measures. Our graduation rate, 82 percent, is the highest in our history. Our students out-perform peers in third grade reading and on the ACT and SAT exams. However, when we dig deeper into the data, from test scores to attendance rates to engagement, we find that the experiences and outcomes among our students are not consistent.

While some groups of students are thriving, others are not performing or growing at the same level as their peers.

Some of our student groups are historically and currently underserved. These students are often students of color; students experiencing poverty, homelessness or foster care; students receiving special education instruction; students who identify as LBGTQ+; and students who are linguistically diverse.



For years, leaders in Bend-La Pine Schools have made closing this gap in achievement a priority and have implemented ideas and methods to meet the needs of our students and families. This year, we are attempting to get to the root cause of our inconsistent outcomes for students. In addition to looking at data, we undertook an extensive effort to listen to our families, students, and staff through in-person conversations and surveys – called the Excellence & Equity Review.

We conducted dozens of listening sessions with families, students, and staff, making a particular effort to reach out to those individuals who feel marginalized or haven't typically been engaged in our schools. Families and students shared experiences about connection, engagement, communication, barriers, and needs in order to thrive in our schools.

The results of these conversations were powerful. Families and students shared their hearts, passions, and vulnerabilities with us. We also gathered information and feedback from staff members at every school, community members, and a broad selection of families at every level.

Thanks to this effort, we have a clearer picture of the challenges our families face and a richer understanding of what our students need to help them find success. We plan to put this knowledge to use. Oregon is making a historic funding investment in schools and we will use the information from this Excellence & Equity Review to inform our strategic spending plans.

Now we are proud to move forward together in partnership with our families, staff, and community and make Bend-La Pine Schools even stronger.



We believe every student's experience in our schools will be better because of this effort.



WE ASKED

WE LISTENED

Bend-La Pine Schools' Excellence & Equity Review required commitment and a willingness to embrace new methods to reach all families and students, with special effort to reach those who have been historically underserved by our schools. This fall, the team, along with trained community leaders, conducted listening sessions with 18 groups of students and 18 groups of parents at 16 schools across Bend-La Pine Schools. Principals also hosted listening sessions with staff at each of our 33 schools. In addition, the team reviewed student data and results from a family school climate survey, taken by more than 2,000 parents/guardians.

The team was intentional about who was invited to participate in these groups, who facilitated them, and in what language they took place. The goal was to make participants feel comfortable to share their experiences, barriers, and needs.

These extensive listening sessions, along with staff comments, data, and survey results, helped define themes and areas of need as we moved toward creating a strategic investment plan.



STUDENTS



FAMILIES



STAFF

OUR TIMELINE

PROCESS



AUGUST

DESIGN AND PLAN
The core team designed the listening sessions format and developed scripts for group leaders.

SEPTEMBER

RECRUIT AND TRAIN
The team recruited 27 staff and community members to serve as facilitators, including Latinx, LGBTQ+, and racially diverse facilitators. Better Together offered training so each listening session would be consistent.

OCTOBER

PRINCIPAL OUTREACH
All administrators took part in small-group listening sessions to share strengths and areas for growth, focused on promoting successful school experiences for all students.

STUDENT AND FAMILY LISTENING SESSIONS
Over the course of six weeks, staff and community facilitators hosted 18 student sessions and 18 family sessions. Approximately 172 students and 133 parents/guardians participated in the listening sessions.

STAFF LISTENING SESSIONS
Each school hosted listening sessions with staff regarding strengths and areas for growth, particularly in promoting successful school experiences for all students.

FAMILY SURVEYS
More than 2,000 family members completed a survey on their connection, engagement, and communication with schools. The survey opened on October 1 and closed November 13.

NOVEMBER

IDENTIFYING THEMES
After the listening sessions and family interviews were completed, a research team from Better Together reviewed the notes and identified themes that emerged from this information. These were shared and discussed with a core group of district leaders, including the superintendent. The team reviewed overall themes and insights broken down by demographic information.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Principals, teachers, classified staff, the Excellence & Equity core team, and the superintendent reviewed information gathered during this process to identify Bend-La Pine Schools' strengths and areas for growth in leadership, talent development, and district policies and practices.

DECEMBER

PUBLIC PRESENTATION
The superintendent publicly presented the Excellence & Equity Review Final Report, outlining next steps in establishing priorities.

FAMILY AND STUDENT LISTENING SESSIONS

Facilitators sat down with 36 family and student groups this fall to learn more about their school experiences.

During the listening sessions, facilitators engaged attendees in conversations about:

- Student and family perceptions of their school community
- Participation at school
- Communication
- School fit and belonging

The starting prompts were designed by a coalition of regional school district staff with the guidance of Better Together to solicit participant feedback and ideas about how to improve teaching and learning environments for our students and families.

STAFF LISTENING SESSIONS

School principals led interactive, schoolwide staff conversations at every one of our 33 schools in the Bend, La Pine and Sunriver areas. Staff reviewed historical student results and comparative data about their students, disaggregated by "historically underserved" and "not historically underserved" students. Each session wrapped with a group conversation about each school's strengths and opportunity areas for improvement and growth.

EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY REVIEW FAMILY SURVEY

Families responded to questions about their current engagement with their students' schools, their children's motivation to learn, and their children's sense of belonging at their schools.

TEACHER INTERVIEWS, BEND EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Bend Education Association members reached out to hundreds of certified staff members individually for conversations about their priorities for future investments and areas of need in our classrooms.

OREGON REPORT CARD DATA

Bend-La Pine Schools' staff utilize a number of tools to collect information about students' academic learning and growth, as well as their social and emotional well-being.

One of those tools, the Oregon Report Card, highlights areas of stability, success, and opportunities for growth to help improve efforts to attain excellence and equity for every student.

This annual report provides an overview of our kindergarten through grade 12 education system, including key data on our students, teachers, and schools:

- Graduation and dropout rates
- Attendance and chronic absenteeism data
- Student demographics and information on specific student groups
- School funding and staff information
- Test results
- Charter school data and information on alternative education programs

FAMILY AND STUDENT LISTENING SESSIONS

STUDENTS

LGBTQ+ students at Bend Senior High School
Spanish-speaking students at Bend Senior High School
La Pine High School students
Marshall High School students
Superintendent's advisory team students
LGBTQ+ students at Mountain View High School
Linguistically diverse students at Summit High School
Special Education students at Summit High School
Special Education students at La Pine High School
Students of color at Bend Senior High School
Students of color at Mountain View High School
Bend Senior High School students
Summit High School students
LGBTQ+ students at Summit High School
Linguistically diverse students at Mountain View High School
Special Education students at Transition Co-op
Students of color at Summit High School
Mountain View High School students

FAMILIES

Cascade Middle School families
La Pine Elementary and Three Rivers areas schools' families
Pacific Crest Middle School families
Pilot Butte Middle School families
Sky View Middle School families
Native American families representing La Pine schools
Special Education families district-wide (two groups)
Families of students of color at Pilot Butte Middle School
Spanish-speaking families at Summit High and Cascade Middle Schools
Spanish-speaking families at High Desert Middle School
High Desert Middle School families
Ponderosa Elementary School families
Silver Rail Elementary School families
High Lakes Elementary School families
Families of students of color at Sky View Middle School
Spanish-speaking families at Bend Senior High School
La Pine High School families





WE LISTENED TO

STUDENTS

The following results highlight key findings, which were culled from thousands of survey results, extensive listening sessions, staff interviews, years of student performance data, and more. We want everyone in our community to get involved by digging in and learning more about the results – www.bend.k12.or.us/excellenceandequity.

Students drive everything we do in Bend-La Pine Schools. Students are at the center of every decision we make and every goal we set. It was important for our review to include student voices. Our students told us they want to have strong relationships; to feel safe, known, and supported; and to find opportunities to excel and belong.

RELATIONSHIPS

Above all else, students shared the importance of developing strong relationships, both with staff members and with peers. Students identified those connections, or lack thereof, as the most critical component to their success.

Strengths: Students appreciated teachers and staff members who made an effort to get to know them as people, who were passionate about what they were teaching, and who effectively engage their students.

"Our teachers really want us to succeed. When I ask questions, they respond and help me, I know that I matter."
— student of color

Areas for growth: Students said some teachers and staff did not take time to get to know them as individuals, so the students never gained a personal connection or trust. Some teachers and classes failed to engage all students actively.

"I've had experiences where teachers weren't passionate and it made me not want to try."
— student





STUDENTS

FEELING SAFE, KNOWN, AND SUPPORTED

Another major theme among students was the importance of being able to share who they are at school and to feel safe and supported by staff and fellow students.

Strengths: Many students, including those from historically underserved groups, shared that they felt accepted, included, and welcome at school.

"This school is like a quilt; everyone comes together with their different perspective."

— student

Areas for growth: A number of students reported biased and racist remarks from students. They believed staff members, who should be allies, ignored these hurtful comments. Students would like to see staff receive more training to support students and to address these biases directly and effectively. Students believed having more diverse staff members at their schools would also be helpful. Another theme addressed by many students was that of feeling overwhelmed and anxious. Students would like more social, emotional, and mental health support.

"I don't feel socially safe and accepted here."

— student with disabilities

"Some teachers refuse to use my identified pronouns or name and find excuses to not use it."

— LGBTQ+ student

OPPORTUNITIES TO EXCEL AND BELONG

From rigorous coursework to challenging Career and Technical Education classes, from extracurricular sports to special interest clubs, students wanted to find a place to shine.

Strengths: Students appreciated having access to a wide range of engaging academic opportunities (natural resources, hospitality, psychology, art, music, Spanish Dual Immersion program, to name a few), as well as co- and extracurricular

activities (multicultural club, athletics, drama, leadership activities, and more). Students appreciated teachers who were passionate about their subjects, and they enjoyed relevant, collaborative, project-based assignments.

"They are teaching you what to be ready for in real life and teaching you what you're going to do in life."
— student

Areas for growth: Some students expressed large differences in course quality between advanced classes and general classes. Others felt the curriculum needed to be updated to include more diverse voices and perspectives. Some students also felt their schools gave preference to some activities above others.

"The only African-American history we learn about is slavery."
— linguistically diverse student

CONCLUSION

Connection, relationships, and opportunities are tied to student success. While some of our students are thriving, others feel isolated. In particular, students of color, LGBTQ+ students, and students with disabilities report experiencing prejudice, bullying, and a lack of understanding from some staff members. They feel our schools need more diverse staff, curriculum, and approaches to learning. Across all groups, students say that staff members who care make a positive difference.





WE LISTENED TO

FAMILIES



Students' first teachers are their families. We know our schools work best when they have strong partnerships with families. When families shared what they want from our schools, they told us they want to trust and be trusted; to receive clear communication and engagement; and to see their students develop strong connections.

TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS

Most families reported their students had solid relationships with school staff members. While this was a strong theme, the families themselves did not always share this connection.

Strengths: How schools handle challenges and complaints that arise can have an impact on how families view their schools. Many families felt pleased that when issues arose, school staff responded quickly and thoughtfully. Others offered praise for welcome, caring environments where the principal seemed to know the name of every parent and student.

"My oldest child is from Jamaica, the office staff immediately said they needed to get a Jamaican flag, acknowledging her culture."
— family member, student of color

Areas for growth: Some families, particularly families of color or Spanish-speaking families, felt unwelcome at our schools. Families related disappointment in what they saw as an inability or unwillingness to address issues of bullying and racism.

"I'm still not happy at all with how they handle bullying here."
— family member



FAMILIES

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT

Consistent, responsive communication, and opportunities for engagement are important for all families, but families reported mixed results from our schools.

Strengths: Many families appreciated staff members' responsiveness. They reported that emails and phone calls were returned promptly at all levels.

"I got a phone call from the assistant principal to say something positive about my son. It was really neat he took the time to do that."
— family member

Areas for growth: Spanish-speaking families wanted to see more consistency regarding translation, as well as more events and meetings in Spanish so they could more genuinely participate. They also expressed frustration about visitor/volunteer policies that they see as barriers to their engagement. Finally, they said schools do not effectively address student bullying or students' use of racist and biased comments. Parents expressed a desire for more streamlined, consistent communication from schools. Some working parents also reported feeling disconnected and excluded from volunteering and school activities.

"I feel this school in particular has such a high percentage of parents available during the day that they forget that some families have two working parents and can't communicate or come in during the day."
— family member

STRONG CONNECTIONS

Families want their students to have strong connections at school and to find a place where they feel a sense of belonging.

Strengths: Many families gave credit to school staff for their efforts to make students feel included.

"My family should receive the same attention and service as any other family and not feel marginalized when I get to my child's school."
— Spanish-speaking family member





"The teachers were making time for my son and for each student who they saw. Feeling like the teachers are excited for you as a student or parent is a big deal."
— family member

Areas for growth: A large number of families from all groups expressed concerns that their students did not fit in or have strong friendships at school. Families of students of color, among others, would like to see more racially diverse staff members at school.

"I want my child to be authentically included, not accommodated."
— family member, student with disabilities

"I ask myself if I made the right choice, bringing my kids here."
— family member, student of color

CONCLUSION

Our families care deeply about their students' experiences at school. Generally, families gave their children's schools high ratings and reported that staff members care about their students. We see that these experiences, however, are not true for all families. To truly partner with them, our schools need to intentionally and visibly make progress on these issues.



WE LISTENED TO

STAFF

Our more than 2,000 staff members are the backbone of our schools. Bus drivers, teachers, principals, custodians, secretaries – they all do this work because they want to make a positive difference in the lives of students. Based on the results of listening sessions at each school, as well as Bend Education Association's individual interviews with hundreds of certified staff members, our staff members believe relationships are critical to their work; they would like to see more interventions in place to support students' academic, social, and emotional growth; and they need more resources to help them effectively address these issues.

RELATIONSHIPS

Strong, positive relationships drive our staff members to do their best work. Most believe it is these personal connections that make the biggest impact on students.

Strengths: From kitchen managers who learn every student's name to teachers who make personal connections, our staff identified positive school culture and caring relationships as their greatest strengths.

"I feel that being able to make a connection with every kid in your class is going to change their life; it will change who they become, it will change their ability to learn."
— teacher

Areas for growth: A common theme among staff was the need to more effectively connect with families, particularly those from historically underserved populations.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Strengths: In looking at strengths, one important theme among many elementary and middle schools was their focus on social and emotional learning, from general classroom practices to interventions for students with more needs. Both classroom teachers and specialists such as counselors have led this work.





STAFF



Areas for growth: Schools reported more students in recent years are coming to school with high needs for support in their social and emotional well-being. Staff districtwide feel this work is critical but see needs for staff training, curriculum materials, and more specialized staff.

INTERVENTION SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Overwhelmingly, our staff members would like to see additional supports in place to help students, including extra academic opportunities; social, emotional, and mental health support; and more.

Strengths: One important strength identified at both the elementary and middle school levels was strong schoolwide systems and programs, which encourage strong instructional practices across the school and help identify and support students who need extra support.

Areas for growth: In individual listening sessions, staff discussed the need for more collaborative staff time and more relevant, timely professional learning so they could grow their skills in effective classroom instruction and intervention.

CONCLUSION

Our staff members cannot do it all. Right now, many feel stretched in their positions. When asked about resources that can support staff, two themes dominated both the listening sessions and the individual meetings. The first was reducing class size, so teachers have more opportunities to develop strong relationships, provide effective feedback, and support a range of learners. The second involved providing more support for struggling students, whether in terms of social and emotional well-being or academics. Suggestions ranged from counselors to behavior specialists, from trained educational assistants to mental health professionals.

"Our caseloads need to be smaller, so we can spend more time with kids. I feel really rushed." — counselor

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM OUR

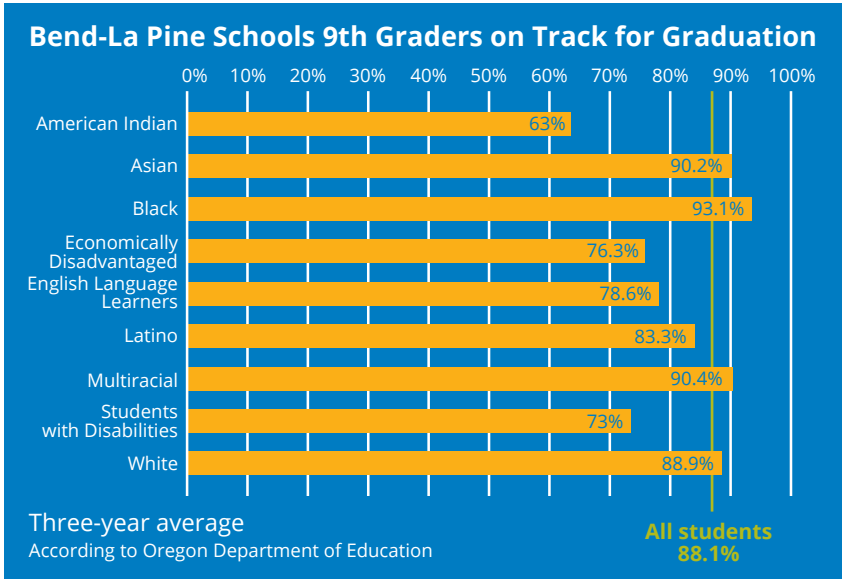
PAST RESULTS

Bend-La Pine Schools' students and staff have much to celebrate.

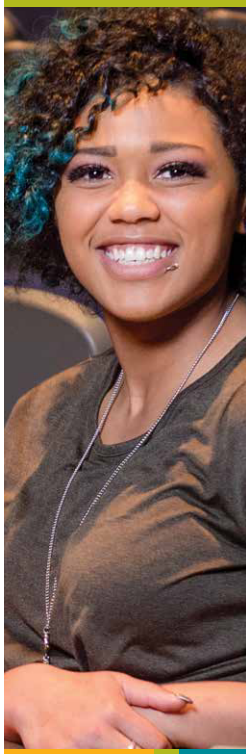
Our students are continuing to improve on assessments in English language arts, math, science, and writing. Each year more students are participating in extracurricular activities, taking more rigorous coursework to earn college credits, and enrolling in Career and Technical Education classes. Our graduation rates have steadily improved, and our most recent rate, 82 percent, is the highest in our history.

On almost all measures, students are improving year-over-year... yet, that success is not being celebrated at the same rate by all students.

One example is the variation of successes we see when digging into the percentage of our freshman students who are "on track" to graduate (this measures ninth-graders who are receiving passing grades in their classes).



When we look beyond the 'average', data reveals that Asian, black, white, and multi-racial students are performing at higher rates than American Indian, economically disadvantaged, Latino, and students with special needs.



We must do more to ensure that each and every student in Bend-La Pine Schools can learn, grow, and achieve at a high level.



WE ARE TAKING

ACTION

Based on the Excellence & Equity Review we undertook this fall, we now have a deeper understanding of the most important strengths of our district, as well as the challenges and barriers facing some of our students, families, and staff. The first steps involved reviewing data, listening to our students, families, and staff, and identifying themes. Our next step is to use that information to craft a plan of action.

This report is a bold, but honest, call to action: **We can do better; we can be better.**

Some of what we learned made us proud: staff members making powerful and meaningful connections; students finding their passions; challenging, engaging classes and programs; and schools serving as a second home for families. But students and families also shared stories that are hard to hear: experiences of racism and prejudice; feelings of being unwelcome and isolated; and a sense of disconnection and mistrust. School staff expressed concerns about lack of available support for students struggling academically or emotionally, and class sizes so large that forming close relationships or providing feedback on student work is a huge challenge. These challenges are troubling and important for us to confront honestly.





Our schools, like many around our nation, are working for some students and not working for others.

The Excellence & Equity Review was not a one-time exercise. We plan to perform this type of review every three years to continually adjust strategies and spending priorities based on the results. We will also continue to connect with a broad group of families and students; we want these conversations and connections to become part of our district culture.

Our next step is to cultivate a Strategic Investment Plan, which we will share with our community in January of 2020. This plan will outline key priorities in our quest to ensure excellence and equity throughout Bend-La Pine Schools. It will offer details about how we plan to utilize a historic increase in funding from the state of Oregon. We believe these additional dollars can help us make profound changes in the educational experiences of our students.

We plan to share the Excellence & Equity Review widely with our schools and community, spurring further and deeper conversations. Bend-La Pine Schools will also host multiple community sessions in late winter of 2020 to share the big ideas from the review, as well as the accompanying Strategic Investment Plan.

Finally, to every parent, family member, student, and staff member who took time to share your experiences with us during this process, thank you. We are grateful for your time and candor; we truly could not do this without you. We will work to honor your experiences and stories as we move forward to make our schools a place of excellence for every student.

Our ultimate goal is to make every student's experience in Bend-La Pine Schools better. It is what we owe every student.

DIG DEEPER INTO OUR

RESOURCES

While this report provides a high level look at our efforts and findings, there is much more information available for review. We encourage individuals to dig into all of our Excellence & Equity supporting documents and results online at www.bend.k12.or.us/excellenceandequity

Listening Sessions – Families and Students

Listening Sessions – Staff

Family Survey Results

Teacher Interviews, Bend Education Association

Oregon Report Card At-A-Glance

Oregon Report Card Data





Est. 1883

BEND LAPINE

Schools

EDUCATING THRIVING CITIZENS