



TRACKING OREGON'S PROGRESS

TOWARD A THRIVING FUTURE: CLOSING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP FOR OREGON'S KIDS



THE OREGON
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

Caitlin Ruffenach, *Senior Research Officer*, The Oregon Community Foundation
Sonia Worcel, *Vice President of Strategy and Research*, The Oregon Community Foundation
Special thanks go to Imani Kamau, Maka Chee and Megan Delius at The Oregon Community Foundation
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For more information about this report, please contact:
Caitlin Ruffenach
The Oregon Community Foundation
503.227.6846
cruffenach@oregoncf.org





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THE OPPORTUNITY GAP: A CALL TO ACTION



In recent years, there has been a widening opportunity gap for America's children: Lower-income children are becoming less and less likely to have access to the key ingredients necessary for future success. This opportunity gap is the result of an increasing wealth gap between lower- and higher-income families, decreasing economic mobility, and increasing socioeconomic segregation in our communities.

A few years ago, my colleagues and I traveled the country to hear firsthand from families on both sides of this opportunity gap. We spent time in Bend getting to know Kayla and her family. Kayla's childhood was characterized by instability and uncertainty—changing family arrangements, periods without consistent housing, poverty and a lack of positive adult role models. While she has hopes for the future, including travel and college, she has no concrete plans nor any support or guidance to help her achieve these dreams.

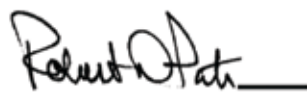
In contrast, Andrew grew up a few miles away from Kayla in a strikingly different Bend neighborhood. He has lived in the same comfortable house his whole life, with both his parents actively engaged in his upbringing. His family's wealth afforded him myriad opportunities, including music and sports. His businessman father modeled and coached him in financial responsibility and planning, and connected Andrew with a community leader for an internship in Andrew's area of interest. Andrew currently is in college with several career goals and concrete plans for turning those goals into reality.

The opportunity gap flies in the face of one of our country's most dearly held values, which is the belief that every person, through his or her own hard work and perseverance, has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential. This is not a "blue" issue or a "red" issue: Even in these fractured political times we can agree that this American dream should be available for all children.

This report highlights data on Oregon's children, and confirms that national trends are mirrored in Oregon. It is clear that Oregon's low-income children, children of color and rural children are not on an equal playing field with their higher-income peers, something my colleagues and I saw firsthand with Kayla and Andrew. Our challenge is not to hold back the Andrews of Oregon, but to boost the Kaylas.

The report also highlights just a few of the organizations that are working tirelessly to address the opportunity gap—for each organization mentioned here, there are dozens more doing equally important work in every corner of the state.

For some, this report may be a wake-up call; for others, it may be a confirmation of important work already underway. For all of us, may this report serve as a call to action: Become involved in your neighborhood and community; mentor a young person; support a youth-serving organization with your time, talent or resources; or encourage your elected leaders to enact policies that ensure all children are given the opportunity to forge their own American dream. This gap in opportunity is unacceptable, and it is up to all of us to ensure that all our children can reach their full potential.



Robert D. Putnam
Malkin Professor of Public Policy, Harvard University
Author of *Our Kids* and *Bowling Alone*



**MORE THAN 1 IN 5
OREGON CHILDREN
LIVES IN POVERTY**

**IN 64% OF OREGON COUNTIES,
CHILDREN RAISED IN LOW-INCOME FAMILIES
WILL LIKELY REMAIN
LOW-INCOME AS ADULTS**

**58% OF OREGON CHILDREN
ARE BEING RAISED BY ADULTS WITH
A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR LESS**

**ONLY 67% OF OREGON'S
LOW-INCOME YOUTH
GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL**

Lincoln City

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Oregon is experiencing widening socioeconomic disparities, and now, more than at any time in the past several generations, the circumstances into which a child is born largely determine the life he or she achieves. Despite widespread belief in the American dream, for many children this dream appears out of reach. Characteristics of neighborhoods and communities, family structure and circumstances, and educational experiences all play a role in providing—or limiting—children's opportunities. Oregon's low-income children, children of color and rural children do not have the same set of opportunities enjoyed by higher-income and white children, and this opportunity gap has far-reaching implications for personal achievement and well-being as well as for community vitality.

Child poverty is on the rise, with long-term negative consequences.

Nearly half of children in Oregon (47 percent) are being raised in low-income families. Further, child poverty is rising in Oregon, with one in five (22 percent) of Oregon's children living in poverty. Poverty rates are even higher for children of color: Almost half of black and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander children and more than one-third of Latino and American Indian children are living in poverty. Low-income families report more daily stress than other families, and early chronic stress makes people predisposed to adverse responses to stressors throughout their lives, resulting in poorer physical and emotional health, educational achievement, and well-being.

Opportunity partly depends on where a child is raised.

In 23 of Oregon's 36 counties, less than half of the children born into low-income families will reach the middle class or beyond as adults. While low-income children in some of Oregon's rural counties have the lowest chances of reaching the middle class, low-income children in other rural counties have the best chances, thus demonstrating that there is not just one rural Oregon experience. Differences in income inequality, segregation and social capital all influence children's future success: Children raised in counties with low income inequality, low racial and economic segregation, and higher social capital fare better.

Family structure and circumstances impact children's future success.

Low-income children are more likely to move out of poverty if they are born to married parents, but one-third of Oregon children live with just one parent, and single-parent families are on the rise in rural Oregon. More than one in three single-parent families is in poverty, compared with less than one in 10 married-parent families. In many of Oregon's rural counties, nearly half of single-parent families are living in poverty. Further, low-income children are more likely to move out of poverty if their parents are more highly educated and securely employed. More than half of children in Oregon are being raised by an adult with a high school diploma or less, and nearly one in three children in Oregon lives in a family where no parent has regular, full-time employment.

Families are faced with growing economic insecurity, which impacts children's chances of future economic mobility. Family incomes have stagnated while essential costs like child care and housing have increased. The cost of child care in Oregon has increased by 18 percent over the past decade, and many families, especially those in rural communities and among certain communities of color, are unable to afford quality child care. In addition, increases in housing costs mean that two-thirds of low-income children in Oregon live in households that spend more than a third of their income on rent or mortgage payments.



Wallowa



Redmond



Portland



Hillsboro

Educational disparities begin early and persist.

The gap in social and cognitive development between low-income children and their higher-income peers begins in infancy. Much of this gap can be attributed to differences in early learning environments at home and in child care settings. Two-thirds of Oregon's low-income young children do not attend preschool. Low-income children and children of color score lower on some kindergarten readiness skills compared to their higher-income and white peers: While there are not differences in measures of social-emotional skills, low-income as well as African-American, Latino, and American Indian and Pacific Islander children score lower on measures of early math and letter name and sound identification.

Achievement gaps that begin in early childhood continue in elementary school. Low-income, African-American, Latino, and American Indian and Pacific Islander children are less likely to read at grade level by third grade, an important predictor of high school graduation. Academic achievement among low-income children and children of color is further inhibited by higher rates of



Portland

exclusionary discipline and chronic absenteeism and fewer enrichment activities. These disparate educational experiences ultimately result in fewer low-income children and children of color graduating from high school. While the overall high school graduation rate in Oregon is 76 percent, just 67 percent of the state's low-income students graduate, and less than 60 percent of American Indian students graduate.

Low-income students and students of color face additional barriers in enrolling in and completing post-secondary education. Just over half of low-income students enroll in post-secondary education, compared to three-quarters of their higher-income peers. More strikingly, just 12 percent of these low-income students received a post-secondary credential by age 25, compared to 34 percent of their higher-income peers. Post-secondary enrollment and completion rates vary greatly by race/ethnicity as well: Less than one out of every five black, Latino and American Indian students who begins a post-secondary path stays on that path through completion. As these children start families of their own, a new generation of children, in turn, are likely to face the same opportunity gap that limited their parents' life choices.



Portland

There is much that can be done to improve prospects for Oregon's children.

There are numerous strategies within the domains of communities and neighborhoods, family supports, and educational opportunities that can improve children's chances of future success.

- Encourage economically and racially integrated communities by supporting collaborative affordable housing solutions. Increasing the availability of affordable housing in opportunity-rich neighborhoods gives low-income families better access to jobs, high-quality schools and safe communities.
- Strengthen neighborhoods and communities by encouraging community engagement, collaborative problem-solving and leadership development, especially within communities of color. When seeking to improve outcomes for low-income communities and communities of color, members of those communities must play a leadership role if solutions are to be feasible and sustainable.
- Strengthen families and foster better child-parent relationships by increasing access to parenting education. Quality parenting education helps parents build strong relationships with their children by equipping them with communication and stress-reduction tools.
- Improve economic prospects for families by supporting career and technical education (CTE). CTE programs train people for skilled, well-paying blue-collar jobs and increase low-income workers' earnings.
- Increase the availability of family-wage jobs by supporting small businesses, entrepreneurs and rural job creation. Ensuring that entrepreneurs, especially women, minorities and rural business owners, have access to capital, peer networks and other support can lead to new jobs and greater economic well-being for families and communities.

**THESE SOLUTIONS WILL
BE MOST EFFECTIVE WITH
MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION
AND LEADERSHIP FROM
ALL OF OREGON'S
DIVERSE COMMUNITIES.**



Stayton

**CHILDREN FARE BEST
WHEN THEIR
FAMILIES ARE
EMPOWERED
AND SUPPORTED
IN MAKING POSITIVE CHANGES.**

- Ensure that more children are ready for kindergarten by increasing access to high-quality, affordable early childhood education. Early environments that foster learning, whether in the home or in child care and preschool settings, are critical for future academic success.
- Encourage K-12 academic success by ensuring all children have access to extracurricular and enrichment activities. High-quality enrichment activities can increase student engagement and academic success, build important social-emotional skills, and foster positive youth-adult relationships.
- Increase post-secondary enrollment and completion by supporting low-income and first-generation students. Multiyear financial support and strong, culturally appropriate advising can help students enroll and complete higher education programs, and families benefit from support in understanding and navigating the higher education system.

A common thread throughout these strategies is family engagement. Children fare best when their families are empowered and supported in making positive changes in their communities, in their own career development, in their parenting and in their children's education from birth through post-secondary.

These solutions involve long-term partnerships between government, nonprofit organizations, philanthropy, the private sector and community members. There is much work to be done, and at the same time, there is no shortage of examples of Oregonians across the state who are working tirelessly to find solutions. These solutions will be most effective with meaningful participation and leadership from all of Oregon's diverse communities. Through these efforts—small and large, local and regional—we can ensure that all of Oregon's children receive a fair chance at forging their American dream.



IN THE UNITED STATES,
43% OF CHILDREN
BORN INTO THE LOWEST-INCOME QUINTILE
WILL REMAIN THERE AS ADULTS.

INTRODUCTION

Oregon, and our nation as a whole, is experiencing widening socioeconomic disparities. Now, more than any time in the past several generations, the circumstances into which a child is born, coupled with long-standing patterns of discrimination, largely determine the life he or she achieves. Yet the American dream remains a central value for our country:

"...A dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are...capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position."

James Truslow Adams, quoted in AEI-Brookings Working Group on Poverty and Opportunity, 2015, p. 9

There is a widespread belief in the American dream—in fact, according to a Pew poll, almost half of Americans think it is common for people who are born poor to work hard and become rich (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2013)—but there is a growing body of literature that suggests that for many children the American dream is out of reach. Robert Putnam, in his 2015 book *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*, paired national data with in-depth stories from communities around the country to illustrate the growing gap in opportunities for lower-income children and their higher-income peers.

Whether children do, indeed, have equal opportunity to succeed in life can be measured by relative economic mobility—children's movement up and down the income ladder as adults relative to their parents. Children at all income levels on average are likely to exceed their parents' incomes, but the income gains achieved by lower-income children are far smaller than

the gains achieved by higher-income children, and for most are not large enough to meaningfully move them up the income ladder (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2012). Indeed, in the United States, 43 percent of children born into the lowest-income quintile of families will remain there as adults, 70 percent will never make it to the middle quintile, and only 4 percent will make it to the top of the ladder (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2013). For these children, the dream is more an illusion.

All children in Oregon, regardless of background, should have equal opportunity to succeed in life. However, Oregon's low-income children, children of color and rural children do not receive the same opportunities in their homes, schools and communities available to other Oregonians, and this opportunity gap has far-reaching implications for personal achievement and well-being as well as for community vitality.

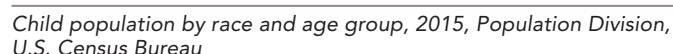
This report focuses on the opportunity gap among Oregon's children. First, we explore the current state of child poverty in Oregon. The subsequent sections of the report each focus on an area that impacts children's opportunities: neighborhoods and communities, families, and education. Each of these sections explores the factors that contribute to the opportunity gap among Oregon's children and provides data that illustrate the impact of that gap on children's achievement. Wherever available, information is provided by race/ethnicity and geography as well as by income. It is critical to examine data broken down by race/ethnicity because the life experiences of children of color in Oregon are shaped by the forces of historical and current racism and segregation in addition to the economic circumstances of their families.

A group of students in a classroom are sitting in rows, playing recorders. They are focused on their instruments, and the classroom setting is visible in the background.

THE CURRENT STATE OF CHILD POVERTY IN OREGON

There are 860,000 children between the ages of 0 and 18 in Oregon. Compared to the adult population, a greater percentage of children in Oregon are from communities of color; while 76 percent of Oregon adults are white, 64 percent of Oregon's children are white, and more than one in five is Latino (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1: Children of color make up more than one-third of the total child population in Oregon.



Map of the Democratic Republic of Congo showing the percentage of the population aged 15 and over with a primary school diploma in 2015. The map is color-coded by region, with a legend at the top showing a gradient from light blue (<1%) to dark blue (18%).

Region	Percentage
North	1%
North-Kivu	1%
South Kivu	1%
Maniema	1%
Ituri	1%
Bas-Congo	18%
Central	10%
South	8%
West	5%
Other regions	<1%

8

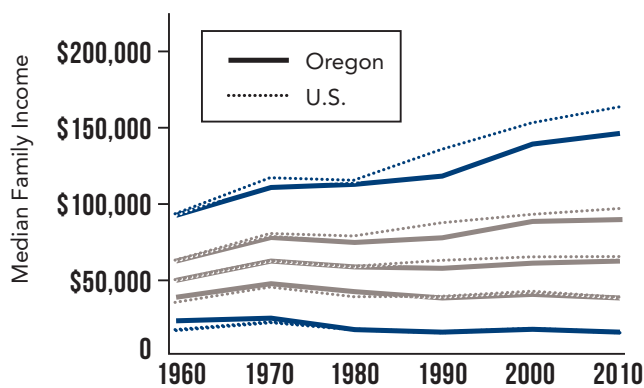


Albany



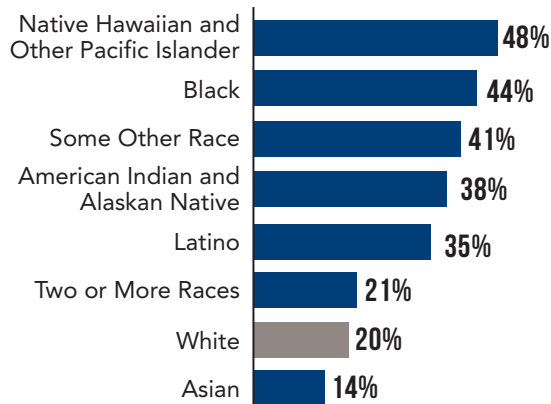
Medford

Figure 3: The income disparity among Oregon families with children is growing.



Median family income by quintile among families with children, 1960-2000 U.S. Decennial Census; 2008-2012 ACS Five-Year Estimates, Carsey School of Public Policy, University of New Hampshire

Figure 4: Children of color are more likely to be in poverty.



Percentage of children in poverty by race and ethnicity, 2015 five-year estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

Income disparity among families with children is growing.

While median family income for Oregon's highest-income families has increased over the past 50 years, median family income for Oregon's lowest-income families has decreased over the same period, mirroring national trends (see Figure 3). This trend illustrates that economic growth has not been distributed evenly across Oregon's families; over time, families with resources have steadily improved their economic standing, while lower-income families have seen their economic circumstances stagnate or decline.

Child poverty is on the rise.

Nearly half of children in Oregon (47 percent) are being raised in low-income families—those families with incomes at or below 200 percent of the poverty level, which for a family of four is about \$48,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Further, child poverty is rising in Oregon, and the rate of poverty for children (22 percent) is higher than the overall poverty rate (17 percent) in Oregon. Poverty rates for children vary greatly by race and ethnicity, with the poverty rate for Asian and white children below the state average, while the rates for other race and ethnic groups are markedly above the state average: More than one-third of Latino and American Indian children are living in poverty, and almost half of black and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander children are living in poverty (see Figure 4).



Seaside

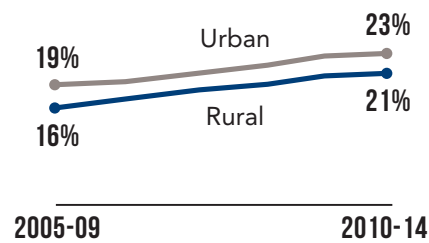


Portland

While child poverty rates are similar on average between urban and rural Oregon, the averages mask some striking differences between counties (see Figures 5 and 6). The child poverty rate in many counties is markedly higher than the statewide average, with the highest rates in several rural counties. Five counties have child poverty rates at or above 30 percent (Douglas, Jefferson, Josephine, Malheur and Wheeler). However, most of the Oregon counties with child poverty rates below the state average also are rural counties, indicating differences in resources, supports, job prospects and economic outlook.

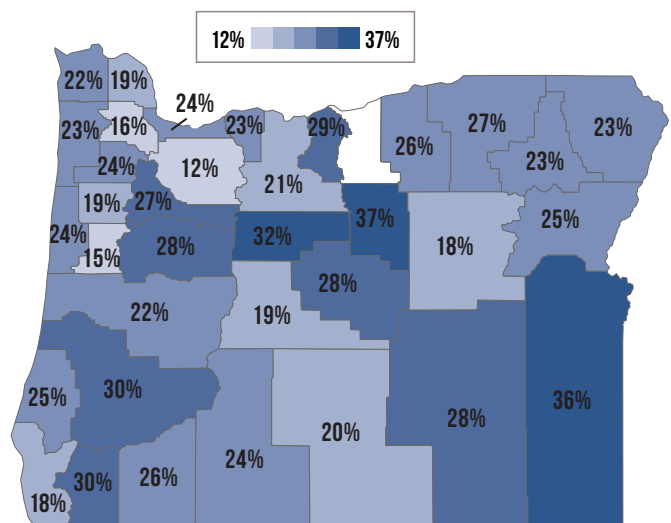
Family poverty can be mitigated using social safety nets like the Earned Income Tax Credit, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). In 2015, 35 percent of Oregon children lived in families that received assistance through SSI, TANF and SNAP. When families are able to use these benefits and work close to full-time, the poverty rate is often reduced. For example, in the United States in 2013, nearly half of households headed by single mothers were in poverty. Taking benefits into account and subtracting out taxes lowers the poverty rate for those families to less than 30 percent (AEI-Brookings Working Group on Poverty and Opportunity, 2015). Thus, these supports are an important tool toward reducing the impacts of poverty for children.

Figure 5: Child poverty is on the rise in both rural and urban Oregon.



Percentage of children in poverty by urban and rural, five-year estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 6: The child poverty rate in 25 counties is equal to or above the statewide rate of 22 percent.



Percentage of children in poverty by county, 2015 five-year estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau
*Data for Gilliam is missing due to a small population.



Yamhill

Growing up in poverty impacts future achievement.

Children who experience multiple adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), including poverty, abuse or neglect, are more likely to suffer from poorer health and other life outcomes than children with fewer ACEs (Felitti, 2009), likely as a result of exposure to the stress induced by these experiences. Chronic stress can disrupt brain development in children, and studies have shown that children raised in poverty have elevated stress hormone levels compared to other children's. This stress is a result of the adverse conditions generally associated with poverty, including unstable or substandard housing, mobility, and parental stress among others (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2005/2014). And this exposure to chronic stress has lifelong implications: Early chronic stress makes people predisposed to adverse responses to stressors throughout their lives, resulting in poorer physical and emotional health, educational achievement, and well-being (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2017).

It may be no surprise that low-income families report more daily stress than other families, and in particular, low-income parents with young children are three times as likely as other families to report poor mental health and are also at increased risk for substance abuse and domestic violence (Gencer, 2014). Thus, lower-income children, and particularly children living in poverty, are exposed to more stress than their higher-income peers. Oregon's child poverty rate of 22 percent

means that more than one in five Oregon children (just shy of 200,000) is living in poverty. Further, nearly half of children in poverty (or just under 100,000) are living in families experiencing extreme poverty, which for a family of three means surviving on less than \$800 per month.

Growing up in poverty is associated with myriad poor outcomes across the domains of health, education and economic security:

"Research has shown that growing up in poverty is associated with lower long-term academic achievement as well as employment and earning power as an adult. Experiencing poverty as a child, especially prolonged poverty, has been shown to hinder a child's cognitive development. And since a child's development in her first few years lays the groundwork for future health and development, child poverty impacts an individual's health outcomes as a child and continues to have a negative impact into adulthood."

Children First for Oregon, 2017, p. 6

Too many Oregon children are being exposed to the stressors and the resultant potential long-term consequences of poverty and other adverse childhood experiences. Neighborhoods and communities, families, and children's educational experiences can all influence—positively or negatively—children's development, opportunities and long-term well-being; the remaining sections of this report explore each of these domains in depth.

COMMUNITIES WITH HIGHER
UPWARD MOBILITY TEND TO BE
MORE INTEGRATED,
HAVE LESS INCOME INEQUALITY AND
HAVE MORE SOCIAL CAPITAL.



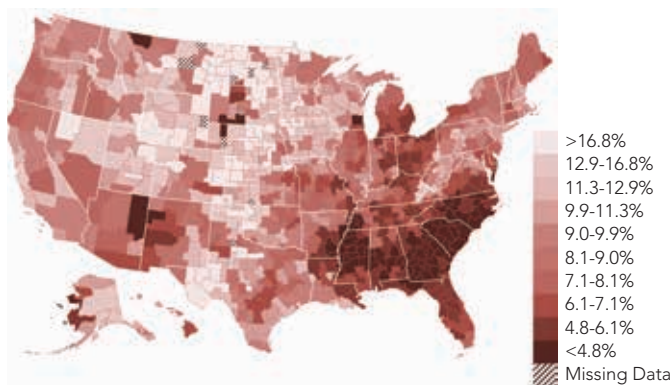
Portland

HOW NEIGHBORHOODS AND COMMUNITIES IMPACT OPPORTUNITY

Opportunity partly depends on where a child is raised.

A child's chance of moving out of poverty varies depending on where the child grows up in the United States. Children whose parents are in the bottom 20 percent of the income distribution generally have the best chance of making it to the top 20 percent if they are raised in the Great Plains or Midwest (see Figure 7). In contrast, children raised in the South have the worst chances of making it to the top of the income ladder. Similar to children in most western states, the odds of a child in Oregon moving from the bottom in childhood to the top of the income ladder in adulthood fall somewhere in the middle.

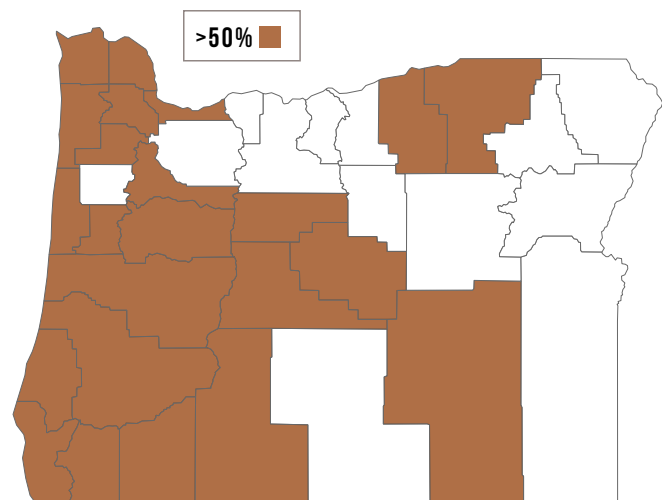
Figure 7: Where children grow up impacts their ability to move out of poverty as adults.



Lighter colors represent a better chance of moving up from the bottom quintile of the national income distribution to the top quintile. Children's chances of reaching top 20 percent of income distribution given parents in bottom 20 percent, Chetty and Hendren, 2017

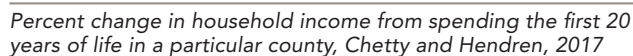
In 23 of Oregon's 36 counties, children born into low-income families (the lowest 40 percent of income earners) have less than a 50 percent chance of reaching the middle class or beyond as adults (see Figure 8). In Jefferson County, a child born to the lowest 20 percent of income earners has a 50 percent chance of staying in this lowest income bracket as an adult and a 38 percent chance of making it to the middle class or above. These odds place Jefferson County in the bottom 20 counties in the nation in terms of economic mobility for children born into poverty. Even in the other 13 Oregon counties where the odds of a low-income child reaching the middle class are greater than 50 percent, the odds hover in the 50 to 60 percent range, except in Wallowa and Grant counties, where the odds, at around 77 percent, are much better.

Figure 8: Low-income children in most Oregon counties have a greater-than-50-percent chance of remaining low-income as adults.



Counties where children born to the lowest 40 percent of income earners are more than 50 percent likely to stay there as adults, Chetty and Hendren, 2017

Figure 9: Growing up in northeastern Oregon has the most positive impact on household income later in life.



The first four factors identified by Chetty and Hendren (racial and economic integration, income inequality,

Oregon's most diverse counties are also the most racially segregated.

Grant and Wallowa counties are the most racially integrated in the state but also have low levels of diversity, with less than 10 percent of the counties' populations belonging to communities of color.

TRACKING OREGON'S PROGRESS TOWARD A THRIVING FUTURE



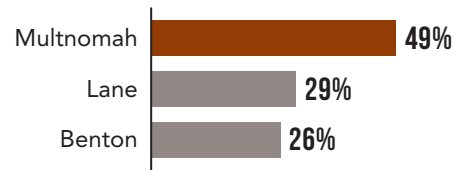
Portland

Economic segregation is highest in Oregon's most populous counties.

Chetty and Hendren also identified a correlation between economic opportunity and the economic integration of communities. Economic integration refers to the degree to which a neighborhood or community includes a mix of low-income and high-income households. Oregonians in poverty are increasingly concentrated in certain high-poverty communities. In 2010, 47 percent of Oregonians in poverty lived in high-poverty areas, compared to 23 percent in 2000 (Bishaw, 2014). High-poverty neighborhoods are typically associated with higher crime rates, fewer job opportunities and lower-quality housing. A 2009 Pew study found that growing up in a high-poverty neighborhood increases the risk of a person falling down the income ladder as an adult (Sharkey, 2009).

Oregon counties that contain the state's largest cities generally have the highest levels of economic segregation, with Multnomah, Benton and Lane counties topping the list (Chetty and Hendren, 2017). Nearly half of Multnomah County residents in poverty and more than one-quarter of Lane and Benton county residents in poverty live in high-poverty hotspots, areas where poverty rates persistently exceed 20 percent (**see Figure 10**). Comparing 2010 to 1980, more households in Portland live in economically segregated neighborhoods (Fry and Taylor, 2012). Low-income households are more likely to live in economically segregated

Figure 10: Nearly half of people in poverty in Multnomah County live in high-poverty communities.



Percent of population in poverty living in high-poverty hotspots, 2013, Oregon DHS Office of Forecasting, Research & Analysis

neighborhoods (20 percent) compared to high-income households (5 percent). Oregon is not unique in this trend; metropolitan areas across the United States are becoming more economically segregated.

Income inequality is moderate in most Oregon counties, but there are a few exceptions.

Income inequality in communities also is correlated with economic opportunity. Oregon has slightly lower levels of income inequality compared to the United States overall (Rahe, et al., 2015). While most Oregon counties have moderate levels of income inequality, there are several exceptions. Multnomah, Lane and Benton counties have consistently high levels of income inequality and are among the 20 percent most unequal counties in the country (Rahe, et al., 2015). The high levels of income inequality in these counties are likely due to a combination of the presence of the state's three largest universities and the state's two largest metropolitan areas. Communities with larger universities often have a low-income student population as well as higher-income faculty and administrators. In addition, higher-wage jobs are often more prevalent in cities, often leading to higher income inequality.

On the other end of the spectrum, Hood River and Morrow counties have consistently low levels of income inequality, placing them among the 20 percent most equal counties in the United States. Both Hood River and Morrow counties lack extremely low-paying and extremely high-paying jobs. In Hood River County, poverty rates are also relatively low, and the median household income is above the state average. In contrast, poverty rates in Morrow County are similar to the state average and employment opportunities are fairly homogenous in terms of pay.



Klamath Falls

Social capital is highest in Eastern Oregon.

Finally, Chetty and Hendren found a correlation between social capital and economic opportunity. Social capital has a variety of definitions, but when Rupasingha, Goetz and Freshwater created their social capital index, they defined it as membership in associations or organizations like civic organizations, fitness centers and religious institutions (2006). They argue that members within these types of organizations repeatedly interact with each other, building trust, which in turn increases cooperation and reciprocity. In addition to including the number of associations and organizations per 10,000 residents, their social capital index also includes the voter turn-out rate for presidential elections, the response rate to the U.S. Census Bureau's decennial survey and the number of nonprofit organizations in each county. In Oregon, Wallowa County ranks highest in the social capital index and falls in the top 100 counties in the country, followed by other Eastern Oregon counties like Baker and Grant. Josephine, Polk and Washington counties ranked the lowest in the index.

Communities play an important role in shaping the opportunities and paths available for children. Unfortunately, where a child grows up has implications for his or her economic well-being as an adult, and in Oregon, low-income children in Eastern Oregon are more likely to increase their socioeconomic status than children in some other parts of the state. A community's degree of racial and economic segregation, economic inequality, and social capital all shape the context of children's experiences and opportunities. People of color and lower-income families in Oregon are increasingly likely to be living in segregated communities, and, echoing the economic mobility findings, communities in Eastern Oregon tend to enjoy more social capital than other areas of the state. Of course, children's opportunities are shaped by their family circumstances and educational experiences as well as by the communities in which they live, and each of these areas will be explored next.

**COMMUNITIES PLAY
AN IMPORTANT ROLE
IN SHAPING THE
OPPORTUNITIES AND PATHS
AVAILABLE FOR CHILDREN.**

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services

Addressing Community Problems Through Grassroots Participation

Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services (WNHS) is a community development corporation serving Linn, Lincoln and Benton counties committed to improving lives and strengthening communities through quality affordable housing, homeownership, economic opportunity and community partnerships. WNHS owns 382 affordable housing units, runs a homeownership center that assists both potential and current homeowners, and works to build healthy communities through both grassroots and upstream public policy efforts.

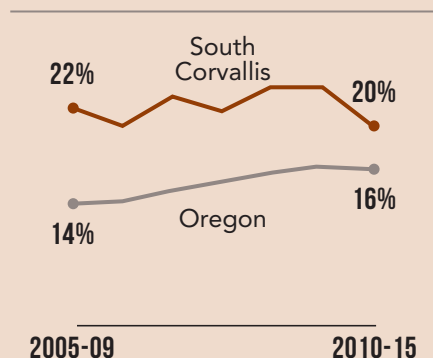
Brigetta Olson, deputy director, acknowledges that “race, where you live, your ZIP code, the language you speak has often long-term effects on your health outcomes later in life.” A focus on healthy homes, neighborhoods and communities has become a unifying theme in much of WNHS’ work and is informing its approach to housing development and management, and resident and community engagement. WNHS works in targeted communities to help provide comprehensive community development services by helping communities identify both the problems they wish to address and the potential solutions; the organization’s efforts in South Corvallis are one example of that work.

In 2010, the Benton County Health Department was awarded a Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to convene multiple agencies to create healthy opportunities for children in the South Corvallis neighborhood. The partner agencies worked with the neighborhood’s residents to decide what those opportunities would look like. Together, the city of Corvallis, Benton County, community organizations and South Corvallis residents updated a local park, conducted a health impact assessment on a highway dividing the neighborhood and secured funding to create a bike path connecting South Corvallis to downtown. That was just the beginning of the collective work and several years ago WNHS took the lead in building a community vision with local residents around those needs.

Recently the organization purchased a 7.7-acre land parcel in South Corvallis that is zoned for both residential and commercial purposes. WNHS is working with residents to find out how they want to develop the land. Brigetta says the extra time it takes to make sure all voices are heard is worthwhile because “there really is community buy-in because they understand why these resources are being prioritized the way that they are because we have the voice of everybody in the community.”



The poverty rate in South Corvallis is consistently higher than the statewide rate.



Percentage of individuals in poverty, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

Families in South Corvallis on average make less than families throughout the state.



Median family income, 2015 five-year estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau



**MORE THAN 1 IN 3
SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES IS IN POVERTY,
COMPARED TO LESS THAN
1 IN 10 MARRIED-
COUPLE FAMILIES.**

Albany

HOW FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES IMPACT OPPORTUNITY

Low-income children are more likely to move out of poverty if they are born to married parents.

According to data from the KIDS COUNT project, about one-third of Oregon children live with just one parent. While the share of single-parent families has remained relatively steady in urban Oregon, it is increasing in rural Oregon (see Figure 11). In 2009, an estimated 25 percent of rural families with children had a non-married household head; in 2015, the number increased to 29 percent.

Children with married parents are more likely to move up the income ladder. According to a joint report from the American Enterprise Institute and Brookings, 80 percent of children in poverty who were raised by married parents for their entire childhood moved out of poverty as adults. In contrast, only 50 percent of children in poverty who were raised by an unmarried parent escaped poverty as adults (2015).

Married-parent families are likely to have higher incomes and are less likely to be in poverty compared to single-parent families. As of 2015, the median family income for a married couple with children was \$77,465, more than double the median income for single-father families and two-thirds more than the median income for single-mother families (see Figure 12). Similarly, more than one in three single-parent families is in poverty, compared to less than one in 10 married-couple families (see Figure 13). The difference in poverty rates for married-couple and single-parent families is even more striking in some counties (see Figure 14). In many of Oregon's rural counties, nearly half of single-parent families are in poverty. Parents in poverty experience economic stress that can negatively impact parenting and increase the type of chronic stress in children that negatively impacts development (Putnam, 2015).

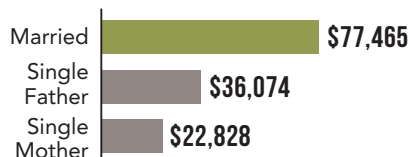
Figure 11: The percentage of non-married heads of household with children is increasing in rural Oregon.



2005-09 2010-14

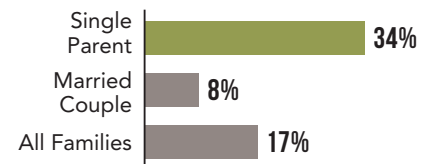
Of the estimated families with own children under 18, percent with a female or male householder without a spouse present, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 12: Married parents make more than \$40,000 more on average annually than single parents.



Median family income by family type, 2015 five-year estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census

Figure 13: More than one-third of single-parent families are in poverty.



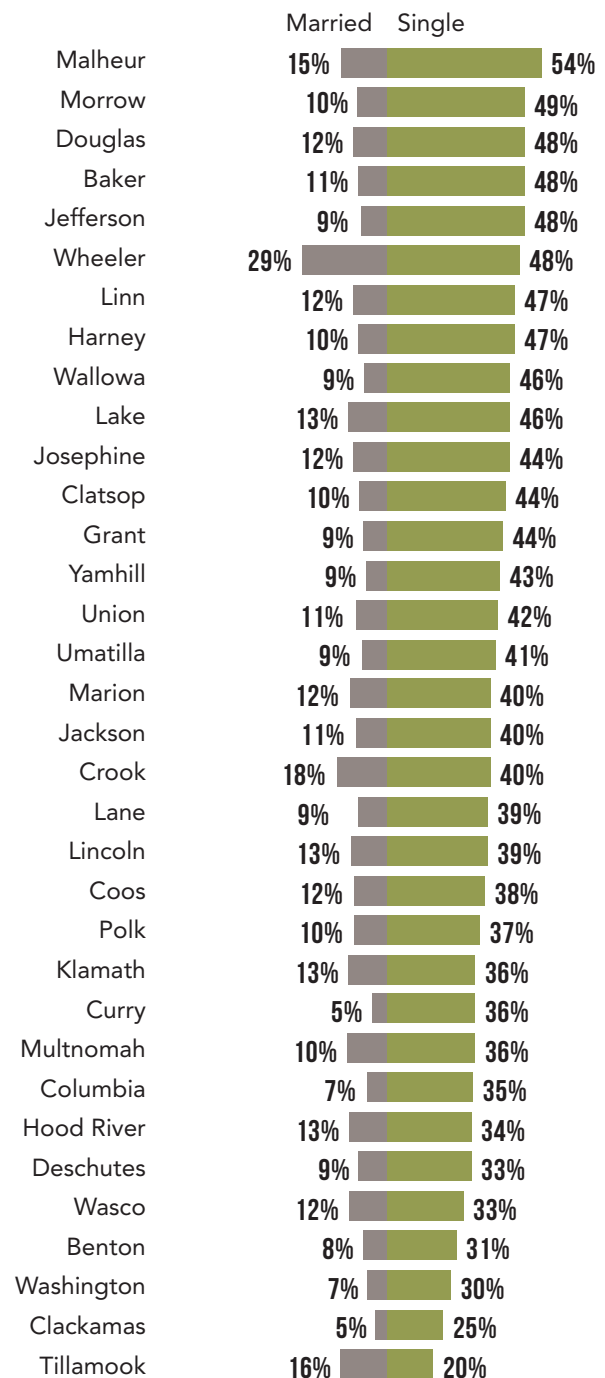
Poverty rate by family type, 2015 five-year estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau



Portland

Married-parent families are also more stable. Children raised in stable families are healthier, better educated and more likely to avoid poverty compared to children with shifting family structures (Reeves and Krause, 2017). For example, one in four married parents separate before their child turns 12, compared to two in three cohabiting parents (Reeves and Krause, 2017). The higher stability among married families may be partially attributed to the fact that children born to married parents are more likely to result from planned pregnancies. Two in three births to single mothers are unintended, compared to one in two births to cohabiting mothers and one in four births to married mothers (Reeves and Krause, 2017). Unplanned births are associated with more instability and a higher risk of union dissolution.

Figure 14: The difference in poverty rates between married-couple and single-parent families is even more striking in some counties.



Percentage of married and single heads of household with children in poverty by county, 2015 five-year estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Building Healthy Families

Helping Families Thrive Through Parent Education

Supporting parents and families is central to the mission of Building Healthy Families (BHF). Though it is headquartered in Enterprise, the organization serves Wallowa, Baker, Union and Malheur counties with its 18 programs that range from home visiting to running an alternative high school. While not every program exists in every county, parenting education is the thread uniting the region.

The organization was established in 1999 after a community needs survey identified parenting education and preventive programming as top priorities in the region; over 18 years of providing direct services to families, these needs have only grown. BHF provides traditional parent education services such as workshops and classes but also hosts community events and activities like weekly playgroups. According to the executive director, Maria Weer, the diverse opportunities mean “[we’re] getting parents the tools to be better parents, but we’re also giving our families an opportunity to spend quality time together.” The programs help better equip parents by teaching them how to reduce stress, manage anger and communicate better.

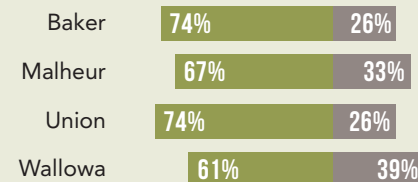
BHF also serves as one of the state’s 15 Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative hubs. As a hub, it collaborates with other providers in the four counties to deliver parent education and make it easier for families to access the services they need. BHF also provides professional development opportunities so that more parent educators and other professionals working with families are using best practices.

Weer notes that the need for BHF’s services is on the rise due to changing economic conditions. Food and housing insecurity are both on the rise, especially in Wallowa and Baker counties, where tourists drive up rental prices. Some businesses have also left the region, reducing economic opportunities for the families that live there. Weer also points out that limited child care options are big barriers to employment for parents. Connecting with other BHF families has helped some parents overcome these barriers by sharing resources and even creating babysitting co-ops.

**PARENT EDUCATION
GIVES YOU CONCRETE TOOLS
AND EXAMPLES FOR HOW
YOU CAN WORK WITH YOUR
CHILDREN AND REALLY
BE A BETTER PARENT.**

Maria Weer, Executive Director, BHF

Most children in the counties served by BHF live with married-couple parents.



Percentage of children living in married-couple and single-parent households, 2015 five-year estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census



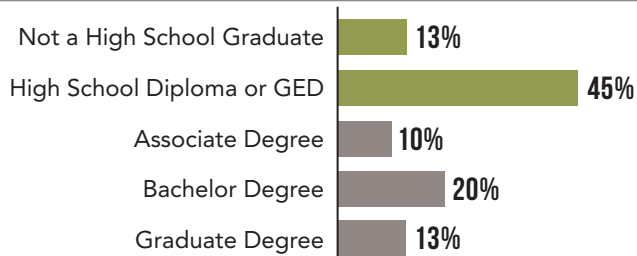
Portland

Low-income children are more likely to move out of poverty if their parents are more highly educated and securely employed.

More than half of children in Oregon are being raised by an adult with a high school diploma or less (see Figure 15). Moreover, in 31 of Oregon's 36 counties, more than 60 percent of adults have less than an associate degree (see Figure 16). Educational attainment also varies by race and ethnicity. While nearly one in two Asian Oregonians have a four-year degree or greater, only one in four black Oregonians, and around one in eight American Indian, Pacific Islander and Latino Oregonians have a bachelor degree or higher (see Figure 17). Married parents nationally are also twice as likely to have a college degree compared to single parents, and are four times as likely compared to cohabiting parents (Reeves and Krause, 2017).

Educational attainment has an impact on both parenting and family economic opportunities. More highly educated mothers typically engage their children in more developmentally appropriate activities (Reeves and Howard, 2013). College-educated parents are likely to spend more time with their children than parents with a high school education, and that extra time is more likely to be spent engaged in developmental activities (Putnam, 2015). Additionally, it has become increasingly difficult to reach the middle class without a post-secondary education. Incomes have been rising with education levels since the 1980s, but incomes for individuals with only some college or less have been falling or stable over the same time period (AEI-Brookings Working Group on Poverty and Opportunity, 2015). Perhaps it is no surprise then that educational attainment is also associated with economic mobility. Individuals with a college degree are more than three times more likely to rise from the bottom of the income ladder to the top (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2012).

Figure 15: More than half of children are being raised by an adult with a high school diploma or less.



Percentage of children by household head's educational attainment, 2015, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 16: In most counties, the percentage of adults with post-secondary degrees is lower than the statewide average of 39 percent.

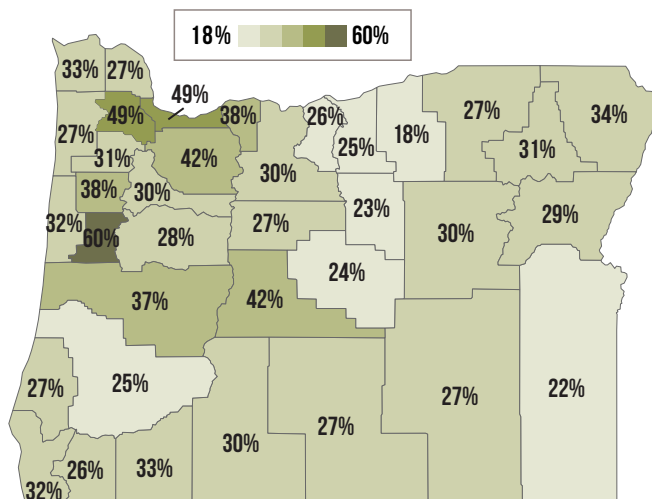
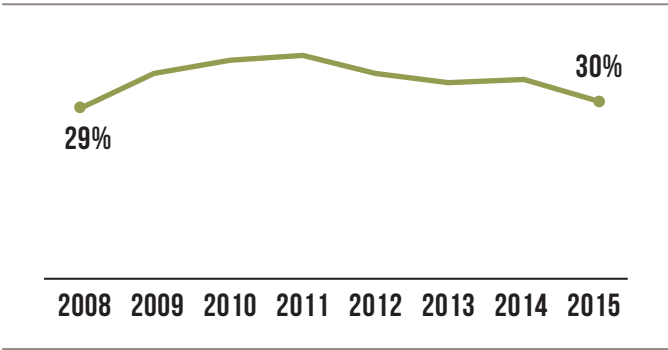


Figure 18: Nearly one in three children lives with parents who lack secure employment.



The share of all children under age 18 living in families where no parent has regular, full-time employment, 2015, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau



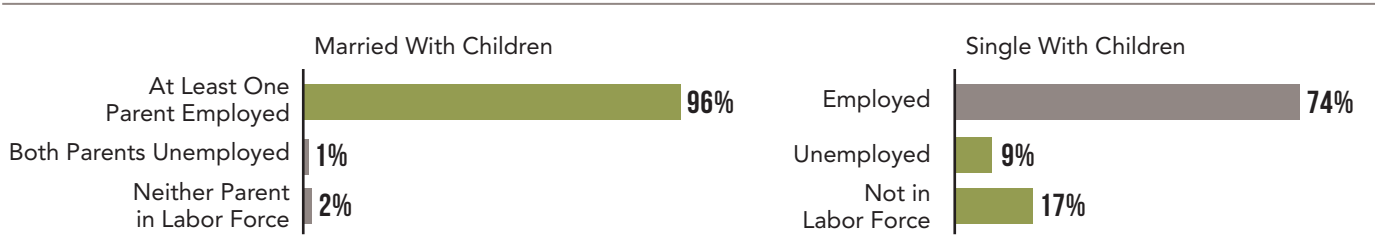
Columbia River Gorge

Many families with children lack the economic opportunities needed to support themselves. Despite the fact that Oregon’s unemployment rate has decreased in recent years and currently stands at 5.7 percent, nearly one in three children in Oregon lives in a family where no parent has regular, full-time employment (see Figure 18). The percentage rose to nearly 40 percent immediately following the Great Recession before falling to pre-recession levels again in 2015. The job prospects available to parents vary based on geography. Economic recovery has been particularly slow in parts of rural Oregon where jobs are concentrated in industries like housing devel-

opment and government (McMullen and Lehner, 2015). Among rural areas in Oregon, the Columbia Gorge has been the only one to return to pre-recession employment levels, because of the strength of the agricultural sector and the major wind farms that were built between 2007 and 2011 (McMullen and Lehner, 2015).

Employment status also varies greatly by family structure (see Figure 19). Nearly one in four single parents is not working. In contrast, nearly all married households have at least one working parent, and in 59 percent of married households both parents work.

Figure 19: While nearly all married households have at least one employed parent, more than one in four single parents lack employment.



Employment status by family type, 2015 five-year estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Klamath Community College

Strengthening the Klamath Basin Workforce Through High-Skill Technology Training



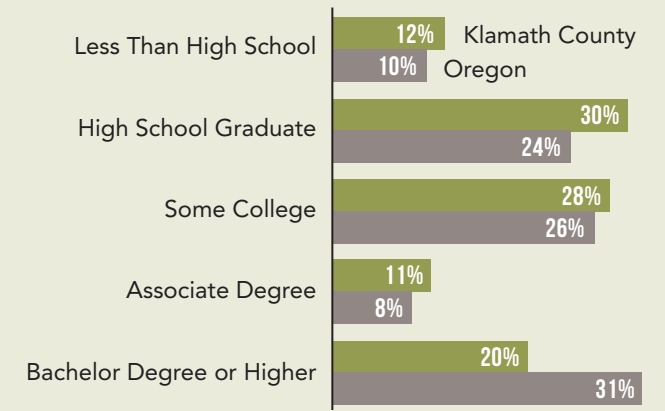
Klamath Community College (KCC) provides 39 degree programs for students in the Klamath Basin and beyond. Like other community colleges, KCC’s student population includes high school students transitioning to college, nontraditional students returning to school or pursuing personal enrichment goals, GED students, and English-language learners. Mirroring its student population, KCC takes a comprehensive view of education that focuses on educational attainment, workforce development and community outreach.

A few years ago, a large manufacturer was considering opening a new plant in Klamath Falls that would have created around 300 high-skill labor jobs. The company eventually decided against opening a plant in Klamath Falls because it was unsure the community could sustain the level of highly skilled labor needed to staff the plant. The decision prompted KCC to take a closer look at the community’s workforce development needs and helped the college realize that there was a significant need for high-skill workforce training. As a result, KCC recently opened its Work Skills Technology Center, which provides services aimed at meeting local workforce needs.

The center offers a multitude of training programs in areas such as computer engineering, digital media and business technology. The programs emphasize placing students in internships that provide real-world experience while they are still in school. Many students have successfully been placed in internships with the top two companies in the region. Julie Murray-Jensen, vice president of enrollment and external affairs, notes that the demand for interns currently outpaces the number of program-specific students available for internships.

KCC is also committed to ensuring that its GED and English as a second language (ESL) students have access to the Work Skills Technology Center by giving them the option to complete their GED or ESL program while simultaneously completing workforce preparation courses or certificate programs. KCC hopes that this co-enrollment option will reduce the burden of educational attainment for these populations that may have otherwise opted out of post-secondary education.

Less than one in three Klamath County adults has a post-secondary degree.



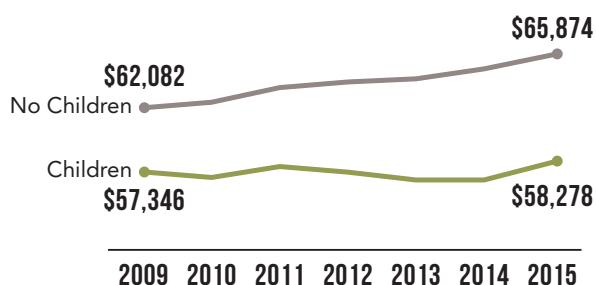
Educational attainment, 2015 five-year estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

Economic security and economic mobility go hand in hand.

As children are growing up, families may move up and down the income ladder. Moving up the income ladder increases children's ability to move even higher up the ladder as adults. Families who are able to move up the income ladder generally have greater economic security, including six-times-higher median liquid savings, 21-times-higher median home equity and eight-times-higher median wealth, than those who stay on the bottom rung (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2013). Unfortunately, there are many barriers to economic security and, in turn, economic mobility in Oregon.

Family incomes have stagnated while essential costs like child care and housing have increased. The median income for families with kids in Oregon increased by just 2 percent between 2009 and 2015 (see Figure 20). Among families without kids, the median family income was about \$7,500 higher and increased by slightly more (6 percent). According to Children First for Oregon, the 2015 median family income for all family types is slightly lower (1 percent) than pre-recession levels in 2008 (2017).

Figure 20: Among families with children, incomes have stagnated.



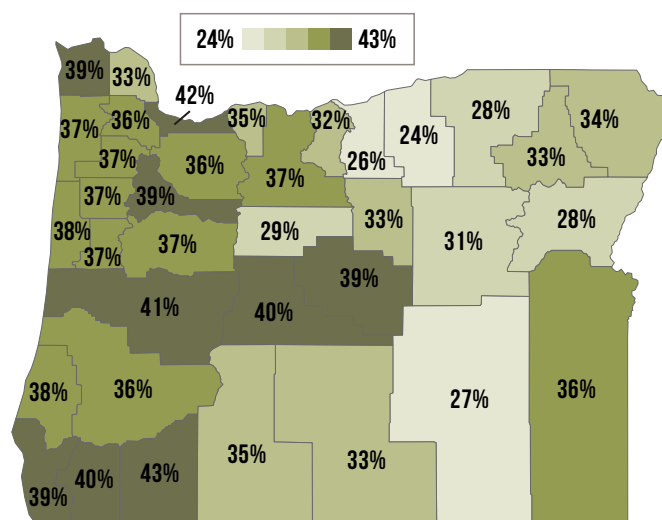
Median family income, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

Over the same time period (2008 to 2015), the cost of child care increased by nearly 18 percent (Children First for Oregon, 2017). Looking back further, between 1994 and 2016, the monthly price for center-based toddler care more than doubled (Grobe and Weber, 2016). Many families, especially those in rural communities and among certain communities of color, are unable to afford quality, formal child care

and are forced to make a difficult choice between lower-quality care and forfeiting income to stay at home with children.

Housing costs have increased for families as well. Median rent in Oregon increased by nearly 10 percent between 2008 and 2015 (Children First for Oregon, 2017). Increases in housing costs mean that two-thirds of low-income children in Oregon live in households where more than 30 percent of the monthly income is spent on rent or mortgage payments. In addition, at least one in four households in every Oregon county spends too much on housing (see Figure 21). Multnomah, Lane, Deschutes, Jackson and Josephine counties have the highest housing cost burdens in the state, with 40 percent or more of households spending more than 30 percent of their monthly income on housing costs.

Figure 21: At least one in four households in every county spends too much on housing.

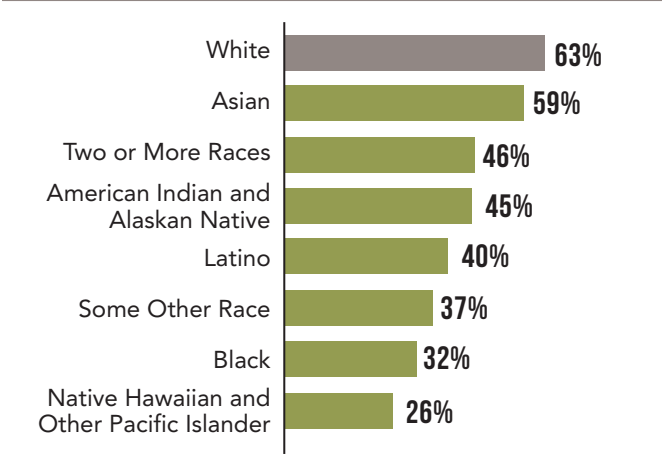


Households whose monthly housing costs are 30 percent or more of their monthly income, 2015 five-year estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

Home equity is associated with economic mobility, and homeownership is one of the main drivers of wealth in the United States. Nationally, the average net worth of homeowners (\$195,400) is 36 times higher than that of the average renter (\$5,400) (Desmond, 2017). However, low-income families and families of color are less likely than their more affluent and white peers to own homes. Through systematic exclusionary policies, families of color have

THROUGH SYSTEMATIC
EXCLUSIONARY POLICIES,
FAMILIES OF COLOR HAVE BEEN
LESS ABLE TO OWN HOMES
AND ACCUMULATE ASSETS.

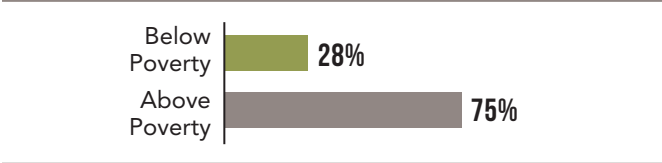
Figure 22: Oregonians of color are less likely to own homes than white Oregonians.



Homeownership rate by race and ethnicity, 2015 five-year estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

been less able to own homes and accumulate assets, resulting in a wealth gap of more than \$200,000 between the average white and black family nationally (Flynn, et al., 2016). Less than one-third of black Oregonians are homeowners, and the homeownership rate is less than half among all communities of color in Oregon with the exception of Asians (see Figure 22). Similarly, fewer than one in three families living below the poverty line own homes, making families in poverty less likely to reap the benefits of homeownership (see Figure 23). These families do not have access to home equity as a line of credit, to boost their net worth or to eventually pass along to their children.

Figure 23: Families in poverty are less likely to reap the benefits of homeownership.



Homeownership rates by poverty level, 2015 five-year estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau



Portland

There are several factors of family structure and circumstances that influence children’s opportunities and their chances of economic security as adults. Parenting structure matters, with children raised in married households more likely to move out of poverty and up the income ladder than children raised in single-parent households, but about one in three Oregon children are growing up with single parents. Further, parental educational attainment and employment are linked to their children’s future economic security, and sizable portions of Oregon’s children are growing up with parents who do not have post-secondary degrees or are not employed. Family incomes in Oregon have stagnated while expenses such as housing and child care have risen, further burdening families and further jeopardizing children’s ability to move up the income ladder as adults. Of course, while family circumstances are a critical component of children’s future success, as illustrated in the previous section of this report, neighborhood and community factors play a large role in shaping children’s futures, as do educational experiences and opportunities, which are explored in the subsequent section.

GAPS IN OPPORTUNITY FOR CHILDREN CAN BE SEEN AS EARLY AS 9 MONTHS.



Gladstone

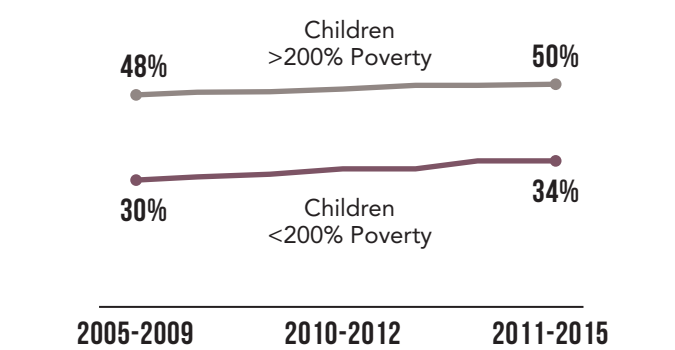
HOW EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE IMPACTS OPPORTUNITY

Early childhood experiences set the stage for success.

Children's social and cognitive development begins in infancy (and in fact, prenatal conditions impact a child's brain development as well), and more brain development takes place in the first few years of a child's life than at any other time during the life span. Enriching home and early child care settings can set the course for healthy development and lifelong achievement. Gaps in opportunity for children begin during this crucial early childhood period: The gap in social and cognitive development between low-income children and their higher-income peers can be seen as early as 9 months, and these gaps persist and grow over the next several years (AEI-Brookings Working Group on Poverty and Opportunity, 2015).

Much of this gap can be attributed to differences in early learning environments at home and in child care settings. Children of parents—whether low-income or not—who engage their children in conversations and who have developmentally appropriate books and toys in the home exhibit higher cognitive prekindergarten and fifth grade skills (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2017). However, low-income children are more likely to find themselves in homes and early care settings that lack the enrichment needed to foster optimal cognitive development. Research has shown that lower-income children are exposed to fewer words and stimulating materials and experiences (Reeves & Howard, 2013). Low-income parents are more likely to suffer from stress and multiple demands on their time and resources and are more likely to be parenting without the

Figure 24: Low-income children are less likely to attend preschool.

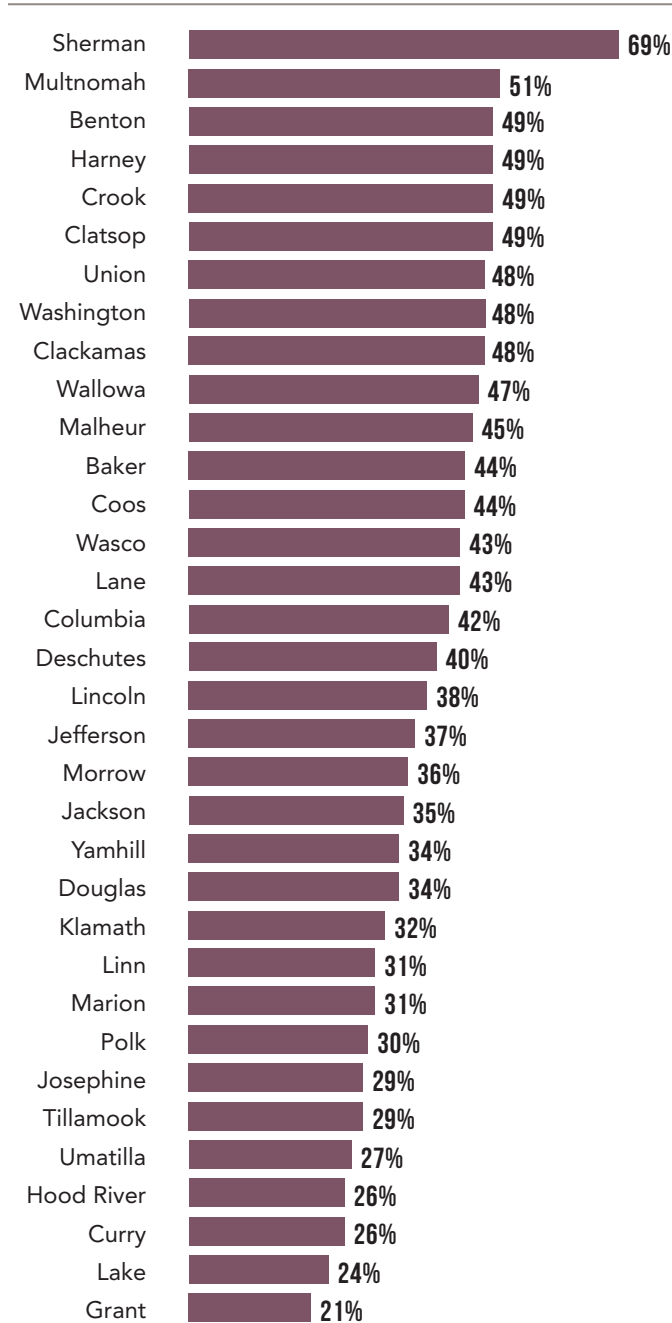


The percentage of children ages 3 and 4 enrolled in school during the previous three months, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

help and support of a spouse, thus impacting their ability to parent optimally (AEI-Brookings Working Group on Poverty and Opportunity, 2015).

Nationally, approximately half of young children are cared for by their parents during the day, with the remaining half receiving care from relatives and friends, home-based child care, or center-based care. Low-income children are more likely to be in the care of their parents, and those who are cared for by others tend to be in lower-quality care (AEI-Brookings Working Group on Poverty and Opportunity, 2015). Oregon data mirror the national data: While half of children not in poverty attend preschool, somewhat fewer children in poverty in Oregon attend preschool (**see Figure 24**). And across all income levels, less than half of young children attend preschool in every county except Multnomah (**see Figure 25**).

Figure 25: Less than half of young children are in preschool in most Oregon counties.



The percentage of children ages 3 and 4 enrolled in school during the previous three months by county, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

*Data for Wheeler and Gilliam counties are unavailable due to small population size.

ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED KINDERGARTENERS COULD NAME 14 LETTERS ON AVERAGE, COMPARED TO AN AVERAGE OF 19 LETTERS AMONG ALL KINDERGARTENERS.



Gladstone

The cognitive and developmental differences attributable to differences in early childhood experiences start early and are clearly visible by the time young children enter kindergarten. Students starting kindergarten in Oregon receive the Oregon Kindergarten Assessment (OKA), which assesses children along several social-emotional and academic dimensions. Results from the OKA indicate that on the whole, economically disadvantaged students (defined by the Oregon Department of Education as those students in families with incomes at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level, which for a family of four is about \$45,000, do not differ markedly from the total population of incoming kindergarteners on measures of self-regulation, interpersonal skills and learning approaches. However, economically disadvantaged students fare worse on measures of early math and letter name and sound recognition. For instance, economically disadvantaged kindergarteners could name 14 letters on average, compared to an average of 19 letters among all kindergarteners.

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Children's Institute

Expanding Access to Quality Early Childhood Education Through Advocacy

Children's Institute is a statewide organization whose mission is to advocate for investments in early education and healthy development for young children. According to Danielle Pacifico-Cogan, director of communications and community engagement, "Children's Institute advocates for improved educational, health and social outcomes for young children in Oregon, with a particular focus on communities that face structural, institutional, and social barriers: children of color, children from rural communities, dual-language learners, children with disabilities, and those who experience poverty."

**IN 2016,
40% OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN
AGES 3-5 HAD ACCESS TO
HEAD START IN OREGON.**

National Head Start Association

Children's Institute directs several different projects focused on improving outcomes for young children, including demonstration projects aimed at increasing school readiness and grade-level reading. In addition to these projects, Children's Institute is active in statewide policy work. Dana Hepper, director of policy and programs, explains that the organization is active in every stage of the policy process, from the development of policy and budget proposals through developing advocacy materials and engaging others in the political process. She continues: "The goal of our work is to make progress toward an Oregon where every child is prepared for success in school and life. We measure success by funding and policy improvements that benefit young children from prenatal to age eight."

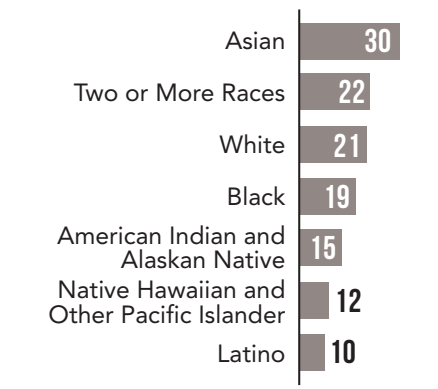
This policy work—which Children's Institute conducts in close partnership with many other nonprofit organizations, public sector allies like the Early Learning Division, and community advocates including parents—has seen some significant successes over the past



several years. More children are being served by Oregon Prekindergarten Head Start and Healthy Families Oregon home visiting. The state has created the \$10 million Kindergarten Partnership and Innovation Fund to connect the early childhood system with elementary school systems, the early childhood system has been strengthened through the creation of the Learning Division and Early Learning Hubs, and Oregon now has a mixed-delivery preschool program called Preschool Promise that served 1,300 children in its first year.

These are significant accomplishments, but Hepper stresses that the work is not done, as Oregon still serves only a fraction of eligible children through these early learning system programs. Too many children and families remain unserved, so Children's Institute continues the important work of advocating on their behalf.

Figure 26: Early academic skills vary by race and ethnicity.

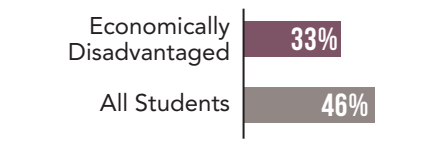


Number of letters correctly named by kindergarteners (out of 100), 2015-16, Oregon Kindergarten Assessment, Oregon Department of Education



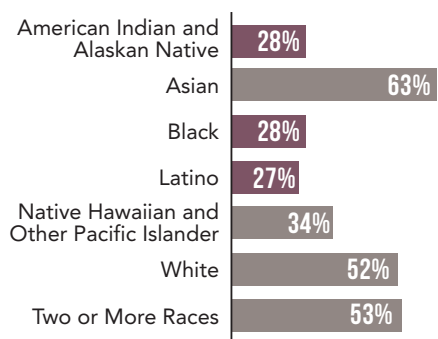
Portland

Figure 27: Fewer economically disadvantaged students meet or exceed reading benchmarks in third grade.



Percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards in reading, 2015, Oregon Department of Education

Figure 28: Even fewer black, Latino and American Indian students are reading at grade level.



Percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards in reading, 2015, Oregon Department of Education

This pattern of results is similar when the data are disaggregated by race/ethnicity (see Figure 26). While there are not striking differences in social-emotional dimensions across racial and ethnic groups, differences are more apparent on the academic dimensions, with Asian, white and multiethnic children scoring higher than African-American, Latino, American Indian and Pacific Islander children.

Differences in K-12 experiences result in a persistent achievement gap.

Achievement gaps that begin in early childhood continue in elementary school. Third-grade reading proficiency is a predictor of subsequent academic success (Fiester, 2013). While 46 percent of Oregon's third-graders meet or exceed third-grade reading benchmarks, just 33 percent of Oregon's economically disadvantaged students meet these benchmarks (rates are similar for urban and rural students) (see Figure 27). The third-grade achievement gap is even more marked when looking at race/ethnicity: while more than 50 percent of Asian, white and multiethnic students meet the third-grade benchmarks, just 27 percent of Latino students, 28 percent of Black and American Indian and 34 percent of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students meet the benchmarks (see Figure 28). In other words, about two-thirds of Oregon's economically disadvantaged students and Latino, black, American Indian students and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students are not reading proficiently by third grade.

Chronic absenteeism, exclusionary discipline and summer learning loss all exacerbate achievement gaps between low-income and higher-income students. Simply put, children who spend less time in school and have fewer enriching out-of-school experiences will learn, and achieve, less. Further, chronic absenteeism can be a predictor of high school performance and graduation and enrollment in higher education (Curry-Stevens and Kim-Gervy, 2016). Low-income Oregon students are twice as likely to be chronically absent than their higher-income peers (Riddle, 2014).

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Airway Science for Kids

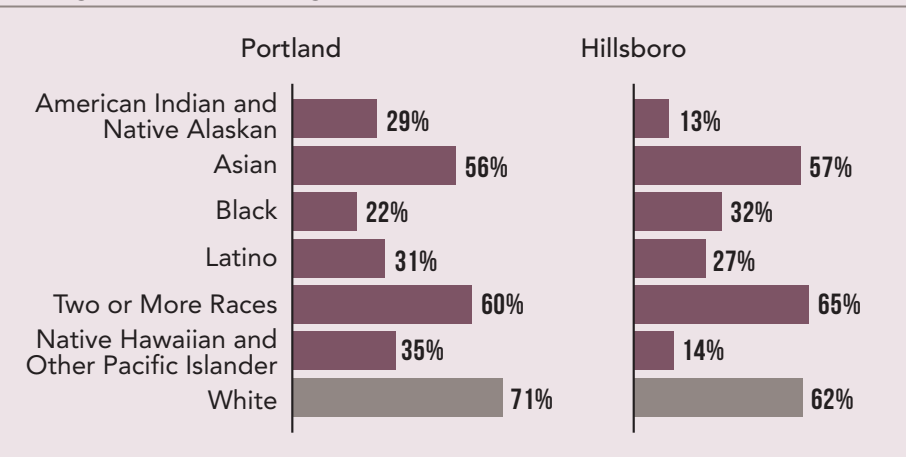
Engaging Youth of Color Through STEM Education

Airway Science for Kids (ASK) exposes historically underrepresented youth to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) through aerospace activities and hands-on projects. ASK offers a range of programming, starting as early as kindergarten and continuing through high school graduation, at various sites in NE Portland and Hillsboro.

ASK first began in 1990 as an out-of-school time opportunity for middle school youth. Jackie Murphy, executive director, explained that the founder of Airway Science for Kids established the program in north and northeast Portland because he realized that African-Americans were not represented in the STEM fields and wanted to provide a pathway for them through aeronautic technology.

Airway Science for Kids continues to maintain the same targeted focus on serving youth of color, expanding to include Latino students from Hillsboro, and also supporting girls. ASK partners with schools and organizations that work with a high number of youth of color and provides most of its programming at schools, thus eliminating transportation barriers for these students. Jackie notes, "It's a pretty known fact that the STEM professions are not very diverse, so our long-term goal is to 'change the face of STEM.'"

Third-graders of color lag behind their white classmates.



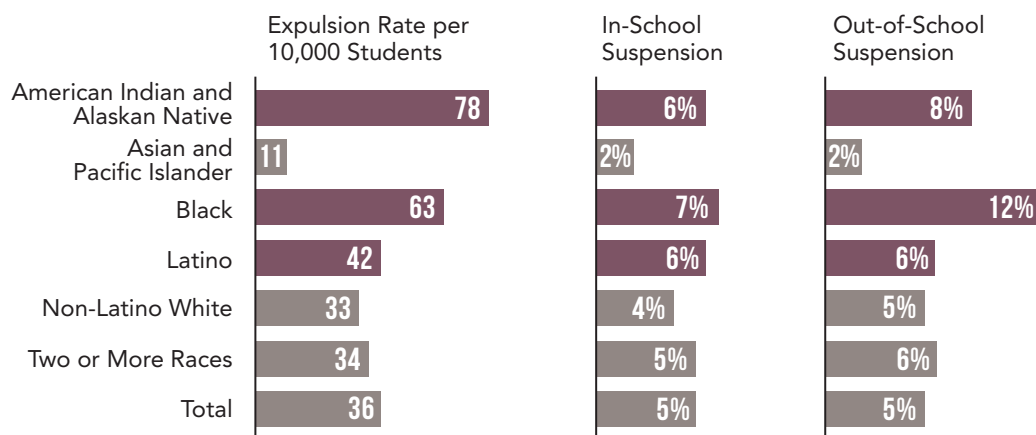
Percentage of third-graders meeting or exceeding third-grade reading standards, 2015, Oregon Department of Education

ASK began its elementary school program, InFlight, three years ago because staff recognized that middle school students were already experiencing negative attitudes toward the STEM fields. There was a strong need to reach students earlier, when they are in elementary school, to give them positive, engaging, fun STEM activities. Oftentimes, ASK staff hear that InFlight students learn STEM skills without even realizing it through the engineering and design curriculum used in the program.

ASK is an example of a high-quality out-of-school time program that complements and connects to in-school learning for youth. Jackie observes that out-of-school time programs are gaining credibility because they offer students an alternative way of learning and provide an opportunity for students to engage and thrive in a nontraditional classroom setting.

Airway Science for Kids staff also frequently talk with youth about their academic and future goals, share information about different colleges and programs, and help students understand the requirements for STEM-related jobs. ASK hopes to align its programming with higher education requirements to create direct pathways to college programs that can in turn lead to careers.

Figure 29: Latino, black and American Indian students are more likely to be suspended and expelled, resulting in less time in the classroom.



Department of Education (2015). Civil rights data collection: 2011-12 discipline estimations by race and ethnicity.

Exclusionary discipline is another way that students lose instructional time. Latino, black and American Indian students are more likely to be suspended and expelled (see Figure 29). On average, 36 out of 10,000 students (of any racial/ethnic group) are expelled; however, that number jumps to 63 African-American students and 78 American Indian students. Similarly, while 5 percent of students overall receive an in-school or out-of-school suspension, 7 percent of African-American students receive an in-school suspension and 12 percent receive an out-of-school suspension. In other words, more than one in 10 African-American students receives an out-of-school suspension during a given school year.

Differences in the summer experiences of low- and high-income students are another factor contributing to different educational outcomes for students. Higher-income students are more likely to have access to enriching summer activities and books and educational toys and activities at home. National research has demonstrated that low-income students tend to lose two to three months of reading and math skills over the summer, which over time can cumulatively put these students two to three years behind their higher-income peers (Kim et al., 2011). Thus, like school-year absenteeism and exclusionary discipline, differences in summer opportunities result in less academic time for low-income students and students of color.

Segregation of schools also hurts low-income students and students of color. White students nationally are three times more likely to attend affluent schools, while

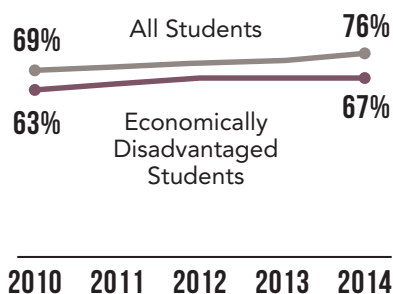
black students are six times as likely to attend poor schools. The concentration of poverty in a school contributes to poorer educational outcomes for students (Whitehurst, Reeves & Rodrigue, 2016). School segregation along racial and economic lines results in lower teacher quality and lower school financing, among other indicators of school quality (Flynn et al., 2016). Over time, the proportion of students attending high-poverty schools has increased; these students have less exposure to enrichment activities and often have less-engaged teachers and communities (AEI-Brookings Working Group on Poverty and Opportunity, 2015). In Oregon, 32 percent of economically disadvantaged students in Title I-funded schools met or exceeded the third-grade reading standards, compared to 41 percent of economically disadvantaged students in schools that don't receive Title I funding. Further, Oregon's poorest schools provide fewer opportunities for students, as exhibited in the number of Advanced Placement (AP) courses offered: While 70 percent of more affluent districts in Oregon offer AP courses, less than 50 percent of the poorest districts offer AP classes. Further, the gap in AP offerings in Oregon is wider than nationally: Nationally, more than 60 percent of the poorest districts offer AP courses (Mattingly et al., 2015).

Further, extracurricular and enrichment opportunities (such as after-school programs), which can provide important support and enrichment leading to more engagement with, and attendance at, school, are disproportionately available to higher-income students, and a larger proportion of higher-income



Grants Pass

Figure 30: Low-income students are less likely to graduate from high school.



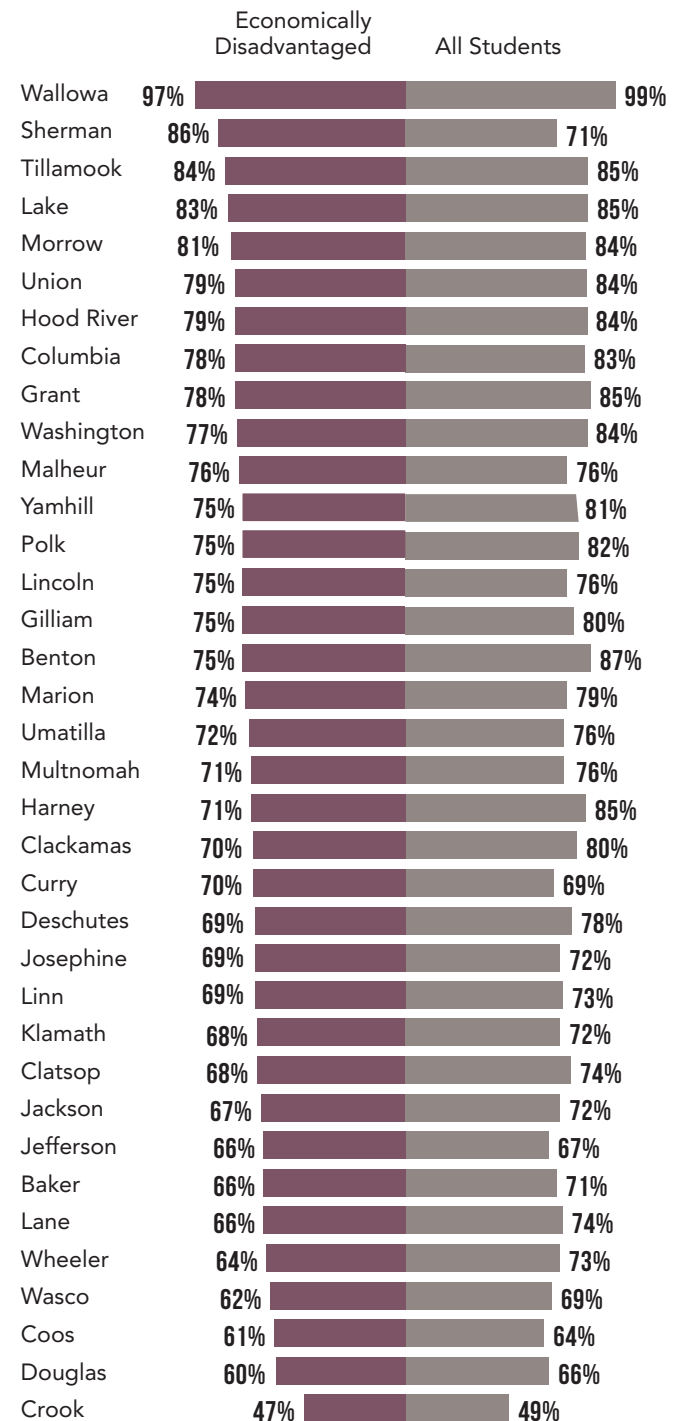
Five-year high school graduation rates, Oregon Department of Education

students participate in out-of-school activities than lower-income students. While nearly all higher-income Oregon students participate in out-of-school enrichment, only about two-thirds of lower-income students take part in these opportunities (Mattingly et al., 2015).

Low-income students in Oregon graduate from high school at a lower rate than other students: While the overall high school graduation rate in Oregon is 76 percent, just 67 percent of the state's low-income students graduate (**see Figure 30**). Graduation rates have increased for both groups since 2010, though the increase is less marked for lower-income students, resulting in a growing gap in graduation rates.

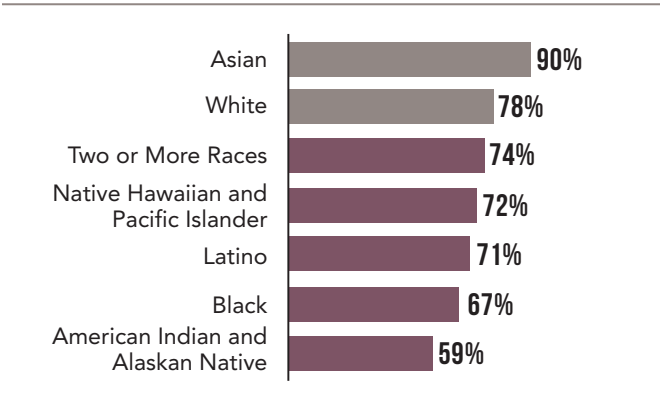
Rates are similar for urban and rural students, and the gap between low-income students and their peers exists in every Oregon county (**see Figure 31**).

Figure 31: Graduation rates vary by county.



Five-year high school graduation rates for economically disadvantaged and all students, 2015, Oregon Department of Education

Figure 32. With the exception of Asian students, students of color are less likely to graduate than their white peers.



Five-year high school graduation rates by race and ethnicity, 2015, Oregon Department of Education

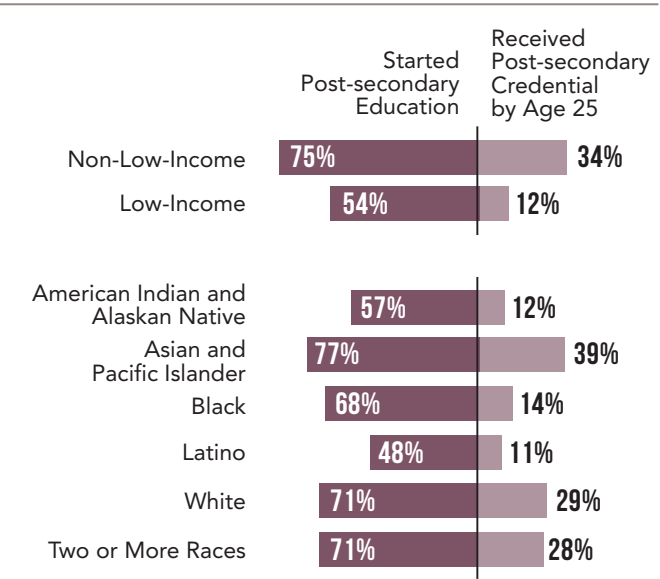
Graduation rates differ markedly between different racial/ethnic groups. Nearly nine out of 10 Asian students graduate from high school, while just under 60 percent of American Indian students graduate (see Figure 32).

Low-income students are less likely to pursue post-secondary education and training.

Individuals with post-secondary educational attainment—whether a certificate or degree—fare better economically than those with a high school diploma or less. Nationally, while post-secondary enrollment has increased over the past several decades for all socioeconomic groups, the gap in enrollment between low-income and higher-income students is growing, and low-income students are more likely to attend community colleges and less-selective four-year colleges. Not only do low-income students have lower enrollment rates, but they also have lower completion rates as well (AEI-Brookings Working Group on Poverty and Opportunity, 2015). The gap in completion rates can be due to academic preparation, lack of knowledge about how the higher education system operates and supports navigating it, and economic and family pressures.

Economic pressures can be acute for Oregon’s low-income students, as Oregon’s community colleges have ranked among the least affordable in the West. While the creation of Oregon Promise (state funding to cover tuition costs at Oregon Community Colleges for recent high school graduates) is an important step in address-

Figure 33. Low-income students and most students of color are less likely to enroll in and complete post-secondary education.



Where students in the public high school class of 2006 went by age 25, Oregon Learns, 2015

ing affordability, many students still struggle to afford the full cost of attendance (which includes tuition, books, fees and related expenses such as child care and transportation). Community colleges serve as a crucial front door for students with varied goals, including those who are pursuing career technical certificates and associate degrees as well as those who ultimately want to transfer to colleges and universities to pursue four-year degrees. Without aid, students must increase their debt burden, work or reduce credit hours to make college more affordable. Each of these options has a negative impact on educational attainment (The Oregon Community Foundation, 2015). Indeed, many students who enroll in community college do not continue on to completion; these students may need extra supports to successfully navigate college systems, balance priorities and succeed academically.

Patterns of post-secondary enrollment and completion in Oregon mirror the national trends. Analysis of a cohort of Oregon high school students tracked over time starting in their sophomore year indicates that just over half of low-income students who were sophomores in 2003 enrolled in post-secondary education, compared to three-quarters of their higher-income peers (see Figure 33). Further, just 12 percent of these low-income students received a post-secondary credential by age 25, compared to 34 percent of their higher-income peers (Oregon Learns, 2015).



Springfield

12% OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS RECEIVED A POST-SECONDARY CREDENTIAL BY AGE 25, COMPARED TO 34% OF THEIR HIGHER-INCOME PEERS.

Post-secondary enrollment and completion vary greatly by race/ethnicity as well. More than 70 percent of Asian, white and multiethnic students enrolled in post-secondary education, compared to 68 percent of African-American, 57 percent of American Indian and just 48 percent of Latino students. Asian, white and multiethnic students also were the most likely to complete a post-secondary credential at 39 percent, 29 percent and 28 percent respectively, while just 12 percent of American Indian, 14 percent of African-American and 11 percent of Latino students obtained a post-secondary credential by the age of 25.

Differences in educational opportunity and the resultant differences in educational outcomes start early—during children’s earliest experiences as infants and toddlers—and continue throughout their time in the K-12 educational system. Ultimately, this educational opportunity gap results in lower graduation rates and post-secondary enrollment and completion for low-income children and children of color. This disparity in educational outcomes matters: Lack of a post-secondary credential or degree limits economic mobility, and the lack of a post-secondary degree or certificate can be particularly limiting for children in poverty. Nearly half of children raised in poverty who do not earn a college degree remain in poverty as adults, compared to only 10 percent of those who do (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2012). As these children start families of their own, a new generation of children, in turn, are likely to face the same opportunity gap that limited their parents’ life choices.

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Better Together

Helping Students Succeed Through Community-Wide Collaboration

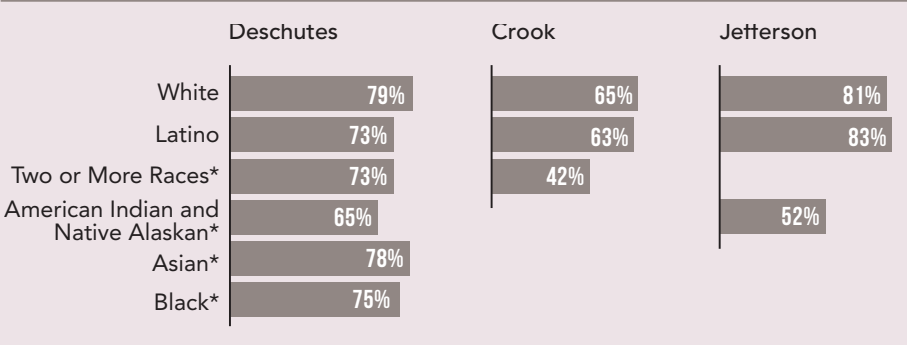
Better Together is working across Crook, Deschutes and Jefferson counties to ensure academic success for Central Oregon students, starting with kindergarten readiness and continuing all the way through entry into a meaningful career.

Education leaders, including superintendents and higher education administrators, came together in 2012 with nonprofits and businesses in Central Oregon to strategize about how to partner more closely to support students for success. The result, a collective impact project called Better Together, is a cross-sector partnership involving more than 200 stakeholders in the region. The goal of this collaborative is to ensure that every student has the skills and resources to enter a meaningful career.

Katie Condit, executive director of Better Together, explains that while Better Together aims to improve outcomes for all Central Oregon’s students, the collaborative has focused special attention on serving underserved and underrepresented populations of students. For example, the Juntos program, led by Oregon State University-Open Campus, is one central component of the strategy to serve Latino students and families in all six school districts in the region. Juntos offers a six-week session that brings students and their families together in middle and high schools to provide information and resources about the higher education process and to address barriers to post-secondary success. Among

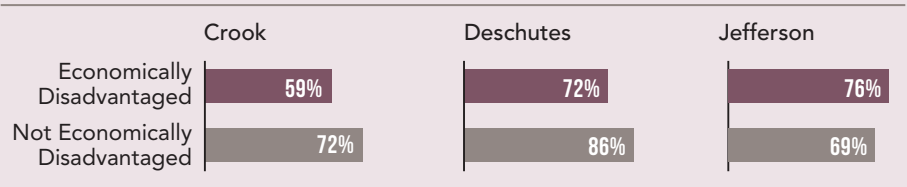


Graduation rates vary significantly by race and ethnicity in Central Oregon.



Five-year high school graduation rate, 2015-16, Oregon Department of Education
*Rates for these races have been omitted for some counties due to small student populations. The rate for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students was omitted for all three counties.

Low-income students are less likely to graduate in Crook and Deschutes counties.



Five-year high school graduation rate, 2015-16, Oregon Department of Education

participating families in Central Oregon, the program boasts a 100 percent high school graduation rate and a 98 percent post-secondary enrollment rate.

The organizations participating in Better Together are coordinating services across the pre-K through post-secondary educational continuum while at the same time placing special emphasis on addressing the needs of the community’s underserved and underrepresented populations. Working together, these organizations are committed to improving educational outcomes for all Central Oregon students.



Lincoln City

**THOUGH MUCH OF THE DATA IN THIS
REPORT IS DISCOURAGING,
THERE IS MUCH THAT
CAN BE DONE TO
IMPROVE PROSPECTS
FOR OUR CHILDREN.**

CONCLUSION

The data in this report demonstrate that we are failing our kids. Low-income children, children of color and many children living in rural Oregon do not have the same opportunities to succeed as their peers, making them less likely to overcome the circumstances into which they are born and achieve the American dream.

The nearly 200,000 children in Oregon who are currently living in poverty face many obstacles to reaching the middle class. They are more likely to live in economically segregated neighborhoods or high-poverty areas where there is likely a lack of quality housing and job opportunities. They are also more likely to have family circumstances that limit the family's economic prospects and, ultimately, the children's chances to move up the income ladder as adults. Rising costs for child care and housing combined with stagnating family incomes make it even harder for poor families with children to survive, let alone prosper, in the state.



Portland

SYSTEMIC SEGREGATION AND RACISM EXACERBATE THE CHALLENGES OF POVERTY FOR OREGON'S CHILDREN OF COLOR.

Beginning in infancy, educational experiences and opportunities further shape prospects for children in poverty. Oregon's low-income children are less likely to be raised in early learning environments that expose them to the materials and experiences needed for cognitive and social development. In addition, the stress endured by low-income parents too often impacts their relationships with their children and, in turn, early brain development. These gaps that begin in early childhood persist, as evidenced by the achievement gaps seen in the Oregon Kindergarten Assessment and third-grade reading scores. Academic achievement among low-income children is further inhibited by higher rates of exclusionary discipline and chronic absenteeism and fewer enrichment activities. These disparate educational experiences ultimately result in fewer low-income children graduating from high school and pursuing post-secondary opportunities, continuing the cycle of poverty for the next generation.

Systemic segregation and racism exacerbate the challenges of poverty for Oregon's children of color. First, children of color are more likely to live in poverty compared to their white peers. Moreover, the disparities seen for low-income children are often even wider for children of color. While it is difficult to tease out the separate effects of poverty and race, these findings suggest that children of color face additional barriers as a result of historical discrimination and systematic, structural racism. As the number of children of color continues to rise in Oregon, it is imperative that we address these barriers and build on the strengths and resiliency found in Oregon's diversifying communities.

The picture is somewhat less clear for children living in rural Oregon. Educational attainment is generally lower in rural communities, and some rural communities face worse economic prospects. In recent years, an increasing number of rural children are living in single-parent families, and those families are often more likely to be in poverty than the statewide average. At the same time, poor children living in rural Oregon counties have both the worst (Jefferson County) and best (Wallowa and Grant counties) chances of making it out of poverty. And while rural children show levels of academic achievement similar to their urban peers', they often have less access to services and enrichment opportunities that may help them succeed. Rural Oregon is far from monolithic, and rural communities each have their strengths and challenges, as do Oregon's urban communities. To ensure that all Oregon children have a chance to succeed, we need to continue to work to understand these strengths and challenges and how opportunities may differ for rural and urban children.

Though much of the data in this report is discouraging, there is much that can be done to improve prospects for our children. Potential solutions exist within the spheres of communities and neighborhoods, family supports, and educational opportunities:

- **Encourage economically and racially integrated communities by supporting collaborative affordable housing solutions.** Housing affordability challenges prevent many low-income and minority families from living in safe neighborhoods with job opportunities, amenities like grocery stores and high-quality schools. Policymakers, nonprofit leaders and the private sector should continue to work together to both increase the stock of affordable housing and ensure that housing is located in opportunity-rich neighborhoods where families can thrive.
- **Strengthen neighborhoods and communities by encouraging community engagement, collaborative problem-solving and leadership development, especially among communities of color.** Social capital is strongly associated with economic mobility and fostered through community involvement. Moreover, social change efforts are more successful when they directly engage and are led by community members who are best-equipped to define community assets, problems and potential solutions (Barnes and Schmitz, 2016). When seeking to improve outcomes for low-income communities and communities of color, members of those communities need to play a leadership role in designing solutions if they are to be feasible and sustainable.
- **Strengthen families and foster better child-parent relationships by increasing access to parenting education.** Healthy relationships with parents promote brain development and protect against the toxic effects of stress by building resilience in children (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2017). As demonstrated in the Building Healthy Families profile (see page 19), quality parenting education helps parents build strong relationships with their children by equipping them with communication and stress-reduction tools. In addition, a cumulative evaluation of the Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative found that parents who attended evidence-based parenting education series reported significant improvement in parenting skills and their children's behavior (2017).
- **Improve economic prospects for families by supporting career and technical education (CTE).** CTE programs focus on training people for skilled, well-paying blue-collar positions and have been shown to more positively impact low-income workers' earnings than other training program models (AEI-Brookings Working Group on Poverty and Opportunity, 2015). The best CTE programs bring community colleges and local industry together to ensure that offerings are aligned with local family-wage jobs. High school CTE programs are also most promising when they are integrated into the core curriculum so that students are learning applied math or incorporating technical writing into their English classes.



Medford

**SOCIAL CHANGE EFFORTS
ARE MORE SUCCESSFUL
WHEN THEY DIRECTLY ENGAGE
AND ARE LED BY
COMMUNITY MEMBERS.**



Sutherlin

FAMILIES SHOULD BE ENGAGED AS PARTNERS IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION.

- **Increase the availability of family-wage jobs by supporting small businesses, entrepreneurs and rural job creation.** Small businesses are important drivers of local economic growth and have been shown to boost county employment rates and income levels while lowering poverty rates (Rupasingha, 2013). Ensuring that entrepreneurs, especially women, minorities and rural business owners, have access to capital, peer networks and other support will lead to new jobs and greater economic well-being for families and communities.
- **Ensure that more children are ready for kindergarten by increasing access to high-quality, affordable early childhood education.** Improving the availability of books in the home, increasing research-based professional development among child care workers and expanding the availability of child care and preschool are important steps in narrowing the opportunity gap early in a child's life. At the same time, increasing affordable child care options is crucial to supporting working families while ensuring that children receive high-quality early care. In addition, encouraging collaboration among prekindergarten through third grade education providers can help smooth transitions and ensure that students stay on track with the appropriate social, emotional and academic skills needed to succeed. In fact, long-term studies have found that children educated in aligned PK-3 systems demonstrate increased math, reading and social skills (Kauerz, 2013). Most importantly, families should be engaged as partners and given the knowledge and skills they need to support children's early learning.
- **Encourage K-12 academic success by ensuring all children have access to a variety of extracurricular and enrichment activities.** High-quality enrichment programs (including after-school programming, arts education and advanced placement classes, among others) can support academic success by providing innovative approaches to learning and can also support social-emotional learning (Leonard and Preciado, 2016). Preliminary evaluation results from OCF's K-12 Student Success: Out-of-School Time Initiative indicate that participation in high-quality out-of-school time programs also may be associated with regular attendance and can support families in navigating the education system and advocating and supporting their children toward academic success.
- **Increase post-secondary enrollment and completion by supporting low-income and first-generation students.** Low-income students often need significant financial assistance to make post-secondary education a viable option. Offering larger, multiyear financial aid and scholarships can help encourage college enrollment and completion (The Oregon Community Foundation, 2015). Families benefit from programs that provide assistance with understanding and navigating the higher education and financial aid systems. Low-income and first-generation students also often benefit from strong, culturally appropriate advising and streamlined scheduling that help them navigate course requirements for degree completion.



Medford

A common thread throughout these strategies is family engagement. Children fare best when their families are empowered and supported in making positive changes in their communities, in their own career development, in their parenting and in their children's education from birth through post-secondary.

The issues related to communities, families and education highlighted in this report are interconnected and must be addressed holistically. Solutions often involve long-term partnerships between government, nonprofit organizations, philanthropy, the private sector and community members. There is much work to be done to ensure that all children have the opportunity to succeed and no shortage of examples of Oregonians across the state who are working tirelessly to find solutions. We are especially encouraged by the increased focus on equity, diversity and inclusion among nonprofit organizations and philanthropy. These efforts will be most successful with meaningful participation and leadership from all of Oregon's diverse communities. Through the aggregation of these efforts—small and large, local and regional—we can ensure that all of Oregon's children receive a fair shake at forging their American dream.

**WE CAN ENSURE THAT
ALL OF OREGON'S
CHILDREN RECEIVE A
FAIR SHAKE AT FORGING
THEIR AMERICAN DREAM.**

OCF IS COMMITTED TO ADDRESSING OREGON'S OPPORTUNITY GAP



The mission of The Oregon Community Foundation (OCF) is to improve life for all Oregonians. A critical part of that mission is assuring that all of Oregon's children have the opportunity to reach their full potential. However, in our state, children from low-income families, many children from rural areas and children of color experience a significant opportunity gap that impacts their chances of future success.

OCF is addressing this opportunity gap through our education programs as well as through investments in communities and other supports for children and families. OCF is supporting parenting education hubs (including the Building Healthy Families program highlighted in this report) around the state that are coordinating parenting education classes and related services for families. Investing in parents as children's first and most important teachers, along with OCF's other early childhood investments, aims to ensure that children are ready for success in kindergarten and beyond.

OCF also invests in enrichment activities for K-12 students. Out-of-school time programs for low-income children, children of color and rural children are improving students' school attendance, assisting with their academics, providing positive adult role models and engaging families in their children's schooling.

Post-secondary attainment is a key to economic advancement and security. OCF supports a variety of programs that provide college mentoring and support, and also awards scholarships to more than 2,300 students each year.

We must strengthen our neighborhoods and communities in addition to supporting children's educational needs. OCF is doing so through a variety of community engagement projects, including leadership development among Oregon's growing Latino community.

Economic vitality across the state is encouraged by investing in Oregon companies and loaning capital to organizations that provide loans to minority-owned and rural businesses. Increasing family wage employment opportunities strengthens families and communities.

There are myriad other interconnected issues that contribute to children's success, and we support nonprofits in every corner of the state that provide a variety of services to children and families, including children's dental health services, enrichment and arts activities, housing, and substance abuse treatment and mental health services, among many others.

OCF collaborates with other philanthropic organizations throughout the state in our initiatives, and we work in partnership with the public sector to address the needs of Oregon's children and families.

None of this would be possible without OCF's donors and their generosity and dedication to the future of this state. They make it possible to do this critical work on behalf of Oregon's children. I urge you to join this important work in your communities: Together, we can make Oregon a land of opportunity for all of our children.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kirby Dyess".

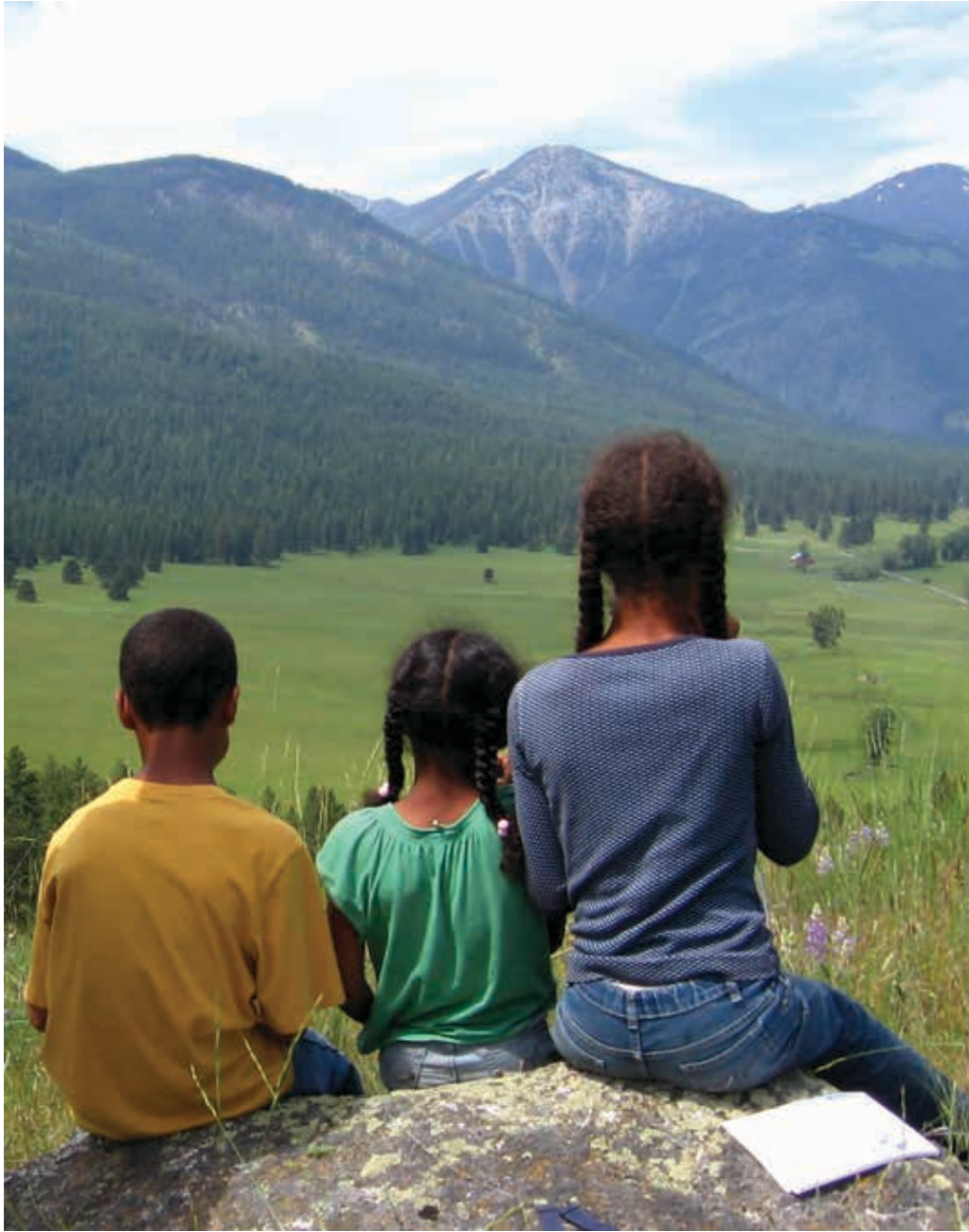
Kirby Dyess
Chair, OCF Board of Directors

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In 2013, The Oregon Community Foundation (OCF) worked with Oregon State University (OSU) to create a set of indicators to track the economic, social and environmental progress of Oregon. These indicators were added to the existing Communities Reporter Tool website as a set of TOP (Tracking Oregon's Progress) indicators. OCF and OSU have published three reports using the TOP indicators. The first report describes the progress that Oregon has made over the past two decades, the second focuses on income inequality across the state and the third highlights available data about Latinos in Oregon. The data were also used to produce this report. All four reports and the TOP indicators are available at oregoncf.org/top-indicators.



The mission of
The Oregon Community Foundation is to
improve lives for all Oregonians through the
power of philanthropy.

PORTLAND
1221 SW Yamhill St.
Suite 100
Portland, OR 97205
503.227.6846

BEND
15 SW Colorado Ave.
Suite 375
Bend, OR 97702
541.382.1170

EUGENE
440 E Broadway
Suite 160
Eugene, OR 97401
541.431.7099

MEDFORD
818 W Eighth St.
Medford, OR 97501
541.773.8987

SALEM
1313 Mill St. SE
Suite 203
Salem, OR 97301
503.779.1927