



# Community Engagement

## New High School Graduation Requirements

**Summary Report provided by  
Oregon's Kitchen Table**

June 2024

In 2022, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) wanted input about what the state should require high school students to learn. They hired Oregon's Kitchen Table (OKT) to ask Oregonians. People said students should learn how to manage their personal finances and plan for their future (e.g., decide on college or a career).

In 2023, the Oregon legislature passed a new law that requires students to learn both of these skills to graduate. These new requirements are called Personal Financial Education and Higher Education and Career Path Skills.

In 2024, ODE and OKT asked groups of people what the standards should be for learning these newly required skills. (Standards describe what students should learn and be able to do after learning the skills.)

We asked people how they themselves use similar knowledge and skills. We made a special effort to hear from students and families who often don't get to share their views on public issues.

This summary tells what we heard. Please see [the full report](#) for more details.



## How we heard from people

We reached out to people in a variety of ways. We interviewed thirteen people. We also worked with our partners to host ten meetings across Oregon. (We call these meetings “community conversations.”)

We heard from youth and from adults who support youth. They were people from groups that have traditionally experienced unfairness in education. They included people who identify themselves or the youth they support as the following:

- LGBTQIA2S+
- Immigrant or refugee youth
- Youth whose parents have been in prison
- Youth involved in the social service or juvenile justice system
- English learners
- Youth who is Black, Latinx, or Filipino
- Youth who experience a disability
- Youth who has experienced houselessness

## What we asked people about

We showed people the new requirements for graduating from high school. We explained the purpose of the requirements. We also shared proposed standards. Then we asked people about the following:

- How the standards reflect people’s community and culture
- Whether it is better to have classes that focus only on these topics, or whether personal finance and future planning could be combined with other classes, like a math class or business class
- What students specifically need to learn about the skills to be successful
- What will help students learn these skills and what makes it hard for students to learn these skills
- How students could show what they learned

## What we heard

### What people agree about overall

- Most people support the new requirements. They want students to be able to make good decisions about money and their future.
- Many people are anxious about students’ futures. They worry that students won’t find well-paying jobs and affordable housing.
- Many people hope the standards will build on and honor the strengths students already have.
- Many people think these skills can help students and their families. However, some people are also concerned that the skills could cause family tensions. For example, different generations might not agree about using credit or going to college.

- People feel it is important for teachers to be able to meet the needs of a wide range of students.
- People want the classes to be hands-on. They want them to be relevant to students' cultures and interests.
- People think the courses should offer more than one teacher's viewpoint.

### **What people disagree about overall**

- People disagree about how flexible the standards should be. People wondered if all students should meet the same standards.
- People disagree whether there should be classes on these topics only, or whether these standards could be added to other classes like a math class or business class.
- People disagree about what grade students should be in when they learn these skills in high school.

### **What people think about teaching personal finance skills**

- People feel the Personal Financial Education courses could help all students have more knowledge and skills to build wealth. This would make it more fair for students who don't learn these skills at home.
- Some people feel students should learn to be successful in mainstream society. Other people feel students should learn skills that are in line with their own cultural views about money and success. Other people think our society has some ideas about money and success that don't work well. And they would like this class to help change those ideas.
- Some people said that there are resources already from many organizations that teach these skills. There are many organizations that teach these skills for specific cultures and communities.
- Many people said the classes should show that poverty is a problem with our society, not the result of someone's choices. Teachers should be aware that many students have had bad experiences with money in the past, like not having enough money.
- People suggested some financial issues the standards should include:
  - Specific cultural practices related to saving, banking, and investing
  - Budget skills to help students learn what it costs to live
  - Ways students could pursue the kind of life they want
- Many people have concerns about making math classes the place where students learn financial skills.

### **What people think about teaching skills for planning for the future (“Higher Education and Career Path Skills”)**

- People felt that the skills should show students their own strengths and interests.
- People felt that the classes can build on many existing programs and classes.
- People disagree about whether all students should have to meet all standards. Some felt students should only have to meet standards that are relevant to their own life plans.
- Many people feel that it is difficult for students and families to understand how to apply for financial aid. They also think it is hard to learn how to get into trade apprenticeships.

- Many people felt it would be better to have more than one teacher help students explore careers.
- People want help for students to make decisions about student debt.
- Many people feel students need to learn how to behave at work or school. They want to see students learn to collaborate, respond to feedback, and be on time.
- Many people said there are things that make it hard for some students to plan for their futures. They mentioned difficulty getting housing and transportation and having the right identity documents.
- Some people said that some students find it hard to think about the future. They think this is hard for incarcerated youth.

## What happens next

Over and over, youth and families told us they are happy that high schools will teach these important skills. People we talked to in 2022 were eager to talk to us again in 2023. Such interest suggests that people will want to stay informed.

The Board of Education and the Oregon Department of Education will use this input to create the standards. The standards have to be approved by the Board of Education. Then the Oregon Department of Education will create materials for these classes.

Starting with the class of 2027, all students will have to complete .5 credit in Personal Financial Education and Higher Education and Career Path Skills to get an Oregon diploma.

We applaud ODE for valuing public input. We urge ODE to keep letting communities know what is happening in regards to these new requirements. It will be valuable to let people know how their input will improve the future for Oregon high school students.

## About Oregon's Kitchen Table

*OKT is part of the National Policy Consensus Center at Portland State University. OKT works to give all people a voice in public decisions. We work to connect with people who usually aren't included in these decisions. OKT helps people discuss state, local, and regional issues. OKT uses many ways and in many languages to learn what people think and experience.*