SB 739 Oregon High Schools Transforming with the Oregon Research Schools Network
Sponsored by Senator Roblan

What is ORSN?

Based on the Agricultural Extension model, the Oregon Research Schools Network (ORSN), from the College of Education at the University of Oregon (UO), extends service, instruction and research statewide by placing experts in the field to help improve academic and career outcomes for Oregon's youth. UO is currently in a unique five-year pilot project, in partnership across Oregon, with North Eugene High School (4J), Roosevelt High School (PPS), Pendleton High School (PSD) and Coquille High School (CSD).

What is unique about ORSN

ORSN's work is rooted in the Oregon Equity Lens, improvement and implementation science. It uses an improvement cycle, leveraging localized data to examine systems, structures and achievement in order to establish key school-specific, evidence-based improvement goals and strategies that will help positively impact academic outcomes, student behavior and graduation rates. The partnership includes a continuous and robust evaluation process to help ensure the effectiveness of ORSN and the school-specific interventions.

Early returns on ORSN

As ORSN is currently in the middle of the first year of the five-year pilot. Data collection has so far shown that

• teachers feel their teaching practices, knowledge and skills have been enhanced by ORSN;

• teachers feel the professional development delivered under ORSN will increase student confidence as learners, positively influence students' physical or emotional well-being, positively affect student performance and/or achievement and increase graduation rates;

• the amount of teacher communication regarding their classroom implementation of the ORSN facilitated professional development has increased compared to prior to ORSN implementation.

Current areas of focus

The four network teachers and leadership teams, in partnership with UO researchers, are taking on some of the biggest systemic challenges faced by Oregon educators today as localized problems of practice with their university partners. At the same time, our network partner schools are engaging in field-initiated research to measure the impact of the intervention as a whole. Areas of focus include chronic absenteeism, 9th grade on-track, culturally-informed and trauma-informed practices, classroom management and engagement strategies, math success, elevating student voice, and teacher mentorship. Scaling up the evidence-based structures of ORSN and supporting its work with more high schools across the state will help Oregon meet its goals of improved performance and increased graduation.
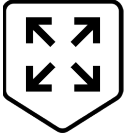
"[Before], our professional development program consisted of a hodgepodge of various unconnected topics. Our professional development today, due to the UO, district partnership is data-driven, consistent and effective. We are so fortunate to be a part of this groundbreaking pilot project." – ORSN Clinical Faculty

Expanding ORSN

SB 739 will allow ORSN to geographically expand across Oregon within its five-year pilot, serving an additional six high schools identified as high need, highly impacted, and geographically diverse. This will bring the ORSN to a total of ten high schools. Schools will be added through an open process, identifying geographically spread schools across Oregon with the highest need. ORSN holds strong promise for creating an improvement model to increase K-12 performance statewide. This pilot will be expanded and evaluated over a five-year period to assess its impact on diverse high school graduation rates and better participation in and completion of post-secondary education.

ORSN Expenditure

The budget requested for the 2020 – 2021 biennium is $2.5 million. This money will provide ORSN the capacity to:
• add six additional clinical professors at six new school sites across Oregon;
• continue the central coordination and management needed to directly support clinical professors and schools in the network, helping to ensure successful implementation;
• develop scale-up strategies including training materials on how to successfully implement an improvement model (which can be delivered online or in person), the development of a train the trainers approach, and a framework for how to increase university partnership opportunities with Oregon's high schools;
• implement a robust and continuous evaluation of ORSN that will determine the effectiveness of this promising model for diverse high schools across the state;
• convene with key stakeholders across the state, hold an annual educator conference for statewide dissemination of ORSN best practices, and publish a policy brief and other dissemination materials for legislators and the field of education across Oregon.

The unique partnership of ORSN

This close and continuous partnership between the university faculty and high school staff provides the opportunity to

• jointly shape the focus and direction of the research, goals and strategies within their schools;

• develop teacher leadership teams that lead the improvement and implementation cycle while ensuring voices from the field are heard and teacher expertise is valued;

• meet regularly over a virtual network to connect, collaborate, learn from one another and shrink geographic gaps;

• provide input into the development of a systemic model to improve all Oregon high schools and graduation rates.

• ensure the resources allocated as a result of the Joint Student Success Committee are part of a systemic, coherent approach to increase student outcomes, close opportunity gaps and strengthen relationships

"ORSN has opened up unique opportunities for our students and staff that were not available before, [for example] the I Am M.O.R.E. Project (Making Other Resiliency Experiences), which for the first time puts youth front and center of the growing national conversation about Trauma Informed Practices. We are now providing opportunities for young people who have experienced trauma to capture the power of their own stories."

-ORSN Clinical Faculty