

POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS

Putting Data in Educators' Hands to Enhance Equity

Partner Oregon Department of Education

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Education leaders in Oregon wanted to know more about student participation and outcomes in accelerated learning and career and technical education (CTE) programs of study in the state. Accelerated learning refers to educational experiences that allow high school students to earn college credit, such as advanced placement and International Baccalaureate courses, dual credit, and direct enrollment in college courses. CTE programs of study are a sequenced set of secondary and postsecondary courses that lead to the award of an industry-recognized credential or certificate or an associate or baccalaureate degree.

Through the REL Northwest contract, Education Northwest researchers conducted a pair of studies (Arneson et al., 2020; Hodara & Pierson, 2018) that both found a positive relationship between these education experiences and students' postsecondary outcomes. However, both studies also found lower levels of participation in accelerated learning and CTE participation for students of color and students from low-income backgrounds. In addition, students receiving special education services and those currently classified as English learner students engaged in accelerated learning and CTE less often than those who were not.

Understanding who participates in accelerated learning and career and technical education

To address Oregon's equity goals, Education Northwest developed a pair of data dashboards, one for accelerated learning and the other for CTE. The aim was to make the information about student participation in these programs more easily accessible to teachers and administrators. Equipped with that understanding, educators could then take steps to encourage more students to participate.

In building the dashboards, researchers worked to strike a balance between providing enough data for people to answer questions relevant to their own contexts, while not so much that the tool becomes overwhelming and unusable. They collected feedback from school districts and partners such as community colleges across the state to get input on the dashboard's usability and the filters needed to display the most relevant information.

Making data-informed decisions to support students

So far, the dashboards have been viewed more than 9,000 times. The Education Northwest team has also fielded many calls from high school, community college, and school district staff members who are trying to understand their data and think through its significance for improving student outcome equity. About one hundred educators registered for two trainings offered by Education Northwest, covering how to use the dashboards and strategies for supporting student access to accelerated learning and CTE coursework.

The dashboards currently contain data from the 2016–17 through 2020–21 school years, with 2021–22 soon to be added. The data are structured to make it easier to look at trends over time, keeping track of which groups of students are and aren't participating in accelerated learning and CTE. By using the dashboards over time to follow the data, educators will be better positioned to help all their students succeed.

“The dashboard gives school leaders and staff easy access to their disaggregated data, which in turn makes it easier to set ambitious equity goals and plan programs, outreach, and interventions that fit local needs.”

**– Kristidel McGregor, *Accelerated Learning Specialist*
Oregon Department of Education**