



Find Your Grind, Inc
8605 Santa Monica Blvd.
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Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of expanding future readiness efforts across Ohio's secondary schools. My name is Nick Gross, and I am here to speak to the importance of ensuring Ohio's students are future ready and workforce ready by expanding the implementation of Find Your Grind to reach at least 75% of secondary students statewide. To accomplish this goal, I respectfully request your support for a \$4 million investment over the next two years.

I want to first applaud Governor DeWine for prioritizing career readiness in this year's budget. His commitment to ensuring Ohio's students are prepared for the workforce of tomorrow is critical to the state's continued economic success. Find Your Grind aligns seamlessly with the Department's vision by providing students with the tools and skills necessary to navigate an evolving job market. Our approach not only prepares students for the careers of today but also equips them with the adaptability to thrive in careers that have yet to be created.

Additionally, I commend the Ohio legislature for its steadfast commitment to workforce readiness over the past two years. Your leadership in supporting career education initiatives has made a tangible difference in students' lives, and expanding Find Your Grind will build upon this momentum. By integrating career exploration with real-world skill development, we can continue closing the gap between education and the workforce needs of Ohio's employers.

A recent impact study conducted in Ohio further supports the effectiveness of Find Your Grind. The study found three major outcomes:

- Improved Social-Emotional Skills – Students who engaged with Find Your Grind showed significant improvement in their social-emotional competencies. On average, students rated their skills 19 percentile points higher after completing the program compared to those who did not participate.
- Increased Teacher Ratings of Student Readiness – Teachers rated students using Find Your Grind higher in career and social-emotional readiness. Educators observed a meaningful



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difference in students' ability to self-direct their career exploration and navigate their personal and professional growth.

- Greater Student Engagement and Completion Rates – Students actively participating in Find Your Grind experienced stronger career awareness and SEL development. Higher completion rates of program activities directly correlated with improved social-emotional learning outcomes, benefiting students across both middle and high school levels.

As we all know, Ohio's workforce landscape is changing rapidly. Data shows that 70% of Ohio employers struggle to find workers with the right skills to fill open positions. At the same time, only 23% of students nationally feel confident about their career plans after high school. This disconnect between education and workforce needs is a critical gap we must close.

Compounding this challenge, research indicates that 85% of the jobs that will exist in 2030 have not yet been invented, meaning today's students must develop adaptable, future-ready skills alongside a clear understanding of the careers and lifestyles they want to pursue.

Find Your Grind offers a student-centered, lifestyle-first approach to career readiness. Instead of asking students, "What job do you want?", the platform starts by asking, "What kind of life do you want to lead?" It then connects students' personal lifestyle preferences—whether they aspire to travel, work remotely, innovate, or make an impact locally—to relevant careers, skills, and educational pathways. This shifts the conversation from simply filling jobs to empowering students to find fulfilling careers aligned with who they are.

Through Find Your Grind, students build essential future-ready competencies such as adaptability, resilience, and self-direction—the very skills Ohio's employers say they value most. In addition, our solutions offer insight into the top industries and careers that are relevant to Ohio, and the growing workforce across the state. This statewide expansion would ensure that students in both urban and rural districts, regardless of zip code, have equitable access to these critical career exploration and future readiness tools.



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Investing \$4 million over the next two years to expand Find Your Grind across Ohio's secondary schools is an investment in Ohio's economic future. It is an investment in students who are not only workforce ready but also confident, engaged, and equipped to navigate the changing world of work.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to Ohio's students and workforce. I respectfully urge your support for this investment, and I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

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Impact and Implementation Evaluation of the Find Your Grind Program

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Find Your Grind is an adaptable online curriculum for middle and high school students focused on social-emotional learning (SEL) and career readiness. It facilitates self-discovery, skill development, and life planning, with a unique lifestyle-first approach to career exploration. The program, available in 9-, 18-, 27-, and 36-unit curricula options, emphasizes four key competencies: self-awareness, career-awareness, social-awareness, and action-awareness, which correspond to SEL's core competencies.

The curriculum personalizes learning through a Lifestyle Assessment that aligns students' interests with tailored content and tracks their progress with the Future Ready Indicator (FRI), a tool that evolves with students' curriculum activities and assessments, reflecting their preparedness in individual competencies.

Teachers can access instructional materials, monitor student progress through assessments, including the FRI, and guide students through additional activities and electives that are dynamically prioritized based on each student's lifestyle preferences, allowing for a customized learning experience.

In 2022, WestEd partnered with Find Your Grind to explore the impact of the Find Your Grind curriculum and professional development on students' social-emotional wellness through a quasi-experimental study. This executive summary provides findings for the impact and implementation study.

Method

The quasi-experimental study involved schools that chose to implement the Find Your Grind program in either Fall or Spring, with the former serving as the treatment group and the latter serving as a comparison group. Teachers who implemented in the Fall integrated Find Your Grind's SEL content into their classes for 12–15 weeks, while comparison teachers continued their usual curriculum. Both

groups participated in pre- and post-implementation assessments using the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) tool to measure students' social-emotional competencies.

Teachers in the treatment group received in-person professional learning, completed surveys, logged their experiences, and participated in interviews to discuss their use of the program. The study's data came from teacher surveys on instructional practices and perceptions of student readiness, professional learning feedback, and student demographic records. Additionally, the Find Your Grind platform tracked student engagement and completion rates of activities related to core competencies such as Self Awareness and Career Awareness.

Data Sample

Twenty-five middle and high school teachers, distributed as four treatment teachers and 21 comparison teachers, participated in the study. They represented schools from three school districts from a midwestern state. Schools were assigned to treatment or (delayed treatment) comparison groups based on each school's preference to begin using the Find Your Grind program in the fall semester or to wait to begin using the program until the spring semester.

From these recruited schools and classes, 186 students assented to participate in the study's treatment group and 313 students assented to participate in the study's comparison group. The student sample contained more male students than females in both groups and more middle school students versus high school students. The high school students in the treatment group were in 11th grade while the high school students in the comparison group were in 9th grade.

Prior to beginning the study, we surveyed participating teachers about the context of when they cover SEL topics during their instruction. Teachers using the Find Your Grind program reported incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) into Career and College Readiness courses, while responses from the comparison group were more diverse. Most teachers from both groups use state standards or their own materials for SEL rather than a specific curriculum, though two treatment teachers had previously used another SEL curriculum. Instruction time for SEL varied, with half spending 30 minutes or less weekly and the other half spending 31-60 minutes. When rating the emphasis on key SEL and Career Readiness elements, Find Your Grind teachers reported lower emphasis on three out of four indicators. Teachers' opinions differed on SEL resources and school practices. Nearly all teachers expressed a need for more resources on self-awareness, social awareness, career awareness, and action awareness, with about a third interested in professional development in these areas.

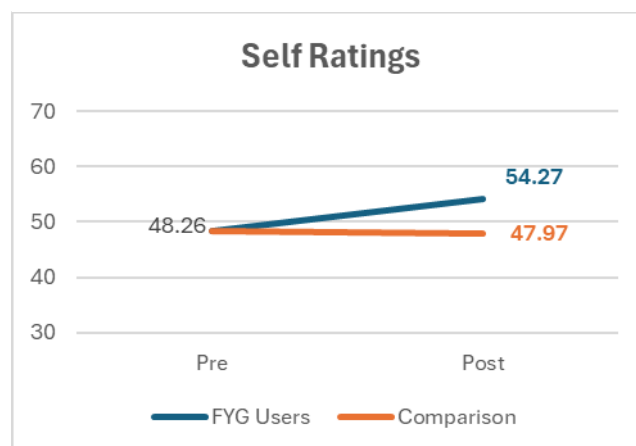
Impact of Find Your Grind on SEL outcomes

Find Your Grind group students were rated differently on the DESSA Social-Emotional Composite at pretest (i.e., prior to implementation) than the comparison group, indicating a lack of baseline equivalency. Additionally, the treatment and comparison samples differed in their demographic composition, with more treatment group students coming from historically underserved populations (i.e., the Find Your Grind group had a higher percentage of minority students, low-income students, English learners, and students with an IEP or Section 504 plan).

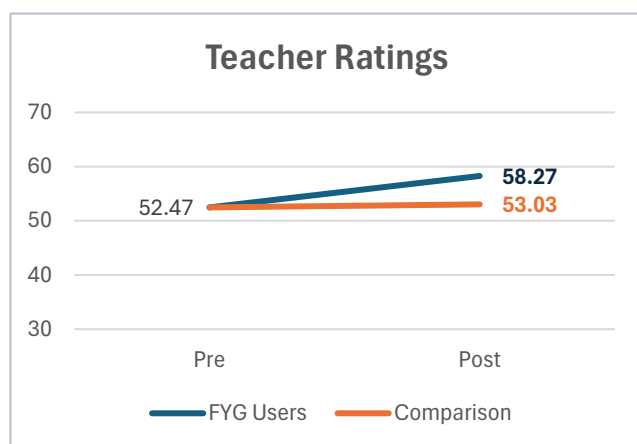
Students who used the Find Your Grind program self-rated their social-emotional skills higher than those who did not, according to a statistical analysis. **The analysis, which adjusted for initial self-**

ratings, revealed a model-predicted mean difference with a standardized effect size of 0.50, indicating a medium-sized positive effect of the program. This translates to an approximate 19 percentile point improvement on the social-emotional composite score for Find Your Grind students. The What Works Clearinghouse recommends using an Improvement Index alongside effect sizes to gauge educational interventions' impact on student performance. Predicted means from the model indicate that starting from the same baseline, Find Your Grind students were expected to rate themselves 6 points higher on average after completing the program compared to the comparison group, which showed little change.

Figure 1. Model Predicted Self Ratings by Timepoint



Furthermore, when analyzing middle and high school students separately, both school-level groups exhibited positive effects from using Find Your Grind, with high school students showing a greater and more statistically significant difference compared to middle school students.



We also compared teacher ratings of students on the DESSA Social-Emotional Composite (SEC) for students who used Find Your Grind to students who did not use the program. Teachers rated students who used the program higher on social-emotional skills compared to students who did not use the program, as shown by a statistical analysis using a two-level HLM model. **The analysis, which considered initial teacher ratings, found a mean difference of over 5 points favoring the Find Your Grind students. This difference corresponds to an**

effect size of 0.45 and suggests an improvement of 17 percentile points when translated into the improvement index.

When comparing middle and high school subsamples, both groups showed positive effects from using Find Your Grind, with the results being only slightly more pronounced for high school students. This indicates that the program had a positive impact on students' social-emotional competencies across both age groups, according to their teachers' assessments.

How Students engaged with the Find Your Grind program

The study found a significant positive correlation between student engagement in the Find Your Grind program and improvements in social-emotional learning (SEL) outcomes. Higher completion rates of Find Your Grind activities were associated with greater positive changes in students' self-ratings on the DESSA scales, suggesting that active participation in the program supports SEL development. Students on average completed 73% of the Find Your Grind curriculum, with middle school students completing

slightly more activities than high school students, although the differences were minimal. This indicates a consistent level of engagement across different educational levels, with unit completion rates ranging from 48% to 82%.

Students identified as having a greater "need for instruction" according to initial DESSA ratings experienced the most significant improvements after the implementation of Find Your Grind. Moreover, students who completed over 60% of the program activities exhibited more substantial gains in their SEL competencies, suggesting that the program may be particularly beneficial for students requiring additional support. While completing extracurricular activities was common, with an average of 56 activities completed per classroom, these did not significantly impact the overall SEL outcomes according to the study's findings. This suggests that the core curriculum activities are the primary drivers of positive change in SEL competencies.

The analysis indicated that gender and student age did not have a statistically significant effect on the SEL outcomes, highlighting that the Find Your Grind program's effectiveness is consistent across these demographic variables. This points to the program's broad applicability and potential for inclusive SEL development.

Teachers' Impressions of the Find Your Grind program

Teachers' feedback on Find Your Grind was mixed, highlighting both positive aspects and areas for improvement. They appreciated the program's student-focused personalization and creative content, including AI features and mentorship components.

"Find Your Grind is student-focused and very personalized."

"The program was a godsend ... ahead of the curve."

"Particularly in the beginning I noticed the students were really highly engaged in the parts where they were learning about themselves. At the very beginning when we hit those first lifestyle assessments, there was a lot of excitement over, 'Oh, these lifestyles make sense for me.'"

Some teachers expressed a desire for more control over assigning tasks and extending deadlines, especially for students with individual needs.

While the content was well-received, teachers suggested integrating more real-world options, like military careers, and tailoring the program to immediate student needs, such as college readiness. The program's independent nature allowed students to work through it on their own, but teachers wished for more interactivity and the ability to focus on specific sections that would engage students. Teachers used the teacher dashboard for lesson planning and tracking student progress, but some desired more functionality, like assigning badges or integrating with tools like Google Classroom. Professional development (PD) experiences were varied, with some teachers wanting more hands-on practice or pre-PD access to the program, while others felt it was useful as is.

Implementation of the Find Your Grind program

The implementation of Find Your Grind varied among teachers, with one following the prescribed study regimen and others adapting usage to fit their classroom needs, often reducing the frequency of Find Your Grind sessions to address student fatigue and engagement issues. Teachers praised the lifestyles unit for helping students learn about themselves and navigate their potential career paths, noting that students initially engaged well with the content. However, challenges included students clicking through materials without engagement, taking advantage of unlimited assessment retakes, and a lack of personalized pacing for students who missed content due to absences or other commitments. Some teachers also expressed a desire for more control over the program to better align with their grading systems and the need for additional resources to prevent students from gaming the assessment system.

To enhance the Find Your Grind experience, recommendations included reducing the number of weekly sessions to maintain student engagement, incorporating randomized assessment questions to discourage sharing of answers, and providing teachers with greater control over content access and pacing. Additionally, incorporating supplemental materials such as worksheets or interactive elements may help ensure students engage with the content rather than skim through it. Furthermore, adapting the program for a flipped classroom model, where students complete badges at home and classroom work during class, could be beneficial. Teachers suggested that Find Your Grind could be improved by adding context to familiar careers and providing a more user-friendly interface for tracking student progress. Finally, ensuring that the program content is differentiated to cater to the varying needs of middle and high school students could address some teachers' concerns about the program's suitability across different age groups.

Find Your Grind program updates

In response to the study's findings, the developers of Find Your Grind took actionable steps to refine and enhance their educational program, incorporating student outcomes and teacher feedback to better meet the needs of both instructors and students in future use. The curriculum has been updated to provide more flexibility for teachers, with features like individual badge assignments and adjustable deadlines. The Teacher Dashboard has been improved for better lesson integration, and professional development is emphasized as crucial for effective implementation. The program aligns with the National Career Clusters® Framework and includes a range of career options, including traditional, non-traditional, and direct-to-industry roles. Interactive activity templates and a dedicated library for each lesson have been introduced to enhance social and emotional learning. To improve student engagement, interactive templates, "brain breaks," and gamification features have been added, and a pacing guide helps maintain appropriate progress through the curriculum. A new analytics platform called FutureSpark has been developed to provide detailed progress tracking, and the curriculum has been made fully responsive to work across various devices. The program is designed to support flexible learning environments, both in and out of the classroom. Finally, a new middle school curriculum has been created with age-appropriate content and gamification, and adjustable reading levels have been introduced to accommodate different language proficiencies.