

**Oregon House of Representatives
Education Committee
April 15, 2013
Testimony**

Honorable Chair and committee members:

I am Diane Smith, representing the BEC, which is a state-wide, non-profit organization invested in quality education since 1984. As the Director of the Teaching and Learning Initiative for BEC, I am directly involved in BEC's role as the primary source for professional development in and systemic implementation of proficiency-based teaching and learning.

My goal in the next few minutes is to describe the strong connection between proficiency and current and proposed legislation.

As a public school educator for over 34 years, I have had the opportunity to see many education initiatives come and go. Most were NOT requested by teachers. I am extraordinarily proud of Oregon's educators because proficiency is the single initiative that I can remember teachers and administrators supporting and asking for professional development in. Here are a few facts that will give you a glimpse of what I'm talking about:

- Proficiency-based education supports learning in K-20 classrooms and is in all 50 states and many countries across the world.
- We currently have evidence of proficiency practices in classrooms from elementary school to higher education.
- Since 2005 BEC has provided professional development and implementation support to over 4500 attendees, representing teachers, building and district administrators, and school board members.
- Our 2012 annual proficiency survey results indicate over 90,000 of Oregon's students are learning in proficiency-based settings.
- Data collected by BEC supports that 84% of survey respondents believe that proficiency fosters equity in access to resources, time, and, learning opportunities; 79% say it improves academic performance and 71% believe it improves their teaching skills.

Committee members are no doubt aware of SB290, passed in a previous legislative session. This bill addressed educator evaluation and the creation of teacher leaders. We have worked with over 127 of Oregon's school districts. In reviewing their evaluation plans for SB290 compliance, I can report

that proficiency practices are prominent in the skill sets that teachers are working to perfect. And, through professional teams, teachers are self-evaluating their skills and setting personal goals to improve their craft in many areas of proficiency practices.

We also answer requests from individual districts and provide state-wide trainings in implementation of HB2220, originally passed in 2011 and scheduled to take effect in July 2013. This bill requires districts to report to parents and students whether a student is proficient in grade-level standards. It also directs districts to report student academic progress separate from non-academic factors. Some districts, like Medford, have spent almost two years studying and revising their reporting system, while other districts will likely supplement their existing report card with a report that outlines what students know and can do.

How does proficiency support the work this committee is charged to do?

1. HB3232 addresses the achievement gap, the need to promote and support successful academic practices, the Post-Secondary Aspirations Program, and connecting students to career options and STEM activities. I can report that schools are creating proficiency-based learning cultures where student learning is supported through a wide variety of unique schedules, through online access to lessons, and models where students advance upon mastery instead of because we hit a certain date on the calendar. We are working with schools that are requiring an internship experience in STEM settings as a requirement for graduation. These can be offered in a proficiency-based model with the teacher and the professional working together with the student to set clear and realistic goals and outcomes that can be used to gauge student learning. This kind of process creates a high level of buy-in and elevates the role of the student to a creator of his learning and not just a consumer.
2. HB3233 addresses creating a network of people and practices that have a proven track record in improving student achievement. Through partnerships with ODE, OEA, COSA and Chalkboard, we have created a network of services and resources that can pair teachers with similar interests and needs, as well as looking at differences in policy and implementation. We have been supporting this networking concept for the last eight years. When a superintendent recently contacted the state about wanting to know what districts were calling a “proficient” level of learning, he was given my email and phone number. When the Family and Consumer Science teachers took on the task of developing and sharing with their teachers across the state high quality test questions that can measure levels of student learning, we offered to post all of them on our document portal so any teacher can retrieve them when needed at no cost to the teacher or the district. And, when a Grants Pass administrator wanted to know how proficiency is improving learning for students on IEPs, we were able to share training tools with him and set up a training event with a proficiency coach who is also a Special Education teacher. We also network at a national level, sitting on two national advisory boards that focus on proficiency practices across the United States. You might be interested in knowing that, because of these connections, we were able to review and then secure

permission to share the grading and reporting handbooks of Lindsay Unified SD in California and Sanbourn Regional HS in Kingston, NH. These groups use proficiency-based practices and, as a result, their implementation documents can be strong and proven resources for our schools. We are currently supporting several districts who want to establish comprehensive grading and reporting parameters that are student-centered and easy for all stake holders to understand. Our database of who is doing what and how they are rolling out proficiency practices puts us in the role of daily connecting educators from one side of the state to another. We have worked in a networking service model since our first training event in proficiency and we support the state's efforts to establish ways that the best of services and practices can be brought to every classroom and every student across the state. That's our goal and that's what drives our service model.

What is the status of proficiency in Oregon schools today?

Look at the chart that reflects the significant rise in the number of training events requested over the last few years. And remember, while we have some state policies that address earning credit by proficiency and reporting student proficiency in standards, for the most part, proficiency is still a teacher-driven initiative in Oregon.

Where do we go from here?

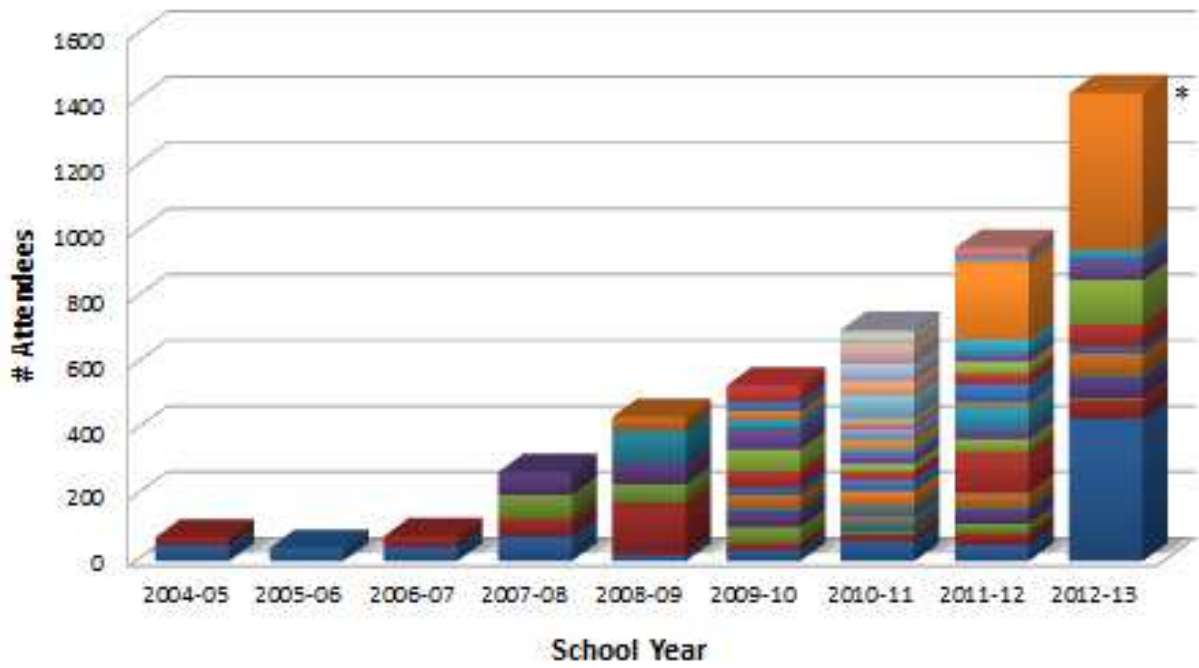
- Proficiency requires some investment, but the investments are DOABLE. We estimate that for \$1,000 per teacher—or \$13.5 million per biennium—proficiency could be fully scaled across Oregon's K-12 system in four years.
- To date, all efforts to transform Oregon K-12 education with proficiency have been done without State-level targeted funding. But systemic and effective scaling is not possible without this level of commitment.

The irony is that proficiency supports the achievement of most of the educational reform and achievement mandates this committee is considering. Why would we NOT make such a minimal investment for optimal results?

I'd like to close by inviting any of you who would like to attend a training event to join us in Eugene on April 29-30. You will have a chance to see teachers collaborating with one another in an effort to improve their craft, to make learning more engaging for both teachers and students, and to discuss ways that we can begin to tell the truth about what students know and can do.

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BEC Proficiency Trainings



* Estimated Training Attendees (March-May 2013)

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