

**Testimony Before House Education Committee
Hearing on English Language Learners
May 14, 2013**

Good afternoon. Chair Gelser, Vice-Chairs Sprenger and Reardon.

For the record, my name is Toya Fick. I am the director of government affairs with Stand for Children, Oregon. And together with our friends at the Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality, Adelantes Mujeres and the Chalkboard Project, we requested this hearing on educational outcomes for Oregon’s English Language Learning (ELL) students because we see a challenge that must be addressed with far more urgency.

The number of ELL students in Oregon is growing rapidly. And by every measure, our ELL students are significantly trailing their English-speaking peers in academic achievement. Equally troubling, their performance lags behind ELL students in other states.

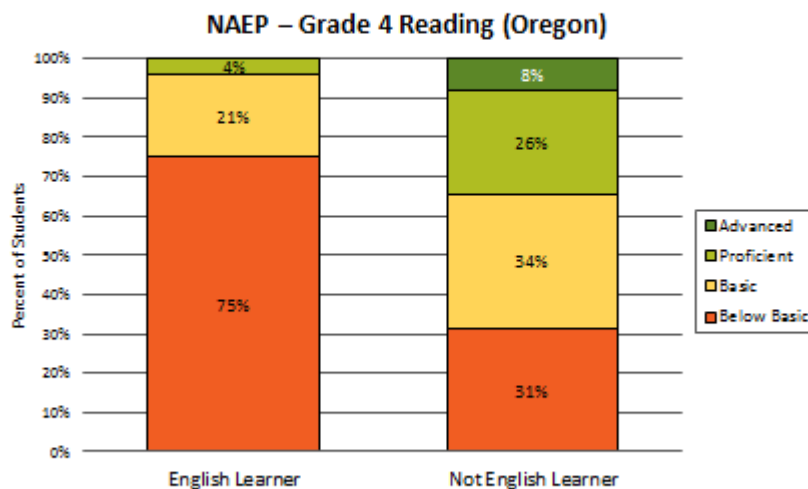
Statewide, only of our ELL students graduate from high school, compared to 70% of their English-speaking peers.

Oregon Graduation Rates

Student Subgroup	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
All students	66.4%	67.7%	68.4%
Limited English Proficient	49.7%	52.1%	49.2%
Not Limited English Proficient	68%	69.1%	70%
Economically Disadvantaged	59.8%	61.3%	61.1%

That should not be surprising, given how Oregon ELL students perform on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) and OAKS assessments. For example, data analyzed by the Education Trust show that at the 4th grade level on the NAEP, 75% of Oregon ELL students are rated as below basic, compared with just 1 in 3 non-ELL students.

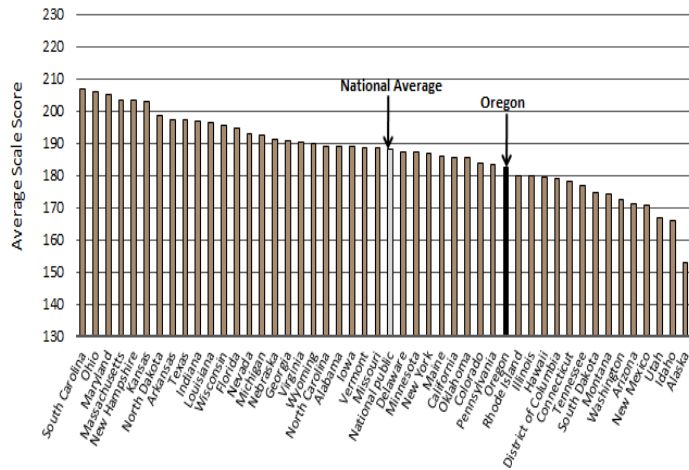
Oregon’s English learners generally have below basic reading skills



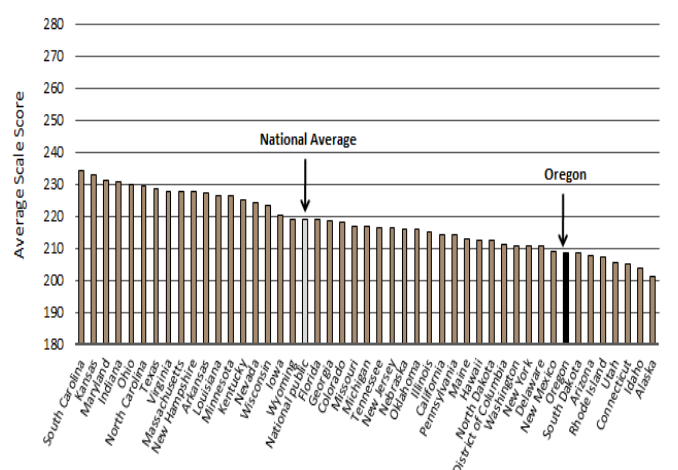
Source: NCE, NAEP Data Explorer

Further, Oregon ELL students' average scores on NAEP tests are well below the national average for ELLs in reading and math, at both 4th and 8th grade levels. In 4th grade reading, Oregon ranks 33rd among other states; in 4th grade math, 39th; in 8th grade reading, 26th; and in 8th grade math, we do slightly better at 17th.

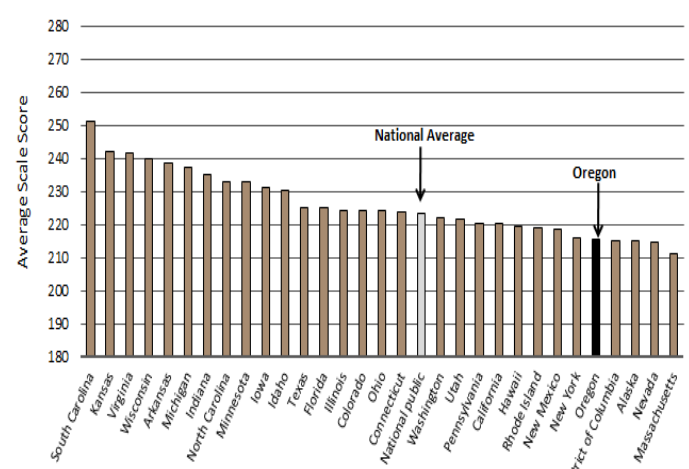
2011 NAEP Grade 4 Reading: Average ELL Scale Scores by State



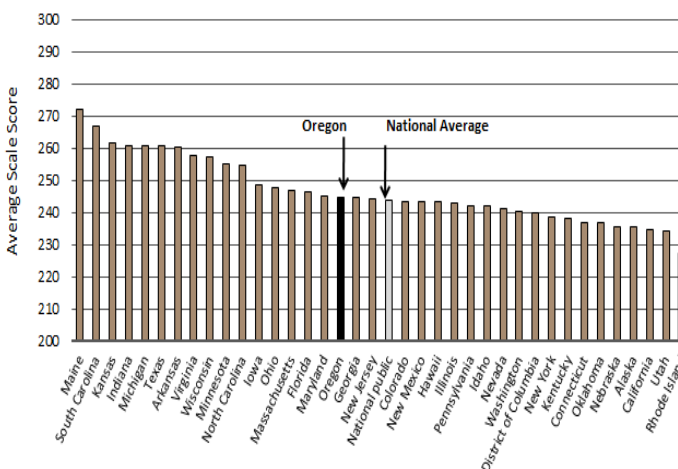
2011 NAEP Grade 4 Math: Average ELL Scale Scores by State



2011 NAEP Grade 8 Reading: Average ELL Scale Scores by State

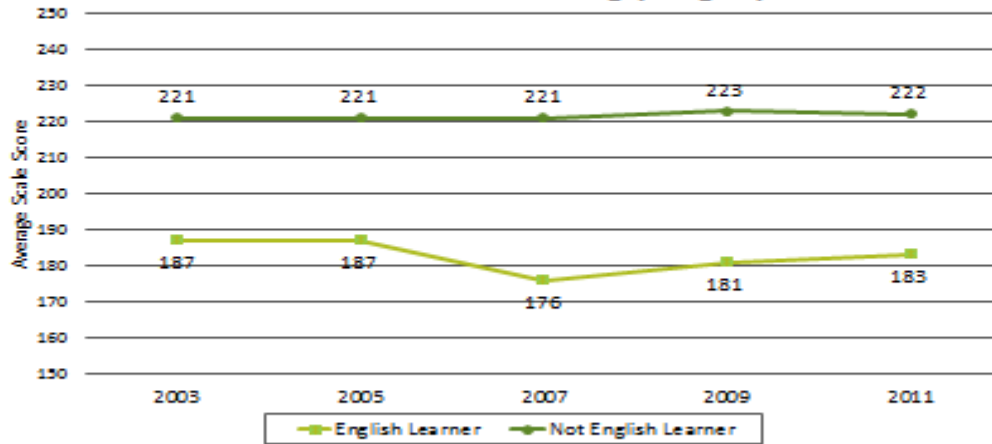


2011 NAEP Grade 8 Math: Average ELL Scale Scores by State



Of equal concern is the fact that academic achievement for ELLs in Oregon is almost completely stagnant. With a couple of notable exceptions, Oregon's public education system is not responding to the needs of this new generation of students. In 4th grade reading, for example, the achievement gap between ELL and non-ELL student on NAEP actually widened considerably between 2000 and 2009.

In Oregon, gap between English learners and non-English learners has widened slightly NAEP – Grade 4 Reading (Oregon)



Source: NCES, NAEP Data Explorer (Proficient Scale Score = 255; Basic Scale Score = 205)

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We can no longer gloss over these statistics.

There should also be no blaming. This is not a failure by teachers, or parents, or students.

It is a challenge for all of us, one that we can only meet by working together to prioritize the needs of children and respond to those needs with best practices and community support.

Other states have made progress in improving outcomes for ELLs, and here in Oregon a few communities have done it, for example in the Woodburn school district.

We are heartened by the presence of David Bautista at ODE, who has worked in two districts that made measurable progress in improving student achievement. We strongly encourage the legislature to support his leadership and to consider taking some action, either this session or in the interim, to pro-actively seek out policy ideas that will support and accelerate his efforts, as well as those of districts who have made ELL student achievement a priority.

A challenge of this magnitude needs leadership, and this is an issue that lacks a clear legislative champion in Oregon. It is our hope that one or more of you might be inspired today to rise to that challenge.

Thank you so much for your time.