

OREGON

Gifted programs are a key source of enriched and accelerated learning opportunities for students identified as high-achieving. When high-achieving youngsters from poor and minority backgrounds have less access to such programs than do their white or more prosperous peers, gifted education is more likely to exacerbate existing inequalities. For tomorrow's leaders to reflect the diversity of our country, today's elementary and middle schools must cultivate high-ability students from diverse backgrounds. Increasing participation of qualified yet underrepresented students in gifted programming in elementary and middle schools would help to narrow persistent achievement gaps across racial groups and level the playing field.

This profile of Oregon's gifted programming describes student participation in gifted programs using school-level data. Although we provide information on all elementary and middle schools in the Beaver State, we focus on high-poverty schools, showing the extent to which they offer gifted services and enroll students of different racial/ethnic groups.

There are 847 urban, suburban, and rural elementary and middle schools in our Oregon sample, 185 of which are considered high-poverty schools because 75 percent or more of their pupils are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. So that we do not distort the analysis by including schools that serve very few students, we exclude the 37 very small schools in Oregon with less than an average of 20 students per grade when calculating the percentage of schools with gifted programs.

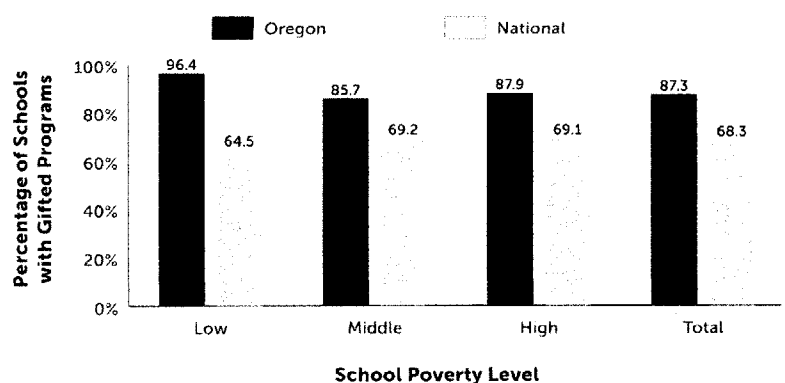
GIFTED PROGRAMS

In Oregon, 87.3 percent of schools have a gifted program. Low-poverty schools are somewhat more likely to have gifted programs than high-poverty schools. Schools in Oregon are much more likely to have gifted programs than the national average, and high-poverty schools in the state are also much more likely to have gifted programs than the national average (Figure 1).

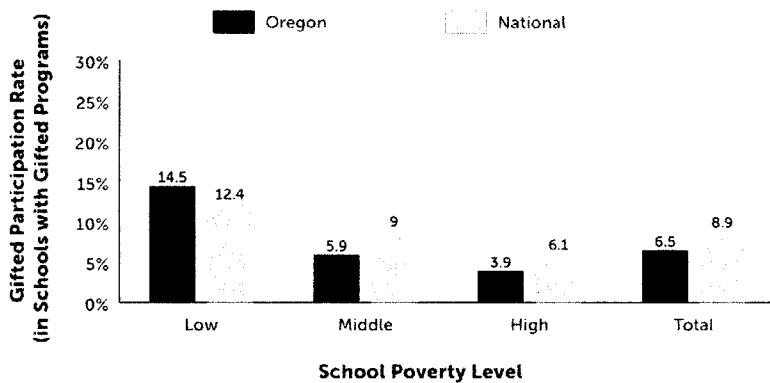
GIFTED PARTICIPATION BY SCHOOL POVERTY LEVEL

Of students in Oregon who attend schools with gifted programs, 6.5 percent participate in those programs. Students in low-poverty schools are more than three times more likely to participate in gifted programs than students in high-poverty schools. Schools with gifted programs in the Beaver State enroll students at a somewhat lower rate than the national average, and high-poverty schools in the state also enroll students at a somewhat lower rate than the national average (Figure 2).

FIGURE 1:
AVAILABILITY OF GIFTED PROGRAMMING BY SCHOOL POVERTY LEVEL



**FIGURE 2:
GIFTED PARTICIPATION BY SCHOOL POVERTY LEVEL**

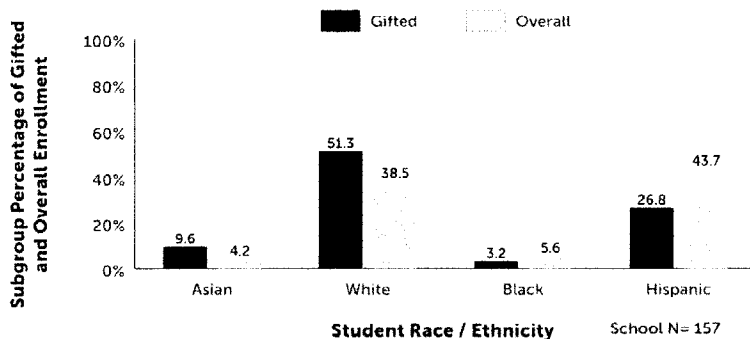


GIFTED REPRESENTATION BY RACE

In Oregon, only 3.9 percent of students at high-poverty schools with gifted programs participate in gifted education, and there are substantial differences in enrollment across racial groups in Oregon’s high-poverty schools.

Asian students constitute 4.2 percent of the overall student population and 9.6 percent of students enrolled in gifted education in these schools. Black students constitute 5.6 percent of the student population and 3.2 percent of students enrolled in gifted education. Hispanic students constitute 43.7 percent of the student population and 26.8 percent of students enrolled in gifted education. Finally, white students constitute 38.5 percent of the student population and 51.3 percent of students enrolled in gifted education (Figure 3).

**FIGURE 3:
SCHOOL COMPOSITION AND GIFTED PARTICIPATION BY RACE
IN HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS WITH GIFTED PROGRAMS**



Sources for all figures: 2014-15 NCLS and 2013-14 OIT data.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

We offer three general policy recommendations (not specific to Oregon) for states wishing to boost participation of students who participate in gifted programs at below-average rates.

1. Consider universal screening and other ways to streamline identification processes.

Schools could improve participation rates by optimizing policies for identifying students and implementing universal screening. A universal screening policy assesses all students to determine which are eligible for gifted services and is one of the best ways to boost participation of underrepresented minority students, as well as less affluent students, English language learners, and female students.

2. Identify students for gifted programs using local norms.

Districts should consider identifying the highest achievers at each school as opposed to across the district. Although students at different schools will meet different standards for inclusion, this identification process is likely to yield greater socioeconomic and ethnic diversity in the district’s gifted programs.

3. Counter bias in identifying and serving minority gifted students.

To the extent that bias plays a role in the underrepresentation of black and Hispanic students in these programs, employing a more diverse teacher force and deploying interventions shown to counter unconscious bias and help teachers recognize giftedness among all students could lead to greater representation for underrepresented students.