



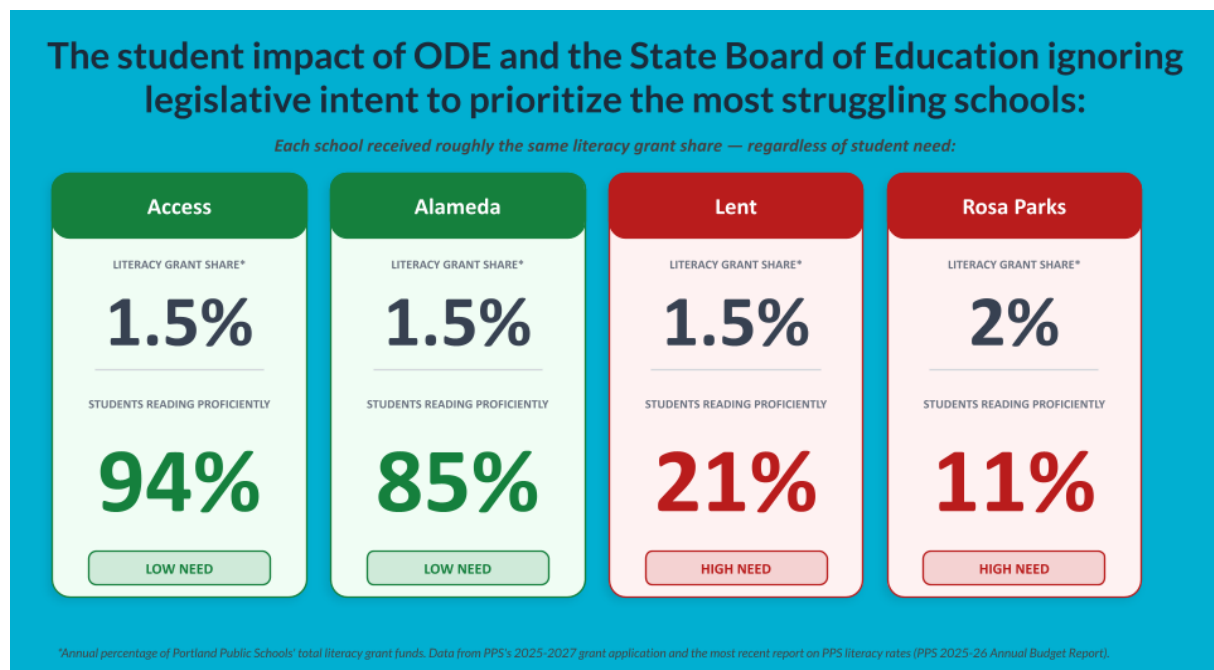
June 15, 2026

Dear House Interim Committee on Education,

In May 2025, Oregon Kids Read and other advocates [implored](#) legislators to ensure that legislative intent around the Early Literacy Success Initiative was upheld. **Instead, over a year later, the Oregon Department of Education and the State Board of Education continue to subvert the democratic process and withhold literacy lifelines from schools with the most students struggling with reading.**

Although research shows that almost any child can be a successful reader with the right instruction and support, over 80%+ of students in our lowest-proficiency schools are not reading at grade level. As highlighted in this [presentation](#), Oregon legislators were clear that the 2023 Early Literacy Success Initiative should support students in schools that need the most help: *“Rules shall, to the greatest extent practicable, prioritize schools with the lowest rates of proficiency in literacy” ((HB 3198):*

Instead, the Oregon Department of Education and State Board of Education adopted rules of their own design that did the exact opposite. We can see how this is playing out in this example from Portland Public Schools:



Here is a more extensive example from PPS, including student demographics:

School Name	Percentage of Total Annual Literacy Grant Award to District	Percentage of Students of Color (Black, Latino, Native American, Pacific Islander, Multi-Race)	Percentage of Students Eligible for Free School Meals by Income	Percentage of Students Reading Proficiently
Alameda	1.5%	13.8%	5.5%	84%
Duniway	1.5%	11.6%	9%	75%
Access	1.5%	12.3%	10.5%	94%
Laurelhurst	1.5%	15.6%	13.2%	80%
Lee	1.5%	44%	47.4%	35%
Lent	1.5%	71.9%	49.2%	21%
MLK Jr.	1.5%	63%	51.6%	44%
Woodlawn	1.5%	59.8%	49%	44%
Rosa Parks	2%	81.9%	84.3%	11%
Boise-Eliot/ Humboldt	2%	74.1%	65%	29%
Cesar Chavez	3%	81.5%	66.7%	18%

Data from [PPS 2025-27 Integrated Application Narrative](#) (page 20-23), ODE's demographic data on schools, and the most recent report on PPS literacy rates (PPS 2025-26 Annual Budget Report)

ODE and the State Board of Education's decision to ignore legislative intent is clearly furthering education inequality and inequities when it comes to literacy. While we are using Portland Public Schools to highlight the problem, this is NOT the failing of any individual district - PPS and other districts are following ODE directives.

In January, Oregon Secretary of State Tobias Read sent a [letter](#) to the Oregon Department of Education requesting a detailed update on this issue:

HB 3198 specified that rules, "to the greatest extent practicable, prioritize schools with the lowest rates of proficiency in literacy." How has the Department met this requirement, and are grant dollars being prioritized

to those schools that have historically struggled - and currently struggle -with literacy performance? Specifically, can you provide information on how many grant dollars have been awarded to the 100 lowest proficiency schools identified in the 2022-2023 school year, the year HB 3198 was passed? Can you also provide how many grant dollars - aside from district-wide curriculum and/or teacher training - have been awarded to the 100 highest proficiency schools identified in the 2022-2023 school year?

[ODE's response](#) did not answer any one of these crucial questions.

On behalf of students who struggle the most with reading, we ask the House Interim Committee on Education to **pose the Secretary of State's questions to ODE in a public hearing.**

We also call on the full legislature to **use its authority to ensure that ODE and the State Board of Education follow legislative intent** in the rule-making and implementation of the Early Literacy Success Initiative.

Sincerely,

Angela Uherbelau
Mother of two Oregon public school students
Founder, Oregon Kids Read