

POLICY BRIEF

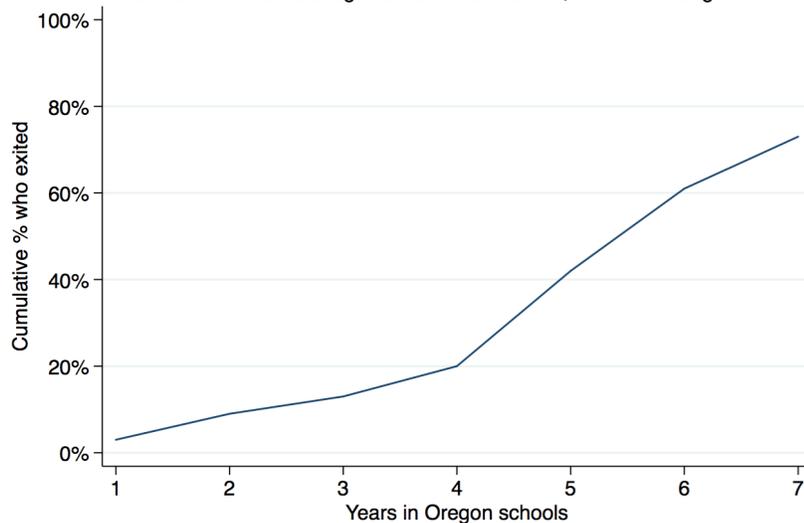
TIMEFRAMES FOR STUDENTS TO ATTAIN ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Changes to English Language Proficiency Assessment Impact the Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient at Different Grades

In 2015-16, Oregon transitioned to a new English language proficiency (ELP) assessment. The new assessment, known as ELPA21, is aligned to college- and career-ready standards. The shift in ELP assessments has led to shifts in the percentage of students scoring proficient at different grade levels, as illustrated below.

Grade	% Proficient 2014-15 (ELPA)	% Proficient 2017-18 (ELPA21)
K	4%	2%
2	6%	19%
4	18%	22%
6	32%	17%
8	20%	6%
10	23%	5%
12	24%	7%

Figure 1. Cumulative percentage of students who exited English learner status, among students who entered Oregon schools as ELs in K, 2006-07 through 2012-13



Among students who entered Oregon as English learners in kindergarten, about three-fourths of students exited English learner services within seven years

When the ODE/OSU partnership began in 2014, an initial research question was: How long does it take English learners (ELs) to attain English proficiency and exit EL services? Knowing the answer to this question is important for establishing expected timeframes for attaining English proficiency, as required by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Analyzing longitudinal data from students who entered Oregon schools as ELs in kindergarten between 2006-07 and 2012-13, we found that 73% exited EL services within seven years, as illustrated in Figure 1. This was in line with prior research, which found that students typically need between four to seven years to develop academic proficiency in English (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000).

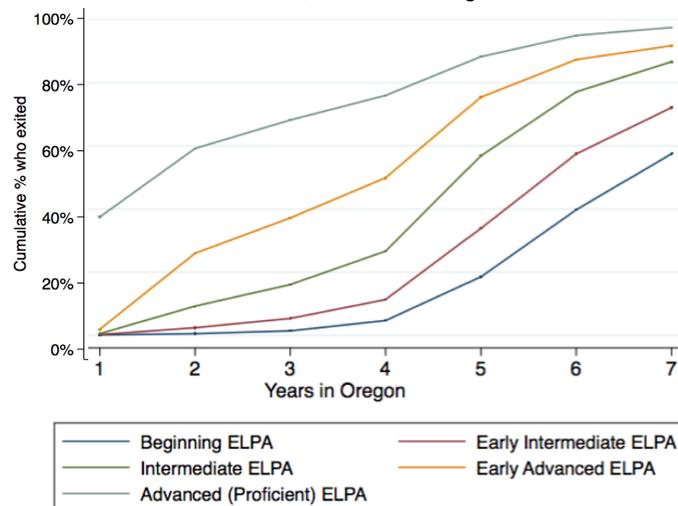
Oregon's On-Track to English Language Proficiency Indicator Is Informed by Our Research Findings

For the first time, the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) allowed states to establish expected timeframes for students to attain English proficiency that varied depending on students' initial English proficiency and several other factors. Given this opportunity, Oregon drew on our partnership research findings, research in other states, and stakeholder input to develop its English language proficiency indicator. Under Oregon's on-track to ELP indicator, most students are expected to attain English proficiency within seven years (or less if they entered school with higher ELP levels). Students with disabilities or interrupted formal education are expected to attain English proficiency within eight years.

Students Who Enter School with Beginning English Proficiency, Students with Disabilities, and Students Who Enter Oregon Schools at Higher Grade Levels Need More Time to Exit EL Services

Again in line with prior research, we found that the time necessary for students to exit EL services varied considerably based on a variety of factors. Unsurprisingly, as Figure 2 illustrates, students who entered Oregon schools at more beginning levels of English proficiency needed more time to exit EL services. Students with disabilities and students who entered Oregon schools at higher grade levels also had longer expected timeframes to exit EL services.

Figure 2. Cumulative percentage of students who exited EL services, by initial ELPA score, 2006-07 through 2012-13



Policy Implications

- While establishing expected timeframes for attaining English proficiency is required under federal law, focusing accountability systems on exiting students from EL services quickly can be counterproductive. For example, other research, including research in Oregon, shows that students in dual language programs take slightly longer to become proficient in English but are ultimately more likely to do so (e.g., Steele et al., 2017).
- Given changes to Oregon's English language proficiency assessment, there is a need to review and update expected timeframes for attaining English proficiency when more years of data are available.
- Administrators and teachers may benefit from professional development about strategies for using data from Oregon's on-track to ELP indicator in ways that inform district- and school-level planning.

References

- Hakuta, K., Goto Butler, Y., & Witt, D. (2000). How long does it take English learners to attain proficiency? University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute Policy Report 2000-1.
- Steele, J. L., Slater, R. O., Zamarro, G., Miller, T., Li, J., Burkhauser, S., & Bacon, M. (2017). Effects of dual-language immersion programs on student achievement: Evidence from lottery data. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(1_suppl), 282S-306S.