

Mixed results in English language learners report

By Stefanie Knowlton

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Oregon got mixed results in its effort to improve instruction for English language learners last year, according to a statewide report released today.

On one hand, a greater percentage of ELL students gained proficiency and left the program. On the other hand, most ELL students failed to move up one level last year and, many did not meet federal testing benchmarks.

"Our state is making steady progress," said State Schools Superintendent Susan Castillo.

"However, results today indicate we have a long way to go before every English learner is acquiring language skills at the rate needed."

The state measures progress based on three minimum benchmarks:

- Half of all students must move up one level
- 14 percent leave the program proficient that year; also, 22 percent leave the program proficient after five years
- Students meet federal testing benchmarks.

Only 23 districts met all three targets, while 98 did not.

Salem-Keizer School District, like most districts, didn't meet the federal benchmark or the percentage of students moving up one level per year.

But it did outperform the state average on the target it reached: percentage of students leaving the program proficient after five years.



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Salem-Keizer ELL proficiency

Salem-Keizer

Number of ELL students: 8,537

moving up one level a year: 46 percent
(target is 50 percent)

leaving program proficient: 14.7 percent of all students per year and 27.5 after five years (targets are 14 percent and 22 percent)

Statewide

Number of ELL students: 67,293

Moving up one level a year: 49.5 percent
(target is 50 percent)

Leaving program proficient: 15.2 percent of all students per year and 26.7 in five years (targets are 14 percent and 22 percent)

Local districts

Only 23 districts met all three targets for English language learners. Here is how local districts did:

Salem-Keizer jumped by more than 16 percentage points in three years on that target, going from 11.5 percent to 27.5 percent. It's the first time the district met that benchmark.

"While we have some bright spots," said Steve Larson with Salem-Keizer School District, "the results continue to underscore our work in improving the outcome for English language learners."

If districts fail to meet any one of the three targets, they are designated as "not met" for the year.

This is the sixth year Salem-Keizer has not met. As a result, the district could lose program funding, be required to fire or replace staff members or make substantial changes to the ELL program.

Gervais School District is one of the few districts that met all three targets. The Oregon Department of Education identified the small district as the state leader for English language development.

A few of the district's initiatives included training teachers in research-based ELL instruction techniques, educational and enrichment activities for students and families, and Thursday night classes at school including English, Russian, computers, GED and healthy cooking.

Larson said Salem-Keizer continues to examine what other districts are doing well in an ongoing effort to improve outcomes for English language learners. The district is working with others around the state to develop best practices for Oregon schools.

"We can definitely learn from what others are doing," he said.

sknowlto@StatesmanJournal.com or (503) 399-6735

Central School District: not met

Dallas School District: not met

Cascade School district: not met

Gervais school district: met

North Santiam School District: not met

Silver Falls School District: not met