

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION – TOPIC SUMMARY

Topic: Bilingual Teachers – Survey Results

Date: December 11, 2014

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Action Requested: Informational Only Adoption Adoption/Consent Agenda

ISSUE BEFORE THE BOARD:

Oregon is already facing a shortage of bilingual teachers. With the growth of dual language programs that provide K-12 students the opportunity to become biliterate, this demand will only increase. Additional state efforts appear necessary to address this problem before it becomes worse.

BACKGROUND:

At present there are over 80 dual language programs in Oregon, including over 70 two-way immersion programs. In addition to a growing interest in bilingualism for all students, several state initiatives are increasing the demand for highly qualified, highly literate bilingual teachers.

Oregon’s Dual-Language/Two-Way Bilingual Grant program (2013-2016)

This grant program was established to help close achievement gaps between English Learners (ELs) and non-English Learners and to support bilingualism, biliteracy, and academic achievement among all students. The purpose of the grant is to assist schools and districts with the design, implementation, improvement and expansion of dual language/two-way programs across the state. In November 2013, grants were awarded to seven districts (Bend-La Pine, Central Point, Hood River, Newberg, Nyssa, Portland, and Springfield,) and one charter school (Four Rivers Community School.) As a result of the grant, four new two-way programs have been launched and others are in the midst of scaling up their programs to additional grades.

State Seal of Biliteracy

In an effort to formally recognize the attainment of mastery in two or more languages, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) is working on a State Seal of Biliteracy Seal to honor the skills students have acquired, providing evidence of proficiency that may be attractive to future employers and college admissions offices. The State Seal of Biliteracy would follow a staggered implementation, using the 2014-2015 school year as a pilot year of initial implementation of biliteracy seal components. At the close of the 2014-2015 school year, project stakeholders will meet to reflect and revise project processes. These reflections would inform final Seal policy to present to the State Board of Education for permanent adoption in the Fall of 2015, for formal statewide implementation in the 2015-2016 school year.

Following are some state initiatives aimed at addressing bilingual teacher shortages and bilingual teacher quality.

Minority Teacher Pipeline and Retention Grants

While not specifically directed at addressing bilingual teacher demand, the Oregon Minority Educator Pipeline Models Grant of 2013-15 is intended to expand models for recruiting and retaining educators who are culturally and /or linguistically diverse. Four grants were awarded to increase the pool of diverse teachers in Oregon, which went to Salem-Keizer School District, Klamath County School District, High Desert ESD, and Eastern Oregon University.

International Visiting Teacher Program

Oregon's International Exchange program is designed to help schools provide quality second language instruction and cultural exchange opportunities that serve to enhance the educational experience of Oregon students. The State of Oregon currently has visiting teacher partnerships with Spain, Mexico and China. Through this program Oregon school districts have the opportunity to recruit foreign language and bilingual teachers from other countries to teach at elementary, middle and high school levels. Visiting Teachers may be hired for up to 3 years on a J1 visa and then, in most cases, are required to return to their home country for a specified period of time.

Oregon's Highly Qualified Teacher Plan (2007)

This plan references "Innovative Teacher Preparation Programs" which were intended to help build a qualified field of prospective teachers for high-poverty, low-performing schools. The plan also specifies that ODE provides supplemental funding for the following innovative teacher preparation program.

- Bilingual Teacher Pathway - The Bilingual Teacher Pathway (BTP) is a teacher preparation program designed to fill critical shortages of bilingual/bicultural teachers in the Portland and Southwest Washington regions. Working with district partners, the program recruits and prepares bilingual/bicultural instructional assistants for initial teacher licensure along with an ESL/Bilingual Endorsement. The stated purpose of the program is to recruit 25 bilingual/bicultural paraprofessionals per year into BTP's teacher licensure program, and support and retain BTP students through initial teacher licensure with an ESL/Bilingual Endorsement.

Following is a summary of Oregon's bilingual teacher credential requirements.

Bilingual Teacher Credential Requirements

The Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) is Oregon's licensing agency for all educators. TSPC offers an ESOL/Bilingual Endorsement but it is left to district discretion to decide whether a teacher is required to have an ESOL/Bilingual endorsement based on the teacher's teaching assignments. Bilingual teachers who teach core subjects need to meet the "highly qualified" teacher requirements for Oregon, including passing the state's testing requirements. New requirements for a Dual Language Teacher specialization were recently drafted by a steering committee of higher education professionals. These were adopted by TSPC in 2014. It appears that the requirement of a Dual Language Teacher specialization is also at district discretion.

Following are the reasons for the Bilingual Teacher Survey and a brief summary of the survey results.

Several districts have contacted ODE to request assistance with filling their bilingual teaching vacancies. Many conveyed having considerable difficulty finding, hiring and retaining qualified candidates. The schools that are part of Oregon's Dual Language grant program are particularly concerned that they will be unable to fulfill the intent of the grant by staffing their new and expanding two-way programs with qualified bilingual teachers. One common concern voiced by many districts, including but not limited to the schools participating in the Dual Language grant program, is that the state's testing requirements for teacher licensure were particularly

challenging for bilingual teacher candidates whose primary language is not English. ODE conducted the survey to better understand bilingual teacher demand, hiring and retention challenges in Oregon.

Bilingual Teacher Survey Results

ODE recently surveyed local districts to gather information regarding bilingual teacher demand. ODE received forty-four complete survey responses. Some responses were from the same district and duplicate district responses were filtered out of most of the analyses below, leaving thirty-seven complete district responses (this includes three state-sponsored schools). Following is a brief summary of the survey results.

Twenty-five of the 37 district responses indicated they had bilingual teacher openings in this academic year (2014-15). Collectively, they had 172 total openings this year, 75% of these positions were at the elementary level. Nine districts had at least 5 positions, ten districts had over 10 positions, and three districts had over 20 positions open for bilingual teachers. When asked to project their bilingual teacher openings for 2015-16, they estimated these to be about 130.

Of the 37 district respondents, 22 (about 60%) indicated they had difficulty filling their bilingual teacher vacancies in 2014-15. However, not all of the 37 respondents indicated having bilingual programs in their district. Twenty-four of the respondents indicated having some form of bilingual program (two-way, developmental, transitional or other). Of these 24 districts, all but four (over 80%) indicated they had difficulty filling their bilingual teacher vacancies in 2014-15. Seventeen districts indicated they had at least one two-way immersion program, and all but one of these districts reported having difficulty filling their bilingual teacher vacancies in 2014-15.

The survey asked respondents to rate the extent to which certain factors contributed to their difficulty in hiring bilingual candidates. They were given thirteen factors to rate on a scale of “Not an Issue” to “Major Issue,” and provided the option to indicate “Don’t Know” for each factor. Of the twenty-two respondents that indicated having two-way immersion programs (this includes some duplicate district responses), following are the top three “Major Issues” they identified:

- The candidate or candidates were not proficient enough in the desired second language (55%).
- The candidate or candidates accepted a teaching position in another state (50%).
- The candidate or candidates were not able to pass one of Oregon’s required assessments for teachers (32%).

POLICY QUESTIONS:

Given the growing demand for highly literate bilingual teachers, should the state consider additional measures to address bilingual teacher shortages in Oregon?

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

None at this time.