

# English Learners in Oregon

Biennial Report to the Legislature

December 2024



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## Introduction

Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 327.016 directs the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to prepare and publish by June 30 of each year an annual report related to the State School Fund moneys received for English language learner programs and student outcomes. The Annual Reports for English Learners (ELs) in Oregon for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years each offer detailed insights into the demographics, academic performance, participation of English learners in targeted educational programs, and the state and federal allocation of funding for English Learners. These reports reflect Oregon's ongoing efforts to support over 100,000 current and former English learners, representing over 18% of the state's student population. In addition to the annual reporting requirement, ORS 327.016 also requires ODE to "submit to the interim legislative committees on education a summary of the two most recent reports prepared" prior to "January 1 of each odd-numbered year." To meet this requirement, the following report provides a comparative summary of the past two EL reports covering the 2021-22 and 2022-2023 school years. Throughout, the implications of the findings are discussed in light of the [ODE Multilingual Learner Strategic Plan](#) (2024) which offers a roadmap for addressing existing disparities.

## Key Comparative Trends

The analysis that follows explores comparative trends, focusing on critical areas such as demographics, proficiency outcomes, program participation, and resource allocation to support multilingual students. As in the past annual EL reports, "current English learners" are multilingual students who were learning English in an English Language Development (ELD) program during the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years. "Former English learners" are multilingual students who demonstrated English proficiency and exited an ELD program prior to the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years. "Ever language learners" are the combination of both current and former English learners. Finally, "never English learners" are monolingual English or multilingual students who were not eligible to receive English language instruction, supports, and services in an ELD program before or during the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years.

**Demographics:** In 2021-22, current ELs comprised 10.4% (56,683) of the 546,726 enrolled students. In 2022-23, this increased to 10.9% (59,263) of the 545,609 enrolled students. In addition, former ELs constituted 42,770 (7.8%) in 2021-22 and 40,912 (7.5%) in 2022-23. The Latino/a/x group constituted the largest ethnic group among current ELs in both years, accounting for 77% (43,629) in 2021-22 and 76.7% (45,463) in 2022-23. Across both years, most current ELs were concentrated in elementary grades, with 61.1% in 2021-22 and 59.2% in 2022-

23, showing a gradual shift as ELs advance through grade levels and exit ELD programs upon achieving English proficiency.

**Academic Performance:** Former ELs consistently outperformed current ELs on the statewide assessments in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics across 2021-22 and 2022-23 years. For example, 50.5% of former ELs met ELA standards compared to 47.8% of never English learners in 2021-22 in elementary grades, which increased to 54.6% compared to 47.8% of never English learners in 2022-23. Meanwhile, only a small percentage of current ELs met state standards in these subjects. Specifically, in elementary grades, only 7% (3,968) of current ELs met ELA standards and 7.1% (4,028) met math standards in 2021-22. In 2022-23, ELA proficiency for current ELs in these grades declined to 6.6% (3,910), while math proficiency remained stable at 7.1% (4,207).

**Targeted Program Participation:** Special Education representation for current ELs was higher than that for never ELs across both years: 20.3% (11,507) in 2021-22 and 19.7% (11,671) in 2022-23. Participation in Migrant Education programs rose from 9.0% (5,131) in 2021-22 to 10.5% (6,232) in 2022-23. EL representation in the Talented and Gifted (TAG) program remained low, with only 0.4% of current ELs participating in 2021-22, and a slight increase to 0.5% in 2022-23. This underrepresentation highlights a gap in the identification of gifted EL students.

**Graduation Rate:** Former ELs graduated at higher rates than never ELs (about 87% compared to about 81%), while current ELs' rates were substantially lower (by about 20%) than both groups in 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years. However, current ELs' graduation rates slightly improved from 65.3% (37,015) in 2021-22 to 68.1% (40,367) in 2022-23. Additionally, current ELs were about three times more likely than never ELs to graduate with a modified diploma across both school years.

**Attendance Rate:** Attendance rates among current ELs, especially in high school, remained lower than their peers (former and never English learners) in 2021-22 (43.5%; 4,732) and 2022-23 (44.0%; 5,329) school years.

**State and Federal Funding:** Between 2021-22 and 2022-23, Oregon increased per-pupil base funding from \$9,167 to \$9,622, leading to a raise in additional state funds for English Learners from \$4,584 to \$4,811 per EL student. Total state allocations for EL programs rose by \$22 million, reflecting growing support, while federal Title III funding slightly decreased from \$137.29 to \$132.95 per EL student.

**Enrollment Trends:** In 2021-22, 546,726 students were enrolled in Oregon schools, with 10.4% (56,683) identified as current ELs. In 2022-23, enrollment dropped slightly to 545,609 students, but the proportion of current ELs rose to 10.9% (59,263). As a general trend, while the overall

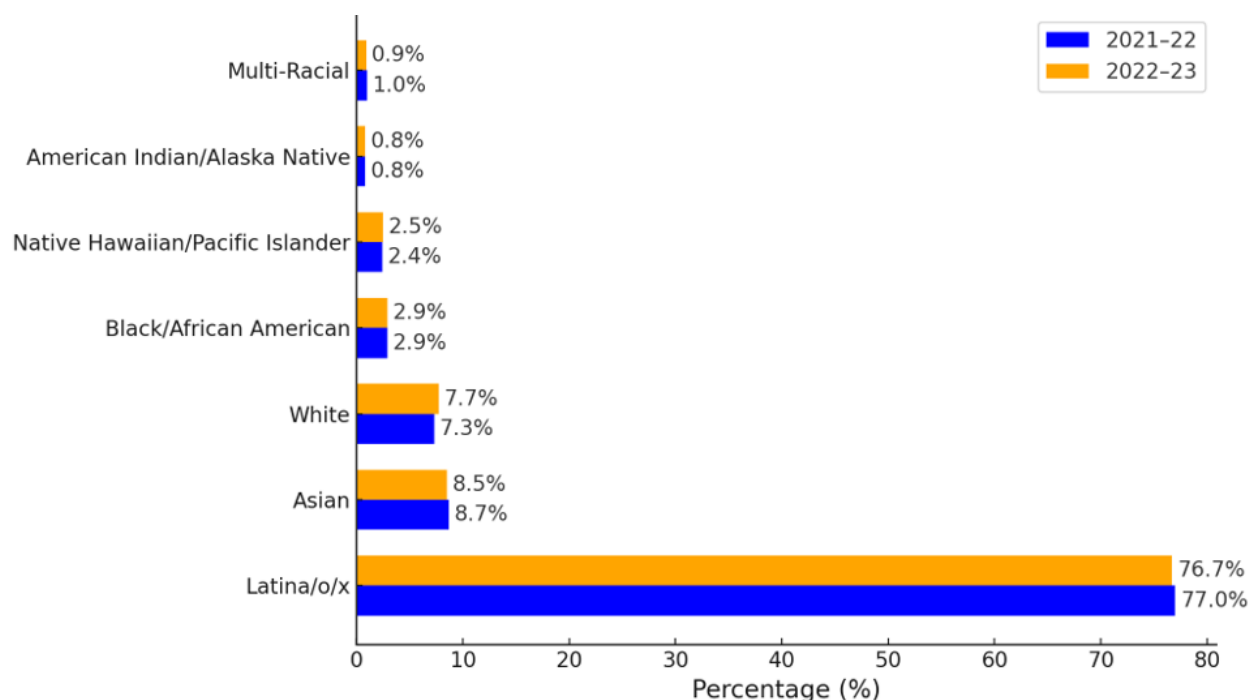
number of Oregon students has declined, the EL population has indeed increased, making up a growing segment of the student population. Table 1 provides the full enrollment counts for current, former and never English learners.

**Table 1. Number of current, former, and ever English Learners in 2021-22 and 2022-23**

School Year	Total Students	Current ELs	Former ELs	Ever ELs
2021-22	546,726	56,683 (10.4%)	42,770 (7.8%)	99,453 (18.2%)
2022-23	545,609	59,263 (10.9%)	40,912 (7.5%)	100,175 (18.4%)

**Ethnic Diversity:** Latino/a/x students comprised the majority of Oregon's current EL population, with 77% (43,629) in 2021-22 and 76.7% (45,463) in 2022-23, underscoring a consistent demographic profile. Both reports also highlight the representation of Latino/a/x and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students among ELs in both years (see Figure 1). In addition, in both years, nearly one-third (about 33%) of the Latino/a/x and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students were designated as English learners.

**Figure 1. Percentage of current English learners by race/ethnicity in 2021-22 and 2022-23.**



**Language Diversity:** Spanish remains the predominant home language among ELs, spoken by 76.6% (43,419) of ELs in 2021-22 and 76.0% (45,035) in 2022-23. Additional prevalent languages include Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Arabic. The number of unique languages spoken increased from 199 in 2021-22 to 222 in 2022-23, reflecting growing linguistic diversity across Oregon (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Most Prevalent Languages among ELs**

Language	2021-22	2022-23
Spanish	76.6% (43,419)	76.0% (45,035)
Russian	2.4% (1,345)	2.6% (1,548)
Chinese	2.1% (1,200)	2.0% (1,178)
Vietnamese	2.2% (1,251)	2.0% (1,172)
Arabic	1.5% (830)	1.4% (820)

### **The number of recent arrivers increased in 2022-23**

Defined as students born outside the United States or Puerto Rico who have been educated in the U.S. for fewer than three cumulative years, recent arrivers represent a unique subset of English learners in Oregon. These students often bring linguistic diversity and cultural assets to their schools but also face challenges in adapting to a new educational system.

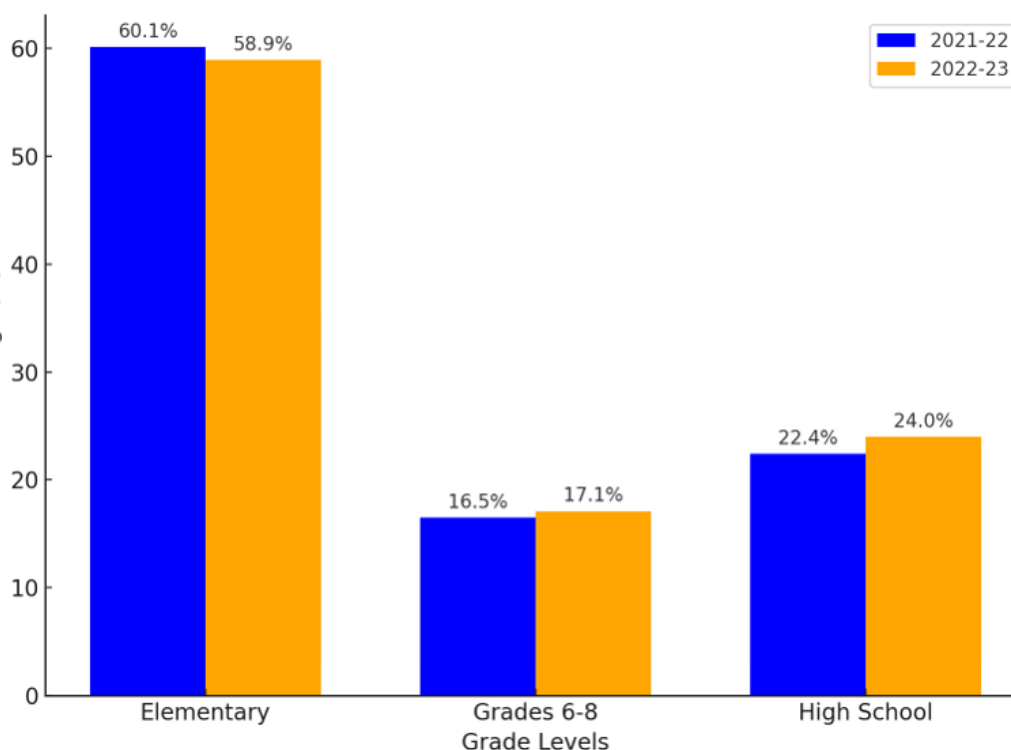
Recent arrivers in Oregon public schools showed notable differences between the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years. In 2021-22, the total number of recent arrivers was **4,145**. In 2022-23, this number increased to **4,851**, signaling a rise in newly arrived students entering the Oregon educational system. The distribution of recent arrivers across grade levels is provided in Figure 2.

The increase in recent arrivers highlights the need for Oregon schools to expand resources for English language instruction and newcomer support. With rising enrollment, especially in middle and high schools, districts must prioritize tailored interventions for older students who face challenges balancing language acquisition and academic content. Adjustments in staffing, culturally responsive teaching, and specialized programs for adolescent newcomers are

essential. The shift in grade-level distribution suggests a growing demand for secondary-level English learner services, necessitating collaboration among educators, counselors, and community organizations to ensure smooth transitions, equitable access to education, and successful integration for these students.

The rise in recent arrivers in Oregon schools also underscores the importance of Goal 3 under Priority Area 1 of [Oregon Multilingual Learner Strategic Plan](#) which emphasizes ensuring consistent access to high-quality interpretation and translation services. Effective communication helps students and families navigate academic and social integration. The increased proportion of older recent arrivers in 2022-23 highlights the need for tailored communication strategies in middle and high schools, where academic content is more complex. These services are essential for fostering inclusion and equity for multilingual learners and their caregivers.

**Figure 2. Grade Distribution of Recent Arrivers in 2021-22 and 2022-23**



### English Learners with Interruptions in their Education

The annual EL reports for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years also highlight trends among English learners with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) in Oregon. These students

face unique challenges due to gaps in formal education, often stemming from immigration or refugee experiences.

In 2021-22, there were 795 current English learners identified as SLIFE, constituting 1.4% of the total English learner population. Most SLIFE students were concentrated in high school (60.8%), followed by middle school (27.7%) and elementary school (11.6%). Eight districts accounted for 81% of these students, with Hillsboro, Hermiston, and Portland among the top districts serving SLIFE learners.

In 2022-23, the number of SLIFE students decreased slightly to 790, representing 1.3% of the English learner population. High school remained the predominant grade level for SLIFE students (62.2%), with middle school (22.7%) and elementary school (15.2%) following. The distribution of SLIFE students shifted slightly, with nine districts now serving 83.3% of this population. Hillsboro, Portland, and Beaverton were the districts with the largest populations of SLIFE learners.

Priority Area 2, Goal 5 of the [Oregon Multilingual Learner Strategic Plan](#) aims to integrate SLIFE students into schools with necessary academic and emotional support. Measures such as developing guidance for credit evaluation (see [SB 940 Study Report, 2024](#)), collaborating with resettlement agencies, and fostering welcoming school environments are essential to addressing these students' unique challenges and ensuring their educational success.

### **Participation in Targeted Programs**

Program participation data reveals how ELs are represented in various federally and state-funded programs, including Special Education, Migrant Education, and Talented and Gifted (TAG). The comparative findings are presented in the following section.

#### **Special Education**

Current ELs are overrepresented in Special Education. In 2021-22, 20.3% (11,507) of current ELs received special education services, slightly decreasing to 19.7% (11,671) in 2022-23. By contrast, these percentages were around 15% for never and 7% for former English learners. This trend indicates a need for careful assessment practices to avoid potential misclassification of ELs. Over-identification often arises when educators misinterpret challenges related to language acquisition as indicators of learning disabilities. This can lead to inappropriate placements that fail to address ELs' actual needs and may stigmatize them, limiting their academic potential (Burr, 2020; Hoover & Klingner, 2011).

#### **Migrant Education**

Most students who participate in Oregon Migrant Education Programs are current or former ELs. Participation in Oregon's Migrant Education program increased from 2021-22 to 2022-23.

In 2021-22, 5,131 current English learners (9% of all current ELs) participated, comprising 51.4% of the 9,947 total participants. Former English learners represented 37.4% of program participants, meaning 88.8% of all students in the program were ever English learners.

By 2022-23, 6,232 current English learners (10.5% of all current ELs) participated, accounting for 57.5% of the 10,844 program participants. Former English learners constituted 31.4%, and ever English learners remained steady at 88.8% of total participants. The number of districts offering Migrant Education services rose from 97 to 101, reflecting expanded program access.

### **TAG Programs**

EL representation in the TAG program remained low across both years, with only **0.4% of current ELs** participating in 2021-22, and a slight increase to **0.5% in 2022-23**. This underrepresentation highlights a gap in the identification of gifted EL students. The persistent underrepresentation of English learners (ELs) in the Talented and Gifted (TAG) program underscores the need for systemic change. With only 0.4% of current ELs participating in 2021-22 and a marginal increase to 0.5% in 2022-23, these figures reflect barriers in recognizing the potential of multilingual students. Priority Area 2, Goal 4 of [Oregon Multilingual Learner Strategic Plan](#) advocates for equitable access to advanced programs by developing culturally responsive identification processes. Addressing this gap involves implementing alternative evaluation criteria and training educators to identify giftedness in diverse contexts, ensuring ELs receive the opportunities to excel and contribute fully to their educational communities.

### **Language Development, Academic Outcomes for English Learners and Beyond**

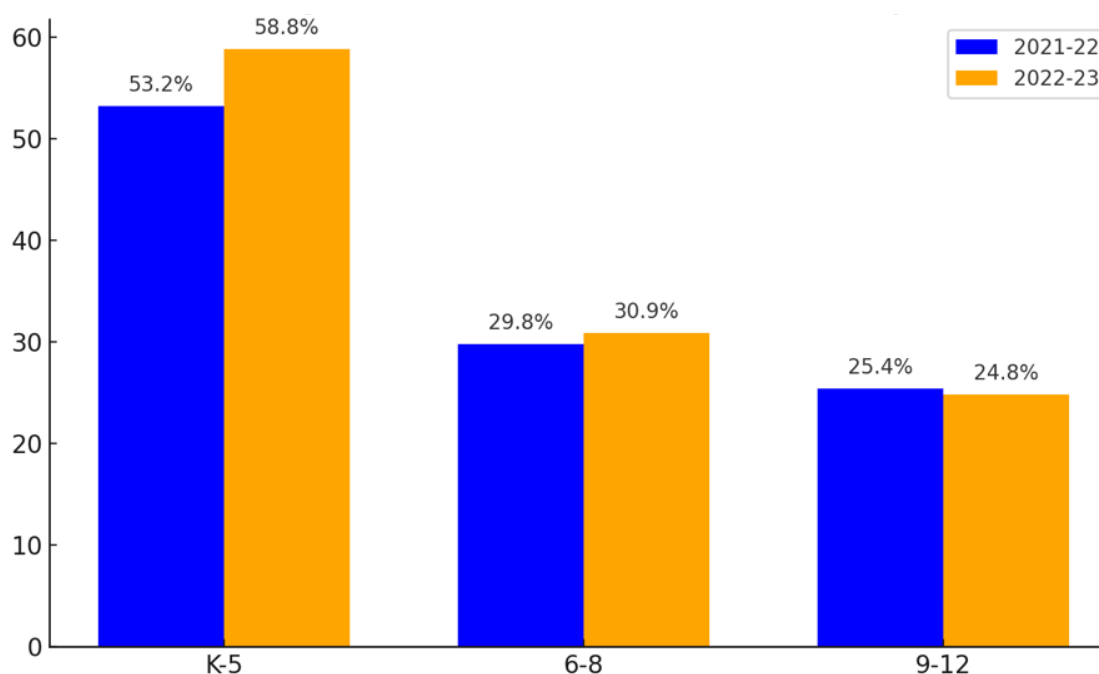
The Oregon English Learners Reports for 2021-22 and 2022-23 also focus on the progress and outcomes of English Learners (ELs) in their language development and academic performance. This includes tracking students' progress toward English proficiency, and performance on statewide academic assessments in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. A comparison of these two years reveals important patterns and changes in EL academic outcomes.

### **On track to Achieve English Proficiency**

Oregon's accountability system monitors whether current English learners are on track to attain English language proficiency within seven years, taking into account initial level of English proficiency, years identified as an EL, and disability and/or an interrupted formal education status. In both years, the K-5 grade band exhibited the highest on-track percentages, with an increase from 53.2% in 2021-22 to 58.8% in 2022-23. Middle school (grades 6-8) saw a slight improvement, rising from 29.8% to 30.9%. High school (grades 9-12) percentages declined marginally, dropping from 25.4% to 24.8% (see Figure 3).

These trends highlight a consistent pattern: younger students (K-5) are more likely to achieve language proficiency milestones compared to older students, with proficiency rates declining as grade levels increase. The data underscores the importance of early intervention in English language development programs to enhance success rates, particularly in middle and high school settings where challenging academic content demands higher level of linguistic knowledge.

**Figure 3. Grade Distribution for English Learners On track to English Proficiency**



### Academic Performance

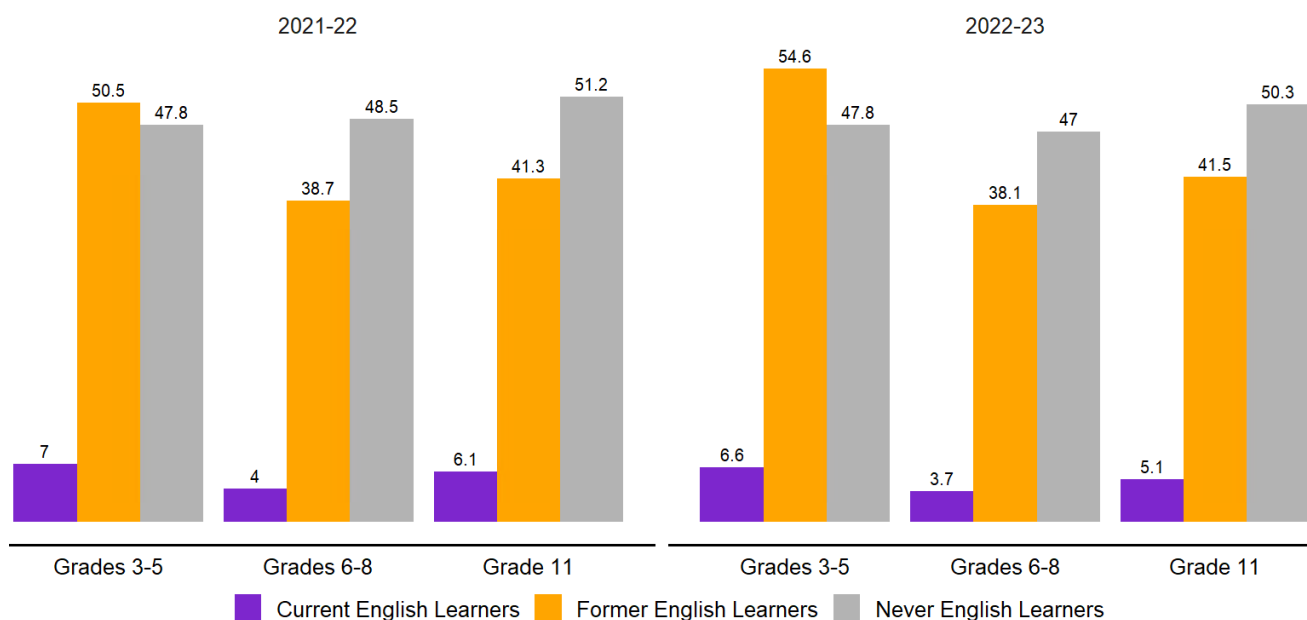
Academic performance, as measured by state standards in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics, presented mixed outcomes across the two years. The following presents a summary of these outcomes.

#### English Language Arts

Across grade levels, substantially lower percentages of current ELs met the ELA standards in both years. For example, at the elementary level, only 7.0% met ELA standards in 2021-22 with a slight decline to 6.6% in 2022-23. However, former ELs demonstrated improvement in ELA, outperforming never English learners across both years. Figure 4 shows the complete range of

results comparing the percentage of current, former, and never English learners meeting the ELA standards across both school years.

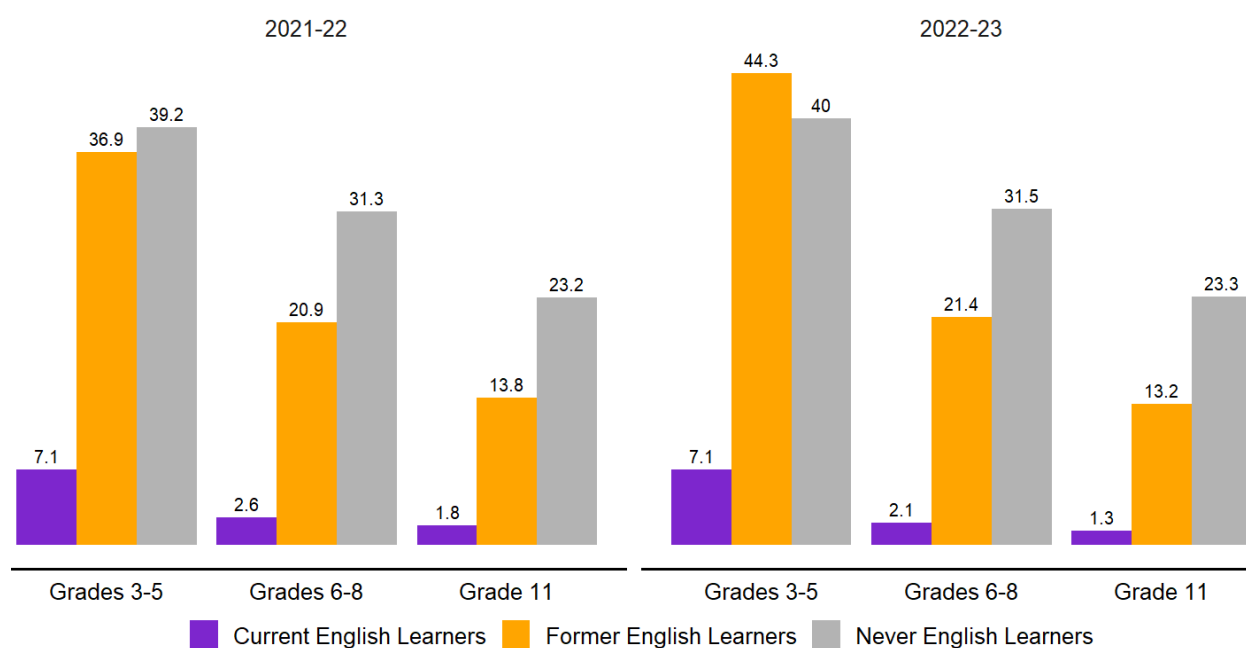
**Figure 4. Grade Distribution for English Learners Meeting/Exceeding ELA Standards**



## Mathematics

In mathematics, performance remained static at 7.1% across both years in the elementary grades. However, former ELs demonstrated exceptional improvement where their percentage of meeting the mathematics standards rose notably from 36.9% in 2021-22 to 44.3% in 2022-23 enabling them to outperform their non-EL peers.

These results highlight the long-term benefits of attaining English proficiency, as former ELs consistently outperform current ELs in academic assessments. Figure 5 shows the complete range of results comparing the percentage of current, former, and never English learners meeting the math standards across both school years.

**Figure 5. Grade Distribution for English Learners Meeting/Exceeding Math Standards**

### Graduation Rates and Diploma Attainment

Graduation rates for former ELs surpassed those of never ELs in both years, with **86.4% in 2021-22** and **87.6% in 2022-23**. However, only **65.3% of current ELs** graduated in four years in 2021-22, rising to **68.1% in 2022-23**. In addition, current ELs were **nearly three times more likely** to receive a modified diploma compared to their never EL peers, underscoring the impact of language acquisition challenges on academic achievement. The disparity in graduation rates between current and former English learners (ELs) underscores the need for targeted support. Such support aligns with priority Area 2, Goal 4, Actions 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5 in [Oregon Multilingual Learner Strategic Plan](#) which emphasize the importance of increasing EL access to advanced learning opportunities and postsecondary pathways. These actions focus on reviewing participation rates, addressing entry barriers, and using focused communication strategies to promote the benefits of career-connected learning. Thus, it is important to leverage various resources (ex. High School Success grants) to support multilingual learners' access to equitable and enhanced outcomes.

### Attendance Rates

Regular attendance rates declined with each advancing grade level for all EL categories. In 2022-23, **58.3% of elementary ELs** maintained regular attendance, compared to **60.3% in 2021-22**. Middle and high school attendance also decreased slightly year over year, with high school attendance for current ELs being the lowest at **44%**. Priority Area 1 in the [Oregon Multilingual Learner Strategic Plan](#) emphasizes culturally responsive communication to foster engagement.

By implementing multilingual outreach, improving interpretation services, and strengthening relationships with EL families, schools can build trust and encourage attendance. These strategies support the goal of creating inclusive environments where ELs and their families feel valued, ensuring greater participation and academic success.

### State Seal of Biliteracy

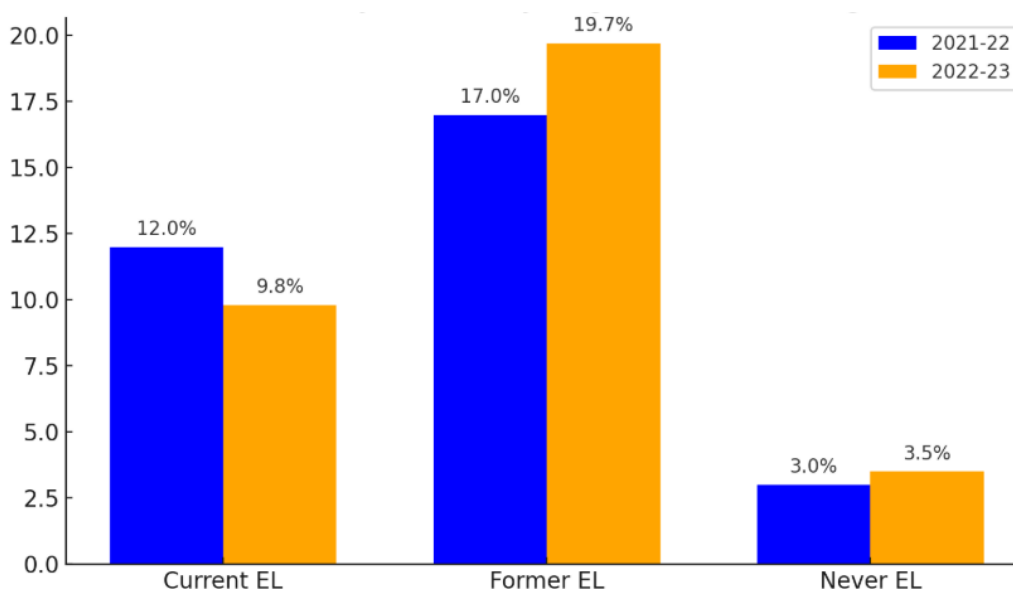
In Oregon, the State Seal of Biliteracy highlights students' bilingual proficiency and cultural assets. Figure 6 shows the percentage of graduates earning the Seal of Biliteracy among Current, Former, and Never English Learners in Oregon for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years. Former English Learners consistently achieved the highest percentages, increasing from 17% in 2021-22 to 19.7% in 2022-23, highlighting the long-term benefits of English Learner programs in fostering bilingual proficiency. Current English Learners earned the Seal of Biliteracy at lower rates, decreasing from 12% to 9.8% over the same period, likely reflecting challenges in attaining advanced bilingual skills while still acquiring English proficiency.<sup>1</sup>

This disparity underscores the challenges current English learners face in achieving advanced bilingual proficiency, suggesting the need for tailored support to help them bridge the gap and excel in attaining the Seal of Biliteracy. Priority Area 4, Goal 3 in the [Oregon Multilingual Learner Strategic Plan](#) highlights the importance of equitable access to pathways for linguistic achievement. Addressing this gap includes enhanced language development programs, educator training, and culturally responsive instruction. By fostering these resources, schools can help current ELs overcome language acquisition challenges, enabling them to achieve advanced bilingual proficiency and earn recognition through the Seal of Biliteracy.

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<sup>1</sup> Never English Learners showed the lowest percentages, at 3% in 2021-22 and 3.5% in 2022-23, suggesting limited access or interest in pursuing bilingual certifications among monolingual English speakers.

**Figure 6. Percentage of current, former, and never English learners earning the Seal of Biliteracy in 2021-22 and 2022-23 (among current, former, and never English learner graduates)**



## Allocation of State and Federal Funding

Funding for English Learner (EL) programs in Oregon is a vital component of ensuring equitable educational opportunities for students eligible for English language development (ELD) services. The EL reports for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years provide detailed information on per-pupil funding allocations for all students, supplemental state funds for EL students, and federal Title III grants aimed at enhancing support for EL programs. The following compares key financial figures across these two reports to highlight the amounts and sources of funding as well as the trends in allocation of funds for English Learners.

### Per-Pupil Funding Amounts

In 2021-22, the average per-pupil funding allocated through the State School Fund was \$9,167 which increased to \$9,622 in 2022-23, reflecting an adjustment aligned with inflation or additional resource considerations.

### ELD Supplemental Funds

The state allocates an additional 50% of the base per-pupil funding for every student enrolled in an ELD program. Thus in 2021-22, the additional state funding for each EL student was **\$4,584** ( $0.5 \times \$9,167$ ) while in 2022-23, the additional state funding per EL student rose to **\$4,811** ( $0.5$

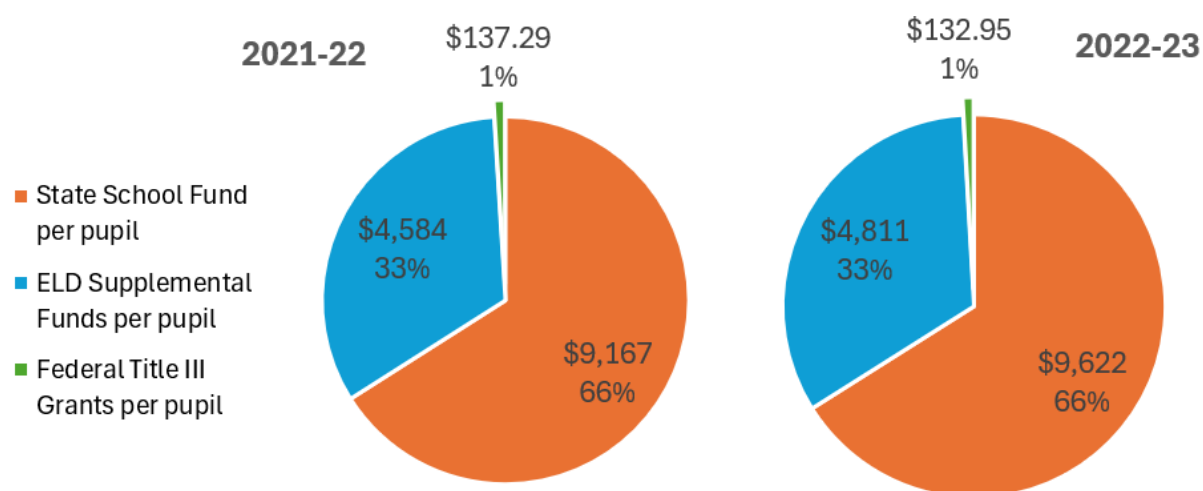
× \$9,622). Overall, the total statewide allocation for additional EL funds rose from **\$228,013,853** in 2021-22 to **\$250,092,649** in 2022-23 (a \$22 million increase).

### Federal Title III Grants

In addition to the state-allocated funding discussed above, federal Title III grants provide additional resources to districts for supplemental EL services, such as teacher training, instructional materials, and family engagement programs. In 2021-22, districts with at least 69 ELs received **\$137.29** per EL student for supplemental services. Districts with fewer than 69 EL students could form consortia to qualify for the federal TIII grants. In 2022-23, districts with at least 77 ELs received **\$132.95** per EL student for supplemental services with smaller districts, once again, able to form consortia to qualify for these grants.

Figure 7 summarizes the percentage of the state and federal per-pupil funding for English Learners in 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years indicating that about 99% of the funding allocated to ELs comes from the state which in turn reflects a strong state-level commitment to education equity for EL students.

**Figure 7. Percentage of state and federal per-pupil funding for English Learners in 2021-22 and 2022-23**



### Conclusion

The comparative trends in Oregon’s English Learner (EL) population from 2021-22 to 2022-23 underscore both progress and persistent challenges. While enrollment increased, especially among current ELs, disparities in academic performance, program participation, and graduation rates remain evident. Former ELs outperformed current ELs academically, with the latter

showing limited gains in graduation rates including higher rates of receiving modified diplomas and continued underrepresentation in targeted programs like TAG, as well as overrepresentation in Special Education. Attendance challenges, particularly at the high school level, further highlight barriers to consistent engagement.

These trends reveal the need for tailored, systemic interventions to address gaps in support for current ELs. The [ODE Multilingual Learner Strategic Plan](#) provides a roadmap for addressing these challenges, with Priority Areas emphasizing equitable access, culturally responsive practices, and family engagement. Actions outlined in the plan, such as expanding pathways to academic and linguistic success, fostering inclusive school environments, and enhancing teacher training, are critical to addressing the existing disparities.

By leveraging the strategies in the plan and aligning resources to meet the unique needs of ELs, Oregon can improve outcomes in future years, ensuring that every English learner has equitable opportunities to excel academically and linguistically to support their full participation and success in school and beyond.

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