

TEACHER PREPARATION

EXAMINING POLICY LEVERS FOR ENGLISH LEARNER COURSE ACCESS

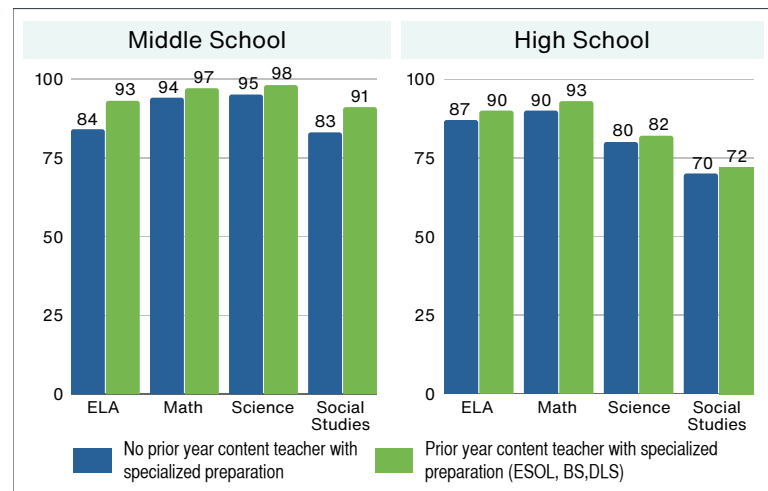
Exploring specialized teacher preparation as a policy lever in Oregon

This brief explores the potential to leverage **specialized teacher preparation** to support students classified as English Learners (ELs) in access to core content. When teachers receive specialized preparation to work with EL-classified students, they may encourage these students to enroll in more core content courses the following year and better prepare them for success in core content courses.

This brief focuses on three types of specialized teacher preparation:

- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement: Earned by completing an educator preparation program, including specialized courses and field experience.
- Bilingual Specialization (BS): Indicates proficiency in a second language; earned by passing a language proficiency assessment.
- Dual Language Specialization (DLS): Earned by completing an educator preparation program, including specialized courses and field experience, and demonstrating language proficiency via an assessment or other measure.

Percentages of Oregon EL-Classified Students Enrolled in Core Content Classes, by School Level, Course Subject, and Access to a Content Teacher With Specialized Preparation for Working With ELs in the Prior Year



Data: Oregon Department of Education, 2017/18 – 2018/19

EL-classified students taught by a content teacher with specialized preparation for working with ELs were more likely to enroll in core content courses the following year

The figure above displays enrollment for EL-classified students across core content subject areas, comparing those who had been taught by a content-area teacher with specialized preparation for working with ELs and those who had not. EL-classified students who took a core content course taught by a teacher with this specialized preparation were more likely to enroll in a core content course again the next year.

This is a promising finding, as it indicates that access to a content teacher who had specialized preparation for working with ELs may lead to higher likelihood of enrollment in subsequent content courses, thereby enabling students to accumulate more credits toward graduation.

How many Oregon teachers have specialized preparation for working with ELs?

Since 2013/14, rates of teachers holding endorsements or specializations for working with ELs have increased at all grade levels. In 2013/14, 11 percent of Oregon teachers held an ESOL endorsement and less than 1 percent held a BS. Among Oregon teachers in 2020/21:

- 17% held an ESOL endorsement,
- 2% held a BS, and
- less than 1% held a DLS (in part because it only became available recently).

Teachers who held bilingual or dual language specializations also generally held an ESOL endorsement.

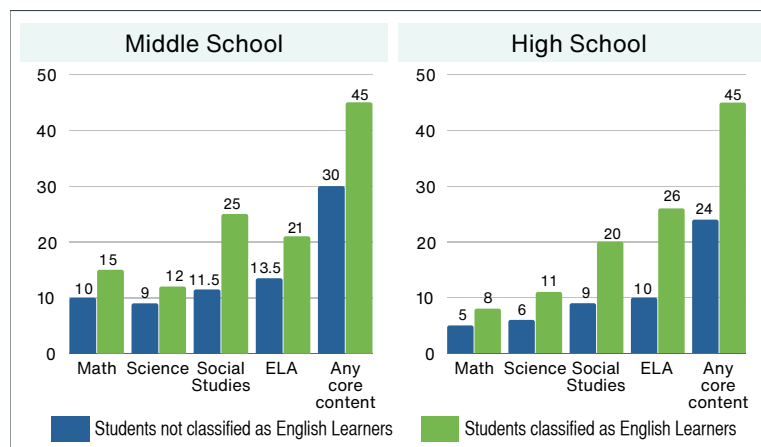
Schools with higher proportions of EL-classified students generally had higher rates of teachers who held an ESOL endorsement or BS/DLS. This is partly, but not entirely, because English language development courses taken by EL-classified students must typically be taught by an ESOL-endorsed teacher.

Almost half of EL-classified students in middle and high school had at least one content course taught by a teacher with specialized preparation

Across all Oregon middle and high schools in 2018/19, almost half of current EL-classified students had at least one core content course (ELA, mathematics, science, or social studies) taught by a teacher with specialized preparation for working with EL-classified students. This rate is 18 percentage points higher than for non-EL-classified students. Of note, the subjects where EL-classified students were most often taught by a teacher with specialized preparation were English language arts (24 percent) and social studies (23 percent). Rates for mathematics and science were much lower, at 12 percent for each.

Teachers in elementary schools held an ESOL, bilingual, or dual language specialization at much higher rates (22 percent) than teachers in middle (13 percent) or high school (9 percent). Nonetheless, substantial percentages of secondary EL-classified students had at least one core content teacher with specialized preparation for working with EL students.

Percentages of Students Enrolled in a Course Taught by a Teacher With Specialized EL Training (ESOL, BS, DLS), by Level, Subject, and EL Classification



Data: Oregon Department of Education, 2018/19

Key Takeaways

- Rates of teachers with specialized preparation for working with EL-classified students have increased at all grade levels in Oregon since 2013/14 but still remain low relative to the overall teaching population.
- STEM teachers are substantially less likely to hold an ESOL endorsement, BS, or DLS than ELA or social studies teachers.
- Almost half of middle and high school EL-classified students had at least one core content course taught by a teacher with specialized preparation for working with ELs.
- EL-classified students who had a core content course taught by a teacher with specialized EL preparation were more likely to enroll in core content courses the following year.