

RESEARCH BRIEF

Oregon School Readiness Research Consortium

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER STUDENTS ENTERING KINDERGARTEN IN OREGON

By Guadalupe Díaz, Megan McClelland, Karen Thompson, and the
Oregon School Readiness Research Consortium

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English Language Learners' Performance on the Oregon Kindergarten Assessment

The Oregon Kindergarten Assessment is composed of three measures: early math, early literacy (including letter sounds and letter names), and approaches to learning (including self-regulation skills and interpersonal skills).

Using data from the 2013-2014 Oregon Kindergarten Assessment, early math skills were assessed using the easyCBM Mathematics available in English and in the student's native language. Early literacy skills were assessed using easyCBM letter names and letter sounds and were assessed in English. Approaches to learning skills were assessed using a teacher-rated measure (the Child Behavior Rating Scale (CBRS)).

After controlling for gender and ethnicity we found that:

- In general, ELLs performed lower in early math, early literacy and self-regulation skills, but not interpersonal skills when compared to non-ELLs.
- When looking specifically at low-income Spanish-speaking ELLs who make up the largest percentage of ELLs in Oregon, low-income Spanish-speaking ELLs performed lower than low-income non-ELLs on early math, and literacy (including both letter names and letter sounds), but did not perform lower on teacher-ratings of self-regulation.

These results suggest that although ELLs performed lower on measures of academic achievement, the biggest gaps in achievement were in measures that were language dependent and were only assessed in English such as the early literacy measure. These findings highlight the importance of including measures in a child's native language to obtain a comprehensive picture of the academic and linguistic resources ELLs have as they enter kindergarten.

English Language Proficiency and English Language Learners

When assessing the academic skills of ELLs, it is important to consider English Language proficiency (ELP). ELP is defined as having the English language skills needed to access instruction and meet the language demands of the academic context in classroom settings. Currently there is no consistent definition of English language proficiency, which can vary by state, district, and school. On average, it takes students 4-7 years to obtain English language proficiency when entering kindergarten as ELLs.

When exploring the relations between ELP and KA in Oregon, children with higher ELP skills scored higher on the Oregon KA. These results highlight the importance of children's language development including both English and their native language to support their academic skills.

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Implications and Suggestions for Practice:

Because ELLs are entering kindergarten with a range of school readiness and ELP skills it is important to include measures that assess both the English academic skills as well as the skills children have in their native language.

- Promote children's self-regulation and interpersonal skills as they enter kindergarten as a way to support their academic skills.
- Support children's English language development, as well as their native language to capitalize on the linguistic resources of children's native language.
- Examine the preschool experience of ELLs to understand the services and supports these children receive before entering kindergarten.

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