OEIB

Reading Equity Summit Report

6.8.15

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Urban League of Portland

For the

Oregon Education Investment Board

OEIB Reading Equity Summit Report

February 23, 2015

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Introduction

In February and June 2014, OEIB staff and board, and stakeholders representing educational organizations, educators and communities gathered to reflect on pathways to advance racial equity in 3rd grade reading outcomes. Over the two retreats, presentations and readings catalyzed discussion and the building of shared insights. This report summarizes those insights with additional elements contained in the literature review as well as applications of the insights for future education investments.

Disparities in 3rd grade reading scores are greater today than four years ago. At the same time, we have an array of community-based organizations (CBOs), and within them culturally specific organizations (CSOs) in particular, utilizing promising practices to improve outcomes in student achievement and parent engagement. Unfortunately, data systems are currently less effective at documenting these gains with certainty that interventions lead to improved 3rd grade reading achievements. Information sharing between school districts, CBOs and CSOs providing services needs improvement to discern the degree to which the core goal is reached: that interventions increase the levels of student reading proficiency and that disparities are eliminated.

Some schools are delivering outstanding results in reading achievements, having effectively introduced improved strategies. Examples include Tualatin Elementary, Turner Elementary, Alice Ott Middle School, and Greenway Elementary (Beaverton). Innovative ideas are available and committed educators able to introduce stronger student tracking practices, team approaches to building interventions, enhanced reading curriculum and professional development for expanding teaching strategies.

That said, there is a large chorus of advocates seeking to expand the service delivery model to incorporate the promising practices utilized by CSO's and CBO's. Most schools have been ineffective in narrowing racial disparities among students and in reaching a desired target of 100% of students being able to read independently by 3rd grade. Communities of color and emerging bilingual students are most adversely affected with only about half of the students being able to read (Latino, Black, Native American and Pacific Islander), and only three-fourths of students being able to read among the remainder (Asian, Multiracial and White).

Innovations in design and delivery of services are necessary to improve 3rd grade reading outcomes particularly for students who have historically been underserved. Many of the effective programs and practices prioritized by Summit participants are simultaneously affirmed in the literature.

Design

- Start early, working within parent and family engagement models to develop parents' capacities to be their children's first teachers, nurturers (to support child development), intermediaries (with the transitions that children need to navigate) and advocates (with the school system).

- Expand our understanding of family stability as essential for child development and support parents in their linguistic, economic and health and social service needs, particularly among low-income and newcomer communities.

- Expand instructional time for reading through summer camps and before- and after-school programs.

- Expand access to child care services with robust early reading training, particularly when they are available in ways that support parent engagement, cultural affirmation, and parent employment.

- Increase child-care service provider training in early learning and literacy, family engagement and cultural affirmation skills.

Delivery

- Provide literacy supports through CBOs and CSOs wherever possible so that engagement is effective, retention is maximized, identity is affirmed, prior hostilities between parents and schools is side-stepped, and racial and linguistic matching is available.

- Support CBOs and CSOs to simultaneously build local leadership. Capacity and community capital that will strengthen community solutions to the range of inequities faced.

Minority Racialization, Grade 3 Reading Results, Disparities & Discussion

The rapid pace at which the number of Oregon's students of color is growing, increasing by five percentage points over a five-year period, is shown on the next page. Numbers alone signal that paying attention to their performance is warranted, and subsequent disaggregation of all education data by race is key to support our understanding of all students.

Discourse

- Shift discourse about all education money flowing through schools, and understand the importance of community-based organizations as part of the education landscape, particularly in their more holistic response to family and student needs.

- Ensure that responsibility for equity in education is durably and effectively rooted among all stakeholders.

Distribution of Oregon's Public School Students

Figure 1: Distribution of Oregon's Public School Students
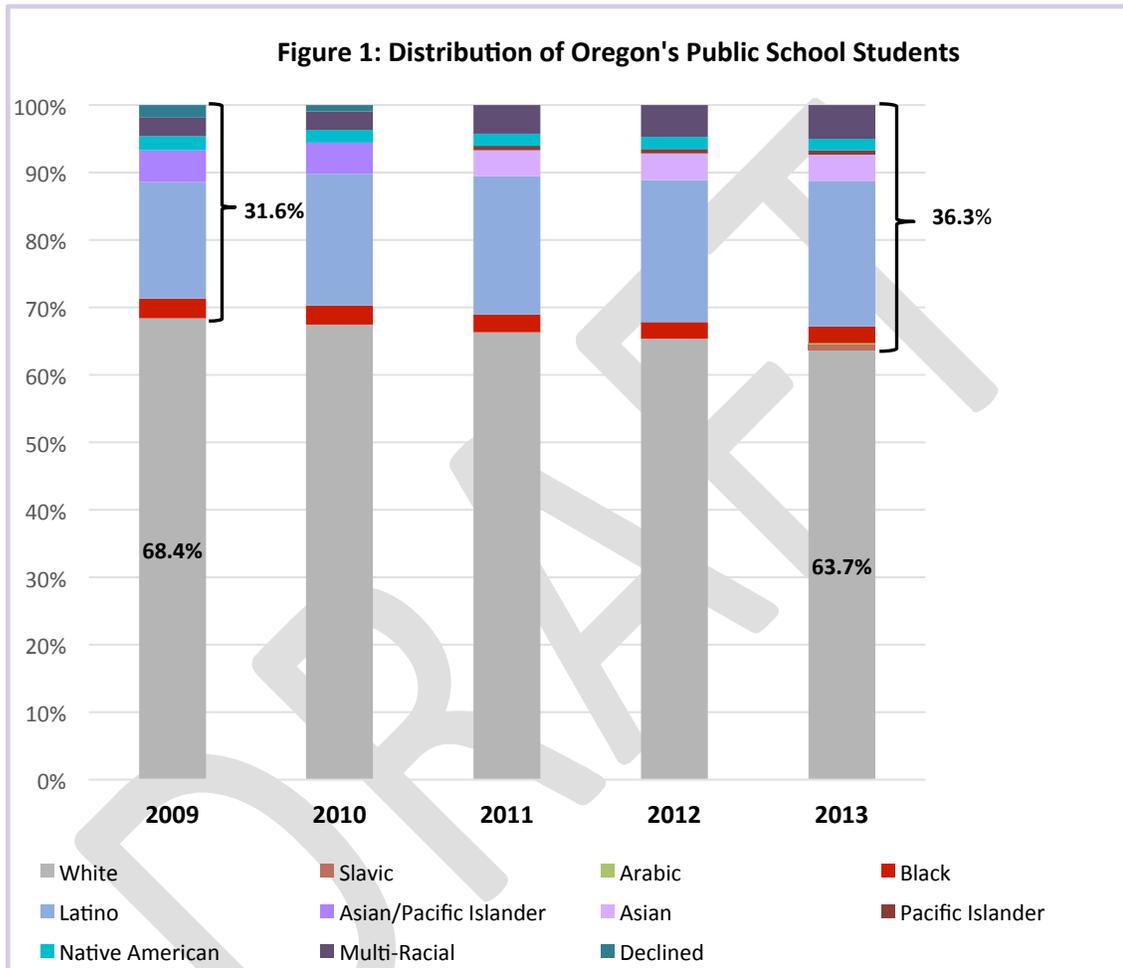
Source: Oregon Department of Education's Statewide Report Card 2013-2014 (2014)

The racial and ethnic diversity of students in Oregon public schools has been rising steadily. Figure 1 shows the increase in numbers of student of color and ethnic/racial groups from 2009 through 2013. These demographic number changes have raised questions about whether current programs and models are achieving state educational outcome benchmarks for all students.

Oregon's Grade 3 Reading Scores

Figure 2: Grade 3 Reading Scores, Oregon

	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Asian	81%		76%, Asian
White	77%		74%, White
Multiracial	76%		71%, Multiracial
Pacific Islander	61%		50%, Pacific Islander
Native	58%		54%, Native
Black	53%		48%, Black
Latino	50%		45%, Latino
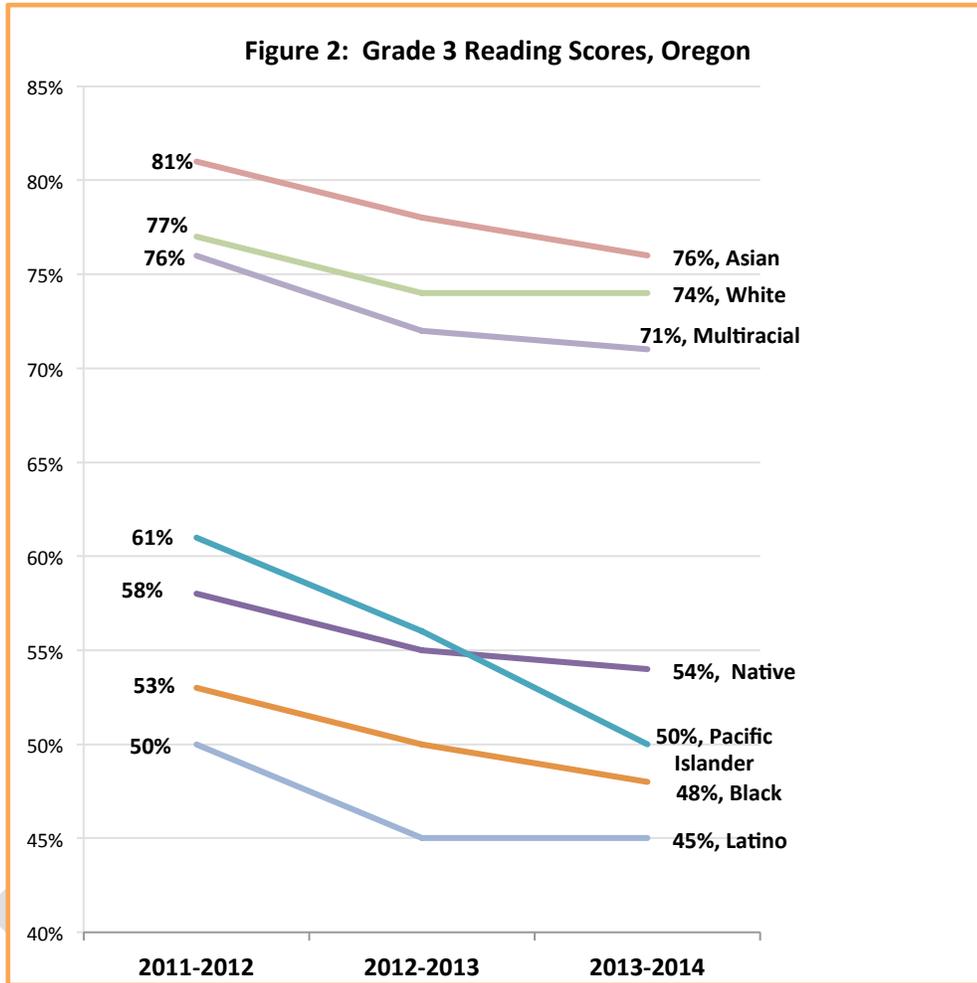
Source: Author's representation of data from Oregon Department of Education (2014).

A relative crisis exists in Oregon's capacity to prepare young students to read, resulting in only 2 in 3 (66%) being able to meet benchmarks in their Grade 3 OAKS reading tests. In Figure 2, we see the drop in these reading scores across all racial groups, and while not definitely assessed for causality, there is a dominant understanding that these losses are due in part to impact of the recession, budget cuts and increases in classroom size.

Oregon's Growth in Reading Achievement Disparities, Grade 3

Figure 3: Growth in Reading Achievment Disparities, Grade 3, Oregon

■ 2011/12
■ 2013/14

Group	Value
White	0.0%
Multiracial	4.2%
Asian	-2.6%
Latino	64.4%
Black/African American	54.2%
Pacific Islander	48.0%
Native American	37.0%

-20% -10% 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70%
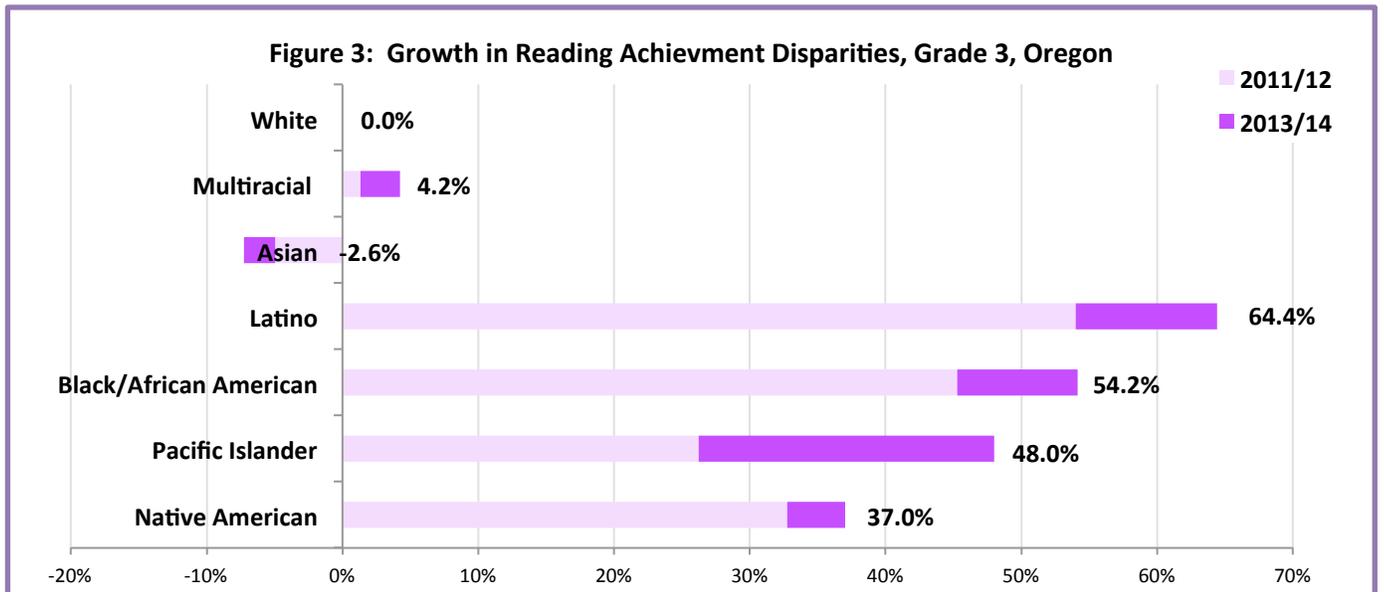
Source: Author's analysis of data from Oregon Department of Education (2014).

While Figure 2 shows losses across all groups of students, we find that losses are greater for every community of color, a critical equity issue. Taking the data, assessing the size of disparities between whites and communities of color, and comparing these over the last three years, we find that the disparities have grown by about ten percentage points on average. These changes are show in Figure 3. This chart was created by identifying the disparity between each community of color with the white community for two years. In each case, we see that the disparities in the 2013-14 are substantially larger than those in 2011-12.

Oregon's 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency 2012/13

Figure 4: 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency, Oregon, 2012/13

Legend:
- ■ Economically Advantaged
- ■ Economically Disadvantaged

Group	Economically Advantaged	Economically Disadvantaged
Asian	85%	64%
Black	67%	47%
Hispanic	69%	43%
AI/AN	74%	50%
White	84%	65%
LEP	56%	37%
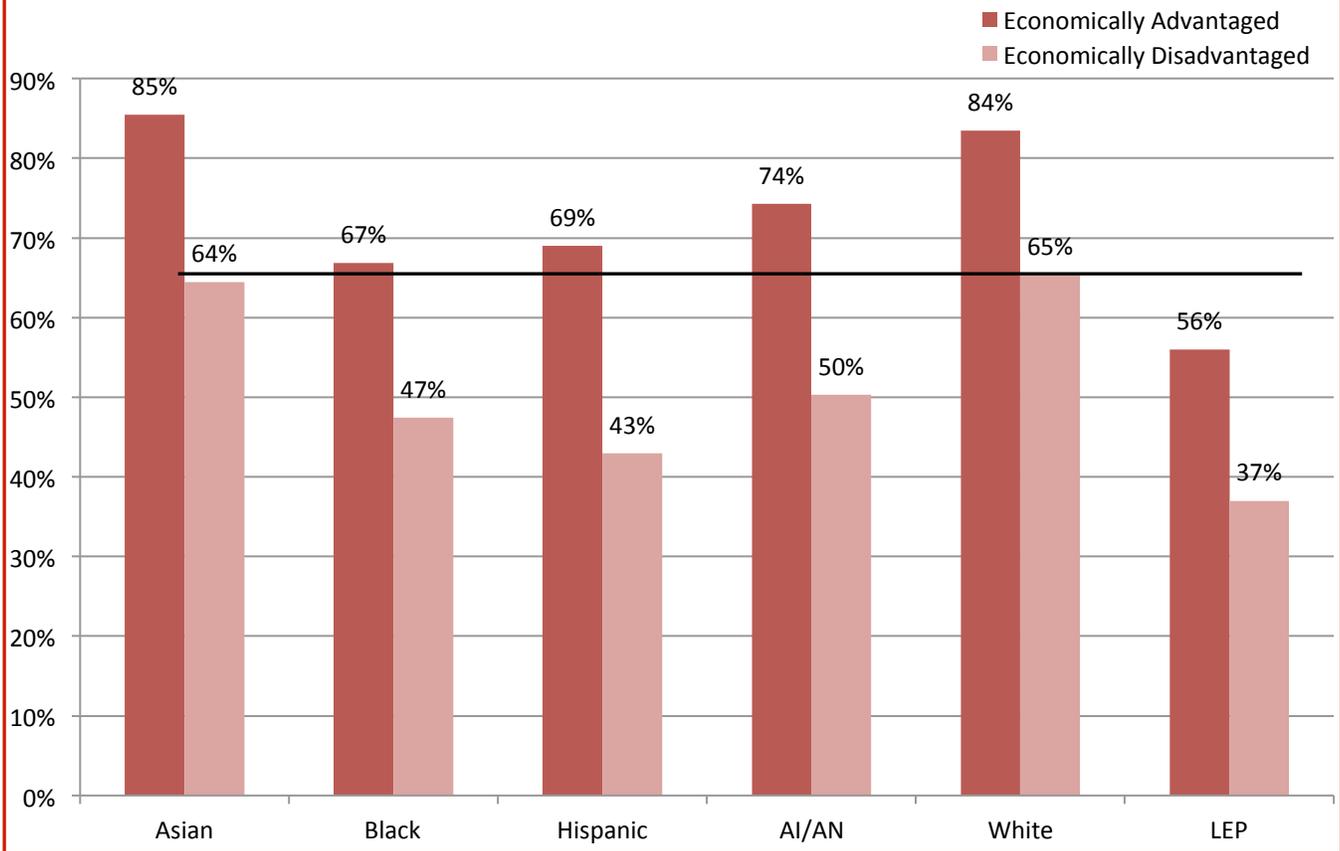
Source: ECONorthwest analysis of Oregon Department of Education data, retrieved from database on February 25, 2014

Research presented in the first Summit shows that disparities in student reading achievement exists even for economically advantaged students, and that the reading achievements for low-income White students approximates the reading achievement of more affluent students of color (for Black, Latino, and ELL students).

Oregon's Distribution of Low-Income Children by Race, 2013

Figure 5: Distribution of Low-income Children by Race, Oregon, 2013

Race	Percentage
Slavic	2.6%
Middle Eastern/North African	0.2%
Latino	31.0%
White	50.6%
African	0.5%
Native American	5.1%
African American	4.6%
Pacific Islander	1.5%
Asian	4.0%
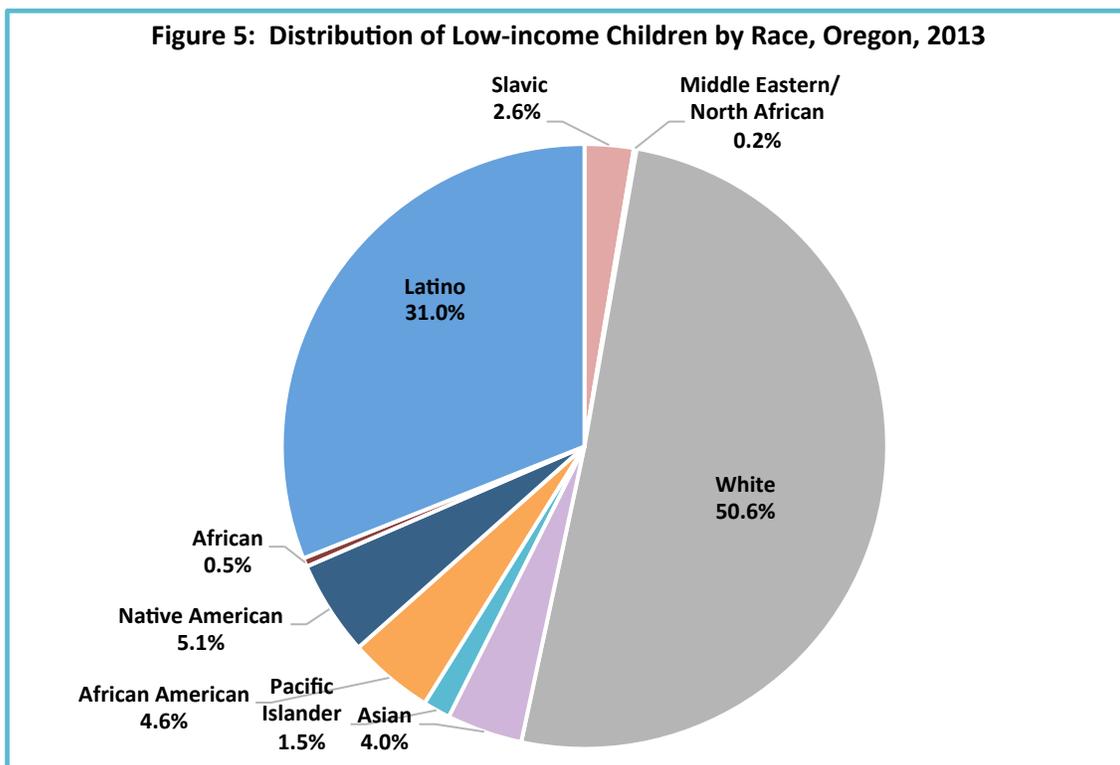
The profile of low-income students (eligible for "free and reduced lunch") is 49.4% students of color, a much more racialized population than the general population, which is 25.1% people of color. This underscores the pattern of students of color being historically underserved, but so too of risk for lesser academic success. These data signal the importance of reaching students of color both to support their ability to navigate preschool and school environments that inscribe racial bias as well as providing holistic supports to students and families experiencing poverty.

Growth of Immigrant Population in Oregon

Figure 6: Growth of Immigrant Population in Oregon
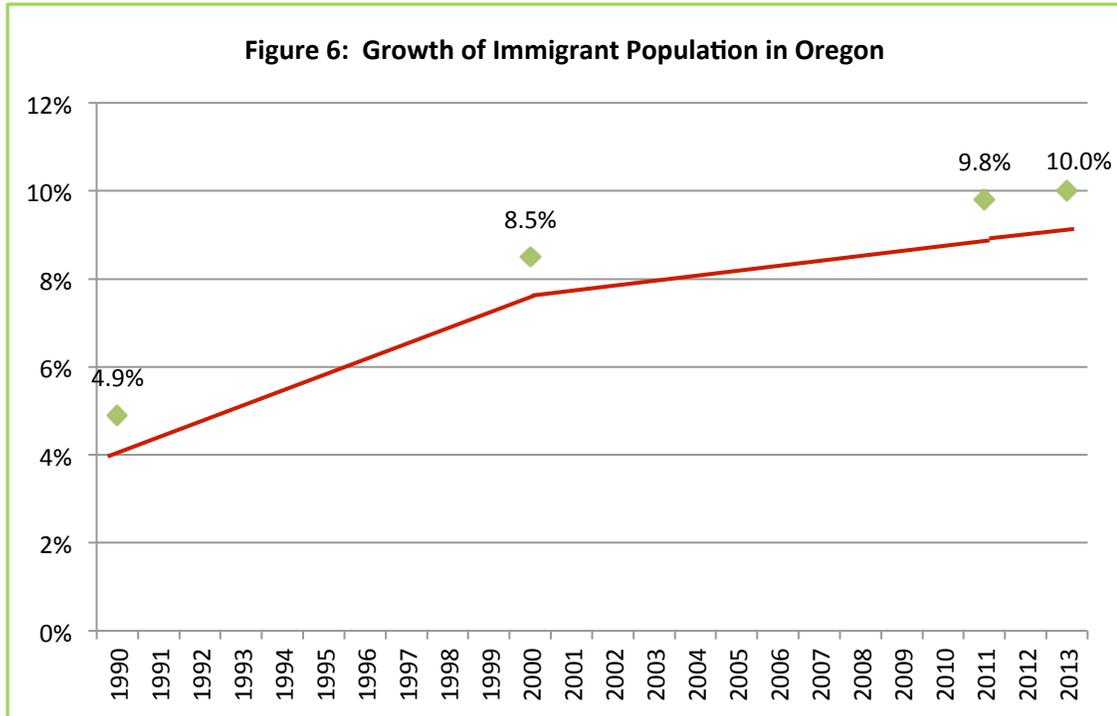
Source: Immigration Policy Center (2013)[1] for early data points and American Community Survey (2013) for recent data point.

Particular challenges face newcomer communities. The growth of such communities is among the top ten nationwide, doubling in concentration from 1-in-20 to 1-in-10 over a fourteen-year span between 1990 and 2013 (as shown in the chart above). With this diversity comes an imperative to bring concerted attention to the newcomer communities to better understand their needs.

Fortunately, attention to newcomer community needs has been emerging in recent years. We now know that newcomers are not well connected to early learning opportunities that they face abundant challenges engaging with schools and teachers, and that families continue to face unwelcoming environments that limit their ability to support their children's education. We also know that newcomers prefer to access culturally specific programs where they are served in their language of origin, and that they are able to improve both their ability to navigate their children's lives, and their own social and economic lives. This finding is shown in the literature that is included in later parts of this report.

Students of color are growing rapidly in number, with immigrant numbers growing at a rate of 10% annually. Students of color make up half of Oregon's low-income students. Among 3rd graders, students of color are much less likely to be able to read (with the exception of the Asian community whose composite measure belies the huge ethnic variations within this community), with their progress deteriorating at levels significantly worse than whites, with racial disparities subsequently growing wider in the last three years. Students of color need to be in the foreground of efforts to improve reading outcomes.

Insights: Problems, Literature Synthesis, Participant Insights & Recommendations

a. The Role of "Community-based organizations"(CBOs) to Address the Opportunity Gap for 3rd Grade Readers

Problem: In many situations, CBOs are under-utilized resources that occupy a marginal presence on the educational landscape. The contribution of community-specific organizations (CSOs) is similarly marginal, with an even greater opportunity potential as they hold key insights and capacities to meet the needs of students of color, with strong results being documented by several community-specific organizations. In this section of the report, CSOs are included as a CBO. While it is also true that schools are held accountable for educational outcomes, the premise that they should be the only vehicles to deliver on reading investments was disputed by those attending the Summits.

Literature Synopsis: The educational contribution and importance of CBOs is a relatively new addition to the academic literature. Most writing about supplemental school supports works from the assumption that services are delivered by the schools themselves. Newer work etches out a space for CBOs in the provisioning of educational supports, primarily tied to two threads of work: (1) the ability to engage immigrant families, and (2) the essential need for approaches that provide culturally specific programing to students of color, through vehicles such as racially-matched mentoring, tutoring, parent engagement and critical consciousness supports for students of color to resist education that "excludes particularly cultural needs [that] dehumanizes the omitted cultures by rejecting their reality, history, and perspectives."[2]

The literature covers programs directly tied to four distinct elements of education: reading, parent engagement, after-school programs, and high school graduation. Some literature speaks to effective services for immigrants, and some speaks to Afrocentric programs. These are specifically named in the larger domains.

The strongest message in the literature is not explicitly about CBOs but rather about understanding both the urgency of early engagement with families who can support reading acquisition: "starting at kindergarten is too late."[3] A national literacy panel advised intervening before age three.[4] While it is advantageous to emphasize reading skills in child care and preschool programs, there are disparities in who accesses such programs. Reaching more marginalized communities can be achieved through CBOs, as demonstrated by the effectiveness of the Early Learning Collaborative with All Hands Raised (Multnomah County) that works through an array of CBOs to reduce late registration for kindergarten. There are four patterns in the role of CBOs in service provision: as the logical vehicle through which to support newcomer communities; implicitly (though rarely explicitly) as preferred educational providers; as providers of "family education programs," and as vehicles through which "community literacy" initiatives could be developed.

a. A new 2014 report details the essential roles of CBOs in addressing the needs of immigrant parents that in turn is essential for stabilizing education for their children.[5] The core needs of immigrant families is for basic literacy, adult English language supports, and cultural and systems knowledge training. This is essential for parents to become active in teaching and supporting teaching of their children. Specifically, such knowledge would help parents understand school instructions, help with homework, converse with teachers, regain parental stature and end reliance on their children for navigating American culture, and participate in various programs designed to support both their children (such as early school enrollment) and their families (such as anti-poverty programs). They need knowledge about the services available to them (including those that are open if they are undocumented in the US), training and support to navigate the school system, and a welcoming environment in these services, as

newcomers frequently encounter hostility in all the systems with which they engage. While this report stops short of defining who should provide such services for parents, CBOs are much better poised relationally, linguistically, and programmatically to serve newcomer parents. In addition to the school-related roles noted earlier, important to CBO contributions include work force development, income support program access and assistance with job search. The same study also identifies the importance of mainstream organizations being linguistically accessible; current patterns are shown efforts are typically insufficient in both quantity and quality.

b. The role of CBOs in education reform efforts has quickly become a "best practice."[6] CBOs hold a "subject position" that is unique in perspective as having typically been involved in communities and aware of a fuller range of issues and challenges facing family wellbeing. Incorporating the work to strengthen the education system is understood to improve interventions and strategy development, as more holistic and integrated approaches to child and family success are likely to result.

c. Literature generally reflected dominant discourses as to the subordinate role of CBOs in education, that education is entirely the role of schools, and that, with the exception of parents as providers of early reading supports, considerations of community partners as providers of education is generally not considered. One recent 2014 report[7] did feature community partnerships prominently in its model, but did not etch out a direct role for community partners in education, only supplementary roles such as health, counseling, recreation services, and in particular, delineating students and their families with community resources. This approach reveals the theoretical bias of the researchers – that of ecological systems theory that presumes that the problems stem from inadequate use of services. For those whose theoretical approaches are more critically oriented, informed, for example, by sustained racial
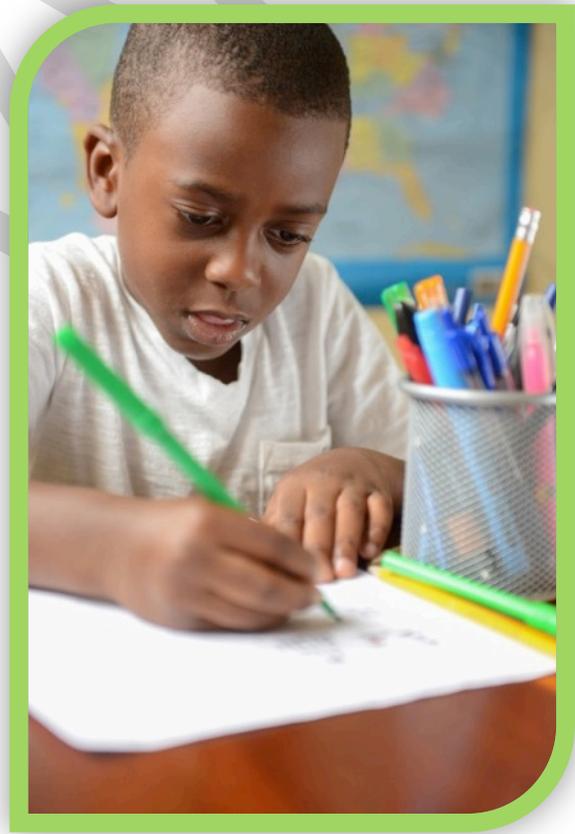
inequities in education, and the disparate outcomes continuing to face children of color (such as that contained with critical race theorists such as Ladson-Billings,[8] Kumasi,[9] Yanow,[10] and Dixson & Rousseau[11]), there will a more rigorous questioning about the causes and solutions to the ability of mainstream educational institutions to address racial disparities. From this perspective, advocates in terms of all resource options, and typically find solutions outside the mainstream institutions.

d. "Family education programs" support families as the first teachers of their children. In a review of four programs (totaling close to 6000 families),[12] results were mixed, with all showing benefits in cognitive development for participating children but some, which also yielded the same results with a control group. Only one was disaggregated by race (the *Parents as Teachers* program) and it showed positive impacts on cognitive development of children and significant benefits for mothers.

e. "Community literacy" is an approach to education that is deeply steeped in pronounced roles for parents, community members and CBOs. Prominent in less developed regions of the world, innovations are able to minimize costs, maximize culturally relevant pedagogy, affirm local leadership and wisdom, and build literacy across ages into a community resource that can then support social and economic development.[13] Given that these studies are primarily African, they were not investigated comprehensively. These types of programs align with Paolo Friere's work with popular education that works through community development to support literacy, an approach that was highly successful in Cuba and Brazil. In cultures where education has remained rooted in the community, there are reciprocal benefits. Such arrangements could be the basis for further collaborative models in the United States.

Recommendations:

Enlisting the support of CBOs allows the education system to leverage the relationships and trust that they have developed with families. These organizations are also equipped to reach families before students are involved in public schools, and to provide before, after and summer camp opportunities. They are also equipped to support a wide range of family needs, such as language training, cultural and community connections, employment skills, and case management services to link family members to needed resources. Families of newcomer students are well served through these socially, culturally, and linguistically inclusive programs. Investing in CBOs to serve students who are unable to read well needs to be accompanied by a solid track record of successful outcomes or promising practices that are showing interim outcomes with a specific group of students or families. It is also critical that there is evidence of a successful prognosis with proposals, alongside a partnership with school districts. Similarly, CSOs are well poised to serve parents of newcomer children, assisting their social, economic and linguistic inclusion.

b. The Role of "Culturally Specific Organizations" in Addressing the Opportunity Gap

Problem: Race relations have been responded to inadequately for many generations, and are evident today in segregation and racial profiling, to assimilation and colorblindness. Today's dominant approach of "cultural competence" is founded on erroneous assumptions that white educators can simply learn enough about "others" so as to then educate students effectively. If such learning was enough to eliminate disparities, then we would be seeing progress. Instead, institutional, systemic, behavioral and ideological racism (and its corollary, white privilege) needs to be dismantled in efforts that are likely to take generations – depending on the degree of resistance that exist, and the resources dedicated for the task. At the school level, everything from teacher selection and preparation to pedagogical approaches, research and evaluation practices, school and classroom culture, discipline policies and practices,

and the availability of school funding, and the equity of its distribution, all are marked by racial bias, albeit cloaked in race-neutral language.

An alternative service model exists – that of culturally specific organizations – that has been developed by communities of color to place community needs central to what, where, how and by whom services are developed.

Literature Synopsis: The literature identifies the forte of CSOs as being able to recruit and retain clients effectively, and to serve the community in culturally relevant and responsive ways. Services that have been studied in the literature show CSOs respond to needs with holistic programming (as opposed to compartmentalized services) that focuses on individual, family, and community services, and that integrate tangible supports with leadership development, community development and policy advocacy work. In education, CSOs have been affirmed for their ability to support positive racial identity, cultural pride, effective parent engagement and relevant education, through their distinctive philosophies that reflect culturally specific linguistic, spiritual, community, civic and cultural affirmation.[14]

In terms of outcomes, CSOs generate improved retention and health outcomes in the social service arena. In education, studies of Afrocentric schools (in Kansas City, Detroit and Chicago) reveal improved test scores in reading in Grades 3 and 4, and improved attendance in comparison with district averages.[15] Local examples in education (NAYA, SEI and Latino Network) show higher standardized test scores, greater parental engagement, and higher graduation rates than local districts are able to generate for students of color.

In general, CSOs demonstrate accountability to their own communities and hold central the progress and wellbeing of the communities they serve, instead of being one of many communities served. CSOs also respond nimbly to changing conditions and priorities,[16] and are replete with community members throughout the organization, from front line

staff to the highest levels of governance and leadership. Students enter the doors of CSOs as insiders instead of outsiders, and everything about the organization communicates, "we are invested in you, and our community depends on your success" and given the overlap in identities of service users and service providers, this premise is true. New research on the "nurturing environment" that promotes child wellbeing[17] aligns well with the contributions of CSOs as they "minimize biologically and psychologically toxic events"[18] (such as the racial invalidations that are ripe in mainstream settings) and "teach, promote, and richly reinforce pro-social behavior"[19] (as successful education engagement and positive racial identity development so achieves), and "monitor and limit opportunities for problem behavior"[20] (as is achieved by having caring adults attuned well to identity challenges that are likely to flow from institutional racism and by more holistic programming).

> *One study revealed that schools would need to invest an additional $1000/child annually to create the same results that are achieved through family engagement.[24]*

Solutions: Maximizing the use of culturally specific organizations for service delivery to students of color holds high potential to improve student achievement. CSOs are also able to reach and partner with parents of color, and support their development as teachers, tutors and advocates for their children.

c. *Parent and Family Engagement*

Problem: Most school practices and culture welcome family engagement on their terms, which are characterized as useful to families who share the same culture, language, race and income as the dominant culture of the school. For others, schools are not effective in supporting parent engagement. Dynamics that interfere with family engagement are expectations that seek deference to the school and teachers' expertise, cultural invalidation, perception of languages other than English as not valuable, limited options for engagement, and students' needs labeled as inadequacies. For many parents, schools remain intimidating places, with invalidation often being a repeated generational pattern, resulting in ambivalence about engagement with schools. We also know that teachers are least likely to reach out to parents when the social divide is high, despite the gains this is likely to create for student achievement.[21]

Literature Synopsis: A brief summary of literature on family engagement[22] affirms both the importance of engagement as a protective feature against absenteeism and dropping out, and in improving graduation rates, student achievement, learning attitudes, and social skill development. Schools themselves can benefit from increased

family engagement as it increases academic expectations, improve student-teacher relationships, increases trust and respect levels, and expands cultural and community awareness. The literacy gains of students whose parents who take on teaching roles was recently confirmed in a study of 900 preschool students: "Parent practices, especially exposure to literacy [and secondarily teaching reading], had a positive impact on children's developing interest in literacy."[23]

One meta-analysis of 32 studies confirms the importance of parental educational attitudes to the reading success of children.[24] The shift required within the family engagement field is summarized this way: "family engagement is no longer defined as one-way participation in select school activities, with teachers being the sole experts on child learning and development. Instead, families are being recognized as equal and critical partners in their children's education."[25] The Oregon Department of Education confirms the importance of engagement being successful when one leads with "ears" and only later engages one's "mouth."[26] The literature then moves forward to identify four key roles for families in education:

- As nurturers of children's health, safety, security and wellbeing, and holding the potential to either exacerbate or reduce chronic stress and environmental development threats.

- As teachers who create learning environments, high expectations, opportunities for development, access to books, reading and telling stories, and practice sharing cultural traditions.

- As intermediaries who support transitions to new spaces, people and cultures, and facilitate and guide ongoing relationships with others.

- As advocates who seek out and intervene to access services and opportunities, as well as problem solve when necessary.[27]

Reading achievement is also tied to the level of success in student teacher and parent-teacher relationships, with racial bias in evidence. Student learning and development is improved when those relationships are strong: "they work harder in the classroom, persevere in the face of difficulties, accept teacher direction and criticism, cope better with stress, and attend more to the teacher."[28] Student performance also reflects parent-teacher relationships: when families participate in education and have warm and respectful relationships with teachers, "students achieve more, demonstrate increased achievement motivation, and exhibit higher levels of emotional, social and behavioral adjustment."[29]

However, critical race theory guides our attention to the structural and discursive issues that are tied to low engagement for families of color: that the education system has been an institution that reproduces whiteness and white privilege, with disparate results being an enduring feature that supports white students (particularly moderate to higher income white students) to obtain stronger education, good grades, and achieve success entering and succeeding in higher education. Indicators are the weak outcomes for students of color, the relative immutability of systems that keep educators of color out of teaching, and family engagement patterns that are inclusive of the typical stay-at-home, English speaking mother (typically female) who is grateful for opportunities to be involved. Additionally, rather than recognize the disparity, schools tend to revert to the discourse they are willing and open partners with families, and that the problem lies entirely with families who are unwilling to be involved: "Family engagement and involvement is treated as a social fact on neutral terrain rather than as a socially constructed phenomenon on the contested terrain of schooling…[and] perpetuate the myth of the uninvolved minority parent."[30]

In addition to specific programs to fully support family engagement for the K-12 reading success of their children, engagement needs to be an ingredient in additional early learning programs such as preschool programs, summer learning programs, and before- and after-school programs. These programs hold potential to meaningfully engage family members in ways that support reading gains.

Family Engagement has the Following Benefits:
- Connections are strengthened between home and school and between home and community
- Families become more confident and informed in supporting their children academically
- Families become less apprehensive about becoming involved with teachers and with the school
- And when that engagement occurs, one study showed that "parents gained confidence in the local school/board by seeing their children happy and enthusiastic and by witnessing concern for their children beyond the school [day]."[31]

Recommendations: While schools and districts need to improve family engagement, CSOs and CBOs that have the trust of their communities, holding much greater potential to reach families who have been unable to support their students' education. Waiting for schools to develop this capacity is too onerous and risky a request for families of color. Research shows that investments in family engagement result in narrowing of racial disparities because they have the "greatest impact for children at greatest risk."[32] Approaches that have promising results include:

- Train parents to be their children's first teachers
  - Provide books, resources and coaching
  - Differentially support parents to be teachers to their children in three periods: early childhood, transition to kindergarten and elementary school
- Provide parents more holistic supports (beyond reading and literacy)
  - Examples include health, social service, housing, language, literacy, citizenship, employment and workforce development
  - Train parents in effective advocacy practices to work with educators
- Improve the welcoming environment of schools through the following methods:
  - CSOs and CBOs provide advice to schools on how to engage successfully with parents of various cultures, including feedback on the impediments that exist for respect and inclusion
  - School cultures that promote inclusion, with Principals providing strong leadership
  - Schools themselves build mindsets that:
    - "Value and respect families and see them as assets in supporting student learning.
    - See engaging families as part of the teacher's core role and responsibility.
    - Be culturally knowledgeable and sensitive."[33]
- Redefine schools as community resources, and a logical site for community programs to take place (particularly in rural schools)
- Support proud relationship with students' own cultures and languages
- Share details of success stories achieved by various CBOs/CSOs (such as Latino Network, NAYA and SEI) and school districts (such as Springfield and Umatilla)

d. *Before-School and After-School Programs*

Problem: Students with a high probability for being unable to read in 3rd Grade need additional reading supports. Again, the same core message from summer learning programs applies – that additional quality instruction time is important for student reading gains.

Literature Synopsis:

An array of educational studies demonstrate the effectiveness of after-school programs in improving student reading and math scores, outperforming those who were not in such programs. Findings from one long-term study of 1500 youth tracked for 24 years show higher educational attainment and occupational success.[34] One study frames the importance of after-school programs as protective factors for Black youth and children, from "complex, systemic social and academic problems… [including] reducing youth involvement in violent and risky behaviors."[35] Another long-term study shows Latino students benefit with improved attendance and higher test scores.[36] A literature review of these findings concludes that student performance improves, attendance increases, engagement expands, and involvement in high-risk activities (drugs, alcohol, violence and crime) decreases, particularly when programs integrate highly relational supports with community elders and mentors.[37] These gains appear to be contingent on regular attendance in higher grades, but not in elementary schools.[38] Exemplars continue to exist regionally, with a particularly strong community-based program in Canada (beginning in Toronto and now spreading nationwide, with almost 10,000 students served annually) that provides academic support, group mentoring, financial support and 1:1 supports generating pronounced results. Participation rates are at 80% of eligible students, graduation rates have more than doubled, dropouts declined by more than 70% and the rate of students going to college increased by 300%.[39]

In programs that have strong mentoring activities, the features of successful mentoring include "being culturally and socially understanding, non-judgmental, consistent, and emotionally supportive."[40] Negligible benefits occur without high quality relationships. Relationship success exists when staff are more flexible, comfortable, "authoritative without being punitive or harsh," and more likely to use positive reinforcement to support behavior.[41]

Why do these benefits result? To begin, additional supports help students gain academic skills, practice and scholastic capacity. They also provide a protective space from the relative dangers of unstructured time, which holds potential to devolve. In addition, engagement with strongly supportive and affirming adults serves to build student

resilience (which is generally understood to be the ability to overcome adversity) as students become more confident, have greater security and improved school success.

The challenge, however, comes from low participation levels among students of color. While little advice exists in the literature on how to expand access – other than broad recommendations to reduce participation barriers such as cost and location – the capacity of communities of color to reach out through local avenues that are reliant on cultural connection and relationships suggest that CSOs may have better success.

One award-winning US school, Metacomet Elementary School in Bloomfield, CT, has eliminated its 3rd Grade reading gap in recent years. A discussion with Principal Desi Nesmith highlighted the ingredients for their success. They received permission from the District to reorient their curriculum entirely to focus on reading, with other subjects integrated within the foundational focus on reading. They have a robust after-school program that, on parents' insistence, now is balanced to be 4/5 academic, and offered 3 days per week. An additional day is for a club called "Pretty Brown Girls" that runs for 8 weeks and supports 3rd grade girls (with 4th grade girls being ambassadors) to build their pride in identity and to combat racism in advertising. Their perspective is that this program has eliminated bullying and enhanced self-esteem. They also provide a 4-week summer school that hires teachers for a 4-weeks day camp experience, provides half days of reading, writing and math instruction, and half days of CBO-delivered activities. In addition, the school fully embraces the inclusion of culturally relevant pedagogy, and integrates this across all curriculum. They have also

created a "data team" that creates a set of levers for early identification of student learning, and every teacher is expected to participate in have team-based discussions on student work to share and learn about assessment, feedback and teaching. They also integrate Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and have dropped from 836 referrals to 8 per year. Finally, there is a student-family assistance center onsite that resources schools to provide holistic supports for students and

families by linking them to CBOs. Some onsite services are provided.

The Province of Ontario (Canada) has built a strategic initiative in poverty reduction, and has tied high school graduation to a series of investments that are connected to early literacy. Their efforts have centered on early literacy supports by providing summer learning for children in grades K to 3, and before- and after-school programs. They also have created full day kindergarten for both junior and senior kindergarten, saving parents an estimated $6500 a year in child-care. This author has reached out to the staff of this initiative and anticipates collecting additional information on the design and results of the relative benefits of before- and after-school programs.

In Oregon, as we look for local experiences, we discover a lack of ready access to these data. Such access relies on agreements with school districts to generate data on both participating students and on the generation of comparison data for relevant populations who are not in these programs. The current (informal) standard is to provide programs with program-specific data, but the comparison data are the total district figures, as opposed to a relevant comparison population. In general (through a sampling of program data available to this author), our CBO data appears to be less effective than the district data, but our CBOs are serving students with heightened risk factors. This awareness of inappropriate data comparators leads us to question some assertions present in the research that the academic benefit of after-school programs is relatively minor.[42] If these studies were based on appropriate comparators, then such a conclusion would make sense. Without equivalent comparators, low level gains would be expected.

Recommendations: Strong data sharing agreements between school districts and service providers is essential to ensure that we can track the results of anticipated investments in early reading. Details on appropriate comparators must be agreed to at the onset of the program. The research studies that create the best evidence for effective programs include quantitative studies of student achievement outcomes (measuring both student progress, and the presence/intensity of risk and protective factors for school reading success), long-term follow up to be able to see if reading gains "stick," and qualitative research on the experiences of parents, students and teachers about the gains made by participating children.

e. Summer Programs

Problem: Two sets of learning challenges exist: the first is students experiencing poverty slide in reading proficiency while higher income children gain in reading proficiency, called "summer setback." The scope of this problem is significant, as families in poverty typically do not have the resources to support out-of-school learning opportunities. The differential effects on the basis of income are pronounced: "by grade 9, two-thirds of the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students

can be attributed to earlier patterns of summer learning losses and gains."[43] We also see that summer setback is prevalent for English Language Learners.[44] The second problem is the summer reading programs provided have had weak to negligible results. These weak results can be explained through the timing of the program (usually being offered to existing 3rd graders and seems to be too late), that students experience it as punishment, that the programs are boring, and that attendance is very low (with studies ranging from 40% in Connecticut, to 50% in Oakland, to 77% in New York city).

Literature Synopsis: A meta-analysis of research on summer learning concludes that when additional learning time is added, academic achievement improves.[45] Such is not the case if the same educational hours are spread over more months – additional "seat time" is required. Intervention research of a seven-week summer program showed that significant gains were made in reading, but then these gains diminished over the subsequent academic year.[46] Of

interest, the researchers shared their understanding of why this occurred: the absence of fun activities (as reading was 2 hours of the day camp program), the weakness of the reading curriculum, the need to teach to the lowest-level readers (which participating students had moved well beyond), the inadequacy of literacy instruction capacity of some teachers, low expectations and less-than-optimal levels of parent involvement. They also made recommendations for improvement that are included in the next segment.

Given that the province of Ontario in Canada has, in the last five years, established early learning as a cornerstone of its anti-poverty strategy, it is undertaking a range of early learning initiatives. In a study of 28 school districts with summer learning programs, a wide range of programs were offered of varying lengths from 1 to 10 classes, with approximately 1200 students attending, and ranging from 8 to 29 day programs, of half to full day programs, with an average of approximately. 3 hours daily devoted to literacy. Results were mixed, with significant gains in some schools, but there were design challenges in not collecting detailed enough data to establish appropriate comparison groups. The conclusions of the researchers are: some programs "reduced 67% of the achievement gap between June and September… others did not, though they likely shrank summer learning gaps that would have otherwise widened… students that are highly vulnerable had substantially less learning loss when they attended summer programs."[47]

Recommendations: Summer reading programs hold potential to support reading acquisition. Such programs should be modeled from exemplary curriculum, use trained and credentialed instructors, integrate fun activities that engage students (and thus encourage regular attendance), and run the full day so that parents do not need to make additional arrangements for day care (also believed necessary to increase attendance). To help ensure that these benefits are retained, suggestions include providing "reading tutoring twice a week, an after-school reading program, or parent intervention designed to increase home reading and access to reading materials."[48]

Consolidated Insights of Summit Participants: "Wish Lists" or "Priorities"

a. Relationships with School Districts

Ongoing concerns exist about the shortcomings of school districts in addressing racial disparities in student achievements.

Educators need to face racial inequities about institutional, cultural and behavioral racism that leads to racial disparities. It is imperative that a commitment be created and entrenched to address racial disparities in reading outcomes. Further research on this topic is being conducted by PSU's Center to Advance Racial Equity and is anticipated for release in mid-2015.

At the same time, many CBO and CSO providers are able to improve school results for children being served, and notice that their capacity to support the effective engagement of families of color is rarely being tapped by school districts. In response, there is growing urgency to take the lead in educational supports, as opposed to being invited in at the will of school districts. The advantages of such providers are that they (a) generate strong results for students with more pressing needs, (b) engage the family on the family's terms and culture, (c) are able to advocate with the schools to gain stronger responsiveness to local needs, and (d) are accountable for high-level results (as part of funding expectations, as well as the distinct case for CSOs that have shared futures for community wellbeing).

b. Discourse Issue: Racial Equity in General

Equity advocates remain concerned about how difficult it is to have a conversation about race with school district administrators and educators. The prevailing dominant discourse is that schools are colorblind and that educators are unaffected by racial bias, and accordingly

efforts to focus on the racial dimensions of disparities are resisted. Equity concerns are, to varying degrees across districts, marginalized and subsequently inadequately tended. Given that racial disparities are pronounced and growing, it is not acceptable for schools to remain insular in addressing equity. When it comes to student achievement, educators often attribute achievement difficulties to poverty rather than accounting for the underlying facets of our education system that have not historically supported students of color.

Given the educator discourse related to poverty, they more readily accept failing outcomes among poor students than students of color. However, students of color then have more difficulties achieving at school not because they are of color but because they are poor. And in n many circles, it is believed that race is simply a proxy for poverty, rather than schools being sites of institutional and personal racism.[49]

Community advocates are concerned about the durability of commitments to racial educational equity, and suggest that progress be made while there are leaders willing to invest in reforms. While a discourse shift in awareness is underway, with educational leaders willing to give voice, attention and investments to the issue, real gains need to be made while these forces are in place. It is time for bolder decisions and investments, with cohesive capacity built to pilot and document successful interventions.

Accountability needs to be entrenched across the system, and performance/program evaluations ensuring that results in reducing disparities are attained.[50] It is also recommended that communities of color be represented at policy-making tables. Overwhelmingly, advocates insist that student outcomes improve, and that considerable resources be leveraged to ensure that gains are realized and sustained.

c. Discourse Issue: Educational Investments and Investments as "School" Monies

The weak performance of school districts in terms of equitable opportunities and outcomes signals to CBOs and CSOs that schools do not have the capacity on their own to eliminate disparities in reading outcomes. To summarize the discussions in this area, CBOs/CSOs need and want to ensure that they have leading roles, with funding to do solid interventions, and that they must be afforded the ability to step out of the shadows and into the lead of working with students of color and low-income students. Educating children needs to be a community endeavor, and community leaders who share the lived experiences of these same students, and whose progress depends on the success of these same students need to be leading service delivery.

It is not necessary to dramatize the shortcomings of the education system that has generated and tolerated such inequities. These arguments are available, but do not need emphasis. The data that opened this report are sufficient to provide impetus that alternatives must be explored. Suffice to say, children who are struggling to read belong to the community, and the resources to serve them need to also belong to the community. Prior habits of giving priority to school districts to support all educational needs have not generated the desired results. These habits need to be broken, and more robust accountability practices for student achievement integrated into the funding requirements.

By no means are CBOs and CSOs saying that school improvements are not important. They just have not been effective in supporting students of color, English Language Learners (ELL) students, and low-income students who are struggling. Students and families of color have been waiting for the promises of better outcomes. Asking for more time to see results is not a sufficient response at this time. Given the link between successful reading with high school graduation and post-secondary enrollment, futures are narrowed for students of color and other struggling groups every time the promise does not materialize.

Real partnerships are believed to be a key ingredient for services, which might include, in the pre-school time period, relationships with Head Starts, child care centers, family child care homes, relative care and informal

care. Partnerships are also essential with families and with schools, and partnerships need to become two-way, and much more flexible and reciprocal, with teachers and schools increasingly behaving as though they are responsible for effective family engagement.

d. *Cultural Validation*

Community leaders continue to find reticence among teachers and principals to step out of mainstream traditions and cultures to become more inclusive. This results in students entering classrooms as cultural "outsiders" and this in turn negates their history, heritage and current lived realities, including the daily racism that students and families experience. The discomfort and resistance to issues of race and cultural/linguistic heritage of many educators and principals is palpable, and this serves as a huge impediment for student progress, family engagement and educational reform. The ongoing and pervasive omission of teachers of color in Oregon's classrooms sustains the whiteness of our schools. Few signs of improvements are on the horizon for diversifying the teaching base, and this omission needs to be reversed.

In response, community advocates want to catalyze several important initiatives:

- Greater minority teacher hiring, ensuring that students of color are increasingly taught by teachers of color
- Full integration of culturally responsive pedagogy
- Authentic and deep ability for educators to identify, discuss and intervene in troubling school climates, teacher performance, and inequitable outcomes. An unflinching capacity to name problems and invite collaboration from community partners to build solutions are required approaches to capacity building in racial equity
- Heightened accountability for equitable outcomes across the education system. Embedding real consequences for inaction, alongside rewards for addressing inequities is needed
- Expanded options for students and families to receive cultural validation is important to provide both inside of schools and outside of schools. The configuration for such an

approach is not just as a supplement to existing school-based services, but also as an alternative to such services.

e. *Recommended Shifts for Schools and Educators*

Explaining these weak and deteriorating results for communities of color requires us to expand our analysis beyond budget cuts and class size increases. We need to consider the inequitable impacts of possibilities such as access to early learning opportunities including Head Start programs, with many children of color having difficulty in accessing these programs. These numbers also point to the results of early education funding that has deteriorated in recent years, with larger classroom sizes and shorter school years (as districts aimed to balance budgets) contributing to deteriorating outcomes. These results are also likely linked to the challenges of families in the recent recession, shouldered more heavily by families of color who have much larger unemployment levels than white families. As a result, it is likely that proportionately fewer families of color have been able to finance early learning opportunities. In addition, the ripple effects of family economic stress influences child stress that in turns narrows learning energy, problem solving and attention in school (poignantly demonstrated in the new film, *The Raising of America*). Parents subsequently have more limited available time to invest in child learning development. The burden of recessions is recognized as being shouldered more heavily by communities of color – and we anticipate that this pattern is increasing the racial disparities in reading scores. We also hold out the possibility that teachers are less able to dedicate individual attention to support reading equitably across their students, made worse when they are stressed by increased class sizes and more of their own economic stressors in a recessionary economy.

There are key perspective shifts sought by community advocates:
- Shift the discourse from "those children" to "our children"
- Foreground the economic surge that all of Oregon will experience if students of color, low-income students and ELL students are academically successful
- Understand CBOs/CSOs as assets for student learning, able to connect with families and children where they live, and able to bring unique assets to education, including providing reading instruction and the much more full range of supports that families are likely to find useful to their social and economic wellbeing
- Foreground success and high prognosis of success in reading outcomes – and let this drive investments as opposed to being territorial on academic investments
- Work diligently on advancing educational equity, demonstrating humility and transparency, and asking for help from community leaders
- Build cultural responsiveness and inclusion at the same as supporting and partnering with CBOs and CSOs who are better equipped to make concrete gains with children and their families.
- Get urgent on educational equity! Too much time has been lost already.

Suggestions for Investments in 3rd Grade Reading

Overall, the Oregon Equity Lens can be given "legs" to guide the investments of OEIB and ODE in strategic investments. Within this document are the ingredients to guide the principles of investments and the types of outcomes that need to be required for funding. The metrics below provide additional guidance for an RFQ process.

a. Lead Organization

Problem: It is desirable for CBOs and or CSOs to be the lead applicant, with partnerships with relevant institutions detailed in the application. If this is not the situation, school districts will step into the lead and CBOs and or CSOs will stay on the margins. The caution issued is that mainstream leaders have a tendency to have a minimal partnership practice, asking for the majority of resources, and decision making authority, while limiting CBOs and or CSOs to relatively minor roles (such as outreach or parent services), and inviting them late to the process without the ability to imprint on the program. In addition, sometimes such efforts involve being asked to "rescue" programs that are not reaching the desired participants, and activating their connections with the community to reach participants. CBOs and or CSOs find such partnership practices overly narrow and limited, and sometimes are experienced as exploitive relationships.

Solution: If Oregon is to meaningfully improve outcomes in reading, traditional investment streams and status quo must be closely examined. CSO's and CBO's should be strongly considered for lead applicants given their ability to demonstrate a successful track record in recruiting, retaining and supporting students whose potential is often untapped. For programs that aim to improve outcomes for communities of color, the lead organization must be a culturally specific organization.

b. Partnership with Districts

Problem: The districts carry statutory responsibility for achievement outcomes and disparities, which was a message of concern voiced by districts during the Summits. This process seeks a method for clarifying school, district, CBOs, CSOs and community shared responsibilities in student outcomes.

Suggestions: The following are recommendations for inclusion into RFQs

- To support the early development of a working partnership, dialogue is recommended early and expansively between the CBO/CSO and either the Superintendent or his/her delegate
- The RFQ should include a requirement for submission of a letter of support from school district for the application that reflects details of the partnership established, and how the partnership was created.
- This letter of support should spell out the details of the relationship and incorporate these specifics:
  - Ways in which the school district will support the CBO/CSO
    - Through making student data available
    - Through a relationship that opens communication about both learnings from the program's activities, and student-specific information sharing – as tied to relevant educational insights
  - Ways in which the CBO/CSO will support the school district
    - Through sharing insights on what works and does not work well with specific communities of students and their families, with the goal of supporting the school district to build its cultural responsiveness
    - The gains made at a composite level from the investment and the advice that service providers have for schools who will work with these same students
    - Specific insights about specific families who need additional supports and resources, as long as permission for such sharing has been provided by the family

c. Accountability and Performance Metrics

Problem: Data systems have been overly limited in race and ethnicity identifiers; with newcomer communities not well identified in school data systems. Solid tracking of ELL status and progress occurs, but many districts do not collect or share their data disaggregated for language.

Suggestions: Determining what works and what does not work is a key ingredient for this investment. It is important for data collection to be effective to document

access and outcomes by race, poverty, and language. It is also important for service providers to have access to educational testing data, and other educational outcomes data (attendance, discipline, grades, OAKS testing scores, Kindergarten readiness scores, and credits) that are contained in student educational files, recognizing that discipline data should be provided in aggregated ways so that privacy for students is retained and the potential for stereotyping limited. As well, this report earlier documented the importance of establishing relevant comparison groups, against which the service provider can assess their own outcomes. Collaboration will be expected to identify a relevant comparison group. It will be important to provide some funds for school districts to be able to extract these data for the CBO/CSO service providers.

d. *Memorandum of Understanding between OEIB/ODE and Service Providers*

Key elements of an MOU demonstrate the agreements that will increase the likelihood that results are effectively tracked, that investments and activities are effectively linked to reading gains, and that there is a collaborative learning environment between service providers and educators that benefits both the schools and the specific students and families being served. The following are suggested as elements in the MOU:

a. Mutually-agreed upon program outcome metrics that connect intervention to 3rd grade reading results.
   i. A sampling of such metrics would include letter recognition, sounds of words, name recognition, book handling, frequency of family members reading to child, parent confidence and experience talking to teachers, and family monitoring of student's academic progress.
   ii. Ideally, CBO staff would be able to administer Oregon's Kindergarten Assessment so that they can test the progress of the children they serve and establish comparison evaluations with appropriate comparison groups (also stipulated in the MOU). Should it be impossible to use the same assessments, aligned assessments should be determined prior to being stipulated in the MOU.
   iii. Tracking of participating student experiences until 4th grade Smarter Balanced reading would be desirable so that CBOs (and school districts/ODE) can discern the longer-term impact of programs. Third grade reading scores and 4th Grade scores (should students not be successful in 3rd Grade) results would be the long-term outcomes indicating success. When OAKS tests are replaced with the statewide summative assessments, these results should be tracked.

b. Meet with school districts at least bi-annually to discuss learnings as tied to the programs and the families and children served.
   i. Progress of project, and program-wide details of students served

ii. Student-specific information that can be helpful to teachers and administrators, and alternatively information from school to CBO to assist in supporting students and families

iii. Learnings of how to effectively serve both students and parents in culturally responsive manner

c. Data sharing agreement will be needed to ensure that service providers can track progress of the students they serve. Currently, CBOs/CSOs with School District partnerships have uneven access to academic achievement of the students they serve. Section (c) indicates the methods and details for the data that will be needed by the CBOs/CSOs. Data will need to be held confidentially. The degree of student specificity will be important to ascertain but the degree to which student-specific data needs to be available to the CSOs/CBOs will likely need to be a program-by-program decision. The timelines on which these data become available to the CBOs/CSOs needs to be defined as well. Availability should be earlier than the schedule of release for statewide data, which is typically much too late for program staff to make effective use in their interventions and supports for children and families.

Closing Comments

The two Reading Equity Summits were fertile for raising important issues, some of which were hopes and dreams, some of which were frustrations, and all of which were in the service of improving student learning to build more promising futures for each of our students in Oregon. These Summits were an investment in moving forward and they hold capacity to shift beyond awareness and into action. The next stages of strategic educational investments will take into account the substance of this report, and consider service delivery models that ensure that those who have traditionally been underserved receive the fullness of supports that they need to gain reading competency.

To ensure that equity is achieved for Oregon's public school students, resources need to be deployed in more effective and culturally specific ways. Retaining the current budgeting practices will not place sufficient accountability structures on the education system to achieve strong outcomes for students of color, ELL students and students experiencing poverty. Targeted funding to achieve targeted, disparity-reducing outcomes, using what we know of the best of services to reach and support students and families is required at this juncture.

There is a strong sense that educational equity is a theme that might fall out of fashion and that important gains can be made while commitments have been publicly declared. Community leaders are hopeful that the state is committed to real improvements – and that these will require refined strategies, funding, delivery models, and accountability for improved outcomes. The urgency of community advocates is palpable. It is imperative that we demonstrate a commitment to move from insight into action to ensure that each Oregon student receives the supports and guidance they deserve.

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[48] P.166 in Schacter, J. & Jo, B. (2005). Learning when school is not in session: A reading summer day-camp intervention to improve the achievement of exiting first-grade students who are economically disadvantaged. *Journal of Research in Reading, 28*(2), 158-169.

[49] The Center to Advance Racial Equity was approach by the Coalition of Communities of Color in 2012 to study this dynamic and assess the degree to which the discourse is in evidence in student experiences. Now in Phase 2 of the research, results are expect in early 2015.

[50] Visarraga, H. (2014). *Celebrating, advancing and measuring equity in education: Proceedings from the 10/16/14 convening.* Wilsonville, OR: The Center for Intercultural Innovation.