



National Research & Development Center to Improve
EDUCATION FOR SECONDARY ENGLISH LEARNERS

WestEd 

Who Waives EL Services and What Are the Effects of Waiving?

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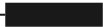
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Possible levers to expand course access

- Waiving EL services
- More instructional time
- Specialized teacher preparation
- Bilingual program participation
- School counselor availability
- Integrated English language development
- Peer composition



What does it mean to waive EL services?

Language in ESSA:

Local education agencies must provide parents with:

(viii) information pertaining to parental rights that includes written guidance—

(I) **detailing the right that parents have to have their child immediately removed** from such [language instruction educational] program upon their request;

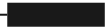
(II) detailing the options that **parents have to decline to enroll their child** in such program or to choose another program or method of instruction, if available.

Potential short-term consequences of waiving EL services:

- No ELD class
- More access to content courses?
- More access to electives of interest?

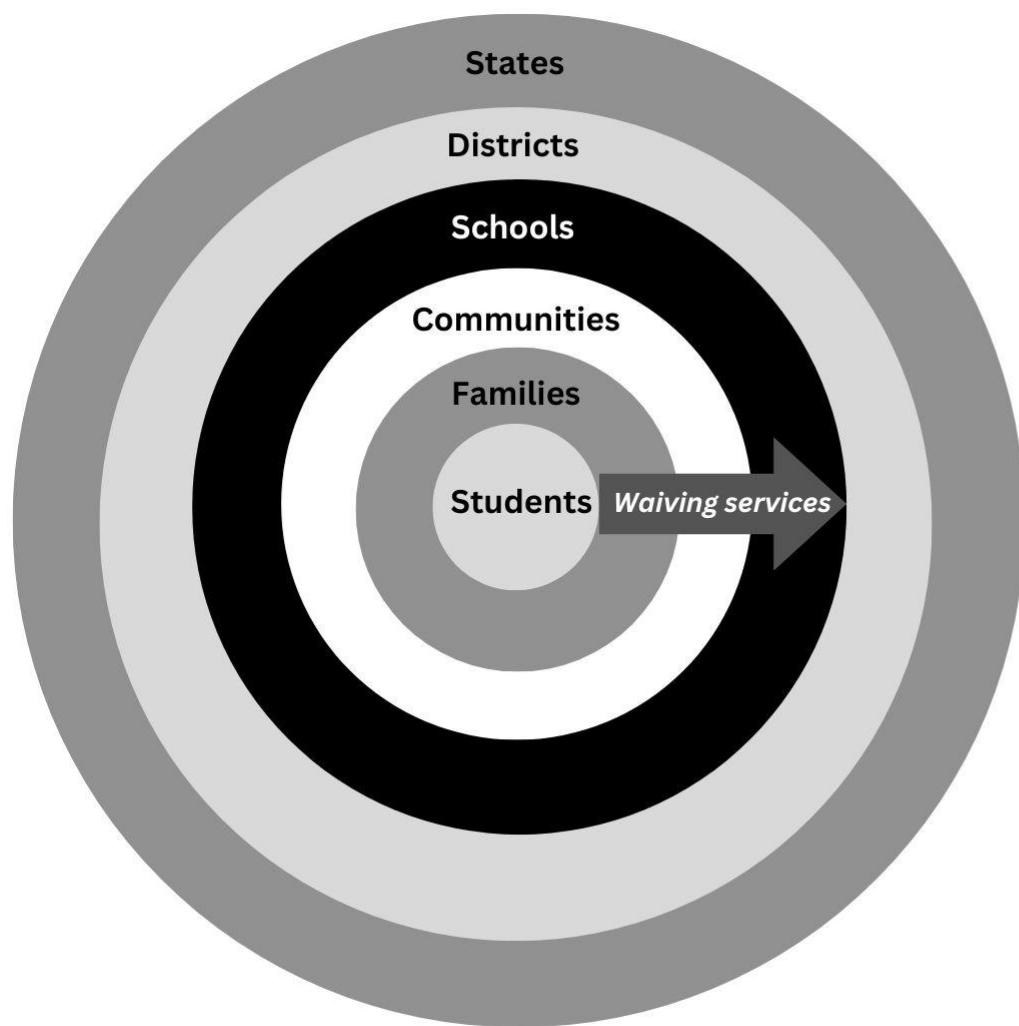
Research Questions

- Who waives EL services?
- What are the effects of waiving EL services on graduation and course-taking?



Prior research on waiving EL services

- There's very little!
- Students who waive EL services may be:
 - More likely to have been educated in the US for many years (Brooks, 2019, 2023)
 - More likely to qualify for special education (Oh & Mancilla-Martinez, 2024)
 - Less likely to be economically disadvantaged (Oh & Mancilla-Martinez, 2024)
 - Have parents who understand and are able to navigate U.S. educational bureaucracies (Mavrogordato & Harris, 2017)
- No prior research on the *effects* of waiving EL services on student outcomes



EL-classified students' **opportunity to learn** is shaped by the nested levels of their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2000; Oakes, 2005; Callahan, 2005).

Waiving EL services is an action that students and their families can take to exercise **agency** over their educational experiences (Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

Aspects of students' and families' **community cultural wealth** (Yosso, 2005) may support their action to waive services, including:

- navigational capital
- resistance capital
- aspirational capital
- familial capital
- social capital
- linguistic capital

Waiving EL services may be conceptualized as an effort to improve **student engagement**, which can be defined as "the goodness of fit between students and the school environment" (Finn et al., 2012).

Sample and methods

Who waives EL services?

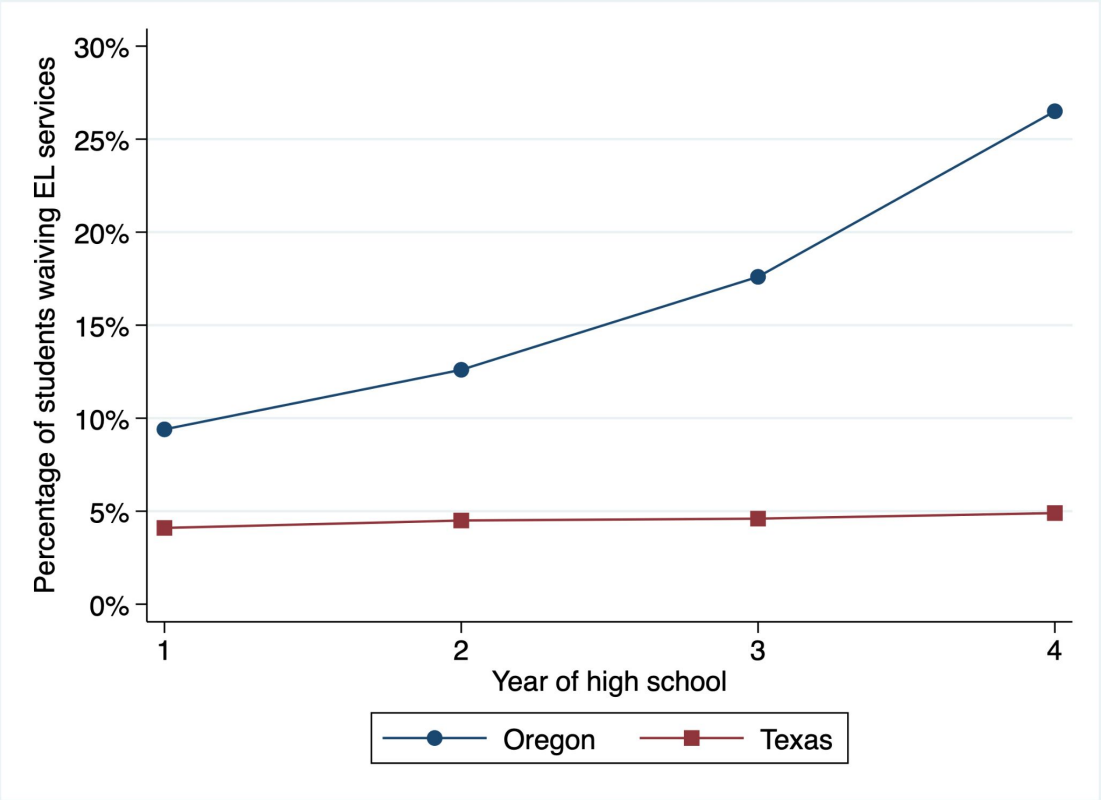
- Statewide, student-level longitudinal data from **Oregon and Texas**
- Grades 9-12
- Texas: One cohort, entered high school in 2015-16
- Oregon: Three cohorts, entered high school in 2013-14, 2014-15, and 2015-16
- **Descriptive**

What's the effect of waiving EL services on later outcomes?

- Statewide, student-level longitudinal data from **Oregon**
- Two cohorts of students who entered high school in 2014-15 and 2015-16
- Limited to students who were also in Oregon schools in 8th grade
- **Quasi-experimental**

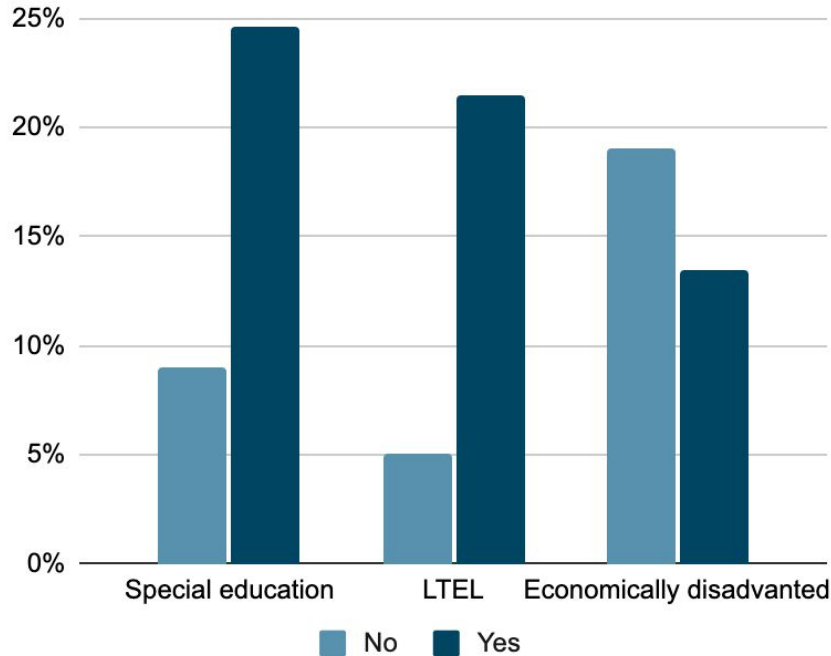
Who waives EL services?

Prevalence of waiving EL services

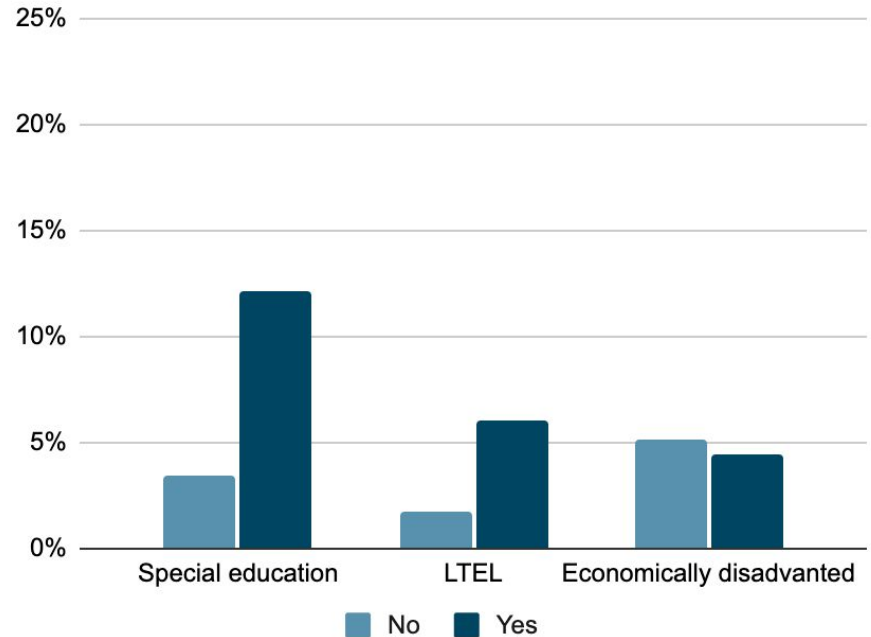


Characteristics of students who waive EL services, grades 9-12

Oregon



Texas



What's the effect of
waiving EL services?

Oregon policy context (2014-2019)

Key high school graduation requirements

- 4 years of ELA
- 3 years of math
- 3 years of science
- 3 years of social studies

EL policy considerations

- ELD counted as an elective
- Very low percentages of high school students scored proficient on the state ELP assessment

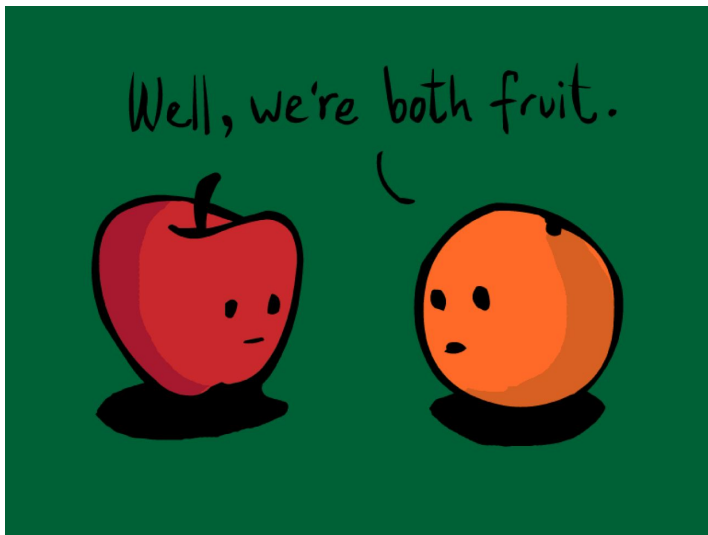
Coarsened Exact Matching (CEM)

In simple terms: **a way to compare apples to apples**

We want students to be the same **except** for whether or not they waived

We do this by matching them on key characteristics:

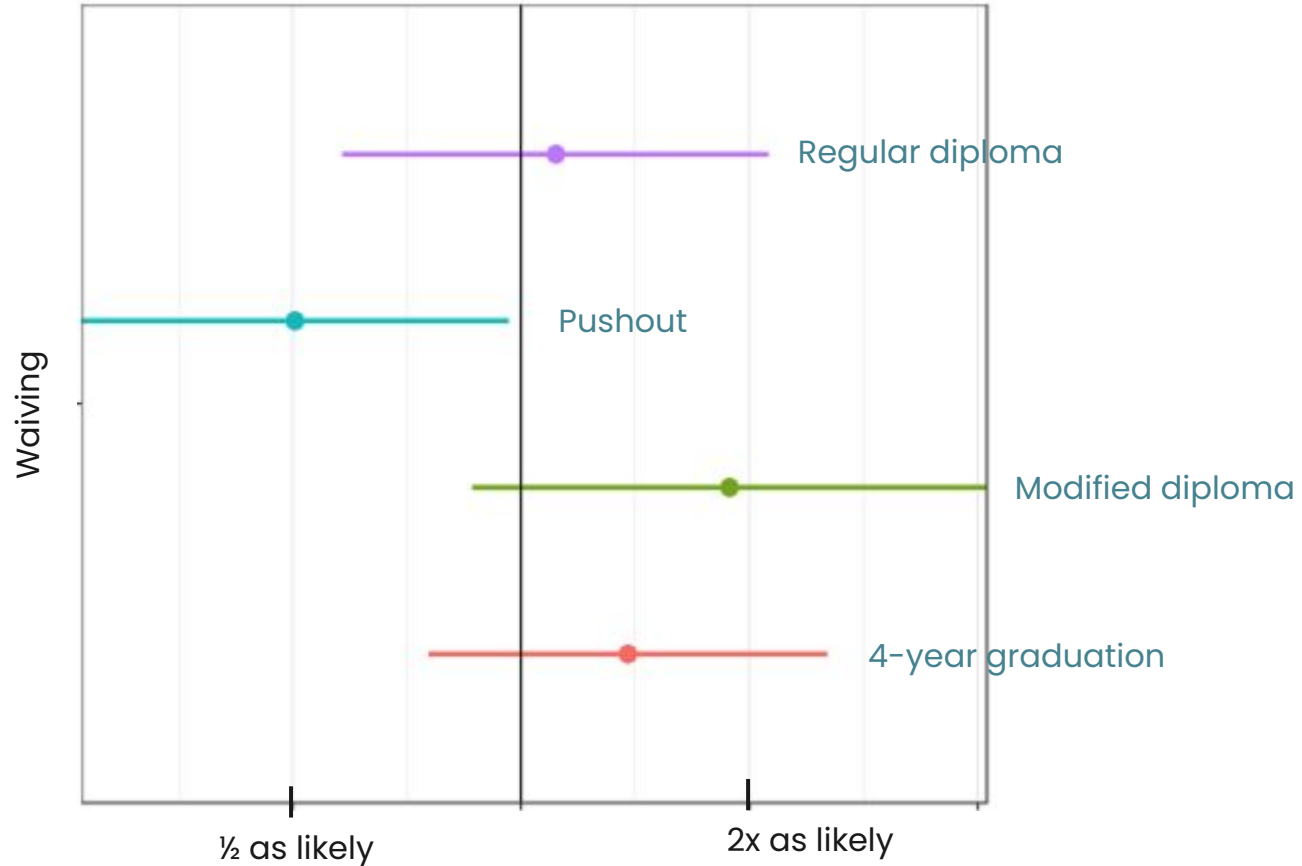
- Gender
- Race/ethnicity
- Socioeconomic background
- Newcomer status
- LTEL status
- Eligibility for SpEd
- Ever-reclassification (during HS)
- Prior achievement (reading, math, ELP)
- Cohort



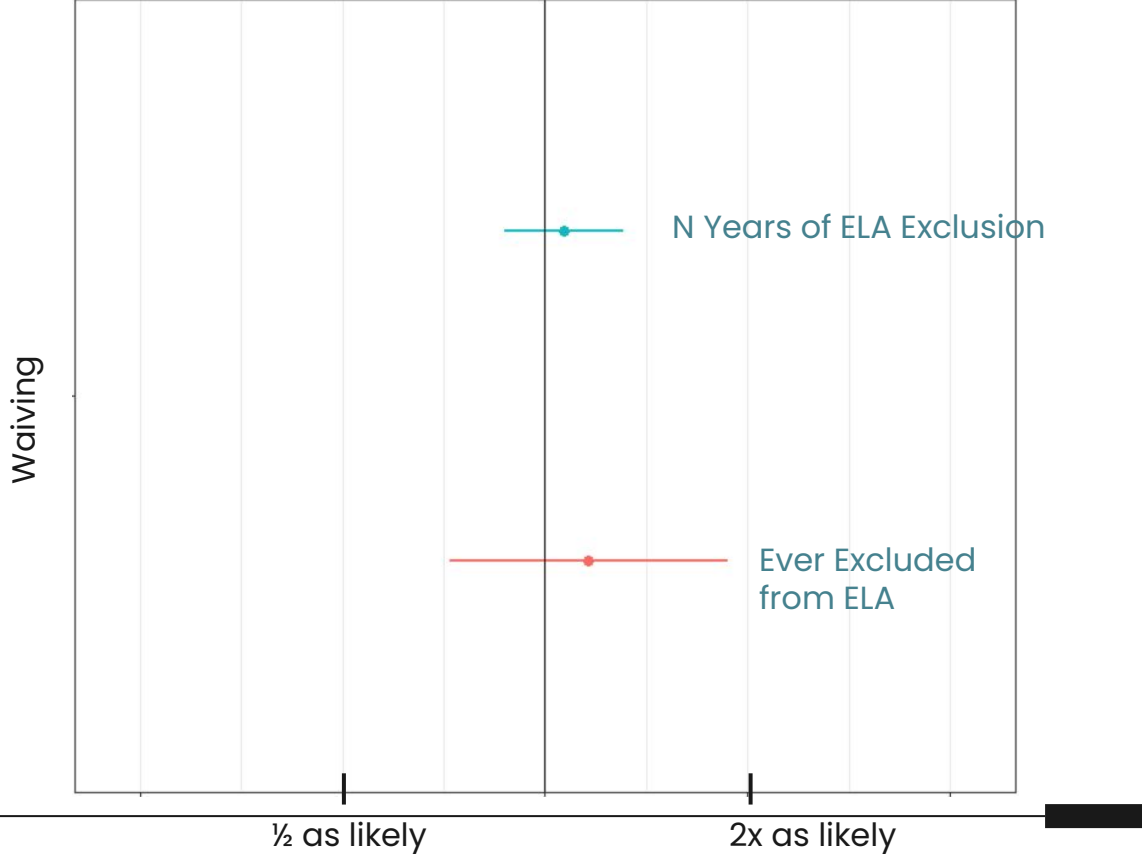
How does the population of students change after matching?

	Before Matching		→	After Matching	
	<i>Never waived</i>	<i>Waived</i>		<i>Never waived</i>	<i>Waived</i>
Cohort 1					
LTEL	79%	93%	→	99%	99%
Dually identified	39%	49%	→	49%	53%
Economic disadvantage	91%	81%	→	99%	96%

Effect on Graduation



Effect on ELA Course-taking



Limitations

- Families decide whether or not to waive, and those that do may still be different in other ways than families who do not waive, or who do not know that waiving is an option
- ELs are an extremely diverse population, making it difficult to account for different characteristics
- We only have 4-year graduation data presented in this analysis, but it may be that outcomes differ across 5-year graduation rates

Implications

- We need innovation in EL services and programs that eliminate the desire or need to waive services and increase student engagement.
- We need to involve students and families in decision-making.
- We need to reconsider reclassification thresholds.

Future Research

- Further digging into our findings (e.g., sensitivity checks)
- Analysis with other content areas (math, science, social studies)
- Analysis on the effect of waiving in other contexts outside of Oregon
- Integrating different policies and programs that may change waiving trends
 - Access to Linguistic Inclusion?
 - Use of integrated ELD?

Thank you!

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