

# Project Update: ReadOregon

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Author: Bonnie Morihara, Ph.D.  
ReadOregon Statewide Coordinator



## Ten Spectacular Years!

2013 marks a full decade of the operation of the ReadOregon Collaborative for the Improvement of Literacy. This bold experiment in cross-university collaboration to address the literacy education needs of teachers throughout Oregon is both unusual and innovative in the level of cooperation and agreement achieved among five public universities, each with individual missions, goals, and ambitions.

## Unmet Needs

Various studies in 2000-01 presented to the Oregon legislature and the Joint Boards of Education reported unacceptably low reading and writing scores among Oregon children living in poverty, the need for stronger knowledge and skills in teaching literacy among K-12 classroom teachers, a widespread shortage of reading specialists in Oregon schools, and a need for strengthened preservice programs in reading. A key strategy for addressing these needs was the development of an inter-institutional literacy education program outlined in a successful grant proposal submitted on behalf of Oregon's public universities by Dr. Holly Zanville, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Oregon University System (OUS).

*"I now have both the theoretical framework for literacy development and practical approaches to support my students."*

– RO student, 2004



## TO-READE

In October 2001 the federal Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) awarded a multi-year grant to the TO-READE (The Oregon Reading Education And Distance Education) project. The goal of TO-READE was to create a shared curriculum of literacy courses that could be offered in flexible formats so that pK-12 teachers throughout Oregon, particularly those who lived beyond commuting distances, would be able to improve their literacy instruction through graduate-level coursework, as well as a program of study that would lead to an Oregon reading endorsement.

TO-READE consortium members recognized that it was crucial to have mutual agreement on the elements, procedures, and goals of literacy instruction and assessment. The consortium determined that the International Reading Association's Standards for Reading Professionals would form the foundation of the curriculum, and literacy faculty began to work collaboratively to develop statements about the nature of the reading process and school literacy programs.

*"I learned to look for patterns in reading and writing behaviors. I have improved my abilities in using informal assessments for diagnostic teaching."*

– RO student, 2008

## CREADE

To reflect the collaborative nature of the project, TO-READE was renamed as CREADE (Collaborative Reading Education And Distance Education). Faculty and deans formulated a curricular structure build around an in-school clinical practicum plus coursework in six thematic areas: Literacy Foundations, Literacy Strategies & Methods, Literacy for Diverse Learners, Literacy Assessment, Literacy Leadership, and Literature. Ultimately, five universities joined together in the collaborative: Eastern Oregon University, Oregon State University, Portland State University, Southern Oregon University, and Western Oregon University.

CREADE offered its first courses spring 2003, and has offered courses for the ensuing 10.5 years (42 terms), evolving from grant funding to a long-term sustainable project. Since its beginning, the reading collaborative has offered teachers three professional development options: a 24-credit, TSPC-approved reading endorsement program, a 12-credit literacy course-of-study for classroom teachers, and a courses-only option.

# ReadOregon

With the end of FIPSE funding in spring 2005, the collaborative was renamed ReadOregon to make its mission more evident in its name. A website was established at <http://readoregon.org> and central coordination was taken over by The Teaching Research Institute (TRI) at Western Oregon University with Dr. Bonnie Morihara serving as ReadOregon Statewide Coordinator.

## ReadOregon Features

ReadOregon has some unique features among multi-university collaboratives that have helped ensure its successful implementation and continuation:

- **Common Tuition.**

In order that no university would be either advantaged or disadvantaged by the cost of the courses, the consortium agreed to charge a common tuition rate, including all fees. The common tuition has remained an approximate average of the graduate tuition rates of all five universities.

- **Statewide Accessibility.**

All ReadOregon courses are delivered online through the learning management system utilized at each university (currently Blackboard, Desire2Learn, or Moodle). With multiple courses offered in each thematic area every term, teachers can combine courses from different universities that suit their schedules and professional interests.

- **Shared Curriculum.**

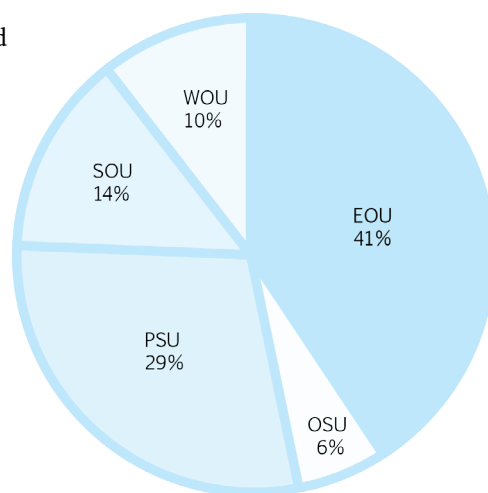
Each university developed courses according to the expertise and availability of its literacy faculty. Moreover, each course was aligned with the Standards for Reading Professionals of the International Reading Association, the preeminent professional organization for literacy educators.

- **TSPC-approved Reading Endorsement.**

The five partner universities collaborated closely on the philosophy and format of the 24-credit reading endorsement program, coming to know and trust each other as they contributed courses to the shared program. The consortium submitted plans for a common online reading endorsement program, including procedures for supervising the clinical practicum, to Oregon's Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC), and the online ReadOregon endorsement program was officially approved in 2003.

- **Central Coordination and Website.**

Built into the plan for long-term program sustainability was a design for distributed responsibilities. As an online program, ReadOregon required a centrally managed website and database, and a central staff to collect syllabi and instructor bios for TSPC, send email registration reminders, answer phone and email queries, track courses taken, and organize meetings, publicity, and help set up standard operating procedures. When ReadOregon coordination moved to TRI at the end of FIPSE funding, central website maintenance and program coordination continued, but print-based publicity and most meetings were phased out.



Percent of  
ReadOregon Courses Taught

*"I have developed a strong understanding of how to foster and motivate students to read and write."*  
– RO student, 2008

*"I am aligning my teaching to the new Common Core Standards."*  
– RO student, 2013

*"This is a fantastic program and I have recommended it to many people!"*  
– RO student, 2010

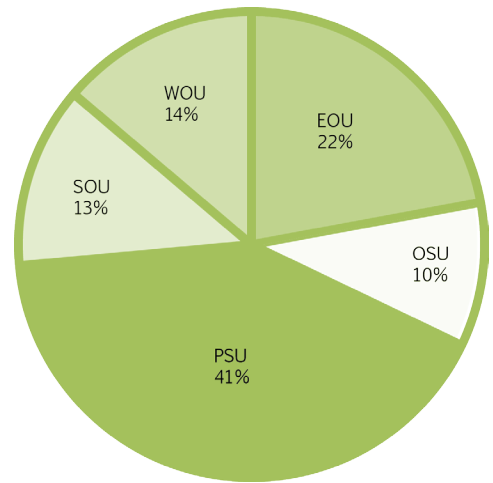
# University Responsibilities

A number of program responsibilities for ReadOregon are efficiently and expeditiously handled at the university level:

- **Provide Academic and Program Advising Using a “Home Institution” Model.** Teachers submitting the online ReadOregon program application select one of the five universities as their “home institution.” The home institution then sends a welcome email with information about the ReadOregon program at that university. Home institutions are responsible for academic advising, supervision of the practicum, and recommending program completers for the endorsement to TSPC.

Each term the university based program coordinator sends course rosters to the Statewide Coordinator so that course-taking across the five universities can be centrally tracked for advising purposes.

- **Monitor Quality of Instructors and Courses.** Approve New Courses for the ReadOregon Program. All ReadOregon courses must meet university course and faculty quality guidelines, including official approval by the Faculty Senate. New courses may be added to the ReadOregon curriculum if they fit within a ReadOregon thematic area, align with IRA Standards, and are recommended by the Dean of Education.
- **Maintain Long-Term Course Schedule.** Each university has the responsibility to maintain the schedule for its courses in the online catalog. The online catalog displays a history of past terms and 3-4 future terms so that students can see when particular courses are generally taught and plan when to take courses in their program.
- **Register Students in Courses.** ReadOregon students must register with the university that is teaching the course(s) in which they are interested. This ensures that tuition income stays with the university teaching the course.
- **Create ReadOregon Program Website at Each University.** Each university maintains its own ReadOregon website with information about the program and courses taught by its faculty, local program and instructor contact information, and course registration links.



ReadOregon Students  
by Home Institution

*“As a principal and superintendent responsible to see that every child meets reading benchmarks, I am an enthusiastic supporter of the ReadOregon program.”*  
– Principal/Superintendent, 2006

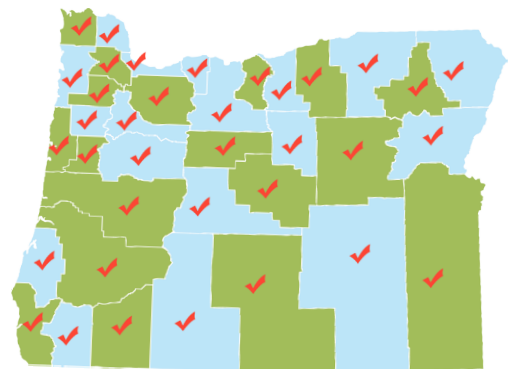
*“I personally believe that every elementary teacher should have a reading endorsement. Reading is the core to all future student achievement. An elementary teacher who cannot effectively teach reading provides a disservice to his/her students.”*  
– Elementary principal, 2008

## A Decade of Serving Oregon Teachers

The ReadOregon collaborative has experienced steady growth in the decade it has been serving the teachers of Oregon:

- Spring 2003 course enrollment = 68 teachers
- Spring 2013 course enrollment = 283 teachers
- 2003 = 33 courses in the ReadOregon curriculum
- 2013 = 66 courses in the ReadOregon curriculum
- 2003 = 389 individuals in the ReadOregon database
- 2013 = 2,220 individuals in the ReadOregon database
- 7,268 = total enrollments since 2003
- 19,552 = total student credit hours since 2003
- 430 = endorsement completers since fall 2004

Teachers participating in ReadOregon reside in **every one** of Oregon’s 36 counties.



# Completers' Comments

"I learned how to do an effective teacher observation. I have a much better idea on how to design an in-service program, and I know what family literacy opportunities there are in my community." (2005)

"In the process of working closely with my administrator and colleagues, I have demonstrated knowledge of the major components of reading by collaboratively putting together professional development opportunities, implementing reading strategies and programs for our struggling readers, and networking with school and district education specialists in the area of literacy." (2007)

"I have used a wide range of instructional literacy practices, formally and informally assessed students using a range of curriculum tools, communicated assessment results, developed professional learning opportunities for staff members, acted as a consultant in the areas of literacy, and demonstrated knowledge of the major components of reading." (2008)

"By networking with educational specialists in our school and district I gained a lot of knowledge of both our school and district literacy plans and policies for meeting the needs of struggling readers." (2009)

"I felt that each of the classes I took were of great value. The instructors and fellow students were very knowledgeable and helpful. I enjoyed taking the classes and was very grateful they were online classes." (2009)

"I learned what elements are needed in a successful literacy program. I was able to take that knowledge and apply it to the professional development sessions I led for my colleagues." (2010)

"The courses I took through READ Oregon were valuable in several ways. One, they offered a wide range of topics suitable for all levels. Two, they were well planned and executed by the instructors. Three, they were a bargain, and finally they provided me with many new strategies and ideas for my classroom. I also valued the interaction with other educators from across Oregon. This is a great program that I would highly recommend to other teachers." (2011)

