Superintendent: Rob Saxton  
Primary contact: Susan Stark Haydon, director of community relations*  
Schools studied: Fowler Middle School, Metzger Elementary School, Tualatin Elementary School  
11,889 students, K-12, suburban

**District and School Descriptions**

Located in a suburb of Portland, Oregon, the Tigard-Tualatin school district serves an increasingly diverse population and faces challenges due to state budget difficulties. While the schools’ students are predominately white, the district has a growing number of low-income students and Latino students, many of whom are learning English as a second language. The district’s schools also vary in terms of student demographics, with low-income and Latino students clustered in particular schools. Of middle schools in Tigard-Tualatin, Fowler enrolls the most low-income students. The school has consistently fallen short of adequate yearly progress targets, but recently made great gains in math achievement on the state test. Metzger Elementary serves the district’s highest percentage of low-income elementary students. Tualatin Elementary has the third largest low-income population among district elementary schools, and 33% of its students are ELLS.

**Key Findings**

- Because Tigard-Tualatin schools identified by the state as in need of improvement do not receive Title I funds, no schools in the district currently face sanctions under NCLB. Still, district officials noted that teachers and administrators feel pressure to improve student achievement and meet AYP targets. As state targets for passing rates on state tests increase in order to meet NCLB’s goal of 100% proficiency by 2014, district officials said Tigard-Tualatin will have more difficulty meeting those higher targets. In response, the district is stepping up efforts to improve.

- Tigard-Tualatin schools tend to fail to meet AYP targets due to the performance of subgroups rather than the performance of students as a whole. Students with disabilities, English language learners, low-income students, and Latino students are the subgroups having the most difficulty. Often there is a great deal of overlap between low-income students, English language learners, and Latino students. To address the needs of these students, the district has hired six new bilingual teachers and provides professional development for staff teaching English language learners.

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* Other contacts for this case study include Carole Biskar, principal, Tualatin Elementary; Ted Feller, Principal, Fowler Middle School; Karen Twain, principal, Metzger Elementary; and Gail Wilkinson, literacy specialist, Metzger Elementary.
• Adding computers in 2004-05 allowed the district to take advantage of Oregon’s computerized testing program. This program enabled Tigard-Tualatin to give students a pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test if their post-test scores were too low. The computerized system also has a disadvantage. If a student took a pre-test in the fall, attended the school more than half the year, but moved without taking the post-test, the pre-test counted against the district, in accordance with state testing guidelines. District officials noted that record keeping and good communication between parents and schools has decreased, but not eliminated, this problem.

• NCLB’s requirement that all Title I paraprofessionals be “highly qualified” has affected employment in the district. While district officials said they support the idea that paraprofessionals be well qualified for their work with children, they also said that NCLB’s requirement has caused some effective paraprofessionals to leave the district rather than take the extra classes or exams required.

• Funding remains an issue for Tigard-Tualatin due in part to state laws, which have capped property taxes, and in part to state budget shortfalls. Although Title I funding has increased, this does not make up for losses elsewhere in the district’s budget. To balance the budget in 2003-04, the district increased class sizes, and has not been able to return to smaller classes.

Overall Impact of NCLB

Although no schools in the Tigard-Tualatin School District have had to face NCLB sanctions, the public reporting of test scores and adequate yearly progress for all schools has affected the district. “As the standards get higher, we’re going to have a tougher time meeting AYP targets,” said Susan Stark Haydon, the district’s director of community relations.

Still, principals said NCLB and state tests do not drive instruction in their schools. As Fowler Middle School Principal Ted Feller put it, “Yes, NCLB is one of the markers of whether or not we’re an effective school, but it isn’t our focus. Our goal is to create the best education possible. If we do that, NCLB will take care of itself.” The percentage of Fowler students passing state math tests increased from 51% in 2003-04 to 78% in 2004-05, even though Fowler has the district’s highest percentage of low-income middle school students, a subgroup that traditionally has difficulty passing state tests in Tigard-Tualatin. Feller attributed the growth to a combination of changing classroom instruction and providing extra intervention for students who were behind. The school did not, he emphasized, teach directly to the state test.

NCLB and Student Achievement

Oregon’s 2004 report card for Tigard-Tualatin stated that 11 of the district’s 14 schools have stayed the same in terms of overall school improvement since 2003, and 3 have improved. Oregon calculates school improvement based on two sets of factors. The first includes academic achievement, and the second includes student attendance, dropout rate, and behavior. “Those that are staying the same were pretty high to begin with,” said Stark Haydon. Since implementation of NCLB, achievement in math and reading has generally improved in most schools, she noted, although some schools have experienced ups and downs. Middle schools and high schools have been lower achieving than elementary schools.

The percentage of Tigard-Tualatin students who passed state math tests increased at all grade levels between school years 2002-03 and 2004-05. Oregon district report cards for Tigard-Tualatin showed that elementary students increased passing rates by about 6 percentage points, middle school students by about 5 percentage points, and high school students by about 16 percentage points. Based on state testing, the district’s lowest achieving subgroups have traditionally been low-
income students, English language learners, students with disabilities, and Latino students. At the elementary level, achievement gaps in passing rates have narrowed in math for all these subgroups. Achievement gaps have also narrowed for middle school low-income and Latino students. Other achievement gaps for English language learners and students with disabilities at the middle school level and for all subgroups at the high school level have stayed about the same or widened slightly.

Passing rates on the state English/language arts tests have decreased somewhat between 2002-03 and 2004-05 in elementary and middle school, but have increased in high school. Oregon district report cards for Tigard-Tualatin show that elementary students decreased passing rates by about 12 percentage points, and middle school students by about 3 percentage points. High school students, however, increased their passing rates by about 3 percentage points. Reasons for the decline in achievement in the elementary and middle school levels are unclear. Despite this decline, test scores in English/language arts were typically higher than state averages. Also, achievement gaps for low-income students, English language learners, students with disabilities, and Latino students have narrowed at all grade levels.

**Adequate Yearly Progress and School Improvement**

**DISTRICT AND SCHOOL AYP STATUS**

Tigard-Tualatin has never met all AYP targets as a district and has been identified for improvement due primarily to the performance of subgroups in middle and high schools. Based on 2004-05 test scores, all nine elementary schools in the district met all AYP targets. The district’s three middle schools and two high schools did not make AYP. These schools will not, however, face NCLB sanctions because they do not receive Title I funding. Historically, the district has focused Title I funding on elementary schools and plans to continue this tradition. Middle and high schools will get additional help, but not from Title I, said Stark Haydon.

In the two high schools, the general population met math and reading targets, but four subgroups failed to make either math or reading targets. These subgroups included low-income students, English language learners, students with disabilities, and Latino students. In Tigard-Tualatin there is a great deal of overlap between low-income students, English language learners, and Latino students. “These are pretty much the same kids,” noted Stark Haydon.

In the three middle schools, the same subgroups failed to make AYP in reading, with the exception of low-income students who met reading AYP targets at one school, and students with disabilities who met reading AYP targets at another school. In math, two of the middle schools met all goals, while one missed goals for students with disabilities and Latino students.

While low-income, ELL, and Latino students who have been in the district for a few years have improved academically, the performance of new students moving into the district tends to mask this improvement, explained Stark Haydon. From school years 1999-2000 to 2004-05, the number of ELL students increased by 173% and the number of low-income students increased by 194%. The steady growth in the number of students in these subgroups may help explain why the achievement gap between these students and the general population has stayed roughly the same, while the achievement gap between students with disabilities and the general population has shrunk somewhat. The percentage of students in special education has remained steady at about 10%.

**DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES**

No Title I schools in Tigard-Tualatin missed AYP for two or more consecutive years, so none faces sanctions under NCLB. Even so, Tigard-Tualatin will focus on improving all schools during 2005-06, said Stark Haydon. While improving the lower-achieving middle and high schools is important, Stark Haydon said elementary schools also need help, even though, based on 2004-05 testing, all met AYP targets. In 2005-06, AYP targets for Oregon will go up by 10 percent-
age points, and some elementary schools may struggle to meet these higher targets. To raise achievement, the district is adding staff and increasing training to help English language learners and students with disabilities. District staff will also use information from student assessments to make instructional choices for students.

**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES**

In addition to following district strategies, schools have initiated their own efforts to improve.

For example, in 2004-05, Fowler Middle School reworked teachers’ schedules. Whereas previously teachers worked together on interdisciplinary units with larger numbers of students, now teachers work in grade-level teams. Each team teaches one or more specific subjects, and students rotate between subjects. As a result, everyone on a team has the same students and can share information and strategies about how to help students. This has led to a better school climate, Principal Feller said. He reported a 40% reduction in behavior referrals and thinks decreased referrals helped increase academic achievement.

Metzger Elementary School, which serves the district’s highest percentage of low-income elementary school students, is in the process of adding a new group to the flexible ability groups it has for most instruction. The new group is called the “newcomer’s station.” At the newcomer’s station, explained Principal Karen Twain, students new to the school are evaluated and given small group or one-on-one instruction before being assigned to a classroom. The station is designed particularly to help students who do not yet speak English and who also may not have writing or reading skills in their own language. About 37% of students in the school are English language learners, according to the school’s 2004-05 state report card.

**Testing Issues**

**GENERAL CHANGES IN TESTING**

All schools in Tigard-Tualatin started using Oregon’s computerized testing in 2004-05 and will continue in 2005-06. The computerized testing is part of Oregon’s accountability plan and has been approved by the U.S. Department of Education. Using the computerized version allows schools to test students up to three times during the year as opposed to just once for the written version of the test. The student’s highest score counts for NCLB. Each test uses a new set of questions so that students do not know the questions ahead of time.

The computerized version of the test also cuts down on test-taking time, because the test molds itself to the test-taker’s level of knowledge. If a student gives a correct answer, the next question will be more difficult. If a student answers incorrectly, the next question will be easier. Ultimately many students using the computer end up having to answer fewer questions than those using paper tests, which must include questions across a full range of difficulty.

This system has advantages for Tigard-Tualatin, explained Stark Haydon, because the district can use the first test in the fall as a pre-test, the second test in the spring as a post-test, and still have a third test if a student doesn’t do as well as anticipated. Many schools have interventions for students who don’t do well on the first or second test.

This system did not work as well at Fowler Middle School prior to 2004-05 because some middle school students simply weren’t motivated to do well on a pre-test that they knew didn’t count, Feller said. In 2004-05, Feller changed the school policy so that only those who failed the pre-test had to retest. This focused students on doing well from the beginning. Ultimately, about 90% retook the test, but many retested not because they had to but because they wanted to increase their scores. “It became sort of an issue of pride,” Feller explained.

The system of retesting also has a disadvantage, which the district discovered last year. According to state testing guidelines, if a student takes a pre-test at one school in the fall, attends that school more than half the year, then moves without taking the post-test, the pre-test counts
in the original school. “If we know the child is leaving, we should try to get another test in before
they leave,” Stark Haydon said. This means that schools need to worry not only about teaching
all students but about making sure students don’t leave without taking the test. “The schools that
have a counselor who’s on top of things tend to do better with this,” Stark Haydon said.

At Metzger Elementary, Principal Karen Twain concurred that it was difficult to ensure that
the school’s highly mobile students were retested before leaving. “We finally got our computer
lab together for testing last year,” Twain said. “But who’s going to do all this testing?” She
explained that retesting can take resources away from instruction, especially when testing
involves accommodations for students with disabilities and for English language learners.

Principals also noted that the information provided by state testing was not as useful for deci-
sion making about individual students as the data teachers collected at the school level. At the
school level, Tualatin Elementary Principal Carole Biskar explained, “We’re individualizing, and
we’re looking at kids over time. NCLB data isn’t enough.”

TESTING ISSUES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Some district officials expressed concern about testing goals for students with disabilities.
Although Tigard-Tualatin identifies a smaller proportion of students for special education than
the state average, and although in Tigard-Tualatin this subgroup has improved a great deal on
state tests since NCLB, officials question whether 100% passing rates by 2014 are realistic. Gail
Wilkinson, literary specialist at Metzger, admitted to having difficulty with the testing goals for
this subgroup. “It doesn’t seem feasible to have 100% of kids reaching goals,” she said. “I don’t
think it’s realistic, and I worry about what’s going to happen nationally in the next few years.”

TESTING ISSUES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS
Confusion about data deadlines resulted in missing data for English language learners at Metzger
Elementary School. About 30 ELL students disappeared entirely from the school’s roster. The
remaining students performed poorly and caused the school to miss AYP targets due to the aca-
demic performance of this subgroup. After the scores were restored, Metzger met all AYP targets.
Ultimately the school faced no NCLB sanctions; but the close call made administrators more
aware of Metzger’s need to improve. “When you think about how the bar rises next year, they’ve
got to do something different,” noted Stark Haydon, referring to the 10-point increase in the
percentage of students who must pass the tests next year.

Impact of NCLB on Curriculum and Instruction

GENERAL CHANGES IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
As a whole, Tigard-Tualatin has been using more data-based decision making throughout the
district, Stark Haydon said. At the elementary level, schools have been using Dynamic Indicators
of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). The program provides diagnostic testing to identify
reading problems and provides intervention.

For example, Tualatin Elementary used DIBELS at the beginning of the year to help iden-
tify students who might not be best served by the school’s Open Court reading curriculum,
Principal Biskar said. Then teachers used a modified version of DIBELS throughout the year to
make sure these students were making progress. This progress was tracked by the school’s
Effective Behavioral Instruction and Support (EBIS) team. These additional brief tests were
important to decision making and helped raise student achievement, Biskar said, noting that the
information provided by NCLB testing was not adequate to monitor student progress. Although
Tualatin Elementary has the third largest low-income population among district elementary
schools, and although 33% of its students are ELLs, the percentage of students passing
English/language arts tests in 2004-05 was slightly higher than the district average.
The district created literacy councils at the middle and high school level in 2004-05. These teacher teams focus on improving reading and writing. "Teachers typically stop teaching reading at the middle grades," Stark Haydon explained. "So literacy councils work on building teachers' knowledge of how to teach reading strategies."

Throughout the district in 2004-05, schools adopted a new math text. The new text is up-to-date and aligned with state standards and state tests. The new curriculum brought a great deal of energy to math teaching last year, Stark Haydon said. She recalled hearing Templeton Elementary School students chanting multiplication tables on their way to lunch.

**CHANGES IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION FOR SUBGROUPS**

In general, students with disabilities have benefited from Tigard-Tualatin's inclusion model, Stark Haydon said. As much as possible, students with disabilities attend general education classes. State test scores show these students have been making progress, although middle and high school subgroups have had difficulty meeting AYP targets.

Fowler Middle School is taking a slightly different approach in 2005-06 to providing educational services to students with disabilities and is replicating a model built for its ELL students. While the majority of students with disabilities are in general education classes for academics, they are grouped together for an "advisory" period. During this period, a special education teacher teaches learning strategies that students can apply to their academic classes, Feller explained.

**English Language Learners**

In addition to hiring six new bilingual teachers, the district has trained more general education teachers in "sheltered instruction" to help them work with ELL students. This approach teaches strategies to make sure new English speakers understand the content of lessons, Stark Haydon explained. Principals said this approach was working well in their schools.

The district has also added a focus on native language literacy. For 2005-06, Tigard High School is offering some academic classes in Spanish only. These classes are primarily for high school age students who have just immigrated to the United States. The instruction keeps them from falling behind in areas like math and science while they are learning English, Stark Haydon said.

Fowler Middle School also added a special class for English language learners in 2005-06. The impetus for this class came from a focus group of ELLs. At the end of the 2004-05 school year, teachers wanted to know why achievement wasn’t improving for ELLs, even though the students were typically well behaved and seemed attentive. Feller suggested that teachers convene a student focus group composed of ELLs and ask the students for advice.

Feller said some of the answers students gave helped teachers understand the students’ culture better. Students told staff that they couldn’t come to tutoring after school because they almost always had to babysit younger siblings or work. They also said they didn’t like to be singled out during class for extra help or be pulled out of class, because both situations were embarrassing. Instead, students said they felt more comfortable in a class where everyone was learning English. As a result, Feller explained that the school regrouped students for their advisory period, which is typically spent in enrichment. For 2005-06, all English language learners are grouped together for their advisory period, and a bilingual teacher teaches vocabulary for the students’ academic subjects.

At Metzger, where staff said they wished they could hire more bilingual teachers, existing teachers have the opportunity to brush up on their Spanish. A local community college offers special Spanish language classes just for teachers on-site at the elementary school in 2005-06, Gail Wilkinson said. A central office staff person is also helping teachers integrate sheltered instruction into their lessons to make sure new English speakers understand the content of lessons.
Teacher Qualifications, Support, and Professional Development

HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS

In the 2004-05 school year, the district employed 623 teachers, and 91% of classes were taught by teachers who met the NCLB definition of “highly qualified.” This percentage surpassed the state’s average of 89%. The previous year, 2003-04, state records showed that only 88.4% of teachers in Tigard-Tualatin met the state’s definition of highly qualified.

The increase in the percentage of highly qualified teachers was due in part to the district’s efforts to help teachers submit lists of their undergraduate and post-graduate coursework for review by Oregon’s Teachers Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC). If the prior coursework is sufficient, TSPC can make the determination that the teacher is highly qualified for the subjects taught. This review was especially important for Tigard-Tualatin’s three middle schools. Oregon’s K-8 license does not require or record subject area expertise; therefore, middle grade teachers teaching particular subjects may or may not have the subject area certification required by NCLB.

In addition, in Fowler Middle School the move to grade-level teams has helped ensure that all teachers are teaching in their area of expertise. In 2003-04 at Fowler, block scheduling led to some teachers teaching out of their field simply to fill in students’ schedules. Now in grade-level teams, teachers teach only one subject. About 99% are highly qualified for 2005-06, according to Principal Ted Feller.

The district anticipates being able to meet the 2006 deadline for having all teachers highly qualified, although due to NCLB the district feels a sense of urgency about hiring bilingual teachers. “We feel that if we don’t hire them when they’re sitting in the interview, we’ll lose them, because everybody in the state needs them,” Stark Haydon said. For 2005-06, the district hired six new teachers for ELL classes and would like to hire more if funding and availability permit, she said. Some current teachers are also working to learn Spanish and teaching techniques for ELL students.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Because no Title I schools are in need of improvement in Tigard-Tualatin, schools do not have to set aside a particular amount of money for professional development. Still, the district offers many opportunities for teachers to improve their skills, Stark Haydon said. For example, in 2004-05, all teachers received training on how to use the new math texts. In addition, professional development has been targeted to helping teachers and paraprofessionals work with English language learners and training teachers to individualize instruction, district records showed.

Schools have also had some freedom to design their own professional development plans. Fowler Middle School, Metzger Elementary, and Tualatin Elementary all had staff training to help English language learners. At Tualatin Elementary, using the EBIS team to help monitor and suggest intervention for lower-performing students has led to a kind of in-house professional development. “It’s helped teachers understand that we need common definitions for terms like ‘reading fluency’ and ‘phonemic awareness,’” Biskar said, explaining that this led to discussion and learning among teachers. Teachers have also had to learn how to understand data and use multiple interventions before referring a student to special education, and teachers assist one another in learning new teaching strategies.

Metzger also relies on professional development offered on site. Part of Wilkinson’s job is to provide professional development in English/language arts to teachers and to model teaching strategies. She also helps oversee new curricular purchases and helps teachers learn to integrate new materials into their current lessons.
Paraprofessional Qualifications and Support

All paraprofessionals now meet NCLB’s definition of highly qualified. This district offered classes to help these staff members become highly qualified; however, not all paraprofessionals chose to take advantage of these. Some simply retired or got other jobs. “We had some people who just decided not to come back,” said Stark Haydon. “Sometimes they were really great aides who worked well with kids, but it had been a long time since they’d been in school. It truly was our loss.” She explained that many of these were longtime employees who started out as parent volunteers and were working more for the love of the students than for income.

Biskar questions NCLB’s definition for highly qualified paraprofessionals. “There was an assumption that we didn’t have qualified people, but we did.” In her school, she said, “We had a really good Title I paraprofessional who did not have her degree. She took the test and passed, but it increased her stress level. She seriously considered whether or not she wanted to stay in the position.”

At Tualatin Elementary, Biskar said she has considered switching from being a targeted assistance Title I school to a schoolwide Title I school to take advantage of the greater flexibility of a schoolwide program; however, in her view, being a schoolwide Title I school has disadvantages in terms of paraprofessionals. In a targeted assistance school, where Title I funds are used only for qualifying students, the law only requires those paraprofessionals hired with Title I dollars to be highly qualified. Other paraprofessionals in the school do not need to meet the NCLB qualifications.

Under schoolwide Title I programs, all paraprofessionals must meet the qualification requirements. Biskar said she won’t make the switch, primarily because she fears losing some of her paraprofessionals. “These people are trained,” she said, explaining that the school has invested a great deal of time and money in teaching paraprofessionals to use specific reading and math interventions. Even if she could replace these paraprofessionals with highly qualified applicants, she would have to spend a lot of time and money training them in the school’s interventions.

Title I paraprofessional positions may become difficult to fill districtwide as a result of NCLB, Stark Haydon speculated, because of the combination of low pay and higher qualifications required. Metzger Elementary, for example, started the 2004-05 school year with an open Title I paraprofessional position. “People are just not applying,” Wilkinson said.

Funding and Costs

The district will open a new elementary school this year, which puts a drain on the district’s already limited financial resources, but the school was needed to reduce overcrowding. “Adding an extra building means extra staff and operating costs,” said Stark Haydon, noting that while the building itself has been paid for by a $85.9 million bond levy, it has an operating budget of about $2 million.

The district’s Title I allocation has increased over the past two years, with the 2005-06 allocation at $895,708 for Title I Part A, but these increases have not made up for losses in state funding, Stark Haydon said. The district’s new superintendent has been examining the district’s resources. “His goal is to look at the budget, identify spending priorities, and begin to create stability,” Stark Haydon said.

Capacity Issues

No cuts are currently planned for 2005-06, but the district still lacks some things district officials think would help student achievement. In particular, Stark Haydon said they would like to reduce class sizes and add more ELL teachers. In 2003-04 staff was cut, and class sizes rose by about four students per class. As of 2005-06, class sizes remain large, with kindergarten through 2nd grade enrollment capped at 24 students per class, 3rd grade at 26 students per class, and 4th through 12th grades at 29 students per class.
Metzger Elementary, for example, had one less teacher and lost its half-time librarian for the 2005-06 school year, even though school enrollment increased. “With larger class sizes, you have more behavior problems,” Wilkinson noted, and without a librarian, all teachers added library skills to their teaching load. “The librarian really was a teacher, not just someone who checked out books,” Wilkinson said.

At Metzger, as throughout the district, Twain said, “We’re making the best of a difficult situation. We need more resources.”

Data File—Tigard-Tualatin School District

Location: Oregon
Type: Suburban

Number of Schools
Total: 15
Elementary: 9
Middle/junior high: 3
High schools: 2
Other: 1

Number of Title I Schools: 4

Student Enrollment and Demographics
Total enrollment: 11,889

  White: 73%
  Latino: 16%
  Asian: 7%
  African American: 2%
  American Indian: 1%

  Low-income students: 27%
  English language learners: 14%
  Students with disabilities: 10%

Teachers
Total number of teachers: 623
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 91.2%

Paraprofessionals
Total number of Title I instructional paraprofessionals: 26
Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

Total Number That Did Not Make AYP Based on 2004-05 Testing
Title I and non-Title I schools that did not make AYP, including those in improvement, restructuring, or corrective action: 5
### Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Restructuring, or Corrective Action

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### Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES

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