

Independent Evaluation of the Colorado READ Act: Per-Pupil Funding Year 5 Summary Report



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Colorado READ Act EVALUATION



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Executive Summary

- Adoption of evidence-based materials on the Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act Advisory List of Professional Development and Instructional Programming has continued to grow. Feeling comfortable with newly adopted evidence-based materials takes time and support.
- Teachers reported confidence implementing READ Plans but need additional training and improved materials to feel confident supporting students with multiple identifications.
- Overall, the number of students identified with significant reading deficiencies (SRDs) continues to decrease since the end of the most acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Across Colorado, a higher percentage of students reached proficiency during the 2023–2024 school year. This positive trend was also evident in students who had at any point been identified with an SRD, especially those who were identified or exited in earlier grades.



In 2019, the Colorado General Assembly passed and signed into law Senate Bill (SB) 19-199, which included a provision mandating that an independent, external multiyear evaluation of the Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act program be conducted (see 2020 Annual Report on the Colorado READ Act for an overview of updates in SB19-199).¹ The evaluation is now in its fourth year and is being conducted by an independent research team led by WestEd that includes APA Consulting and RTI International.

The key legislative goals for this evaluation are as follows:

1. Help state policymakers and district leaders understand impacts of READ Act funding and support on students, families, schools, and districts.
2. Learn and share successes and best practices across districts and schools.
3. Inform improvements to the READ Act by understanding how schools and districts used funds.
4. Get direct feedback from school and district leaders about how the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) can best support further improvement in READ Act implementation.

This report relies on numerous sources of information (see Appendix A for a detailed description of data collected and analytic methods used), including

- student-, school-, and Local Education Provider (LEP)-level extant data from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and publicly available datasets;
- inventories of LEP staff and principals, reading coaches, teachers, and families at schools that received READ Act funding and participated in READ Act activities; and

¹ See [the Colorado READ Act 2024 Annual Report](#). 



- site visits with a sample of schools receiving Early Literacy Grants (ELGs) and LEPs that received READ Act funding, with a focus on schools and LEPs that have been successful (relative to others in the state) in moving students who have ever been identified with a significant reading deficiency (SRD) toward proficiency on the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS).

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

In the remainder of the Executive Summary, we describe high-level findings and related recommendations for each of the three evaluation questions. The concluding chapter of this report (Chapter 10) includes more detailed findings.

1) How Are LEPs and Schools Implementing READ Act Provisions?

Adoption of Evidence-Based Materials on the Advisory List Has Continued To Rise

More than 80% of schools reported using approved core curriculums during the 2023–2024 school year. In addition, 32% of schools reported using exclusively approved materials across all grade levels and material types (approved core, supplemental, and intervention curriculums, as well as interim, diagnostic, and summative assessments). Similar to previous years, district administrators continued to emphasize evidence-based materials and high-quality instruction as key to student literacy growth.

Feeling Comfortable with Newly Adopted Evidence-Based Curriculum Takes Time and Support

Teachers, coaches and principals reported that it takes at least a year for them to get comfortable with a new core curriculum. In addition, more than 10% of teachers, coaches, and principles reported they still did not feel comfortable implementing the new curriculum at the time of the survey. This aligns with



research that indicates it takes time and support for teachers to become truly comfortable and effective with implementation (Werres & Châu, 2023; National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2020; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). When asked about what positively impacted their ability to implement the new curriculum, teachers were most likely to cite standards alignment, administrator support, and resource availability.

Recommendation: Now that adoption of evidence-based materials on the Advisory List is widespread, districts and schools should focus on providing support and resources to ensure that educators are comfortable implementing the curriculum with fidelity.

Teachers Need Additional Training to Feel Confident Supporting Students with Multiple Identifications

Teachers reported confidence implementing READ Plans but need additional training and improved materials to feel confident supporting students with multiple identifications. More than 80% of teachers responding to the survey strongly agreed that they felt confident about the steps and strategies needed to support a student placed on a READ Plan. In comparison, fewer than half of coaches and teachers reported that they had received sufficient training to feel confident identifying and supporting students with multiple identifications. In particular, teachers and coaches noted a need for resources to better support English learners (ELs). For example, 44% of teachers and 46% of coaches reported receiving no additional training in supporting students with IEPs. Similarly, 37% of teachers and 28% of coaches received no professional development (PD) focused on ELs. Site visit reports provide examples of these gaps. Site visit staff described the linguistic diversity of their student population and the need for continued training and biliteracy practices. They noted that although some bilingual resources were provided, additional training would help staff address students' varied needs.



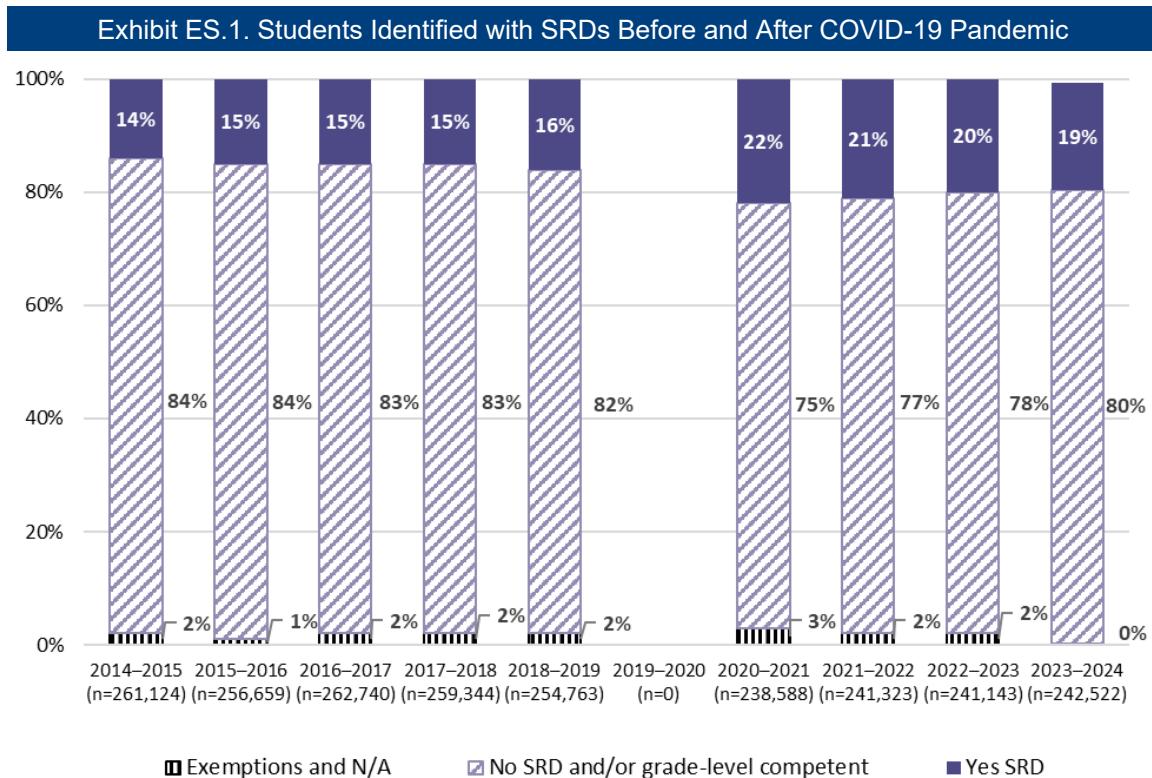
These challenges were echoed by **parents of children with multiple identifications who reported concerns about READ Act supports**. For example, only 22% of parents responding to the survey reported that the guidance they received about supporting reading was tailored to their children. Parents who participated in focus groups also noted difficulties distinguishing which services were provided under which plan (e.g., READ Plan, Individualized Education Program [IEP]) and raised concerns that frequent testing and pullout supports may negatively affects students' motivation and engagement related to reading.

Recommendation: Given our consistent findings that administrators and teachers feel less confident in supporting students with multiple identifications and are unclear about which plan (e.g., READ Plan, IEP) should take precedence when a student has multiple identifications, we recommend that teachers and administrators would benefit from additional training to support students with a diversity of needs.

2) To What Extent Has the Implementation of the READ Act Led to a Reduction in the Number of Students Identified with SRDs?

SRD Identification Rates Continue to Decline Post-pandemic

Overall, the number of students identified with SRDs has continued to decrease since the end of the most acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although SRD identification rates remain elevated from pre-pandemic levels (around 15% per year), in 2023–2024 they declined to 19% from the all-time high of 22% recorded immediately post-pandemic in 2020–2021 (see Exhibit ES.1).



SRD Identification and Exit Rates Have Been Stable for the Past 3 Years

Current SRD identification rate trends are different from historic trends but have settled since the 2020–2021 academic year, during the most acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic (see previous years' reports for more details about historic trends). **Overall, SRD identification and exit rates have been stable since the 2021–2022 school year.** From 2022–2023 to 2023–2024, the percentage of students newly identified with an SRD decreased marginally (4.9% to 4%). The rate of students exiting SRD identification also remained stable: 4.3% compared to 4.2% in the previous school year. **Notably, 2023–2024 is the first year of this data collection in which a higher percentage of students moved from being identified with an SRD to not being identified with an SRD than moved from not being identified with an SRD to being identified with one.**



Early Intervention Matters

The length of time that students are identified with an SRD varies by the grade level in which they are first identified. Among students identified with an SRD in kindergarten, about 20% exited from SRD status in 1st grade (i.e., after one year), 10% exited in 2nd grade, 9% exited in 3rd grade, and 61% continued to be identified with an SRD by the end of 3rd grade (i.e., they never exited from SRD status). **Students identified with an SRD at an earlier grade level were more likely to exit SRD status by the end of the 3rd grade, signaling the importance of early identification and intervention** (Wanzek & Vaughn, 2007).

3) To What Extent Do Students Identified with SRDs Achieve Reading Proficiency by 3rd Grade?

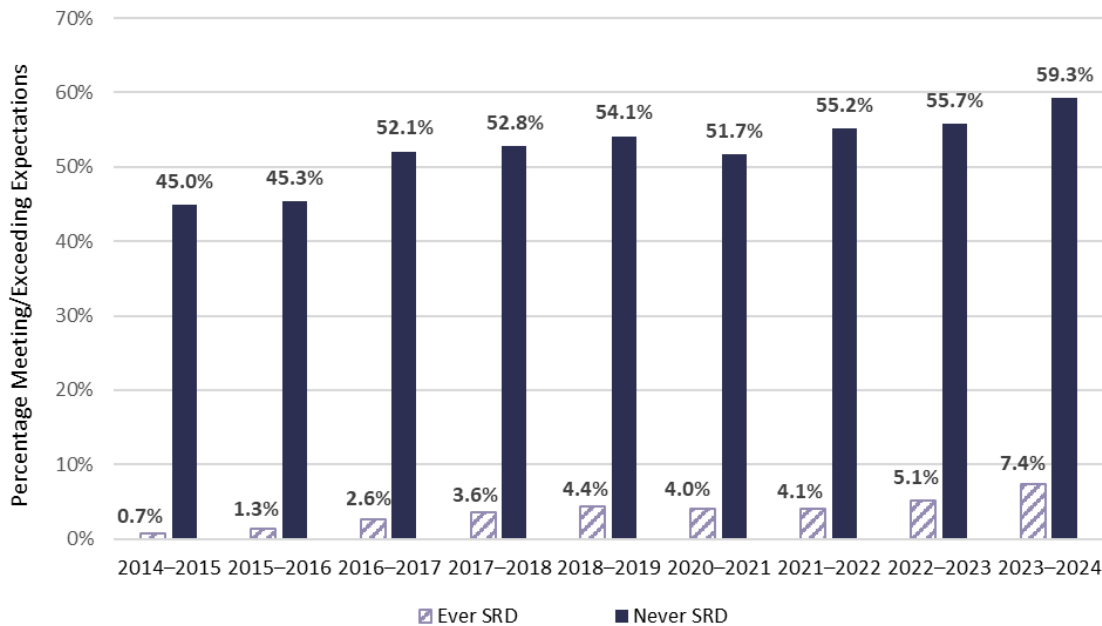
Increase in Proficiency Rates Across All Groups

Like in 2022–2023, 2023–2024 student performance data shows the proficiency rates of both groups of students (i.e., those never identified with an SRD and those identified with an SRD at some point between kindergarten and 3rd grade) reaching all-time highs, but the trend remains disproportional. **Across the state, a higher percentage of students than ever before during this data collection reached proficiency during the 2023–2024 school year:** 42.4% of 3rd-grade students met or exceeded expectations on the CMAS English and Language Arts (ELA) exam (2.3 percentage points higher than in 2022–2023). **This positive trend was also evident in students who had at any point been identified with an SRD** (7.4% proficiency rate, 2.3 percentage points higher than 2022–2023) and by their peers who had never been identified with an SRD (59.3% proficiency rate, 3.6 percentage points higher than in 2022–2023).²

² Note: The number of assessed students remains depressed from the 2018–2019 school year, although the composition of identities of students assessed remains comparable to previous years (race and ethnicity, English-language proficiency status, disability status, etc.).



Exhibit ES.2. CMAS Proficiency Rates of Students Have Slowly Improved Since 2020–2021



Note: No data are included for 2019–2020 due to a statewide assessment pause during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Increasing Proficiency Rates for Students with Multiple Identifications, but Students with Multiple Identifications who are also Identified with SRDs Lag Behind Their Peers

Trends in 2023–2024 were largely unchanged from previous years, with students with IEPs or ELs who were also identified with SRDs meeting or exceeding proficiency on the CMAS ELA exam at lower rates than their general education peers who had also been identified with SRDs. However, **in 2023–2024, students with IEPs and ELs—irrespective of SRD designation—displayed an increase in proficiency rates from 2022–2023. Percentage point increases from 2023–2024 were slightly higher than in previous years.** Students with IEPs who were ever dually identified with an SRD increased their proficiency rates from 1.7% in 2022–2023 to 2.9% in 2023–2024. Students with IEPs who had never been identified with an SRD made a slightly higher gain in proficiency rates from 38.1% in 2022–2023 to 42.4% in 2023–2024. Among EL students, 4.1% of those who were ever dually identified with an SRD



demonstrated proficiency (up 1.2 percentage points from 2023), while 38.7% of those never identified with an SRD reached proficiency (0.4 percentage points higher than 2022). Only 1% of students with an IEP, EL designation, and SRD identification reached proficiency on the CMAS ELA exam in 2023–2024 compared with 24.3% of their peers who had never been identified with an SRD (1.6 percentage points higher than 2023).

These findings suggest that students with multiple identifications continue to be underserved by the READ Act on their journey to reading English at grade level by the end of the 3rd grade. In addition to educator confusion (reported in all years evaluated) around how to best serve dual-identified students and how to prioritize between READ Plans and IEPs, this demonstrates that educators need additional implementation guidance so they can best serve students.

Recommendation: These consistent findings suggest the importance of additional guidance and training to support these students, such as the proposed training for teachers to better differentiate instruction for students learning English while learning how to read.³

Early Identification and Exit from SRD Status Are Associated with Higher CMAS Proficiency Rates

In general, **students who were identified earlier with an SRD or exited earlier from being identified with an SRD had higher CMAS proficiency rates than their peers who were identified and exited in a later grade level.** For example, 24% of students who were identified with an SRD in kindergarten and exited in 1st grade met the CMAS proficiency standard in 3rd grade, compared to 15% of students who were identified in 1st grade and exited in 2nd grade, and 7% of students who were identified in 2nd grade and exited in 3rd grade. These findings suggest that early identification and intervention for students with SRDs may lead to higher CMAS performance in 3rd grade.

³ See "[Colorado teachers need help teaching English learners to read. The state wants more training](#)" on Chalkbeat Colorado.



Similar trends were observed when looking at individual CMAS performance levels for each group of students. Students who were first identified with an SRD in kindergarten and exited in 1st grade most frequently scored in the third-highest performance level on the CMAS exam (i.e., Approached Expectations”), with 55% of students scoring in the top three performance levels. In contrast, only 45% of the students identified with an SRD in kindergarten and exited in 2nd grade performed in the top three performance levels; these students most frequently scored in the second-lowest performance level (i.e., “Partially Met Expectations”). Only 21% of students who exited in 3rd grade were in the top three performance levels. Very few students that never exited SRD status scored in the top three performance levels (3%). Students who were first identified with an SRD in 1st or 2nd grade showed similar trends—students who exited earlier had higher CMAS proficiency rates than students who exited in a later grade level or students who never exited from SRD status.

Recommendation: These findings underscore the importance of early identification and intervention for students with significant reading deficiencies, a key component of the READ Act. We recommend that districts and schools prioritize early identification and intervention for students identified with significant reading deficiencies.



1

Introduction

Three broad research questions guided the evaluation.

- How are LEPs and schools implementing READ Act provisions?
- To what extent has the implementation of the READ Act led to a reduction in the number of students identified with an SRD?
- To what extent do students identified with an SRD achieve reading proficiency by the 3rd grade?



The importance of achieving early-grade reading proficiency for later student academic success is well documented. Researchers and education leaders consider the achievement of reading proficiency by the end of 3rd grade to be crucial to a child's future academic success and financial independence. To help schools and districts support all children in achieving this goal, the Colorado State Legislature passed the Colorado READ Act in 2012 to replace the Colorado Basic Literacy Act. The READ Act provides school districts with funding and support to aid literacy development for kindergarten through 3rd grade (K–3) students, especially those identified with SRDs⁴ who are at risk of not reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.

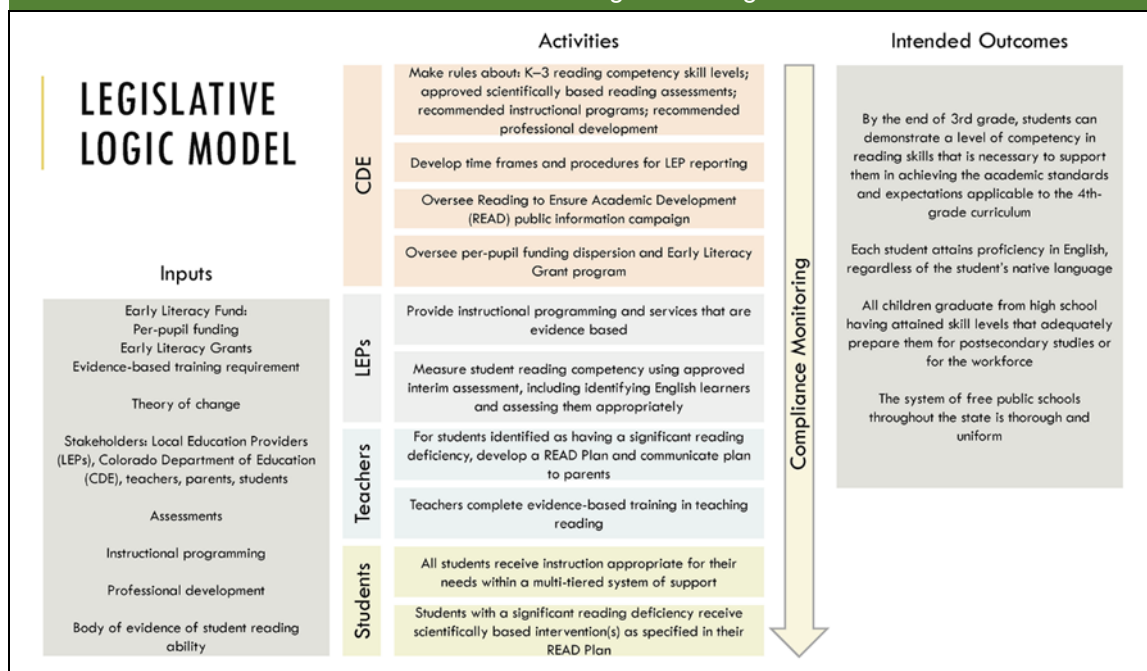
READ Act

Backward mapping of intended outcomes identified in the READ Act through activities and inputs illustrates how authors of the Act intended the pieces to fit together to improve reading outcomes (Exhibit 1.1). To ensure that 3rd-grade students have the necessary reading skills to succeed in higher grade levels and beyond, the READ Act established mechanisms to ensure that all K–3 students receive reading instruction based on the science of reading and that students identified with SRDs receive appropriate science-based interventions to address their needs. Educators, principals, and administrators complete evidence-based training in reading that enables them to deliver instruction and/or provide support aligned with the science of reading. LEPs select core instructional programs, interventions, PD programs, and assessments from the Advisory List of Instructional Programming and Approved list for PD that CDE has developed and disseminated. CDE also determines grade-level competency in reading, monitors LEP use of READ Act per-pupil funds, administers the Early Literacy Grant (ELG) program, and oversees READ Act reports (Exhibit 1.1).

⁴ "Significant reading deficiency" means that a student does not meet the minimum skill levels for reading competency in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, including oral skills, and reading comprehension established by the State Board pursuant to section 22-7-1209, s, for the student's grade level.



Exhibit 1.1. READ Act Legislative Logic Model



Under provisions of the READ Act, schools use an interim assessment from the Advisory List to identify students with SRDs. After screening, students are given a diagnostic assessment to identify areas of need and inform the development of an individualized READ Plan. The READ Act specifies certain components required in all READ Plans; however, each plan must be tailored to meet individual student needs and updated regularly based on progress monitoring.

The Colorado General Assembly placed four broad requirements on the Colorado State Board of Education and CDE to administer the READ Act: rulemaking, accountability, information dissemination, and funding dissemination.

Functionally, CDE's activities can be placed into six categories: compliance, instruction, assessment, curriculum, prekindergarten to kindergarten transition, and State-Identified Measurable Result (Exhibit 1.2).

1. Managing compliance ensures that READ Act funds are used effectively and lawfully and educators understand READ Act requirements.



2. Informing human capital through training requirements and providing recommended lists of PD programs ensures that teachers know how to provide reading instruction that is scientifically grounded.
3. Reviewing and approving K–3 reading assessments allows students identified with SRDs to be effectively identified and provided appropriate interventions.
4. Reviewing and recommending curriculum and interventions ensures that students receive reading instruction that is scientifically grounded.
5. Aligning prekindergarten and kindergarten readiness standards with K–3 reading standards supports effective prekindergarten practices.

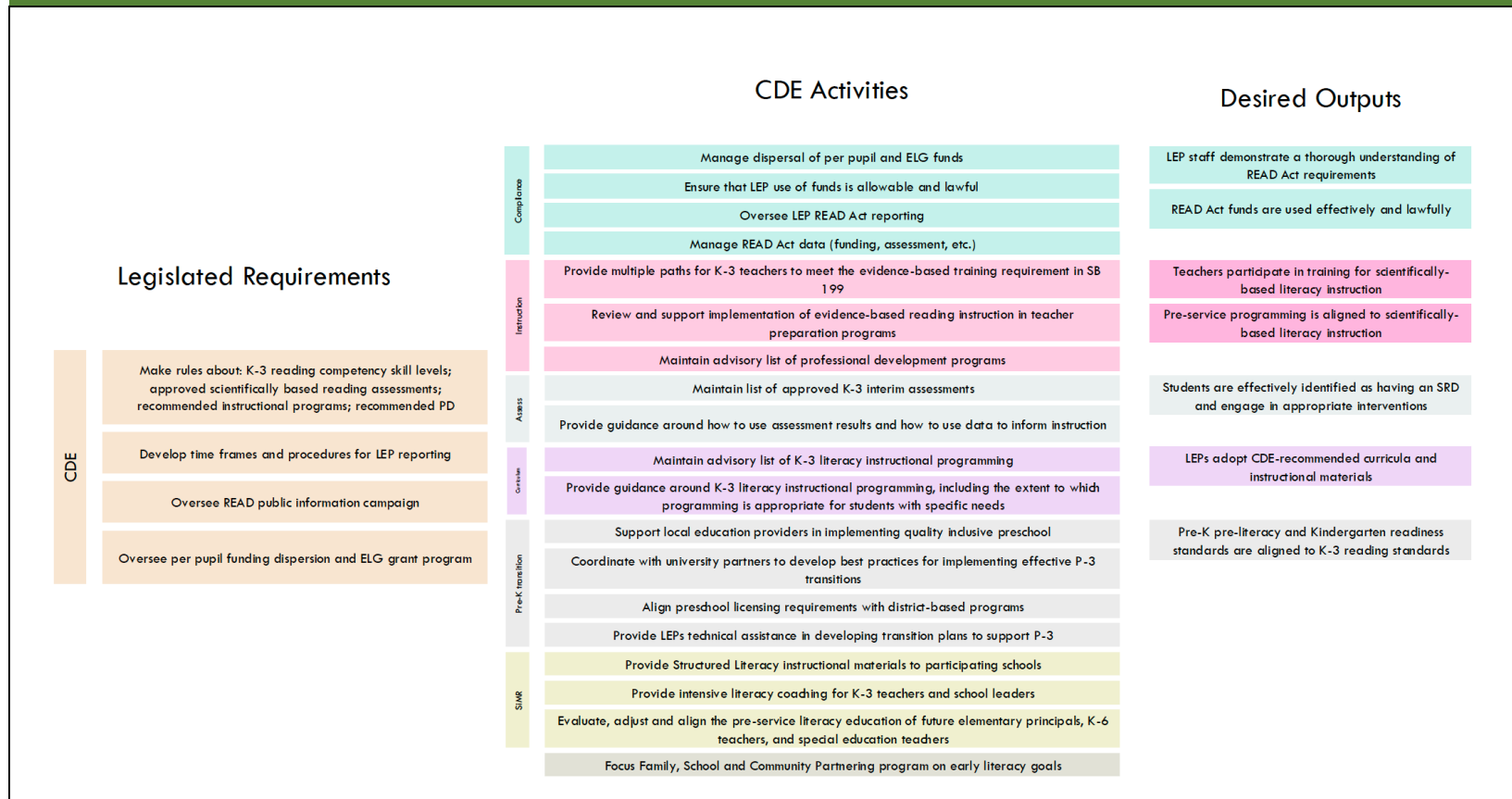
In addition to specifying that the Colorado State Board of Education must approve a set of reading assessments, the READ Act charges CDE with creating the Advisory List of Instructional Programming⁵ and the Approved list for PD⁶ that are scientifically grounded and evidence-based.

⁵ See [Advisory List of Instructional Programming](#) on the Colorado Department of Education website.

⁶ See [Approved Professional Development](#) on the Colorado Department of Education website.



Exhibit 1.2. CDE READ Act Roles and Activities Aligned with Outcomes





LEPs may use READ Act funds to purchase instructional programming from the Advisory List (they may also purchase instructional programs that are not on the Advisory List if they do not use READ Act funds, since the READ Act specifies that all instruction should be evidence- and scientifically based). The 2019 revision of the READ Act required all K–3 teachers to complete 45 hours of evidence-based training in teaching reading by August 1, 2022. In 2022, SB22-004 was passed, which required all interventionists in grades 4–12 as well as K–5 principals and administrators to complete evidence-based training in teaching reading by August 1, 2024 (see Chapter 3 for discussion of the evidence-based training requirement).

The Comprehensive ELG program was also created in 2012 as part of the READ Act. This fund was created primarily to provide resources through ELGs for Colorado schools and districts to implement interventions, programs, and supports specifically for K–3 students identified with SRDs. Schools may apply individually or as part of a consortium of schools. To help ensure that these funds are appropriately targeted, the state has provided districts with a list of approved, evidence-based education interventions that have been supported by the ELG since 2012. Districts, in turn, are required by statute each year to provide information to CDE regarding their planned usage of funds to support students identified with SRDs. In 2018, House Bill 18-1393 allowed for the creation of two grant programs in addition to the original Comprehensive ELG program. Sustainability grants allow districts and schools that have completed Comprehensive ELGs to receive additional funding to continue their activities. Annual PD grants provide funding to districts and schools to support the implementation of evidence-based reading programming and strategies. Supplemental awards are also made based on availability of funding.

Evaluation of READ Act

In 2019, the Colorado General Assembly passed and signed into law



Senate Bill (SB) 19-199, which included a provision mandating that an independent, external multiyear evaluation of the READ Act program be conducted (see 2020 Annual Report on the Colorado READ Act for an overview of updates in SB19-199).⁷ The evaluation is now underway and is being conducted by an independent research team led by WestEd that includes APA Consulting and RTI International.

The key legislative goals for this evaluation are as follows:

1. Help state policymakers and district leaders understand impacts of READ Act funding and support on students, families, schools, and districts.
2. Learn and share successes and best practices across districts and schools.
3. Inform improvements to the READ Act by understanding how funds were used.
4. Get direct feedback from school and district leaders about how CDE can best support further improvement in READ Act implementation.

Aligned with these goals, the evaluation is guided by three broad research questions:

1. How are LEPs and schools implementing READ Act provisions?
2. To what extent has the implementation of the READ Act led to a reduction in the number of students identified with SRDs?
3. To what extent do students identified with an SRD achieve reading proficiency by the 3rd grade?

In addition, this year's report focuses special attention on three additional topics. First, we worked with CDE to identify districts and schools that have been relatively more successful at achieving the goals of the READ Act. Based on our finding in the 2022–2023 report that students who exited SRD status before 3rd

⁷ See [the Colorado READ Act 2024 Annual Report](#). 



grade had higher rates of proficiency on the 3rd-grade CMAS ELA exam, we focused on schools who had received per-pupil funding and demonstrated higher rates of (a) exiting students identified with SRDs by 3rd grade and (b) higher rates of proficiency on the 3rd-grade CMAS ELA for those students. Seven “bright spot” schools were identified and participated in site visits. On-site evaluation staff toured schools during K–3 reading blocks to observe staffing, the school’s approach to reading, and READ Plan implementation in an effort to learn and document what led to their successes (see Appendix A for a detailed overview of site selection). Second, we continue to examine trends in the adoption and use of evidence-based instructional materials and assessments. Now that 98% of districts report using core curriculum on the Advisory List, we focused on the adoption of evidence-based curriculum and assessments over the past 3 years, how long it takes school staff to feel comfortable with these new materials, and what supports facilitate effective implementation. Last, this year’s report includes in-depth exploration of within-year student growth on foundational skills using student-level data from districts participating in the Early Literacy Assessment Tool (ELAT) project.

In order to answer these evaluation questions and examine these special topics, this report relies on numerous sources of information (see Appendix A for a detailed description of data collected and analytic methods used), including

- extant student-, school-, and LEP-level data from CDE and publicly available datasets;⁸
- inventories of LEP staff and principals, reading coaches, teachers, and families at schools that received READ Act funding and participated in READ Act activities; and
- site visits with a sample of schools receiving ELGs and LEPs that received READ Act funding, with a focus on schools and LEPs and schools that have been successful (relative to others in the state) in

⁸ CDE’s publicly available data are available on the [Colorado Education Statistics](#)  page of the Colorado Department of Education website.



exiting students from SRD status before 3rd grade and moving those students closer to proficiency on the 3rd-grade CMAS ELA exam.

Purpose and Organization of This Report

This report on the fifth year of the external evaluation of the READ Act describes READ Act implementation during the 2023–2024 school year as well as findings related to the main components of the READ act: overall approaches to reading (Chapter 2) which includes special focus on the adoption of new evidence-based materials; the evidence-based training in teaching reading requirement (Chapter 3), identifying and supporting students under the READ Act (Chapter 4); findings related to the ELG (Chapter 5); READ Act per-pupil funding and related spending (Chapter 6), student outcomes (Chapters 7, 8, and 9); and comprehensive findings and recommendations organized by each of the evaluation questions (Chapter 10).

It is important to note several limitations regarding this year's report. First, each year we are limited to reporting student READ Act and performance data from the previous school year due to data availability at the time of the report. For example, this year's report mostly focuses on student READ Act and performance data during the 2023–2024 school year. In addition, it is important to note that information collected from districts, school-level staff, and families are limited by how many responded to this year's survey (see Appendix A for overview of response rates by survey type). Last, although our combined dataset includes student-level READ Act and state performance data, it does not include student-level data on the frequency and type of interventions that students received as part of their READ Plans. Therefore, we are unable to explore patterns at the state level and the extent to which specific interventions impact student outcomes.



2

Overall Approaches to Reading

- Adoption of evidence-based materials on the Approved list has continued to rise.
- It takes school staff at least a year to get comfortable implementing a new core curriculum. Standards alignment, administrator support, and resource availability are critical to supporting that implementation.
- School-level staff report implementing tiered instructional models that include daily core instruction and small group instruction differentiated by students reading levels.



The READ Act established mechanisms to ensure that all K–3 students receive reading instruction based on the science of reading. This includes the creation of an Advisory List of Instructional Programming and lists of Approved assessments and PD programs that are scientifically grounded and evidence-based, the promotion and use of evidence-based instruction focused on foundational reading skills (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency including oral skills and reading comprehension) and completion of required training in evidence-based reading instruction (see Chapter 3). This chapter includes a summary of key components of reading instruction, including the prevalence of and support for use of materials on the Advisory List, focus on the five components of reading instruction, staffing and activities during literacy blocks, and overall successes and challenges related to reading approach.

To What Extent Are Districts and Schools Using Materials on the Advisory List?

Districts and schools have access to Advisory Lists for core, supplemental, and intervention curriculums, as well as Approved lists of diagnostic and interim assessments. These lists were first published in 2020 and have been updated every 2 years. Vendors are not compelled to provide materials and evidence for review. Thus, the Advisory Lists are not a comprehensive judgment of all curriculums being used in the state, but rather a review and rating of those curriculums that are submitted for review and approval. New versions of a curriculum or assessment must undergo a new submission and review process. Some changes in adoption rates of approved curriculums between years may be due to a curriculum that has been somewhat widely used for years being approved for the first time.

Overall, there was an increase in usage of core, supplemental, and intervention curriculums on the Advisory List between the 2022–2023



Overall Approaches to Reading

school year and the 2023–2024 school year.⁹ In 2022–2023, about 69% of schools¹⁰ were using approved core curriculums, which rose to 80% in 2023–2024. Nearly three-quarters of schools (72%) reported using approved supplemental curriculums on the Advisory List in 2023–2024, a return to 2021 levels after a sharp dip in 2022–2023, when levels fell to just over 50%. In addition, 83% of schools were using approved intervention curriculums on the Advisory List in 2023–2024, a return to the 2021–2022 level (86%) after a sharp drop in 2022–2023 (60%). Last, virtually all districts (99.9%) reported using approved interim assessments (see Exhibit 2.1 for most-used programs and Exhibits 2.2 and 2.3 for trends in adoption over time).

Exhibit 2.1. Most-Used Approved Materials in 2023-24			
Core Curriculum	Supplemental Curriculum	Intervention Curriculum	Interim Assessment
Houghton Mifflin Into Reading (19.5%)	Wilson Foundations (12.6%)	Orton Gillingham-Yoshimoto Orton Gillingham (14.5%)	Amplify mCLASS with DIBELS, 8th Edition (34%)
Amplify CKLA (18.3%)	Lexia-Core 5 Reading (12%)	Lexia - Core 5 Reading (13.3%)	Acadience Reading* (29.7%)
McGraw Hill Wonders (12.4%)	Literacy Resources - Heggerty Foundations (9.6%)	Curriculum Associates i-Ready (10.2%)	i-Ready (19.2%)

Note. Percentages represent grade level entries in schools reporting use of program in 2023–2024.

* Acadience Reading was formerly referred to as DIBELS Next.

Similar to the past 2 years, most districts (68%) reported making decisions about the instructional programs at the district level and indicated that all elementary schools use the same program. Only 4% percent of districts reported that schools have autonomy with regard to instructional programs. It is also

⁹ In the first year of the Literacy Collection (2021–2022), districts were provided with only a list of approved curriculums and “other” to choose from when indicating which curriculums were in use. In the second year, 2022–2023, districts could choose from a list of all submitted curriculums. Therefore, the drop from Year 1 to Year 2 may indicate a more precise data collection rather than a true drop in approved curriculums usage.

¹⁰ The use of “schools” throughout this chapter refers to any school reporting to CDE to enroll K–3 students who took part in the Literacy Data Collection in 2021–2022, 2022–2023, or 2023–2024. Each school reports curriculums use for each K–3 grade. Because each school appears four times in the dataset, these percentages are not a precise measure of the proportion of schools, but rather the proportion of grade level entries to all schools in the dataset. We use “schools” for ease of readability, but please keep in mind that this is a true measure of the overall proportion of grade level entries rather than a distinct count of schools, which may be using approved curriculums for some but not all grade levels.



important to note that most teachers reported supplementing materials on the Advisory Lists with outside materials. Fifty-two percent of teachers responding to the survey reported daily or weekly use of outside materials. In addition, across materials there were higher reported usage of approved materials in earlier grades. For example, 84% of schools reporting approved core curriculum usage in grades K–2 but only 69% of schools reported doing so for 3rd grade.

Degrees of Curriculum and Assessment Usage

We developed measures to assess the extent to which schools are exclusively using all approved materials, partially using approved materials, or not using approved materials. “All” or “exclusively” approved indicates that within a grade-level entry, all submitted curriculums or assessments in a given category were approved.¹¹ “Partial” or “some” approval indicates that at least one submission per category was approved. “No” approval indicates that none of the submissions in a given category were approved. Although our analyses above show that most schools are using approved materials, we found that **33% of schools reported using exclusively approved curriculums materials, up from 25% of schools in 2022–2023 and less than 1% of schools in 2021–2022**. In 2023–2024, about twice as many schools used all approved curriculums for kindergarten and 1st grade compared to 2nd and 3rd grades (Exhibit 2.1). There is considerably less variation between grades in use of approved assessments, with about 89% of schools reporting using exclusively approved assessments across grade levels. **About 32% of schools reported using exclusively approved curriculums and assessments**. Notably, all seven of the site visit schools utilized core, supplemental, and intervention programs on the Advisory List.

¹¹ Districts can submit up to two core curriculums per grade-level entry, up to three supplemental and intervention curriculums, up to two interim assessments, and up to two diagnostic assessments.

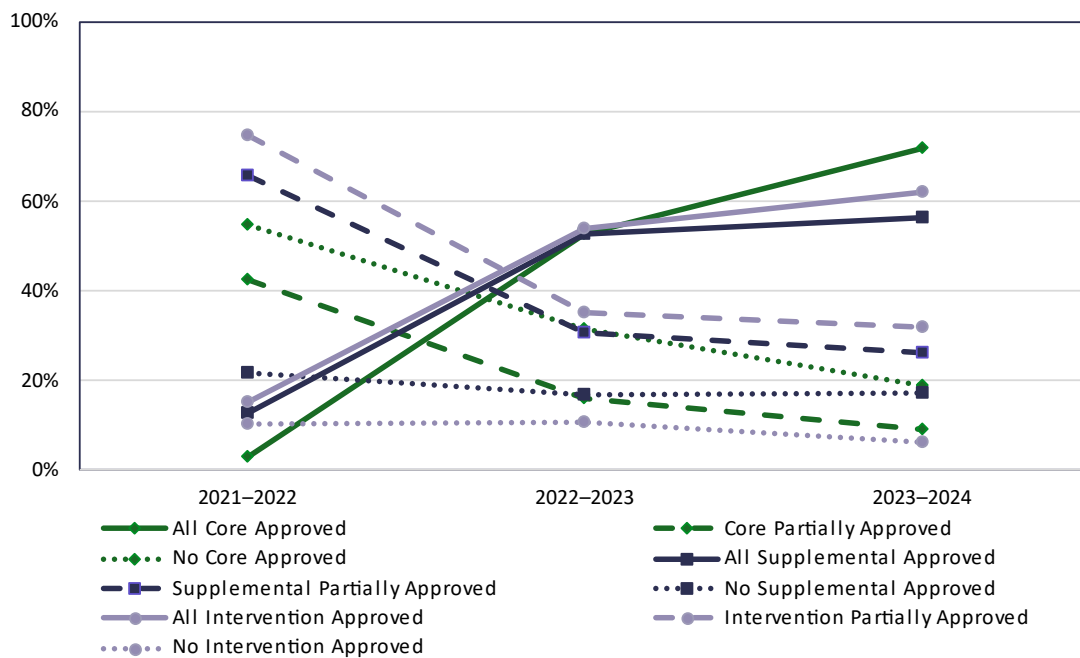


Overall Approaches to Reading

Exhibit 2.2. More Schools Are Using Exclusively Approved Curriculums and Assessments															
Approved Material Category	Percent, %														
	2021–2022					2022–2023					2023–2024				
	K	1	2	3	Total	K	1	2	3	Total	K	1	2	3	Total
Using All Approved Curriculums	0.5	1.0	0.6	0.3	0.6	31.2	35.3	18.9	15.7	25.3	40.4	48.6	23.3	20.6	33.2
Using All Approved Assessments	20.7	20.3	19.8	20.0	20.2	77.1	77.4	76.7	77.0	77.0	89.6	89.5	89.3	89.3	89.4

A higher percentage of schools reported exclusively using approved core, supplemental, and intervention curriculums during 2023–2024 than in previous years (Exhibit 2.3). Although the percentage of schools using exclusively approved materials has risen; naturally, the share of schools who only partially use or do not use approved curriculums has fallen over the same time period. More than half of schools are using exclusively approved curriculums in at least one curriculum category.

Exhibit 2.3. Curriculums Usage Over Time, by Degree of Adoption

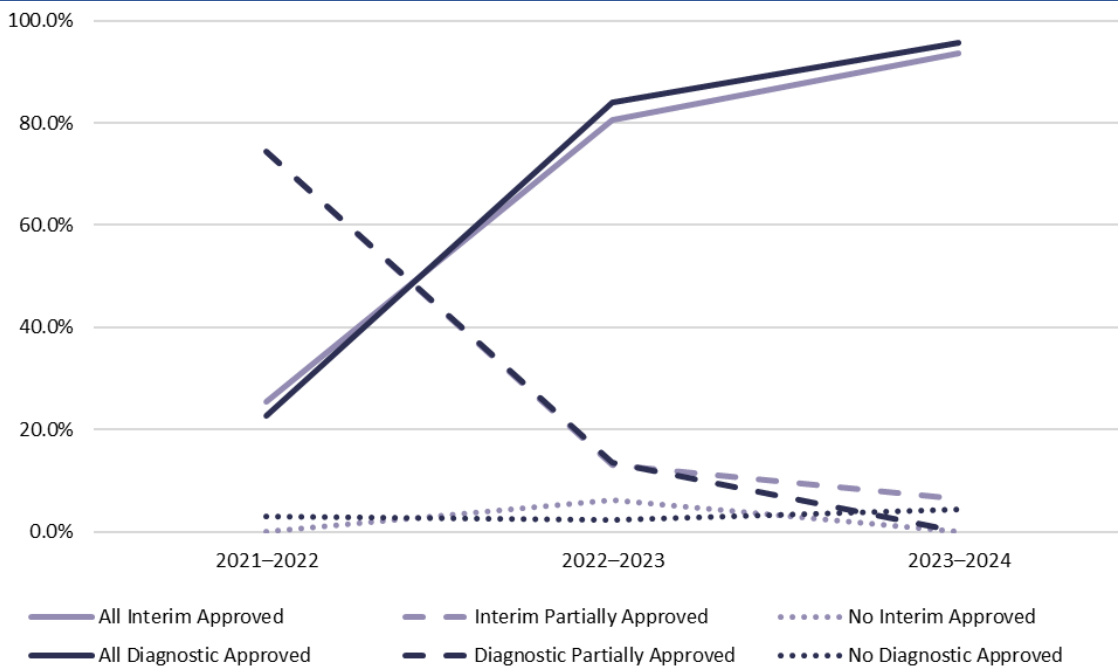




Overall Approaches to Reading

Similarly, a higher percentage of schools reported exclusively using approved interim and diagnostic assessments during 2023–2024 than in previous years (Exhibit 2.4). **Nearly all schools are now using approved assessments.**

Exhibit 2.4. Assessment Usage Over Time, by Degree of Adoption



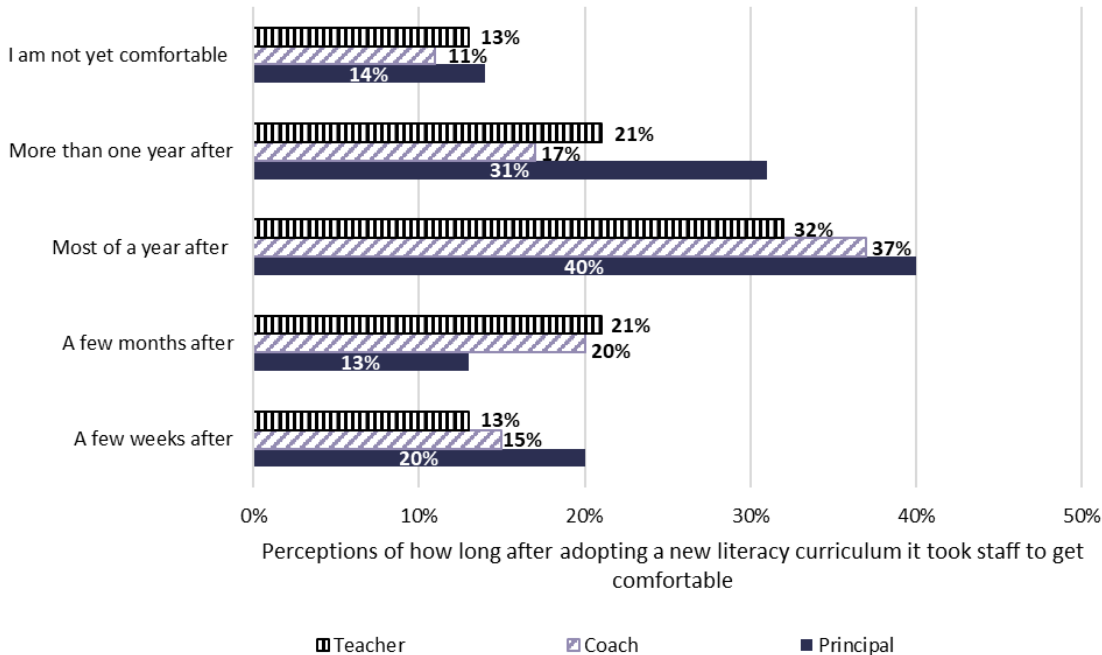
How Often Do Schools Adopt and How Do They Support Adoption of New Core Curriculums?

Most teachers (66%), coaches (67%) and principals (59%) responding to the survey reported their school adopted a new core literacy curriculum in the past 3 years. **All three groups reported that it took at least a year for them to get comfortable with the new curriculum, with more than 10% of teachers, coaches, and principals reporting that they still do not feel comfortable implementing the new curriculum at the time of the survey (see Exhibit 2.5).**



Overall Approaches to Reading

Exhibit 2.5. Most School-Level Staff Reported It Takes at Least a Year to Be Comfortable with New Curriculum



In particular, teachers reported that they were comfortable planning for instruction and adjusting instruction to meet student needs. Teachers were the least comfortable fitting the necessary content into instructional time, with over a third of teachers reporting they were somewhat or very uncomfortable. This aligns with research that indicates it takes time and support for teachers to become truly comfortable and effective with implementation (Werres & Ch  u, 2023; National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2020; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Adopting New Programs

“Staff at School ABC expressed the need for more time and support to learn and practice with their instructional programs. For example, there were routines embedded in curriculums that staff needed time to learn (e.g., hand gestures in one program), as well as language specific to curriculums that involved a learning curve. District staff reported that despite the learning curves with instructional programs, educator fluency with programs was getting better over time.”

The vast majority of returning teachers, coaches, and principals reported that they received PD related to the new curriculum. In contrast, over 30% of new



teachers reported that they did not receive any PD related to the new curriculum, suggesting there may be challenges ensuring that PD is available to new staff who may not have had the chance to participate in PD when the curriculum was newly adopted. All three groups (teachers, coaches, and principals) reported that curriculum developers and the district were most likely to provide the PD. When asked about what positively impacted their ability to implement the new curriculum, teachers were most likely to cite standards alignment, administrator support, and resource availability (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Pak et al., 2020; Penuel et al., 2007).

How Often Do Schools Adopt New Interim Assessments and How Are Districts and Schools Supporting Adoption of New Interim Assessments?

About a third of teachers, coaches, and principals reported adopting a new interim assessment in the past 3 years. This was partly due to the assessment review cycle, which often results in some previously approved assessments being removed from the list, forcing schools to choose from the updated list of approved assessments.¹² Similar to core curriculum, 78% of teachers and coaches reported PD related to the new assessments, most often provided by assessment publishers or the district. Most teachers reported feeling somewhat or very comfortable administering the assessment, interpreting results, using data to inform instruction, and explaining the results. In contrast, over 40% of responding teachers reported feeling somewhat or very uncomfortable using the assessment system, suggesting this may be an area for future professional learning supported by coaches and principals, most of whom reported feeling very comfortable using the assessment system. Teachers were most likely to agree that training and PD, standards alignment, and administrative support positively impacted their ability to implement the new interim assessment system.

¹² The most recent assessment review, which occurred in 2022, required districts to switch assessments by the beginning of the 2024–2025 school year.

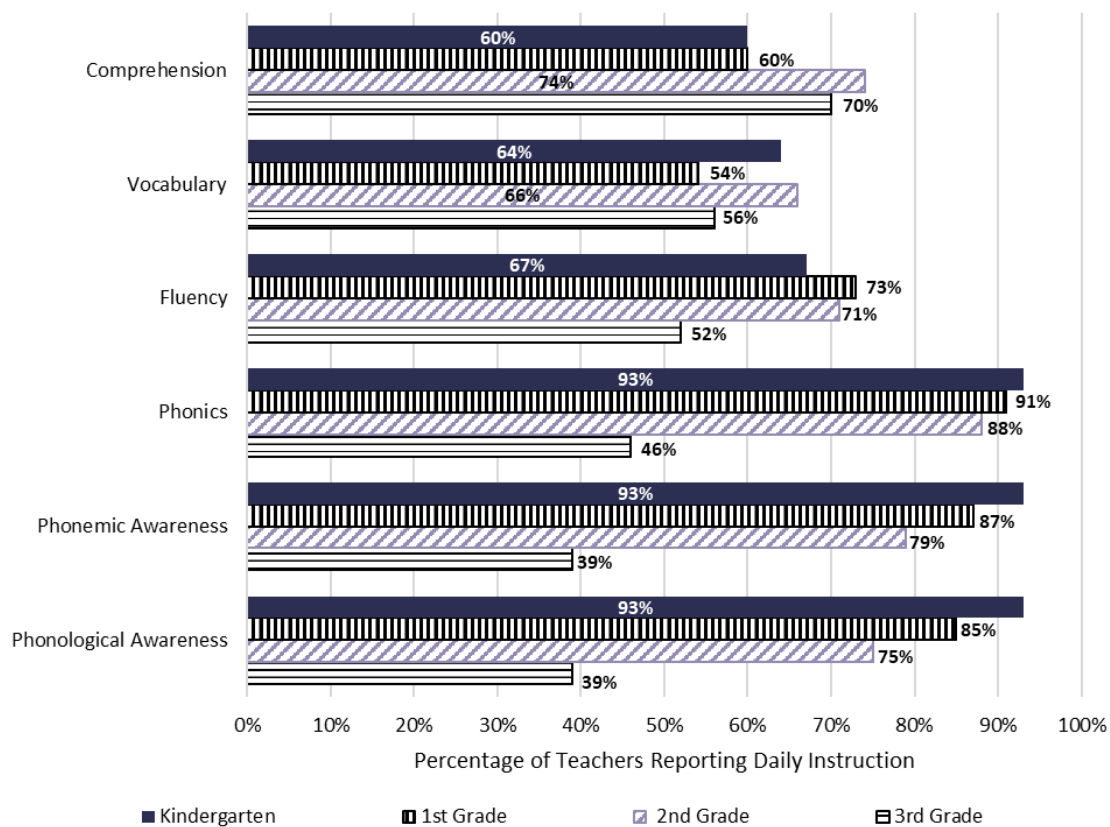


How Are Districts and Schools Approaching Reading?

As in past years, **most districts mandated—and ultimately reported—daily instruction in each of the five foundational skills of reading.**

Kindergarten, 1st-, and 2nd-grade teachers were more likely to report daily instruction in phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency. In contrast, 2nd- and 3rd-grade teachers were more likely to report daily instruction on comprehension (see Exhibit 2.6). This was echoed by the site visit schools, with four of the seven schools emphasizing the intentional shift to comprehension focused literacy instruction in 2nd and 3rd grade.

Exhibit 2.6. Variability in Reports of Daily Instruction by Foundation Skill and Grade





Staffing and Activities During Literacy Block

School-level staff reported implementing tiered instructional models that include daily core instruction and small group instruction differentiated by students reading levels, in line with recommended evidence-based practices (Gersten et al., 2008). Most teachers (56%) reported students participating in literacy activities while they conducted small groups on a daily basis, along with daily self-guided literacy practice (52%) and weekly support from paraprofessionals and coaches.

The same pattern emerged when teachers were asked about how they structure literacy activities for students identified with SRDs. Most teachers (58%) reported providing paired and small group instruction to students identified with SRDs on a daily basis. Reports of one-on-one instruction for students identified with SRDs were more variable, with 46% teachers providing this a few times a week or more and 25% of teachers reporting they never provide one-on-one instruction to students identified with SRDs. The same pattern was evident for coaches—they were most likely to provide paired and small group instruction on a daily basis (38%) and less likely to report providing daily one-on-one instruction (16%) to students identified with SRDs (see Chapter 4 for additional detail about supporting students identified with SRDs).

Most teachers reported at least weekly support from paraprofessionals and coaches, including over a third of teachers who reported having multiple

adults in the classroom for daily reading instruction. All seven of the “bright spot” schools who participated in site visits emphasized the importance of additional

specialized staff such as interventionists and coaching to support reading

The Importance of Staff Collaboration

“Staff reported that instructional support from and collaboration among the expert reading interventionist, instructional coach, and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education teacher leaders facilitated Elementary School ABC’s success...The reading interventionist provided intervention outside the classroom for those students who needed the most support. In addition, they provided in-class support to both teachers and their students during small groups.”



instruction and READ Act implementation. These were schools who had received per-pupil funding and demonstrated higher rates of (a) exiting students identified with SRDs by 3rd grade and (b) higher rates of proficiency on the 3rd-grade CMAS ELA for those students.

Guidance Related to Staffing

Ninety-two percent of principals and 80% teachers reported that teachers receive school-level guidance about who should work with the lowest-performing literacy groups in small group instruction. Most principals (76%) reported that this guidance instructs teachers that interventionists or reading specialists should serve the lowest-performing literacy group. In practice, teachers were more likely to report that they served as the primary small group instructor for their lowest-performing literacy group (48%), with only a third of teachers (33%) reporting that an interventionist or reading specialist served as the primary group instructor. Those who selected “other” were most likely to report a combination of staffing support (i.e., special education teachers, dyslexia specialists), depending on the situation. Almost 90% of principals reported they consider teacher skill and ability in literacy instruction when making grade-level placements. Principals were most likely to assign their most effective teachers to kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grades.

What Were Successes and Challenges Related to Reading Approach and Instructional Materials?

Successes

Similar to findings from prior reports, district administrators and principals emphasized the implementation of evidence-based materials and high-quality instruction as key to student growth. Fifty-four percent of district administrators reported that instructional materials were successful or very successful in helping students exit SRD status, and 37% noted success in raising 3rd-grade proficiency. Six of the seven site visit schools also attributed their



success at getting students off SRD status and closer to proficiency on 3rd-grade CMAS ELA exams to specific instructional programs, emphasizing that these programs increased the rigor of instruction and student engagement in text.

Beyond instructional materials, districts and principals frequently cited professional learning and grade-level teams as crucial for student growth (see Exhibit 2.7). This was exemplified at

CORE Program Increased Rigor and Engagement

“School ABC’s core program was perceived as increasing the rigor of instruction and the engagement of students with texts. Students were more engaged in reading, and staff anticipated that their comprehension would improve due to the substantial increase in background knowledge and vocabulary, especially in informational texts. They saw improvements in oral comprehension and vocabulary for students with IEPs.”

one site visit school, which highlighted its PD offerings, including monthly 3-hour district-led sessions and bimonthly schoolwide PD sessions, that were aligned with the instructional focus of professional learning communities as well as student needs. This underscores that instructional materials are only one component within the broader framework of supporting literacy development.

Challenges

Similar to the challenges cited with adopting new curriculums, the main challenge site visit schools cited was adequate time and staff to deliver instruction to students at varying reading levels, especially those

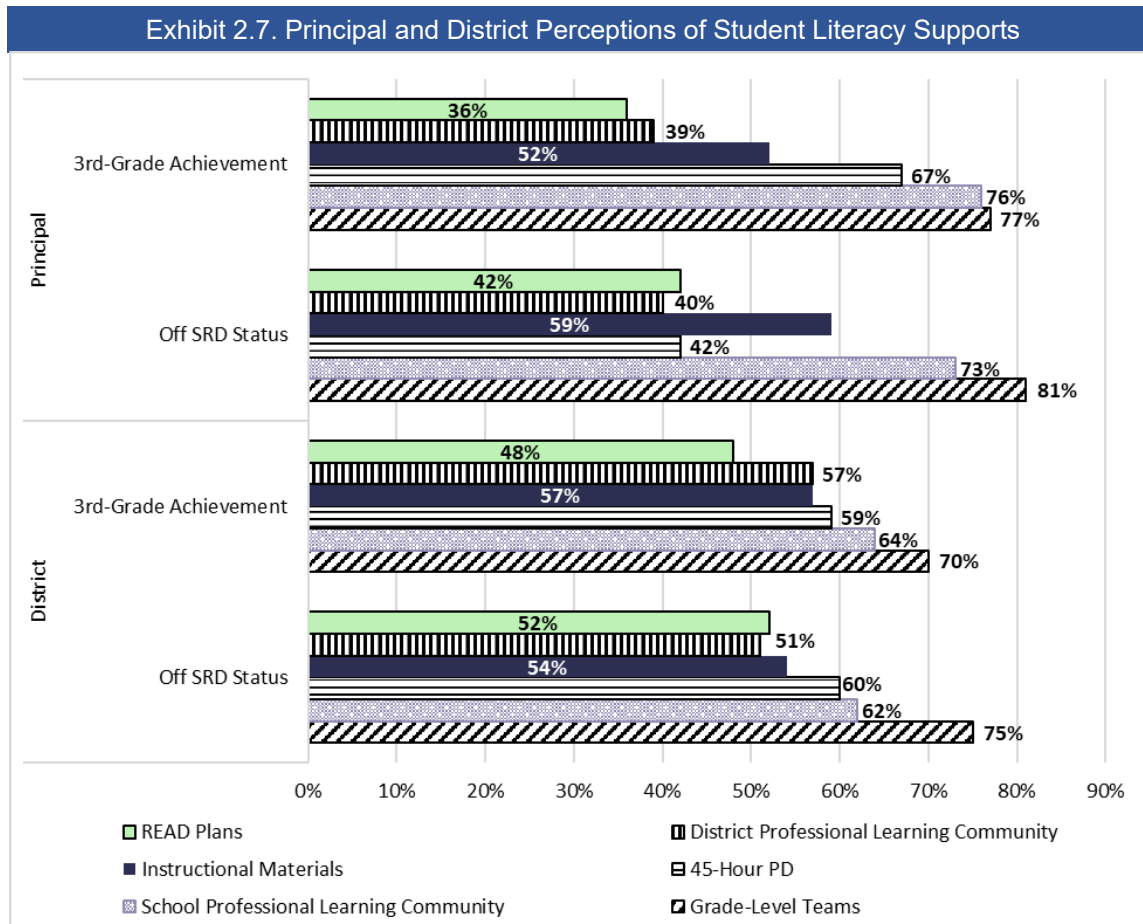
Inadequate time and staff to address student needs

Staff at School ABC spoke about general challenges associated with instructional programs and reading instruction, including the wide variation in student skills at each grade level and interventionists’ limited capacity to address all needs. A staff member expressed that there were “consistently extremely high needs here” and that staff needed to make strategic, difficult decisions to address the most pressing among them.

with reading challenges. Five of the seven schools noted this difficulty, citing challenges getting through all the recommended content, the need for additional time to work with their curriculum, and the need for additional staff to support recommended interventions.



Overall Approaches to Reading



Key Takeaways

Adoption of evidence-based materials on the Approved list has continued to rise.

- Over 80% of schools were using approved core curriculum during the 2023–2024 school year.
- In addition, 32% of schools reported exclusively using approved curriculums and assessments, up from less than 1% in 2021–2022.
- District administrators and principals continued to emphasize the implementation of evidence-based materials and high-quality instruction as key to student growth.



Teachers, coaches, and principals reported it took at least a year for them to get comfortable with a new core curriculum.

- At the time of the survey, more than 10% of teachers, coaches, and principals reported that they still do not feel comfortable implementing the new curriculum.
- When asked about what positively impacted their ability to implement the new curriculum, teachers were most likely to cite standards alignment, administrator support, and resource availability.

School-level staff stressed the importance of structures and staffing to support systematic reading instruction differentiated by student reading levels.

- Districts and principals frequently cited professional learning and grade-level teams as crucial for student growth.
- Most teachers reported at least weekly support from paraprofessionals and coaches, including over a third of teachers who reported having multiple adults in the classroom for daily reading instruction.
- All seven of the bright spot schools who participated in site visits emphasized the importance of additional specialized staff such as interventionists and coaches to support reading instruction and READ Act implementation.



3

Professional Development; Evidence-Based Requirements

- Most educators participated in training beyond the mandatory 45-hours, though access varied widely by district and role.
- Gaps persisted in coaching access and district-level supports available to teacher.
- Although access to PD was widespread, participation and comfort varied—especially in supporting ELs and students with disabilities.



The READ Act requires that all K–3 teachers, K–12 reading interventionists, and K–3 principals and administrators complete evidence-based training in teaching reading. This requirement is intended to ensure that early elementary educators deliver instruction aligned with the science of reading. As of August 16, 2024, 28,939 educators had completed the evidence-based training in teaching reading for teachers (includes K–12 reading interventionists and may also include administrators) and 3,224 administrators had completed the mandatory K–3 principals and administrator training. This chapter explores the ongoing impact of the evidence-based training and the range of professional learning supports educators received beyond this requirement.

Impact of Evidence-Based Training in Teaching Reading Requirement

Educators across roles reported that training and PD efforts had a positive impact on their instructional practices, particularly in the context of newly adopted curriculums and assessments. Most teachers (62%) and coaches (65%) reported applying knowledge from the 45-hour training at least weekly, and most teachers (77%) found PD to be very or somewhat impactful on their practice. Coaches were more likely to find PD highly impactful, with almost all coaches (96%) rating it as very or somewhat impactful. Of the principals who had completed the READ Act–required training, over 75% reported the principal training was applicable, high-quality, and helpful in supporting instructional staff. Feedback from site visits reinforced these findings. Staff reported improved ability to identify student literacy needs using tools such as mCLASS with DIBELS 8th Edition, 2018 and mCLASS Lectura (Amplify, Inc.) as a result of the required training. They credited these gains, in part, to sustained literacy training and coaching aligned to READ Act principles and collaborative planning time.



Supports for Teacher Training

Educators received a variety of professional learning supports beyond the 45-hour training, though access varied widely by district and role. District inventory responses show that most districts provide PD focused on the science of reading, though only 35% require it. Similarly, just over one-third of districts (36%) require coaching supports for teachers and school leaders, while over half (56%) provided coaching as an optional support.

Most districts (57%) provide additional training as an optional support available to staff. Site visit schools that received per-pupil funding highlighted a variety of PD offerings beyond the 45-hour training. Staff described how they used per-pupil funds to provide extended coaching, embedded PD sessions, and training aligned with bilingual literacy instruction. Some staff emphasized the importance of ongoing support for biliteracy practices. Other schools expressed interest in targeted training related to data use, culturally responsive pedagogy, and strategies for supporting students with multiple learning needs, including ELs and students with disabilities. These examples illustrate the range of additional training topics valued by educators and underscore the variation in support available across schools and districts.

Teachers and coaches reported varied participation in district-provided PD, school-based PD, professional learning communities, self-study, and one-on-one coaching. However, many educators reported limited access to district-provided PD and one-on-one coaching. Nearly half of teachers reported receiving no district-provided PD (44%) or one-on-one coaching (65%). In contrast, coaches were more likely to have received supports across all offerings.

Educators also reported engaging in substantial PD in key reading areas beyond the 45-hour requirement. Among teachers, the most common areas of additional training included phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. For example, 70% of teachers received at least some PD in phonemic awareness and over 65% received PD in comprehension,



fluency, and vocabulary. Coaches engaged in even more extensive training in these areas, with over 80% receiving some training in phonics and phonemic awareness.

Gaps did persist in training related to supporting ELs and students with disabilities. For example, 44% of teachers and 46% of coaches reported receiving no additional training in supporting students with IEPs. Similarly, 37% of teachers and 28% of coaches received no PD focused on ELs. Training in disciplinary reading was also less common, with over one-third of teachers and 35% of coaches reporting no additional hours in this area. Staff provided examples of these gaps during site visits. Some staff described the linguistic diversity of their student population and the need for continued training and biliteracy practices. Staff noted that although the district provided some bilingual resources, additional training would help staff address students' varied needs.

Challenges Related to Professional Development

Although the 45-hour training remains a foundational element of the READ Act's professional learning strategy, educators and district leaders continued to express concerns about implementation challenges. Teachers described difficulties integrating the content into practice, particularly given its online format and time demands. Among the challenges district leaders most frequently cited were limited time to complete the training (38%) and staff pushback or burnout (11%). One administrator noted, "It is difficult for new teachers to find time to do the training when they are just getting started and are new to the district. They have so many trainings to do."

Site visits with staff identified issues related to restructuring school schedules to provide additional opportunities for collaborative and PD. Teachers described the benefits of 2 to 3 hours of collaborative time each week and one additional hour of PD on early release days. Leaders emphasized that sustaining such time investments will require continued funding and leadership prioritization.



Although there is broad agreement that the 45-hour training has improved teacher understanding of evidence-based practices, the variation in access and depth of additional training highlights the need for continued efforts to ensure equity in professional learning opportunities statewide.

Key Takeaways

Educators across roles reported ongoing application of the 45-hour training and positive perceptions of its relevance to their instructional work.

- Most teachers (62%) and coaches (65%) reported using knowledge from their 45-hour training at least weekly.
- One-third of teachers (33%) and over half of coaches (57%) described PD as very impactful.
- Over 75% principals reported the required administrator training was applicable, high-quality, and helpful in supporting instructional staff.

Although access to PD was widespread, participation varied—especially in PD focused on supporting ELs and students with disabilities.

- Many educators received training in core areas such as phonics, fluency, and vocabulary.
- However, substantial gaps remained. For example, 44% of teachers and 46% of coaches reported receiving no PD related to supporting students with IEPs. Similarly, over one-third of teachers (37%) did not receive training related to supporting ELs. Staff from site visit schools also noted gaps in training related to ELs and students with IEPs.

District-provided supports varied significantly in scope, format, and frequency.



- Professional learning beyond the 45-hour requirement took many forms, including district and school PD, self-study, and coaching. However, 44% of teachers reported not receiving any district-provided reading PD, and 65% received no one-to-one coaching. Although coaches were more likely to access supports, the variation in availability suggests ongoing concerns about equitable access across districts.
- Staff from some site visit schools described how school leadership teams leveraged grant funding to create robust planning and PD structures, while some schools lacked the necessary resources and time to allocate to such efforts.

District leaders and educators identified persistent challenges related to time, staffing, and implementation of the 45-hour teacher training.

- Thirty-eight percent of district administrators cited a lack of time to complete the training as a challenge, particularly for new teachers. Other concerns included pushback and burnout (11%), difficulty monitoring completion (10%), and lack of funding (7%). These implementation barriers highlight the need for continued support and flexibility in meeting the training requirement statewide.
- On-site visits, flexible schedules, leadership support, and additional funding were commonly cited as crucial to sustaining implementation gains.



4

Identifying and Supporting Students with Significant Reading Deficiencies

- Assessments were a key driver of instructional decisions related to reading instruction.
- Teachers reported confidence implementing READ Plans but need additional training and improved materials to feel confident supporting students with multiple identifications.
- Communication between teams and collaboration among staff are key methods of supporting students.
- Parents of children with multiple identifications identified challenges with READ Act supports.



The READ Act aims improve reading skills for students in kindergarten through 3rd grade, aiming for children to read at grade level by 4th grade. Under provisions of the READ Act, schools use an interim assessment from the Advisory List to identify K–3 students with SRDs. After screening, students are given a diagnostic assessment¹³ to identify areas of need and collaboratively (with specialists and parents) develop individual READ Plans that include areas of deficiency, targeted interventions, and measurable goals. This chapter provides a summary of findings related to the availability and clarity of READ Act guidance, how districts and schools support students identified with a, SRD, and how parents are involved in READ Plan activities.

How Clear Is the Guidance Related to Identifying and Exiting Students from SRD Status?

Most districts (77%) provided guidance on identifying and exiting students from SRD status. Most principals (72%), coaches (67%), and teachers (53%) indicated that their guidance and procedures related to identifying and existing students had not changed in the **past year**. Principals who did report changes were asked to provide details on what those changes were. Principals mostly cited minor adjustments

such as adding a dyslexia screener, modifying cut scores, adjusting exit guidelines and timelines, and enhancing clarity in processes.

Systematic Processes for Identification

Two site visit schools praised the benefits of having structured, systematic, and consistent processes related to identifying students with SRDs. They emphasized that having systems in place helped them to accurately determine early which students should be identified with an SRD and receive additional support.

Similar to previous years, **district administrators reported that state guidance related to serving general education students under the READ Act was clear—with responses indicating improvement in clarity over time.** Nearly all (97%) agreed that guidance for identifying students with SRDs and

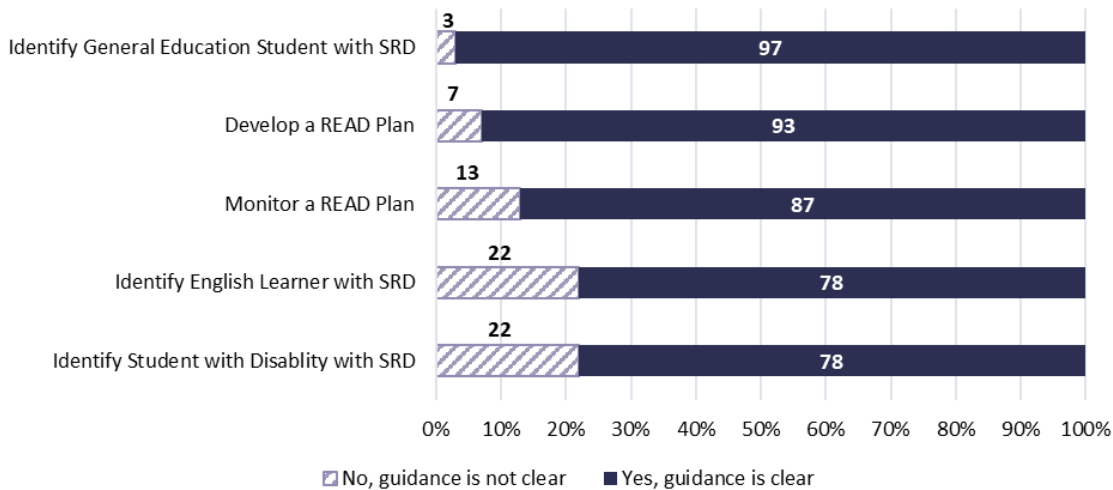
¹³ A subset of the approved interim assessments include embedded diagnostic assessments.



Identifying and Supporting Students with SRDs

developing READ Plans to support them (93% agreement) was clear (Exhibit 4.1). Perceptions of clarity of CDE guidance on exiting students from READ Plans improved, with 81% of district administrators reporting clarity in 2024–2025, up from 70% in 2023–2024.

Exhibit 4.1. Districts Reported CDE Guidance for SRD Identification and Support Is Clear

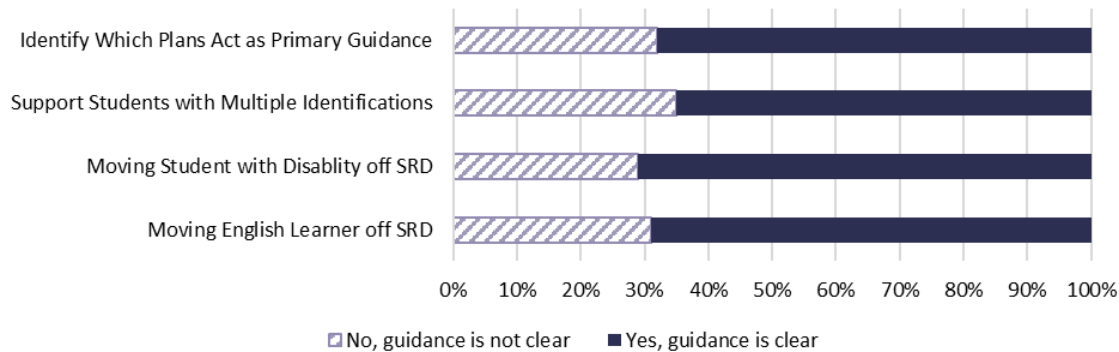


Consistent with previous years, guidance for non-general education students, particularly those with disabilities and ELs, remained less clear. There were continued challenges supporting students with multiple identifications, i.e., students who have been identified with an SRD and who are ELs and/or students with disabilities. Although **perceptions of clarity concerning students with multiple identifications improved by at least 10% in all areas from 2023–2024, there was continued confusion among a sizable minority of districts around how to support students with multiple identifications under the READ Act**, including exiting students with disabilities and ELs from SRD status, identifying which plan (READ Plan, IEP, etc.) should act as primary guidance for students with multiple identifications, and understanding how to support students with multiple identifications (Exhibit 4.2).



Identifying and Supporting Students with SRDs

Exhibit 4.2. Districts Report Less Clarity on CDE Guidance for ELs and Students with IEPs



Overall principal, coach, and teacher perceptions of state guidance on exiting students echoed improvements in district-level perceptions of clarity. School-level staff noted improved clarity related to state guidance on exiting compared to the previous year (Exhibit 4.3). This collective improvement suggests that state guidance is helping to support understanding of READ Act expectations and processes.

Exhibit 4.3. Most School-Level Respondents Reported Guidance on Exiting is Clear or Very Clear

Role	Guidance, Percent (%)		
	State	District	School
Principal	82	84	N/A
Coach	73	76	83
Teacher	68	72	71

Note. Respondents rated sources from “completely unclear” to “very clear.” The table shows percentages for ratings of “somewhat clear” and “very clear”

Five of the seven “bright spot” site visit schools, selected for their success in achieving READ Act–related goals, reported that they used CDE or district guidance and resources to make exiting decisions, with guidance typically including cut scores and flowcharts. However, one school mentioned district guidance on the body of evidence for exiting was somewhat vague and did not provide any information on how to collect the necessary information. At this school and others, staff emphasized collaboration with interventionists and a



reliance on data to inform decisions. Alongside clear guidance, this data-informed, collaborative approach was cited by site visit staff as key to their success in exiting students from READ plans by 3rd grade, in alignment with READ Act goals.

How Are Schools Supporting Students with SRDs?

As shared in Chapter 2, most schools are using core curriculums and intervention programs on the Advisory List. In addition, many reported that they had adopted a new core curriculum in the past 3 years, which took time to get comfortable with, even with accompanying PD.

In addition to the use of high-quality instructional materials to support students, **educators frequently reported collaborating with colleagues as a key part of their efforts to supporting students under the READ Act.**

Teachers most often cited working with reading coaches (78%), reading specialists (72%), other classroom teachers (66%), and special educators (66%). Collaboration also occurs between coaches (66%) and teachers (60%) to facilitate grade-level transitions and discuss the transfer of READ Plans. This collaboration emphasizes the importance of working together to ensure students identified with SRDs receive the necessary supports.

Beyond collaboration, teacher and coach confidence in supporting students is critical (e.g., Guo et al., 2012; Varghese et al., 2016). Coaches generally expressed more confidence than teachers in supporting students identified with SRDs, particularly in identifying them, exiting them, and creating READ Plans for them. **However, 82% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they felt confident in the steps and strategies needed to support a student placed on a READ Plan.**

Consistent with previous years, teachers were more involved than coaches in a variety of READ Act activities, although involvement varied by activity and individual teacher. Typically, teachers were consistently involved in

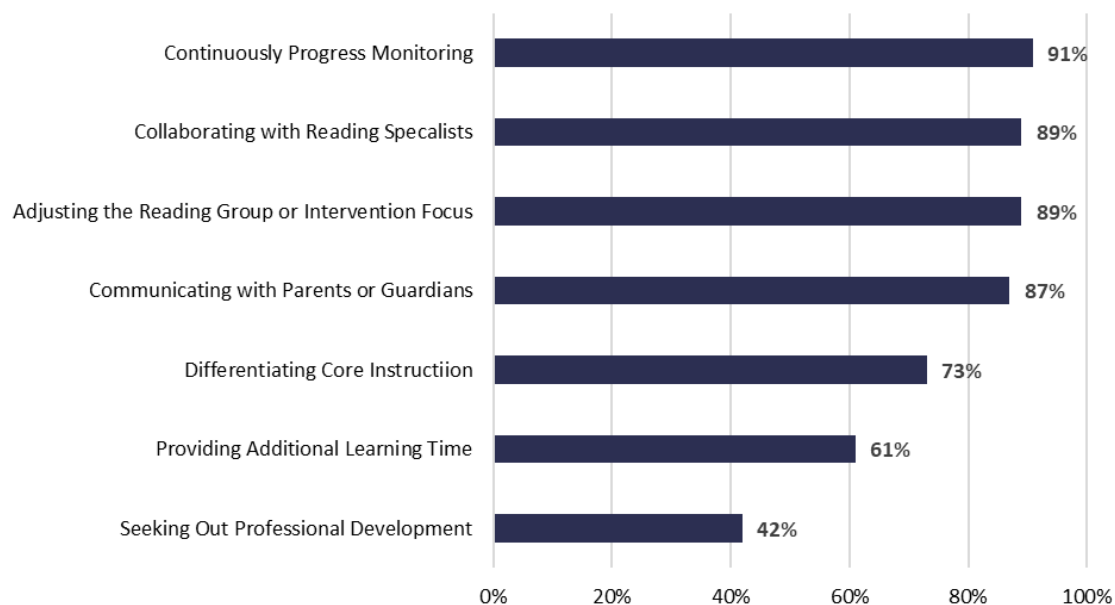


Identifying and Supporting Students with SRDs

communicating with parents (56% always); as well as reviewing (53% always), developing (51% always), and tracking progress on READ Plans (48% always); and conducting interim assessments (46% always).

When asked about what actions they take to ensure students receive the necessary literacy supports, **almost all teachers reported adjusting the focus of reading groups or interventions, collaborating with reading specialists, continuously monitoring student progress, and communicating with parents** (Exhibit 4.4). Strategies mentioned less frequently included differentiating core instruction and providing additional instructional time. Moreover, fewer than half of the teachers reported pursuing additional PD to ensure students received the support they needed.

Exhibit 4.4. Teachers Use a Variety of Methods for Supporting Student Reading Skills



Note. Teachers selected the actions they typically engaged in to ensure students received the necessary literacy supports.

How Are Parents Involved in READ Plans?

More than half (59% of 401) parents who responded to the survey felt informed about the READ Act and the resources it would provide their



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child(ren). These respondents were primarily parents of children in kindergarten through 3rd grade, with most indicating that their child was not an EL (88%) and had not been identified with a specific learning disability (77%).

According to principals, coaches, and teachers, parents were most likely to be involved in reviewing and approving READ Plans and were less likely to participate in identifying students with an SRD and in progress monitoring at home (see Exhibit 4.5). Although 70% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt comfortable implementing READ Plan activities at home, only 39% agreed or strongly agreed that the support from their school related to home implementation was sufficient.

Exhibit 4.5. Principals, Coaches, and Teachers said Parents Are Involved in Reviewing and Approving READ Plans					
Role	Percent, %				
	Identifying SRD	Reviewing READ Plans	Approving READ Plans	Implementing READ Plan Activities at Home	Progress Monitoring at Home
Principal	17	89	81	40	24
Coach	13	71	67	36	20
Teacher	22	70	66	42	23

Note. Respondents rated from “never” to “all of the time.” The table shows percentages for ratings of “most of the time” and “all of the time.”

What Does Parent READ Plan Communication Look Like?

Parents play a key role in supporting their children’s reading ability (e.g., Boonk et al., 2018; Kim & Sheridan, 2015). Communicating with parents may be critical to their ability to provide support at home (e.g., Brock &

Communication Plans

School DEF staff spoke about their successes in parent communication, highlighting the depth of their communication plan, which included using family conferences around SRD identification windows to provide one-on-one information on READ Plans, goals, and supports the school would provide. To ensure they connected with student families, READ Plan letters were translated into home languages (families had over 27 different home languages). The communication plan also recommended that teachers share strategies with families for at-home practice.



Edmunds, 2010; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Risko & Walker, 2009). Nearly all districts (92%) reported providing schools with guidance for family communication, including specifications related to conferences, meetings, and letters or emails. Additionally, 15 districts mentioned using CDE guidance or talking points in their communication strategies in open-ended survey comments. This approach was mirrored in site visit schools, half of which also referenced CDE or district guidance in their communication plans.

Most parents (59%) reported that their knowledge of the READ Act came from their child's teacher. Concurrently, 78% of teachers stated that they communicate with families about READ Plan progress a few times a year.

However, discrepancies arose in the perceived specificity of the information teachers provided, with parents more likely to report that the guidance they received was general, while teachers perceived that they were providing specific, individualized guidance (see Exhibit 4.6).

Specifically, teachers reported giving specific guidance (59%), whereas only 22% of parents felt the guidance was tailored to their child (Exhibit 4.6). In focus groups, parents mentioned they received "just general things based on grade level" or that "the communication I got was pretty generic," suggesting a need for more specific, targeted guidance.

Exhibit 4.6. Teachers and Parent Perceptions of Guidance Specificity Varied			
Role	Guidance, Percent (%)		
	General	Reading Skill	Student-Specific
Parent	48	30	22
Teacher	14	27	59

In written responses to the survey, parents expressed a desire for improved communication, with about one-third (57 out of 201) registering frustration over the quantity or frequency of communication, while just 3% provided positive feedback regarding READ Act–related communication. When expressing their frustration, some parents cited vagueness in the communication



they received and frustration with not getting responses to requests for information from the school.

Focus group feedback illustrated the wide variation in communication practices both within and across schools, with some parents expressing they felt their child's school or teacher had been highly communicative and others indicating they needed to push for and seek out even the smallest bits of information. Although the survey and focus group responses likely reflect input from highly engaged parents, the expressed desires (e.g., "Getting updates on status or getting work sent home tailored to kid so we can help would be nice," "It would have been helpful for the teacher to specify that [name redacted] is on a READ Plan because he is behind in reading. I assumed every kid had a READ Plan") could universally benefit children and their families.

Collectively, these responses underline the challenges of not only sharing relevant information with families but doing so in a manner that meets their preferences and provides specific guidance. Site visit schools that demonstrated relatively higher student reading growth emphasized both the importance and challenges of effective parent communication, recognizing it as a promising area for ongoing development.

What Do Parents Say About Their Child's Reading Growth?

Approximately half of the parent survey respondents (48%) stated that their child experienced sufficient or significant growth as a result of their READ Plan. Although less prevalent among parents providing open-ended responses, those who did discuss growth tended to highlight the positive changes their child had made. Some parents expressed that having goals was instrumental in supporting growth through accountability. As one parent noted: "My child is on the autism spectrum and has an IEP. The reading plan helps us have goals and to hold us accountable. He has made progress." Others appreciated the additional support their child received, sharing comments like, "Extra intervention



has been very helpful and needed for my child's success,” and “I was so appreciative and impressed with the detail and the level of support [school] offered to help catch my child up and get her to reading on level. The interventions were incredibly helpful and supportive, and she felt more confident as they went on.”

Some parents also praised the role of their child’s teacher. One parent stated, “Our child’s teacher has been amazingly instrumental in fostering his ability to not only read but comprehend and respond to what they are reading. They also love reading at home now, both on their own and with us. He has improved leaps and bounds!” Although less common, these responses illustrate parents’ awareness of both the growth their child is making and the specific supports facilitating that growth.

To What Extent Are READ Plans Used to Make Instructional Decisions for Students Identified with SRDs?

Similar to last year, more than half (59%) of principals reported that staff in their schools used READ Plans for instructional decisions related to reading most or all of the time. However, **the perceived impact of READ Plans on day-to-day instructional decisions varied among teachers and coaches, consistent with prior findings.** Fewer than half of teachers and coaches indicated that READ Plans influenced lesson development, small group activities, and one-on-one work with students (see Exhibit 4.7).

Exhibit 4.7. Teachers and Coaches Reported READ Plans Have Some Influence on Classroom Activities		
Source	Percent, %	
	Teachers	Coaches
Develop reading lesson	24	38
Small group work	9	47
One-on-one work	37	32

Note. Respondents rated sources from “no influence” to “strong influence.” The table shows percentages for ratings of “strong influence.”



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Site visit schools emphasized that assessment data were the primary drivers of setting instructional focus, reading groups, and reading goals. This—and findings from survey responses—indicate that READ Plans form just one component of broader support systems for students. Principals and coaches highlighted the critical role of IEPs and READ Act interim, diagnostic, and summative tests in guiding K–3 instructional strategies (see Exhibit 4.8), reinforcing the importance of data. Different respondents emphasized different support elements based on their roles, with teachers comparatively less likely to utilize READ Act interim assessment data for informing reading instruction. Additionally, a smaller proportion of coaches and principals reported considering assessments beyond those mandated by the READ Act as significant tools for shaping K–3 reading strategies. Notably, teachers and coaches were more likely than principals to report that IEPs and EL plans were important for informing instruction. In comparison to 2023–2024, principal perceptions demonstrated a heightened emphasis on data, with reduced focus on plans.

Exhibit 4.8. Principal, Coaches, and Teachers Reported Interim Assessments and Diagnostic Assessments Were Important for Informing K–3 Reading Instruction			
Source	Percent, %		
	Principals	Coaches	Teachers
READ Act interim test	67	76	47
READ Act diagnostic and summative tests	74	80	53
Non–READ Act test	41	43	53
IEP	46	72	77
EL plan	26	39	47
READ Plan	22	45	40

Note. Respondents rated sources from “not at all important” to “very important.” The table shows percentages for ratings of “very important.”

What Instructional Resources Are Used to Support Students Identified with SRDs?

Principals, coaches, and teachers shared their views on the usefulness of assessment tools (see Exhibit 4.9). Teachers were the least likely to report the assessment tools as very useful; however, respondents expressed positive



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attitudes toward the tools overall, except when predicting CMAS scores. Respondents generally indicated the low usefulness of assessments for predicting CMAS scores.

Exhibit 4.9. Principal, Coaches, and Teachers Felt Assessments Were Useful			
Source	Percent, %		
	Principals	Coaches	Teachers
Identifying SRDs	62	61	33
Exiting from SRD status	46	49	29
Identifying specific skills to target with instruction	49	50	35
Adjusting instruction to meet student needs	48	49	34
Predicting CMAS expectations	21	19	19

Note. Respondents rated sources from “not at all useful” to “very useful.” The table shows percentages for ratings of “very useful.”

Regarding the new optional dyslexia screener component, all but one of the currently approved interim assessments included the optional dyslexia screener worksheet. In practice, more than half of districts (69%) and slightly fewer than half of principals (44%) reported using a universal screener or a screener that included a dyslexia screener. Among the teachers aware of the dyslexia screener usage (24%), around half reported feeling fairly or very confident in modifying instruction based on screener results (59%). As CDE increases its focus on screening for indicators of dyslexia characteristics, it will be important to ensure there is accompanying clarity and guidance around what dyslexia screening looks like.

How Are Schools Supporting the Additional Needs of Students Identified with SRDs?

Educators expressed a variety of perspectives with regard to integrating IEPs, EL plans, and READ Plans. Around a quarter of all respondents considered IEPs and READ Plans as standalone documents. Conversely, around one-third to one-half viewed them as fully	Logistic Challenges School ABC emphasized that supporting students with multiple support plans can be challenging from a logistic standpoint when figuring out how to schedule to ensure students receive all of the necessary interventions.
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integrated documents. Similar patterns were observed for EL plans, which respondents were slightly more inclined to view as standalone documents.

Consistent with previous years, fewer than half of coaches and teachers reported they had received sufficient training to feel confident identifying and supporting students who had multiple identifications (Exhibit 4.10). These findings underscore the challenges of supporting students with multiple plans (e.g., an IEP and a READ Plan), emphasizing the need for better resource alignment and educator preparedness. In addition, they highlight the desire for additional PD to enhance teachers' readiness and confidence in aiding ELs and students with disabilities who also have READ Plans.

Exhibit 4.10. Coach and Teacher Training to Support Students with Additional Needs		
Role	Identify and Support, %	
	ELs	SWDs
Coach	35	39
Teach	27	23

SWDs = Students with disabilities

Knowing how to support ELs and students with IEPs identified with SRDs remains a challenge. Responses from coaches and teachers indicate around two-thirds had received some guidance on differentiating READ Plan implementations to meet diverse needs. However, only 29% of principals reported their school provides very clear guidance about how to support students with multiple identifications, indicating the need for additional clarity in the guidance provided.

Despite unclear guidance on differentiating instruction, most teachers and coaches reported feeling prepared or very prepared to implement READ Plans for ELs and students with disabilities (see Exhibits 4.11–4.13). However, it is important to note that approximately one-third of teachers felt not at all prepared or mostly unprepared to support students with multiple identifications.



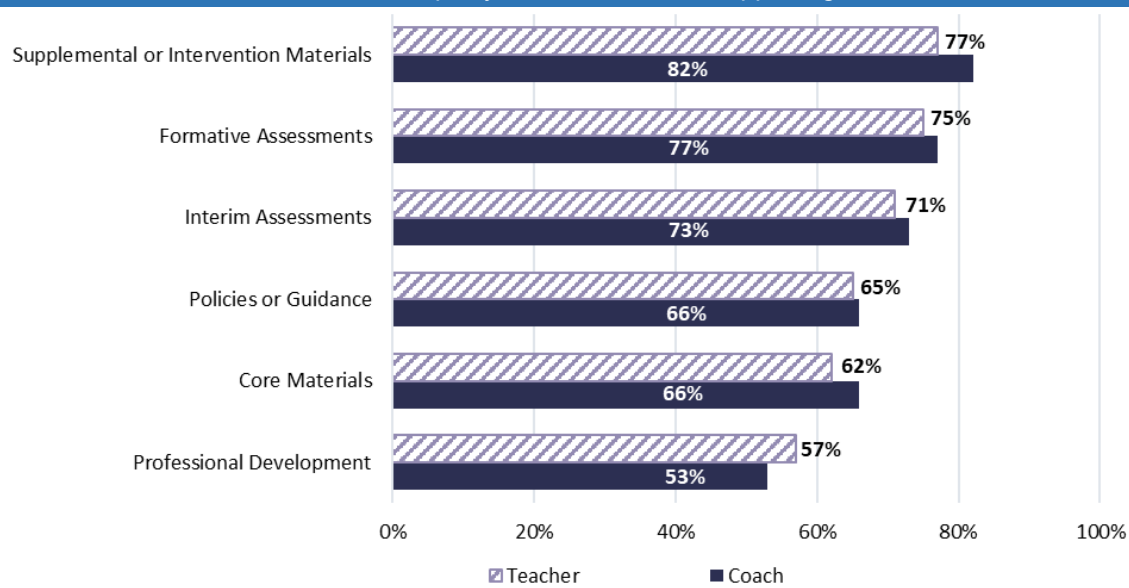
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Exhibit 4.11. Degree to Which Coaches and Teachers Felt Prepared to Support READ Plan Implementation for ELs and SWDs

Role	Implement READ Plans, %	
	ELs	SWDs
Coach	82	71
Teacher	70	65

SWDs = Students with disabilities

Exhibit 4.12. Adequacy of Resources for Supporting SWDs

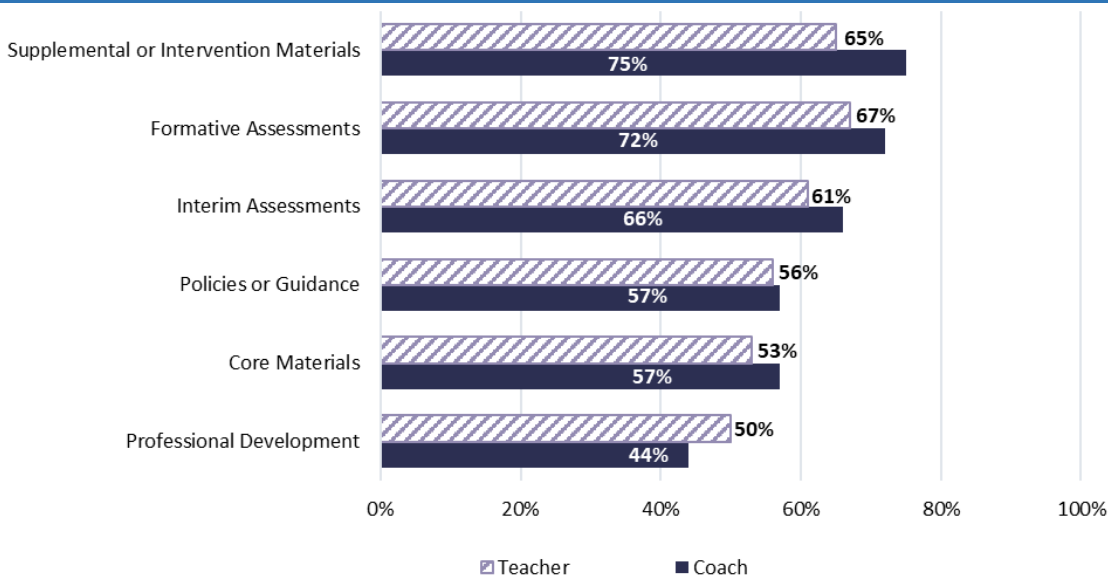


Note. Respondents rated resources as “adequate” or “not adequate.” The figure shows percentages for ratings of “adequate” for teachers and coaches.



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Exhibit 4.13. Adequacy of Resources for Supporting ELs



Note. Respondents rated resources as “adequate” or “not adequate.” The figure shows percentages for ratings of “adequate” for teachers and coaches.

These challenges were echoed during site visits and addressed in open-ended survey responses. Four site

visit schools cited challenges in EL assessments, particularly around understanding scores

and growth fluctuations. Coaches and teachers who provided open-ended survey responses emphasized the value of training and collaboration to adequately support students with multiple identifications. **They also stressed the significance of communication between teams, collaborating with other service providers, and developing cohesive plans to support students.**

Communication and Collaboration

Teachers and coaches shared that “communication between all the teams is valuable” and that it was beneficial to have “time to collaborate with other service providers.” They also said that it was important to “find ways to bring all providers together to come up with a cohesive plan to support students” and have “multiple professional staff members who spend targeted time with our students with identifications of any kind.”



What Do Parents of Students with Multiple Identifications Report About the Support Their Child Receives?

Both focus group parents and 20% of parent survey respondents discussed their children having multiple identifications and plans, such as being identified with an SRD and having an IEP. These parents provided insights into the unique challenges faced by families whose children have multiple—sometimes overlapping—support plans.

Focus group parents noted difficulty in distinguishing which services were provided under which plan. For example, one parent mentioned, “I don't think that there's anything that I've known of specific to his reading plan, but really a lot of the supports I think are for his IEP right now.” Similarly, survey respondents expressed uncertainty about how different plans worked together, with comments like, “It is not real clear to me how the READ Plan works or is implemented for my child. My child also has a 504 and I don't know if the READ Plan works in concert with the 504. The 504 has been the plan I'm most aware of impacting my child at school.” Both focus group and survey participants expressed concerns that having additional plans often seemed like extra work for teachers without added benefits for children.

In focus groups and open-ended responses, parents expressed a desire to move beyond only having a data-driven approach to reading, recognizing how the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted vital early learning periods. Comments reflected worries about frequent tests and their impact on student confidence and motivation, with some remarking that school literacy programs had made reading a source of anxiety rather than enjoyment. Some parents advocated for creativity in reading activities to foster intrinsic motivation, encouraging children to understand their personal reasons for enjoying reading. Parents consistently highlighted the importance of ensuring that reading remains a pleasurable pursuit



that is not overshadowed by performance pressures and benchmarks, stressing the need to support a child's holistic development in reading education.

Key Takeaways

Districts reported improved clarity with regard to CDE guidance on identifying, exiting, and supporting students.

- Perceptions of clarity of CDE guidance on exiting students from READ Plans improved, with 81% of district administrators in reporting clarity in 2024–2025, up from 70% in 2023–2024.
- Perceptions of clarity concerning students with multiple identifications increased by at least 10% from 2023–2024 in all areas.

Assessments were a key driver of instructional decisions related to reading instruction.

- Less than half of teachers and coaches indicated that READ Plans influenced lesson development, small group activities, and one-on-one work with students.
- Site visit schools emphasized that assessment data were the primary drivers of setting instructional focus, reading groups, and reading goals.
- Seventy-four percent of principals, 80% of coaches, and 50% of teachers reported that READ Act diagnostic and summative assessments were “very important” for informing reading instruction.
- Principals, coaches, and teachers expressed positive attitudes related to the usefulness of assessment tools, for identifying students with SRDs, targeting and adjusting instruction, and exiting students from SRD status.



Teachers reported confidence implementing READ Plans but need additional training and improved materials to feel confident supporting students with multiple identifications.

- Most (82%) teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they felt confident in the steps and strategies needed to support a student placed on a READ Plan.
- Less than half of coaches ($\leq 39\%$) and teachers ($\leq 27\%$) felt that they had received sufficient training to feel confident identifying and supporting students who had additional learning needs.
- Reports about resource adequacy for ELs were approximately 10% lower for each category than those for students with disabilities, highlighting the added complexities of aligning instructional and assessment materials for ELs.

Communication between teams and collaboration among staff are seen as key methods of supporting students.

- In open-ended responses, coaches and teachers shared that “communication between all the teams is valuable,” that it was beneficial to have “time to collaborate with other service providers,” and that it was important to “find ways to bring all providers together to come up with a cohesive plan to support students.”

Parents of children with multiple identifications identified challenges with READ Act supports.

- Only 22% of parents felt the guidance they receive about supporting reading is tailored to their child.
- Focus group parents noted difficulty in distinguishing which services were provided under which plan.
- Parents also raised concerns about frequent testing and pullout supports potentially affecting students’ motivation and engagement.



5

Early Literacy Grant

- The opportunity to work with external literacy consultants was a primary motivator for applying for the grant and cited as the primary drivers of positive impacts.
- All 10 site visit schools reported that ELG participation enhanced teaching quality and practice across classrooms.
- Schools reported significant improvements to student literacy proficiency due to their ELG participation.
- Loss of staffing from reductions in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding challenges schools' ability to sustain ELG impact.



The Comprehensive ELG program provides resources for Colorado schools and districts to implement interventions, programs, and supports specifically for K–3 students identified with SRDs. Schools apply individually or as part of a consortium of schools within a district or Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES). Comprehensive ELG recipients are grouped into cohorts by year of award receipt. Schools can receive a comprehensive ELG more than once and also remain eligible for ELG PD grants.

This chapter provides a summary of themes identified following site visits with 10 ELG schools, including the ELG application process, how ELG funds were deployed, successes and positive impacts reported by schools, and challenges with sustaining ELG funding. These sites were selected by evaluating which schools receiving ELGs had relatively higher rates of success at increasing the percentage of students moving off SRD status each year for the past 3 years (2021–2022 through 2023–2024). Analysts examined the set of schools receiving ELGs that also had an increasing percentage of students moving off SRD status each year, while restricting the sample based on other considerations, such as whether the site had been visited previously, CDE performance ratings, and school size. This method yielded six acceptable sites. In consultation with CDE, four more sites were identified for site visits based on criteria that allowed for a more holistic view of the ELG program as currently implemented. Three of the four additional sites were Cohort 6 and 7 Comprehensive ELG grantees that also received ELG PD grants and had acceptable CDE performance ratings. The final site was selected as a CDE-identified bright spot based on its ELG goal performance and SRD rate. Two sites were in Cohort 4 (2018–2019 through 2021–2022), four sites were in Cohort 5 (2020–2021 through 2023–2024), one was in Cohort 6 (2022–2023 through 2025–2026), and 3 were in Cohort 7 (2024–2025 through 2027–2028).¹⁴

¹⁴ One Cohort 5 site had also been also a member of Cohort 3 (2016–2017 through 2019–2020). Three sites in Cohorts 6 and 7 also received an ELG professional development grant.



What Motivated Districts and Schools to Apply for the Grant?

Opportunity for external literacy consultants was critical motivation for applying for ELG funds. Consistent with findings from previous evaluation years, most school leaders expressed during site visits that securing the services of an external consultant through the grant was also often described as *a driving factor in a school's decision to apply for a grant*. School leaders were particularly attracted to the idea that an external consultant could bring a fresh perspective into their school with specific expertise in literacy instruction and in coaching teachers and other staff.

The opportunity for a consistent literacy instructional approach was another key motivating factor. School and district leaders believed the ELG offered a strong opportunity for them to focus on establishing and enhancing consistent literacy instruction across classrooms and grades. School leaders indicated that, prior to their grants, teachers often used different reading materials and different approaches to incorporating phonics, whole language, assessment data, and small group work into their teaching. Student experiences could therefore vary significantly across classrooms and grades. School and district leaders viewed students experiencing consistent literacy instructional approaches each year to build upon and reinforce what they learn as particularly important to boosting academic performance. Having a grant like the ELG—which provides and *requires* cross-grade-level support for teachers—made the grant particularly attractive.

What Facilitated the ELG Application Process?

Knowledge and previous experience were extremely helpful for the application process. Similar to previous years, several schools found it advantageous to have identified the external literacy consultant they wanted to work with prior to submitting their ELG application. Some schools shared that



they involved their external consultant in the grant writing process and that this was highly beneficial and facilitated grant writing since the consultant was familiar with the process and could offer substantive advice on its completion.

Schools also consistently stated that it is best practice to include teachers or teacher leaders in the ELG design process, and that schools should obtain teacher input and support for the grant application.

Other leaders indicated it was advantageous to collaborate with consultants or leaders in other schools with ELG experience before applying for the grant. These leaders felt more confident and comfortable with the process and what to expect if they won the grant. Prior to applying for a grant, school leaders should be encouraged to seek out and speak with an experienced literacy consultant or another school leader with ELG experience to inform them about the application process and key deadlines to be aware of, and to help ensure their application experience is as efficient and effective as possible.

What Challenges Arose During the ELG Application Process?

Additional guidance from and consistent access to CDE staff was needed during application process. Key challenges cited across schools included the need for additional clarity/guidance from CDE on allowable budget expenses, yearly allocations, and reporting expectations, and more flexibility on grant deadlines and on allowing budgets to rollover from year to year. **School leaders indicated the need for more access to CDE staff to help answer questions regarding the application process, but understood turnover at the agency impacts the capacity to respond.**

The application platform, Smartsheet, was difficult for schools and districts to navigate. Echoing findings from 2023–2024, school and district leaders regularly reported difficulties with the application, including that it was not “user-friendly,” and did not allow users to save their progress online. Multiple school



leaders also mentioned the need to streamline the number of application questions to reduce redundancies.

How Were ELG Funds Deployed?

ELG funding was used to support early literacy instruction as expected and in accordance with CDE's Advisory Lists. Districts and schools continue to report that core curriculum purchases using ELG funds were guided by the state's Advisory List of Instructional Programming to ensure that new curriculum purchases were research-based and approved by the state. Consistent with previous years, schools and districts reported the following most common uses of funds:

- **External literacy consultant** monthly visits to support and coach K–3 teachers.
- **Additional school-level staff** to support K–3 literacy activities, including, **reading coaches** to collaborate with the external literacy consultant and bolster the consultant's work when they were not at the school and full or part-time **reading interventionists**, whom schools used to support breaking students into smaller reading groups based on their reading proficiency. These small groups allowed interventionists to deliver reading support that was more tailored to students' needs, which schools reported increased the overall effectiveness of literacy instruction.
- **New core reading curriculums** for K–3 classrooms as well as consumable materials and decodables.
- **Supplemental literacy materials and intervention programs**, which were used to ensure more targeted support could be provided to struggling readers. Schools reported the purchase of high-quality, supplemental materials were critical tools for teachers and interventionists to use to reinforce and strengthen supports to students.



ELG funding was supplemented with other state or federal funding in at least half of schools interviewed. In general, school leaders reported ELG funds were sufficient to meet the core features of their grants, including purchase of external literacy consultant time to visit their school and coach their teachers, and funding for reading coaches or reading interventionists. For the first time in the evaluation process, half the schools reported in 2024–2025 that they relied heavily in recent years on supplemental funding, including the federal government’s Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to support key ELG and literacy instruction improvement goals. They used such funds for needs including the purchase of supplemental literacy curriculums, literacy instructional materials, teacher PD, and school support staffing. **With the end of ESSER funding, some of these school leaders indicated that ELG funding alone was no longer sufficient to meet all their goals and that supplemental funding was needed to meet and sustain those goals.**

School leaders also frequently indicated the importance of federal Title I dollars in supplementing a variety of K–3 literacy needs in their schools. Examples included using Title I funds to support vertical integration and alignment of instruction, support the hiring of additional needed reading interventionist time, hire needed paraprofessionals to support small group student work on literacy skills, hire a “READ Act support specialist,” to support parent engagement initiatives at the school, and provide added support for students identified with SRDs.

Similarly, schools cited ELAT funds as a key funding stream that they integrated with their ELGs as a coordinated funded strategy to meet the needs of their schools. Cuts or reductions to these Title I funds or other funding streams could therefore have a negative impact on the effectiveness of ELGs.



What Successes and Positive Impacts Did ELG Schools Report?

School consistently identified bringing in an external literacy expert on a monthly basis as the single-most impactful element of ELG-funded activities. These external consultants, which are a required ELG component, were highly valued because they brought trusted and respected outside expertise into schools. Teachers and school leaders consistently viewed consultants as bringing fresh perspectives and a high degree of expertise and credibility. They were identified as the “driving force” behind needed changes to instructional practices and subsequent successes in raising student reading performance. School leaders and teachers reported that knowing the consultant would be coming back the next month to check on their progress was a positive incentive for teachers to make sure they stayed consistent. The presence of the consultant in the building, even for just a few days per month, was reported as powerful in keeping teachers and staff “accountable” for the instructional changes they were coached to make. **Typically, school leaders reported that positive impacts from working with their consultants began within the first year of receiving ELG funding and continued to grow after that.** This was viewed as extremely rapid progress since consultants typically visited schools just once per month for several days. Conducting site visits monthly over the course of the year was viewed as the necessary frequency to bring about and embed needed changes in teachers’ literacy instruction and practice. The consultant’s time was typically focused on working with teachers individually, in grade-level teams, and on collaborating with and coaching the schools’ reading coaches and interventionists.

Using ELG funds to pay for reading coaches and interventionists to work in schools complements the external literacy consultants. Site visit participants reported that these additional personnel served a crucial role in the weeks that the consultants were not present in their school and that they



reinforced the messages received from their external consultants on a day-to-day basis. These positions offered valuable “in-house” expertise that helped ensure schools did not become over-reliant on the support provided by their external consultant. Instead, these coaches and interventionists strengthened the consultants’ work when they were not in the building, which typically led to the coaches becoming longer-term sources of support in the schools.

Most schools and districts reported at least some positive impacts on student assessment scores. In multiple cases, school leaders indicated that changes in student performance happened rapidly after starting work on their ELG. One school reported that noticeable progress in student literacy achievement was observed at the beginning of the second semester in Year 1 of the grant, and that this progress further grew and strengthened in subsequent years. In some cases, ELG performance improvements continue to be expressed in terms of student performance on beginning-, middle-, and end-of-year interim assessments. Further work is needed to understand the linkages or disconnects between student performance on interim assessments and student performance growth on Colorado’s statewide assessments.

Impacts on student assessment scores that school leaders specifically attributed to their ELG participation include:

- Decreasing the percentage of students below grade level in literacy from 43% at the start of the school year to 18% by the end.
- A 7% increase in 3rd-grade CMAS proficiency from Year 3 to 4 of the grant.
- Improved school rating on the state performance framework from the lowest band (Turnaround Plan) in Year 1 to the higher band (Priority Plan) by the end of Year 2 of their ELG.
- Consistent and improved literacy score growth for students in 4th and 5th grades who participated in the grant in grades K–3, with these students showing growth in performance that was 12.5 percentage points higher than their initial target.



All schools reported significant positive impacts on teachers' instructional practice. These impacts were in the areas of literacy instruction, classroom management practices, and efficiency and effectiveness in using student interim assessment data to inform instruction. School leaders uniformly reported that teachers' confidence and use of effective instructional practices not only improved significantly, but they began using more consistent terminology and strategies within and across grades, resulting in a more consistent and effective instructional experience for students over time. These improvements and benefits were supported directly by teachers working with the external literacy consultant—whose recurring presence each month in the school helped hold teachers accountable. The work of the consultants was successfully reinforced by school-level literacy coaches who were a consistent presence in the building.

Impacts on instructional efforts and teacher practices that school leaders specifically attributed to their ELG participation include:

- Teacher confidence in literacy instruction increased, with improvements made to their phonics and small group instruction.
- Teachers improved their ability to assess and address student literacy needs and their ability to integrate instruction with assessment data.
- Improved use of professional learning communities to focus more on literacy; teachers also gained confidence in their ability to address reading deficiencies.
- Improved ability to identify student literacy needs using tools such as mCLASS and mCLASS Lectura for benchmarks and progress monitoring.
- Cross-grade and classroom teacher collaboration improved, as did collaboration between teachers and reading interventionists and between elementary and middle school teachers.



- Teachers and staff began applying new, ELG-informed, improved classroom management strategies, instructional methods, and expectations of rigor to other subject areas beyond literacy (including science, writing, and math) and students displayed stronger reading comprehension and vocabulary skills in those subjects.
- Teachers and staff developed an enhanced ability to identify literacy needs and adapt instruction for students with IEPs.
- Consistency of instruction overall improved across several schools, with leaders expressing the benefits to students of “hearing the same language from teachers” across classrooms and grade levels.
- Enhanced small group instruction and improved reading intervention processes saving teachers time, allowing them to better address the specific needs of students.
- Creation of more focused READ Plans based on specific, attainable, data-driven student achievement goals.
- Increased focus on tracking student progress using mCLASS data.

What Challenges Were Associated with ELGs?

Sustainability was the single greatest challenge associated with the ELG experience. This was viewed as particularly critical in light of ongoing and persistent teacher, school leader, and staff turnover resulting in continuous loss of institutional knowledge and training gained through ELG activities. Loss of funding to support in-school reading coaches and interventionists after ELG funding ends was also cited as a critical threat to maintaining desired results, especially since these staff often became strong sources of “in-house” literacy instruction expertise past the life of the grant. This loss of funding for staffing has become more acute as ESSER funding has ended, since many districts and



schools drew upon these funds to help offset the added costs of employing staff support.

Key Takeaways

The opportunity to work with external literacy consultants was a primary motivator for schools applying for the grant and were cited as the primary drivers of positive impacts on teachers and students.

- Schools benefited when they could draw on an experienced consultant's advice during the grant application process or on advice from other school leaders who had been through the application process and worked with consultants.

All 10 site visit schools reported that ELG participation enhanced teaching quality and practice across classrooms. Specifically, ELG schools reported improved:

- teacher ability to use data to address student literacy needs and to integrate instruction with assessment data, including for students with IEPs;
- teacher classroom management and collaboration; and
- alignment and consistency of literacy instruction across classrooms and grades.

Schools reported significant improvements to student literacy proficiency due to their ELG participation.

- For example, one ELG school decreasing the percentage of students below grade level in literacy from 43% at start of the school year to 18% by the end and another reported a 7% increase in 3rd-grade CMAS proficiency from Year 3 to 4 of the grant.
- Schools also reported improved student performance in other subjects such as math, science, and writing.



- Loss of staffing from reductions in ESSER funding challenges schools' ability to sustain ELG impacts.

ELG funds were sufficient to meet core grant goals for schools; however, with ESSER funding ending, half of school leaders interviewed said supplemental funding is needed to fully meet and sustain grant goals.



6

Funding

- Making decisions around READ Act per-pupil spending is a collaborative process; however, school principals, district superintendents, and district literacy leaders have the most influence over these decisions.
- READ Act per-pupil funds are most frequently spent on purchasing instructional programs and on the salaries of reading coaches.
- Limitations of READ Act per-pupil funds have resulted in LEPs using additional funding streams to implement READ Act requirements.



Background on READ Act Per-Pupil Funding

READ Act per-pupil intervention funds are allocated to LEPs annually based on the number of eligible students in the LEP (i.e., K–3 students who were identified with an SRD and as receiving instructional services pursuant to READ Plans in the previous year in public schools operated by the LEP). Currently, the statute permits LEPs use the per-pupil funding only for one or more of the following seven allowable categories:

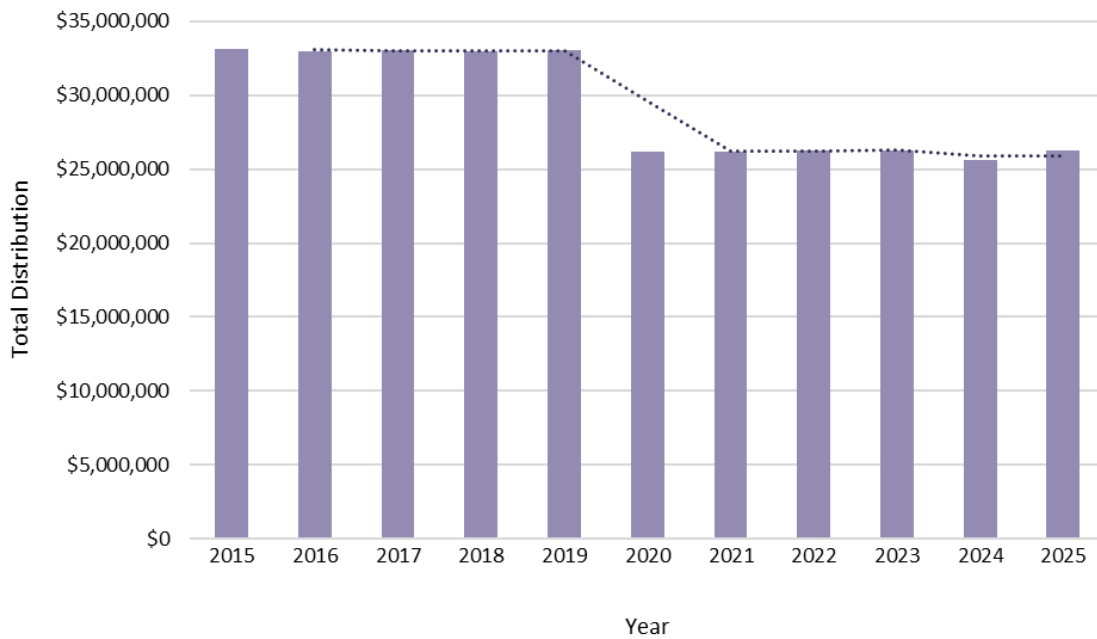
- operating a summer school literacy program
- purchasing core reading instructional programs included on the CDE READ Act Advisory List
- purchasing and/or providing approved, targeted, scientifically or evidence-based intervention services to students; may include services provided by a reading interventionist
- providing technology, including software, that is on the CDE READ Act Advisory List; may include PD for use of technology
- purchasing the services of a reading specialist or reading interventionist from a BOCES
- purchasing tutoring services focused on increasing students' foundational reading skills
- providing PD programming to support K–3 educators in teaching reading

How Did Per-Pupil Funding Change Over Time?

The total amount of READ Act per-pupil intervention funds provided to LEPs has remained steady since 2020, ranging from about \$25,600,000 to \$26,300,000 (Exhibit 6.1).



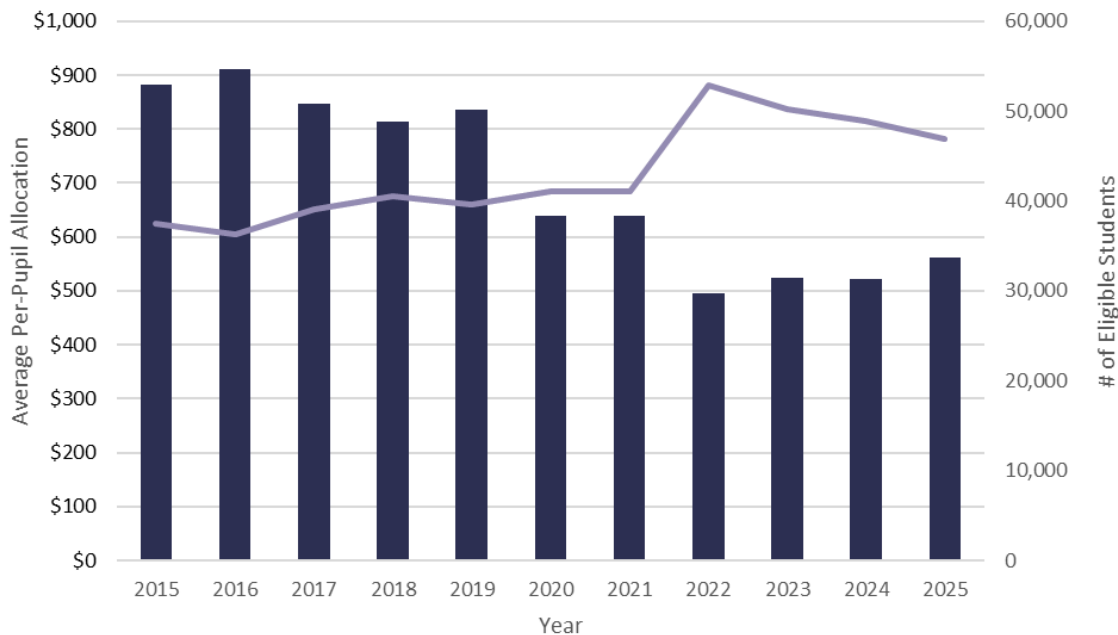
Exhibit 6.1. Change in READ Act Total Funding Over Time



Additionally, the average per-pupil allocation has remained steady since 2023, even though the number of eligible students decreased from 50,190 in the 2022–2023 school year to 46,835 in the 2024–2025 school year (Exhibit 6.2).



Exhibit 6.2. Change in READ Act Per-Pupil Funding Over Time



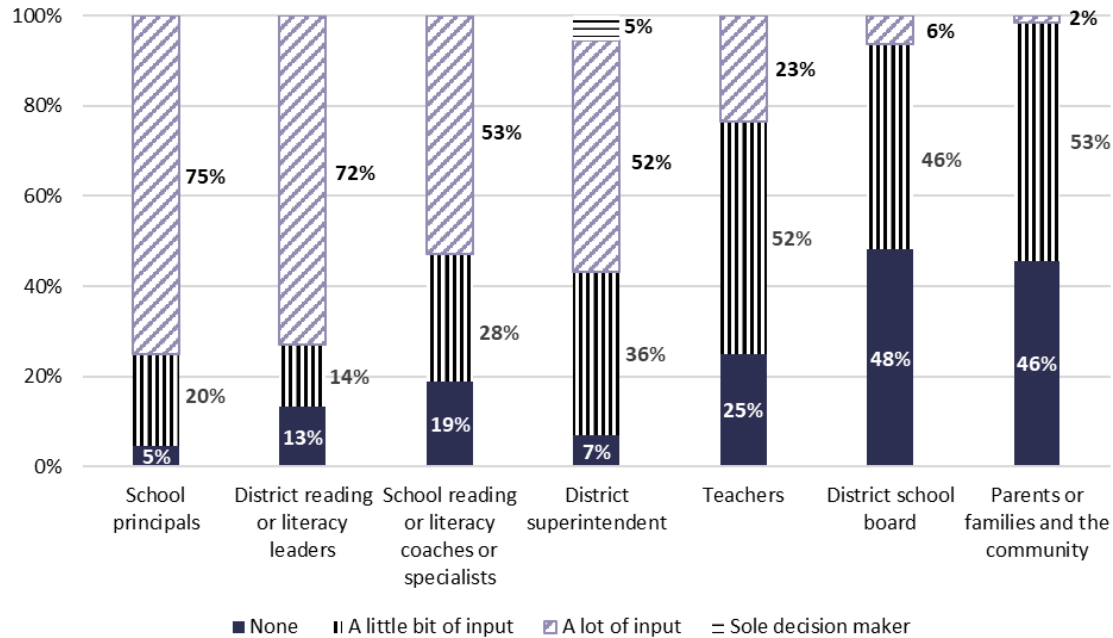
Note. READ Act per-pupil funding in 2020–2021 was based on the number of eligible students from 2018–2019 as testing did not occur in 2019–2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Who Has Influence Over the Use of READ Act Per-Pupil Funding?

According to LEP survey respondents, **deciding how READ Act per-pupil funding is spent is a collaborative process.** The percentage of district administrators who reported a sole decision maker with regard to fund allocation decreased from 8% in 2023–2024 to 5% in 2024–2025. Similar to the 2023–2024 survey, some district and school entities were reported by LEP respondents as having more input than others when making decisions about READ Act per-pupil spending in 2024–2025. Once again, district administrators reported that school principals, district superintendents, and district reading or literacy leaders generally had the most input when making decisions about per-pupil spending. School reading or literacy coaches or specialists and teachers were also generally reported as having at least some input and district school boards, and parents or families and the community were reported as having the least input (Exhibit 6.3).



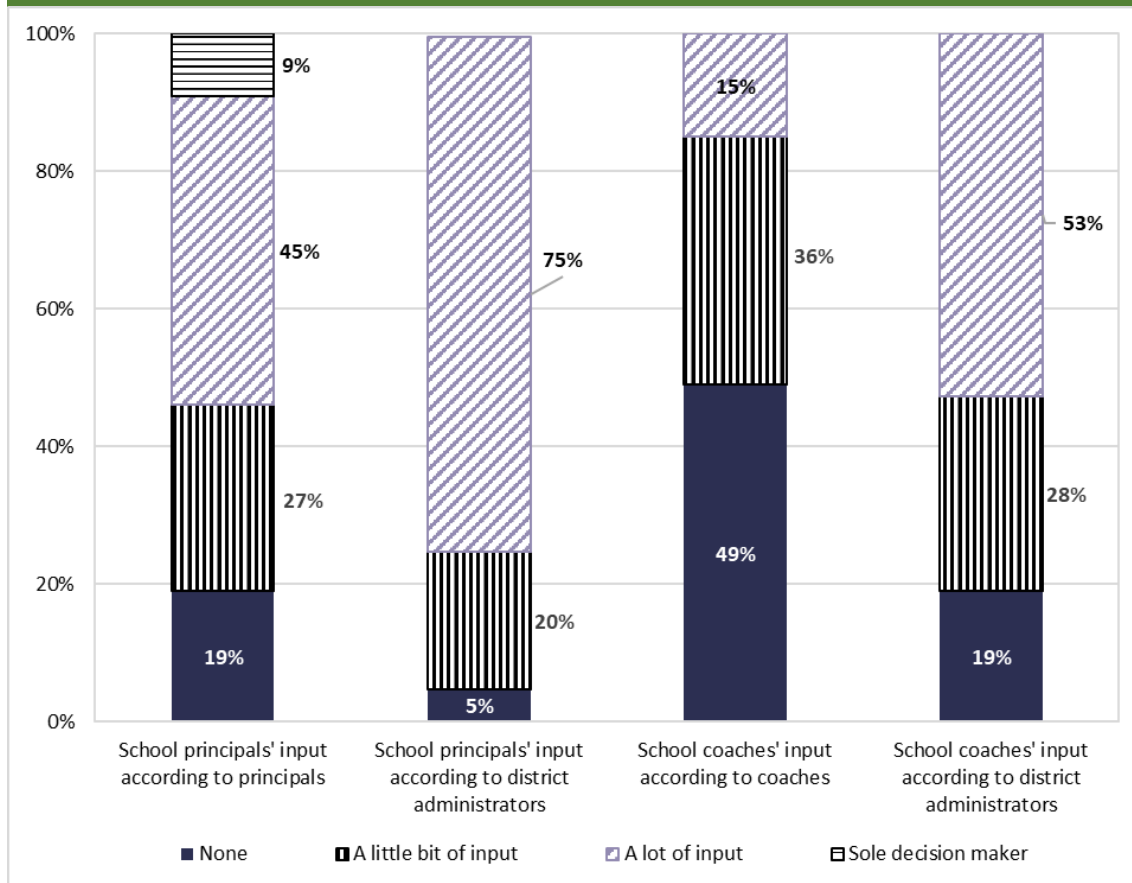
Exhibit 6.3. District Administrators Reported Decision-Making About the Use of READ Act Per-Pupil Funds Is Collaborative



School principals and reading or literacy coaches or specialists were also asked for their perspectives on the extent to which they had input over how READ Act per-pupil funds were spent at their school. Consistent with previous years, district administrators were more likely than school-based staff to report that school-based staff had input around financial decisions. The exception was principals, 9% of whom indicated that they were the sole decision maker, in contrast with district administrators, none of whom reported principals as the sole decision maker (Exhibit 6.4).



Exhibit 6.4. School-Based Staff and District Administrator's Input in Decisions About READ Act Per-Pupil Funding



How Is READ Act Per-Pupil Funding Used?

Similar to 2023–2024, principal survey respondents reported that **READ Act funds were most frequently used to purchase K–3 core, supplemental, or intervention instructional programs on the Advisory List of Instructional Programming and for the salary of reading coaches to meet READ Act implementation requirements** (Exhibit 6.5). Principals also reported using funds to purchase K–3 interim or diagnostic and summative assessments on the Approved list, provide one-on-one or small group tutoring to students identified with SRDs; and purchase approved K–3 PD programs. Few principals reported using READ Act funds to purchase external consultant services to provide



teacher PD, support staff needs for paraprofessionals and reading coaches; or to purchase instructional programs, assessments, or PD programs that were not approved by CDE. There were small differences between the use of READ Act per-pupil funding in 2024–2025 and 2023–2024. Principals reported increased purchasing of approved instructional programs, assessments, and PD programs. Additionally, 46% of principals reported using READ Act funds to pay part or all of the salary of reading coaches compared to 39% in 2023–2024.

Exhibit 6.5. Use of READ Act Per-Pupil Funds According to School Principals		
READ Act Funding Use	Percentage of Principal Responses (Frequency)	
	2023–2024	2024–2025
Purchase of K–3 core, supplemental, or intervention instructional programs on the Advisory List	54	62
Purchase of K–3 core, supplemental, or intervention instructional programs not on the Advisory List	4	4
Purchase of K–3 interim or diagnostic and summative assessments on the Approved list	24	30
Purchase of K–3 interim or diagnostic and summative assessments not on the Approved list	0.7	1
Purchase of K–3 PD programs on the READ Act Advisory List for professional development	18	19
Purchase of K–3 PD programs not on the READ Act Advisory List Advisory List for PD	1	1
Paying part or all of the salary for (a) reading coach(es)	39	46
Purchasing external consultant services to provide teacher PD	8	4
Providing one-on-one or small group tutoring to students with significant reading deficiencies	24	20

Note. Percentages do not add up to 100 as principals were allowed to select multiple uses.

These same trends were evident among site visit schools. Most frequently, school-based staff reported using this funding to purchase and/or provide targeted, evidence- or scientifically based intervention services (all seven LEP sites), and/or purchase core reading instructional programs on the Advisory List (three sites); and/or purchase approved PD programs (three sites). Typically, the intervention services “purchased” referred to using the funds to pay for part or all of the salary of a reading interventionist. Funds were less frequently used for providing technology (one site) or purchase tutoring services (one site).¹⁵

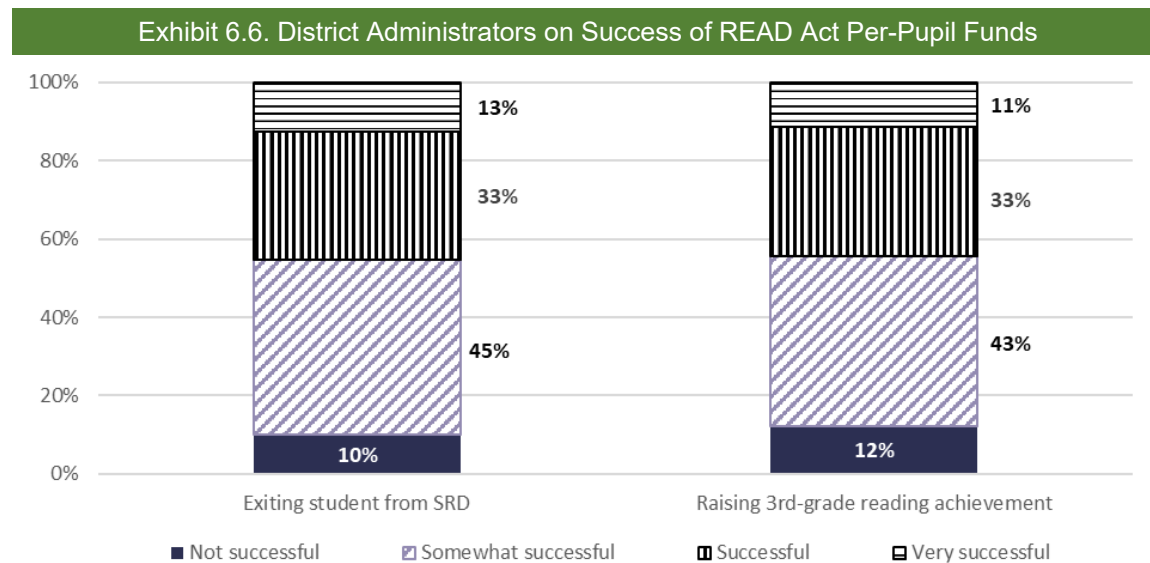
¹⁵ The evaluation intended to use READ Act Budget Submission data to more accurately report uses of READ Act funds, however, there were concerns regarding the reliability of the current data.



To What Extent Did Per-Pupil Funds Contribute to Reading Success?

In discussing the contribution of READ Act per-pupil funds to their schools' success around reading, five of the seven site visit schools emphasized the value of hiring additional staff, such as reading specialists/interventionists. Two site visit schools also mentioned the usefulness of funding for PD resources (e.g., Orton Gillingham training). Participants noted that READ Act funds helped address curriculums and student needs across the district, providing teachers with common goals and pedagogical practices to use in the classroom.

In the LEP inventory, over 40% of district administrators reported that per-pupil funding was successful or very successful in exiting students identified with SRDs off that status and in raising 3rd-grade reading achievement levels (Exhibit 6.6). This was an increase from the 2023–2024 survey, in which fewer district administrators reported that the per-pupil funds were successful or very successful in raising students' 3rd-grade reading achievement levels.





What Challenges Are Associated with READ Act Per-Pupil Funding?

This year, most site visit participants did not experience challenges with per-pupil funding. Among the three that cited challenges, participants mentioned the lack of sustainability in funding (due to loss of funds when students exit READ Plans) and limited funding for additional reading specialists/interventionists and staff time. These obstacles made it difficult to ensure students maintained appropriate supports. As in past years, four schools expressed that additional funds to hire more interventionists to work with students with READ Plans would be very helpful in addressing the needs of students beyond 3rd grade, especially those retaining READ Plans.

What Other Funding Streams or Investments Were Used to Support READ Act Implementation?

Site visit and survey participants reported using additional funding streams to implement READ Act requirements. These typically included ELAT funds (six sites), Title I, II, and/or III funds (four sites), general district funds (three sites), and Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) funds (three sites). Other sources included general school funds and other grant funds (e.g., Nathan Yip Foundation grants). This use of multiple funding sources was further supported by the LEP inventory, with 36% of district administrators reporting that their LEP used funding related to the sources above. Site visit participants and district administrators reported that these additional funding streams or investments were typically used to purchase core instructional materials, assessments, and intervention programs and materials; hire additional literacy-related staff (e.g., reading coaches, specialists, or interventionists; instructional support staff) and fund additional PD opportunities.



Key Takeaways

Making decisions about to spend READ Act per-pupil funding is a collaborative process.

- School principals, district superintendents, and district reading or literacy leaders generally had the most input on per-pupil spending, with 95%, 93%, and 86% input, respectively.

READ Act per-pupil funds were most frequently used to purchase K–3 core, supplemental, or intervention instructional materials, and for the salary of reading coaches.

- Site visit participants and district administrators noted that READ Act funds were successful in addressing curriculums and student needs.
- Four of seven site visit participants had no challenges with per-pupil funding.
- Schools used additional funding streams to implement READ Act requirements.
- ELAT funds; Title I, II, and/or III funds; and general district funds were among the most-used funds.

Site visit and survey participants reported using additional funding streams to implement READ Act requirements.

- Additional funding streams typically included ELAT funds (six sites); Title I, II, and/or III funds (four sites), general district funds (three sites); and CLSD funds (three sites).



7

Student Outcomes – SRD and READ Plan Status

- Although SRD identification rates remain elevated from pre-pandemic levels, they continued to decline in 2023–2024.
- Overall, SRD identification and exit rates have been relatively stable since the 2021–2022 school year. Most students maintain the same SRD identification they had the previous year.
- Students were more likely to exit SRD status by the end of 3rd grade if they had been identified with an SRD at an earlier grade level.
- Differences between assessments may result in some interim assessments identifying more students as needing READ Act services than others.
- Not being identified as “at risk” does not necessarily imply proficiency on CMAS.



One of the primary factors in determining whether a student receives a READ Plan and READ Act–related services is the identification of an SRD. Although the key goal of the READ Act is to provide students identified with SRDs with sufficient support so that they read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade, a shorter-term goal is assisting those students so that they are no longer identified with SRDs (although they may still need reading support). Accordingly, this chapter explores trends in SRD identification rates, the movement between SRD statuses from one year to the next, the student and school/district characteristics that may influence rates of SRD identification, and whether SRD identification rates differ by core program usage.

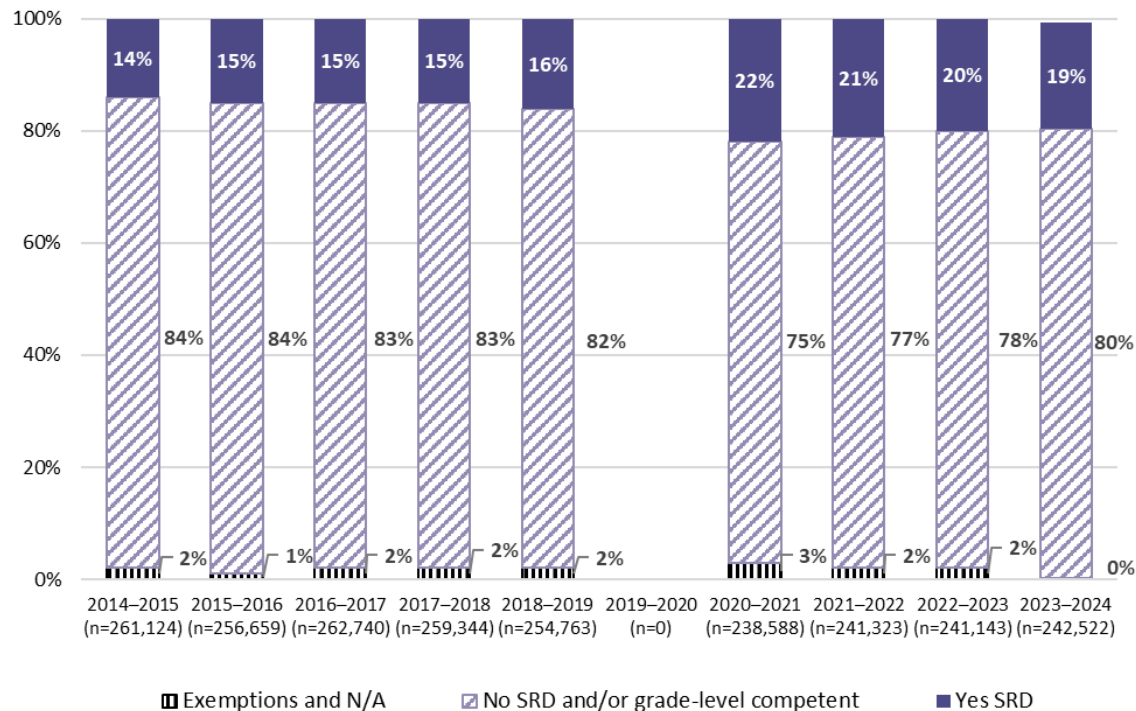
SRD Identification Rates

Although SRD identification rates remain elevated from pre-pandemic levels (around 15% per year), they have declined consistently since the all-time high of 22.2% recorded immediately post-pandemic in 2020–2021. In 2023–2024, the rate was 19.3% (see Exhibit 7.1 for more detail).



Student Outcomes – SRD and READ Plan Status

Exhibit 7.1. Students Identified with SRDs Before and After COVID-19 Pandemic



Movement Between SRD Identifications

As SRD identification rates have not changed substantially since 2021–21 years, looking at movement between SRD identification gives a more nuanced picture of student pathways. Students' SRD statuses can be broadly categorized into three categories: being identified with an SRD, not being identified with an SRD, or being exempt from SRD classification. Students move between these statuses year to year based on their classifications, which are primarily guided by their interim assessment scores during the spring semester.

Current SRD identification rate trends are different from historic trends but have settled since the 2020–2021 academic year, during the most acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic (see previous year's reports for more details about historic trends). **Overall, SRD identification and exit rates have been stable since the 2021–2022 school year (Exhibit 7.2).** From 2022–2023 to

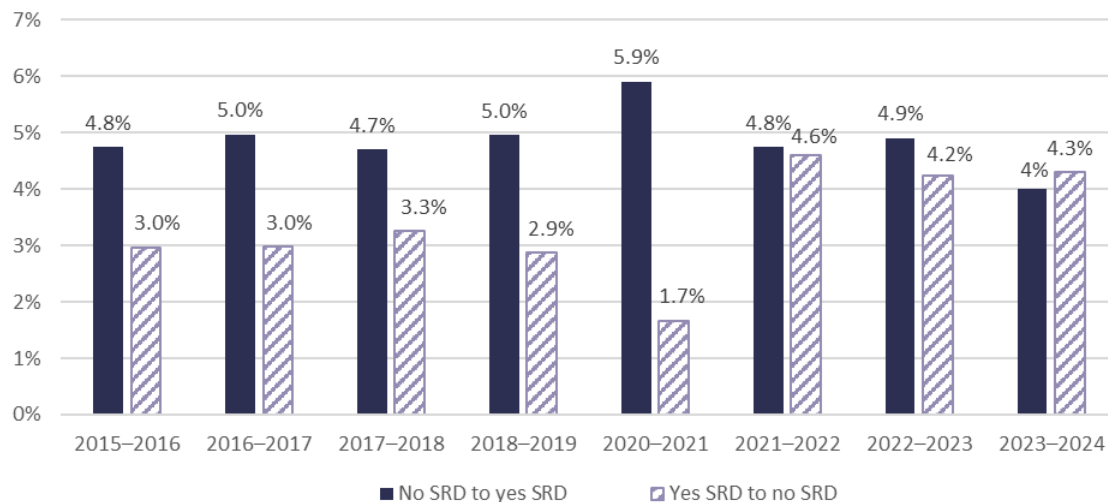


Student Outcomes – SRD and READ Plan Status

2023–2024, a marginally lower percentage of students went from not being identified with an SRD to being identified with an SRD (4.9% to 4%). The rate of students exiting SRD identification also remained stable at 4.3% compared to 4.2% in the previous school year. **Notably, 2023–2024 is the first year of this data collection in which a higher percentage of students moved from being identified with an SRD to not being identified with an SRD than moved from not being identified with an SRD to being identified with one.**

Although the SRD identification of some students might change from one year to the next, **most students continue to have the same SRD identification from the previous year.** The rates of students maintaining the same SRD status have remained stable since 2021–2022 and remain slightly below pre-pandemic percentages, with marginally more students continuing to not be identified with an SRD in 2023–2024 (51.3% compared to 47.9% in 2022–2023) and marginally fewer continuing to be identified with an SRD (7.4% compared to 10.3% % in 2022–2023).

Exhibit 7.2. SRD Identification and Exit Rates Have Remained Stable Since 2020–2021





Trends in SRD Movement by Demographic Characteristics

Despite the overall stability referenced above, some student groups experience more movement between SRD identifications than others. **ELs and students with disabilities are more likely than their peers to change SRD statuses between years.** This finding remains consistent across years (Exhibit 7.3). Our consistent findings (see Chapter 4) that administrators and teachers feel less confident supporting students with multiple identifications and are unclear about which plan should take precedence (e.g., READ Plan, IEP) when a student has multiple identifications suggest that teachers and administrators would benefit from additional training to support students who have a diversity of needs.

Exhibit 7.3. ELs and Students with IEPs Experienced Higher Rates of Movement between SRD Designations than Peers								
SRD Movement	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023	2023–2024
All Students, %								
No SRD to yes SRD	4.8	5.0	4.7	5.0	5.9	4.8	4.9	4.0
Yes SRD to no SRD	3.0	3.0	3.3	2.9	1.7	4.6	4.2	4.3
ELs, %								
No SRD to yes SRD	7.8	7.6	7.4	7.5	7.3	6.3	6.4	5.4
Yes SRD to no SRD	5.2	5.3	5.6	4.7	2.7	7.1	6.5	6.7
Students with IEPs, %								
No SRD to yes SRD	7.0	7.6	8.8	8.9	10.7	7.2	7.5	6.9
Yes SRD to no SRD	5.3	5.6	6.0	5.5	3.0	6.2	6.2	6.8

SRD identification and movement patterns also vary by student race. Although rates of being identified with an SRD are slightly down from previous years in general, it remains true that higher percentages of Black and Hispanic students are reclassified as being identified or not identified with SRDs each year than their White peers. Although being identified with an SRD may increase the supports a student receives, a higher percentage of students belonging to a



particular racial group moving between designations (disproportionate to their percentage of enrollment) may indicate that SRD identification and READ Act supports such as READ Plans are still not equally targeted, effective, or consistent across students of different races.

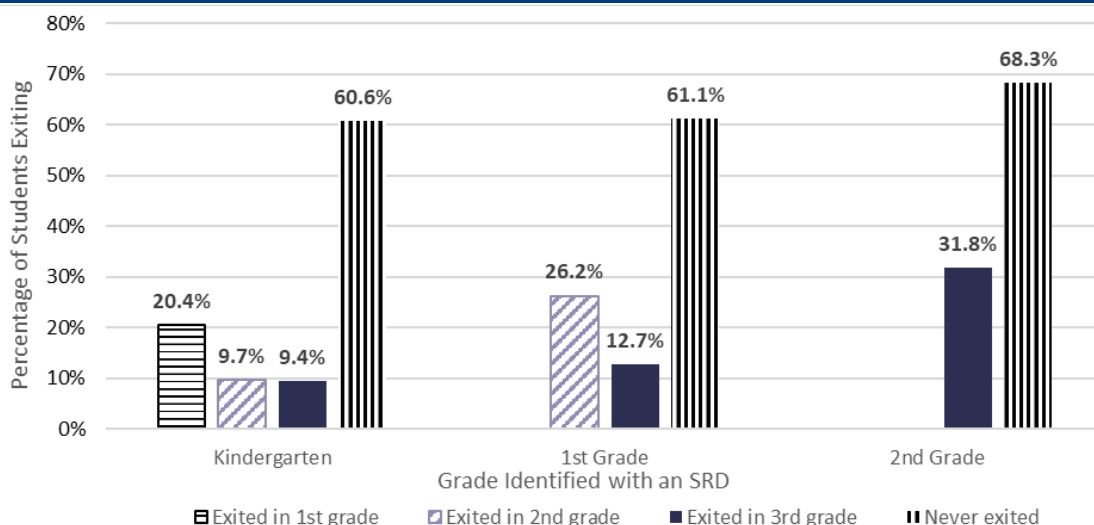
What Is the Relationship Between Grade Level of SRD Identification (and Subsequent Placement on a READ Plan) and Time to Exit the READ Plan and/or SRD Status?

The length of time that students are identified with an SRD varies by the grade level in which they are first identified (see Exhibit 7.4). About 20% of students identified with an SRD in kindergarten exited SRD status in 1st grade (i.e., after one year), 10% exited in 2nd grade, 9% exited in 3rd grade, and 61% continued to be identified with an SRD by the end of 3rd grade (i.e., they never exited SRD status). **Students identified with an SRD at an earlier grade level were more likely to exit from SRD status by the end of 3rd grade, signaling the importance of early identification and intervention.** Previous research also demonstrates how interventions can be more effective at earlier grade levels (Wanzek & Vaughn, 2007).



Student Outcomes – SRD and READ Plan Status

Exhibit 7.4. Students Identified at an Earlier Grade Level Were More Likely to Exit SRD Status by the End of 3rd Grade



Similar results can be seen when looking at the year a student was first issued a READ Plan and the year they were taken off the READ Plan. It is important to note, however, that students were less likely to be taken off a READ Plan than exited from SRD status. This finding was not surprising, however, given that the legislation requires that a READ Plan remain in place until the student demonstrates grade-level reading proficiency (C.R.S. § 22-7-1206).

Student Performance and SRD Identification Rates by Interim Assessments

Whether a student is identified with an SRD is typically determined by their interim assessment performance; historically, student SRD statuses reported by the state match the status determined by the interim assessments more than 97% of the time.¹⁶ This means that a student's SRD status is highly dependent on the assessment they take and its administration, content, and scoring method. This assessment usage is also reflected in the district administrator survey,

¹⁶ Differences are generally due to ACCESS scores being taken into account for ELs. ACCESS is the [“collective name for WIDA’s suite of summative English language proficiency assessments.”](#)



Student Outcomes – SRD and READ Plan Status

where almost 70% of administrators reported that their district requires schools to use interim assessment performance to determine whether a student should be exited from their SRD status. An additional 27% of administrators reported that their district recommends using the interim assessments (rather than requiring it).

SRD identification rates differ substantially by interim assessment (see Exhibit 7.5). Acadience Reading (formerly referred to as DIBELS Next) has the lowest rate, with only 13% of students taking the assessment being identified with an SRD. ISIP Lectura Temprana has the highest rate, with 30% of students being identified with an SRD.

Exhibit 7.5. SRD Rates in 2023–2024 Differ Substantially by Assessment	
Interim Assessment	Percentage (%) of Students Identified with an SRD
Acadience Reading	13
i-Ready	20
ISIP Reading	24
ISIP Lectura Temprana	30
mCLASS with DIBELS, 8th Edition	18
mCLASS Lectura	26
Star Early Learning	24

Note. Acadience Reading was formerly referred to as DIBELS Next.

Some of these differences are due to the population of students taking each of the interim assessments. For example, 18% of the students who took Acadience Reading in the 2023–2024 school year were chronically absent (missing 10% or more of a school year, about 18 days) compared to 31% of the students who took ISIP Reading (Exhibit 7.6). This suggests substantial differences between the schools electing to use each of the assessments. Additionally, assessment characteristics such as length of administration and cost may play a role in determining which assessments schools select.



Student Outcomes – SRD and READ Plan Status

Exhibit 7.6. Student Characteristics Differ Substantially by Assessment					
Interim Assessment	Percent, %				
	Students of Color	EL	Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	IEP	Chronically Absent
Acadience Reading	26	4	32	11	18
i-Ready	43	20	40	16	19
ISIP Reading	63	15	64	16	31
ISIP Lectura Temprana	96	93	77	12	38
mCLASS: DIBELS 8th Edition	46	14	49	16	22
mCLASS Lectura	97	92	77	14	37
Star Early Learning	44	21	39	16	20

Note. Acadience Reading was formerly referred to as DIBELS Next.

Additional variation is likely due to differences between assessments. For example, although the students taking the i-Ready and Star Early Learning assessments are almost identical in terms of their demographics (see Exhibit 7.6), Star Early Learning had an SRD identification rate that was 4 percentage points higher than i-Ready. This difference, along with the findings reported in the next section, suggests that the same student may be more likely to be identified with an SRD on the Star Early Learning assessment than i-Ready due to the structure of the assessment or cut score setting method used.

This can have significant consequences for students, as certain assessments may make some students more likely to be identified with an SRD and receive READ Act services because of the structure of the assessment, rather than their performance. Given this, CDE and educators should consider using other measures in addition to interim assessment performance when determining a student's SRD status. This will ensure a more equitable approach to SRD identification and distribution of READ Act services.

Comparison Between Interim Assessments and the 3rd-Grade CMAS ELA Exam

To further examine the comparability of the interim assessments, we used equipercentile linking, an approach to statistically link scores from different



Student Outcomes – SRD and READ Plan Status

assessments so they can be compared directly (Kolen & Brennan, 2004). This method will allow us to compare how different the interim assessments are in terms of identifying students at risk of reading difficulty, since the assessments will be placed on the same scale (in this case, the CMAS scale). The method is content-neutral—that is, it uses a paired group design (i.e., it only includes students who took both a 3rd-grade interim assessment and the 3rd-grade CMAS assessment) and the assessments do not have to test identical constructs. The links are made by assuming that scores on different assessments can be considered equivalent when the scores on each test have the same percentile rank: if 11% of students are identified with an SRD on one interim assessment, the linked CMAS score is at the 11th percentile on the CMAS assessment. Assessment publishers have also used this method to link their cut scores to state assessments. For example, NWEA (2020) conducted a linking study between its MAP Growth assessment and CMAS to derive cut scores that align to the CMAS performance levels.¹⁷

It is important to note that the accuracy of the linkages is partially related to how representative the student populations taking each assessment are of the state (in terms of their demographic characteristics and CMAS performance). As shown in Appendix Exhibits C-1 and C-2, mCLASS and i-Ready have demographic and CMAS distributions that are similar to the state; these are the two most frequently delivered assessments. The populations taking Acadience Reading (formerly DIBELS Next), ISIP Reading, and Star Early Learning are less similar to the state; however, for the purposes of these analyses, the equipercentile linking procedure is still appropriate.

As shown in Exhibit 7.7, the SRD cut scores (shown in red) cluster around the bottom of the Partially Met Expectations and top of the Did Not Yet Meet Expectations performance levels, signifying that the different assessments identify similar groups of students. However, there is variation between

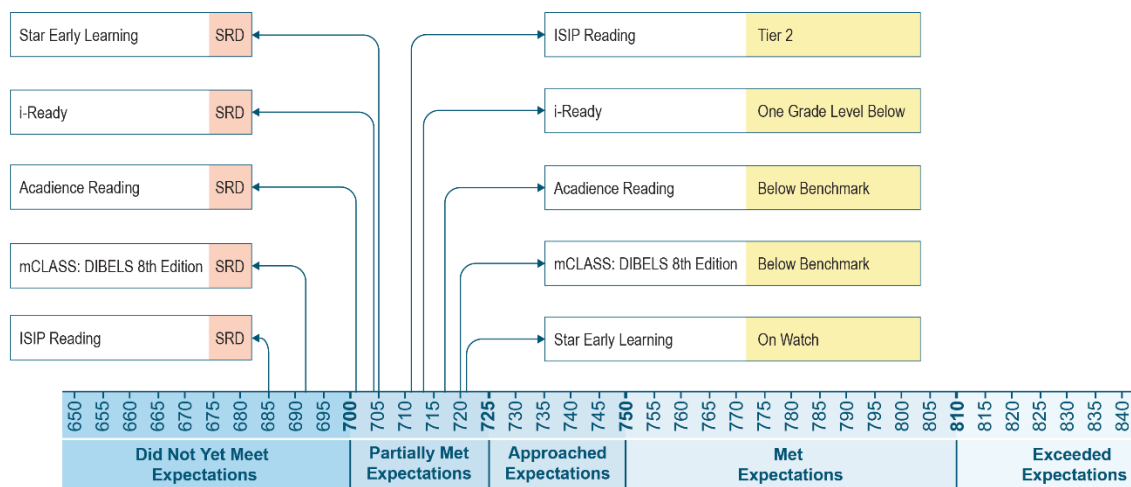
¹⁷ See the [linking study](#)  between the NWEA MAP Growth assessment and CMAS.



Student Outcomes – SRD and READ Plan Status

assessments and some assessments will likely identify more students with an SRD because of the vendor-selected cut score. **In other words, who gets READ Act services is likely partially due to the assessment that is taken rather than the student's performance.**

Exhibit 7.7. Interim Assessment Cut Scores Cluster Around Similar Levels on the CMAS Composite Scale, But There is Variation



Note. Acadience Reading was formerly referred to as DIBELS Next.

We also linked the general at-risk cut scores (in yellow), which are the cut scores that identify students at any level of risk, not just significant risk, to the CMAS scale. Each of the general at-risk cut scores link to the Partially Met Expectations CMAS performance level (i.e., a whole performance level before the proficiency cut on the CMAS exam). This is not surprising, however, given that for most of the interim assessments, the general at-risk cut score aligns with the 40th percentile on an external measure or according to the national norms on the assessment. The 40th percentile on CMAS corresponds to approximately a 725 scale score, which is the cut between Partially Met Expectations and Approached Expectations.

Again, the results show that the assessments identify similar groups of students, but that there is variation across assessments. Additionally, as these at-risk cuts fall below the Met Expectations performance level it is clear that a



Student Outcomes – SRD and READ Plan Status

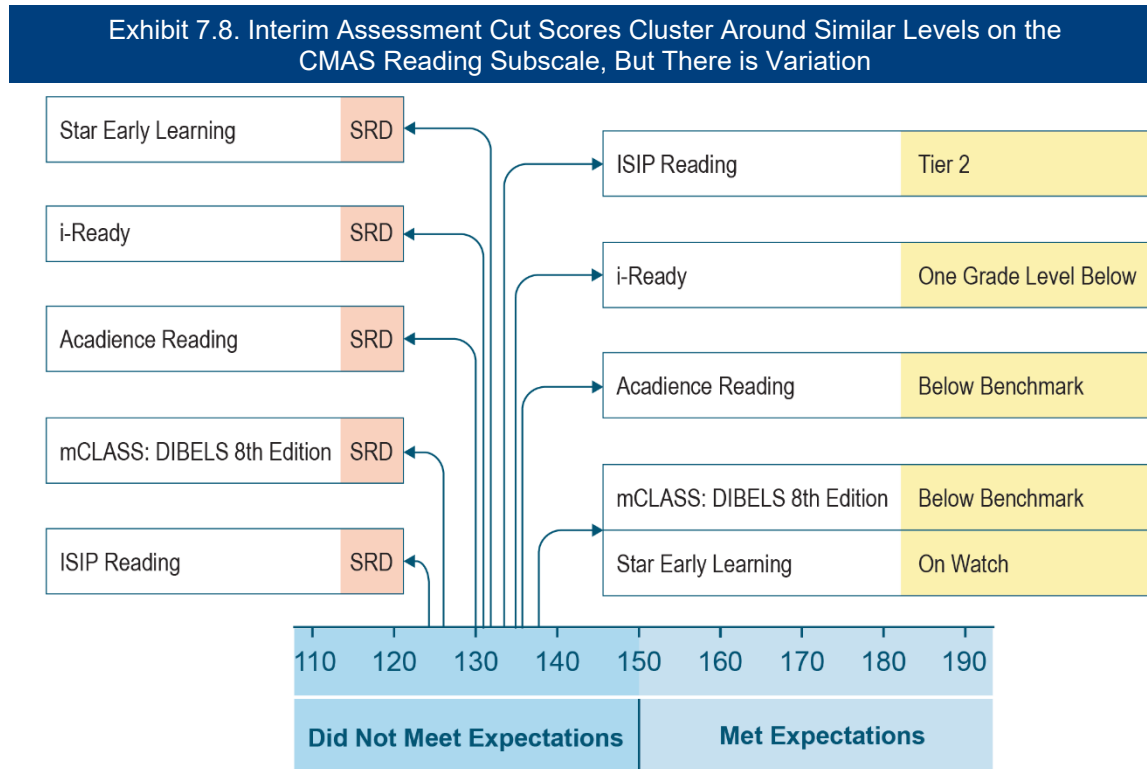
subset of students will likely be identified as being on grade level or at benchmark on the interim assessments but will fail to meet the proficiency standard on the CMAS exam. **Thus, educators should keep in mind that not being identified as “at risk of reading difficulty” does not necessarily imply proficiency on the CMAS assessment or sufficient growth to reading proficiently by the end of the 3rd grade.** Educators also emphasized this disconnect. Of the educators surveyed, 43% of principals, 40% of literacy coaches, and 47% of teachers reported that the interim assessments are not at all useful or only somewhat useful in predicting 3rd-grade CMAS performance.

We observed similar findings when linking the interim assessment cut scores to the CMAS reading subscale (Exhibit 7.8).¹⁸ Across the assessments, the cut scores cluster around similar levels of the scale, but with variation between assessments. Additionally, the general at-risk cut scores also fell below the proficiency standard on the CMAS reading subscale.

¹⁸ Note: The alignment between the interim assessments and CMAS may differ depending on the time period students are assessed (i.e., fall versus winter versus spring) and a student's grade level.



Student Outcomes – SRD and READ Plan Status



Note. Acadience Reading was formerly referred to as DIBELS Next.

These findings do not represent an issue with the interim assessments or show that certain assessments are better than others; they simply display the substantial differences between literacy screeners and summative state assessments. Not only were the assessments created differently and cut scores set differently, the purpose of the assessments also differ. Many screeners are created to identify students with reading difficulties, rather than students who are expected to meet reading competency levels. Additionally, screeners typically test foundational skills rather than the higher-level content assessed in statewide summative assessments. **Therefore, without other statewide assessment data in K–2 that would help predict CMAS performance, educators must consider how interim assessment data can be supplemented to determine which students may need additional resources to meet reading proficiency levels by the end of 3rd grade.**



These differences showcase the importance of assessment literacy at the state, district, school, and classroom levels. As states, districts, and schools consider which assessments meet their established criteria, they must also consider whether the suggested uses of these assessments, and consequences of the performance on these assessments, are appropriate. Additionally, it is vital that educators are trained to effectively interpret the results of the assessment and also understand the limits of the assessments, given their structure, purpose, and differences from statewide assessments. **Focusing solely on interim assessment performance when identifying students with an SRD and exiting students from SRD status can have significant implications on fair resource allocation.**

Key Takeaways

SRD identification rates are still higher than pre-pandemic levels, but they remain marginally on the decline. However, students with disabilities, ELs, and most students of color¹⁹ still experience more identification and movement between statuses than their peers.

- From 2022–2023 to 2023–2024, a marginally lower percentage of students went from not being identified with an SRD to being identified with an SRD (4.9% to 4%). In comparison, 5.4% of ELs and 4.9% of students with IEPs were identified with an SRD.
- SRD status retention rates have remained stable since 2021–2022 and remain slightly below pre-pandemic percentages, with marginally more students continuing to not be identified with an SRD in 2023–2024 (51.3% from 47.9% in 2022–2023) and marginally fewer continuing to be identified with an SRD (7.4% from 10.3%).

¹⁹ In this instance, students who are not White or Asian.



Student Outcomes – SRD and READ Plan Status

Students identified with an SRD at an earlier grade level were more likely to exit SRD status by the end of the 3rd grade, showcasing the importance of early identification and intervention.

SRD rates differ substantially by interim assessment. These differences are not only driven by student demographics but also by the structure of the assessment and the method used to set cut scores.

- Some assessments may make students more likely to be identified with an SRD and thus receive READ Act resources.

Equipercentile linking reveals that SRD and general at-risk cut scores across assessments generally identify similar groups of students but that there is variation across assessments. Different assessments may not identify the same students with an SRD and as needing READ Act services.

Being labeled as “not at risk” on an interim assessment does not mean that a student will meet reading proficiency standards by the end of 3rd grade or that they are achieving sufficient growth to meet reading proficiency levels.

- The general at-risk cut scores that identify students at any level of risk fall well below the “Met Expectations” cut score on the CMAS assessment.
- Differences between interim assessment and CMAS classifications appear to affect educator perspectives about the interim assessments—of the educators surveyed, 43% of principals, 40% of literacy coaches, and 47% of teachers reported that the interim assessments are not at all useful or only somewhat useful in predicting 3rd-grade CMAS performance.



8

Student Outcomes – CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt Performance

- Overall, CMAS proficiency rates reached all-time highs for all groups of students; however, these rates remained low for students that had ever been identified with an SRD and even lower for students with multiple identifications.
- Early identification of students with SRDs and early intervention are associated with higher CMAS performance in 3rd grade.
- Colorado Spanish Language Arts proficiency rates are below pre-pandemic rates and performance for students never identified with an SRD decreased since 2022–2023.
- Students ever identified with an SRD had significantly lower CMAS proficiency rates in 4th through 8th grade than students never identified.



The CMAS exam is administered to students in math and English language arts (ELA) beginning in the 3rd grade. This summative statewide assessment is given annually in the spring and is meant to evaluate and measure student learning outcomes and demonstrate achievement against established benchmarks shared across the state. Third-grade CMAS ELA scores provide one way to gauge the extent to which early literacy instruction and interventions have moved students toward 3rd-grade reading proficiency—one of the main goals of the READ Act. In some cases, students are exempt from taking the CMAS assessment: native Spanish speakers who meet eligibility requirements take the Colorado Spanish Language Arts (CSLA) assessment and students with significant cognitive disabilities take the Colorado Alternate (CoAlt) assessment. These alternative assessments are used in place of the CMAS assessment to more fairly measure student literacy performance at the end of the 3rd grade for different student populations.

This chapter explores how student performance between the 2014–2015 and 2023–2024 school years²⁰ on the CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt assessments varied by student SRD status, school- and district-level factors (such as region and demographic makeup), and facets of student identity (demographics, IEP or EL designation, absenteeism, etc.). We also examined trends in CMAS performance after the 3rd grade for students identified with an SRD at some point in grades K–3.

How Does Student Performance on the 3rd-Grade CMAS ELA Assessment Differ by SRD Identification?

Students first take the CMAS assessment in the 3rd grade, the final year in which interim READ Act assessments are required. Historically, students who have at any point in K–3 been identified with an SRD have had very different

²⁰ Because of the timing of a variety of CDE data collections and subsequent data availability, this evaluation generally focuses on the school years preceding the year during which the report is published—the latest year included in this report is 2023–2024; 2024–2025 will be included in the Year 6 report.



success rates on the CMAS ELA exam than their peers who have never been identified with an SRD—between 2016–2017 and 2022–2023, more than half of students who had never been identified with an SRD (“Never SRD”) met or exceeded the proficiency²¹ standard on the CMAS ELA exam in 3rd grade (as determined by their overall composite score), compared with less than 5.1% of students who had ever been identified with an SRD (“Ever SRD”) (Exhibit 8.1).²²

Like in 2022–23, 2023–2024 student performance data shows the proficiency rates of both groups of students (i.e., those never identified with an SRD and those identified with an SRD at some point between kindergarten and 3rd grade) reaching all-time highs, but the trend remains disproportional. **Across the state, a higher percentage of students than ever before during this data collection reached proficiency during the 2023–2024 school year—42.4% of 3rd-grade students met or exceeded expectations on CMAS ELA (2.3 percentage points higher than last year). This positive trend was also evident for students who had at any point been identified with an SRD (8.4% proficiency rate, 2.3 percentage points higher than 2022–2023) and by their peers who had never been identified with an SRD (59.3% proficiency rate, 3.6 percentage points higher than in 2023).**²³ From the 2020–2021 school year forward, both students who had ever or never been identified with an SRD showed increasing progress in meeting or exceeding CMAS proficiency standards in 3rd grade, albeit at vastly different rates.

²¹ Throughout this chapter, “proficiency” is used to refer to scoring in the “Meets Expectations” or “Exceeds Expectations” score ranges on the CMAS ELA exam.

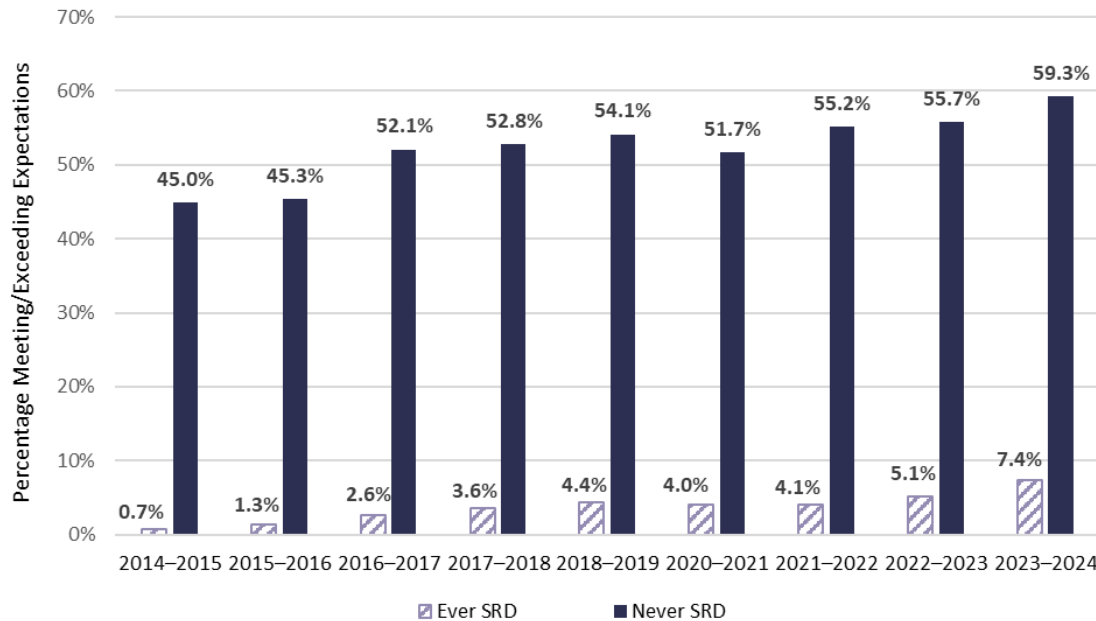
²² “Ever SRD” refers to students who had at any point in K–3 been identified with an SRD, “Never SRD” refers to students who had never been identified with an SRD in K–3.

²³ It is worth noting that the number of assessed students remains depressed from the 2018–2019 school year, although the composition of identities of students assessed remains comparable to previous years (race and ethnicity, English-language proficiency status, disability status, etc.).



Student Outcomes – CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt

Exhibit 8.1. CMAS Proficiency Rates of Students Ever Identified with an SRD and Students Never Identified Have Slowly Improved Since 2020–2021



Note. No data are included for the 2019–2020 due to a statewide assessment pause during the COVID-19 pandemic.

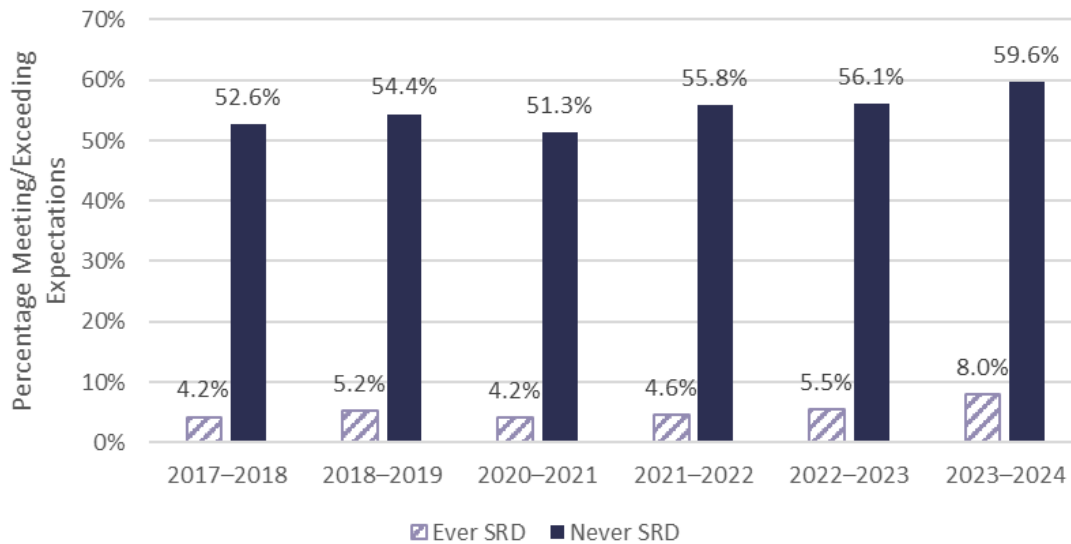
Trends in CMAS Reading Subsection Performance

In addition to the proficiency rates determined by the overall composite score, we examined the reading subscore on the CMAS ELA assessment. Similar to the findings when examining the overall proficiency rates, students who were ever identified with an SRD were significantly less likely than their peers to meet or exceed expectations on the reading subsection of the CMAS ELA exam (Exhibit 8.2). Also, like the overall findings, **proficiency rates again reached all-time highs on the reading subsection for students who had never been identified with an SRD** (59.6% proficiency rate compared to 55.8% in 2022–2023) **and students who had ever been identified with an SRD** (8.0% proficiency rate compared to 5.5% in 2022–2023).



Student Outcomes – CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt

Exhibit 8.2. CMAS Reading Subsection Proficiency Rates of Students Ever Identified with an SRD and Students Never Identified Have Slowly Improved Since 2020–2021



Trends in CMAS Performance by Demographic Characteristics, Turnover Rate, and State Accountability Ratings

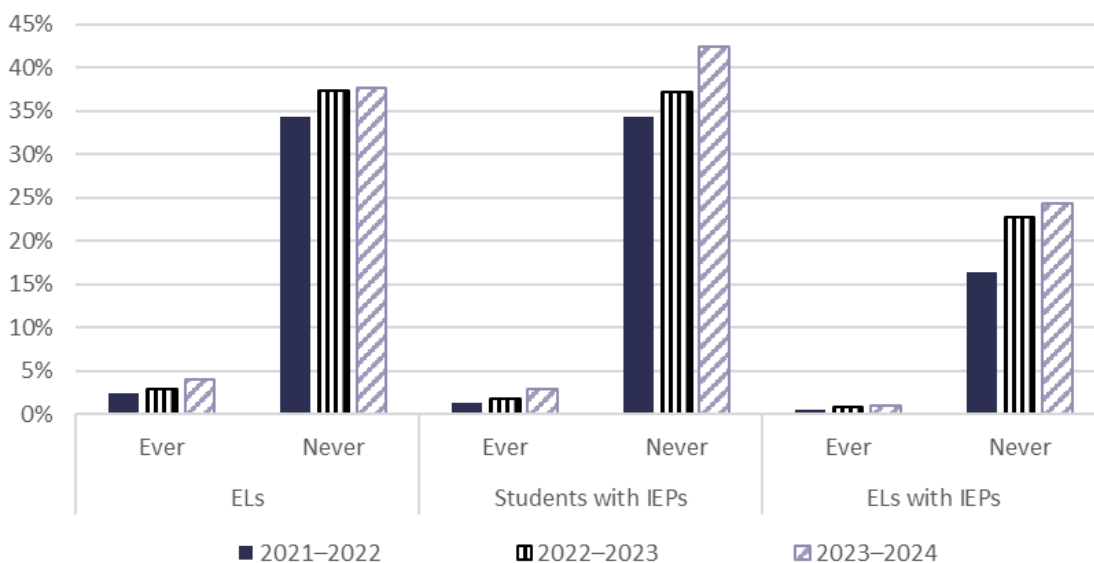
Trends were largely unchanged from previous years, with ELs or students with IEPs who were also identified with SRDs meeting or exceeding proficiency on the CMAS ELA exam at lower rates than their general education peers who had also been identified with SRDs (see Exhibit 8.3). **In 2023–2024, ELs and students with IEPs, irrespective of SRD designation, showed growth in proficiency rates, with slightly higher percentage point increases from 2022–2023 than in previous years' comparisons.** Students with IEPs who were ever dually identified with an SRD increased their proficiency rates from 1.7% in 2022–2023 to 2.9% in 2023–2024. Students with IEPs who were never identified with an SRD made a slightly higher gain in proficiency rate from 38.1% in 2022–2023 to 42.4% in 2023–2024. Among EL students, 4.1% of those who were ever dually identified with an SRD demonstrated proficiency (up 1.2 percentage points from 2023), while 38.7% of those never identified with an SRD



Student Outcomes – CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt

reached proficiency (0.4 percentage points higher than 2022). Only 1% of students with an IEP, EL designation, and an SRD identification reached proficiency on the CMAS ELA exam in 2023–2024 compared with 24.3% of their peers who were never identified with an SRD (1.6 percentage points higher than 2023).

Exhibit 8.3. Increasing Rates of Students with Multiple Identifications are Meeting Proficiency, But Those with an SRD Designation Lag Behind Their Peers



This suggests that students with multiple identifications continue to be underserved by the READ Act on their journey to reading English at grade level by the end of 3rd grade. This finding, in addition to educator confusion (reported in every year of this evaluation) around how to best serve students with dual identifications and how to prioritize between READ Plans and IEPs demonstrates that CDE needs to provide educators with additional implementation. These consistent findings suggest the importance of additional guidance and training to support these students, such as the proposed training for teachers to better differentiate instruction for students learning English while learning how to read.²⁴

²⁴ See ["Colorado teachers need help teaching English learners to read. The state wants more training"](#) on Chalkbeat Colorado.



Exhibit 8.4. ELs and Students with IEPs or SRDs Are Reaching CMAS Proficiency at Higher Rates at an Increasing Pace										
Student Group	SRD Status	Percent, %								
		2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023	2023–2024
All students	Ever	0.7	1.3	2.6	3.6	4.4	4.0	4.1	5.1	8.4
	Never	45.0	45.3	52.1	52.8	54.1	51.7	55.2	55.7	59.3
ELs	Ever	0.3	0.8	1.8	2.3	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.9	4.1
	Never	25.0	26.7	33.2	33.1	34.6	28.7	34.3	38.3	38.7
Students with IEPs	Ever	0.2	0.4	1.0	1.1	1.7	1.4	1.3	1.7	2.9
	Never	18.4	21.1	26.5	30.8	33.5	32.9	34.3	38.1	42.4
ELs with IEPs	Ever	0.1	0.1	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.5	0.9	1.0
	Never	9.9	10.8	13.3	12.8	20.0	14.7	16.4	22.7	24.3

How Do 3rd-Grade CMAS Proficiency Rates Differ Depending on the Grade a Student Is Identified with an SRD and the Grade They Are No Longer Identified?

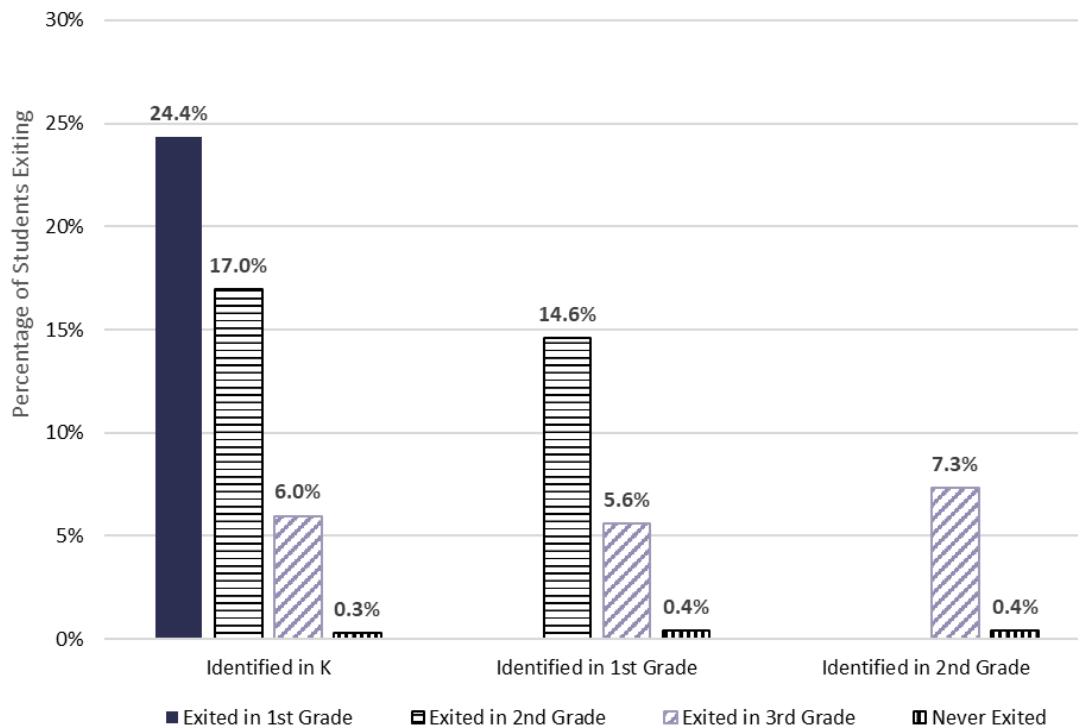
We also examined whether 3rd-grade CMAS performance differs by the grade that a student was first identified with an SRD or the grade they exited SRD status. **In general, students who were identified with an SRD earlier (and presumably started receiving READ Act services earlier) and/or exited SRD status earlier had higher CMAS proficiency rates than their peers who were identified and exited in a later grade level** (Exhibit 8.5). For example, 24% of students who were identified with an SRD in kindergarten and exited in 1st grade met the CMAS proficiency standard in 3rd grade, compared to 15% of students who were identified in 1st grade and exited in 2nd grade, and 7% of students who were identified in 2nd grade and exited in 3rd grade **These findings suggest that early identification and early intervention for students with SRDs may lead to higher CMAS performance in 3rd grade.** These findings are substantiated by previous literature showing the importance of early support. For example, Lovett et al. (2017) found that students who received a reading intervention in 1st and 2nd grade made larger gains in foundational word reading skills than students in 3rd grade. Additionally, in the following years, the



Student Outcomes – CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt

1st-grade students displayed faster growth rates than the 2nd-grade students on six of eight reading outcomes.

Exhibit 8.5. Students Identified Earlier with an SRD and Who Exited Earlier Have Higher CMAS Proficiency Rates



Interestingly, students who were first identified in 2nd grade and exited in 3rd grade had higher CMAS proficiency rates than students who also exited from SRD status in 3rd grade but were first identified in kindergarten or 1st grade. Although the differences are relatively small (8.31% for students identified in 2nd grade versus 5.97% and 5.60% for students identified in kindergarten and 1st grade), it's possible that these results were observed since students first identified in 2nd grade were only identified with an SRD for a single year before exiting SRD status, suggesting that they improved their performance at a faster rate than their peers identified in kindergarten or 1st grade.

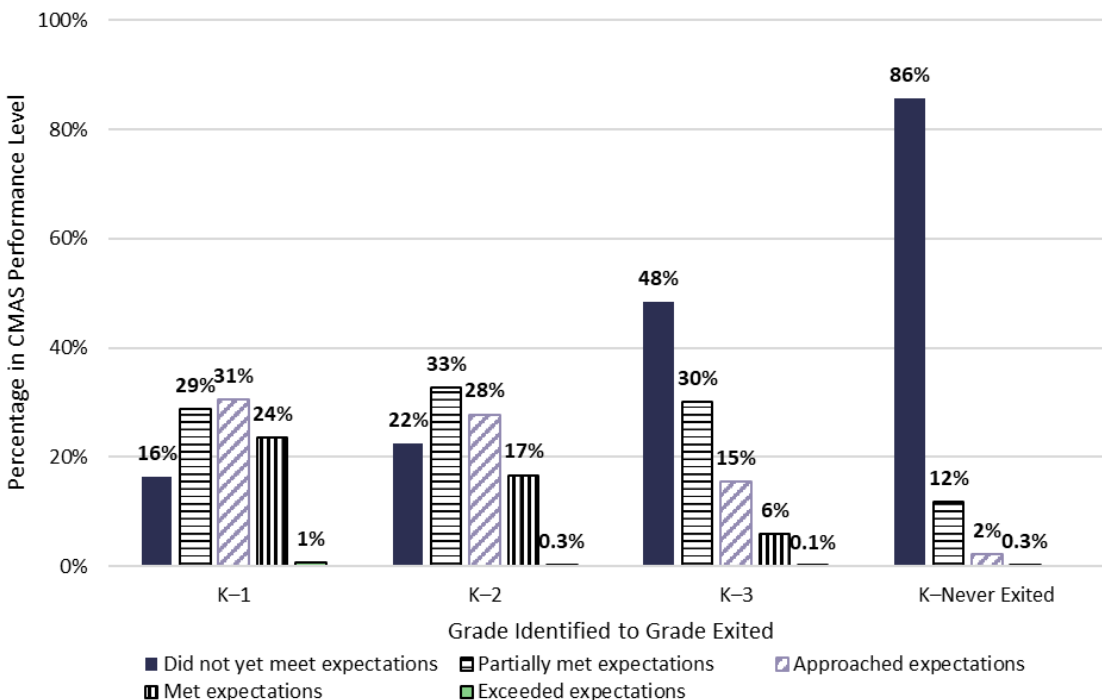
Similar trends were observed when looking at individual CMAS performance levels for each group of students. Among students who were first



Student Outcomes – CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt

identified with an SRD in kindergarten and exited in 1st grade, students most frequently scored in the third-highest performance level on the CMAS exam (i.e., Approached Expectations”), with 55% of students scoring in the top three performance levels (see Exhibit 8.6). In contrast, only 45% of the students identified in kindergarten who exited in 2nd grade performed in the top three performance levels, with students now most frequently scoring in the second-lowest performance level (i.e., Partially Met Expectations), and only 21% of students who exited in 3rd grade in the top three performance levels. Very few students that never exited scored in the top three performance levels (3%). Finally, the percentage of students in higher performance levels decreased consistently among students who exited in 3rd grade and students who never exited.

Exhibit 8.6. Kindergarten Students Who Exited Earlier Performed Better on CMAS



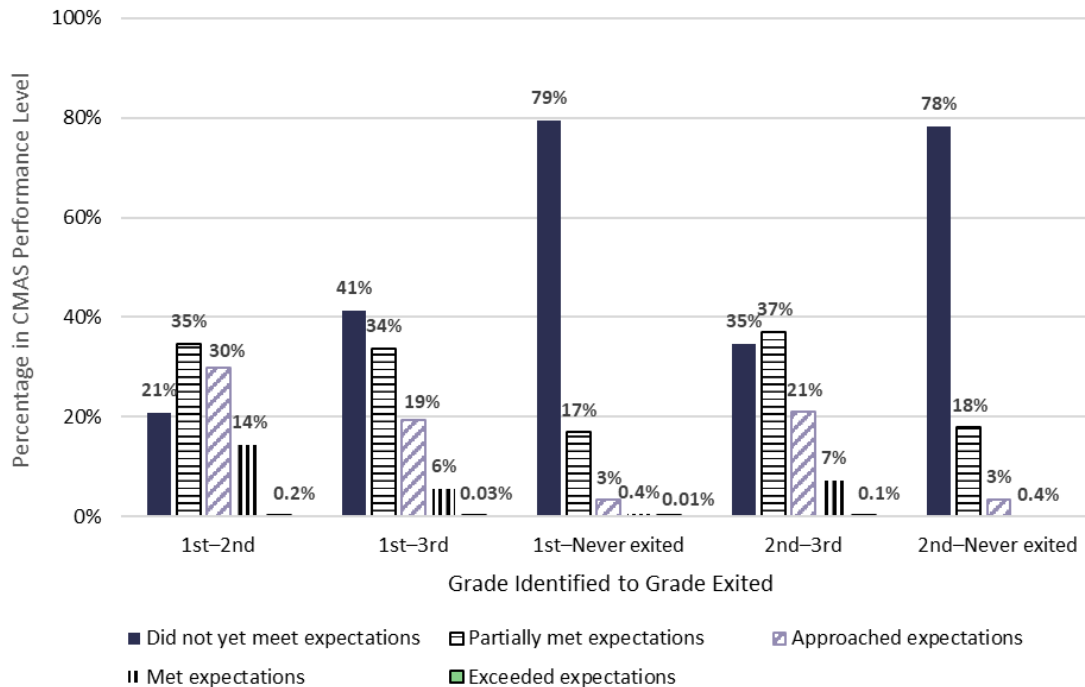
Students who were first identified in 1st and 2nd grade showed similar trends, with the students who exited earlier having higher CMAS proficiency rates



Student Outcomes – CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt

than students who exited in a later grade level or students who never exited SRD status (Exhibit 8.7).

Exhibit 8.7. 1st- and 2nd-Grade Students Who Exited Earlier Have Higher CMAS Proficiency Rates



How Does Student Performance on the 3rd-Grade CSLA Assessment Differ by SRD Identification?

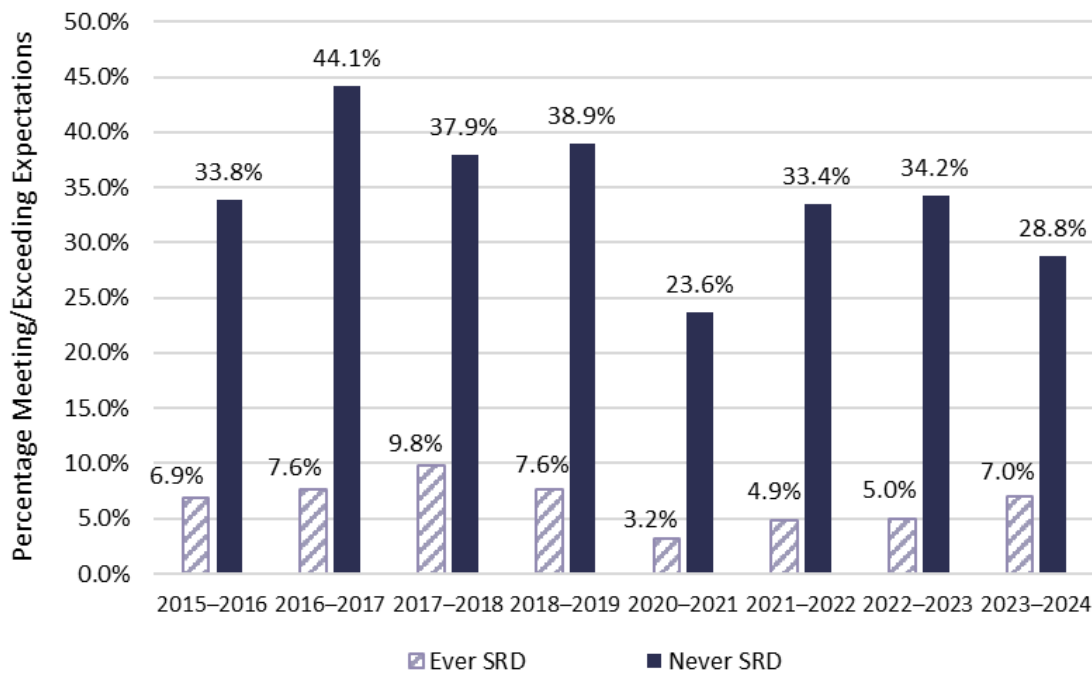
In the 3rd grade, eligible Non-English Proficient (NEP) and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students may take an accommodated version of the CMAS ELA assessment, referred to as the CSLA assessment. As seen among CMAS test-takers, students who had at any point in K–3 been identified with an SRD had significantly lower success rates on the CSLA assessment than their peers who had never been identified with an SRD (Exhibit 8.8). Additionally, there was also a decrease in performance immediately following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e., in the 2020–2021 school year); however, the drop in performance was substantially larger among students taking the CSLA assessment than



Student Outcomes – CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt

among their peers taking the CMAS assessment. Between 2018–2019 and 2020–2021, CSLA proficiency rates dropped by 15.3 percentage points for students never identified with an SRD, and 4.4 percentage points for students identified with an SRD at some point in K–3.

Exhibit 8.8. CSLA Proficiency Rates Continue to Be Below Pre-pandemic Levels and Performance Has Decreased Over the Past Year



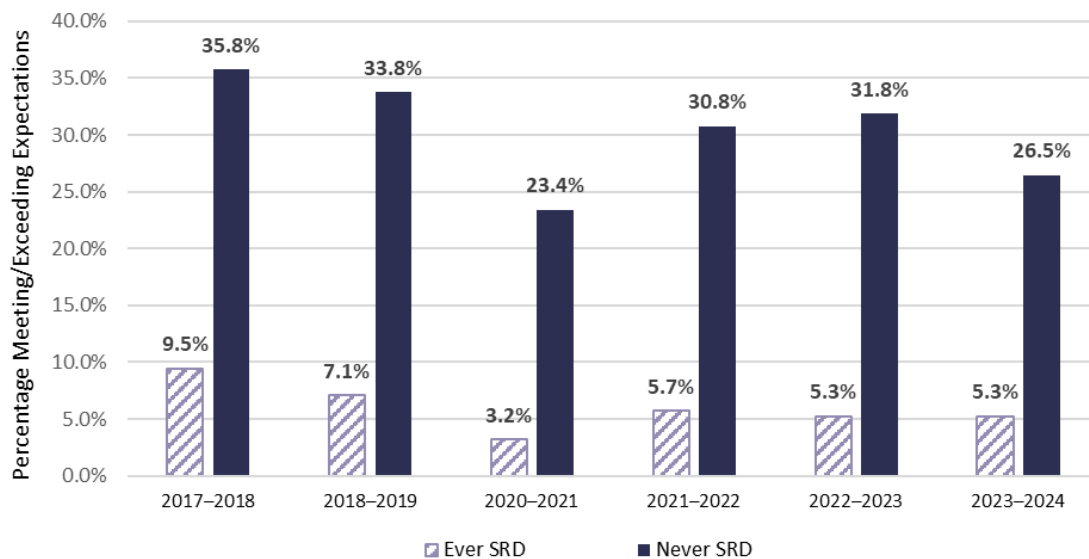
Unlike post-pandemic CMAS assessment scores; CLSA proficiency rates continue to be below pre-pandemic rates and performance for students never identified with an SRD decreased over the past year (the opposite of what was observed among CMAS test-takers). In the 2023–2024 school year, students never identified with an SRD had a proficiency rate of 28.8%, a decrease of about 5.4% from 2022–2023. However, students who were at some point identified with an SRD displayed a slight improvement in performance over the same time period, with their proficiency rate increasing by 2 percentage points.



Student Outcomes – CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt

The same findings were observed when examining CSLA reading subscore data (Exhibit 8.9). These findings suggest that compared to students taking the CMAS ELA assessment, NEP and LEP students taking the CSLA assessment are not receiving sufficient resources to surpass or even just return to pre-pandemic levels.

Exhibit 8.9. CSLA Reading Subscore Proficiency Rates Continue to Be Below Pre-pandemic Levels and Performance Has Decreased Over the Past Year



Trends in CSLA Performance by Demographic Characteristics

From 2015–2016 through 2023–2024, 99.4% of CSLA test-takers in the 3rd grade were Hispanic and 99.6% were classified as ELs. Additionally, about 89% were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, 10% had an IEP, and 33% were chronically absent during the school year.

Students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch had approximately the same proficiency rates as the average CSLA test-taker, likely due to the fact that an overwhelming majority of CSLA takers met this socioeconomic eligibility criteria (Exhibit 8.10). In comparison, students with IEPs had substantially lower proficiency rates on the CSLA exam than their peers; in 2015–2016 and 2018–



Student Outcomes – CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt

2019 through 2022–2023, no students with an IEP who were also identified at some point in K–3 with an SRD met proficiency standards on the CSLA exam. Finally, students who were chronically absent had slightly lower proficiency rates than the average CSLA test-taker; however, rates were not substantially different. **Similar to trends with CMAS test-takers, this suggests that students with multiple identifications continue to be underserved by the READ Act on their journey to reading proficiently at grade level by the end of the 3rd grade.** These results, alongside educator uncertainty around serving students with dual identifications, reveals that additional guidance and PD may be needed to better support these students.

Exhibit 8.10. Students with IEPs and Chronically Absent Students Typically Perform Below the Average CSLA Test-Taker									
Student Group	SRD Status	Percent, %							
		2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023	2023–2024
All Students	Ever	6.9	8.6	9.8	8.6	3.2	4.9	5.0	8.0
	Never	33.8	44.1	38.9	38.9	23.6	33.4	34.2	28.8
FRL Eligible	Ever	6.7	8.9	10.0	8.8	2.7	4.8	5.2	6.84
	Never	33.2	43.5	38.4	38.9	26.0	34.5	34.3	29.8
Students with IEPs	Ever	0.0	2.8	1.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.78
	Never	9.5	21.7	20.4	13.3	18.7	16.0	20.8	16.7
Chronically Absent	Ever	—	—	—	—	2.7	4.2	4.2	4.4
	Never	—	—	—	—	22.0	31.0	32.5	25.6

How Does Student Performance on the 3rd-Grade CoAlt ELA Assessment Differ by SRD Identification?

Students who are classified as having significant cognitive disabilities are also exempt from taking the CMAS ELA assessment in the 3rd grade. These students may be tested using the CoAlt) ELA assessment that is used to determine the extent to which these students meet the Extended Evidence Outcomes (EEOs) of the Colorado Academic Standards.

In 2014–2015 (i.e., the first year CoAlt ELA data were observed), 31.6% of students met the target or advanced performance levels on the CoAlt

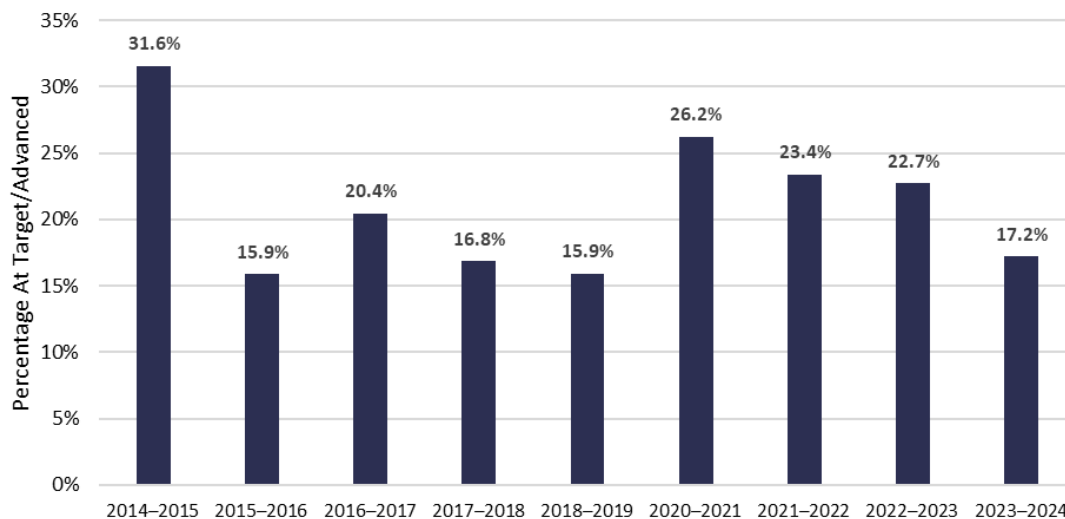


Student Outcomes – CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt

assessment. From the following year (2015–2016) through 2018–2019, the CoAlt target and advanced rates were lower, ranging from 15.9% to 20.4%. In 2020–2021 (i.e., following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic), the rate jumped to 26.2% and has consistently decreased each year following. These findings are in contrast to the CMAS results, which showed a decrease in performance in 2020–2021, followed by improving proficiency rates.

These differences, however, can likely be attributed to the changes in the demographic composition of students taking the CoAlt assessment across years. Prior to 2020–2021, around 60% of CoAlt test-takers were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch each year; this dropped to 51% in 2020–2021 and the number of CoAlt test-takers dropped by almost half (535 in 2018–2019 to 282 in 2020–2021) (Exhibit 8.11). Since 2020–2021, the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch has increased each year, at least partially explaining the decrease in performance seen over time (Duncan et al., 1994; Micheltmore & Dynarski, 2017; Reardon, 2011).

Exhibit 8.11. CoAlt At Target/Advanced Rates Have Consistently Dropped Since 2020–2021



As was the case among CSLA test-takers, students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch had similar rates of being at target or advanced on the CoAlt



Student Outcomes – CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt

assessment as the average CoAlt test-taker; in some years, students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch displayed higher performance than their peers. EL students and chronically absent students, however, had lower performance each year than their peers, matching the demographic trends observed among CMAS and CSLA test-takers (Exhibit 8.12).

Exhibit 8.12. EL Students and Chronically Absent Students Typically Perform Below the Average CoAlt Test-Taker									
Student Group	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023	2023–2024
All Students	31.6	15.9	20.4	16.8	15.9	26.2	23.4	22.7	18.2
FRL Eligible	31.2	18.9	21.9	19.0	18.7	23.5	23.8	28.2	18.1
EL Students	26.4	11.3	18.0	12.7	12.3	13.6	9.1	18.7	14.9
Chronically Absent	—	—	—	—	—	16.4	23.6	19.4	16.1

CMAS Assessment Performance in 4th Through 8th Grade

Student ELA performance is also tested in 4th through 8th grade using the CMAS assessment. As shown in Exhibit 8.13, **students who were ever identified with an SRD at some point in K–3 continued to show significantly lower CMAS proficiency rates in grades 4 through 8 than students never identified with an SRD.** Although there appears to be some improvement among students ever identified, it is clear that these students may need additional supports to meet proficiency standards at the same rate as their peers who were never identified with an SRD.

As in the 3rd grade, CMAS ELA proficiency rates of students ever identified with an SRD differed depending on the grade of identification (Exhibit 8.14). In 3rd through 7th grade, students identified at an earlier grade level had higher proficiency rates on the CMAS ELA assessment, suggesting that early identification and intervention can have long-lasting effects on student performance. By the 8th grade, however, student proficiency rates did not appear to differ by grade of first identification.



Student Outcomes – CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt

Exhibit 8.13. Students Ever Identified with an SRD Display Higher Levels of Performance in Later Grade Levels But Still Fall Far Below the Proficiency Rates of Students Never Identified

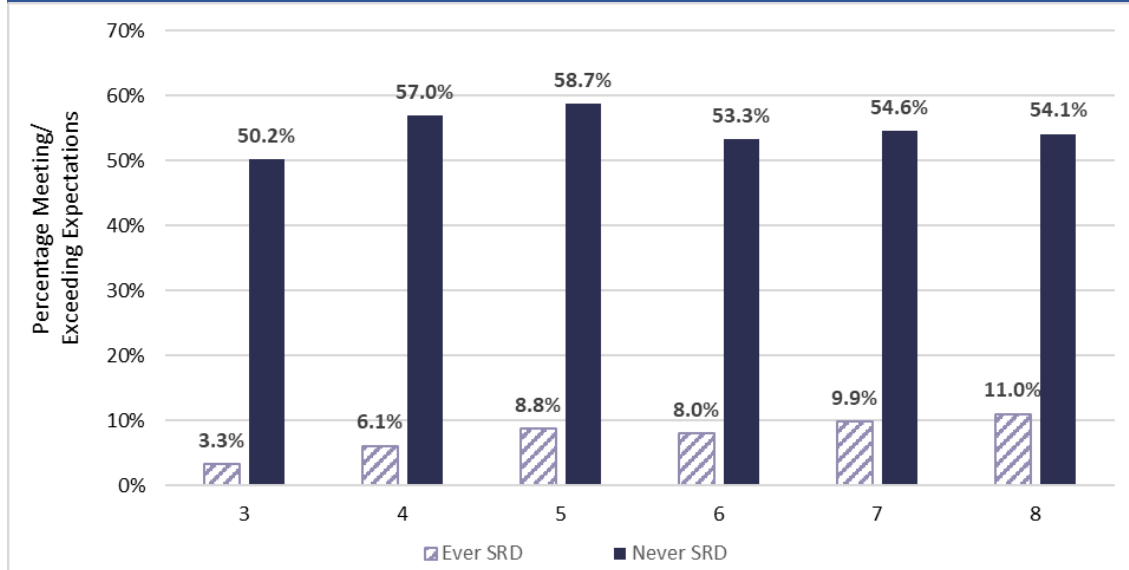
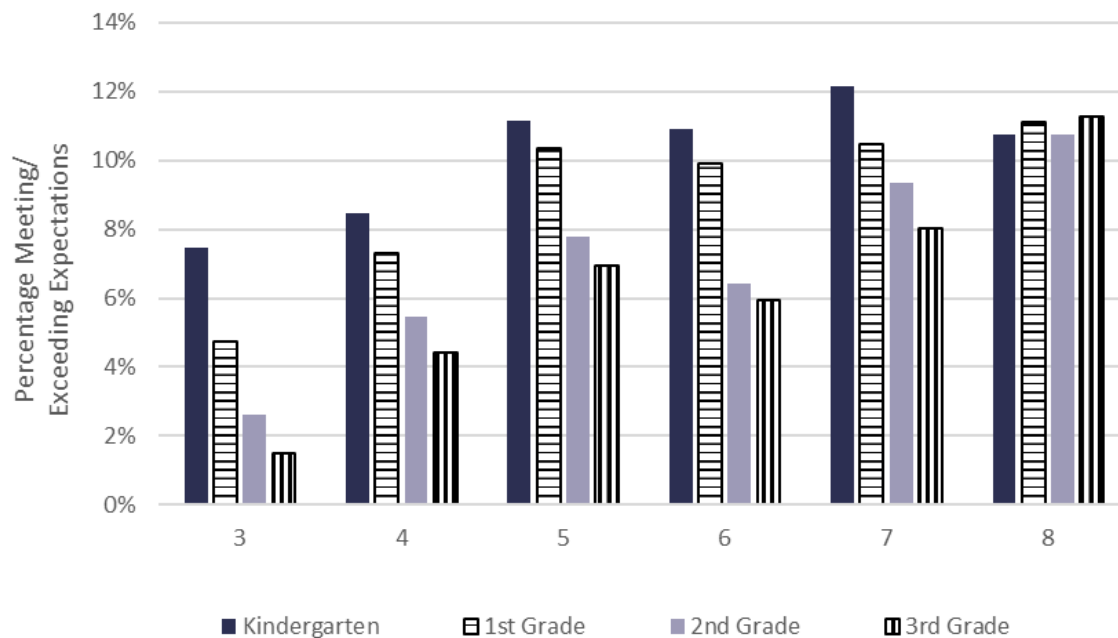


Exhibit 8.14. Students Identified Earlier with an SRD Had Higher Proficiency Rates in 3rd–7th Grade





Key Takeaways

There were increases in CMAS proficiency rates for all groups of students (on the composite scale and reading subscale).

- Although students identified with an SRD at some point in K–3 had higher proficiency rates than in 2023, their rates were still substantially below the rates of students never identified with an SRD.

Students with multiple identifications had higher proficiency rates—but students who were identified with an SRD as part of their multiple identifications lagged behind their peers.

Early identification and early intervention for SRDs may lead to higher CMAS performance in the 3rd grade.

- 24% of students who were identified with an SRD in kindergarten and exited in 1st grade met the CMAS proficiency standard in the 3rd grade, compared to 15% of students who were identified in 1st grade and exited in 2nd grade, and 7% of students who were identified in 2nd grade and exited in 3rd grade.

Students taking the CSLA exam were less likely to demonstrate proficiency than students taking the CMAS assessment following the pandemic.

- CLSA proficiency rates continue to be below pre-pandemic rates and performance for students never identified with an SRD decreased over the past year (the opposite of what was observed among CMAS test-takers).

Students who were ever identified with an SRD at some point in K–3 continued to show significantly lower CMAS proficiency rates in 4th through 8th grade than students never identified with an SRD.



Student Outcomes – CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt

- Students identified with an SRD at an earlier grade level had higher CMAS proficiency rates in 3rd through 7th grade than those identified at a later grade level—this provides further evidence of the importance of early identification and intervention for struggling students.



9

Student Outcomes – ELAT Performance

- Overall, the percentage of students at or above benchmark increased from the beginning of the year (BOY) to the end of the year (EOY), with kindergarten and 1st-grade students displaying the most improvement.
- At BOY, all grade levels had similar SRD rates, however, kindergarten students displayed the highest levels of improvement by EOY; SRD rates for kindergarten students dropped by 20 percentage points.
- Almost a third of students who started the year as identified with an SRD exited SRD status by MOY; and 92% of these students stayed off of SRD status at EOY.
- A higher percentage of students who were not identified with an SRD in kindergarten were later identified, as compared to other grades. This may further indicate the importance of early intervention.



The 2012 School Finance Act required CDE to select an early literacy assessment tool so that teachers could conduct more timely assessments of the reading skills of their K–3 students, helping them meet the assessment requirements of the READ Act. CDE began the Early Literacy Assessment Tool Project (ELAT) and worked to select an assessment that would provide digitized immediate results from individualized tests, store and analyze those results, and recommend activities for students based on those results.²⁵ Districts were required to apply to participate in ELAT and approved applicants received software licenses to use the assessments.

Amplify was selected as the initial assessment vendor for 2013–2018, with districts participating in the ELAT grant using the DIBELS Next (English-language; now Acadience Reading) and IDEL (Spanish-language) assessments. Amplify continued as the approved assessment vendor for 2018–2023; however, districts were also allowed to use Istation’s ISIP Early Reading and ISIP Lectura Temprana assessments. The contract was again re-awarded to Amplify for 2023–2028, allowing districts instead to use mCLASS with DIBELS, 8th Edition (English) and mCLASS Lectura (Spanish) assessments.

ELAT data, which included about 79% of Colorado districts and 53% of K–3 students in 2023–2024, provides another avenue to examine student performance and progress throughout the year. Although CMAS is only administered once per year starting in the 3rd grade and READ Act interim assessment performance is only recorded across the state at EOY, ELAT assessments are administered three times per year in K–3, allowing us to examine student performance across the entire school year. These interim assessments are administered in the beginning (fall), middle (winter), and end (spring) of the school year. This allows us to examine changes in performance within and across years.²⁶ Due to data availability from the vendors, the following

²⁵ See the [Early Literacy Assessment Tool](#) page on the Colorado Department of Education website.

²⁶ Observed performance changes or growth can be misleading due to changing assessment cut scores throughout the school year and across grade levels.



analyses will focus on historical Amplify DIBELS Next²⁷ student performance data from 2018–2019 through 2022–2023. In future years, we plan to report on the ELAT assessments currently in use (mCLASS with DIBELS, 8th Edition and mCLASS Lectura), combining these data with other student records to create a more holistic dataset of student-, school-, and district-level characteristics.

Data Overview

The analytic dataset includes 1,650,448²⁸ K–3 student records across five school years (Exhibit 9.1). 169 districts are represented (~95% of all current districts) and 694 schools are included. The number of students tested in the spring of the 2019–2020 school year is significantly less than the number tested in the fall and winter due to the assessment pause during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some analyses (e.g., those tracking students over time) only include observations that have a corresponding unique student identifier (this makes up 81% of the sample). Note: Excluding students without identifiers may lead to slightly biased reporting for these analyses, as they may not be wholly representative of the full set of students who participated in these exams, demographically and otherwise.

²⁷ Amplify's DIBELS Next assessment (currently referred to as Acadience Reading) is different from Amplify's mCLASS with DIBELS, 8th Edition assessment.

²⁸ Thirty-seven additional students were included in the dataset; however, composite score data were not available.



Student Outcomes – ELAT Performance

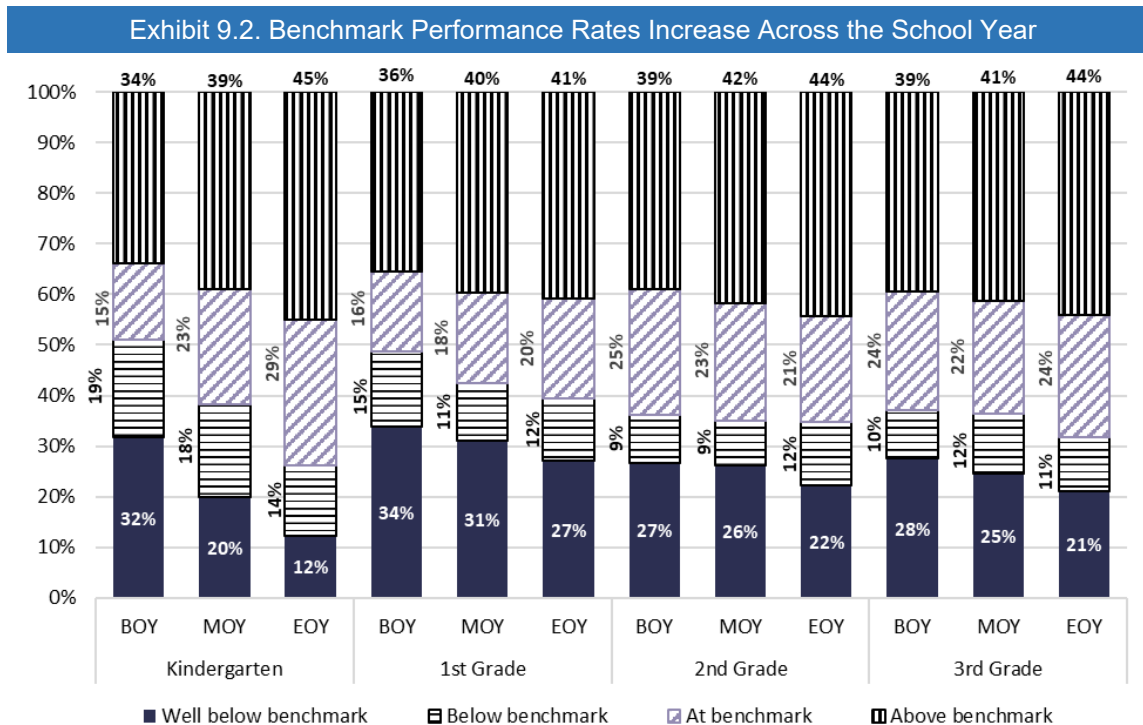
Exhibit 9.1. Student Observations per Benchmark Period						
Grade	Benchmark Period	School Year				
		2018–2019	2019–2020	2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023
K	BOY	29,878	30,273	27,506	30,460	28,738
	MOY	29,918	30,239	27,223	30,524	28,697
	EOY	29,456	279	27,219	30,026	28,184
1st	BOY	29,997	29,578	28,760	29,406	31,367
	MOY	29,959	29,551	28,370	29,340	31,259
	EOY	29,533	274	28,303	28,860	30,680
2nd	BOY	30,257	29,768	28,114	30,237	29,863
	MOY	30,256	29,646	27,859	30,232	29,791
	EOY	29,920	275	27,738	29,722	29,460
3rd	BOY	30,675	29,992	27,798	29,349	30,508
	MOY	30,615	29,767	26,951	29,424	30,464
	EOY	30,334	238	27,931	29,254	30,153

How is Student Performance Changing Within and Across Grade Levels?

For all grade levels, the percentage of students at or above benchmark increases from BOY to EOY (Exhibit 9.2). **Students in kindergarten and grade one show higher levels of improvement across the school year than students in 2nd and 3rd grade;** benchmark proficiency rates increased 25% from BOY to EOY for kindergarten students, 9% for 1st-grade students, 1% for 2nd-grade students, and 5% for 3rd-grade students. Although this pattern of decreasing risk rates paints a positive picture, educators should be cautious when interpreting these results, as the changes in benchmark performance may be due to shifting cut scores (as discussed in Chapter 7) rather than increases in student literacy knowledge.



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Note. The bars within a grade level may not contain the same students across benchmark periods as some students may be tested less than three times per year.

How Are SRD Rates Changing Within and Across School Years?

In Amplify’s DIBELS Next assessment (now Acadience Reading), the score range that would indicate a student should be identified with an SRD matches the “Well Below Benchmark” performance level on the assessment. Below, we examine how the percentages of students who should be identified with an SRD according to the assessment or who scored in the “Well Below Benchmark” performance level changes within and across grade levels and across school years. **Across all grade levels and school years, the percentage of students identified with an SRD decreases from BOY to EOY, with the exception of 2019–2020 because of the significantly decreased testing rate during the onset COVID-19 pandemic (Exhibit 9.3).**

Although the performance patterns are the same across school years, the percentage of students identified with an SRD increased post-COVID (i.e., in the



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2020–2021 school year and onwards), in all benchmark periods. Since 2020–2021, SRD rates have been slowly returning to pre-pandemic levels, as shown in Chapter 7.

Exhibit 9.3. Benchmark Performance Within the Year, Across Grade Levels and School Years															
Grade Level	Percent, %														
	2018-2019			2019-2020			2020-2021			2021-2022			2022-2023		
	BOY	MOY	EOY	BOY	MOY	EOY	BOY	MOY	EOY	BOY	MOY	EOY	BOY	MOY	EOY
Kindergarten	32	15	9	31	16	30	34	31	17	31	20	12	31	19	11
1st grade	26	24	21	27	26	34	47	38	31	36	35	29	33	33	27
2nd grade	22	21	18	22	22	27	30	30	25	30	29	24	29	29	23
3rd grade	25	21	18	25	21	23	29	27	23	30	27	22	29	26	22

How Many Students Remain At Significant Risk for Reading Difficulties Within a Grade Level and Across Grade Levels?

Within-Grade Change

In the 2022–2023 school year, 88,317 K–3 students had test scores across all three benchmark periods. Among these students, the percentage identified with an SRD decreases from BOY to EOY, although there was a greater change among students in kindergarten than in other grade levels (Exhibit 9.4). **Kindergarten students had SRD rates in the beginning of the year that were comparable to students in 1st through 3rd grade; however, by EOY their SRD rate was substantially lower (with the rate having dropped by 20 percentage points across the school year).**

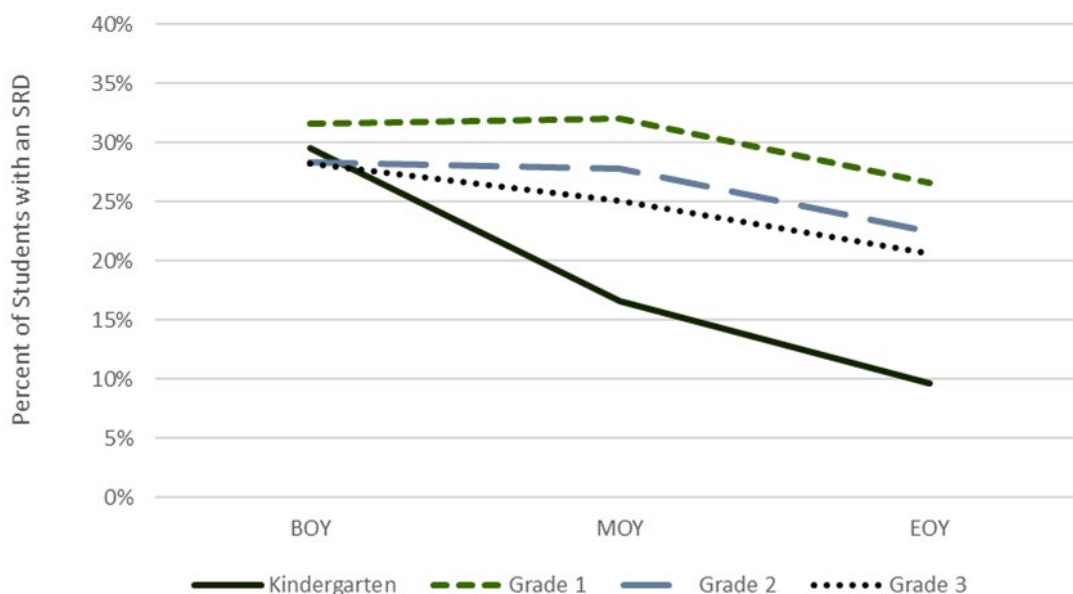
As discussed in Chapter 7, benchmark cut scores can vary from one assessment to the next; however, the cut scores for an individual assessment (such as DIBELS Next) can also shift between administration periods, calling into question the extent to which assessment performance levels can be used to measure growth across the school year. Setting the BOY, MOY, and EOY cut scores to the same percentile (e.g., the 20th percentile) on DIBELS Next assessment data can allow for a more consistent measurement of change. When



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setting the cut scores to the 20th percentile,²⁹ there was again a decrease in the percentage of students identified as being at significant risk from BOY to EOY (like in Exhibit 9.4); however, the change in performance is smaller than when using the vendor-provided benchmark levels, particularly for kindergarten students. When using the benchmark performance levels, kindergarten students displayed a 20 percentage point drop in the number identified as being at significant risk; however, this decrease dropped to 4 percentage points when using the 20th percentile cut scores across all time periods.

Exhibit 9.4. Student Performance Improved Across the 2022–2023 School Year



In addition to tracking overall performance across the school year, we can examine the trends for students at different performance levels at each of the benchmark periods. **As shown in Exhibit 9.5, nearly all students who started the year not at significant risk of reading difficulty remained at this level at MOY and EOY**—of the 71% of students who were not identified with an SRD at BOY, 93% continued to not be identified with an SRD by MOY, and 99% of the

²⁹ The 20th percentile was selected as the cut score for the analysis as the DIBELS Next assessment publisher used the 20th percentile on the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) assessment to assist with the development of the “Well Below Benchmark” performance level cut score.

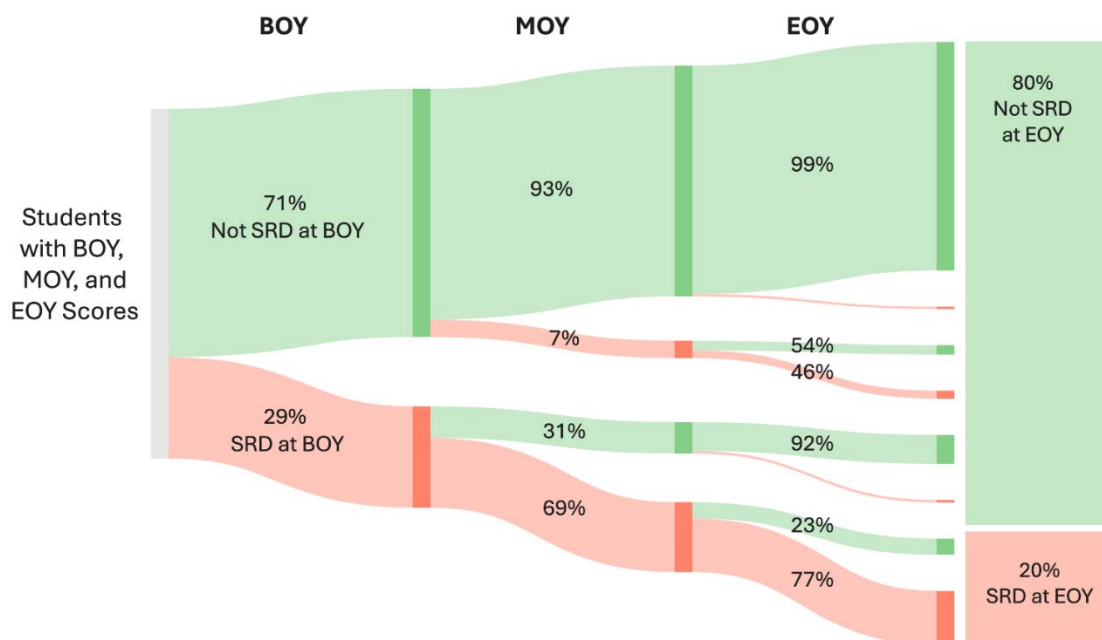


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students who were not identified with SRD in both time periods were still not identified with an SRD at EOY. However, students who were not at significant risk at BOY but instead experienced a drop in performance by MOY had substantially different outcomes at EOY. Just over half (54%) of the 7% of students who went from not SRD at BOY to SRD at MOY were classified as not SRD at EOY.

Students identified with an SRD at BOY showed similar patterns across the school year; that is, those identified with an SRD at BOY typically continued to be identified with an SRD at MOY and EOY. However, these students did experience some improvement across the school year. **Of the 29% of students identified with an SRD at BOY, almost a third (31%) exited SRD status at MOY. Of those students, 92% continued to not be identified with an SRD at EOY, showcasing the importance of early identification and intervention.**

Exhibit 9.5. Student Performance Trends Across the School Year



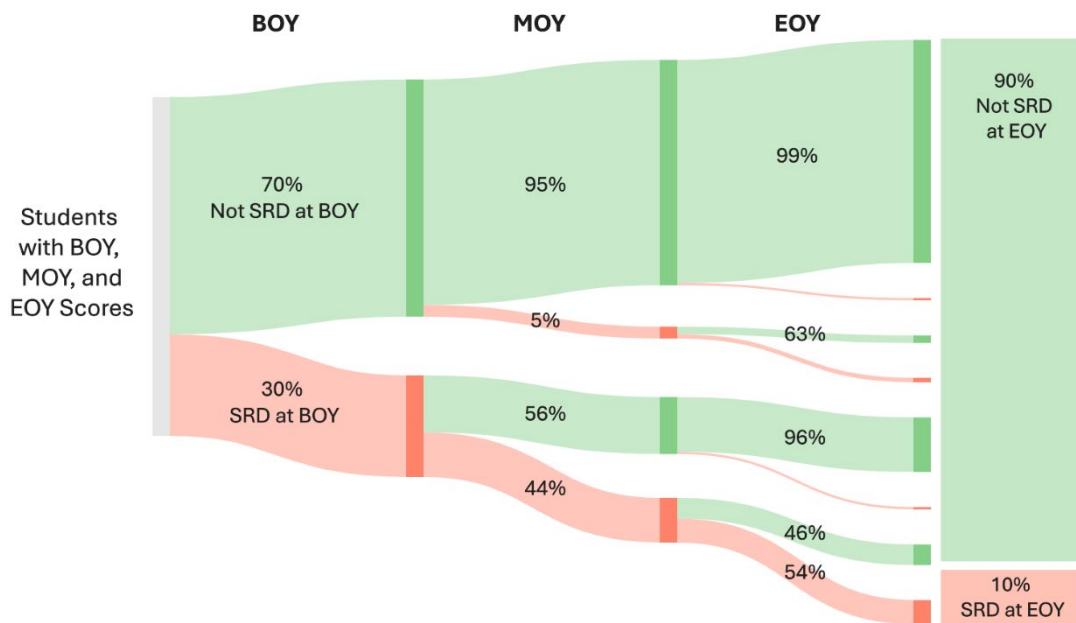
Kindergarten students (Exhibit 9.6) displayed higher levels of improvement than students in later grade levels (see Appendix Exhibits C-3



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to C-5). Among all students, 31% came off of SRD status by MOY, and 92% of these students stayed off SRD at EOY. Among kindergarten students alone, over half came off of SRD status by MOY (56%, as opposed to 31% in the overall sample), and 96% remained off SRD status at EOY. Overall trends were similar across grade levels.

Exhibit 9.6. Kindergarten Student Performance Trends Across the School Year



Across-Grade Change

Between the 2018–2019 and 2023–2024 school years,³⁰ 91,003 students with a unique student identifier in this sample had two or more EOY scores, allowing us to examine their likelihood of continuing to be identified with an SRD between grade levels (Exhibit 9.7). EOY scores used to assign SRD status to students for the following school year.

³⁰ 2019–2020 scores are excluded from this analysis due to a significantly decreased number of scores recorded because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We felt the inclusion of these scores could further bias the sample since we cannot at this time examine the characteristics of students to judge the degree to which they are representative of students across the state.

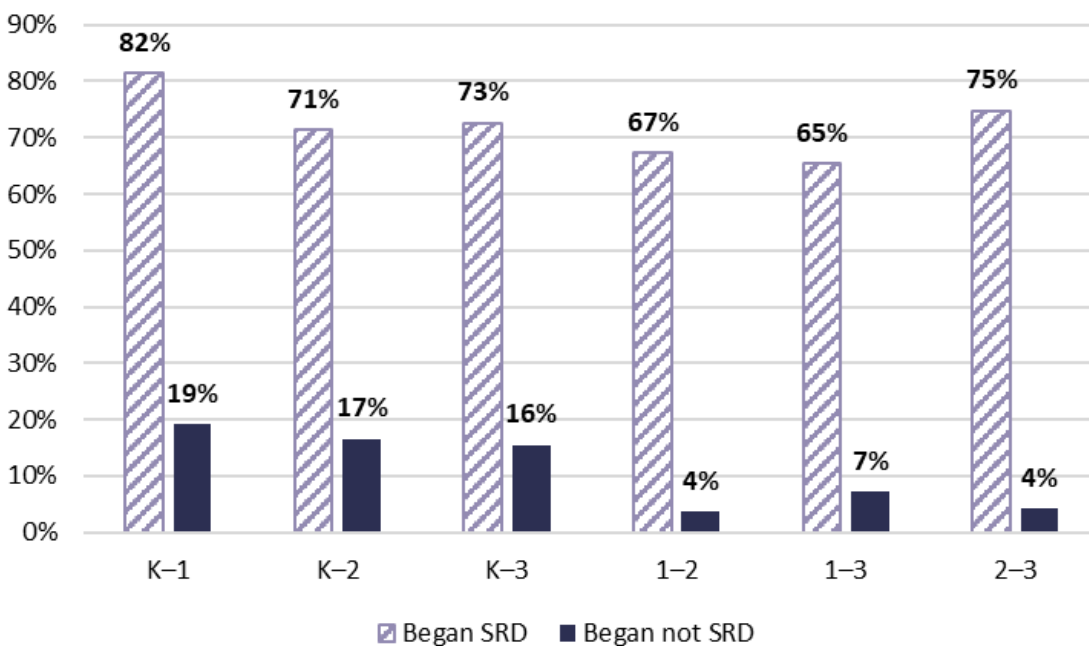


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Exhibit 9.7. Number of Observations Included in Across-Grade Analyses, by Grade	
Grade	Number of Observations
K	45,442
1st	65,464
2nd	53,809
3rd	50,050

In order to maximize the number of students we could include in this analyses, we examined the percentage of students in a given grade scoring in the SRD range, stratified by their SRD status in each previous grade level, as applicable (Exhibit 9.8). In this manner, we were able to include students who have, for example, an EOY score in only kindergarten and 2nd grade, but not in 1st or 3rd grade. That student would be included in analysis of K–2 transitions, but not K–1 or K–3 transitions.

Exhibit 9.8. Percentage of Students with SRD EOY Scores, by Previous SRD Status



Unsurprisingly, across grade-level transitions, students identified with an SRD in a previous grade level were more likely than their peers who were not identified with an SRD to continue to be identified with an SRD in a later grade.

A higher percentage of students who were not identified with an SRD in



kindergarten were identified with an SRD in a later grade, compared to students transitioning from a grade other than kindergarten (1st grade and higher) to the next. This may further support the importance of early intervention, as noted in Chapters 7 and 8. Students who are identified earlier and exit SRD status earlier are more likely to reach proficiency on the 3rd-grade CMAS ELA exam. The percentages of students who were not identified with an SRD at BOY in a grade other than kindergarten and were later identified with an SRD are more in line with the average percentage of students across the state who go from not being identified with an SRD to being identified with one each year (see Chapter 7).

Key Takeaways

Overall, the percentage of students at or above benchmark increased from BOY to EOY, with kindergarten and 1st-grade students displaying more improvement than 2nd- and 3rd-grade students.

- Benchmark proficiency rates increased 25% from BOY to EOY for kindergarten students, 9% for 1st-grade students, 1% for 2nd-grade students, and 5% for 3rd-grade students.

Across all grade levels and school years, the percentage of students identified with an SRD decreased from BOY to EOY, with higher SRD rates in all administration periods following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Since 2020–2021, SRD rates in each administration period have been slowly returning to pre-pandemic levels.

At BOY, all grade levels had similar SRD rates, however, by EOY, kindergarten students had a substantially lower rate than the other grade levels (i.e., kindergarten students displayed the most improvement).

- SRD rates dropped 20 percentage points for kindergarten students, 5 percentage points for 1st-grade students, 6 percentage points for



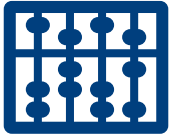
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2nd-grade students, and 8 percentage points for 3rd-grade students.

Students who started the year not being identified with an SRD usually stayed off of SRD status throughout the school year, while students who started the year being identified with an SRD typically stayed on SRD status throughout the school year.

Across grade-level transitions, students identified with an SRD in a previous grade level were more likely than their peers who were not identified with an SRD to continue to be identified with an SRD in a later grade.

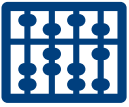
- A higher percentage of students who were not identified with an SRD in kindergarten were identified with an SRD in a later grade, compared to students transitioning from a grade other than kindergarten (1st grade and higher) to the next. This may further indicate the importance of early intervention.



10

Conclusion

- Adoption of evidence-based materials on the Advisory List has continued to rise. Feeling comfortable with newly adopted evidence-based materials takes time and support.
- Teachers reported confidence implementing READ Plans but need additional training and improved materials to feel confident supporting students with multiple identifications.
- Overall, the number of students identified with SRDs continues to decrease since the end of the most acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Across the state, a higher percentage of students reached proficiency during the 2023–2024 school year. This positive trend was also evident in students who had at any point been identified with an SRD, especially those who were identified or exited from SRD status in earlier grades.



With 5 years of evaluation data collected, the evaluation team is framing its conclusions to align with each of the three evaluation questions:

1. How are LEPs and schools implementing READ Act provisions?
2. To what extent has the implementation of the READ Act led to a reduction in the number of students identified with SRDs?
3. To what extent do students identified with an SRD achieve reading proficiency by the 3rd grade?

1) How Are LEPs and Schools Implementing READ Act Provisions?

In the following section, we describe high-level findings and recommendations for each of the major components of the READ Act.

Advisory List of Instructional Programming and Assessments

Adoption of Evidence-Based Materials on the Advisory List Has Continued to Rise

Over 80% of schools reported using approved core curriculum during the 2023–2024 school year. In addition, 32% of schools reported exclusively using approved materials across all grade levels and material types (approved core, supplemental, and intervention curriculums, as well as interim, diagnostic, and summative assessments). Similar to past years, district administrators continue to emphasize evidence-based materials and high-quality instruction as key to student literacy growth.

Feeling Comfortable with Newly Adopted Evidence-Based Curriculum Takes Time and Support

Teachers, coaches and principals reported it took at least a year for them to get comfortable with a new core curriculum. In addition, more than 10% of teachers, coaches, and principles reported they still did not feel comfortable implementing the new curriculum at the time of the survey. This aligns with research that indicates it takes time and support for teachers to become truly



comfortable and effective with implementation (Werres & Châu, 2023; National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2020; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). When asked about what positively impacted their ability to implement the new curriculum, teachers were most likely to cite standards alignment, administrator support, and resource availability.

Recommendation: Now that adoption of evidence-based materials on the Advisory List is widespread, districts and schools should focus on providing support and resources to ensure that educators are comfortable implementing the curriculum with fidelity.

School-Level Staff Stressed the Importance of Structures and Staffing to Support Systemic Reading Instruction Differentiated by Students' Reading Levels

Districts and principals frequently cited opportunities for professional learning and grade-level teams as crucial for student growth. Most teachers reported at least weekly support from paraprofessionals and coaches, including over a third of teachers who reported having multiple adults in the classroom to support daily reading instruction. All seven bright spot schools that participated in site visits emphasized the importance of additional specialized staff (e.g., interventionists, coaches) to support reading instruction and READ Act implementation. In open-ended responses, coaches and teachers shared that “communication between all the teams is valuable,” that it was beneficial to have “time to collaborate with other service providers,” and that it was important to “find ways to bring all providers together to come up with a cohesive plan to support students.”

Recommendation: Districts and schools should prioritize supports such as professional learning and utilize structures such as grade-level teams to increase staff communication and collaboration.



Evidence-Based Training in Teaching Reading and Professional Development

Educators Across Roles Reported Ongoing Application and Positive Perceptions of the 45-Hour Training

As of August 16, 2024, 28,939 educators have completed the evidence-based training in reading for teachers³¹ and 3,224 administrators have completed the K–3 principal and administrator training. Similar to 2023–2024, educators across roles reported ongoing application of the 45-hour training and positive perceptions of its relevance to their instructional work. Most teachers and coaches reporting using knowledge from their 45-hour training at least weekly. Over 75% of principals reported the principal-focused training was applicable, high-quality, and helpful in supporting instructional staff.

Educators Received a Variety of Professional Learning Supports Beyond the 45-Hour Training, Though Access Varied Widely by District and Role

For example, district inventory responses show that most districts provide PD focused on the science of reading, though only 35% require it. Similarly, just over one-third of districts (36%) require coaching supports for teachers and school leaders, while over half (56%) provided coaching as an optional support.

Gaps Persisted in Training Related to Supporting ELs and Students with Disabilities

For example, 44% of teachers and 46% of coaches reported receiving no additional training in supporting students with IEPs. Similarly, 37% of teachers and 28% of coaches received no PD focused on ELs. Site visits provided examples of these gaps. Some staff described the linguistic diversity of their student population and the need for continued training and biliteracy practices. Staff noted that although some bilingual resources were provided, additional training would help staff address students' varied needs.

³¹ Includes reading interventionists for K–3 and 4–12 and may also include administrators.



Identifying and Supporting Students with SRDs

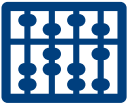
Assessments Were a Key Driver of Instructional Decisions Related to Reading Instruction

Most principals, coaches and teachers reported that READ Act diagnostic and summative assessments were “very important” for informing reading instruction. In particular, school-based staff noted the usefulness of assessment tools for identifying students with SRDs, targeting and adjusting instruction, and exiting students from SRD status. This data-based approach was echoed by site visit schools that emphasized that assessment data were the primary driver of setting instructional focus, developing reading groups and determining reading goals.

Teachers Need Additional Training and Improved Materials to Feel Confident Supporting Students with Multiple Identifications

Teachers reported confidence implementing READ Plans but need additional training and improved materials to feel confident supporting students with multiple identifications. Over 80% of teachers responding to the survey strongly agreed that they felt confident to in the steps and strategies need to support a student placed on a READ Plan. In comparison, fewer than half of coaches and teachers reported that they had received sufficient training to feel confident identifying and supporting students with multiple identifications. In particular, teachers and coaches noted a need for resources to better support ELs.

Parents of children with multiple identifications who reported concerns about READ Act supports echoed these challenges. For example, only 22% of parents responding to the survey reported that the guidance they received about supporting reading was tailored to their children. Parents who participated in focus groups also noted difficulties distinguishing which services were provided under which plan (e.g., READ Plan, IEP) and raised concerns that



frequent testing and pullout supports may negatively affect students' motivation and engagement related to reading.

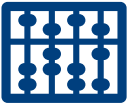
Early Literacy Grant

All 10 Site Visit Schools Reported That ELG Participation Enhanced Teaching Quality and Practice

These impacts were focused on literacy instruction, classroom management practices, and improvement in teachers' efficiency and effectiveness using student interim assessment data to inform their instruction. School leaders uniformly reported that not only did teachers' confidence and use of effective instructional practices improve significantly, but they began using more consistent terminology and strategies within and across grades, resulting in a more consistent and effective instructional experience for students over time.

External Literacy Consultants Were a Primary Factor in Schools' Desire to Apply for ELG and Cited as Primary Driver of Positive Impacts

Similar to findings from the last 2 years, the opportunity to work with external literacy consultants was a primary motivator for applying for the grant and was cited as the primary driver of positive impacts. **Bringing in an external literacy expert into schools on a monthly basis was the single-most impactful element of ELG-funded activities.** These external consultants, which are a required ELG component, were highly valued because they brought in trusted and respected outside expertise into schools. Teachers and school leaders routinely reported that consultants brought fresh perspectives and a high degree of expertise and credibility. They were identified as the "driving force" behind needed changes to instructional practices and subsequent successes in raising student reading performance. The presence of the consultant in the building, even for just a few days per month, was reported to be powerful in keeping teachers and staff "accountable" for the instructional changes they were coached to make.



Most ELG-Funded Schools and Districts Reported At Least Some Positive Impacts on Student Assessment Scores

In multiple cases, school leaders indicated that changes in student performance happened rapidly after starting work on their ELG. For instance, one school reported observing noticeable progress in student literacy achievement at the beginning of the second semester of the first year of the grant, and that this progress further grew and strengthened in subsequent years. In some cases, ELG performance improvements continue to be expressed in terms of student performance on BOY, MOY, and EOY interim assessments.

Recommendation: Further work is needed to understand the linkages or disconnects between student performance on interim assessments and student performance growth on Colorado’s statewide assessments.

Sustainability Was the Single Greatest Challenge Associated with ELG Experience

This was viewed as particularly critical in light of ongoing and persistent teacher, school leader, and staff turnover that results in continuous loss of the institutional knowledge and training gained through ELG activities. Lack of funding to support in-school reading coaches and interventionists after ELG funding ends was also cited as a critical threat to maintaining desired results. This loss of funding for staffing has become more acute as federal ESSER funding has ended, since many districts and schools have drawn upon these funds to help offset the added costs of employing staff support.

Recommendation: CDE should consider providing structured guidance on sustainability planning before schools enter the final phase of the grant. District and school leaders should participate in intentional and strategic sustainability planning to mitigate the loss of resources at the end of ELG funding.



Per-Pupil Funding

READ Act Funds Were Most Frequently Used for Materials on the Advisory List and for Reading Coaches

Similar to last year, principal inventory respondents reported that READ Act funds were most frequently used to purchase K–3 core, supplemental, or intervention instructional programs on the Advisory List and for the salary of reading coaches to meet READ Act implementation requirements. Principals also reported using funds to purchase K–3 interim or diagnostic and summative assessments on the Approved list, provide one-on-one or small group tutoring to students identified with SRDs; and purchase K–3 PD programs on the Advisory List.

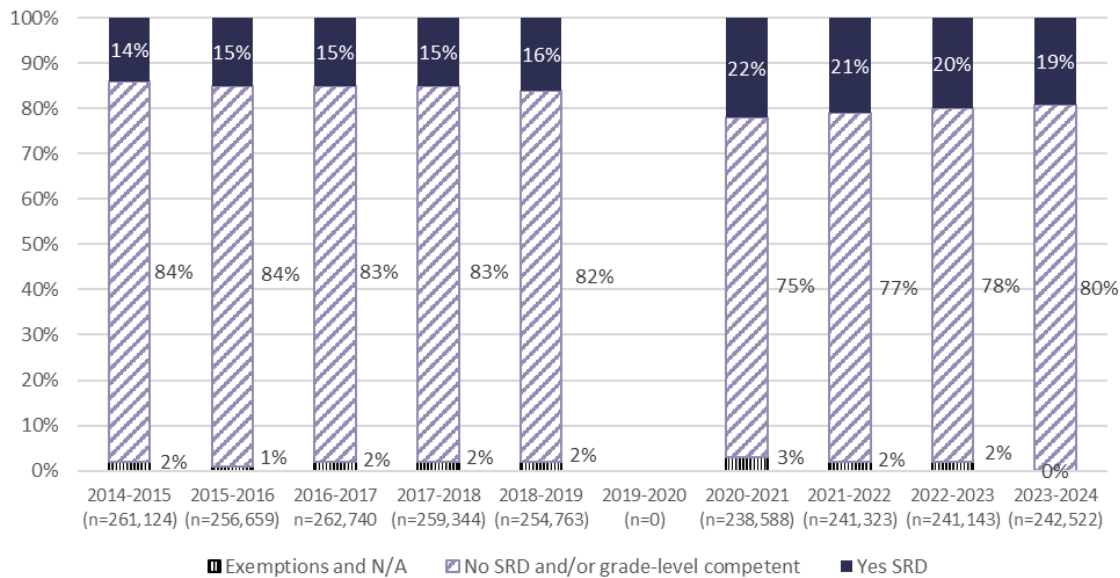
2) To What Extent Has the Implementation of the READ Act Led to a Reduction in the Number of Students Identified with SRDs?

SRD Identification Rates Continuing to Decline Post-Pandemic

Overall, the number of students identified with SRDs has continued decreasing since the end of the most acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although SRD identification rates remain elevated from pre-pandemic levels (around 15% per year), they continued to decline to 19% in 2023–2024 from the all-time high of 22% recorded immediately post-pandemic in 2020–2021 (see Exhibit 10.1).



Exhibit 10.1. Students Identified with SRDs Before and After COVID-19 Pandemic



SRD Identification and Exit Rates Have Been Stable for the Past 3 Years

Current SRD identification rate trends are different from historic trends but have settled since the 2020–2021 academic year, during the most acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic (see previous year’s reports for more details about historic trends). **Overall, SRD identification and exit rates have been stable since the 2021–2022 school year (Exhibit 10.2).** From 2022–2023 to 2023–2024, a marginally lower percentage of students went from not being identified with an SRD to being identified with an SRD (4.9% to 4%). The rate of students exiting SRD identification also remained stable, 4.3% compared to 4.2% in the previous school year. **Notably, 2023–2024 was the first year of this data collection in which a higher percentage of students moved from being identified with an SRD to not being identified with an SRD than moved from not being identified with an SRD to being identified with one.**

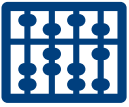
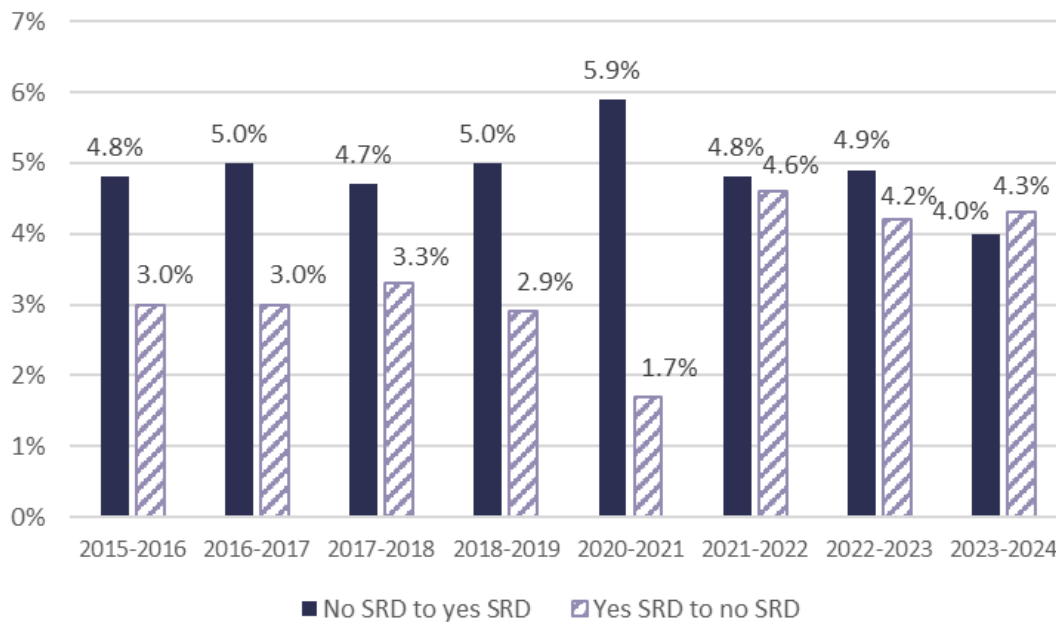


Exhibit 10.2. SRD Identification and Exit Rates Have Remained Stable Since 2020–2021



Despite overall stability referenced above, some student groups experience more movement between SRD identifications than others. **ELs and students with disabilities are more likely than their peers to change SRD statuses between years—more frequently entering and exiting SRD status.** This finding remains consistent across years.

Recommendation: Our consistent findings that administrators and teachers feel less confident in supporting students with multiple identifications and are unclear about which plan should take precedence when a student has multiple identifications (e.g., READ Plan, IEP) suggest that teachers and administrators would benefit from additional training to support students with a diversity of needs.

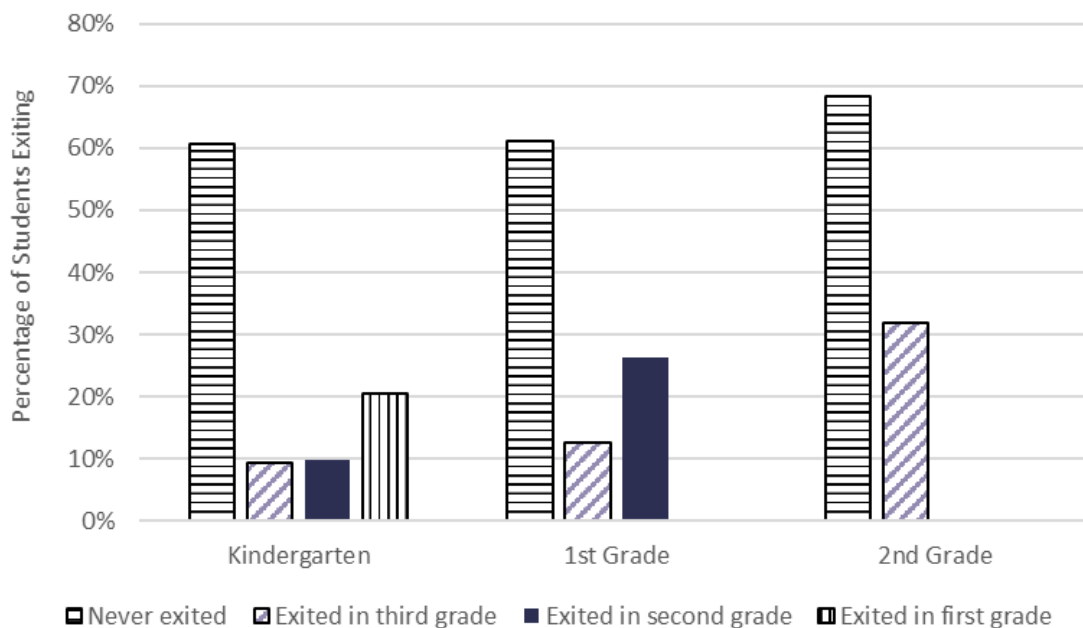
Early Intervention Matters

The length of time that students are identified with an SRD varies by the grade level they are first identified in (see Exhibit 10.3). Among students



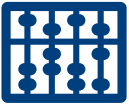
identified with an SRD in kindergarten, about 20% exited from SRD status in 1st grade (i.e., after one year), 10% exited in 2nd grade, 9% exited in 3rd grade, and 61% continued to be identified with an SRD by the end of the 3rd grade (i.e., they never exited from SRD status). **Students identified with an SRD at an earlier grade level were more likely to exit from SRD status by the end of the 3rd grade, signaling the importance of early identification and intervention** (Wanzek & Vaughn, 2007).

Exhibit 10.3. Students Identified at an Earlier Grade Level Were More Likely to Exit SRD Status by the End of 3rd Grade



SRD Identification Rates Differed Substantially by Interim Assessment

As seen in Exhibit 10.4, **SRD identification rates differed substantially by interim assessment**. Some of these differences are due to the population of students taking each of the interim assessments. For example, 18% of the students who took Acadience Reading in the 2023–24 school year were chronically absent, compared to 31% of the students who took ISIP Reading. Additional variation, however, is likely due to differences between assessments. For example, the students taking i-Ready and Star Early Learning were almost



identical in terms of their demographics (see Exhibit 7.5); however, Star Early Learning had an SRD identification rate 4-percentage points higher than i-Ready. This difference, along with findings reported in the next section, suggests that similar students may be more likely to be identified with an SRD on the Star assessment than i-Ready due to the structure of the assessment or cut score setting method used.

Exhibit 10.4. SRD Rates in 2023–2024 Differed Substantially by Assessment	
Interim Assessment	Percentage (%) of students identified with an SRD
Acadience Reading	13
i-Ready	20
ISIP Reading	24
ISIP Lectura Temprana	30
mCLASS: DIBELS 8th Edition	18
mCLASS Lectura	26
Star Early Learning	24

Note. Acadience Reading was formerly referred to as DIBELS Next.

These differences between the assessments can have significant consequences for students, as the structure of certain assessments—rather than student performance—may make it more likely for some students to be identified with an SRD and receive READ Act services.

Recommendation: CDE and educators should consider using other measures in addition to interim assessment performance when determining a student’s SRD status to ensure a more equitable approach to SRD identification and distribution of READ Act services.

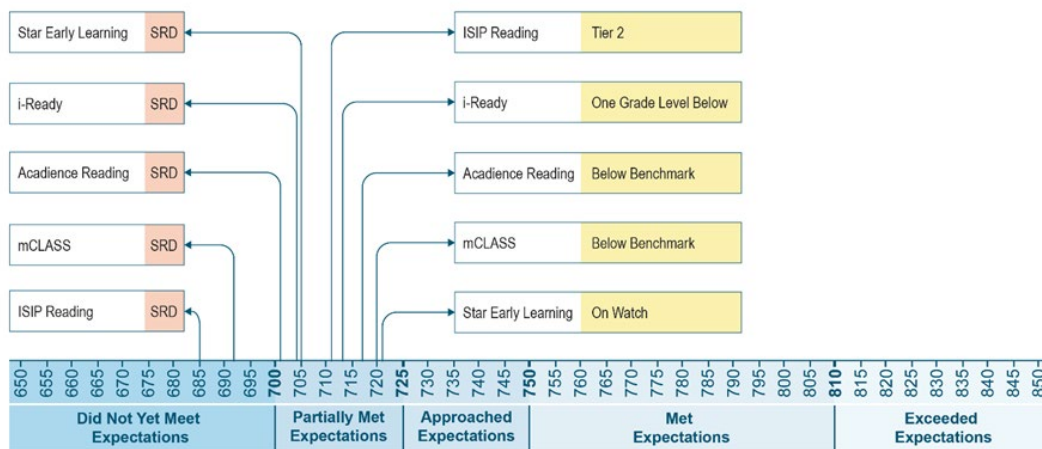
Importance of Assessment Literacy

To further examine the comparability of the interim assessments, we used equipercentile linking, which is an approach to statistically link scores from different assessments so they can be compared directly (Kolen & Brennan, 2004) (see Chapter 7 for a detailed explanation). As shown in Exhibit 10.5, the SRD cut scores (in red) cluster around the bottom of the Partially Met Expectations and top of the Did Not Yet Meet Expectations performance levels, signifying that the

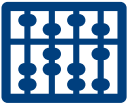


different assessments identify similar groups of students. However, there is variation between assessments and some assessments will likely identify more students with an SRD because of the vendor-selected cut score. **In other words, who gets READ Act services is likely partially due to which assessment is being taken rather than student performance.**

Exhibit 10.5. Interim Assessment Cut Scores Cluster Around Similar Levels on the CMAS Composite Scale, But There is Variation



We also linked the general at-risk cut scores (in yellow), which are those that identify students at any—not just significant—level of risk, to the CMAS scale. Each of the general at-risk cut scores link to the Partially Met Expectations performance level on CMAS (i.e., a whole performance level before the proficiency cut on the CMAS exam). Again, the results show that the assessments identify similar groups of students but that there is variation across assessments. Additionally, because these at-risk cuts fall below the Met Expectations performance level it is clear that a subset of students will likely be identified as being on grade level or at benchmark on the interim assessments but will fail to meet the proficiency standard on the CMAS exam. **Thus, educators should keep in mind that not being identified as “at risk of reading difficulty” does not necessarily imply proficiency on the CMAS assessment or sufficient growth to reading proficiently by the end of 3rd**

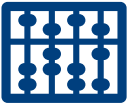


grade. Educators also emphasized this disconnect. Of the educators surveyed, 43% of principals, 40% of literacy coaches, and 47% of teachers reported that the interim assessments are not at all useful or only somewhat useful in predicting 3rd-grade CMAS performance.

These findings do not represent an issue with the interim assessments; they simply display the substantial differences between literacy screeners and summative state assessments. Not only were the assessments created differently and their cut scores set differently, the purpose of the assessments also differ. Many screeners are created to identify students with reading difficulties rather than students who are expected to meet reading competency levels. Additionally, screeners typically test foundational skills rather than the higher-level content assessed in statewide summative assessments.

Recommendation: Without other statewide assessment data in K–2 that would help predict CMAS performance, educators must consider how the interim assessment data can be supplemented to determine which students may need additional resources to meet reading proficiency levels by the end of 3rd grade.

These differences really showcase the importance of assessment literacy at the state, district, school, and classroom levels. As states, districts, and schools consider which assessments meet their established criteria, they also need to consider whether the suggested uses of these assessments, and consequences of the performance on these assessments, are appropriate. Additionally, it is vital that educators receive the training they need to effectively interpret the results of the assessment and also understand the limits of the assessments given their structure, purpose, and differences from statewide assessments. **Focusing solely on interim assessment performance when identifying students with an SRD and exiting students from SRD status can have significant implications on fair resource allocation.**



3) To What Extent Do Students Identified with SRDs Achieve Reading Proficiency by 3rd Grade?

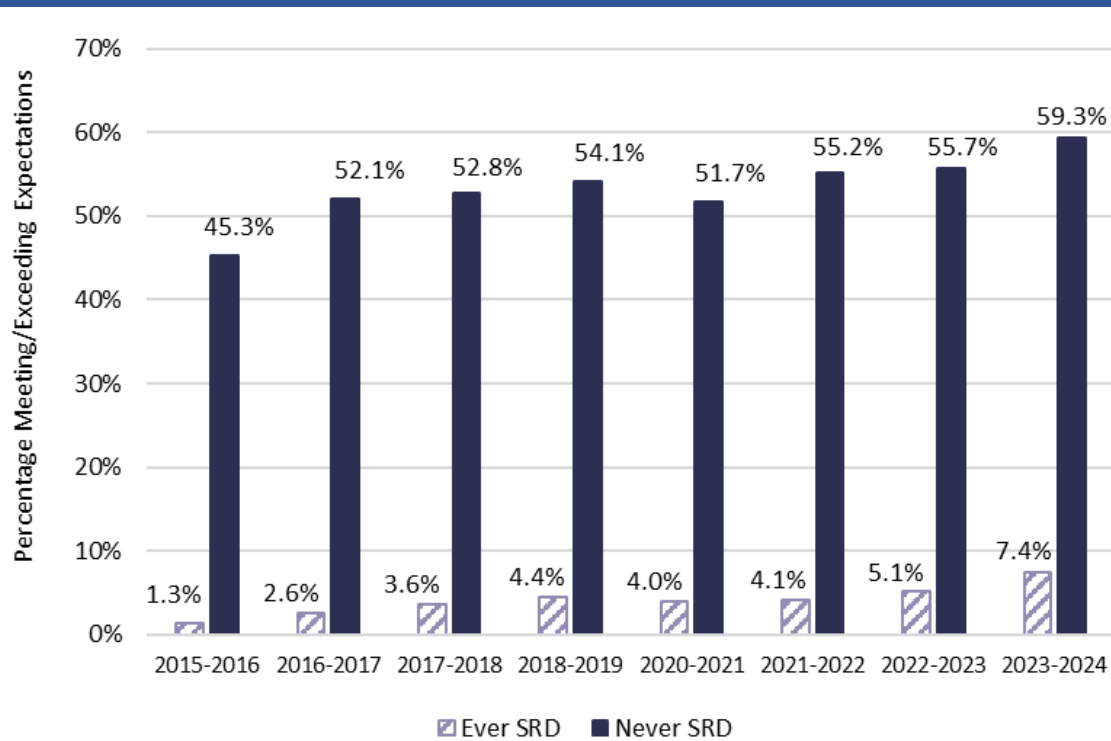
Increase in Proficiency Rates Across All Groups

Like in 2022–2023, 2023–2024 student performance data show the proficiency rates of both groups of students (i.e., those never identified with an SRD and those identified with an SRD at some point between kindergarten and 3rd grade) reaching all-time highs, but the trend remains disproportional. **Across the state, a higher percentage of students than ever before during this data collection reached proficiency during the 2023–2024 school year—42.4% of 3rd-grade students met or exceeded expectations on CMAS ELA (2.3 percentage points higher than last year). This positive trend was also evident in students who had at any point been identified with an SRD (7.4% proficiency rate, 2.3 percentage points higher than 2022–2023) and by their peers who had never been identified with an SRD (59.3% proficiency rate, 3.6 percentage points higher than in 2023) (Exhibit 10.6).**³²

³² Note: The number of assessed students remains depressed from the 2018–2019 school year, although the composition of identities of students assessed remains comparable to previous years (race and ethnicity, English-language proficiency status, disability status, etc.).



Exhibit 10.6. CMAS Proficiency Rates of Students Ever Identified with an SRD and Students Never Identified Have Slowly Improved Since 2020–2021³³



Increasing Proficiency Rates for Students with Multiple Identifications, but Those with an SRD Designation Lag Behind Their Peers

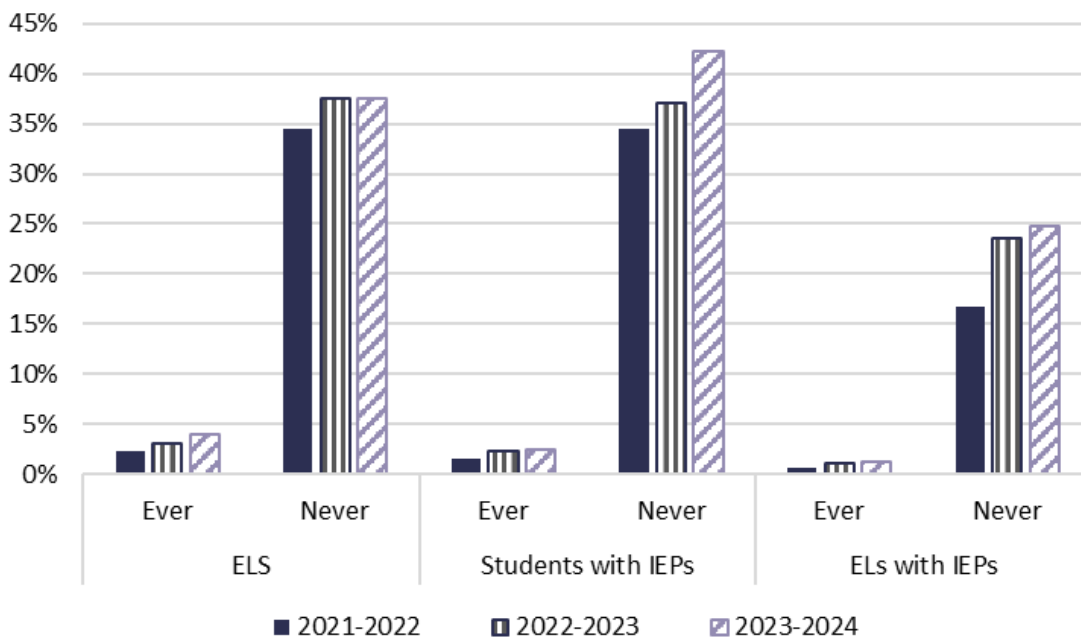
Trends were largely unchanged from previous years, with students with IEPs or ELs who were also identified with SRDs meeting or exceeding proficiency on the CMAS ELA exam at lower rates than their general education peers who had also been identified with SRDs (see Exhibit 10.7). However, **in 2023–2024, students with IEPs and ELs, irrespective of SRD designation, displayed an increase in proficiency rates from 2022–2023, with slightly higher percentage point increases from last year than in previous years.** Students with IEPs who were ever dually identified with an SRD increased their proficiency rates from 1.7% in 2022–2023 to 2.9% in 2023–24. Students with

³³ No data are included for 2019–2020 due to a statewide assessment pause during the COVID-19 pandemic.

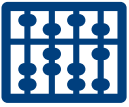


IEPs who were never identified with an SRD made a slightly higher gain in proficiency rate from 38.1% in 2022–2023 to 42.4%. Among EL students, 4.1% of those who were ever dually identified with an SRD demonstrated proficiency (up 1.2 percentage points from 2023), while 38.7% of those never identified with an SRD reached proficiency (0.4 percentage points higher than 2022). Only 1% of students with an IEP, EL designation, and SRD identification reached proficiency on the CMAS ELA exam in 2023–24 compared with 24.3% of their peers who were never identified with an SRD (1.6 percentage points higher than 2023).

Exhibit 10.7. Increasing Rates of Students with Multiple Identifications Are Meeting Proficiency, But Those Identified with an SRD Designation Lag Behind Their Peers



This suggests that students with multiple identifications continue to be underserved by the READ Act on their journey to reading English at grade level by the end of the 3rd grade. This finding, in addition to educator confusion (reported in every year of this evaluation) around how to best serve students with dual identifications and how to prioritize between READ Plans and IEPs, demonstrates that educators need additional implementation guidance so they can best serve students.



Recommendation: These consistent findings suggest the importance of additional guidance and training to support these students, such as the proposed training for teachers to better differentiate instruction for students learning English while learning how to read.³⁴

Early Identification and Exit Is Associated with Higher CMAS Proficiency Rates

In general, **students who were identified with an SRD and/or exited from their SRD status earlier had higher CMAS proficiency rates than their peers who were identified and exited in a later grade level.** For example, 24% of students who were identified with an SRD in kindergarten and exited in 1st grade met the CMAS proficiency standard in the 3rd grade, compared to 15% of students who were identified in 1st grade and exited in 2nd grade, and 7% of students who were identified in 2nd grade and exited in 3rd grade. These findings suggest that early identification of students with significant reading deficiencies, and early intervention, may lead to higher CMAS performance in the 3rd grade.

Similar trends were observed when looking at individual CMAS performance levels for each group of students. Students who were first identified with an SRD in kindergarten and exited in 1st grade most frequently scored in the third-highest performance level on the CMAS exam (i.e., Approached Expectations), with 55% of students scoring in the top three performance levels. In contrast, only 45% of the students identified in kindergarten who exited in 2nd grade performed in the top three performance levels, with students most frequently scoring in the second-lowest performance level (i.e., Partially Met Expectations), and only 21% of students who exited in 3rd grade were in the top three performance levels. Very few students that never exited scored in the top three performance levels (3%). Students who were first identified in 1st and 2nd

³⁴ See "[Colorado teachers need help teaching English learners to read. The state wants more training](#)" on Chalkbeat Colorado.



grade showed similar trends, with the students who exited earlier having higher CMAS proficiency rates than students who exited in a later grade level or students who never exited SRD status.

Recommendation: These findings underscore the importance of early identification and intervention for students with significant reading deficiencies, a key component of the READ Act.



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List of Appendices

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- B: Year 5 Instructional Programs
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