

**GROTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
MARCH 9, 2026 @ 6:00 P.M.
CENTRAL OFFICE, ROOM 11/HYBRID**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Beverly Washington – Chairperson, Adrian Johnson – Vice Chairperson, Andrea Ackerman (remote), Ian Thomas (remote), Jennifer White, Michael Whitney (remote)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sean Corcoran, Mitch Shinbrot, Jay Weitlauf

ALSO PRESENT: Susan Austin, Anne Marie Mancini, Denise Doolittle Sam Kilpatrick, Clint Kennedy (remote), Shannon Weigle, Rebecca Beyus, Lauren Casini

I. CALL TO ORDER – Mrs. Beverly Washington, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. Review of the December 8, 2025, Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Johnson, White: To approve the December 8, 2025, meeting minutes.
PASSED - UNANIMOUSLY

III. K-3 Literacy Update – Attachment #1

Sarah Beth Stonoha gave an overview of the K-3 Literacy Update and Mid-Year Dibels Review.

III. Presentation re: Early Childhood Center at Mary Morrisson – Attachment #2

Denise Doolittle, Susan Austin, Shannon Weigle, Lauren Casini, Rebecca Beyus, Karen Hyatt, and Jane Roberts gave an overview of the Early Childhood Program Expansion and Enhancement.

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Ackerman, Whitney: The meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

March 9, 2026

K-3 LITERACY UPDATE AND MID-YEAR DIBELS REVIEW

Presented by
Sarah Beth Stonoha
Literacy Coordinator

PURPOSE/CONTEXT

1. MOY DIBELS Results

2. From Data to Action: Tier 1 Instruction

3. Family Engagement/Communication

4. Collaboration and professional learning

What teachers see

Composite Score:

Overall summary of a student literacy skills based on the subtests.

ORF-Accuracy

Measures percentage of words correctly during a timed passage reading.

ORF:

Measures reading rate and fluency through a timed passage.

RAN:

Automatic retrieval of familiar words.

	Letter Sounds	Decoding	Word Reading	Reading Accuracy	Reading Fluency	Basic Comprehension	Vocabulary	Spelling	Phonological Processing
Composite Score Goal 389	NWF-CLS Goal 68	NWF-WRC Goal 20	WRF Goal 36	ORF-Accu Goal 96%	ORF Goal 78	Maze Goal 9	VOCAB Goal 26	SPELL Goal 45	RAN Goal 48
399 Benchmark	79 Benchmark	23 Benchmark	53 Benchmark	97% Benchmark	84 Benchmark	8.5 Below	21 Well Below	—	35 Benchmark

NWF-CLS

Measures a student's ability to identify letter sounds in isolation and nonsense words.

NWF-WRC:

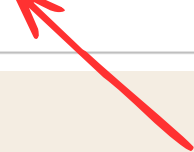
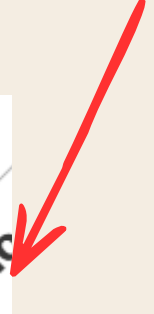
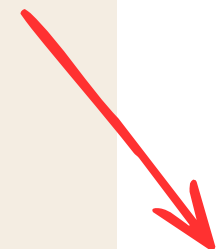
Measures a student's ability to blend letter sounds into whole words.

MAZE:

Measures reading comprehension using a cloze passage.

VOCAB:

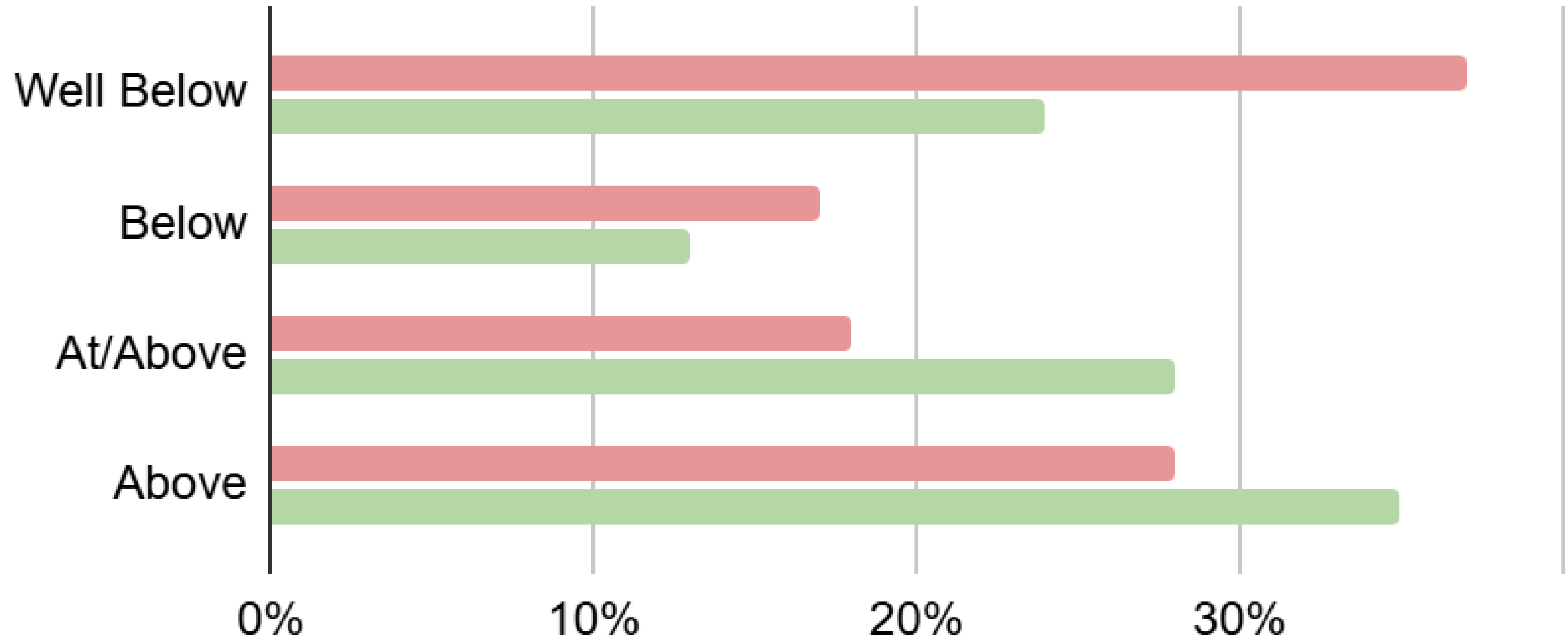
Measures receptive vocabulary knowledge.



High-Level Trends/Takeaways

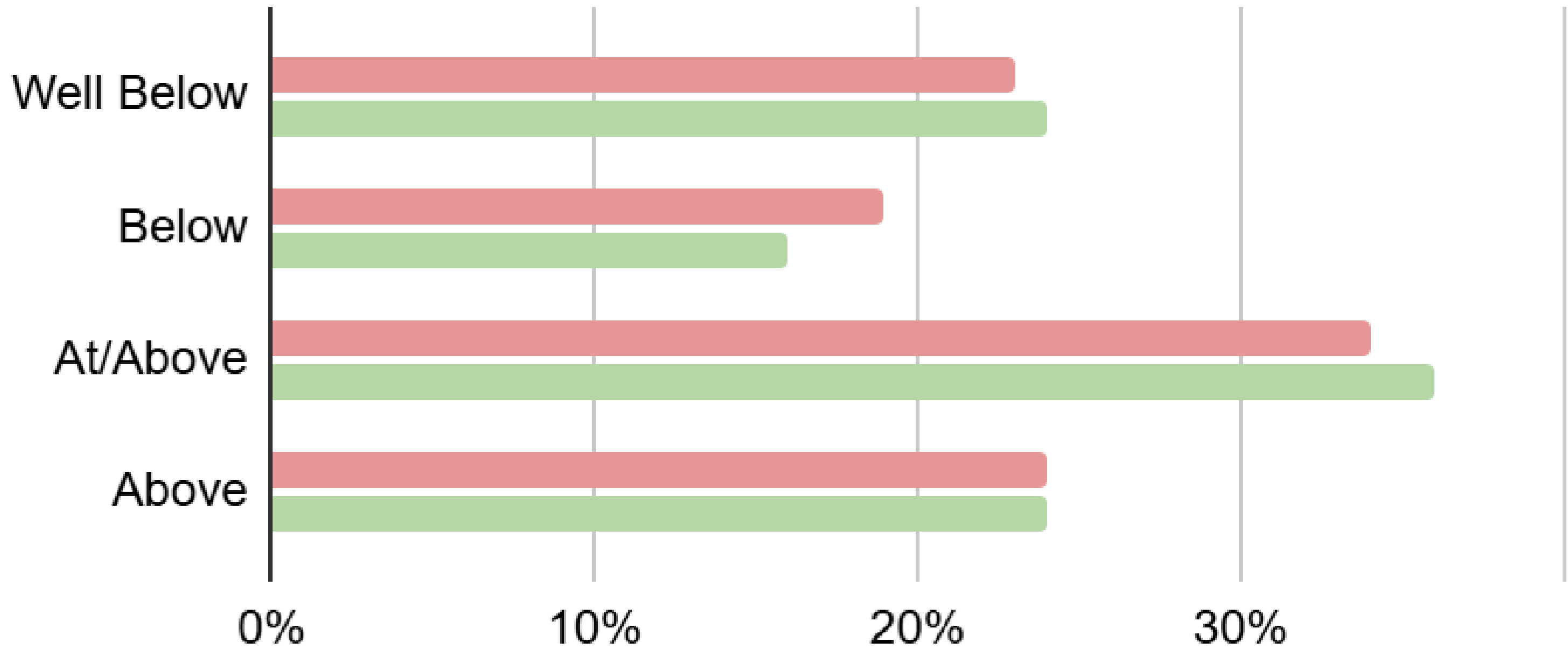
Kindergarten Benchmark Scores '25-'26

BOY Composite MOY Composite



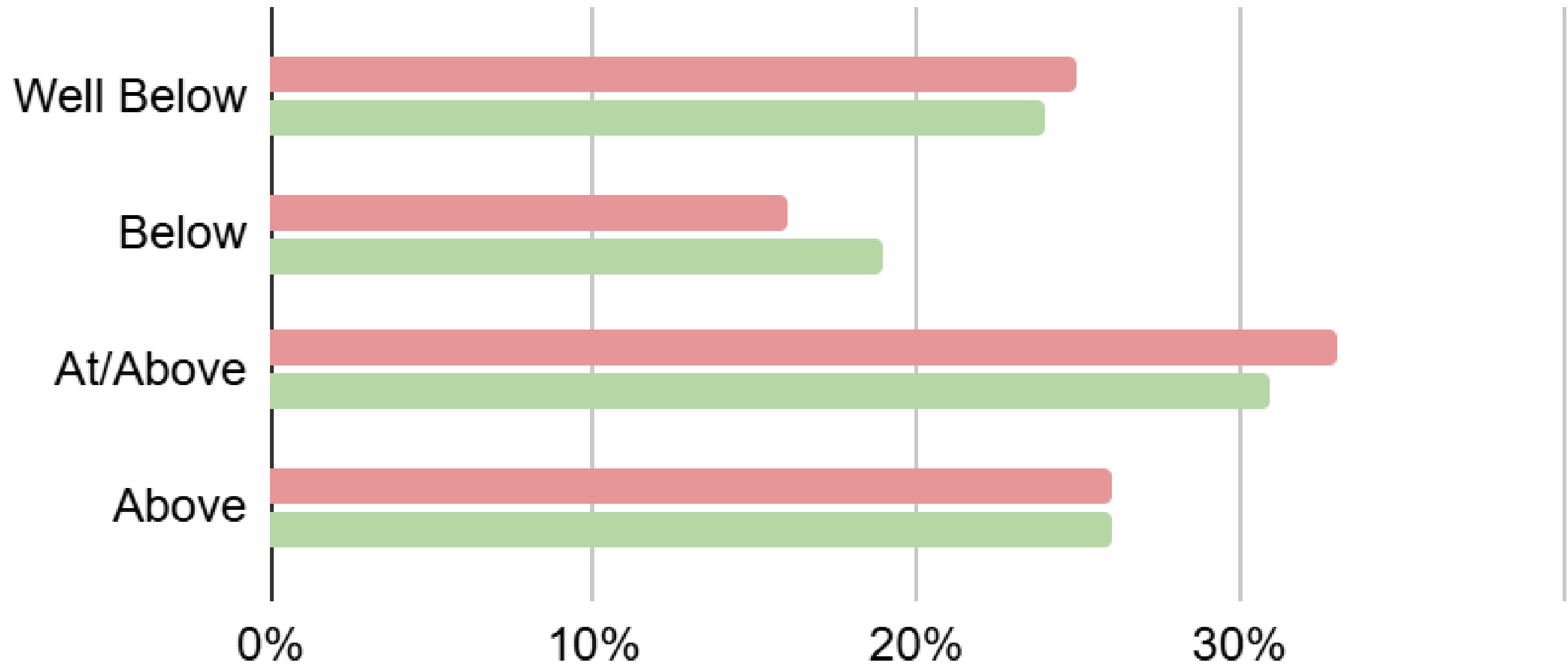
Grade 1 Benchmark Scores '25-'26

BOY Composite MOY Composite



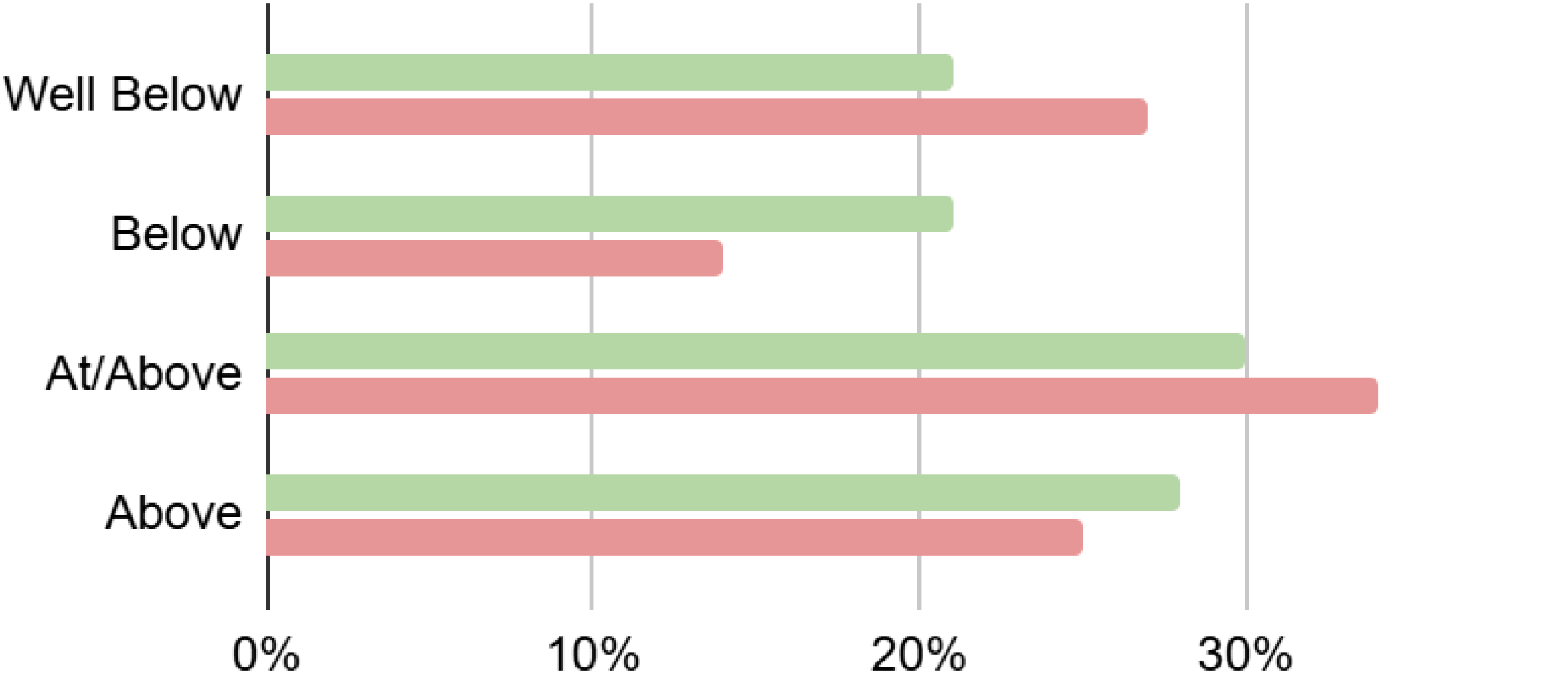
Grade 2 Benchmark Scores '25-'26

BOY Composite MOY Composite



Grade 3 Benchmark Scores '25-'26

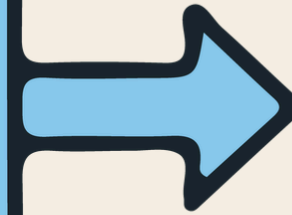
BOY Composite MOY Composite



From Data to Action

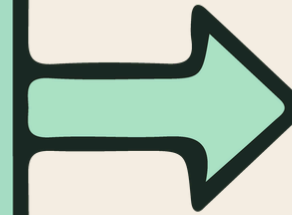
1. Identify Students

MOY & additional
approved assessments



2. Plan for Instruction

Tier 1 refinement
Targeted small groups
Intervention groups



3. Monitor & Adjust

Progress Monitoring
PLC review
Specialist Collaboration

What Tier 1 Looks like in K-3

Every student receives daily, research-aligned literacy instruction before additional supports are added.

Heggerty (K-1)- Phonemic Awareness

- Daily oral sound work
- 10-12 minutes per day

UFLI Foundations (K-3)- Phonics & Word Reading

- Explicit decoding instruction
- 30 minutes per day

Wit & Wisdom (K-5)- Knowledge & Comprehension

- Complex texts & vocabulary
- 60-90 minutes per day

Geodes (K-3)- Connected Reading Practice

- Skill-aligned reading
- Whole group and small group instruction based on need of the students

Communication with Families

Fostering Family Engagement

mCLASS® Home Connect
1st Grade, Middle-of-Year Assessment

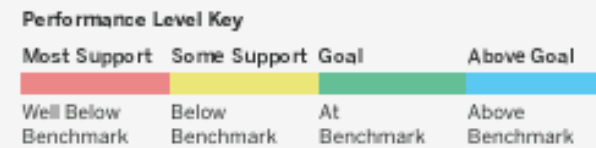
Why is [redacted] being assessed?

The teachers and administrators at our school want [redacted] to read successfully. As part of this commitment, we use DIBELS® 8th Edition (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), which evaluates [redacted] performance on the literacy skills necessary to become a successful reader.

What do the below assessments mean?

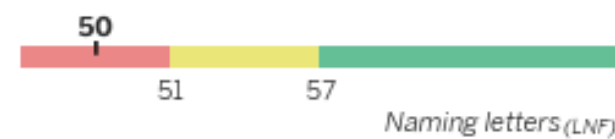
[redacted] has surpassed grade-level expectations in DIBELS. The DIBELS composite score reflects performance on the skills shown below.

434 **DIBELS Composite Score**
Has Surpassed Goal



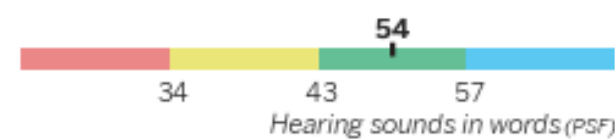
Letter Names
Naming letters from print, measured by DIBELS Letter Naming Fluency (LNF). Can your child...

...name both uppercase and lowercase letters?



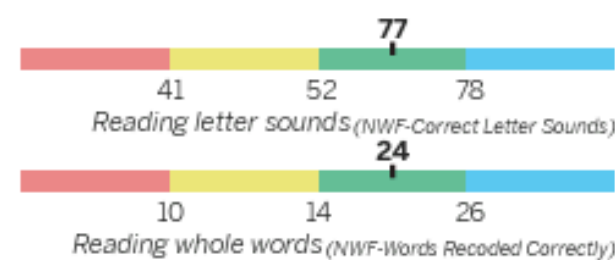
Phonemic Awareness
Hearing and using the smallest units of sound in spoken words, measured by DIBELS Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF). Can your child...

...identify the first, middle and last sound in "sun"? (sss...uh...nnn)



Decoding
Knowing the sounds of letters and sounding out written words, measured by DIBELS Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF). Can your child...

*...sound out simple words like "van"? (vvv...aah...nnn)
...easily read a list of two- and three-letter words?
...easily read more complicated words over time?*



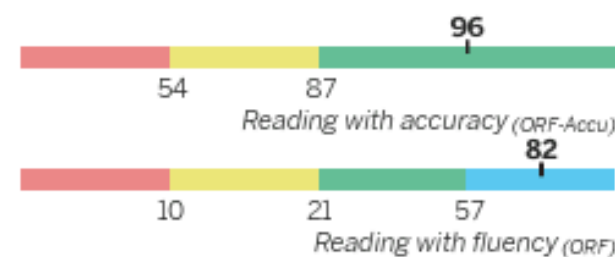
Accurate and Fluent Reading
Reading common words easily, quickly and correctly, measured by DIBELS Word Reading Fluency (WRF). Can your child...

*...recognize familiar words without sounding them out?
...recognize common words such as: "there", "one", "color"?*



Reading words in stories easily, quickly, and correctly, measured by DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency (ORF). Can your child...

*...read stories quickly and easily?
...read aloud smoothly and accurately?
...read words and sentences in short stories easily?*



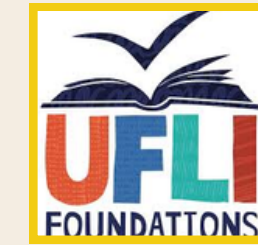
Letter Name& Sounds (LNF, PSF):
Builds sound awareness and letter sound connections.



Letter Name& Sounds (LNF, PSF):
Builds sound awareness and letter sound connections.

Word Reading (WRF): Practice high-frequency words in meaningful text.
Fluency (ORF- Accuracy & Rate): Develop smooth, accurate reading in connected text.

Vocabulary and Language: Build deep understanding of grade-level words and knowledge.



Letter Name& Sounds (LNF, PSF): Builds sound awareness and letter sound connections.

Decoding(NWF): Students learn to sound out and read unfamiliar words.

Word Reading (WRF): Practice high-frequency words in meaningful text.

Fluency (ORF- Accuracy & Rate): Develop smooth, accurate reading in connected text.



Letter Name& Sounds (LNF, PSF)
Builds sound awareness and letter sound connections.

Decoding(NWF): Students learn to sound out and read unfamiliar words.
Fluency (ORF- Accuracy & Rate): Develop smooth, accurate reading in connected text.

DIBELS Report: Activities for Home

██████████ 1st Grade, Middle-of-Year



Activities for ██████████

Even if you have just a few minutes each day, you may be surprised by how much you can help ██████████ learn to read. Here are some activities we recommend based on ██████████ most recent mCLASS reading test. Most of these activities can be done just about anywhere. Feel free to change them a bit to match ██████████ interests or to fit your schedule.

Where ██████████ needs support



Accurate and Fluent Reading

Reading words in stories easily, quickly, and correctly

Word Race

Choose five words your child is learning in school. Write them on a sheet of paper and read them with your child. Now, challenge your child to read the words as many times as possible in thirty seconds. Make it a fun race by saying, "Ready, set, go."

Go Fish

Choose 10 words your child is learning in school. Write each word down on two separate cards, making 10 pairs of cards, 20 cards in total. To play, give each player six cards and put the remaining cards in a drawing pile. Ask your child, "Do you have the word _____?" (Read one word card in your hand.) If he or she has a matching card, you may take it. If not, you can go fish in the pile of remaining cards. Next, it's your child's turn. Repeat until one player matches all his or her cards.

Words in a Hat

As your child reads aloud, write down any missed words on scrap paper. After he or she is done reading, place the words in a bowl or hat. Draw words out and help him or her read the words correctly. To extend the exercise, have your child find the words in the text and read them within the original sentence.

We are working hard to ensure that ██████████ development is on target for success, and we thank you for your efforts at home. Together, we will help ██████████ become a successful reader.

For more activities, visit our Home Connect site: <https://www.mclass.amplify.com/homeconnect>

- Directly aligned to the child's area of need
- Simple (5–10 minutes)
- Focused on foundational skill development

Home Connect: Module-Aligned Reading Support

GROTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Connecticut

January 2026

Complex texts help children grow their vocabulary, deepen their knowledge, and explore big ideas through rich language and content. Here's a sample and Performance Checklist you might come across:

"Galileo's Story Night"
By Kelly Terwilliger

By now, autumn had arrived, and evenings darkened early. One night on the moon rose, Galileo pointed his telescope toward the sky. If it could see far on Earth, why not into the heavens as well? Who knew what the moon might look like close up?

What Galileo saw astonished him. The moon was not perfectly smooth, as it appeared to the naked eye. It was a bumpy moon. Its edges had "ridges of darkness" and "rips of lights," and it was covered with what looked like craters, mountains, and valleys. Entranced by these unexpected details, Galileo drew picture after picture of what he saw through the telescope.

(Terwilliger, 1)

Student Performance Checklist	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Accurately read the passage three to five times.				
Read with appropriate phrasing and intonation.				
Read with appropriate expression.				
Read orally at a good pace and an audible volume.				
Fluently or near-fluently.				

Decodable texts are like workout sessions for kids, helping them flex their word-sounding muscles and build reading fluency. Here's a sample you might come across:

The Nurse Workshop

Lemora is a nurse. She is going to a workshop to sharpen her skills. As she enters the workshop, she sees a girl in a pink shirt. That is her friend, Biddy. Lemora taps Biddy and mumbles hello. Biddy perks up. "This is superb!" she says. "I am so happy to see another friend here."

In the first part of the workshop, Lemora and Biddy take turns checking their vitals. Next, they work on mending burns. Third, they work on being broken bones. The girls are helped. "What a perfect workshop. I love being a nurse," says Lemora. "Will I see you at the next one?" asks Biddy. "Of course! I would not miss it," Lemora confirms.

How to Practice At Home with... DECODABLE TEXTS

WHAT ARE DECODABLE TEXTS?
A decodable text is a book that uses words your child can sound out with the letters and sounds they've learned. It helps them practice reading with confidence! Here are decodable texts that your child might bring home:

- Short passages that focus on a letter or sound they are working on.
- Books that are assigned to your child and brought home to read for practice.

WAYS YOUR CHILD CAN READ DECODABLE TEXTS WITH YOU AT HOME



ECHO READ

One person reads, then the other person repeats it. This helps readers who might have trouble with some tricky words.



CHORAL READ

Read it together as many times as you can! This helps all readers keep the same pace!



RE-READ

when you re-read a text that is familiar, your fluency improves each time.

Remember: listening counts too! Read it to them until they are ready to give it a try!

Keep Reading time short (10-15 minutes is all you need!)

Celebrate effort, not perfection- they will get more practice at school

What if My child still struggles to read it?

Allow them the opportunity to try and support them. Remember, that these are passages that are practiced at school and sent home because your child's teacher knows it is a good fit! Reach out to your child's teacher if you have any questions.

How to Practice At Home with... COMPLEX TEXT

WHAT ARE COMPLEX TEXTS?
In school, your child reads books and passages with new ideas, words, and meanings. They might be harder for your child to read alone, and that's okay. Here's what you should know if you see these handouts coming home for extra practice:

Why is it labeled 'Complex Text'?

This title indicates to students that it can be presented at home. It's not meant for students to read it on their own.

Why is it labeled 'Complex Text'?

If there's no need for a return, it's for parents to read.

If you provide your child with the chance to practice reading the story, words, and phrases they are learning in class.

What should my child know to read this text?

Your child can read the material on their own until they receive the following:

- Accurately recognize all the words and use expression and emotion.
- Build their confidence in reading.

WHAT IF MY CHILD NEEDS HELP TO READ COMPLEX TEXTS AT HOME?

That's okay! Complex texts are meant to stretch your child's thinking — not something they have to read all on their own.

NEED A storytime buddy? I'm your girl! Just click on the Grade Level link and copy up with Mrs. Stone!

Hi Grade 1!

You will find all of the handouts in this link:

[Grade 1: Module 2 Fluency Homework](#)

Hi Grade 2!

You will find each handout below:

[Handout 5A](#)
[Handout 11A](#)
[Handout 20A](#)
[Handout 26A](#)

Hi Grade 3!

You will find each handout below:

[Handout 20](#)
[Handout 2E](#)
[Handout 13A](#)
[Handout 19B](#)
[Handout 27B](#)

Hi Grade 4!

You will find all of the handouts in this link:

[Handout 1C](#)
[Handout 7A](#)
[Handout 11A](#)
[Handout 18A](#)
[Handout 25B](#)

Hi Grade 5!

You will find all of the handouts in this link:

[Handout 2A](#)
[Handout 5A](#)
[Handout 8B](#)
[Handout 13B](#)
[Handout 16B](#)
[Handout 19C](#)
[Handout 26A](#)
[Handout 29B](#)

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By Kelly Terwilliger

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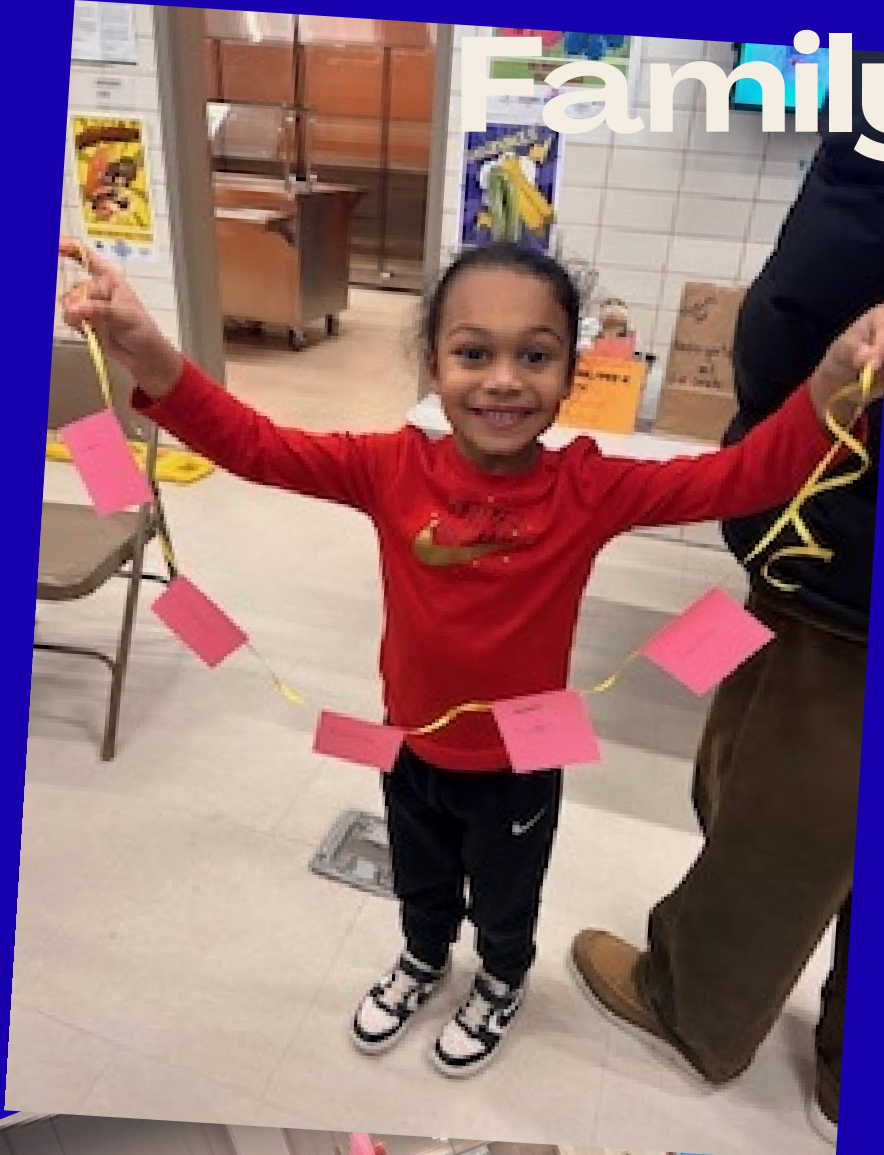
(Terwilliger, 1)

Remember that your child may not be able to read these passages on their own. However, listening to the sentences and vocabulary will provide them with valuable learning experiences and give you insight into what they are studying at school. If you have any questions, feel free to contact your child's teacher.

It also provides:

- This helps families understand:**
- The difference between decodable texts (skill practice)
 - And complex texts (knowledge & vocabulary building)
 - Tips for supporting decoding at home
 - Guidance for listening to and discussing complex read-alouds
 - Links to read-alouds connected to current module topics

Family Engagement Literacy Nights



PLC & Teacher Support

- Weekly PLCs: to analyze student work and plan for interventions
- Literacy How: Professional Development and Support
- District Meetings: Align K-3 instruction & assessment
- Ensure teachers understand the “why” and “how” of the data

High Quality Instructional Materials + Collaboration and PD + Targeted Support → Improved Teaching and Learning



**Early Childhood Program
Expansion & Enhancement**

March 9, 2026

GPS Strategic Plan Pillars

1



Accelerate Academic Achievement



2



Cultivate a Rich and Vibrant Learning Community



3



Strengthen Pathways that Develop Post Secondary Readiness



4

Attract and Grow A Skilled and Supported Workforce



5

Improve Operational Efforts and Increase Fiscal Responsibility



Early Childhood Program Expansion - General Updates

December: BOE accepted award

January: Grant funds available in eGMS
Parent Engagement survey administered
Town Council accepted award 1/13

February: RTM accepted award 2/11

March: TLI day for early childhood educators to be held at Mary Morrisson

Steering Committee meeting monthly and as needed.

Regular communication with Office of Early Childhood (OEC). Operations Grant application not posted yet.

Early Childhood Program Expansion - SY 2026-2027



Mary Morrisson Early Childhood Center

Pre-kindergarten: 4 year olds

9 Classrooms (Full Day)

1 ABA Classroom = 2 sessions
(3 yr AM, 4 yr Full Day)



Thames River Magnet School

Preschool: 3 year olds

3 Classrooms = 6 sessions
(A.M./P.M.)

Enrollment at Mary Morrisson- SY 2026-27

Capacity

Full Day PreK: 162 students

ABA Classroom: 12 students

Current Enrollment as of 3/5/26

Full Day preK: 90 (83 current, 7 new)

ABA Classroom: TBD



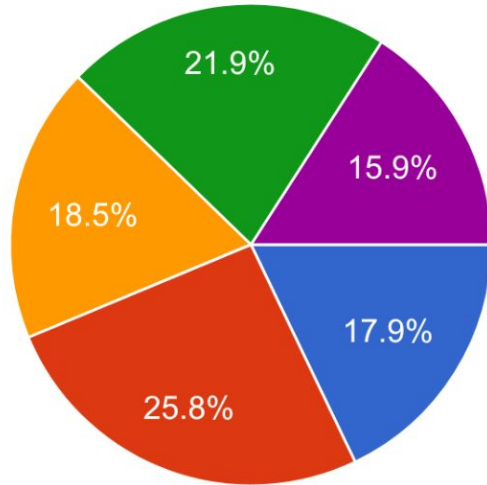
Registration Timeline

- January: Registration opens
- June: Classroom assignments
- post-June: Registration continues, based on availability

Parent Engagement Survey & Family Info Night

- Community outreach through ParentSquare, social media, and website from January 9th - February 11th
- 152 parent responses: including 108 not already in district & 82 with a child who will be 4 yrs old in September
- Family Information Night tentatively scheduled for April 8th at TRMS to include overview of schools and district, registration process, and early childhood program

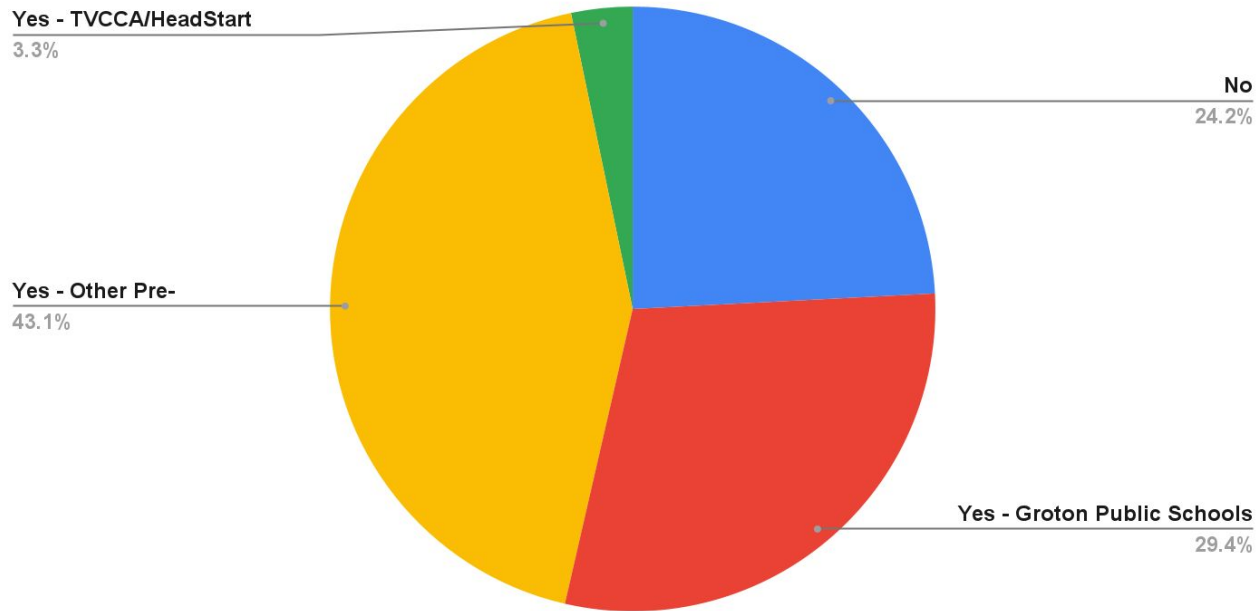
What is your attendance zoned elementary school?



- Catherine Kolnaski STEAM Magnet School
- Charles Barnum Discovery Magnet School
- Mystic River Active Play and Exploration Magnet School
- Northeast Academy Arts Magnet School
- Thames River Environmental and Marine Science Magnet School

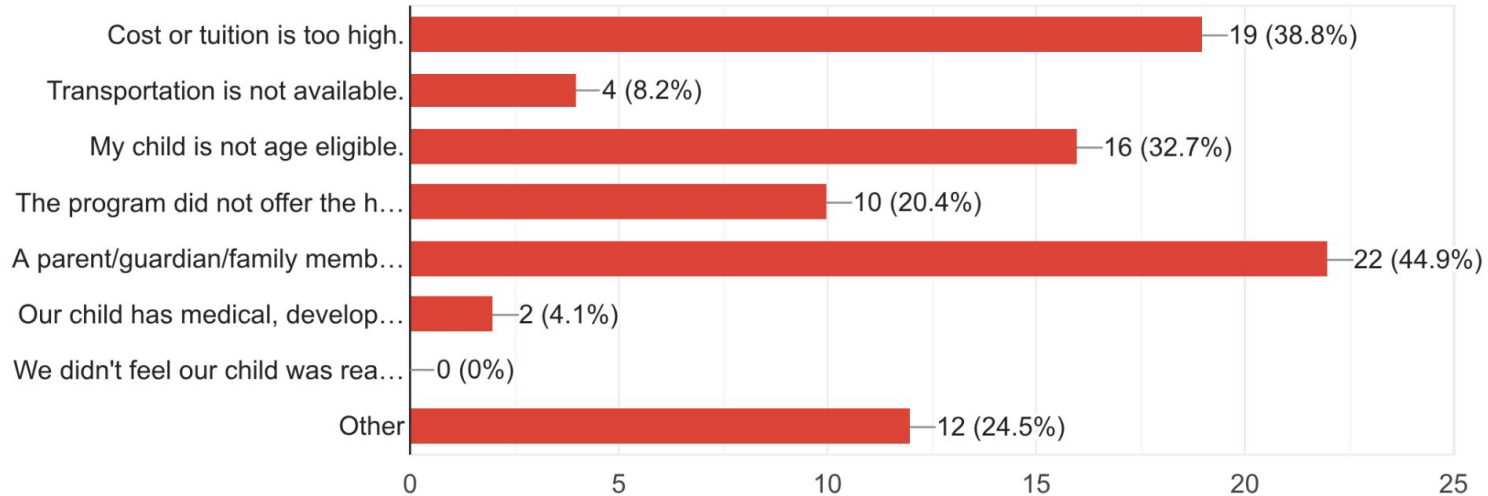
Data Insight: Survey participation represented students from neighborhoods across the district, indicating broad community engagement and interest.

Does your child currently attend an early learning or childcare program?



Data Insight: Only 29% (45) of respondents are currently enrolled in GPS programs, suggesting we successfully reached a strong cross-section of families in the community not presently participating in district offerings. Nearly 46% (71) attend another childcare program.

If your child is not currently attending an early childhood or child care program, why?



Data Insight: Respondents provided various reasons why their children do not attend an early childhood program with cost and another family member at home being the primary reasons.

Open Ended Response Insights



- **Positive Feedback and Community Benefit:** Widespread excitement and support for the program's expansion. Respondents were "absolutely thrilled" about the program expansion, believing it will be an "amazing opportunity," a "great idea," and a "vital resource" for the community, their children's development, and kindergarten readiness.
- **Need for Full-Day Option and Extended Care:** Most frequent comment was the desire for a full-day, 5-days/week program, as the current half-day schedule is impractical for full-time working parents and causes financial strain due to expensive full-time daycare. Many asked about the availability of before and after-school care.
- **Eligibility and Enrollment Questions:** Parents had questions regarding eligibility for children with September-December birthdays (often referred to as "ber" babies) and how this program would impact the existing Transitional Kindergarten (T-K) program. Some also asked about the application/registration process, and if special education services (IFSP/IEP) and smaller bus transportation would be available at the new location.
- **Program Specifics, Services, and Location:** Parents asked about the curriculum (play-based vs. structured), the teacher-to-child ratio, lunch service, before and after care, transportation, and program location.



Community Support for Expanded Early Education

- “This would be an amazing opportunity. We are currently paying \$270 for 3 days and it makes very hard to pay other bills but we want our son to learn and be amongst other kids. We both work full time and need full day daycare.”
- “My son will turn 5 right before school starts August 26th. He is not ready for kindergarten but ready to be finished with preschool.”
- “We are very excited to hear that GPS is looking into more options for Early Childhood. Our daughter will be 4 next month and we’d love for her to be able to participate in a program like this, but unfortunately the current half day programs offered do not work for us and full time working parents.”
- “My child will be in K next year, but I still wanted to fill this out to say how amazing and much needed this program is. Childcare/preschool is so expensive and a struggle for families. This early learning would be so beneficial so our young learners are ready for the intensity of kindergarten.”
- “We would love for our son to be able to go to the Early Childhood/Pre-K program. Getting him into some structured learning and interacting with kids his age would be great for him.”
- “GPS Pre-K has been there for all three of my children, and it has been an integral part of the care and education plans for my family. This is a vital resource for our community, and has prepared all of my children for their elementary school experience.”



Community Support for Expanded Early Education

- The pre-k program did wonders for my oldest child (now 4th grader). I am very happy to hear that Groton is expanding this program and additional students may be able to get the same amazing experience of pre-k. As a military family, we have moved often and nothing has compared to Groton schools.
- I would like to see a educational program that is still play based. Where children can explore and use their natural curiosity as a path for their education. While still introducing them to the basics of reading, math and science.
- The Transition Kindergarten program has been demonstrated to be a valuable resource for Groton families and helps to fill the gap for children like my daughter who will turn five in November after the September 1 cut-off date. She has attended the Groton pre-k program, but she would benefit tremendously from a full-day TK program. She loves school, and she has expressed interest in attending specials classes like gym and music, lunch in the cafeteria, and she needs a greater challenge next year academically.

Facilities Upgrade



- Building assessment for repairs completed
- Final water testing scheduled
- Steering Committee meeting with OEC Deputy Commissioner on March 19th for final walk through of Mary Morrisson with Fire Marshall
- Furniture being sorted for repurposing and donation
- New furniture order being finalized
- IT order being finalized
- Facilities Department preparing school repair list for bid solicitation