COLORADO
Department of Education

Accelerating Student Outcomes
Transforming Early Literacy in Colorado



Colorado State Board of Education

October 2025

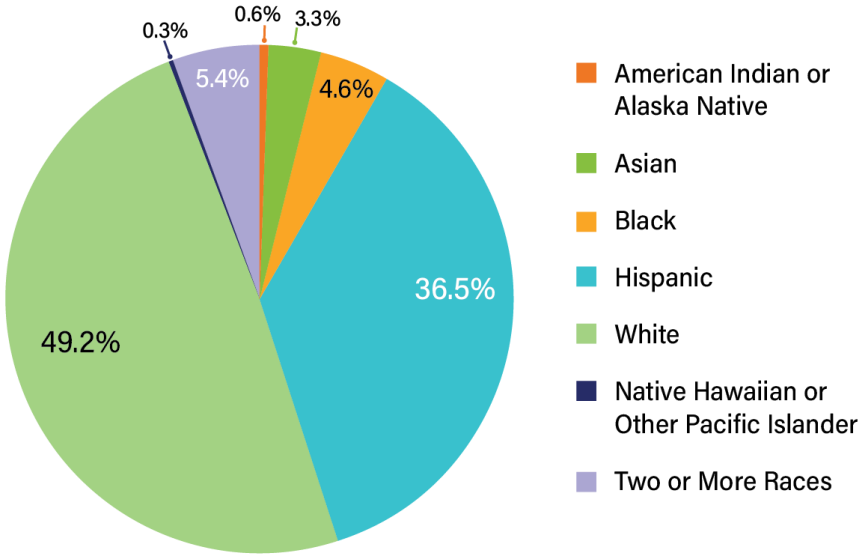
Our schools, students, and educators

178 SCHOOL DISTRICTS

1,927 SCHOOLS

881,065 PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

Student Demographics*



*October 2024 Data

Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch:
394,765 (~44%)

Students with Individualized Education Programs:
117,616 (~13%)

Multilingual Learners*:
105,362 (~12%)

McKinney Vento:
14,498 (~2%)

**Includes both Non-English Proficient and Limited English Proficient students*

Theory of Change

Our Vision

To create an equitable educational environment where *all* students and staff in Colorado thrive

Our Role

To improve student outcomes and ensure students and families across Colorado have access to high-quality schools, we will:

> SERVE

Provide actionable support to local educational agencies

> GUIDE

Implement policy and legislation in an effective way

> ELEVATE

Share the experiences of local educational agencies and students

Our Core Values: INTEGRITY | EQUITY | ACCOUNTABILITY | TRUST | SERVICE

Our Priorities:

- Increase Student Engagement
- Accelerate Student Outcomes
- Strengthen the Educator Workforce
- Provide Operational Excellence

Vision for 2028

By 2028:

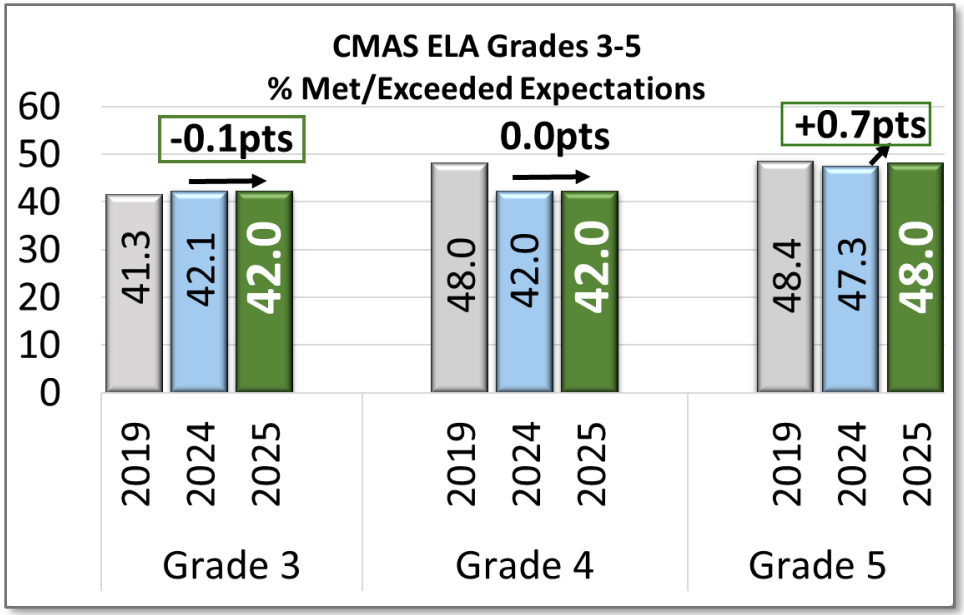
- **60% of 3rd graders** will meet/exceed ELA CMAS expectations
- **Student Group Goals:**
  - Free or Reduced-Price Lunch eligible students: 25.1% → 40% (2028)
  - Students with disabilities: 13% → 20% (2028)
  - Multilingual learners: 11.9% → 20% (2028)
  - Decrease the number of schools identified as Priority Improvement or Turnaround Year 3+ from 41 in 2024 to 35 in 2027-28

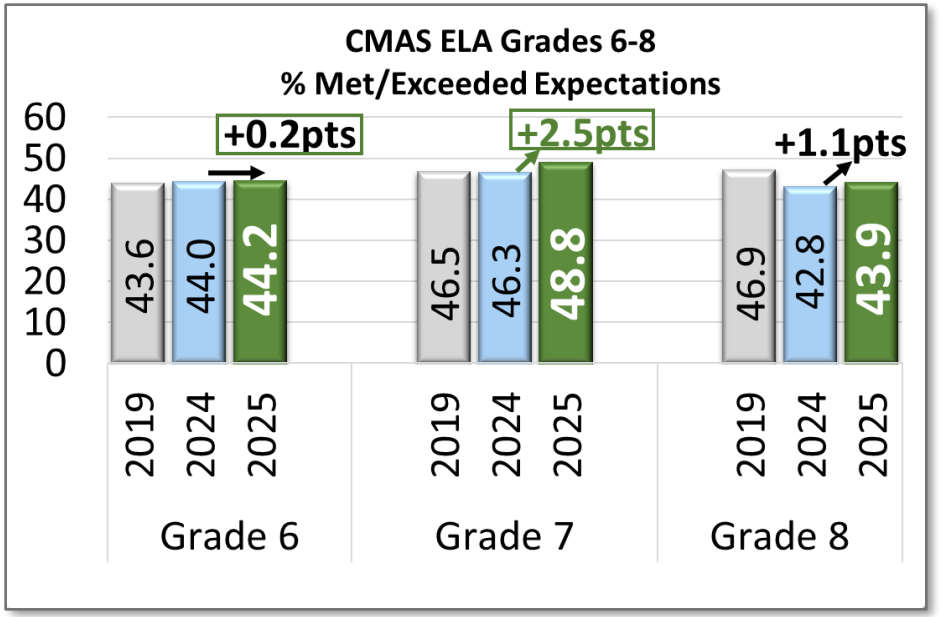
Why This Matters

- **42%** of 3rd graders met or exceeded expectations on ELA CMAS in 2024
- Disparities persist for students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and low-income students
- Literacy by third grade is a key predictor of long-term academic success

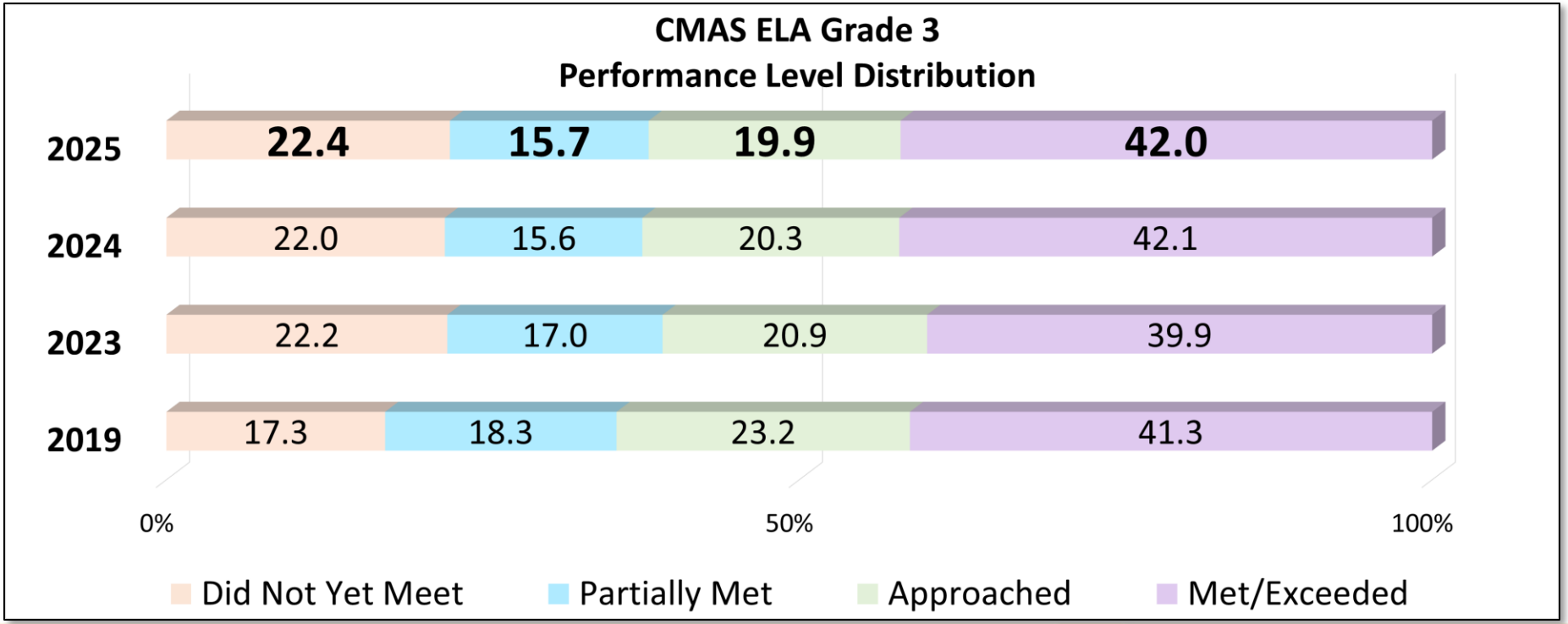


Goal: Increase 3rd Grade ELA CMAS Proficiency from 42% (2024) to 60% (2028)



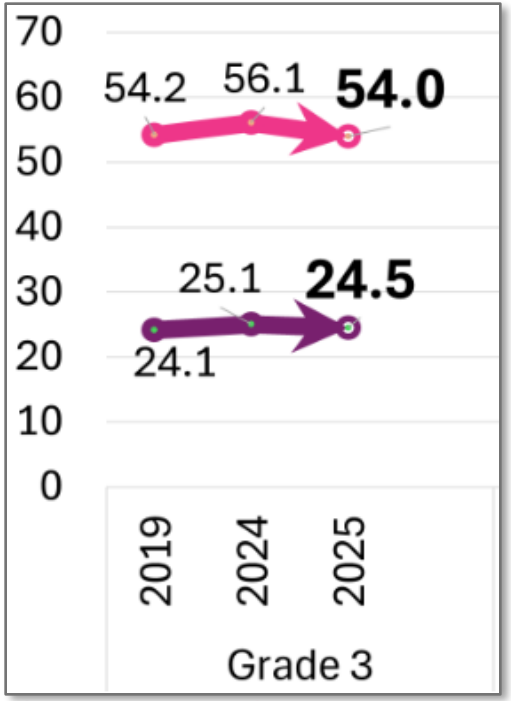


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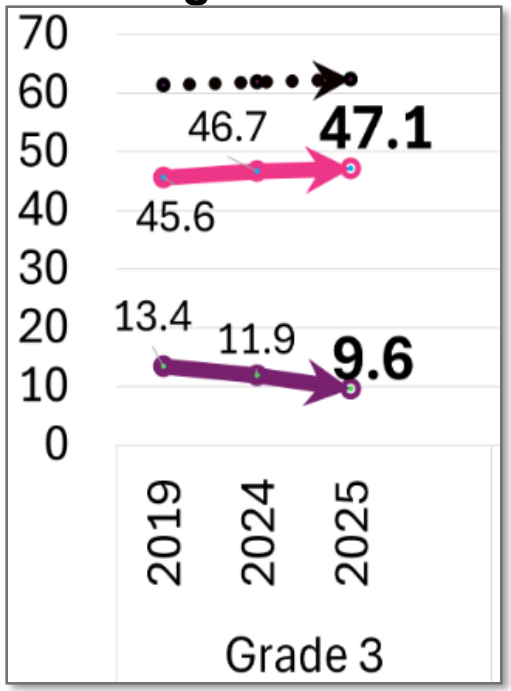
3rd Grade CMAS Student Group % Met/Exceeded

Free/Reduced Lunch



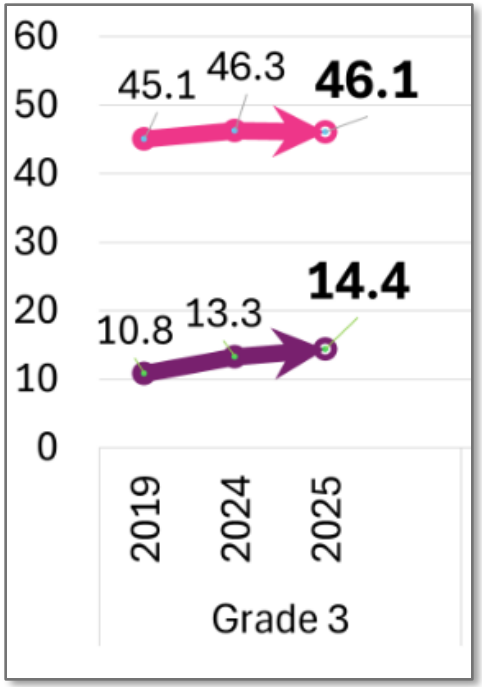
FRL Eligible Not Eligible

Multilingual Learners



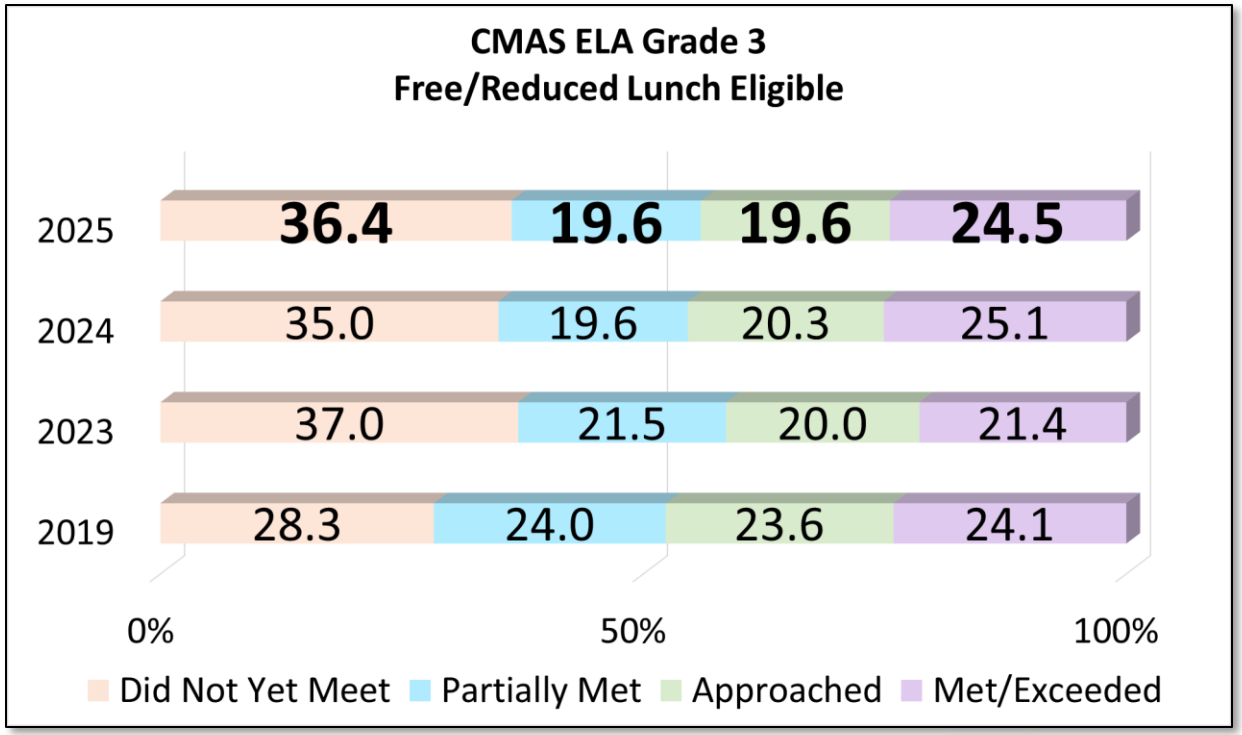
NEP/LEP Not NEP/LEP FEP/FELL

Students with IEPs

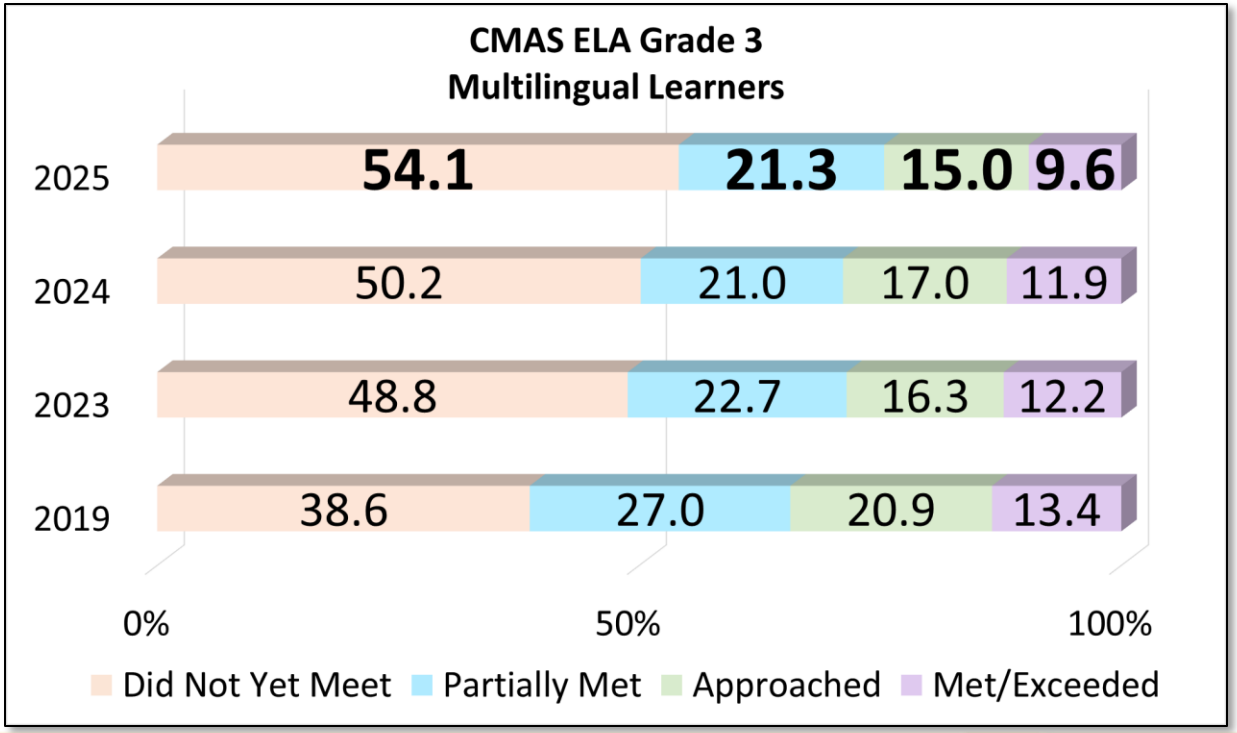


Students with IEPs Students without IEPs

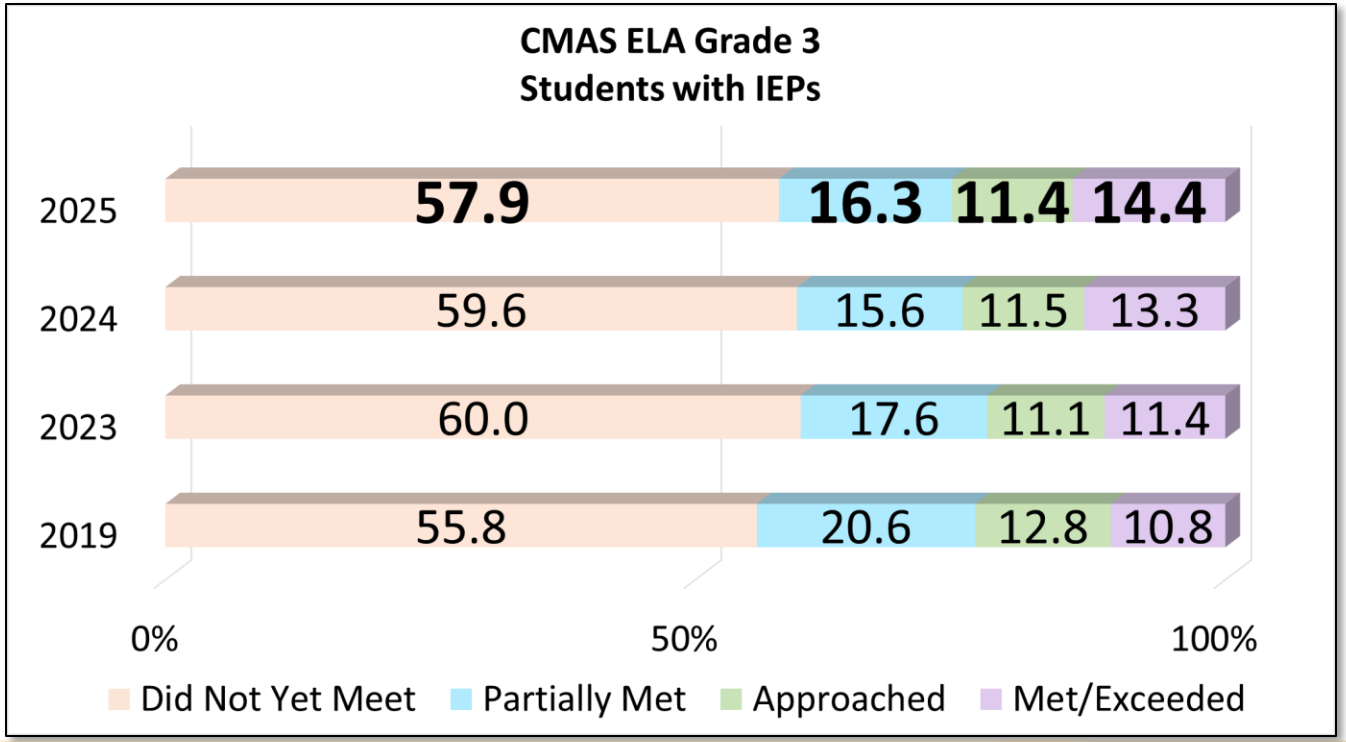
Free/Reduced Lunch Eligible Goal:
Increase 3rd Grade ELA CMAS Proficiency from 25.1% (2024) to 40% (2028)



Multilingual Learner Goal:
Increase 3rd Grade ELA CMAS Proficiency from 11.9% (2024) to 20% (2028)



Students with Disabilities Goal:
Increase 3rd Grade ELA CMAS Proficiency from 13% (2024) to 20% (2028)



What We Heard When Planning

- We need to ensure strong foundations are in place for best first instruction.
- We need to target our resources strategically.
- We need to use our data to identify promising practices and create opportunities for cross-district learning and collaboration.

In response, we developed three core strategies

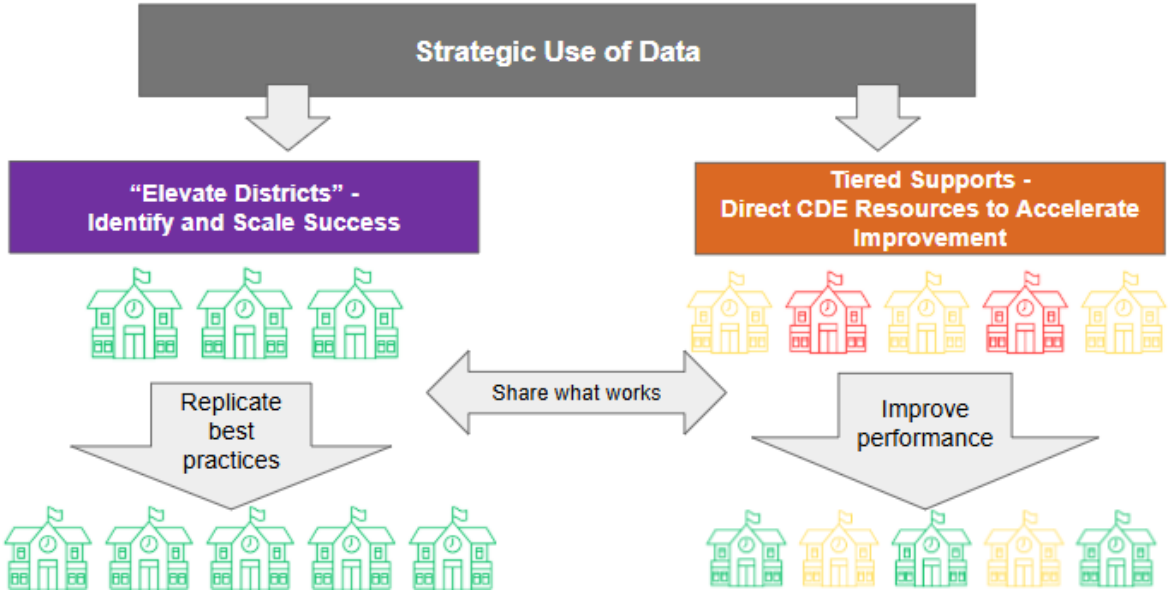
Core Strategies

- **Major Strategy 1:** Analyze state data to identify and scale successful strategies for students – Elevate Effective Practice Models
- **Major Strategy 2:** Redesign CDE Data Systems for Support & Coherence
- **Major Strategy 3:** Strengthen Local Instructional Leadership

Overview of Tiered Supports

Big Idea

Create collaborative structures to strategically use CDE data across the department to identify and scale success and to direct resources and support to accelerate improvement among our highest needs districts to meet our CDE WIGs





Major Strategies to Accelerate School Improvement Efforts

Major Strategy 1: Elevate Effective Practice Models

Activities

- Look across data sources to identify sites achieving exceptional student outcomes for students, particularly in third grade
- Create multiple opportunities for professional learning and peer collaboration grounded in elevating and spreading effective practices
- Refine CDE awards and celebrations to elevate effective practices

Leading Indicators:

- +5% districts in learning cohorts by 2027 – **Achieved**
  - 53% (2025), 383 leaders from 101 districts
  - 43% (2024), 76 districts
- 80% of high-priority districts in targeted professional learning by 2025–26

Major Strategy 2: Redesign CDE Data Systems for Support & Coherence

Activities

- Create a unified, student-centered picture of district needs to drive CDE supports
- Create a 'living map' of supports and resources that align to LEA needs.
- Implement systems for cross-CDE collaboration to increase coherence and responsiveness to field needs

Leading Indicators by 2028:

- Launch of Data Governance Steering Committee - **Achieved**
- Improve decision-making using comprehensive data
- Increase % of high needs districts receiving CDE grants aligned with tiered supports

Major Strategy 3: Strengthen Local Instructional Leadership

Activities

- Develop a shared vision for instruction and definition of Best First Instruction across CDE and assess areas of coherence.
- Develop a robust professional learning menu for districts and schools to access aligned with core needs.

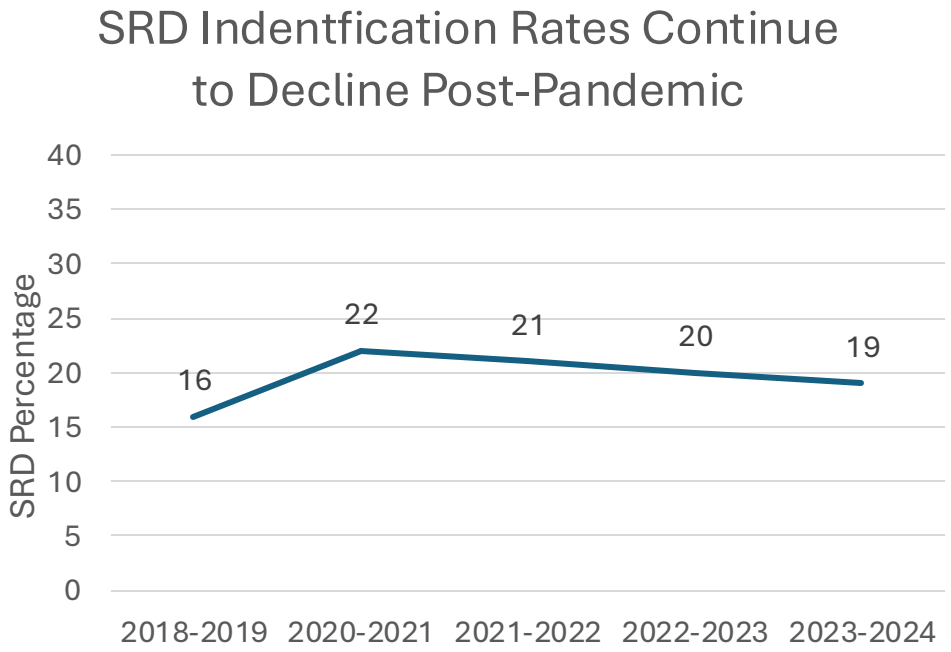
Leading Indicators by 2028:

- 90% of districts use HQIM in ELA and Math
  - **Achieved in K-3 ELA –98%**
- 80% of participants in the best first instruction training reported learning that translated into actionable improvement in their practice
- 5% decrease of Significant Reading Deficiency identifications
- 10% increase of students exiting READ Plans by 3rd grade



Early Indicators of Success

Significant Reading Deficiency Rates Decline

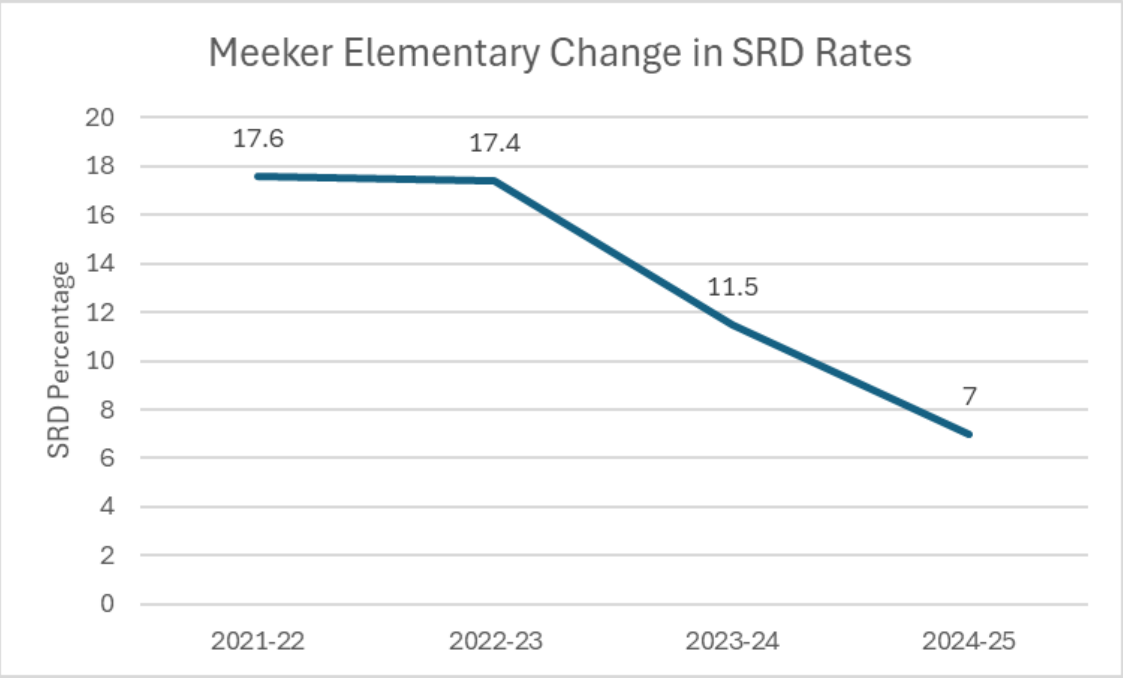


The percentage of students who receive special education services or are English Learners who have an SRD has also decreased for the third consecutive year.

Early Indicators of Success

- Of the 22 schools that participated in the Early Literacy Grant (ELG) for the 2023-24 school year, 63.6% (14) saw a reduction in Significant Reading Deficiency (SRD) from the year prior (2023).
    - While ELG cohorts have a greater percentage of students identified as having an SRD than the state when they apply for the ELG, the ELG cohorts demonstrate greater reduction in the percentage of students with an SRD than the state when participating in the Early Literacy Grant.
- Nearly 60% of K-3 students attend schools participating in the Early Literacy Assessment Tool (ELAT) project during the 2024-2025 school year.
    - For the second year in a row, Colorado ELAT end of year scores for moving students into "at or above benchmark" outpaced the national scores by 6%.

Meeker Elementary School, Meeker RE-1 School District (1 of 2)



Shift to streamlined, consistently applied literacy instruction across K-3.

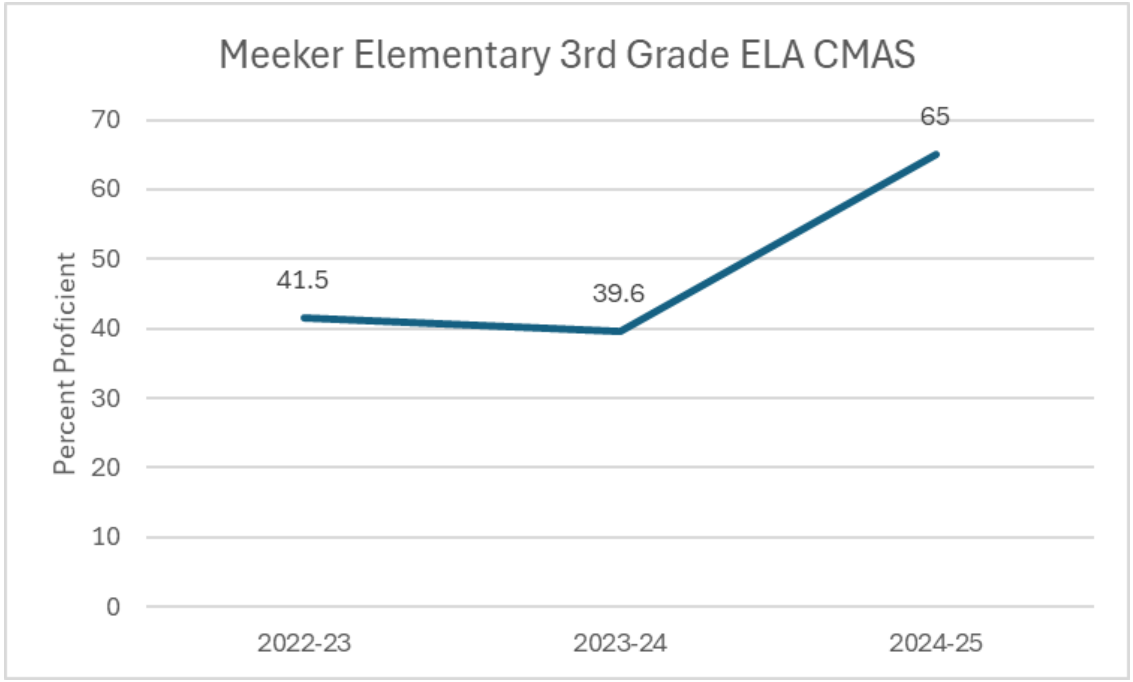
Intensive and explicit literacy instruction integrated throughout the entire school day, using common language and framework across classrooms.

Immediate, active implementation from the start of the year (moving beyond “learning phase” to fidelity in practice).

Met 3/3 ELG goals in 2024-25

SRD decreased from 17% in 22-23 (Year 1) to 7% in 24-25 (Year 3)

Meeker Elementary School, Meeker RE-1 School District (2 of 2)



Dramatically increased 3rd grade ELA CMAS proficiency levels.

76% of K-3 students initially scoring well below benchmark on mCLASS DIBELS 8 assessment progressed by at least one performance category by end of year.

64% of K-3 students initially scoring well below benchmark on the mCLASS DIBELS 8 assessment reached benchmark or above benchmark by the end of year.



Together, we can ensure every child is reading to learn by third grade.
Let's build a system where success is not by chance—but by design.

Read, Learn, Lead