

Independent Evaluation of the Colorado READ Act: Per-Pupil Funding Year 6 Summary Report

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Colorado READ Act EVALUATION

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Executive Summary



In 2019, the Colorado General Assembly passed Senate Bill (SB) 19-199, which included a provision mandating an independent, external multiyear evaluation of the Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act program. The evaluation is now in its sixth year and is being conducted by an independent research team led by WestEd, which includes APA Consulting and RTI International.

The key legislative goals for this evaluation are to (1) help state policymakers and district leaders understand the impacts of READ Act funding and support on students, families, schools, and districts; (2) learn about 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; and (4) gather 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 draws on multiple data sources, including student-, school-, and Local Education Provider (LEP)-level extant data from CDE and publicly available datasets; surveys of LEP staff, principals, reading coaches, and teachers at READ Act–funded schools; and site visits with a sample of Early Literacy Grant (ELG) schools and LEPs. The Year 6 report also introduces new trajectory analyses that track identification of individual students with significant reading deficiencies (SRDs) and reading growth across grade levels over time.

Across 6 years of data collection, the evaluation has tracked implementation progress, examined student outcomes, and documented challenges that persist even as Colorado has made significant strides in early literacy. Taken together, the evidence tells a story of substantial progress and of the work that is still needed to ensure every student benefits from it.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The following sections describe high-level findings for each of the three evaluation questions (EQs). Detailed findings and analyses appear in the conclusion of the full report. The Recommendations section is grouped by audience with specific suggestions for each.

EQ 1: How Are LEPs and Schools Implementing READ Act Provisions?

Adoption of Evidence-Based Materials Remains Widespread

In 2024–2025, 84% of schools used core curricula on the Advisory List, up slightly from 80% in 2023–2024. Usage of supplemental curricula (71%), intervention curricula (86%), and interim assessments (100%) on the Advisory Lists also remained widespread. District administrators

and principals continued to emphasize evidence-based materials as a key driver of literacy growth, with 66% reporting that instructional materials were successful in helping students exit SRD status. There was a slight decline in districts requiring all schools to use the same programs (68% to 60%), suggesting a gradual shift toward greater school-level autonomy.

Feeling Comfortable With Newly Adopted Curriculum Takes Time and Support

As in previous years, teachers, coaches, and principals reported that it takes at least a year to feel comfortable implementing a new core curriculum. The percentage of principals who reported that it took more than a year for staff to reach comfort increased significantly, from 31% in 2023–2024 to 46% in 2024–2025, reflecting growing recognition that curriculum implementation is a multiyear process. At the time of the survey, more than 10% of principals, coaches, and teachers reported they were still not comfortable. Unlike prior years, all three groups reported that the district primarily provided professional development and were also more likely to report it had a positive impact on their implementation.

A Gap Persists in Teacher Comfort With the Assessment System

While over 90% of coaches and principals reported feeling comfortable with the assessment system, more than 40% of teachers reported discomfort—a pattern consistent with prior years. This gap is particularly notable because teachers were most likely to rely on classroom performance data and least likely to use interim assessment data when making instructional decisions, pointing to an ongoing need for targeted support in assessment literacy.

Guidance and Support Are Needed to Implement SB 25-200 Requirements

Understanding of the new SB 25-200 dyslexia screening legislation was limited: 47% of districts and 57% of principals reported they were not sure what the legislation meant for their school or district or had no knowledge of it. Among those with awareness, the most commonly requested supports included screener advisory lists, implementation timelines, and training. Fewer than half the teachers (47%) reported sufficient knowledge of the characteristics of dyslexia, and only 39% felt confident they could modify instruction accordingly.

There Is a Continued Need for Clear Guidance on Students With Multiple Identifications

As in all prior years of this evaluation, administrators and teachers reported feeling less confident supporting students with multiple identifications requiring intervention (having an SRD and an IEP, for example) and expressed uncertainty about which plan should take precedence. Only 37% of districts reported having specific policies for students who qualify for more than one

plan, and only 54% reported clarity on which plan should serve as the primary guidance document. Fewer than 9% of respondents found available curricula fully adequate for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and fewer than 15% found it fully adequate for English learners (ELs).

ELG Schools Report Marked Improvements, Though Sustainability Remains the Greatest Challenge

ELG-funded external literacy consultants and in-school reading coaches were credited with substantial improvements in teacher professional development, instructional alignment, and targeted student support. Seven of 10 site visit schools reported student assessment gains they attributed directly to their ELG, with some schools reporting dramatic improvements. These reports are consistent with the positive trends observed in interim assessment scores following the first year of ELG participation.

However, school leaders consistently noted a gap between interim assessment gains and Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) results. Interim assessments capture foundational skills such as phonics and decoding, while CMAS requires higher-order writing and comprehension skills not directly measured by interim tools—a pattern documented consistently across multiple years of this evaluation (see Appendix B for an overview of the equipercentile analysis conducted in the Year 5 READ Act Summary Report).

Both current and past ELG cohort schools cited sustainability of grant impacts, compounded by ongoing staff turnover, as their greatest challenge. More than 70% of district and school leaders expressed concerns about the long-term sustainability of READ Act–funded positions and implementation efforts more broadly.

EQ 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 and Exit Rates Have Stabilized Post-pandemic

SRD identification rates have stabilized since reaching a post-pandemic high of 22.2% in 2020–2021. In 2024–2025, the rate was 18.7%—within a percentage point of the prior year and continuing a gradual downward trend, though the rate remains above the pre-pandemic level of approximately 15%. Movement rates have held steady since 2021–2022: The percentage of students newly identified with an SRD remained at approximately 4%, while the exit rate declined marginally from 4.3% to 3.5%.

Despite overall stability, ELs and students with disabilities (SWDs) remained more likely than their peers to shift SRD status, with 5.5% of ELs and 7.3% of students with IEPs moving from not being identified to being identified in 2024–2025. Additionally, Black and Hispanic students continued to be reclassified from one status to another[1] at higher rates than their White peers, a pattern consistent across all 6 years of the evaluation.

Students Persistently Identified With an SRD May Benefit from Additional Supports

New trajectory analyses reveal a troubling pattern: Students identified with an SRD early who continued to be identified across multiple grade levels fall progressively further below the Colorado average for their grade level on interim assessments at every subsequent grade level. This suggests that early identification of significant reading deficiency alone is not sufficient to produce recovery for all students.

Additionally, it appears that a subset of students are identified as having a significant reading deficiency later than would be optimal. Their scores trend downward in early grades but do not cross the threshold for formal SRD identification until 2nd or 3rd grade. Students persistently identified with an SRD may benefit from more differentiated, intensified, or sustained interventions to support continued reading growth.

EQ 3: To What Extent Do Students Identified With SRDs Achieve Reading Proficiency by 3rd Grade?

Proficiency Rates Have Stabilized, but the Gap Between Ever- and Never-Identified Students Remains Pronounced

In 2024–2025, 41.9% of 3rd-grade students statewide met or exceeded CMAS English and Language Arts (ELA) proficiency, compared to 42.2% the previous year. The gap between ever-identified as having an SRD and never-identified as having an SRD students remained pronounced: 58.2% of never-identified students met or exceeded proficiency, compared to only 7% of ever-identified as having an SRD students—a difference of more than 50 percentage points, which has been persistent across every year of this evaluation.

Students With Multiple Identifications Continue to Be Underserved

Fewer than 1% of students identified with an IEP\ who are ELs and are also identified with an SRD met or exceeded CMAS proficiency in 2024–2025, compared to 18.8% of peers with an

[1] Includes movement from no SRD to yes SRD and no SRD to yes SRD

IEP and EL designation who were never identified with an SRD. As in every prior year, these findings suggest that students with multiple identifications on their path to reading proficiency by the end of 3rd grade continue to be underserved by the READ Act.

NEP and LEP Students Continue to Lag Behind

Colorado Spanish Language Arts (CSLA) proficiency rates for non-English Proficient (NEP) and Limited English Proficient students continued to fall below both pre-pandemic levels and CMAS proficiency rates for their peers, regardless of SRD status. In 2024–2025, proficiency was 27.7% for NEP/Limited English Proficient students never identified with an SRD and 5.6% for those ever identified—reductions from the prior year in both groups. These findings suggest that NEP and Limited English Proficiency students are not receiving sufficient supports return to, let alone surpass, pre-pandemic proficiency levels.

Early Identification and Exit Remain Associated With Higher Proficiency Rates

Students who were reclassified from Yes to No SRD status showed strong, sustained improvement over time, performing near or at the Colorado average by 3rd grade. Students identified early who were reclassified by the end of 1st grade consistently demonstrated higher CMAS proficiency rates than those who were reclassified later or were never reclassified.

Year 6 trajectory analyses add an important dimension: Early identification of SRD and exit from a READ plan are associated not only with higher proficiency in 3rd grade, but with a trajectory of sustained improvement across all grade levels. In contrast, students who remain persistently identified as having an SRD who remain persistently identified show widening gaps relative to the Colorado average, indicating a need for additional instructional alignment and targeted supports over time. The current system has opportunities to further strengthen outcomes for these students through refined screening, intervention, and progress-monitoring approaches, a signal that the current system is not yet generating the outcomes these students need.

Recommendations

The following recommendations, organized by intended audience and ordered according to the chapter structure of the report, are drawn from 6 years of evaluation data and reflect the most pressing opportunities for improvement across all levels of the READ Act system.

Recommendations for CDE

Strengthen guidance and supports for SB 25-200 implementation. With the 2027–2028 implementation deadline approaching, CDE should prioritize disseminating clear, actionable guidance on dyslexia screening requirements—including Advisory List screeners, timelines, and family communication templates. CDE should also develop and make widely available training to help teachers identify and support students exhibiting characteristics of dyslexia well in advance of the deadline.

Provide clear, actionable guidance on supporting students with multiple identifications. The confusion educators experience around supporting students with multiple identifications (students who are designated with an SRD as well as having an IEP or being an EL) and which of their plans should take precedence has persisted across all 6 years of this evaluation. The statewide training CDE has contracted to develop for educators serving students with IEPs, students who show characteristics of dyslexia, and students who are ELs is an important step. CDE should ensure this training is broadly accessible and pair it with written guidance that gives districts and schools clear direction on coordinating READ plans with IEPs and EL plans.

Investigate current screening thresholds and intervention approaches for persistently identified students. Year 6 trajectory analyses reveal that students who remain persistently identified with an SRD fall progressively further behind over time, and that some students are being identified as having an SRD later than would be optimal. CDE should examine whether current thresholds are sufficiently sensitive enough to flag emerging reading risks early, and whether current intervention approaches are generating measurable progress for students who do not exit SRD status.

Explore sustainability strategies for ELG- and per-pupil–funded positions. Given the consistent evidence of ELG's positive association with student outcomes and the concerns about sustainability that more than 70% of site visit district and school leaders expressed, CDE should develop structured guidance on sustainability planning and consider funding mechanisms such as tiered or phased grant structures that would help schools maintain key positions and consultant relationships beyond the grant period.

Expand Spanish-language literacy materials and bilingual supports on the Advisory Lists. NEP and Limited English Proficient students continue to perform below pre-pandemic levels and below their peers on CMAS. CDE should prioritize approving additional Spanish-language literacy materials and assessments and expanding access to bilingual literacy consultants to address persistent gaps in CSLA proficiency.

Continue to investigate the disconnect between interim assessment performance and CMAS results. This disconnect has been documented consistently across multiple years of the evaluation. CDE should examine whether current instructional approaches adequately develop the higher-order writing and comprehension skills assessed by CMAS and invest in professional development to strengthen assessment literacy across educator roles—with particular attention to helping educators understand both the value and the limitations of READ Act interim assessments.

Recommendations for Districts

Invest in sustained, multiyear curriculum implementation support. With adoption of evidence-based materials now widespread, CDE's priority should shift to supporting educators in implementing curriculum with fidelity over multiple years. Professional development should be district-led, ongoing, and targeted to staff who are still building comfort with implementation.

Build assessment literacy at all levels. The persistent gap in teacher comfort with the assessment system and in the use of interim assessment data to inform instructional decisions point to a need for targeted district support. Districts should equip coaches and principals with strategies to support teachers in interpreting and applying assessment data effectively and should build assessment literacy into ongoing professional learning structures.

Develop specific policies and supports for students with multiple identifications. Only 37% of districts reported having specific policies for students who qualify for multiple plans. Districts should develop clear policies and provide teachers with concrete, actionable guidance on how to coordinate READ plans with IEPs and EL plans to ensure students with overlapping needs receive coherent, targeted support.

Prioritize sustainability planning for READ Act–funded positions. Given persistent concerns about the long-term sustainability of READ Act–funded implementation, districts should engage in intentional and strategic sustainability planning—including identifying alternative funding streams, building distributed leadership models for literacy instruction, and protecting investments in reading coaches and interventionists where possible.

Recommendations for Schools

Leverage professional learning structures to support implementation. Across all 6 years of the evaluation, participants have consistently cited grade-level teams, professional learning communities (PLCs), and collaborative planning time as critical supports for student growth.

Schools should protect and prioritize these structures, particularly as educators continue to navigate new curricula and the demands of SB 25-200.

Prioritize early screening and intervention. Year 6 trajectory analyses reinforce what has been true across the full evaluation: Early identification and early intervention are associated with significantly better outcomes. Schools should ensure that all kindergarteners are screened in a timely manner, that READ plans are developed promptly, and that intervention supports are consistently delivered.

Strengthen parent communication and engagement. Parent communication around READ plans remains highly variable across schools, with many parents reporting limited understanding of what the READ Act provides and what their children's Plans entail. Schools should provide clear, accessible, and consistent communication (such as plain-language summaries, translated materials, and regular progress updates) to ensure families can actively participate in supporting their children's reading growth.

Looking Ahead

As Colorado continues this work, the core challenge is no longer whether to implement the READ Act but how to ensure that its benefits reach every student equitably, that supports are sustainable over time, and that the system continues to improve in response to what the data reveal. Six years of evaluation data paint a clear picture: The foundational infrastructure of the READ Act is in place and producing results for many students. What remains is the harder work of closing the gaps that persist for students with multiple identifications, students learning English, and students who are identified with an SRD but not yet demonstrating consistent progress toward being reclassified away from SRD status.

The trajectory analyses introduced in Year 6 make visible both what is possible when identification and intervention are early and effective and what is at stake for students when they are not. The recommendations in this report are oriented toward that goal: building a system that identifies every child who needs support, delivers that support with sufficient intensity and alignment to produce real progress, and sustains the investments that make it possible.

Introduction



The importance of 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 Reading to Ensure Academic Development (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 significant reading deficiencies (SRDs)[2] who are at risk of not reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.

READ Act

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 provide support aligned with the science of reading. Local Education Providers (LEPs) select core instructional programs, interventions, professional development (PD) programs, and assessments from the Advisory List of Instructional Programming[3] (hereafter, Advisory List) and Approved list for PD that the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) has developed and disseminated[4]. 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.

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 required components of all READ plans; however, each plan must be tailored to meet individual student needs and updated regularly based on progress-monitoring.

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

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

[3] See Advisory List of Instructional Programming on the Colorado Department of Education website.

[4] See Approved Professional Development on the Colorado Department of Education website.

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, Senate Bill (SB) 22-004 was passed, which required all interventionists in 4th- through 12th grade as well as K–5 principals and administrators to complete evidence-based training in teaching reading by August 1, 2024.

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. 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 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 SB 19-199).[5] 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 evaluation questions (EQs):

1. How are LEPs and schools implementing READ Act provisions?

[5] See the Colorado READ Act 2024 Annual Report.

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 SRDs achieve reading proficiency by 3rd grade?

In addition, this year's report focuses special attention on three additional topics. First, we examined how Colorado's early literacy investments extend beyond the READ Act by analyzing student outcomes across four state literacy grant programs: The READ Act–funded Comprehensive ELG and ELG PD programs, as well as the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant and the Structured Literacy Initiative (SLI), which operate independently of the READ Act but share the same goal of improving early literacy instruction. Using a difference-in-differences (DiD) statistical approach, we estimated the association between participation in each of these programs and student outcomes, including the likelihood of being identified with an SRD and performance on READ Act interim assessments (see Chapter 6 for a full discussion of findings). Second, this year's report examines district and school readiness for the new dyslexia screening requirements established under SB 25-200, which will require all schools to implement a universal dyslexia screener beginning in the 2027–2028 school year. Given that nearly half of districts and more than half of principals reported limited awareness of this legislation, we explored what educators currently know about the new requirements, what supports they need to implement them effectively, and how confident teachers feel in identifying and instructing students who exhibit characteristics of dyslexia (see Chapter 2 for a full discussion of findings). Third, this year's report includes an in-depth exploration of K–3 reading trajectories, examining how the timing of SRD identification and persistence of SRD status are associated with student reading growth over time. Using a multilevel growth model, we analyzed how students' standardized interim assessment scores evolved from kindergarten through 3rd grade based on when they were first identified and whether their SRD status persisted or resolved, providing important new insight into which students are and are not being adequately served by current intervention approaches.

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;[6]

[6] CDE's publicly available data are on the Colorado Education Statistics page of the Colorado Department of Education website.

- surveys 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 LEPs and schools that participated in other early literacy initiatives such as the Comprehensive State Development Grant and the Structured Literacy Initiative to better understand the cumulative effects of early literacy investments across the state (See Appendix A for a more detailed overview of site selection).

Purpose and Organization of This Report

This report on the sixth year of the external evaluation of the READ Act describes READ Act implementation during the 2025–2026 school year as well as findings related to the main components of the READ Act: overall approaches to reading (Chapter 1); identifying and supporting students under the READ Act (Chapter 2); READ Act per-pupil funding and related spending (Chapter 3); findings related to the ELG (Chapter 4); student outcomes (Chapters 5 and 6); and comprehensive findings and recommendations organized by each of the evaluation questions (Conclusion).

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 2024–2025 school year. In addition, it is important to note that information collected from districts, school-level staff, and families is 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, schools do not report 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.

1. Overall Approaches to Reading



The READ Act was designed to ensure that all K–3 students receive reading instruction grounded in the science of reading. To support this goal, the Act established the Advisory List and Approved lists of assessments and PD programs, all of which are required to be scientifically grounded and evidence-based. The READ Act also promotes instruction focused on the five foundational reading skills—phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension—and requires educators to complete training in evidence-based reading instruction.

This chapter examines how districts and schools are putting these requirements into practice. It covers the use of materials on the Advisory List, approaches to teaching the five foundational reading skills, how literacy blocks are staffed and organized, and the key successes and challenges schools have encountered in their approaches to reading instruction.

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 in English and Spanish as well as approved lists of diagnostic and interim assessments in both languages. 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. Revisions of curriculums or assessments must undergo a new submission and review process. Some changes in adoption rates of curriculums on the Advisory List between years may be the result of a curriculum used by many schools being on the Advisory List for the first time.

Overall, the usage of all Advisory List curricula (core, supplemental, and intervention) was similar to the previous year. In the 2023–2024 school year, 80% of schools were using core curricula on the READ Act Advisory List. This rose slightly in the 2024–2025 school year, with 84% of schools using core curricula on the Advisory list. Also, in 2024–2025, 71% of schools reported using supplemental curricula and 86% of schools reported using intervention curricula on the Advisory Lists. Finally, 100% of schools reported using approved interim assessments. Of district administrators who adopted a new core curriculum in the district within the last 3 years, 98% of district administrators reported their curriculum was on the Advisory List.

As in previous years, **most districts made decisions about the instructional programs at the district level and required all elementary schools to use the same programs from the READ Act Advisory List.** Although this declined slightly from 68% in 2023–2024 to 60% in

2024–2025, more districts in 2024–2025 reported giving schools a list of preferred Advisory List programs to choose from rather than mandating a single program. Only 6% of districts—a 2% increase from 2023–2024—reported giving schools full autonomy over their instructional program decisions. Assessment decisions have remained more consistent: 82% of district administrators reported making assessment decisions at the district level and requiring all elementary schools to use the same READ Act–approved interim and diagnostic assessments.

As in previous years, **most teachers reported supplementing curricula on the Advisory List with outside reading materials that were not among the provided core, supplemental, and intervention curricula**. Fifty-nine percent reported doing so daily or weekly, up slightly from 52% in 2023–2024. Among the 605 teachers who reported using outside materials, the most common reasons for doing so were to better meet individual student needs (86%), address students' broader academic needs (75%), and fill gaps in the curriculum (55%). These patterns were echoed in site visits: Eight of the 12 schools visited reported that teachers generally adhere to the Advisory List but occasionally bring in outside materials, such as fluency resources, decodable texts, and materials for upper grade levels, to reinforce evidence-based instruction. Teachers in earlier grades (K–2) were more likely than 3rd-grade teachers to report using outside phonics materials.

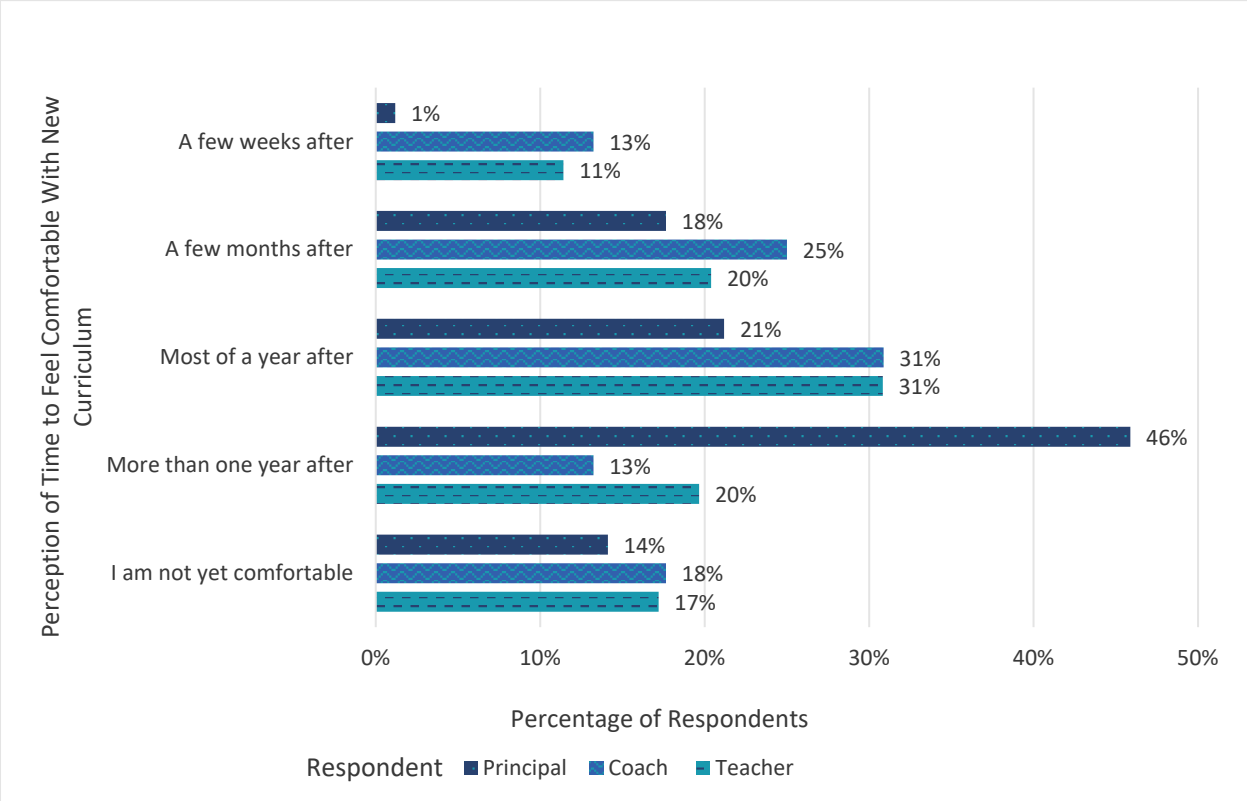
> "Staff reported that the school adhered to approved instructional materials for Tier 2 interventions… [However], teachers occasionally supplemented with additional decodable texts when [University of Florida Literacy Institute] resources were insufficient or when students needed repeated practice with specific skills. These supplemental materials were used with administrative approval and are intended to reinforce structured literacy approaches."
>
> – School Site ABC

How Often Do Schools Adopt New Curricula and How Do They Support Implementation?

As in previous years, most principals (50%), coaches (64%), and teachers (66%) reported adopting a new core literacy curriculum from the READ Act Advisory List of Instructional Programming within the last 3 years. Among principals who adopted a new curriculum, over half reported selecting one of three commonly adopted programs on the Advisory List: Into Reading (2020) (Houghton Mifflin), Amplify CKLA 2nd Edition (2022) (Amplify Education, Inc.), or CKLA (2017) (Amplify).

Most teachers and coaches reported that it took at least a year to feel comfortable implementing a new curriculum.[7] Nearly half of principals (46%) agreed, reporting that it took their staff more than a year to reach that level of comfort—up significantly from 31% the previous year (Exhibit 1.1). This growing recognition that curriculum implementation is a multiyear process is consistent with research in the field (Werres & Châu, 2023; National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2020; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Notably, more than 10% of principals, coaches, and teachers reported that they were still not comfortable implementing the new curriculum at the time of the survey, underscoring the ongoing need for implementation support.

Exhibit 1.1. Most School-Level Staff Needed at Least a Year to Feel Comfortable with New Curriculum



More than 80% of teachers, coaches, and principals reported receiving PD related to their new core literacy curriculum. Unlike in 2023–2024, all three groups indicated that the district, not the curriculum publishers, were the primary providers of this PD. All three groups were more

[7] Respondents were asked "How long did it take [you, your staff] to feel comfortable implementing the new curriculum?"

likely than in the previous year to report that the PD had a positive impact on their ability to implement the curriculum. As in the previous year, school staff also cited standards alignment, administrator support, and resource availability as important factors in supporting successful implementation.

Site visit schools identified several key challenges associated with adopting a new curriculum, most commonly the time required to become familiar with the curriculum's demands, the lack of materials on the Advisory Lists to fill content gaps, and difficulty finding well-trained staff to deliver intervention to students at varying reading levels. Three of nine site visit schools specifically noted that learning how to implement the new curriculum was time-intensive and that the shortage of well-trained staff made it difficult to deliver interventions with consistency and rigor. More than half of site visit schools also highlighted the need for additional materials on the Advisory Lists to support fluency practice, including more decodable texts, a wider variety of text types, and materials that connect to students' backgrounds or are appropriate for both lower-level and advanced readers.

Although no new interim assessments were introduced in 2024–2025, a notable gap in comfort with the interim assessment system persisted across staff roles. **Although over 90% of coaches and principals reported feeling somewhat or very comfortable administering, interpreting, and explaining assessment results, more than 40% of teachers reported feeling uncomfortable with the assessment system**—a pattern consistent with 2023–2024. This gap suggests that teachers continue to need additional support from coaches and principals in using assessment data effectively.

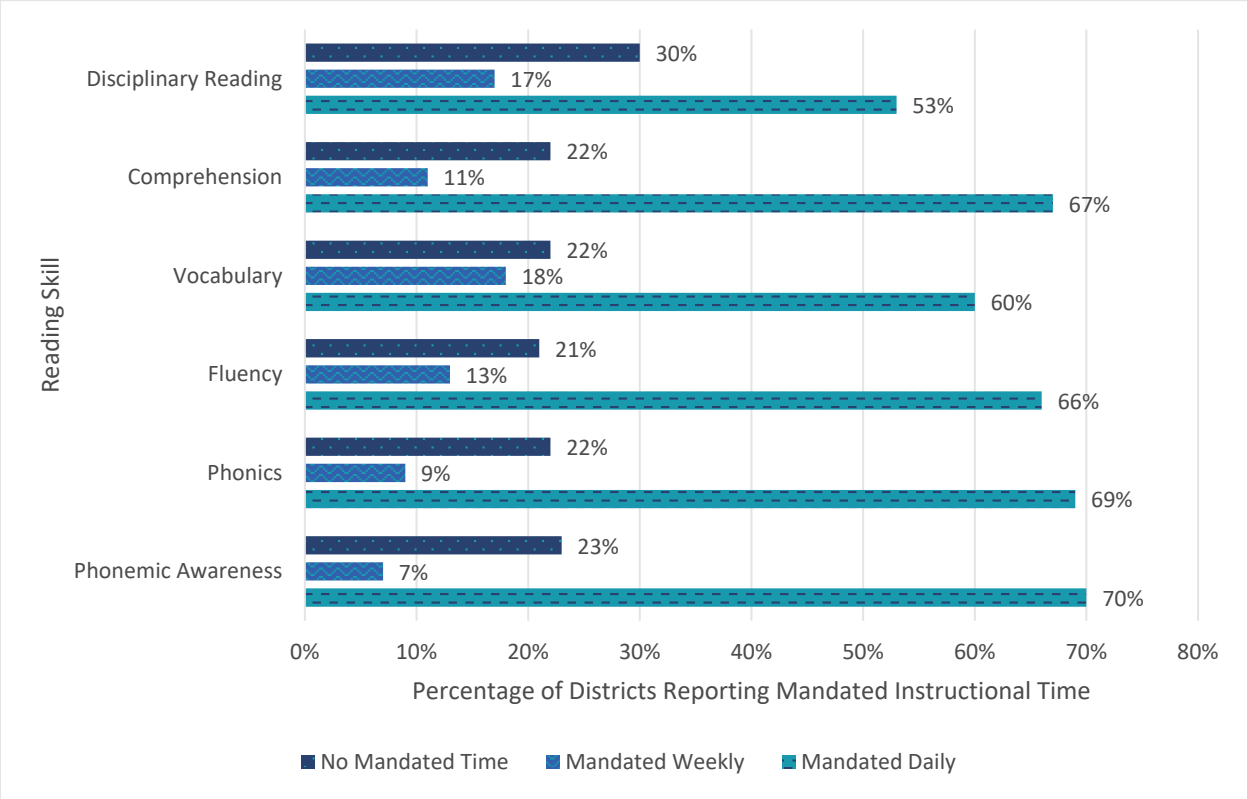
This support is particularly important, given that 80% of teachers reported considering all data sources equally when determining student supports, and that teachers were most likely to rely on classroom performance data and least likely to use interim assessment data when making instructional decisions (see Chapter 3 for more on assessment administration for identification of SRDs). On a more positive note, 88% of teachers reported progress-monitoring all students using an approved assessment at least once every 6 weeks, and eight of 12 site visit schools reported using the 2025–2026 READ Act Calendar and READ plan Procedures guidance documents to stay on track with district assessment timelines.

How Are Districts and Schools Approaching Reading?

As in previous years, more than 40% of district administrators reported mandating the amount of time schools spend on instruction aligned to the science of reading. More than half (52%) required daily instruction of the five foundational reading skills—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension—as well as disciplinary reading (Exhibit 1.2). Although

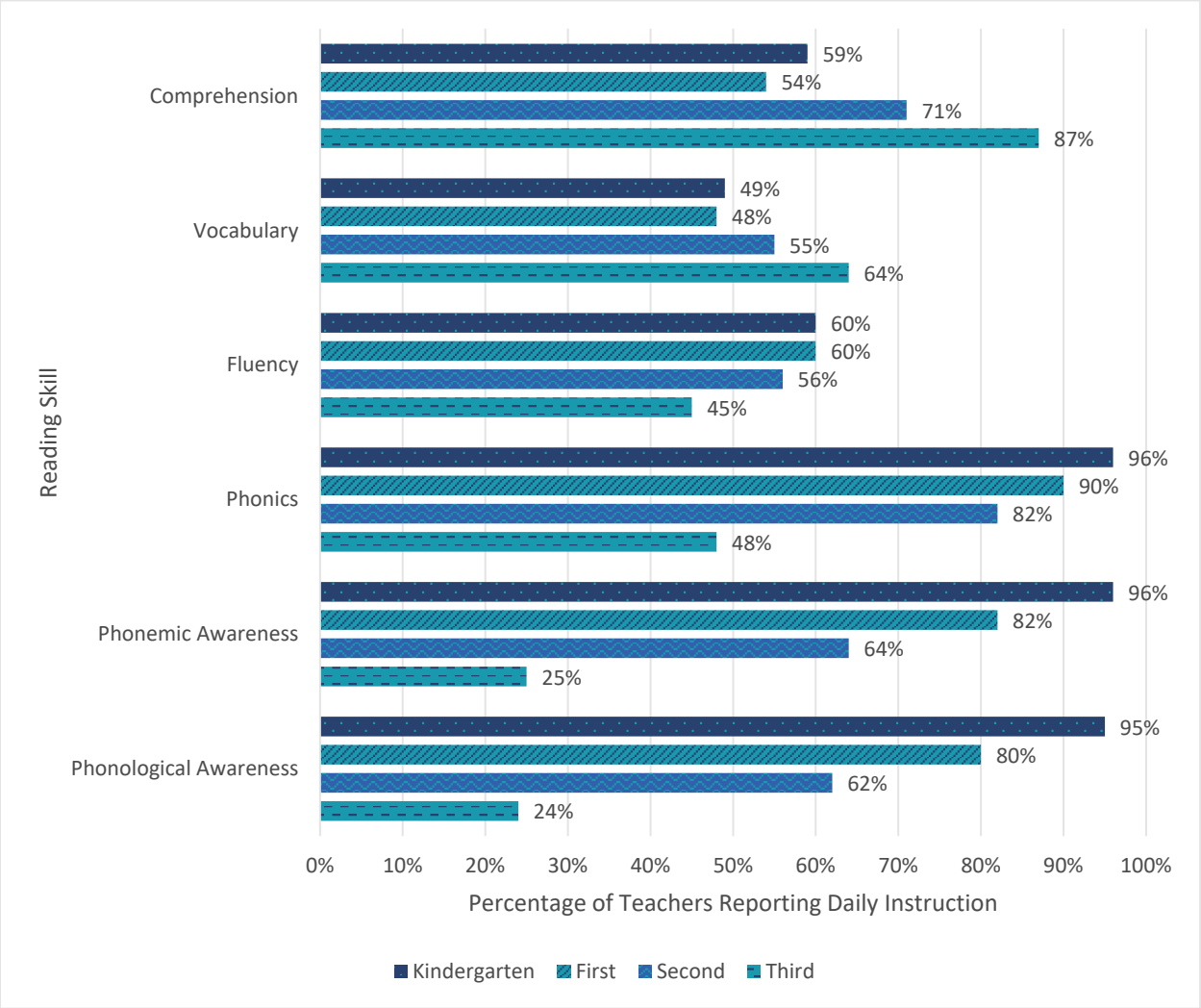
daily instruction mandates continued to be the norm, there was a slight shift toward weekly mandates compared to the previous year. For example, 13% of district administrators mandated weekly vocabulary instruction in 2024–2025, up from 6% in 2023–2024.

Exhibit 1.2. Most Districts Mandated Daily Instruction of the Five Foundational Reading Skills and Disciplinary Reading



As expected, the frequency of mandated instructional time also varied by grade level. District administrators reported that kindergarten, 1st-, and 2nd-grade teachers were more likely to focus on phonemic and phonological awareness within their 120-minute literacy block, while 3rd-grade teachers were more likely to focus on comprehension within their shorter 90-minute block. Teacher survey responses reflected the same pattern—kindergarten and 1st-grade teachers reported spending more daily instructional time on phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency, while 2nd- and 3rd-grade teachers reported a greater emphasis on comprehension.

Exhibit 1.3. Variability in Reports of Daily Instruction by Foundation Skill and Grade Follows Expected Pattern



How Are Literacy Blocks Organized and Staffed?

School-level staff continued to implement tiered instructional models that include daily core and small group instruction, often with the support of other adults during literacy instructional blocks. Similar to 2023–2024, a third of teachers (39%) reported regularly having multiple adults in the classroom for reading instruction. Teachers and principals identified the additional adults in the classroom as paraprofessionals, special education support people, interventionists or reading specialists, parents, volunteers, and student teachers. **This additional staffing was used to support (1) small group instruction, (2) targeted support**

to specific students during whole class instruction, and (3) one-on-one instruction during literacy blocks.

More than half of teachers across all grade levels reported providing daily instruction in all five foundational reading skills, delivered primarily through whole class (45%) and small group (44%) instruction. More than half (57%) of teachers reported that their other students engaged in daily literacy activities independently while they worked with small groups. One-on-one instruction represented the smallest share of daily literacy time for both teachers and coaches. There was also a slight decrease in daily self-guided literacy practice—47% of teachers reported that students engaged in this daily, down from 52% in 2023–2024. Tiered instruction was consistently highlighted as a cornerstone of the reading approach across all 12 site visit schools.

> "Staff noted WIN ["What I Need"] time as a key element of the school's approach to reading. It consisted of small group instruction in which qualified educators used high-quality resources to target individual students' needs. Staff reported that students performing below proficiency in reading, whether identified with an SRD or not, were typically paired with a highly qualified teacher during WIN time."
>
> – School Site DEF

Finally, **most teachers reported tailoring both the frequency and format of their instruction to meet specific students' needs.** More than 70% reported adjusting how often they provided instruction based on the number of students in their classroom who had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or had been identified with an SRD, and more than 80% reported adjusting their instructional format based on the same factors.

> "Staff reported that the READ Act aligned with the school's approach to literacy, in that both focus on prioritizing the students who need the most support in reading. All students engaged in whole group and small group reading instruction, with some receiving interventions based on need. Classroom teachers supported students with READ plans. One staff member stated, 'I do prioritize those kids that are on a READ plan to make sure every day I'm meeting with them and I think that's what my teammates are doing too.'"
>
> – School Site HIJ

What Were Successes Related to Reading Approach and Instructional Materials?

As in previous years, **district administrators and principals identified the use of evidence-based materials and high-quality instruction as the most important factors driving student growth.** Sixty-six percent of district administrators reported that instructional materials were successful or very successful in helping students exit SRD status, and 63% credited instructional materials with raising 3rd-grade reading proficiency. Five site visit schools similarly emphasized that adopting curricula on the Advisory List had played a key role in improving literacy outcomes and reducing the number of students identified with an SRD.

> "Staff felt, due in part to their use of approved resources, that students were performing well on midyear reading assessments (e.g., more students were scoring in the green and blue ranges on midyear mCLASS assessments), reaching their reading goals by the end of the year, and exhibiting confidence as readers. Using common instructional materials across grades strengthened vertical alignment at the school…teachers spent less time searching for instructional materials to use because they had a strong set of resources provided to them."
>
> – School Site KLM

Collaborative professional structures also emerged as a critical support for student growth. More than 60% of district administrators and 75% of principals reported that professional learning communities (PLCs) and grade-level teams played a crucial role in 3rd-grade reading growth.

> "Staff reported that the core curriculum was strong and well-aligned across teachers and grade levels. Additionally, the PLC process supported consistent instruction and helped to ensure instruction was scaffolded to align with grade-level standards."
>
> – School Site NOP

Key Takeaways

Overall usage of curricula on the Advisory List was similar to 2023–2024, with most schools using materials on the READ Act Advisory List.

- In 2024–2025, 84% of schools reported using core curricula, 71% used supplemental curricula, 76% used intervention curricula, and 100% reported using interim assessments on the Advisory Lists.
- Most districts continued to make instructional program decisions at the district level and required all elementary schools to use programs from the Advisory List, though this decreased slightly from 68% in 2023–2024 to 60% in 2024–2025.

Most teachers reported using reported supplementing Advisory List curricula with outside reading materials.

- Fifty-nine percent of teachers reported supplementing curricula daily or weekly, a slight increase from 52% in 2023–2024.
- Of 605 teacher survey respondents who reported that they used outside reading materials, 86% sought to add activities that better meet student needs, 75% sought to better meet students' academic needs, and 55% sought to fill in content gaps in the curriculum.

Most principals, teachers, and coaches reported it took at least a year to become comfortable with implementing the new curriculum.

- Forty-six percent of principals (compared to 31% in 2023–2024) who adopted new curricula reported it took more than a year for staff to feel comfortable implementing it, suggesting that principals are increasingly recognizing that new curricula implementation is a multiyear process.
- Teachers, coaches, and principals noted that the district, not curriculum publishers, primarily provided PD, a change from 2023–2024. Additionally, all three groups were more likely to report that training had a positive impact on their ability to implement the curriculum.

Teachers continued to need additional support using the assessment system.[8]

- While over 90% of coaches and principals reported feeling somewhat or very comfortable using the assessment system, more than 40% of teachers reported

[8] Teachers were asked to rate their level of comfort related to the interim assessment used at their school.

feeling somewhat or very uncomfortable—a gap that coaches and principals play an important role in addressing through targeted job-embedded PD, modeling effective use of the assessment system during instructional walk-throughs, and offering follow-up support to ensure teachers feel confident navigating and applying assessment data in their classrooms.

- Eighty percent of teachers reported considering all data sources equally when determining student supports, though teachers were most likely to use classroom performance data and least likely to use interim assessment data to inform instructional decisions.

School-level staff continued to implement tiered instructional models that included daily core and small group instruction, often with the support of other adults during literacy instructional blocks.

- Similar to 2023–2024, a third of teachers (39%) reported regularly having multiple adults in the classroom to assist with reading instruction.
- Additional staff were used to support (1) small group instruction, (2) provide targeted support to specific students during whole class instruction, and (3) provide one-on-one instruction during literacy blocks.

District administrators and principals emphasized the implementation of evidence-based materials and high-quality instruction as key to student growth.

- Sixty-six percent of district administrators reported that instructional materials were successful in helping students exit SRD status, and 63% attributed success in raising 3rd-grade reading proficiency to instructional materials.
- Five site visit schools also emphasized that Advisory List curricula played a key role in improving students' literacy outcomes and decreasing the number of students identified with SRDs.

2. Identifying and Supporting Students



The READ Act aims to 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 are required to use an interim assessment from the Advisory List to identify K–3 students with SRDs. After screening, students take a diagnostic assessment[9] to identify areas of need, after which instructional staff work collaboratively (with specialists and parents) to develop individual READ plans that include areas of deficiency, targeted interventions, and measurable goals. In 2025, additional legislation requiring the use of universal screeners that support identifying students with characteristics of dyslexia was also passed. All schools will be required to use screen students for characteristics of dyslexia in the 2027–2028 school year. This chapter provides a summary of findings related to the implementation of READ Act requirements related to identifying and supporting students, how districts and schools support students identified with an SRD, and how parents are involved in READ plan activities.

To What Extent Is READ Act Guidance Clear and Supportive?

Consistent with previous years, most districts reported that CDE guidance was clear. They reported clarity in how to identify general education students (93%), ELs (75%), and students with disabilities (SWDs) (75%) with SRDs, as well as in how to move general education students (84%), ELs (67%), and SWDs (65%) off SRD status. However, districts continued to report a lack of clarity with guidance documents related to supporting students with multiple identifications, those students who were identified with SRDs and who also had an IEP and/or were ELs. As staff at one site visit school shared, it took time and discussions with other districts to navigate the CDE guidance related to ELs identified with SRDs and determine best practices. **In addition, there was persistent district-level confusion about how to (1) support SWDs and (2) identify which plans should serve as the primary guidance for supporting a student with multiple plans, with only 58% and 54% of districts, respectively, reporting clarity in CDE guidance related to those topics**.

> Five site visit schools mentioned using CDE- or school-level guidance in their processes for identification. One school reported that its district used CDE's Significant Reading Deficiency Determination Process and Definitions document consistently across all elementary schools. They described screening students, meeting to review data, and using a body of evidence to determine the type and duration of interventions needed in a READ plan.

[9] A subset of the approved interim assessments include embedded diagnostic assessments.

In addition to state guidance, most districts continued to provide their own guidance related to identifying students with SRDs (91%), exiting students from READ plans (66%), and exiting students from SRD status (83%). Overall, principals' perceptions of clarity of state and district guidance remained consistent with the previous year, with most reporting the guidance was clear or very clear. Coaches and teachers reported marginally more clarity related to state-, district-, and school-level guidance on exiting students compared to the previous year, with most reporting the guidance was somewhat or very clear (Exhibit 2.1). This indicates there has been continued improvement in understanding expectations for exiting students from SRD status or READ plans.

Exhibit 2.1. In Line with Previous Years, School-Level Respondents Agree That Guidance on Exiting Students from a READ plan Is Clear or Very Clear

Respondent	State Guidance Is Clear	District Guidance Is Clear	School Guidance Is Clear
Principal	80%	80%	N/A
Coach	81%	85%	90%
Teacher	70%	69%	72%

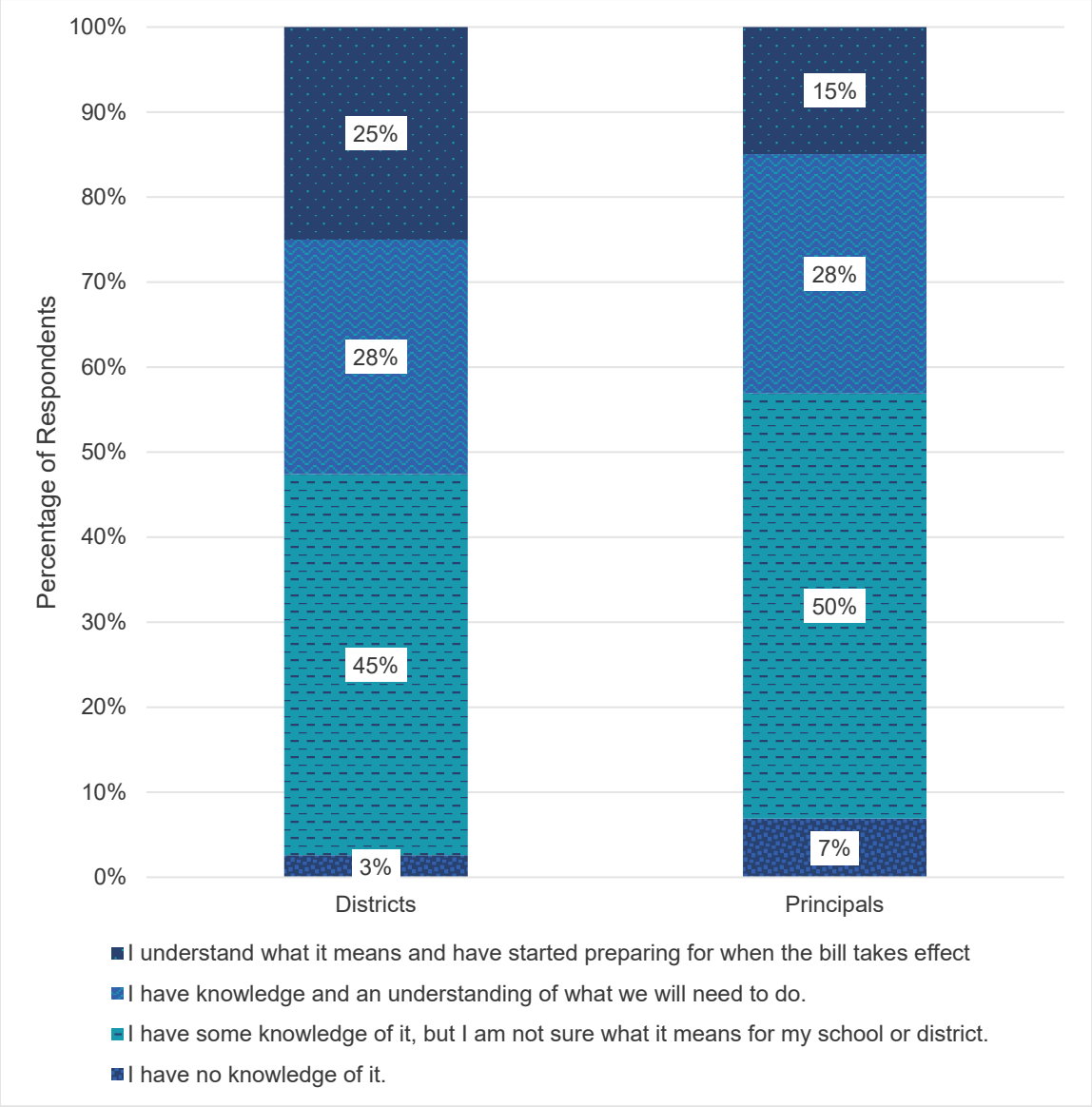
Note. Respondents rated sources on a scale from "completely unclear" to "very clear." The table shows percentages for ratings of "somewhat clear" and "very clear."

Echoing that message of clarity and understanding related to READ Act implementation, **only 26% of districts reported making changes related to their READ Act guidance or implementation in the past year**. Those that did report changes generally reported minor alterations to guidance, including clarifying guidance related to identification or exiting, providing clearer guidance related to parent communication, adjusting the READ plan format, or adding guidance for upper grades.

SB 25-200 defines dyslexia and requires that, beginning no later than the 2027–2028 school year, schools must develop a screening process for identifying K–3 students with characteristics of dyslexia or implement a universal dyslexia screener aligned to requirements. In addition, the screener must accurately and reliably identify students at risk for dyslexia.

Although most respondents felt the guidance and implementation of existing READ Act legislation requirements was clear, understanding related to the new SB 25-200 legislation was significantly less clear. **Almost half of districts (47%) and more than half of principals (57%) reported they were not sure what it meant for their school or district or had no knowledge of the new legislation** (Exhibit 2.2).

Exhibit 2.2. Districts and Principals Report Limited Understanding of SB 25-200 Dyslexia Screening and READ Act Requirements



Those that did have knowledge of the new legislation reported needing additional training, funding, communication guidance, and more information in general to meet the new requirements. District responses about needed supports were somewhat more process-focused, with requests such as:

- "specific list of approved screeners"
- "a timeline for screening and what to do with results"
- "a list of approved assessments and clear communication for all stakeholders"
- "training, guidance, expectations, and screening procedures"
- "training and additional funding to support implementation"

Principals echoed these process-focused needs but also reported concerns about day-to-day implementation, with requests for supports including:

- "training for staff, assessments that screen for dyslexia, and support for talking to parents about it"
- "additional training to help support how the screener tests for the various types of dyslexia, and how to identify appropriate interventions to support students in overcoming those learning needs"
- "support in communicating the results to parents"

In particular, principals requested support in how to communicate the distinction that the results of the screener are not an official diagnosis of dyslexia, but rather "an indication that their child may have symptoms and could benefit from the strategies utilized with students who may have dyslexia." One site visit school also mentioned the desire for additional information related to the new legislation, particularly in terms of how general education teachers would be supported when working with students with characteristics of dyslexia. Together, these responses reflected a need for additional guidance at all levels to support implementation of the new legislation.

How Are Schools Supporting Students With SRDs?

As shared in Chapter 1, in line with the previous year, 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 they were still becoming comfortable with, even with accompanying PD. In addition to the use of high-quality instructional materials to support students, **89% of schools reported ensuring all students were screened and put on READ plans if needed by the end of kindergarten, as required by the READ Act**. When asked about challenges related to early identification, principals reported not wanting to screen students too early (especially those who had not attended preschool), challenges related to

behavior and chronic absences, the burden of having to follow a screener with a diagnostic to get necessary data for READ plan development, and the amount of time needed to complete all screening. Although most schools were able to screen all kindergarteners, these responses highlight one of the first challenges to supporting students identified with SRDs—ensuring early identification.

Students identified with an SRD are placed on a READ plan, which outlines the supports provided to improve reading skills. Similar to previous years, **educators reported frequent collaboration with colleagues as a key component of supporting students under the READ Act.** Teachers most often cited working with reading coaches (78%), reading specialists (65%), other classroom teachers (64%), and special educators (63%). Coaches (74%) and teachers (54%) also continued to collaborate to facilitate grade-level transitions and discuss the transfer of READ plans. This collaboration ensured students identified with SRDs receive necessary supports.

> One teacher shared, "I would say one of the most beneficial things is having planning time for interventions. We meet with grade-level teachers, principals, the literacy coach, Title 1 coordinator, and special education staff to ensure that we place students in meaningful groups based on a variety of needs."

Beyond collaboration, teacher and coach confidence in supporting students is critical (e.g., Guo et al., 2012; Varghese et al., 2016). As in previous years, coaches expressed more confidence than teachers in identifying, exiting, and creating READ plans for students with SRDs. Coaches also had a greater increase in confidence over the past year compared to teachers, especially in terms of exiting students (Exhibit 3.3).

Further in line with previous years, 85% 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. While teachers may not feel as confident identifying students with an SRD or exiting them from a READ plan, they are confident about supporting students while they are on READ plans.

Exhibit 2.3. Coaches Reported a Greater Increase in Confidence Supporting Students Identified With SRDs Compared to Teachers

Method of Support	Change in Coach Confidence From 2024–2025 to 2025–2026	Change in Teacher Confidence From 2024–2025 to 2025–2026
Identifying students with SRDs	+12.12%	+0.39%
Creating READ plans	+4.90%	+2.2%
Exiting students from READ plans	+11.12%	+0.41%
Exiting students from SRD status	+18.75%	+0.38%
Supporting students with multiple identifications	+7.77%	-3.90%
Identifying which plans serve as primary guidance	+9.09%	-1.61%

Note. Respondents rated sources from "not confident" to "very confident." The table shows changes in the percentages for "very confident" ratings from the 2024–2025 school year to the 2025–2026 school year.

Consistent with previous years, READ plans served as one of the many drivers of decisions that teachers and coaches made related to their classroom literacy instruction and support for students identified with SRDs. According to teachers, READ plans had a stronger influence on how they completed small group work (41% strong influence) and one-on-one work with students (42% strong influence), compared to general reading lessons (18% strong influence). **When asked what sources of information informed K–3 reading strategies—principals, coaches, and teachers generally reported IEPs, interim assessment data, diagnostic and summative data, and other test data** as the greatest drivers (Exhibit 2.4). READ plans and EL plans were reported as less influential; however, teachers rated both READ plans and EL plans as more important for informing instruction compared to coaches and principals.

Exhibit 2.4. Data Are Consistently Rated as "Very Important" for Informing K–3 Reading Instruction

Sources Data That Information K-3 Reading Instruction	Principal	Coach	Teacher
READ Act interim assessment data	71.53%	62.38%	40.48%
READ Act diagnostic and summative assessment data	75.98%	71.00%	47.22%
Non-READ Act assessment data	45.81%	45.55%	47.94%
IEPs	45.81%	65.35%	77.07%
READ plans	21.79%	29.70%	38.29%
EL plans	22.09%	35.64%	45.37%

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

When asked more specifically about the usefulness of the school's assessment tools compared to the prior year, all respondents rated the assessment tools as generally useful for identifying students with SRDs, exiting students from SRD status, and adjusting instruction. Numerous site visit schools highlighted strengths of their school's assessment tools, emphasizing how they appreciated the clear information provided, the explanations related to specific skills, the value of the data for precise targeting of intervention skills, clear ability to interpret results and use data to drive instruction, and the benefits of clear and consistent metrics by which to make decisions. In contrast, survey respondents continued to report that the assessment tools were not as useful for predicting CMAS expectations.

As in previous years, common actions for supporting students included adjusting the intervention focus, communicating with parents, continuously progress-monitoring, and collaborating with reading specialists or other staff. **Looking ahead to new legislation, fewer than half of teachers said they had sufficient knowledge of the characteristics of dyslexia (47%) and only 39% were confident they could modify their instruction to meet the needs of students exhibiting those characteristics**. This signals that although teachers are confident in developing and implementing READ plans, they need additional supports to ensure they can identify and support students with characteristics of dyslexia.

How Are Parents Involved in READ plans?

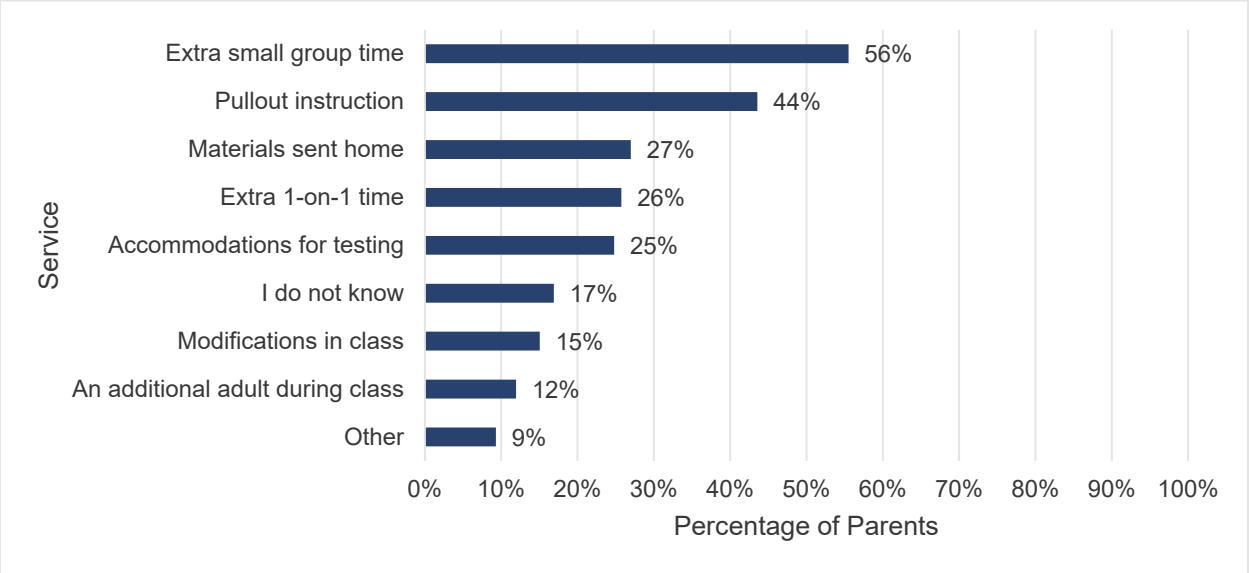
Similar to 2023–2024, 58% (n = 454) of parents who responded to the survey felt informed about the READ Act and the resources it would provide their child. These respondents were primarily parents of children in kindergarten through 3rd grade (82%). Most indicated that their child was not an EL (96%), did not have a 504 plan (88%), and did not have an IEP (77%).

Principals, coaches, and teachers reported parental involvement in SRD determination and support to be similar to previous years, with parents most likely to be involved in reviewing READ plans (42%–53% all of the time), approving READ plans (41%–57% all of the time), and exiting students from READ plans (22%–26% all of the time). Parents were less frequently reported to be involved in developing READ plans, monitoring progress at home, and implementing activities at home.

Notably, the data show considerable variability in the extent of parental involvement. Several parents participating in focus groups echoed this sentiment. In discussing READ plans, one parent stated, “I felt like the teacher was not equipped or very communicative about this right off the bat, so it was poor communication for the whole year. Now we’re at a new school and I feel like it’s much better.” Parents also expressed frustration with READ plans and the lack of involvement they had with them. A parent who was asked about their child’s READ plan stated, “That is a really great question, because I’m still kind of like, what is a READ plan? We had a READ plan, and I had to sign like this agreement, so I thought this is serious, but then it was silence, and I did not hear anything more.”

Parents' familiarity with the READ Act also varied widely. When asked how well they understood the READ Act and what services their child was entitled to after being identified with a reading difficulty, responses were spread fairly evenly from strongly disagree to strongly agree. **When asked more specifically about supports provided through READ plans, parents primarily reported that they understood their child received pullout instruction, extra small group time, accommodations for testing, extra one-on-one time, and materials sent home (Exhibit 2.5)**. However, 17% of parent survey respondents did not know what supports their child received, which was echoed by several focus group parents who reported that they were not clear on what supports their child received for their READ plan in comparison to IEPs, 504 plans, or other plans.

Exhibit 2.5. Parents Understand Children to Receive a Variety of Services Through Their READ plans



How Are Schools Supporting the Additional Needs of Students with Multiple Identifications?

Only 37% of districts had specific policies for developing, implementing, and monitoring plans for students qualifying for multiple types of support, yet 88% of principals reported giving clear guidance to their staff on how to support these students. Even so, districts, principals, coaches, and teachers did not always agree on how READ plans should be connected to other student documents (Exhibit 2.6).

Exhibit 2.6. There Is Some Disagreement Among Respondents About READ Plans Being Fully Integrated or Cohesive with Other Plans and Documents

Respondent	Integrated With IEPs	Integrated With EL Plans	Integrated With School Readiness Plans	Integrated With Other Documents
District	39.02%	32.50%	30.77%	28.95%
Principal	39.64%	19.75%	14.65%	15.13%

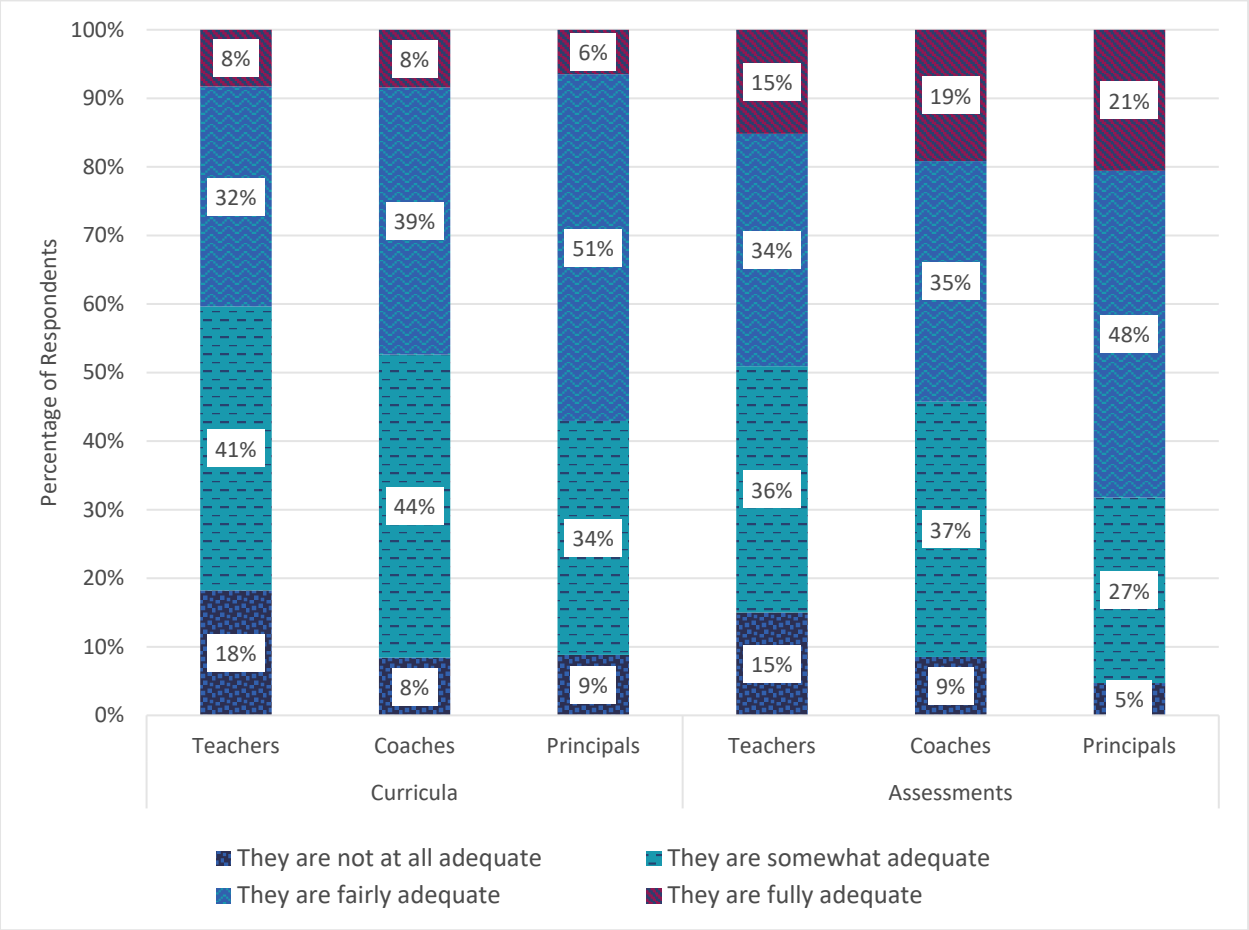
Respondent	Integrated With IEPs	Integrated With EL Plans	Integrated With School Readiness Plans	Integrated With Other Documents
Coach	29.59%	13.40%	9.38%	9.57%
Teacher	31.59%	22.58%	20.50%	19.47%

Note. Responses options were that these documents should be "fully integrated/cohesive," "somewhat integrated," or "not integrated." Table shows the percentage of respondents who chose for "fully integrated/cohesive."

Staff at multiple site visit schools echoed the need for additional actionable guidance and clarity on supporting students with multiple plans, specifically around best practices. Additionally, approaches to supporting students who qualified for both READ plans and IEPs varied significantly across site visit schools. One school noted that students with IEPs who qualify for a READ plan get one and may also receive different interventions under the two plans, as classroom teachers use different resources than the special education department; however, the IEP reading goals are pulled over to the READ plan in either case. Another site visit school took a different approach, stating that the IEP set both interventions and goals; a READ plan was maintained for the student, but it did not have much meaning. Parents also expressed confusion about how plans work together. As one parent reported, "It is not clear that the two [IEP and READ plan] *must* go together. My kid had an IEP prior to READ, it is unclear what does what, the READ plan feels redundant on top of the IEP." Together, these findings signal a need for additional guidance or clarity on expectations for integrating READ plans with other plans and documents.

Despite this confusion, **more than half (57%) of the parents who reported their child received additional supports (n = 343) said the additional supports received due to other plans were very much in alignment with READ plans**. Additionally, coach and teacher perceptions of preparedness and confidence to support ELs and students with specific learning disabilities remained the same as previous years, with most teachers and coaches reporting feeling generally prepared. However, when asked about adequacy of curricula and assessments for students with IEPs and ELs, principals, coaches, and teachers reported that materials were not fully adequate for supporting either student group. Specifically, when asked about adequacy for students with IEPs, fewer than 9% of teachers, coaches, and principals reported that *curricula* were fully adequate (Exhibit 2.7) and less than 22% reported that *assessments* were fully adequate.

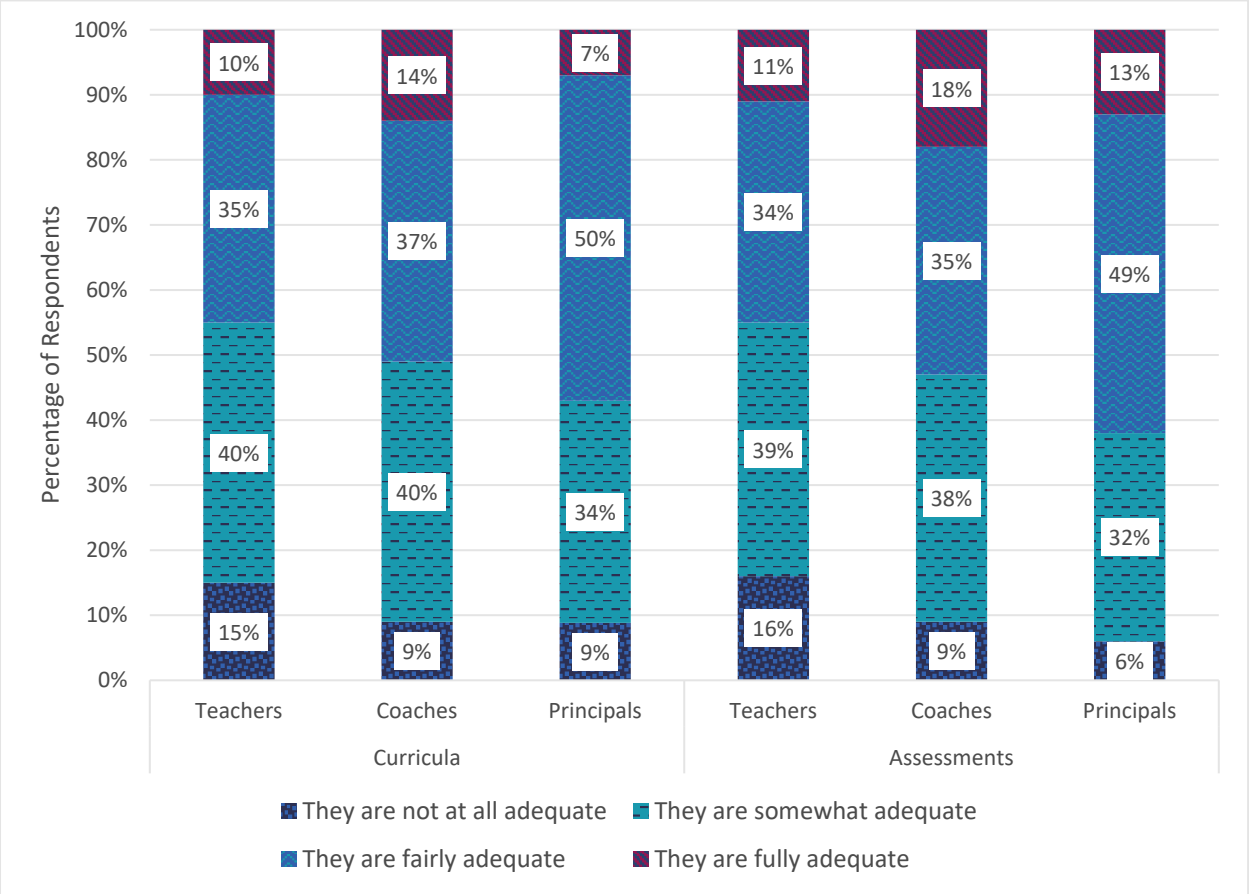
Exhibit 2.7. Most Coaches, Teachers, and Principals Did Not Find Curricula or Assessments Fully Adequate to Support Students with IEPs



Note. Respondents were asked to report their perception of whether "curricula" and "assessments" were adequate for supporting students with IEPs. The exhibit shows the full set of response options.

Respondents felt similarly about the adequacy of curricula and assessments for ELs. Specifically, fewer than 15% of respondents felt the curricula was fully adequate and fewer than 19% felt the assessments were fully adequate (Exhibit 2.8).

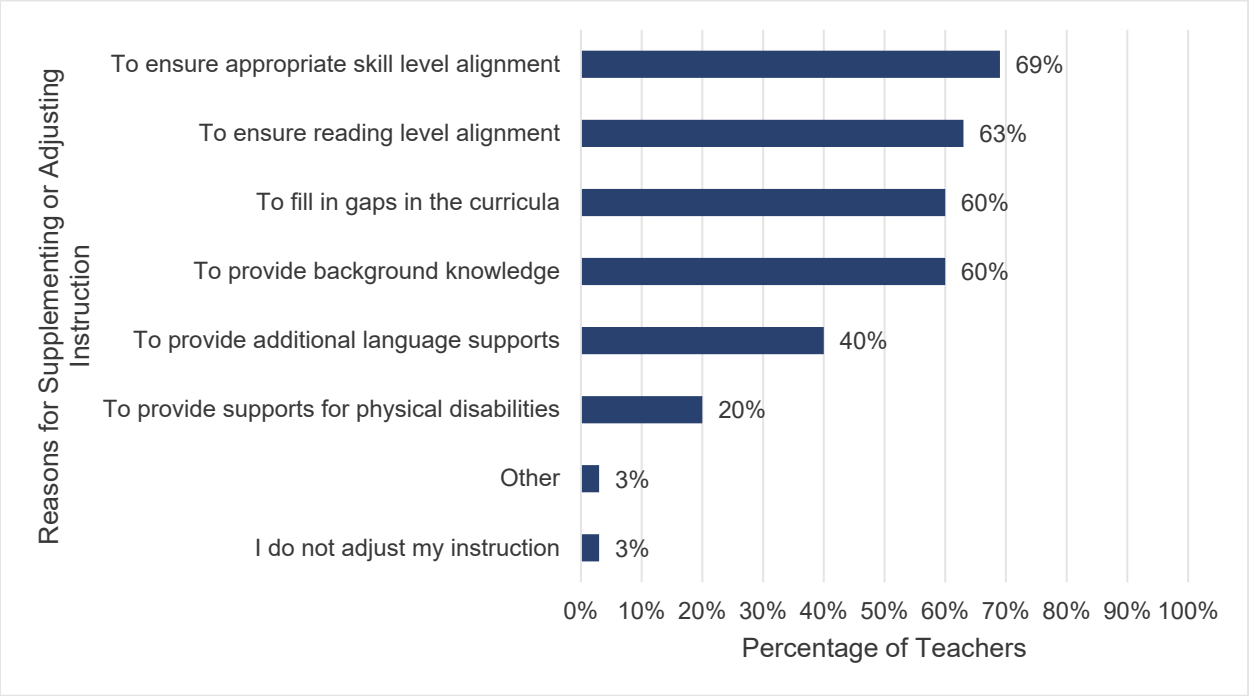
Exhibit 2.8. Coaches, Teachers, and Principals Did Not Find Curricula or Assessments Fully Adequate to Support ELs



Note. Respondents were asked to report their perception of whether "curricula" and "assessments" were adequate for supporting English Learner students. The exhibit shows the full set of response options.

Teachers reported frequently adjusting, modifying, or differentiating instruction to meet student needs. In order to better understand these modifications, teachers were also asked to indicate the reasons that they needed to supplement or adjust instruction to meet the needs of learners with multiple identifications. Teachers primarily reported adjusting instruction to ensure skill-level alignment, reading-level alignment, fill in gaps in the curricula, and provide background knowledge (Exhibit 2.9).

Exhibit 2.9. More Than Half of Teachers Report Supplementing or Adjusting Instruction to Meet Student Needs



Taken together, these findings indicate a key challenge facing schools and districts: the need for additional guidance, materials, and support to aid teachers in adequately adjusting or modifying instruction to ensure it meets the needs of all learners. In response to the persistent challenges of serving students with multiple identifications, CDE has contracted with vendors to develop statewide training for educators on providing intervention instruction to students who have IEPs, students who are at risk for or identified as having dyslexia, and students who are ELs. The trainings will be available in multiple formats at no cost to Colorado educators in fall 2026. The goal of these trainings is to increase teacher confidence and ability to adjust provide adapted instruction ensuring the needs of all students are met.

What Does 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 about their child's learning and setting up two-way communication may be critical to their ability to provide support at home (e.g., Brock & Edmunds, 2010; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Risko & Walker, 2009). In line with prior years, most districts (84%) reported providing schools with guidance for family communication, including using the CDE-provided talking points, conference or meeting guidelines, methods for

sharing test and progress-monitoring results, and letter or email templates. When asked about school-level READ plan communication practices, school-level respondents most commonly reported emails or letters, parent conferences, and other meetings, in line with previous years. Less frequently reported were phone calls, process reports, texting, using apps, or sending home flyers.

When asked, **most teachers (82%) reported they communicated with families about READ plan progress a few times a year**. Focus group parents, however, reported varied experiences. One parent highlighted her positive experience, sharing, "The teacher was very communicative, she invited me to a meeting, she had an example READ plan, and we went over guidelines and what it would involve. Then every 4 weeks, I think, we had progress-monitoring, and she would ask me how I wanted to receive communication. She was great!" Another parent shared, "I was told to go to the website to get progress-monitoring information, but then it wasn't updated, and so I asked for it, and it was just an uphill battle for me to get any updates from them." This variability in communication aligns with earlier findings about variability in the level of parent involvement and notification related to READ plans (see the section entitled How Are Parents Involved in READ plans?). Parents also acknowledged the challenges teachers faced and advocated for supports to help teachers with communication, including providing teachers with pre-made videos and specific suggestions for developing reading skills they could share with parents.

> One site visit school outlined a detailed communication process that was adapted from district guidance. Teachers sent a letter related to READ plan development to parents up three times. They only proceeded with READ plan development on their own if they had not heard from parents after all three attempts to contact them. The process included milestones for meeting with parents and talking points to use when doing so. Other schools documented similar processes that included talking points and communication expectations. One school stated that a big part of their READ plan success was in communication and making sure parents understood the "why" and not just the "what" of READ plans.

Most teachers, coaches, and principals reported that they did not regularly provide parents with guidance on how to support reading at home—only 27% of teachers, 42% of coaches, and 40% of principals said they did so consistently. Among those who did provide guidance, 59% of teachers and 44% of coaches said it was tailored to each student's specific needs. This generally aligns with what parents reported: most said they received some combination of specific and general reading guidance and progress updates, though the most commonly received updates were placement test results. A small number of parents reported receiving no information at all.

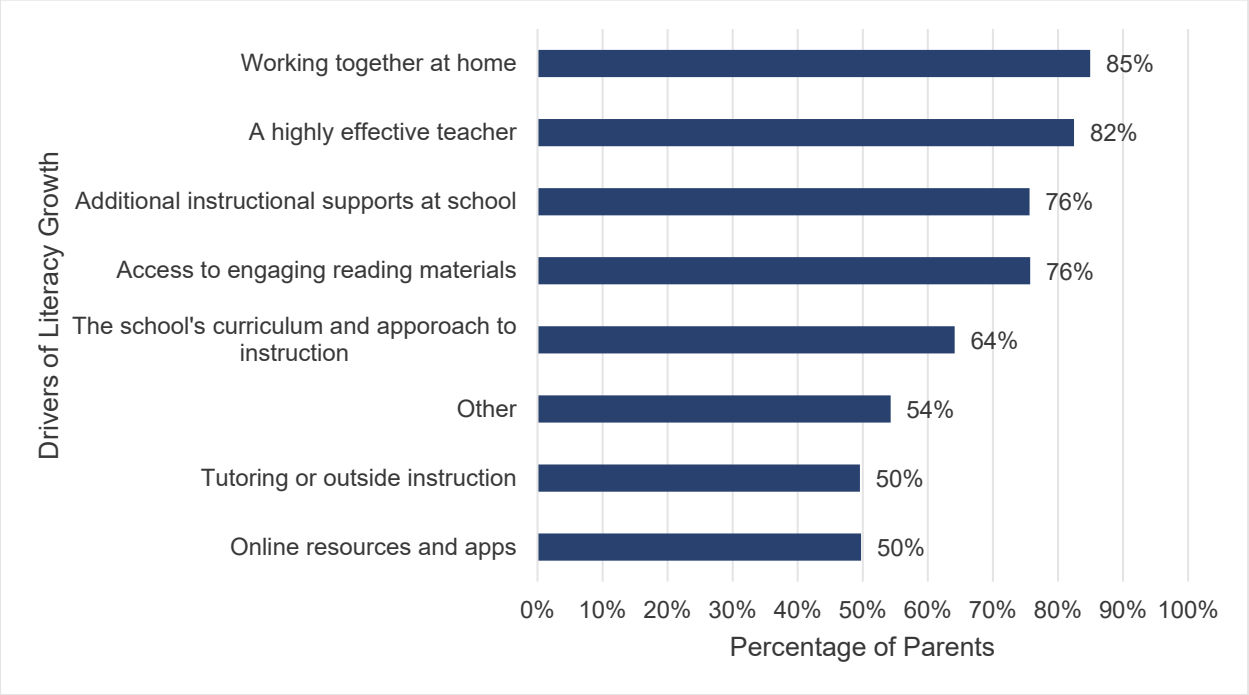
Schools that participated in site visits identified several barriers to effective parent communication. These included READ plans that were too lengthy and difficult for parents to navigate, resources that were not accessible to families due to language differences or other reasons, the time required to develop READ plans and related resources and have them translated and low response rates to outreach efforts.

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

When asked about their child's reading growth, slightly fewer than half the parent survey respondents (43%) stated that their child experienced sufficient or significant growth as a result of their READ plan, similar to previous years.[10] **However, 70% of parents reported that the resources and supports their child received related to their READ plan or SRD status were sufficient to foster growth in their literacy skills.** When asked to indicate what they felt had the biggest influence on their child's reading growth, parents were most likely to agree that working together at home and having a highly effective teacher supported their child's growth as a reader (Exhibit 2.10). Many parents also agreed that additional support at school and access to engaging reading materials supported reading growth.

[10] For more detailed information on student reading growth, see Chapters 6–9.

Exhibit 2.10. Parents Reported Numerous Drivers of Children's Literacy Growth



Parents who valued the READ plan most often pointed to the concrete impact it had on their child's reading progress. Their comments reflected genuine appreciation for the support their children received. One parent noted that their child was improving daily with the help of materials sent home, while another expressed gratitude for both the program and the educators putting it into practice. A third parent captured this sentiment most powerfully: "We are so grateful for the group support at school that our son has received in supporting his reading skills! We are encouraged by his growth and identify the clear link between his READ plan support and his increased ability to identify letters and their sounds." While there is still room for improvement, these responses underscore that READ plans that are implemented well can make a real difference for students and their families.

Key Takeaways

There is a continued need for clear guidance and policies to support students with multiple identification and plans.

- Only 54% of districts reported clarity in CDE guidance related to which plans should serve as the primary guidance for a student with multiple identifications.
- Fewer than half of districts (37%) reported having specific policies with respect to developing, implementing, and monitoring plans for students with multiple identifications.

Teachers, schools, and districts need additional supports to ensure they are equipped to carry out the new SB 25-200 requirements.

- Almost half of districts (47.42%) and more than half of principals (56.90%) reported they were not sure what it meant for their school or district or had no knowledge of the new legislation.
- Fewer than half of teachers (47%) said they had sufficient knowledge of the characteristics of dyslexia. Only 39% were confident they could modify instruction to meet the needs of students exhibiting characteristics of dyslexia.
- Principals and districts reported needing support with funding, training, and guidance as well as clarity around the timeline, requirements, allowable assessments, and language for communicating with families.

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

- Seventy-six percent of principals, 71% of coaches, and 47% 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, coaches, and principals felt curricula and assessments were not fully adequate to support the needs of students with multiple identifications.

- Fewer than 15% of respondents felt the curricula were fully adequate for ELs and fewer than 19% felt the assessments were fully adequate for ELs.

- Fewer than 9% of respondents reported that the curricula were fully adequate for students with IEPs and fewer than 22% reported assessments were fully adequate for students with IEPs.
- Teachers reported adjusting instruction to ensure skill-level alignment and reading-level alignment, fill in gaps in the curricula, and provide background knowledge.

Parents appreciated the resources and supports their children received under their READ plans.

- Seventy percent of parents reported that the resources and supports their child received related to their READ plan or SRD status were sufficient to foster growth in their literacy skills.
- Specific READ plan supports that parents reported included pullout instruction, extra small group time, accommodations for testing, extra one-on-one time, and materials sent home.
- Parents reported that working together at home, having a highly effective teacher, additional instructional supports, and access to engaging reading materials supported their children's growth as readers.

3. Funding



Annually, READ Act per-pupil intervention funds are allocated to local education providers (LEPs) based on the number of eligible students in the LEP (i.e., K–3 students in LEP-operated public schools who were identified with SRDs and were receiving instructional services pursuant to READ plans at the end of the *previous* school year). Currently, the statute permits LEPs to use the per-pupil funding for one or more of the following seven allowable categories:

- operating a summer school literacy program
- purchasing core reading instructional programs included on the 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 Advisory List; may include PD for use of technology
- purchasing the services of a reading specialist or reading interventionist from a Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES)
- purchasing tutoring services focused on increasing students' foundational reading skills
- providing PD programming to support K–3 educators in teaching reading

The annual distribution of total READ Act per-pupil intervention funds provided to LEPs has remained steady since 2022 (an average of $26,094,340.90) with a corresponding reduction in the number of eligible students between 2022 and 2025.

Who Makes Decisions About READ Fund Use?

As in previous years, LEP survey respondents indicated that **decisions about how to use READ Act per-pupil funding were made collaboratively**. District administrators reported that principals, superintendents, and district leads had the most input in these decisions, while coaches, teachers, families, and school board members had at least some involvement. Compared to 2023–2024, however, decision-making appears to have become more concentrated among district leads, principals, and superintendents, with less input from families, teachers, and coaches. District administrators were also more likely than in prior years to identify a single decision-maker, though the role of that person varied by district.

Notably, neither principals nor literacy coaches identified themselves as sole decision-makers when asked about their influence over per-pupil spending, a contrast to how district administrators characterized the process. This gap in perceived influence is consistent with findings from previous years.

How Are READ Funds Used?

As in the previous 3 years, principals reported that READ Act per-pupil funds were **most commonly spent on K–3 instructional programs—including core, supplemental, and intervention materials on the Advisory List—and on reading coach salaries to support READ Act implementation** (Exhibit 3.1). Although instructional programs still accounted for the largest share of spending, principals reported a shift over the past 2 years that decreased spending on instructional programs and increased spending on tutoring. Site visit findings also reflected this: Among the 12 schools visited, staff were most likely to report using READ Act funds for READ Act interventionist salaries (75%), supplemental materials on the Advisory List (67%), tutoring (33%), and teacher PD (33%).

Exhibit 3.1. Most School Principals Used READ Act Per-Pupil Funds for K–3 Instructional Programs and Reading Coach Salaries

READ Act Funding Use	% of Principal Responses in 2024–2025 (N = 188)	% of Principal Responses in 2025–2026 (N = 182)
Purchase of K–3 core, supplemental, or intervention instructional programs on the Advisory List	62%	51%
Purchase of K–3 core, supplemental, or intervention instructional programs not on the Advisory List	4%	2%
Purchase of K–3 interim or diagnostic and summative assessments on the Advisory List	30%	25%
Purchase of K–3 interim or diagnostic and summative assessments not on the Advisory List	1%	0.5%
Purchase of K–3 professional development programs on the READ Act Advisory List of Professional Development	19%	14%
Purchase of K–3 professional development programs not on the READ Act Advisory List of Professional Development	1%	0.1%
Paying part or all of the salary for (a) reading coach(es)	46%	43%
Purchasing external consultant services to provide teacher professional development	4%	7%

READ Act Funding Use	% of Principal Responses in 2024–2025 (N = 188)	% of Principal Responses in 2025–2026 (N = 182)
Providing one-on-one or small group tutoring to students identified with SRDs	20%	29%

How Successful Was the Use of READ Act Funds?

LEPs reported that per-pupil spending in several areas, including reading coach salaries, instructional programs on the Advisory List, tutoring services, and teacher PD, contributed to moving students off SRD status and supporting overall student growth. More than 40% of district administrators and principals rated per-pupil funding as successful or very successful in helping students exit SRD status[11] when used alongside other resources.

Site visit schools offered concrete examples of this impact. One school reported successfully moving students off SRD status by using READ Act funds to support interventionist salaries and mandatory science of reading–aligned teacher training. Staff at four other site visit schools reported that READ Act funds for instructional materials, interventionists, and professional learning, used in combination with school-based PLCs, contributed to measurable student growth.

> "Staff at School B reported that although READ Act per-pupil funding represents a relatively small portion of the overall budget, its strategic use—particularly when combined with [Early Literacy Assessment Tool] support—has contributed to steady improvements in reading outcomes over time. According to staff, the percentage of students identified with a significant reading deficiency (SRD) declined from 24.2% in 2018–2019 to 18.4% in 2023–2024."

Sustainability of READ Act–Funded Implementation

More than 70% of district and school leaders expressed concerns about the long-term sustainability of READ-funded positions and implementation efforts. In response, many have begun exploring strategies to maintain progress even as funding pressures grow. Thirty percent of principals and 18% of district administrators reported plans to absorb READ plan expenses into existing budgets, such as general, Title I, or district funds. A subset of leaders (12% of

[11] See Chapter 4 to learn more about exiting students from SRD status.

school leaders and 9% of district leaders) also reported investing in staff capacity-building as a way to improve both student outcomes and teaching effectiveness over time.

Other strategies include diversifying funding through grants such as the CLSD grant, reducing staff, or consolidating positions to stretch available resources. Looking ahead, district administrators identified additional funding needs that will be critical to fully meet the requirements of the READ Act and SB 25-200, particularly for screeners and assessments, interventionists, and reading support services.[12]

[12] See the Dyslexia page of the Colorado Department of Education website.

Key Takeaways

Decisions about READ Act per-pupil funding are a collaborative process.

- Compared to the previous year, spending input was more concentrated among district leads, principals, and superintendents, with less input from families, teachers, and coaches.

Principals reported they most frequently used READ Act per-pupil fund on K–3 core, supplemental, or intervention instructional programs on the Advisory List (53%) and reading coach salaries (43%).

- Although instructional programs still accounted for the largest share of purchases, school leaders reported decreased spending on instructional programs and increased spending on tutoring over the past 2 years.

District administrators and school-based staff reported that per-pupil spending on reading coach salaries, instructional programs on the Advisory List, tutoring services, and teacher PD contributed to exiting students from SRD status and increasing student growth.

- More than 40% of district administrators and principals reported that, when used in combination with other resources, per-pupil funding was successful or very successful in helping exit students from SRD status.
- Staff at four site visit schools also reported that READ Act funds for instructional materials, interventionists, and professional learning used in conjunction with school-based PLCs contributed to measurable student growth.

More than 70% of district and school leaders expressed concerns about the long-term sustainability of READ Act–funded positions and implementation efforts.

- In response, district and school leaders have adopted various financial strategies, including building READ plan expenses into existing budgets (30% of principals and 18% of district administrators), diversifying funding through grants, and investing in staff capacity-building.
- District administrators identified additional funding as critical to fully meet the requirements of the READ Act and SB 25-200, particularly for screeners and assessments, interventionists, and reading support services.

4. Early Literacy Grant



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 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, addressing three main topics:

1. The ELG application process. This includes key literacy challenges schools sought to address by applying, school experiences and challenges with completing the application, and school leader and staff understanding of ELG requirements and expectations.
2. How ELG funds were deployed. This includes how funds were used to purchase reading materials, pay for external literacy consultants' time, and support reading coach positions at the school.
3. Successes, impacts and challenges reported by schools. This includes such topics as school staff perceptions of ELG impact on student performance, grant implementation challenges and successes, and challenges with sustaining ELG activities past the life of the grant.

Summaries of key findings for each of these three main topics are below.

The qualitative findings presented in this chapter complement the quantitative analysis in Chapter 6, which examines the association between ELG participation and student performance on READ Act interim assessments. Together, these chapters offer both an on-the-ground view of how ELG funds are used and what schools experience, and a data-driven analysis of how participation relates to measurable student outcomes.

The ELG Application Process

ELG recipients were asked several questions regarding their experience applying for ELG funding. These questions were related to factors that influenced decisions to apply for funding and the application process experience.

What Factors Influenced Schools' Decisions to Apply for an ELG?

The primary literacy challenges that ELG schools cited were the needs to address their schools' low literacy scores and accelerate students' progress. Multiple schools cited increased gaps in student literacy performance that surfaced following the COVID-19 pandemic as a reason for seeking ELG funding to provide further PD and support for their staff.

Almost all schools welcomed the opportunity to bring in an outside expert to support staff. Seven of the 10 site visit schools indicated that *access to an external literacy implementation consultant was a key motivator* for their grant application. School leaders commented that they had limited PD budgets and liked that the school could choose an external literacy implementation consultant who was a good fit for their teachers and staff to provide ongoing PD.

Multiple schools also indicated that an additional incentive to apply for the grant was that funds could be used to fund *school-based literacy coaches* in their buildings. Such coaching was viewed as critically necessary not only to accelerate growth in student literacy performance but also to help address ongoing challenges of high teacher turnover.

What Was the Application Process Experience Like?

School leaders reflected that the ELG application process was highly labor intensive, requiring substantial staff time and effort. This responsibility often landed on a single individual who had to work significant hours outside the normal workday to complete application requirements. This level of effort was particularly challenging in small districts where school leaders did not have access to district-level grant application support or guidance to reduce burden.

Schools typically indicated administrative leaders (at the school or district level) were primarily responsible for completing the proposal and deciding on how ELG funds would be deployed. In a few cases, external literacy implementation consultants were included in grant planning and participated in ELG design. Teachers were not consistently involved in ELG application writing or design. Those who were tended to be small groups of more experienced/senior teachers. Notably, six out of the 10 site visit schools pointed to the importance of garnering strong teacher buy-in to the grant to maximize success.

One district with multiple schools applying for an ELG reported that CDE required them to create separate grant applications for each school even though much of the content was the same across sites. The district viewed this as a duplicative effort that CDE could explore streamlining in the future by allowing multiple schools in the same district with similar application characteristics to submit a single application.

How ELG Funds Were Deployed?

ELG recipients were asked several questions about how they utilized ELG funds and whether grant funds were sufficient to support their planned activities. Interviews also explored topics such as whether ELG-funded activities were specifically focused on addressing the needs of SWDs or ELs.

How Were ELG Funds Used?

ELG schools consistently reported three uses for ELG funds:

- *External literacy implementation consultant support*. External literacy implementation consultants typically visited schools once per month to provide literacy coaching and support to teachers, school leaders, and in-school literacy coaches. They used a variety of strategies to deliver support, including classroom observations, modeling instruction, and working with teachers individually or in groups to improve use of student assessment data to inform instruction.
- *Creating or expanding literacy-focused staff positions*. School-based literacy coaches were used to support teachers and reading interventionists to work with students in small instructional groups. Schools often selected existing veteran teachers to serve as the ELG-funded school-based literacy coach.
- *Supporting additional materials/PD*. Materials and PD opportunities ranged from paying teachers to complete Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) (Lexia Learning) training or sending teachers to conferences focused on literacy, writing instruction, dyslexia, or other training specifically associated with effectively implementing their literacy curriculum.

Some schools noted that CDE restrictions on the use of grant funds prevented them from using their ELG funds as desired. Specifically, these included:

- *Literacy materials for Spanish-language instruction on the Advisory List*. Three schools reported that there is a lack of Spanish-language reading and writing intervention materials on the Advisory Lists. Because the ELG only allows schools to use funds for materials on the Advisory List, schools are limited in their ability to fully meet EL student needs with grant funds.

- *Annual budget cycle requirements*. ELG funds must be used within an annual cycle and cannot be shared across schools. As a result, schools may be forced to return unused funds even if the additional resources are needed.
- *Lack of flexibility for small, rural schools.* Participants identified staffing challenges unique to small, rural schools, where many staff members perform multiple roles that might be distinct positions in larger districts. This can create a disconnect between how schools and CDE define staff positions and lead to questions about whether grant funds can be used to cover a specific position.
- *Staff travel restrictions.* At least one school noted that CDE no longer approves the use of ELG funds for certain travel-related expenses (e.g., for teachers to attend out-of-state PD sessions or training). School leaders said such travel can cost thousands of dollars, which schools or districts may not be able to provide through general funds.

Were ELG Funds Deemed Sufficient to Support Planned Grant Activities?

School leaders generally reported that ELG funding was sufficient to support their targeted grant activities. The largest cost typically cited was the use of funds to pay an external literacy implementation consultant to come into the school each month—as required by the grant—to provide literacy coaching and support to teachers. Additionally, in at least one instance, school leaders noted that grant funds were insufficient when the school also needed to purchase new curriculum materials.

How Were ELGs Used to Support ELs or SWDs?

School staff generally indicated that the ELG is not designed for ELs or SWDs. Leaders in these schools believed, however, that improved instruction generated through the grant—such as improved use of assessment data to inform instruction—would benefit all students, including those with special needs. Similarly, schools created and provided specific intervention time for instructional staff to work in small groups with students with special needs. This work was supported by literacy consultants and instructional coaching paid for with ELG funds.

- *ELs*. Four site visit schools served high percentages (50% or more) of EL students or implemented a dual-language instructional model for Spanish- and English-speaking students. These schools prioritized the selection of external

literacy implementation consultants and coaching support with expertise relevant to serving EL students so they could specifically help strengthen and improve EL instructional strategies.

- *SWDs*. Schools tended to refer more broadly to steps they took to address literacy instruction for SWDs. For instance, schools noted the ELG was designed to engage all teachers in data conversations to more clearly and effectively align student needs and goals, which had the benefit of aligning specific goals identified by special education teachers with general education classroom instruction. Other schools indicated that curricula purchased with ELG funds were selected with the needs of SWDs in mind, taking into consideration how effectively such materials could be used.

ELG Successes, Impacts, and Challenges

During their ELG site visits, each school was asked to reflect on the key successes, impacts on staff and students, and challenges they attributed directly to ELG implementation.

What Key Impacts and Successes Do Schools Attribute to ELGs?

Most ELG schools cited a mix of four interrelated key impacts that they attributed directly to ELG implementation and—in particular—to the work of the external literacy implementation consultants:

1. Improved teacher PD on literacy instruction.
2. Improved alignment of instruction across classrooms.
3. Enhanced capacity to provide targeted literacy instruction and support to meet individual student needs.
4. Increased student performance and growth in interim literacy assessments.

ELG-funded external literacy implementation consultants and in-school literacy coaches improved *teacher PD* on literacy instruction. School leaders indicated that ELG funding enabled their schools to pay for coaching positions that would otherwise be unaffordable. For instance, staff in one school indicated these ELG-funded positions "increased focus on adult learning and continuous improvement for school staff in addition to focusing on student growth." Teachers emphasized that "[external literacy implementation] consultant support significantly

strengthened their ability to interpret [mCLASS] data and respond to progress-monitoring challenges, particularly for students with persistent foundational skill gaps."

ELG funding improved *alignment of instruction* across classrooms. Staff noted that they were "working more closely, were more aligned systemwide, and that teachers' mindsets on implementing curriculums with fidelity and alignment across classrooms had improved substantially." This alignment was often expressed in terms of "teachers utilizing common strategies and instructional language" in their classrooms. School staff cited clearer, more consistent instructional routines and use of materials across classrooms, making instruction more predictable and effective across the school.

ELG funding enhanced staff capacity to provide *targeted literacy instruction* and support to meet individual student needs. Schools credited their ELG external literacy implementation consultants and school-based literacy coaches with improving how classroom teachers, EL teachers, and teachers of SWDs examine data together to create a more tailored, shared responsibility for student learning and development and increasing collaboration in their use of interventions to support struggling readers. Staff were able to provide more targeted student support due to ELG-purchased intervention materials and ELG-funded school-based literacy coach staffing. This included increased use of data protocols, more explicit planning for small groups, and greater accountability for student progress. Six of the 10 site visit schools pointed to the importance of garnering strong teacher buy-in to the grant in order to maximize success and the effectiveness of work with the external literacy implementation consultant.

Seven of 10 site visit schools cited increased *student performance* and growth on literacy assessments as an impact of the ELG. The positive impact of ELG-funded activities on testing scores was observed on interim assessments (mCLASS with Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills [DIBELS], 8th Edition, 2018 [Amplify, Inc.]) (hereafter, mCLASS DIBELS 8) as well as on CMAS. For example:

- Leaders in one school indicated that the percentage of students reading at or above grade level increased from 41% to 72% in a single year. Students who had been at the school for multiple years demonstrated the strongest growth, particularly in foundational reading skills.
- In another school, leaders stated that the percentage of students reading at benchmark across K–3 increased from 46% to 69% and students needing the highest levels (Tier 3) of reading interventions declined from 36% to 17% in the first year of their ELG.

- Another school indicated the ELG was responsible for helping students avoid the performance declines seen elsewhere due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that students instead maintained high assessment results on both CMAS and mCLASS assessments[13].

In addition, schools noted that connections between ELG implementation and improved CMAS outcomes became more evident in the upper elementary grades over time.

What Key Challenges Do Schools Report Regarding ELGs?

Key challenges associated with ELG implementation can be grouped into three main categories:

1. *Sustainability* of impacts past the life of the grants.
2. Need for more *bilingual supports,* including bilingual literacy materials and assessments on the Advisory Lists and bilingual external literacy consultants.
3. Need for added *flexibility* in the use of ELG funds.

***Sustainability* of grant impacts.** Schools reported a desire to retain existing connections with external literacy implementation consultants past the life of the grant to help maintain and cement progress. They also emphasized school capacity to maintain funding to support school-based literacy coaches or interventionist staffing previously supported by ELG funding. These positions were consistently viewed as critical to support teachers in their understanding of the science of teaching reading and use of student data to inform instruction. The supports were also viewed as crucial for maintaining instructional consistency over time through inevitable teacher turnover.

To alleviate sustainability issues, CDE may want to consider:

- Allocating additional resources to support at least four external literacy implementation consultant visits per year for a period of time after the grant ends, which will help maintain momentum and provide refreshers on instructional practices.
- Adopting a tiered approach to ELG funding, wherein higher-need schools receive larger grants than lower-need schools.

[13] Site visit participants referred to MCLASS and did not differentiate between mCLASS DIBELS 8, mCLASS in English, and mCLASS Lectura in Spanish.

- Encouraging external literacy implementation consultants to work with schools to help shift responsibility from a single instructional coach to a more distributed leadership model for literacy instruction.

Lack of available *bilingual supports.* Schools noted a lack of Spanish-language literacy curricula and intervention materials on the Advisory List. They cited the need for more (1) bilingual literacy materials and assessments on the Advisory List and (2) bilingual external literacy consultants versed in bilingual literacy instruction. Schools' ability to fully meet EL student needs with grant funds was limited because ELG funds could only be used to purchase materials on the Advisory List. Failing to provide sufficient bilingual resources and supports can contribute to ongoing gaps in student growth data because assessments do not account for biliteracy. As one school leader noted, "If a student knows the meaning of a word in Spanish but not its English translation, that student might not perform as well if assessed only in English." As a result, more students may be kept on READ plans unnecessarily because a valid dual-language assessment tool does not exist.

To remedy the lack of Spanish-language resources, CDE may want to:

- Consider soliciting more Spanish-language reading curricula during the review cycle or add more flexibility to allow ELG schools to purchase a wider range of materials.
- Identify more external literacy consultants with specific expertise and success working in bilingual or Spanish-language settings.

Lack of *flexibility* from CDE in how schools use ELG funds. Schools noted challenges in how they were able to utilize ELG funds to meet emerging needs related to literacy instruction but not explicitly connected to their ELG activities. This was especially true for smaller, rural schools and districts that did not have the same access to resources as larger districts. For instance, schools in remote areas cited challenges with CDE restrictions on use of funds to in-state travel only. They reported that travel to Denver-based training or PD was onerous and that they were often geographically closer to out-of-state training options (such as in New Mexico or Arizona) of equal quality that would be much more feasible and cost effective.

To provide for more flexibility in the administration of ELG funds, CDE may want to:

- Allow schools to carry over unused funds from year to year as long as a justification for the carryover is provided.
- Expand flexibility in how ELG schools use funds to cover staff travel for literacy professional development.

Are There Disconnects Between Student Achievement on CMAS vs. Interim Assessments?

ELG schools have reported significant gains in student interim assessment performance that they attribute specifically to their ELG participation. These gains, however, have not always translated into similar student performance gains on CMAS. Leaders in ELG schools offered several perspectives on this topic:

- There is a consistent disconnect between CMAS results and stronger performance on interim and diagnostic assessments, particularly in foundational reading skills.
- Interim assessments capture *foundational skills* (e.g., phonics, decoding), while CMAS requires "*higher-order skills*," especially writing and comprehension, which the interim assessments do not measure as directly.
- Interim assessments do not reliably predict CMAS performance, especially for students in the "middle" range of proficiency.
- Limited classroom emphasis on writing and application of reading skills may contribute to lower CMAS performance, since it requires students to read, analyze, and write about texts more than other assessments.
- Students' reading skills improve faster than their ability to write about reading, which limits CMAS performance compared to interim assessments.
- K–3 foundational skill development may not immediately translate to increased 3rd-grade CMAS results but tend to show up more strongly in later grades (4th–5th).
- An ELG-produced focus on literacy instruction may not translate to high CMAS performance because teachers perceive routine assessments as better indicators of student learning. Therefore, they spend less time teaching to CMAS expectations, instead prioritizing literacy instruction they perceive as more tailored to student needs.

Since the CMAS is still a critical measurement tool, CDE should further explore the disconnect between interim literacy assessments and CMAS results. Specifically, CDE might examine how CMAS focuses on "higher-order" writing and comprehension skills and how this focus may or may not align well with the interim assessments almost all ELG schools use as their primary tool to understand student performance growth (see Appendix B for an overview of the equipercentile analysis conducted in the Year 5 READ Act Summary Report).

How Can Artificial Intelligence Help Schools Address Literacy Instruction Challenges?

Schools are in the very early stages of exploring the usefulness and appropriateness of artificial intelligence (AI) in supporting K–3 literacy instruction outside of ELG activities. Interviewees consistently reported that the purchase of AI tools is not an allowable use of ELG funds. Overall, AI use and implementation at ELG site visit schools was limited and at most in the exploratory phase.

- Participants at four sites noted AI's potential to support coaching and teacher planning but did not believe it could effectively replace human interaction, and further stated that effective teaching relies on relationships, context, and nuanced understanding of students.
- At one site, participants said they had used an AI tool to develop a grade-level Spanish text for students to practice reading and found it helpful.
- One school piloted an AI tool for language arts in 6th through 8th grade. The AI algorithm–based tool provided human-generated feedback to students' written responses. Teachers used the data to identify opportunities for small group intervention. Staff did not view this tool as appropriate for elementary school.
- Another school conducted pilots of AI literacy coaching and noted that several were promising.

Key Takeaways

Schools credited ELG-funded external literacy implementation consultants and in-school literacy coaches with three key impacts on teachers and instruction:

- improved *teacher PD* on literacy instruction;
- improved *alignment of instruction* across classrooms; and
- enhanced capacity to provide targeted *literacy instruction*.

Seven of 10 site visit schools reported gains in student academic assessments scores that they attributed directly to their ELG. Performance increases were generally measured through interim reading assessments.

- Leaders at one school indicated that the percentage of students reading at or above grade level increased from 41% to 72% in a single year.
- In another school, leaders stated that the percentage of students reading at benchmark across K–3 increased from 46% to 69% and that students needing the highest levels (Tier 3) of reading interventions declined from 36% to 17%.

Despite the above, gains on interim benchmark did not always translate to gains in CMAS results.

- Four school leaders noted a consistent disconnect between CMAS results and ELG-led performance improvements on interim and diagnostic assessments.

Both current and past ELG cohort site visit participants cited sustainability of grant impacts as a challenge.

- This appears to be particularly true with regard to school capacity to maintain funding for in-school reading coaches or interventionist staff.
- Schools also reported a desire to retain an ongoing connection with external literacy consultants past the life of the grant to maintain and cement ELG impacts and progress.

Several ELG site visit schools identified a need for more bilingual education support. Key additional supports needed included:

- additional bilingual literacy materials and assessments on the Advisory Lists
- access to more bilingual external literacy consultants

5. Student Outcomes (SRD, CMAS, and ELAT)



One of the primary factors in determining whether a student receives a READ plan and READ Act–related services is whether they have been identified with an SRD. The READ Act's overarching goal is to ensure that students identified with an SRD receive sufficient support to read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade. A shorter-term goal is to help these students progress to the point where they are no longer identified with an SRD—even if they might still benefit from ongoing reading support.

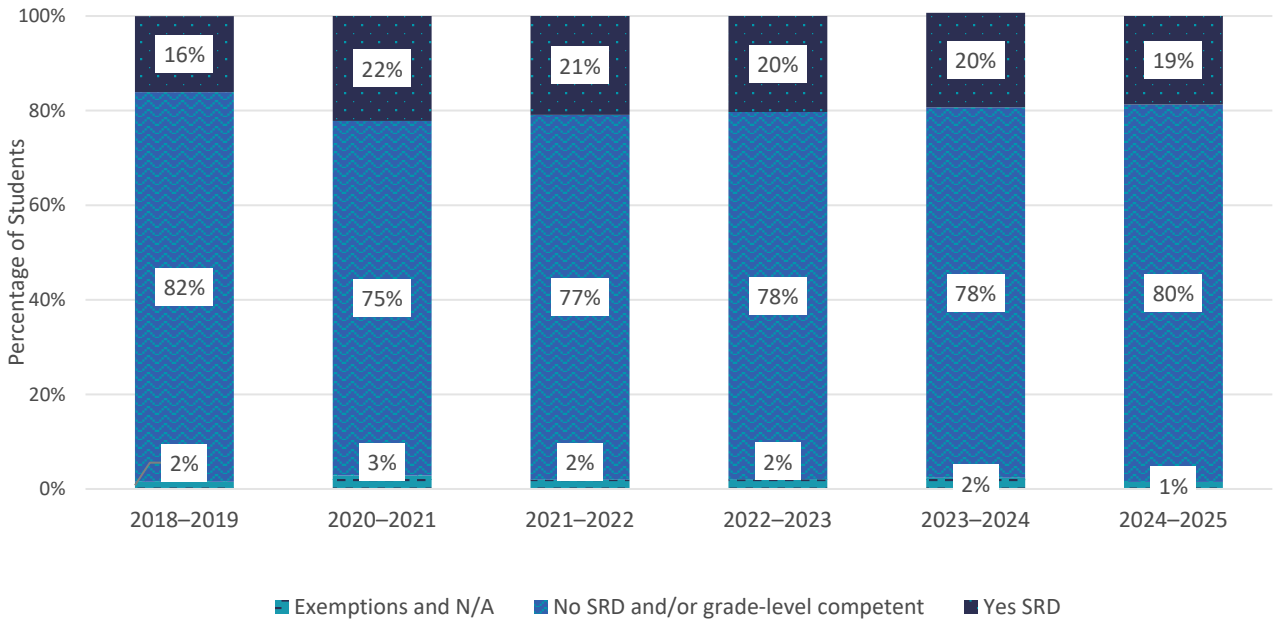
This chapter examines trends in SRD identification rates over time; how students move between SRD statuses from one year to the next; the student, school, and district characteristics that may influence identification rates; and whether identification rates differ based on the core literacy curriculum a school uses.

How Do Students Move Through SRD Statuses and What Factors May Affect Identification and Exit Rates?

How Do SRD Identification Rates Change Over Time?

SRD identification rates have stabilized since reaching an all-time high of 22.2% in 2020–2021, immediately following the pandemic. In the years since, rates have hovered around 20%, and in 2024–2025 the rate was 18.7%—within a percentage point of 2023–2024 (Exhibit 5.1).

Exhibit 5.1. SRD Rates Have Stabilized Since Reaching an All-Time High in 2020–2021



Note. There are no data for 2019–2020 due to a statewide assessment pause during the COVID-19 pandemic. Number of students for included years were as follows: 2018–2019= 254,763, 2020–2021= 238,588, 2021–2022=241,323, 2022–2023= 241,143, 2023–2024= 242,522, and 2024–2025= 237,710. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and adjusted to ensure totals sum to 100%.

How Do Students Move Between SRD Identifications?

Although overall SRD identification rates have stabilized in recent years, how individual students move between SRD statuses from year to year reveals a more nuanced picture. Under the READ Act, students can be categorized into one of three statuses: identified with an SRD, not identified with an SRD, or exempt from SRD classification. Students move between these statuses annually, based primarily on their interim assessment scores from the spring semester.

Overall, SRD identification and exit rates have remained stable since 2021–2022 (Exhibit 5.2). Movement rates in 2024–2025 were nearly identical to those in 2023–2024. The percentage of students newly identified with an SRD held steady at around 4%, while the percentage of students exiting SRD identification declined marginally, from 4.3% in 2023–2024 to 3.5% in 2024–2025.

In 2024–2025, most students maintained their SRD status from 2023–2024. The majority of students continued not to be identified with an SRD, and the percentage of students who remained identified with an SRD held steady at 9.4%.

Trends in SRD Movement by Demographic Characteristics

Despite the overall stability in SRD identification rates, some student groups experience more movement between SRD statuses than others**. ELs and SWDs continued to be more likely than their peers to shift SRD status (no SRD to yes SRD and yes SRD to no SRD) from one school year to the next—a pattern that has been consistent across years** (Exhibit 5.2).

This finding takes on added significance in light of a related finding reported in Chapter 2: Administrators and teachers reported feeling less confident supporting students with multiple identifications and expressed uncertainty about which plan (e.g., READ plan, IEP) should take precedence when a student qualifies for more than one. Taken together, these findings emphasize the importance of the planned statewide training for educators on providing intervention instruction to students who have IEPs, students who are at risk for or have been identified as having dyslexia, and students who are ELs.

Exhibit 5.2. ELs and Students with IEPs Experienced Higher Rates of Movement Between SRD Designations than Peers

Students	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023	2023–2024	2024–2025
All Students, %									
No SRD to yes SRD	4.8	5.0	4.7	5.0	5.9	4.8	4.9	4.0	4.1
Yes SRD to no SRD	3.0	3.0	3.3	2.9	1.7	4.6	4.2	4.3	3.5
ELs, %									
No SRD to yes SRD	7.8	7.6	7.4	7.5	7.3	6.3	6.4	5.4	5.5
Yes SRD to no SRD	5.2	5.3	5.6	4.7	2.7	7.1	6.5	6.7	6.9
Students with IEPs, %									

Students	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023	2023–2024	2024–2025
No SRD to yes SRD	7.0	7.6	8.8	8.9	10.7	7.2	7.5	6.9	7.3
Yes SRD to no SRD	5.3	5.6	6.0	5.5	3.0	6.2	6.2	6.8	5.6

Across all 6 years of this evaluation, SRD identification and movement patterns have also varied consistently by race. Black and Hispanic students are reclassified—either gaining or losing an SRD designation—at higher rates each year than their White peers. While being identified with an SRD can increase the level of support a student receives, disproportionate movement between designations among certain racial groups may signal that SRD identification and READ Act supports such as READ plans are not being applied equitably or are not proving equally effective across students of different racial backgrounds. This is a pattern that warrants continued attention and further investigation.

How Does the Timing of SRD Identification and Retention of SRD Status Affect K–3 Reading Trajectories?

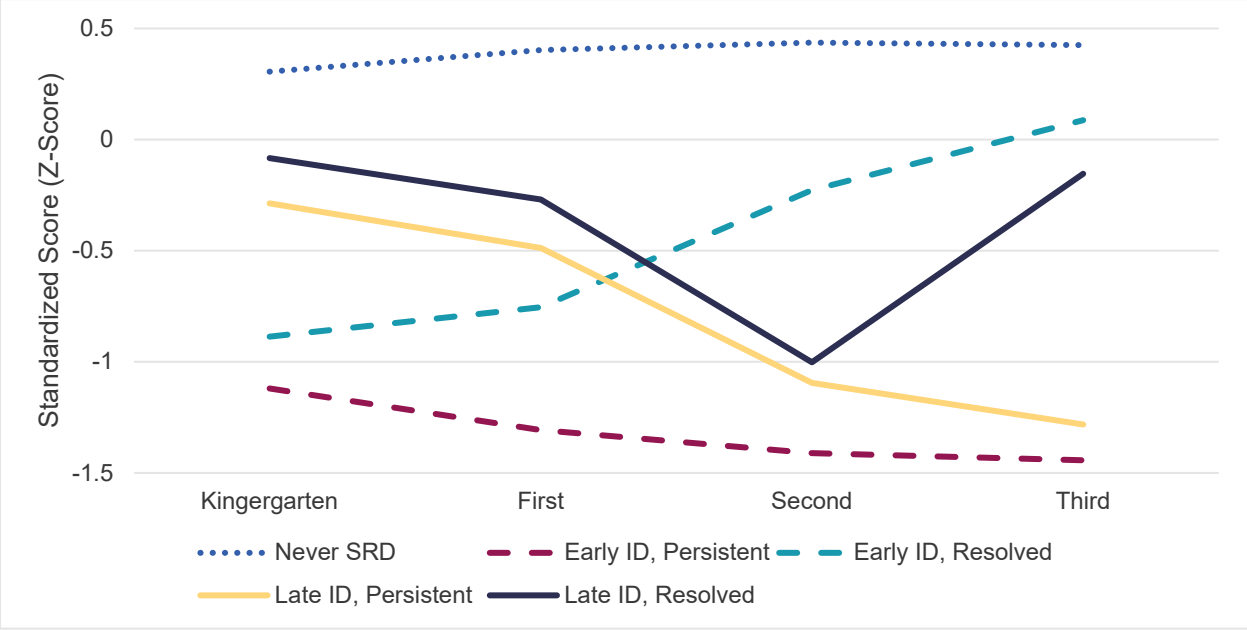
As discussed earlier, students move in and out of SRD status from year to year based primarily on spring interim assessment results. These annual determinations can be used to map out longer-term reading trajectories—the distinct paths students follow over time based on when they were identified and whether their SRD status persisted or resolved.

This analysis examines post-COVID reading trajectories for students grouped into different SRD pathways. Using a statistical model that accounts for differences across schools and students, standardized interim assessment scores from kindergarten through 3rd grade were analyzed based on grade level, the timing of SRD identification (early: kindergarten or 1st grade, versus late: 2nd or 3rd grade), whether SRD status persisted or resolved over time, and key student characteristics such as gender, race and ethnicity, and IEP status (see Appendix B for more detail).

Because several different assessments are used across Colorado, scores were standardized so that the trajectories reflected how each group's performance compared to the Colorado average at each grade level, rather than measuring absolute gains in reading ability. A score of zero represents the Colorado average, scores above zero indicate above-average performance, and scores below zero indicate below-average performance.

As shown in Exhibit 5.3, students who were never identified with an SRD consistently performed above the Colorado average and showed steady improvement relative to that benchmark across grade levels. Among students identified in kindergarten or 1st grade, trajectories diverged sharply beginning in 1st grade. Those who eventually exited SRD status showed strong, sustained improvement over time, closing the gap with the Colorado average at each successive grade level and performing near or at the average by 3rd grade. **In contrast, students who continued to be identified with an SRD across multiple years fell progressively further below the Colorado average with each passing grade.** This pattern suggests that early identification alone is not sufficient to produce recovery for all students and raises important questions about whether current intervention approaches are generating meaningful progress for students with persistent SRD designations.

Exhibit 5.3. Students Who Exit SRD Status Improve Over Time, While Persistently Identified Students Fall Further Behind



Note. The scores in the graph represent the predicted z-scores after controlling for demographic characteristics.

There was a similar divergence among students identified in 2nd or 3rd grade. Notably, many of these students were already performing below the Colorado average before they were formally identified, but their scores had not yet dropped far enough to meet the threshold for a formal SRD designation. By the time they were officially identified under the READ Act, their performance was substantially below the Colorado average.

As with early-identified students, trajectories among late-identified students diverged over time. Some went on to improve and exit SRD status, while others continued to fall further behind. On average, students who eventually exited SRD status had slightly higher scores than those who remained identified, even though both groups were performing below average. Students who exited were also less likely to belong to a historically underserved group.

For late-identified students, the key concern is not how often students are being screened, but whether the screening thresholds are sensitive enough to flag emerging reading risk before significant decline occurs. Although their scores often trended downward, they would not qualify for formal identification until their performance dropped below the formal threshold. These students were falling into a borderline range that current thresholds did not flag as requiring READ Act support.

Whether earlier or more sensitive identification thresholds could have prompted intervention at a more effective point in these students' development is an open question; however, the trajectory patterns suggest that the current system may be identifying some students later than would be ideal.

What Are the Trends in CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt Assessment Performance and How Do They Differ by Student Group?

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

The CMAS exam, which covers both math and ELA, is administered annually in the spring to students starting in 3rd grade. As a statewide summative assessment, it measures student learning against shared benchmarks across Colorado. Third-grade CMAS ELA scores offer one way to gauge how well early literacy instruction and interventions are moving students toward reading proficiency by the end of 3rd grade—one of the READ Act's primary goals.

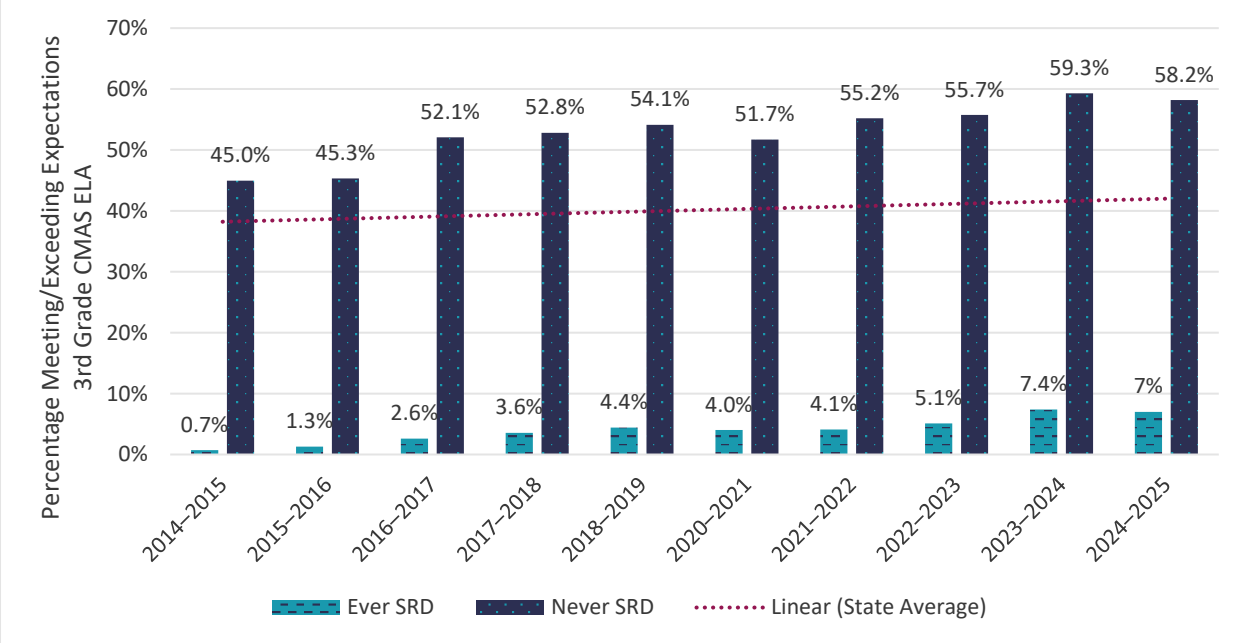
Some students take alternative assessments in place of CMAS: Native Spanish speakers who meet eligibility requirements take the Colorado Spanish Language Arts (CSLA) assessment and students with significant cognitive disabilities take the Colorado Alternate (CoAlt) assessment. These assessments are designed to more accurately measure literacy performance for different student populations.

Third grade is both the first year students take the CMAS and the final year in which READ Act interim assessments are required. Historically, students who have ever been identified with an SRD at any point in kindergarten through 3rd grade have had very different outcomes on the

CMAS ELA exam compared to students who have never been identified. As shown in Exhibit 5.4, far fewer students who were ever identified with an SRD met or exceeded the proficiency standard on the 3rd-grade CMAS ELA exam than their peers who were never identified.

In 2024–2025, proficiency rates for both groups remained stable—within a percentage point of the all-time highs reached in 2023–2024. Statewide, 41.9% of 3rd-grade students met or exceeded proficiency, compared to 42.2% in 2023–2024. The pronounced gap between the two groups, however, remained persistent. More than half of students who were never identified with an SRD met or exceeded proficiency (58.2%, down slightly from 59.3% in 2023–2024), while only 7% of students who were ever identified with an SRD did so, a difference of more than 50 percentage points. **Over the past 3 years, both groups have shown stable proficiency rates, but the gap between them has remained wide.**

Exhibit 5.4. 3rd–Grade CMAS Proficiency Rates of Students Ever Identified With an SRD and Students Never Identified Have Slowly Improved Since 2020–2021

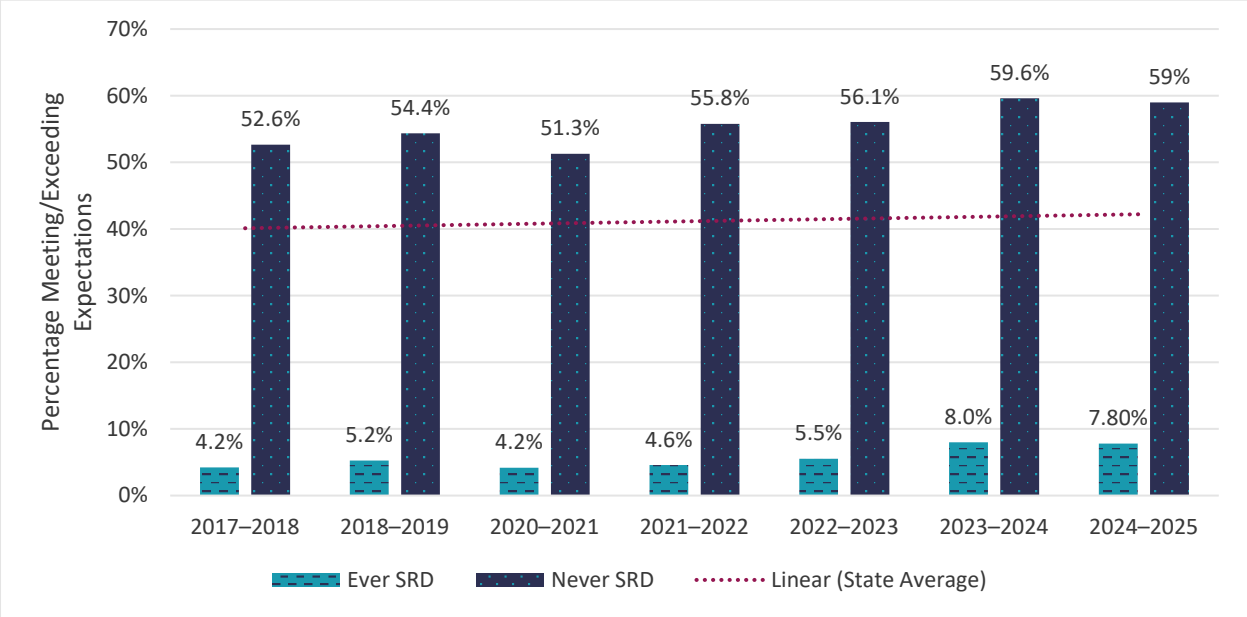


Note. There are no data for 2019–2020 due to a statewide assessment pause during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Trends in CMAS Reading Subsection Performance

In addition to overall proficiency rates, we examined performance on the reading subsection of the CMAS ELA assessment. The pattern mirrors the overall findings: Students who were ever identified with an SRD were significantly less likely than their peers to meet or exceed expectations on the reading subsection, and rates declined marginally from 2023–2024 to 2024–2025 (Exhibit 5.5). Among students who were never identified with an SRD, 59% met or exceeded expectations on the reading subsection, down slightly from 59.6% the previous year. By contrast, only 7.8% of students who were ever identified with an SRD did so, compared to 8.0% in 2023–2024.

Exhibit 5.5. 3rd-Grade CMAS Reading Subsection Proficiency Rates of Students Ever Identified With an SRD and Students Never Identified Have Slowly Improved Since 2020–2021



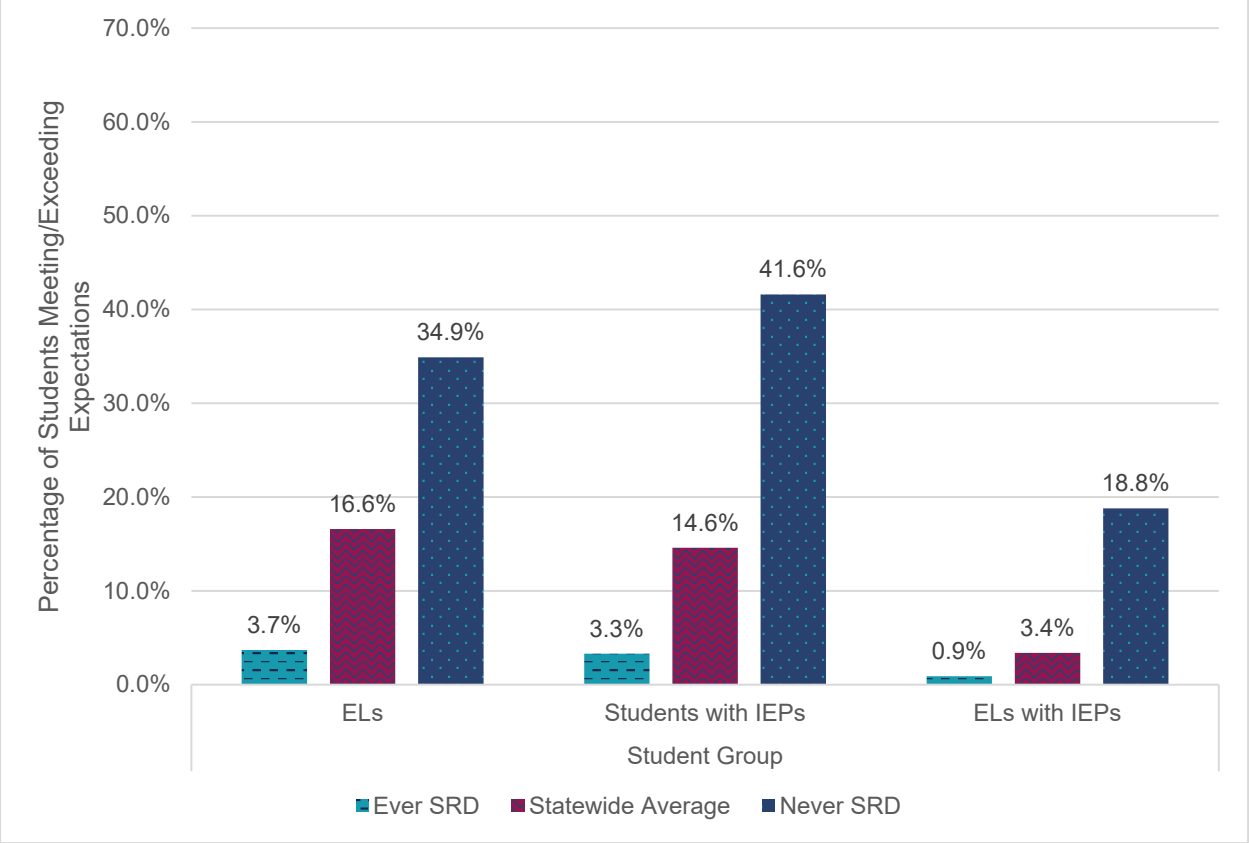
Trends in CMAS Performance by Demographic Characteristics

As in previous years, ELs and students with IEPs who were also identified with an SRD met or exceeded proficiency on the CMAS ELA exam at lower rates than their general education peers who were also identified with an SRD (Exhibit 5.6). Overall proficiency rates for these groups

were similar to 2023–2024 rates, with a slight increase for students with IEPs (3.3%, up from 2.9%) and a slight decrease for ELs (3.7%, down from 4.1%) who were ever identified with an SRD.

The picture is particularly pronounced for students carrying multiple identifications. The vast majority of students who were dually or triply identified did not reach 3rd-grade proficiency. Fewer than 1% of ELs with an IEP and identified with an SRD met or exceeded proficiency on the CMAS ELA exam in 2024–2025, compared to 18.8% of their peers who were never identified with an SRD. This gap of nearly 18 percentage points underscores the compounding challenges faced by students with overlapping needs and highlights the critical importance of well-coordinated, targeted support for this population.

Exhibit 5.6. Students With SRDs and Other Identifications Lag Behind Their Peers on 3rd–Grade CMAS

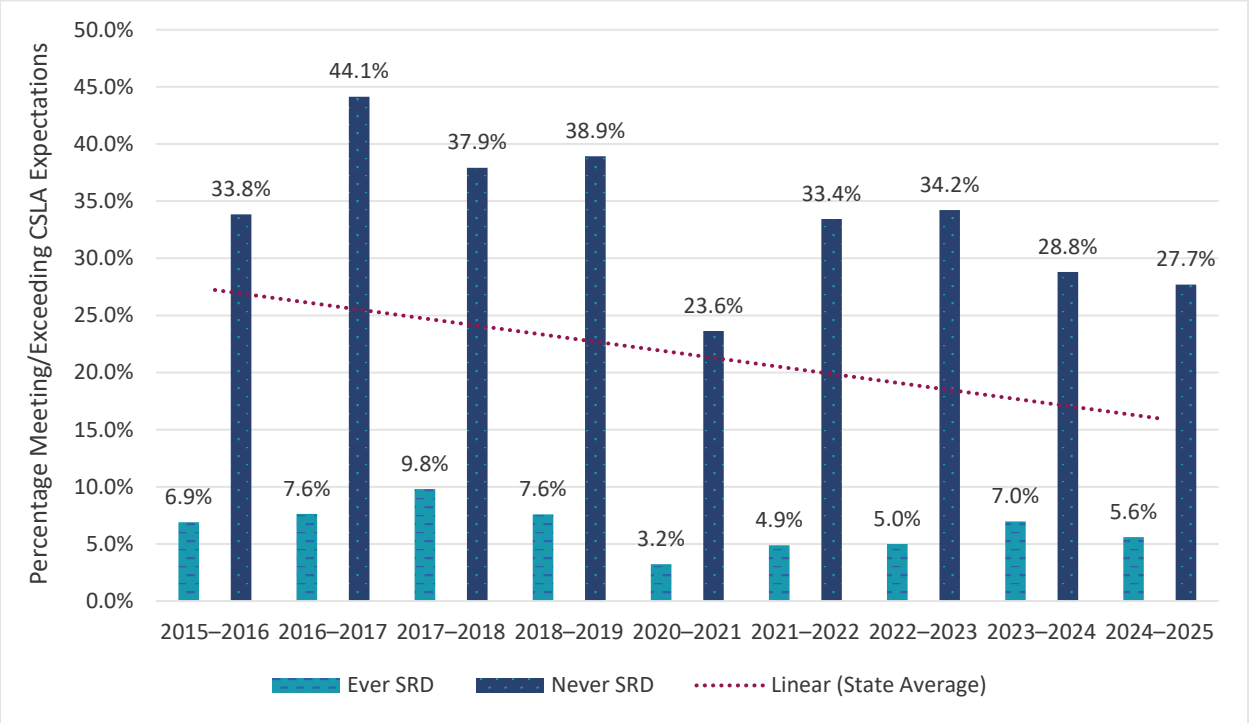


These findings suggest that students with multiple identifications require more coordinated and integrated supports to fully benefit from READ Act-funded instruction and related services. This is compounded by a finding that has emerged in every year of this evaluation: Educators consistently report confusion about how to best support students with multiple identifications and uncertainty about how to prioritize between READ plans and IEPs when a student qualifies for both. As noted earlier in this report, CDE has contracted with vendors to develop statewide training for educators on providing intervention instruction to students who have IEPs, students who are at risk for or identified as having dyslexia, and students who are ELs. The trainings will be available in multiple formats at no cost to Colorado educators in fall 2026. The goal of these trainings is to increase teacher confidence and their ability to provide adapted instruction, ensuring the needs of all students are met.

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

In the 3rd grade, eligible NEP and Limited English Proficient students may take the CSLA, an accommodated version of the CMAS ELA 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 5.7).

Exhibit 5.7. 3rd–Grade CSLA Proficiency Rates Are Still Below Pre-pandemic Levels and Performance Has Decreased Over the Past Year



CSLA proficiency rates continue to lag behind both pre-pandemic levels and the proficiency rates of peers taking the CMAS. In 2024–2025, students who had never been identified with an SRD had a CSLA proficiency rate of 27.7%, a decrease of about 1.1 percentage points from 2023–2024. Students who had ever been identified with an SRD saw a slightly larger decline over the same period, with proficiency dropping 1.4 percentage points from 7% to 5.6%.

These findings suggest that NEP and Limited English Proficient students—regardless of whether they have ever been identified with an SRD—are not receiving sufficient resources to return to, let alone surpass, pre-pandemic proficiency levels. This pattern stands in contrast to the more stable trends observed among students taking the CMAS and points to a need for more targeted support for this population.

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

Students classified as having significant cognitive disabilities are exempt from the CMAS ELA assessment in 3rd grade. Instead, these students may take the CoAlt ELA assessment, which

measures the extent to which they meet the Extended Evidence Outcomes (EEOs) of the Colorado Academic Standards.

In 2014–2015, the first year CoAlt ELA data were available, 31.6% of students met the target or advanced performance levels. Rates were lower in the following years, ranging from 15.9% to 20.4% between 2015–2016 and 2018–2019. Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, rates rose to 26.2% in 2020–2021, then declined consistently each year until 2024–2025, when they increased marginally to 19.9% from 17.2% the previous year.

This pattern stands in contrast to CMAS trends, which showed a decline in performance in 2020–2021 followed by gradually stabilizing proficiency rates in subsequent years.[14] The divergence between the two assessments suggests that students taking the CoAlt may be experiencing a distinct recovery trajectory that warrants continued monitoring.

How Do Students Perform on the ELAT Assessment Within and Across School Years?[15]

The 2012 School Finance Act required CDE to select an early literacy assessment tool to help teachers more regularly evaluate the reading skills of their K–3 students in line with READ Act requirements. In response, CDE launched the Early Literacy Assessment Tool (ELAT) project to identify early reading assessments, store and analyze student data, and recommend targeted activities based on those results.[16] Beginning in 2013, districts applied to participate in ELAT; approved applicants received software licenses to use the assessments and accompanying PD.

Amplify was selected as the initial assessment vendor from 2013 to 2018, with participating districts using the DIBELS Next assessment in English (now known as Acadience Reading) and the Indicadores Dinámicos del Éxito en la Lectura (IDEL) assessment in Spanish. Amplify continued as the approved assessment vendor from 2018 to 2023; during which time districts were also permitted to use Istation's ISIP Early Reading and ISIP Lectura Temprana assessments. Amplify was again awarded the contract for 2023 to 2028, with assessments shifting to mCLASS DIBELS 8mCLASS in English and mCLASS Lectura in Spanish.

[14] Some of these differences can likely be attributed to the changes in the demographic composition of students taking the CoAlt assessment across years. As discussed in the 2023–2024 report, fewer students have been participating in the CoAlt assessment since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Those who do participate and are experiencing other challenges (e.g., learning English, having chronic absences) consistently score below their peers.

[15] For ease of comparison, most percentages in the following sections regarding ELAT are rounded to the nearest whole number.

[16] See the Early Literacy Assessment Tool page on the Colorado Department of Education website.

ELAT data offer an important additional lens for examining student performance throughout the year. Unlike the CMAS assessment, which is administered once per year beginning in 3rd grade, and READ Act interim assessments, which are recorded statewide only at the end of the year, ELAT assessments are administered three times per year (in the fall, winter, and spring) for students in kindergarten through 3rd grade. This allows for a more complete picture of how student performance changes both within and across school years, with notable limitations.[17]

The analyses that follow focus on the ELAT assessments currently in use (mCLASS DIBELS 8mCLASS and mCLASS Lectura)[18] and draw on data combined with other student records to provide a more complete picture of student, school, and district characteristics.

Data Overview: Who Participates in the ELAT Program?

In 2023–2024, 160 districts (approximately 88% of all school districts in the state) and 947 schools (~85% of all schools in the state) participated in the ELAT program. Participation was slightly lower in 2024–2025, with 155 districts (~85%) and 924 schools (~83%) represented. Students in ELAT-participating schools made up 41.3% of all K–3 students in the READ Act data collection in 2023–2024, rising to 44.8% in 2024–2025.

Although fewer than half of READ Act–assessed students were enrolled in ELAT-participating schools, the two groups, including students with IEPs and ELs, were very similar in terms of student demographics and special population characteristics. This similarity suggests that findings from the ELAT analyses are likely to reflect broader trends across the state, even though not all districts participate.[19]

How does Student Performance Change on mCLASS DIBELS 8mCLASS Within a School Year?

The mCLASS DIBELS 8mCLASS assessment provides each student with a composite score at each testing period, calculated using weighted scores from a series of subtests. In 2023–2024, students across all grade levels showed improvement in their composite scores throughout the school year (Exhibit 5.8). **As expected, kindergarteners showed the most growth. The percentage of students performing at or above benchmark rose from about 31% at the**

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

[18] For information on historical Amplify DIBELS Next student performance data from 2018–2019 through 2022–2023, see Year 5's report.

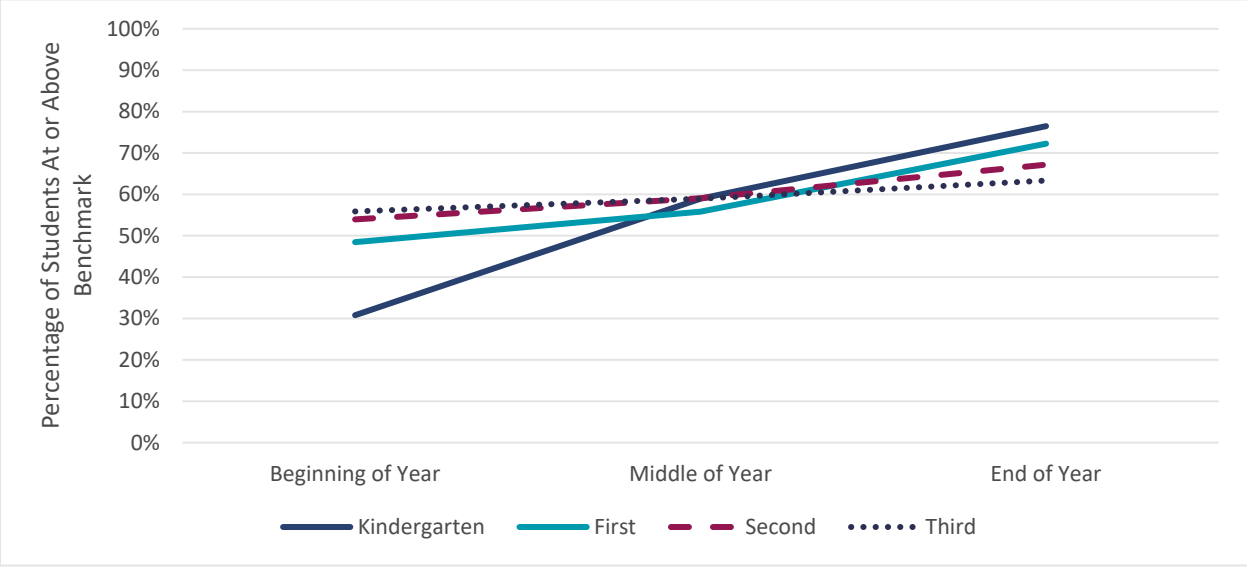
[19] Analyses of ELAT data with READ characteristics, like SRD status, will not contain the 3,691 students in 2023–2024 and 4,033 students in 2024–2025 who have a unique student identifier that does not match an identifier in the READ Act data.

beginning of the year to about 76% by the end, an increase of 45 percentage points. Growth was more modest in the higher grades, with the percentage of students at or above benchmark increasing by approximately 25 percentage points in 1st grade, 14 in 2nd grade, and 7 in 3rd grade.

Results in 2024–2025 followed a similar pattern (Exhibit 5.9), with students at all grade levels showing improvement across the school year. Kindergarteners again saw the largest gains, with an increase of 48 percentage points in students reaching benchmark by the end of the year compared to the beginning. First, 2nd, and 3rd graders increased by about 22, 13, and 4 percentage points, respectively.

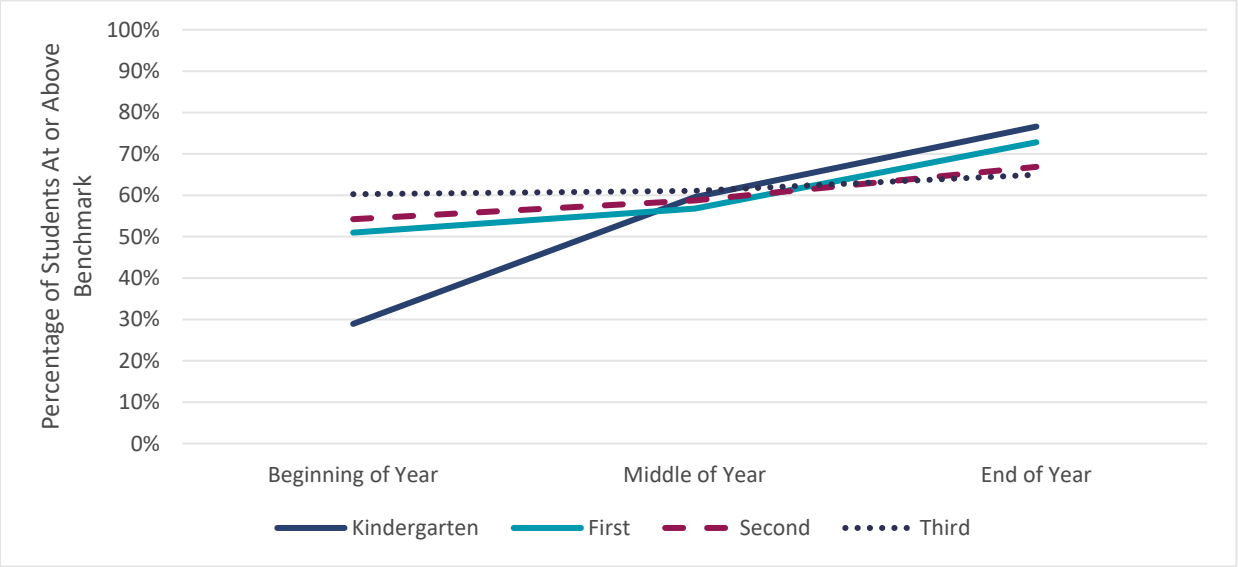
Although these trends are encouraging, they should be interpreted with some caution. Some of the changes in benchmark performance may reflect shifts in the cut scores set by the test maker, rather than actual gains in student literacy—that is, the improvements may not be entirely attributable to increases in student knowledge and skills.

Exhibit 5.8. 2023–2024 Benchmark Performance Rates Increase Across the School Year, with Kindergarteners Showing the Most Growth on mCLASS DIBELS 8



Note. Lines may not contain the same students across benchmark periods, as some students may be tested fewer than three times per year.

Exhibit 5.9. 2024–2025 Benchmark Performance Rates Increase Across the School Year, With Kindergarteners Showing the Most Growth on mCLASS DIBELS 8



Note. Lines may not contain the same students across benchmark periods, as some students may be tested fewer than three times per year.

How Does Student Performance on mCLASS Lectura Change Across the School Year?

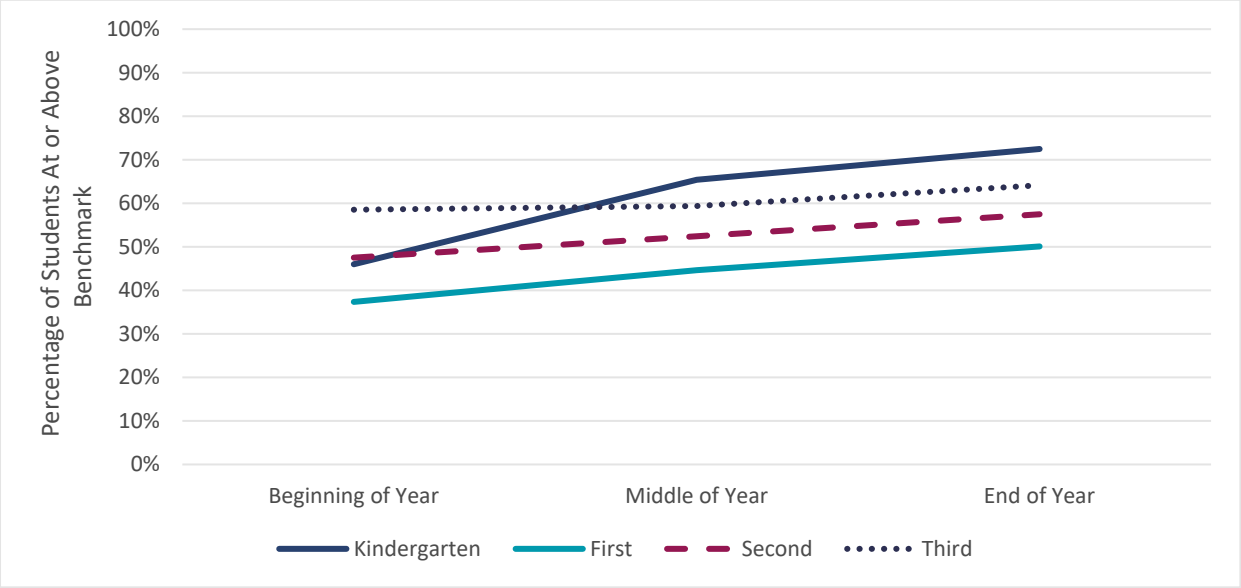
Students taking mCLASS Lectura showed composite score growth across all grade levels in both 2023–2024 (Exhibit 5.10) and 2024–2025 (Exhibit 5.11), though at a more modest rate than students taking mCLASS.

In 2023–2024, kindergarteners again showed the greatest growth, with the percentage of students performing at or above benchmark rising from about 46% at the beginning of the year to about 72% by the end—an increase of 26 percentage points. While this gain is smaller than what was observed among kindergarteners taking mCLASS, it is worth noting that Lectura-assessed kindergarteners started the year performing at higher rates than their mCLASS peers. As in the mCLASS results, growth was more modest in the higher grades, with the percentage of students at or above benchmark increasing by 13 percentage points in 1st grade, 11 in 2nd grade, and 5 in 3rd grade.

Results in 2024–2025 followed a similar pattern, with students at all grade levels showing growth across the school year. At 32 percentage points, kindergarteners saw the largest gains, followed by 1st graders (15 points), and 2nd and 3rd graders (8 points each). Although Lectura

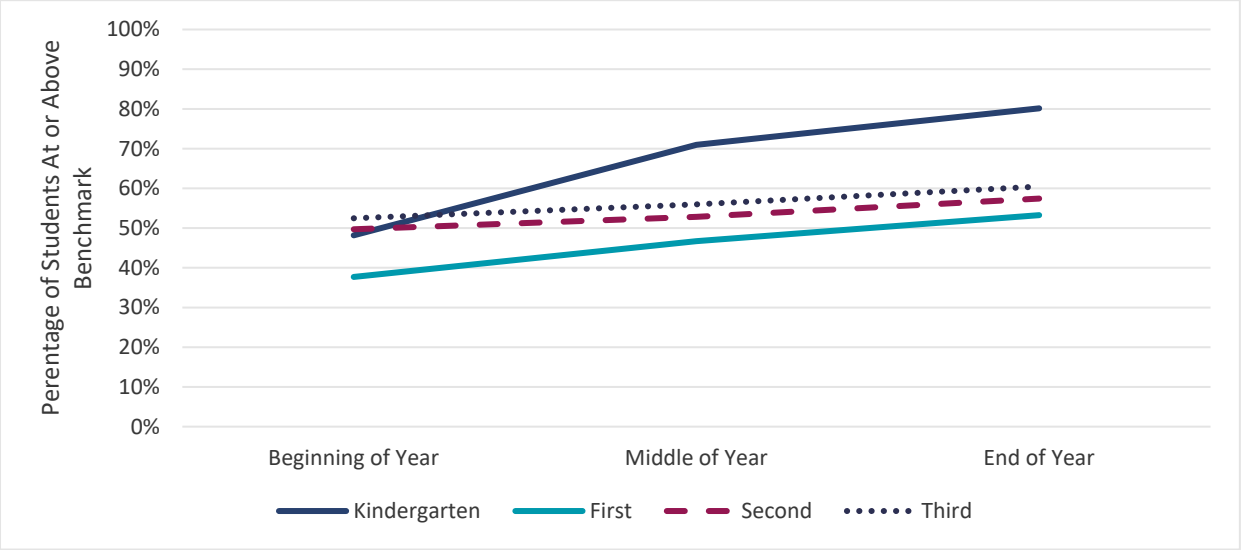
students in kindergarten through 2nd grade did not show as much overall growth as their mCLASS DIBELS 8mCLASS peers, Lectura-assessed 3rd graders ended 2024–2025 with a higher percentage of students at or above benchmark than their mCLASS DIBELS 8mCLASS counterparts (difference of 4 percentage points).

Exhibit 5.10. 2023–2024 Benchmark Performance Rates Increase Across the School Year for Students Taking mCLASS Lectura, But at More Modest Rates Than Students Taking mCLASS DIBELS 8



Note. Lines may not contain the same students across benchmark periods, as some students may be tested fewer than three times per year.

Exhibit 5.11. 2023–2024 Benchmark Performance Rates Increase Across the School Year for Students Taking mCLASS Lectura But at More Modest Rates Than For Students Taking mCLASS DIBELS



Note. Lines may not contain the same students across benchmark periods, as some students may be tested fewer than three times per year.

How Do Students Grow Within School Years, and How Does This Compare to Their Peers Outside of the State?

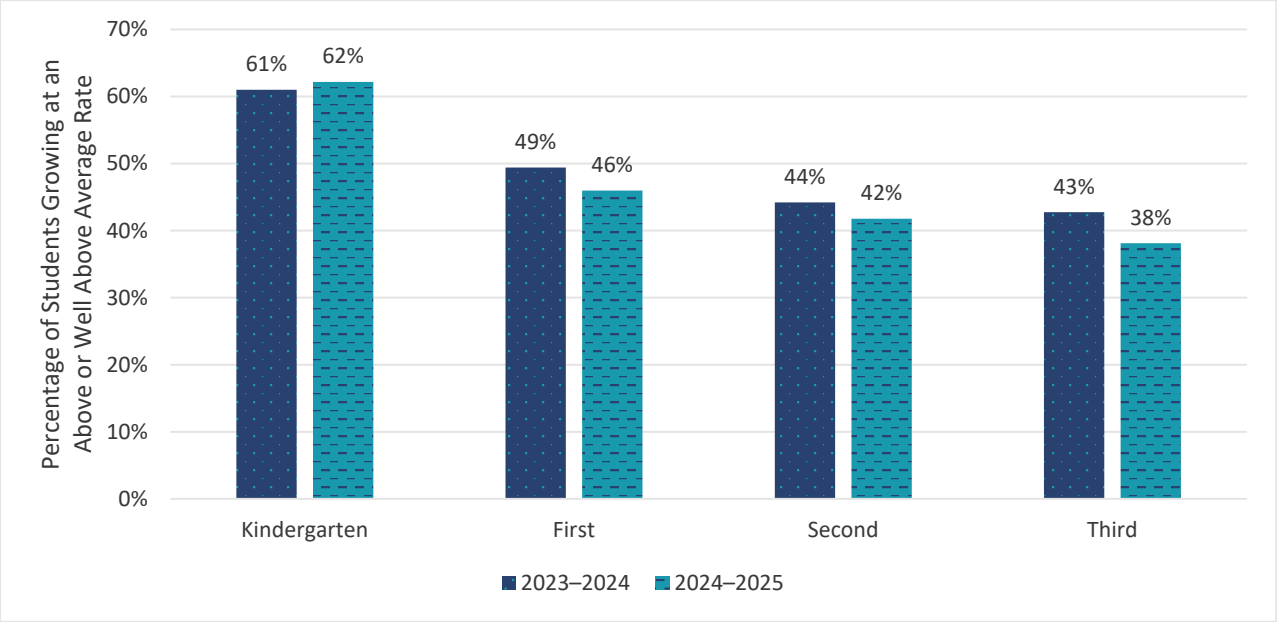
In addition to benchmark scores, mCLASS DIBELS 8 provides a growth measure that tracks how much individual students improve across the school year compared to peers who started the year at a similar level, using a national student sample as a reference point. This sample includes nearly 3 million students from all 50 states participating; the growth measure is developed and maintained by mCLASS[20]. This means that a student showing "average growth" is improving at a rate consistent with students nationwide who started the school year scoring similarly, while a student showing "well above–average growth"' is outpacing those peers by a significant margin. Although this measure is descriptive rather than predictive, it offers a useful way to understand how Colorado students are progressing relative to students across the country.

Growth rates were consistent across both 2023–2024 and 2024–2025, with the percentage of students in each growth category remaining within a few percentage points at each grade level

[20] For more detailed technical information about zone of growth calculation, see https://dibels.amplify.com/docs/techreports/DIBELS8-Zog_tech_report_20221010.pdf

from one year to the next (Exhibit 5.12). **Overall, most Colorado K–3 students participating in the ELAT program are growing at rates similar to or greater than their national peers on mCLASS DIBELS 8.** Kindergarteners showed the strongest results, with 61% achieving above- or well above–average growth in 2023–2024 and 62.2% doing so in 2024–2025.

Exhibit 5.12. Most Colorado K–3 Students Participating in ELAT Are Growing at Rates Similar to or Greater Than Their National Peers on mCLASS DIBELS 8



When growth rates are examined by SRD status, a more complex picture emerges (Exhibit 5.13). More than half of students in districts participating in the ELAT project who have never been identified with an SRD experienced growth that was above or well above average: 55.1% in 2023–2024 and 52.2% in 2024–2025. By contrast, only 32.4% and 27.3% of students who had ever been identified with an SRD achieved those same growth rates in 2023–2024 and 2024–2025, respectively—a gap of nearly 25 percentage points compared to their peers who have never been identified.

The difference is most pronounced in kindergarten, which is not surprising given that students identified with an SRD at the earliest opportunity are likely to show the greatest divergence in growth from the start. As students move through grades, the gap between those who have ever been identified with an SRD and those who have not gradually narrows but does not close entirely (Exhibits 5.14 and 5.15).

Exhibit 5.13. A Lower Percentage of Students Participating in ELAT Who Have Ever Been Identified With an SRD Show Similar or Greater Growth Than Their National Peers on mCLASS DIBELS 8

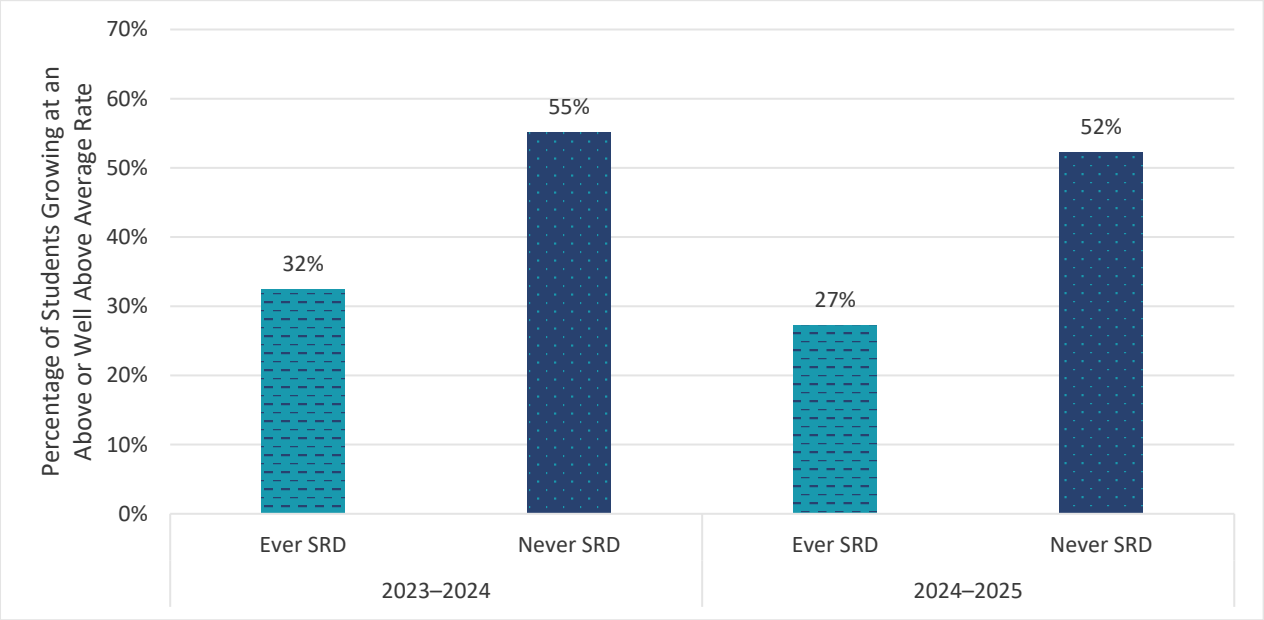


Exhibit 5.14. In 2023–2024, A Lower Percentage of Colorado K–3 Students Participating in ELAT Who Have Ever Been Identified with an SRD Experienced Comparable Growth to Their National Peers on mCLASS DIBELS 8 Than Those Who Were Never Identified with an SRD

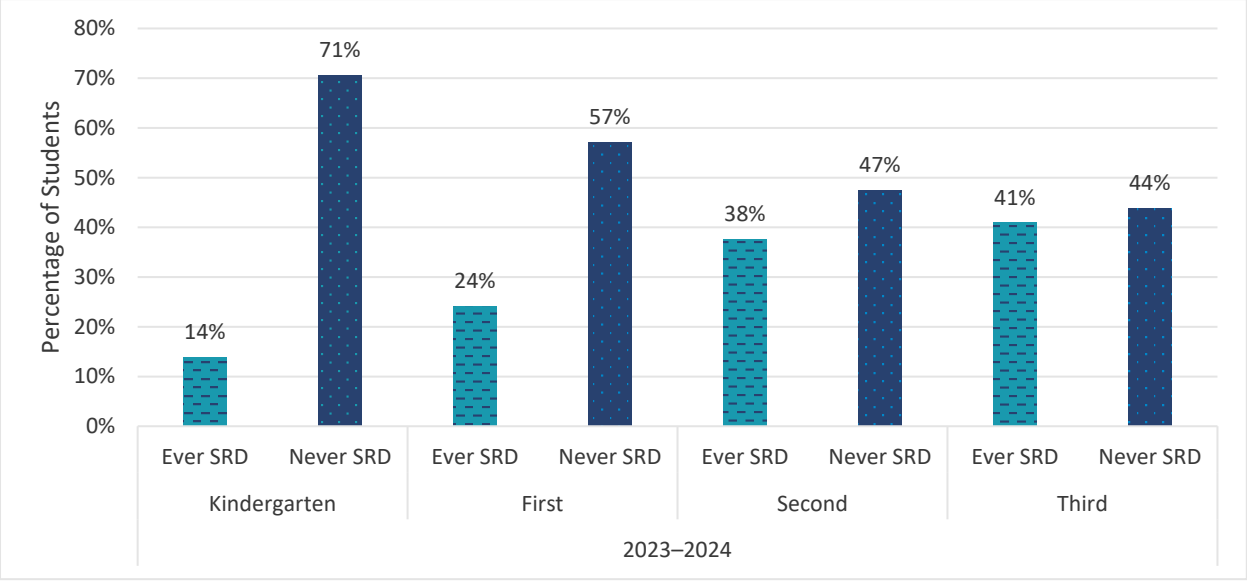
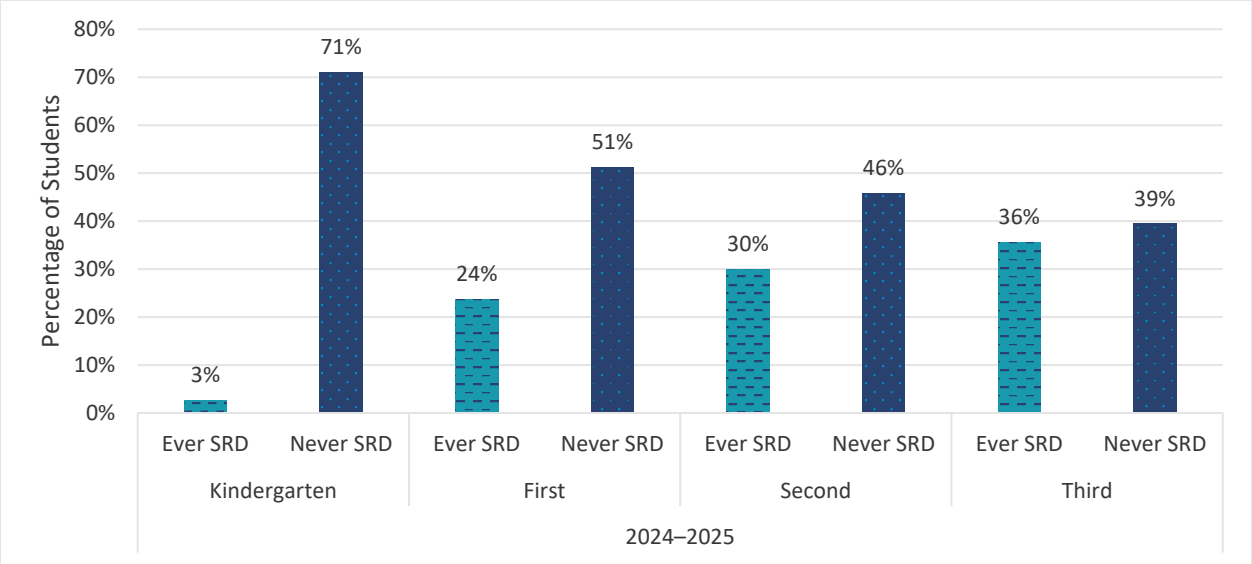


Exhibit 5.15. In 2024–2025, A Lower Percentage of Colorado K–3 Students Participating in ELAT Who Have Ever Been Identified with an SRD Experienced Comparable Growth to Their National Peers on mCLASS DIBELS 8 Than Those Who Were Never Identified with an SRD



When looking at growth rates by student characteristics, students with IEPs were less likely to achieve above- or well above–average growth compared to their peers without IEPs (Exhibit 5.16). ELs, by contrast, showed growth rates comparable to their non-EL peers. Similarly, no notable differences in growth rates emerged when examining results by race.

Exhibit 5.16. Percentage of Students Participating in ELAT Making Above- or Well Above-Average Growth on mCLASS DIBELS 8

Students	2023–2024	2024–2025
Students with IEPs	35.9%	34.1%
Students without IEPs	51.4%	48.9%
EL students	44.9%	44.1%

Fluent students	49.6%	47.0%

Key Takeaways

SRD identification and exit rates have been stable since the 2021–2022 school year and were nearly identical over the 2024–2025 and 2023–2024 school years. ELs and SWDs remain more likely than their peers to change SRD statuses between years.

- The percentage of students moving from not being identified with an SRD to being identified with an SRD increased from 4% to 4.1% while the rate of students exiting SRD identification dropped marginally (to 3.5% compared to 4.3% in 2023–2024).
- In comparison, 5.5% of ELs and 7.3% of students with IEPs who were not identified with an SRD in 2023–2024 were identified with an SRD in 2024–2025.

Students persistently identified with an SRD across grade levels are not getting the interventions they need to reach reading proficiency.

- Students who are identified with an SRD early and continue to be identified across grade levels fall progressively further below the Colorado average at every subsequent grade level.
- A subset of students are being identified with SRDs later than would be optimal to adequately support their reading growth; they fall below average but do not meet the threshold for SRD identification until 2nd or 3rd grade, at which point it is harder for them to catch up, particularly for students who belong to historically underserved groups.

Over the past 3 years of post-pandemic schooling, both students who had ever or never been identified with an SRD showed stable rates of meeting or exceeding CMAS proficiency standards in 3rd grade, albeit at vastly different rates.

- In 2024–2025, 41.9% of 3rd-grade students across the state met or exceeded proficiency, compared to 42.2% in the previous year.
- More than half of students who have never been identified with an SRD met or exceeded proficiency (58.2%), while only 7% of those ever identified with an SRD met or exceeded it.

SRD identification and exit rates have been stable since 2021–2022 and were nearly identical between 2023–2024 and 2024–2025.

- The percentage of students newly identified with an SRD held steady at around 4%, while the percentage exiting SRD identification declined marginally from 4.3% to 3.5%.

- ELs and SWDs continued to be more likely than their peers to change SRD status between years: 5.5% of ELs and 7.3% of students with IEPs who were not identified with an SRD in 2023–2024 were identified in 2024–2025.
- Black and Hispanic students continue to be reclassified—either gaining or losing an SRD designation—at higher rates than their White peers, a pattern that has been consistent across all 6 years of this evaluation.

Students persistently identified with an SRD are not receiving sufficient interventions to move them toward reading proficiency.

- Students identified with an SRD early who continue to be identified across grade levels fall progressively further below the Colorado average at every subsequent grade level.
- A subset of students are being identified later than would be optimal. Their scores trend downward in early grades but do not meet the threshold for formal SRD identification until 2nd or 3rd grade, at which point it is harder for them to catch up.

Over the past 3 years, proficiency rates on the 3rd-grade CMAS ELA assessment have been stable for both students who were ever and never identified with an SRD, but the gap between the two groups remains pronounced.

- In 2024–2025, 41.9% of 3rd-grade students statewide met or exceeded proficiency, compared to 42.2% in 2023–2024.
- More than half of students never identified with an SRD met or exceeded proficiency (58.2%), compared to only 7% of students ever identified with an SRD.
- Students with multiple identifications face compounding challenges: Fewer than 1% of EL students with an IEP who were identified with an SRD met or exceeded CMAS proficiency in 2024–2025, compared to 18.8% of peers never identified with an SRD.

NEP and Limited English Proficient students taking the CSLA assessment continue to perform below both pre-pandemic levels and their peers taking the CMAS, regardless of SRD status.

- In 2024–2025, CSLA proficiency rates were 27.7% for students never identified with an SRD and 5.6% for students ever identified with an SRD. These were both declines from the previous year and well below CMAS proficiency rates for comparable groups.

After several years of declining CoAlt ELA proficiency rates, there was marginal improvement in 2024–2025.

- The percentage of students meeting target or advanced performance levels on the CoAlt increased to 19.9% in 2024–2025, up from 17.2 in 2023–2024, though rates remained below pre-pandemic levels.

Fewer than half of assessed by an interim assessment under the READ Act were enrolled in ELAT-participating schools in 2023–2024 and 2024–2025, but demographic similarities between the two groups mean that findings can be reasonably generalized across the state.

- About 88% of school districts and 85% of schools participated in the ELAT program in 2023–2024, decreasing slightly to 85% of districts and 83% of schools in 2024–2025.
- Students in ELAT-participating schools made up 41.3% of K–3 students in the READ Act data collection in 2023–2024 and 44.8% in 2024–2025.

Kindergarteners showed the most growth within a school year on both mCLASS DIBELS 8 and mCLASS Lectura in both school years, though mCLASS DIBELS 8 kindergarteners saw larger overall gains.

- On mCLASS DIBELS 8, the percentage of kindergarteners performing at or above benchmark increased by 45 percentage points from the beginning to the end of the year (31% to 76%) in 2023–2024, and by 48 percentage in 2024–2025.
- On mCLASS Lectura, the percentage of kindergarteners performing at or above benchmark increased by 26 percentage points in 2023–2024 (46% to 72%) and by 32 percentage points in 2024–2025. Although Lectura kindergarteners saw smaller gains than their mCLASS DIBELS 8 peers, they began the year performing at higher rates.
- When interpreting these results, it is important to note that some changes in benchmark performance may reflect shifts in cut scores set by the test maker rather than actual gains in student literacy.

Most Colorado K–3 students in districts participating in the ELAT project are growing their mCLASS DIBELS 8 scores at rates similar to or greater than their national peers, but meaningful differences by SRD status and IEP designation exist.

- Kindergarteners showed the highest growth rates compared to national peers, with 61% achieving above- or well above–average growth in 2023–2024 and 62.2% in 2024–2025.
- About half of students who have never been identified with an SRD experienced above- or well above–average growth in both 2023–2024 and 2024–2025, compared to about a third of students who have ever been identified with an SRD—a gap of nearly 25 percentage points.

- Students with IEPs were less likely to achieve above- or well above–average growth compared to peers without IEPs. By contrast, ELs showed growth rates comparable to their non-EL peers. No notable differences in growth rates emerged by race.

6. Student Outcomes (Grant Programs)



This chapter looks at READ Act–funded programs alongside other state literacy initiatives to provide a fuller picture of how Colorado is investing in early literacy. Examining multiple programs together is important because different funding structures, implementation approaches, and program lengths can all affect student outcomes in different ways.

Although the Comprehensive ELG and ELG PD programs fall under the READ Act, other initiatives—such as the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant and the Structured Literacy Initiative (SLI)—operate independently of the READ Act while sharing the goal of improving early literacy instruction. Looking at these programs side by side helps put the effects of READ Act funding in context and allows for a more complete understanding of how literacy investments across the state are linked to student outcomes.

Although their goals are similar, the Comprehensive ELG, ELG PD, CLSD, and SLI programs differ significantly in their design, scope, and duration. Exhibit 6.1 provides a brief overview of each program's funding length and the year the grants were initiated in Colorado.

Exhibit 6.1. Summary of Literacy Grants

Grant Program	Number of Years of Funding	Year of Grant Commencement
Comprehensive ELG	Up to 5 years*	2013–2014
SLI	Up to 5 years	2015–2016
ELG PD	1 year	2020–2021
CLSD	4 years**	2021–2022

Note. *The Comprehensive ELG program is a 4-year grant cycle. The first year of the grant serves as a planning and initial implementation year; grantees can apply for an additional 1-year sustainability grant after completion of the cycle. **The CLSD program is a 4-year grant cycle that ran from the 2021–2022 through 2024–2025 school years.

As discussed in previous chapters (see Chapter 4 for ELG findings), qualitative information about these programs was gathered through surveys of district administrators, principals, coaches, and teachers, as well as through school site visits. These methods provided insight into how funds were distributed and used, what was working well, and what challenges participants encountered.

This chapter shifts to a quantitative analysis, examining whether participation in these grant programs is associated with better student outcomes. Appendix B contains additional methodological detail and exhibits related to the findings in the chapter.

To What Extent Does Participation in the Comprehensive ELG Program Have an Effect on Being Identified with an SRD and on READ Act Interim Assessment Performance?

The Comprehensive ELG program is the longest-running grant in the analysis, serving approximately 150 schools across seven cohorts since 2013–2014. The analysis in this chapter focuses on Cohorts 2 through 6, which includes schools that entered the program between 2016–2017 and 2022–2023.[21]

To estimate the effect of the ELG program on interim assessment performance, the analysis used a difference-in-differences (DiD) approach to compare how outcomes changed over time in ELG and non-ELG schools. Results were examined using two primary models. An event study DiD model looked at whether student outcomes improved after schools entered the program, while also verifying that ELG and non-ELG schools had similar outcomes prior to program participation. A dynamic DiD model then examined how outcomes evolved the longer schools participated in the program. Both models accounted for differences in student demographics, school-level characteristics, and broader statewide trends.

Effect on Likelihood of Being Identified with an SRD

The event study model first examined whether ELG participation affected the likelihood/chance of a student being identified with an SRD, in effect, whether the ELG program reduced SRD rates. Before interpreting the results, the model was used to check whether ELG and non-ELG schools had similar outcomes prior to program entry. This check revealed that ELG schools already had somewhat better outcomes three or more years before entering the program, suggesting some pre-existing differences between the two groups of schools. As a result, the findings should be interpreted with some caution, though they remain informative. Overall, the results showed little to no evidence that ELG participation reduced the chance of a student being identified with an SRD.

The dynamic model shown suggests a more encouraging pattern. Students in ELG schools were initially more likely to be identified with an SRD in the first year of the program but were

[21] Cohort 1 schools began participating before the first of year of data available for the evaluation and Cohort 7 schools entered the program in 2024–2025 with no outcome data following the first year of implementation.

less likely to be identified over time. However, these positive trends were also not statistically significant and do not provide strong evidence of lasting program impact.

Effect on Interim Assessment Scores

The ELG program showed a clearer and more consistent positive effect when looking at interim assessment scores. In the first year of the program, no meaningful effect on assessment scores was observed. However, from Years 2 through 5, students in ELG schools showed significant and growing improvements in their scores. **Taken together, the results suggest that the ELG program has a meaningful positive effect on student interim assessment scores, particularly after the first year of implementation.**

This potential positive effect is also reflected in how district administrators and principals perceive the program. More than three-quarters reported that ELG participation was at least somewhat successful in helping students exit SRD status and in raising 3rd-grade reading achievement. These perceptions align closely with the quantitative findings and help paint a more complete picture of the program's impact.

To What Extent Does Participation in the ELG PD Program Have an Effect on Being Identified with an SRD and on READ Act Interim Assessment Performance?

The ELG PD grant is a 1-year program that provides PD funding to schools and districts. To qualify for the grant, a district must already be showing student growth. Participation in the ELG PD program did not produce a statistically significant effect on either the likelihood of students being identified with an SRD or on their interim assessment scores. This may not be surprising given the program's short duration. It is possible that PD funding needs to be in place for additional years to translate into measurable improvements in student reading outcomes.

To What Extent Does Participation in the CLSD Program Have an Effect on Being Identified with an SRD and on READ Act Interim Assessment Performance?

The CLSD grant is a competitive, federally funded grant administered by CDE to improve literacy outcomes for students from birth through 12th grade. The grant supports the use of evidence-based literacy practices and provides participating districts and schools with a range of resources, including instructional materials, professional development, literacy coaching, technical assistance, support for developing local literacy plans, and family engagement efforts.

CLSD funding is awarded through a competitive application process, with priority given to schools and districts serving high proportions of historically underserved students (including students from low-income backgrounds, ELs, and SWDs) as well as those with high rates of SRD identification and those located in Qualified Opportunity Zones. As a result, participating schools tend to have greater demonstrated literacy needs than non-participating schools. In Colorado, the CLSD grant reached over 160 schools between 2021–2022 and 2024–2025.

In a dynamic DiD model and a propensity score matching model, CLSD participation was associated with an increased likelihood of students being identified with an SRD and lower interim assessment scores. However, these findings must be understood in context before drawing conclusions about the program's effectiveness.

Several important factors complicate the interpretation of these results. First, the analysis only included a single cohort of schools, which limits the conclusions that can be drawn. Second, that cohort began participating during the early recovery period following the COVID-19 pandemic, a time when many schools were still dealing with significant disruptions to learning. Third, site visits suggested that the program was implemented inconsistently across participating schools. Finally, schools that entered the CLSD program already had significantly higher rates of SRD identification and served larger proportions of students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. While the models attempted to compare CLSD schools with similar non-participating schools, they cannot fully account for all of the ways these schools differed, including how they recovered from the pandemic.

To What Extent Does SLI Participation Have an Effect on Being Identified with an SRD and on READ Act Interim Assessment Performance?

Administered by CDE through its Office of Special Education, the SLI is a state-supported project to improve early literacy outcomes, particularly for students at risk for reading difficulties. The initiative is grounded in structured literacy—an evidence-based approach aligned with the science of reading that emphasizes explicit, systematic instruction in foundational language skills. SLI provides participating schools and districts with up to 5 years of supports,[22] including intensive PD for teachers and school leaders, access to instructional materials and resources, and ongoing coaching and technical assistance to support implementation. The project focuses primarily on kindergarten through 3rd grade and is designed to coordinate instruction across tiers within a multi-tiered system of supports. The initiative[23] specifically targets schools serving

[22] Some schools in the initiative participated for an additional (sixth) year.

[23] Some schools dropped out of the program before the end of their participatory period.

high proportions of historically underserved students, including students from low-income backgrounds, ELs, and SWDs.

Between 2015–2016 and 2024–2025, 39 schools participated in the initiative. During site visits, school administrators reported differences in how program funding was used and varying levels of involvement across schools. Some administrators also reported limited awareness of the SLI grant and its impact at their school, which may reflect gaps in communication or staff turnover over the course of the program.

The event study models found that SLI and non-SLI schools were on similar trajectories before the program began, which strengthens confidence in the results. No effect was observed in the first year, but beginning in Year 2, students in SLI schools were less likely to be identified with an SRD, and interim assessment scores also improved over time.

The dynamic model showed similar positive patterns, though most results were not statistically significant. The exception was interim assessment scores in Years 2 and 3, which did show statistically significant improvements. The difference in results between the two models is likely due to the relatively small number of schools in the SLI program, which makes it harder to detect effects with confidence.

Overall, the results are mixed but suggest possible positive trends worth monitoring. This is especially true given that site visits revealed meaningful differences in how the program was implemented across schools, which may help explain some of the variability in findings.

Key Takeaways

The Comprehensive ELG program shows the strongest and most consistent evidence of a positive effect on student outcomes.

- No effect was observed in the first year of implementation, but students in ELG schools showed significant and growing improvements in interim assessment scores from Years 2 through 5.
- Positive trends were also observed in the likelihood of students being identified with an SRD over time, though these were not statistically significant.
- More than three-quarters of district administrators and principals reported that ELG participation was at least somewhat successful in helping students exit SRD status and raising 3rd-grade reading achievement, consistent with the quantitative findings.

The ELG PD program, which provides 1 year of professional development funding, did not produce a statistically significant effect on SRD identification or interim assessment scores.

- The program's short duration may limit its ability to produce measurable improvements in student reading outcomes, as PD likely requires sustained implementation to take effect.

CLSD participation was associated with an increased likelihood of SRD identification and lower interim assessment scores, but these findings should be interpreted with caution.

- Several contextual factors complicate interpretation of the results, including the fact that only a single cohort (which began during COVID-19 recovery) was analyzed, implementation varied across schools, and participating schools already had significantly higher rates of SRD identification and greater proportions of historically underserved students.

The SLI shows possible positive trends, though results are mixed.

- Beginning in Year 2 of implementation, students in SLI schools were less likely to be identified with an SRD, and similar improvements were observed in interim assessments scores.
- The statistical significance of findings differed between methods, likely due in part to the relatively small number of schools participating in the program.

- Meaningful differences in how the program was implemented across schools, as reported during site visits, may help explain some of the variability in the findings and warrant further investigation.

Conclusion



Six Years of Learning: What the Evidence Tells Us

This report marks the sixth year of the independent evaluation of the Colorado READ Act. Across 6 years of data collection, the evaluation has tracked implementation progress, examined student outcomes, and documented the persistent challenges that remain even as Colorado has made significant strides in early literacy. Taken together, the evidence tells a story of meaningful progress and the work still needed to ensure every student benefits from it.

On the positive side, adoption of evidence-based materials has become widespread, with the large majority of schools now using core curricula, assessments, and intervention programs on the Advisory Lists. Tiered instructional models are consistently in place across schools. Per-pupil funding, when used strategically, has been used for evidence-based early literacy materials, staffing support, and professional learning. Grant programs, particularly the Comprehensive ELG, have demonstrated a positive association with student assessment performance in quantitative analyses. School leaders participating in site visits consistently credited ELG-funded consultants and coaches with notable improvements in teacher practice and instructional alignment. Third-grade CMAS ELA proficiency rates have also shown consistent improvement since the post-pandemic low, with 41.9% of students statewide meeting or exceeding proficiency in 2024–2025. And SRD identification rates, while still elevated from pre-pandemic levels, have declined steadily since the post-pandemic high of 22.2% in 2020–2021.

At the same time, several challenges have proven to be persistent across all 6 years of the evaluation. Students with multiple identifications requiring intervention (for example, a student with an SRD designation and an IEP), particularly those with IEPs, ELs, and those with SRD designations, remain significantly underserved, with fewer than 1% reaching CMAS proficiency in 2024–2025. NEP and Limited English Proficient students continue to perform below pre-pandemic levels on the CSLA assessment. The gap between students who have ever been identified with an SRD and those who have never been identified has remained pronounced and persistent across every year of this evaluation. Educators consistently report a need for clearer guidance and alignment across READ plans, IEPs, and EL plans to support students with multiple identifications.

New trajectory analyses in Year 6 add an important dimension to this picture: Students who are identified with an SRD early and exit SRD status show strong, sustained improvement over time, while students who remain persistently identified show widening gaps relative to the Colorado average, indicating a need for additional instructional alignment and targeted supports over time. This finding, combined with evidence that some students are being identified later than would be optimal, raises important questions about the sufficiency of current screening thresholds and intervention approaches for the students who need them most.

As Colorado continues this work, the core challenge is no longer whether to implement the READ Act but how to ensure that its benefits reach every student equitably, that supports are sustainable over time, and that the system continues to improve in response to what the data reveal.

Findings by Evaluation Question

EQ 1: How Are LEPs and Schools Implementing READ Act Provisions?

The following section describes 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 Remained Widespread

Overall use of curricula on the Advisory List was similar to the previous year, with 84% of schools using core curricula on the Advisory List in 2024–2025, up slightly from 80% in 2023–2024. Usage of supplemental curricula (71%), intervention curricula (86%), and interim assessments (100%) on the Advisory Lists also remained widespread. Similar to past years, district administrators and principals continued to emphasize evidence-based materials and high-quality instruction as key drivers of student literacy growth, with 66% of district administrators reporting that instructional materials were successful in helping students exit SRD status and 63% crediting materials with raising 3rd-grade reading proficiency.

Although district-level mandates for uniform program use remained common, there was a slight decline (from 68% in 2023–2024 to 60% in 2024–2025) in the percentage of districts requiring all elementary schools to use the same programs. More districts this year reported giving schools a list of preferred programs from which to choose, suggesting a gradual shift toward greater school-level autonomy in instructional program selection.

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

As in 2023–2024, teachers, coaches, and principals reported that it took at least a year to feel comfortable implementing a new core curriculum. Notably, the percentage of principals reporting it took more than a year for staff to reach that level of comfort increased significantly from 31% in 2023–2024 to 46% in 2024–2025, suggesting that principals are increasingly recognizing curriculum implementation as a multiyear process, consistent with research in the field (Werres

& Châu, 2023; National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2020; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Underscoring the ongoing need for implementation support, more than 10% of principals, coaches, and teachers reported they were still not comfortable implementing the new curriculum at the time of the survey.

Unlike the previous year, all three groups reported that the district primarily, not curriculum publishers, were the primary providers of PD. All three groups were also more likely than in prior years to report that training had a positive impact on their ability to implement the curriculum.

A Gap Persists in Teacher Comfort With the Assessment System

Although over 90% of coaches and principals reported feeling somewhat or very comfortable administering, interpreting, and explaining assessment results, more than 40% of teachers reported feeling uncomfortable with the interim assessment system, a pattern consistent with the previous year. This gap is particularly notable given that 80% of teachers reported considering all data sources equally when determining student intervention supports, and that teachers were most likely to rely on classroom performance data and least likely to use interim assessment data to inform intervention support decisions.

School-Level Staff Stressed the Importance of Structures and Staffing to Support Systemic Reading Instruction

School-level staff continued to implement tiered instructional models that included daily core and small group instruction, often with the support of additional adults during the literacy block. Similar to last year, 39% of teachers reported regularly having multiple adults in the classroom for reading instruction. District administrators and principals continued to cite PLCs and grade-level teams as crucial supports for student growth, with more than 60% of district administrators and 75% of principals reporting these structures played a crucial role in 3rd-grade reading growth.

Identifying and Supporting Students with SRDs

Assessments Remained a Key Driver of Instructional Decisions

As in previous years, most principals, coaches, and teachers reported that READ Act interim, diagnostic, and summative assessments were important for informing reading instruction. Seventy-six percent of principals, 71% of coaches, and 47% of teachers reported that READ Act diagnostic and summative assessments were "very important" for informing reading instruction. School-based staff also expressed generally positive attitudes about the usefulness of assessment tools for identifying students with SRDs, targeting and adjusting instruction, and

exiting students from SRD status. However, as in previous years, survey respondents continued to report that the assessment tools were not as useful for predicting CMAS expectations—a disconnect that has now been documented consistently across multiple years of this evaluation.

Educators Need Additional Guidance and Support to Implement SB 25-200 Requirements

Although most respondents felt the guidance and implementation of existing READ Act requirements was clear, understanding of the new SB 25-200 dyslexia screening legislation was significantly more limited. Nearly half of districts (47%) and over half of principals (57%) reported that they were not sure what the legislation meant for their school or district or had no knowledge of it. Among those with some awareness, the most commonly requested supports included approved screener lists, implementation timelines, training, and guidance on communicating with families — including support in communicating that screener results are not an official dyslexia diagnosis. Fewer than half of responding teachers (47%) reported having sufficient knowledge of the characteristics of dyslexia, and only 39% felt confident they could modify their instruction to meet the needs of students exhibiting those characteristics.

There Is a Continued Need for Clear Guidance and Policies to Support Students With Multiple Identifications

As in every prior year of this evaluation, administrators and teachers reported feeling less confident supporting students with multiple identifications and expressed uncertainty about which plan should take precedence when a student qualified for more than one. Only 37% of districts reported having specific policies for developing, implementing, and monitoring plans for students with multiple identifications, and only 54% reported clarity on which plan should serve as the primary guidance document. Educators also consistently reported that available curricula and assessments were not fully adequate for supporting students with IEPs or ELs: Fewer than 9% of respondents found curricula fully adequate for students with IEPs, and fewer than 15% found it fully adequate for ELs.

Early Literacy Grant

Schools Reported Marked Improvements in Teacher Practice and Student Outcomes, Though Gains on Interim Assessments Did Not Always Translate to CMAS Results

As in previous years, ELG-funded external literacy consultants and in-school reading coaches were credited with substantial improvements in teacher PD, alignment of instruction across classrooms, and the capacity to provide targeted literacy support to individual students.

Consistent with prior years, access to external consultants was the single-most commonly cited motivator for applying to the grant and the primary driver of its positive impacts. Seven out of 10 site visit schools reported student assessment gains they attributed directly to their ELG, with some schools reporting dramatic improvements—including one school where the percentage of students reading at benchmark increased from 46% to 69% in a single year. As detailed in Chapter 6, these reports are consistent with the positive trends observed in interim assessment scores following the first year of ELG participation.

However, school leaders consistently noted a gap between these gains on interim assessments and CMAS results. Interim assessments capture foundational skills such as phonics and decoding, while CMAS requires higher-order skills—particularly in writing and comprehension—that interim tools do not measure as directly. This disconnect has been reported across multiple years of the evaluation and warrants further systematic investigation see Appendix B for an overview of the equipercentile analysis conducted in the Year 5 READ Act Summary Report).

Sustainability Remained the Greatest Challenge Associated with the ELG

Both current and past ELG cohort schools identified sustainability of grant impacts as a key challenge. Schools expressed a desire to maintain connections with external consultants past the life of the grant and reported difficulty sustaining funding for in-school reading coaches and interventionist positions. These challenges are compounded by ongoing teacher and staff turnover, which results in continuous loss of the institutional knowledge and training gained through ELG activities. These concerns are not unique to ELG schools; district and school leaders expressed parallel concerns about the long-term sustainability of READ Act–funded positions more broadly (see Sustainability of READ Act–Funded Positions and Implementation Is a Growing Concern in the Per-Pupil Funding section below).

Per- Pupil Funding

READ Act Funds Were Most Frequently Used for Instructional Programs and Reading Coach Salaries, With Increased Spending on Tutoring

As in past years, principals reported that READ Act per-pupil funds were most commonly used to purchase K–3 instructional programs on the Advisory List (51%) and to pay reading coach salaries (43%). However, a notable shift occurred over the past 2 years, with principals reporting decreased spending on instructional programs and increased spending on tutoring, rising from 20% to 29% of principals reporting tutoring as a use of per-pupil funds. More than 40% of district administrators and principals rated per-pupil funding as successful or very successful in helping students exit SRD status when used alongside other resources.

Sustainability of READ Act–Funded Positions and Implementation Is a Growing Concern

More than 70% of district and school leaders expressed concerns about the long-term sustainability of READ Act–funded positions and implementation efforts. This concern mirrors the sustainability challenges reported by ELG schools (see above). Strategies being explored include building READ plan expenses into existing budgets, diversifying funding through grants, and investing in staff capacity-building. District administrators also identified additional funding needs as critical to fully meeting the requirements of the READ Act and SB 25-200, particularly for screeners and assessments, interventionists, and reading support services.

EQ 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 and Exit Rates Have Stabilized Post-Pandemic

Overall, SRD identification rates have stabilized since reaching a post-pandemic high of 22.2% in 2020–2021. In 2024–2025, the rate was 18.7%, within a percentage point of the prior year and continuing a gradual downward trend, though rates remain above the pre-pandemic level of approximately 15%. Movement rates have similarly held steady since 2021–2022. The percentage of students newly identified with an SRD remained at approximately 4%, while the exit rate declined marginally from 4.3% to 3.5% and most students maintained the same SRD status as the previous year.

Despite this overall stability, some student groups continued to experience more movement between SRD statuses than others. ELs and SWDs remained more likely than their peers to shift SRD status from one school year to the next, with 5.5% of ELs and 7.3% of students with IEPs moving from not identified to identified in 2024–2025. This finding has been consistent across all 6 years of the evaluation. Additionally, Black and Hispanic students continued to be reclassified at higher rates than their White peers—a pattern that warrants continued attention and further investigation.

Students Persistently Identified With an SRD May Benefit From Additional Supports

New trajectory analyses conducted in Year 6 reveal a troubling pattern: Students identified early with an SRD who remain identified across multiple grade levels fall progressively further below the Colorado average at every subsequent grade level. This suggests that early identification alone is not sufficient to produce recovery for all students and raises important questions about

whether current intervention approaches are generating real progress for persistently identified students.

Additionally, a subset of students appear to be identified later than would be optimal. These students' scores trend downward in early grades but do not cross the threshold for formal SRD identification until 2nd or 3rd grade, at which point it is considerably harder for them to catch up. These students were not invisible to the screening system but they were falling into a borderline range that current thresholds did not flag as requiring READ Act support.

EQ 3: To What Extent Do Students Identified With an SRD Achieve Reading Proficiency by 3rd Grade?

Proficiency Rates Have Stabilized, but the Gap Between Ever- and Never-Identified Students Remains Pronounced

Third-grade CMAS ELA proficiency rates have been stable over the past 3 years following several years of post-pandemic improvement. In 2024–2025, 41.9% of 3rd-grade students statewide met or exceeded proficiency, compared to 42.2% the previous year—a marginal decline of 0.3 percentage points. The gap between students who were ever identified with an SRD and those who were never identified remains pronounced: 58.2% of students never identified with an SRD met or exceeded proficiency, compared to only 7% of those ever identified. This is a gap of more than 50 percentage points that has persisted across multiple years of this evaluation.

Students With Multiple Identifications Continue to Be Underserved

The picture is particularly pronounced for students with multiple identifications. Fewer than 1% of students identified with an IEP, an EL designation, and an SRD met or exceeded CMAS proficiency in 2024–2025, compared to 18.8% of peers (those with an IEP and an EL designation) who were never identified with an SRD. As in every prior year of this evaluation, these findings suggest that students with multiple identifications continue to be underserved by the READ Act on their path to reading proficiency in English by the end of 3rd grade.

NEP and LEP Students Continue to Lag Behind

CSLA proficiency rates continue to fall below both pre-pandemic levels and the proficiency rates of peers taking the CMAS, regardless of SRD status. In 2024–2025, proficiency rates declined slightly for both groups—to 27.7% for students never identified with an SRD and to 5.6% for students ever identified. These findings suggest that NEP and Limited English Proficient

students may benefit from additional, targeted bilingual resources and supports to accelerate recovery toward pre-pandemic proficiency levels.

Early Identification and Exit Remains Associated With Higher Proficiency Rates

Consistent with findings from previous years, students who exited SRD status showed strong, sustained improvement over time, performing near or at the Colorado average by 3rd grade. Students who were identified early and exited SRD status by the end of 1st grade consistently demonstrated higher CMAS proficiency rates than those who exited later or never exited. These findings continue to underscore the importance of early identification and early intervention as key components of the READ Act.

Recommendations

To support ease of use, the recommendations provided below are grouped by intended audience and ordered according to the chapter structure of the report. This organization is intended to help stakeholders quickly identify actions within their purview, while underscoring the shared responsibility required to fully implement the READ Act.

Recommendations for CDE

Strengthen guidance and supports for SB 25-200 implementation.

With the 2027–2028 implementation deadline approaching, CDE should prioritize disseminating clear, actionable guidance on dyslexia screening requirements, including an Advisory List of approved screeners, timelines, and communication templates for families. CDE should develop and make widely available trainings to help teachers identify and support students exhibiting characteristics of dyslexia well in advance of the deadline.

Provide clear, actionable guidance on supporting students with multiple identifications.

The confusion educators experience around supporting students with multiple identifications and which plans should take precedence has persisted across all 6 years of this evaluation. The statewide training CDE has contracted to develop for educators serving students with IEPs, students with characteristics of dyslexia, and ELs is an important step. CDE should ensure this training is broadly accessible and pair it with written guidance that gives districts and schools clear direction on coordinating READ plans with IEPs and EL plans.

Investigate current screening thresholds and intervention approaches for persistently identified students.

Year 6 trajectory analyses revealed that students who are persistently identified with an SRD fall progressively further behind over time, and that some students are being identified later than would be optimal. CDE should examine whether current thresholds are sufficiently sensitive to flag emerging reading risk early, and whether current intervention approaches are generating measurable progress for students who do not exit SRD status.

Explore sustainability strategies for ELG- and per-pupil–funded positions.

Given the consistent evidence of ELG's positive association with student outcomes and the concerns about sustainability expressed by more than site visit district and school leaders, CDE should develop structured guidance on sustainability planning and consider funding mechanisms, such as tiered or phased grant structures, that help schools maintain key positions and consultant relationships beyond the grant period.

Expand Spanish-language literacy materials and bilingual supports on the Advisory Lists.

NEP and Limited English Proficient students continue to perform below pre-pandemic levels and below their CMAS peers. CDE should prioritize approving additional Spanish-language literacy materials and assessments and expanding access to bilingual literacy consultants to address persistent gaps in CSLA proficiency.

Continue to investigate the disconnect between interim assessment performance and CMAS results.

This disconnect has been documented consistently across multiple years of the evaluation and has been noted by both educators and ELG site visit schools. CDE should examine whether current instructional approaches adequately develop the higher-order writing and comprehension skills assessed by CMAS and invest in targeted PD to strengthen assessment literacy across educator roles—with particular attention to helping teachers, coaches, and principals understand both the value and the limitations of READ Act interim assessments. CDE should support educators in understanding that strong performance on interim assessments does not necessarily predict CMAS proficiency and in identifying what additional data sources and instructional strategies can help bridge that gap.

Recommendations for Districts

Invest in sustained, multiyear curriculum implementation support.

Now that adoption of evidence-based materials is widespread, districts should shift their priorities to supporting educators in implementing the curriculum with fidelity over multiple years. PD should be district-led, ongoing, and targeted to staff who are still building comfort with implementation.

Build assessment literacy at all levels.

Teachers' persistent challenges with the assessment system and the use of interim assessment data to inform instructional decisions point to a need for targeted district support. Districts should equip coaches and principals with strategies to support teachers in interpreting and applying assessment data effectively and consider building assessment literacy into ongoing professional learning structures.

Develop specific policies and supports for students with multiple identifications.

Only 37% of districts reported having specific policies for students who qualify for multiple plans. Districts should develop clear policies and provide teachers with concrete, actionable guidance on how to coordinate READ plans with IEPs and EL plans to ensure students with overlapping needs receive coherent, well-targeted support.

Prioritize sustainability planning for READ Act–funded positions.

Given the concerns about the long-term sustainability of READ Act–funded implementation, districts should engage in intentional and strategic sustainability planning that includes identifying alternative funding streams, building distributed leadership models for literacy instruction, and protecting investments in reading coaches and interventionists where possible.

Recommendations for Schools

Leverage professional learning structures to support implementation.

Across all 6 years, district and school leaders have consistently cited grade-level teams, PLCs, and collaborative planning time as critical supports for student growth. Schools should protect and prioritize these structures, particularly as educators continue to navigate new curricula and the demands of SB 25-200.

Prioritize early screening and intervention.

Year 6 trajectory analyses reinforce what has been true across the full evaluation: Early identification and early intervention are associated with significantly better outcomes. Schools should ensure that all kindergarteners are screened in a timely manner, that READ plans are developed promptly, and that intervention supports are consistently delivered.

Strengthen parent communication and engagement.

Parent communication around READ plans remains highly varied across schools, with many parents reporting limited understanding of what the READ Act provides and what their child's plan entails. Schools should work to provide clear, accessible, and consistent communication, including plain-language summaries, translated materials, and regular progress updates, to ensure families can actively participate in supporting their children's reading growth.

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Appendices



Appendix A: Data Sources

Available Data

This evaluation drew from a wide range of data sources, including:

- extant student-, school-, and Local Education Provider (LEP)-level data from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and publicly available datasets;
- surveys of LEP staff and principals, reading coaches, and teachers at schools that received Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act funding and participated in READ Act activities;
- surveys of Colorado parents with a child/children; and
- site visits with a sample of schools receiving Early Literacy Grants (ELGs) and LEPs that received READ Act funding.

The following sections describe these data sources.

Extant Data

The evaluation relied on a variety of student-, school-, and LEP-level extant data obtained directly from CDE and from publicly available resources, including CDE's Education Statistics page and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). These data provided information regarding K–3 student performance on READ Act interim assessments, K–8 performance on state-level assessments, K–3 performance on Early Literacy Assessment Tool (ELAT) interim assessments, K–3 READ plan designations, demographic characteristics of K–12 students, READ Act literacy program data, READ Act funding data, ELG financial data, and school- and LEP-level contextual data.

Student-Level Data

READ Act Data Collection

Each year, CDE requires districts to report information regarding the prevalence of K–3 students identified with significant reading deficiencies (SRDs) through their READ Act collection to determine per-pupil funding for districts. The READ Act data available for the evaluation currently span 2013–2014 through 2024–2025 (with the exception of 2019–2020, due to the statewide assessment pause during the COVID-19 pandemic). Due to data irregularities in the 2013–2014 school year (the first year of READ Act data collection) and discussions with CDE, data from the 2014–2015 school year are the first data used for the analysis.

Through this collection, CDE obtains for each student the name of the READ Act–administered interim assessment, along with the student's score and date of administration; SRD and READ plan designations (including exemption status); intervention supports; retention information; and demographic data (i.e., gender, race/ethnicity, free or reduced-price lunch [FRL] status; special education status; and English-language proficiency status). These data are reported for all K–3 students enrolled in each district at the time of data submission. Analysts created additional variables to aid analysis (e.g., indicators of student movement between LEPs and schools and more granular categorizations of how students transition between SRD statuses).

The READ Act data used for the evaluation consisted of 2,495,916 K–3 observations across 10 years. Almost 90% of K–3 student observations correspond to a READ Act interim assessment that was on the Advisory list for the 2023–2024 school year and onward. Some analyses for the evaluation are restricted to students taking these assessments.[24]

State-Level Assessment Data

To evaluate student growth and expand the understanding of how proficiency on READ Act interim assessments align with state-level educational outcomes, WestEd requested additional state-level assessment data from CDE—in particular, Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) scores and their alternatives, which included the Colorado Spanish Language Arts (CSLA) assessment for eligible English learners (ELs)[25] and the Colorado Alternate Assessment (CoAlt) for students with significant cognitive disabilities. The CMAS and CoAlt data available for the evaluation currently span 2014–2015 through 2024–2025 (with the exception of 2019–2020)

[24] The list of currently approved READ Act interim assessments can be found on the Approved Assessments page of the Colorado Department of Education website.

[25] CDE produced a flowchart that outlines the eligibility criteria for the CSLA assessment.

for 3rd- through 8th-grade students. The currently available CSLA data span 2015–2016 through 2024–2025 for 3rd- through 8th-grade students.

There were eight different READ Act interim assessments on the Advisory List that K–3 students could take, but the CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt are the only statewide assessments, making their data the only consistent measures of academic success. Each year, CDE provides WestEd with CMAS ELA and math composite scores, proficiency levels, and reading scale scores; CSLA composite scores, proficiency levels, and reading scale scores; and CoAlt ELA and math proficiency levels. Reading scale scores for CMAS and CSLA are available beginning in the 2017–2018 school year.

CDE also provided access to Early Literacy Assessment Tool (ELAT) data in order to allow for analysis of student performance within a school year. The 2012 School Finance Act required CDE to select an early literacy assessment tool so that teachers could receive more timely assessments of the reading skills of their K–3 students. 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 the end of the year, ELAT assessments are administered three times per year in K–3, allowing us to examine student performance across entire school years. The data used for the evaluation this year span the 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 school years and are from the Amplify mCLASS English and mCLASS Lectura assessments. Currently, these data are maintained as a siloed dataset.

Demographic Data

CDE collects student demographic information in October and again at the end of the school year, known as the Student End-of-Year (SEOY) collection. The data available for the evaluation span 2014–2015 through 2024–2025 and include K–12 students in the October collection and K–12 students in the SEOY collection. These data have been used to facilitate analyses, including comparisons of student performance over time across a variety of peer and identity groups that are based on the following demographic characteristics: Gender, race/ethnicity, EL status, English-language proficiency, language background, FRL status, Individualized Education Program (IEP) status, Section 504 disability status, migrant status, homeless status, chronically absent status, disability type, and school Title I status. For the K–3 data (which are used for the evaluation's primary analyses), analysts elected to use SEOY demographic data, as suggested by CDE. October demographic data were used when SEOY demographic data were unavailable for a particular student or variable.

Student-level datasets (i.e., READ Act data, state-level assessment data, and demographic data) were merged together using the masked student identifier that uniquely identifies each

student across the state, and other identifiers (for example, grade level, school code, and district code) to create a single student-level longitudinal file describing demographic characteristics and academic performance of each student in each available year. As mentioned, ELAT data is maintained separately.

School- and LEP-Level Data

Literacy Program

Following the legislative update to the READ Act in 2019, CDE requires LEPs to report the READ Act–administered interim and diagnostic assessments in use in the LEP, along with their core, supplemental, and intervention instructional literacy programs for K–3 for each school in their district. Additionally, LEPs using READ Act and/or ELG funding for teacher professional development (PD) are required to provide information on how their PD plan aligns with scientific and evidence-based literacy instruction.[26] These data are currently available for the 2020–2021 through 2024–2025 school years.

Literacy Grant Program Funding

For an analysis of the association between participation in grant programs and improved performance on interim assessments, data about district/school participation in the Comprehensive ELG, ELG PD, Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD), and Structured Literacy Initiative (SLI) grant programs were provided by grant administrators. The data provided were largely around participation in the grant, rather than level or fidelity of implementation. Therefore, analyses focused on whether districts/schools ever participated in the grant program and the years in which they entered and exited the program.

ELG Data

The ELG program was established in 2012 to provide funds to schools to support efforts to improve student literacy. Grants may be awarded to an applying LEP on a district-wide basis or to individual schools in a district. Also, an LEP may apply individually or as part of a group of LEPs. The program consists of (1) the Comprehensive ELG program, which provides funds to help insert essential components of reading instruction into all elements of K–3 teaching, and

[26] Additional information about literacy program data and reporting requirements can be found on the READ Data Collections in Data Pipeline page of the Colorado Department of Education website.

(2) the ELG Annual PD program, which provides funds intended for early literacy PD of elementary educators.

To date, there have been seven cohorts of Comprehensive ELG grantees. As of 2018, the grant follows a 4-year cycle, with grantees having the opportunity to apply for an additional 1-year sustainability grant. Most Comprehensive ELG data were obtained directly from CDE, with the remainder coming from CDE's web page on these programs.[27] In general, data include the cohort of the school, an indicator of whether the school was part of a group during the ELG application process, school-level ELG funding (by year) for schools that were not part of a group, the total amount of Comprehensive ELG funding for a school or group of schools, and an indicator of whether the school received the additional sustainability funding.

In 2018, the revised READ Act also authorized the ELG PD program. To date, PD grants have been awarded six times (i.e., once per year from the 2020–2021 school year through the 2025–2026 school year). As with Comprehensive ELG data, most ELG PD data were obtained directly from CDE, with the remainder coming from CDE's web page on these programs.[28] In general, data include an indicator of whether the school received the ELG PD grant, an indicator of whether the school was part of a group (or not) during the ELG application process, and ELG PD funding amounts.

READ Act Per-Pupil Funding

READ Act per-pupil funding data was provided by CDE for the 2014–2015 through 2024–2025 school years as the publicly available data were suppressed for districts with fewer than 16 students eligible for READ Act funding.

Publicly Available Contextual Data

Publicly available school- and LEP-level data for the 2014–2015 through 2025–2026 school years were retrieved from CDE's Education Statistics web page and select federal data sources to provide contextual data about the sample of students used in analysis. Overall, data relate to the following and were retrieved from CDE's website: grade-level, demographic, and instructional program enrollment; FRL eligibility; mobility rates; LEP setting, rural-small rural designation, and region; and local, state, and federal funding. School-level locale was retrieved from publicly available NCES resources.

[27] The publicly available Comprehensive ELG data can be found on the Comprehensive ELG page of the Colorado Department of Education website.

[28] The publicly available ELG PD data can be found on the Professional Development ELG page of the Colorado Department of Education website.

The student-level data discussed previously were merged with ELG program data, READ Act per-pupil funding data, and publicly available school and LEP contextual data using school and district codes to create a single longitudinal K–3 dataset. The K–3 file was provided to CDE, along with an accompanying codebook containing descriptions of each variable and its associated values/codes.

Exhibit A-1. Data Elements and Sources

Data Source(s)	Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity Distribution[b]	Other Enrollment of Interest[c]	Mobility Rate[d]	READ Act/ELG/Other Funding	Grade-Level Distribution of Sample	Race/Ethnicity Distribution of Sample	FRL Status of Sample	Other Demographics	Interim Assessment Usage	Interim Assessment Scores	READ Act Interventions	Student Movement Between SRD Designations	CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt Scores and SRD Status	ELAT Scores
Publicly available LEP- and school-level pupil membership data[e]	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Demographic data, provided by CDE	-	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-
READ Act SRD and READ plan data, provided by CDE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-
CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt assessment data, provided by CDE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-
READ Act (Per-Pupil and ELG) funding data, provided by CDE	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Publicly available ELG Data[f]	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Publicly available CDE district revenue[g]	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ELAT assessment scores, provided by CDE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y

[a] Membership by district/school and grade level (2015–2024).

[b] Membership by district, race/ethnicity, and gender (for LEPs) or membership by school, race/ethnicity, gender, and grade (2015–2026).
[c] Membership by district/school and instructional program; membership by district/school and FRL eligibility (2015–2026).
[d] District/school mobility rates by instructional program service type (2015–2025).
[e] These data for previous years are available on the Data Insights, Resources & Archives page of the Colorado Department of Education website.
[f] Data are available on the Comprehensive ELG page of the Colorado Department of Education website.
[g] Data are available on the School District Revenues and Expenditures page of the Colorado Department of Education website. Annual revenue for the 2024–2025 school year was not available at the time this evaluation report was published.

LEP, Principal, Coach, and Teacher Surveys

LEP Survey

The LEP survey issued in Year 6 focused on READ Act implementation during the 2025–2026 school year. The primary topic areas surveyed were levels of influence that different district and school staff had in decisions about READ Act per-pupil spending; success of resources in growth to standard and 3rd-grade proficiency; methods to identify and support students with SRDs (including those with multiple identifications); development, implementation, and monitoring of READ plans; parent involvement, overall district and state guidance; the organization and provision of READ Act–specific instructional programs and assessments; LEPs' approaches to literacy; training for teaching reading, and ELG and ELAT participation.

The survey was administered from about October 27, 2025, to January 16, 2026. In total, 118 district administrators completed the LEP survey and had their responses used for the evaluation. The LEP survey respondents were relatively representative of the overall LEPs in Colorado in 2024–2025 in terms of their geographic characteristics (i.e., rural designation status, region, and setting; Exhibit A-2) as well as the distribution across congressional districts (Exhibit A-3).

Exhibit A-2. Geographic Characteristics of LEP Survey Respondents

Geographic Characteristic	Frequency (%) Among All LEPs in Colorado	Frequency (%) Among LEP Survey Respondents
Rural Designation[a]		
Rural	20.7% (*n* = 31)	26.0% (*n* = 30)

Geographic Characteristic	Frequency (%) Among All LEPs in Colorado	Frequency (%) Among LEP Survey Respondents
Small Rural	62.0% (*n* = 111)	54.9% (*n* = 62)
Region[b]		
Northwest	11.5% (*n* = 23)	11.1% (*n* = 13)
Southwest	12.5 % (*n* = 25)	10.2% (*n* = 12)
Northeast	17.0% (*n* = 34)	15.4% (*n* = 18)
Pikes Peak	15.0% (*n* = 30)	17.0% (*n* = 20)
West Central	7.0% (*n* = 14)	7.7% (*n* = 9)
North Central	10.5% (*n* = 21)	12.0% (*n* = 14)
Southeast	15.5% (*n* = 31)	15.5% (*n* = 18)
Metro	11.0% (*n* = 22)	11.1% (*n* = 13)
Setting		
Remote	42.8% (*n* = 86)	43.6% (*n* = 51)
Outlying town	24.4% (*n* = 49)	25.8% (*n* = 29)
Urban-suburban	8.5% (*n* = 17)	12.0% (*n* = 14)
Denver metro	7.5% (*n* = 15)	8.6% (*n* = 10)
Outlying city	6.5% (*n* = 13)	9.4% (*n* =11)
Colorado BOCES	10.5% (*n* = 21)	1.7% (*n* = 2)

Note. BOCES = Boards of Cooperative Educational Services.
[a] Rural designation only pertains to standard school districts (i.e., not including BOCES, Charter School Institute, or Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind).
[b] Region does not include Charter School Institute.

Exhibit A-3. Congressional Districts of LEP Survey Respondents

Congressional District	Frequency (%) Among All LEPs in Colorado	Frequency (%) Among LEP Survey Respondents
1	1.1% (*n* = 2)	0.0% (*n* = 0)
2	7.8% (*n* = 14)	7.0% (*n* = 8)
3	32.2% (*n* = 58)	33.9% (*n* = 39)
4	36.7% (*n* = 66)	32.2% (*n* = 37)
5	7.2% (*n* = 13)	9.6% (*n* = 11)
6	2.8% (*n* = 5)	2.6% (*n* = 3)
7	6.7% (*n* = 12)	7.8% (*n* = 9)
8	5.6% (*n* = 10)	7.0% (*n* = 8)

Principal, Coach, and Teacher Survey

WestEd also surveyed principals, K–3 reading coaches, and K–3 reading teachers for the Year 6 evaluation. Primary topic areas surveyed were staff's educational and professional backgrounds; perceived levels of influence on decisions about READ Act per-pupil spending; use of READ Act funds; use of different types of data and documentation to inform K–3 reading strategies; adoption of literacy curricula and intervention materials; coaching and reading activities; methods to identify and exit students with SRDs (including students with multiple identifications); the development, implementation, and integration of READ plans; available support for coaches and teachers (including use of core, supplemental, and intervention curriculums); overall district and state guidance; and literacy professional development and training.

The survey was administered from about October 27, 2025, to January 16, 2026. In total, 185 principals (from 185 schools), 111 reading coaches (from 102 schools), and 780 teachers (from 243 schools) responded to their respective surveys and had their responses used for the evaluation. Of the respondents, 89% of principal surveys, 83% of coach surveys, and 73% of

teacher surveys were fully completed. School staff respondents were relatively representative of the overall school population in Colorado in terms of school locale (Exhibit A-4), with some variation throughout. However, the distribution of LEPs of these school respondents differed from the overall state, with school respondents less likely to come from rural districts or small rural districts. The distribution of congressional districts by respondent generally mirrors that of Colorado schools, with District 1 and 6 being slightly underrepresented in the survey responses (Exhibit A-5).

Exhibit A-4. Geographic Characteristics of School Survey Respondents

Geographic Characteristic	Frequency (%) Among All Schools in Colorado	Frequency (%) Among School Survey Respondents
School Locale		
City: Large	23.1% (*n* = 422)	16.5% (*n* = 163)
City: Mid	8.0% (*n* = 146)	4.9% (*n* = 48)
City: Small	4.2% (*n* = 78)	5.0% (*n* = 49)
Suburb: Large	23.6% (*n* = 431)	28.5% (*n* = 279)
Suburb: Mid	3.2% (*n* = 58)	5.4% (*n* = 54)
Suburb: Small	2.2% (*n* = 40)	3.5% (*n* = 34)
Town: Fringe	2.9% (*n* = 53)	1.1% (*n* = 11)
Town: Distant	1.9% (*n* = 34)	3.1% (*n* = 30)
Town: Remote	6.9% (*n* = 126)	10.0% (*n* = 98)
Rural: Fringe	5.9% (*n* = 108)	6.7% (*n* = 66)
Rural: Distant	6.4% (*n* = 116)	5.2% (*n* = 51)
Rural: Remote	11.7% (*n* = 213)	9.9% (*n* = 97)
Rural Designation		
Rural	49.4% (*n* = 263)	18.6% (*n* = 182)
Small rural	50.6% (*n* = 269)	11.0% (*n* = 108)
Region		
Northwest	6.3% (*n* = 113)	9.0% (*n* = 86)
Southwest	4.9% (*n* = 88)	2.7% (*n* = 26)
Northeast	4.7% (*n* = 85)	3.5% (*n* = 34)
Pikes Peak	17.3% (*n* = 311)	15.9% (*n* = 153)
West Central	5.3% (*n* = 96)	8.0% (*n* = 77)
North Central	13.4% (*n* = 241)	16.0% (*n* = 154)
Southeast	3.8% (*n* = 68)	2.2% (*n* = 21)
Metro	44.3% (*n* = 796)	42.7% (*n* = 410)
Setting		
Remote	11.6% (*n* = 214)	10.1% (*n* = 99)
Outlying town	12.7% (*n* = 234)	10.7% (*n* = 105)
Urban-suburban	24.5% (*n* = 452)	24.8% (*n* = 244)
Denver metro	44.9% (*n* = 829)	45.3% (*n* = 444)
Outlying city	5.4% (*n* = 99)	8.8% (*n* = 87)
Colorado BOCES	0.8% (*n* = 15)	0.3% (*n* = 4)

Note. The state-level geographic data included come from the 2023–2024 school year. The values in Column 2 (Frequency Among All Schools in Colorado) pertaining to district characteristics (i.e., rural designation, region, and setting) may differ from the exhibit containing geographic characteristics of LEPs if there was no school corresponding to an LEP in the publicly available data. Schools associated with the Charter School Institute are not associated with a region.

Exhibit A-5. Congressional Districts of School Survey Respondents

Congressional District	Frequency (%) Among All Schools in Colorado	Frequency (%) Among School Survey Respondents
1	10.5% (*n* = 201)	6.7% (*n* = 66)
2	11.2% (*n* = 213)	12.8% (*n* =125)
3	17.9% (*n* = 341)	18.4% (*n* = 180)
4	16.6% (*n* = 317)	20.6% (*n* = 202)
5	12.3% (*n* = 232)	10.3% (*n* =101)
6	9.4% (*n* = 179)	5.6% (*n* = 55)
7	10.4% (*n* = 199)	13.0% (*n* = 127)
8	11.9% (*n* =229)	12.6% (*n* = 123)

Parent Survey

WestEd also surveyed parents of K–3 students for the Year 6 evaluation. Primary topic areas surveyed were the sufficiency of EL and IEP resources; overall understanding of the Colorado READ Act and SRD identification; the child's SRD identification status; knowledge about services available to students identified with an SRD; the child's READ plan status; involvement with developing, reviewing, and approving a READ plan; involvement with progress-monitoring; implementing READ plan activities at home; exiting the child from a READ plan; availability of school supports to implement READ plan activities at home; and improvement of reading skills due to the child's READ plan.

The survey was administered from about October 27, 2025, to January 16, 2026. In total, 609 parents responded to the survey.

Site Visits

To select schools for Year 6 site visits, analysts relied on their working dataset that combines student, LEP, and school-level data. For both LEP and ELG site selection, although a representative sample of sites was not the primary goal of site selection this year, efforts were made to select a diverse set of schools within the group of schools eligible for a site visit. Analysts used the dataset to choose school sites using the procedures and rules of thumb that follow. As in previous years, the process is rooted in data but also relies on analysts' judgment and practical considerations. For example, schools or districts that were initially selected but were unable to participate in the site visits due to timing, staff shortages, etc. were replaced with the next-best available school choice. Other limitations and considerations taken into site selection are discussed below. If another set of analysts was using the same data and followed the same procedures, the lists would be expected to be similarly composed but not necessarily include the exact same schools.

LEP Site Visits

From January to February 2026, evaluation team members conducted on-site visits at 10 schools that received READ Act per-pupil funding (see Exhibit A-6 for the list of schools). The evaluation chose sites that participated in additional literacy grant programs and compared them to a matched site that did not participate, using the following procedure:

- Restrict sample to schools that received a CLSD subgrant or participated in the SLI.
- Restrict sample to schools with a 2024–2025 preliminary performance rating of priority improvement plan or higher.
- Examine additional contextual factors including school size, type, demographics, SRD identification rates, 3rd-grade CMAS performance, and accountability rating.
- For each site chosen that participated in an additional grant program, choose a contextually similar "matched" site to visit.

Prior to each site visit, district and school staff members were asked to provide artifacts such as redacted READ plans that could provide additional context regarding READ Act implementation. They were also asked to identify district and school staff who could answer questions about the use of READ Act and ELG per-pupil funds and READ Act implementation. During the on-site visit, evaluation staff toured schools during reading blocks to observe staffing, approaches to reading, and READ plan implementation. They also conducted interviews and focus groups with school staff to obtain information about the K–3 reading approach, use of READ Act funds,

identification of students under the READ Act, READ plan development and implementation, PD and training for teaching reading during the school year, and needs of EL students and students with disabilities.

Upon completion of the site visits, evaluation team members analyzed the input provided in each of these topic areas and produced a summary report for each school/LEP. These summary reports were then used to identify common themes that surfaced across the seven sites, identify lessons learned, and help state leaders understand READ Act implementation.

Exhibit A-6. Site Visit LEPs and Schools

LEP	School
Denver Public Schools	Colfax Elementary School
Westminster Public Schools	Mesa Elementary School
Charter School Institute	The Pinnacle Charter School
Greeley 6	Salida del Sol Academy
Pueblo County 70	Desert Sage Elementary School
Fremont RE-2	Fremont Elementary School
Cherry Creek 5	Fox Hollow Elementary School
Douglas County RE-1	Pine Lane Elementary
Thompson R2-J	Ivy Stockwell Elementary School
Lewis-Palmer 38	Ray E Kilmer Elementary School
St. Vrain Valley RE1J	Hygiene Elementary School
Jefferson County R-1	Stony Creek Elementary School

ELG Site Visits

The evaluation team conducted virtual site visits to gather data and information on how schools and districts across Colorado utilized their ELGs. From October through February 2026, the evaluation team conducted visits with 10 ELG sites that were selected based on their status as either (1) recent Comprehensive and/or PD grantees, or (2) previous Comprehensive grantees with mixed achievement toward their grant goals (some that met all of their goals, some that struggled, etc.). The following procedure was used to select sites:

- Restrict sample to ELG recipients that have not been previously visited.
- Restrict sample to schools with a 2025 preliminary accountability rating of priority improvement or higher.
- Examine additional contextual factors including performance on grant goals, school size, type, demographics, SRD identification rates, 3rd-grade CMAS performance, and accountability rating.

Site visits were conducted virtually, typically in 2-hour interviews that included school- and/or district-level leaders as well as teachers. Evaluation team members reviewed data from CDE regarding the amounts and timing of ELG funding received at each site. The evaluation team used a common interview protocol to ensure consistent data gathering across sites. The protocol covered four main topics on ELG experiences:

1. background on the ELG application process;
2. how ELG funds were deployed; and
3. other successes and challenges.

Site visit interviews included questions designed to gather information from school and district leaders on three key topic areas: (1) their experiences applying for an ELG and challenges and successes associated with the grant application process; (2) how ELG funds were deployed in the school, including items such as hiring an external literacy consultant, purchasing coaching or interventionist support in the school, and purchasing literacy materials and assessments; and (3) the successes and challenges associated with ELG implementation, including any impacts on student or teacher performance and lessons learned and factors that facilitated or hindered the success and impact of the grant at the school.

Upon completion of all site visits and focus groups, evaluation team members analyzed the input received in each of these topic areas and produced a summary report for each district. These summary reports were then used to identify common themes that surfaced across the 10 sites, identify lessons learned, and help state leaders understand ELG impacts.

Exhibit A-7. ELG Site Visit Schools and LEPs

LEP	ELG School
East Grand 2	Fraser Valley Elementary School
Steamboat Springs RE-2	Strawberry Park Elementary
Southeastern BOCES	Holly School
Charter School Institute	Steamboat Montessori
Adams-Arapahoe 28J	Park Lane Elementary School
Colorado Springs 11	Columbia Elementary School
Canon City RE-1	Lincoln School of Science and Technology
Denver County 1	Ellis Elementary School
Durango 9-R	Riverview Elementary School
Denver County 1	Bryant Webster Dual Language ECE-8 School

Appendix B: Student Outcome Analyses

Student Outcomes (SRD, CMAS, and ELAT)

K–3 Reading Trajectories

In Chapter 5, we examined how the timing of identifying students with significant reading deficiencies (SRDs) and whether students remain identified over time are associated with reading growth from kindergarten through 3rd grade.

To address this question, we estimated a longitudinal (multilevel) growth model using repeated student-level assessment data. The outcome was students' standardized assessment scores (z-scores), which allow for consistent comparisons across grades and time points.

Student performance was modeled as a function of grade level, students' SRD pathways, and the interaction between these two factors. This approach allows us to assess whether reading growth differs across groups of students over time. Students were classified into five SRD pathway groups:

- **Never SRD**: Students who were never identified with an SRD.
- **Early ID, Persistent**: Identified in kindergarten or 1st grade and still identified at their most recent observation.
- **Early ID, Resolved**: Identified in kindergarten or 1st grade but no longer identified at their most recent observation.
- **Late ID, Persistent**: First identified in 2nd or 3rd grade and still identified at their most recent observation.
- **Late ID, Resolved**: First identified in 2nd or 3rd grade but no longer identified at their most recent observation.

The model estimates how reading performance changes across grade levels for each of these groups, while adjusting for differences in student characteristics, including gender, race/ethnicity, free or reduced-price lunch eligibility, English learner status, and Individualized Education Program (IEP) status. These adjustments ensure that comparisons reflect differences in growth patterns rather than differences in student composition. Because each student is observed multiple times, the model accounts for this by allowing each student to have their own

baseline level of performance. This ensures that the results reflect changes in student performance over time, rather than differences between students.

Following model estimation, we generated adjusted predictions of student performance for each SRD group at each grade level. These estimates hold student characteristics constant and represent the typical trajectory for each group. Results are presented as line graphs in the report, showing how reading performance changes from kindergarten through 3rd grade for each SRD group. These figures allow for straightforward comparisons of both starting points and rates of improvement across groups.

ELAT Performance

Data Methods

Generating the Early Literacy Assessment Tool (ELAT) dataset involved merging those student records obtained from the ELAT vendor with student records from the Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act data collection, resulting in a combined dataset that facilitates analysis of ELAT data by READ Act–specific characteristics, like SRD status, ELAT data over time, and comparison of READ Act interim assessment data for students who were in schools participating in ELAT as compared to those who were not. Data for individual students appear multiple times within a school year, up to three if they participated in the ELAT assessment during each seasonal benchmark period. This means that there are significantly more observations than there are distinct students accounted for in the dataset. The composition of observations and students is described further below.

Makeup of Analytic Sample

The combined mCLASS with Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, 8th Edition, 2018 (Amplify, Inc.) (hereafter, mCLASS), mCLASS Lectura, and READ Act analytic dataset includes 926,898 K–3 student records (students can appear in the dataset up to three times in a school year, given the testing cadence) across two school years (Exhibit B-1), encompassing 314,707 unique students. Of these, 43.9% of students have data for both ELAT and READ Act data collections, 54.6% only have data for the READ Act collection, and 1.5% only have data for the ELAT collection (Exhibit B-2).

Exhibit B-1. Analytic Sample Makeup of Student Observations

Data Type and Assessment	2023–2024 School Year	2024–2025 School Year	Total
ELAT data only – mCLASS	6,825	7,303	14,128
ELAT data only – mCLASS Español	397	272	669
READ and ELAT data – mCLASS	310,317	309,580	619,897
READ and ELAT data – mCLASS Español	13,146	13,451	26,597
READ data only	134,422	131,185	265,607
Total	465,107	461,791	926,898

Exhibit B-2. Analytic Sample Makeup of Distinct Students

Data Source	2023–2024 School Year	2024–2025 School Year	Total
ELAT data only – mCLASS	1.5% (*n* = 3,678)	1.7% (*n* = 4,006)	24% (*n* = 7,503)
ELAT data only – mCLASS Español	0.1% (*n* = 179)	0.1% (*n* = 191)	0.1% (*n* = 366)
READ and ELAT data – mCLASS	43.7% (*n* = 107,488)	44.0% (*n* = 106,333)	45.8% (*n* = 144,255)
READ and ELAT data – mCLASS Español	2.0% (*n* = 4,849)	2.0% (*n* = 4,861)	2.2% (*n* = 7,005)

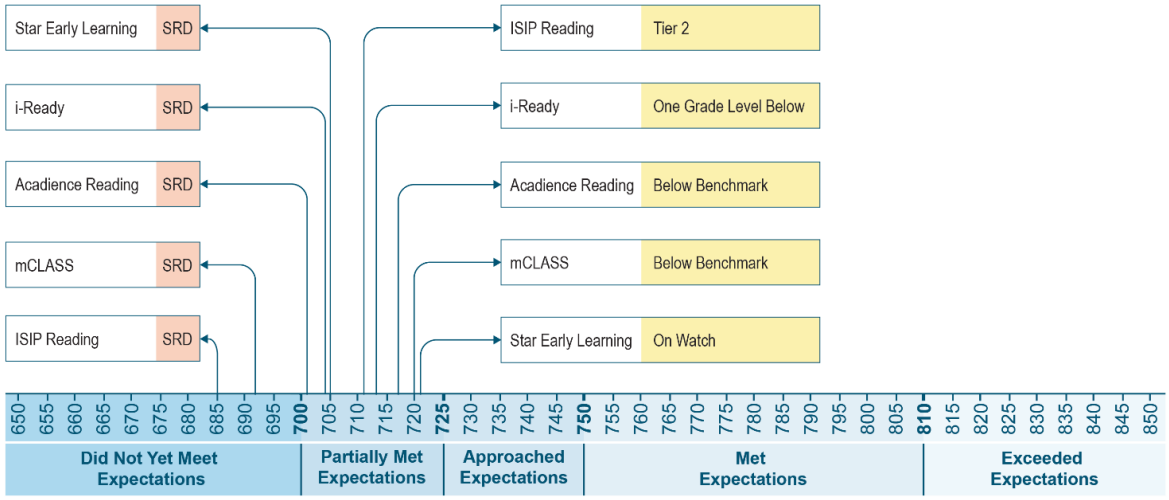
Data Source	2023–2024 School Year	2024–2025 School Year	Total
READ data only	54.6% (*n* = 134,422)	54.3% (*n* = 131,185)	56.4% (*n* = 177,625)
Total	100.0% (*n* = 246,213)	100.0% (*n* = 241,744)	100.0% (*n* = 314,707)

Prior Reporting – Equipercentile Linking Results

In Year 5 of the evaluation, we conducted an equipercentile linking analysis to put the end-of-year interim assessment scores for 3rd-grade students on the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) scale. The method is content-neutral; that is, the assessments do not have to test identical constructs, and 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). The analysis allows us to compare the cut scores on the interim assessments and examine differences in how the cut scores of the interim assessments align with CMAS.

In the results (as shown in Exhibit B-3), we observed that there was variation between assessments in their alignment with CMAS performance levels and that some assessments would likely identify more students with an SRD because of the vendor-selected cut score. We also observed that there is a subset of students who will 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.

Exhibit B-3. Equipercentile Linking of Interim Assessments and CMAS



These findings help explain the disconnect that educators highlight between their students' performance on interim assessments and on CMAS at the end of 3rd grade.

These findings do not represent an issue with the interim assessments; they simply display the substantial differences between literacy screeners and summative state assessments. Additionally, the findings should not be used to compare how closely each interim assessment aligns with CMAS performance levels and the relative ability of individual interim assessments to predict CMAS scores. This analysis only examines the links between interim assessment scores at the end of 3rd grade and CMAS. Performing the analysis at different testing windows (fall or winter) and grade levels may result in different findings.

Student Outcomes (Grant Participation)

In Chapter 6, we evaluated the relationship between participation in state- and federally funded literacy grant programs and student reading outcomes. The primary outcomes of interest were (1) the likelihood of a student being identified with an SRD, and (2) students' standardized interim assessment scores (z-scores). All analyses adjust for student-level characteristics including gender, race/ethnicity, free or reduced-price lunch eligibility, English learner status, and IEP status. Analyses also account for fixed school-level differences and statewide trends over time to help mitigate the impacts of the differences between participating schools on the results. This means the estimates reflect changes within the same schools after they joined the program, rather than simple comparisons between different schools. That said, the models could not account for every factor that might influence outcomes, such as temporary dips in performance caused by shifts in student population.

The primary analytic strategy was a difference-in-differences (DiD) framework, which compares how outcomes changed over time in schools that received grant funding relative to schools that did not. Four model types were used, with the combination applied to each program depending on data availability and program design.

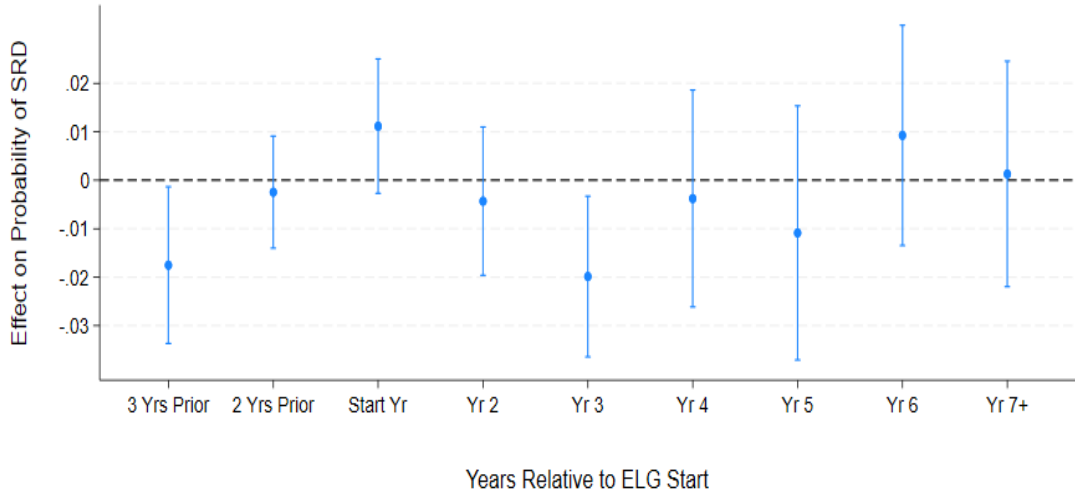
Analytic Models

Event Study Models

Event study models estimate program effects relative to the timing of grant entry, using the year immediately before program entry as the reference point. Including pre-period indicators allows for a check of pre-trends: If participating and non-participating schools were already diverging before the grant began, estimates may reflect those preexisting differences rather than a true program effect. Event study models were not estimated for the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant because all schools entered the program in the same year, eliminating the timing variation this approach requires.

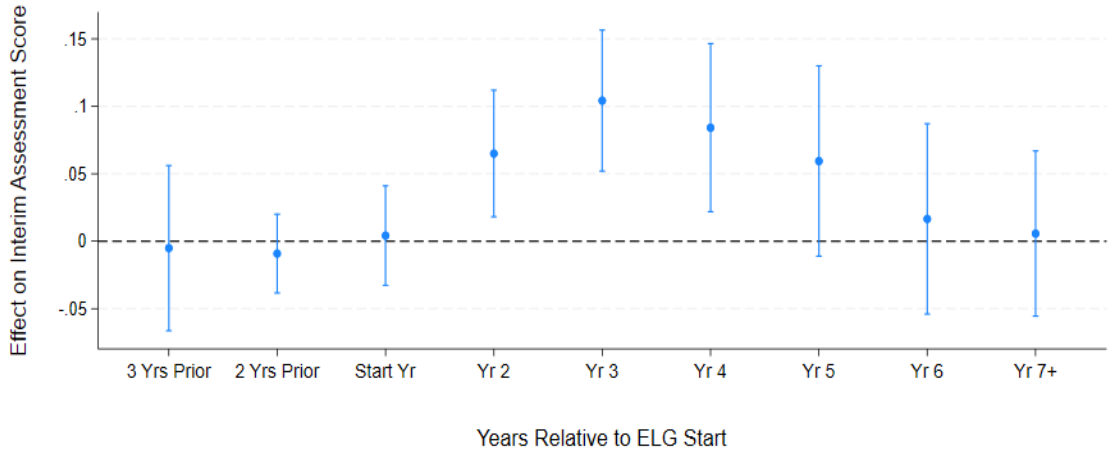
Exhibits B-4 and B-5 display the event study model results for the Comprehensive Early Literacy Grant (ELG). Exhibit B-4 presents findings related to the likelihood of SRD identification, whereas Exhibit B-5 presents findings related to interim assessment scores.

Exhibit B-4. ELG Schools Showed Better Outcomes Than Non-ELG Schools Before Program Entry, Indicating Potential Pre-Existing Differences, And No Program Impact Was Observed



Note. "3 Yrs Prior" refers to performance 3 years before implementation of the program and earlier.

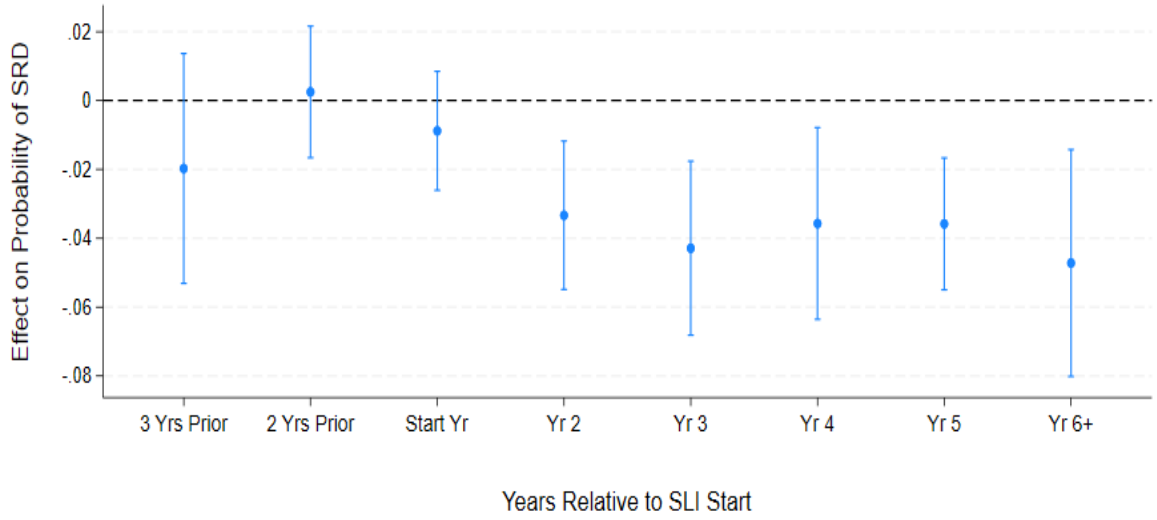
Exhibit B-5. Relative To The Year Before Program Entry, ELG Schools Showed Higher Interim Assessment Performance Than Non-ELG Schools In Years 2–4



Note. "3 Yrs Prior" refers to performance 3 years before implementation of the program and earlier.

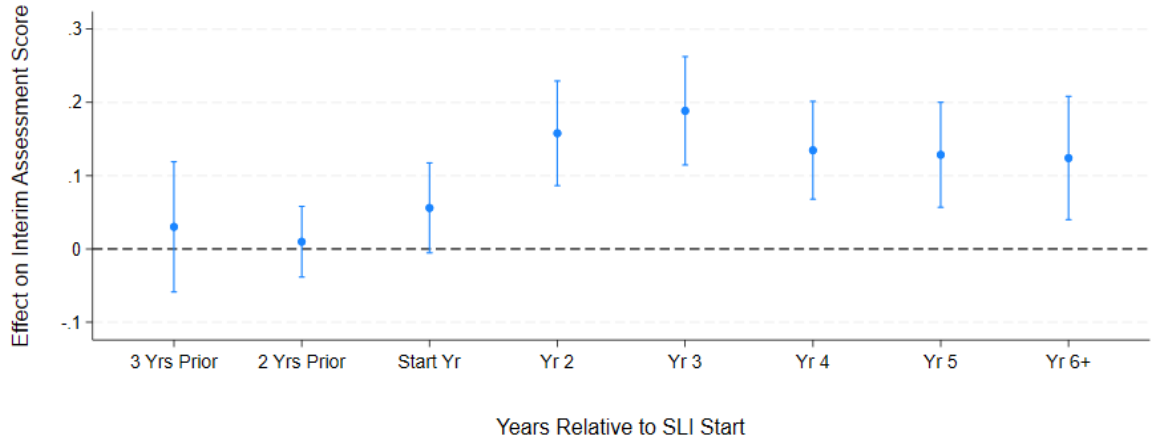
Exhibits B-6 and B-7 display the event study model results for the Structured Literacy Initiative (SLI). Exhibit B-6 presents findings related to the likelihood of SRD identification, whereas Exhibit B-7 presents findings related to interim assessment scores.

Exhibit B-6. Relative To The Year Before Program Entry, The Likelihood of SRD Identification Was Lower In SLI Schools Than In Non-SLI Schools Beginning After Year 1



Note. "3 Yrs Prior" refers to performance 3 years before implementation of the program and earlier.

Exhibit B-7. Relative To The Year Before Program Entry, SLI Schools Showed Higher Interim Assessment Performance Than Non-SLI Schools Beginning After Year 1



Note. "3 Yrs Prior" refers to performance 3 years before implementation of the program and earlier.

Dynamic Models

Dynamic models estimate how outcomes change with each additional year of participation, rather than relative to when a school entered the program. This is useful for assessing whether effects emerge gradually, grow over time, or remain stable. Year-of-participation indicators were created for ELG, SLI, and CLSD. No dynamic model was estimated for the ELG Professional Development grant, given its single-year structure.

Exhibits B-8 and B-9 display the dynamic model results for the Comprehensive Early Literacy Grant (ELG). Exhibit B-8 presents findings related to the likelihood of SRD identification, whereas Exhibit B-9 presents findings related to interim assessment scores.

Exhibit B-8. ELG Schools Generally Showed A Lower Likelihood of SRD Identification Than Non-ELG Schools During Program Participation, But Results Were Not Statistically Significant

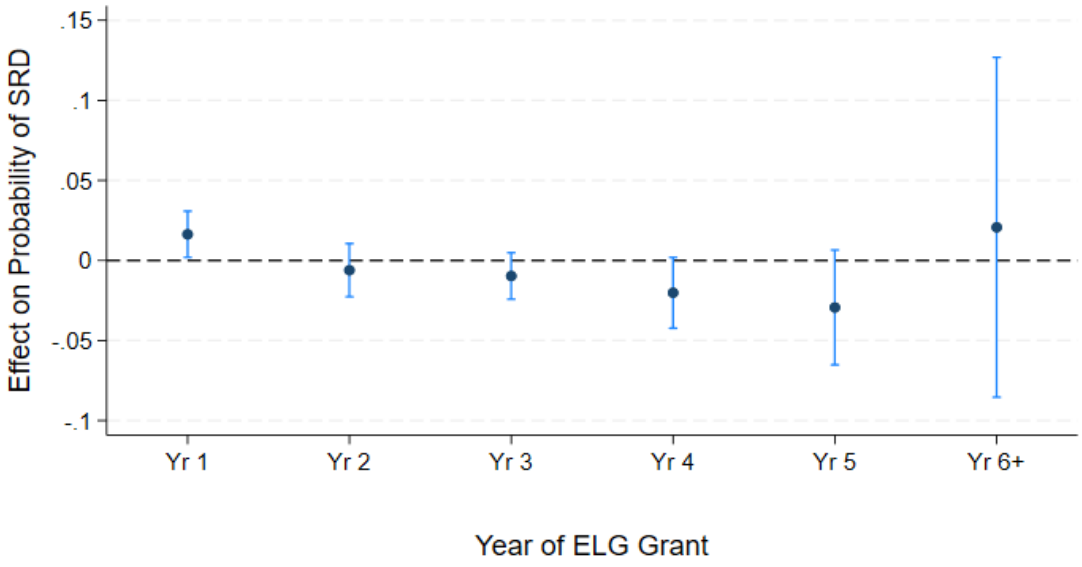
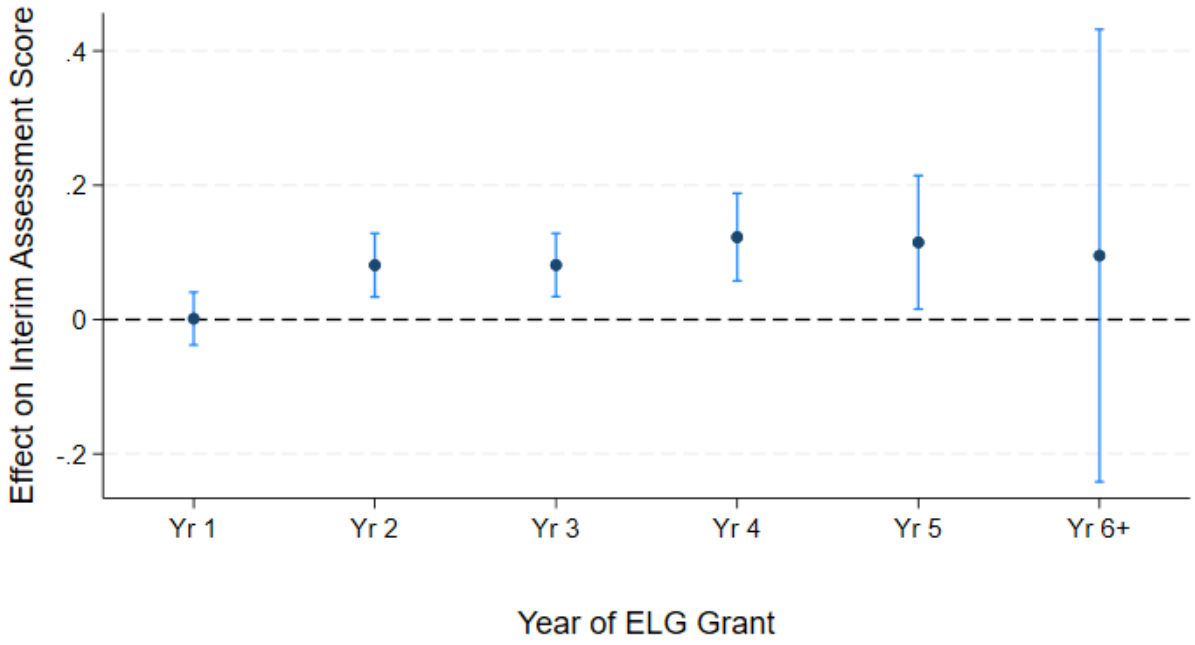


Exhibit B-9. ELG Schools Generally Showed Higher Interim Assessment Performance Than Non-ELG Schools Beginning After Year 1 of Program Participation, With Less Precise Estimates in Later Years



Exhibits B-10 and B-11 display the dynamic model results for the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant. Exhibit B-10 presents findings related to the likelihood of SRD identification, whereas Exhibit B-11 presents findings related to interim assessment scores.

Exhibit B-10. CLSD Schools Generally Showed A Higher Likelihood of SRD Identification Than Non-CLSD Schools During Program Participation, Other Than in Year 2

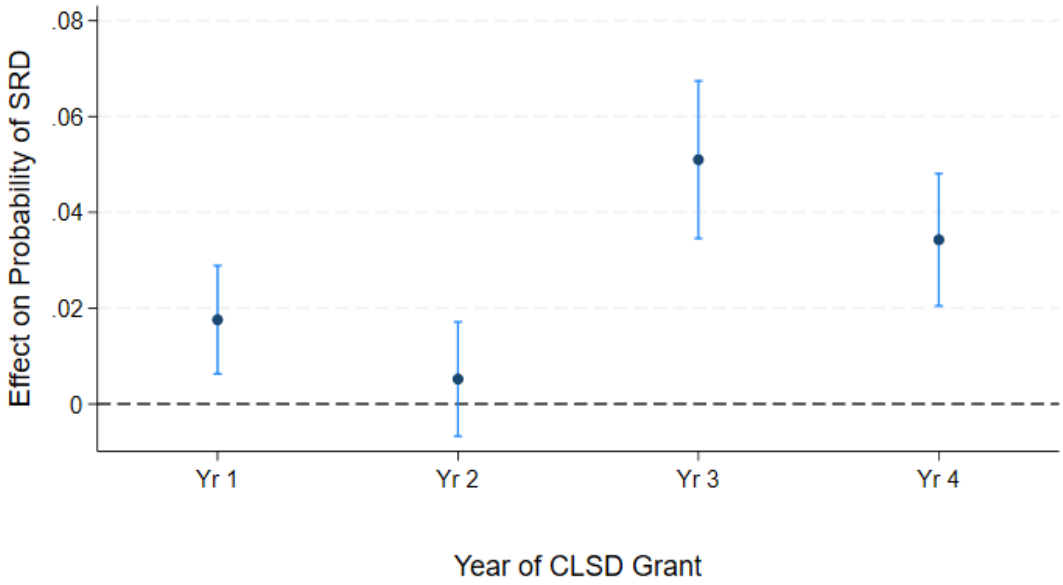
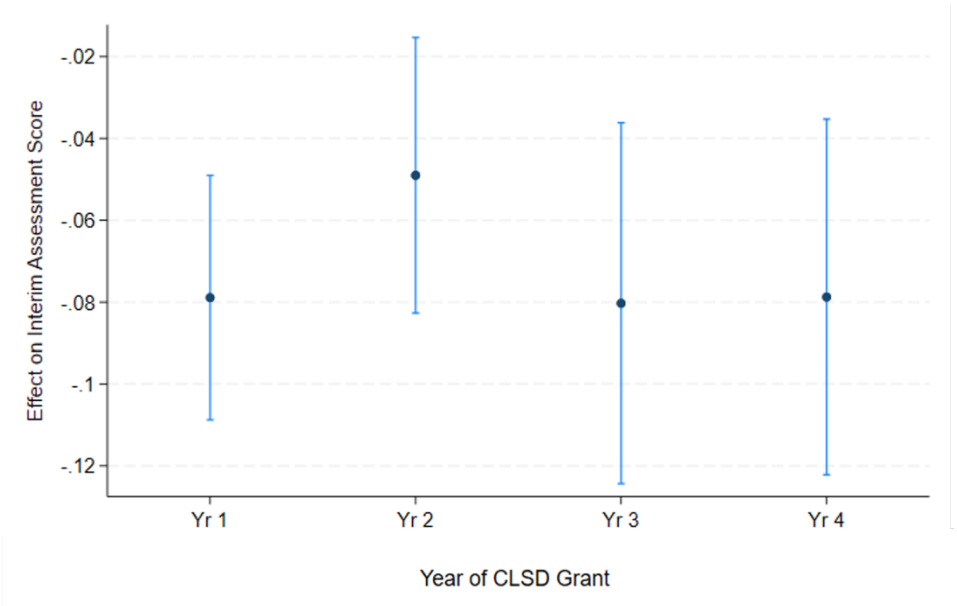


Exhibit B-11. CLSD Schools Generally Showed Lower Interim Assessment Performance Than Non-CLSD Schools During Program Participation



Exhibits B-12 and B-13 display the dynamic model results for the Structured Literacy Initiative (SLI). Exhibit B-12 presents findings related to the likelihood of SRD identification, whereas Exhibit B-12 presents findings related to interim assessment scores.

Exhibit B-12. SLI Schools and Non-SLI Schools Did Not Differ In The Likelihood of SRD Identification

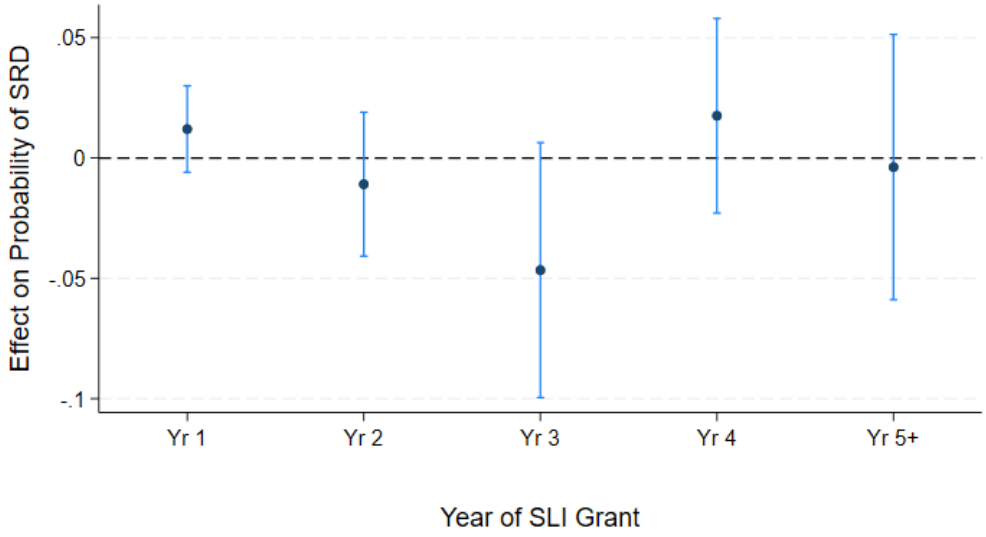
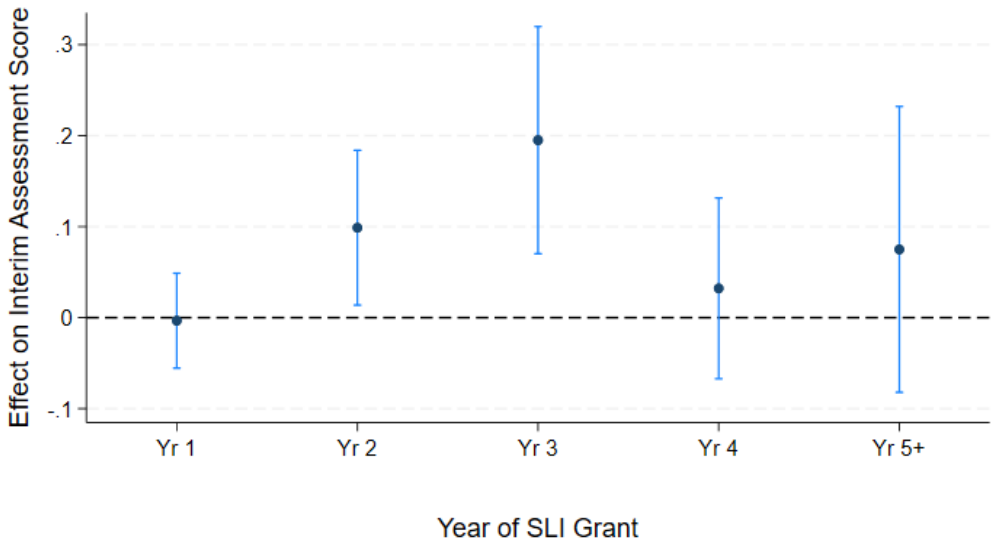


Exhibit B-13. SLI Schools Generally Showed Higher Interim Assessment Performance Than Non-SLI Schools Beginning After Year 1 of Program Participation, With Only Years 2 and 3 Being Statistically Significant



Propensity Score Matching Model

Propensity score matching (PSM) constructs a more comparable control group by matching each participating school to a similar non-participating school on observable pre-program characteristics. A logistic regression model estimated each school's probability of receiving funding (propensity score) based on pre-program SRD rates, assessment scores, free or reduced-price lunch rates, English learner rates, IEP rates, and school size. Although the primary DiD models control for many observable differences between schools and track within-school changes over time, the PSM models help provide even better comparisons between grant participating schools and non-grant participating schools. Following the matching, the DiD models were then re-estimated in the matched sample to evaluate how results may change.

Clean Comparison Models

Clean comparison models restrict the sample to schools that participated in only one grant program and compare them to schools that never received any of the four grants, reducing the risk that co-participation in multiple programs confounds estimates. These models were conducted as secondary models to support the primary DiD models. Because they restricted the comparison sample to schools that never participated in any of the grant programs, these models were not used for the primary analyses.