

Kindergarten through Grade 4 Literacy Report for School Year 2020-2021



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[Each Child, Our Future](#), Ohio's strategic plan for education, emphasizes early learning and literacy improvement for students of all grades. The plan commits Ohio to continuing to support its youngest learners while providing reading supports, when needed, for middle and high school students.

To ensure students succeed in college, careers and life, Ohio has raised expectations for how teachers should teach and what students should know and be able to do in kindergarten through grade 12. In line with these expectations, literacy is not treated as a separate field of study or course, but as an overarching aspect of education. Literacy affects learners' access to and interest in all knowledge, at all grade levels and in all facets of their lives. For more on this, see [Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement](#).

Reporting of Reading Achievement

[Ohio law](#) requires the state superintendent of public instruction to report annually to the governor and General Assembly the numbers and percentages of kindergarten through grade 4 students who are reading below grade level based on diagnostic assessments. The state superintendent is to include the types of intervention services districts are offering these students and, when possible, their effectiveness.

[The law](#) also requires the state to report progress for all public school students placed on Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans in kindergarten through grade 4 and the progress made by school districts and community schools operating under state-required Reading Achievement Improvement Plans.

This report is organized in four sections:

- **Section 1** discusses the number and percentage of kindergarten through grade 4 students reading below grade level as determined by assessment and performance level.
- **Section 2** discusses reading achievement progress for kindergarten through grade 4 students on Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans.
- **Section 3** discusses reading achievement progress for districts and community schools operating under Reading Achievement Improvement Plans.
- **Section 4** discusses types of intervention services offered to kindergarten through grade 4 students reading below grade level.

The report concludes with a description of some of the Department's ongoing literacy support efforts.

Section 1: Number and Percentage of Kindergarten through Grade 4 Students Reading Below Grade Level by Assessment and Performance Level

The results of the reading diagnostic assessment administered at the beginning of each school year determine whether a child is "on track" or "not on track" to read at his or her current grade level. A child who is on track is reading at the level set by [Ohio's Learning Standards](#) for the end of his or her previous grade. The reading diagnostic assessment is only required to be administered to children in kindergarten through grade 3. Table 1, below, includes the numbers and percentages of students in kindergarten through grade 3 who have scored on-track and not on-track on a state-approved reading diagnostic assessment in the 2020-2021 school year. See additional student performance data in the spreadsheet accompanying this report.

Table 1 also shows the numbers and percentages of students in grades 3 and 4 who scored proficient or not proficient on Ohio's State Test for English language arts in the 2020-2021 school year. Ohio's State Test for English language arts measures student proficiency on Ohio's Learning Standards for English language arts. Third-grade students first take the test in the fall, at which point the test serves as an early marker of student performance on the standards. Third-grade students who do not score at least at the "proficient" level in the fall

are required to take the test again in the spring. Students who score at least at the “proficient” level in the fall may also take the test in the spring. The numbers and percentages in the column titled “Ohio’s State Test for English Language Arts Assessment: Proficiency Status” in Table 1 contain the highest score a student received on either the fall or spring grade 3 English language arts assessment in the 2020-2021 school year. Ohio’s State Test in grade 4 English language arts is administered once per year in the spring.

Table 1: Kindergarten through Grade 4 Students Reading Below Grade Level 2020-2021

Grade Level	Fall Reading Diagnostic: On-Track Status ¹			Ohio’s State Test for English Language Arts Assessment: Proficiency Status		
	On Track	Not On Track	% On Track	Proficient	Not Proficient	% Proficient
Kindergarten	71,692	44,304	61.8%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Grade 1	78,342	43,169	64.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Grade 2	73,513	47,777	60.6%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Grade 3	72,081	47,599	60.2%	61,402	56,866	51.9%
Grade 4	N/A * (Not Available)	N/A	N/A	64,329	50,474	56%

*Grade 4 students do not take the reading diagnostic assessment required under [ORC 3313.608\(B\)\(1\)](#).

Nationally, understanding the pandemic’s impact on student learning is a top priority among educators and policymakers. Based on available evidence, it is increasingly clear that students’ academic progress was slower during the 2020-2021 school year compared to prior years. Mirroring historical patterns, the pandemic’s impact on learning was greater for historically underserved students, including Black, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students. This disparate impact widens an already existing achievement gap. Further, national research may underestimate the impact because of lower test participation rates among all students, a trend more pronounced among vulnerable student populations.

As measured by Ohio’s state tests, third-grade students learned roughly 20 percent less on average between November 2020 and April 2021 (between the fall and spring administration of the English language arts exam) as compared to students in prior years.² Approximately one third of the total decline in third-grade English language arts achievement is due to a decrease in learning during the 2020-2021 school year. The remaining two thirds of the decrease in learning took place prior to the fall 2020 testing window (including, but not limited to, school closures in spring 2020). In 2020-2021, Ohio’s fourth-grade students scored 7.3 percentage points lower in proficiency on Ohio’s State Test for grade 4 English language arts than students did in 2018-2019. Ohio’s State Test for grade 4 English language arts was not administered in the 2019-2020 school year because of pandemic-related emergency legislation.

Section 2: Reading Achievement Progress for Students on Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans³

All Ohio districts and community schools must screen kindergarten through grade 3 students for reading difficulties using the fall reading diagnostic at the beginning of each school year. Each student taking the fall

¹ Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are not included in the On Track and Not On Track numbers and percentages because they are exempt from all aspects of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee.

² In collaboration with the Department, researchers from the John Glenn College of Public Affairs at the Ohio State University conducted an analysis of participation and performance on the 2021 third-grade English language arts test. A full report of the analysis is available on the [John Glenn School of Public Affairs website](#). Student achievement is based on two outcomes: 1. Changes in the share of students attaining grade-level proficiency—demonstrated by scoring 700 on Ohio’s State Test for grade 3 English language Arts, and 2. Changes in standardized scale scores. Ohio State’s report analyzed state test results between the Fall of 2020 and the Spring of 2021.

³The percentage presented in this section represents the state average of students identified as *not on track* in reading who progressed to *on track* in reading. This percentage is not the same as the state average used on the state report card for the Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers component. Pursuant to Ohio Administrative Code 3301-28-07 (B)(3), the data used to determine the state average on the state report card for the Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers component includes the deduction for children who are not on Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans but scored below proficient on the grade 3 Ohio’s State Test in English Language Arts.

reading diagnostic who is found to be not on track to read on grade level must receive a Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan. Each student will be on this improvement plan until he or she scores on track for grade-level reading on the next school year's fall reading diagnostic *or* until the student scores proficient (700) or higher on Ohio's State Test for grade 3 English language arts.

Based on the fall reading diagnostic for the 2019-2020 school year, 30 percent of students in kindergarten through grade 3 with Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans from the prior year progressed to grade-level reading in 2020-2021. Comparatively, 38 percent of students who were not on track and with Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans in 2017-2018 progressed to grade-level reading in 2018-2019 – the last time period for this measure before the pandemic.

Section 3: Reading Achievement and Progress for Districts and Community Schools Operating Under Reading Achievement Improvement Plans

The Reading Achievement Improvement Plan is a district-level blueprint for raising student achievement in reading. [Ohio law](#) requires school districts or community schools that demonstrate certain criteria on their past two consecutive Ohio School Report Cards to submit Reading Achievement Improvement Plans to the Ohio Department of Education by December 31. The criteria include the following:

1. The district or community school received either of the following:
 - a. A grade of “D” or “F” on the Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers Component of its Ohio School Report Card
 - b. A performance rating of three stars or lower on the Early Literacy Component of its Ohio School Report Card; and
2. 51 percent or less of the district's or community school's students scored proficient or higher on Ohio's grade 3 English language arts test.⁴

[Per Section 6\(A\) of House Bill 409 of the 133rd General Assembly](#), Ohio districts and community schools were not required to submit Reading Achievement Improvement Plans to the Ohio Department of Education in 2021. Consequently, the Department does not have data regarding the progress made by school districts and community schools operating under state-required Reading Achievement Improvement Plans for the 2020-2021 school year.

While Reading Achievement Improvement Plans were not required in 2020-2021, the Department, nonetheless, continued to provide opportunities for support to those districts and community schools that were required to submit Reading Achievement Improvement Plans in 2019-2020. For instance, in the 2020-2021 school year, in partnership with the [Lead for Literacy Center](#), the Department hosted the *Ohio Lead for Literacy Institute* – a six session virtual professional development opportunity for elementary school principals and other school-based literacy leaders in districts. The objectives of the Ohio Lead for Literacy Institute are to support school leaders in the following areas:

- Facilitate professional development, including coaching;
- Use evidence-based literacy and assessment practices to support learning for all students, including students with or at risk for disabilities;
- Develop education programming related to evidence-based literacy practices to improve reading outcomes for all students, including students with or at risk for disabilities;
- Allocate resources efficiently and effectively so that students with, or at risk for, disabilities have access to literacy instruction and interventions that meet their individual needs; and,
- Improve teacher implementation of evidence-based reading instruction and intervention within a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) in their schools.

⁴ See HB 82 (134th GA), ORC 3302.13, effective September 30, 2021

Section 4: Types of Intervention Services Offered to Kindergarten through Grade 4 Students Reading Below Grade Level

Research suggests that when children at risk for reading difficulties receive early and intensive intervention, they have a much stronger chance of achieving grade-level reading ability. Without early intervention, their difficulties are likely to persist and worsen over time as the demands of school increase. The chance of “catching up” decreases over time.

Under [Ohio law](#), districts and community schools must create Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans for students in kindergarten through grade 3 who are not on-track (reading below grade level) within 60 days of receiving the reading diagnostic results. The district or school must involve the student’s parent or guardian and the classroom teacher in developing the plan. A Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan must include the following:

- Identification of the student’s specific reading difficulty;
- A description of proposed supplemental instruction services that will target the student’s identified reading difficulty;
- Opportunities for the student’s parents or guardians to be involved in the instructional services;
- A process to monitor the implementation of the student’s instructional services (progress monitoring);
- A reading curriculum during regular school hours that does the following:
 - Helps students read at grade level;
 - Provides scientifically based and reliable assessment; and
 - Provides initial and ongoing analysis of each student’s reading progress.
- A statement that unless the student attains the appropriate level of reading competency by the end of grade 3, the student may be retained unless otherwise exempt.⁵

Table 2, below, lists the types of intervention services districts and community schools provided to students with Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans in the 2020-2021 school year. No single reason exists why a child struggles to read. Schools choose various strategies on a case-by-case basis according to the unique needs of each child as determined by data. Districts and schools are required to report into the education management information system the types of reading intervention services provided during the school year. Districts and schools may report one or more intervention services for each student.

The Department has not yet evaluated the effectiveness of these intervention services because districts and community schools did not report to the Department the specific areas of reading difficulty targeted by the interventions. To address this issue, the Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan intervention [codes](#) were revised for the 2021-2022 school year to include evidence-based interventions based on the science of reading.

Table 2: Intervention Service Options for Students on Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans 2020-2021

Intervention Services	
Guided Reading (small-group instruction)	Responsive Intervention
Phonemic Awareness and Phonemic Decoding	Proactive Intervention
Increased Reading Time	Orton-Gillingham (reading approach)
Sight Word Instruction	Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies
Shared Reading	Other Explicit Instruction of Fluency
Extended Learning Time (each week)	Other Explicit Instruction of Comprehension
Supplemental Instruction in Decoding Skills	Other Explicit Instruction of Vocabulary
Interactive Writing	Other Language Experience Approach

⁵ For school years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 (and continuing in 2021-2022), emergency legislation modified the Third Grade Reading Guarantee promotion criteria. Specifically, in those school years, no school district, community school, or STEM school and no chartered nonpublic school subject to section 3301.163 of the Revised Code may retain a student in the third grade based solely on a student’s academic performance in reading unless the principal of the school building and the student’s reading teacher agree that the student is reading below grade level and is not prepared to be promoted to the fourth grade. See HB 197 (133rd GA) Section 17, HB 409 (133rd GA) Section 4, and SB 229 (134th GA) Section 8, respectively.

One-on-One Tutoring or Mentoring

Other Intervention

Table 3, below, shows the five most frequently reported intervention services used by Ohio districts and community schools for kindergarten through grade 3 students with Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans during the 2020-2021 school year.

Table 3. Most Frequently Reported Intervention Services by Grade Level 2020-2021

Intervention Services	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Total
Guided Reading	24,606	28,037	30,981	37,759	121,383
Phonemic Awareness and Phonemic Decoding	27,638	24,811	20,533	14,249	87,231
Increased Reading Time	8,951	8,845	10,699	14,165	42,660
Sight Word Instruction	10,325	11,846	10,749	7,431	40,351
Supplemental Instruction in Decoding Skills	6,002	8,406	8,242	8,959	31,609

Conclusion: The Department's Ongoing Literacy Support Efforts

The Department promotes an equitable education system that prioritizes language and literacy development for all learners. This is in keeping with [Each Child, Our Future](#) and [Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement](#). The latter is Ohio's guide for the implementation of evidence-based language and literacy instruction for all children from birth through grade 12. The data reflected in this report illustrate the Department's need to continue to identify and support the implementation of evidence-based language and literacy practices.

The Department is committed to helping educators support all children in increasing their literacy skills to become lifelong learners. For example, the Department provides a continuous professional learning series addressing literacy supports for state support team and educational service center colleagues to bolster their support to districts to specifically address literacy needs. The Department has also trained state support team and educational service center colleagues to support districts with literacy or English language arts curriculum audits and material selection. Additional supports include analyzing district data to identify gaps in resources. In addition to these efforts, the following examples illustrate statewide supports the Department provides:

- Literacy Academy:** The Department's annual [Literacy Academy](#) moved to a virtual format beginning in 2021. The Literacy Academy provides professional learning to support the use of evidence-based language and literacy practices. All sessions were available on demand and supported by viewing guides with discussion questions and further learning opportunities. The Department has embraced this new model and is creating additional on-demand courses for any educator to access for free at any time. The new courses will be available on the Department's website beginning in January 2022.
- Literacy Instruction within Remote Learning Environments:** Resources for [literacy instruction within remote learning environments](#) were made available through the Department's [Reset and Restart Education website](#). These resources include a white paper and videos describing evidence-based literacy instruction focused on teaching reading online, families as partners and new literacies (digital literacies).

- **Kindergarten-Grade 5 Remote Literacy Planning and Discussion Guide:** [The Kindergarten-Grade 5 Remote Literacy Planning and Discussion Guide](#) focuses on the components of effective K-5 instruction, addressing learning gaps and accelerating progress, partnering with families and caregivers, delivering instruction through multiple methods as well as training and coaching educators.
- **Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan Intervention Video Series:** The Department has created a series of short support videos for the revised Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan intervention education management information system codes. In each video, Ohio's literacy leads describe specific intervention types and demonstrate how to teach each Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan intervention type.
- **Professional Development and Instructional Resources:** The Department published *Professional and Instructional Resources Implemented by Striving Readers Subgrantees and Early Literacy Pilot Schools* in April 2020 to support interested applicants for the Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant. All Ohio districts may use this resource when considering using Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) and American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds to purchase literacy resources and professional development. In addition, the Department has also published a [Guide for Supporting Literacy Efforts with ESSER and ARP Funds](#).
- **Regional Data Leads:** The Department's literacy team is working with the regional data leads housed in the educational service centers to help districts better examine state and local literacy data to inform supports needed, such as professional development, curriculum materials, core instruction and intervention supports.

Overall, the Department is committed to supporting Ohio educators in ensuring their students continue to grow in language and literacy. The time is now for all students to have access to literacy instruction based in reading science for core instruction and intervention.