Independent Evaluation of the Colorado READ Act: Per-Pupil Funding Year 4 Summary Report

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Colorado READ Act EVALUATION

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary v
Summary of Findings and Recommendations vii
Potential Impacts of the READ Act vii
Continuing Challenges xii
Additional Challenges xvii

1. Introduction 1
Introduction 1
READ Act 2
Evaluation of READ Act 7
Purpose and Organization of This Report 9

2. Overall Approaches to Reading 10
How Are Districts and Schools Approaching Reading Instruction? 11
To What Extent Are Districts Using Approved Programs and Assessments? 14
What Were Successes and Challenges Related to Reading Approach and Instructional Materials? 20
Key Takeaways 21

3. Professional Development; Evidence-Based Requirements 23
How Effective Was the 45-Hour Training? 24
To What Extent Did the 45-Hour Training Influence Reading Instruction? 25
What Were the Successes and Challenges of the 45-Hour Training Requirement? 26
What Additional Supports Were Available to Support Evidence-Based Teaching in Reading? 27
Key Takeaways 30

4. Identifying and Supporting Students With Significant Reading Deficiencies 32
How Were Students Identified with Significant Reading Deficiencies? 33
To What Extent Was Training and Support Available for READ Plan Development and Implementation? 34
What Informed Instructional Decisions? 38
To What Extent Were Parents and Family Involved? 43
SRD Identification and READ Plan Implementation 43
Key Takeaways 49

5. Early Literacy Grant 51
What Were Overall Perceptions of the Early Literacy Grant? 52
What Themes Were Noted with Regard to the ELG Application Process? 52
How Were ELG Funds Deployed? 57
What Lessons Were Learned Regarding ELG External Literacy Consultants? 58
What Were Other Successes Associated with ELGs? 64
What Were Other Challenges to ELG Success? 67
Key Takeaways 68

6. Funding 70
Background on READ Act Per-Pupil Funding 71
Who Was Included in Decisions about READ Act Per-Pupil Spending? 72
How Were Per-Pupil Funds Spent? 74
How did Per-Pupil Funds Contribute to Success in Reading? 76

What Were the Challenges Associated with READ Act Per-Pupil Funding? 78
Other Funding Streams or Investments for READ Act Purposes 79
Key Takeaways 80
7. Student Outcomes 82
How Has the Percentage of Students Identified With SRDs Changed Over Time? 83
How Do Students Move between SRD Statuses from One Year to the Next? 84
What Impact Do Student and School Characteristics Have on SRD Identification? 89
What Is the Impact of SRD Identification on the Following Year's Performance on the READ Act Interim Assessment? 95
Key Takeaways 99
8. Conclusions 101
How Does Student Performance on the 3rd-grade CMAS ELA Assessment Differ by SRD Identification? 102
What Impact Do Student and School Characteristics Have on CMAS Performance? 106
What Is the Impact of SRD Identification in 1st and 2nd grade on 3rd-Grade CMAS ELA Performance? 109
How Do Interim Assessment Cut Scores Align with the CMAS ELA Scale? 109
Key Takeaways 113
Conclusion 115
1) How are LEPs and schools implementing READ Act provisions? 116
2) To What Extent Has the Implementation of the READ Act Led to a Reduction in the Number of Students Identified with SRDs? 122
3) To What Extent Do Students Identified with SRDs Achieve Reading Proficiency by 3rd Grade? 124
Appendices 131
Appendix 1: Data Sources 132
Appendix 2: Year 4 Instructional Programs 149
Appendix 3: Student Outcome Analyses 156

Executive Summary

- There has been widespread adoption of materials on the READ Act Advisory List.
- Proficiency rates on the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) reached an all-time high but remained much lower for students who have ever been identified with a significant reading deficiency (SRD).
- Students who exited READ plans by third grade had higher 3rd grade proficiency rates.
- There are continued challenges supporting students with multiple designations under the READ Act.
- Cut scores used to identify students with an SRD were linked to the lower end of the CMAS scale.

Decades of research have demonstrated the importance of reading proficiency in the early elementary grades. Because reading is a fundamental skill that furthers learning, these years are a critical time for intervening to support struggling readers. In 2019, the Colorado General Assembly passed and signed into law Senate Bill (SB) 19-199, which included a provision mandating that an independent, external multiyear evaluation of the Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act program be conducted (see 2020 Annual Report on the Colorado READ Act for an overview of updates in SB 19-199).[1] The evaluation is now in its fourth year and is being conducted by an independent research team led by WestEd and including APA Consulting and RTI International.

The key legislative goals for this evaluation are as follows:

1. Help state policymakers and district leaders understand the 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 the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) can best support further improvement in READ Act implementation.

This report relies on numerous sources of information (Appendices 1–2 for a detailed description of data collected and analytic methods used), including

- extant data from the student, school, and Local Education Provider (LEP) levels from the CDE and publicly available datasets;

[1] See https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdedepcom/readactreport.

- inventories of LEP staff and principals, reading coaches, teachers, and families at schools that received READ Act funding and participated in READ Act activities;
- focus groups with families who have been involved with the READ Act; and
- site visits with a sample of schools receiving Early Literacy Grants (ELGs) and LEPs that received READ Act funding.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

In the remainder of the executive summary, we describe high-level findings and related recommendations related to the potential impacts of the READ Act, continuing challenges, and additional challenges. The concluding chapter of this report (Chapter 9) includes more detailed findings organized by each of the three evaluation questions.

Potential Impacts of the READ Act

Increased Focus on Foundational Skills, Coherence, and Adoption of Materials on the READ Act Advisory List

Districts, schools, and teachers across the state are providing evidence-based reading instruction focused on the foundational skills emphasized in the READ Act. Most districts (67%) indicated that they provide guidance or minimum requirements related to the amount of time schools should spend teaching foundational skills. Most teachers who responded to the statewide inventory reported daily instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Districts and schools also reported coherence and alignment in terms of reading materials and increased use of approved core materials. Sixty-one percent of districts make decisions about instructional materials and require that all elementary schools use the same programs. Seventy-five percent require that all elementary schools use the same assessments. **There has been widespread**

adoption of materials on the READ Act Advisory List of Instructional Programming. In the 2022–23 school year, over 75% of schools serving 67% of CO students report using approved core instructional materials compared to less than half of schools serving 43% of students the previous school year. **READ Act per-pupil funds are most frequently spent on purchasing instructional programs and on the salaries of reading coaches.** Compared to 2022–23, principals more frequently reported purchasing instructional programs, assessments, and professional development (PD) programs on their respective Advisory lists and less frequently reported purchasing materials not on the Advisory lists. It is worth noting that administrators typically rated school grade-level teams, school professional learning communities (PLCs), the 45-hour training requirement, and the Advisory lists as being more successful than per-pupil funding in exiting students identified with significant reading deficiencies (SRDs) from that status and raising 3rd-grade achievement levels.

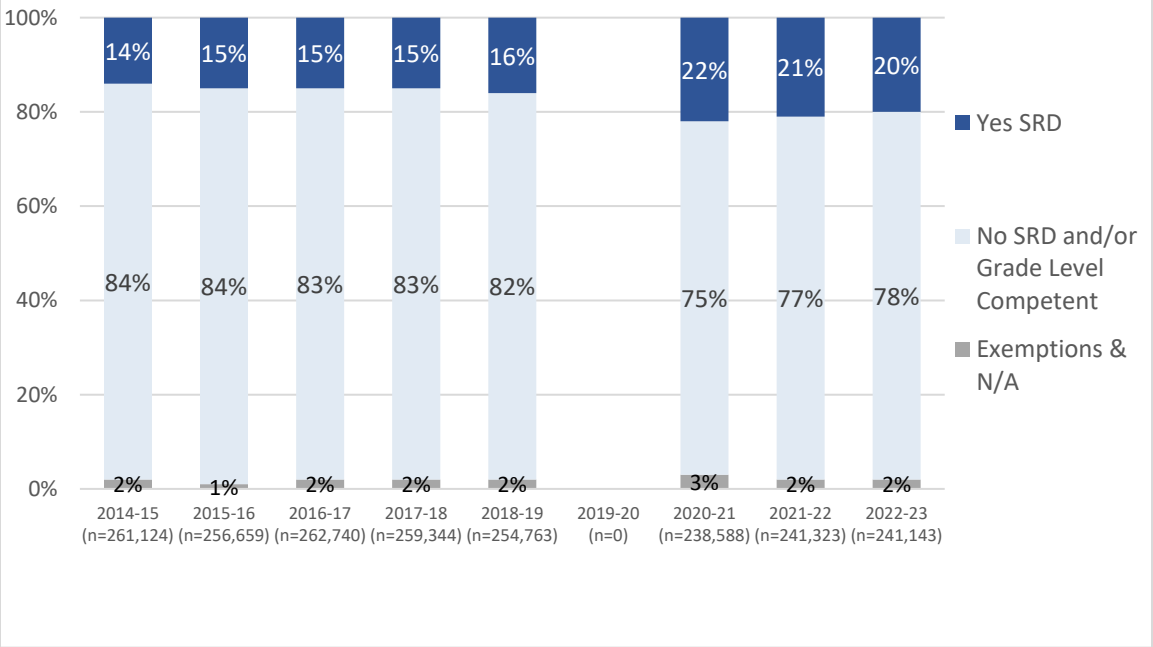
It is important to note that schools that participated in site visits reported challenges with the time it took for staff and students to adjust to new programs and the need for additional resources and PD related to teaching English learners (ELs). There was also a decrease in reported usage of approved supplemental and intervention programming between the 2021–22 and 2022–23 school years.

Recommendation: Given the widespread adoption of core materials and challenges noted by site visit schools, the 2024–25 evaluation should explore these trends in curriculum adoption, including barriers to adoption of approved supplemental and intervention programs and identifying the supports necessary for schools and teachers to successfully adopt evidence-based curriculums.

Return to Pre-pandemic Rates of Identification and Exit from SRDs

Overall, the number of students being identified with an SRD has been slowly decreasing since the pandemic. While the percentage of students identified with an SRD remain above the 16% identified in 2019, there has been a marginal decrease since the 2020–21 school year (Exhibit ES-1).

Exhibit ES-1. More students were identified with an SRD after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the percentage has been slowly decreasing since the 2020–21 school year



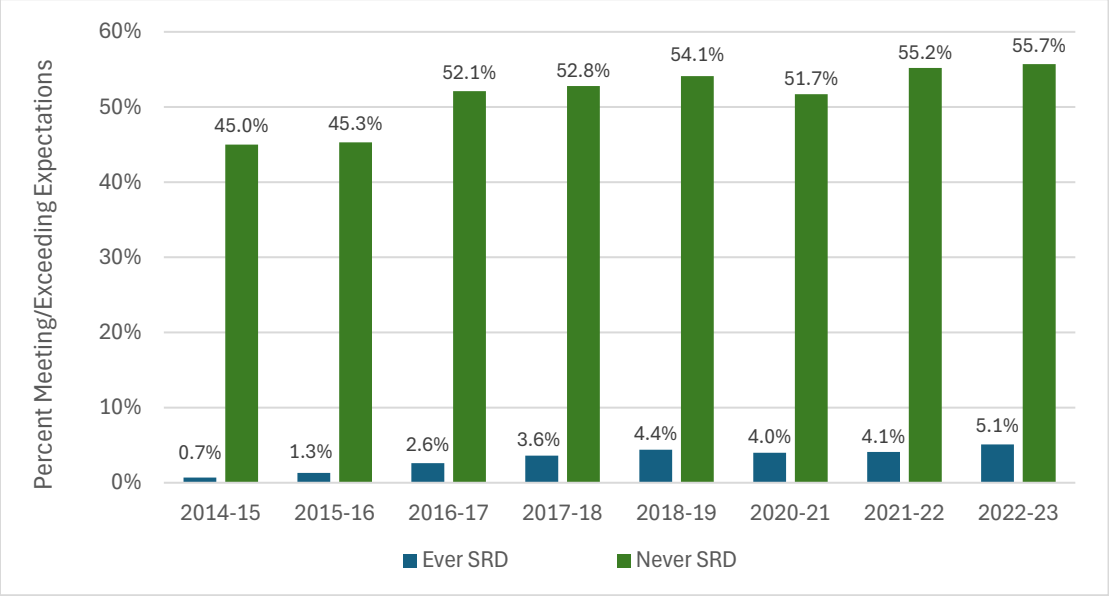
Similar trends were evident when looking at movement between SRD designations. Prior to the pandemic, each year, approximately 5% of students were newly identified with an SRD. This increased to 6% immediately following the pandemic and the related disruption to learning. In the past 2 years of learning recovery, **identification rates have returned to pre-pandemic levels (4.7% in 2021–22 and 4.9% in 2022–23) and larger percentages of students have exited from SRD status.**

Proficiency Rates on CMAS Reach All-Time High but Remain Much Lower for Students Identified with SRDs

Students first take the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) assessment in 3rd grade, the final year in which the READ Act interim assessments are given. Historically, students who had at any point in K–3 been identified with an SRD had very different success rates on the CMAS English Language Arts (ELA) exam than their peers who had never been identified with an SRD. Between 2016–17 and 2021–22, more than half of students who had never been identified with an SRD met or exceeded the proficiency standard on the CMAS ELA exam in 3rd grade (as determined by their overall composite score), compared with less than 4.5% of students who had ever been identified with an SRD (Exhibit ES-3).

While the trend of disproportionality remained broadly in place in 2022–23, the proficiency rates of both groups of students (i.e., those never identified with an SRD and those identified with an SRD at some point between kindergarten and 3rd grade) reached all-time highs. In other words, more students than ever before who had at any point been identified with an SRD reached proficiency on the 2022-23 CMAS (5.1% compared to 4.1% in 2021–22), while their peers who had never been identified with an SRD also reached a new highest percentage of proficiency (55.7%,.5 percentage points higher than in 2022 which was up to that point the highest proficiency percentage from 2015 forward).

Exhibit ES-2. Slow Improvement in CMAS Proficiency Rates of Students Ever Identified with an SRD and Students Never Identified Since 2020–21



Higher CMAS Proficiency Rates for Students Who Exit SRD Status by 3rd Grade

There were also noticeable differences just within the group of students who were ever identified with an SRD at some point in K–3. **Students who were identified with an SRD in K–2 but were no longer identified with an SRD in 3rd grade performed higher on the CMAS assessment, on average, than students who were still identified with an SRD in 3rd grade.** Almost 13% of students who were no longer identified with an SRD in 3rd grade met or exceeded expectations on CMAS, while less than 1% of their peers who were identified with an SRD in 3rd grade reached these proficiency levels. These findings underscore the importance of early identification and intervention.

Continuing Challenges

SRD Rates Differ by Student and School Characteristics

It is important to note that **SRD identification rates differ substantially by student characteristics; that is, membership in typically underserved groups makes it more likely that a student is identified with an SRD**. As in previous years, students eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch (FRL), ELs, special education students, students absent 10% or more of the days enrolled during the school year (referred to as chronically absent students by CDE), and non-White[2] students were more likely than their peers not in those groups to be identified with an SRD in 2022-23. While each of these characteristics significantly impacted a student's SRD identification, the individual effect of a single student characteristic (except special education status) was lessened when all of these factors were considered together, emphasizing the importance of understanding how each student's combined identity impacts their likelihood of being designated with an SRD. In addition to individual characteristics, there were five school-level characteristics that impacted the likelihood of being identified with an SRD: the significant school-level characteristics included the percentage of non-White students in the school, percentage of special education students, percentage of students eligible for FRL, percentage of chronically absent students (as defined by CDE), and student mobility rate.

Recommendation: These findings strongly suggest that students in these typically undeserved groups may need additional support and that the level of these supports may differ depending on the school environment of the student. Districts and schools should prioritize READ

[2] Non-White students refers to American Indian/Alaskan Native students, Asian students, Black/African American students, Hispanic/Latino students, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students, and multiracial students.

Act funds and targeted supports for schools that have the highest concentrations of eligible students.

Continued Challenges Supporting Students with Multiple Designations

As in previous years, students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or ELs who were also identified with an SRD reached proficiency on the CMAS ELA exam at lower rates than their general education peers who had also been identified with SRDs. As with the overall population of students, **students with IEPs and ELs who were identified with an SRD at some point in K–3 displayed a slight increase in proficiency rates from 2022.** Among students with IEPs, only 1.7% of those who were ever dually identified with an SRD demonstrated proficiency on the CMAS exam (up .4 percentage points from 2022). Similarly, among EL students, only 2.9% of those who were ever dually identified with an SRD demonstrated proficiency (up .4 percentage points from 2022).

In addition to these continued challenges, educators **expressed significant challenges with the practical application of the 45-hour training, its online delivery format, and a lack of adequate training to support ELs identified with SRDs.** Teachers cited concerns including the need for more hands-on implementation support and a desire for in-person refresher trainings and more tailored PD opportunities, especially for teachers working in dual-language environments. Approximately one-third of coaches and a quarter of teachers reported a lack of training to adequately identify and support ELs with SRDs.

In line with findings from the past 3 years, **there is continued confusion around identification, guidance, and support for students with multiple support needs.** This confusion remains despite most districts reporting specific policies for the development, implementation, and monitoring of READ Plans for

students with multiple identifications; 42% of coaches and 45% of teachers reported they did not have enough training and support to identify SRDs in students with specific learning disabilities. These findings suggests that students with dual identifications continue to be underserved by the READ Act on their journey to reading English at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.

Recommendation: CDE and districts should provide additional guidance and supports around how to best support dual-identified students. This could include additional PD opportunities and identification of materials that address the diverse needs of all educators. There is also a strong call for in-person refresher trainings to better integrate learning into daily teaching practices.

SRD Identification Alone Did Not Impact Student Performance on Interim Assessments or CMAS ELA Exam

This year's analysis also examined the impact of SRD identification on later reading performance. Using a regression discontinuity design (RDD) approach, we were able to compare trends in performance on interim assessments and CMAS for students who were identified with SRDs and those who were right above the cutoff for identification. We found that SRD identification in 2021–22 was largely ineffective in impacting student performance on the interim assessments in the 2022–23 schools year. The same trend was evident when examining the impact of SRD identification on 3rd-grade CMAS scores. The results indicate that SRD identification in 1st or 2nd grade may not have significantly impacted the CMAS performance of students at the end of 3rd grade, although some improvement among students identified with an SRD at some point in K–3 was observed. It is important to note that this analysis only examined the impact of identification. We were not able to examine the specific interventions that students above and below the cutoff received and many

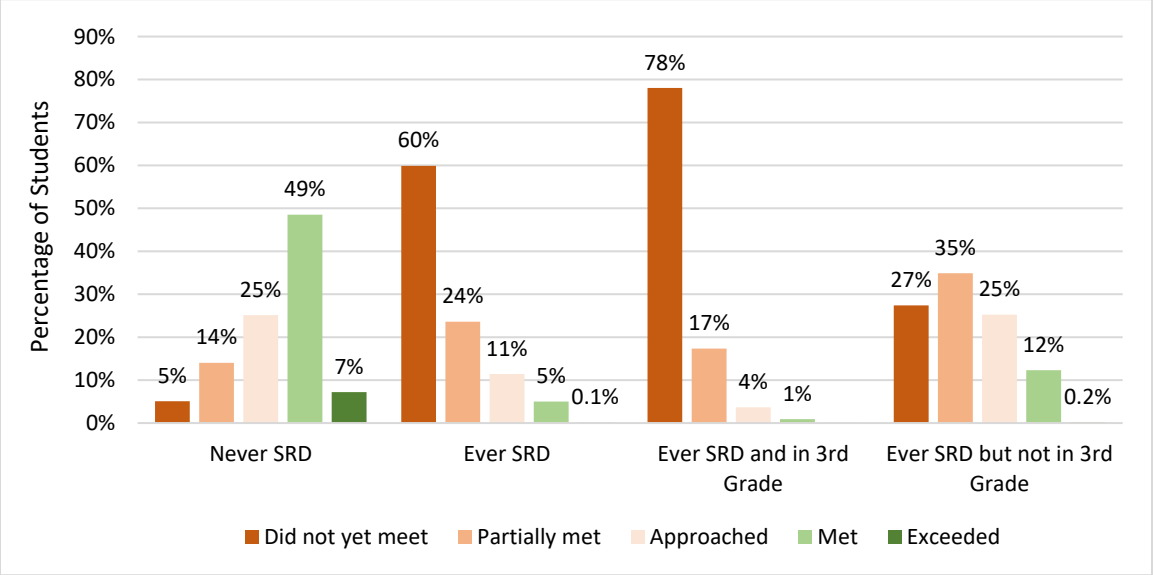
schools using a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework may have provided similar supports to students around this cutoff.

Cut Scores Used to Identify Students with an SRD Linked to the Lower End of the CMAS Scale

As we have observed, very few students who are ever identified with an SRD in K–3 meet or exceed expectations on CMAS by the end of 3rd grade, although some improvement is observed for students who are no longer identified with an SRD by the end of 3rd grade. While this improvement (that is, the change from SRD identification to reading proficiency on CMAS) is a key goal of the READ Act, a better understanding of how much students are expected to grow is needed. Using an equipercentile linking procedure (Kolen & Brennan, 2004), we found that **the cut scores used to identify students with an SRD were linked to the lower end of the CMAS ELA scale (they generally clustered from the end of the "Did Not Yet Meet Expectations" range to the beginning of the "Partially Met Expectations" range).** This signifies that most students identified with SRDs in 3rd grade would be in the lowest category on CMAS.

As shown in Exhibit ES-3, 78% of students who were identified with an SRD in 3rd grade scored in the lowest performance level on the CMAS assessment ("Did Not Yet Meet Expectations"), while only 27% of their peers who were not identified with an SRD in 3rd grade but were previously identified received scores within this performance level.

Exhibit ES-3. Majority of Students with SRD in 3rd grade did not meet expectations on CMAS



It is clear, then, that students identified with SRDs would need to improve substantially in order to meet or exceed expectations on the CMAS exam. The results also show that many students who are not identified with an SRD, according to their performance on the interim assessment, would still need substantial assistance to demonstrate reading proficiency on CMAS.

Many Students Who Are Considered Reading at Grade Level Based on Interim Assessments Are Likely to Not Meet Expectations on CMAS

Aside from the READ Act–specific SRD cut scores, most of the interim assessments also have more general "at-risk" cut scores that identify students at any level of risk (not just significant risk) of reading difficulties. As educators might use these benchmark performance levels to determine which students need any level of support (not just READ Act support), we also linked these more general cut scores to the CMAS scale. **These cut scores that identify students at any level of risk link to scores within the "Partially Met Expectations"**

range on CMAS, suggesting that many students who are considered reading at grade level in 3rd grade according to interim assessments are likely to not meet expectations on CMAS. This difference between interim assessment cut scores and CMAS cut scores in determining reading proficiency likely occurs for several reasons, including differences in content and difficulty, differences in assessment administration, and cut score-setting procedures.

Recommendation: Overall, the results call into question whether the goal of students identified with an SRD be proficient in reading by the end of 3rd grade is realistic. Although educators should typically avoid setting lower expectations for a specific group of students, it is also important to have reasonable metrics and pathways of student growth in a set period of time to determine the success of an intervention. The State Board should consider alternate measures of success, including growth on READ Act interim assessments or including the percentage of students partially meeting or approaching expectations on the CMAS exam as measures of success.

Additional Challenges

Family Engagement with READ Act Communication and READ Plan Involvement

This year's evaluation focused on gathering feedback from parents and families. Although parents did give positive feedback about their experiences, **parents who provided written feedback and participated in focus groups expressed frustration over identification practices, READ Plans, ongoing student supports, and a general lack of communication.** These parents reported challenges related to the SRD identification process, including the lack of inclusion of dyslexia, issues with specific testing, and a lack of parent involvement. Of the 271 parents who provided written responses on the inventory, over 70% expressed frustration with the lack of communication related

to READ Plans. Approximately one-third of parents who provided written responses felt their child was not currently receiving adequate reading support.

Recommendation: CDE should provide guidance and support to districts and schools to better serve families impacted by the READ Act. CDE could provide resources to help districts and schools provide understandable and personalized recommendations for students and highlight and disseminate best practices.

Buy-In Critical to ELG Success

Site visit participants continued to cite **the work of the external literacy consultants as the single most impactful element of the ELG.** Similar to findings from the 2022–23 report, grantees reported significant successes that resulted from their ELGs which included student performance improvements on literacy interim assessments (rather than annual statewide reading assessments), reductions in teacher turnover, increased teacher proficiency to use data to inform instruction, and improved teacher classroom management and use of small group instruction. **Cultivating and promoting strong buy-in from school leaders and teachers was cited as critical to the success of ELGs.** Grantees promoted buy-in through the involvement of staff, including lead teachers, in the grant application process in order to ensure that grant activities were well-aligned with school needs. For district or school consortium applications, site visit participants emphasized the importance of school leader involvement in the grant application process and communication with the external literacy consultant they want to work with. Lastly, buy-in was promoted by regular monthly meetings between school leaders and consultants during the grant period to stay apprised of consultant work and demonstrate strong school leader support for grant activities.

Recommendation: CDE should require school staff and school leaders to be involved in ELG grant applications and promote regular

meetings between consultants and school leaders to help cultivate and promote buy-in.

1

Introduction

Three broad research questions guided the evaluation.

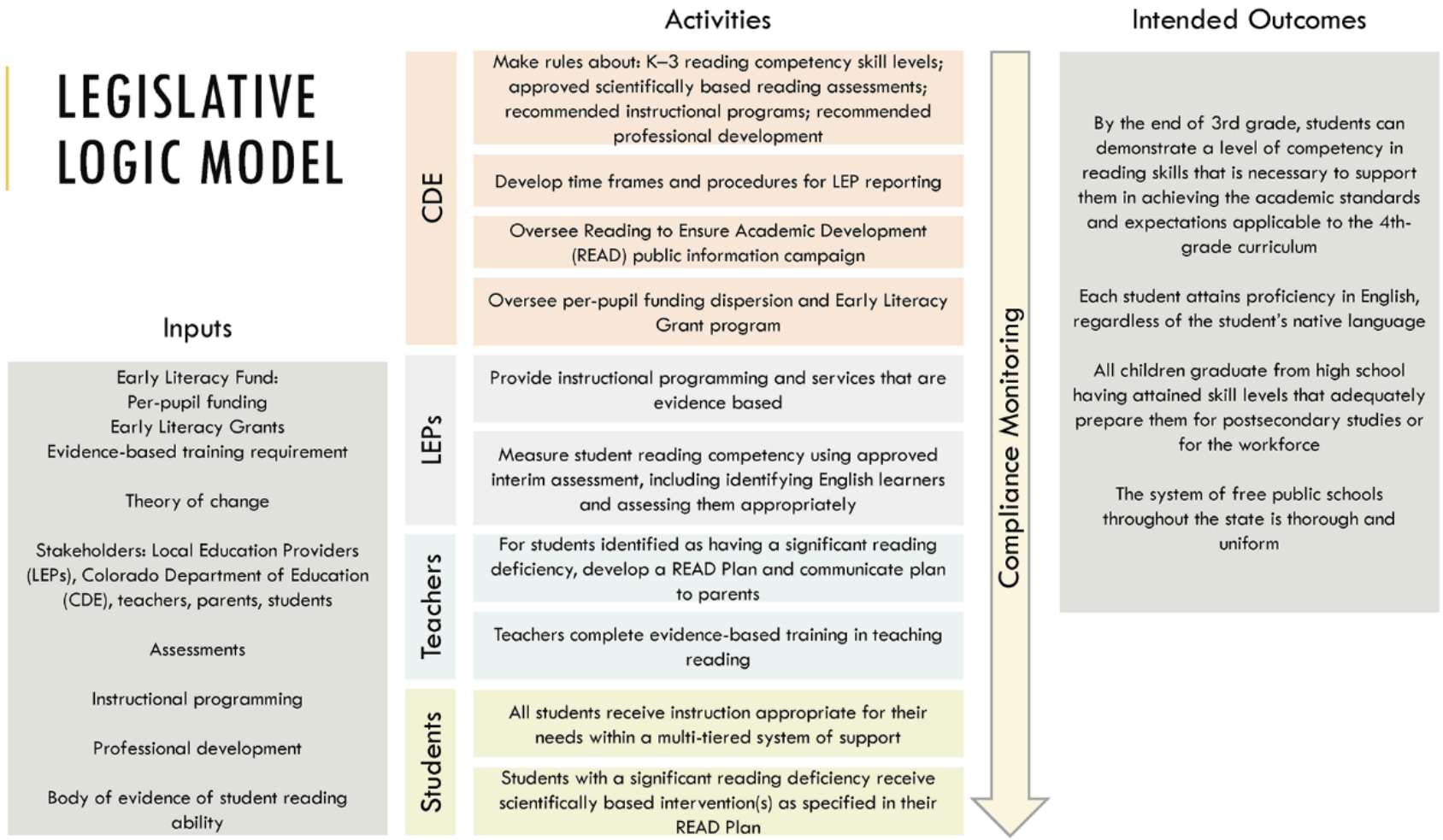
- **How are LEPs and schools implementing READ Act provisions?**
- **To what extent has the implementation of the READ Act led to a reduction in the number of students identified with SRDs?**
- **To what extent do students identified with SRDs achieve reading proficiency by 3rd grade?**

The importance of achieving early-grade reading proficiency for later student academic success is well documented. Researchers and education leaders consider the achievement of reading proficiency by the end of 3rd grade to be crucial to a child's future academic success and financial independence. To help schools and districts support all children in achieving this goal, the Colorado State Legislature passed the Colorado 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) who are at risk of not reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.

READ Act

Backward-mapping of intended outcomes identified in the READ Act through activities and inputs illustrates how authors of the Act intended the pieces to fit together to improve reading outcomes (Exhibit 1). 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 students identified with SRDs receive appropriate science-based interventions to address their needs. Teachers 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 Professional Development and Instructional Programming that the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) has developed and disseminated. CDE also determines grade-level competency in reading, monitors LEP use of READ Act per-pupil funds, administers the Early Literacy Grant (ELG) program, and oversees READ Act reports (Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1. READ Act Legislative Logic Model



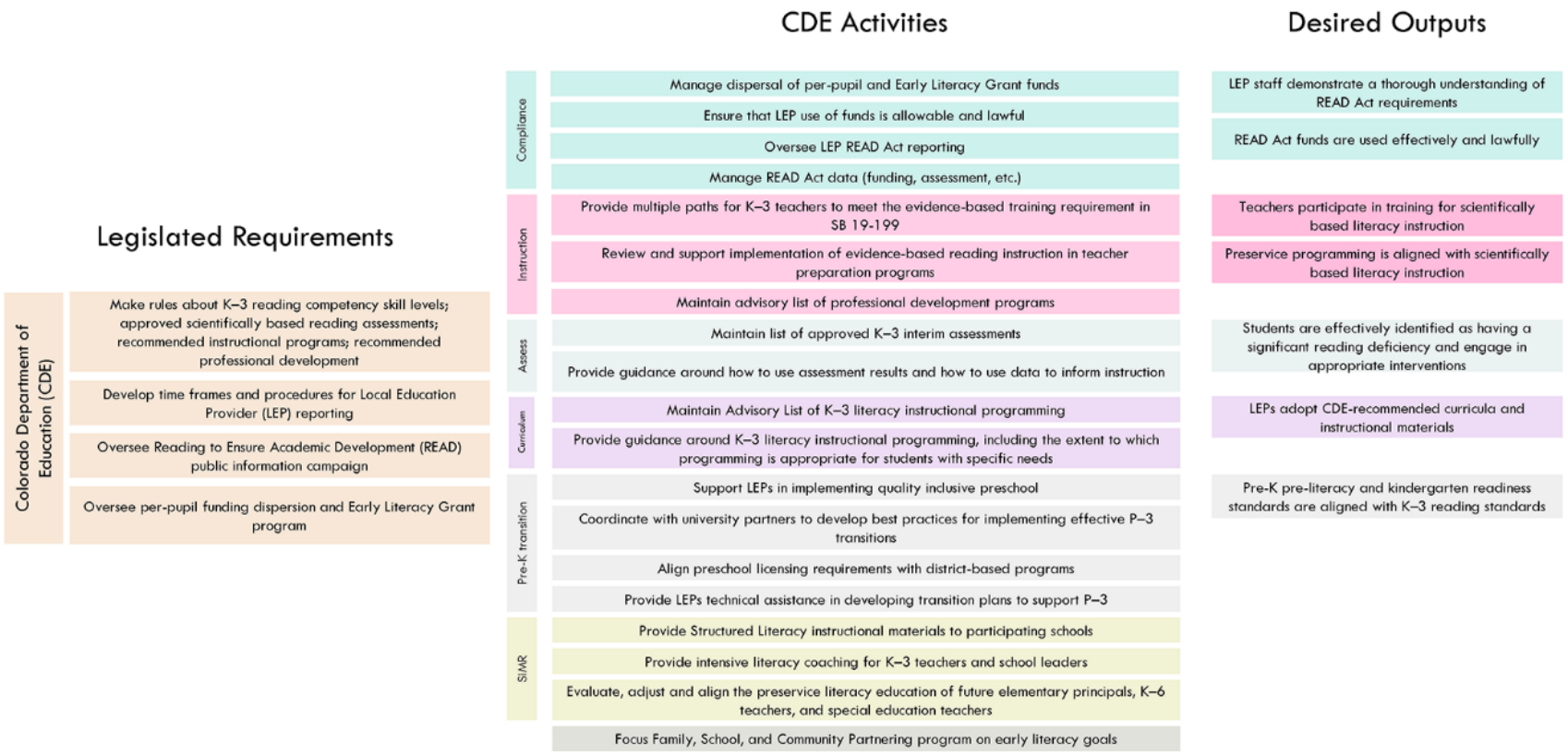
Under provisions of the READ Act, schools use an interim assessment from the Advisory List to identify students with SRDs. After screening, students are given a diagnostic assessment to identify areas of need and develop individual READ Plans. The READ Act requires certain components be included in all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

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

Functionally, CDE's activities can be placed into six categories: compliance, instruction, assessment, curriculum, prekindergarten to kindergarten transition, and State-Identified Measurable Result (Exhibit 2).

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

Exhibit 2. CDE READ Act Roles and Activities Aligned With Outcomes



In addition to specifying that the Colorado State Board of Education must approve a set of reading assessments, the READ Act charges CDE with creating Advisory Lists of Instructional Programming[3] and Professional Development[4] that are scientifically grounded and evidence-based.

LEPs may use READ Act funds to purchase instructional programming from the Advisory List (although schools may also purchase instructional programs that are not on the Advisory List, they cannot use READ Act funds to do so). The 2019 revision of the READ Act requires all K–3 teachers to complete 45 hours of evidence-based training in teaching reading (see Chapter 3 for discussion of the evidence-based training requirement).

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

[3] See https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/advisorylistofinstructionalprogramming2020.

[4] See https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/readactprofessionaldevelopmentevidenceteachertraining.

Evaluation of READ Act

In 2019, the Colorado General Assembly passed and signed into law Senate Bill (SB) 19-199, which included a provision mandating that an independent, external multiyear evaluation of the READ Act program be conducted (see 2020 Annual Report on the Colorado READ Act for an overview of updates in 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 research questions:

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

In addition, this year's report focuses special attention on five additional topics highlighted in the 2023 Evaluation Report. First, we examine trends in the adoption and use of evidence-based instructional materials and assessments.

[5] See https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdedepcom/readactreport.

This year, we were able to analyze two years of statewide data collected as a result of the Literacy Transparency Act, which helped us gain insight about the impact of the READ Act on the adoption of evidence-based materials. Second, we continue to explore the impact of the required training in teaching evidence-based reading. Last year's report emphasized the perception that the training positively impacted teacher knowledge and practice. This year, we asked districts and schools about the sustainment of these changes and the supports they have in place to support them. Third, given the READ Act's explicit focus on parent involvement, we were able to conduct a statewide inventory of parents as well as follow-up focus groups to get direct feedback about how the READ Act is working for students and families. Next, given last year's finding that bringing in an external literacy expert on a monthly basis to work with teachers was identified as the single most impactful element of ELG-funded activities, this year's ELG site visits were focused on the role of the external ELG consultants. Last, this year's report includes an in-depth analysis of the impact of identification of significant reading deficiency on later performance and an examination of the alignment of interim assessments and CMAS to better understand the gap between student performance on these measures in kindergarten through 2nd grade and later performance on the CMAS.

In order to answer these evaluation questions and examine these special topics, the report relies on numerous sources of information (Appendices 1–2 for a detailed description of data collected and analytic methods used), including

- extant student, school, and LEP-level data from CDE and the publicly available dataset;[6]
- inventories of LEP staff and principals, reading coaches, teachers, and families at schools that received READ Act funding and participated in READ Act activities;

[6] CDE's publicly available is available here: https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval.

- focus groups with families who have been involved with the READ Act; and
- site visits with a sample of schools receiving ELG and LEPs that received READ Act funding.

Purpose and Organization of This Report

This report on the fourth year of the evaluation describes READ Act implementation during the 2022–23 school year as well as findings related to special topics, including an examination of trends in use of literacy materials (Chapter 2), a follow-up on the perceived impact of teacher training and available supports to sustain that learning (Chapter 3), a broader examination of families perceptions of the READ Act (Chapter 4), and a focus on the role and impact of ELG consultants (Chapter 5). It also details findings related to per-pupil READ Act funding and related spending (Chapter 6), student outcomes (Chapters 7 and 8), and a concluding chapter with comprehensive findings and recommendations organized by each of the evaluation questions (Chapter 9).

It is important to note several limitations regarding this year's report. First, we are limited to annual READ Act interim assessment data and 3rd-grade CMAS scores as measures of student reading proficiency. This did not allow for in-depth exploration of within-year student growth on foundational skills and how that growth relates to 3rd-grade proficiency. We plan to conduct these analyses next year with access to student-level data from districts participating in the Early Literacy Assessment Tool (ELAT) project. In addition, we did not receive CMAS data for students in 4th through 8th grade, which limited our ability to examine student reading proficiency trends for students in later grades. Last, we did not receive staff-level training data from CDE with regard to participation in the READ Act–required training and were unable to provide an overview of completion rates by pathway or incorporate rates of teacher training completion in our student outcomes analysis.

2

Overall Approaches to Reading

- Districts, schools, and teachers across Colorado are providing evidence-based reading instruction focused on the foundational skills emphasized in the READ Act legislation.
- Districts and schools report increased coherence in terms of and use of approved core instructional materials. In 2022–3, over 75% of schools serving 67% of CO students report using approved core instructional materials.
- Site visit schools reported challenges related to the time required for staff and students to adjust to new programs and the need for additional resources and professional development related to teaching ELs.

How Are Districts and Schools Approaching Reading Instruction?

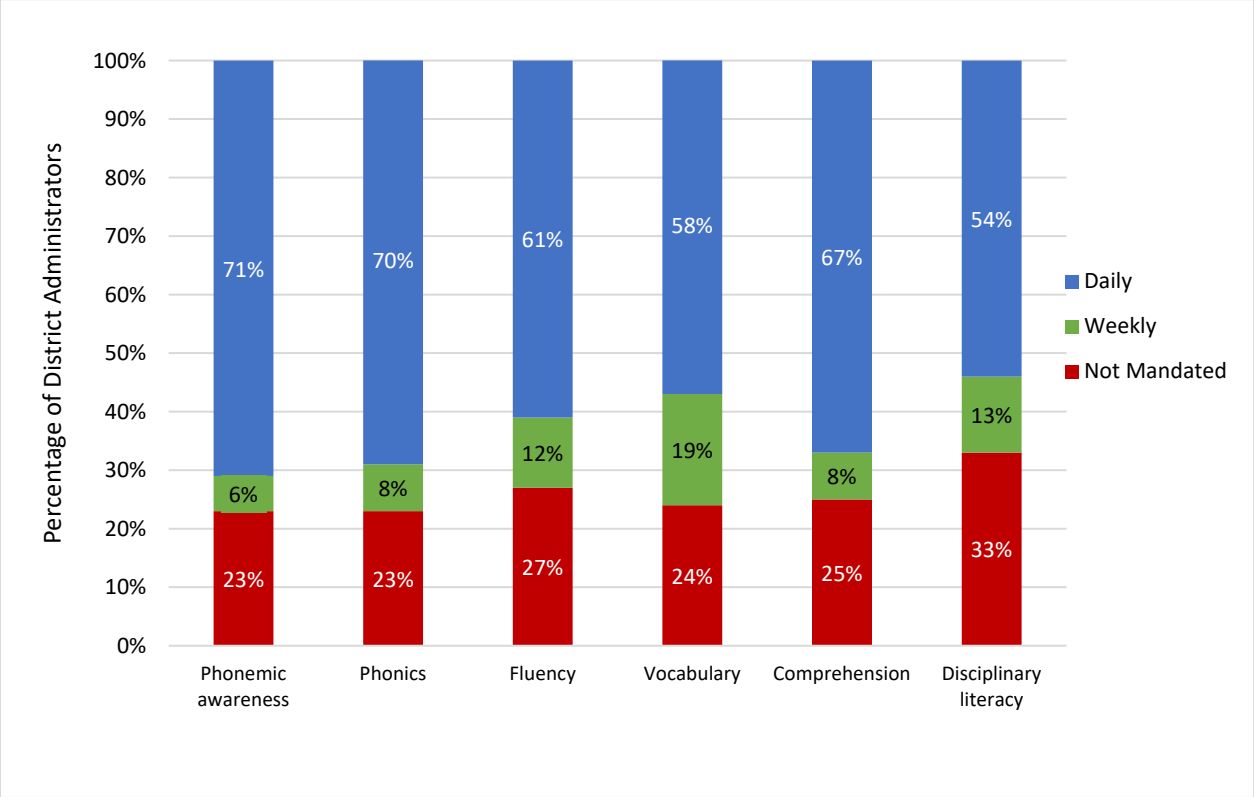
Districts and schools across the state are providing evidence-based reading instruction focused on the foundational skills emphasized in the READ Act legislation and research. Most districts (67%) indicated that they provide guidance or minimum requirements related to the amount of time schools should spend teaching foundational skills. The remaining 28% reported that schools have autonomy with regard to how much time is spent focused on foundational skills.

READ Act Legislation (HB 12-1238 22-7-1202 (II))

Research shows that reading instruction that is focused around the foundational reading skills of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency including oral skills, and reading comprehension is highly effective in teaching young children to read.

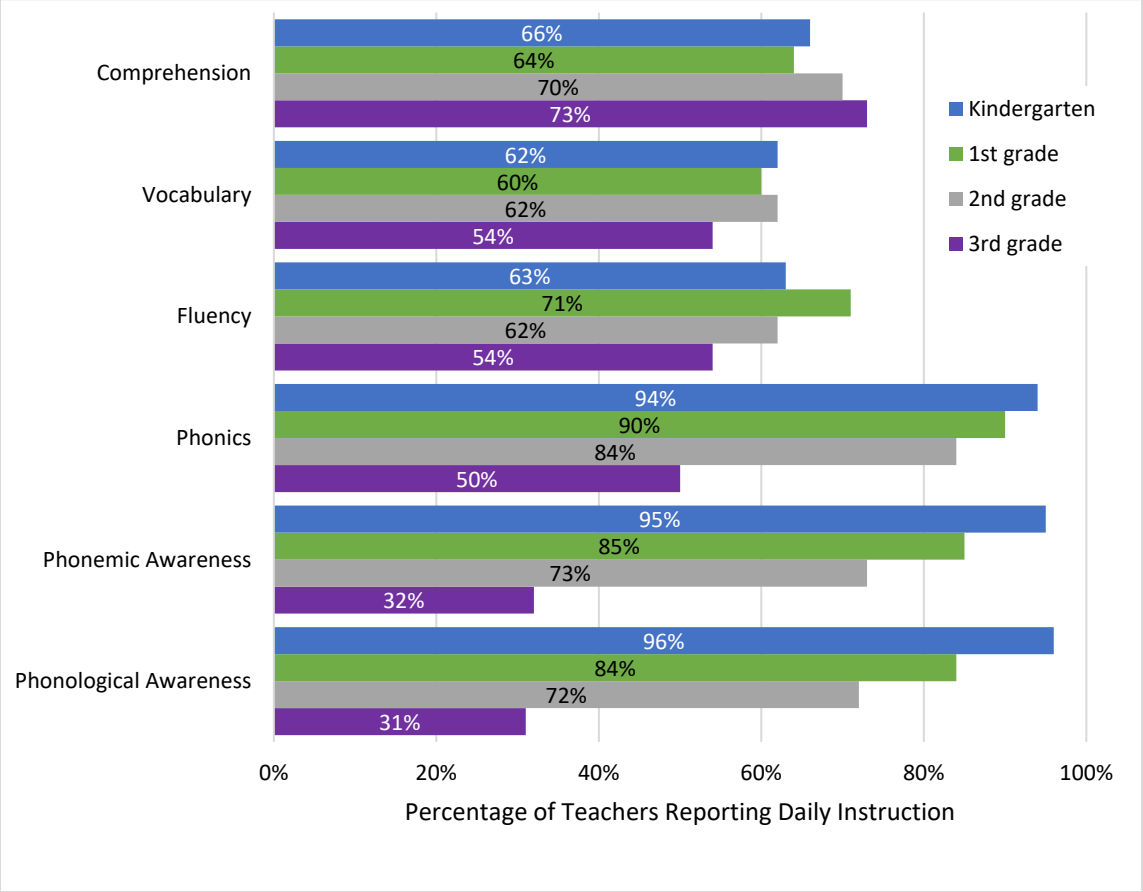
Although most districts reported daily mandates for instruction in each of the five foundational skills, districts were more likely to report mandates for daily instruction in phonemic awareness (71%) and phonics (70%) compared to disciplinary reading (54%) and vocabulary (58%) (Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3. Most Districts Mandate Daily Instruction in the Foundational Skills



Teachers reported similar trends. Most teachers reported daily instruction in the five foundational reading skills. However, teachers reported more frequent phonics instruction (80% daily) compared to the four other skills (61–72% daily instruction). Kindergarten and 1st-grade teachers were more likely to report daily instruction on phonological awareness, and phonics than 2nd- and 3rd-grade teachers. The trend reversed for instruction on comprehension, 73% of 3rd-grade teachers reported daily instruction on comprehension compared to 64 and 66% of kindergarten and 1st-grade teachers (Exhibit 4 and Exhibit 5). It is important to note that a minority of teachers did not report teaching these skills on a daily or even weekly basis. For example, 7% of 3rd-grade teachers only teach comprehension once per week.

Exhibit 4. Range in Reports of Daily Instruction by Foundational Skills and Grades



Focus on Foundational Skills

School ABC took a systematic, intentional approach to five components of reading: phonological awareness, explicit phonics instruction, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The school's goal for teaching reading was to create independent readers of grade-level text, supported by teachers who were experts in the knowledge, skills, and pedagogy for effective reading instruction.

When asked about reading approach, seven of the 12 school sites visited emphasized the importance of daily, systematic, intentional focus on the five components of reading. This was exemplified at one site where teachers emphasized the skills needed to critically read, write, speak, and listen with a focus on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Over the course of the school day, students at

this school engaged in all components of literacy learning and focused on all five foundational skills.

To What Extent Are Districts Using Approved Programs and Assessments?

Similar to reports in 2023, **most districts (61% in 2024) reported making decisions about instructional programs at the district level and indicated that all elementary schools in their districts use the same programs**. An additional 23% provided the schools with guidance and a list of READ Act–approved and district-preferred instructional programs to choose from. Only 8% of districts reported that schools have autonomy with regard to instructional programs.

This district-level alignment was even more pronounced with regard to assessments. Seventy-five percent of districts reported that decisions about assessments are made at the district level and that elementary schools use the same assessments from the Approved list.

What Core, Supplemental, and Intervention Programs Are Districts Using?[7]

District survey responses align with reports of instructional program use as required by the Literacy Curriculum Transparency Act (SB 21-151 Section 22-7-1209). This amendment to the READ Act requires each LEP to submit grade-level information about their reading curriculum to CDE so that the department can post the information on its website. Analysis of these data reveals a wide range of curriculums in use in each curriculum category, both approved and not approved. **Overall, there was an increase in usage of materials on the Advisory List for core programming between the 2021–22 school year and the 2022–23 school year. Reported usage of materials on the Advisory List for supplemental programming and Advisory List for intervention**

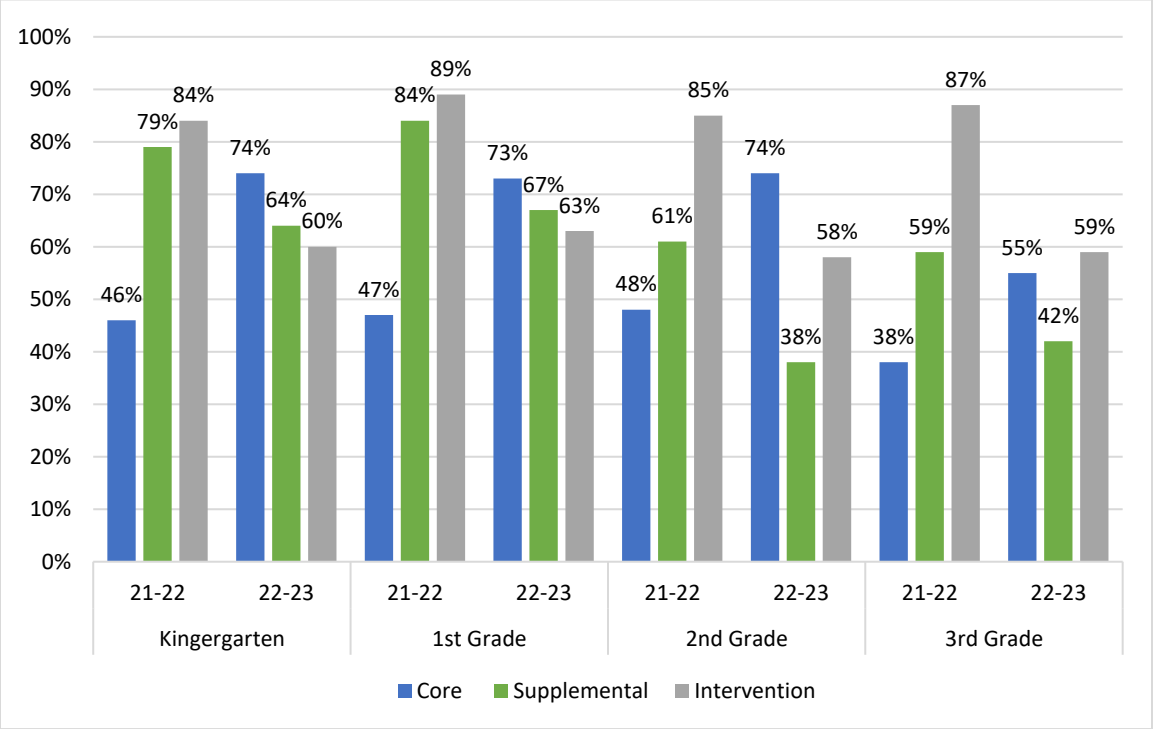
[7] See Appendix 2 for full list of instructional materials used by site visit schools.

programming decreased during this same period. During the 2021–22 school year, a little less than half of CO schools[8] were using Advisory List for core programming materials, serving 43% of K–3 students.[9] Adoption of curriculums on the Advisory List was significantly higher in 2022–23, with about 75% of schools serving 67% of students using Advisory List for core programming materials for kindergarten and 1st and 2nd grades. During both the 2021-22 and 202-23 school years, Advisory List for core programming materials usage in 3rd grade was at least 10 percentage points lower than in other grade levels (Exhibit 5). Next year, evaluation site visits should explore these trends—in particular, the downtrend in use of materials on the Advisory List for supplemental programming and Advisory List for intervention programming and lower rate of Advisory List for core programming materials usage in 3rd grade.

[8] The use of "schools" throughout this chapter refers to any school reporting to CDE to enroll K–3 students who took part in the Literacy Data Collection in 2021–22 or 2022–23.

[9] The use of "Students" throughout this chapter refers to K–3 students enrolled in schools who took part in the READ Act Data Collection and Literacy Data Collection in 2021–22 or 2022–23.

Exhibit 5. More Schools Using Approved Core Curriculum in 2022–2023



In 2021-22, Wonders (McGraw Hill, 2017), Wonders (McGraw Hill, 2020), and Amplify CKLA (Amplify, 2017), were the most-used materials on the Advisory List for core programming.[10] Of the approved materials in use during 2022–23, several of same curriculums remained popular, along with HMH Into Reading (2020) (Exhibit 6).

[10] Percentage of schools using approved curriculums are totaled across grade levels and ranked; this does not imply that each curriculum is approved for each grade level. This simply presents a snapshot of the approved curriculums being used in the most schools.

Exhibit 6. Wonders, Amplify CKLA, and HMH Into Reading Most-Used Core Curriculums in 2021–22 and 2022–23

Core Curriculum	2021–22	2022–23
Wonders (2017)	10.6%	5%
Wonders (2020)	9.1%	11.7%
Amplify CKLA (2017)	8.4%	13.7%
HMH Into Reading (2020)	6.8%	15.9%

A higher percentage of schools were using materials on the Advisory List for supplemental programming in 2021–22 than materials on the Advisory List for core programming— approximately 70% across grade levels serving about 70% of students. This fell to 52.6% of schools in 2022–23, serving 53% of students. While the percentage fell in every grade level, use of materials on the Advisory List for supplemental programming dropped particularly sharply for 2nd grade: approximately 23 percentage points. This may be in part due the change in curriculum usage in 2nd grade from 2021–22 to 2022–23 and decreased reporting. i-Ready (Curriculum Associates) dropped from approximately 11% to 3% and Istation Reading from about 9% to 3%. There was an increase of 20% in schools that did not report their supplemental curriculums.

The most-used materials on the Advisory List for supplemental programming in 2021-22 were Fundations (Wilson), i-Ready, and Lexia Core5 Reading (Lexia). In 2022–23, the most-used materials were Fundations, Lexia Core5 Reading, and Phonemic Awareness (Heggerty) (Exhibit 7).

Exhibit 7. Most-Used Supplemental Curriculums in 2021–22 and 2022–23

2021–22	2022–23
Fundations (12.8%)	Fundations (9.5%)
i-Ready (11.0%)	Lexia Core5 Reading (9.5%)
Lexia Core5 Reading (10%)	Phonemic Awareness (9.0%)

About 60% of schools serving 58.5% of students were using materials on the Advisory List for intervention programming in 2022–23, a decrease from about 86% of schools serving 84.7% of students in 2021–22. The most popular materials on the Advisory List for intervention programming in 2021–22 were Lexia Core5 Reading, Yoshimoto Orton-Gillingham (Orton-Gillingham) and Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words (SIPPS) (Collaborative Classroom). In 2022–23, the most popular materials were Yoshimoto Orton-Gillingham, Institute for Multi-Sensory Education (IMSE) Orton-Gillingham (IMSE), and Lexia Core5 Reading (Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8. Most-Used Intervention Curriculums in 2021–22 and 2022–23

2021–22	2022–23
Lexia Core5 Reading (18.2%)	Yoshimoto Orton-Gillingham (8.9%)
Yoshimoto Orton-Gillingham (12%)	IMSE Orton-Gillingham (8.9%)
SIPPS (11%)	Lexia-Core 5 Reading (8.4%)

It is important to note that most teachers reported supplementing these approved core, supplemental, and intervention programs on at least a weekly basis. Teachers were more likely than principals or coaches to report using outside materials that were not on the approved lists. Sixty-one percent of teachers responding to the inventory reported daily or weekly use of outside materials, compared to 32% of principals and 39% of coaches.

What Interim and Diagnostic Assessments Are Districts Using?

In 2021–22, virtually all schools (99.9%) serving nearly all students (97%) were using interim assessments on the Approved list to assess whether students should be identified with SRDs (Exhibit 9). Slightly fewer schools used approved interim assessments in 2022–23 (93.7%, serving 90% of students), with the same assessments remaining highly popular.

Exhibit 9. Percent of Schools Using Approved Assessments by Grade

	Year	K	1	2	3	K-3
Interim READ Act Assessment	2021-22	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%
	2022-23	93.7%	93.8%	93.8%	93.8%	93.7%
Diagnostic Assessment	2021-22	96.9%	96.8%	96.9%	97.0%	96.9%
	2022-23	97.2%	97.3%	97.4%	97.5%	97.4%

The most commonly used assessments across years were Acadience Reading (Acadience Learning), i-Ready, and Istation's Indicators of Progress (ISIP) Early Reading (Exhibit 10).

Exhibit 10. Acadience Reading, i-Ready, and ISIP Early Reading Most-Used Interim Assessments in 2021–22 and 2022–23

Interim Assessment	2021–22	2022–23
Acadience Reading	55.5%	57.4%
i-Ready	23%	13%
ISIP Early Reading	12.5%	9.9%

Schools are required to use diagnostic assessments to identify which aspects of reading a student needs stronger support in when an interim assessment indicates they might meet the requirements to be identified with an SRD. Use of diagnostic assessments on the Approved list, while not quite as high as interim assessments, were very high in both 2021–22 (96.9% of schools, 95.1% of students) and 2022–23 (97.4%, 95.5% of students). In both years, the most commonly used diagnostic assessments on the Approved list were Acadience Reading (51.1%, 50.1%) and i-Ready (25.5%, 25.3%).

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

Similar to findings from last year's report, district administrators and site visit participants also focused on the implementation of evidence-based materials as a key success. Fifty-four percent of district administrators responding to the inventory reported that instructional materials were successful or very successful in helping exit students off of SRD status and 48% reported that instructional materials were successful or very successful at raising 3rd-grade proficiency. Seven of the site visit schools cited instructional materials were also the most frequent success. Four of these seven sites emphasized the efficacy of using the same program within a school and across the district. Staff reported that the programs they used for core, supplemental, and intervention programming aligned well with one another and featured common language that teachers used in collaboration across grades and that students experienced as they moved from grade to grade. Additional successes related to instructional materials included clear expectations for teacher use of instructional programs, having a "mirrored" program in Spanish for the core program, and the autonomy to incorporate additional materials as long as they were aligned with foundational skills**. Five of the 12 site visit schools cited the READ Act Advisory List as a success. Staff expressed appreciation that the programs on the Advisory List were vetted resources grounded in evidence.**

Strategic Use of Curricular Materials

At School EFG, staff reported success with learning to use curricular materials over time and gaining the ability to pinpoint what worked best to target specific skills. Staff reported feeling that they were using resources that helped close reading gaps, that interventions were research-based, and that there was consistency in use across teachers. One staff member remarked, "I feel like we're getting really positive results," from this intentional approach to using curricular resources strategically.

Nine of the 12 schools cited instructional materials as a challenge. This included concerns about specific programs, the time it took for staff and students to adjust to new programs, and the need for additional PD and resources for ELs to supplement their current curriculum. **Supporting ELs under the READ Act was also cited as a challenge.** Similar to last year's findings, over 30% of teachers reported being only somewhat or not confident in supporting students with multiple plans (i.e. IEP and READ Plan), with 13% not confident at identifying which plans superseded others. Last, several schools cited the need for additional time to implement programs with fidelity. Staff at one school expressed that there was not enough time to keep pace with curricular milestones and be responsive to student needs within the school day—to cover everything needed "with the fidelity, purpose, and depth that you want to," in the words of one staff member. Staff reported that having limited time to practice reading skills was a challenge and that they would ideally have more time to work with students in small groups.

Need for Spanish-Language PD and Resources

At School HIJ, staff reported that teachers who taught in Spanish at the school needed Spanish-language professional development offerings and core, supplemental, and intervention programming resources. They reported that such resources would address an equity gap with READ Act implementation at the school. Staff noted that it was important for teachers who taught in Spanish to have authentic, original Spanish-language resources and examples as opposed to English-language resources that had been translated to Spanish.

Key Takeaways

Districts, schools, and teachers across the state are providing evidence-based reading instruction focused on the foundational skills emphasized in the READ Act legislation.

- Most districts (67%) indicated that they provide guidance or minimum requirements related to the amount of time schools should spend teaching foundational skills.
- Most teachers reported daily instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. However, teachers reported

more frequent phonics instruction (80% daily) compared to the four other skills (61–72% daily instruction).

- Seven of the 12 site visit schools emphasized the importance of daily, systematic, intentional focus on the five components of reading.

Districts and schools report increased coherence and use of core programs on the Advisory List.

- Sixty-one percent of districts make decisions about instructional materials at the district level and require that all elementary schools use the same programs.
- Seventy-five percent of districts make decisions about assessments at the district level and require that all elementary schools use the same programs.
- There has also been widespread adoption of materials on the READ Act Advisory List. In 2022–23, over 75% of schools serving 67% of CO students reported using Advisory List of Instructional Programming materials vs. less than half of schools serving 43% of K–3 the previous school year.

Site visit schools reported challenges with the time it took for staff and students to adjust to new programs and the need for additional resources and PD related to teaching ELs.

- There was also a decrease in reported usage of materials on the Advisory Lists for supplemental and intervention programming between the 2021–22 and 2022–23 school years.
- Next year's evaluation should explore these trends in curriculum adoption, including barriers to adoption of approved supplemental and intervention programs and the supports necessary for schools and teachers to successfully adopt curriculums.

3

Professional Development; Evidence-Based Requirements

- Educators across various roles reported high rates of perceived usefulness, applicability, and quality of the 45-hour training mandated by the READ Act.
- Principals, teachers, and coaches reported that the 45-hour training influenced reading instruction strategies.
- Educators also expressed significant challenges with the practical application of the 45-hour training, the online delivery format, and lack of adequate training to support ELs identified with SRDs.
- The district-provided supports beyond the 45-hour training were available to teachers and coaches to varying degrees across districts.

How Effective Was the 45-Hour Training?

Colorado school districts receiving READ Act per-pupil funds were required to ensure that all K–3 teachers had completed 45 hours of evidence-based training in teaching reading by August 1, 2022. As described in the Year 3 report, by May 2023, 13,218 teachers had completed a READ Act–required evidence-based training in teaching reading and had passed the end-of-course assessment.[11] Training completion data for the 2023–24 school year were not available at the time of this report's publication.

Educators across various roles who responded to the inventories reported high rates of perceived usefulness, applicability, and quality of the 45-hour training program. Specifically, 79% of principals described the training as "very" or "somewhat" useful for enhancing teacher and coach capabilities within their schools. Similarly, 89% of coaches and 92% of teachers reported that the training was directly applicable to their daily educational and coaching tasks. Regarding the 45-hour training, all responding principals found their training "very" or "somewhat applicable" to their roles, affirming the training's relevance across schools and roles. A significant majority of principals (85%), coaches (83%), and teachers (86%) praised the quality of their mandatory training.

During site visits, educators expressed appreciation for the comprehensive coverage of the evidence-based practices highlighted in the READ Act. However, concerns emerged regarding the practical application and delivery method of the content. Some teachers expressed concerns about the

Challenges with Training Application and Delivery

At School KLM, staff highlighted challenges with the practical application of the training content, expressing a need for more hands-on support and opportunities to practice what they learned. Staff reported feeling overwhelmed by the extensive information presented and noted that the online format was less engaging, failing to incorporate best practices in adult learning, such as interactive discussions.

[11] We did not receive teacher training completion data for the 2023-24 school year.

practical application of the training content, sharing a desire for more hands-on implementation support and practice opportunities to better integrate identified skills into classroom settings. Additionally, several teachers expressed feeling overwhelmed by the volume of information and found the online delivery format less engaging and more challenging to digest.

To What Extent Did the 45-Hour Training Influence Reading Instruction?

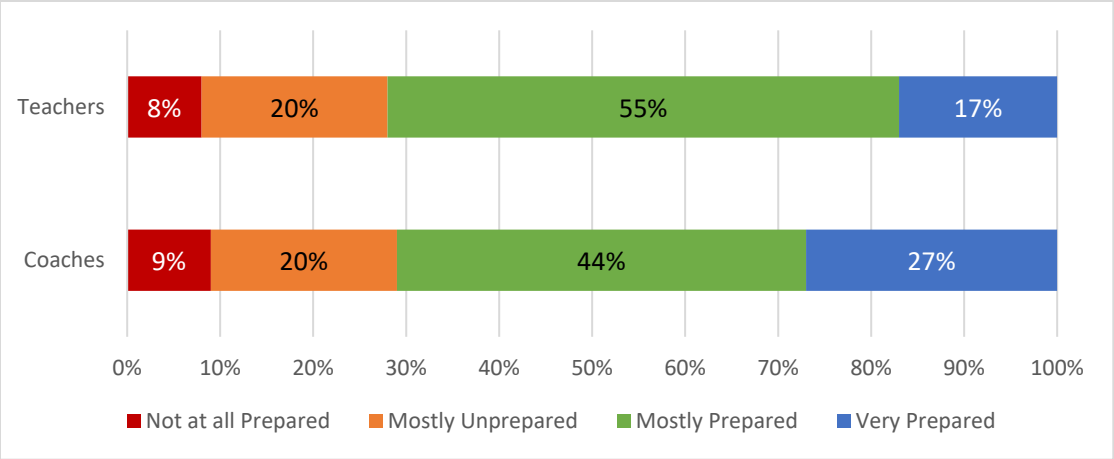
The 45-hour training significantly shaped reading instruction and implemented strategies. Teachers, coaches, and principals who responded to the inventories considered the 45-hour training program to be important to informing reading instruction and strategies. More than one-third of teachers (37%) actively used materials from the training to inform their classroom instruction. Principals (74%) and coaches (85%) viewed the 45-hour training as important for shaping their school's K–3 reading strategies. Notably, 78% of principals, 86% of coaches, and 85% of teachers reported significant improvements in instructional approaches, particularly in the systematic teaching of reading, phonics, and phonemic awareness, according to site visit data. These improvements enabled teachers to better differentiate instruction and address diverse student needs, leading to noticeable improvements in student reading capabilities and more students meeting growth and proficiency targets. The training reportedly helped teachers become more effective in diagnosing and addressing student skill deficits.

To What Extent Did the 45 Hour Training Prepare Instructional Staff to Support Students with Specific Learning Disabilities?

District administrators who responded to the inventory affirmed the effectiveness of the 45-hour training in addressing the needs of students identified with SRDs, with 54% reporting success in moving students off SRD status and 52% observing improvements in 3rd-grade reading achievement

levels. While most coaches (71%) and teachers (72%) felt prepared to support students with specific learning disabilities, a notable proportion expressed concerns about their ability to identify and support students identified with SRDs, indicating a need for targeted training in this area (Exhibit 11).

Exhibit 11. Coach and Teachers Level of Preparation to Support Students with Specific Learning Disabilities in Reading/Dyslexia



What Were the Successes and Challenges of the 45-Hour Training Requirement?

Consistent with findings from the Year 3 report, the 45-hour training was broadly perceived to be valuable and instructive, but difficult to complete due to the amount of time it required and to teachers finding the online format to be "less engaging" with fewer interactive components. During site visits, several schools expressed a desire for in-person refresher trainings and more tailored PD opportunities, especially for teachers working in dual-language environments or those interested in more hands-on approaches. Year 4 findings identify challenges in fully integrating the

Need for Tailored PD Opportunities

At School OPQ, staff reported a need for in-person refresher trainings during the school year. They emphasized the importance of such sessions to effectively practice and deepen their understanding of the concepts learned in the initial training.

evidence-based practices highlighted in the READ Act into daily instructional practices and in extending support to dual-language classrooms.

As noted above, the most immediate impacts observed were related to teachers' knowledge and instructional practice. During site visits, some schools reported that these shifts translated to increases in student learning. This kind of pattern would not be surprising in the context of adopting a whole-school instructional reform, such as the evidence-based approaches highlighted in the READ Act. Typically, shifts in student learning are preceded by shifts in teacher practice, which often require changes in teacher knowledge, beliefs, and mindsets. In this sense, the findings related to PD are consistent with expected patterns.

What Additional Supports Were Available to Support Evidence-Based Teaching in Reading?

To What Extent Were Coaching Supports Provided?

Data from site visits indicated that most schools supplemented the required 45-hour training with a variety of additional PD and ongoing peer learning supports. Educators benefited from diverse forms of support, including district newsletters, coaching, specialized resources, and professional learning communities (PLCs) that supported ongoing PD. These PLCs specifically aided in supporting data-driven instruction and continuous improvement cycles.

Most coaches who responded to the inventory provided teachers with PD in scientifically based reading (62%) and coaching (67%) at least monthly. However, nearly one-fifth of coaches (17%) did not provide any PD in scientifically based reading, demonstrating a gap in consistent training provision.

To What Extent Was Additional Training Provided?

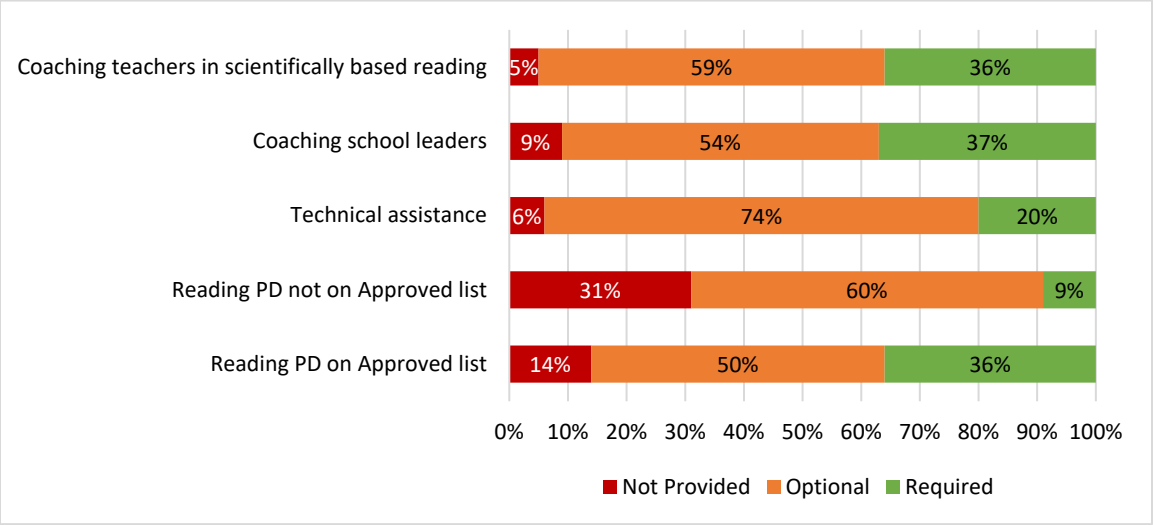
Over the past 2 years, a significant number of teachers engaged in additional training beyond the mandatory 45 hours. Teachers who responded to the inventory received up to 5 hours or more of training in areas including

comprehension (71%), disciplinary reading (67%), fluency (73%), phonemic awareness (82%), phonics (81%), and vocabulary (73%). However, a sizable minority of teachers did not receive additional training in these critical areas, highlighting a gap in the PD provided across contexts.

Additionally, both school principals and coaches who responded to the inventories received additional training in these areas, with at least 68% of principals and 71% of coaches participating. Despite this, approximately one-third of principals and one-quarter of coaches reported not receiving training in any of these key areas.

There were also PD opportunities intended to address the needs of students in 4th through 8th grade who had active READ Plans or had been identified with SRDs. Most district administrators (74%), principals (66%), coaches (53%), and teachers (62%) who responded to the inventories reported that their district or school provided such PD offerings. Districts provided a range of required and optional trainings, including PD on Approved lists (87%), PD not on approved lists (70%), technical assistance (94%), coaching supports for school leaders (90%), and coaching supports for teachers (95%) (Exhibit 12).

Exhibit 12. Districts Supports and Training Beyond Mandatory 45-Hour Training



The additional district-provided supports beyond the mandatory 45-hour training were available to coaches and teachers to varying degrees across districts. These supports included professional learning, observations, vision setting, one-on-one coaching, and PD related to the evidence-based practices highlighted in the READ Act. Nearly three-quarters of coaches who responded to the inventory (71%) and over two-thirds of responding teachers (68%) reported that additional time for professional learning was periodically available to them. PD related to the science of reading was available periodically to two-thirds of coaches (67%) and nearly two-thirds of teachers (59%). Most coaches (80%) and teachers (87%) took part in observations, as well as vision-setting activities (78% of coaches and 73% of teachers).

Coaches and teachers shared more about the specific topics covered in follow-up PD offerings. Most coaches who responded to the inventory participated in sessions on using data to drive literacy instruction (87%), lesson planning (67%), and making decisions about instructional materials (63%). Some coaches also took part in sessions on supporting ELs in reading and literacy (38%) and supporting students with IEPs in reading and literacy (22%). Most teachers participated in sessions on using data to drive literacy instruction (86%), lesson planning (69%), and making decisions about instructional materials (62%). Some teachers took part in sessions on supporting students with IEPs in reading and literacy (45%) and supporting ELs in reading and literacy (39%).

Districts provided professional learning through a variety of activities. Coaches who responded to the inventory had periodic access to workshops (70%), PLCs (77%), collaborative lesson planning (80%), the analysis of student data (97%), and self-study opportunities (80%). Responding teachers also had access to workshops (62%), PLCs (84%), collaborative lesson planning (85%), the analysis of student data (98%), and self-study opportunities (83%).

What Were the Challenges and Gaps with Regard to Additional Professional Development?

While substantial support structures were in place to support school staff, gaps remained, particularly in providing consistent and effective training for all educators. Approximately one-third of principals and one-quarter of coaches who responded to the inventories reported a lack of training in key areas of the evidence-based practices highlighted in the READ Act. Inequitable access to PD was also a concern, with more than one-quarter of coaches (27%) and nearly one-third of teachers (32%) lacking sufficient time for professional learning. Furthermore, about half of coaches (48%) and teachers (48%) reported limited access to coaching. These disparities highlight critical areas for improvement in PD accessibility and equity, suggesting a need for more targeted and inclusive training strategies.

Key Takeaways

Educators across various roles—principals, coaches, and teachers—reported high rates of perceived usefulness, applicability, and quality of the 45-hour training mandated by the READ Act.

- 79% of principals found the 45-hour training valuable for enhancing teacher and coach capabilities.
- 89% of coaches and 92% of teachers reported that the 45-hour training was directly applicable to their daily tasks.
- A significant majority of principals (85%), coaches (83%), and teachers (86%) praised the quality of the 45-hour training.

Principals, teachers, and coaches reported that the 45-hour training influenced reading instruction strategies.

- More than one-third of teachers reported actively using the 45-hour training materials in their classrooms.
- 78% of principals, 86% of coaches, and 85% of teachers reported significant improvements in instructional approaches as a result of the 45-hour training.

Despite their appreciation for the content covered, educators also expressed significant challenges with the practical application of the 45-hour training, the online delivery format, and lack of adequate training to support ELs identified with SRDs.

- Teachers cited concerns including the need for more hands-on implementation support and the overwhelming volume of information, which was found to be less engaging and difficult to digest.
- Several site visit schools expressed a desire for in-person refresher trainings and more tailored PD opportunities, especially for teachers working in dual-language environments or those interested in more hands-on approaches.

The district-provided supports beyond the mandatory 45-hour training were available to teachers and coaches to varying degrees across districts.

- These supports included professional learning, observations, vision setting, one-on-one coaching, and PD related to the evidence-based practices highlighted in the READ Act.
- Approximately one-third of principals and one-quarter of coaches who responded to the inventories reported a lack of training in key areas of the evidence-based practices highlighted in the READ Act.
- Inequitable access to PD was also a concern, with more than one-quarter of coaches (27%) and nearly one-third of teachers (32%) lacking sufficient time for professional learning.

4

Identifying and Supporting Students with Significant Reading Deficiencies

- **Using a body of evidence remains the most common method of determining which students should be identified with SRDs and exiting students from READ Plans; however, interim assessment scores continue to be highly aligned with SRD identification trends.**
- **There is continued confusion around identification, guidance, and support for students who have multiple support needs.**
- **There is a lack of consensus on which sources of evidence are most important for informing K–3 reading instruction.**
- **Parents expressed frustration over identification practices, READ Plans, ongoing student supports, and a general lack of communication.**

How Were Students Identified with Significant Reading Deficiencies?

More than 80% of principals, coaches, teachers, and district administrators who responded to the inventories, as well as eight of 12 site visit schools, reported using a body of evidence approach to determine which students to identify with SRDs. Interim assessments, curriculum-based measures, student's classroom work (e.g., assignments, worksheets), and—to a lesser extent—informal assessments informed body of evidence approaches (Exhibit 13). Almost all respondents reported using interim assessments as part of their body of evidence approach. School-based staff that participated in site visits also indicated that many schools use vendor-assigned cut scores for SRD identification, which is in line with the finding from previous years' evaluations that the overwhelming majority of SRD identifications match the placement recommended from students' interim assessment scores. This indicates that while schools are using body of evidence approach for SRD identification, interim assessments are still significant in determining which students should be identified with SRDs.

What Goes into a Body of Evidence

ABC Elementary provided an overview of the components in its body of evidence for SRD identification. The school cited the use of mCLASS with DIBELS 8th Edition, 2018 (Amplify, Inc.) assessment data, i-Ready assessment data, classroom assessments, classroom observations, and grades on classwork. The school used district-provided cutoff scores for mCLASS and i-Ready assessments. Staff also met to review each student's body of evidence and reading needs, which informed decisions regarding necessary supports.

Exhibit 13. Body of Evidence to Identify Students with SRDs

Role	Interim Assessments	Classroom Work	Curriculum-Based Measures	Informal Assessments
Coach	96%	75%	76%	66%
Teacher	93%	80%	81%	76%
Principal	99%	65%	72%	50%
District	97%	74%	75%	64%

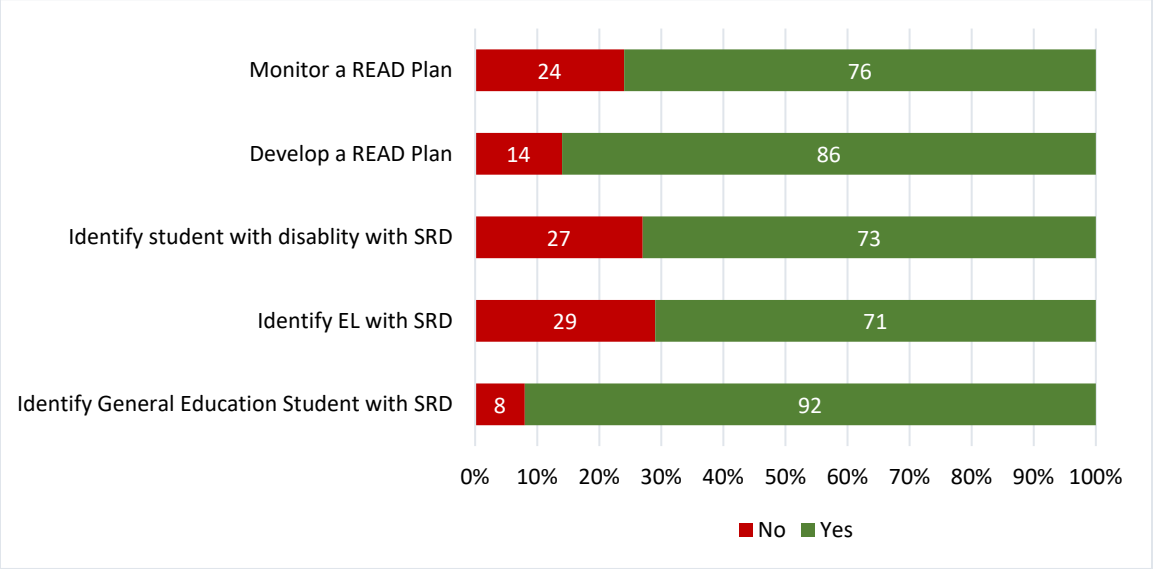
Almost all principals (98%) reported that they had a specific process for communicating with parents about identifying students with SRDs and READ Plans. The most common methods for communicating SRD- and READ Plan–related information were parent conferences (n = 128), other meetings (e.g., IEP meetings: n = 114), and letters or emails (n = 101). Phone calls, texting, and other methods were also reported, but less frequently.

To What Extent Was Training and Support Available for READ Plan Development and Implementation?

State and District Guidance

District administrators reported that state guidance related to serving general education students under the READ Act was clear. It was particularly clear for identifying students with SRDs—with 92% agreement—and for developing READ Plans to support them, with 86% agreement (Exhibit 14). However, perceptions of clarity of CDE guidance on exiting students from READ Plans was less consistent. Seventy percent of district administrators reported that the state's guidance on exiting a student from a READ Plan was clear. Similarly, 71% of teachers, 68% of coaches, and 73% of principals reported that CDE guidance on exiting students was somewhat or very clear.

Exhibit 14. Variation in State Guidance Clarity for SRD Identification and Support

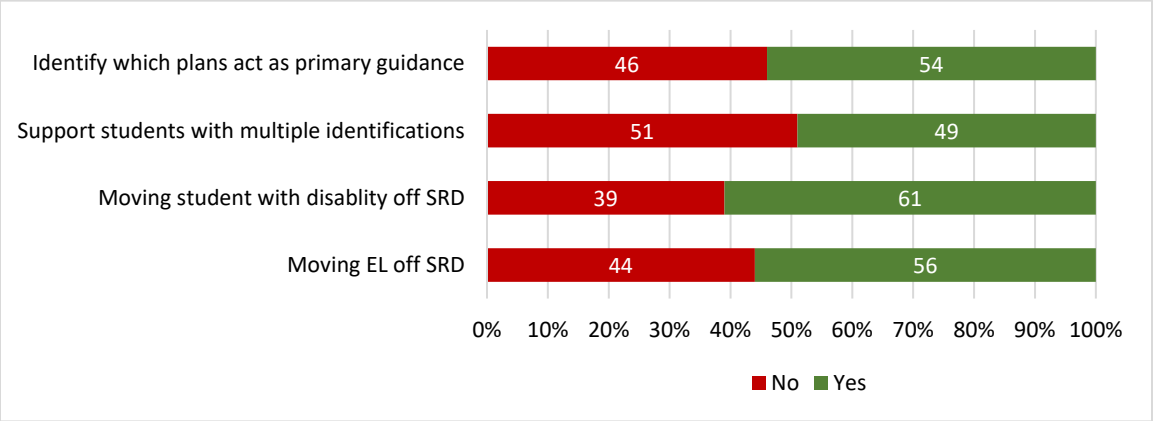


Many of the schools that participated in site visits reported that they used district guidance and resources to identify students with SRDs and support them. These supports included templates, training videos, and district-level staff who supported teachers as they developed and implemented READ Plans.

Consistent with previous years, district administrators reported that guidance on supporting non–general education students under the READ Act—specifically, students with disabilities and ELs—was unclear. **In particular, there was continued confusion around exiting students with disabilities and ELs from SRD status, identifying which of their plans (READ Plan, IEP, etc.) should act as primary guidance, and understanding how to support students with multiple identifications** (Exhibit 15). Although district administrators and teachers reported the guidance for general education students was clear, there is a need for additional support on how to best identify and support students with multiple identifications. Perhaps in response to these areas of confusion, 56% of districts reported having specific policies regarding the development, implementation, and monitoring of READ Plans for students with multiple identifications—an increase from 36% in the previous year. In

addition, 69% of teachers felt confident or very confident in their ability to support students with multiple identifications.

Exhibit 15. District Perception of State Guidance for Exiting and Support of Non–General Education Students



Educators expressed a range of opinions with regard to integrating IEPs and READ Plans. The smaller proportion of respondents—15% of coaches and 20% of teachers—viewed them as standalone documents. In contrast 30% of coaches and 33% of teachers viewed them as fully integrated into a cohesive document.

How Were READ Plans Developed and Implemented?

A slight majority of districts reported that schools within their district were responsible for reviewing their own READ Plans as well as monitoring the fidelity of implementation (Exhibit 16). In contrast, a few districts indicated that the district conducted reviews of all READ Plans.

Regarding principal involvement, only 26% reported being involved with READ Plan development and implementation most or all of the time. However, a larger parentage (58%) reported monitoring READ Plan implementation most or all of the time. There has been little change in principal involvement compared to the previous year.

Exhibit 16. Schools Are Generally Responsible for Reviewing and Monitoring READ Plan Development and Implementation

Level of Monitoring	District Reviews All	District Reviews a Sample	District Reviews None (Schools Responsible)	No District Plan
Review READ Plans for Quality	21%	22%	51%	6%
Monitor READ Plan Implementation	31%	11%	56%	2%

Overall, coaches were less involved in READ Plan activities and there was significant variation in their levels of involvement across sites, while teachers were consistently involved in READ Plan activities. Teachers were involved in communicating with parents (59% always); exiting students from READ Plans (32% always); reviewing (56% always), developing (56% always) and tracking progress on READ Plans (52% always), and conducting interim assessments (50% always).

Some collaboration between coaches and teachers was reported with 52% of coaches and 29% of teachers indicating ongoing discussions throughout the school year regarding student READ Plans. However, most coaches (72%) and teachers (68%) reported collaborating with teachers at the end of the school year to discuss READ Plans as students transitioned to the next grade.

How Were Students with READ Plans Supported Beyond 3rd Grade?

The number of students in 4th grade or higher who remain on READ Plans has grown every year from the start of READ Plan data collection, ranging from about 27,000 students to over 50,000 students per year. Most of these students are in upper elementary and middle school grades, with decreasing numbers of students with READ Plans as students enter and continue through high school.

Districts, principals, coaches, and teachers varied in the extent to which they reported to have provided or been provided guidance related to the identification and support for students beyond 3rd grade. (Exhibit 17). The increase in students who remain on READ Plans beyond 3rd grade and the inconsistent guidance for managing those plans indicates a need for additional guidance on how to best support students with READ Plans beyond 3rd grade. Of the guidance staff reported receiving, guidance related to exiting READ Plans and teaching the science of reading were most common, while guidance related to identification with an SRD was the least common.

Exhibit 17. Variation in Perceptions of Guidance Provided for Supporting Students Beyond 3rd Grade

Role	Entering a READ Plan	Exiting a READ Plan	Entering SRD Status	Exiting SRD Status	Teaching the Science of Reading
District	53%	76%	45%	61%	71%
Principal	53%	76%	49%	52%	68%
Coach	57%	91%	39%	52%	67%
Teacher	70%	78%	44%	44%	63%

Note. Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options.

What Informed Instructional Decisions?

Principals, and coaches emphasized the importance of READ Act interim, diagnostic, and summative tests for informing K–3 instructional strategies (Exhibit 18). A smaller percentage of coaches and principals reported additional assessments beyond those mandated by the READ Act as important sources of information for guiding K–3 reading strategies. In contrast, nine visit reports emphasized that READ Plans were a significant driver of instructional decisions. A relatively small proportion of teachers reported using READ Act interim assessment data to inform their reading instruction (Exhibit 19); however, a considerable percentage of teachers, coaches, and principals reported that non–

READ Act assessment data informed instruction. Teachers, coaches, and principals also reported that IEPs were important for informing instruction. **Together, these findings highlight a disconnect between what administration feels is important for informing K–3 reading instruction and what teachers are doing in their classrooms.**

Exhibit 18. Principal/Coaches Felt Interim Assessments and Diagnostic Assessments Were important for informing K–3 Reading instruction

Source	Principals	Coaches
READ Act Interim Test	68%	66%
READ Act Diagnostic and Summative Tests	73%	79%
Non–READ Act Test	41%	49%
IEP	61%	58%
READ Plan	33%	49%

Principals and coaches rated sources from “not at all important” to “very important.” The table shows percentages for ratings of “very important.”

Exhibit 19. Teachers Reported Non–READ Act Assessment data, IEPs, and READ Plans Were Used to Inform Instruction

	Percentage of Teachers Reporting
READ Act Interim Test	28%
READ Act Diagnostic and Summative Tests	54%
Non–READ Act Test	77%
IEP	82%
READ Plan	73%

Note. Teachers reported on what documents they use to inform reading instruction.

More than half of principals (56%) reported that staff in their schools used READ Plans for instructional decisions most or all of the time. However, the perceived impact of READ Plans on day-to-day instructional decisions varied for teachers and coaches. While close to half of coaches felt READ Plans had strong influence on work in small groups, only one-third of teacher felt similarly. A small proportion of coaches and teachers felt that READ Plans have a strong

influence on one-on-one work with students (Exhibit 20). The limited influence of READ Plans aligns with district administrators' perceptions of their overall efficacy, with district administrators primarily reporting that READ Plans were not successful or only somewhat successful (61%) at moving students off SRD status.

Exhibit 20. Teacher/Coach Perceptions of READ Plan Influence on Classroom Activities

Source	Teachers	Coaches
Small Group Work	32%	48%
1-on-1 work	27%	35%

How Were Students Exited from READ Plans?

There was a disconnect between the guidance districts provided and the guidance that school staff members believed they needed to make informed decisions about exiting students from READ Plans and SRD status. **Despite 74% of districts reporting providing written guidance regarding exiting students from READ Plans, a substantial proportion of principals, teachers, and coaches felt that the guidance on how to exit students from SRD status was completely or somewhat unclear** (Exhibit 21).

Exhibit 21. Percentage of Respondents Indicating School or District Guidance on Exiting READ Plans Was Completely or Somewhat Unclear by Role

Role	School	District
Principals	n/a	24%
Coaches	27%	29%
Teachers	29%	31%

Similar to the process of identifying students with SRDs, a body of evidence approach was also frequently used to exit students from SRD status. Seven of 10 site visit reports highlighted the use of a body of evidence for doing so. **Districts recommended the use of interim assessment scores (98%), curriculum-based measures (85%), and classroom work (94%) to determine whether a student should exit SRD status.** The inclusion of parent input into exit decisions showed more variation—15% required parental input, 72% recommended it, and 11% did not recommend it. Teachers and coaches echoed the district reports, indicating they always used diagnostic and summative assessments to exit students from SRD status (Exhibit 22). The determination of whether students met the goals in their READ Plans, interim assessment scores, and scores on other reading assessments were also often used as factors in SRD exiting.

Process of Exiting Students

Teachers at HIJ Elementary exited students by reviewing their full body of evidence and checking that individual scores aligned with the overall body of evidence and demonstrated adequate growth in reading. Staff reported that they were careful not to take scores at face value but to put scores in context of a child's full body of evidence. To exit a student, scores above the district cutoff on mCLASS had to be accompanied by additional evidence that the student could independently read at grade level.

Principals, coaches, and teachers reported that students infrequently exited and reentered READ Plans. Only 3% percent of principals, 3% of coaches, and 5% of teachers reported that students frequently exited and then reentered a READ Plan. Meanwhile, 75% of principals and 63% of both coaches and teachers reported that students infrequently or never exited and then reentered a READ Plan.

Exhibit 22. Interim Assessments, Diagnostic Assessments and READ Plan Goals Frequently Used for Exiting

Role	Interim Assessment	Diagnostic/ Summative Assessments	Other Reading Assessments	Classroom Work	Parental Input	READ Plan Goals
Districts (Required)	71%	73%	73%	20%	15%	50%
Coaches (Used all the time)	48%	58%	36%	25%	12%	50%
Teachers (Used all the time)	41%	52%	34%	30%	13%	45%

Note. Districts reported whether a specific component was required in the exiting process. Coaches and teachers reported on which information was used to exit students on a scale of "never used" to "all of the time."

What Were the Successes and Challenges in Identifying and Supporting Students with SRDs?

Site visit reports identified several successes and challenges associated with identifying students with SRDs. Teachers reported that teacher involvement in testing (n = 4) and having clear guidance (n = 2) were beneficial to successfully identifying students with SRDs. School-based staff who participated in site visits made it clear that they appreciated having teachers involved in testing as it allowed them to gain a better understanding of student performance.

Despite the appreciation of teacher involvement, one of the biggest challenges reported related to identifying students with SRDs was the time required to administer assessments, with half of site visit schools reporting that testing took too much of teachers' time. Site visit schools also reported learners as challenges a lack of clear guidance on how to integrate the components of the body of evidence (n = 3), the transition to new assessments (n = 3), and how to accurately identify specific student groups, such as kindergarteners and ELs.

Teachers and coaches also commonly expressed that identification of students with SRDs among diverse student groups as challenging. Only

a little more than half of coaches (58%) and teachers (55%) reported that they had received sufficient training and support to feel confident determining whether an EL should be identified as a student with SRD. Teachers and coaches reported similar concerns related students with a specific learning disability in reading/dyslexia, with 42% of coaches and 45% of teachers reporting they did not have enough training and support to identify SRDs for students with specific learning disabilities.

Despite identification challenges most coaches and teachers reported feeling very prepared or mostly prepared to support implementation of READ Plans for these students (Exhibit 23).

Exhibit 23. Degree to Which Coaches and Teachers Felt Prepared to support READ Plan Implementation for SWDs and ELs

Role	Implement READ Plans for ELs	Implement READ Plans for SWDs
Coaches	76%	71%
Teachers	73%	72%

SWD = Student with disabilities

To What Extent Were Parents and Family Involved?

SRD Identification and READ Plan Implementation

Reports of parental involvement in identifying students with SRDs and implementing READ Plan by coaches and teachers varied greatly. According to coaches and teachers, **parents were most likely to be involved in implementing READ Plan activities at home and least likely to be involved in progress monitoring.** Additionally, over a third of teachers and coaches reported that parents were rarely or never involved with the SRD identification process (Exhibit 24).

Exhibit 24. Percentage of Respondents Reporting Parental Involvement

Amount of Time	Role	Identifying SRD	Developing READ Plans	Implementing READ Plan Activities at Home	Progress Monitoring
All or most of the time	Coach	37%	36%	52%	18%
	Teacher	42%	30%	52%	21%
Rarely or never	Coach	45%	44%	10%	65%
	Teacher	36%	52%	20%	65%

The lack of reported parental involvement in identifying students with SRDs was echoed in parent-reported frustrations related to the SRD identification process. While the most common frustration was that screening for dyslexia is not included in the identification process, parents mentioned other frustrations related to specific testing, such as "The DIBELS tests are ridiculous. Even adults cannot read as quickly with no errors as children are required to do." They also mentioned other frustrations related to the desire for involvement in identification, such as, "Parents should be involved in the process. The READ Plan was just given to me at parent-teacher conferences. It wasn't reviewed with me. I have no clue how my child is doing on it. I wasn't provided on resources/activities to do with my child at home."

Out of the 567 parents who responded to the inventory, 57% reported they felt well-informed about the READ Act. Most parents reported involvement with implementing READ Act activities at home (56%) in alignment with coach and teacher reports. A smaller percentage (32–48%) reported involvement in developing, reviewing, and approving READ Plans (Exhibit 25).

There was a notable decrease in the number of parents who felt supported by their schools in implementing READ Act activities at home—dropping from 71% in the previous year to 60%.

Additionally, only 57% of parents believed that the support they received related to helping their child at home was sufficient. Approximately half of parents who provided a written response on the inventory mentioned a desire for additional resources or support. Specifically, parents expressed frustration with the lack of detailed information (e.g., “More information needs to be given to parents regarding the resources available and the specific interventions done at school when their child is on a READ Plan. Without us as parents asking questions, I don’t think we would have been given any insight past the letter we received.”); a lack of actionable guidance (e.g., “After being informed of the READ Plan, I'm not sure what he's doing in school daily or how we can supplement this instruction.”); and a desire for information to better help their child (e.g., “I'd like some guidance on what specific books they can read that are right for their age and grade level”).

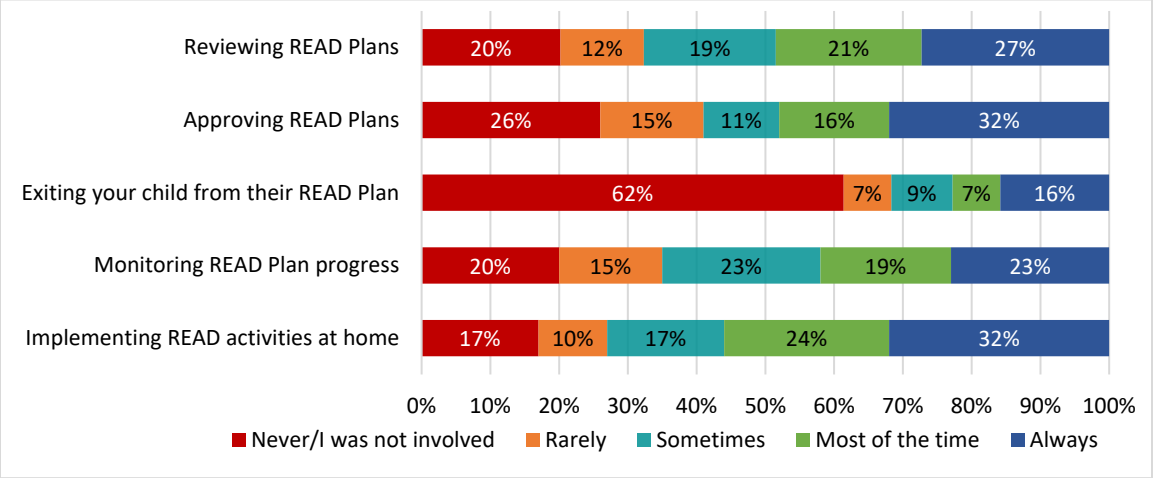
Family Involvement in READ Plans

Parent focus group and survey responses highlighted tension around parental involvement in READ Plans, with parents reporting little to no knowledge or involvement with READ Plan identification.

One stated “In 3 years I have never been provided a copy of my child’s READ Plan. I have requested it and been ignored.”

Another shared, “I feel there was not enough communication given. We found out he was on a READ Plan during our 20 minute conference in the fall.”

Exhibit 25. Parent Reports of Involvement by READ Act Activity



Note. N varied by number of responses to a particular item between 420 and 440.

Despite feeling a lack of sufficient support related to at-home READ Plan support, 76% of parents reported feeling comfortable implementing those activities, in alignment with prior years' reports. **During focus groups, parents expressed frustration that the only provided guidance to support their child was to read at home.** One voiced concern over not knowing the specific strategies being taught at school, and thus feeling unable to effectively support their child at home. Another parent expressed frustration with being advised to "keep reading," stating, "We were just told to keep reading with him at home…just keep reading with him…but no specific plan, or these are the things you can do to help him out besides reading…we read for hours."

Parents also noted concern about how their child was supported at school. Despite teachers generally reporting they were confident in READ Plan implementation, parents reported concerns related to how their students were supported at school. Around one-third of parents who provided written responses felt their child was not getting enough support. One parent said, "I think that the district needs to help students who are struggling more. I felt that when my child was identified as needing a READ Plan all of the extra instruction/practice fell to us to do for him." Another common theme in parent feedback was their

dissatisfaction with the lack of individualization in addressing their children's needs. These parents expressed their frustration with schools using a common approach to support students despite their unique differences. Many of these parents also mentioned seeking out and paying for tutoring and support for their children outside of the school system.

This feedback highlights the tension between school and parent perceptions related to parental involvement and student supports at school. **Despite teacher's general perceptions that they were equipped to support and properly implement READ Plans, some parents were dissatisfied with the level of supports their student received**. However, it is important to note that parents who did express positive experiences related to READ Plan implementation often felt they were a direct result of the staff at their school (e.g., School EFG has been so supportive through this journey with my child since 1st grade. They have always communicated with us, updated us, adjusted when something wasn't working. I couldn't be more appreciative for the staff for the extensive help.").

Growth and Exiting

Parental involvement in the process of exiting their child from a READ Plan has also declined compared to the previous year, with 62% of parents reporting that they were not involved—compared to 46% the previous year. Additionally, the percentage of parents reporting that their child's reading skills improved or improved greatly as a result of their READ Plan decreased. **Only 46% of parents reported that their child's READ Plan greatly or sufficiently improved their child's reading skills, a drop from 61% in the year prior.**

Parents' open-ended responses related to satisfaction with reading growth often included mention of the additional support children received. One parent stated, "The extra attention she has been receiving during school hours has greatly improved her reading ability, confidence, and enjoyment. I am thankful that the staff at XYZ Elementary identified her deficiency and acted quickly to

provide the regular support she needed to improve her reading." In contrast, parents who reported their child did not have the growth desired mentioned frustrations with a lack of support, identification, or general frustrations related to READ Plans. One parent highlighted her dissatisfaction with SRD identification, stating, "My child struggles with reading and unable to comprehend reading passages, but because she is not completely failing, she is not aided with her challenges and barely has a 'good enough' grade." This trend suggests the need for more effective communication and engagement strategies between schools and families.

Communication

In contrast to principals reporting clear processes for communicating with parents, parents routinely reported frustrations with communication related to SRD identification and READ Plans. When parents of children identified with SRDs were asked if they were well-informed about the supports available to their child, 14% strongly agreed they were well-informed, while 22% strongly disagreed. Additionally, out of the 271 parents who provided written responses on the inventory, over 70% expressed some sort of frustration with a perceived lack of communication. Parents reported their unhappiness about not being adequately informed about the initiation of READ Plans, the specific interventions involved, and their children's progress. Many parents also reported receiving minimal or no information during brief parent-teacher conferences. One summed up her frustrations by stating, "I don't even know what it is but it doesn't seem to be working with my daughter. I was told she'd be placed on it and that's about the only information I've received." **Together, parent frustrations with communication related to SRD identification and READ Plans further highlights the disconnect between school and parental perceptions.**

Key Takeaways

Using a body of evidence remains the most common method of identifying students with SRDs and exiting students from READ Plans; however, interim assessment scores continue to be highly aligned with SRD identification trends.

- More than 80% of all respondents to the inventories reported using a body of evidence approach to identify students with SRDs.
- Eight out of 12 site visit schools reported using a body of evidence approach.
- Over 90% of respondents indicated that interim assessments were a key indicator in their body of evidence.

There is continued confusion around identification, guidance, and support for students who have multiple support needs.

- Forty-six percent of district administrators were unclear on which plans (e.g., READ Plan, IEP) should be the primary guidance for supporting a student with multiple identifications.
- Fifty-six percent of districts reported having specific policies for the development, implementation, and monitoring of READ Plans for students with multiple identifications.
- Fifty-eight percent of coaches and 55% of teachers reported that they had received sufficient training and support to feel confident identifying SRDs in ELs.
- Forty-two percent of coaches and 45% of teachers reported that they did not have enough training and support to identify SRDs in students with specific learning disabilities.

There was a lack of consensus on which sources of evidence are most important for informing K–3 reading instruction.

- Sixty-eight percent of principals and 66% of coaches reported that READ Act interim assessments were very important for informing K–3 reading instruction; however, only 28% of teachers reported considering these assessments when making instructional decisions.
- Seventy-seven percent of teachers reported using non–READ Act data to inform instruction; however, only 41% of principals and 49% of coaches considered non–READ Act data very important for informing K–3 reading instruction.

- Only 33% of principals and 49% of coaches viewed READ Plans as very important for informing K–3 reading instruction; however, 73% of teachers reported using READ Plans to inform their instruction.

Parents expressed frustration over identification practices, READ Plans, ongoing student supports, and a general lack of communication.

- Parents reported frustrations related to the SRD identification process, including the lack of inclusion of dyslexia, issues with specific testing, and failures to involve parents.
- Of the 271 parents who provided written responses on the inventory, over 70% expressed frustration with a lack of communication.
- Approximately one-third of parents providing written responses to the inventory felt their child was not currently receiving adequate support.

5

Early Literacy Grant

- Site visit participants continued to indicate the work of Early Literacy Grant (ELG)-funded external literacy consultants are the single most impactful element of the ELG.
- Site visit participants reported significant successes that resulted from their ELGs.
- Cultivating strong buy-in from teachers was cited as critical to the success of the ELGs.
- The single greatest threat identified to the lasting success of ELGs continued to be a lack of sustainability due to staff turnover.

What Were Overall Perceptions of the Early Literacy Grant?

Consistent with findings from the evaluation team's 2022–23 evaluation, school and district leaders who participated in the 2023–24 site visits voiced **consistently strong, positive support for ELGs**. These leaders indicated the grants led directly to improved K–3 teacher instructional practices and improved student performance on literacy assessments. In particular, school leaders and teachers pointed to **the impact of the external consultants** on helping teachers understand how to use interim assessment data (using tools such as Acadience) to monitor student understanding of key literacy concepts, modify instruction appropriately to address any gaps in such understanding, and develop interventions to support students struggling to meet reading proficiency goals when needed.

Many school and district leaders continued to report that positive turnarounds in student achievement happened rapidly—sometimes during the first year of ELG activities. It should be noted that these student performance improvements were typically measured using beginning-, middle-, and end-of-year interim assessments, rather than using statewide student reading assessment scores. Educators use these interim assessments to continually monitor student progress; such monitoring was typically one of the key focus areas of teacher work with ELG-funded external literacy consultants.

What Themes Were Noted with Regard to the ELG Application Process?

The evaluation team noted several themes across the site visits that went through the ELG application process, including:

1. Involvement of school staff and teachers in the application process.
2. The advantages of meeting with an external literacy consultant.

3. The different level of challenges faced by small or rural schools.
4. The challenges associated with schools participating in consortium grant applications.
5. Other application challenges, such as saving grant application progress online and having to spread funds evenly over 4 years as opposed to varying the funding across years.

Involvement of School Staff and Teachers

The evaluation team noted that **involving school staff, including lead teachers, in the grant application process is an important and successful strategy** to ensure grant activities align well with school needs and to enhance the level of teacher and school leader buy-in to ELG activities after grants are awarded. Not all schools implemented this strategy during the application processes. Several schools whose applications were completed at the district level or by a central coordinating entity without school staff or teacher consultation reported challenges obtaining teacher buy-in during the first year of the grant. This was also true in cases where a school principal put together an application on their own, with limited or no input from the rest of their staff. In addition to staff buy-in once the grant was underway, a key consequence of such lack of consultation was a reduction in the effectiveness of grant activities, particularly during the first year.

Involving school staff, including lead teachers, in the grant application process was viewed as an important and successful strategy for the overall success of the ELG.

Evaluation team input suggests that district leaders, BOCES leaders, and school leaders should seek to involve school-level staff and teacher leaders from any participating school as early as possible in the grant application process in order to maximize implementation efficiency and “hit the ground running” during the first year of the grant.

During site visits, most school leaders expressed that they were aware that having an external consultant come into the school was an ELG requirement. Some described the grant's requirements to use the services of an external consultant as a driving factor in the school's decision to apply for a grant.

In a few cases, where schools were part of consortium applications, the school leaders were not aware of the external consultant requirement because they had limited or no participation in the grant application process. This also occurred at times when there was turnover in school leadership that took place after ELG application submission but before grant commencement. Valuable time could be lost as new leaders got "up to speed" on the grant's requirements; additionally, if there was not buy-in from the new leadership regarding, the work of the external consultant, that lack of buy-in filtered to teachers and made it more challenging for consultants to access teachers or to gain needed support to get teachers to agree to implement recommended changes in the classroom.

Schools found it advantageous to have either identified the external literacy consultant they wanted to work with prior to submitting their ELG application or to have spoken with and received guidance from such a consultant.

Meeting with an External Literacy Consultant

Feedback obtained through the site visits in 2023–24 indicated that schools found it **advantageous to have either identified the external literacy consultant they wanted to work with prior to submitting their ELG application**, or to have spoken with and received guidance from such a consultant prior to applying. Schools that had interviewed experienced consultants during the application process felt more confident and comfortable with the process and what to expect should they win the grant. However, not all principals or school leaders had this experience during the application process. For instance, only 35% of principals who responded to the evaluation's inventory agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they "had sufficient input into

the selection of the literacy consultant" for their school. Another 38% of respondents had a neutral response, and 28% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Teachers responding to the inventory reported even lower levels of input into the selection of consultants for their schools, with only 19% reporting agreement that they had sufficient input into consultant selection and 57% either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Small or Rural School Challenges

As in prior evaluation years, the overall difficulty in completing the ELG application was influenced by (1) whether the school or district had a person with prior grant application experience or a dedicated grant writer and (2) the size and rurality of the school or district. Districts or schools that had a staff person who had experience with ELG applications in the past reported fewer challenges in filling out the application. **Smaller and more remotely located schools reported that the application was challenging and onerous.** In some cases, these schools relied on a teacher or reading specialist to take on writing the grant on top of their other duties, which was a described as difficult. These schools relied primarily on CDE's grant website for guidance. They reported that the website was helpful, but that more support was needed during the application process.

Smaller schools and more remotely located schools reported that the ELG application was challenging and onerous.

Consortium Grant Applications

Several schools participating in this year's evaluation site visits were part of a consortium of other schools that participated under the same ELG. This included instances where a district applied for a consortium grant that encompassed multiple elementary schools, or a Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) applying on behalf of multiple schools within its jurisdiction, or a charter school network applying for a grant on behalf of multiple schools. Reported successes were that schools received highly valuable support in meeting the literacy needs of their K–3 students that they would not otherwise

have received and, in some cases, that the grant helped bring needed uniformity and consistency assessments, curriculums used, and the overall literacy instructional approach across schools.

Challenges reported with the consortium grants included that (1) schools often were unaware of the components of the grant prior to award, which could contribute to lower overall initial school leader and staff buy-in to the grant; (2) the grant's limited resources could be spread unevenly across schools, leaving some schools feeling as though the grant was not as effective as it could have been; and (3) leaders needed more information on how to apply for a grant across multiple campuses and assistance identifying an appropriate mechanism for disseminating funds across multiple schools.

Several schools reported challenges with the ELG online application not allowing them to save their progress. Others reported that it was challenging that the application required them to divide funding evenly across all years of the grant.

Other Application Challenges

In addition to the findings described above, several schools reported challenges with the ELG online application process not allowing them to save their progress and come back to it later, and that it was difficult to upload charts and graphs into the online application portal. This was consistent with challenges expressed by site visit participants in prior evaluation years.

Other site visit participants reported that the requirement to divide overall funding evenly across all years of the grant was limiting. Instead, these participants believed ELGs would be more effective if they allowed grant recipients to decide how to divide the overall sum of money across grant years. This would allow schools, for instance, to spend more in the first year of the grant to purchase needed curriculums, assessments, materials, and external consultant time, and then spend smaller amounts focused mainly on the external consultant's time in in later years of the grant.

Similarly, other sites indicated that having to maintain the same level of spending across years fails to allow schools to account for yearly increases in

salary and staff costs due to inflation and cost of living increases. Schools suggested that, at a minimum, CDE should provide guidance within grant application materials that advises applicants to plan for likely staffing cost increases over time, particularly for school-based literacy coaches, reading interventionists, and external literacy consultants.

How Were ELG Funds Deployed?

Site visits also explored how grantees utilized ELG funds. Consistent with prior year evaluation findings, the most commonly reported use of funds included:

1. Purchasing time for an **external literacy consultant** to visit ELG school sites on a monthly basis to support and coach K–3 teachers.
2. Paying for **additional school-level staff** to support K–3 literacy activities. These additional staff typically included half- or full-time reading coaches (either district- or school-based) to collaborate with the external literacy consultant, coach K–3 teachers, and reinforce the work of the consultants when they are not present; and full- or part-time reading interventionists to support K–3 teachers and work with students.
3. Purchasing **new core reading curriculums** for K–3 classrooms, as well as consumable materials and decodables designed to support implementation of the new curriculums.
4. Purchasing **supplemental literacy materials and intervention programs** for grades K–3 such as SIPPS and Heggerty. These intervention materials were used to support struggling readers in grades K–3 to ensure that more targeted support could be provided to these students in small groups.

Elements of the four items listed above appeared in most of the ELG sites the evaluation team visited. Districts reported that core curriculum purchases using ELG funds were guided by the state's Advisory List. Districts relied on this

list to ensure new curriculum purchases were research-based and approved by the state.

Additional feedback from site visits regarding the use of ELG funds included a request for **more flexibility in how funds can be allocated** across multiple grant years, concern with the requirement that funds be evenly dispersed across all years of the grant, and guidance and/or templates from CDE on how ELG funds might be spent over the course of the grant. Such guidance might be particularly helpful for small/rural schools with less experience implementing multiyear grants.

What Lessons Were Learned Regarding ELG External Literacy Consultants?

Input from participants across ELG sites clearly **confirmed that the external literacy consultant role is a lynchpin to successful ELG implementation**. In general, schools reported that bringing in an external literacy expert on a monthly basis to work with teachers was the single most impactful element of ELG-funded activities. This was true even when site visit participants reported that relationships with external consultants were strained or challenging at the outset of the grant or when schools felt the need to change consultants during the course of the grant.

What Were Key Facilitators of Consultant Success in Schools?

External literacy consultants were highly valued because teachers and school leaders typically perceived them as having significant specialized literacy expertise and an ability to provide schools a fresh perspective, a new focus on literacy, and personalized coaching on the use of data to inform instruction. There were numerous aspects of implementation at the school site that facilitated consultant success or that the evaluation team identified as potential best practices.

- **Meeting with school leaders and teachers in the summer** prior to the start of grant was an effective way for consultants to build relationships and prepare school staff for the expectations of the grant before the hectic start of the school year.
- Approaching **feedback to teachers in a constructive and positive way** focused on identifying and praising teacher strengths, rather than highlighting perceived weaknesses. This positive approach was particularly important during the first year of the grants, as it enabled consultants to establish and build trusting relationships with teachers, which are needed to encourage teachers to adopt new instructional approaches.

Providing positive feedback to teachers was particularly important during the first year of the grant, and enabled consultants to establish and build relationships of trust.

- Teachers and consultants expressed the importance of district and school leaders **making it clear the consultant's goal was not to evaluate teachers** and that this clarity was necessary to help consultants build ongoing, trusting relationships with teachers.
- **Providing a minimum of 2 days per month** of consultant support. Typically, site visit participants reported 2 days as necessary for the consultant to have enough time to visit all K–3 classrooms to observe instruction and model lesson delivery and meet with teachers outside of class. Consultants also used time during the 2 days to meet with school leaders and school-based reading coaches and interventionists to help ensure all levels of staff were on the same page.
- **Modeling instruction** was viewed as an important component of the consultants' work with teachers. Modeling lesson delivery not only provide teachers with a live demonstration of how to implement changes to their instruction, but also demonstrates to teachers that a consultant understands the unique challenges faced by students.

- **Supporting all teachers and staff in the school** enhanced external consultant effectiveness. Excluding teachers in grades 4–5 within a school was viewed by site visit participants as weakening overall teacher buy-in to the consultant's work since teachers frequently collaborate across grade levels. Activities siloed to grades K–3 weakens the chances of teachers across grades using consistent terminology and literacy instruction approaches. Site visit participants viewed this as particularly important for schools implementing a new K–5 literacy curriculum. Similarly, consultants expressed the importance of extending their support as much as feasible to include paraprofessionals, special education teachers, EL teachers, and other school staff. Consultants agreed that "the strongest implementing ELG schools were ones that found ways to include all educators."

> *"The strongest implementing ELG schools were ones that found ways to include all educators."*
> *Consultant A*

- Consultants indicated that **accepting the school or district's choice of literacy curriculum** and doing their best to promote the strengths of the curriculum and to support teachers working with existing materials was critical to success. Maintaining positivity was particularly important when a consultant personally favored a different program. As one consultant noted, "The magic is not in the program, it's in the teaching."
- **Having school leaders personally participate in meetings** with the consultant each month was one of the clearer indicators that a school would have a successful ELG experience, according to external consultants. They viewed this level of engagement as critical, as it demonstrated to teachers a high level of school leader buy-in to the grant, important because the grant is typically

> *Having school leaders personally participate in meetings with the consultant each month was one of the clearer indicators that a school would have a successful ELG experience.*

just one of many interventions that teachers must prioritize each school year.

The above facilitators were considered key to creating a school atmosphere conducive to consultant success. However, the content of consultant support was reported to be fairly consistent across school sites. This included a common emphasis placed on helping teachers utilize interim reading assessments (typically Acadience). These assessments were used to continually measure student learning over the course of each school year. The resulting data informed literacy instruction and the design of specific interventions for struggling readers, including students placed on READ Plans.

Another consistent aspect of grant implementation across sites was the important role played by in-school reading coaches. Teachers and school leaders consistently reported that these staff—whose positions were often made possible because of ELG funds—played a critical role in working with external consultants to understand the nature of support provided and help ensure that consultant coaching was reinforced consistently between consultant visits.

Data gathered through the evaluation's inventory of reading coaches in ELG schools highlighted the important role of the external consultants in collaborating with and supporting these in-school coaches. For instance, 70% of the coaches responding to the inventory indicated that they had a strong working relationship with their school's consultant, and nearly two-thirds either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the statement that "the literacy consultant contributed to positive changes" in their abilities as coaches.

Potential Added CDE Supports for External Consultants

The evaluation team engaged in data gathering around the topic of supports that facilitated the work of external literacy consultants. The team gathered these data from interviews with school leaders and the external consultants. Themes that emerged from this data included:

- Desire for access to additional **training on the consultant's expected role** within the ELG framework and how this role might be look different in urban or rural settings. Such training was viewed as particularly necessary for new consultants with no prior experience working with ELG schools. They indicated training could include expectations around content and frequency of consultant visits and any expected accountability measures the state would use to gauge consultant performance or effectiveness.
- Value of having **CDE provide clear information to each ELG school leader** as soon as possible after grant award to ensure leaders are aware of ELG expectations. This could include a **project launch checklist** outlining (1) expected school leader support and collaboration with external consultants; (2) the appropriate role of the consultant, including conducting classroom visits and walkthroughs; (3) how leaders are expected to communicate to teachers about grant requirements and working with external consultants; (4) school plans to continue grant activities in the event of school leadership changes; (5) the expectation that daily school schedules are designed to include a minimum of 90 minutes dedicated to literacy instruction each day; and (6) that schools are free to change consultants at any time during the course of the grant if the relationship is not working as planned.
- The absence of clear guidance from the state sometimes puts consultants in the difficult position of showing up to ELG schools that are unprepared to support key requirements, including having **sufficient time for literacy built into their daily schedules** and ensuring teachers understand the purpose of the grant. As one consultant indicated: "The biggest challenge I've experienced as a consultant is when no one has done any sense making so teachers understand why the grant is happening and what the expectations are."

- Although both schools and external consultants use the CDE website as a resource for information on ELG-related expectations, some participants reported **the website does not always have the most up-to-date information**, and that it needs to be reviewed at least annually and updated to ensure information is correct each program year.
- The process for **publishing each year's approved list of external consultants** would ideally take place during the fall of each school year, according to focus group input. This would allow schools starting their ELGs the following school year to begin meeting with and interviewing consultants in advance and start working with the selected consultant in the summer prior to the first year of the grant.
- Ensuring **ELG funds are provided to schools as early as possible** (preferably in the fall before the first school year of implementation) would allow school and district leaders needed time to recruit, meet with, and hire external consultants, and recruit and hire new reading coaches or interventionist positions paid for through the grants.
- A need for Colorado to **streamline the existing consultant application process**. Consultants indicated they currently are asked to reapply for approval every other year, and that this process is time-consuming and onerous. Consultants believed that, once they are approved, they should only have to reapply every 3 years as long as they have not had complaints or issues working with their existing schools. Consultants also requested that CDE streamline the process for reapplying once a consultant or consulting firm has passed the more stringent initial approval process.

The process for publishing each year's approved list of external consultants would optimally take place during the fall of each school year, according to focus group input.

Site visit participants and consultants viewed the above supports as potential avenues to further enhance the work of external consultants in schools

and the effectiveness of ELGs in general. Consultants universally expressed agreement with the fact CDE has been highly supportive in implementing ELGs and recognized that CDE staff are charged with implementing numerous education programs across the state and are often "stretched thin" in their ability to provide additional support to implement programs.

Consultants also universally expressed an appreciation for the opportunity to use their expertise to support teachers in delivering literacy instruction, and that this type of support is critically needed across the state.

What Were Other Successes Associated with ELGs?

Consistent with prior year evaluation findings, school and district leaders typically identified bringing in an external literacy consultant on a monthly basis to work with teachers as the single most impactful element of ELG-funded activities. Such external consultants were highly valued because they brought fresh perspectives and a high degree of credibility into schools, and they were routinely identified as the driving force behind needed changes to instructional practices and subsequent successes in raising student reading performance.

Another theme that has emerged consistently across site visits was the high value and positive impact associated with using ELG funds to pay for reading coaches and interventionists to work in schools. Site visit participants reported that these personnel served a crucial role in reinforcing on a day-to-day basis the messages received during monthly visits from external consultants. These monthly visits needed continual support from personnel in schools, and site visit participants indicated ELG funding made that possible.

In terms of student performance, **school leaders continued to credit ELGs and the work of external consultants for significant student literacy**

School leaders continue to credit ELGs and the work of external consultants for significant student literacy performance improvements. In some cases, leaders also reported improvements in student math and science performance.

performance improvements. In some cases, school leaders reported that **math and science scores also improved**. These leaders attributed such cross-subject growth to an overall elevation in teacher practice.

The speed with which performance improvements reportedly occurred varied from site to site. Changes in student performance were slower in schools that struggled to establish a strong working relationship with their external consultant at the start of the grant. In cases where strong relationships were reported with the external consultant at the start of the grant, positive changes in student performance were reported as rapidly as by the middle of a school year and continued throughout the course of the grant.

One site reported that by the end of Year 2, they had reduced by 50% the number of students scoring significantly below grade level on the Acadience assessment and increased the number of students who achieved grade-level mastery. Other sites reported observing performance improvements during the end of the first semester of grant implementation.

Notably, performance improvements were typically expressed in terms of student performance on beginning-, middle-, and end-of-year interim assessments (such as the Acadience assessment) rather than on annual statewide reading assessments. The evaluation team noted that this was not surprising, since external consultant work typically focused on helping teachers use interim assessments to measure student learning and design interventions that directly addressed student challenges.

Further evaluation work is needed to understand the linkages or disconnects between student performance on interim assessments versus student performance on Colorado's statewide assessments. This is particularly important since policymakers often focus attention on statewide assessment performance.

Other key impacts that school and district leaders specifically attributed to ELG participation included:

- **Reductions in teacher turnover**. These were attributed to teachers feeling an increased sense of efficacy in their jobs as a result of ELG-provided supports and coaching.
- **Increased teacher collaboration**. School leaders and consultants reported that teacher collaboration within and across grade levels was improved due to the development of a common "language" with respect to literacy goals and the use of data to guide instruction. Increased collaboration was often reported to occur not just between K–3 classroom teachers, but between teachers in grades 4–5 as well as between paraprofessionals, reading coaches, and other school staff.

Performance improvements were typically expressed in terms of interim assessments rather than performance on statewide reading assessments. Further evaluation is needed to understand the linkages or disconnects between student performance on interim and statewide assessments.

- **Increased teacher proficiency using data to inform instruction and hold themselves accountable** for student performance. ELGs helped teachers learn to use interim reading assessments to identify students with low reading performance and monitor these students to ensure they saw a year's worth of growth. Again, some leaders pointed to increased proficiency in using data to inform instruction as the basis for improvements not only in student reading scores, but math and science as well.
- Improved educator effectiveness **placing students into small, targeted groups** for literacy instruction.
- Improved **teacher classroom management** practices as a result of consultant support and coaching.
- Enhanced **teacher attitudes and beliefs** around the value of using literacy assessment data to inform instruction.

- Increased **success implementing new, schoolwide literacy curriculums** with consistency and fidelity across classrooms.

School or district leaders directly attributed each of the successes listed above to the ELG.

What Were Other Challenges to ELG Success?

Site visit participants continue to report that finding a consultant with the right fit for the school was critical, and that certain challenges could arise in this process. In some cases, districts or schools faced challenges in finding an external consultant with compatible instructional and curricular philosophies. In other cases, a change in the external consultant during the first year due to illness or other factors caused some lost time at the beginning of a school's grant while they ensured the new consultant aligned with school or district culture and priorities. As in prior years, a small number of sites indicated that, even when there was a strong fit with an external consultant, over time teachers could experience "consultant fatigue" and bringing in a fresh consultant when this occurs can be beneficial.

School staff identified the greatest threat to sustainability of ELG impacts as teacher turnover and the resulting loss of institutional knowledge gained through ELG activities. They also cited loss of funding to support in-school reading coaches after an ELG's end as a critical threat to the sustainability of grant results.

The greatest threat to sustainability of ELG impacts was teacher and school leader turnover. Loss of funding to support in-school reading coaches after ELGs end was also cited as a critical threat to the sustainability of grant results.

External literacy consultants identified school leader turnover as the most important threat to sustaining grant impacts. Consultants believed that school leader support in implementing grant priorities was critical and that plans should be in place to support and sustain the work of the grants through leadership changes.

Other identified challenges to ELG success included some veteran teachers' resistance to working with external consultants or adopting new approaches to literacy instruction in their classrooms and current substitute teacher shortages that make it difficult to pull teachers out of the classroom as a group for PD or to meet with external coaches.

Key Takeaways

Site visit participants continue to indicate the work of the ELG-funded external literacy consultants as the single most impactful element of the ELG. Factors that promote consultant success include:

- Consultants placing an emphasis on providing positive, constructive feedback for teachers, particularly early in the grant to build trust and strong working relationships.
- Consultants meeting with teachers and school leaders in the summer to plan activities prior to the start of the grant.
- Consultants having a minimum of 2 days per month in a school to ensure there is time to observe classrooms, provide feedback, and model instruction.
- Ensuring new consultants have access to sufficient training on their expected roles in schools and how this role can differ in urban or rural settings.

Site visit participants reported significant successes that resulted from their ELGs, including:

- Student performance improvements on literacy assessments, typically expressed in terms of performance on beginning-, middle-, and end-of-year interim assessments rather than on annual statewide reading assessments.
- Reductions in teacher turnover, attributed to teachers feeling an increased sense of efficacy.
- Increased teacher proficiency using data to inform instruction, particularly in using interim assessments to monitor student performance.
- Improved teacher classroom management and use of small group instruction.

Cultivating and promoting strong buy-in from school leaders and teachers was cited by site visits participants as critical to the success of ELGs. Key ways to promote such buy-in include:

- Involving school staff, including lead teachers, in the grant application process to ensure grant activities align well with school needs.
- For district or school consortium applicants, ensuring school leaders are involved in the grant application process and that they have spoken with or identified the external literacy consultant they want to work with during the process.
- School leaders meeting with consultants monthly during the grant to stay apprised of consultant work and demonstrate strong school leader participation in grant activities.

Sustainability of grant impacts remains a challenge.

- The single greatest threat to the lasting success of ELGs is teacher turnover.
- School leader turnover can also negatively affect sustainability of grant impacts. Advance succession planning can help sustain ELG impacts through leadership changes.
- Use of ELG funds to pay for in-school reading coaches was reported to be highly impactful since these coaches work with external consultants and provide teachers with ongoing support when the consultant is not in the building. Loss of funding to support in-school coaches after the end of an ELG was cited as a critical threat to the sustainability of grant results.

Per-Pupil Funding

6

- District leaders reported that making decisions around READ Act per-pupil spending is a collaborative process; district literacy leaders, school principals, and school literacy coaches have the most influence over these decisions.
- READ Act per-pupil funds are most frequently spent on purchasing instructional programs and paying salaries of reading coaches.
- Schools and LEPs reported receiving insufficient funding and expressed a need for additional staff, instructional programs and materials, and supports for 4th- and 5th-grade students with reading challenges.
- Site visit and LEP inventory participants reported using additional funding streams to implement READ Act services to students.

Background on READ Act Per-Pupil Funding

Annually, READ Act per-pupil intervention funds are allocated to LEPs based on the number of eligible students in the LEP (i.e., K–3 students who were identified with SRDs and as receiving instructional services pursuant to READ Plans in the previous year in public schools operated by the LEP). Currently, the statute allows 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, including services provided by a reading interventionist;
- providing technology, including software, on the Advisory List, which may include PD for use of technology;
- purchasing the services of a reading specialist or reading interventionist from a BOCES;
- purchasing tutoring services focused on increasing students' foundational reading skills; and
- providing PD programming to support K–3 educators in teaching reading.

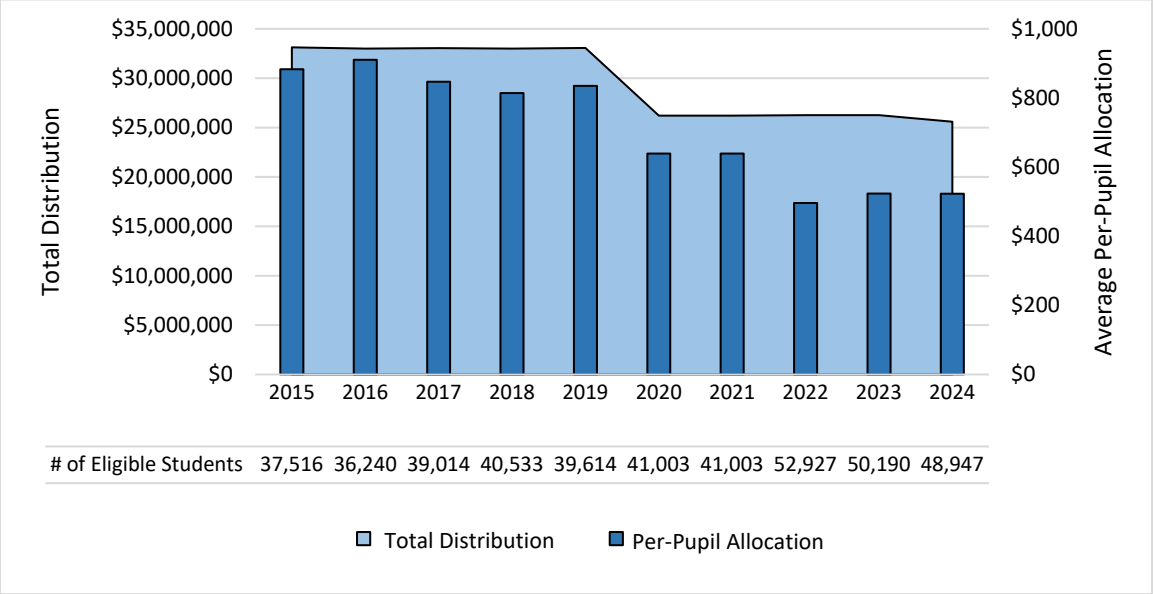
The total amount of READ Act per-pupil intervention funds provided to LEPs decreased significantly after the passage of SB19-199 in 2019. As a result of that legislation, READ intervention funds were redirected to the external program evaluation, state-provided teacher training, public information campaign, and ELG program, thereby reducing the per-pupil distribution to districts (CDE, 2024).[12] During the same period, the number of eligible students increased from

[12] Colorado Department of Education. (2024, April 2). READ budget submissions. https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/read-budget-submissions.

37,516 students in the 2014–2015 school year to 48,947 students in the 2023–2024 school year (Exhibit 26.).

Due to limitations of READ Act per-pupil funding, LEPs and schools used other funding streams and investments to implement READ Act requirements. These are outlined later in this chapter.

Exhibit 26. Changes in READ Act Funding Over Time



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

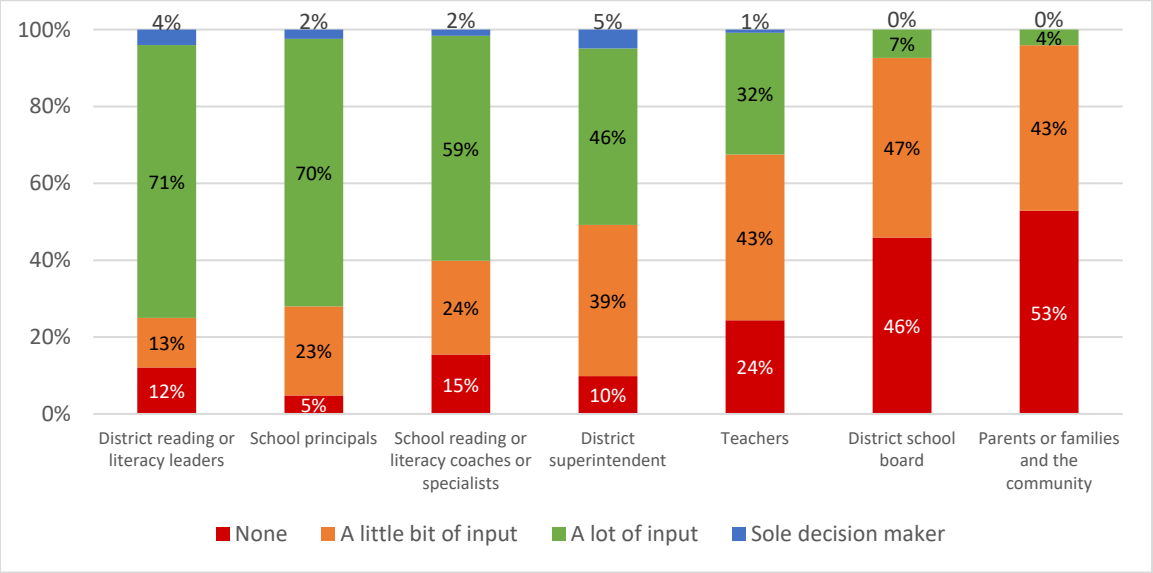
Who Was Included in Decisions about READ Act Per-Pupil Spending?

According to LEP inventory respondents, **making decisions about how READ Act per-pupil funding is spent is a collaborative process**. Similar to last year, only 8% of district administrators reported that any entity is the sole decision maker in determining how these funds should be spent (Exhibit 27).

However, some district and school decision makers were reported as having more input than others when making decisions about READ Act per-pupil spending. **District leaders reported that district reading or literacy leaders,**

school principals, and school reading or literacy coaches and specialists generally had the most input when making decisions about per-pupil spending, with over 60% of administrators reporting that district literacy leaders, principals, and school literacy coaches had a lot of input or were the sole decision makers (Exhibit 27). District superintendents and teachers were also reported as having at least some input, while district school boards and parents or families and the community were reported as having the least input, with about half of administrators reporting that these two groups had no input regarding per-pupil spending decisions. District administrators provided similar responses in 2022–23, with some minor variation. For example, 16% of administrators reported in 2022–23 that the district superintendent had no input regarding decisions around READ Act spending; however, this dropped to 10% in the 2023–24 inventory. Additionally, administrators felt that all groups had more opportunities for input in 2023–24 compared to the previous year.

Exhibit 27. Input on Decisions about READ Act Per-Pupil Spending



Principals and literacy coaches were also asked for their perspectives on the extent to which they had input over how READ Act per-pupil funds were spent in their school. As was the case in 2021–22 their opinions about the level

of input they had differed markedly from opinions of district administrator respondents. In other words, **different inventory respondents saw their level of input around READ Act per-pupil spending differently**. Although only 5% of district administrators reported that principals had no input around decisions about per-pupil spending, 30% of principals reported that they had no input. In contrast, 9% of principals reported that they were the sole decision maker, while only 2% of district administrators reported that principals were the sole decision maker. Similarly, while less than one-sixth (15%) of district administrators reported that school-level literacy coaches had no input around these spending decisions, over half (55%) of coaches reported having no input. Although the reports from district administrators, principals, and coaches around their levels of input still differ significantly, the differences are noticeably smaller when compared to the previous year.

How Were Per-Pupil Funds Spent?

According to principal inventory respondents, per-pupil funding was spent on numerous resources to meet READ Act implementation requirements. **READ Act funds were most frequently used to purchase K–3 core, supplemental, or intervention instructional programs on the Advisory List and to pay the salaries of reading coaches** (Exhibit 28), with 54% and 39% of principal respondents, respectively, reporting these uses. Principals also reported using funds to provide one-on-one or small group tutoring to students identified with SRDs (24%), purchase K–3 interim or diagnostic and summative assessments on the Approved list of assessments (24%), and purchase K–3 PD programs approved by CDE for professional development (18%). Few principals reported using these funds to purchase external consultant services to provide teacher PD or to purchase instructional programs, assessments, or PD programs **not** on their respective advisory lists. **Finally, 13 principals (10%) reported not being aware of how READ Act funds were spent in their school.**

Exhibit 28. School Principals Most Likely to Use Funds for READ Act–Approved Instructional Programs and Reading Coach Salaries

READ Act Funding Use	Percentage of Principal Responses (Frequency)
Purchase of K–3 core, supplemental, or intervention instructional programs on the READ Act Advisory List of Instructional Programming	54% (*n* = 73)
Paying part or all of the salary for (a) reading coach(es)	39% (*n* = 53)
Purchase of K–3 interim or diagnostic and summative assessments on the Approved list for assessments	24% (*n* = 32)
Providing one-on-one or small group tutoring to students identified with SRDs	24% (*n* = 32)
Purchase of K–3 PD programs on the READ Act Advisory List of Professional Development	18% (*n* = 25)
Purchasing external consultant services to provide teacher PD	8% (*n* = 11)
Purchase of K–3 core, supplemental, or intervention instructional programs not on the READ Act Advisory List of Instructional Programming	4% (*n* = 6)
Purchase of K–3 PD programs not on the READ Act Advisory List of Professional Development	1% (*n* = 2)
Purchase of K–3 interim or diagnostic and summative assessments not on the Approved list for assessments	0.7% (*n* = 1)

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

There were some differences between the use of READ Act per-pupil funding in the 2023–24 school year and in 2022–23. Most notably, **in 2023–24, principals more frequently reported purchasing instructional programs, assessments, and PD programs on their respective Advisory lists and less frequently reported purchasing these materials and resources if they were not on the lists**. For example, in 2022–23, 20% of principals reported purchasing core, supplemental, or intervention materials or programs not on their respective Advisory lists, while only 4% reported doing so in 2023–24. Additionally, in 2022–23, 51% of principals reported using READ Act funds to pay part or all of the salary for reading coaches, compared to 39% in 2023–24.

Site visit participants also reported multiples uses of READ Act funding. Most frequently, educators reported using this funding to purchase core reading

instructional programs on the Advisory List (seven of the 12 LEP site visits) and/or purchase or provide targeted, evidence- or scientifically based intervention services (11 sites). Typically, "purchase" of the intervention services referred to using the funds to pay part or all of the salary of a reading interventionist. According to the LEP site visits, funds were less frequently used for providing technology from the Advisory List (or PD for the use of technology) or providing PD programming to support K–3 educators in teaching reading—four sites each reported these uses. Additionally, funds were used to operate a summer school literacy program (two sites), purchase the services of a reading specialist/interventionist from a BOCES (two sites), and purchase tutoring services (one site).[13]

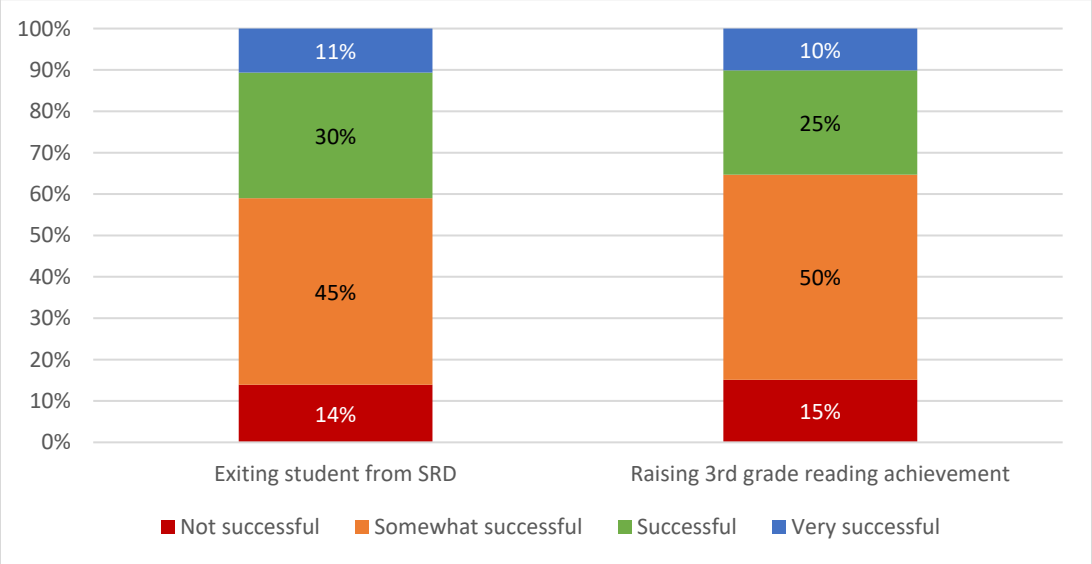
How did Per-Pupil Funds Contribute to Success in Reading?

In discussing the role of READ Act per-pupil funds in contributing to their school's success around reading, LEP site visit participants emphasized the usefulness of hiring additional staff such as reading specialists/interventionists (eight sites) and purchasing instructional and intervention programs or resources (six sites). Some site visit participants also mentioned the usefulness of having funding to pay for PD resources, such as Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) or Orton-Gillingham training (two sites), and to purchase technology to acquire additional data on students (one site). Participants noted that these PD resources helped address curriculum and student needs across the district, improving consistency in the use of instructional programs, providing teachers with strategies to use during the classroom, helping teachers become more data driven and have greater access to progress-monitoring tools, and helping improve the reading skills of students.

[13] The evaluation intended to use READ Act budget submission data to more accurately report uses of READ Act funds; however, there were concerns regarding the reliability of the current data.

In the LEP inventory, district administrators also reported on the success of READ Act per-pupil funding in exiting students identified with SRDs off that status and in raising 3rd-grade reading achievement levels. District administrators provided similar responses in discussing the success of per-pupil funds in achieving these two READ Act goals (Exhibit 29). **Only about 10% of administrators reported that per-pupil funding was "very successful" in achieving these READ Act goals; 25% to 30% reported that the funding was "successful," and 45% to 50% reported that it was only "somewhat successful."** Administrators typically rated school grade-level teams, school PLCs, the mandated PD for instructional staff (i.e., 45-hour requirement), and CDE-recommended or -approved instructional materials as being more successful in achieving these goals. These findings somewhat mirror the findings from 2022–23; however, fewer district administrators reported in 2023–24 that the per-pupil funds were successful or very successful in achieving either of these goals. While 46% of administrators reported in 2022–23 that per-pupil funds were successful or very successful in exiting students identified with SRDs off that status, only 41% reported that this year (i.e., a 5% decrease). Similarly, while 44% of administrators reported in 2022–23 that per-pupil funds were successful or very successful in raising 3rd-grade reading achievement levels, only 35% reported that this year (i.e., a 9% decrease).

Exhibit 29. Administrator Reports of Per-Pupil Funds' Success With Student Reading Levels



What Were the Challenges Associated with READ Act Per-Pupil Funding?

Site visit participants cited a number of challenges in using READ Act per-pupil funds in their school. Most frequently, **site visit participants expressed that funding was insufficient to fully implement expectations of the READ Act and take steps to meet the needs of students with reading difficulties** (10 of 12 site visits), such as acquiring new reading instructional materials and hiring additional staff to provide interventions to students. Additional challenges included a lack of sustainability in funding (due to loss of funds when students exit from READ Plans), timing of funding determination and delivery, inflexibility of funds, and onerous budget revision processes.

In addition to these challenges, participants noted several needs, many of which could be alleviated by changes in the amount and allowable uses of per-pupil funding. Most frequently, **participants reported the need for additional staff (and funding for staff), particularly interventionists to work with students with READ Plans and address each students' needs, and greater**

ability to purchase and access additional reading and literacy materials and resources for teachers and students (e.g., hands-on decodables and rich, engaging, and diverse stories). Some participants also cited the need for additional resources to help with identification of students with reading difficulties (even prior to an SRD identification), engage parents and families in literacy activities, and provide additional supports for students beyond 3rd grade, specifically for those retaining READ Plans. These challenges and concerns were also expressed in previous site visit feedback.

Other Funding Streams or Investments for READ Act Purposes

Given the reported limitations in funding, **site visit and LEP inventory participants reported using additional funding streams to implement READ Act services for students**. These typically included general school funds (nine sites), general district funds (seven sites), ESSER funds (five sites), Title I funds (four sites), ELAT funds (two sites), and funding from the superintendent's budget (two sites). Other funding sources included Title II, ELG, Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD), and Empowering Action for School Improvement (EASI). This use of multiple funding sources was further reflected in the LEP inventory, with 46% of district administrators reporting that they used funding related to the COVID-19 pandemic (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security [CARES], ESSER, Governor's Emergency Education Relief [GEER], or Coronavirus Relief Fund [CRF]) on literacy-related activities for K–3 students. **However, the percentage of district administrators reporting using COVID-related funding decreased from 2022–23 (57% to 46%).**

Site visit participants and district leaders reported that these additional funding streams or investments were typically used to purchase core instructional materials, assessments, and intervention programs and materials; hire additional literacy-related staff (e.g., reading coaches, specialists, or interventionists; instructional support staff; classroom aides); finance tutoring services; fund

additional PD; and purchase reading materials for 4th- and 5th-grade students in need of support. Although READ Act funding is designed to supplement other LEP funds, site visit participants and district leaders suggested that non–READ Act funding is needed to implement all aspects of the READ Act effectively and sufficiently.

Key Takeaways

District leaders reported that making decisions around READ Act per-pupil spending is a collaborative process and that district literacy leaders, school principals, and school literacy coaches have the most influence over these decisions.

- Inventory respondents had varied opinions on their levels of input around per-pupil spending—5% of district administrators reported that principals had no input, while 30% of principals reported this; 15% of administrators reported that school literacy coaches had no input, while more than 55% of coaches reported this.

READ Act per-pupil funds are most frequently spent on purchasing instructional programs and paying the salaries of reading coaches.

- Compared to 2022–23, principals more frequently reported purchasing instructional programs, assessments, and PD programs on their respective Advisory lists and less frequently reported purchasing materials not on the Advisory lists.
- 10% of principals reported not being aware of how READ Act funds were spent in their school.
- Administrators typically rated school grade-level teams, school PLCs, the mandated PD for instructional staff, and CDE-recommended or -approved instructional materials as being more successful than per-pupil funding in exiting students identified with SRDs off that status and in raising 3rd-grade reading achievement levels.

Schools and LEPs reported receiving insufficient funding and expressed a need for additional staff, instructional programs and materials, and supports for 4th- and 5th-grade students with reading challenges.

- Additional challenges included a lack of sustainability in funding, timing of determination of and delivery of funding, inflexibility of funds, and onerous budget revision processes.

Site visit and LEP inventory participants reported using additional funding streams to implement READ Act services for students.

- Other funding streams most frequently included general school and/or district funds, ESSER funds, and Title I funds.
- 46% of district administrators reported that they used funding related to the COVID-19 pandemic on literacy-related activities for K–3 students. This was a decrease of 11% from 2022–23.

7

Student Outcomes

– SRD and READ Plan Status

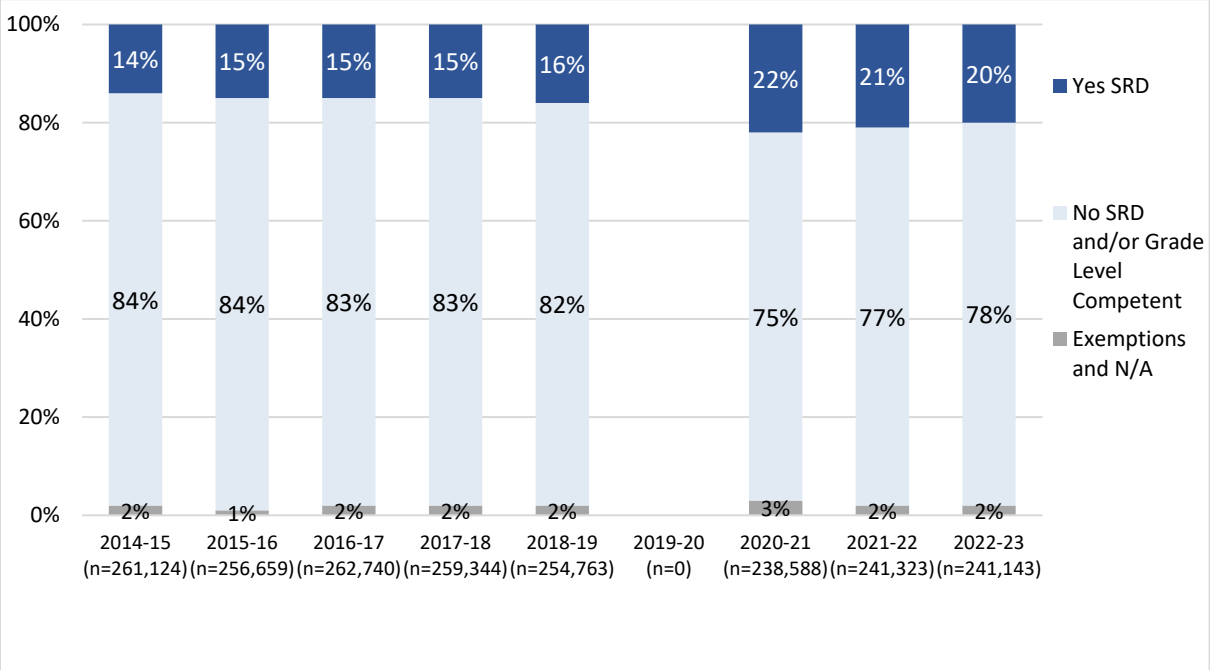
- Overall, the number of students identified with SRDs has been slowly decreasing since the end of the most acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Students eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch, EL students, special education students, students absent 10% or more of the days enrolled during the school year, and non-White students were more likely than their peers not in those groups to be identified with SRDs; however, some of the variation between these subgroups can be explained by other student and school-level characteristics.
- SRD identification in 2021–22 appears to have had no impact on student interim assessment performance in 2022–23.

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

How Has the Percentage of Students Identified With SRDs Changed Over Time?

The total number of students assessed for and identified with SRDs (i.e., yes, no, or exempt) in 2023 remained steady from 2022, going from 241,323 students to 241,143, which is still approximately 13,000 fewer students than in spring 2019 (SRD determinations were not reported during the 2019–20 school year due to a statewide assessment pause during the COVID-19 pandemic). Following the onset of the pandemic, the percentage of students identified with SRDs increased from 16% in 2018–19 to 22% in 2020–21. **Although the percentage of students identified with SRDs remains above the 16% identified in 2019, there has been a slight decrease since the 2020–21 school year** (Exhibit 30).

Exhibit 30. Students Identified with SRDS Before and After COVID-19 Pandemic



How Do Students Move between SRD Statuses from One Year to the Next?

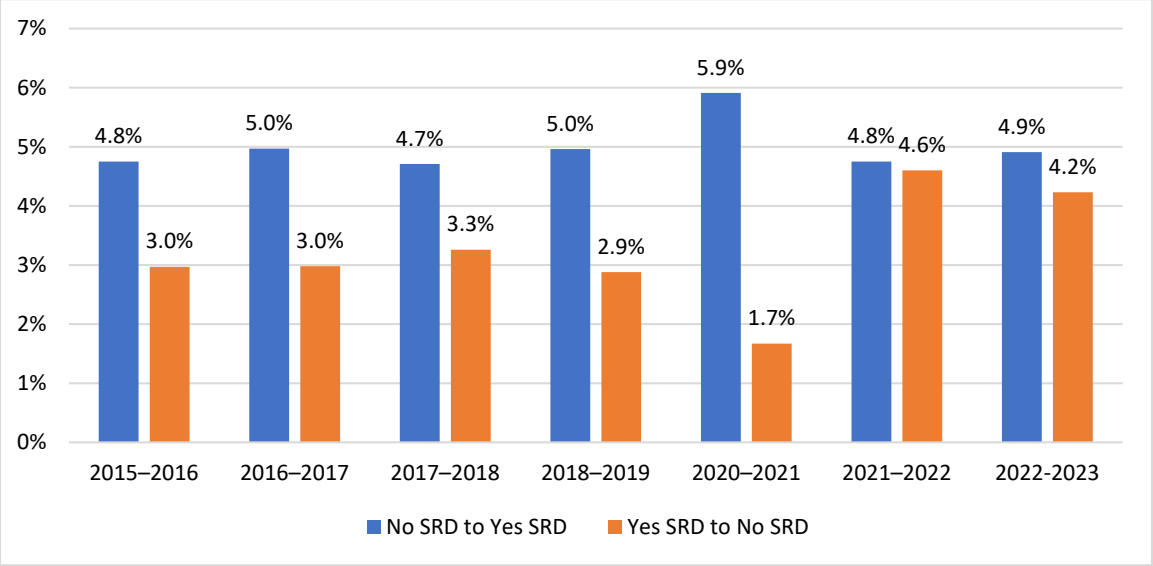
As SRD identification rates have not changed substantially within the last 3 years, looking at movement between SRD identification gives a more nuanced picture of student pathways. Students' SRD statuses can be broadly categorized into three categories: being identified with an SRD, not being identified with an SRD, or being exempt from SRD classification. Students move between these statuses year to year based on their classifications, which are partially guided by their interim assessment scores during the spring semester.

Prior to the 2020–21 academic year, about 5% of students per year went from not being identified with an SRD to being identified with an SRD in the following year, while approximately 2.9% to 3.3% of students went from being identified with an SRD to no longer being identified with an SRD (Exhibit 31). In 2020–21 (i.e., after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic), the rates noticeably

changed. More students than usual were identified with SRDs after not being identified as such previously (5.9%) and fewer students were exited from SRD identification (1.7%). However, the trend observed in 2020–21 reversed in 2021–22. The percentage of students who went from being not being identified with an SRD to being identified with an SRD dropped from 5.9% to 4.7%, while nearly three times as many students went from being identified with an SRD to no longer being identified as such (1.7% to 4.6%).

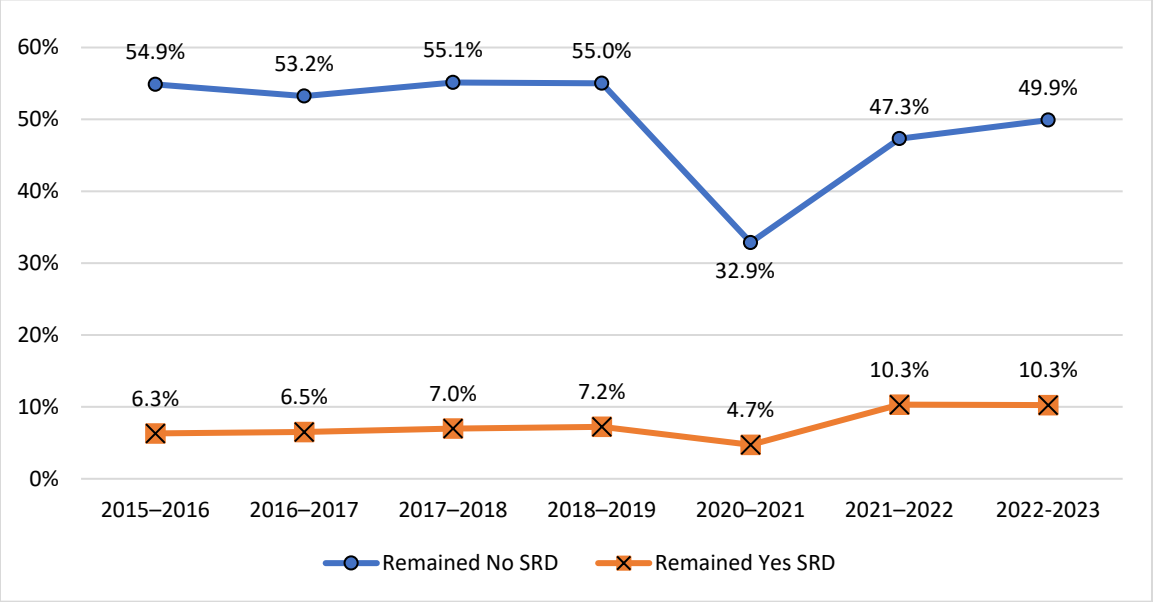
The changes from 2022 to 2023 were relatively minor, indicating that levels may be reaching a new equilibrium after the most acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic (Exhibit 31). From 2021–22 to 2022–23, the number of students who went from not being identified with an SRD to being identified with an SRD was 11,831 (4.9%), commensurate with the number from 2020–21 to 2021–22: 11,453 (4.7%). Additionally, only slightly fewer students exited SRD identification from 2022 to 2023, 10,208 (4.2%) compared to the previous year, when 11,112 students (4.6%) did so.

Exhibit 31. Rates from No SRD to SRD and from SRD to No SRD in 2023 Similar to Rates in 2022



While the SRD identification of some students might change from one year to the next, **most students retain their SRD identification from the previous year** (Exhibit 32). SRD status retention rates in 2023 were approximately the same as the rates in 2022. The percentage of students who continued to not be identified with an SRD rose marginally from 47.3% in 2021–22 to 49.9% in 2022–23, still slightly below pre-pandemic percentages (about 53% to 55%). Additionally, the number of students who continued to be identified with an SRD in 2022-23 was nearly identical to 2021-22, 10.3% in both school years.

Exhibit 32. Most Students Retain SRD Statuses from One Year to the Next



What Are SRD Movement Trends for English Learners and Students with Disabilities?

Rates of movement between SRD identifications differ by student identity. English learners (ELs) and students with disabilities experienced higher rates of movement between SRD identifications than their peers—that is, these students were more likely to go from being not being identified with SRDs being identified with SRDs in the following year and were also more likely to be exited from being identified with SRDs to either not being identified with SRDs or to an exemption status. This finding remains consistent across years (Exhibit 33).

Exhibit 33. ELs, Students with IEPs, and Students with Disabilities Experienced Higher Rates of Movement between SRD Designations than Peers

	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023
All Students							
No SRD to Yes SRD	4.8%	5.0%	4.7%	5.0%	5.9%	4.8%	4.9%
Yes SRD to No SRD	3.0%	3.0%	3.3%	2.9%	1.7%	4.6%	4.2%
English Learners							
No SRD to Yes SRD	7.8%	7.6%	7.4%	7.5%	9.3%	6.3%	6.4%
Yes SRD to No SRD	5.2%	5.3%	5.6%	4.7%	2.7%	7.1%	6.5%
Students with IEPs							
No SRD to Yes SRD	9.0%	9.6%	8.8%	8.9%	10.7%	7.2%	7.5%
Yes SRD to No SRD	5.3%	5.6%	6.0%	5.5%	3.0%	6.2%	6.2%
Students with Disabilities							
No SRD to Yes SRD	8.4%	9.0%	8.2%	8.3%	9.7%	7.2%	7.3%
Yes SRD to No SRD	5.6%	6.0%	6.5%	5.8%	3.4%	6.6%	6.9%

SRD Movement Trends by Race

SRD identification and movement patterns also vary by student race. Overall, a higher percentage of non-White students (excluding Asian students) are reclassified as being identified or not identified with SRDs each year than their White peers (Exhibit 34). Although being identified with an SRD may increase the supports given to a student, a higher percentage of students belonging to a particular racial group moving between designations (disproportionate to their percentage of enrollment) may indicate that supports are still not equally targeted, effective, or consistent across students of different races.

Exhibit 34. Non-White Students Experienced Higher Rates of Movement between SRD Designations than Peers

	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023
Asian							
No SRD to Yes SRD	2.6%	3.0%	2.9%	2.5%	3.0%	2.9%	2.5%
Yes SRD to No SRD	2.5%	2.6%	3.2%	2.9%	1.6%	3.6%	3.5%
American Indian/Native Alaskan							
No SRD to Yes SRD	6.8%	7.5%	6.3%	8.5%	8.0%	6.8%	6.3%
Yes SRD to No SRD	4.2%	4.2%	3.6%	4.1%	1.7%	5.8%	6.4%
Black							
No SRD to Yes SRD	6.0%	6.7%	5.8%	6.1%	7.5%	5.2%	5.7%
Yes SRD to No SRD	6.0%	6.7%	5.8%	6.1%	7.5%	5.2%	5.1%
Hispanic							
No SRD to Yes SRD	7.0%	6.9%	6.7%	7.1%	8.6%	6.1%	6.5%
Yes SRD to No SRD	3.6%	3.9%	4.6%	3.9%	2.2%	6.5%	5.7%
Native Hawaiian							
No SRD to Yes SRD	4.1%	2.9%	5.1%	4.2%	6.2%	5.6%	5.3%
Yes SRD to No SRD	2.6%	4.2%	2.0%	3.6%	1.8%	5.6%	4.6%
White							
No SRD to Yes SRD	3.4%	3.7%	3.5%	3.7%	4.3%	4.0%	4.0%
Yes SRD to No SRD	2.1%	2.0%	2.4%	2.2%	1.3%	3.4%	3.3%
Two or More Races							
No SRD to Yes SRD	3.6%	4.2%	3.9%	4.0%	4.7%	3.9%	4.2%
Yes SRD to No SRD	2.4%	2.5%	2.6%	2.5%	1.6%	3.5%	3.5%

What Impact Do Student and School Characteristics Have on SRD Identification?

As expected, SRD identification rates differ substantially by student characteristics; that is, membership in groups that are typically underserved makes it more likely that a student is identified with an SRD. The following findings demonstrate that some groups of students are not receiving the necessary support in order to avoid being identified with SRDs.

In 2022–23, students eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch (FRL), ELs, special education students, students absent 10% or more of the days enrolled during the school year (referred to as chronically absent students by CDE), and non-White students were more likely than their peers not in those groups to be identified with SRDs (Exhibit 35). For example, 31% of students with high degrees of being absent were identified with SRDs in 2022–23 compared to 17% of students without high degrees of being absent, making "chronically absent" students 1.9 times more likely to be identified with SRDs than students who were not "chronically absent". Male and female students and Asian and White students had roughly similar SRD identification rates.

Exhibit 35. Students in Certain Groups More Likely To Be Identified with an SRD

Demographic	% Identified with SRD	Relative Risk of Being Identified with SRD
Female	19.5%	0.9
Male	21.9%	
Students eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch	32.5%	2.7
Students not eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch	12.1%	
English learner students	39.8%	2.3
Non-English learner students	17.0%	
Special education students	52.7%	3.4
Non-special education students	15.4%	
Chronically absent students	31.3%	1.9
Not Chronically absent students	16.9%	
American Indian/Native Alaskan	35.8%	2.6
Asian	14.7%	1.1
Black/African American	29.1%	2.1
Hispanic/Latino	31.3%	2.3
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	34.3%	2.5
Two or more races	16.7%	1.2
White	13.6%	

Note. Table only includes students identified with an SRD or not (i.e., excludes exempt students). Risk ratio indicates the likelihood of members of a student group being identified with an SRD compared to students not in that group (e.g., ELs were 2.3 times more likely to be identified with an SRD compared to non-ELs).

As students can belong to multiple demographic groups at a time (with some belonging to multiple underserved groups), the singular effects of these characteristics combine to impact a student's likelihood of being identified with an SRD. In order to parse out the individual influence of each of these characteristics in affecting a student's likelihood of being identified with an SRD, a multilevel logistic regression model was used.[14]

Six student-level characteristics were found to significantly predict whether a student would be identified with an SRD or not, after taking into consideration the effect of the other student- and school-level characteristics. **The significant student-level characteristics included special education status, EL status, FRL status, gender, race/ethnicity, and chronically absent status (as defined by CDE).** Although each of these characteristics significantly impacted whether a student was identified with an SRD, the individual effect of a single student characteristic (except special education status) was less than suggested when looking at the characteristics before considering other student-level effects (see column two of Exhibit 36); that is, **some of the variation between student groups (e.g., ELs versus non-ELs) can be accounted for by other student-level characteristics**. For example, after accounting for other student characteristics, ELs were 1.8 times more likely than non-ELs to be identified with an SRD, instead of 2.3 times more likely before accounting for other characteristics. This is likely because other characteristics contributed to the difference between SRD identification rates for ELs and non-ELs. For example, about 77% of ELs were eligible for FRL while only 36% of non-ELs were eligible for FRL. Therefore, after accounting for FRL status and other characteristics, the impact of EL status dropped. **The intersections of students' identities layer to impact their likelihood of being identified with SRDs.**

[14] Exempt students (2% of sample) were excluded from the multilevel analysis.

Exhibit 36. Accounting for Student- and School-Level Characteristics Typically Reduced the Effect of Individual Characteristics on Likelihood of SRD Identification

Demographic	% Identified with SRD	% Identified with SRD (HLM)*
Female	19.5% (RR = 0.9)	15.5% (RR = 1.0)
Male	21.9%	14.9%
Students eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch	32.5% (RR = 2.7)	19.8% (RR = 1.6)
Students not eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch	12.1%	12.4%
English learner students	39.8% (RR = 2.3)	25.1% (RR = 1.8)
Non-English learner students	17.0%	13.7%
Special education students	52.7% (RR = 3.4)	50.4% (RR = 4.3)
Non-special education students	15.4%	11.8%
Chronically absent students	31.3% (RR = 1.9)	19.7% (RR = 1.4)
Not Chronically absent students	16.9%	13.7%
American Indian/Native Alaskan	35.8% (RR = 2.6)	20.4% (RR = 1.5)
Asian	14.7% (RR = 1.1)	11.8% (RR = 0.9)
Black/African American	29.1% (RR = 2.1)	18.5% (RR = 1.3)
Hispanic/Latino	31.3% (RR = 2.3)	17.4% (RR = 1.3)
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	34.3% (RR = 2.5)	21.9% (RR = 1.6)
Two or more races	16.7% (RR = 1.2)	14.5% (RR = 1.1)
White	13.6%	13.8%

Note. Table only includes students identified with SRD or not (i.e., excludes exempt students). Risk ratio indicates the likelihood of members of a student group being identified with SRDs compared to students not in that group. *Hierarchical Linear Model

In addition to the student-level characteristics, five school-level characteristics were found to significantly predict whether a student would be identified with an SRD or not—**the significant school-level characteristics included the percentage of non-White students in the school, percentage of special education students, percentage of students eligible for FRL, percentage of chronically absent students, and student mobility rate**.[15] In other words, in addition to student-level characteristics, the characteristics of a school also had significant impacts on whether a student with identified with an SRD (with these impacts potentially differing depending on a student's

[15] The percentage of EL students and whether a school was currently participating in an ELG program were not found to significantly predict SRD identification.

characteristics). For example, schools with chronic absenteeism rates 10 percentage points above average had higher SRD identification rates among all student groups (Exhibit 37). Conversely, schools with chronic absenteeism rates 10 percentage points below average had lower SRD identification rates among all student groups. For example, in schools with chronic absenteeism rates 10 percentage points above average, 27% of ELs were identified with SRDs (after accounting for the effects of other characteristics), while only 23% of ELs were identified with SRDs in schools with chronic absenteeism rates 10 percentage points below average. Furthermore, the changes in SRD identification rates when comparing schools with chronic absenteeism rates 10 percentage points above and below average were marginally greater for underserved groups, suggesting that **certain student groups may be more affected by school-level characteristics than other groups**.

Exhibit 37. School-Level Chronic Absenteeism Rates Affect SRD Identification for All Student Groups

Demographic	% Identified with SRD (HLM)*	% Identified with SRD – 10 percentage points above average chronic absenteeism rate	% Identified with SRD – 10 percentage points below average chronic absenteeism rate
Female	15.5%	17.0%	14.1%
Male	14.9%	16.4%	13.5%
Students eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch	19.8%	21.6%	18.1%
Students not eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch	12.4%	13.6%	11.2%
English learner students	25.1%	27.2%	23.0%
Non-English learner students	13.7%	15.0%	12.4%
Special education students	50.4%	53.2%	47.6%
Non-special education students	11.8%	13.0%	10.7%
Chronically absent students	19.7%	21.6%	18.0%
Not Chronically absent students	13.7%	15.1%	12.5%
American Indian/Native Alaskan	20.4%	22.3%	18.7%
Asian	11.8%	13.0%	10.7%
Black/African American	18.5%	20.3%	16.9%
Hispanic/Latino	17.4%	19.1%	15.9%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	21.9%	23.8%	20.0%
Two or more races	14.5%	15.9%	13.1%
White	13.8%	15.2%	12.5%

Note. Table only includes students identified with an SRD or not (i.e., excludes exempt students).*Hierarchical Linear Model.

These results show that some students may need additional support to avoid being identified with an SRD and that the level of these supports may differ based on the school environment of the student. The results also show that educators need to take a whole-child approach in determining how student performance should be addressed; although one classification (e.g., EL status, FRL status) may significantly contribute to a student's performance, all attributes of the student still need to be taken into account in order to effectively support their literacy development. Finally, these results should not be used to set

expectations for students; they should be used to consider what can be addressed to help students.

What Is the Impact of SRD Identification on the Following Year's Performance on the READ Act Interim Assessment?

As discussed, the SRD identification of some students changes from one year to the next. For example, of the 35,005 students who were identified with SRDs at the end of 2021–22 and for whom we had data for 2022–23, 9,937 (28%) transitioned to no longer being identified with an SRD by the end of 2022–23. Although these students exhibited improvements over the course of a school year, the question remained as to whether there being identified with an SRD (according to a student's interim assessment) has a significant impact on a student's assessment performance in the subsequent year.[16] As students identified with an SRD are expected to receive an individualized READ Plan that outlines specific interventions aimed at improving their literacy development, one might expect that being identified with an SRD would impact a student's performance in the subsequent year (after receiving interventions). To address this question, a regression discontinuity design (RDD) was used to provide a causal estimate of the impact of being identified with an SRD (according to a student's interim assessment score[17]) at the end of 2021–22 on student performance in 2022–23.

Across the state, **we found that SRD identification in 2021–22 may not have significantly impacted student performance on the interim assessment scores in the 2022–23 school year**. As shown in Exhibit 38, there does not appear to be any clear difference (i.e., no discontinuity) between the

[16] The interim assessment was used as the outcome measure as interim assessment scores are the only consistent K–2 measure available for student performance.

[17] Although a student's SRD identification as determined by their interim assessment performance may be different from their state-assigned identification, 99.8% of students had the same state and vendor-assigned identifications.

2022–23 interim assessment scores of students identified and not identified with an SRD in 2021–22.

Exhibit 38. RDD Points to No Effect of SRD Identification on Subsequent Year's Interim Assessment Performance

These findings were also observed when conducting the analyses for each grade level separately and for specific subgroups of students (i.e., ELs, special education students, students eligible for FRL, students of different races/ethnicities). There is some evidence, however, that SRD identification had a positive impact on Asian students ($p < 0.1$), with an effect size of 0.19; that is, SRD identification resulted in an almost one-fifth of a standard deviation improvement in interim assessment scores in 2022–23. It is possible, however, that this result is driven by other underlying student characteristics. For example, Asian students were least likely of all racial/ethnic groups to be classified as

special education students or have a Section 504 plan[18]. Additionally, after White students, Asian students were least likely to be eligible for FRL lunch or to have high degrees of absence.

The RDD analyses were also conducted for different geographical areas within Colorado. **As was the case with the statewide analysis, no effects of SRD identification were observed in any region in Colorado (when combining student scores from all schools across the region) and in 10 of the 12 school locales (when only looking at schools within each locale)**.[19] SRD identification was shown to have a negative impact (of over half a standard deviation) on 2022–23 literacy performance among students in schools with a "distant" town classification[20] ($p < 0.05$). A small negative impact (i.e., an effect size of less than one-tenth of a standard deviation) was also observed for schools with a "large city" classification[21]; however, the result was only marginally significant ($p < 0.1$). Somewhat similar results were seen in previous school years. When conducting the RDD analysis using 2017–18 as the SRD identification year and 2018–19 as the outcome year, a negative impact was observed for students in both fringe town[22] schools and remote town[23] schools, suggesting that SRD identification has a negative effect on subsequent literacy performance among students attending schools within towns.[24]

[18] A Section 504 Plan is a plan developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives appropriate accommodations.

[19] As students may change districts and/or geographic areas between school years, the district or geographic area in 2022–23 was considered to be the district or geographic area in which SRD interventions occurred.

[20] The "Town – Distant" classification refers to a territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 10 miles and less than or equal to 35 miles from an urbanized area.

[21] The "City – Large" classification refers to a territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with a population of 250,000 or more.

[22] The "Town – Fringe" classification refers to a territory inside an urban cluster that is less than or equal to 10 miles from an urbanized area.

[23] The "Town – Remote" classification refers to a territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 35 miles from an urbanized area.

[24] See NCES for a full set of locale definitions: https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/annualreports/topical-studies/locale/definitions.

Moreover, no effects were observed for 52 of the 61 counties examined in the state. Of the nine counties in which a statistically significant effect could be found ($p < 0.1$), seven had particularly small sample sizes,[25] indicating that those effects might be spurious. The two remaining counties showed positive impacts of SRD identification on subsequent literacy performance, with respective effect sizes of 0.14 and 0.30.

Finally, of the 177 districts that had sufficiently large sample sizes for the analysis, only two displayed statistically significant positive impacts on students identified with SRDs ($p < 0.05$), with effect sizes of 0.19 and 0.30. One additional district displayed a marginally significant negative impact ($p < 0.1$). Of note, one of the two districts with a significant positive impact had a negative impact in the prior school year (i.e., when 2021–22 was the outcome year), calling into question whether the effect was only observed due to the sample size of the district.

Overall, **the RDD analysis suggests that identifying a student with an SRD in the 2021–22 school year had no impact (positive or negative) on early literacy assessment performance in spring 2022–23**. However, it is important to contextualize the results and note that were some limitations in conducting the analyses. The RDD analysis did not compare the scores of all students—the analysis only compared students with a specific range around the SRD cut scores, as students near the cut score were not expected to differ meaningfully (regardless of their SRD designation). Additionally, while the expectation underlying this analysis is that students receiving an SRD identification would receive specialized READ Act services, it is possible that students who did not meet the SRD cut on the interim assessments and were not identified with an SRD also received interventions if they were still identified as having some reading difficulties. Lastly, SRD identification is only one part of the

[25] Small sample sizes for the RDD analysis refer to samples with less than 100 students within the analytical range of scores on either or both sides of the SRD cut score.

READ Act. Therefore, **although there was no apparent impact of identification with an SRD in 2021–22 on interim assessment performance in 2022–23, this should not be interpreted as evidence that READ Act services did not assist students identified with SRDs in their reading development.**

Key Takeaways

Overall, the number of students being identified with SRDs has been slowly decreasing since the end of the most acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- However, SRD movement trends from 2021–22 to 2022–23 remained similar to the previous year; most students in 2022–23 (about 60%) retained the SRD identification (i.e., identified with an SRD or not) assigned to them in 2021–22, with 50% of students remaining as not being identified with an SRD and 10% of students remaining as identified with an SRD.
- The percentages of students moving from not being identified with an SRD to being identified with an SRD (according to their designation) and from being identified with an SRD to not being identified with an SRD were similar to last year, suggesting that levels may be reaching a new equilibrium after the most acute phase of the pandemic.
- Historically underserved students (EL students, students with IEPs, students with disabilities, and non-White students) experienced higher rates of movement between SRD identification than their peers.

Students eligible for FRL lunch, EL students, special education students, students absent 10% or more of the days enrolled during the school year, and non-White students were more likely than their peers not in those groups to be identified with SRDs; however, some of the variation between these subgroups can be explained by other student- and school-level characteristics.

- Although SRD identification rates vary between different groups of students, some of the variation can be explained by other student- and school-level characteristics (e.g., some of the difference in the likelihood of being identified with an SRD between ELs and non-ELs is likely due to

socioeconomic status; 77% of ELs are eligible for FRL, compared to only 36% of non-ELs).

- School-level characteristics may affect some groups of students more than others.

SRD identification in 2021–22 appears to have had no impact on student interim assessment performance in 2022–23.

- This null result generally holds when comparing students in different grade levels, subgroups, and geographic areas.
- The results should not be interpreted as evidence that READ Act services did not assist students identified with SRDs in their reading development, due to limitations of the analysis.
- Further data and analysis are needed to study student performance throughout the school year rather than solely studying it year to year.

8

Student Outcomes

- CMAS Performance

- Overall, there were improvements in CMAS proficiency rates across the state; however, these rates remained low for students that had ever been identified with an SRD and even lower for students identified with an SRD who were also EL or had an IEP.
- Students who were identified with an SRD in K–2 but were no longer identified with an SRD in the 3rd grade performed higher on the CMAS than those who were identified in the 3rd grade.
- Special education status had the largest effect on a student's CMAS score, after taking into consideration the effect of other student- and school-level characteristics.
- SRD identification in 1st or 2nd grade may not have significantly impacted CMAS performance in 3rd grade.
- Interim assessment cut scores that identify students at any level of risk were linked to CMAS scores within the "Partially Met Expectations" range, suggesting that many students who are considered reading at grade level in 3rd grade according to interim assessments are likely to not meet CMAS expectations.

Given that the goal of the READ Act is to identify struggling readers and provide them with the support they need to read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade, 3rd-grade CMAS ELA scores provide one way to gauge the extent to which early literacy instruction and interventions have moved students toward 3rd-grade reading proficiency. This chapter explores how student performance on CMAS differed by SRD status, whether there was an impact of SRD identification on CMAS, and what student and school characteristics impacted CMAS performance. We also examined the alignment between the READ Act interim assessments (which are used for SRD identification) and the CMAS assessment. In other words, we attempted to identify the CMAS score that lines up with the interim assessment cut score, given that these help to determine whether students should receive READ Act intervention services. Ideally, a clearer understanding of the alignment between these assessments will help educators better understand which students are being identified with SRDs by the interim assessments and where their students are in their growth toward becoming proficient readers.

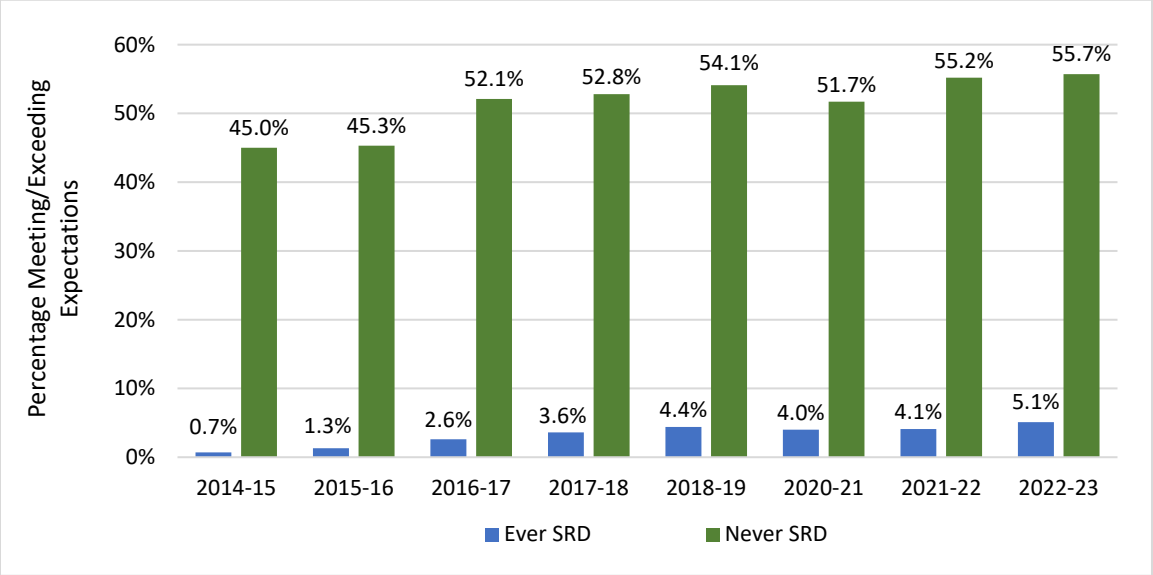
How Does Student Performance on the 3rd-grade CMAS ELA Assessment Differ by SRD Identification?

Students first take the CMAS assessment in 3rd grade, the final year in which interim READ Act assessments are given. Historically, students who had at any point in K–3 been identified with an SRD have had very different success rates on the CMAS ELA exam than their peers who had never been identified with an SRD. Between 2016–17 and 2021–22, more than half of students who had never been identified with an SRD met or exceeded the proficiency standard on the CMAS ELA exam in 3rd grade (as determined by their overall composite score), compared with less than 4.5% of students who had ever been identified with an SRD (Exhibit 39).

Although the trend of disproportionality remained broadly in place in 2022–23, the proficiency rates of both groups of students (i.e., those never

identified with an SRD and those identified with an SRD at some point between kindergarten and 3rd grade) reached all-time highs. In other words, more students than ever before who had at any point been identified with an SRD reached proficiency during the 2022-23 school year (5.1% compared to 4.1% in 2021–22), while their peers who had never been identified with an SRD also reached a new highest percentage of proficiency (55.7%,.5 percentage points higher than in 2022, which was up to that point the highest proficiency percentage from 2015 forward).[26]

Exhibit 39. CMAS Proficiency Rates of Students Ever Identified with an SRD and Students Never Identified Have Slowly Improved Since 2020–21

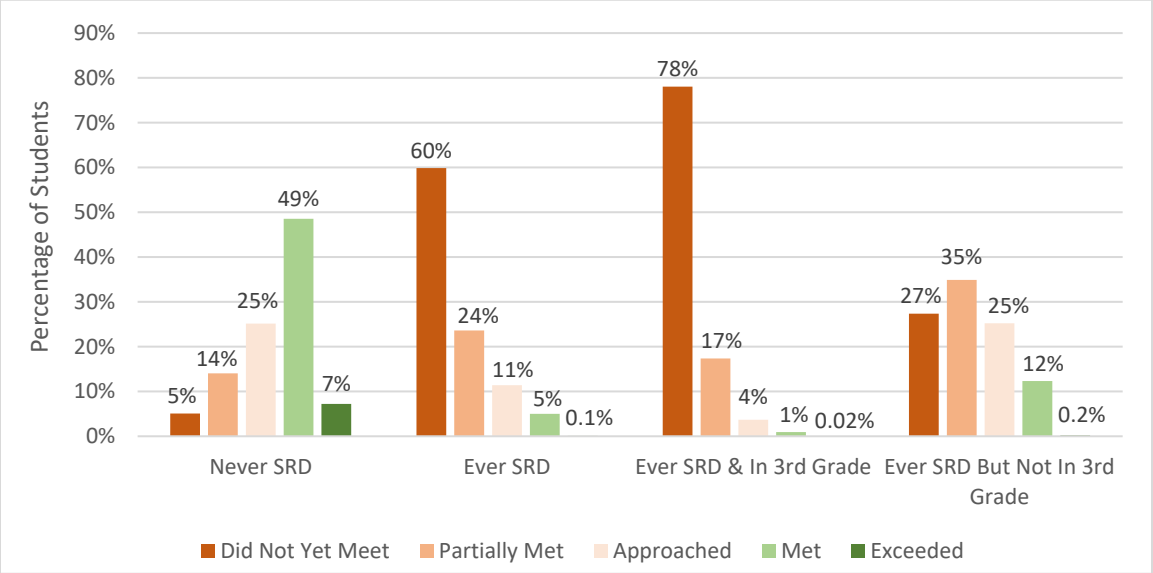


There were also noticeable differences just within the group of students who were ever identified with an SRD at some point in K–3. **Students who were identified with an SRD in K–2 but were no longer identified with an SRD in 3rd grade performed higher on the CMAS assessment, on average, than students who continued to be or were first identified with an SRD in 3rd**

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

grade. As shown in Exhibit 40, 78% of students who were identified with an SRD in 3rd grade scored in the lowest performance level on the CMAS assessment ("Did Not Yet Meet Expectations"), while only 27% of their peers who were not identified with an SRD in 3rd grade but were previously identified received scores within this performance level. Additionally, almost 13% of students who were no longer identified with an SRD in 3rd grade met or exceeded expectations on the CMAS, while less than 1% of their peers who were identified with an SRD in 3rd grade reached these proficiency levels.

Exhibit 40. Students Who Exited SRD Identification in 3rd Grade Outperformed Their Peers Identified with an SRD in 3rd Grade on CMAS

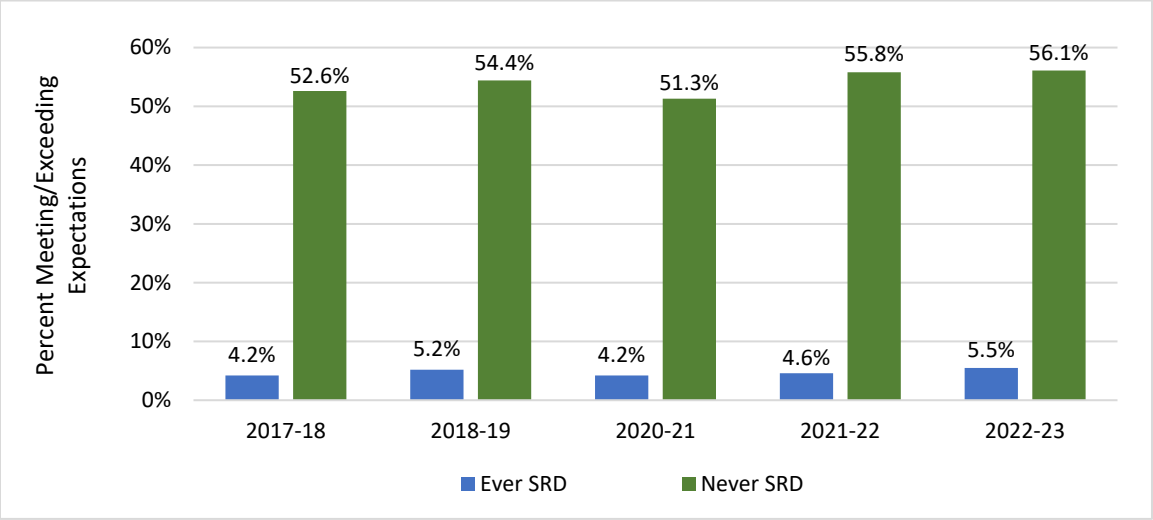


Reading Subsection Trends

In addition to the proficiency rates determined by the overall composite score, we examined the reading subscore on the CMAS ELA assessment. Similar to the findings when examining the overall proficiency rates, students who were ever identified with an SRD were significantly less likely than their peers to meet or exceed expectations on the reading subsection of the CMAS ELA exam (Exhibit 41). However, **proficiency rates also reached all-time highs on the reading subsection for students who had never been identified with an SRD**

(56.1% compared to 55.8% in 2021–22) **and students who had been identified with an SRD at some point between kindergarten and 3rd grade** (5.5% compared to 4.6% in 2021–22).

Exhibit 41. CMAS Reading Subsection Proficiency Rates of Students Ever Identified with an SRD and Students Never Identified Have Slowly Improved Since 2020–21



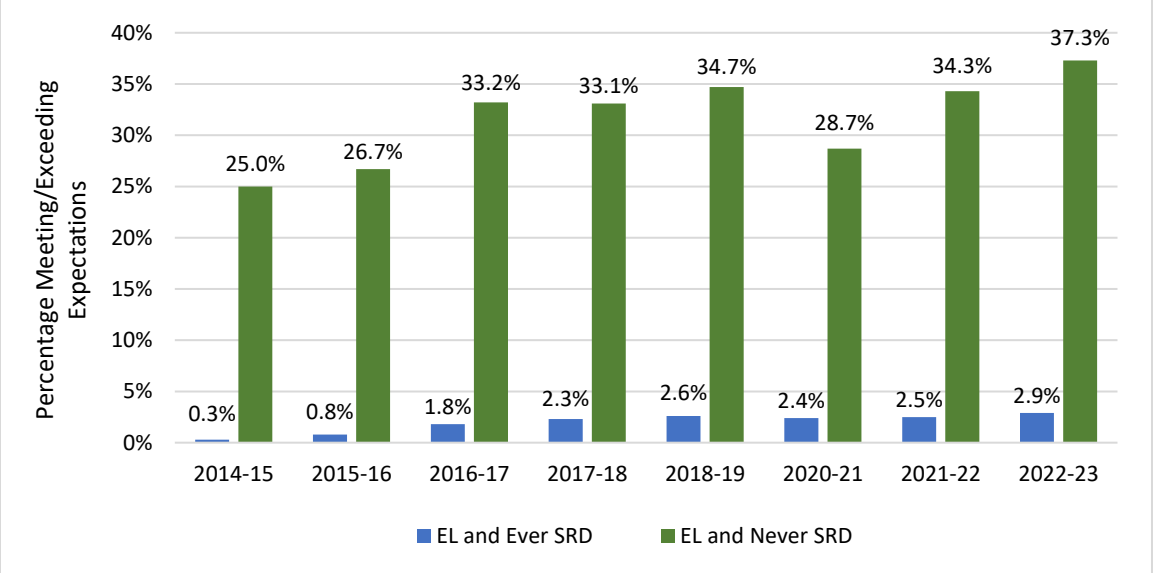
Trends By Demographic Characteristics

As in previous years, students with IEPs or ELs who were also identified with SRDs reached proficiency on the CMAS ELA exam at lower rates than their general education peers who had been identified with SRDs. As seen with the overall population of students, **students with IEPs and ELs who were never identified with an SRD or were identified with an SRD at some point in K–3 displayed a slight increase in proficiency rates from 2022**. Among students with IEPs, only 1.7% of those who were ever dually identified with an SRD demonstrated proficiency on the CMAS exam (up .4 percentage points from 2022), while those never identified with an SRD had a proficiency rate of 37.1% (2.8 percentage points higher than 2022). Similarly, among EL students, only 2.9% of those who were ever dually identified with an SRD demonstrated proficiency (up .4% percentage points from 2022), while 37.3% of those never

identified with an SRD reached proficiency (3 percentage points higher than 2022) (Exhibit 42). Only 0.9% of students with an IEP, EL designation, and SRD identification reached proficiency on the CMAS ELA exam in 2022–23 (.4 percentage points higher than 2022), compared with 22.7% of their peers who were never identified with an SRD (6.3 percentage points higher than 2022).

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

Exhibit 42. ELs Never Identified with an SRD or Identified with an SRD in K–3 Have Showed Improvements in CMAS Proficiency Rates Since 2020–21



What Impact Do Student and School Characteristics Have on CMAS Performance?

In addition to IEP and EL status, other student and school characteristics influence the performance of students on the CMAS assessment. Using two

multilevel linear regression models, we further examined how student- and school-level characteristics influenced the CMAS performance of students in 3rd grade and students in 4th through 8th grades in 2022–23. Both models contained the same predictors (student and school characteristics) as the multilevel logistic regression model in Chapter 7, excluding two school-level predictors (the school-level percentage of special education students and the school-level percentage of non-White students), which were both considered as statistically insignificant predictors of CMAS performance in the model.

Special education status had the largest effect on a student's CMAS score at the end of the school year in both 3rd grade and 4th through 8th grade (Appendix 3 Exhibit A-8).[27] On average, 3rd grade students in special education, would be expected to perform about 39 points below non-special education students on the CMAS exam, after taking into consideration the effect of the other student- and school-level characteristics. When performing the same analysis for 4th- through 8th-grade students, a difference of about 19 points would be expected.

Further, after accounting for other characteristics, 3rd-grade students eligible for FRL, 3rd-grade EL students, and 3rd-grade students absent 10% or more of the days enrolled during the school year would respectively be expected to perform about 14, 13, and 7 points below their 3rd-grade peers not in those groups. Additionally, on average, non-White students (excluding Asian students), would be expected to receive lower scores than their White peers on the CMAS exam, while Asian students would be expected to perform higher, even after accounting for other student and school characteristics. **However, part of the continued differences in performance between racial groups are likely due to factors that we were unable to quantify in the analysis, including the effects of racial discrimination**. For example, Conwell and Leafia (2021) demonstrate that White, Black, and Hispanic

[27] While some students with disabilities take the Colorado Alternate Assessment (CoAlt), 95% of 3rd-grade students with an IEP took the CMAS during 2022–23. In order to be eligible to take the CoAlt, students must have what CDE defines as a significant cognitive disability.

families have significantly different circumstances that may affect student achievement, even when these families have the same level of wealth. These circumstances, which may occur due to historic and current racial discrimination, may result in Black and Hispanic students having "less access to developmentally advantageous schools and neighborhood contexts."

These trends were also generally observed in the 4th- through 8th-grade sample; however, almost all of the student characteristics had smaller individual effects than among the 3rd-grade students. These reductions may have been a result of the breakdown of the analytic samples. The 3rd-grade sample consisted of the vast majority of 3rd-grade students across the state in 2022–23. The 4th- through 8th-grade sample, however, only contained a specific cohort of students in the state—that is, students who, in 3rd grade, were reported as being identified with an SRD or remained on a READ Plan. As a result, the demographic makeup of the 4th- through 8th-grade sample consisted of a substantially higher percentage of underserved students than the state overall. For example, about 40% of CO students were eligible for FRL; however, this jumped to 66% in the 4th- through 8th-grade sample. Similarly, the percentage of special education students jumped from about 12% to 36%. The makeup of the 4th- through 8th-grade sample may have weakened the influence of these predictors, as the sample consisted of students who were all, at some point, classified as "struggling" with reading.

Finally, as discussed in Chapter 7, these results indicate that some students may not be receiving the support they need and that no single characteristic of a student fully determines their CMAS ELA performance. Although certain characteristics may have more impact on student performance than others, differences between student groups cannot be entirely addressed if there is only focus on a sole characteristic—students have different combinations of these characteristics and must be treated as individuals.

What Is the Impact of SRD Identification in 1st and 2nd grade on 3rd-Grade CMAS ELA Performance?

While some improvements were made in the CMAS ELA proficiency rates of students ever identified with an SRD and students with dual identifications, the question remains as to whether SRD identification has a significant impact on CMAS performance. An RDD analysis (as described in Chapter 7) was used to examine whether identification of an SRD in 1st or 2nd grade (according to a student's interim assessment performance) had a significant impact on CMAS achievement in 3rd grade (using the 2022–23 3rd-grade cohort).[28]

The results indicate that **SRD identification in 1st or 2nd grade may not have significantly impacted the CMAS performance of students at the end of 3rd grade**, although some improvement among students identified with an SRD at some point in K–3 was observed.

How Do Interim Assessment Cut Scores Align with the CMAS ELA Scale?

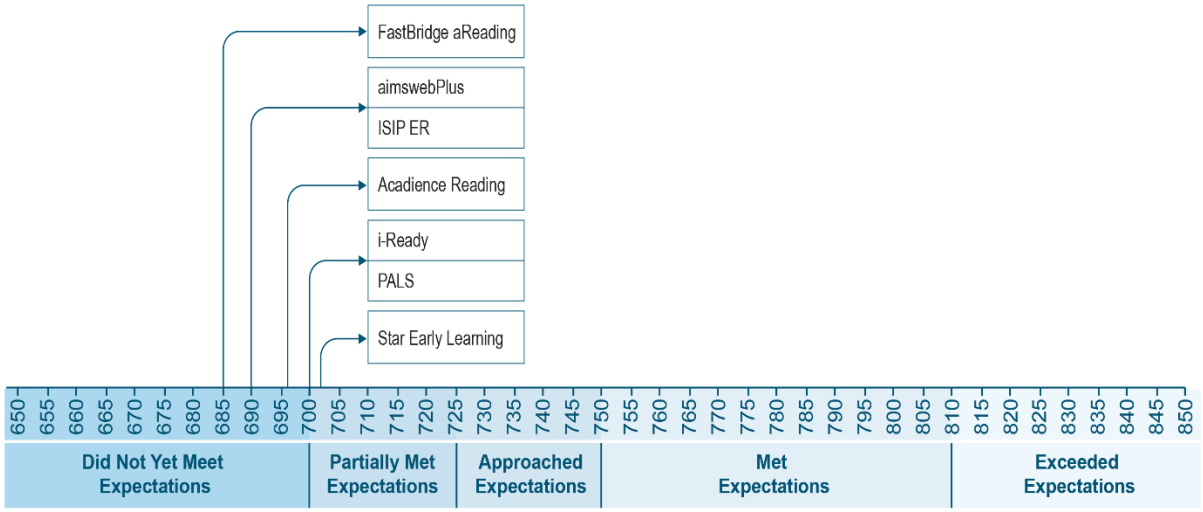
As we have observed, very few students who are ever identified with an SRD in K–3 meet or exceed expectations on CMAS by the end of 3rd grade, although some improvement is observed for students who are no longer identified with an SRD by the end of 3rd grade. While this improvement (that is, the change from SRD identification to reading proficiency on CMAS) is a key goal of the READ Act, a better understanding of how much students are expected to grow is needed. To address the question of the extent to which students at different performance levels on the interim assessments (such as those identified with an SRD) would need to improve in order to achieve this READ Act goal, the equipercentile linking procedure (Kolen & Brennan, 2004) was used to link the

[28] The effect of SRD identification in kindergarten was not examined as scores were not in available in 2019–20 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

cut scores from the 3rd-grade interim assessments to the 3rd-grade CMAS ELA scale.[29]

For each of the interim assessments, **the cut scores that are used to identify students with an SRD were linked to the lower end of the CMAS ELA scale** (they generally clustered from the end of the "Did Not Yet Meet Expectations" range to the beginning of the "Partially Met Expectations" range) (Exhibit 43). This signifies that most students identified with an SRD in 3rd grade would score in the lowest category on CMAS. It is clear, then, that students identified with an SRD would need to improve substantially in order to meet or exceed expectations on the CMAS exam. The results also show that many students who are not identified with an SRD, according to their performance on the interim assessment, would still need substantial assistance to demonstrate reading proficiency on CMAS.

Exhibit 43. 3rd-Grade Interim Assessment Scores Range from "Did Not Yet Meet Expectations" to "Partially Met Expectations" on CMAS

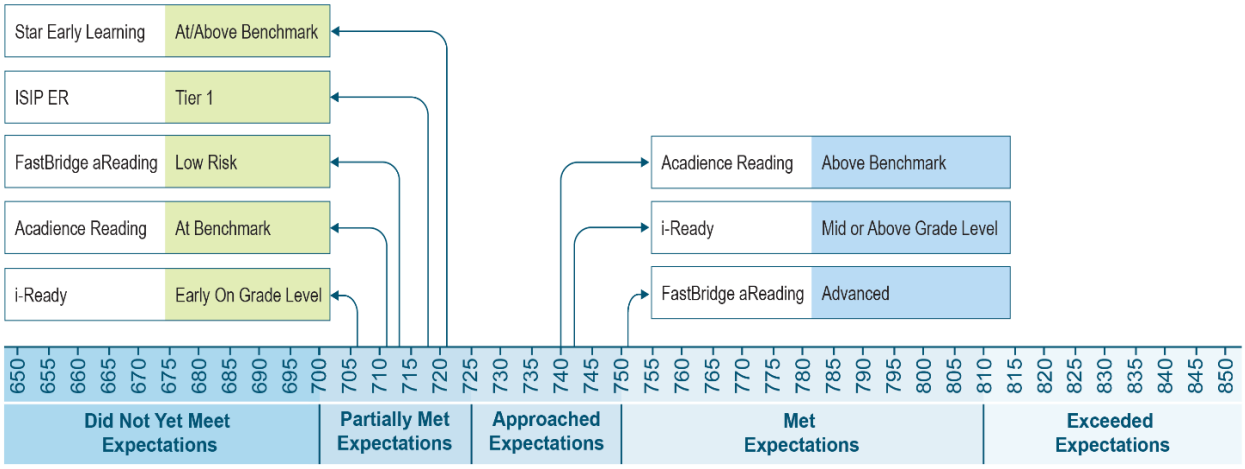


[29] 3rd-grade students without numeric interim assessment or CMAS scores were excluded from the analyses. The equipercentile linking procedure was not conducted for ISIP Lectura Temprana or Indicadores Dinámicos del Éxito en la Lectura (IDEL) due to their minimal use across the state.

Aside from the READ Act–specific SRD cut scores, most of the interim assessments also have more general "at-risk" cut scores that identify students at any level of risk (not just significant risk) of reading difficulty. As educators might use these benchmark performance levels to determine which students need any level of support (not just READ Act support), we also linked these more general cut scores to the CMAS scale.

The cut scores that identify students at any level of risk (indicated in green in Exhibit 44) **link to scores within the "Partially Met Expectations" range on CMAS, suggesting that many students who are considered reading at grade level in 3rd grade according to interim assessments are likely to not meet expectations on CMAS**. This difference between interim assessment cut scores and CMAS cut scores in determining reading proficiency likely occurs for several reasons, including differences in content and difficulty, differences in assessment administration, and cut score–setting procedures.

Exhibit 44. Overall, At-Risk Cut Scores Align to the "Partially Met Expectations" Performance Level on CMAS



Note. PALS and aimswebPlus were not included, as only SRD cut scores were available.

Some of the assessments (Acadience Reading, i-Ready, and FastBridge eReading) have additional cut scores above the general "at-risk" cut scores that can be used to determine which students are reading above grade level

expectations (identified in blue in Exhibit 44). **These cut scores link to a range starting at the middle of the "Approached Expectations" to the beginning of "Met Expectations,"** revealing that these cut scores are more closely aligned to what CMAS creators deem appropriate performance for 3rd-grade students.

These results suggest that using the SRD cut scores (or even the more general "at-risk" cut scores) to determine which students need additional resources to reach reading proficiency levels by the end of 3rd grade (according to CMAS) may result in many students not receiving the necessary support to achieve this goal. It is important to note, however, that this is not due to underlying issues with the assessments—it is simply a result of how different assessments are designed, what content is used, how their scores are created and structured, and what their purpose are. Assessments are rarely perfect substitutes for one another— they measure different skills and content proficiencies, use different scoring methods, and are not the same level of difficulty. A "meets expectations" score on one interim assessment could be equivalent to a "below expectations" score on another. There is no single rule of thumb or governing body that sets assessment cut scores between proficiency levels—the cut scores are up to each assessment maker and may be influenced by a wide range of factors, including psychometric analyses, a particular year's testing population and scores, and trends among similar assessments. Additionally, assessments are given at different points in the year and in different intervals. A test administered just a few months into the school year is unlikely to show as much student growth or scores as high as an assessment administered in March, when students have had longer to learn. Similarly, if an assessment is given three times a year instead of once, students are more likely to grow comfortable with the testing format and may perform better on the assessment.

Overall, the results call into question whether the goal of students identified with an SRD be proficient in reading by the end of 3rd grade is realistic. This is not to say that those students are incapable of significant

reading growth and meeting proficiency; rather, it demonstrates the importance of having reasonable metrics and pathways for student growth in a set period of time to determine the success of an intervention.

Key Takeaways

Overall, there were improvements in the CMAS proficiency rates across the state; however, these rates remained low for students who had ever been identified with an SRD and even lower for students identified with SRDs who were also ELs or have IEPs.

- Improvements were also observed on the reading subsection of the exam, with proficiency rates reaching all-time highs for students who had never been identified with an SRD and students who had been identified with an SRD at some point in K–3.

Students who were identified with an SRD in K–2 but were no longer identified with an SRD in 3rd grade performed higher on CMAS than those who were identified in the 3rd grade.

- 78% of students who were identified with an SRD in 3rd grade scored in the lowest performance level on CMAS, while only 27% of their peers who were no longer identified with an SRD by the end of 3rd grade performed the same.

SRD identification in 1st or 2nd grade may not have significantly impacted CMAS performance in the 3rd grade.

- There was no difference in 3rd grade CMAS performance between students who were identified as having an SRD in first or second grade and those who were just above the SRD cut score.

Many students who are considered reading at grade level in 3rd grade according to the interim assessments are likely to not meet CMAS expectations.

- Interim assessment cut scores that identified students with an SRD linked to the lower end of the CMAS ELA scale.
- Interim assessment cut scores that identified students at any level of risk were linked to CMAS scores within the “Partially Met Expectations” range
- Using interim assessment cut scores to determine which students need additional resources to reach proficiency levels by the end of 3rd grade

may result in many students not receiving the necessary support to achieve this goal.

9

Conclusion

- There has been widespread adoption of materials on the READ Act Advisory List.
- Proficiency rates on the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) reached an all-time high but remained much lower for students who have ever been identified with a significant reading deficiency (SRD).
- Students who exited READ plans by third grade had higher 3rd grade proficiency rates
- There are continued challenges supporting students with multiple designations under the READ Act.
- Cut scores used to identify students with an SRD were linked to the lower end of the CMAS scale.

With 4 years of evaluation data collected, the evaluation team is framing its conclusions to align with each of the three evaluation questions:

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

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

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

Advisory List of Instructional Programming and Assessments

Districts, schools, and teachers across the state are providing evidence-based reading instruction focused on the foundational skills emphasized in the READ Act. Most districts (67%) indicated that they provide guidance or minimum requirements related to the amount of time schools should spend teaching foundational skills, while most teachers who responded to the statewide inventory reported daily instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Districts and schools also reported coherence and alignment in terms of reading materials and increased use of approved core materials. Sixty-one percent of districts make decisions about instructional materials and require that all elementary schools use the same programs. Seventy-five percent require that all elementary schools use the same assessments. **There has been widespread adoption of materials on the Advisory List.** In the 2022–23 school year, over 75% of schools serving 67% of CO students reported using approved core instructional materials compared to less than half of schools serving 43% of students in 2021–22.

Schools who participated in site visits reported challenges with the time it took for staff and students to adjust to new programs and the need for additional resources and PD related to teaching ELs. There was also a decrease in reported usage of approved supplemental and intervention programming between the 2021–22 and 2022–23 school years.

Recommendation: Given site visit schools' widespread adoption of core materials and challenges, next year's evaluation should explore trends in curriculum adoption, including barriers to adoption of approved supplemental and intervention programs and the supports necessary for schools and teachers to successfully adopt evidence-based curriculum.

Evidence-Based Training in Teaching Reading

Statewide inventory and site visit participants reported **high rates of perceived usefulness, applicability, and quality of the 45-hour training mandated by the READ Act.** Seventy-nine percent of principals found the 45-hour training valuable for enhancing teacher and coach capabilities, and the vast majority of coaches and teachers reported that it was directly applicable to their daily tasks. There was also **widespread agreement that the 45-hour training influenced reading instruction strategies.** More than one-third of teachers reported actively using the training materials in their classroom.

Despite the appreciation they expressed for the content covered, **educators also noted significant challenges with the practical application of the 45-hour training, its online delivery format, and the lack of adequate training to support ELs identified with SRDs.** Teachers cited concerns such as the need for more hands-on implementation support and a desire for in-person refresher trainings and more tailored PD opportunities, especially for those working in dual-language environments. Approximately one-third of coaches and a quarter of teachers reported a lack of training to adequately identify and support Els identified with SRDs.

Additional district-provided supports beyond the mandatory 45-hour training were available to teachers and coaches to varying degrees across districts. They included professional learning, observations, vision setting, one-on-one coaching, and PD focused on the evidence-based practices highlighted in the READ Act. While these supports were available in most districts, a sizable minority statewide inventory respondents cited a lack of available support and inadequate access to PD.

Recommendation: Findings related to PD underscore the need for more tailored PD opportunities that address the diverse needs of all educators, especially those working in dual-language environments or those requiring more interactive PD sessions. There is also a strong call for in-person refresher trainings to better integrate learning into daily teaching practices.

Identifying and Supporting Students with SRDs

Using a body of evidence remains the most common method of identifying students with SRDs and exiting students from READ Plans; however, interim assessment scores continue to be highly aligned with SRD identification trends. More than 80% of district administrators, principals, teachers, and coaches reported using a body of evidence approach to identify students with SRDs. There was also overwhelming consensus that guidance for identifying general education students was clear.

In line with findings from the past 3 years, **there is continued confusion around identification, guidance, and support for students with have multiple support needs.** This confusion remains despite reports that most districts report having specific policies for the development, implementation, and monitoring of READ Plans for students with multiple identifications. To this end, 42% of coaches and 45% of teachers reported they did not have enough training and support to identify SRDs in students with specific learning disabilities.

There was also a lack of consensus on which sources of evidence are most important for informing K–3 reading instruction. Sixty-eight percent of principals and 66% of coaches reported that READ Act interim assessments were very important in informing K–3 reading instruction; however, only 28% of teachers reported considering interim assessments when making instructional decisions. Seventy-seven percent of teachers reported using non–READ Act data to inform instruction, compared to 41% of principals and 49% of coaches reporting that non–READ Act data were very important for informing K–3 instruction. Similarly, most teachers (73%) reported using READ Plans to inform their instruction, compared to 33% of principals and 49% of coaches reporting that READ Plans were very important for informing K–3 instruction.

This year's report was focused on gathering feedback from parents and families. While there was positive feedback about their experiences, parents who provided written feedback and participated in focus groups **expressed frustration over identification practices, READ Plans, ongoing student supports, and a general lack of communication.** These parents reported challenges related to the SRD identification process, including the exclusion of dyslexia, issues with specific testing, and a lack of parent involvement. Of the 271 parents who provided written responses on the inventory, over 70% expressed frustration with the lack of communication. Approximately one-third of parents providing written responses felt their child was not currently receiving adequate reading support.

Recommendation: CDE should provide guidance and support to districts and schools to better serve families impacted by the READ Act. CDE could provide resources to help districts and schools provide understandable and personalized recommendations for students and highlight best practices on the CDE website.

Early Literacy Grant

Site visit participants continued to indicate **the work of the ELG-funded external literacy consultants is the single most impactful element of the ELG.** Factors identified that promote consultant success include training for new consultants; an emphasis on consultants providing positive, constructive feedback for teachers; ensuring that consultants meet with teachers and school leaders prior to the start of grant activities; ensuring that consultants visit schools at least 2 days per month to observe classrooms, provide feedback, and model instruction. In line with findings from the 2023 evaluation report, **site visit participants reported significant successes that resulted from their ELGs**, including student performance improvements on literacy interim assessments (rather than annual statewide reading assessments), reduced teacher turnover, increased teacher proficiency to use data to inform instruction, and improved teacher classroom management and use of small group instruction.

Cultivating and promoting strong buy-in from school leaders and teachers was cited as critical to the success of ELGs. Grantees promoted buy-in and ensured that grant activities would be well-aligned with school needs through involving staff, including lead teachers, in the grant application process. For district or school consortium applications, site visit participants emphasized the importance of school leader involvement in the grant application process and early communication with the external literacy consultant they want to work with during that process. Last, regular monthly meetings between school leaders and consultants during the grant period to stay apprised of consultant work and demonstrate strong school leader support for grant activities promoted buy-in.

ELG recipients reported that sustainability remains a challenge and identified teacher turnover as the greatest single threat to lasting success. They also cited school leader turnover, which can also negatively affect sustainability of grant impacts, as a major challenge. Advance succession planning can help sustain ELG impacts through leadership changes. Use of ELG

funds to pay for in-school reading coaches was reported to be highly impactful since these coaches work with external consultants and provide teachers with ongoing support when the consultant is not present. Loss of funding to support in-school coaches after an ELG ends was cited as a critical threat to the sustainability of grant results.

Recommendation: CDE should require school staff and leaders to be involved in ELG grant applications and promote regular meetings between consultants and school leaders to help cultivate and promote buy-in.

Per-Pupil Funding

District administrators reported that making decisions around READ Act per-pupil spending is a collaborative process. District literacy leaders, school principals, and school literacy coaches have the most influence over per-pupil spending decisions. **READ Act per-pupil funds are most frequently spent on purchasing instructional programs and on the salaries of reading coaches.** Compared to 2022–23, principals more frequently reported purchasing instructional programs, assessments, and PD programs on their respective Advisory lists and less frequently reported purchasing materials that were not CDE-approved. It is worth noting that administrators typically rated school grade-level teams, school PLCs, the 45-hour training requirement, and the Advisory lists as being more successful than per-pupil funding in exiting students from SRD identification and raising 3rd-grade achievement levels.

Schools and LEPs reported that **funding was not sufficient to fully implement the READ Act and expressed a need for additional staff, instructional programs and materials, and supports for 4th-and 5th-grade students with reading challenges.** Site visit and LEP inventory participants reported using additional funding streams, including general school funds, ESSER funds, and Title I funds to implement READ Act requirements.

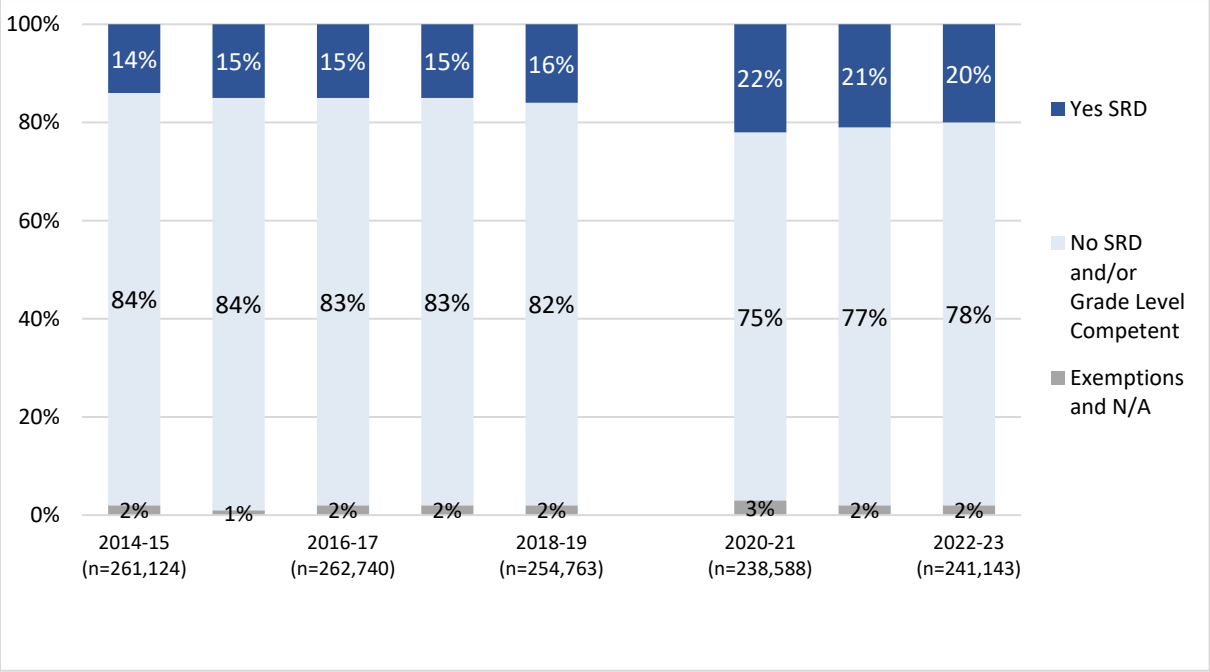
Recommendation: Consider providing additional per-pupil funding or flexibility in per-pupil funding to support students with reading challenges

in upper elementary grades. In addition to funding, the 45-hour training requirement could also be extended to 4th- and 5th-grade teachers.

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

Overall, the number of students being identified with SRDs has been slowly decreasing since the pandemic. Although the percentage of students identified with SRDs remains above the 16% identified in 2019, there has been a marginal decrease since the 2020–21 school year (Exhibit 45).

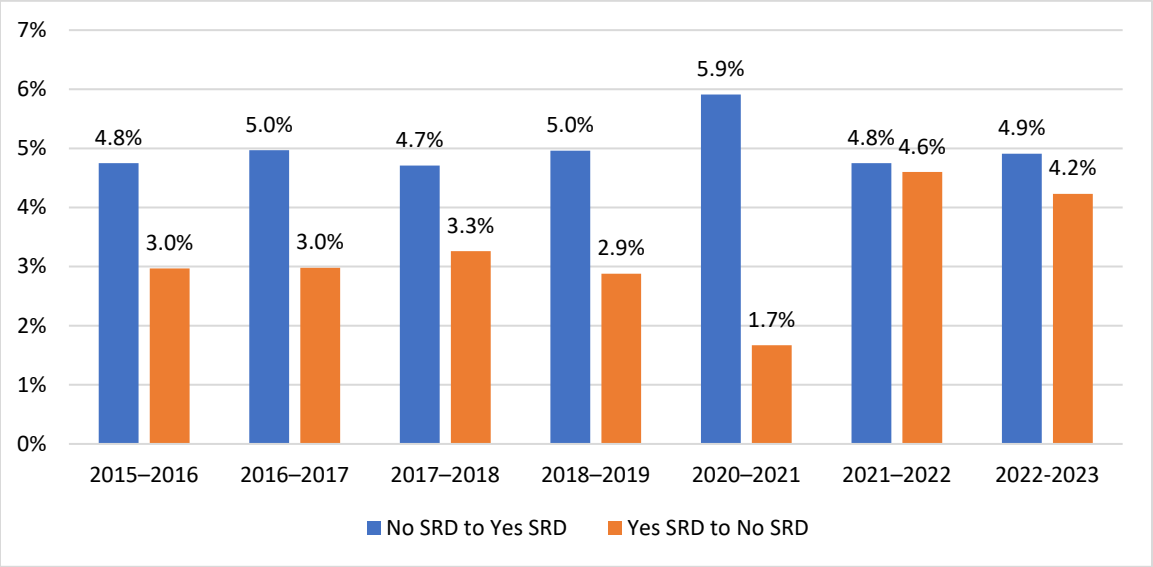
Exhibit 45. More Students Identified with SRD After COVID-19, but Percentage Has Been Slowly Decreasing Since 2020–21



Similar trends were evident when looking at movement between SRD identifications. Prior to the pandemic, each year, approximately 5% of students were newly identified with an SRD. This increased to 6% immediately following the pandemic and the related disruption to learning. In the past 2 years of

learning recovery, identification rates have returned to pre-pandemic levels (4.7% in 2021–22 and 4.9% in 2022–23) and larger percentages of students have exited from SRD status (Exhibit 46).

Exhibit 46. Rates from No SRD to SRD and from SRD to No SRD in 2023 Similar to Rates in 2022



It is important to note that **SRD identification rates differ substantially by student characteristics; that is, membership in typically underserved groups makes it more likely that students are identified with SRDs**. In 2022–23, students eligible for FRL, ELs, special education students, students absent 10% or more of the days enrolled during the school year, and non-White students were more likely than their peers not in those groups to be identified with an SRD. While each of these characteristics significantly impacted a student's SRD identification, the individual effect of a single student characteristic (except special education status) was lessened when all these factors were considered together, emphasizing the importance of understanding and supporting the whole child. In addition to individual characteristics, there were five school-level characteristics that impacted the likelihood of being identified with an SRD: the percentage of non-White students in the school, percentage of special education

students, percentage of students eligible for FRL, percentage of chronically absent students, and student mobility rate.

Recommendation: These findings strongly suggest that students in these typically undeserved groups may need additional support and that the level of these supports may differ depending on the school environment of the student. Districts and schools should prioritize READ Act funds and targeted supports for schools that have the highest concentrations of eligible students.

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

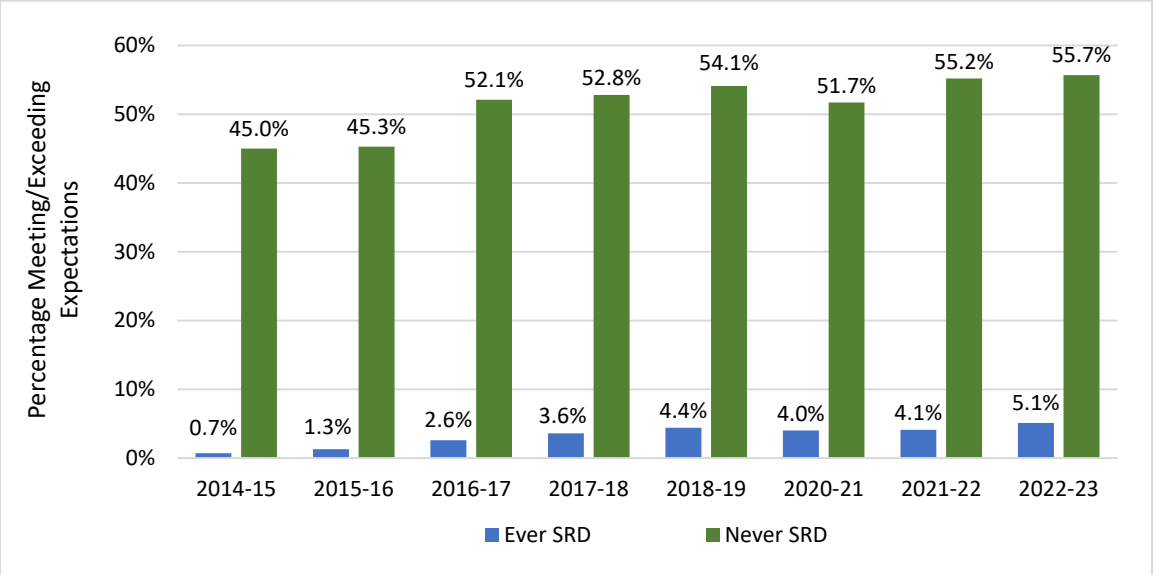
Trends in CMAS Performance

Students first take the CMAS assessment in the 3rd grade, the final year in which the READ Act interim assessments are given. Historically, students who had at any point in K–3 been identified with an SRD had very different success rates on the CMAS ELA exam than their peers who had never been identified with an SRD. Between 2016–17 and 2021–22, more than half of students who had never been identified with an SRD met or exceeded the proficiency standard on the CMAS ELA exam in 3rd grade (as determined by their overall composite score), compared with less than 4.5% of students who had ever been identified with an SRD (Exhibit 47).

Although the trend of disproportionality remains broadly in place in 2022–23, the proficiency rates of both groups of students (i.e., those never identified with an SRD and those identified with an SRD at some point between kindergarten and 3rd grade) reached all-time highs. In other words, more students than ever before who had at any point been identified with an SRD reached proficiency in 2023–24 (5.1% compared to 4.1% in 2021–22), while their peers who had never been identified with an SRD also reached a new highest

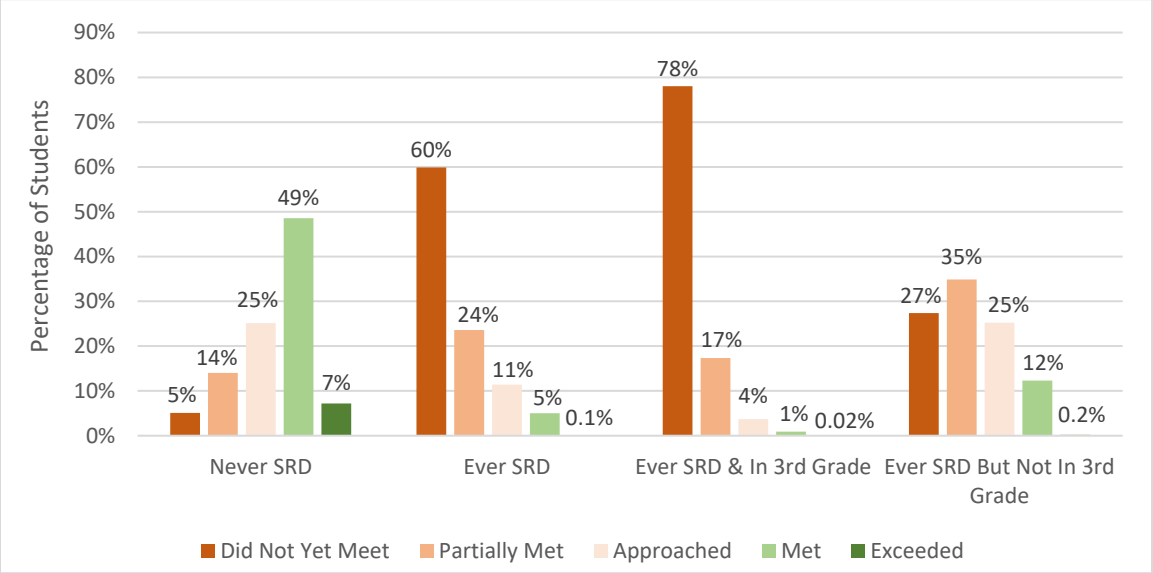
percentage of proficiency (55.7%,.5 percentage points higher than in 2022, which was up to that point the highest proficiency percentage from 2015 forward).

Exhibit 47. CMAS Proficiency Rates of Students Ever Identified with an SRD and Students Never Identified Have Slowly Improved Since 2020–21



There were also noticeable differences just within the group of students who were ever identified with an SRD at some point in K–3. **Students who were identified with an SRD in K–2 but were no longer identified with an SRD in 3rd grade performed higher on the CMAS assessment, on average, than students who were identified with an SRD in 3rd grade.** As shown in Exhibit 48, almost 13% of students who were no longer identified with an SRD in 3rd grade met or exceeded expectations on CMAS, while less than 1% of their peers who were identified with an SRD in 3rd grade reached these proficiency levels.

Exhibit 48. Students Who Exited SRD Status in 3rd Grade Outperformed Peers Identified with SRDs in 3rd Grade on CMAS



Furthermore, as in previous years, students with IEPs or ELs who were also identified with an SRD reached proficiency on the CMAS ELA exam at lower rates than their general education peers who had also been identified with SRDs. As seen with the overall population of students, **students with IEPs and ELs who were never identified with an SRD or were identified with an SRD at some point in K–3 displayed a slight increase in proficiency rates from 2021– 22.** Among students with IEPs, only 1.7% of those who were ever also identified with an SRD demonstrated proficiency on the CMAS exam (up .4 percentage points from 2021– 22), while those never identified with an SRD had a proficiency rate of 37.1% (2.8 percentage points higher than 2022). Similarly, among EL students, only 2.9% of those who were dually identified with an SRD demonstrated proficiency (up .4 percentage points from 2021– 22), while 37.3% of those never identified with an SRD reached proficiency (3 percentage points higher than 2021– 22).

Recommendation: These findings suggests that students with dual identifications continue to be underserved by the READ Act on their

journey to reading English at grade level by the end of 3rd grade. Alongside the confusion educators have expressed over the years around how to best serve dual-identified students (e.g., whether to prioritize a student's READ Plan or their IEP), this indicates that additional CDE implementation guidance is needed for educators to best serve these students.

What is the Impact of SRD Identification on Interim Assessment and CMAS Performance?

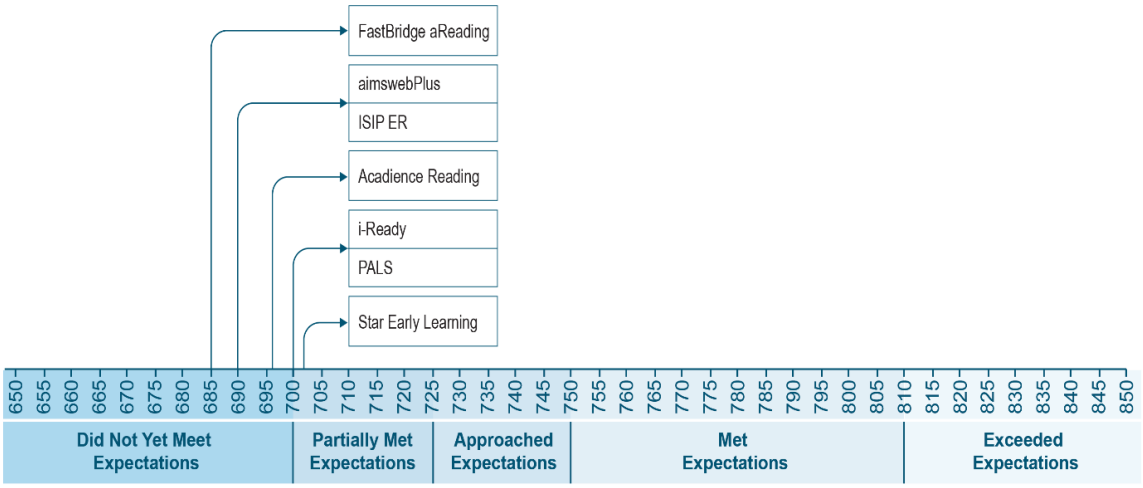
This year's analysis also examined the impact of SRD identification on later reading performance. Using a regression discontinuity design (RDD) approach, we were able to compare trends in performance on interim assessments and CMAS for students who were identified with SRDs and those who were right above the cutoff for identification. We found that **SRD identification in 2021–22 was largely ineffective in impacting student performance on the interim assessments in the 2022–23 school year.** The same trend was evident when examining the impact of SRD identification on 3rd-grade CMAS scores. The results indicate that SRD identification in 1st or 2nd grade may not have significantly impacted the CMAS performance of students at the end of 3rd grade, although some improvement among students identified with an SRD at some point in K–3 was observed.

How Do Interim Assessment Cut Scores Align with the CMAS ELA Scale?

As we have observed, very few students who are ever identified with an SRD in K–3 meet or exceed expectations on CMAS by the end of 3rd grade, although some improvement is observed for students who are no longer identified with an SRD by the end of 3rd grade. While this improvement (that is, the change from SRD identification to reading proficiency on CMAS) is a key goal of the READ Act, a better understanding of how much students are expected to grow is needed. Using an equipercentile linking procedure (Kolen & Brennan, 2004), we found that the **cut scores that are used to identify students with**

SRDs linked to the lower end of the CMAS ELA scale (they generally clustered from the end of the "Did Not Yet Meet Expectations" range to the beginning of the "Partially Met Expectations" range; Exhibit 49). This signifies that most students identified with an SRD in 3rd grade would be in the lowest category on the CMAS exam. It is clear, then, that students identified with an SRD would need to improve substantially in order to meet or exceed expectations on the CMAS exam. The results also show that many students who are not identified with an SRD according to their performance on the interim assessment would still need substantial assistance to demonstrate reading proficiency on CMAS.

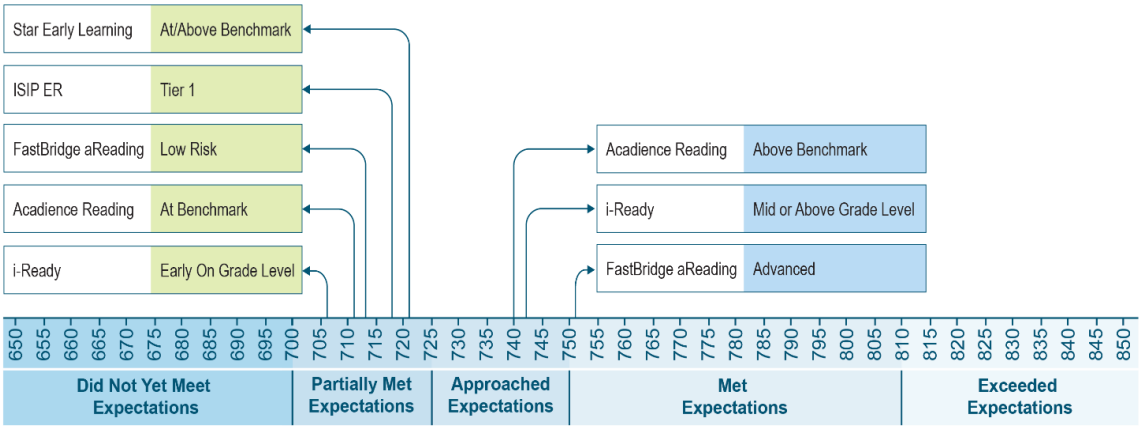
Exhibit 49. 3rd-Grade Interim Assessment SRD Cut Scores Range from "Did Not Yet Meet Expectations" to "Partially Met Expectations" on CMAS



Aside from the READ Act–specific SRD cut scores, most of the interim assessments also have more general "at-risk" cut scores that identify students at any level of risk of reading difficulty (not just significant risk). As educators might use these benchmark performance levels to determine which students need any level of support (not just READ Act support), we also linked these more general cut scores to the CMAS scale. These **cut scores that identify students at any level of risk** (those indicated in green in Exhibit 50) **link to scores within the**

"Partially Met Expectations" range on CMAS, suggesting that many students who are considered reading at grade level in 3rd grade according to the interim assessments are likely to not meet expectations on CMAS. This difference between interim assessment cut scores and CMAS cut scores in determining reading proficiency likely occurs for several reasons, including differences in content and difficulty, differences in assessment administration, and cut score-setting procedures.

Exhibit 50. Overall At-Risk Cut Scores Align to "Partially Met Expectations" Performance Level on CMAS Exam



Note. PALS and aimswebPlus were not included as only SRD cut scores were available.

Recommendation: Overall, the results call into question whether the goal of students identified with an SRD be proficient in reading by the end of 3rd grade is realistic. Although educators should typically avoid setting lower expectations for a specific group of students, it is also important to have reasonable metrics and pathways of student growth in a set period of time to determine the success of an intervention. The State Board should consider alternate measures of success, including growth on READ Act interim assessments or including the percentage of students partially meeting or approaching expectations on the CMAS exam as measures of success.

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Appendices

- Appendix 1: Data Sources
- Appendix 2: Year 4 Instructional Programs
- Appendix 3: Student Outcome Analyses

Appendix 1: Data Sources

Available Data

The 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;
- inventories of LEP staff and principals, reading coaches, and teachers at schools that received Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act funding and participated in READ Act activities;
- inventories of parents with a child/children identified with a significant reading deficiency (SRD); and
- site visits with a sample of schools receiving Early Literacy Grants (ELGs)_ and LEPs that received READ Act funding, with a focus on LEPs that potentially significantly impacted the 2021–22 interim assessment performance of students identified with an SRD in 2020–21.

The following sections describe these data sources and detail data-processing procedures, data issues that arose, and decisions that were made to resolve those issues.

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–12 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 Collection

CDE requires districts annually to report information regarding the prevalence of SRD identifications among K–3 students, through their READ Act collection, to determine per-pupil funding for districts. The READ Act data available for the evaluation currently span from 2013–2014 through 2022–2023 (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 (i.e., the first year of data collection for the READ Act) and discussions with CDE, the first year of data used for the analysis is from the 2014–2015 school year.

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- and reduced-price lunch [FRL] status; special education status; English-language proficiency status; and gifted status). These data are reported for all K–3 students enrolled in each district at the time of data submission. READ Plan designation and demographic information are also provided for 4th- through 12th-grade students who remained on a READ Plan after exiting 3rd grade. 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 2,015,684 K–3 observations across 8 years. READ Act designations and demographic information were also available for 312,500 4th- through 12th-grade observations across 6 years[30]; however, the data were not evaluated this year due to concerns over the quality and representativeness of the data.

[30] The 4th- through 12th-grade observations for the 2014–2015 and 2015–2016 school years were not included due to a large percentage of grade misclassifications.

Over 90% of K–3 student observations are recorded as taking a READ Act interim assessment that was approved during the 2022–23 school year. Some analyses for the evaluation are restricted to students taking these approved assessments.[31] These interim assessments include:

- aimswebPlus (English and Spanish)
- Acadience Reading
- Indicadores Dinámicos del Éxito en la Lectura (IDEL)
- FastBridge
- i-Ready
- ISIP (Reading and Lectura Temprana)
- PALS (English and Spanish)
- Star Early Learning

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, CMAS scores and their alternatives (which included the Colorado Spanish Language Arts [CSLA] assessment for eligible ELs[32] and the Colorado Alternate Assessment [CoAlt] for students with significant cognitive disabilities). The CMAS and CoAlt data available for the evaluation currently span from 2014–2015 through 2022–2023 (with the exception of 2019–2020) for 3rd-grade students and are only available for 2022–2023 for 4th- through 8th-grade students. The CSLA data available currently span from 2015–2016 through 2022–2023 for 3rd-grade students and are only available for 2022–2023 for 4th-grade students. CoAlt and CSLA data were available prior to the 2022–

[31] The list of currently approved READ Act interim assessments can be found at https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/readactassessments.

[32] The eligibility criteria for the CSLA assessment can be found at https://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/csla.

2023 school year; however, the data were not used for the evaluation as the student IDs could not be matched to the student IDs in other datasets provided.

As there were 11 different READ Act interim assessments that K–3 students could take, the CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt data provide the only consistent measure of academic success that is delivered statewide. Each year, CDE provides 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.

Demographic Data

CDE collects student demographic information in two different collections (i.e., an October collection and Student End-of-Year [SEOY] collection). The data available for the evaluation span from the 2014–2015 through 2022–2023 school years and include K–12 students in the October collection and K–8 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, language proficiency, language background, FRL status, IEP status, Section 504 handicapped status, gifted 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 primary analyses for the evaluation), 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 such as 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 year available. The K–3 and 4th-

through 12th-grade data were maintained in separate datasets as the evaluation focused primarily on the earlier grade levels.

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.[33] These data are currently available for the 2020–2021 through 2022–2023 school years.

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

To date, there have been six cohorts of Comprehensive ELG grantees, with over $30 million awarded in total across the lifespans of the first four cohorts (i.e., cohorts that completed the grant). 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

[33] Additional information about literacy program data and reporting requirements can be found at https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/readdatapipeline#literacyandassessment.

CDE, with the remainder coming from CDE's web page on these programs.[34] 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 Professional Development program. To date, the Professional Development program grants have been awarded four times (i.e., once per year from the 2020–2021 school year through the 2023–2024 school year). As with Comprehensive ELG data, the majority of ELG Professional Development data were obtained directly from CDE, with the remainder coming from CDE's webs page on these programs.[35] In general, data include an indicator of whether the school received the ELG Professional Development grant, an indicator of whether the school was part of a group (or not) during the ELG application process, and ELG Professional Development funding amounts.

READ Act Per-Pupil Funding

READ Act per-pupil funding data was provided by CDE for the 2014–2015 through 2022–2023 school years as the publicly available data was suppressed for districts with less than 16 students eligible for READ Act funding.

Publicly Available Contextual data

Publicly available school- and LEP-level data for the 2014–2015 through 2022–2023 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

[34] The publicly available Comprehensive ELG data can be found at https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/comprehensiveelg.

[35] The publicly available ELG Professional Development data can be found at https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/elgprofessionaldevelopment.

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 the NCES publicly available resources.

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 two longitudinal datasets (one for K–3 students and one for 4th- through 12th-grade students). The K–3 file was provided to CDE, along with an accompanying codebook containing descriptions of each variable and its associated values/codes.

Issues in Merging Student Data

Three student-level datasets were used to create the primary K–3 longitudinal file used for the evaluation: (1) READ Act dataset; (2) CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt state assessment dataset; and (3) demographic dataset. In merging these datasets, analysts attempted to use student ID, grade level, school code, and district code to ensure that the correct students were merged across each file. This method was also useful because some students had multiple observations within the demographic file due to switching schools and/or districts during the school year. As documented below, some data issues arose in cleaning and merging the three student-level files for the 2022–2023 school year. Once the 2022–2023 data were finalized, data were appended to the Year 3 evaluation dataset, which contained the information for previous years of the evaluation (i.e., 2014–2015 through 2021–2022).

In merging the 2022–2023 CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt state assessment data with the 2022–2023 READ Act data, about 7% of 3rd-grade students in the READ Act data did not have a corresponding CMAS, CSLA, or CoAlt score during the school year. Given the evaluation's focus on READ Act data, these students were included in the dataset and analysis. Once the READ Act and state assessment data were combined, demographic data were merged to provide additional characteristics of students. Only eight students in the

2022–2023 assessment file did not have a corresponding match in the SEOY demographic file or October demographic file.

The final Year 4 working data file for K–3 students contained 2,015,684 student-level observations, with each student observation containing assessment data, demographic information, and contextual information about the LEP and school they attended in a given year. The final 4th- through 12th-grade dataset contained 312,500 student-level observations and was cleaned in a similar manner; however, these data only contained CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt scores for the 2022–2023 school year (Exhibit A-1).

Exhibit A-1. Data Elements and Sources

Data Source(s)	Enrollment[a]	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	Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Status of Sample	Other Student Demographics	Interim Assessment Usage	Interim Assessment Scores	READ Act Interventions	Student Movement Between SRD Designations	CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt Scores and SRD Status
Publicly Available LEP- and School-Level Pupil Membership Data[e]	X	X	X	X										
Demographic Data, Provided by CDE						X	X	X	X					
READ Act SRD and READ Plan Data, Provided by CDE										X	X	X	X	X
CMAS, CSLA, and CoAlt Assessment Data, Provided by CDE														X
READ Act (Per-Pupil and ELG) Funding Data, Provided by CDE					X									
Publicly Available ELG Data[f]					X									
Publicly Available CDE District Revenue[g]					X									

[a] Membership by district/school and grade level (2015–2023).
[b] Membership by district, race/ethnicity, and gender (for LEPs) or membership by school, race/ethnicity, gender, and grade (2015–2023).
[c] Membership by district/school and instructional program; membership by district/school and free or reduced-price lunch eligibility (2015–2023).
[d] District/school mobility rates by instructional program service type (2015–2023).
[e] These data for previous years are available at https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rvprioryearpmdata.
[f] Data are available at https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/comprehensiveelg.
[g] Data are available at https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdefinance/revexp. Annual revenue for the 2022–2023 school year was not available at the time these reports were published.

LEP, Principal, Coach, and Teacher Inventories

LEP Inventory

The LEP inventory issued in Year 4 focused on READ Act implementation during the 2023–2024 school year. The primary topic areas inventoried 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; identifying and supporting students with SRDs after 3rd grade; the organization and provision of READ Act–specific instructional programs and assessments; LEPs' approaches to literacy; training for teaching reading, and ELG and Early Literacy Assessment Tool (ELAT) participation.

The inventory was administered from about December 1, 2023, to February 12, 2024. In total, 125 district administrators completed the LEP inventory and had their responses used for the evaluation. The LEP inventory respondents were relatively representative of the overall LEP population in Colorado in 2022–2023 in terms of their geographic characteristics (i.e., rural designation status, region, and setting; Exhibit A-2).

Exhibit A-2. Geographic Characteristics of LEP Inventory Respondents

Geographic Characteristic	Frequency (%) Among All LEPs in Colorado	Frequency (%) Among LEP Inventory Respondents
Rural Designation[a]		
Rural	25.3% (*n* = 37)	33.3% (*n* = 31)
Small Rural	74.7% (*n* = 109)	66.7% (*n* = 62)
Region[b]		
Northwest	11.5% (*n* = 23)	10.7% (*n* = 13)
Southwest	12.5% (*n* = 25)	13.1% (*n* = 16)
Northeast	17.5% (*n* = 35)	15.6% (*n* = 19)
Pikes Peak	15.0% (*n* = 30)	14.8% (*n* = 18)
West Central	7.0% (*n* = 14)	8.2% (*n* = 10)
North Central	10.5% (*n* = 21)	14.8% (*n* = 18)
Southeast	15.0% (*n* = 30)	10.7% (*n* = 13)
Metro	11.0% (*n* = 22)	12.3% (*n* = 15)
Setting		
Remote	46.2% (*n* = 85)	39.3% (*n* = 48)
Outlying Town	26.7% (*n* = 49)	30.3% (*n* = 37)
Urban-Suburban	9.2% (*n* = 17)	10.7% (*n* = 13)
Denver Metro	8.2% (*n* = 15)	10.7% (*n* = 13)
Outlying City	7.1% (*n* = 13)	7.4% (*n* = 9)
Colorado BOCES	2.7% (*n* = 5)	1.6% (*n* = 2)

[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.
Note. BOCES = Boards of Cooperative Educational Services.

Principal, Coach, and Teacher Inventory

WestEd also inventoried principals, K–3 reading coaches, and K–3 reading teachers for the Year 4 evaluation. Primary topic areas inventoried were staff's educational and professional backgrounds; perceived levels of influence in 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; 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; identifying and supporting students with SRDs after 3rd grade; PD; the 45-hour teacher training requirement; and ELG and ELAT participation.

Inventories were administered from about December 1, 2023, to February 12, 2024. In total, 147 principals (from 147 schools), 140 reading coaches (from 117 schools), and 541 teachers (from 177 schools) completed their respective inventories and had their responses used for the evaluation. School staff respondents were relatively representative of the overall school population in Colorado in terms of school locale (Exhibit A-3), with school respondents most likely to come from city schools and suburban schools. However, the distribution of LEPs of these school respondents differed from the overall state, with school respondents more likely to come from rural districts (rather than small rural districts) and LEPs in the Denver metro and urban-suburban areas.

Exhibit A-3. Geographic Characteristics of School Inventory Respondents

Geographic Characteristic	Frequency (%) Among All Schools in Colorado	Frequency (%) Among School Inventory Respondents
School Locale		
City: Large	20.2% (*n* = 281)	21.8% (*n* = 57)
City: Mid	10.1% (*n* = 141)	8.8% (*n* = 23)
City: Small	3.0% (*n* = 41)	3.4% (*n* = 9)
Suburb: Large	23.4% (*n* = 326)	21.4% (*n* = 56)
Suburb: Mid	2.7% (*n* = 37)	3.8% (*n* = 10)
Suburb: Small	2.5% (*n* = 35)	2.3% (*n* = 6)
Town: Fringe	2.2% (*n* = 31)	1.9% (*n* = 5)
Town: Distant	1.9% (*n* = 26)	3.8% (*n* = 10)
Town: Remote	7.4% (*n* = 103)	10.3% (*n* = 27)
Rural: Fringe	8.1% (*n* = 113)	11.1% (*n* = 29)
Rural: Distant	7.1% (*n* = 99)	4.2% (*n* = 11)
Rural: Remote	11.4% (*n* = 158)	7.3% (*n* = 19)
Rural Designation		
Rural	25.3% (*n* = 37)	45.5% (*n* = 15)
Small Rural	74.7% (*n* = 109)	55.5% (*n* = 18)
Region		
Northwest	10.9% (*n* = 20)	10.3% (*n* = 6)
Southwest	13.1% (*n* = 24)	8.6% (*n* = 5)
Northeast	17.5% (*n* = 32)	5.2% (*n* = 3)
Pikes Peak	15.3% (*n* = 28)	24.1% (*n* = 14)
West Central	6.6% (*n* = 12)	6.9% (*n* = 4)
North Central	11.5% (*n* = 21)	17.2% (*n* = 10)
Southeast	14.8% (*n* = 27)	10.3% (*n* = 6)
Metro	10.4% (*n* = 19)	17.2% (*n* = 10)
Setting		
Remote	46.2% (*n* = 85)	18.6% (*n* = 11)
Outlying Town	26.6% (*n* = 49)	27.1% (*n* = 16)
Urban-Suburban	9.2% (*n* = 17)	23.7% (*n* = 14)
Denver Metro	8.2% (*n* = 15)	17.0% (*n* = 10)
Outlying City	7.1% (*n* = 13)	11.9% (*n* = 7)
Colorado BOCES	2.7% (*n* = 5)	1.7% (*n* = 1)

Note. The state-level geographic data included come from the 2022–23 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.

Parent Inventory

WestEd also inventoried parents of K–3 students for the Year 4 evaluation. Primary topic areas inventoried were the child's EL, disability, and IEP status; sufficiency of EL and IEP resources; overall understanding of the Colorado READ Act and SRD identification; the child's SRD identification status; notification method of child's SRD identification; involvement with SRD identification process; knowledge about services available to students identification with an SRD; 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; comfort with implementing READ Plan activities at home; availability of school supports to implement READ Plan activities at home; and improvement of reading skills due to the child's READ Plan.

The inventory was administered from about December 1, 2023, to February 12, 2024. In total, 566 parents completed the inventory, with 393 of those parents reporting that their student was currently on a READ Plan (or had been at some point previously).

Site Visits

LEP Site Visits

From January to March 2024, evaluation team members conducted on-site visits at 12 schools that received READ Act per-pupil funding (Exhibit A-4 for the list of schools). Prior to each site visit, district and school staff members were asked to provide artifacts such as sample 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 12 sites, identify lessons learned, and help state leaders understand READ Act implementation.

Exhibit A-4. Site Visit Local Education Providers and Schools

Local Education Provider	School
Littleton 6	Mark Hopkins Elementary School
Douglas County RE-1	Cherokee Trail Elementary School
Eagle County RE-50	Avon Elementary School
Widefield 3	M.L. King Elementary School
Fountain 8	Weikel Elementary School
Pueblo City 70	North Mesa Elementary School
Colorado Springs 11	Bristol Elementary School
Johnstown-Milliken RE-5J	Pioneer Ridge Elementary School
Montezuma-Cortez RE-1	Kemper Elementary School
Montrose County RE-1J	Johnson Elementary School
Roaring Fork RE-1	Basalt Elementary School
Thompson R2-J	Centennial 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 ELG. From January through March 2024, the evaluation team conducted visits with 15 ELG sites that were selected to represent a variety of locales across the state, including a mix of urban and rural communities. Selected sites also were drawn from across ELG funding cohorts that have taken place over time; some sites had already completed their multiyear ELGs, while others had recently started or were in the midst of implementing grant activities. This mix of sites allowed the

evaluation team to hear from educators and school and district leaders representing a variety of settings and perspectives.

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;
3. lessons learned regarding ELG external literacy consultants; and
4. other successes and challenges.

In the current evaluation year, the evaluation team placed an added focus on gathering data on the successes and challenges of schools working with these external consultants. In particular, the site visits included specific questions pertaining to how external consultants were deployed in schools, the characteristics that made them more or less effective working with teachers, and overall challenges and successes in working with these consultants. In addition, the evaluation team held a focus group with a group of literacy consultants who are currently on CDE's approved list to work with ELG schools. This focus group was designed to get input from the consultants' perspectives on the challenges of working with teachers and how they overcome these challenges to maximize success.

Site visit interviews included questions designed to gather information from school and district leaders about their experiences applying for an ELG. These questions are important not only to inform CDE and state policymakers about the application process, but also to provide insight into whether the existing process might encourage or hinder future districts from applying for grants, and whether districts that have been through the process can offer any lessons learned to be shared with future school and district leaders.

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 15 sites, identify lessons learned, and help state leaders understand ELG impacts.

Exhibit A-5. Early Literacy Grant Site Visit Schools and Local Education Providers

Local Education Provider	Early Literacy Grant School
Colorado Springs School District 11	Twain Elementary School
Cripple Creek-Victor RE-1	Cresson Elementary School
Adams County 14	Rose Hill Elementary School
Ellicott 22	Ellicott Elementary School
Park County RE	Edith Teter Elementary School
Southeastern BOCES	Campo Elementary School
Southeastern BOCES	Eads Elementary School
Southeastern BOCES	Granada Elementary School
Charter School Institute	Global Village Academy - Aurora
Delta County School District	Garnet Mesa Elementary School
Denver Public Schools	Eagleton Elementary School
Denver Public Schools	Godsman Elementary School
Durango 9-R	Sunnyside Elementary School
Weld RE-1	Pete Mirich Elementary School
Weld RE-1	Platteville Elementary School

Appendix 2: Year 4 Instructional Programs

Exhibit A-6. Instructional Programs Used by Site Visit Schools

School	Core	Supplemental	Intervention	4th–5th Grade	Other
1	K–2: Superkids Reading Program & SLI[a] 3rd grade: CKLA	K-3: i-Ready (Curriculum Associates), Superkids Foundational Skills Kit Students with READ Plans: 95 Percent Group materials (including 95 Percent Group Multisyllable Routine Cards and 95 Percent Group Phonological Awareness PA Lessons Deluxe Kit)[e] Students with IEPS on READ Plans did not use these materials but used Educational Support System resources instead.	i-Ready Phonological & Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Vocabulary, and Listening and Reading Comprehension, Core 5 Reading (Lexia)	The school used CKLA for 4th- and 5th-grade core curriculum and SLI for intervention programming. In 4th and 5th grades, 95 Percent Group materials were used to supplement core programming when needed. As with K–3, staff used 95 Percent Group materials (including 95 Percent Group Multisyllable Routine Cards and 95 Percent Group Phonological Awareness PA Lessons Deluxe Kit) with most 4th-grade students with READ Plans for supplemental programming. Some students with IEPS on READ Plans did not use these materials but used ESS resources instead.	The school used SLI as its main approach to reading instruction.

School	Core	Supplemental	Intervention	4th–5th Grade	Other
2	Benchmark Workshop	K–1: Bridge the Gap (Heggerty)[e] K–3: Orton-Gillingham – IMSE, MobyMax[a] 1st grade: Boost Reading (Amplify) 2nd grade: CR Success Learning 3rd grade: Reading Plus	K–2: Blast (Really Great Reading) K–3: Orton-Gillingham IMSE 3rd grade: HD Word (Really Great Reading)	The school used the same core instructional program (Benchmark Workshop) for 4th–5th grades as for K–3. The school also used Reading Plus and MobyMax as supplemental instructional programs for 4th–5th grades.	The school did not use other K–3 reading materials outside of those on the Advisory List.
3	Wonders 2020 (McGraw Hill)	K–2: Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum (Literacy Resources), Multi-Sensory Education materials (Orton-Gillingham), mCLASS Amplify Reading Edition (Amplify)	K–2: Heggerty Phonemic Awareness for K–2[d] Grades 3–5: Bridge the Gap (Heggerty) Institute for Multi-Sensory Education materials (Orton-Gillingham) Wonders Leveled Readers[a] Phonological Awareness, Screener for Intervention, Phonological Awareness PA Lessons Deluxe Kit (95 Percent Group)	The 4th- and 5th-grade core, supplemental, and intervention programs were the same as for K–3 with the exception of Heggerty Phonemic Awareness. The school used Bridge the Gap instead of Heggerty Phonemic Awareness for 4th- and 5th-grade interventions.	The school did not report using other K–3 reading materials.

School	Core	Supplemental	Intervention	4th–5th Grade	Other
4	Benchmark Advance	K–3: Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum, i-Ready Reading K–2: Secret Stories[a] 1st grade: Yoshimoto Orton-Gillingham 3rd grade: University of Florida Institute materials[a]	K: Yoshimoto Orton-Gillingham K–2: Heggerty Phonemic Awareness[d] K–3: i-Ready Reading 1st and 2nd grade: Orton-Gillingham Institute for Multi-Sensory Education 3rd grade: Heggerty Bridge the Gap	The school used Benchmark Advance for core programming for students in 4th and 5th grade. For supplemental programming, it used University of Florida Institute materials and i-Ready Teacher Toolbox, and for intervention programming it used Heggerty Bridge the Gap, Benchmark Advance, Intervention Classroom Kit, and i-Ready Reading. The school reported using University of Florida Institute materials to close gaps in phonics skills for 4th and 5th graders.	The school reported that[t] it did not use reading materials beyond those listed.
5	K–3: Being a Reader, Second Edition (2021)	K–3: mCLASS Amplify Reading Edition (Amplify), Core 5 Reading	SIPPS and the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum[d] Staff primarily used the Heggerty program in kindergarten and 1st grades to give students more resources to learn and practice phonemic awareness.	The school reported that it used the same core, supplemental, and intervention programs to support students who needed reading interventions in the 4th and 5th grades as it used for students in K–3.	Staff reported using reading materials from the Florida Center for Reading Research and from other sources they felt provided valid, scientifically sound reading materials.

School	Core	Supplemental	Intervention	4th–5th Grade	Other
6	K–2: SuperKids (Zaner Bloser) 3rd grade: Into Reading (HMH)	K–2: Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum (Literacy Resources), Nancy Fetzer's Writing Curriculum,[a] and Yoshimoto Orton-Gillingham The school reported no supplemental reading programs used for 3rd grade.	K–3: Really Great Reading: Countdown, Blast, and HD Word, Wilson Reading System, Yoshimoto Orton-Gillingham, 3rd grade: Heggerty Bridge the Gap	The district used Into Reading (HMH) for the core program in grades 4 and 5. The district used Really Great Reading, Yoshimoto Orton-Gillingham, Wilson, and Heggerty Bridging the Gap as intervention programs in grades 4 and 5.	The school did not report using programs other than those listed above for instructional, supplemental, and intervention programming.
7	1st–3rd grade: Into Reading and Arriba la Lectura (HMH)	K–3: iStation Espanol Lectura Temprana (iStation), Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum (Literacy Resources), and Fundations (Wilson)	K–3: iStation Spanish and Yoshimoto Orton-Gillingham 1st–3rd grade: Read Naturally (Read Live)	The school used Into Reading and Arriba la Lectura (HMH) for the core reading program in grades 4 and 5. The school used iStation Spanish as the supplemental program, and iStation Spanish, OG, and Read Naturally as the intervention programs in grades 4 and 5.	The school used multiple K–3 reading materials to supplement instructional programs. These included Heggerty Bridge the Gap (Literacy Resources), Ed Mark (Mind Resources)[a], Sonday System (Winsor Learning), and SPIRE (EPS Learning).
8	Benchmark Workshop (Benchmark Education)	The school reported that the K–3 supplemental reading instruction consisted of teacher-selected materials, and that it did not have a specific supplemental instructional program.	Yoshimoto Orton-Gillingham and Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words (SIPPS, Center for the Collaborative Classroom)	For 4th- and 5th-grade core reading instruction, the school used Benchmark Workshop. For the intervention program, it used Yoshimoto Orton-Gillingham.	The school used Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum (Curriculum Resources), resources from the University of Florida Learning Institute, Jan Richardson stories, CKLA (Amplify) materials, and Handwriting Without Tears as additional K–3 reading materials.

School	Core	Supplemental	Intervention	4th–5th Grade	Other
9	K–3: ReadyGEN[a] K–2: Reading Foundations Skills Block,[a] Heggerty Phonemic Awareness[c] K–1: Estrellita (Estrellita)[a] 1st grade: Lunita (Estrellita)[a] 2nd and 3rd grade: Palabras a Su Paso (Savvas)[a]	3rd grade: 95 Percent Group materials	K–3: Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words (SIPPS) (Center for the Collaborative Classroom), Esperanza Spanish Program (Valley Speech Language and Learning Center) Staff used Wilson Reading System (Wilson Language Training) and Read Live (Read Naturally) with some students with disabilities for intervention programming.	The school served students in prekindergarten through 4th grade (not 5th grade). For 4th grade, the school reported using ReadyGEN and Palabras a Su Paso for core programming, 95% Group materials for supplemental programming, and SIPPS and Esperanza for intervention programming. The school used 95 Percent Group Word Study (on the Advisory List for supplemental programming), Multisyllable Routine Cards & Vocabulary Surge A for 3rd grade (on the Advisory List for intervention programming), and Vocabulary Surge B for 4th grade.	The school did not report using other K–3 reading materials. In the observed kindergarten class, staff used Yoshimoto Orton-Gillingham materials.

School	Core	Supplemental	Intervention	4th–5th Grade	Other
10	ReadyGEN[b]	K–3: Fundations (Wilson) K–2: Core 5 Reading (Lexia) Kindergarten: Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum (Literacy Resources)	Kindergarten: Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum,[d] Core 5 Reading, Fundations,[f] and research-based practices influenced by Orton-Gillingham. 1st grade: Core 5 Reading, Fundations,[f] and research-based practices influenced by Orton-Gillingham 2nd grade: Core 5 Reading 3rd grade: i-Ready	The school reported using ReadyGEN for core reading instruction and i-Ready lessons for intervention programming in 4th and 5th grades.	The school did not report using other K–3 reading materials.
11	Benchmark Advance 2022 (Benchmark Education)	K–3: Saxon Phonics[a] 2nd grade: Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum (Literacy Resources)	K–5: Core 5 Reading (Lexia)	The school reported using Benchmark Advance for core programming in 4th and 5th grade and Core 5 Reading for intervention programming. The school created READ Plans for students identified with SRDs in 4th or 5th grade.	Staff reported using Teachers Pay Teachers and other websites to find other K–3 reading materials to use in their classes. Staff reported that materials they selected were aligned to the science of reading, but they were not sure that all K–3 educators were consistent in ensuring such alignment.

School	Core	Supplemental	Intervention	4th–5th Grade	Other
12	K–3: Into Reading (HMH)	K: Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum (Literacy Resources) 1st grade: Secret Stories (Katie Garner)[a]	K–3: i-Ready 1st–3rd grade: SIPPS (Center for the Collaborative Classroom) 2nd–3rd grade: Read Naturally Encore II (Read Naturally)	The school used EL Education for 4th- and 5th-grade instructional programming. For 4th- and 5th-grade intervention programming, the school used i-Ready, SIPPS, and Read Naturally.	The school reported using The Six-Minute Solution as an additional material.

[a] Not on Advisory list.
[b] The school adopted this program prior to the establishment of the Advisory List, and ReadyGEN was not on the Advisory List for core instruction. However, the school reported that CDE approved its use of ReadyGEN for K–3 students.
[c] The program was on the Advisory List of Instructional Programming as a supplemental approved program but is the core program for the school.
[d] The program was on the Advisory List of Instructional Programming as a supplemental approved program but is an intervention program for the school.
[e] The program was on the Advisory List of Instructional Programming as an intervention approved program but is a supplemental program for the school.
[f] The school reported that CDE had approved its use of Fundations with K–3 students.

Appendix 3: Student Outcome Analyses

In addition to the descriptive statistics presented during the student outcome chapters (Chapters 7 and 8), several regression models were used to further examine student performance on the READ Act interim assessments and CMAS ELA assessment, including (1) a multilevel logistic regression model to examine the impact of student and school characteristics on SRD identification, (2) two multilevel linear regression models to examine the impact of student and school characteristics on CMAS performance in 3rd grade and in 4th through 8th grade, and (3) a regression discontinuity design (RDD) model to examine the impact of SRD identification on a student's subsequent literacy assessment performance. Additional details about these models are included below.

Multilevel Regression Models

Multilevel logistic and linear regression models were used to estimate the impact of student and school characteristics on SRD identification and CMAS performance. Multilevel models were used to account for the natural grouping of students (level 1) within schools (level 2), as this hierarchical structure can affect impact estimates. In each of the models, predictors (i.e., the student- and school-level characteristics) were selected using a forward stepwise approach, whereby each predictor was added individually and kept in the model if it significantly improved the fit of the model.

Multilevel Logistic Regression Model

For the multilevel logistic regression model described in Chapter 7, student SRD identification status (as assigned by the state) in 2022–23 was used as the outcome of interest. Students who were classified as exempt (i.e., did not receive a status of being identified with an SRD or not being identified with an SRD) were excluded from the analysis (2% of students); students missing student-level characteristics of interest were also excluded (0.2% of students).

After using the forward stepwise approach, the model included six student-level predictors and five school-level predictors. Student-level predictors included special education status, EL status, FRL status, gender, race/ethnicity, and chronically absent status, while school-level predictors included the percentage of non-White students in the school, percentage of special education students, percentage of students eligible for FRL, percentage of chronically absent students, and school-level student mobility rate. The percentage of EL students and whether a school was currently participating in an ELG were not significant predictors of SRD identification and were not included in the model. The school-level data were generated by aggregating the student-level variables to the school-level as some of the publicly available school-level data was suppressed due to small school populations. Additionally, school-level predictors were centered at the grand mean—that is, a value of zero for the school-level predictor represented the average school for that characteristic. No interactions between predictors or random slopes were included in the model.

Exhibit A-6 displays the results of the multilevel logistic regression model used to examine the impact of school and student characteristics on SRD identification.

Exhibit A-7. Multilevel Logistic Regression Results

Predictors	Odds Ratio	Standard Error	P-value
Special education status	7.58	0.111	<0.001
English learner status	2.12	0.036	<0.001
Free- and reduced-price lunch status	1.74	0.025	<0.001
Gender	1.05	0.012	<0.001
Race/ethnicity			<0.001
American Indian/Native Alaskan	1.61	0.112	<0.001
Asian	0.84	0.032	<0.001
Black/African American	1.42	0.040	<0.001
Hispanic/Latino	1.32	0.021	<0.001
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	1.75	0.154	<0.001
Two or more races	1.06	0.030	0.050
Chronically absent status	1.54	0.020	<0.001
School-level % of Non-White students	0.99	0.001	<0.001
School-level % of special education students	0.99	0.003	0.025
School-level % of FRL-eligible students	1.01	0.001	<0.001
School-level chronically absent rate	1.01	0.002	<0.001
School-level mobility rate	1.02	0.003	<0.001
Constant	0.37	0.019	<0.001

Multilevel Linear Regression Models

For the two multilevel linear regression models described in Chapter 8, student CMAS ELA scaled scores in 2022–23 were used as the outcome of interest—one model was used for the 3rd-grade sample of students and the other was used for students in 4th through 8th grades. About 10% of 3rd-grade students were not included in the analysis because they were missing CMAS scaled scores (an additional 0.2% were missing student-level characteristics of interest); and about 17% of the 4th- through 8th-grade sample of students were not included due to missing CMAS scores. The 4th- through 8th-grade sample used for the analysis was not representative of the state; it only contained students who were reported in 3rd grade as being identified with an SRD or remaining on a READ Plan.

Both models contained the same predictors as the multilevel logistic regression model discussed previously, excluding two school-level predictors (the school-level percentage of special education students and percentage of non-White students) which were not found to be significant predictors of CMAS ELA performance.

Exhibit A-8 displays the unstandardized impact estimates (along with their standard errors) and standardized coefficients for each model.

Exhibit A-8. Multilevel linear regression results

Variables	Grade 3		Grades 4–8	
	Unstandardized Estimates	Standardized Coefficients	Unstandardized Estimates	Standardized Coefficients
Special education status	-38.53*** (0.45)	-0.30	-19.33*** (0.26)	-0.34
English learner status	-13.48*** (0.51)	-0.11	-3.70*** (0.32)	-0.06
Free- and reduced-price lunch status	-14.37*** (0.38)	-0.16	-4.62*** (0.31)	-0.08
Gender	3.63*** (0.30)	0.04	4.42*** (0.24)	0.08
Race/ethnicity				
American Indian/Native Alaskan	-9.39*** (1.98)	-0.02	-4.71*** (1.31)	-0.02
Asian	5.39*** (0.88)	0.02	3.45*** (0.86)	0.02
Black/African American	-10.56*** (0.78)	-0.05	-6.98*** (0.56)	-0.06
Hispanic/Latino	-8.02*** (0.41)	-0.09	-4.45*** (0.35)	-0.08
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	-11.18*** (2.65)	-0.01	-8.65*** (1.90)	-0.02
Two or more races	0.05 (0.66)	0.0003	-2.08*** (0.67)	-0.01
Chronically absent status	-7.30*** (0.38)	-0.07	-4.87*** (0.27)	-0.08
School-level FRL rate	-0.16*** (0.02)	-0.10	-0.07*** (0.01)	-0.07
School-level chronically absent rate	-0.13*** (0.03)	-0.04	-0.04** (0.02)	-0.02
School-level mobility rate	-0.41*** (0.07)	-0.06	-0.27*** (0.04)	-0.06
Constant	752.75*** (0.45)		723.89*** (0.40)	

Note. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$.

Regression Discontinuity Design

The RDD technique was used to provide a causal estimate of the impact of being identified with an SRD (according to a student's interim assessment score) on literacy assessment performance in 2022–23. RDD is a research method with strong causal validity that can be used when access or eligibility for a treatment/program is clearly defined by a cutoff—in this case, the SRD cut score on each of the interim assessments. Although interim assessments are not the only factors that are used to determine access to READ Act services, there is a strong alignment between the vendor-assigned SRD identification and state-assigned identification. Of the 241,323 students in the 2021–22 school year with state- and vendor-assigned identifications (97% of students), 99.8% had the same state- and vendor-assigned identifications. Given this alignment, the RDD analysis lends itself well to the examination of the impact of SRD identification on subsequent student performance.

Using this method, we compared the 2022–23 literacy performance (interim assessment performance in Chapter 7 and 3rd-grade CMAS performance in Chapter 8) of students on either side of the cutoff (i.e., students identified with an SRD and students not identified with an SRD). Conceptually, students on either side of the cutoff (within a specific bandwidth) are not expected to differ meaningfully, mimicking a randomized control trial at the SRD cut score.

The analysis was conducted using the rdrobust package in Stata (Calonico et al., 2017), with several analytic decisions being made using the package to shape the structure of the RDD equation. A linear functional form of the relationship between the interim assessment performance (determining SRD identification) and the outcome literacy performance was used and the "bandwidth" (i.e., the range of data analyzed on either side of the SRD cut score) was selected to minimize the mean squared error of the lines of best fit on either side of the threshold. Doing so means that every analysis used a linear form, but

each one may have had a different bandwidth (which may not have been symmetric on either side of the threshold). Additionally, to increase power in districts and regions with low sample sizes, we controlled for gender, FRL status, special education status, and EL status. Finally, for the purposes of the analysis, a sample size was considered insufficient if there were less than 100 students within the bandwidth on either side of the SRD cut score.

Impact on Interim Assessment Performance

In Chapter 7, RDD was used to examine the impact of SRD identification in 2021–22 on interim assessment performance in 2022–23. The analytic sample consisted of 163,965 students with interim assessment scores in both the 2021–22 and 2022–23 school years. Students without a recorded numeric assessment score, such as exempt students and students who did not transition from one grade to the next in the expected manner were not used for the analysis (~4% of the sample).

As the interim assessments use different scales, the prescore (from 2021–22) and outcome score (from 2022–23) were normed prior to the analysis so that the scores for each assessment were on the same scale—the prescore was also centered around the normed SRD cut score. Additionally, the prescore was reverse-coded so that a positive effect size represents a positive impact of being identified with an SRD on subsequent early literacy performance.

Impact on CMAS Performance

In Chapter 8, RDD was used to examine the impact of SRD identification in 2020–21 (1st grade) and 2021–22 (2nd grade) on 3rd-grade CMAS performance in 2022–23. The prescores (i.e., interim assessment scores in 1st and 2nd grade) were normed, centered, and reverse-coded, as in Chapter 7; however, the outcome score (i.e., CMAS scaled scores in 3rd grade) was not normed, as the outcome was from a single assessment (compared to multiple interim assessments in Chapter 7).

Limitations of RD Analysis

As discussed in Chapter 7, there are limitations to the RDD analysis. In addition to those previously discussed, future analyses could (1) consider different techniques to select the bandwidth for each model, (2) use Bayesian shrinkage estimation techniques to “shrink” the individual district effect sizes toward the true grand mean, and (3) adjust the p-values for multiple hypothesis testing.