

Kindergarten through Grade 4 Literacy Report 2021-2022



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Executive Summary

The last several years have been unpredictable for students, families, teachers, and schools. During this time, Ohio's education community has responded by working diligently to identify and address the unique needs of their communities while ensuring their students continue to receive a quality education.

The Ohio Department of Education's collective effort, [Future Forward Ohio](#), encompasses the state's strategic priorities for helping students recover from the impact of the pandemic. The Department is committed to serving the needs of Ohio's students, with special attention on raising literacy achievement, accelerating learning, strengthening workforce readiness and supporting student and staff wellness. Advancing these priorities is critical to the success of Ohio's communities, families and, most importantly, students.

As highlighted in the [2021-2022 State Report Card](#), student achievement is up statewide, mirroring the resiliency of students and the dedication and effectiveness of Ohio educators. The data in this Kindergarten through Grade 4 Literacy Report for school year 2021-2022 acknowledges some of the challenges that remain in working to ensure that students are proficient readers.

Key findings include:

- Only 59.8% of third graders and 62.5% of fourth graders scored proficient or higher on the respective state ELA test.
- 30% of students in kindergarten through grade 3 with Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans in the fall progressed to grade-level reading by the spring, which was similar to the rate of growth in 2020-2021.
- The most frequently reported interventions were Explicit Intervention in Phonemic Awareness, Explicit Intervention in Decoding, Explicit Intervention in Comprehension, Interventions Designed around Leveled Texts, and Explicit Intervention in Sight Word Recognition.
- Evidence indicates that third grade students on Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans made significant progress in reading throughout the academic year.

Reporting of Reading Achievement

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

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

This report is organized in four sections:

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

reading below grade level.

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

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

The results of the reading diagnostic assessment administered at the beginning of each school year determine whether a child is “on track” or “not on track” to read at his or her current grade level. A child who is on track is reading at the level set by [Ohio's Learning Standards](#) for the end of his or her previous grade. The reading diagnostic assessment is only required to be administered to children in kindergarten through grade 3. Table 1, below, includes the numbers and percentages of students in kindergarten through grade 3 who have scored on track and not on track on a state-approved reading diagnostic assessment in the 2021-2022 school year. Additional student performance data is available in the spreadsheet accompanying this report.

Table 1 also shows the numbers and percentages of students in grades 3 and 4 who scored proficient or not proficient on Ohio’s State Test for English language arts in the 2021-2022 school year. Ohio’s State Test for English language arts measures student proficiency on Ohio’s Learning Standards for English language arts. Third-grade students first take the test in the fall, at which point the test serves as an early marker of student performance on the standards. Third-grade students who do not score at least at the “proficient” level in the fall are required to take the test again in the spring. Students who score at least at the “proficient” level in the fall also may take the test in the spring. The numbers and percentages in the column titled “Ohio’s State Test for English Language Arts Assessment: Proficiency Status” contain the highest score a student received on either the fall or spring grade 3 English language arts assessment in the 2021-2022 school year. Ohio’s State Test in grade 4 English language arts is administered once per year in the spring. *Notably, only 59.8% of third graders and 62.5% of fourth graders scored proficient or higher on the respective state ELA test.*

Table 1: Kindergarten through Grade 4 Students Reading Performance (2021-2022)

Grade Level	Ohio’s State Test for English Language Arts Assessment: Proficiency Status			
	On Track	Not On Track	Proficient	Not Proficient
Kindergarten	60.2% (75,475)	39.8% (49,904)	N/A	N/A
Grade 1	61.7% (72,410)	38.3% (44,930)	N/A	N/A
Grade 2	55.3% (67,028)	44.7% (54,252)	N/A	N/A
Grade 3	56.1% (68,109)	43.9% (53,190)	59.8% (74,639)	40.2% (50,161)
Grade 4	N/A * (Not Available)	N/A	62.5% (78,841)	37.5% (44,892)

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

Section 2: Reading Achievement Progress for Kindergarten through Grade 3 Students on Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans

All Ohio districts and community schools must screen kindergarten through grade 3 students for reading difficulties using the fall reading diagnostic at the beginning of each school year. For each student who is not on track (is reading below grade level), the school also must:

- Administer any necessary informal or formal diagnostic assessments to determine the instructional needs of the student;
- Immediately provide reading instruction and/or intervention using research-based reading strategies that have been shown to be successful in improving reading among low-performing readers and are targeted at the student’s identified reading deficiencies; and
- Develop a Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan within 60 days of receiving the student’s diagnostic result.

Each student will remain on a Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan until the student scores on track for grade-level reading on the next school year's fall reading diagnostic *or* until the student scores proficient (700) or higher on Ohio's State Test for grade 3 English language arts.

Based on the reading diagnostic scores for the 2021-2022 school year, 30% ($n = 44,099$) of students in kindergarten through grade 3 with Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans in the fall progressed to grade-level reading by the spring. This rate of growth is similar to the 2020-2021 school year, in which 30% ($n = 40,726$) of students on Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans achieved grade-level reading scores in spring, but it still is below the rate for the 2019-2020 year in which 38% of students ($n = 46,334$) progressed to grade-level reading by the end of the academic year.

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

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

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

Due to emergency legislation suspending ratings on the Ohio School Report Cards in 2021, Ohio districts and community schools were not required to submit Reading Achievement Improvement Plans to the Department in 2022. Consequently, the Department does not have data regarding the progress made by school districts and community schools operating under state-required Reading Achievement Improvement Plans for the 2021-2022 school year.

Hypothetically, if the normal submission requirements were in place, 71 districts and 105 community schools would have been required to submit a Reading Achievement Improvement Plan to the Department in 2022.

Section 4: Types of Intervention Services Offered to Kindergarten through Grade 3 Students Reading Below Grade Level

Research suggests that when children at risk for reading difficulties receive early and intensive intervention, they have a much stronger chance of achieving grade-level reading ability. Without early intervention, their difficulties are likely to persist and worsen over time as the demands of school increase. The chance of "catching up" decreases over time. Based on foundational research for [Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement](#), Ohio students who enter kindergarten on track in language and literacy are seven times more likely to go on to score proficient on the third grade Ohio's State Test for English language arts. Students who are not proficient in reading by third grade are three times more likely than their proficient peers to not graduate on time.

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

- Identification of the student's specific reading difficulty;
- A description of proposed supplemental instructional services that will target the student's identified

reading difficulty;

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

Table 2, below, lists the types of intervention services districts and community schools provided to students with Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans in the 2021-2022 school year. No single reason exists why a child struggles to read. Schools choose various strategies on a case-by-case basis according to the unique needs of each child as determined by data. Districts are required to report the types of reading intervention services provided during the school year in the Department’s Education Management Information System. Districts may report one or more intervention services for each student.

Table 2: Intervention Service Options for Students on Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans 2021-2022

Intervention Services	
Explicit Intervention in Phonemic Awareness	Multi-Modal Approach to Structured Literacy
Explicit Intervention in Decoding	Explicit Intervention in Vocabulary
Explicit Intervention in Comprehension	Explicit Intervention in Writing – Focus on Foundation Skills Transcription
Interventions Designed around Leveled Texts	Explicit Intervention in Writing – Focus on Composition Skills
Explicit Intervention in Sight Word Recognition	Explicit Intervention in Communication/Language
Explicit Intervention in Fluency	Interventions Designed Around the Three Cuing System
Small Group Scaffolding of Complex Text	Summer Structured Literacy Programs

Although all the possible intervention service options reportedly were used across districts, there was variability in their usage. The least frequently reported were explicit intervention in writing, explicit intervention in communication/language, summer structured literacy programs and interventions designed around the three-cuing system. Table 3, below, shows the five most frequently reported intervention services used by Ohio districts and community schools for kindergarten through grade 3 students with Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans during the 2021-2022 school year.

Table 3. Most Frequently Reported Intervention Services by Grade Level 2021-2022

Intervention Services	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Total
Explicit Intervention in Phonemic Awareness	43,394	31,168	25,804	17,111	117,477
Explicit Intervention in Decoding	19,555	24,105	28,131	23,960	95,751
Explicit Intervention in Comprehension	6,552	7,146	14,586	31,425	59,709
Interventions Designed around Leveled Texts	8,638	10,942	14,001	17,658	51,239
Explicit Intervention in Sight Word Recognition	12,529	14,212	13,842	9,321	49,904

It is important to note the changes in the number of students who were receiving each type of intervention across grade levels (Table 3). For example, explicit intervention in phonemic awareness is important to emphasize in grades K and 1, as children are in early stages of word recognition instruction. As such, there is a greater number of students receiving intervention supports in those grades compared to grades 2 and 3. Conversely, a greater emphasis on building comprehension skills becomes the focus as children get older. As seen in Table 3, a greater number of grade 3 students were receiving intervention supports for comprehension as compared to kindergartners and grade 1 students. The use of interventions designed around leveled texts followed a similar pattern, with a reported increase for students in grades 2 and 3. This suggests that although intervention to support comprehension skills was occurring, students receiving the intervention around leveled texts were most likely receiving instruction on texts that were below their grade level.

For third grade students, intervention services often are of particular importance for ensuring students' reading proficiency for future academic success. On average, third-grade students on Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans demonstrated significant gains throughout the academic year on Ohio's State Test for English language arts. An important aspect of examining students' gains over time is understanding the extent to which district-level effects exert influence on children's scores, particularly because there is considerable variation among district locations and types. Analyses that incorporated these district-level effects determined that students' average spring scores (688) were greater than their average fall scores (657), indicating that third grade students on Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans made significant progress in reading throughout the academic year.

As described above and shown in Table 3, although there were many possible intervention strategies that students could have received, the most frequently reported interventions for students in grade 3 were explicit intervention in comprehension, explicit intervention in decoding, intervention around leveled texts and explicit intervention in phonemic awareness. For third-graders, the fifth most frequently reported intervention was explicit instruction in fluency. A comparison of scores for students receiving these five most frequently reported interventions are below in Table 4 and indicate levels of gain throughout the year. Of note, students receiving any of these intervention types demonstrated significant gains from fall to spring.

Table 4. Improvement on Ohio's State Test for Grade 3 English Language Arts by Intervention Type in 2021-2022

Intervention strategy	Avg. Fall score	Avg. Spring score	Gain
Explicit Intervention in Comprehension	664	691	27
Explicit Intervention in Decoding	653	680	27
Interventions Designed around Leveled Texts	662	689	27
Explicit Intervention in Phonemic Awareness	653	680	27
Explicit Intervention in Fluency	653	680	27

Overall, results from the 2021-2022 school year suggest that children identified as not on track for reading at grade level, who subsequently were on Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans, exhibited significant gains on the state test throughout the year. Although it is important to note these data are limited in that the details of the intervention administered are unavailable, this is a promising outcome as it indicates most students are receiving the support they need to make progress. However, these results also show that, on average, most students still are not scoring at or above grade-level proficiency even after receiving intervention services. These data support the idea that early intervention is critical; students who receive intervention can make considerable progress over time, so providing these services as early as possible is key.

Conclusion: The Department's Ongoing Literacy Support Efforts

Ohio is almost back to pre-pandemic reading achievement levels. However, these levels continue to be unacceptable for Ohio's learners and families. Efforts such as building educator and administrator knowledge and identification of high-quality instructional materials has been underway. The Department is committed to helping educators support all children in increasing their literacy skills to become lifelong learners. For example, the Department provides a continuous professional learning series addressing literacy supports for state support team and educational service center colleagues to bolster their support to districts to specifically address local literacy needs. The Department also has trained state support team and educational service center colleagues to support districts with literacy or English language arts curriculum reviews and material selection. These supports include analyzing district data to identify gaps in resources. In addition to these efforts, the following examples illustrate statewide supports the Department provides:

- **Literacy Academy:** The Department's annual [Literacy Academy](#) moved to a virtual format beginning in 2021. The Literacy Academy provides professional learning to support the use of evidence-based language and literacy practices. All sessions were available on demand and supported by viewing guides with discussion questions and further learning opportunities. The Department has embraced this new model and is creating additional on-demand courses for any educator to access for free at any time.
- **Statewide Professional Development Literacy Courses:** The Department added three new literacy-focused courses to Ohio's Learning Management System. These courses take five to eight hours to complete. Participants can receive a certificate for contact hours for completing the courses. The courses include:
 - **Leading Adolescent Literacy:** This course provides an overview of the importance of building leadership to ensure an effective approach to adolescent literacy. It also provides an overview of the core components of adolescent literacy. The target audience includes building and district leaders along with those leading literacy initiatives such as coaches and curriculum directors.
 - **Peer Coaching for Literacy:** This course guides participants to develop a peer coaching model at their buildings or districts that supports effective literacy instruction and continuous instructional improvement. The target audience includes building and district leaders, coaches, teacher leaders and anyone else who is interested in developing or improving a peer coaching program.
 - **Instructional Coaching for Literacy:** This course covers the key strategies, knowledge and skills that highly effective literacy coaches need to support educators in their buildings or districts. The target audience includes current literacy coaches, building leaders, teacher leaders and anyone who is interested in supporting educators to improve their practice.
- **Ohio's Introduction to Dyslexia Course:** The Department's Introduction to Dyslexia, Kindergarten-Grade 3 course now is available in the Department's Learning Management System. This free course is an option that meets the [professional development requirements](#) of Ohio's Dyslexia Support Laws. Additionally, the Department will be developing a free course to meet the professional development requirements for intervention specialists and teachers providing instruction to students in grades 4-12. Intervention specialists serving these grade bands must complete 18 clock hours of professional development by the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year.
- **Ohio's Dyslexia Guidebook:** As required by [Ohio law](#), Ohio's Dyslexia Guidebook contains best practices and methods for universal screening, intervention and remediation for children with dyslexia or children displaying dyslexic characteristics and tendencies. Districts and schools use the guidebook to access critical information for successful implementation of Ohio's Dyslexia Support Laws.
- **Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan Intervention Video Series:** The Department has

created a series of short support videos for the revised Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan intervention Education Management Information System codes. In each video, Ohio's literacy leads describe specific intervention types and demonstrate how to teach each Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan intervention type.

- **Regional Support Teams for Literacy:** The Department provides continuous support for regional partners at educational service centers and state support teams through monthly professional learning sessions, facilitator training opportunities in Department-disseminated professional development and engagement in educational service center and state support team networks. The consultants that support the implementation of Ohio's Plan to Raise to Literacy Achievement are members of their regions' support teams for literacy. These team members provide support to districts and schools in their regions around data-based decision-making in literacy, developing improvement plans in literacy and supporting the fidelity of implementation of evidence-based practices in language and literacy.
- **Accelerated Learning through High-Quality Tutoring Programs:** High-dosage tutoring is an effective strategy to accelerate learning for all learners. Ohio is prioritizing high-dosage tutoring for literacy, as well as mathematics, through the Statewide Mathematics and Literacy Tutoring Program. The Department, in partnership with the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE), awarded over \$14 million in Statewide Mathematics and Literacy Tutoring Grants to Ohio colleges and universities planning to create or expand mathematics and literacy high-dosage tutoring programs for Ohio's K-12 students in one-on-one or small-group settings. Grant funds are being utilized to launch and expand high-dosage tutoring programs that meet local needs for mathematics and literacy supports using evidence-based practices. Ohio is also fortunate to partner with the Ohio Deans Compact and the University of Cincinnati to develop the P20 Tutoring Collaborative. Through this partnership Ohio is able to offer exceptional ongoing professional learning opportunities to grantees, tutors, and district/school partners to ensure alignment to high-dosage tutoring practices and a focus on explicit instruction in math and English language arts. These sessions are hosted in partnership with national experts at the Meadows Center at the University of Texas-Austin.

With a focus on literacy improvement statewide and across all ages, birth through higher education, the Department is using federal COVID relief funds to accelerate learning in reading by providing additional, and more effective, opportunities to learn. Examples include providing support for after-school and summer programming, assisting schools and districts in selecting high-quality instructional materials, creating professional development opportunities for literacy instruction and building capacity of regional structures to support implementation of evidence-based literacy practices.

The Department is committed to supporting Ohio educators in ensuring their students continue to grow in language and literacy. The time is now for all students to have access to literacy instruction and high-quality instructional materials based in reading science for both core instruction and intervention.