



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: K–4 Reading Levels

2024

Authorizing Legislation: [RCW 28A.320.203](#)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with state law (RCW 28A.320.203), all schools in Washington are required to report to their school district the number of students in kindergarten through 4th grade who are reading below grade level, as well as the interventions that are being provided to improve reading skills. OSPI is required to submit a report on this data annually to the Legislature.

OSPI received data on 54.6% of elementary students in grades K–4 for the 2023–2024 school year. Of the student counts reported, 36.7% of students in reporting districts are reading below grade level. This remains constant compared to the previous year.

BACKGROUND

In 2013, the Legislature passed [Senate Bill 5946](#), which set up a system for using educational support systems for every student in grades K–12.

Educators, schools, and school districts were informed of the legislative requirements through professional development opportunities at regional educational service districts (ESDs), state conferences, personal communications, communications to district offices, and correspondence from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

Strengthening Student Outcomes

OSPI and the Association of Educational Service Districts (AESD) implemented Part 1 of [Senate Bill 5946](#) (2013)—Learning to Read, Reading to Learn—during the 2014–2015 school year. This legislation focused on the importance of collaborative partnerships essential to supporting students. The legislation called for using evidence-and research-based programs for all students, especially in grades K–4, and providing statewide models to support school districts in implementing a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS).

Revised Code of Washington [\(RCW\) 28A.320.202](#) now requires school districts to be responsible for providing a comprehensive system of instruction and services in reading and early literacy that must include annual use of screening assessments to determine the reading levels and areas that need interventions for student in grades K–4.

In addition to supporting students, Part 1 of [ESSB 5946](#) (2013) identified how essential professional learning is necessary for educators to enhance and expand their instructional practices and understanding of early literacy development. Professional development in early literacy is especially important to support the instruction of young readers since reading proficiency is a crucial element for student academic success, as stated by [RCW 28A.415.400](#).

In 2016, the Legislature passed [House Bill 1345](#). To improve student outcomes, this legislation provided a statewide definition of “professional learning” as a comprehensive, sustained, job-embedded, and collaborative approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement.

For the last seven years, including 2023–24, school districts have chosen from 45 interventions based on best practices. A total of 275 individual districts reported intervention data for 2023–24. There were 10 unique interventions listed within Student-Centered Practices; 5 interventions for Extended Time Beyond the School Day; 9 interventions for Educator Practices; 12 interventions for Consultant Teachers; 6 interventions for Outreach and Support for Families; and 3 interventions in Community Engagement.

Identification and Reporting of Students Reading Below Grade Level

Washington State schools and school districts are required to identify students' reading levels according to the evidence-based state and district selected assessments.

School districts must annually report to OSPI ([RCW 28A.320.203](#)):

- The number of students in grades K–4 who are reading below grade level, and
- The intensive reading strategies and/or interventions being provided to improve the reading skills of these students.

The information must be disaggregated by subgroups of continuously enrolled students. To collect the required data, OSPI developed the K–4 Literacy Report, accessible through the Education Data System (EDS) portal. Users identified students reading below grade level from a comprehensive list of disaggregated student groups who were continuously enrolled in the same school during the 2023–2024 school year.

UPDATE STATUS

Findings

From the data reported by Washington school districts, 36.7% of K–4 students were not reading on grade level for the 2023–24 school year. The district-reported Students Reading Below Grade Level data is 47.7% complete.

Of the Washington school districts, 147 districts did report K–4 student literacy data; 54.6% of students' scores were reported by their districts. OSPI extended data submission opportunities to support schools with reporting. However, 52.3% of districts did not report student data this year. This represents a significant decrease when compared to the previous year. In 2022–23, 88.6% of student scores were reported by their districts. In 2021–22, 72% of students' scores were reported by their districts; 92.2% of students were represented in the district data submitted to OSPI. In 2018, 96% of students were represented in the district data submitted to OSPI.

OSPI acknowledges an IT issue significantly delayed the opening of the data collection application which is a reason many districts did not report. This delay created challenges at the end of the school year, as the application was not available until the summer. Despite efforts to communicate the availability of the reporting window, data collection was impacted. To assist districts, OSPI extended the reporting window into October. In the future, OSPI will proactively prepare data reporting systems well in advance to ensure districts can complete their reporting within the typically expected time frame. Additionally, OSPI will continue to provide reminders and technical support to districts regarding data reporting.

The tables below report the counts show how many are reading below grade level for each grade level.

Table 1: 2023–24 K–4 Students Identified as Reading Below Grade Level by Grade Band

Grade Band	Total K–4 Continuous State Enrollment*	K–4 Enrollment for Reported Districts	Number of Students Identified as Reading Below Grade Level	Percent of Students Reading Below Grade Level	Percent Not Meeting Standard on SBA (Smarter Balance Assessment) ELA Statewide (Level 3 or 4)
Kindergarten	70,329	38,084	11,063	29%	--
Grade 1	72,872	44,583	14,817	33%	--
Grade 2	77,039	41,958	16,243	39%	--
Grade 3	74,039	40,841	15,181	37%	51%
Grade 4	76,657	41,933	17,037	40%	50%
Total	370,942	202,613	74,442	36%	

Source: The Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) pulled on 10/25/24 and the 2023–24 K–4 Literacy Report in the Education Data System.

Response Rate

Data included Washington state public school districts and State-Tribal Education Compact schools. Data analysis showed that for the 2023–24 school year, 47.7% of the school districts submitted data; 54.6% of Washington state K–4 students are represented in the data collected here. 161 school districts with 168,329 students did not submit data. OSPI acknowledges that an IT issue significantly delayed the opening of the data collection application which impacted data collection. However, 277 school districts provided intervention data. 90% of districts reported intervention data. The reporting platform was reopened after the reporting window closed to accommodate schools in reporting their data.

Data Disaggregated by Race

Students identified as Hispanic/Latino improved their reading levels by 7.1% compared to last school year. Students identified as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander also improved their reading by 3%. Students identified as Asian improved their reading below grade level by 2.9%.

Students identified as White experienced a decline in reading level by 1.7%.

The number of students identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native, Black/African American, or students identified as Two or More Races remained constant, with changes of less than 1% compared to last school year.

Data Disaggregated by Subgroups

Students identified as Multilingual/English Language Learners improved their reading levels by 4.5% compared to last school year. Students identified as Homeless also improved their reading level by 1.2% compared to last school year. Students identified from the Learning Assistance Program (LAP) showed improvements in reading by 1.2% compared to last school year.

Students identified as Low Income experienced a decline in reading level by 1.3% compared to last school year. Students identified as Migrant experienced a decline in reading level by 2% compared to last school year. Students identified as Title 1 declined in reading level by 5% compared to last school year.

Students identified as Male, Female, or Gender X remained constant, with changes of 1% or less reading below grade level compared to last school year. Students identified from Special Education, having a 504 Plan, or as Unaccompanied Youth remained constant, with changes of 1% or less reading below grade level compared to last school year.

Table 2: 2023–2024 K–4 Students Identified as Reading Below Grade Level by Subgroups

Student Group	K–4 Enrollment for Reported Districts	Number of Students identified as Reading Below Grade Level	Percent of Students Identified as Reading Below Grade Level
All Students	370,942	74,422	36.7%
Male	104,035	39,422	37.8%
Female	98,139	34,928	35.5%
Gender X	348	72	37.5%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2,364	1405	59%
Asian	21,439	3,835	17.8%
Black/African American	9,704	3,154	44 %
Hispanic/Latino	66,899	29,266	43.7%
White	95,175	30,249	31.7%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2,267	1,148	50.6%
Two or More Races	17,086	5,365	31%
Low Income	100,465	49,051	48.8%
LAP – Learning Assistance Program	50,352	31,146	61.8%
Title I – Targeted Assistance Program	1,749	1,243	71%
Special Education	34,235	19,237	56%
Multilingual/English Language Learners	39,807	22,404	56%
Migrant	4,130	2,617	63%
Homeless	6 131	3,545	57.8%
504 Plan	6,648	2,286	34%
Unaccompanied Youth	341	167	48.9%

Source: The Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) pulled on 10/25/24 and the 2023–24 K–4 Literacy Report in the Education Data System.

Table 3: 2023–2024 K–4 Student Trends in Reading Below Grade Level by Subgroup

Subgroup	2023–2024 (n)	2023–2024 (%)	2022–2023 (%)	2021–2022 (%)	2020–2021 (%)	2017–2018 (%)
Low-Income	49,051	48.8%	47.5	54.0	54.1	44.6
Special Education	19,237	56%	56	57.7	57.5	57
Multilingual/English Language Learners	22,404	56%	60.5	60.0	62.3	-
Migrant	2,617	63%	61	59.5	68.5	59
Homeless	3,545	57.8%	59	67.0	61.9	50.1
504 Plan	2,286	34%	33	34.1	38.3	23.1
LAP	31,146	61.8%	63	62.5	67.9	-
Title I	1,243	71%	66	63.5	69.4	-
Unaccompanied Youth	167	48.9%	48.5	56.3	46.4	33.2

Source: The Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) pulled on 10/25/24 and the 2023–24 K–4 Literacy Report in the Education Data System.

Intervention

For the last six years, including 2023–24, school districts report on 45 interventions based on best practices. A total of 277 individual districts reported intervention data for 2023–24. Districts were encouraged to report on all intervention practices they used and could select more than one option. The most frequently reported practices were in educator practice such as using professional learning communities, attending district or school trainings. The least used intervention practice is attending a national conference.

There were 10 unique interventions listed within Student-Centered Practices which included items like group tutoring led by a classroom teacher. There are 5 interventions listed for Extended Time Beyond the School Day which includes items like computer-based instruction, before and after school instruction, or homework clubs. There were 9 interventions for Educator Practices, which included items like professional learning communities (PLCs), training and workshops, and teacher mentor programs. There were 12 interventions for Consultant Teachers, which included items like employment of instructional coaches, literacy coaches, and English language development coaches. There were 6 interventions for Outreach and Support for Families which included items like literacy activities for use at home, school associations, and literacy events for families to support literacy. There were 3 interventions in Community Engagement which included items like reading partnerships with groups like a library, boys and girls clubs.

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

In the 2023–24 school year, according to data from 147 school districts, 36% of students in grades K–4 were reading below grade level. This remained constant, with changes of 1% or less reading below grade level compared to last school year.

The following student groups all saw improvements in the rate of students reading below grade level:

- Students identified as Hispanic/Latino
- Students identified as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Students identified as Asian
- Students identified as Multilingual/English Language Learners
- Students experiencing homelessness
- Students identified as LAP – Learning Assistance Program

OSPI will continue to focus on literacy support. English Language Arts is currently engaging in the Learning Standards review. The learning standards update is a crucial component of our continuous efforts to enhance educational practices and student outcomes. The updated standards ensure that our system is most effective for student achievement by aligning our standards with the most current research, evidence-based practices and address the use of technology in the classroom. This learning standards update supports our commitment to providing high-quality education and helps us address the diverse needs of our students. It also enables us to implement evidence-based instructional practices and strategies that are proven to improve student learning and engagement.

During the next year OSPI will be offering Dyslexia professional learning opportunities to train K–5 teachers in structured literacy and the science of reading. As an equity measure, OSPI will continue to offer the [Dyslexia Guidance: Implementing MTSS for Literacy](#) (2024) and learning resources to inform literacy systems in schools.

Universal screening continues to be an important strategy required by WA state. OSPI has recently identified screening tools and resources that exemplify best practices and updated the guidance: Implementing [MTSS for Literacy: Early Literacy Screening Crosswalk](#) (2024). We will continue to share this updated resource for districts to inform their process when identifying high quality screening tools.

Also, OSPI is in partnership with Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Northwest to develop a statewide K-6 literacy framework for Washington State. The framework is meant to support districts and schools with a comprehensive vision that outlines requirements and recommendations for literacy programming across the grade levels in the education system.

The Office of Native Education (ONE) is actively working to support early literacy among American Indian and Alaska Native students by collaborating with Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to support native students as they learn to read in Washington schools. ONE is also involved in hosting Native

Family Literacy Nights, targeting students and families of specific schools. These events aim to provide resources and support for families and educators in supporting Native literacy. ONE is also developing a pilot LETRS program for educators who work specifically with Native learners and communities.

OSPI has budget requests for funding that will target professional learning for evidence based early literacy instruction and to support the updated ELA learning standards. Additional funding would also target an AI tool to support early readers and educators with day-to-day classroom literacy needs.

OSPI Elementary ELA and Student Information Services will also plan to prepare the data reporting system well in advance to avoid a technical delay in the opening of the reporting window. Additionally, OSPI plans to contact districts earlier and more frequently next year about mandatory reporting. The OSPI English Language Arts team will work with the Student Information office to review the efficiency of the data collection process.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: 2023–24 Intervention Data

Table 1: Number of Districts Offering Student Centered Tutoring Services in 2023–2024

Tutoring Services	Number of Reported Districts Offering Service	Percent of Reported Districts Offering Service
Group tutoring (Classroom Teacher)	248	89.5%
Group tutoring (Paraeducator)	244	88%
Adult Tutoring (Paraeducator)	230	85%
Group tutoring (Intervention Specialist)	207	74.7%
Adult Tutoring (Classroom Teacher)	222	80%
Adult Tutoring (Intervention Specialist)	185	66.7%
Adult Tutoring (Volunteer)	76	27.4%
Peer tutoring (Cross age)	57	20.6%
Peer tutoring (Same age)	45	16.2%
Group tutoring (Volunteer)	53	19.1%

Source: The Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) pulled on 10/25/24 and the 2023–24 K–4 Literacy Report in the Education Data System.

Table 2: Number of Districts Offering Extended Learning Time Services in 2023–2024

Extended Learning Time Service	Number of Reported Districts Offering Service	Percent of Reported Schools Offering Service
Computer-based or online instruction	160	57.8%
Structured summer programs	139	50%
Before/after school instruction	121	43.7%
Book programs	68	24.5%
Homework Club	39	14.1%

Source: The Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) pulled on 10/25/24 and the 2023–24 K–4 Literacy Report in the Education Data System.

Table 3: Number of Districts Offering Interventions for Educator Practice in 2023–2024

Professional Development Type	Number of Reported Districts Offering Service	Percent of Reported Schools Offering Service
Professional learning community	236	85%
School/district training/workshop	243	87.7%
Teacher mentor program	200	72%
New teacher induction program	160	57.8

Professional Development Type	Number of Reported Districts Offering Service	Percent of Reported Schools Offering Service
Regional/state training/workshop	90	32.5%
Co-Teaching	102	36.8%
Regional/state conference	71	25.6%
National training workshop	29	10.5%
National conference	23	8.3%

Source: The Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) pulled on 10/25/24 and the 2023–24 K–4 Literacy Report in the Education Data System.

Table 4: Number of Districts Utilizing Consultant Teachers in 2023–2024

Consultant Teacher Type	Number of Reported Districts Offering Service	Percent of Reported Schools Offering Service
Instructional coach for schools	99	35.7%
Instructional coach for teachers	110	39.7%
Literacy coach for teachers	58	20.9%
Literacy coach for schools	64	23.1%
English Language Development (ELD) coach for schools	64	23.1%
English Language Development (ELD) coach for teachers	63	22.7%
Instructional coach for districts	70	25.3%
Content coach for schools	48	17.3%
Content coach for teachers	57	20.6%
English Language Development (ELD) coach for districts	59	21.3%
Content coach for districts	41	14.8%
Literacy coach for districts	44	15.9%

Source: The Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) pulled on 10/25/24 and the 2023–24 K–4 Literacy Report in the Education Data System.

Table 5: Number of Districts Providing Outreach/Support for Families in 2023–2024

Outreach/Support for Families Type	Number of Reported Districts Offering Service	Percent of Reported Districts Offering Service
Literacy activities for families to do together at home	214	77%
School associations (PTA, PTSA, PTSO)	194	70%
Family Literacy events	210	75.8%
Home visits	72	25.9%

Outreach/Support for Families Type	Number of Reported Districts Offering Service	Percent of Reported Districts Offering Service
Classes/coaching to families on working on reading skills at home	80	28.9%
Employment of parent and family engagement coordinators	82	29.6%

Source: The Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) pulled on 10/25/24 and the 2023–24 K–4 Literacy Report in the Education Data System.

Table 6: Number of Schools Offering Community Engagement in 2023–2024

Extended Learning Time Service	Number of Reported Districts Offering Service	Percent of Reported Schools Offering Service
Reading Partnerships (library, Boys and Girls club reading support)	169	61%
Kindergarten Transitions P-4 Community Partnerships Count	106	38%
Mentoring Count	58	20.9%

Source: The Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) pulled on 10/25/24 and the 2023–24 K–4 Literacy Report in the Education Data System.

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