2024-2025 Student Group Performance

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Kentucky Department of
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Agenda

- 2024-2025 Data Disaggregated by Student Groups
- National Research and Kentucky Data Analysis
- Efforts to Support Student Growth

KBE Actions to Advance Student Achievement & Address Gaps

- Raise Awareness of Persistent Achievement Gaps
- Advocate for Funding
- Highlight the Importance of Opportunity and Access Through Policy
- Promote Evidenced-Based Practices
- Support Collaboration

2024-2025 Data
Student Group Performance

Jennifer Stafford, Associate Commissioner

Office of Assessment and Accountability

Percentage Kindergarten Readiness by Group

Student Group	Kindergarten Student Readiness by Year				
	2020-2021^	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
All Students	51.0	53.1	44	46	48
Male	46.6	49.1	40	42	46
Female	55.6	57.4	48	50	51
White (Non-Hispanic)	53.5	54.9	47	49	52
African American	46.0	47.3	34	40	42
Hispanic	31.0	36.8	25	27	29
Asian	62.3	62.9	58	61	60
American Indian/Alaska Native	50.8	51.2	44	35	53
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	44.6	46.5	34	34	36
Two or more races	50.8	52.7	43	45	50
English Learner (EL)	31.7	36.9	25	28	28
Free/Reduced-Price Meals	41.2	43.3	34	37	39
Students with Disabilities	35.0	33.3	31	30	35

Elementary School Performance

Progress Indicators

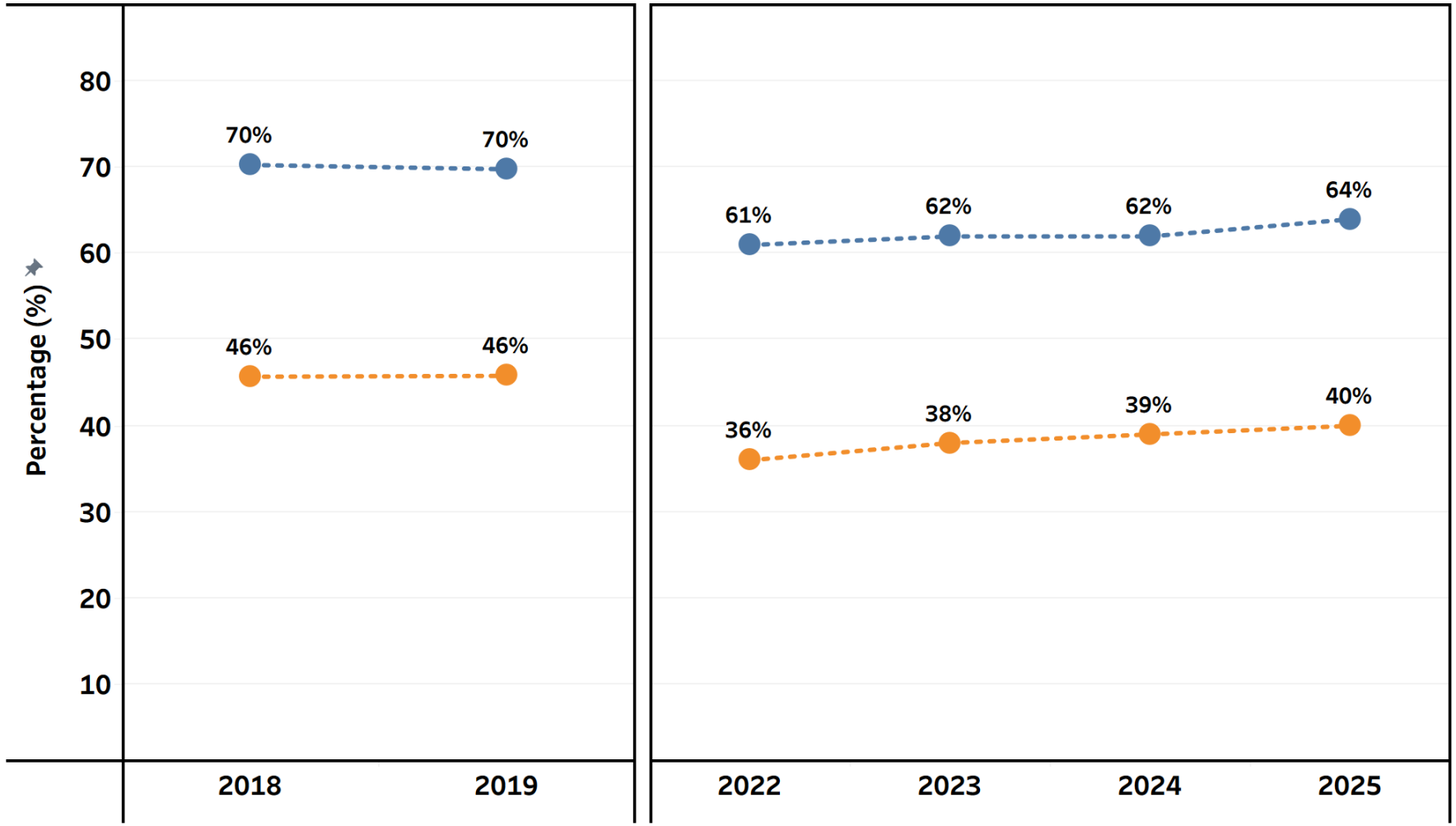
- Reading P/D increased at various rates:
  - All students rose from 45% (2022) to 49% (2025) (+4)
  - Females 48% to 51% (+3)
  - Males 43% to 47% (+4)
  - African American 24% to 28% (+4)
  - Hispanic 34% to 34% (increased in 2023 to 35%) (+0)
  - EL 31% to 31% (increased in 2023 to 32%) (+0)
  - Economically Disadvantaged 36% to 40% (+4)
  - Special Needs 26% to 29% (+3)
- Math P/D increased at various rates:
  - All students rose from 38% (2022) to 43% (2025) (+5)
  - Females 37% to 40% (+3)
  - Males 40% to 46% (+6)
  - African American 16% to 21% (+5)
  - Hispanic 27% to 31% (+4)
  - EL 26% to 29% (increased in 2023 to 30%)
  - Economically Disadvantaged 28% to 34% (+6)
  - Special Needs 20% to 24% (+4)
- Science P/D rose from 29% (2022) to 37% (2025)

Growth Areas

- Math still trails reading (43% vs 49%)
- Persistent student group gaps: Economic, EL, IEP, race/ethnicity, special needs
- Gender patterns: Females outperform males in reading; males outperform females in math
- Performance is rising or holding steady across groups but not closing gaps.

Trend of Proficient/Distinguished - Elementary / Reading

Economically Disadvantaged vs Non-Economically Disadvantaged



Note that there was no assessment data due to COVID in 2020 and 2021.

Middle School Performance

Progress Indicators

- Reading: P/D improved 44% → 47%
  - All students rose from 44% (2022) to 47% (2025) (+3)
  - Females 49% to 52% (+3)
  - Males 39% to 43% (+4)
  - African American 22% to 26% (+4)
  - Hispanic 33% to 34% (+1)
  - EL 15% to 19% (+4)
  - Economically Disadvantaged 34% to 38% (+4)
  - Special Needs 16% to 19% (+3)
- Math: P/D improved 37% → 41%
  - All students rose from 37% (2022) to 41% (2025) (+4)
  - Females 37% to 41% (+4)
  - Males 37% to 42% (+5)
  - African American 15% to 19% (+4)
  - Hispanic 27% to 28% (+1)
  - EL 13% to 17% (+4)
  - Economically Disadvantaged 26% to 31% (+5)
  - Special Needs 14% to 18% (+4)
- Science: P/D increased 22% → 29%
- Social studies: P/D rose 36% → 39%

Growth Areas

- NAEP context: uneven recovery post-pandemic
- Student group gaps remain wide (Economic, EL, IEP, race/ethnicity, special needs)
- Gender performance persists: females higher in ELA, males slightly higher in math

High School Performance

Progress Indicators

- Reading: P/D edged up 44% → 46%
  - All students rose from 44% (2022) to 46% (2025) (+2)
  - Females 50% to 52% (+2)
  - Males 38% to 40% (+2)
  - African American 23% to 25% (+2)
  - Hispanic 33% to 33% (increased in 2023 and 24 to 34%) (+0)
  - EL 8% to 9% (+1)
  - Economically Disadvantaged 33% to 36% (+3)
  - Special Needs 12% to 15% (+3)
- Math: P/D climbed 36% → 40%
  - All students rose from 36% (2022) to 40% (2025) (+4)
  - Females 38% to 42% (decreased in 2023 to 34%) (+4)
  - Males 34% to 39% (+5)
  - African American 16% to 19% (+3)
  - Hispanic 27% to 27% (decreased in 2023 and 2024 to 23%) (+0)
  - EL 9% to 10% (+1)
  - Economically Disadvantaged 25% to 29% (+4)
  - Special Needs 10% to 13% (+3)
- Social studies: P/D improved 34% → 38%
- ACT: KY ranks 4th among states testing 100% of graduates

Growth Areas

- ACT readiness: composite 18.1 (down from 18.2)
- Science still low (21% P/D)
- Student group gaps persist (Economic, EL, disability, race/ethnicity, special needs)

KSA and ACT Differences

Different Constructs and Standards:

- KSA Proficient/Distinguished means a student meets or exceeds Kentucky Academic Standards for their grade level. It reflects mastery of grade-level content, not readiness for postsecondary coursework.
- Based on ACT's College Readiness Standards, the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks indicate the likelihood of earning a C or better in first-year college courses (English, math, reading). These benchmarks were set by the Council on Postsecondary Readiness using empirical data, not grade-level standards.

Different Scales:

- KSA uses performance levels (Novice, Apprentice, Proficient, Distinguished) tied to Kentucky standards.
- ACT uses a 1–36 scale and readiness cut scores (e.g., Math = 19, Reading = 20).

Note: A student can be "Proficient" on KSA but still below ACT benchmarks. ACT readiness requires knowledge and application beyond grade-level expectations.

Performance Summary

- Progress is real—KSA shows steady gains in reading and math at all three levels.
- Gaps are persistent across assessments—Disparities by income, language, disability, and race/ethnicity are evident across levels and are affirmed by NAEP and by ACT student group patterns at grade 11.
- Performance is rising or holding steady across groups but not closing gaps.
- High school readiness—KSA gains are encouraging, but ACT indicates more work to boost college-readiness.

A Strategic Review of National Research and Kentucky's Analysis of Achievement Gaps and Performance Patterns

Karen Dodd, Chief Performance Officer

Leslie McKinney, Strategic Data Analyst/Researcher

Office of the Commissioner

Achievement Gap Review: Purpose & Strategic Framing

What we know about "Achievement Gaps"

- Persistent differences in performance across student groups
- Observed across core assessments, graduation, and access to opportunities
- Increasingly understood as **opportunity gaps** or **educational debt** rooted in systemic conditions

Scope and Limitations of the Work

- This work synthesizes existing research and Kentucky-specific analysis to support informed decision-making
- Assessment data identifies where gaps exist but does not explain the underlying causation
- Findings are descriptive in nature, intended to deepen understanding of performance patterns

What We Know About Achievement Gaps

Systemic Drivers

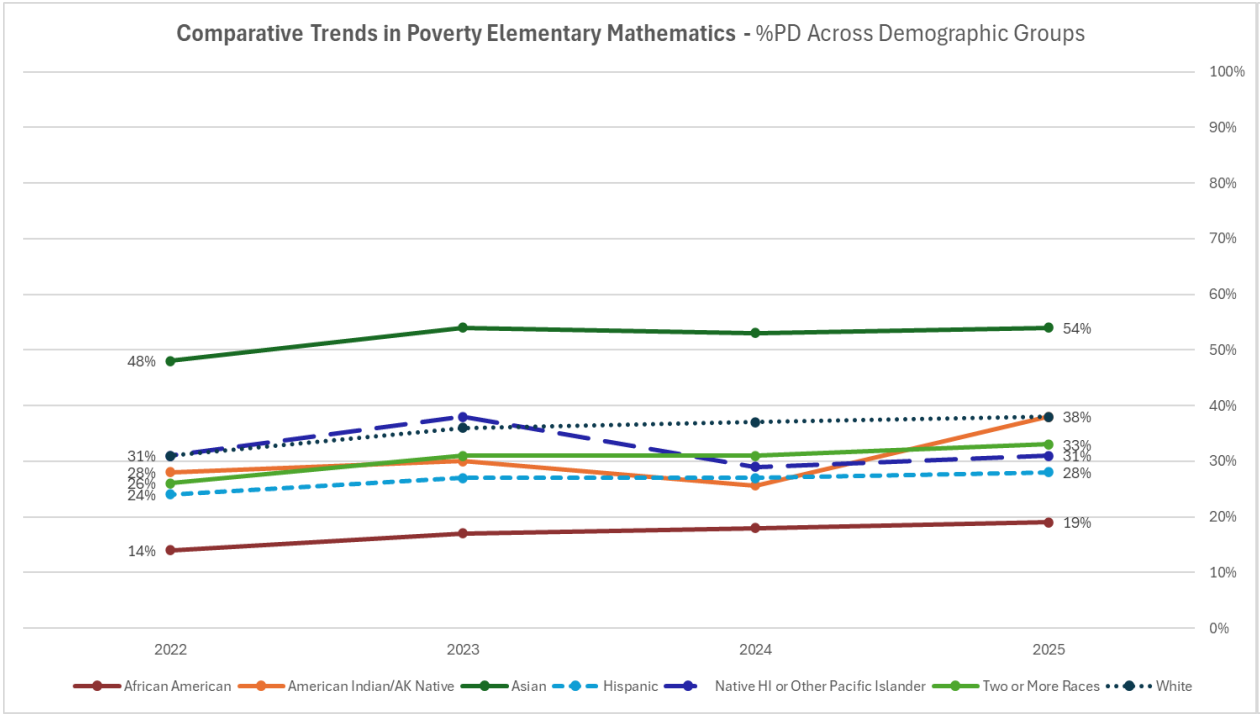
- Achievement and skill development are strongly tied to **socioeconomic conditions**
  - Much national research indicates that racial disparities in achievement diminish significantly between students of the same socioeconomic status; however, initial data analysis in Kentucky challenges that finding
  - While individual poverty is a challenge, school-level poverty acts as a multiplier – creating systemic barriers that impact instructional quality

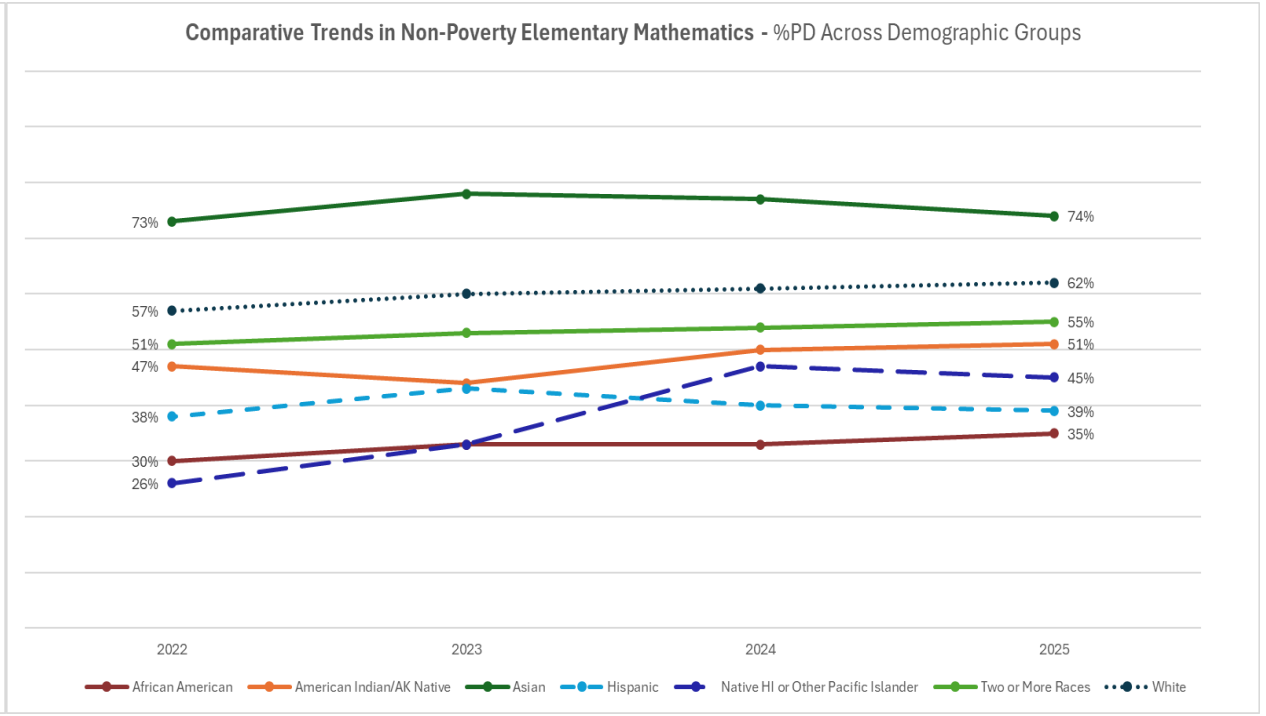
What We Know About Achievement Gaps, cont.

Observed Trends & Local Context

- Gaps **emerge early,** often by kindergarten and often persist throughout the student's academic career.
- Kentucky's data largely mirrors national trends and patterns confirming these as systemic issues rather than isolated local challenges
- Improvement is possible, but progress may be uneven without sustained support

Impact of Economic Status on Elementary Mathematics Achievement by Race/Ethnicity





Measurement and Reflection

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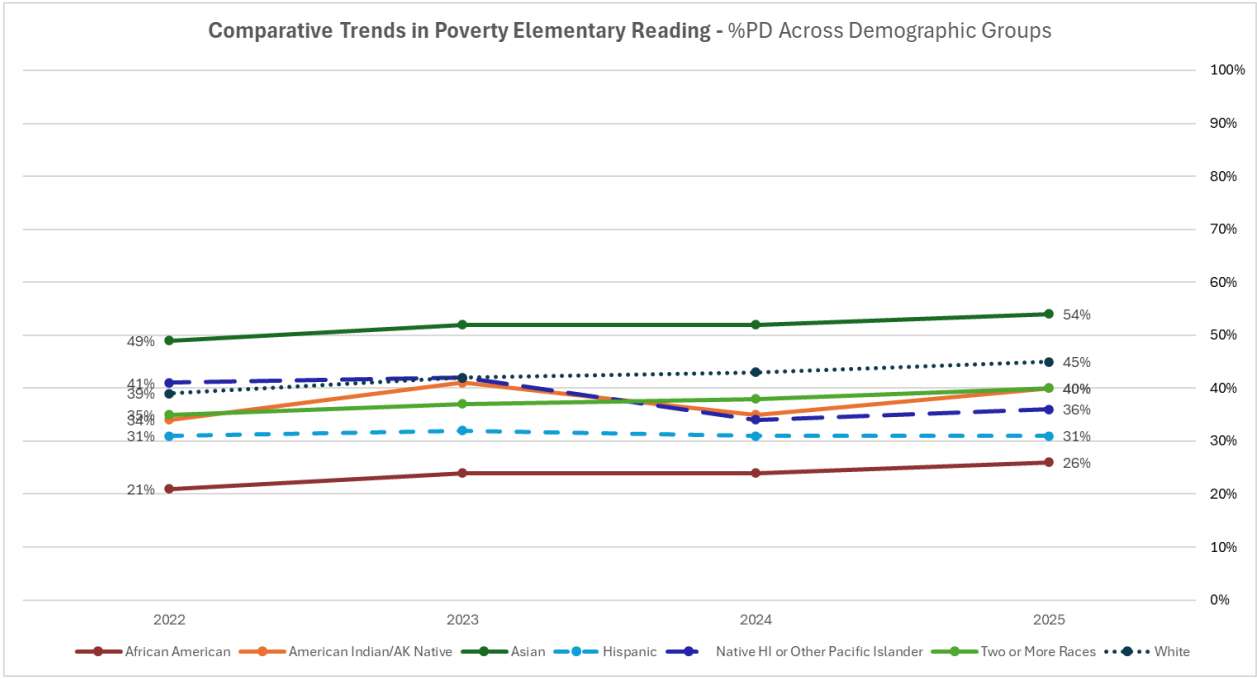
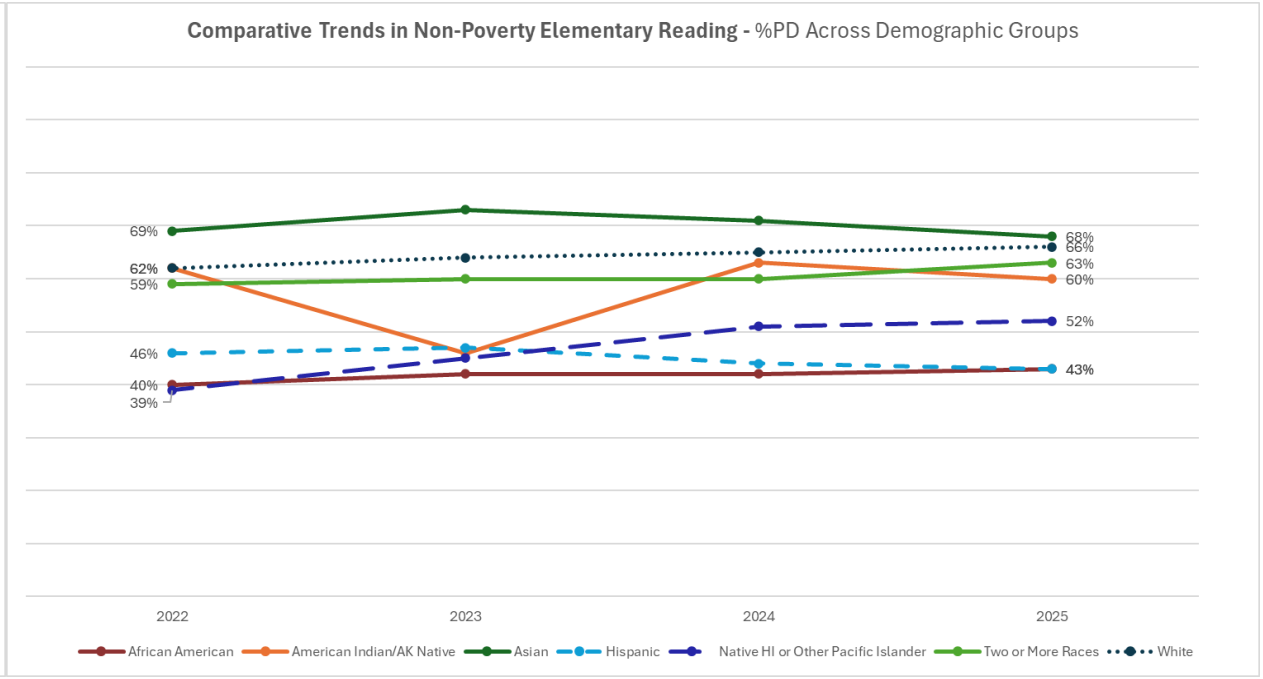
Impact of Economic Status on Elementary Reading Achievement by Race/Ethnicity





Measurement and Reflection

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Next Steps in Research & Strategic Analysis

Our ongoing analysis will focus on:

- Identifying specific contextual factors and patterns that fall within our direct operational reach to ensure resources are targeted effectively
- Shifting the lens from individual student socioeconomic status to the environmental impact of school and community-level poverty as a predictor of outcomes
- Scaling our current race/ethnicity and socioeconomic data models to include targeted analysis of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners
- Deepening our knowledge base on how achievement gaps behave within our local landscape, to include isolating "bright spots" where gaps have successfully closed
- Prioritizing early entry analysis to investigate gaps related to Kindergarten readiness including specific contextual factors and patterns.

So What? Implications for Policy and Practice

- Although gaps are persistent, they do not have to be permanent.
- We can influence the gaps through targeted, sustained action, including, but not limited to:
  - Ensuring High-quality instruction is widely accessible
  - Prioritizing Early intervention
  - Pairing Accountability with Capacity-Building
- Strategic success depends on our ability to isolate and target contributing factors unique to Kentucky, within our direct operational influence.

Efforts to Support Student Growth

Micki Ray Marinelli, Chief Academic Officer

Office of Teaching and Learning

Board Role and Call for Support

- Promote increased access to HQIR and associated funding - ABR
- Promote curriculum-based PL and associated funding - ABR
- Advocate for the expansion of the literacy and numeracy coaching models - ABR
- Advocate for the scaling of statewide implementation at middle and high school
- Support continued principal leadership development

High-Quality Instructional Resources (HQIRs)

What are HQIRs?

The KDE defines HQIRs as materials that are:

- Aligned with the *Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS)*;
- Research-based and/or externally validated;
- Comprehensive to include engaging texts (books, multimedia, etc.), tasks and assessments;
- Based on fostering vibrant student learning experiences;
- Culturally relevant, free from bias; and
- Accessible for all students.

Why are they important for students?

Research found that:

- Students in classrooms that used one HQIR for four consecutive years outpaced comparison students by a margin of 38 percentile points (Steiner, 2018).
- Average cost-effectiveness ratio of switching to HQIRs is almost 40 times that of class size reduction (Koedel, C., & Polikoff, M., 2017).
- When teachers don't have access to HQIRs, they tend to use unvetted online resources, leading to inconsistent quality (Opfer, D., Kaufman, J., & Thompson, L., 2017).

Kentucky Department of Education. (n.d.). *High-Quality Instructional Resources.* Infographic.

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State Implementation of HQIRs

Percentage Growth for K-12 HQIR Implementation (2019 – 2025)

*Represents earliest implementation year available, beginning in 2019 and beyond.

Math

State	2019*	2025	% Growth
Nebraska	20%	61%	205%
Massachusetts	25%	64%	156%
Rhode Island	39%	84%	115%
New York	35%	64%	83%
New Mexico	44%	75%	70%
Texas	24%	40%	67%
Oregon	0%	66%	66%
Kentucky	**45%**	**70%**	**56%**
Mississippi	42%	65%	55%
Delaware	56%	84%	50%
Arkansas	54%	78%	44%
Tennessee	45%	63%	40%
Ohio	43%	56%	30%
Maryland	67%	68%	1.50%
Louisiana	83%	81%	-2.40%
Virginia	36%	29%	-19%

English/Language Arts

State	2019*	2025	% Growth
Nebraska	5%	58%	1060%
Delaware	11%	69%	527%
Massachusetts	9%	40%	344%
Arkansas	19%	62%	226%
Tennessee	23%	71%	209%
Mississippi	21%	59%	181%
Rhode Island	31%	75%	142%
Kentucky	**30%**	**66%**	**120%**
Ohio	24%	39%	63%
Oregon	0%	60%	60%
New Mexico	35%	54%	54%
New York	37%	55%	49%
Texas	37%	51%	38%
Maryland	52%	70%	35%
Virginia	30%	40%	33%
Louisiana	60%	68%	13%

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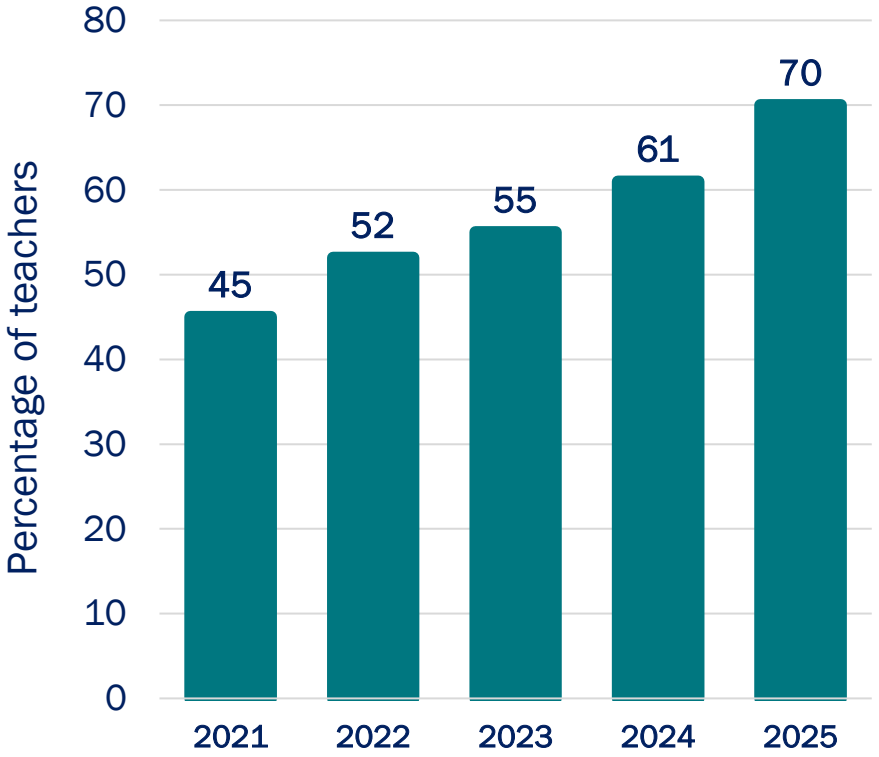
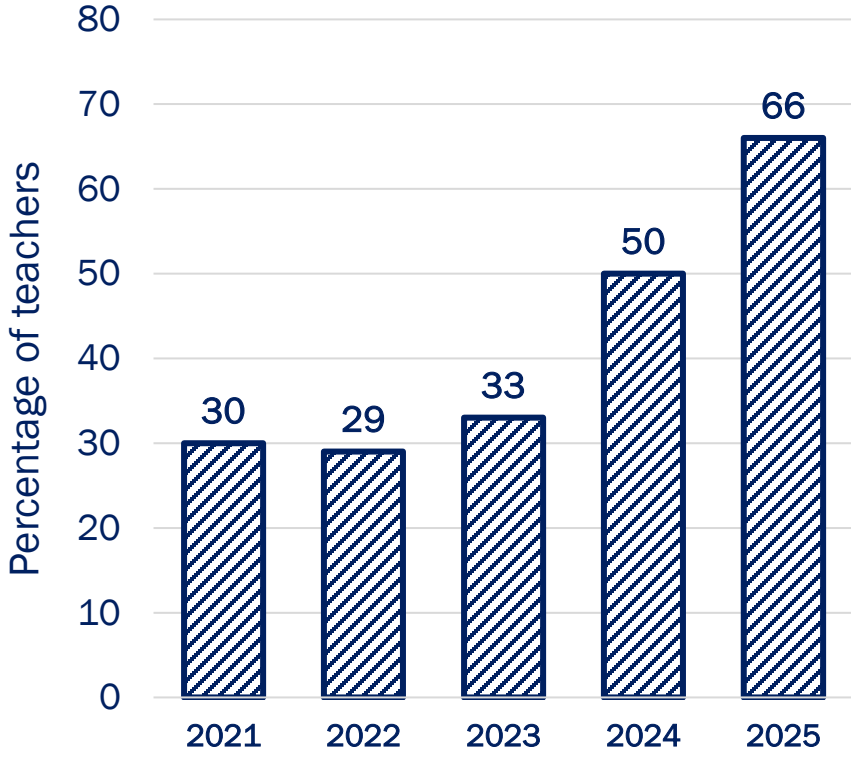
Doan, S., et al. (2025). *American Instructional Resources Survey 2019-2025*. RAND Corporation.

Kentucky HQIR Adoption Progress

Percentage of K-12 teachers regularly using Math HQIRs



Percentage of K-12 teachers regularly using English/Language Arts HQIRs



Doan, S., et al. (2025). *American Instructional Resources Survey 2019-2025*. RAND Corporation.

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Purposeful Implementation Matters

Impact of leadership and professional learning

Outcomes depend on more than just adoption

Leadership and high-quality professional learning are key drivers

School/District Leadership

In schools with required HQIRs, principals are more likely to:

- Be **engaged in promoting strong instructional practices.**
- Encourage that **lesson plans be based on the curriculum.**
- Require that **observations take curriculum into account.**

Professional Learning (PL)

- When teachers participated in curriculum-based PL, their **students' test scores improved by 9%** of a standard deviation, (Short and Hirsh 2020).
- Teachers who experience more frequent, collaborative and student-centered PL report **more positive feelings about their curriculum.**
- Educators who experienced high-quality PL show a **deeper level of attention to implementation.**

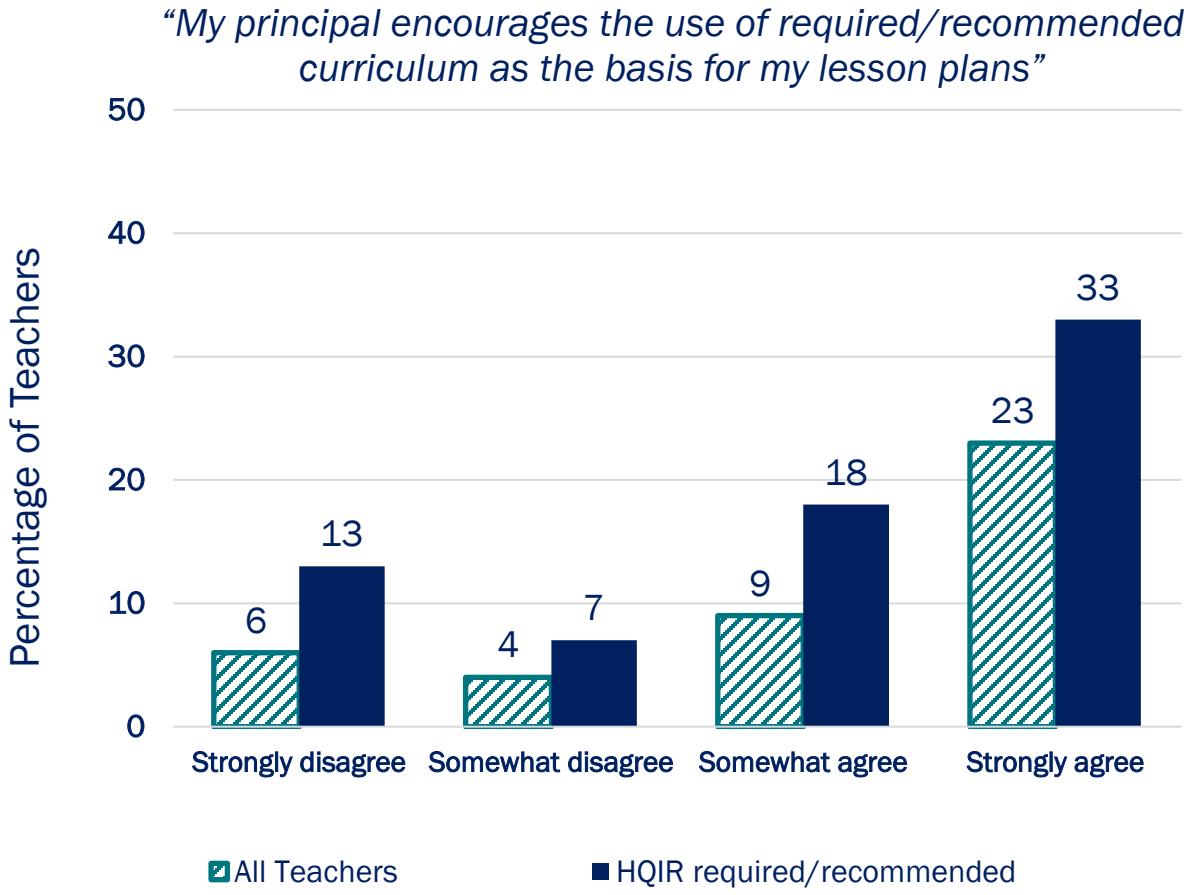
Doan, S. and Anna Shapiro. (2023). *Do Teachers Think Their Curriculum Materials Are Appropriately Challenging for Their Students? Findings from the 2023 American Instructional Resources Survey*. RAND Corporation.

Short, J. and Hirsh, S. (2020). *The Elements: Transforming Teaching through Curriculum-Based Professional Learning*. Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Leadership drives systemic implementation

In districts with a required HQIR (solid bar) *and* a principal who encourages teachers to base their lesson plans on that curriculum ("agree"), **consistent usage is significantly higher.**

This matters because it means more consistent access to grade-level learning and standards-aligned instruction for students.



Doan, S., et al. (2025). *American Instructional Resources Survey 2019-2025*. RAND Corporation.

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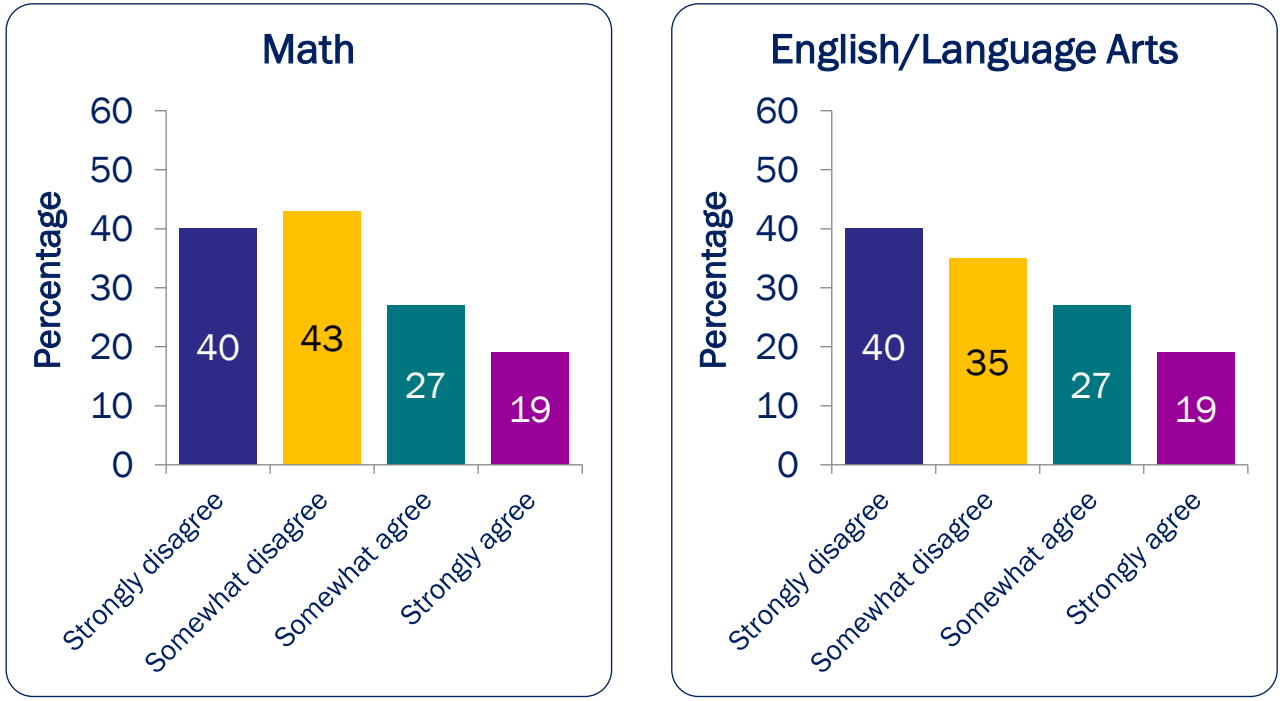
High-quality PL leads to more effective implementation

The more effective the PL, the less likely materials are seen as “too challenging” for students.

ELA and math teachers who indicated that **materials are too challenging**, by teacher-reported **effectiveness of professional learning activities**

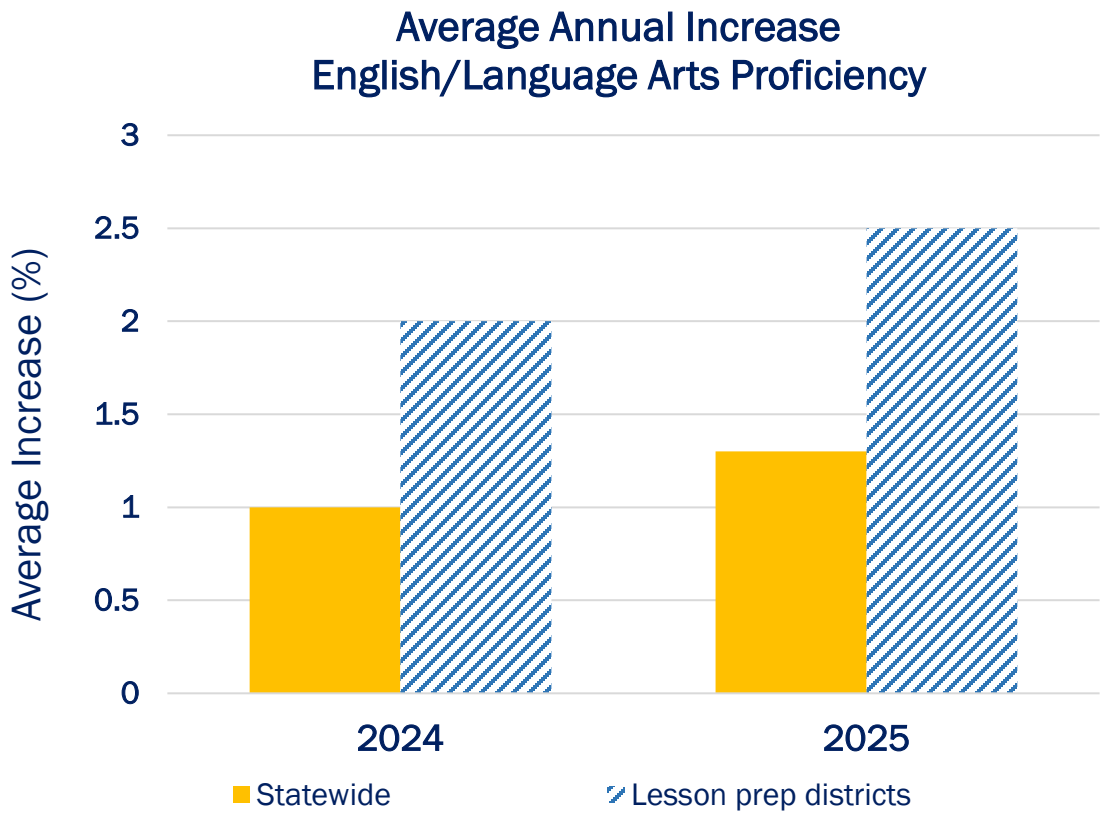


NOTE: The figure shows the percentage of math (N = 2,389) and ELA (N = 2,905) teachers who reported that the materials required or recommended by their district were too challenging for the majority of their students, separated by whether teachers agreed that the professional learning activities that they participated in during the 2022–2023 school year helped them use their curriculum materials more effectively to meet student needs.

Doan, S. and Anna Shapiro. (2023). *Do Teachers Think Their Curriculum Materials Are Appropriately Challenging for Their Students? Findings from the 2023 American Instructional Resources Survey*. RAND Corporation

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that focus on HQIR implementation see greater outcomes.

- Tennessee found that districts where teachers' PLCs focus on lesson internalization and student work analysis have seen **twice the growth in student proficiency** compared to the state average
- PLCs are most effective when they specifically focus on HQIR implementation:
  - Analyze student work
  - Internalize upcoming HQIR lessons
  - Rehearse key instructional routines



Tennessee Department of Education, unpublished data, 2025

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Kentucky's Implementation Efforts

Encouragement of KY principals in using HQIRS as the basis for daily lessons is growing

- In ELA, increasing percentages of KY teachers said **their principal encouraged them to use their recommended materials as the basis for their lesson plans.**
- Analysis of KSA reading data by ICF found that Grade 4 and 5 students enrolled in **districts that had adopted and implemented an HQIR for literacy had higher reading scores** than students who did not attend such districts.

Which of the following does your school principal most encourage you to use as the basis of your lesson plans? **(Percentage of teachers)**

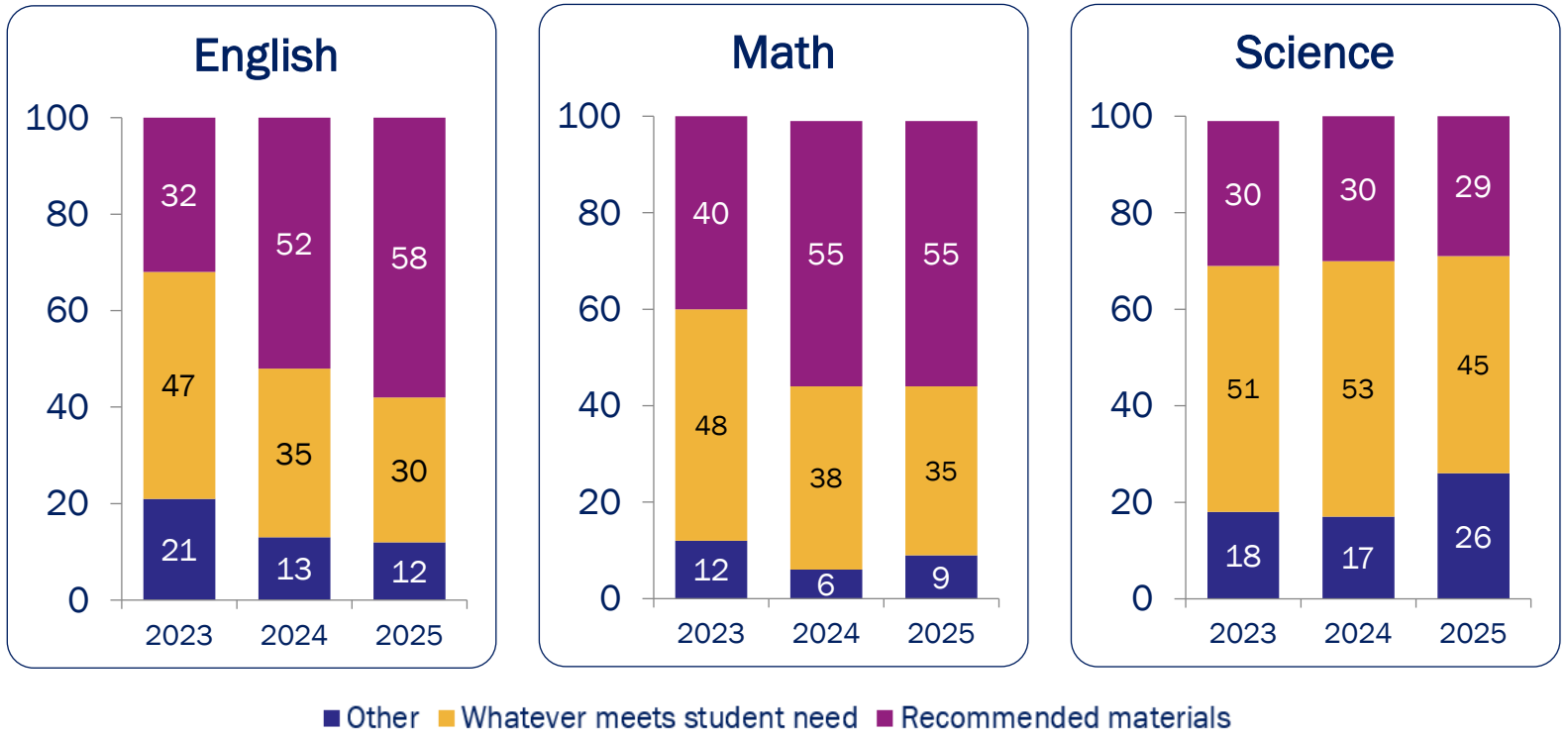

Figure shows teacher responses, separated by subject, to the following survey item: "Which of the following does your school principal most encourage you to use as the basis for your ELA/Math/Science lesson plans (pick one)?" The "Other" portion of the bars reflects respondents who answered "Other," "Materials I have developed on my own," and "Materials I have developed in collaboration with other [SUBJECT] teachers."

Doan, S., et al. (2025). *American Instructional Resources Survey 2019-2025*. RAND Corporation.

Kentucky Department of Education. (2025). *Kentucky Reading Academies: Supporting Literacy in the Commonwealth.* Infographic.

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Professional Learning Outcomes: Kentucky Reading Academies

Student and Teacher Gains

- Of the 7,000 K-5 teachers participating in Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling **(LETRS) training**, **pre- and post-assessment average increased from 65% to 95%.**
- **LETRS-trained teachers who worked with literacy coaches outperformed their non-LETRS-trained counterparts** in their use of phonemic awareness and phonics resources in their instruction.
- KY educators reported that LETRS participation motivated implementation of their district-approved HQIR into their classroom practice.

ICF found **statistically significant growth among students who were taught by LETRS-trained teachers:**

- Grade 5 students taught by **LETRS-trained teachers over two consecutive years had significantly higher reading scores** compared to students receiving just one year or no years of instruction by a LETRS-trained teacher.
- **This trend was also reported for special education students in grades 4 and 5** who had two consecutive years with a LETRS-trained teacher compared to those with access for one year or no access.

Kentucky Department of Education. (2025). Kentucky Reading Academies: Two years of outcomes and impact. Infographic.

Usher, K., Syal, S., et al. (2025). Kentucky Read to Succeed evaluation: Year 2 report executive summary. ICF.

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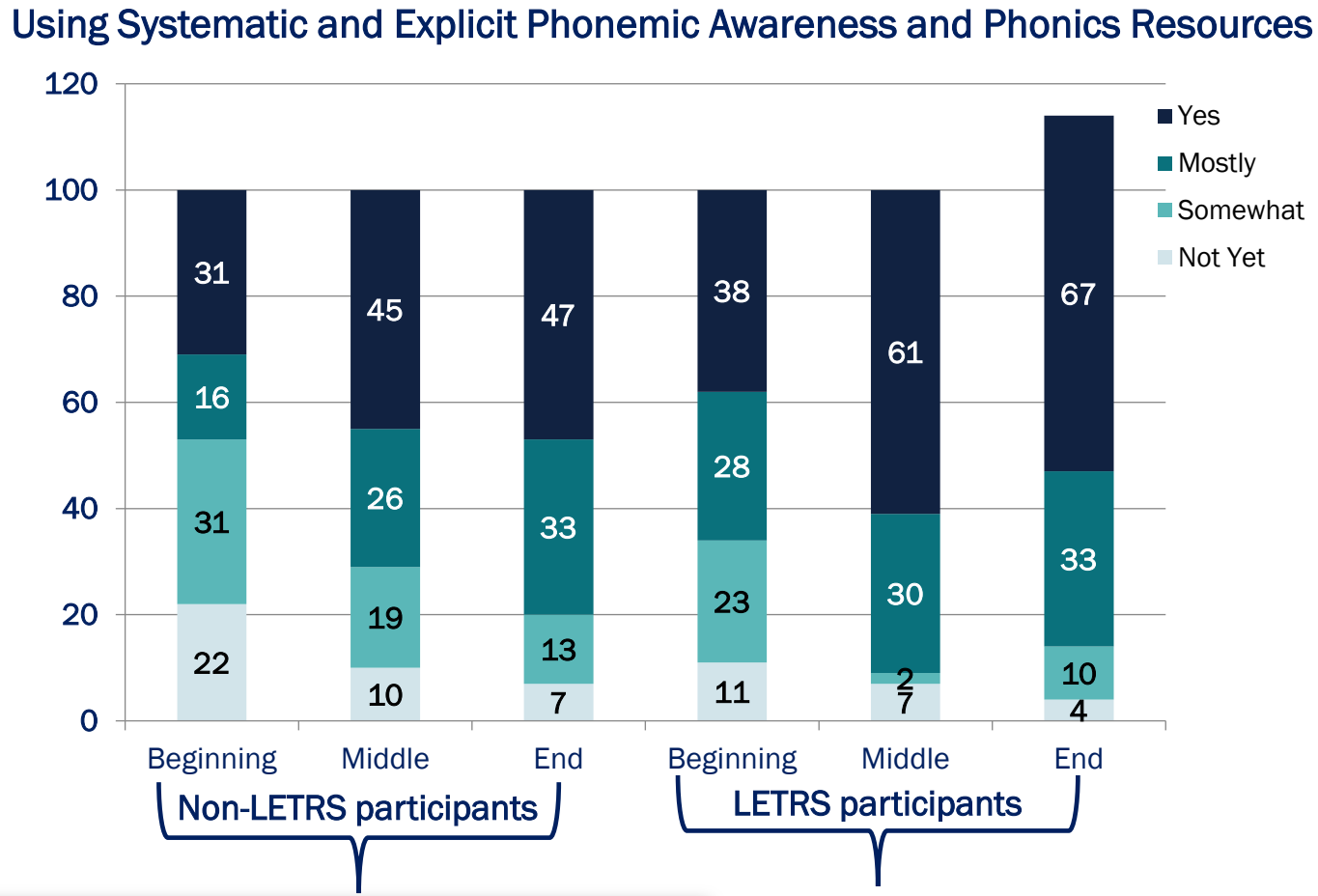
Professional Learning Outcomes: Kentucky Reading Academies

Impact on teacher perception and literacy knowledge

Findings from third-part evaluator, ICF, indicate that LETRS participants reported:

- Increased confidence in literacy knowledge;
- Increased application of strategies across all three tiers of instruction; and
- Increased motivation to implement district-adopted HQIRs into classroom practice.



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Kentucky Department of Education. (2025). Kentucky Reading Academies: Two years of outcomes and impact. Infographic.

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Kentucky Case Study

In one case study school, implementation of HQIRs and LETRS strategies led to significant improvements in students' performance on the district-wide literacy assessments.

Following students' completion of the i-Ready assessment, the number of students across the district who had reading improvement plans decreased substantially from approximately 90 to 50.

Kentucky Department of Education. (2025). Kentucky Reading Academies: Two years of outcomes and impact. Infographic.

Professional Learning Efforts

State Literacy Coaching Model Overview

- State Regional Literacy Directors (SRLDs) oversee the impactful work of the literacy coaching specialists and offer school and district support.
- School-based literacy coaches provide personalized support on implementing evidence-based literacy practices and standards-aligned grade-level instruction.
- Coaching cycles contribute to effective implementation of high-quality instructional resources (HQIRs) and improved student learning experiences aligned to grade-level standards.

2024-2025

- 23 partnership schools
- 23 school-based coaches
- 50+ districts receiving regional director support

2025-2026

- 31 partnership schools (total)
- 35 school-based coaches (total)
- 75+ districts receiving regional director support (total)
- 8 regional principal support coaches

Professional Learning Efforts

State Literacy Coaching Model - Impact on teacher effectiveness

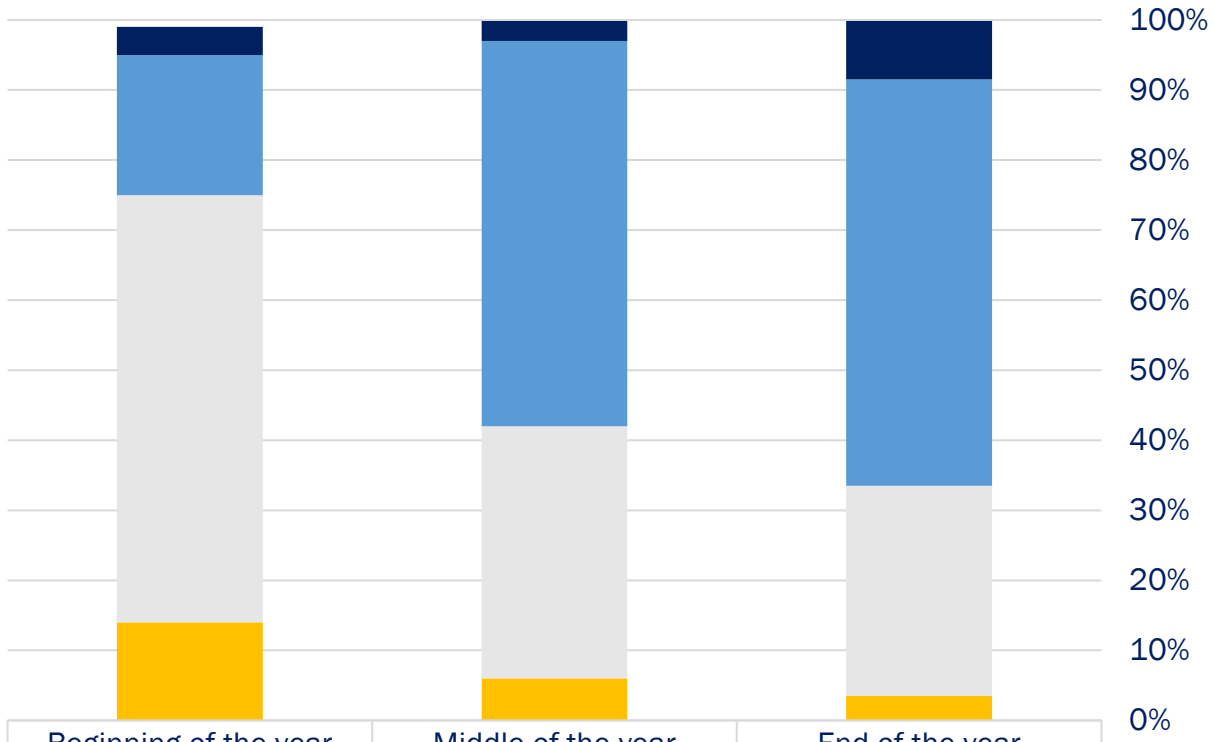
- The integration of coaching support, particularly alongside LETRS, was regarded as a **critical** factor in ensuring effective use of HQIRs.
- All surveyed teachers, regardless of LETRS participation reported strong agreement that coaching improved their instructional strategies and helped them implement next steps to enhance student learning.
- Administrators reported that coaches supported building-wide implementation and were especially valuable in schools with limited LETRS participation.

"[My coach and I] would go to classrooms and walk through together. And … we'd come out and we'd debrief … . She would teach me. So then when I would give feedback to the teacher, I could be very specific. … Without her, we would have all been way off track even with the right resource."

– Kentucky school administrator

Usher, K., Syal, S., et al. (2025). Kentucky Read to Succeed evaluation: Year 2 report executive summary. ICF.

Literacy Coaching Partnership Schools - Implementation Integrity



	Beginning of the year	Middle of the year	End of the year
Yes	4%	4%	9%
Mostly	20%	55%	58%
Somewhat	61%	36%	30%
Not at all	14%	6%	4%

Over the course of 2024-2025 school year, coaches have influenced HQIR implementation integrity with over 60% of lessons demonstrating “upper-bucket integrity” by the end of the school year.

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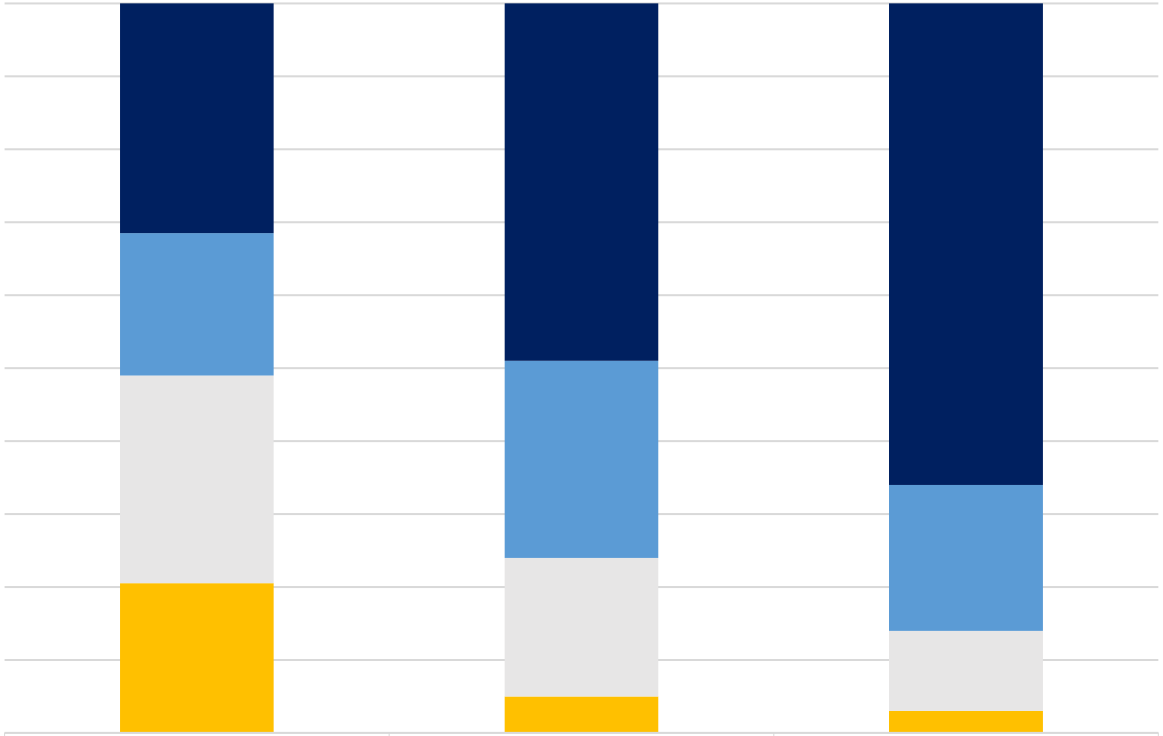
Literacy Coaching Partnership Schools – Use of Grade-Appropriate Texts



	September 2024	January 2025	April 2025
Yes	86	119	139
Mostly	39	54	40
Somewhat	57	38	22
Not yet	41	10	6

Over 85% of observed lessons had a grade-appropriate text at the center of the lesson by April 2025, up from 57% in September.

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Coaching cycles contribute to effective implementation of high-quality instructional resources (HQIRs) and improved student learning experiences aligned to grade-level standards.

These changes in instruction corresponded with reports of notable student growth, including descriptions of some KY kindergarten classrooms achieving near-universal grade-level proficiency.

"For the end-of-the-year [assessment], my kindergarten teacher has 95% of her kindergarteners on grade level. Yes. So that was super, super exciting."

– State Literacy Coaching Specialist

Usher, K., Syal, S., et al. (2025). Kentucky Read to Succeed evaluation: Year 2 report executive summary. ICF.

Board Role and Call for Support

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- Promote curriculum-based PL and associated funding - ABR
- Advocate for the expansion of the literacy and numeracy coaching models - ABR
- Advocate for the scaling of statewide implementation at middle and high school
- Support continued principal leadership development

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- Raise Awareness of Persistent Achievement Gaps
- Advocate for Funding
- Highlight the Importance of Opportunity and Access Through Policy
- Promote Evidenced Based Practices
- Support Collaboration