

i-Ready Personalized Instruction Improves Post-COVID Recovery

Recently, Curriculum Associates conducted a [large-scale longitudinal study](#) to examine if student academic growth is recovering or mirroring pre-COVID trends. The findings revealed key pockets of recovery: older students and those close to grade level in 2021 have largely recovered to historical levels of growth. Yet, the data also uncovered a few troubling trends. In particular, younger students and those furthest behind grade level in 2021 are not growing fast enough to keep pace with pre-pandemic trends.

One possible explanation is younger students and students below grade level require more targeted interventions than those implemented in recovery efforts, especially younger students who are building foundational skills. Varied patterns of growth by student group offer insight into the effects of recovery efforts. Implementation considerations (i.e., alignment between intervention and student population, implementation fidelity) may be key to recovery. To further explore this hypothesis, this brief report examines student growth among students using *i-Ready Personalized Instruction* (PI) as recommended. *i-Ready* PI provides tailored reading and mathematics instruction, systematic practice, and scaffolded feedback for students in Grades K–8. Leveraging the same longitudinal methods and analysis strategies, we modeled student growth among *i-Ready* PI users to see how their growth compared to national trends previously documented.

Key Findings

- Compared to national post-COVID trends, students using *i-Ready* PI as recommended **kept pace—or exceeded—historical growth in reading**.
- Using *i-Ready* PI as recommended appeared to **support post-COVID recovery for younger students and students below grade level**. These were some of the nation’s most impacted students according to national trends.

Figure 1. Differences in Student Growth in Reading by Cohort for *i-Ready* Fidelity Users

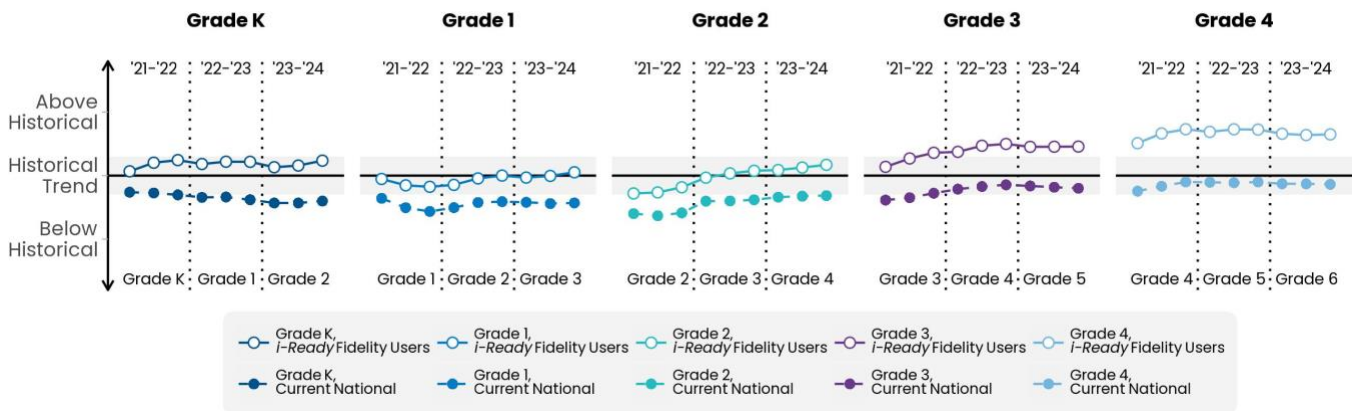
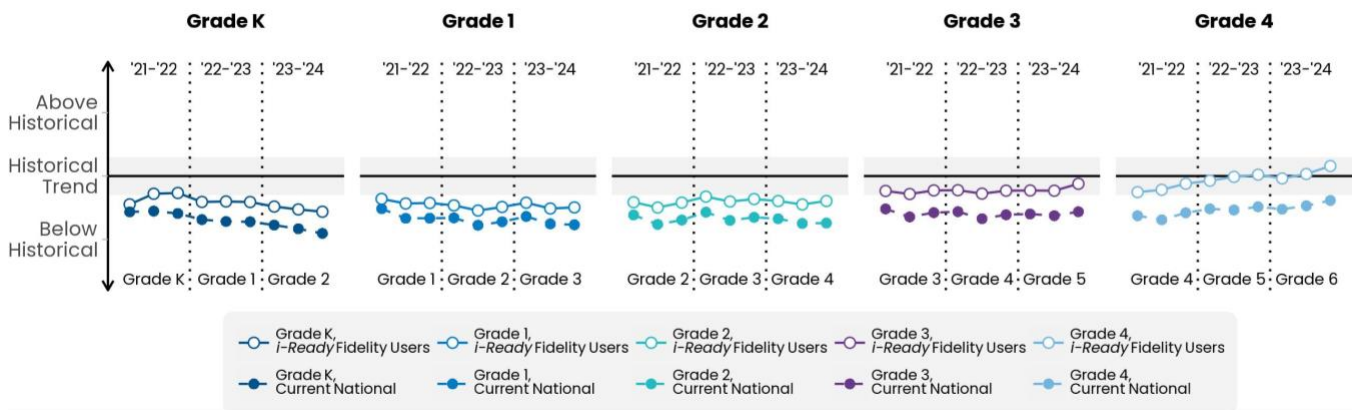


Figure 2. Differences in Student Growth in Mathematics by Cohort for *i-Ready* Fidelity Users



Methods

We leveraged the same data (i.e., historical data from fall 2016 to spring 2019 and post-COVID data from fall 2021 to spring 2024) and analytic approach as previous work (Young & Young, 2024). For each sample, we created five longitudinal cohorts that differed by starting grade in fall 2016 and 2021 for historical and post-COVID samples, respectively. The youngest cohorts (i.e., ages 3-4 during the pandemic), started in Grade K and the oldest started in Grade 4 (see Table 1).

We identified schools using *i-Ready* PI and flagged if students were using as recommended (i.e., fidelity users). These criteria were 1) using for at least 18 weeks per academic school year; 2) average weekly time was more than 30 minutes; and 3) average lesson pass rate was higher than 70%. If student *i-Ready* PI usage met the above criteria for at least two of three years assessed, they were coded as an *i-Ready* PI fidelity user (see Table 1).

Results

Growth among *i-Ready* PI fidelity users was higher than post-pandemic national averages across all cohorts. For reading, *i-Ready* PI fidelity user growth showed recovery across all cohorts, with the two oldest cohorts even exceeding historical trends (see Figure 1). For mathematics, *i-Ready* PI fidelity user growth exceeded post-pandemic national trends and showed recovery among older cohorts (see Figure 2). Though in younger cohorts, all students remain behind historical trends, the use of *i-Ready* PI with fidelity minimized these differences. These patterns were most pronounced for students below grade level in 2021. For these students, using *i-Ready* PI as recommended appeared to buffer slowed post-COVID growth patterns, especially for the youngest cohorts.

Discussion

Implementing *i-Ready* PI as recommended (i.e., with fidelity) appears to minimize differences between pre-pandemic and post-pandemic growth trends. In other words, recommended *i-Ready* PI usage appears to help students catch up, recover, or even exceed pre-pandemic trends, especially for reading. These results held for both young learners and students beginning below grade level who were most impacted by the pandemic. These findings suggest that well-designed and implemented interventions—those that align with the target population—can buffer, support, or accelerate growth post-pandemic.

Young, E., & Young, K. (2024). *Student growth in the post-COVID era*. Curriculum Associates. <https://cdn.bfldr.com/LS6J0F7/at/4rqc5wtpxqf85mk4pxj6rm7/ca-2024-summer-research-student-growth-technical-report.pdf>

Appendix

Figure 3. Differences in Grade Level Student Growth in Reading by Cohort for *i-Ready* Fidelity Users

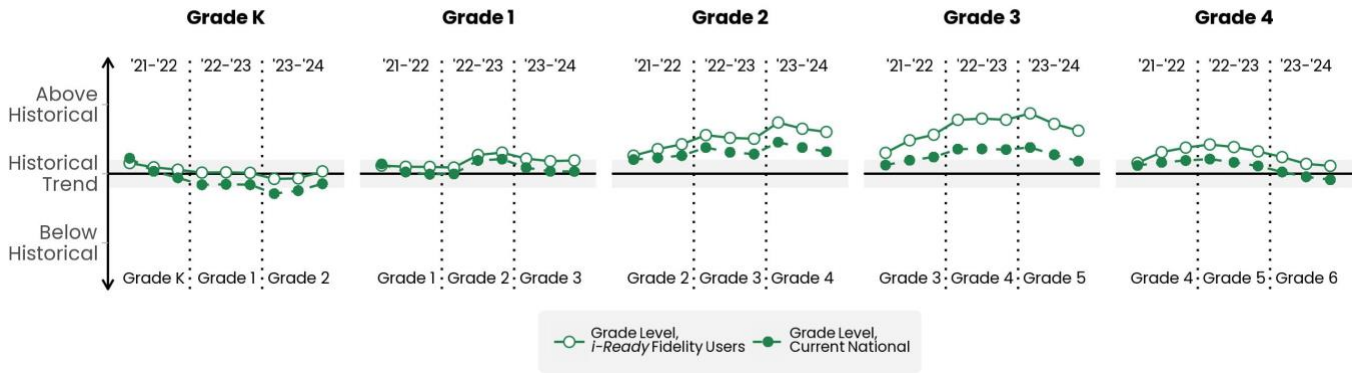


Figure 4. Differences in One Grade Below Student Growth in Reading by Cohort for *i-Ready* Fidelity Users

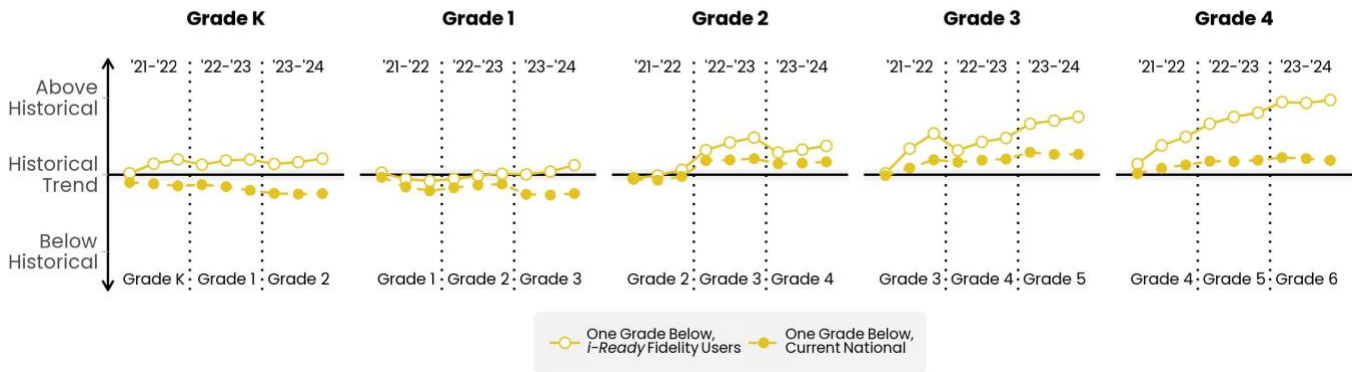


Figure 5. Differences in Two or More Grades Below Student Growth in Reading by Cohort for *i-Ready* Fidelity Users

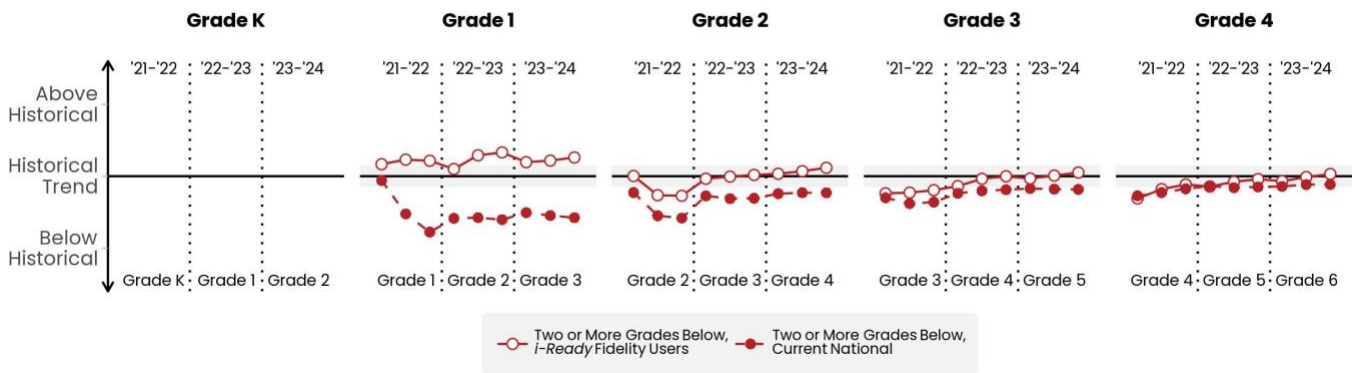


Figure 6. Differences in Grade Level Student Growth in Mathematics by Cohort for *i-Ready* Fidelity Users

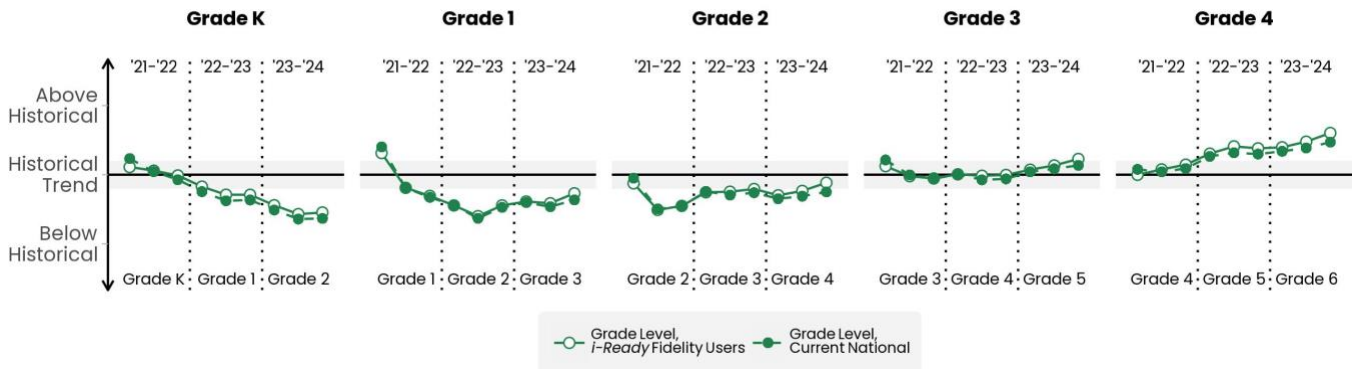


Figure 7. Differences in One Grade Below Student Growth in Mathematics by Cohort for *i-Ready* Fidelity Users

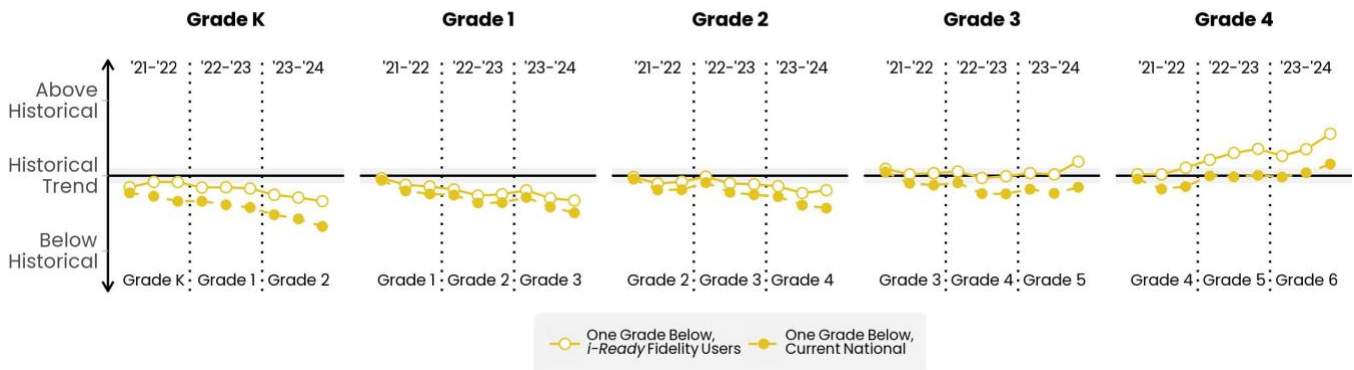


Figure 8. Differences in Two or More Grades Below Student Growth in Mathematics by Cohort for *i-Ready* Fidelity Users

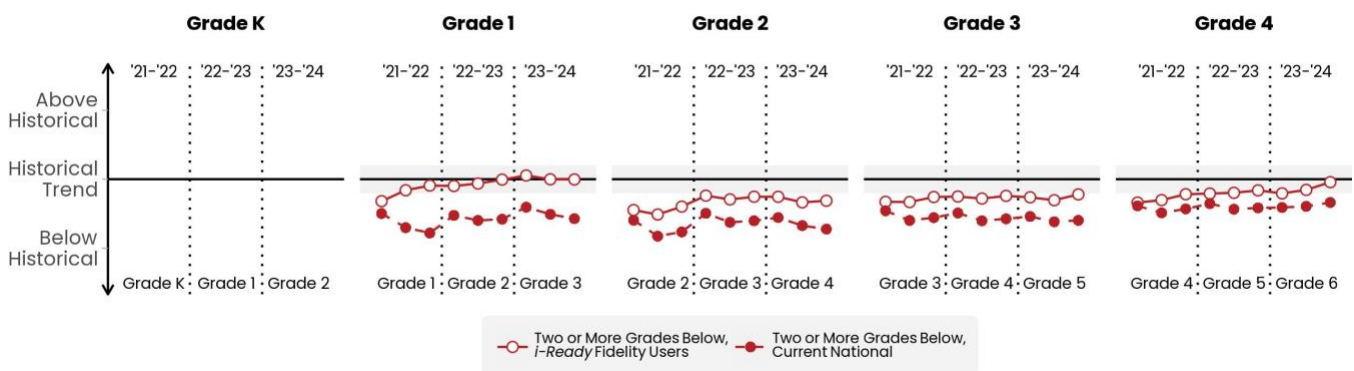


Table 1. Sample Sizes by Cohort, Subject, and Fidelity Status

Cohort	Group	Reading					Mathematics				
		N	Fidelity User Ns		Fidelity Percentage		N	Fidelity User Ns		Fidelity Percentage	
			Yes	No	Yes	No		Yes	No	Yes	No
Grade K	Grade Level	157,274	78,380	78,894	49.84%	50.16%	141,399	66,935	74,464	47.34%	52.66%
	One Below	332,827	133,929	198,898	40.24%	59.76%	475,184	222,137	253,047	46.75%	53.25%
	Total	490,101	212,309	277,792	43.32%	56.68%	616,583	289,072	327,511	46.88%	53.12%
Grade 1	Grade Level	96,394	50,628	45,766	52.52%	47.48%	80,770	43,159	37,611	53.43%	46.57%
	One Below	380,015	187,412	192,603	49.32%	50.68%	467,805	251,534	216,271	53.77%	46.23%
	Two or More Below	59,305	15,684	43,621	26.45%	73.55%	112,214	48,708	63,506	43.41%	56.59%
	Total	535,714	253,724	281,990	47.36%	52.64%	660,789	343,401	317,388	51.97%	48.03%
Grade 2	Grade Level	143,480	69,650	73,830	48.54%	51.46%	94,555	52,413	42,142	55.43%	44.57%
	One Below	243,530	95,556	147,974	39.24%	60.76%	359,989	193,332	166,657	53.7%	46.3%
	Two or More Below	185,304	64,610	120,694	34.87%	65.13%	237,116	104,953	132,163	44.26%	55.74%
	Total	572,314	229,816	342,498	40.16%	59.84%	691,660	350,698	340,962	50.7%	49.3%
Grade 3	Grade Level	248,299	98,229	150,070	39.56%	60.44%	98,460	52,482	45,978	53.3%	46.7%
	One Below	131,177	34,969	96,208	26.66%	73.34%	341,648	170,762	170,886	49.98%	50.02%
	Two or More Below	226,778	54,557	172,221	24.06%	75.94%	272,118	105,091	167,027	38.62%	61.38%
	Total	606,254	187,755	418,499	30.97%	69.03%	712,226	328,335	383,891	46.1%	53.9%
Grade 4	Grade Level	136,329	50,036	86,293	36.7%	63.3%	105,454	48,928	56,526	46.4%	53.6%
	One Below	188,719	37,717	151,002	19.99%	80.01%	246,384	94,394	151,990	38.31%	61.69%
	Two or More Below	154,337	22,603	131,734	14.65%	85.35%	227,574	62,395	165,179	27.42%	72.58%
	Total	479,385	110,356	369,029	23.02%	76.98%	579,412	205,717	373,695	35.5%	64.5%