

STATE OF STUDENT LEARNING IN 2025

JULY 2025 | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Five years following the abrupt closures of schools in March 2020, academic recovery at the national level remains elusive for many. Yet, there is nuance to these patterns, with some groups more affected by pandemic closures than others. The [latest research from Curriculum Associates](#) provides an in-depth analysis of student achievement in reading and mathematics during the 2024–2025 school year, examining which trends in achievement have proved durable while identifying variation

to these patterns. The report leverages a nationally representative sample to accurately reflect national trends while offering insight into unique subgroup patterns.

Results show that nationally, students are not demonstrating comparable levels of achievement to pre-pandemic. Though these achievement levels appear more stable over time, they vary depending on the student group evaluated.

Longstanding Shifts to Academic Achievement

Five years post-pandemic, overall academic achievement trends remain unchanged from the 2021–2022 school year ([Figures 1 and 2](#)). However, recovery patterns differ substantially across key school characteristics and student populations.

- Younger students appear more impacted by pandemic-related disruptions, with large declines in the proportion of students reaching grade level in 2022 and limited change since.
- The proportion of grade-level students in Grades 4 and up in mathematics show slight, but consistent, increases.
- Majority Black schools continue to show a steady increase in grade-level students across most grades and in both subjects since 2023, but given longstanding differences, disparities continue.



[Read the full
research report](#)
to learn more.

Figure 1: On Grade Level by Year—Reading

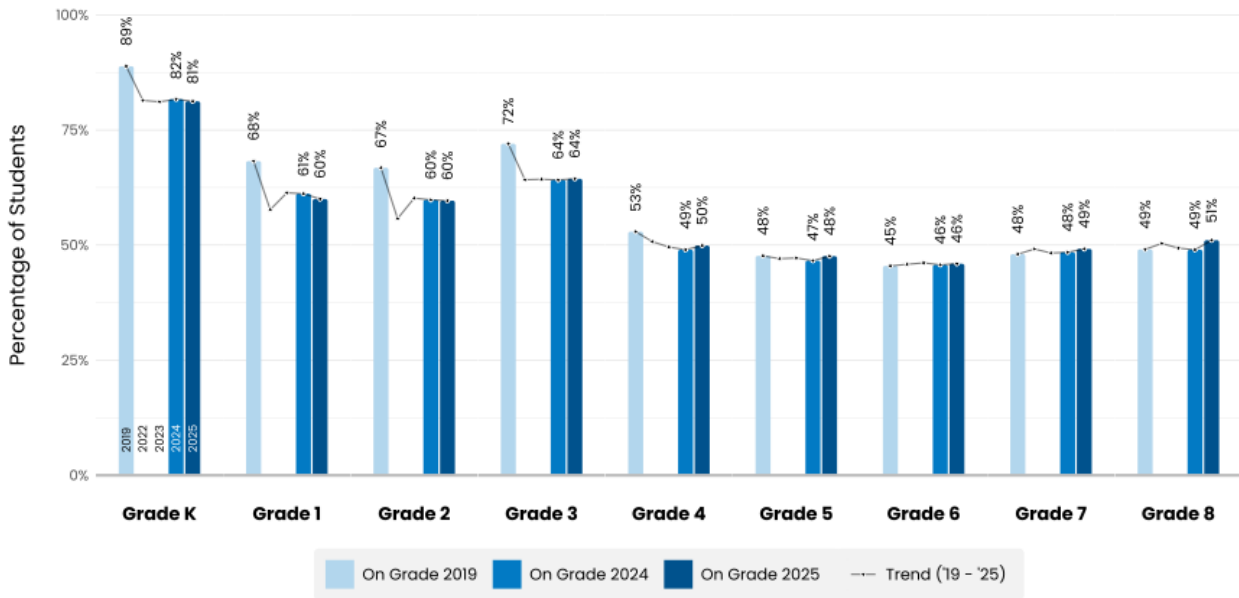
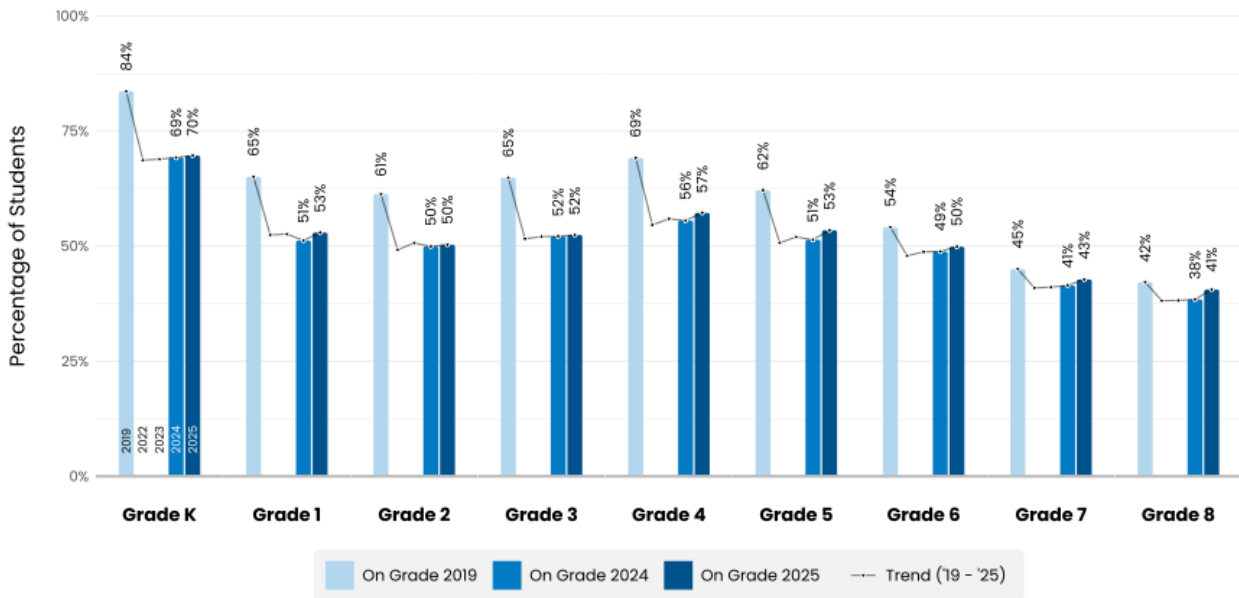


Figure 2: On Grade Level by Year—Mathematics

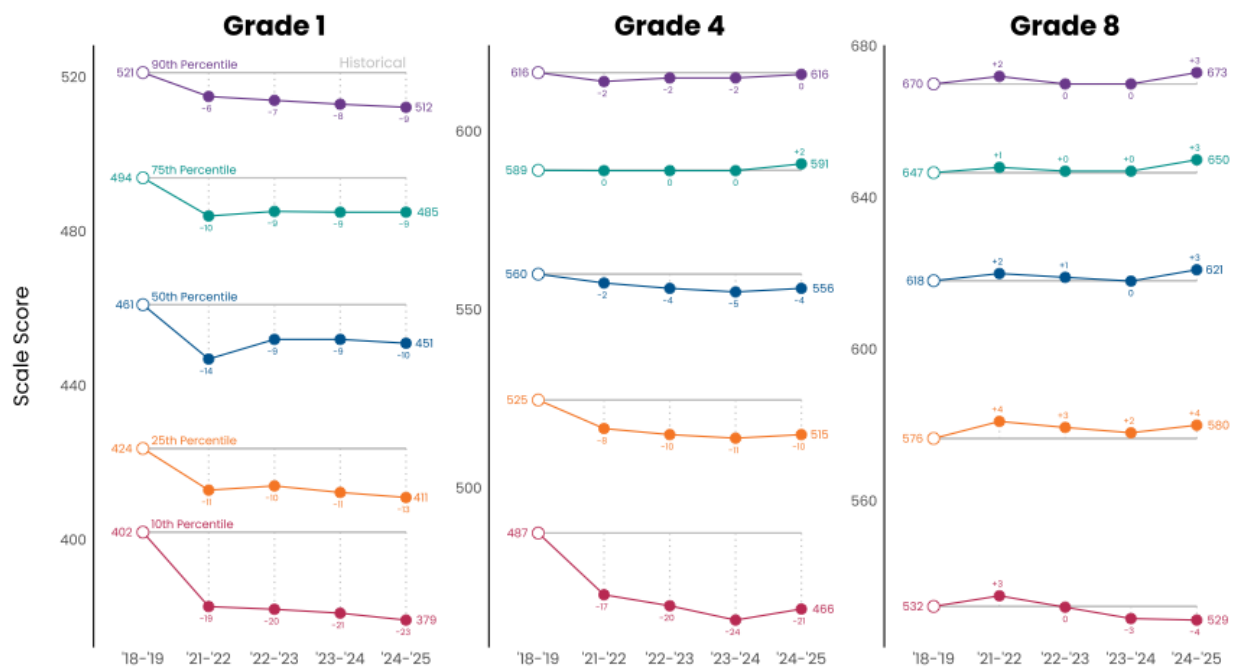


Shifts in Performance Differ by Percentile

The current research shows large discrepancies between the nation's highest and lowest performers. To evaluate academic achievement across student performance groups, we analyzed the 90th, 75th, 50th (i.e., median), 25th, and 10th percentile scale scores.

- There have been changes to the median (i.e., 50th percentile) score, with declines immediately post-pandemic and often stagnation or continued decline in years since (Figure 3).
- Across most grades, differences between students in higher and lower percentiles have increased over time, exacerbating longstanding gaps in performance among students.

Figure 3: Reading Scale Score Changes by Percentile



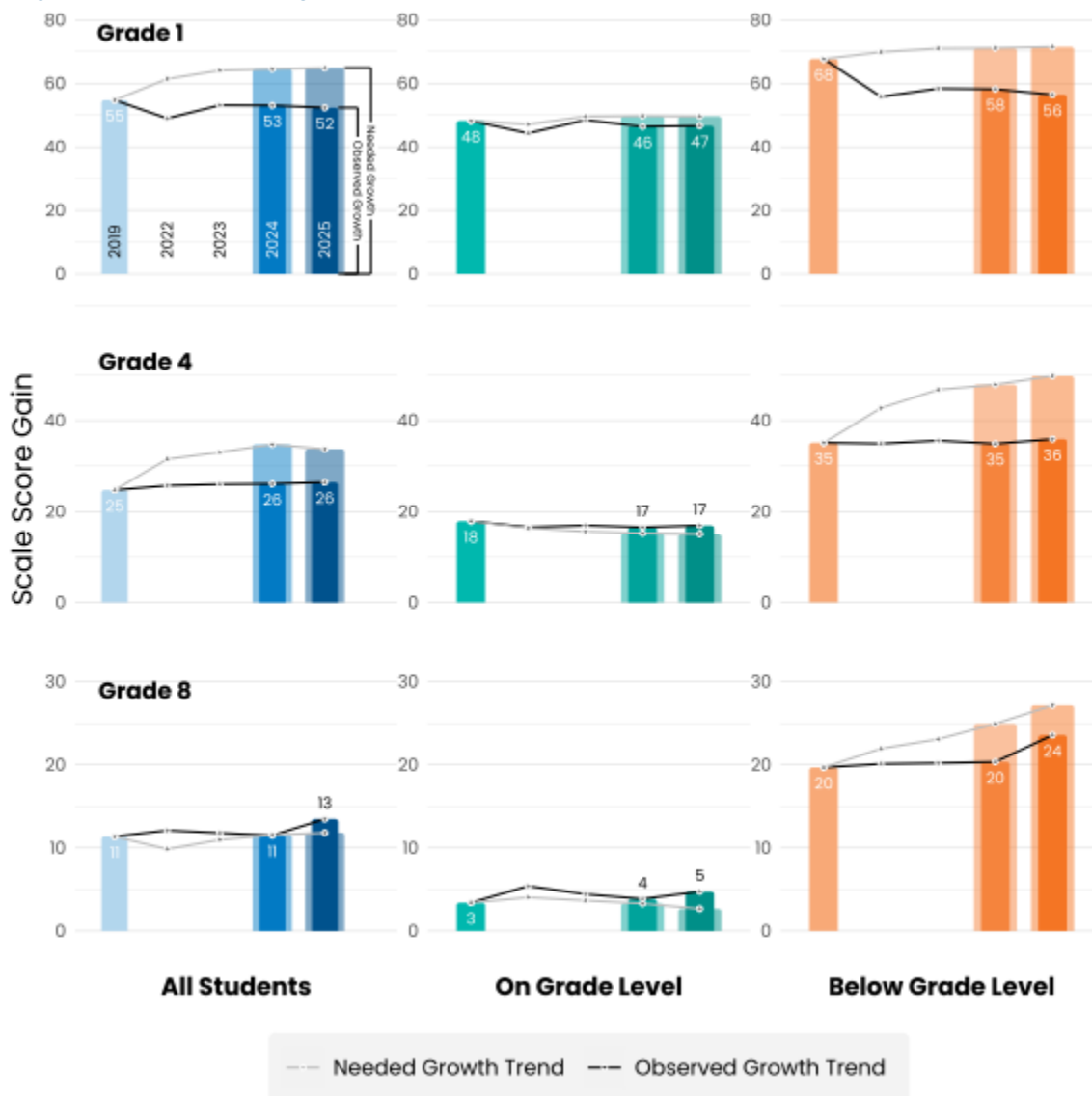
Note: Data are from selected grades in reading. See Technical Report for full data.

Annual Growth Not Enough to Get More Students to Grade Level

Results indicate students are growing at comparable rates to pre-pandemic but not enough to make up the academic ground lost (Figure 4). Students are entering the school year less prepared, so pre-pandemic annual growth is inadequate for students to reach historical benchmarks of spring performance.

- Students on grade level are showing comparable growth to—if not exceeding—their pre-pandemic peers.
- Students below grade level, on the other hand, experience challenges in either maintaining similar growth rates or are still not demonstrating the growth necessary to catch up to pre-pandemic spring scores.

Figure 4. Fall-to-Spring Observed Growth and Needed Growth in Mathematics



Note: Data are from selected grades in mathematics. See Technical Report for full data.

Implications

We may be entering a new era of education, with consistent, now longstanding changes to achievement. These results further emphasize the need to review student performance with a more individualized lens, understanding which students require continued and more targeted support. Though overall sample trends largely mirror those of the prior spring, disaggregated results show not only variance by school and community characteristics, but which specific groups of students may be driving more sweeping changes to national academic performance. It remains ever critical to evaluate these from a nuanced and data-driven perspective. Educational support, learning, and more recently, academic recovery, have never been a “one-size-fits-all” endeavor, and these data emphasize that remains true. As the field of education continues to evolve and respond to shifts in policy, practice, enrollment, and funding, one thing remains constant: It is necessary for educators, administrators, and service and curriculum providers to work in tandem to best support students moving forward.

Read the [full research report](#) to learn more.

About Curriculum Associates

Founded in 1969, Curriculum Associates, LLC designs research-based print and online instructional materials, screens and assessments, and data-management tools. The company’s products and outstanding customer service provide teachers and administrators with the resources necessary for teaching diverse student populations and fostering learning for all students.