How Did Students Perform in Reading Using *The Literacy Portfolio* by *i-Ready*?

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Research Report | October 2024

i-Ready

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Summary

Rooted in *i-Ready Diagnostic* data and evidence-based research, *The Literacy Portfolio* by *i-Ready* provides intentional instruction for students in Grades K–5. To evaluate the first year of implementation of *The Literacy Portfolio*, we investigated the growth of users across three districts in the 2023–2024 school year. We found that, regardless of chronological grade, students achieved their growth targets and made progress in their literacy skills. With *The Literacy Portfolio*, more students met their growth targets than expected, and average rates of Typical Growth surpassed national averages. Further, aside from students who started at the highest placement level in the fall, a substantial percentage of each starting group advanced at least one placement level in overall reading, Phonics, and Comprehension: Overall placement.

◆ **i-Ready**®

Key Findings

In the first year of implementation of The Literacy Portfolio*, students achieved their growth targets and improved their literacy skills.*

- With *The Literacy Portfolio*, more students achieved their Typical Growth and Stretch Growth® targets than expected, and average rates of Typical Growth across the school year surpassed national averages.

- With *The Literacy Portfolio*, a substantial percentage of students advanced at least one placement level in overall reading skills and in important Reading domains. Aside from students who started at the highest placement level:

    o   More than 75 percent of students in Grades K–5 advanced at least one placement level in overall reading

    o   More than 80 percent of students in Grades K–2 advanced at least one placement level in Phonics

    o   More than 65 percent of students in Grades 3–5 advanced at least one placement level in Comprehension: Overall

Study Overview

In the 2023–2024 school year, Curriculum Associates conducted a research study of Grades K–5 students using *The Literacy Portfolio*. In this study, the research team addressed several research questions:

1. How did students using *The Literacy Portfolio* progress on overall reading performance from fall 2023 to spring 2024?

2. Did Grades K–5 students advance on *i-Ready Diagnostic* for Reading placement levels from fall to spring in overall reading?

3. Did Grades K–2 students advance on *i-Ready Diagnostic* for Reading placement levels from fall to spring in Phonics?

4. Did Grades 3–5 students advance on *i-Ready Diagnostic* for Reading placement levels from fall to spring in Comprehension: Overall?

We evaluated the first two research questions for Grades K–5 students in each grade level individually, the third research question for Grades K–2 students combined, and the last research question for Grades 3–5 students combined. Due to limited access to demographic data for students, we were unable to further examine our research questions by specific student characteristics.

Get to Know *The Literacy Portfolio*

With robust *i-Ready Diagnostic* data and evidence-based research strategies, *The Literacy Portfolio* provides intentional instruction using a combination of literacy programs and resources

for students in Grades K–5. *The Literacy Portfolio* is supported by the Sequencing Guides, which provide guidance on using the suite of programs and resources in the English language arts classroom across 36 weeks of instruction. Each grade-level band (i.e., Grades K and 1, Grade 2, and Grades 3–5) uses a different mix of literacy programs and resources targeted to the specific needs of those students. With *The Literacy Portfolio*, teachers are empowered to thrive in the classroom with systematic and explicit instructional routines, data-driven insights, and full coverage of essential standards.

Available programs include *Magnetic Reading Foundations*, *Magnetic Reading*, *Ready Reading*, *Ready Writing, i-Ready Personalized Instruction,* and Teacher Toolbox. In addition*, Phonics for Reading®*, which is designed for older striving readers, is an optional program for Grades 3–5 students. Details of the program combinations provided by *The Literacy Portfolio* can be found in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: *The Literacy Portfolio* Provides Specific Program Combinations Depending on the Targeted Skill and Grade Level
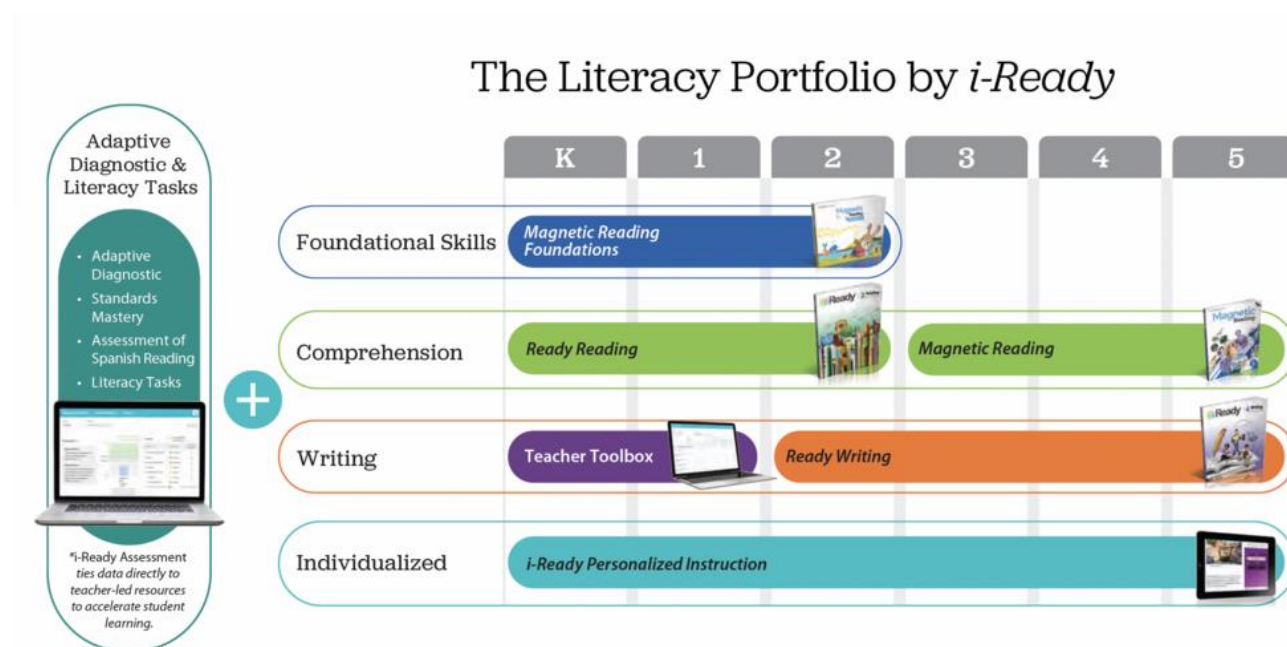
Data

Student performance was measured with Curriculum Associates' fall and spring *i-Ready Diagnostic* for Reading. The Diagnostic is an online, adaptive, and criterion-referenced assessment of student learning for reading in Grades K–8. It is built on college- and career-readiness standards and provides grade-level placements. Most school districts administer the Diagnostic to students three times during the school year: fall, winter, and spring. When students take the *i-Ready Diagnostic*, they receive a scale score that reflects their test performance that can then be used for comparison across grades and time.

The research team focused on the following Diagnostic measures in the current study: Typical Growth and Stretch Growth targets for all students, overall Diagnostic 5-level placement levels for all students, Phonics domain 5-level placement levels for Grades K–2 students, and Comprehension: Overall domain 5-level placement levels for Grades 3–5 students.

Students are classified into criterion-referenced placement levels based on their Diagnostic scale score. Students who place below or above their chronological grade level are put into a placement grade level (i.e., Levels K–8), while students who place on grade level are assigned to a placement of Early, Mid, or Late On Grade Level. For the purpose of assigning growth targets, students' grade-level placements are categorized into five relative placement levels: Mid or Above Grade Level, Early On Grade Level, One Grade Level Below, Two Grade Levels Below, and Three or More Grade Levels Below, which is also known as 5-level placements. The 5-level placements differentiate student knowledge and skill relative to grade-level proficiency and are available at both overall and specific domain levels (e.g., Phonics).

With the 5-level placements, the overall Diagnostic for Reading was used as a measure of general reading achievement. The research team was also interested in examining how students performed in specific literacy domains. In the early grades, phonics is especially important because it lays the foundation for comprehending ideas that is crucial for beginning readers (National Reading Panel, 2000; Castles et al., 2018). When students are able to use phonics to encode and decode words successfully, they are more likely to be confident and proficient readers. When students enter middle grades, comprehension becomes critical to developing their reading skills and necessary for other educational skills they will acquire in the future (National Reading Panel, 2000). Therefore, the team focused on Phonics and Comprehension: Overall as key literacy domains for the K–2 grade band and 3–5 grade band, accordingly.

The Diagnostic also assigns each student a Stretch Growth target and a Typical Growth target that is based on the student's chronological grade and overall placement level on the fall Diagnostic. A Typical Growth target is the median scale score growth over the school year for students at a given grade and fall placement level. It can be used to understand how much individual students or groups of students are growing compared to an average student nationally, for instance, to identify students who are lagging or surpassing median growth. A Stretch Growth target is an ambitious but attainable goal for student growth. Stretch Growth targets were determined based on observations of growth of a national sample of students who started at each placement level and achieved grade-level proficiency over time. Stretch Growth measures represent well-above-average growth, but do not exceed the 80th percentile of growth for students in any given placement (Curriculum Associates, 2018).

Sample

The study included three districts that implemented *The Literacy Portfolio* in the 2023–2024 school year in Grades K–5 and allowed Curriculum Associates to use their data for research. The final sample included students with a valid *i-Ready Diagnostic* for Reading score in fall and spring and who did not change grade levels throughout the school year.

The final sample for the current study included 21,761 students across Grades K–5 from 75 schools in three school districts. In addition, 99.8 percent of students in the sample were *i-Ready Personalized Instruction* users. Demographic data for the three districts in the sample came from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Almost half of the students from these three districts were White, around 27 percent of students were Black, 15 percent of students were Hispanic, close to 14 percent of students had a reported disability, and 8 percent were Multilingual Learners. See Table 1 below for a more detailed description of the demographic makeup of the three districts in the final sample.

Table 1: Most Students in the Sample Identified as White or Black, and a Small Percentage of Students Qualified as a Multilingual Learner or as Having a Disability

Race							Multilingual Learner Status	Disability Status
American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian	Multiple Races	White	Yes	Yes
1.7%	1.9%	26.6%	15%	.3%	5.5%	48.6%	7.9%	13.8%

Note: Data comes from NCES. Data on race was not available for all students, thus the percentages do not add up to 100 percent.

Analysis

To answer our research questions, several descriptive analyses were conducted using R version 4.2.3 (Posit Team, 2023). To better understand how students using *The Literacy Portfolio* progressed on overall reading performance, we examined the percentage of students meeting Typical Growth and Stretch Growth targets. We also calculated the average progress toward these growth targets as the percentage of students' growth from fall to spring out of their growth target.

To more directly demonstrate students' growth, we examined students' change in 5-level placements from fall to spring. A cross-tabulation of fall and spring *i-Ready Diagnostic* 5-level placements for overall reading, Phonics, and Comprehension: Overall was conducted, with percentages of students in each transition cell reported for each outcome.

Results

How did students using *The Literacy Portfolio* progress on overall reading performance from fall 2023 to spring 2024?

To answer our first research question, we evaluated students' progress by examining their Typical Growth and Stretch Growth. Generally, about half of students nationally will reach their Typical Growth target, and approximately 30 percent of students will reach Stretch Growth (Curriculum Associates, 2018; Rome & Daisher, 2022). With *The Literacy Portfolio*, more students met their growth targets than expected (see Figure 2).

With regard to Typical Growth, 71.3 percent of students across all grades using *The Literacy Portfolio* achieved their Typical Growth target, on average, which is about 20 percent more than what we see nationally, on average. An average of 46.3 percent of students across grades met their Stretch Growth target, which is around 10%–20% more than what is expected. Grade 2 students, in particular, made large gains, with approximately three-quarters of students achieving their Typical Growth target and about half achieving their Stretch Growth target.

Figure 2: Students in Grades K–5 Are Meeting Their Growth Targets Using *The Literacy Portfolio*
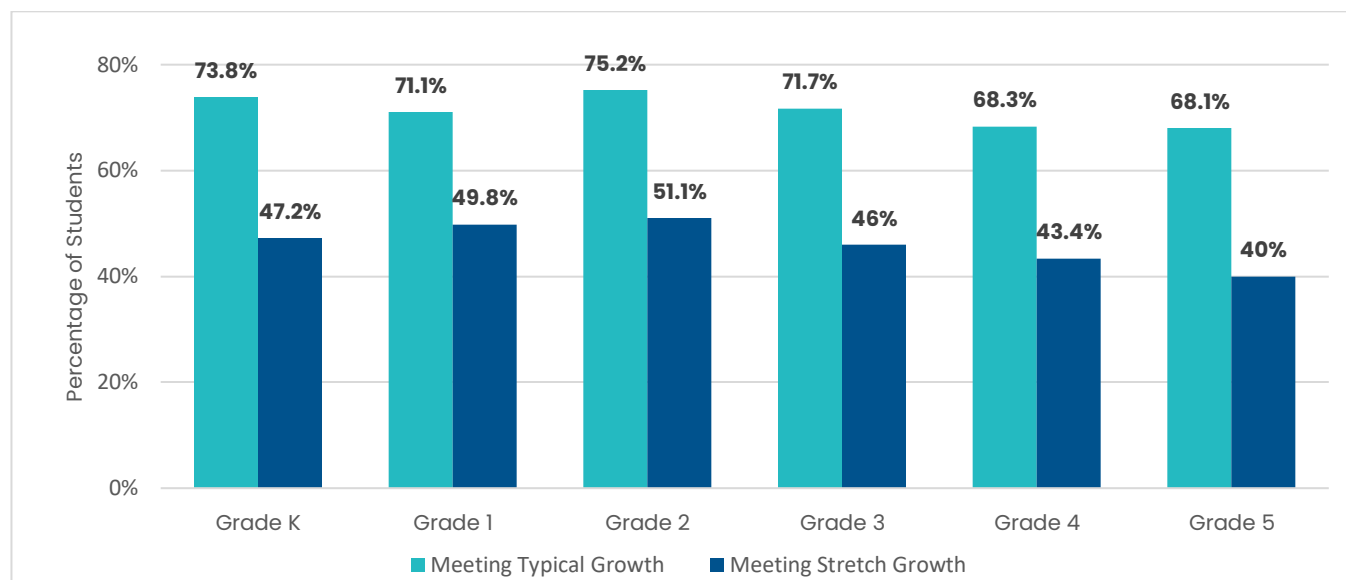
The team also examined students' percent Typical Growth and Stretch Growth. Percent growth is the percentage of students' growth from fall to spring out of their growth targets. On average, we expect the average percent progress toward Typical Growth for a group of students to be 100 percent. With *The Literacy Portfolio*, students' average Typical Growth in the current study far exceeded 100 percent (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Students' Average Typical Growth across Grades K–5 Surpasses National Averages
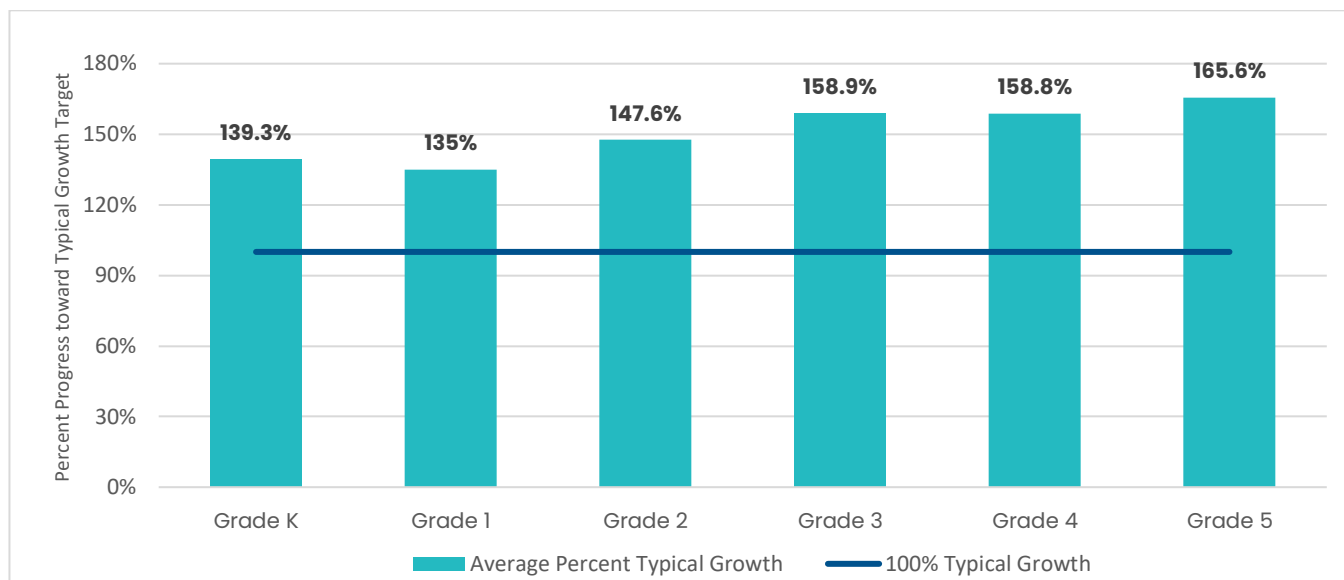
As Stretch Growth targets are aspirational targets to put students on track toward proficiency or advanced proficiency, we would not expect 100 percent of students to meet these challenging targets. However, students' average progress toward Stretch Growth from fall to spring was strong using *The Literacy Portfolio*. In particular, the average percent progress toward Stretch Growth for students in Grades K–3 was around 100 percent. The corresponding progress toward Stretch Growth was 86.5 percent and 77.4 percent for Grades 4 and 5 students, respectively.

Figure 4: Students' Average Stretch Growth Progress from Fall to Spring in Grades K–5 Is Strong
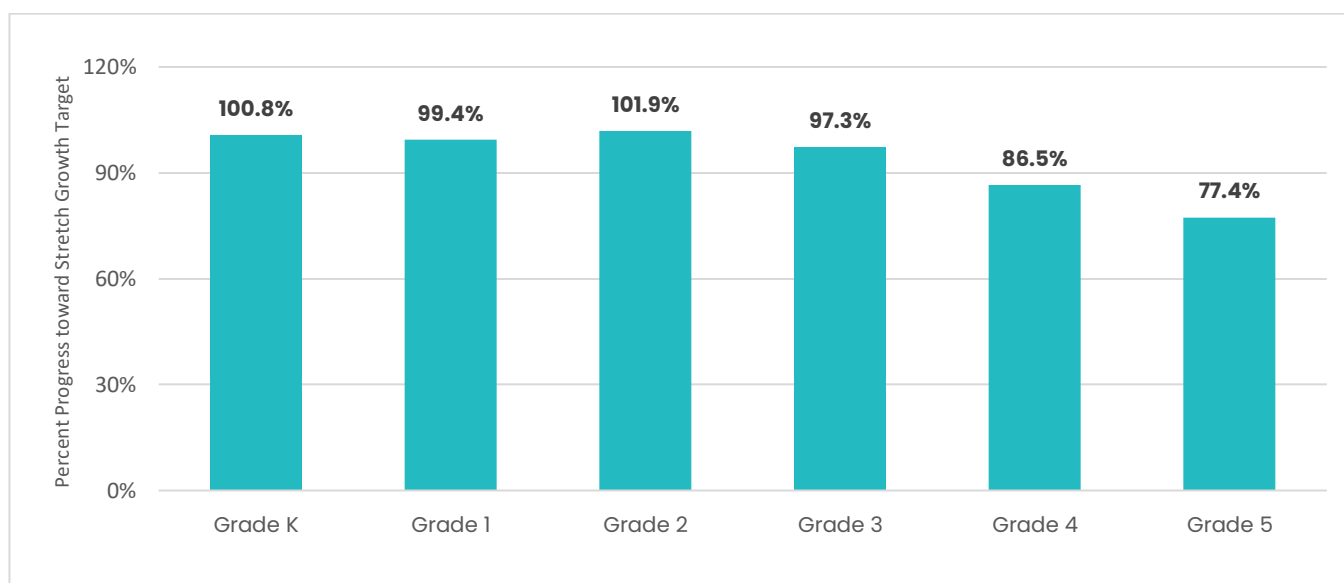
Did Grades K–5 students advance on *i-Ready Diagnostic* for Reading placement levels from fall to spring in overall reading?

For our second research question, we examined student growth on the *i-Ready Diagnostic* for Reading, which is used for evaluating students' overall reading skills. We found similar patterns of placement-level changes across all grades. As such, we only present the results of Grade 3 in detail, and the full results for the remaining grades can be found in the Appendix. Aside from students who started at the highest level, a substantial percentage of students from each starting level advanced at least one placement level over the school year (see Table 2). Further, approximately 84 percent of students who started at One Grade Level Below in the fall progressed beyond their starting level by spring.

Table 2: A Substantial Percentage of Students in Grade 3 Advanced at Least One Placement Level from Fall to Spring in Overall Reading

		n	Three or More Grade Levels Below	Two Grade Levels Below	One Grade Level Below	Early On Grade Level	Mid or Above Grade Level
			Spring *i-Ready Diagnostic* Overall Reading Placement				
Fall *i-Ready Diagnostic* Overall Reading Placement	Three or More Grade Levels Below	373	34.3%	41.8%	15.8%	5.6%	2.4%
	Two Grade Levels Below	832	2.3%	21%	35.8%	31.7%	9.1%
	One Grade Level Below	877	.1%	1.4%	14.4%	50.7%	33.4%
	Early On Grade Level	1,110	.1%	.2%	2.1%	20.2%	77.5%
	Mid or Above Grade Level	719	0%	0%	0%	2.1%	97.9%

Note: Shaded cells indicate improvement of one or more grade levels.

Did Grades K–2 students advance on *i-Ready Diagnostic* for Reading placement levels from fall to spring in Phonics?

For our next research question, we examined placement-level changes from fall to spring for students in Grades K–2 in the Phonics domain (see Table 3). Similar to overall reading skills, except for those students who started at the highest placement level, around 80 percent of each starting group advanced at least one placement level across the school year.

Table 3: A Large Majority of Students in Grades K–2 with Room for Improvement Advanced at Least One Placement Level from Fall to Spring in Phonics

			Spring *i–Ready Diagnostic* Phonics Domain Placement			
		n	Two Grade Levels Below	One Grade Level Below	Early On Grade Level	Mid or Above Grade Level
Fall *i–Ready Diagnostic* Phonics Domain Placement	**Two Grade Levels Below**	1,741	21.4%	45.5%	11.1%	22%
	One Grade Level Below	5,318	.8%	19.3%	17.1%	62.7%
	Early On Grade Level	1,317	0%	5.7%	10.1%	84.2%
	Mid or Above Grade Level	2,003	0%	2%	2.7%	95.3%

Note: Shaded cells indicate improvement of one or more grade levels.

Did Grades 3–5 students advance on *i-Ready Diagnostic* for Reading placement levels from fall to spring in Comprehension: Overall?

For our last research question, we examined placement levels for Grades 3–5 students in the Comprehension: Overall domain (see Table 4). Aside from students whose starting level was the highest in the fall, a significant percentage of students in each starting group advanced at least one placement level from fall to spring. With *The Literacy Portfolio,* around 60%–70% of students in each starting placement level advanced at least one placement level by the end of the school year.

Table 4: A Significant Percentage of Students in Grades 3–5 with Room for Improvement Advanced at Least One Placement Level from Fall to Spring in Comprehension: Overall

			Spring *i–Ready Diagnostic* Comprehension: Overall Placement				
		n	Three or More Grade Levels Below	Two Grade Levels Below	One Grade Level Below	Early On Grade Level	Mid or Above Grade Level
Fall *i–Ready Diagnostic* Comprehension: Overall Placement	**Three or More Grade Levels Below**	1,929	41.6%	26.3%	24.6%	5.3%	2.2%
	Two Grade Levels Below	1,927	5.4%	20.8%	40.5%	21.6%	11.7%
	One Grade Level Below	3,186	.8%	3.5%	28.6%	30.5%	36.6%
	Early On Grade Level	1,975	0%	.6%	6.5%	18.1%	74.8%
	Mid or Above Grade Level	2,365	0%	0%	1%	4.5%	94.4%

Note: Shaded cells indicate improvement of one or more grade levels.

Conclusion

In this study, Curriculum Associates focused on the literacy performance of students using *The Literacy Portfolio.* We evaluated how those students progressed toward their Typical Growth and Stretch Growth targets as well as how students advanced in their overall reading, Phonics, and Comprehension: Overall placement levels. Students in the study using *The Literacy Portfolio* improved their literacy skills and progressed from fall to spring on reading placement levels above and beyond what would be expected. Regardless of grade, more students met their growth targets than expected, and students made strong progress across the school year toward their targets. Moreover, a large proportion of students advanced on their 5-level placements from fall to spring in their overall reading skills and in key literacy domains.

These initial findings are promising and indicate that students benefited having *The Literacy Portfolio* in their classrooms. *The Literacy Portfolio* not only focuses on overall reading but also addresses important literacy domains for each grade band. By enabling students to build corresponding literacy skills at different grade levels, *The Literacy Portfolio* lays the groundwork for students' future learning achievements. The results of the current study highlight the potential impact the core literacy programs designed by Curriculum Associates could have on students' literacy performance.

Limitations and Opportunities for Future Research

Due to a lack of demographic data about students in our study, the team was not able to examine certain student characteristics, including Multilingual Learner status, disability, and socioeconomic disadvantaged status, known correlations with student academic performance. Further, the students in the sample came from three districts, so caution should be taken when interpreting results, in particular generalizing to a national sample. It would be important to build on this research in additional states and school districts with access to student demographic data to better understand how certain groups of students using *The Literacy Portfolio* may be performing differently. In addition, it is important to note that the results presented in the report are descriptive in nature and cannot point to causal conclusions. Future research on this topic may consider including a comparison group to further understand the efficacy of *The Literacy Portfolio*.

The team did not track how *The Literacy Portfolio* was implemented in the current study. Because we know that implementation has important implications for how students take up the program and thus, their educational outcomes, future research should collect data on implementation, including how the Sequencing Guides were followed by educators and whether students used the programs as expected over the school year. These data will allow the team to examine the relationship between implementation and students' performance with *The Literacy Portfolio*, which can inform best practices for effective instruction for using *The Literacy Portfolio* conversely.

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Appendix

Table 5: *i-Ready Diagnostic* 5-Level Placement Transition from Fall to Spring for Grade K

		Spring *i-Ready Diagnostic* Overall Reading Placement			
		n	One Grade Level Below	Early On Grade Level	Mid or Above Grade Level
Fall *i-Ready Diagnostic* Overall Reading Placement	One Grade Level Below	1,764	12.4%	26.4%	61.2%
	Early On Grade Level	592	.5%	5.1%	94.4%
	Mid or Above Grade Level	201	0%	0%	100%

Note: Shaded cells indicate improvement of one or more grade levels.

Table 6: *i-Ready Diagnostic* 5-Level Placement Transition from Fall to Spring for Grade 1

		Spring *i-Ready Diagnostic* Overall Reading Placement				
		n	Two Grade Levels Below	One Grade Level Below	Early On Grade Level	Mid or Above Grade Level
Fall *i-Ready Diagnostic* Overall Reading Placement	Two Grade Levels Below	319	7.2%	68.7%	10.7%	13.5%
	One Grade Level Below	2,585	.4%	24.9%	19.2%	55.5%
	Early On Grade Level	349	0%	.9%	2.6%	96.6%
	Mid or Above Grade Level	365	0%	.3%	.8%	98.9%

Note: Shaded cells indicate improvement of one or more grade levels.

Table 7: *i-Ready Diagnostic* 5-Level Placement Transition from Fall to Spring for Grade 2

		Spring *i-Ready Diagnostic* Overall Reading Placement				
		n	Two Grade Levels Below	One Grade Level Below	Early On Grade Level	Mid or Above Grade Level
Fall *i-Ready Diagnostic* Overall Reading Placement	Two Grade Levels Below	1,099	26.2%	54%	13.3%	6.5%
	One Grade Level Below	1,900	.2%	19.3%	32.6%	47.8%
	Early On Grade Level	630	0%	.5%	6.2%	93.3%
	Mid or Above Grade Level	575	.2%	.2%	1.2%	98.4%

Note: Shaded cells indicate improvement of one or more grade levels.

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Table 8: *i-Ready Diagnostic* 5-Level Placement Transition from Fall to Spring for Grade 4

			Spring *i-Ready Diagnostic* Overall Reading Placement				
		n	Three or More Grade Levels Below	Two Grade Levels Below	One Grade Level Below	Early On Grade Level	Mid or Above Grade Level
Fall *i-Ready Diagnostic* Overall Reading Placement	Three or More Grade Levels Below	650	43.2%	20.9%	30.8%	3.4%	1.7%
	Two Grade Levels Below	336	3.6%	9.8%	74.1%	8.9%	3.6%
	One Grade Level Below	1,512	.3%	1.3%	40.5%	28%	30%
	Early On Grade Level	568	.2%	0%	6.3%	21.5%	72%
	Mid or Above Grade Level	774	.1%	0%	.6%	4.5%	94.7%

Note: Shaded cells indicate improvement of one or more grade levels.

Table 9: *i-Ready Diagnostic* 5-Level Placement Transition from Fall to Spring for Grade 5

			Spring *i-Ready Diagnostic* Overall Reading Placement				
		n	Three or More Grade Levels Below	Two Grade Levels Below	One Grade Level Below	Early On Grade Level	Mid or Above Grade Level
Fall *i-Ready Diagnostic* Overall Reading Placement	Three or More Grade Levels Below	530	47.2%	38.3%	12.1%	2.1%	.4%
	Two Grade Levels Below	737	2.2%	26.9%	50.1%	18.3%	2.6%
	One Grade Level Below	1,041	.3%	3.7%	28.7%	43.9%	23.4%
	Early On Grade Level	684	0%	.1%	7.6%	28.9%	63.3%
	Mid or Above Grade Level	639	0%	0%	.5%	6.7%	92.8%

Note: Shaded cells indicate improvement of one or more grade levels.