

# STATE OF STUDENT LEARNING IN 2024

AUGUST 2024 | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Four years out from initial school closures, current and prior research identify disparate patterns in academic recovery, including student growth trajectories (Young & Young, 2024). The [latest research from Curriculum Associates](#) provides an in-depth analysis of student achievement in mathematics and reading during the 2023–2024 school year, examining what these varied growth patterns mean for grade-level attainment.

The report leverages a nationally representative sample to accurately reflect national trends while offering insight into emerging outliers.

**The results reveal that academic recovery at a national level remains stagnant, with small pockets in which specific populations are challenging the trends.**

## Key Findings

### Fewer students are achieving grade level than pre-pandemic.

- Overall, the proportions of grade-level students are very similar from spring 2023 to spring 2024 across grades and subjects, indicating limited recovery from pre-pandemic but steadier levels of achievement over the prior three years.
- Differences between pre- and post-pandemic achievement appear larger for students who began the year well below grade level. This indicates a diverging pattern for learning recovery as achievement gaps widen.
- Despite small increases in on-grade level students for some groups, inequities continue for historically underserved communities.

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

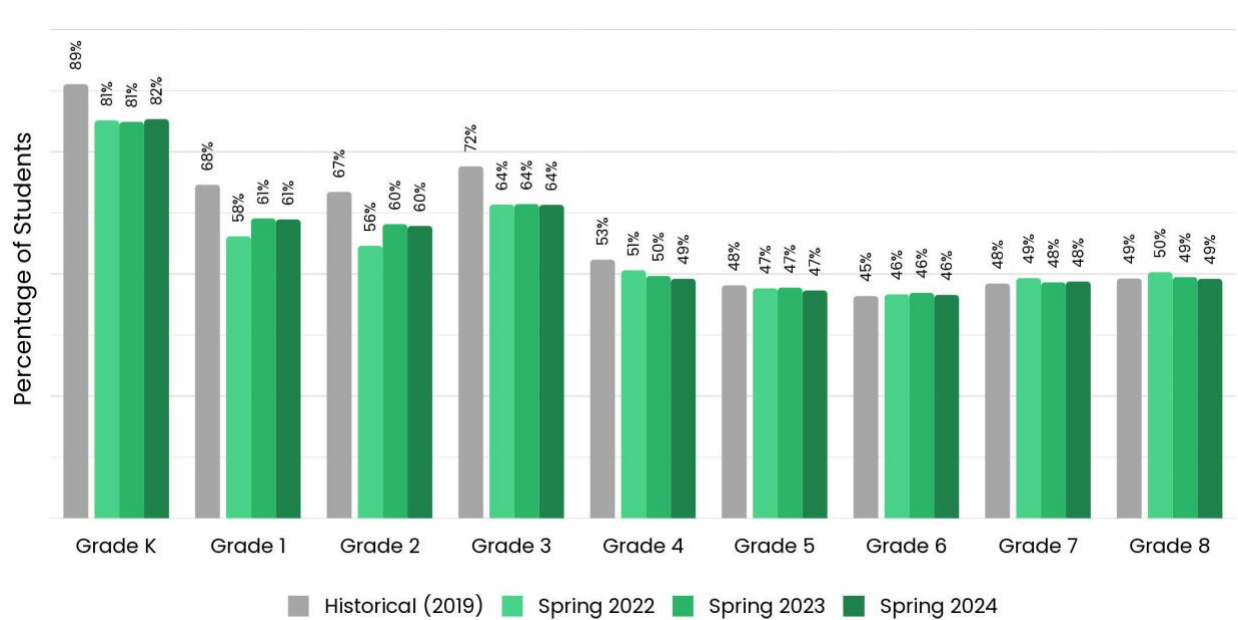
## Results by Subject

In both mathematics and reading, there were decreases in the proportions of students reaching grade level immediately post-pandemic, with limited recovery since. Evaluating annual growth by starting placement level shows students who began below grade level are not making the growth needed to reach historical spring scores. On the other hand, students who began on grade level have maintained comparable growth and scores. These results may indicate much of the change in grade-level percentages is driven by students who began below grade level. **These gaps may compound over time, making it more challenging for students to reach grade level despite comparable annual growth.**

### Reading

The proportion of students on grade level remains below pre-pandemic trends but on par with prior years (i.e., spring 2022 and 2023). Changes from pre- to post-pandemic were larger in younger grades (i.e., Grades K–4), whereas older grades (i.e., Grades 5–8) showed relatively stable proportions of students on grade level from pre- to post-pandemic (Figure 1). In some grades, namely Grades 1 and 2, there was small recovery from the 2021–2022 to the 2022–2023 school years, but limited increases since.

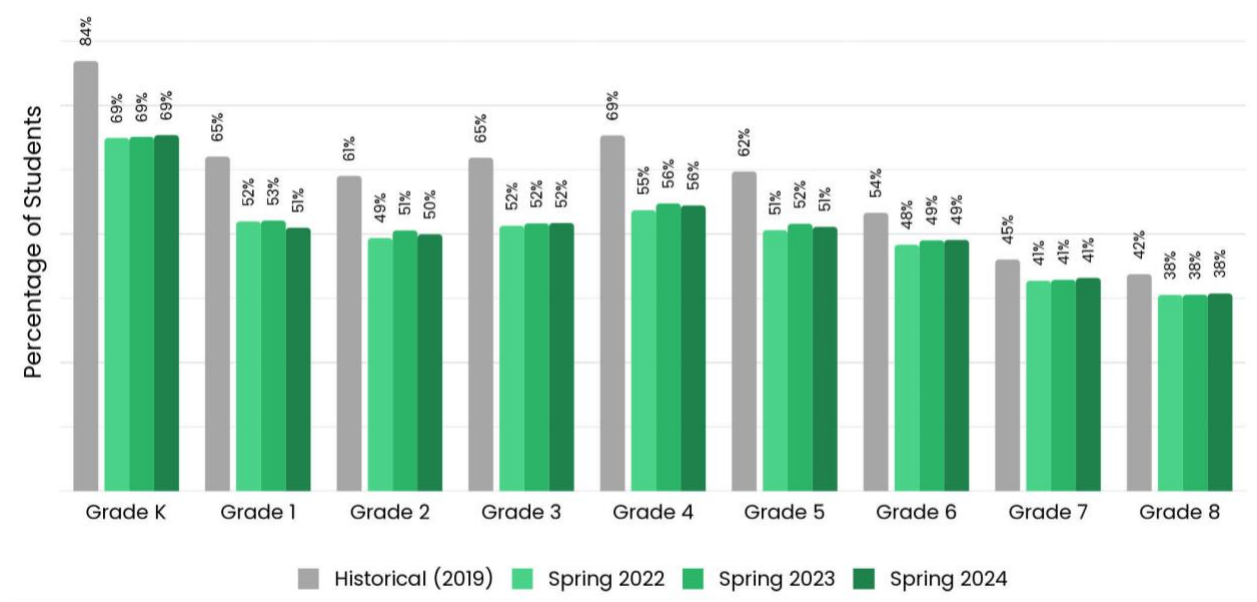
Figure 1: On Grade Level by Year—Reading



### Mathematics

Overall mathematics results show similar grade-level trends as in reading, with older students demonstrating less decline than younger students immediately post-pandemic (Figure 2). These declines were more pronounced, though, with older grades declining by an average of four points and some younger grades declining by nearly 15 points. These proportions have not demonstrated change from spring 2023 to spring 2024, so values remain well below pre-pandemic proportions for young students.

Figure 2: On Grade Level by Year—Mathematics

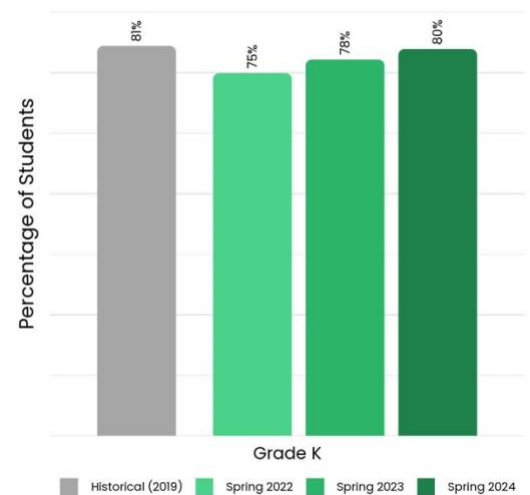


## Pockets of Progress

Data show some promising trends in Grade K phonics and schools serving majority-Black populations.

- Grade K:** Since the return to in-person schooling, the percentage of Grade K students on grade level in phonics has increased each year (Figure 3). This improvement from last year to this year, if applied nationally, could mean nearly 75,000 more Grade K students achieving grade-level phonics skills. Because phonics is a strong predictor of later reading ability, this is an encouraging trend.
- Majority-Black student populations:** While these schools still face significant challenges and continued disparities, there are encouraging increases in the proportion of on-grade level students in Grades 3 and up.

Figure 3: On Grade Level by Year—Phonics



# Implications

The results of this report remind us that academic recovery is ongoing, and the path of academic recovery is not a universal experience.

Identifying places where recovery occurred and the practices that were successful are important next steps toward improving academic achievement at a larger scale. Educators, district leaders, and other stakeholders must assess which interventions are effective for whom as we work together to change the course of learning for students who need support now.

For the full technical report, visit [CurriculumAssociates.com/StateOfStudentLearning2024](https://CurriculumAssociates.com/StateOfStudentLearning2024).

## Reference

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>

## 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.