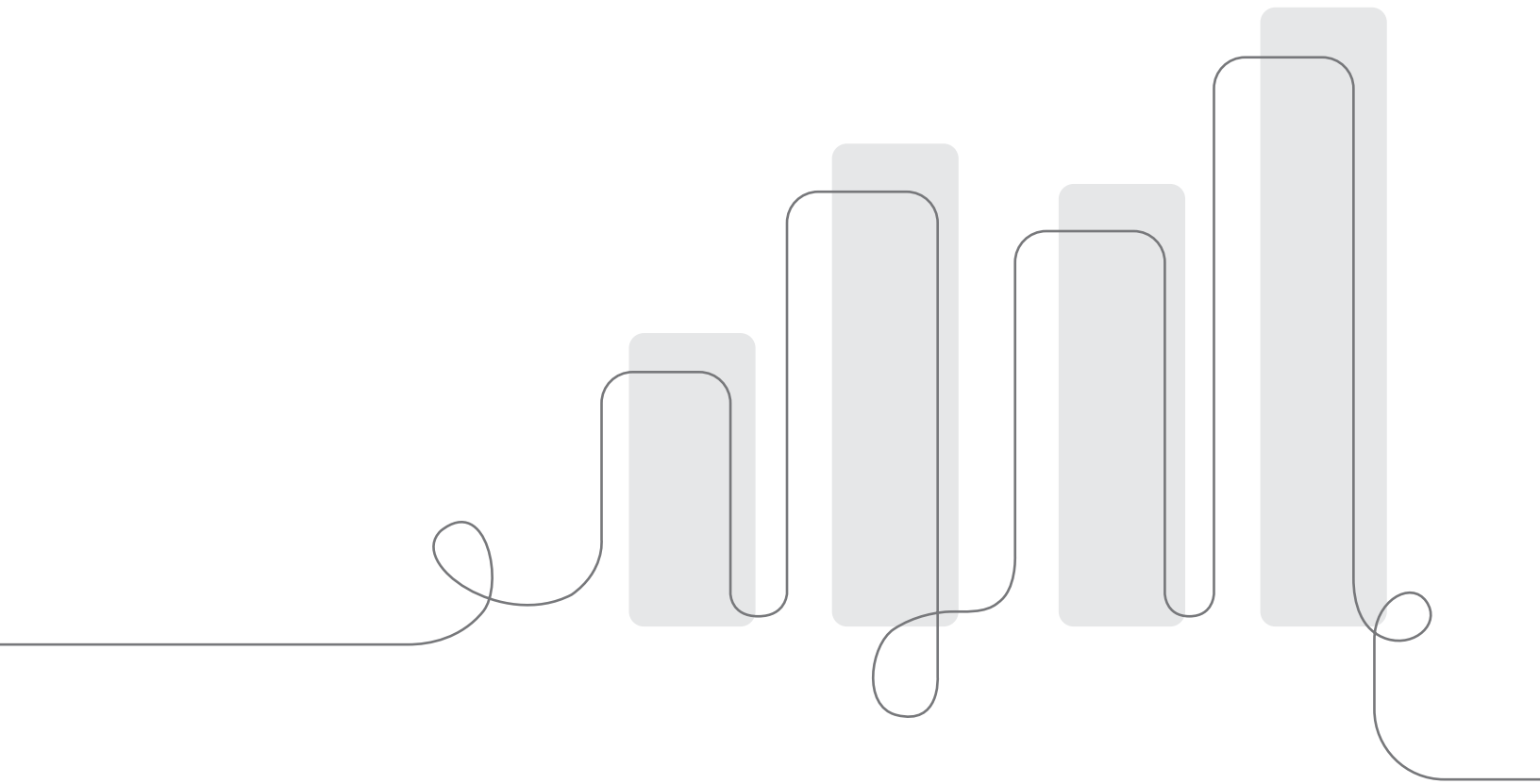


RESEARCH BRIEF

Middle-of-year data show that academic recovery continues in early literacy, with Black and Hispanic students making the greatest gains.

February 2023



# Risks remain for youngest students with least instructional time during critical early years.

The latest middle-of-school-year data show that throughout the spring and fall of 2022, schools across the country made meaningful progress reducing the number of students at risk for not learning to read. These successes are especially evident in the lower elementary grades (grades K–2). **Further, the measurable disparities in achievement between Black and Hispanic students and their white and Asian peers have narrowed since the prior year and in some grades are actually smaller than before the pandemic.**

However, the data also show that across all grades, the percentages of students at risk and at greatest risk are still worse than they were at the middle of the 2019–20 school year, before pandemic disruptions began. Moreover, pandemic-related learning losses in early literacy are now disproportionately concentrated in grades 1–3. **Third graders, the cohort of students with the most impacted instructional time from the pandemic, experienced no improvement from the prior year.**

Over the past two years, elementary schools across the United States have been assessing students on early literacy skills with Amplify's mCLASS®. The DIBELS® 8th Edition data, collected by teachers interacting with students one on one, either live or over video, reveals instructional loss due to the pandemic, and the extent to which students have recovered from those losses.

American students continue to make progress in early literacy, with the most recent data showing Black and Hispanic students making the greatest gains. But in every elementary grade, there are still too many students at risk of failing to read proficiently by the end of third grade, an important indicator of future academic success.

## **About the data**

The report highlights the effects of COVID-19 disruptions by comparing mCLASS with DIBELS 8th Edition benchmark data from the 2019–20, 2020–21, 2021–22, and 2022–23 school years. From more than 2 million students assessed with mCLASS, approximately 300,000 students in a matched set of 1,400 schools in 43 states are represented. The schools in the source data are slightly more likely to be in large urban metropolitan areas than the nation overall.

## **About mCLASS**

The data was collected with mCLASS, Amplify's teacher-administered literacy assessment and intervention suite for grades K–6. mCLASS, powered by DIBELS 8th Edition, automates the data collection of Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), a widely-used series of short tests that assess K–8 literacy. Developed by the University of Oregon, DIBELS is an observational assessment collected by teachers interacting with students one-on-one, either live or over video. DIBELS is typically administered three times a year (beginning, middle, and end of year), and is used to identify reading difficulty, monitor progress, and inform instruction, especially for struggling readers.

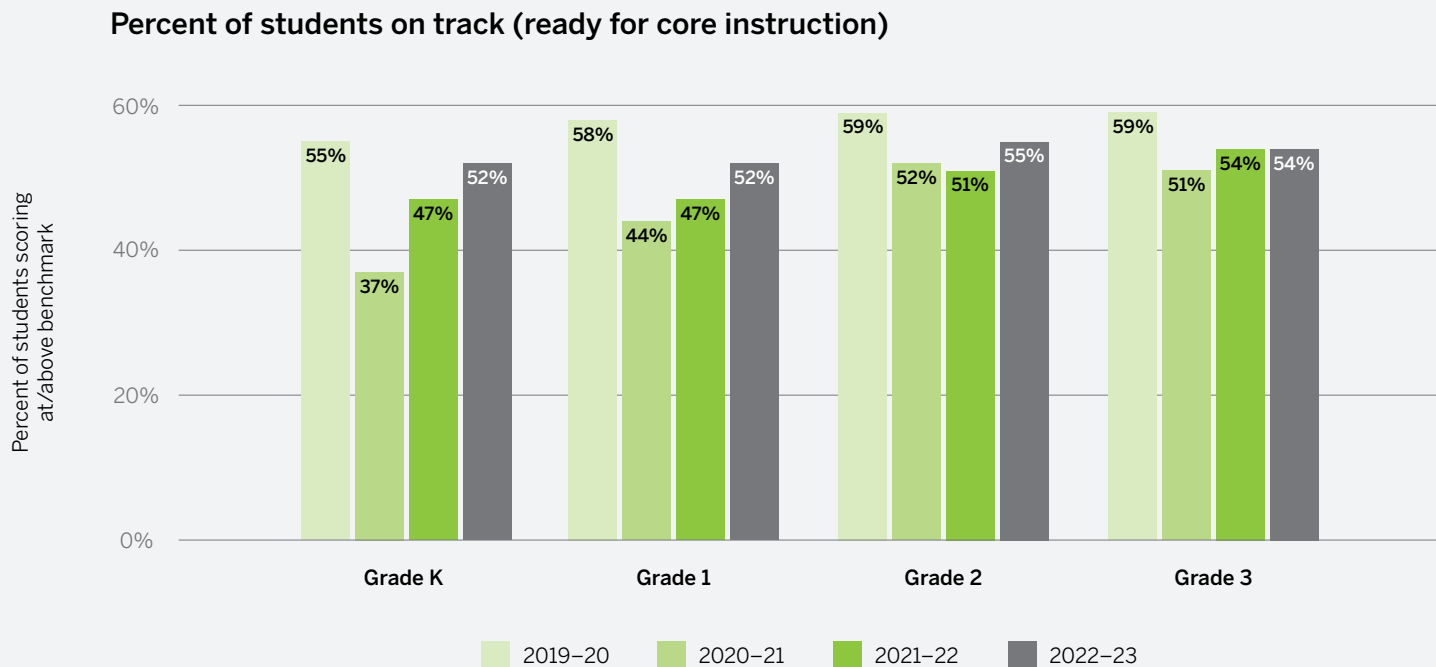
## **About Amplify**

A pioneer in K–12 education since 2000, Amplify is leading the way in next-generation curriculum and assessment. Our core and supplemental programs in ELA, math, and science engage all students in rigorous learning and inspire them to think deeply, creatively, and for themselves. Our formative assessment products help teachers identify the targeted instruction students need to build a strong foundation in early reading and math. All of our programs and services provide educators with powerful tools that help them understand and respond to the needs of every student. Today, Amplify serves more than 15 million students in all 50 states. For more information, visit [amplify.com](https://www.amplify.com).

## Insights

### How many students are on track to learn to read?

The following table shows the percentage of students in each grade who were assessed as being on track (ready for core instruction) in early literacy skills. They include the most recent data from the middle of the current school year (2022–23), as well as data from the middle of the three previous school years (2019–20, 2020–21, and 2021–22).

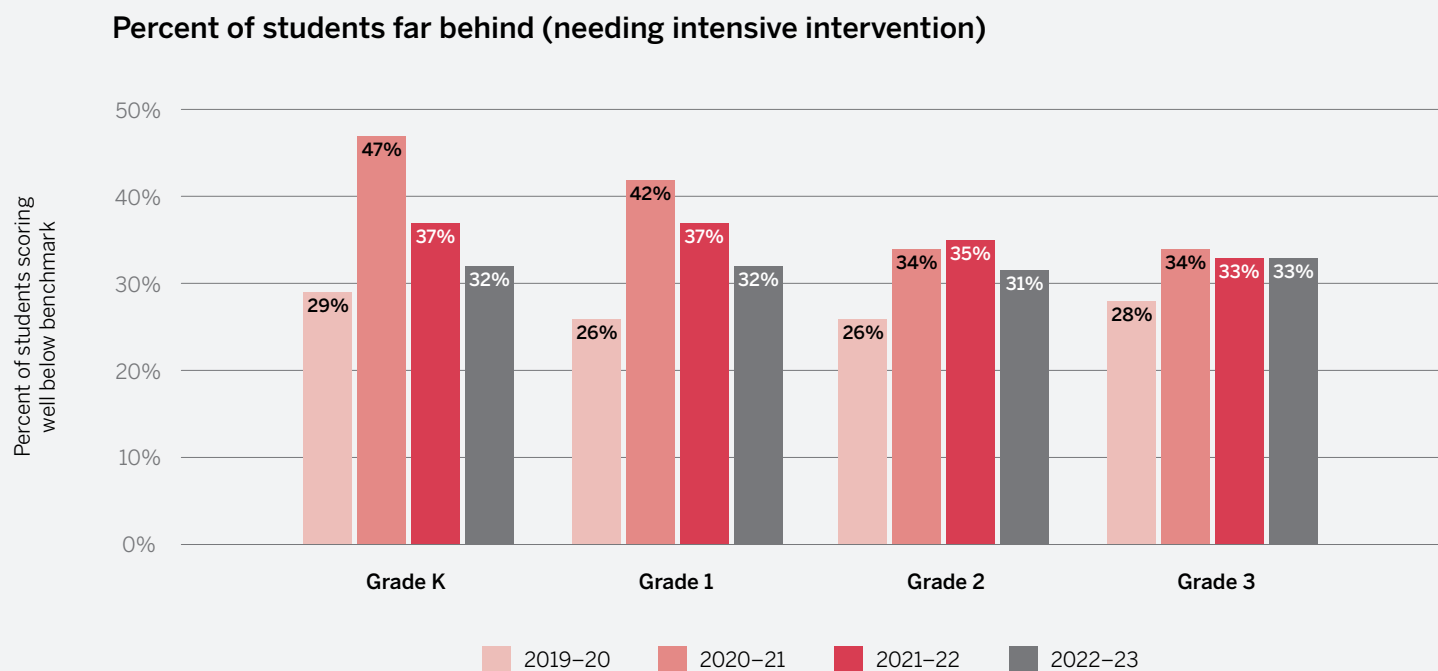


The data show that there are now (mid-year 2022–23) more students on track for learning to read than there were last year (mid-year 2021–22), but not as many as there were three years ago (mid-year 2019–20) before the pandemic.

**The more discouraging data is from grades 1-3, the students who missed the most foundational instruction during the pandemic.** In kindergarten, the percentage of students on track for learning to read fell from 55 percent in the middle of 2019–20 to 52 percent in the middle of 2022–23. In grade 1, it fell from 58 percent to 52 percent; in grade 2, it fell from 59 percent to 55 percent; in grade 3, it fell from 59 percent to 54 percent. In grades K–2, there are signs of recent progress, because there are more students on-track now than there were a year ago (mid-2021–22), with the gains in kindergarten and 1st grade further building on gains from the prior year. But that is not the case in grade 3, where the percentage of students on track is the same as it was a year ago.

## How many students are still at greatest risk?

The following table shows the percentage of students in each grade who were assessed as being far behind (in need of intensive intervention) in early literacy skills. It includes the most recent data from the middle of the current school year (2022–23), as well as data from the middle of the three previous school years (2019–20, 2020–21, and 2021–22).



The data show that there are now (mid-2022–23) fewer students far behind in learning to read than there were last year (mid-2021–22), but more than there were three years ago (mid-2019–20) before the pandemic. The exception is 3rd grade, where the percentage of students in the greatest risk category remains unchanged from last year.

**The more discouraging data is from grade 3.** In kindergarten, the percentage of students at greatest risk for not learning to read rose from 29 percent in the middle of 2019–20 to 32 percent in the middle of 2022–23. In grade 1, it increased from 26 percent to 32 percent; in grade 2, it increased from 26 percent to 31 percent; in grade 3, it increased from 28 percent to 33 percent and did not improve from the prior year. In grades K–2, there are signs of progress: fewer students are far behind now than there were a year ago (mid-2021–22), with the improvement in kindergarten and 1st grade further building on the reductions from the prior year. But that is not the case in grade 3, where the percentage of students at risk remains the same as it was a year ago.

## Has the pandemic disproportionately impacted the number of Black and Hispanic students who are on track to learn to read?

The following four tables disaggregate student data by race/ethnicity. They show the percentage of students in each grade who were assessed as being on track (ready for core instruction) in early literacy skills. They include the most recent data from the middle of the current school year (2022–23), as well as the change from last year (2021–22) and the year preceding the pandemic (2019–20).

### Percent of students on track: Performance trends by student subgroup

Kindergarten Subgroup	MOY 2022–23	Change from 2021–22	Change from 2019–20
All students	52%	+5 pts	-3 pts
Asian	71%	+1 pt	-2 pts
Black	51%	+9 pts	-5 pts
Hispanic	46%	+7 pts	-4 pts
White	58%	+1 pt	-5 pts

Grade 2 Subgroup	MOY 2022–23	Change from 2021–22	Change from 2019–20
All students	55%	+4 pts	-4 pts
Asian	80%	+3 pts	-1 pt
Black	44%	+4 pts	-5 pts
Hispanic	53%	+5 pts	-3 pts
White	62%	0 pts	-6 pts

Grade 1 Subgroup	MOY 2022–23	Change from 2021–22	Change from 2019–20
All students	52%	+5 pts	-6 pts
Asian	75%	-1 pt	-5 pts
Black	44%	+7 pts	-7 pts
Hispanic	48%	+6 pts	-6 pts
White	57%	-1 pt	-8 pts

Grade 3 Subgroup	MOY 2022–23	Change from 2021–22	Change from 2019–20
All students	54%	0 pts	-5 pts
Asian	79%	-1 pt	0 pts
Black	42%	-1 pt	-8 pts
Hispanic	53%	0 pts	-3 pts
White	61%	-1 pt	-8 pts

**The data show that in most grades and demographic categories there are now (mid-year 2022–23) more students on track for learning to read than there were last year (mid-year 2021–22), but not as many as there were two years ago (mid-year 2019–20) before the pandemic.** The good news is that measurable disparities in achievement between Black and Hispanic students and their Asian and white peers have narrowed in grades K–2.

**In kindergarten, grade 1, and grade 2, measurable disparities in achievement nationally between Black and Hispanic students and their white counterparts remain significant, but are now comparable to or less than what they were before the pandemic.**

For instance, according to the most recent data (mid-year 2022–23), only 44 percent of Black and 48 percent of Hispanic grade 1 students are on track, compared to 57 percent of white and 75 percent of Asian grade 1 students. Compared with prior to the pandemic (mid-year 2019–20), there was a decrease of 7 percentage points for Black students, 6 percentage points for Hispanic students, 8 percentage points for white students, and 5 percentage points for Asian students. While all students are performing worse than before the pandemic, Black and Hispanic students have shown smaller declines than white students, narrowing the measurable disparities in achievement between them.

Similarly, according to the most recent data (mid-year 2022–23), only 44 percent of Black and 53 percent of Hispanic grade 2 students are on track, compared to 62 percent of white and 80 percent of Asian grade 2 students. Compared with prior to the pandemic (mid-year 2019–20), there was a decrease of 5 percentage points for Black students, 3 percentage points for Hispanic students, 6 percentage points for white students, and 1 percentage point for Asian students. While all students are performing worse than before the pandemic, Black and Hispanic students have shown smaller declines than white students, narrowing the measurable disparities in achievement between them.

## Has the pandemic disproportionately impacted the number of Black and Hispanic students who are at greatest risk for not learning to read?

The following four tables disaggregate student data by race/ethnicity. They include the most recent data from the middle of the current school year (2022–23), as well as the change from last year (2021–22) and the year preceding the pandemic (2019–20).

### Percent of students far behind: Performance trends by student subgroup

Kindergarten Subgroup	MOY 2022–23	Change from 2021–22	Change from 2019–20
All students	32%	-5 pts	+3 pts
Asian	18%	-1 pt	+3 pts
Black	32%	-9 pts	+5 pts
Hispanic	38%	-7 pts	+3 pts
White	27%	-1 pt	+6 pts

Grade 2 Subgroup	MOY 2022–23	Change from 2021–22	Change from 2019–20
All students	31%	-4 pts	+5 pts
Asian	12%	-2 pts	+2 pts
Black	43%	-4 pts	+9 pts
Hispanic	34%	-5 pts	+5 pts
White	25%	-1 pts	+6 pts

Grade 1 Subgroup	MOY 2022–23	Change from 2021–22	Change from 2019–20
All students	32%	-5 pts	+6 pts
Asian	15%	-1 pt	+3 pts
Black	40%	-9 pts	+8 pts
Hispanic	36%	-7 pts	+6 pts
White	27%	0 pts	+7 pts

Grade 3 Subgroup	MOY 2022–23	Change from 2021–22	Change from 2019–20
All students	33%	0 pts	+5 pts
Asian	14%	+2 pts	0 pts
Black	46%	+2 pts	+10 pts
Hispanic	34%	-1 pt	+3 pts
White	27%	0 pts	+7 pts



**The data show that in most grades and demographic categories, there are now (mid-year 2022–23) fewer students far behind (needing intensive intervention) in learning to read than there were last year (mid-year 2021–22), but still more than there were three years ago (mid-year 2019–20) before the pandemic.** The good news is that the measurable disparities in achievement between Black and Hispanic students and their Asian and white peers have narrowed in grades K–2. The exception is grade 3, where the percentages of Asian, Black, and white students who are far behind have all increased or remained the same from a year ago. In fact, for Black 3rd graders, the percentage of students who are far behind now stands at its highest level since the pandemic.

**In kindergarten, grade 1, and grade 2, the measurable disparities in achievement nationally between Black and Hispanic students and their white counterparts have decreased from the prior year, and in some cases, are now smaller than they were before the pandemic.**

For instance, according to the most recent data (mid-year 2022–23), 40 percent of Black and 36 percent of Hispanic grade 1 students are far behind, compared to 27 percent of white and 15 percent of Asian grade 1 students. Compared with prior to the pandemic (mid-year 2019-20), there was an increase of 8 percentage points for Black students, 6 percentage points for Hispanic students, 7 percentage points for white students, and 3 percentage points for Asian students. While all students are performing worse than before the pandemic, Black students have experienced slightly greater declines than white students, whereas Hispanic students have seen slightly smaller declines than white students.

Similarly, according to the most recent data (mid-year 2022–23), 43 percent of Black and 34 percent of Hispanic grade 2 students are far behind, compared to 25 percent of white and 12 percent of Asian grade 2 students. Compared with prior to the pandemic (mid-year 2019-20), there was an increase of 9 percentage points for Black students, 5 percentage points for Hispanic students, 6 percentage points for white students, and 2 percentage points for Asian students. While all students are performing worse than before the pandemic, Black students have experienced greater declines than white students, whereas Hispanic students have seen slightly smaller declines than white students.

## Recommendations

### Addressing risks for the youngest students

Pandemic-related learning losses in early literacy are now concentrated in grades 1–3, with third graders, in particular, showing the least amount of improvement from the prior year. This group of students who experienced the most instructional loss may need more support to catch up and stay on track. Educators can provide that support with data-driven insight into students' reading development and instructional practices that are based in the Science of Reading. To help educators where they need it most, **it is important that schools and districts invest in a reliable universal screener, high-quality core curriculum, evidence-based interventions, and professional development.**

The good news: Science-based reading instruction reduces the need for intervention and enables children to move forward as capable, confident learners. When students receive instruction based in the Science of Reading, outcomes improve. When that instruction takes place in the early grades, research shows that 95 percent of students can be taught to read at or approaching grade level.

### Elements of a coherent approach

Types of instruction	Scheduling/formatting options	Which students
Grade-level core instruction focused on both knowledge and skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• During school day (literacy block)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All</li></ul>
Additional foundational skill instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• During school day (in addition to literacy block)</li><li>• Summer school</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students who are at risk</li></ul>
Intervention opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• During school day</li><li>• Before and after school tutoring</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Those who continue to struggle even with additional foundational skill instruction</li></ul>
Science of Reading based personalized learning (online program)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• During school day (as part of additional foundational skills)</li><li>• At home</li><li>• Before and after school</li><li>• Summer school</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All</li></ul>

Educators serving students in grades K–3 need continued support and professional development to help students who are most at risk. Amplify recommends districts make integrated plans to ensure that schools:

- Administer benchmark assessments three times per year to monitor levels of risk for reading difficulties.
- Allocate resources to support students who are at risk, spending additional time in literacy instruction beyond grade-level instruction.
- Regularly monitor progress for students who are at risk, making adjustments as needed.
- Ensure all students receive grade-level instruction that is evidence-based, and support instructional staff in gaining knowledge about the Science of Reading.
- Instill a love of reading and books during all school-based programs, with the support of caregivers and the community.

For more information on mCLASS,  
visit [amplify.com/mclass](https://amplify.com/mclass).

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