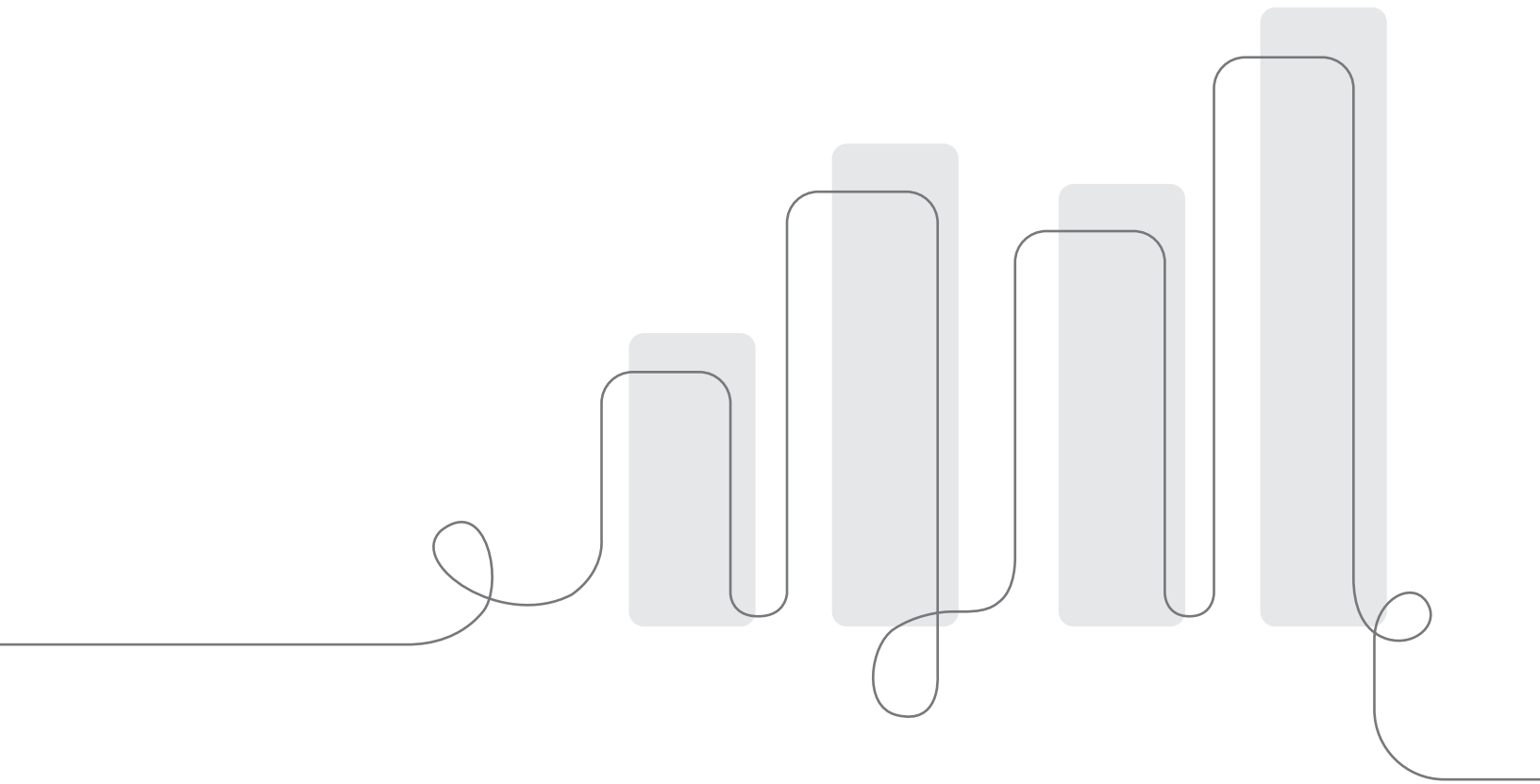# Summer instructional loss highlights the importance of quality core instruction for the youngest grades.

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Amplify.

Summer instructional loss highlights the importance of quality core instruction for the youngest grades.

The latest beginning-of-school-year data show that recent improvements in early literacy across grades K–3 have flattened. Student academic readiness is better than its low point in 2021–22, but still below levels prior to the pandemic (2019–20). Grades K–3 are critical years for literacy development, and the youngest students remain the most at risk for not learning to read.

As educators examine data from beginning-of-year assessments to create plans and allocate resources for the 2024–25 school year, they should focus on students in the youngest grades—specifically those progressing from kindergarten to grade 1—where one in four come back from summer no longer on track (ready for core instruction). Having had the least amount of explicit instructional time featuring a clear scope and sequence to reinforce foundational reading skills, kindergarten and grade 1 students remain the most vulnerable to instructional loss.

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

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 beginning of the current school year (2024–25), as well as data from the beginning of the five previous school years (2019–20, 2020–21, 2021–22, 2022–23, and 2023–24). **In kindergarten, more students are arriving at school ready for core instruction than before the pandemic (2019–20); but in all other grades, readiness has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels.**

**Percent of students on track (Ready for core instruction)**
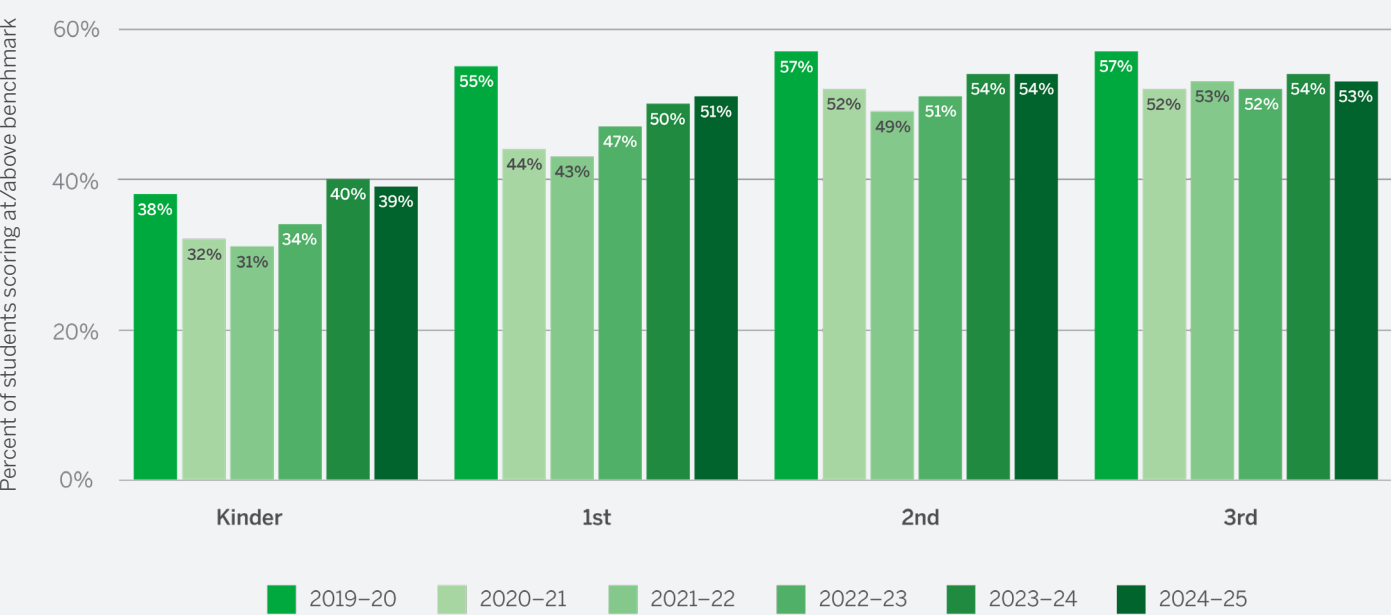
The data show that there are now (2024–25) more students on track for learning to read at the beginning of the school year than there were three years ago (2021–22).

Student performance in grades K–3 is mixed compared to prior years, with some grades showing greater percentages of students on track while others have fewer percentages on track. In kindergarten, the percentage of students on track for learning to read at the beginning of the year fell from 38 percent in 2019–20 to its lowest point of 31 percent in 2021–22 before starting to rebound, and in 2023–24, climbed to 40 percent before dropping slightly to 39 percent in 2024–25, and remains the only grade to have surpassed the pre-pandemic performance level. In grade 1 (the only grade to show improvement from last year), readiness fell from 55 percent in 2019–20 to 43 percent in 2021–22 before rebounding to 51 percent in 2024–25; in grade 2, it fell from 57 percent to 49 percent in 2021–22 before rebounding to 54 percent in 2024–25; in grade 3, it fell from 57 percent to 53 percent in 2021–22 and has hovered around that level ever since.

How many students are at risk for not learning to read?

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. They include the most recent data from the beginning of the current school year (2024–25), as well as data from the beginning of the five previous school years (2019–20, 2020–21, 2021–22, 2022–23, and 2023–24). **In grades 1–3, improvement has slowed but continues, whereas kindergarten students appear less prepared than in the prior year. Across all grades K–3, the number of students at risk for not learning to read has yet to improve to pre-pandemic levels.**

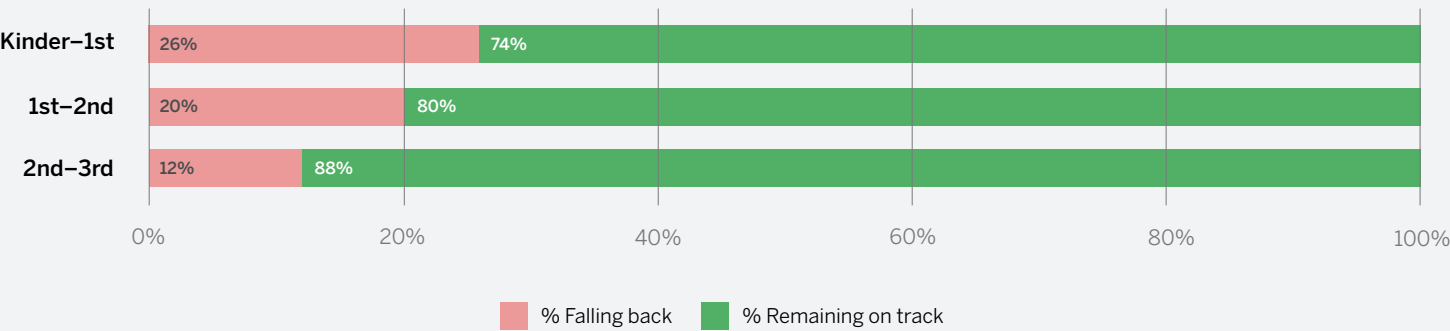**Percent of students far behind (Needing intensive intervention)**
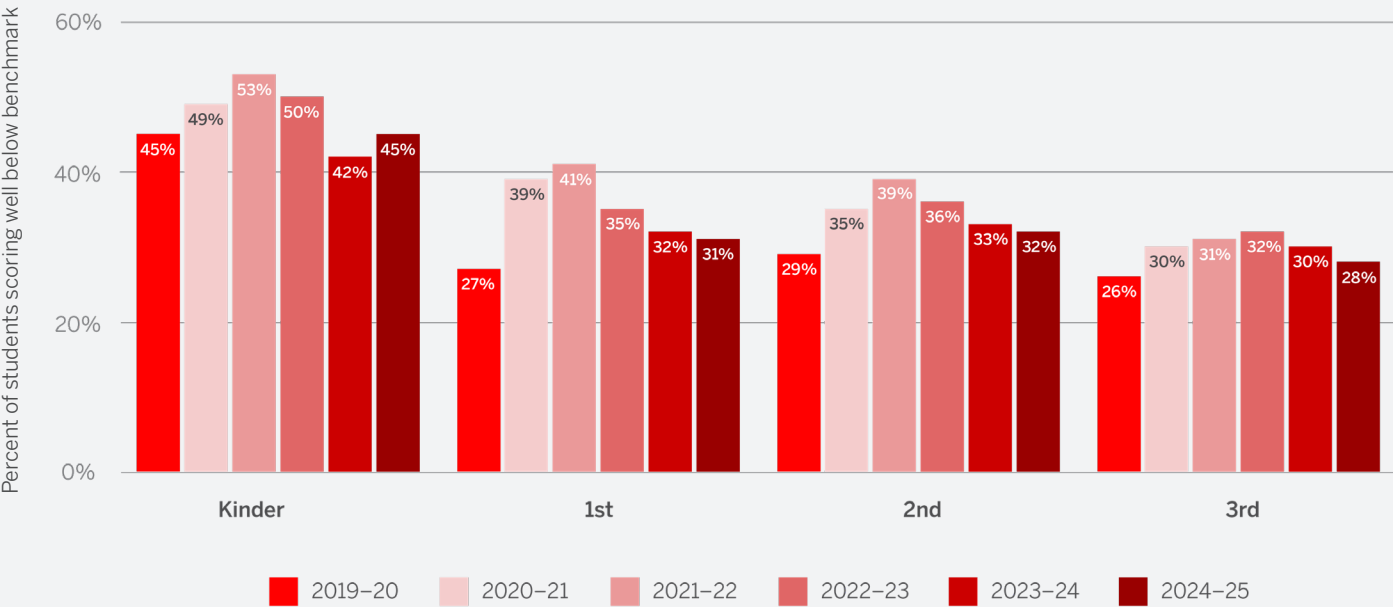
The data show that at the beginning of the 2024–25 school year, fewer students are far behind in learning to read than there were at the highest points of 2021–22.

The percent of students who may need intensive intervention based on beginning-of-year performance levels has declined slightly from the prior year in grades 1–3, but has grown in kindergarten. In kindergarten, the percentage of students at greatest risk for not learning to read rose from 45 percent in 2019–20 to 53 percent in 2021–22, before decreasing to 42 percent in 2023–24, and then rising again to 45 percent in 2024–25. In grade 1, it increased from 27 percent in 2019–20 to 41 percent in 2021–22, before rebounding somewhat to 31 percent in 2024–25. In grade 2, it increased from 29 percent to 39 percent in 2021–22 before improving to 32 percent; in grade 3, it increased from 26 percent to 32 percent in 2022–23 before improving to 28 percent in 2024–25.

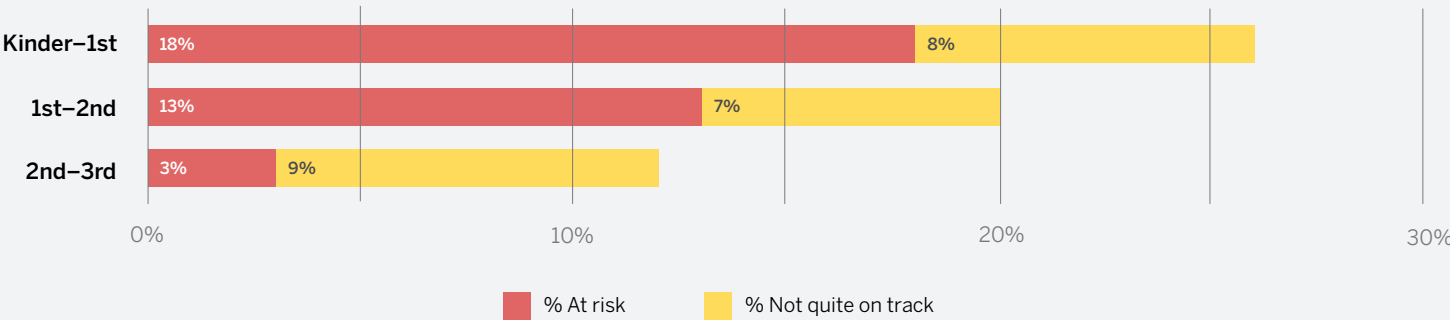# How has instructional loss during the summer months impacted students at risk for not learning to read?

The chart below shows the impact of instructional loss during the summer months on students from the end of 2023–24 to the beginning of 2024–25 school years. Specifically, the chart shows the decline in the percent of students who were on track for learning to read at the end of 2023–24 in kindergarten, grade 1, and grade 2, but returned to school in 2024–25 in grade 1, grade 2, and grade 3 having fallen behind and now requiring additional supports beyond core instruction. **The instructional loss is greatest from kindergarten to grade 1, where as many as one in four students come back from summer no longer able to demonstrate their reading skills. But the instructional loss is notable in all grades.**

Change in readiness for core instruction
2023–24 EOY to 2024–25 BOY

Grade	% Falling back	% Remaining on track
Kinder–1st	26%	74%
1st–2nd	20%	80%
2nd–3rd	12%	88%

■ % Falling back ■ % Remaining on track

Among the students who experienced instructional loss and are not ready for core instruction, cited above, the most significantly impacted fell back to the lowest performance level and now require intensive intervention to get back on track. The following chart illustrates this subset of students whose skills have declined from the end of the prior year such that they are no longer on track. **In grade 1, the greatest number of students (18%) demonstrate risk for not being able to read at the beginning of the year though they were previously on track. The percentage drops for grade 2 (13%) and grade 3 (3%). These students will all need intervention to catch up.**

Impact of summer months away from school
Change in students at risk/not ready for core instruction 2023–24 EOY to 2024–25 BOY

Grade	% At risk	% Not quite on track
Kinder–1st	18%	8%
1st–2nd	13%	7%
2nd–3rd	3%	9%

■ % At risk ■ % Not quite on track

Recommendations

Students in grades K–3 remain the most vulnerable to instructional loss, because they have received the least amount of explicit instructional time to reinforce foundational reading skills. Grade-level instruction for all students and targeted instruction for some students should be based on assessment data that highlights specific skill gaps, instructional needs, and learning strengths. This data-driven approach enables educators to provide differentiated support, developing foundational reading skills based on each student's progress and proficiency.

After administering benchmark assessments at the beginning of the year, Amplify recommends districts and schools use that data to:

- Ensure that all students receive **quality instruction** grounded in evidence-based practices such as the Science of Reading

- Identify students that need additional support and develop a plan for addressing their needs

- Allocate resources for additional support and implement those plans

- Regularly monitor progress for students and make adjustments as needed

Elements of quality instruction

Systematic	Cumulative	Explicit
Systematic instruction involves a sequential progression where skills and concepts are organized in a clear, logical order. Skills to be taught are explicitly identified within and across grade levels, ensuring consistency. Schools should establish a scope and sequence for these skills across all grades and teachers should teach the skills identified for their grade level.	Cumulative instruction begins with less complex skills and concepts, building knowledge progressively. It emphasizes regular review of previously taught material, ensuring that skills are revisited, strengthened, and applied to new learning. This approach goes beyond isolated skill practice, enabling students to connect and apply new learning to their prior knowledge.	Explicit instruction uses clear, direct teaching in which teachers explain and model skills through a gradual release model. Scaffolded support helps students build independence in applying these skills and strategies. This approach encourages active learning through guided practice, collaboration, and discussion, allowing teachers to monitor progress and provide immediate feedback.

About the data

The report highlights the effects of instructional loss by comparing Amplify mCLASS with DIBELS®
8th Edition benchmark data from the 2019–20, 2020–21, 2021–22, 2022–23, 2023–24 and 2024–25
school years. From more than 3 million students assessed with mCLASS, approximately 250,000
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, but perform
comparably to the much larger mCLASS national population.

For the summer instructional loss analysis, data are drawn from a matched set of 450,000 students
assessed at the end of 2023–24 and beginning of 2024–25. These students have progressed from
kindergarten to first grade, first to second grade, and second to third grade from the end of 2023–24 to
the beginning of 2024–25.

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.

Explanation of assessment performance levels

DIBELS performance levels	Status	Instructional implications
🟦 Above benchmark	On track	Ready for core instruction, likely to meet grade-level reading standards at end of year
🟩 At benchmark		
🟨 Below benchmark		Not far behind, require some strategic support, reasonably likely to meet end of year standards
🟥 Well below benchmark	At risk	Far behind, require intensive intervention, unlikely to meet end of year standards

About Amplify

A pioneer in K–12 education since 2000, Amplify is leading the way in next-generation curriculum and
assessment. Our captivating core and supplemental programs in literacy, math, and science engage
all students in rigorous learning and inspire them to think deeply, creatively, and for themselves. Our
formative assessment products turn data into practical instructional support to help all students build
a strong foundation in early reading and math. All of our programs provide teachers with powerful
tools that help them understand and respond to the needs of every student. Today, Amplify reaches
more than 15 million students in all 50 states. To learn more, visit amplify.com.

For more information on mCLASS,
visit **amplify.com/mclass**.

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