



First-Year Evidence from an Evaluation of the Read by Grade Three Law

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The Year 1 Evaluation of the Read by Grade Three Law Asks Four Main Questions:

1. How was the Read by Grade Three Law formed and intended to work?
2. How is the Read by Grade Three Law being implemented in Michigan? Does implementation vary across populations and places and, if so, why?
3. Does the Read by Grade Three Law improve the achievement and attainment of Michigan's students? Is there heterogeneity in this effect across populations and places?
4. Is this policy an effective use of resources?



DATA AND METHODS

We Use a Mixed-Methods Design That Combines Multiple Sources of Data and Multiple Methods of Analysis:

Data Type	Sample	Outcomes/Areas of Interest	Analysis Method
Stakeholder interviews	<p>N=24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 state-level policymakers • 5 MDE personnel • 8 external stakeholders 	Formation, perceptions, and early implementation of the Law	Semi-structured interview
State administrative records	<p>4.7 million K-5 student-year observations</p> <p>209,000 K-5 teacher-year observations</p> <p>2012-13 through 2018-19</p>	Student achievement, grade retention, special education placement, English learner program participation, student and educator mobility	Cohort-level Interrupted Time Series (ITS)

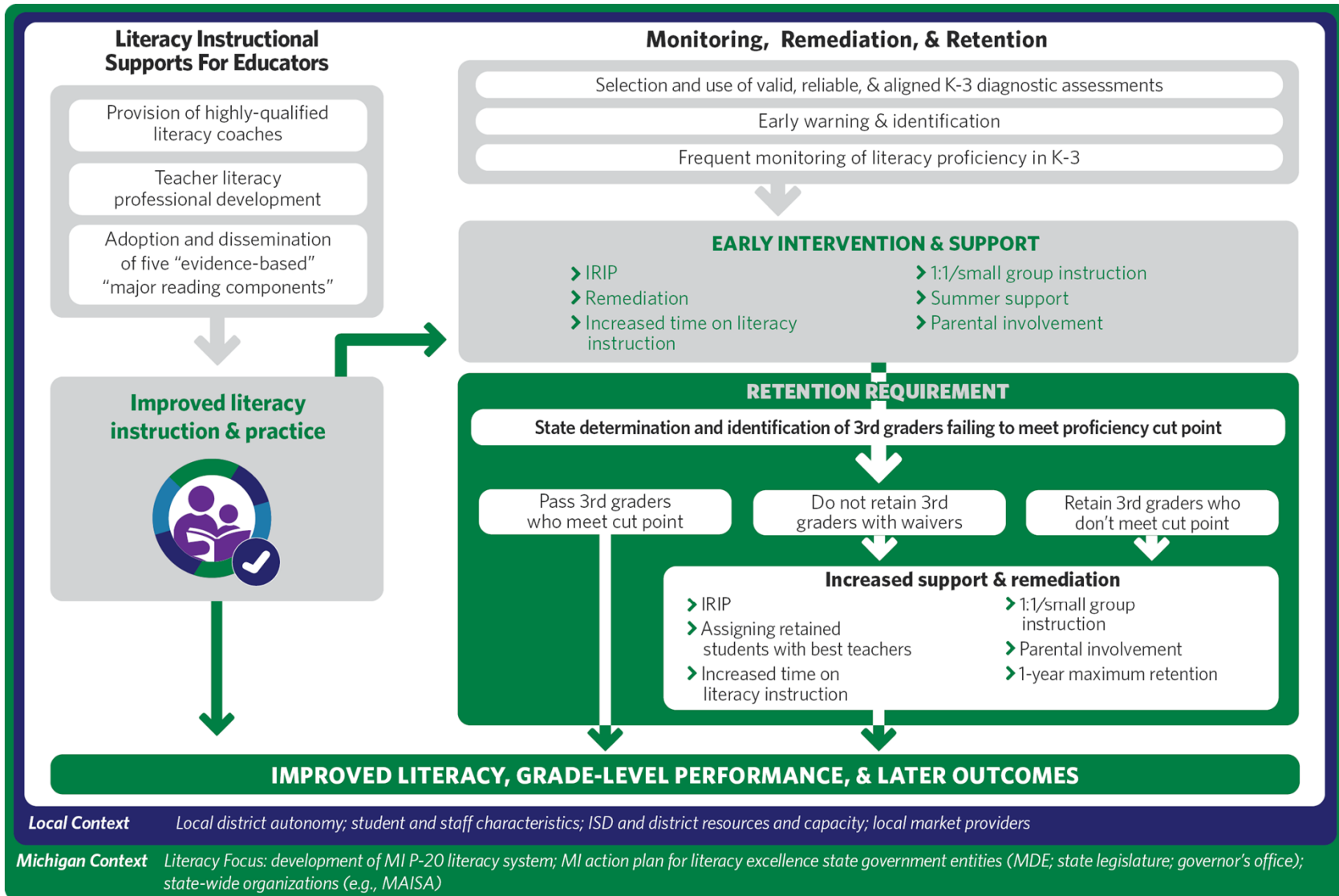
DATA AND METHODS

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Data Type	Sample	Outcomes/Areas of Interest	Analysis Method
Educator surveys	<p>17,532 K-8 teachers (32% response rate)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-3 (n=9,286, RR=43%) <p>928 K-8 principals (35% RR)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-5 only (n=584, RR=47%) <p>192 district superintendents (35% RR)</p> <p>133 Intermediate School District (ISD) Early Literacy Coaches (88% RR)</p>	<p>Literacy instructional practice,</p> <p>Professional learning, coaching, curricula, and interventions</p> <p>understanding, perceptions,</p> <p>Early implementation, and</p> <p>Costs of the Law</p>	<p>Descriptive analyses (weighted responses)</p> <p>Sub-analyses by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grade span • districts' predicted retention rate • districts' ELA performance • districts' proportions of economically disadvantaged students • locale

THEORY OF CHANGE

How the Read by Grade Three Law is Intended to Work



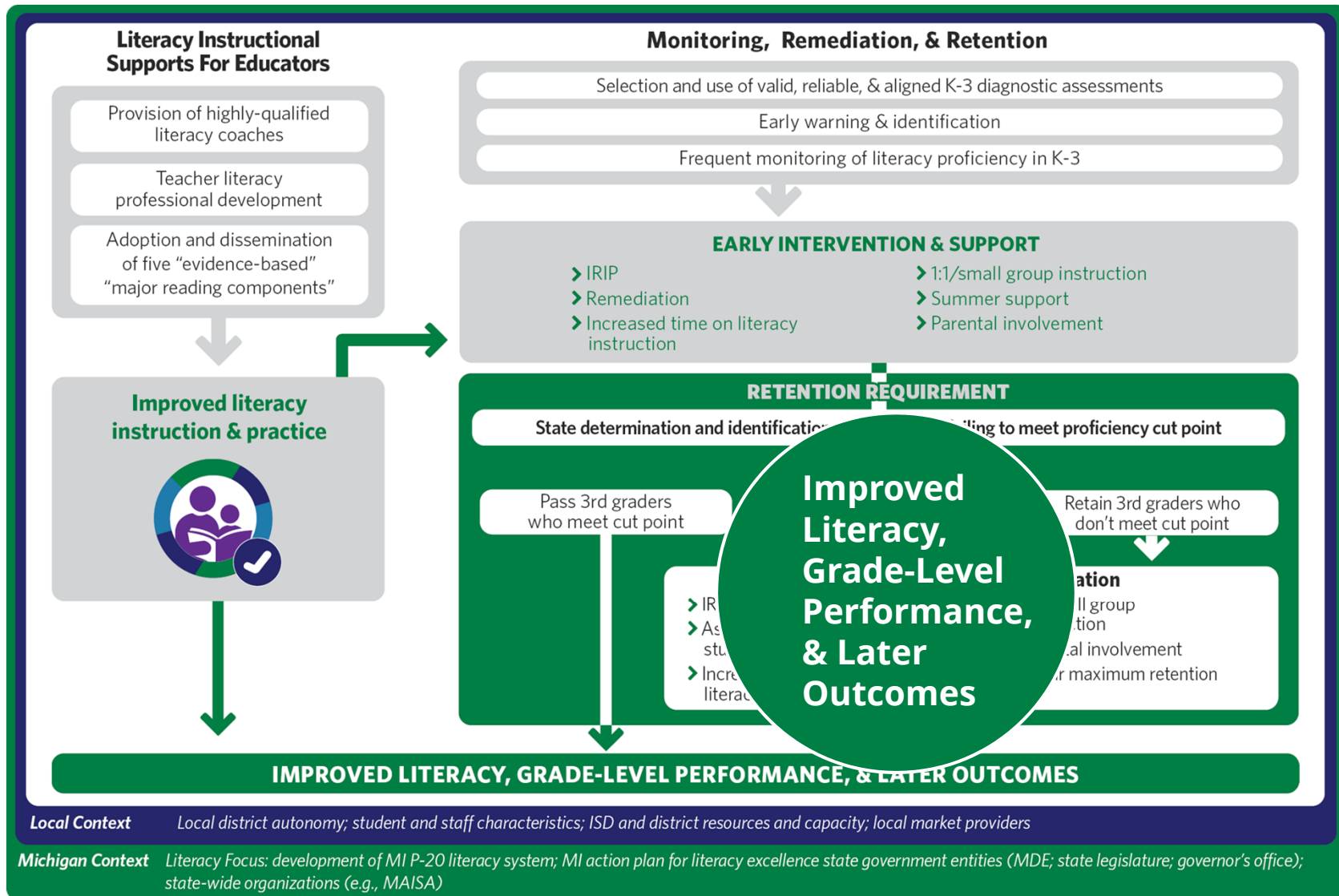
THEORY OF CHANGE

Potential Unintentional or Indirect Outcomes of the Read by Grade Three Law

- **ELA achievement for 4th-5th grade students**
 - **Positive** effects overall because of increased focus on literacy; for 4th and 5th graders in later years because they were treated by the Law in earlier years.
 - **Negative** effects if schools or districts have redistributed personnel or financial resources to grades K-3.
- **Math achievement**
 - **Positive** spillover effects on math.
 - **Negative** effects if schools or districts redistribute effort from math to ELA.
- **Shifts in K-2 retention, Development Kindergarten enrollment**
 - Students may be **more likely** to be retained in grades K-2 in order to get a good cause exemption and avoid being retained in third grade.
 - Students may be **more likely** to enroll in Developmental Kindergarten to have an extra year to learn literacy skills.
- **Special education placement**
 - Students may be **more likely** to be identified with disabilities in order to qualify for a good cause exemption.

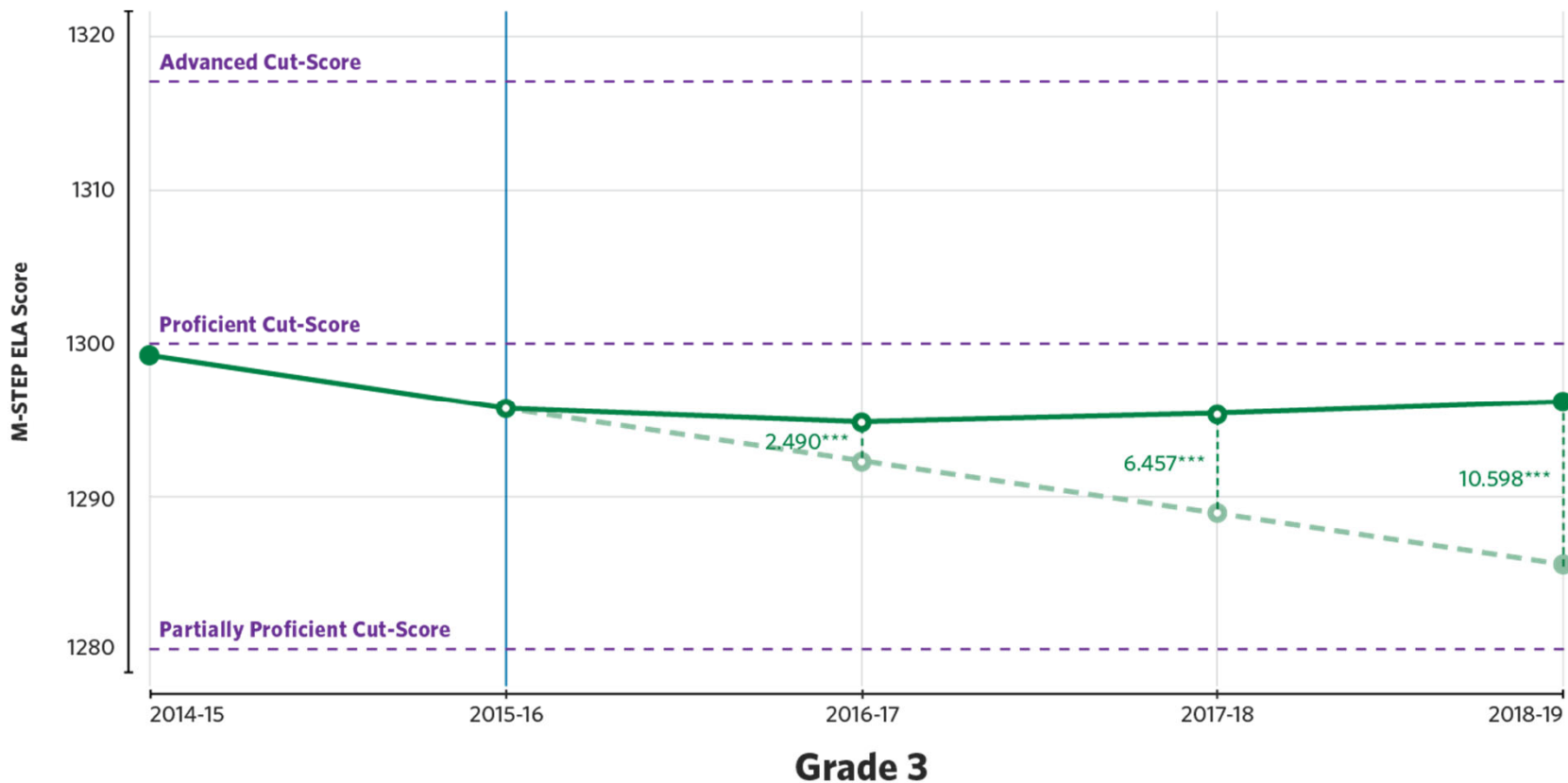
THEORY OF CHANGE

How the Read by Grade Three Law is Intended to Work



EARLY EFFECTS OF THE LAW ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Third Grade Student Achievement in ELA Has Improved Relative to the Pre-Trend Since the Law Passed

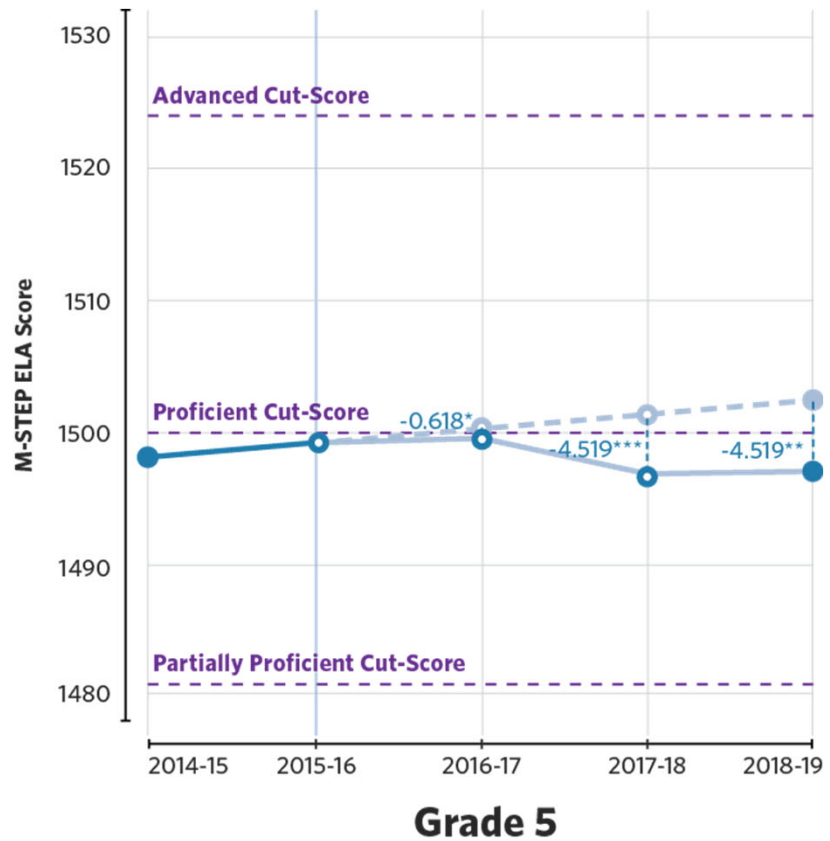
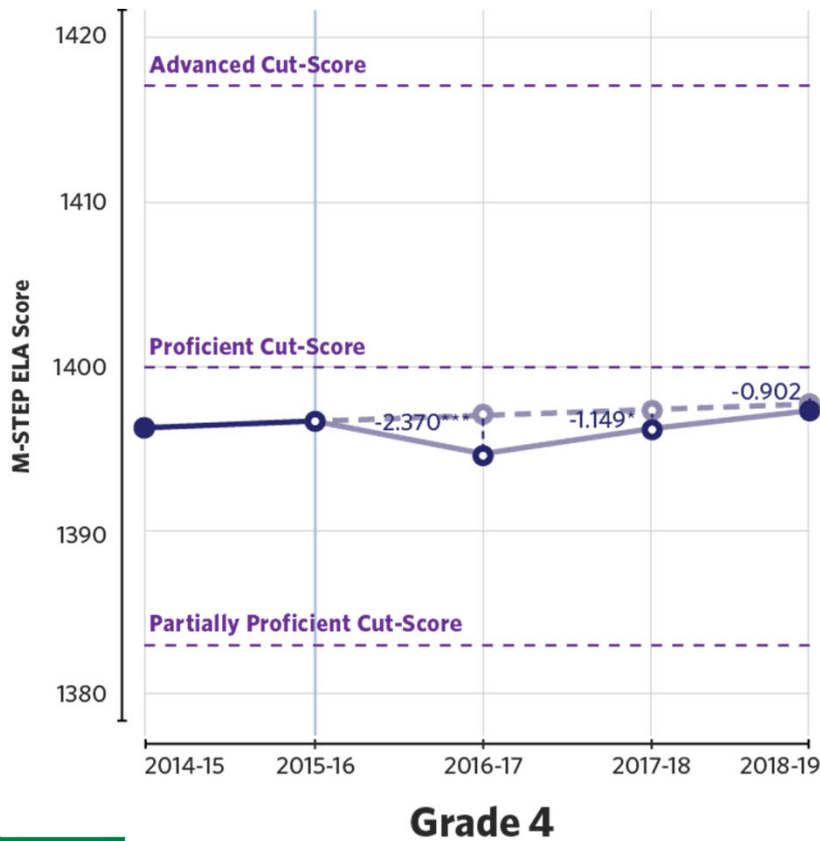


Note: The dark blue dots are fitted values of M-STEP ELA scores based on coefficient estimates from the ITS model. The light green dashed line represents the expected trend in absence of the Law. Asterisks represent the statistical significance of deviations of actual M-STEP scores in each of the post-Law years from the expected trend. Robust standard errors clustered at the district level. + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. The model includes a full set of covariates, including gender, economically disadvantaged status, indicators of ELs, students with disabilities, and non-resident status, school size and demographic composition of the student body (i.e., the percentage of non-White students, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students, the percentage of students with disabilities, and the percentage of ELs), the school-level average and trend in MEAP reading scores between 2012-13 and 2013-14, and district fixed effects.



EARLY EFFECTS OF THE LAW ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

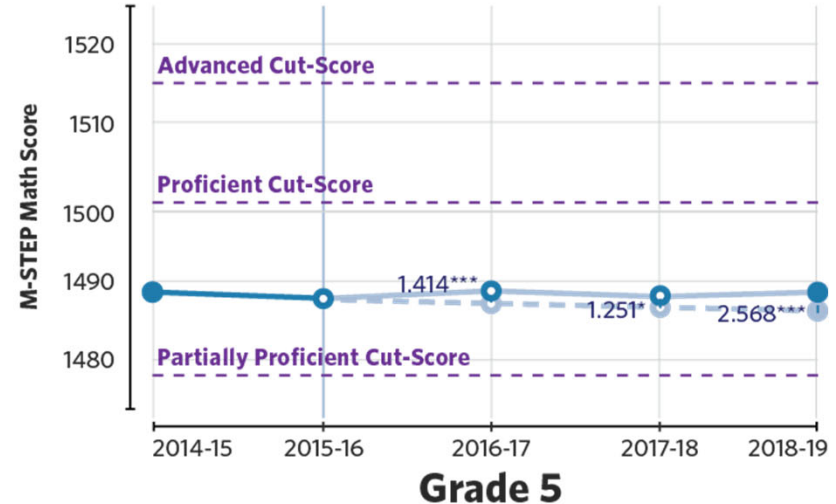
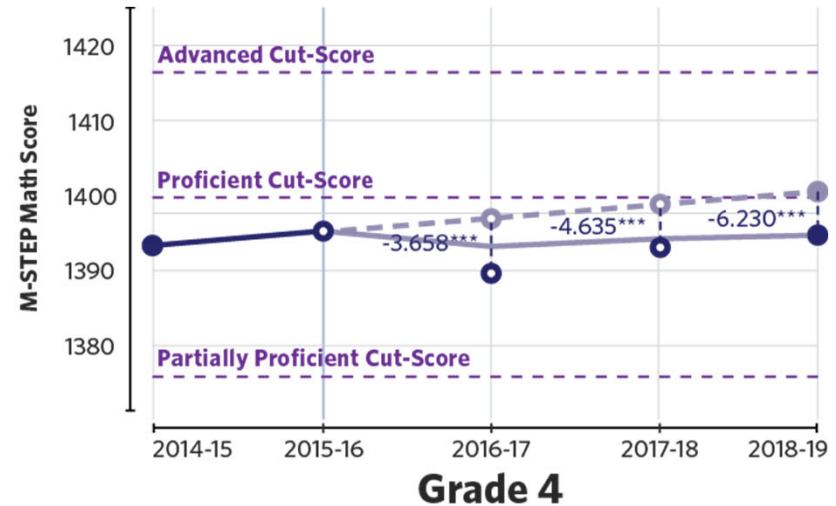
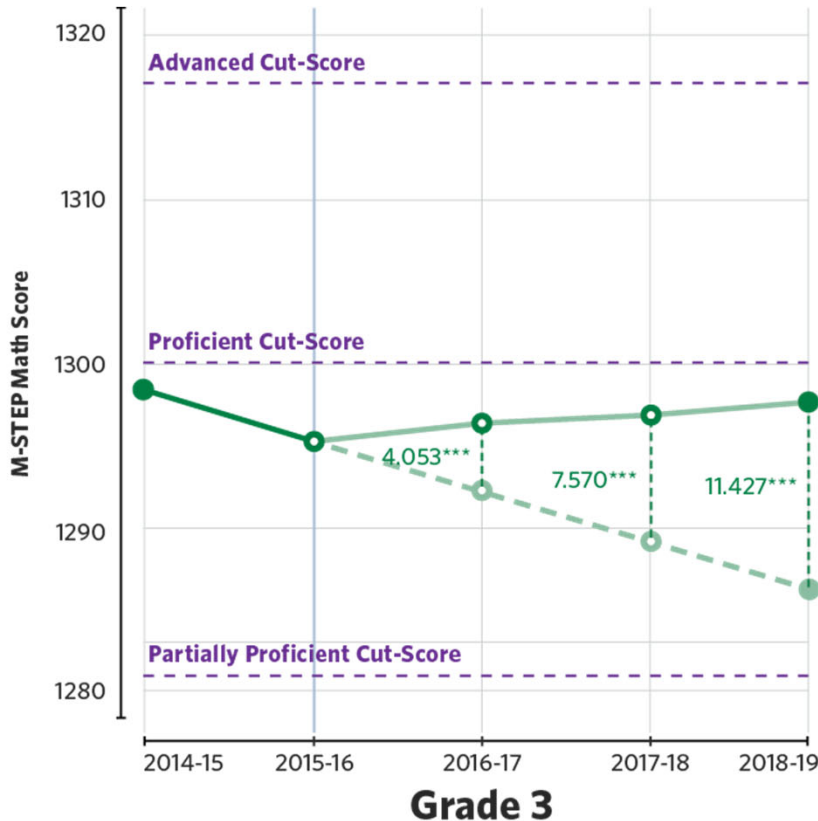
Fourth and Fifth Grade ELA Achievement May Also be Affected by the Law



Note: Robust standard errors clustered at the district level. + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Models include a full set of covariates, the school-level average and trend in MEAP reading scores between 2012-13 and 2013-14, and district fixed effects.

EARLY EFFECTS OF THE LAW ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

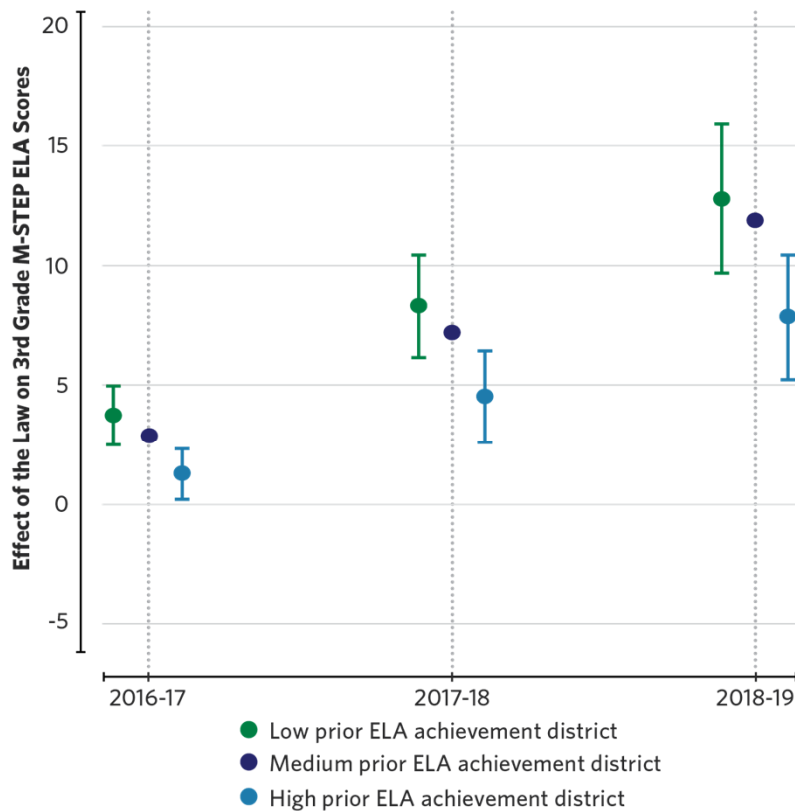
Third Grade Student Achievement in Math Has Improved Relative to the Pre-Trend Since the Law Passed



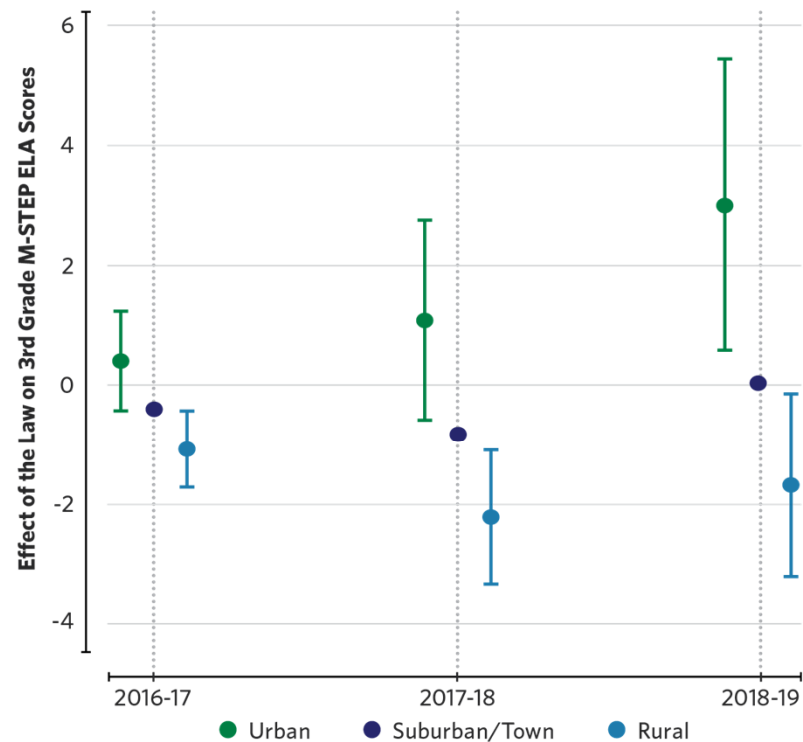
Note: Robust standard errors clustered at the district level. + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Models include a full set of covariates, the school-level average and trend in MEAP math scores between 2012-13 and 2013-14, and district fixed effects.

EARLY EFFECTS OF THE LAW ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

There are Greater Third Grade ELA Gains in Urban Districts and Districts with the Lowest Prior ELA Achievement



ELA Gains by District Achievement

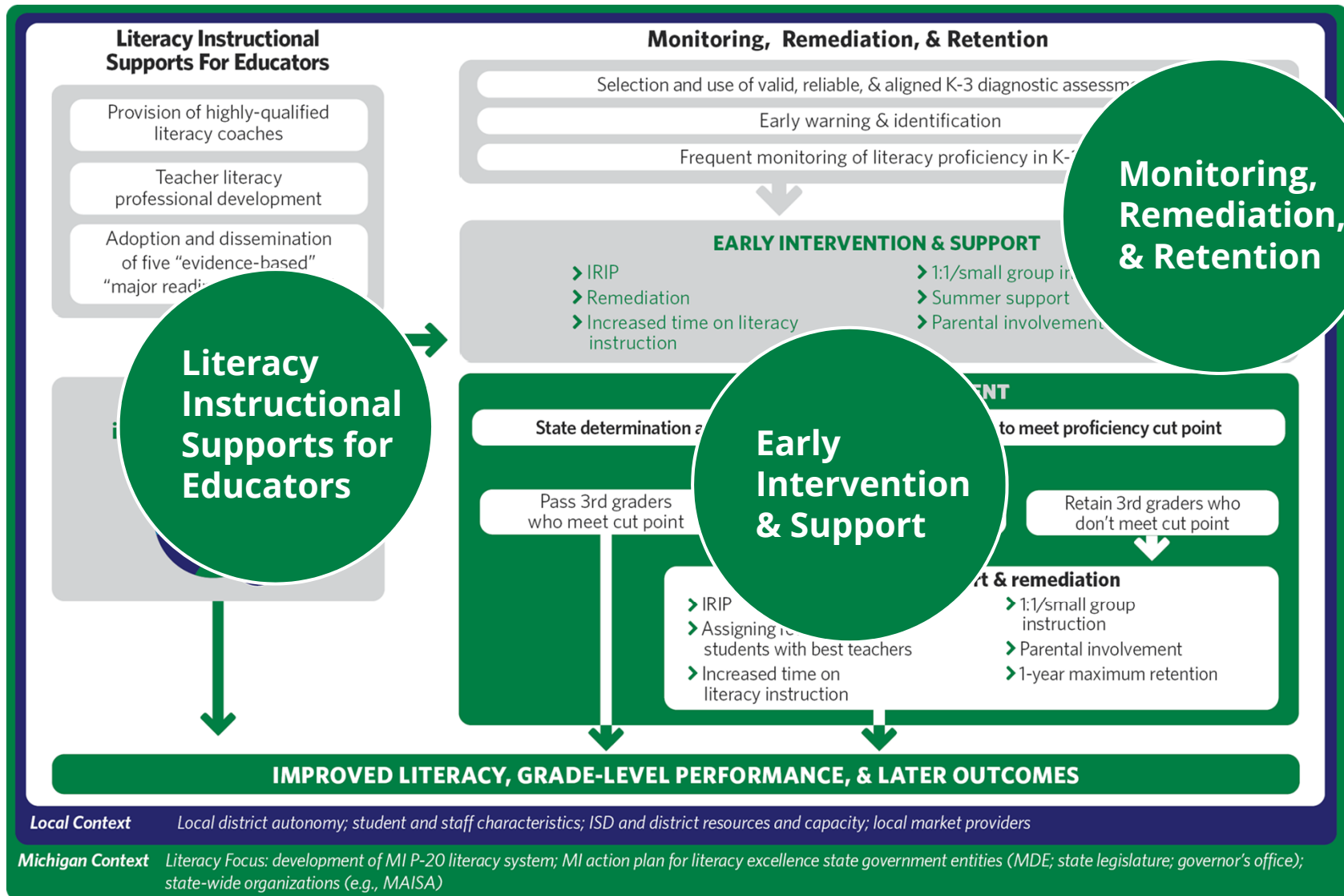


ELA Gains by Locale

Note: The dots are coefficient estimates of the post-Law year indicators from the ITS model, and the lines are the 95% confidence intervals. Models include a full set of covariates, the school-level average and trend in MEAP reading scores between 2012-13 and 2013-14, and district fixed effects. A district's prior ELA achievement is measured by its average ELA score of 3rd-5th grade students in the 2015-16 school year. Districts are classified into "low" "medium" "high" categories depending on whether they fall in the bottom quartile, middle two quartiles, or top quartile of districts on the prior ELA achievement.

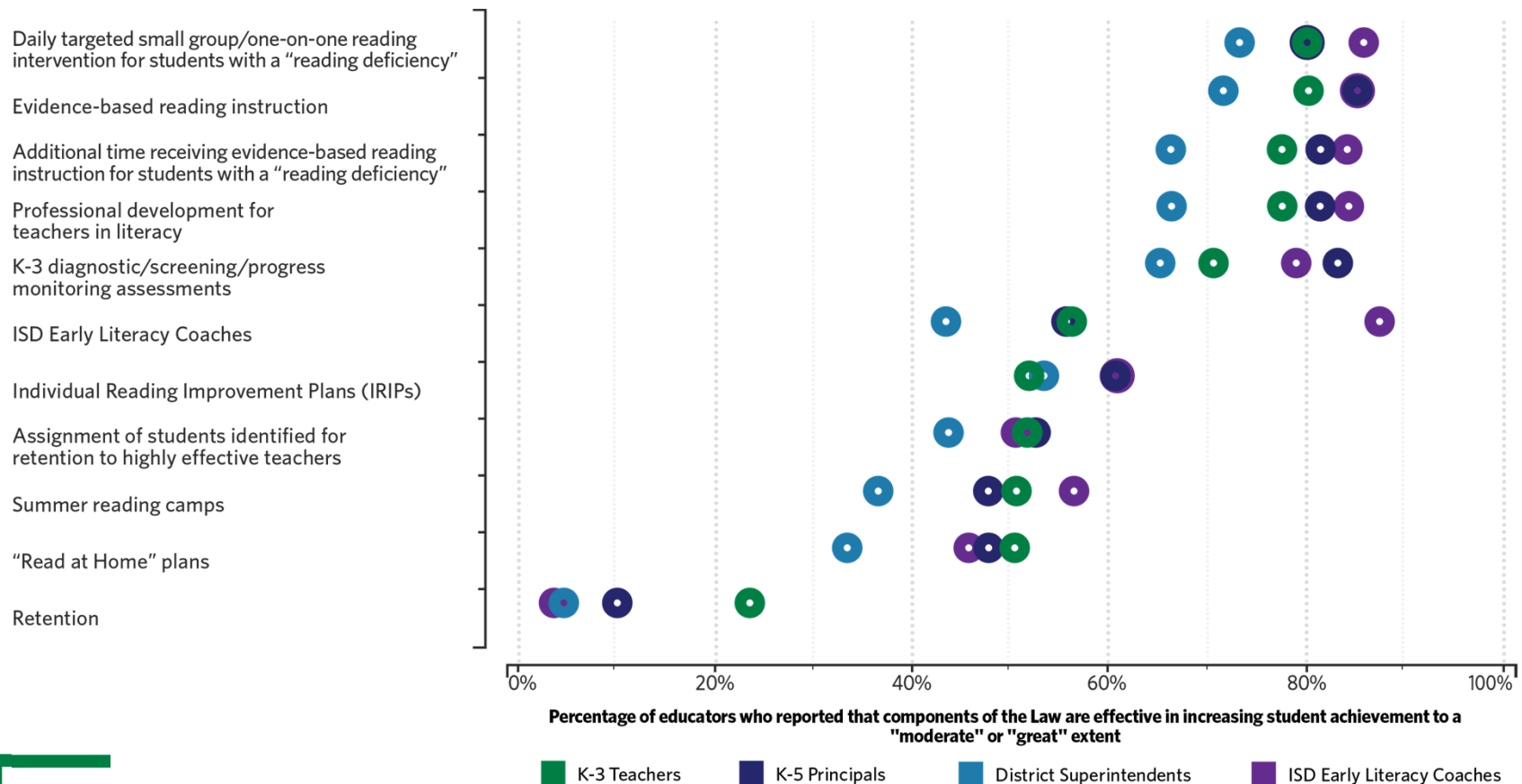
THEORY OF CHANGE

How the Read by Grade Three Law is Intended to Work



IMPACT OF THE LAW'S INTERVENTIONS ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

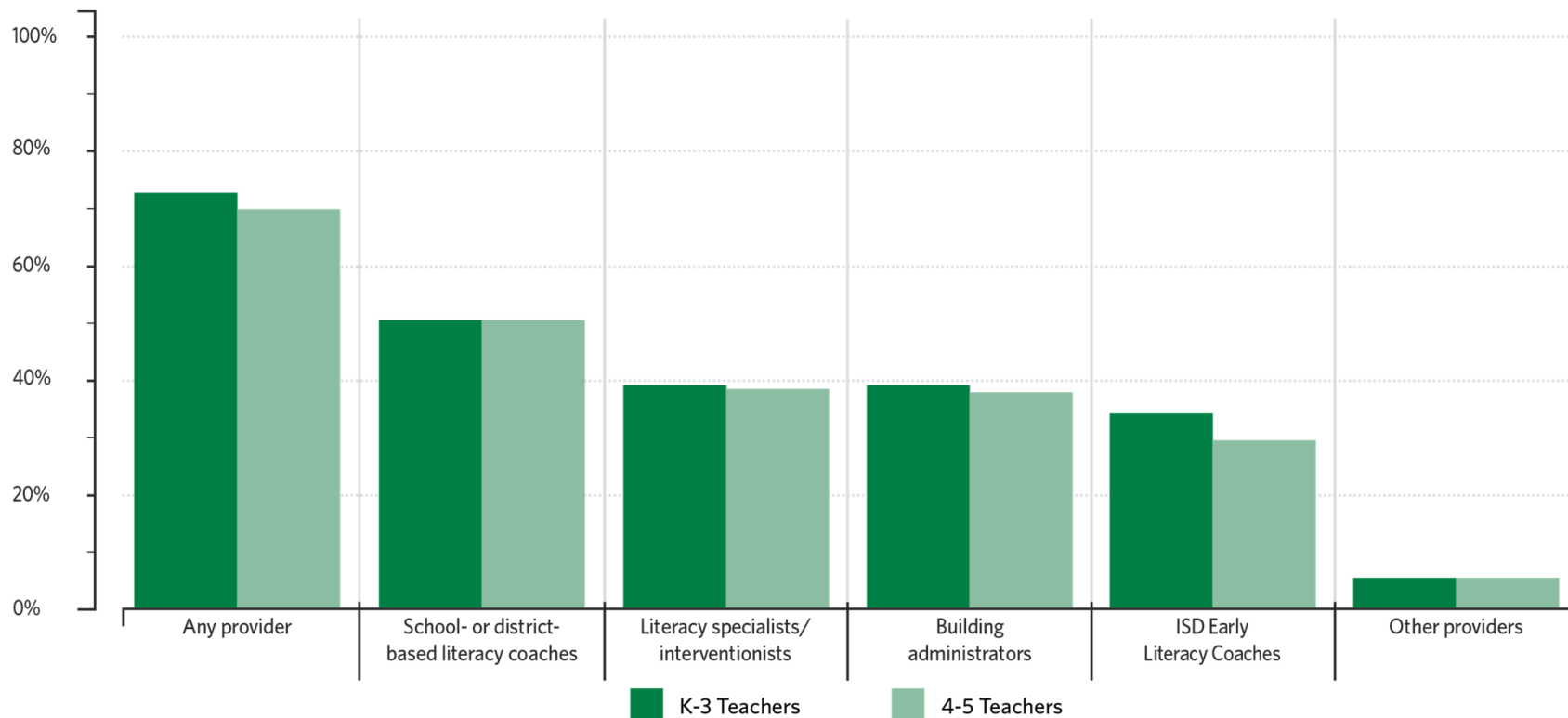
Educators Expressed Optimism That Many of the Law's Literacy Supports Would Improve Student Achievement



Note: Educators were asked, "Please indicate the extent to which you believe each of the following elements of the Read by Grade Three Law will be effective in increasing student achievement."

ACCESS TO LITERACY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

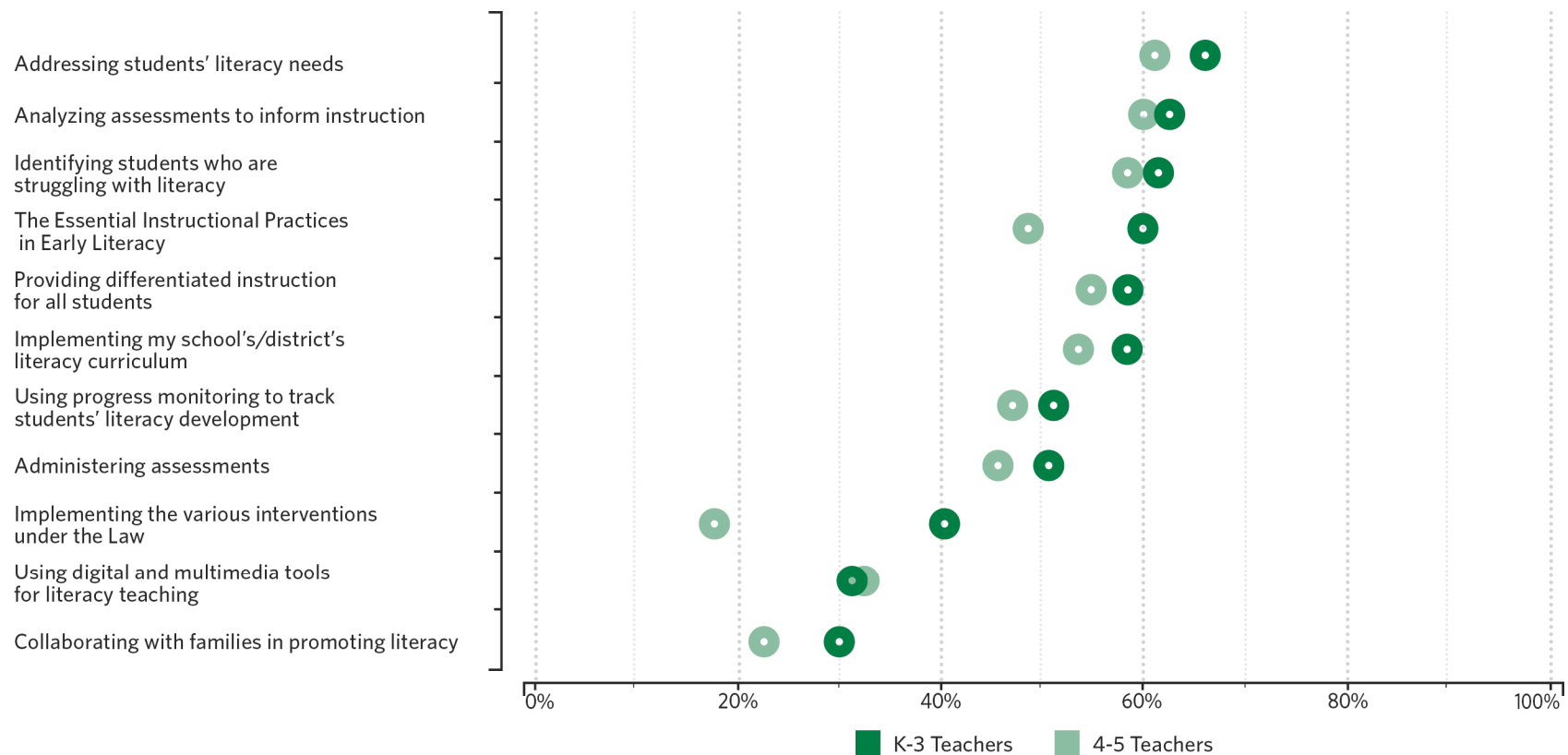
The Majority of Teachers Received Some Form of Literacy Professional Development in 2019-20



Note: Teachers were asked, "Since the beginning of the school year, have you received one-on-one literacy coaching or other professional development from any of the following providers?"

LITERACY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

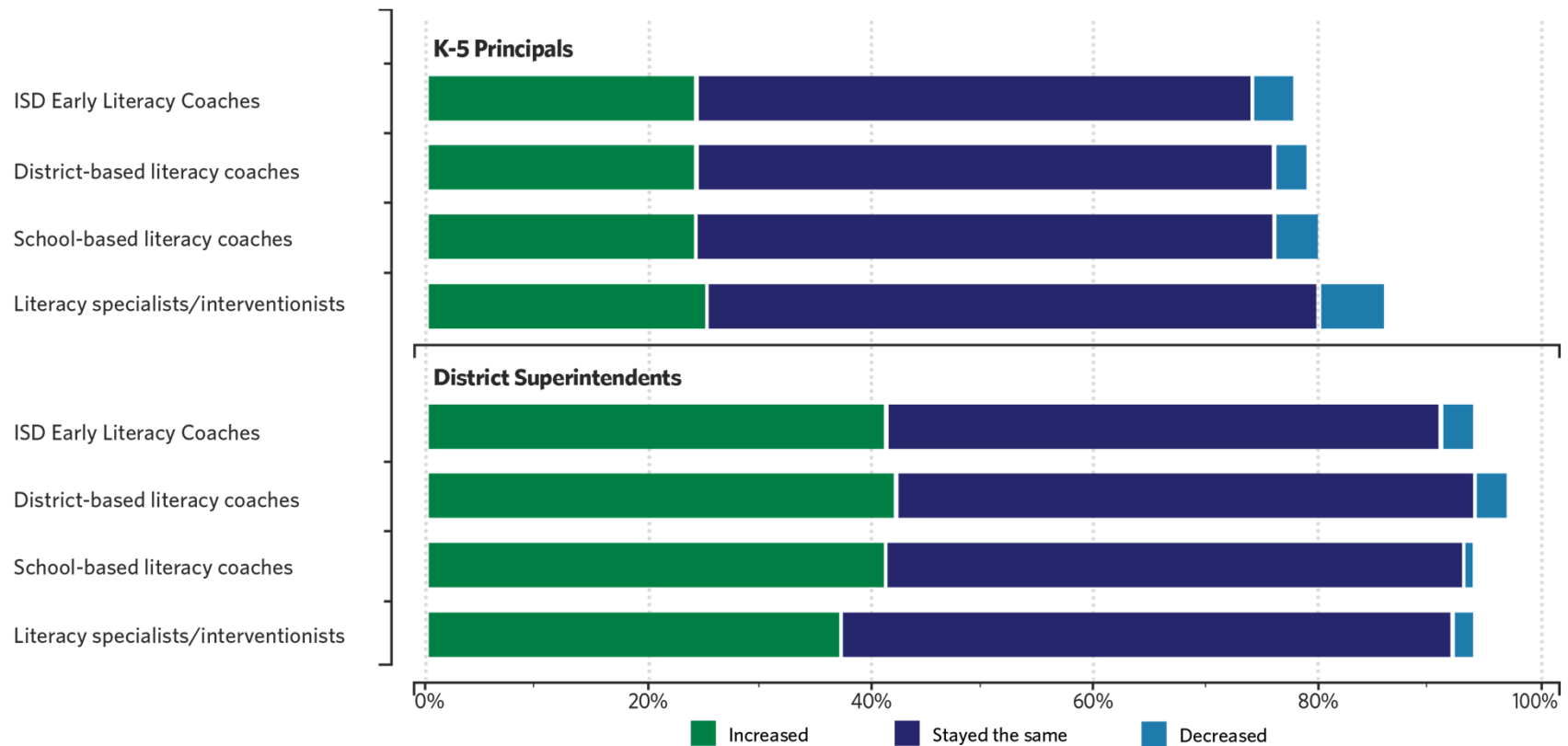
Teachers' Literacy Professional Development Was Focused on the Essential Instructional Practices for Early Literacy as Well as Identifying and Addressing Students' Literacy Learning Needs



Note: Teachers were asked, "Please tell us on which of the following topics you have received literacy professional development."

INCREASED BUT LIMITED PROVISION OF LITERACY COACHES

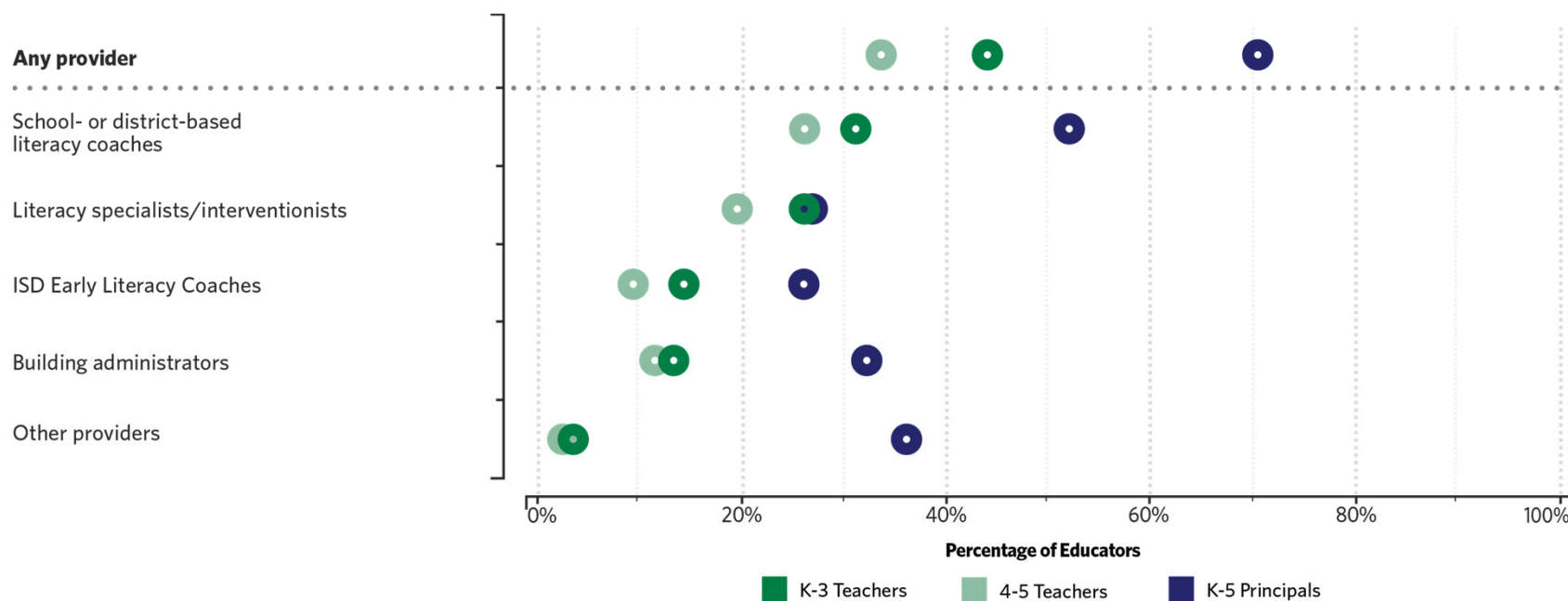
Approximately 25% of K-5 Principals Reported That the Number of Literacy Coaches Increased Since the Law Passed



Note: Principals and district superintendents were asked, "How has your school's/district's access to these personnel changed since the implementation of the Read by Grade Three Law?"

ACCESS TO LITERACY COACHING

Less Than Half of K-3 Teachers Reported Receiving One-on-One Literacy Coaching; Relatively Few From ISD Early Literacy Coaches

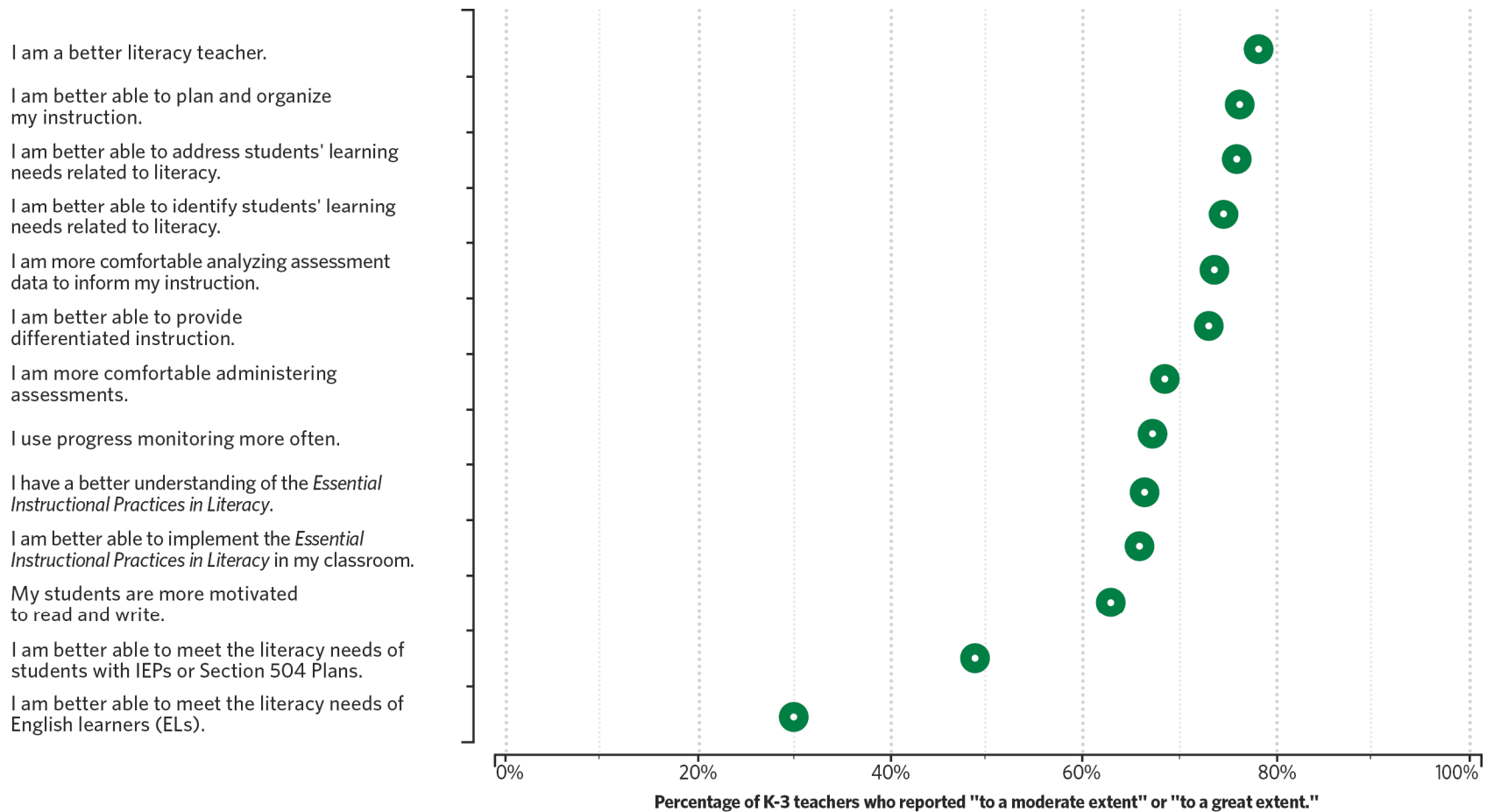


Note: Teachers were asked, "Since the beginning of the school year, have you received one-on-one literacy coaching from any of the following providers?" Principals were asked, "Which of the following individuals provide one-on-one literacy coaching to the teachers in your school?"



ONE-ON-ONE LITERACY COACHING

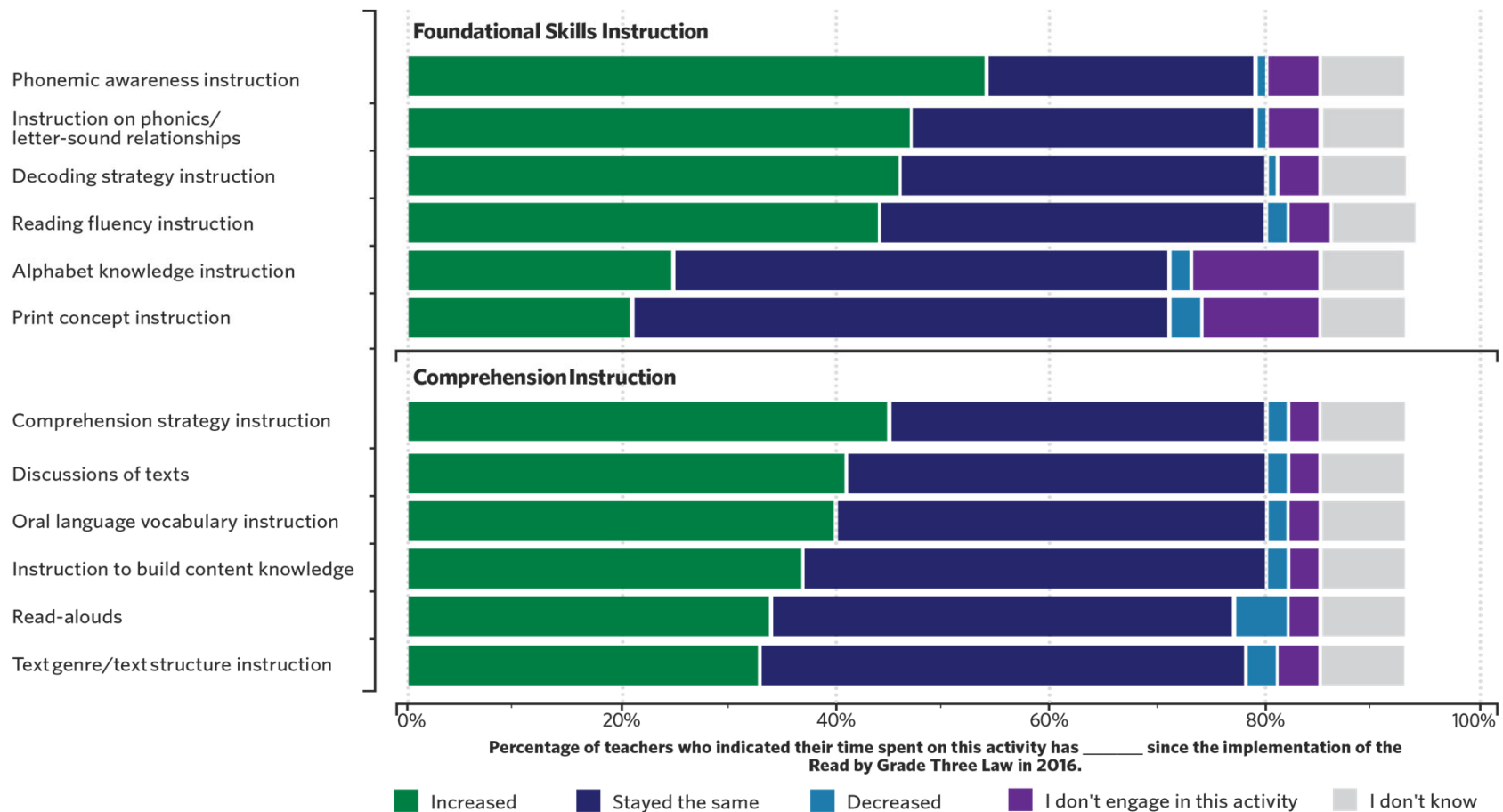
Teachers Believed That One-on-One Literacy Coaching Improved Their Practice



Note: Teachers who reported receiving one-on-one literacy coaching in the 2019-20 school year were asked, "To what extent do you agree with the following statements about how the one-on-one literacy coaching (from any provider) you have received this school year has affected your literacy instruction?"

EVIDENCE-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

K-3 Teachers Reported Increased Time Spent on Evidence-Based Instructional Practices Since the Law Was Passed



Note: Seven percent did not respond. Teachers were asked, "In this question, we are asking you about the kinds of reading instruction you engage in in a typical week and whether or not this has changed since the Read by Grade Three Law was implemented in 2016."

INDIVIDUAL READING IMPROVEMENT PLANS (IRIPS)

State-Level Stakeholders Perceived IRIPs as a Valuable Support, but Educators Were Less Certain.

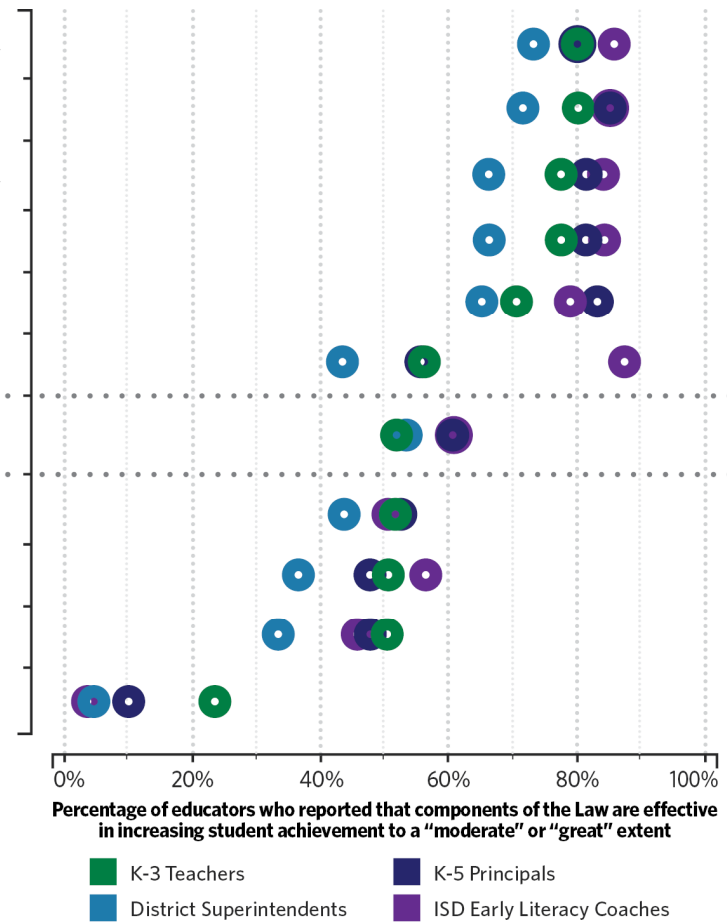


I think the IRIPs are, weirdly, one of the best things that happened because everybody's paying a lot more attention to what individual kids need, and having conversations with the adults, their parents, their guardians, about it. I think that's good.

- An external stakeholder



- Daily targeted small group/one-on-one reading intervention for students with a "reading deficiency"
- Evidence-based reading instruction
- Additional time receiving evidence-based reading instruction for students with a "reading deficiency"
- Professional development for teachers in literacy
- K-3 diagnostic/screening/progress monitoring assessments
- ISD Early Literacy Coaches
-
- Individual Reading Improvement Plans (IRIPs)**
-
- Assignment of students identified for retention to highly effective teachers
- Summer reading camps
- "Read at Home" plans
- Retention



Note: Educators were asked, "Please indicate the extent to which you believe each of the following elements of the Read by Grade Three Law will be effective in increasing student achievement."

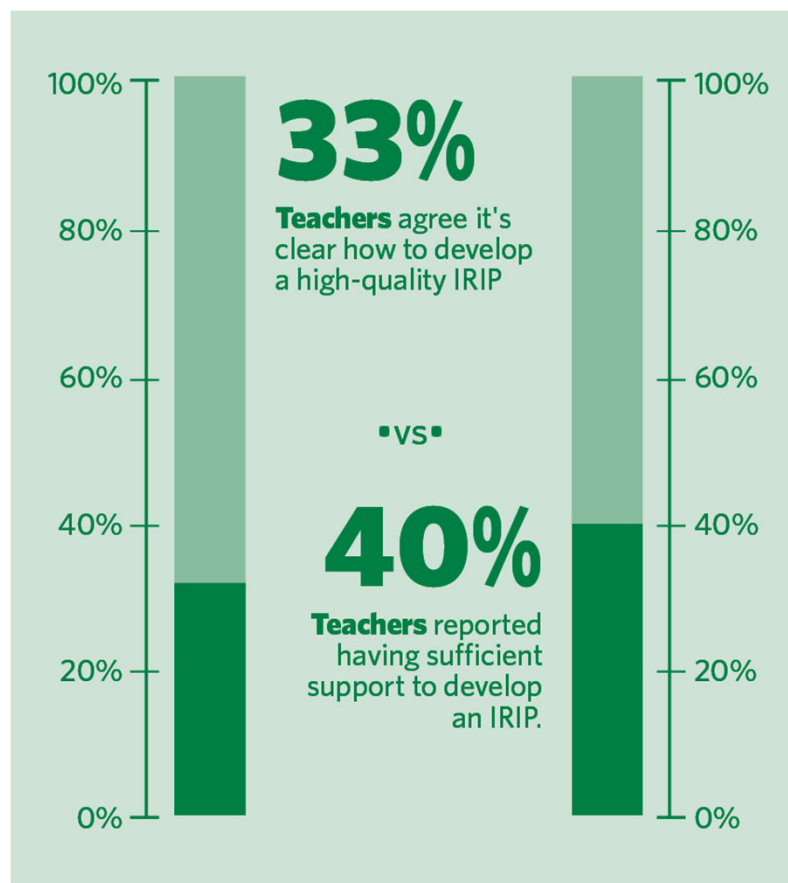


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State-Level Stakeholders Perceived IRIPs as a Valuable Support, but Educators Were Less Certain

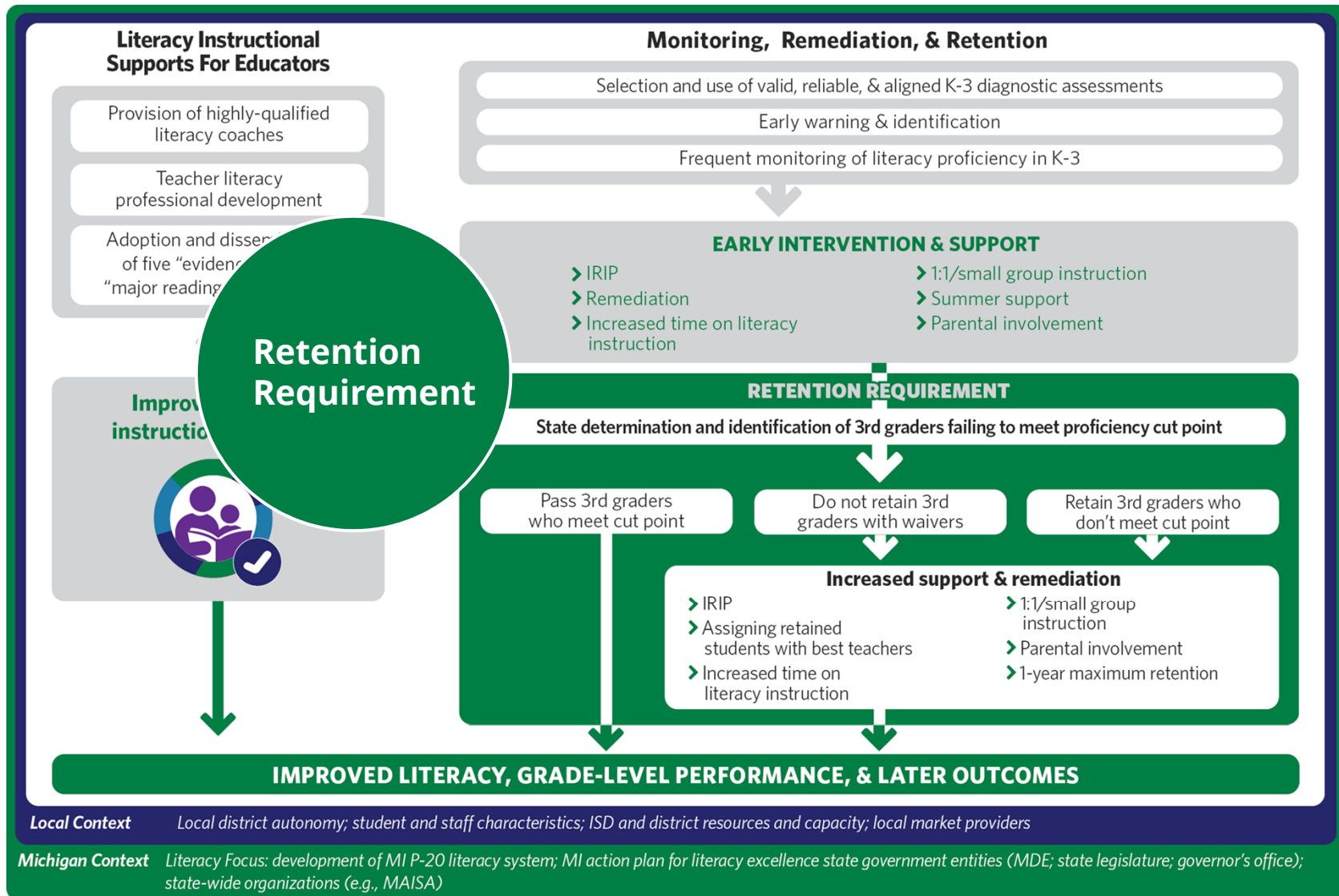
“ I think we lack understanding what a quality [IRIPs]...strategy might be, and so it would be really valuable to make sure that people understand and are able to choose a strategy that will really support that child's needs that is research-based and evidence-based, like we know it works, and I don't think we have that across the state, that knowledge of how to do that [for IRIPs].

- An external stakeholder ”



THEORY OF CHANGE

How the Read by Grade Three Law is Intended to Work



THIRD-GRADE RETENTION

State-Level Stakeholders Were Divided on the Wisdom of Including Retention in the Law



“We never in that discussion set out to say, we think that retention is a useful intervention for getting kids to read by third grade. That wasn’t really the intention. It was more about having this **distant threat** out there that, **if you guys [i.e., schools/districts] don’t get serious and have this conversation, this is what happens.**”

– A policymaker

“I do know [retention is] **a fear-based tool**, it’s a punitive tool, and I just see a lot of fear. I see parents who are afraid, kids who are afraid, teachers who are afraid...It’s just another way to put the hammer down, I think, on schools. It’s a fear-based tool and it’s misguided.”

– A policymaker

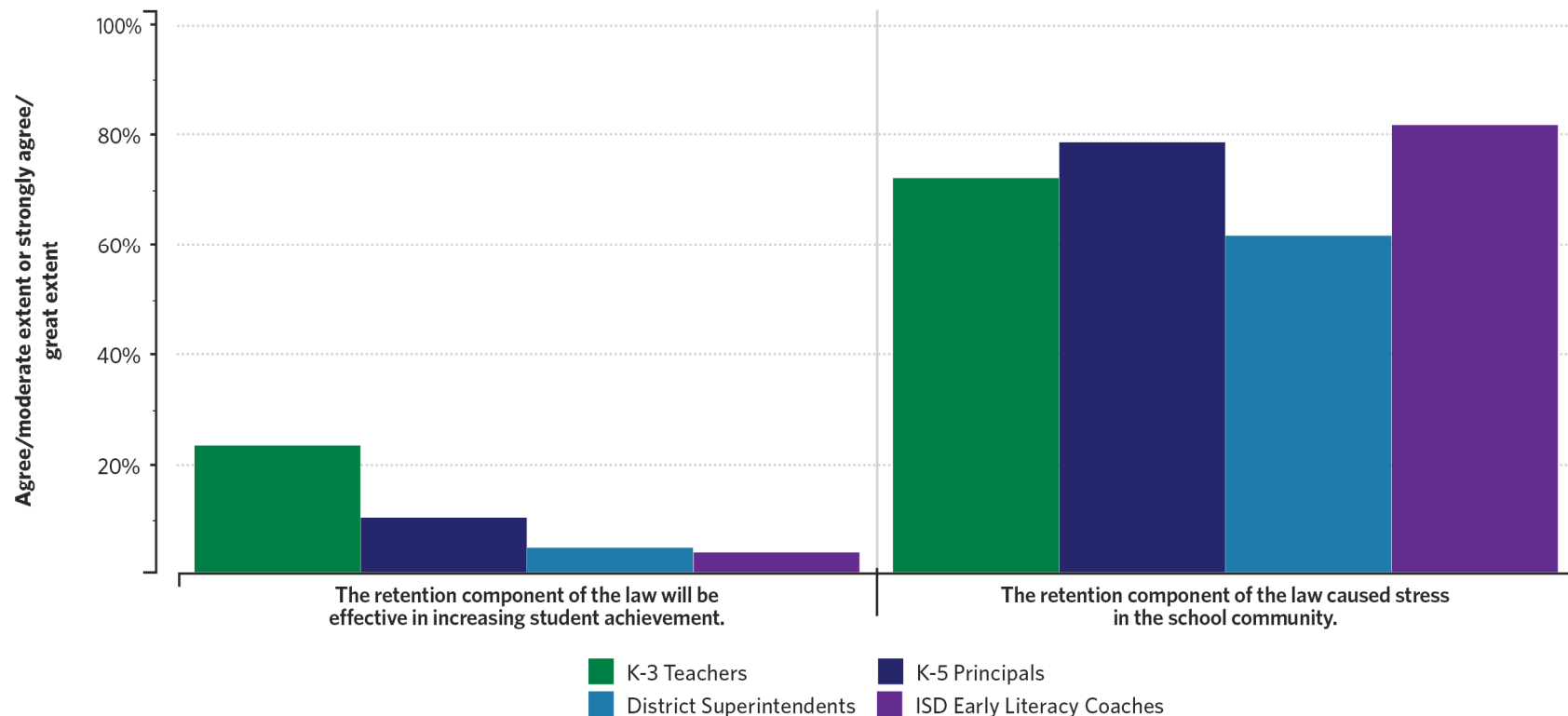
“I’m sincerely afraid that of the few thousand students that they’ll identify with this cut score, that they will mainly be poor and minority students in high-risk districts. Double up on the harm. That’s why I’m not saying it’s done any good. **I think it could do a lot of harm.**”

– An external stakeholder



THIRD-GRADE RETENTION

Few Educators Believe That Retention Will Improve Student Literacy



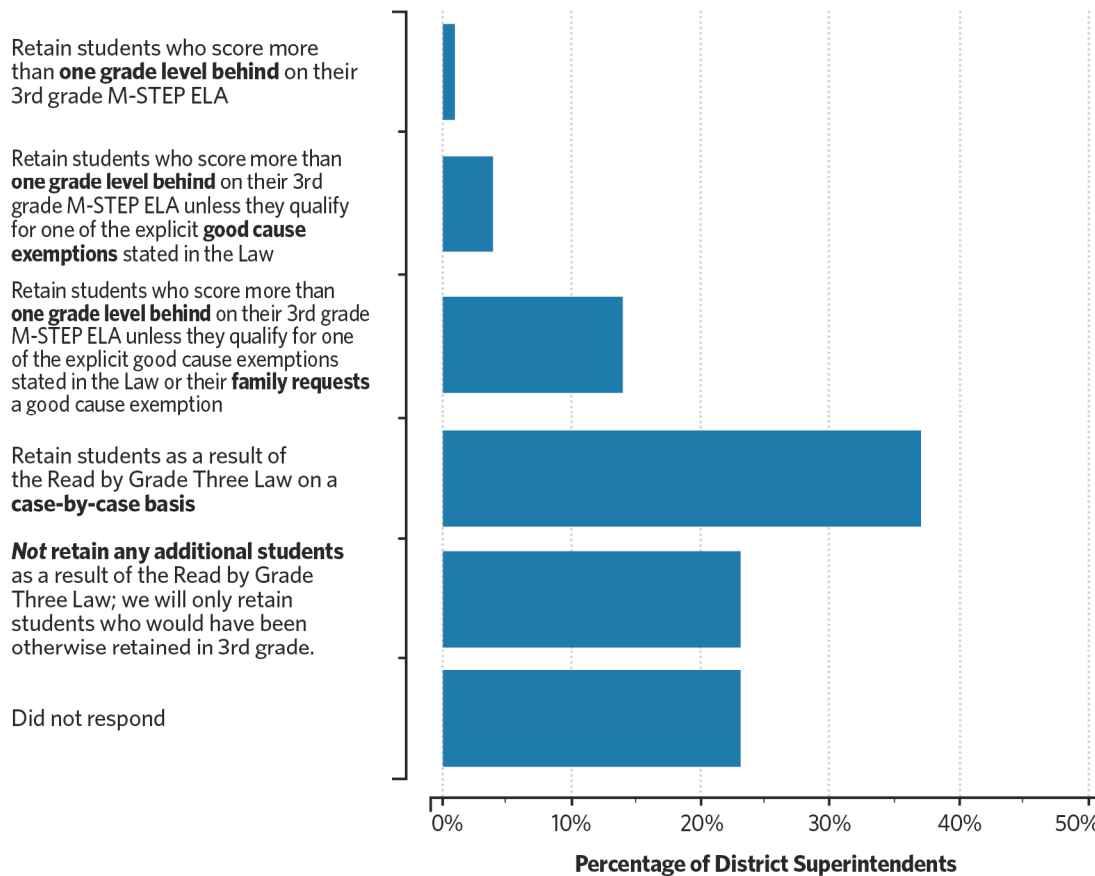
Note: Teachers, principals, district superintendents, and ISD Early Literacy Coaches were asked, "To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Read by Grade Three Law?"



THIRD-GRADE RETENTION

Superintendents Reported District Plans Before and After the COVID-19 Pandemic:

Before the COVID-19 Pandemic...



After the COVID-19 Pandemic...

41% of superintendents reported that their district **originally planned** on retaining students due to the Read by Grade Three Law, but **now** would make retention decisions on a **case-by-case basis**.

28% reported that their district **never intended** to retain students under the Read by Grade Three Law but would **now** make retention decisions on a **case-by-case basis**.

Note: In the survey of the Read by Grade Three, district superintendents were asked, "Please select the statement that best reflects your district's plans for student retention under the Read by Grade Three Law." In the COVID-19 survey administered following the suspension of face-to-face instruction in spring 2020, district superintendents were asked, "Due to the suspension of face-to-face instruction because of COVID-19 and suspension of state assessments for the 2019-20 school year, the state is waiving the requirement that students will be retained based on the ELA M-STEP. How does this impact your district's plans for third-grade retention, if at all?"

THEORY OF CHANGE

Potential Unintentional or Indirect Outcomes of the Read by Grade Three Law

ELA achievement for 4th-5th grade students

- **Positive** effects overall because of increased focus on literacy; for 4th and 5th graders in later years because they were treated by the Law in earlier years
- **Negative** effects if schools or districts have redistributed personnel or financial resources to grades K-3

Math achievement

- **Positive** spillover effects on math

Student retention

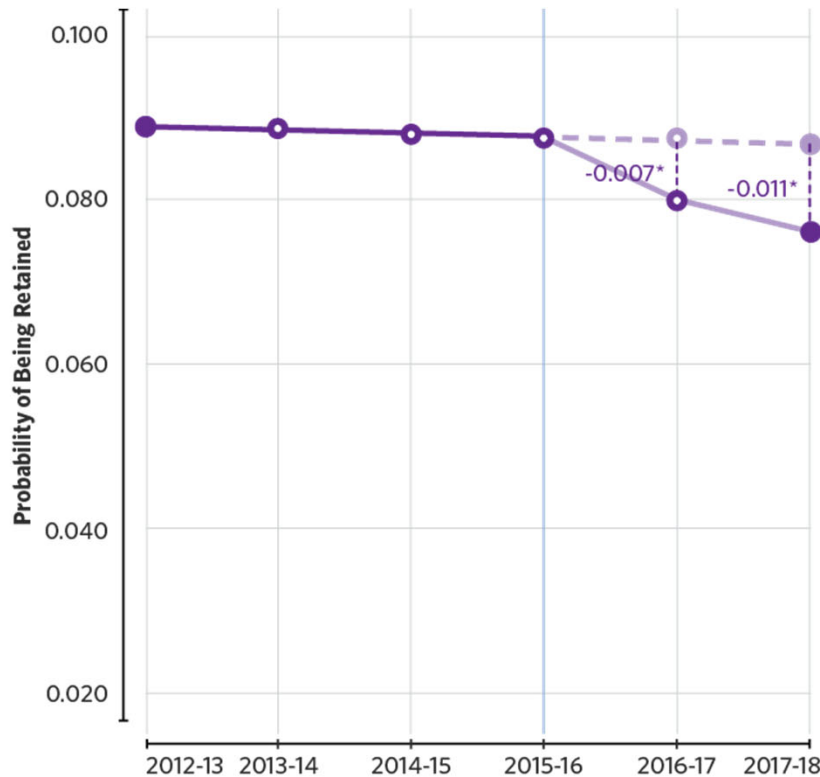
- Students may be **more likely** to be retained in grades K-2 to avoid being retained in third grade under the Law using a good cause exemption.
- Students may be **more likely** to enroll in Developmental Kindergarten to have an extra year to learn literacy skills.

Special education placement

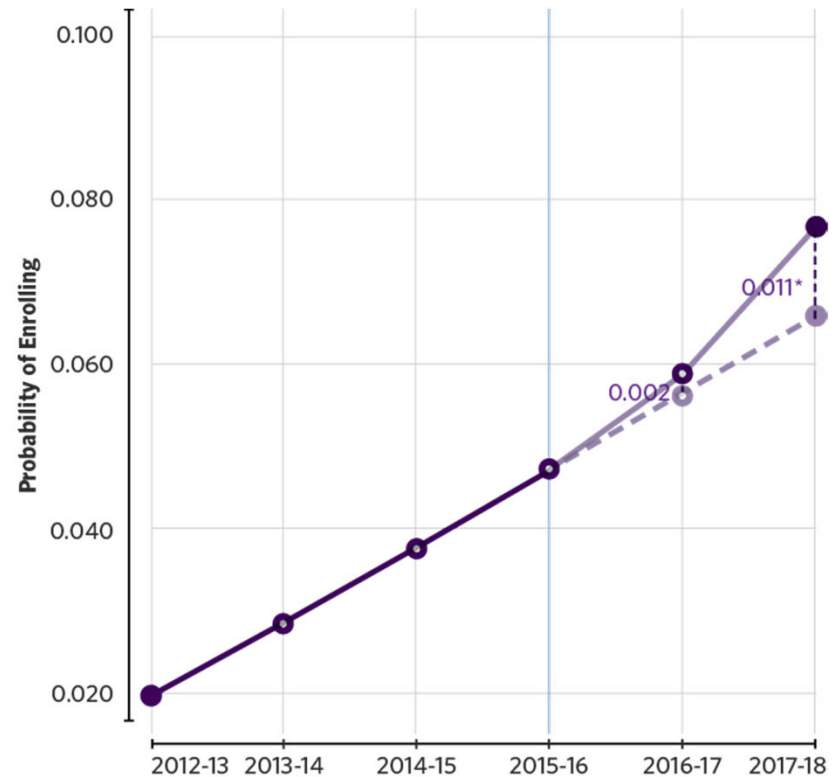
- Students may be **more likely** to be identified as students with disabilities to qualify for a good cause exemption.

STUDENT RETENTION

Student Retention Rates in Kindergarten Decreased;
Enrollment in Developmental Kindergarten Increased.



**Regular Kindergarten
Retention**



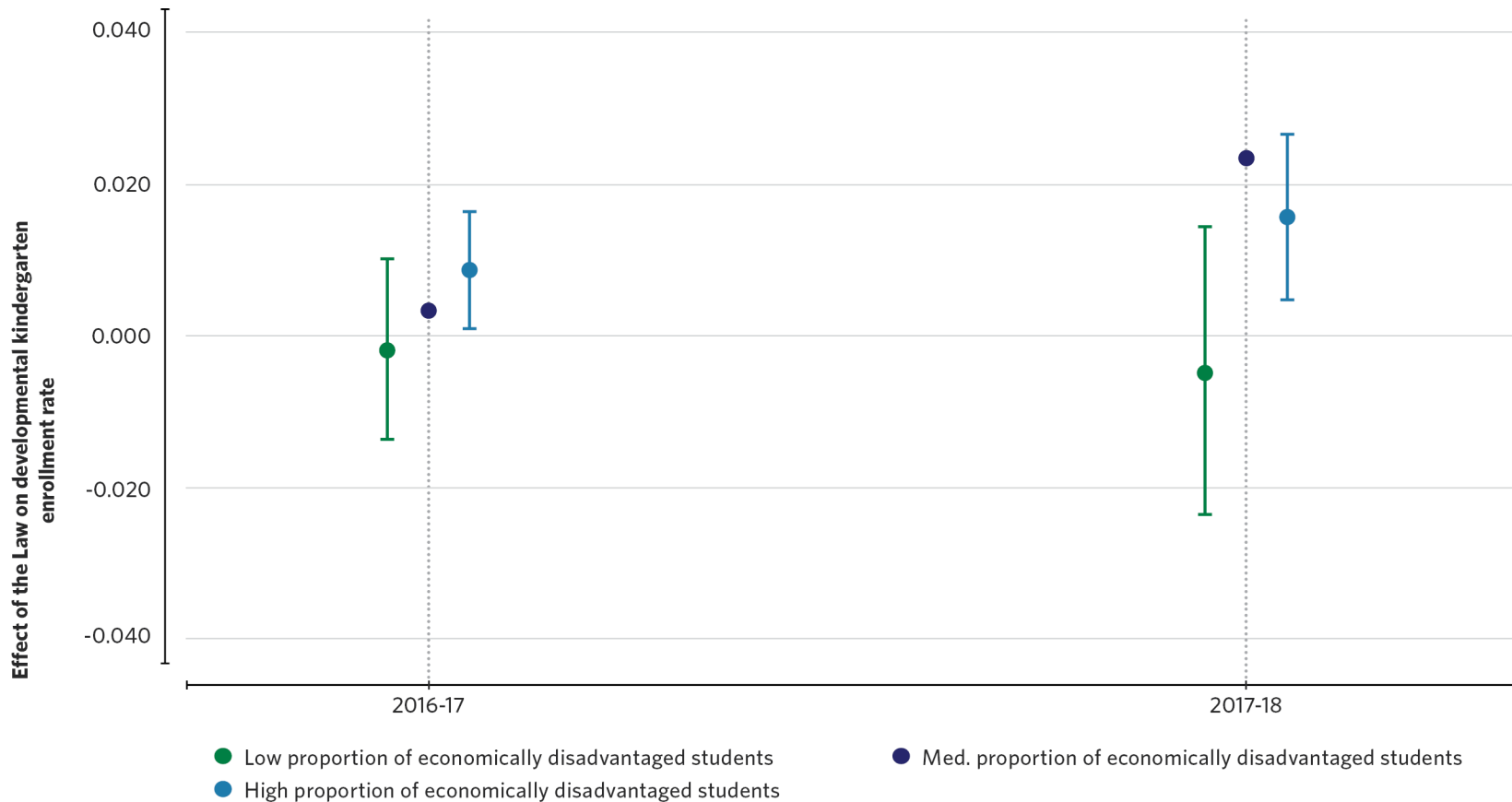
**Developmental Kindergarten
Enrollment**



Note: Robust standard errors clustered at the district level. + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. The retention rate measures the proportion of students who were retained after a given school year. The analytical sample of a given grade excludes students who have been retained in that grade before. Models include a full set of covariates and district fixed effects.

DEVELOPMENTAL KINDERGARTEN

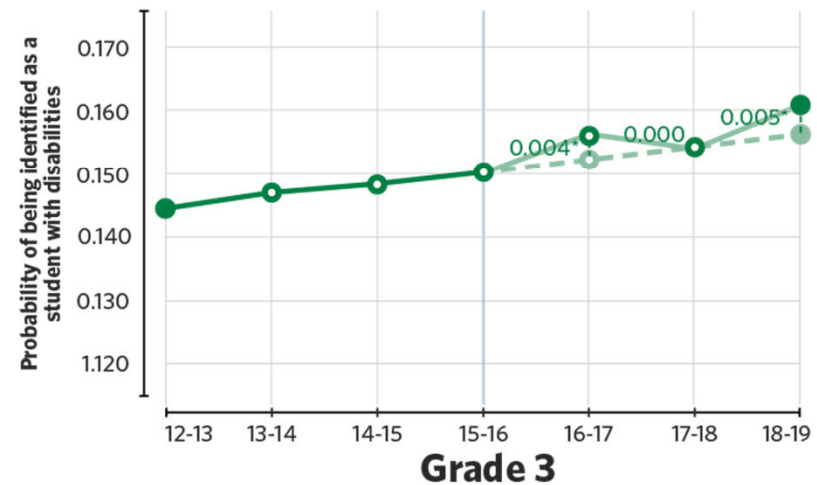
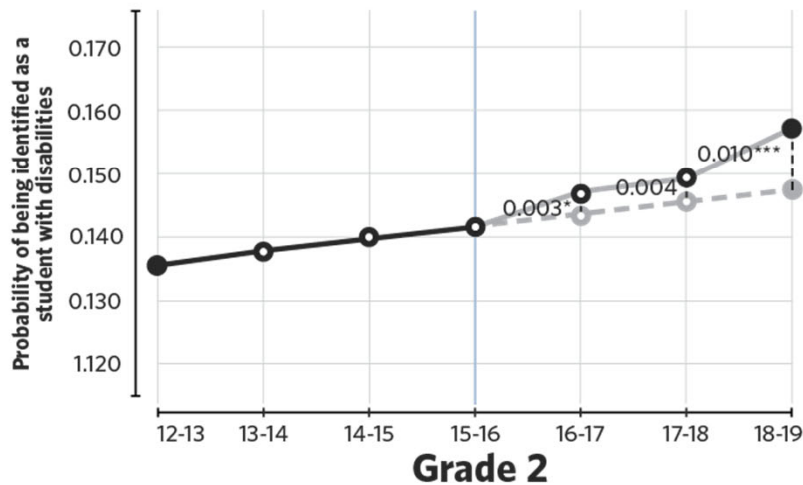
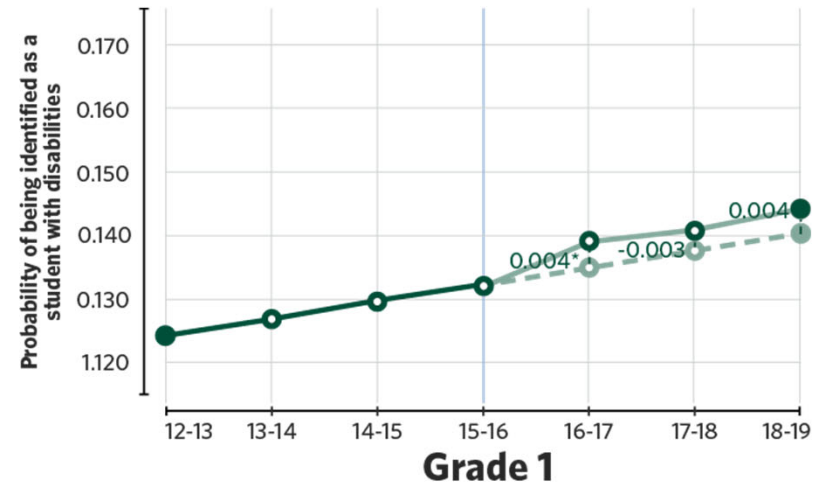
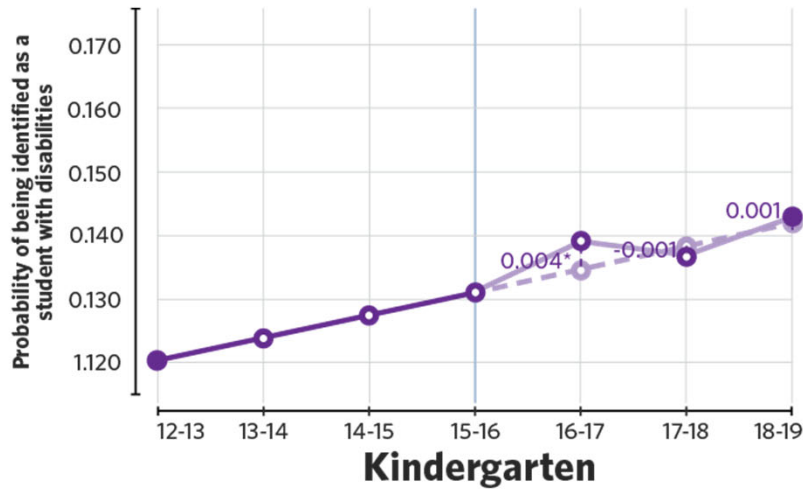
Developmental Kindergarten Enrollment Increased More Rapidly in Traditionally Underserved Districts



Note: The dots are coefficient estimates of the post-Law year indicators from the ITS model, and the lines are the 95% confidence intervals. Districts are classified into "low" "medium" "high" categories depending on whether they fall in the bottom quartile, middle two quartiles, or top quartile of districts on the proportion of students who are identified as economically disadvantaged. Models include a full set of covariates and district fixed effects.

SPECIAL EDUCATION PLACEMENT

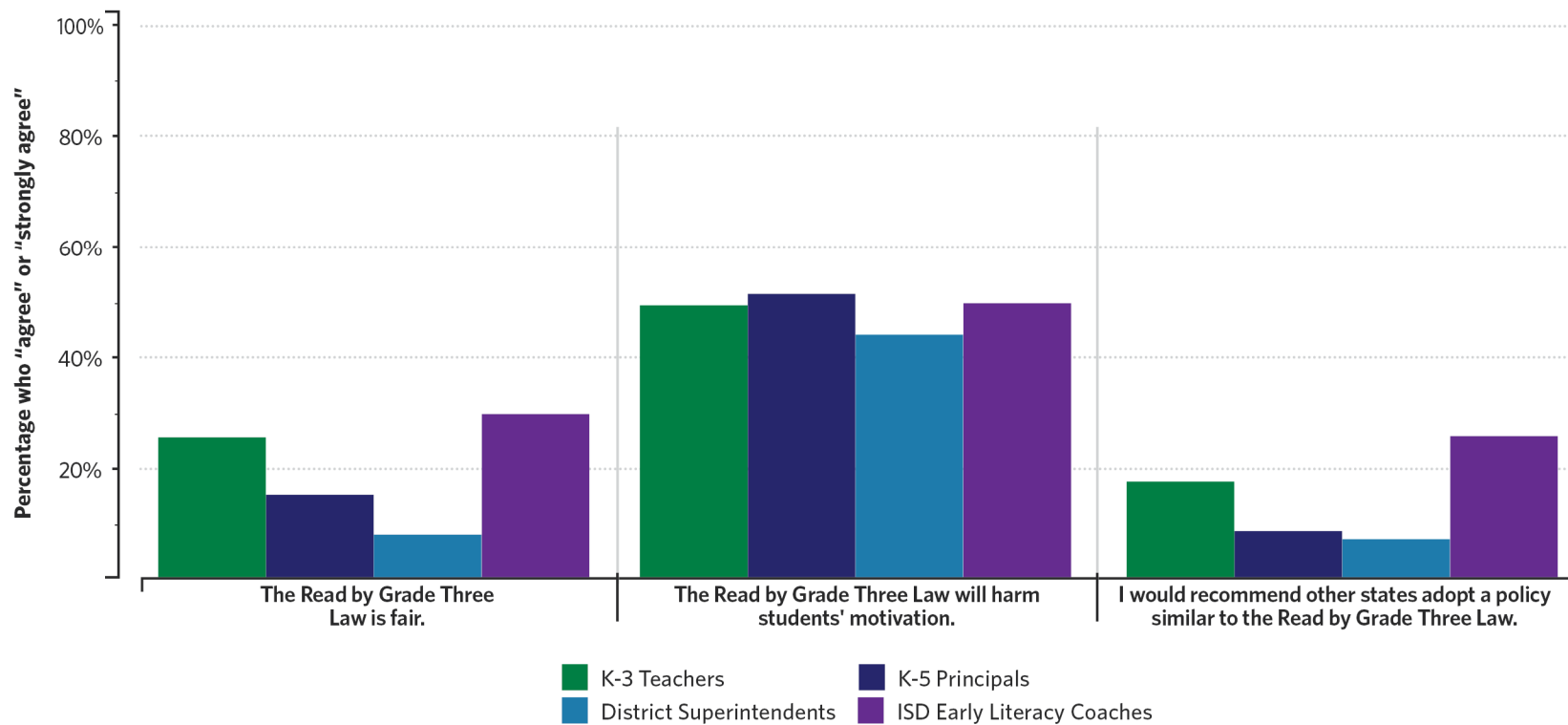
K-3 Special Education Identification Rates Increased After the Law



Note: Robust standard errors clustered at the district level. + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Student with disabilities include students with an Individualized Education Program [IEP] or students with academic supports (i.e., students with a Section 504 Plan) in a given school year. Models include student and school covariates, including gender, economically disadvantaged status, indicators of EIs and non-resident status, school size and demographic composition of the student body (i.e., the percentage of non-White students, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students, the percentage of students with disabilities, and the percentage of ELs), and district fixed effects.

EDUCATOR'S PERCEPTIONS OF THE LAW

Educators Had Negative Perceptions of the Read by Grade Three Law



Note: Teachers, principals, district superintendents, and ISD Early Literacy Coaches were asked, "To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Read by Grade Three Law?"

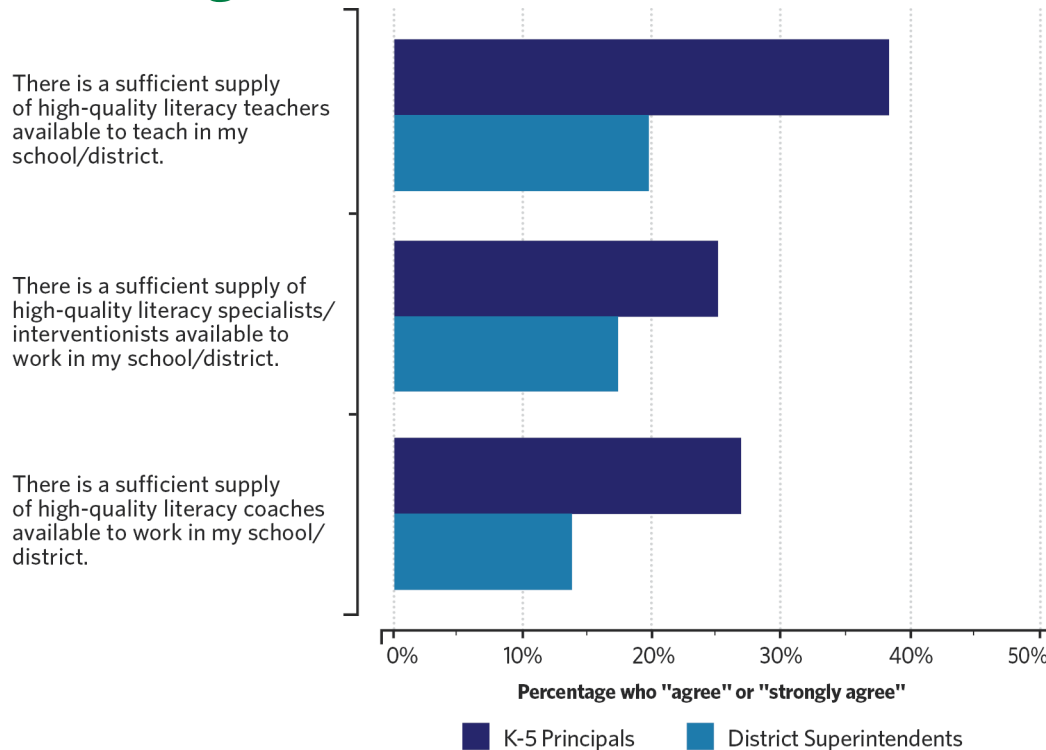
CHALLENGES WITH THE LAW'S IMPLEMENTATION

- Shortage of qualified early literacy coaches
- Shortage of teachers
- Inequitable access to literacy resources
 - Access to literacy coaches and specialists was inequitable
 - Educators in low-income districts faced greater challenges providing quality literacy instruction and resources
- The COVID-19 pandemic – Spring 2020
 - Nearly all principals and teachers reported they were concerned students would return to school behind in literacy
 - ISD Early Literacy Coaches switched focus from coaching to administrative duties once school buildings closed



SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED LITERACY TEACHERS & COACHES

Both Educators and State-Level Stakeholders Reported a Shortage of Literacy Teachers and Coaches Available in School Buildings



“We have such a talent problem in Michigan...Even if we paid for the correct amount of literacy coaching support, so that that was not a financial barrier, we don't have enough people to even fill the roles.”

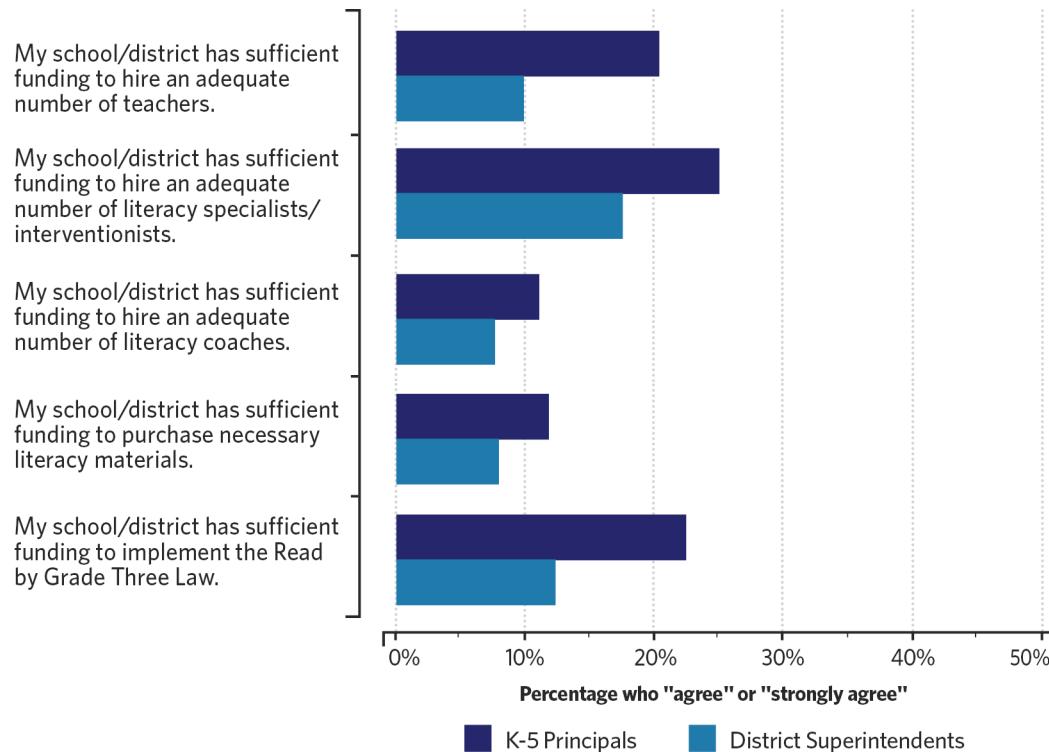
- A former policy maker”



Note: Elementary school principals and district superintendents were asked, “To what extent do you agree with the following statements about you and your school's/district's ability to improve literacy instruction and/or implement the Read by Grade Three Law?” Source: EPIC survey of educators about the Read by Grade Three Law.

SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED LITERACY TEACHERS & COACHES

Fiscal Constraints Created Barriers to Hiring a Sufficient Number of Literacy Teachers and Coaches



“We’ve got \$21 million in coaches, which we should be able to expand to about 270 statewide coaches, which is not nearly enough in terms of implementing [the] Law.

- A stakeholder

When you get a reading coach or two reading coaches per Intermediate School District, then it's not alike [to Florida's reading law]. It's almost ineffective because it would be too diluted to really provide significant value.

- A former policymaker”



Note: Elementary school principals and district superintendents were asked, “To what extent do you agree with the following statements about you and your school’s/district’s ability to improve literacy instruction and/or implement the Read by Grade Three Law?”

SHORTAGE OF TEACHERS

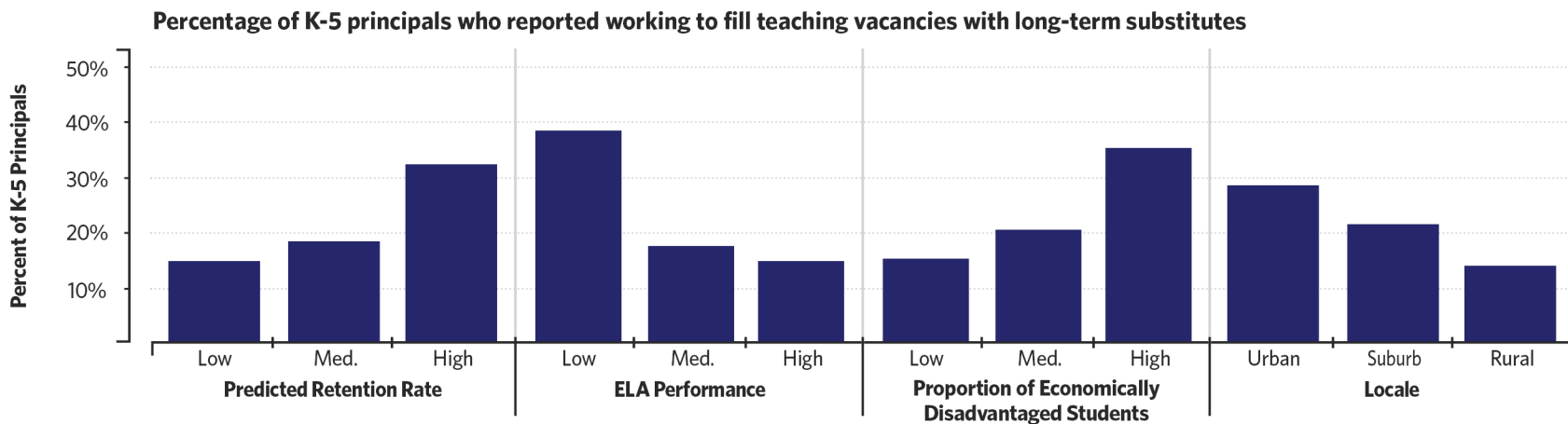
Michigan's Teacher Shortage Impacts Instruction and the Supply of Literacy Coaches

“Probably the biggest challenge right now is just having sufficient numbers of people to be literacy coaches without cannibalizing the stock of people we need teaching.”

- An external stakeholder”

“Because of the teacher shortage, we are having a series of long-term subs from kindergarten to third grade. Is that fair, that they're gonna be held back when they never had a 'real' teacher?”

- A policymaker”



Note: Elementary principals were asked, "As a result of the Read by Grade Three Law, have you initiated any of the following personnel changes?"

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Third-grade ELA and math achievement has improved since the Law's passage relative to decreasing prior trends.
- Educators attribute achievement gains to the Law's literacy supports.
- Teachers perceived literacy professional development to be effective, although there was a shortage of literacy coaches.
- Access to literacy coaching and literacy resources was inequitable.
- Student retention remains a controversial component of the Law.
- Developmental kindergarten enrollment and special education placement may have increased as a result of the Law.
- COVID-19 led to increased concerns about literacy instruction and disrupted the implementation of the law.



EPIC

**Education Policy
Innovation Collaborative**
RESEARCH WITH CONSEQUENCE

Education Policy Innovation Collaborative