



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

**Prepared for:
The Early Literacy Task Force
April 2022**

Amy Cummings
Graduate Assistant, EPIC

College of Education | Michigan State University

BACKGROUND ON EPIC



- The **Education Policy Innovation Collaborative (EPIC)** at Michigan State University is an independent, non-partisan research center that operates as the strategic research partner to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and works to provide evidence to education policymakers and stakeholders across Michigan.
- EPIC is devoted to **research with consequence** and the idea that rigorous evidence can improve education policy and practice and, ultimately, students' lives.
- EPIC conducts **original research** using a variety of methods to **produce new insights** that decision-makers can use to create and implement policy.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The Year 2 Evaluation of the Read by Grade Three Law Asks Two Main Questions:



How is the Read by Grade Three Law being implemented in Michigan?

- a) Does implementation vary across populations and places, and if so, why?
- b) How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect the Law's implementation?



Is the Read by Grade Three Law meeting its goal to improve literacy achievement and attainment for Michigan students?

- a) For which students, if any, is the policy particularly successful?

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	6 state-level stakeholders	Michigan's educational landscape during the COVID-19 pandemic Perceptions of the current and future implementation of the Law	A priori and emergent coding of semi-structured interviews
State administrative records	5.3 million K-5 student-year observations 225,000 K-5 teacher-year observations 2012-13 through 2020-21	Student achievement, grade retention, special education placement, English learner program participation, student and educator mobility	Cohort-level Interrupted Time Series (ITS)

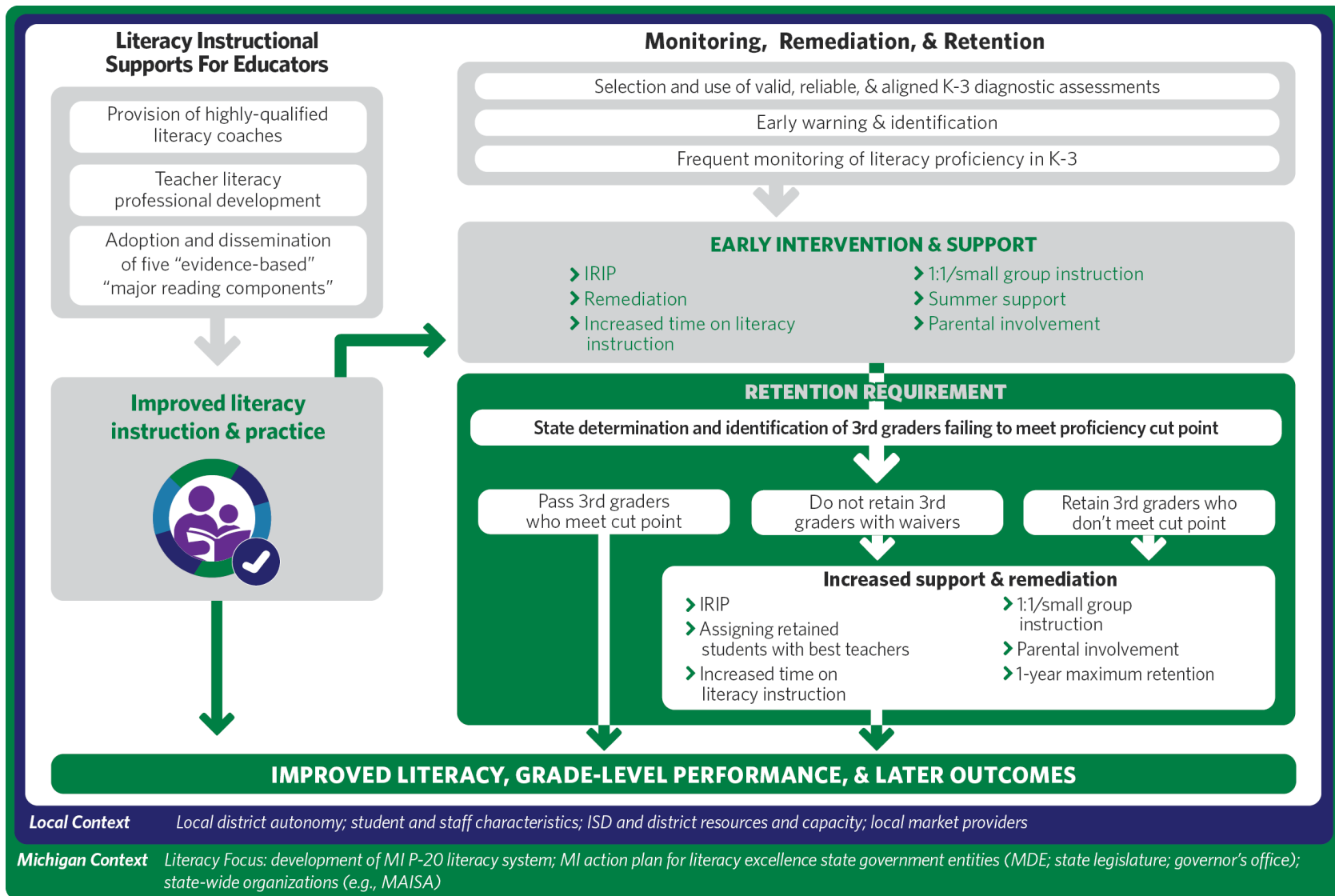
DATA AND METHODS

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
Educator surveys	<p>7,788 K-5 teachers (25% response rate)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-3 (n=4,083, RR=25%) <p>417 K-5 principals (21% RR)</p> <p>162 District superintendents (30% RR)</p> <p>582 Literacy coaches (51% RR)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ISD Early Literacy Coaches (n=163, RR=42%) • Other literacy coaches (n=419, RR=55%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy instructional practice • Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic • Professional learning, coaching, curricula, and interventions • Understanding and perceptions • Early implementation • Costs of the Law 	<p>Descriptive analyses (weighted responses)</p> <p>Sub-analyses by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade range • Instructional modality • Charter vs TPS • Districts' ELA performance • Districts' proportions of economically disadvantaged, non-White, English learners, students with disabilities • Locale and size

THEORY OF CHANGE

How the Read by Grade Three Law is Intended to Work

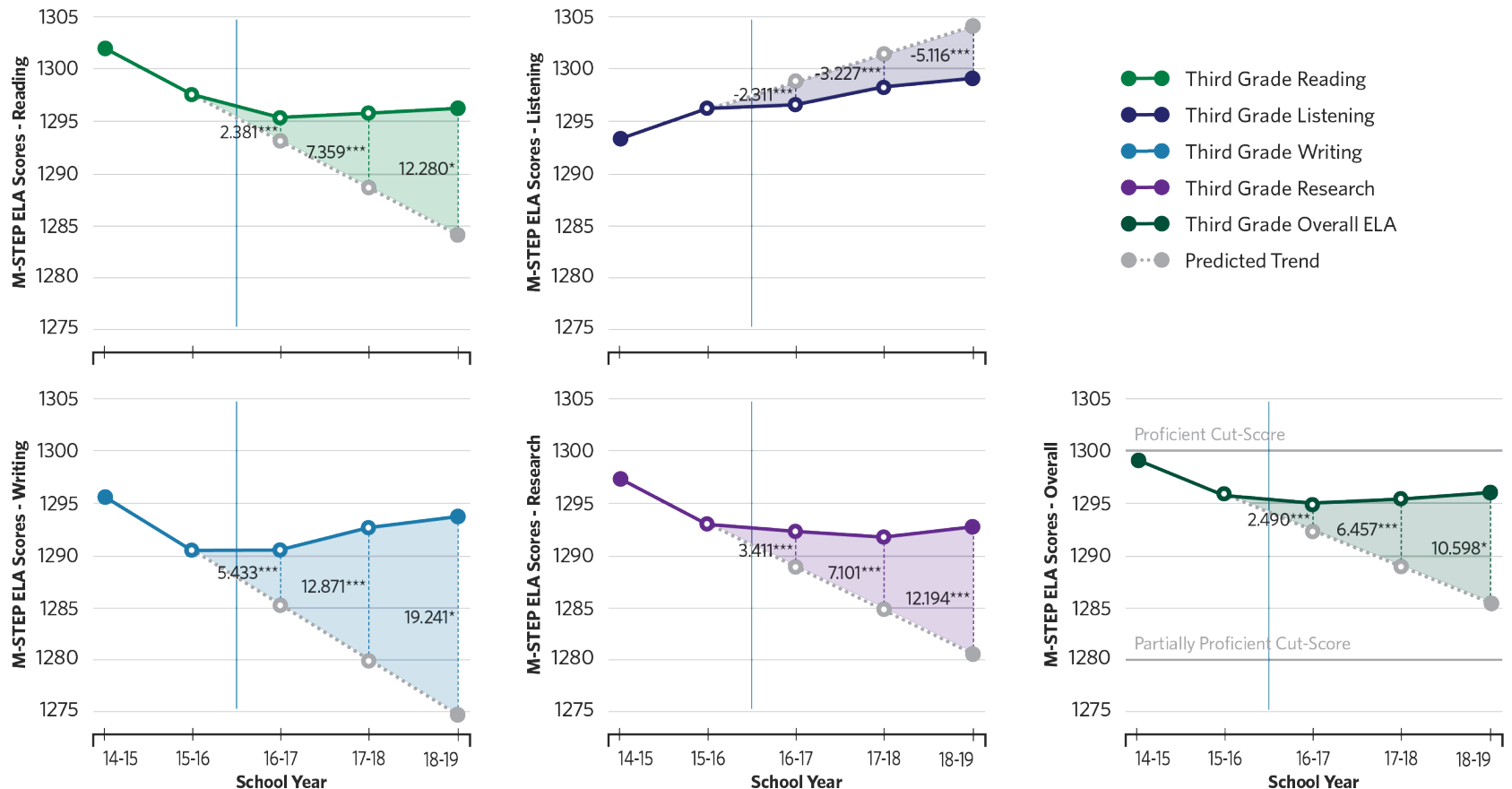


Early Student Achievement Results



EARLY STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RESULTS

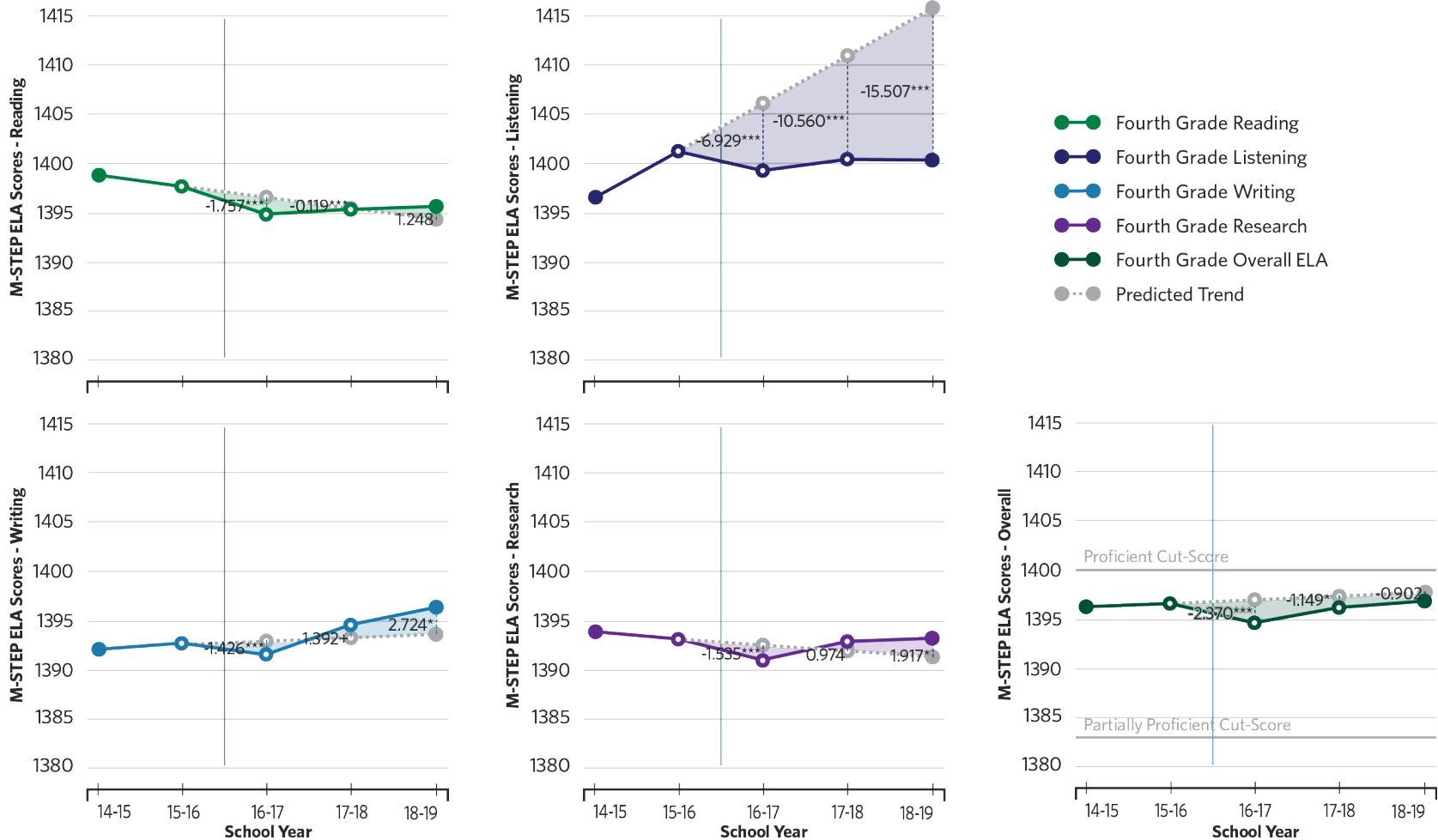
Third Grade Student Achievement in ELA Has Improved Relative to the Pre-Trend Since the Law Passed



Note: The colored dots are fitted values of M-STEP ELA scores based on coefficient estimates from the ITS model. The light grey dotted 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 derived from student-level administrative records for Michigan 3rd-grade students.

EARLY STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RESULTS

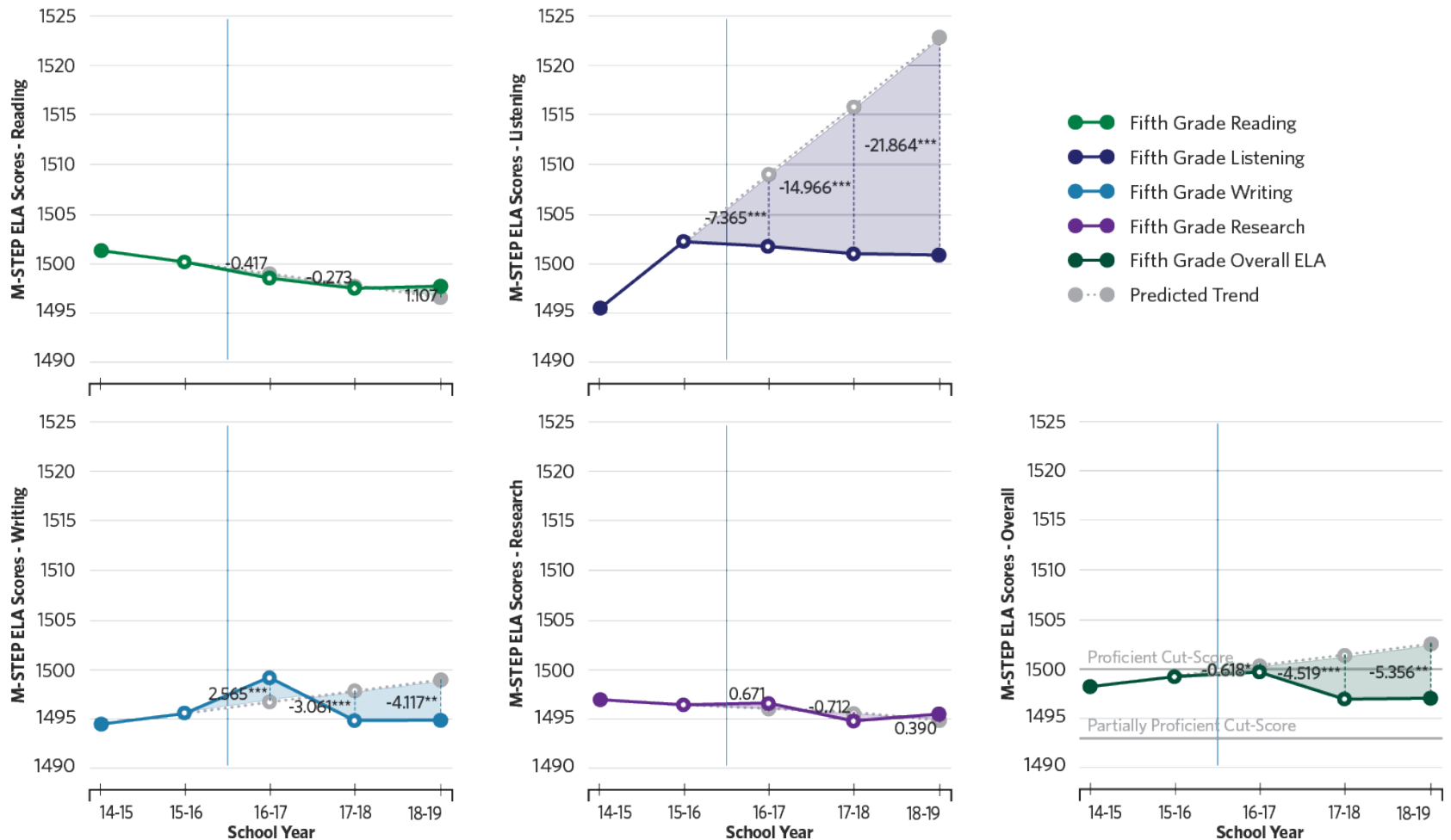
Fourth Grade ELA Achievement May Also be Affected by the Law



Note: The colored dots are fitted values of M-STEP ELA scores based on coefficient estimates from the ITS model. The light grey dotted 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 derived from student-level administrative records for Michigan 3rd-grade students.

EARLY STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RESULTS

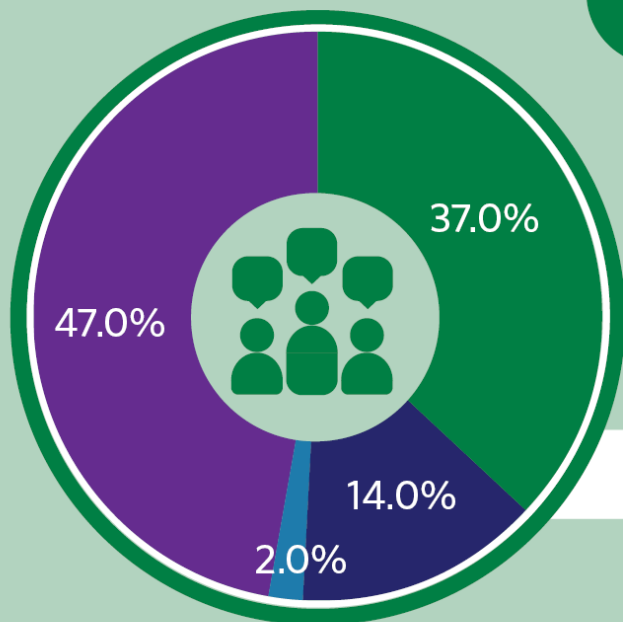
Fifth Grade ELA Achievement May Also be Affected by the Law



Note: The colored dots are fitted values of M-STEP ELA scores based on coefficient estimates from the ITS model. The light grey dotted 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 derived from student-level administrative records for Michigan 3rd-grade students.

EARLY STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RESULTS

Most K-3 Teachers Do Not Believe the Law Has Effectively Improved Students' Literacy Skills



Q

To what extent have you seen improvements in your incoming students' literacy skills since the implementation of the Read by Grade Three Law?



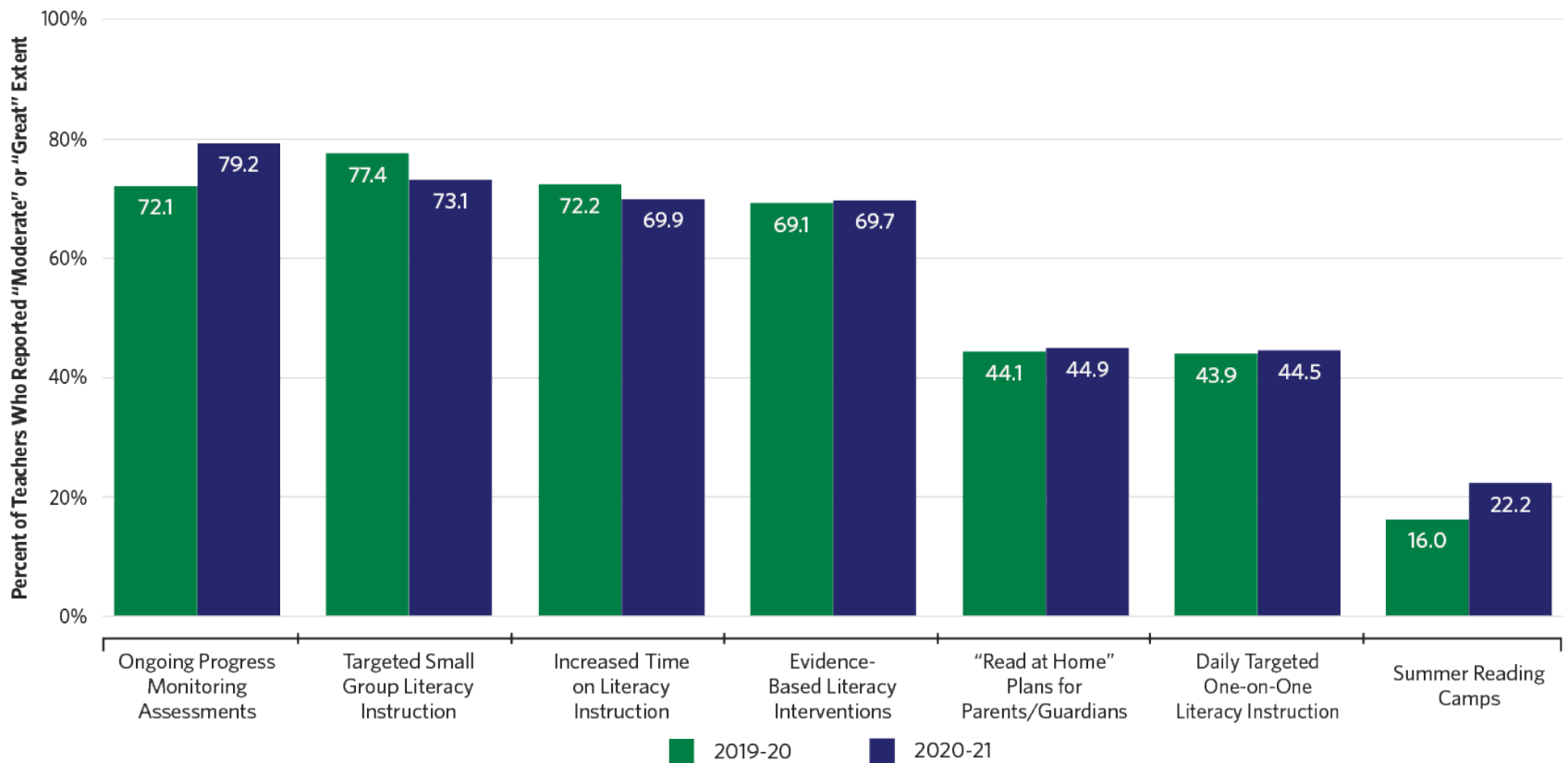
A

- To a Small Extent
- To a Moderate Extent
- To a Great Extent
- Not at All

Implementation of the Read by Grade Three Law

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE READ BY GRADE THREE LAW

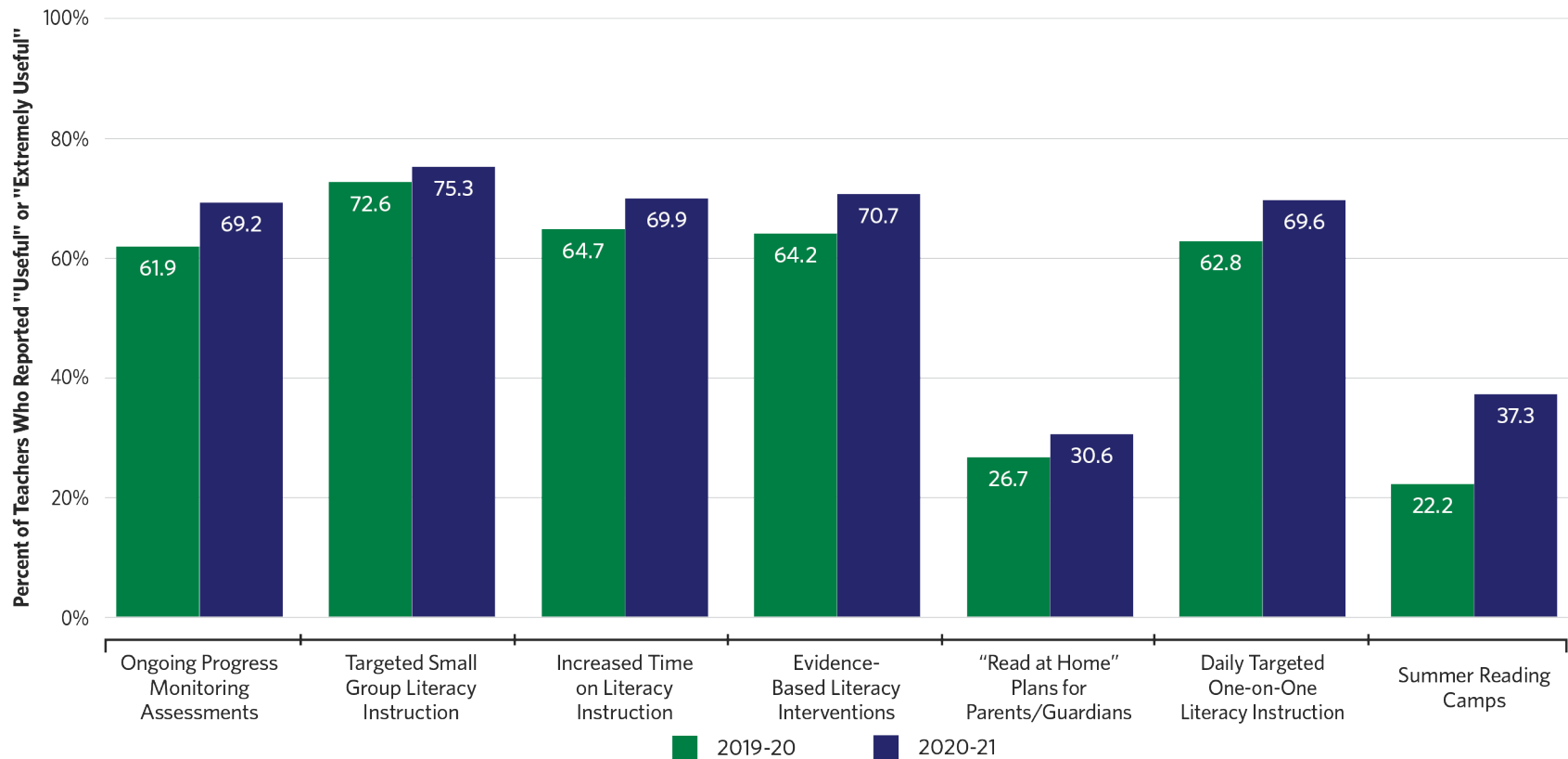
Teachers Continued to Use Many of the Law's Supports



Note: This figure combines results from the 2019-20 survey and the 2020-21 survey. In both surveys, teachers and principals were asked, "To what extent are you using the following interventions when you work with students who are identified as having a 'reading deficiency?'" The available options varied slightly across the two different surveys, so only the answers that were directly comparable are represented here. On the 2020-21 survey, options included "Diagnostic and screening assessments" and "Supplemental evidence based-reading intervention." Source: EPIC survey of educators about the Read by Grade Three Law.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE READYBY GRADE THREE LAW

Teachers Continued to Perceive Many of the Law's Supports as Effective



Note: This figure combines results from the 2019-20 survey and the 2020-21 survey. In both years, teachers were asked, "If you use [the literacy support], how useful is it in improving students' literacy?" The available options varied slightly across the two surveys, so only the answers that were directly comparable are represented here. On the 2020-21 survey, options included "Diagnostic and screening assessments" and "Supplemental evidence based-reading intervention."

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE READ BY GRADE THREE LAW

Fiscal and Human Capital Constraints Continued to Hinder Implementation

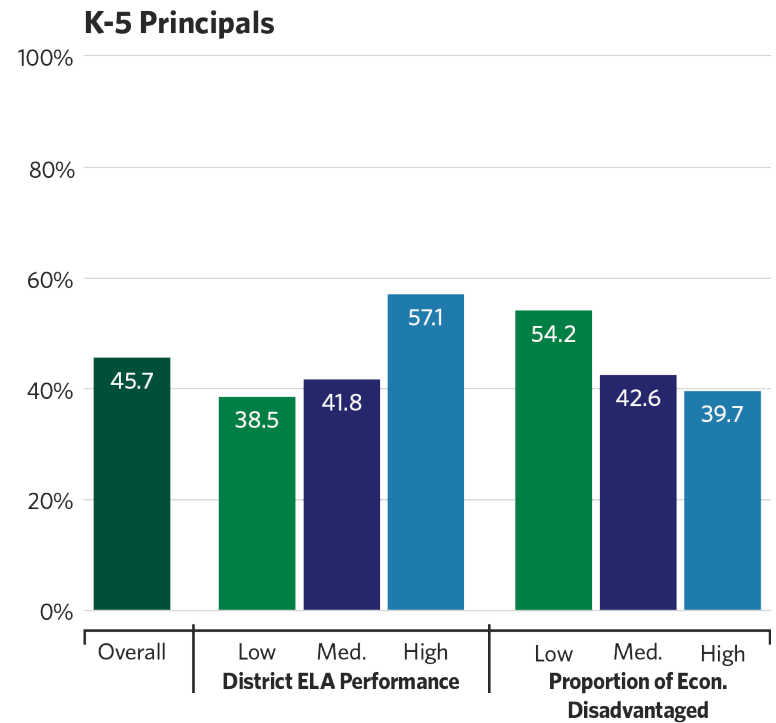
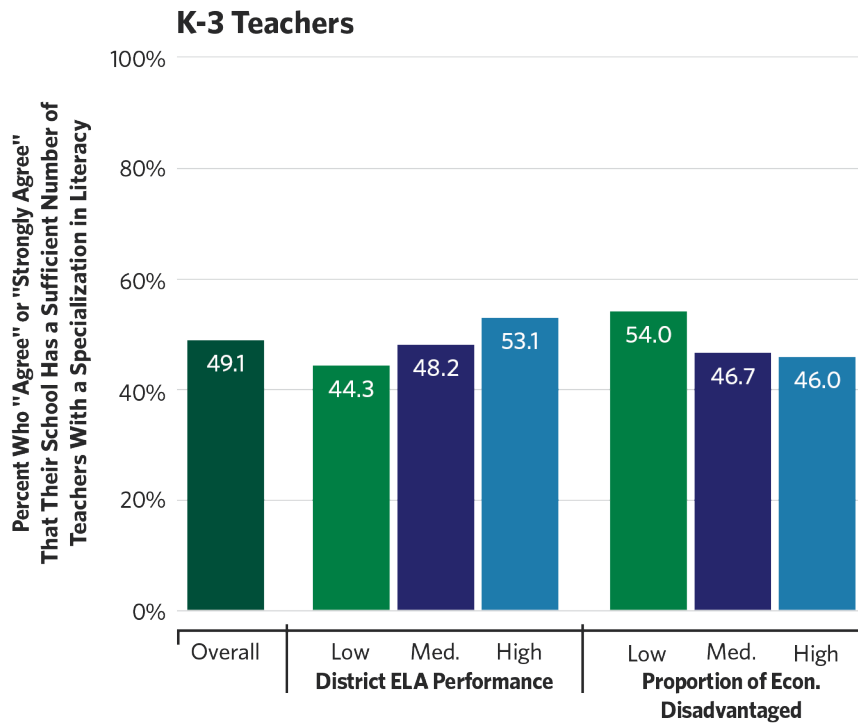
Most schools are not properly staffed with support staff to help implement—full implementation of intervention programs. Money should be provided to these schools to support this if you are making a law that all children should pass. Seems silly to expect something of districts when lack of funding makes it impossible to reach these goals.

– Educator response to the final EPIC survey question

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE READ BY GRADE THREE LAW

Fiscal and Human Capital Constraints Continued to Hinder Implementation

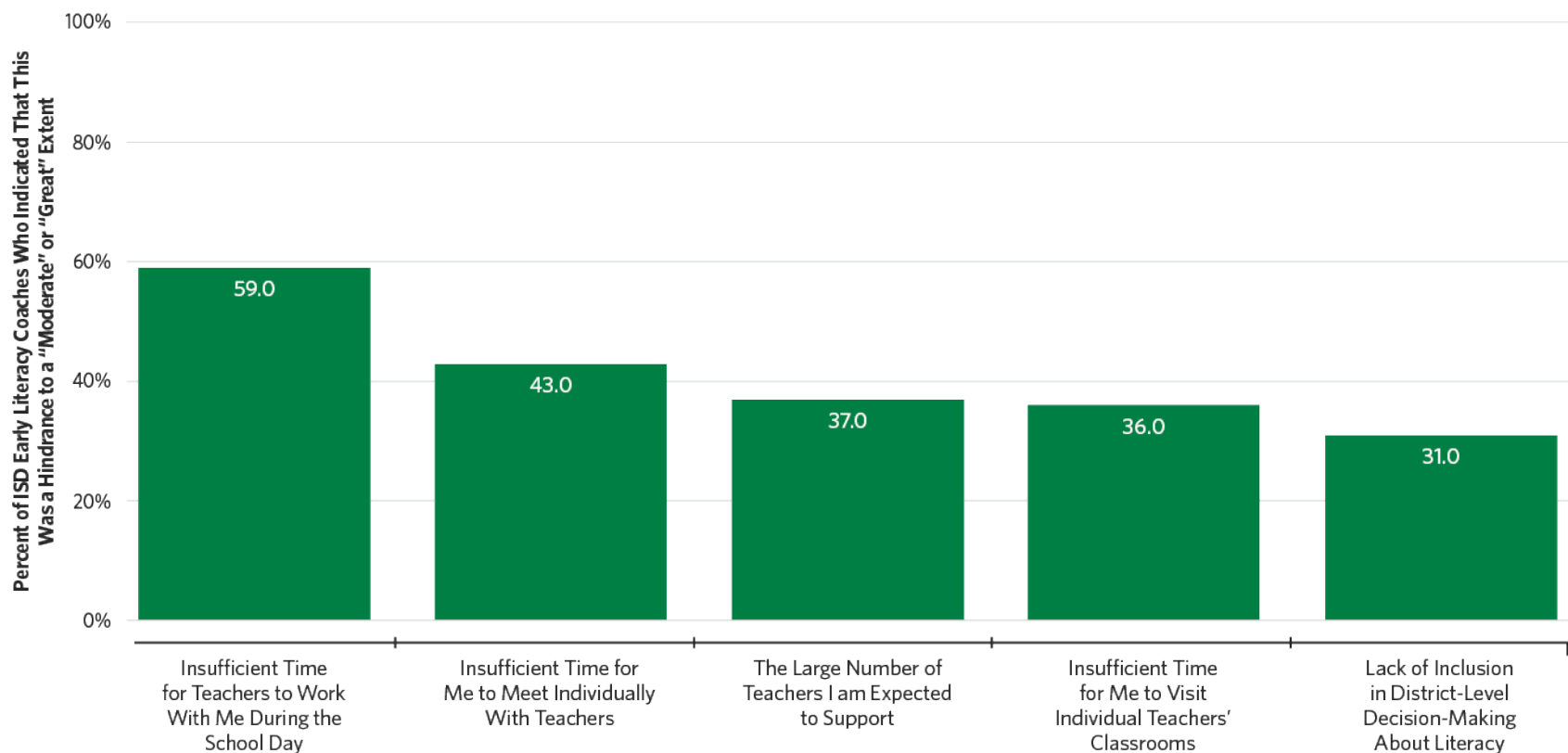
My school has a sufficient number of teachers with a specialization in literacy...



IMPLEMENTATION OF THE READ BY GRADE THREE LAW

Fiscal and Human Capital Constraints Continued to Hinder Implementation

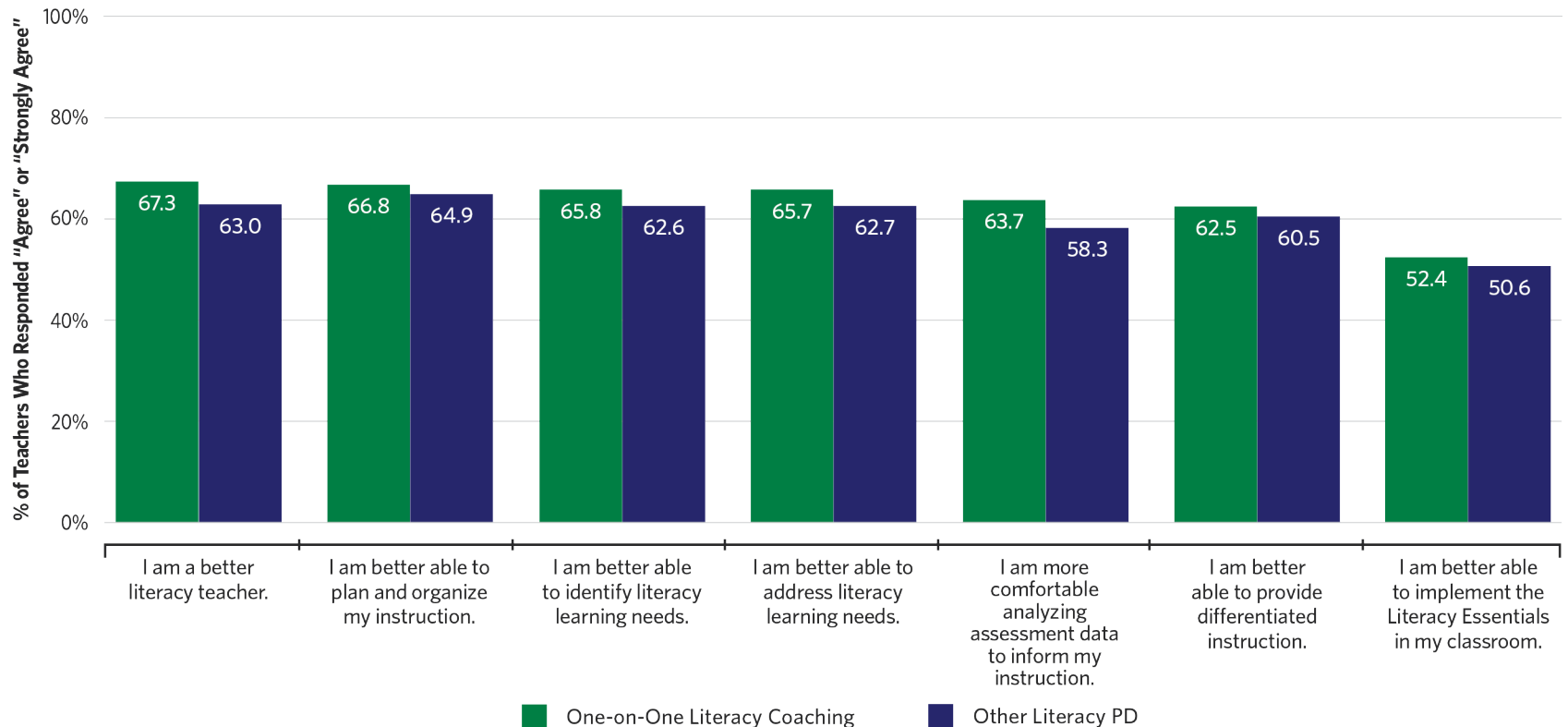
To what extent is each a hindrance to your work as an ISD Early Literacy Coach?...



IMPLEMENTATION OF THE READ BY GRADE THREE LAW

Most K-3 Teachers Believed Professional Development Helped Them Improve Their Practice

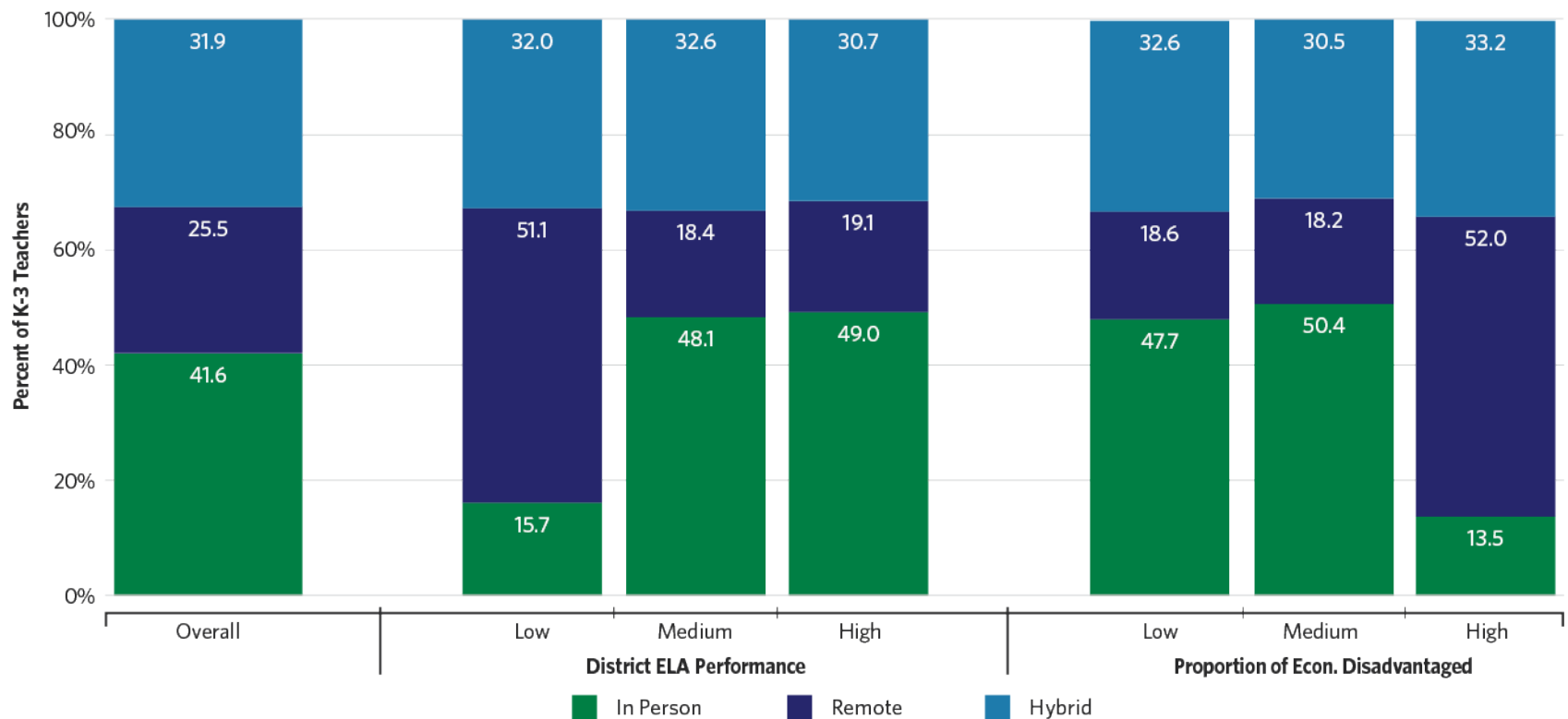
To what extent do you agree that these aspects of 1:1 literacy coaching and/or professional development received this year affected your literacy instruction?



How did the COVID-19 Pandemic Affect Implementation of the Read by Grade Three Law?

COVID-19 AFFECTED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAW

Most Educators Reported Delivering Instruction Remotely at Least Part of the Time in 2020-21



Note: In our survey, "Hybrid" is defined as "...both in person and remote, including livestreaming." Teachers were asked, "In what format have you primarily delivered instruction for the majority of the 2020-21 school year?"

COVID-19 AFFECTED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAW

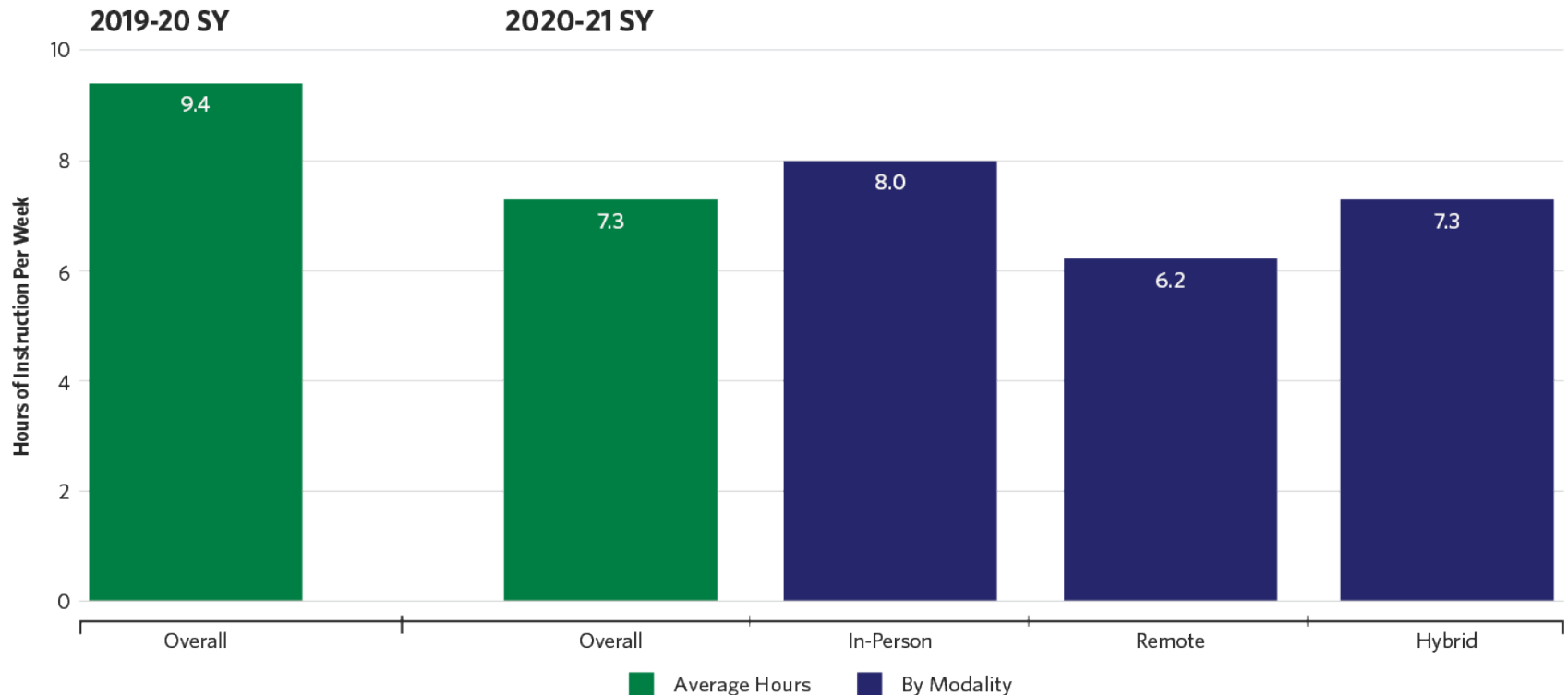
The Pandemic Made it Difficult for K-3 Teachers to Provide Literacy Instruction and Interventions



Note: Teachers were asked, "We want to better understand how COVID-19 may have affected your or your school's ability to deliver literacy instruction and implement the Read by Grade Three Law. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?" Questions specifically about the challenges of remote settings were only asked to teachers who reported primarily remote or hybrid instruction. Questions specifically about in-person settings were only asked to teachers who reported primarily in-person or hybrid instruction.

COVID-19 AFFECTED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAW

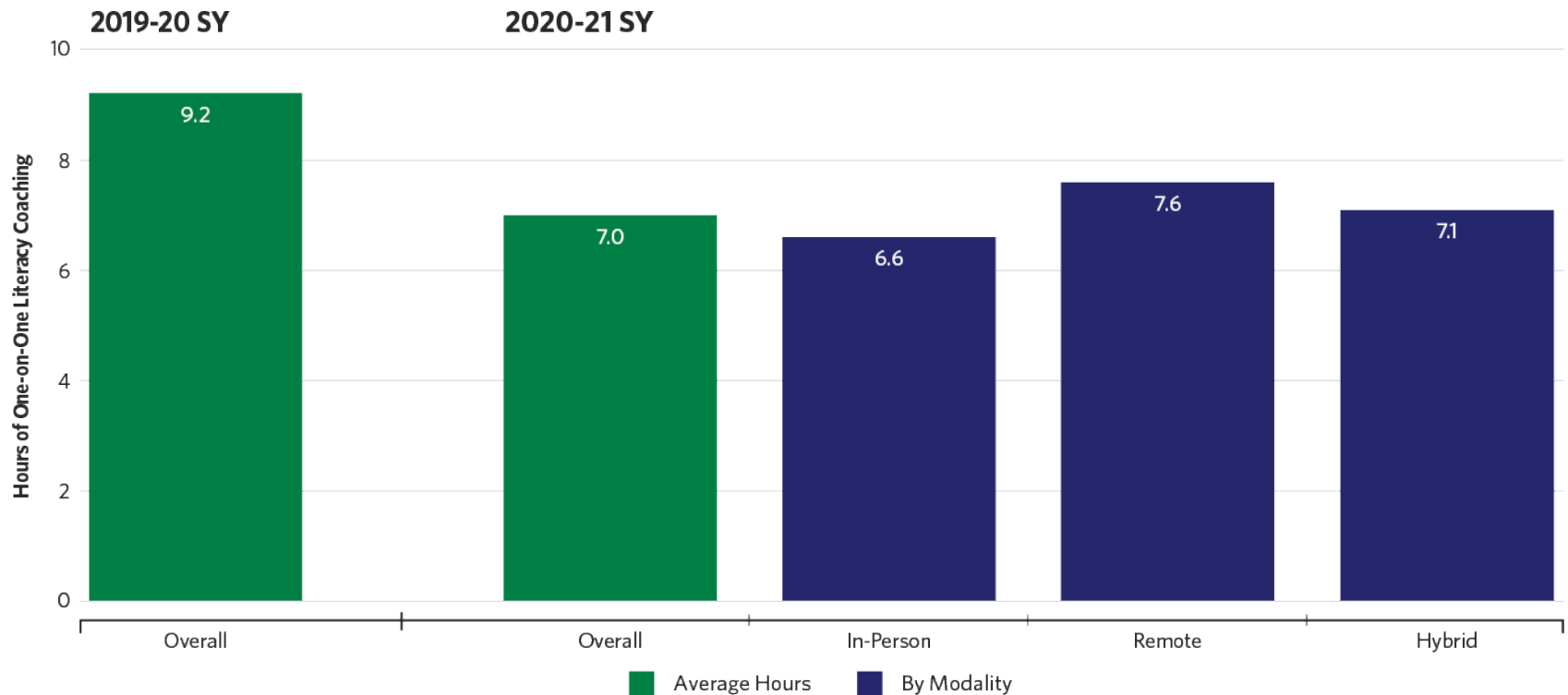
Educators Report Spending Less Time on Instruction During the 2020-21 School Year



Note: In the 2020-21 survey, teachers were asked, "How much time do you currently spend on instruction in each of the following content areas in a typical week? How has the amount of time you spend on instruction in each of these areas changed since last year? If you do not know the exact number, please use your best estimate. If you do not teach a given content area, please enter a zero (0)." In the 2019-20 survey, teachers were asked, "How much time do you spend on literacy instruction (i.e., reading and writing) in a typical week? Please round to the nearest half-hour interval."

COVID-19 AFFECTED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAW

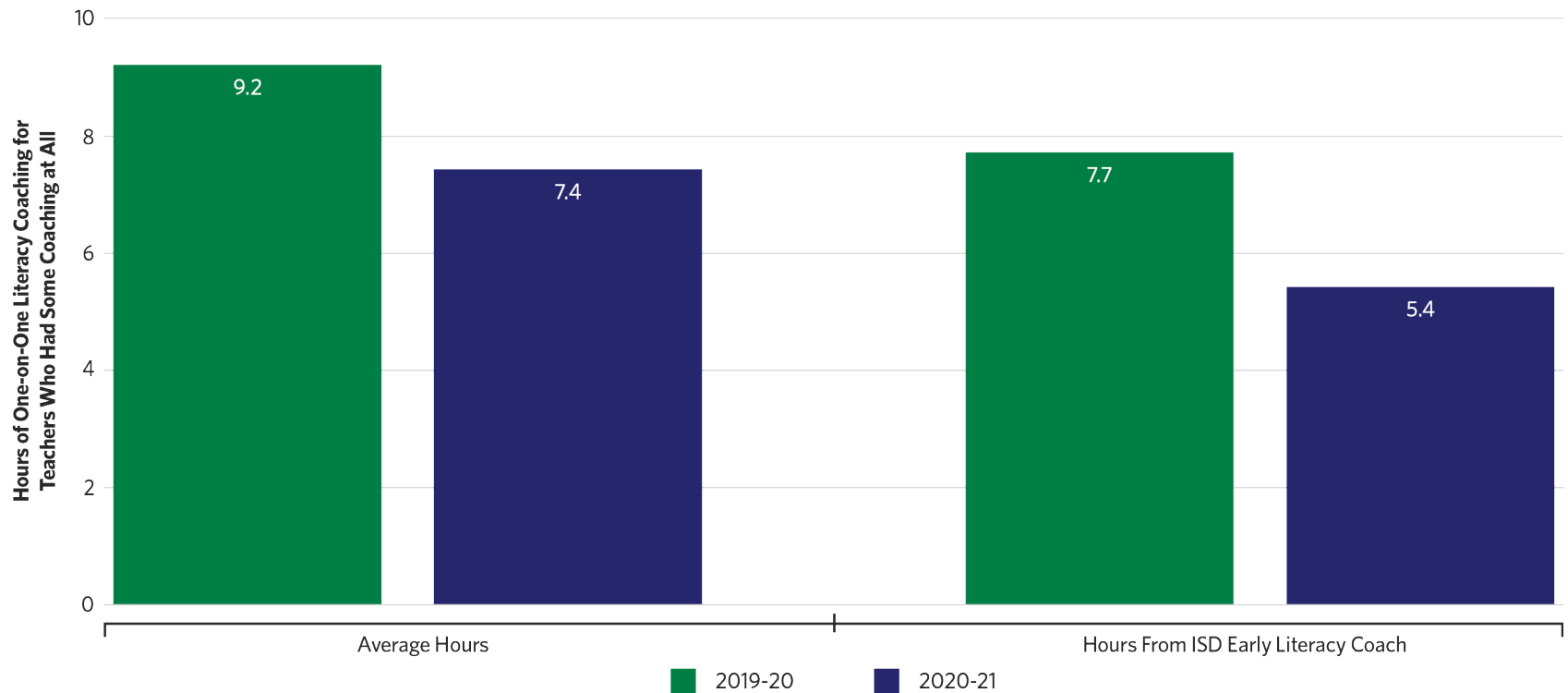
K-3 Teachers Received Less One-On-One Literacy Coaching During the 2020-21 School Year



Note: Teachers were asked, "Since the beginning of the school year, approximately how many hours of one-on-one literacy coaching have you received?"

COVID-19 AFFECTED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAW

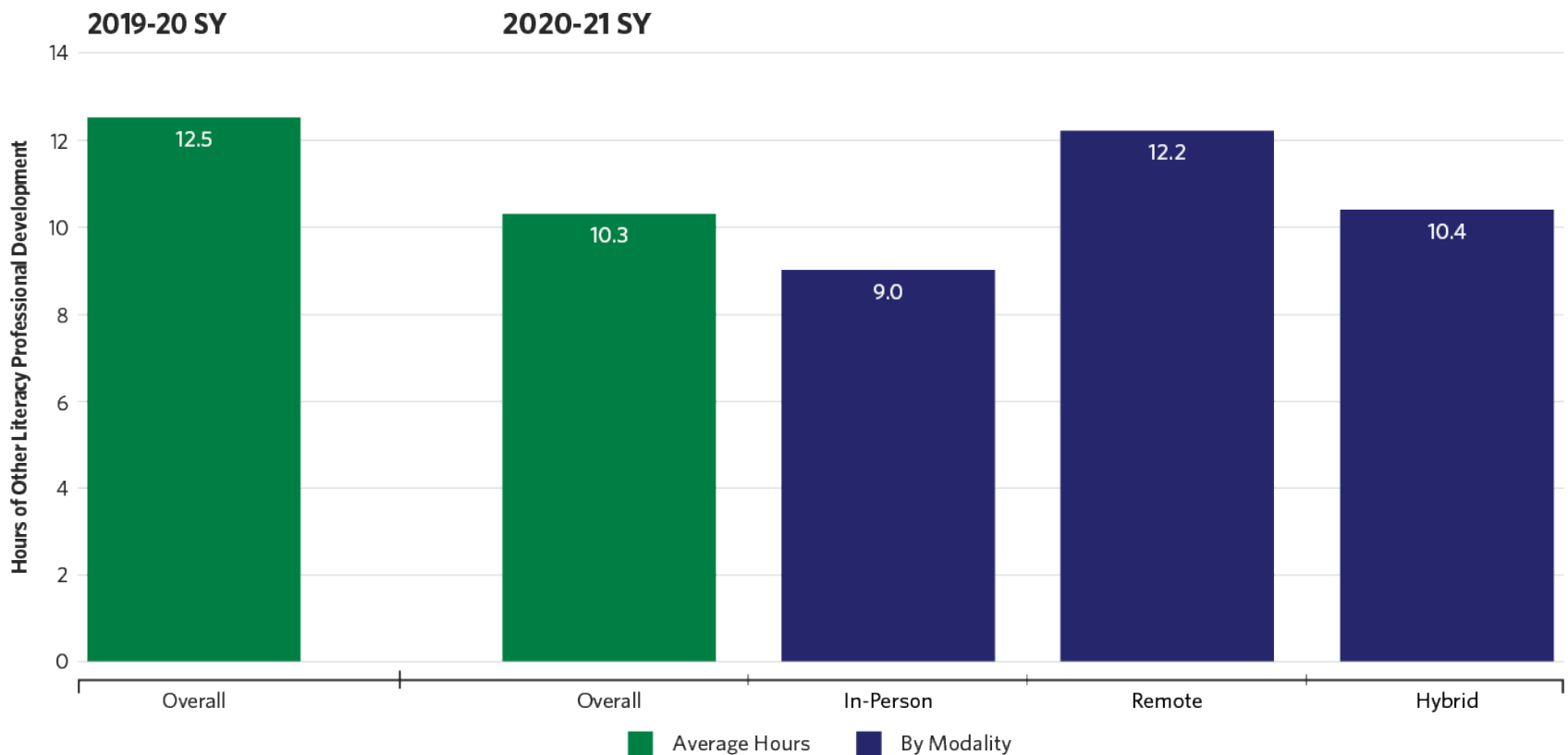
Teachers Received Less One-On-One Literacy Coaching Particularly from ISD Early Literacy Coaches



Note: teachers who indicated that they received one-on-one literacy coaching were asked, "Since the beginning of the school year, approximately how many hours of one-on-one literacy coaching have you received? Approximately how many of these hours were provided by the ISD Early Literacy Coach? Please round to the nearest half-hour interval. If you do not know the exact number, please use your best estimate."

COVID-19 AFFECTED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAW

Teachers Received Less Other Literacy Professional Development During the 2020-21 School Year

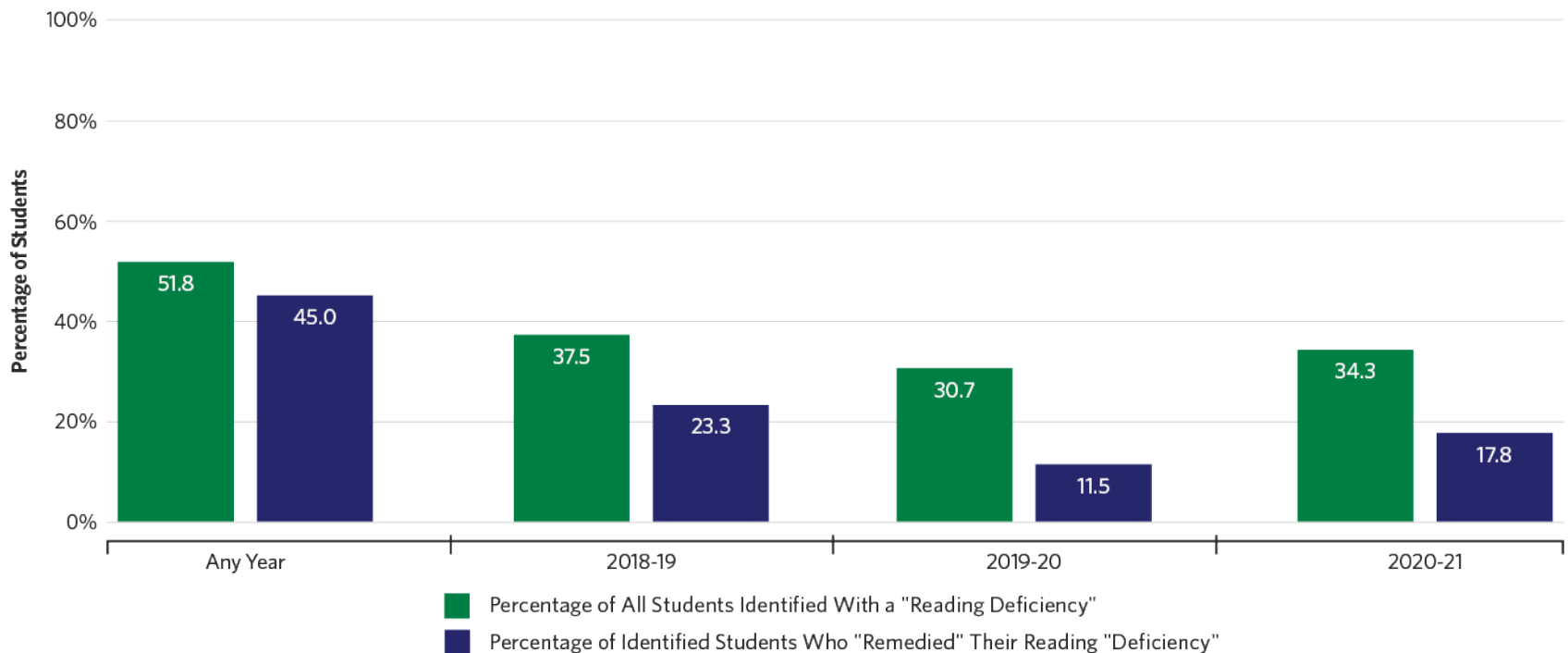


Note: Teachers were asked, "Teachers were asked, 'Since the beginning of the school year, about how many hours of other literacy professional development have you received?'"

Early Identification, Remediation, and Retention Under the Law

EARLY IDENTIFICATION, REMEDIATION, AND RETENTION UNDER THE LAW

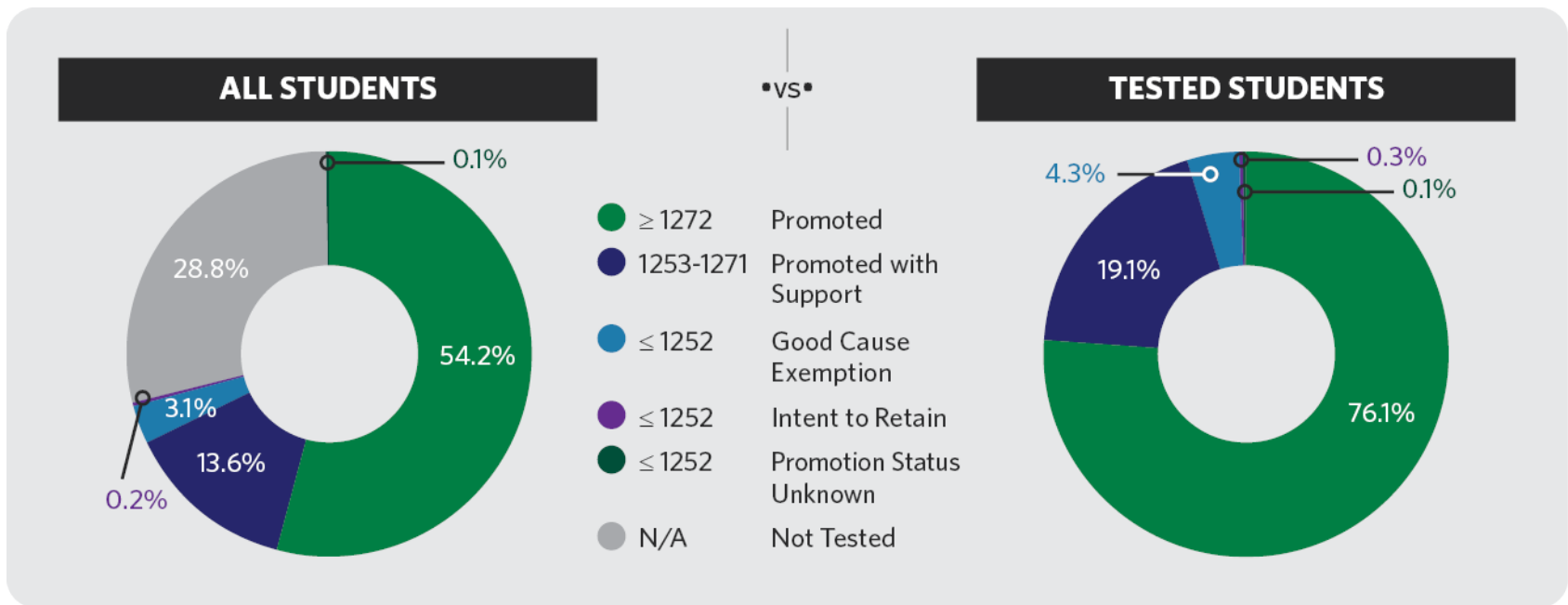
More Than One-Half of 2020-21 3rd-Graders Were Identified As Having a “Reading Deficiency” at Some Point Between 1st and 3rd Grade



Note: Data are derived from student-level administrative records for the cohort of students in 3rd grade in 2020-21. This cohort is tracked from 2018-19 to 2020-21. A student remedied their “reading deficiency” if they are no longer flagged as having a “reading deficiency” in the spring of a given year. For the green bars, the y-axis is the percentage of all students who were identified with a “reading deficiency.” For the blue bars, the y-axis is the percentage of identified students who “remediated” their “reading deficiency.”

EARLY IDENTIFICATION, REMEDIATION, AND RETENTION UNDER THE LAW

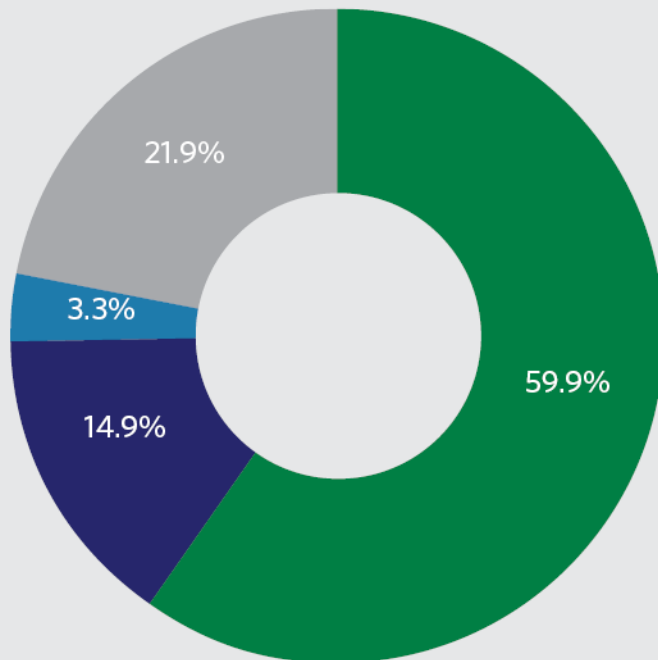
Relatively Few Students Were Eligible for Retention at the End of 2020-21 and Districts Planned to Retain Even Fewer



Note: End-of-Year retention outcomes are based on participation and scores on the 2020-21 third-grade ELA M-STEP. All students who score at or below 1252 were eligible for retention under the Read by Grade Three Law. The left panel includes all third-grade students and the right panel includes only tested students. Students who scored between 1253 and 1271, inclusive, were not eligible for retention under the Law but were recommended additional literacy support. Students who scored at or above 1272 were not eligible for retention under the law. The percentages shown may not sum to exactly 100% due to rounding.

EARLY IDENTIFICATION, REMEDIATION, AND RETENTION UNDER THE LAW

Most Districts Promoted all Eligible Students, but Districts Differed in the Proportion Retained at the End of 2020-21

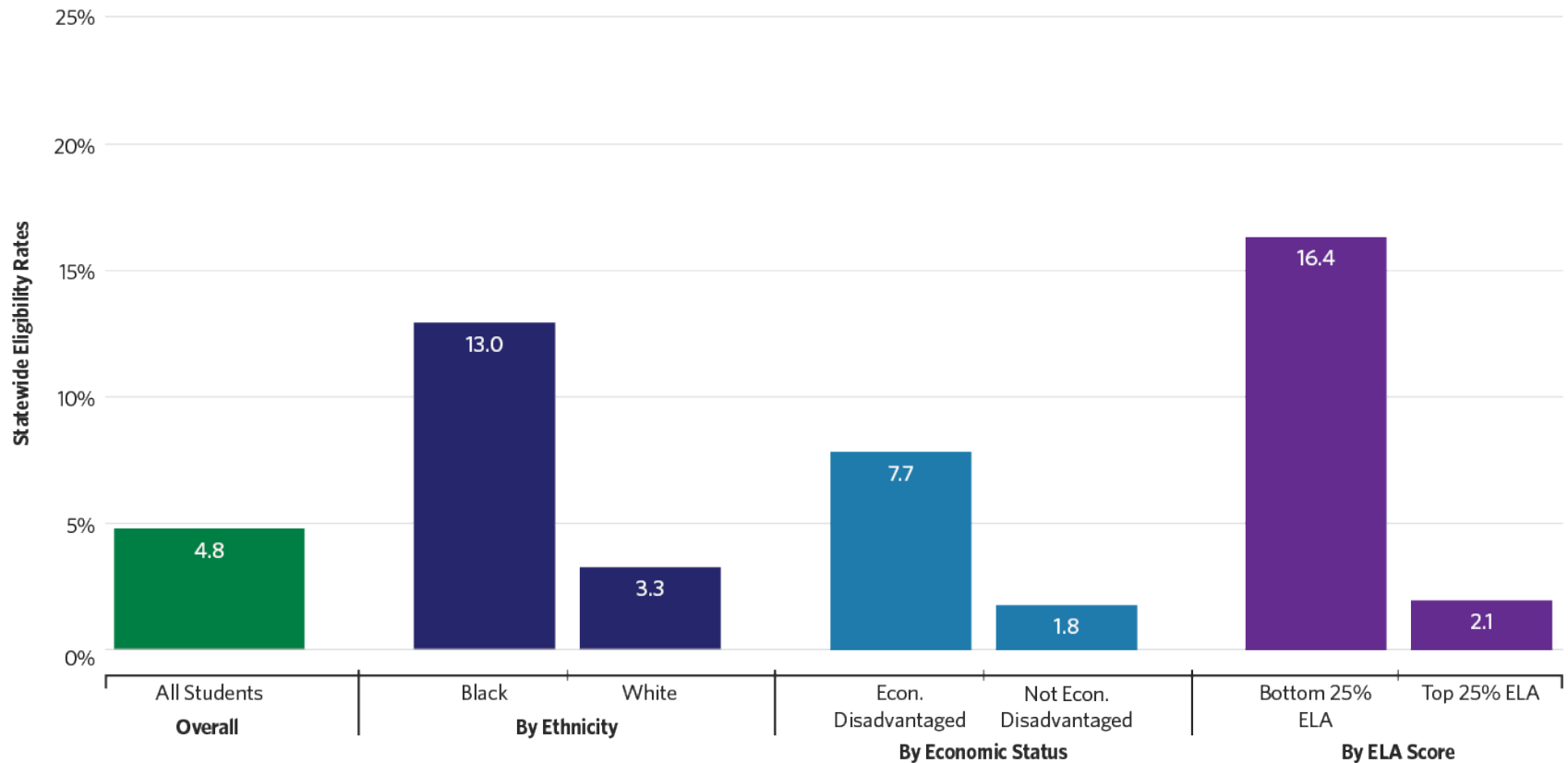


BREAKDOWN BY DISTRICT

- Promote All Eligible Students
- Retain Some Eligible Students
- Retain All Eligible Students
- No Students Eligible for Retention

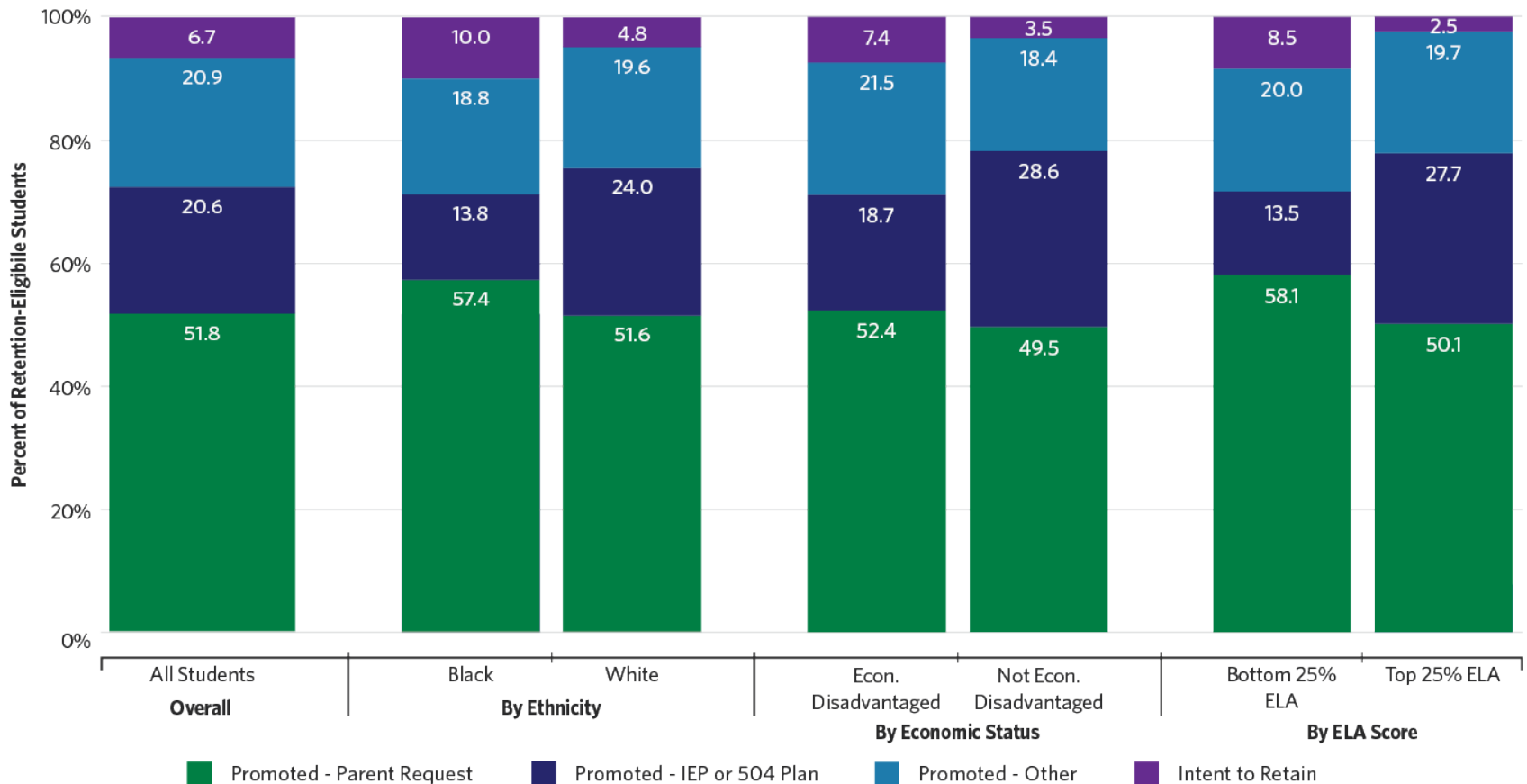
EARLY IDENTIFICATION, REMEDIATION, AND RETENTION UNDER THE LAW

There Were Significant Disparities in the Proportion of Retention-Eligible Students Across Groups



EARLY IDENTIFICATION, REMEDIATION, AND RETENTION UNDER THE LAW

The Types of Good Cause Exemptions Granted Varied by Student Group



Note: These are percentages of retention-eligible third-grade students. The Ns refer to the total number of retention-eligible third-grade students associated with each group. The percentages shown may not sum to exactly 100% due to rounding.

Key Takeaways and Policy Implications

KEY TAKEAWAYS



ELA M-STEP scores and subscores from before the pandemic suggest improvements in ELA achievement.

- Most teachers do not believe the Law has effectively improved students' literacy skills.



Educators continued to have positive perceptions of many of the Law's supports.



Resource constraints continued to encumber the Law's implementation.



Most K-3 teachers who received coaching and professional development thought it improved their practice.

- Teachers received less literacy professional development during the 2020-21 school year.

KEY TAKEAWAYS



K-3 teachers reported spending less time on literacy instruction during the 2020-21 school year.

- They felt that the pandemic negatively affected their ability to provide literacy instruction and interventions.

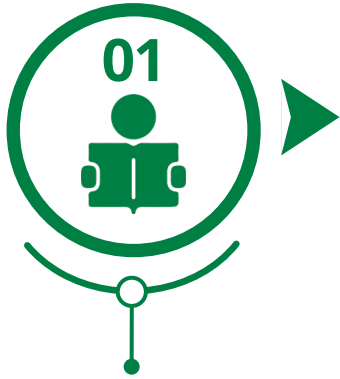


More than one-half of 3rd-grade students in 2020-21 school were identified with a “reading deficiency” at some point between 1st and 3rd grade.

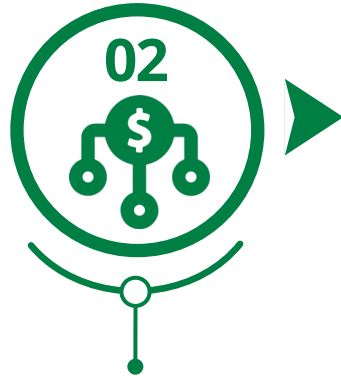


While relatively few students were eligible for retention at the end of 2020-21, and districts planned to retain even fewer, there were significant disparities in retention outcomes across groups of students.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS



Continue to improve Tier I literacy instruction so that fewer students require intervention.



Provide additional funding for literacy professional development and other literacy resources.



Focus on meeting students' literacy needs to address students' missed learning opportunities.



Evaluate district assessments and procedures for identifying students in need of extra literacy supports and help districts align local and state assessments and achievement expectations.



Full report can be found at:
<https://epicedpolicy.org/rbg3-year-two-report/>

Contact info:
kstrunk@msu.edu; tswright@msu.edu; westall2@msu.edu

Education Policy Innovation Collaborative

College of Education | MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

236 Erickson Hall, 620 Farm Lane, East Lansing, MI | (517) 884-0377 | EPICedpolicy@msu.edu