

Welcome!



2026 Research With Consequence Forum

FROM EVIDENCE TO IMPACT IN LITERACY POLICY



Welcome, and Background



MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

Dr. Madeline Mavrogordato
EPIC Director, Michigan State University

THE EPIC APPROACH

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), the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI), local school districts, and Michigan-based organizations.

EPIC is devoted to **research with consequence** and the idea that rigorous evidence can improve education policy and programs, and, ultimately, students' lives.



EPIC conducts **original research** using a variety of methods that include advanced statistical modeling, representative surveys, interviews, and case study approaches to **produce new insights** that decision-makers can use to create and implement policy.



Rigor:

The evidence is credible and trustworthy due to careful research design and robust methods

Relevance:

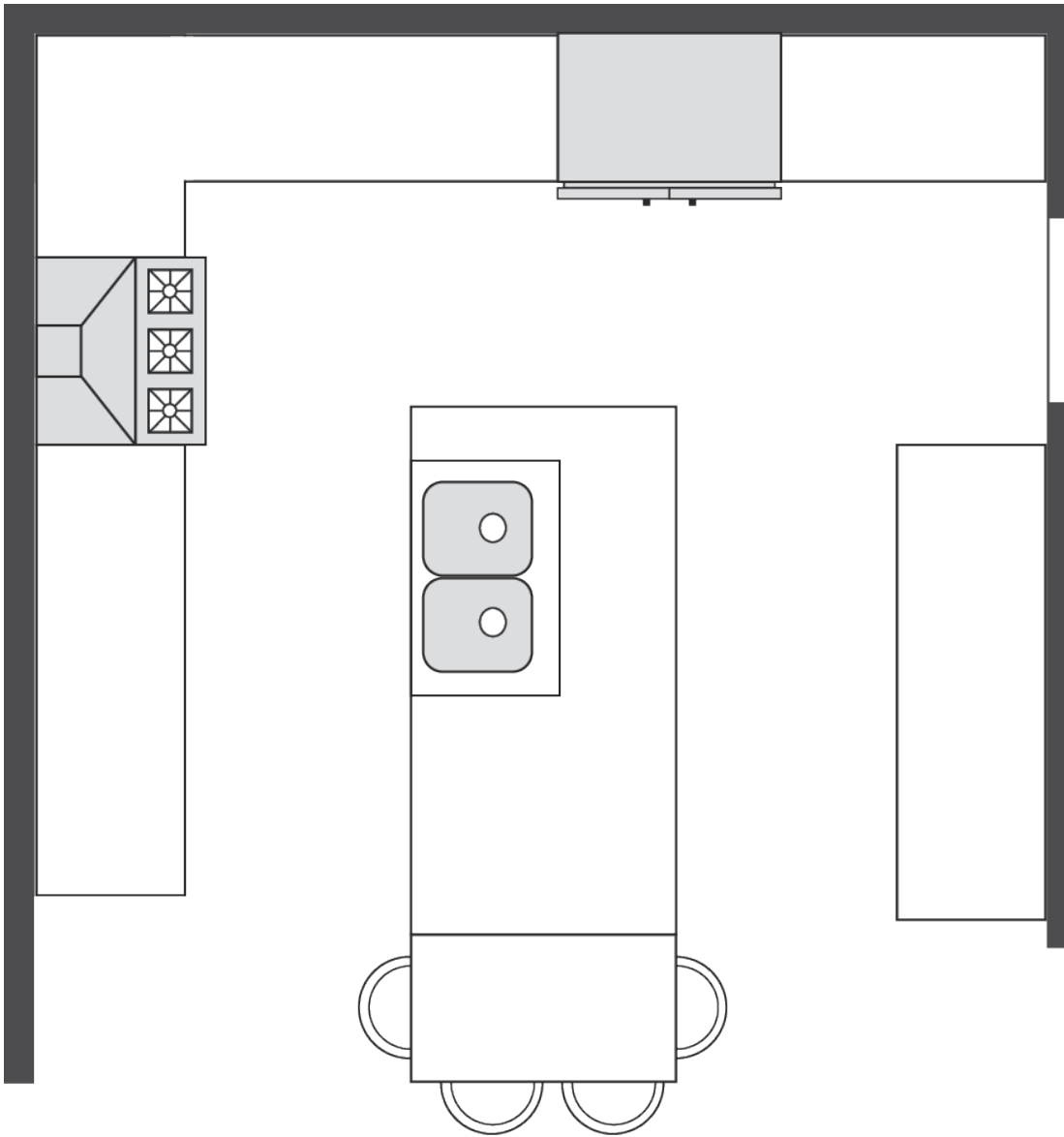
The questions matter in this moment and continue to evolve over time.

Relationships:

The research is connected to people who can use it.

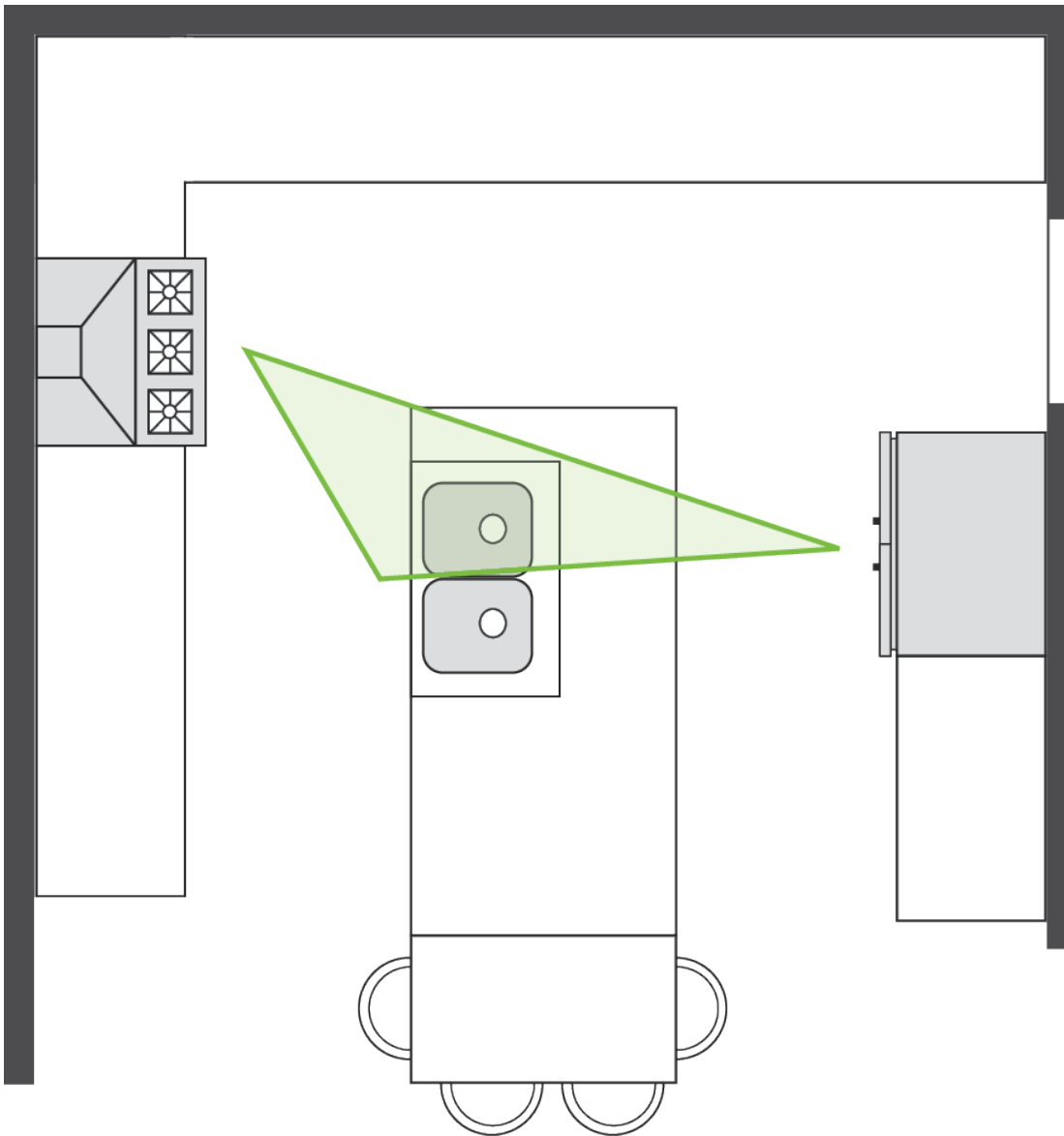


Research With Consequence Forum Goal Illustrated



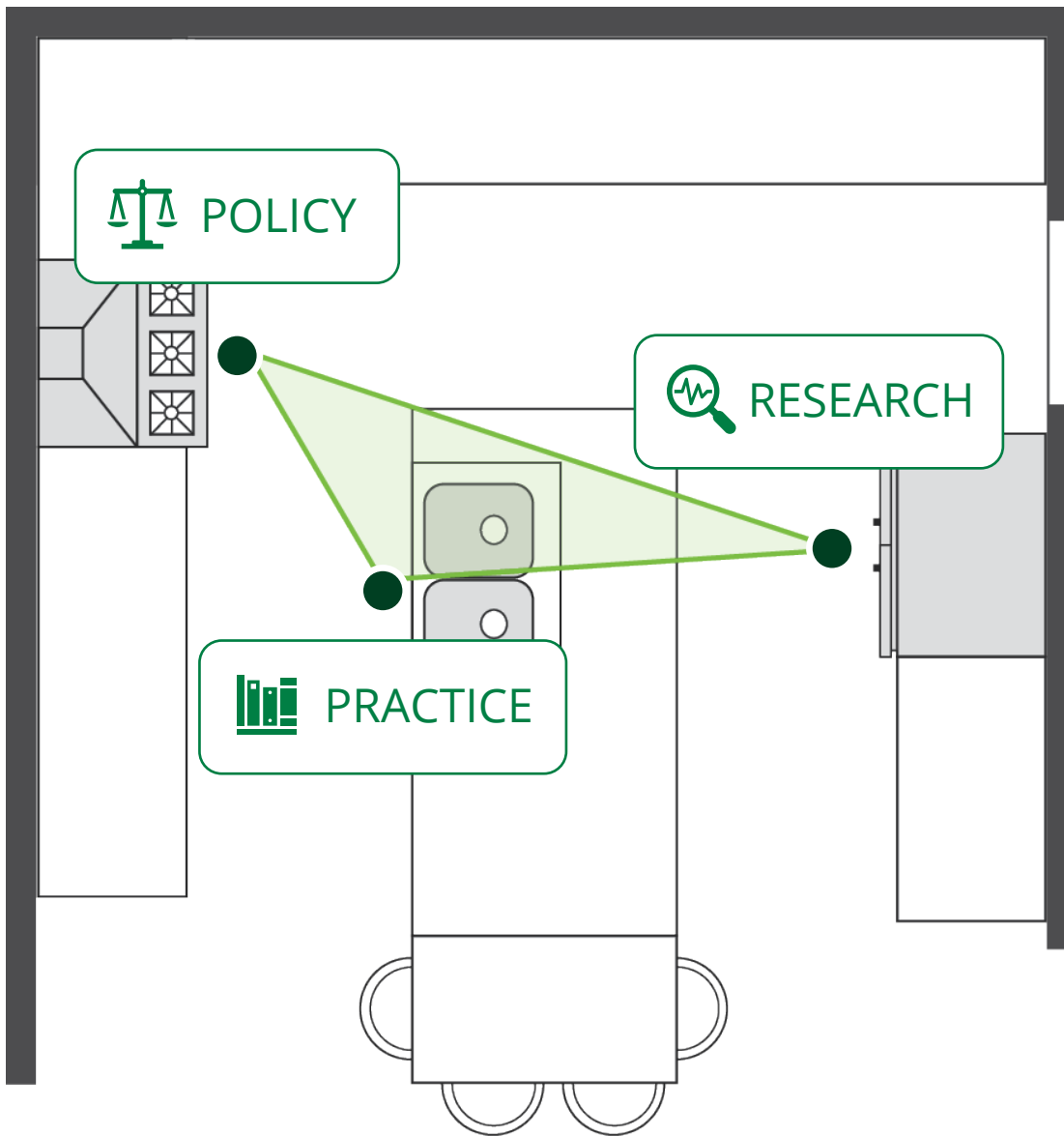
Research With Consequence Forum Goal Illustrated

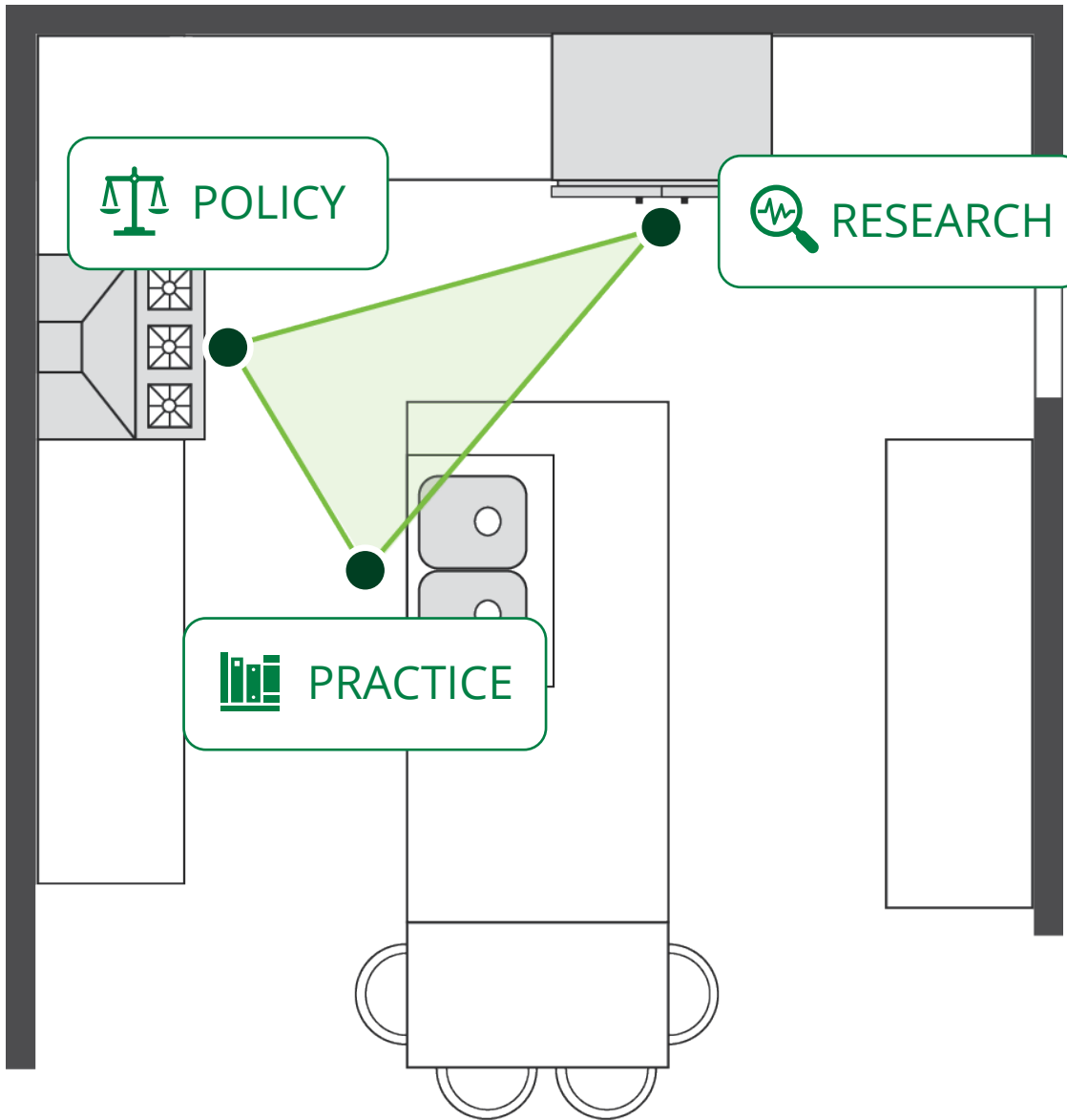
A kitchen work
triangle



Research With Consequence Forum Goal Illustrated

An inefficient work
triangle



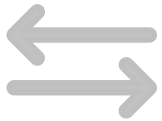


Research With Consequence Forum Goal Illustrated



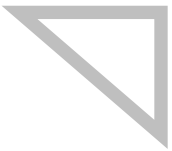
The idea is to reduce unnecessary **distance** between **research**, **practice**, and **policy** to create a smooth, **logical workflow** between zones.

Research With Consequence Forum 2026: Literacy Policy



To bring research closer to policy and practice, our goals are to:

- Share cutting edge research
- Convene stakeholders
- Create conditions needed to support rigorous research
- Build and strengthen the relationships



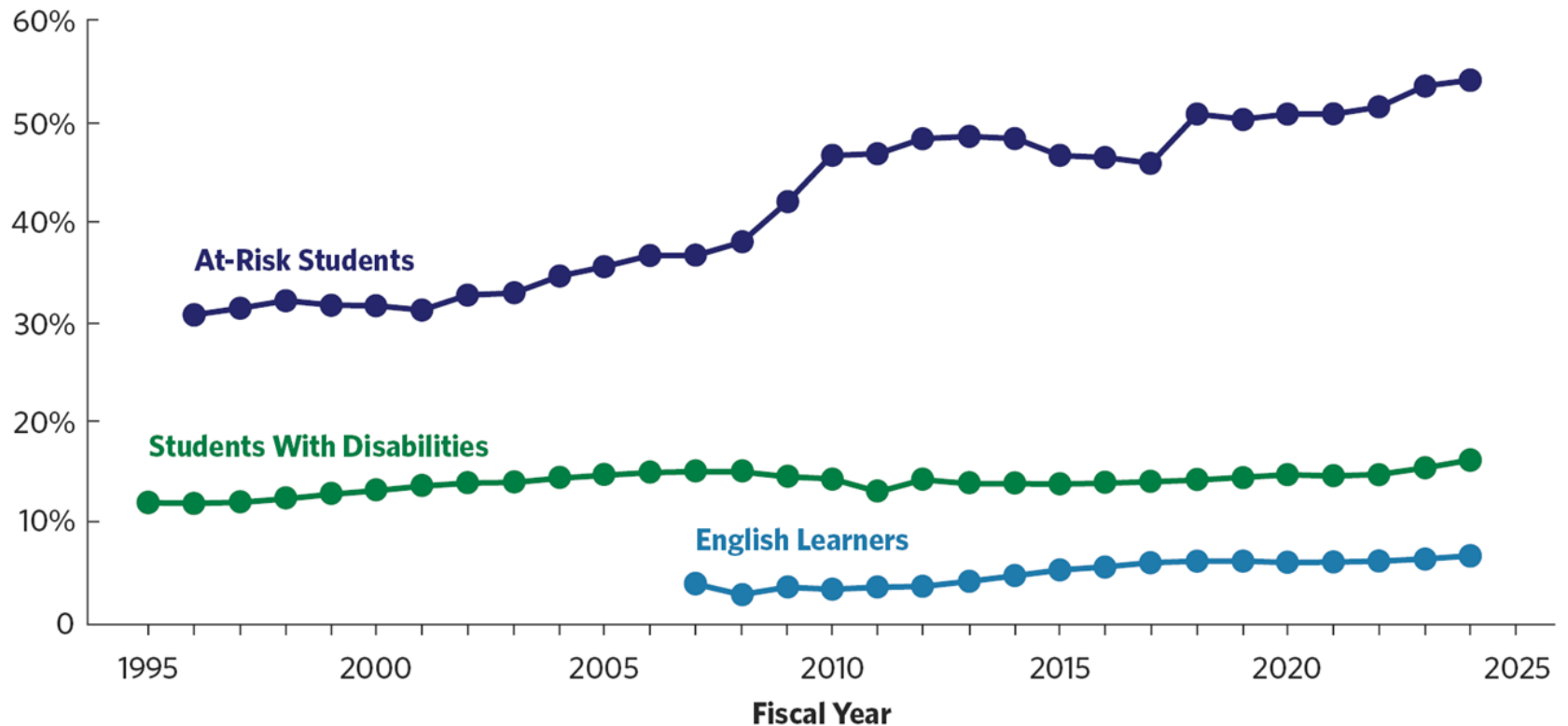
Our goal is to support a more productive work triangle that will lead to improved literacy outcomes in Michigan.

In 2024, the Typical Michigan District was **Half as Large** as the Typical District in 1995 and had just over **Half as Much Revenue**

	1994-95	2001-02	2023-24
Number of Districts	559	735	822
Median # of Students	1,687	1,173	781
Total Revenues (2024\$)	\$25.46M	\$19.48M	\$12.85M
# of Districts With <= 200 Students	40	98	117

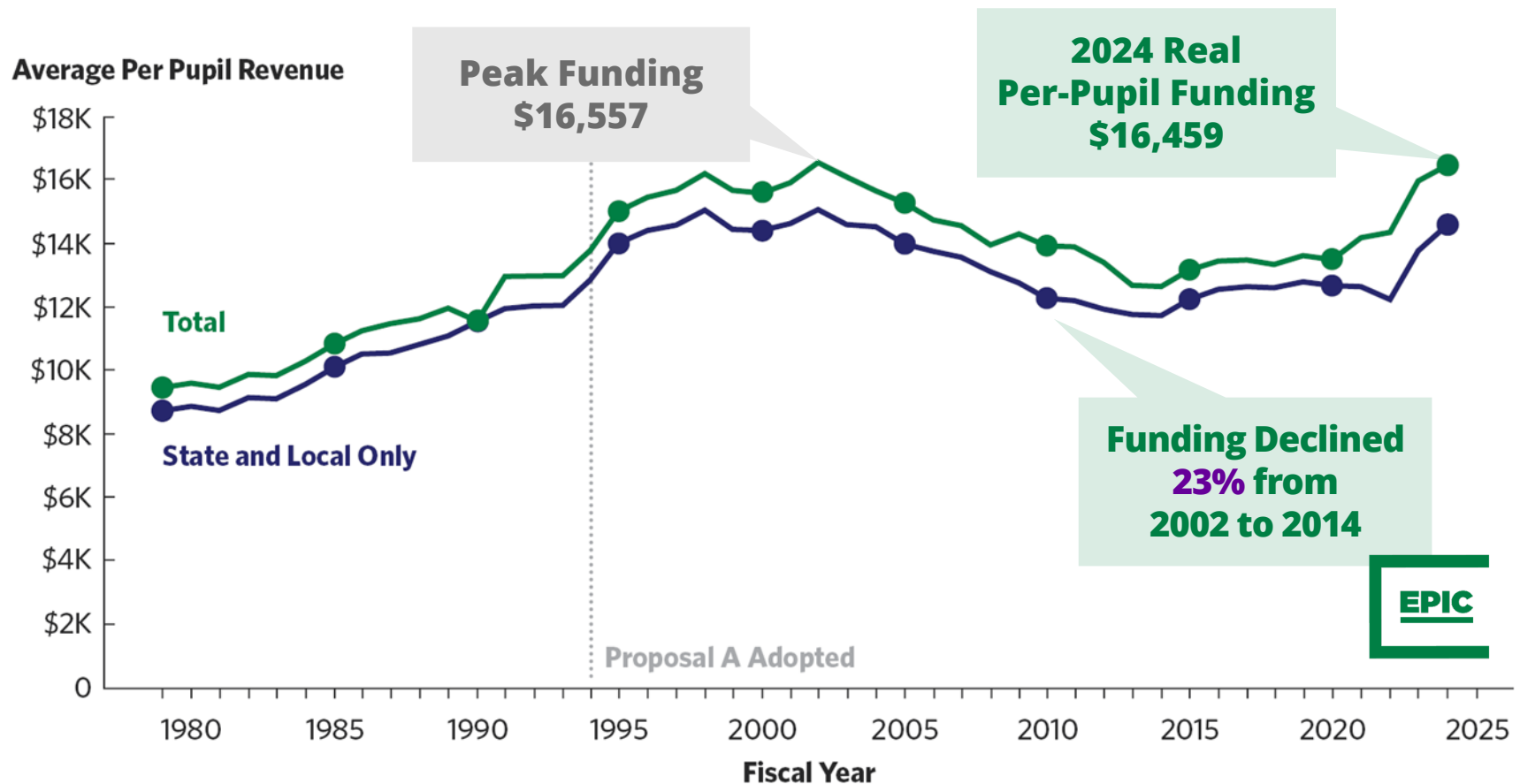
Michigan's Student Body Has **Much Greater Needs** Now Than in the Past

Percent of Total Student Population



Real K-12 Operating Revenues Show Transitions in 2002, 2014, and 2022

Funding increased starting in 2022 but remains below the high point set in 2002.



Changes in Inflation-Adjusted Teacher Compensation Reflect the Shift Away From Instructional Salaries



Through 2008, Michigan's average teacher salary was in the top 10 and often within the top 5.



Teacher salaries peaked in 1995.

If salaries had kept pace with inflation since 1995, the average Michigan teacher would have earned just over \$100K in 2025.



Instead, the average teacher's salary declined by 29%.

What does this mean for literacy policy research?

A strong work triangle between education practice, policy and research is needed more now than ever before to improve literacy in Michigan.



What works, for whom, and under what conditions?



How is literacy policy is being felt and experienced by educators who are our front-line policy implementers?



We need to use research to guide and motivate state investments to improve literacy.



We can learn from other states about improving literacy, but we need to leverage Michigan research to chart our own path.



Agenda

2026 Research With Consequence Forum

- **Remarks:** Dr. Delsa Chapman, MDE
- **Presentation:** Synthesis of Literacy Research Results
- **Activity:** Surfacing Stakeholder Research Priorities
- **Researcher Panel:** Translating Research Priorities into Research Studies
- **Stakeholder Panel:** Takeaways from Today



Lessons from Michigan's Read by Grade Three Law



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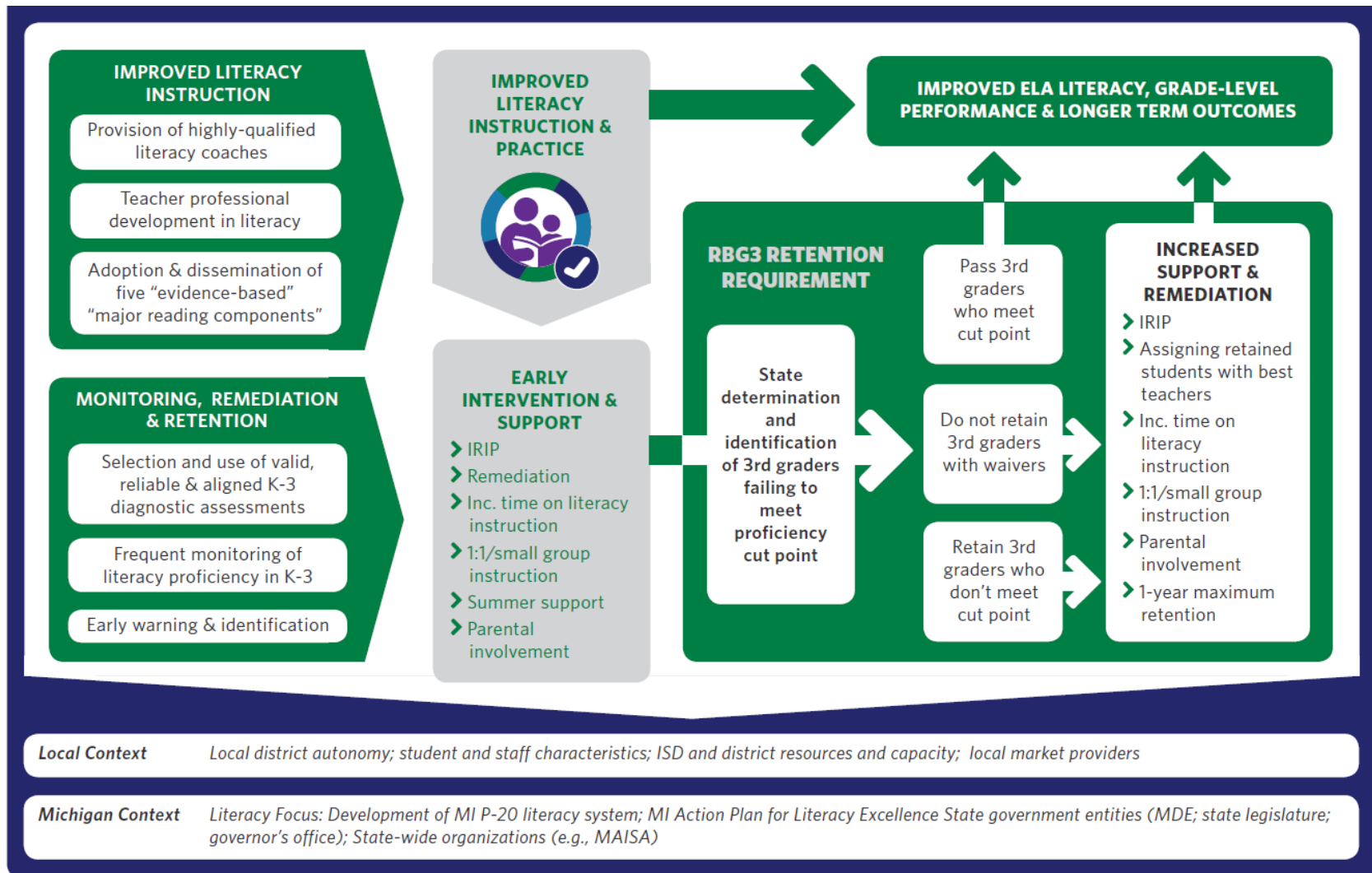
Dr. Tara Kilbride
EPIC Associate Director

Setting the Stage: Why revisit Read by Grade Three?

- Michigan has moved into a new era of literacy policy
- EPIC led a comprehensive multi-year study of the Read by Grade Three (RBG3) Law's implementation and impacts
 - Much of **what we learned from RBG3 is still relevant** in Michigan's current early literacy policy landscape
 - The RBG3 study also serves as an exemplar of how collaborative **research efforts can support evidence-based decision-making** when implementing or revising state-level education policies



About Read by Grade Three: Theory of Change



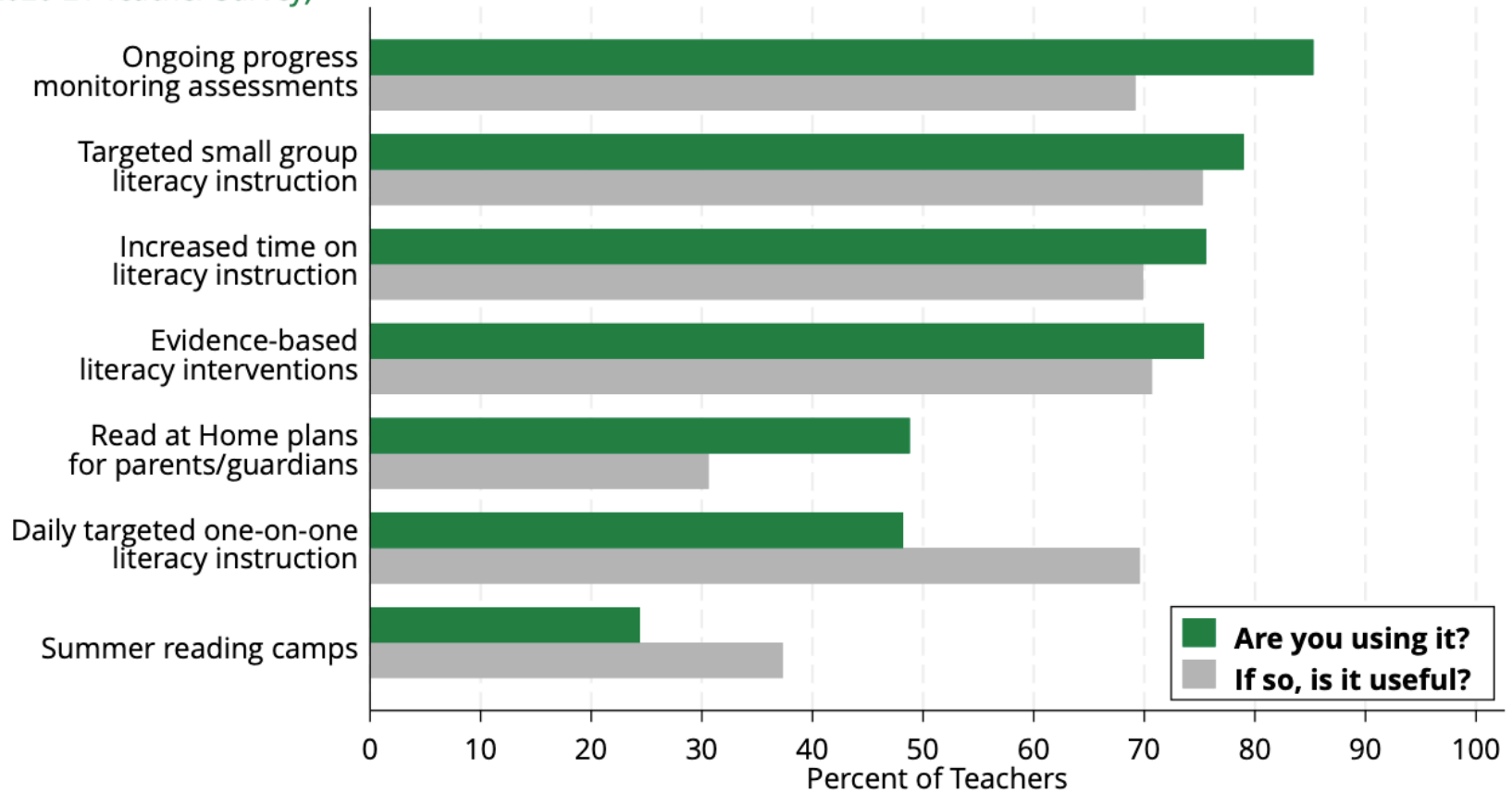
EPIC's Read by Grade Three Study: Data Collection and Analysis

Read by Grade Three Law Evaluation Data Sources

Data Source	Years	Information Collected
Administrative Data	2016-2024	Assessment results, retention eligibility and outcomes, "reading deficiency" identification and interventions, demographics, staffing information
Educator Surveys	2020-2023	Instructional practices and interventions; perceptions, understanding, and implementation of the RBG3 law
Stakeholder Interviews	2019-2021	Policy development, implementation challenges
Classroom Observations	2020-2023	Literacy instructional practices in K-3 classrooms
Implementation Logs	2019-2023	Literacy coaching activities, instructional focus areas, and time allocation

RBG3 Implementation: Use and Usefulness of Literacy Interventions

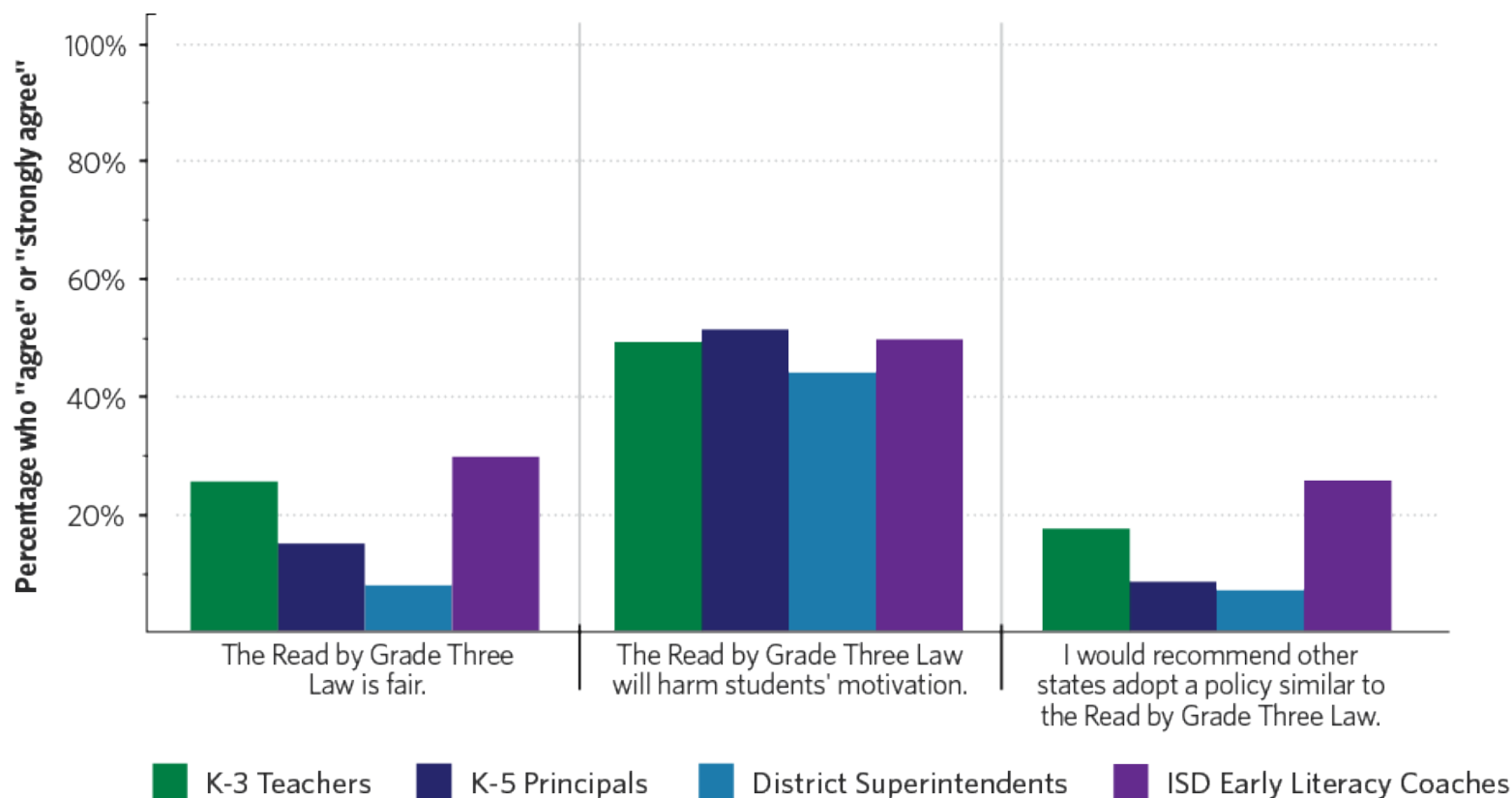
Read by Grade Three Literacy Interventions (2020-21 Teacher Survey)



Strunk, K. O., Wright, T. S., Westall, J., Zhu, Q., Kilbride, T., Cummings, A., Utter, A., & Mavrogordato, M. (February 2022). "Michigan's Read by Grade Three Law: Year Two Report."

RBG3 Implementation: Perceptions of Retention Policy

Most educators felt that the retention component of RBG3 caused stress in the school community and would not be effective in increasing achievement.

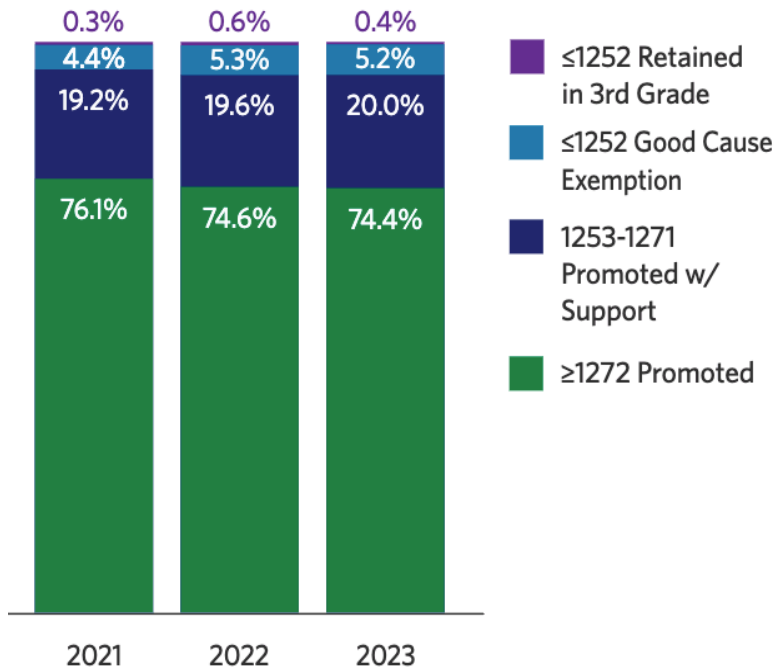


Strunk, K. O., Wright, T. S., Kilbride, T., Zhu, Q., Cummings, A., West, J., Turner, M., & De Voto, C. (March 2021). "Michigan's Read by Grade Three Law: Year One Report."

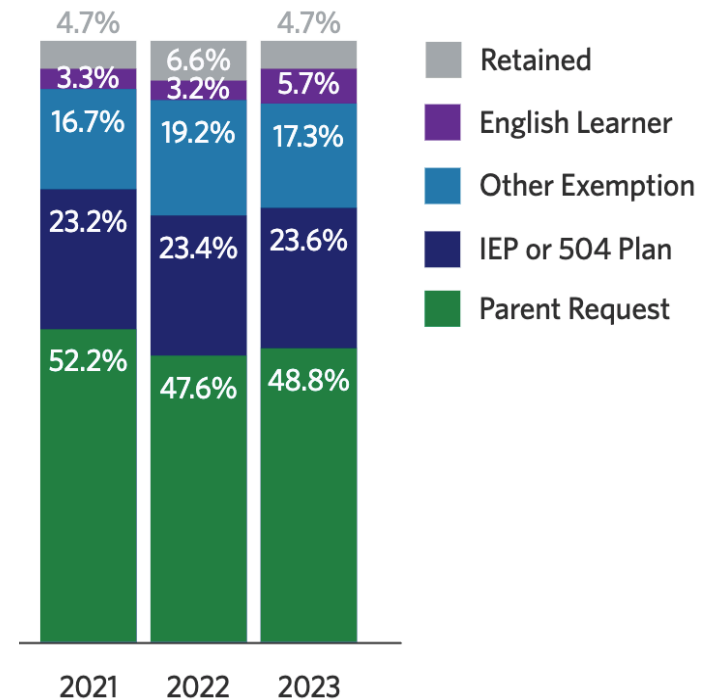
RBG3 Implementation: Retention Eligibility and Exemption Decisions

While 4-6% of students were eligible for retention each year, more than 90% of these students received exemptions, often through parent requests.

M-STEP Score Ranges and Retention Outcomes



Exemption Decisions for Retention-Eligible Students

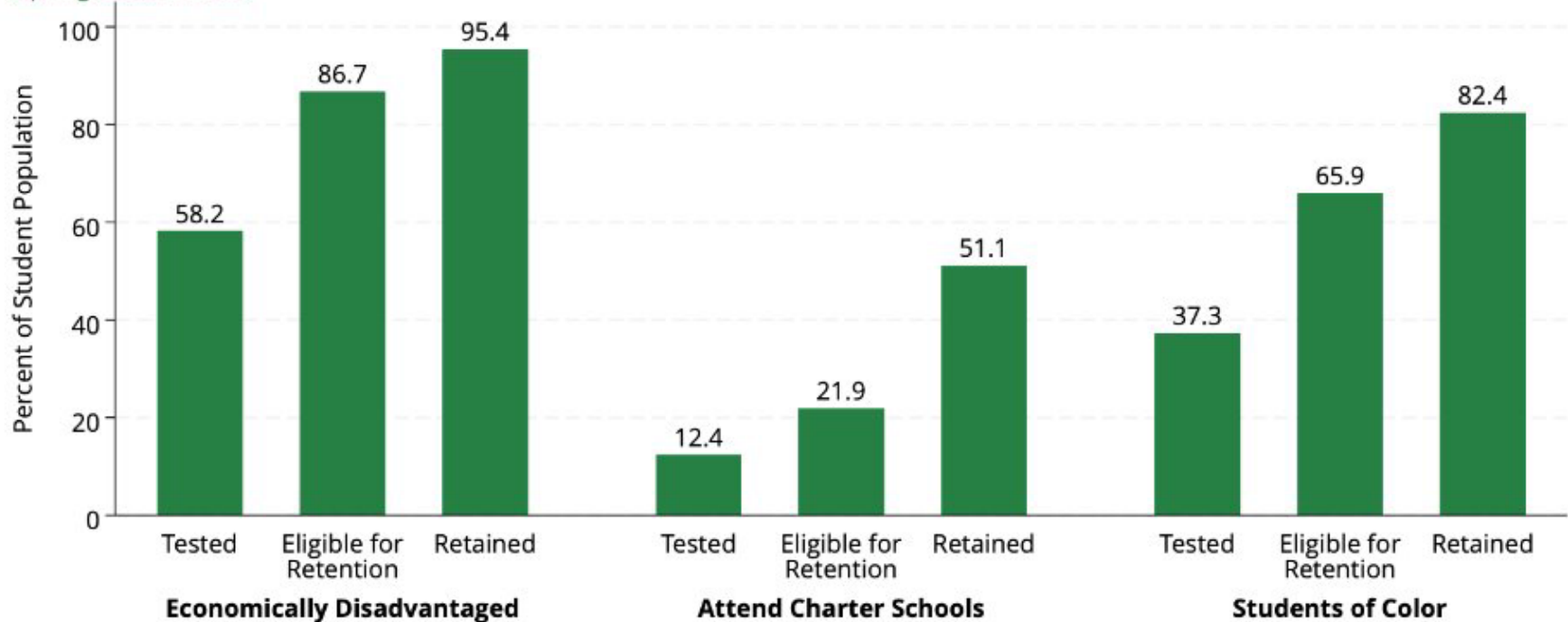


Kilbride, T., Nadal-Fernandez, J. M., & Walker, S. (June 2024). "Retention and Exemption Decisions Under the Read by Grade Three Law."

RBG3 Implementation: Disparate Impacts of Retention Policy

Economically disadvantaged students, charter school students, and students of color were far more likely than other eligible students to be retained under the RBG3 policy.

Subgroup Representation Among Tested, Retention-Eligible, and Retained Students
(Spring 2023 M-STEP)

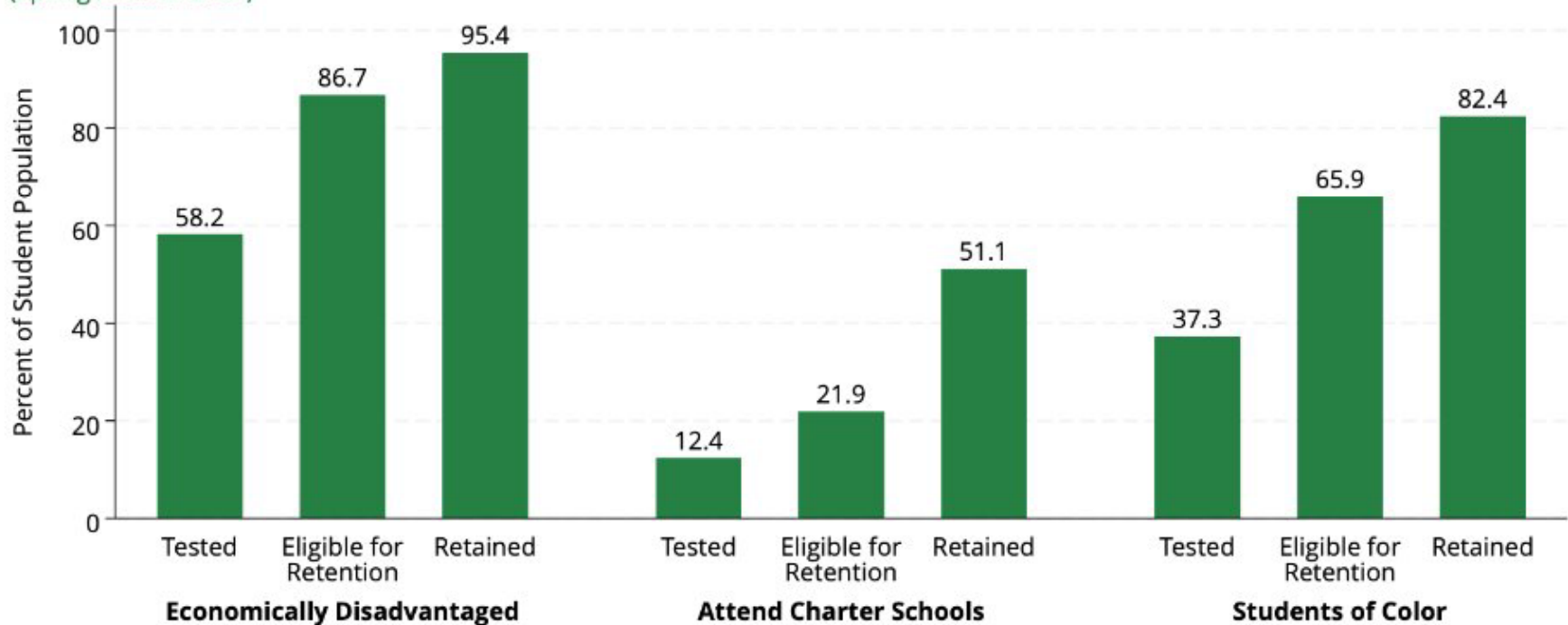


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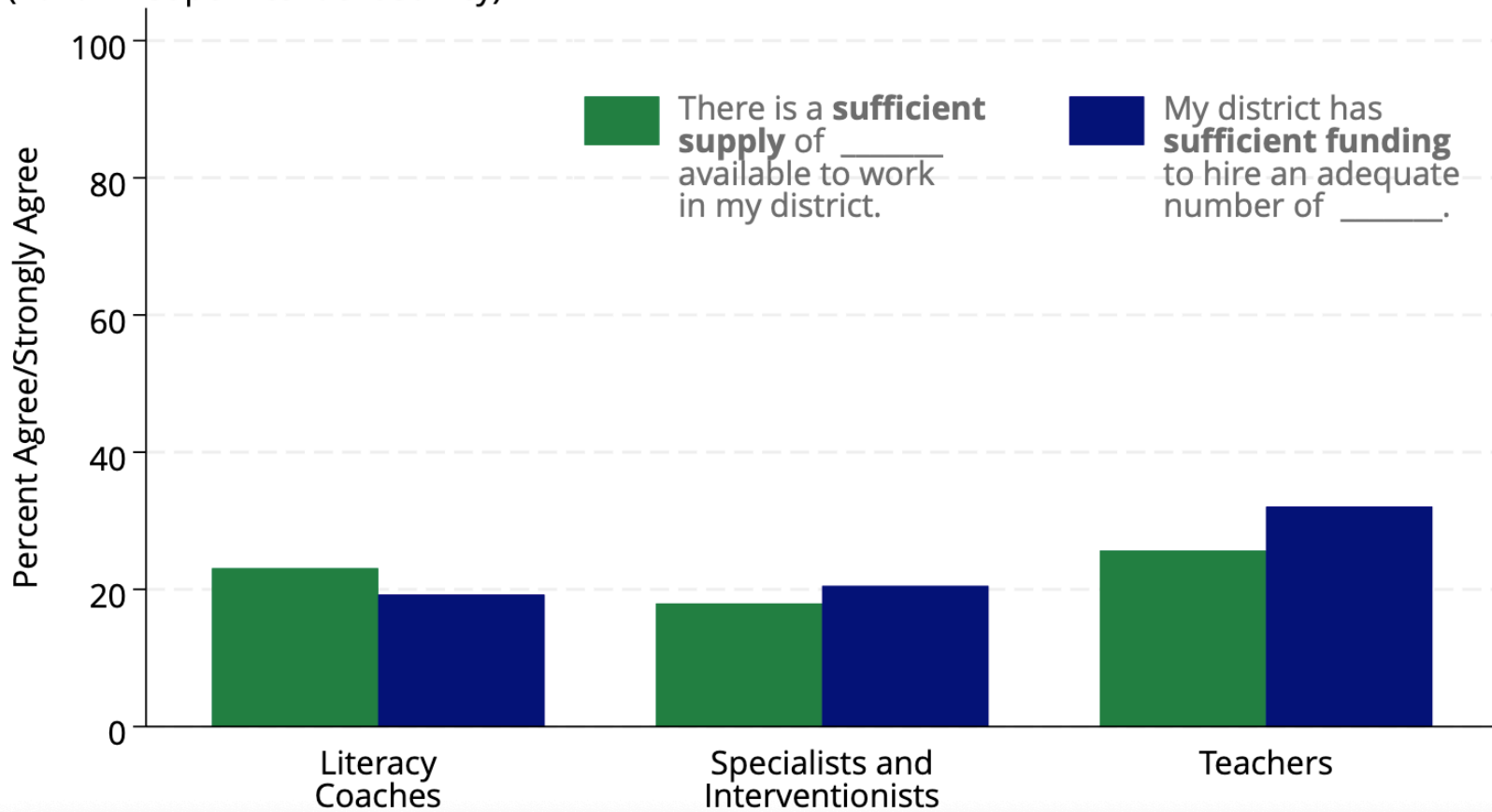
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(June 2024). "Retention and Exemption Decisions Under the Read by Grade Three Law."

Implementation Capacity: Human Capital & Fiscal Constraints

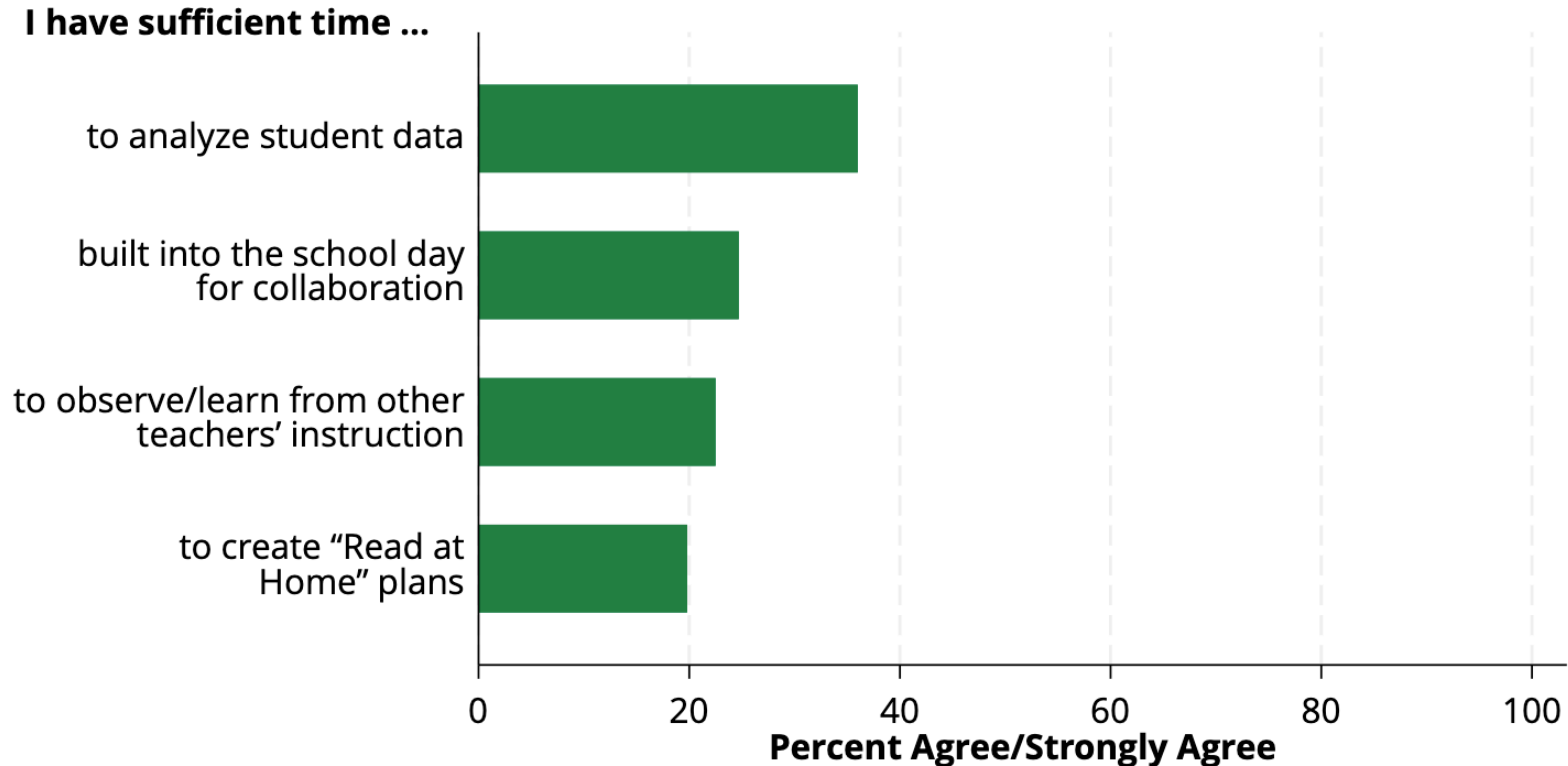
District Capacity to Hire Literacy Personnel
(2020-21 Superintendent Survey)



Strunk, K. O., Wright, T. S., Westall, J., Zhu, Q., Kilbride, T., Cummings, A., Utter, A., & Mavrogordato, M. (February 2022). "Michigan's Read by Grade Three Law: Year Two Report."

Implementation Capacity: Time Constraints

Teachers' Capacity to Improve Literacy Instruction /Implement RBG3 Law
(2020-21 Teacher Survey)

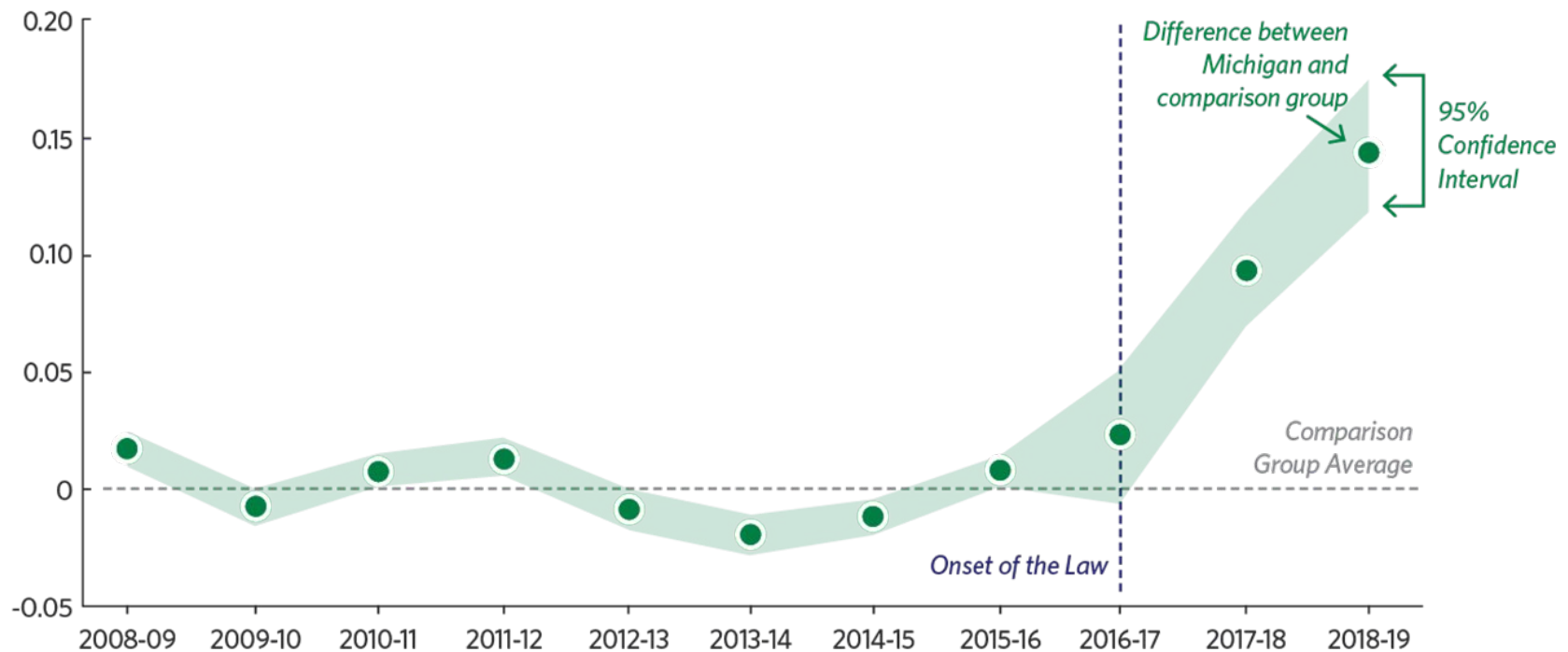


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Academic Achievement: Overall Impact of the RBG3 Law

Relative to states without similar early literacy policies, average ELA scores for Michigan 3rd graders increased after the RBG3 law went into effect. Achievement gains were larger for later cohorts with more exposure to the law's interventions and supports.

Average 3rd-Grade ELA performance (standard deviations)



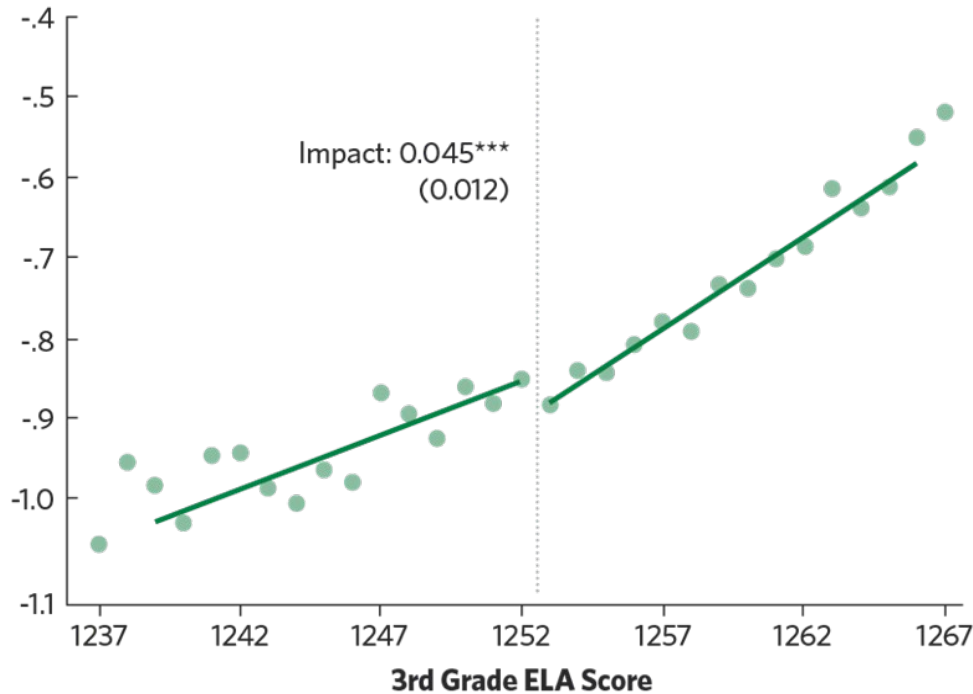
Walker S., Nadal-Fernandez, J. M., & Kilbride, T.

(2026). *Estimating the Overall Effects of Statewide Early Literacy Policies: Evidence from Michigan.*

Academic Achievement: Impact of Retention Policy

ELA Score Next Year

Standard Deviations



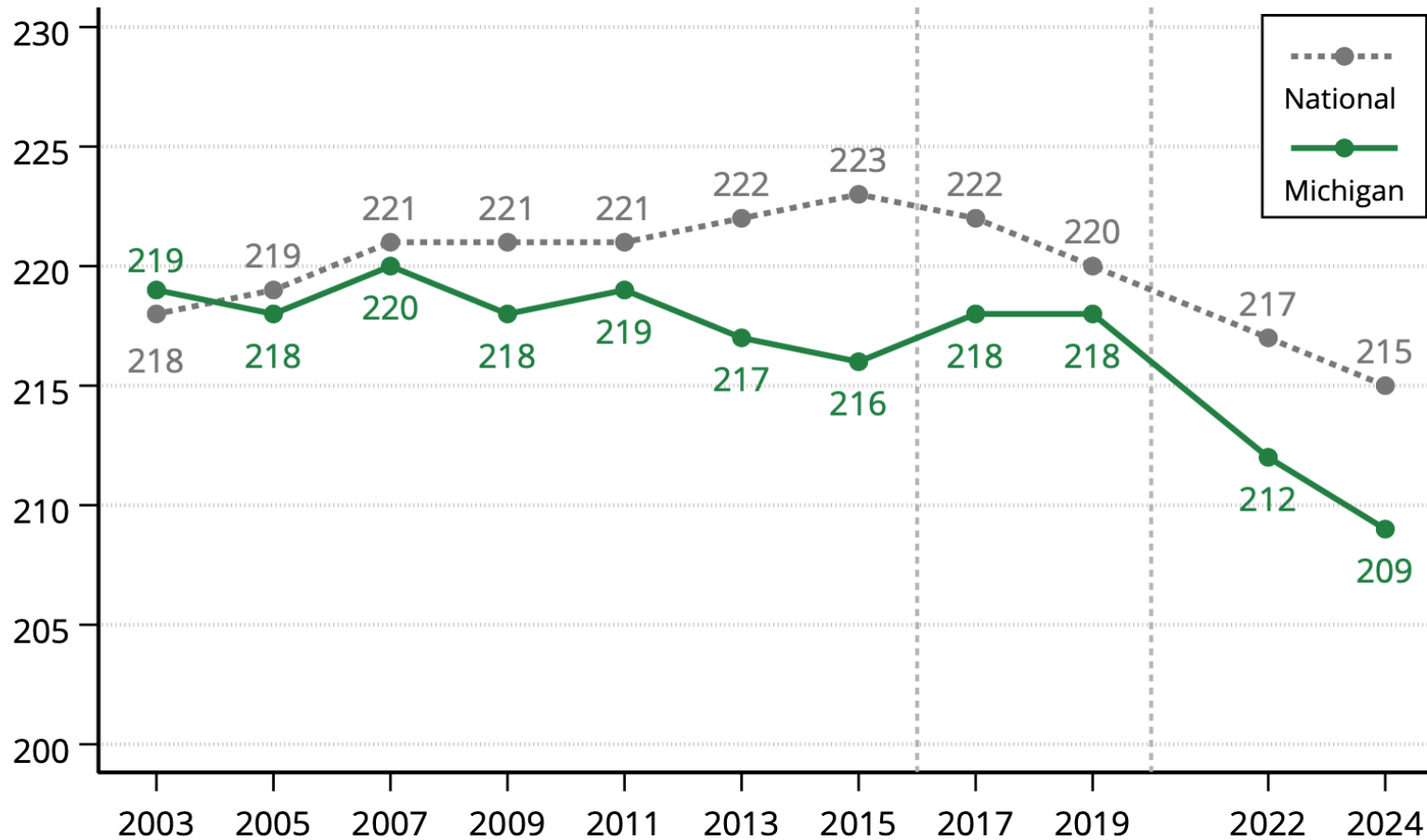
Students who were identified as eligible for retention showed modest academic improvements in the following year (0.045 SD in reading).

Students showed similar positive academic effects in districts where no retention occurred, indicating that targeted support services —not retention itself—drove improvements.

Berne, J. S., Jacob, B. A., Weiland, C., & Strunk, K. O. (2026). Assessing the impact of grade retention: A cautionary tale of exclusion restriction violations. Journal of Public Economics, 253, 105534.



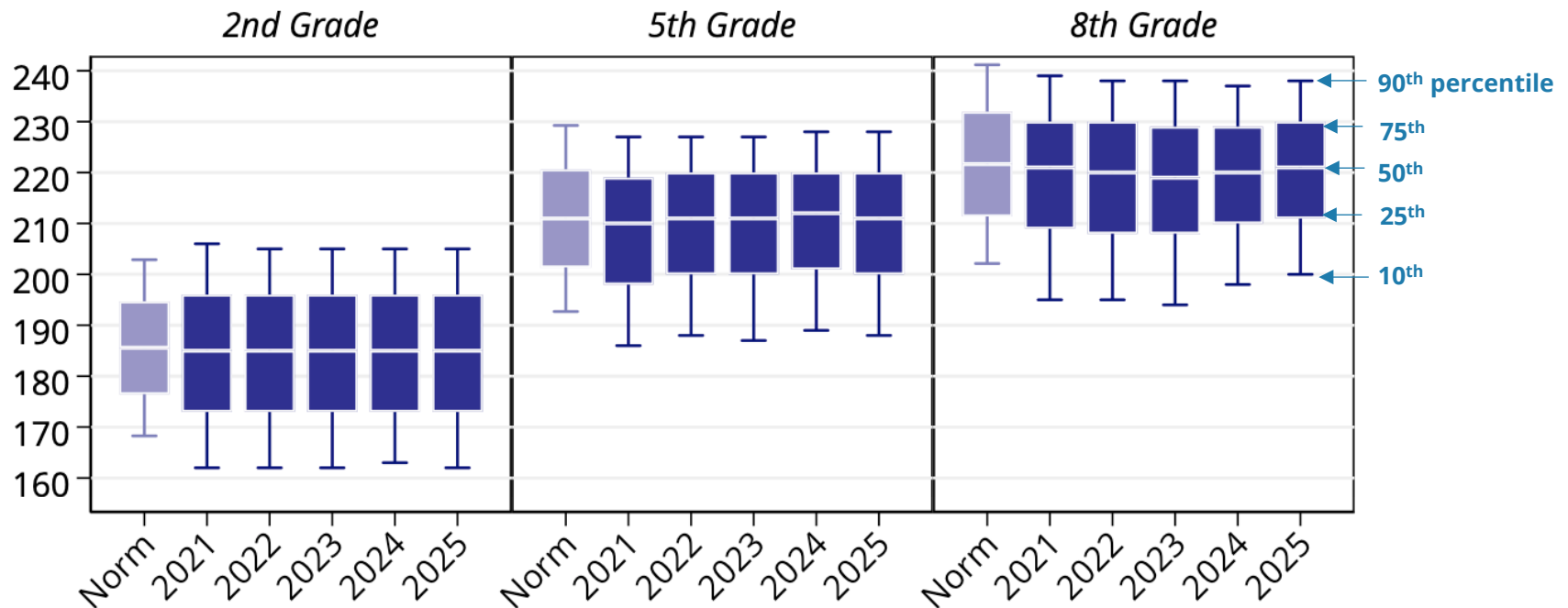
Where are we now? National Assessment of Student Progress (NAEP) Trends



Where are we now?

Benchmark Assessments

MAP Growth Reading (Spring)



Gaps between high- and low-performing students widened in 2020-21. Since then, gaps have narrowed in most subject areas and grade levels, except elementary reading. Students' academic levels and learning needs vary to a greater extent than would have been expected before COVID. This has implications for instructional strategies, curricula, and staffing.



Why Study Literacy Policy in Michigan?



Tanya S. Wright

Professor of Early Literacy, University of Michigan



Lori Bruner

Asst. Professor of Literacy, University at Albany

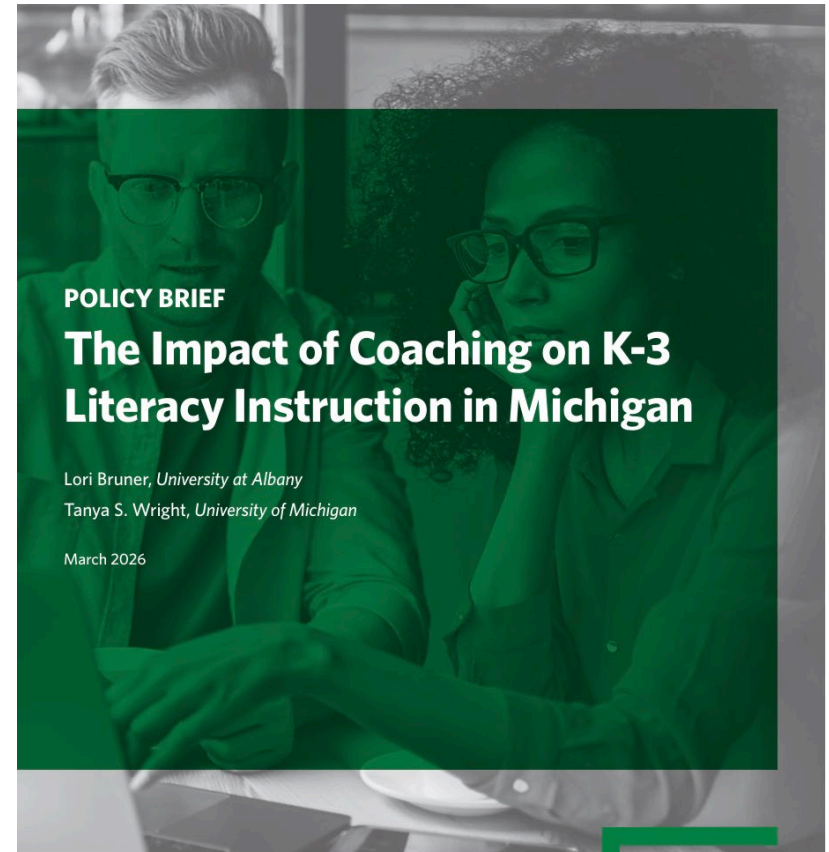
This presentation is based upon work supported by the Institute of Education Sciences (R305H190004) and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Why Study Literacy Policy in Michigan?

- MI students score 44th in the nation.
- We want to support MI students to **read, write, speak, listen**, & to use these skills as **tools for learning!**
- Goal of literacy policies is to improve learning opportunities for students.
- Are policies working as intended?



How have we studied Literacy Policy in MI?



And what did we find out?

Curriculum Study - What did we do?

- Teacher & Superintendent surveys

TABLE 2.1. Sample Size and Response Rates

	2020-21			2021-22			2022-23		
	Survey Sample	Target Population	Response Rate	Survey Sample	Target Population	Response Rate	Survey Sample	Target Population	Response Rate
K-5 Teachers	6,670	29,317	22.8%	5,588	30,777	18.2%	4,948	29,948	16.5%
District Superintendents	162	632	25.6%	89	590	15.1%	87	505	17.2%

Curriculum Study - What did we learn?

- Teachers reported using **a lot** of curricular resources!

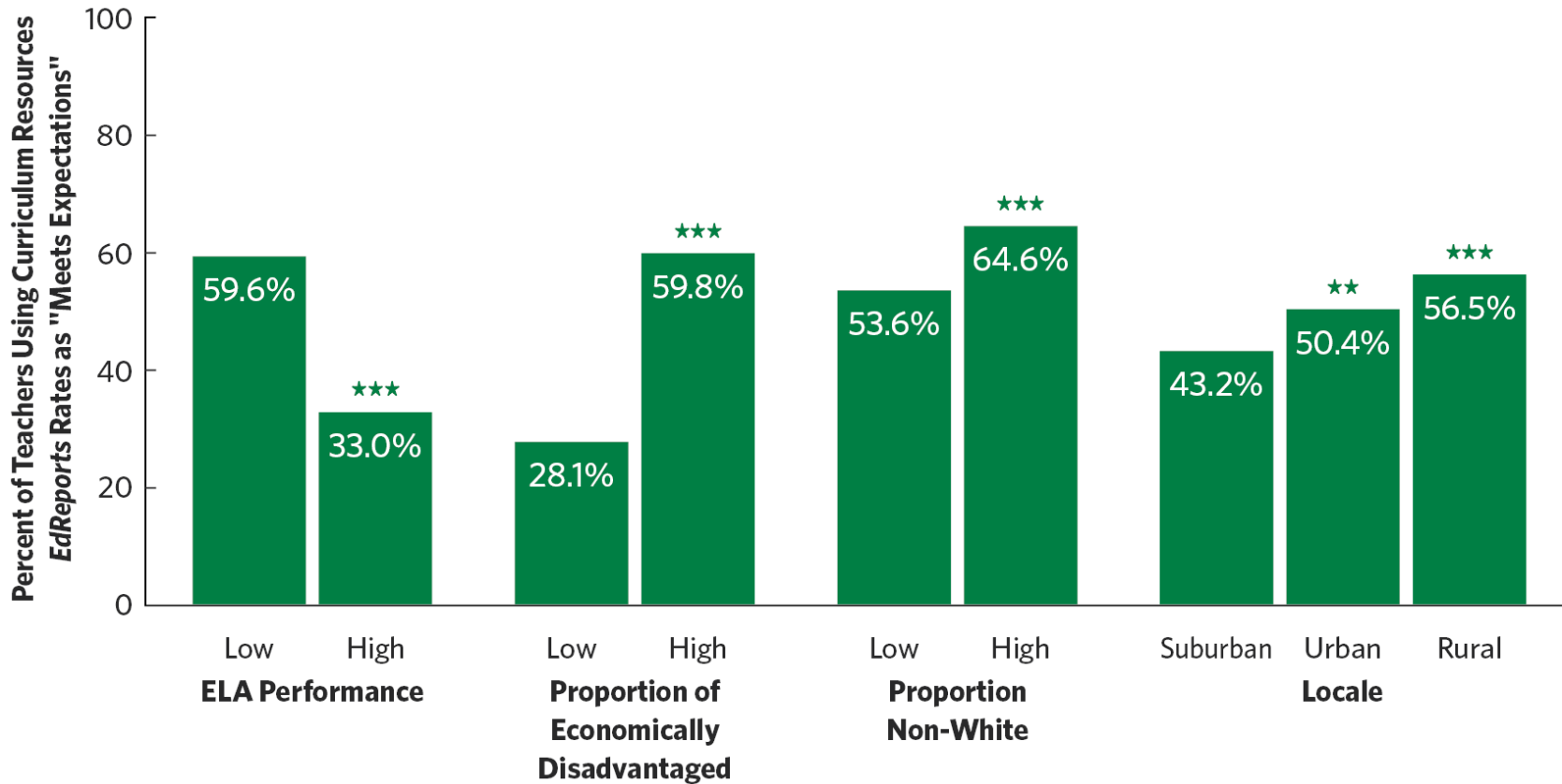
**TABLE 4.1. Number of ELA Curriculum Resources
Teachers Report Using**

	2019-20	2022-23
Core ELA	170	154
Supplemental Writing	128	120
Supplemental Phonics/Spelling	166	170
Total	464	444

Curriculum Study - What did we learn?



- 32% of teachers were using highly rated core ELA curriculum resources in 2022-23 compared to 12% in 2019-20.



Curriculum Study - How does this help?



- Documented substantive change in curriculum materials usage
- Demonstrated need for better supports for curriculum decision-making
- By 2023, districts serving higher proportions of students from historically underserved populations were **more** likely to use highly rated curriculum resources.
- Suggests need to consider **curriculum materials AND other levers** (e.g., professional development and coaching) to move instruction.



Literacy Coaching Study - What did we do?



Participants:

- 16 ISD early literacy coaches and 89 K-3 teachers
- Compared instruction for **teachers receiving coaching** to a randomly selected **wait-list comparison**

Data Collected:

- Classroom videos (318 hours total)
- Weekly coaching logs (1,330 total)
- Semi-structured interviews with coaches (15 hours total)



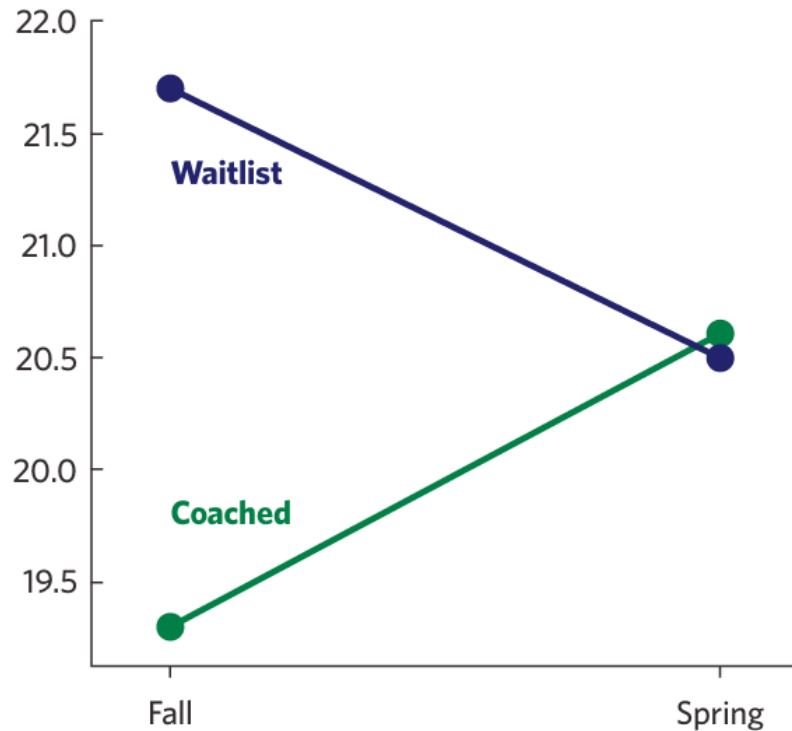
Literacy Coaching Study - What did we learn?



Fall-to-Spring Instructional Growth: Coached vs. Waitlist Comparison Teachers

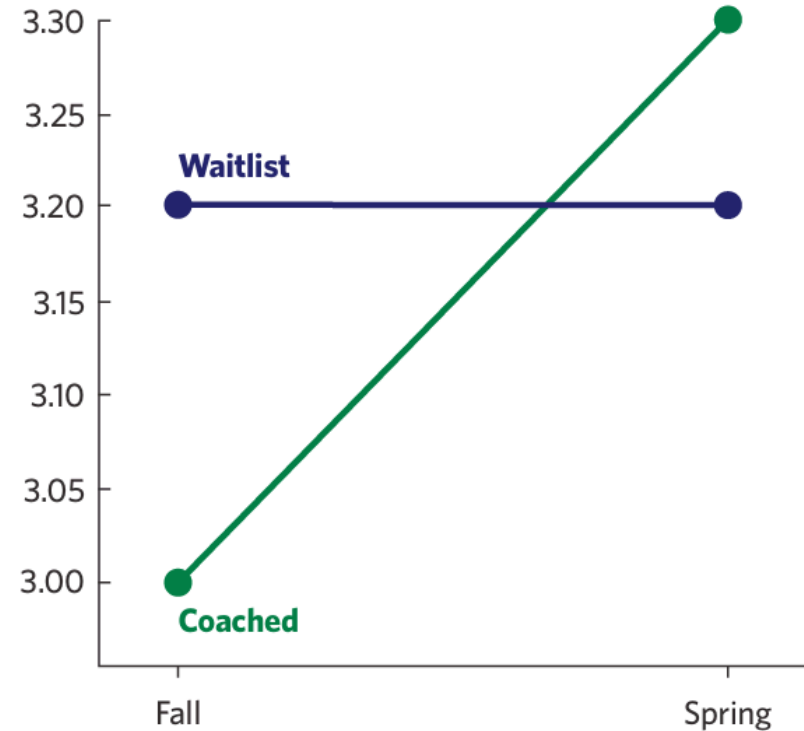
Literacy Essential Coaching Protocol ($p=.044^*$)

Mean Score



ELLCO Composite Scores ($p=.001^{***}$)

Mean Score

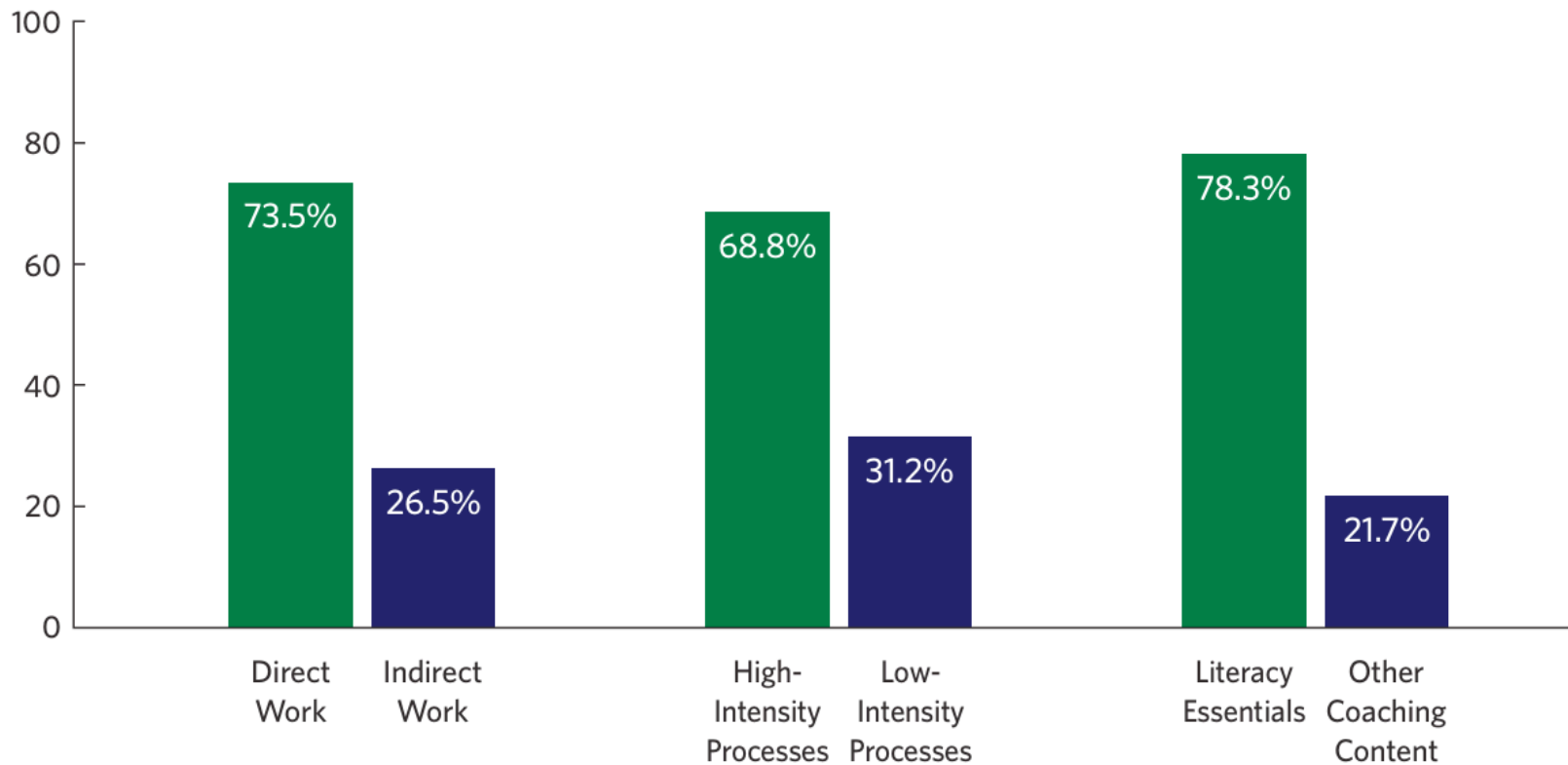


Literacy Coaching Study - What did we learn?



Coaching Time Concentrated on Direct, High-Intensity, and Research-Aligned Practices

Percent of Time



Literacy Coaching Study - How does this help?

FOR ITERATIVE IMPROVEMENT:



Keep what's working: coaching focused on **research-based literacy instruction, intensive coaching practices, direct work with teachers.**



Increase percentage of the states' teachers who receive coaching from a **highly-trained coach.**



Improve contextual conditions that limited coaches' abilities to enact high quality coaching.



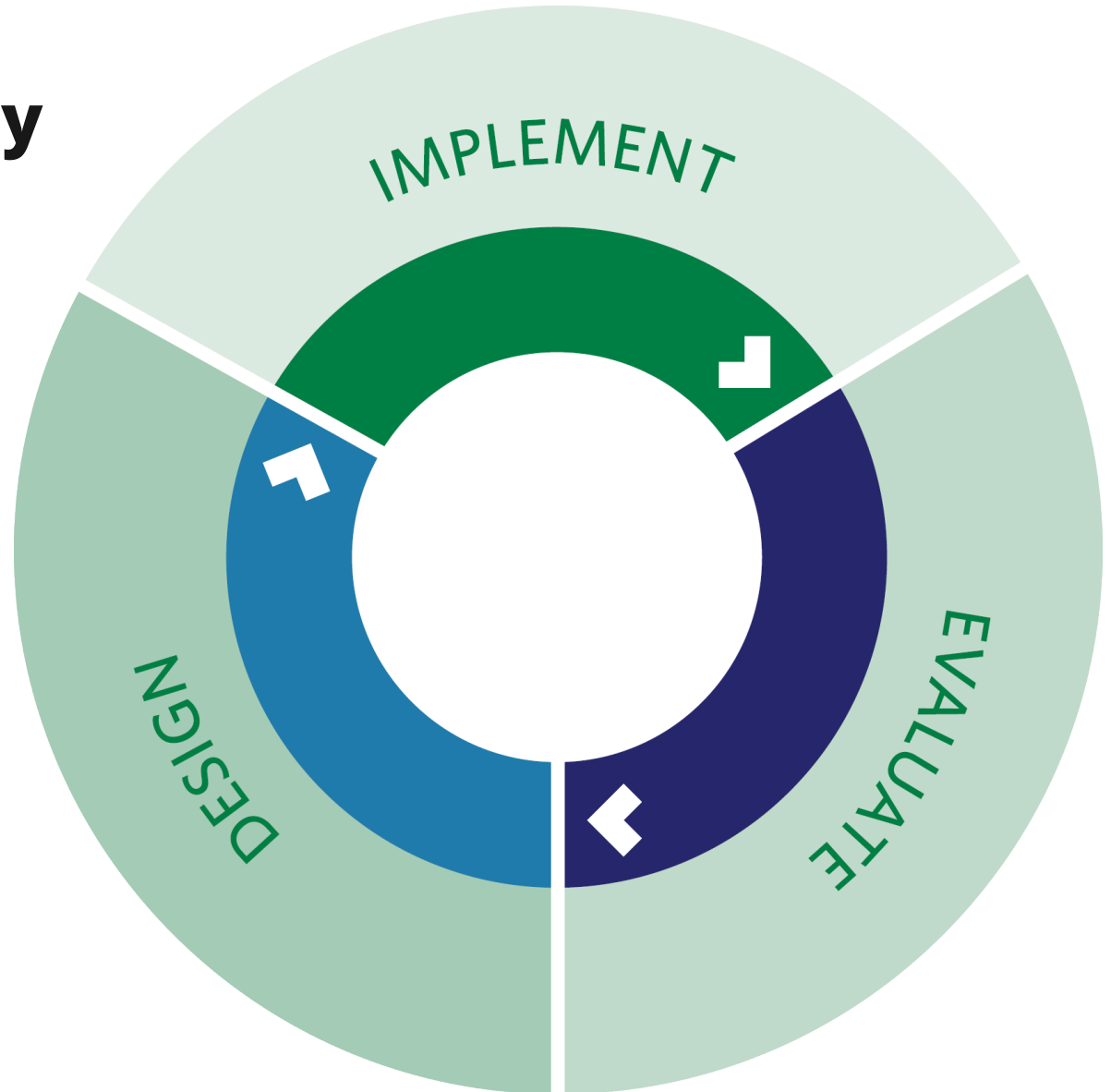
Create reasonable dosage recommendations (coaching time ranged from 8-50 hours).

When we don't study literacy policy...



When we do study literacy policies...

- Data-based decision making
- Iterative improvement





Literacy Policy Research: Looking Ahead



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Dr. Adrea Truckenmiller
Associate Professor, Michigan State University

Opportunities

- PA 146 & 147 for **compliance**
 - Evidence-based literacy instruction
 - Screening assessment
 - MTSS – using assessment to inform more effective instruction
 - Professional learning pre-service and in-service
 - Focus on dyslexia (previous data ignored this population)
- Research is a key facilitator for **implementation**
- 2 examples
 - What other successful states have done and Michigan can too
 - Model Michigan study that integrated across initiatives.

Florida's and Virginia's Research Practice Partnership

Research

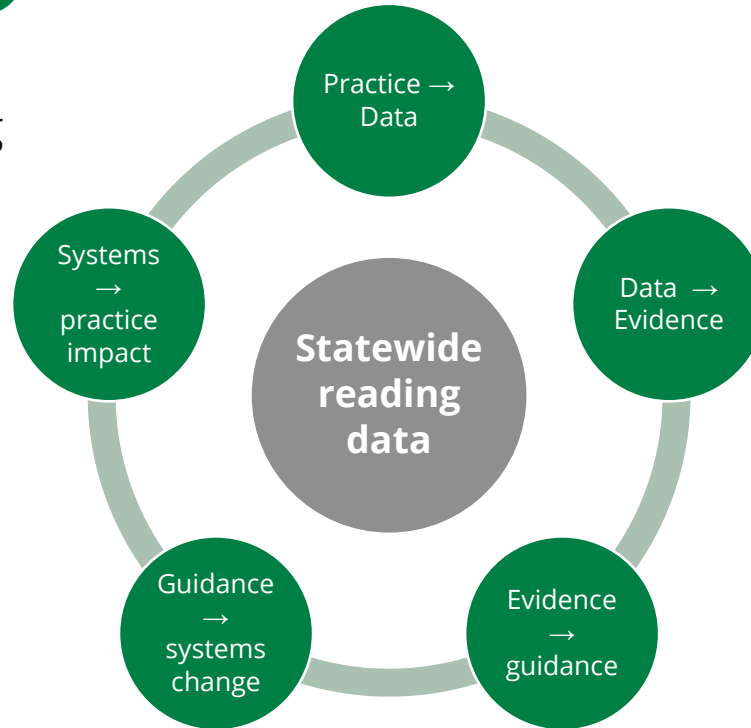
Find more effective instruction, coaching

Understand literacy development

Refined decision rules

Reduce over and under identification of student needs

100+ studies published



Practice

Evidence-based instructional resources

Less time in assessment and more effective assessment decisions

Coaching questions answered

More effective Professional Learning

Student proficiency dramatically increased

But haven't we been collecting data?

Standards Assessment

(what Michigan collects)

Standards

(MSTEP; some NWEA, best in grades 3 - 8)

Science of Reading

(what Florida & Virginia assesses)

Code

(DIBELS 8th)

Language Comprehension

(mClass)

Components of student's literacy development that predicts students' achievement of the standards

Subword

Word

Sentence/
passage

Word
(vocab)

Sentence
(syntax)

Passage
(discourse)

Is the combination of practices effective?

Need carefully designed research

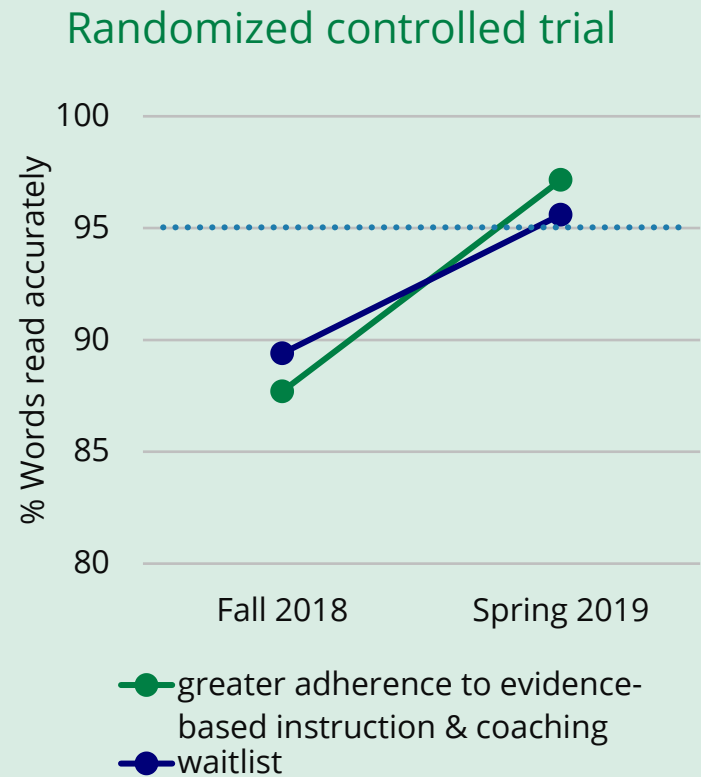
Mechanisms

Screening data identifies need (DIBELS)

Evidence-based content focus (phonics)

Coaching + professional learning

Observation-based feedback



Source: Valentine, Truckenmiller, & Gascon, 2026



Surfacing Stakeholder Research Priorities

Key Definitions

RESEARCH

is a systematic, purposeful investigation aimed at discovering new knowledge and ultimately solving problems.

RESEARCH WITH CONSEQUENCE

brings rigorous, relevant, and timely evidence to bear on today's most pressing education policy issues.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION RESEARCH

studies how public policies are put into practice, the outcomes of these policies, and why policy outcomes sometimes differ from what policymakers originally intended. This type of research answers a fundamental question:

What happens between policy adoption and policy outcomes, and why does it matter?

A Non-Exhaustive List of Possible Research Priorities



- Student achievement trends
- Literacy coaching
- ELA curricula and instructional resources
- Early literacy screening
- Early interventions
- Educator training - pre-service/teacher preparation programs
- Educator training - professional development for in-service teachers
- Identifying and supporting students with reading difficulty
- State-level implementation of Michigan's literacy and dyslexia laws
- Local implementation of Michigan's literacy and dyslexia laws

What are you taking away from our time together today?



What do we need to do collectively to ensure policy, practice, and research are working in tandem to support literacy improvements in Michigan?





Education Policy Innovation Collaborative

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION | MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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