K–3 READING · ONE SCHOOL'S YEAR

Nine Out of Ten

In the fall, nearly a third of this school's kindergartners were below benchmark in reading. By spring, nine out of ten were reading above it. The school did not adopt a new curriculum, hire anyone, or add a minute to the day.

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The jump in kindergartners reading **above** benchmark from fall to spring, moving from 31% to 90%.	Grades where more students finished the year above benchmark than started it there.	The amount the school spent on a new core reading curriculum. It kept the one it already had.

The stakes

In most schools, reading stops being taught somewhere around fourth grade and starts being assumed. From that point on, science, history, and even math word problems quietly become reading tests. A child who has not learned to read by then is not behind in one subject. He is behind in all of them, closing a gap that widens while he works.

That arithmetic sits underneath every K–3 reading screener in the country, and it is why the early grades are the only place where the problem is still inexpensive to solve. A kindergartner taught to read correctly the first time costs a district a fraction of what the same child costs in fourth grade, when the fix becomes intervention, retention, and years of specialist time.

At one K–3 elementary school, last year looked different from the year before.

The school

It is a small building, with roughly 220 students screened. No grant money came in and nobody was hired. The teachers worked with what they already had.

What the school did buy was **The Reading Roadmap**, one purchase per teacher covering three things.

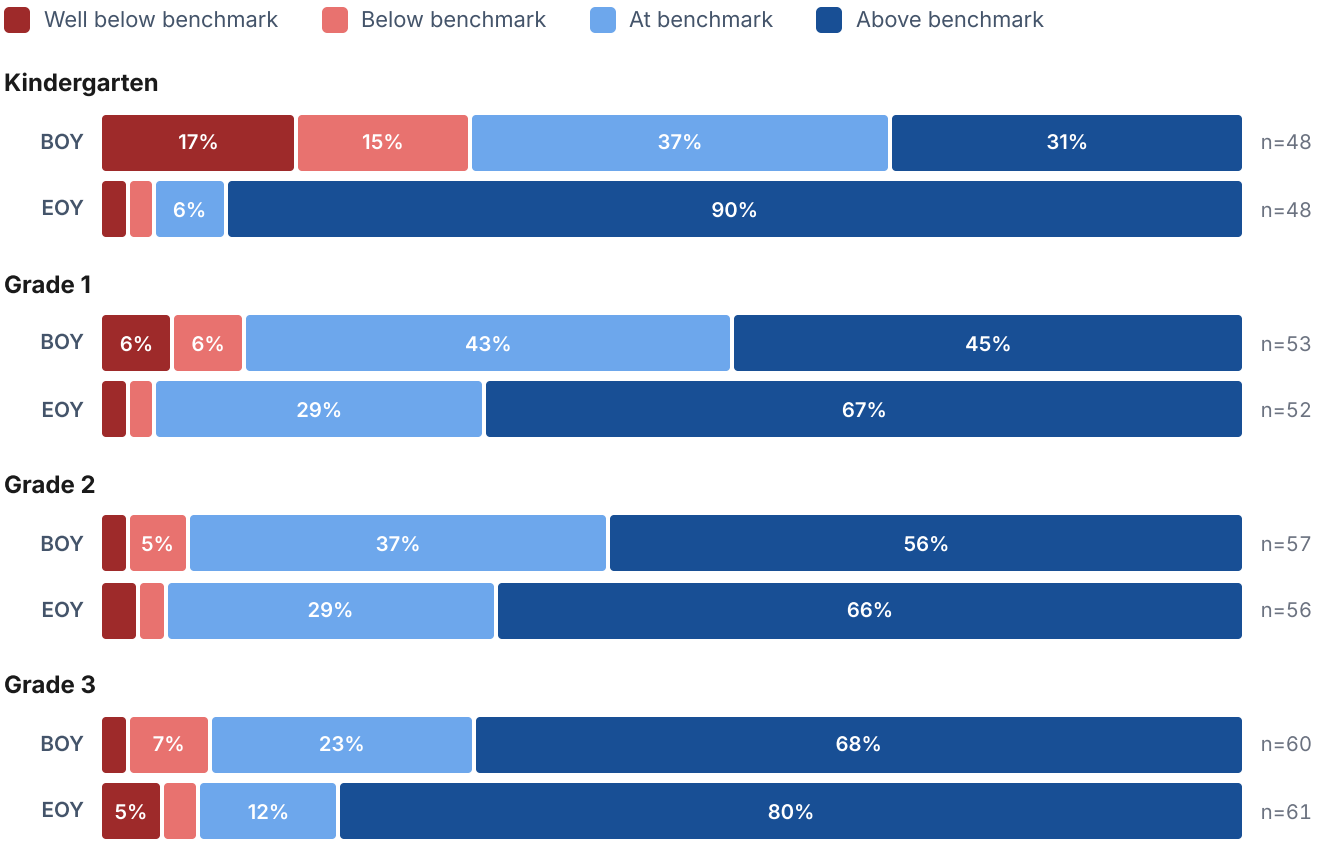
The training	Teachers worked through the course, which walks a teacher through building a whole reading program: the order to teach skills in, what a daily lesson looks like, and how to run small groups.
The tools	They pulled lessons, games, and reading passages from the Reading Roadmap library all year, so whatever skill was taught that morning got practiced that same day.
The support	When a teacher got stuck on one specific student, she could text a Reading Roadmap-trained teacher who looked at the data and told her what to try next, usually within the same week.

The results

The numbers below come from the school's own universal reading screener, comparing its students in the fall with the same students in the spring.

Reading screener results, by grade

Where students landed in the fall (BOY) compared with the spring (EOY). Each bar represents everyone screened in that grade.



Slices under five percent are drawn to scale but left unlabeled, because the school's report did not label them. Numbers are rounded.

The same numbers, in a table

GRADE	WHEN	WELL BELOW	BELOW	AT	ABOVE	STUDENTS
Kindergarten	BOY	17%	15%	37%	31%	48
	EOY	<5%	<5%	6%	90%	48
Grade 1	BOY	6%	6%	43%	45%	53
	EOY	<5%	<5%	29%	67%	52
Grade 2	BOY	<5%	5%	37%	56%	57
	EOY	<5%	<5%	29%	66%	56
Grade 3	BOY	<5%	7%	23%	68%	60
	EOY	5%	<5%	12%	80%	61

In the fall, almost a third of the kindergarten class was below or well below benchmark. By spring, 90 percent of that same class of 48 was reading above it.

The older grades moved as well, just more quietly. Most of those students were already at or above benchmark in the fall, so the change shows up higher on the scale, where students who had been holding steady at benchmark pushed past it. First grade went from 45% above to 67%. Second grade went from 56% to 66%. Third grade went from 68% to 80%.

When the school's principal went through the year-end data, she did not lead with the ninety percent. She led with the handful of students still sitting in the red, children who had come in far below and had grown anyway. She wanted them counted.

What the numbers show

The youngest students moved the most

Kindergarten changed more than any other grade, which is what the research would predict. The skills that decide whether a child reads, which are hearing the individual sounds in words and matching those sounds to letters, are taught in the earliest grades. They are also the skills that respond fastest when the teaching changes.

Reading money usually arrives at the grades where scores get reported publicly. This chart is an argument for spending it earlier, where the same dollar moves more children further.

The school did not throw out its curriculum

There was no adoption process, no committee, and no cart full of boxes in the hallway in August.

What changed was that teachers learned how reading actually works, and then had lessons and games on hand that matched what they were teaching. That knowledge is also what lets a teacher judge the

program she was handed. A great many adopted reading curricula were written before the evidence settled, and some still have children guessing at a word from the picture or the sentence around it. A teacher who understands how reading is learned can tell which parts of her program to lean on, which parts to skip, and what to put in their place. A teacher who has never been taught that has no way to know.

The teachers were never the problem

When students struggle to read, the blame tends to land on teachers. It is the wrong place for it.

Elementary preparation programs have only recently begun teaching reading the way the research says it must be taught, so most teachers in classrooms today finished their training before that shift. Even now, roughly half of those programs still do not cover all five parts of reading instruction, and one in five are still teaching methods the research set aside years ago.

So a teacher walks into a building doing exactly what she was taught to do, and then gets held responsible for a gap in her own training that nobody ever told her about. When somebody finally shows her what the research says instead, she changes quickly. This chart is what that looks like on a spreadsheet.

What the school bought

The Reading Roadmap is one purchase that covers a teacher for a full year, holding in one place the three pieces schools usually assemble separately.

The training walks a teacher through building a reading program from the ground up: what order to teach skills in, what a daily lesson looks like, how to find out what students already know without losing a week to testing, and how to run small groups that reach every reader in the same half hour.

The tools are the library the training points to, with the lessons, games, and reading passages built to match what a teacher has just learned to teach.

The support is a trained teacher on the other end of a text message, who will read the data on one struggling student and say what to try next.

Investment	**$297 per teacher for one year**, covering the training, the resource library, and the support.
Format	On demand, so a teacher can work through it on her own schedule. Schools also assign specific videos on professional development days so grade-level teams work through them together.
Time	About 18 hours from start to finish, including implementation.
For schools	Districts and schools buy it for grade-level teams and whole staffs, not one teacher at a time.

Questions school leaders ask

“We already adopted a reading curriculum. Does this replace it?”

Often it does not, but that is the second question. The first is whether the adopted program teaches reading the way the evidence says it must, and a great many do not. The training gives teachers what they need to answer that about their own materials: what to lean on, what to skip, and what to put in its place. Some schools keep nearly everything. Some keep very little. Either way, the decision stops being a guess.

“My teachers are already maxed out. Is this one more thing?”

It is the opposite of one more thing. Teachers do not burn out only from hours. They burn out from the feeling of failing children they cannot figure out how to reach, and from the nights and weekends spent stitching a reading program together out of search results, outside trainings, and whatever the last workshop left behind. That work never ends, and it is invisible on any schedule.

The Reading Roadmap ends the stitching. The training, the lessons, the games, the reading passages, and the person to ask are already built and already in one place. Eighteen total hours of training and implementation replaces a year of reinventing the wheel.

“Professional development has never changed anything here.”

That is usually fair. Most professional development is a single day that hands teachers information and leaves them to work out the rest alone, and nothing follows them back into the classroom on Monday. This is the opposite arrangement: the training arrives with the materials to teach from and a trained teacher to ask, and all of it stays available for the year.

The cost of waiting a year

Reading data moves slowly across a district and quickly inside a classroom. The children who were in kindergarten at this school last fall are in first grade now, spending that year reading rather than catching up.

A school that waits for the next adoption cycle spends that time on a cohort it does not get back. The screener does not pause for a procurement calendar, and neither does the child still guessing at words in March.

> **FOR SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS**
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> The Reading Roadmap is $297 per teacher for a full year, covering the training, the library, and the support. Schools purchase it by the grade-level team or by the staff.
>
> **Request a quote at thereadingroadmap.com/contact**

This school asked that we not use its name. Screener results are reported as the school sent them. Teacher preparation figures: National Council on Teacher Quality, *Teacher Prep Review* (June 2026).

The Reading Roadmap · thereadingroadmap.com