

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has produced significant disruptions in student learning. School closures and a shift to remote learning and hybrid learning models has impacted an unprecedented number of students in Utah K-12 schools. The impact and implications of COVID-19 on student learning has drawn the interest of various stakeholders. Questions about the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are centered on understanding the extent of it and identifying major areas of need to direct the necessary resources to mitigate student learning loss and long-term academic impacts.

This report provides a summary of reading assessment data. It explores trends in the participation rates of Utah students in the Acadience Reading Assessment and their reading performance as measured by benchmark levels. Using historical Acadience Reading assessment data (three years) allows for a comparison of participation rates and students' reading performance at the beginning of the school year to provides an initial overview of reading outcomes due to the soft closure that occurred in March 2020. Comparisons in this report are made between this school year 2020-2021 and the previous school year 2019-2021 to examine changes. It is to be noted that additional data and analyses will be needed to fully understand the magnitude of the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on student learning. Also, BOY Acadience Reading data used to produce descriptive statistics in this report are to be interpreted with caution given the preliminary nature of the data¹.

A summary of the results is provided below. In general, the percent of students who participated in the Acadience Reading assessment is lower this school year 2020-2021 compared to last school year 2019-2020. There have also been corresponding decreases in the percentage of students reading at or above benchmark this school year in comparison to last year.

FINDINGS

PARTICIPATION RATES

- At the state level, Acadience Reading assessment participation rates across grade 1 through 3 decreased by 3.4 percentage points.
- All demographic groups (i.e., low-income, English learner, and student with disabilities) experienced a decrease in their participation rates. In comparison to their peers, the difference in participation rates is minimal. Similar patterns are noted for each demographic group when disaggregating the data by grade K through 3².
- At the state level, the participation rate decreased for all racial/ethnic groups with Native American students (7.5%) and Pacific Islander students (5.5%) having the greatest

¹ The BOY Acadience Reading assessment data used in this report are based on December 1 counts in order to make fair year-to-year comparisons. These results are likely change given that Acadience outcome data is usually limited to students who are enrolled in an LEA for a full academic year (160 days). Any reporting of Acadience Reading results is based on the threshold that students have received instruction in an LEA for a full academic year.

² The Acadience Reading assessment is only required in grades 1-3. For this reason, lower participation rates in kindergarten are expected than other grades.

decline. Similar patterns are noted when the data is disaggregated by grade K-3 although the percentage point decreases are greater in first grade and third grade. Also, Black students, Native American students, and Pacific Islander students tend to have larger participation rate drop than their peers.

AT OR ABOVE BENCHMARK

- The data showed that the largest decrease in percentage of students reading at or above benchmark occurred in first grade across all demographic groups and racial/ethnic groups.
- The percentage of students from low-income families in first grade who are at or above benchmark decreased by 15.7 percentage points from the previous school year (compared to 14.1% for students who are not low-income).
- The percentage of students with disabilities in first grade who are at or above benchmark decreased by 10 percentage points from the previous school year (compared to 14.5% for students who are not in special education).
- The percentage of EL students in first grade who are at or above benchmark decreased by 14.1 percentage points from the previous school year (compared to 14% for students who are not ELs).
- In first grade, all racial/ethnic groups experienced a 10% or more decline this school year in the percent of students reading at or above benchmark when compared to the previous school year with Black students experiencing the largest decline, followed Hispanic/Latino students (14.8%) and White students (13.3%). Native American students had an 11.5% percentage point decrease while Pacific Islander students and Asian students experienced an 11.6 and 10.3 percent point decrease, respectively.
- Black students experience the lowest percentage point decrease in the percent of students reading at or above benchmark in third grade compared to the previous year.

INTRODUCTION

On March 12, 2020, Governor Hebert announced the soft closure of all Utah's K-12 schools as a preventative measure intended to slow the spread of COVID-19. The soft closure was to be effective for two weeks beginning on March 16. This soft closure was, however, extended and stayed in force until the end of the school year. With in-school instruction suspended for the remainder of the school year, schools and communities took unparalleled actions to meet the challenge of providing education to Utah students as they shifted to remote learning.

Prior to the start of school year 2020-2021, Utah local education agencies (i.e., school districts and charter schools; LEAs) established plans to safely reopen schools for in-person instruction. As LEAs have implemented their plans and undertaken the complex and difficult task of providing educational services to students in this unprecedented time, education has been further disrupted by temporary closures implemented to mitigate the risk from COVID-19 outbreaks. The academic impact of these disruptions, as well as the varied ways in which LEAs have provided educational services, has drawn the interest of various stakeholders.

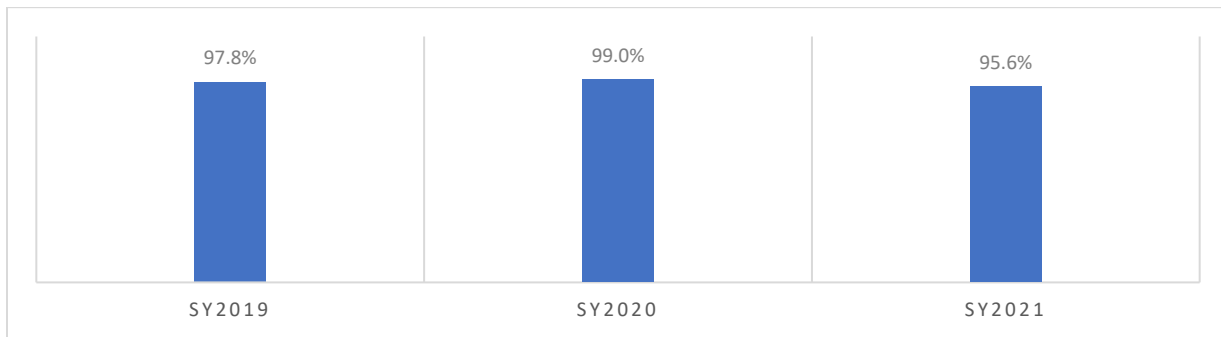
Indeed, given the vast impact and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning, LEAs will need to consider how to address and mitigate student learning loss and long-term academic impacts. Consequently, state and local leaders as well as other educational stakeholders have begun to review data to assess the extent of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning. The Utah State Board of Education (USBE) provides an initial review of reading data in this report to examine trends in literacy outcomes using the Acadience Reading assessment.

USBE specifically analyzed beginning of the year (BOY) Acadience Reading assessment data to present descriptive statistics that summarize changes in the (a) participation rates of students in the assessment and (b) in the percent of students at or above benchmark based on school year 2020-2021 to the previous school year 2019-2020 comparisons. Participation rates and percentages of students at or below benchmark are disaggregated by grade, demographic groups, and race/ethnicity.

STATE ACADIENCE PARTICIPATION RATES ACROSS GRADE 1-3

In school year 2018-2019, 97.8% of students in grade 1-3 participated in the BOY Acadience Reading assessment compared to 99% of students the following school year 2019-2020. In school year 2020-2021, the participation rate was 95.6%, indicating a 3.4 percentage point decrease compared to the previous school year.

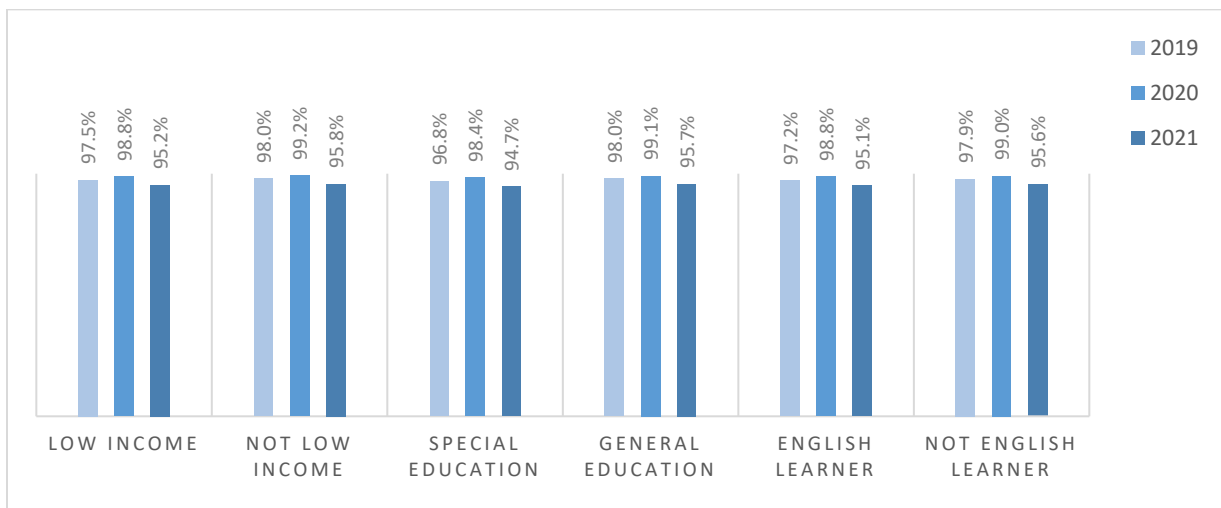
Figure 1. BOY Grade 1-3 Acadience Reading Assessment Participation Rates for SY2019 through SY2021



STATE PARTICIPATION RATES BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

There has been a corresponding decrease in Acadience Reading assessment participation rates among all demographic groups (i.e., low-income, English learner, and Special Education) in grades 1-3 this school year (2020-2021) compared to the previous school year (2019-2020). Specifically, the participation rate of students from low-income families decreased by 3.6% percentage points compared to 3.4% for students who are not from low-income families. The participation rate of students with disabilities was lower by 3.7% percentage points. English learner (EL) students had 3.7% percentage point decrease in their participation rate (non-EL students, 3.4%). The difference in percentage point drops between groups are minimal.

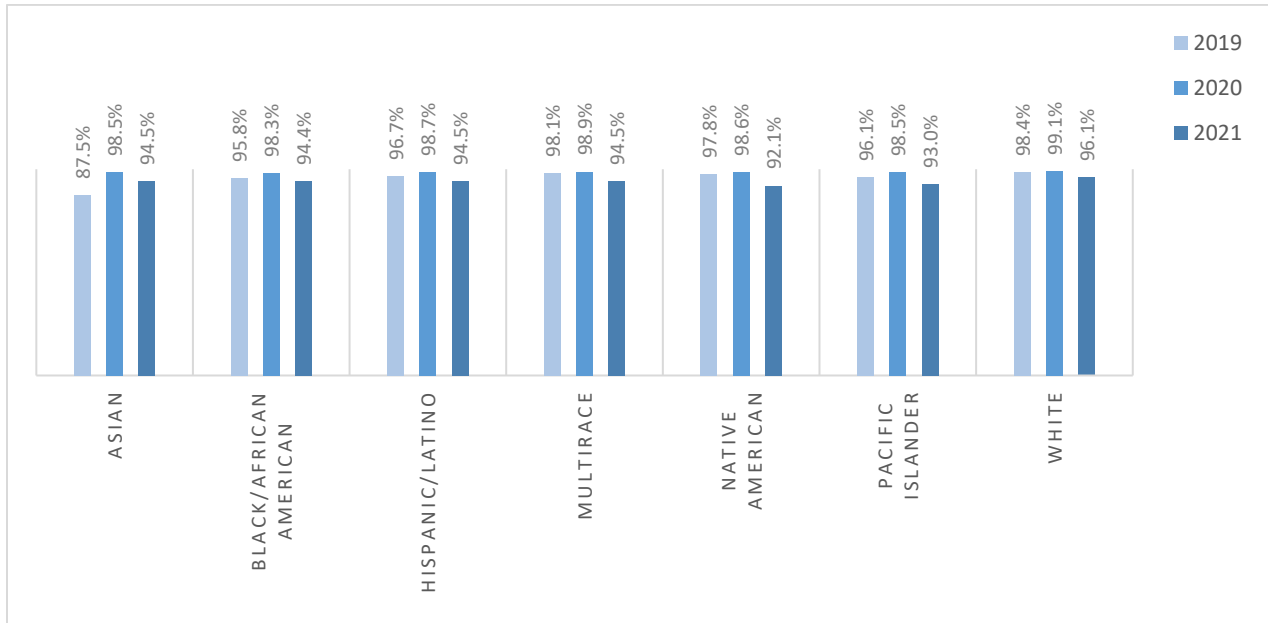
Figure 2. BOY Grade 1-3 Acadience Reading Assessment Participation Rates by Demographic Groups for SY2019 to SY2021



STATE PARTICIPATION RATES BY RACE/ETHNICITY

Native American students had the greatest percentage point decrease (7.5%) in their Acadience assessment participation rate, followed by Pacific Islander students (5.5%). White students had the lowest participation rate drop (3%) with the rest of the groups under a 5% percentage point decrease (Multiracial students, 4.4%; Hispanic or Latino, 4.2%; Asian, 4%; and Black/African American, 3.9%).

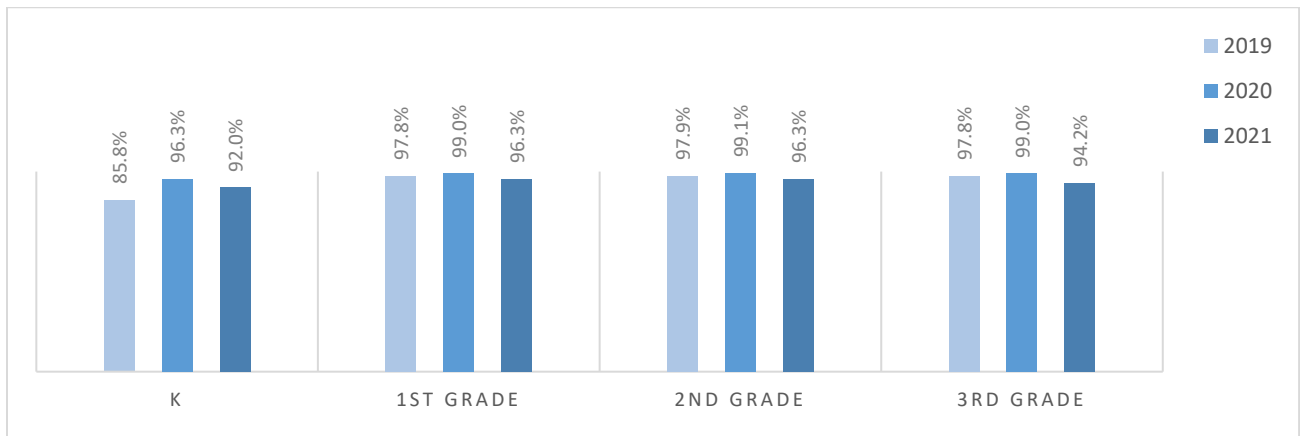
Figure 3. BOY Grade 1-3 Acadience Reading Assessment Participation Rates by Race/Ethnicity for SY2019 to SY2021



STATE PARTICIPATION RATES BY GRADE K THROUGH 3

The data shows that students in kindergarten (4.3%) and third grade (4.8%) experienced the largest percentage point decrease in their Acadience Reading assessment participation rates compared to the previous year (SY2019-20). Students in first grade had a 2.7 percentage point decrease while students in second grade had 1.8 percentage point decrease.

Figure 4. BOY Acadience Reading Assessment Participation Rates by Grade for SY2019 to SY2021

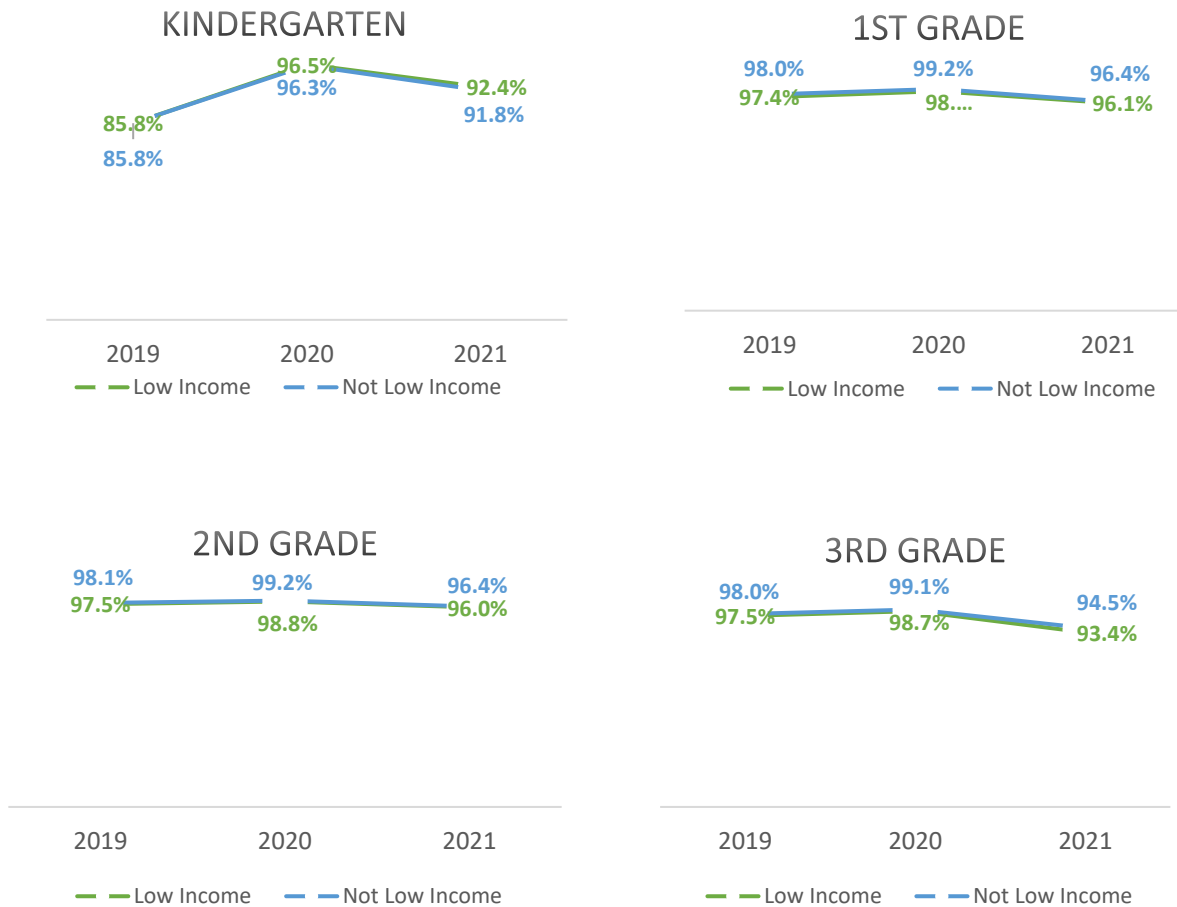


PARTICIPATION RATES BY GRADE AND DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP

STUDENTS FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

The Acadience Reading assessment participation rate of kindergarten students from low-income families was 4.1 percentage points lower from the previous school year 2019-2020. Kindergarten students who are not considered low-income had a similar decrease in their participation rate (4.5%). The participation rate of first grade students from low-income families was down by 2.6 percentage points compared to 2.8% for students who are not from low-income families. The participation rate of second grade students from low-income families fell by 2.8 percentage points. Second grade students who are not considered low-income had the same decrease in their participation rate. Third grade students from low-income families had a greater percentage point decrease in their participation rate (5.3%) than non-low-income students (4.6%).

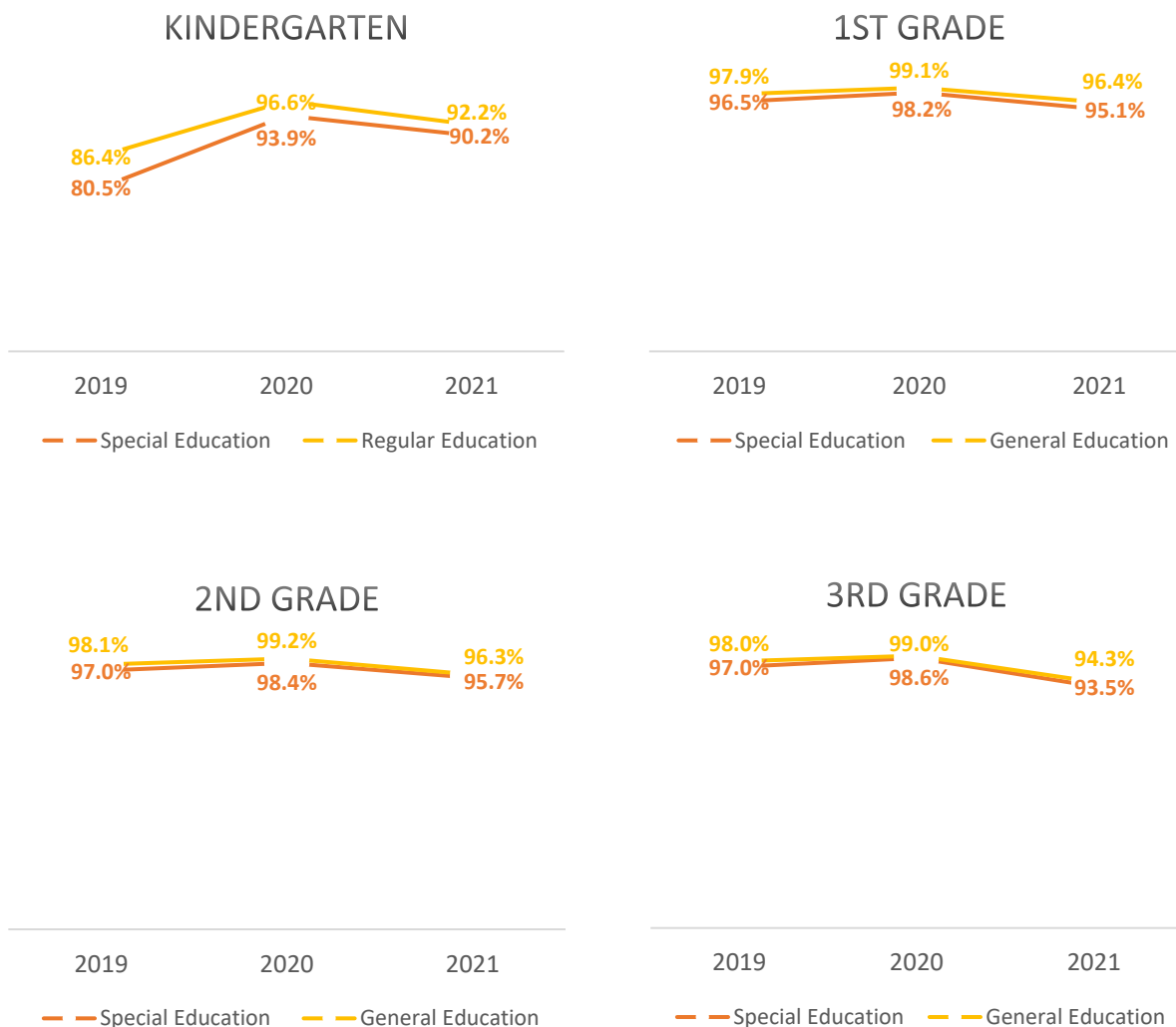
Figure 5. BOY Acadience Reading Assessment Participation Rates by Low-Income Status for Grade K-3 for SY2019 to SY2021



STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The greatest percentage point decrease in the Acadience Reading assessment participation rates was for third grade students who qualify for special education services (5.1%). Compared to students in general education, students who receive special education services had a similar decline in their Acadience Reading assessment participation rates across all grades (kindergarten, 3.7 percentage point decrease versus 4.4 percentage point decrease; first grade, 3.1% compared to 2.7%; second grade, 2.5% compared to 2.8%; and third grade, 5.1% compared to 4.7%, respectively).

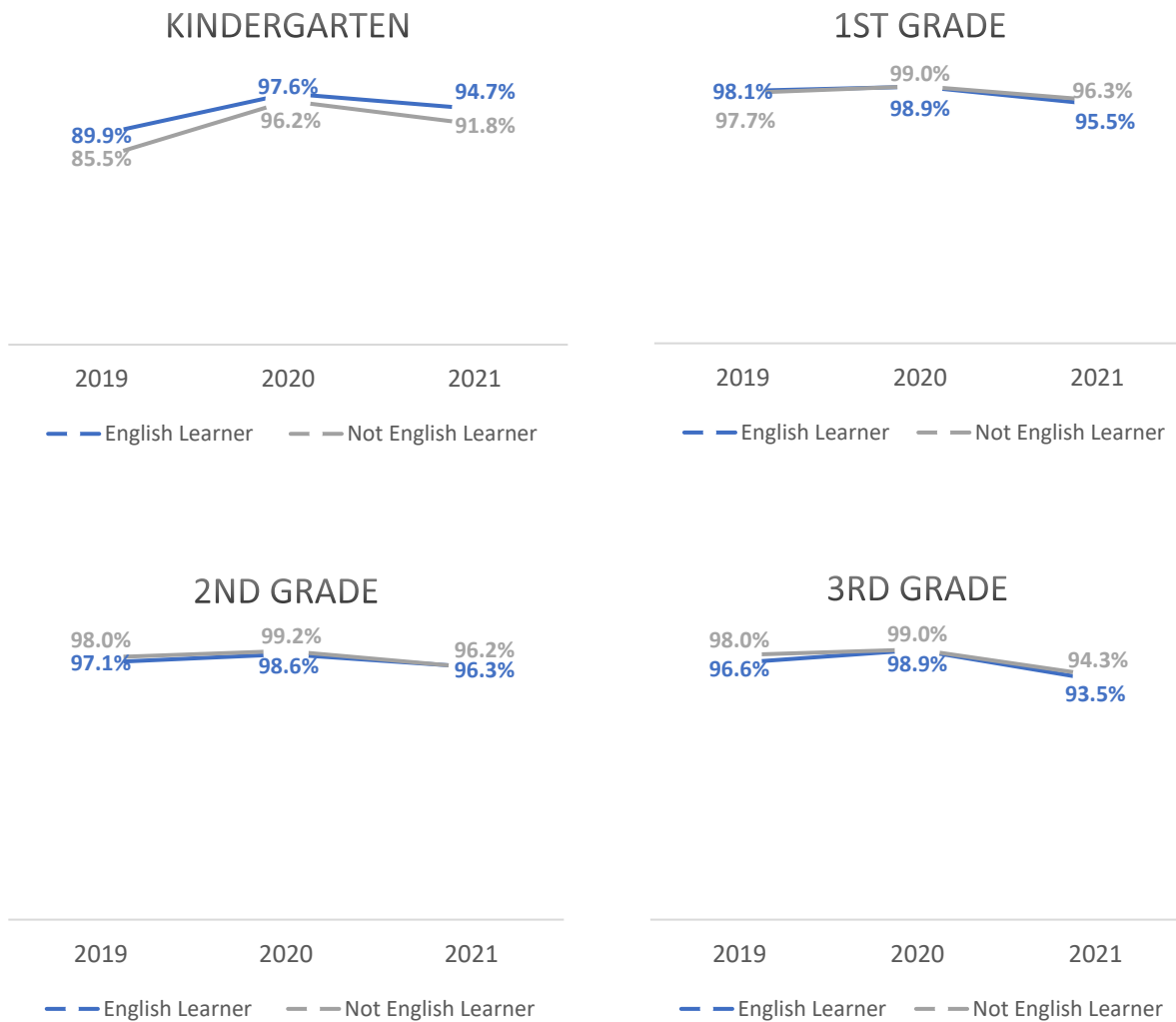
Figure 6. BOY Acadience Reading Assessment Participation Rates by Special Education Status for Grade K-3 for SY2019 to SY2021



ENGLISH LEARNERS

Compared to the last school year 2019-2020, the Acadience Reading assessment participation rates of EL students are consistently lower across each grade. EL kindergarten students had 2.9 percentage point decrease in their participation rate compared to 4.4% for students who are not ELs. First grade EL students saw a 3.4 percentage point decrease in their participation rate compared to 2.7% for students who are not ELs. Second grade EL students had a 2.3 percentage point decrease compared to 3% for students who are not ELs. Third grade EL students had 5.4 percentage point decrease compared to 4.7% students who are not ELs.

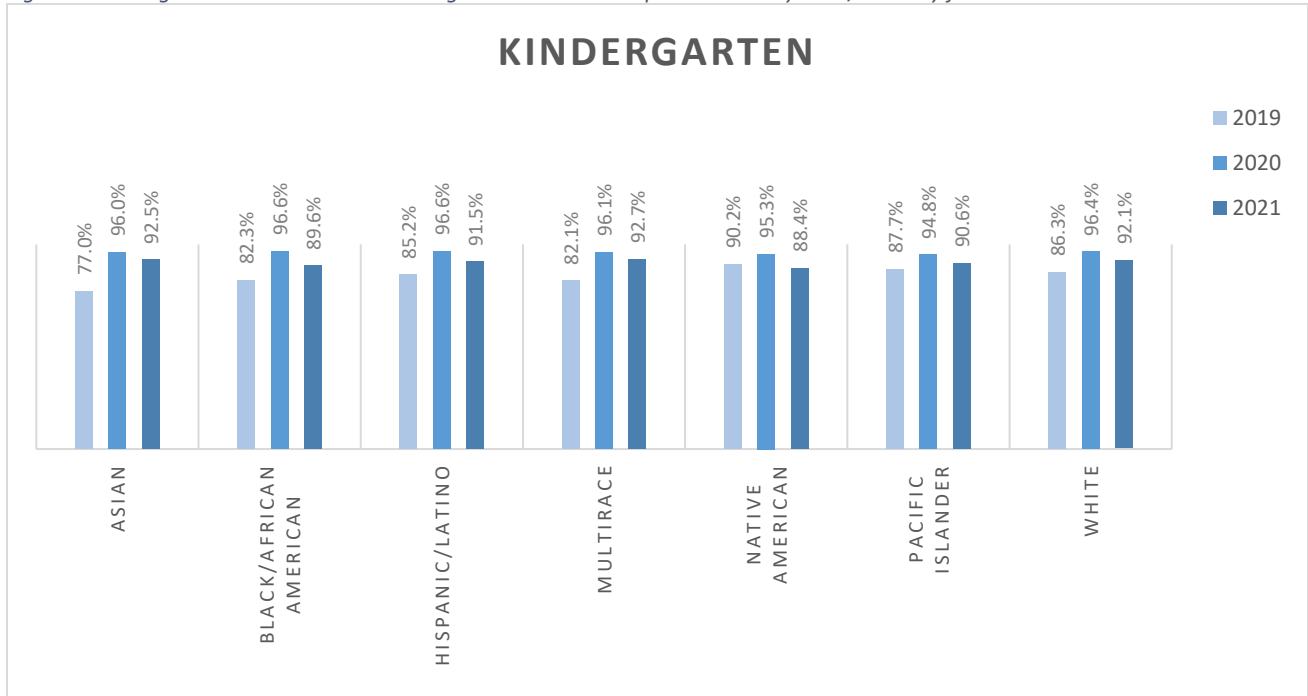
Figure 7. BOY Acadience Reading Assessment Participation Rates by English Learner Status for Grade K-3 for SY2019 to SY2021



PARTICIPATION RATES BY GRADE AND RACE/ETHNICITY

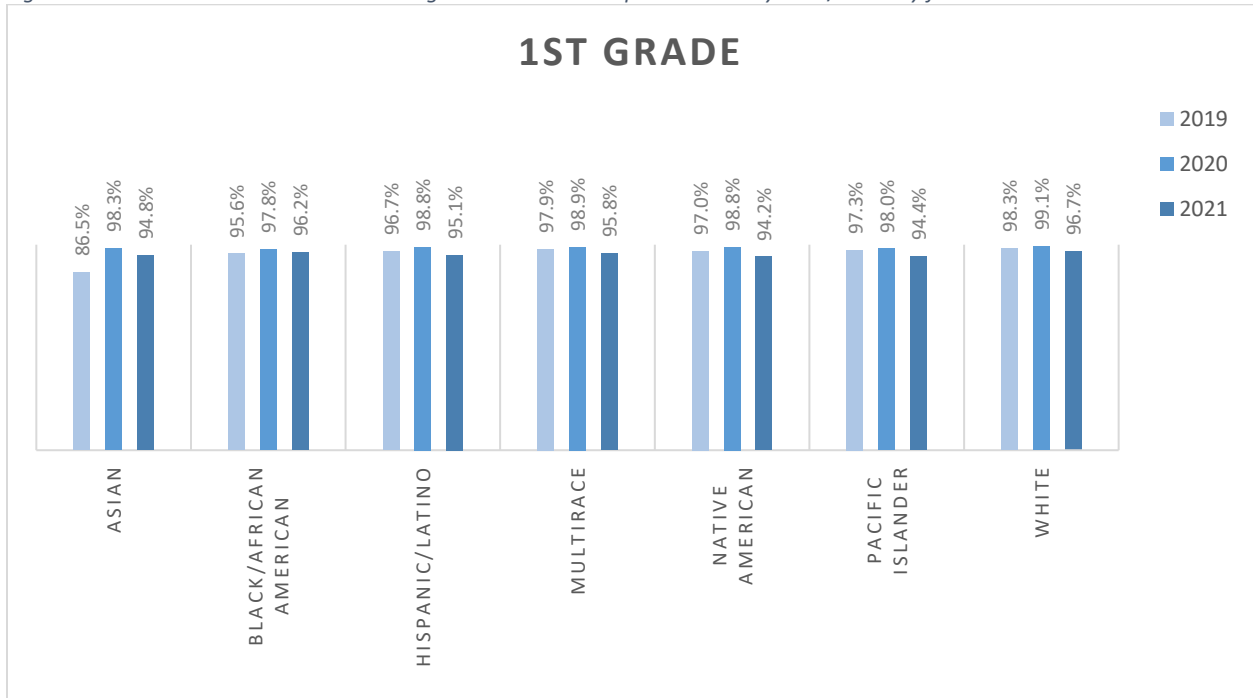
In kindergarten, Native American students and Black students had the largest percentage point decline in their Acadience Reading assessment participation rates (6.9% and 7%, respectively), followed by Hispanic/Latino students (5.1%). White students and Pacific Islander students had similar drop in their participation rates (4.3% and 4.2%, respectively). The participation rate of Asian students fell by 3.5 percentage points while the participation rate of Multiracial students decreased by 3.4%.

Figure 8. Kindergarten BOY Acadience Reading Assessment Participation Rates by Race/Ethnicity for SY2019 to SY2021



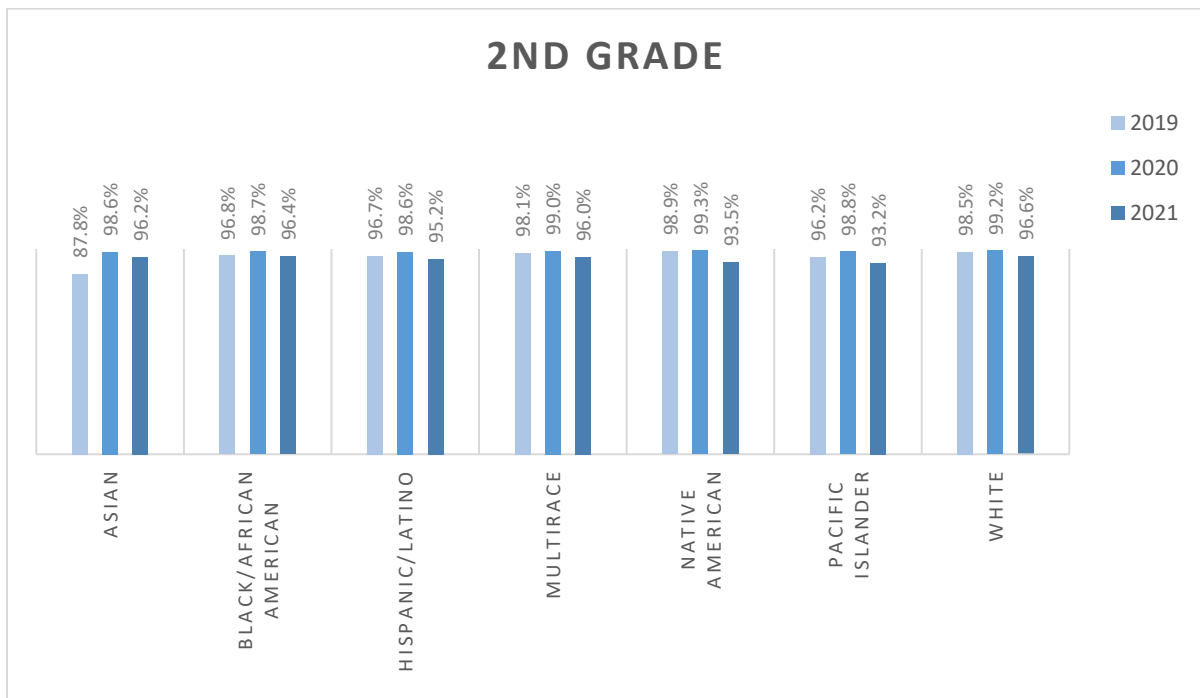
In first grade, Native American had a lower Acadience Reading assessment participation rate (4.6%) this school year compared to last school year than all other racial/ethnic groups (Asian, 3.5%; Black/African America, 2.6%; Hispanic/Latino, 3.7%; Multiracial, 3.1%; Pacific Islander, 3.6%; White, 2.4%).

Figure 8. First Grade BOY Acadience Reading Assessment Participation Rates by Race/Ethnicity for SY2019 to SY2021



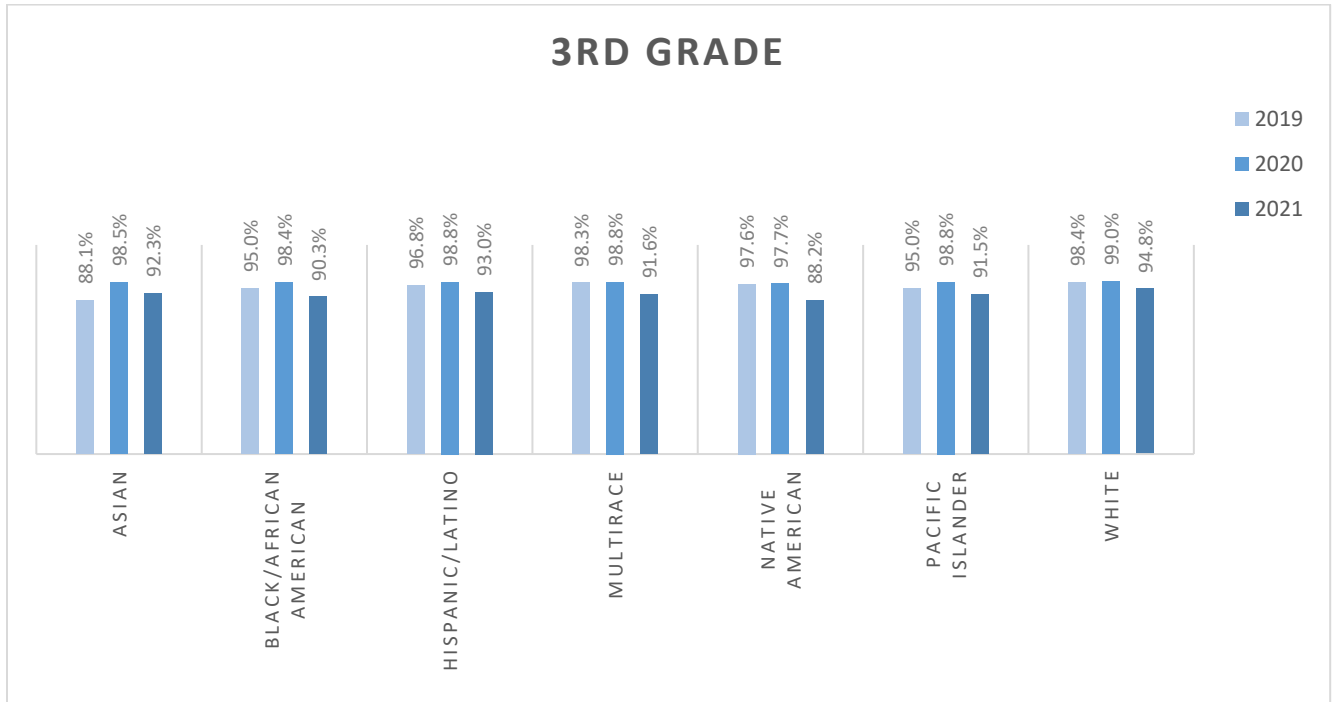
In second grade, the participation rates fell by 2.4 percentage points for Asian students, 2.3% for Black/African American students, 3.4% for Hispanic/Latino students, 3% for Multiracial students, 5.8% for Native American student, 5.6% for Pacific Islander students, and 2.6% for White students.

Figure 10. Second Grade BOY Acadience Reading Assessment Participation Rates by Race/Ethnicity for SY2019 to SY2021



In third grade, the data shows that Native American students had the largest decrease in their Acadience Reading assessment participation rate (9.5%), next were Black students with 8.1 percentage point drop, followed by Multiracial students and Pacific Islander students (7.2% and 7.3%, respectively). Compared to all groups, White students had the lowest percent point decline in their participation rates (4.2%). Asian students had 6.2% decrease while Hispanic/Latino students had 5.8% decrease.

Figure 11. Third Grade BOY Acadience Reading Assessment Participation Rates by Race/Ethnicity for SY2019 to SY2021

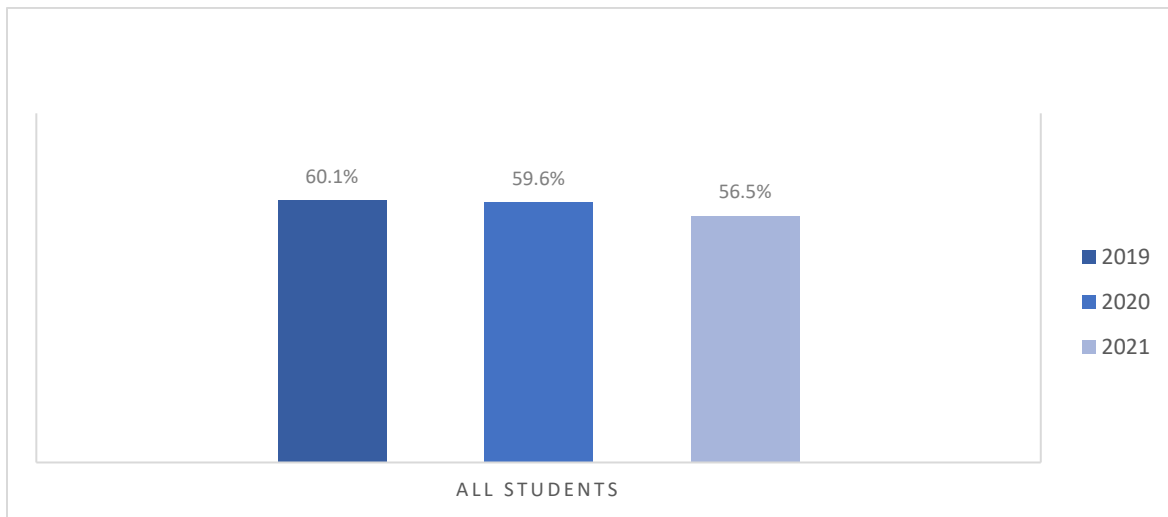


AT OR ABOVE BECHMARK

The Acadience Reading assessment provides three benchmark status levels that describe students' reading performance. These levels are, At or Above Benchmark, Below Benchmark, and Well Below Benchmark, which are based on the likelihood of achieving future reading goals and provide information about whether students need targeted instructional support. At or Above Benchmark is used here.

For this school year 2020-2021, the percentage of students who are at or below benchmark is 3.1 percentage points lower than the previous year across Grade 1-3 for all students in the state.

Figure 12. Percent of Students Reading At or Above Benchmark Based on BOY Acadience Reading Assessment, Grade 1-3, for SY2019 through SY2021



AT OR ABOVE BENCHMARK BY GRADE LEVEL

The percentage of students reading at or above benchmark fell the most in first grade (14 percentage point decrease; kindergarten, 3.1%; second grade, 6.5%; and third grade, 3.5%).

Figure 13. Percent of Students Reading At or Above Benchmark Based on BOY Acadience Reading Assessment, Grade K-3, for SY2019 through SY2021

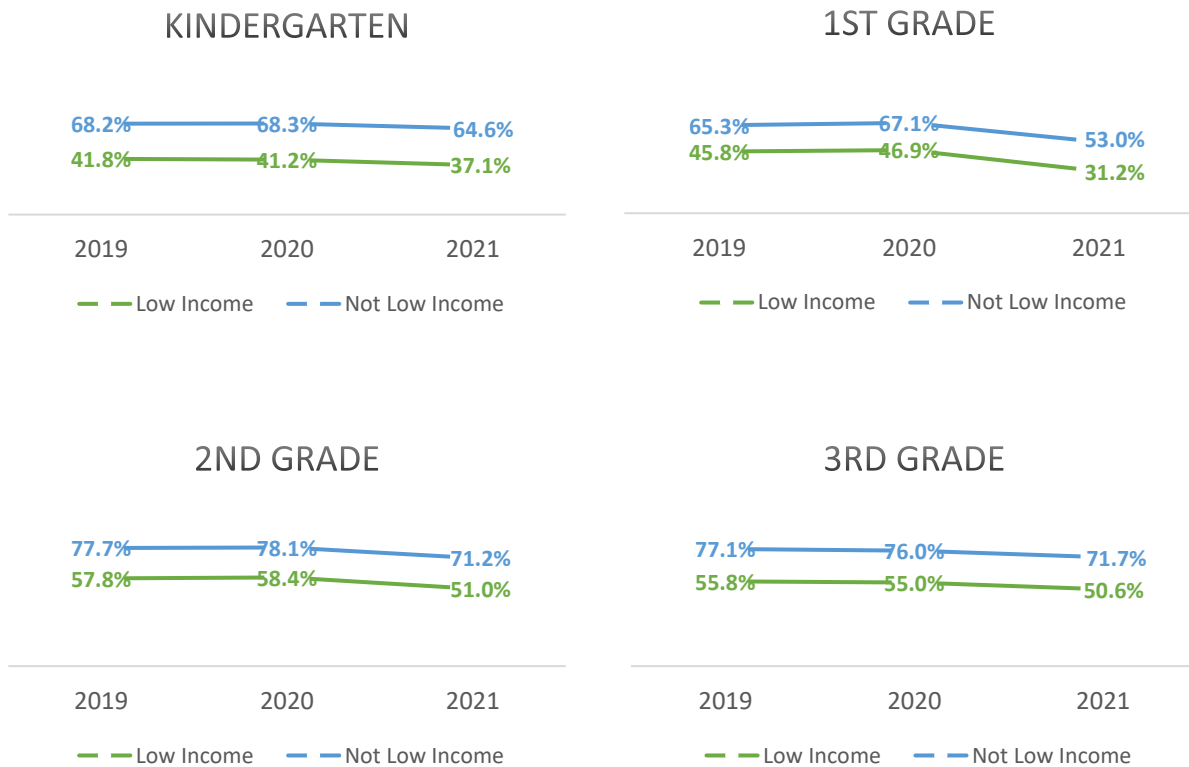


AT OR BELOW BENCHMARK BY GRADE AND DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

STUDENTS FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

The data shows that the percentage of first grade students from low-income families who are at or above benchmark was 15.7 percentage points lower this school year than the previous school year (not low-income students, 14.1%). Students in the second grade experienced the second largest decline in percent of students at or above benchmark (7.4% for low-income versus 6.9% for not low-income students) compared to last school year. The data shows smaller percentage point decreases in the percent of students at or above grade in kindergarten (4.1% for low-income students compared to 3.7% not low-income students) and third grade (4.9% for low-income students compared to 4.4% not low-income).

Figure 14. Percent of Students At or Above Benchmark Based on BOY Acadience Reading Assessment, Grade K-3 by Low-Income Status, for SY2019 through SY2021

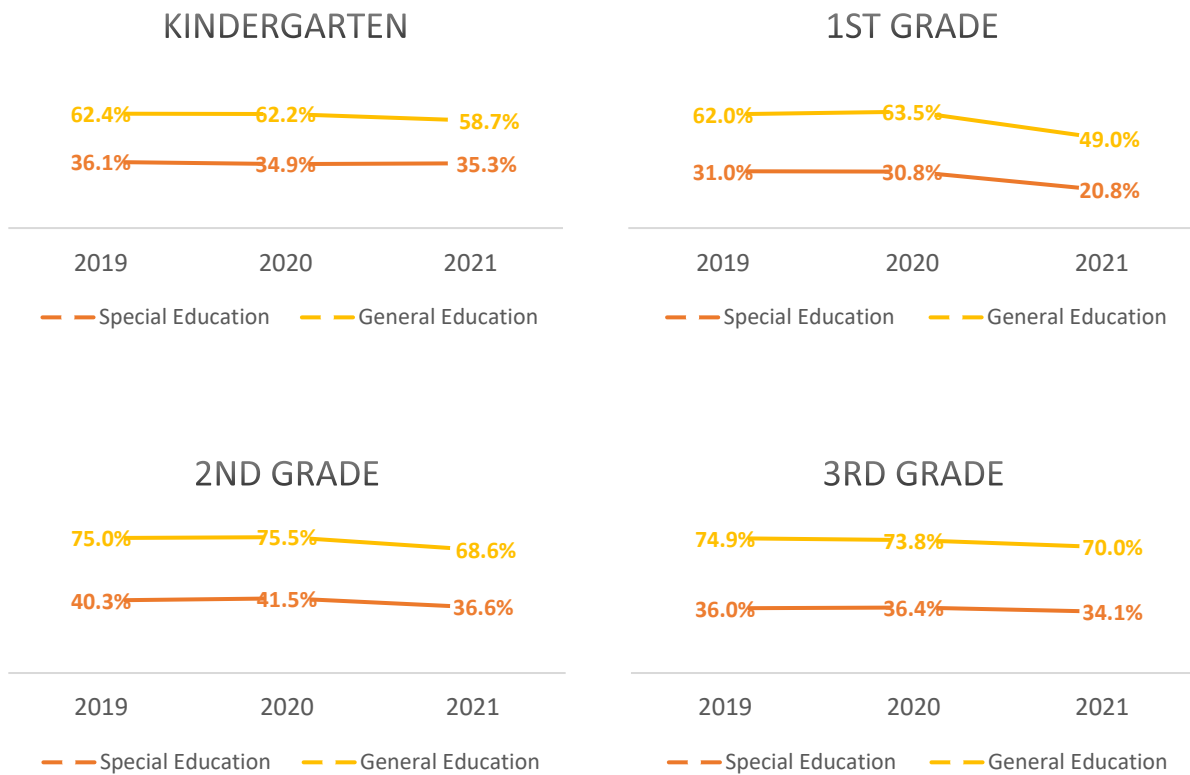


STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The data shows that students who are not receiving special education services had consistently larger declines in the percent of students at or above benchmark when compared to the previous school year. In second grade, the percent of students in special education was lower by 4.5 percentage points compared to 6.9% for students in general education. In third grade, the percent of students in special education reading at or above benchmark dropped by 2.3 percentage points compared to 3.8% for students in general education. The percent of kindergarten students in special education reading at or above benchmark increased by 0.4 percentage points compared to 3.5% decrease for students in general education.

The largest decline in the percent of students reading at or above benchmark for both groups is noted in first grade with students in special education showing a 10-percentage point decrease and students in general education with 14.5 percentage point decrease).

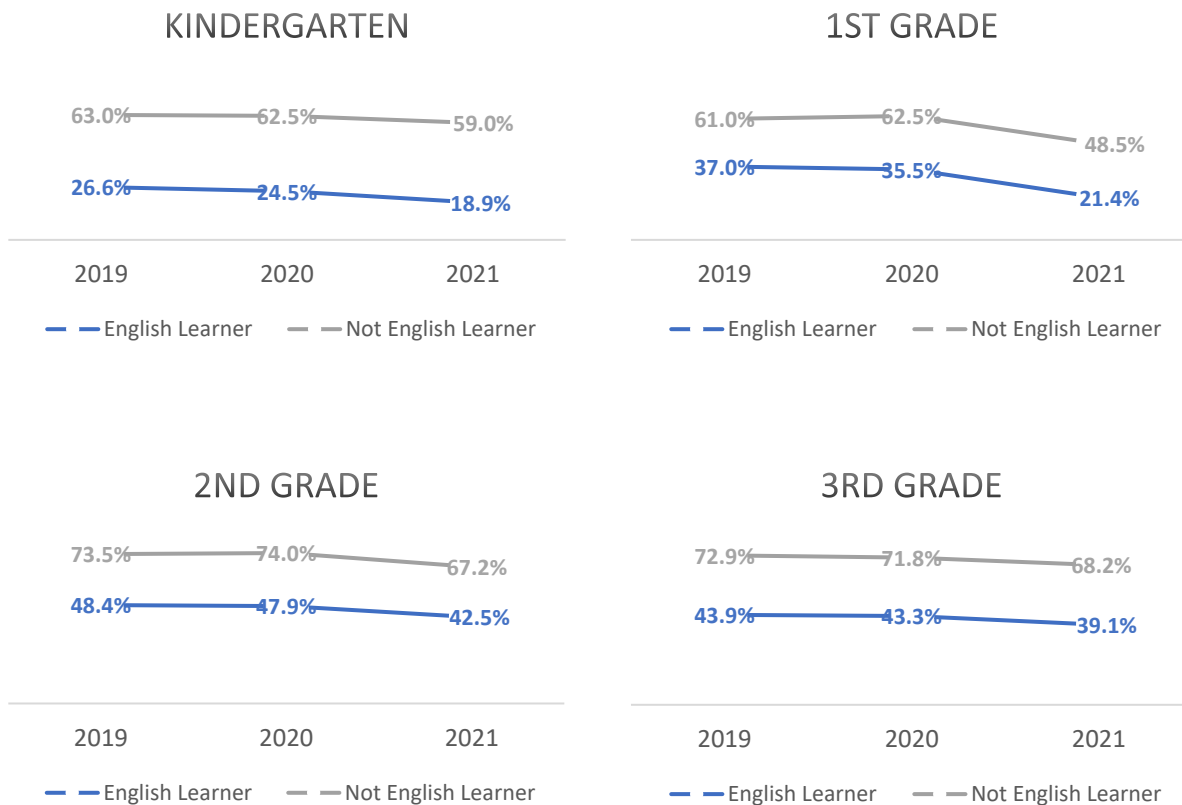
Figure 15. Percent of Students Reading At or Above Benchmark Based on BOY Acadience Reading Assessment, Grade K-3, by Special Education Status, for SY2019 through SY2021



ENGLISH LEARNERS

The data shows the largest decrease in the percent of EL students who are reading at or above benchmark was in first grade. For students who are not ELs, the percent point decrease was similar (14%). In kindergarten, the percent of EL students who are reading on grade decreased by 5.5 percentage points in relation to the previous school year (3.5% for students who are not ELs). In second grade, a lower percent of EL students are reading at or above benchmark compared to last school year (5.4% and 6.8% for students who are not ELs). In third grade, the decrease in the percent of EL students reading at or above benchmark was 4.2% percentage points compared to 3.6% for students who are not ELs.

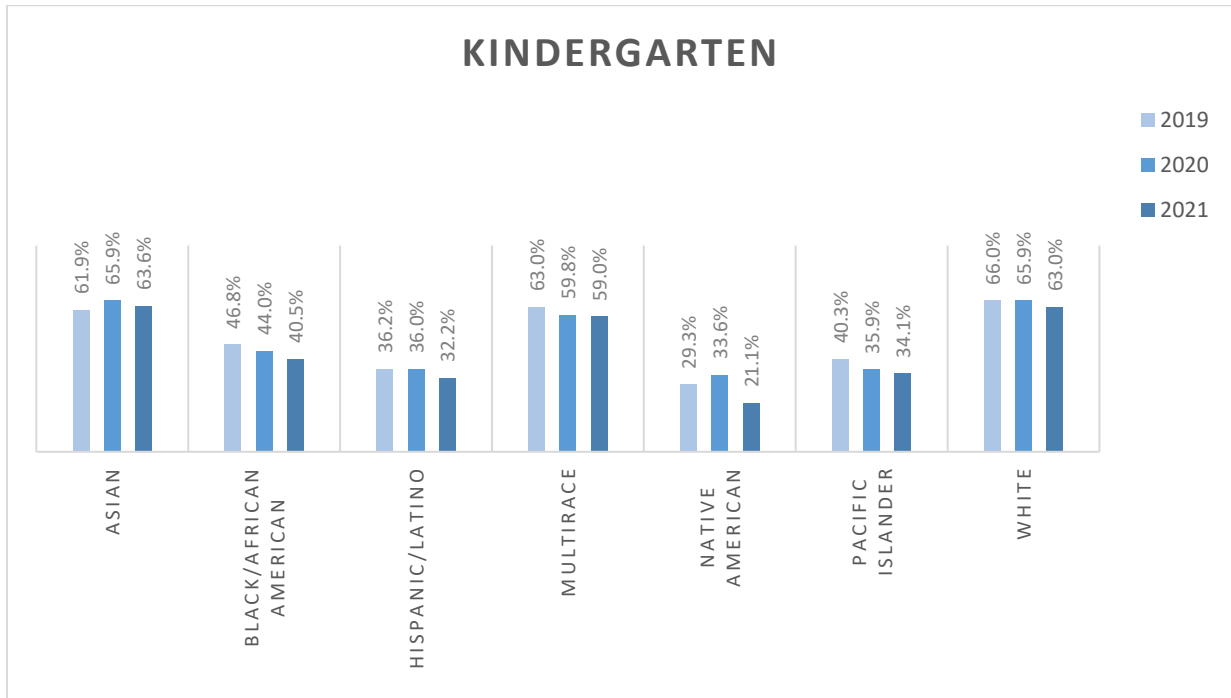
Figure 16. Percent of Students Reading At or Above Benchmark Based on BOY Acadience Reading Assessment, Grade K-3, by English Learner Status, for SY2019 through SY2021



READING AT OR ABOVE BENCHMARK BY GRADE AND RACE/ETHNICITY

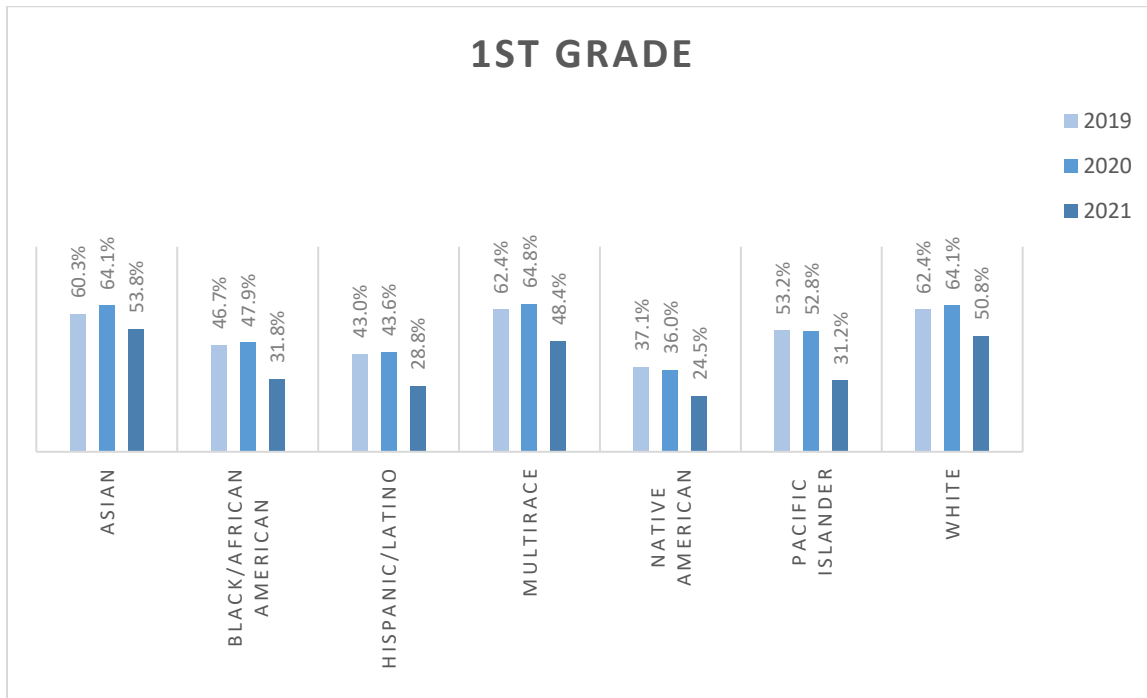
In kindergarten, Native American students experienced the largest decline in their reading at or above benchmark percentage (12.5%) compared to last school year. The rest of the groups had less than a 4-percentage drop (Asian, 3.3%; Black/African American 3.5%; Hispanic/Latino, 3.8%) with Multiracial students with the lowest percentage point decrease (0.8%), followed by Pacific Islander students (1.8%) and White students (2.9%).

Figure 17. Percent of Students Reading At or Above Benchmark Based on BOY Acadience Reading Assessment, Grade K, by Race/Ethnicity, for SY2019 through SY2021



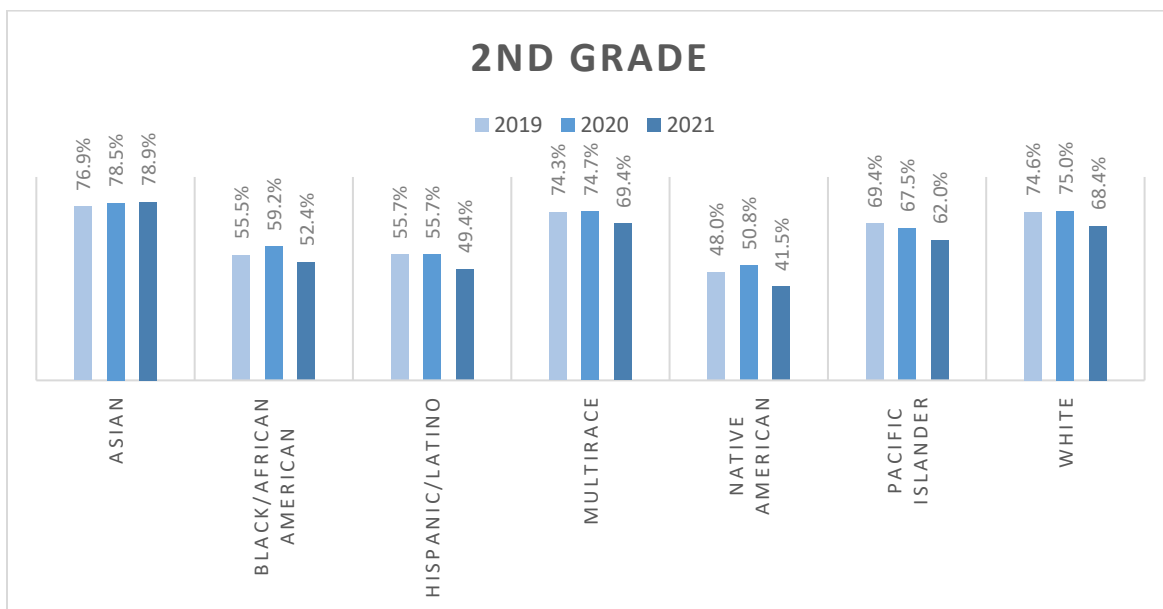
In first grade, all race/ethnic groups experienced a 10% or more decline in their reading on grade percentages when compared to the previous school year. Black students experienced the largest decline (16.1%), followed Hispanic/Latino students (14.8%) and White students (13.3%). Native American students had an 11.5% decrease and Pacific Islander students and Asian students experience an 11.6% and 10.3 decrease, respectively.

Figure 18. Percent of Students Reading At or Above Benchmark Based on BOY Acadience Reading Assessment, Grade 1, by Race/Ethnicity, for SY2019 through SY2021



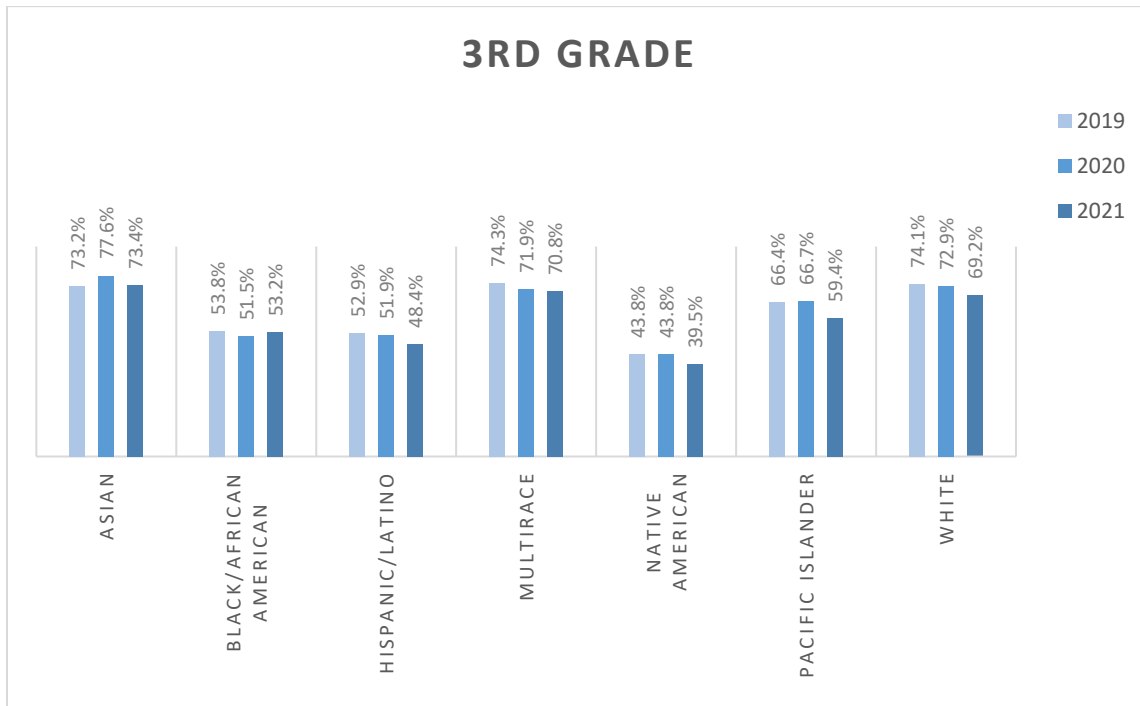
In second grade, the decline in the percentage of students who are reading on grade across all race/ethnicity groups ranged 0.4% (Asian) to 9.3% (Native American) from the previous school year. Black students had a 6.8 percentage point decrease. For Hispanic/Latino students, it decreased by 6.3 percentage points 5.3% for Multiracial students, 5.5% for Pacific Islander students and 6.6% for White students.

Figure 18. Percent of Students Reading At or Above Benchmark Based on BOY Acadience Reading Assessment, Grade 2, by Race/Ethnicity, for SY2019 through SY2021



In third grade, the decline in the percentage of students who are reading on grade across all race/ethnicity groups ranged 2.7% (White) to 7.3% (Pacific Islander). While all race/ethnic groups showed a percentage point decreases their reading at or above benchmark rates (Asian, 4.2%; Hispanic/Latino, 3.5%; Native American, 4.3%; and White, 3.7%), Black students experienced a smallest 2.3 percentage point increase.

Figure 19. Percent of Students Reading At or Above Benchmark Based on BOY Acadience Reading Assessment, Grade 3, by Race/Ethnicity, for SY2019 through SY2021



CONCLUSION

Across grades by demographic groups including racial/ethnic groups, the data shows percentage point decrease in participation rates. When comparing between student groups (e.g., low-income versus not low-income), the differences in participation rate drops are minimal. It is noted that Black, Native American, and Pacific Islander student showed larger percentage point declines in their BOY Acadience Reading assessment participation.

In terms of percent of students reading at or above benchmark, the data showed that the largest percentage point decrease occurred in first grade across all demographic and racial/ethnic groups.