Are Ohio's youngest children ready to learn?

Providing a strong foundation for young children in Ohio means they are ready to learn.

# School Readiness & Academic Achievement

What does the data tell us?

Children who enter school ready to learn are more likely to demonstrate stronger math, reading, and social skills later in life, whereas children who enter kindergarten unprepared are at a disadvantage for future success.[1]

Ensuring that young children enter school prepared to learn gives them a fair chance to succeed and creates greater opportunities for a more inclusive and prosperous Ohio.

Most young children do not demonstrate kindergarten readiness based on Ohio's assessment.

Demonstrating Readiness on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
41.9%	37.9%	35.4%	36.5%
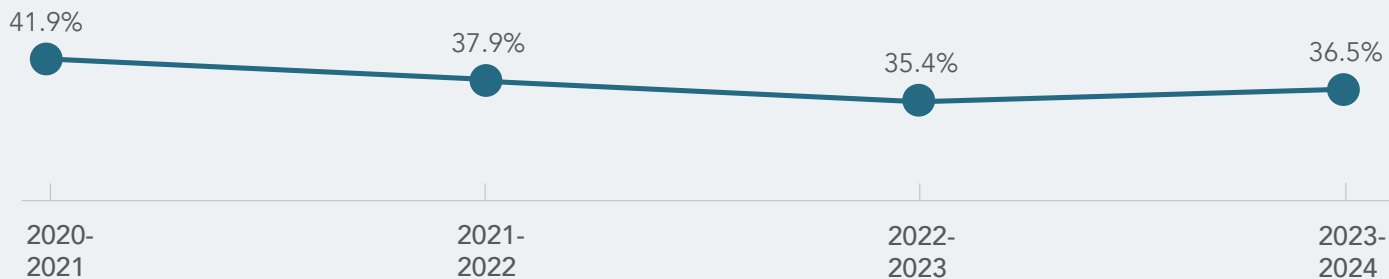
Source: Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, School Report Card data, 2020-2024

Literacy

Less than half of Ohio kindergarten students were on track for language and literacy in the 2022-2023 school year.

44% of Ohio students were "on-track" for language and literacy based on Ohio's kindergarten readiness assessment*
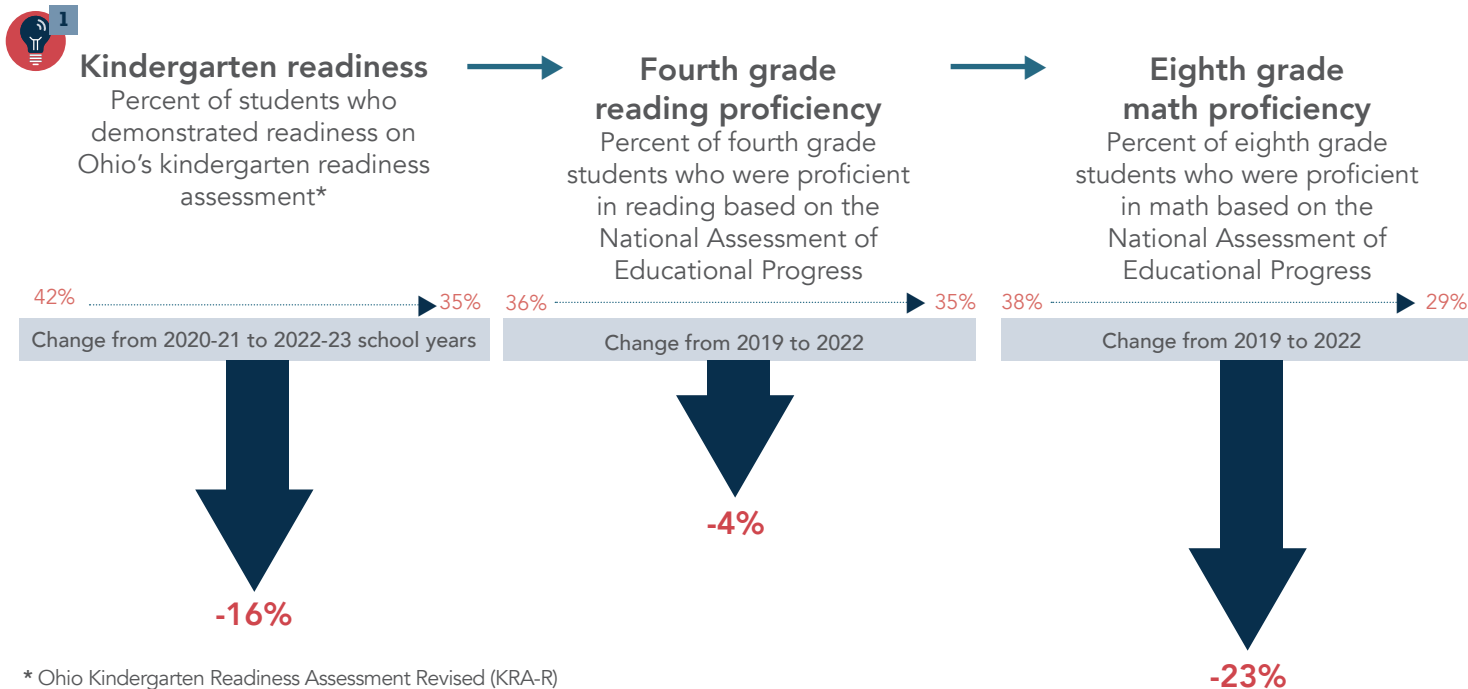
* Ohio Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Revised (KRA-R)
Source: Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, School Report Card data (2022-2023 school year)

Kindergarten readiness

Percent of economically disadvantaged students who demonstrated kindergarten readiness*

Top quartile (25.1% to 63.3%)
Second quartile (21% to 25%)
Third quartile (18.1% to 20.8%)
Bottom quartile (11.1% to 18%)

Statewide

49%
Ohio overall: 35%
21%

Ohio students **without** economic disadvantage

Ohio students **with** economic disadvantage

* Based on the Ohio Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Revised (KRA-R)
Source: Ohio Department of Education and Workforce and Ohio Department of Children and Youth (2022-2023 school year)

Kindergarten readiness, fourth grade reading proficiency, eighth grade math proficiency:

In Ohio, children are starting behind and staying behind in school. There is a strong connection in research between a child's readiness to enter kindergarten and their math and reading scores throughout their academic careers.[2] When we prepare our children for kindergarten, we prepare them for a future of academic success. Kindergarten readiness, fourth grade reading proficiency, and eighth grade math proficiency have all declined since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kindergarten readiness
Percent of students who demonstrated readiness on Ohio's kindergarten readiness assessment*

Fourth grade reading proficiency
Percent of fourth grade students who were proficient in reading based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress

Eighth grade math proficiency
Percent of eighth grade students who were proficient in math based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress

42% ➤ 35%
Change from 2020-21 to 2022-23 school years
-16%

36% ➤ 35%
Change from 2019 to 2022
-4%

38% ➤ 29%
Change from 2019 to 2022
-23%

* Ohio Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Revised (KRA-R)

Source: Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, School Report Card data (2020-2021 school year, 2022-2023 school year)

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Data Explorer (2019, 2022)

Almost two-thirds (34.5%) of fourth graders are not proficient in reading based on the National Assessment of Education Progress. The Healthy People 2030 Benchmark is 41.5%.[3]

Consistent attendance provides children with stable routines, exposure to enriching environments, and foundational skills that support school readiness.

When young children are frequently absent, they miss vital opportunities to develop key relationships with caregivers and peers, engage in early literacy and numeracy activities, and build the emotional regulation needed for later academic success.[4]

K-3 students missing at least 10% of school attendance time in a year.
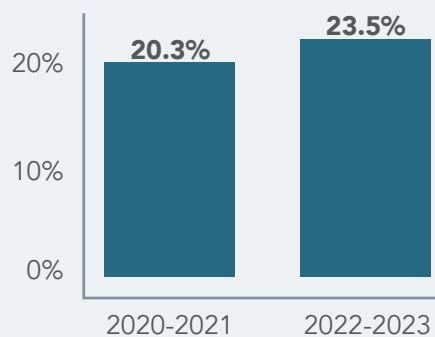
Source: *Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, 2023*

Chronic absenteeism has greatly increased since the COVID-19 pandemic, *disrupting students' learning, widening achievement gaps, and exacerbating social-emotional challenges, particularly for the most vulnerable populations.*[5]

Chronic absenteeism refers to a child missing 10% or more of school or educational program days within a given year, including both excused and unexcused absences.[6]

For children from birth to age five, chronic absenteeism can significantly disrupt their early learning experiences, which are critical for cognitive, social-emotional, and language development. Chronic absenteeism can also exacerbate existing disparities, further widening achievement gaps before children even enter kindergarten.

Citations & Sources

1. Ohio Department of Children and Youth. (2024). REI impact brief 2024.

2. Ibid.

3. US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2022

4. Dee, T. S. (2024). Higher chronic absenteeism threatens academic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 121(3), e2312249121.

5. Council of Economic Advisers. (2023, September 13). Chronic absenteeism and disrupted learning require an all-hands-on-deck approach. The White House.

6. American Academy of Pediatrics. (2024, May 13). School attendance.

Ohio's performance

School Readiness & Academic Achievement

	Baseline	Most Recent	Trend
Kindergarten readiness. Percent of students who demonstrated kindergarten readiness based on the Ohio Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Revised (KRA-R)	41.9% (2020-2021)	35.4% (2022-2023)	Worsened
White, non-Hispanic	42.2%		
Asian or Pacific Islander	35.8%		
Black, non-Hispanic	19.8%		
Hispanic	18.2%		
Multiracial	29.2%		
Students without disabilities	37.8%		
Students with disabilities	14.4%		
Students without economic disadvantage	49.2%		
Students with economic disadvantage	21.0%		
On track for literacy. Percent of students who were "on-track" for language and literacy based on the Ohio Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Revised (KRA-R)	52.1% (2020-2021)	44.3% (2022-2023)	Worsened
Fourth grade reading proficiency. Percent of fourth grade students who were proficient in reading based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress	36.1% (2019)	34.5% (2022)	No Change
Two or more races			
White, non-Hispanic			
Black, non-Hispanic			
Hispanic			
Eighth grade math proficiency. Percent of eighth grade students who were proficient in math based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress	37.5% (2019)	29% (2022)	Greatly Worsened
Chronic absenteeism. Percent of students in grades K-3 missing at least 10% of school attendance time in a year	20.3% (2021)	23.5% (2023)	Worsened
American Indian or Alaskan Native			
Asian or Pacific Islander			
Black, non-Hispanic			
Hispanic			
Multiracial			
White, non-Hispanic			
Economic Disadvantaged			
Not Economic Disadvantaged			