



## Destination 2025 Monthly: March 2021

Prepared by the Department of Research & Performance Management

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### Key Findings

- In reading, as measured by FastBridge assessments, the median achievement percentiles for SCS students in grades K-3 was below the national average (50th percentile) for all grade levels except for students in grade 2. The median percentile for grade 2 was 57.
- In math, the median achievement percentiles for SCS students were below the national average for all grade levels except for Kindergarten, which had a median percentile just above the national average at 53.
- In reading, the percentage of students with test scores in the bottom quartile increased for students in grades K-1 in fall 2020 compared to students in fall 2019. The percentage of students with scores in the bottom quartile in grades 2-3 decreased. Notably, 50% of all students in grade 1 scored in the bottom quartile.
- The same pattern held for math. The percentage of students whose test scores were in the bottom quartile increased for grades K-1 and decreased for grades 2-3.
- Median Lexile scores for students in grades 2-5 increased compared to fall 2019 for all grade levels except grade 5. The median Lexile score for grade 5 was unchanged.
- The median Lexile score for students in grade 3 was within the CCR Lexile range. No other grade level reached the recommended CCR range.
- Data should be interpreted in a larger context to account for the impact of COVID-19 learning loss and challenges related to virtual instruction and learning.

### Introduction

The March KPIs focus on academic progress for students in grades K-3 in reading and math. Historically, the KPIs have compared students' progress to the previous year using the winter (or mid-year) assessment scores from the District's universal screener. This year, however, due to the impact of the COVID pandemic, the assessment windows for the universal screener were adjusted. Instead of being assessed both at the beginning of the year and at mid-year as is typical, students have been assessed only once so far, in October. Thus, as opposed to having a fall and winter assessment score on all students, only one score is available from the universal screener that was administered in mid-fall. (Students will be assessed again on the universal screener at the end of the school year, providing a spring score.)

Students in grades K-5 were screened using the Illuminate FastBridge suite of assessments. The universal screener measures where students stand compared to a national comparison group on reading and math skills appropriate to their grade level. Students in grades K-1 are evaluated in a one-on-one testing format between the student and the teacher using the earlyReading and earlyMath assessments. All assessments were administered virtually using virtual supports that included placing student copies of the materials needed for the assessment in PowerPoint, OneNote, Whiteboard, or another comparable app. Students in grades 3-5 are assessed using aReading and aMath, which are computer-adaptive assessments that adjust question complexity based on the students' correct or incorrect responses to previous questions. Fewer adjustments were needed to administer aReading and aMath in a virtual setting as it is a computerized assessment. The schools and the Curriculum and Instruction staff, however, worked to support and monitor grade 2-5 students' completion of the assessments.



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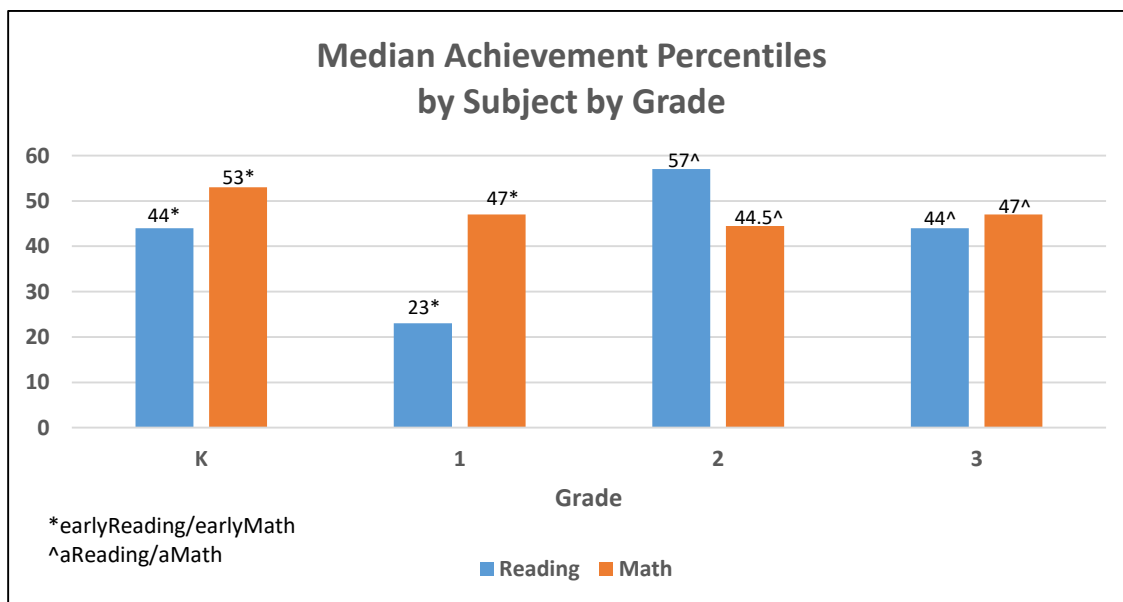
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Three metrics were used to examine K-3 student progress in reading and math: median achievement percentiles, the percentage of students in the bottom quartile, and Lexile scores of text complexity. Each of these will be discussed below.

### Median Achievement Percentiles

Due to the COVID-adjusted assessment window, the universal screener has been administered only once. Therefore, no student growth data (which requires a comparison of two assessment scores for the same students) are available. Instead, median achievement percentiles will be presented. Median achievement percentiles measure the percentile cut point at which half SCS students scored above and half scored below. A median achievement percentile of 50 would indicate that, as a group, students are achieving on par with the national average.

The graph below presents the median achievement percentiles by subject by grade for students in grades K-3. Reading percentiles are represented by the blue bars, and math percentiles the orange bars. For both subjects and all grades, except for Kindergarten math and grade 2 reading, the median percentile was below the national average (50th percentile). In math, Kindergarten students had a median achievement percentile of 53, putting the grade level just above the national average. Grade 2 students had a median achievement percentile 57 of in reading, also indicating that as a group they were above the national average. Perhaps the data point that stands out most is the median achievement percentile for grade 1 reading, which is 23. This means that half the students in grade 1 had an achievement percentile below 23 on the fall earlyReading assessment.



### Percentage of Students in the Bottom Quartile

The second metric examined was the percentage of students whose test score was in the bottom quartile on the assessment, or at or below the 25th percentile. The lower the percentage of students in the bottom quartile, the better the academic standing of the students as a whole. This metric examines each grade level as a group; therefore, the percentages from this year's assessment can be compared to the percentages from last year to gauge academic standing over time. To examine

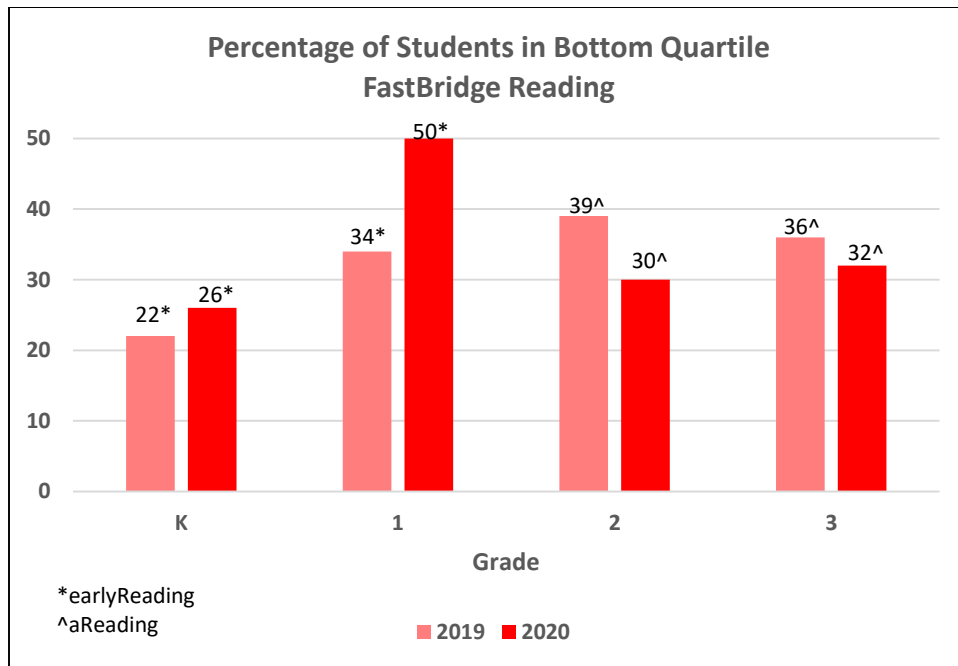


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comparable tests across the years, comparisons must come from the same assessment window.<sup>1</sup> This year, although the timing of the assessment window was adjusted due to COVID, the assessment SCS students in grades K-1 completed in October was the fall assessment. Therefore, these scores will be compared to last year's fall 2019 assessment scores. There were approximately 14 months between the fall 2019 assessment and the fall 2020 assessment completed in October.

The graph below contains the percentage of students in the bottom quartile for reading from fall 2019 (blue bars) and fall 2020 (orange bars). The percentage of students in the bottom quartile increased for grades K-1 from 2019 to 2020 and decreased for grades 2-3. Of note, is that 50 percent (i.e., half) of the students in grade 1 had test scores in the bottom quartile.

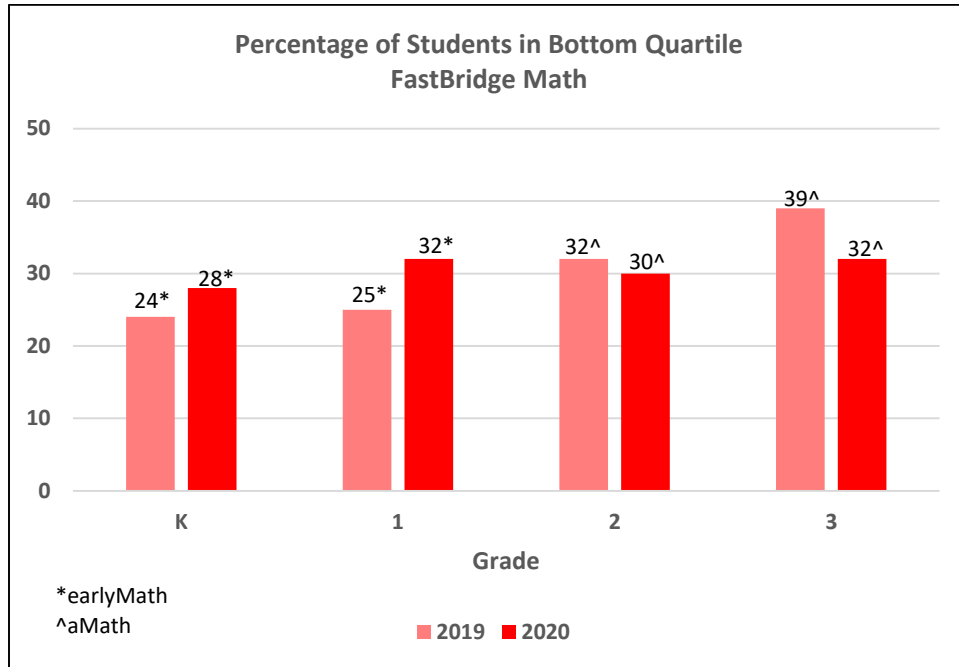


The next graph displays the percentage of students in the bottom quartile in math in fall 2019 and fall 2020. The same pattern holds here as in reading. There was an increase in the percentage of students in grades K-1 in the bottom quartile and a decrease for students in grades 2-3.

<sup>1</sup> The assessments administered in grades K-1 contain different subtests at different points in the school year, relative to academic instruction throughout the year. Thus, the content of the assessment differs from fall to winter to spring for earlyReading and earlyMath.



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### Lexile Scores

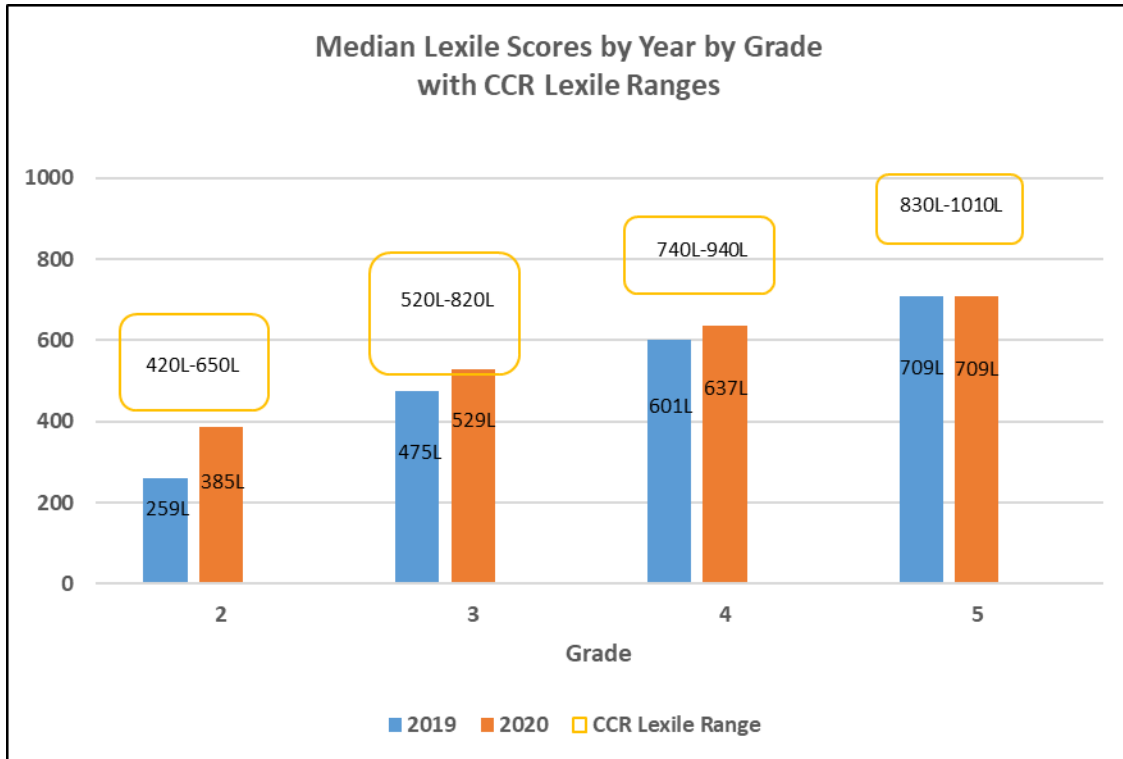
The final KPI for March is to examine the Lexile scores of students in all grades. Lexile scores indicate the level of text complexity students are able to comprehend on their own. The Lexile framework also provides the range of Lexile scores at which students should be reading over the course of a year to be college and career ready (CCR) by the time they graduate from high school.<sup>2</sup>

This year, Lexile scores are available for SCS students in grades 2-5. The graph below presents median Lexile scores for fall 2019 (blue bars) and fall 2020 (orange bars). For all grade levels, except grade 5, the median Lexile score was higher in fall 2020 than fall 2019. In grade 5, the median Lexile score was unchanged. As these are fall Lexile scores, to be on track for CCR, students should have Lexile scores at least at the bottom end of the CCR range depicted in the yellow box. Students in grade 3 in fall 2020 have a median Lexile score just reaching the lower end of the CCR range. No other grades have median Lexile scores in the CCR range.

<sup>2</sup> [lexile.com/educators/measuring-growth-with-lexile/college-and-career-readiness/](https://lexile.com/educators/measuring-growth-with-lexile/college-and-career-readiness/)



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### Interpreting the Data

Keeping a few points in mind will allow for a better interpretation of the above data. First, the median achievement percentiles presented represent achievement on a universal screener and not on a summative achievement test such as TNReady. The purpose of universal screeners is to identify students at risk or needing additional support for learning. Therefore, they do not necessarily predict mastery on summative achievement tests. Second, the assessments differ across grades. Students in grades K-1 are assessed with earlyReading and earlyMath which have a one-on-one testing format between the student and teacher, while students in grades 2 and above take aReading and aMath, both of which are computer adaptive tests. Any comparisons across grades must be interpreted with caution.

Third, outcomes may be influenced by COVID-19 learning loss and challenges related to virtual instruction and learning. For example, during the first few weeks of the school year, students were assessed with iReady, an online tool that provides diagnostic assessment information in reading and math. iReady scores for students in grades K-2 could not be analyzed due to questions about data validity, perhaps caused by challenges in a virtual environment. The one-on-one testing format in FastBridge for grades K-1 likely make the current earlyReading and earlyMath scores more accurate even though the assessments had to be administered virtually. The iReady scores for students in grade 3 in were compared to their scores from winter 2019 when the same students were in grade 2. The median percentiles increased slightly in both reading and math for this group of students from winter 2019 to fall 2020. However, despite median percentile increases, 44% of students in reading and 47% of students in math showed decreases in their individual percentile ranks across the two times.



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The various data for SCS students in grades K-3 show a mixed picture of both some progress compared to last year and some regression. Perhaps the best strategy moving forward is for the District to provide additional supports for all struggling students regardless of why they are struggling. The COVID-19 pandemic has added challenges for students and families and the youngest students in the District will likely need to be bolstered to reach their academic potential.