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Literacy Intervention Program Evaluation 2019

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LITERACY INTERVENTION PROGRAM **EVALUATION** 2019

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY
IDAHO POLICY INSTITUTE

LITERACY INTERVENTION PROGRAM EVALUATION
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For over 20 years, Idaho leaders have recognized the critical importance of early childhood literacy. In this time, the Idaho State Legislature, State Board of Education and State Department of Education have put in place policies, rules, plans and programs to support reading proficiency in Idaho's kindergarten through third grade students. In 2015, the Board of Education published an updated Comprehensive Literacy Plan for the state and the Legislature responded in 2016 by amending statutes related to early literacy development and establishing the current Literacy Intervention Program. Most recently, in 2018, the Legislature requested an external evaluation of the Literacy Intervention Program. This report, by the Idaho Policy Institute, serves as this evaluation. The report briefly reviews early childhood literacy efforts in Idaho to provide the necessary background and context of this program. It then evaluates the Literacy Intervention Program itself and discusses its design, use of funds and effectiveness during its first two years.

We stress that the current Literacy Intervention Program has only been in place since the 2016-17 school year. At the time of this report, we are in the midst of the 2018-19 school year. As such, there are only two full years of data with which to conduct an evaluation. This short time frame limits our ability to fully judge program effectiveness, as students who entered kindergarten during year one of the Program will not finish third grade until 2020. That said, there are early indications of patterns within the data that can inform the manner in which the Program is implemented, and further evaluated, in subsequent years.

Since 1999, when the first Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Plan was implemented, Idaho has seen an overall increase in literacy in kindergarten to third grade students. This is, in part, due to the State's commitment to early literacy and ongoing programmatic improvements. The Literacy Intervention Program assessed in this report is just one example of such improvements. By making a commitment to utilizing assessment data to make evidence-based decisions, the State will likely continue to improve on its ability to identify students most in need of additional literacy interventions and, thus, support all students' efforts to achieve grade level reading by third grade.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

In 1999, the National Reading Panel was convened by the United States Congress. The 14 member panel reviewed over 100,000 studies on how children learn to read, attempting to determine the most effective evidence-based methods for teaching reading. A major finding was that early reading acquisition depends on the understanding of the connection between sounds and letters. These findings prompted broad scale incorporation of policies across the states.

That same year, indicating continuing recognition of the critical importance of reading skills, Idaho passed the Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Act. The legislation associated with this act sought to mandate regular assessments of kindergarten to third grade (K-3) students (and make school-level assessment data available to stakeholders), provide intervention for students not meeting grade-level reading proficiency and implement associated professional development for instructors and administrators. The original legislation has morphed over time, with the most substantive updates in response to the outcomes of the 2015 Comprehensive Literacy Plan. One of the updates, implemented in 2016 by legislative statute, established the new Literacy Intervention Program (Program), the focus of this report. The Program is now in its third year.

EVALUATION AND RESULTS

METHODS

Idaho Policy Institute (IPI) reviewed recent peer reviewed academic literature and studies surrounding literacy intervention to identify best practices, contextualize Idaho's program and inform IPI's data collection and analysis of the Program.

IPI collaborated with Idaho State Board of Education (OSBE) and State Department of Education (SDE) staffs to collect data on performance metrics, specifically the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) assessment. IPI requested additional data elements deemed appropriate for the evaluation. This lead to three main sets of data:

- Student-level IRI scores and demographic data
- Individual Local Educational Agency (LEA) Literacy Intervention Plans
- LEA Literacy Intervention Expenditures

Student-level data from three academic years (2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18) was provided to IPI. The dataset included spring and fall IRI scores, grade level, gender, race/ethnicity, free and reduced lunch status, individualized educational plan (IEP) status, limited English proficient (LEP) status, 504 Plan status, homeless status, school and LEA. Every year of student-level data provided by OSBE represented four active student cohorts across the K-3 grade levels, with cohorts falling off after third grade and being added with each subsequent year's kindergarten class. The dataset includes over 527,000 unique test scores for 145,217 students over the three academic years.

We supplemented this with additional data elements on school locale from National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). LEA-level data from the Literacy Intervention Plans for academic years 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 was also collected along with expenditure reports. The plans' data was combined with the IRI data and NCES data to create a dataset indicating each LEAs' impacted population, budget and expenditures.

This information is reported at the state-level and used to identify patterns by different categories.

ELEMENTS OF EVALUATION

PROGRAM DESIGN

Generally speaking, the Program has been well-designed. The ability to tailor literacy intervention plans at the LEA-level allows for flexibility to take into account local context and shape interventions to suit local needs. Additionally, the mandated collection of data such as IRI scores, program budgets and annual expense reports is extremely beneficial for ongoing evaluation.

Another strength of the Program is that it targets resources and intervention directly to the students that need it. IRI scores are a relatively consistent assessment of students' literacy proficiency because they are administered over time and tracked by both the LEAs and the SDE. Funding is directly tied to a three-year rolling average of LEAs' aggregate student proficiency, allowing both schools and the state to direct resources where they are most needed. As noted, the Program provides a statewide framework, while remaining adaptable to local contexts through individual LEA plans.

One limitation in the Program's design is divided reporting of financial data and restrictions surrounding that information's usage. Having access to both anticipated budgets from the start of the academic year and expense reports at the end provides a valuable evaluative tool. Unfortunately, they are submitted to two different entities—the front end budgets to OSBE, the expense reports to SDE. Although LEAs submit their annual Literacy Intervention Plans with a projected budget to OSBE, OSBE is not charged with approving the plans nor can OSBE qualitatively evaluate the plans or compare plans against actual expenses. With no state entity empowered to compare both the front-end and back-end financial reports for evaluative purposes, there is a lost opportunity to track Program budgeting practices over time to better aid LEAs in anticipating actual Program costs over time and ensure more efficient distribution of financial resources. This, in turn, would make the Program itself more efficient over time. This problem is discussed more in-depth in the following section.

In addition to the financial reporting issues, intervention plans submitted by LEAs vary in format and reporting, limiting analysis opportunities. Finally, some LEAs criticized in their plans the practice of submitting the same IRI data to two state agencies, indicating such a mandated practice is a poor use of their time. Therefore, streamlining financial reporting for ongoing evaluation of financial data might have additional benefits by reducing the work load for individual LEAs.

USE OF FUNDS

As noted, LEAs are required to submit an expense report of the past year's Program expenditures at the end of each academic year. Expenditures are broken down into four major categories: Personnel, Curriculum, [Student] Transportation and Other. Using data from 142 LEAs in FY 2017 and 147 LEAs in FY 2018, IPI analyzed the proportion of annual LEA expenditures in each funding category. The averaged results across LEAs is summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1: AVERAGE PROPORTION OF EXPENSE REPORT BUDGET CATEGORIES (LITERACY PROGRAM FUNDING ONLY)

	FY 2017	FY 2018
Personnel	67.5%	71.0%
Curriculum	22.9%	21.0%
Transportation	0.8%	0.9%
Other	8.4%	7.3%

Distribution of expenses across categories is generally stable under the first two years of the Program. On average, personnel expenses accounted for 68% of the overall cost in the first year of the program and 71% in year two. Curriculum costs accounted for 23% of overall costs in year one and 20% in year two. Transportation expenses is the smallest funding category, reflecting that few districts expend funds on travel relative to the literacy intervention program—approximately 1% in both years. Finally, the Other funding category accounts for 8% of expenditures in year one and 7% of expenditures in year two.

LEAs are required to submit two financial reports each year. First, an anticipated budget is submitted to OSBE at the beginning of the academic year as part of the LEAs' Literacy Plans. Second, expense reports reflecting actual expenditures are submitted at the end of the academic year to SDE. As mentioned, by virtue of their submission to different state agencies, these numbers are generally not collectively reviewed. That said, if compared with one another, they can serve as useful financial planning indicators. For instance, these comparisons can help in identifying LEAs that may need more assistance in Program implementation if actual expenses consistently exceed budget expectations. The better LEAs are at anticipating how much funding they will have in a given year, the better they can direct those resources to where they will be most effective. In short, decision-makers would stand to benefit from a comparison of these financial data for evaluative and programmatic improvement purposes.

Comparing budgeted dollars to actual expenses can also be a relative indicator of Program efficiency year-to-year. IPI compared the start-of-year budgets to the end-of-year expense reports to produce a measure indicating how accurately the budgets anticipated costs. We classified LEAs "near budget" if expenses were within +/- 25% of anticipated costs. If expenses were greater than +/- 25% of budgeted costs, then they were either classified "over budget" (if actual expenses were greater) or "under budget" (if actual expenses were less). This allows us to track an element of financial efficiency over time. Table 2 and Figure 1 summarize LEA performance over the two years of the Program.

FIGURE 1: BUDGET TO EXPENSE REPORT COMPARISON

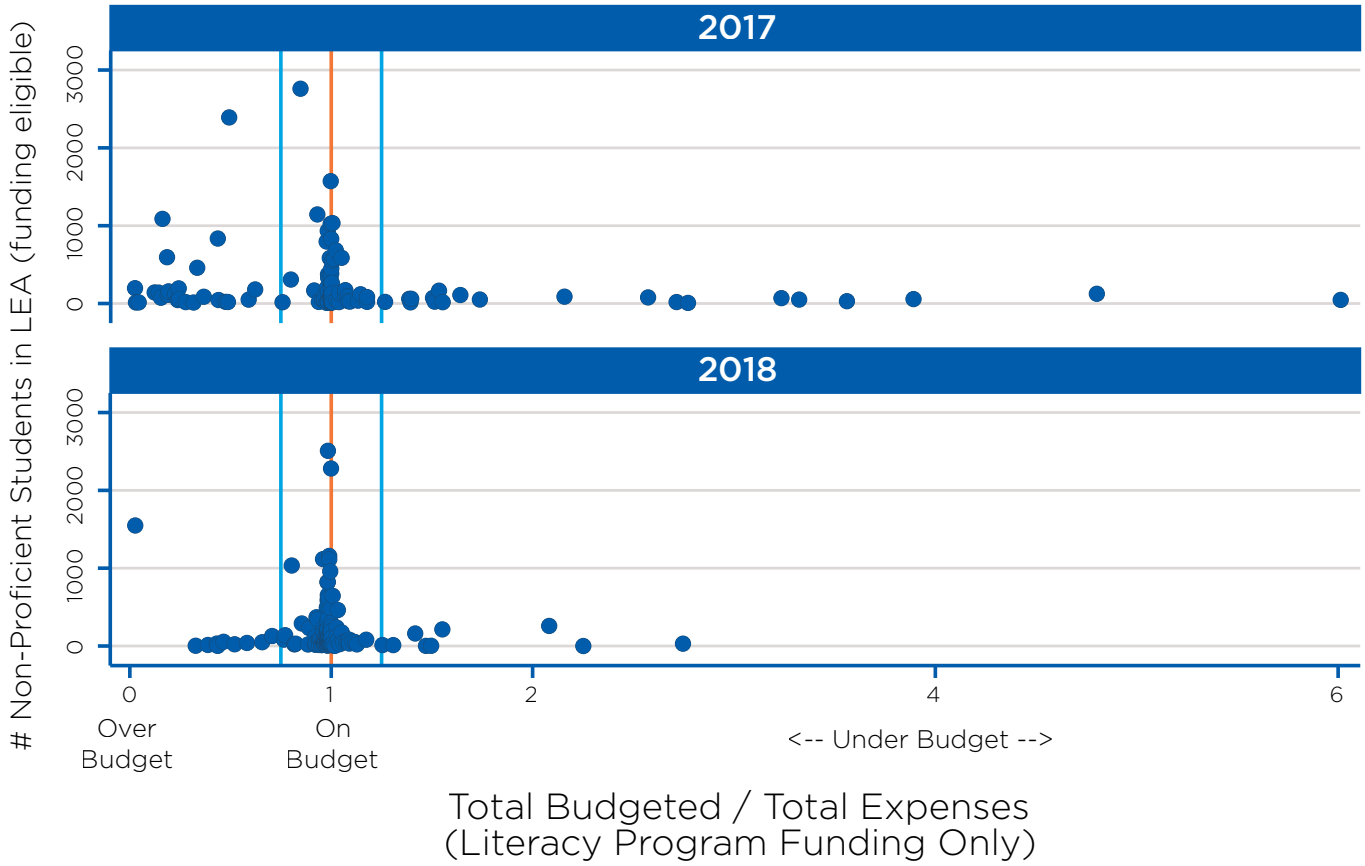

TABLE 2: BUDGET TO EXPENSE REPORT COMPARISON

	2017	2018
Over	20.8%	7.2%
Near	62.5%	86.3%
Under	16.7%	6.5%

In FY 2017, nearly two-thirds of LEAs—62.5%—were near their projected budget (the outer bounds of which are represented by blue lines on the graph—the orange line represents the point where budgets and expenses perfectly match). Approximately 20.8% were over budget, while 16.7% were under budget. By contrast, in FY 2018 the proportion of LEAs near budget increased to 86.3% (a 23.8 percentage point increase), while those over budget decreased to 7.2% and those under budget decreased to 6.5%. While two years of data is not enough to draw definitive conclusions, it nevertheless indicates that in year two LEAs better anticipated costs associated with the Program, which will allow them to allocate their resources more efficiently. From Figure 1, we can also see that schools with more students (and larger budgets) were generally better able to anticipate costs. This is likely due to the budgets of small schools being far more susceptible to even small changes in expenses, which would constitute a greater percentage of their initial budget. Even so, schools with fewer students also improved their Program budgeting in year two. Additional data points from subsequent years will help improve Program implementation, as it will allow the State to identify LEAs that could benefit from additional financial planning resources.

PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

With only two complete years of data from the Program, it is extremely difficult to assess its effectiveness. Students who entered kindergarten during year one of the Program will not finish third grade until 2020. Even then, those students would constitute only a single cohort, one that could have been influenced by challenges surrounding the Program's initial implementation, as well as a change in assessment instrument in year three (from the legacy IRI to the new IRI by Istation). Isolating the effect of these factors from that cohort would be difficult without a comparison group that did not experience these interventions. Even then, that would constitute only one cohort of students. That said, there are early indications of patterns within the data that can inform the manner in which the Program is implemented by identifying where resources may be allocated in order to effect change at the LEAs overall reading proficiency level.

Table 3 provides a descriptive overview of the dataset utilized for this evaluation.

TABLE 3: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Category	2016-17		2017-18	
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
Kindergarten Students	20,683	20,340	20,861	20,801
1st Grade Students	21,821	21,340	21,757	21,893
2nd Grade Students	22,396	21,855	22,105	22,037
3rd Grade Students	23,232	22,734	22,852	22,783
Total Students	88,132	86,269	87,575	87,514
% Homeless	2.2%	2.4%	2.4%	2.5%
% IEP	9.9%	10.0%	11.3%	11.4%
% LEP	10.8%	10.6%	10.7%	10.8%
% White	74.7%	74.8%	75.0%	74.9%
% Male	51.0%	51.1%	51.1%	51.2%
% Students Scoring Proficient	58.8%	72.9%	58.4%	72.4%
% Students Scoring Basic	22.9%	14.6%	22.7%	14.6%
% Students Scoring Below Basic	18.4%	12.5%	19.0%	13.0%

IRI Proficiency

One key component of the Program is assessing student literacy proficiency to best direct resources to students requiring more learning support. As such, each fall and spring, students in grades K-3 take the IRI. It is important to note, the intention of the IRI is to assist instructors in identifying students who may need additional support to achieve grade-level reading, rather than to evaluate students or their instructors. Generally, fall scores are lower than spring scores due to the so-called "summer slide," the months of summer vacation when students are without daily classroom instruction. Those who do not score proficient on the fall exam are required to receive additional instructional hours

TABLE 4: LITERACY PROFICIENCY BY GRADE (SPRING IRI) (2016-17)

	Grade			
	KG	1st	2nd	3rd
Below Basic	7.4%	15.1%	15.3%	11.9%
Basic	12.5%	17.8%	14.8%	13.3%
Proficient	80.1%	67.1%	69.9%	74.9%

TABLE 5: LITERACY PROFICIENCY BY GRADE (SPRING IRI) (2017-18)

	Grade			
	KG	1st	2nd	3rd
Below Basic	7.2%	15.5%	17.0%	12.1%
Basic	12.9%	17.6%	14.5%	13.2%
Proficient	79.9%	66.9%	68.5%	74.6%

(30 hours if scoring Basic, 60 hours if Below Basic), within the school year, to bring them to grade level.

Table 4 breaks down Spring IRI scores by grade level for FY 2017, while Table 5 does for FY 2018. Reading proficiency levels were generally stable at each grade level between years one and two. Kindergarten students achieved the highest reading proficiency level, with 80.1% proficient in year one and 79.9% in year two. We see a substantial drop-off in proficiency rate from kindergarten to first grade, with 67.1% of first graders proficient in year one and 66.9% in two. Scores improved only slightly for second grade, which saw 69.9% and 68.5% proficient in years one and two, respectively. Finally, scores improved in third grade, reaching 74.9% proficient in year one and 74.6% in year two.

Collectively, the results suggest that students do not have a particularly difficult time grasping kindergarten-level reading concepts, but begin to struggle as they are introduced to more advanced concepts in first and second grades. More specifically, in kindergarten children are expected (and therefore tested on) their ability to identify letters and their sounds. Starting in first grade, they begin to learn to read and the assessment takes on greater complexity, which can be challenging for some, thus resulting in lower test scores. Another compounding factor that could be impacting results for kindergarteners is that it is not compulsory in Idaho. As a result, some first grade students are being exposed to formalized education for the first time, without adequate preparation, which translates into lower assessment scores. These lower scores pull down the overall average for the grade level, which can take several years/grade levels to recover. Additionally, the second grade appears to be especially challenging to students, as it is the only grade in both years where Below Basic is the second-most frequent outcome. By third grade, however, students' proficiency somewhat recovers.

Locale

An indication of proficiency differences between urban and rural students may be useful in directing support to underperforming LEAs. In order to determine if this was the case in Idaho, NCES's indicator of school locale was used to create categories for comparison. NCES currently defines school locale along four overriding categories: City, Suburb, Town and Rural (for how each category is defined, see Appendix A). Tables 6 and 7 summarize proficiency levels by school locale. The distribution of students was fairly consistent across

TABLE 6: LITERACY PROFICIENCY BY LOCALE (SPRING IRI) (2016-17)

	Grade			
	KG	1st	2nd	3rd
City	78.9%	68.4%	70.6%	76.2%
Suburb	83.4%	70.6%	73.4%	76.3%
Town	78.1%	63.4%	65.9%	73.2%
Rural	79.9%	66.0%	69.2%	73.8%

TABLE 7: LITERACY PROFICIENCY BY LOCALE (SPRING IRI) (2017-18)

	Grade			
	KG	1st	2nd	3rd
City	79.5%	68.1%	71.0%	76.8%
Suburb	83.7%	71.5%	71.6%	77.2%
Town	78.0%	61.9%	64.1%	71.2%
Rural	79.0%	66.2%	67.6%	73.3%

locales, with suburban schools having slightly more students than other classifications. Suburban schools perform best across all grade levels in both years, with proficiency levels ranging from 70-84%. Town schools appear to have the lowest proficiency, edging out rural schools. Even so, town school proficiency ranges from 62-78% across both years. That said, by third grade, all locales have proficiency rates in excess of 70%.

Cohort

While the results paint a picture of statewide student proficiency, it is also useful to track individual student proficiency across years. Towards that end, students in the IRI dataset were assigned to five cohorts in order to track their proficiency across grade levels. Cohort 1 consists of students enrolled in third grade during the 2016-17 school year, who subsequently fell out of the dataset. Cohort 2 consists of students enrolled in second grade in 2016-17 and third grade in 2017-18. Cohort 3 consists of students in first grade (2016-17) and second grade (2017-18). Cohort 4 consists of students in kindergarten (2016-17) and first grade (2017-18). And finally, Cohort 5 consists of students in kindergarten in 2017-18.

To preserve comparative power, students who repeated grades or were not enrolled in consecutive fall/spring terms were excluded from cohorts.

Table 8 summarizes cohort proficiency over time. Similar to the aggregate statewide proficiency, kindergarten had the highest levels of reading proficiency, with Cohorts 4

TABLE 8: LITERACY PROFICIENCY BY COHORT (SPRING IRI) (2 YEARS)

	Grade			
	KG	1st	2nd	3rd
Cohort 1				76.0%
Cohort 2			71.3%	75.8%
Cohort 3		68.8%	69.9%	
Cohort 4	82.1%	68.2%		
Cohort 5	80.7%			

and 5 exceeding 80% proficiency. While Cohort 4 exhibited the same drop-off between kindergarten and first grade, Cohorts 2 and 3 both showed improved proficiency as they advanced to third and second grades, respectively.

These results indicate that the literacy programs are effective at increasing proficiency from first to second and second to third grades. The drop off from kindergarten to first grade, discussed earlier, remains a concern and may warrant further attention. Possible interventions that may mitigate the drop include a closer look at Early Reading Instruction or making kindergarten attendance compulsory. Unfortunately, with the limited cohort data in our dataset (only a single cohort advanced from kindergarten to first grade), we cannot adequately assess the effect of kindergarten attendance on first grade proficiency levels. This is something that may be possible in future evaluations with a greater number of student cohorts.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity

As racial and ethnic diversity may impact students' reading proficiency, and such students may need greater support, we created an indicator of school diversity. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (2017), Idaho's population is 91% white, which suggests most Idaho schools will have predominantly white students. Therefore, we created a relative diversity measure for Idaho schools by coding all schools in the dataset according to the racial/ethnic makeup of its K-3 students and dividing the schools into subgroups. Schools with a student body that is over 90% white are classified ***low diversity***, those that are 85-90% white are classified ***medium diversity***, 75-84% as ***high diversity*** and those with less than 75% white students as ***very high diversity***. Tables 9 and 10 break down IRI proficiency by grade level and school diversity for each year.

While there is not much difference in kindergarten proficiency levels across diversity classifications, there is a much more pronounced effect in subsequent grades. Schools with very high racial diversity generally have a proficiency level 10 percentage points less than other diversity classifications. This is likely a result of more diverse schools having a higher concentration of non-white students for whom English is a second language. As we will see in the next section, this can substantially affect proficiency rates.

TABLE 9: LITERACY PROFICIENCY BY SCHOOL DIVERSITY (SPRING IRI) (2016-17)

	Grade			
	KG	1st	2nd	3rd
Very High	77.7%	61.0%	64.7%	69.1%
High	80.9%	71.2%	72.0%	77.4%
Medium	82.6%	71.0%	74.7%	79.8%
Low	81.4%	70.2%	73.0%	77.8%

TABLE 10: LITERACY PROFICIENCY BY SCHOOL DIVERSITY (SPRING IRI) (2017-18)

	Grade			
	KG	1st	2nd	3rd
Very High	78.0%	60.6%	61.8%	69.8%
High	82.9%	71.8%	73.2%	77.3%
Medium	79.8%	69.0%	72.0%	77.9%
Low	80.1%	72.2%	72.4%	77.8%

Limited English Proficiency

As the IRI assesses students' proficiency in reading English, students for whom which English is not their first language may have lower levels of proficiency. Idaho schools identify such students through a ten category classification system for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students. For ease of analysis, we have collapsed these classifications into two categories: LEP students (those in the program or still undergoing monitoring) and non-LEP students (those now fluent, screened out or not applicable). Tables 11 and 12 summarize the results.

TABLE 11: LITERACY PROFICIENCY BY LEP (SPRING IRI) (2016-17)

	Grade			
	KG	1st	2nd	3rd
Non-LEP	81.0%	69.5%	71.9%	76.9%
LEP	71.8%	48.1%	52.4%	58.8%

TABLE 12: LITERACY PROFICIENCY BY LEP (SPRING IRI) (2017-18)

	Grade			
	KG	1st	2nd	3rd
Non-LEP	80.9%	69.1%	70.7%	76.6%
LEP	71.6%	49.5%	51.7%	58.0%

Results for both years demonstrate the same patterns we have seen up to this point—large drop from kindergarten to first grade followed by gradual recovery—but the results for LEP students are more pronounced. While LEP students lag non-LEP students by 10 percentage points in kindergarten, the gap widens in subsequent years to roughly 20 percentage points. The difficulties of learning a second language compound the inherent challenges of learning how to read, leaving LEP students to play catch-up. From this we begin to see why schools with very high diversity produce lower proficiency rates — as they likely have a higher concentration of LEP students facing unique challenges. This presents another possible area for improvement. If we know that the added challenges LEP students face result in lower reading proficiency scores, improving programs that aid and support LEP students, or allocating resources to help mitigate those challenges, can help produce an overall positive impact on reading proficiency. The earlier these challenges can be mitigated, the better, as it will allow these students to no longer be left behind their classmates.

Students with Prior Learning Accommodations

Some students face physical or behavioral challenges that necessitate an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to accommodate their learning. As with students for whom English is not their first language, the reading challenges faced by students with an IEP are compounded by the challenges they already face. Tables 13 and 14 summarize the IRI proficiency levels of IEP students.

Across both years, we see that reading proficiency among IEP students consistently lagged non-IEP students. While not surprising, the margin grows wider with each

TABLE 11: LITERACY PROFICIENCY BY IEP (SPRING IRI) (2016-17)

	Grade			
	KG	1st	2nd	3rd
Non-IEP	82.6%	70.7%	74.4%	80.1%
IEP	55.0%	35.2%	30.7%	30.8%

TABLE 12: LITERACY PROFICIENCY BY IEP (SPRING IRI) (2017-18)

	Grade			
	KG	1st	2nd	3rd
Non-IEP	82.5%	70.9%	73.7%	80.1%
IEP	57.2%	35.6%	30.9%	34.7%

successive grade level, nearly doubling from 25-28 percentage points in kindergarten to 45-49 percentage points in third grade. Additionally, the percentage of IEP students who are proficient does not rise above 36% after kindergarten. Once again, improving IEP support programs or allocating resources can help increase reading proficiency among this group, which would, in turn, increase overall reading proficiency.

Economically Disadvantaged Students

Economic disadvantage is known to affect student performance. While there is no direct measure of a student's level of economic security available, a common proxy is whether they are eligible for free or reduced price lunches. State data sorts students into five possible categories—free lunch eligible, reduced price eligible, district eligible, community eligible school and not eligible. It is important to note that while the state records this data as a single variable, they are actually determined at two separate levels of analysis. Free lunch eligible, reduced price eligible and not eligible are all student-level classifications determined by the student's own personal status. Conversely, a student is classified as district eligible or community eligible school if a high enough proportion of the LEAs'/schools' students qualify for free or reduced lunch. In that case, eligibility is granted to the entire LEA or school population, regardless of their personal eligibility status. As such, it is important to consider these classification groupings separately, since they are not directly comparable with one another.

TABLE 15: LITERACY PROFICIENCY BY LUNCH STATUS (SPRING IRI) (2016-17)

Students with Student-Level Classifications (N=72,554)				
	Grade			
	KG	1st	2nd	3rd
Free	74.0%	57.9%	60.1%	66.3%
Reduced Price	81.2%	69.4%	69.9%	75.6%
Not Eligible	85.6%	76.9%	79.4%	83.9%
Students with School- or District-Level Classifications (N=14,593)				
District Eligible	74.2%	56.7%	62.0%	64.7%
Community Eligible School	64.0%	60.5%	50.0%	50.0%

TABLE 16: LITERACY PROFICIENCY BY LUNCH STATUS (SPRING IRI) (2017-18)

Students with Student-Level Classifications (N=72,554)				
	Grade			
	KG	1st	2nd	3rd
Free	72.5%	55.7%	59.3%	65.2%
Reduced Price	80.3%	67.4%	67.8%	74.4%
Not Eligible	85.6%	76.9%	78.0%	83.2%
Students with School- or District-Level Classifications (N=14,593)				
District Eligible	75.5%	58.1%	58.3%	66.9%
Community Eligible School	87.6%	56.3%	63.3%	67.4%

The data indicates that both free or reduced lunch eligible students generally lag behind those who do not qualify, especially after kindergarten. Students who qualify for free lunches—generally an indicator of greater economic disadvantage than reduced price lunch eligibility—have the lowest level of proficiency among student-level lunch metrics.

Of the school or district level metrics, proficiency rates differ based on Program year. In year one, district eligible students generally performed better than students in community eligible schools. In year two, however, students in community eligible schools performed slightly better. Without more data, it is difficult to isolate why.

An additional economic challenge faced by some students is housing insecurity. For some, this means having no permanent home of their own, in which case they may be moving from place to place or be literally experiencing homelessness. This uncertainty means that they have greater difficulty focusing in school and may be more likely to have poor attendance or behavioral issues. This, in turn, impacts their academic performance. In terms of the Program, this means that there is an opportunity to increase student proficiency again by ensuring that this affected population is better served, so that they are able to focus on learning. Overall, it is important to recognize how these different programs affect each other and improvement in one may require attention elsewhere.

The data suggests that homeless students consistently lag non-homeless students by approximately 15-20 percentage points. Unlike IEP students, the wider gaps in first and second grades start to contract by third grade, especially in year two. Even so, in non-kindergarten grades reading proficiency does not reach 60% among homeless students, indicating another area for improvement.

TABLE 17: LITERACY PROFICIENCY BY HOMELESS (SPRING IRI) (2016-17)

	Grade			
	KG	1st	2nd	3rd
Not Homeless	80.5%	67.6%	70.4%	75.3%
Homeless	65.0%	46.1%	49.5%	57.0%

TABLE 18: LITERACY PROFICIENCY BY HOMELESS (SPRING IRI) (2017-18)

	Grade			
	KG	1st	2nd	3rd
Not Homeless	80.4%	67.5%	69.0%	75.0%
Homeless	63.6%	47.4%	48.8%	58.8%

CONCLUSION

The current Literacy Intervention Program, assessed in this report, is just one example of improvements made by the State of Idaho since implementing a strategic approach to early childhood literacy. By making a commitment to utilizing assessment data to make evidence-based decisions the State will likely continue to improve on its ability identify students most in need of additional literacy interventions and, thus, support all students' efforts to achieve grade level reading by third grade. In this regard, the data put forth in this report demonstrates that some factors associated with students, outside their IRI score, may indicate a propensity to underperform on the assessment.

We stress again that with only two complete years of data from the Program, it is extremely difficult to evaluate its effectiveness. Additionally, changes in the Program—most notably the change in assessment instrument in the current year of the Program, from the legacy IRI to the new IRI by Istation—is an event that will make direct comparisons of future years with the first two years of the Program difficult. It will take several years of Program data under the new IRI by Istation before a comprehensive evaluation will be possible.

That said, there are early indications of patterns within the data that can inform the manner in which the Program is implemented. This is especially true in identifying where resources may be allocated in order to effect change at the LEAs' overall reading proficiency level. Additionally, authorizing the use of existing budget and expense reporting data for evaluative purposes can help improve Program implementation by allowing the State to identify LEAs that could benefit from additional financial planning resources. With further evidence-based interventions directed at these students' specific needs, there is a potential for further improvement in their proficiency levels and, thus, the overall proficiency level of the State.

APPENDIX A: ABBREVIATIONS & DEFINITIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

IEP: Individualized Education Plan

IRI: Idaho Reading Indicator

LEA: Local Educational Agency

LEP: Limited English Proficiency

NCES: National Center for Education Statistics

OSBE: Idaho Office of the State Board of Education

Plan: Literacy Intervention Plan

Program: Literacy Intervention Program

SDE: Idaho State Department of Education

NCES LOCALE DEFINITIONS

- City is defined as "territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city"
- Suburb is defined as "territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area"
- Town is "territory inside an urban cluster"
- Rural is defined as "Census-defined rural territory"

NCES further subdivides these categories—City and Suburb are subdivided by Large, Midsize and Small, while Town and Rural are subdivided by Fringe, Distant and Remote. To simplify analysis, only the four overriding categories were used.

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