

2024 STATE OF THIRD-GRADE READING IN FLORIDA



Florida Business Alliance
for Early Learning Project

**FLORIDA
CHAMBER**
Foundation




INTRODUCTION

This report delves into the latest data on third-grade reading proficiency in Florida, providing an analysis of how well students across the state are meeting this essential educational benchmark.

By analyzing the most recent statistics, we highlight the top 10 performing counties, showcasing areas where students have the highest level of reading proficiency. Conversely, we identify the counties that are struggling the most, aiming to understand the challenges these areas face so that leaders across Florida can provide extra support.

This comprehensive overview offers valuable insights for educators, business and community leaders, and policymakers dedicated to enhancing literacy and educational outcomes across Florida.

5% 

**Florida's 3rd Grade Reading
Scores Jumped Up 5 Percentage
Points in 2024**



**3RD GRADE
READING SCORES**

55%
(Improving)

97,413

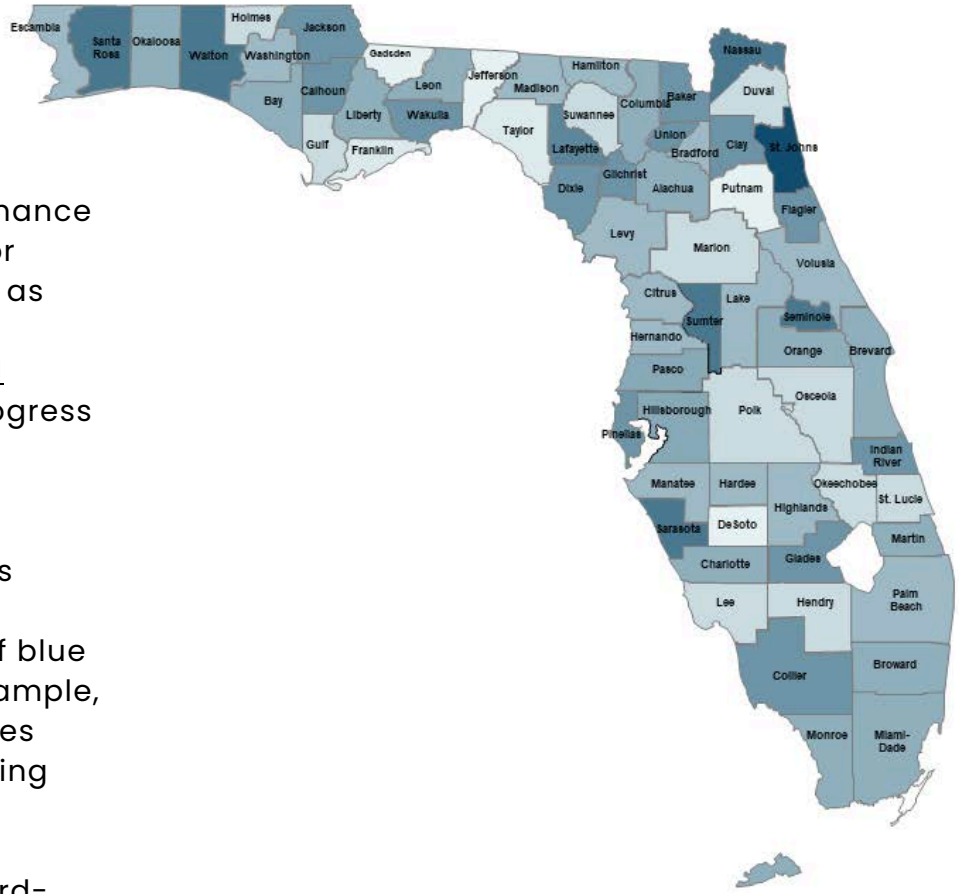
Not Reading at Grade Level
(Decreasing)

STATEWIDE HIGHLIGHTS

This map illustrates the performance of Florida students reading at or above 3rd-grade level, defined as those earning a Level 3+ on the Spring 2024 State Standardized Assessment known as “FAST Progress Monitoring.”

As we can see on the map, disparities exist in several areas throughout Florida, visually represented by the spectrum of blue hues county-by-county. For example, Putnam has lower reading scores while Sarasota has higher reading scores.

The bar graphs disaggregate 3rd-grade reading scores by poverty status and ethnicity, highlighting significant disparities between Black (13% lower) and Hispanic students (5% lower) compared to state averages, and demonstrating the need for targeted educational strategies to address these gaps.

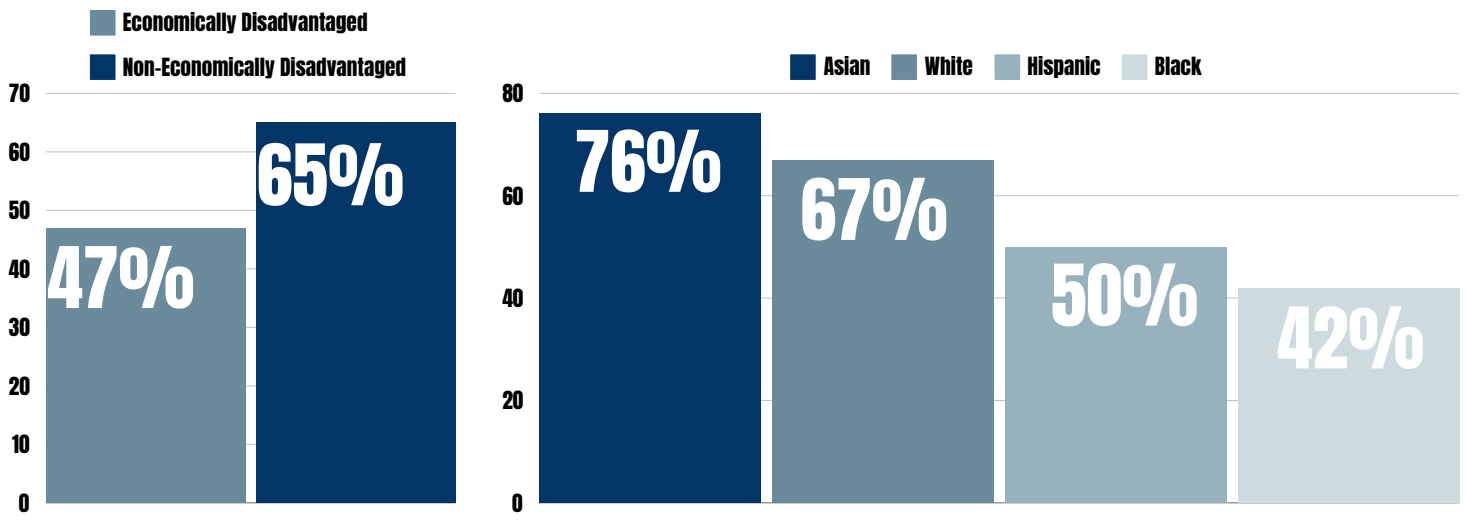


THE FLORIDA SCORECARD METRICS TO HELP SECURE FLORIDA'S FUTURE

SCAN TO SEE THE SCORES
IN YOUR COUNTY ON
THEFLORIDASCORECARD.ORG



3RD-GRADE READING BY DEMOGRAPHICS



TOP 10 “MOST PROFICIENT” COUNTIES

County Name	% of 3rd Graders Reading at or Above Grade Level	# Not Reading at Grade Level	Percentage Point Change from 2023-2024
St. Johns	76%	889	+4%
Sarasota	68%	1060	+7%
Nassau	68%	298	-1%
Lafayette	67%	24	+8%
Seminole	67%	1535	+7%
Santa Rosa	66%	747	+5%
Walton	65%	320	+6%
Sumter	65%	268	+4%
Union	64%	65	+11%
Wakulla	64%	153	+9%

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

According to the Florida Department of Education, chronic absenteeism, **defined as missing at least 10% of days in a school year for any reason**, is a primary cause of poor academic achievement.

Notably, St. Johns County, a county that consistently performs in the “top 10” counties in 3rd-grade reading, has maintained the lowest chronic absenteeism rates than Florida at large **over the last 10 years**; Just 17.2% of St. Johns County students missed 10% or more of school in 2023 versus 30.9% in Florida.

While chronic absenteeism is improving overall, Florida’s rates are **higher than the national average** and have been prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.



FLORIDA'S CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

1/3

of Florida students are chronically absent, missing 10% or more of school for any reason.

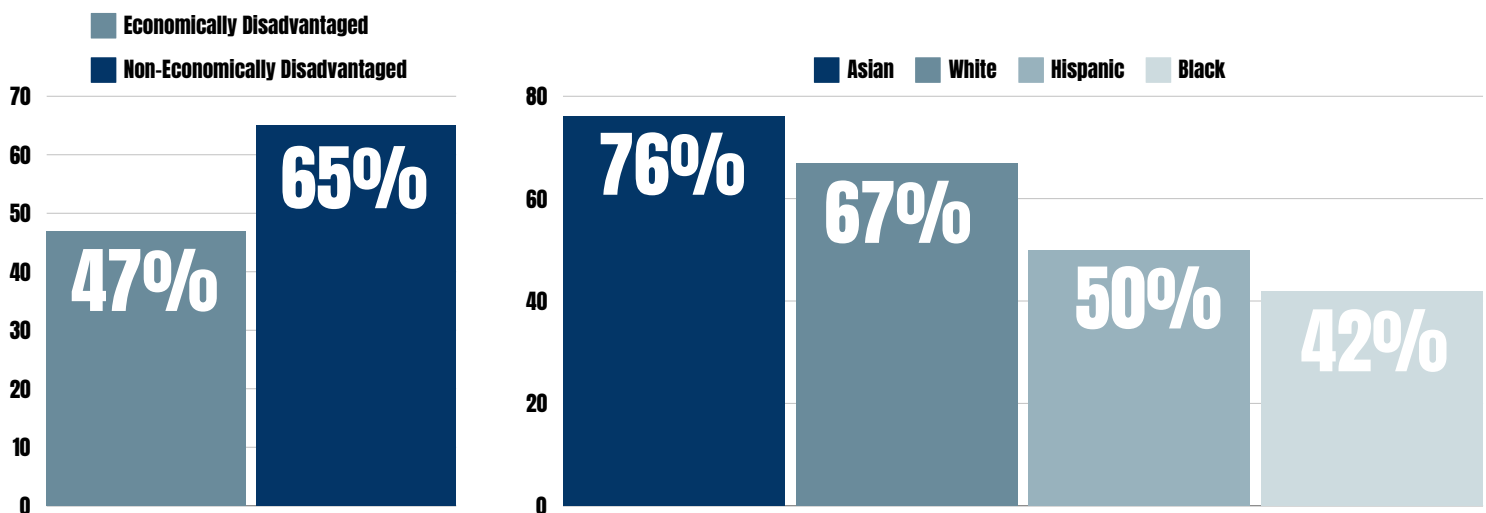
987,361

Florida students were absent 10% or more days.

THE 10 LOWEST PERFORMING COUNTIES

County Name	% of 3rd Graders Reading at or Above Grade Level	# Not Reading at Grade Level	Percentage Point Change from 2023-2024
Holmes	46%	126	+6%
Suwannee	46%	243	-4%
Hendry	45%	470	+9%
Marion	43%	2114	+4%
Franklin	40%	61	+3%
Taylor	40%	126	-4%
Putnam	39%	513	+3%
DeSoto	38%	218	+5%
Jefferson	37%	34	+15%
Gadsden	37%	226	+6%

3RD-GRADE READING BY DEMOGRAPHICS

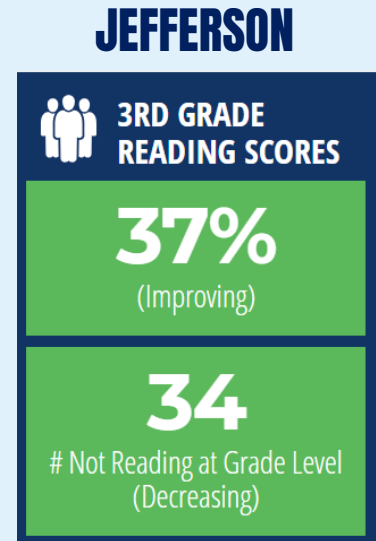
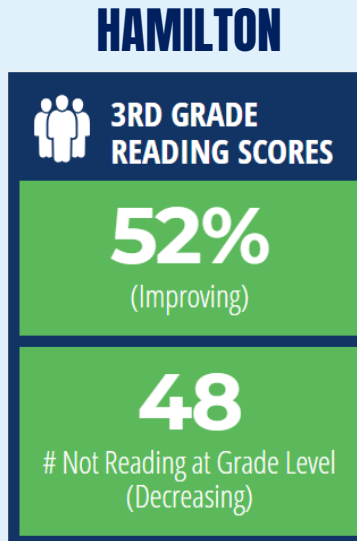


LARGEST INCREASES IN PROFICIENCY

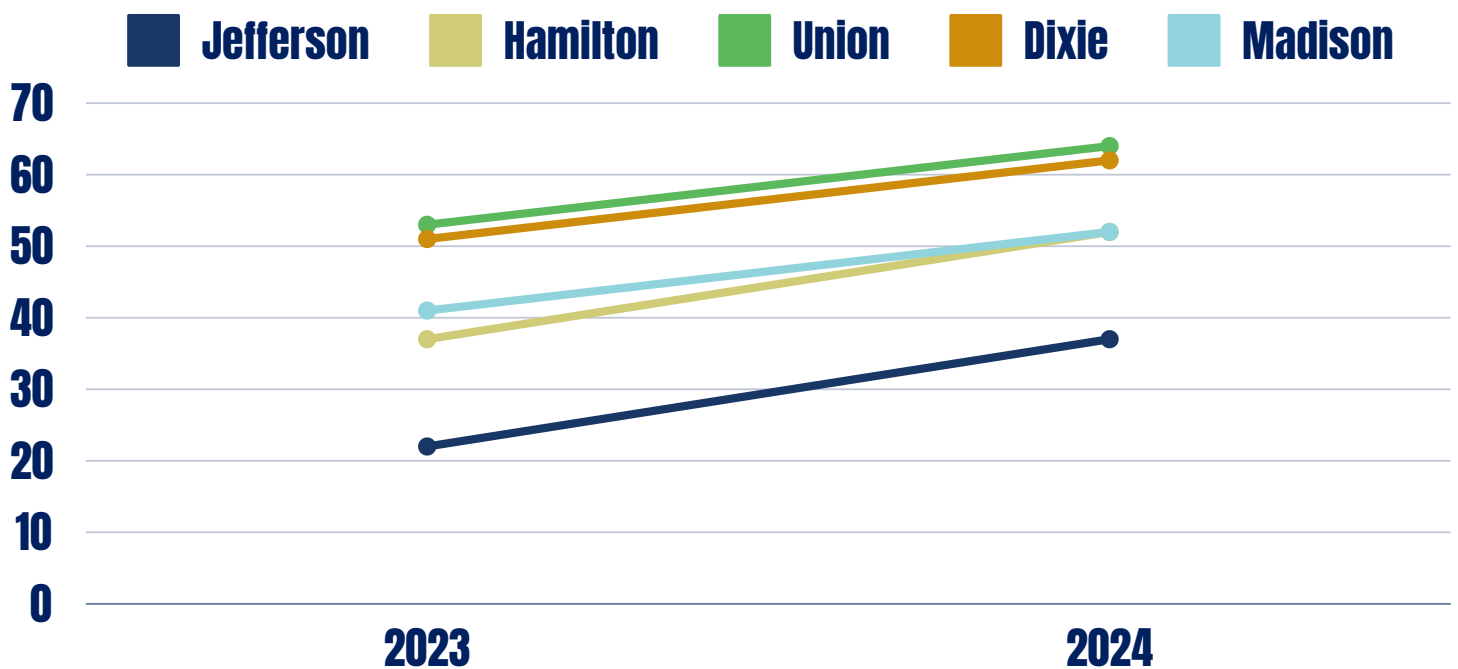
While these 3rd-grade reading scores are concerning, there are positive points worth highlighting.

A handful of rural school districts made incredible strides over the past year.

Both Hamilton and Jefferson counties, which are both rural, increased 15 percentage points over the year and now have 52% and 37% of 3rd-graders reading at grade level respectively.



FIVE RURAL COUNTIES INCREASE MORE THAN 10 PERCENTAGE POINTS FROM 2023 TO 2024



Get Started Today!

Join the growing number of businesses and organizations investing in early learning and literacy, supporting the Florida Chamber Foundation's 2030 goals:

1.100% of Florida's children are kindergarten ready

2.100% of Florida 3rd graders read at or above grade level

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