



Benchmark Advance K–2 Students Post Significant Gains on Star Test

Implementation

During the 2022–2023 school year, a large urban public school district in the southwestern United States implemented *Benchmark Advance* as its core English Language Arts (ELA) program for all K–2 across all 30 elementary schools. To examine the impact of *Benchmark Advance* on student reading achievement, *Renaissance Star® Early Literacy* Assessment data were collected and analyzed for 5,199 students with complete Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 Unified Scale Score data.

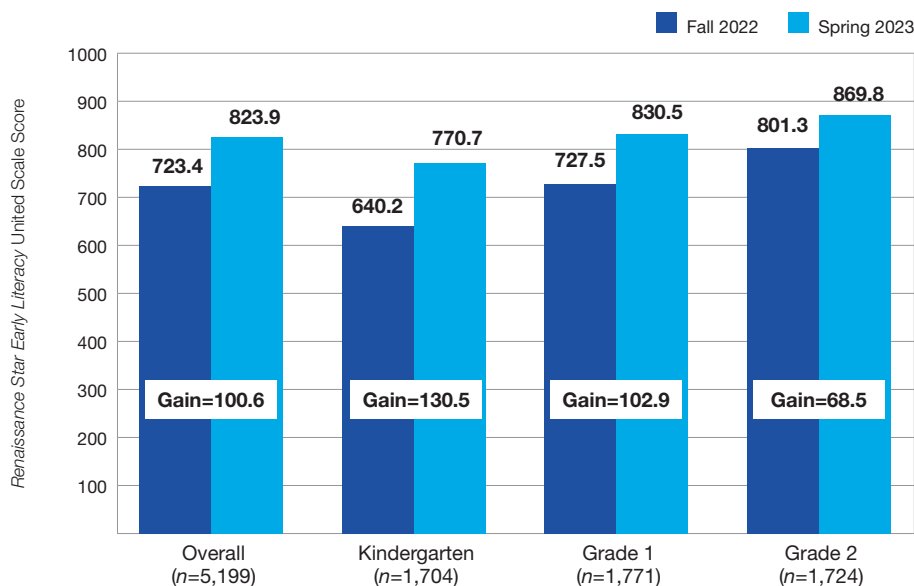
Impact

K–2 students using *Benchmark Advance* demonstrated statistically significant gains on the Star Test from Fall 2022 to Spring 2023 (see Figure 2). Average scores increased from 723.4 to 823.9— an overall Fall-to-Spring gain of 100.6 points—with a large effect size of 1.04 ($p < .05$). When disaggregated by grade level, dependent t-tests showed statistically significant increases in all grades: Kindergarten (103.5), Grade 1 (102.9), and Grade 2 (68.5).

FIGURE 1. Southwestern Public School District Demographics

Student Group (N=5,199)	Percent
GRADE LEVEL	
Kindergarten	32.8%
Grade 1	34.1%
Grade 2	33.2%
ETHNICITY	
American Indian/ Alaska Native	3.2%
Asian	2.7%
Black/African American	9.1%
Hispanic/Latino	55.2%
Multi-Race	5.6%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0.1%
White	24.0%
GENDER	
Female	48.2%
Male	51.8%
OTHER	
Special Education	11.5%
English Language Learners	21.5%
Gifted	2.9%

FIGURE 2. Average Performance on the *Renaissance Star Early Literacy* Test from Fall 2022 to Spring 2023 for *Benchmark Advance* Grade K–2 Students in a Southwestern Public School District



Gains Seen Across All Subgroups on Star Early Literacy

These gains were consistent across all student groups. Regardless of ethnicity, gender, English learner status, special education classification, or gifted identification, students showed meaningful improvements from Fall to Spring (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. Southwestern Public School District *Benchmark Advance* Students, Grades K-2 (N=5,199) Performance on the *Renaissance Star Early Literacy* Test, Fall 2022 to Spring 2023

Student Group	N	Fall 2022 Star Early Literacy Unified Scale Score	Spring 2023 Star Early Literacy Unified Scale Score	2022 to 2023 Star Early Literacy Unified Scale Score Gain	p	Effect Size (d)
ETHNICITY*						
Asian	140	704.13	822.63	118.50	$p<.001$	1.61
Black/African American	474	708.52	812.50	103.98	$p<.001$	1.43
Hispanic/Latino	2,871	716.53	812.77	96.24	$p<.001$	1.44
American Indian/ Alaska Native	165	692.39	803.47	111.09	$p<.001$	1.56
Multi-Race	293	741.03	837.61	96.58	$p<.001$	1.41
White	1,250	746.70	853.67	106.97	$p<.001$	1.58
GENDER						
Male	2,694	726.66	827.99	99.84	$p<.001$	1.45
Female	2,505	720.31	820.15	101.32	$p<.001$	1.50
OTHER						
Special Education Services	598	701.72	789.40	87.68	$p<.001$	1.21
English Learners	1,115	679.48	778.49	95.52	$p<.001$	1.32
Gifted	149	857.50	953.02	99.01	$p<.001$	1.41

*Data for the Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander group are not shown due to the small sample size. To protect student privacy, results are not reported for groups with fewer than 10 students.

Changes in Star Early Literacy Performance Levels

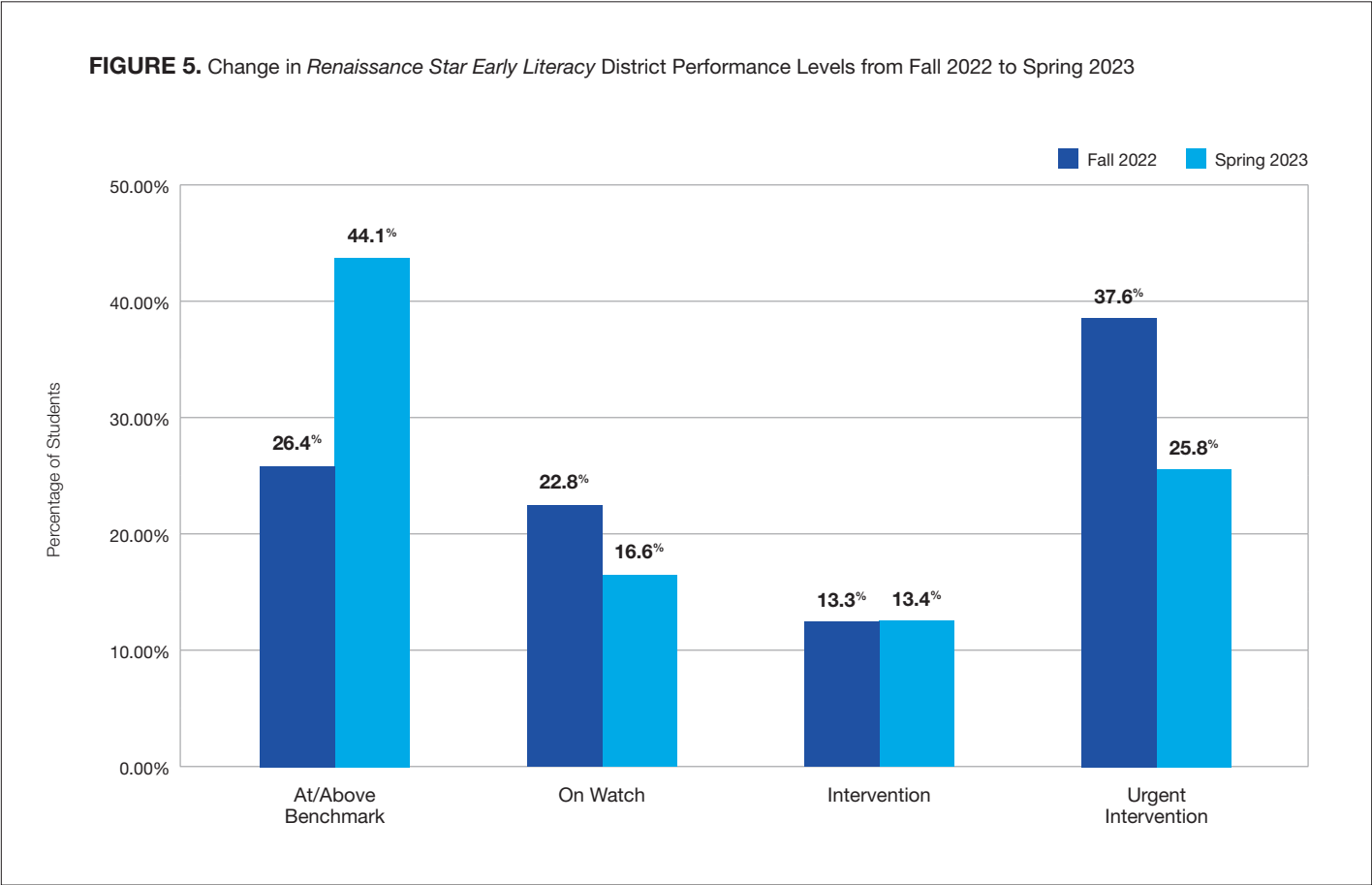
The *Renaissance Star Early Literacy* assessment places students in four levels: At/Above Benchmark, On Watch, Intervention, and Urgent Intervention. The goal is for students to reach At/Above the 40th percentile. Figure 4 shows category movement from Fall to Spring. For example, 1,953 students (37.6%) started in Urgent Intervention; by Spring, that number dropped to 1,343 (25.8%), with 1,060 remaining and 283 moving in from other groups.

Figure 4 shows that out of 5,199 K–2 students assessed, 1,975 advanced by at least one proficiency level between the beginning and end of the school year. This includes 893 students who exited the Urgent Intervention category: 300 advanced to At/Above Benchmark, 208 to On Watch, and 385 to Intervention. Additionally, 679 students moved up from Intervention—450 to At/Above Benchmark, 229 to On Watch, and 403 students progressed from On Watch to At/Above Benchmark.

FIGURE 4. Performance Levels of K–2 *Benchmark Advance* Students on the *Renaissance Star Early Literacy* Assessment: Fall 2022 vs. Spring 2023

2023 Renaissance Star Early Literacy Performance Level							
2022 Renaissance Star Early Literacy Performance Level		At/Above Benchmark	On Watch	Intervention	Urgent Intervention	Total Student in 2022	% of Students in 2022
	At/Above Benchmark	21.9% (1,141)	2.7%(138)	1.3% (65)	0.5% (27)	1,371	26.4%
	On Watch	7.8% (403)	2.3% (122)	2.2% (112)	1.1% (55)	692	13.3%
	Intervention	8.7% (450)	4.4% (229)	5.8% (303)	3.9% (201)	1,183	22.8%
	Urgent Intervention	5.8% (300)	4.0% (208)	7.4% (385)	20.4% (1,060)	1,953	37.6%
	Total Students in 2023	2,294	697	865	1,343		
	% of Students in 2023	44.1%	13.4%	16.6%	25.8%		

Figure 5 visually illustrates changes across the four performance levels from the beginning to the end of the school year. In each group, the dark blue bar represents the percentage of students in that category in Fall 2022, while the light blue bar shows the percentage in Spring 2023.



Conclusion

Results from a southwestern urban district in the United States showed that K–2 students demonstrated statistically significant reading gains during the first year of implementing *Benchmark Advance* as their core English Language Arts (ELA) program. On average, K–2 students improved by over 100 points on the *Renaissance Star Early Literacy* assessment, with large effect sizes observed across all demographic groups.

Importantly, the gains were not limited to one subgroup; all student groups, including English learners, students receiving special education services, and those from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, demonstrated significant growth from Fall to Spring.

In addition to the increases in average scale scores, there was notable proficiency movement: nearly 2,000 students advanced by at least one performance level. The percentage of students in the Urgent Intervention category decreased significantly from 37.6% to 35.8%, while the percentage of students meeting or exceeding benchmark expectations rose from 26.4% to 44.1%. These results highlight promising early trends in literacy development during the first year of *Benchmark Advance* implementation.

