

Vermont's Education Accountability Framework

Vermont Agency of Education

February 24, 2026

Background on Accountability

Vermont's accountability system is:

- A federal requirement under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
- The same accountability system we have had since 2017
- Grounded in a model of school improvement
- Designed around the idea that every student can succeed

The Agency of Education has identified areas where we would like to evolve this framework and is dedicated to simultaneously **increasing transparency and increasing support.**

Clear requirements that statewide **accountability** systems must expect more progress for the groups of students who have been behind, base school ratings on the progress of all groups of students, and expect action when any group of students is consistently underperforming.



The Education Trust | www.edtrust.org

The Every Student Succeeds Act

Authorizing Federal Legislation, Updated 2015

Vermont State Plan

Vermont recently revised the state accountability plan to ensure compliance with federal statute and alignment with the new assessment system. Please see below for [background](#), [purpose](#), a [summary of changes](#), [information on public comment](#), and to view the [full state plan](#).



Vermont Accountability Framework

Current State

01

ESSA State Plan

02

EQS/DQS

03

Range of Federal Program Requirements

04

Annual Assurances

05

State Laws

Future State: Coherent Accountability Framework



Beyond ESSA

Accountability in Vermont is shaped and informed by a variety of other federal and state laws, including:

- IDEA
- Perkins
- WIOA
- Education Quality Standards
- District Quality Standards
- Annual Assurances
- and unique requirements for state education laws (i.e., Act 139, Act 77, Act 73, etc.)



Measures of Performance

Measures of School Performance in VT's ESSA State Plan

- **Assessment** – Math (VTCAP)*
- **Assessment** – ELA (VTCAP)*
- **Assessment** – Science (VTCAP)
- **Annual Progress Towards English Proficiency** (WIDA ACCESS)
- **Graduation Rate** (4 and 6-year cohort graduation rates)
- **Performance on Career/College-Readiness Assessments** (Meeting CCR benchmark on one or more of these, SAT, ACT, AP, college course completion, etc.)
- **Career/College-Ready Outcomes Within 16 Months of Graduation** (National Student Clearinghouse)

School Indicators Weight Comparison

High School

Weight



English Language Arts (ELA)/Reading (23%)

Science (6%)

Performance on College/Career-Readiness Assessments (12%)

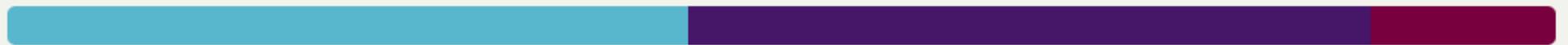
Math (23%)

Graduation Rate (23%)

College/Career-Ready Outcomes Within 16 Months of Graduation (12%)

Elementary School

Weight



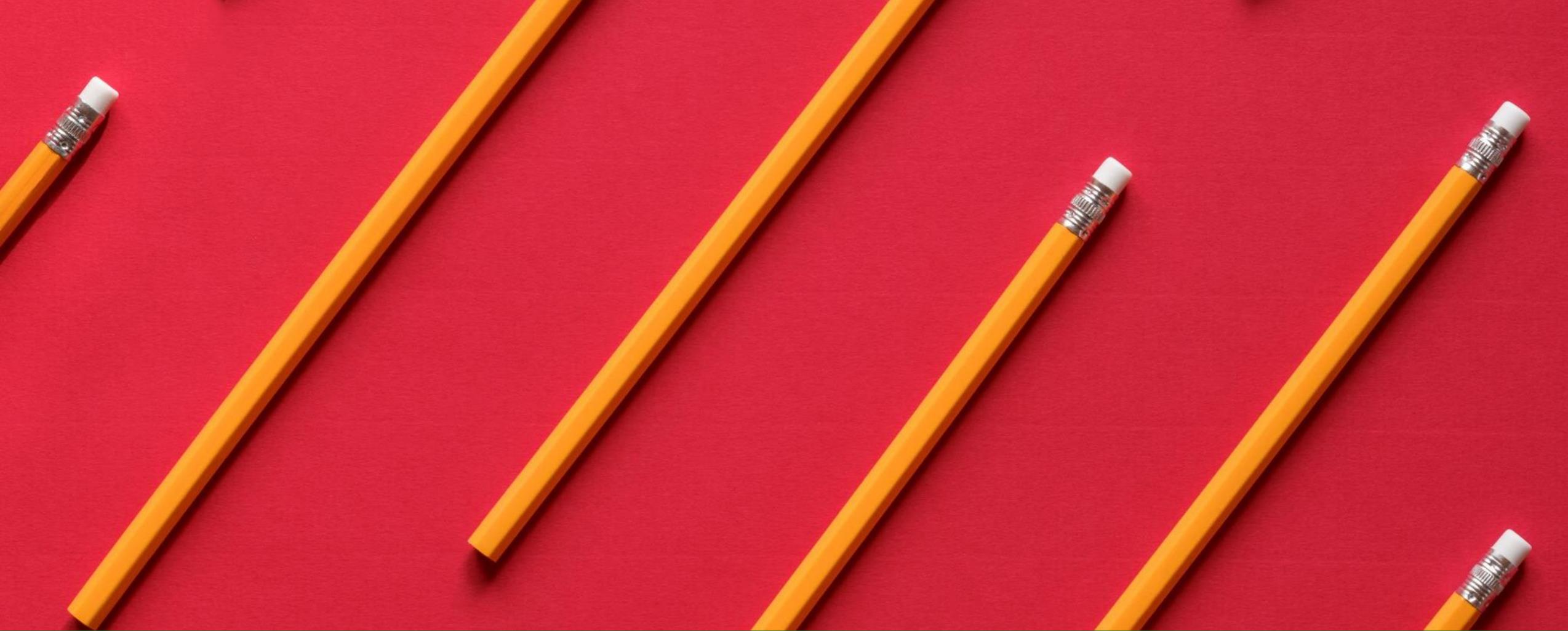
English Language Arts (ELA)/Reading (44%)

Science (15%)

Math (44%)

Description of Performance Ratings

- **Current Performance:** Indicates the performance for the domain or indicator for the academic year selected.
- **Performance Change:** Indicates the amount of change for the domain or indicator for the academic year selected compared to the previous academic year.
- **Current Equity Index:** Indicates the difference in performance between students who have been historically underserved in schools compared to their historically privileged peers.
- **Equity Index Change:** Indicates the amount of change for Current Equity Index for the academic year selected compared to the previous academic year.
- **Accountability vs. Reporting**



School Identifications

School Identifications

- Under ESSA, states are required to identify schools in need of both comprehensive and targeted support
- Schools in need of **comprehensive support** are identified every three years and represent schools where the average performance of all students in the school is significantly below performance expectations and showing evidence of declining further
- Schools in need of **targeted support** are those where there is a significant and persistent achievement gap between one or more student groups and their peers. Schools can be identified for both comprehensive and targeted support and improvement

Performance

Priority 1

CSI

Equity Gaps

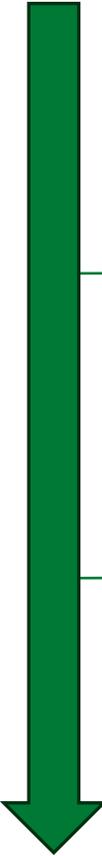
Equity 1

TSI

ATSI

School Identification “Tracks”

Equity Gaps



Equity 1

- Identified every year.
- Not a federal designation.
- Early warning of equity gaps as described in our State Plan

TSI

- Identified every year.
- Federal designation.
- Persistent inequities in outcomes for specific student groups

ATSI

- Identified every three years.
- Federal designation.
- Persistent inequities in outcomes for specific student groups AND particularly low performance by sub-group.



Priority 1: The collection of schools with the lowest performance (Not Meeting) and declining performance change (Declining).

- Not a federal designation.

CSI: Lowest 5% of Title 1 schools OR with graduation rates below 67%.

- Three-year cycle.
- Exit: No longer meet entrance criteria next identification cycle.

CSI Schools

- **School Year 2021-2022**

- 14 of the 16 schools previously identified as CSI met the relevant exit criteria and are no longer in CSI status
- 2 schools did not meet the exit criteria and will remain in CSI status for an additional three years

- **School Year 2024-2025**

- 12 new schools were identified as CSI
- 11 elementary and middle schools with both low overall performance in 2024-2025 and declining performance relative to 2023-2024
- 1 school who pre-entered the newly identified CSI cohort after failing to meet the exit criteria for Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) based on 2023–2024 school year data

List of TSI and ATSI Schools (and reason for identification)

- Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) schools have a performance gap between one or more student groups for two consecutive school years and that group's performance is in the lowest 5 percent of Equity 1 schools for the same subgroup
- **2024-2025 School Year**
 - 1 middle/high school (7-12 grades)
- Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) schools are TSI schools where performance of one or more identified student groups is lower than the performance of the highest performing priority 6 schools
- **2024-2025 School Year**
 - 1 middle high school is entering targeted support and improvement
 - 3 elementary schools are entering targeted support and improvement

Summary of Findings

1. Statewide Academic Proficiency Remains Below Expectations
2. Early Literacy and the Grade 9 Transition Are Critical Weak Points
3. Mathematics Achievement Is Low, but Growth Is Improving
4. Science Performance Is Stable but Stagnant
5. English Learner Progress Has Declined
6. Graduation Rates Are Mixed and Trending Downward
7. College and Career Readiness Remains a Significant Challenge
8. Most Schools Are Not Yet Meeting Performance Expectations
9. Achievement Gaps Are Expanding

Refer to appendix for more detailed analysis.

Statewide Academic Proficiency Remains Below Expectations

- Across Vermont, student proficiency in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science remains well below the state's long-term goals under the Every Student Succeeds Act
- In ELA, no grade level exceeds 60% proficiency, and in mathematics, rates rarely surpass 50%
- Science performance is somewhat higher than math but remains clustered in the low-to-mid 40% range
- These results indicate that a majority of Vermont students are not yet meeting grade-level academic standards, underscoring the need for sustained instructional improvement across content areas.

Most Schools Are Not Yet Meeting Performance Expectations

- More than half of Vermont schools are rated as Not Meeting or Approaching performance expectations and are either declining or not improving compared to the prior year
- Only 26% of schools are Meeting or Exceeding expectations, and just 12% both meet expectations and demonstrate improvement
- These findings indicate that sustained academic growth and system-wide improvement are not yet widespread

Percentage and Number of Schools by Current Overall Performance Rating and Change in Overall Performance from Prior Year

Ratings	Not Meeting	Approaching	Meeting	Exceeding
Declining	3% (9)	0% (0)	<1% (1)	<1% (1)
Not Improving	26% (68)	26% (69)	8% (35)	6% (15)
Improving	7% (19)	0% (0)	5% (12)	7% (19)
Excelling	<1% (1)	6% (16)	0% (0)	0% (0)

Achievement Gaps Are Expanding

- Equity designations nearly doubled from the prior year, reflecting widening achievement gaps among historically marginalized student groups
- The number of schools identified for equity concerns increased substantially for students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and English learners
- The sharp increase suggests that disparities in outcomes are not only persistent but intensifying, requiring focused and sustained attention

Statewide Approach

- **Data-driven urgency:** Statewide results show inconsistent performance, requiring coordinated, system-wide action
- **Leverage Best Practices:** Identify and learn from schools exceeding performance
- **Literacy & Math Transformation:**
 - Act 139 & Read Vermont drive evidence-based literacy implementation statewide
 - Count On Vermont advances a PreK–12, data-driven math improvement strategy
- **Inclusive & Coherent Systems:**
 - Act 173 strengthens Vermont’s statewide approach to inclusive education and integrated supports
 - Statewide Graduation Requirements promote aligned expectations for all students
- **Stronger Improvement & Accountability:** Evidence-based continuous improvement, faster assessment reporting, additional supports from the AOE, and clearer growth measures to link data to action



Accountability in Action

Theory of Action

Vermont's accountability system is designed around the idea that every student can succeed — and to foster that success, we need to know which students and which schools need additional support.

State-Level Responsibility

- **To the federal government**

- Address areas of federal non-compliance: Assessment (timeline and peer review) and school improvement support (monitoring and improving continuous improvement plans)

- **To the state**

- Achieve statewide education goals
- Align work to a statewide vision for public education

- **To students, families, and communities**

- Provide transparency around progress towards educational quality goals
- Continuously improve to build the best education system in America for every student in Vermont



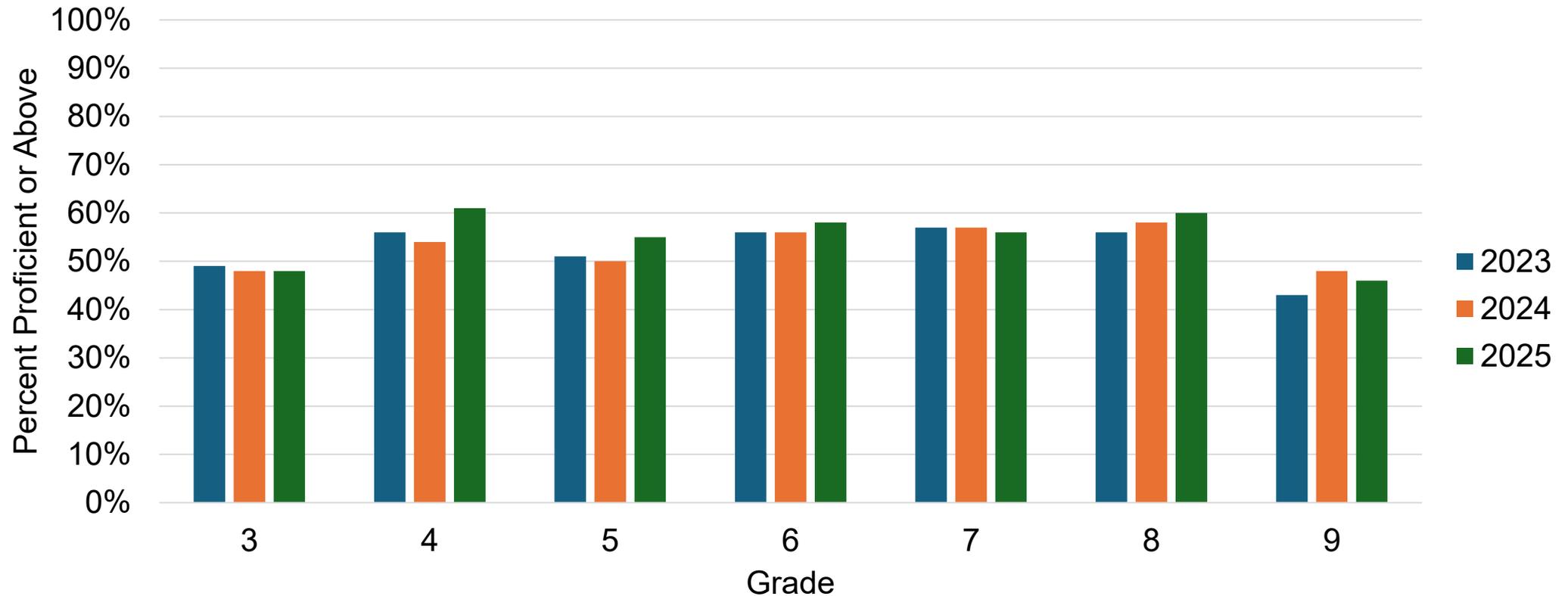
Questions?



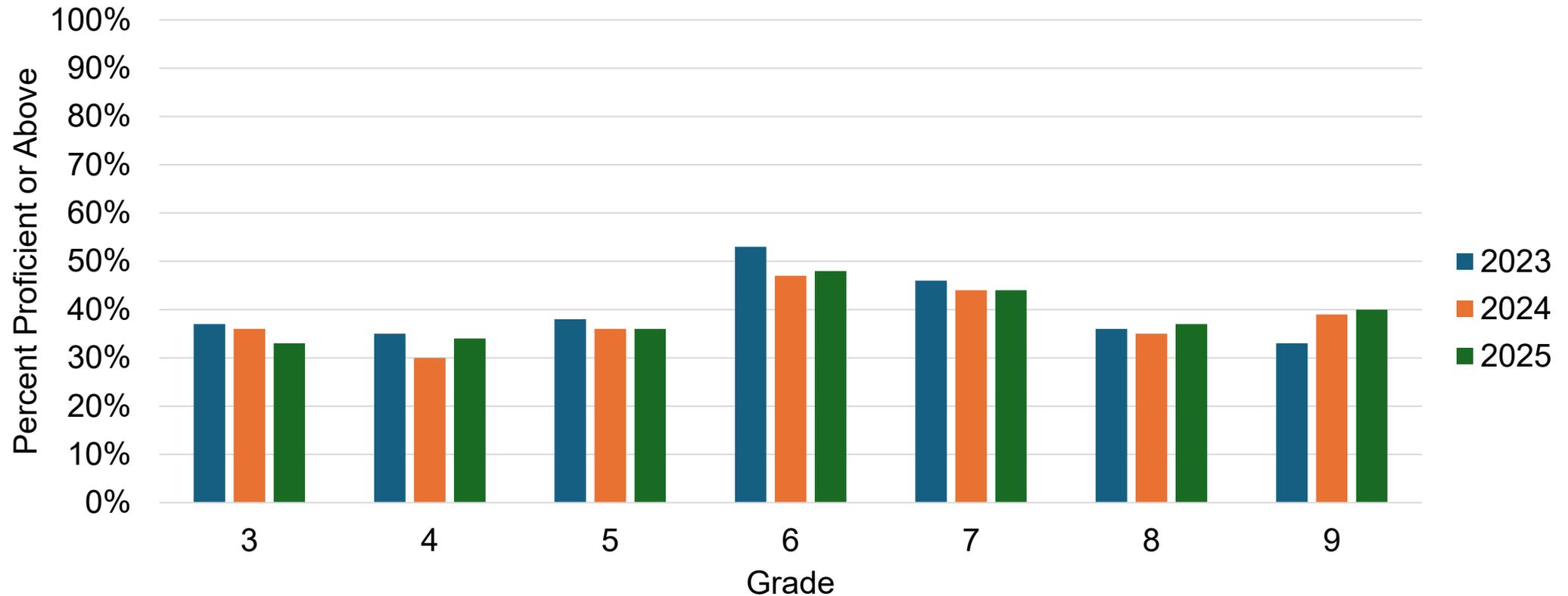
Appendix

Additional Data Analysis

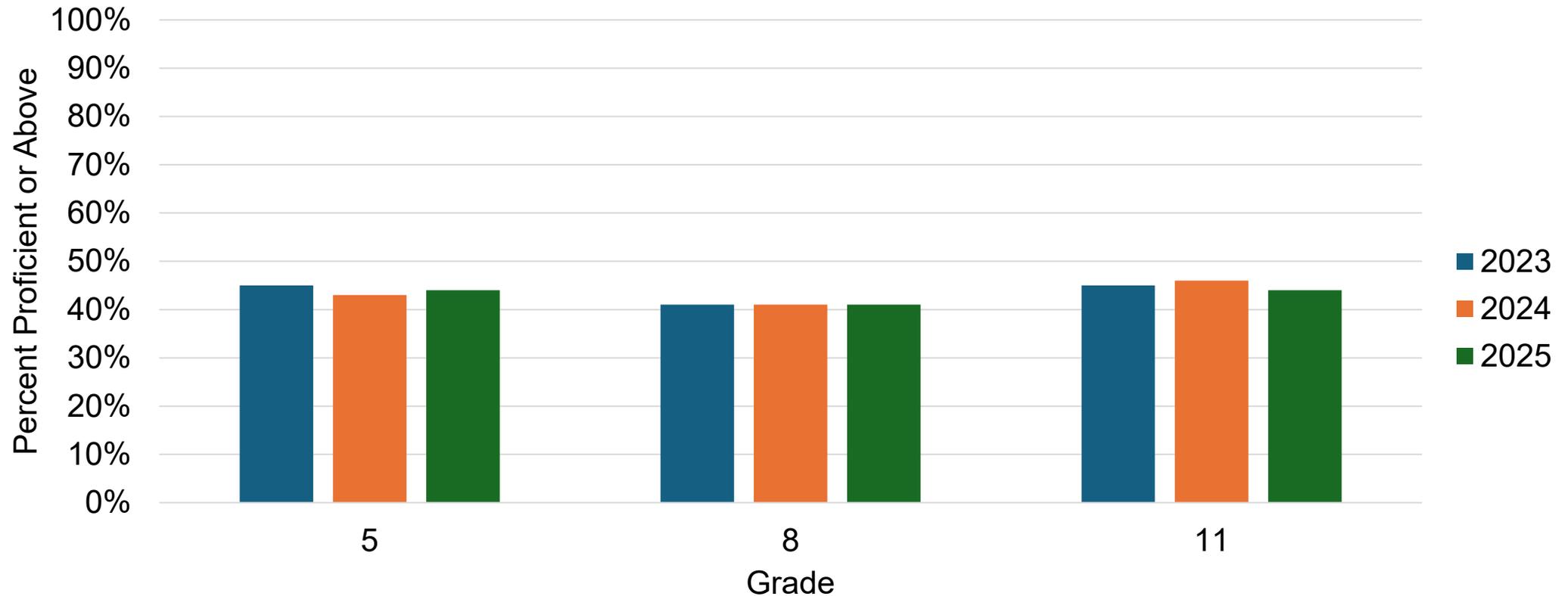
Statewide Proficiency Rates in English Language Arts by Grade and Year



Statewide Proficiency Rates in Mathematics by Grade and Year



Statewide Proficiency Rates in Science by Grade and Year



Early Literacy and the Grade 9 Transition Are Critical Weak Points

- Two grade levels stand out as persistent areas of concern
 - In Grade 3, fewer than half of students demonstrate proficiency in ELA, raising alarm given the well-documented importance of early reading skills for long-term academic success
 - Proficiency drops sharply from Grade 8 to Grade 9 in ELA, with declines of 10–14 percent age points across cohorts
 - Growth data mirrors this trend, with Grade 9 showing the weakest progress
- Together, these patterns identify early literacy and the middle-to-high school transition as critical leverage points for intervention

Statewide Average Growth English Language Arts by Grade and Year

Years	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
Spring 2023 to Spring 2024	47.7	44.4	51.4	47.9	48.4	41.9
Spring 2024 to Spring 2025	50.9	47.8	52.0	47.8	49.5	40.2

Statewide Proficiency Rates in English Language Arts by Grade and Year

School Year	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
2022-2023	49%	56%	51%	56%	57%	56%	43%
2023-2024	48%	54%	50%	56%	57%	58%	48%
2024-2025	48%	61%	55%	58%	56%	60%	46%

Mathematics Achievement Is Low, but Growth Is Improving

- Mathematics proficiency remains among the lowest of all tested areas, particularly in elementary grades
- Unlike ELA, mathematics growth increased across all grade levels in the most recent year
- While current proficiency rates remain far below state targets, the upward trend in growth suggests that students are beginning to make accelerated progress
- If sustained over multiple years, this growth could translate into improved overall achievement and narrowing gaps

Statewide Average Growth Mathematics by Grade and Year

Years	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
Spring 2023 to Spring 2024	44.9	48.5	50.0	46.2	44.0	48.7
Spring 2024 to Spring 2025	46.4	50.0	51.3	48.5	45.9	49.7

Science Performance Is Stable but Stagnant

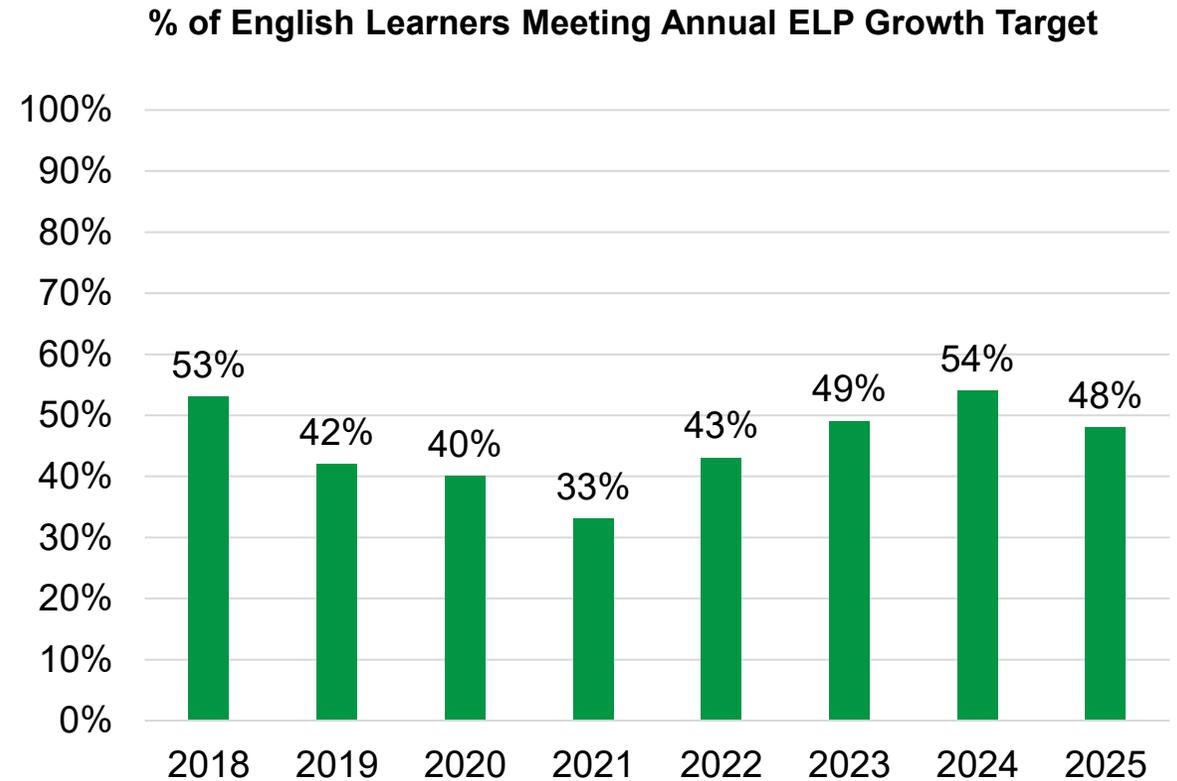
- Science proficiency rates have remained relatively steady over time, typically ranging between 41 and 46% across tested grades
- Although stability may indicate system consistency, the lack of upward movement suggests limited momentum toward long-term goals
- Without targeted instructional or curricular shifts, science outcomes are unlikely to improve substantially

Statewide Proficiency Rates in Science Grade and Year

School Year	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 11
2022-2023	45%	41%	45%
2023-2024	43%	41%	46%
2024-2025	44%	41%	44%

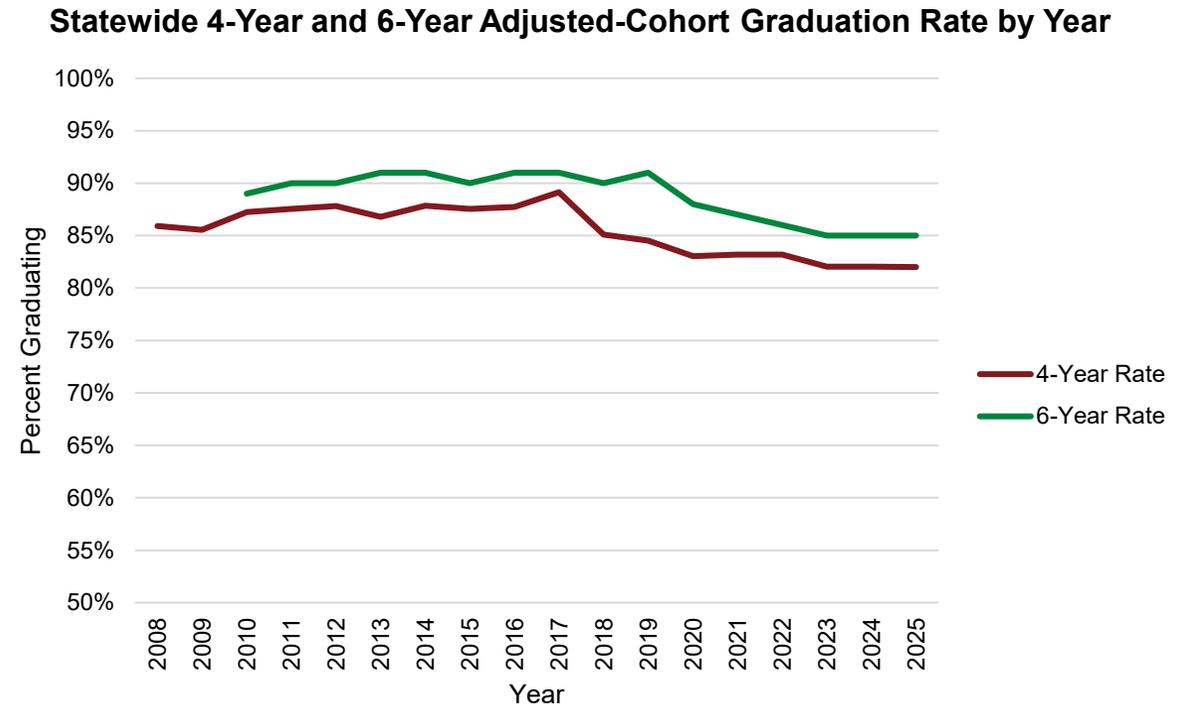
English Learner Progress Has Declined

- Vermont's long-term goal is for all English learners to meet annual growth targets toward English language proficiency
- In 2024–2025, only 48% met their annual growth targets, down from 54% the previous year
- The number of schools flagged for equity concerns related to English learners increased dramatically
- These results suggest that schools are facing increasing challenges in supporting multilingual students and that current strategies may require adjustment or expansion



Graduation Rates Are Mixed and Trending Downward

- While a majority of Vermont high schools meet performance expectations for graduation rates, statewide trends show gradual decline
- The four-year graduation rate has fallen from a peak of 89% in 2017 to 82% in 2025
- Graduation remains a relative strength compared to academic proficiency, the downward trend signals emerging risks in high school completion



College and Career Readiness Remains a Significant Challenge

- Fewer than 60% of seniors demonstrated proficiency on at least one college and career readiness (CCR) assessment, and only 46% of graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution within 16 months of graduation, well below the state’s 80% goal
- This suggests that academic readiness alone does not fully explain postsecondary participation and that additional structural, financial, or advisory supports may be necessary

Statewide Performance on College and Career Readiness Indicators

Indicator	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
CCR Assessments	47%	50%	42%	52%	54%	59%
Post-Secondary Enrollment	47%	50%	42%	48%	42%	46%

Percentage of Schools by Rating: Academic Achievement & Growth

