Accelerating Improvement in Public Schools
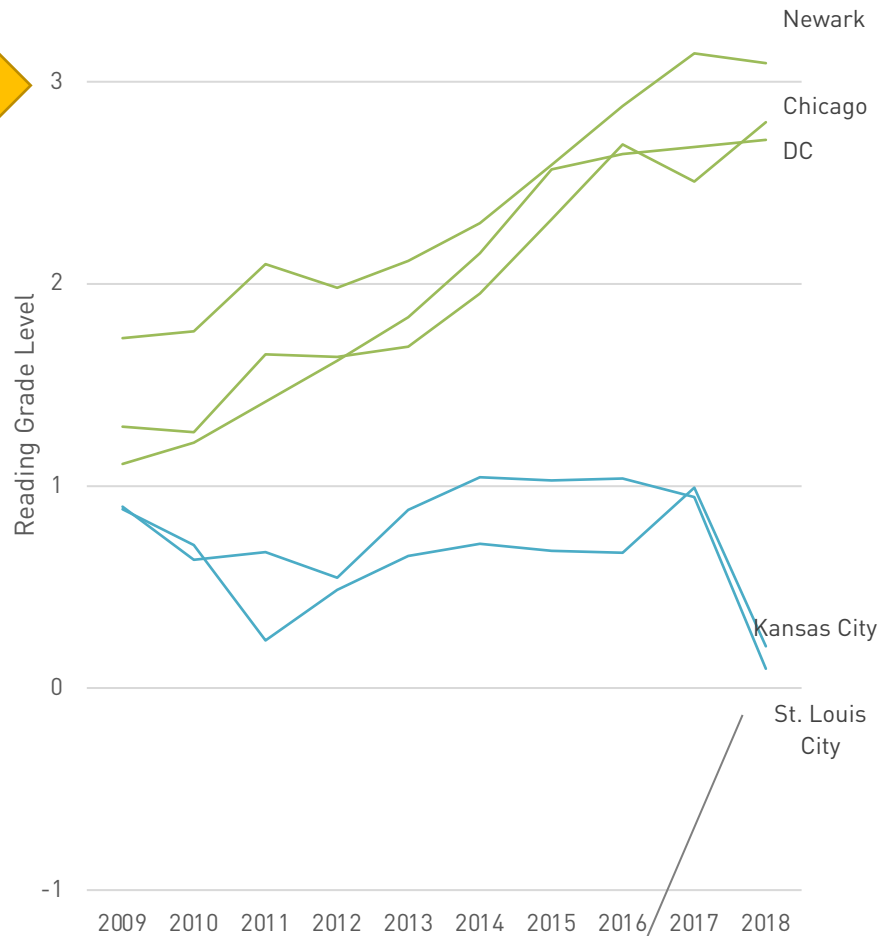
September 2023

THE
OPPORTUNITY
TRUST

Executive Summary

- Black and low-income children in Missouri, mostly located in the St. Louis region, lost more ground than Black and low-income children in almost every other state in the nation during the pandemic. We now rank second to the bottom in Black child literacy in the nation.

- Performance at key milestones – 3rd grade reading and 8th grade math – show that more than two-thirds of children are performing in the bottom of four performance categories, defined as functionally illiterate.

- These test scores matter. There are decades of research that correlate higher scores to job readiness, reduction in crime, reduction in teenage pregnancy, increased vibrancy of neighborhoods. St. Louis needs these scores to improve.

- There are school districts and charter networks showing us that more progress is possible. If more school systems improved at the rate of those schools, St. Louis averages would surpass state averages in 5 years becoming one of only a handful of urban areas in the nation to do so.

- However, we lack the conditions locally and at the State level to foster this kind of improvement. And we've historically been too lax about goals and accountability.

- We can start to change this together with a focus on stronger governance and transparent data.
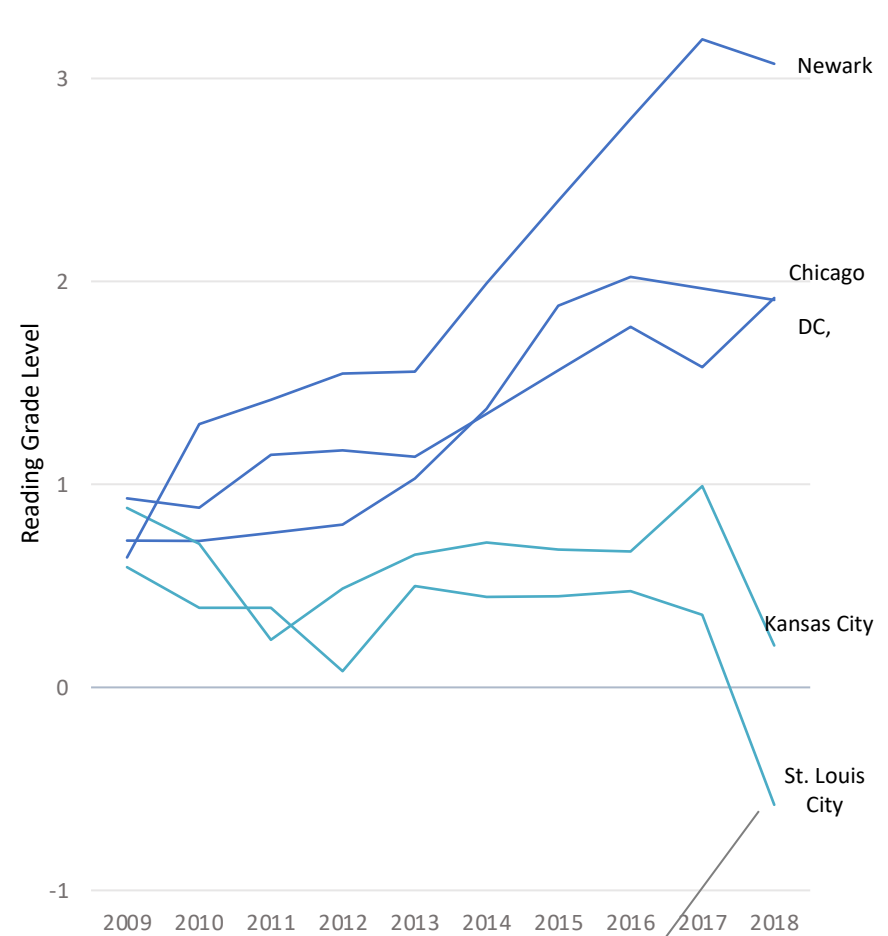
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Other cities have seen progress in key milestones like 3ʳᵈ grade reading. Why not St. Louis?

All 3ʳᵈ Grade Students

At Grade Level

Reading Grade Level

Newark
Chicago
DC

Kansas City

St. Louis City

2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018

St. Louis 3rd graders are 3 grade levels behind national average.

Black 3ʳᵈ Grade Students

Reading Grade Level

Newark

Chicago
DC,

Kansas City

St. Louis City

2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018

Black St. Louis 3rd graders are 3.6 grade levels behind national average.

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Source: Reardon, S. F., Ho, A. D., Shear, B. R., Fahle, E. M., Kalogrides, D., Jang, H., & Chavez, B. (2021). **Stanford Education Data Archive (Version 4.0).** Retrieved from http://purl.stanford.edu/db586ns4974.
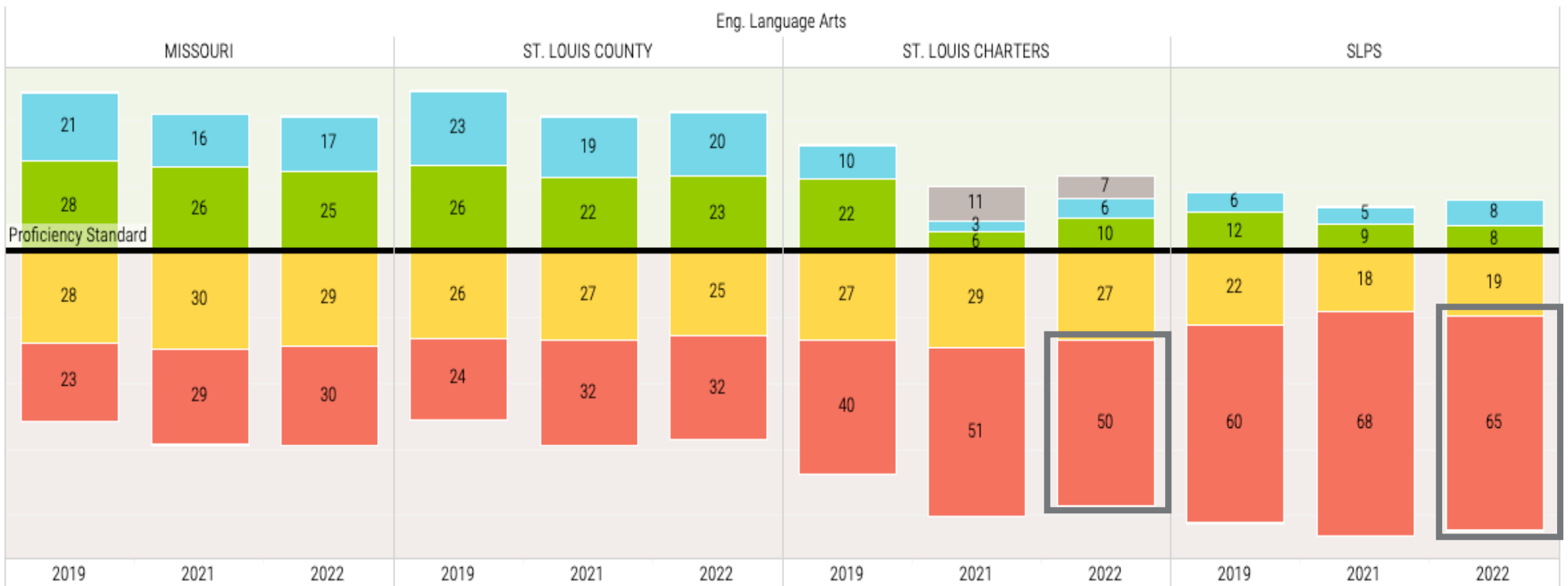
3rd grade reading proficiency recovery

- Little progress was made in the first two years back in school

- Nearly two thirds (65%) of SLPS students scored below basic - the lowest of four levels of performance.

Percent of Students by Performance Level
Grade 03, All Students

Legend: ■ % Missing ■ % Advanced ■ % Proficient ■ % Below Basic ■ % Basic

Customize this chart

Eng. Language Arts

MISSOURI

	2019	2021	2022
% Advanced	21	16	17
% Proficient	28	26	25
% Basic	28	30	29
% Below Basic	23	29	30

ST. LOUIS COUNTY

	2019	2021	2022
% Advanced	23	19	20
% Proficient	26	22	23
% Basic	26	27	25
% Below Basic	24	32	32

ST. LOUIS CHARTERS

	2019	2021	2022
% Missing		11	7
% Advanced	10	3	6
% Proficient	22	6	10
% Basic	27	29	27
% Below Basic	40	51	50

SLPS

	2019	2021	2022
% Advanced	6	5	8
% Proficient	12	9	8
% Basic	22	18	19
% Below Basic	60	68	65

Proficiency Standard

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72% of Missouri's persistently failing schools are in St. Louis

Persistently failing schools – schools that remained in the bottom 10% in both ELA and math statewide from 2019 to 2022 – are concentrated in urban areas.

St. Louis City and St. Louis County account for:
- **72%** of persistently failing schools in the state
- **67%** of students attending persistently failing schools statewide

Jackson County accounts for:
- **25%** of persistently failing schools in the state
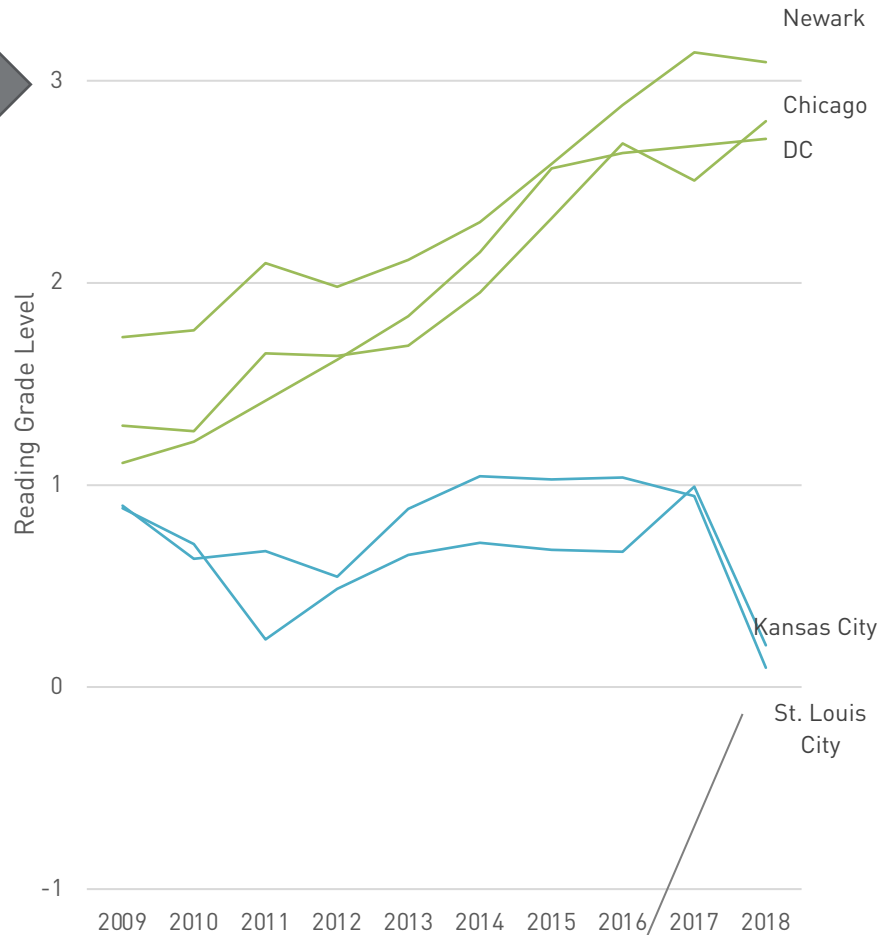- **31%** of students attending persistently failing schools statewide

2022 Enrollment of Districts with Schools in the Bottom 10% Statewide

District	# Students in District	# Students Attending Bottom 10% School	% Students in District Attending Bottom 10% School	
St. Louis Public Schools	17,135	9,947		58%
Kansas City 33	13,270	5,083		38%
Ferguson-Florissant	9,237	3,915		42%
Riverview Gardens	5,157	3,712		72%
St. Louis Charters	11,824	3,115		26%
KC Charters	13,334	2,738		21%
Hazelwood	16,313	2,622		16%
Hickman Mills C-1	4,810	2,230		46%
Normandy Schools	2,764	1,503		54%
Columbia 93	17,967	953		5%
Jennings	2,347	884		38%
Springfield R-XII	23,428	701		3%
Raytown C-2	7,757	690		9%
St. Joseph	10,295	515		5%
Charleston R-I	763	335		44%
Center 58	2,410	328		14%
University City	2,392	254		11%
Hayti R-Ii	615	243		40%
Clarkton C-4	295	160		54%
Madison C-3	181	102		56%
Gilliam C-4	36	36		100%
Mirabile C-1	33	33		100%

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Note: Bottom 10% means the school was in the bottom 10% of students with advanced or proficient scores in both ELA and math statewide. This analysis only includes K-12 schools and districts with publicly available math and ELA data. Select schools with specialty services were omitted.
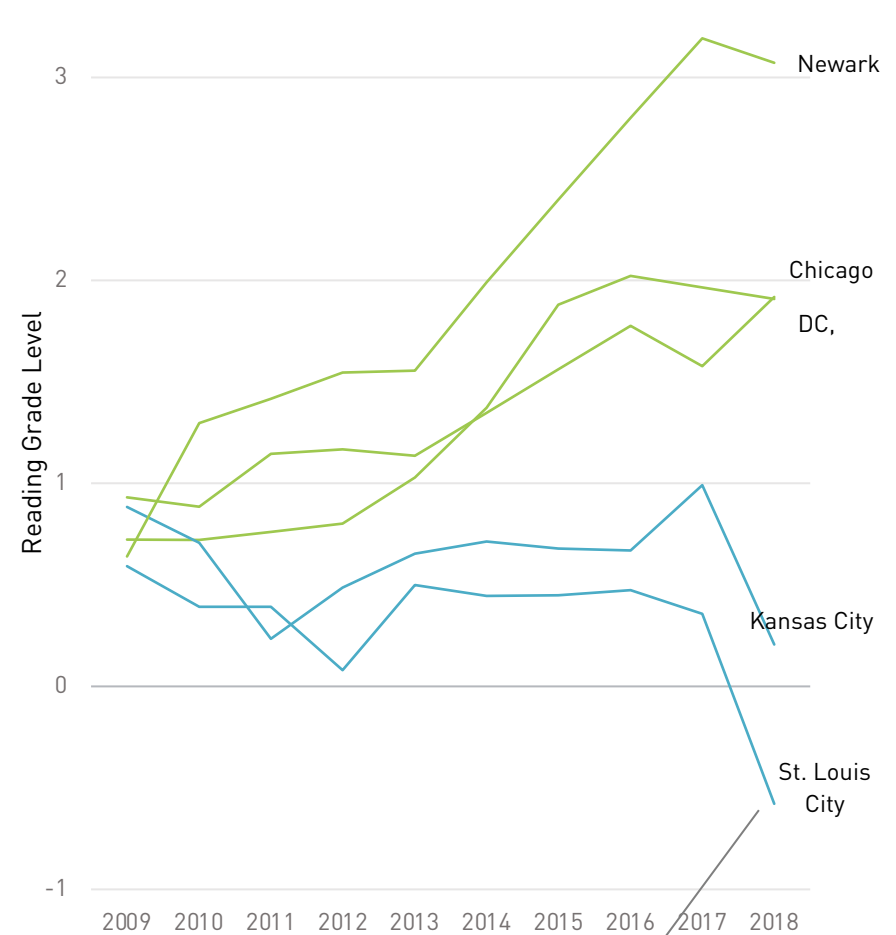
We can see similar progress by applying similar strategies, adjusting for our context

All 3rd Grade Students

At Grade Level

Reading Grade Level

Newark
Chicago
DC
Kansas City
St. Louis City

3
2
1
0
-1

2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018

St. Louis 3rd graders are 3 grade levels behind national average.

Black 3rd Grade Students

Reading Grade Level

Newark
Chicago
DC,
Kansas City
St. Louis City

3
2
1
0
-1

2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018

Black St. Louis 3rd graders are 3.6 grade levels behind national average.

Source: Reardon, S. F., Ho, A. D., Shear, B. R., Fahle, E. M., Kalogrides, D., Jang, H., & Chavez, B. (2021). **Stanford Education Data Archive (Version 4.0).** Retrieved from http://purl.stanford.edu/db586ns4974.
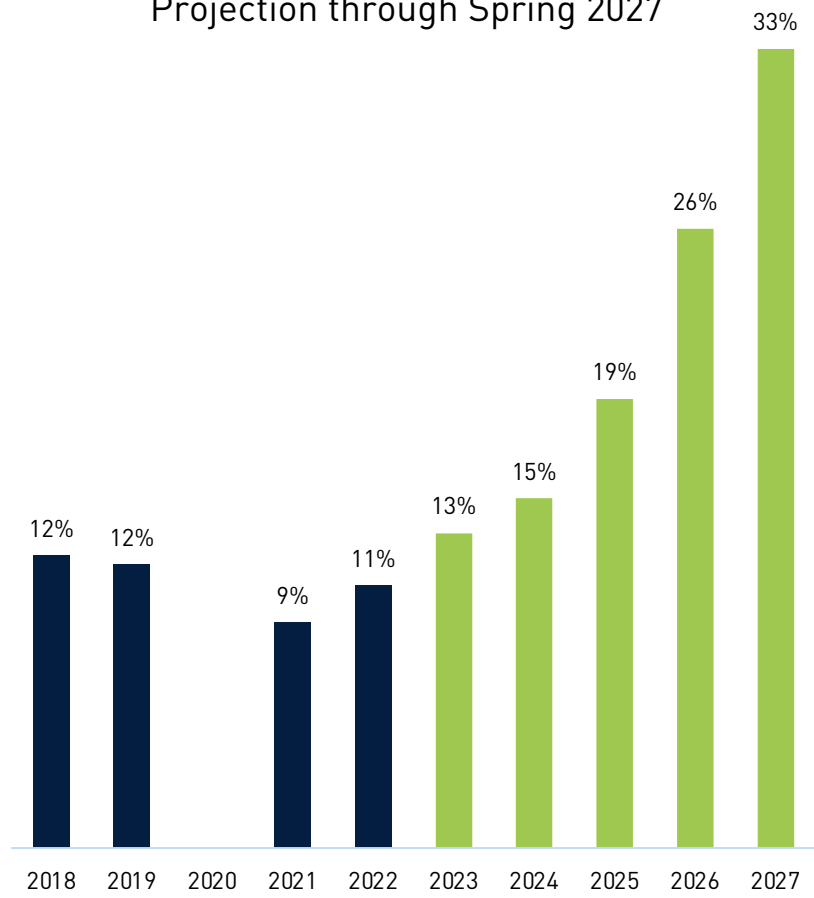
By 2027, we are working to more than triple the number of children in St. Louis public schools who are receiving an adequate education

Investment goes to three proven strategies:

Empower **families and students** to demand and drive change

Increase **School Quality**

Foster **learning and continuous improvement**

Launch, scale and transform **schools**
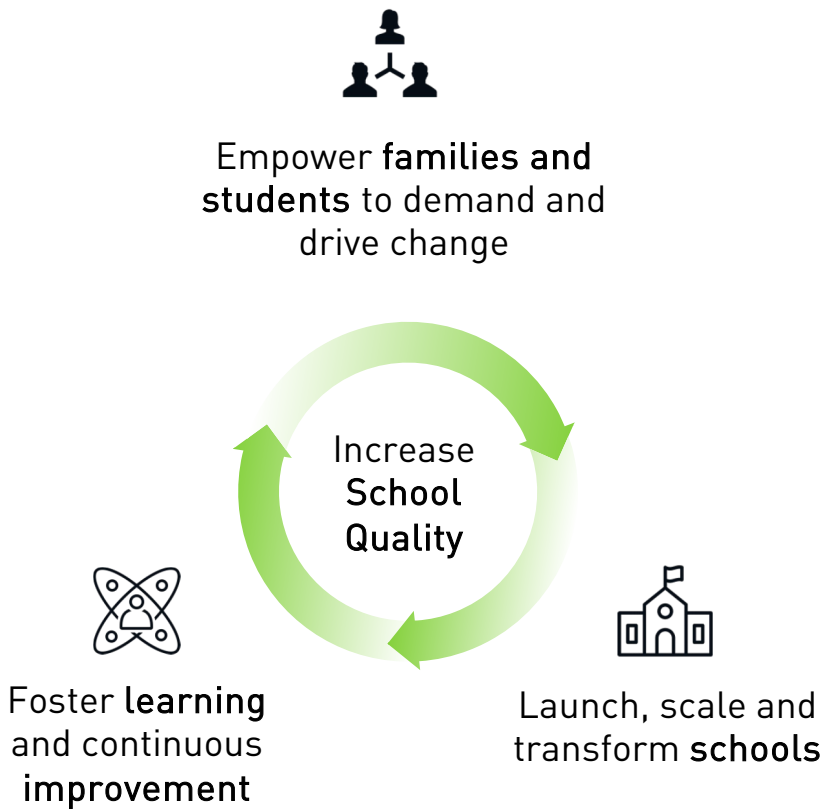
25% Quality in Five Years

Percent of students in quality schools
Projection through Spring 2027

Year	Percent
2018	12%
2019	12%
2020	
2021	9%
2022	11%
2023	13%
2024	15%
2025	19%
2026	26%
2027	33%

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Empowering families and students underserved by our public schools

Awareness and Capacity Building

Removing Barriers to Access

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Increase the number of high quality public schools

Add seats at higher performing schools

64%

Probability of becoming a "gap closing" school

city garden
montessori school

New Building at 4209 Folsom Avenue

hkw architects

Launch New & Innovative Schools

50%

Probability of becoming a "gap closing" school

STL PRE-K COOPERATIVE

KAIROS

ST. LOUIS VOICES ACADEMY OF MEDIA ARTS

The Leadership School
STUDENT LEADERSHIP AT THE CENTER OF LEARNING

ATLAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Improve Quality at Existing Schools

EducationWeek®

SCHOOL & DISTRICT MANAGEMENT

Billions in School Improvement Spending But Not Much Student Improvement

Education Next

Choice, Flexibility, Accountability Drive School Improvement

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF **UNIVERSITY CITY**
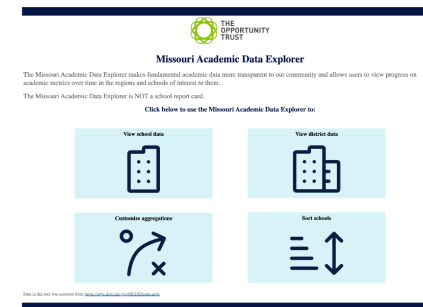Transform the Life of Every Student Every Day!

Momentum Academy

<10%

Probability of becoming a "gap closing" school*

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Build an education ecosystem that supports improvement and innovation

TALENT

ST. LOUIS TEACHER RESIDENCY

edfuel — TALENT AS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

The Management Center — Turning good intentions into great results

TNTP — reimagine teaching

Increased teacher retention in partner schools from 67% to 81%

USABLE DATA

Center for Education Policy Research — HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Exponent Education

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Missouri Academic Data Explorer

The Missouri Academic Data Explorer makes fundamental academic data more transparent to our community and allows users to view progress on academic metrics over time in the regions and schools of interest to them.

The Missouri Academic Data Explorer is NOT a school report card.

Click below to use the Missouri Academic Data Explorer to:

View school data

View district data

Customize aggregations

Sort schools

Missouri Academic Data Explorer (MADE)

Check out this tool to access and analyze Missouri state academic data and learn more about schools in your community.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND FAIR CHOICE

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The New York Times

OPINION
GUEST ESSAY

We Can Fight Learning Loss Only With Accountability and Action

Sept. 5, 2023

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

OPINION | COMMENTARY | Follow

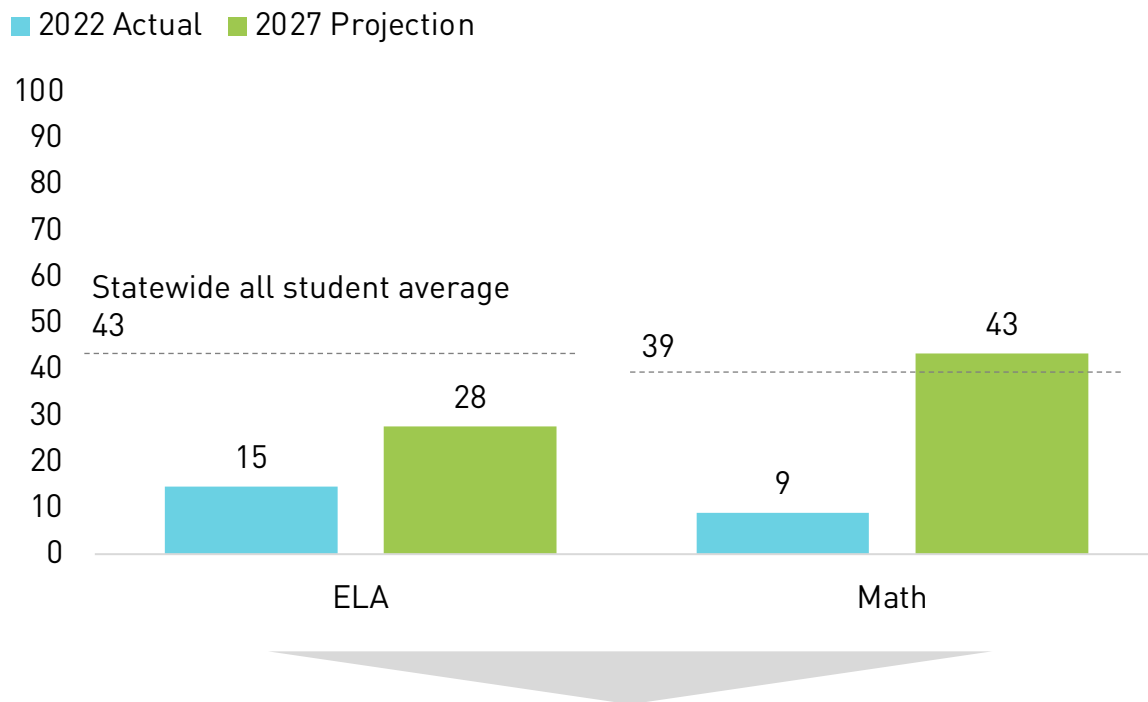*Michael Bloomberg: Why I'm Backing Charter Schools*

The public school system is failing. My philanthropy will give $750 million to a proven alternative.

Outliers present an example of what's possible citywide when the right conditions for improvement are in place

- Current proficiency rates for Black students citywide are 15% in ELA and 9% in math.

- If every SLPS school and charter improved their proficiency rates for Black students at Momentum's rate* for the next five years, citywide Black student achievement would dramatically improve.

- These increased test scores translate into significant improvements in college attendance and early career earnings.**

St. Louis City Black Student Proficiency Rate Projection SLPS and Charter

■ 2022 Actual   ■ 2027 Projection

Statewide all student average 43

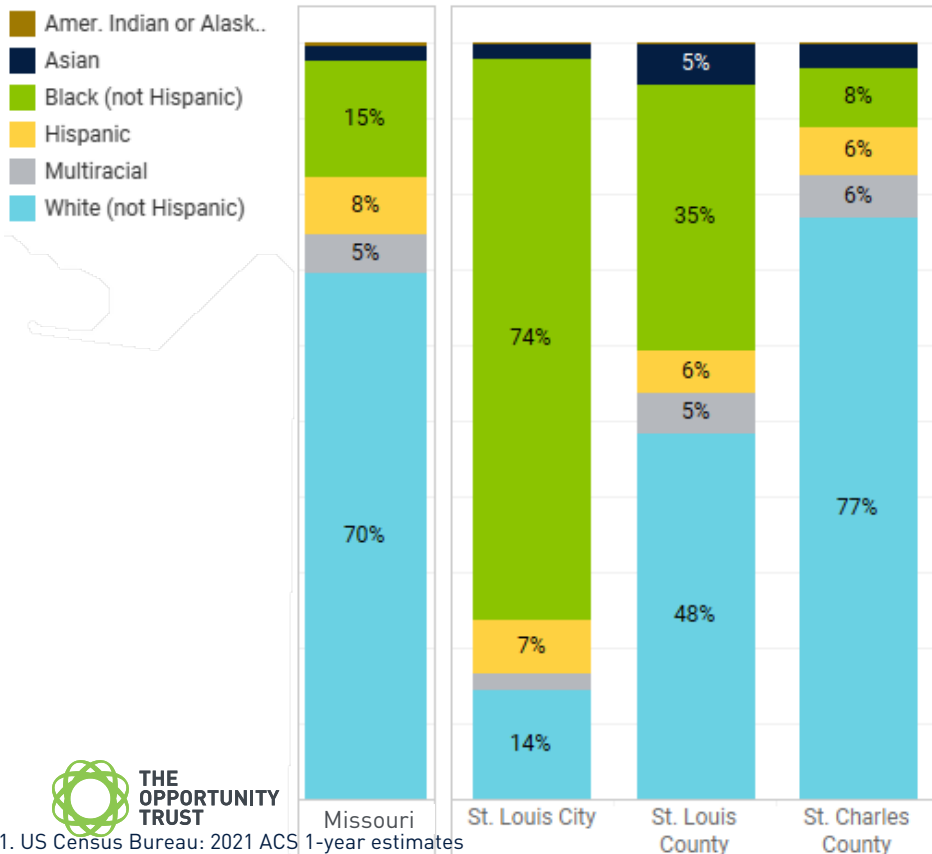|	ELA	Math
2022 Actual	15	9
2027 Projection	28	43

Math statewide average: 39

In an average class of 24 students, this amounts to **1 additional student** proficient in ELA and **2 additional students** proficient in math per year.
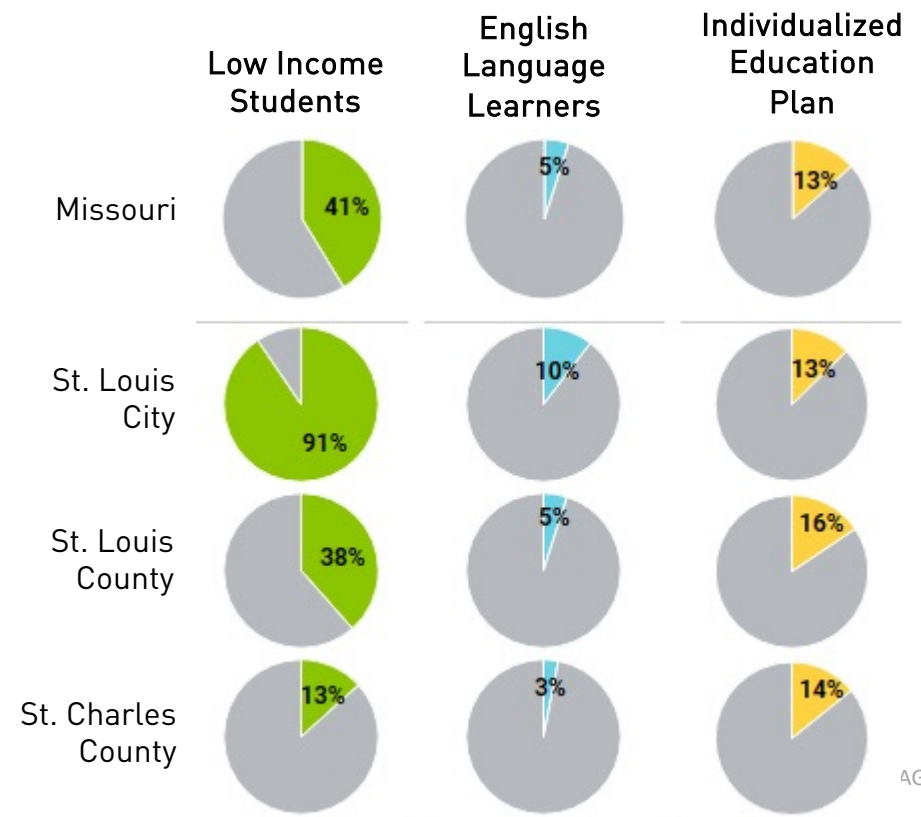
Appendix

Missouri and St. Louis Region Statistics

	School Aged Children[1]	Private School Enrollment[1]	K-12 Public Enrollment[2]	# Districts	# LEAs
Missouri	1,013,000	148,000	863,000	521	38
St. Louis City	35,000	6,000	29,000	2	18
St. Louis County	160,000	32,000	132,900	23	1
St. Charles County	70,000	11,000	58,000	5	0

Racial/Ethnic Demographics

Legend: Amer. Indian or Alask.., Asian, Black (not Hispanic), Hispanic, Multiracial, White (not Hispanic)

Missouri: Black 15%, Hispanic 8%, Multiracial 5%, White 70%
St. Louis City: Black 74%, Hispanic 7%, White 14%
St. Louis County: Asian 5%, Black 35%, Hispanic 6%, Multiracial 5%, White 48%
St. Charles County: Black 8%, Hispanic 6%, Multiracial 6%, White 77%

Additional Student Characteristics

Low Income Students / English Language Learners / Individualized Education Plan

Missouri: 41% / 5% / 13%
St. Louis City: 91% / 10% / 13%
St. Louis County: 38% / 5% / 16%
St. Charles County: 13% / 3% / 14%

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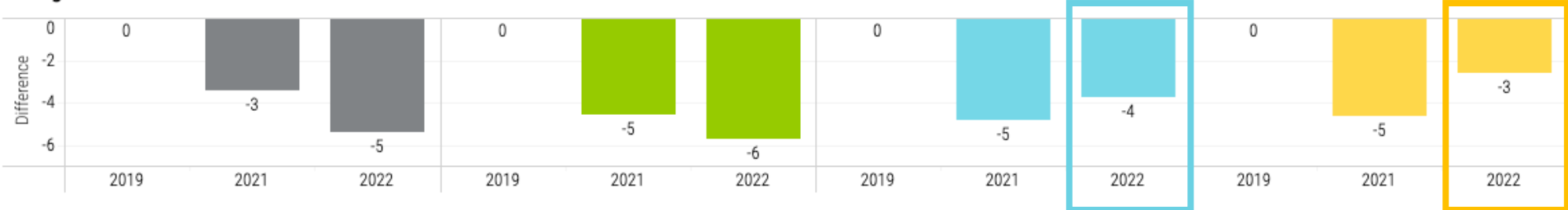# Reading performance continued to decline from 2021 to 2022 statewide and remained relatively flat locally

- In the state and county, ELA achievement continued to decline from 2021 to 2022.

- Locally, both charters and SLPS improved modestly (+1% and +2% points, respectively).

- No sector has reached pre-pandemic levels of performance.

Percent of Students Proficient or Advanced
Grade All, All Students

Customize this chart

Eng. Language Arts

MISSOURI | ST. LOUIS COUNTY | ST. LOUIS CHARTERS | SLPS

Change from 2019

Interact with these data on www.theopportunitytrust.org

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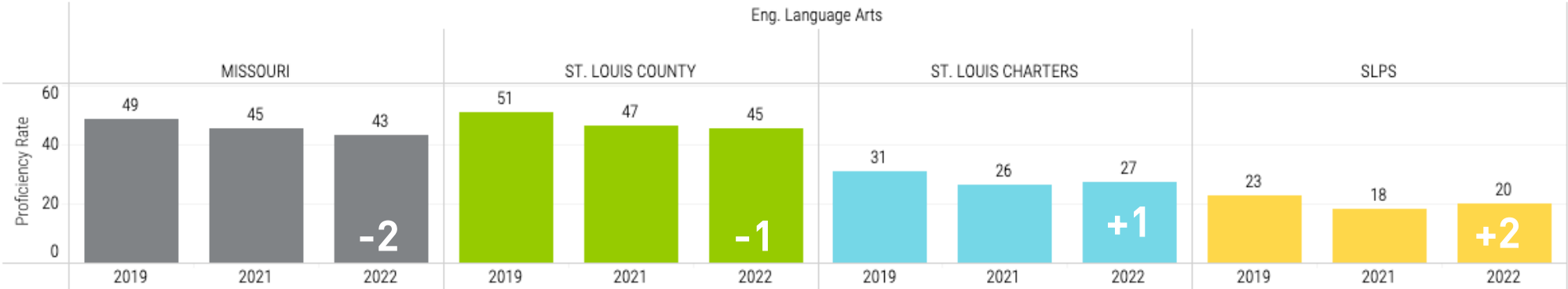
Math proficiency showed some signs of "rebounding" statewide and locally
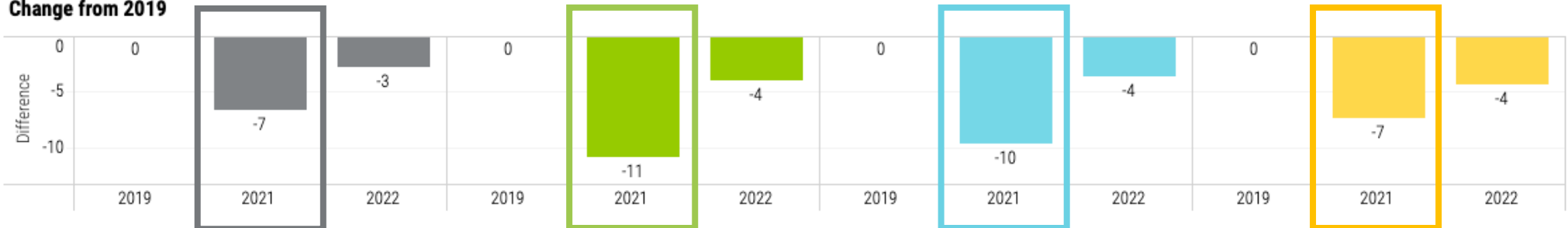
- Mirroring national trends, students lost more ground in mathematics than reading.

- Some signs of "rebounding" exist in math: students statewide, in St. Louis county, and across the city are improving, through no sector is back to pre-pandemic achievement.

Percent of Students Proficient or Advanced
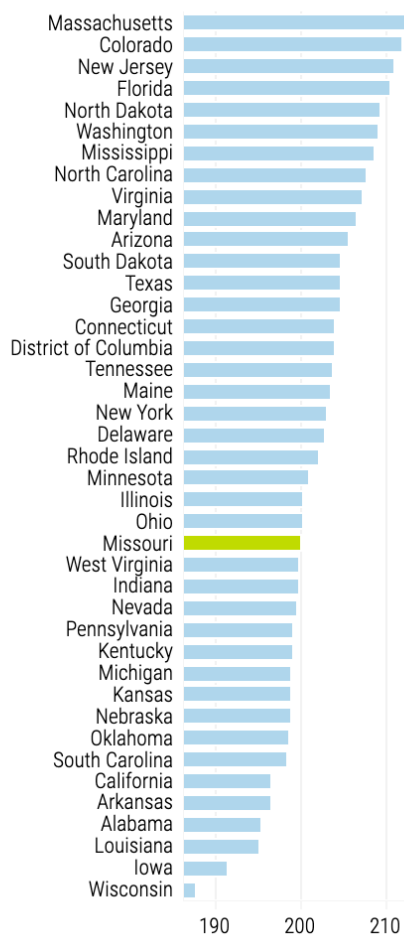Grade All, All Students
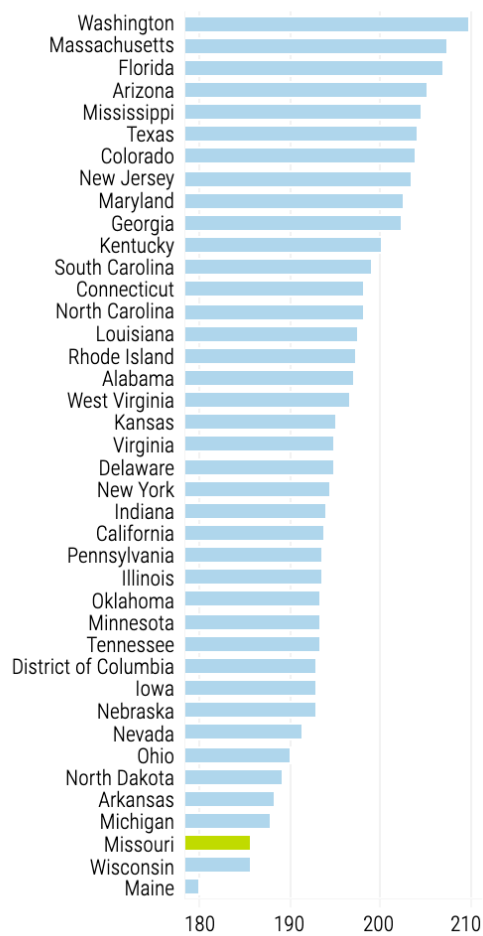
Customize this chart

Mathematics

Missouri's Black students lost more ground than peers in every other state through the pandemic

Grade 4 Reading Composite Score
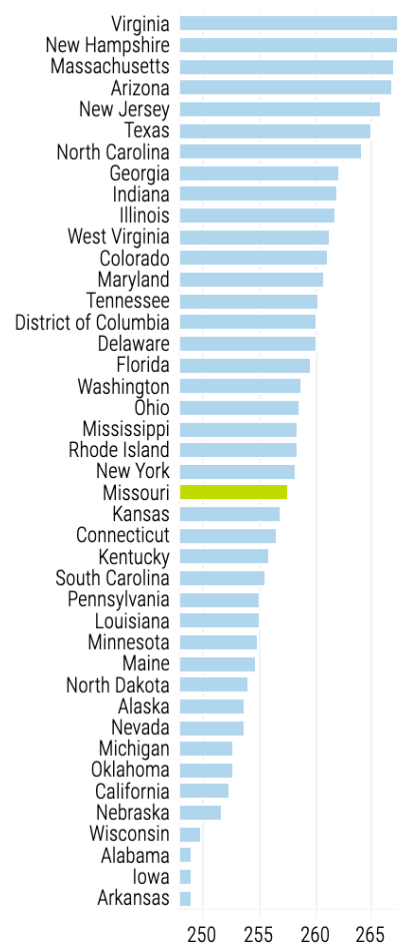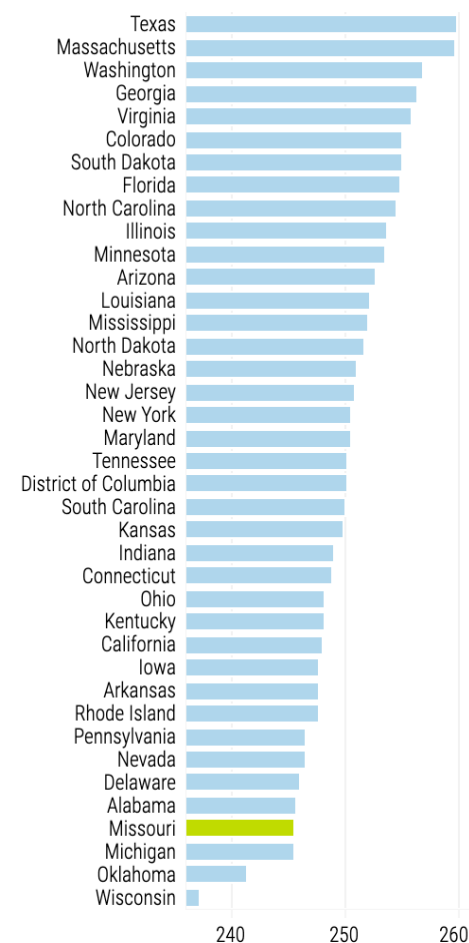### NAEP State Rankings for Black Students

2019 Scale Score Ranking

Massachusetts
Colorado
New Jersey
Florida
North Dakota
Washington
Mississippi
North Carolina
Virginia
Maryland
Arizona
South Dakota
Texas
Georgia
Connecticut
District of Columbia
Tennessee
Maine
New York
Delaware
Rhode Island
Minnesota
Illinois
Ohio
Missouri
West Virginia
Indiana
Nevada
Pennsylvania
Kentucky
Michigan
Kansas
Nebraska
Oklahoma
South Carolina
California
Arkansas
Alabama
Louisiana
Iowa
Wisconsin

190 200 210

2022 Scale Score Ranking

Washington
Massachusetts
Florida
Arizona
Mississippi
Texas
Colorado
New Jersey
Maryland
Georgia
Kentucky
South Carolina
Connecticut
North Carolina
Louisiana
Rhode Island
Alabama
West Virginia
Kansas
Virginia
Delaware
New York
Indiana
California
Pennsylvania
Illinois
Oklahoma
Minnesota
Tennessee
District of Columbia
Iowa
Nebraska
Nevada
Ohio
North Dakota
Arkansas
Michigan
Missouri
Wisconsin
Maine

180 190 200 210

Grade 8 Math Composite Score
NAEP State Rankings for Black Students

2019 Scale Score Ranking

Virginia
New Hampshire
Massachusetts
Arizona
New Jersey
Texas
North Carolina
Georgia
Indiana
Illinois
West Virginia
Colorado
Maryland
Tennessee
District of Columbia
Delaware
Florida
Washington
Ohio
Mississippi
Rhode Island
New York
Missouri
Kansas
Connecticut
Kentucky
South Carolina
Pennsylvania
Louisiana
Minnesota
Maine
North Dakota
Alaska
Nevada
Michigan
Oklahoma
California
Nebraska
Wisconsin
Alabama
Iowa
Arkansas

250 255 260 265

2022 Scale Score Ranking

Texas
Massachusetts
Washington
Georgia
Virginia
Colorado
South Dakota
Florida
North Carolina
Illinois
Minnesota
Arizona
Louisiana
Mississippi
North Dakota
Nebraska
New Jersey
New York
Maryland
Tennessee
District of Columbia
South Carolina
Kansas
Indiana
Connecticut
Ohio
Kentucky
California
Iowa
Arkansas
Rhode Island
Pennsylvania
Nevada
Delaware
Alabama
Missouri
Michigan
Oklahoma
Wisconsin

240 250 260
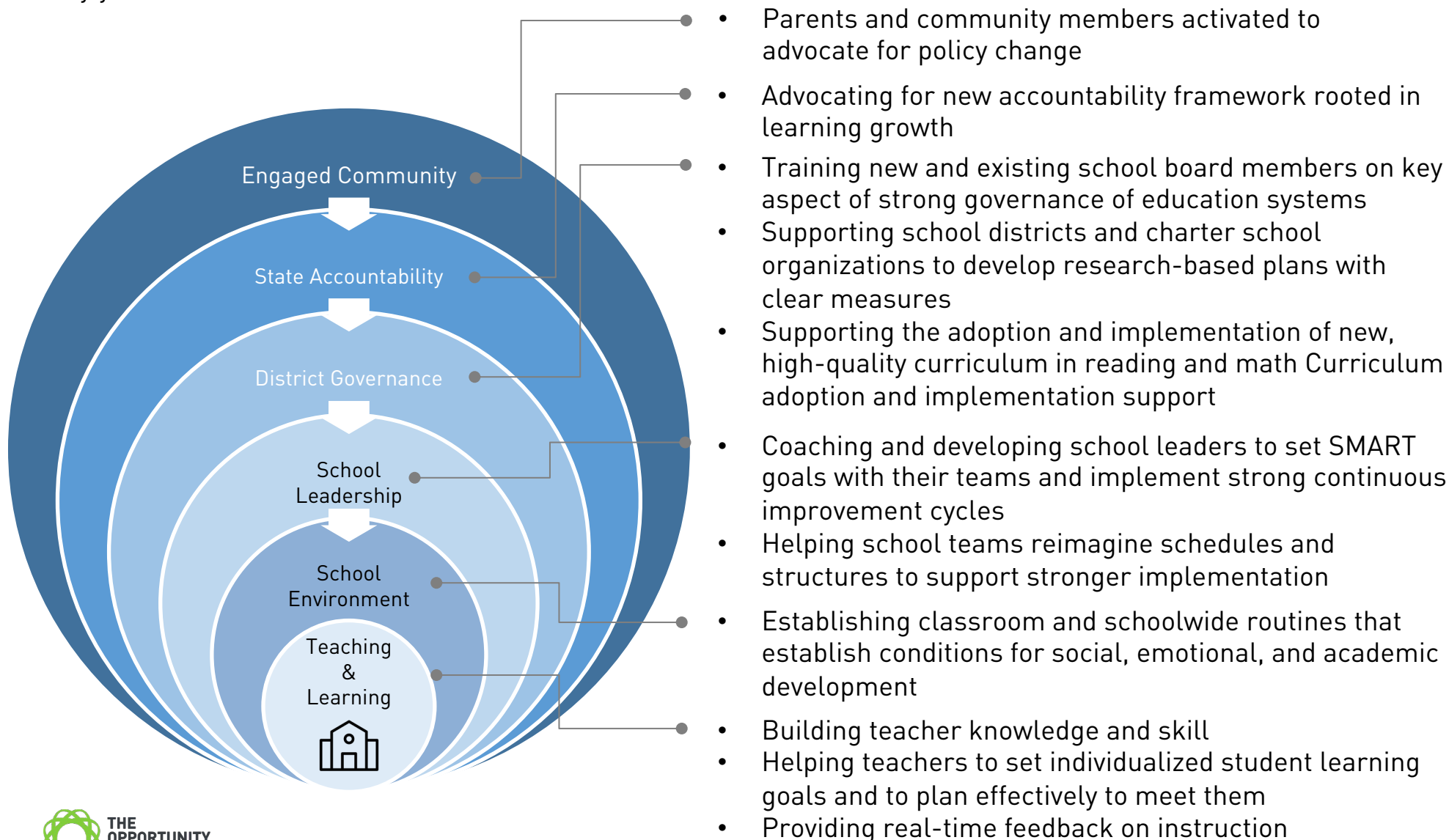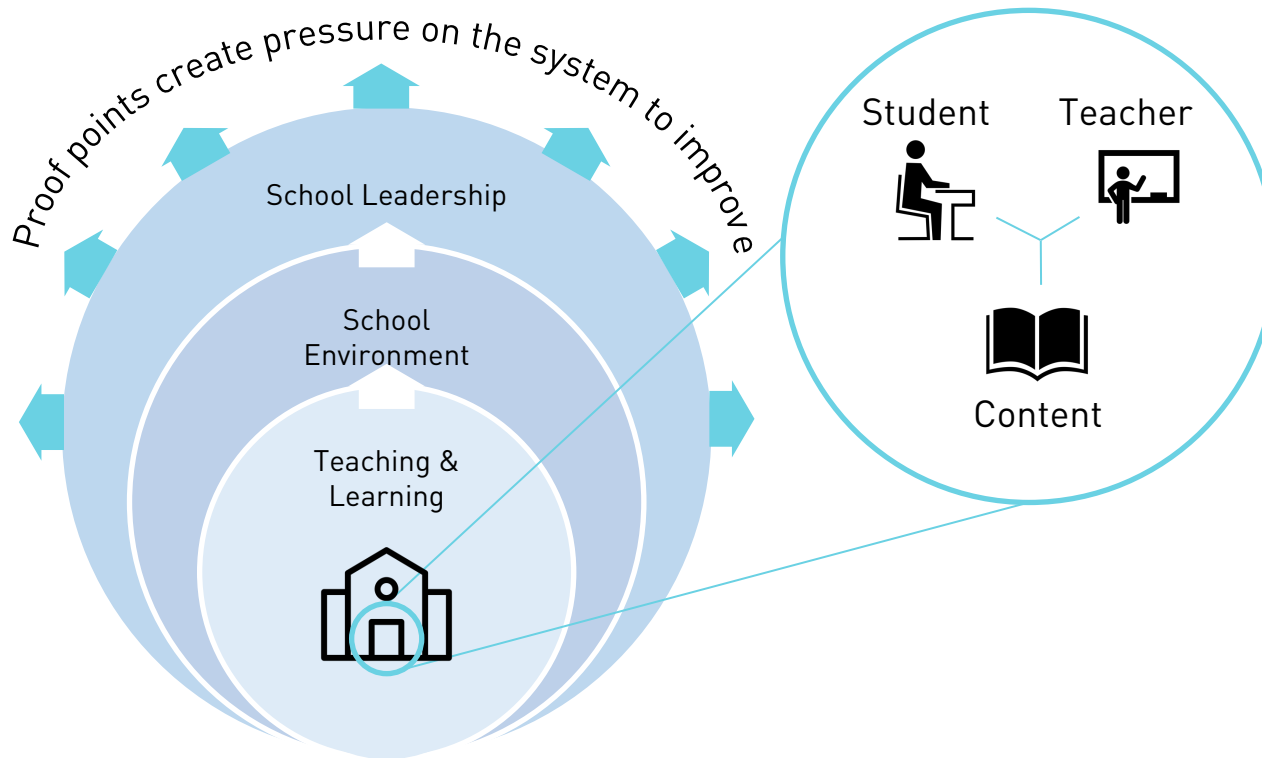
Student achievement is influenced by a range of downward pressures from policies and practices outside the classroom

Our strategy pursues **systemic change** by strengthening the environment in which schools operate and is grounded in insights from faster improving systems. These changes require persistent political and community pressure over many years.

Engaged Community

State Accountability

District Governance

School Leadership

School Environment

Teaching & Learning

- Parents and community members activated to advocate for policy change

- Advocating for new accountability framework rooted in learning growth

- Training new and existing school board members on key aspect of strong governance of education systems
- Supporting school districts and charter school organizations to develop research-based plans with clear measures
- Supporting the adoption and implementation of new, high-quality curriculum in reading and math Curriculum adoption and implementation support

- Coaching and developing school leaders to set SMART goals with their teams and implement strong continuous improvement cycles
- Helping school teams reimagine schedules and structures to support stronger implementation

- Establishing classroom and schoolwide routines that establish conditions for social, emotional, and academic development

- Building teacher knowledge and skill
- Helping teachers to set individualized student learning goals and to plan effectively to meet them
- Providing real-time feedback on instruction

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Launching new schools is an expedient strategy to raise achievement quickly and creates proof points that help the system overall to improve

New schools provide children growing up today with better educational opportunities because they have maximum flexibility to shape an effective instructional core: the interaction between students, their teachers, and rigorous content. These schools' successes provide blueprints for larger system change and increase pressure on existing schools to improve.

Proof points create pressure on the system to improve

School Leadership

School Environment

Teaching & Learning

Student

Teacher

Content

The instructional core reflects the critical interaction between teachers' knowledge and skill, students' engagement in their own learning, and academically challenging content. Independently and together, these factors have among the largest effect sizes on student achievement in the education literature.

In a 10-city study of education reforms around the country, *"new start" schools performed significantly higher than comparison schools* and were the most likely of all grant-supported school types to have low-income students whose performance exceeded the state average for all students.

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Conditions That Accelerate Improvement

Essential Conditions	Key Components
Strong Governance	• Sets ambitious but feasible goals for improvement • Provides support and resources to Executive and team to create a strong plan • Holds Executive accountable to progress against goals
Effective Leadership	• Recruits and retains high performing team • Builds a goal-oriented, performance culture • Develops team members • Takes personal responsibility for outcomes
Robust Instructional Core	• Research-based curriculum materials aligned to grade-level expectations • Teacher planning protocols • Principal and teacher observation and feedback • Data-driven improvement cycles
Accountability and Choice	• Transparent data and reporting • Accountability that rewards and recognizes progress and intervenes where there is persistent failure • Choice with dollars following students

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