

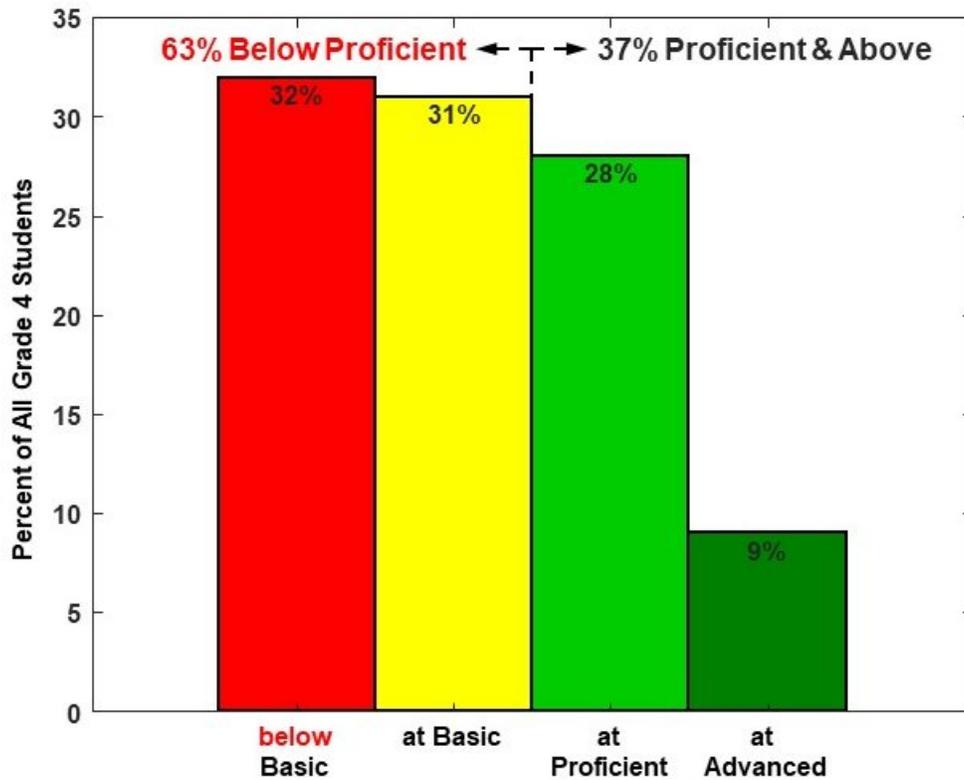
Early Literacy Assessments for Vermont

1. Regular Education Assessments

A. National assessments – National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has four achievement levels: “below Basic,” “at Basic,” “at Proficient,” and “at Advanced.” According to the 2019 NAEP for 4th grade reading scores, 32% of Vermont’s fourth graders are “below Basic” and a total of 63% are below “at Proficient”. See figure below.

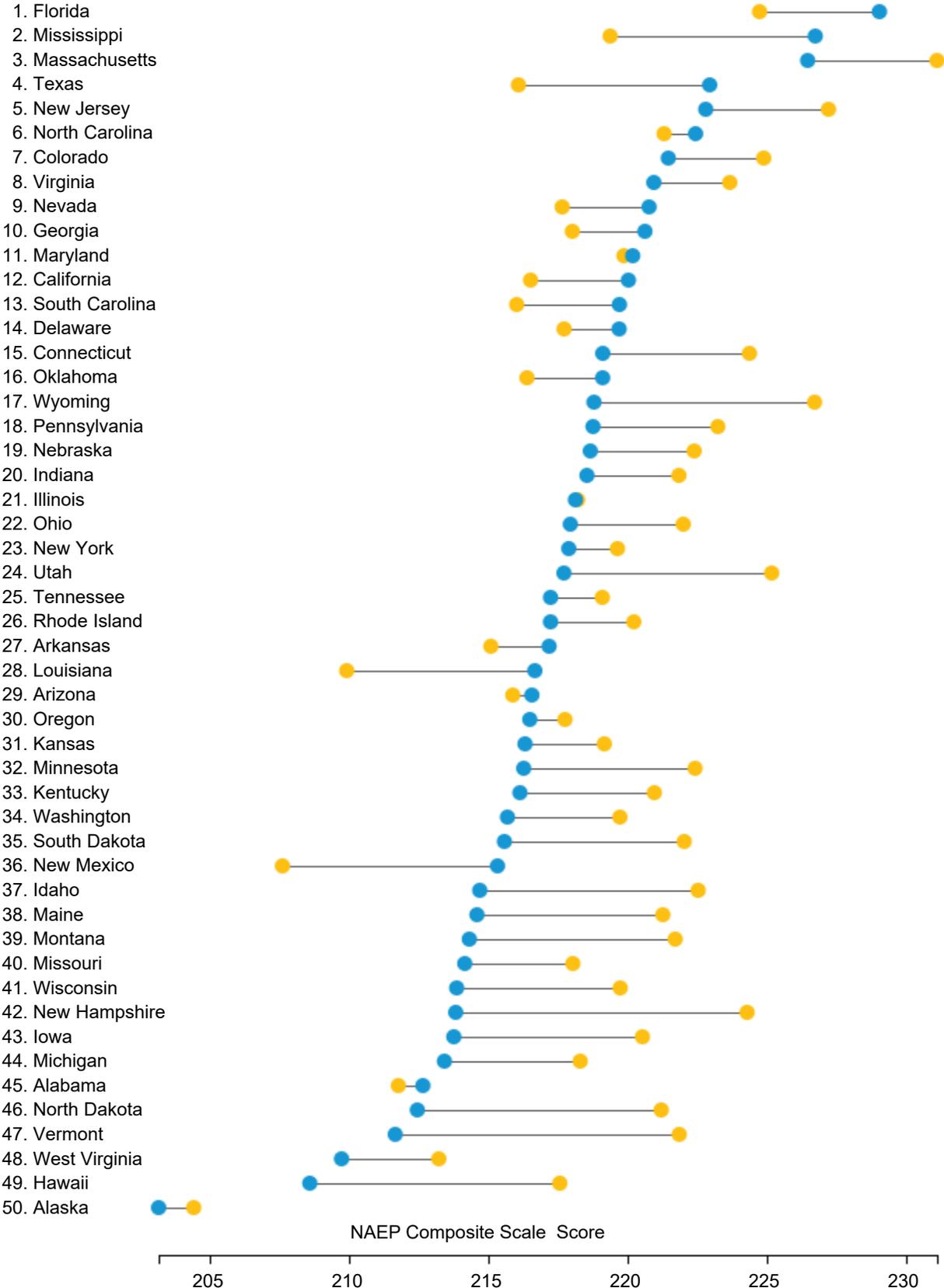
Vermont Grade 4 Reading Achievement Level
The Nation’s Report Card (National Assessment of Educational Progress)



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2019 Reading Assessment. <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ndecore/xplore/nde>

When these results are adjusted by the Urban Institute (<https://apps.urban.org/features/naep/>) for a state’s student population’s age, race or ethnicity, special education status, free and reduced-price lunch eligibility (imputed), and English language learner status, Vermont ranks 47th out of the 50 states. This represents a drop from a rank of 37th in 2017. See Table 1 below.

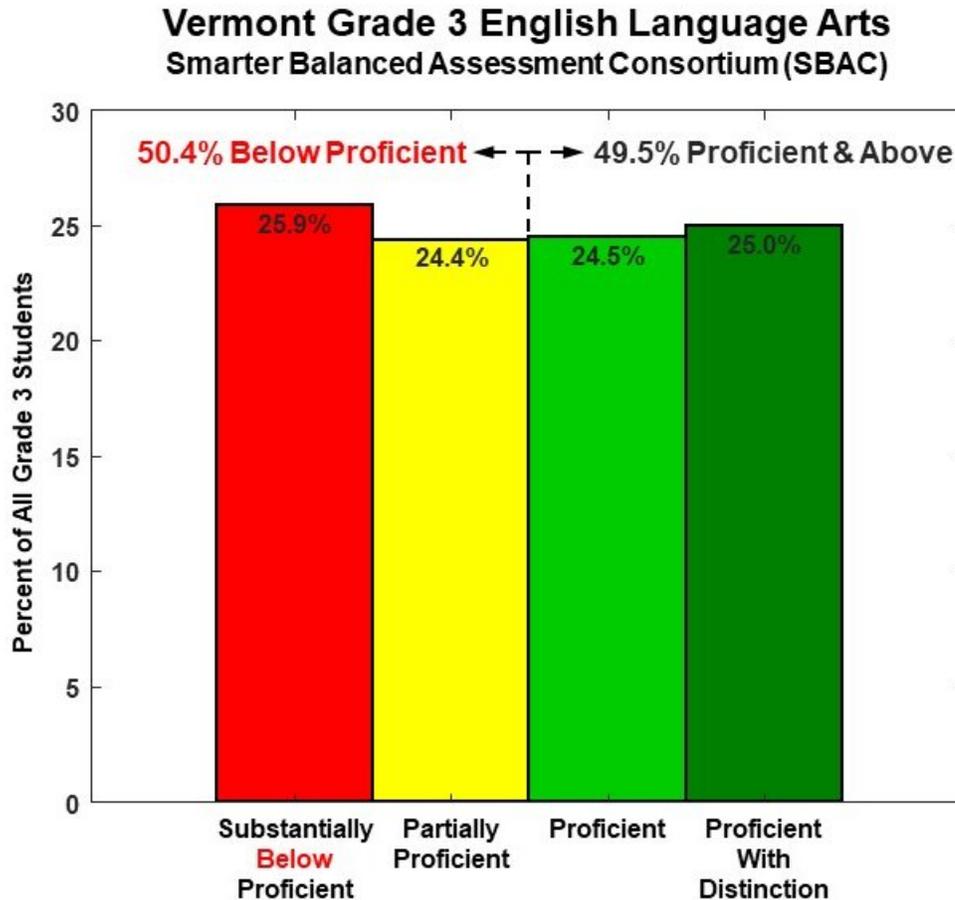
Table 1 Unadjusted versus adjusted 2019 NAEP 4th-grade reading composite scores with controls for age, race or ethnicity, special education status, free and reduced-price lunch eligibility (imputed), and English language learner status. Unadjusted ● Adjusted ●



Source: Urban Institute, 500 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Washington, DC. <https://apps.urban.org/features/naep/>

B. Vermont assessments – Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessment has four achievement levels: “Substantially below Proficient,” “Partially Proficient,” “Proficient,” and “Proficient with Distinction.” According to the 2019 SBAC for 3rd grade English Language Arts, 25.9% of Vermont’s third graders are “Substantially below Proficient” and a total of 50.4% are below “Proficient”. See figure below.



Source: Vermont Agency of Education, 2019 SBAC Assessment.

<https://education.vermont.gov/data-and-reporting/vermont-education-dashboard/assessment>

2. Historically Under-Served Populations Assessments

A. Socioeconomic Status

Based on the 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 4th grade reading scores, 78% of Vermont students from lower income families (School Lunch Program Eligible) are below “at Proficient” compared to just 53% of Vermont students from higher income families (not School Lunch Program Eligible). Children from lower income families score 25% lower than children from higher income families. This 25% difference is important because as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) [Programme](#)

[for International Student Assessment \(PISA\) report](#) notes in their motivation to define equity: “children from wealthier families may find many open doors to a successful life, but **children from poor families often have just one chance in life – and that is a good teacher and school that give them an opportunity to develop their potential.**” (p. 19).

Based on the 2019 Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) for 3rd grade English Language Arts, 68.3% of students from lower income families (on Free and Reduced Lunches) are below “Proficient” compared to just 38.4% of students from higher income families (not on Free and Reduced Lunches). The discrepancy between children from low income families and higher income families is even larger on the SBAC test. Children from lower income families score almost 30% lower.

B. Disabilities

Based on the 2019 NAEP 4th grade reading scores, 93% of Vermont students identified with disabilities (having either an Individualized Education Program [IEP] or protection under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) are below “at Proficient” compared to just 56% of Vermont students not identified with disabilities. Children identified with disabilities score 37% lower than those not identified with disabilities.

Based on the 2019 SBAC for 3rd grade English Language Arts, 86.7% of students in special education are below “Proficient” compared to just 43.6% of students not in special education. The discrepancy between children identified with disabilities and those without disabilities is even larger on the SBAC test. Children identified with disabilities score over 43% lower.

C. Race/Ethnicity

Based on the 2019 SBAC for 3rd grade English Language Arts, 69.6% of black students are below “Proficient” compared to just 49.7% of white students. Black students score almost 20% lower than white students.

3. Observations

Depending on the assessment, between a third to a half of Vermont’s white children from higher income families and without any identified disabilities are below proficient. Why are so many advantaged children failing to learn early literacy skills?

Notably, our education system is failing to serve our most vulnerable children who need the opportunity afforded by an education. How can we most effectively educate our children from lower income families, children identified with disabilities or children with different race or ethnicity to reduce these measured disparities?

What needs to change in our schools so that all Vermont children are taught effectively?