



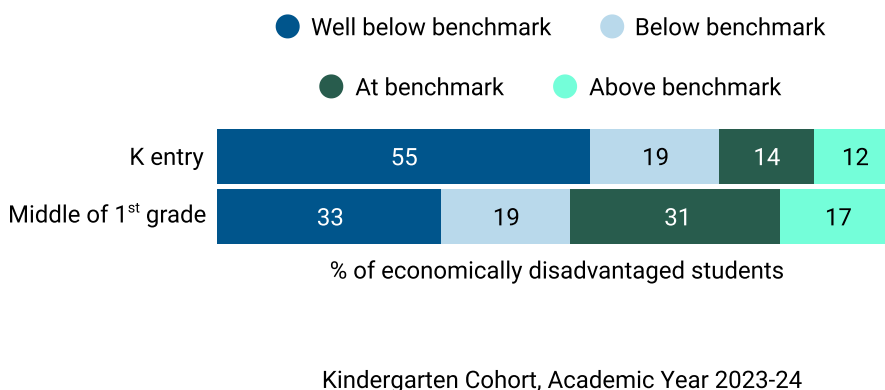
Many Louisiana children arrive at kindergarten unprepared to learn to read

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Key Findings

- **55% of Louisiana's economically disadvantaged children score well below the benchmark for reading readiness at kindergarten entry**, placing them at high risk for future reading difficulties.
- **By the middle of first grade, the number of economically disadvantaged students scoring well below the benchmark drops to 33%.** A vast majority (80%) of these struggling students were already far behind at kindergarten entry.



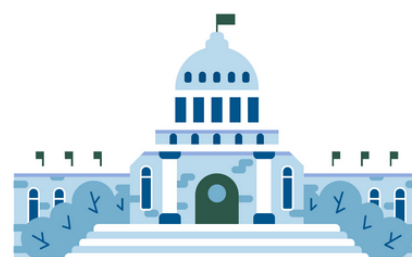
Why This Matters



- **Louisiana now screens all K-3 students using the DIBELS assessment.**
 - This statewide universal screening, which ended in 2013-14 and was started again in 2023-24, provides a window into students' reading skills in the early grades.
- **Reading challenges in kindergarten affect many of Louisiana's youngest learners.**
 - 76% of Louisiana's public-school kindergartners are classified as economically disadvantaged, and more than half of these children arrive at kindergarten without basic literacy skills.
- **Teachers of early grades face uphill battles.**
 - Teachers must deliver grade-level content while supporting many children who haven't yet mastered early literacy foundations.

Policy Recommendations

- **Identify strategies to improve kindergarten readiness in economically disadvantaged students.**
- **Use early assessment data (like DIBELS) to intervene early and drive targeted instruction throughout the early grades.**
- **Support parents in understanding and responding to their child's screening results.**



Bottom Line

Early reading struggles can be predicted, and many can be prevented. Most students who struggle with reading by first grade were already far behind when they entered kindergarten. **To close literacy gaps, we must intervene early and sustain that support through the early grades.**