

Pennsylvania's 2022 Student Proficiency Rates Show Signs of Partial Recovery

Proficiency rates on Pennsylvania's statewide assessments in 2022 remain below pre-pandemic levels, especially in math, but there is evidence that student learning has begun to recover. Proficiency rates for grades 5–8 in 2022 improved in both English language arts (ELA) and math relative to rates predicted for 2021 from a [Mathematica research brief](#) that accounted for unusual test conditions that year (Figure 1).¹ The results are encouraging, but more work is needed to help students recover from the pandemic.

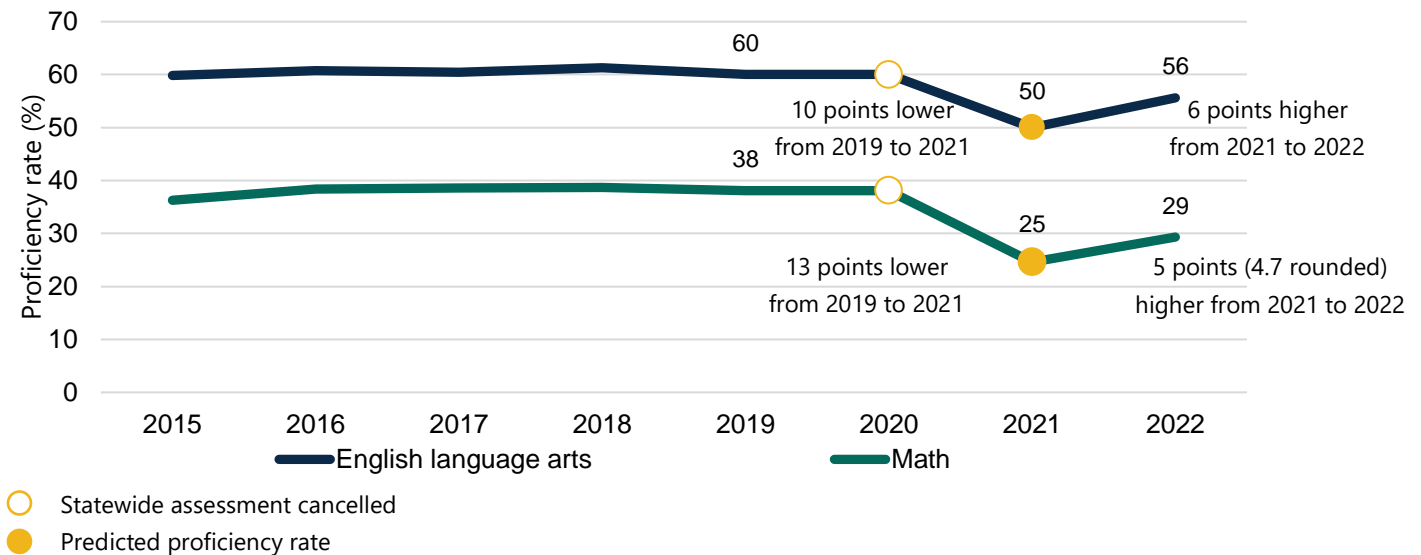
It has been difficult to monitor statewide changes in academic achievement during the pandemic. Pennsylvania's statewide assessments were cancelled in 2020, and the results for 2021 did not provide a clear picture of academic proficiency statewide. This was because fewer students

participated in the 2021 assessments, particularly among those with lower performance before the pandemic. In addition, test administration dates in 2021 varied widely from the spring to the fall of the next school year.

Mathematica, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Education, predicted spring 2021 proficiency for nearly all students in grades 5–8, accounting for the unique assessment issues that year. The findings revealed that steep declines in proficiency likely occurred from 2019 to 2021, larger than data suggested from test takers only.

By spring 2022, proficiency rates in grades 5–8 had regained 6 points of their 10-point drop in ELA and nearly 5 points of their 13-point drop in math.

Figure 1. Actual and predicted proficiency rates in grades 5 through 8 in Pennsylvania, 2015–2022



Notes: The exhibit shows actual proficiency rates from the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment, averaged across grades 5–8, unless marked by either an open or closed circle.

Source: Data from 2015 through 2019 and 2022 are from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The 2021 data are predicted proficiency rates from Lipscomb et al. (2022).

¹ The research brief focused on grades 5–8 because students in these grades also took the statewide assessments in 2019 (in grades 3–6), before the pandemic began.

For more information

Research brief

Lipscomb, Stephen, Duncan Chaplin, Alma Vigil, and Hena Matthias. “How the COVID-19 Pandemic Affected Academic Proficiency Rates in Pennsylvania in 2021: Findings from a Predictive Model.” Cambridge, MA: Mathematica, 2022.
<https://www.mathematica.org/publications/how-the-covid-19-pandemic-affected-academic-proficiency-rates-in-pennsylvania-in-2021>

Pennsylvania’s statewide assessment results

<https://www.education.pa.gov/DataAndReporting/Assessments/Pages/PSSA-Results.aspx>

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