



**CROSS-STATE ANALYSIS:  
PERCENTAGE OF BENCHMARK STUDENTS IN SPRING,  
BY GRADE LEVEL, STATE AND YEAR OF  
IMPLEMENTATION**

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The 2007-2008 school year marked the fourth year of school-level implementation for Alaska Reading First. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) compared the percentage of Alaska Reading First students meeting benchmark in the spring to other students' performance in Arizona, Montana, Washington, and Wyoming for the first four years of implementation. While Alaska had only one cohort of Reading First schools, all of the other states had more than one cohort. Cohort 1 schools in Arizona, Montana, and Washington started in 2003-2004; Cohort 1 schools in Alaska and Wyoming started in 2004-2005. The first four years of Cohort 1 in each state was used for comparison purposes. For each state and grade level, only matched student DIBELS scores from fall to spring for each implementation year were used. During the 2006-2007 school year, Arizona started reporting Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 as a single cohort because of the small number of schools in Cohort 2. Cohort 1 had 63 schools while Cohort 2 had only nine schools, totaling 72 schools for Cohort 1.

While the percentage of benchmark students in Alaska dramatically increased in all grades, except kindergarten, from the first year to the fourth year, a gradual upward trend was seen only in third grade across the years. In the other grades, the percentage of benchmark students reached a plateau in the first or second year of implementation and did not improve, except by a few percentage points, for the remaining years. In the other states, there generally was an upward trend at all grade levels. By the end of the fourth year, most states had outperformed Alaska in the percentage of benchmark students across grade levels.

More detailed results are presented in the following summaries and charts.

## Kindergarten

The percentage of Alaska Reading First kindergarten students started higher at the end of the first year of implementation than any of the other states, but continued to remain at the same level for the next three years. On the other hand, other states showed a gradual upward trend and reached greater percentages of benchmark students by the end of the fourth year. In fact, Wyoming Reading First had 90 percent of its kindergarten students at benchmark for the last two years. (See Figure1.)

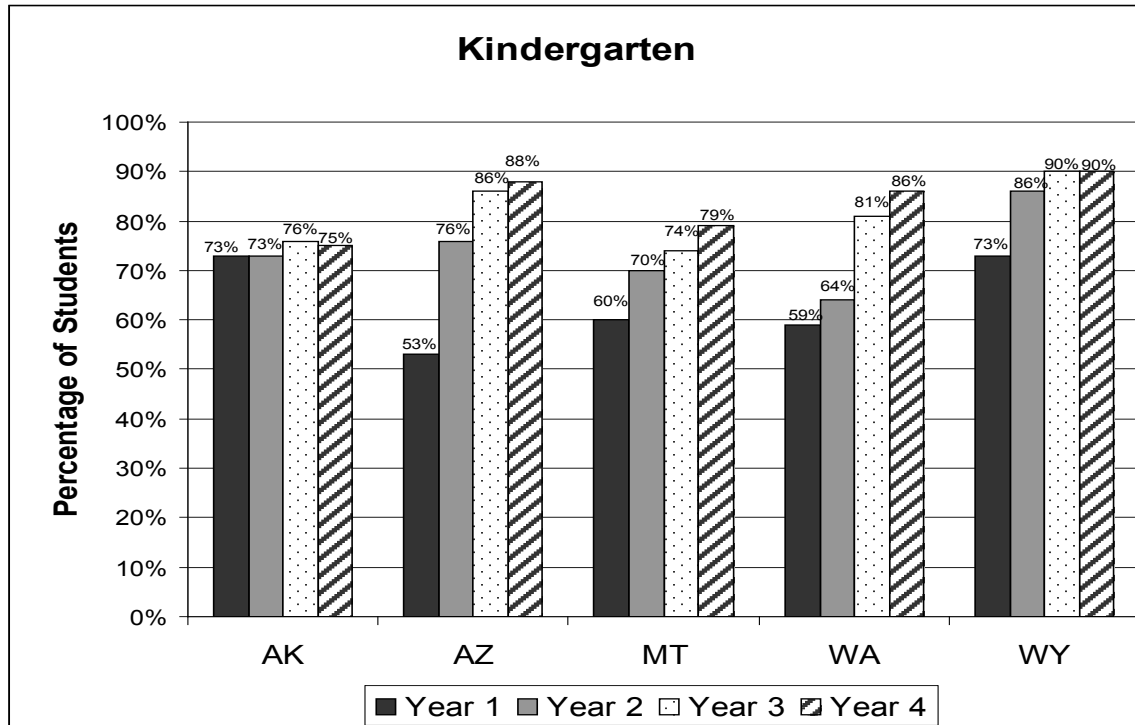


Figure 1: Percentage of kindergarten students at benchmark across time, by state.

## First Grade

The percentage of Alaskan students in first grade moderately increased from the spring of the first year to the spring of the second year, then remained remarkably stable at 65 percent for three years. In Arizona, there was a steep upward trend; there was a more gradual upward progress in the other states. By the end of the fourth year, all states had a greater percentage of benchmark students than Alaska's 65 percent. Percentages ranged from 66 percent to 74 percent. (See Figure 2.)

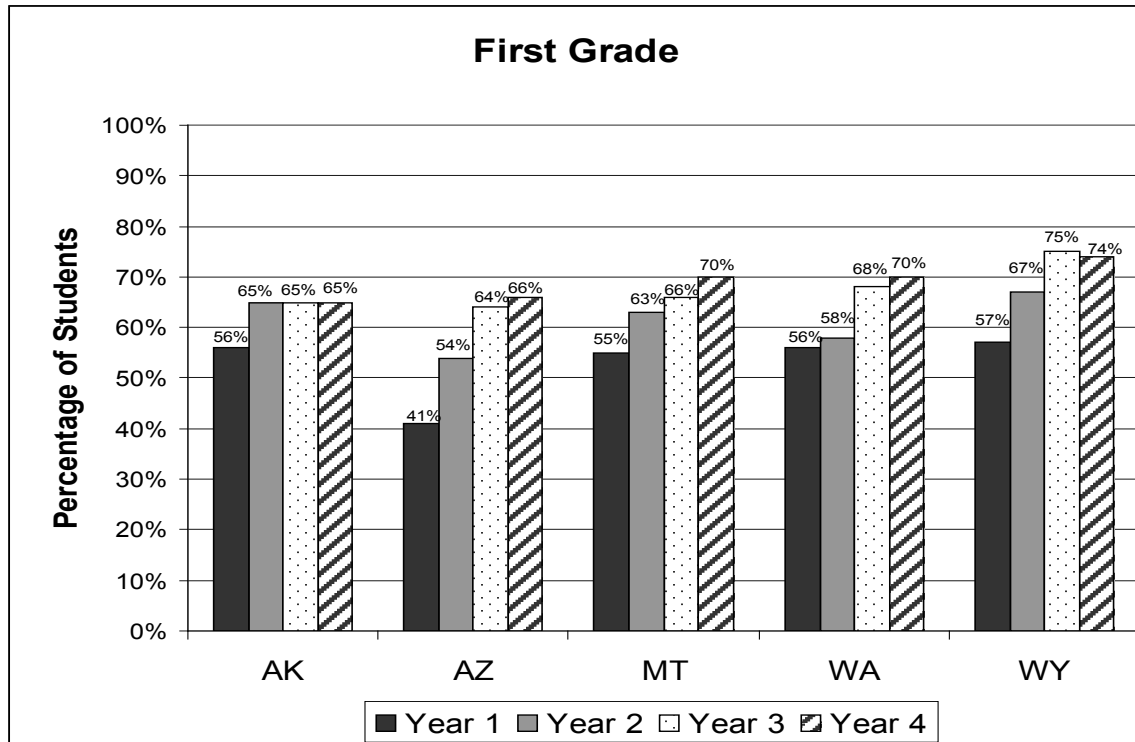


Figure 2: Percentage of first-grade students at benchmark across time, by state.

## Second Grade

In second grade, the percentage of Alaskan Reading First students increased substantially from the end of the first year to the end of the second year, but then remained stable at about 60 percent until the end of the fourth year. The other states demonstrated a gradual upward trend across the four years of implementation. At the end of the fourth year, all states had approximately the same percentage of second-grade, benchmark students—about 60 percent or slightly higher. (See Figure 3.)

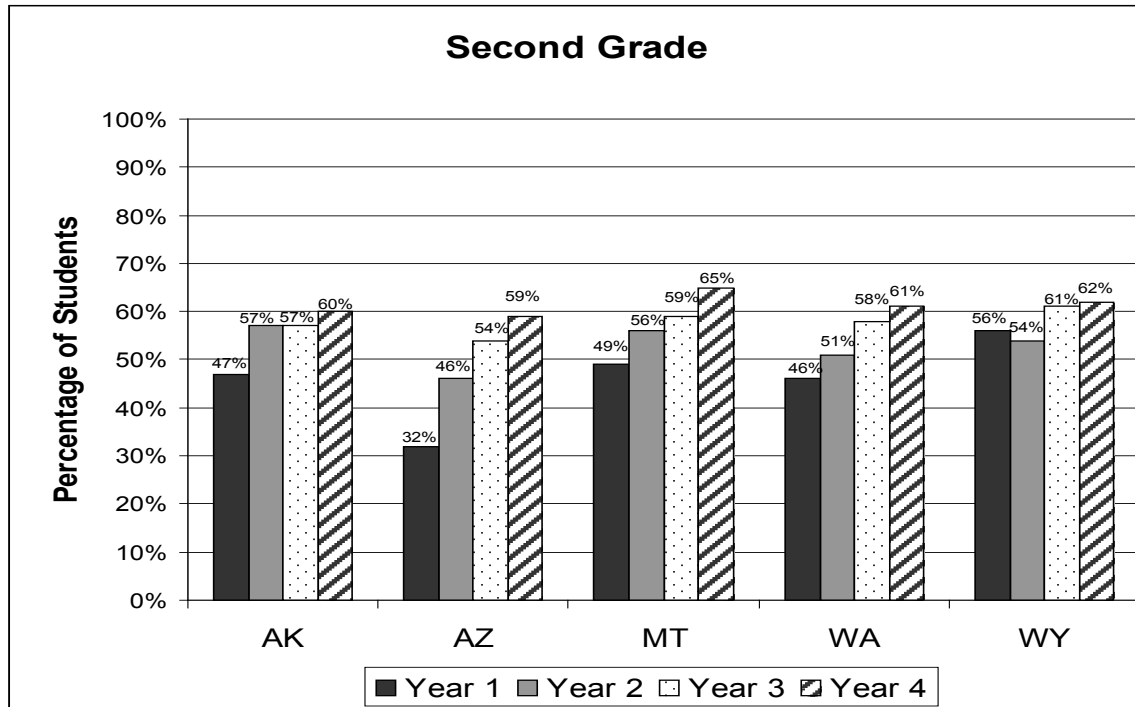


Figure 3: Percentage of second-grade students at benchmark across time, by state

### Third Grade

The percentage of third-grade students in Alaska steadily improved from 39 percent to 52 percent. The other states generally had upward trends, with Montana experiencing a dip in the third year. Wyoming's upward trend over the first three years took a slight percentage-point increase in the third year, and then a percentage-point decline in the fourth year. In the fourth year, Alaska had the lowest percentage of benchmark students (52%) than any of the other states. In fact, across Alaska's grade levels, the third grade had the smallest percentage of benchmark students in the fourth year. (See Figure 4.)

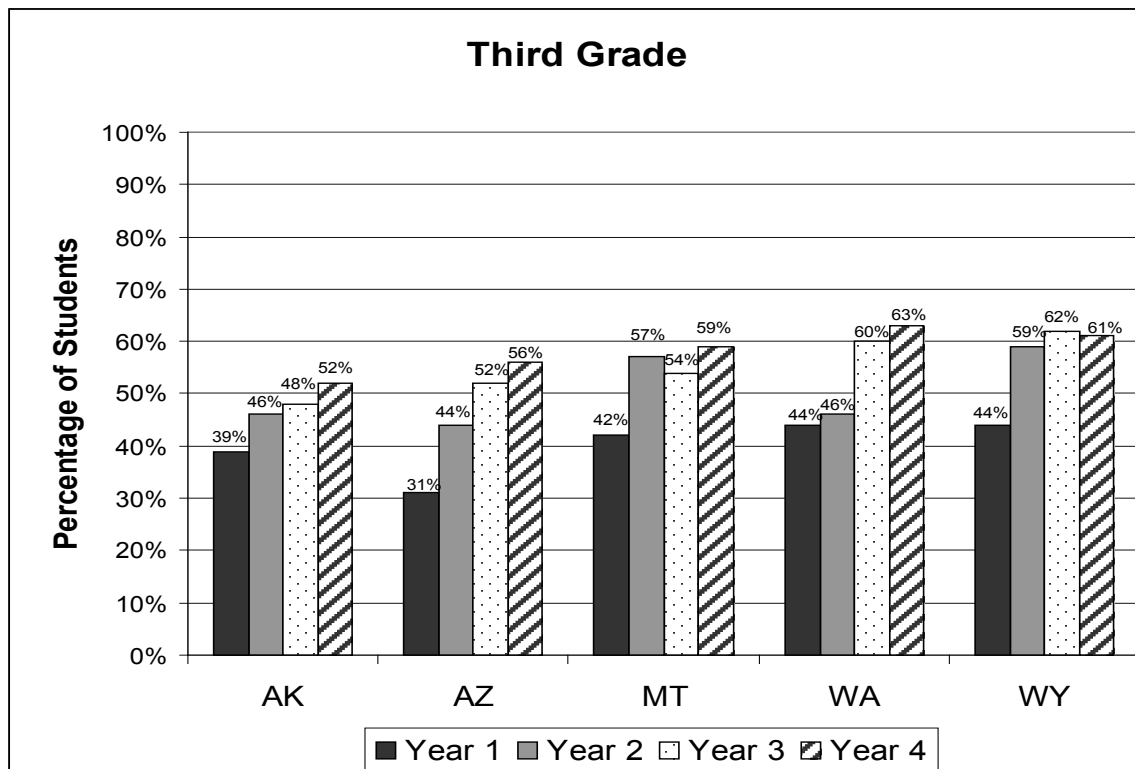


Figure 4: Percentage of third-grade students at benchmark across time, by state