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Early reading test shows strong statewide gains from fall to spring

(BOISE) – Statewide results from the spring Idaho Reading Indicator show that about two-thirds of all Idaho students in kindergarten through third grade were reading at grade level, notable progress despite the pandemic disruptions in the school year, Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra said.

“That’s an improvement of about 15 percentage points from the fall, showing that our teachers effectively used results from the start of the school year to identify areas where individual intervention or additional instruction was needed,” Superintendent Ybarra said. “Now our districts and schools are focused on addressing the effects of any unfinished learning going into this summer and the next school year, making sure students learn to read by third grade so they can read to learn for the rest of their lives.”

Administration of the spring IRI was disrupted by the pandemic last year, along with other assessments and school operations, and the 2018-19 school year was the last time that all Idaho K-3 students took the Idaho Reading Indicator assessment in both fall and spring.

Statewide, district and school Idaho Reading Indicator results are available on [the State Department of Education website](#).

“The percentage of students reading at grade level was lower this spring than it was in spring 2019, but this is a different cohort of students, facing unprecedented challenges during a pandemic that stretched on for more than a year,” Director of Assessment and Accountability Kevin Whitman said.

Final statewide results from the Spring 2021 IRI showed a drop of about 5 percentage points in the number of K-3 students reading at grade level when compared to spring 2019 results – 65.1 percent this year compared to 69.7 percent in 2019. The gap was narrowest in kindergarten (1.8 percentage points) and third grade (3.1 percentage points).

By grade, the percentage of students reading at grade level this spring ranged from 59.5 percent in 1st Grade to 70.1 percent in 3rd Grade. The percentage of students reading substantially below grade level dropped about 9 percentage points, from 24.4 percent overall in the fall to 15.5 percent in the

spring. The percentage of students in the middle category of “near grade level” also dropped, from 26 percent to 19.4 percent.

Across Idaho, 87,538 students took the IRI between May 3 and May 28.

The new online Idaho Reading Indicator debuted statewide in fall 2018 after a successful pilot program in more than 50 Idaho schools in the 2017-18 school year. It measures five foundational reading skills – Alphabetic Knowledge, Phonemic Awareness, Vocabulary, Comprehension and Fluency – to help teachers target their instruction to students’ individual needs.

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Attached: Final spring 2021 IRI results by state, district and school; graphics showing spring 2021 results and comparisons with fall 2020 and spring 2019.