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Preliminary statewide results from second year of Idaho’s new early reading test reinforce importance of literacy intervention in grades K through 3

(BOISE) – Statewide preliminary results are out for the fall Idaho Reading Indicator, which aims to ensure students in kindergarten through third grade are learning to read so they can read to learn.

“We’re excited to see results from the second year of our new early reading test, which provides us with additional data on the needs of our students,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra said. “Overall statewide performance across all four grade levels shows 55 percent of students are at or above grade level, up from about 53 percent last fall, the first administration of the new IRI.”

“One major area of concern is that many of our youngest students are entering school without the foundational reading skills they need,” Superintendent Ybarra said. “Only 43 percent of incoming kindergarteners started school this fall reading-ready. That’s down from 45 percent last fall, but more importantly it points to the importance of early literacy intervention.”

There are encouraging signs in grades 1 through 3, with the percentage of students testing at grade level increasing in fall 2019. Percentages of students at grade level rose from 43 percent to 49 percent in first grade, from 60 percent to 63 percent in second grade, and from 61 percent to 64 percent in third grade.

These preliminary results include 90,000 students in kindergarten through third grade who took the Idaho Reading Indicator between Aug. 5 and Sept. 30. Students will take the test again in May, near the end of the school year.

“We look forward to this spring, when IRI testing will show these students’ progress, and it will be great to have two full years of IRI results to assess progress and establish literacy targets,” Superintendent Ybarra said.

The new IRI, Istation's Indicators of Early Progress, debuted statewide last year after a successful pilot program in 50 Idaho schools. It measures five foundational reading skills – Alphabetic Knowledge, Phonemic Awareness, Vocabulary, Comprehension and Fluency – and provides an important resource of teachers and parents to measure students' ability and identify areas that call for intervention or additional instruction.

The K-3 test used in previous years measured how quickly and fluently students could read, but not whether they understood what they were reading.

The State Department of Education's Assessment and Accountability team will study the fall IRI results according to demographics – ethnicity, students with disabilities, English learners and other student groups – and student cohorts, for example comparing scores of this year's first-graders with last year's kindergarteners. The team also will analyze school and district results to identify bright spots to promote best practices.

Final statewide results, along with district and school-level results from the fall 2019 IRI, are expected to be available early next month.

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Attached: A graphic showing statewide fall IRI results by grade.