

Elevate 215: Citywide Student Learning Report

What Kind of Education System Must
Philadelphia Build for Our Next
Generation to Thrive?

In Partnership with:

THE
PHILADELPHIA
EQUITY ALLIANCE

2026

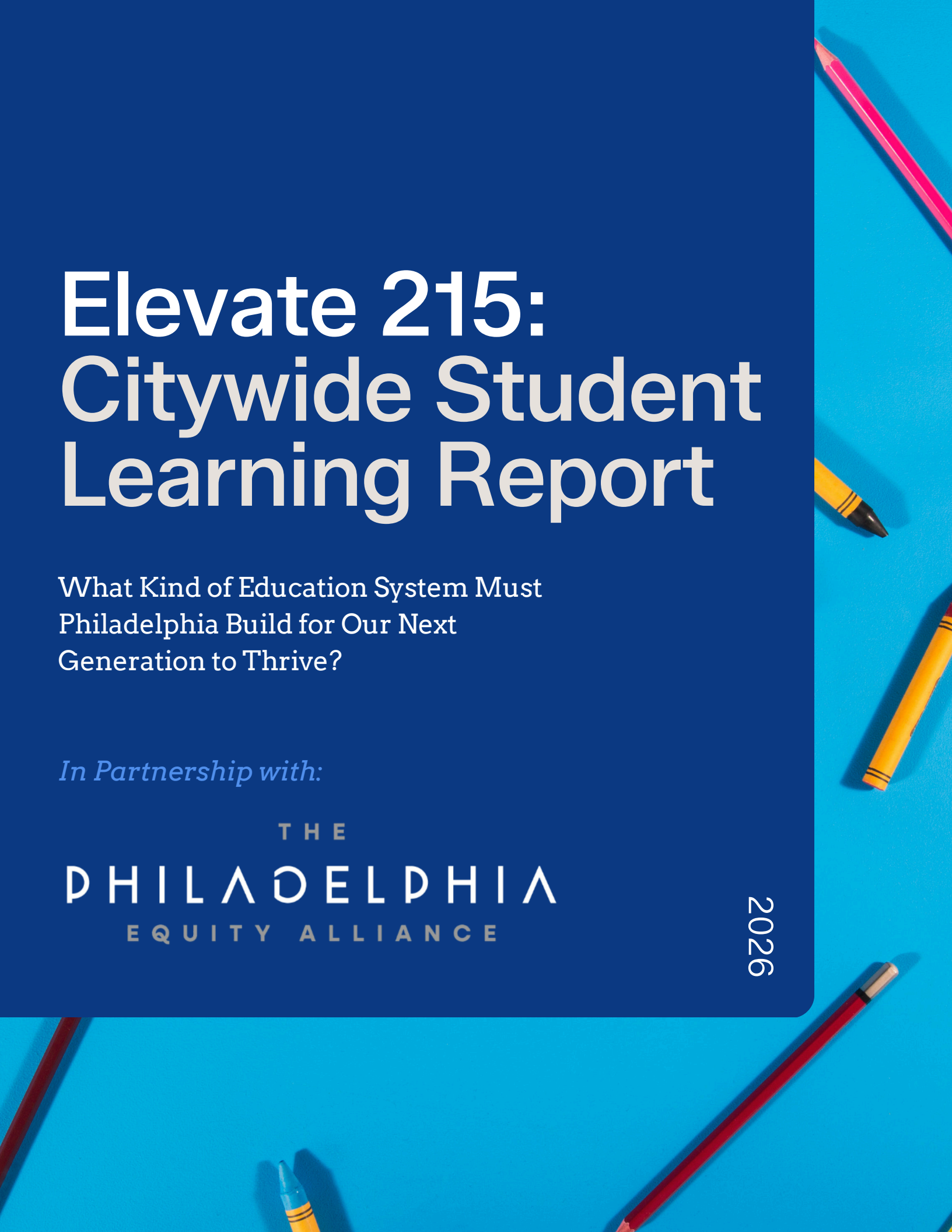


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Executive Summary

Data shows that Philadelphia schools are making progress, but we need to move with urgency to create real long-term change for students.

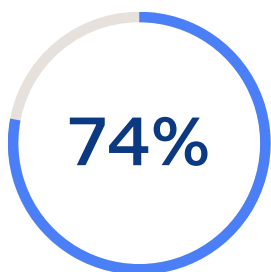
Elevate 215, in partnership with the Philadelphia Equity Alliance (PEA), created the Philadelphia Student Learning Report as a comprehensive analysis of citywide student learning trends across Philadelphia's public district and charter schools.

Using publicly available data, the report establishes a citywide picture of student learning, highlighting both areas of progress and opportunities to accelerate outcomes for students, and helping focus public dialogue on a critical question: What kind of education system must Philadelphia build to prepare the next generation to thrive in school, work, and life—and strengthen the future of our city?

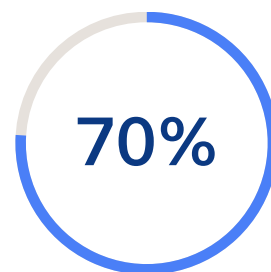
The purpose of this report is to establish a foundation of education data to inform a conversation about solutions moving forward. It will be the first in a series examining education in Philadelphia, and identifies a few key takeaways:

1 Philadelphia students are experiencing strong and consistent academic growth.

Approximately 74% of schools exceeded statewide growth expectations in reading and approximately 70% exceeded expectations in math in 2025, with similar outcomes consistent over the past six years measured.



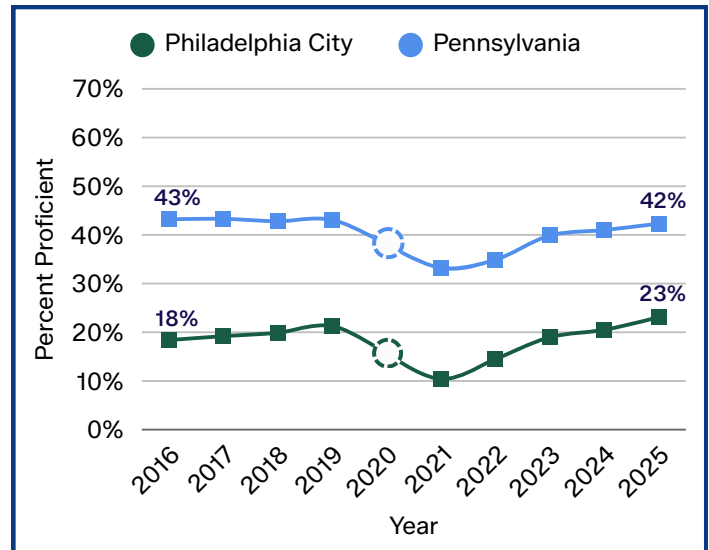
74% of schools in Philadelphia exceeded the statewide growth benchmark in ELA since 2025



70% of schools in Philadelphia exceeded the statewide growth benchmark in math in 2025

2 Student proficiency rates have generally rebounded since the pandemic.

They have surpassed pre-pandemic performance in math (pictured) and recovery continues in reading. Citywide proficiency remains well below statewide rates, but the city has narrowed gaps with the state over time.



3 Graduation rates have steadily increased.

An increase from 72% in 2016 to 79% in 2025 reflects long-term progress across the city.

4 While gains are evident, student performance remains significantly below state and national averages.

PSSA, NAEP, and Keystone Assessment data demonstrate the need for continued focus and coordinated action to accelerate learning outcomes.

In recent years, other cities like those in [Mississippi and Louisiana](#), and municipalities like [Washington, D.C.](#), have shown that improvement is possible regardless of the socioeconomic status or demographics of the students they serve.

They have also shown that it takes vision, commitment, and sustained focus. We must come together as civic leaders to create a citywide agenda focused on key levers to accelerate learning using the following strategies:

- Identify a common agenda and goals, and align a coalition around a shared definition of success.
- Identify bright spots to replicate best practices and build on what is working locally.
- Invest in measuring what matters citywide over an extended period.
- Identify and advocate for key policy levers that have worked in other places.
- Create a structure to hold city and school leaders accountable for progress over the next 10-20 years.

As we look ahead to the 250th anniversary of our great nation—in the very city where the promise of democracy first began—we believe we can come together to make positive change for our schools. We invite you to join us in reshaping the education conversation in Philadelphia around what is possible for our students.

Introduction

As Philadelphia commemorates the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding, we face a crucial question: **How can this historic city guarantee its future as a desirable place to live, work, and raise a family?**

Great cities have a diverse mix of flourishing businesses, good-paying jobs, and affordable homes that produce economic mobility for their residents. They invest in infrastructure and public resources, such as parks and libraries, so that their families can live healthy, full lives. Most importantly, great cities are forward-thinking. They ensure continued prosperity by prioritizing the welfare and education of their youngest citizens.

In 2024, an organization called Opportunity Insights based at Harvard University released research ranking Philadelphia 50th out of 50 cities studied in providing economic mobility. This finding shows that, as a region, Philadelphia is failing to deliver on the most fundamental promise of the American experiment: opportunity—the chance to create a better, more prosperous life for our children.

In response to this, Elevate 215, in partnership with the Philadelphia Equity Alliance, has spent the last six months convening a cross-section of nonprofit and business leaders to tackle this big question through the lens of K-12 education: how do we create a more equitable and economically mobile Philadelphia by preparing our youngest citizens to thrive?

Toward that end, this report will be the first in a series about publicly funded schools in Philadelphia and the academic performance of their students. The goal of this first report is to establish a citywide snapshot of student learning outcomes to help us better understand where things stand, before we go on to further explore strategies that can be used to propel our students toward economic mobility and success in life; and inform a citywide vision to help move our schools forward.

When our nation's founders met 250 years ago, it required them to reflect on their values, envision the future they desired, and build a pathway to achieving it.

We hope to bring this spirit with us as we reflect on our citywide education system and imagine what it can be to benefit our children. To do so, we also need a clear, shared understanding of our students' progress: what they learn, what it means for public schools citywide, and how we can use this information to track our progress toward creating a more prosperous future for Philadelphians in the coming years.

BACKGROUND

To develop a true citywide vision of schools, we must first understand the schools we have. Philadelphia has a robust ecosystem of schools totaling more than 330 buildings in the public sector alone. Students from families across the socioeconomic spectrum attend a variety of school types, including public district-run schools, public charter schools, and private schools (inclusive of faith-based and secular private schools). Many of these schools distinguish themselves with unique programming, instructional themes, and pedagogical approaches.

Our country's 250th birthday coincides with the conclusion of ten years of key milestones for education in Philadelphia:

- **Local Board of Education:** In 2017, after years of management by the state-controlled School Reform Commission, Philadelphia re-established its local Board of Education composed of mayoral appointees.
- **PHL PreK:** Also in 2017, PHL PreK enrolled its first cohort of students with funding from the city's sugary beverage tax.
- **School Funding Reform:** In 2023, after a legal battle lasting nearly a decade, a Pennsylvania court ruled the state's school funding system unconstitutional, leading to the development of a more equitable funding formula that allocates additional resources to the state's 412 inadequately funded school districts, including the School District of Philadelphia.
- **New Mayoral Leadership:** Also in 2023, the city elected its first female mayor, Cherelle Parker, with stated top priorities aimed at making Philadelphia "Safer, Cleaner, [and] Greener with Access to Economic Opportunity for All."
- **District Strategic Academic and Facilities Plans:** Between 2023 and 2025, the Superintendent of the School District of Philadelphia developed a strategic plan, Accelerate Philly, that seeks to accelerate and expand progress in School District of Philadelphia-operated schools - now with the outlines of a facilities master plan approved by Board of Education to support this goal.



Together, these milestones have laid the groundwork for Philadelphians to reimagine how the city's education system works and have created a sense of ownership in Philadelphia schools that we haven't had in many years. How do we build on this momentum to accelerate academic outcomes for our students?

This report seeks to create a clear understanding of where our city's schools are and to reflect on where they've been, in order to refine and act on a vision for the future. It focuses on creating a citywide view of the performance of the publicly funded system over the last ten years, including both public district and charter schools, and utilizes publicly available data.

The report will do this by examining demographic and student learning data in the following sections:

Overview of Student Enrollment

K-8 Student Learning Data

- 10-year trends in student growth
- 10-year trends in student proficiency

9-12 Student Learning Outcomes

- Keystone exams
- Graduation pathways
- Graduation rates over 10 years

DATA GUIDE

This report presents data that is publicly available from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). In most instances, PDE files at the state and district (i.e., LEA) levels were sufficient to calculate state and citywide rates.

Citywide rates, based on PDE files, include every public school located in Philadelphia, with the exception of state-authorized cyber charter schools with operations based in Philadelphia. When more detailed information is provided, like when schools are categorized by their governance (e.g., charter or district) or admission criteria, supplementary data from the School District of Philadelphia's open data repository is used.

To protect student privacy, both PDE and the School District of Philadelphia apply rules to "suppress" data for schools and groups of students below a set number, or n-size. For this reason, percentage totals may not always add up to 100.

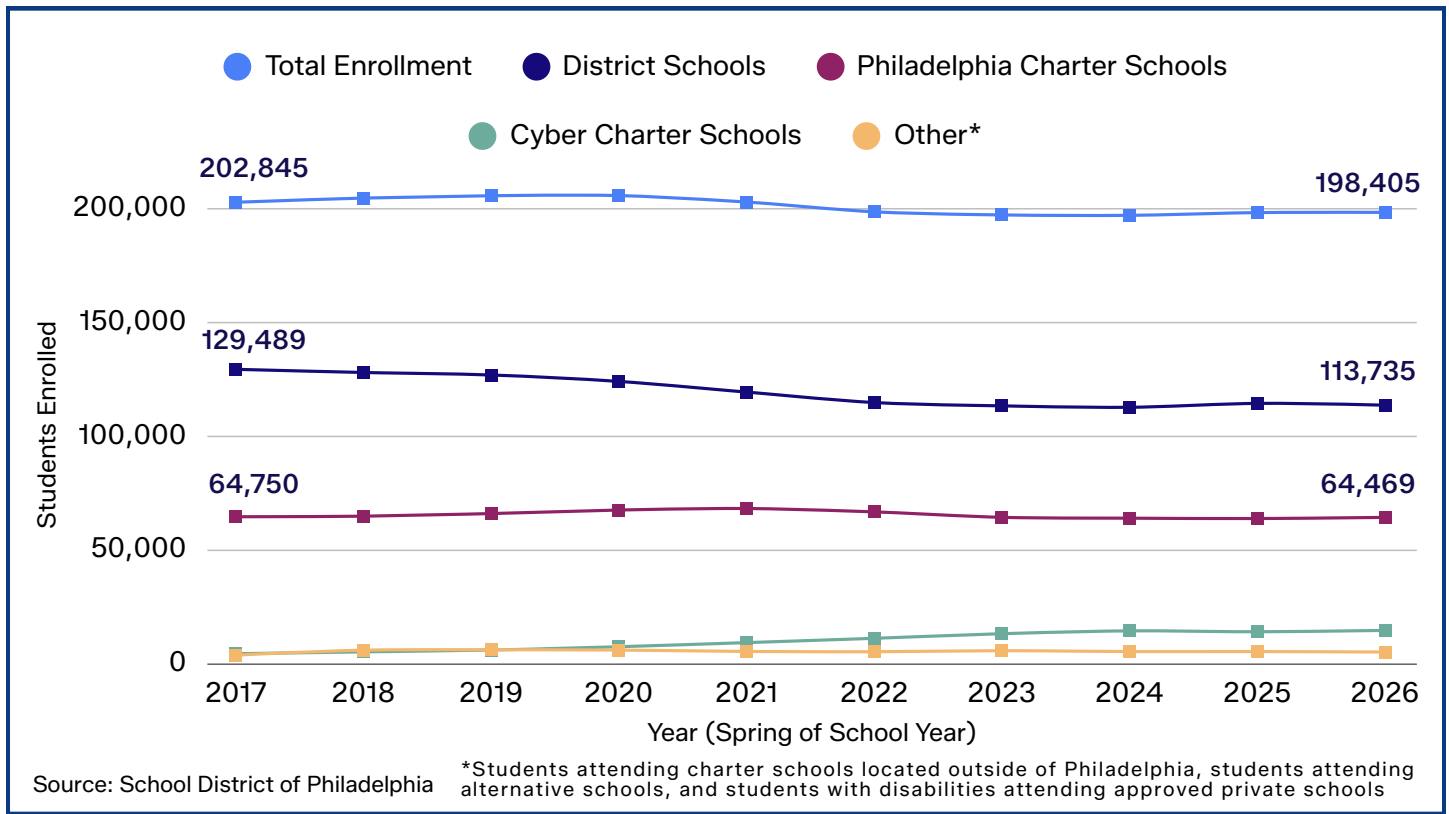
More information about the data, calculations, and school type definitions is provided in the [Citywide Learning Report Data Guide](#).

Citywide Student Enrollment Overview

After declines during the previous decade, citywide school enrollment has been relatively stable for the last 10 years. Populations have shifted between different types of schools, with enrollment declining most in district schools.



Figure 1: Total Citywide Public School Enrollment



PHILADELPHIA SCHOOL ENROLLMENT TRENDS BY SECTOR

Some notable takeaways include:

- After declines during the previous decade, citywide school enrollment has been relatively stable for the last 10 years, starting with approximately 202,800 students in Philadelphia in 2017 and ending with approximately 198,400 students in 2026.
- However, student populations have shifted between different types of schools, with enrollment declining most in district schools from 129,500 students in 2017 to 113,730 students in 2026.
- Brick-and-mortar public charter school student enrollment remained mostly flat during the last 10 years, while cyber charter school enrollment rose from 4,600 students in 2017 to over 14,800 students in 2026.

PHILADELPHIA SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

The previous graph gives us a good sense of where students are enrolled, but we also need to understand what types of students attend these schools.

Looking at the citywide public school population, we see:

- The percentage of economically disadvantaged students has been relatively flat with slight increases in both Philadelphia and Pennsylvania.
- The percentage of students identified as English learners has doubled in both Philadelphia and Pennsylvania over the past 10 years, with schools in Philadelphia enrolling English learners at a rate that is 2.5 times the state rate.
- The increase in English learners mirrors immigration patterns reflected in US Census data.

Note that the citywide figures in both charts include district and charter schools.

Figure 2: Low Income Students in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania

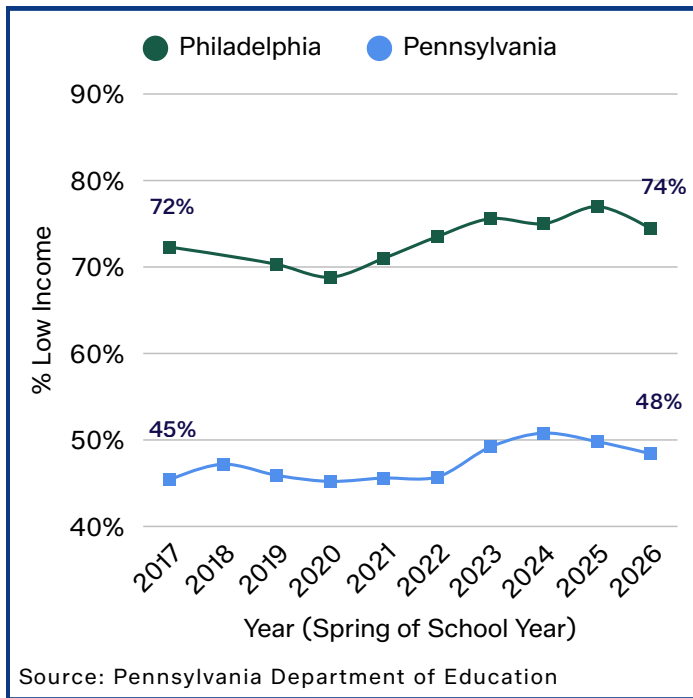
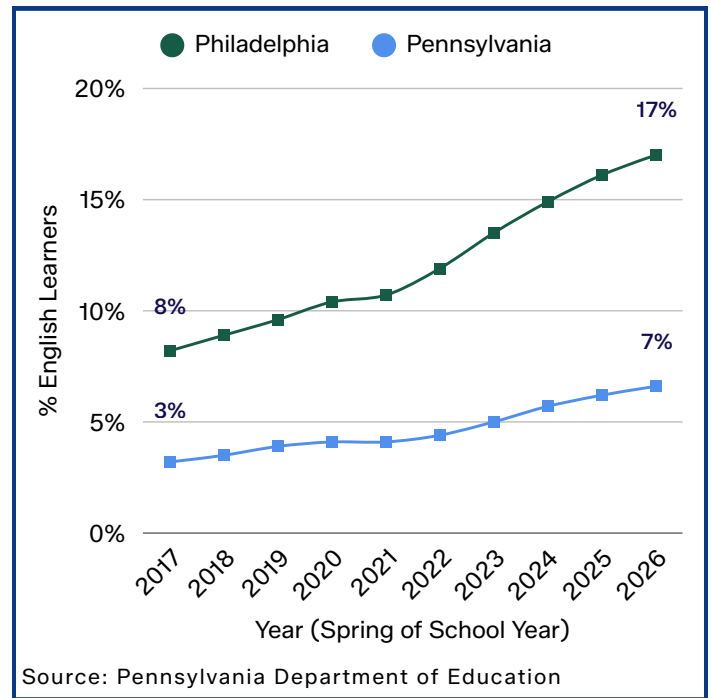


Figure 3: English Learners in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania



Information about student enrollment and demographics is important to consider when analyzing student learning trends. In the next two sections, we explore what students are learning in both our elementary and high schools. We break these into different sections in part because the data we have for students is different at different ages, and in part because the goals of education shift from K-8 to 9-12th grades.

K-8 Student Learning Data

To summarize student learning trends, we first look at elementary schools where student learning data is available citywide based on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). Each year in grades 3-8, students take the PSSA in both English language arts (ELA) and math, providing us with consistent data about student learning across public schools.

There are two standardized ways in which schools measure and assess student learning:

1. **Growth:** How much a student improves from one year to the next, regardless of where they start. A student can grow from year to year while still not meeting grade-level standards or crossing the proficiency threshold, and;
2. **Proficiency:** What a student knows relative to a grade-level standard at a point in time.

In other words, student growth—as measured by the Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System (PVAAS)—provides a way to understand how much students are learning in our schools each year, regardless of where they start. PVAAS helps us understand student learning progress by using a student’s prior achievement to predict how much they should learn each year and then measuring whether they make more or less progress than expected.

We will begin by examining ten years of citywide student growth data.



CITYWIDE STUDENT GROWTH OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS

Figure 4: Philadelphia Schools Exceeding Growth Expectations in English Language Arts

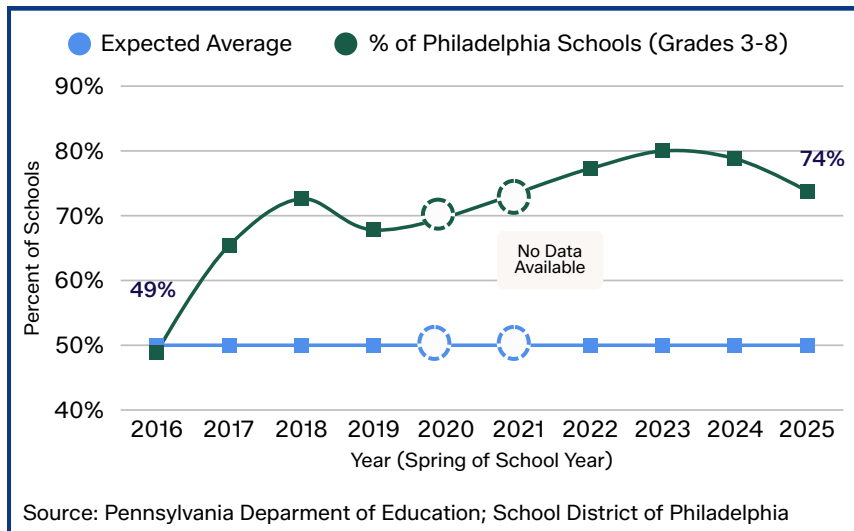
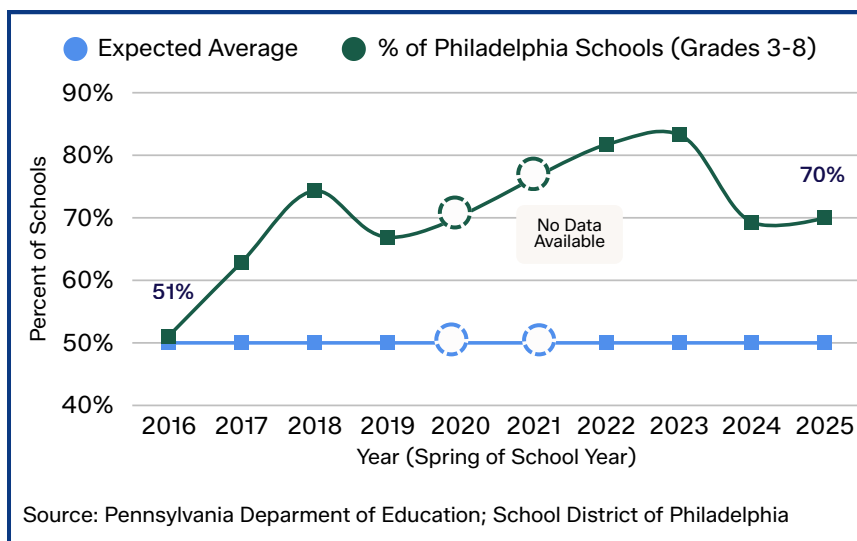


Figure 5: Philadelphia Schools Exceeding Growth Expectations in Math



Data shows students are experiencing high levels of academic growth in Philadelphia classrooms. Approximately 74% of schools in Philadelphia exceeded the statewide growth benchmark in ELA and approximately 70% did in math for the 2025 school year.

This data shows that across the city, most schools are making more progress with their students than expected over the past seven years. This finding aligns with other [recent national studies](#) that show Philadelphia students making good progress compared to their peers both in the state and the country, but using Pennsylvania publicly-available data to determine what percentage of schools citywide are producing gains for their students.

Elevating The Way We Use Student Growth Data

The “Exceeding Growth Expectations” measure is based on student growth data, which is publicly available through the state’s PVAAS website. Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has reported it for over 10 years, and while education professionals use this data, it is seldom mentioned in discourse about public education.

This is in part because the data is based on complex calculations, and the reported value, the annual growth index (AGI), is not reported intuitively.

Since student growth is one of the primary indicators of the impact that schools have on student learning, we present the data with two key differences:

1. We use PVAAS methodology to transform the AGI to a value between 50 and 100. That value is referred to as the “Building Score.”
2. We calculate the percentage of schools with building scores above the expected average of 75.

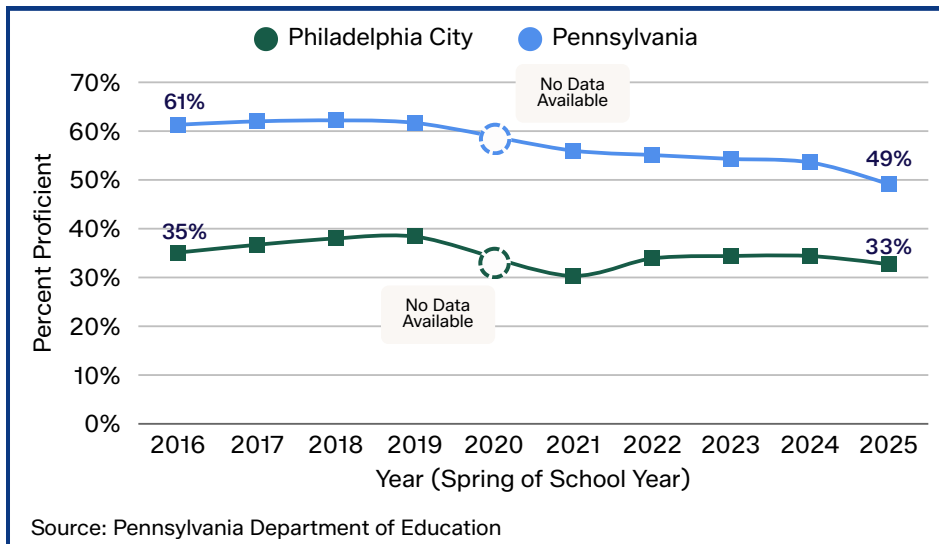
Reporting growth in this way gives us a better understanding of the success students are experiencing in Philadelphia schools that is not readily apparent in proficiency data.

CITYWIDE STUDENT PROFICIENCY OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS

Student proficiency measures the percentage of students who test on or above grade level each year in each subject. Unlike student growth, which measures how much students learn each year, student proficiency measures the percentage of students who are proficient in ELA or math at the end of the year.

This data shows that student proficiency rates have rebounded since the pandemic but remain well below the state average.

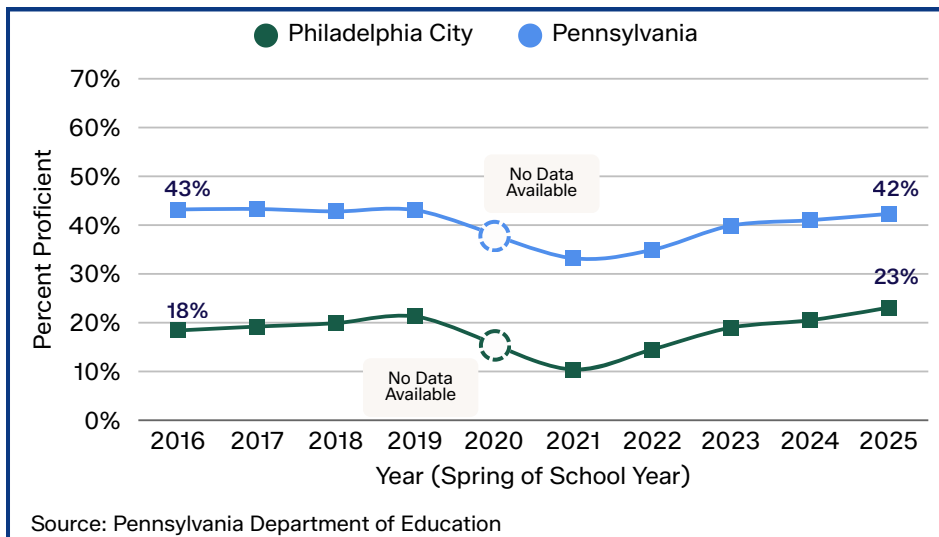
Figure 6: English Language Arts Proficiency Rates (Grades 3-8)



Specifically, rates declined during the COVID-19 school closures and have risen above pre-pandemic levels in math but have not yet caught back up in reading.

- 32.7% of Philadelphia students tested at grade level in reading in 2025
- 23.1% of Philadelphia students tested at grade level in math in 2025
- The gap between Philadelphia students and their peers statewide has narrowed, as statewide proficiency rates declined and have been slower to improve

Figure 7: Math Proficiency Rates (Grades 3-8)



This proficiency data shows us how students in Philadelphia are doing compared to their peers statewide. We will now look at how growth and proficiency rates can be used at the school level to better understand the impact schools are having on student learning.

ANALYZING GROWTH WITH PROFICIENCY

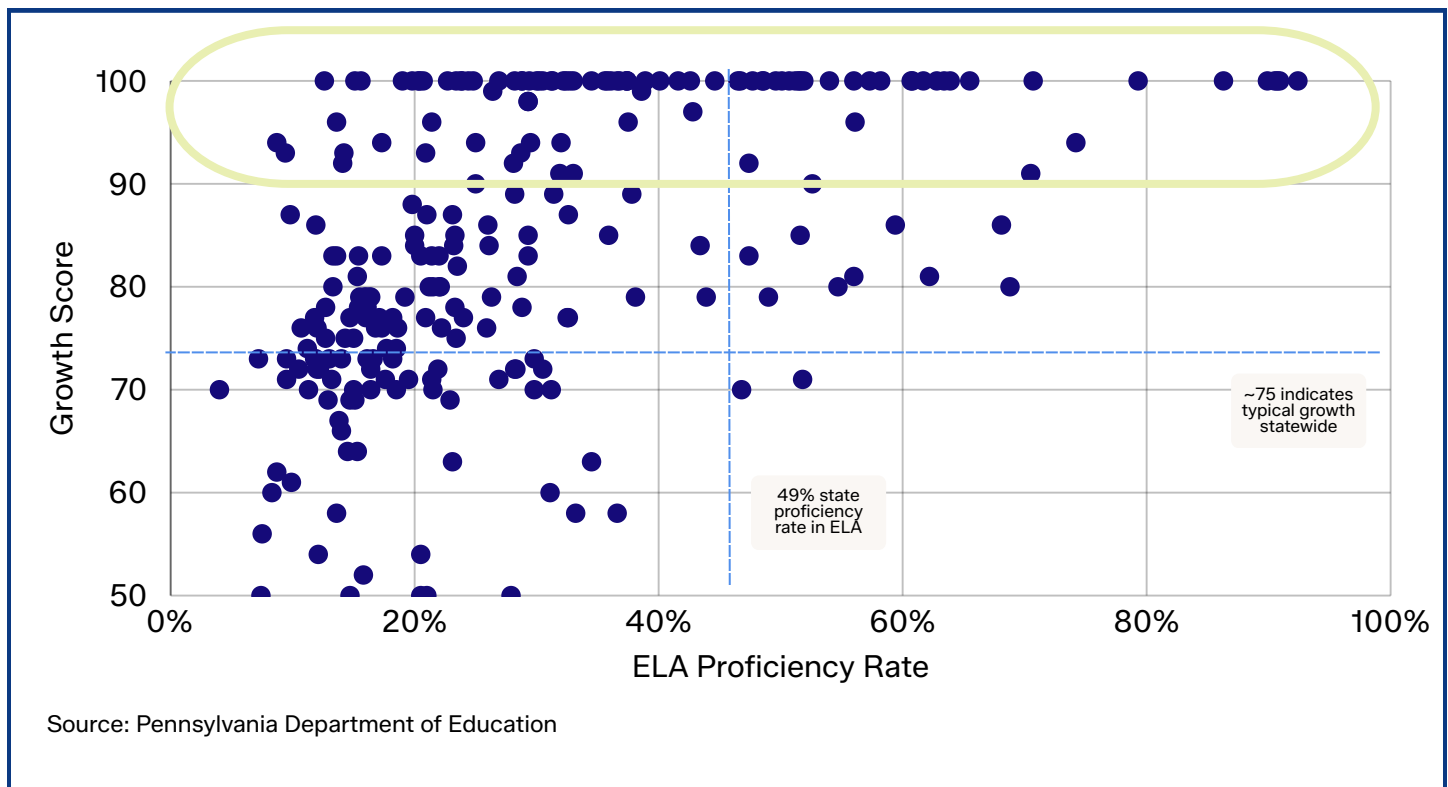
To help illuminate how growth and proficiency come together, we can analyze both at the school level. One way to accelerate student learning citywide is to identify schools that are making the biggest student learning gains over time and better understand the practices that are working for their students.

Toward this end, we've pulled together scatterplots that show student growth (vertical axis) and proficiency (horizontal axis), first from a citywide perspective in ELA and then in two council districts with the highest concentrations of poverty in Philadelphia.

When we compare English Language Arts proficiency with Student Growth at a citywide level, it demonstrates what we mean when we say that 74% of schools citywide exceed expectations for growth.

Here you can see that the majority of schools are scoring above the 75 threshold that marks the growth standard statewide. Further, when we look just at schools that have high levels of growth (with a score higher than 90) we notice that there are 100 schools with a score at 90 or above, and 73 with the highest possible growth score of 100. On the other hand, we also see that despite exceeding the growth standard, the vast majority of school proficiency rates are below the statewide proficiency rate of 49% in ELA.

Figure 8: ELA School Growth Building Scores v. Proficiency Rates Citywide



Now, to bring this to life at a neighborhood level, we will look at the 5th council district that represents North Philadelphia, Fairmount, Temple University area, and parts of Center City; and the 7th council district that represents Kensington and North Philadelphia.

The scatterplots below show that although most of these schools serve very high-poverty student populations and many have low proficiency rates, most are producing positive student learning growth for their students (above 75 on the y-axis)

Figure 9: 5th Council District ELA Growth v. Proficiency (2025)

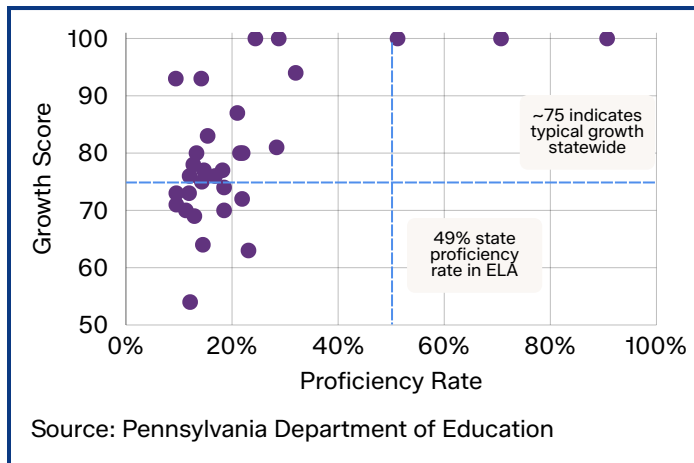
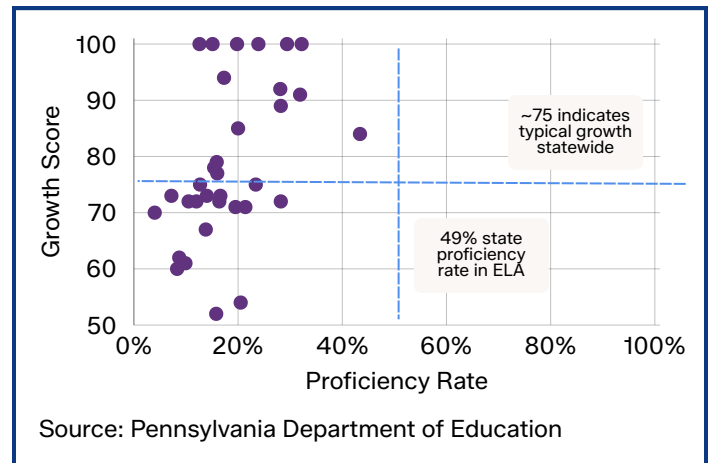


Figure 10: 7th Council District ELA Growth v. Proficiency (2025)



One thing you will notice is that while absolute proficiency is higher in a few schools in council district 5 (two of which are magnet schools with criteria-based admissions), both of these council districts have five or more schools scoring a 100 on PVAAS - meaning that the students in those schools are growing at the highest possible rate on the state growth measure - with another 5-10 schools in each council district displaying growth levels that exceed the state standard of 75 on growth.

Elevate 215 uses data like this to identify schools that are beating the odds for their students.

As the city looks to make investments in areas with the highest levels of poverty, which often align with areas with the least economic mobility, we must identify schools that have a track record of making progress for their students, learn from them, and replicate what they are doing to further improve results across the city.

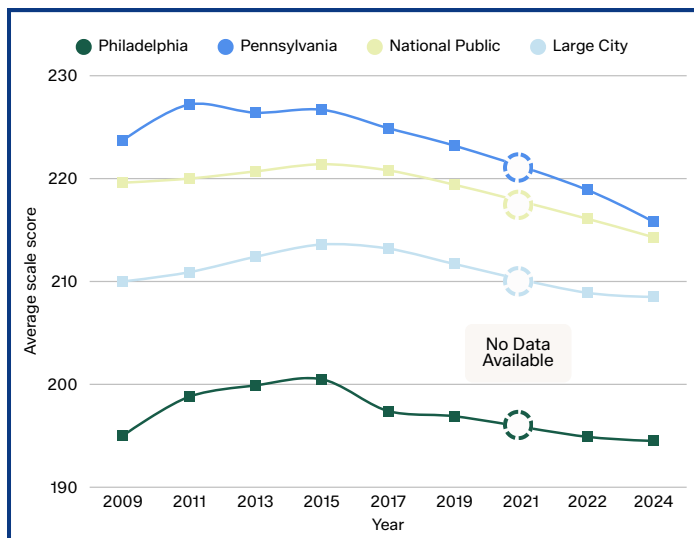


ANALYZING STUDENT PROFICIENCY ON THE NAEP

To provide a broader context for citywide and state trends, we can turn to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

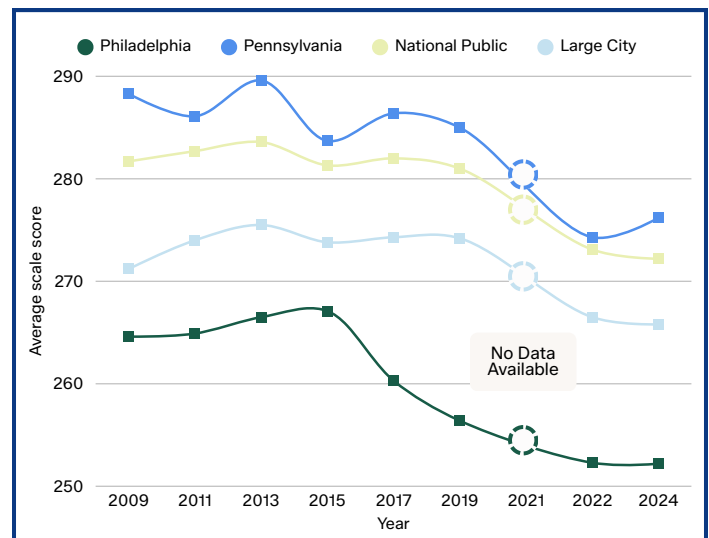
Recently, the School District of Philadelphia has cited NAEP data to show that Philadelphia has been accelerating student performance or staving off declines at higher rates than its peers. We are interested in whether the reading and math trends reflected in PSSA data also appear in NAEP results. These results go back to when Philadelphia joined NAEP as a city in 2009.

Figure 11: NAEP 4th Grade Reading



Source: NAEP Data Explorer

Figure 12: NAEP 8th Grade Math



Source: NAEP Data Explorer

The NAEP exam tests 4th and 8th graders in ELA and Math. Note that we've used just 4th grade reading and 8th grade math here for brevity and to illuminate trends. Full NAEP scores are available at: nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/

NAEP data tells a similar, if slightly more challenging, picture compared to PSSA growth and proficiency data. A few observations stand out:

- The NAEP data emphasizes that while scores have stabilized post-pandemic Philadelphia students continue to trail state and national averages, and lag behind other large urban districts as well.
- While stable Philadelphia outcomes over the last two years and math improvement for Pennsylvania statewide offer reasons for optimism, this data also shows how much ground remains to be made up. Compared with many other cities and states across the U.S., Philadelphia students are still working from a much lower base of proficiency.

One criticism of NAEP data is that it may reflect differences in student poverty levels as much as differences in academic outcomes. To address this concern, the Urban Institute recently developed a poverty-adjusted NAEP measure that normalizes learning outcomes against student demographic backgrounds. In 2020 it adjusted city scores and in 2025 it adjusted statewide scores.

The 2020 adjustment improves Philadelphia’s overall NAEP score but does not improve the comparative ranking significantly. The 2025 statewide adjustment decreases Pennsylvania’s scores, bringing them more in line with the nationwide scores.

These findings begin to fill out the picture of student learning in Philadelphia elementary schools.

Positive student learning progress is occurring but given the low proficiency baseline students have started from, sustained urgency is needed to work together to accelerate student learning to ensure students have the skills and knowledge to succeed in high school and beyond.



9-12th Grade Learning Outcomes

High school data can be more difficult to interpret because schools use a variety of subject-specific exams and graduation requirements to assess students' readiness for postsecondary success.

There is a robust conversation in both Pennsylvania and nationally about what is required to prepare high school students to succeed in life: Is it a high school diploma? Passing exit exams? Or helping students identify their passions and putting them on a pathway to college or a career? Or is it all of the above?

This section won't perfectly answer these questions, but given this context, we will analyze citywide trends across several key metrics to inform the conversation about postsecondary readiness, knowing that progress on each of these metrics can provide valuable insights.



KEYSTONE EXAM PROFICIENCY

During the 2012-13 school year, Keystone Exams in Algebra I, Biology, and Literature replaced previous high school PSSA tests. The Keystone Exams were initially established as a requirement for graduation.

Keystone Exams are administered three times per year—winter, spring, and summer—as end-of-course exams. Beginning with the class of 2023, public high school students are required to demonstrate proficiency in each exam as a requirement for graduation.

The following data show the percentage of students who scored proficient on Keystone Literature and Algebra exams by the time they completed 11th grade (students also take Biology exams, not pictured).

Figure 13: Keystone Literature Proficiency

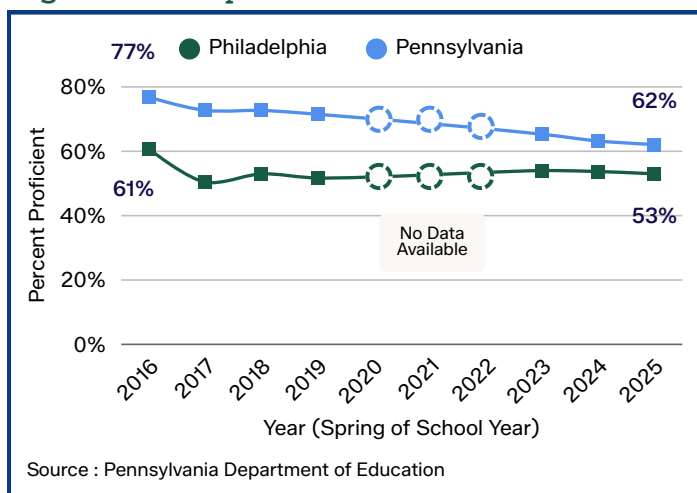
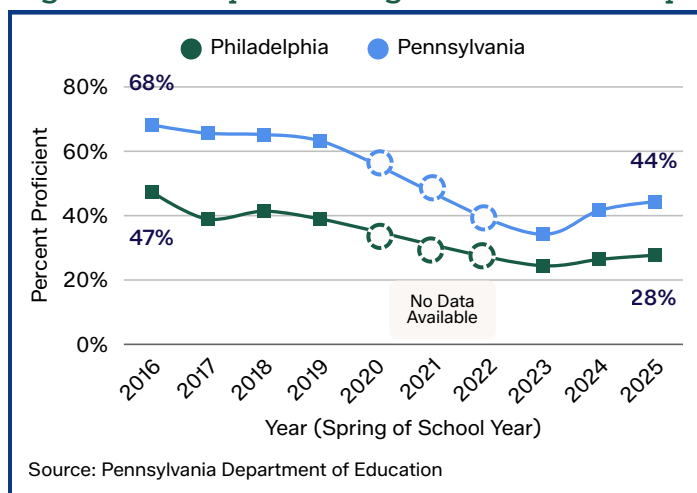


Figure 14: Keystone Algebra Proficiency



The grades during which a student completes the Keystone-relevant course can vary greatly across schools. To account for this, PDE reports Keystone proficiency for students in 11th grade only, creating a standard metric across schools. Furthermore, many high-achieving students complete Algebra I during eighth grade. Traditional in-year proficiency reporting, like that used for the PSSA, would exclude the math achievement of a high school's highest-performing students.

As you can see in the graphs above, there is a similarly uneven recovery observed on Keystone exams in high school as seen in PSSA proficiency in the elementary grades.

- On literature exams, **Philadelphia students have bounced back** to proficiency rates similar to where they were pre-pandemic, whereas in algebra student proficiency is bouncing back but remains below pre-pandemic levels.
- Gaps are smaller here with the State of Pennsylvania, due in large part to significant declines in state proficiency rates post-pandemic.
- However, given that students can take these exams multiple times, and take them at different ages, it is less clear what these pass rates mean for student skill sets as they prepare to leave high school.

Another way to understand how Keystone exam pass rates relate to preparation for graduation and college is to examine graduation pathway data.

GRADUATION PATHWAYS

In 2018, PA Act 158 introduced statewide graduation requirements that included five pathways to graduation, two of which are dependent on Keystone exam scores. Although these requirements were originally planned to take effect for the class of 2022, they were delayed for one year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and went into effect for the class of 2023.

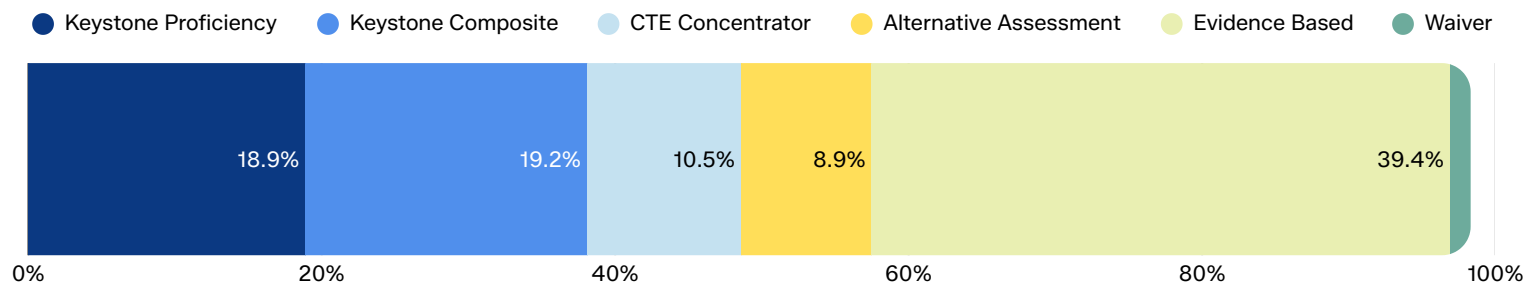
You can learn more about the respective pathways, and how students graduate by each in the table below:

Table 1: Philadelphia Citywide Graduation Pathway Categories

Graduation Pathway	Students demonstrate that they are ready to graduate by...
Keystone Proficiency	Scoring in the proficient or advanced range on all three Keystone Exams
Keystone Composite	Earning a combined scale score of 4452 on the three exams, with no Below Basic scores and at least one Proficient or Advanced score
Alternative Assessment	Scoring above specific thresholds on alternative assessments, such as the SAT, ACT, PSAT/NMSQT, or ASVAB, or by obtaining unconditional admission to a 4-year college
CTE Concentrator	Successful completion of a CTE program and passing an industry-based competency assessment like the NOCTI or NIMS
Evidence-Based	Students submit three alternative pieces of evidence to their school that demonstrate postsecondary readiness, including at least one of the following: scores from a college-readiness test like the ACT or SAT, AP or IB test scores, successful completion of dual enrollment coursework in the content areas, or acceptance into an alternative postsecondary institution.

With the graduation pathway definitions in mind, we can make meaning of how students are using these pathways to graduate.

Figure 15: Philadelphia Citywide Graduation Pathways (2025)



Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education

The Keystone pass rates reported in Figures 13 and 14 may seem to suggest that most students will be able to fulfill the graduation requirement with their Keystone test scores. However, students need to demonstrate proficiency in all three subjects or use the composite pathway if they have passed two of the three exams and qualify.

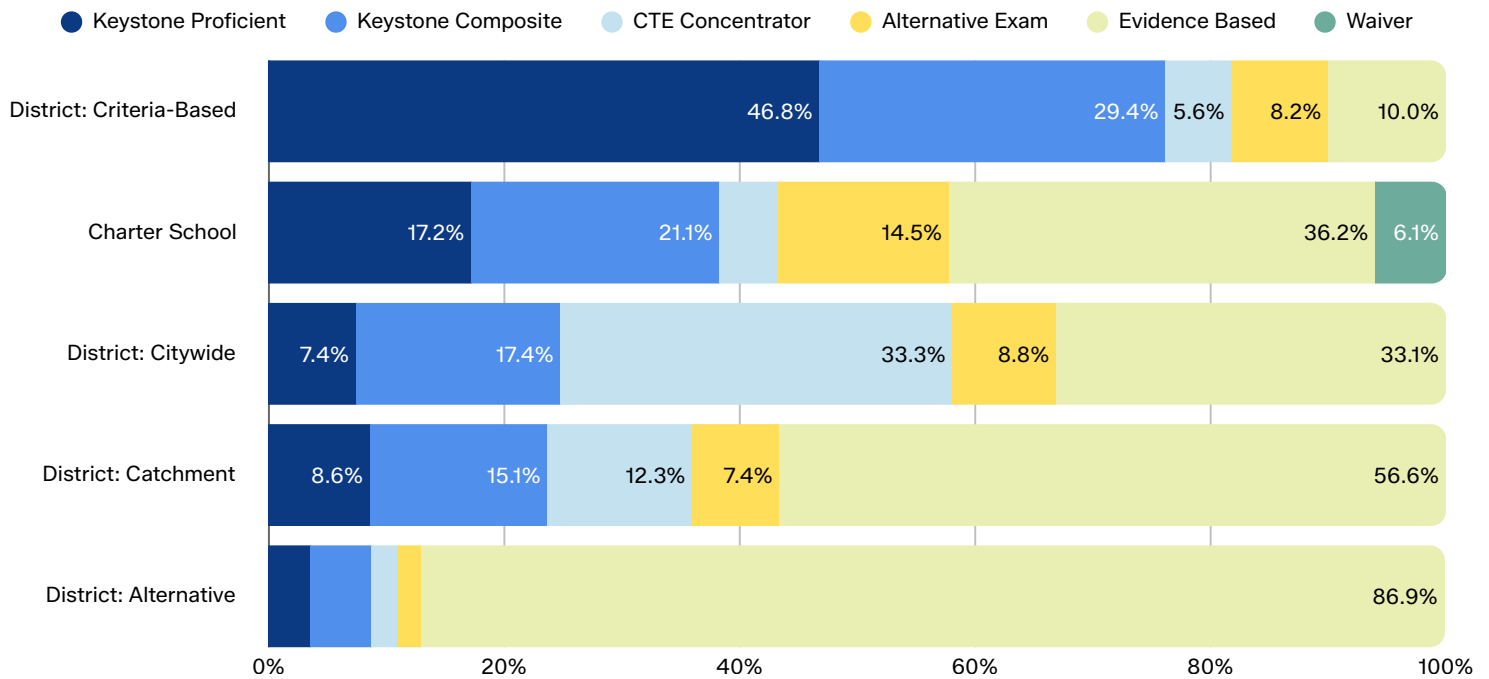
Citywide, we see that students graduate via a diverse set of pathways. Specifically:

- Approximately 38% of Philadelphia students graduate through Keystone Proficiency (scoring proficient or above on all Keystone exams) or Keystone Composite (achieving a composite score across all three tests that meets a threshold) pathways.
- The most used pathway for graduation in Philadelphia is the evidence-based pathway, with over 39% of students graduating by submitting three pieces of evidence that demonstrate postsecondary readiness.

The graduation pathways most used vary by school type and should be evaluated in the context of a school's programming.

For example, an excellent Career and Technical Education (CTE) high school—represented in the *Citywide Admissions* category below—may have low Keystone exam proficiency rates because students are focused on passing the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) exam and will graduate via the CTE Concentrator pathway. At competitive, college-preparatory high schools with criteria-based admissions, the use of Keystone-based pathways should be expected, as high scores on standardized tests are required for admission.

Figure 16: Graduation Pathway by School Type (2025)



Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education

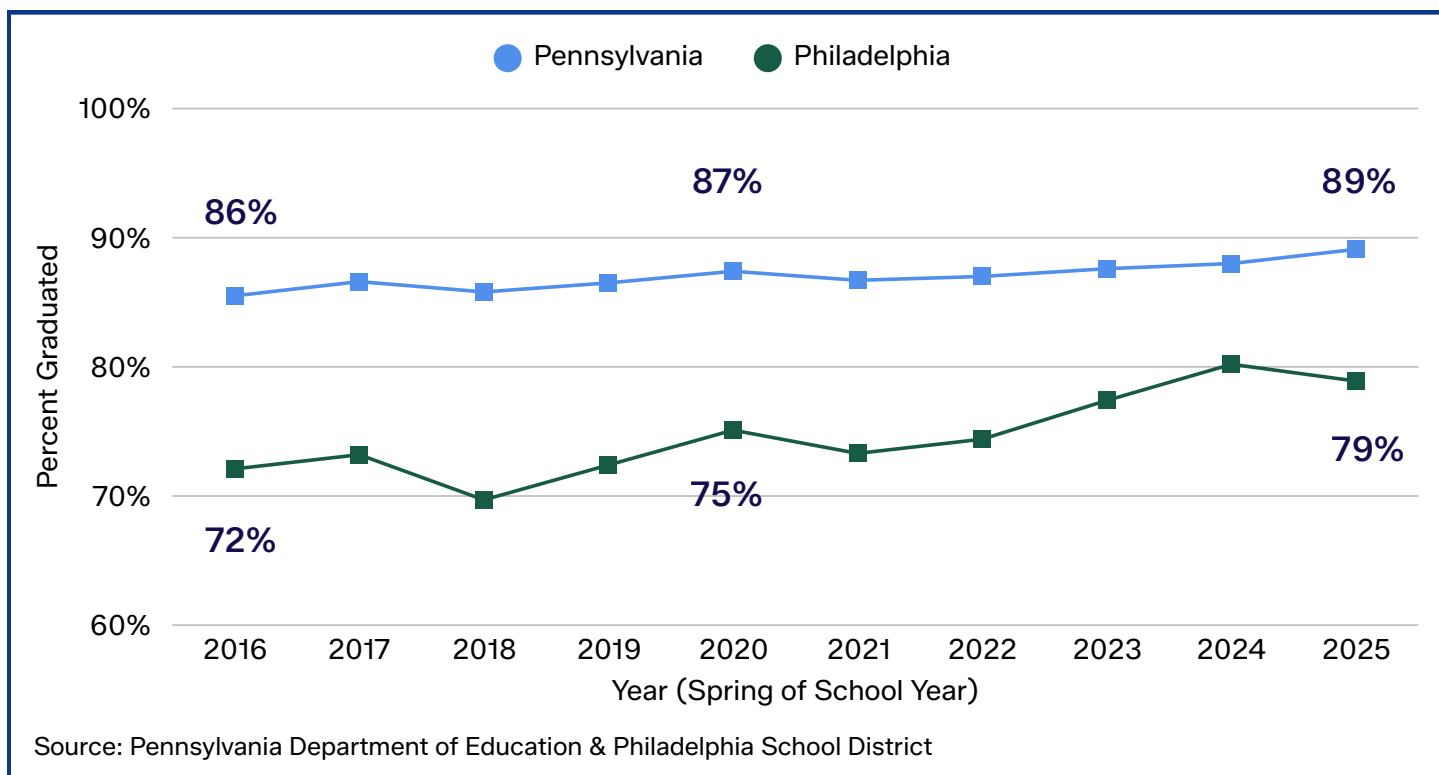
This chart breaks out graduation pathways by school type in Philadelphia. This data drives home how different the experiences, and the requirements for graduation that are being used, are by high school type in Philadelphia. Specifically:

- This shows that nearly 75% of students in criteria-based admissions schools (often known as magnet schools) are graduating either by passing all keystone exams, or a composite score across these exams.
- It also shows that about 24% of students in neighborhood catchment high schools are graduating using these exams, with nearly 57% graduating using the 'evidence-based' pathway.
- Other types of high schools have varying percentages of students using different pathways - it is difficult to determine how many of these are aligned with their missions versus are used as ways to increase graduation rates.

Local news outlet Chalkbeat recently [reported on these trends](#), and hosted a conversation about the value of different graduation pathways. We hope increasing transparency around this data will contribute to a more robust conversation about what skills and knowledge students should have to graduate high school, and how we can work together to ensure we have a coherent and aligned system of support to help them achieve them.

CITYWIDE GRADUATION RATES OVER 10 YEARS

Figure 17: Graduation Rate for Philadelphia & Pennsylvania (4-Year)



City-level graduation rates include both district-operated and charter-operated public schools. These rates may differ from other published rates due to variations in reporting methodology (we use PDE's 4-year cohort rates) and the inclusion of students attending alternative pathway programs that are sometimes excluded from published rates. We include all students from all public schools in Philadelphia.

Graduation rates have trended up consistently since 2016 citywide from 72% to 79% citywide in 2025.

While we have detailed in the previous sections the different factors that are contributing to the increasing graduation rate, we do think increasing graduation rates are important on their own.

When we consider the expansive research showing how students with a high school diploma have higher college graduation rates, higher lifetime earnings, and lower incarceration rates, it is an undeniable benefit for more students to be leaving high school in Philadelphia with a diploma.

As we conclude our analysis of high school outcomes data, the question we need to continue to interrogate is:

Are we setting students up to live, work, and raise a family in Philadelphia in a way that provides them with the economic mobility we want to provide, and ultimately benefits our region?

Conclusion

The goal of this report is to be the first snapshot in a series that will examine how our publicly funded schools are doing citywide.

There is much more to examine in this student learning data, but to make progress we must have a collective understanding of where we are. We hope this summary level information can help start a citywide conversation about how we can work together to improve student learning.

We do believe there is much to learn from this as a starting point. Despite the setbacks of COVID-19 and recent public debates about structural budget deficits and school closures, Philadelphia schools have seen promising learning growth, rising graduation rates, and stabilizing outcomes in other areas over the last 10-15 years.

We say this not to overlook the challenges we face. Student proficiency, NAEP, and Keystone data all show that Philadelphia is facing similar post-pandemic challenges as many cities across this state and country. They also show that low baseline proficiency rates, often associated with poverty and underinvestment, continue to be a challenge for our students to overcome.

But we also see a city with the opportunity for more progress. In recent years, other cities like those in Mississippi and Louisiana, and municipalities like Washington, D.C., have shown that improvement is possible regardless of the socioeconomic status or demographics of the students they serve.

They have also shown that it takes vision, commitment, and sustained focus. We must come together as civic leaders to create a citywide agenda focused on key levers to accelerate learning using the following strategies:

- **Identify a common agenda and goals, and align a coalition around a shared definition of success.**
- **Identify bright spots to replicate best practices and build on what is working locally.**
- **Invest in measuring what matters citywide over an extended period.**
- **Identify and advocate for key policy levers that have worked in other places.**
- **Create a structure to hold city and school leaders accountable for progress over the next 10-20 years.**

We believe this is achievable as we look ahead from the 250th anniversary of our great nation—in the very city where the promise of democracy first began. We invite you to join us in reshaping the education conversation in Philadelphia around what is possible for our students. And in building a future where every child has access to a thriving, modern, and inspiring learning experience that prepares them to lead the next chapter of our city and nation.



Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere appreciation to the members of the Philadelphia Equality Alliance for their bold vision and steadfast commitment to making Philadelphia the most equitable city in America. Thank you for ensuring that the voices and futures of our youngest citizens—our children—remain central to this important work.

We also offer our deepest gratitude to the members of the Education Committee for generously contributing their time, talent, and expertise. Your thoughtful leadership, collaboration, and dedication made this foundational report possible.

Together, we have taken an important first step toward reimagining what is possible for Philadelphia's children, and we look forward to continuing this work to build a city where every child has the opportunity to thrive.

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Learn More

To read the report or reference the methodology online, visit:

<https://elevate215.org/>

About Elevate 215

Elevate 215 is a Philadelphia-based nonprofit with a goal of increasing the number of quality schools in Philadelphia, supporting effective educators, and creating the conditions that allow students to succeed. Through strategic investments, partnerships, and citywide initiatives, Elevate 215 works to ensure more students have access to high-quality educational opportunities.

About the Philadelphia Equity Alliance

The Philadelphia Equity Alliance is a coalition of civic, business, nonprofit, and community leaders committed to advancing economic mobility across Philadelphia. Through collaboration, research, and public engagement, the Alliance seeks to develop a shared vision for a stronger future for Philadelphia's families and communities.