



## Program Committee

Thursday, October 14, 2021

Virtual Meeting – will be posted online the following day  
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board  
20 Education Court, P.O. Box 2558  
Hamilton, ON L8N 3L1

### AGENDA: 5:30-8:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Student Learning & Achievement Report
4. Adjournment

# Executive Summary

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## Topic: Student Learning and Achievement Report

### Context

HWDSB's Board of Trustees have approved a new Strategic Directions for 2016-20 and staff has developed an Annual Plan for 2021-22. The five priorities are positive culture and well-being, *student learning and achievement*, effective communication, school renewal and partnerships.

**Mission:** We empower students to learn and grow to their full potential in a diverse world.

**Commitment:** We are committed to learning, equity, engagement and innovation

**Priority:** Student Learning and Achievement

### Summary

The following report includes:

- The review of the current implementation of the 2021-22 HWDSB Annual Plan, *Student Learning and Achievement*
- Appendix A: Student Learning and Achievement Data

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board is committed to improving student learning and achievement through effective instructional strategies. We have two focus areas: Graduation and Reading.

The first goal is to improve the graduation outcome for all students and close the gap for those current and historically underserved. HWDSB has set a target of at least 80% of Grades 7-12+ students making progress towards graduation. Student achievement data from 2020-21 shows that most cohorts are within reach of 80% of students on track to graduate. Many Year 5 + students who have not yet graduated continue to attend school and progress towards graduation.

Strategies include: provide differentiated professional learning on culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy, blended learning and personalized learning with a particular focus on engaging learners that are historically underserved, implement instructional, assessment and engagement practices focused on improving the outcomes for all students in Grades 7 to 12, and develop and implement the tools required to monitor the progress students make towards graduation on a regular basis, from Grade 7 onwards.

The second goal is to improve the reading achievement of all students and closing the gap for those current and historically underserved. HWDSB has set a target of at least 75% of K - Grade 6 students becoming effective readers. Student achievement data from 2020-21 shows that we are on track with at least 75% of students in Grades 2 - 6 as effective readers. Grade 1 student achievement data is slightly lower and will focus our efforts this year as we re-engage students and welcome them back to school.

Strategies include: provide differentiated professional learning on culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy, blended learning and personalized learning with a particular focus on engaging learners that are historically underserved, implement effective reading and instruction practices, and develop and implement the tools required to regularly monitor the progress students make towards becoming proficient readers from Kindergarten to Grade 6 at the classroom, school and system levels. The report provides an update on each strategy and the work at system, school and classroom level.

The report also provides information about school reopening in September 2021 and student re-engagement.

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# HWDSB Annual Plan Report

**Name of Report:** Student Learning and Achievement Report (Annual Plan Year 2021-22)

**Date:** October 2021

**Priority: Student Learning and Achievement:** We will improve student learning and achievement through effective instructional strategies

*Grades 7 to 12+*

**Goal #1: Improving the graduation outcome for all students and closing the gap for those current and historically underserved.**

**Target:** At least 80 per cent of students within each cohort making progress towards graduation/graduating\*.

\*Graduation includes obtaining an Ontario Secondary School Diploma, Certificate of Achievement and/or Certificate of Accomplishment

*Strategy: Investing in People: Provide differentiated professional learning on culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy, blended learning and personalized learning with a particular focus on engaging learners that are historically underserved.*

Preparation and planning for the de-streaming of Grade 9 Mathematics was a focus in the second half of 2020-21. Learning Services designed and delivered professional development related to embedding culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy (CRRP), Indigenous Cultural Safety (ICS), and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to teams of Grade 7 to 9 educators and administrators. This learning aimed to support students who are currently or historically underserved. Once the Ministry of Education released the final de-streamed Grade 9 Mathematics (MTH1W) course in June 2021, a summer writing team developed a HUB course for MTH1W teachers, called *Learning Math Together: Grade 9*, with a suggested sequence of activities, assessment tools and practices for the classroom, and learning related to equity. The writing team lead an orientation session for educators in late August and again in early September.

Throughout 2020-21, we prioritized support for all Grades 7-12+ educators to use digital tools for teaching, especially when a shift to remote learning for all students was required in January and April. Professional learning focussed on how to operate the standard learning platforms (The HUB and MS Teams), and how to engage students and support student learning in a virtual space. Most professional learning was provided via MS Teams or The HUB. Overall, staff enhanced and refined their digital skills and capabilities with these platforms.

In 2021-22, Specialized Services staff designed and developed self-directed courses on the HUB. Here the focus was on educator resources to map curriculum and plan program for students with disabilities as well as how to use specific technology tools in the classroom. Staff also continue to strengthen and extend educator knowledge to create precise and personalized Individual Education Plans (IEP) for students.

The Investing in People strategy for 2021-22 builds on work from last year and explicitly focuses on closing the achievement gap for underserved students. The Ministry of Education and HWDSB goals for de-streaming call for cultural change where students' lived experiences, cultures, interests, and aspirations are acknowledged and honoured both in the classroom and in making decisions about pathways after graduation. The Grade 9 Math educators in each secondary school currently teaching MTH1W are engaged in a collaborative inquiry process. This is a job-embedded professional learning strategy that features small groups of educators who

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learn in a cyclical process of attempting new practices; reflect on the impact of those practices; and then plan to use what they learned in their inquiry. The HWDSB resources *Learning Math Together* and a Universal Design for Learning HUB course show educators how to embed CRRP, ICS, and UDL into their classroom programs. The experiences of these Grade 9 Math educators will inform additional learning for educators this year and in 2022-23.

Specialized Services continues to provide a wide variety of professional development opportunities to meet the needs of students requiring special education services and supports. Virtual platforms including [Learning4Success Website](#), [Speech and Language website](#) and the [Centre for Success website](#) contain excellent resources for educators.

Executive Council monitors this strategy through learning session attendance and feedback from both central office and school-based educators, principals, and vice principals.

*Strategy: Leveraging Effective Practices: Implement instructional, assessment and engagement practices focused on improving the outcomes for all students in Grades 7 to 12.*

COVID-19 required HWDSB staff to learn and implement effective practices in digital learning spaces. While effective teaching practices are similar in the physical or digital classroom, navigating a digital learning environment was new for many HWDSB educators. We learned that remote teaching is most effective when educators are connected to students and digital routines and practices are consistent. Student well-being, engagement, and learning improved with consistency in remote classrooms. The importance of connection became very clear in the shift to full remote learning in secondary. Schools reported that the requirement for students to log-in remotely and attend online for each period had a positive effect on student engagement and learning.

Consistent routines and practices in the digital space created a more predictable and secure digital space for students. With MS Teams and The HUB as board standard platforms, students were not required to learn different platforms for each of their educators. Educators established routines and practices which allowed students to understand where to find assignments, how to communicate with their teacher, and where to submit their assignments. Learning Services staff worked to share best practices and “workflows” so that there was more coherence across classrooms.

During 2020-21, staff implemented new practices to support student learning and achievement. One effective new practice was a shift from exams to Student Success Days. During these days, students could complete incomplete assessments (test, projects, etc.) to improve their mark. At the end of both semester 1 and 2, students earned more credits than might have been predicted at mid-term. We also implemented new practices for transitions from Grades 8 to 9. To honour student and parent discussion and choice, a Grade 8 teacher’s approval and signature was no longer required for Grade 9 course selections. We also implemented a new set of guidelines for transitions meetings between elementary staff and secondary staff to ensure discussions before students enter secondary school focus on a student’s strengths, interests, and aspirations.

This year, staff will refine and extend the practices begun in 2020-21. Student Success Days will continue, and schools will have the option of offering exams in Grade 12 college, university, or mixed courses to provide the experience of an exam. A “flex day” has been added each quadmester immediately following the distribution of preliminary reports. On a flex day, students attend their regularly scheduled courses, but no new whole class learning occurs. Instead, the educator supports the students in completing assignments and assessments, re-taking assessments, or in preparing for new learning.

Finally, de-streaming Grade 9 Mathematics is revealing the impact of practices related to CRRP, ICS, and UDL. Educators are reporting that student confidence is increasing because students can demonstrate their learning through their own choice of task. Staff see students who enjoy learning Math because of the new approaches to teaching in de-streamed classes, such as using vertical whiteboards as workspaces, spiralling learning so that previously taught concepts are reviewed as they are applied to new concepts and increased collaborative problem-solving and group tasks.

As staff continue to align the Equity Action Plan with our graduation goal, we are exploring how we might potentially de-stream other secondary grade 9 subjects for 2022-23. First, we need to confirm any Ministry of Education direction for de-streaming in 2022-23. If there is no additional direction, staff will return to the Board of Trustees in early November with a recommendation for September 2022 that is grounded in research, current de-streaming data, and future pathway planning.

Executive Council monitors this strategy through observational data and gathered by principals, vice principals and superintendents during school and classroom visits.

*Strategy: Refining Measures of Progress: Develop and implement the tools required to monitor the progress students make towards graduation on a regular basis, from Grade 7 onwards at the classroom, school and system levels.*

In 2021-22, the following measures will indicate whether a student in Grades 9 through 12 is on track to graduate: credit accumulation; Community Involvement Hours; and completion of the Literacy Graduate Requirement through the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) or course (OSSLC). For example, students in Grades 9 to 11 who have earned all of their credits and completed at least 10 Community Involvement Hours, are considered on track because they are in a position to graduate at the end of their Grade 12 year.

Learning Services is developing an approach to monitoring whether students in Grades 7 and 8 are on track to graduate. Measures being considered include report card grades, especially in Language and Math, learning skills, and Grade 6 EQAO performance.

Executive Council monitors this strategy through the Student Data Strategy Committee and Board Annual Plan Quarterly Reviews.

***In 2020-21, we measured each cohort's progress towards graduation using credit accumulation data:***

***77 % of the 2020-21 cohort (this year's Grade 10) are on track to graduate  
72 % of the 2019-20 cohort (this year's Grade 11) are on track to graduate  
76 % of the 2018-19 cohort (this year's Grade 12) are on track to graduate  
77 % of the 2017-18 cohort (this year's Grade 12+) are on track to graduate***

***The Ministry of Education will report on graduation rates for 2016-17 cohort in Spring 2022. HWDSB system level data indicates that we are not on track to meet the target of 80% of students graduating by August 2021. However, there are more than 1300 students of this cohort currently active and working towards graduation. (See Appendix A: 2020-21 Student Learning and Achievement Data)***

*Grades K to 6*

**Goal #2: Improving the reading achievement of all students and closing the gap for those current and historically underserved.**

Target: At least 75 per cent of students within each cohort on track as an effective reader.

*Strategy: Investing in People: Provide differentiated professional learning on comprehensive literacy instruction, assessment, and interventions with a particular focus on engaging learners that are historically underserved.*

2020-21 began with Reading Specialists working in Grade 2 classrooms to support educators and students after the school closure period from March to June 2020. During this time, the Reading Specialists provided small group instruction for students as well as job-embedded professional development on the five components of reading (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) and the elements of an effective comprehensive literacy program. After November, they shifted to their usual work with

Kindergarten and Grade 1 educators and students. The Reading Specialist Team supported Remote Educators in providing small group reading instruction via MS Teams and assessing student reading progress remotely. Throughout the school year, the system professional learning focus was effective instruction in phonics. Phonics refers to teaching students the relationship between sounds and the alphabet. A strong foundation in phonics enables students to decode new words using their knowledge of sounds and letters. It is a foundational skill for effective readers.

In 2021-22, the Reading Specialists have again started the year in Grade 2 classrooms working with educators and students. They will shift to Kindergarten and Grade 1 in late October. The professional learning focus will continue to be phonics. We expect that the soon to be released Ontario Human Rights Commission Right to Read Report will recommend a focus on phonics in classrooms. Another priority for professional learning will be implementation of Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP) and Indigenous Cultural Safety (ICS) in a comprehensive literacy program. The Reading Specialists, supported by work from Program, Specialized Services, Equity and Indigenous Education teams, will lead the learning in Kindergarten and Grade 1 in schools.

A Junior Reading Strategy is under development to complement the Early Reading Strategy. Based on the Ministry guides for *Effective Instruction in Literacy, Grades 4 to 6*, this document will outline how older students continue to develop their reading skills. It will embed CRRP in classroom practice to support students as they encounter more difficult texts and learn to read independently. Program, Specialized Services, Equity and Indigenous Education staff are also collaborating on the design and development of the professional learning for the Junior Reading Strategy.

Finally, the Specialized Services Division will continue to lead professional development related to interventions, such as Empower™ Reading and Lexia Core 5™ Reading, for struggling readers. It will also collaborate with the Program team to implement the recommendations arising from the expected Right to Read Report.

Executive Council monitors this strategy through learning session attendance and feedback from both central office and school-based educators, principals, and vice principals.

*Strategy: Leveraging Effective Practices: Implement effective reading instruction and assessment practices from Kindergarten to Grade 6.*

As with the progress towards graduation goal, staff worked in 2020-21 to identify and implement effective reading strategies in both physical and digital classrooms. Regardless of the space, effective instruction occurs in comprehensive literacy when students receive modelled, shared and guided instruction, as well as independent practice of reading and writing skills. Educators intentionally model and teach the five key components of reading and provide on-going feedback to students to continue their progress. As students move through the primary division to junior, the emphasis shifts from phonemic awareness and phonics towards vocabulary (word study) and comprehension (inferencing and critical thinking) of challenging texts, especially in other subject areas like science with specialized vocabulary. Access to diverse texts where students can see their identities, interests, and lived experiences is critical to developing engaged and effective readers. To provide access to diverse texts and to support reading acquisition, Learning Services provisioned digital texts and assessment tools to remote and in-person teachers.

Staff implemented a home reading intervention called Home Reading with a Heart, in the spring of 2021 to respond to the challenges experienced by Grade 1 students in 2019-20 school year. The program made digital texts and supporting information for parents/guardians available to all Grade 2 students. The homeroom teacher promoted reading at home using the texts and a weekly newsletter. For students in High Priority Schools, staff selected 10 students, based on report card marks and classroom observation, for small group virtual reading instruction. Staff also continued to provide interventions using Empower™ Reading and Lexia Core 5™ Reading for students in Grades 2 and 3 respectively. Please note that more than 75% of Grade 2 students met the provincial standard on the June 2021 report card when only 67% of the cohort met the standard in June 2020.

In 2021-22, effective reading practice will include approaches and practices from CRRP, ICS, and UDL. It is vital that students see themselves and their lived experiences in the texts they read in school. Students' first languages, cultures, and lived experiences will be used as a resource in acquiring reading skills. Learning about Indigenous topics needs to follow a cultural safety approach. Students with an Individual Education Plan will have the supports they need to read in their classroom (e.g., assistive technology to support students in reading and writing). Learning Services will continue to provide digital reading resources for remote learners.

The Home Reading with a Heart program will start in late October this year with the same approach, except that the small group instruction may occur in-person rather than remotely. We will continue to use Empower™ Reading and Lexia Core 5™ Reading. We may add other intervention tools, depending on the recommendations of the Right to Read Report. We anticipate that the programs will have the same success in 2021-22.

Executive Council monitors this strategy through observational data gathered by principals, vice principals and superintendents during school and classroom visits.

*Strategy: Refining Measures of Progress: Develop and implement the tools required to regularly monitor the progress students make towards becoming proficient readers from Kindergarten to Grade 6 at the classroom, school and system levels.*

Last year, staff began work on new monitoring tools for reading. The classroom-based *Milestones to Reading K-1* was supplemented with a Grades 2 and 3 version that took the same approach to documenting observable reading behaviours to determine if a student was on-track to achieve the provincial standard, rather than only depending on an assessment tool such as the Development Reading Assessment (DRA). As well, staff has developed a phonics assessment tool to support educators in assessing students' phonics skills and then providing phonics instruction. The Kindergarten - Grade 1 Reading Tracker continued to be used to monitor students at the class and school level. The French Immersion and English as a Second Language *Milestones* continue to be used in classrooms.

In 2021-22, new tools will be reviewed, refined and piloted. Staff is intentionally moving slowly as all existing and new tools need to be reviewed with an anti-racist, anti-oppression and anti-colonial foundation. For example, we have developed a new Kindergarten to Grade 1 Reading Tracker that looks at a wider set of assessment data. A Kindergarten to Grade 6 Reading Tracker may be developed over the course of the school year.

Executive Council monitors this strategy through the Student Data Strategy Committee and Board Annual Plan Quarterly Reviews.

***In 2020-21, at least 75% of HWDSB students in Grades 2-6 were on track to be an effective reader. (See Appendix A: 2020-21 Student Learning and Achievement Data)***

### **Return to School September 2021**

Returning to School in September 2021 focused on student engagement to attend school, to feel safe supported and included, and to learn. Secondary Student Services staff had timetables ready for all students for the start of the school by working in early July and late August. As well, all schools received conversation scripts, links to community and board resources and programs, and funds to have a caring adult (a staff member with a strong rapport with the family) call to families and invite them back to the school in September. Some of these calls happened before school started and some later when students had yet to attend school. We will repeat this approach throughout the year as we monitor student attendance.

To help students feel safe, supported, and included, a staff team created the *Reimagining Wellness* initiative that focuses on wellness, community, and inclusion. Through age-appropriate daily 30-minute activities led by caring educators, students will see school as a place that is safe, welcoming, and understanding of their needs. These activities explicitly build community, promote inclusion, and teach social-emotional skills.

Engagement in learning includes students believing they can be successful in school. Many students re-entering school may question their ability to be successful after a disrupted experience from March 2020 to June 2021. In elementary schools, teachers are supported to use a wide variety of assessment tasks and strategies instead of standard assessment tools. When educators get to know their students in a variety of ways and plan personalized activities and teaching from students' strengths, that helps to build student confidence.

Elementary Progress Reports, usually completed in mid-October, have been scheduled for mid-November to provide time for students to feel comfortable in school and for teachers to know their students well before this first report. In secondary schools, we know that the quadmester structure moves quickly and creates pressure to complete a course in a short period of time. The flex days mentioned above are an opportunity for students to catch up early in a course. Student Success days provide another opportunity for completing assignments and earning a credit.

Appendices:

**Appendix A: 2020-21 Student Learning and Achievement Data**

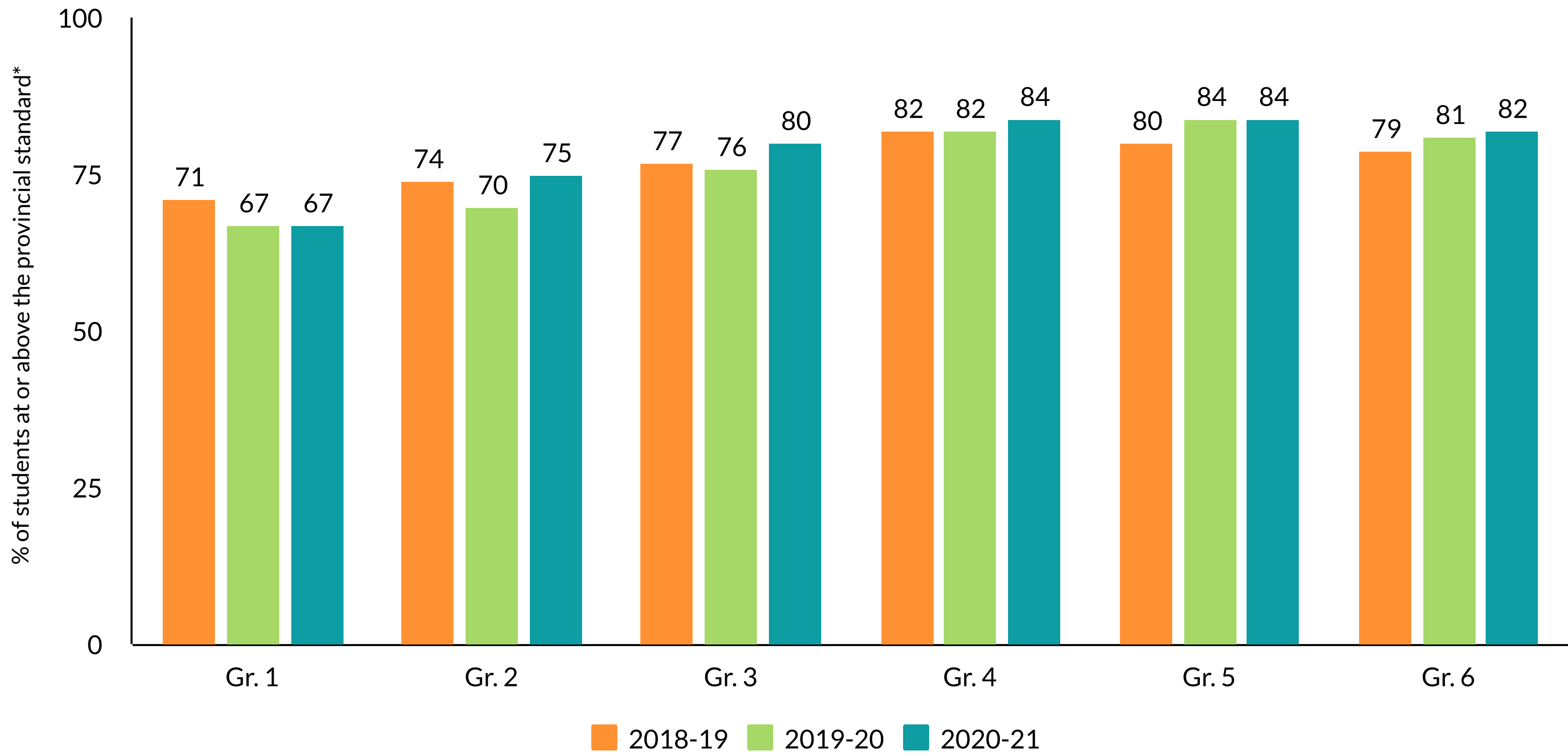




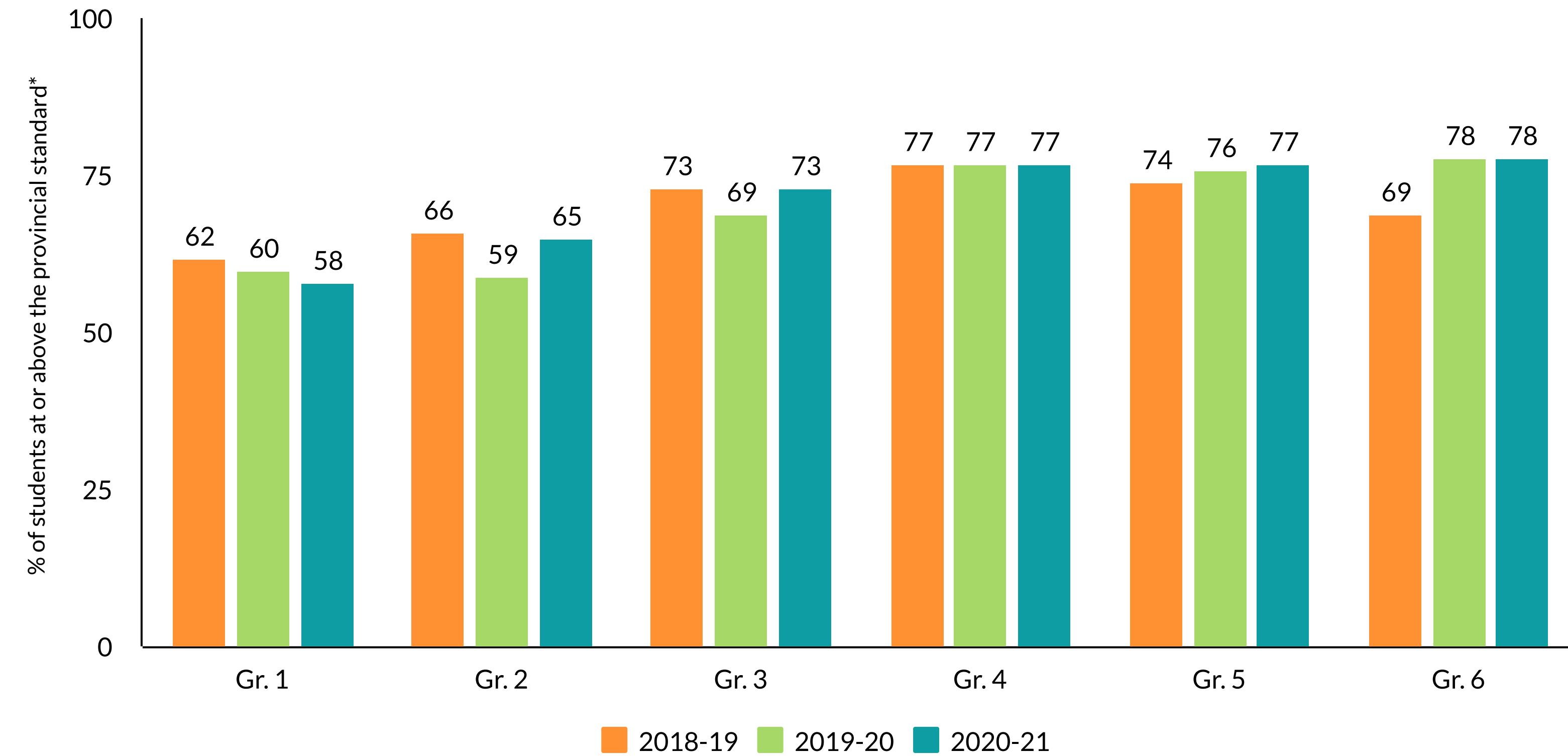
ALL STUDENTS READING

TARGET: At least 75 per cent of students within each cohort on track as an effective reader.

All Schools: Grades 1-6 Reading at Report 2

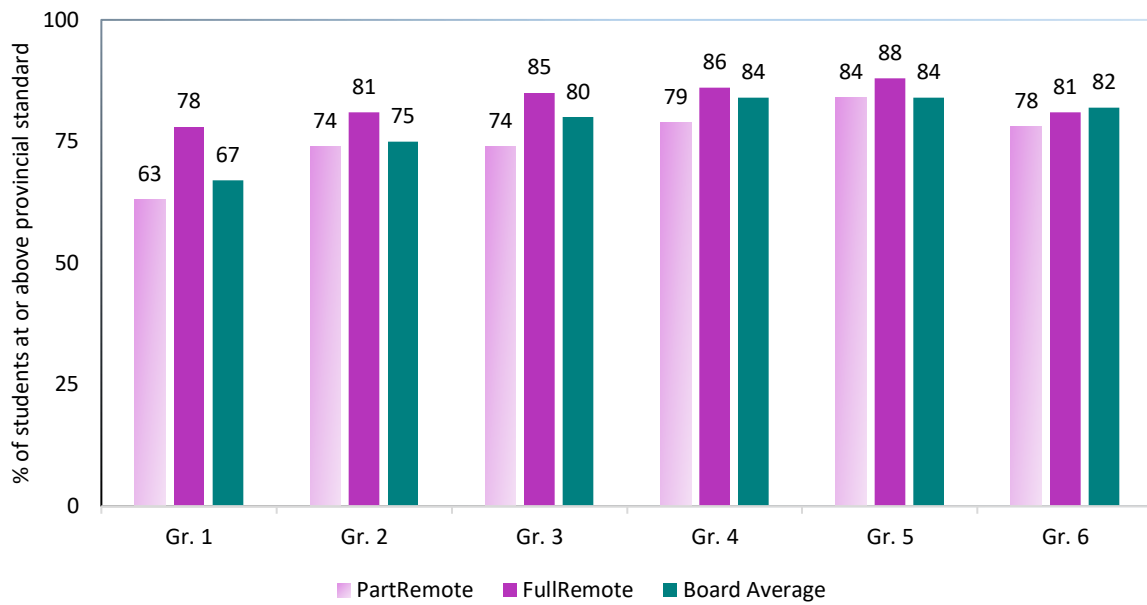


HPS: Grades 1-6 Reading at Report 2

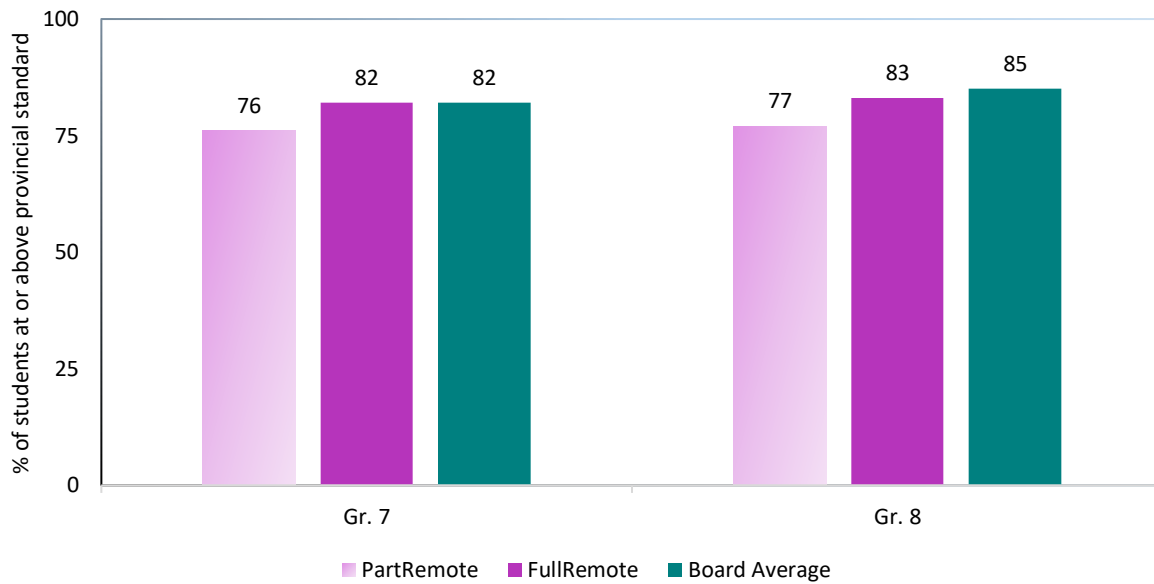


The provincial standard is a Level 3, which is at least a B- (Grades 1-6).

Remote School: Grades 1-6 Reading at Report 2



Remote School: Grades 7-8 Reading at Report 2

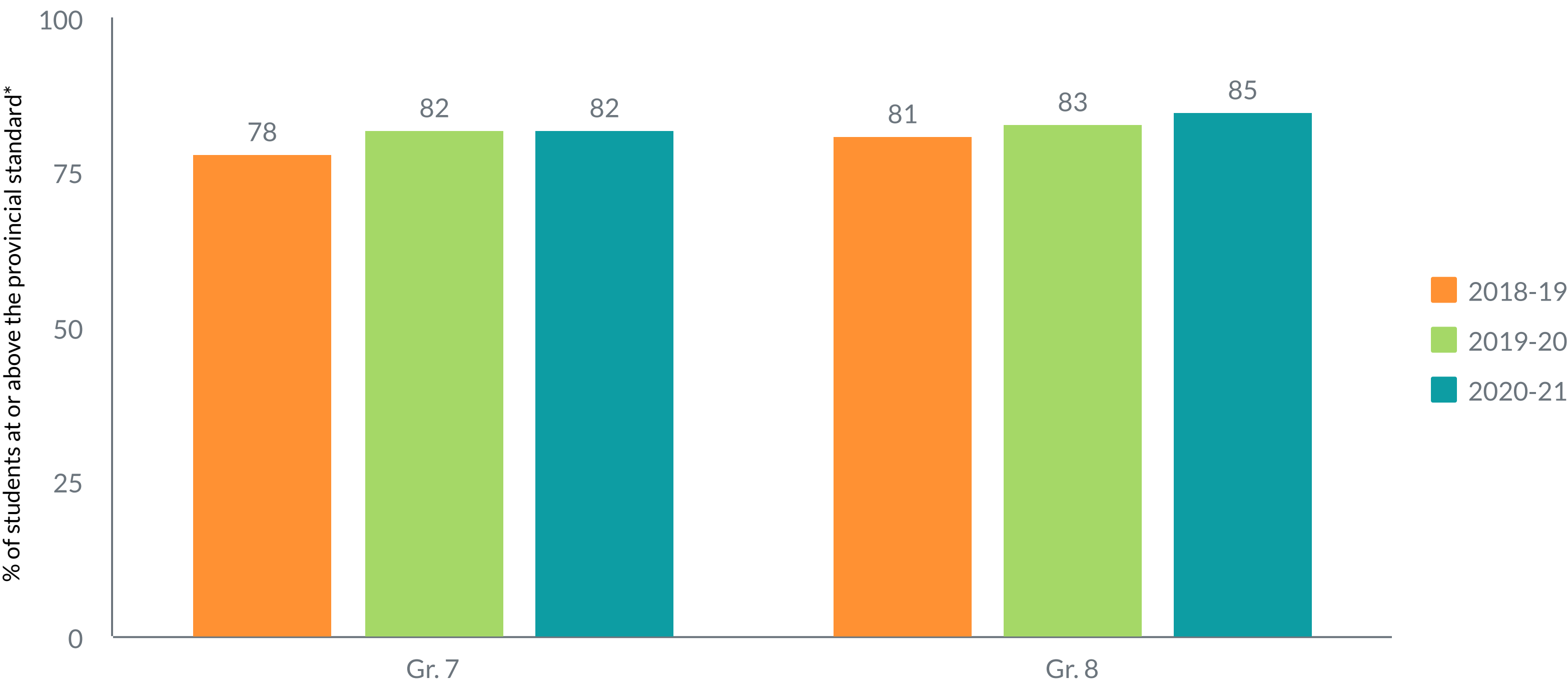




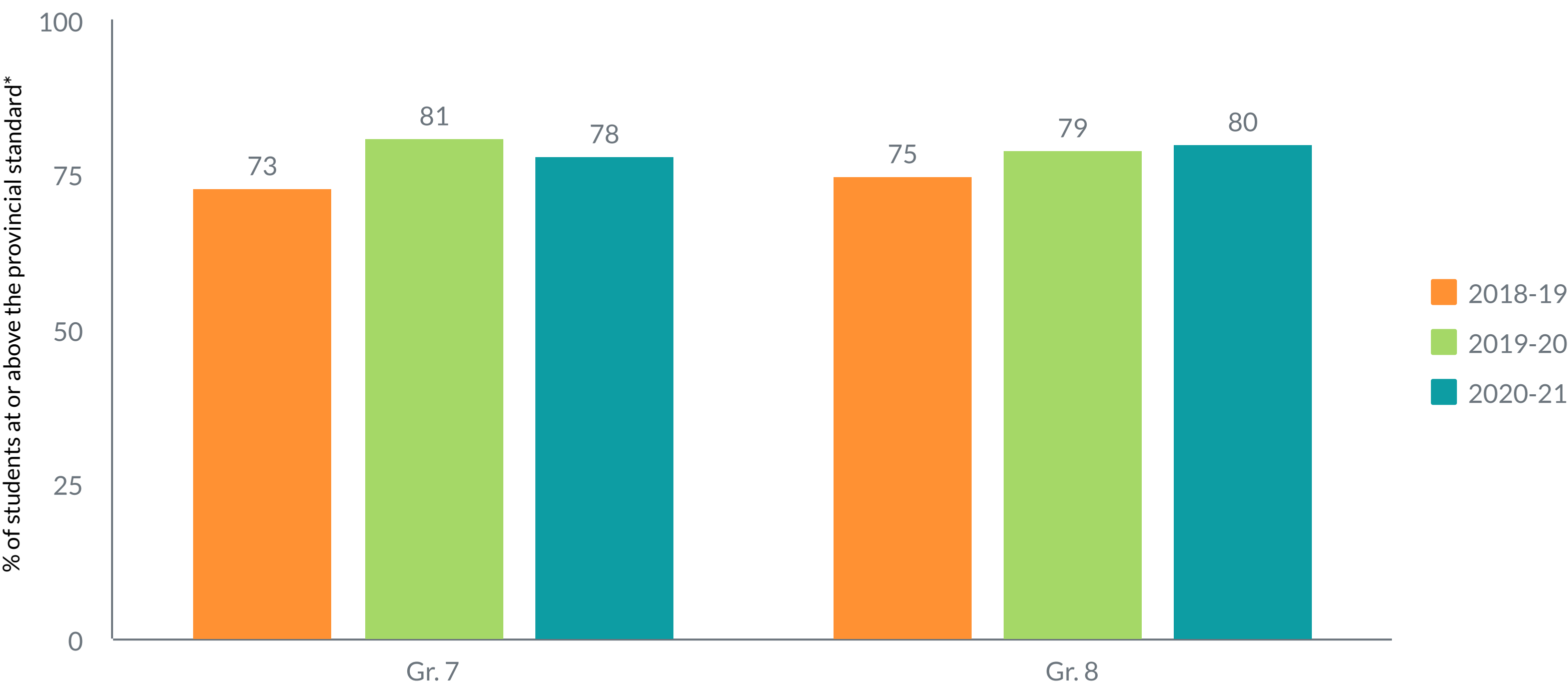
ALL STUDENTS GRADUATING

TARGET: At least 80 per cent of students within each cohort making progress towards graduation/graduating.

All Schools: Grades 7-8 Reading at Report 2

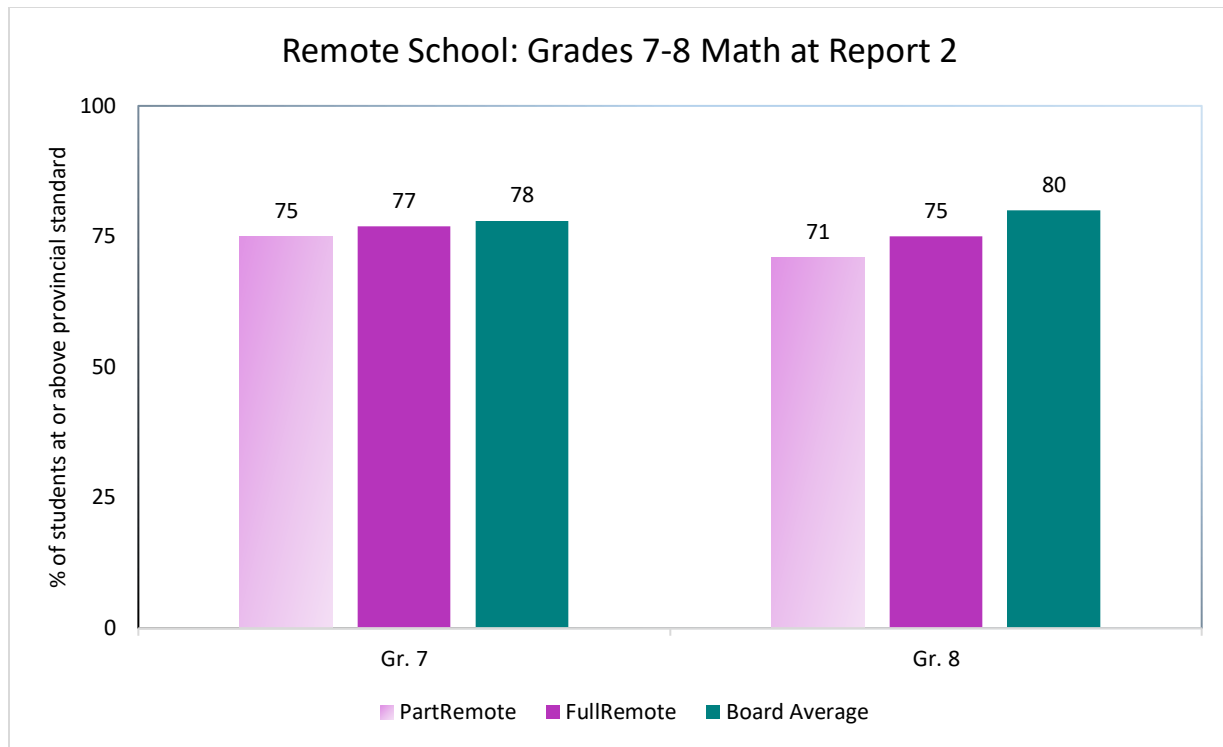


All Schools: Grades 7-8 Math at Report 2



Note: An average math mark per student was calculated across 5 math strands in 2018-19 and 2019-20. Reporting standards changed in 2020-21 and math is now reported as a single mark.

The provincial standard is a Level 3, which is at least a 70% (Grades 7-8).





ALL STUDENTS GRADUATING

TARGET: At least 80 per cent of students within each cohort making progress towards graduation/graduating.

Credit Accumulation by End of School Year

