



# NEWSLETTER

## FAST PM1 Comparison (2024-25 vs. 2025-26)

The 2025–2026 FAST PM1 results show early signs of progress compared to last year, with fewer students at Level 1 and more moving into Levels 2 and 3. Mathematics demonstrated the most notable gains, while ELA showed modest improvement. However, challenges remain significant: in Pre-K and K–2, more than 85% of students continue to perform below grade-level benchmarks, and overall movement into Levels 4 and 5—the indicators of true proficiency—remains minimal. The data underscores both the positive impact of recent efforts and the urgent need to intensify support for foundational literacy and math instruction.

### Detailed Analysis

The initial FAST PM1 results from the 2025–2026 school year show small but meaningful signs of progress compared to 2024–2025. Across most areas, the percentage of students performing at Level 1 decreased, with corresponding increases in Levels 2 and 3. These shifts indicate that more students are beginning to move out of the most at-risk category and toward proficiency, though the improvements remain incremental rather than transformational.

### Pre-K and K–2 Performance

In Pre-K Early Literacy, the percentage of students at Level 1 dropped from 89% last year to 85% this year. While this reduction is encouraging, it also highlights the continued readiness gap, as the vast majority of our youngest learners are still performing below expectations. Similar trends are evident in the primary grades. In K–2 Early Literacy, 74% of students remain at Level 1, and only 9% reached grade-level expectations (Levels 3–5). In K–2 Reading, 64% of students scored at Level 1, and just 13% reached proficiency. These results underscore the urgency of strengthening foundational literacy instruction, as more than 85% of K–2 students continue to perform below grade-level benchmarks.

### Intermediate Grades ELA

ELA Reading (3rd–10th) showed modest improvement, with Level 1 decreasing from 55% to 52% and Level 3 proficiency growing from 11% to 13%. While this demonstrates some movement in the right direction, over half of students remain at Level 1, signaling the need for sustained, targeted instructional support.

### Mathematics

Mathematics (3rd–8th) showed more notable progress, with Level 1 declining from 75% to 68% and increases in both Levels 2 and 3. This movement suggests that recent efforts to strengthen math instruction are beginning to yield positive results. In K–2 Math, Level 1 dropped from 83% to 76%, with more students moving into Levels 2 and 3. These improvements are encouraging but highlight that the majority of students are still performing below grade-level expectations.

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**Data is not about  
adding more to  
your plate. Data  
is about making  
sure you have  
the right things  
on your plate.**

*Elijah Key, Superintendent  
Lisa Robinson, Asst. Superintendent,  
Academic Services*

## **Updates from Elementary/Secondary Education**

The Academic Services team is actively engaged in site visits across our schools to provide universal support in strengthening instructional practices. Current efforts are focused on enhancing instructional strategies, improving transitions between assignments, and supporting the implementation of UFLI, Acaletics, and Project Opal.

In addition to teacher support, we are working closely with administrators to deepen the use of data as a tool to inform instruction. This includes ongoing progress monitoring, analyzing multiple data points, and identifying actionable next steps to improve student outcomes.

Our support is more intensive in our BSI schools (Chattahoochee Elementary and West Gadsden Middle) where we are prioritizing targeted coaching, data informed planning, and structured follow up to ensure consistency and growth in instructional delivery.

Through these combined efforts, Academic Services remains committed to fostering high quality teaching and learning across the district.

## **Updates from the Counselors' Corner**

Theme: Reset, Refocus, & Restart!

Gadsden County School Counselors, serving students from elementary through high school, deliver comprehensive programs that promote academic achievement, social-emotional growth, and college and career readiness. They help students develop essential skills in learning, self-management, social development, and future planning through core curriculum lessons, individual and group counseling, crisis response, and consultation with parents and teachers. Counselors also serve as Section 504 and MTSS facilitators, collaborating with educators, families, and community partners to ensure equitable support and opportunities for all students.

To monitor and improve services, the School Counseling Department requires counselors to complete Use-of-Time Monthly forms documenting how they support students, parents, and other duties. This data provides a monthly overview of services and informs the Florida Department of Education's Annual Guidance Plan. The submission deadline is October 27, 2025, with weekly reminders sent to ensure timely reporting.

Following the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommendations, counselors spend at least 80% of their time on direct services, including individual and group counseling, classroom guidance, individual student planning, responsive services, crisis response, peer mediation/conflict resolution, and parent/teacher consultation. The remaining 20% of time is dedicated to indirect services, such as scheduling, collaboration with staff and parents, referrals, planning and implementing school-wide programs, community outreach, and participation in school committees.

At the start of the 2025–26 school year, counselors received packets outlining their roles and responsibilities. Their first professional development on September 17, 2025, included training on the district's attendance policy, Section 504, MTSS, the Crisis Prevention Team, and Manifestation Determination for students with 504 plans. Using data on academic performance, attendance, and other student outcomes, counselors provide targeted interventions, remove systemic barriers, and ensure equitable access to rigorous coursework. They also support students with academic, social-emotional, and career needs, helping them stay engaged and achieve their full potential.

## Updates from Exceptional Student Education (ESE)

The Exceptional Student Education (ESE), Student Services, and Mental Health Department is committed to supporting the academic, social and emotional success of all students. Our team provides direct services and training to schools, teachers and families to ensure equitable access to learning opportunities and supports.

Currently, we are conducting Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), Attendance and Section 504 trainings at every school site to strengthen staff capacity in meeting diverse student needs. In addition, we are providing classroom management and instructional support side by side with teachers ensuring real-time strategies are applied to create positive and productive learning environments.

Through this work, our department continues to promote student achievement, improve engagement and build a strong culture of support across the district.

## Updates from Head Start/PreK

Head Start/PreK has kicked off to a great year with our new initiative for all 4-year-olds called "Project OPAL". Project OPAL: Optimizing Phonological Awareness Learning. The goal in this project is to enhance our understanding of how to effectively and efficiently support children's achievement of phonemic awareness and thus reading and spelling success.

The Education Team has completed 100% of FAST Star Early Literacy for all PreK students. Based on this data, we have multi-tiered the students and now provide small groups and individualized instruction. The entire department is pushing into classrooms every week for three hours to help provide instruction.

CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) Observations through Early Learning Coalition (ELC) have been completed. These observations have a significant part of the VPK Accountability Metric. The CLASS Observation is 50% of the overall percentage for a school site to meet expectations based on the state rule. The other 50% is 30% learning gains on Star Early Literacy and 20% achievement (scale score 707 or higher) on Star Early Literacy.

## Updates from OPLS

The Office of Professional Learning Services has begun our "Tour of Schools", meeting with educators to assist them with their certification needs. We thank Ms. Clark for assisting with this event. Mrs. Latasha Porter-Pride, Reading Program Specialist has been working diligently coordinating the "GCS New Teacher Induction Academy" for new teachers and their mentors. Their first meeting is scheduled for October 31, 2025 from 1:15 pm - 3:15 pm.

Our face-to-face Reading Endorsement Cohort will begin soon with our very own Professional Learning Coordinator, Ms. Chelsea Murphy (previously Program Specialist) facilitating this professional learning. The OPLS joined the TRAC team by attending BSI visits at Chattahoochee Elementary School and West Gadsden Middle School. From this visit, the OPLS coordinated a professional learning for our BSI schools titled "Explicit Instruction" which will take place at West Gadsden Middle School Media Center on October 31, 2025 at 1:15 pm - 3:15 pm.

We are happy to welcome our new staff: Kysha Washington-Hopkins, Director of Professional Learning and LaTasha Porter-Pride, Reading Program Specialist.

For certification and professional learning support, please reach out to the Office of Professional Learning Services.

## Updates from Federal Programs

The Office of Federal Programs has been actively working to ensure compliance and support for schools. Our team has been sending out the required "Four-Week Letters" and collecting attestations from all principals. We are also encouraging all Title I schools to hold their annual Title I Parent Meetings.

In preparation for state monitoring, Federal Programs is compiling and organizing documentation for Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV, Title V, and Title IX, as requested by the Florida Department of Education.

On September 16, 2025, we participated in the "Wild Wild West" Parent Meeting for West Gadsden, Greensboro, and Chattahoochee schools. We are also scheduled to participate in the Gadsden County High School Title I Parent Meeting on September 23, 2025.

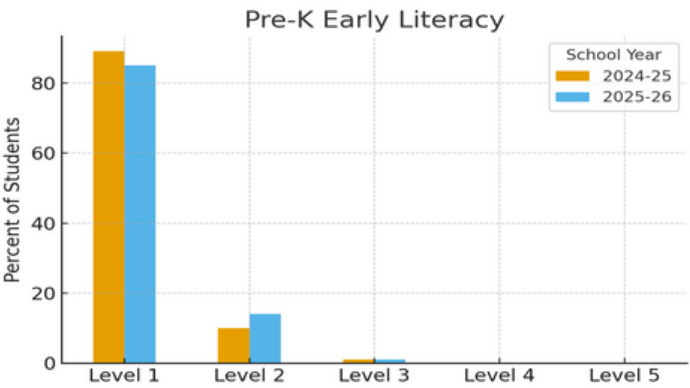
Overall Picture

Overall, the data reflects important steps in the right direction. The district is seeing fewer students at Level 1 and more students moving toward proficiency, particularly in mathematics. However, challenges remain. Level 1 percentages are still very high across all subjects, ranging from 52% in intermediate grades ELA to 85% in Pre-K. Growth into Levels 4 and 5—true indicators of proficiency and mastery—remains minimal. Persistent early learning gaps in Pre-K and primary grades also point to the need for continued focus on foundational skills.

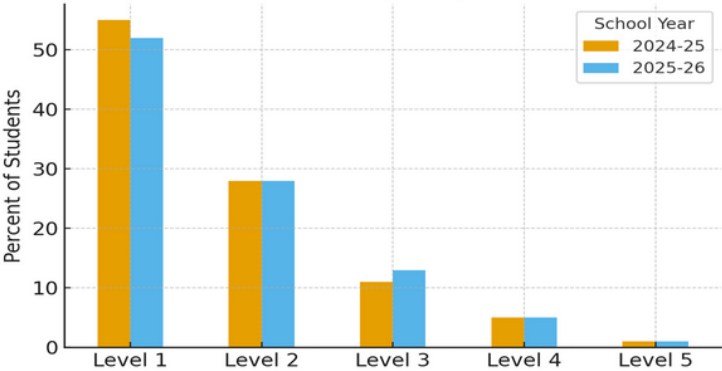
Next Steps

The district will continue to monitor these results closely, using the data to inform instructional planning, interventions, and professional learning. While progress is gradual, the early shifts provide a foundation we can build upon to accelerate learning and increase the number of students performing on grade level.

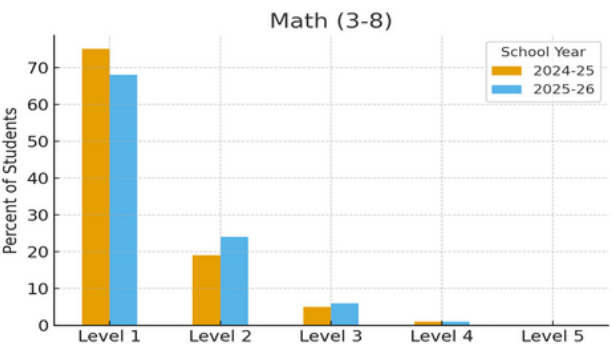
Pre-K Early Literacy - Comparison



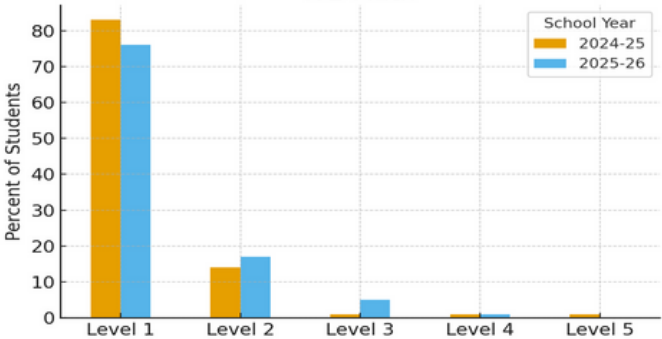
ELA (3-10) - Comparison  
ELA (3-10)



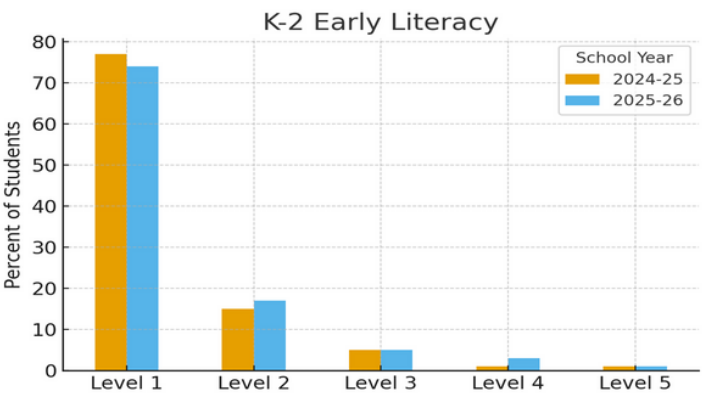
Math (3-8) - Comparison



K-2 Math - Comparison  
K-2 Math



K-2 Early Literacy - Comparison



K-2 Reading - Comparison

