



## PALS-K, PALS I, and PALS 2 Spring Scores Report 2016-2017

### Key Findings

1. There were four-year increases in the rates of students meeting the PALS K English and PALS I English summed score benchmark.
2. Overall, 81% of MMSD kindergarteners, 75% of 1<sup>st</sup> grade students, and 75% of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students met PALS English summed score benchmarks.
3. The Sound Awareness subtest had the highest rates of students meeting the benchmark score on the PALS K English and PALS K Español, while the Spelling Inventory subtest had the highest rates on the PALS I English and PALS I Español.
4. The Concept of Word-List subtest had the lowest rates of students meeting the benchmark score on the PALS K English and PALS I English, while the Alphabet Recognition subtest had the lowest rates on the PALS K Español and PALS I Español.
5. PALS I English and PALS I Español results are similar – on both assessments, 75% of students met the summed score benchmark was the same in 2016-17.
6. There were large decreases in rates of students meeting benchmark scores on the PALS K Español, which coincided with a policy change in time spent on Spanish instruction for DLI courses.
7. There were decreases in the gaps of comparable demographic groups meeting summed score benchmarks across all assessments. On the PALS K English and PALS I English, there were large gap reductions between ELL and non-ELL students.

### PALS Background

The Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) is a mandatory, statewide universal screening assessment designed to identify students who are behind in their acquisition of fundamental literacy skills. The 2016-17 school year was the fifth year MMSD universally administered the PALS-K English to Kindergarteners. It was also the fourth year that MMSD administered the PALS I English and PALS 2 English to first and second grade students. This report divides the PALS-K English and PALS I English separately because the formats of the tests are very different. MMSD also offers the PALS Español to students in Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. All students in a DBE or DLI classroom are administered the PALS Español examination, to match their language of instruction. This report breaks down the PALS-K and PALS-I sections to include the PALS Español iteration of the tests. In 2015-16, policy changes shifted the time of instruction in DLI classrooms from 90% Spanish – 10% English to 50% Spanish – 50% English. These students were still given the PALS K Español and PALS I Español assessments. The Appendix contains more information on the PALS assessment.

The PALS-K assessment is composed of six required tasks and one optional task, each of which provides teachers with a picture of how students are progressing in specific areas of literacy. Classroom teachers individually administer the majority of the PALS-K screening, but some tasks can be given in small groups of five or fewer students. PALS-K includes a benchmarked summed score to show whether a student has the basic skills necessary to continue learning to read. The benchmarks for the PALS-K are intentionally set to be low to identify students that are performing much lower than expected. And to clearly identify students in need of additional support.

The PALS I is composed of ten tasks divided into four levels of examination: the Entry level, Level A, level B, and Level C. During spring, the Entry level is composed of two required tasks, combining to create a benchmarked summed score. Level A is made of two optional tasks. Level B is composed of three tasks, combining to create a benchmarked summed score. Level B is administered to students unable to read more than 75 percent of the words on the preprimer word list in the Entry Level. Level C is composed of two tasks and is only administered when a student fails to meet the Level B summed score benchmark. PALS I is used to measure a child's knowledge of important literacy fundamentals and can be used to identify specific areas where the student needs additional instruction.



**Data Notes**

The PALS assessments are given in the fall and spring, but this report provides only spring scores across multiple years. This report includes four years of data for the PALS K English and PALS I English assessment, but only 3 years of data for the PALS 2 English and PALS I Español, and 2 years of data for the PALS K Español assessment. Each section contains graphics on the percents of students meeting the summed score benchmark and a subtest graphic and table breakdown. The PALS 2 English section only contains graphics on the summed score benchmark because the number of students taking subtests is too low to report on. PALS 2 Español data are not included in this report because the number of students taking this assessment were very low. This report only used data that was readily available within MMSD databases, due to the accuracy and fidelity of these data files. There are data for all assessments that are not included in this report because they are not stored within MMSD databases. In this report, each assessment is labeled as English or Español. Any section that does not denote the language of the PALS assessment is reference *all* PALS scores (for example: PALS-K headers represent *both* PALS-K English and PALS-K Español).

**Overall Summed Score Benchmark Rates on All PALS Assessments**

Figure 1: Percent of Students Meeting the Summed Score Benchmark on PALS Assessments

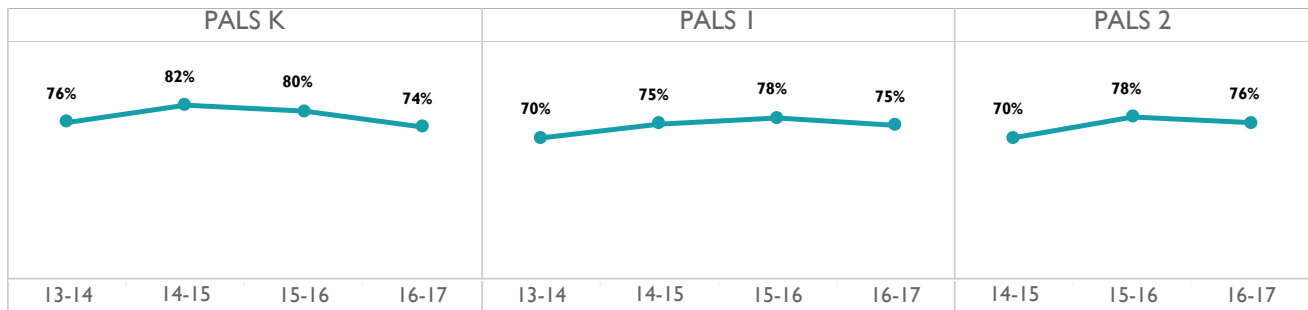
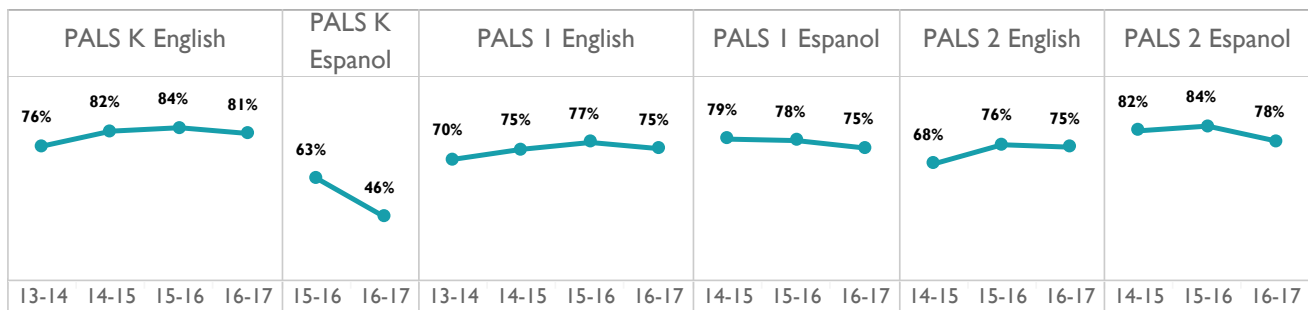


Figure 2: Percent of Students Meeting the Summed Score Benchmark on PALS Assessments by Language and Assessment



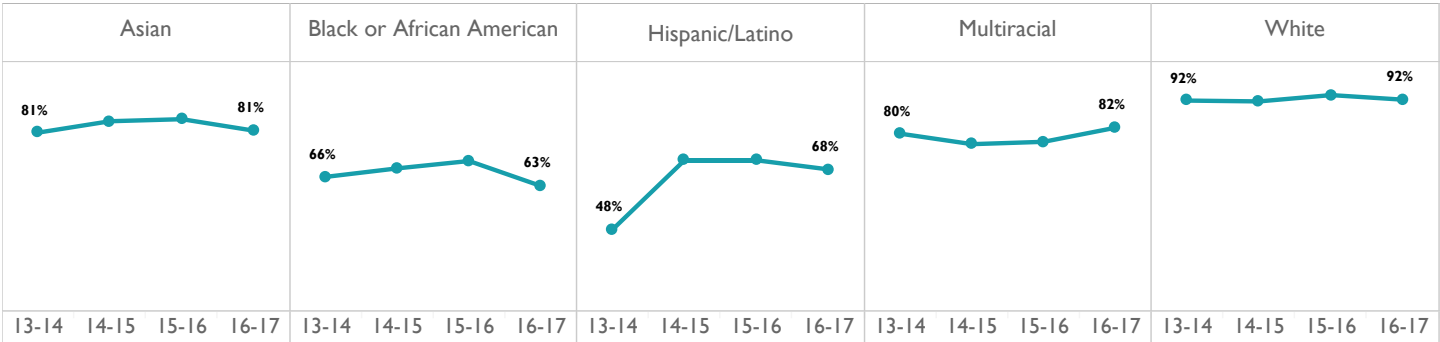
Overall, there was a four-year decrease in the percent of kindergarten students meeting the summed score benchmark on the PALS-K assessments. There were increases in the percent of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students meeting the summed score benchmark on the PALS I and PALS 2 assessments.

Over 80% of kindergarten students taking the PALS K English, 75% of 1<sup>st</sup> grade students taking the PALS I English, and 75% of students taking the PALS 2 English achieved the summed score benchmark. Students taking these exams exhibited a slight decrease in 2016-17 after years of increasing rates. Students taking the PALS K Español and the PALS I Español had decreasing rates of students meeting the summed score benchmark. While students taking the PALS I Español assessment had similar results to students taking the PALS I English exam, students taking the PALS K Español had significantly lower rates of students meeting the summed score benchmark compared to students taking the PALS K English. The large decrease in PALS-K Español students meeting the Summed Score benchmark corresponds with a policy change to 50-50 instructional time in DLI and DBE classes.



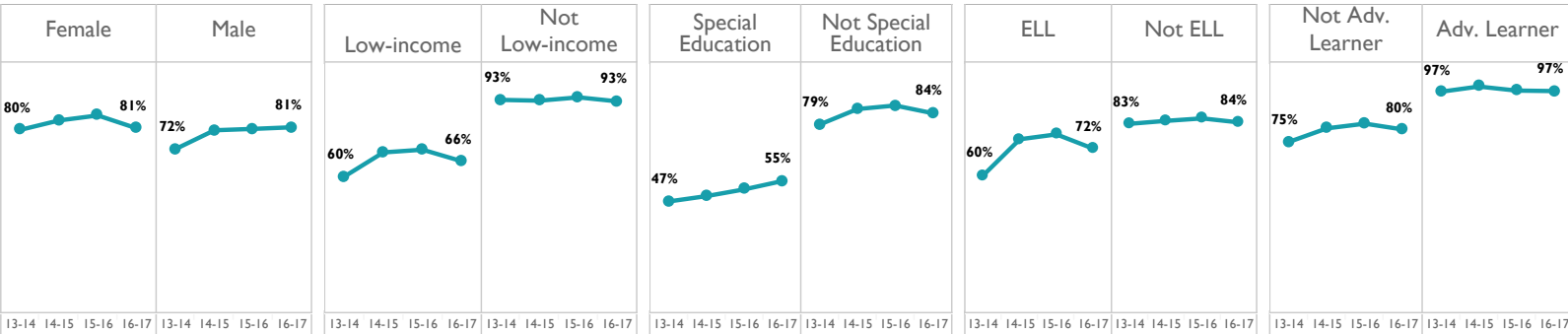
**PALS K English Results**

Figure 3: Percent of Students Meeting the PALS K English Summed Score Benchmark by Race/Ethnicity



Students identifying as African American were the only racial/ethnic group that had a decrease in the percent of students meeting the summed score benchmark on the PALS K English, over the four year period. Students identifying as Hispanic or Latino had a large increase in the percent of students meeting the summed score benchmark between the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school year. This aligns with the introduction of the PALS K Español assessment, which was administered to a large number of Hispanic and Latino students and likely accounts for the large change. Students identifying as white had the highest rates of students meeting the summed score benchmark – over 90% of white students met the benchmark each year.

Figure 4: Percent of Students Meeting the PALS K English Summed Score Benchmark by Other Student Demographic Groups



In 2016-17 over all demographic groups except students receiving special education services had over 66% of students meeting the summed score benchmark. Gaps in PALS K English achievement between demographic groups persisted across the four year time span. However, these gaps closed in each demographic group. In particular, the gap between English Language Learner students and non-English Language Learners halved, from 23% to 12%. The introduction of the PALS K Español assessment during the 2013-14 school year likely affected this gap closing.



Figure 5: Percent of Students Meeting the PALS K English Subtest Benchmarks

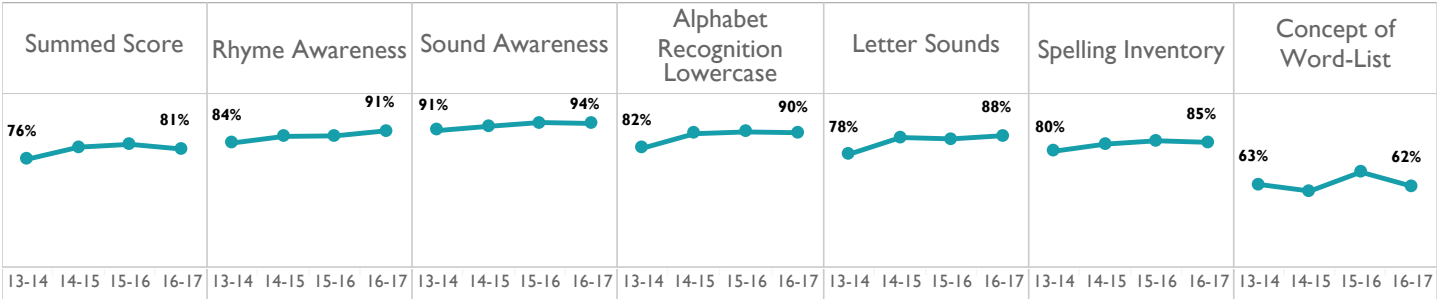


Table 1: Percent of Students Meeting PALS-K English Spring Score Benchmarks by Student Demographic Groups

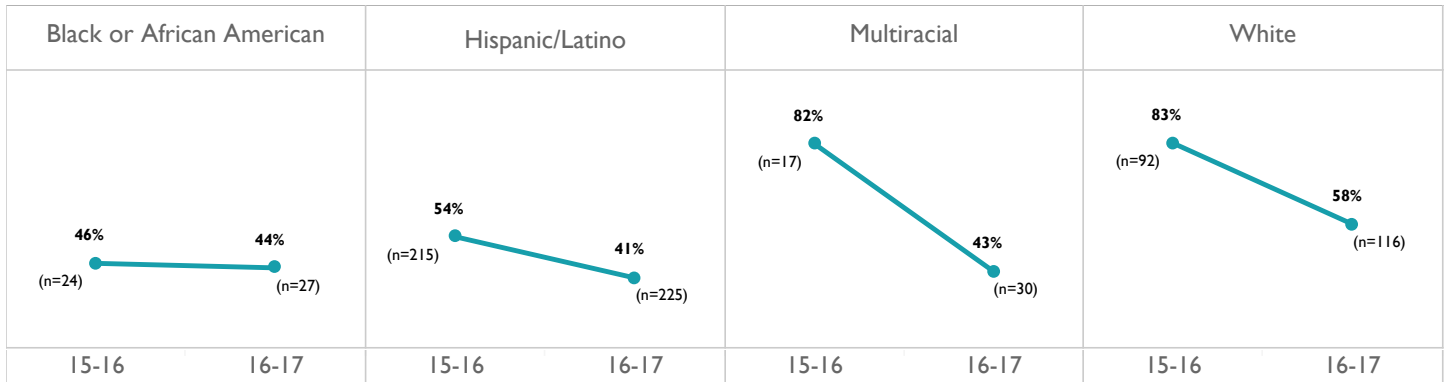
Demographic	Summed Score		Rhyme Awareness		Sound Awareness		Alphabet Recognition Lowercase		Letter Sounds		Spelling Inventory		Concept of Word-List	
	16-17	4 Yr +/-	16-17	4 Yr +/-	16-17	4 Yr +/-	16-17	4 Yr +/-	16-17	4 Yr +/-	16-17	4 Yr +/-	16-17	4 Yr +/-
Overall	81%	5%	91%	6%	94%	4%	90%	8%	88%	10%	85%	5%	62%	-1%
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>														
Asian	81%	1%	86%	5%	94%	2%	93%	3%	88%	1%	81%	1%	65%	-2%
African American	63%	-3%	85%	4%	86%	-2%	78%	-1%	74%	2%	69%	-1%	38%	-7%
Hispanic/Latino	68%	20%	80%	16%	90%	9%	82%	29%	84%	30%	76%	12%	42%	3%
Multiracial	82%	2%	91%	-2%	96%	6%	93%	5%	90%	7%	87%	4%	61%	-3%
White	92%	0%	97%	2%	99%	2%	95%	1%	94%	4%	94%	2%	76%	-3%
<i>Gender</i>														
Female	81%	1%	91%	5%	94%	2%	89%	5%	88%	6%	86%	1%	62%	-4%
Male	81%	10%	90%	7%	95%	6%	90%	11%	88%	13%	84%	8%	62%	2%
<i>Low-income</i>														
Not Low-income	93%	-1%	97%	3%	98%	2%	96%	1%	95%	3%	94%	1%	78%	-4%
Low-income	66%	7%	83%	8%	90%	4%	81%	12%	79%	13%	73%	5%	41%	-4%
<i>Special Education</i>														
Not Special Education	84%	5%	93%	5%	96%	3%	91%	7%	90%	9%	87%	4%	64%	-2%
Special Education	55%	9%	70%	16%	76%	7%	76%	12%	70%	15%	59%	12%	41%	9%
<i>English Language Learner</i>														
Not ELL	84%	1%	93%	2%	95%	2%	90%	2%	89%	5%	87%	3%	64%	-5%
ELL	72%	12%	83%	12%	90%	6%	87%	20%	84%	18%	76%	6%	54%	5%
<i>Advanced Learner</i>														
Not Adv. Learner	80%	6%	90%	7%	94%	4%	89%	8%	88%	10%	84%	5%	60%	-1%
Adv. Learner	97%	0%	99%	-1%	99%	-1%	97%	1%	99%	3%	99%	1%	92%	3%

The percent of students meeting the benchmark scores increased on all skill subtests except the Concept of Word: World List subtest, where there was a 1% decrease. Gaps in rates of students meeting benchmark scores decreased across several subtest scores for all demographic groups, except the gap between students identifying as African American and students identifying as white.



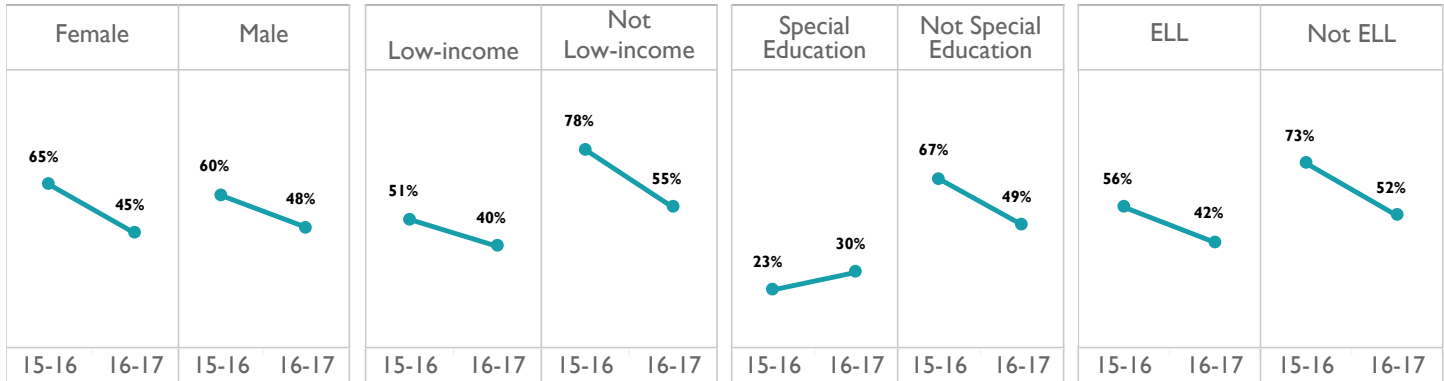
**PALS K Español Results**

Figure 6: Percent of Students Meeting the PALS K Español Summed Score Benchmark by Race/Ethnicity



Students identifying as Hispanic or Latino and students identifying white made up the largest racial/ethnic groups taking the PALS K Español assessment. The rate of students meeting the summed score benchmark decreased across all racial/ethnic groups, including a 25% decrease among students identifying as white. These decreases occurred after the 50:50 time of instruction policy change, which may have affected students' scores.

Figure 7: Percent of Students Meeting the PALS K Español Summed Score Benchmarks by Other Student Demographic Groups



There were decreases in rates of students meeting the summed score benchmark in 2016-17 across all demographics, except students receiving special education services. Gaps in PALS K Español achievement between demographic groups persisted across the two year time span. However, these gaps closed in each demographic group, including a 25% reduction in the gap between special education and non-special education students, and a 12% reduction in the gap between low-income and not low-income students.



Figure 8: Percent of Students Meeting the PALS K Español Subtest Benchmarks

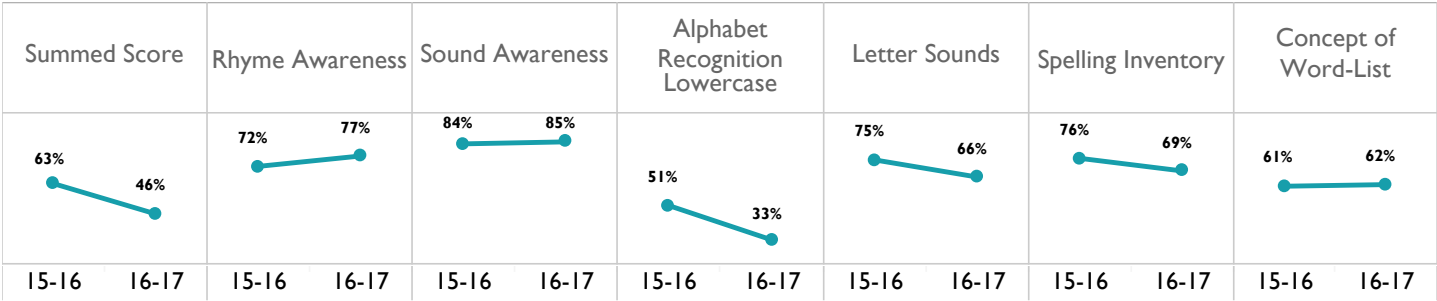


Table 2: Percent of Students Meeting PALS-K Español Spring Score Benchmarks by Student Demographic Groups

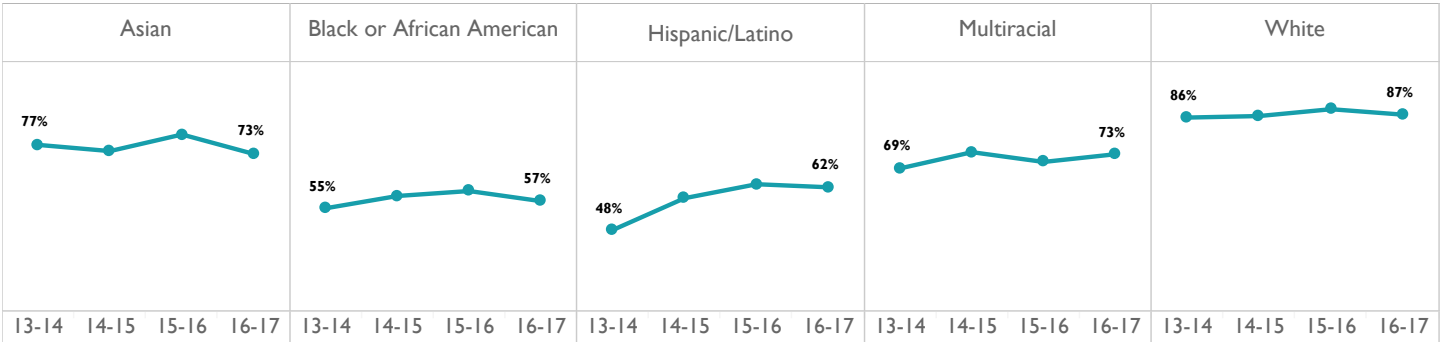
Demographic	Summed Score		Rhyme Awareness		Sound Awareness		Alphabet Recognition Lowercase		Letter Sounds		Spelling Inventory		Concept of Word-List	
	16-17	2 Yr +/-	16-17	2 Yr +/-	16-17	2 Yr +/-	16-17	2 Yr +/-	16-17	2 Yr +/-	16-17	2 Yr +/-	16-17	2 Yr +/-
Overall	46%	-16%	77%	6%	84%	1%	33%	-18%	66%	-9%	69%	-6%	62%	1%
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>														
African American	44%	-1%	67%	-17%	89%	1%	30%	-12%	48%	-23%	67%	8%	59%	9%
Hispanic/Latino	41%	-13%	69%	11%	79%	3%	32%	-15%	65%	-4%	63%	-6%	54%	5%
Multiracial	43%	-39%	87%	4%	93%	-1%	33%	-31%	53%	-35%	67%	-22%	67%	-16%
White	58%	-25%	92%	-6%	92%	-7%	34%	-25%	75%	-11%	83%	-10%	78%	-9%
<i>Gender</i>														
Female	45%	-19%	77%	5%	87%	1%	31%	-25%	63%	-15%	70%	-10%	60%	-1%
Male	48%	-13%	77%	6%	82%	1%	34%	-11%	69%	-3%	68%	-3%	64%	3%
<i>Low-income</i>														
Not Low-income	55%	-23%	90%	-1%	95%	-1%	35%	-24%	73%	-12%	80%	-9%	76%	-5%
Low-income	40%	-11%	68%	11%	78%	3%	31%	-14%	61%	-7%	62%	-5%	52%	6%
<i>Special Education</i>														
Not Special Education	49%	-18%	81%	6%	87%	1%	33%	-21%	67%	-10%	71%	-8%	64%	0%
Special Education	30%	7%	50%	7%	65%	7%	27%	10%	56%	5%	52%	6%	44%	12%
<i>English Language Learner</i>														
Not ELL	52%	-21%	87%	-3%	92%	-1%	33%	-22%	69%	-13%	78%	-3%	73%	-3%
ELL	42%	-14%	69%	10%	79%	1%	32%	-16%	64%	-7%	62%	-10%	53%	1%

The percent of students meeting the benchmark score increased on the Rhyme Awareness, Sound Awareness, and Concept of Word subtests, but decreased on all other subtests. The largest decreases in rates of students meeting benchmark scores were on the Entry Level Summed Score and Alphabet Recognition – Lowercase skill subtest, where there was a 16% and an 18% decrease in rates, respectively. Gaps in rates of students meeting benchmark scores decreased among all demographic groups, partially due to large decreases in rates among demographic groups that historically score higher than comparable groups.



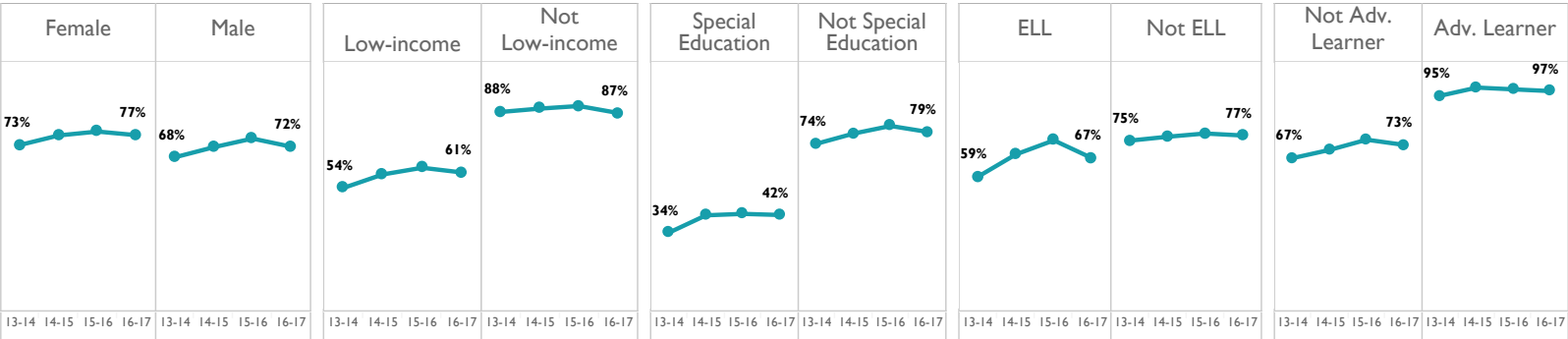
**PALS I English Results**

Figure 9: Percent of Students Meeting the PALS I English Summed Score Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity



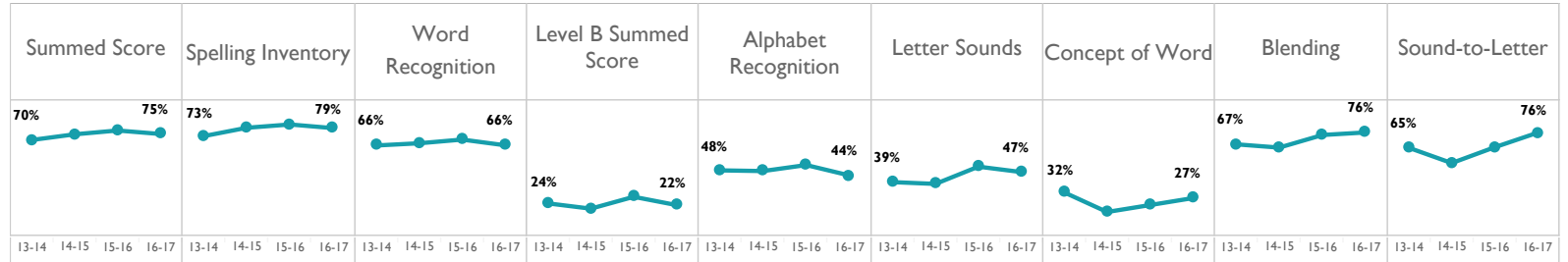
Students identifying as Asian were the only racial/ethnic group that had a four year decrease in the percent of students meeting the summed score benchmark. Students identifying as white had the highest rate of students meeting the benchmark score, with 87% meeting the benchmark in 2016-17. Hispanic and Latino 1<sup>st</sup> grade students saw a similar, but smaller rise in rates as Hispanic and Latino kindergarten students taking the PALS K English.

Figure 10: Percent of Students Meeting the PALS I English Summed Score Benchmarks by Other Student Demographic Groups



Gaps in PALS I English achievement between demographic groups persisted across the four year time span, but decreased. In particular, the gap between English Language Learner and non-English Language Learner students was 10% in 2016-17, which was the smallest of all demographic groups.

Figure 11: Percent of Students Meeting the PALS I English Subtest Benchmarks



There were increases in the percent of students meeting Entry Level Summed Score (Spelling & Word Recognition and Level C Summed Score (Blending and Sound-to-Letter) skill subtests, signifying an improvement in overall student achievement on the PALS I English and an improvement among students with the lowest scores (who took the Level C assessment).



Table 3: Percent of Students Meeting PALS-I English Spring Score Benchmarks by Student Demographic Groups

	Entry Level Summed Score		Spelling Inventory		Word Recognition		Level B Summed Score		Alphabet Recognition		Letter Sounds		Concept of Word		Blending		Sound-to-Letter	
	16-17	4 Yr +/-	16-17	4 Yr +/-	16-17	4 Yr +/-	16-17	4 Yr +/-	16-17	4 Yr +/-	16-17	4 Yr +/-	16-17	4 Yr +/-	16-17	4 Yr +/-	16-17	4 Yr +/-
Overall	75%	5%	79%	6%	66%	0%	22%	-1%	45%	-3%	47%	8%	28%	-4%	76%	9%	75%	11%
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>																		
Asian	73%	-3%	76%	-2%	66%	-9%	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Black or African American	57%	2%	63%	3%	50%	-1%	17%	-11%	44%	-14%	48%	7%	19%	-7%	69%	-4%	71%	-1%
Hispanic/Latino	62%	15%	71%	19%	52%	6%	23%	12%	34%	12%	52%	31%	31%	8%	72%	12%	71%	18%
Multiracial	73%	5%	77%	2%	61%	-1%	22%	-3%	44%	-13%	28%	-17%	22%	-6%	92%	22%	92%	16%
White	87%	1%	90%	3%	79%	-1%	33%	0%	53%	-16%	47%	-10%	43%	-6%	84%	4%	79%	-4%
<i>Gender</i>																		
Female	77%	4%	81%	5%	68%	-2%	34%	11%	60%	9%	58%	17%	30%	-3%	77%	12%	80%	14%
Male	72%	5%	77%	7%	65%	2%	14%	-10%	34%	-12%	39%	2%	26%	-5%	75%	7%	74%	10%
<i>Low-income</i>																		
Not Low-income	87%	-1%	89%	1%	80%	-3%	40%	-2%	66%	-7%	53%	-9%	47%	-4%	83%	4%	72%	4%
Low-income	61%	7%	68%	9%	52%	1%	17%	-2%	38%	-1%	45%	14%	22%	-5%	74%	10%	76%	13%
<i>Special Education</i>																		
Not Special Education	79%	5%	83%	7%	70%	1%	30%	3%	51%	0%	64%	22%	33%	-4%	86%	13%	84%	14%
Special Education	42%	8%	47%	6%	35%	-2%	10%	0%	35%	-4%	20%	-6%	20%	7%	59%	10%	62%	17%
<i>English Language Learner</i>																		
Not ELL	77%	2%	81%	3%	69%	-1%	23%	-7%	46%	-15%	45%	-5%	27%	-8%	76%	1%	75%	-1%
ELL	67%	8%	74%	12%	59%	2%	20%	4%	38%	8%	52%	27%	29%	1%	75%	17%	78%	26%
<i>Advanced Learner</i>																		
Not Adv. Learner	73%	6%	78%	7%	64%	1%	23%	1%	44%	-2%	47%	9%	28%	-3%	76%	10%	76%	12%
Adv. Learner	97%	2%	98%	2%	96%	2%	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

\*Scores with “---“ listed are suppressed because of the number of students with a recorded score is below 8.

\*\*This table is divided into three sections that correspond with the three levels on the PALS assessment – Level A, Level B, and Level C

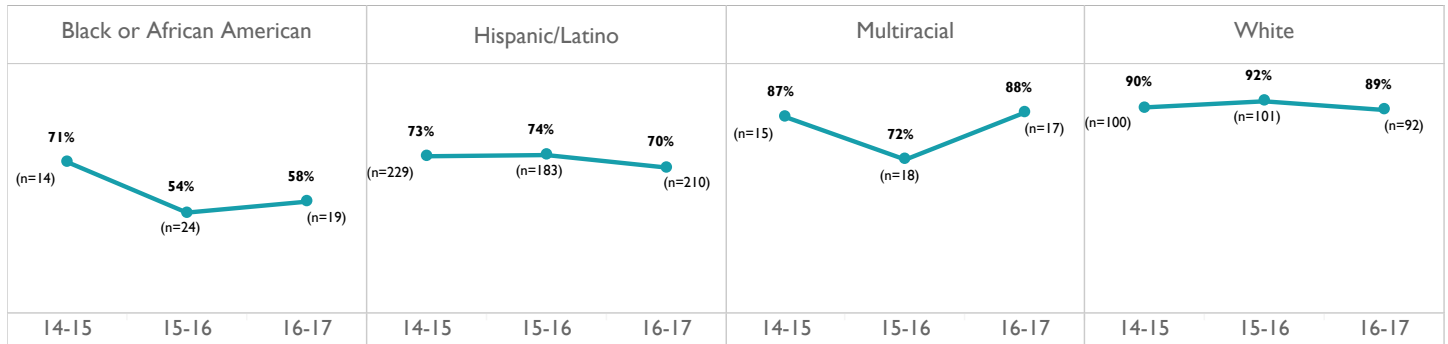
There were four year decreases in students meeting the benchmark score on the Level B Summed Score, Alphabet Recognition, and Concept of Word skill subtests. All other subtests had either increases or the same rate of students meeting the benchmark score. The largest increases were on the Level C subtests (Blending and Sound-to-Letter), which were only assessed to students with the lowest Entry Level scores (who took the Level C assessment), signifying an increase in rates of students meeting benchmark scores among 1<sup>st</sup> grade students who had the lowest performance on the PALS I English assessment. Gaps between demographic groups persisted, but decreased among low-income and English Language Learner students.





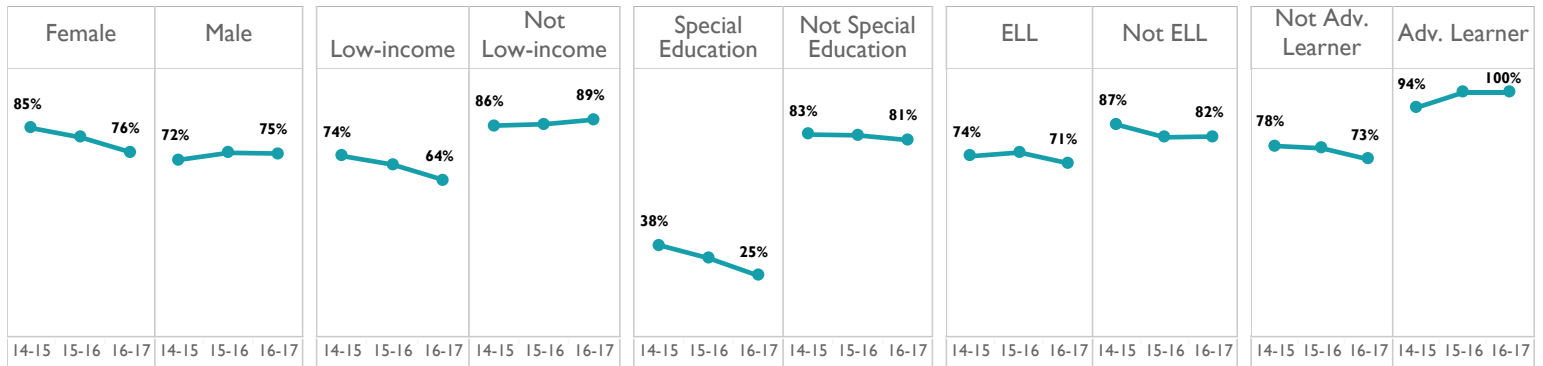
**PALS I Español Results**

Figure 12: Percent of Students Meeting the PALS I Español Summed Score Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity



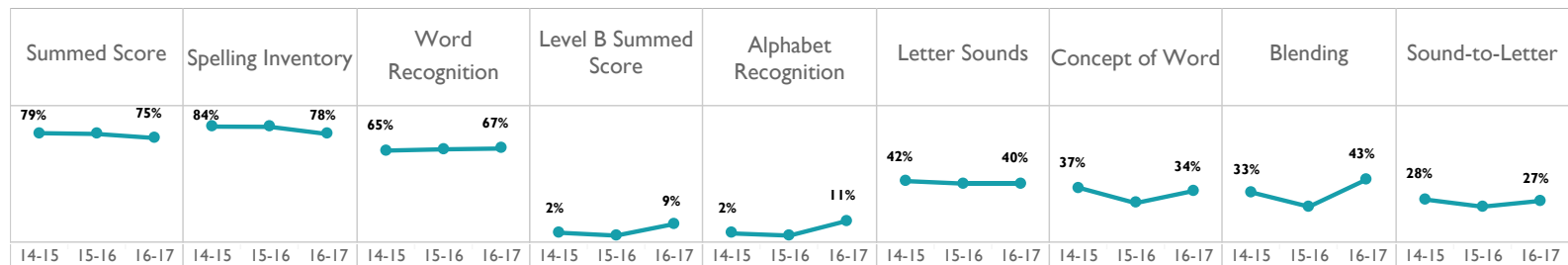
The percent of students meeting the summed score benchmark remained stable across the three-year time span among students identifying as white and students identifying as Hispanic or Latino. In 2016-17, over 70% of these students achieved the summed score benchmark. The rates among African American and Multiracial groups were more variable, but low participation numbers among these racial/ethnic groups may have affected the movement in rates across the three years.

Figure 13: Percent of Students Meeting the PALS I Español Summed Score Benchmarks by Other Student Demographic Groups



There were decreases in rates of students meeting the summed score benchmark in 2016-17 across all demographics, except among male and not low-income students. Gaps in PALS I Español achievement rates between demographic groups persisted across the three year time span.

Figure 14: Percent of Students Meeting the PALS I Español Subtest Benchmarks



There were higher rates of students meeting the Entry Level Summed Score and the Entry Level skill subtests (Spelling Inventory and Word Recognition) benchmarks than all other subtests, where less than 50% of students met benchmark scores.



Table 4: Percent of Students Meeting PALS-I Español Spring Score Benchmarks by Student Demographic Groups

	Entry Level Summed Score		Spelling Inventory		Word Recognition		Level B Summed Score		Alphabet Recognition		Concept of Word		Blending		Sound-to-Letter	
	16-17	3 Yr +/-	16-17	3 Yr +/-	16-17	3 Yr +/-	16-17	3 Yr +/-	16-17	3 Yr +/-	16-17	3 Yr +/-	16-17	3 Yr +/-	16-17	3 Yr +/-
Overall	75%	-4%	78%	-6%	67%	2%	9%	7%	11%	10%	34%	-3%	43%	10%	27%	-1%
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>																
Black or African American	58%	-14%	74%	-5%	47%	12%	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Hispanic/Latino	70%	-4%	71%	-8%	62%	2%	12%	9%	12%	10%	41%	4%	38%	4%	25%	-4%
Multiracial	88%	2%	88%	-5%	88%	8%	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
White	89%	-1%	93%	-1%	79%	0%	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
<i>Gender</i>																
Female	76%	-10%	80%	-9%	67%	-4%	11%	11%	11%	11%	44%	21%	47%	3%	27%	-4%
Male	75%	2%	76%	-3%	67%	7%	6%	3%	12%	9%	24%	-21%	40%	14%	27%	1%
<i>Low-income</i>																
Not Low-income	88%	2%	92%	1%	79%	4%	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Low-income	64%	-10%	67%	-13%	57%	-2%	11%	11%	14%	14%	31%	-8%	40%	8%	24%	-3%
<i>Special Education</i>																
Not Special Education	80%	-3%	83%	-5%	72%	3%	12%	9%	15%	13%	42%	9%	55%	14%	36%	4%
Special Education	25%	-13%	30%	-11%	21%	-9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	11%	-33%	13%	-5%	0%	-18%
<i>English Language Learner</i>																
Not ELL	81%	-6%	87%	-5%	72%	-2%	0%	-13%	8%	1%	27%	-10%	67%	29%	33%	21%
ELL	71%	-3%	73%	-7%	64%	4%	13%	13%	13%	13%	38%	1%	33%	1%	24%	-7%
<i>Advanced Learner</i>																
Not Adv. Learner	72%	-6%	76%	-8%	64%	-1%	9%	7%	11%	10%	34%	-3%	43%	10%	27%	-1%
Adv. Learner	100%	6%	100%	6%	97%	3%	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

\*Scores with “---” listed are suppressed because of the number of students with a recorded score is below 8.

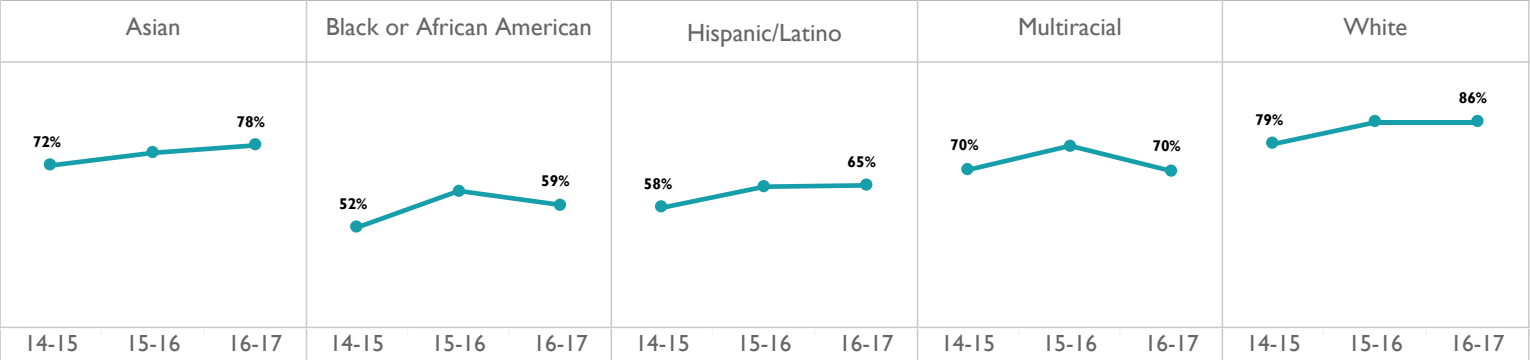
\*\*This table is divided into three sections that correspond with the three levels on the PALS assessment – Level A, Level B, and Level C

There were low numbers of students taking the Level B and Level C portion of the PALS I Español. There were gaps in rates of students meeting benchmark scores across the Entry level subtests, and the Level B and Level C tests, among comparable demographic groups where there were high participation numbers. The gap between English language learner and non-English language learner students decreased across nearly all subtests.



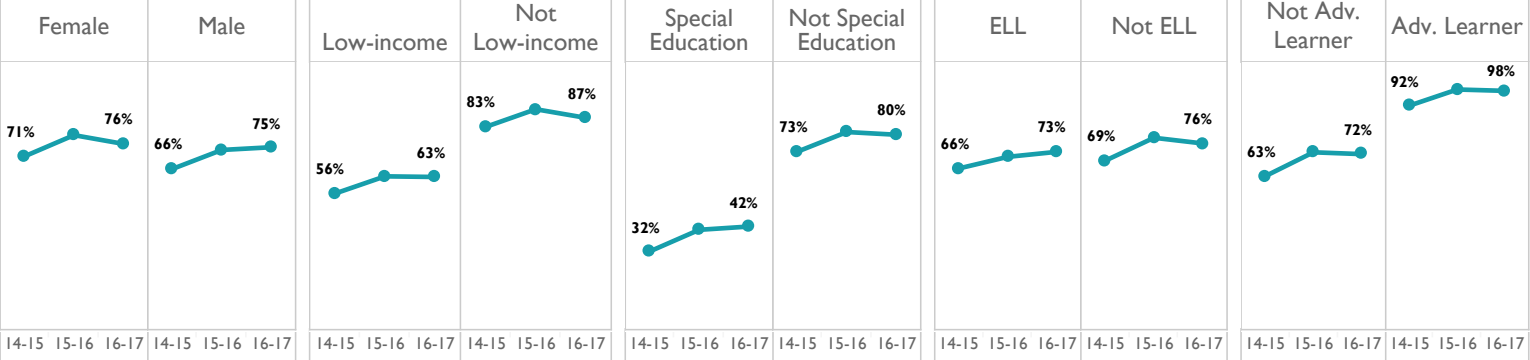
**PALS 2 English Results**

Figure 15: Percent of Students Meeting the PALS 2 English Summed Score Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity



The percent of students meeting the summed score benchmark increased or remained the same across the three-year time span among for all racial/ethnic groups. Students identifying as white had the highest rates of students meeting the summed score benchmark score, while students identifying as African-American had the lowest rates.

Figure 16: Percent of Students Meeting the PALS 2 English Summed Score Benchmarks by Other Student Demographic Groups



The percent of students meeting the summed score benchmark increased across all demographic groups. Gaps in PALS 2 English achievement rates between low-income and not low-income and students receiving special education services and non-special education students persisted across the three year time span. There was only a small gap in rates between English Language Learner and non-English Language Learner students.

The number of students taking the PALS 2 English and PALS 2 Español are small because students who meet the summed score benchmark on the fall iteration of the assessment are not tested in fall. While the number of students taking the PALS 2 English assessment in the spring were large enough to report on, the number of students taking the PALS 2 Español were too low to provide any meaningful analysis in this report.



## Appendix I: Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening

### Description

Researchers at the University of Virginia developed the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) as an assessment designed to identify students who are significantly behind in their acquisition of fundamental literacy skills and to provide educators a direct means of matching literacy instruction to the specific literacy needs of their students. PALS for kindergarten (PALS-K) 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (PALS 1-3) are scientifically-based reading assessments for classroom teachers to use with their students. The primary purpose is to identify students who perform below expectations. MMSD only administers PALS-K, PALS 1, and PALS 2.

In April 2012, the State of Wisconsin passed legislation requiring the use of an early literacy screener to all 5K students enrolled in a Wisconsin district or charter school. DPI selected PALS to fill this requirement for a statewide, universal screener. PALS-K aligns with both the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS). Additionally, PALS-K works in conjunction with the district's Response to Intervention (RTI) framework, providing a baseline for each student and target areas in which a student may need additional intervention.

### Tasks

PALS-K is composed of six required tasks and one optional task. The majority of the PALS-K screening is administered individually, but a few of the tasks can be given in small groups of five or fewer students. The tasks are:

- **Rhyme Awareness** - From three pictures, students are asked to identify a picture that rhymes with the target picture. There are a total of ten items for this task.
- **Beginning Sound Awareness** - From three pictures, students are asked to identify pictures that have the same beginning sound as the target picture. There are a total of ten items for this task.
- **Alphabet Knowledge** - Students are asked to name the 26 lower-case letters of the alphabet.
- **Letter Sounds** - Students are asked to produce the letter sounds of 23 upper-case letters of the alphabet, as well as three digraphs.
- **Spelling** - Students spell five consonant-vowel-consonant words, receiving credit for phonetically acceptable substitutions.
- **Concept of Word** - Students are taught a rhyme in advance of assessing their concept of word. PALS-K assesses a students' concept of word by using a picture sheet of the rhyme, as well as pointing and word identification in a small book, and a word list.
- **Word Recognition in Isolation (Optional)**- Students identify a list of words at the Pre-primer, Primer, and First-Grade level.

PALS 1-3 is composed of four Levels of test administration. The levels and their tasks are:

#### Entry Level (*Mandatory*)

- **Spelling** – Students are asked to spell lists of words representing phonics features necessary to be successful at each grade level.
- **Word Recognition in Isolation** – Students are given a list of word lists for each grade to gauge the students' progress.

#### Level A: Oral Reading in Context (*Optional in the Spring*)

- **Fluency** – PALS includes a fluency guide which assess students' oral reading fluency. Students' oral reading is scored on a 3-point scale according to their phrasing and expression.
- **Comprehension** – After reading a passage out loud, students answer a set of multiple-choice comprehension questions about the passage.

#### Level B: Alphabetics (*Only when a student read less than 75% of pre-primer word list*)

- **Alphabet Recognition** – Students' are asked to identify the 26 lower-case letters of the alphabet.
- **Letter Sounds** – Students' are asked to produce the sounds of 23 letters, as well as three digraphs



- **Concept of Word** – Students are asked to identify words in a memorized rhyme as well as use context to identify individual words within a given line of text.

Level C: Phonemic Awareness (*Only when a student has not met Level B Benchmark*)

- **Blending** – Students are asked to blend individual phonemes together to come up with a word. Items move from two-phoneme words to four-phoneme words.
- **Sound-to-Letter** – Students are asked to segment a word into phonemes and identify the letter that represents the beginning, middle, or ending phoneme in that word.

### **Benchmarks**

PALS includes a summed score, which is benchmarked to show whether a student has met a level of minimum competency. Meeting the summed score benchmark implies that the student has met a level of minimum competency, and not that the student is on grade level or will be at grade level by the end of the year. In addition, a student could meet the summed score benchmark, but not have met all individual task benchmarks or still be on the borderline in some tasks/skills. The benchmarks are set purposefully low to prevent over-identification of students in need of intervention.

### **Administration**

In 2015-16 academic year, MMSD administered PALS twice (fall and spring) to all students in 4K, kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. In addition, the district offered an optional mid-year screening in late January-early February.

Generally, it is recommended that classroom teachers administer the screening to each student, since they will be able to obtain the most accurate and informative results because of their relationship with the student. All PALS-K tasks, with the exception of the optional Word Recognition in Isolation task, are un-timed. Typically, it takes about 25-30 minutes per student to administer the complete assessment.

The Rhyme Awareness and Beginning Sound Awareness tasks are administered in small groups of five or fewer students. Students who perform below expectation in groups then take the test in an individual format. The Alphabet Knowledge, Letter Sounds, Concept of Word, and optional Word Recognition in Isolation tasks are administered individually. The Spelling task can be administered either in small groups or individually.

Since state law requires the administration of PALS as a universal screener for all 4K-2 students, there is no opt-out provision in the statute, and therefore schools and districts should make every effort to screen all students, including students with disabilities.

### **Uses of Results**

MMSD uses PALS for a variety of purposes, including:

1. To identify students who need additional literacy support;
2. To tailor instruction appropriately based on what students know and what they are ready to learn;
3. To monitor progress for schools and the district via the Data Dashboard; and
4. To set district goals and track progress on School Improvement Plans (SIPs).