

# A District-Wide Elementary Literacy Collaboration Model

Cohort Evidence from Grade 1–3 Reading Outcomes

---

Kirk Savage • Karen Allan • Nicole Driscoll • Joanne Robertson

*Chilliwack School District | University of the Fraser Valley*

**May 2026**

# About This Study

## What We Studied

Elementary Literacy Collaboration (ELC) is a district-wide initiative focused on improving early literacy through job-embedded professional learning, coaching, collaboration, and targeted student support.

We analyzed reading outcomes for ~2,700 students across three cohorts:

### Kindergarten 2015 Cohort (Grade 3 – 2018)

Pre-ELC (baseline)

### Kindergarten 2021 Cohort (Grade 3 - 2024)

First ELC cohort (post-COVID entry)

### Kindergarten 2022 Cohort (Grade 3 - 2025)

Second ELC cohort

*\*Analysis based on longitudinal PM Benchmark data from Grades 1–3.*

~2,700

Students Studied

Grades 1–3

Reading Data Collected

PM Benchmark<sup>®</sup>

Assessment Tool Used



Chilliwack  
School District

# What is Elementary Literacy Collaboration (ELC)?

## ELC Teachers (Literacy Specialists)

ELC Teachers are district-based literacy specialists who co-plan, model strategies, and work alongside classroom teachers. They stay current in their training through weekly collaboration and training sessions (Friday afternoon).

## Teacher Collaboration and Coaching: Job-Embedded Professional Learning

ELC provides ongoing, in-classroom professional learning and coaching from both our ELC Teachers and our Literacy Coordinators.

## Targeted Student Support

Students who need additional support receive small-group instruction aligned with classroom learning from our ELC teachers.

## Evidence-Based Approach

Instruction is grounded in research-backed methods: phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

**Pilot:** 2020–2022 (Grades 2–3, 10 schools)  
**District-Wide implementation:** 2022–present (all 21 elementary schools)

# PM Benchmark Grade Level Chart

GRADE	PERFORMANCE STANDARD	November	March	June
ONE	Emerging	1	1-5	1-10
	Developing	2-4	6-10	11-13
	Proficient	5-8+	11-13+	14-16+
TWO	Emerging	1-12	1-14	1-16
	Developing	13-14	15-16	17-18
	Proficient	15-16+	17-18+	19-20+
THREE	Emerging	1-18	1-19	1-21
	Developing	19-20	20-21	22
	Proficient	21-22+	22-23+	23-24+
FOUR	Emerging	23	24	25
	Developing	24	25	26
	Proficient	25	26	27
FIVE	Emerging	26	27	28
	Developing	27	28	29
	Proficient	28	29	30

## What does a PM Benchmark measure/observe?

- Reading behaviours
- Accuracy, comprehension, fluency and expression
- Reading growth over time

**It's one of our assessment tools used to help guide instruction and intervention.**

# Finding 1: ELC Cohorts Recovered to Comparable Grade 3 Outcomes

*ELC cohort students started Grade 1 behind. By Grade 3, they closed much of the gap.*



## Lower Start, Strong Recovery

ELC cohorts started lower after COVID disruptions but closed much of the gap by Grade 3.

## Instructional Consistency Maintained

Reading growth remained stable despite significant system disruption.

## Finding 2: ELC Cohorts Showed Stronger Growth

Students in both ELC cohorts demonstrated slightly higher year-over-year reading growth, with the largest differences emerging from Grade 2 to Grade 3.



**+0.81**

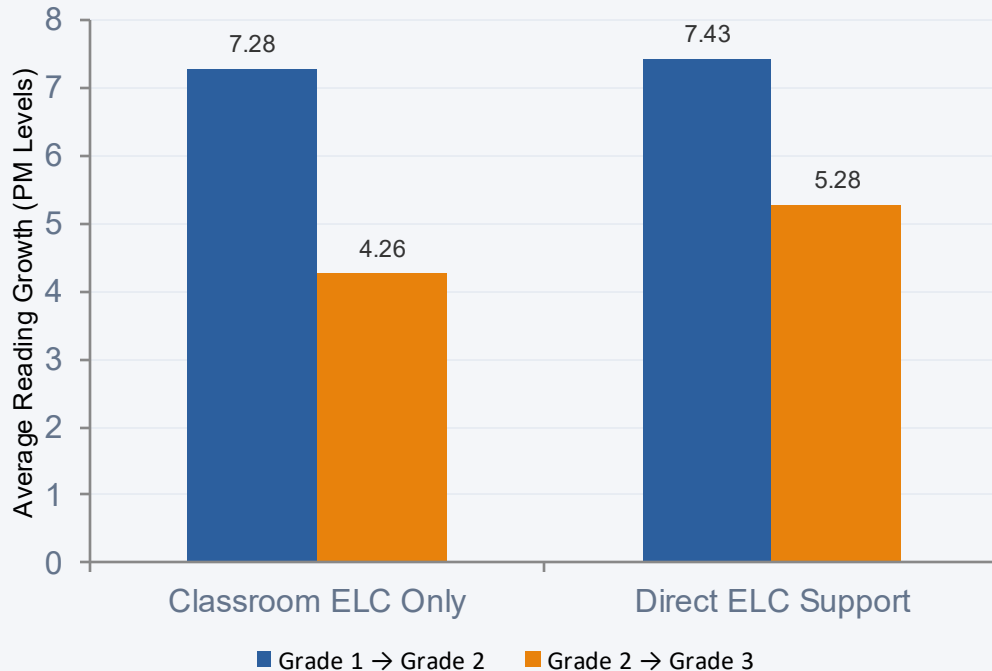
**2021 Cohort**  
Additional PM levels gained  
(Gr. 2→3) vs. 2015

**+0.69**

**2022 Cohort**  
Additional PM levels gained  
(Gr. 2→3) vs. 2015

# Finding 3: Direct ELC Support - Associated with Stronger Grade 3 Outcomes

Students who received direct ELC intervention demonstrated stronger Grade 2 – 3 growth and higher Grade 3 outcomes, even after accounting for where they started.



## Grade 3 Adjusted Scores

Classroom ELC Only:

**23.18 PM levels**

With Direct Support:

**23.54 PM levels**

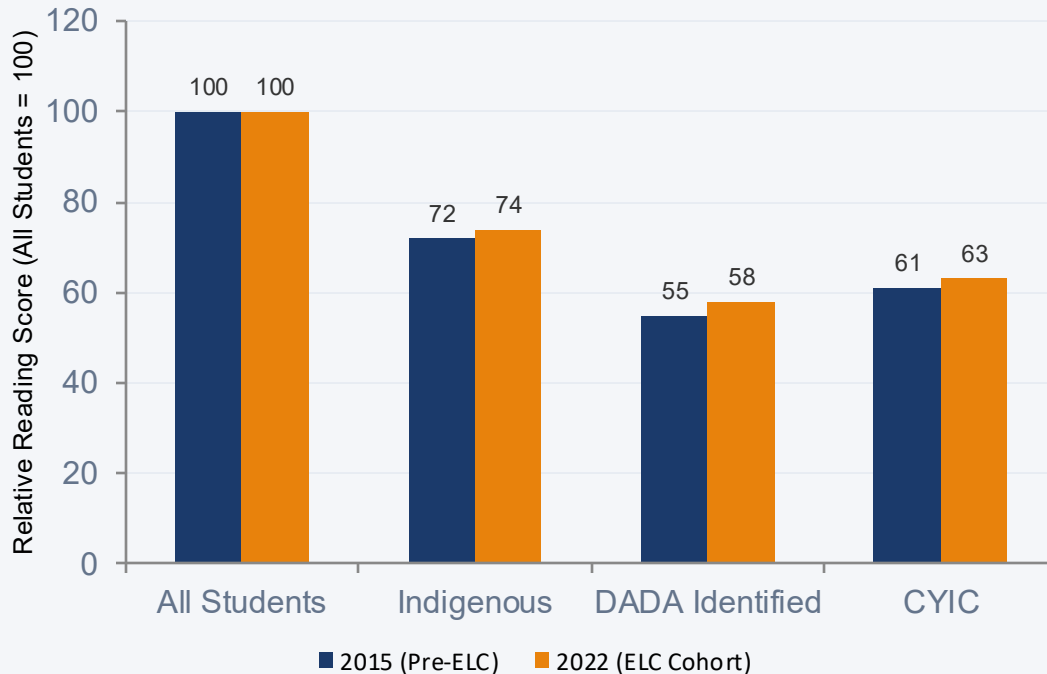
## What This Means

Students with the greatest needs showed stronger gains with direct ELC support.

The largest differences emerged in Grade 2 – 3, suggesting a cumulative effect over time.

# Finding 4: Growth Improved Across Groups - Equity Gaps Remained

While overall growth improved, achievement gaps for priority learners persisted across all three cohorts.



## Strengthen Tier 2/3 Supports

More intensive, targeted intervention for students with the greatest needs.

## Culturally Responsive Literacy

Deepen alignment between literacy instruction and Indigenous learners' needs.

## Assessment Translation

Ensure data leads to action plans for students with complex learning profiles.

\* Scores shown as a percentage of the cohort average (100 = overall cohort performance)

## **Classroom Teacher Perspective**

“As I reflect on this year since September, I realize just how impactful your presence has been in my classroom and in my own growth as an educator.

I have learned so much from watching you thoughtfully guide students through morphology, sentence structure, and higher-level language thinking in such accessible ways.

I feel more confident incorporating these skills throughout the day because of what you modeled and taught me.”

— Gr. 3/4 Teacher

## Learning Assistance Perspective

“Having a full-time teacher with a specific literacy focus made a huge difference in our ability to support students.

The ELC Teacher provided a fresh perspective and different approach. This helped students move past a reading stage where they had been ‘stuck’ and, in some cases, revealed that there were deeper issues needing attention.

The evidence of students graduating from needing ELC Teacher support demonstrates its effectiveness. It significantly contributes to the literacy growth of our students.”

— Elementary Learning Assistance Teacher

# What This Means - For Our Schools & District



## For Classrooms

Continue investing in coaching and collaboration with ELC Teachers - **linked to consistent student growth across cohorts**

Protect time for co-planning and reviewing student data - **critical for responsive instruction**

Consistent, high-quality Tier 1 literacy instruction remains the foundation - **supporting stable growth for all learners**

## For Schools

Progress monitoring cycles must be regular and actionable - **to identify and respond to student needs early**

Role clarity for ELC Teachers and Learning Support Staff is critical - **to strengthen Tier 2/3 impact**

Early literacy must be a shared school-wide priority - **not dependent on individual classrooms**

## For the District

Sustain ELC Teacher positions - **associated with improved growth and targeted intervention impact**

Align literacy strategic plans with equity strategy - **to address persistent gaps for priority learners**

Build on this research to examine longer-term outcomes (Grades 4–5) and predictive modelling

# Summary

---

**01** ELC-cohort students grew as much or slightly more than pre-COVID cohorts - despite starting lower.

---

**02** Year-over-year reading gains were slightly stronger in ELC years, particularly from Grade 2 to Grade 3

---

**03** Students who received direct ELC support showed stronger gains by Grade 3.

---

**04** Equity gaps remain. Additional targeted support is needed for priority learners.

---

**05** ELC is functioning as a system-level approach – supporting consistent growth and targeted intervention.



# Questions

*We welcome your thoughts, feedback, and questions.*