

Fall 2026 i-Ready Diagnostic Results, Grades K–8

Executive summary · Reading and mathematics · Data as of October 7, 2026

Prepared by Tim Schell, Director of Secondary Curriculum and Instruction · October 2026

The bottom line

- **WCSD students start the year well above the national middle.** The typical K–8 student scored at the 74.5th national percentile in mathematics and the 68th in reading. Every grade is above the national median (50th percentile) in both subjects.
- **The elementary placements look low, but they are not low.** This is the first fall i-Ready administration in grades K–4. In the fall, i-Ready's "on grade level" placement measures students against expectations for the whole grade, so few students nationally reach it so early in the year: only about 15% in K–4 mathematics and 29% in reading. WCSD K–4 students placed on grade level at about twice the national rate in mathematics (31%) and one and a half times the national rate in reading (43%). Fall K–4 results are a baseline; the first K–4 growth measure comes in winter.
- **Grades 5–8 reading has improved three falls in a row,** from 53% to 56% to 59% on grade level. Mathematics is steady at 54%, with fewer students two or more grade levels below (17% to 14%).
- **The same students are gaining ground over time.** Today's 7th graders moved from the 76th to the 84th national percentile in mathematics and from the 69th to the 74.5th in reading over two years. In 2025–26, 71% of students in grades 5–8 met their annual typical growth target in mathematics and 66% in reading, against about 50% nationally.
- **Three things need attention.** (1) Students who are two or more grade levels behind rarely catch up: of 5th and 6th graders in that group in fall 2024, 4% in mathematics and 14% in reading are on grade level two years later. (2) A gap between girls and boys in mathematics appears by grade 1, is widest in grades 4–5 and is largest in number and operations, where students who fall far behind are also the least likely to catch up. (3) Results for students who are economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, English learners, and Black and Hispanic/Latino students are well below the district as a whole.

How to read fall i-Ready results

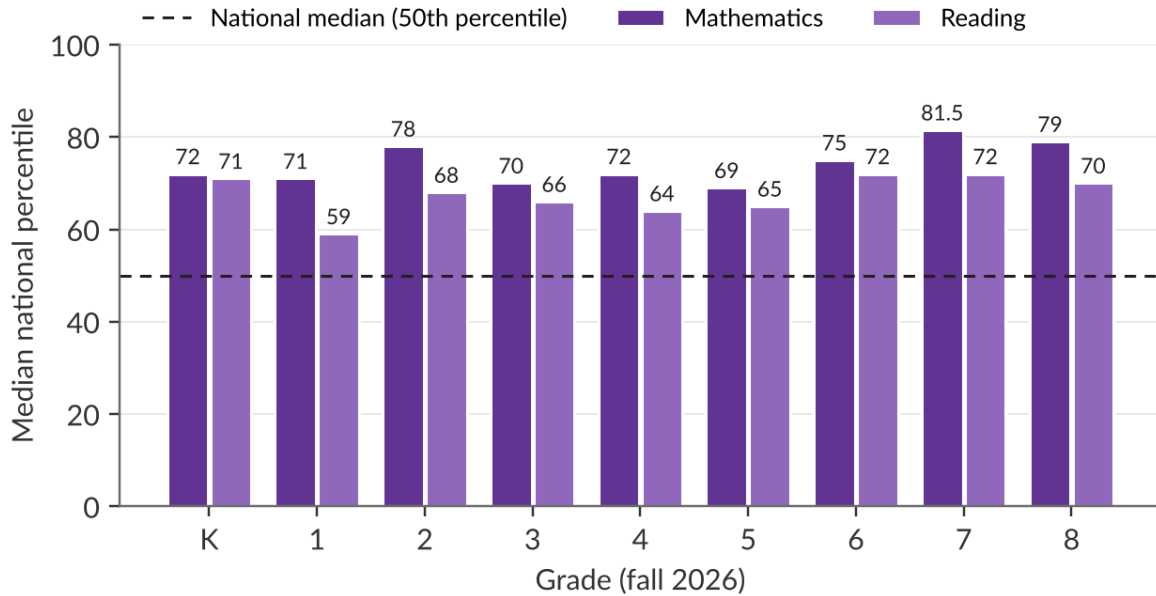
- **Placement level** compares a student with what is expected for the whole grade. "On grade level" in this brief means Early On or Mid or Above Grade Level. Curriculum Associates notes that a fall placement of 1 Grade Level Below is "performing consistently with students who have just begun their academic year"; it is a concern in winter or spring.
- **National percentile** compares a student with students in the same grade nationally at the same time of year; 50 is the national middle. It is the better way to compare grades, schools and years.
- **"Approximate national" rates** estimate the share of students nationally who place on grade level in the fall, from the national percentile that matches the lowest on-grade-level score in each grade. In grade 1 mathematics that score sits near the 90th percentile, so only about 10% of students nationally reach it.

Fall 2026 at a glance

- **Mathematics is a strength in every grade.** Medians run from the 69th percentile (grade 5) to the 81.5th (grade 7). About three in four K–8 students scored at or above the national median.
- **Grade 1 reading has the lowest median (59th percentile)** and the lowest share on grade level (22%). The grade 1 fall bar is especially high nationally (about 17% of students clear it), so the placement figure overstates the concern, but grade 1 reading is the place to watch in winter.

- **Grade 5 reading has the largest share two or more grade levels below (23%)** of any grade, and grade 8 reading is next (21%).
- **Participation was nearly complete.** About 96–99% of students enrolled in each grade had tested by October 7. Fewer than 1.5% of tests carried an i-Ready "rush" flag.

Figure 1. Median national percentile by grade, fall 2026



Values are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Fall 2026 results by grade: WCSD compared with the nation

Grade	Students tested	Math: % on grade level	Math: approx. national %	Math: median percentile	Reading: % on grade level	Reading: approx. national %	Reading: median percentile
Kindergarten	258	36	15	72	45	23	71
Grade 1	263	17	10	71	22	17	59
Grade 2	266	30	12	78	44	27	68
Grade 3	297	30	14	70	59	42	66
Grade 4	314	39	22	72	44	32	64
Grade 5	308	44	26	69	48	32	65
Grade 6	333	55	28	75	61	34	72
Grade 7	336	57	25	81.5	63	38	72
Grade 8	329	59	23	79	62	39	70
Grades K–4	1,398	31	15	72	43	29	65
Grades 5–8	1,306	54	25	76	59	36	70
All K–8	2,704	42	20	74.5	51	32	68

Students tested is for mathematics; reading counts differ by at most two students per grade. Approximate national % for grade groups is weighted by the number tested in each grade.

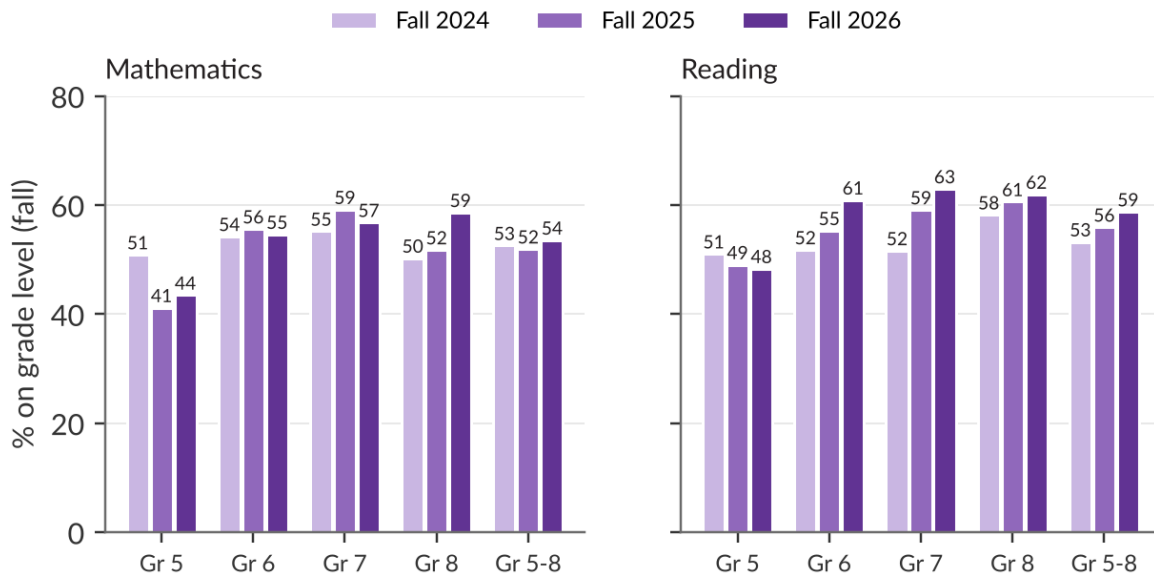
Table 2. Fall 2026 results by school

School	Students tested	Math: % on grade level	Math: median percentile	Reading: % on grade level	Reading: median percentile
Arboretum Elementary (K–4)	408	33	75.5	46	68
Heritage Elementary (K–4)	497	32	71	42	62
Prairie Elementary (K–4)	493	28	71	42	64
Waunakee Intermediate (5–6)	641	49	72	55	70
Waunakee Community Middle (7–8)	665	58	81	63	71

Elementary and secondary percentages on grade level are not directly comparable because the fall bar is higher in the early grades (see Table 1). Differences among the three elementary schools are modest and partly reflect who enrolls at each school.

Grades 5–8: three-year trends

Grades 5–8 have taken i-Ready three times a year since 2024–25, so fall 2026 can be compared with the two previous falls. Each grade is a different group of students each year (a "snapshot" comparison); the next section follows the same students over time.

Figure 2. Percent of students on grade level in the fall, grades 5–8, 2024 to 2026


Values are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Grades 5–8 fall results, 2024 to 2026

Subject and grade	% on GL 2024	% on GL 2025	% on GL 2026	% 2+ below 2024	% 2+ below 2025	% 2+ below 2026	Median %ile 2024	Median %ile 2025	Median %ile 2026
Math, grade 5	51	41	44	16	15	16	75	66	69
Math, grade 6	54	56	55	16	16	11	75	74	75
Math, grade 7	55	59	57	15	12	12	78.5	81	81.5
Math, grade 8	50	52	59	19	17	16	77	78	79
Math, grades 5–8	53	52	54	17	15	14	76	75	76
Reading, grade 5	51	49	48	22	21	23	68	67	65
Reading, grade 6	52	55	61	19	18	15	68	68	72
Reading, grade 7	52	59	63	26	19	16	63	72	72

Subject and grade	% on GL 2024	% on GL 2025	% on GL 2026	% 2+ below 2024	% 2+ below 2025	% 2+ below 2026	Median %ile 2024	Median %ile 2025	Median %ile 2026
Reading, grade 8	58	61	62	22	24	21	68	69	70
Reading, grades 5–8	53	56	59	22	21	19	67	69	70

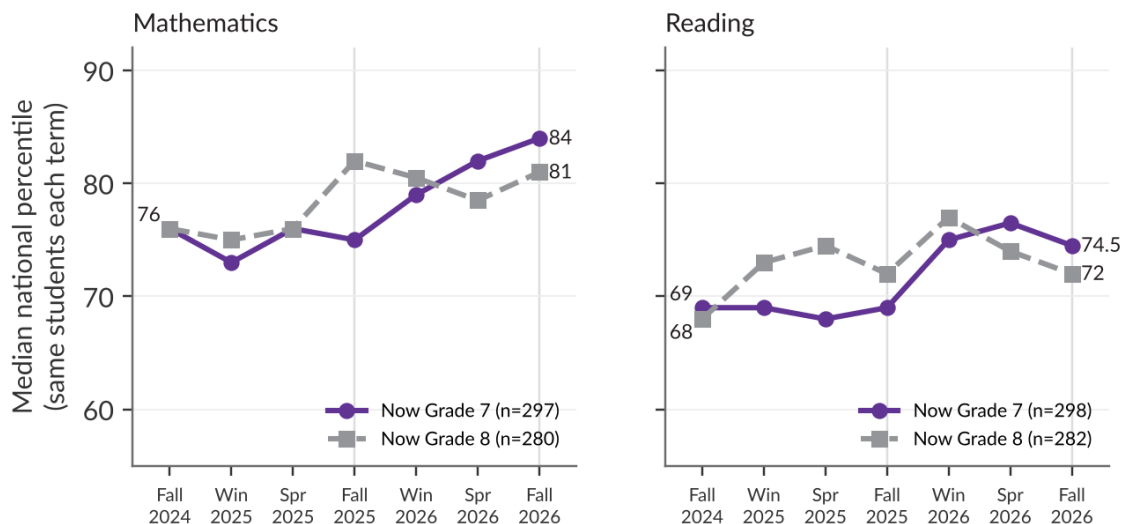
GL = grade level. "2+ below" = two or more grade levels below. Each column is the fall administration of that school year.

- **Reading gains are broad.** Grades 6, 7 and 8 each placed more students on grade level in fall 2026 than in fall 2024, and the share two or more grade levels below fell in grades 6 and 7. Grade 5 reading has not improved (51% to 48%).
- **Grade 5 mathematics is lower than in 2024** (51% on grade level then; 41% and 44% since). These students arrive from the elementary schools, and the pattern matches the decline in grade 4 Forward mathematics results the district has documented. **Grade 8 mathematics is up** (50% to 59%).
- **Growth during the year is strong.** Typical growth is the median gain for students nationally at the same grade and starting level, so about half of students meet it. In 2025-26, 71% of WCSD students in grades 5–8 met it in mathematics (up from 64% in 2024-25) and 66% in reading (up from 63%). Grade 6 was highest (82% mathematics, 75% reading); grade 7 mathematics was lowest (59%).

Grades 5–8: the same students over time

This section follows students who took every i-Ready diagnostic from fall 2024 through fall 2026: 297 students now in grade 7 and 280 now in grade 8 (mathematics; reading counts are similar). Between 85% and 92% of the students in each starting group were tested all seven times.

Figure 3. Median national percentile of the same students, fall 2024 to fall 2026



Values, fall 2024 to fall 2026 (seven tests). Math: grade 7 (n=297) 76, 73, 76, 75, 79, 82, 84; grade 8 (n=280) 76, 75, 76, 82, 80.5, 78.5, 81. Reading: grade 7 (n=298) 69, 69, 68, 69, 75, 76.5, 74.5; grade 8 (n=282) 68, 73, 74.5, 72, 77, 74, 72.

- **Both groups gained ground against the nation in both subjects.** The one-year groups tell the same story: students who were in grade 5 last year moved from the 66th to the 75th percentile in mathematics and from the 66.5th to the 72nd in reading.
- **The move from the Intermediate School to the Middle School did not cost ground in mathematics.** Today's 7th graders were at the 82nd percentile last spring and the 84th this fall. Reading eased slightly (76.5th to 74.5th).
- **Placements always drop from spring to fall, and that is expected.** For example, 76% of today's 8th graders were on grade level in mathematics last spring and 62% this fall. Students are now measured against the next grade's expectations. Their percentiles held steady over the summer, which is the better signal.

Table 4. Where students who started in each placement group are two years later

Placement in fall 2024 (grades 5–6)	Students	% on grade level, fall 2026	% 1 below, fall 2026	% 2+ below, fall 2026
Math: On grade level	320	90	10	0
Math: 1 grade level below	190	37	53	10
Math: 2+ grade levels below	85	4	38	59
Reading: On grade level	316	89	8	3
Reading: 1 grade level below	173	50	34	16
Reading: 2+ grade levels below	108	14	30	56

Same students, fall 2024 (grades 5–6) to fall 2026 (grades 7–8). Rows may not add to exactly 100% because of rounding.

- **Students on grade level stay there** (about 9 in 10), and about half of those 1 grade level below in reading (50%) and over a third in mathematics (37%) have reached grade level.
- **Students two or more grade levels below mostly stay far behind.** About 59% two or more grade levels behind in mathematics and 56% in reading are still two or more grade levels below two years later. The one-year view (fall 2025 to fall 2026, grades 5–7) is the same. Their percentiles did rise (the lowest-scoring quarter of these students in fall 2024 moved from the 34th to the 48th percentile in mathematics), but some of that rise is the normal tendency of very low scores to move toward the middle on retesting.

Results by student group

Table 5. Fall 2026 results by student group, grades K–8

Student group	Students tested (math)	Math: % on grade level	Math: median percentile	Reading: % on grade level	Reading: median percentile
All students, K–8	2,704	42	74.5	51	68
Economically disadvantaged	130	16	41	23	41.5
Not economically disadvantaged	2,574	43	75	52	69
Students with disabilities	298	18	44	23	41
Students without disabilities	2,406	45	77	54	70
English learners (grades 4–8)*	64	17	38	11	28
Not English learners (grades 4–8)	1,556	52	76	58	70
Female	1,276	34	69	52	69
Male	1,427	49	79	50	67
Asian	94	61	90	69	84.5
Black or African American	54	26	54.5	26	49
Hispanic or Latino	224	26	56	36	54
Two or more races	150	37	68	48	64
White	2,176	43	76	52	69

Group membership is from 2026–27 district enrollment records. *English learner status is from the spring 2026 state assessment file and current enrollment records, which reliably identify English learners only in grades 4–8. American Indian/Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students (fewer than 10 tested) are included in totals but not shown.

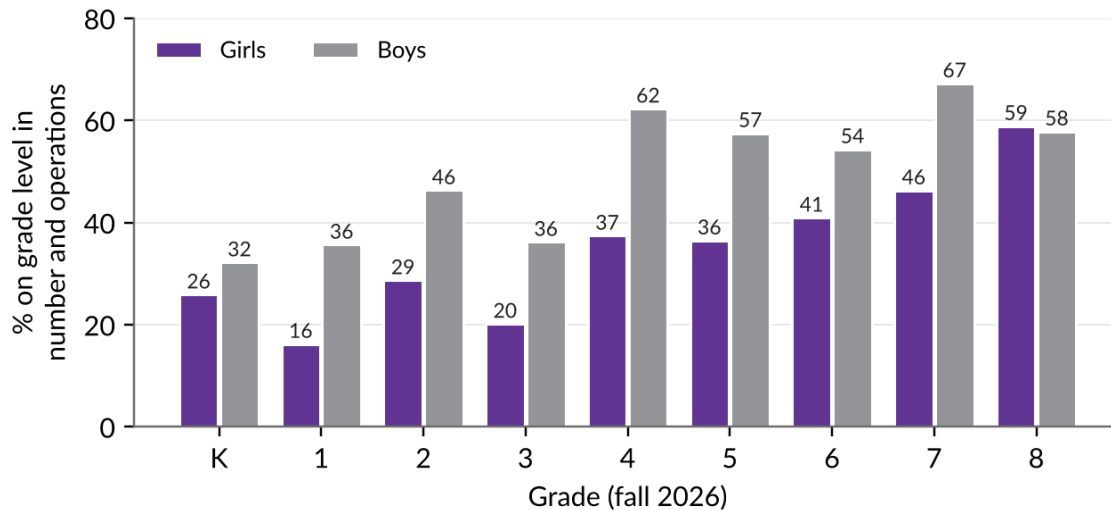
- **Gaps by group are large and consistent across subjects.** Medians for economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities and English learners are in the 28th to 44th percentile range, against the 74.5th (mathematics) and 68th (reading) for all students. These groups are small (64 to 299 students), so individual grades should be read with care.

- **The mathematics gap between girls and boys starts early.** The median for girls is below boys' in every grade from 1 through 8 and is widest in grades 4 and 5 (girls at the 61st and 60th percentiles; boys at the 78th and 78.5th). It narrows by grade 8 (78th versus 80.5th). Girls lead slightly in reading (69th versus 67th). The next section looks at the mathematics gap by domain.

Mathematics by domain: a closer look at number and operations

i-Ready mathematics reports four domains: number and operations, algebra and algebraic thinking, measurement and data, and geometry. Each domain score rests on fewer questions than the overall score, so the patterns below matter more than any single figure.

Figure 4. Percent on grade level in number and operations, girls and boys, fall 2026



Values are listed in Table 6.

Table 6. Gap between girls and boys in the percent on grade level, by domain, fall 2026

Grade	Girls / boys tested	Overall	Number and operations	Algebra and algebraic thinking	Measurement and data	Geometry	Number and operations: girls / boys %
Kindergarten	112 / 146	+3	-6	+1	+3	+9	26 / 32
Grade 1	148 / 115	-13	-19	-6	-9	-16	16 / 36
Grade 2	129 / 136	-17	-18	-13	-21	-9	29 / 46
Grade 3	134 / 163	-14	-16	-14	-12	-5	20 / 36
Grade 4	131 / 183	-26	-25	-13	-17	-7	37 / 62
Grade 5	148 / 160	-25	-21	-16	-18	-13	36 / 58
Grade 6	149 / 184	-14	-13	-20	-11	-14	41 / 54
Grade 7	162 / 174	-16	-21	-9	-17	-6	46 / 67
Grade 8	163 / 166	-1	+1	-1	-6	-1	59 / 58

Percentage points: girls minus boys (- means girls are lower). One student with no recorded sex is excluded.

- **The gap appears in every domain, and is largest in number and operations in the early grades.** Measured in standard units that adjust for each grade's spread of scores, the K-4 gap is 0.33 in number and operations, 0.27 in measurement and data, 0.21 in algebraic thinking and 0.07 in geometry. In kindergarten, girls are even with or ahead of boys in three domains but already 6 points behind in number and operations. By grade 4 the number and operations gap is 25 points (37% of girls on grade level, 62% of boys). In grades 5-8 the gap is similar across number and operations, algebraic thinking and measurement, and smallest in geometry.

- **In grades 5–8, the gap arrives from elementary school; whether it then narrows is mixed.** Girls entering grade 5 placed on grade level in number and operations at 47% in fall 2024, 33% in fall 2025 and 36% in fall 2026 (boys: 57%, 50%, 58%). Following the same students from fall 2024 to fall 2026, the number and operations gap all but closed for today's 8th graders (from 0.32 to 0.09 standard units) but widened for today's 7th graders (from 0.25 to 0.35). In 2025–26, girls in grades 5–8 gained 24 number and operations scale-score points from fall to spring, compared with 21 for boys.
- **Weak number and operations skills show no clear extra slowdown, but they are the hardest deficit to close.** Students in grades 5–8 who are weak in number and operations follow lower paths, because they tend to be lower overall. Compared with students who started at the same overall level, a weak number and operations score (two or more grade levels below, or weak relative to the student's other domains) did not significantly predict slower growth over one or two years (the estimates were small and could not be distinguished from zero). The deficit itself persists, however: of 5th and 6th graders two or more grade levels below in number and operations in fall 2024 (60 students), 62% were still that far behind in that domain two years later, against 44–50% in the other domains, and 7% were on grade level overall. The one-year view is similar (57% versus 45–50%).

What we will do next

- **Report fall results to families and staff with percentiles alongside placements**, so that a K–4 "1 Grade Level Below" fall placement is not read as a deficiency.
- **Review intervention for students two or more grade levels below**, starting with grade 5 reading and grades 5–8 mathematics: who is served, how often, with what program, and how progress is monitored between diagnostics.
- **Strengthen number and operations in grades K–4, with attention to girls**, and give students two or more grade levels below in number and operations targeted, sustained number-sense intervention in grades 5–8.
- **Watch grade 1 reading and grade 5 reading at winter.** The winter diagnostic (mid-November through early March) will give the first K–4 growth results.
- **Use i-Ready as an early indicator for the Board's state report card goal** by linking spring i-Ready results to spring Forward Exam results for the same students.

Questions the District may wish to ask

- What share of students who start the year two or more grade levels below should we expect to reach grade level within a year, and how will we know whether intervention is working before spring?
- What in K–4 number and operations instruction might explain why girls start behind, and what will change?
- What growth targets (typical and stretch) will we set for winter and spring, and how will they be reported back to the Board?

About the data

Sources. i-Ready Diagnostic results for reading and mathematics exported October 7, 2026 (fall 2026–27: 2,704 mathematics and 2,706 reading results in grades K–8, completed 09/10 to 10/06/2026), the full-year 2024–25 and 2025–26 i-Ready files for grades 5–8, 2026–27 district enrollment records, and the spring 2026 Wisconsin Forward Exam student file. The fall testing window runs through November 15, so a small number of students may still test.

Rules and privacy. One result per student per testing window (the most recent completed test). "On grade level" = Early On or Mid or Above Grade Level. Medians are of national percentile ranks. Trajectories include only students tested in every window shown. Approximate national rates are estimated from i-Ready national percentiles in WCSD's own results, not published by Curriculum Associates. Domain comparisons between girls and boys use each grade's own spread of scale scores. All figures are aggregates; groups with fewer than 10 students are not shown.

AI assistance

This brief was drafted with AI assistance (Claude, Anthropic), including data processing, statistical computation, chart production and narrative drafting. It was reviewed and approved by Tim Schell, Director of Secondary Curriculum and Instruction, Waunakee Community School District.

Environmental impact

Producing this brief and its companion presentation with AI assistance, including the follow-up domain analysis, used an estimated 0.3 kilowatt-hours of data-center electricity (plausible range 0.15–0.5 kWh), or roughly 110 grams of CO₂-equivalent on the average U.S. grid. That is about the same as 3 hours and 55 minutes of Netflix streaming, or driving a car that gets 30 miles per gallon about three-eighths of a mile. These are order-of-magnitude estimates: AI providers do not publish per-session energy use. The figures assume about 0.077 kWh per hour of video streaming (International Energy Agency), 8,887 g CO₂ per gallon of gasoline (U.S. EPA) and about 0.37 kg CO₂ per kWh of U.S. grid electricity.