



Spring 2026 State Assessment Results

Three-year trend, 2023-24 to 2025-26, with Dane County, peer group, and statewide comparisons

Forward Exam • PreACT Secure • ACT • DLM

Board of Education • October 2026

Amy Fassbender, Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction

Tim Schell, Director of Secondary Curriculum and Instruction

What the state assessments measure

Four assessments, grades 3–11, reported on one DPI scale

1

Forward Exam

Grades 3–8 — ELA & Mathematics every grade; Science in 4 & 8; Social Studies in 4, 8 & 10

2

PreACT Secure

Grades 9–10 — ELA & Mathematics

3

ACT with Writing

Grade 11 — ELA, Mathematics & Science

4

Dynamic Learning Maps

Grades 3–11 — Alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities

How results are reported

- Metric: percent of tested students scoring Meeting or Advanced — DPI's definition of proficient.
- Population: Full Academic Year (FAY) district students, the same group used for state report cards.
- Order: district → grade → school → student groups.
- Comparisons (slides 15–17) use DPI's public district files for all enrolled students.
- Small groups (fewer than 10 tested) are suppressed.

2025-26 at a glance

Percent of FAY district students at Meeting or Advanced, all tested grades

ELA

75.6%

▲ +2.3 pts vs. 2024-25
▲ +3.9 pts vs. 2023-24

Mathematics

76.9%

▲ +2.6 pts vs. 2024-25
▲ +1.0 pts vs. 2023-24

Science

74.4%

▲ +5.1 pts vs. 2024-25
▲ +2.0 pts vs. 2023-24

Social Studies

81.2%

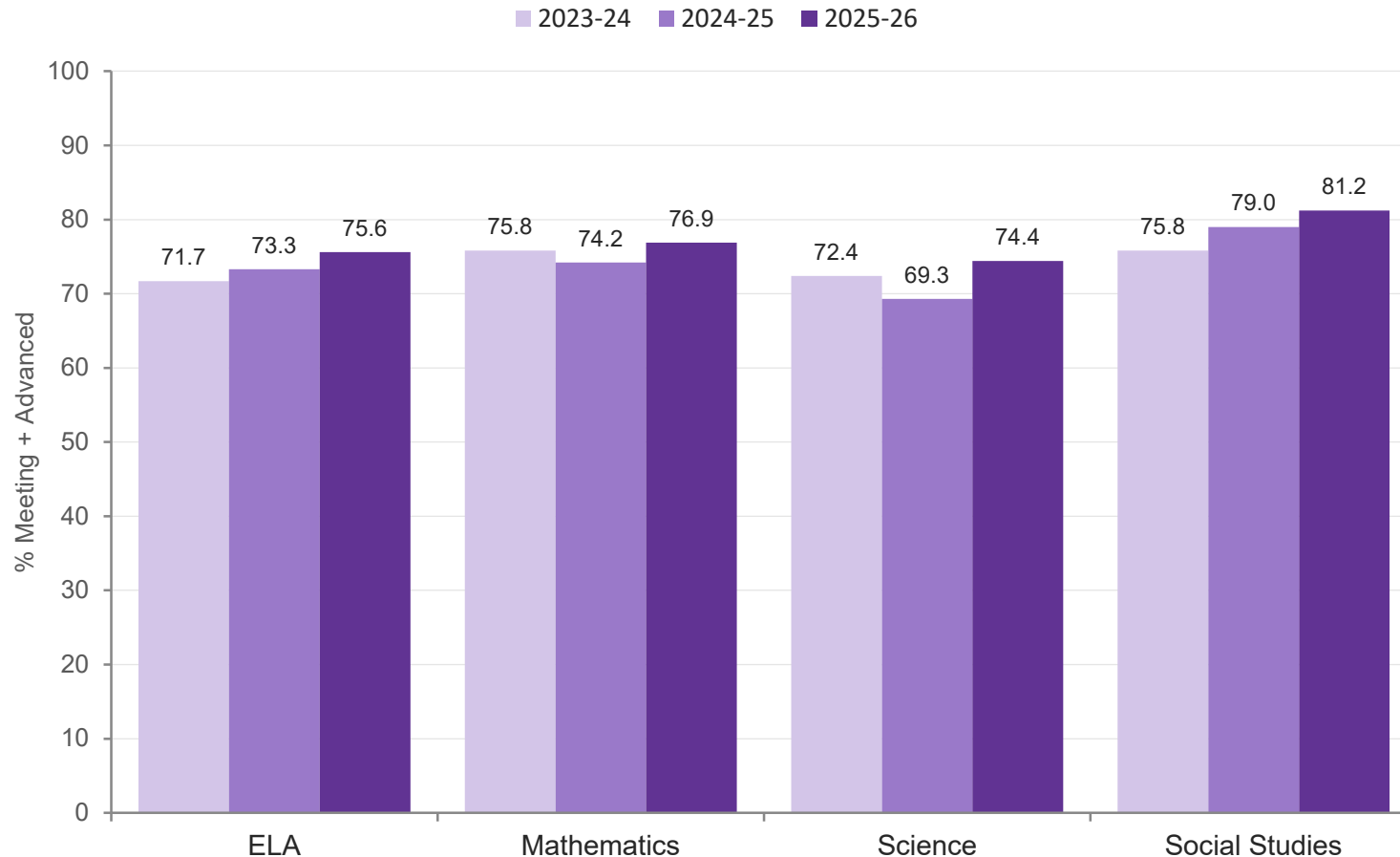
▲ +2.1 pts vs. 2024-25
▲ +5.4 pts vs. 2023-24

Gains in all four subjects. ELA and Social Studies are at three-year highs; Mathematics and Science recovered from 2024-25 dips to finish above 2023-24. Participation was 96–98% in every subject.

Growth is at the top. The Advanced share rose over three years in every subject: ELA 20% → 27%, Math 31% → 36%, Science 35% → 42%, Social Studies 41% → 50%.

Three-year trend by subject

District total, % Meeting + Advanced

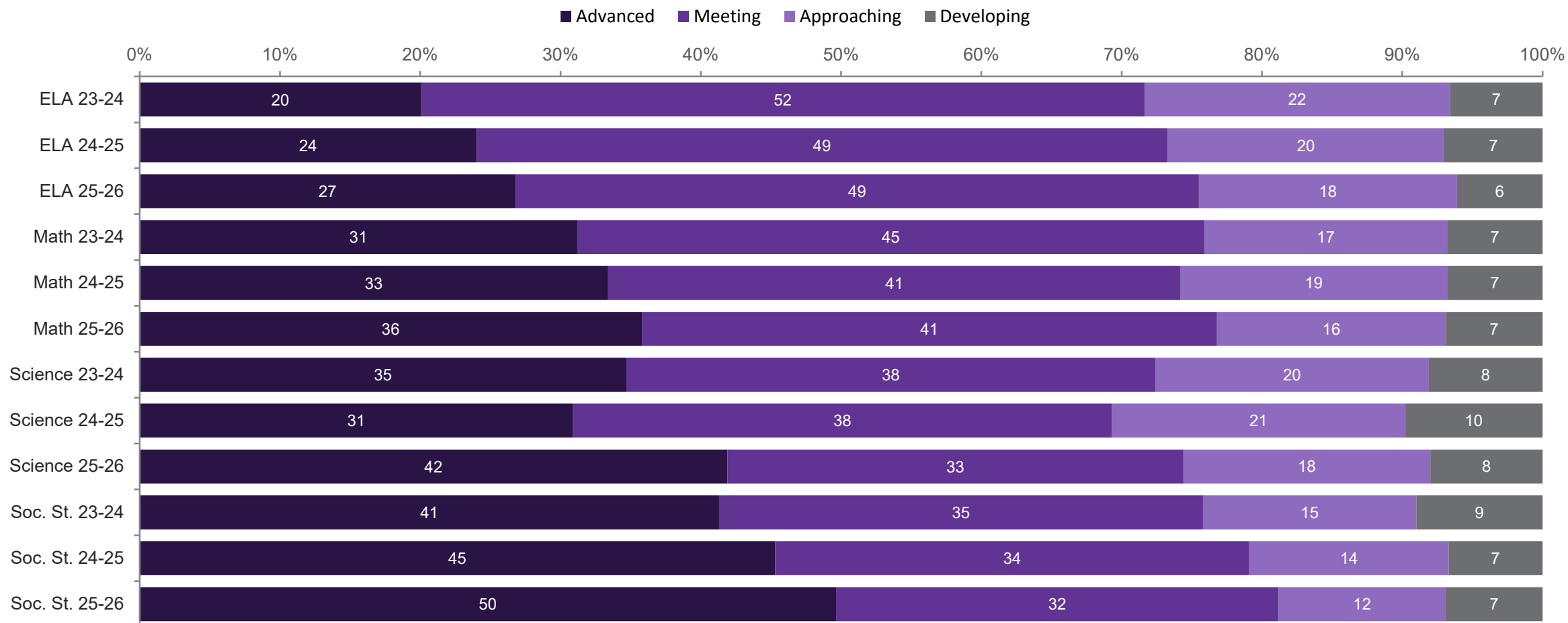


Reading the trend

- Social Studies: +5.4 over three years, the strongest climb.
- ELA: two consecutive gains; +3.9 since 2023-24.
- Mathematics & Science: 2024-25 dips reversed; both now above 2023-24.
- The 2024-25 dips in Math and Science were concentrated in one cohort (Grade 11) — see the grade slides.

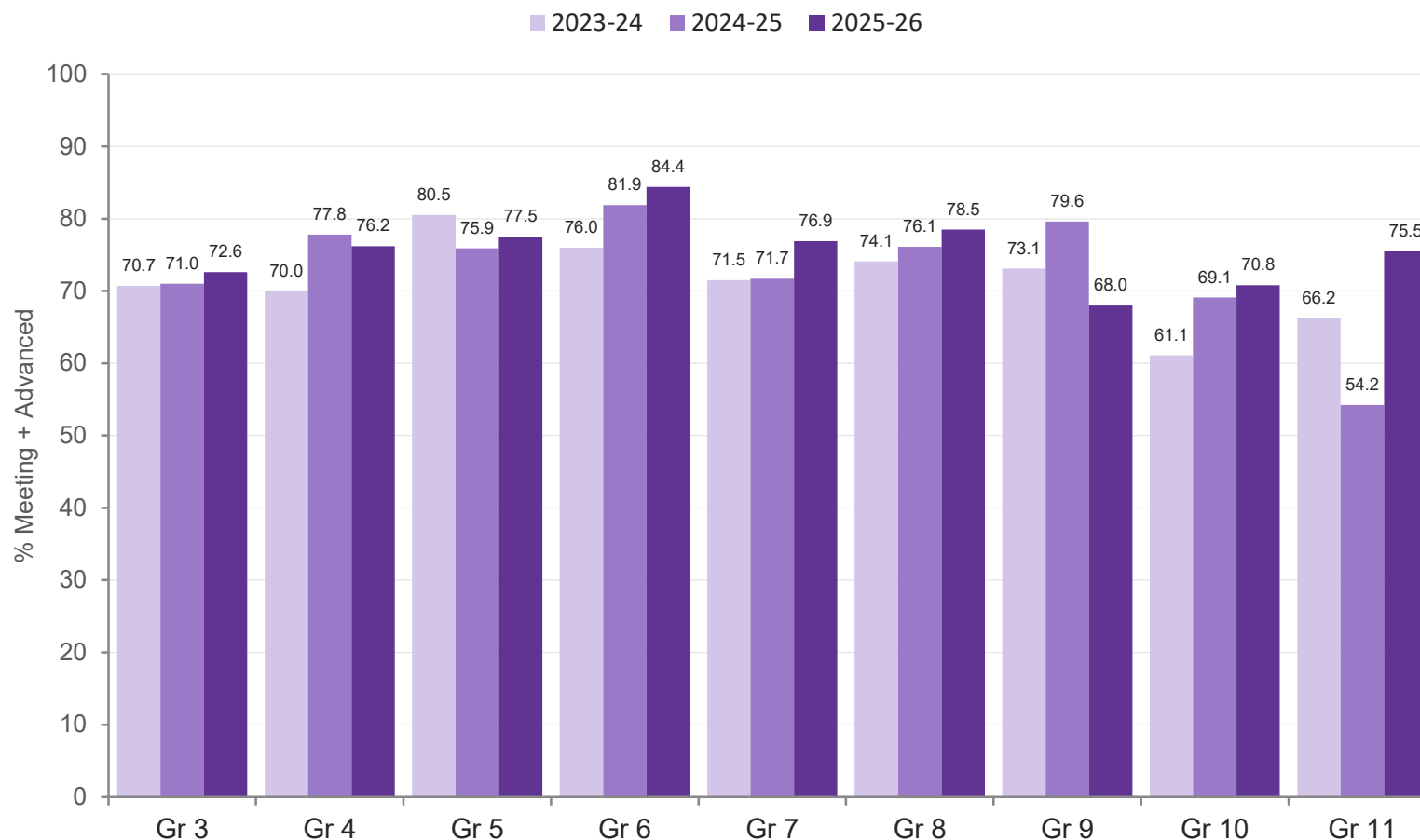
More students reaching Advanced

Share of tested students at each DPI level, district total



ELA by grade

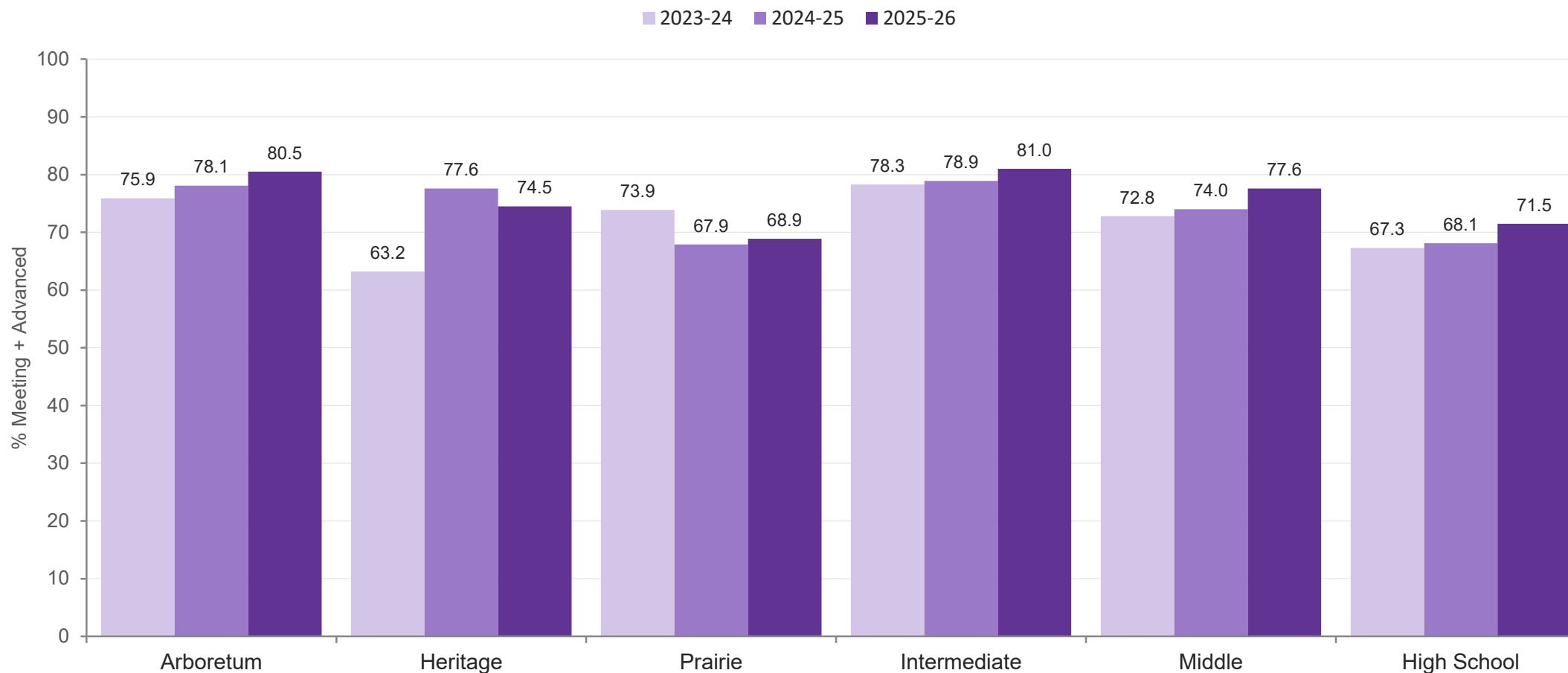
% Meeting + Advanced • Forward (3–8), PreACT Secure (9–10), ACT (11)



- Grade 6 (84.4%) is the highest grade-level result in any subject
- Grades 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 all improved; Grade 4 eased 1.6 after a big 2024-25 gain
- Grade 11 ACT rebounded 21 points after a low 2024-25 cohort
- **Monitor: Grade 9 fell 11.6 points to 68.0% — lowest ELA grade**

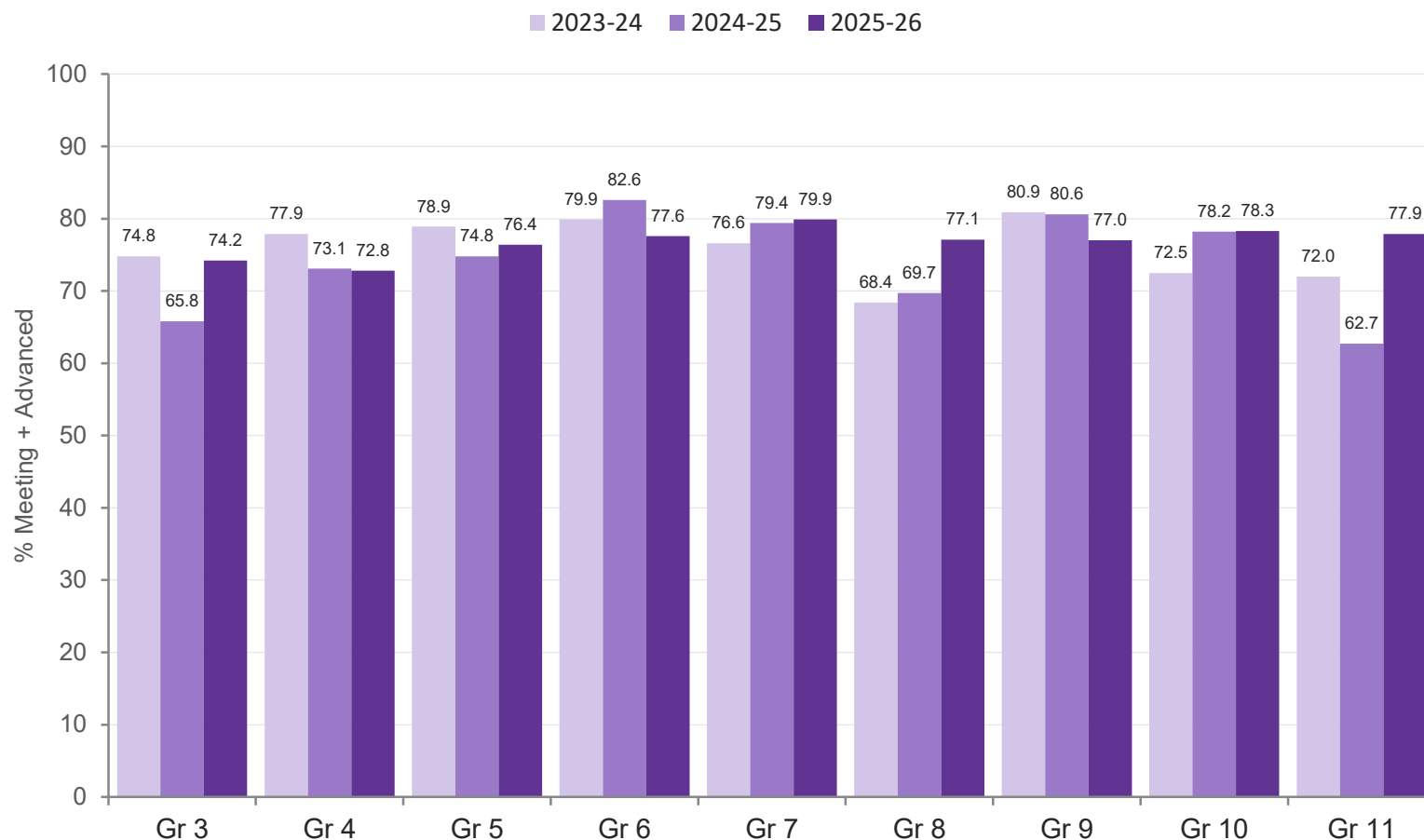
ELA by school

% Meeting + Advanced • Elementary results reflect grades 3–4



Mathematics by grade

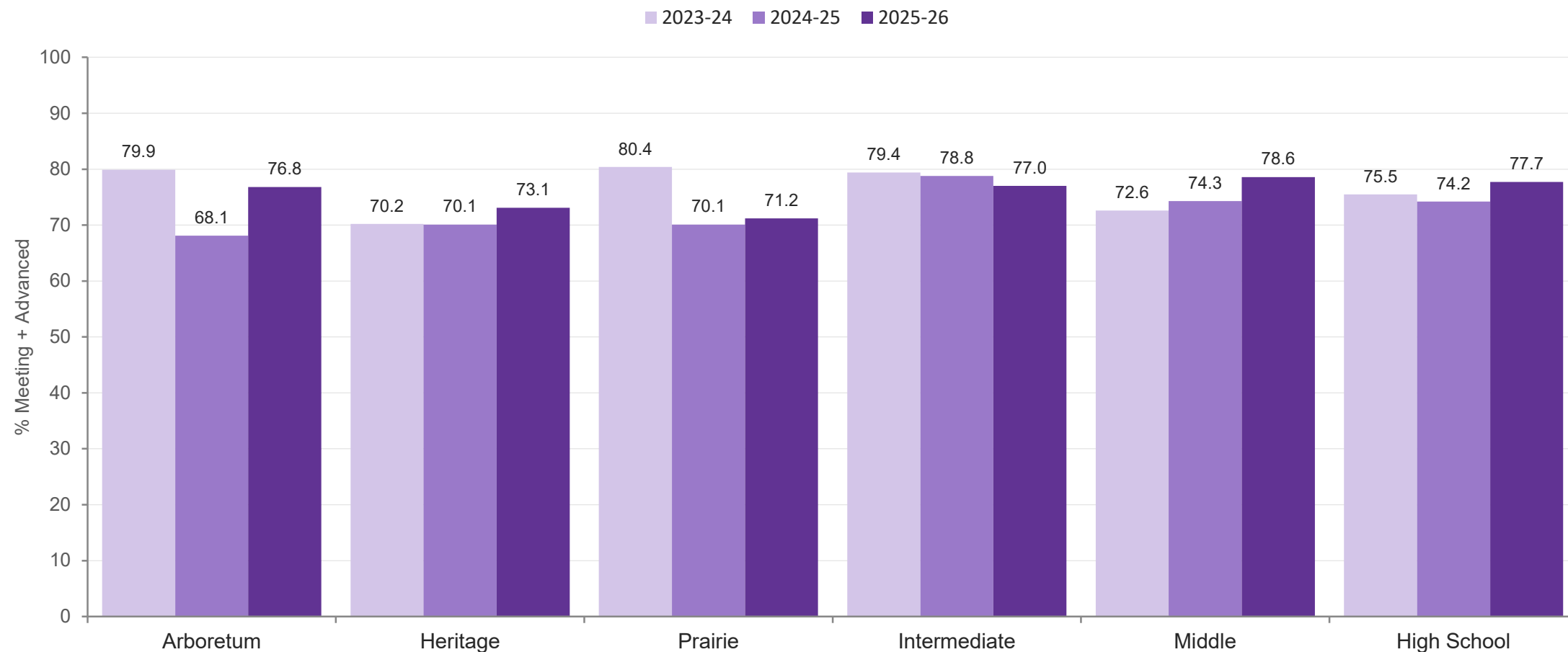
% Meeting + Advanced • Forward (3–8), PreACT Secure (9–10), ACT (11)



- Grade 8 up 7.4 to 77.1% — from lowest Forward grade to a three-year high
- Grade 3 recovered 8.4 points to 74.2%
- Grade 11 ACT rebounded 15 points to 77.9%
- **Monitor: Grade 6 down 5.0 to 77.6%; Grade 9 down 3.6; Grade 4 still 5 below 2023-24**

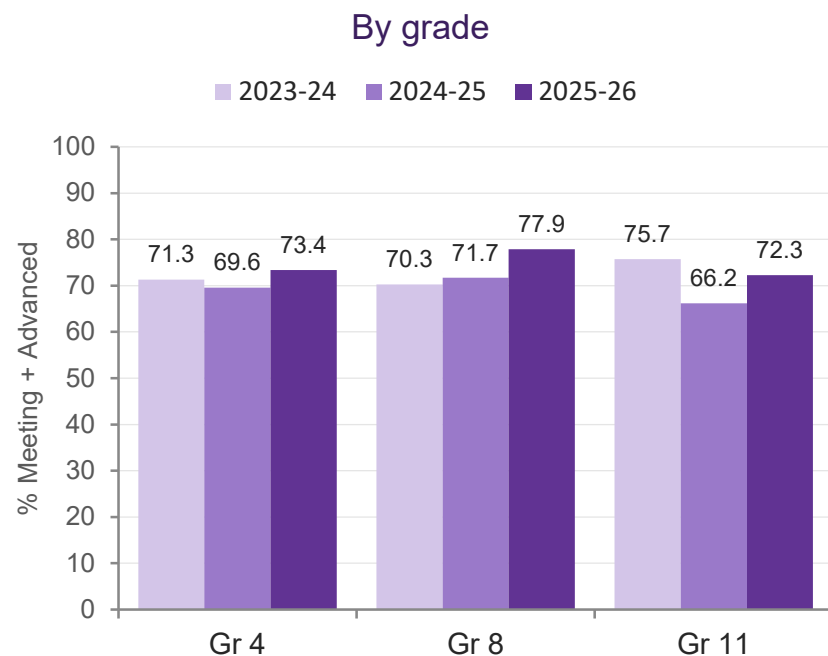
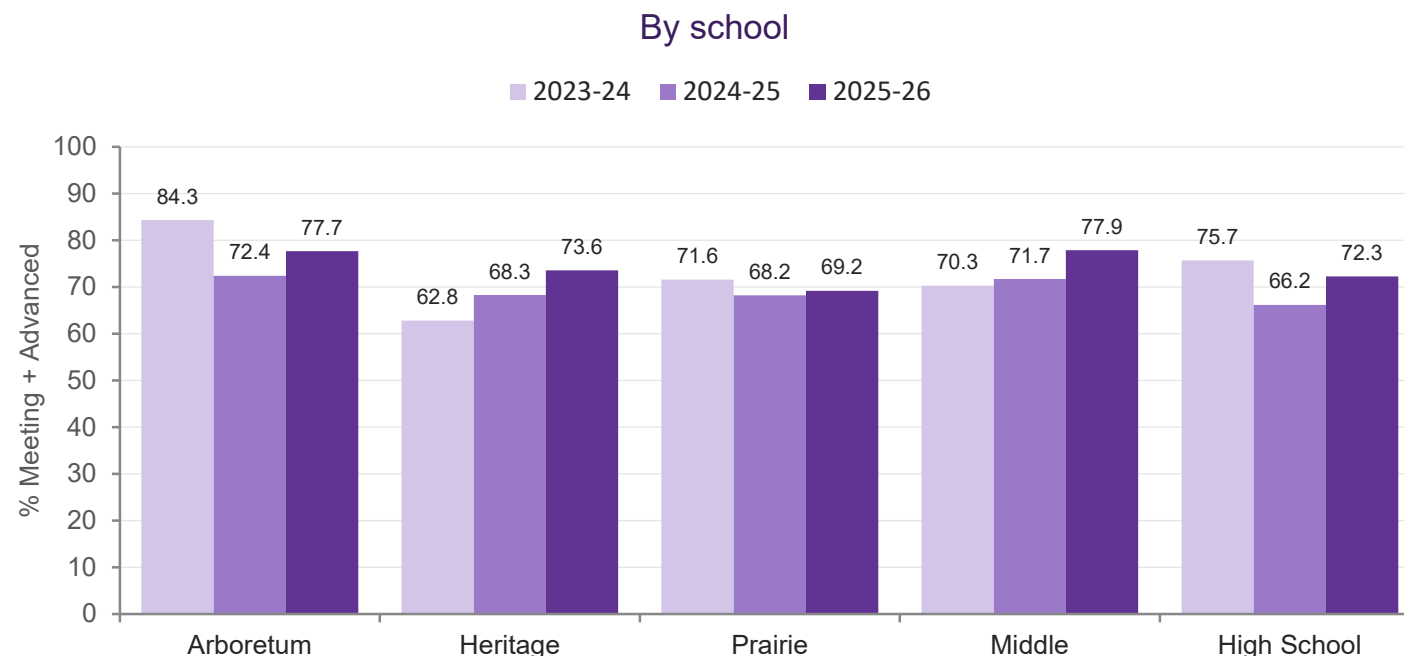
Mathematics by school

% Meeting + Advanced • Elementary results reflect grades 3–4



Science

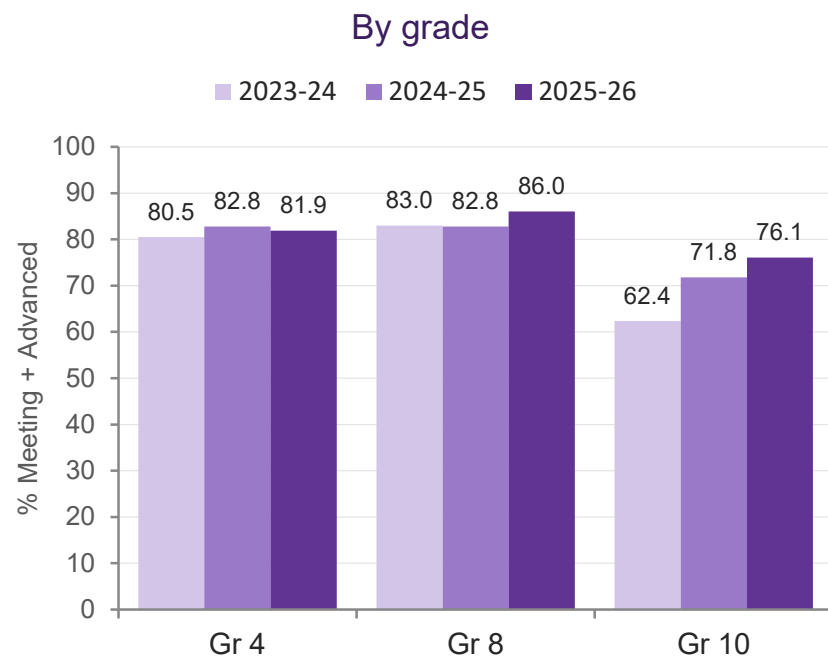
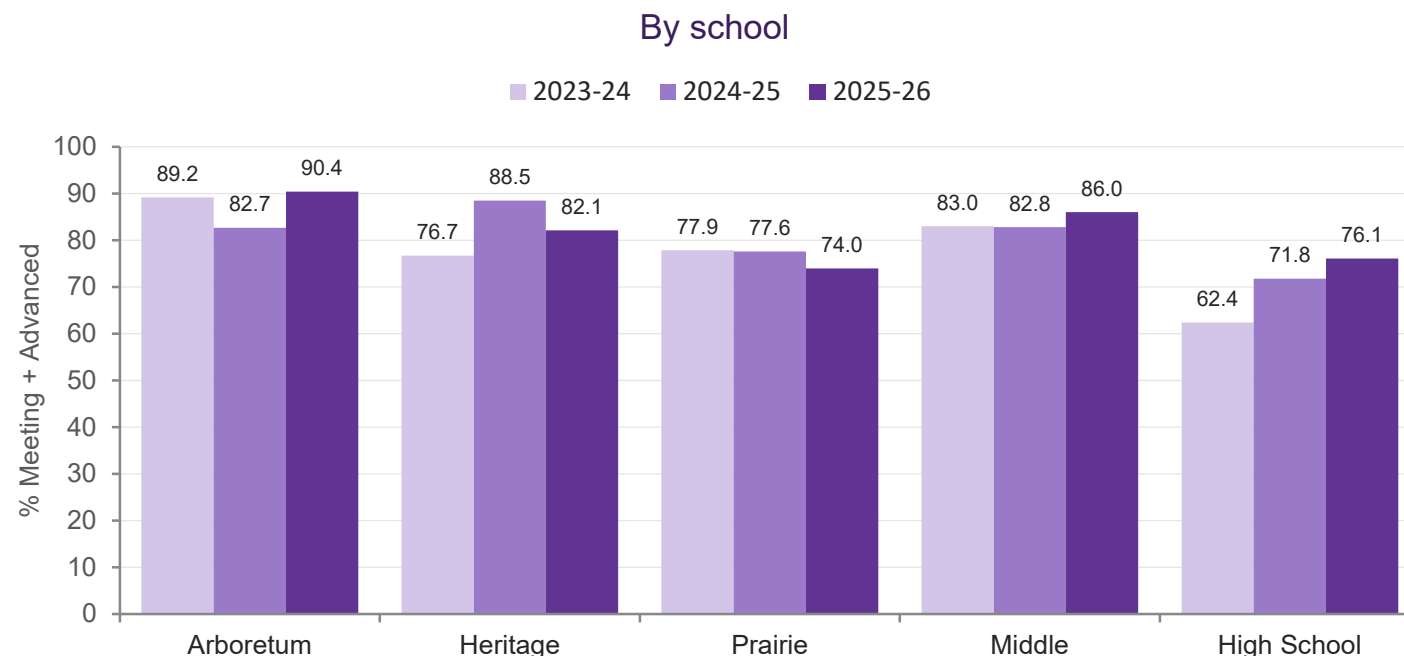
% Meeting + Advanced • Grades 4 & 8 (Forward), Grade 11 (ACT)



- All three grades improved: Gr 4 +3.8, Gr 8 +6.2 (three-year high), Gr 11 +6.1
- Largest one-year gain of any subject (+5.1 to 74.4%)

Social Studies

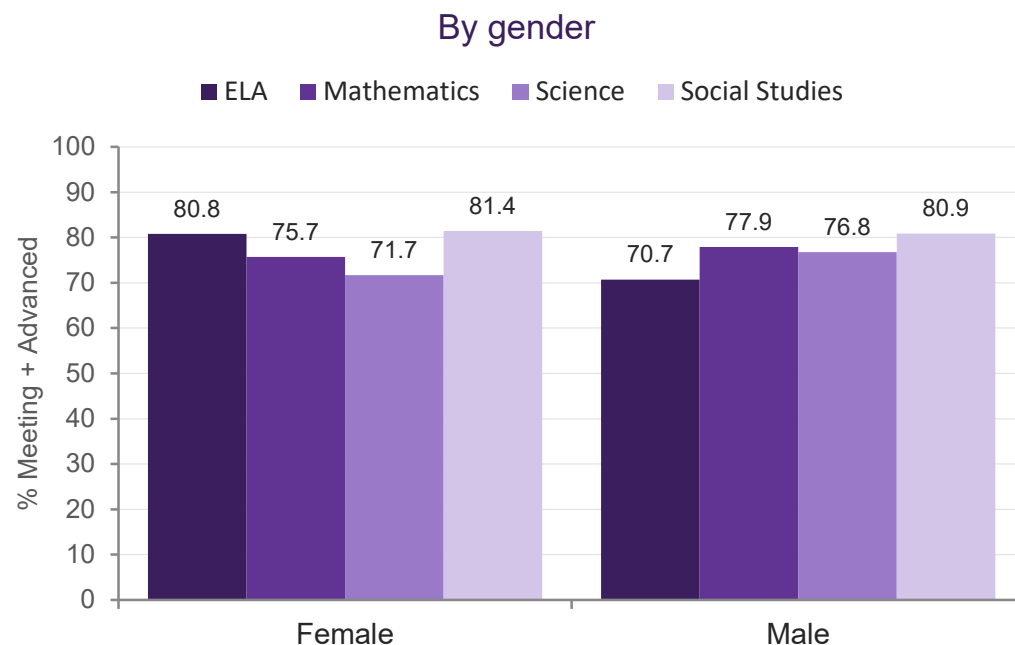
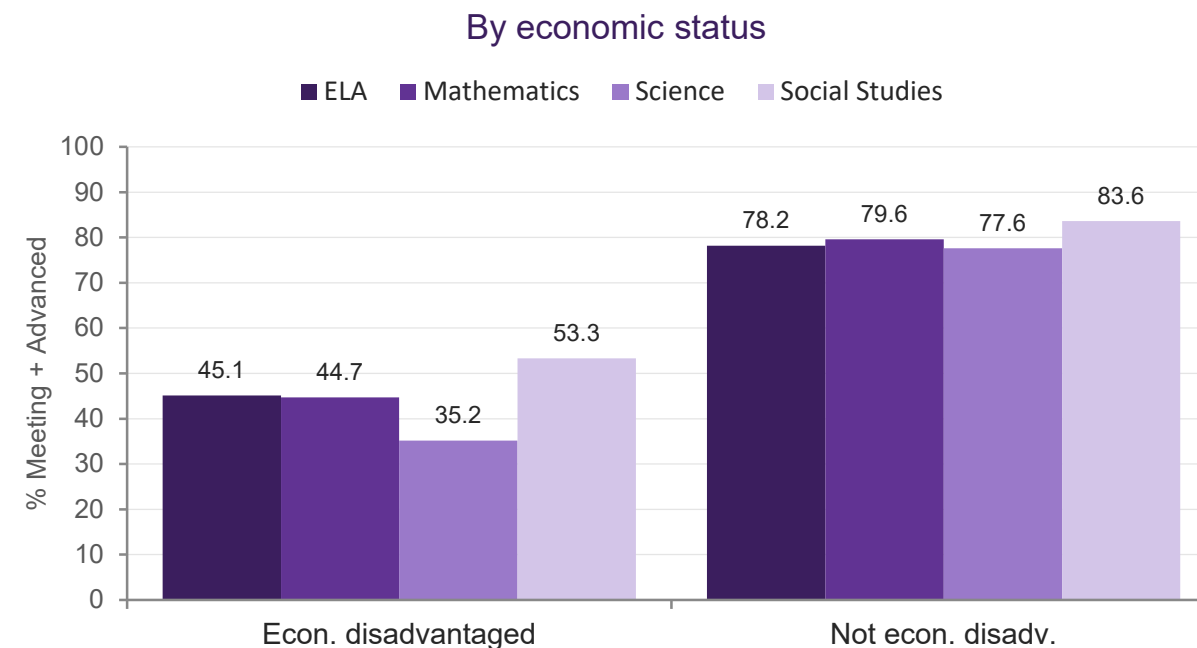
% Meeting + Advanced • Grades 4, 8 & 10 (Forward)



- Highest-performing subject: 81.2%, +5.4 over three years
- Grade 10 up 13.7 points since 2023-24; Grade 8 at 86.0%

Student groups: gender and economic status

2025-26 % Meeting + Advanced

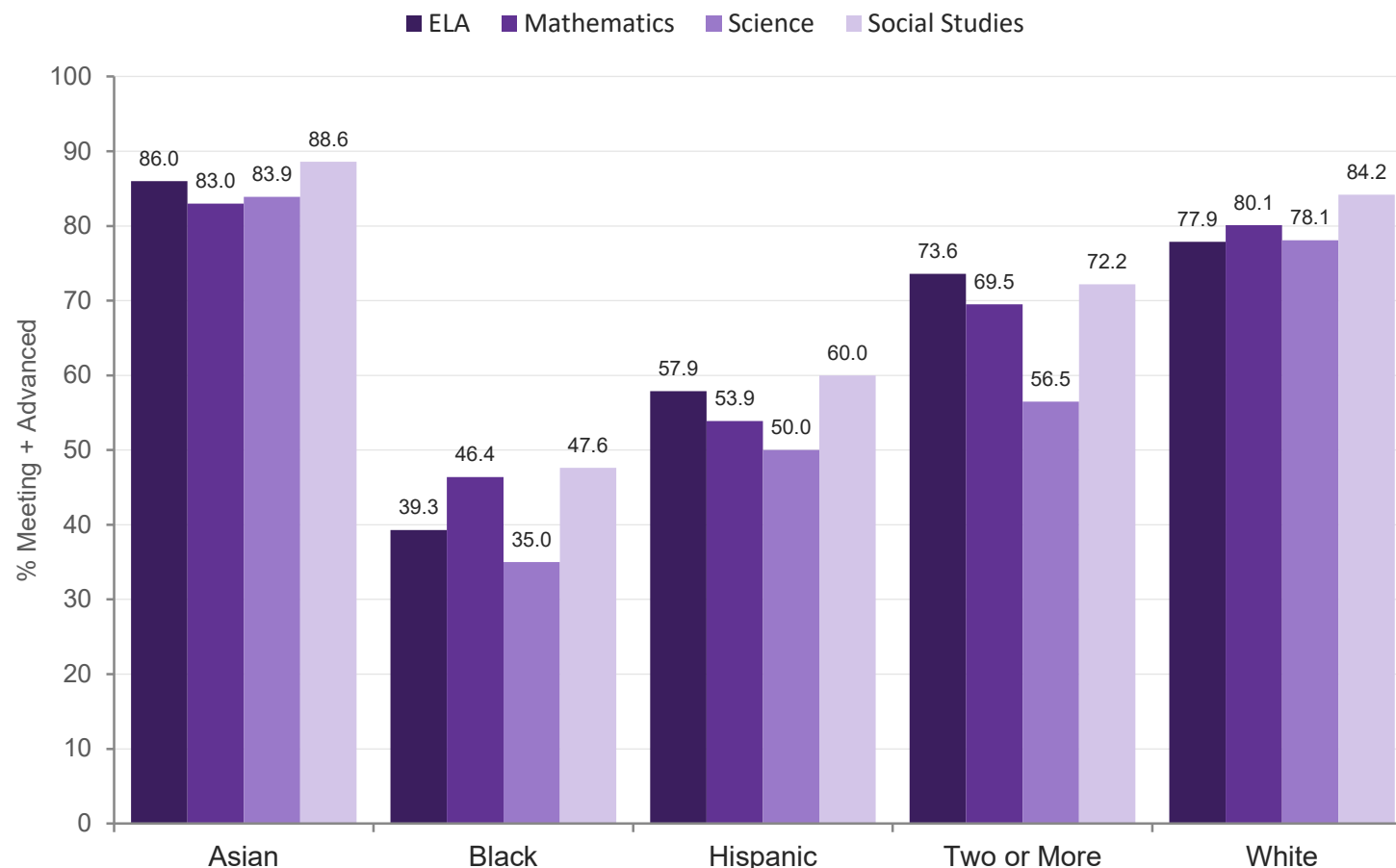


Gender: girls lead in ELA by 10 points (18 points in grades 9–11); boys lead in Math (+2) and Science (+5); Social Studies is even.

Economic status: gaps of 33 (ELA), 35 (Math), 42 (Science) and 30 (Social Studies) points have not narrowed in three years; Science and Social Studies proficiency for economically disadvantaged students fell 11–12 points (n≈70–75).

Student groups: race and ethnicity

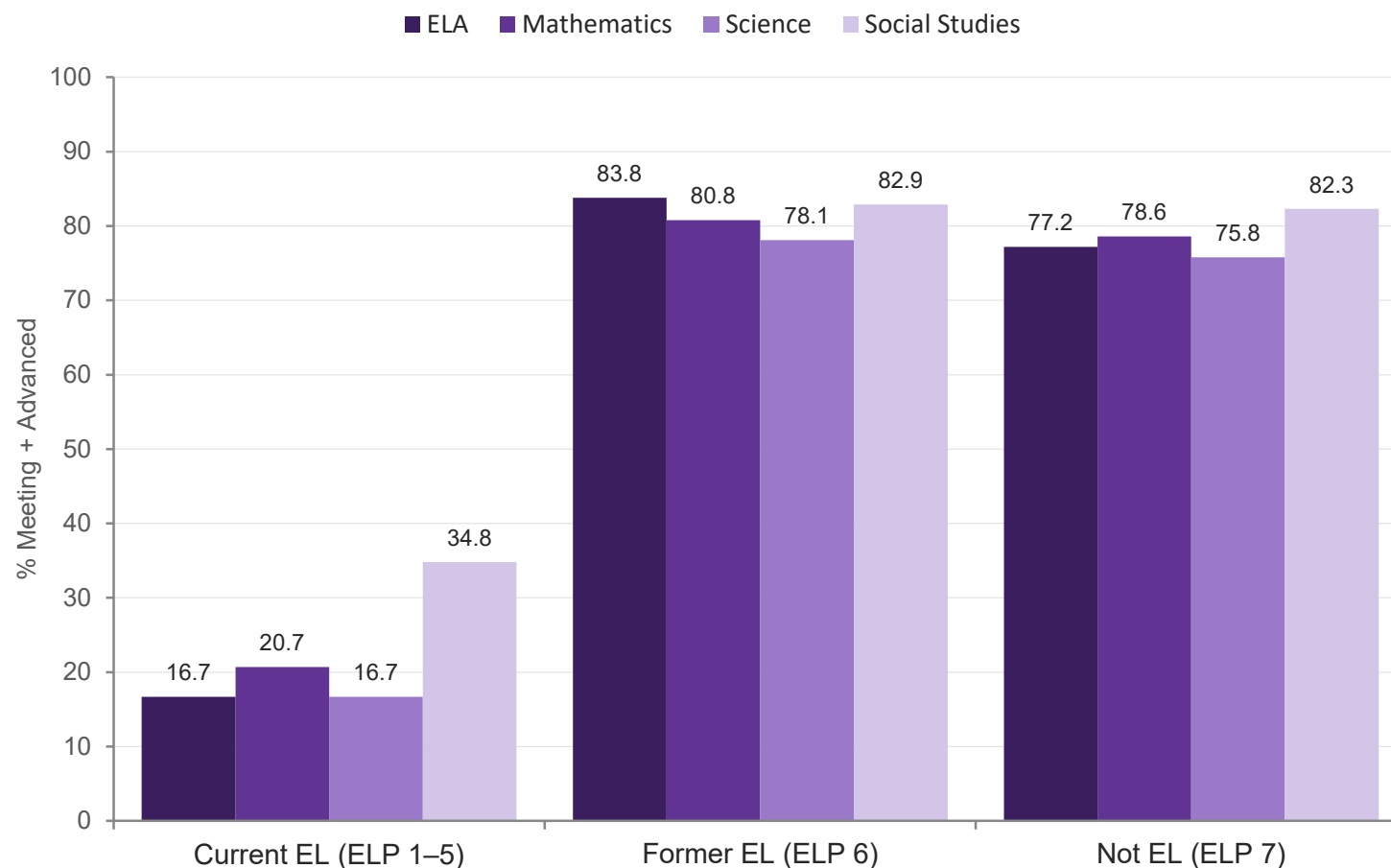
2025-26 % Meeting + Advanced • American Indian and Pacific Islander students (n=2 each) suppressed



- Asian (83–89%) and White (78–84%) students lead; White students improved in all four subjects
- Hispanic students (n≈230) gained in ELA (+5.0) and Math (+4.4) but remain 20+ points below the district
- Black students (n=56): Math up 10.4 to 46.4%; ELA flat near 39%
- Two or More races improved in ELA, Math and Social Studies
- Science and Social Studies groups are small (n≈20–65) — read single-year changes cautiously

Student groups: English learners

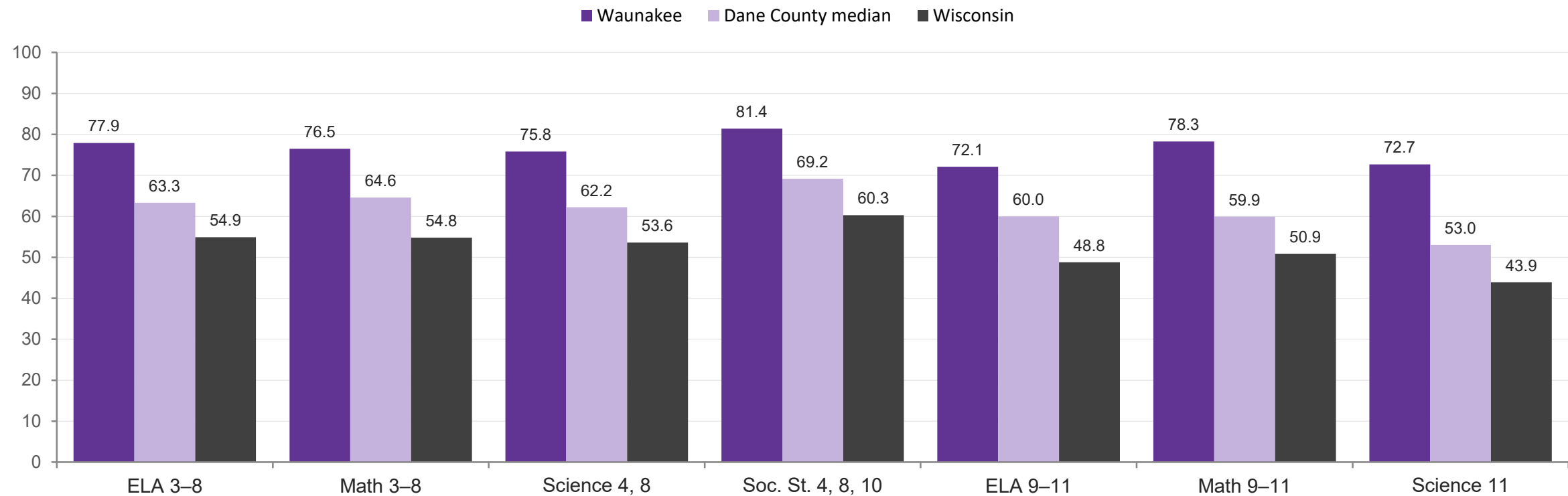
2025-26 % Meeting + Advanced • EL = ELP levels 1–5; Former EL = ELP 6



- Former English learners (n≈99) meet or exceed the district average in every subject — 83.8% ELA, 80.8% Math
- Current ELs (n≈90) scored 16.7% ELA and 20.7% Math, down ~10 points as the group's composition changed
- Students who were never ELs track the district total
- Takeaway: the language-development pathway produces durable outcomes; current ELs need academic supports alongside language services

How we compare: Dane County

2025-26 % Meeting + Advanced, all enrolled students tested • 16 Dane County public school districts

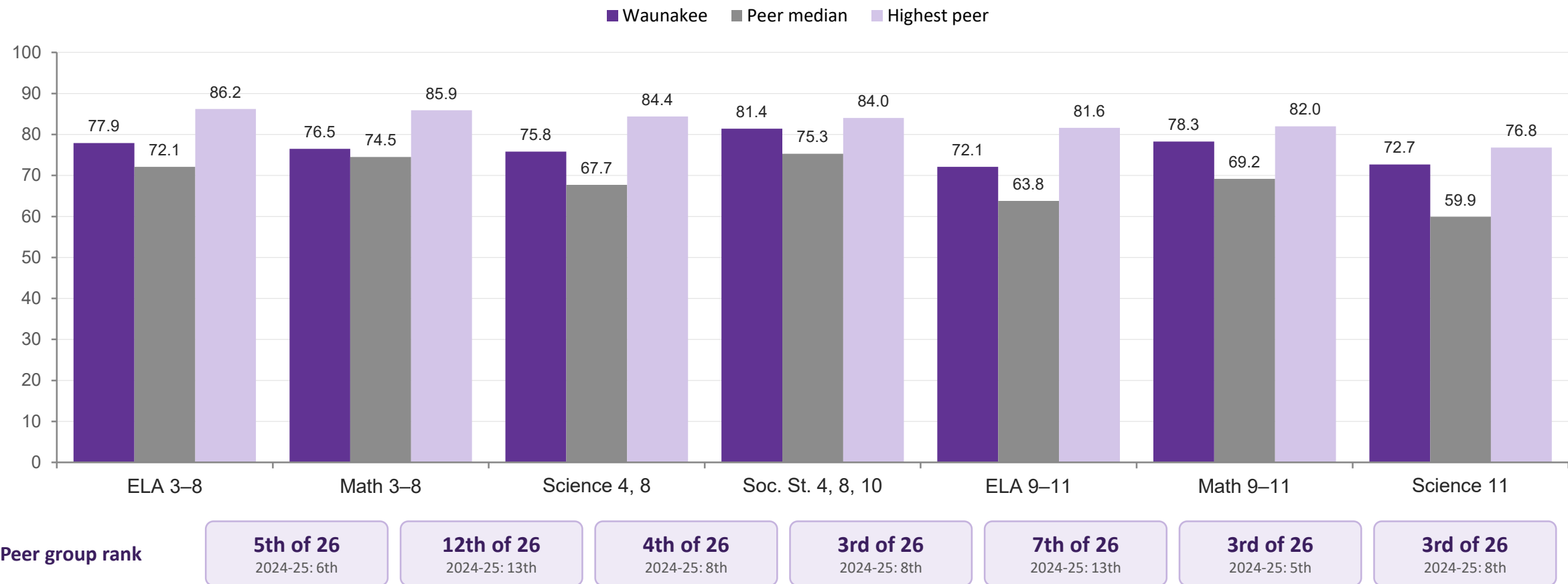


Dane County rank	1st of 16	1st of 16	1st of 16	1st of 16	2nd of 16	1st of 16	1st of 16
	2024-25: 1st	2024-25: 1st	2024-25: 3rd	2024-25: 3rd	2024-25: 3rd	2024-25: 2nd	2024-25: 2nd

ACT Composite (grade 11): 22.9 — 2nd of 16 (Dane median 20.6; Wisconsin 19.3). Grade 11 leads the county in all three ACT subjects.

How we compare: statewide peer group

2025-26 % Meeting + Advanced • Waunakee and its 25 comparable districts (WCSD Comparable District Model)



Highest peer: Cedarburg in six of seven; Hamilton in Social Studies. Grade 11 Math is 2nd of 375 districts statewide.

Grade-level ranks

2025-26 rank by subject and grade • Dane County (of 16) and peer group (of 26) • 1 = highest

Dane County — grade	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ELA	2	2	1	1	2	2	4	4	1
Mathematics	4	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	1
Science		3				1			1
Soc. Studies		2				2		1	

Peer group — grade	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ELA	10	7	6	2	6	4	12	4	5
Mathematics	11	15	11	12	10	10	10	3	1
Science		11				3			3
Soc. Studies		13				6		3	

Shading: dark purple = 1st; medium = 2nd–3rd; light = top four (Dane) or top ten (peers). Grades 9–11 Science = grade 11 ACT; grade 10 Social Studies = Forward.

- Dane County: every Forward grade in the top four; grade 11 first in all three ACT subjects; grades 9–10 ELA fourth.
- Peer group: grade 11 Math 1st, grade 6 ELA 2nd; grades 3–8 Math ranks 10th–15th in every grade — the clearest gap with the strongest peers.
- Participation: about 94% in grades 9–11 (state 94%, peer median 98%). Counting non-tested students, high school peer ranks would fall to 11th / 7th / 5th from 7th / 3rd / 3rd.

Strengths and opportunities

What the three-year trend and the comparisons tell us

Strengths

- Proficiency up in all four subjects; Advanced share rising everywhere
- First in Dane County in all four Forward subjects and HS Math and Science
- Above the peer median in every subject; peer ranks up in all seven
- Grade 11 ACT back above 75% in ELA and Math; Grade 11 Math 2nd of 375 statewide
- Grade 8 Math and Grade 6 ELA at three-year highs
- Former English learners at or above district average

Opportunities

- Grade 9 ELA: –11.6 to 68.0%; 12th of 26 peers; 18-point gender gap at grades 9–11
- Grades 3–8 Math ranks 10th–15th among peers; Grade 6 Math –5.0; Grade 4 Math below peer median
- HS participation ~94%, 24th of 26 peers
- Economic-status gap of 30–42 points, unchanged in three years
- Black and Hispanic students below 60% in every subject

Data notes

- Population and metric: Full Academic Year (FAY) district students; percent scoring Meeting or Advanced on Wisconsin DPI performance levels; denominators are tested students (No Test excluded). Participation was 96–98% in every subject and year.
- Assessments: Forward Exam (grades 3–8 ELA/Math; 4 & 8 Science; 4, 8 & 10 Social Studies), PreACT Secure (grades 9–10 ELA/Math), ACT (grade 11 ELA/Math/Science), and the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) alternate assessment where reported.
- 2025-26 grades 3–8 ELA and Math come from the DRC Grade Results File rather than WISEdash. FAY status was matched from other 2025-26 WISEdash files for grades 4 and 8 (about 1% non-FAY); grades 3, 5, 6, and 7 are assumed FAY. DLM results are not yet included for those grades/subjects.
- Economic status comes from district enrollment demographic files, matched by WISEid with 100% coverage. English learner = ELP codes 1–5; former EL = ELP 6. Groups with fewer than 10 tested students are suppressed.
- Comparisons (slides 15–17) use DPI's public 2025-26 district files released October 1, 2026: all enrolled students, tested-student basis, DLM included. Waunakee's figures there differ from FAY figures by about one point or less. Dane County median includes all 16 districts; peer median excludes Waunakee. McFarland's figures cover its in-person schools only; its statewide virtual charter schools are excluded.

Questions and discussion

Amy Fassbender, Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction

Tim Schell, Director of Secondary Curriculum and Instruction

AI disclaimer: This document was drafted with the assistance of Claude, an AI system developed by Anthropic, working from WISEdash for Districts and DRC student-level data exports, district demographic files, and Wisconsin DPI's public 2025-26 district-level data files. All analyses, figures, and narrative in every release have been reviewed and approved by Tim Schell, Director of Secondary Curriculum and Instruction, Waunakee Community School District, prior to distribution.

Environmental impact statement: Producing this set of deliverables (data processing, analysis, and document generation across the original September drafting session and the October 2026 comparison updates) is estimated to have consumed roughly 1.0 kWh of electricity — an order-of-magnitude estimate, since AI providers do not report per-session energy use. That is comparable to about 13 hours of Netflix streaming (≈ 0.077 kWh per hour, per Netflix/DIMPACT) and, in carbon terms, to driving about 1.3 miles in a car that gets 30 mpg (≈ 0.39 kg CO₂ using the U.S. average grid intensity of ≈ 0.39 kg CO₂/kWh and 8.9 kg CO₂ per gallon of gasoline).