

## Quick Facts:

- 42,000+ students
- 27 elementary schools;  
10 of those are Title I schools
- 6% of students are MLs;  
50% Free and Reduced Lunch
- 77 different home  
languages are spoken

## Challenge:

After years of struggling with low early literacy performance, Washington County set themselves a lofty goal of 100% of kindergarteners learning letters and sounds by November 1st. To do this, administrators knew they needed a way to easily collect data then instantly access and analyze it to track progress towards their goal.

## Solution:

Administrators rolled ESGI out districtwide because it provided a customizable, easy-to-use assessment platform to gather and monitor districtwide foundational literacy data.

## Results:

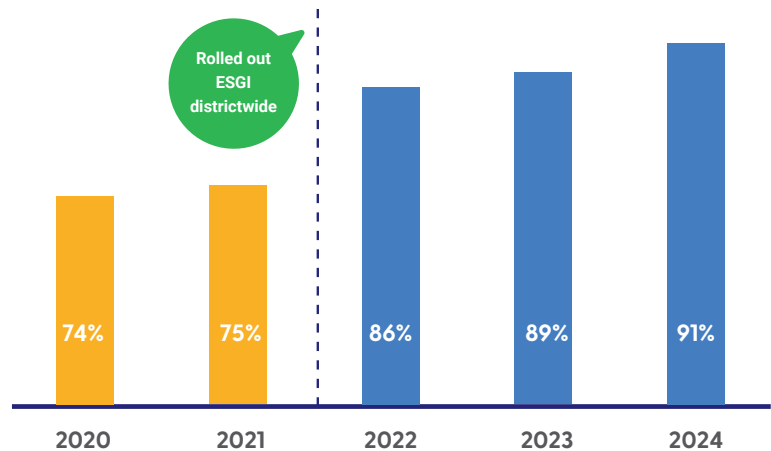
From 2020 to 2024, the percentage of kindergarteners reaching state literacy benchmarks rose from **74% to 91%**.  
**WCSD rose in Utah state rankings from #18 to #3.**

*"If you want real time data that's easy to collect and easy for the teachers to use, there's just no reason not to try ESGI. We haven't even looked to any other data collecting platforms and assessment platforms because it's so easy."*

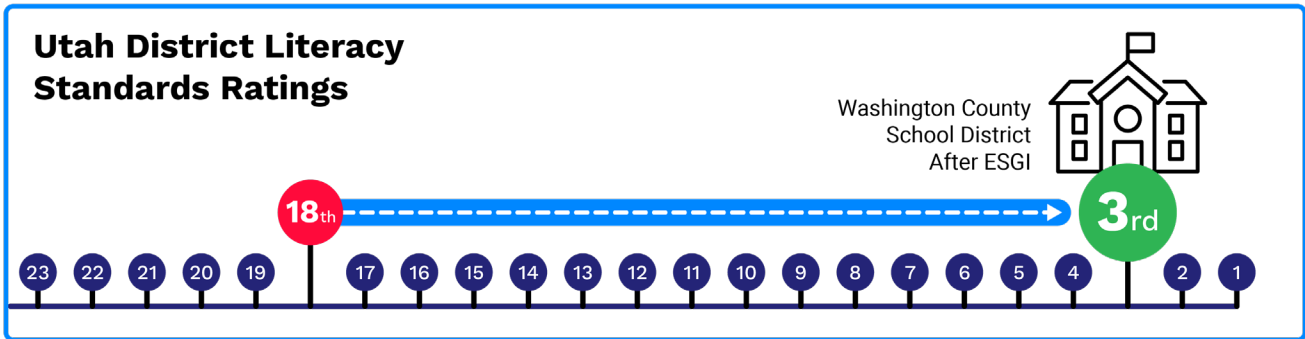
## Better Data, Stronger Starts: How Washington County Transformed Students' Early Literacy with ESGI

Washington County School District (WCSD) in Utah is a large district with 27 elementary schools and a diverse and unique student population, with 77 different home languages spoken. In March of 2021, Amy Mitchell, WCSD's Executive Director of Elementary and Title I Programs and Kathy Hall, WCSD's District Literacy Coordinator, were reviewing kindergarten literacy data. They saw that after six and a half months of instruction, only 60% of their kindergarteners could identify their letters, a situation that was "pretty alarming." They knew through the Science of Reading that identification of letters and sounds is the foundation of literacy - so they had to make big changes quickly, for the sake of their students' futures. As a result, Mitchell and Hall **set an extraordinary goal for the district going forward: 100% of kindergarteners knowing their letters and sounds by November 1st.**

### Percent of Kindergarteners Proficient on Literacy Standards



Mitchell and Hall collaborated with Charise Gardner, WCSD’s Kindergarten Grade Level Specialist, to get the initiative off the ground. They realized that reaching this goal would require **exceptional coordination and common progress tracking across their kindergarten classrooms**. To make this happen, the kindergarten team needed a tool that would make the new initiative **easy for the team to put into practice and make data collection and analysis simple**.



### Using Data to Reach New Literacy Heights

Several WCSD schools had already been using ESGI before 2021-22, but after the new letters and sounds initiative was put in place, ESGI was adopted district-wide in kindergarten classrooms. Hall and Gardner had previously worked with ESGI and knew it could be their secret weapon in rolling out this new foundational literacy initiative. There were three key reasons why they felt ESGI would help them be successful:

#### Simple, real time data tracking

“Gardner explained, “When we decided to go district-wide, the reason was that **easy access to data** to know what schools were struggling and needed support. [It gave us] **instant data which made a big difference.**”

Gardner knew that a **simple tracking system would make implementation of a district-wide initiative much more effective, since all team members would be clear on expectations and whether they were meeting them or not**. ESGI’s easy-to-use tools for data collection and reporting let teachers understand their classroom progress and allowed district-level administrators to compare school performance and target support where needed.

A simple data system like ESGI makes it much easier to get teachers on board, too. When asked what WCSD would miss the most if ESGI disappeared, Gardner quickly pointed to teacher time saved. **“For the teachers, it’s the time to put in the data...they skip multiple data collection steps because of ESGI.”**

## Assessment customization

With ESGI, Gardner was able to design customized assessments perfectly aligned with WCSD's needs - they were based on both the kindergarten letters and sounds initiative and the scope and sequence of the reading curriculum that WCSD used. Once created, Gardner could distribute these assessments through ESGI to all teachers districtwide, standardizing the way that kindergarten classroom performance was measured and homing in on exactly what she wanted teachers to track, and students to achieve.

## Family communication

Another element identified by the leadership team as key to the initiative's success was the ability to consistently share actionable information with students' families, empowering them to provide educational reinforcement outside of school hours. Mitchell explained why ESGI was the perfect solution to support this need:



ESGI generates reports for parents so we can get them on board, saying for instance, 'Your child still needs these two letters. Here are some ideas for at home, at the grocery store, in the car, things that you can do to help them recognize and learn these letters and sounds would be helpful.'



## Unprecedented Results

From 2020-21 to 2023-24, the kindergarten letters and sounds initiative had a transformative impact on elementary students' literacy capabilities in WCSD. First, **the number of kindergarteners reaching Utah benchmark literacy goals skyrocketed from 74% to 91%. By leveling up their early learners' literacy proficiency, WCSD jumped from the 18th to 3rd highest district in terms of kindergarten literacy proficiency in the state of Utah.** Also, WCSD's success with kindergarten literacy set the stage for more literacy growth in later grades - the crux behind their initial idea. Hall said,



"When we first began, our 4th and 5th grade students were still needing phonics skills... to nowadays, we have very few students in 4th and 5th needing that skilled work...We've moved onto comprehension groups [focusing on] knowledge building."



The WCSD leadership team is proud of what they've accomplished and knows that ESGI was a crucial supporting factor in their success. Hall sums it up: *"If you want real time data that's easy to collect and easy for the teachers to use, there's just no reason not to try ESGI. We haven't even looked to any other data collecting platforms and assessment platforms because it's so easy."*