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a two-year longitudinal correlational study of the instructional efficacy of

HMH Read 180

in Wicomico County Public Schools 2024-2026

ESSA Tier 3 Promising

October 2026

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Prosody Consulting LLC provides customized research and evaluation, program and assessment development, as well as editorial services, with special emphasis on K-12 learning. Owner/Founder Kimberly Munroe has 30+ years of experience in education, as a teacher, author, and researcher, having conducted 100+ quantitative and qualitative studies. Learn more at prosodyco.com.

INTRODUCTION

Reading achievement has declined steadily across the United States for more than a decade. The most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading results showed two-point decreases from two years earlier in Grades 4 and 8, as well as the lowest average score ever reported for Grade 12. In 2024, no state and only one jurisdiction posted gains in reading. These findings indicate that students have not recovered from COVID-19 school closures and that pre-pandemic declines have continued to deepen. Losses appear across most student groups, regardless of race/ethnicity, English language status, economic status, or disability status (U.S. Department of Education, 2025). This pattern is especially concerning because early reading success promotes greater reading volume, which builds the knowledge and language resources that support later reading skills and habits (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2021; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Willingham, 2017). Beyond school, higher literacy proficiency is linked to employment, wages, health, life satisfaction, and civic engagement (OECD, 2024). Educators, researchers, and reading-curriculum developers, therefore, need to identify the pedagogies and practices that most effectively improve reading outcomes for all students, particularly those who are underperforming.

This report presents findings from a two-year quasi-experimental evaluation of *Read 180*, which Wicomico County Public Schools in Maryland implemented as a Tier 2 literacy intervention during the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years. Students reading below grade level were expected to participate in *Read 180*. Using district implementation data, Prosody conducted analyses to examine the extent to which participation in *Read 180* was associated with improved student literacy outcomes. The sections that follow describe the *Read 180* program and summarize existing research on its efficacy. We then present the study's data and analytic methods, followed by results in narrative and graphic form showing associations between *Read 180* usage and student literacy development. The report concludes with key takeaways and references.

BACKGROUND

Program Under Study

Read 180 is a comprehensive reading intervention for students in Grades 3-12 who read below grade level, particularly those needing Tier 2 or Tier 3 support, including students with disabilities or dyslexia and English learners. The program can be used in dedicated intervention settings or integrated into core classrooms.

The program combines teacher-led instruction, adaptive digital learning, independent reading, and authentic texts to build the interconnected skills needed for proficient reading. Instruction targets the established pillars of reading—phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension—and is grounded in the Science of Reading, the Simple View of Reading, and Scarborough's Rope. The *Read 180* Student Application provides personalized practice from phonics through comprehension, while teacher-led lessons offer explicit, differentiated support in small-group and whole-group settings.

HMH, the publisher of *Read 180*, reports more than 25 years of research and over 90 studies supporting the program, along with a Strong rating from the What Works Clearinghouse, as evidence of its instructional efficacy. A detailed program description and findings from prior research are available here.

District Characteristics

Wicomico County, the largest county on Maryland's Eastern Shore, has a population of approximately 107,000. Wicomico County Public Schools enrolls over 15,000 students in pre-K through Grade 12 across 26 schools: six elementary schools, one elementary/middle school, three middle schools, one middle/high school, three high schools, and an evening high school. In addition to Gifted and Talented and Special Education services, the district offers a broad range of academic programs, including elementary intermediate magnet programming. In 2025, Wicomico Public Schools had an on-time graduation rate of 87.23%. Table 1 provides demographic information on the district's student population for the 2025-2026 academic year.

Table 1. District Demographic Data

Characteristics	2025-2026 *N=15,401*
Ethnicity	
Black/African American	39%
White/Caucasian	34%
Hispanic/Latino	15%
Multiracial	8%
Asian	3%
Native American	1%
Economically Disadvantaged	
(qualifies for free/reduced meals)	58%
Students with Disabilities	
(served by ADA 504)	5%
Multilingual Learners	14%

Implementation Model

Read 180 was implemented across all middle schools during the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school years. Eligibility for literacy intervention was determined using spring MAP Growth reading assessment data, with students scoring below the 34th percentile identified for support. Following identification, students are grouped according to instructional needs, and fall MAP Growth results were subsequently reviewed to determine whether placement adjustments are needed. Student progress was monitored throughout the year using tracking sheets, and intervention decisions were informed by ongoing performance data.

Wicomico School District implemented a push-in model within the core ELA block. Students received 45 minutes of core literacy instruction and 45 minutes of daily literacy intervention. *Read 180* teachers implemented the instructional rotations, including Student Application and small-group instruction. Independent reading took place during the Core ELA block where students read every day. Emphasis had been placed on ensuring students engage with the software for a full 20-minute session each day, resulting in a steady increase in software usage over time and improved implementation fidelity.

At the midyear assessment window, students scoring above the 34th percentile exited the intervention. To address engagement concerns, particularly with students who had participated for multiple years by the eighth grade, educators shifted instruction to Stage C content. This provided access to new, more challenging materials, thereby increasing relevance and student interest.

At the high school level, students with IEPs were enrolled into *Read 180* through the Special Education department. Students received 40 minutes of daily intervention instruction in addition to 80 minutes of core ELA instruction, delivered through a dedicated pull-out model.

STUDY DESIGN

Data and Methods

Wicomico Public School District and HMH provided student-level standardized assessment scores for the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years, along with student academic and demographic data and *Read 180* usage measures for participating students. Data included student-level results for Fall and Spring administrations of MAP *Growth Reading* (MAP-R) Scaled Scores and Percentile Ranks for each academic year. Data also included student results for the annual administration of the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program English Language Arts (MCAP ELA) for both years. The initial sample included 1,770 students in sixth through eighth grades enrolled in Wicomico schools implementing *Read 180*. The data provided was complete, and no students were excluded from the analysis.

Two types of analysis were conducted. A correlational analysis was performed using the Spearman Correlation Coefficient to examine several metrics of *Read 180* usage and changes in achievement over time on the MAP-R assessment. A quasi-experimental comparison of performance over time was conducted using Repeated Measures ANOVA for the MAP-R Scale Score and Percentile Rank. A Repeated Measures ANOVA was conducted to compare performance over time for the MCAP scaled score. These comparisons were conducted for the total sample and by each individual grade level. Additional comparisons were conducted using One-Way ANOVA and the independent t-test to examine differences in the change in MCAP scaled score across various demographic variables.

This study meets the criteria for an ESSA Tier 3 Promising-level evaluation of instructional efficacy.

Research Sample

The study sample included 1,770 students in Grades 6, 7, and 8. More than half of the sample was enrolled in Grade 7, while fewer than one percent were enrolled in Grade 8. Slightly more than half of the students were male. Most students were socioeconomically disadvantaged (62%), as indicated by FRPL eligibility and consistent with the district's overall population. The sample was majority Black/African American (40%). Other represented groups included White/Caucasian (31.8%) and Hispanic (15.6%). A small number of students in the sample (3.4%) were classified as English Learners. Nearly 10% (9.8%) were identified as students with disabilities, about double the district's overall proportion. Table 2 provides full demographic characteristics for the sample.

Table 2. Sample Demographic Data

Characteristics	2024-2026 *N=1770*
Grade	
6	48.6%
7	50.9%
8	0.5%
Not Reported	0%
Gender	
Male	50.84%
Female	49.1%
Non Binary	0.06%
Ethnicity	
Black/African American	40%
Asian	4.2%
Hispanic	15.6%
White/Caucasian	31.8%

Characteristics	2024-2026 *N=1770*
Multiple Ethnicities	7.6%
Amer. Indian/Alaskan Native	0.6%
Pacific Islander	0.2%
Not Reported	0%
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	62%
Students with Disabilities	9.8%
Dyslexia Identification	2%
Dysgraphia Identification	1.2%
Dyscalculia Identification	1.4%
English Learners	13.4%

Measures

Software Usage Data

Software usage data were collected as students used the online Student Application during *Read 180* instruction.

Measures of Academic Progress: MAP Growth, Reading (MAP-R)

The Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), commonly known as MAP Growth, is a computer-adaptive K-12 assessment that measures student achievement and growth in mathematics, reading, language usage, and science. Scores are reported on the RIT (Rasch Unit) scale, an equal-interval scale of roughly 100 to 350 that tracks learning progress across grade levels. MAP-R reports also include Percentile Ranks, which compare a student's reading score with those of same-grade peers nationwide. Schools typically administer the assessment to monitor progress over time (at intervals that may include fall, winter, and spring) and teachers use the results to screen and group students, differentiate instruction, and assess readiness.

Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP), ELA

MCAP is Maryland's statewide assessment program for measuring student proficiency and progress against state content standards. The English Language Arts (ELA) assessment is administered in Grades 3-8 and high school, providing stakeholders with data on school performance, student growth, and achievement.

RESULTS

Usage

Software usage data included the number of completed segments, the number of completed sessions, the total number of topics completed, the total minutes spent, and the total number of days of usage. The summary statistics for the sample by year are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Software Usage Implementation Metrics 2024-26

Implementation Metric	2024-25		2025-26	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Total Segments Completed				
Total	4.35	6.0	5.66	6.34
6th Grade	4.4	6.0	4.9	6.5
7th Grade	5.1	5.2	5.66	6.3
8th Grade	3.2	4.9	5.5	5.9
Total Sessions				
Total	114.3	56.1	127.0	50.7
6th Grade	115.9	55.1	141.0	45.6
7th Grade	105.1	81.9	127.1	50.7
8th Grade	113.5	43.6	112.7	44.3
Total Topics Completed				
Total	33.6	49.4	32.5	49.9
6th Grade	34.1	49.6	50.3	56.9
7th Grade	1.7	4.85	32.5	49.9
8th Grade	40.5	49.8	20.9	39.4
Total Minutes Spent				
Total	1222.7	687.6	1382	671.5
6th Grade	1239.7	679.6	1526.9	589.4
7th Grade	1008.3	795.5	1382	671.6
8th Grade	1223.9	572.8	1212.6	621.4
Total Days with Usage				
Total	80.3	36.2	95.6	35.3
6th Grade	81.4	35.5	103.1	28.6
7th Grade	70.1	49.2	95.6	35.3
8th Grade	81.4	29.0	90.9	36.4

Program Usage and Score Gain Correlations

A correlational analysis was performed to determine if relationships exist between the usage variables described above and achievement gains as measured by the change in MAP-R Assessment Score across the study period. A non-significant positive correlation was observed between MAP-R Gains and Total Segments Completed ($r = .05$), indicating a small effect size ($p = .261$, 95.00% CI = [-.04, .14]. A significant positive correlation was observed between MAP-R Gains and Total Topics Completed ($r = .14$), indicating a small effect size ($p = .010$, 95.00% CI = [.05, .23]). A significant positive correlation was observed between MAP-R Gains and Total Minutes Spent ($r = .13$), indicating a small effect size $p = 0.012$, 95% CI = [.04, .21]). A significant positive correlation was observed between MAP-R Gains and Total Days With Usage ($r = .13$), indicating a small effect size ($p = .011$, 95.00% CI = [.04, .22]). This suggests that as *Read 180* usage metrics increase, the MAP-R Assessment score changes as students make more gains.

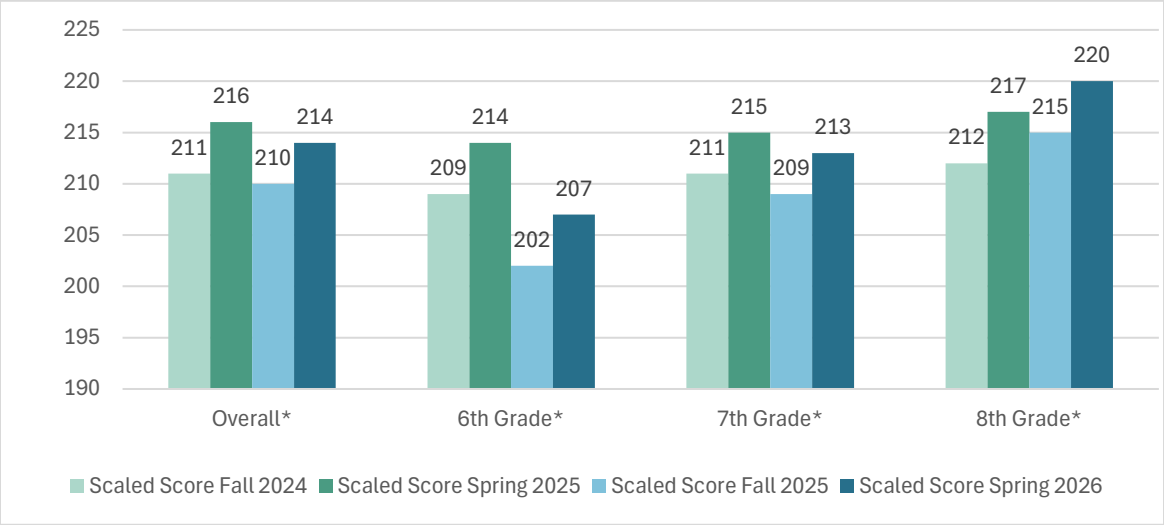
Performance

MAP Growth in Reading Measure (MAP-R) Analyses

Analyses were conducted to evaluate students' actual gains on the MAP-R in Scaled Scores and Percentile Rank.

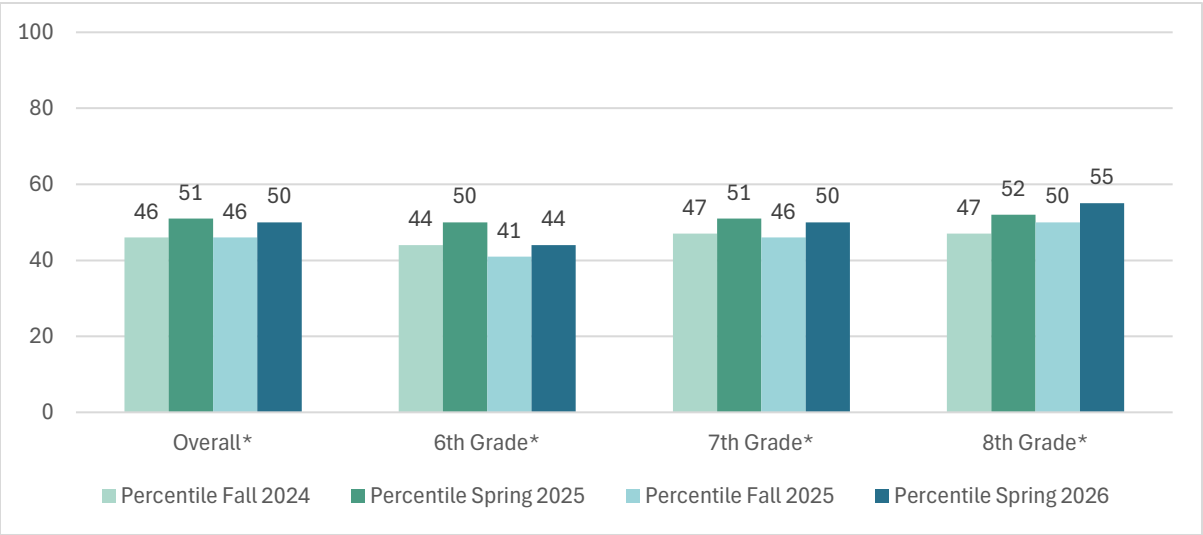
A growth analysis of changes in Scaled Scores from the beginning to the end of each school year showed significant within-year improvement. The change in Scaled Scores across each study year was significant, with medium-to-large effect sizes (*p<0.05, partial eta squared 0.03-0.09*). These differences are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Gains in Growth Measure Reading Scaled Score from Beginning to End of Study
P<0.05



A growth analysis of the change in Percentile Rank from the beginning to the end of the study yielded significant improvements within each study year. The change in Percentile Rank across each study year was significant, with small effect sizes (*p<0.05, partial eta squared 0.009-0.02*). These differences are illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Gains in Growth Measure Reading Percentile Rank from Beginning to End of Study
P<0.05



An analysis of gains in Scale Score within each school year based on several demographic characteristics was also conducted. Gains on the MAP scale score were positive across all identified ethnic/racial groups, genders, English language learner status, and students eligible for FRPL in both the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school years. Gains within each year and each demographic group were statistically significant ($p<0.05$) with small to moderate effect sizes (*partial eta squared = 0.001-0.06*). These gains are illustrated in Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 4. 2024-25 Gains in MAP Scale Score for Demographic Groups

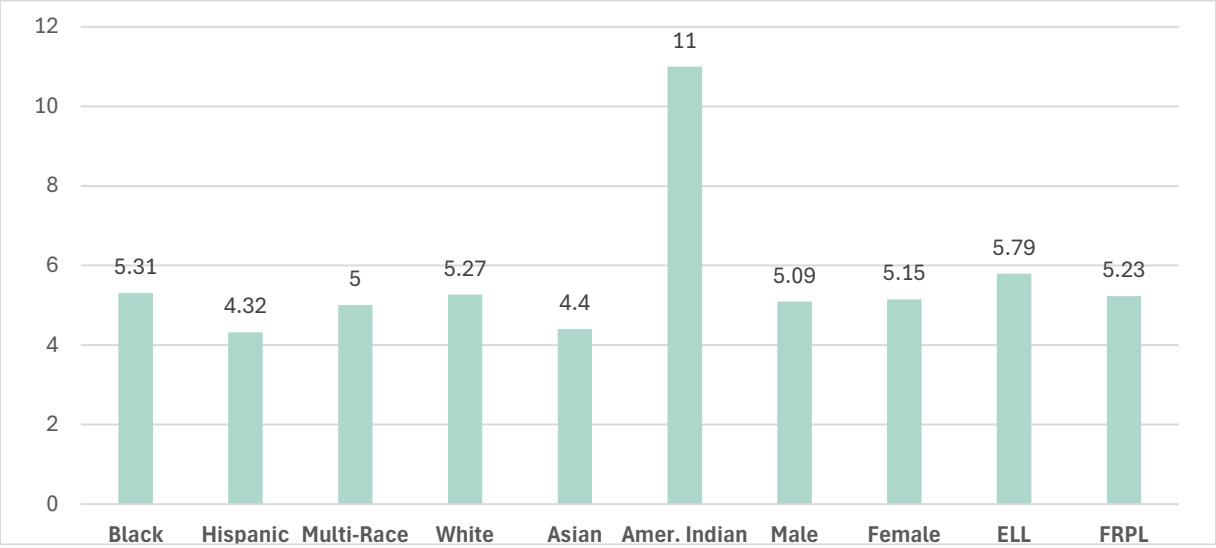
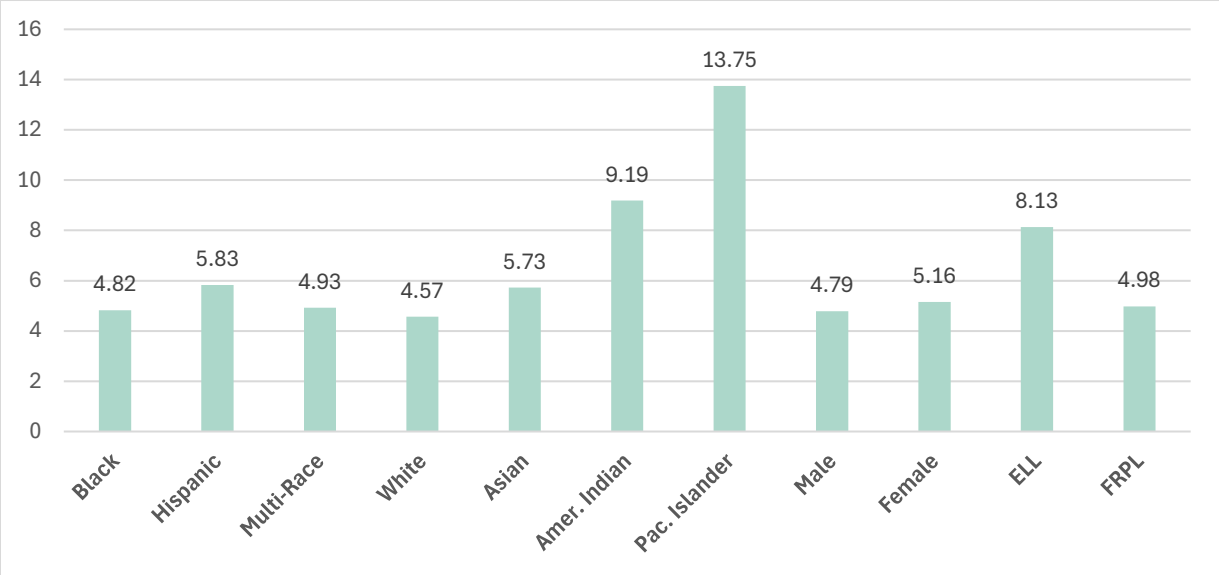


Figure 5. 2025-26 Gains in MAP Scale Score for Demographic Groups



MCAP Test Analyses

An analysis of MCAP Scale Scores was conducted across two time periods: Spring 2024 and Spring 2025, and Spring 2025 and Spring 2026. Analyses of main effects found that from initial testing in 2024 to testing in 2025, students demonstrated significantly higher scores overall and for all individual grade samples (*p<0.05, Cohen's d =0.33-0.56*). All groups demonstrated small-to-moderate effect sizes. The change in MCAP Scale Score from the 2025 measure to the 2026 measure showed a statistically significant increase overall and for the 7th- and 8th-grade groups, with small effect sizes (p<0.05, Cohen's d = *0.06-0.09*). The 6th-grade group saw a decrease in Scale Score from 2025 to 2026, but this change was not statistically significant. These differences are shown in Figures 6 and 7.

Figure 6. Change in MCAP Scale Score from Spring 2024 to Spring 2025
***=p<0.05**

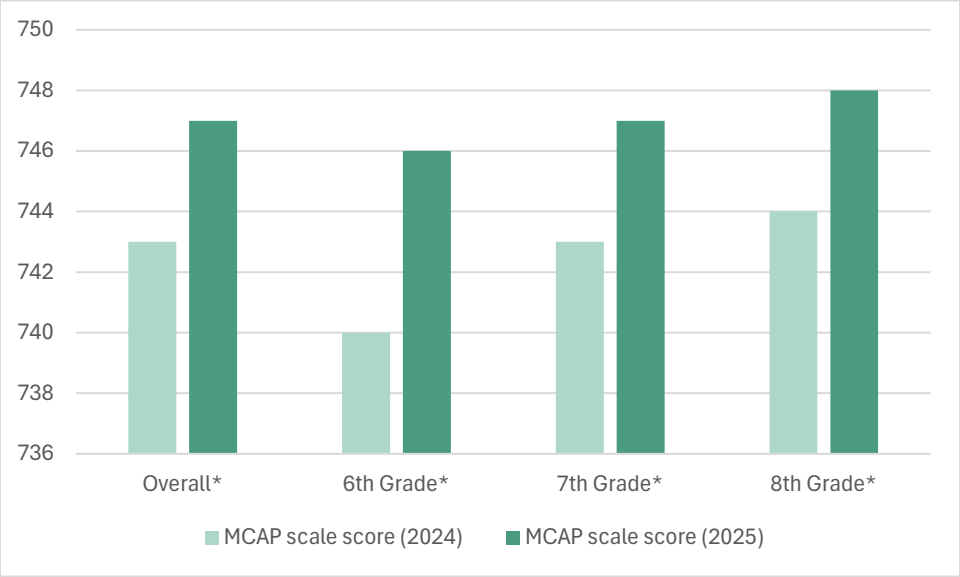
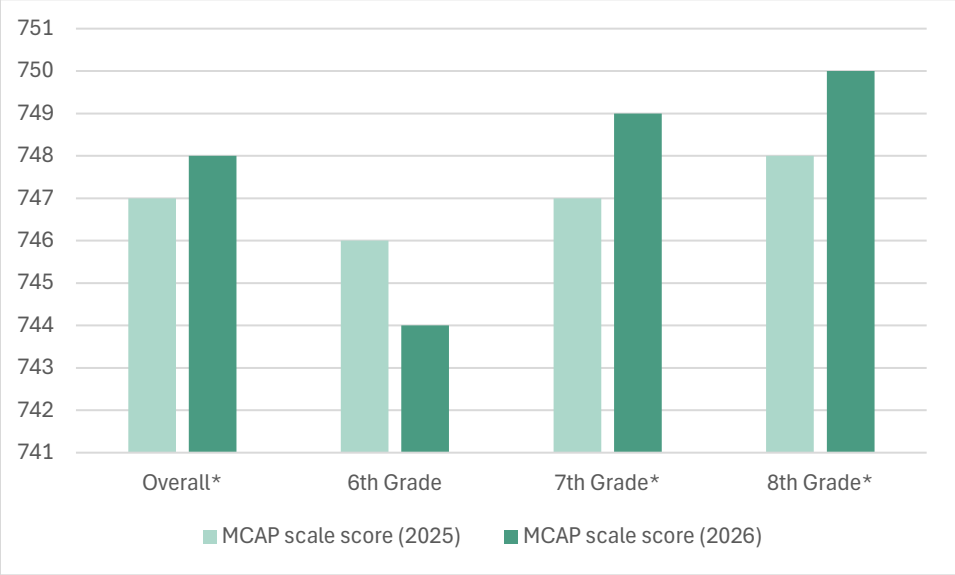


Figure 7. Change in MCAP Scale Score from Spring 2025 to Spring 2026
***=p<0.05**



CONCLUSIONS

Students demonstrated improvement in reading achievement over the study period.

The relationship between *Read 180* usage and reading achievement was positive. Greater numbers of topics completed, minutes spent using the software, and days of usage were each significantly associated with a greater increase in MAP-R score. However, the correlations were small ($r = .13–.14$).

MAP Growth Reading Scale Scores and Percentile Ranks showed statistically significant changes across assessment periods, with gains generally observed from Fall 2024 to Spring 2025, and recovery by Spring 2026.

Growth was positive overall but showed variability across some demographic groups. MAP scale-score changes increased significantly by ethnicity, gender, English Language Learner status, and FRPL eligibility.

Performance on the Maryland state ELA assessment (MCAP) improved from 2024 to 2025 and from 2025 to 2026. MCAP scores increased significantly from the 2024 assessment to 2025 for the overall sample and each grade, with small-to-moderate effect sizes. The change between 2025 and 2026 was statistically significant overall and for the 7th- and 8th-grade groups, with small effect sizes, but not for the 6th-grade group.

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