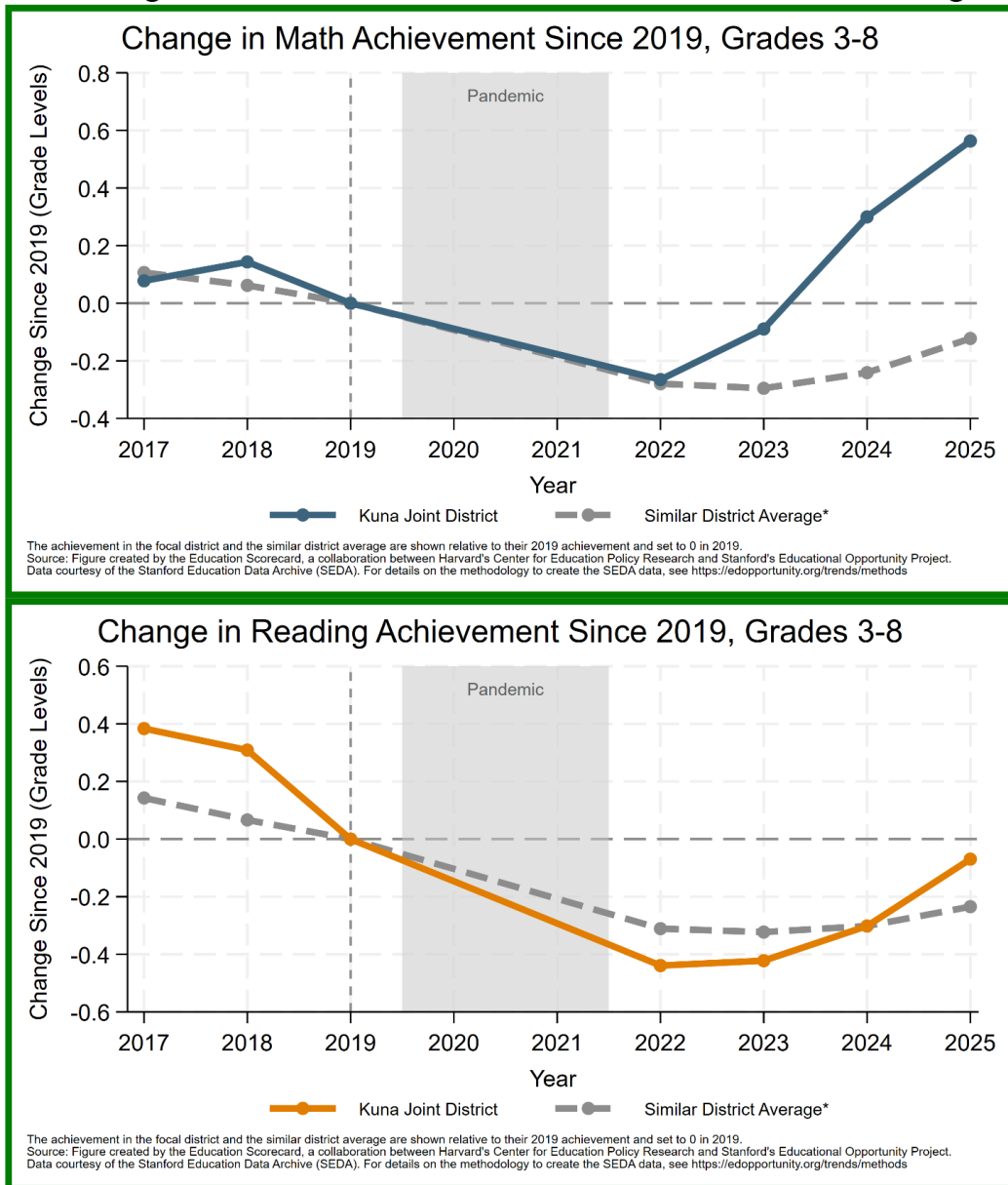


EDUCATION RECOVERY SCORECARD

Kuna Joint School District
Kuna, Idaho

Kuna Joint District, ID

Rising Faster than Similar Districts in Math & Reading



*Similar Districts: Shelley Joint District, Sugar-Salem Joint District, Lake Pend Oreille School District, Emmett Independent District, Mountain Home District

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Student Demographics:

Total student population: 5,649

White: 76%

Hispanic/Latino: 16.2%

Students from Low Income Families: 38%

Kim Bekkedahl, Superintendent (2024–present)

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Background: Kuna Joint School District (KJSD) serves an increasing student population in a rural but growing region of Idaho. Under the aligned, consistent leadership of former Superintendent Wendy Johnson and Superintendent Kim Bekkedahl, the district has transformed into a model for evidence-based instruction. By prioritizing systemic alignment—ensuring that everyone from the school board to principals are trained in evidence-based practices—the district has established a deeply rooted culture of data-driven decision-making and instructional excellence.

Strategies for Success:

Strengthening the foundation for data-driven decision-making:

- KJSD partnered with the [McREL Institute](#) to equip principals as instructional leaders, focusing on [21 specific leadership practices](#) proven to drive student achievement. These practices include being knowledgeable about and involved in curriculum and instruction, and monitoring the effectiveness of school practices. The district solidified this shift by aligning its principal evaluation system with McREL’s research-based best practices, and adopting a similar model for district-level leadership evaluation.
- The district facilitates a multi-tiered leadership structure to align instruction from the central office to the classroom. At the district level, monthly Guiding Coalition meetings bring together principals and instructional coaches to model leadership strategies and align on the district’s broader goals, which were recently codified in a set of essential standards.
- This model is mirrored at the school level, where principals lead their own monthly Guiding Coalition meetings with instructional coaches and educators to discuss building-level instructional decisions.
- To ensure these strategies reach daily practice, teacher professional learning communities (PLCs) meet weekly, providing a consistent venue for maintaining alignment between the district’s vision and classroom instruction. The district implements an early student release schedule for Wednesdays to provide teachers with dedicated time for PLC meetings.
- Annually, each principal identifies a specific instructional goal to serve as a focal point for the school year, such as increasing student discourse during mathematics blocks. To ensure these goals translate into classroom practice, principals collaborate with instructional coaches to develop specific “look-fors” that demonstrate progress toward the objective. Throughout the year, principals and instructional coaches support teachers through regular classroom observations and targeted feedback cycles, and progress toward the annual goal is formally reviewed during building-wide meetings held several times a year.

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Implementing high-quality literacy and math instruction:

- KJSD established an early commitment to evidence-based literacy by training all staff in the science of reading starting in 2009. To ensure alignment at all levels, reading coaches completed both specialized coach training and the foundational teacher training. Over a three-year period, every principal and district leader also participated in the same science of reading training as teachers to recognize and support effective reading instruction. Even board members engaged in the training to ensure they could articulately advocate for the district's instructional shifts.
- The district implements high-quality literacy curriculum at all levels: Houghton-Mifflin Harcourt's [Into Reading](#) for elementary school (beginning in 2026-27), Savvas' [myPerspectives](#) in middle school, and [CommonLit](#) in high school.
- English Language Arts (ELA) educators rely on a variety of data to drive instructional decisions. K-5 students are required by the state to take benchmark exams twice a year through [Amira Learning](#) (previously i-Station) in addition to the end-of-year state assessment; the district also administers Amira's monthly formative literacy assessment. In addition, elementary teacher teams develop common formative assessments (CFAs) to monitor student progress, which are delivered monthly to all students and more frequently to students needing intervention.
- Beginning in the 2025-26 school year, KJSD created a separate reading class block in addition to Language Arts for middle school.
- In math, teachers use Curriculum Associates' [i-Ready](#) curriculum for grades K-8 and X in high school. The curriculum includes regular formative assessments to measure student progress, tailored to different student groupings based on proficiency levels.
- From 2014-Y, KJSD partnered with Boise State University to provide its [Teaching Mathematical Thinking \(TMT\)](#) program to educators, which was previously provided by the state for Idaho Regions 3 and 4. When state funding for the program was eliminated, Boise State assisted KJSD and other districts in securing grants to maintain the initiative, which groups educators by region and grade level and focuses on student-centered teaching practices in math. While the partnership is no longer in operation, it provided a critical foundation for the district's math leadership and data-driven culture.

Developing effective student learning practices:

- KJSD has adopted [AVID \(Advancement Via Individual Determination\) programming](#) district-wide. This program aims to equip students with tools to help them learn more efficiently and effectively through its WICOR (Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading) framework. For example, the programming helps students learn how to annotate readings effectively so that they can revisit their notes to find the most important information.
- All elementary students receive AVID programming to teach them to organize their learning activities and use the WICOR strategies to grow in reading and writing. All sixth graders take an AVID class to learn how to study, take notes, and communicate effectively. Students in grades 7-12 can choose to take an AVID elective to continue strengthening these skills and prepare for college and careers.