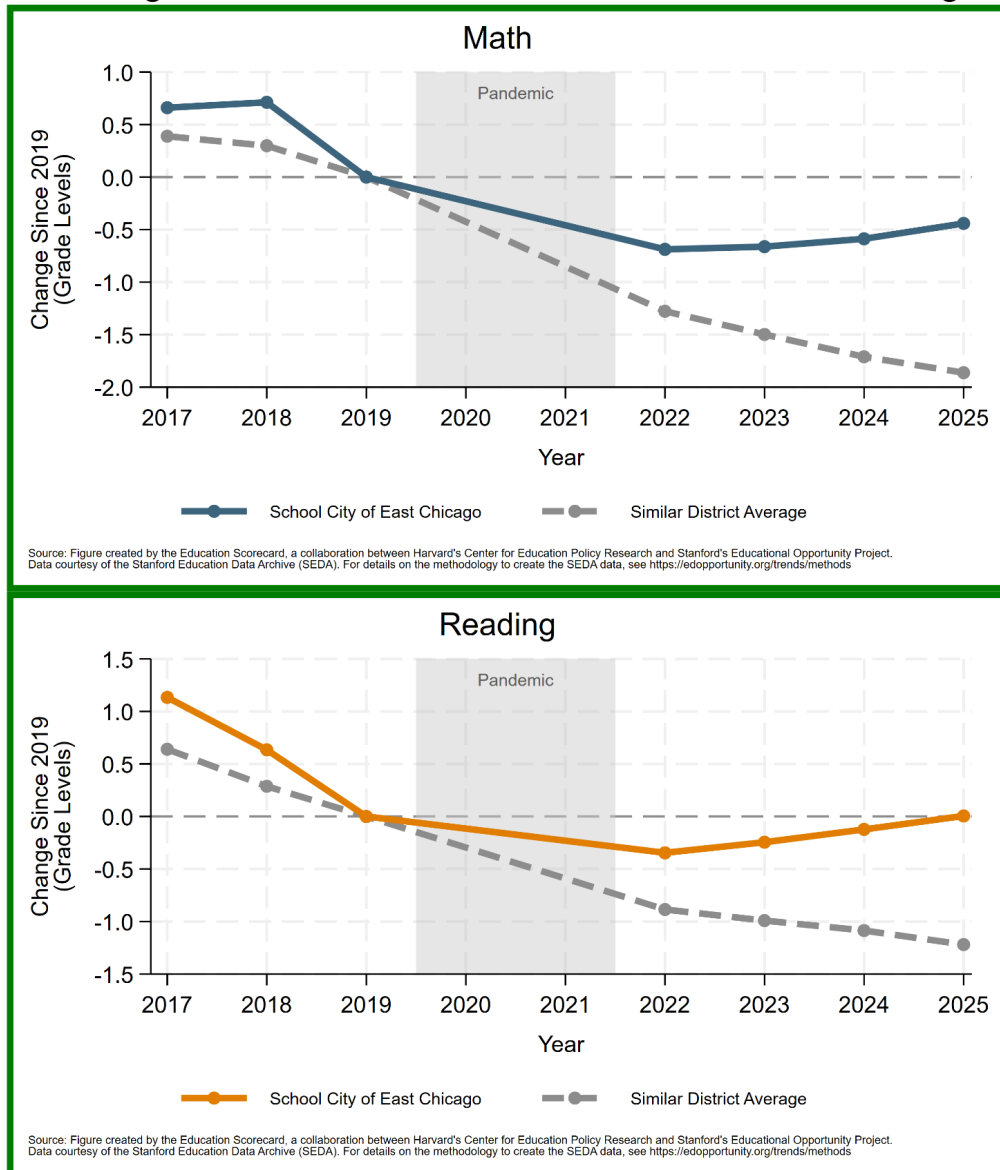


**School City of East Chicago Public Schools**  
 East Chicago, Indiana

## School City of East Chicago, IN

### Rising Faster than Similar Districts in Math & Reading



Similar Districts: Lake Ridge New Tech Schools, School City of Hammond, School Town of Speedway, River Forest Community School Corporation, Lake Station Community Schools

### **Student Demographics:**

Total student population: 3,253

Economically Disadvantaged: 69.3%

Special Education: 19.75%

Three largest racial demographics:

Hispanic 54%

Black 43%

Two or more races 2%

### **Dr. Stephen D. Bournés, Superintendent**

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- “We are proud of our collective efforts to increase our students’ proficiency in 3rd Grade reading and our graduation rate of 90%. We are using this successful foundation as forward momentum.”

### **Background**

School City of East Chicago (SCEC) serves roughly 3,200 students in Northwest Indiana, with a high share of economically disadvantaged, multilingual, and special education students. After several years of leadership transition, the district has stabilized under Superintendent Dr. Stephen D. Bournés and is now executing a [five-year strategic plan](#) anchored in two priorities: building a districtwide academic support system and investing in professional learning for staff. The district’s recent gains in math and reading have been driven by a coherent instructional framework, content-specialized coaching, in-school intervention systems, and a deliberate effort to use one-time pandemic-era funds to build long-term capacity rather than short-term programs.

### **Strategies for Success**

#### **Coherent Instructional System - Owned by the Central Office**

- The district adopted a K-12 instructional framework that defines shared look-fors for every classroom and ties walkthroughs, coaching, and evaluation to a common set of expectations.
- Central office reestablished principals as instructional leaders by launching a yearlong, district-designed walkthrough plan that requires both central office and building leaders to complete a set number of classroom visits, first focusing on classroom environment and then on high-leverage practices like Checking for Understanding (CFU), with all evidence captured in the Standards for Success (SFS) platform.
- The district implemented a tiered teacher support model (Tiers 1-3) with districtwide criteria for observation frequency, coaching intensity, and which staff (coach, principal, central office) are responsible for each tier; Tier 3 includes intensive co-planning and co-teaching led by administrators and coaches.
- Elementary instructional coaches were restructured into centrally directed content-specific roles—math coaches and Science of Reading coaches—using district expectations for “student-centered” coaching cycles based on student data and grade-level “exit skills.”
- The central office standardized PLC work through a district template that requires teams to analyze student data, flag “bubble” students near proficiency, and plan concrete next

instructional steps, while also launching teacher-led TLCs and “look-ahead” PLCs on upcoming math content that principals and district leaders are trained to facilitate and monitor.

### Standardized Literacy and Math Strategy

- District leaders moved all elementary and middle schools to explicit, systematic phonics instruction, added [Heggerty](#) for phonemic awareness, and adopted [Reading Horizons](#) intervention labs to deliver structured, in-day support for students who are behind in reading.
- The central office built a district-managed intervention system by partnering with the state to implement [Acadience](#) literacy screening and progress monitoring, grouping students by skill into five-week intervention cycles, and convening EL and special education leaders to select subgroup-specific interventions and schedules rather than leaving those choices to individual schools.
- At the high school level, the district directed every department to adopt “literacy across the curriculum,” making reading and writing an explicit responsibility in all content areas, not only ELA.
- The district created and oversees algebra and math labs at the high school, targets “bubble” students for SAT tutoring, and designates [ST Math](#) as the core math intervention for students with disabilities.
- The district designed the Early Bird Academy for middle school as a district program that both enriches already-proficient students and allows them to earn high school credits early, preventing stagnation among on-track students.

### Built Wraparound Supports for Students and Families

- The district organized MTSS around a unified “Triple A” framework (Academics, Attendance, and Attitude) and set expectations for school-level data reviews, while standardizing attendance contracts, truancy officer home visits, and [PBIS](#) reward systems to improve daily attendance and behavior across all schools.
- The district funded community engagement [liaisons](#) (CEs) in every building and Bilingual Family Outreach Coordinators (BFOCs) so language is not a barrier to access for SCEC’s majority-bilingual community.
- The district requires Title I and EL family meetings (often via Zoom) and supports school-based family nights and Parent Cafés that connect families to wraparound services, including partnerships with organizations such as [Geminus](#) to address broader social needs that affect attendance and learning.

### Investments in Sustainable Capacity

- The district used ESSER primarily to underwrite training, coaching, and intervention programs that could transition to other federal funding streams after ESSER sunset, deliberately avoiding large permanent staffing expansions that would create a fiscal cliff.
- District leaders designed “grow your own” pathways so that ESSER-funded professional learning produced more licensed teachers and coaches the district can sustain long term, addressing the licensed teacher shortage with a local pipeline strategy.