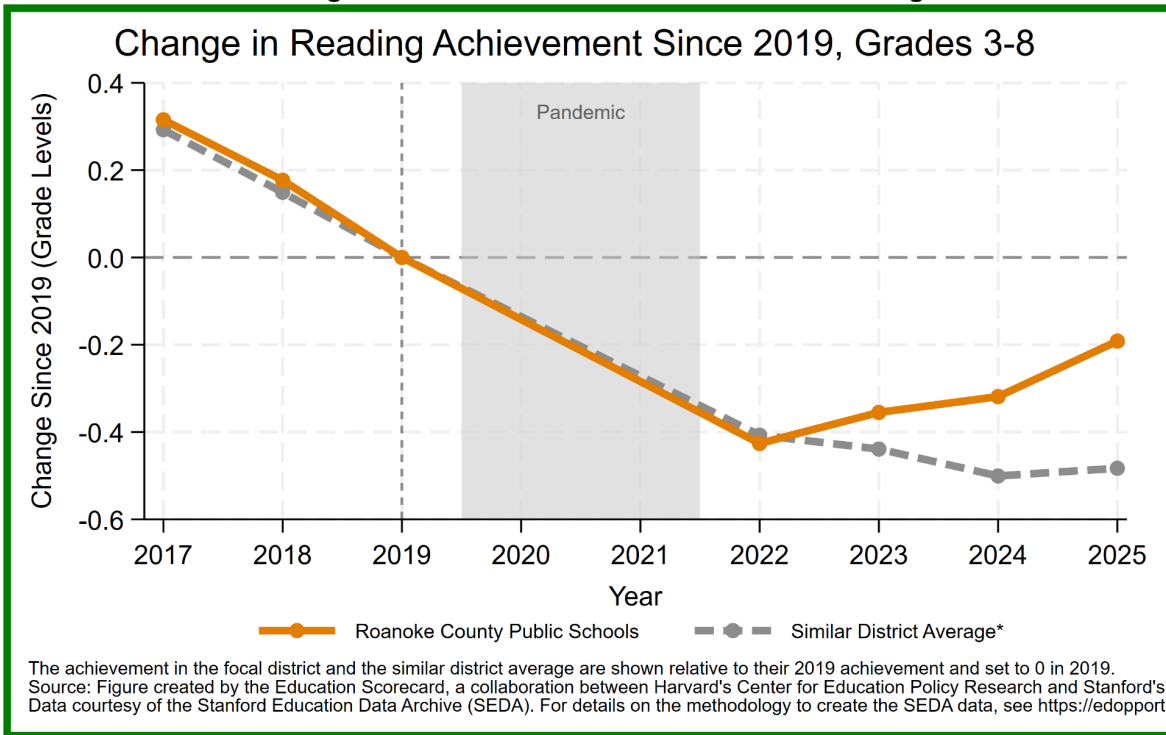


Roanoke County Public Schools
Roanoke, VA

Roanoke County Public Schools, VA
Rising Faster than Similar Districts in Reading



*Similar Districts: Botetourt County Public Schools, Hanover County Public Schools, York County Public Schools, Campbell County Public Schools, Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools



Student Demographics:

Total student population: 13,736
Economically disadvantaged: 36.1%

Three largest racial demographics:

White: 70.4%

Hispanic/Latino: 9.6%

Black/African American: 8.6%

Dr. Ken Nicely, Superintendent

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- “The C-Change Framework serves as the essential pillar for everything we do, providing a shared instructional language. By centering our division on this shared mission, we ensure that every decision is filtered through a commitment to deeper learning and collaborative problem-solving.”
- “We’ve built a culture of shared ownership where teachers and division leaders alike are trained to analyze performance trends by standard and adjust instruction in real time. This disciplined approach allows us to direct targeted support and resources where they are needed most, ensuring that high-quality, evidence-based instruction remains consistent across every classroom in the division.”

Background:

Situated in southwest Virginia, Roanoke County Public Schools (RCPS) circles the city of Roanoke, serving students in the surrounding county across 27 schools. [As of 2025](#), the division ranked sixth in the state for student math performance and seventh for student reading performance. These strong student outcomes reflect the division’s sustained commitment to delivering high-quality instruction, investing in teacher leadership and professional growth, and continuously strengthening the systems that support teaching and learning.

Strategies for Success:

Establishing and implementing a shared instructional framework:

- RCPS’s strategic plan, referred to as the [C-Change Framework](#), consists of five pillars: Instructional Balance, Classroom and School Climate, Learning Culture, Support Services, and Professional Growth. The framework is designed to promote deeper learning, defined as learning that is engaging and purposeful, where students develop strong collaborative problem-solving and communication skills needed for long-term success.
- The framework reflects the results of a broader stakeholder engagement process, where division leaders collected feedback from teachers, principals, students, and community members on what an ideal educational experience would look like.
- All RCPS staff members are trained on how to use the C-Change framework during their initial onboarding process. The framework is further reinforced year-round through professional development opportunities, including a Leadership Academy. These academies occur 10 times per year and are attended by assistant principals, principals, and division leaders, who then provide targeted support to teachers within their buildings.
- In addition to the C-Change framework, RCPS has committed to providing all students with access to high-quality curricula. Rather than adopting a single curriculum, the



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division developed a Dynamic Curriculum Guide (K–10), aligned to [Virginia's standards of learning \(SOLs\)](#). The guide integrates core content with enrichment opportunities and differentiated pathways, giving teachers flexibility to adapt to students' needs while maintaining curricular alignment.

- This approach prevents teachers from having to learn new curricula every time there is a change in building or division leadership. Ensuring consistent curricular usage across classrooms and buildings helps promote equitable student access to high-quality learning materials, thus improving student academic outcomes.

System-wide commitment to literacy development:

- The division prioritizes early literacy, with a strong emphasis on phonics and foundational reading skills. Acknowledging the critical connection between literacy skills and early childhood development, RCPS made the decision to keep its youngest students in-person during the COVID-19 pandemic. The division used alternative classroom spaces, like gyms and cafeterias, to provide this in-person instruction. Division leaders attribute current reading student outcomes, in part, to this decision.
- In accordance with state law, RCPS has a [Division Literacy Plan](#) that is used to support student literacy development across the division's K-8 classrooms. This plan is grounded in research on the science of reading and evidence-based instructional practices. In addition to the division's literacy plan, each elementary and middle school are required to develop a site-based plan using a common template. These templates include sections for schools to identify their instructional materials, plans for educator professional development, progress monitoring strategies, and plans for family engagement. Students also have individual reading plans, which help teachers track their progress throughout the year and strategically adjust instruction as needed.
- RCPS has provided each middle school in the division with a dedicated literacy coach. Coaches work directly with ELA, special education, and content-area teachers to improve instruction and support students through co-teaching, modeling, and small-group work.
- The division facilitates professional learning communities (PLCs) for teachers and building leaders to keep tabs on student learning. Within these PLCs, ELA teachers, reading coaches, and principals meet to review student data meetings on a regular basis and identify strategies for individualized instruction with struggling readers.
- RCPS offers two summer reading programs: an incentivized reading program for all K-12 students in partnership with the Roanoke County Library System, and a "Path to AP" program where students can earn academic credit through structured summer reading activities.

Data-driven instruction:

- In addition to using state assessment data to inform instructional practices, RCPS has created other opportunities to collect data on student performance. The division uses [MasteryConnect](#), where teachers build and share assessments, monitor student performance by standard, and analyze trends over time. Benchmark and formative assessment data are shared across classrooms, schools, and divisions to inform ongoing instructional decisions.
- The division requires their PLCs to meet regularly to review formative data, identify student needs, and adjust instruction. Teachers are trained to analyze their own



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classroom data and make instructional decisions, reinforcing a culture of shared ownership for student outcomes across the system.

- Instructional leaders, including Division Directors of Instruction and content supervisors, hold regular, division-wide data meetings with principals and teachers to review in-year data. This helps the division make timely instructional adjustments rather than waiting for end-of-year assessment results.
- The division adopts a proactive approach to engaging teachers in strategic planning processes before state assessment data is released. This includes deploying instructional coaches and allocating resources in response to identified needs. Throughout this process, the division intentionally balances guidance with autonomy, allowing high-performing schools the flexibility to sustain their success while directing targeted support to underperforming schools.