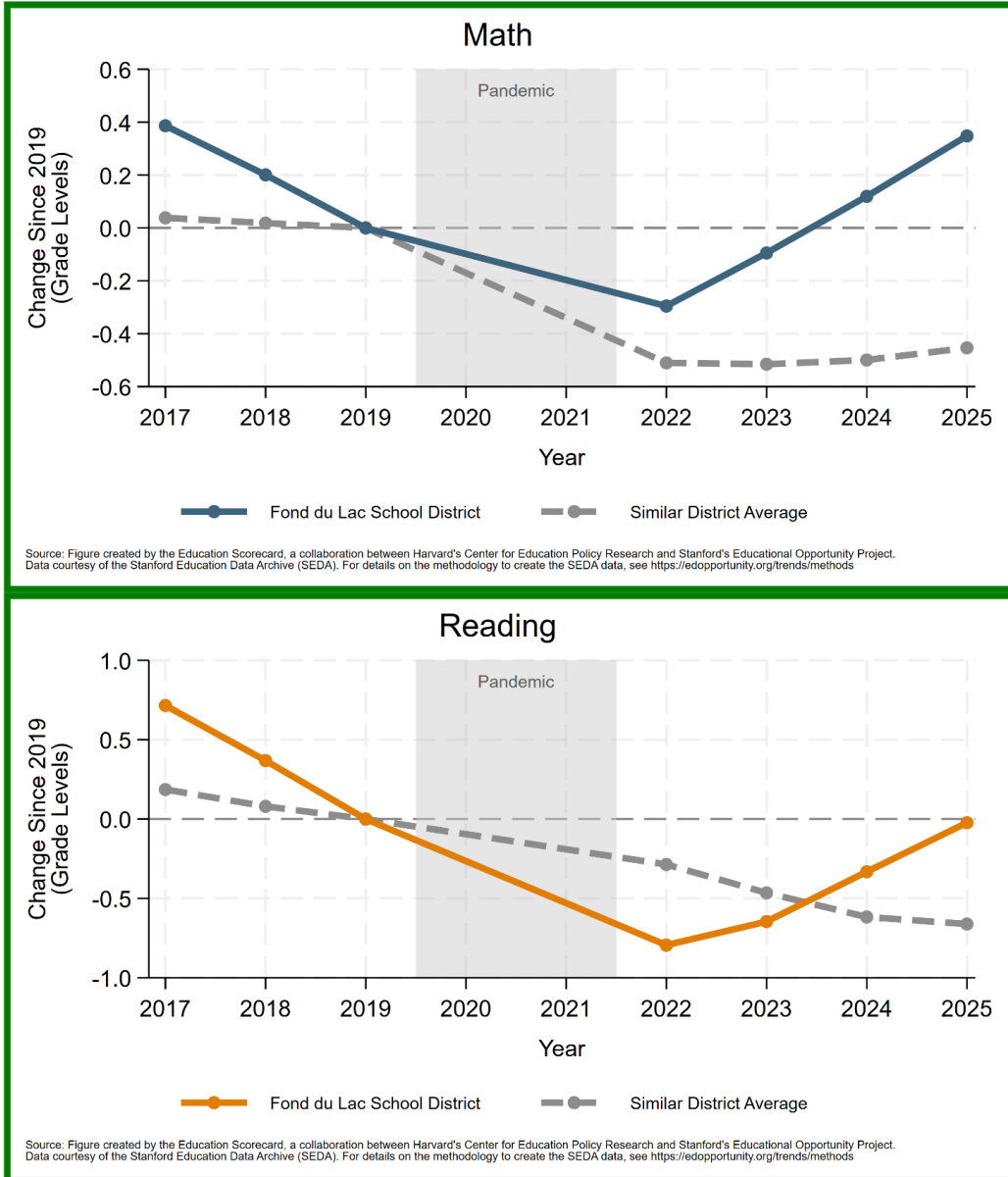


Fond du Lac School District
Fond du Lac, WI

Fond du Lac School District, WI
Rising Faster than Similar Districts in Math & Reading



Similar Districts: Janesville School District, Oshkosh Area School District, Waukesha School District, Beloit School District, Eau Claire Area School District

Student Demographics:

Total student population: 6,457

Socioeconomically Disadvantaged: 49.5%

Three largest racial demographics:

White: 59.1%

Hispanic/Latino: 20.6%

Black/African American: 8.9%

Matt Steinbarth, Superintendent

steinbarthm@fonddulac.k12.wi.us

- “We’ve made a fundamental shift in the role of the principal from a building manager to a true instructional leader. By creating the Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) positions to handle daily administrative tasks and behavior support, we freed our principals to be where they matter most: in the classroom and at the data table.”
- We refuse to let the summer slide undo the hard work our students and teachers put in during the school year. Through our partnership with the Boys & Girls Club, we’ve created a seamless, year-round learning ecosystem that provides our most vulnerable students with the consistent, high-dosage academic support they need to return in the fall ready to learn, not just catch up.”

Background:

Located in East-Central Wisconsin, the Fond du Lac School District (FDLSD) is the 19th largest school district of over 400 districts in the state. Between 2021 and 2025, FDLSD achieved a remarkable ascent in Wisconsin’s annual district rankings, [jumping 200 places](#) from 375th to 175th. Superintendent Matt Steinbarth attributes this upward trajectory to exceptional student growth; from 2022 to 2024, the district secured the [highest positive change](#) in reading growth statewide and recorded the greatest improvement in math scores among Wisconsin’s 20 largest districts. Under Superintendent Steinbarth’s leadership, FDLSD has catalyzed these results by integrating intensive leadership development, adopting rigorous new curricula, and deploying new data practices, all bolstered by community partnerships to support year-round learning.

Strategies for Success:

Instruction-focused leadership development:

- Over the last several years, FDLSD leaders and educators have engaged in two leadership development programs: [The University of Virginia’s Partnership for Leaders in Education](#) and the [InitiativeOne \(iOne\) Leadership Institute](#).
- As part of the University of Virginia’s Partnership for Leaders in Education program, responsibility for student learning is shared across district staff, school leaders, and individual educators. Principals have developed a strong understanding of what is happening in classrooms, participating in frequent classroom observations and weekly data-driven instruction meetings with their grade-level teams.
- To allow principals to immerse themselves in classroom instruction, the district created the role of Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSA) in the 2021-22 school year to share administrative responsibilities. Now, each elementary school has a TOSA; TOSAs are credentialed educators who function similarly to Deans of Students or Assistant Principals. TOSAs monitor classroom instruction, support student behavior, and provide guidance to teachers.
- Participation in the iOne Leadership Institute aided FDLSD in their effort to build a culture of support among all district staff and educators. Part of this effort included

adopting high expectations for staff and students and always putting student needs at the forefront.

Adopting high-quality curricula and utilizing data-driven instruction:

- The district has taken a more structured approach to curriculum implementation across grade levels to ensure consistency and quality of instruction. While teachers previously were allowed to make individual curricular decisions, FDLSD engaged in district-wide implementation of new ELA and math curricula. As shared by Superintendent Steinbarth, the district believes that every student, no matter which teacher they have or school they attend, should have the same opportunities to access high-quality curriculum and instruction. Once teachers demonstrate consistent implementation, the district collects teacher feedback to identify gaps in the curriculum and create opportunities for increased teacher voice and flexibility in implementation.
- One piece of the district's growth in student reading and math outcomes has been adopting and implementing high-quality curricula. To promote student reading and literacy outcomes, the district adopted the [Amplify CKLA](#) curriculum for K-5 students and [Amplify ELA](#) for all middle school students. Math curriculum includes the [Bridges in Mathematics](#) curriculum for grades K-5, [Illustrative Math](#) for grades 6-8, and [Reveal Math](#) for grades 9-12.
- This adoption was supported by extensive professional development designed to strengthen teacher understanding and implementation, including intensive summer retreats for school-based team leaders. Each school designates six to seven team leaders, who are classroom teachers responsible for disseminating what they learned during these training sessions and supporting their colleagues in implementing the curriculum effectively.
- Principals actively participate in all data-driven instruction (DDI) meetings within their school buildings, which occur weekly for 70 minutes. During these meetings, teachers present their students' formative and summative assessment data aligned to state standards, allowing teams to identify specific skill areas of student need and identify strategies to adjust and individualize instruction. Meetings are divided by grade bands (e.g., K-2 and 3-5) who meet on separate days, allowing principals time to visit classrooms and stay connected with instruction.
- This focused, data-driven approach has led to strong outcomes across the district, with all 13 elementary and middle schools meeting or exceeding expectations. Tools like [i-Ready](#) support targeted interventions, which have proven effective in promoting student outcomes. For example, after adopting this data-driven approach, the district's one previously underperforming school is now ranked in the top 1% of Wisconsin schools for student growth.

Community partnerships for consistent learning opportunities:

- The district prioritizes wraparound support for students beyond the school day through strong community partnerships, most notably with their [local Boys & Girls Club](#). The superintendent serves on the local Boys & Girls Club board, helping align programming with district priorities and ensuring consistency in student support.
- Summer programming is closely connected to the school year. The local Boys & Girls Club is a recipient of a 21st Century Learning Center Grant that supports the needs of low-income students. The Boys & Girls Club uses these funds to hire district teachers to lead academic instruction, using the same curriculum and resources students engage with during the school year. Student progress is monitored through the i-Ready system, allowing for continuity in tracking student growth.
- To further coordinate services, the city's recreation center operates under the school

district, and some recreation funding supports Boys & Girls Club programming. Together, these efforts reflect a broader strategy to extend learning and enrichment opportunities beyond the traditional school calendar.

- In the 2025 summer session, 92% of students who attended the Boys & Girls Club summer programming improved their reading iReady score, and 95% improved their math i-Ready score.
- FDLSD has engaged in community engagement as a strategy to reduce chronic absenteeism. Principals and TOSAs have adopted the habit of walking through local neighborhoods and knocking on doors to build trust with families and encourage parents to send their children to school.