



## What does a change in a student's percentile mean? How updated norms impact risk status in Wisconsin

We want to inform you about an important update to the way your child's standardized academic test scores for early literacy are interpreted this school year. Beginning now, the norms used to compare students' scores to other students across the country have been refreshed. In simple terms, norming is the process of updating how test scores are ranked nationally, ensuring the results more accurately reflect how your child's performance compares to students today, not several years ago. Norming every 7 - 10 years is a best practice in standardized testing.

As a result of this improvement, you may notice that your child's national percentile ranking could change slightly from previous years. While the updated norms play a significant role in shaping how percentile rankings are interpreted, it is important to recognize that they represent just one piece of a much larger puzzle. A student's national percentile ranking can fluctuate from year to year for many reasons—and it's often impossible to attribute these changes to a single cause with certainty. Other factors which may contribute to shifts in student performance between grade levels include:

- Students may have made gains relative to their peers between school years.
- Students may experience particularly good or challenging testing days, influenced by their mood, motivation, or personal circumstances.
- The standardized assessments themselves evolve to reflect grade-level expectations, which may highlight or obscure individual strengths depending on the content covered

Each of these factors—alongside the norming update—interact in complex ways, and their relative impact varies from student to student. For that reason, understanding shifts in percentile ranking requires looking beyond test scores alone and considering the broader context of your child's learning journey, including classroom performance, engagement, and growth over time.

The effect of updated norms on a student's national percentile ranking matters because Wisconsin statute requires that students who score below the 25th percentile engage in diagnostic assessment and have a personal reading plan. The updated norms help ensure that identification for extra help is based on the most current and accurate information. Overall, these updates offer greater confidence that all students' achievements are measured in a way that more accurately reflects their standing among peers today. More information about early literacy in Wisconsin can be found at [www.dpi.wi.gov/wi-reads](http://www.dpi.wi.gov/wi-reads).