



Updates to Norms for Early Literacy and Reading Measures and Composites for the 2025–2026 School Year

The following key updates are going into effect for Fall testing on August 1, 2025:

- Updated norms for Early Literacy and Reading measures and composites
- Updated norms affect national percentile rankings, student growth percentiles (SGP), risk tier cut scores, and reporting features describing performance levels
- New prekindergarten (pre-K) Early Literacy Composite combines scores from Print Concepts, Auditory Vocabulary, and Initial Sounds
- New Grade 1 Early Literacy Composite combines scores from Oral Reading Fluency, Nonsense Word Fluency, and Word Reading Fluency (replacing composite based only on Oral Reading Fluency)

Overview of Norming

Norms refer to the statistical benchmarks used to report national percentiles, SGP, and other reporting features that describe how students' scores and growth rank relative to peers across the nation. *Norming* refers to the statistical analysis of student data to derive norms. To obtain a robust estimate of how students in the whole U.S. population score on aimswebPlus measures (without having scoring data from the entire population), norming methods involve collecting scoring data from a normative sample (or norming sample) of students that is representative of the entire population. Norming samples must include a large number of students carefully sampled from all ability levels with demographic characteristics matching the population they represent (e.g. matching proportions of students from different races/ethnicities, socioeconomic status, and genders). Additionally, norming samples represent the performance of students at certain points in time.

Why Norms Need to be Updated

Updating norms is a process of updating the reference points against which new test scores are compared, so changes in norms represent a shift from the old norms referencing how students in the United States were performing in the past to new norms referencing how students are performing more recently. Student performance at any point in time is a reflection of countless factors shaping who the students are, what skills they are expected to learn, when they are expected to learn them, and all the sociocultural influences on the educational systems students learn these skills in. Therefore, there are countless reasons current students perform similarly in some ways and differently in other ways relative to students in the past. Therefore, updating norms is critical for ensuring that aimswebPlus reports are based on a better understanding of how students are performing in classrooms today.

Scope of Norming Updates

Norming Updates for Measures

Updated norms cover all Early Literacy (Pre-k–Grade 1) and Reading (Grades 2–12) measures with only a few exceptions noted below. Tables 1 and 2 show all the measures, grade levels, and seasons where norms have been updated. Primarily, these updates will enable aimswebPlus to report national percentile rankings and use Risk Tier cut scores to describe score results. Additionally, new SGP will be reported to evaluate growth (rate of improvement [ROI]) between seasons within a grade level, including Pre-K and high school grades where growth norms were unavailable before.

In most instances, updated Early Literacy norms will replace existing norms that had been available since previous norming efforts. Additionally, new norms are being added to seasons and grade levels for some measures where norms were unavailable before. Specifically, the Early Literacy benchmark forms that were added to new grade levels and seasons for the 2023–2024 school year will now report results based on the new norms.

Updates to Reading measure norms for Grades 2–8 will replace existing norms that had been available since previous norming efforts. Updates for Grades 9–12 include major improvements in how high school reading scores will be reported. Specifically, grade specific norms will be available for reporting performance on test scores and growth. This will replace the ways that Grade 8 norms had been directly copied for reporting high school performance.

Some measures were not included in the norming updates. Additional data collection and analysis will be necessary to provide robust norms in the future for Listening Comprehension, Spelling, Reading Comprehension–Progress Monitoring, Classic Maze, and Written Expression subtests.

Table 1 Updated Early Literacy Measure Norms for Pre-K–Grade 1

Early Literacy measure	Pre-K				Kindergarten				Grade 1			
	F	W	Sp	Su	F	W	Sp	Su	F	W	Sp	Su
Print Concepts (PC)	✓	✓ ⁿ	✓ ⁿ	✓ ⁿ	✓	✓ ⁿ	✓ ⁿ	✓ ⁿ				
Initial Sounds (IS)	✓	✓	✓ ⁿ	✓ ⁿ	✓	✓	✓ ⁿ	✓ ⁿ				
Auditory Vocabulary (AV)	✓	✓	✓	✓ ⁿ	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ ⁿ	✓ ⁿ	✓ ⁿ	
Letter Word Sounds Fluency (LWSF)			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Phoneme Segmentation (PS)					✓ ⁿ	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ ⁿ	✓ ⁿ	
Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Word Reading Fluency (WRF)							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)									✓	✓	✓	✓

Note. Check marks indicate where Fall (F), Winter (W), Spring (Sp), and Summer (Su) forms will be available with updated norms. The notation *n* indicates measures that have new norms in grade levels or seasons where they did not before. Summer scores will be reported using the same norms as Spring.

Table 2 Updated Reading Measure Norms for Grades 2–12

Reading measure	Grades 2–3				Grades 4–8				Grades 9–12			
	F	W	Sp	Su	F	W	Sp	Su	F	W	Sp	Su
Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reading Comprehension-Fixed Form (RC-FF)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reading Comprehension-Computer Adaptive (RC-CAT)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vocabulary (VO)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Silent Reading Fluency (SRF)					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note. Check marks indicate where Fall (F), Winter (W), Spring (Sp), and Summer (Su) forms will be available with updated norms. Summer scores will be reported using the same norms as Spring.

Composite Score Updates and New Norms

Updated norms also apply to the Early Literacy (Pre-K–Grade 1) and Reading (Grades 2–12) Composite scores. For most grade levels, norming updates are simply replacing the older norms. For Pre-K, Grade 1, and high school grade levels, updates to composite scores and norms are unique (see Table 3). Additionally, these updates will add new student growth percentiles for composites and Risk Tier cut score features in aimswebPlus for Pre-K and each high school grade level, where norms had been unavailable before.

Table 3 Updates to Early Literacy and Reading Composite Scoring and Norms

Composite name	Grade level(s)	Composite calculation	Update details
Early Literacy	Pre-K	Auditory Vocabulary + Initial Sounds + Print Concepts	New composite added
Early Literacy	K	Letter Naming Fluency + Letter Word Sounds Fluency	Update to existing norms
Early Literacy	1	Oral Reading Fluency + Nonsense Word Fluency + Word Reading Fluency	New composite added and update to existing norms
Reading	2–3	(½ × Oral Reading Fluency) + Reading Comprehension + Vocabulary	Update to existing norms
Reading	4–8	(½ × Silent Reading Fluency*) + Reading Comprehension + Vocabulary	Update to existing norms
Reading	9–12	(½ × Silent Reading Fluency*) + Reading Comprehension + Vocabulary	Update to existing norms**

*For Grades 4–12, if a student’s Silent Reading Fluency score is null, their Oral Reading Fluency score will be used instead to calculate their Reading Composite score.

**Updated Reading Composite norms for high school grade levels are specified uniquely for each grade level.

Reporting Features Affected by Norming Updates

Assessments taken in 2025–2026 and going forward will be reported with the new norms. No changes will be made to assessments taken during the 2024–2025 school year or earlier, which were reported in aimswebPlus using the previous Early Literacy and Reading norms.

National Percentiles

The national percentile rankings reported when students complete an assessment will be based on the new norms. For any given measure score, the percentile shown on a report for the 2025–2026 school year may differ from the percentile that the same score received in previous years.

Percentile Cut Scores

Norming updates affecting national percentile rankings mean that scores associated with performing at or below a certain percentile will likely be different for the 2025–2026 school year compared to previous years. This is especially important to note for customers who use aimswebPlus in collaboration with state or district assessment requirements.

Performance Levels

aimswebPlus performance levels categorize students based on national percentile rankings. While the range of percentiles for each level remains unchanged, updates to rankings may shift some scores into new categories. Reporting updates include total scores at the measure level and domain level performance within measures. (e.g., Measure Breakdown and Skills Plan reports).

Risk Tier Cut Scores

Recent normative data updated the risk tier cut scores which predict students' risk of not meeting spring percentile targets. New national percentile norms identified Spring scores for target percentiles (15th–70th). Students in the normative samples not meeting these targets were analyzed to derive cut scores for low, moderate, or high risk tiers. This is especially important to note for customers who use aimswebPlus risk tiers in collaboration with state or district assessment requirements.

Student Growth Percentiles

SGP rankings, which describe a student's ROI across the school year, will reflect the new norms. These updates will include the SGP reported on the change in benchmark screening scores between seasons and how growth norms support progress monitoring during goal setting and evaluating growth trend lines.

Navigating the Transition

Norming updates provide many benefits, and understanding the changes can help avoid challenges or confusion. The following section provides an overview of a few key insights about how norming updates can affect score interpretation and how to make reasonable comparisons of new results relative to previous norms. The frequently asked questions (FAQ) section at the end of this document provides answers to more specific questions that may come up.

Overall Trends in Norming Updates

Norms were updated for each measure separately, so changes in the results vary from measure to measure. Still, there are some overall trends that were observed for most measures. Specifically, performance observed in the recent normative samples indicates that across most grade levels and measures current students are scoring lower on average than students in the prior norming sample. There are some measures and grade levels where current students appear to be scoring consistently or better than students in the prior norming sample, but these are exceptions to the

overall trend. These shifts observed in the aimswebPlus norming updates are consistent with similar long-term trends observed across the field of academic testing in the United States, including those recently reported by the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

These overall trends mean that national percentiles based on new norms are more likely to seem higher than national percentiles reported for the same scores with the previous norms. The national percentiles across all Early Literacy and Reading measures and grade levels are on average 8.9 percentile points higher with the current norms than the previous norms. This average gives a sense of the new norms overall, but updates from measure to measure, grade to grade, season to season, and even across different scores are unique. For most measures and grade levels, shifts in national percentiles are close to the overall average, ranging from 3 percentile points lower to 20 percentile points higher. In some rare cases, updated norms show larger shifts. For example, the Kindergarten norms for Letter Naming Fluency are 23 national percentile points higher for some scores, but the Kindergarten norms for Phoneme Segmentation are 22 percentile points lower for some scores. Whichever way the updates to the norms create changes in reporting, they ultimately reflect a new and improved understanding of how students are performing in schools today.

How to Make Comparisons of Performance Between Old and New Norms

The norming updates may make comparisons between the 2024–2025 and 2025–2026 school years more challenging than previous school years in a few ways. Consider the following guidance to make valid comparisons of scores reported with previous and current norms.

1. When comparing the performance of students in a grade/class this year relative to last year, remember that the content and scoring rules of the measures have not changed. Renorming makes comparing national percentiles invalid across previous and current norms, but comparisons of raw scores or vertical scale scores between school years still provide valid insights into how different cohorts of students are performing on the same measures.
2. When specifically comparing performance of Grade 1 Early Literacy performance to previous school years, it is important to note that the 2025–2026 Early Literacy Composite score is composed of multiple measures, whereas in previous years this composite only represented performance in one measure, Oral Reading Fluency.
3. When comparing how an individual or group of students performs in Fall of 2025 relative to their performance in Spring of 2024, it would be misleading to directly compare only changes in national percentile scores between these tests. Likewise, some measures change in complexity across grade levels (e.g., Oral Reading Fluency passages) making comparisons of raw scores across grade levels difficult too. Alternatively, measures like Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary report vertical scale scores which can be used to track progress across grade levels. Also, aimswebPlus calculates local norms when 30 or more students in a grade level have taken the same measure or composite. Comparing a student's local norms across grade levels can reveal if their performance relative to peers is consistent or changing.

FAQ

Why are the new norms different than the old norms?

There are many contributing factors to the changes observed between the new and former norms. Primarily, changes reflect differences in student performance. Those changes in performance may be driven by factors including but not limited to changes in educational trends in the population, major disruptions to educational practice (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic), demographic shifts in the population, and differences between norming samples.

Are there any aimswebPlus reports that help compare scores across school years that use different norms?

The Group Benchmark Distribution report has options to show the range of scores observed by groups of students across multiple school years.

Have the forms changed because of the new norms?

No. Updating norms does not change the content on any measure's form. Likewise, updating norms does not affect content or how responses are scored.

Do I need to print off new test materials?

There is only one update to Early Literacy measures to be aware of. A new Pre-K Summer form of Auditory Vocabulary will be added to the benchmark measures starting in the Summer of 2026. Examiners may print off the new Auditory Vocabulary stimulus pages and add them to their existing Pre-K Summer Benchmark stimulus book or reprint the entire file.

How do new norms work for the Computer Adaptive Test (CAT) and the Fixed Form of Reading Comprehension?

New Reading Comprehension norms are based on vertical scale scores observed from students taking the CAT version of the measure. These norming results will be used when reporting the results of CAT and Fixed Form Reading Comprehension scores. This is possible as both versions of the test use the same vertical scale.

Have the norms for the Spanish Early Literacy and Spanish Reading measures been updated too?

No. The Spanish Early Literacy and Spanish reading measure norms will not change for the 2025–2026 school year.

Have the norms for Early Numeracy and Math measures been updated too?

No. The Early Numeracy and Math measure norms will not change for the 2025–2026 school year.