

## PSSA Performance Trends from 2018-19 to 2022-23

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### Key Findings

- 34.0% of students in grades 3-8 scored Proficient or Advanced on the 2022-23 PSSA ELA compared to 34.4% in 2021-22 and 35.7% in 2018-19.
- 20.7% of students in grades 3-8 scored Proficient or Advanced on the 2022-23 PSSA Math compared to 16.5% in 2021-22 and 21.6% in 2018-19.
- 40.2% of students in grades 4 and 8 scored Proficient or Advanced on the 2022-23 PSSA Science compared to 37.1% in 2021-22 and 40.0% in 2018-19.

### Overview

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessments (PSSAs) are standardized state assessments administered to Pennsylvania students in grades 3-8 at the end of each school year.<sup>1</sup> The PSSA English Language Arts (ELA) and PSSA Math are administered to students in grades 3-8, and the PSSA Science is administered to students in grades 4 and 8. Students can score in one of four performance levels: Advanced, Proficient, Basic, and Below Basic.

At the School District of Philadelphia (SDP or the District), PSSA performance is the focus for three of the five goals adopted by the Board of Education.<sup>2</sup> This data brief describes District-wide trends in PSSA performance between the 2018-19 (pre-Covid) and 2022-23 school years.<sup>3</sup>

### PSSA ELA

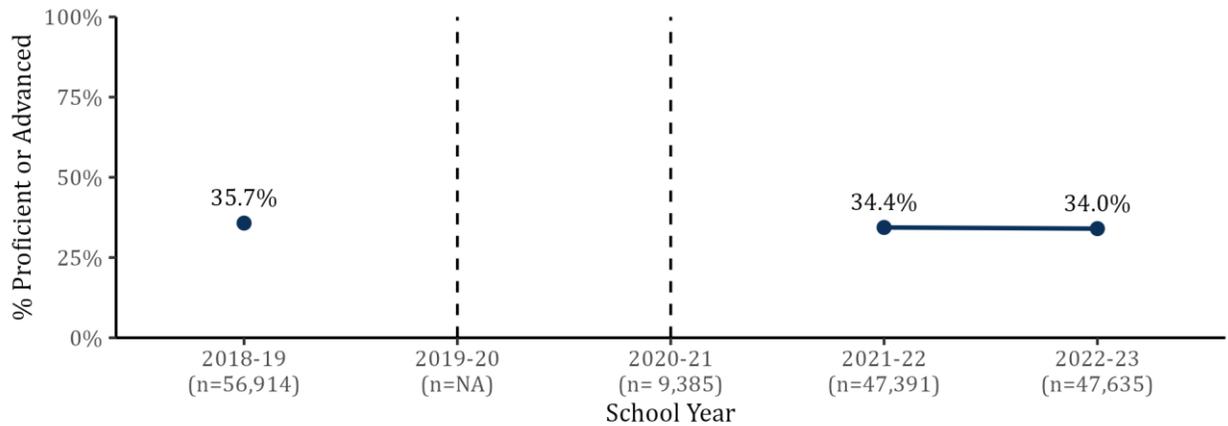
In the 2022-23 school year, the percentage of students in grades 3-8 scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA ELA was 34.0% (Figure 1). This was similar to the 2021-22 proficiency rate of 34.4% but was lower than the 2018-19 rate of 35.7%. The percentage of students scoring Below Basic decreased from 28.2% in 2021-22 to 26.4% in 2022-23, meaning that a smaller percentage of students scored in the lowest performance level, but the 2022-23 Below Basic rate was still higher than the 2018-19 rate of 22.8% (Figure 2).

<sup>1</sup> For more information see <https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Assessment%20and%20Accountability/PSSA/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.philasd.org/schoolboard/goals-and-guardrails/>

<sup>3</sup> Includes results from the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessments (PASA). The PASA is designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are not able to participate in the PSSA. For more information see <https://www.philasd.org/era/pssa-pasa-information/>

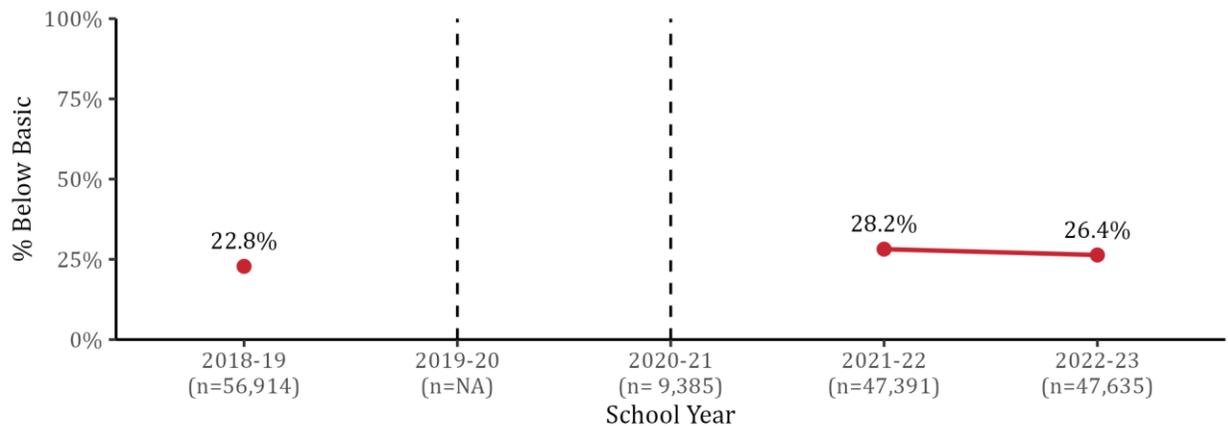
Figure 1. Percentage of students in grades 3-8 scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA ELA from 2018-19 to 2022-23



**Note:** NA = Not available; students did not take the PSSA exams in 2019-20 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Results not reported for 2020-21 because less than 20% of eligible students took the PSSA exams due to the Covid-19 pandemic and students enrolled in virtual or hybrid school. Results include all students in grades 3-8 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced and were attributed to the School District of Philadelphia.

**Source:** Qlik PSSA & Keystones App, Performance Details, downloaded October 6, 2023

Figure 2. Percentage of students in grades 3-8 scoring Below Basic on the PSSA ELA from 2018-19 to 2022-23

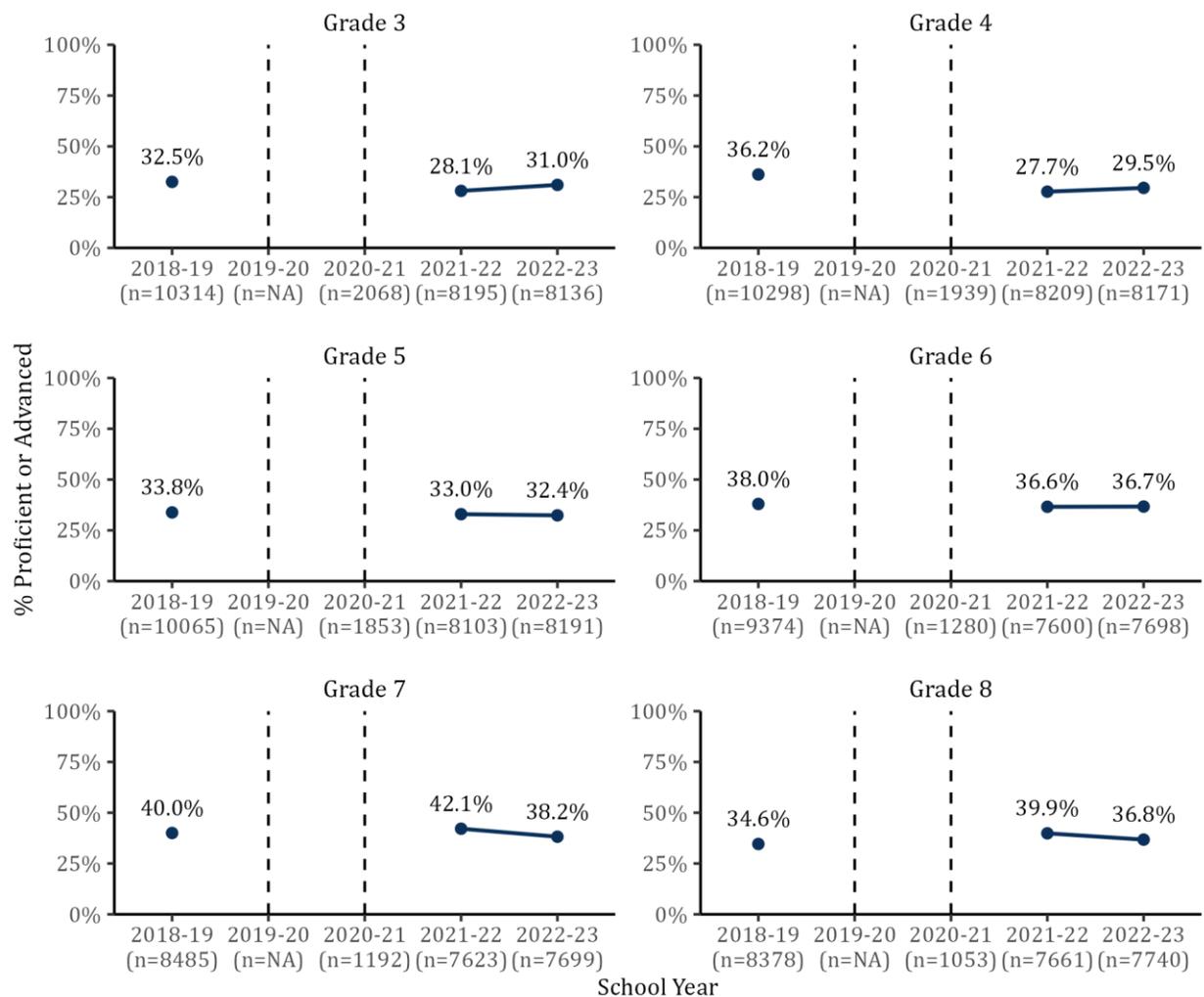


**Note:** NA = Not available; students did not take the PSSA exams in 2019-20 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Results not reported for 2020-21 because less than 20% of eligible students took the PSSA exams due to the Covid-19 pandemic and students enrolled in virtual or hybrid school. Results include all students in grades 3-8 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced and were attributed to the School District of Philadelphia.

**Source:** Qlik PSSA & Keystones App, Performance Details, downloaded October 6, 2023

Between 2021-22 and 2022-23, the percentage of students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA ELA increased for grades 3 and 4 (2.9 and 1.8 points, respectively), remained steady for grades 5 and 6, and decreased for grades 7 and 8 (3.9 and 3.1 points, respectively) (Figure 3). Compared to 2018-19, proficiency rates in 2022-23 were lower for all grades except grade 8, which improved upon the pre-Covid rate by 2.2 points. Grade 4, comprising students who completed first grade in 2019-20 when instruction first went virtual due to Covid, was the farthest away from the 2018-19 rate (-6.7 points between 2018-19 and 2022-23).

Figure 3. Percentage of students in grades 3-8 scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA ELA from 2018-19 to 2022-23, by grade level

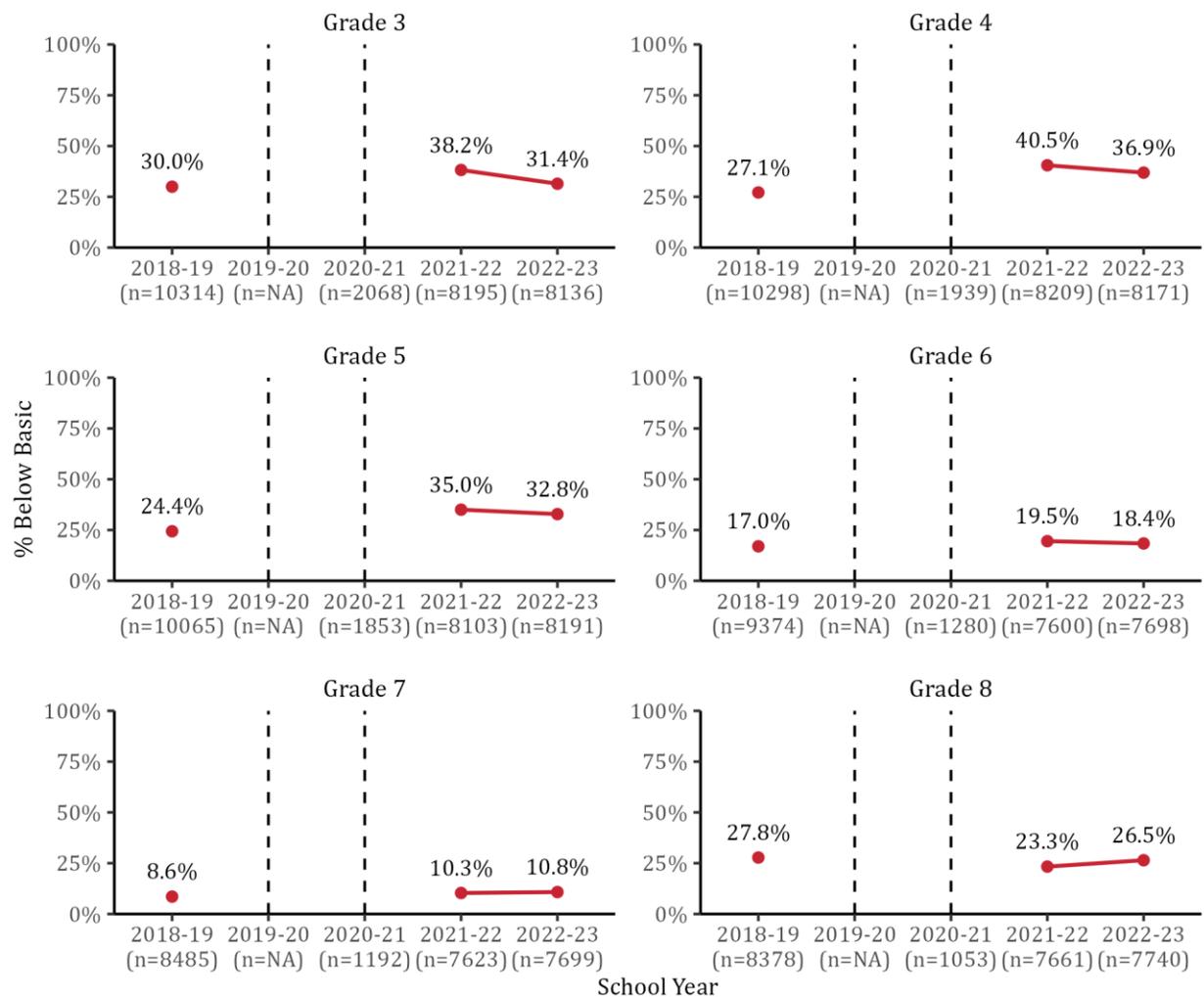


**Note:** NA = Not available; students did not take the PSSA exams in 2019-20 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Results not reported for 2020-21 because less than 20% of eligible students took the PSSA exams due to the Covid-19 pandemic and students enrolled in virtual or hybrid school. Results include all students in grades 3-8 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced and were attributed to the School District of Philadelphia.

**Source:** Qlik PSSA & Keystones App, Performance Details, downloaded October 6, 2023

Below Basic rates on the PSSA ELA decreased for grades 3 through 6 but increased for grade 8 between 2021-22 and 2022-23 (Figure 4). Compared to 2018-19, Below Basic rates were higher in 2022-23 for all grades except grade 8. Grades 4 and 5 were the farthest away from 2018-19 levels (9.8 and 8.4 percentage points, respectively).

Figure 4. Percentage of students in grades 3-8 scoring Below Basic on the PSSA ELA from 2018-19 to 2022-23, by grade level



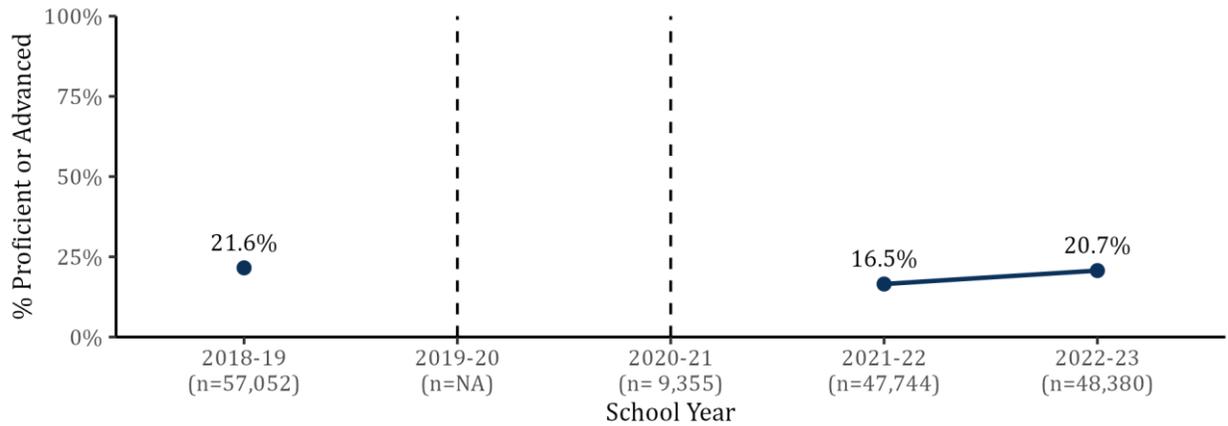
**Note:** NA = Not available; students did not take the PSSA exams in 2019-20 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Results not reported for 2020-21 because less than 20% of eligible students took the PSSA exams due to the Covid-19 pandemic and students enrolled in virtual or hybrid school. Results include all students in grades 3-8 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced and were attributed to the School District of Philadelphia.

**Source:** Qlik PSSA & Keystones App, Performance Details, downloaded October 6, 2023

## PSSA Math

The percentage of students in grades 3-8 scoring Proficient or Advanced on the 2022-23 PSSA Math was 20.7%, an increase of 4.2 points over 2021-22 and within 1 point of the 2018-19 proficiency rate (Figure 5). At the same time, the percentage of students scoring Below Basic decreased, from 61.7% in 2021-22 to 56.8% in 2022-23, but remained higher than the pre-Covid rate of 53.6% (Figure 6).

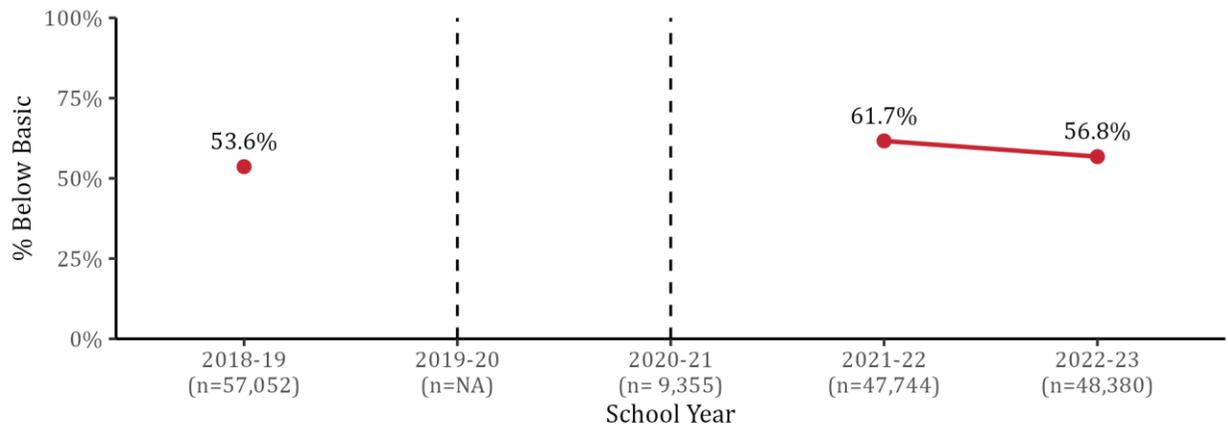
Figure 5. Percentage of students in grades 3-8 scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Math from 2018-19 to 2022-23



**Note:** NA = Not available; students did not take the PSSA exams in 2019-20 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Results not reported for 2020-21 because less than 20% of eligible students took the PSSA exams due to the Covid-19 pandemic and students enrolled in virtual or hybrid school. Results include all students in grades 3-8 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced and were attributed to the School District of Philadelphia.

**Source:** Qlik PSSA & Keystones App, Performance Details, downloaded October 6, 2023

Figure 6. Percentage of students in grades 3-8 scoring Below Basic on the PSSA Math from 2018-19 to 2022-23

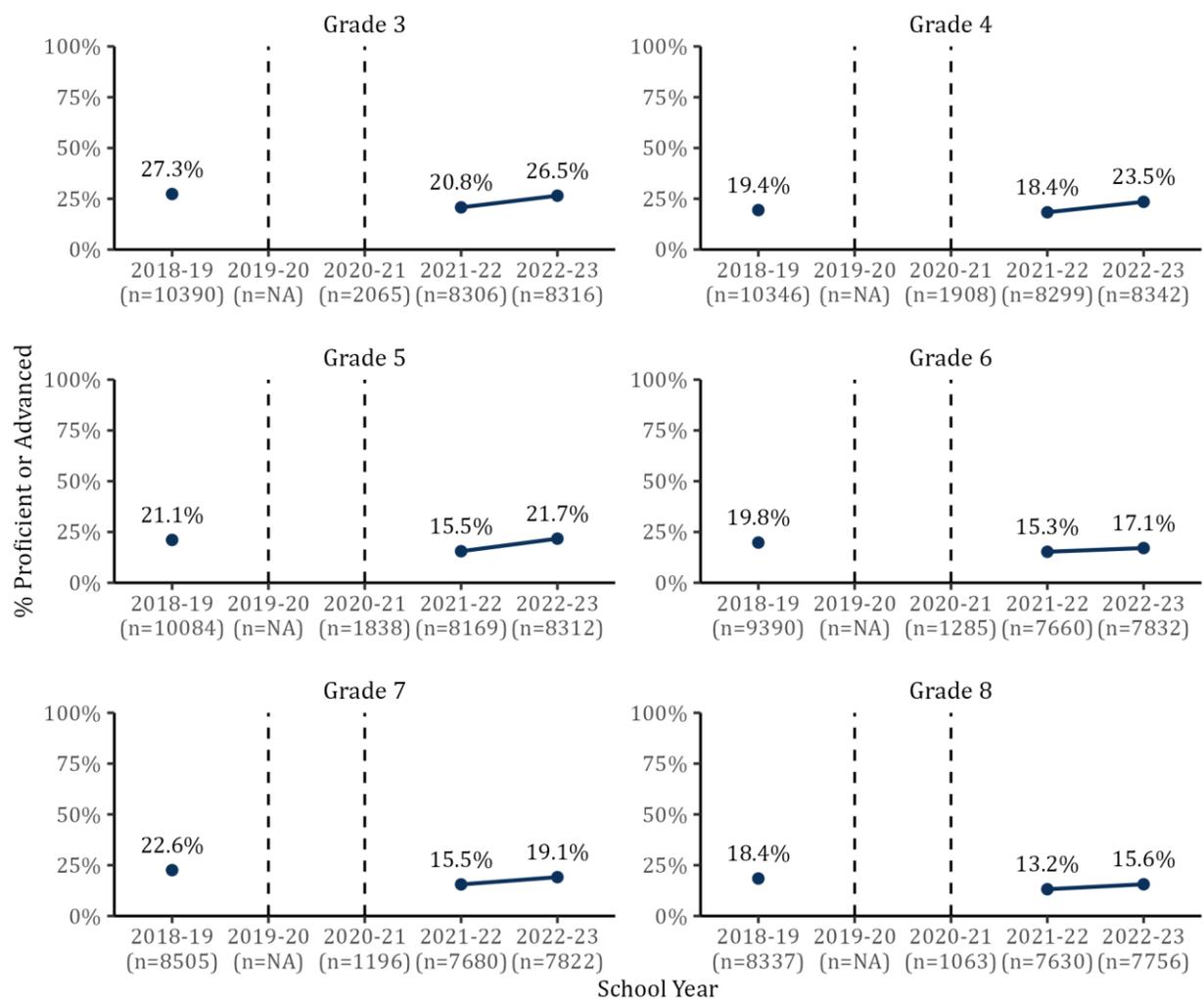


**Note:** NA = Not available; students did not take the PSSA exams in 2019-20 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Results not reported for 2020-21 because less than 20% of eligible students took the PSSA exams due to the Covid-19 pandemic and students enrolled in virtual or hybrid school. Results include all students in grades 3-8 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced and were attributed to the School District of Philadelphia.

**Source:** Qlik PSSA & Keystones App, Performance Details, downloaded October 6, 2023

PSSA Math proficiency rates increased for all grade levels between 2021-22 and 2022-23, with the largest increases in grades 3-5 (ranging from 5.1 to 6.2 percentage points; Figure 7). Compared to 2018-19, however, proficiency rates in 2022-23 were lower for all grades except grades 4 and 5. Grade 4 had the largest increase over the 2018-19 rate, at 4.1 points.

Figure 7. Percentage of students in grades 3-8 scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Math from 2018-19 to 2022-23, by grade level

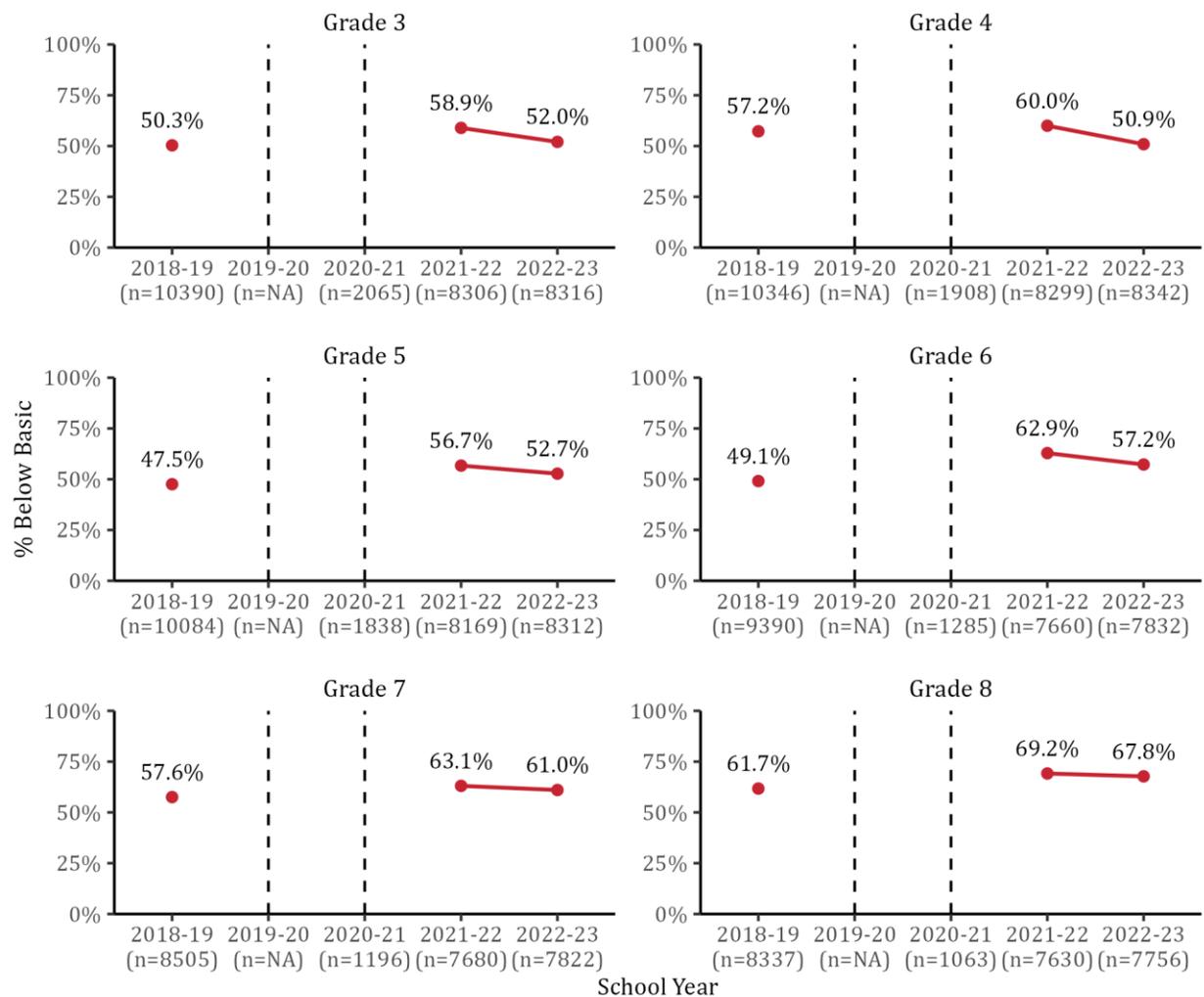


**Note:** NA = Not available; students did not take the PSSA exams in 2019-20 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Results not reported for 2020-21 because less than 20% of eligible students took the PSSA exams due to the Covid-19 pandemic and students enrolled in virtual or hybrid school. Results include all students in grades 3-8 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced and were attributed to the School District of Philadelphia.

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Between 2021-22 and 2022-23, the Below Basic rate decreased for all grade levels, with the largest decrease in grade 4, followed by grade 3 (9.1 and 6.9 percentage points, respectively; Figure 8). Despite these decreases, the 2022-23 Below Basic rate remained higher than the 2018-19 rate for all grades except grade 4 (-6.2 points between 2018-19 and 2022-23).

Figure 8. Percentage of students in grades 3-8 scoring Below Basic on the PSSA Math from 2018-19 to 2022-23, by grade level



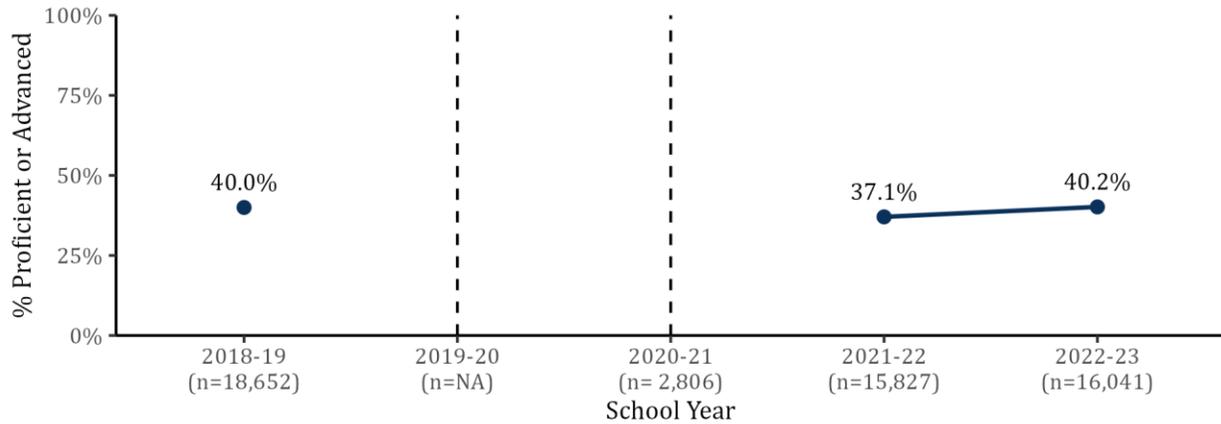
**Note:** NA = Not available; students did not take the PSSA exams in 2019-20 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Results not reported for 2020-21 because less than 20% of eligible students took the PSSA exams due to the Covid-19 pandemic and students enrolled in virtual or hybrid school. Results include all students in grades 3-8 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced and were attributed to the School District of Philadelphia.

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## PSSA Science

The percentage of students in grades 4 and 8 scoring Proficient or Advanced on the 2022-23 PSSA Science was 40.2%, a 3.1 percentage point improvement over 2021-22 and within 1 point of the pre-Covid rate (Figure 9). The Below Basic rate decreased from 35.6% in 2021-22 to 33.6% in 2022-23 but remained above the 2018-19 rate of 27.2% (Figure 10).

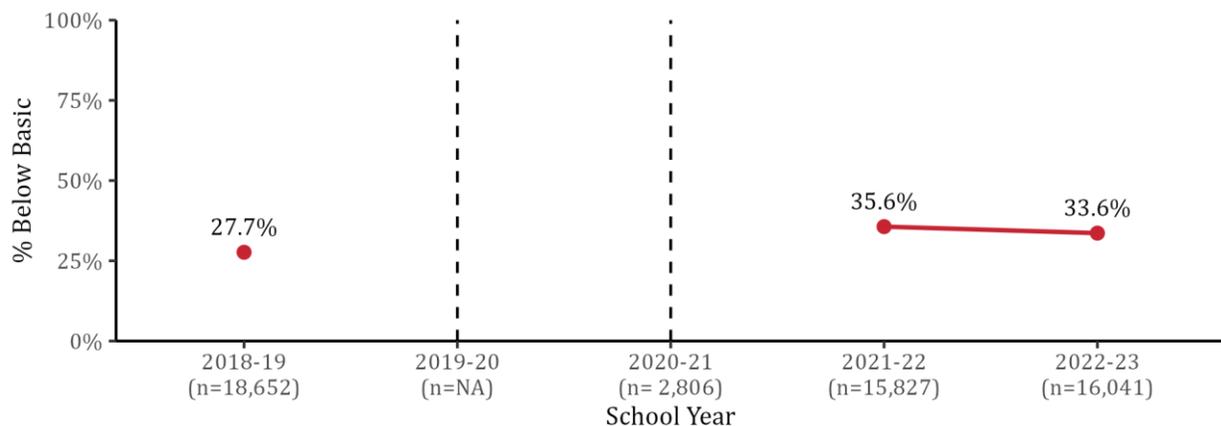
Figure 9. Percentage of students in grades 4 and 8 scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Science from 2018-19 to 2022-23



**Note:** NA = Not available; students did not take the PSSA exams in 2019-20 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Results not reported for 2020-21 because less than 20% of eligible students took the PSSA exams due to the Covid-19 pandemic and students enrolled in virtual or hybrid school. Results include all students in grades 3-8 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced and were attributed to the School District of Philadelphia.

**Source:** Qlik PSSA & Keystones App, Performance Details, downloaded October 6, 2023

Figure 10. Percentage of students in grades 4 and 8 scoring Below Basic on the PSSA Science from 2018-19 to 2022-23

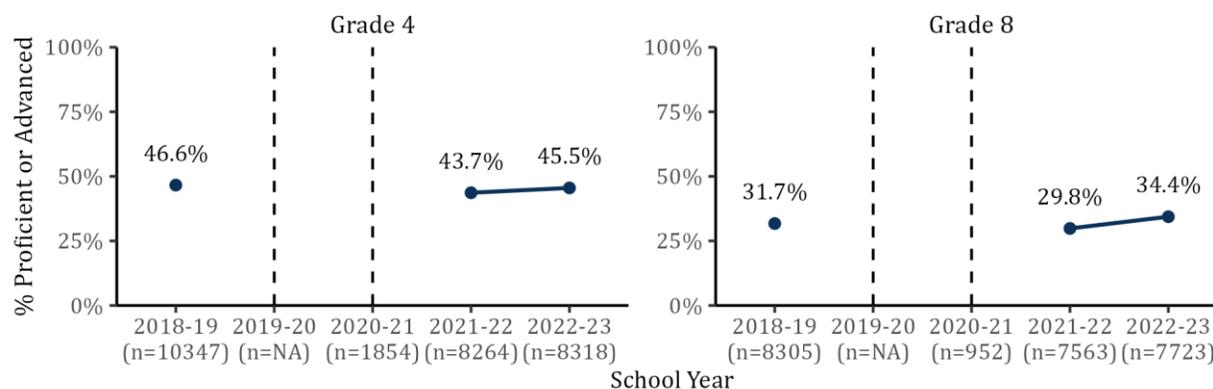


**Note:** NA = Not available; students did not take the PSSA exams in 2019-20 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Results not reported for 2020-21 because less than 20% of eligible students took the PSSA exams due to the Covid-19 pandemic and students enrolled in virtual or hybrid school. Results include all students in grades 3-8 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced and were attributed to the School District of Philadelphia.

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Proficiency rates on the PSSA Science increased for both grades 4 and 8 between 2021-22 and 2022-23 (Figure 11). Compared to 2018-19, the proficiency rate for grade 4 decreased 1.1 percentage points, while the proficiency rate for grade 8 improved 2.7 points in 2022-23. Below Basic rates for both grade levels decreased from 2021-22 but still exceeded 2018-19 levels (Figure 12).

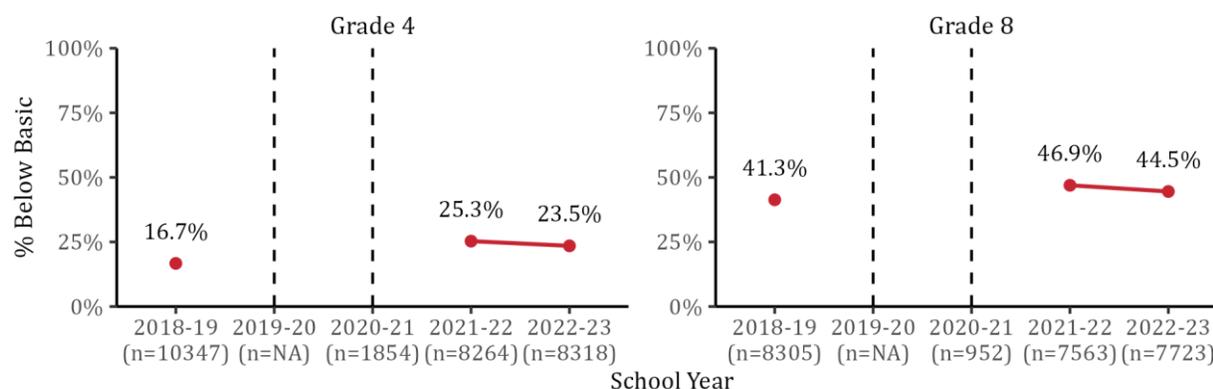
Figure 11. Percentage of students in grades 4 and 8 scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Science from 2018-19 to 2022-23, by grade level



**Note:** NA = Not available; students did not take the PSSA exams in 2019-20 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Results not reported for 2020-21 because less than 20% of eligible students took the PSSA exams due to the Covid-19 pandemic and students enrolled in virtual or hybrid school. Results include all students in grades 3-8 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced and were attributed to the School District of Philadelphia.

**Source:** Qlik PSSA & Keystones App, Performance Details, downloaded October 6, 2023

Figure 12. Percentage of students in grades 4 and 8 scoring Below Basic on the PSSA Science from 2018-19 to 2022-23, by grade level



**Note:** NA = Not available; students did not take the PSSA exams in 2019-20 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Results not reported for 2020-21 because less than 20% of eligible students took the PSSA exams due to the Covid-19 pandemic and students enrolled in virtual or hybrid school. Results include all students in grades 3-8 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced and were attributed to the School District of Philadelphia.

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## Conclusion

Overall, District-level proficiency rates on the PSSA Math and PSSA Science improved between 2021-22 and 2022-23, while proficiency on the PSSA ELA remained steady. Below Basic rates also decreased for all subjects in 2022-23 compared to 2021-22, meaning that a smaller percentage of students scored in the lowest performance level. However, proficiency rates still lagged behind 2018-19 levels in both PSSA ELA and PSSA Math, and Below Basic rates lagged behind 2018-19 levels in all subjects.

For some grade levels, performance trends differed from District-level trends. PSSA ELA proficiency rates increased for grades 3 and 4 (2.9 and 1.8 percentage points, respectively) and decreased for grades 7 and 8 (3.9 and 3.1 points, respectively) between 2021-22 and 2022-23. Furthermore, Below Basic rates for grades 7 and 8 did not decrease. For the PSSA Math, proficiency rates in grades 4 and 5 met or exceeded those from 2018-19 (+4.1 points and +0.6 points, respectively), and the Below Basic rate for grade 4 was 6.3 points below the pre-Covid rate. For the PSSA Science, the proficiency rate for grade 4 was still 1.1 points behind the 2018-19 rate.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Additional information on SDP PSSA performance is available on our Open Data website:  
[https://www.philasd.org/performance/programsservices/open-data/school-performance/#pssa\\_keystone](https://www.philasd.org/performance/programsservices/open-data/school-performance/#pssa_keystone)