

USBE Legislative Request Form

(Policy, Funding, & Efficiency / Reductions)

2027 General Session

SECTION 1: THE BOTTOM LINE

Request Title: Early Math Assessment

USBE Lead Point of Contact:

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- USBE Section: Assessment

Director Reviewer: Cydnee McCarty

Nature of Request (Select all that apply):

☐ **Policy Change:** Creating, amending, or repealing Utah State Code.
(Complete Section 4)

☒ **New/Increased Funding:** Seeking new financial resources.
(Complete Section 3)

☐ **Efficiency / Reduction:** Proposing the elimination or reduction of a program, mandate, or funding stream. (Complete Section 3 and/or 4)

Purpose Statement (BLUF - Bottom Line Up Front):

We are requesting \$1,450,000 in ongoing funding to reinstate statewide access to a standardized K-3 early math benchmark assessment and diagnostic screener. This tool allows educators to identify students at risk for early numeracy difficulties and progress-monitor targeted interventions.

Demonstrating immense local demand, 80.3% of Utah LEAs voluntarily opted to continue administering this assessment in SY2027 after state funding lapsed, with 64% choosing to cover the additional costs for digital administration out of local budgets.

SECTION 2: THE BUSINESS CASE

(Required for all requests)

The Problem:

Utah Code 53E-4-307.5 authorizes the State Board of Education to designate a benchmark math assessment for statewide use. However, dedicated state funding for the assessment was removed during the 2026 Legislative Session. Because USBE no longer had state appropriations to support statewide digital administration, the Board was forced to transition the assessment from a required statewide benchmark to an optional LEA-level choice for the 2026–2027 school year.

Without ongoing state funding, the state loses its only consistent early math diagnostic tool. Furthermore, current statute does not mandate that LEAs act upon early math data or provide progress-monitored interventions without funded statewide benchmark infrastructure.

The Source:

This request was formally generated and prioritized by the Utah State Board of Education during the 2026 Legislative Session; however, it was ultimately not picked up or funded by the Legislature. Recognizing the critical nature of early numeracy diagnostics and responding to strong demand from the field, the Board's Finance Committee voted in its May 2026 meeting to direct USBE staff to prepare a renewed funding request for the 2027 General Session.

The necessity of this request is overwhelmingly supported by local educational agencies (LEAs) statewide. Even though the transition to an optional model meant state funding lapsed for SY2027, 80.3% of Utah LEAs voluntarily elected to continue administering the early math benchmark

assessment using local funds. Furthermore, 64% of participating LEAs chose to absorb additional local costs to maintain digital administration rather than paper-based testing. This remarkable level of local investment demonstrates that Utah school districts and charter schools view early math screening as an indispensable tool for classroom instruction and student success.

Projected Results:

1. Maintain statewide diagnostic coverage across >80% of K-3 public school students, restoring consistent early math performance tracking.
2. Reduce the proportion of students at risk for long-term math difficulties by driving annual increases in students performing at or above benchmark in grades K-3.

Consequence of Inaction:

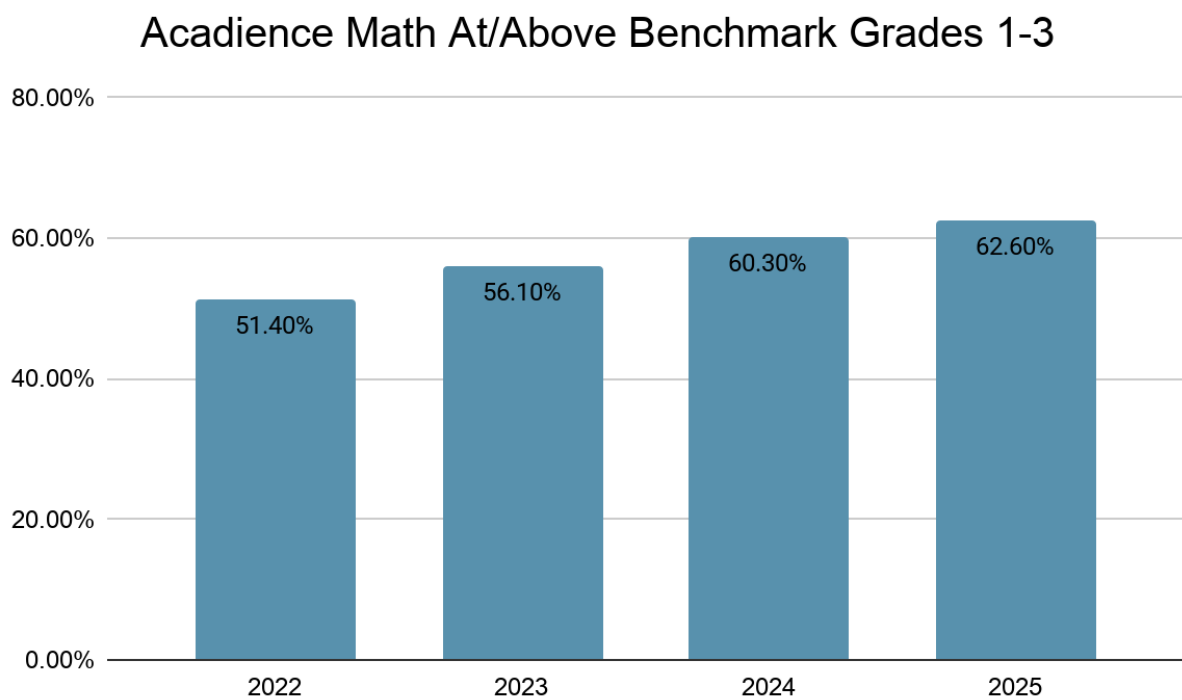
If this request is not funded, Utah will lose its only standardized measure of early numeracy achievement in grades K-2 (where no other statewide assessment exists). Statewide data comparability will end, preventing USBE and the Legislature from evaluating early math outcomes or identifying statewide learning gaps. Furthermore, small, rural, and economically disadvantaged LEAs that cannot afford local vendor contracts will be forced to abandon early math screening altogether, widening equity and achievement gaps.

Evidence & Data:

Since the math benchmark has been required, Utah has seen a significant increase in the number of students at or above benchmark, which means that they are less likely to experience math difficulties. The increase shows that teachers are providing better instruction and students are more successful in math. The assessment also allows teachers to track if their math

interventions, if implemented, are working and if students are making progress towards the end of year goal, which has most likely also led to improved student outcomes.

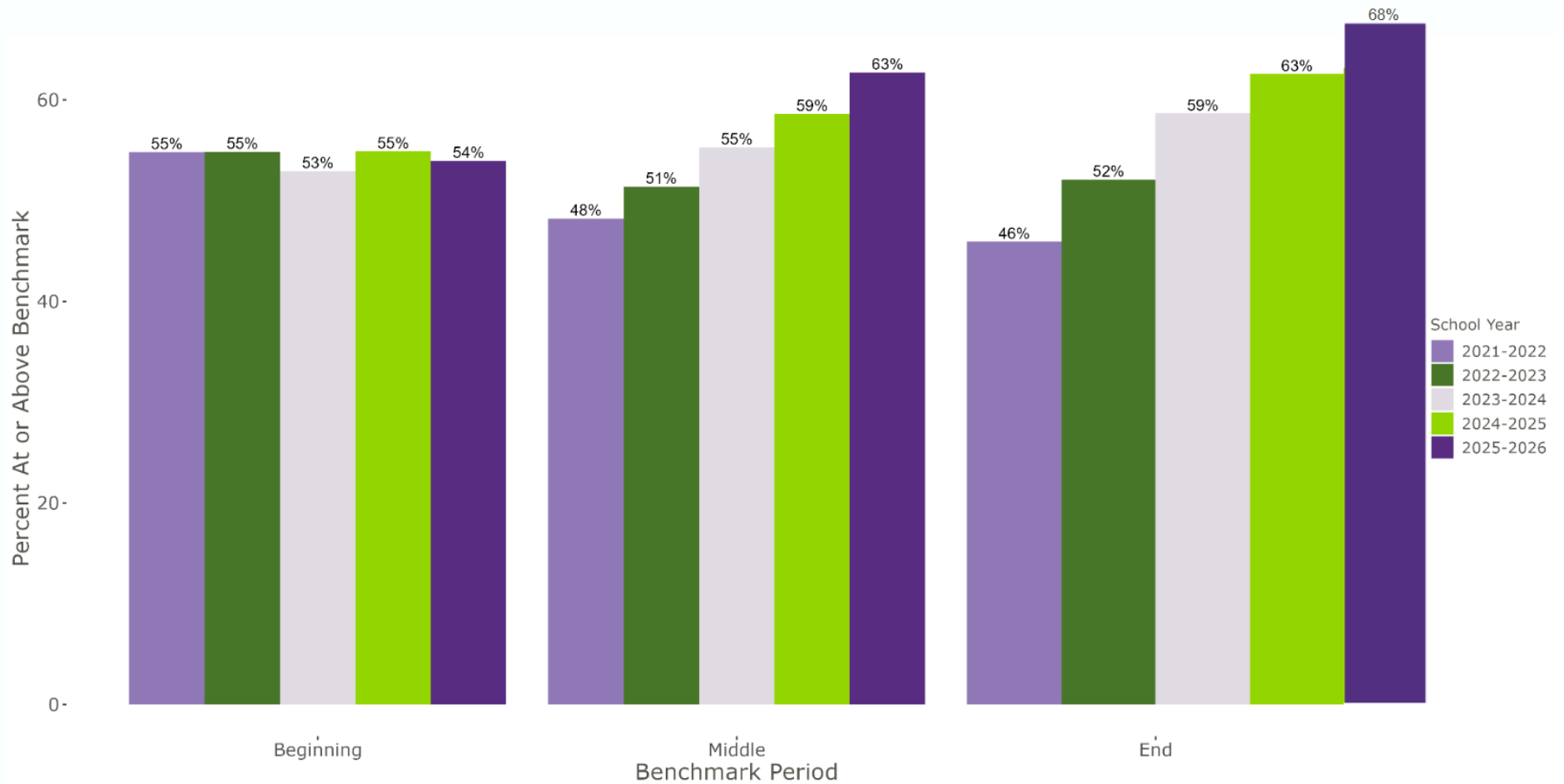
The graph below shows the percent of students in grades 1-3 that were at/above benchmark on Acadience Math from 2022-2025 (2026 combined data is pending). This means that the percent of students that are likely to experience difficulties in math is decreasing. We continue to see yearly improvement.



The following graphs show the individual grade growth over the last five years. It shows that in each grade students enter the school year at a relatively similar level, but every year show increasing gains by the end of the year.

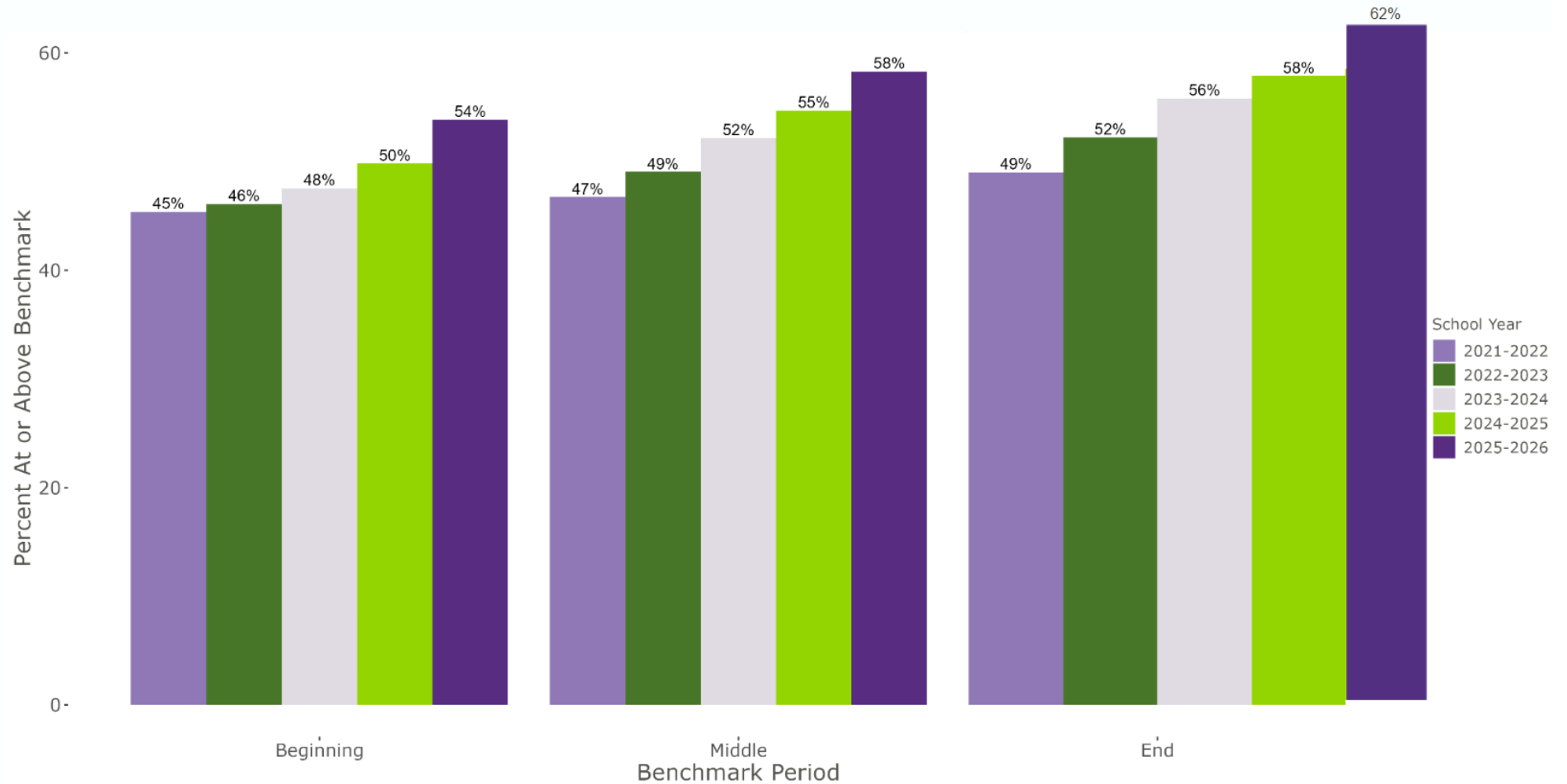
Kindergarten Cross-Year Comparison

Percentage of Students At or Above Benchmark on the Math Composite Score



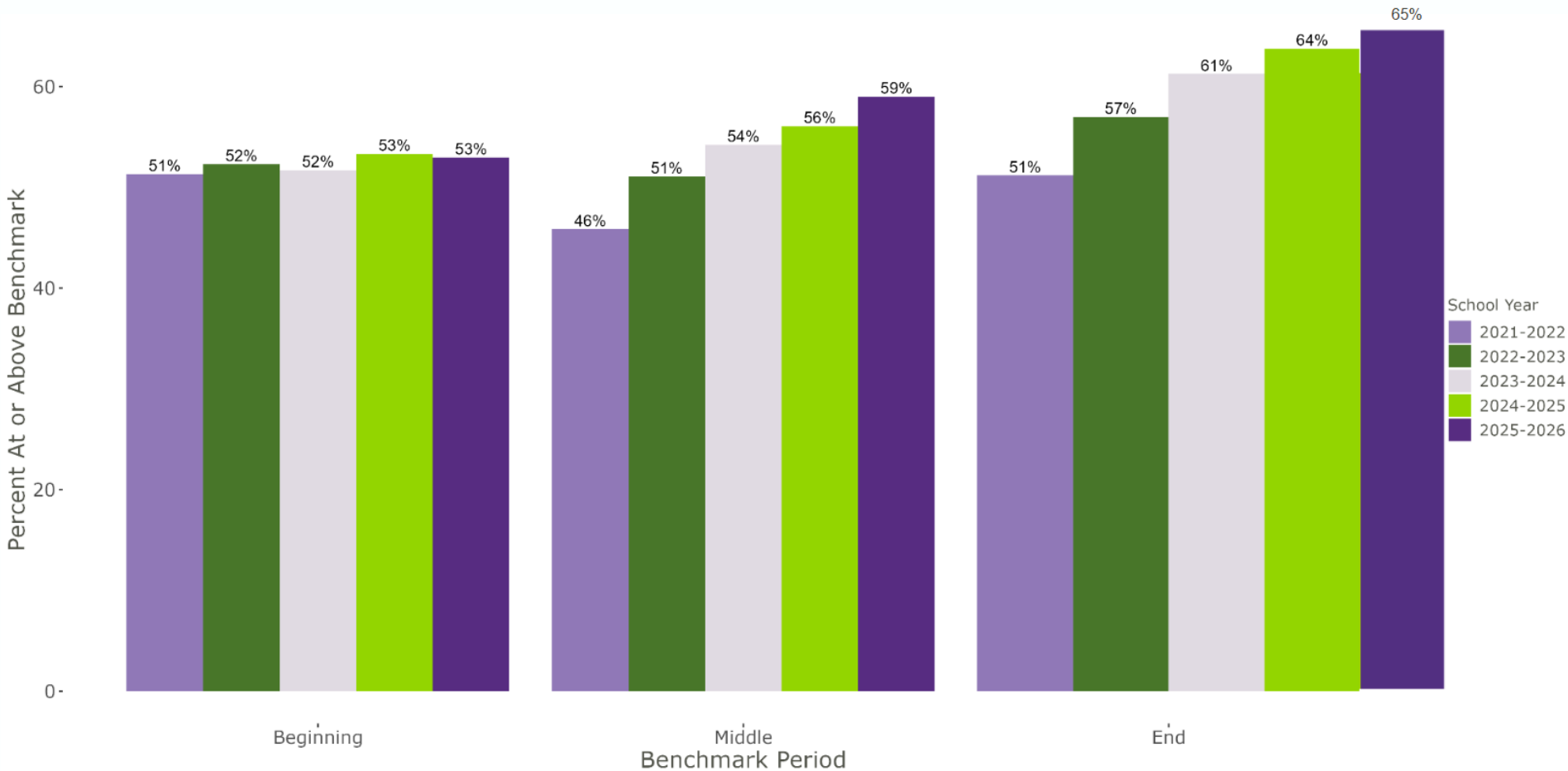
Grade 1 Cross-Year Comparison

Percentage of Students At or Above Benchmark on the Math Composite Score



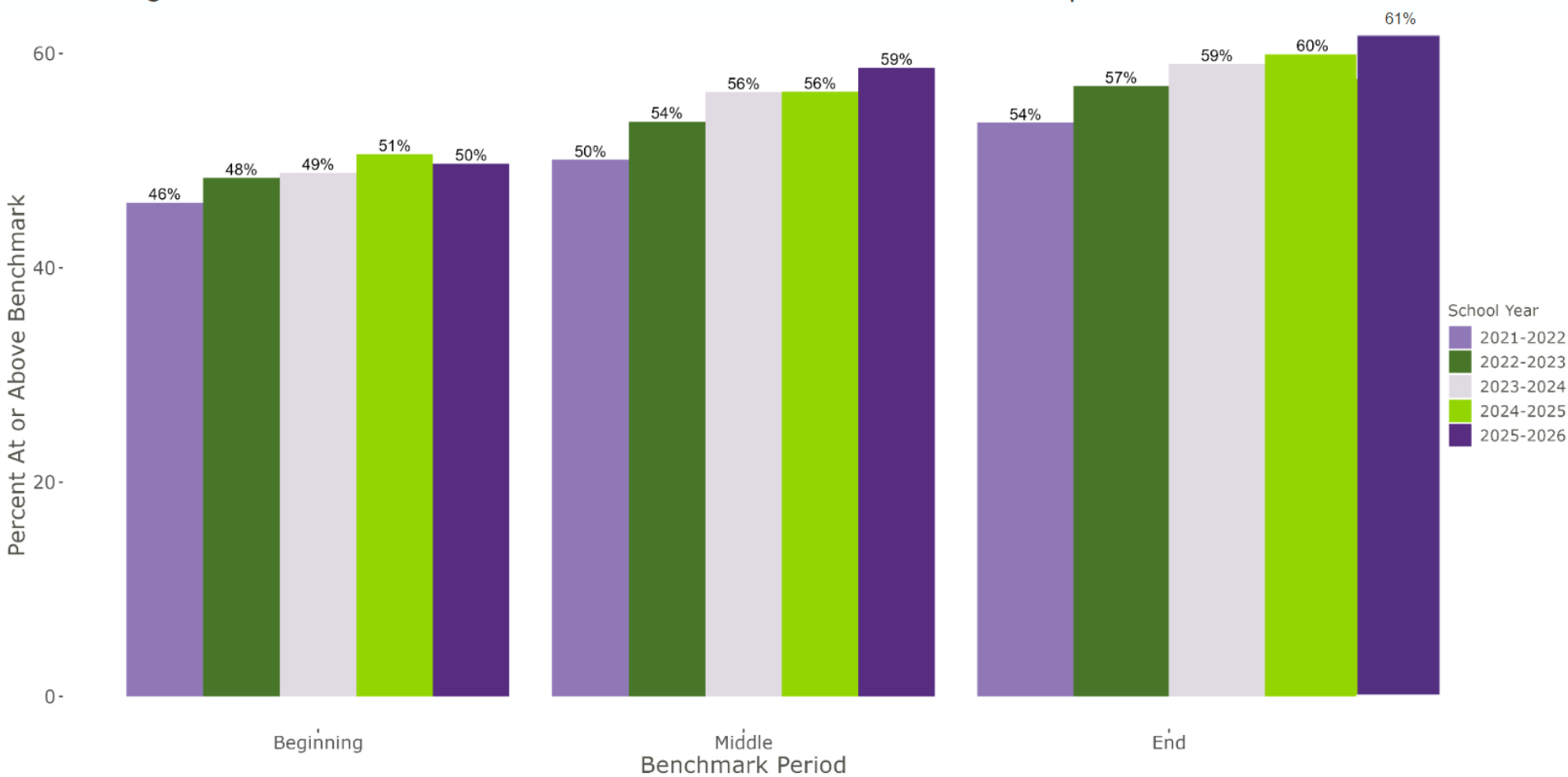
Grade 2 Cross-Year Comparison

Percentage of Students At or Above Benchmark on the Math Composite Score



Grade 3 Cross-Year Comparison

Percentage of Students At or Above Benchmark on the Math Composite Score



SECTION 3: FUNDING, OFFSETS, & EFFICIENCIES

*(Complete **only** if your request involves financial resources or proposing budget cuts)*

Financial Ask:

(If a field does not apply, enter \$0).

- **FY 2027 Ongoing Requested:** \$1,450,000
- **FY 2027 One-Time Requested:** \$0
- **Proposed Offsets / Savings:** \$0 *(Amount saved by cutting redundancies or reallocating existing funds)*

The Offset Strategy:

We did have limited funding of \$300,000 a year for the early math assessment, however that funding was removed in the 2026 legislative session. When the funding was initially requested there was a vendor that offered a product for \$1.50 per student. However, that vendor no longer offers a product at that low cost point and neither do any others. The cost of the assessment in 2025-2026 was \$1,069,600. We were supplementing the additional cost with one time carry forward funds. We do not have the funds to continue to provide an early math assessment on an on-going basis.

Future Obligations:

Does this request create multi-year scale-up costs or ongoing maintenance obligations?

☐ Yes

☒ No

If yes, please describe: _____

Itemized Budget Request:

(Please detail how the funding will be utilized across the following categories).

	FY 2027 (Current)	FY 2028 (proposed)
TOTAL REQUESTED	\$	\$1,450,000

New USBE FTEs Requested: 0

If no FTEs are required, explain.

We currently have an employee who has been managing the early math assessment along with other assessment responsibilities. No additional USBE FTEs are needed.

Performance Measures:

1. Increase the percentage of Utah K-3 students performing at or above benchmark on the end-of-year early math assessment by 2.0 percentage points annually over the next 5 years (from a SY2026 baseline).

2. Maintain at least 90% statewide student participation in early math benchmark screening across all participating school districts and charter schools.