Struggling Readers at the End of School Year 2025–2026: CRLA Results for 5.1 Million Grade 1–3 Learners in Philippine Public Schools

Mark Anthony Llego

NASH Reviewer, Philippines

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Abstract

The Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) is the Philippine Department of Education's teacher-administered reading screen for Grades 1 to 3. This report analyzes its end-of-year results for School Year (SY) 2025–2026, published on the EDCOM II early childhood dashboard as of May 10, 2026: 5,127,670 learners in 38,679 public schools across all 18 regions, 93.8% of public Grade 1–3 enrollment. Counting each learner once, 10.0% (511,753) were struggling readers (Low Emerging or High Emerging) and 47.6% read at grade level. Struggling readers were most common in Grade 1 Mother Tongue (14.4%) and least common in Grade 3 Filipino (5.6%). Regional shares ranged from 5.3% in the National Capital Region to 23.4% in BARMM; the three regions with the most struggling readers held 27.2% of the national total, one of them (Region IV-A) because of its size rather than its rate. Beta-binomial empirical Bayes estimates for the 232 schools divisions ranged from 0.2% to 46.2%; 12 divisions lay outside the 95% limits of a funnel plot allowing for the real spread between divisions, and 2 were flagged at a 5% false discovery rate. In 6,061 schools also found in DepEd's selected-school CRLA file, that file's shares at grade level were lower in every grade and language, consistent with its being the start-of-year round. The results argue for planning reading support by the number of struggling readers as well as the rate, for attention to Grade 1, and for reading division ranks with their uncertainty.

Keywords: early-grade reading; Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment; struggling readers; Philippines; empirical Bayes; funnel plot; schools divisions

1. Introduction

The Department of Education (DepEd) defines the CRLA as "a standardized reading assessment tool administered by the Department of Education for Grades 1 to 3 learners, grouping them into Low Emerging, High Emerging, Developing, Transitioning, and At Grade Level reading profiles based on reading proficiency standards" (Department of Education [DepEd], 2025d, Enclosure, Sec. III, item 2). Its guidelines for ARAL-Reading in Key Stage 1 set three administrations a year: "The CRLA shall be administered at the beginning of the school year (BOSY), in the middle of the school year (MOSY), and at the end of the school year (EOSY)" (DepEd, 2025b, Enclosure No. 2, Sec. II, item 3.2). The end-of-year round has a direct use: for the 2026 summer remediation programs, "The EOSY assessment results shall serve as the basis for identifying learners who will participate in the ARAL Summer Programs," and the CRLA end-of-year results for SY 2025–2026 are the assessment named for ARAL Summer-Reading in Key Stage 1 (DepEd, 2026b, Enclosure, para. 26).

The Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) published DepEd's end-of-year CRLA results for SY 2025–2026, school by school, on its early childhood dashboard (Second Congressional Commission on Education [EDCOM II], 2026). This report describes those results nationally, by grade and language of assessment, by region and by schools division, and sets them beside DepEd's earlier selected-school CRLA file. It asks four questions: what share of Grade 1–3 learners were struggling readers at the end of the year; how the share varied by grade and language; where struggling readers were concentrated, by rate and by number; and which divisions differed from the national rate by more than the normal spread between divisions.

2. Data and methods

2.1 Data

The data are the school-level end-of-year CRLA results for SY 2025–2026 for public schools, as of May 10, 2026 on the EDCOM II dashboard, extracted and cleaned by NASH Reviewer (Llego, 2026a). The cleaning rules, including how schools were assigned to regions, are documented with the data set (Llego, 2026b). Regions follow the Philippine Standard Geographic Code (PSGC), with Sulu counted in Region IX and the Negros Island Region (NIR) as its own region; divisions are as the results record them. The analysis covers 5,127,670 learners in 38,679 schools in 232 divisions: 93.8% of the 5,469,054 Grade 1–3 learners enrolled in public schools in SY 2025–2026 (DepEd, 2026a).

The comparison in Section 3.5 uses DepEd's selected-school CRLA file for SY 2025–2026 (DepEd, 2025a): 647,681 learners in 6,121 public schools in 44 divisions of five regions (CAR and Regions I, III, VIII and IX), which DepEd's download package dates September 28, 2025.

2.2 Measures

The dashboard reports five grade-and-language blocks: Grade 1 in the Mother Tongue, Grade 2 in the Mother Tongue and in Filipino, and Grade 3 in Filipino and in English. Each block places learners at one of the five CRLA levels. A struggling reader is a learner at either Emerging level. Because Grade 2 and Grade 3 learners are assessed in two languages, national and regional totals count each learner once: Grade 1 learners by their Mother Tongue result, Grade 2 learners by Filipino and Grade 3 learners by English.

2.3 Analysis

National and regional shares are the shares of the learners assessed (learners at a level divided by learners assessed). They are not estimates from a sample, so they carry no sampling intervals; they describe the 93.8% of public Grade 1–3 learners whose results were on the dashboard (Section 5).

For divisions, the share of struggling readers was estimated with a beta-binomial empirical Bayes model (Casella, 1985): each division's estimate is a weighted average of its own share and the national rate, with the weight on the national rate set by a concentration parameter fitted by maximum likelihood (26.7, the national rate counting as much as 26.7 learners). The 95% intervals for the estimates and for each division's rank (1 for the fewest struggling readers) come from 4,000 draws from the posterior distribution (Goldstein & Spiegelhalter, 1996).

A funnel plot set each division's share against the number of learners it assessed, with 95% and 99.8% limits around the national rate from the same beta-binomial model, so the limits allow for the real spread between divisions as well as chance (Spiegelhalter, 2005). Two-sided tail probabilities from that model were adjusted with the Benjamini–Hochberg procedure at a false discovery rate of 5% (Benjamini & Hochberg, 1995).

Finally, DepEd's selected-school file was matched to the dashboard by school ID, and the shares at grade level were compared in the schools found in both.

3. Results

3.1 National results

Counting each learner once, 6.9% of the 5,127,670 learners were Low Emerging (352,055) and 3.1% High Emerging (159,698): 511,753 struggling readers, or 10.0%. A further 10.4% were Developing (532,502), 32.0% Transitioning (1,640,942) and 47.6% At Grade Level (2,442,473), so 52.4% were below grade level at the end of the year. DepEd's own summary of the end-of-year results gives the same figure for Key Stage 1: "10% of Key Stage (KS) 1 ... learners remain at the Emerging and Frustration levels" (DepEd, 2026b, Enclosure, para. 4).

3.2 Grade and language

Grade 1 Mother Tongue had the most struggling readers, 14.4%, and the smallest share at grade level, 45.4% (Table 1, Figure 1). Grade 2 results were almost the same in both languages, 7.9% struggling in each. In Grade 3, Filipino had the fewest struggling readers of any block (5.6%) and the largest share at grade level (50.8%); Grade 3 English had more struggling readers (8.1%) with a similar share at grade level (50.1%). These comparisons set different learners side by side in one year; they do not follow the same children across grades.

Table 1. CRLA reading levels at the end of SY 2025–2026 by grade and language of assessment

Grade and language	Learners	Low Emerging	High Emerging	Developing	Transitioning	At Grade Level	Struggling
Grade 1 Mother Tongue	1,594,608	9.4%	5.0%	13.0%	27.3%	45.4%	14.4%
Grade 2 Mother Tongue	1,634,270	5.8%	2.1%	10.0%	34.1%	47.9%	7.9%
Grade 2 Filipino	1,693,777	5.8%	2.1%	10.1%	35.0%	47.1%	7.9%
Grade 3 Filipino	1,826,546	4.2%	1.5%	6.8%	36.7%	50.8%	5.6%
Grade 3 English	1,839,285	5.7%	2.4%	8.5%	33.4%	50.1%	8.1%
All learners, one result each	5,127,670	6.9%	3.1%	10.4%	32.0%	47.6%	10.0%

Note. Struggling = Low Emerging + High Emerging. "All learners" counts Grade 1 by Mother Tongue, Grade 2 by Filipino and Grade 3 by English. Data: EDCOM II early childhood dashboard, May 10, 2026, cleaned by NASH Reviewer (Llego, 2026a).

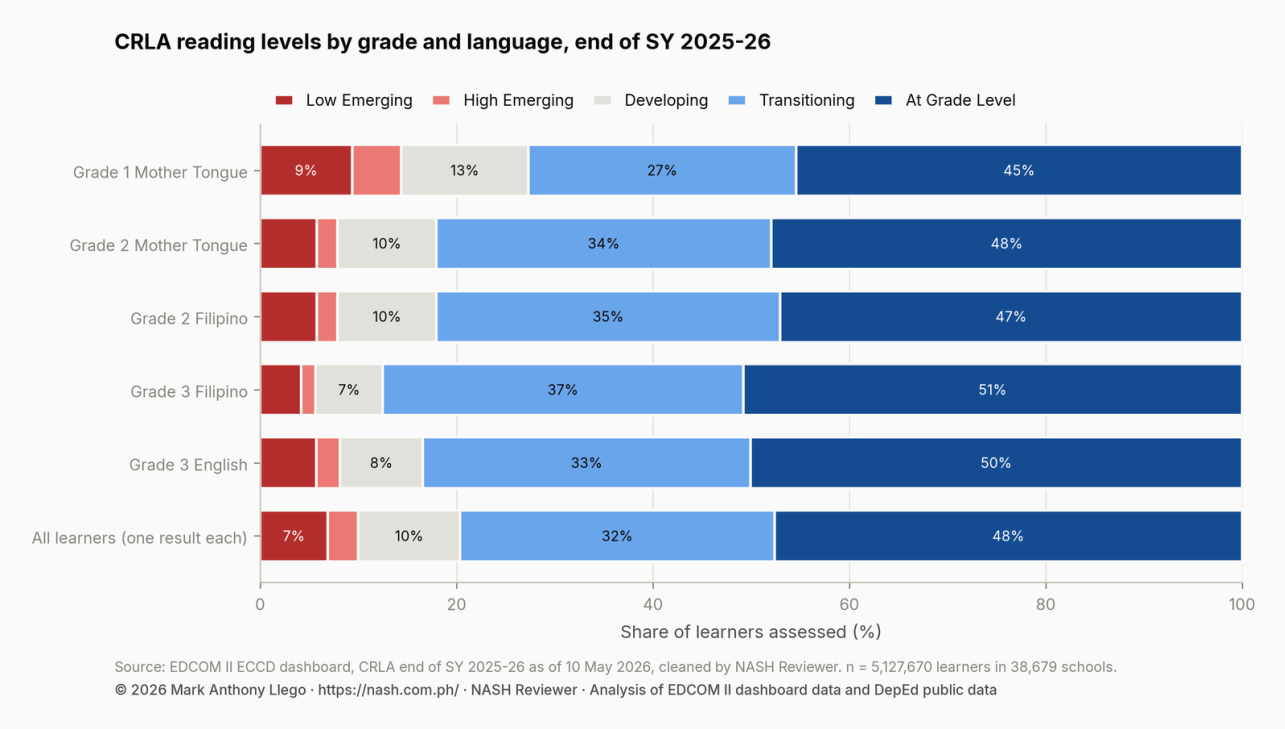

Figure 1. Share of learners at each of the five CRLA reading levels at the end of SY 2025–2026, for each grade-and-language block and for all learners counted once.

3.3 Regions

The share of struggling readers ranged from 5.3% in NCR to 23.4% in BARMM, so the highest regional share was 4.4 times the lowest (Table 2, Figure 2). Nine of the 18 regions were above the national share of 10.0%, among them every Mindanao region except Region X. The share at grade level followed a similar order, from 55.8% in CAR and 55.5% in NCR to 30.7% in BARMM; Region VIII combined a low share of struggling readers (7.2%) with one of the highest shares at grade level (55.6%).

Rates and counts told different stories. The three regions with the most struggling readers (Region IV-A, BARMM and Region XII) held 27.2% of the national total. BARMM and Region XII were among them because their rates were high, 23.4% and 17.7%. Region IV-A was among them because it was large: its rate, 6.7%, was below the national share, but it assessed 724,571 learners, the most of any region, which gave it 48,777 struggling readers, 9.5% of the national total.

Table 2. Struggling readers and learners at grade level by region, end of SY 2025–2026, from the lowest to the highest share struggling

Region	Schools	Learners	Struggling readers	Share struggling	Share of national struggling	At Grade Level
NCR	520	469,125	24,884	5.3%	4.9%	55.5%
CAR	1,500	75,844	4,112	5.4%	0.8%	55.8%
Region IV-A	2,754	724,571	48,777	6.7%	9.5%	50.0%
Region VIII	3,656	245,652	17,765	7.2%	3.5%	55.6%
Region III	3,024	520,994	41,175	7.9%	8.0%	54.7%
Region VI	2,433	199,208	16,243	8.2%	3.2%	53.4%
Region II	2,212	164,618	14,237	8.6%	2.8%	48.9%
Region X	2,176	273,425	25,563	9.3%	5.0%	49.3%
Region I	2,409	218,318	20,669	9.5%	4.0%	46.5%
Caraga	1,706	159,091	16,044	10.1%	3.1%	48.3%
NIR	1,742	254,077	26,444	10.4%	5.2%	44.4%
Region VII	2,189	320,467	33,390	10.4%	6.5%	44.6%
MIMAROPA	1,924	186,639	21,230	11.4%	4.1%	44.4%
Region XI	1,749	274,481	32,147	11.7%	6.3%	42.1%
Region V	3,162	346,762	41,812	12.1%	8.2%	41.0%
Region IX	2,310	250,036	36,716	14.7%	7.2%	43.3%
Region XII	1,744	236,985	41,972	17.7%	8.2%	37.2%
BARMM	1,469	207,377	48,573	23.4%	9.5%	30.7%

Note. Learners counted once (see Table 1). Sulu is counted in Region IX, following the PSGC. Data: as in Table 1.

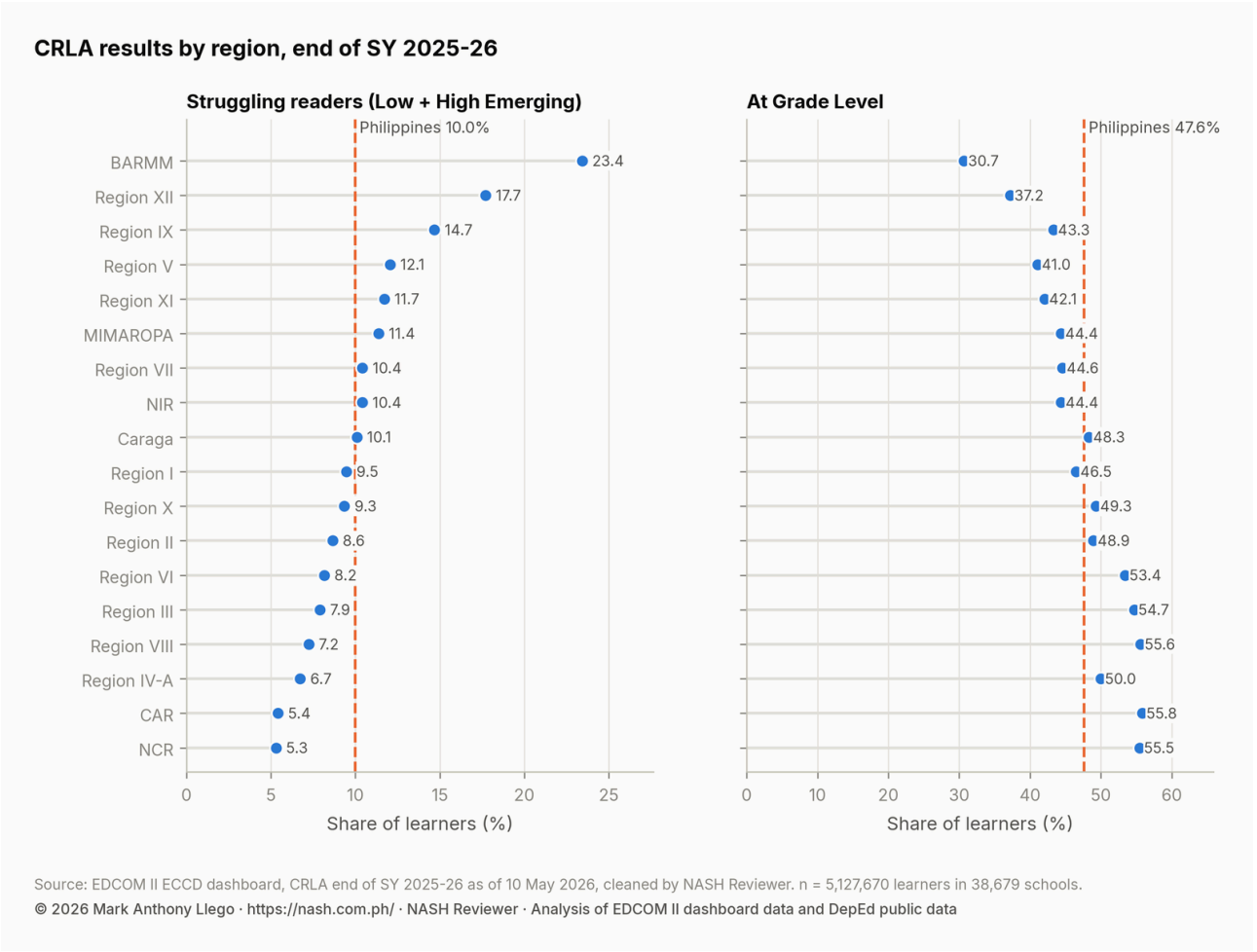

Figure 2. Share of learners struggling and share at grade level in each of the 18 regions at the end of SY 2025–2026, with the national share marked.

3.4 Schools divisions

The 232 divisions ranged from 762 learners assessed in the smallest to 121,080 in the largest, and their raw shares of struggling readers from 0.1% to 46.3%. Because even the smallest division assessed 762 learners, the empirical Bayes estimates moved little from the raw shares: estimates ranged from 0.2% (95% interval 0.1% to 0.4%) in the City of San Juan to 46.2% (95% interval 45.3% to 47.2%) in Tawi-Tawi (Figure 3).

Ranks were uncertain. For the median division, the 95% interval for its rank was about 15 places wide (14.5), so divisions a few places apart often could not be told apart; ranks were firm only near the two ends of the list, as for the City of San Juan (rank 1, interval 1 to 1) and Tawi-Tawi (rank 232, interval 232 to 232).

Of the 232 divisions, 220 lay within the funnel's 95% limits (Figure 4). Above them, Tawi-Tawi lay beyond the 99.8% limit and six more divisions between the 95% and 99.8% limits; below them, two divisions, including the City of San Juan, lay beyond the 99.8% limit and three more between the two limits (Table 3). With 232 divisions, about 12 would be expected outside the 95% limits even if every division followed the usual spread; 12 lay outside. After the Benjamini–Hochberg adjustment, two divisions stood out at a 5% false discovery rate: Tawi-Tawi, above the national rate, and the City of San Juan, below it.

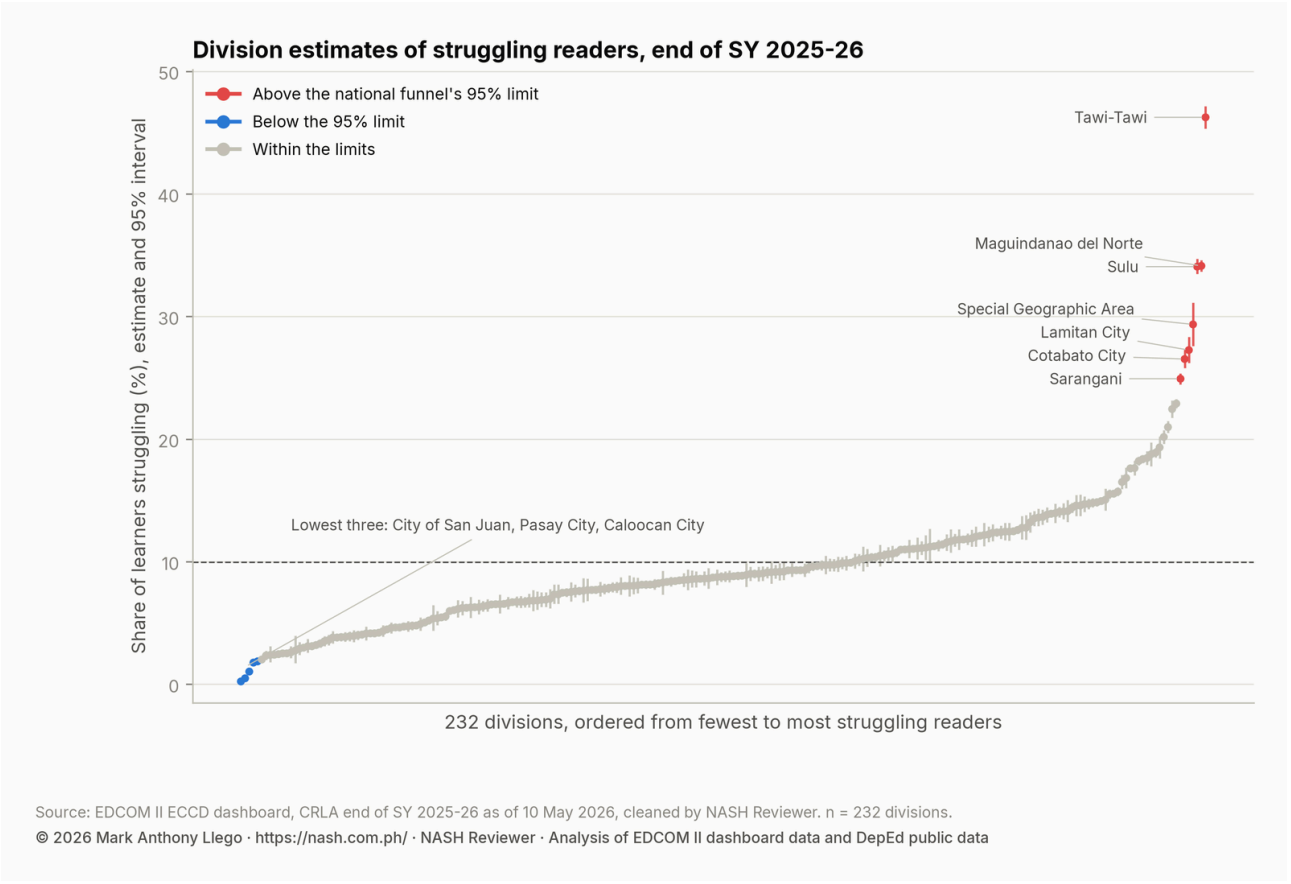

Figure 3. Empirical Bayes estimate of the share of learners struggling in each of the 232 divisions, with its 95% interval, ordered from fewest to most struggling readers.

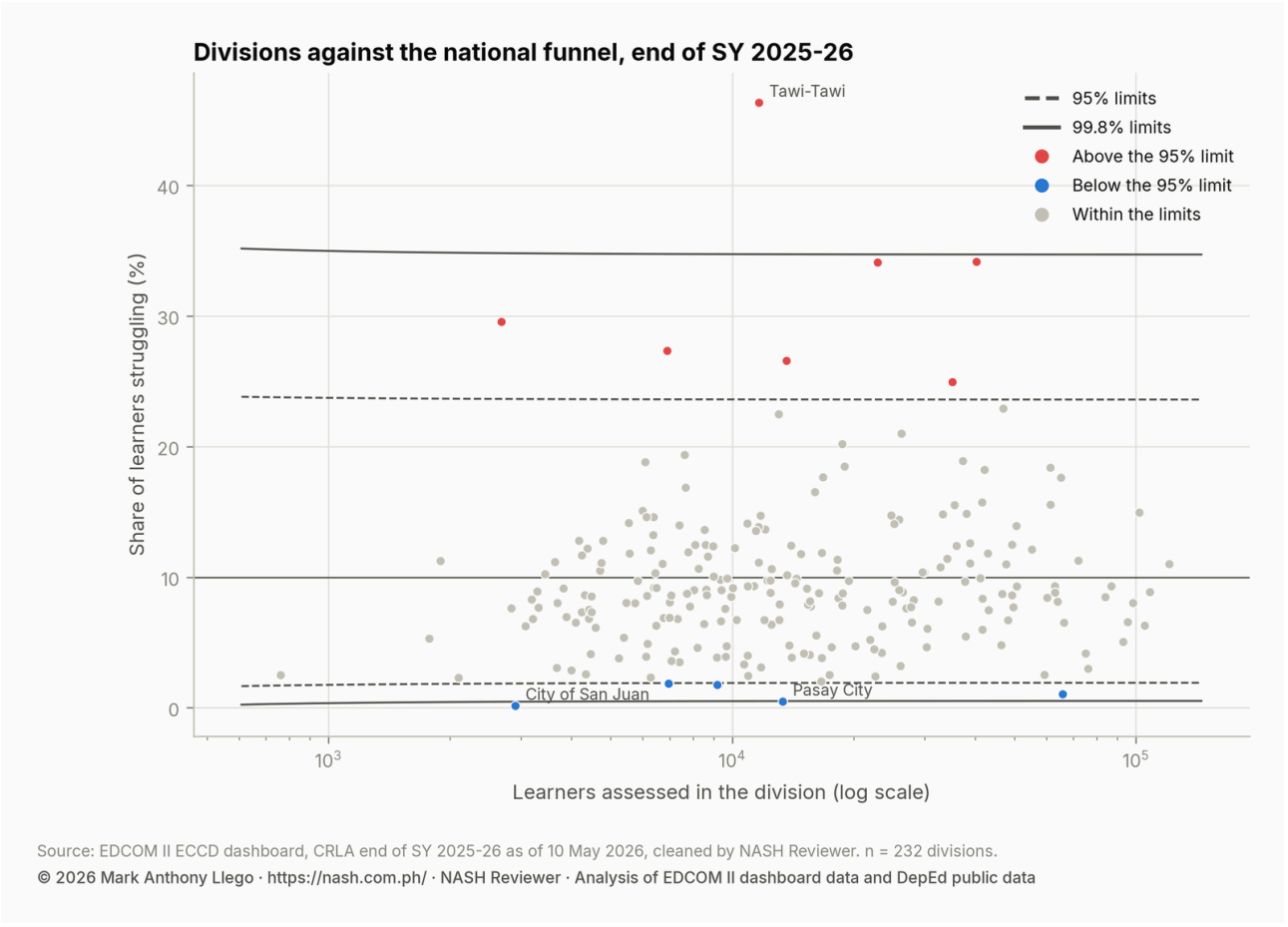

Figure 4. Share of learners struggling in each division against the number of learners it assessed, with 95% and 99.8% limits around the national share from the beta-binomial model.

Table 3. The 12 divisions outside the funnel's 95% limits, end of SY 2025–2026

Division	Region	Learners	Share struggling	Estimate (95% interval)	Rank of 232 (95% interval)	Funnel	FDR 5%
Tawi-Tawi	BARMM	11,664	46.3%	46.2% (45.3–47.2)	232 (232–232)	above 99.8%	flagged
Maguindanao del Norte	BARMM	40,320	34.1%	34.1% (33.7–34.6)	231 (230–231)	above 95%	no
Sulu	Region IX	22,946	34.1%	34.1% (33.5–34.7)	230 (230–231)	above 95%	no
Special Geographic Area	BARMM	2,684	29.5%	29.4% (27.6–31.1)	229 (229–229)	above 95%	no
Lamitan City	BARMM	6,909	27.3%	27.3% (26.2–28.3)	228 (227–228)	above 95%	no
Cotabato City	BARMM	13,644	26.6%	26.5% (25.8–27.3)	227 (227–228)	above 95%	no
Sarangani	Region XII	35,143	24.9%	24.9% (24.5–25.4)	226 (226–226)	above 95%	no
Mountain Province	CAR	6,965	1.8%	1.9% (1.6–2.2)	5 (4–7)	below 95%	no
Sto. Tomas City	Region IV-A	9,194	1.7%	1.8% (1.5–2.0)	4 (4–6)	below 95%	no
Caloocan City	NCR	65,928	1.0%	1.0% (1.0–1.1)	3 (3–3)	below 95%	no
Pasay City	NCR	13,354	0.5%	0.5% (0.4–0.6)	2 (2–2)	below 99.8%	no
City of San Juan	NCR	2,906	0.1%	0.2% (0.1–0.4)	1 (1–1)	below 99.8%	flagged

Note. Rank 1 = fewest struggling readers. Intervals from 4,000 posterior draws. FDR = Benjamini–Hochberg false discovery rate. Data: as in Table 1.

3.5 Comparison with DepEd's selected-school CRLA file

DepEd's selected-school file (DepEd, 2025a) covers 647,681 learners in 6,121 schools in five regions; its headline shares are 15.7% at grade level and 30.3% Low Emerging, far from the end-of-year figures above. Of its schools, 6,061 were found on the dashboard. Among the 5,980 of these with Grade 1 Mother Tongue results on the dashboard, 89.5% had Grade 1 Mother Tongue learner counts that agreed within ±15%, consistent with the two releases covering the same learners in the same school year. DepEd's share at grade level was lower in every grade-and-language block (Table 4, Figure 5), and the gap was widest in Grade 1: 5.3% at grade level in DepEd's file against 49.2% in the same schools at the end of the year. The file does not name its round. DepEd set the mid-year CRLA "two (2) weeks before the second quarter examination" (DepEd, 2025b, Enclosure No. 2, para. 22), and the SY 2025–2026 calendar holds that examination on October 23 and 24, 2025 (DepEd, 2025c); a file dated September 28, 2025 therefore predates the mid-year round, and the start of the year is the only round it could hold. At the end of the year, the selected schools, all in five regions, read a little better than all dashboard schools.

Table 4. Share of learners at grade level in DepEd's selected-school file and on the EDCOM II dashboard, SY 2025–2026

Grade and language	DepEd file, start of year (6,121 schools)	EDCOM, same schools, end of year	EDCOM, all schools, end of year
Grade 1 Mother Tongue	5.3%	49.2%	45.4%
Grade 2 Mother Tongue	17.3%	51.6%	47.9%
Grade 2 Filipino	17.2%	51.2%	47.1%
Grade 3 Filipino	22.7%	54.7%	50.8%
Grade 3 English	23.3%	53.3%	50.1%

Note. The DepEd column covers all 6,121 schools in the file; in the 6,061 schools matched to the dashboard its values are 5.3%, 17.2%, 17.1%, 22.7% and 23.2%. Data: DepEd (2025a); EDCOM II early childhood dashboard, May 10, 2026 (Llego, 2026a).

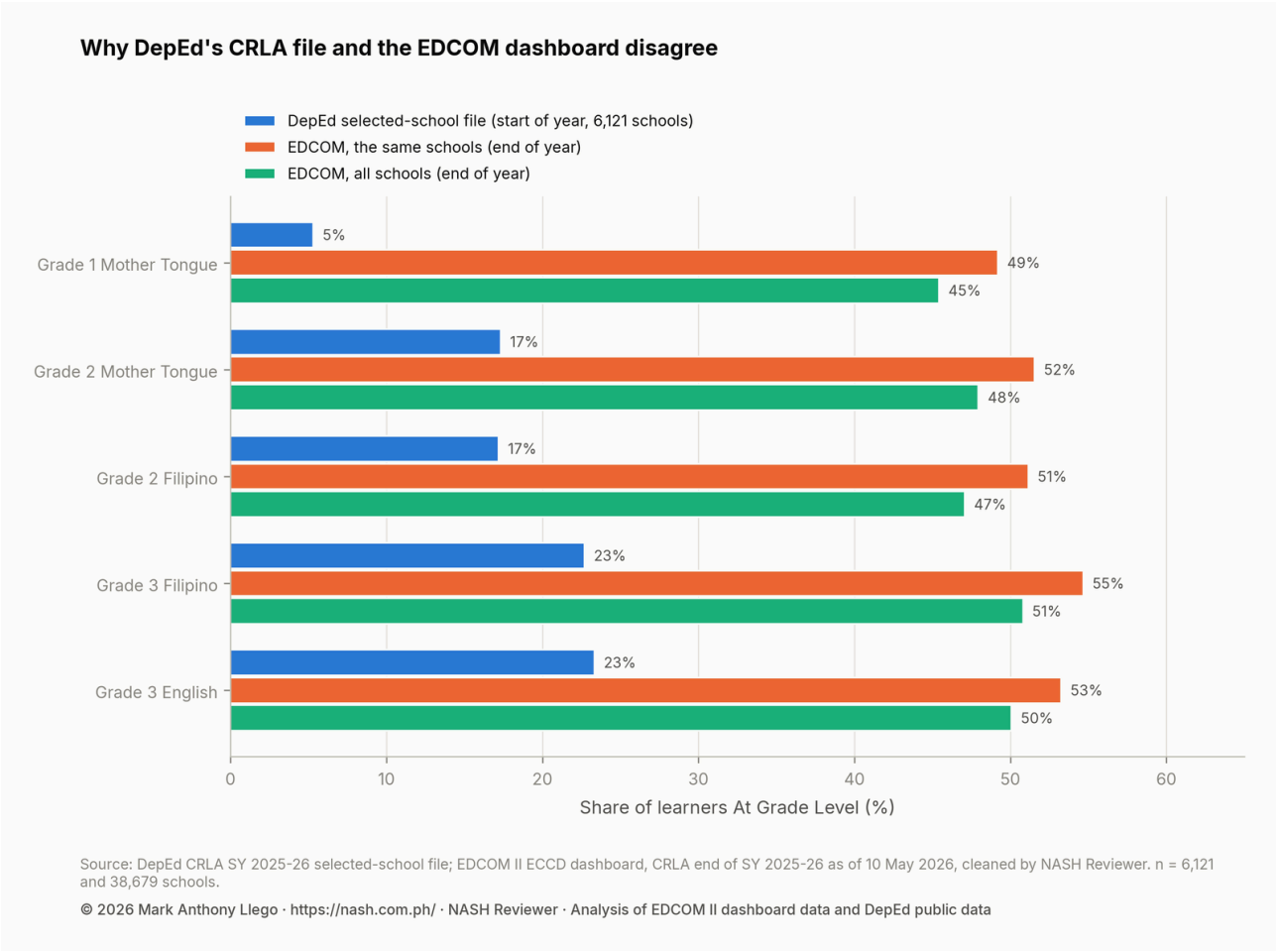

Figure 5. Share of learners at grade level by grade and language in DepEd's selected-school file, in the same schools on the EDCOM II dashboard at the end of the year, and in all dashboard schools.

4. Discussion

About one Grade 1–3 learner in ten was a struggling reader at the end of SY 2025–2026, and just over half were still below grade level. The largest group below grade level was not the struggling readers but the Transitioning learners (32.0%), one level below At Grade Level. Reading support aimed only at the Emerging levels would leave them out; DepEd's ARAL-Reading guidelines provide that "Classroom-based remediation shall be provided to Developing and Transitioning learners in Grades 2 and 3 until they are grade-level ready" (DepEd, 2025b, Enclosure No. 2, para. 23).

Grade 1 stands apart: 14.4% of Grade 1 learners ended the year at the Emerging levels in the Mother Tongue. The 2026 summer program covered "incoming Grades 2, 3, and 4 learners at the Emerging levels" (DepEd, 2026b, Enclosure, para. 14), so these learners were among those it covered from May 6 to June 2, 2026, and they entered Grade 2 in June 2026 needing a reading plan from its first weeks.

Where support goes depends on whether it follows rates or counts. BARMM and Region XII have the highest rates, but Region IV-A, with a rate below the national share, has the most struggling readers of any region. Allocating support by rate alone would pass over many struggling readers in large regions and, by the same logic, in large divisions and schools.

Division league tables call for care. Most division ranks are uncertain by many places, and once the number of comparisons is allowed for, only two divisions can be distinguished from the normal spread between divisions. An unusually low share, such as the City of San Juan's, is first a reason to check the data before it is treated as a result.

Finally, results from different rounds measure different points in the school year. For the same learners, the beginning- and end-of-year rounds show progress, as DepEd intends (DepEd, 2025d, Enclosure, Sec. III, item 1); but a start-of-year file should not be read as if it were the end of the year, as the comparison in Section 3.5 shows.

5. Limitations

The national and regional shares describe the learners whose results were on the dashboard on May 10, 2026: 93.8% of public Grade 1–3 enrollment. About 340,000 enrolled learners are not in the results, and those not assessed may differ from those assessed; learners entered later are not counted, and the dashboard may change after that date. The Grade 1 block is labeled Mother Tongue, but DepEd allows Grade 1 to be assessed in the Mother Tongue or in Filipino (DepEd, 2025b, Enclosure No. 2, Sec. II), so the block may include some Filipino results. Divisions are administrative units that differ in size, geography and mix of schools, and a division's share describes the place as a whole, not any school or child within it. The round of DepEd's selected-school file rests on the file's date and the comparison with the dashboard, because the file does not name it, and a file date records when a file was saved, not when learners were assessed. The CRLA is a teacher-administered screen, and its results depend on how consistently it is given and recorded, which this analysis cannot observe.

Data availability

The cleaned school-level data, division estimates, the unchanged extract of the dashboard's tables and documentation are free to download from NASH Reviewer at https://nash.com.ph/edcom-data, and are recorded at https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.24621192. In research and teaching the files may be analyzed and the results published with a citation; republishing the files needs written permission. The original results are on the EDCOM II early childhood dashboard (EDCOM II, 2026); DepEd's selected-school file and enrollment data are on DepEd's Machine Ready Files page (DepEd, 2025a, 2026a).

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