

FLN

Learning from

UP

UTTAR PRADESH

Insights from PARAKH 2024 for
three FLN approaches in UP

CAN WE LEARN FROM UTTAR PRADESH’S FLN TURNAROUND?

Uttar Pradesh (UP), once seen as an educational underperformer, is now emerging as a **strong performer** in foundational learning. Between 2021 and 2024, while India’s Grade 3 scores rose only 2–3 percentage points, UP improved by **10 points** in both language and mathematics— moving from below the national average to above it. The state also climbed sharply in rankings, from **25th to 7th in Language** and from **22nd to 7th in Mathematics**.

This turnaround was driven by focused reforms and leadership. In 2019, **Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath** launched Mission Prerna to ensure all primary students achieve foundational literacy and numeracy. The state publicly set quantifiable Prerna Lakshya (learning goals). “For example, in Grade 3, a child is expected to read at a fluency of 30 words per minute and solve 75% of single-digit addition and subtraction problems,” explained **Vijay Kiran Anand**, the state’s first Director General of School Education.

These targets were widely shared with teachers and communities, ensuring alignment and accountability across the

system. This was followed up by good efforts of subsequent DGSEs under direction of Principal Secretaries and the Chief Minister himself. Such great, no-nonsense leadership from the top has been one of the major factors in UP’s turnaround. PARAKH reports provide an insight into what’s happening within the FLN space.

Three NGOs (CSF, LLF, DEVI) were given a total of 15 districts to try out their FLN interventions. This report discusses how they added value. An overview of the three approaches is given overleaf. Each approach has its strengths, but one NGO which used a pedagogical approach and focused on classroom transaction of learning produced above average outcomes. At the more granular level of competencies, too, it produced the largest gains in each category. This does not necessarily imply a causal relationship, but DEVI’s ALfA pedagogy may have been a contributing factor, which ensures that all classroom time is used fully, with children learning joyfully in pairs.

Grade 3 Averages	India		Uttar Pradesh	
	Language %	Math %	Language % and rank	Math % and rank
2017 (Pre-Covid, NAS)	67%	63%	58% (32nd)	59% (27th)
2021 (Pandemic, NAS)	62%	57%	58% (25th)	54% (22nd)
2024 (Post-Pandemic, PRS)	64%	60%	68% (7th)	64% (7th)

FLN INTERVENTIONS BY DIFFERENT NGOS IN UP

CENTRAL SQUARE FOUNDATION (CSF)

6 Districts: Agra, Aligarh, Ghaziabad, Jhansi, Gorakhpur and Sitapur.

Approach:

- District PMU model → governance capability building data-driven execution
- Supports NIPUN BHARAT Mission at the state level through holistic system approach.
- Support Early Childhood Education (ECE) at the SPO.
- Provide technical support in regular monitoring of the implementation of the NIPUN Bharat program.

LANGUAGE AND LEARNING FOUNDATION (LLF)

5 Districts: Varansi, Fatehpur, Shravasti, Chanduali and Bhadohi.

Approach:

- Structured pedagogy Teacher Professional Development, mentoring & academic support co-created TLMs
- Creation of high-quality materials for English and Mathematics, including workbooks, teacher guides, storybooks, and training manuals for Balvatika (Grade 3).
- Designing remedial teaching materials and techniques for Classes 4 and 5.
- To provide supportive supervision material for ARP, SRG and Master trainers.

DIGNITY EDUCATION VISION INTERNATIONAL

Districts: Lucknow, Unnao, Shamli, and Barabanki.

- ALfA pedagogy → paired-learning routines → Professional Development
- The initiative uses the ALFA FLN Booster Program, gives hands-on materials for children to work in pairs.
- Children take turns to read, do activities and ask each other questions.
- DEVI conducts teacher training & empowers government mid-level leaders to ensure effective implementation.
- The program includes the ALfAWay app, offering free online content accessible via mobile devices.



More info on different NGOs working in UP as per Basic Education Department



Joyful Learning leads to greater attendance.

NAS 2021 TO PARAKH 2024

Uttar Pradesh’s impressive improvement in foundational literacy and numeracy between NAS 2021 and Parakh 2024 offer encouragement that India’s FLN crisis is not inevitable; solutions are at hand.

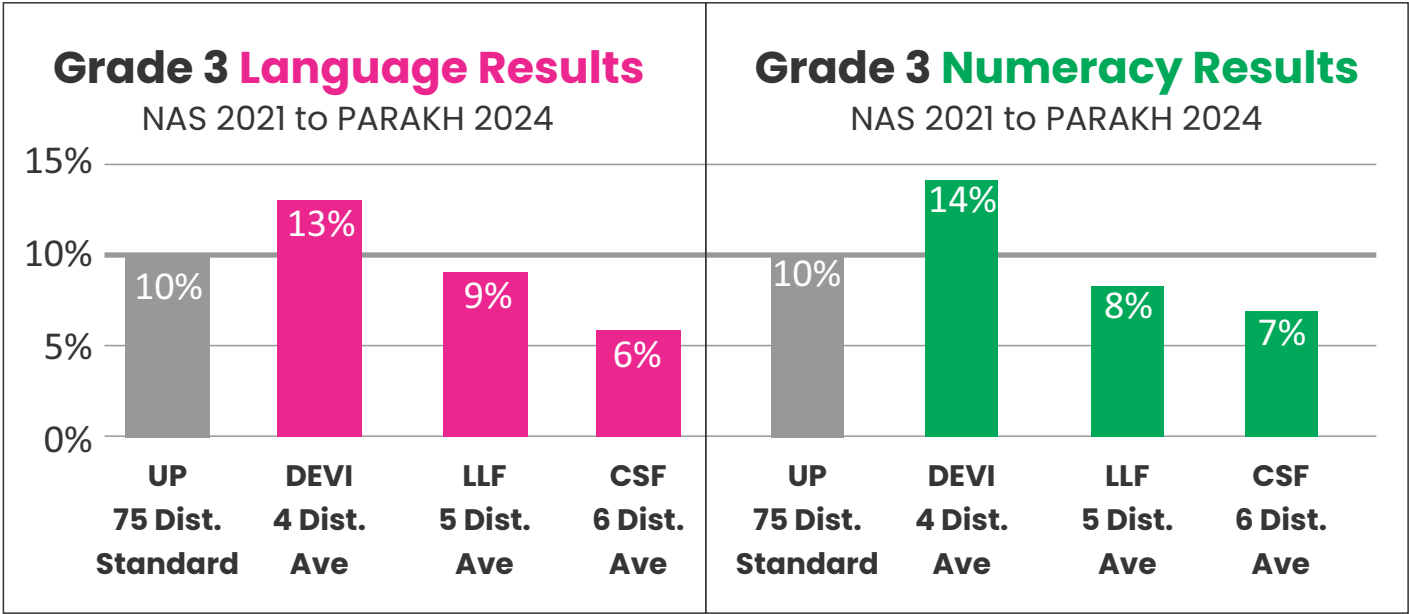
Digging into the inter-district variations shows that **policy focus alone is not sufficient**; what ultimately drives learning gains is what happens inside classrooms. When policy and pedagogy work together, they multiply impact and lead to higher learning gains. Pedagogy, which has been ignored as a major factor, needs to become a central focus in light of these results.

Districts implementing the ALfA (Accelerating Learning for All) model through DEVI achieved learning gains **(+13 to +14 pp)** that were significantly

higher than both the state average **(+10pp)** and districts supported by other major NGOs **(+6 to +9 pp)**.

Despite operating as a **short, low-cost, 45-day supplement**, ALfA delivered larger improvements in both literacy and numeracy by shifting classrooms from teacher-led coverage to process-led learning, with children **actively decoding, explaining, and working in pairs**.

The UP experience makes a clear case that effective pedagogy is as critical as governance, monitoring, and materials. Sustainable FLN reform requires not only the right policy priorities, but **teaching-learning processes** that reliably translate those priorities into accelerated learning in every classroom, for every child.



Key

Literacy Gain

Numeracy Gain

Sources: Click/Scan QR

NAS
2021

PARAKH
2024

More info on different
approaches by NGOs
working on FLN in UP

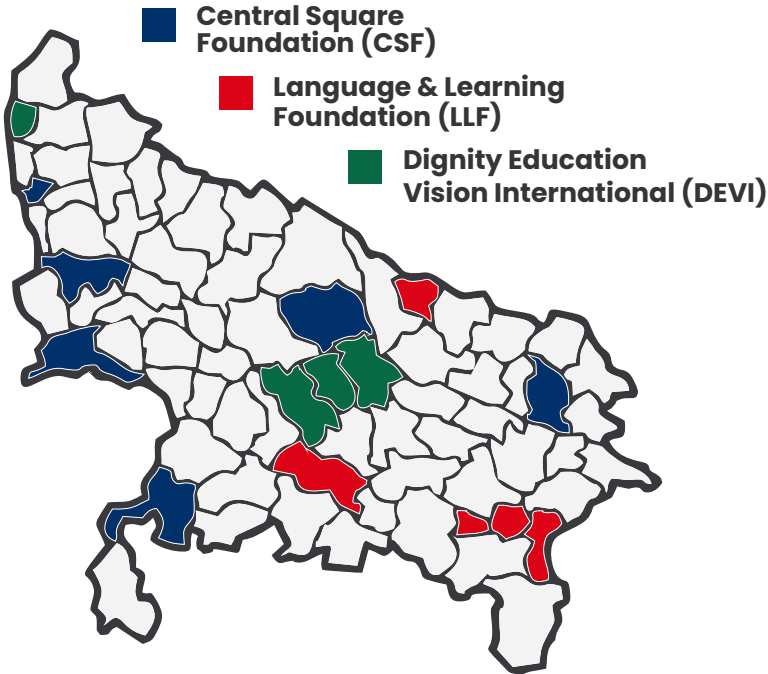
FLN IN UTTAR PRADESH NGO PARTNERS

Three NGOs have been working on FLN in a combined total of 15 of the 75 districts of UP:

- CSF Cluster: 6 districts
- LLF Cluster: 5 districts
- DEVI Cluster: 4 districts

This report compares outcomes for Grade 3 from NAS 2021 to PRS 2024. UP overall made impressive gains (+10pp in both language and mathematics) as a result of its policies and macro-level measures. However, there is significant district-level variation, which reveals interesting patterns.

- CSF: Central Square Foundation
- LLF: Language & Learning Foundation
- DEVI: DEVI Sansthan (Dignity Education Vision International)
- NAS: National Achievement Survey
- PRS: PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan



More info on different NGOs working in UP

FLN Scale by NGO in Uttar Pradesh

NGO	Students (approx.)	Teachers* (approx.)	Schools (approx.)	Grade span (FLN focus)	Districts (UP)
CSF	350,000	25,000	8,400	1–3	Agra, Aligarh, Ghaziabad, Jhansi, Gorakhpur, Sitapur
LLF	450,000	15,000	6,300	1–3	Bhadohi, Chandauli, Fatehpur, Shravasti, Varanasi
DEVI	510,000	30,000	7,500	1–5	Shamli, Lucknow, Barabanki, Unnao

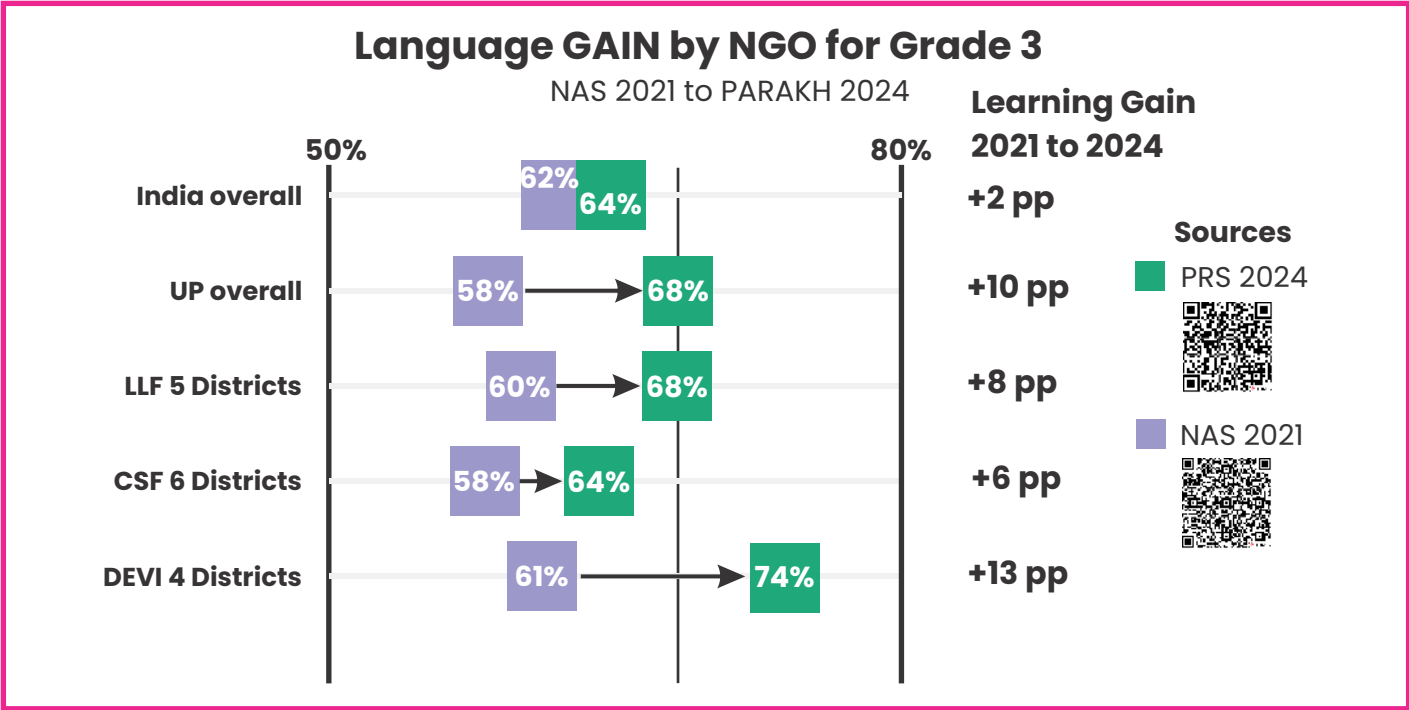
Data Sources & Assumptions:

- The data above is based on what is available publically.
- Number of schools are based on the latest available UDISE+/NAS/PRS data.
- FLN-focussed Grades 1–3 are a subset of these totals. Grades 1–3 usually account for around 60% of total enrollment in Grades 1–5.
- Teachers are not strictly grade-specific, but around 60% may be considered actively engaged in FLN (Grades 1–3).

LANGUAGE GAIN BY NGO NAS 2021 TO PRS 2024

The districts the different NGOs are working in had similar performance in Grade 3 language in the 2021 NAS, but by 2024 a significant gap existed, with DEVI's district having gained a bigger ground as per table below, organized from highest to lowest gains both in terms of percentage points (pp) and relative gain % $(PRS-NAS)/NAS \times 100$).

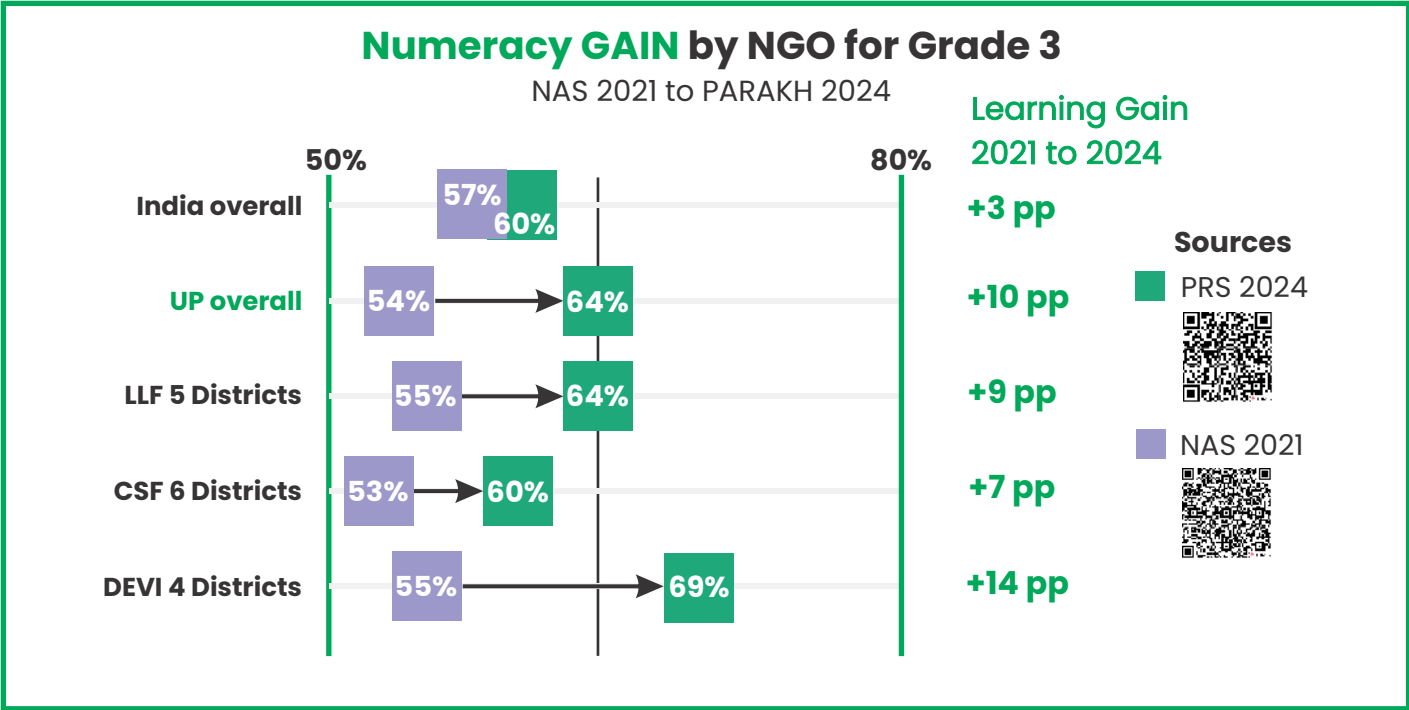
Group	NAS 2021 (%)	PRS 2024 (%)	Gain (pp)	Relative Gain (%)
India Overall	62	64	+2	+3.2%
UP Overall	58	68	+10	+17.2%
LLF (5 districts)	60	68	+8	+13.3%
CSF (6 districts)	58	64	+6	+10.3%
DEVI (4 districts)	61	74	+13	+21.3%



MATHEMATICS GAIN BY NGO NAS 2021 TO PRS 2024

The districts the different NGOs are working in had similar performance in Grade 3 Mathematics in the 2021 NAS, but by 2024 a significant gap existed, with DEVI's district having gained a bigger ground as per table below, organized from highest to lowest gains both in terms of percentage points (pp) and relative gain % $(PRS-NAS)/NAS \times 100$.

Group	NAS 2021 (%)	PRS 2024 (%)	Gain (pp)	Relative Gain (%)
India Overall	57	60	+3	+5.3%
UP Overall	54	64	+10	+18.5%
LLF (5 districts)	55	64	+9	+16.4%
CSF (6 districts)	53	60	+7	+13.2%
DEVI (4 districts)	55	69	+14	+25.5%



DISTRICT-WISE GAINS AT A GLANCE

		Grade 3 Language			Grade 3 Numeracy		
NGO	District	NAS 2021	PARAKH 2024	Gain	NAS 2021	PARAKH 2024	Gain
LLF	Bhadohi	54%	66%	12%	50%	62%	12%
LLF	Chandauli	59%	63%	4%	55%	59%	4%
LLF	Fatehpur	71%	72%	1%	67%	68%	1%
LLF	Shravasti*	55%	73%	18%	51%	69%	18%
LLF	Varanasi	59%	67%	8%	54%	61%	7%
LLF Average		60%	68%	9%	55%	64%	8%

* These are overall gains for Shravasti. LLF worked in 3 of the 5 blocks of Shravasti.

		Grade 3 Language			Grade 3 Numeracy		
NGO	District	NAS 2021	PARAKH 2024	Gain	NAS 2021	PARAKH 2024	Gain
CSF	Agra	54%	56%	2%	49%	52%	3%
CSF	Aligarh	65%	72%	7%	60%	69%	9%
CSF	Ghaziabad	60%	71%	11%	54%	65%	11%
CSF	Gorakhpur	56%	65%	9%	52%	61%	9%
CSF	Jhansi	60%	58%	-2%	54%	54%	0%
CSF	Sitapur	52%	61%	9%	47%	57%	10%
CSF Average		58%	64%	6%	53%	60%	7%

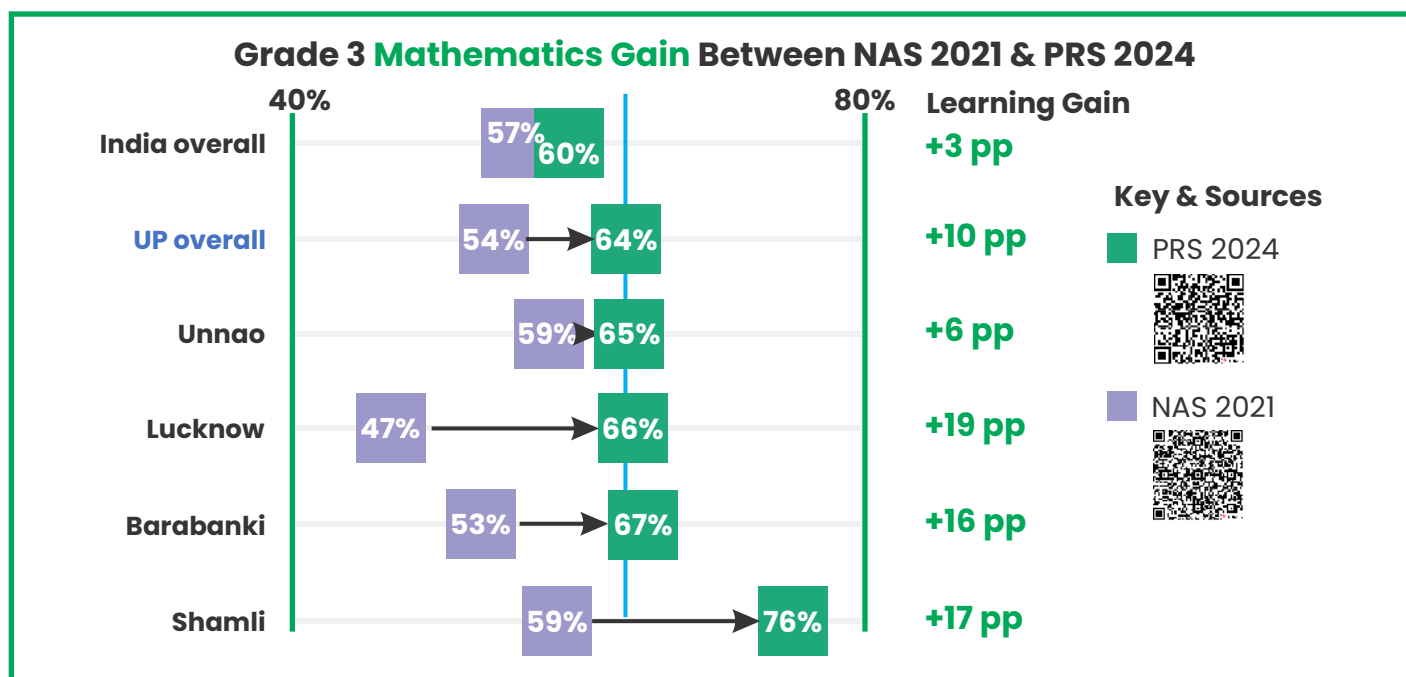
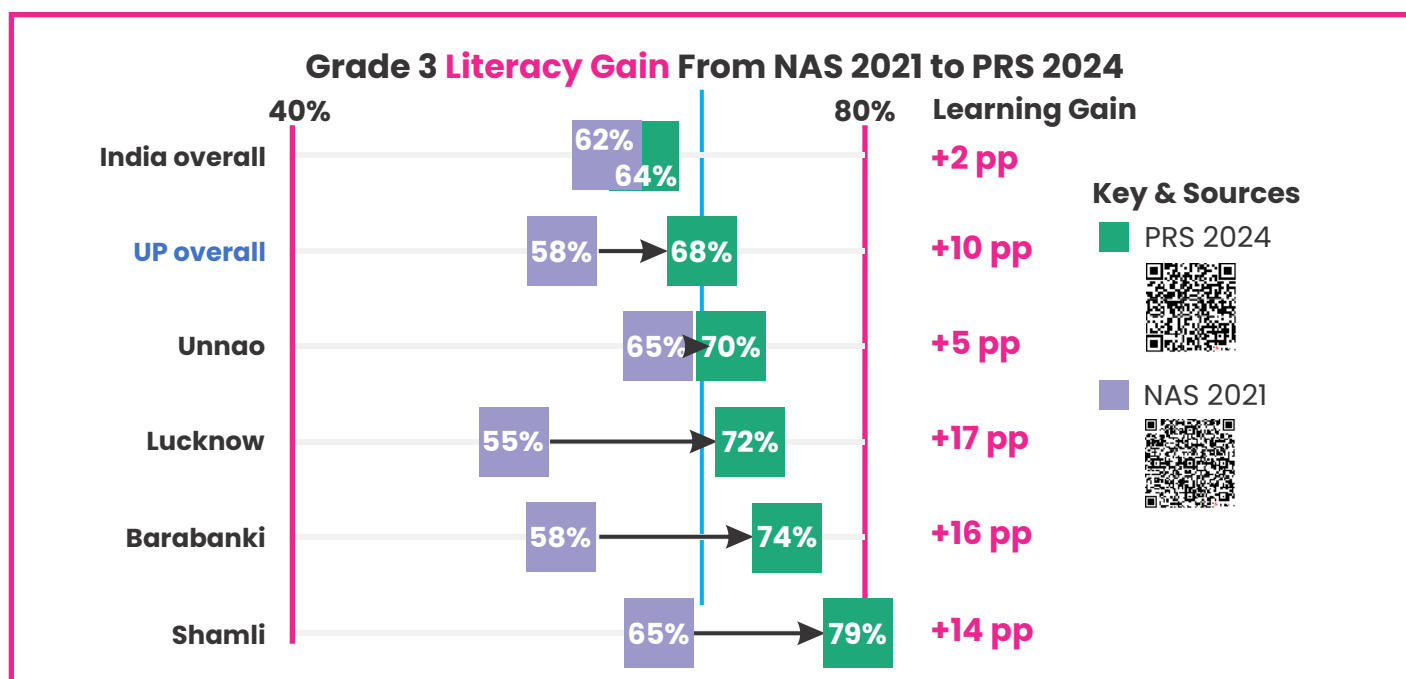
		Grade 3 Language			Grade 3 Numeracy		
NGO	District	NAS 2021	PARAKH 2024	Gain	NAS 2021	PARAKH 2024	Gain
DEVI	Barabanki	58%	74%	16%	53%	67%	14%
DEVI	Lucknow	55%	72%	17%	47%	66%	19%
DEVI	Shamli	65%	79%	14%	59%	76%	17%
DEVI	Unnao	65%	70%	5%	59%	65%	6%
DEVI Average		61%	74%	13%	55%	69%	14%

* DEVI had rolled out its program in only some of the blocks of Unnao before PRS2024.

UP Overall		58%	68%	10%	54%	64%	10%
India Overall		62%	64%	2%	57%	60%	3%

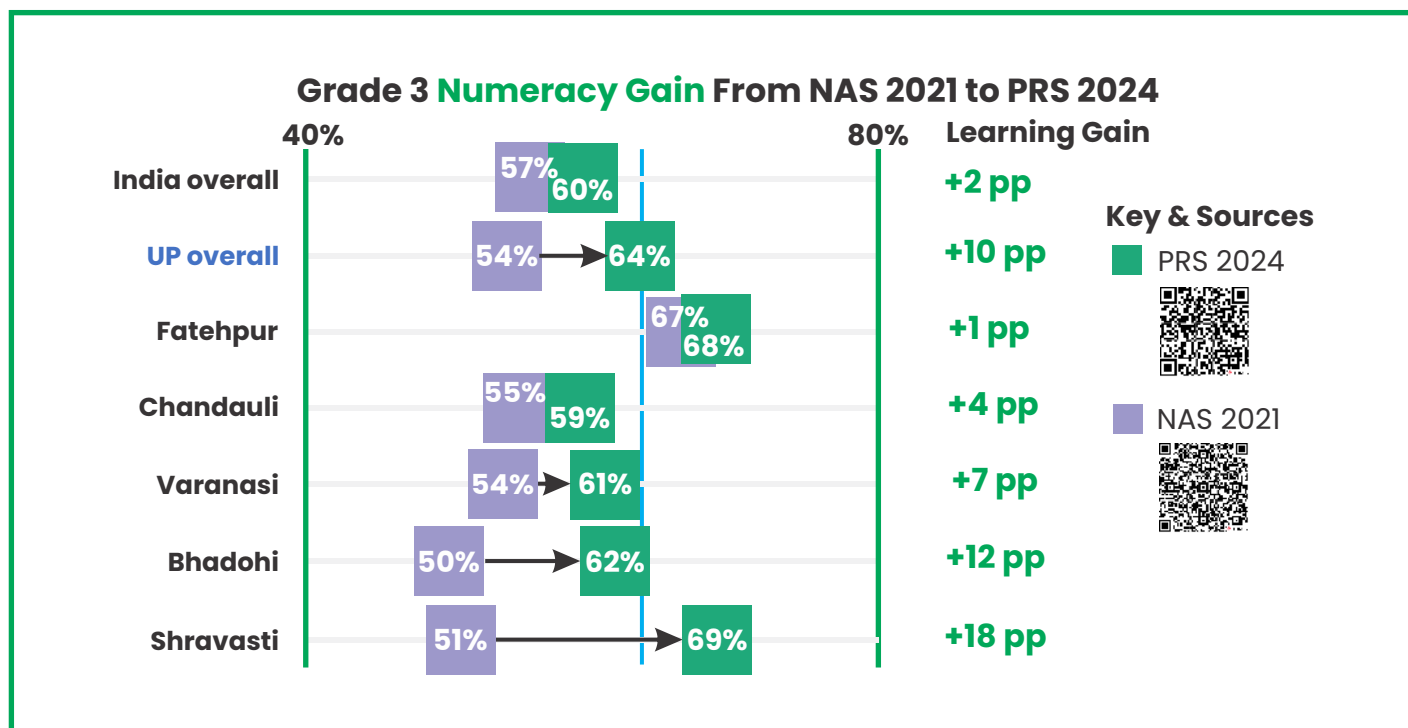
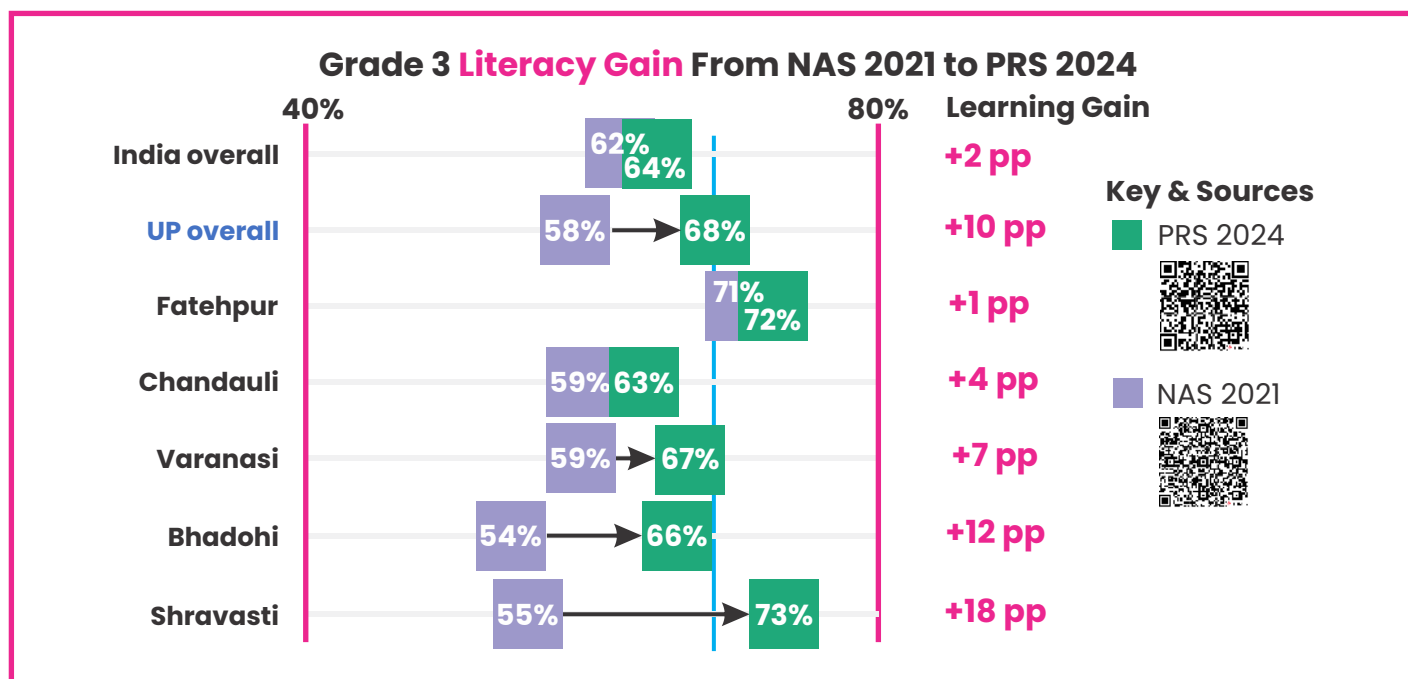
DEVI NGO DISTRICT-WISE GAINS NAS 2021 TO PRS 2024

The DEVI NGO districts show above UP average gains as a cluster. Particularly remarkable is Shamli, a formerly low performing district of India (as per NAS 2017) where AlfA was first implemented as a 10+10 school RCT in 2022 (validated by Harvard GSE), then adopted by 40% of its schools in 2023. Full district implementation began in 2024 itself, yet by November 2024, when PRS took place, Shamli had surpassed others to reach Rank 2 out of 75 districts of UP. It is important to note that DEVI, being a newcomer, did not have the full 3-year cycle for implementation. Yet, the 4 districts improved by 5 to 19 percentage points. The Unnao district showed the least improvement as DEVI materials got delayed in reaching many schools.



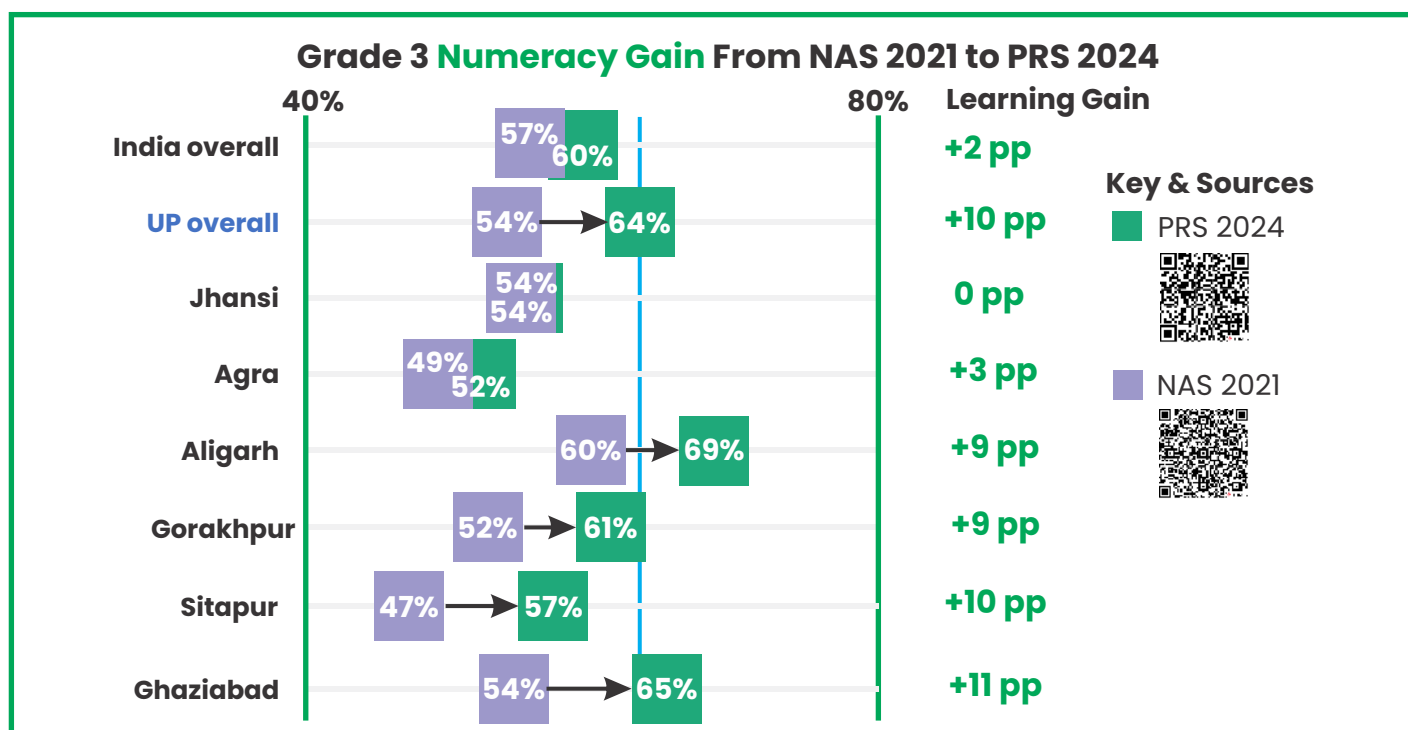
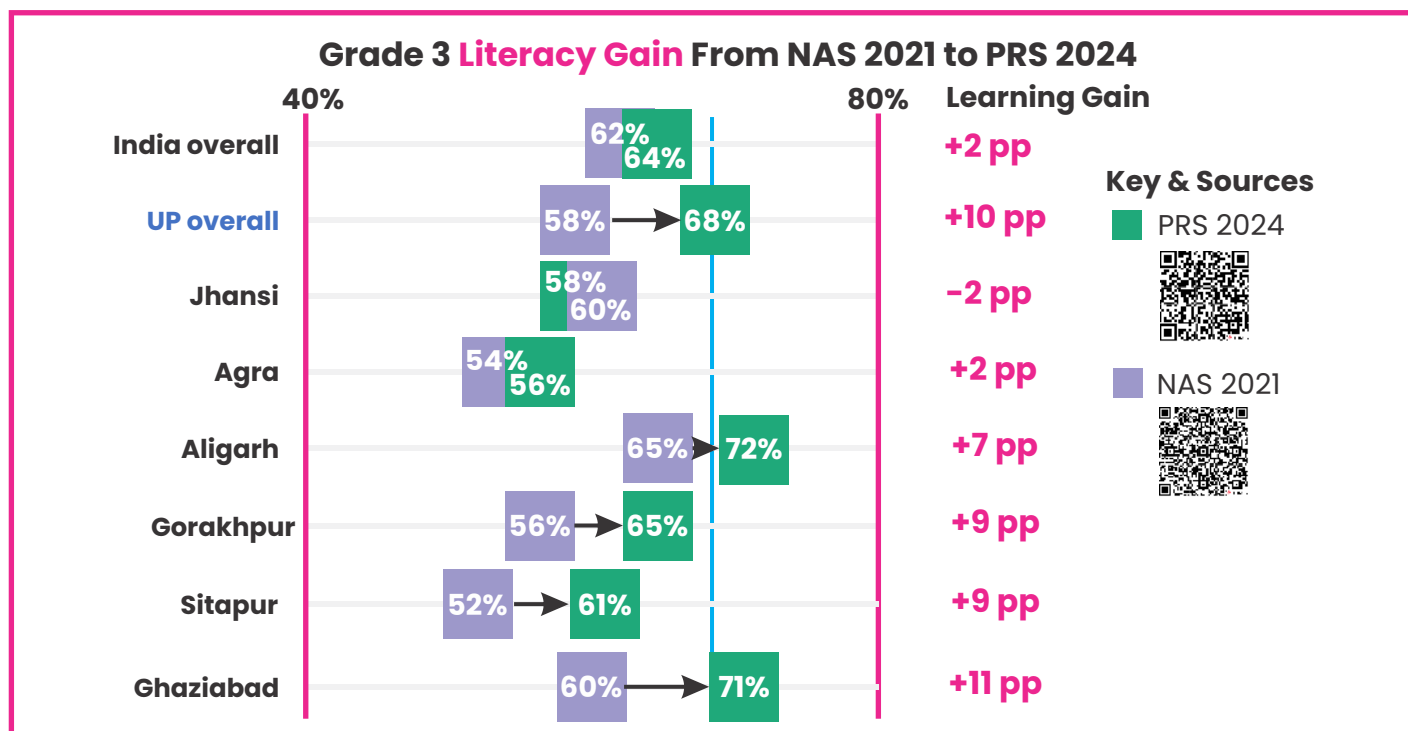
LLF NGO CLUSTER OF DISTRICTS NAS 2021 to PRS 2024

The LLF districts show clear gains overall, but with substantial variation across districts. In literacy, improvement ranges from just +1 pp in Fatehpur to +18 pp in Shravasti, with Bhadohi (+12 pp) and Varanasi (+7 pp) also showing strong progress, while Chandauli (+4 pp) improved more moderately. Numeracy shows a very similar pattern, again ranging from +1 pp to +18 pp. This significant variation is consistent with LLF's staggered footprint in Uttar Pradesh: LLF has supported the state since 2019, with district work expanding over time, including Varanasi from 2021, Shravasti from 2022, Chandauli from April 2023, Bhadohi from August 2023, and Fatehpur later.



CSF NGO CLUSTER OF DISTRICTS NAS 2021 to PRS 2024

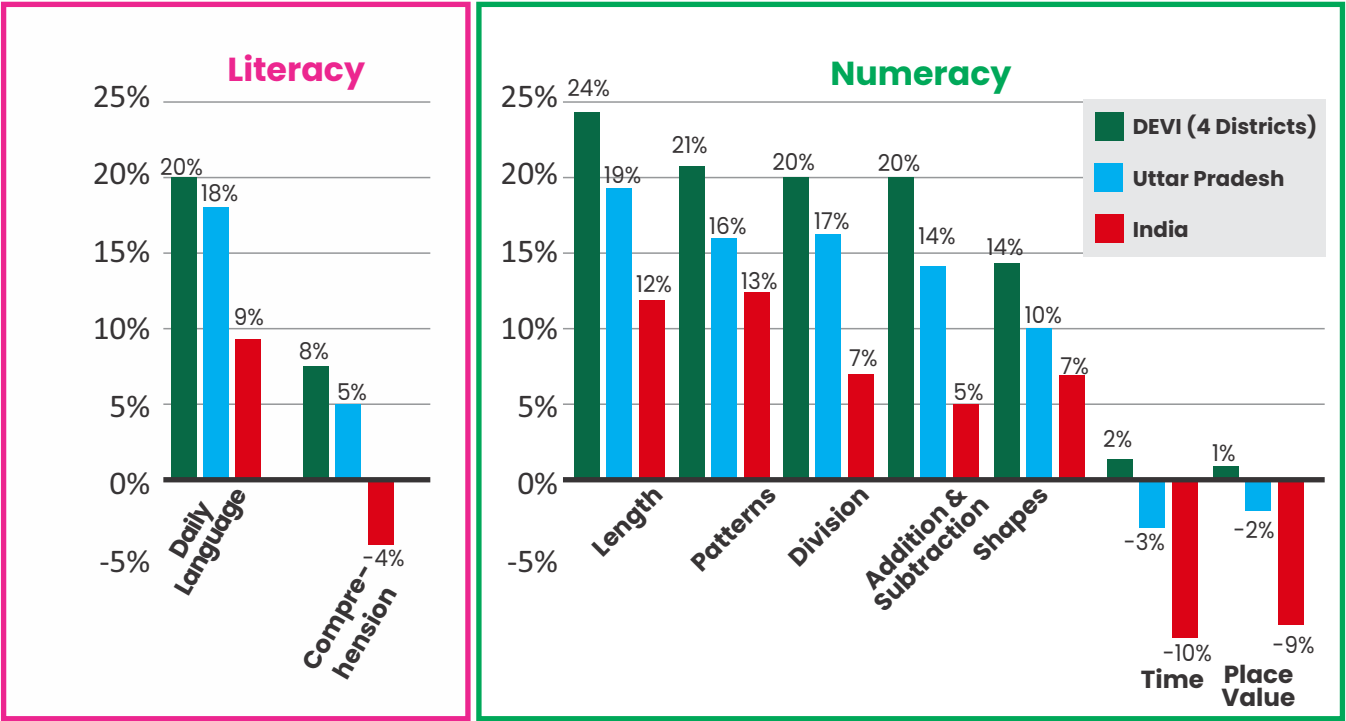
The CSF districts also reflect marked variability rather than a uniform pattern of progress. In literacy, outcomes range from a slight decline in Jhansi (-2 pp) and a modest +2 pp in Agra to stronger gains in Gorakhpur & Sitapur (+9 pp each), and Ghaziabad (+11 pp). Numeracy shows the same unevenness: Jhansi remained flat, Agra gained +3 pp, while Aligarh and Gorakhpur (+9 pp), Sitapur (+10 pp), and Ghaziabad (+11 pp) made much larger gains. Together, these results underline that district-level implementation conditions strongly shape the pace of learning improvement.



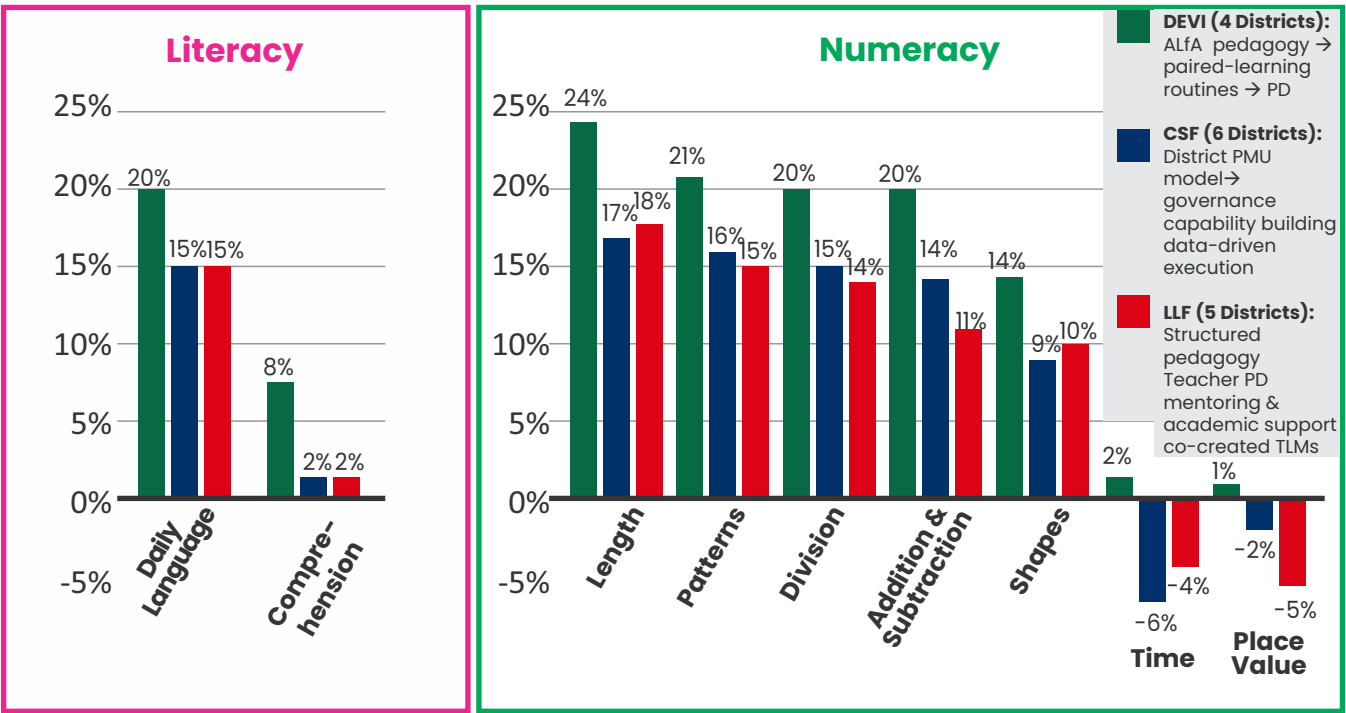
COMPETENCY-WISE OVERVIEW

Competency-wise gains were real in most districts in the same analysis. It shows all approaches had some impact. However, across the board, DEVI districts showed the highest gains in all competencies.

Grade 3 Competency Gains NAS 2021 to PRS 2024



Competency Gains by NGO



The NAS 2021 and PRS 2024 had slightly different competencies, for instance, NAS included 3-digit numbers whereas PRS was only up to 2-digit numbers. The above analysis compares similar competencies.

Grade 3 Literacy Competencies

NAS 2021		PARAKH 2024	
LO Code	Learning Outcome for Grade 3	LO Code	Learning Outcome for Grade 3
DAILY LANGUAGE			
L312	Reads printed scripts on the classroom walls: poems, posters, charts etc.	C-9.7	Knows and uses enough words to carry out day-to-day interactions effectively; can guess the meaning of new words using existing vocabulary
COMPREHENSION			
L304	Reads small texts with comprehension , i.e., identifies main ideas, details, sequence and draws conclusions	C-10.5	Reads short stories and comprehends their meaning – by identifying characters, storyline and what the author wants to say – on their own

Grade 3 Numeracy Competencies

NAS 2021		PARAKH 2024	
LO Code	Learning Outcome for Grade 3	LO Code	Learning Outcome for Grade 3
LENGTH			
M312	Estimates and measures length and distance using standard units like centimetres or meters & identifies relationships.	C-8.9	Selects appropriate tools and units to perform simple measurements of length , weight, and volume of objects in their immediate environment.
PATTERNS			
M318	Extends patterns in simple shapes and numbers	C-8.2	Identifies and extends simple patterns in their surroundings, shapes, and numbers.
DIVISION			
M306	Explains the meaning of division facts by equal grouping/sharing and finds it by repeated subtraction	C-8.7	Recognises multiplication as repeated addition and division as equal sharing .
ADDITION & SUBTRACTION			
M303	Solves simple daily life problems using addition and subtraction of three-digit numbers with and without regrouping.	C-8.6	Performs addition & subtraction of 2-digit numbers fluently using flexible strategies of both numerical and word problems.
SHAPES			
M309	Identifies and makes 2D-shapes by paper folding, paper cutting on the dot grid, using straight lines etc.	C-8.8	Recognises basic geometric shapes and their properties, understands and explains relation of objects in space.
TELLING THE TIME			
M317	Reads the time correctly to the hour using a clock/watch.	C-8.10	Performs simple measurements of time in minutes, hours, day, weeks and months.
PLACE VALUES			
M302	Compares numbers up to 999 based on their place values .	C-8.5	Recognises & uses numerals to represent quantities up to 99 with decimal place value system .

COMPETENCY-WISE GAINS NAS 2021 to PRS 2024

Across the numeracy competencies analysed, there was significant variation in the level of gains between 2021 and 2024. Some competencies, like measuring length and extending patterns, saw large gains. However competencies like telling the time and place value saw a decline in 2024 compared to 2021 with a slight positive outcome for the 4 DEVI districts.

LENGTH

NAS 2021: M312

Estimates and measures **length** and distance using standard units like centimetres or meters.

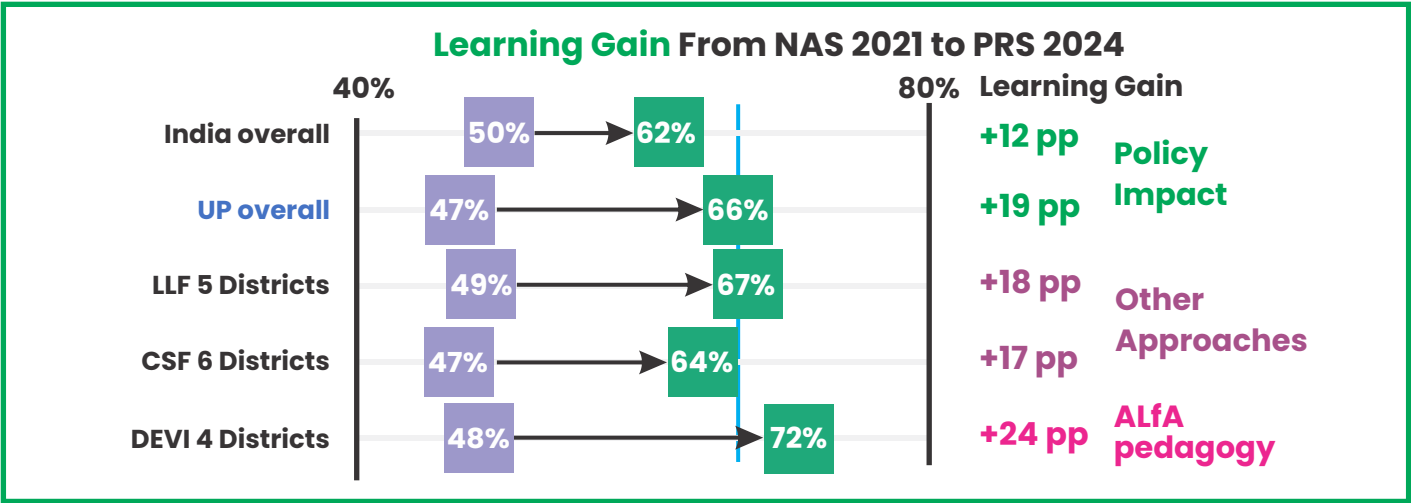
PRS 2024: C8.9

Select appropriate tools and units to perform simple measurements of **length**, weight, and volume of objects in their immediate environment.

Sample Item:

How long is the pencil?

- (a) 1cm (b) 7cm
(c) 8cm (d) 9cm



PATTERNS

NAS 2021: M318

Extends patterns in simple shapes and numbers.

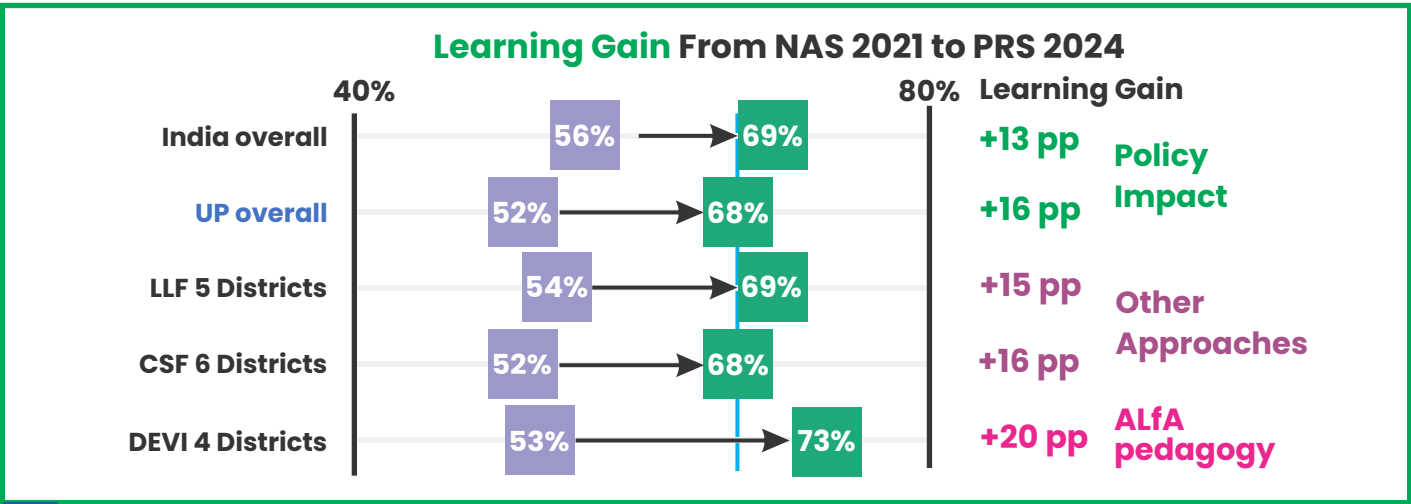
PRS 2024: C8.2

Identifies and **extends simple patterns** in their surroundings, shapes, and numbers.

Sample Item:

Which numbers come just before the given numbers?

- ____, ____, 198, 199, 200
(a) 201, 202 (b) 202, 203
(c) 196, 197 (d) 195, 190



DIVISION

NAS 2021: M306

Explains the meaning of **division** facts by equal grouping/sharing and finds it by repeated subtraction.

PRS 2024: C8.7

Recognises multiplication as repeated addition and **division** as **equal sharing**.

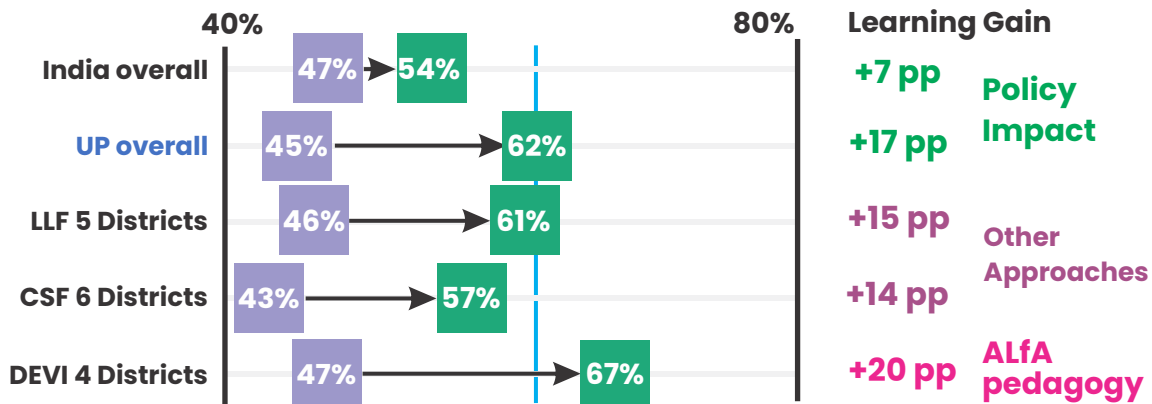
Sample Item:

If 18 mangoes are divided equally among 3 children, how many mangoes will each child get?

- (a) 5 (b) 6
(c) 3 (d) 9



Learning Gain From NAS 2021 to PRS 2024



ADDITION & SUBTRACTION

NAS 2021: M303

Solves simple daily life problems using **addition** and **subtraction** of three-digit numbers with and without regrouping.

PRS 2024: C8.6

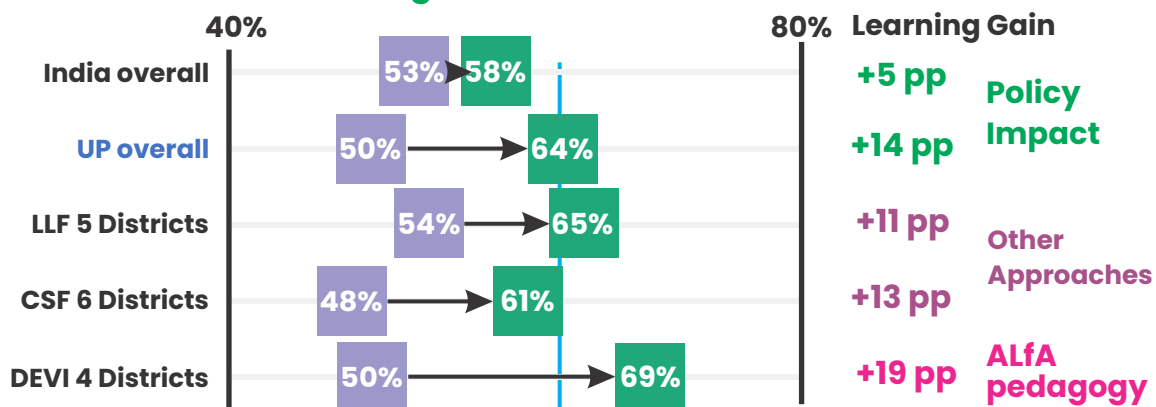
Performs **addition** and **subtraction** of 2-digit numbers fluently using flexible strategies of composition and decomposition of both numerical and word problems.

Sample Item:

In a cricket match, Ramu scored 24 runs and Kalu scored 63 runs. How many runs did they score altogether?

- (a) 47 (b) 77
(c) 68 (d) 87

Learning Gain From NAS 2021 to PRS 2024



SHAPES

NAS 2021: M312

Identifies and makes **2D-shapes** by paper folding, paper cutting on the dot grid, using straight lines etc.

PRS 2024: C8.8

Recognises, makes, and classifies **basic geometric shapes** and their observable properties, and understands and explains the relative relation of objects in space.

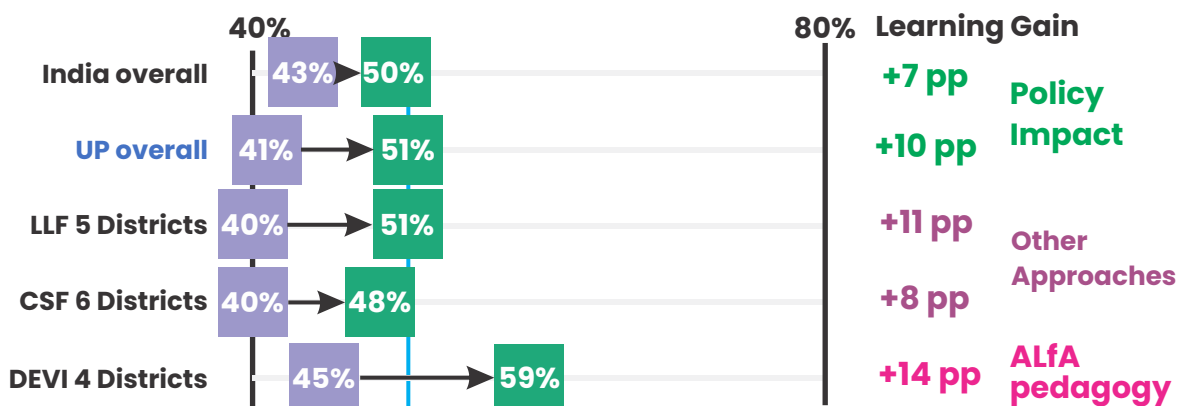
Sample Item:

How many sides are there in the given figure?

- (a) 10 (b) 11
(c) 14 (d) 12



Learning Gain From NAS 2021 to PRS 2024



PLACE VALUE

NAS 2021: M302

Compares numbers up to 999 based on their **place values**.

PRS 2024: C8.5

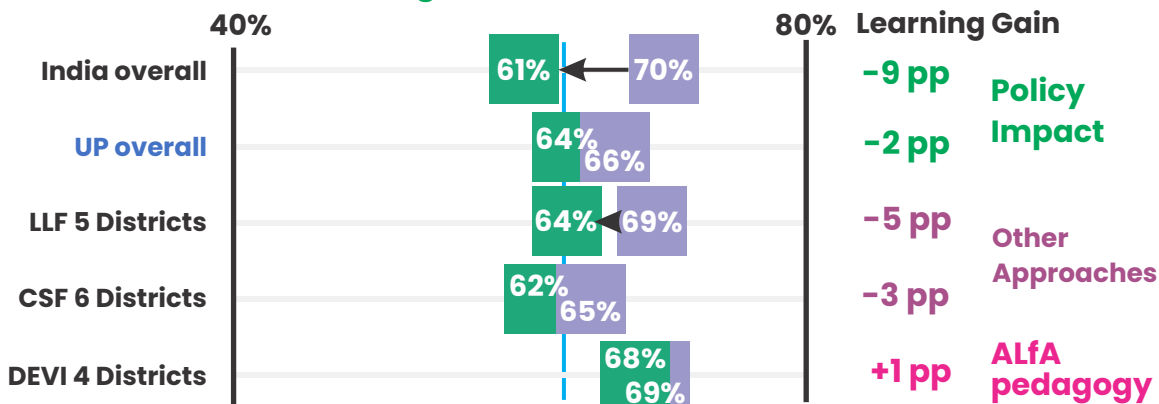
Recognises and uses numerals to represent quantities up to 99 with the understanding of decimal **place value system**.

Sample Item:

In the number 753, which digit is in the tens place?

- (a) 3 (b) 5
(c) 7 (d) None of these

Learning Gain From NAS 2021 to PRS 2024



TIME

NAS 2021: M317

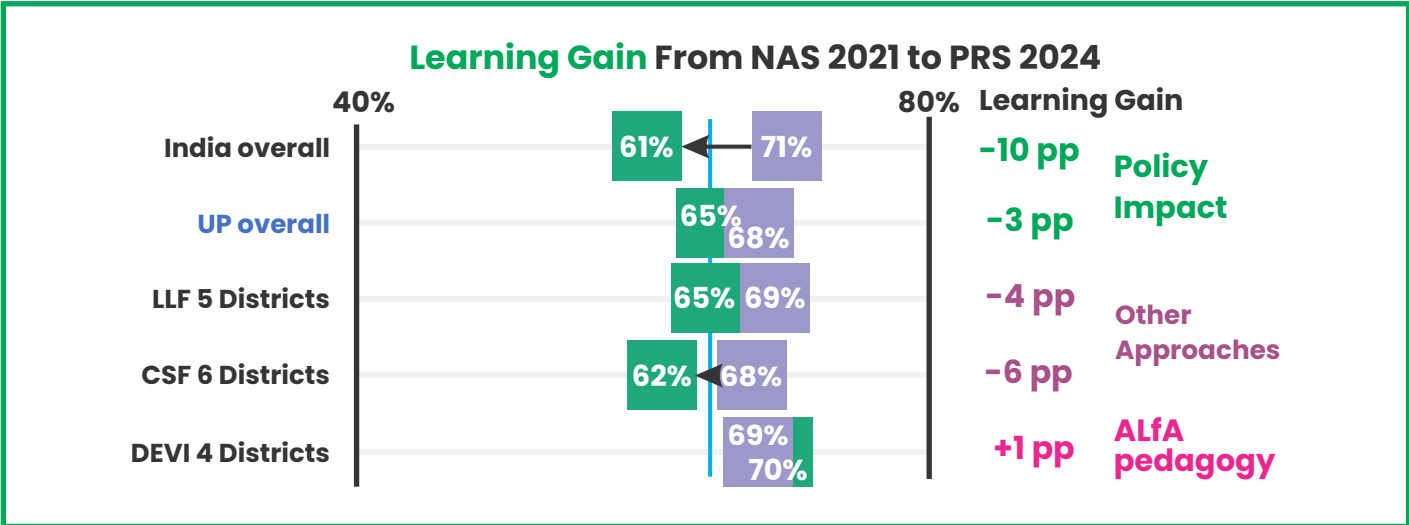
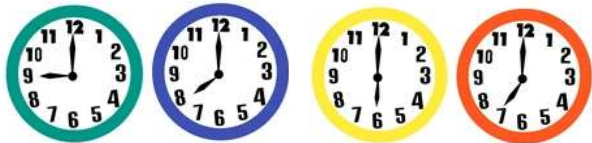
Reads the time correctly to the hour using a clock/watch.

PRS 2024: C8.10

Performs simple measurements of time in minutes, hours, day, weeks and months.

Sample Item:

Which clock shows 8 o'clock?



DAILY LANGUAGE

NAS 2021: L312

Reads **printed scripts** on the classroom walls: poems, posters, charts etc.

PRS 2024: C9.7

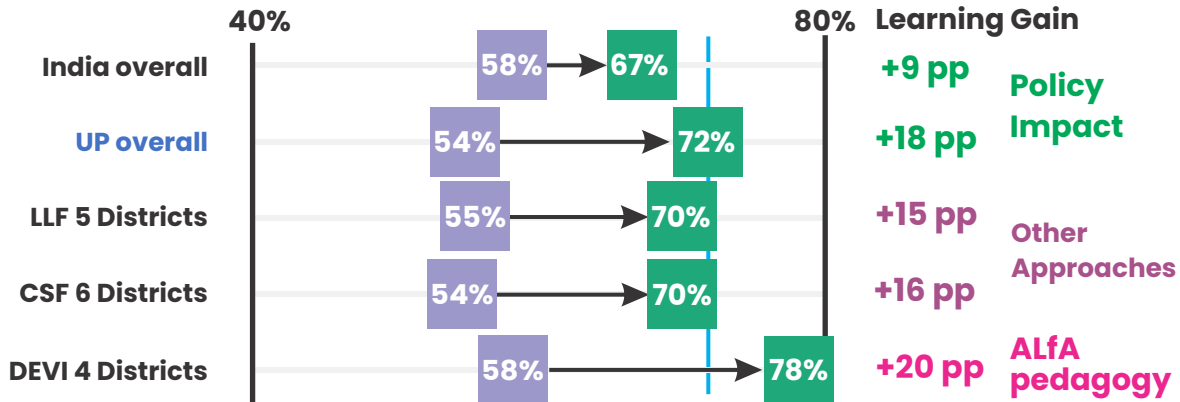
Knows and uses **enough words** to carry out day-to-day interactions effectively and can guess the meaning of new words by using existing vocabulary.

Sample Item:

Which of these is different from all the others?

- a) potato b) pineapple
c) brinjal d) bitter gourd

Learning Gain From NAS 2021 to PRS 2024



COMPREHENSION

NAS 2021: L304

Reads **small texts with comprehension**, i.e., identifies main ideas, details, sequence and draws conclusions.

PRS 2024: C8.2

Reads short stories and **comprehends their meaning** – by identifying characters, storyline and what the author wants to say – on their own.

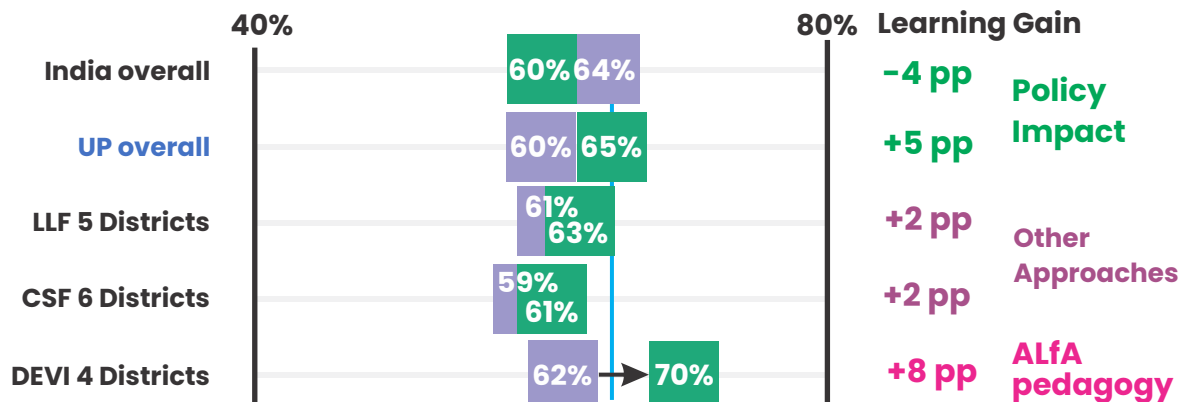
Sample Item:

The crow dropped pebbles into the matka so the water would rise and he could drink.

The crow was:

- a) hungry b) tired
c) thirsty d) dirty

Learning Gain From NAS 2021 to PRS 2024





Every word read is a step
towards a brighter future.

