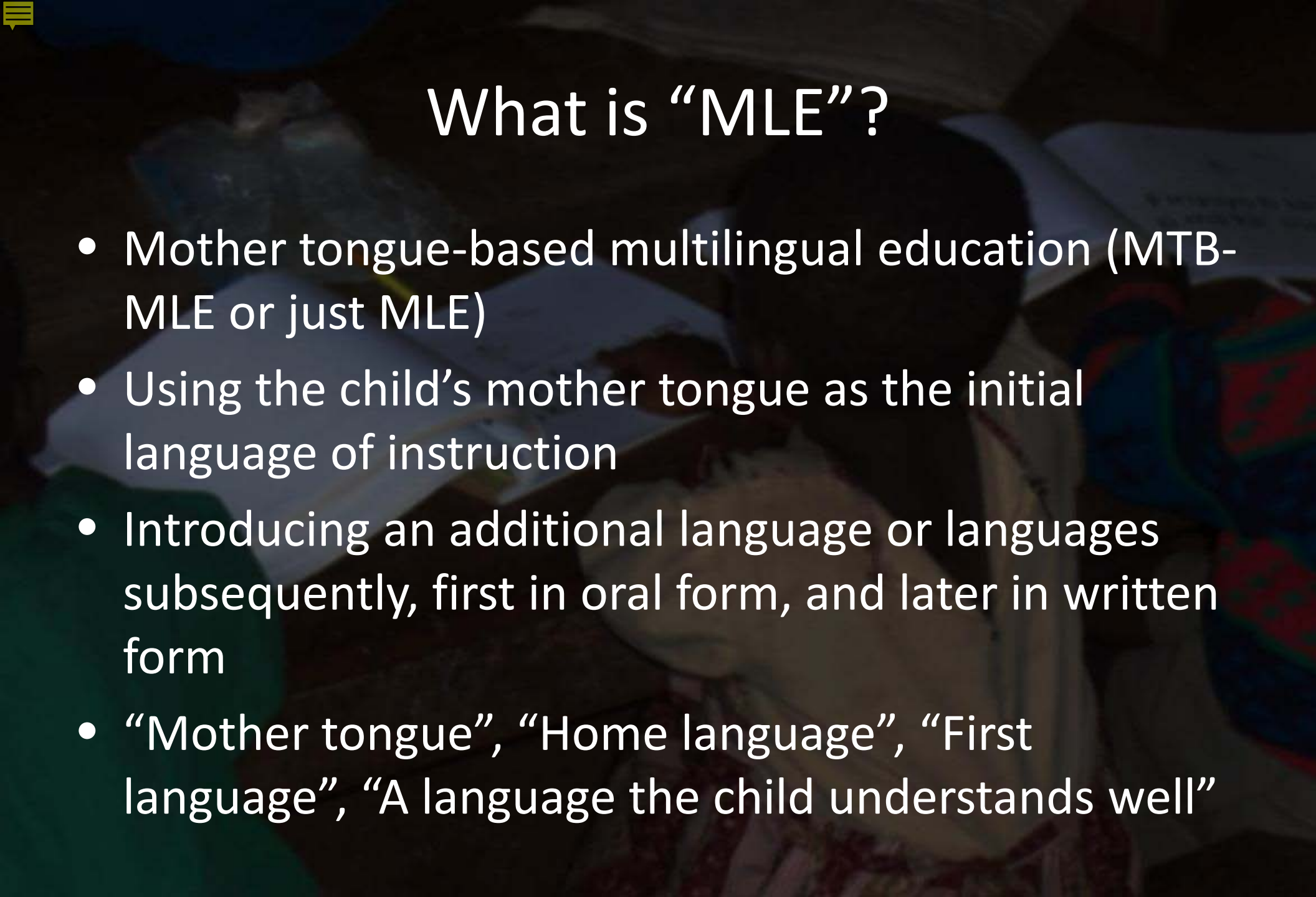




Laying a Solid Foundation for Learning:
Lessons from the Kom MLE Project in Cameroon
Paul Frank—SIL LEAD and SIL International

A dark, artistic photograph of a child's hands holding an open book, with the pages showing some text and illustrations. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the paper and the child's hands.

What is “MLE”?

- Mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE or just MLE)
- Using the child’s mother tongue as the initial language of instruction
- Introducing an additional language or languages subsequently, first in oral form, and later in written form
- “Mother tongue”, “Home language”, “First language”, “A language the child understands well”

A dark, low-key photograph of a young child sitting on the floor, leaning over and reading an open book. The child is wearing a light-colored shirt and patterned pants. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some colorful fabric. The overall mood is quiet and focused.

Why use an MLE approach?

- Children can learn if they understand
- Easier to teach reading when the child knows the language
- Greater educational success
- True even for the *second* language

A dark, low-key photograph of a person sitting and reading a book. The person is wearing a light-colored shirt and a patterned skirt. The background is dark, and the lighting is focused on the person and the book.

Why isn't MLE used more often?

- Official language more valuable?
- Move to the new language quickly
- Using first language waste of time or hindrance?

A dark, low-key photograph of a person, likely a woman, sitting and reading a book. The person is wearing a light-colored, patterned garment. The background is dark and out of focus, with some colorful patterns visible on the right side. The overall mood is quiet and focused.

Kom Education Pilot Project (KEPP)

- English-speaking North West Region of Cameroon
- Approximately 250,000 speakers
- Kom is primary language in the area
- School staff speak Kom
- English is primary language of instruction
- Performance very poor

A dark, low-key photograph of a young child sitting on the floor, leaning over and reading an open book. The child is wearing a light-colored shirt and a patterned skirt. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some colorful fabric. The text is overlaid on the upper half of the image.

What was the intervention?

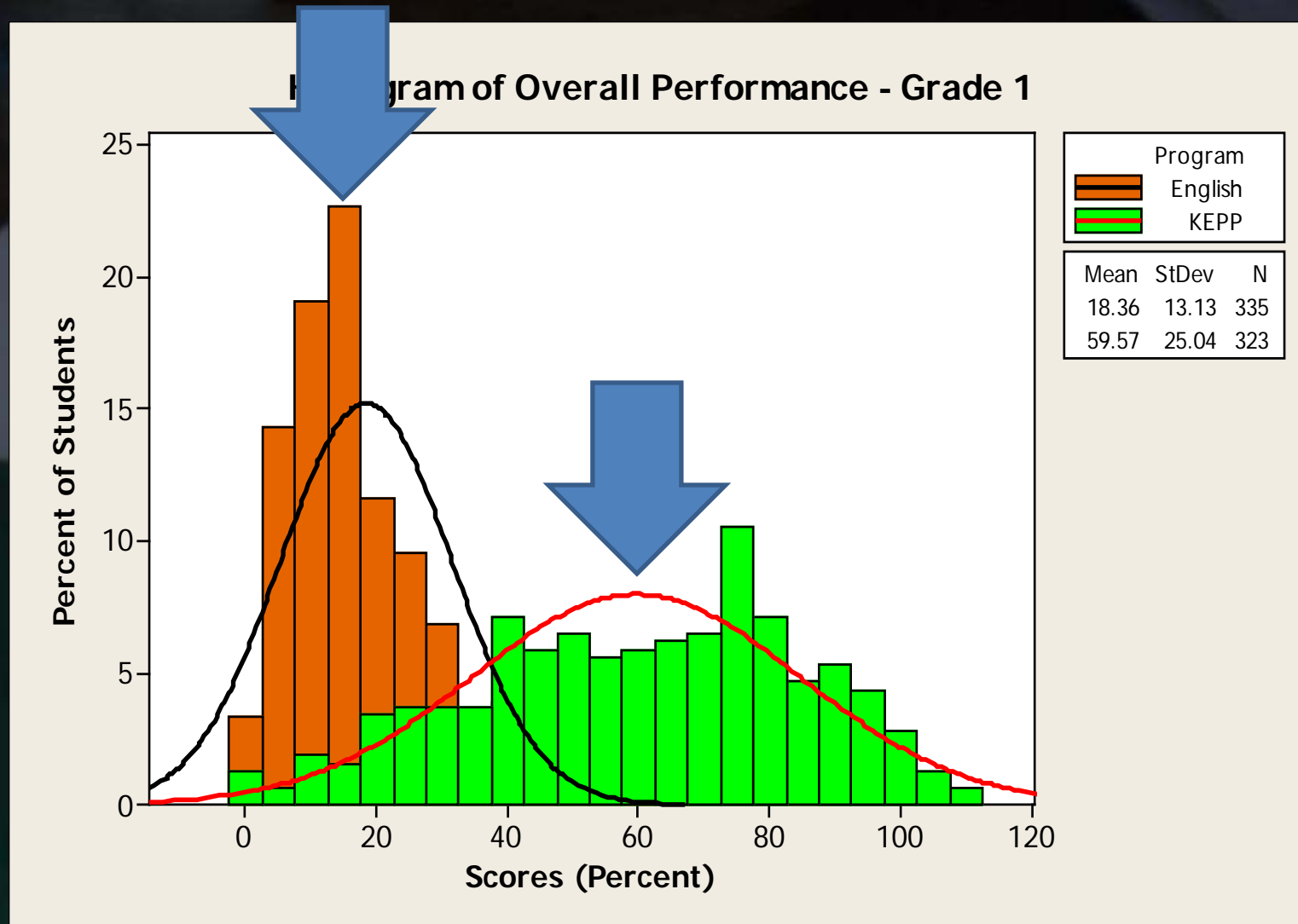
- Grades 1-3: Kom is language of instruction
- Students also learn oral English
- Third grade: learn to read and write in English
- Fourth grade: transition to English



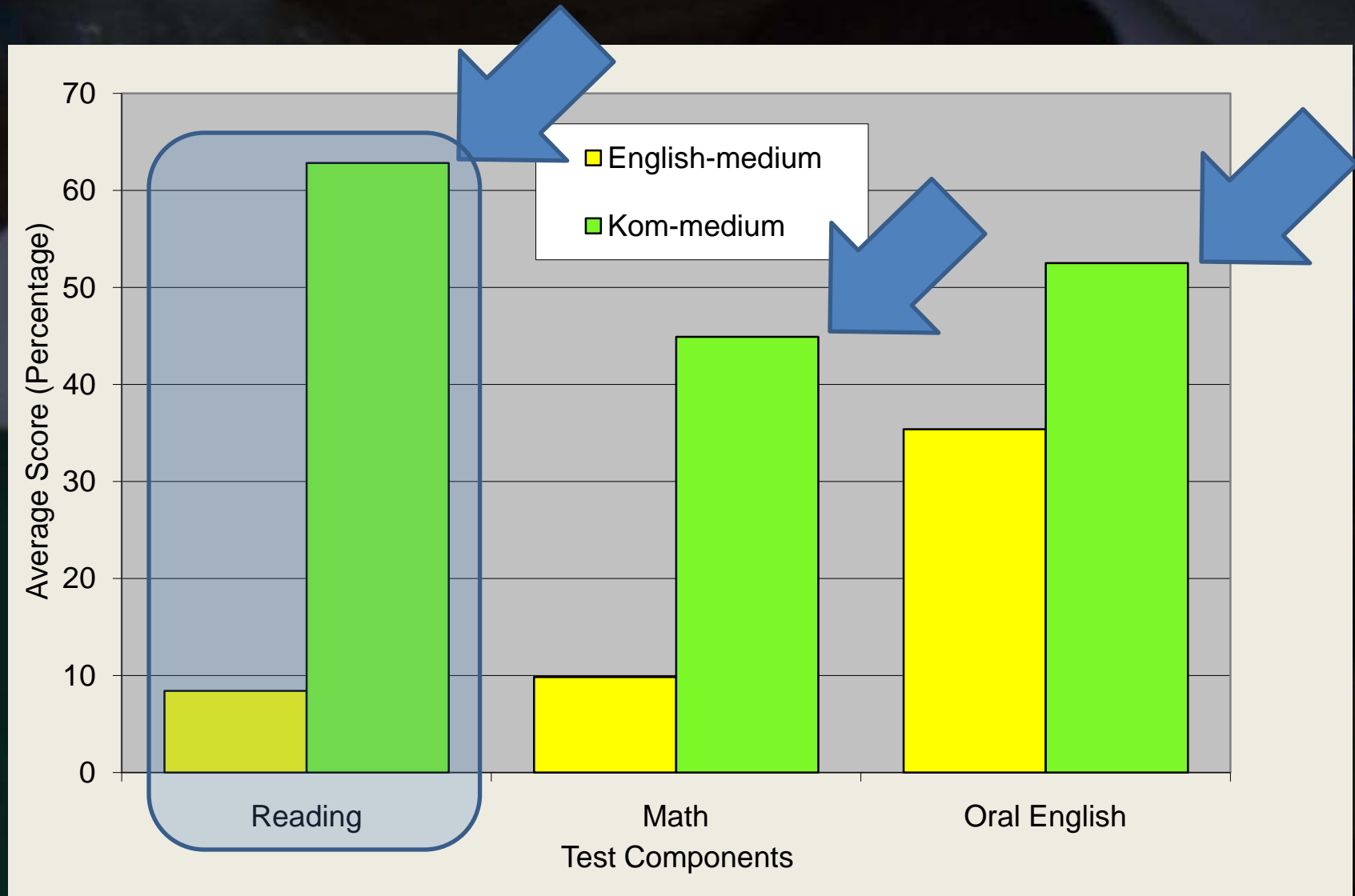
Baseline

- Reading comprehension in English:
 - 4% after one year of school
 - only 20% in Class 6
- Math scores:
 - under 10%
 - even counting under 15%
- Some children in Class 4 “had never held a pencil or written on a piece of paper”

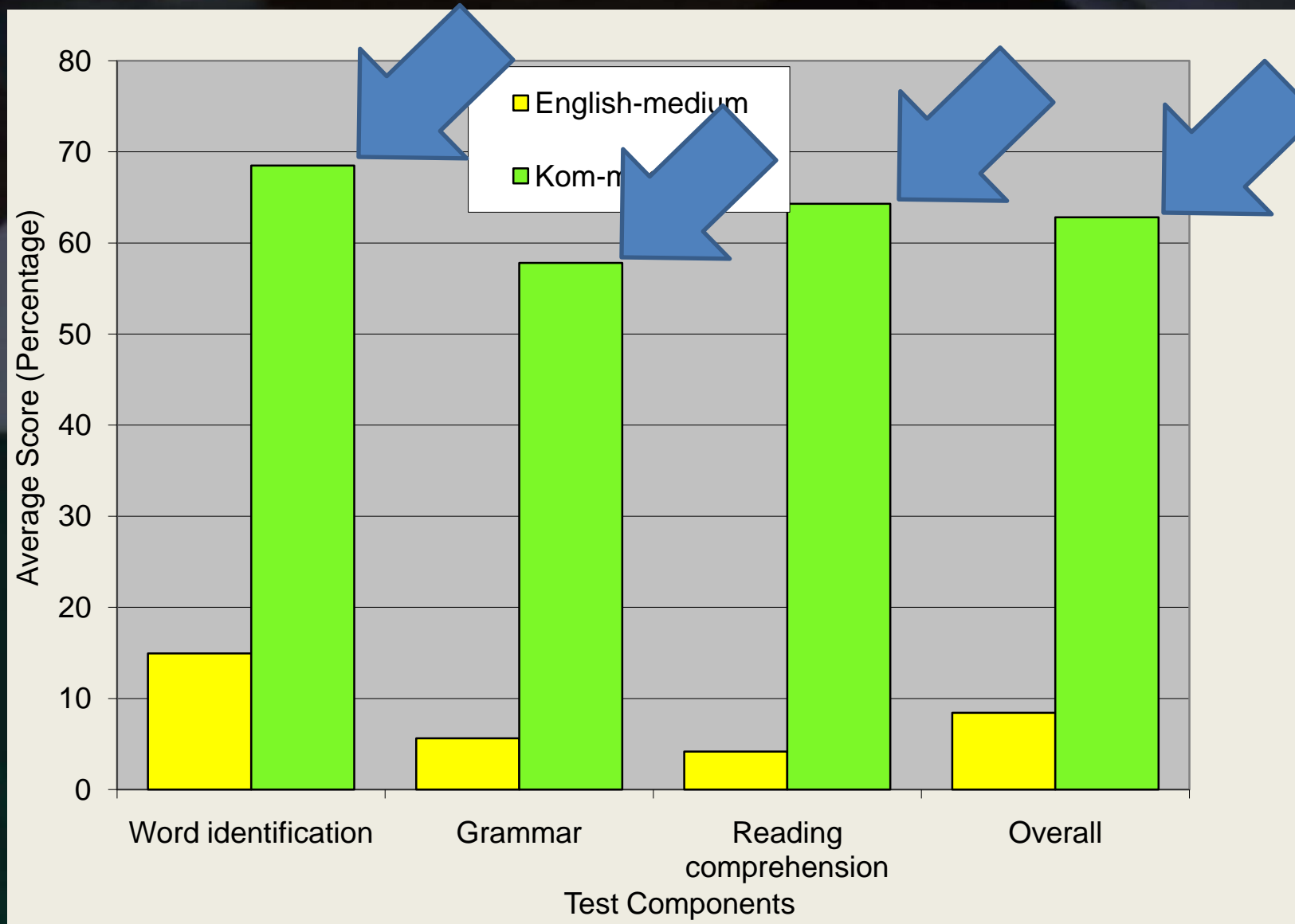
One year—comparison of scores



Comparison on sub-tests



Comparison on reading sub-tests



A dark, low-key photograph of a young child sitting and reading a large book. The child is wearing a light-colored shirt and a patterned skirt. The book is open, and the child's hands are visible on the pages. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some colorful patterns.

Specific features of the intervention

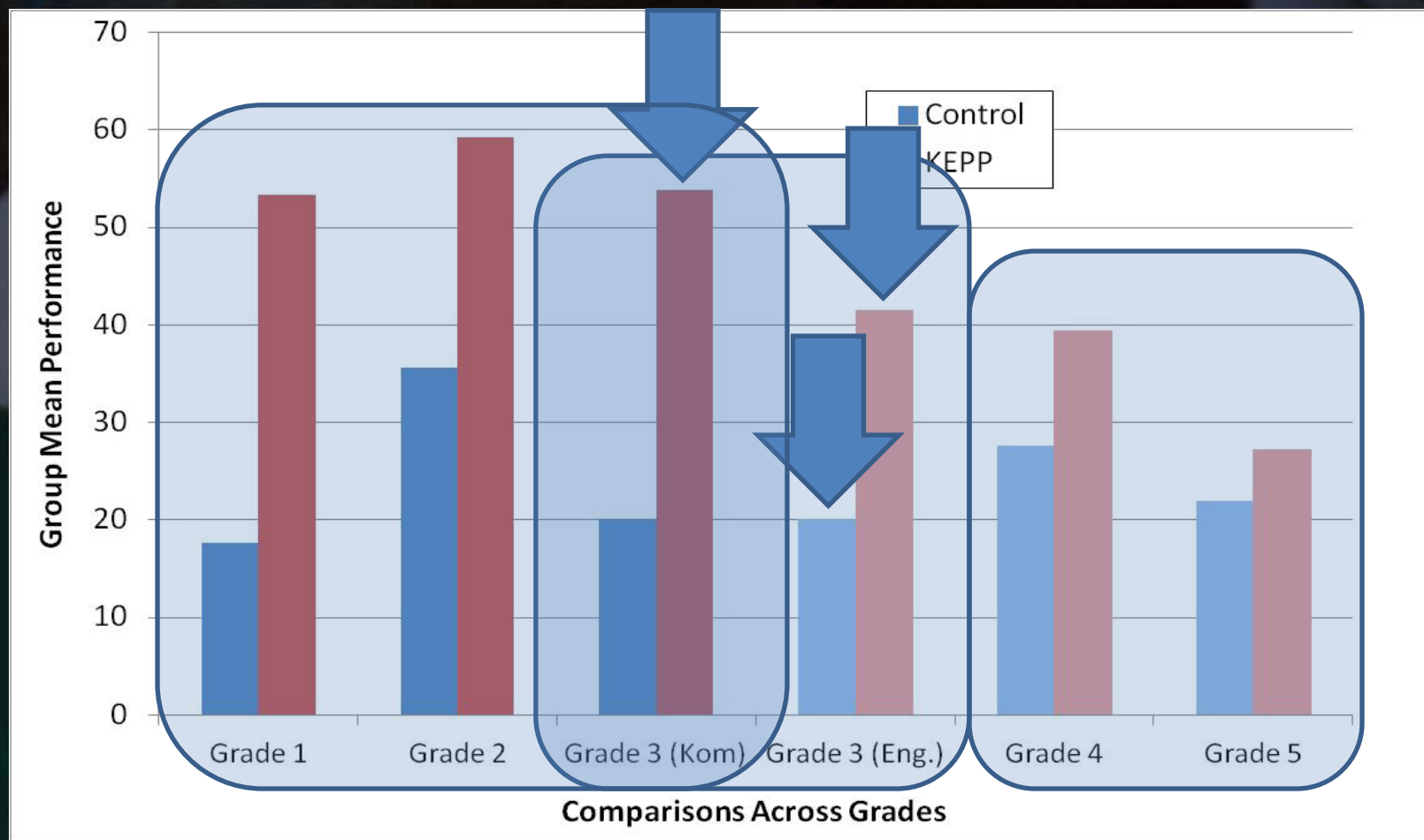
- Children learn to read in Kom
- Reading out loud to students
- Phonics to teach decoding
- Integrated reading curriculum
- Questioning strategies to promote comprehension and reasoning

A young child with dark hair is sitting and reading a book. The child is wearing a light-colored shirt and a patterned skirt. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some papers and a colorful object.

And there's more!

- 10 minutes daily for independent reading or writing
- English language development
- Instruction in math
- Teacher training
- Teacher support

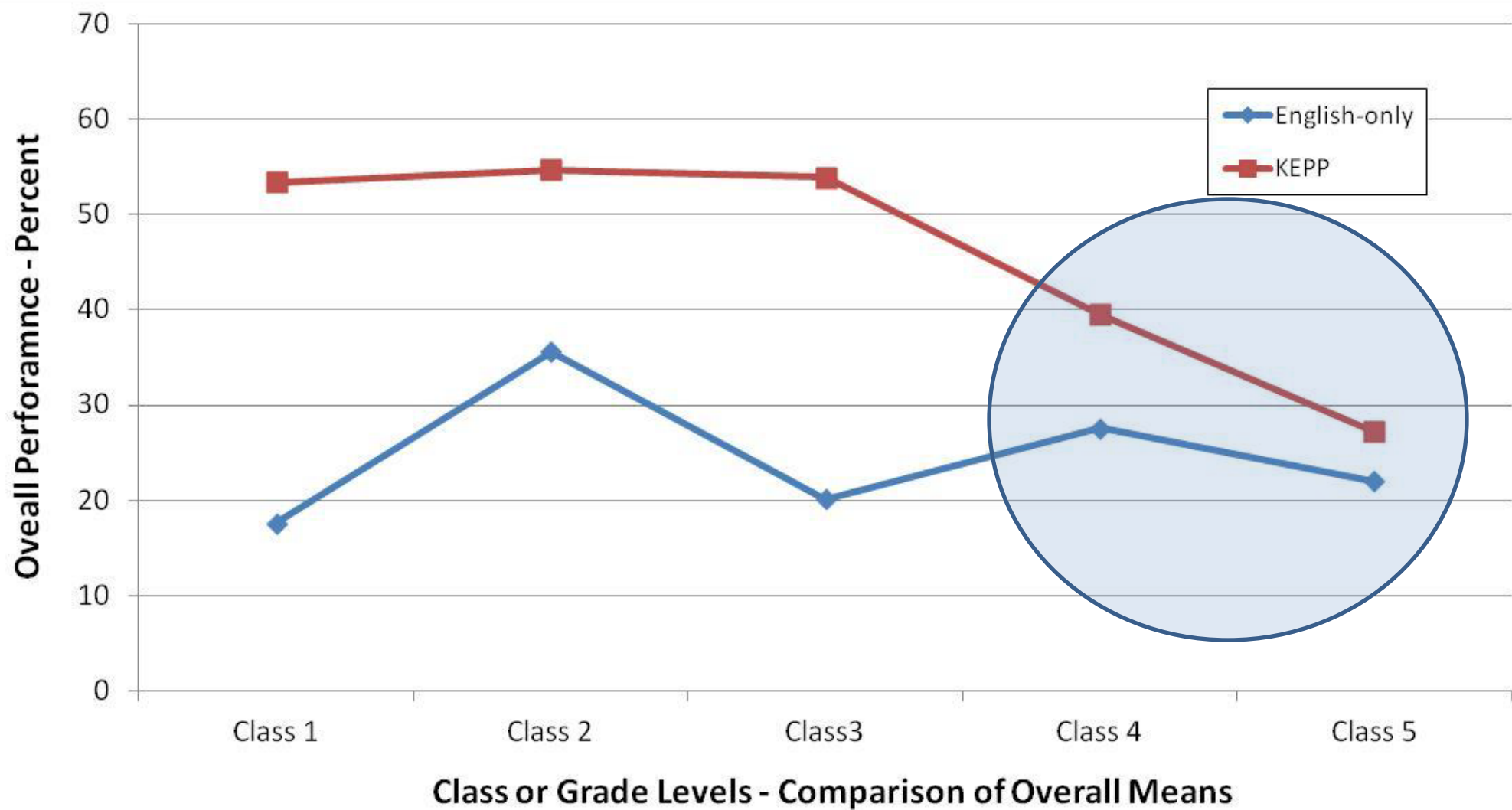
Results after five years



A dark, low-key photograph of a young child sitting and reading a book. The child is wearing a light-colored shirt and a patterned skirt. The background is dark and out of focus, with some colorful patterns visible on the right side.

Conclusions after five years

- Use of mother tongue has brought significant improvements
- Gains of more than 60%
- Stronger reading comprehension, oral proficiency, knowledge of English



A dark, low-key photograph of a young child sitting and reading a book. The child is wearing a light-colored shirt and a patterned skirt. The background is dark, with some colorful fabric visible on the right side.

The difficulties of early exit programs

- “Early exit”: complete transition to another language early in primary school
- “Late exit”: use the mother tongue throughout primary
- Late exit programs have stronger outcomes
- Kom project shows weaker outcomes

A photograph of a person with dark hair, seen from the back, sitting at a desk and writing in a notebook. The desk is cluttered with papers, a pen, and other items. The lighting is dim, and the overall tone is dark. The text "In their own words..." is overlaid in the center of the image.

In their own words...

A dimly lit scene showing a person with dark hair, seen from the back, sitting at a wooden table and reading an open book. The table is cluttered with several sheets of paper, some of which appear to be handwritten notes or drafts. A yellow pen lies on one of the papers. To the right of the person, there is a colorful, patterned bag or piece of fabric. The overall atmosphere is quiet and focused, suggesting a study or work environment.

Questions? Comments?

Credits

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