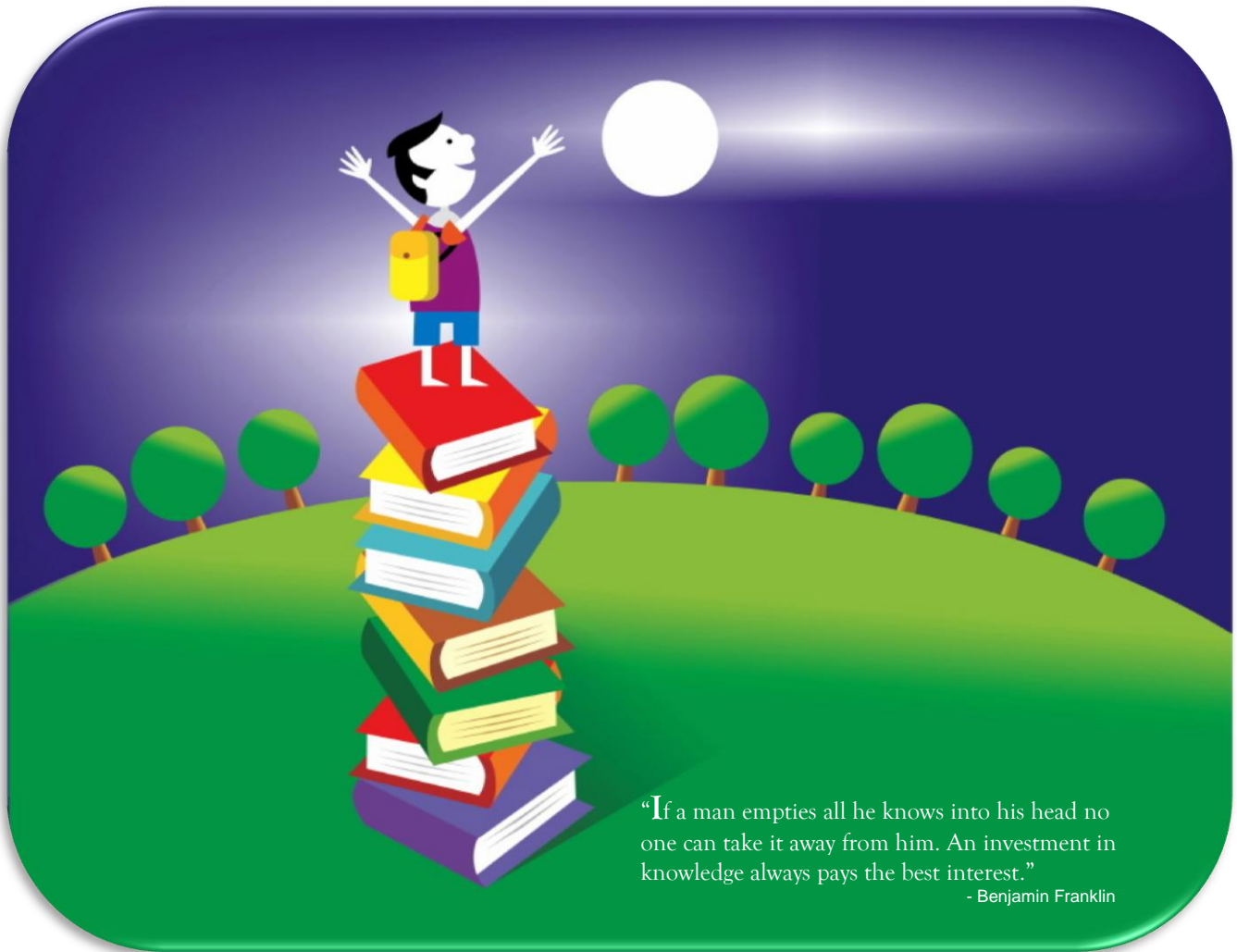


Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters in Florida



“If a man empties all he knows into his head no one can take it away from him. An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.”

- Benjamin Franklin

64% of all Florida Fourth Graders Cannot Read Proficiently

To Make A Difference We Must Close The Gap And Raise The Bar

Early childhood matters, from healthy births to early care and education. We must ensure that children are ready to learn when they arrive in school.

Schools must have rigorous standards and use proven tools to train teachers and engage students. We must invest in results-driven initiatives to transform low-performing schools into high-quality teaching and learning environments.

Parents must be involved, and we must enable parents, families, and caregivers to ensure that they can be successful in helping to generate good outcomes for their children.

We must find, develop, and utilize solutions to two of the most significant contributors to the under achievement of children from low-income families— chronic absence from school and summer learning loss.

In Florida, 67,000 young people age 16 to 19 were not in school and were not high school graduates in 2009. The link between grade level reading and high school graduation and economic success is proven - every student who does not complete high school costs our society an estimated \$260,000 in lost earnings, taxes and productivity.

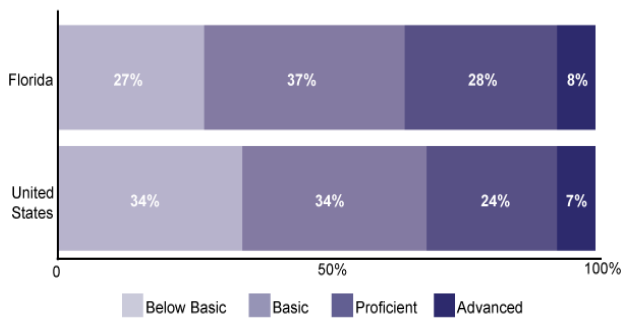
- KIDS COUNT Data Center

- Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters

The indicators in this brief were selected because they reflect the wide range of factors that influence and are impacted by children's early reading proficiency. Although the key indicator for this report is the rate of 4th grade students scoring below proficient on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading test, other indicators are included to further illuminate the challenges our state faces in ensuring educational success for all students. For example, being born with low birthweight and failing to attend an early learning program prior to elementary school entry can influence children's school readiness and, in turn, their early reading proficiency. Failure to read at grade level can lead to grade retention and bring about loss of interest and motivation to succeed in school.

"America vows to be the country of hope and opportunity for all, but it fails to fulfill this promise to our youngest citizens. We celebrate their birth but then wait to see if they succeed in school before we pay attention to their strengths and needs."
- Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters

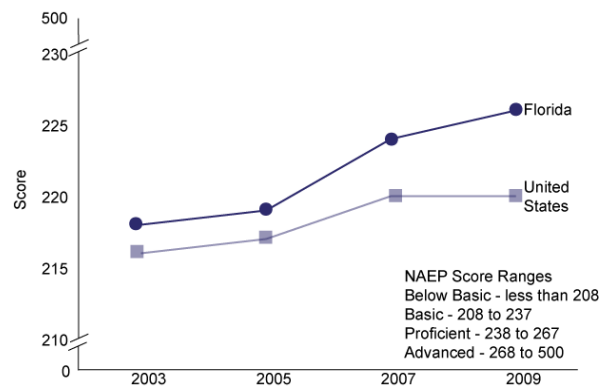
NAEP 4th Grade Reading Achievement Levels, 2009



NAEP 4th Graders who Scored Below Proficient Reading Level, 2009

	FL %	US %
Race		
White	55	59
Black	82	85
Hispanic	69	84
Geographic Location		
City	67	74
Suburb	63	64
Town	68	72
Rural	64	67

NAEP 4th Grade Reading Score Averages



Students with relatively low literacy achievement tend to have more behavioral and social problems in subsequent grades and higher rates of retention.

Up to half of the fourth-grade curriculum is incomprehensible to students who read below that grade level.

What do we know about Florida children? Over the past decade an average of 220,000 babies were born each year. Every five years, roughly 1 million infants enter our society in Florida and count on us to help them become responsible, well-adjusted citizens and achieve their dreams. Figures demonstrate a steady increase in the 0 to 9 population in our state over the past decade with projections showing an increase to nearly 2.6 million by 2030. Five to nine year olds, typically attending kindergarten through third grade, numbered an average of 1,142,482 over the past three years. Every year we are given another opportunity to meet the challenge of providing tools to address the needs of these young children.

Our task is clear. All young children must learn to read fluently, with pleasure and with a rich understanding of content. This should not be daunting. For every child under the age of 10 in Florida, there are at least 6 adults who could share in the responsibility to assure that each of 2,267,192 children could read by the end of third grade.

Source: Florida Office of Economic & Demographic Research
Florida Department of Education

Major Factors that Undermine Reading Proficiency

	FL %	US %
Children age 1 to 5 whose family members read to them fewer than 3 days per week	13	16
Children age 3 to 5 not enrolled in nursery school, preschool, or kindergarten	40	40
Children age 6 to 17 who repeated one or more grades since kindergarten	16	11
Teens age 16 to 19 who are not in school and not high school graduates	7	6
Persons age 18 to 24 not attending school, not working, and with a high school diploma or less	18	16
Children in households where the household head is not a high school graduate	14	15

Source: National Survey of Children's Health, 2007
American Community Survey, 2009

Population by Age, 2009

Age	FL	US
Under Age 1	231,945	4,261,494
1	232,442	4,298,055
2	239,532	4,335,825
3	233,050	4,223,596
4	229,036	4,180,686
5	225,392	4,185,573
6	222,812	4,138,962
7	223,995	4,108,268
8	229,546	4,167,184
9	215,277	4,009,647
10	212,347	3,946,437

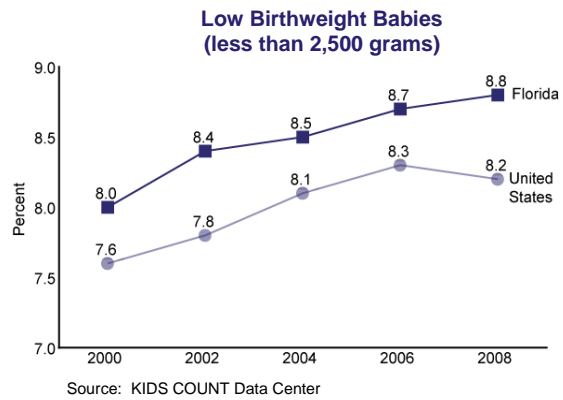
Source: KIDS COUNT Data Center

Florida Public School Students, 2009/10

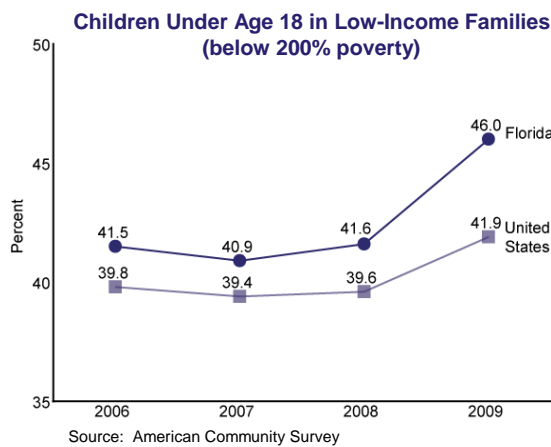
Grade	Enrollment	Non-promotion	English Language Learner	Absenteeism (21+ days)
PreK	51,712	N/A	7,203	14,072
K	196,066	8,009	35,699	22,276
1	197,885	9,076	35,901	16,604
2	198,507	5,791	29,296	13,740
3	209,104	12,135	22,017	13,282
4	199,338	2,461	17,684	12,886
5	198,996	1,680	13,615	13,259

Source: Florida Department of Education

Low birthweight babies are at a greater risk than normal weight babies for neurodevelopmental problems (e.g., cerebral palsy, blindness, and mental retardation), behavioral problems, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) - all of which can interfere with learning and school success.



Results from a national longitudinal study of nearly 4,000 students showed that poverty has a powerful influence on graduation rates. Overall, 22% of children who have lived in poverty do not graduate from high school, compared to 6% of those who have never been poor. This rises to 32% for students spending more than half of their childhood in poverty. Students whose mothers have less than a high school diploma or its equivalent are more likely to be retained in grade than children whose mothers have a bachelor's or graduate degree (20% versus 3%).



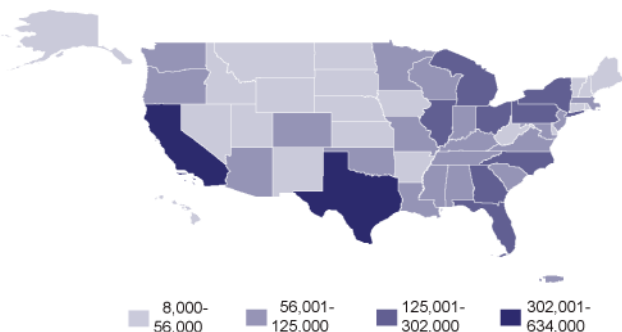
The fact is that the low-income fourth-graders who cannot meet NAEP's proficient level in reading today are all too likely to become our nation's lowest-income, least-skilled, least-productive, and most-costly citizens tomorrow.

Chronic absence (missing 10% or more of the school year, for any reason) is a problem for 1 in 10 kindergartners and first-graders nationwide. Chronic absence in kindergarten is associated with lower academic performance in first grade. For low-income children, chronic early absence predicts the lowest levels of educational achievement at the end of fifth grade. By sixth grade, students who attend school less than 80% of the time, or fail math or English/reading, or receive an unsatisfactory behavior grade in a core course, have only a 10% to 20% chance of graduating on time. By ninth grade, missing 20% of school is a better predictor of dropping out than eighth grade test scores.

NAEP 4th Graders who Scored Below Proficient Reading Level, 2009

	Family Income	
	Student eligible for free/reduced school lunch	Student not eligible for free/reduced school lunch
FL %	75	51
US %	83	55
	School Income	
	School receives Title 1 funding	School does not receive Title 1 funding
FL %	72	58
US %	79	55

Persons Age 18 to 24 Not Attending School, Not Working, and No Degree Beyond High School, 2009



Source: KIDS COUNT Data Center

The median income for young adults with a bachelor's degree was \$45,000, while those without a high school diploma or its equivalent had median earnings of \$21,000. In 2009 Florida had 302,000 young people age 18 to 24 not attending school, not working, and with no degree beyond high school placing us among some of the worst states.

"An estimated 75% of Americans aged 17 to 24 cannot join the military - 26 million young Americans - most often because they are poorly educated, involved in crime, or physically unfit."

- Ready, Willing and Unable to Serve

Promote reading proficiency by the end of third grade.

Ensure that children are developmentally ready to succeed in school.

“The most effective way to put children on a path to productive, successful adulthood is through two-generation strategies—strategies that both help parents move their families ahead economically and improve young children’s health, development, and educational success. “

- 2011 KIDS COUNT Data Book

Promote responsible parenthood and ensure that mothers-to-be receive prenatal care.

Strengthen and modernize unemployment insurance (UI) and promote foreclosure prevention and remediation efforts.

Promote savings and asset protection and help families gain financial knowledge skills.

Preserve and strengthen existing programs that supplement poverty-level wages, offset the high cost of child care, and provide health insurance coverage for parents and children.

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