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### ***Low Reading Scores Show Majority of U.S. Children Not Prepared for Future Success*** **Report Finds 32 Point Gap between Low and Higher Income Children in Ohio**

Sixty-three percent of Ohio's fourth graders are not proficient in reading, according to a new KIDS COUNT® data snapshot released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The snapshot finds that a large majority of children in the United States are not reading proficiently by the time they reach fourth grade - a key predictor of a student's future educational and economic success.

[\*Early Reading Proficiency in the United States\*](#) reports that two-thirds of all children in the nation are not meeting the important benchmark of reading at grade level at the start of fourth grade. Of even greater concern is that the gap between students from higher- and lower-income families is growing wider, with 17 percent improvement seen among the former group compared to only a 6 percent improvement among their lower-income peers. If this trend continues, the country will not have enough skilled workers for an increasingly competitive global economy by the end of this decade.

The report found mixed results for Ohio fourth graders. The percent of all Ohio children not proficient in reading improved from 66 percent in 2003 to 63 percent in 2013. However, the data showed troubling differences between low and higher income children. In 2013, 80 percent of low income Ohio children were below proficient in reading compared to less than half (48 percent) of higher income children-- a gap of 32 percentage points.

These findings come on the heels of the Ohio Department of Education's release last month of preliminary results from the Grade 3 Reading Achievement Test, a statewide test used in determining whether students will advance under the Third Grade Guarantee. The results show further evidence of disparities in reading proficiency by race, with 67 percent of Black and 57 percent of Hispanic below proficient on the statewide test compared to 37 percent of White children.

"Ohio needs to do whatever it takes to get all children — especially low income and children of color — on track with this milestone," said Renuka Mayadev, Executive Director of the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio. "The long-term prosperity of Ohio and our nation depends upon improving crucial educational outcomes such as reading proficiency."

The Annie E. Casey Foundation has documented in [\*Early Warning: Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters\*](#) and [\*Early Warning Confirmed\*](#) the need to focus on reading proficiency by the end of third grade as an essential step toward increasing the number of children who succeed academically

and do well in life. Research from the reports found that children who read proficiently by the end of third grade are more likely to graduate from high school, are less likely to fall into poverty and are more likely to find a job that can adequately support their families.

[\*Early Reading Proficiency in the United States\*](#) recommends that more must be done to increase reading proficiency for low-income children so that they can attain economic security as adults: use results-driven solutions to transform low-performing schools into high-quality learning environments; make sure that communities are supported to ensure children come to school ready, attend school every day and maintain and expand their learning during the summer months; and develop a system of early care and education that coordinates what children experience from birth through age eight.

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The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).

*Early Reading Proficiency in the United States* features the latest data for states, the District of Columbia and the nation, as does the Casey Foundation's [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#), which is home to comprehensive national, state and local statistics on child well-being. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The [Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#), launched in May 2010, is a collaborative effort of funders, nonprofit partners, states and more than 140 communities across the nation to ensure that many more children from low-income families succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career and active citizenship.

The Children's Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.