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## Two-Thirds Of U.S. 4th Graders Are Not Proficient In Reading

The Annie E. Casey Foundation released its annual "Kids Count Data Book." Here's what they found.



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The Annie E. Casey Foundation released its annual "Kids Count Data Book." Here's what they found. (Shutterstock)

NEW YORK, NY — Reading and math scores for children in the United States continue to languish at the national level, according to an annual report published Monday by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The report found that 65 percent of 4th graders were not proficient in reading in 2017, which represents an improvement of 3 percentage points since 2009. Meanwhile, 67 percent of 8th graders weren't proficient in math, the same as 2009.

Reading proficiency by the end of third grade and math proficiency by the end of 8th grade are [key markers in a child's development](#), Leslie Boissiere, vice president of external affairs at the organization, told Patch this week. After third grade, children are expected to be able to use their reading skills to learn other subjects. Mastery becomes vital for students to continue their learning.

“Children who reach fourth grade without being able to read proficiently are more likely to struggle academically and eventually drop out of school,” the report said.

Additionally, students with strong math and science skills are more likely to graduate from high school, complete college and earn higher incomes, the report said. But Boissiere acknowledged there's been little or no progress made since 2009 when it comes to reading and math proficiency.

“Our kids aren't benefiting from the strength of a public education system that ensures that they have the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in careers and in life,” said Boissiere.

The data showed vast gaps at the national level in proficiency levels along racial and ethnic lines, as well as between states.

While 54 percent of white 4th graders weren't proficient at reading, about 8 in 10 children who are African-American, American Indian and Latino weren't reading at grade level.

Similarly, 57 percent of white 8th graders weren't proficient in math, but that number was 87 percent for African-American kids, 81 percent for American Indian and 80 percent for Latinos.

Massachusetts was the only state in 2017 where more than half of 4th-graders were reading at grade level. The state had the lowest percentage of kids who were not proficient in reading at 49 percent. New Mexico had the highest at 75 percent.

Massachusetts 8th graders also performed best in math, with the lowest share of students not proficient at 50 percent. Louisiana had the highest rate at 81 percent.

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