

Report reveals growing gap in reading proficiency of students

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In a new KIDS COUNT data snapshot, the Annie E. Casey Foundation 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 finds that while there have been overall improvements in reading scores over the past decade, the gap between students from higher- and lower-income families is growing wider. Proficiency levels have increased significantly more for higher-income students than for their lower-income peers.

Hawai'i's trend is similar to the national trend. While the share of students not reading-proficient remains slightly higher in Hawai'i than nationally, the state has seen an overall improvement in proficiency levels with 79% of fourth graders reading below proficiency in 2003 compared to 70% in 2013. Despite these overall improvements, disparities between income groups persist. Greater improvements were seen among higher-income students in Hawai'i over the past decade (with the share who are not proficient decreasing from 71% to 57%) than among lower-income students (decreasing from 87% to 83%).

"What is most concerning is that the gap in [reading proficiency](#) based on family income continues to widen. Hawai'i is one of three states with the largest increases in that gap over the past decade," states Ivette Rodriguez Stern, the Hawai'i KIDS COUNT Project Director, with the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Center on the Family. "Children go from learning to read in the early years to reading for the sake of learning by

the third grade and beyond. Increasing the reading proficiency of children from lower-income families in the early years is especially important to making sure they are ready to succeed in school and can later attain economic security," said Stern.

This latest data snapshot compares reading data from the 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress, with data taken from the assessment in 2003 when a majority of states began participating. Among the recommendations, the data report emphasizes the need to develop a coherent system of early care and education that aligns, integrates and coordinates what children experience from birth through age eight.

"This data snapshot is particularly timely, given the state's growing focus on early childhood care and education," said Dr. Marianne Berry, Director of the Center on the Family. "Research highlights the importance of focusing on the early years in order to promote healthy child development and to give children a strong foundation for successful educational experiences in school. The investments we make now in providing our young children with high quality care and education can improve their chances for experiencing better outcomes in the future."

The new snapshot features the latest data for states, the District of Columbia and the nation, as does the KIDS COUNT Data Center, home to comprehensive national, state and local statistics on child well-being. The Data Center allows users to create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and to view real-time information on mobile devices.

More information: For more information, visit:
www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/Publications.aspx?pubguid=%7b35D

Provided by University of Hawaii at Manoa

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