

WHAT'S NEW WITH KIDS?

December 2013

Rebel Reading Challenge

“Read to know, read to grow.” “The better you can read, the better your life will be.” “The only way you are going to be what you want to be is by knowing how to read.” “Read every day, even if it is to your dog.” These are the words of encouragement given by educators and university athletes to 6,500 plus fourth and fifth graders from 32 schools in Clark County at the Thomas & Mack at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). From the deafening cheers and loud applause of the students, the antics of the Rebel mascot, and the cheers of the UNLV cheerleaders and Rebel Girls, one would think the UNLV Runnin’ Rebels were playing. Instead, the students were attending the third annual Rebel Reading Challenge Kick-Off Celebration, which was sponsored by UNLV Athletics and Super Pawn.

The event was held to stress the importance of reading and to challenge students to read. UNLV Executive Vice President and Provost Dr. John White, Clark County School District Superintendent Pat Skorkwosky, and two UNLV student athletes addressed the crowd on the importance of reading. Television broadcasters from four local stations read from a book. Accolades were bestowed upon the top-performing schools and students in reading. Jo Mackey Elementary School was the top-performing school because its students had aggregately read 181,819 pages during the 30-day competition. The top reader, Celeste Robles from Renaldo Martinez Elementary School, had read 16,011 pages. Although the importance of reading for success was stressed, offering incentives to read never hurts. Super Pawn announced it would reward top-performing reading schools with tickets to a UNLV men’s basketball game, pizza classroom lunch with Super Kid; \$100 gift certificates for teachers, and other prizes.

It is encouraging that the community recognizes the importance of reading. Being able to learn is a strong indicator of school and workplace success. Workers who are literate are essential to the growth and economic development of a state. So, how well do Nevada students read?

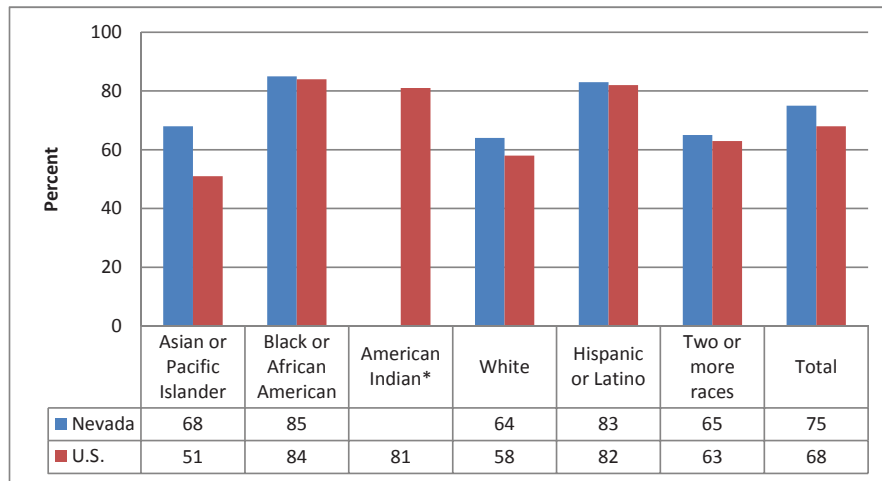
Based on the results from the National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP) test in 2011, 75 percent of fourth graders in Nevada scored below NAEP proficient reading levels. Among the states, Nevada ranked 46th on this indicator (50 = worst). The national figure is 68 percent.

All of the major racial/ethnic groups in Nevada for which data are available, showed Nevadans faring worse than the national average. See Table 1.

A higher percentage of fourth graders from cities (77 percent), suburbs (75 percent), and towns (74 percent) in Nevada failed to meet the NAEP standards compared to those from rural areas (68 percent). See Table 2.

The Rebel Reading Challenge appeared to be an entertaining, educational event, one which could have long-lasting positive outcomes for Nevada. Students in lower-level grades could also benefit from such an event. The importance of reading proficiency by the end of third grade is effectively presented in the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s report *Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*, available at <http://www.aecf.org>.

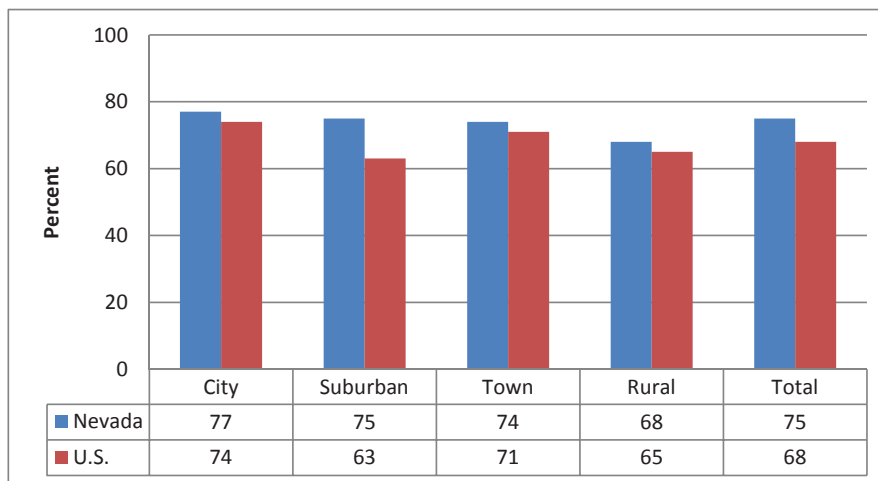
Table 1. Percent of Fourth Graders Scoring Below Reading Proficiency by Race/Ethnicity, Nevada and the United States: 2011



*Nevada data were suppressed because NAEP sample size reporting standards were not met.

Source: Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress; The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center data query, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/>, as of 11/21/13.

Table 2. Percent of Fourth Graders Scoring Below Reading Proficiency by Geographic Location, Nevada and the United States: 2011



Source: Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress; the Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center data query, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/>, as of 11/21/13.