

# WHAT'S NEW WITH KIDS?

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January 2011

## Reading Proficiency by the End of Third Grade

Why reading by the end of third grade matters is the crux of the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF)-sponsored 10-year Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. The AECF and a “big-tent” coalition of people and organizations are committed to achieving the following campaign goals: (1) “‘close the gap’ between the children of low-income rural and urban families and their higher-income counterparts, (2) increase by 50% the number and proportion of students who are grade-level proficient readers by the end of third grade; and (3) ‘raise the bar’ so that these readers truly are proficient by the rigorous standards that will put them on track to graduate from high school and to compete with the rest of the world.”<sup>1</sup>

As part of the campaign, the AECF released a special report, *Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*, that provided data, outlined the issue, and suggested some promising solutions to ensure achieving grade-level reading for all children by the end of third grade. In addition, the AECF has garnered and continues to garner the support of public officials, funders, leaders in the faith, ordinary citizens, community leaders, parents, businesses, advocates, and military in its effort.

Newly elected Nevada governor, Brian Sandoval, in his *State of the State Address*, quoted the premise of the AECF’s special report on reading—“It’s simple—until third grade, we learn to read. After that, we read to learn.”<sup>2</sup> 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. Nevada is no exception.

Based on the results from the National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP) test in 2009, 76 percent of fourth graders in Nevada scored below NAEP proficient reading levels.<sup>3</sup> The national figure is 68 percent. Nevada, along with California, ranked 46th among the states (1 = best, 50 = worst) on reading proficiency. Compared to the other states, only Louisiana (82 percent), New Mexico (80 percent), and Mississippi (78 percent) had a higher percentage of students scoring below NAEP proficient reading levels than did Nevada. More troubling is that 87 percent of low-income Nevada students failed to reach proficient reading levels.

Of the major racial/ethnic groups in Nevada, Hispanics/Latinos had the highest percentage (87 percent) of fourth graders who scored below NAEP proficient reading levels, followed by blacks (86 percent), whites (66 percent), and Asians/Pacific Islanders (62 percent). See Table 1. A higher percentage of fourth graders from cities (77 percent), suburbs (79 percent), and towns (80 percent) in Nevada failed to meet the NAEP proficient standards compared to those from rural areas (66 percent). See Table 2. Rural students in Nevada also slightly outperformed their counterparts in the nation.

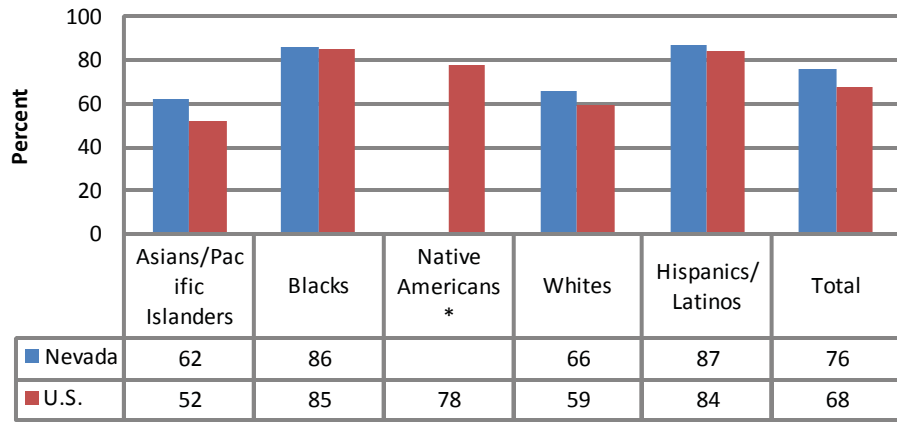
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<sup>1</sup>The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, *Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*, p. 41, online at: [http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/123/2010KCSpecReport/AEC\\_report\\_color\\_highres.pdf](http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/123/2010KCSpecReport/AEC_report_color_highres.pdf), as of 2/22/11.

<sup>2</sup>Sandoval, Brian, *State of the State Address*, January 24, 2011, <http://www.nv.gov/>, as of 2/17/11. The governor made the statement in reference to social promotion, which he discourages. He favors retaining students who cannot read by the end of third grade.

<sup>3</sup>The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, *Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*, online at: [http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/123/2010KCSpecReport/AEC\\_report\\_color\\_highres.pdf](http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/123/2010KCSpecReport/AEC_report_color_highres.pdf), as of 2/22/11.

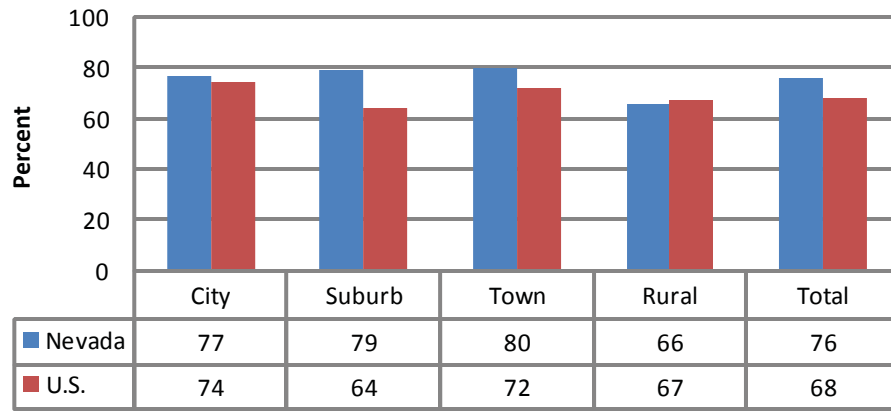
**Table 1. Percent of Fourth Graders Scoring Below Reading Proficiency by Race/Ethnicity, Nevada and the United States: 2009**



\*Data were suppressed because NAEP sample size reporting standards were not met.

Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, *Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*, available at: [http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/123/2010KCSpecReport/AEC\\_report\\_color\\_highres.pdf](http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/123/2010KCSpecReport/AEC_report_color_highres.pdf), as of 2/22/11.

**Table 2. Percent of Fourth Graders Scoring Below Reading Proficiency by Geographic Location Nevada and the United States: 2009**



Note: "Geographic areas are based on U.S. Census data describing proximity to an urbanized area (a densely settled core with densely settled surrounding areas) using four categories (City, Suburb, Town, Rural)."

Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, *Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*, available at: [http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/123/2010KCSpecReport/AEC\\_report\\_color\\_highres.pdf](http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/123/2010KCSpecReport/AEC_report_color_highres.pdf), as of 2/22/11.