



LITERACY IN NEVADA AND THE NATION:

PART I: UNDERSTANDING LITERACY CHALLENGES IN THIRD GRADE CLASSROOMS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



What you need to know...



Americans struggle with literacy.

It is estimated that **over half** of American adults read below a sixth-grade level.

In 2024, only **31 percent** of American fourth graders and **35 percent** of twelfth graders were proficient in literacy.

The situation is similar in Nevada, with **30 percent** of fourth graders reaching proficient or advanced levels of literacy.

While students may face barriers, effective instruction and systems of support based on the latest research substantially improve literacy outcomes.



What our study found:

We examined data from ten Nevada third-grade classrooms and found that **more than half** had students spanning at least five grade levels in their literacy abilities.

Put another way, it is as though many teachers have children from first through fifth grade **in a single classroom**.

More research is needed on the literacy variability in Nevada's elementary classrooms and the available policy prescriptions to address the state's literacy crisis.

LITERACY PROFICIENCY IN THE UNITED STATES

Literacy is the ability to read and write. Literacy skills include “understanding, evaluating, using and engaging with written texts to participate in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.”¹ In the United States, literacy rates have declined, with a growing share of adults unable to read or write.² These national patterns offer essential context for Nevada’s literacy challenges. Understanding both adult and K-12 literacy rates is vital to improving state literacy policy and driving access to supportive programming.

National student literacy rates remain below desired benchmarks and have declined in recent years. The Nation’s Report Card uses scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) administered to fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders to determine reading proficiency levels, among other metrics. In 2024, only 31 percent of American fourth graders performed at or above the proficient level in literacy, two percentage points lower than in 2022.³ Additionally, only 30 percent of eighth graders and 35 percent of twelfth graders were proficient in 2024.⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this issue, as average reading scores of American fourth graders dropped by five points between 2020 and 2022—the largest decline in reading scores since 1990.⁵



It is estimated that 54 percent of American adults read below a 6th grade level.



1. National Center for Education Statistics, “What PIAAC Measures,” accessed September 15, 2025, https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/measure.asp?section=1&sub_section=3.

2. National Center for Education Statistics, *PIAAC Data Explorer*, accessed September 17, 2025, <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/ideuspiaac/report.aspx?p=1-LNP-1-20133,20173,20233-PVLIT-BMLIT-USI-RP-RP-Y-J-0-0-37>.

3. National Center for Education Statistics, *NAEP Report Card: Grades 4 and 8 Reading* (2024), accessed September 15, 2025, https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reports/reading/2024/g4_8/.

4. National Center for Education Statistics, *NAEP Report Card, Grade 8*; National Center for Education Statistics, *NAEP Report Card: Grade 12 Reading* (2024), accessed September 15, 2025, <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reports/reading/2024/g12/>.

5. National Center for Education Statistics, *NAEP Long-Term Trend Assessment Results: Reading and Mathematics* (2022), accessed September 15, 2025, <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/ltt/2022/>.

AMERICA IS FALLING BEHIND

Poor literacy and numeracy persist after high school graduation and are not generally improved in adulthood. This is causing American adults to fall behind the rest of the world in skills such as numeracy, literacy, and problem-solving. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development administers an instrument called the Survey of Adult Skills, which is part of its Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). It examines the abilities of adults worldwide, ages 16 to 65, in numeracy, literacy, and problem-solving. There have been three rounds of PIAAC data collection from the United States: in 2012, 2017, and 2023. In 2017, 19 percent of American adults had a literacy rate at or below level 1 (out of 5 levels);

that percentage increased to 28 percent in 2023.⁶ Various organizations using this data estimate that over half (54 percent) of United States adults read below a sixth-grade level.⁷

The Educational Testing Service conducted a special analysis of the first PIAAC survey, examining the data on the millennial generation. They found that only millennials in Italy and Spain scored lower on literacy tests than millennials in the US. In numeracy, American millennials tied for last with Italy and Spain. In problem solving, US millennials were alone in last place among the 33 nations.⁸ The most recent PIAAC results, from 2023, show that American scores in literacy and numeracy have fallen further.⁹



6. National Center for Education Statistics, *PIAAC Data Explorer*.

7. Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, "Why Literacy," accessed September 16, 2025, <https://www.barbarabush.org/why-literacy/>.

8. Madeline J. Goodman et al., *America's Skills Challenge: Millennials and the Future* (Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, 2015), 14, https://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/Americas_Skills_Challenge.pdf.

9. National Center for Education Statistics, *Highlights of the 2023 U.S. PIAAC Results* (2024), https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/2023/national_results.asp.

LITERACY RATES IN NEVADA

USING THE NATIONAL, FOURTH GRADE MEASURE: NAEP

Like many states, Nevada faces persistent challenges in early reading proficiency, and its students mirror the national trends. On the 2024 NAEP, only 30 percent of Nevada's fourth graders performed at or above proficiency, 29 percent performed at a basic level, and 41 percent (the largest group) performed below a basic level.¹⁰

Nevada's literacy outcomes vary across racial, ethnic, linguistic, economic, and educational-experience groups, reflecting differences in access to literacy development supports, such as high-quality early childhood education, extra reading supports in the primary grades, books at home, and neighborhood libraries.



Performance gaps between student groups are also pronounced. For example, Black students scored on average 25 points lower, and Hispanic students scored 21 points lower than their white classmates. Additionally, economically disadvantaged students scored 20 points lower than their financially stable classmates.¹¹

NAEP categorizes student performance into four achievement ranges:

- **Below NAEP Basic:** Student scores that fall below the cut point required for fundamental mastery.
- **NAEP Basic:** Denotes partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills fundamental for performance at each grade.
- **NAEP Proficient:** Denotes solid academic performance and demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter. This represents a high standard on the test rather than a simple grade-level benchmark.
- **NAEP Advanced:** Denotes superior academic performance beyond NAEP Proficient.

10. National Center for Education Statistics, *The Nation's Report Card: 2024 State Snapshot Report—Nevada Grade 4 Reading* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, 2024), <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2024/pdf/2024220NV4.pdf>.

11. Ibid.

The nation's performance on the NAEP Reading assessment was similar in 2024 (214) to the 1998 baseline year (213), whereas Nevada's score improved from 206 to 213 over that same period.¹² That Nevada's performance is on par with the national average is as much a reflection of the national literacy struggle as the state's concerted efforts to improve.

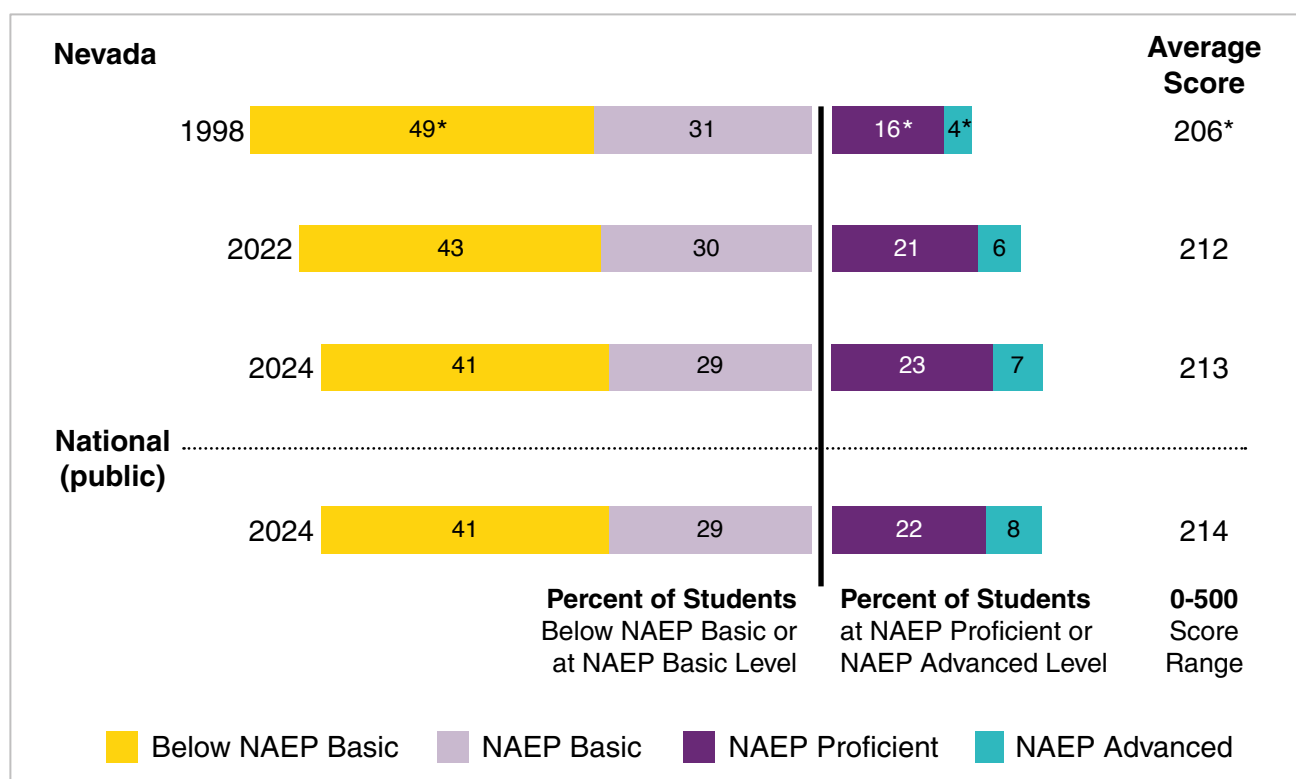
The historical data also show Nevada experienced improvement on NAEP Reading between the 2017 and 2019 assessments, following the state's investment

in its Read by Grade 3 program. However, Nevada and the nation experienced a big drop-off in scores following the COVID-19 pandemic.



The historical data show Nevada experienced improvement on NAEP Reading between the 2017 and 2019 assessments, following the state's investment in its Read by Grade 3 program.

Figure 1. Grade 4 NAEP Reading Assessment Achievement Levels, by Percent and Average Scores



Source: See note 12.

*Significantly different ($p < .05$) from the state's results in 2024. Significance tests were performed using unrounded numbers. Note: NAEP achievement levels are to be used on a trial basis and should be interpreted and used with caution. Details may not sum to the totals due to rounding.

USING THE STATE, THIRD GRADE MEASURE: SBAC

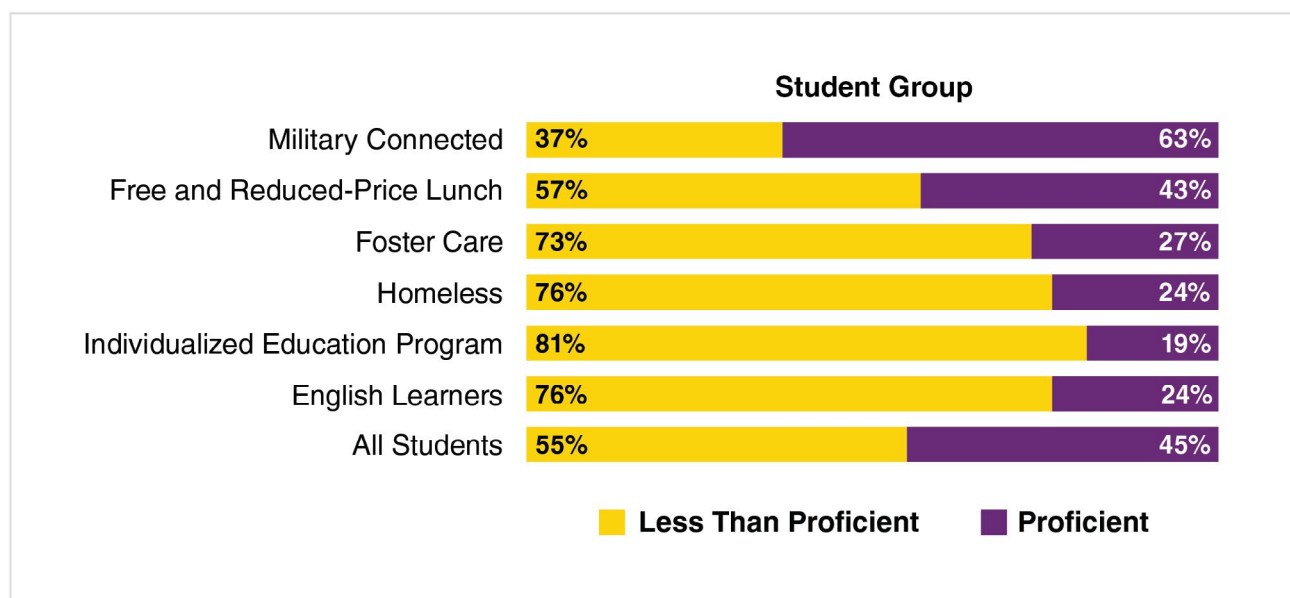
The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium's (SBAC) English language assessment is more comprehensive than the NAEP Reading assessment. The SBAC instrument looks at reading, writing, speaking, listening, and inquiry skills.

The NAEP scores compare Nevada students to the national baseline. However, the NAEP assessment is administered to fourth-grade students, not to third-grade students. Third-grade literacy is a focus because early English reading proficiency is a critical benchmark recognized for future success.¹³ In 2015, Nevada enacted the statewide Read by Grade 3 law, and the state relies on the annual SBAC scores to assess third-grade literacy. In the 2024-25 school year, 45 percent of

third-grade students were proficient in English on the SBAC.¹⁴ Third through eighth-grade SBAC scores showed notable disparities between students, as approximately 26 percent of American Indian/Alaskan Native students were proficient compared to almost 58 percent of white students and 71 percent of Asian students. Other groups had especially low proficiency rates: about 15 percent of students with an Individualized Education Program, 14 percent of English language learners, and 26 percent of students in foster care.¹⁵

In addition to the SBAC, school districts in Nevada use Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) and i-Ready test scores to measure proficiency and monitor progress.

Figure 2. Grade 3 English Literacy Proficiency by Student Group According to SBAC Scores



Source: See note 14.

13. Donald J. Hernandez, *Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation* (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011), <https://www.aecf.org/resources/double-jeopardy>; Anne E. Cunningham and Keith E. Stanovich, "Early Reading Acquisition and Its Relation to Reading Experience and Ability 10 Years Later," *Developmental Psychology* 33, no. 6 (1997): 934–45, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.33.6.934>.

14. Nevada Department of Education, *Nevada Accountability Portal 2024-2025*, accessed August 11, 2026, https://nevadareportcard.nv.gov/di/report/summary_1?report=summary_1&scope=e24.y22&organization=c2269&scores=MA_pass%2CRD.

15. Nevada Department of Education, *Nevada Accountability Portal 2024-2025*, accessed July 6, 2026, <https://nevadareportcard.nv.gov/DI/nv/2025>.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LOW LITERACY AND THE RESULTING EFFECTS

LOW LITERACY FACTORS

Recent research has identified and replicated findings that point to at least four factors that hinder reading development among children, irrespective of their environmental, socioeconomic, ethnic, and biological factors.

These four factors include:

- Deficits in phoneme awareness and developing the alphabetic principle;
- Deficits in acquiring reading comprehension strategies and applying them to the reading of text;
- Deficits in developing and maintaining the motivation to learn to read; and
- Limitations in effectively preparing teachers.¹⁶

These four factors are compounded by additional factors that exist outside of a child's control. One significant factor is the quality of early childhood education. Children who lack access to high-quality preschool programs often enter kindergarten behind their peers in foundational language and literacy skills.¹⁷ These early gaps can persist throughout a student's K-12 schooling if not addressed early.¹⁸

Socioeconomic disparities further exacerbate this issue, as families with limited financial resources may face obstacles in accessing educational support, books, and enrichment activities.¹⁹ Students with well-educated parents also tend to have higher literacy rates than those with less-educated parents; however, socioeconomic status is likely still a contributing factor, given the high cost of postsecondary education.²⁰



Children who lack access to high-quality preschool programs often enter kindergarten behind their peers in foundational language and literacy skills.



16. G. Reid Lyon, "Why Are So Many Children Having Difficulties?" *Reading Rockets*, accessed July 31, 2026, <https://www.readingrockets.org/topics/strugglingreaders/articles/why-are-so-many-children-having-difficulties>.

17. Allison H. Friedman-Krauss et al., *The State of Preschool 2021: State Preschool Yearbook* (National Institute for Early Education Research, 2022), <https://nieer.org/state-preschool-yearbook-2021>.

18. Christina Weiland and Hirokazu Yoshikawa, "Impacts of a Prekindergarten Program on Children's Mathematics, Language, Literacy, Executive Function, and Emotional Skills," *Child Development* 84, no. 6 (2013): 2112–30, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12099>.

19. Hernandez, *Double Jeopardy*, 8; Maren Blanchard, "The Relationship between Socioeconomic Status and Literacy: How Literacy Is Influenced by and Influences SES," *Michigan Journal of Economics*, January 5, 2023, <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/mje/2023/01/05/the-relationship-between-socioeconomic-status-and-literacy-how-literacy-is-influenced-by-and-influences-ses/>.

20. Susan Aud et al., *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups*, NCES 2010-015 (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2010), <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010015.pdf>.

These disparities reflect differences in access to resources, housing instability, food insecurity, limited access to healthcare, and increased exposure to stress, all of which can affect learning and academic performance in the classroom. As a result, standardized scores on literacy exams often capture inequities in educational opportunity as much as differences in academic ability or effort.²¹

Language background is another key factor, and Nevada has a large population of multilingual learners—over 65,000 statewide.²² For many of these students, literacy development involves simultaneously learning English and mastering academic reading and writing skills, which can pose challenges not faced by students whose primary language is English.

Access to experienced teachers and literacy specialists also affects literacy outcomes. Schools with high teacher turnover or staffing shortages, particularly in rural and under-resourced areas, often struggle to provide consistent, high-quality literacy instruction. Nevada has faced persistent teacher shortages, particularly in specialized roles such as reading interventionists.²³

When students are not provided sufficient practice opportunities in school, literacy challenges persist. Additional contributing factors also include the quality of reading materials; if the materials that teachers are working with in schools are poorly created, this exacerbates challenges that students may face when developing English literacy skills.²⁴



21. William A. Herring et al., "Racial and Socioeconomic Disparities in the Relationship between Children's Early Literacy Skills and Third-Grade Outcomes: Lessons from a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment," *Educational Researcher* 51, no. 7 (2022): 441–50, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X221091535>.

22. Nevada Department of Education, *2025 PreK-12 Nevada State Literacy Plan* (2025), 81, https://webapp-strapi-paas-prod-nde-001.azurewebsites.net/uploads/2025_prek_12_nevada_state_literacy_plan_67b2bf468a.pdf.

23. *Ibid.*, 82.

24. Lyon, "Why Are So Many Children Having Difficulties?"

Additional factors contributing to low literacy rates include mental health challenges, learning disabilities (particularly when left undiagnosed), transiency, and a lack of reading curricula aligned with current literacy recommendations.²⁵ Students may experience a combination of these factors to varying degrees, and each factor can affect others. Importantly, these challenges should not be viewed as deficiencies or failures on the part of the child. Mental health and behavioral challenges often reflect broader social, developmental, or environmental circumstances that can create barriers to learning and engagement with instruction. Likewise, undiagnosed learning disabilities may delay access to appropriate supports rather than reflect a student's capacity to learn. Many of these determinants also contribute to chronic absenteeism, which exacerbates poor literacy rates as students miss critical instruction and content and accumulate unlearned skills.²⁶ Because these circumstances are beyond a child's control, improving literacy outcomes requires a coordinated approach that identifies needs early, provides evidence-based instruction and interventions, and ensures students receive the support necessary to succeed.

For more specific information on these contributing factors, please see the Guinn Center's policy brief titled "[Chronic Absenteeism in Nevada: Part I – Trends, Factors, and Policy Considerations](#)," published in July 2025.

The good news, however, is that these factors can be overcome when students are taught through effective instruction that aligns with best practices in literacy. Ninety-five percent of students can learn how to read when taught with materials and instructional practices that align with the science.²⁷ The science of reading is grounded in relatively recent brain research that demonstrates neural pathways are formed and strengthened when students are taught the "code" of reading through systematic and explicit instruction and materials. This research will be explored in greater depth in a follow-up brief.²⁸



25. Literacy Pittsburgh, "Challenges of Low Literacy," accessed September 22, 2025, <https://www.literacypittsburgh.org/the-challenge/>; Alpha Diallo, "Improving Literacy in the United States: Recommendations for Increasing Reading Success," *Center for American Progress*, May 28, 2020, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/improving-literacy-united-states-recommendations-increasing-reading-success>.

26. Anna Colquitt and Macie Nielsen, *Chronic Absenteeism in Nevada: Part I—Trends, Factors, and Policy Considerations* (Guinn Center, July 16, 2025), <https://www.guinncenter.org/research/chronic-absenteeism-in-nevada-part-i---trends-factors-and-policy-considerations>.

27. Louisa C. Moats, *Teaching Reading Is Rocket Science, 2020: What Expert Teachers of Reading Should Know and Be Able to Do* (Washington, DC: American Federation of Teachers, 2020), <https://www.aft.org/reports/teaching-reading-rocket-science-2020>.

28. Yaacov Petscher et al., "How the Science of Reading Informs 21st-Century Education," *Reading Research Quarterly* 55, suppl. 1 (September 2020): S267–82, <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.352>.

EFFECTS OF LOW LITERACY

Poor literacy is detrimental to students' academic and overall well-being during school and throughout their adult lives. A recent opinion piece in *The Nevada Independent* notes that "students who are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school and often have limited economic mobility as a result."²⁹ In fact, third-grade reading proficiency is often the "make-or-break benchmark," as students entering fourth grade are expected to read to learn other subjects. Unprepared students will struggle, as "up to half of the printed fourth-grade curriculum is incomprehensible to students who read below that grade level," and three-fourths of students who are poor readers in third grade will be poor readers in high school.³⁰ While these are major concerns for all students, Black and Hispanic students who are not reading by third grade are twice as likely to drop out of high school compared to their white classmates.³¹

Communities with lower literacy rates may experience broader social and economic effects, including higher poverty rates and limited civic participation.³² For Nevada, low literacy rates can influence workforce development and economic competitiveness, as businesses increasingly require employees with strong communication and problem-solving skills.

Additionally, low literacy can have long-term social impacts, including intergenerational cycles of low educational attainment, reduced health literacy, and greater reliance on social services.³³ Juvenile delinquency is linked to poor literacy, as most incarcerated youth read below grade level, with estimates between 83 and 98 percent.³⁴ Addressing these challenges requires coordinated strategies across early education, K-12 systems, workforce development, and community initiatives.



29. Tim Hughes, "Opinion: Will Nevada's New Laws Actually Move the Needle on Literacy Rates?" *The Nevada Independent*, August 19, 2025, <https://thenevadaindependent.com/article/opinion-will-nevadas-new-laws-actually-move-the-needle-on-literacy-rates>.

30. Leila Fiester and Ralph Smith, *Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*, KIDS COUNT Special Report (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010), 9, http://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-Early_Warning_Full_Report-2010.pdf.

31. Hernandez, *Double Jeopardy*, 9.

32. "Child Illiteracy in America: Statistics, Facts, and Resources," *Regis College Online*, December 5, 2024, <https://online.regiscollege.edu/blog/child-illiteracy>.

33. Barbara Bush Foundation, "Why Literacy."

34. Antonis Katsiyannis et al., "Juvenile Delinquency and Recidivism: The Impact of Academic Achievement," *Reading & Writing Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10573560701808460>.

READING LEVELS IN NEVADA: A STUDY OF TEN THIRD-GRADE CLASSROOMS

The Guinn Center works with externs from the William S. Boyd School of Law at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas to enhance their learning opportunities with applied research. Our research team mentors our externs in developing research questions, designing research studies, and proposing future research directions. To this end, this study was developed with an extern as a small-scale research project to better understand the specific challenges faced by Nevada teachers who are struggling to help their students achieve literacy proficiency before they move on to fourth grade.

Our study aimed to:

1. Document the distribution of literacy proficiency rates within a small sample of Nevada third-grade classrooms;
2. Quantify the range of achievement levels present within those classrooms; and
3. In subsequent reports, examine the policy options available to educators and policymakers to best help students achieve literacy proficiency.

DATA SOURCES

For this study, the data used include MAP Growth or i-Ready scores from 10 third-grade classrooms across the state. The sample consists of six traditional public classrooms (five urban and one rural) and four charter school classrooms (two urban and two rural). There is a significant mix of income levels, geographic areas, and student demographics among the classrooms studied.



What is i-Ready?

The i-Ready Diagnostic is a computer-adaptive assessment usually given to students three times during the school year. The scores provide information on what grade-level standards the student meets, as well as a percentile ranking compared to the national average of students in the same grade assessed at the same time. The i-Ready prescribes actionable next steps for each student based on their results.

What is MAP?

MAP tests are also computer-adaptive assessments administered up to three times each school year. MAP data provides teachers and education leaders with big-picture trends, progress, and areas of growth.

While MAP is effective at measuring performance relative to peers, it does not diagnose specific skill gaps or provide direct instructional support.

PROCEDURE

We first completed an [Institutional Review Board](#) protocol and obtained full clearance to begin collecting data. Our team coordinated with school districts before contacting individual principals to obtain research permission where needed. We sent emails to principals at 14 elementary schools across the state explaining the purpose of the study and requesting either i-Ready or MAP data from one randomly selected third-grade class at each school. Principals were asked to ensure the report contained no identifying information before sending the records. To the extent practicable, we converted the RIT (Rasch Unit) scores from the MAP data to grade-level proficiency. The MAP data uses grade-level means rather than benchmarks, so it is likely that our data slightly underestimates the number of proficient students.

DATA ANALYSIS

After receiving the MAP and i-Ready results for each class, we began our analysis by compiling data from each school into tables and creating charts that showed the relationship between grade level and literacy proficiency. These visuals enabled analysis of proficiency levels within a single classroom and evaluation of patterns across school types.

After creating grade-level data points for ten classrooms across the state, the grade distributions for reading proficiency were assembled.

Figure 3 shows the percentage of students in each sampled third-grade classroom at reading levels kindergarten through fifth grade. Each grade has a dedicated color to show the varying degrees of proficiency.

Figure 3. Literacy Grade Spans in Sampled Nevada Third-Grade Classrooms

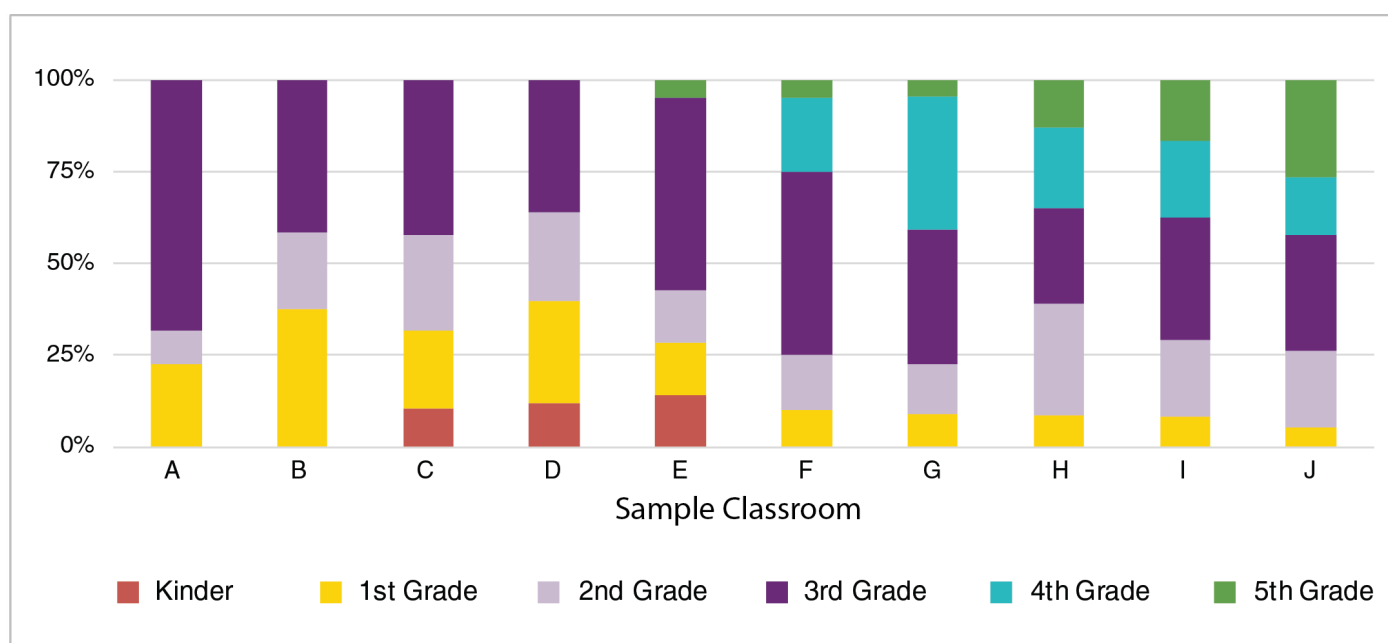


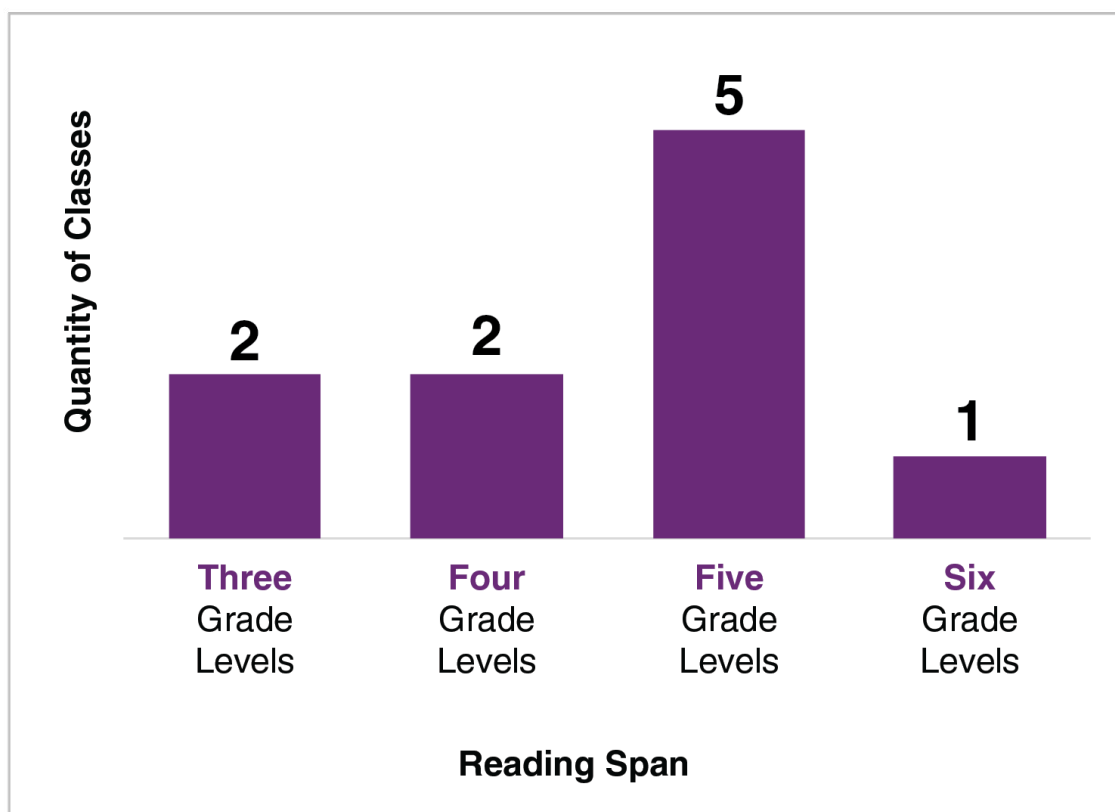
Figure 4 illustrates the number of classrooms with reading spans ranging from three to six grade levels. From our sample, we found that half of the third-grade classes studied had a range of five grade levels of literacy proficiency. Two classes spanned three grades, two spanned four grades, five spanned five grades, and one spanned six grades.

The sample size was not large enough to detect significant differences in classroom demographics (e.g., urban/rural or public/charter), which may explain the wide variation in proficiency. It would be

interesting to expand this research across the state to explore whether any significant differences exist.

The variation in student ability is significant. The classroom with the lowest number of literacy proficiency levels had students at three different reading levels (first, second, and third grade). The classroom with the greatest variation had students reading at levels from kindergarten to fifth grade. In one classroom, only 26 percent of the students read at a third-grade level, meaning approximately three-fourths of the class read above or below the intended instructional content.

Figure 4. Number of Sampled Classes with Various Grade Spans



STUDY RESULTS

Our research demonstrates that teachers often face the challenge of teaching students with varying literacy levels within a single classroom. The reading proficiency data from 10 third-grade classrooms indicate substantial variation in literacy proficiency within individual classrooms. Half of the sampled classrooms included students reading across a five-grade level range. The magnitude of this variation highlights the complexity teachers face in teaching across grade levels within a single classroom, as many are simultaneously trying to provide instruction to students with markedly different literacy needs. This variability may make it difficult to deliver appropriate, grade-level content while also providing appropriate intervention and enrichment. One could argue that the instruction needs to be more than

differentiated; it may need to be completely different for given pairs of students.

As this study was limited to ten classrooms, these findings should be interpreted as descriptive rather than representative of all of Nevada's third-grade classrooms. The sample size of this study was insufficient to determine whether differences in literacy span are associated with variables such as school type, geographic location, student demographics, or instructional models. However, the consistency and magnitude of variation should be cause for concern and prompt efforts to examine the situation further and to consider a planning, organizational, and instructional response.



FUTURE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Future research could provide a deeper understanding of the needs of teachers and students across the state. For example, the research in this report could be expanded to a statewide sample, enabling teachers, policymakers, and stakeholders to better understand the range of grade-level proficiency faced by Nevada's teachers. A larger sample may also enable identification of patterns and factors contributing to the proficiency ranges. What are the proficiency variations among all elementary grades? How do variations change from grade to grade? Are there schools with consistently lower proficiency variation? If so, are they doing something different?

Future research could also focus on soliciting teachers' perspectives on possible data gaps, opportunities for improvement, the effects of test timing and reporting, and how well assessment data equips them to individualize instruction to meet student needs. Additional investigation might also consider how teachers are or can effectively utilize testing data in the classroom.

Research questions might include:

- When aligned with the science of developing foundational literacy skills, what is the impact of quality systematic and explicit instruction on classrooms with a diverse population of learners?
- Where are examples of this working to improve literacy outcomes?
- How much practice do students need when they are falling behind, and how can students who have mastered the "code" be supported with advanced learning?

It may also be helpful to examine teachers' knowledge of evidence-based reading instruction and English orthography, as these factors may influence student literacy outcomes. Future research could also examine the extent to which Nevada is successfully pursuing evidence-based practices by offering quality foundational instruction in pre-K programming, ensuring Science of Reading course requirements for early childhood and elementary teacher licensure, using high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), and providing job-embedded professional development for school leaders and teachers related to literacy.

An analysis of all these issues might provide district leaders and state policymakers with data to help guide future policy discussions surrounding literacy interventions.

Nevada has made significant investments to improve literacy rates among our primary school population, including the Nevada Department of Education's revised [Nevada State Literacy Plan](#) and key provisions in [Senate Bill 460](#) (2025).³⁵ For future briefs, the Guinn Center plans to quantify these investments, alongside research highlighting best practices for improving literacy outcomes, an explainer on the Science of Reading, and guidance on how teachers, administrators, community members, and parents can support literacy development. We also plan to review investments other states have made to improve their literacy rates and explore potential policy options for Nevada's unique landscape. As we move forward in this endeavor, we welcome the input and insights of those who have experience in or passion for literacy matters.

35. Anna Colquitt and Todd Butterworth, *Nevada's Senate Bill 460 (2025 Session): Overview of Key Provisions* (Guinn Center, August 7, 2025), <https://www.guinncenter.org/research/nevadas-senate-bill-460-2025-overview-of-key-provisions>.

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ABOUT THE GUINN CENTER

The Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities is a nonprofit, nonpartisan policy research center addressing key challenges faced by policymakers and all Nevadans.

Our staff researchers, together with academic partners and independent experts across the state, tackle policy issues that range from taxation to water use, healthcare to education, and everything in between. We identify and analyze the complex problems we face as a state and inform decision-makers about actionable, data-driven, and effective policy solutions.

We invite you to join us in creating a brighter future for the Silver State by supporting our mission, signing up for our newsletter, or getting in contact.

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