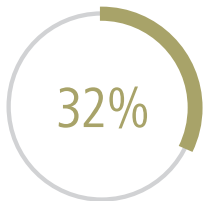


K-12 Early Literacy

MAY 2019



2 OUT OF 3 CHILDREN NOT READING PROFICIENTLY BY THE END OF 4TH GRADE WILL END UP IN JAIL OR RECEIVE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE¹



ONLY 32% OF MICHIGAN 4TH GRADERS ARE PROFICIENT IN READING²

RESEARCH SHOWS THAT CHILDREN OF LOW-LITERACY PARENTS START KINDERGARTEN SIGNIFICANTLY BEHIND THEIR PEERS³

Reason for Action

Talent 2025 has made literacy a priority because reading proficiency by 3rd grade is essential for a student's success and long-term quality of West Michigan's workforce.

Current State

Students learn to read until the end of 3rd grade. After that, they read to learn. One in six children who do not read proficiently in 3rd grade fail to graduate from high school on time, four times the rate for children with proficient reading skills. More than 80 percent of children from economically disadvantaged communities lose reading skills over the summer. Two out of three children who cannot read proficiently by the end of 4th grade will end up in jail or receiving public assistance.

Michigan continues to struggle teaching children in grades kindergarten through 3rd grade to read.

- 32% of Michigan 4th graders are proficient in reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)
- 45.3% of 3rd graders are proficient/advanced on Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) for English Language Arts (*Source: MISchoolData, 10 ISDs, 2017-18*)
- More undergraduate elementary education programs could teach evidence-based early literacy instructional practices and provide clinical experiences to develop these in the classroom.

The solutions to improve literacy cannot be limited to elementary school. The problem is cyclical, and only a multi-level approach across all age groups – preschool through adults – can break that cycle.

- **Ages 0-5** are important because a third of children in the U.S. arrive at kindergarten without the skills they need to succeed, and children who enter kindergarten without appropriate reading skills have a much higher chance of dropping out of school.
- **Grades K-3** are when a child learns to read. Without a strong foundation in reading, children are left behind at the beginning of their education. They lag in every class, year after year, because more than 85 percent of the curriculum is taught by reading. And by the end of third grade, 74% of struggling readers won't catch up. In fact, one of the most important predictors of graduating from high school is reading proficiently by the end of third grade⁴.
- **Literacy among parents** is also a significant factor. Research shows that children of low-literacy parents begin kindergarten significantly behind their peers.

Future State

To address the systemic nature of the problem a set of reinforcing strategies must be implemented to ensure children enter kindergarten ready to learn, every student achieves reading proficiency by third grade, and adults with below basic literacy receive effective support.

Sources:

¹ *Early Warning! Why Reading by the Third Grade Matters*, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010

² *The Nation's Report Card: Reading 2017 State Snapshot Reports for Grade 4*, National Center for Education Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2017/pdf/2018039MI4.pdf>

³ *Starting School at a Disadvantage: The School Readiness of Poor Children*, Brookings, March 2018

⁴ The Children's Reading Foundation

Strategies

1

Ages 0-5: Every child in West Michigan enters kindergarten ready for school

- Expand the Great Start Readiness Program to at-risk children
- Implement the Kindergarten Entry Observation state wide
- Scale the Reach Out and Read program to medical practices and clinics

3

Literacy among parents: Every West Michigan adult has basic literacy skills (or a high school diploma or GED)

- Employers provide training tied to incentives for employees who have literacy skills below basic levels
- Advocate for systemic adoption of Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs
- Schools act as a hub for resources to strengthen families (i.e. Bright Beginnings, Parent University, Kent Schools Service Network, Community Schools Model, etc.)

2

Grades K-3: 80% of West Michigan 3rd grade students meet or exceed proficiency in reading

- Utilize evidence-based instructional practices identified by the Reading Now Network and the General Education Leadership Network (GELN) in all schools
- Align the pedagogy literacy instruction among teacher preparation programs to evidence-based practices
- Incentivize high-quality teachers and principals to work in schools where a good portion of the students are at risk
- Increase equity among Michigan school districts by increasing the foundation allowance for urban and rural districts

EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS

GELN

The General Education Leadership Network (GELN), a collaborative of the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators, identified 10 essential practices for early literacy instruction that could be a statewide focus of professional development. The research-supported practices also align with the Reading Now Network (RNN).

RNN

The Reading Now Network (RNN), a collaborative effort by superintendents from 10 West Michigan counties, aims to ensure at least 80% of third-graders read proficiently regardless of demographics and that intervention strategies are systemically implemented for the other 20%.

Using literacy coaching for principals and teachers, a classroom library initiative and customized assistance, the network has led to significant success. Teachers and administrators at RNN schools are embracing and implementing program recommendations.

ROR

Pediatricians can also encourage early literacy through programs like Reach Out and Read (ROR), which provides families with 10 free books over the course of a child's first five years. The program trains doctors and medical staff to speak with parents about the importance of reading aloud and engaging with their young children, including cuddling up to read together on a regular basis. They also demonstrate how best to look at books and talk about the stories with their children.

Research shows the program has a significant effect on parental behavior and attitudes toward reading aloud. It results in improved language scores of the children who participate.