



## ***New KIDS COUNT Data Book Highlights Education Concerns***

*Report shows over two-thirds of Idaho's fourth graders not proficient in reading*

### **EMBARGOED:**

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BOISE, ID — Educating our children today brings hope for a better tomorrow. With this in mind, a new *KIDS COUNT*<sup>®</sup> *Data Book* from the Annie E. Casey Foundation raises concerns for Idaho's future, particularly in respect to our struggles to produce proficient readers.

In 2013, the most recent year for which data is available, 67% of Idaho fourth graders failed to meet proficiency standards. Idaho now ranks 33<sup>rd</sup> in the nation in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading proficiency, falling from 20<sup>th</sup> in 2007. Idaho's reading proficiency declined by 3% during this time, while much of the nation achieved significant improvements. In fact, during this span, only three states experienced a greater decline than Idaho.

“We're trending in the wrong direction,” states Idaho KIDS COUNT Director Lauren Necochea. “The success that so many states are having demonstrates that it is *not* impossible to improve reading proficiency. We owe it to our kids to give them the tools they need to succeed in the new economy.”

Idaho is also near the bottom of the nation in preschool enrollment, ranking 49<sup>th</sup> out of the 50 states. In 2013, 68% of Idaho's 3 and 4 year olds were not enrolled in any kind of preschool.

“The *Data Book* shows that we have significant work to do to get Idaho's children ready to learn when they enter kindergarten,” said Rod Gramer, president and CEO of Idaho Business for Education. “If kids cannot read proficiently, they cannot learn. And if they cannot learn they will not be ready to obtain a meaningful education that prepares them for success in school, work and life. Idaho's 21st century economy depends on a highly educated and skilled workforce. As a state, we must take effective steps to ensure that all of Idaho's children are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten.”

Health insurance is another area in which Idaho has seen mixed results. Despite recent success in expanding health insurance to more Idahoans, the state ranks 40<sup>th</sup> in the nation in percentage of insured kids. In 2013 nine percent of Idaho kids remained uninsured. While this represents a significant 36% improvement from 14% uninsured rate in 2008 (pre-Affordable Care Act), many states have improved at much greater levels. Neighboring Oregon, for example, has cut its uninsured rate by more than half during the same time period.

Idaho, unlike Oregon and many other states, has not yet expanded Medicaid to low-income working families. “Many people have worked very hard to bring health insurance to Idaho’s kids,” adds Necochea. “But because Idaho has not yet addressed our health coverage gap, many working families also face the uncertainty of being uninsured.”

The 2015 *Data Book*, which focuses on key trends in child well-being in the post-recession years, measures child well-being in four domains: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. Idaho’s cumulative ranking is #22.

The 2015 *Data Book* will be available July 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at <http://databook.kidscount.org>, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of 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.

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Idaho KIDS COUNT is a nonprofit organization bringing data and research to conversations that affect Idaho's children. Idaho KIDS COUNT is a member of the national KIDS COUNT Network, and receives funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. It is a program of Jannus, Inc., a 501(c)3 community resource organization. To learn more, visit [www.idahokidscount.org](http://www.idahokidscount.org).

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation’s children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org) and the [KIDS COUNT Data Center](http://databook.kidscount.org), which is home to comprehensive national, state and local statistics on child well-being. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.