



UNDER EMBARGO Until June 10, 2024 at 12:01 a.m. ET
Contact: Sonia Lindell, 407.440.1421 x 702

Florida Ranks 30th for Child Well-Being in *2024 KIDS COUNT Data Book*

Data from 50 States Shows Academic Outcomes and Absenteeism are Linked to Poverty, Trauma

Policymakers Must Act to Promote Kids' Future Success, Annie E. Casey Foundation Finds

STATEWIDE — Among the 50 states, Florida ranked 30th in overall child well-being, similar to last year's ranking of 31st. The state's ranking of 5th in the education domain obscures the fact there was little change in scores. While graduation rates and 4th-grade reading proficiency improved, 8th-grade math proficiency dropped in 2022, 77% of 8th graders were not proficient in math compared to 69% in 2019.. It also hides large learning differences for Black and Latina/o students, and students in Title I schools that serve students with limited resources. The data shows Florida leaders must do more to prepare children to learn so they are ready to earn when they reach adulthood. At stake nationally: hundreds of billions of dollars in future earnings and trillions of dollars in lost economic activity.

Each year, the *Data Book* presents national and state data from 16 indicators in four domains — economic well-being, education, health, and family and community factors — and ranks the states according to how children are faring overall.

"I hope the education ranking does not make us complacent. With 61% of fourth graders who are not proficient readers and 77% of 8th graders who are not proficient in math, there is so much work to be done and a need for greater investment in education. The rankings in the other three areas of child well-being, economic (42nd), health (31st) as well as family and community (30th) highlight the fact we need continued attention on Florida's children and communities" said Norin Dollard, Ph.D., KIDS COUNT director at Florida Policy Institute.

In its 35th year of publication, the *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* focuses on students' lack of basic reading and math skills, a problem decades in the making, that was brought to light by the focus on learning loss during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unprecedented drops in learning from 2019 to 2022 amounted to decades of lost progress. Chronic absence has soared, with children living in poverty especially unable to resume their school day routines on a regular basis.

The Casey Foundation report contends that the pandemic is not the sole cause of lower test scores: Educators, researchers, policymakers and employers who track students' academic readiness have been ringing alarm bells for a long time. U.S. scores in reading and math have barely budged in decades. Compared to peer nations, the United States is not equipping its children with the high-level reading, math

and digital problem-solving skills needed for many of today's fastest-growing occupations in a highly competitive global economy.

This lack of readiness will result in major harm to the nation's economy and to youth as they join the workforce. [Up to \\$31 trillion](#) in U.S. economic activity hinges on helping young people overcome learning loss caused by the pandemic. Students who don't advance beyond lower levels of math are more likely to be [unemployed after high school](#). One analysis calculates the drop in math scores between 2019 and 2022 will [reduce lifetime earnings](#) by 1.6% for 48 million pandemic-era students, for a total of \$900 billion in lost income.

The Foundation recommends the following:

- **Ensuring access to low- or no-cost meals, a reliable internet connection, a place to study, and time with friends, teachers, and counselors.** This will help make sure children arrive at the classroom ready to learn.
- **Expanding access to intensive tutoring for students who are behind in their classes and missing academic milestones.** Research has shown the [most effective tutoring](#) is in person, high dosage, and tied directly to the school.
- **Policymakers should invest in community schools**, public schools that provide wraparound support to kids and families. Natural homes for tutoring, mental health support, nutritional aid, and other services, community schools use innovative and creative programs to [support young learners](#) and encourage parent engagement, which leads to [better outcomes for kids](#).

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RELEASE INFORMATION

The *2024 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org/databook. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the *Data Book* can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at datacenter.aecf.org.

ABOUT THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's young people 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. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.