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Kansas Follows National Trends for Declining Reading and Math Scores

Kansas continues to stay in bottom half among all states for education rankings, Annie E. Casey Foundation reports

TOPEKA, KAN. — Kansas continues to rank in the bottom half of states for education, according to the **2024 KIDS COUNT® Data Book**, a 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how children and families are faring. The data show Kansas leaders must do more to prepare children to learn so they are ready to earn when they reach adulthood.

Kansas ranked 28th in education. Between 2013 and 2022, the state saw reading and math proficiency among fourth and eighth graders decline, as reported by the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) assessments. In 2013, 62% of fourth graders were not proficient readers compared to 69% in 2022, a 7-percentage point increase. During this same timeframe, the percentage of eighth graders not proficient in math increased from 60% to 77%.

Kansas data reflects a national decline in levels of reading and math proficiency, which were exacerbated by changes in learning environments during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021-2022, Kansas and the nation also saw an increase in chronic absenteeism from school (30% nationally versus 27% in Kansas).

“The long-term impacts of these trends are concerning as the next generation of Kansans leave school and enter the workforce,” John Wilson, President and CEO of Kansas Action for Children said. “While exacerbated by the pandemic, we believe this data trend is the result of underlying issues children and families are facing, making kids less ready to learn when they enter school and disadvantaging many for long-term success.”

In 2021-2022, around 40% of Kansas kids had experienced one or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which create harmful levels of stress for children that can undermine a child’s development and ability to cope with life’s challenges. Examples of an ACE include not having enough to eat for every meal, experiencing an unstable housing environment, disruptions to their family life, or traumatic experiences.

Wilson continued, “More must be done to empower parents in providing their children with the building blocks that promote healthy outcomes and set them up for life-long success. Better support for parents will translate into more stable relationships, improved home and school environments, and better developmental opportunities for children starting in their earliest years.”

The following would improve Kansas families’ ability to help kids learn in — and outside of — school:

- Ensuring access to low- or no-cost meals, a reliable internet connection, a place to study, and time with friends, teachers, and counselors.
- 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.

- Improving families' economic security through a state child tax credit and expansion of the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit so families can afford quality child care, reliable transportation, and basic necessities that ensure kids arrive to the classroom ready to learn.

In each year's Data Book, the Annie E. Casey Foundation uses 16 indicators measuring four domains – economic well-being, education, health, and family and community factors – to assess child well-being in each state and nationally. The annual KIDS COUNT data and rankings represent the most recent information available.

Kansas ranked 19th overall — 12th in economic well-being, 19th in health, 23rd in family and community, and 28th in education.

Key Kansas statistics include the following:

HEALTH CARE

- In 2022, nearly 38,500 children did not have health insurance. This is about the same as the prior year, but this number is likely to increase in future years due to the public health unwinding.

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

- The number of Kansas kids living in poverty jumped to around 94,000 children in 2022 from 92,000 in 2021. These kids lived in households with an income below the 2022 poverty line, or a household income of \$29,678 for a family of two adults and two kids.
- The rate of Kansas teens (16-19) not in school and not working stayed steady between 2019 and 2022 at 6%. However, Kansas' ranking declined from 11th to 16th compared to the rest of the nation.

EDUCATION

- Kansas continues to lag behind half of other states in student success, with the percentage of below-average math and reading scores continuing to increase.
 - o In 2022, the rate of fourth graders falling below NAEP-defined proficient reading levels was 69%. Kansas ranks 28th in the nation for this data point.
 - o In 2022, the rate of eighth graders falling below NAEP-defined proficient math levels was 77%. Kansas ranks 34th in the nation for this data point.
- In 2018-2022, 42,000 young children were not in school. These 3- and 4-year-olds didn't access the long-lasting benefits of early education that sets them up for K-12 school, jobs, and life.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT

- In 2022, 29% of Kansas children lived in single-parent households, compared to the national average of 34%.

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 KANSAS ACTION FOR CHILDREN

KAC is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to make Kansas a place where every child has the opportunity to grow up healthy and thrive. We engage in bipartisan advocacy, partnerships, and information-sharing on key issues, including early learning and education, health, and economic security for families. We work with policymakers, local organizations, and fellow advocates to inform sound policy,

foster collaboration, and promote an equitable tax system. For more than 40 years, KAC has been a resource to leaders and advocates who are working to ensure a brighter future for every child.

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.

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