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Education Measures Show Reading Improvements and Math Achievement Challenges

South Carolina Children Continue to Rank in the Bottom 10, According to the Annual KIDS COUNT Report Released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Several critical education indicators show mixed results for math and reading achievement for South Carolina, according to the *2024 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, a 50-state report of recent data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how children and families are faring. South Carolina remains stagnant in child and family well-being indicators, ranking 40th in the annual survey.

Examining the effects of the pandemic on children and education, the publication spotlights two measures, both indicators of future academic success. In South Carolina, only 32% of fourth graders were at or above proficient in reading in 2022, a slight improvement in the past decade. The second education measure is 8th-grade math, and only 22% of South Carolina students were at or above proficient in math, a significant decrease from 31% in 2011.

“While reading scores held steady, the significant drop in math scores during the pandemic amounts to decades of lost progress,” said Sue Williams, CEO of Children’s Trust. “In South Carolina, students’ lack of basic reading and math skills is a problem that has been decades in the making. We can and must do better by our children to prepare them for the workforce of the future.”

The annual publication also examined chronic absenteeism, recognizing that children cannot learn if they are not in school. During the 2021-22 school year, 27% of South Carolina children were classified as chronically absent, meaning they missed more than 10% of the school year. KIDS COUNT also measures a broad range of economic, health, education, family and community indicators that are critical social determinants of health.

There are strong correlations between poverty, absenteeism and school performance. In 2022, too many children in South Carolina lived in poverty (19%), and too many lived in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment (28%).

“While dedicated educators play a vital role, students succeed when supported by a strong community infrastructure and when their family can access resources,” said Edward Anderson, the executive director of OnTrack Greenville and a Children’s Trust board member. “For students in under-resourced communities, healthcare, transportation and stable housing significantly impact a child’s learning ability.

The KIDS COUNT data underscores the importance of collective action in ensuring our children's well-being and academic achievement.”

“Moving forward, a multi-sector approach is crucial. Partnerships between schools, families, and community organizations can create a comprehensive support system that empowers students to reach their full potential,” added Anderson. “By investing in initiatives that foster collaboration, we can build a brighter future for all children.”

Children’s Trust supports a range of collaborative initiatives and proven prevention programs, including its network of family resource centers – community places where families can access support services and information such as parenting classes, job training, school support, childcare and more. Children’s Trust also recently enhanced its parenting website, scParents.org, where families can readily access information, support and resources to help their children thrive.

Children’s Trust has produced several county-level data profiles for more data and information: child well-being, adverse childhood experiences and child maltreatment. Those are available at sccchildren.org.

Organizations and individuals who want to work toward building better futures for children and families are encouraged to visit scChildren.org and sign up for our mailing list.

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 Children’s Trust of South Carolina

Children’s Trust is the only statewide organization focused on preventing child abuse and neglect in South Carolina. It leads and supports a network that shares our belief that all children should thrive, live in secure families and be surrounded by supportive communities. Children’s Trust coordinates the state’s efforts for the Strengthening Families Program; Triple P (Positive Parenting Program); S.C. Adverse Childhood Experiences Initiative; Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting; Child Abuse Prevention Month; and KIDS COUNT. For more information, visit scChildren.org.

About the Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation’s young children, youth and young adults 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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