



# By the Numbers: The State of Literacy in Maine

Understanding the status of literacy development in the State of Maine informs the development of both policy and practice. The information that follows represents reports generated by various entities who track such data. Click on the live links to find full reports and other resources. The bulleted information provides an example of information within each resource.

## Early Childhood: Birth Through Preschool

### [2021 Kids Count report](#)

- 64% of Maine’s young children are not enrolled in preschool
- 46.9% of children under 6 are read to everyday
- 71% of children under age 6 have all available parents in work force
- 15.9% of children under age 5 live in poverty

### [GetReadytoRead.org](#)

- If identified early and given research-based intervention, 90-95 % of children “at risk” for reading failure will become fluent readers.
- Prevention of reading failure can reduce the need for special education services later in a student’s educational life. Special education costs are, on average, double those of general education.
- Currently 2.7 million students with learning disabilities (primarily reading disabilities) receive special education services, an increase of 42 percent over the last decade.
- Competent readers developed through early detection and assistance will go on to succeed in both academics and life, reducing the need for social programs.

### [A Window to the World: Early Language and Literacy Development](#) (2011)

- At 16–18 months, when children begin amassing vocabulary, word learning is significantly affected by economic status.
- By age 3, trends in the amount of talk, vocabulary growth, and style of interaction are well established and suggest widening gaps.
- Children’s academic successes at ages 9 and 10 can be attributed to the amount of talk they hear from birth through age 3.

### [National Center for Education Statistics \(NCES\) Fast Facts 2019](#)

- 3- to 5-year-olds not yet in kindergarten who were read to three or more times in the past week were lower in 2016 (81 percent) than in 2001 (84 percent).

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## [Developing Early Literacy: Report of the National Early Learning Panel \(NELP\) 2008](#)

- Six variables representing early literacy skills or precursor literacy skills had medium to large predictive relationships with later measures of literacy development.
- These six variables include:
  - alphabet knowledge (AK): knowledge of the names and sounds associated with printed letters
  - phonological awareness (PA): the ability to detect, manipulate, or analyze the auditory aspects of spoken language (including the ability to distinguish or segment words, syllables, or phonemes), independent of meaning
  - rapid automatic naming (RAN) of letters or digits: the ability to rapidly name a sequence of random letters or digits
  - RAN of objects or colors: the ability to rapidly name a sequence of repeating random sets of pictures of objects (e.g., “car,” “tree,” “house,” “man”) or colors
  - writing or writing name: the ability to write letters in isolation on request or to write one’s own name
  - phonological memory: the ability to remember spoken information for a short period of time

## [America’s Early Childhood Literacy Gap 2009](#)

- 37% of children arrive at kindergarten without the skills necessary for lifetime learning.
- Kindergarten language ability accounted for 96% of individual differences in language ability in grades 1 and 2.
- 10 – 15% of children who have difficulty learning to read eventually drop out of high school.

## [National Survey of Children’s Health](#) (2016 to Present)

- 49% of Maine children ages 0-5 are read to every day by a family member. This is 13% higher than nationwide data.
- 54% of Maine children ages 0-5 were told stories or sung to by a family member every day. This is 6% higher than nationwide data.



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## School Age: Pre-kindergarten Through Grade 8

### [2021 Maine KIDS COUNT Data Book](#)

- From 2003 to 2020, chronic absenteeism among fourth grade students has risen from 16% to 24.4%
- 4% of Maine students aged 6 to 17 repeated one or more grades since starting kindergarten
- In 2019, roughly 57% of fourth grade students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch scored below proficiency reading level while 33% of students who are not eligible for free or reduced lunch scored below proficiency reading level.
- In 2020 3.1 % of Maine students were identified as language learners.
- Maine was one of six states that saw the largest percentage increases in their African-American child population.

### [National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition \(NCELA\)](#)

From the USDOE office of English Language Acquisition: site provides national leadership to ensure that English learners and immigrant students attain English proficiency and achieve academic success.

- Despite access to preschool, ELs were somewhat less likely than non-EL preschool-aged children to enroll in a preschool program. 16% EL to 21% non-EL.
- In 2017, 9.4% of language learners were proficient in reading English in grade 4. Data not available for grade 8.

### [Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters \(2010\)](#)

- Reinforces that students in low-income schools are much more likely to perform below standards in reading achievement
- 85% of U.S. students in low-income schools scored below proficient and 53% scored below basic on the 2009 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) reading assessment.
- In addition, the report reinforces the importance of helping students read proficiently by third grade. There is a strong correlation between poverty, failure to read proficiently, and failure to graduate from high school. Students who do not read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely not to graduate high school.

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### [Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third-Grade Reading \(2013\)](#)

- This update to the 2010 report on third-grade reading noted that every dollar spent in the first four to six years of schooling (including prekindergarten) provides society with a \$8.24 return on investment.

### [Early Reading Proficiency in the United States: A Kids Count Snapshot \(2014\)](#)

- On the 2013 NAEP fourth-grade reading assessment, the gap in reading proficiency between Maine students from higher and lower income families is 19-27 points. In addition, 80% of U.S. students from low-income families, 93% of dual-language learners, and 89% of students with disabilities scored below proficiency.

### [Maine Education Assessment Dashboard](#): 2018/2019 data

- Overall, 55.9% of Maine students were at or above state expectations for ELA/literacy. This is an increase from 50.7% the year before.
- Statewide, 62% of females and 50.1% of males were at or above state expectations for ELA/literacy. This is an increase from 56.3% and 45.4% respectively the year before.
- Overall, 14.6% of English Language Learners were at or above state expectations for ELA/literacy. This is a decrease from 15.2% the year before.

### [Nation's Report Card 2019](#)

[Reading report highlights](#)

[State Profiles](#)

[State Snapshot](#)

#### Grade 4 In Maine:

- The average scale score for grade 4 students (221) in 2019 was lower than the scores in 1992 - 2013.
- Grade 4 male students in Maine had an average scale score in reading (218) that was lower than that of female students (225).
- In 2019, grade 4 students in Maine eligible for free/reduced-price lunch had an average reading scale score of 209.

#### Grade 8 in Maine:

- In Maine, the average scale score for grade 8 students (265) in 2019 was lower than the scores in 1998 -2017.
- In 2019, grade 8 male students in Maine had an average scale score in reading (259) that was lower than that of female students (272).

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- In 2019, grade 8 students in Maine eligible for free/reduced-price lunch had an average reading scale score of 255. This was lower than that of students in Maine not eligible for this program (273).

### [Education Indicators for Maine \(2017-2018\): Mitchell Institute Report](#)

- Those children who enter school not kindergarten-ready have lower reading skills at the end of first grade, and 88% of those poor readers will still be poor readers in 4th grade.
- By age 5, a typical middle-class child recognizes 22 letters of the alphabet, compared to 9 letters for a child from a low-income family. Full day kindergarten programs help to close such a gap between low income students and their peers; as of 2014, 88% of Maine's school districts offer full day kindergarten programs.
- In Maine, 17% of students who were chronically absent in both kindergarten and 1st grade were reading proficiently in third grade, compared to 64% of those with good attendance.

### [Education Indicators for Maine \(2018\): Educate Maine](#)

- 36% and 40% of 4th grade students are at or above proficiency in reading and math, respectively. (National Assessment of Education Progress)
- 39% and 36% of 8th grade students are at or above proficiency in reading and math, respectively. (National Assessment of Education Progress)

### [Council for a Strong America: Maine Report](#)

- In Maine, for every \$1 invested in early care and education, an additional \$0.78 is generated into the overall economy, for a total of \$1.78 in new spending in the state.

### [Dyslexia Center of Utah](#)

- One in five students, or 15-20% of the population, has a language based learning disability. Dyslexia is the most common of the language based learning disabilities.
- Nearly the same percentage of males and females have dyslexia.
- Nearly the same percentage of people from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds have dyslexia.
- In minority and high poverty schools, 70-80% of children have inadequate reading skills.
- Nationwide 20% of the elementary school population is struggling with reading.
- 80% of children with an IEP have reading difficulty and 85% of those are Dyslexic.
- 30% of children with Dyslexia also have at least a mild form of ADHD.



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## Adolescents and Young Adults: High School and College Age

### [2019 Kids Count Data Book](#)

- In 2018, 6% of Maine teens were not in school and not working. This figure has improved slightly since 2008.
- From 2013 – 2017, 13% of Maine students did not graduate from high school on time.
- 49% of young adults in Maine ages 18 to 24 are enrolled in or have completed college.

### [National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition \(NCELA\)](#)

From the USDOE office of English Language Acquisition: site provides national leadership to

- The graduation rate for EL students is 78%; the graduation rate for non-EL students is 88.3% (note: anyone who has participated in an EL program in HS is counted but those who exited EL programs prior to grade 9 are not counted in this figure).

### [Education Indicators for Maine \(2018\): Educate Maine](#)

- 59% and 35% of 11<sup>th</sup> grade students are at or above proficiency in reading and math, respectively. (SAT)
- 87% Graduate High School
- 87% of Maine students will graduate high school in 4 years
- 63% of Maine students enrolled in college within one year of graduating from high school
- 84% of Maine first-year students returned for a second year at a college institution

### [The Alliance for Excellent Education: Maine Fact Sheet](#)

If Maine increased its overall graduation rate to 90 percent, the economic benefits from these 2,600 additional graduates would likely include as much as:

- \$27 million in increased annual earnings and \$4.1 million in annual state and local tax revenues;
- 200 new jobs and a \$35 million increase in the gross state product;
- \$56 million in increased home sales;
- \$3.4 million in increased auto sales.

### [College and Career Readiness of U.S. Graduates](#) (Achieve 2017)

- For the most part, Maine has a greater need for workers with higher education degrees than there are people with degrees.
- 60% of STEM jobs and nearly 40% of non-STEM jobs in Maine require a BA or more.  
Readiness

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- 12% of jobs require an associate degree but 9% of adults 25+ have the degree.
- 35% of jobs require a bachelor's degree but only 17% of adults 25+ have the degree.

### Adults/Workplace

#### [Maine Workforce Data Quality Initiative](#)

- For the period 2009-2011, first year wages for those with a post-associate certificate were nearly 50% higher than those with only a high school diploma.

#### [Center for Workforce Research and Information, Maine Department of Labor](#)

This site collects data from a variety of resources and reports on program/education completion and earnings.

- Data tables can be sorted by required education, median income levels, projected need, and other categories.
- General operations managers, heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers, and registered nurses are the occupations projected to have the highest need by 2026. Each requires training beyond a high school diploma.

#### [Technical Report of the Survey of Adult Skills \(PIAAC\) 2013](#)

- People dealing with problems when using information and computer technology often share the following characteristics:
  - The existence of the problem is primarily a consequence of the availability of new technologies.
  - The solution to the problem requires the use of computer-based artifacts (applications, representational formats, computational procedures).
  - The problems are related to the handling and maintenance of technology-rich environments themselves (e.g., how to operate a computer, how to fix a settings problem, how to use the Internet browser in a technical sense).

#### [Profile of Adult Education Target Population: Maine 2011](#)

- 99,982 adults or 8% of the total state population are adults without a high school credential.
- 70% of adult males with no high school credential are unemployed.

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### [Making Maine Work: Critical Investments for the Maine Economy 2018](#)

- Goal: increase participation in the workforce by groups that have historically been difficult to engage;
- Take a “whole person” approach to helping adults who are already in the workforce achieve a credential;
- Grow the skills of Maine’s workforce so that 60% of Maine workers have a credential of value by 2025;
- Strengthen diverse educational pathways that lead to career success.

### [National Center for Education Statistics: Adult Literacy in the United States](#)

Four in five U.S. adults (79 percent) have English literacy skills sufficient to complete tasks that require comparing and contrasting information, paraphrasing, or making low-level inferences—literacy skills at level 2 or above in PIAAC (OECD 2013). In contrast, one in five U.S. adults (21 percent) has difficulty completing these tasks. This translates into 43.0 million U.S. adults who possess low literacy skills.

### [Literacy Gap Map - Barbara Bush Foundation \(2019\)](#)

The Barbara Bush Foundation has developed a Literacy Gap Map that enables users to narrow the idea of adult literacy in the state of Maine and in each county. 36 million adults in the United States struggle to read basic sentences — which can make it difficult or impossible to navigate everyday life (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, 2015, February). Explore the implications of adult literacy through:

- Seeing what adult literacy looks like in the state of Maine (i.e. Washington and Aroostook County 10% of adults lack basic literacy skills).
- Exploring how literacy influences well-being by county (i.e. Piscataquis County 17.3% of residents say their overall health is either ‘fair’ or ‘poor.’)
- Exploring the direct literacy impact on health, income and education by county. (i.e. Waldo County 14.3% of residents live below the poverty line).