

Twelve Ways to Improve Learning

Help Children Read

Definition and Source

Reading scores for students in third and eighth grades are based on the Illinois Standard Achievement Test. Eleventh-grade reading scores are based on the Prairie State Achievement Examination. Data represent the percent of student scores that met or exceeded minimum standards for the grade level and subject tested. Data are from the Illinois State Board of Education.

Trends and Key Findings

Statewide, the percentage of students meeting reading standards is highest in eighth grade (63.7 percent) and lowest in 11th grade (56.4 percent). Third-grade students fall in the middle, with 62.0 percent meeting state standards. Results didn't change for students in third and 11th grade from 2001-02 to 2002-03. But the percentage of eighth-graders meeting reading standards fell 6.3 percent.

There are some substantial disparities among counties in the third and eighth grades. Depending on location, anywhere from 43 percent to over 85 percent of students meet standards. The City of Chicago and Alexander County have the lowest reading scores in the state; the majority of high-ranking counties are located in the central north section of the state, and all are rural with the exception of DuPage County.

The achievement gap among racial and ethnic groups is clearly evident in reading scores. More Asian and white students at every grade level meet state standards than African-American and Hispanic students. African-American students start with the lowest passing rate (34.8 percent in third grade) and improve in the eighth grade before falling back to previous levels in the 11th grade. Hispanic students seem to struggle later; about half of them meet standards in the third and eighth grades, while only 34.3 percent do in the 11th grade.

Action Steps

Although many academic subjects are important indicators for future success, reading is particularly vital because it affects

STUDENTS MEETING STATE READING STANDARDS (%)

	THIRD GRADE			EIGHTH GRADE			ELEVENTH GRADE		
	2001-02	2002-03	% change	2001-02	2002-03	% change	2001-02	2002-03	% change
Illinois	62.2	62.0	-0.3	68.0	63.7	-6.3	58.2	56.4	-3.1
Adams	68.6	69.4	1.2	66.8	62.9	-5.8	57.3	54.6	-4.7
Alexander	46.0	42.9	-6.7	48.3	50.0	3.5	26.5	34.4	29.8
Bond	74.7	72.2	-3.3	75.1	72.8	-3.1	55.7	54.0	-3.1
Boone	65.5	67.5	3.1	62.2	59.9	-3.7	53.8	57.2	6.3
Brown	60.0	56.9	-5.2	63.0	55.8	-11.4	58.9	52.4	-11.0
Bureau	70.3	75.5	7.4	72.9	71.2	-2.3	55.4	58.2	5.1
Calhoun	74.4	66.0	-11.3	81.8	54.4	-33.5	45.9	57.6	25.5
Carroll	73.7	71.4	-3.1	73.3	68.3	-6.8	62.7	56.4	-10.0
Cass	58.3	66.2	13.6	62.7	59.4	-5.3	47.8	52.6	10.0
Champaign	63.8	66.6	4.4	70.8	65.5	-7.5	67.4	61.8	-8.3
Christian	74.6	67.9	-9.0	66.0	66.3	0.5	62.4	56.2	-9.9
Clark	64.6	73.2	13.3	69.4	68.0	-2.0	60.5	54.5	-9.9
Clay	72.9	59.2	-18.8	70.6	65.7	-6.9	56.9	52.2	-8.3
Clinton	80.8	80.8	0.0	71.3	67.1	-5.9	57.4	50.8	-11.5
Coles	72.7	75.8	4.3	72.1	69.8	-3.2	62.9	56.1	-10.8
Cook	66.8	66.0	-1.2	70.7	66.5	-5.9	60.2	60.4	0.3
Crawford	60.9	65.3	7.2	66.5	65.8	-1.1	53.6	53.0	-1.1
Cumberland	74.7	78.8	5.5	66.5	56.6	-14.9	54.9	52.0	-5.3
De Kalb	71.5	72.5	1.4	73.0	68.1	-6.7	62.4	60.5	-3.0
De Witt	78.2	73.8	-5.6	70.2	68.3	-2.7	63.7	60.6	-4.9
Douglas	73.7	74.1	0.5	70.9	63.2	-10.9	59.8	57.7	-3.5
Du Page	82.1	81.7	-0.5	82.1	79.5	-3.2	70.4	69.3	-1.6
Edgar	72.1	72.3	0.3	58.3	63.8	9.4	52.6	47.4	-9.9
Edwards	64.8	62.1	-4.2	73.6	72.5	-1.5	60.2	61.8	2.7
Effingham	75.7	77.6	2.5	71.9	66.8	-7.1	61.2	57.9	-5.4
Fayette	68.9	59.5	-13.6	64.5	63.6	-1.4	55.1	49.3	-10.5
Ford	73.4	72.3	-1.5	73.7	71.3	-3.3	69.9	63.0	-9.9
Franklin	67.7	70.0	3.4	66.5	61.7	-7.2	54.1	51.4	-5.0
Fulton	67.9	68.7	1.2	69.5	58.5	-15.8	57.0	45.3	-20.5
Gallatin	61.9	60.3	-2.6	77.2	75.0	-2.8	63.6	54.5	-14.3
Greene	58.7	58.9	0.3	57.0	55.4	-2.8	46.3	52.2	12.7
Grundy	77.2	73.3	-5.1	75.5	70.6	-6.5	63.4	58.1	-8.4
Hamilton	69.7	85.2	22.2	76.8	74.0	-3.6	52.6	47.0	-10.6
Hancock	68.3	67.4	-1.3	67.6	71.7	6.1	52.5	57.3	9.1
Hardin	74.0	70.0	-5.4	60.4	56.6	-6.3	55.0	36.6	-33.5
Henderson	63.4	68.1	7.4	64.6	54.2	-16.1	56.8	55.7	-1.9
Henry	77.2	74.4	-3.6	69.6	60.6	-12.9	63.0	60.2	-4.4
Iroquois	71.9	73.6	2.4	67.1	64.5	-3.9	59.7	60.2	0.8
Jackson	68.5	68.2	-0.4	71.0	63.4	-10.7	61.4	57.6	-6.2
Jasper	69.3	63.2	-8.8	75.4	61.0	-19.1	63.9	54.1	-15.3
Jefferson	68.9	63.7	-7.5	69.0	65.2	-5.5	53.6	55.4	3.4
Jersey	64.3	76.0	18.2	57.7	61.0	5.7	53.7	51.5	-4.1
Jo Daviess	74.0	66.3	-10.4	72.4	60.4	-16.6	58.3	57.4	-1.5
Johnson	76.0	76.2	0.3	77.6	63.1	-18.7	65.9	50.4	-23.5
Kane	68.0	67.9	-0.1	66.7	64.9	-2.7	57.5	54.0	-6.1
Kankakee	61.6	67.8	10.1	64.3	61.2	-4.8	52.6	54.2	3.0
Kendall	72.5	74.9	3.3	73.7	68.6	-6.9	61.1	57.5	-5.9
Knox	74.3	65.6	-11.7	62.3	58.0	-6.9	60.2	56.9	-5.5
Lake	73.0	72.5	-0.7	74.8	70.5	-5.7	68.2	66.4	-2.6
LaSalle	66.8	67.4	0.9	67.5	62.9	-6.8	57.2	55.5	-3.0
Lawrence	67.6	69.6	3.0	59.7	65.4	9.5	54.9	42.9	-21.9

STUDENTS MEETING STATE READING STANDARDS (%)

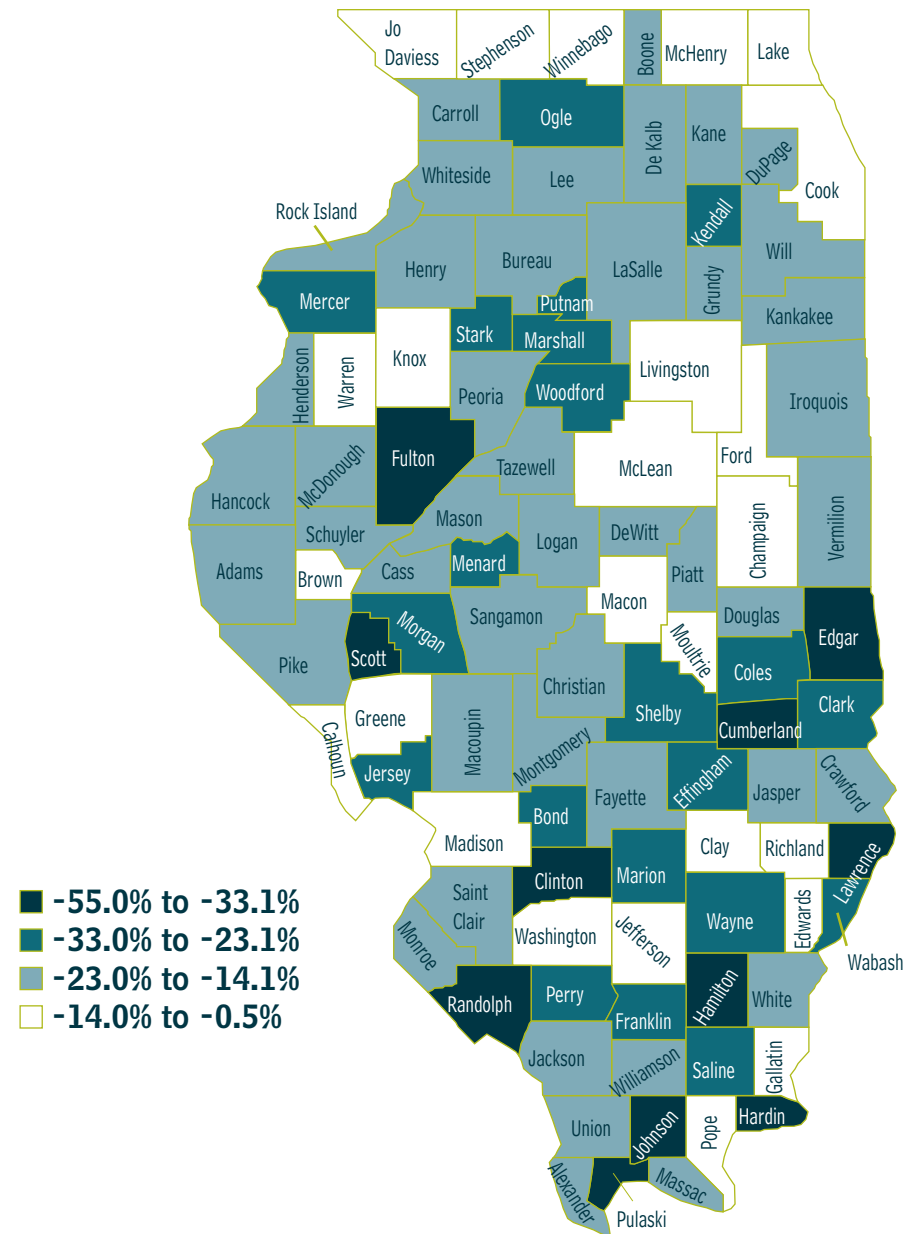
	THIRD GRADE			EIGHTH GRADE			ELEVENTH GRADE		
	2001-02	2002-03	% change	2001-02	2002-03	% change	2001-02	2002-03	% change
Lee	76.5	74.4	-2.7	74.1	64.2	-13.4	63.8	60.0	-6.0
Livingston	69.3	63.8	-7.9	70.8	64.4	-9.0	61.4	59.5	-3.1
Logan	70.8	66.5	-6.1	66.2	60.2	-9.1	63.7	54.3	-14.8
Macon	63.8	65.1	2.0	63.5	57.6	-9.3	59.8	59.3	-0.8
Macoupin	73.3	70.8	-3.4	68.9	60.9	-11.6	57.9	56.9	-1.7
Madison	62.4	62.8	0.6	65.1	61.3	-5.8	60.0	56.2	-6.3
Marion	65.3	71.5	9.5	70.0	63.4	-9.4	54.5	50.4	-7.5
Marshall	82.8	81.7	-1.3	69.5	64.4	-7.3	55.0	57.7	4.9
Mason	74.7	73.2	-2.0	64.9	61.2	-5.7	61.3	58.5	-4.6
Massac	70.5	64.3	-8.8	64.1	59.5	-7.2	56.4	49.6	-12.1
McDonough	86.0	77.6	-9.8	69.2	64.8	-6.4	61.5	64.8	5.4
McHenry	72.9	70.8	-2.9	73.8	71.2	-3.5	63.4	64.1	1.1
McLean	73.5	70.7	-3.8	74.8	70.7	-5.5	66.8	66.4	-0.6
Menard	69.7	75.7	8.6	71.1	66.2	-6.9	55.4	54.2	-2.2
Mercer	64.9	70.1	8.0	64.0	60.2	-5.9	58.2	50.0	-14.1
Monroe	81.8	79.5	-2.8	83.0	78.5	-5.4	68.1	63.8	-6.3
Montgomery	68.5	67.2	-1.9	67.1	70.9	5.7	60.1	54.7	-9.0
Morgan	71.1	73.5	3.4	68.6	66.2	-3.5	59.8	53.9	-9.9
Moultrie	74.5	74.7	0.3	83.0	76.2	-8.2	61.8	68.1	10.2
Ogle	74.6	76.4	2.4	78.0	68.8	-11.8	63.4	57.3	-9.6
Peoria	67.1	66.3	-1.2	68.4	61.7	-9.8	56.4	54.2	-3.9
Perry	68.2	71.7	5.1	67.5	68.4	1.3	63.1	52.1	-17.4
Piatt	75.5	81.1	7.4	72.0	73.6	2.2	72.1	67.7	-6.1
Pike	63.4	68.3	7.7	65.8	67.2	2.1	52.6	53.8	2.3
Pope	60.6	54.8	-9.6	85.7	67.3	-21.5	63.7	52.8	-17.1
Pulaski	63.1	64.1	1.6	35.5	48.1	35.5	48.8	28.8	-41.0
Putnam	71.5	72.0	0.7	78.3	61.5	-21.5	51.4	49.4	-3.9
Randolph	69.3	79.9	15.3	70.2	57.5	-18.1	60.1	50.3	-16.3
Richland	74.5	69.2	-7.1	74.3	73.5	-1.1	67.9	60.1	-11.5
Rock Island	62.9	64.6	2.7	63.7	60.4	-5.2	55.4	51.8	-6.5
St. Clair	65.7	64.2	-2.3	66.5	65.1	-2.1	55.5	53.5	-3.6
Saline	71.7	68.2	-4.9	67.0	64.2	-4.2	56.5	51.6	-8.7
Sangamon	64.7	66.0	2.0	67.8	63.7	-6.0	60.6	56.4	-6.9
Schuyler	67.5	63.0	-6.7	73.3	62.2	-15.1	50.1	50.6	1.0
Scott	67.1	72.7	8.3	75.3	67.2	-10.8	52.7	46.8	-11.2
Shelby	68.7	74.6	8.6	70.4	69.2	-1.7	60.1	53.7	-10.6
Stark	82.8	82.5	-0.4	77.7	61.3	-21.1	61.2	58.7	-4.1
Stephenson	69.8	64.8	-7.2	64.4	63.1	-2.0	58.6	56.5	-3.6
Tazewell	77.8	78.2	0.5	78.4	71.1	-9.3	62.1	60.3	-2.9
Union	66.0	64.8	-1.8	67.8	60.2	-11.2	55.1	52.3	-5.1
Vermilion	66.4	67.7	2.0	63.3	61.3	-3.2	53.7	55.7	3.7
Wabash	76.2	78.3	2.8	61.3	72.7	18.6	61.3	59.4	-3.1
Warren	66.5	65.3	-1.8	67.7	61.9	-8.6	52.3	56.5	8.0
Washington	74.1	77.5	4.6	71.2	60.9	-14.5	61.9	69.6	12.4
Wayne	72.5	77.5	6.9	70.4	77.0	9.4	52.7	55.2	4.7
White	62.4	73.1	17.1	65.5	59.2	-9.6	43.4	61.7	42.2
Whiteside	70.4	69.4	-1.4	69.2	66.7	-3.6	59.3	56.9	-4.0
Will	66.7	67.5	1.2	70.8	64.9	-8.3	59.6	57.5	-3.5
Williamson	69.7	71.6	2.7	70.0	63.4	-9.4	55.7	57.0	2.3
Winnebago	58.6	56.2	-4.1	57.6	53.5	-7.1	57.4	52.7	-8.2
Woodford	81.7	79.6	-2.6	77.8	72.3	-7.1	66.0	61.1	-7.4
Chicago	35.0	36.0	2.9	55.4	50.6	-8.7	36.2	36.1	-0.3

all areas of current and future learning. Recommended action steps include:

- Increase the availability and quality of early childhood education by approving the Illinois Early Learning Council’s “Preschool for All” proposal because much of the preparation for reading begins before children begin kindergarten. This proposal would provide quality preschool options to all 3- and 4-year-olds whose parents choose to participate. The proposal also includes a funding set-aside for services to at-risk families with children from birth to age 3.
- Reduce class sizes while maintaining the quality of instruction, which has been shown to have a positive effect on test scores for all children, especially minorities and low-income students.

Changes in Reading Scores from 3rd Grade to 11th Grade, 2002-03

Reading scores fall in every county between third and 11th grade. Statewide, 62 percent of third-graders meet standards while only 56.4 percent of 11th-graders do, a decline of 9.0 percent. The biggest decline in scores occurred in Clinton, Cumberland, Edgar, Fulton, Hamilton, Hardin, Johnson, Lawrence, Pulaski, Randolph and Scott counties.



Source: Illinois State Board of Education

Reading Success Results From Experiences in the Early Years

By Claudia Quigg, Founder and Executive Director, Baby TALK

From the first day of life until the last day of peaceful age, reading fulfills basic human needs. Books inspire us, teach us new information, comfort us, keep us company, occupy our minds with great thoughts and make us laugh out loud. Acquiring the skills needed to process written language is one of the great achievements of childhood. Learning to read gives a child entrance into his own culture.

Educators have made a science of effectively teaching children how to read. Research into methodology has revealed good information about *how* appropriate strategies achieve reading success for most children. But, to quote Jim Trelease, families teach children *why* to read. Children are lured into reading by adults—parents and other engaged caregivers—who share books with them in a way that creates a hunger to acquire the skill for themselves.

From the first day of life until the last day of peaceful age, reading fulfills basic human needs. Books inspire us, teach us new information, comfort us, keep us company, occupy our minds with great thoughts and make us laugh out loud.

When a parent snuggles close to a child to read a book, much more occurs than the recitation of words on a page:

- First, the physical closeness of book sharing results in biochemical changes in the neurology of both adults and children. Hormones diminish stress, slow heart rates, quiet the mind and create feelings of affection.
- Listening to books with an adult mentors children into the reading process. Learning that the black marks on the page mean something, that the illustrations relate to the words and that the text flows from left to right—these and other important concepts set the stage for reading instruction.
- Following the line of a story and its beginning, middle and end train a child's ability to attend and to maintain a thought over time.
- Sharing a protagonist's challenge or dilemma, then observing how that tension is resolved, gives a child important experience in problem solving.

Efforts to raise successful readers are too late if they begin in elementary school. Reading success results from experiences in the early years which build critical attitudes and readiness skills. Early childhood efforts in this state are making Illinois a leader in supporting parents and children around early literacy experiences, but we need to expand them and extend them to every family. Let's put a book in every crib.



Claudia Quigg (above) is founder and executive director of Baby TALK in Decatur, a program that provides parent support and promotes reading, conversation, developmentally appropriate play and music for children. Quigg is an adjunct assistant professor at Millikin University and a consultant to the Touchpoints Project of Boston's Children's Hospital/Harvard Medical School. She founded Baby TALK in 1986, and it has grown to be replicated in 31 states and Canada.