

Key Messages Fact Sheet

The following are selected facts and sources that help explain the current state of literacy in Pennsylvania and nationwide. The full list of facts are available as text in the Facts section and as infographics in the Infographics section. This information is valuable for establishing the scope of the literacy challenge that teachers, students and families face today. As more information becomes available or is updated, we will continue to pass it along to participants in this program.

Pertinent Facts and Sources

How does literacy in Pennsylvania compare to the rest of the nation?

- Only 40% of 4th graders in PA read at or above proficiency. –The Nation’s Report Card
- Only 42% of 8th graders in PA read at or above proficiency. –The Nation’s Report Card
 - To understand those scores in context, nationally 34% of public school students performed at or above *Proficient* in reading in 2013 in both grades 4 and 8, with the percentages in the states ranging from 17% to 48%. Fifteen states/jurisdictions (including PA) had higher percentages at or above *Proficient* than the nation at both grades 4 and 8 and 14 had lower percentages at both grades.
- 13% of PA adults lack even basic literacy skills. This percentage of Pennsylvania adults who struggle with basic literacy is around the national average and remains unchanged from 1992. – National Center for Education Statistics
- 3 out of 4 jobs in PA require education beyond high school. –Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

A summary of literacy statistics nationwide

- 32 million adults in the U.S. can’t read. That’s 14% of the population. –U.S. Department of Education and the National Institute of Literacy
- 21% of adults in the U.S. read below a 5th grade level --U.S. Department of Education and the National Institute of Literacy
- Kids who don’t read proficiently by 4th grade are 4 times more likely to drop out of school. –The Annie E. Casey Foundation
- As of 2011, America was the only free-market OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) country where the current generation was less well educated than the previous. –Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy

- 53% of 4th graders admitted to reading recreationally “almost every day,” while only 20% of 8th graders could say the same. –National Center for Educational Statistics
- 6 out of 10 households do not buy a single book in a year --The Literacy Project Foundation

The economic and social effects of below-average literacy

- Americans who are below average in literacy are struggling to find jobs, stay healthy and support their families. –The Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies
- In today’s tech-centric world, basic literacy skills simply aren’t enough. –Pew Internet and American Life Project
- 20% of Americans read below the level needed to earn a living wage –National Institute for Literacy
- 2/3 of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of 4th grade will end up in jail or on welfare –U.S. Department of Justice
- To determine how many prison beds will be needed in future years, some states actually base part of their projection on how well current elementary students are performing on reading tests –The Justice Project
- Between 1973 and 2008, the share of jobs in the U.S. economy requiring postsecondary education increased from 28% to 59%. –Washington, DC: Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce
- Children who have not developed some basic literacy skills by the time they enter school are 3 - 4 times more likely to drop out in later years. –National Adult Literacy Survey
- 85% of juvenile offenders have problems reading –U.S. Department of Education
- Nearly half of America’s adults are poor readers, or “functionally illiterate.” –National Adult Literacy Survey