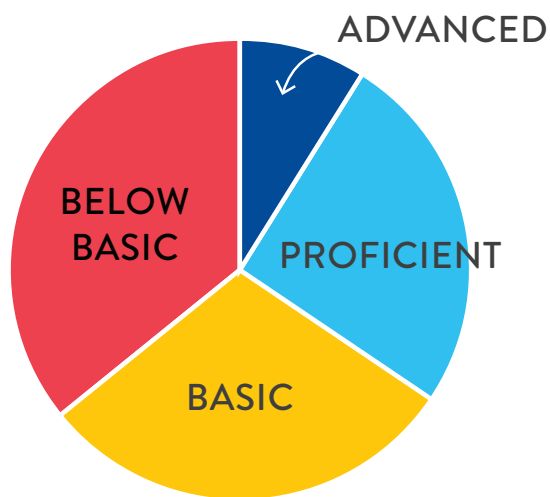


EQUITY FOR ILLINOIS' EARLY LEARNERS

MOST K-3 STUDENTS CANNOT READ OR DO MATH PROFICIENTLY

It is a fundamental injustice that just 35% of 4th grade students in Illinois meet or exceed reading standards.



2019 GRADE 4 NAEP READING RESULTS

The Annie E. Casey Foundation¹ found that third graders who are not proficient readers are:



more likely to drop out of high school than proficient third grade readers.



more likely to drop out of high school if they are low-income families than proficient third grade readers.

60%+

of prison inmates cannot read, according to the Prison Literacy Foundation.²

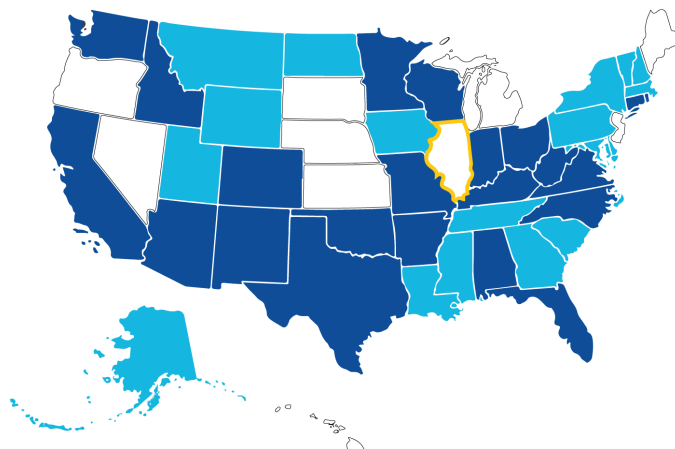
85%

of juveniles in the court system are struggling readers.

OTHER STATES ARE IMPROVING OUTCOMES

Most states have enacted some form of K-3 reading or math laws, with policies addressing teacher preparation and professional development, literacy coaches, curriculum design, universal K-2 screening, dyslexia screening, supports and interventions for identified students, and third-grade retention. In the last three years, eleven states have enacted laws to align reading instruction with evidence-based practice.

“Evidence-based practice” in literacy instruction means explicit, systematic, and sequential instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension.



A review of state laws found **Illinois among only nine states nationally that do not meet benchmarks** in educator preparation, evidence-based curriculum (listed together in light blue on the map), early assessment and identification of deficiencies, and interventions (listed together in dark blue on the map).

THE EQUITY IN EARLY EDUCATION ACT IS A SOLUTION

The Equity in Early Education Act ensures that **all students get the support they need to become proficient at reading and math through:**

- **Early identification of reading and math deficiencies.** Usually using existing local assessments, schools would detect deficiencies and communicate with parents early.
- **Appropriate supports and interventions.** Students would immediately receive targeted supports in their specific areas of deficiency with a goal of reaching proficiency by third grade; if they have not met standards at the end of third grade, they continue to receive the supports into fourth grade. **This bill does NOT include mandatory retention.**
- **Evidence-Based Reading Curriculum.** Schools must use a reading curriculum that reflects evidence-based practices, which include explicit, systematic, and sequential instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, reading comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary development.
- **Teacher preparation and support.** Educator preparation programs must provide explicit and repeated instruction in the five components of reading. Schools must provide teachers with professional development or coaching in evidence-based reading instruction.

Early Literacy and Math Grants. Subject to appropriation, districts would be eligible for grants to support evidence-based curriculum, professional development, and literacy coaches. Some states that have enacted similar policies have attached funding, and others have not. Though additional funding is not required, it would help districts replace curriculum sooner, train and support teachers more effectively, and strengthen schools' abilities to implement the changes.

“For decades, schools have taught children the strategies of struggling readers, using a theory about reading that cognitive scientists have repeatedly debunked... The ability to read words in isolation quickly and accurately is the hallmark of being a skilled reader. This is now one of the most consistent and well-replicated findings in all of reading research.”³

– Emily Hanford, American Public Media

¹ Annie E. Casey Foundation, Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters, January 2010, <https://www.aecf.org/resources/early-warning-why-reading-by-the-end-of-third-grade-matters>

² Michael Sainato, US Prison System Plagued by High Illiteracy Rates, *Observer*, July 18, 2017, <https://observer.com/2017/07/prison-illiteracy-criminal-justice-reform/>

³ Emily Hanford, At a Loss for Words: How a flawed idea is teaching millions of kids to be poor readers, American Public Media, August 22, 2019, <https://www.apmreports.org/episode/2019/08/22/whats-wrong-how-schools-teach-reading>

For more information, contact Jessica Handy at
jhandy@stand.org or 312-404-0223