

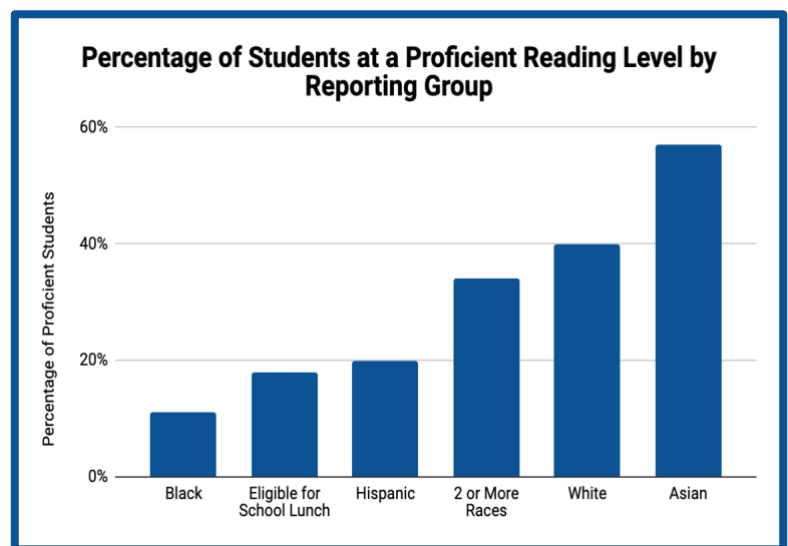


Pennsylvania's Early Literacy Crisis for Black Children

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- For 2022, the [National Assessment of Education Progress \(NAEP\)](#) shows that Pennsylvania's Black children's reading proficiency scores by the end of 3rd grade were *the lowest among ethnic-racial groups*.
- Black children scored *an average of 32 points lower than White children* on NAEP's 2022 reading assessment.¹
- Black children reading proficiency scores were *lower than the scores of children eligible for the National School Lunch Program*.¹
- The difference in the Black-White average reading score was not significantly different from NAEP's 2002 assessment for Pennsylvania.¹
- Pennsylvania's *Black-White difference in 4th grade reading scores ranks 13th highest in the nation*.²
- Reading is a developmental process.³ Cognitive gaps in infancy are associated with reading gaps in early elementary school.^{3,4}
- Poor reading proficiency by the end of 3rd grade places children at risk of high school dropout, low earnings, teen pregnancy, poor emotional and physical well-being, and incarceration.^{6,7,11}
- Instruction quality, family, school, and neighborhood processes, that are linked to lower economic status, establish and maintain achievement gaps.^{3,5,8}



Policy Recommendations to Improve Early Literacy

- The state of Mississippi (ranked first in reading proficiency progression 2019) was successful in significantly [improving reading proficiency](#)¹² by enacting:
 - Teacher training in [evidence-based strategies](#) emphasizing phonetic learning.^{9,10}
 - [The Early Learning Collaborative \(ELC\) Act](#) that established partnerships among public schools, childcare agencies, including Head Start, to coordinate and standardize instruction that promotes reading proficiency by kindergarten.⁴
 - Students who attend collaboratives perform better than those who attend other Pre-K classes.¹³
 - The [Literacy-Based Promotion Act \(LBPA\)](#) focusing on K-3 evidence-based instruction, literacy coaches, individual reading plans, and mandating that *all* children accomplish grade level reading by 3rd grade.
- Interventions that begin in infancy and that are sustained have the largest effects on cognitive and language skills.^{3,9} Home visiting programs should be available to all low-income families and be an integral part of collaborative efforts to promote early childhood reading proficiency.



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