

Education

Education is an essential component that predicts the future success of children and youth.

Education begins early and achievement gaps appear before children enter school. Brain development begins before birth, and early experiences create the foundation for cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. “A strong foundation in the early years increases the probability of positive outcomes and a weak foundation increases the odds of later difficulties”.ⁱ

National research indicates that 46% of kindergarteners are starting school without the basic skills necessary to succeed. Children from low-wage families are up to 2 years behind in language development.ⁱⁱ “Of 50 children having difficulty learning to read in kindergarten, 44 of them will still have trouble in 3rd grade”ⁱⁱⁱ Locally, approximately 45% of low-income kindergarteners are not proficient in early literacy skills, in contrast to 32% of higher-income kindergarteners.

Across our service area, there is a disparity in 4th grade reading and math proficiency of about 25% between low-income students and higher income students. This gap remains steady as we look at 8th grade and 11th grade proficiency levels.^{iv} The trends do show improvement in proficiency but trends in graduation rates do not show the same positive trends over time.

ⁱ *The Science of Early Childhood Development: Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do.* (2007). (p. 14).

National Scientific Council, Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. Retrieved from www.developingchild.net

ⁱⁱ Zill, Nicholas & West, Jerry, for the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2001). *Entering Kindergarten: A Portrait of American Children When They Begin School: Findings from The Condition of Education 2000.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/2001035.pdf>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ramey, Craig T. & Sharon L. *Right From Birth: Building Your Child's Foundation For Life.* Goddard Press, Inc. (January 1999)

^{iv} Iowa Department of Education. https://www.edinfo.state.ia.us/web/apr_summary_staticweb.asp