

Mecklenburg County's Children

Twenty-two percent of children age 0-5 live in poverty; this number increased over 66% from 2007-2012ⁱⁱⁱ

Only 51% of economically disadvantaged 3rd graders were on grade level in reading for 2011-12

In 2012, an average 5,241 children were on the waiting list for child care subsidy each month^{iv}

2012 Mecklenburg County Child Snapshot	
Children age 0-5 ⁱ	84,191
Children 0-5 living in poverty	19,165
Number of kindergarteners enrolled in CMS ⁱⁱ	12,565
Estimated number of economically disadvantaged kindergarteners	6,798
Number of 4-year-olds on wait list for public Pre-Kindergarten programs	2,300

Why is Early Literacy Important?



Children experience rapid brain development from birth to age 5; the timing and quality of early experiences combine to shape brain architecture^v

By age three, there is a 30 million word gap for economically disadvantaged children based upon their language experiences and interactions in their family settings^{vi}

By the time children from low income families enter kindergarten, they are typically 12-24 months below national norms in language and pre-reading skills. ^{vii}

Many children from low-income families lack early interactions that foster linguistic development, including verbal interactions with their parents, being read to, and access to books in their home, compared with children from middle-income families.^{viii}

In the average middle income family, there are 13 books per child; in the average low-income neighborhood, there is 1 book for every 300 children.^{ix}



Vocabulary use at 3 years old is predictive of language skills at age 9 and 10 and is associated with reading comprehension scores:^x



The National Research Council asserts that high school graduation can be predicted with reasonable accuracy by knowing the reading skills of children at third grade.

One in six children who are not reading proficiently in third grade does not graduate from high school on time, a rate four times greater than that for proficient readers.

For economically disadvantaged children who were not reading proficiently in third grade, the proportion that does not finish school rose to 26 percent. That's more than six times the rate for all proficient readers. The rate was highest for poor Black and Hispanic students, at 31 and 33 percent respectively—or about eight times the rate for all proficient readers.

Sources & Notes

ⁱ US Census American Community Survey (ACS)

ⁱⁱ Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools 2011-2012

ⁱⁱⁱ US Census ACS; NC State Center for Health Statistics

^{iv} Child Care Resources, Inc.

^v National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2000). From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development. Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development. Jack P. Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips, eds. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press

^{vi} Hart, B., and Risley, T.R. (1995). Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

^{vii} Annie E. Casey Foundation (2010). Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters, Annie E Casey Foundation. (2010).;

^{viii} Annie E. Casey Foundation (2010). Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters, Annie E Casey Foundation. (2010).

^{ix} Neuman, Susan B. and David K. Dickinson, ed.(2006). Handbook of Early Literacy Research, Volume 2. New York, NY. p.31.

^x Hernandez, D.J. (2011). Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills & Poverty Influence High School Graduation.