THE LINK BETWEEN
THIRD GRADE READING SKILLS AND
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES

by

DONALD J. HERNANDEZ
Professor, Department of Sociology
Hunter College and The Graduate Center, City University of New York
and
Senior Advisor, Foundation for Child Development
Email: DonH@albany.edu, Phone: (518) 442-4668

A Lecture for
The Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy
and
The National Institute for Early Education Research
September 20, 2011
Acknowledgements: Annie E. Casey Foundation,
Foundation for Child Development,
Center for Social and Demographic Analysis of the University at Albany, SUNY,
and staff of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth
Thanks for support from...
- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Foundation for Child Development

and assistance from...
- Center for Social and Demographic Analysis, University at Albany, SUNY
- Staff of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth
Overview of New Study

- Why study third-grade reading?
- Key features of the study
- New findings
- Policies and programs
- Future research plans and possibilities
- Focusing on the Children of New Jersey
Third grade marks the point when students shifts from “LEARNING TO READ” to “READING TO LEARN”.
Why Focus on Third-Grade Reading Skills?

No Child Left Behind Act

...asserted “President Bush’s unequivocal commitment to ensuring that every child can read by the end of third grade”

...requires states to annually test and report third-grade reading skill by poverty status and race-ethnicity
Slide 6.
Why Focus on Third-Grade Reading Skills?

President Obama’s blueprint for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act calls for...

“Putting Reading First” by significantly increasing Federal investment in scientifically-based early-reading instruction.
Slide 7.
New Results in This Study

First-ever study to calculate high school graduation rates for children with different...

reading skill levels and poverty experiences and for specific race-ethnic groups
Among All children...

- 33% ... proficient readers *(at or above grade level)*
- 67% ... not-proficient readers *(below grade level)*

Among Not Proficient Readers...

- 33% ... basic level readers
- 34% ... below-basic level readers
1/3 of children classified as high, medium, or low skill readers

National Longitudinal Study of Youth

3,975 children born 1979-1989

PIAT reading test

Children classified as (1) never poor, or (2) poor at least 1 of 5 interview years

High school graduation on time, that is, by age 19
Slide 10. Percent of Students Not Graduating by 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency

- Total: 12%
- Proficient: 4%
- Not Proficient, Total: 16%
Slide 11. Percent of Students Not Graduating, among Not-Proficient Readers

- Not Proficient, Total: 16%
- Not Proficient, Basic: 9%
- Not Proficient, Below Basic: 23%
3rd Grade Reading Test Scores for All Students and Non-Graduates

Reading Scores for All Students
- 33.3%: Low, Not Proficient Below Basic
- 33.3%: High, Proficient
- 33.3%: Medium, Not Proficient Basic

Reading Scores for Non-Graduates
- 12%: High, Proficient
- 25%: Medium, Not Proficient Basic
- 63%: Low, Not Proficient Below Basic
Slide 13. Percent of Students Not Graduating by Reading Proficiency & Poverty Experience

- Children without Poverty Experience
- Children With Poverty Experience

- Total: 6% (Blue) vs. 22% (Red)
- Proficient: 2% (Blue) vs. 11% (Red)
- Not Proficient: 9% (Blue) vs. 26% (Red)
Poverty Experience for All Students

- Yes: 38%
- No: 62%

Poverty Experience for Non-Graduates

- Yes: 70%
- No: 30%
Slide 15. Percent of Students Not Graduating by Reading Proficiency & Race-Ethnicity

- **Total**
  - White: 9%
  - Black: 21%
  - Hispanic: 21%

- **Proficient**
  - White: 24%
  - Black: 13%
  - Hispanic: 9%

- **Not Proficient**
  - White: 25%
  - Black: 6%
  - Hispanic: 4%
Race-Ethnicity of All Students and Non-Graduates

Race-Ethnicity of All Students
- 75%: White
- 17%: Black
- 8%: Hispanic

Race-Ethnicity of Non-Graduates
- 56%: White
- 30%: Black
- 14%: Hispanic
Slide 17. Percent Not Graduating from High School across Reading, Poverty, and Race-Ethnic Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Not Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Poverty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Slide 18. Percent Not Graduating from High School across Selected Reading and Poverty Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Poverty</th>
<th>Poverty</th>
<th>No Poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Align high quality early education with curriculum/standards thru 3rd grade

Attend to health and developmental needs of children

Work training and other programs to help lift families out of poverty

Dual-Generation programs
How much difference does living in a poor neighborhood make?

What kinds of resources for families foster children’s school success?

What family processes link these resources…

...... to better third-grade reading? and

...... to high school graduation?