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A Majority of American Children Are Unable To Read at or Above Grade Level by 4th Grade

“This is an American Tragedy. Our Children Deserve Better.”

(October 22, 2008 -- New York) An analysis of U.S. government statistics by the Foundation for Child Development (FCD) released today shows that by the Fourth Grade, less than one-third of all American children are reading at or above grade level. The [full report](#) and graphics on the [reading levels of all American children](#), and [American children by racial/ethnic groups](#) are available online.

American Fourth Graders Reading at or Above Grade Level in 2005

- Asian American or Pacific Islander – 40 percent
- White – 39 percent
- American Indian – 19 percent
- Latino – 15 percent
- Black – 12 percent

“This is an American tragedy. By the Fourth Grade, more than half of White and Asian American children cannot read at grade level,” said Ruby Takanishi, President of the Foundation for Child Development. “For Latino, Black and American Indian children, the numbers are even worse - - more than 80 percent cannot read at grade level by Fourth Grade.”

Children’s success must be built on a foundation of seamless learning during their earliest PreKindergarten to Third Grade (PreK-3rd) school years. Yet currently, most children experience a wide range of experiences that fail to align and connect learning successfully from year to year.

“Our children are not failing to learn. Our schools are failing to teach them effectively,” said Takanishi. “It is time for Americans to take responsibility for guaranteeing a high-quality PreK-3rd education to this and future generations. Our children deserve better, and America’s future demands better.”

“America’s democratic traditions and economic power in an increasingly competitive global marketplace demand the transformation of public education to promote the lifelong learning of America’s future generations. Our country can no longer afford an educational system that leaves behind the majority of its students by Fourth Grade.” said Takanishi.

FCD’s analysis of children’s reading levels is based on U.S. Census data and the U.S. Department of Education’s National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) scores.

[The Foundation for Child Development](#) is a national, private philanthropy dedicated to the principle that all families should have the social and material resources to raise their children to be healthy, educated and productive members of their communities.

www.fcd-us.org