



# **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](mailto: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

## **Slide 2.**

# **Thanks for Support and Assistance**

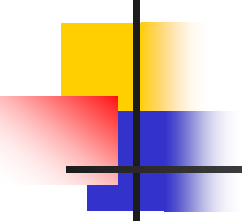
---

## **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**

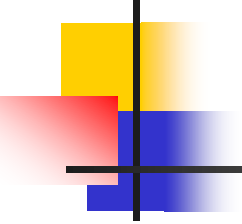


## **Slide 3.**

# **Overview of New Study**

---

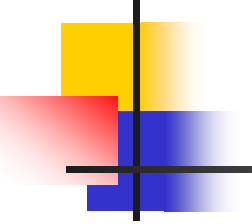
- **Why study third-grade reading?**
- **Key features of the study**
- **New findings**
- **Policies and programs**
- **Future research plans and possibilities**
- **Focusing on the Children of New Jersey**



**Slide 4.**  
**Why Focus on  
Third Grade Reading Skills?**

---

**Third grade marks the point  
when  
students shifts  
from  
“LEARNING TO READ”  
To  
“READING TO LEARN”**



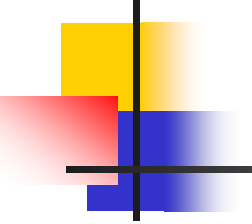
**Slide 5.**  
**Why Focus on  
Third-Grade Reading Skills?**

---

**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**



# Slide 8. Fourth-Grade Reading Skills of America's Children, Based on NAEP, "The Nation's Report Card"

---

## 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**

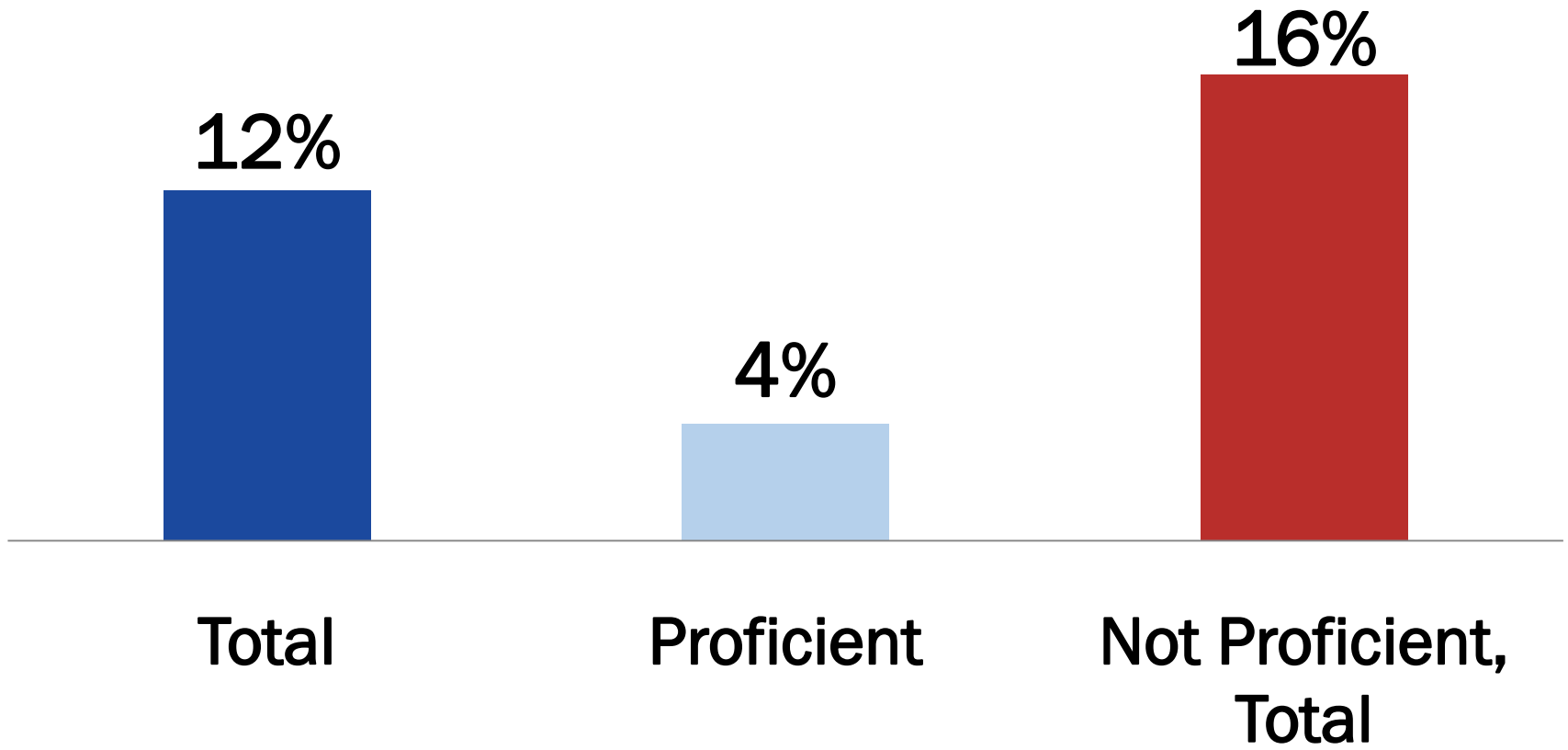
## Slide 9.

### Key Features of the New Study

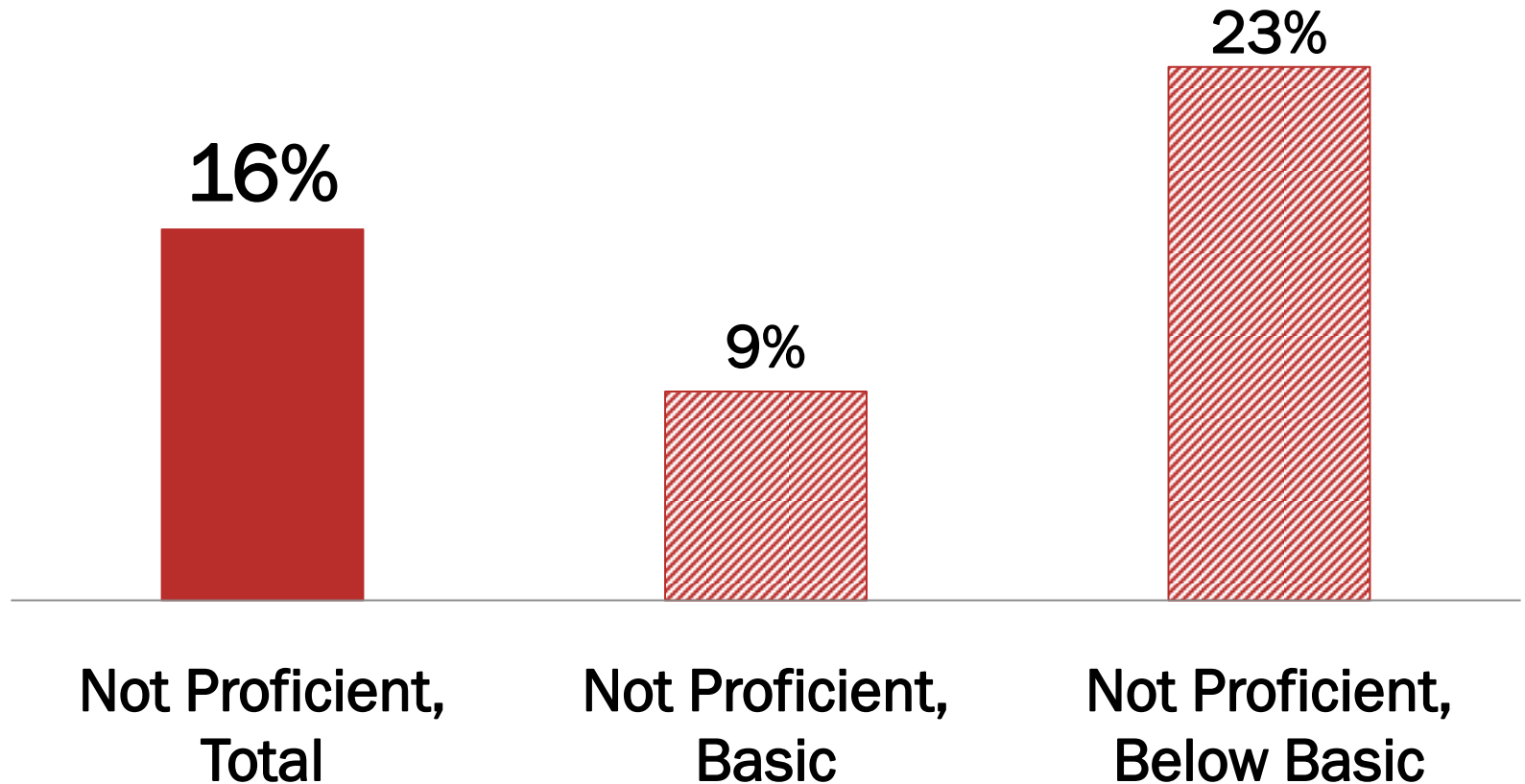
---

- **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 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading Proficiency



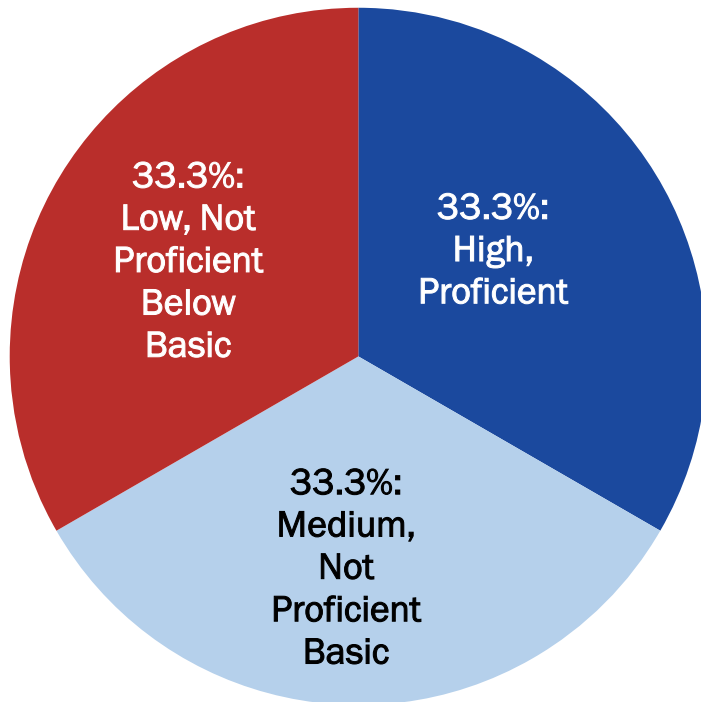
# Slide 11. Percent of Students Not Graduating, among Not-Proficient Readers



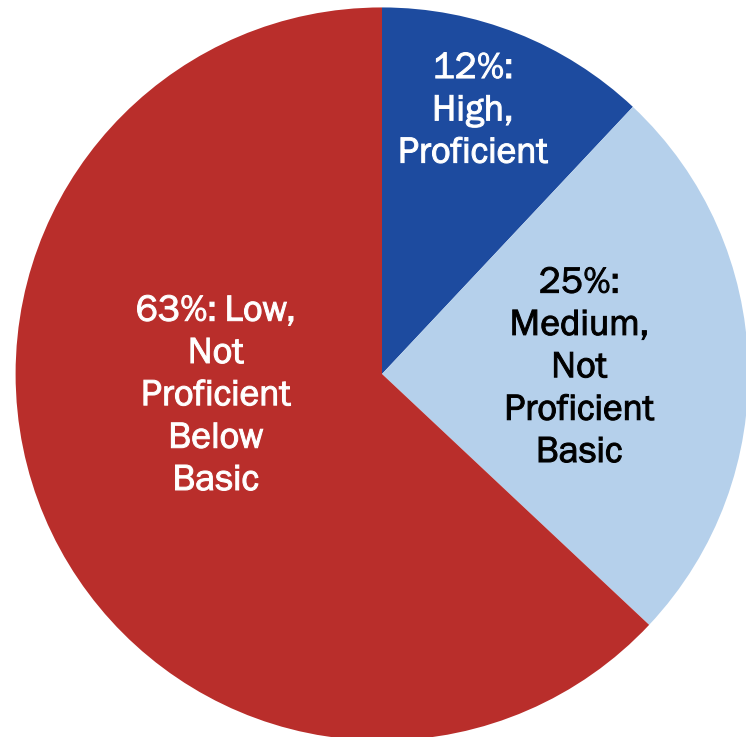
# Slide 12.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading Test Scores for All Students and Non-Graduates

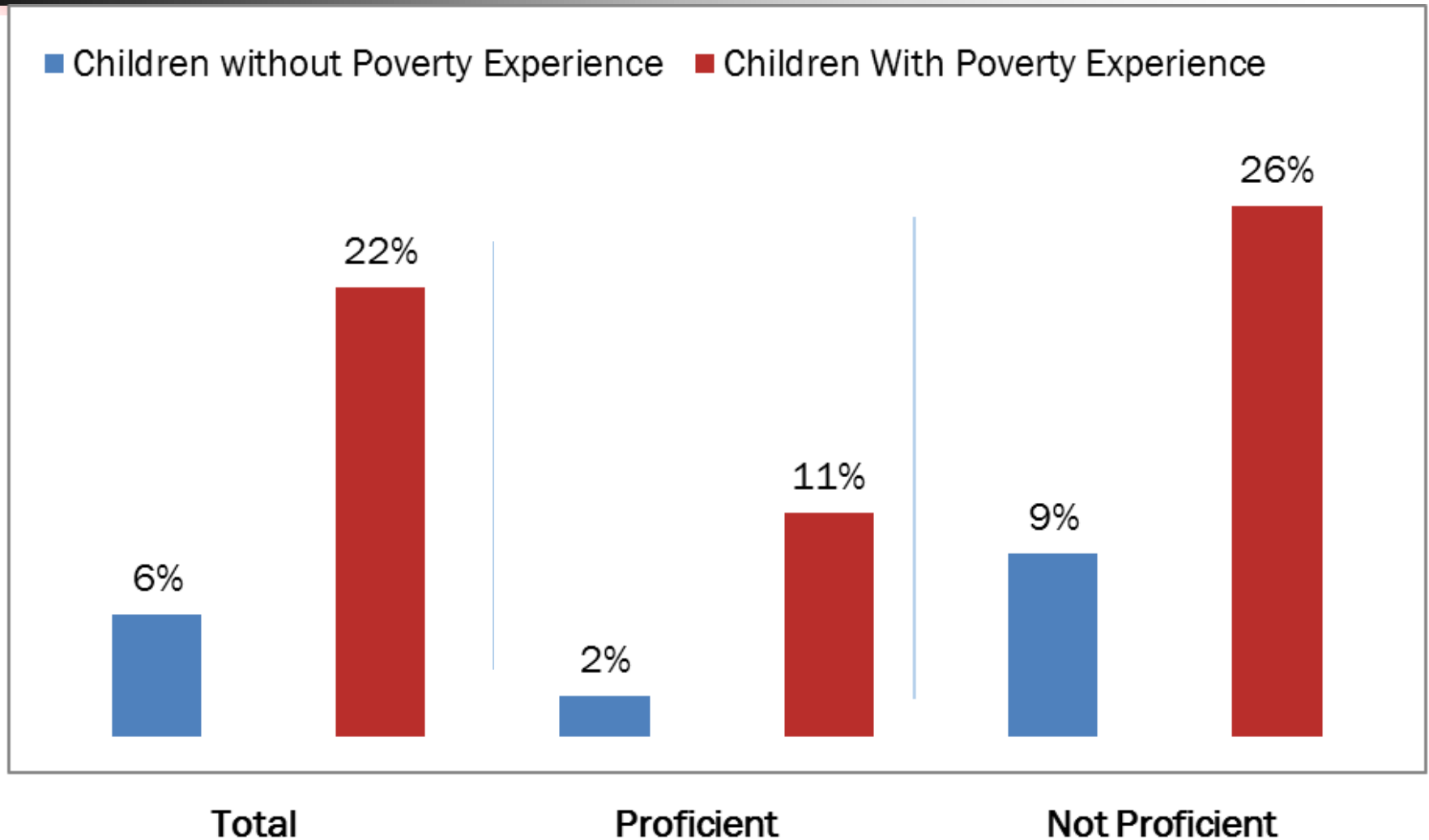
### Reading Scores for All Students



### Reading Scores for Non-Graduates



# Slide 13. Percent of Students Not Graduating by Reading Proficiency & Poverty Experience

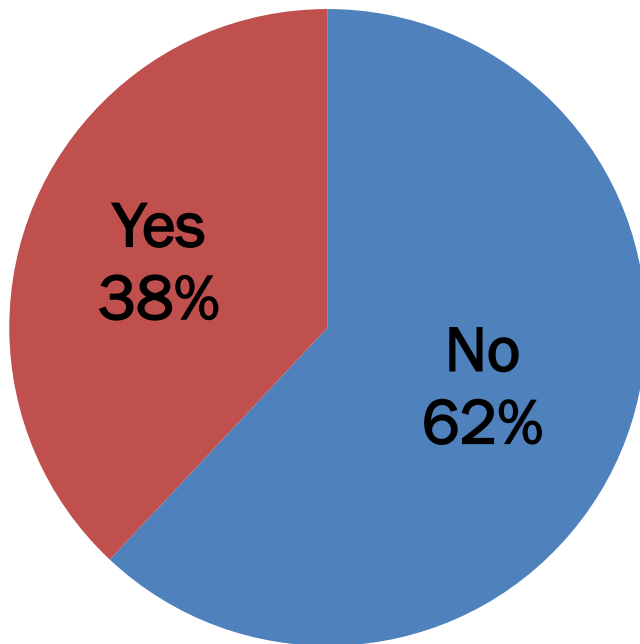


# Slide 14.

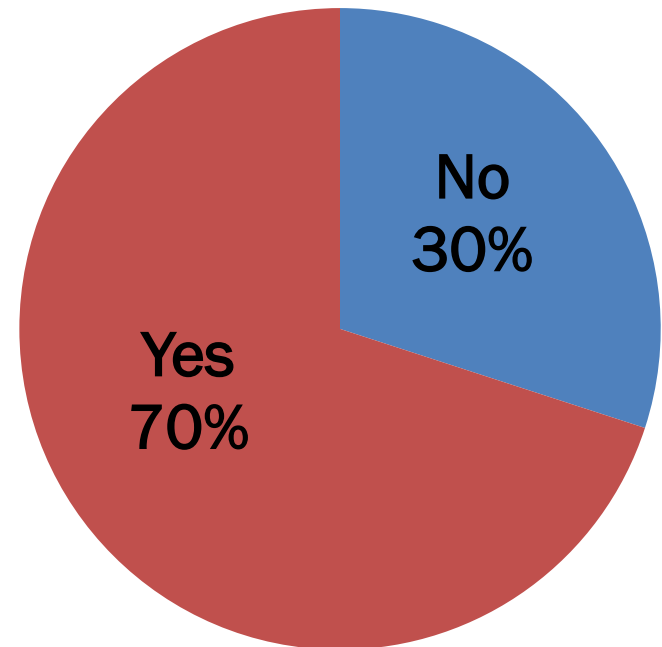
## Poverty Experience for All Students and Non-Graduates

---

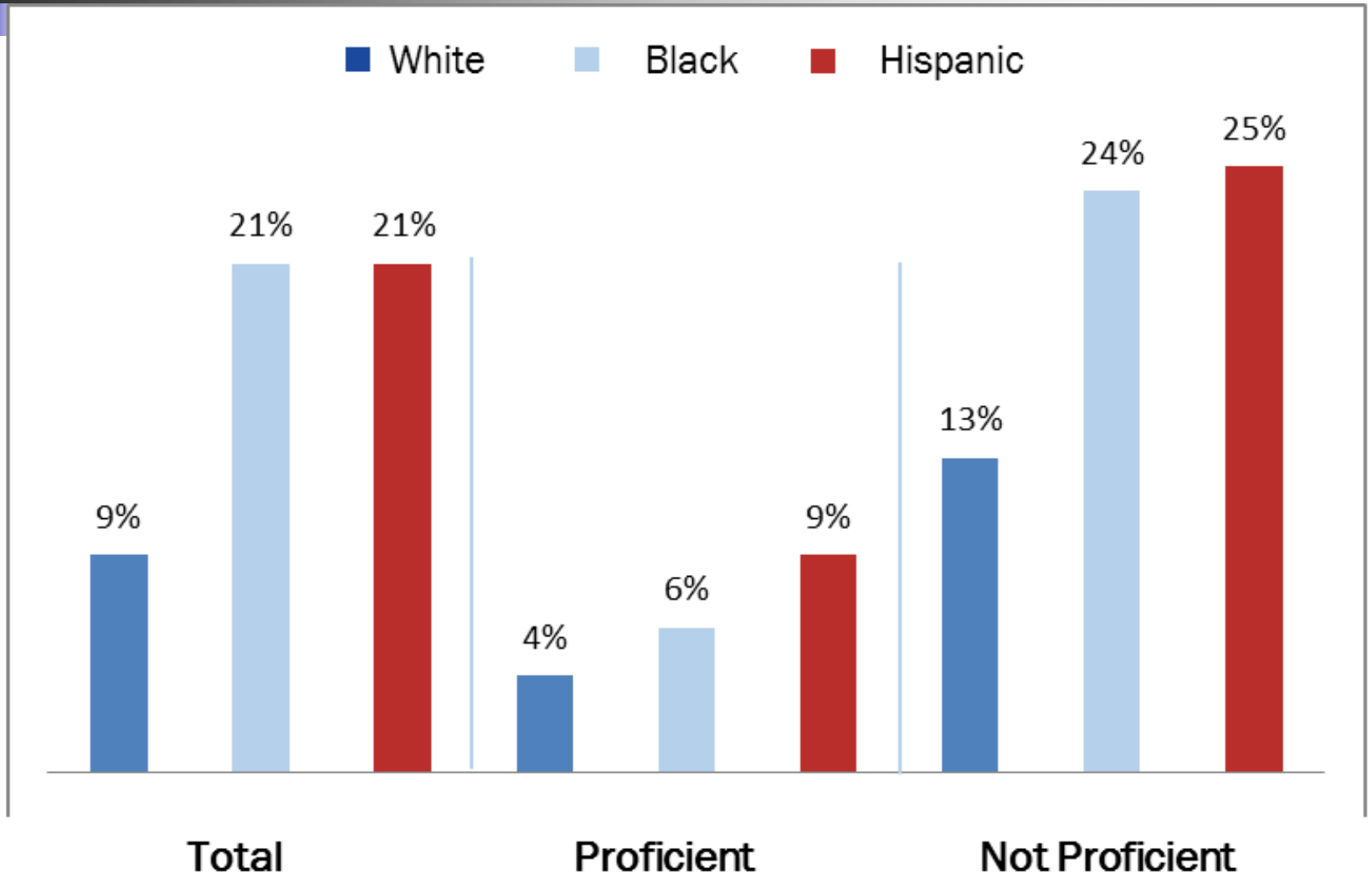
### Poverty Experience for All Students



### Poverty Experience for Non-Graduates



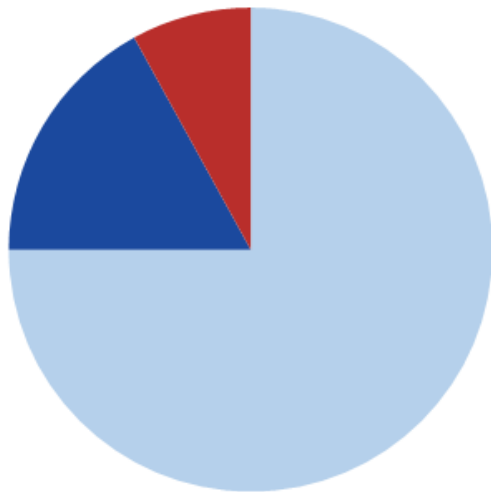
# Slide 15. Percent of Students Not Graduating by Reading Proficiency & Race-Ethnicity



# Slide 15.

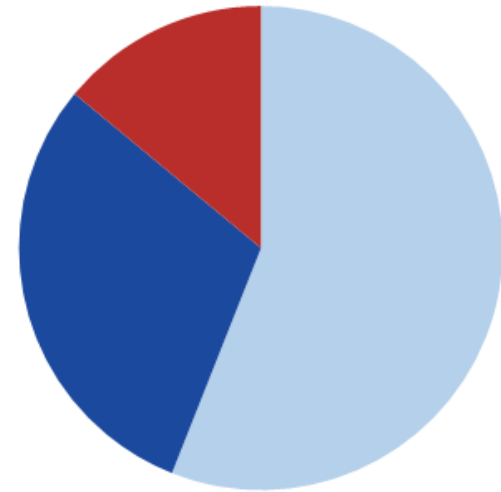
## Race-Ethnicity of All Students and Non-Graduates

### Race-Ethnicity of All Students



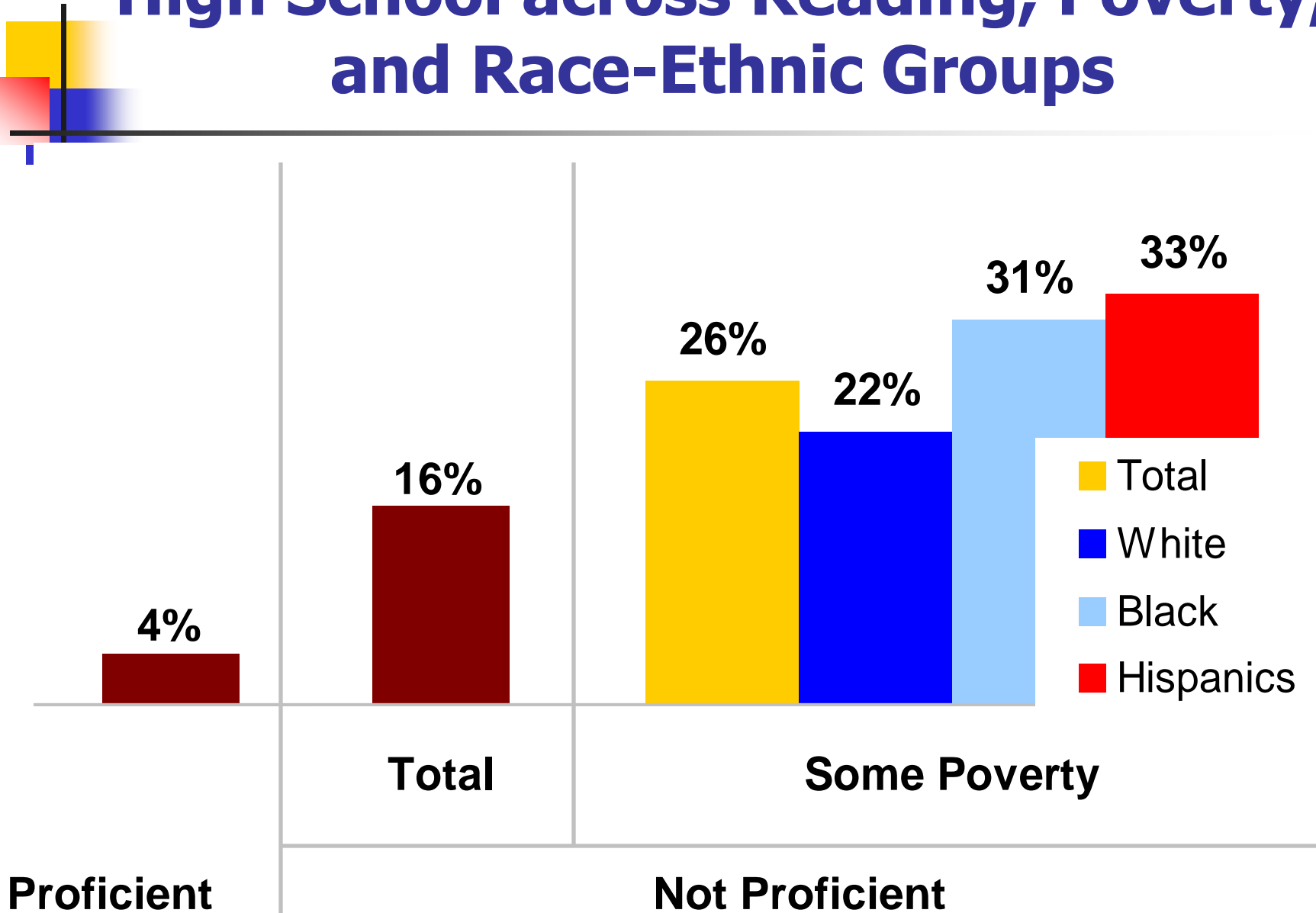
■ 75%: White ■ 17%: Black ■ 8%: Hispanic

### Race-Ethnicity of Non-Graduates



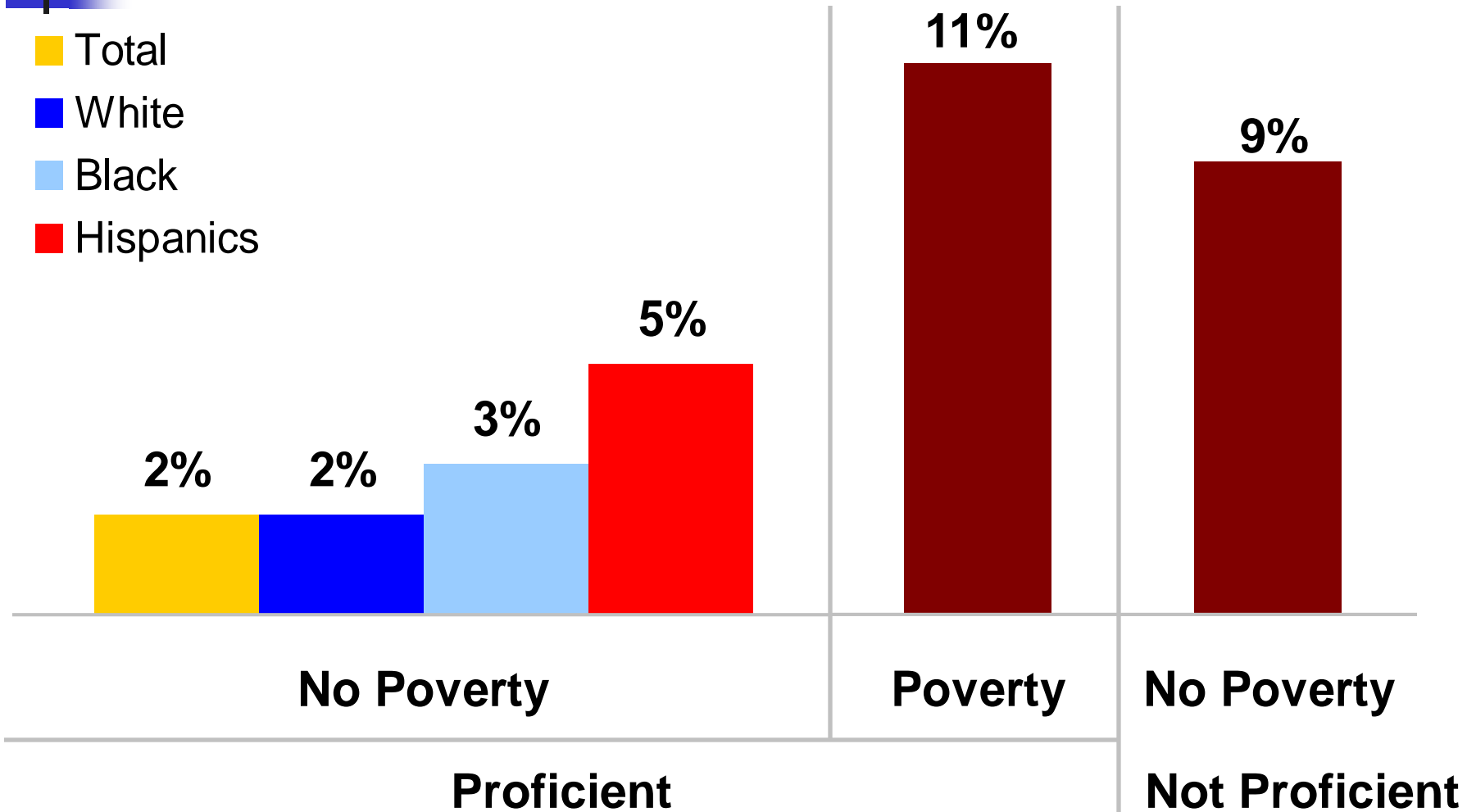
■ 56%: White ■ 30%: Black ■ 14%: Hispanic

# Slide 17. Percent Not Graduating from High School across Reading, Poverty, and Race-Ethnic Groups



# Slide 18. Percent Not Graduating from High School across Selected Reading and Poverty Groups

- Total
- White
- Black
- Hispanics





# **Slide 19. Government Policies to Improve Third-Grade Reading and High School Graduation**

---

- **Align high quality early education with curriculum/standards thru 3<sup>rd</sup> grade**
- **Attend to health and developmental needs of children**
- **Work training and other programs to help lift families out of poverty**
- **Dual-Generation programs**

## **Slide 20.**

# **Future Analyses to Provide Deeper Understanding**

---

- **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?**