

**Pell Institute Fact Sheet**  
**Updated: 3/18/2011**

**READING AND WRITING TEST GAPS**

Background/History

Data is reported as percentages based on proficiency in the subject (see above the table for further description). Low-income on this data sheet means students who qualify for the National School Lunch Program.<sup>1</sup> Reading data is from 2009 National Center for Education Statistics assessments and writing data is from 2002 and 2007.

Reading Facts and Figures<sup>2</sup>

BB: Below Basic

AB: At Basic

AP: At Proficient

AA: At Advanced

	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
SES differences	BB	AB	AP	AA
Low income	49	33	15	2
Not low income	20	35	33	12

	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
	BB	AB	AP	AA
	40	44	15	1
	15	43	38	4

	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
	BB	AB	AP	AA
	39	39	20	2
	21	35	37	7

	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
Gender differences	BB	AB	AP	AA
Male	36	34	24	6
Female	30	34	27	9

	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
	BB	AB	AP	AA
	29	44	26	2
	21	42	34	4

	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
	BB	AB	AP	AA
	31	36	29	4
	20	36	37	7

	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
Racial Differences	BB	AB	AP	AA
Native American	50	30	16	4
Asian/ Pacific Islander	20	30	33	16
Black	52	32	14	2
Hispanic	51	32	15	3
White	22	35	32	10

	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
	BB	AB	AP	AA
	38	41	19	2
	17	38	39	6
	43	43	13	0
	39	44	16	1
	16	43	38	4

	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
	BB	AB	AP	AA
	30	41	27	2
	19	32	39	10
	43	40	16	1
	39	39	20	2
	19	35	39	7

	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
	BB	AB	AP	AA
<b>All Students</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>8</b>

	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
	BB	AB	AP	AA
<b>All Students</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>3</b>

	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
	BB	AB	AP	AA
<b>All Students</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>5</b>

Discussion

Overall, most students were below basic or at basic reading levels in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, but by 8<sup>th</sup> grade and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, most students were at basic or at proficient levels. Low-income students had a much higher percentage of students below basic reading levels in all three grades than their higher income counterparts, but were about equal in percentage of students at the basic reading level. Higher income students had much higher percentages at the proficient and advanced levels for all three grades. Females had higher percentages at proficient and advanced levels than males, and were roughly equal at the basic level. Males had a higher percentage below basic reading levels across all three grades. In terms of racial differences, White and Asian students fared best with much higher percentages of students at the advanced and proficient levels in all three grades than their Native American, Black, and Hispanic counterparts. In 4<sup>th</sup> grade, Native American, Black, and Hispanic students all had at least 50% below basic reading levels, but improved this percentage to roughly 40% by 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Clear gaps in test results can be seen along racial and socioeconomic lines.

Writing Facts and Figures

BB: Below Basic

AB: At Basic

AP: At Proficient

AA: At Advanced

	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade <sup>3</sup>			
SES differences	BB	AB	AP	AA
Low income	22	62	15	1
Not low income	8	56	33	3

	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade <sup>4</sup>			
SES differences	BB	AB	AP	AA
Low income	20	63	16	0
Not low income	7	52	38	3

	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade <sup>4</sup>			
SES differences	BB	AB	AP	AA
Low income	31	59	10	0
Not low income	15	57	26	1

	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
Gender differences	BB	AB	AP	AA
Male	19	61	19	1
Female	9	55	33	3

	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
Gender differences	BB	AB	AP	AA
Male	17	61	21	1
Female	7	50	40	3

	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
Gender differences	BB	AB	AP	AA
Male	26	58	16	0
Female	11	57	30	1

	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
Racial Differences	BB	AB	AP	AA
Native American	25	61	13	1
Asian/ Pacific Islander	7	52	37	4
Black	23	63	13	1
Hispanic	23	60	16	1
White	10	57	31	3

	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
Racial Differences	BB	AB	AP	AA
Native American	21	59	19	1
Asian/ Pacific Islander	8	46	41	5
Black	19	65	15	0
Hispanic	20	62	17	1
White	7	52	38	3

	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
Racial Differences	BB	AB	AP	AA
Native American	30	58	12	0
Asian/ Pacific Islander	14	56	29	1
Black	31	60	9	0
Hispanic	29	60	11	0
White	14	56	29	1

	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
	BB	AB	AP	AA
All Students	14	58	26	2

	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
	BB	AB	AP	AA
All Students	12	56	31	2

	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
	BB	AB	AP	AA
All Students	18	57	23	1

Discussion

Overall, more than 50% of students tested at the basic writing level in 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, with the next highest percentage of students testing at the proficient writing level. Only 1-2% of students reached the advanced writing level in each grade. Low income students performed worse than their higher income peers, with more than 80% scoring below basic or at basic writing levels in all three grades. In contrast, students above the low income bracket had about 90% scoring at the basic and proficient writing levels in 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade. In terms of gender, females outperformed males in all three grades with double the percentage of students at the proficient and advanced writing levels. About 80% of males scored below basic or at basic writing levels in all three grades. Asian and White students outperformed their Native American, Black, and Hispanic peers in all three grade levels; however, 50-65% of students from all races/ethnicities scored at the basic level in each grade. Testing gaps are clearly seen in gender, income, and race for writing scores.

References & Resources

- 1 - Provides free or reduced-price lunch to students from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level (for free lunch) and between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty level (for reduced-price lunch).
- 2 - U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2009 Reading Assessment.
- 3 - U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.
- 4 - U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 Writing Assessment.