



PRESS RELEASE

▶ Three Reports. One Urgent Message for Maryland

The Annie E. Casey Kids Count Data Book, NCTQ's Teacher Prep Review, and NAEP's Long-Term Trend Assessment tell a connected story — and Maryland must be honest about what it says.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 11, 2026

This week, three major reports landed in quick succession. Taken separately, each offers important data. Taken together, they tell a story that Maryland cannot afford to ignore: our children's futures are at risk, the gap between our state's self-perception and its reality is wide, and the window for meaningful action is now.

Maryland READS works specifically on literacy — and we know that reading is not the only factor shaping a child's life outcomes. Economic stability, health, family, and community all matter. That is precisely why this week's convergence of data demands a unified response from everyone who cares about Maryland's children.

Maryland READS will continue to do our part — advancing evidence-based literacy policy, building the READ Strong Network across our counties, and refusing to accept that the gap between Maryland's potential and its performance is inevitable.

Wake-Up Call for Maryland: The 2026 Kids Count Data Book

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's [2026 Kids Count Data Book](#) is a mirror Maryland needs to look into — clearly and honestly.

In our work across the state, we encounter something consistently: Marylanders are proud of where they live. There is a deep, genuine optimism about what it means to be from this state — its workforce, its institutions, its diversity. Maryland READS sees this pride as an asset. But pride rooted in our past is not the same as performance in our present.

Maryland ranked 19th overall in the 2026 Kids Count index — down from 14th in 2019, not because Maryland's outcomes declined dramatically, but because other states improved faster.

That is its own kind of alarm. We are not falling behind because we failed catastrophically. We are falling behind because we moved too slowly while others moved with urgency.

“Our confidence in Maryland is not wrong — but it is outdated. We are squarely in the middle of the pack, and the middle is not the expectation for have for children in Maryland.” — Trish Brennan-Gac, Executive Director

The Kids Count report evaluates four domains: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. Maryland READS applauds this holistic framework. Reading proficiency does not exist in isolation. A child who is food insecure, living in unstable housing, or without access to health care faces compounding barriers to literacy. Every domain in this report connects to every other.

The Root Cause We Cannot Ignore: NCTQ’s 2026 Teacher Prep Review

NCTQ’s [2026 Teacher Prep Review: Decoding Progress in Reading Preparation](#) names teacher preparation as the overlooked root cause of our national reading crisis — and Maryland’s data make the case with particular force.

While several Maryland institutions showed meaningful improvement — most notably Hood College’s remarkable jump from an F to an A, and gains at Bowie State, Frostburg, Morgan State, and Salisbury — too many programs remain stuck. Coppin State, St. Mary’s College, and UMBC are unchanged from 2023. Every year of inaction is another cohort of teachers entering Maryland classrooms unprepared to teach children to read.

The NCTQ report is clear: literacy reforms that fail to address teacher preparation keep school districts in an endless, costly loop of retraining — while students miss out. Maryland has been living that loop. We have been forced to operate in crisis mode, spending millions to retrain teachers after the fact, while higher education institutions move slowly or not at all.

We have questions for the leaders of those institutions:

- What actions will you take to improve?
- If you are already doing things to improve, what can you share with us to show families and policymakers that you are preparing teachers who are prepared to teach reading?
- What data are you tracking on how graduates perform in the classroom around reading instruction and will you share it?
- And, why should state policy have to compel you to prepare teachers well?

For programs not yet in this report — if you are making improvements, we want to hear from you. Show your work. Leaders at other institutions could learn from you. And importantly, the communities you serve deserve transparency.

Stay tuned for Maryland READS full statement on the NCTQ report. We urge policymakers, higher education leaders, and community members to read it.

A Reason for Cautious Optimism: NAEP Long-Term Trend Results

The newly released [NAEP Long-Term Trend Assessment results](#) — based on assessments administered in the 2024–2025 school year — offer a meaningful signal.

For 9-year-olds, average reading scores increased by 4 points compared to 2022, with the strongest gains among lower-performing students at the 10th and 25th percentiles. These are the students who have historically been left behind — and seeing movement there matters.

For 13-year-olds, scores showed no significant change from 2023, and remain below pre-pandemic 2020 levels. The recovery is incomplete. The work is not done.

Maryland READS is deeply encouraged by these national trend lines. We are especially grateful for the leadership of Superintendent Carey Wright, who has approached this moment with both vision and infrastructure — building not just policy directives but the systems of support that school districts need to translate those directives into practice. We watch with admiration as she builds a statewide network of coaching, support, and accountability that gives the science of reading a real chance to take hold in classrooms across Maryland.

We are hopeful that the 2026 main NAEP results — when released — will continue to build on these trends. And we will be watching.

The Bottom Line

Trends may be improving. But trends are not destiny. Maryland is a state with extraordinary assets — world-class institutions, a diverse and talented population, committed educators, and engaged communities. We have every reason to do better than 18th. We have every reason to be a national model for how a state confronts its reading crisis and wins.

But that future requires honesty about our present. It requires higher education institutions to stop waiting for a mandate and start acting like partners in this work. It requires our communities — parents, faith leaders, civic organizations, businesses — to rally behind Superintendent Wright’s vision and give it the public support it deserves. And it requires our state’s policymakers to use every lever they have: standards, funding, accountability, and voice.

“The data tells us where we are. Our communities’ children tell us why it matters. And Dr. Wright’s leadership tells us that change is possible — if we all show up.” — Trish Brennan-Gac, Executive Director

Maryland READS will continue to do our part — advancing evidence-based literacy policy, building the READ Strong Network across our counties, and refusing to accept that the gap between Maryland’s potential and its performance is inevitable.

We invite every Marylander who cares about children’s futures to join us now!

- June 26th, Montgomery County READ Strong Network meeting – [registration link](#)
- July 17th, Summit Literacy Summit in Prince George’s County – [registration link](#)
- June 21st, Baltimore City READ Strong Network meeting – [registration link](#)

Referenced Reports

- [2026 Kids Count Data Book — Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)
- [NCTQ 2026 Teacher Prep Review: Decoding Progress in Reading Preparation](#)
- [NCTQ 2026 Maryland-Specific Reading Foundations Profile](#)
- [NAEP Long-Term Trend Assessment Results: Reading and Mathematics \(2025\)](#)

ABOUT MARYLAND READS

Maryland READS is a nonprofit organization working to end Maryland’s reading crisis by advancing evidence-based literacy policy, building community capacity, and driving systemic change. Through the READ Strong Network, Maryland READS partners with families, educators, community organizations, and elected officials in counties across Maryland to ensure every child learns to read. marylandreads.org info@marylandreads.org.