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Despite Massive School Reform Efforts, More Children Continue to Fall Off of the Third Grade Reading Cliff

Washington, DC – March 1, 2016 – The new report released today by [DC Action for Children](#) illustrate **that third grade reading proficiency in DC has not improved since 2007**. In fact, the analysis shows that for some student subgroups, there was a slight decline in reading scores between 2007 and 2014. The report also reveals less than 43 percent of DCPS, and 45 percent of charter school, third graders scored proficient or above in reading on the 2014 DCCAS.

The ability to read proficiently by the third grade is one of the best predictors of a student's later academic success. Students who are not proficient readers by the end of 3rd grade often struggle to catch up and are **four times** more likely to drop out of school than those who are.

The new data brief draws on DC CAS results between 2007 and 2014 to provide a comprehensive look at how third grade students' performance have changed under PERAA. Since third grade reading proficiency, in particular, is associated with improved outcomes, this update focuses on trends in reading performance, looking particularly at how race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and school sector are associated with student success.

"The DC KIDS COUNT policy brief shows us that while our reforms in education have been courageous, we have much more work to accomplish," said HyeSook Chung, executive director of DC Action for Children. "DC's persistent achievement gaps by family income, race and ethnicity show us that disparities begin early in children's lives and we need to tackle these challenges much earlier." Moreover, Chung states, "We applaud District leaders for recognizing the work we still have to do on behalf of DC's children. Like them, we believe with the right interventions and support strategies, children who trail can indeed catch up."

To ensure ALL DC children achieve their full potential, we recommend several measures to boost third grade reading proficiency:

- 1) Improve quality in early care and education programs including home visiting and child care programs to ensure all children enter school healthy and ready to learn.
- 2) Expand and strengthen early literacy programs such as the Books from Birth program to fill the gaps for families in need of early literacy resources.

The District is home to approximately 41,000 children under the age of 5; this population has grown by 25 percent since 2009. One-quarter of these children live in poverty; many of their families do not have the resources to start a home library. We have a tremendous opportunity to impact early literacy. We know that we must support children's learning earlier to ensure that all infants and toddlers develop the inter-related skills necessary to be strong readers throughout their lives.

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Founded in 1992, DC Action for Children (www.dckids.org) is a nonpartisan organization that provides data-based analysis and policy leadership on critical issues facing DC children and youth, to promote policies and actions that optimize child and family well-being.

DC Action is the home of DC KIDS COUNT, which tracks key indicators of child well-being in the DC neighborhoods where children live, learn and grow.

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