

LITERACY "MINUTES" for Chapter Chair 2025–2026

- The U.S. average score for literacy (258) was 12 points lower than in 2017 (271) but was not statistically significantly different from the international average (260). Average scores were higher in 13 countries, lower in 14 countries, and not statistically significantly different in 3 countries. Finland (296) and Japan (289) had the highest average literacy scores.
- The percentage of low-performing adults (scoring Level 1 or below) in the U.S. increased, from 19 percent in 2017 to 28 percent in 2023.
- The percentage of high-performing adults (scoring at Level 3 or above) in the U.S. decreased, from 48 percent in 2017 to 44 percent in 2023.
- A 2020 analysis by Gallup, along with the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, estimated that the output of the U.S. Economy could increase by \$2.2 trillion or approximately 10% of the Nation's GDP if all adults were at level 3 literacy
- Anything below Level 3 literacy is considered "Partially illiterate."
- Any adults scoring below a level 1 literacy are able to comprehend simple sentences and short paragraphs with minimal structure; they struggle with multi-step instructions or even complex sentences.
- Any with a level 1 literacy can locate explicitly cued information in short texts, lists or any simple digital pages when they have minimal distractions; however, they will struggle with multipage texts and complex prose.
- Starting in the early 2000s, there has been an increase in immigrants in cities. Many of those children speak other languages besides English, and so these children fall behind other students who start with English.
- In 2019, the National Center for Educational Statistics reported that 4.1% of US adults had literacy abilities below level 1, defined as "unable to successfully determine the meaning of sentences, read relatively short texts to locate a single piece of information, or complete simple forms," and could be classified as functionally illiterate.
- Over one million eligible children were not enrolled in Kindergarten for the 2021-2022 school year.
- Functional literacy is divided into useful literacy, informational literacy, and pleasurable literacy.
- In 2003, there was a study done by the NCES that measured functional literacy. These are measured in three types of functional literacy: prose literacy, document literacy, and qualitative literacy.
- In 2019, there was a study done, and 34% of fourth-grade students performed at or above the Proficient level, and 65% of students performed at or above the Basic level of literacy.
- The Reading assessment results are reported as Average scores. The scale is 0-500. The basic level is at 208, and the Proficient level is at 238. The average reading score for fourth-Grade public school students was 219, with Female students having an average score that was 7 points higher than male students, and students who were eligible for the National School Lunch Program had an average score that was 28 points lower than students who were not eligible for this program.