

How Do Colorado Citizens Fare From Cradle to Career?

Colorado ranks 16th in the nation in terms of Chance-for-Success, according to the 2007 *Quality Counts* report¹. The Chance-for-Success Index is an overview of 13 indicators that identify potential areas of strength and weakness in an individual's educational trajectory. Colorado was above the national average in 10 of the 13 areas, including level of parental education and high school graduation rates.



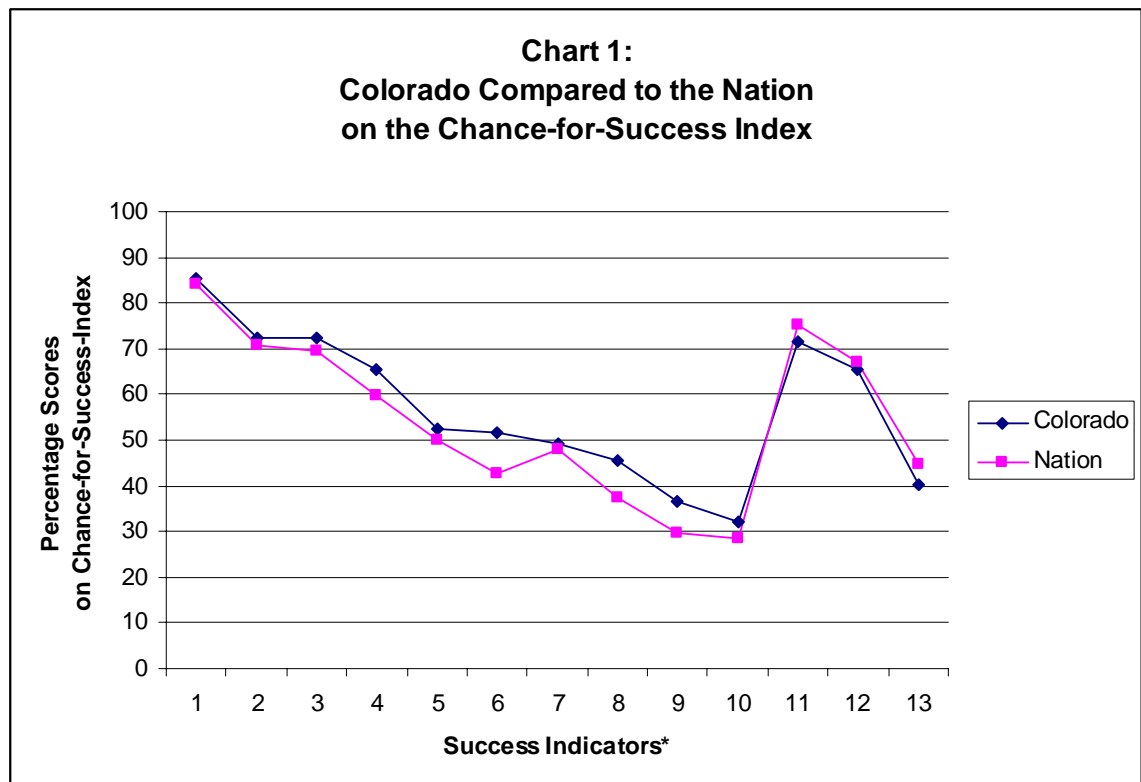
Table 1
Colorado and National
2007 Chance-for-Success Indicators

Success Indicators	Colorado	Nation	Difference
1 Linguistic integration	85.2%	84.3%	0.9%
2 Parental employment	72.5%	70.6%	1.9%
3 High school graduation	72.5%	69.6%	2.9%
4 Family income	65.3%	59.8%	5.5%
5 Annual income at or above national median	52.3%	50.0%	2.3%
6 Parent education	51.7%	42.5%	9.2%
7 Postsecondary participation	49.2%	47.8%	1.4%
8 Adult educational attainment	45.7%	37.4%	8.3%
9 Elementary reading	36.6%	29.8%	6.8%
10 Middle school mathematics	32.0%	28.5%	3.5%
11 Kindergarten enrollment	71.7%	75.3%	-3.6%
12 Steady employment	65.4%	67.2%	-1.8%
13 Preschool enrollment	40.1%	44.8%	-4.7%

While this report reflects positively on the state in a general sense, a closer look at the data reveals that Colorado is just barely above the national average in most areas, and that some of the measures are redundant. For example, Colorado is above the national average in both parent education and adult educational attainment: it makes sense that the score on one of these measures would be closely related to the score on the other. And Colorado was below the national average with regard to preschool and kindergarten enrollment, as well as in the area of steady employment (defined as “adults in labor force working full time and year-round”).

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In addition to the 13 indicators used in the Chance-for-Success Index, the 2007 Quality Counts report examined “Educational Alignment Policies”, areas in which a state creates policies designed to connect educational systems to each other and to the workforce. For example: does the state link Kindergarten learning expectations with elementary school readiness? Is college preparation a requirement for earning a high school diploma? The theory behind Educational Alignment Policies is that education should be designed in such a way that each step specifically prepares the individual for the next step after it: kindergarten prepares individuals for first grade, first grade prepares individuals for second grade, and so on.



*Chart 1: Success Indicators 1-13 correspond with Table 1 above.

Despite ranking 16th in the nation in terms of Chance-for-Success, Colorado ranks 49th in the nation in terms of Educational Alignment Policies. Of the 15 policies identified in the study, Colorado has enacted only one. Based on the 2007 Quality Counts data, it can be suggested that, as Colorado creates policies and programs such that each stage of education prepares the individual for the next, and such that high school and equivalency education are clearly linked to college preparedness and work readiness, it can be expected that high school graduation rates and steady employment will improve across the state, and that the gap between Colorado and the nation on the Chance-for-Success Index will increase accordingly.

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Overall, this report indicates that Colorado citizens have a better-than-average chance for success; however, opportunities for at-risk Colorado families to succeed can be improved through policies and programs that recognize the intergenerational impact of education at all levels, and place emphasis on educational attainment as a primary factor in achieving goals that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

¹From Cradle to Career: Connecting American Education From Birth Through Adulthood. (2007) *Education Week*, 26, 17. Colorado Supplement. Available online at <http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/qc/2007/17shr.co.h26.pdf>