

Lit Scan

Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

Volume 1 ♦ Number 7

October 1, 1997

Geography of Functional Illiteracy Among African Americans in Colorado

According to the 1990 U.S. Census, one in five adults (those age 25 or over) did not graduate from high school. For African American adults, that ratio is over a third. Of these 6.1 million African American dropouts, a third did not even begin high school. On the basis of numerous studies that have directly tested the literacy skills of such populations, these conditions are known to identify the functionally illiterate.

Conditions in Colorado are only slightly better. One out of six Colorado adults and one out of five African American adults in the state did not graduate from high school. Of the state's almost 74,000 African American dropouts, one-fourth did not even begin high school.

Conditions in the state's five metropolitan areas vary dramatically. (See Table 1.) Two figures stand out in this table:

- ◆ The incidence of functional illiteracy among African Americans is highest in metropolitan Denver. Over 11,000 African American Coloradans living in the metropolitan Denver counties cannot read, write, or do simple math well enough to achieve their potential socially or economically.
- ◆ The proportion of functional illiteracy among the state's African American population is highest in the Pueblo area: almost 30 percent—almost three times the rate in the Colorado Springs area and half again the rate for the metro Denver area.

African American Coloradans Who Did Not Complete High School by Metropolitan Area, 1990

Metropolitan Area	Less than 9 th grade		9 th -12 th grade, no diploma		Total (less than high school graduate)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Colorado Springs	376	2.7%	1,265	9.2%	1,641	11.9%
Denver (metro counties)	2,781	5.0%	8,814	15.7%	11,595	20.7%
Fort Collins-Loveland	12	2.6%	19	4.1%	31	6.7%
Greeley	11	5.1%	24	11.2%	35	16.3%
Pueblo	117	8.9%	275	21.0%	392	29.9%

Office of Adult Education ♦ Colorado Department of Education
201 East Colfax Avenue ♦ Denver, Colorado 80203-1799
(303) 866-6609 ♦ fax (303) 830-0793

© 1997