

Lit Scan

Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

Volume 3 ♦ Number 11

December 9, 1999

At Risk Conditions Predict Student Performance on NAEP Civics Assessment

Parental Educational Attainment Associated with Widest Gaps

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 1998 Civics Assessment tested how well students in grades 4, 8, and 12 were able to answer questions about the basic ideas underlying American public life:

- What are civic life, politics, and government?
- What are the foundations of the American political system?
- How does the government established by the Constitution embody the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy?
- What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?
- What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?

The performance of students on this latest NAEP test is associated with four major at risk factors: place of residence (i.e., central city vs. suburb, small town, or rural), race/ethnicity, poverty (i.e., eligibility for the Free/Reduced-Price School Lunch Program), and parental educational attainment (i.e., college and high school graduates vs. high school dropouts).



CARE
Center for At-Risk Education coe

Colorado Literacy Research Initiative (CLRI)
CARE—Family Literacy/Adult Literacy
201 East Colfax Avenue ♦ Denver, Colorado 80203-1799
(303) 866-6737 ♦ fax (303) 866-6940
© 1999

Place of Residence

- For all three grades, students living in central cities score lower than those living in suburbs.
- For grades 4 and 8, central city dwellers also score lower than residents of small towns and rural areas.
- In all three grades, suburbanites outscore those in small towns and rural areas.

Race/Ethnicity

- For all three grades, White and Asian/Pacific Islander students outscore Black, Hispanic, and American Indian students.

Table 2. Percentage of students at or above proficient in civics by grade and race/ethnicity, 1998

Grade	Race/ethnicity	Percent at or above proficient
4th grade	White	29
	Black	8
	Hispanic	8
	Asian/Pacific Islander	27
	American Indian	14
8th grade	White	28
	Black	7
	Hispanic	8
	Asian/Pacific Islander	26
	American Indian	11
12th grade	White	33
	Black	9
	Hispanic	11
	Asian/Pacific Islander	28
	American Indian	9

Table 1. Percentage of students at or above proficient in civics by grade and place of residence, 1998

Grade	Place of residence	Percent at or above proficient
4th grade	Central city	19
	Suburb	26
	Small town/rural	23
8th grade	Central city	19
	Suburb	26
	Small town/rural	21
12th grade	Central city	25
	Suburb	28
	Small town/rural	25

Poverty

- For all three grades, students eligible for the Free/Reduced-Price School Lunch Program scored dramatically lower on civics than others.

Table 3. Percentage of students at or above proficient in civics by grade and Free/Reduced-Price School Lunch Program status, 1998

Grade	Free/Reduced-Price School Lunch Program	Percent at or above proficient
4th grade	Eligible	9
	Not eligible	30
8th grade	Eligible	8
	Not eligible	27
12th grade	Eligible	10
	Not eligible	29

Parental Educational Attainment

- For all three grades, students whose parents did not finish high school scored dramatically lower on civics than children of high school and college graduates.
- Also, for all three grades, the gap in civics scores between children of college graduates and children of high school dropouts increases by grade.
- Of the four at risk conditions reported on herein, parental educational attainment is associated with the most dramatic differences between groups.

Table 4. Percentage of students at or above proficient in civics by grade and parental educational attainment, 1998

Grade	Parents' highest level of education	Percent at or above proficient
4th grade		
	Graduated from college	26
	Graduated from high school	23
	Did not finish high school	5
8th grade		
	Graduated from college	32
	Graduated from high school	15
	Did not finish high school	4
12th grade		
	Graduated from college	36
	Graduated from high school	14
	Did not finish high school	6

SOURCE

National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 Civics Assessment. Available at: http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/civics/civ_new_results.asp

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information about this study or other projects of the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative, contact: Keith Curry Lance, Colorado Department of Education, 201 E. Colfax Ave., Suite 309, Denver, CO 80203-1799, (303) 866-6737, fax (303) 866-6940, e-mail klance@sni.net