

Lit Scan

Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

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Highlights

- Over 76,000 Colorado preschoolers and school children have parents who did not graduate from high school.
- The state's adult education programs serve parents of almost 26,000—or one-third—of these children at risk of educational failure.

Colorado's Adult Education Efforts Impact One Third of Children of Under- Educated Parents

One of the strongest predictors of an individual's level of educational attainment—perhaps the strongest predictor—is their parents' level of educational attainment. Of those who fail to complete a high school education, 73 percent—almost three out of four—were raised by parents who never completed high school (or earned a GED) themselves.¹

During FY 1998, adult education programs in Colorado served 15,819 individuals, 14,011 of whom were under age 45.² For 1998, the national norm for family size for householders under age 45 with less than a high school education (controlling for some cases of childlessness) was 1.85 children.³ Therefore, participants in the state's adult education programs may be estimated to have 25,780 children.⁴

In March 1998, 13.8 percent of U.S. families with children under age 18 were headed by parents under age 45 with less than a high school education.⁵ While a current state figure for this statistic is not available, it can be estimated. Adjusting for Colorado's generally higher level of educational attainment, the estimated state percentage for parents under age 45 with less than a high school education is 8.5 percent.⁶ For March 1998, these under-educated parents may be estimated to have 76,322 children under age 18.⁶

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To summarize, there are over 76,000 Colorado children under age 18 who are at risk of educational failure because their parents never completed high school (or earned a GED). The state's adult education programs serve their parents directly, and therefore impact in a very strong if indirect way 25,780 pre-school and school age children. Thus, it may be said that Colorado adult education programs impact over one-third of children who are at risk because of their parents' low educational attainment.

FOOTNOTES

1. Irwin S. Kirsch, Ann Jungeblut, Lynn Jenkins, and Andrew Kolstad, **Adult Literacy in America: A First Look at the Results of the National Adult Literacy Survey**, National Center for Education Statistics, September 1993. Derived from Table 1.6, Average Proficiency on Each Literacy Scale, Respondents' Education Level by Parents' Education Level.
2. **Annual Performance Report for the Adult Education Program, FY 98**, Office of Adult Education, Colorado Department of Education.
3. **March 1998 Current Population Survey**. (<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam.html>) Derived from Table 6, Families, by Type, Age of Own Children, and Educational Attainment, Race, and Hispanic Origin of Householder: March 1998.
4. 14,011 times 1.85 equals 25,780.
5. See footnote 3.
6. **Educational Attainment in the United States, March 1998**. (<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/educ-attn.html>) Derived from Table 13, Educational Attainment of Persons 25 Years Old and Over, for States: March 1998. (Nationally, non-high school graduates are 17 percent of the adult population, compared with only 10 percent for Colorado.)

CONTACT INFORMATION

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