

Lit Scan

Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

Volume 3 ♦ Number 8

October 13, 1999

“Information-Rich” Households Associated with Educational Attainment of “Key Consumer”

Highlights

- Children being raised by better-educated adults are more likely to be living in households that are “information-rich” environments.
- Such children start school better equipped to learn and have access to more resources and opportunities for more experiences that support educational success.

According to the 1997 Consumer Expenditure Survey of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the amount and variety of information available to children in their own homes is strongly associated with the educational attainment level of the family’s key consumer (often a parent or grandparent and usually the mother).

“Information-rich” households are those that provide children with ready access to books, magazines, and newspapers as well as television, radio, and the Internet. Such households are

also likelier to be taking advantage of cultural opportunities like museums, theater, concerts, and sporting events. In addition, these households spend more directly on education—costs such as college tuition for parents, expenses associated with extra-curricular school activities (e.g., academic and sports teams, band, choir, clubs), music and dance lessons, and tutoring fees for children. (See Table 1 below.)



Table 1. Annual Consumer Expenditures on Selected Items Relating to “Information-Rich” Households, 1997

Item	All consumer units (households)	Less than high school graduate	High school graduate (including GED)	Bachelor's degree
Television, radio, sound equipment	\$577	\$383	\$550	\$671
Education	571	125	286	963
Other entertainment supplies, equipment and services (e.g., cable TV, Internet)	439	173	370	616
Fees and admissions	471	112	286	881
Reading	164	75	121	243

Selected Household Spending for High School Graduates vs. Dropouts

Compared with households headed by high school dropouts, households headed by high school graduates spend:

- more than twice as much on cultural events, education-related activities, and mass media access (e.g., cable TV, Internet), and
- one and a half times as much on reading matter and television. (See Table 2 below.)

**Table 2. Selected Consumer Expenditures for Households of High School and College Graduates as a Percent of High School Dropout Households, 1997**

Item	High school graduate (including GED)	Bachelor's degree
Television, radio, sound equipment	144%	175%
Education	229%	770%
Other entertainment supplies, equipment and services (e.g., cable TV, Internet)	214%	356%
Fees and admissions	255%	787%
Reading	161%	324%

Selected Household Spending for College Graduates vs. High School Dropouts

Compared with households headed by high school dropouts, households headed by college graduates spend

- almost eight times as much on cultural events and education-related activities, and
- more than three times as much on mass media access and reading matter. (See Table 2 above.)



Conclusions

Two conclusions may be drawn from these data:

- Children being raised by better-educated adults are more likely to be living in households that are "information-rich" environments.
- Such children start school better equipped to learn and have access to more resources and opportunities for more experiences that support educational success.

SOURCES

Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1997 Consumer Expenditure Survey, Table 10. Education of reference person: Average annual expenditures and characteristics. Available at: <ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/ce/standard/1997/educat.txt>

Recommended related reading:

1998. Levenstein, Phyllis. *High School Graduation Effects of a Verbal Interaction Program for At-Risk Toddlers: A Study of Long-Term Outcomes in a Replication of the Mother-Child Home Program*. Paper presented at the Head Start National Research Conference, Washington, DC, July 9-12, 1998. ERIC document: ED 425820.
1997. Froese, Victor. *The Relationship of School Materials and Resources to Reading Literacy: An International Perspective*. In **Information Rich but Knowledge Poor? Emerging Issues for Schools and Libraries Worldwide**. Presented at the Annual Conference of the International Association of School Librarianship, Vancouver, British Columbia, July 6-11, 1997. ERIC document: ED 412967
1992. *National PTA/World Book Successful Learning Survey*. ERIC document: ED 372143
1992. Simner, Marvin L. *Predictive Validity of the Caregiver's School Readiness Inventory*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Psychological Association, Quebec City, June, 1992. ERIC document: ED 348144
1986. McCormick, Christine, and Mason, Jana M. *Use of Little Books at Home: A Minimal Intervention Strategy That Fosters Early Reading*. Center for the Study of Reading, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. ERIC document: ED 314742

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