

# Lit Scan

Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

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## Highlights

Estimated numbers of Colorado preschoolers missing key home literacy activities (on a regular basis or entirely), 1999:

- over 100,000 do not visit a library
- over 95,000 do not do arts and crafts
- over 80,000 are not taught songs or music
- almost 79,000 are not told stories
- almost 57,000 are not taught letters, words, or numbers
- over 30,000 are not read to

## Colorado Preschoolers At Risk Due to Inadequate Home Literacy Activities

Education begins at home, years before children begin their formal schooling. For decades, research has consistently shown that a child's readiness to learn and his or her actual academic performance are powerfully affected by the extent to which parents or other family

members engage them in "home literacy" activities during the preschool years. Those activities include reading to children; telling them stories; teaching them letters, words, or numbers; teaching them songs or music; doing arts and crafts with them; and visiting the library with them. Such family investments in early childhood education are critical to the development of "emerging literacy."

Parents, usually mothers, polled in the 1999 National Household Education Survey (NHES) reported the weekly frequency of home literacy activities with their three to five year olds. Notably, the natural bias of such reports is to over-estimate the extent to which these socially desirable activities occur.

Over 17,000 Colorado preschoolers have parents who did not graduate from high school.

**CARE**  
Center for At-Risk Education 

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  
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To estimate the incidence of this problem for Colorado, national percentages were adjusted for the fact that Colorado has a higher average level of adult educational attainment than the nation as a whole. (In 1998, 11.1 percent of Americans age 25 and over had not graduated from high school compared with only 10.4 percent of adult Coloradans.) Those percentages were then applied to the U.S. Census Bureau's estimates of the 1999 population of three, four, and five year olds in Colorado.

**Colorado Preschoolers Not Participating in  
Key Home Literacy Activities with a Family Member  
Three or More Times Per Week, 1999**

Home Literacy Activities Not Engaged in Regularly by Parents	Percentage of 3 to 5 year olds		Estimated Colorado Number
	U.S.	Colorado Estimate	
Read to	19%	18%	30,153
Taught letters, words, or numbers	36%	34%	56,955
Told a story	50%	47%	78,732
Taught songs or music	51%	48%	80,407
Did arts and crafts	61%	57%	95,483
Visited a library (in the past month)	64%	60%	100,508

**SOURCES**

- Current Population Survey, **Educational Attainment in the United States, March 1998**. Table 1. Educational Attainment of Persons 15 Years Old and Over, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: March 1998, and Table 13. Educational Attainment of Persons 25 Years Old and Over, for States: March 1998. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/prod/3/98pubs/p20-513u.pdf>
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**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](mailto:klance@sni.net)