

# Lit Scan

Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

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## Parental Education a More Powerful Predictor of Reading Scores at All School Levels

**Table 1. Average Student Proficiency in Reading by Age and Selected Characteristics of Students, 1996**

Selected student characteristics	9 year olds	13 year olds	17 year olds
<b>Total</b>	<b>212.4</b>	<b>259.1</b>	<b>286.9</b>
Male	206.8	252.5	279.9
Female	218.0	265.4	294.4
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>			
White	219.9	267.0	294.4
Hispanic	194.1	239.9	264.7
Black	190.0	235.6	265.4
<b>Parental education</b>			
Not h.s. graduate	197.0	241.0	267.0
Graduated h.s.	207.0	252.0	273.0
Post high school	220.0	270.0	297.0
<b>Control of school</b>			
Public	210.0	257.0	286.0
Private	227.0	274.0	294.0
<b>Region</b>			
Northeast	220.0	261.0	291.0
Southeast	206.0	252.0	279.0
Central	215.0	268.0	292.0
West	210.0	258.0	286.0

to reading proficiency of these potential predictors. Table 1 reports average 1996 reading scores included in the **Digest of Education Statistics 1999**.

### Highlights

- Parental education and race/ethnicity exert the strongest effects on reading scores at all school levels.
- Both are associated with 30 point differences between groups in NAEP reading scores.
- In all likelihood, most of the effects associated with race/ethnicity would disappear if parental education was taken into account.

The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) has tested the reading proficiency of nine, thirteen, and seventeen year olds every two or three years since 1971. For each test year, average scores have been reported by age, gender, race/ethnicity, parental education, control of school (i.e., public vs. private) and U.S. region.

Consistently, since 1980 (when school control was added), race/ethnicity and parental education have demonstrated the strongest relationships



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Throughout the early and mid-1990's, race/ethnicity and parental education were associated with 30 point differences in reading scores for most age groups, compared with 10 to 15 point differences associated with gender, school control, and region.

In all likelihood, a substantial proportion of the differences associated with race/ethnicity is explained away by parental education. Notably, an earlier analysis of kindergartners' reading scores by both race/ethnicity and maternal education indicated that parental education is, in fact, a stronger predictor than race/ethnicity after the effects of maternal education were taken into account.

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**SOURCES**

- Table 112. Average student proficiency in reading, by age and selected characteristics of students: 1971 to 1996, **Digest of Education Statistics 1999**, p. 130. Available at: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2000031>
- *Maternal Education More Powerful Predictor of Kindergartners' Reading Scores Than Family Type*, **LitScan**, v. 4., n. 3, March 13, 2000. Available at: < [http://www.lrs.org/clri/html/v\\_\\_4\\_\\_2000\\_.html](http://www.lrs.org/clri/html/v__4__2000_.html) >.

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**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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