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Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

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U.S. Children of Low-Literacy Parents Score Low on International Reading Assessment, 2000

In 2000, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) tested the reading skills of 15-year-olds in the United States and 25 other member nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).



U.S. children whose parents did not complete high school earned lower reading scores than their counterparts in all but four other OECD countries: Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg, and Mexico. On reading scores, U.S. and Polish children of high school dropouts tied for 21st and 22nd places in a field of 26 nations.

This surprisingly low ranking by the U.S. raises some questions about the comparability of data from one nation to another. For instance, how comparable is the U.S. General Education Development (GED) program to its counterparts in other nations? Nonetheless, despite questions concerning the comparability of data, children of poorly educated parents in other major English-speaking countries—Ireland, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada—earned scores 10 percent or more higher than their U.S. counterparts.

This and similar studies indicate that parents who are poorly educated themselves are less likely:

- ♦ to expose their children to books and other reading materials at home,
- ♦ to show interest and be involved in their child's school,
- ♦ to help their child with homework, and
- ♦ to have high expectations of their child's performance in school.

Strategies that have been shown to reduce the damaging effects of poverty in a child's educational environment at home include: family literacy programs, such as Even Start, adult literacy and basic skills education programs; early childhood education programs, such as Head Start; and children's and youth services of public libraries, such as story times, homework centers, and summer reading programs.

Source: **Outcomes of Learning: Results From the 2000 Program for International Student Assessment of 15-Year-Olds in Reading, Mathematics, and Science Literacy**, National Center for Education Statistics, Statistical Analysis Report, December 2001 (NCES 2002-115). Available at: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/2002115.pdf>.

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