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Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

Volume 7 - Number 7

August 28, 2003

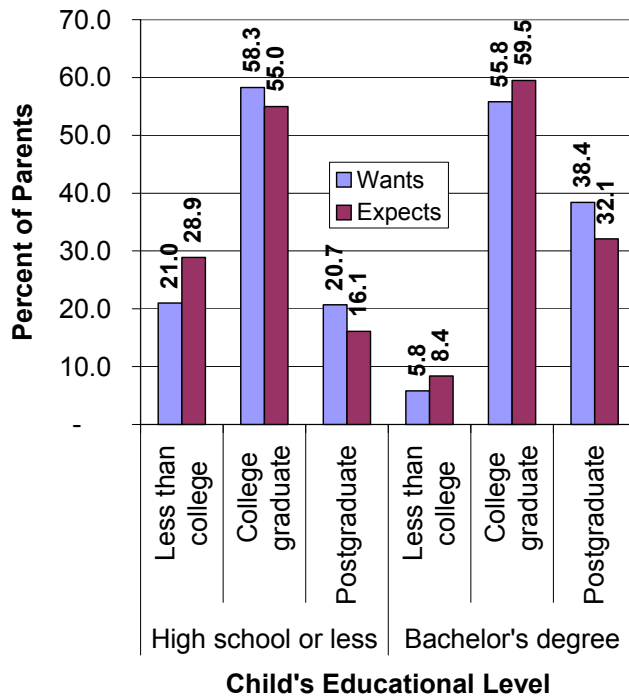
Parent's Education Linked to Educational Expectations for Children, Reading to Preschool Children, and Academic Achievement

A recently released study by the U.S. Census Bureau indicates that a parent's education is a significant predictor of the parent's educational expectations for his or her children, the likelihood that the child was read to regularly during the preschool years, and selected indicators of academic achievement.

Parent's Educational Expectations of Children

Compared with parents with bachelor's degrees, those with a high school diploma or less are more than three times as likely to have low educational ambitions for their children. More than 20 percent of less-educated parents do not see a need for their children to earn college degrees. Less than 6 percent of more-educated parents have such low ambitions for their children's education. Notably, however, the percentages of both parent groups who want less education for their children are exceeded by the percentages of both groups who expect their children will settle for less education.

Chart 1. Educational Expectations of Parents for Their Children Under Age 18 by Parent's Education, 2000

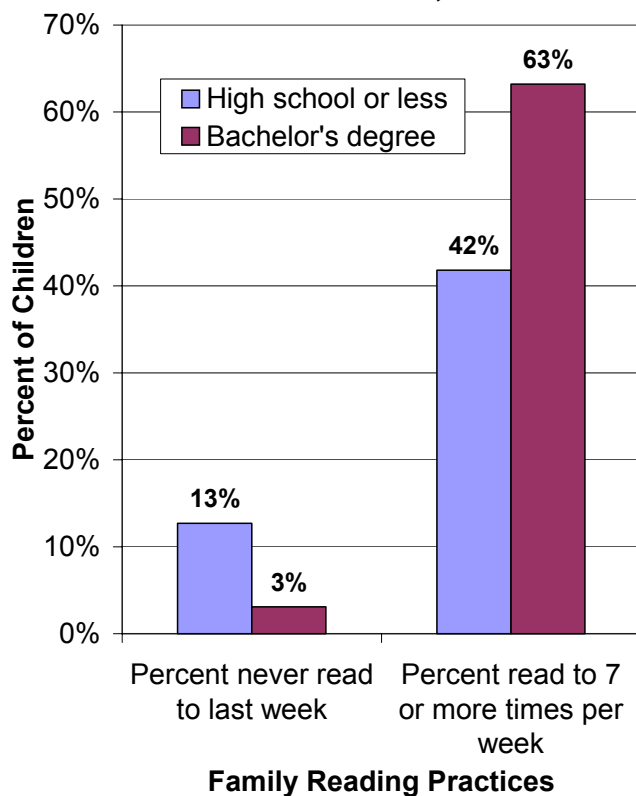


**Parent's Education Linked to Educational Expectations for Children,
Reading to Preschool Children, and Academic Achievement**

While the wishes and expectations of less- and more-educated parents regarding college graduation are remarkably similar—wishes and expectations for both groups fall between 55 and 60 percent—more-educated parents are somewhat more likely to expect their wishes to be exceeded by their children.

Not surprisingly, more-educated parents are twice as likely as less-educated parents to want and expect their children to continue their education beyond the bachelor's degree.

**Chart 2.
Reading to Children Ages 1-5 by a
Family Member by Parent's
Education, 2000**



less-educated parents, but there are a few indicators related to achievement, albeit two of the three are negative ones. Children of parents with bachelor's degrees are more than twice as likely to be in gifted classes as children of parents with a high school diploma or less (26 v. 11 percent). Conversely, children of less-educated parents are twice as likely to repeat a grade (10 v. 5 percent) or be suspended from school (12 v. 6 percent).

Family Reading Practices

Beyond wishes and expectations of their children's own educational attainment, parent's education also impacts actual family practices related to school readiness, particularly reading to children. Compared with college-educated parents, those with a high school diploma or less were more than four times as likely to report not reading to their children during the past week (3 v. 13 percent). More-educated parents were about 50 percent more likely than their less-educated counterparts to report having read to their children on a daily basis (63.2 v. 41.8 percent reading to children 7 or more times per week). Further, more-educated parents reported reading to their children an average of 8.3 times per week, compared with 6.1 times for less-educated parents (a one-third difference).

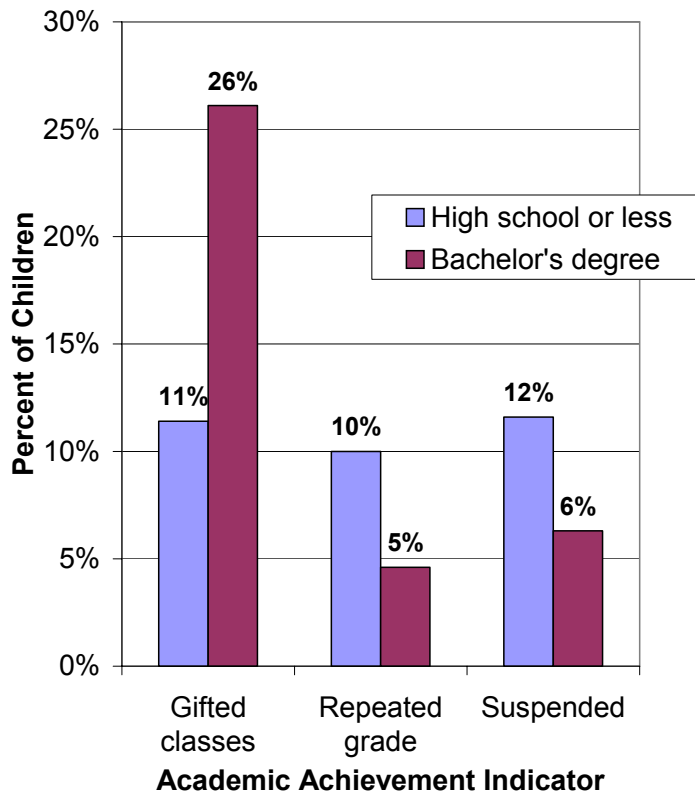
Academic Achievement Indicators

No precise indicators of academic achievement are available with which to compare the children of more- and

Implications

Why report such differences in educational wants, expectations, and achievement for children of more- and less-educated parents? Is the message that educational problems and failures are to be blamed on parents? Certainly not. But data such as these make it clear that educational success—or failure—can be a generational phenomenon. That is why the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), through its Center for At-Risk Education (CARE), promotes adult education and family literacy programs around Colorado, so that every effort possible is made to break the cycle of low educational attainment from one generation to the next. For students, teachers, schools, and even society to be successful, it is not enough to focus on schoolchildren alone. Most parents want their children to do better in life than they have, and sometimes they need help to make that dream come true.

**Chart 3.
Academic Achievement of
Children Ages 6-17 by
Parent's Education, 2000**



SOURCES

U.S. Census Bureau, **A Child's Day: 2000** (Selected Indicators of Child Well-Being) (P70-89). Released August 11, 2003. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/00p70-89.html>

CONTACT INFORMATION

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