

Lit



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Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

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Mother's Education Linked to Growth of Reading Achievement Gap Between Kindergarten and 1st Grade

According to The Condition of Education 2003, data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study indicates that children whose mothers did not graduate from high school lag increasingly behind their classmates whose mothers earned high school or GED diplomas. (See Table 1 and Chart 1.)



For a cohort of children who began kindergarten in Fall 1998, mother's education accounted for a difference in reading scale scores of only 2 points—18 for students with less-educated mothers and 20 for students with more-educated mothers. By the time those same students finished the first grade in Spring 2000, their scale scores in reading were 48 and 55, respectively—7 points apart. While the number of reading scale points involved was small, the size of the gap associated with mother's education increased two and a half times (i.e., from 2 to 7) by the time the cohort of children completed the first grade.

Table 1. Children's Reading Achievement Through First Grade by Mother's Education, 1998-2000

Reading Scale Scores	Mother's Education		Difference	Percent Difference
	Less than high school	High school or GED diploma		
Kindergarten, Fall 1998	18	20	2	11.1%
Kindergarten, Spring 1999	27	31	4	14.8%
1st Grade, Fall 1999	32	36	4	12.5%
1st Grade, Spring 2000	48	55	7	14.6%
Gain, K-1 st Grade **	30	35	5	16.7%

* Gain is calculated as the difference from Fall Kindergarten to Spring first grade.

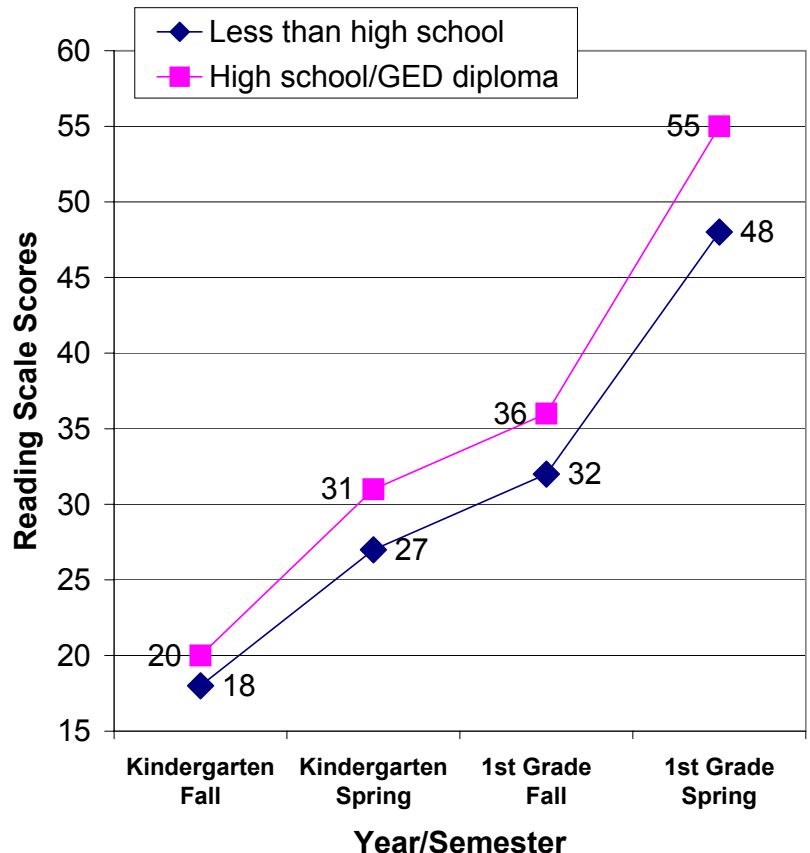
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If the widening of the reading achievement gap associated with mother's education continued to increase at the same rate for this cohort of children, by the time they reach fourth grade, the gap between children with less- and more-educated mothers could widen to 15 points. That would also be a 15 percent difference in favor of children whose mothers graduated from high school.

The fact that a mother's education can have such a profound impact on the educational success of her child is precisely why the Colorado Department of Education's Center for At-Risk Education (CARE) provides a wide variety of programs and services to support parents as they seek to improve their own educational attainment and thereby their children's academic achievement.

Schools focus their attention on direct interventions with children to ensure that we "leave no child behind." Adult education and family literacy programs intervene with both parents and children to ensure that we "leave no family behind."

Chart 1. Children's Reading Scores from Kindergarten Through 1st Grade by Mother's Education, 1998-2000



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>

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