

# Lit Scan

Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

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## Kids Do Better in Reading When Parents Graduate From High School

*Gateways to Achievement*, a study that looks at CSAP scores county-by-county in the state of Colorado, demonstrates a direct correlation between children's higher 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading scores and the educational attainment of their parents.



The educational success of each generation of Coloradans is influenced by the lessons and examples of the adults in their lives. When the adults in children's lives are better-educated, children are more likely to have opportunities to succeed in life. Where adult educational attainment is higher, children tend to have an edge on every gateway to opportunity.

- Because their mothers are more likely to have received prenatal care, children in better-educated communities are likelier to be born healthy.
- When women defer childbearing until they themselves are adults, complete their own education, and marry, their children enjoy a safer and more stimulating early childhood.
- Where adults are better educated, a child is more likely to attend preschool, building a more solid base for literacy.
- Children from better-educated counties are less likely to be obese because they are more likely to learn about proper nutrition and exercise and to have access and the means to buy healthy food, establishing a

healthier lifestyle in childhood and adolescence.

- Children are less likely to become "idle teens"—neither being in school nor working—if they reside in better-educated communities. (See Table 1.)



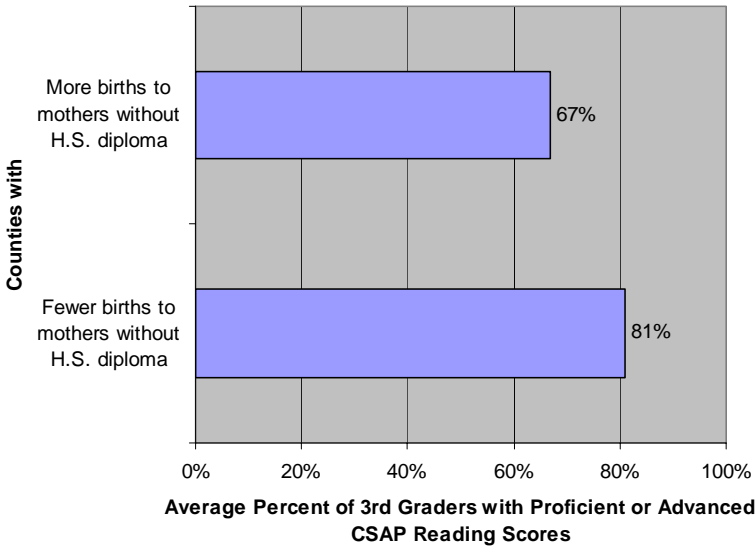
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**Table 1. Gateways into the Cycle of Opportunity for Children**

Data	Counties by percent of adults without high school diploma (median = 16%)	Mean
Percent of mothers receiving prenatal care	Median or above	74.7%
	Below median	80.9%
Births (per 1,000) to teen mothers	Median or above	32.4
	Below median	14.4
Births (per 100) to single mothers	Median or above	31.8
	Below median	21.8
Births (per 100) to women without high school diplomas	Median or above	26.3
	Below median	14.4
Percent ages 3 & 4 enrolled in preschool	Median or above	44.4
	Below median	53.3
Percent of children who are obese	Median or above	11.5
	Below median	7.9
Percent of teenagers who are "idle" (i.e., not in school & not employed)	Median or above	9.7
	Below median	5.9

**Chart 1 - A Safe and Stimulating Early Childhood**



In counties where fewer children were born to mothers without high school diplomas, 14% more third-graders scored well on reading than in counties with more births to mothers without diplomas. (See Chart 1.)

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Improving the situation of the adults in children's lives, particularly by improving adult educational attainment also has a significant impact on academic achievement of children.

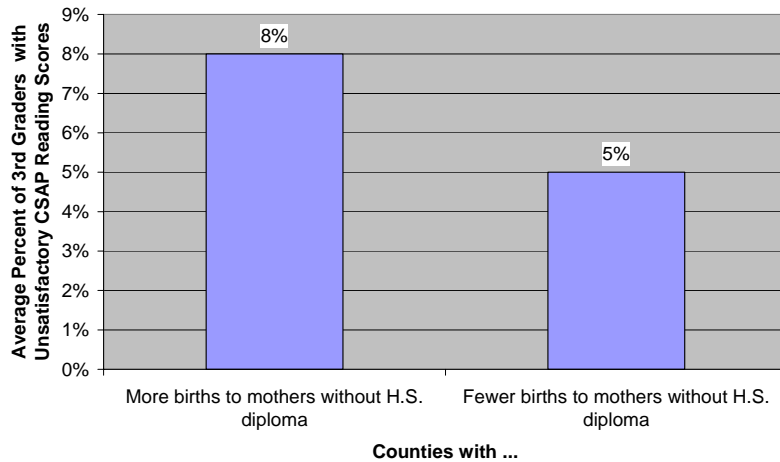
When the adults in children's lives are better-educated, children are more likely to have opportunities to succeed as they enter adulthood. Where adult educational attainment is higher, there is wider access to educational opportunities, better public health, and more economic prosperity.

- Well-educated adults are likelier to live in counties with at least one college or university.
- Obesity and diabetes are less common where adults are better-educated.
- Where adult educational attainment is higher, families tend to have jobs and higher incomes and to reside in homes that they own, making them less dependent on social service programs. (See Table 2.)

**Table 2. Gateways into the Cycle of Opportunity for Adults**

Data	Counties by percent of adults without high school diploma (median = 16%)	Mean
Percent of counties with at least one college or university	Median or above	40.6
	Below median	45.4
Percent of adults who are obese	Median or above	16.8
	Below median	12.6
Percent of adults with diabetes	Median or above	5.5
	Below median	2.9
Median household income	Median or above	\$31,667
	Below median	\$46,094
Percent of children with parents not in labor force	Median or above	9.5
	Below median	4.9
Children under 5 (per 100) receiving WIC	Median or above	36.4
	Below median	14.1
Children (per 1,000) receiving TANF	Median or above	27.0
	Below median	9.1
Children under 19 (per 100) receiving CHP+	Median or above	7.0
	Below median	4.5
Percent of households with children renter-occupied	Median or above	32.4
	Below median	28.2

Chart 2 - A Safe and Stimulating Early Childhood



Counties with more births to mothers with no high school diploma were twice as likely to have third graders who scored in the unsatisfactory level on reading. (See Chart 2.)

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## SOURCES

Colorado Department of Education. (2004). *Gateways to achievement: a county-level perspective on The Bell Policy Center's Colorado: The State of Opportunity.*

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

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