

Lit Scan

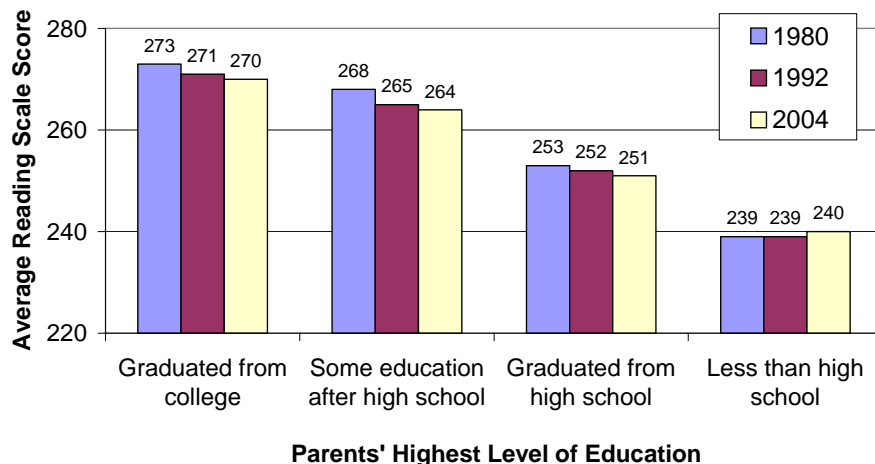
Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

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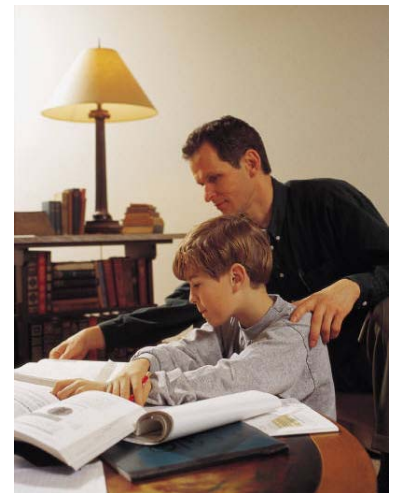
July 15, 2005

Parents' Education Levels Consistently Predict Students' Reading & Math Scores, 1980-2004

Chart 1. Trend in Average Reading Scale Scores for Students Age 13 by Parents' Highest Level of Education, 1980-2004



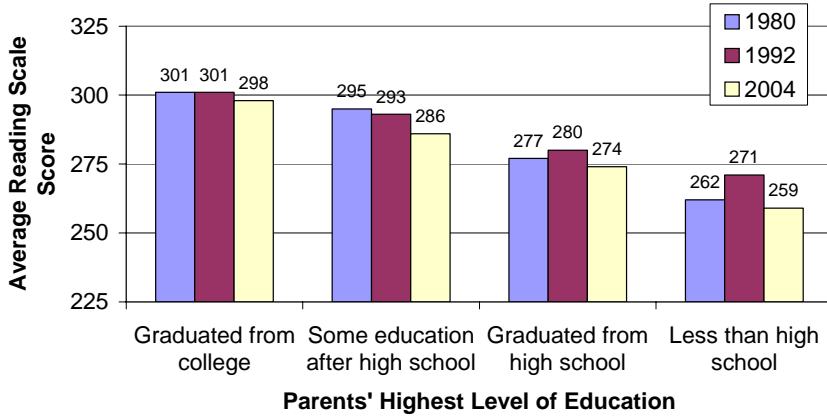
From 1980 to 2004, there were no statistically significant changes in the average reading scores of students ages 13 and 17. (See Charts 1 and 2.) There was only one exception: Average reading scores of 17 year olds with parents with some education after high school were lower in 2004 than in 1980.



For the same interval, the trends for average math scores of students ages 13 and 17 differ dramatically. For 13 year olds, average math scores rose significantly, while for 17 year olds, they were static. (See Charts 3 and 4.)

The impact of parents' highest levels of education on both reading and math scores for both age groups is powerful and consistent. The higher the parents' education level, the higher the average test scores. In 2004, there were 30-point gaps in reading and math scores between 13 year olds whose parents graduated from college and their counterparts whose parents did not complete high school. For 17 year olds, these gaps grow to 40 points.

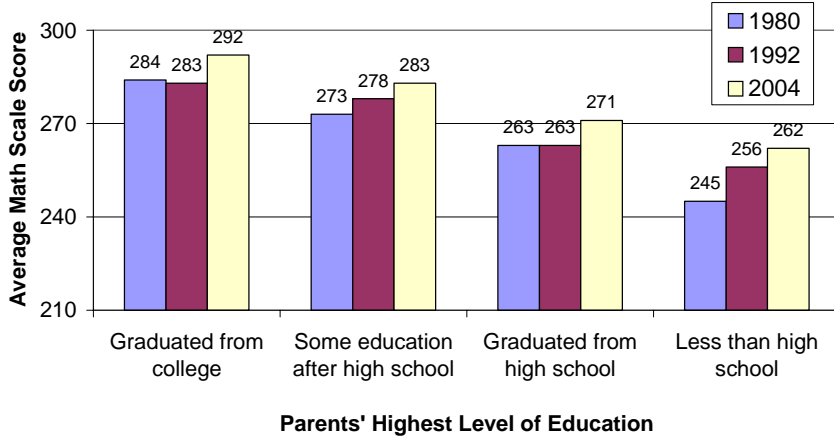
Chart 2. Trends in Average Reading Scale Scores for Students Age 17 by Parents' Highest Level of Education, 1980-2004



These findings indicate that academic success is a generational phenomenon. To whatever extent parents do not attain higher levels of education themselves, the odds increase dramatically that their children will not experience academic success either.

This powerful relationship between the educational successes of one generation and the next is precisely why adult education and family literacy programs play such a critical role in ensuring that no child is left behind.

Chart 3. Trends in Average Math Scale Scores for Students Age 13 by Parents' Highest Level of Education, 1980-2004



SOURCES

- 2004 Long-Term Trend Assessment Results. The Nation's Report Card. Available at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/ltr/results2004/su-b-reading-pared.asp> and <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/ltr/results2004/su-b-math-pared.asp>.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Chart 4. Trends in Average Math Scale Scores for Students Age 17 by Parents' Highest Level of Education

