

# Lit Scan

Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

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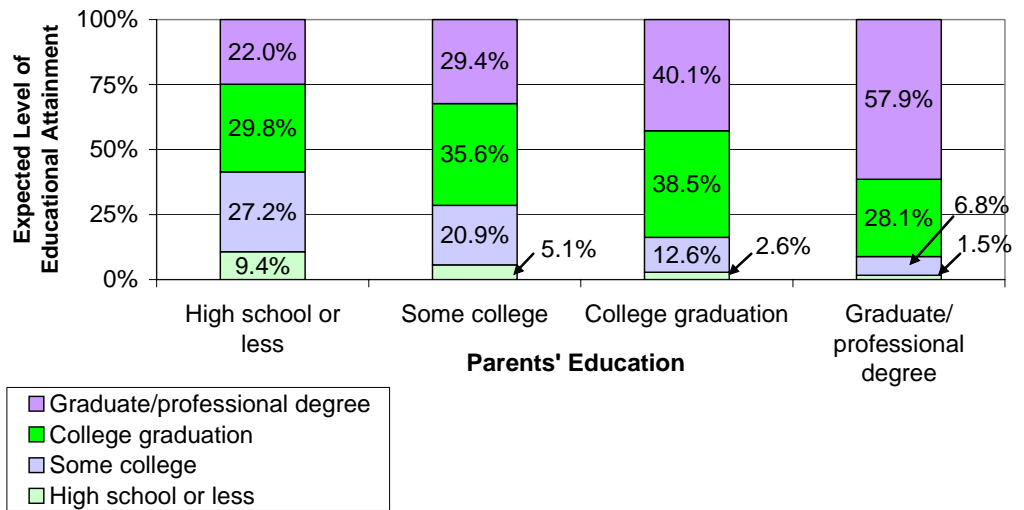
October 19, 2005

## Parents' Level of Education Affects Own Expectations of Educational Attainment

Students' expectations about their own expected level of educational attainment is affected dramatically by their parents' education.

In 2004, almost ten percent of 2002 high school seniors (9.4%) expected to attain no more than a high school diploma. With each succeeding level

**Level of Educational Attainment Expected by 2002 High School Seniors by Parents' Education, 2004**



of parental education, that percentage usually dropped by almost half. For those whose parents completed some college, only about five percent (5.1%) expected to attain no more than a high school diploma. Such low educational ambitions for themselves were held by only about 2.5 percent (2.6%) of those whose parents graduated from college and by only 1.5 percent of those whose parents earned graduate or professional degrees.

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The reverse is true at the other end of the parental education scale. Of respondents whose parents earned graduate or professional degrees, almost 60 percent (57.9%) expected to earn such degrees themselves. Only about one-third as many respondents whose parents went no further than high school (22%) expect to earn advanced degrees. That percentage declines predictably for intervening levels of parental education.

Notably, the expectations described in this report are not those of current high school seniors, but of individuals who were high school seniors in 2002. This fact suggests the persistent impact of parental education on one's own educational expectations, even after becoming an adult.



The findings of this study suggest that a key strategy for improving the academic achievement of K-12 students—and encouraging them to pursue higher levels of educational attainment after high school—is promoting adult education and family literacy. Efforts that lead to educational gains for adults are very likely to have multi-generational impact that makes a real, long-term difference.

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**SOURCE**

National Center for Education Statistics. **A Profile of the American High School Senior in 2004: A First Look, Initial Results from the First Follow-up of the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002** (ELS: 2002), E.D. TAB. NCES 2006-348. Available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2006/2006348.pdf>.

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**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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