

The Bell Policy Center *Research • Advocacy • Opportunity... for Colorado*

Children, Poverty, and the Adult Education/Literacy Connection


*The Early Childhood Council of Boulder County
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Children, Poverty, and Adult Education/Literacy

- The evidence indicates that family poverty, low adult literacy, and poor child academic performance are strongly linked

-- National Center for Family Literacy

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The Link: Children's Economic Condition Based on Parent's Education

- 44% of Colorado children whose parents do not have a high school degree live in poor families (less than 100% of federal poverty)
 - 81% live in low- income families (less than 200% of federal poverty)

Source: National Center for Children in Poverty, Colorado Demographic Profiles.

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The Link: Children’s Economic Condition Based on Parent’s Education (continued)

- 24% of Colorado children whose parents have a high school degree, but no college, live in poor families
 - 54% live in low- income families
- 6% of Colorado children whose parents have some college or more live in poor families
 - 19% live in low- income families

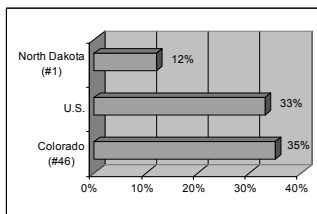
Source: National Center for Children in Poverty, Colorado Demographic Profiles.

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The Link: Families’ Economic Condition Based on Parents’ Education

Percent of Colorado Low-Income Working Families Parent, No HS/GED (2006)



Source: *Still Working Hard, Still Falling Short*, Working Poor Families Project.

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The Link: Impact on Children’s School Success

- Low adult literacy and education levels adversely affect children’s school success
 - Children’s literacy levels are strongly linked to the educational level of their parents—especially their mothers.
 - Children from families with undereducated parents tend to perform at the lowest levels in school
 - Low-income students drop out at six times the rate of those from high-income families

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Breaking the Cycle: Adult Education/Family Literacy

- High quality adult education and family literacy programs help to break this cycle [of poverty] for adults and their children

-- National Center for Family Literacy

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Family Literacy Programs: Adult and Child Outcomes

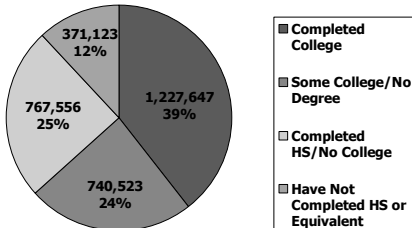
- Results from National Center for Family Literacy program evaluation studies showed that:
 - 43% of adults who participated in the programs reviewed were employed, compared with 14% before enrollment
 - By the end of the programs, 90% of formerly at-risk children were judged ready for kindergarten with no expected academic or social problems
 - Overall dependence on public assistance for families that participated in the programs decreased from 67% to 44%

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Who Do We Need to Reach? Educational Attainment in Colorado

Colorado's Working-Age Adults, 18-64
(3,106,849 total)



Source: "Colorado Profile of Adult Learners 2008," The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS).

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Who We Are (and Aren't) Reaching: Adult Education Enrollment

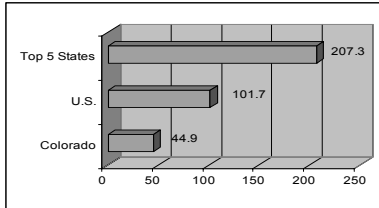
- Of the 371,000 working-age adults in Colorado without a high school diploma
 - About 14,500 were enrolled in state-administered Adult Education programs in 2006-07
 - That's about 4%

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How Does Colorado Compare? Adult Ed Enrollment

Adults Served per 1000 Adults Age 18-64:
Enrolled in State-Administered Adult Education Programs with Less than a High School Diploma



Source: "Colorado Profile of Adult Learners 2008." The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS).

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How Well Does Our State Fund Adult Education?

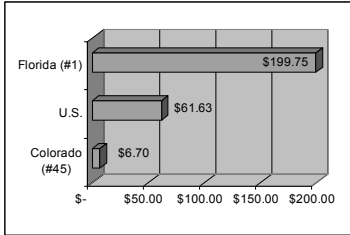
- Until 2006, Colorado provided no state dollars as part of its required "state match" of federal Adult Education and Family Literacy funding
- Colorado's state match is achieved primarily through gifts, grants and donations from foundations, businesses, special events, etc.
- In 2006, Colorado started providing \$200K per year of state money for Family Literacy Programs

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How Does Colorado Compare? "State" Funding for Adult Ed

State-Administered Adult Education Programs
FY 2005 "State" spending per 18-64 year old without HS/GED



Source: U.S. Department of Education and American Community Survey data. 13



The Bottom Line

- We can and must do better if Colorado is to become the state that we aspire to be for ourselves and our children.

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What's Needed: Next Steps?

- Show the political will/commitment to address and support adult education and family literacy through state policy changes
 - P-20 Council
 - Jobs Cabinet

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What's Needed: Next Steps?

- Make meaningful investments of state funds in adult education and family literacy as part of an overall transformational, aspirational strategy

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What's Needed: Next Steps?

- Continue the state's increased commitment to high-quality early childhood education, preschool, and full-day kindergarten

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What's Needed: Next Steps?

- Sharpen our focus on children's access to healthcare, and families' ability to obtain affordable health insurance, as issues related to educational success.

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Why Should We Do Better?

For the Kids:

- Help end the cycle of poverty that affects so many of our children and limits their possibilities
- Increase children’s literacy and school success
- Reduce dropout rates and help kids become more effective adult members of our society

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Why Should We Do Better?

For the Adults:

- Help parents be better partners in their children’s education
- Help unemployed adults gain the literacy skills necessary to enter the workforce
- Help employed adults qualify for higher paying jobs that better support their families

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Why Should We Do Better?

For the State:

- Create more engaged/effective citizens and community members
- Reduce reliance on public assistance programs
- Create a better qualified workforce to build a stronger state economy

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Why Should We Do Better?

For Society:

- Because helping kids, parents, and families is the right thing to do in a just and moral society

"The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."

--Franklin D. Roosevelt

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