

## RELATED BEHAVIORS AND CHARACTERISTICS

### EA 3.1.A PARENTAL READING TO YOUNG CHILDREN

Numerous studies have documented the importance of reading books to enhance children's literacy development. Reading to children is a critical determinant of subsequent school literacy,<sup>86</sup> promotes the growth and understanding of vocabulary,<sup>87</sup> and enhances learning of basic concepts about books.<sup>88</sup> Telling stories is another way in which parents can participate in their children's literacy development.<sup>89</sup>

As noted in Figure EA 3.1.a, only 64 percent of three- to five-year-old children had parents who read to them or told them stories on a regular basis in 1993. This percentage is somewhat lower for black (56 percent), Hispanic (53 percent), and American Indian (50 percent) children than for white (69 percent) and Asian (66 percent) children. In addition, children from single parent families, and those whose mothers did not complete high school were less likely to be read or told stories to several times a week. Only 51 percent of children whose mothers did not complete either high school or a GED certificate, compared to 67 percent of children whose mothers did complete high school had parents who read to them or told stories to them on a regular basis. (See Table EA 3.1.a) Finally, there was only a small gender difference in the percentage of children whose parents read to or told stories to them frequently, with 63 percent of males and female children read to or told stories on a regular basis.

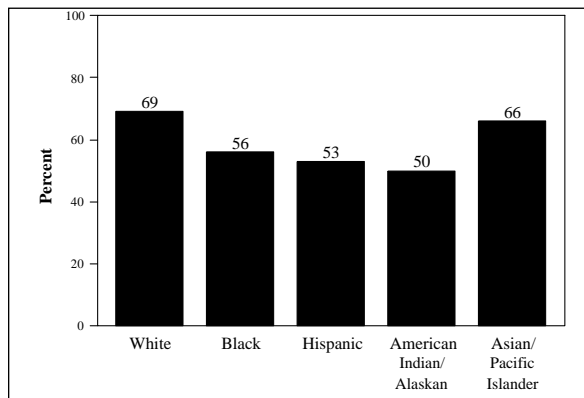
<sup>86</sup>Anderson, R. C., et al. (1985). *Becoming a Nation of Readers: Report of the National Academy of Education's Commission on Reading*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education.

<sup>87</sup>Chomsky, C. (1972). Stages in language development and reading exposure. *Harvard Educational Review*, 42, 1-33.

<sup>88</sup>Snow, C., & Ninio, A. (1986). The contribution of reading books with children to their linguistic and cognitive development. In W. Teale & E. Sulzby (Eds.), *Emergent Literacy: Reading and Writing*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

<sup>89</sup>Sulzby, E. (1985). Children's emergent reading of favorite story books: A developmental study. *Reading Research Quarterly*, Summer(4), 458-481. National Education Goals Panel. (1994). *The National Education Goals Report: Building a Nation of Learners*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Figure EA 3.1.A PERCENT OF 3- TO 5-YEAR-OLDS WHOSE PARENTS READ TO THEM OR TOLD STORIES REGULARLY, BY RACE/ETHNICITY: 1993



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), *1992 Trends in Academic Progress*.

**Table EA 3.1.A PERCENTAGE OF 3- TO 5-YEAR-OLDS WHOSE PARENTS<sup>a</sup> READ TO THEM EVERY DAY OR TOLD THEM STORIES REGULARLY<sup>b</sup>, BY RACE/ETHNICITY, GENDER, FAMILY TYPE, AND MOTHER'S EDUCATION: 1993**

Read to or Told a Story	
Total	64
Race/Ethnicity	
White	69
Black	56
Hispanic	53
American Indian/Alaskan	50
Asian/Pacific Islander	66
Gender	
Male	63
Female	65
Family Type	
Two parents	67
None or one parent	58
Mother's Education	
Completed high school/GED	67
Did not complete high school	51

Notes: <sup>a</sup> parent or another family member.

<sup>b</sup> Response of “read to everyday” or “told a story 3 or more times a week.”

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), *1992 Trends in Academic Progress*.

## RELATED BEHAVIORS AND CHARACTERISTICS

### EA 3.1.B READING HABITS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Independent reading is one necessary aspect of literacy development. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has documented the association between students who read for fun in their free time and reading achievement. Students in grades 4, 8, and 12 who read more frequently for fun had consistently higher average reading proficiency scores than those students who read less often.<sup>90</sup>

As shown in Table EA 3.1.b, less than half of fourth graders (44 percent), and less than a quarter of eighth and twelfth graders (22 percent and 23 percent, respectively) reported reading for fun on a daily basis in 1992. In both fourth and eighth grades, larger proportions of girls than boys reported frequent reading in their spare time. For example, over half (51 percent) of fourth grade girls read for fun on a daily basis, in comparison with only 36 percent of fourth grade boys. Among twelfth graders, however, about equal proportions of boys (23 percent) and girls (22 percent) reported reading on a daily basis.

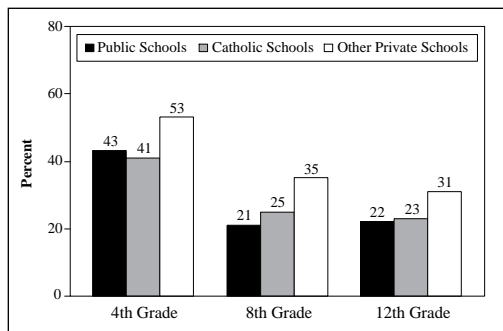
Asian students reported the highest level of reading daily (50 percent), and black students the lowest (40 percent), with whites, Hispanics, and Native American children in between. By twelfth grade rates across these groups ranged from 17 percent (black) to 25 percent (Native American and white).

There were differences in the percentage of students who reported reading on a daily basis by parents' educational level. For example, larger percentages of twelfth grade students whose parents had some education after high school (22 percent), or who graduated from college (28 percent) than students whose parents did not finish high school (14 percent) or only graduated from high school (18 percent) read for fun on a daily basis. These patterns are similar among eighth graders.

As illustrated in Figure EA 3.1.b, larger percentages of students in each grade who attended non-Catholic private schools than either public or Catholic schools, read for fun on a frequent basis. Nearly equal percentages of public and Catholic school students reported reading in their free time on a daily basis in eighth (21 percent and 25 percent) and twelfth grades (22 percent and 23 percent), but not in fourth grade (43 percent and 41 percent).

<sup>90</sup>National Center for Education Statistics (1993). *NAEP 1992: Reading Report Card for the Nation and the States*. Report No. 23-ST06. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

**Figure EA 3.1.B PERCENT OF STUDENTS IN 4TH, 8TH, AND 12TH GRADE WHO READ FOR FUN ON A DAILY BASIS, BY TYPE OF SCHOOL: 1992**



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1992 Reading Assessment, unpublished data.

**Table EA 3.1.B PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS IN 4TH, 8TH, AND 12TH GRADE WHO READ FOR FUN ON A DAILY BASIS BY GENDER, RACE/ETHNICITY, PARENT'S EDUCATION, AND TYPE OF SCHOOL: 1992**

	4th Grade	8th Grade	12th Grade
Total	44	22	23
Gender			
Male	36	17	23
Female	51	27	22
Race/Ethnicity			
White	44	24	25
Black	40	15	17
Hispanic	44	17	18
Asian/Pacific Islander	50	26	22
American Indian	45	31	25
Parents' Education <sup>a</sup>			
Did not finish high school	—	18	14
Graduated high school	—	18	18
Some education after high school	—	23	22
Graduated college	—	26	28
Type of School			
Public schools	43	21	22
Catholic schools	41	25	23
Other Private schools	53	35	31

Note: <sup>a</sup> Percent reading for fun is not reported by parent's education for 4th graders because over a third did not know their parent's level of education.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1992 Reading Assessment, unpublished data.

## RELATED BEHAVIORS AND CHARACTERISTICS

### EA 3.2 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILD'S SCHOOL

Parental involvement in school activities has been identified by many educators as having a positive impact on the school performance of children.<sup>92</sup> Greater involvement is thought to be associated with greater monitoring of school and classroom activities, a closer coordination of teacher and parent efforts, greater teacher attention to the child, and earlier identification of problems that might inhibit learning.<sup>93</sup>

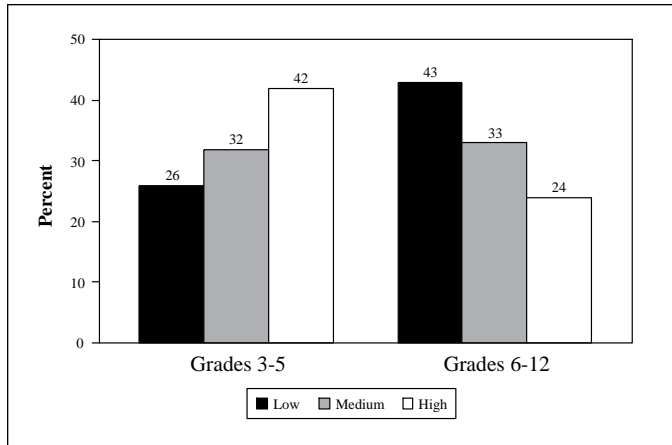
Figure EA 3.2 presents national estimates for 1993 on the degree of parental school participation among parents of children in grades 3-5 and 6-12. Possible activities include general school meetings (e.g., PTA meeting or back-to-school night), attending a class event such as a play or sports event, and volunteering in the classroom or to serve on a school committee. The figure demonstrates that levels of parental involvement in school activities decreases substantially as children age. Forty-two percent of parents with children in grades 3-5 were classified as highly involved, meaning that they had been involved in all three types of activities described above during the school year. The level of involvement among parents of older children in grades 6-12 is substantially lower with 24 percent classified as highly involved. Nearly one half of the parents of older children were classified as having a low level of involvement, defined as having participated in one or no school activities.

Table EA 3.2 shows that the degree of school involvement varies substantially according to characteristics of the family and the school. These data refer only to parents of children in grades 6-12. Parents with a college degree were far more likely to be highly involved in school activities than are parents with less than a high school degree (43 percent versus 7 percent). Families where there are two biological parents in the households were more likely to be highly involved than either mother-only families or families involving step-fathers (33 percent versus 14 percent and 18 percent). Mothers who worked part-time were more likely to be highly involved (32 percent) than either mothers who work full time (24 percent) or those who were not in the labor force (24 percent). Mothers who were unemployed were even less likely to be highly involved in school activities (12 percent). Finally, parents of children in private school were more than twice as likely to be highly involved in school activities as parents of public school children (54 percent versus 22 percent).

<sup>92</sup>Cited in Zill, N., and Nord, C.W. (1994). *Running in Place: How American Families are Faring in a Changing Economy and Individualistic Society*. Child Trends, Inc.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

Figure EA 3.2 DEGREE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILD'S SCHOOL ACTIVITIES IN 1993



Note: Parents were asked about whether they had participated in the following activities: (1) attended a general school meeting such as a back to school night; (2) attended a school or class event such as a play or sports event; and (3) volunteered at the school or served on a school committee. Parents who had done none of these things or only one were categorized as displaying a low level of involvement. Parents who answered yes to two of the questions were classified as having a moderate level of involvement, while those who had done all three were said to have a high level of involvement.

Source: Zill, N. and Nord, C.W. (1994). *Running in Place: How America Families are Faring in a Changing Economy and an Individualistic Society*. Child Trends, Inc. Compiled with data from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1993. National Household Education Survey, School Safety and Discipline component.

## RELATED BEHAVIORS AND CHARACTERISTICS

**Table EA 3.2 PERCENT OF PARENTS WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THEIR CHILD'S SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, BY GRADE AND LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT<sup>a</sup>: 1993**

	Low Involvement		Moderate Involvement		High Involvement	
	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-12	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-12	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-12
All Parents	26	43	32	33	42	24
Parental Education Level						
Less than high school	—	74	—	19	—	7
High school graduate	—	53	—	31	—	16
Some college	—	41	—	35	—	24
College graduate or more	—	21	—	36	—	43
Family Type						
Mother-father families	—	34	—	33	—	33
Mother-only families	—	54	—	32	—	14
Mother-stepfather families	—	46	—	36	—	18
Mother's Employment						
Works full-time	—	40	—	36	—	24
Works part-time	—	36	—	32	—	32
Not in labor force	—	50	—	26	—	24
Looking for work	—	54	—	34	—	12
School Type						
Public	—	45	—	33	—	22
Private	—	16	—	30	—	54

Note: <sup>a</sup>Parents were asked about whether they had participated in the following activities: (1) attended a general school meeting such as a back to school night; (2) attended a school or class event such as a play or sports event; and (3) volunteered at the school or served on a school committee. Parents who had done none of these things or only one were categorized as displaying a low level of involvement. Parents who answered yes to 2 of the questions were classified as having a moderate level of involvement, while those who had done all three were said to have a high level of involvement.

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