

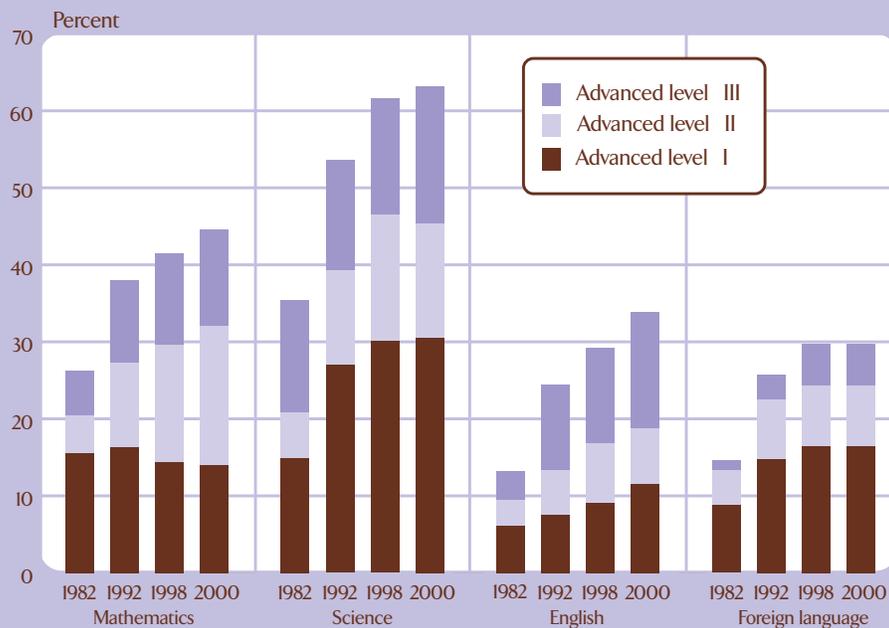
## Education indicators

Education shapes the personal growth and life chances of children, as well as the economic and social progress of our Nation. Early educational experiences, such as reading to children, improve skills and academic success in school,<sup>11</sup> while later academic accomplishments, such as advanced coursetaking and high school completion, promote achievement in higher education and employment prospects.<sup>12,13</sup>

The most recently available data (2001) indicate that 58 percent of 3- to 5-year olds were read to daily by a family member. This percentage has fluctuated since 1993, ranging from 53 to 58 percent. Females (61 percent) were more likely to have been read to than males (55 percent).

Long-term increases in academic coursetaking are among the most noteworthy improvements in childhood education; between 1998 and 2000, however, the only significant increase in academic coursetaking was in English. The percentage of high school graduates who had taken honors-level English courses increased 2.5 times, from 13 percent in 1982 to 34 percent in 2000, with the largest increases occurring in the percentage of students taking 75 percent or more of their English courses at the honors level (Figure 9). Similarly, the percentage of high school graduates taking advanced

**FIGURE 9** Percentage of high school graduates who completed high-level coursework in mathematics, science, English, and foreign language, 1982, 1992, 1998, and 2000



NOTE: Mathematics level I: algebra III and trigonometry; level II: precalculus; level III: calculus. Science level I: chemistry I or physics I; level II: chemistry I and physics I; level III: chemistry II or physics II or advanced biology. English level I: less than 50 percent of completed courses classified as honors (vs. low academic and regular courses); level II: 50-74 percent in honors; level III: 75 percent or more honors courses. Foreign language level I: 3 years of Spanish, French, Latin, or German; level II: 4 years; level III: advanced placement.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. High School and Beyond Survey, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, and National Assessment of Educational Progress Transcript Study.

<sup>11</sup> Snow, C.E., Burns, M.S., and Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

<sup>12</sup> Horn, L., Nunez, A.M., and Bobbitt, L. (2000). *Mapping the Road to College: First-Generation Students' Math Track, Planning Strategies, and Context for Support*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

<sup>13</sup> American Council on Education. (1994). *Higher Education Today: Facts in Brief*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education, Division of Policy Analysis and Research.

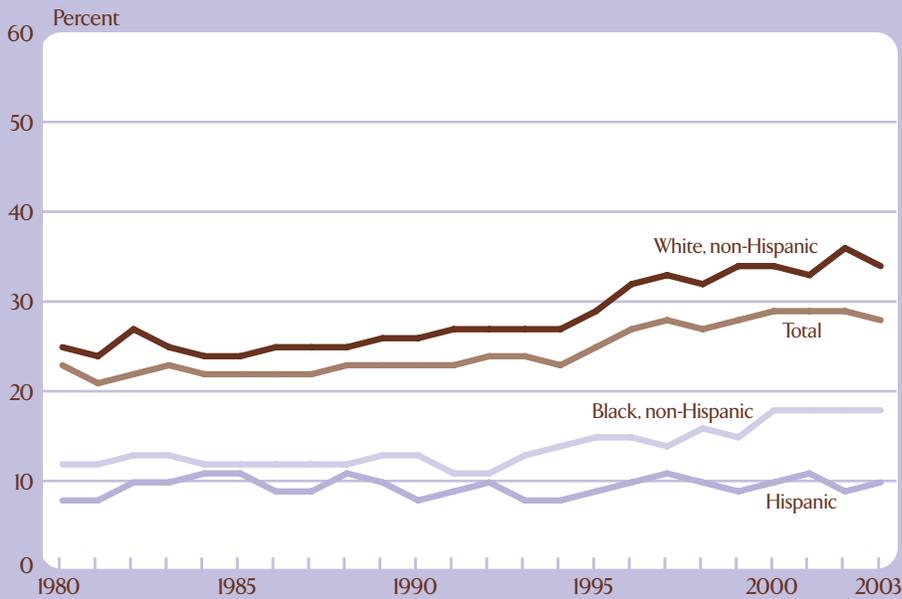
mathematics courses went up more than 1.5 times, from 26 percent in 1982 to 45 percent in 2000, and the percentage taking advanced foreign language doubled, from 15 percent in 1982 to 30 percent in 2000. In each subject, the largest increases occurred among students taking the highest-level courses. In 2000, 63 percent of high school graduates had taken an advanced science class (physics or chemistry), up from 54 percent in 1992 and 35 percent in 1982.

The percentage of young adults ages 18 to 24 who had completed high school with a diploma or an alternative credential such as a General Education Development (GED) certificate increased only slightly, from 84 percent in 1980 to 87 percent in 2001. Racial and ethnic differences persist, with 91 percent of White, non-Hispanic young adults having completed high school, compared with 86 percent of Black, non-Hispanic young adults and 66 percent of Hispanic young adults.

The percentage of 25- to 29-year olds who completed a bachelor's or more advanced degree increased steadily from 1980 through 1996, but has remained relatively stable since, fluctuating between 27 and 29 percent (Figure 10). In 2003, 28 percent of adults ages 25 to 29 had attained a bachelor's degree or higher. White, non-Hispanics (34 percent) were more likely to attain higher education than Black, non-Hispanics (18 percent) and Hispanics (10 percent). Hispanic adults not only have the lowest rates of attaining higher education, but also have not experienced the recent significant increases evident among White, non-Hispanics and Black, non-Hispanics. Between 1980 and 2002, there was no significant change in higher education attainment among Hispanics, while attainment among White, non-Hispanics increased by nearly one-half and attainment among Black, non-Hispanics increased by one-half.

**FIGURE 10**

**Percentage of 25- to 29-year olds who have completed a bachelor's or more advanced degree by race and Hispanic origin, 1980-2003**



NOTE: Prior to 1992, this indicator was measured as completing four or more years of college rather than the actual attainment of a bachelor's degree. Beginning in 2003, the Current Population Survey asked respondents to choose one or more races. All race groups discussed in this figure from 2003 onward refer to people who indicated only one racial identity.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau. Current Population Survey, March and Annual Social Economic Supplements. Tabulated by the U.S. Department of Education.