

FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES



FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

There are many important variables that affect student achievement; however, one that often gets overlooked by assessments and learning standards is family involvement.

Research suggests that parental engagement has a strong positive impact on student achievement, particularly in those areas with fewer relative school resources.¹ Additionally, recent studies by the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) establish the critical relationship between community strength, or social capital, and schools.

CCSR found that schools in which communities have successfully built a school-community bond also have been successful in creating essential educational supports, such as clear, rigorous instruction, strong professional development and robust parental involvement.

More established social and economic characteristics—measures of family income, unemployment and educational attainment—also impact a child’s cognition and development.

While *Illinois Kids Count 2009* does not draw student achievement conclusions based on the data published in the book, it does present indicators to provide a picture of the characteristics and environments of families and communities in which Illinois children are being raised.

Research shows a link between poverty and children’s cognitive and school-related outcomes across educational stages. In 2007, nearly 9 percent of all Illinois families with children under age 18 lived below the poverty level for more than a year. This figure dropped to slightly more than 5 percent for married-couple families and jumped significantly to 34 percent for single-mother families.

This data reflects the lag in income for single-mother households compared to other families. In 2007, on average, single mothers with children under age 18



earned almost \$55,000 less than married-couple families with children under age 18 and \$14,500 less than single fathers with children under age 18.

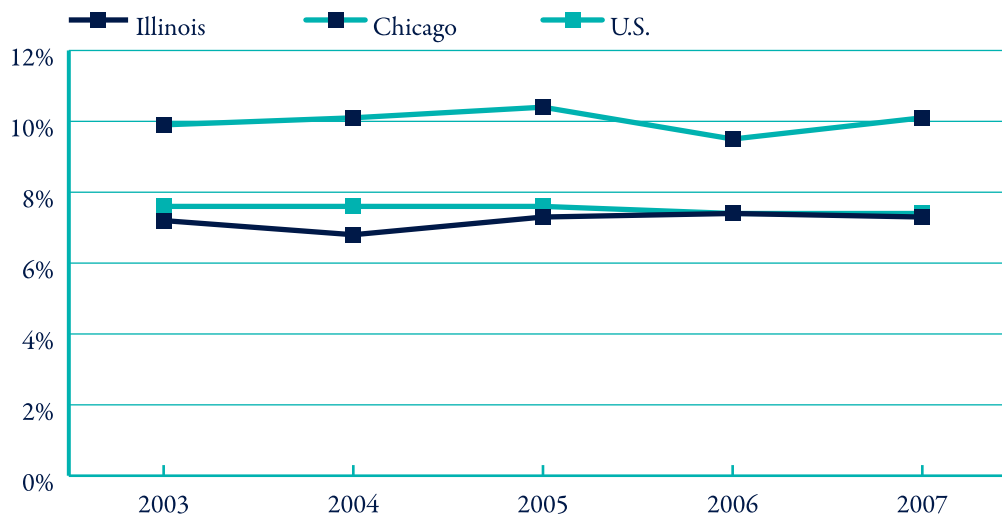
Unemployment in Illinois and the United States has fluctuated since 2000, dipping to 4.5 percent in 2006. However, in Illinois, it rose to 5 percent in 2007, and has steadily increased in 2008, reaching 7.3 percent in November, its highest point since 6.7 percent in 2003.

Mother’s education also is an important predictor of a child’s achievement. Mothers who give birth as teenagers are less likely to have a high school diploma than adult mothers. Births to teen mothers in Illinois have declined 15 percent from 2000 to 2006. Additionally, teen births to women who were already mothers have dropped even more—nearly 28 percent from 2000 to 2005. Furthermore, the number of births to mothers in Illinois with less than 12 years of education has decreased 10 percent.

It is clear that strong ties between parents/communities and schools positively impact students’ educational success throughout childhood and adolescence. While the nature of the involvement changes as children mature and their needs change, it nonetheless remains essential.

¹Houtenville, Andrew J. and Karen Smith Conway, “Parental Effort, School Resources and Student Achievement,” *The Journal of Human Resources*, XLIII, 2008, pp. 437-453.

Percentage of Female Householder with Own Children and No Husband Present, Illinois, Chicago and U.S.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Language Spoken at Home, Illinois and Chicago, 2007

	Illinois	Chicago
Population 5 years and over	11,961,769	2,533,959
English only	78.2%	63.9%
Language other than English	21.8%	36.1%
Speak English less than "very well"	9.8%	17.5%
Spanish	12.8%	24.9%
Speak English less than "very well"	6.3%	12.2%
Other Indo-European languages	5.6%	6.5%
Speak English less than "very well"	2.1%	3.0%
Asian and Pacific Islander languages	2.5%	3.2%
Speak English less than "very well"	1.1%	1.7%
Other languages	0.8%	1.4%
Speak English less than "very well"	0.3%	0.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey

Grandparents Living with Own Grandchildren Under 18 Years, Illinois and Chicago, 2007

	Illinois		Chicago	
Grandparents living with own grandchildren	263,363	100.0%	81,327	100.0%
Grandparents financially responsible for grandchildren	101,879	38.7%	31,693	39.0%
Years responsible for grandchildren				
Less than 1 year	21,188	8.0%	6,569	8.1%
1 or 2 years	24,847	9.4%	6,111	7.5%
3 or 4 years	17,437	6.6%	6,153	7.6%
5 or more years	38,407	14.6%	12,860	15.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey

Families and Communities

Median Income for Families with Own Children Under Age 18, Illinois, Chicago and U.S., 2007 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars

	Illinois	Chicago	U.S.
Total	\$65,761	\$51,472	\$61,173
Married-couple family			
Total	\$77,393	\$70,037	\$72,168
With own children under 18 years	\$80,675	\$66,785	\$76,393
No own children under 18 years	\$74,570	\$72,258	\$69,120
Other family			
Total	\$35,889	\$33,357	\$33,533
Male householder, no wife present			
Total	\$47,296	\$47,665	\$43,975
With own children under 18 years	\$40,416	\$41,786	\$37,559
No own children under 18 years	\$52,569	\$51,487	\$51,135
Female householder, no husband present			
Total	\$32,261	\$30,245	\$30,114
With own children under 18 years	\$25,912	\$22,776	\$23,761
No own children under 18 years	\$44,835	\$40,544	\$41,616

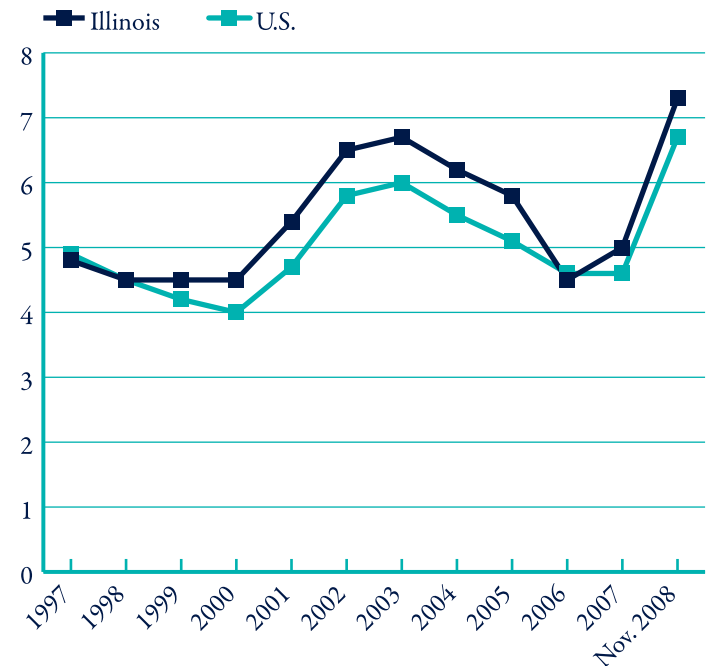
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey

Percentage of Families Whose Income in the Past 12 Months is Below the Poverty Level, Illinois, Chicago and U.S., 2007

	Illinois	Chicago	U.S.
All families	8.8%	16.7%	9.5%
With related children under 18 years	13.5%	23.8%	14.9%
With related children under 5 years only	13.4%	16.1%	16.0%
Married couple families	4.0%	8.9%	4.5%
With related children under 18 years	5.6%	12.4%	6.4%
With related children under 5 years only	4.7%	5.5%	5.9%
Families with female householder, no husband present	26.1%	31.1%	28.2%
With related children under 18 years	34.2%	39.7%	36.5%
With related children under 5 years only	39.9%	37.2%	44.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey

Average Unemployment Rates, Illinois and U.S.



Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security

Educational Attainment, Age 25 and Older, Illinois, Chicago and U.S., 2007

	Illinois	Chicago	U.S.
Percent high school graduate or higher	85.7%	78.5%	84.5%
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	29.5%	29.6%	27.5%
Less than 9th grade	6.3%	10.5%	6.4%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	8.0%	11.0%	9.1%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	29.1%	27.0%	30.1%
Some college, no degree	19.9%	16.5%	19.5%
Associate's degree	7.2%	5.5%	7.4%
Bachelor's degree	18.4%	17.8%	17.4%
Graduate or professional degree	11.0%	11.8%	10.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey

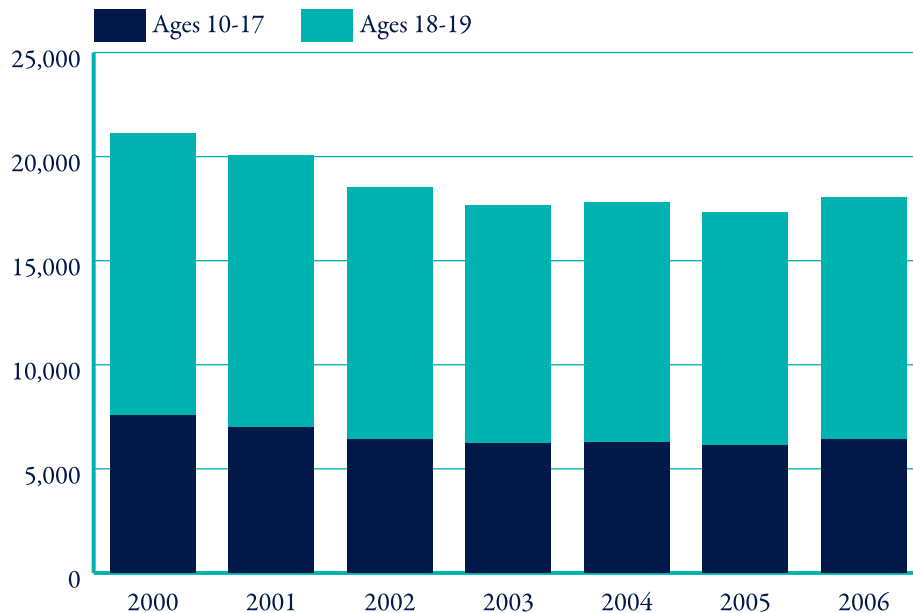
Occupations for Employed Civilians, Age 16 and Older, Illinois and Chicago, 2007

	Illinois	Chicago	U.S.
Management, professional and related occupations	34.3%	33.6%	34.6%
Service occupations	16.2%	19.6%	16.7%
Sales and office occupations	26.4%	24.8%	25.6%
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	0.3%	0.1%	0.7%
Construction, extraction, maintenance and repair occupations	8.2%	6.8%	9.7%
Production, transportation and material moving occupations	14.6%	15.1%	12.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey

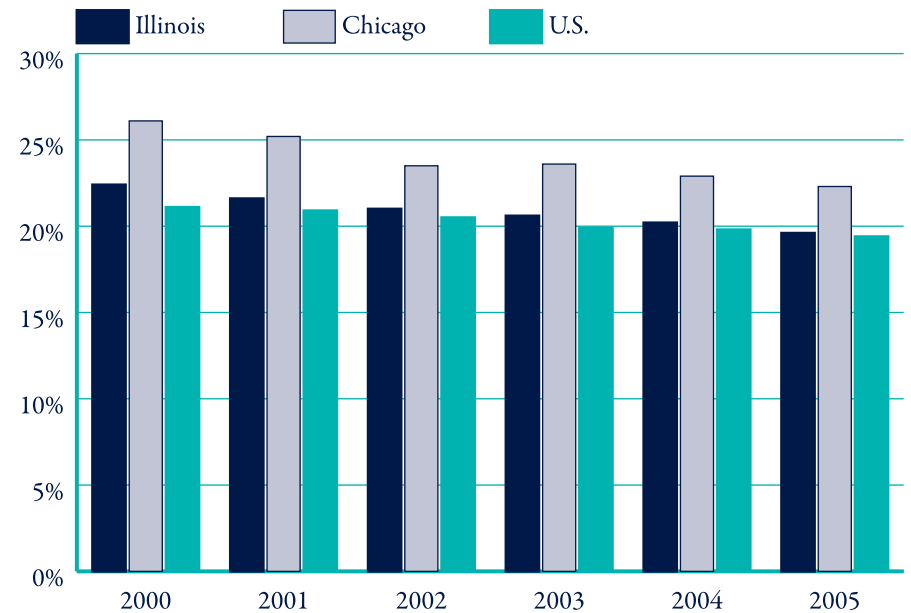
Families and Communities

Births to Teen Mothers, Illinois



Source: Illinois Department of Public Health

Teen Births to Women Who were Already Mothers, Illinois, Chicago and U.S.



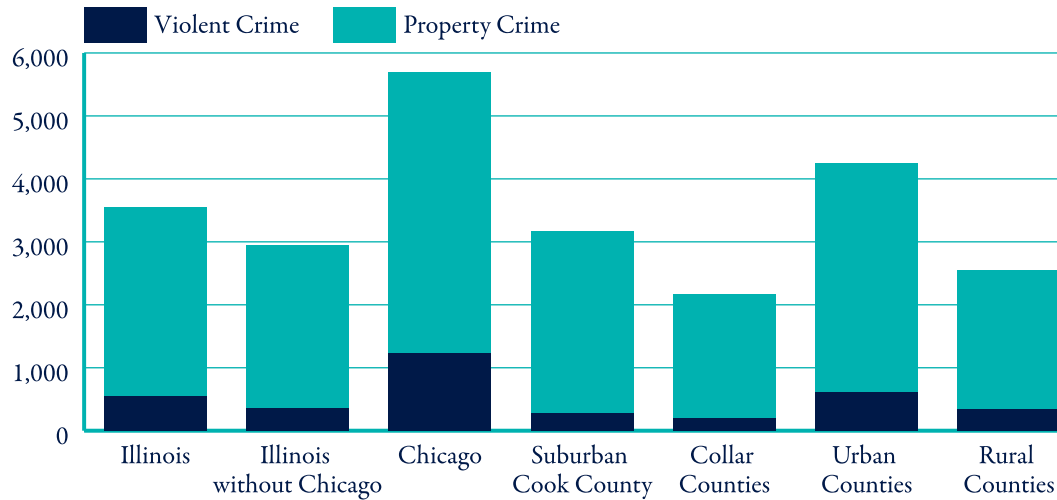
Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, based on data from a Child Trends analysis of National Center for Health Statistics 1990-2004 Natality Data Set

Births to Mothers with Less than 12 Years of Education, Illinois, Chicago and U.S.

	Illinois	Chicago	U.S.
2000	21.9%	34.9%	21.7%
2001	21.7%	34.1%	21.7%
2002	21.3%	33.2%	21.5%
2003	21.1%	32.5%	21.6%
2004	20.8%	31.6%	22.2%
2005	20.4%	30.5%	20.9%
% Change	-10.1%	-22.4%	-32.4%

Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, based on a Child Trends analysis of National Center for Health Statistics 1990-2005 Natality Data Set

Illinois Crime Index Offense Rate (per 100,000) by Region, 2007



Source: Illinois State Police

Illinois Crime Index Offense Rate (per 100,000)

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Violent Crimes						
Murder	7.7	7.1	6.2	6.1	6.1	5.9
Criminal Sexual Assault	49.0	46.5	46.3	47.3	44.2	43.6
Robbery	202.3	189.2	178.7	183.1	186.6	180.3
Aggravated	365.8	330.6	331.0	332.5	321.1	317.3
Subtotal	624.8	573.4	562.2	569.1	558.1	547.1
Property Crimes						
Burglary	650.0	622.5	601.3	610.6	605.3	588.6
Theft	2,484.5	2,402.5	2,339.2	2,228.4	2,181.9	2,133.3
Motor Vehicle Theft	360.9	334.2	322.4	312.6	297.9	267.2
Arson	23.9	22.6	19.3	19.4	18.7	18.2
Subtotal	3,519.3	3,381.8	3,282.3	3,171.0	3,103.8	3,007.2
Crimes Index Total	4,144.1	3,955.2	3,844.5	3,740.1	3,661.8	3,554.3

Source: Illinois State Police

Parent Involvement Makes a Difference

By Lina Cramer

Senior Consultant, *Strengthening Families* and former Director of the *Illinois Family Partnership Network*

All parents want their children to succeed in school. Studies consistently show that all parents—across demographic categories, such as income, education levels, ethnic, cultural or geographic—are involved in supporting their children’s learning at home.

Parental involvement makes a difference. Indeed research indicates that robust partnerships with parents are a significant factor in supporting children’s learning and school improvement. Specifically, according to the National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools, when parents are actively engaged, children:

- Earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs
- Are promoted, pass their classes and earn credits
- Attend school regularly
- Have better social skills, show improved behavior and adapt well to school
- Graduate and go on to postsecondary education

Parental Support at Home and at School

Parental expectations about their children’s education and school participation both current and future are extremely important. When parents encourage learning, provide structure and support for school attendance and assignments and are consistent in their interest in their academic progress, children know that their parents are invested in their success in school and life.

When parents understand that it is their right and responsibility to their children to forge partnerships with fellow parents and a school’s teachers and leaders, they can have a positive impact on their student’s academic success.

What is more, parents’ regular communication with teachers builds understanding and increases the likelihood that they can work in partnership for consistency and proactively support their children’s learning by addressing needs or resolving challenges collaboratively.

School-Parent Partnerships

Schools need to be intentional about building positive relationships with all parents.

When parents feel welcome, are respected for their knowledge and engaged as valuable partners, student learning is supported at home and at school. Regular communication, openness to input and inquiry, and opportunities to contribute and to learn promote parents’ feeling that they are essential members of the school community.

While some schools and a few districts in Illinois consistently engage parents and sustain meaningful partnerships—they are in the minority. Even with the increased attention and requirements of No Child Left Behind, parent involvement continues to languish in most schools and districts.

Systemwide Approach

Illinois schools and districts need a comprehensive approach to engage families, as defined by from the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, that:

- Prepares educators, school leaders, support staff, administrators and parents and families to support learning and participate in family-school partnerships that encourage engagement.

- Focuses on meaningful outcomes and purposes that relate directly to learning expectations for students.
- Advocates for an inclusive educational culture that involves all stakeholders in supporting students in their academic pursuits.

Any systemic effort to build trusting relationships between schools and families must focus on all ages and with attention to transitions, such as entering kindergarten, middle or high school. Such an approach requires the devotion of resources—staff, time, physical space—to build capacity and develop policies, measures and accountability in order to fully support and sustain meaningful parental involvement in schools and learning.

As the debate about how to improve our schools grows louder, one important strategy continues to be put on the back burner: parents’ role in supporting children’s learning and improving school success. It is time to stop pointing fingers or assigning blame; our children need strong parent-school partnerships to ensure that children learn and that schools work for all children.

The Most Fundamental Issue for Our Nation

By Edward B. Rust Jr.

Chairman and CEO, State Farm®

Each new year brings with it a sense of renewal. And when a new year also means new national leadership, as this one does, new energy and hope arrive concerning issues critical to our nation's future.

President Obama faces substantial challenges dealing with America's overall economic well-being and national security. These priorities compete for his leadership focus and our nation's financial resources. But these pressing issues must not detour us from addressing a need most fundamental to our nation's future: the education of our children.

Mr. Obama, himself, has said quality education "probably has more to do with our economic future than anything." I would add it also has a lot to do with our national security, with producing good citizens and great leaders. And it has everything to do with preparing our children for future opportunities.

Most every discussion about improving the quality of our schools inevitably leads to the topic of money. Current dollars must be spent wisely, and more dollars are needed to improve schools. I believe American business is prepared to make the needed investments—but only if we can be sure that when students emerge from our schools, they'll have the knowledge and skills necessary to be productive workers and managers in our factories and offices.

All too often today, that simply is not happening.

As he sought our votes, Mr. Obama identified several education imperatives:

- Improve early childhood education. This has been at the top of the Voices for Illinois Children agenda for more than two decades now. We need to cultivate curiosity and learning whether children are with parents or other caretakers.

- Prepare effective educators. We desperately need to recruit the right kind of people into teaching and properly prepare them. We must retain and reward good teachers and replace those who missed their calling.
- Prioritize science and math. We want our children to receive well-rounded educations, but if we don't improve achievement in science and math, our security, standard of living and social structure will slip backwards.
- Reduce dropout rate. Nearly 300 kids drop out of Illinois high schools every school day. We must do more to help our most at-risk kids stay in school and succeed there.
- Eliminate the achievement gap. "No Child Left Behind" needs to be improved but it has started to advance achievement among minority students. High standards and more accountability can help close the gap.

Improved education won't happen overnight. But that's no excuse for letting other issues elbow school reform onto the "this can wait" list.

Consider this: Every day we delay upgrading the quality of education in America represents only a small part of the academic life of each of the 75 million young Americans. But cumulatively, that single day's delay equates to more than 200,000 years of missed opportunities to better prepare the next generation for a challenging future.

This is the single issue most important to our collective future. That means every parent, every teacher and administrator, every business leader—every citizen and every community—must give our very best toward a common goal of building better lives for the generations to come.