

Census: Interaction between kids and parents on the rise

Many young children are getting a head start on acquiring the skills needed to read, as family members take time out of their day on a regular basis to read aloud with them, the U.S. Census Bureau reports.

In 2009, half of children ages 1 to 5 were read to seven or more times a week by a family member.

“Selected Indicators of Child Well-Being (A Child’s Day): 2009” uses statistics from the Survey of Income and Program Participation to provide a glimpse into how children younger than 18 spend their day, touching on subjects such as the degree of interaction with parents and extracurricular activities. These statistics are compared with those from earlier years.

While reading interactions are more frequent among families above poverty, reading interactions among low-income families have increased over the last 10 years. In 2009, 56 percent of 1- and 2-year-olds above poverty were read to seven or more times a week, compared with 45 percent below the poverty level. However, while parental reading involvement for children above poverty was not different from rates in 1998, it rose from 37 percent for those below poverty.

According to this latest look into the lives of children, more children are taking honors or advanced placement classes. From 1998 to 2009, the percentage of children ages 12 to 17 enrolled in gifted classes climbed from 21 percent to 27 percent.

At the same time more children are taking gifted classes, fewer are participating in athletics. Regardless of the children’s age, participation in sports decreased from 41

percent in 2006 down to 36 percent in 2009.

Other highlights:

- The percentage of children who talked or played together with a parent three or more times in a typical day increased from 50 percent in 1998 to 57 percent in 2009.
- The percentage of children who ate dinner with a designated parent seven times per week on average increased slightly from 69 percent in 1998 to 72 percent in 2009.
- The percentage of children whose parents praised them three or more times per day increased from 48 percent in 1998 to 57 percent in 2009.
- Children 12 to 17 years old were more likely than children 6 to 11 to participate in sports in 2009 (41 percent and 32 percent, respectively).
- Younger children 6 to 11 were more likely than older children to participate in lessons (32 percent and 29 percent, respectively). Lessons include those taken after school or on the weekend in subjects such as music, dance, language, computers or religion.
- In 2009, 5 percent of children 6 to 11 and 9 percent 12 to 17 had ever repeated a grade.

The Survey of Income and Program Participation produces national estimates for the U.S. resident population and subgroups and allows for the observation of trends over time, particularly of selected characteristics, such as income, eligibility for and participation in government assistance programs, household and family composition, labor force behavior and other associated events.

Questions for each child are asked of the designated parent.