

Educational Issues

Secondary Data

Data in Tables 8 and 9 provide comparative data for level of educational attainment, school dropout rates and graduation rates for Weld County. As shown in Table 8, the educational attainment level in Weld County has improved from 1990 levels. There are fewer individuals with educational attainment levels of high school graduates or less and an increase in the percentages of individuals with an educational level higher than high school. Compared to Colorado levels, overall, the educational attainment percentages are higher at all levels with the exception of high school graduate (23.2% vs. 26.9%) and associates degree (7.0% vs. 7.3%). The percent of high school graduate or higher and bachelor's degree or higher in Weld has increase from 1990 levels. ACT composite scores have also improved slightly from 1990 levels, although for each of these indicators, Weld is slightly below State or National levels.

Table 8. National, State and County Educational Indicators

Education Indicator	National	Colorado 2000	Weld County 1990	Weld County 2000
Educational Attainment (Persons 25 years and older)				
Less than 9 th Grade	7.5%	4.8%	12.0%	9.8%
9 th to 12 th Grade, no diploma	12.1%	8.2%	13.0%	10.5%
High school graduate	33.8%	23.2%	29.1%	26.9%
Some college, but no degree	17.2%	24.0%	20.9%	23.8%
Associates degree	7.5%	7.0%	6.3%	7.3%
Bachelor degree	16.4%	21.6%	11.9%	14.6%
Advanced degree	7.9%	11.1%	6.4%	7.1%
ACT scores composite	21.0	21.5	WC School District 6 20.9	WC School District 6 21.1
% high school graduate or higher	80.4%	86.9%	74.9%	79.6%
% bachelor's degree or higher	24.4%	32.7%	18.4%	21.6%

Table 9. Colorado Department of Education 5-Year Trend Dropout Rates Including Alternative Schools 1998-1999 To 2002-2003

County/School District	1998-1999			1999-2000			2000-2001			2001-2002			2002-2003		
	Dropout Rates Including Alternative Schools			Dropout Rates Including Alternative Schools			Dropout Rates Including Alternative Schools			Dropout Rates Including Alternative Schools			Dropout Rates Including Alternative Schools		
	Pupil Count	Dropouts	Rate	Pupil Count	Dropouts	Rate	Pupil Count	Dropouts	Rate	Pupil Count	Dropouts	Rate	Pupil Count	Dropouts	Rate
WELD															
Weld County RE-1	972	52	5.3%	967	38	3.9%	983	28	2.8%	981	21	2.1%	1,007	13	1.3%
Eaton RE-2	733	20	2.7%	761	28	3.7%	743	20	2.7%	737	19	2.6%	793	19	2.4%
Keenesburg RE-3(J)	731	1	0.1%	784	38	4.8%	815	4	0.5%	819	12	1.5%	850	25	2.9%
Windsor RE-4	1,202	33	2.7%	1,202	26	2.2%	1,284	28	2.2%	1,344	21	1.6%	1,431	10	0.7%
Johnstown-Milliken RE-5J	740	43	5.8%	770	17	2.2%	810	29	3.6%	769	36	4.7%	831	28	3.4%
Greeley 6	6,698	318	4.7%	7,174	275	3.8%	8,253	446	5.4%	7,336	238	3.2%	7,611	158	2.1%
Platte Valley RE-7	524	13	2.5%	532	10	1.9%	556	11	2.0%	533	13	2.4%	536	3	0.6%
Weld County RE-8	1,299	81	6.2%	1,371	22	1.6%	1,247	26	2.1%	1,247	37	3.0%	1,177	15	1.3%
Ault-Highland RE-9	457	14	3.1%	472	18	3.8%	494	22	4.5%	498	19	3.8%	511	16	3.1%
Briggsdale RE-10	64	0	0.0%	69	0	0.0%	66	0	0.0%	72	0	0.0%	72	0	0.0%
Prairie RE-11	65	0	0.0%	75	1	1.3%	68	2	2.9%	65	0	0.0%	56	0	0.0%
Pawnee RE-12	66	0	0.0%	70	0	0.0%	72	0	0.0%	71	0	0.0%	71	0	0.0%
* Average Rates for Weld	13,551	575	4.2%	14,247	473	3.3%	15,391	616	4.0%	14,472	416	2.9%	14,946	287	1.9%

As shown in Table 9, the overall dropout rates in Weld County School Districts have dropped from 4.2% in 1998-1999 to 2.9% in 2002-2003. Some districts, such as WC Gilcrest RE-1 and WC RE-8 have dropped markedly (5.3% and 6.2%, respectively in 1998-1999 to 1.3% and 1.3%, respectively in 2002-2003).

The average graduation rate for Weld County is 81.3% which is slightly lower than the State average of 83.6% (see Table 10). Graduation rates across school districts in Weld County ranged from 72.9% in the Ault-Highland District to 91.7% in the Windsor RE-4 district. In 9 out of the 10 school districts in Weld County, the graduation rates for whites was higher than Hispanic students. The difference in white and Hispanic graduation rates varied from 31.4% in Eaton RE-2 to 3% in Ault-Highland RE-9.

Table 10. Rate of Graduates for Weld County Schools and State (2003) ^a

County/School District	Graduates	Rate	Rates by Race		State Totals		
			Whites	Hispanics	Whites	Hispanics	All
WELD							
Weld County Gilcrest RE-1	95	85.6%	93.0%	71.1%			
Eaton RE-2	105	82.7%	89.1%	57.7%			
Keenesburg RE-3(J)	85	78.0%	80.4%	62.5%			
Windsor RE-4	187	91.7%	92.8%	86.2%			
Johnstown-Milliken RE-5J	89	74.8%	83.1%	59.0%			
Greeley 6	814	81.0%	89.7%	64.4%			
Platte Valley RE-7	69	87.3%	93.7%	64.3%			
Weld County RE-8	131	73.2%	86.0%	58.4%			
Ault-Highland RE-9	62	72.9%	73.8%	70.8%			
Briggsdale RE-10	10	100.0%	100%	NA			
Prairie RE-11	8	88.9%	87.5%	100%			
Pawnee RE-12	6	100.0%	100%	NA			
* Average Rates for Weld	1,661	81.3%			87.5%	69.6%	83.6%
a. Includes Alternative Schools							

Community Educational Issues – Survey Data

Key informants and household respondents were asked to indicate whether unsafe school environment, rundown building, overcrowded classrooms or lack of equipment was *not an issue, a minor, moderate, or major issue* for their community. Respondent perceptions of the extent to which educational concerns are an issue for their community appear in Table 11 and Figure 19.

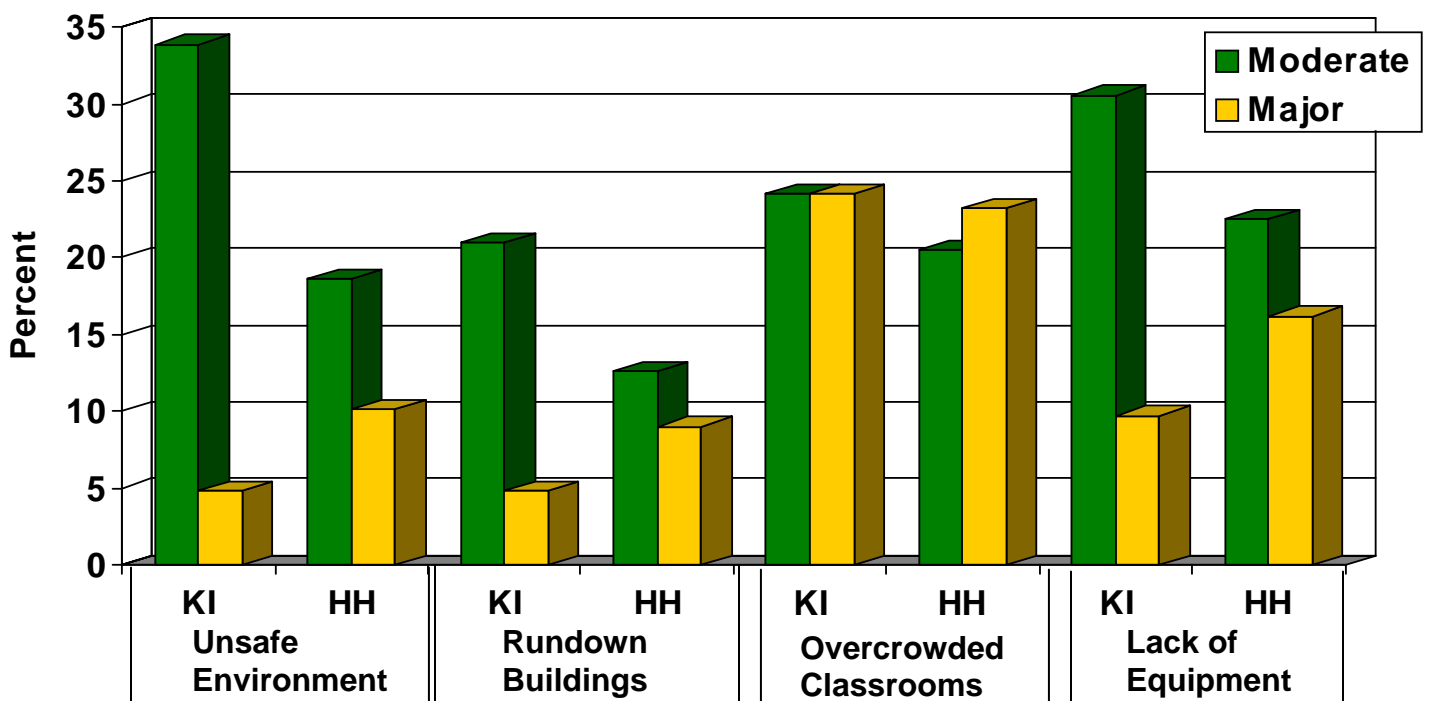
The majority of respondents did not feel that schools were unsafe or that the buildings were “rundown”. However, an almost equal percent of key informants and household respondents (48.4% and 43.7%, respectively) thought that overcrowded classrooms were either a moderate or major issue. A similar pattern was seen for lack of equipment as 40.3% of key informants and 38.7% of household respondents thought the lack of equipment was a moderate or major issue, although 22.3% indicated they didn’t know if lack of equipment was an issue for schools.

Table 11. Percent of Key Informants (KI) and Household Respondents (HH) Indicating that Community Educational Concerns Are a Minor, Moderate, Major Issue^a

Educational Issues	Minor Issue		Moderate Issue		Major Issue		Don't know	
	Key Informant %	HH %	Key Informant %	HH %	Key Informant %	HH %	Key Informant %	HH %
Unsafe school environment	33.9	20.0	33.9	18.6	4.8	10.1	4.8	14.5
Rundown building	30.6	19.5	21.0	12.6	4.8	9.0	9.7	11.0
Overcrowded classrooms	29.0	18.6	24.2	20.5	24.2	23.2	16.1	18.0
Lack of equipment	29.0	20.1	30.6	22.5	9.7	16.2	21.0	22.3

^a Throughout this report, the percent of respondents who reported concerns were “not an issue” were excluded from the charts and tables. The complete set of frequencies can be found in the Appendix.

Figure 24. Percent of Key Informants (KI) and Household Respondents (HH) Reporting Educational Issues as a Moderate or Major Community Problem



Community Educational Issues by Subgroup

No significant differences by the general categories of rural or urban households regarding any community educational issues were found. However, 28% of whites reported that an unsafe school environment was either a moderate or major issue, while 49.3% of non-whites¹ indicated that an unsafe school environment was either a moderate or major issue. Those with the lowest incomes (<\$14,999) reported that lack of equipment was a moderate or major issue compared to those with higher incomes who most often reported that lack of equipment was either a minor or moderate issue.

There were significant differences in respondent's perception of community educational issues depending on where they lived in Weld County. Sixty-six percent of those living in Evans, 44% of those respondents living in south-central Weld, and 43% living in south-west Weld reported that an unsafe school environment was either a moderate or major issue. Rundown buildings were a moderate or major issue for 35% of respondents living in south-west Weld and 30% of those living in west-central Weld. Overcrowded classrooms were seen as a moderate or major problem for six community areas in Weld County. These areas were south-central Weld (57.7%), south-west Weld (67.5%), west-central Weld (50.1%), east-central Weld (50.0%), Greeley (55.4%), and Evans (84.2%). Finally, lack of equipment was viewed as a moderate or major problem by respondents living in central-south Weld (64%), south-west Weld (65.7%), east-central Weld (50.0%), and Evans (86.7%).

Household Educational Issues – Survey Data

Respondents were asked to indicate if they or anyone in their household had experienced educational challenges such as inadequate educational opportunities, children being unsafe at school, or discrimination in school. The results are shown in Table 12 and Figure 25.

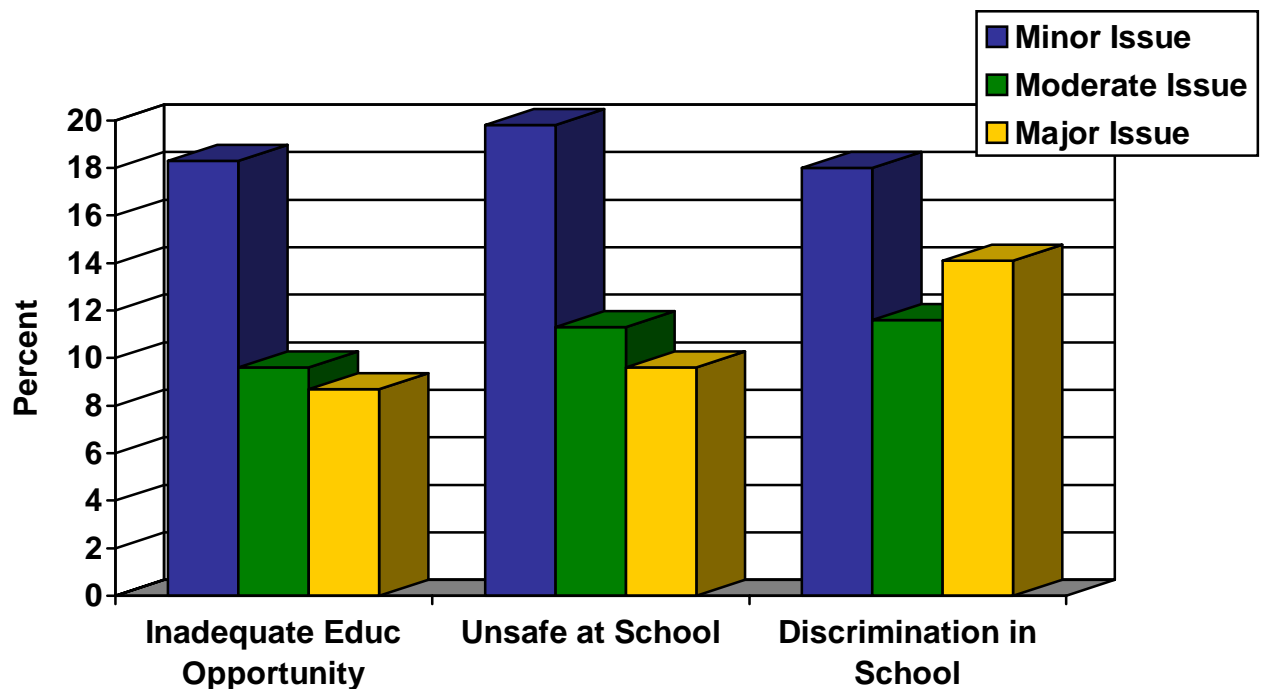
Table 12. Number and Percent of Respondents Reporting that Educational Concerns were Not an Issue, a Minor, Moderate or Major Issue for Their Household

Educational Issues	Not an Issue		Minor Issue		Moderate Issue		Major Issue	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Inadequate educational opportunities	232	63.4	67	18.3	35	9.6	32	8.7
Children being unsafe at school	216	59.3	72	19.8	41	11.3	35	9.6
Discrimination in school (because of gender, race or economics)	203	56.2	65	18.0	42	11.6	51	14.1

¹ Throughout this report non-whites were respondents who indicated they were either American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander, or Hispanic and were grouped together for additional analyses (n=88).

The majority of household respondent indicated that these were not educational issues they faced. However, of those who reported that these were minor, moderate, or major issues, discrimination in school because of race, gender, or economics was an issue for the highest percent of respondents. Inadequate educational opportunities, children unsafe at school, and discrimination were seen as issues for 36.6%, 40.7% and 43.8% of households, respectively.

Figure 25. Percent of Households Reporting Educational Concerns as a Minor, Moderate or Major Issue



Education was viewed by focus group participants as an important means for successful community integration and enculturation. English language and literacy were adult educational issues identified in the community.

“Illiteracy is a problem for some people who come from Mexico. That’s why I’m getting my GED because it is something very important.”

Another informant stated, “Literacy in English is a big issue.” The majority of focus group participants were in community ESL classes and/or GED classes.

Participants placed a high value on education for their children. Focus group participants are involved in the education of their children and did so by attending parent teacher conferences and school functions as well as arranging individual meetings with teachers. Parent participation was enhanced when language barriers were absent.

That is, when parents spoke English and/or when personal encounters and meetings were conducted in and/or translated to Spanish.

Many focus groups participants expressed satisfaction with the schools their children attended.

“As far as education wise, I think the teachers care and they go out of their way big time for the kids.”

Nonetheless, key issues emerged regarding the education system in rural and urban Weld county related to, 1) language, and 2) safety including bullying.

One mother expressed concern with the way teachers in her neighborhood elementary school treated monolingual children.

“In my neighborhood, the school where I am, the school is not very good. They treat the kids like they are all dumb. I have seen other schools where they do things very differently. They pay more attention; they communicate more with the parents. They don’t pay as much attention to the kids in my neighborhood.”

Focus group participants thought communication with their children’s’ teachers was imperative for successful learning of their children. In discussing the problems of education, they expressed frustration with language barriers that exist between teachers and parents.

“I want to communicate with the teacher but I think it’s a language problem. When we talk, like on the first day, she half-explains things to me and I half-understand, but we can’t come to an understanding.”

“I think this is a problem that many, many people have. More than the style of teaching, it’s the problem of language.”

“I think it’s a problem of the language more than the school. In Mexico, the school system is very different than in the United States.”

More often than not, teachers speak only English. Even though a translator may be available, some informants expressed a lack of contentment with the interaction.

“I have had a translator before but for me it’s not the same. I don’t know if there are problems or not.”

“You don’t know if the person is telling the teacher correctly what you said.”

A few focus groups participants expressed concerns related to issues of safety in rural and urban high schools.

“...In Mexico, the students have to clear backpacks so the teachers can see if they’re bringing in drugs or weapons. I think they should do this here. I think they can do more.”

“I’ve heard nothing but horror stories about the high school. It’s so bad to the point that I tell my husband that we have two years to get out because my son starts high school in two years.”

At a rural elementary school, parents discussed the issue of bullying:

“Bullying is a major problem there. She got bullied so bad last year there.”

Participants were vigilant about the issues in the school system and communicated with teachers and school officials when problems arose.

Other open comments about educational issues from the household survey included the following:

Educational opportunities:

- Special programs needed for gifted/talented charter schools and disabled students
- Not enough care for kids with special needs

Overcrowded schools

- Developments not paying its way causing over crowded schools
- Class room sizes increasing due to population expanding
- Growth and its impact on public education...over crowding, school facilities, transportation...Schools are being asked to do more with less

Racism

- Shortage of “experienced” teachers that truly care about the success of our Hispanic students
- Also the division in schools between Latinos or between Mexican-American and the Immigrant community is a major issue...Also many immigrants have no education beyond grade school

Quality Needs Concerns

- Achievement disparities by race and income
- Ensuring the competency of students in the basics of reading, writing and math...Ensuring cultural/bilingual needs are being met.
- Not enough electives that are the same as other schools
- Need preschools desperately, Montessori, Waldorf etc. Both public and private
- Inadequate elementary music education in public schools
- Dropping music and art in local schools

- Computer equipment, gym equipment, books

School Funding

- Teachers underpaid, under supplied
- Seriously unpaid teachers (under funded, teacher compensation)
- Poor teacher pay and recruitment
- Pay of employees and support of the people

Household Educational Issue by Subgroups

Additional analyses were conducted to examine any differences in educational issues by race, income, and geographical location. Inadequate educational opportunity was reported as a major issue for individuals living in rural Weld compared to those living in the Greeley/Evans area (11.2% vs. 5.3%). Respondents who were non-white¹ were more likely to report that inadequate educational opportunities were either a moderate or major issues for their household (32.1% vs. 12.2%) than white respondents.

Non-white respondents were also more likely to report that “children being unsafe at school” was an issue compared to white respondents. Thirty-six percent of non-white respondents said this was a moderate or major issue for their household compared to 14.1% of white respondents.

Results indicated that discrimination in school was more likely a moderate or major issue for respondents in households with incomes below \$14,999 (47.1%) compared to individuals in households with higher income levels. Discrimination was a moderate or major issue for 44.3% of non-white households compared to white households (18.8%). Finally, respondents in households in three geographic locations in Weld County were more likely to report discrimination as a moderate or major issue compared to respondents in other Weld areas. These respondents lived in Evans (50.0%), south east Weld (42.9%), and central south Weld (42.8%).

¹ Throughout this report non-whites were respondents who indicated they were either American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander, or Hispanic and were grouped together for additional analyses (n=88).