

cause of their educational failure or whether it is merely a symptom of ongoing poor school performance and dislocation in existence prior to pregnancy. Students already well connected and attached to school environments are less likely to drop out of school (attachment theory). Teens, who may already be struggling in school, who meet a hostile school environment once pregnant are more likely to drop out. This disruption or cessation of education more often results in a lower earning potential. Children born to adolescent mothers are at an increased risk of poverty and poor educational achievement, as well as becoming teen parents themselves, creating the potential intergenerational poverty. In the United States, this is particularly true for minority teen mothers who may already be distanced from education prior to pregnancy or where adequate services are not available for their continued educational success.

### Factors Influencing Teen Pregnancy and Education

Access to sexual education and contraceptives plays a significant role in teen birthrates. Ongoing controversy and politics regarding sexual education has resulted in significant differences in the type and availability of sexual education made available. Pregnancy prevention programs likewise are varied; those that are multifaceted and broad based have been shown to have the greatest success. Programs that focus not only on sexuality but on goal setting and other life skills have been shown to be effective both in the United States and internationally in preventing or delaying pregnancy as well as sexually transmitted diseases. Other factors that impact teen pregnancy also include parental involvement in sexual education. Low socioeconomic status (which may contribute to limited educational opportunities) and a history of physical and/or sexual abuse are additional variables that increase a teen's risk of pregnancy. Internationally, every additional year of schooling for girls equals considerable health gains for her future children, including lower child morbidity and mortality rates. Schools and programs working to actively keep girls in school or that accommodate those who become pregnant help ensure a brighter future.

### Educational Responses to Teen Pregnancy

Despite the inclusion of pregnant or mothering students in the 1972 passage of Title IX, guaranteeing

equal education, educational responses to teen pregnancy differ greatly across the United States. Title IX protects pregnant and mothering teens' right to equal education and also prevents their forcible removal from school to alternative programs. School environments may employ hostile or indifferent attitudes toward pregnant teens, including rigid absentee policies, discrimination against or condemnation of pregnant teens by administration, infrastructure barriers such as too-small desks or crowded hallways, refusal of the school to allow the teen to participate in extracurricular activities, and indifference to physical needs of pregnant teens.

Legally, students cannot be forced to participate in alternative schooling programs (where they exist) against their will. However, hostile school environments can be a coercive factor for students either to drop out or to join alternative programs. A significant lack of evaluation of these alternative programs leads to a lack of understanding of whether equal educational opportunities are being afforded all students. Schools that accommodate student needs during and after pregnancy (including child care) can greatly improve students' chances of success.

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**See Also:** Adolescence; Adolescent Sexual Behavior; Sex Education; Title IX.

### Further Readings

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## Television and Education

Watching television has become a regular, everyday activity in the modern world. Television is primarily considered a medium of entertainment and

relaxation; however, it plays a vital role as a public informer and mass educator because of its output, range, and reach. A great deal of people's knowledge and understanding is acquired by watching television. Television viewing has both positive and negative outcomes. However, this contradictory background system constitutes the informal education context. Moreover, television provides learners with a new set of cognitive skills, which challenge formal education to respond to the changes arising from the environment. These conflicting opinions are connected to a variety of aspects.

### Television-Viewing Habits and Motivation

Television underwent explosive growth as a mass medium in the 1950s and brought the natural world, entertainment, and education into living rooms around the world. Television has enjoyed the status of most dominant medium in terms of reach, time spent, and popularity for decades. Despite the steady rise of the Internet, the average television viewing rate has not decreased globally. However, developments in information technology are changing TV viewing habits. In Western countries some groups, especially teenagers, already consider the Internet more important than television.

A number of factors, such as the choice and range of television services available, the demographic mix of different countries, and the amount of home-grown content available, influence how much television people watch. According to the uses and gratifications approach, people are motivated to watch television by four needs: the need for information, personal needs (including the creation of identity and the desire for social comparison), social needs, and entertainment needs. In the case of television-watching habits, two manners of behavior have been noted: instrumental watching, which refers to greater selectivity in regard to that being watched, which is connected to people's need for information and which involves more educational objectives; and ritual watching for entertainment purposes, which involves selecting the most agreeable option from those available.

A large proportion of television-watching is ritual in nature, accounting for 80 percent of all viewing in all age groups. The average person is calculated to be intellectually passive when watching television for around 24 hours a week. However, as a rule, people are cognitively active when watching something instrumentally. Studies have shown that people with

fewer cognitive needs tend to watch more television, while those with a higher level of education prefer written media.

### Television's Effects

A large proportion of mass communication studies are based on the assumption that media has a significant effect on its audience. Television has been hailed for its educational and cultural benefits, as well as feared for its disturbing influence.

On the one hand, watching educational programs has been linked to a number of positive effects on viewers, such as improved creative ability, greater interest in books, wider vocabulary, language learning, pro-social attitudes and behavior, and better understanding of the wider world. On the other hand, television viewing is blamed for a variety of social and physical ills, including inactivity, obesity, diminished social skills, a lack of morals, and aggression. Typically, television is also blamed for commandeering people's time and interests and for wasting time that would otherwise be spent more constructively.

### Television as an Aid to Learning

Television has offered a new form of distance learning and allowed people to learn about a wide range of subjects, from culture to astronomy and sociology. Television is an effective tool for the acquisition and learning of foreign languages, too, and television programs can support the cultural and social integration of immigrants into a new community. In many countries television has been used to augment education in the broadest sense through formal education programs that support school curricula and informal education. Though commercial television is considered to be more entertaining and driven by the market, public broadcasting has more of a role as an educator. Public broadcasting laws vary from country to country, but almost universal principles are to inform, to educate, to promote debates and rational discussions, to preserve national culture, language and identity, and to create better understanding of processes in society.

Used as part of the formal education system, and with the right application and guidance, television can be an effective educational tool from a very young age, contributing to the acquisition of academic knowledge and to social and emotional development. Television is employed in education in two ways: (1) as a tool to support the achievement of objectives in other subjects and (2) as a learning

environment in its own right to shape critical, conscious consumers of media.

Education is generally discussed as part of the official education system, and yet the majority of learning takes place outside it. That is why the term *informal education* exists alongside that of “formal education.” Formal education is a system with the help of which official learning is organized in society. It is an institutionalized and hierarchical system that, in the form of its curricula, is given official objectives, one which begins at preschool and ends at university.

Informal education takes places beyond the education system and its curricula and has no official objectives. This often means lifelong processes and unintentional learning and a socialization process occurring not only within the family, among friends, and in the working and other environments but also through television and other media. Informal learning can be self-directed, occur unintentionally, or take place through socialization. The internalization of values, attitudes, patterns of behavior, and skills in everyday life are important parts of socialization. Television has become an influential agent of socialization in the modern world alongside family, peers, and the education system.

As a significant informal learning environment, television provides learners with, among other things, a new set of cognitive skills, including complex and extensive visual and spatial skills, such as iconic representation and spatial visualization. The challenge facing formal education today is adapting to the changes arising from the environment, which is forcing it not only to make use of new strengths in visual-spatial intelligence shaped by the media environment but to compensate for the weaknesses that have arisen in higher-level cognitive processes in the case of abstract vocabulary, attention, reflection, inductive problem-solving, critical thinking, and imagination. These are developed through reading and the use of older technology. Education, therefore, demands the implementation of the specific strengths of every technological resource in a way that fosters all cognitive skills.

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**See Also:** Cognitive Skill/Intellectual Skill; Digital Divide/Digital Capital; Parental Educational Expectations;

Parental Involvement; Online Education; Technology in the Classroom.

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## Tennessee

Tennessee is the 17th-largest state in the United States by population, with 6,296,254 residents. It is located in the southeast region of the United States and is approximately 491 miles long and 115 miles wide with a total of 42,146 square miles. The state naturally divides into three regions: the mountains of East Tennessee, the foothills of Middle Tennessee, and the low plains of West Tennessee. It is bordered by Kentucky and Virginia to the north, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi to the south, North Carolina to the east, and Missouri and Arkansas to the west. Its economy is driven by agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism. Though Tennessee lagged the nation in student achievement over the past 20 years, by 2009 it was considered to be on the cutting edge of education reform as a first-round Race to the Top winner.

#### History and Social Structure

On June 1, 1796, the Southwest Territory became the state of Tennessee. During its first 14 years of statehood, Tennessee grew from a population of 85,000 to 250,000. Slavery played a significant role in this expansion; by 1810, over 20 percent of the population was African American. Despite internal division around issues of slavery, during the Civil War, compared to other states, Tennessee provided the largest number of soldiers to the Confederate army and was home to several important battles.

Plagued with racial inequalities, to some extent, the 20th century brought shifts in racial relations. Following World War II, a greater demand for racial equality

was voiced. By 1960, two-thirds of the African Americans living in Tennessee were living in nearby cities and towns, making collective action more feasible. With the establishment of organizations such as the Highlander Center by Myles Horton and Don West, Tennessee began to have an organized movement and location for civil rights leaders and community organizers, playing an important role in desegregation demonstrations. The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in a Memphis motel was another significant event that put Tennessee on the map of the civil rights movement.

#### School Structure

From 2010 to 2011, the state of Tennessee had 1,736 schools serving just under a million students from prekindergarten through 12th grade. Of these, 67.4 percent were white, 24.2 percent were African American, 6.2 percent were Hispanic, 1.9 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.3 percent were Native American. Of these students, 14.7 percent were classified as having a disability, 3.9 percent as limited English proficient, and 60.3 percent as economically disadvantaged. There are currently 136 school districts, 90 of which are considered rural; only 11 are city schools, and 35 are town or suburban. Public schools work under the supervision of a state

Table 1 Elementary and secondary education characteristics

	Tennessee	U.S. (average)
Total number of schools	1,803	1,988
Total students	987,422	970,278
Total teachers	66,558.10	60,766.56
Pupil/teacher ratio	14.84	15.97

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), 2010–11.

Table 2 Elementary and secondary education finance

	Tennessee	U.S. (average)
Total revenues	\$8,230,341,306	\$11,464,385,994
Total expenditures for education	\$8,494,429,687	\$11,712,033,839
Total current expenditures	\$7,540,305,690	\$9,938,906,259

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), “National Public Education Financial Survey,” FY08 (2007–08).

department of education, led by a superintendent appointed by the governor.

Since 2005, 40 public charter schools have opened in Middle and West Tennessee, with only two located east of Nashville. Tennessee is also home to nine public universities, 13 community colleges, and 27 technology centers, all supervised by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC). Over 250,000 students attend a public institute of higher education in the state. Both the THEC and the Department of Education report to an elected State Board of Education. In addition to the public education system, there are 48 private colleges and universities, including three historically black colleges/universities and Vanderbilt University—widely considered to be one of the top 50 U.S. schools.

Under the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP), student achievement in English/language arts and mathematics have been measured in third through eighth grade annually. In 2008, the state came under scrutiny for a failure of “truth in advertising” when proficiency levels based on the TCAP showed large discrepancies with proficiency levels measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which reported that fewer than 75 percent of Tennessee students tested were proficient in either reading or math. This led to a movement, led by the Tennessee Diploma Project, designed to raise standards and increase the rigor of testing, while also attacking low graduation and college retention rates. In a further effort to raise achievement scores and increase federal funding, Tennessee adopted the National Common Core Standards (CCS) and joined a consortium to design a new annual test that will be used beginning in 2014.

#### Current Issues

Since the turn of the 21st century, Tennessee has been a site of major education reforms, culminating in a first-round win of \$501 million in federal Race to the Top funds in 2009. Current trends in education reform have their roots in research and reforms conducted in Tennessee. In 1985 former governor Lamar Alexander (later U.S. secretary of education and senator) commissioned a study of class size reduction called Project STAR (Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio). Its major findings included the now-popular notion that individual teacher effects are variable and are more powerful than class size or school-level effects on student achievement. The Benwood Initiative, a



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N-Z Index



# SOCIOLOGY of EDUCATION

An A-to-Z Guide

Volume 2

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