



# Raising our Voices for Children

Children's Alliance of New Hampshire

## NEW HAMPSHIRE 2007 DATA BOOK

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When children and families thrive, our entire state benefits. The 2007 Kids Count New Hampshire Data Book identifies the opportunities and challenges facing the children of our state — assessing family economic opportunity, educational opportunity, and child health, development and safety. Kids Count provides data at the most local level, providing a broad and deep assessment.

The 2007 Kids Count New Hampshire Data Book carries both good and bad news. On the positive side,

#### 2007 Highlights

- ✓ 50% increase in child poverty
- ✓ 10% drop in real median family income
- ✓ 10-year high for children receiving food stamps
- ✓ 25% of children scoring below basic on NHEIAP

data on child health and development place our state at the top of national rankings for overall well being. We are at a 10-year low for the rate of infant deaths. We

boast health insurance coverage for 94 percent of the children in our state.

But not all the data is encouraging. Research has established the importance of family economic opportunity and educational opportunity to child growth and development. More families in NH are struggling to meet basic needs. Student achievement data suggests that existing educational opportunities do not meet student needs.

Our country and our state are grounded in the promise of the American Dream: that hard work will provide every child with the opportunity to meet their full potential. But this dream does not meet reality for all children and families in New Hampshire. More families are discovering that full time work does not lift their family out of poverty. More children are

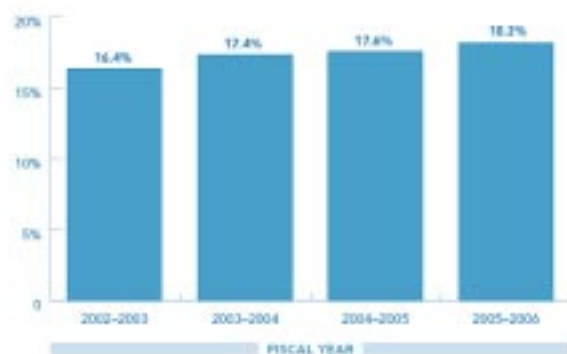
finding that their chances for success vary dramatically from family to family and town to town.

### ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

New Hampshire families are experiencing significant financial pressures. Real family median income has decreased by 10 percent in five years. Child poverty has increased by more than 50 percent, with one out of ten New Hampshire children living in poverty. Nearly 1,000 of our children are homeless. The number of children receiving food stamps in New Hampshire reached a ten-year high in 2004.

The more closely the data is assessed, the more troubling it becomes. Experts agree that the definition of poverty used to calculate the federal poverty level is flawed, resulting in a dramatic undercount of the child poverty rate. An alternate measure of family need is enrollment in the subsidized school lunch program.

Students Enrolled to Receive Free or Reduced-Price School Lunch  
► 2002-03 to 2005-06



Source: New Hampshire Department of Education

Any child in a family with an income below 185% of the federal poverty level is eligible for free or reduced priced lunch. During the 2005-06 school year roughly one in every six children in New Hampshire enrolled in the subsidized lunch program. That translates into more than 18 percent of children living in a family unable to meet basic needs.

The rate of child poverty varies significantly among families. Children living in single-mother families account for only 21 percent of all children in the state but they account for 68 percent of the total children living in poverty. Young children (under age five) face a poverty rate of nearly 13 percent.

The rate of child poverty varies significantly from town to town. The 2007 Kids Count New Hampshire Data Book introduces a Child Well Being Index for every town in our state. The index is based on seven standardized indicators, with at least half of the indicators related to family income. Analyzing town-level data through the lens of the Child Well Being Index shows not only the increasing disparity between towns but also the cumulative effects of poverty. Data show that children living in towns ranked lowest in Child Well Being experience a multiplication of barriers that results in unequal opportunity and limit individual opportunity to reach one's full potential. A child living in a town in the lowest quintile (when compared to a child from a town in the highest quintile) is:

- 5 times more likely to be born to a mother who lacked adequate prenatal care
- 5 times more likely to be born to a mother lacking a high school degree
- 6 times more likely to enroll in the subsidized school lunch program
- 2 times more likely to score below basic on the third grade school assessment

## EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

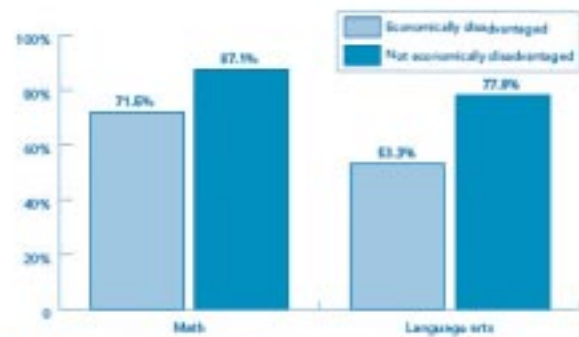
In education, as in family economics, local data reveal both disparity and barriers to opportunity. NHEIAP test scores suggest that New Hampshire is currently failing to meet the educational needs of at least one quarter of our children.

- More than one quarter of 3rd and 10th graders scored below basic on a standard assessment for language arts
- More than 15 percent of 3rd graders and 19 percent of 10th graders scored below basic on the math assessment

Student achievement is closely tied to economic opportunity as shown dramatically in the following charts of NHEIAP scores by family economic status.

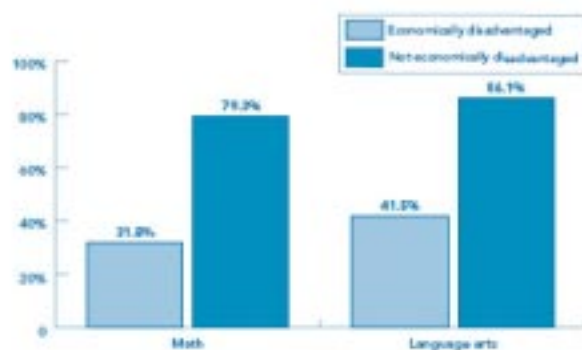
Given the link between education and workforce preparedness, the data on student achievement in the 2007 Kids Count New Hampshire Data Book is

3rd Grade Students Scoring at Basic or Above on the NHEIAP  
by economic status, 2004-05



Source: New Hampshire Department of Education, NHEIAP

10th Grade Students Scoring at Basic or Above on the NHEIAP  
by economic status, 2005



Source: New Hampshire Department of Education, NHEIAP

particularly discouraging. How can we sustain a thriving economy when too few children leave school prepared to enter the workforce?

## SUCCESS IS IN REACH

Broad shifts in the New Hampshire and global economy drive many of the challenges now faced by children and families. As the economy shifts away from manufacturing jobs, there is an erosion of the economic base of middle-income jobs. As costs of living increase, hard-working families are no longer able to meet the rising costs of housing, health care and child care.

Kids Count is at its core a research project. Kids Count data books do not carry any policy agenda. Rather, the data books provide nonpartisan, credible data on children and families – informing readers of unmet needs and creating the opportunity to seek strategic responses.

Our challenges are not unsolvable. Let us embrace the information set out in Kids Count New Hampshire 2007 and get to work for the well being of our children, our families and our future.