

INFORMATION CAPSULE

Department of Research Services

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ETS REPORT FINDS THAT TEACHERS COMPARE FAVORABLY WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS

A recent report from the Educational Testing Service found that teachers' scores on a literacy survey were significantly higher than the general adult population and similar to those of other college-educated adults. Using data from the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics, the report compares the performance of teachers to the general population, and to professionals at the same level of higher education – four year and graduate degrees. Comparisons were made with respect to three types of literacy skills: prose, document, and quantitative. Highlights are as follows:

Prose Literacy

Prose literacy is the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts that include editorials, news stories, poems, and fiction. In prose literacy the teachers averaged higher scores than did managers and administrators, and at a similar level with lawyers, accountants, physicians, personnel professionals, and educational administrators. Only computer analysts scored significantly higher.

Document Literacy

Document literacy is the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in everyday materials such as job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables, and graphs. In the area of document literacy the teachers placed about the same as in prose literacy.

Quantitative Literacy

Quantitative literacy is the knowledge and skills required to apply arithmetic operations, either alone or sequentially, using numbers

embedded in printed materials. In quantitative literacy the teachers scored on a par with other managers and professionals, but were outscored by those who represented quantitative and analytic professions -- electrical engineers, lawyers, accountants, and computer analysts.

Teachers are a Bargain

The NALS found a strong relationship between literacy and earnings. Of those surveyed, individuals with higher literacy scores tended to earn more, and be employed in managerial and professional occupations. However, the average earnings of teachers, as compared to similar professionals, fall far short, even though their literacy scores compare favorably. Dollar for dollar, teachers are a bargain.

The report, *How Teachers Compare: The Prose, Document, and Quantitative Skills of American's Teachers*, was written by Barbara A. Bruschi and Richard J. Coley of the Educational Testing Service, and published by the ETS's Policy Information Center in February, 1999. Copies can be downloaded from their website: www.ets.org/research/pic.