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 IDENTIFIERS \*Prose Literacy Scores

ABSTRACT

An important issue in the education reform debate is the effect of comparatively low salaries on teacher quality. Prose literacy scores are one of the best available measures of verbal ability, a factor identified by research as being associated with teacher quality. If teachers have lower prose literacy scores relative to college graduates in other occupations, this could indicate that relatively low salaries may not be attracting (or keeping) the most skilled college graduates to (in) the teaching profession. If, however, the literacy levels of teachers are no lower than those of their counterparts in other occupations, then other benefits (job security, a shorter work year, the opportunity to work with children, good retirement benefits, etc.) may be more important for attracting quality teachers than salary alone. Prose literacy scores, labor market outcomes, and other characteristics of full-time employed bachelor's degree recipients, by occupation in 1992 are presented. Analysis shows that in 1992 teachers had literacy skills similar to private-sector executives and managers, engineers, physicians, writers and artists, social workers, sales representatives, education administrators, and registered nurses. Teachers also tended to work fewer weeks per year than other college graduates, but at lower pay. (NAV)

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INDICATOR OF THE MONTH  
LITERACY OF TEACHERS

November 1995

National Center for Education Statistics  
U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement  
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**Literacy of teachers**

An important issue in the education reform debate is the effect of comparatively low salaries on teacher quality. Prose literacy scores are one of the best available measures of verbal ability, a factor identified by research as being associated with teacher quality. If teachers have lower prose literacy scores relative to college graduates in other occupations, this could indicate that relatively low salaries may not be attracting (or keeping) the most skilled college graduates to (in) the teaching profession. If, however, the literacy levels of teachers are no lower than those of their counterparts in other occupations, other benefits (e.g., job security, a shorter work year, the opportunity to work with children, good retirement benefits, etc.) may be more important for attracting quality teachers than salary alone.

- ◆ In 1992, teachers had literacy skills similar to private-sector executives and managers, engineers, physicians, writers and artists, social workers, sales representatives, education administrators, and registered nurses. Scientists were the only professionals who had measurably higher prose literacy skills than teachers.
- ◆ Although teachers had literacy skills similar to college graduates in many other occupations, their earnings were often substantially less. However, the average number of weeks worked in 1991 was lower for teachers than for college graduates in many other occupations.

**Prose literacy scores, labor market outcomes, and other characteristics of full-time employed bachelor's degree recipients, by occupation: 1992**

Occupation	Average prose literacy scores	Average annual earnings in 1991	Average weekly wage last week	Average weeks worked in 1991	Percentage with Average age	graduate degrees	Percentage female
<b>All bachelor's degree recipients</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>\$38,530</b>	<b>\$805</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>38</b>
Scientists	354	39,320	805	49	36	43	21
Lawyers and judges	352	71,223	1871	49	41	94	17
Accountants and auditors	344	38,463	832	50	37	28	38
Private-sector executives and managers	341	56,044	1,052	51	41	33	26
Postsecondary teachers	340	47,867	924	48	45	90	29
Engineers	339	48,408	952	50	41	32	8
Physicians	335	121,120	2,454	49	44	100	16
<b>Teachers<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>333</b>	<b>25,983</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>71</b>
Writers and artists	332	29,507	589	46	39	33	47
Social workers	332	26,739	551	50	40	38	60
Sales representatives	328	39,872	900	49	42	10	23
Education administrators	326	44,130	888	50	49	79	57
Registered nurses	326	33,981	741	49	38	16	88
Sales supervisors and proprietors	316	32,720	669	51	41	21	20

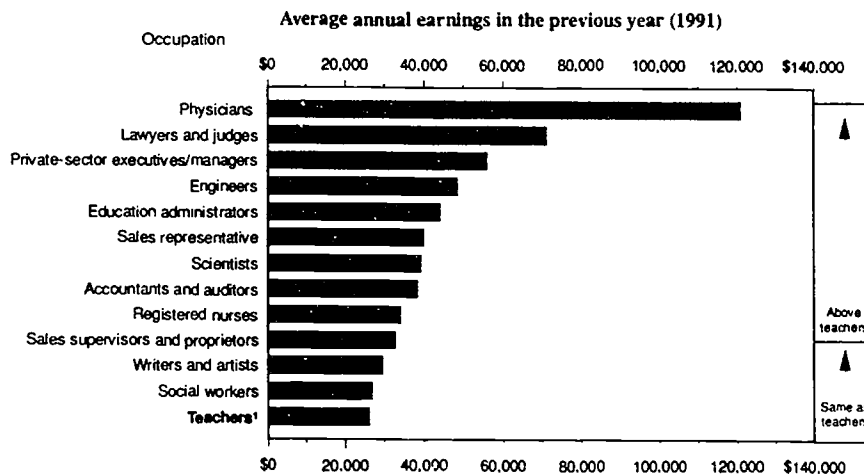
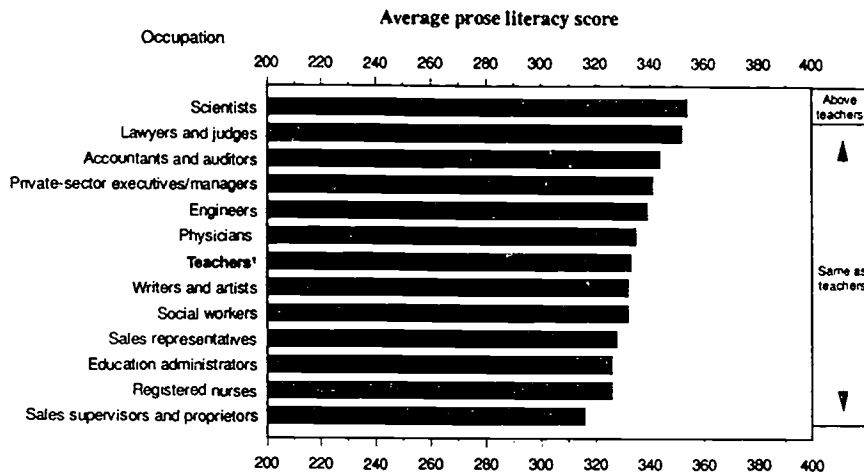
<sup>1</sup> Statistically significant difference from teachers.

<sup>2</sup> Includes prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers, elementary and secondary school teachers, teachers in special education, and teachers not elsewhere categorized.

NOTE: Individuals scoring between 326 and 375 were able to integrate or synthesize information from complex or lengthy passages. For example, at proficiency level 328, test-takers were able to state in writing an argument made in a lengthy newspaper article.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992.

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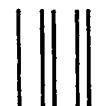
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SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992.

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