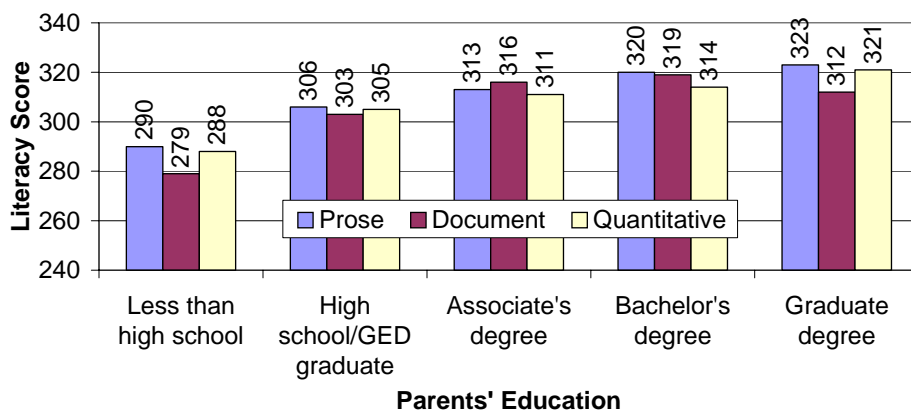


Impact of Parents' Education on Literacy Skills Evident Among Imminent College Graduates

In January 2006, the American Institutes for Research released the results of a national survey funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts. This study found that **more than 75 percent** of students about to graduate from **two-year colleges** and **more than half** of those about to graduate from **four-year colleges and universities** do **not** score at the **proficient** level of literacy. These findings indicate that, although these students are about to receive degrees, they do not have the literacy skills required to compare credit card offers with different interest rates or to summarize the arguments presented in newspaper editorials.



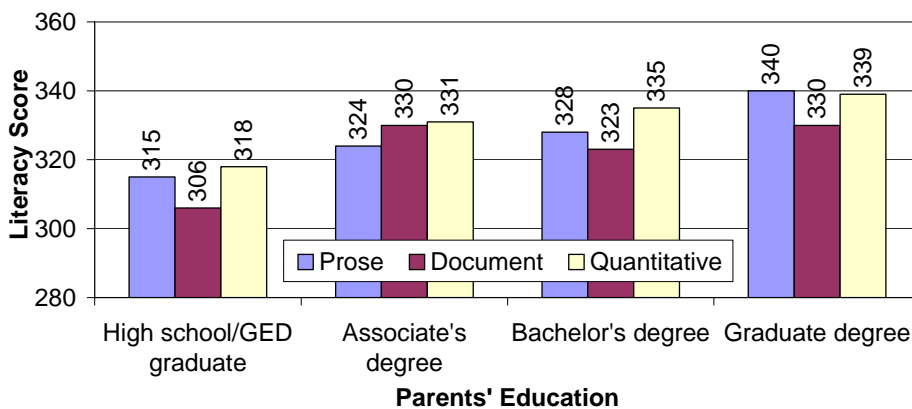
Chart 1. Average Prose, Document, and Quantitative Literacy Scores for Imminent Graduates of Two-Year Colleges, by Parents' Education, 2003



Among the factors that may explain these surprising conclusions is the **educational attainment level of the students' parents**. Prose, Document, and Quantitative Literacy scores tend to increase predictably with the education level of the degree candidate's parents. (See Charts 1 and 2.)

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Chart 2. Average Prose, Document, and Quantitative Literacy Scores for Imminent Graduates of Four-Year Colleges and Universities, by Parents' Education, 2003



This study provides some of the most compelling evidence to date of the powerful intergenerational impact of educational attainment. This is remarkable evidence that parents' education exerts a lasting influence on the literacy skills of their children—even after these individuals earn postsecondary degrees.

It underscores the value of adult education and family literacy programs that seek to help individuals overcome the intergenerational effects of low literacy.



What are Prose, Document, and Quantitative Literacy?

Prose Literacy

The knowledge and skills needed to search, comprehend, and use information from continuous texts. Examples include: editorials, news stories, brochures, and instructional materials.

Document Literacy

The knowledge and skills needed to search, comprehend, and use information from noncontinuous texts in various formats. Examples include job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables, and drug or food labels.

Quantitative Literacy

The knowledge and skills required to identify and perform computations, either alone or sequentially, using numbers embedded in printed materials. Examples include balancing a checkbook, figuring out a tip, completing an order form, or determining the amount of interest on a loan from an advertisement.

SOURCE

American Institutes for Research, The National Survey of America's College Students, January 2006. Available online at: http://www.air.org/news/documents/The%20Literacy%20of%20Americas%20College%20Students_final%20report.pdf
 Fact sheet: <http://www.air.org/news/documents/collegeliteracyfactsheet.htm>

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information about this study or other projects of the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative, contact: Keith Curry Lance, Colorado Department of Education, 201 E. Colfax Ave., Suite 309, Denver, CO 80203-1799, (303) 866-6737, fax (303) 866-6940, e-mail: lance_k@cde.state.co.us