



Literacy Service Plan 2012-2013

What is Literacy and How Does it Impact Society?

“Literacy is the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community, to achieve one’s goals and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.”
(International Adult Literacy Survey - IALS - 1994)

The link between literacy and economic success is being closely examined. With a global economy, an ageing workforce and an increasing reliance upon immigration to meet skill shortages, the literacy level in Ontario is a growing issue.

The goal of Employment Ontario is for Ontario to “have the most educated people and highly skilled workforce in North America in order to build the province’s competitive advantage.”
Literacy is now being recognized as the foundation upon which such a workforce will rest.

Essential Skills are the fundamental skills that make it possible to learn all others. They are enabling skills that help people participate fully in the workplace and in the community. Essential Skills underlie the performance of most workplace tasks.

Essential Skills

- Reading Text
- Document Use
- Oral Communication
- Thinking Skills
- Continuous Learning
- Numeracy
- Writing
- Working with Others
- Computer Use

“Having a literate community is key to the growth and development of all the essential skills, but the ongoing development of essential skills is dependent upon lifelong learning. Where you are tomorrow depends upon what you learn today.”

Leah Morris, Executive Director, Adult Basic Education Association

Economic and Social Implications

(taken from: Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, 2004)

Nationally the literacy statistics show that

- 42% of Canadians ages 16-65 do not have the minimum literacy skills for coping with everyday life and work tasks
- 15% of that 42% score at the lowest literacy levels and have serious difficulty dealing with any printed material

Justice

Offenders experience literacy problems at a rate 3 times that of the general population. The average education level of newly admitted offenders serving two years or more is grade seven.

Health

Canadians classified among the most healthy have higher than average literacy and numeracy skills, while those among the least healthy have the lowest average skills. Some direct effects of living with low literacy skills include increased hospitalization and misinterpreted medication instructions.

Work

People with low literacy skills are about twice as likely to be unemployed for 6 or more months than those with higher skills. Canadian adults who have low literacy levels are 2.5 times more likely to be on social assistance.

Poverty

Up to 50% of adults with lower levels of literacy live in low-income households, compared with only 8% of those with high-level literacy skills.