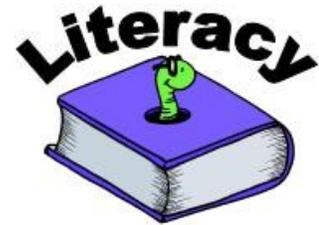


Literacy

Literacy has been broadly defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as “understanding, evaluating, using and engaging with written texts to participate in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential”. In addition, literacy also involves numeracy, defined by the OECD as “the ability to engage with mathematical information in order to manage the mathematical demands of a range of situations in everyday life.” Low levels of literacy reduce a person’s ability to carry out basic daily activities. For example, this may mean the inability to work, use public transportation or understand important documents necessary to receive medical or social services. Providing all Canadians with meaningful opportunities to develop and sustain quality literacy skills will result in stronger communities bolstered by active participation in economic, employment, health, and social systems.



The Facts

Adult literacy is usually measured on a literacy scale of 1 to 5. Level 3 is the equivalent to a high school completion.

Alberta

- ◆ 4 out of 10 Albertans are within the low literacy level range (1-2).
- ◆ More specifically, 40% of adults in Alberta between the ages of 16 to 65 lack the basic literacy and essential skills to function effectively in our society.
- ◆ 15% of adult Albertans scored at or below the lowest literacy level.
- ◆ 55% of adults scored at Level 3 or higher which is thought to be the level necessary to be competitive in an information-based economy.
- ◆ 26% of adult Albertans can only deal with simple material and have difficulty reading safety manuals or hazardous material warnings found in the workplace.
- ◆ Nationally, Alberta sits above the average score of literacy as outlined by the OECD

Canada

- ◆ Canada ranks slightly above the OECD average in literacy. However, Canada shows a larger proportion of its population at both the highest and lowest levels of literacy.
- ◆ In 2012, people between 25 and 34 had the highest average literacy skills.
- ◆ 42% of Canadian adults between the ages of 16 and 65 have low literacy skills.
- ◆ 55% of working age adults in Canada are estimated to have less than adequate health literacy skills.
- ◆ 15% of Canadians can’t understand the writing on simple medicine labels.
- ◆ 27% of Canadians cannot comprehend warnings on a hazardous materials sheet.

The Solution

According to the Edmonton Literacy Coalition, the solution to improving low levels of literacy within our community and across Canada is quality literacy education which is accessible to all people. This includes raising awareness of the benefits of high levels of literacy, such as:

- ◆ Higher literacy rates gives a much greater return on investment than physical capital.
- ◆ Higher levels of literacy are associated with higher levels of involvement in various community groups and organizations and in volunteer activities.



- ◆ Higher literacy rates provide people with an understanding of proper medical and health related knowledge, which means fewer mistakes and interventions needed.
- ◆ Literacy proficiency improves chances of employment, builds self-confidence and enables discussions and actions that affect the welfare of individuals and their community.

Edmonton Resources

Edmonton has numerous organizations and initiatives working towards raising the literacy rates.

Edmonton Literacy Coalition	www.edmontonliteracycoalition.ca
Centre for Family Literacy	www.famlit.ca
Edmonton Community Adult Learning Association	www.ecala.org
Edmonton Public Library	www.epl.ca
The Learning Centre Literacy Association	www.tlcla.org
Project Adult Literacy (PALS)	www.palsedmonton.blogspot.ca
Centre for Literacy	www.centre4literacy.com
The Literacy and Learning Day Society of Edmonton	www.literacyday.ca
The Edmonton Elizabeth Fry Society	www.efryedmonton.ab.ca
The Edmonton John Howard Society	www.johnhoward.org

Other Related Resources

Literacy Without Borders	www.literacywithoutborders.com
Norquest College	www.norquest.ca
Yellowhead Tribal College	www.ytced.ca
Frontier College	www.frontiercollege.ca
Canadian Literacy and Learning Network	www.literacy.ca
The Canadian Council on Learning	www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Home.html
ABC Life Literacy Canada	www.abclifeliteracy.ca
Statistics Canada	www.statcan.gc.ca/start-debut-eng.html
Literacy Alberta	www.literacyalberta.ca
Alberta Innovation and Advanced Education	www.eae.alberta.ca
National Literacy Trust	www.literacytrust.org.uk
Employment and Social Development Canada	www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/jobs/les/index.shtml
Canadian Centre for Research on Literacy	www.elementaryed.ualberta.ca/Centres/CCRL.aspx
Living Literacy: A	

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