

The Centre for Family Literacy is dedicated to helping families grow and prosper.



The Centre for Family Literacy Centre Page

September 2008

Improving the Literacy Levels of Canadian Workers

“Enhancing literacy levels in the workplace improves bottom-line performance for Canada’s employers and gives employees a better chance for success in their careers.”

*Conference Board of Canada,
The Economic Benefits of Improving Literacy Skills in the Workplace
1997*

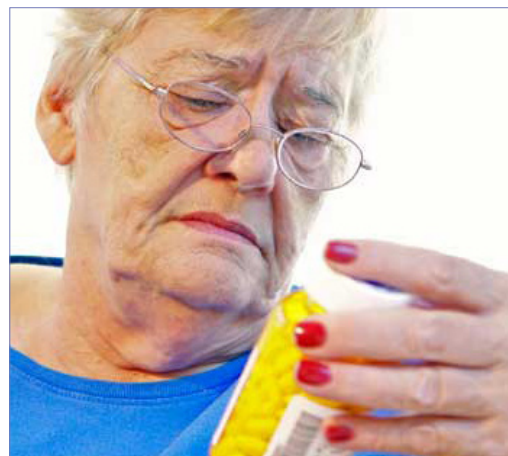


In the premier issue of *Canadian CEO*, Alan C. Middleton, Schulich School of Business, York University stated, “making sure employees have the requisite workplace literacy skills has become an economic imperative to address the challenges facing corporate Canada today.”

The Centre has received funding from Human Resources and Social Development Canada, Office of Literacy and Essential Skills to explore how family literacy concepts can enhance literacy and essential skills programs in the workplace.

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How Easy is Health Information to Read?



Canadians turn first and foremost to their family physician for health related information. On average, they consult five different print sources (internet, libraries). A recent report by the Canadian Council on Learning states that older and less educated Canadians – those who also tend to score lower on literacy assessments - use fewer health information sources.

Considering that health information is often written at higher reading levels, it is no surprise that this has health consequences for individuals who struggle with literacy.

They make fewer attempts to learn about their health issues, and are more likely to report poor health and suffer from chronic disease. They also report a lack of knowledge about managing their health and tend not to engage in disease prevention behaviour (*Health Literacy in Canada*, 2008). The *Health Literacy In Canada* report also found that more than

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Improving the Literacy Levels of Canadian Workers

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The Workplace Family Literacy Project will research a range of options for improving the level of literacy and essential skills of employees through a family based approach. The project will produce resources and tools to assist literacy organizations and businesses in implementation of these programs in the workplace.

The first phase of the project is an environmental scan of the business and literacy communities across Alberta. The scan will ascertain the level of awareness of the effect of literacy on the economy, the types of workplace literacy programs currently being used, and the types of partnerships that exist between business and literacy organizations.

Family literacy is an innovative and comprehensive response to literacy issues as it addresses the literacy needs of adults, as well as the literacy development of their children. Through this intergenerational connection, family literacy programs improve the literacy skills of adults who comprise our current workforce and their children who represent our future workforce.

Knowing that there is a direct link between Canada's future economic prosperity and the literacy levels of its workforce, it is important that we develop strategies that produce results for the short and long term.

How Easy is Health Information to Read?

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half (60%) of Canadians over the age of 16 do not possess the minimum health literacy skills required to read and understand medication and nutrition labels, give informed consent, or understand safety instructions for equipment and machinery.

The Centre's Foundations in Family Literacy course has a new module that addresses this issue. The course is offered on line to Alberta Family Literacy practitioners, and is also being delivered in B.C. and Ontario.

The links between health and literacy are significant; they need to be part of any discussions about improving the lives of those with low literacy and the health of all our citizens.

One person's story about health literacy:

“Well, I was stupid, like to stuff like that. OK, you would take a book and you would try to read about emphysema and cancer and all of that. Sometimes there are words there and if you broke it down in your own way – but it may not mean that at all ... I went to the library, and little pamphlets that you get at the doctor's office about it – I found

out on my own ... Now you don't like to ask, what do you think they are saying? That happens and then they know that you don't have enough schooling to understand whatever they are saying ... You don't like to say “well I haven't got that much schooling; what does this mean?” ... They don't use plain words.”

from the Health Literacy in Rural Nova Scotia research project

Centre Appoints New Executive Director



On August 11, Sandra Irving joined the Centre for Family Literacy as our new Executive Director. Sandra recently retired from Edmonton Public Schools after a thirty-four year career as a teacher, assistant principal and principal.

We recently asked Sandra a few questions about her

new role as Executive Director of the Centre for Family Literacy:

What led you to apply for the position of Executive Director at the Centre?

When I retired, I knew that I wanted to be engaged in continued learning for myself personally but also in work that would allow me to continue to serve others in some way. When I saw the ad for the position of Executive Director at the Centre for Family Literacy, and subsequently conducted some of my own research, I knew that I had found a place to capitalize on what I already knew and also learn about families and learning from a very different perspective.

How will your background in public education help you in your new role?

Literacy in the most universal forms has been a passion and focus for my entire professional life. As a classroom teacher, I centered all of my instruction around literacy, encouraging deep thinking and inquisitive action. As an elementary school principal I supported classroom teachers in their important work of teaching children to read, write, think, create, problem-solve and communicate.

You have probably seen the popular bumper sticker or t-shirt that says, "If You Can Read This Thank A Teacher!" I would like to add to the bottom, "Thank Your Family and Community As Well"; for truly, success as a learner is not just about success in the classroom. Family literacy

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New C.O.W. Joins the Herd

The current Edmonton Literacy C.O.W. bus is over 27 years old and needs to be put out to pasture. A much younger version has been purchased and is awaiting a retro fit so that it can join the herd and continue to deliver the highly successful program to communities throughout Edmonton.

Staff Update

Maureen Sanders will continue to serve the family literacy community in the coming months as Co-Coordinator of the national Foundations in Family Literacy Project. Maureen, along with Kimberley Onclin, now Associate Executive Director of the Centre, is also coordinating a National Family Literacy Conference to be held in Edmonton in 2010.



Wednesday,
September 24

The CanWest Raise-a-Reader campaign raises awareness, funds and resources for family literacy programs across Canada.

The Centre for Family Literacy is one of 6 local literacy programs that receives funding from this campaign.

On Wednesday September 24, look for our volunteers with a special edition of the Edmonton Journal and make your donation in support of family literacy in Edmonton.

Online donations to the Centre can be made through CanadaHelps.org



The Centre for Family Literacy gratefully acknowledges the ongoing support of the following:



Edmonton & Area
Child & Family Services Region 6



New Executive Director

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really is about ensuring that all children begin at a very early age to be engaged learners and that all families have the tools, skills and resources they need to support their child's early literacy development.

Working in this field is a perfect fit for me because it takes me beyond my familiar zone of the classroom, out into the important world of family literacy and life-long learning.

You have been "on the job" for almost one month now; what are your first impressions of the Centre?

I am indeed impressed with what I have seen so far. Family Literacy is a complex and multifaceted field that addresses the needs of equally complex and multifaceted families. The Centre's professional and skilled staff deliver excellent community programs and facilitate training throughout the province.

I was able to spend three weeks with Maureen Sanders, who used that time to teach me a great deal. Her work and vision for quality family literacy programming is awe inspiring and I am humbled to step into the role knowing that she is never further than a phone call away for advice and perspective.

Call for Nominations: 2009 Lois Hole Memorial Literacy Awards

The Centre for Family Literacy invites you to join us in celebrating the achievements of Alberta literacy learners and leaders by nominating an individual, business or organization to be honoured at the 3rd annual Leading with Literacy Breakfast in January 2009.

There are two award categories – Lois Hole Adult Learner Award and the Lois Hole Community Leadership Award. Eligibility criteria and nomination forms are available on our website at famlit.ca. The nomination deadline is Thursday, October 30, 2008.

Previous Award Recipients

Adult Learner Award
2008 – Dave Chorney
2007 – Linn Pascal

Community Leadership Award
2008 – Edmonton Journal – Raise a Reader
2007 – Dr. Ruth Hayden

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Literacy Develops in Families First

The Centre for Family literacy is dedicated to helping Alberta grow and prosper. Our innovative programs, training and research help Alberta families achieve what they imagine - improved education, jobs and health.

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