



RE(ad)SEARCH, Vol. 1

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All headings in blue are links to articles.

[1. Today is Essential Skills Day](#)

The fourth annual Essential Skills Day takes place on Friday, September 27, 2013 to raise awareness about the [importance of workplace literacy and essential skills training](#). The nine essential skills, as identified by the Government of Canada, are the foundation for learning all other skills and enable people to evolve with their jobs and adapt to workplace change. The skills are: [Reading](#), Document Use, Numeracy, Writing, Oral Communication, Working With Others, Thinking, Computer Use, and Continuous Learning.

[Here's](#) how organizations around the country celebrated ESD, including four from Alberta.

More Stories from the Trenches

[2. How stopping bedtime stories too early can damage children's literacy: Those who are read to are more likely to enjoy books. *Daily Mail, UK. Sept. 17, 2013*](#)

- Oxford University Press surveyed 1,000 children aged seven to 11
- Half of young readers said they'd enjoy reading more if parents helped
- Many parents abandon reading with their children from the age of eight
- Half of eight and nine year olds were 'rarely or never read to at home'
- The National Literacy Trust found pupils are 13 times more likely to read above the expected level for their age if they enjoy books for pleasure.

[3. How the stigma of low literacy can impair patient-professional spoken interactions and affect health: insights from a qualitative investigation. *University Study, UK. Aug. 16, 2013*](#)

Over and above the well-documented difficulties that people with low literacy can have with the written information and complex explanations and instructions they encounter as they use health services, the stigma of low literacy had significant negative implications for participants' *spoken* interactions with healthcare professionals.

Participants described various difficulties in consultations, some of which had impacted negatively on their broader healthcare experiences and abilities to self-manage health conditions. Some communication difficulties were apparently perpetuated or exacerbated because participants limited their conversational engagement and

used a variety of strategies to cover up their low literacy that could send misleading signals to health professionals.

Participants' biographical narratives revealed that the ways in which they managed their low literacy in healthcare settings, as in other social contexts, stemmed from highly negative experiences with literacy-related stigma, usually from their schooldays onwards. They also suggest that literacy-related stigma can significantly undermine mental wellbeing by prompting self-exclusion from social participation and generating a persistent anxiety about revealing literacy difficulties.

4. Illiteracy is an intergenerational problem in Tasmania. Australia, Sept. 22, 2013

Apparently, this past week, low literacy rates has been big news in Australia. Clearly, it's a problem in all developed parts of the English-speaking world.

A report by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for 2011-2012 shows half of all Tasmanians aged 15 to 74 are functionally illiterate, and more than half are functionally innumerate—meaning they don't have the skills needed to get by in the modern world, like filling out forms, or reading the instructions on their prescription.

'I have a young boy here. He's 16...he came in to me and he said "I've just had a baby and I'm now a dad", and I went "Congratulations, that's great", but he said, "I now need to learn to read and write",' says Ms Harrison.

Programs Being Carried Out Elsewhere

1. Texas A&M to Improve Early Literacy Skills for At-Risk Kindergarten Students. Texas, Sept. 16, 2013

The goal of the research project is to investigate assessments that are currently used to monitor reading development of kindergarten students at risk for reading difficulties and to identify assessments that are most efficient and practical. They will also examine other factors such as a student's ability to understand instructions and language proficiency. Additional outcomes of the project are expected to identify practices that are the most reliable, practical and sensitive to growth patterns for monitoring the reading progress of kindergarten students at risk for reading disabilities.

The Project ELM team will also work throughout the school year with teachers to assess students' overall reading skills. Monitored twice a month, updates and progress reports will be provided to teachers in areas such as letter naming fluency, letter sound fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, nonsense word fluency and decoding fluency.

"One assessment that is commonly used is a letter sound fluency test, where a student is asked to look at a page of letters and then say aloud the sounds each letter makes. Other assessments may have the student read short words or sentences," said Clemens. "While these are widely used assessments, we don't have a lot of information regarding how those measures function for students with reading difficulties. In part, that is what inspired this project."

To continue to monitor progress, the team of researchers will conduct brief assessments with the students in the first and second grade school years. These follow-up evaluations will provide information on the ability of kindergarten assessments to predict long-term reading outcomes.

2. **Raise-a-Reader: Going all out to promote literacy in Windsor.** *Windsor Star, Sept. 26, 2013*

Just like newspaper subscribers, there are kids who like to read the printed word and kids who like to read on screen. Local literacy programs in Windsor-Essex make use of both mediums to help children develop a love for reading. Here are two high-tech and two classic approaches to literacy in Windsor-Essex.

3. **Education officials hope new reading program will put students on track to success.** *South Carolina, Sept. 21, 2013*

A lengthy article on a bill that's currently being discussed in the state legislature that would—in addition to what's below--seek to establish a Read to Succeed Office within the state Department of Education to administer professional development for current teachers and assist higher education in restructuring their programs to provide more training in literacy for teachers. Here are some highlights.

Job one for teachers in South Carolina public schools is to teach children to read, according to advocates of legislation that would refocus the state's school system. Most educators wouldn't argue with that premise. But some are objecting to the approach put forward in a bill that will be up for debate in January called the Read to Succeed Act. Students unable to read on grade level by third grade could have to repeat the grade, if the bill passes. The bill is patterned after a program called Just Read, Florida! that increased reading levels from Grades 3-10 between 2001 and 2010.

If *Read to Succeed* becomes law, students who are not at the level they should be by the end of third grade would be required to enroll in a "summer reading camp." Exceptions would be made for students for whom English is their second language, or who have a disability or already have failed a grade. Those who don't catch up during the summer program would be provided at least 90 minutes a day of intensive reading instruction when they repeat third grade. Parents would receive reports at least monthly on their children's progress. Students who by Nov. 1 of the year they're retained demonstrate that they're ready to move up to fourth grade could be promoted mid-year.

"The state has spent countless dollars in education on reading and our scores are basically still flat," said Barbara Hairfield, vice chair of the Education Oversight Committee and chairman of an EOC subcommittee that undertook a study on the state's reading problems. "Everybody wants to improve but everybody's out there doing their own thing, and it's not working," said Hairfield, who is also social studies curriculum coordinator for the Charleston County School District.

Jason McCreary, director of accountability and quality assurance for Greenville County Schools, has even more concerns about the legislation. For starters, he said there's no evidence that students who are held back in third grade because they can't read on grade level do any better by simply repeating the grade. He'd rather see more effort put into early intervention, before students reach that point.

The idea of requiring middle and high school teachers to go back to school to learn how to teach reading also makes little sense to him. All teachers should be able to recognize if their students' reading level is holding them back, but they should refer those students to a reading specialist rather than be expected to teach them how to read, he argues. "I'm not going to go to an auto mechanic if I have a fever," he said. "We have trained teachers who specialize in reading and understand how to teach it." All teachers in core curriculum subjects "teach reading and writing within their art, which is different than teaching a student how to read," he said.

4. **8 ways to celebrate National Literacy Month. U.S., Sept. 21.**

NLM is a great opportunity for all school stakeholders to share their best practices that help promote a passion for reading and writing. In this blog post, Brad Currie, a former teacher and administrator, highlights eight instances in which educators have gone outside of the box and promoted the importance of literacy.

Related News

1. **Alberta's population reaches four million. Government News Release, Sept. 26.**

- According to information released by Statistics Canada, Alberta's population on July 1, 2013 was 4,025,074.
- The province's recent increase from three to four million has been driven largely by migration.
- At 36.1 years, Alberta has the lowest median age of all the provinces, which creates momentum for further population growth. Alberta has the highest growth rate from natural increase (births minus deaths) of all the provinces, relative to their population size.
- A key factor in attracting new Albertans has been the province's strong economy.
- Alberta's population has doubled since 1978, when its population stood at two million. In the 22 years following 1978, Alberta's population grew by another million, reaching three million in 2000.
- Over the last 20 years, Alberta had the highest average annual growth rate (2.1%) among the provinces.
- Alberta's population is expected to reach five million mark by 2027 and six million by 2041.

2. **Caledon Institute of Social Policy: Provincial/Territorial Policy Monitor. Canada, August 2013.**

The Caledon Institute of Social Policy (www.caledoninst.org) regularly scans provincial and territorial government websites in order to follow policy developments related to our core work and interests. A partial list includes: disability, education, health, housing, income security, poverty reduction, recreation, seniors and youth. This tracking is intended to inform our analysis of policy trends. Monitors can be searched on our website by date, jurisdiction and category. *A good way to do a scan of what's happening around the country in the realm of social policy. The link is for an easy-to-read PDF.*

3. **October is National Child Abuse Awareness Month**

- What are some signs that a child may be neglected or abused?
- A child who is often hungry or not dressed for the weather.
- A young child who is often left alone.
- A child who is extremely withdrawn or usually aggressive.
- Unexplained bruises or injuries.
- A child who shows unusual knowledge of sexual matters beyond their age of development.
- A child or youth who does not want to be at home or runs away from home.
- A child who is exposed to illegal drug activity.