

Family Literacy

Most experts agree that a **parent is a child's first and most important teacher**. When a parent exposes a child to books and language at an early age, it lays the foundation for a lifetime of literacy.

Children who live in households without books and with non-reading parents are at a disadvantage when they enter school. In fact, a four-year-old child growing up in a home without reading and literacy development will have heard 32 million fewer words than a child living in a home where literacy and learning are part of the regular routine.

Health Literacy

According to the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy, **43% of Oklahoma adults**, more than one million people, are currently at the lowest two literacy levels, resulting in **difficulty functioning effectively in society**. Researchers have found that adults who function at the lowest literacy levels find it difficult to understand the instructions of medical care providers, read consent forms, and read and understand labels on prescription bottles.

Low literacy results in higher hospitalization rates as well as medication and treatment errors. This leads to an estimated cost of \$73 billion each year in unnecessary health care expenses. *ProLiteracy*

Learning Disabilities

According to the Learning Disabilities Association of America, a learning disability is a neurological condition that interferes with a person's ability to store, process or produce information. Learning disabilities can affect one's ability to read, write, speak, spell, compute math and reason. It can also affect a person's attention, memory, coordination, social skills and emotional maturity. The National Institute for Literacy reports that 15% of the general population has learning disabilities, and **80% of those in adult basic and literacy programs have learning disabilities** of various types and severity.

English Language Learners

The 2005 American Community Survey of the U.S. Census revealed a population in Oklahoma of 256,771 residents age five and older who speak a language other than English at home. According to the National Adult Literacy Survey, oral proficiency in English is the key to initial employment for immigrants and refugees, and English literacy is necessary for promotion and advancement in work.

The continued growth in the number of speakers of languages other than English is reflected in the growing number of adult English language learners across the country. *National Adult Literacy Survey*

Workplace Literacy

Employers reported that their **employees will need more of the following skills in the future**: 51% of jobs will require stronger reading/writing/communication skills, 40% of jobs will require strong computer skills, 39% of jobs will require the ability to read and translate diagrams and flowcharts, 39% of jobs will require math skills, and 27% of jobs will require English language fluency. *2005 Skills Gap Report*



The Literacy Resource Office of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries provides support, information, and technical assistance to more than 60 library and community-based programs throughout the state.

The Literacy Resource Office provides a lending library of materials, funding opportunities, training, literacy-related marketing items, statewide newsletter, website and toll-free number.

Local literacy programs collaborate with libraries, employers, educational providers, government agencies, civic organizations, and others to serve their communities.



To be a part of Oklahoma's literacy effort, please contact your local literacy program or call the Literacy Resource Office at 800-522-8116 (toll free in Oklahoma) or 405-522-3205.

Visit the Literacy Resource Office website at www.odl.state.ok.us/literacy for a listing of community literacy programs, along with other information about literacy in Oklahoma.