Research Scan: August 2011

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Research Announcements

Community Learning

NIACE announced in April 2011 that it was assessing the social and economic impact and value for money of Informal Adult and Community Learning, on behalf of the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), and invited those with evidence of the impacts of adult learning to make submissions. These submissions are to be analyzed and summarized for BIS and used to inform a policy paper on the future of Informal Adult and Community Learning.

Keywords: Community literacy; Informal learning; National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE); Research announcements United Kingdom

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Family Literacy

Ensuring early acquisition of literacy: study on parental support [posted June 2011]

In the UK, NRDC has coordinated the research project Ensuring early acquisition of literacy: study on parental support for the European Commission. The project, which was to run from December 2009 to February 2011, looked at programs in Europe aiming to help parents of disadvantaged families to support their young children's reading literacy. As of August 2011 the findings had yet to be announced.

Keywords: Children's development; Children's Literacy; Family literacy

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National Programs and Policy – UK – Skills for Life

NIACE is coordinating the Independent Inquiry into Adult and Youth literacy- Lifelong Literacy: In, Out and Beyond Work, into the state of affairs in England and Wales ten years after the launch of the Skills for Life national strategy. The Inquiry was launched on September 8, 2010, a progress report was published that December, and the final report is due September 2011. It is expected to provide the evidence for recommendations to be made to different adult and youth literacy stakeholders and an "independent analysis of what has been achieved by the Skills for Life strategy over the past decade and mark the 10 year anniversary with an overview and critical appraisal of a way forward." It will include a review of research literature and policies.

Keywords: Adult Literacy; National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE); Skills for Life; United Kingdom; Youth

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Professionalization

The Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC) is doing a study called *Review of Program Participant Impacts of Professionalization Standards for Literacy Practitioners.* It will examine the relationship between standards for literacy service provision and outcomes for program participants, drawing upon academic research, findings from international literacy professionalization initiatives, and interviews with literacy stakeholders.

The OLC has previously explored the concept of professionalization in the adult literacy field in Ontario through discussion papers, sessions and panels during both Spotlight on Learning conferences.

Keywords: Canada; Ontario Literacy Coalition; Professionalization; Reports

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Workforce/Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills

In their newsletter of February 2011 the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) discussed their Literacy and Essential Skills in the Workplace demonstration project [http://www.srdc.org/lww/en_index.asp], a 3-year project which began in February 2010. Through this project SRDC intends to provide evidence of tangible benefits to employers from workplace LES training. Up to 1200 workers in 80 to 100 firms in the accommodation sector of the tourist industry are to be involved, with half getting training while the other half serves as a control group in the study.

Keywords: Canada; Program assessment; Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC); Workplace literacy and essential skills

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Canada – National Project Run by ACCC

The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) is running a three year (February 2010- February 2013), $4.8 million project called *Developing a National Framework for Essential Skills:* Seeking Harmony While Respecting Diversity*. This program will develop a national framework to support the essential skills (ES) development of groups currently excluded from the labour market: Aboriginals, newcomers to Canada, unskilled workers and the unemployed. The Framework will include a national repository of ES resources.

The (UK) Armed Forces Basic Skills Longitudinal Study (2008-2011)

This is being conducted by NIACE, and examines the impact of improving literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) skills of Service personnel on their professional and personal development and collectively on organizational performance. NIACE has already published a number of summary and research papers online.

Keywords: Longitudinal studies; National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE); United Kingdom

Research Publications

Adult Literacy: Literature Reviews

Kruidenier, J. R., MacArthur, C. A., & Wrigley, H. S. (2010). Adult Education Literacy Instruction: A Review of the Research. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy. Retrieved August 15, 2011, from http://lincs.ed.gov/pd/adult_ed_review.

Adult Literacy Instruction: A Review of the Research is a follow-up to the original review of Adult Education (AE) reading instruction, *Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction*, published in 2002. This new report focuses on findings derived from the research and their application in AE settings. It includes research findings from reviews of adolescent reading instruction, reading-writing connections, English for Speakers of Other Languages reading and writing instruction, and an appendix.

Keywords: Adult Literacy, English as an additional language (EAL); Language learning; Literature reviews; United States

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Children's Development

The [UK] Millennium Cohort Study is a longitudinal survey conducted by the Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS) at the University of London, following the lives of a sample of about 19,000 babies born in the UK in the year 2000–2001.

Among those findings reported in March 2010: "three-year-olds whose parents read to them every day were two months ahead of their peers in the first year of primary school, not only in language and literacy, but also in maths. However, there was no "significant" decline for those at the same age who watched TV for two or more hours a day." [www.guardian.co.uk/society/2010/feb/21/toddlers-study-health-policy]

Although the *Guardian* does not provide references, its source appears to be:
HANSEN, K., JONES, E., JOSHI, H. and BUDGE, D (eds) (2010). *Millennium Cohort Study Fourth Survey: A User's Guide to Initial Findings.* London: Centre for Longitudinal Studies. Retrieved August 17, 2011, from http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/studies.asp?section=0001000200010012

This is a collection of articles presenting findings having to do with family demographics, child development parenting, and schooling, among other things.

Results from the three previous surveys were published in 2004, 2007, and 2008.

Keywords: Children's development; Children's Literacy; Family literacy; Longitudinal studies; Newspaper articles; Reading; United Kingdom

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Embedding Literacy, Language and Numeracy

Leach, Linda, et. al. (2010). *New Zealand: 'One size does not fit all': how five tertiary education organisations embed literacy, language and numeracy: summary report*. Retrieved August 15, 2011, from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/tertiary_education/one-size-does-not-fit-all-how-five-tertiary-education-organisations-embed-literacy,-language-and-numeracy-summary-report/key-findings

This report uses case studies to show how different tertiary education organizations teach literacy, language and numeracy skills as part of their program. Some common threads: all case study sites had an 'embedded literacy champion' from within the organization; and there was a clear commitment to embedding in all organizations although this took on different forms in different contexts.

Keywords: Adult Literacy; Case studies; Embedding; New Zealand; Reports

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Family Literacy

Improving Mothers' Literacy Skills May Be Best Way to Boost Children's Achievement
Posted November 3, 2010

Programs to boost the academic achievement of children from low income neighborhoods would be more successful if they simultaneously provided adult literacy education to parents, according to a study appearing in Demography that was conducted by United States National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded researchers. They based this conclusion on their finding that a mother's reading skill is the greatest determinant of her children's future academic success.

Narayan Sastry, Anne R. Pebley. *Family and Neighborhood Sources of Socioeconomic Inequality in Children's Achievement.* Demography - Volume 47, Number 3, August 2010, pp. 777-800. Retrieved August 17, 2011, from http://www.nichd.nih.gov/news/releases/102510-reading-family-income.cfm.

Keywords: Children's literacy; Family literacy; Journal articles; National Institutes of Health; United States

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Financial Literacy

Canadian Task Force on Financial Literacy. (2010*). Canadians and Their Money: Building a brighter financial future. A report by the Task Force on Financial Literacy*. Retrieved August 15, 2011, from http://www.financialliteracyincanada.com/canadians-and-their-money.html,

ABC Life Literacy Canada. (2010) Submission to the Canadian Task Force on Financial Literacy. Retrieved August 15, 2011, from http://abclifeliteracy.ca/en/files/TaskForceSubmission.pdf

TD Bank Financial Group. (2009). *Literacy Matters: Dollars and Sense - The Urgent Need for Lifelong Financial Literacy*. Retrieved August 15, 2011, from http://www.td.com/economics/special/ca0610_literacy.pdf

The concept of 'financial literacy' has recently become popular, the idea being that people could better manage their money if they were better educated in financial matters. For example, the TD Bank Financial Group published a report calling for a national strategy on financial literacy. One result of this interest was the Canadian Task Force on Financial Literacy, appointed by the Government of Canada in June 2009. The Task Force heard from literacy organizations such as ABC Life Literacy Canada before publishing the report Canadians and Their Money: Building a brighter financial future. A report by the Task Force on Financial Literacy in December 2010. It declares financial literacy to be an 'essential skill' and proposes a 'National Strategy on Financial Literacy', that would involve efforts by various stakeholders with the Government of Canada taking on a leadership role.

Keywords: ABC Life Literacy Canada; Canada; Financial literacy, Numeracy; Reports

Schwartz, Saul. (2010). Can Financial Education Improve Financial Literacy and Retirement Planning*? IRPP Study* (12): 1-28. Retrieved August 15, 2011, from www.irpp.org/pubs/IRPPstudy/IRPP_Study_no12.pdf.

A report by Saul Schwartz finds little evidence that financial education actually improves the financial outcomes of those receiving such education. After reviewing studies of effectiveness of financial education, Schwartz concludes that education on its own is insufficient to improve financial outcomes. Pairing education with improved government policy will have greater impact. The report concludes that the government should focus on consumer protection, redesign pension programs and develop an agency to regulate the financial industry, as well as offering an advisory service to provide impartial third-party advice.

Meanwhile, ABC Life Literacy Canada has developed a financial literacy program for adult learners (called 'Money Matters') which has been pilot tested and is set to be launched in the fall of 2011.

Keywords: Canada; Financial literacy, Numeracy; Reports

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Health and Literacy

2011 Health Literacy Papers – A bibliography, sent to the Healthliteracy e-mail list in June 2011:
http://lincs.ed.gov/pipermail/healthliteracy/2011/006050.html

Keywords: Bibliographies; Health literacy

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Learning and Technology

Richards, Griff, McGreal, Rory, & Stewart, Brian (2011). *Cloud Computing: What is cloud computing and why is it important for Adult Literacy?* AlphaPlus. Retrieved August 17, 2011, from http://alphaplus.ca/en/web-tools/online-publications-a-reportsgroup1/cloud-computing.html

This is the first in a series of research reports to be published by AlphaPlus in 2011-12 on digital technologies and their potential impacts on the literacy field. This report includes a review of recent literature on cloud computing, on the role of technology in literacy, and on the characteristics of adult literacy in Canada.

Cloud computing involves making computer files and software available to users online as opposed to users housing them on their own computers. For a literacy organization, this would mean not having to maintain its own computer infrastructure, instead having access to "powerful and affordable computing infrastructure and the ability to buy computing software, as needed, over the Internet", which would also can help centralize and connect e-learning materials and literacy communities interspersed throughout the Internet, and lead to the creation of a centralized online platform for the sharing of and collaboration on tools and resources.

Keywords: AlphaPlus; Canada; Computer literacy; Digital skills; Educational technology; E-learning; Literature Reviews; Literacy organizations; Reports

Moriarty, Maria (2011). *Finding Our Way: Digital Technologies and E-Learning for Adult Literacy Students, Educators and Programs*. Retrieved August 17, 2011, from http://alphaplus.ca/en/web-tools/online-publications-a-reportsgroup1/finding-our-way.html

This literature review is the second of nine reports to be published by AlphaPlus in 2011-12 on digital technologies and their potential impacts on the literacy field. As there is relatively little literature on these technologies relating specifically to the adult literacy sector, this review looks across the education spectrum, including K-12 and postsecondary education materials. However, it is restricted to the time period 2005-2011 and confined to sources from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand.

The review presents a global snapshot of how technology has been used to enhance teaching, learning and professional development, exploring how educators could be supported to integrate technology into their practice. The author has grouped the findings according to a variety of themes, including digital reading; digital skills and employment; learning disabilities and assistive technology; the digital divide; anywhere/anytime learning; collaborative learning; and professional development in technology for literacy educators.

Keywords: AlphaPlus; Canada; Computer literacy; Digital skills; Educational technology; E-learning; Literature Reviews

Davis, N. E. & Fletcher, J. (2010). *E-learning for adult literacy, language and numeracy: Summary report*. Wellington: Ministry of Education. Retrieved August 15, 2011 from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/tertiary_education/76972/executive-summary

This report summarizes the main findings of a research project on how e-learning can help to improve adults' literacy, language and numeracy skills. Among its findings: e-learning is more effective if it is part of face-to-face training; many of the e-learning strategies used for building reading and writing skills can also be successfully used for and by adults with disabilities; the use of mobile digital technologies in e-learning contexts increases the flexibility of LLN provision; and there is a need for professional development in e-learning.

Keywords: E-learning; Distance learning; Educational technology; New Zealand; Reports

Learning Disabilities

NCVER (Australia) Releases Research Report on Apprentices with Learning Disabilities
October 13, 2010

Cotton, S , Polytechnic West. (2010). *Breaking down the barriers: strategies to assist apprentices with a learning disability*.

A study that explores the difficulties faced by apprentices with learning disabilities and the strategies used to overcome these difficulties. In addition to surveying apprentices with learning disabilities, the researcher also held a focus group of lecturers and learning disabilities support staff and interviewed family members. The greatest difficulties reported by the apprentices were with reading and understanding texts. Accommodation of their learning styles, individual mentoring and tutoring, and supportive relationships were identified as successful strategies for helping the students succeed. However, non-disclosure of learning disabilities often limited the support students could be given.

This research was undertaken by a novice researcher in the Community of Practice scholarship program, which is funded through NCVER's Building Researcher Capacity initiative."

Keywords: Australia, Apprenticeship, Learning disabilities, Research reports, Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES)

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Libraries and Literacy

Report of the Literacy & Lifelong Learning Working Group - Strengthening the Saskatchewan public library system's role in promoting, delivering and supporting literacy and lifelong learning opportunities for all by Literacy & Lifelong Learning Working Group (2011) (PDF): http://www.nald.ca/library/research/report_lllwg/report_lllwg.pdf

The Literacy and Lifelong Learning Working Group was formed to investigate the potential of public libraries as promoters of literacy and lifelong learning. This report comes out of a consultation process involving a series of workshop consultations with library trustees, library staff, local library boards and relevant organizations. It recommends a coordinated provincial strategy and policy created by the Provincial Library and Literacy Office in cooperation with the public library sector. Policy would articulate standard expectations of literacy programming in public libraries throughout the province. It also recommends that library systems incorporate literacy and lifelong learning into their strategic plans and have at least one literacy coordinator position among their staff, create action plans to provide the facilities, programming and training needed to conduct literacy and lifelong learning initiatives, and to ensure accountability by regularly assessing the impacts of these initiatives. It also advocates partnerships with varied stakeholders such as Aboriginal groups and First Nations, literacy organizations, and English as an Additional Languages groups.

Keywords: Canada; Libraries; Reports; Saskatchewan;

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National Programs and Policy

National Research and Development Centre (2011). *Literature Review of International Adult Literacy Policies*. National Adult Literacy Agency, Dublin, Ireland. Available on August 18, 2011 at http://www.scribd.com/fullscreen/50539888.

The NRDC produced a *Literature Review of International Adult Literacy Policies (2011)* for the Irish National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), focusing on research publishing from 1990 onwards about literacy policy in Australia, Canada, Finland, New Zealand, Scotland, Sweden, the United Kingdom (England), and the USA. The report discusses themes and lessons relevant to the Irish context. The Nordic countries are said to have been successful at creating a 'culture of adult learning' that encourages widespread participation in learning while removing barriers to participation. By contrast, Australia is seen as having squandered its 1990's position as a world leader in policy and provision due to a lack of coherent long-term vision, while Canada's 'impressive attention to producing adult literacy research' has not been matched by policy efforts to create sustainable, high-quality programs, and its generally short-term, isolated initiatives have tended to be ineffective.

Keywords: Ireland; Literature Reviews; National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA); National Resource and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy (NRDC); Policy

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National Programs and Policy – New Zealand

Tertiary Education Commission (2010). *Getting Results in Literacy and Numeracy: Contributing to the vision that all New Zealanders enjoy a level of literacy and numeracy that enables them to participate fully in all aspects of life*. Retrieved August 10, 2011, from http://literacyandnumeracyforadults.com/content/download/7691/64639/file/Getting-Results-in-Literacy-and-Numeracy.pdf

This document reports on achievements to date, finding that the capability to include literacy and numeracy in programs is now more widespread across all tertiary education sectors, while also discussing the next steps for the tertiary education sector.

Keywords: Adult literacy; New Zealand; Numeracy; Policy; Professional development; Reports

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National Programs and Policy – UK – Skills for Life

The NRDC has published The Teacher Study: The impact of the Skills for Life strategy on teachers (2010), a study of 1027 teachers between 2004 and 2007 that provides a portrait of their qualifications, working conditions, professional development opportunities and job satisfaction. It found that many welcome the professionalization of the field, the improved status that goes with it, and the government's recognition of the importance of their work. However, any find that the standards, targets and bureaucracy that come with Skills for Life imposes new administrative burdens that divert them from the main business of teaching, and others find that it has created divisions between teachers in different education sectors

Keywords: National Resource and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy (NRDC); Policy; Professional Development; Reports; Skills for Life; United Kingdom

Numeracy

NIACE Committee of Inquiry on Adult Numeracy Learning. (2011). Numeracy Counts. Retrieved August 16, 2011, from http://shop.niace.org.uk/numeracy-counts.html

This report is the result of the Independent Inquiry into Numeracy led by NIACE, which ran from April 2010 to January 2011. The Inquiry did some background research and focus groups with practitioners and learners, and then called for and received submissions from individuals and groups. The report recommends that the definition of numeracy be broadened beyond procedural skills to focus more on behaviours involving the use of mathematical thinking and conceptual skills. Their proposed definition of 'numerate' is to be 'competent, confident and comfortable' with one's mathematical judgments. The report urges that the government promote a change in cultural attitudes towards numeracy by promoting it in the media as something that is used in everyday life; that they assess numeracy in ways that focus on 'real-life' activities, measuring numerate practices, behaviours and conceptual understanding; and to prioritize those whose numeracy is weakest, something the UK national Skills for Life strategy failed to do.

Keywords: National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE); Numeracy; Policy; Reports; Skills for Life; United Kingdom

Thomas, G & Ward, J. (2010). *Numeracy for adults: building skills with online learning links*. New Zealand Ministry of Education. Retrieved August 17, 2011 from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/tertiary_education/numeracy-for-adults-building-skills-with-online-learning-links/1.-introduction

This report describes a project that supplemented workplace learning with simple online numeracy tasks that trainees completed in their own time. It found that these tasks helped them to improve their numeracy skills

Keywords: Educational technology; Numeracy; New Zealand; Program evaluation; Reports

Readability

Making things hard to read 'can boost learning': study
Posted November 3, 2010

A study published in the journal *Cognition* found that students who read information in difficult-to-read fonts had better recall of that information when tested 15 minutes later.

Oppenheimer DM, Yauman CD, Vaughan VB. (2011). Fortune Favors the Bold (and the Italicized): Effects of Disfluency on Educational Outcomes. *Cognition (118)* 1: 111-115. Retrieved August 22, 2011 from http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21040910

Keywords: Journal articles; Reading; Readability

Workforce/Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills

Chinien, Chris, & Boutin, France (2011). *Defining Essential Digital Skills in the Canadian Workplace: Final Report*. Retrieved August 21, 2011, from http://www.nald.ca/library/research/digi_es_can_workplace/digi_es_can_workplace.pdf

This study sought to update the concept of computer use as one of the nine essential skills (as defined by HRSDC), and included a literature review, consultations with employers, the identification of existing assessment tools. The report proposes a framework for defining digital essential skills is proposed and presents a new complexity rating skill for these skills.

Keywords: Reports; Workplace literacy and essential skills;

Centre for Workplace Skills Report on work-related informal learning

Wihak, Christine, & Hall, Gail (2011). *Work-related Informal Learning: Research and Practice in the Canadian Context*. Retrieved August 22, 2011, from http://www.nald.ca/library/research/informal_learning/informal_learning.pdf

In june 2011 The Centre for Workplace Skills released a report on work-related informal learning. Members of the Centre's Network of Experts were presented with the report's findings through The Centre Online, an online 'community of practice' for Centre members.

This project was funded by the Canadian Council on Learning's Work and Learning Knowledge Centre and was headed by the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment.

Keywords: Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment; Centre for Workplace Skills; Informal learning; Reports; Workplace literacy and essential skills

Wolf, A & Evans, K. (2011). *Improving Literacy at Work.* Routledge.

Wolf, Alison; Aspin, Liam; Waite, Edmund; Ananiadou, Katerina. (2010). The Rise and Fall of Workplace Basic Skills Programmes: Lessons for Policy and Practice. *Oxford Review of Education*, v36 n4 p385-405 Aug 2010. Abstract retrieved August 11, 2011, from http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03054985.2010.494448.

These both report on the findings of a longitudinal study tracked 53 workplaces which hosted subsidized basic skills courses, and examined the impact on the enterprises themselves as well as on learners. These subsidized courses were provided as part of the UK's Skills for Life national strategy. The courses were found to have left no lasting impact, as they did not lead to behaviour changes that were likely to affect productivity and employers were unwilling to support further provision at full cost. The results suggest that the "one-size fits all" nature of the programs resulted in many cases where provision was mismatched with the needs of many learners, and that positive outcomes are more likely in workplaces where learners have opportunities to use their literacy skills.

Keywords: Journal articles; Longitudinal studies; Reports; Workplace literacy and essential skills (WLES)

Keywords

Aboriginal peoples

Adult education

Apprenticeship

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Workshops

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Name keywords:

ABC Life Literacy Canada

Alberta

Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC)

Australia

British Columbia

Canadian Apprenticeship Forum

Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment

Canadian Council on Learning (CCL)

Canadian Library Association (CLA)

Canadian Society for Training and Development (CSTD)

Centre for Workplace Skills

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Learn Canada 2020

Learn@Work Week

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LINCS

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Manitoba

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National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Northeast Edmonton Literacy Network

Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES)

Ontario

Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC)

Prince Albert Literacy Network

People, Words & Change

Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC)

United States