Current Research

Publications

Current Research

Community Literacy

Ontario Research into Social Media Use by Community Literacy Organizations

Social Media – Community Literacy of Ontario
http://www.communityliteracyofontario.ca/social-media-marketing/

> In April 2013, Community Literacy of Ontario began a two-year project of research and development to support the creation of social media marketing materials and resources for Ontario's community-based literacy agencies. The project is funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The research will include a needs assessment of Ontario's literacy community social media marketing needs, online research into the most useful social media marketing platforms and tools, focus groups, piloting of the tools and resources that are developed, and a project evaluation.

Keywords: Community education, Community literacy, Community organizations, Needs Assessment, Ontario, Pilot projects, Program evaluation, Social media, Technology

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Research Publications

International Literacy Assessments

US PIAAC Results report

Goodman, Madeline, et al. (2013). *Literacy, Numeracy, and Problem Solving in Technology-Rich Environments: Results from the International Assessment of Adult Competencies 2012 – First Look*. National Center for Education Statistics. Available at
http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2014008

> This document reports US PIAAC results in literacy, numeracy, and problem solving in technology-rich environments for a representative sample of adults in the United States age 16 to 65. These results are compared to an international average in countries/regions that participated in the PIAAC 2012 assessment. The report also includes results for US groups defined by demographic characteristics such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, and level of education**.** Overall literacy and numeracy results are also compared to results from previous international assessments. The US average score in PIAAC was at or below the average in all three domains, although the percentage of the population who scored at the highest literacy level was slightly higher than average. Also, the 55-65 age group scored higher than the average in literacy.

Keywords: Digital competencies, International literacy assessments, Numeracy, Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), United States

Australian PIAAC results released

Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, Australia, 2011-12. Available at
http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4228.0

> Australia has yet to issue a formal report of PIAAC results, but is presenting results from the survey on the website of the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Level 3 is generally used as a dividing line between "low" skill levels and "high" skill levels in making regional and demographic comparisons. For instance, comparisons are made of the proportions of people at Level 3 or above by employment status, by industry and occupation, by level of education, by country of birth and by first language spoken. The breakdown of literacy scores by country of birth shows that 57% of people born in Australia were at Level 3 or higher, compared to 62% of those born in the UK, 69% of those born in Malaysia, 65% of those born in South Africa, and only 17% of those born in Italy.

Keywords: Australia, Digital competencies, International literacy assessments, Numeracy, Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

Digital Competencies

Recent US Data on Access to Computer and Internet Technology

National Telecommunications and Information Administration. (2013). *Exploring the Digital Nation: America's Emerging Online Experience.* Available at http://www.ntia.doc.gov/report/2013/exploring-digital-nation-americas-emerging-online-experience

> This 2013 report from the U.S. government looks at the nation's progress in achieving the policy goal of universal broadband access, and rates of Internet use, the barriers to use and people's online activities. It is based on data from the Census Bureau's July 2011 Current Population Survey Computer and Internet Use Supplement. The dataset includes information gathered from 53,000 households. The report finds that there were continued disparities in broadband adoption based on demographics and geography, but that these were diminishing over time. There were still disparities in computer ownership and broadband adoption by income level and by race. At the state level, the proportion of households with computers ranged from 65% to 85%. 92% of those who accessed the Internet did so from home; those who did not went online at public libraries, work, and school, and other places.

Keywords: Digital competencies, Surveys, Technology, United States

Younger Americans Still Attached to Print: Pew Report

Zickuhr K, Rainie L, & Purcell K. (2013). *Younger Americans' Library Habits and Expectations: Summary of Findings. Pew Research Center.* Available at http://libraries.pewinternet.org/2013/06/25/younger-americans-library-services/

> This survey of Americans aged 16-29 looks at their habits and attitudes when it comes to library use, reading, and technology. 2,252 people were surveyed in October-November 2012, half of them on landline phones and half on cell phones. The surveys were conducted in English and Spanish. The report also quotes librarians and library patrons who participated in the in-person and online focus groups. The researchers found that although Americans in this age group are almost all online, and are more likely than older patrons to use Internet, computers and online databases at the library than are older patrons, they remain attached to print. 75% of them reported reading at least one book in print in the past year, compared to 64% of adults aged 30 and older. They were also about as likely to have visited a library in the past year. Although their reading of e-books had increased since 2011, this did not seem to affect their reading of print books. The report does not indicate how many books people had read on average beyond noting the proportion who had read at least one.

Keywords: Digital competencies, Libraries, Reading, Technology, United States

Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills

Majority of Australian Employers Believe All Employees "Fully Proficient" at their Jobs: Survey

NCVER (2013). Australian vocational education and training statistics: Employers' use and views of the VET system 2013. Available at http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2675.html

> This report comes from the 2013 Survey of Employer Use and Views of the VET System. , which surveyed a random stratified sample of Australian employers to collect information about their use and views of the vocational education and training (VET) system and measure their engagement with and view of the VET system. The previous survey was in 2011. Among the findings: 65.2% of employers believed that all their employees were "fully proficient" at their jobs, while 34.8% reported having some employees who were not. The main reasons employers thought employees were below full proficiency were that they were new to their roles (48.0%) or had not completed appropriate training. They believed the main effects of this were increased workload for other staff (82.7%), increased operating costs (54.5%) and trouble meeting customer service objectives (47.0%). The main strategies they identified to address this problem were training existing staff (81.4%), internal reorganization (50.3%) and recruitment of new employees (48.9%). 36.4% of employers reported recruitment difficulties. Just over 50% of employers reported using the VET system, a decrease from 2011. Overall employer satisfaction was also slightly lower, although it was still close to 80%.

Keywords: Australia, Employers, Program evaluation, Skills mismatch, Skills shortages, Surveys, Vocational education, Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES)

Community Literacy

British Action Research Study on Impacts of Community Learning

Plant, Helen, & Perry, Sarah. (2013). Making a Difference: The Impact of Community Learning. *Adults Learning 25* (1): 8-13.

> The Community Learning Innovation Fund (CLIF) was a £4 million grant fund from the Skills Funding Agency, administered by the UK National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), which funded 96 community learning projects across England from August 2012 to July 2013. Early analysis of the data indicates that the fund engaged over 15,000 learners, including many from disadvantaged backgrounds and those least likely to participate in learning. NIACE is producing six thematic reports on learning for health, families, digital inclusion, employability, volunteering, and personal capability. This article provides short summaries of each of these reports supported by case studies.

Keywords: Case studies, Community education, Community literacy, Community organizations, Digital competencies, Employability, Family literacy, Health, Integrated learning approach, United Kingdom,

Community Literacy of Ontario Research Leads to Newsletter on Best Practices for Working with Social Assistance Recipients

Community Literacy of Ontario. (2013). Literacy + OW: Best Practices for Serving Ontario Works Clients. *Our Voice.* Available at
http://www.communityliteracyofontario.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Our-Voice-Literacy-+-OW-Best-Practices-for-Serving-Ontario-Works-Clients-Oct-2013.pdf

> At least 40% of adult learners in Ontario's community-based Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) agencies receive some form of social assistance. Community Literacy Ontario therefore decided to research and write a newsletter on best practices for working with clients who are on Ontario Works. They reviewed various internet and print based resources including several literature reviews, surveyed member agencies, and conducted a focus group with the CLO Board of Directors to identify best practices for working with this population. In the survey, agencies were asked to share success stories or best practices. They found from both the research and input from literacy practitioners that formally connecting academic with non-academic outcomes increases human resiliency and contributes to greater self sufficiency. Aside from this, it is unclear from the newsletter exactly how "best practices" were defined for this study. "Best practices" identified include: formally targeting and noting non-academic outcomes for learners such as increased self-confidence, improved ability to set and achieve goals, and improvements in interpersonal skills; supporting learners' basic needs; starting community gardens; creating a welcoming environment to overcome clients' negative experiences with accessing community and government services; providing ongoing motivation; setting realistic expectations; building relationships with and collaborating with other community services in assisting learners; and offering contextualized literacy programming.

Keywords: Best practices, Community education, Community literacy, Community organizations, Integrated learning approach, Literature reviews, Ontario, Outcomes of Learning, Poverty, Social assistance, Unemployed

NWT Report Recommends Integrated "Whole Person" Approach to Help Learners Overcome Barriers to Learning and Work

NWT Literacy Council (2013). *Factors that Facilitate Adult Learner Success in the NWT*. Retrieved November 25, 2013, from http://www.nald.ca/library/research/nwtlc/factors/factors.pdf

> This report summarizes current thinking in Canada on non-academic outcomes, factors that get in the way of or facilitate adult learner success, and prior learner assessment recognition (PLAR). The research included: a literature review with a focus on Aboriginal learners, findings from previous New West Territories (NWT) research on non-academic outcomes for adult learners, and interviews with three adult education instructors and an adult learner focus group. The researchers recommend the adoption of an integrated "whole person" approach to overcome multiple barriers for learners, specifically targeting barriers such as the availability of childcare, finances, and adequate housing, while recognizing the time it may take some learners to complete programs; implementing prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) in

programs; embedding learning in practical and realistic contexts, particularly for learners with lower levels of skills; and balancing academic and non-academic outcomes.

Keywords: Aboriginal peoples, Best practices, Community education, Community literacy, Community organizations, Integrated learning approach, Literature reviews, Outcomes of Learning, Yukon Territory

Canadian Guide to Effective Practices for Essential Skills (ES) practitioners

Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) (2013). *National Framework: An Integrated Approach to Developing Essential Skills*. Retrieved November 26, 2013, from http://www.nald.ca/library/learning/accc/accc_integrated_approach/accc_integrated_approach.pdf

> This guide to effective practices for Essential Skills (ES) practitioners was produced as part of a participatory action-research project led by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (now Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). Research for the project included a content analysis of common factors of success as derived from practitioners' stories, pilot testing of the approach developed in 17 sites across Canada, including nine colleges and eight workplaces, to validate usefulness of this approach for helping various learner groups meet ES requirements, and a systematic analysis of case studies to identify effective ES practices. Abstracts of the case studies are collected in a booklet on the ACCC's website at http://www.accc.ca/

Keywords: Action research, Case studies, Canada, Integrated learning approach, Pilot projects, Teaching, Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES)

Family Literacy

NIACE Independent Inquiry into Family Learning (England and Wales) Reports

NIACE. (2013). *Family Learning Works: The Inquiry into Family Learning in England and Wales.*
Full report at
http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/n/i/niace_family_learning_report_reprint_final.pdf
Summary report at
http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/n/i/niace_family_learning_summary_report_final_web_v2_2.pdf

> The UK National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) conducted the Inquiry into Family Learning beginning in October 2012 and reported in October 2013. The Inquiry gathered evidence through a review of national and international research on the impact of family learning, expert seminars, focus groups, site visits, and a series of filmed interviews giving testimony about family learning from learners, teachers, and managers. These interviews appear in the report and online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=EnmtXgNOgoM. Chapter 3

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focuses on the evidence found on the impacts of family learning. They found strong evidence that family language and math programs benefit children's skills as well as those of their parents and carers. Positive impacts on children were particularly strong. They also found wider benefits including improving impacts on adults' self-confidence, motivation to learn, parenting skills and practices, health and well being, and employability (although there is less quantitative evidence in this area). The report recommends that every child's education include family learning, and that further quantitative research be done on the wider impacts of family learning.

Keywords: Children's Literacy, Family literacy, Literature reviews, Numeracy, Outcomes of Learning, United Kingdom,

Learning Disabilities

Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities

Taylor, Maurice C., & Roberts, Meagan (2013). *Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities: A Look at the Issues Facing the Field*. Retrieved November 27, 2013, from
http://www.nald.ca/library/research/thompson_ed_pub/adult_lit/adult_lit.pdf

> A large proportion of adult literacy learners in Canada are thought to have learning disabilities. The authors look at adult literacy and learning disabilities in Canada and provide an overview of the research in this area. They note that, as reported in the 2006 State of the Field report on Adult Literacy, "the literature on literacy and disabilities is remarkably limited", particularly in Canada. They look at some recent American research on learning disabilities and alphabetics, fluency, and reading comprehension. Research has found that those with learning disabilities are overrepresented in the adult education target population (people testing at low literacy levels). The authors note an emerging paradigm for disabilities studies, the "social model", which sees disability not as an individual problem but as a social issue of how to remove barriers that hinder the social participation of the "disabled". Some researchers call for this approach to inform future disabilities research, while others argue for approaches that will give voice to the individual experiences of the marginalized. The authors argue that adopting a social view of literacy that connects literacy practices with the personal experiences of adult literacy learners would stand a better chance of helping disabled learners, as would targeted professional development for literacy instructors and the development of appropriate resources.

Keywords: Canada, Learning disabilities, Literature reviews, Teaching