

Constructing Health & Literacy Curriculum

A Learning Institute

**What do we mean by “literacy”,
“information literacy”
“health literacy” &
related terms?**

- Selected definitions**

Why worry about definitions?

Difficult to talk about a concept without a shared definition

Curriculum starts from definition.

Selections in this presentation have come from the fields of literacy, adult education, library studies, health education and more, over a period of more than thirty years.

They demonstrate the evolution of the concepts and the disparities in co-existent definitions.

Literacy

Literacy is using printed and written information to function in society to achieve one's goals and develop one's knowledge and potential.

- International Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey (IALSS 2003)



Literacy

Literacy is a complex set of abilities needed to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture – alphabets, numbers, visual icons – for personal and community development. The nature of these abilities, and the demand for them, vary from one context to another..... cont'd

-The Centre for Literacy of Quebec



- In a technological society, literacy extends beyond the functional skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening to include multiple literacies such as visual, media and information literacy. These new literacies focus on an individual's capacity to use and make critical judgements about the information they encounter on a daily basis.
- However a culture defines it, literacy touches every aspect of individual and community life. It is an essential foundation for learning through life, and must be valued as a human right.

-The Centre for Literacy of Quebec

Health promotion-

“process of enabling people to increase control over and to improve their health”
(World Health Organization)

- health promotion and disease prevention.
- actualize the mission of public health
- relies on health education and health communication, systems and policies that advance public's health status.

Source: Zarcadoolas, Christina, Pleasant, Andrew F., & Greer, David S.

Advancing Health Literacy: A Framework for Understanding and Action, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006, pp. 4-6.

Health education —

- full range of activities that involve communicating health information to people
- attempts to address gap between what we know about health and what people actually practice
- can take place anywhere: home or community, schools and health care settings, work sites, consumer marketplace

Source: Zarcadoolas, Christina, Pleasant, Andrew F., & Greer, David S. *Advancing Health Literacy: A Framework for Understanding and Action*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006, pp. 4-6.

Health communication-

- use of human and mass or multi-media and other communication skills and technologies to educate or inform an individual or public about a health issue and keep issue on public agenda
- Studies show most consumers want more and better health information.
- Key objective: to construct linguistically, culturally appropriate, and innovative communications using the public health system and to have better patient-provider encounters.

Source: Zarcadoolas, Christina, Pleasant, Andrew F., & Greer, David S.

Advancing Health Literacy: A Framework for Understanding and Action, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006, pp. 4-6.

Social marketing-

- Merges traditional marketing and advertising strategies to persuade people to act in specific ways on social issues, e.g. health and the environment
- focus on designing and evaluating messages and campaigns through careful audience analysis, segmentation, identification of target audiences (market segmentation), understanding audiences, and tailoring communications for a desired effect.
- Instead of starting with what an audience does not know and needs to know, the social marketer begins with knowing what people do and do not do, and why.
- Goal: Behaviour change

Source: Zarcadoolas, Christina, Pleasant, Andrew F., & Greer, David S.

Advancing Health Literacy: A Framework for Understanding and Action, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006, pp. 4-6.

Consumer decision making-

involves active cognitive and emotional roles individuals play in attending to, evaluating, and acting on health information

- Health consumers increasingly required to become more active co-participants in their health and health care

Examples: Making medical treatment decisions, or making decisions about lifestyle changes

Source: Zarcadoolas, Christina, Pleasant, Andrew F., & Greer, David S. *Advancing Health Literacy: A Framework for Understanding and Action*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006, pp. 4-6.

Health literacy –

- the wide range of skills and competencies that people develop to seek out, comprehend, evaluate, and use health information and concepts to make informed choices, reduce health risks, and increase quality of life.

Source: Zarcadoolas, Christina, Pleasant, Andrew F., & Greer, David S. *Advancing Health Literacy: A Framework for Understanding and Action*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006, pp. 4-6.

Four domains of health literacy:

- *Fundamental* – language and numeracy
- *Scientific/technological* – some competence with physical/natural sciences, technology, scientific uncertainty
- *Civic/community* – media literacy, knowledge of civic and government processes
- *Cultural* – recognition of collective beliefs, customs, world-view, social identity

C. Zarcadoolas, A. Pleasant & D.S. Greer Center for Environmental Studies, Brown University

Health literacy

Health literacy represents the cognitive and social skills that determine the motivation and ability of **individuals** to gain access to, understand and use information in ways which promote and maintain good health. Health literacy means more than being able to read pamphlets and successfully make appointments. By improving people's access to health information and their capacity to use it effectively, health literacy is critical to empowerment.

World Health Organization (WHO) 1998

Health literacy is the degree to which **individuals** can obtain, process, and understand the basic health information and services they need to make appropriate health decisions. **But health literacy goes beyond the individual.** It also depends upon the skills, preferences, and expectations of those health information providers: our doctors, nurses, administrators, home health workers, the media, and many others. Health literacy arises from a convergence of education, health services, and social and cultural factors, and brings together research and practice from diverse fields.

Institutes of Medicine 2004

Health Literacy: A Prescription to End Confusion

L Shohet October 16, 2008

Health literacy

The degree to which people are able to access, understand, appraise and communicate information to engage with the demands of *different health contexts* in order to promote and maintain good health across the life-course.

B.C. Health Literacy Research Team 2006

Information literacy

Most definitions focus on information- literate person

"information literates" – first used in 1974
people "trained in the application of information resources to their work".

- President, US Information Industry Association

<http://dis.shef.ac.uk/literacy/definitions.htm>

An information-literate person

“... is able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information”

[American Library Association](#) (1989)

An information-literate person

- recognises the need for information;
- recognises that accurate and complete information is the basis for intelligent decision making;
- identifies potential sources of information;
- develops successful search strategies;
- accesses sources of information, including computer-based and other technologies;
- evaluates information;
- organises information for practical application;
- integrates new information into an existing body of knowledge, and;
- uses information in critical thinking and problem solving.
 - [Doyle](#) (1992)

An information-literate person

One who has the analytical and critical skills to formulate research questions and evaluate results, and the skills to search for and access a variety of information types in order to meet his or her information need.

- [Lenox and Walker](#) (1993)

Information literacy

"a new liberal art that extends from knowing how to use computers and access information to critical reflection on the nature of information itself, its technical infrastructure, and its social, cultural and even philosophical context and impact"

- [Shapiro and Hughes](#) (1996)

Information literacy

Information Literacy, which encompasses knowledge of one's information needs and the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organize and effectively use information to address issues or problems at hand, is a prerequisite for participating effectively in the information society, and is part of the basic human right of life long learning.

- The Prague Declaration (2003)

"Information literacy is the adoption of appropriate information behaviour to identify, through whatever channel or medium, information well fitted to information needs, leading to wise and ethical use of information in society."

dis.shef.ac.uk/literacy

Compare skills required for IALSS levels with definitions of health and information literacies

Look at the common expectations

Conclusion:

Current definitions of health literacy and information literacy require skills at IALSS Level 4-5

**In 2003, 17% of Canadians had that level of skill
In some provinces, it was as low as 12%**