



PCERA 2007

Overview and Summary of the 2007 PCERA Symposium on Literacy initiatives

Ottawa

January 29-30, 2007



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ISBN 0-88987-167-1

Ce rapport est également disponible en français.

The PCERA Symposium was held on January 29-30, 2007, at the Delta Ottawa Hotel, Ottawa.

PowerPoint presentations are available at
<http://www.cmec.ca/stats/pcera/symposium2007/indexe.stm>.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2007 PCERA Symposium focused on provincial/territorial literacy practices and policies, with an emphasis on the use of research and data, to inform policy and programming decisions. The symposium was hosted by Raymond Th  berge, Director General of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, and Sange de Silva, Director General of the Institutions and Social Statistics Branch at Statistics Canada.

The presentations and discussions gave participants many opportunities to share information, discuss practices and challenges with their colleagues, and also consider gaps in the use of data and research in literacy. The final plenary, in particular, gave participants the opportunity to synthesize topics raised throughout the two days and consider possible pan-Canadian initiatives that would help address gaps in literacy information, data, and research.

Suggestions and recommendations presented by participants clustered into six themes as outlined below. Details of these items are included in the report.

We are now turning our attention to research relating to three themes on the agenda that have been identified as general priorities for CMEC: literacy, Aboriginal education, and access to postsecondary education.

- Coordinate information on literacy activities
- Improve access to data
- Increase linkages/connections
- Provide evaluation frameworks
- Increase knowledge mobilization
- Build capacity

There are a series of initiatives that CESC could consider based on the outcomes of the 2007 Literacy Symposium, including the following:

- Undertake a state-of-the-field literature search
- Compile an inventory of literacy activities across the country, with identification of promising practices
- Identify common needs and priorities across the country
- Develop a pan-Canadian literacy research agenda
- Begin work on an evaluation framework for literacy practices
- Undertake research on models of literacy initiatives
- Provide follow-up conferences and events that focus on exchange of information
- Increase dissemination of data and research in a user-friendly form

Details on these initiatives are included in the report.



2007 PCERA SYMPOSIUM ON LITERACY INITIATIVES

Background

The Canadian Education Statistics Council (CESC) initiated the Pan-Canadian Education Research Agenda (PCERA) to focus on interprovincial/territorial issues and to promote research and dialogue among stakeholder groups, including policy makers, researchers, practitioners and educational organizations. An annual symposium allows these groups to share information with each other on specific topics and follow up where appropriate.

The 2007 Symposium focussed on provincial/territorial literacy practices and policies, with an emphasis on the use of research and data, to inform policy and programming decisions. The agenda was structured to provide ample opportunity for provinces and territories to profile promising practices and for group discussions about connections between data and policy—both current and anticipated. A special session of the Symposium concentrated on issues related to challenges faced by Aboriginal people in the improvement of literacy levels.

The Symposium was hosted by Raymond Théberge, Director General of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), and Sange de Silva, Director General of the Institutions and Social Statistics Branch at Statistics Canada. Dr. Théberge and Mr. de Silva presented opening comments for the Symposium, chaired discussions and also provided a synthesis of discussions following the plenary session. Sixty five participants from ministries of education across the country and representatives from Statistics Canada, Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC), and literacy organisations attended the Symposium.

PCERA was originally conceived as a vehicle for research to guide the development of the PCEIP indicators. Over the past 10 years, that concept has expanded. PCERA is now promoting research on existing and emerging policy issues of concern to policy makers, practitioners, and researchers across Canada.

Purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to provide an overall summary of the symposium. Although a synopsis of the highlights of each presentation is included, the focus and intent of this report is

- To summarize themes emerging from group discussions
- To present recommendations for follow-up on issues identified during discussions



Copies of the individual PowerPoint presentations are available on the CMEC Web site,¹ providing detailed descriptions of many of the promising practices presented by the provinces and territories at the symposium. This report is designed to be a companion piece to that material as a synopsis cannot adequately capture the depth of the material presented by the provinces and territories.

Appendix I presents highlights of the individual sessions held during the two-day symposium, and Appendix II presents a list of acronyms used in this report. The list of participants is provided as Appendix III.

Overview of the symposium

One of the goals of this event is to try to respond to these concerns by going beyond presentations of research, and exploring how to make the connections that bring the data and research into the policy world.

On day 1, participants attended a keynote address outlining evidence that links economic, social, and health benefits to improving literacy. There was also a presentation on pan-Canadian data sources and tools related to literacy. Participants were able to choose two of four sessions on adult literacy or school-age literacy, all of which focused on the use of data to support literacy activities.

Day 2 began with a panel of presentations and discussion on the use of research and data to support initiatives to improve Aboriginal literacy. A presentation on policy-relevant research programs was also held. The symposium ended with a plenary session focused on three questions:

1. What role could CESC play in identifying and acting on a pan-Canadian agenda for policy-relevant literacy research?
2. What can CESC/CMEC do to engage the broader literacy community in issues relating to research and data?
3. What can CESC/CMEC do to share innovative programs and approaches to evaluating their impact?

The presentations and discussions gave participants many opportunities to share information, discuss practices and challenges with their colleagues, and also consider gaps in the use of data and research in literacy. Several things became obvious from the discussions.

¹ See www.cmec.ca.



- Data and research are widely used across the country to help determine goals and objectives for literacy and to review program outcomes.
- IALSS is used extensively to provide basic data on adult literacy that informs policy and program development.
- People and information linkages across the country are limited and somewhat ad hoc. There appears to be a desire to increase and formalize linkages in a variety of ways to make progress in literacy development in Canada.

Summary of themes and recommendations emerging from the symposium

Presentations and discussions covered a wide variety of topics and issues — exploring data gaps, describing promising practices, and outlining challenges faced by the jurisdictions. The final plenary, in particular, gave participants the opportunity to synthesize topics raised throughout the two days and consider possible pan-Canadian initiatives that would help address gaps in literacy information, data, and research.

Suggestions and recommendations presented by participants clustered into six themes as outlined below. A brief overview of some specific ideas related to each of the themes is also included.

- **Coordinate information on literacy activities**

Many participants thought that literacy stakeholders across the country would benefit from the compilation and coordination of information on what is happening in the provinces and territories regarding literacy research and initiatives. This activity would provide a composite database and reference tool and, as important, help avoid duplication of effort.

Many participants also felt that work to identify common research needs and priorities across the country may pave the way for pan-Canadian projects. Two examples mentioned included pilot projects to test new initiatives or the coordinated delivery and testing of specific literacy models in a number of jurisdictions.

Other suggestions included the compilation of a summary “yellow pages” of research topics, approaches, and experts by specific area as an additional reference tool; compilation of an update on promising practices across the country; and a state-of-the-field literature survey, including international experiences and outcomes.



- **Improve access to data**

Many participants felt improved access to research and data would be helpful to researchers, policy developers, and practitioners. Aside from enhancements to technical access, simpler presentations of the sometimes complex research and data would increase usage and applications of relevant material. The possibility of developing a consortium to purchase data on a more cost-effective basis was also raised.

Jurisdictions also noted that more specific data on priority issues were needed. They cited requirements across the country for additional information on those with lower levels of literacy as an example.

- **Increase linkages/connections**

Many times during the symposium, discussions focused on the importance of enhancing connections between researchers, policy and program developers, practitioners, and other stakeholders. Literacy was viewed as a critical issue needing to be “owned” by everyone, and initiatives to connect those involved in literacy were seen as essential. Possible activities such as round tables, internships, networks, and electronic databases were mentioned.

The value of involving research users and practitioners in the definition of research questions at the outset of projects and in analyzing the data and providing feedback as projects develop was discussed.

Some participants raised the possibility of fostering regional linkages if a group of provinces and/or territories has common interests or priorities.

- **Provide evaluation frameworks**

It appears that there are no common evaluation frameworks for literacy practices currently available and in use by jurisdictions in Canada. Most jurisdictions do individual program evaluations, but a framework identifying the critical components of an evaluation of literacy practices would improve both individual evaluations and the ability to compare results across jurisdictions. Reference tools on evaluations for specific literacy practices are in use in other countries, and a review of these evaluation strategies and tools to determine what would be useful in the Canadian situation would be beneficial.

An evaluation framework would allow jurisdictions to critically review promising practices on the basis of a set of common criteria and would allow them to meaningfully compare results of various initiatives and inform future



programming decisions. It would be a valuable tool to help coordinate efforts across the country.

- **Increase knowledge mobilization**

Knowledge mobilization is seen by all participants as key to making progress in literacy. The need to move from pure research to facilitating policy and program applications was emphasized again and again. Some participants suggested that the release of research should be accompanied by identification of contact people for follow-up. Others emphasized that more effort supplementing and simplifying research into user-friendly material that highlights promising practices would help disseminate knowledge more effectively to users.

A wide knowledge-dissemination strategy was highly recommended. Round tables, follow-up events to the symposium, electronic newsletters, and other strategies were suggested.

- **Build capacity**

The need to build further capacity in Canada was noted by many participants. There are still gaps in material development and design of innovative approaches, particularly in the adult literacy area. Some participants discussed the possibility of pan-Canadian pilot project to test new models. Once again, examples used included initiatives for those with low levels of literacy and for those who have work-related literacy needs.

Recommendations for follow-up related to CESC/PCERA activities

There are a series of initiatives that CESC could consider based on the outcomes of the 2007 Literacy Symposium:

- Undertake a state-of-the-field literature search on school-age and adult literacy to provide a reference tool for policy and program initiatives. One starting point might be to look at literature on programs targeted at specific groups. Given the priority that several jurisdictions have placed on Aboriginal literacy, this may be a beneficial undertaking. Another priority often mentioned during the symposium was workers with low literacy levels.

The idea of this symposium is to share the initiatives being undertaken within ministries and departments, to discuss how data and research are being used to support the development and evaluation of policies on literacy, and to consider how we can use research and data more effectively.



- Compile an inventory of literacy activities across the country, with provision of a promising-practices section designed as a reference tool for practitioners. The inventory could also include a list of experts by field and contacts in the various jurisdictions that would allow for follow-up and consultations on program initiatives.
- As part of the survey of jurisdictions mentioned above, identify common needs and priorities across the country as a first step toward developing a pan-Canadian research agenda for literacy. The results of this initiative could form the basis of a pan-Canadian discussion on future initiatives and meeting common priorities.
- Begin work on an evaluation framework for literacy practices that will assist jurisdictions to effectively evaluate their policies and practices and determine which promising practices are models for best practices.
- Undertake research on models of literacy initiatives to determine the skill gains and other outcomes associated with different literacy programming approaches and models. At this point, we are not clear on which type of programs (in-class; on-the-job, self-directed, linked to skill development, community-based, etc.) are most effective for which groups of clients. This kind of information would facilitate effective program planning and make the best use of investments in literacy development.
- Provide follow-up conferences and events that focus on exchange of information and provide opportunities for participants to determine common needs and priorities.
- Increase dissemination of data and research in a user-friendly form. One step in this area could be ongoing newsletters designed for users that present literacy data and research.

Ministers have identified literacy as a priority for CMEC and have developed a literacy action plan. Some of the recommendations arising from the symposium are consistent with initiatives that CMEC is currently considering.

Specific recommendations from the symposium that relate to CMEC's action plan include

- A knowledge dissemination and communications strategy for literacy activities
- Networks to connect policy and program people with researchers and practitioners
- Work to support research and data on literacy



Summary observations

The symposium provided a valuable forum for exchange and dialogue among the provinces, territories, and the federal officials. It was obvious that there are many opportunities for coordination across the country that would be beneficial to advance the literacy agenda in Canada. Further dialogue and interaction would create synergies, prevent duplication, and help jurisdictions make effective progress on common priorities and issues.



APPENDIX I

Synopsis of Symposium

Keynote Address — Scott Murray

Scott Murray from Statistics Canada provided an opening address rich in insights on current research related to literacy. His address included an overview of data, research applications, and policy conclusions related to the 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey data. Some of the highlights of his presentation included the following:

- Research shows that improvements in literacy yield considerable positive returns on public investment — in terms of labour market effects, relationship to economic growth, wage impacts, technology usage, and health outcomes.
- Investment in human capital (people) produces greater returns than physical capital (buildings).
- In terms of overall returns, improvements in literacy for those in the bottom quartile of literacy skills promise the most returns and impact.
- Both higher levels of postsecondary education and higher levels of literacy produce positive economic impacts. However, the impact of achieving higher levels of literacy is independent of the impact of postsecondary education.
- Immigrants, who will be the source of virtually all employment growth in the next decade, tend to have lower literacy levels than the Canadian-born population.
- The average scores of literacy in Canada for the working-age population between 1994 and 2003 basically did not change, despite a rise in other indicators such as educational attainment. Indeed, IALSS shows a loss of skills for some age groups.

Mr. Murray outlined a series of initiatives currently under way, which will provide additional research to assist literacy planning:

- The study of those with the lowest literacy levels — the level 1 literacy group
- Research on the cost of best practices
- The linkage of Canadian language benchmarks (levels of language proficiency) to the IALSS results to measure the literacy of immigrants



- Projections for the distribution of literacy skill levels to 2035 to determine anticipated changes
- Analysis of skill loss by industry over time

Mr. Murray's presentation also included an identification of current knowledge gaps, including the need for further information on the links between skill levels and productivity to show the full impact of investments in literacy. He also highlighted the need to understand the outcomes of investment in health literacy more fully. Another topic he raised was the need to understand the components of skill loss over time and the contributing factors. He also suggested that literacy data should be added to HRSDC's current modelling exercises (Olivia) to link with community-level data.

Making the observation that the available literacy data have provided the federal government with evidence to demonstrate that literacy is a problem in Canada, Mr. Murray concluded that the economic case for investment in literacy is very strong. He also pointed out that, although there is a need to address both adult and school-age literacy, raising adult skills will help address Canada's international ranking in literacy performance relative to other countries.

Mr. Scott Murray is currently International Study Director for the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL). He has recently returned to Statistics Canada as Director General and Senior Advisor, Science, Innovation and Electronic Information Division. He is also an adjunct professor at UNB CRISP [Canadian Research Institute for Social Policy] and President of DataAngel Policy Research Inc.

Mr. Murray has specialized in the design and conduct of large-scale ad hoc surveys to meet emerging public policy issues. His own work has included studies of volunteer activities, child-care usage, longitudinal labour market activity, and international comparative work in the area of the assessment of adult skill and participation in adult education and training.



Session 1: How Can We Use Data Effectively to Support Improvements in Literacy?

SESSION 1A: SCHOOL-AGE LITERACY

Gerald Morton, Ministry of Education, British Columbia
Data and policy: a direct connection

Mr. Morton presented examples of the linkages between data and policy in British Columbia, giving practical advice on how to make these linkages successful. He recommended the following based on lessons learned in his province.

- Ensure data collection is directly linked to policy questions: Where are we now? Where do we want to go? How will we know when we have made a difference?
- Link data to public accountability reports — service plans, annual reports, and other reports
- Link data to student achievement in the design of reports aimed at the system, both at the aggregate level and also at the provincial, district, school, class, and student levels. Also use ad hoc analytical reports.

*Where are we now?
Where do we want to go?
How will we know when we have made a difference?*

In sharing lessons learned, Mr. Morton advised beginning with the questions you want to address, not with the data. He also pointed out the necessity of being open to modifying the data and to continually checking to determine whether the data answer the defined questions and how they are linked to accountability and performance management structures.

With regard to collection of data, he advised doing so at the most disaggregated level possible. He observed that the use of a unique identifier for students exponentially increases the value of data in policy applications. He also recommended that the proposed use of data should drive key decisions about their storage and warehousing rather than the reverse. With regard to access, he suggested than putting it in the hands of those most affected by it would have the maximum impact.



Gerald Morton has worked in the Ministry of Education since 1988. He has held the positions of Director of Communication, Director of Program Evaluation and Reporting, and Manager of School Accreditation and is currently a Director in the ministry's new Knowledge Management Department. His responsibilities include research and reporting, data analysis, data exchange, and distributed learning.

Gerald has a BA in Journalism from Carleton University and an MA in Leadership and Training from Royal Roads University and is currently working on his dissertation for the EdD program at Simon Fraser University.

Carol Campbell, Joel Clodman, John Comper, Ministry of Education, Ontario
Developing a data-informed approach for the Ontario Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

Outlining the three goals in Ontario to increase student achievement, reduce gaps in performance, and increase public confidence, the Ontario officials discussed the basic approach they had adopted to address their defined goals:

- Identify and build on successes
- Build in evaluation throughout the project — both formative and summative evaluation at both the local and provincial levels
- Use data analysis and information management to understand performance and focus strategies effectively
- Foster a “culture of inquiry” and a commitment to evidence

They included a detailed presentation of the Ontario database that supports the Ontario Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat's work. The demonstration focused on one segment of the database — school performance data — and illustrated the school performance typology developed by Ontario as well as the ability of the database to produce very efficient and timely data for analysis.

The Ontario officials identified applications of the database, including the Schools on the Move Project (improvement in best practices); the Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership (for those with consistently low achievement), and partnerships with school boards. They reported the data were being used to design targeted interventions and were being provided to student achievement officers across the system.



Discussion following the presentation focused on the applications of the database to specific initiatives, as well as the reaction of different constituencies to its usage.

Carol Campbell is Chief Research Officer for the Ontario Ministry of Education. She combines this ministry-wide role with her ongoing work as Executive Officer with responsibilities for research, evaluation, and data management within the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat. Carol has international experience in conducting education policy research in areas including strategies for raising student achievement, approaches to addressing educational and social disadvantage, school improvement, school leadership, teachers' professional development, role and effectiveness of school districts, inter-agency work with schools, and parent and community engagement.

Carol's career has combined education research, policy, and practice in government, district, and academic roles. Prior to joining the Ministry of Education, Carol was a member of faculty at the Institute of Education, University of London. She was also seconded to the English Government's Department for Education and Skills. Her first policy advisor role was developing new partnerships working between government and an under-performing district to support improvement. In her next role as policy advisor to the Commissioner for London Schools, Carol was responsible for establishing a framework of professional development and recognition for London's teachers.

Joel Clodman currently holds the position of Data Management Specialist, at the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, Ministry of Education, Ontario. During his career, Joel has been extensively engaged in all facets of decision-support: business development; programming, design, implementation, user training, data development, training, and marketing, to name but a few. Throughout his 26 years within the Ontario Public Service, Joel has specialized in the customized development of a wide range of decision-support products, notably those geared toward non-sophisticated users.

Joel is an expert in the design, development, and application of socioeconomic data for government business applications. He has worked with a wide array of ministries, including Health, Community and Social Service, and Education. His most recent projects include STARS and the Secretariat's Statistical Neighbours Project. Joel has given numerous presentations on the topics of performance measurement, indicator development and design, systems design and user interface, and is a staunch believer that decision-support products can and should be used by all organizational members, regardless of their level of expertise, and readily integrated into their daily tasks and projects.

Joel holds a master's degree in organizational behaviour and has received several national and international awards for his ground-breaking work in the transformation of the workplace for decision-support initiatives.



John Comper has been an educator for over 30 years in Ontario. He has taught and been an administrator at both elementary and secondary schools and was involved in various board projects and initiatives including Summer Institute programs for newly appointed administrators. John holds a master's degree in educational systems planning and has done doctoral studies in educational administration. He has worked as a research consultant with school boards on various studies in program evaluation and assessment. John is currently a student achievement officer with the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat as a member of the Research, Evaluation and Data Management Team.

As well as being member of the Statistical Neighbours Project team, his role at the secretariat involves a wide range of data analysis, research, and evaluation projects, including analyses of EQAO data, board target-setting data, student data for an oral language research project, local initiatives reports, and analysis of successful school and classroom level practices to support student achievement in literacy and numeracy.



SESSION 1B: ADULT LITERACY

Satya Brink, HRSDC
Literacy in the workplace

Ms. Brink's presentation continued the ongoing discussion of the IALSS data, looking at workplace literacy and numeracy. Ms. Brink explained that HRSDC is working to get full value from IALSS and present the data in policy-ready form, as there is much interest across the country in workplace literacy data.

Some of the highlights of Ms. Brink's presentation included the following:

- Data demonstrate the significant relationships between literacy and the workforce and the labour market.
- Prose literacy proficiency is associated with use of computers for task-oriented purposes — a skill in current demand that is anticipated to continue to be in demand in the workplace.
- There is a tendency for jurisdictions to focus more on prose and document literacy, but it is important not to neglect numeracy skills, which score lower in every province and territory.
- Many industries require workers with level 3 literacy, or level 4/5, even though we often tend to think they require only basic literacy among their workers.
- Statistics show a high proportion of immigrants among employed workers with postsecondary education who have literacy skills below level 3. Even after 10 years in the country, immigrants tend to score poorly.
- With regard to gender differences, there is a high proportion of men with low literacy skills doing relatively well in terms of wages, but they tend to be in sectors that are suffering economically. Women with lower-level literacy skills tend to be in lower-income jobs. Statistics show that women have larger economic gains than men from increases in their literacy skills, but men have better numeracy skills than women.
- Persons with low literacy are found in every age group.
- In Canada, prose literacy scores decline with age.



- OECD is planning to introduce PIAAC — Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies — in 2010. It will measure scales similar to those of IALSS (allowing comparability over time) but will include digital skills.

Satya Brink has worked in social policy research at universities, for government, for international organizations, and as a consultant. She is currently Director, National Learning Policy Research, Learning Policy Directorate at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Government of Canada. She was previously the Director of Child, Youth and Social Development Studies, a unit publishing about 30 social research reports a year. In her current position, her responsibilities include the development of evidence for policies related to human capital and lifelong learning from early childhood to later adulthood. She is widely published.

Francois Nault, Statistics Canada

A demographic perspective on the IALSS results

Mr. Nault's presentation used IALSS data to explore progress (or lack of progress) in literacy skill scores in Canada between the 1994 IALS and the 2003 IALSS.

The data show that in 2003, 48% of Canadian adults scored below level 3, the desired threshold to cope with the demands of today's knowledge-intensive society. Looking at the 25–59 age cohort, he explained that there was very little change between the 1994 and the 2003 surveys for this core working-age population. There was some growth in the younger group aged 25 to 33, but these gains were offset by skill losses in other age cohorts and among immigrants. This actually resulted in a slight skill loss overall in Canada.

Mr. Nault compared these results to other international jurisdictions, including the United States and Norway. He also presented three simulations that tested some of the international situations on the Canadian base data.

A lively discussion followed, and the group explored issues related to the comparability of PIAAC to IALSS and data on immigrants, as well as details on the situation with regard to literacy in other countries. There was an interesting exploration about how we could break the low-wage/low-skill equilibrium, including some discussion of the policy options that may be used to address this issue. The preponderance of small firms in Canada was raised as a factor that makes interventions to address worker literacy more difficult.



François Nault is currently the director of the Division of Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics (CTCES) of Statistics Canada. He has worked at Statistics Canada since 1990. Before moving to the CTCES, he worked in the Demography Division on population estimates and projections and in the Health Statistics Division, where he was responsible for vital statistics.

He was part of the team that prepared the 2003 report of the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program. He is the author of a number of articles in the fields of demography, health, and education.

SESSION IC

Tamara Knighton, Statistics Canada

Pan-Canadian data sources and tools relating to literacy

Ms. Knighton gave a comprehensive review of data sources relating to literacy, focusing on PISA, IALS, and IALSS but including TIMSS, PIRLS, and PCAP. She included tips on how to access the data and how some of the specific data collection was changing over time.

Tamara Knighton is Chief of the Assessment and Adult Learning Section at Statistics Canada. She began working at the Centre for Education Statistics in 2001 on the Adult Education and Training Survey. In 2003, she became project manager for the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and was responsible for the operational and analytical aspects of PISA. In 2006, Ms. Knighton's portfolio expanded, and she began working in the area of adult literacy on the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey.



Session 2: How Are Data and Research Being Used to Develop and Evaluate Literacy Initiatives and Policies?

SESSION 2A: SCHOOL-AGE LITERACY

Krista Vokey, Newfoundland and Labrador

Making waves: implementing successful literacy strategies

As a curriculum development expert, Ms. Vokey shared her experience with the English Language Arts program adopted in Newfoundland and Labrador as an example of implementing a successful literacy strategy. She discussed the broad definition of literacy and recognition by policy developers and practitioners that what matters is reading to learn, not just learning to read.

Her comments on the components of curriculum development provided an interesting perspective on literacy to help participants understand the complexity of literacy. She outlined Luke and Freebody's Four Resources Model:

- Code breaker — reading information and understanding the meaning of words
- Meaning maker — understanding semantics
- Text participant — active user, engaged in dialogue
- Text analyst — critical literacy

In Newfoundland and Labrador, provincial assessments are conducted annually for grades 3, 6, and 9 and show provincial, school and district, and student snapshots of achievements. Ms. Vokey also discussed the use of data to define needs, referencing "Cultural Connections" initiatives as an example of how the province supports these identified areas.

Krista Vokey, MA, BEd, BAH, is currently working at the Department of Education as a program development specialist for 4-12 English Language Arts. She also works in the areas of the fine arts and learning resources.

Prior to joining the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, she was a program implementation specialist with both the Eastern School District and the former Avalon East School District with responsibilities for school development, fine arts, and English language arts for six years. Other professional backgrounds include English Department Head and English, French, and music teacher.



Lee Kubica, Yukon

The use of data to develop and evaluate programs to address the change in the overall performance of students in mathematics between grade 3 and grade 6

Mr. Kubica gave a presentation on Yukon's strategy to increase math performance in elementary students aimed at achieving performance results similar to those in Alberta students. Specific issues considered relevant to poor math scores in Yukon included high absenteeism and teachers' dislike of teaching math.

A territory-wide teacher training project on mathematics was mounted for all K–7 teachers, which has demonstrated good results in terms of student outcomes, particularly for grade 3. The target of 50% of students getting 80% is close to being met in grade 3, and, over the next six years, every teacher in elementary schools in Yukon will have training on teaching math.

On the attendance issue, results of data analysis showed that it does not appear to be a strong factor in explaining student performance in math. Further work is being undertaken to analyze these relationships.

The circumstances of First Nations students were discussed as the performance of these students tends to be weaker than that of non-First Nations students.

A good discussion on the use of data in policy analysis in other jurisdictions followed the presentations.

Nova Scotia has focused on elementary literacy assessment, providing targeted literacy support, professional development programs, mentorships, and improved resources. They reported good results from these measures.

Saskatchewan talked about the use of their continuous improvement framework, which incorporates data into assessment tools and planning processes.

Nunavut raised issues related to the language of assessment tools and described their initiatives to recruit Aboriginal teachers and teach Inuit dialects in the schools.

Ontario commented on their system — Management Information for Student Achievement (MISA) — and initiatives to build capacity at the provincial and board levels. Every school board will have a MISA leader to promote use of data. The challenges of building collaborative networks were discussed, and issues related to the use of different data definitions and computer systems in promoting a standardized approach were also raised.



The group considered potential ways to share promising practices on an ongoing basis. Suggestions included visiting scholars, secondments, mentorships, and internships. It was pointed out that a clearly articulated common vision is necessary if we are to move in a common direction. The following needs were highlighted:

- Identify key questions common to all jurisdictions.
- Identify components that we want to share.
- Identify promising practices and lessons learned.
- Decide on a way to post/exchange information.
- Identify a network of people in specific areas of expertise (key contacts).

Lee Kubica, a Yukoner for the last 35 years, is the Assistant Deputy Minister of Public Schools and Superintendent of Schools for the Yukon Department of Education.

Mr. Kubica participated in developing Western and Northern Canadian Protocol Common Curriculum Framework for K–9 Mathematics, June 1995 and the WNCP Common Curriculum Framework for 10–12 Mathematics, June 1996. Mr. Kubica was a member of the Applications of Mathematics 10, 11, and 12 Student Texts and Teacher Resource steering committee. He was a member of the working group in the development of the Essentials of Mathematics 10, 11, and 12 curriculum framework for the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol, as well as a member of the working group that developed the student texts and teacher resources for these curriculae. Mr. Kubica sat on the working group for the WNCP Common Curriculum Framework for K–9 Mathematics, May 2006, and now chairs the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol Assistant Deputy Ministers’ Steering Committee.



SESSION 2B: ADULT LITERACY

The adult literacy session consisted of presentations and a panel discussion on how data and research are being used to support literacy initiatives in jurisdictions — usually involving the use of provincial/territorial assessment data and/or IALSS data in policy and program development as well as program reviews.

Barbara Wynes, Department of Advanced Education and Literacy, Manitoba *How research and statistics have influenced policy development in the area of adult literacy*

Ms. Wynes reported that Manitoba's Adult Literacy Act, introduced in 2006, presents the Adult Literacy Strategy, formalizes the adult literacy program, and establishes standards for that program. Use of the IALSS has had a significant impact on the approach adopted in Manitoba, as the literacy program has been aligned with IALSS terms and definitions. The province has also purchased an oversample of Aboriginal data, as this is a priority area for Manitoba.

Barbara Wynes is the Senior Consultant for the Adult Learning and Literacy branch of Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy. She is responsible for policy, research, and practitioner training initiatives for Adult Learning Centres and community-based Adult Literacy programming in Manitoba.

Barbara has been with the department since 1998, prior to which she spent 10 years as an instructor with the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

Barbara Miron, Northwest Territories *IALSS and the renewal of the Northwest Territories literacy strategy*

Reviewing the use of IALSS data in the Northwest Territories, Ms. Miron explained how the data were cross-referenced with goals, objectives, and actions from the 2001 NWT Literacy Strategy. An assessment of IALSS categories of measurement to determine their alignment with adult literacy math curriculum was undertaken. As a result, new math resources for curriculum support were developed.



Barbara Miron has been Coordinator, Literacy and Adult Basic Education, with the Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Education, Culture and Employment since 2004. Prior to that, she taught adults for many years in a variety of contexts.

Ms. Miron has deep roots in the north. Her parents moved to the Northwest Territories in the 1940s, and she grew up on the shores of Great Slave Lake with fishing boats and docks as a backyard. She attributes her love of learning to spending many long cold winters in a home her teacher mother amply supplied with books.

Ms. Miron has a BA in Psychology, a BEd in Adult Education, and an MA in English. In 2003, she received a Canada Post Literacy Community Leadership Award for innovative literacy programming in a small Aboriginal community in the Northwest Territories.

Cindy Christopher, Newfoundland and Labrador
Moving forward: increasing access to adult literacy programs in Newfoundland and Labrador

Ms. Christopher discussed the level 1 adult basic education program conducted at nine pilot sites in Newfoundland and Labrador from 2002 to 2005 and how this project and other research have influenced policy and programs.

The pilot program was independently evaluated by the Atlantic Evaluation Research Consultants and was judged to be relatively good with regard to such factors as stability of programming, financial support, staffing, meeting student obstacles, and professional development. Lower ratings were given for recruitment, matching the program to needs, stakeholder support, and achievement of targets and reporting.

These findings resulted in policy changes that have strengthened the existing ABE level I program.

Following completion of the pilot, there have been several provincial initiatives aimed at increasing access to literacy programs, including the following:

- Increase to the provincial grants budget from \$300,000 to \$469,000 in 2005–06
- Provision of \$1.2 million to the College of the North Atlantic in 2006–07 to increase its offerings of ABE, particularly level I
- Proposal to the Pan-Canadian Innovations Initiative to pilot an alternative approach to the ABE level I program utilizing a combination of Web-based and classroom instruction



Preliminary policy-related findings from recent provincial research on the participation of adults with low levels of education in education and learning activities include the following:

- High school non-graduates and graduates have a greater preference for institution-based settings for high school completion (school and college) rather than community-based settings.
- One of the key deterrents to ABE participation was the need for participants to work and their preference to do so.

The discussion following the presentations concentrated on the following questions:

- Who needs to be engaged?
- How do we effectively engage others?
- How can we strengthen research and statistics related to Aboriginal literacy?

Highlights included consideration of the intergenerational impacts of literacy; the need to make adult learning programs attractive to those who require these programs; and the need to build more capacity for resource material. The necessity for innovation in programming was emphasized by many people in the group.

The requirement to research the kind of skill gains adult learners make in different kinds of programs was also identified. This type of information was seen as essential to focus programming on areas where it has the most significant impact.

Cindy Christopher is the Manager of Adult Literacy with the Adult Learning and Literacy Division of the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education. She has been a public servant with various departments over the past 23 years. She first joined the Department of Education in January 1998 to manage the communications and consultations process to develop the province's strategic literacy plan. While her early work with the department encompassed literacy initiatives for all ages, her current efforts focus on addressing adult literacy development.

She has helped guide the work of external consultants on several provincial adult literacy research initiatives during the past nine years, including the *Evaluation of Basic Literacy/ABE Level 1 Programs in Newfoundland and Labrador* in 2001, *Evaluation of the Literacy Development Council of Newfoundland and Labrador* in 2003, and the *ABE Level I Pilot Project* from 2003 to 2005.



Session 3: Plenary Discussion — Day 1

Participants were divided into several groups to consider priorities for improving the use of research and data in literacy initiatives. There were a wide range of suggestions during the plenary session. The following list highlights the main ideas presented:

- Effective knowledge dissemination models are required, particularly to give practitioners clear information and tools.
- An evaluation framework that identifies basic and key elements that should be addressed in reviewing literacy initiatives would be useful to increase comparability of results for planning.
- There is a need for compilation of information that could be used by all jurisdictions: list of experts by specialty area, policy and program initiatives in each jurisdiction, identification of common themes and priorities.
- A network to discuss research findings and connect researchers with practitioners would be welcome.
- The definition of literacy should be examined to determine the scope of activities that fall under it.
- There may be opportunities for common action across jurisdictions — perhaps to purchase oversampling on themes of common interest or to purchase other data.



Session 4: How Can Research and Data Support Initiatives to Improve Aboriginal Literacy?

Helen Robinson-Settee, Manitoba

Considerations relating to issues of Aboriginal self-identification

Pointing out the many issues related to determining Aboriginal identity, Ms. Robinson-Settee reviewed Manitoba's approach to collecting data on Aboriginal students, including the use of an Aboriginal Identity Field (AIF) since 1999–2000. She reported that this category has undergone many changes in the last seven years, but that there has been an overall increase in reporting of Aboriginal ancestry. She attributes this trend to improvements in the collection system, work with parents, and extensive work with Aboriginal communities to address initial concerns about use of the data.

Helen Robinson-Settee is currently Director with the Aboriginal Education Directorate, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth/Advanced Education and Literacy. She has worked with the Department of Education for the past ten years, first as a consultant in the School Programs Division and then with the Directorate. Her responsibilities span from the early years to postsecondary and everything in between. Some of her work includes representing Manitoba on the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol Aboriginal Education Working Group and the Directors of Aboriginal Education Table.

Prior to her work as a consultant, she taught in inner-city schools, including the two Aboriginal schools in Winnipeg: Children of the Earth and Niji Mahkwa.

Brent Munro, British Columbia

Considerations relating to issues of Aboriginal self-identification

Data on Aboriginal students, who represent about 10% of the population in British Columbia, have been collected since 1989. In 1992 a unique personal education number (PEN) was assigned to each student so that he or she can be tracked throughout the system, including postsecondary.

Mr. Munro commented on issues encountered by British Columbia with inconsistent reporting practices and movement of students between the provincial and federal systems. He advised that it is critical to state the purpose and planned use for data collection at the beginning of all exercises. Also, he advised that consultation with Aboriginal groups is essential to the success of data collection.



Plans in British Columbia involve an attempt to standardize data definitions across ministries and further consultation with Aboriginal communities.

During the discussion following the presentations, many jurisdictions reported similar challenges related to definitions, self-identification, and language in collecting Aboriginal data.

Brent Munro began working with the Ministry of Education in 2001 as a researcher and is currently the Manager of Surveys and Data Exchange in the ministry's new Knowledge Management Department. His responsibilities include development, implementation, and practice of policies, strategies, and processes related to ministry surveys and to the sharing and exchange of information with other agencies, institutions, and academic researchers.

Ray Smith and Collette Robertson, Saskatchewan

The use of data for the evaluation of the Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP)

NORTEP is designed to encourage people residing in Northern Saskatchewan, especially Aboriginal peoples, to train as teachers. Giving an interesting overview of the success to date of the initiative, Saskatchewan officials reported that about 90% of those in the program are of Aboriginal descent, and that there has been a significant increase in the percentage of Aboriginal teachers in the north (35% in 2005 compared with 2% in 1976). The program is designed to encourage community input into the program and to promote Aboriginal languages. Teacher turnover has been reduced, and the provision of role models and leaders in northern communities is notable.

In the summary discussion and question period, all jurisdictions reported briefly on initiatives in their jurisdictions related to Aboriginal data collection and the challenges they were encountering.



Ray Smith is the Assistant Director at La Ronge with the Northern Teacher Education Program/Northern Professional Access College. He teaches the Indigenous Studies and Cree language classes for first-year NORTEP/NORPAC students.

Ray is originally from a Métis community called Pinehouse Lake, Saskatchewan. He is a graduate of NORTEP. He has taught in First Nations high schools at Stanley Mission and Beauval for six years and is actively involved with revitalizing and maintaining the Cree language. He is also active with Aboriginal education through his teaching and the committees he is involved with on behalf of NORTEP/NORPAC.

Collette Robertson has worked as Aboriginal liaison in the University Services and Adult Learning Development Branch of Saskatchewan Advanced Education and Employment for over nine years. She has worked with the provincial government for 25 years in various positions of adult education, employment, and training.

Ms. Robertson is an Aboriginal person with ancestry from the Lakota Sioux of Standing Buffalo First Nation in Saskatchewan. Her primary responsibilities as Aboriginal liaison include working with the Aboriginal postsecondary institutions that offer university programming in Saskatchewan: the Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP), the Northern Professional Access College (NORPAC), the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, and the First Nations University of Canada.



Session 5: How Can Policy-Relevant Research Programs Help to Improve Literacy?

Diane Charest, Gilbert Moisan, and Julie-Madeleine Roy, Quebec
La recherche orientée sur la persévérance et la réussite scolaires au Québec

The presentation highlighted the extensive and detailed program initiated in Quebec on student retention and academic success, including the main areas of research:

- Factors that contribute to academic success or failure
- Efficient teaching and evaluation strategies
- Differences between boys and girls
- Collaboration
- Disabled students — factors related to success
- Alignment of the school setting with the labour market

Quebec officials also presented material on the ministry's knowledge-transfer strategy. With the objective of developing a research culture in the education system, the province has moved to make research available in accessible formats and to develop a knowledge-transfer network. Officials indicated that the ministry has fostered strong linkages with researchers with the launch of 20 new projects each year. As part of the knowledge dissemination project, researchers are required to report regularly. The result is contributing to a culture of research in the ministry, and collaboration in knowledge transfer is very high in Quebec around this initiative.

During the questions and comments following the presentation, many participants noted that Quebec's research could be used to help inform programs in other parts of the country.



Diane Charest leads the Research Department in the Research, Statistics and Indicators Branch of the Quebec Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports, whose main mandate is to perform prospective and evaluative research to help set directions for the educational system. Her unit is also responsible for the ministry's research program on school retention and success.

Over the past few years, she has led or supervised a number of projects dealing with the integration of young dropouts into the labour market and on the characteristics of adults with low educational attainment and the training available to them. She was also a member of the steering committee created to analyze Quebec data from IALSS (International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey).

Julie-Madeleine Roy is a research officer in the Research Department in the Research, Statistics and Indicators Branch of the Quebec Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports. She holds a master's degree in educational psychology and is mostly responsible for research on K-12 issues, as well as for developing and implementing the knowledge transfer strategy associated with the research program on school retention and success.

Gilbert Moisan is a research officer and psychologist. He leads the research program on school retention and success in the Research Department in the Research, Statistics and Indicators Branch of the Quebec Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports.

Over the past few years, he has carried out or supervised studies on special-needs student populations, including students from low SES backgrounds and students with disabilities. He has also taken part in developing education system indicators and has performed research for the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation.



Session 6: Final Plenary

A plenary was held on the final day, providing an opportunity to synthesize the many themes that had emerged throughout the two days of presentations and discussions.

Following individual round-table discussions, each group reported on three questions:

1. What role could CESC play in identifying and acting on a pan-Canadian agenda for policy-relevant literacy research?
2. What can CESC/CMEC do to engage the broader literacy community in issues relating to research and data?
3. What can CESC/CMEC do to share innovative programs and approaches to evaluating their impact?

There were a wide variety of suggestions from participants in response to the questions, but they tended to cluster into six themes as outlined below:

1. Coordinate information on literacy activities
2. Improve access to data
3. Increase linkages and connections
4. Provide evaluation frameworks
5. Increase knowledge mobilization
6. Build capacity

Details on these suggestions are found on pages 4–6.



APPENDIX II

Acronyms

Acronym	Full title	Notes
ALL	Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey	Administered in Canada and five other countries in 2003. ALL is the acronym for the international study as a whole; IALSS is the acronym within Canada.
CECSC	Canadian Education Statistics Council	Deputy ministers of education and Chief Statistician of Canada.
IALS	International Adult Literacy Survey	Administered in Canada and 7 other countries in 1994. (A further 15 countries participated in 1996 and 1998.)
IALSS	International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey	Administered in Canada and five other countries in 2003. IALSS is the acronym within Canada. ALL is the acronym for the international study as a whole.
PCAP	Pan-Canadian Assessment Program	Cyclical program of pan-Canadian assessments of student achievement in mathematics, reading and writing, and science.
PCERA	Pan-Canadian Education Research Agenda	Funds policy-relevant research and knowledge mobilization activities on topics of interest to ministers.
PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies	OECD's planned assessment of adult literacy, scheduled for 2010.
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment	OECD's assessment of 15-year-olds' literacy, mathematics, and science achievement.
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study	Administered in 35 countries to test reading comprehension at grade 4.
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study	Administered in 49 countries at about grades 4 and 8 to measure education achievement in mathematics and sciences.



APPENDIX III

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PCERA Partners

Canadian Education Statistics Council (CESC)

The Canadian Education Statistics Council (CESC), a partnership between the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and Statistics Canada, provides valuable information and insight about education in Canada, both to the Canadian public and to provincial and territorial governments, through programs such as the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program (PCEIP) and the Pan-Canadian Education Research Agenda (PCERA).

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)

CMEC is an intergovernmental body comprising provincial and territorial ministers responsible for education. It is the mechanism through which ministers consult and act on matters of mutual interest and the instrument through which they consult and cooperate with national education organizations and with the federal government.

Statistics Canada

Statistics Canada is the national statistical agency whose duties are to collect, compile, analyze, abstract, and publish statistical information relating to the commercial, industrial, financial, social, economic, and general activities and status of the Canadian population.

