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Feature Articles:

- **U.S. Ranks Below Average in Adult Literacy**
- **Canyon City Funds Literacy Program**
- **Congratulations to New Tutors**

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The Literacy Program
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www.libraryliteracy.org

ProLiteracy
www.proliteracy.org

Southern California Library Literacy Network
www.sclln.org

If you do not wish to receive future issues of this e-newsletter, please let us know at

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U.S. Ranked *Below Average* in International Study of Adult Literacy

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) released a report on the 2012 survey of adult literacy by the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) in October 2013. It included respondents from 24 OECD countries (mostly in Europe, plus Japan, Korea, Canada, and the U.S.) It is the first survey of adult literacy skills in the United States in nearly a decade.



The research focused on people ages 16 to 65. It dealt with three crucial areas:

- literacy — the ability to understand and respond to written material;
- numeracy — the ability to use numerical and mathematical concepts; and,
- problem solving — the ability to interpret and analyze information using computers.

How did the U.S. stack up?

The U.S. mean literacy score was **below the international average** — ranking 16th out of 24 countries. One in six adults in the U.S. has low literacy skills. The U.S. average scores in numeracy were **lower than all but two other countries**. Nearly one-third of U.S. adults have significant deficiencies in numeracy. In problem-solving using computers, U.S. adults scored **lower than the international average**, lower than 14 other countries.

What does this mean?

OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría summarized some of the significance and nuances of the findings during his remarks in Brussels on Oct. 8 when the report was released:

- What people know has a major impact on their life opportunities.
- Proficiency in basic skills affects more than earnings and employment. Adults with lower literacy proficiency are far more likely than those with better literacy skills to report poor health, to perceive themselves as objects rather than actors in political processes, and to have less trust in others.
- In the US, a difficult social background often translates into poor literacy skills.
- Young Americans are entering a much more demanding job market with similar literacy and numeracy skills as those who are retiring. This is scary.
- Coherent, easy-to-interpret certification that incorporates formal and informal learning over the working life is essential, particularly for foreign workers.
- The bottom line is that skills matter!

How can this be?

For decades the U.S. has been working to increase its literacy rate and global competitiveness by allocating funds to improve K-12 schools, preschool and school readiness, high school graduation rates, better science and technology programs and more. Little attention has been given to adult education and literacy, even though. According to ProLiteracy data, funding for adult education and English language instruction has declined since 2002. Federally-funded literacy and basic education programs only reach 3 percent of those in need of adult literacy services. The vast majority of adult education programs around the nation report waiting lists of between two and three months on average for basic education, English language learning, and GED preparation services.

Yet, research shows that the best predictor of a child's educational attainment is the education level of . . . the primary caregiver, usually the mother.

What can we do?

" . . . now is the time to invest in adult literacy and basic education," according to Kevin Morgan, president and CEO of ProLiteracy. Increased educational attainment leads to increased earnings, and contributes to the US economy. Increased educational attainment contributes to a skilled US workforce, which contributes to increased global competitiveness. And again, increased educational levels of parents leads to increased educational attainment for their children; it breaks the cycle of illiteracy.

It is that simple. Investing in Adult Education Pays.

For more information on the PIAAC go to the National Coalition for Literacy website: www.national-coalition-literacy.org

Canyon City Foundation Funds The Literacy Program

The Canyon City Foundation will present a check to the Azusa City Library on Monday, November 18 at the regularly scheduled meeting of the Azusa City Council. The grant award is in support of The Literacy Program. It will support the activities of The Azusa Literacy Council as it transitions into becoming a nonprofit 501 (c) (3) organization to serve the literacy needs of the Azusa community, under the leadership of Chairperson, Bob Donnelson.

The Canyon City Foundation award will also strengthen and supplement the activities of the new **Grassroots ESL** program which was launched in October with funding from the California State Library. **Grassroots ESL** tutoring began at seven community locations in October and is already touching the lives of 73 adults and their families.

Congratulations to newly trained tutors!

Basic Literacy

Bob Donnelson
Anita Fung
Melissa Gasper
Rachel Pobre
Melissa Salvatin
Mary Williams
Josie Zimmermann

Grassroots ESL

Erika Aguilar
Jesse Aramburo
Maria Aramburo
Guenett Assegued
Sarai Balanzar
Jessica Bugarin
Yvonne Gonzalez
Helen Goodwin
Leilanz Kasraie
Salman Ladna
Mary Leasure
Tina Lopez
Diane Mercado
Curtis Ulrich
Fritzi Valladares

Want to get involved?

Contact The Literacy Program for information on the next training workshop.
(626) 812- 5266 literacy@ci.azusa.ca.us

"Literacy is not just about reading and writing; it is about respect, opportunity and development."