



# Helping Families Learn is Everyone's Business

*An Employers' Guide to Family Literacy  
in the Workplace*

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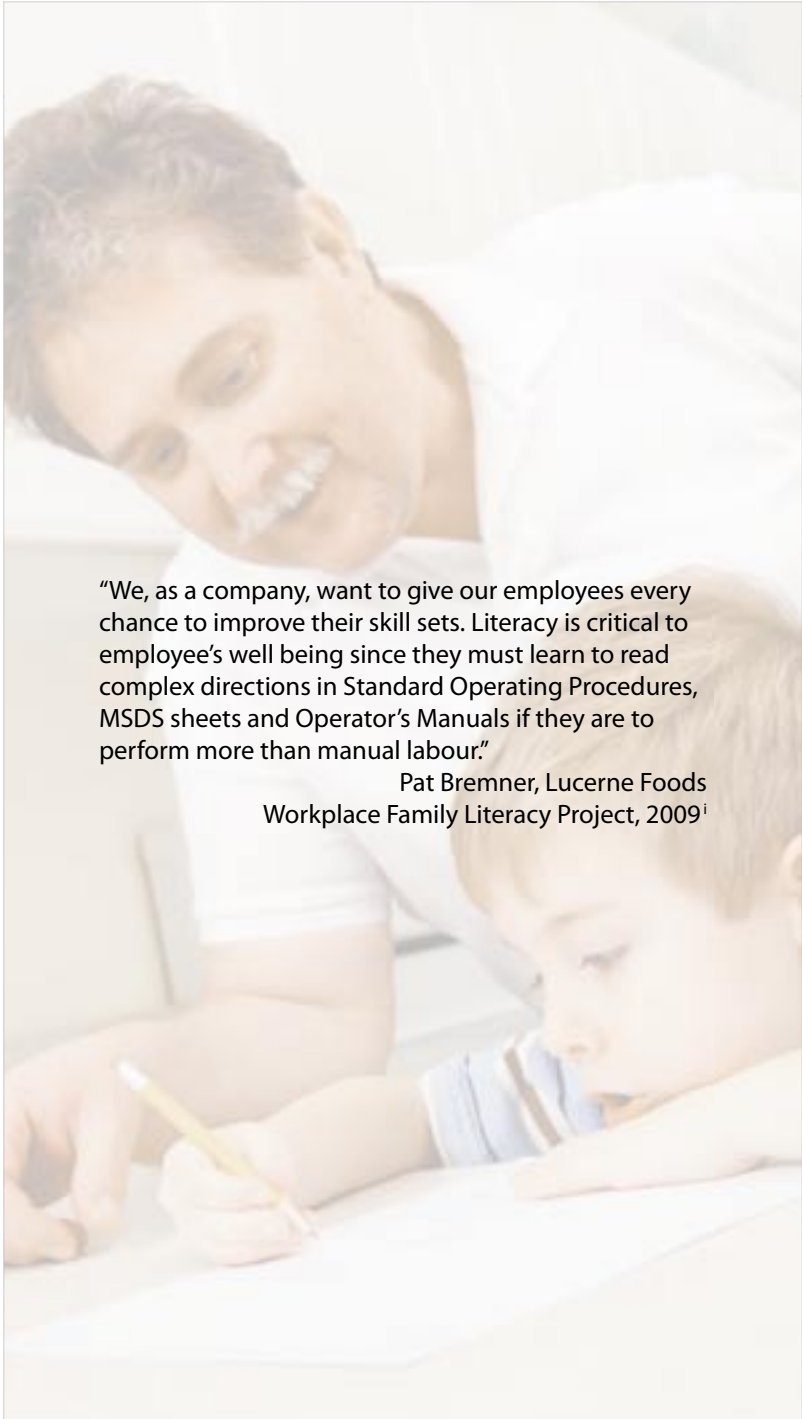
## ***An Employers' Guide to Family Literacy in the Workplace***

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Further information on the Centre for Family Literacy can be obtained by visiting [www.famlit.ca](http://www.famlit.ca), or calling the Centre at 1-866-421-7323.

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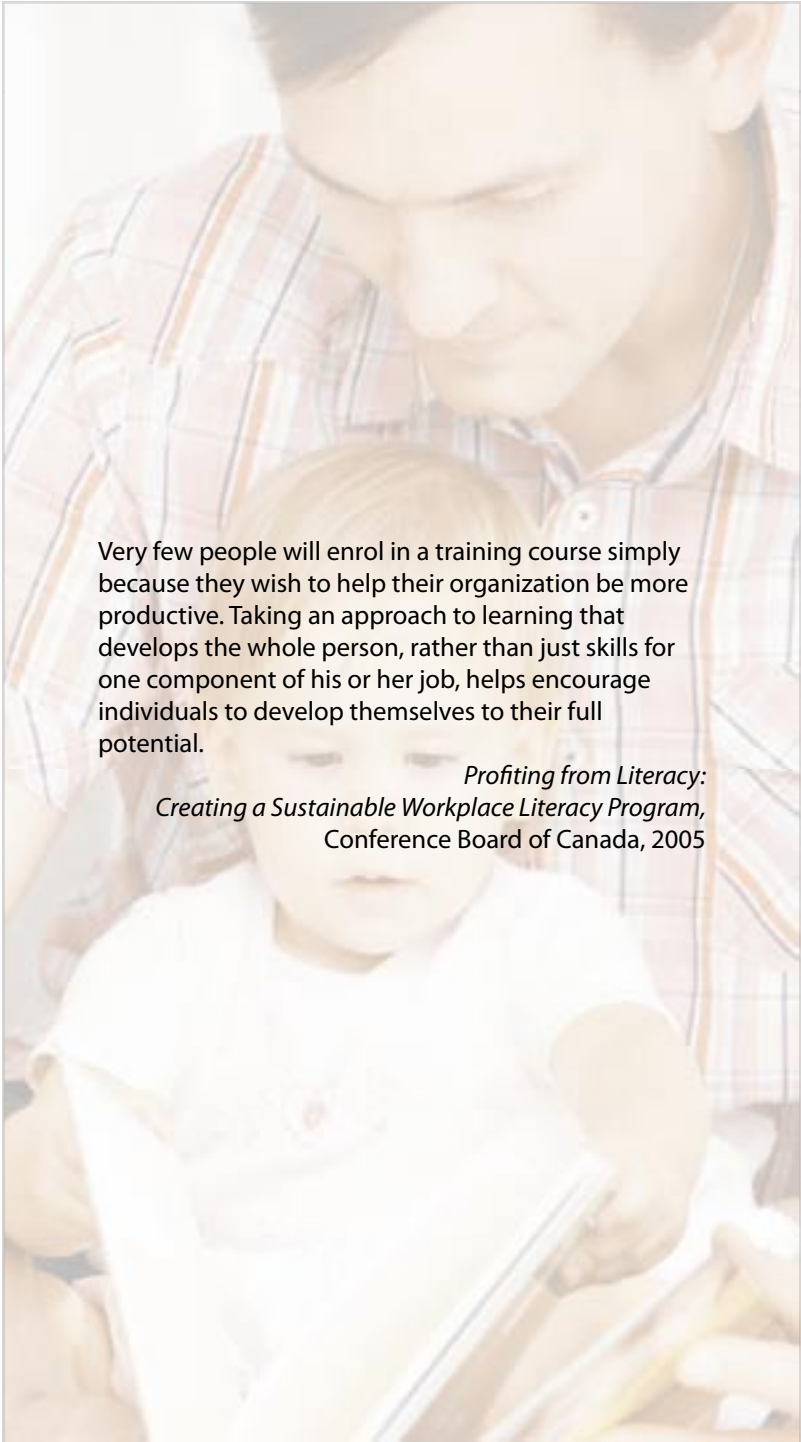


“We, as a company, want to give our employees every chance to improve their skill sets. Literacy is critical to employee’s well being since they must learn to read complex directions in Standard Operating Procedures, MSDS sheets and Operator’s Manuals if they are to perform more than manual labour.”

Pat Bremner, Lucerne Foods  
Workplace Family Literacy Project, 2009<sup>1</sup>

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Why family literacy in the workplace?.....	1
Literacy is an issue for a great number of workers.....	1
Literacy issues affect your bottom line.....	1
Those who most need training aren't participating.....	1
Family literacy programs benefit employers <i>and</i> employees.....	2
Backgrounder.....	3
Summary of literacy statistics in Alberta.....	3
Literacy and the workforce.....	4
Barriers to participation in traditional workplace programs.....	6
Family literacy in the workplace.....	7
Examples of programs.....	9
The BOOKS Program at XL Foods / Lakeside Packers.....	9
The Lucerne Workplace Family Literacy Project.....	10
Literacy and Parenting Skills (LAPS).....	11
City of Kamloops.....	11
Learning Together, Ford Motor Company.....	12
Winthrop University.....	13
Linking Home and School Through Workplace (LHSTW).....	13
Other examples.....	14
What can you do?.....	15
Inform yourself and your management team.....	15
Talk to your local literacy provider.....	16
Put together a steering committee.....	16
Find out what your employees are interested in.....	17
Decide what is feasible.....	20
Be a champion.....	23
Things to consider before you start.....	23
In conclusion.....	25
Appendix A: Definitions.....	26
Appendix B: Leger Marketing's business surveys.....	29
Appendix C: Community-based family literacy programs in Alberta.....	31
Appendix D: Sample interest inventory.....	37
Appendix E: About the Centre for Family Literacy.....	39
End notes.....	40



Very few people will enrol in a training course simply because they wish to help their organization be more productive. Taking an approach to learning that develops the whole person, rather than just skills for one component of his or her job, helps encourage individuals to develop themselves to their full potential.

*Profiting from Literacy:  
Creating a Sustainable Workplace Literacy Program,  
Conference Board of Canada, 2005*

# Why family literacy in the workplace?

## *Literacy is an issue for a great number of workers*

The most recent Statistics Canada survey shows that 40% of adults aged 16-65 in Alberta lack the basic literacy skills to perform competently in most jobs in our modern economy. That represents over 700,000 people. For Canada as a whole, that statistic changes to 42% of adults aged 16-65. Read more about literacy rates on page 3 and Appendix A.

## *Literacy issues affect your bottom line*

There is a cost to the economy from low literacy levels, especially in terms of safety and productivity. Although estimates of economic costs are imprecise, the Canadian Task Force on Business estimated that low literacy levels in 1988 cost businesses about \$4.1 billion annually in lost productivity. As literacy levels are virtually the same now as twenty years ago, this figure rises to roughly \$6 billion when adjusted for inflation.<sup>ii</sup>

Looking at it another way, there is a benefit from investing in literacy programs. Statistics Canada estimates a 1% increase in literacy skills would yield a 1.5%, or \$18.4 billion, permanent increase in our GDP and a 2.5% increase in productivity.<sup>iii</sup>



Literacy and essential skills are just two of a myriad of factors that affect productivity and performance in the workplace, but they are vitally important factors. Read more about literacy and the labour force on page 4.

## *Those who most need training aren't participating*

Although industry and business in Canada have benefitted from workplace literacy and essential skills programs for many years now, few employers offer programs and they are not reaching those most in need.

Only 29% of level 2 Canadians participated in adult education and training, as opposed to 40% of level 3 and 60% of levels 4 and 5 Canadians.<sup>iv</sup> (For a definition of levels, see the next section and Appendix A.)

Only 18% of Canadian workers with high school education or less receive formal workplace training.<sup>v</sup>

### ***Family literacy programs benefit employers and employees***

There have been community-based family literacy programs in Alberta since the early 1990s, and in other jurisdictions since the 1980s, and the results are clear.

- Parents join because the focus is on helping their children, as opposed to their own abilities.
- Parents experience changes in their literacy-related attitudes and behaviors.
- Parents gain the confidence to re-enter the learning system and pursue other training.
- Young children—your future workforce—increase their early language and early literacy skills.<sup>vi</sup>

There must be benefits to the employer, of course, to justify running a family literacy program in the workplace. And there are.

- Adults retain information and skills picked up in workplace training to a greater degree when the training materials are related to day-to-day experiences at work, at home, and in the community.<sup>vii</sup>
- Family literacy programs provide an opportunity for adults to practice and learn skills that they can apply to work as well as family life. In addition to reading and writing for the program, many of the topics discussed in the context of supporting children's development—problem-solving, communication skills, getting along with others, understanding how reading and writing develop—dovetail with the essential skills necessary for today's workplace.
- Having the program in the workplace in and of itself raises awareness of the importance of reading, writing, and communication.

- Such programs have been successfully used as a “hook” to get reluctant workers into company training programs.<sup>viii, ix</sup>
- Family literacy programs are a way to maintain a broad perspective on training and education that addresses workers as employees, individuals, and family and community members.<sup>x</sup>
- It is a means of getting “double duty dollars”<sup>xi</sup> from workplace training, in terms of increased skills in the current and future workforces.
- It is a way for companies to exercise their social responsibility by supporting literacy development in the broader community, and helping to develop a culture of learning in which all may reach their full potential.<sup>xii</sup>

It’s important to note that, for the most part, family literacy programs in the workplace have involved employees, and children do not attend but rather benefit indirectly.

In the pages that follow, you’ll find additional information on why implementing family literacy in your workplace makes sense. There are examples of programs that have taken place here in Alberta and elsewhere, and you’ll also find practical suggestions on how to partner with your local family literacy organization to deliver the most effective program.

## Backgrounder

### *Summary of literacy statistics in Alberta*

The most recent Statistics Canada survey shows that 40% of adults aged 16-65 in Alberta lack the basic literacy skills to function effectively in society.<sup>xiii</sup> Their skills are too low to be fully competent in most jobs in our modern economy.<sup>xiv</sup> That represents over 700,000 people.



Fourteen percent of Alberta's adult population is at level 1—the lowest level on the five-point scale. These individuals have difficulty reading instructions on a product label and are unable to read a bedtime story to their children.



A further 26% are at level 2, which means they can only deal with reading material that is simple and clearly laid out. They may have adapted their lower literacy skills to everyday life, but would have difficulty learning new job skills requiring a higher level of literacy.<sup>xv</sup>

Level 3 is the internationally recognized minimum level of skills required to manage everyday literacy tasks. Thirty percent of adult Albertans are at this level.

Despite these high numbers, fewer than 10% of adults with low literacy skills ever enroll in programs to improve their skills.<sup>xvi</sup>

### **Literacy and the workforce**

Literacy skills are critical in today's information-based society and economy, and yet one in 4 Canadians in the labour market has literacy skills at level 2.<sup>xvii</sup> There is a cost to business and the economy from these low literacy levels, especially in terms of safety and lost productivity. Although estimates of economic costs are by definition imprecise, the Canadian Task Force on Business estimated that low literacy levels in 1988 cost businesses about \$4.1 billion annually in lost productivity, or approximately \$6 billion when adjusted for inflation.<sup>xviii</sup>

Looking at it another way, there is a benefit from investing in literacy and essential skills programs. A 1% increase in literacy skills would yield a 1.5%, or \$18.4 billion, permanent increase in our GDP and a 2.5% increase in productivity.<sup>xix</sup>

Literacy and essential skills are just two of a myriad of factors that affect productivity and performance in the workplace, but they are vitally important factors.

We know about the economic benefits of improving literacy levels through workplace initiatives and there are many success stories about workplace programs. Studies such as Michael Bloom's *The Economic Benefits of Improving Literacy Skills in the Workplace*<sup>xx</sup> detail clear benefits to employees (higher income, less unemployment, more full-time work, etc.) and employers (time savings, improved quality of work, lower costs, etc.).

However, the Conference Board of Canada and others find that upper level 2 and lower level 3 employees are “generally overly confident about their literacy skills and unaware of reasons for upgrading their skills.”<sup>xxi</sup> Fewer than 30% of adult workers in Canada participate in job-related education and training, compared to almost 35% in the United Kingdom and nearly 45% in the United States.<sup>xxii</sup>

Moreover, training is usually offered to, and taken by, employees in supervisory or management level positions. Only 18% of Canadian workers with high school education or less receive formal workplace training.<sup>xxiii</sup>

<b>Key Facts About Literacy and the Labour Force<sup>xxiv</sup></b>
<p>Literacy outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One in 4 Canadians in the labour market (aged 16 to 65) has literacy skills at IALS level 2, on a five-level scale, where 3 is the minimum required for everyday reading and writing tasks, and 5 is the highest level.</li> </ul>
<p>Labour market participation and literacy outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only 66% of working-age Canadians at IALS levels 1 and 2 participate in the labour market, as opposed to 83% of levels 4 and 5 working-age Canadians.</li> <li>• Almost 84% of working-age Canadians at IALS level 2 believe their readings skills are “not at all limiting” to their opportunities at work.</li> </ul>
<p>Participation in adult education and training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only 29% of level 2 Canadians participated in adult education and training, as opposed to 40% of level 3 and 60% of levels 4 and 5 Canadians. The Canadian total participation rate is 38%.</li> </ul>
<p>Income and earnings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out of six variables that predict earnings, level of literacy is the most significant factor.</li> </ul>

Another consideration is the number of employers who offer workplace literacy or essential skills training to their employees. According to Leger Marketing's 2009 surveys on behalf of this project, half of Alberta employers report providing workplace education programs, but these are often likely to be basic computer skills and teamwork. Of businesses offering workplace training in the 12 months prior to the survey, only 18% provided training in reading, 18% provided writing-related training, and 12% provided basic math.<sup>xxv</sup> (See Appendix B for more information from the Leger surveys.) There are clear benefits in improving workplace



literacy cited by employers—improved learning facility of employees, their ability to work together as a team, and improved labour-management relations to name a few—but this message has not yet reached many Canadian workplaces.

### **Barriers to participation in traditional workplace programs**

Increasing participation in workplace training programs has been the subject of a number of studies, as has the subject of motivation to participate in adult learning programs. In *Literacy, Life and Employment*, the Conference Board of Canada reports that participants in their study (the “target group,” as opposed to “higher literacy group”) cited financial reasons and lack of time as two key reasons why they did not take part in available job-related training.<sup>xxvi</sup> However, the authors point to the IALS findings on self-assessment and over-confidence (cited above), and note the need to make individuals with low levels of literacy aware of the benefits of improving and upgrading skills.

The Conference Board also reports that, for adult learners who may have had negative experiences with formal schooling, deciding to take part in any type of learning program can be difficult. They may fear the repercussions of failure or be concerned about confidentiality, or may not be aware that a learning program could help them build needed skills.<sup>xxvii</sup>

The following barriers are often cited as preventing people from getting involved in learning, whether in the workplace or other venues:

- low self-esteem as a result of previous negative experience of learning
- fear of failing, or lack of confidence in their ability to take part in a group
- feeling that learning is for “other people” but not for them—inability to recognize themselves as “learners” despite what they have learned through life’s experiences
- adults who have left school with few or no qualifications may not feel good about returning to learning<sup>xxviii</sup>
- adult and workplace literacy programs may be under prescribed because of employee fear or sense of stigma<sup>xxix</sup>

### ***Family literacy in the workplace***

While there are examples of family literacy in the workplace, some of which are included in the next section, these types of programs are not widespread. What is not lacking are clear and compelling arguments that show how interwoven all of these threads are—learning as an adult, as a worker, as a parent, as a child—and how one supports and enhances the other. From academic research on functional context learning and literacy transfer to calls from labour and business councils to invest in family literacy, recognition has existed for over two decades of the wisdom of integrating family-based programming into workplace and basic skills initiatives.

Family literacy in the workplace is about overcoming these barriers, getting your employees interested in learning and comfortable with taking training, and creating an intergenerational cycle of achievement.

## **Results from family literacy programs that impact workplace skills**

In the family literacy field it has been demonstrated that adults with low literacy skills will often participate in literacy programs to benefit their child. At the same time, they experience changes in their literacy-related behaviors and attitudes, and often go on to other upgrading programs.<sup>xxx, xxxi</sup>



The U.K. study *Assembling the Fragments: A Review of Research on Adult Basic Skills*<sup>xxxii</sup> is one of several that found that adults in family literacy programs have higher attendance, retention, and completion rates than those in “general provision,” and that their movement to further study and employment is high. Other researchers have documented benefits from family literacy program participation related to employment, such as enhanced employment status or job satisfaction, increased employment, and increased participation in job training.<sup>xxxiii, xxxiv</sup>

Although research clearly shows the benefits of family literacy for adult participants and for children, it has been largely overlooked as a strategy for developing effective workplace literacy programs.

## **Family literacy components enhance other types of education and training**

Research suggests that workplace programs that aim to do more than increase job-specific skills, that use functional materials from not only the workplace but also home and community, are more effective than programs with a narrower scope. Family literacy activities and materials can enhance the effectiveness of workplace training.

By offering contextual learning experiences, both within and outside the classroom, family literacy and adult education programs can help individuals, particularly those with limited experience in the labor market, develop a broad array of skills and behaviors valuable both to employers and to their own ability to pursue a career.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Union involvement in and support of workplace literacy programs also reflects the importance of curriculum and materials related to workers' lives. The Canadian Union of Public Employees' list of best practices for literacy in the workplace states that unions support programs that address the needs of the whole person, enriching learners' lives as individuals, workers, union members, family members, and citizens.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

## Examples of programs

The first two examples given here are the pilot programs that ran as components of the Workplace Family Literacy Project, the initiative that produced this guide and the companion *Helping Families Learn is Everyone's Business: A Practitioners' Guide to Family Literacy in the Workplace*.

The examples that follow the pilot program descriptions are drawn from Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom—initiatives that go back two decades or more. These range from intensive programs that involved workers and their families, to programs that focused on parents and primary caregivers, to workplace learning centres that were open not just to employees but to their families as well, to lunchtime seminars, book lending programs for workers and their children, and family literacy activities and special events.

### **The BOOKS Program at XL Foods / Lakeside Packers**

In late 2009 Lakeside Packers, a meat packing plant just outside of Brooks, Alberta, conducted a pilot program that saw a small number of its employees participate in a BOOKS (Books Offer Our Kids Success) family literacy program. The participants were permanent residents or new immigrants, many of whom are not literate in their own language and all of whom have very limited English reading and writing skills. The group met once a week for 1.5 hours, before their shift started, with the program running for eight weeks.

The BOOKS program focuses on encouraging parents and other caregivers to share picture books regularly with their children and build on the experience of reading together through craft activities. In the Brooks pilot, discussion of the themes of the children's



books led naturally into discussions of work-related interests and concerns, such as job aspirations and workplace safety. The classes also opened up opportunities for participants to discuss their own learning, and to ask questions related to language and reading within the safe environment of a child-focused program. Outcomes included improved communication in the workplace and enhanced family enjoyment of learning.

At the conclusion of the pilot program, the company decided to continue BOOKS, with over 50 employees on a wait list for the next program.

“I used to do orientation—I would say ‘you need to let me know if you can’t read,’ but they didn’t—[they were] afraid, embarrassed. We knew some could not.”

Safety Coordinator, Lakeside Packers<sup>xxxvii</sup>

### ***The Lucerne Workplace Family Literacy Project***

In 2009 the Taber and District Community Adult Learning Association approached Lucerne Foods in the southern Alberta community about the possibility of partnering in a family literacy in the workplace project. Lucerne employees identified topics that they were interested in, and the literacy coordinator used these to develop a series of 30-minute lunchtime seminars delivered at the food processing plant. The project ran for eight weeks. Outcomes included workers becoming more aware of their literacy skills and the literacy development of their children, and enhanced worker attitudes toward the importance of family literacy activities.

At the conclusion of the pilot program, the plant supervisor said she would recommend the program to anyone, and the learning association was negotiating with another food processing company to offer similar programming to its employees.

“Family literacy helps to produce young adults, who are just entering the workforce, with the ability to read directions carefully and thereby reduce waste in the form of accidents and mistakes.”

Plant supervisor, Lucerne Foods<sup>xxxviii</sup>

### ***Literacy and Parenting Skills (LAPS)***

The Further Education Society of Alberta is, at the time of writing this publication, adapting LAPS so as to partner with community businesses to increase the literacy and essential skills of their workers. This will assist them to participate in family and community more fully and will encourage them to continue on a path of lifelong learning. Also, workers will become more efficient and productive in the workplace if their challenges are addressed in an effective manner. In addition to LAPS, its Aboriginal version, A-LAPS (Aboriginal Literacy and Parenting Skills), will also be utilized so that the educational sessions will be culturally relevant for Aboriginal workers.

Interested employers participating in piloting the newly developed LAPS/A-LAPS sessions include the Calgary Board of Education, Walmart, and a First Nations Casino. The LAPS in the workplace sessions will be published and available to family literacy practitioners, community groups, and interested employers across the country in 2011.<sup>xxxix</sup>

### ***City of Kamloops***

Four interest groups were involved in this project: City of Kamloops, CUPE 900, Laubach Literacy of Canada, and Thompson Rivers University (TRU). TRU teamed with Laubach to develop and deliver a family literacy workshop series for interested City of Kamloops employees. The City sought to increase employee interest in developing their workplace literacy skills.

The workshop series was designed to impact the employees' home literacy practices, with some on-site practice with participant and child. It was based on Laubach's Family Literacy Program (suitable for caregivers of children 0-12), which focuses on creating a learning culture in the home. Participants met on eight occasions, 2 hours each time, at a neutral downtown office building. The sessions typically began with a discussion of a particular



reading/literacy strategy with some paired practice. Between sessions, participants were asked to try the strategies/activities at home and report back to the group. Children and other members of the families attended two sessions.<sup>xi</sup>

### ***Learning Together, Ford Motor Company***

As a response to the need for new skills development, unions and management collaborated to set up a learning centre at the Ford Motor Company plant just outside of London, England in the mid-1990s. The centre, known as the Off Line Basic Skills Unit, was a drop-in workshop with flexible hours, offering finite and ongoing programming. Employees could work on equivalency maths and English, as well as courses for particular workplace functions.



Among the courses offered at the learning centre was a family literacy program called Learning Together, an intensive model that includes three components. Each program ran for ten weeks, and each session was “stand alone” as shift patterns meant families couldn’t always attend. In this type of program, parents meet to work on their own literacy skills, as well as to learn ways to support their children’s literacy development. While their parents meet separately, children take part in an enriched early childhood education program. Joint sessions are also included, giving parents an opportunity to practice what they’ve learned and to share ways in which they use literacy at home. The families met together on Saturday mornings for two hours, with an hour for the separate sessions and an hour for the joint sessions. The families also took part in visits to other parts of the Ford plant. According to the program manager, assessments showed progress and great improvements in confidence, and it was an important hook to get employees into learning centre programs.<sup>xli</sup>

In addition to the Learning Together program, the Ford plant in Dagenham also took part in the More Families Reading Campaign, where taster collections of books were established in workplaces to encourage more fathers to read with their children. Their cafeteria library was one of the most successful of the

campaign; almost one hundred workers joined the book lending program and more than 200 books were issued during the year.<sup>xlii</sup>

### ***Winthrop University***

A program at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, South Carolina promotes lifelong literacy skills for its custodial, gardening, and refuse collection department employees and, in turn, helps these adult learners support their children's education. (Some employees have less than a grade six education.) Employees attend two-hour sessions each week for 12 weeks.

This program is intended to help employees improve their on-the-job literacy skills through activities involving their families and homes. Three approaches characterize the program: using children's literature, work-related literature, and personal literature. Participants receive job training activities at work and then as part of the instruction, relate these activities to their homes and their families. For example, by learning and responding to literacy strategies used when reading children's books, the program intends for the participants to use these strategies when reading for personal pleasure or work.

The "Using Children's Literature" module of the program involves participants in reading activities that include prediction, characterization, sequencing, inferencing, and imagery. During class, the participants record their reactions to the readings in a log book; at home, they read and discuss the books with family members. The "Using Work-Related Literature" module involves participants in reading about hazardous materials and safety on the job and in the home. The "Using Personal Literature" module involves participants in writing and sharing stories about their life experiences with others in class and, later, with their children at home. The three modules of this program connect home, school, and workplace literacy applications.<sup>xliii, xliv, xlv</sup>

### ***Linking Home and School Through Workplace***

Linking Home and School Through Workplace (LHSTW), developed by the Work in America Institute, began its first on-site pilot program in 1990 and by 1991 had thirty-one sites in 25 states across the U.S. Unions played a key role and sites included the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, Sheet Metal

Workers, and the UAW/Ford and UAW/GM Training Centers. LHSTW targeted employees with children pre-school through junior high. The organization's goals were:

- to assist employees in teaching their children basic skills
- to strengthen parent and child relationships
- to introduce employees to workplace education and to offer basic skills courses
- to educate the next generation of employees
- to institutionalize the concept of education in the workplace

Topics were selected to promote inter-generational learning and parenting skills while fostering education and communication. At the workplace parents were taught activities they could bring home and share with their children.<sup>xlvi, xlvii</sup>

### **Other examples**

There are several other examples of family literacy workplace initiatives. In England projects have included the London Transport Museum,<sup>xlvi</sup> UnionLearn,<sup>xlix</sup> the National Literacy Trust's Family Reading Campaign,<sup>i</sup> the Campaign for Learning,<sup>ii</sup> and Asda Supermarkets' The Big Read campaign.<sup>iii</sup>

One example from the U.S. is the "Simple Things You Can Do" tip sheet for employers and others distributed by the U.S. Department of Education as part of the "America Reads" Challenge to help all children read well and independently by the end of the third grade.<sup>liii</sup>

In Canada there are examples of company and union learning centres that have

"Great to have it at lunchtime at work, otherwise I would never have done this."

opened their doors not only to employees and union members, but to their families as well. These include Durabelt Inc.,<sup>liv</sup> AltaSteel,<sup>lv, lvi</sup> and United Food and Commercial Workers.<sup>lvii</sup> Spokespersons for these organizations explain this broader inclusion as promoting a culture of learning beyond their own workforce, and reinforcing employee learning by opening centres to family members.

## What can you do?

### *Inform yourself and your management team*

There's a wealth of information available on literacy (statistics on rates in Alberta and Canada, as well as information about literacy and the workplace, and family literacy), both online and at your local community-based literacy organization. See the following section for more information on the latter.

There have been numerous surveys and a great deal of research on the state of literacy in Canada and the most effective ways of addressing literacy issues in the workplace. Of particular importance is the work of Statistics Canada and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development through the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey, and the subsequent Canadian reports. The Conference Board of Canada is another excellent source of information on workplace learning. Information on workplace literacy, adult literacy, and family literacy can be found on the National Adult Literacy Database and the ABC Life Literacy Canada website. Information on family literacy in general, as well as information on specific program types, can be found at the Centre for Family Literacy. Links to these and other organizations can be found in the endnotes for the earlier sections of this booklet, or check the following links:

Statistics Canada	<a href="http://www.statcan.gc.ca">www.statcan.gc.ca</a>
Conference Board of Canada	<a href="http://www.conferenceboard.ca">www.conferenceboard.ca</a>
ABC Life Literacy Canada	<a href="http://abclifeliteracy.ca/en/workplace-literacy">http://abclifeliteracy.ca/en/workplace-literacy</a>
National Adult Literacy Database	<a href="http://www.nald.ca">www.nald.ca</a>
Centre for Family Literacy	<a href="http://www.familit.ca">www.familit.ca</a>

## **Talk to your local literacy provider**

Arrange to meet with a representative from your local family literacy program to discuss how you might collaborate to help your employees reach their full potential at work, at home, and in the community. What kinds of programs do they offer? What resources could they contribute to a collaborative program, and what can your business provide?

Based on this conversation, you might want to invite the literacy coordinator to make a presentation to your staff about literacy in your community and in your workplace.

A companion document to this guide, *Helping Families Learn is Everyone's Business: A Practitioners' Guide to Family Literacy in the Workplace*, was distributed to community-based family literacy programs across Alberta in 2010. That document contains more detailed information on developing partnerships with business to develop and deliver family-oriented programming in the workplace.

Family literacy programs are often associated with volunteer tutor adult literacy programs (VTALs), which are found in over 65 communities across Alberta. Also check your local community adult learning council, or the public library. Look under LEARN in the yellow pages, or check the list of family literacy programs on the Government of Alberta website (<http://www.aet.alberta.ca/apps/literacy/familit.asp>). A list of provincially funded family literacy programs is included in Appendix C; this list was current in early 2010 but the Government of Alberta website should be consulted for updated listings.

To contact literacy organizations in other jurisdictions, check your provincial or territorial government website, or go to the Movement for Canadian Literacy website at [literacy.ca](http://literacy.ca), and click on "Links" for a list of provincial and territorial literacy coalitions.

## **Put together a steering committee**

No matter which source of information you consult regarding good practice in workplace education or other types of initiatives, the literature is consistent in recommending that all stakeholders should be involved in program planning, delivery, and evaluation.

It needn't be a large group, but a steering committee should be put in place consisting of representatives from management, employees, labour (if applicable), and the local literacy organization.

Having people from each of these groups involved and championing the initiative greatly increase its chances for success; gaining support and buy-in at all levels is essential. Supervisors should be involved as well as management. Their support is needed; they need to understand the benefits to be gained in the workplace by improving employees' skills, and how the family literacy program will contribute to those outcomes.

If having employees attend programs during work hours is a consideration, it is especially important to involve line management or supervisors in planning from the outset, in order to lessen the impact on production.

An employee or preferably two should be on the committee as well. They can be both employee representatives and labour representatives. In addition to bringing an important perspective to planning and promotion, their involvement is an important signal to employees and will help to create a sense of ownership of the program.

In the case of unionized workplaces, having a union representative involved and on the committee is essential. Issues such as paid versus unpaid time to participate, assessment, and program evaluation will require union input. Their participation and support can determine whether employees participate in the program.

### ***Find out what your employees are interested in***

When Leger Marketing conducted a survey in 2009 of over 500 businesses in Alberta, with follow-up interviews with over 100 employers, many stated that they would consider offering family literacy programs in the workplace if their employees indicated a need for such an initiative.



Identifying interests relating to family literacy among the workforce and tailoring the program to meet those needs is a vital part of planning for a number of reasons:

- it provides the information needed by employers, indicating that this type of program is desired by their employees
- it helps to determine the readiness of an organization to host a family literacy program, and identify barriers to implementing a program
- it builds ownership, support, and awareness for the project, and gives people some control over what they learn and the way they learn it
- it can be used to make a case for financial support
- it helps to determine which type of family literacy program would be best suited to meet the needs and interests of the employees of a particular workplace, and which they would be most likely to take part in
- it can be used to clarify or modify goals set for the initiative
- it can be used as a baseline for evaluating the success of the project

There is a fundamental difference between conducting an interest inventory as opposed to a more traditional type of needs assessment. An interest inventory may be less threatening to people than a conventional needs assessment because it focuses on what employees want—on what their interests are—rather than on their perceived deficits or what others may think they need.<sup>lviii</sup> It's a strengths-based approach to finding out more about literacy issues in families and communities, and can be used to develop responses to these interests without "targeting" individuals. It is ideally suited for use in the workplace as it removes what might be perceived as risks related to job security and confidentiality. Participation in the interest inventory should be voluntary.

## Suggested process for using an interest inventory

1	<p>The steering committee decides on who will be involved, how the information will be collected, and what information is required.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Encourage all to participate and try to ensure participation from good cross-section of the workforce: gender, age, level of education, new/longer-term employees.</li> <li>b. If other training is offered in the workplace, those involved should be included to determine if and how the family literacy program could fit into other training initiatives.</li> <li>c. Management should be included for their perspective on what resources are available to support the program.</li> </ol>
2	<p>Create a communication strategy to raise awareness about the interest inventory.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Let people know ahead of time that the interest inventory is going to take place.</li> <li>b. Use as many methods of communication as possible: word of mouth, company and/or union newsletters, a mailout with paycheques/stubs, regular meetings.</li> <li>c. Consider whether translating notices, etc. is necessary.</li> <li>d. Have “training champions” from all levels of organization who act as ambassadors and promoters of the initiative let people know about the interest inventory and why it’s being used.</li> </ol>
3	<p>In addition to a checklist to be completed by employees, conduct a document review or ask for compiled information that will help to determine interests. (Compile general information only, rather than employee-specific data. Demographic information might include education levels, number of children, ages of children/dependants/grandchildren, ESL training, etc.) In addition to personnel files, other sources might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous organizational needs assessments or workplace needs assessments conducted by the business</li> <li>• Training records</li> <li>• Social committee documents</li> <li>• Employee assistance files</li> <li>• Information gathered for other purposes that might document learning goals and needs</li> <li>• Supervisors’ or management’s recommendations regarding training</li> </ul>
4	<p>Distribute the interest inventory.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Make the form as easy to complete as possible, such as a simple “tick box” survey.</li> <li>b. Consider having the form completed as a group activity (lunch hour, staff meeting, union meeting, etc.) with the option of taking it away to complete.</li> </ol>
5	<p>Consider having an incentive to complete the form, such as a coupon for a free coffee in the company cafeteria.</p>



When considering using an interest inventory or needs assessment, and looking at who should ask the questions, bear the following in mind:

- When people lack confidence, they may not be able to tell you directly what they want or are interested in.
- There can be an imbalance of power when “professionals” or people in a position of authority ask questions; this may intimidate learners who may not speak up for themselves.
- Some people are more vocal than others; care must be taken to ensure that all are heard.
- People may not use “learning” terminology, but rather talk of hobbies, or what they do as a family, or what they do to have fun.
- Have information on other services available in the community ready for when there are suggestions and interests that lie outside of what a family literacy program can offer.

See Appendix D for an example of a workplace interest inventory.

### ***Decide what is feasible***

Once you have talked to your local literacy provider, gathered a steering committee, and collected information about your employees’ interests, here are some other considerations to help you determine what is feasible for your organization.

### **Where do you want to start?**

The kind of activity or program you start will depend on input from the steering committee, resources available in the business and the community, and feedback from employees through the interest inventory or some other avenue. Your options mirror the wide range of initiatives that take place in communities under the broad umbrella “family literacy program.” You may find that one of these types of activities is best suited to your business, or you may find that taking a graduated approach that moves employees through the following list over time into more direct literacy programming is the most effective for your organization.

Activities in the workplace can include one or more of the following, or move over time from small events to direct programming.

- Buy a book as a present for staff who have a new child.

- Celebrate World Book Day, Freedom to Read Day, Children's Book Week, and National Poetry Month: make the most of national reading events to celebrate reading at work. Your local library or bookstore may be a good resource for these types of events.
- Children's library exchange: create a children's library within the workplace. Encourage staff to bring in books their children have grown out of so they can be borrowed by parents (or grandparents, uncles, or aunts) of other children.
- Workplace library: set up a library within the workplace and encourage borrowing. The library could be of books brought in by staff or donated by the company. A local librarian may be able to help set one up. The Ford Motor Company in Dagenham set up a workplace library with the help of a visiting local librarian who brought boxes of books onto the shop floor. Employees were encouraged to borrow books for themselves and their children.
- Have the local literacy program run demonstration sessions or "taster sessions" of family literacy programs at the workplace to generate interest and awareness of programs in the community.
- Offer lunchtime or brown-bag seminars or workshops on the importance of reading as a family or other family literacy-related topics identified by employees in the interest inventory. (For workplaces with predominantly male employees, there is significant research that demonstrates the importance of father involvement on children's learning and healthy development.)
- Offer one of several models of family literacy programming to employees. The type of program, scheduling, and other details of program development and delivery would be determined as outlined above, with the involvement of different stakeholders on your steering committee.

One advantage of starting with a book lending program or reading-related events is that it gives employees time to become talk about and become accustomed to family literacy activities in the workplace before making a commitment (a large step for people with limited skills) to attending a program.

### **Will it be part of other training?**

Is there a larger training program that could have family literacy

activities or programs added to it, or will family literacy activities be a stand-alone initiative?

There are advantages to introducing family literacy into the workplace by integrating it into existing programs, whether essential skills, English as a Second Language, or job-specific training. It places family literacy on the same footing as other training and educational initiatives, and “normalizes” it. As the research cited earlier indicates, family literacy components can support and enhance benefits of other types of training.

Family literacy programming can also be run independent of other training, or in a workplace where there isn’t other training or educational activity. Offering the program on its own means that you may attract employees who are not yet ready, for any number of reasons, to participate in other types of training or learning opportunities.

### **Work with other businesses if an in-house program isn’t feasible**

If your company is too small to offer its own program, explore opportunities to partner with other employers. Rather than working alone with the local literacy program, it may be more feasible to work with a number of businesses and offer the family literacy program to a group of employees from various workplaces. This might also include working with local labour councils or employment agencies.

### **Choose a type of family literacy program to offer**

There are many types or models of family literacy programs and activities offered in Alberta. By working with your local family literacy provider you can explore different models and determine which is best suited to your workplace in the way of objectives, necessary resources, and duration.

### **Work out program planning, delivery, and evaluation**

Having stakeholders—employees, management, labour if applicable, and the literacy program—working together will mean that there are common understandings of what the aims and objectives of the program are, the most effective way of delivering it, what will constitute success, and how that success will be measured in a “safe” and appropriate manner.

## **Be a champion**

Once the committee is in place, you may want to delegate responsibility for the project to one of your managers or other staff. If that is the case, the project will be stronger if management and other leaders or “gate-keepers” in the organization stay visibly supportive of the project. The role of champions, in the workplace and the community, was a constant theme raised by business, literacy practitioners, and labour during the two-year research project leading to these publications.

The attitudes of supervisors, employees, senior managers and union officials toward learning are strong indicators of their future commitment to and support for a learning program. Support “from the top down”—or lack thereof—can make or break a learning program. Management’s attitude toward learning will undoubtedly be perceived by the rest of the organization, and it will colour everyone else’s opinion of the value of the program.

Conference Board of Canada,  
*Profiting from Literacy* (2005)

## **Things to consider before you start**

As part of exploring a partnership with the local family literacy organization, take a look at whether there are conditions or barriers that need to be addressed before a program could be successfully delivered in your workplace. The suggestions below were collected through extensive surveys with both literacy practitioners<sup>lx</sup> and over 500 business owners<sup>lx</sup> in Alberta in 2008-09.

### **Positive attitude toward literacy development of staff**



There is, unfortunately, still a stigma attached to having low literacy skills, and it is this stigma that keeps many people away from programs. What is the attitude in your workplace toward staff development? Have there

been other types of literacy-related training at this workplace? With what results? Is there a learning culture in the workplace, where all training is seen as a positive opportunity and all employees are encouraged to develop to their full potential?

### **Interest and buy-in**

A common theme in workplace programs of all types is that chances for success depend on obtaining buy-in from all levels of an organization—from upper management to the shop floor. Having support from all stakeholder groups gives the message that the program is important and has value, not just in meeting business goals but also in addressing employees' needs and interests.

Three things are important when looking at how to obtain buy-in: the program must be relevant and tailored to the needs and interests of the employees, participation should be voluntary, and individual assessment, progress, and outcomes must be confidential.

### **Good employee/employer relations**

Is this the right time to be trying a new program? In order to get the buy-in described above, consider if there are pressures on management or employees that could impact participation. For example, have there been lay-offs recently, or difficult contract negotiations? Will the proposed program be perceived as adding to these pressures, or creating unwanted expectations of employees? Training must be seen as “apolitical,” with both management and employees supporting it.

### **Visible support from employer**

In addition to the interest and buy-in mentioned above, the employer needs to be seen as supportive of the program. Such support might include:

- allowing staff the time to discuss the program and identify needs and interests
- providing resources to promote the program and recruit participants
- providing appropriate space for the program

The question of funding to offer and to continue the program can't be generalized and depends on the resources available in each community and the role played by partners in each initiative. Family literacy programs are very inexpensive to deliver

compared with other types of training; the BOOKS program highlighted in the Lakeside Packers pilot project typically costs about \$3000 to deliver, and much of those costs are for the books used in the program, which in some instances could be provided by the family literacy program involved in the partnership. Also, in some instances family literacy organizations receive funding for program delivery and look for locations in the community at which to offer programs.

Another question that can only be answered locally is whether employees attend the program on their own time, on company time, or on a combination of both. Having at least some paid time to attend the program sends a strong message to employees that the program has value.

## **In conclusion**

Family literacy initiatives in the workplace can make a difference in areas such as recruitment of workers, job satisfaction and retention, promotion, and especially providing an avenue into additional training and work-related skill development. Encouraging employees to learn at work has implications for key elements of business success, especially in the areas of safety and productivity. Finally, involving your business in family literacy programs will mean benefits for today's workplace as well as tomorrow's.

For more information on the value of family literacy in the workplace, contact your local literacy provider or the Centre for Family Literacy in Edmonton.

*"A high level of literacy skills is essential if Alberta is going to be globally competitive. To be the best, and function as a team, our employees need to be working at a common level of understanding; literacy forms the foundation of that understanding."*

Gary Bosgoed,  
Vice President, Business Services and Systems,  
WorleyParsons Canada Ltd. in Edmonton,  
and Workplace Family Literacy Project  
steering committee member

# Appendix A: Definitions

**Literacy**<sup>lxi</sup> is defined as the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community—to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.

The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) measured literacy skills in three broad domains:<sup>lxii</sup>

- prose literacy: the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts including editorials, news stories, poems and fiction
- document literacy: the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in various formats, including job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables and charts
- quantitative literacy: the knowledge and skills required to apply arithmetic operations, either alone or sequentially, to numbers embedded in printed materials, such as balancing a chequebook, figuring out a tip, completing an order form or determining the amount of interest on a loan from an advertisement

IALS measured literacy on a five-level scale, where level 1 is the lowest and level 5 is the highest. Descriptions of typical competencies at each level on the prose scale illustrate the differences between the five levels.

## Level 1

At this level, respondents show very poor prose literacy skills. Individuals may, for example, be unable to determine the correct amount of medicine to give a child from information printed on a package.

## Level 2

At this level, respondents can deal only with material that is simple, and clearly laid out. A level 2 score denotes a weak level of skill, but more hidden than level 1. It identifies people who can read, but test poorly. They may have developed coping skills to manage everyday literacy demands, but their low level of proficiency makes it difficult for them to face novel demands, such as

learning new job skills.

### **Level 3**

At this level, respondents demonstrate a suitable minimum for coping with the demands of everyday life and work in a complex, advanced society. A level 3 score approximates the skill level required for successful secondary school completion and college entry. As with the higher levels, it requires the ability to integrate several sources of information and solve more complex problems.

### **Levels 4 and 5**

At these levels, respondents demonstrate command of higher-order information-processing skills.

**Workplace basic skills** and the related terms workforce literacy, workplace literacy, employability skills, and (below) essential skills are defined in a number of ways by a number of different agencies and organizations. The Conference Board of Canada defines workplace basic skills as including:

- understanding and ability to use prose (such as reports, letters, and equipment manuals)
- communicating effectively
- understanding and ability to use documents (such as safety instructions, assembly directions, maps)
- understanding and ability to use numbers by themselves or charts and tables
- thinking critically and acting logically to solve problems and make decisions
- using computers, technology, tools and information systems effectively
- ability to build and work in teams
- positive attitude toward change
- willingness and ability to learn for life<sup>lxiii</sup>

**Essential skills**<sup>lxiv</sup> are defined as the fundamental skills that make it possible to learn all others. They are enabling skills that help people participate fully in the workplace and in the community. They are:

- reading text
- document use
- numeracy



- writing
- oral communication
- working with others
- thinking skills
- computer use
- continuous learning

**Family literacy** refers to “the ways parents, children, and extended family members use literacy at home and in their community.”<sup>lxv</sup>

**Family literacy programs** include “the range of initiatives that recognize the influence of the family on the literacy development of family members, and that support families in literacy activity and in accessing literacy resources.”<sup>lxvi</sup> Programs may involve parents only, or parents and children together.

## **Appendix B: Leger Marketing's business surveys**

According to surveys conducted of Alberta business and industry by Leger Marketing for the Centre for Family Literacy in 2008-2009, employers agree there is a need for improved literacy and essential skills among the province's workforce (81%, including 42% strong agreement). Similarly, there is a high level of concern regarding the essential skill levels of the future workforce in this province (80% agreeing that their own organizations are concerned, including 52% strong agreement).<sup>lxvii</sup>

### **Views of partnerships**

Over 75% of employers surveyed indicated there could be benefits to partnering with external literacy providers.

### **Awareness of family literacy**

In their initial survey of over 500 businesses,<sup>lxviii</sup> Leger found that while 74% of Alberta employers agreed that employees are more likely to upgrade their skills if their children directly benefit, more employer education is needed for many organizations to be ready to pursue this type of literacy training.

In Leger's follow-up survey<sup>lxviii</sup>—130 interviews with Alberta employers—one-third of organizations expressed an interest in offering family literacy training programs, regardless of whether the program involves only the worker (36%), the worker and their children (35%), or the worker and another adult (33%).

Organizations were also asked to rate their level of agreement with a series of statements regarding aspects of family literacy programs. At least three-quarters agreed that family literacy programs would be beneficial for the employer (81%), and that family literacy programs would improve adult workers' personal literacy and essential skills (75%).

Seven in 10 said that family literacy programs would improve the organization's ability to handle new responsibilities or communication practices, provide a non-threatening way to re-enter the learning system (72%), increase workforce skill level (71%),

improve productivity (70%), and improve the quality of products and services (69%).

At least six in 10 organizations agreed that family literacy would motivate employees to pursue other types of training (65%), improve the ability to implement new technology, production processes, or other changes (63%), improve safety (62%), and have unique advantages over other types of literacy and essential skills programs (60%).

Employers also agreed that family literacy programs would increase their competitiveness (59%), improve labour-management relations (59%), and attract employees (49%).

## Appendix C: Community-based family literacy programs in Alberta

Please note that the links and addresses below were current as of March 2010. For updated information, please see the Government of Alberta website at [www.alberta.ca](http://www.alberta.ca), and follow the links to Community Learning, Family Literacy Programs. Also check for family literacy programs offered by other organizations in your community such as libraries, settlement agencies, health units, and community colleges.

City / Town	Project Title	Host Organization / Service Delivery Organization	Phone   Email
	<b>Beaverlodge</b>	<i>South Peace Family Literacy</i> South Peace Rural Community Learning Association	Telephone: 780-518-7361   <a href="mailto:holly_handfield@famlit.ca">holly_handfield@famlit.ca</a>
	<b>Bon Accord</b>	<i>Rhythm and Rhyme Family Time</i> Sturgeon County/ Sturgeon Literacy	Telephone: 780-921-3589   <a href="mailto:annitaj@netscape.ca">annitaj@netscape.ca</a>
	<b>Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement</b>	<i>Ayamicikewen Program</i> Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement	Telephone: 780-689-2170   <a href="mailto:mdaniels@buffalolakemetis.com">mdaniels@buffalolakemetis.com</a>
	<b>Calgary</b>	<i>Bowmont Family Literacy Project</i> Calgary Family Services Society	Telephone: 403-807-8867   <a href="mailto:susangarrow@shaw.ca">susangarrow@shaw.ca</a>
	<b>Calgary</b>	<i>Cross-Cultural Parent-Child Literacy Program</i> Calgary Immigrant Aid Society/ Immigrant Services Calgary	Telephone: 403-538-8361   <a href="mailto:wendya@immigrantservicescalgary.ca">wendya@immigrantservicescalgary.ca</a>
	<b>Calgary</b>	<i>Pebbles in the Sand: ESL Literacy for Women &amp; Children</i> Calgary Immigrant Women's Association	Telephone: 403-263-4414   <a href="mailto:language@ciwa-online.com">language@ciwa-online.com</a>

**Calgary***Magic Carpet Ride*

CanLearn Society for Persons with Learning Difficulties/ Calgary Learning Centre

Telephone: 403-686-9300 | [anne.price@calgarylearningcentre.com](mailto:anne.price@calgarylearningcentre.com)**Camrose***Camrose Family Literacy*

Society of Camrose and Area Community Learning Council/ Camrose Family Literacy

Telephone: 780-672-8754 | [famlit@camroselearning.com](mailto:famlit@camroselearning.com)**Cardston***Family Learning Circle*

Westwind School Division #74/

Cardston &amp; District Community Adult Learning Program

Telephone: 403-653-4991 | [kathy.richards@westwind.ab.ca](mailto:kathy.richards@westwind.ab.ca)**Coronation***PCALC Family Literacy*

County of Paintearth/ Paintearth Community Learning Council

Telephone: 1-888-578-3817 | [patking@wildroseinternet.ca](mailto:patking@wildroseinternet.ca)**Drayton Valley***Pulling Families Together*

Drayton Valley Adult Literacy Society

Telephone: 780-621-1722 | [lheywood@literacyalberta.ca](mailto:lheywood@literacyalberta.ca)**Drumheller***Building Blocks*

Olds College / Drumheller and District Further Education Council

Telephone: 403-823-3669 | [ddfec@oldscollege.ca](mailto:ddfec@oldscollege.ca)**Edmonton**

Family Fun Learning - a family literacy program for parents and grandparents in the Chinese community

ASSIST Community Services Centre

Telephone: 780-429-3111 | [perry.twaits@assistcsc.org](mailto:perry.twaits@assistcsc.org)**Edmonton***Books Offer Our Kids Success (BOOKS)*

Centre for Family Literacy Society of Alberta

Telephone: 780-421-7323 | [kim\\_chung@famlit.ca](mailto:kim_chung@famlit.ca)**Edmonton***Literacy Connects Families*

Connect Society: Deafness Education Advocacy &amp; Family Services

Telephone: 780-454-9581 Ext 243 | [smcullough@connectsociety.org](mailto:smcullough@connectsociety.org)**Edmonton***Early Language-Early Literacy Project*

Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation/ Early Head Start

Telephone: 780-426-3666 Ext 222 | [llema@e4calberta.org](mailto:llema@e4calberta.org)

<p><b>Edmonton</b>  <i>Multicultural Language and Literacy Enhancement Program</i>  Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers  Telephone: 780-424-7709   <a href="mailto:sgross@emcn.ab.ca">sgross@emcn.ab.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Edmonton</b>  <i>Books for Children and Families</i>  Norwood Child and Family Resource Centre  Telephone: 780-471-3737   <a href="mailto:laurief@ncfrc.ab.ca">laurief@ncfrc.ab.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Edmonton</b>  <i>Otenaw Lyniuk Literacy Project</i>  Ben Calf Robe Society  Telephone: 780-477-6648   <a href="mailto:marg@bcrsociety.ab.ca">marg@bcrsociety.ab.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Edmonton</b>  <i>Books, Babies and More</i>  Terra Association/ Terra Association - Meeting the Challenge of Teen Pregnancy  Telephone: 780-428-3772   <a href="mailto:karen.mottershead@terraassociation.com">karen.mottershead@terraassociation.com</a></p>
<p><b>Edmonton</b>  <i>Family Literacy Connections</i>  The Candora Society of Edmonton  Telephone: 780-474-5011   <a href="mailto:crystal.nahaiowski@candorasociety.com">crystal.nahaiowski@candorasociety.com</a></p>
<p><b>Edson</b>  <i>The Edson Family Literacy Program</i>  Edson and District Community Learning Society  Telephone: 780-723-3630   <a href="mailto:jodimant@gyrd.ab.ca">jodimant@gyrd.ab.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Edson</b>  <i>Storysacks</i>  Edson Friendship Centre  Telephone: 780-723-5494   <a href="mailto:efc99@telus.net">efc99@telus.net</a></p>
<p><b>Fishing Lake</b>  <i>Acimowins</i>  Fishing Lake Métis Settlement  Telephone: 780-943-2661   <a href="mailto:flmsahs@fishinglake.ca">flmsahs@fishinglake.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Foremost</b>  <i>Rural Parent-Child Mother Goose Program</i>  Forty Mile Community Adult Learning Association  Telephone: 780-867-3973   <a href="mailto:writebreak@fortymile.ab.ca">writebreak@fortymile.ab.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Fort Saskatchewan</b>  <i>Rhymes and Storytimes Parent-Child Mother Goose Program and Creative Kitchens</i>  Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society  Telephone: 780-998-5595 Ext 223   <a href="mailto:heatherb@familiesfirstsociety.ca">heatherb@familiesfirstsociety.ca</a></p>

<p><b>Fort Vermilion</b>  <i>Family Literacy in Fort Vermilion and Area</i>          Northeast Community Adult Learning Society          Telephone: 780-927-4625   <a href="mailto:marilyne@fvsd.ab.ca">marilyne@fvsd.ab.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Fox Creek</b>  <i>Books Offer Our Kids Success (B.O.O.K.S.)</i>          Town of Fox Creek/Write Start Literacy          Telephone: 780-622-3758   <a href="mailto:literacy@foxcreekcrc.ca">literacy@foxcreekcrc.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Grande Prairie</b>  <i>Family Literacy Program</i>          Grande Prairie Council for Lifelong Learning          Telephone: 780-539-6077   <a href="mailto:jasmin.greavett@gppsd.ab.ca">jasmin.greavett@gppsd.ab.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Grande Prairie</b>  <i>Home-Words</i>          The Grande Prairie Family Education Society/ Healthy Families Program          Telephone: 780-830-5300   <a href="mailto:betty.miller@pchr.ca">betty.miller@pchr.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Hanna</b>  <i>Hanna Family Stepping Stones</i>          Hanna and District Association for Lifelong Learning          Telephone: 403-854-2099   <a href="mailto:lindsay.jennings@hannalearning.com">lindsay.jennings@hannalearning.com</a></p>
<p><b>High Level</b>  <i>High Level Family Literacy Initiative</i>          Chinchaga Adult Learning Council          Telephone: 780-926-2950   <a href="mailto:calc1@telus.net">calc1@telus.net</a></p>
<p><b>High River</b>  <i>Building Blocks Family Literacy Program Municipal District of Foothills No. 31</i>          Literacy for Life Foundation          Telephone: 403-652-5090   <a href="mailto:litlife@telus.net">litlife@telus.net</a></p>
<p><b>Innisfail</b>  <i>Henday Family Literacy Project</i>          Henday Association for Lifelong Learning          Telephone: 403-227-2866   <a href="mailto:donnaarnold@hendaylearning.com">donnaarnold@hendaylearning.com</a></p>
<p><b>Kikino</b>  <i>Families Reading Together</i>          Kikino Colony 7E Council Association/ Kikino Early Intervention Program          Telephone: 780-623-4131   <a href="mailto:kiyouth@telusplanet.net">kiyouth@telusplanet.net</a></p>
<p><b>Lac La Biche</b>  <i>Aboriginal Family Literacy Program</i>          Lac La Biche Canadian Native Friendship Centre          Telephone: 780-623-3249   <a href="mailto:ed@nativefriendship.ca">ed@nativefriendship.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Lac La Biche</b>  <i>Rhymes That Bind</i>          Lac La Biche Regional Awasisak &amp; Family Development Circle Association          Telephone: 780-623-4742   <a href="mailto:deandar@telus.net">deandar@telus.net</a></p>

<p><b>Lamont</b>  <i>P.A.L. (Play and Learn) Program</i>  Lamont County/ Lamont County Community Adult Learning Council  Telephone: 780-895-2874   <a href="mailto:adultlearning@lamontcounty.ca">adultlearning@lamontcounty.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Lethbridge</b>  <i>Rhyme Time Program</i>  Lethbridge Public Library  Telephone: 403-320-4278   <a href="mailto:pmcgeorge@lethbridgepubliclibrary.ca">pmcgeorge@lethbridgepubliclibrary.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Lloydminster</b>  <i>A Gift to Our Community–Embracing Family Literacy</i>  Lloydminster Learning Council Association  Telephone: 780-875-5763   <a href="mailto:l-learn@telusplanet.net">l-learn@telusplanet.net</a></p>
<p><b>Manning</b>  <i>Manning Aboriginal Family Literacy Whole Community Experience</i>  Manning Community Resource Centre (Aboriginal) Society  Telephone: (780) 836-4222   <a href="mailto:arcc@telus.net">arcc@telus.net</a></p>
<p><b>Medicine Hat</b>  <i>Family Literacy Programs</i>  LEARN - The Medicine Hat &amp; District Further Education Council  Telephone: 403-529-3878   <a href="mailto:cgerl@mhc.ab.ca">cgerl@mhc.ab.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Pincher Creek</b>  <i>Napi Literacy Project</i>  Napi Friendship Association  Telephone: (403) 562-8020   <a href="mailto:brighterfutures@shaw.ca">brighterfutures@shaw.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Rocky Mountain House</b>  <i>Rocky Native Friendship Centre Society Family Literacy Program</i>  Rocky Native Friendship Centre Society  Telephone: 403-845-2788   <a href="mailto:mduhamel.rnfc@shawlink.ca">mduhamel.rnfc@shawlink.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Rocky Mountain House</b>  <i>Rocky Family Literacy Program</i>  Rocky Community Learning Council  Telephone: 403-845-4544   <a href="mailto:dreid@rockyclc.ab.ca">dreid@rockyclc.ab.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Ryley</b>  <i>Beaver County Family Program</i>  Beaver County / Beaver County Adult Learning Council  Telephone: 780-663-3730   <a href="mailto:calc@beaver.ab.ca">calc@beaver.ab.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Slave Lake</b>  <i>Raising Readers Family Literacy Program</i>  Slave Lake Adult Education Committee  Telephone: 780-849-8626   <a href="mailto:urquhartm@northernlakescollege.ca">urquhartm@northernlakescollege.ca</a></p>
<p><b>St. Paul</b>  <i>St. Paul Family Literacy Project</i>  Portage College  Telephone: (790) 645-6489   <a href="mailto:marvin.bjornstad@portagecollege.ca">marvin.bjornstad@portagecollege.ca</a></p>



<p><b>St. Paul</b>  <i>La main dans la main/123 Prêt-à-conter</i>  Société des parents pour l'éducation francophone de St-Paul et région  Telephone: 780-645-5050   <a href="mailto:lr Reidy@atrium.ca">lr Reidy@atrium.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Stettler</b>  <i>Stettler Family Literacy Program</i>  Stettler &amp; District Community Adult Learning Council  Telephone: 403-742-2999   <a href="mailto:read.stettlerlearning@telus.net">read.stettlerlearning@telus.net</a></p>
<p><b>Taber</b>  <i>Families Learning Together</i>  Taber &amp; District Community Adult Learning Association  Telephone: 403-223-1169   <a href="mailto:executivedirector@taberadultlearning.com">executivedirector@taberadultlearning.com</a></p>
<p><b>Three Hills</b>  <i>Kneehill READ Family</i>  Kneehill Adult Learning Society  Telephone: 403-443-5556   <a href="mailto:read4me@eastlink.ca">read4me@eastlink.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Valleyview</b>  <i>Family Learning Initiative</i>  Valleyview and District Further Education Council  Telephone: 780-524-4323   <a href="mailto:jsmith@northernlakescollege.ca">jsmith@northernlakescollege.ca</a></p>
<p><b>Vegreville</b>  <i>Building Blocks and Family Start</i>  Community Association for Lasting Success  Telephone: 780-632-3225   <a href="mailto:dpalichuk@vcals.org">dpalichuk@vcals.org</a></p>
<p><b>Vulcan</b>  <i>Building Blocks Family Literacy and Time for Rhymes Programs</i>  Rainbow Literacy Society  Telephone: 403-485-3107   <a href="mailto:coordinator@rainbowliteracy.com">coordinator@rainbowliteracy.com</a></p>
<p><b>Westlock</b>  <i>Learn With Me/Read With Me Project</i>  Each One Teach One Literacy Society  Telephone: 780-349-6333   <a href="mailto:eotoliteracy@hotmail.com">eotoliteracy@hotmail.com</a></p>

## **Appendix D: Sample interest inventory**

## Helping families learn is everyone's business



We are interested in general information to help us plan a no-cost family literacy program here at XYZ Industries. All responses are confidential. Thank you for taking part!

Circle your answer:

Are you the parent of a young child? (Birth to grade 6)	yes	no		
Are you a grandparent or other caregiver helping to raise young children?	yes	no		
Do you care for foster children?	yes	no		
If yes to any of the above, are they	0-2 years	3-5 years	6-9 years	9-12 years
Do you have questions about how to help your child learn?	yes	no		
Would you attend a 4–8 week program (once a week):				
Before work starts (adults only)	yes	no		
Right after work (adults only)	yes	no		
At lunchtime (adults only)	yes	no		
Saturday mornings (adults and children)	yes	no		

Please ✓ as many as you are interested in:

- A free lending library at work (books for kids and adults)
- A series of lunchtime sessions on why it's important to read to young children
- A program for parents of infants and toddlers that helps with the child's early language development
- A program for parents of preschoolers, focused on simple things that can help get a child ready for school
- Sessions on helping your children with homework (elementary school), reading report cards, and dealing with your child's teacher
- Sessions to help parents create a fun reading environment in the home and encourage reluctant readers
- Sessions on helping your child learn while retaining your home language (What language? \_\_\_\_\_)
- A program where you practice skills that will help you in your job *and* help you to help your child learn

What other ideas do you have?

**Simple things can make a world of difference to a young child.  
Share a bedtime story tonight.**

## **Appendix E: About the Centre for Family Literacy**

The Centre for Family Literacy was the first centre of its kind in Canada to focus on the development of literacy in the context of the family. With a 30-year history of serving families and communities, the mandate of the Centre is to:

- develop and deliver family and adult literacy programs in the Alberta Capital region
- provide training to family literacy professionals in Alberta and across the country
- serve as an information and program resource to family literacy professionals in Alberta
- raise awareness surrounding the importance of literacy and its impact on individuals, families, and communities
- serve as the location for intensive and long-term research on the effectiveness of family literacy programs
- pilot and implement innovative new approaches to learning and education

We have an outstanding track record of working in collaboration with a wide range of community agencies to provide programs and services that best meet the needs of families and communities. As a leader in the country, we provide a continuum of services that enable individuals and families to participate at many points in their own development. In the past year, over 15,000 Alberta adults and children accessed our programs, training, and services.

Centre for Family Literacy  
#201, 11456 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0N9  
780-421-7323  
1-866-421-7323  
[www.familit.ca](http://www.familit.ca)

## End Notes

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