

Literacy and Civic Engagement: Making the Connection

Almost half of Canadians struggle with literacy. About one in five (17%) have extremely low literacy.

What is literacy?

"Literacy is ... a means of identification, understanding, interpretation, creation, and communication in an increasingly digital, text-mediated, information-rich and fast-changing world." - UNESCO[i]



Making a difference

Community engagement is vital to its success. Strong literacy skills increase one's ability to:

- understand and analyze issues in the news and during elections
- evaluate print and digital media to determine fact and fiction
- participate in community organizations and decision-making



Civic Engagement includes

- participating in a local, regional, provincial, or national election
- being active in a group or association
- volunteering for a charity or organization
- running for political office
- signing or creating a petition
- working with others to solve a problem in your community
- protesting, demonstrating, and boycotting



Getting everyone involved

Free literacy programs are at the heart of getting everyone involved in civic life.

"Knowing more about the election gives me more confidence to vote. The more you know about an election, the more likely you'll participate. More people [voting] makes the election fairer."

– Learner, Independent Studies, Frontier College



Research shows

- literacy is connected to citizenship, democracy, and community participation [ii]
- people with lower levels of literacy report weaker connections with their communities and society [iii]
- for a society to thrive, its people need to be civically engaged [iv]
- people who have a higher level of education are more likely to be civically engaged[v]



Frontier College

Frontier College is a national charitable literacy organization leading Canada's transformational literacy movement. We work with volunteers, partners, and communities to ensure that everyone has access to effective, literacy-based learning that empowers them with the capabilities and confidence they need to realize their goals.

frontiercollege.ca

[i] United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (en.unesco.org/themes/literacy)

[ii] Burkholder, C., & Watt, D. (2017). "Literacies of Civic Engagement: Negotiating Digital, Political and Linguistic Tensions." *Language and Literacy*, 19(3), 1-3.

[iii] Public Health Agency of Canada (2017). "The Health and Social Dimensions of Adult Skills in Canada: Findings from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)." Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. Web. 15 May 2019.

[iv] People for Education (2017). "Measuring What Matters: Competencies and conditions for success." Web. 15 May 2019.

[v] Brunswick, R. T. N. (2008). "Impacts of Low Literacy Levels in Rural New Brunswick." Web. 15 May 2019.