

Literacy Impacts Adults: Learner Perspectives

To be literate means that you have the skills to understand what you read, communicate with others and engage fully and confidently in life's activities and opportunities— at work, at home and in the community. Literacy is a tool that opens up a world of opportunities to an individual. It is also something that many of us take for granted. Unfortunately, millions of adult Canadians struggle with literacy challenges (http://www.abc-canada.org/en/adult_literacy).



Since 1979 READ Saskatoon has delivered the adult one-to-one tutoring program. The program matches adult learners, 18 years of age or older, with trained volunteer tutors, who then work together to improve literacy skills. Learners and tutors typically meet once a week for 1 - 2 hours at a branch of the Saskatoon Public Library or other public location, as per READ Saskatoon's policy and procedure guidelines.



In 2011, mid term and long-term evaluations were conducted through phone surveys with 46 learners who reflected on their own learning with regard to the tutor program. Mid term interval included a sample of learners who had been involved in the tutor program for between 10–12 months and long-term learners were participants for over two years.

Improved literacy and essential skills:

63% of mid term and 87% of long term participants noted improvements in literacy skills and progress toward their learning goals.

- Speaking, listening, and reading improved more quickly than writing.
- Other positive changes reported by learners were improved patience, document use, conversation skills and learning Canadian culture.

Over 82% of both mid and long term learners reported enhanced learning skills. They felt they had a better understanding of their strengths and were better equipped to ask for help when identifying and solving their learning problems.

Only 10% of learners (mid & long term combined) reported no independent study time outside of tutoring sessions, with work schedules and family obligations listed as main deterrents. Those who were pursuing academic goals or English language study reported more hours of extra study than the most frequent 1–2 hours per week reported.

Over 86% of learners were satisfied with the types of learning activities shared by their tutors.

Over 80% of learners felt supported, encouraged, and respected by their tutors and reported satisfaction with the quality of relationship they had with their tutors.

- 42% of long term learners maintained the same tutor over time.
- Most tutor-learner relationships lasted an average of one year.

I used to panic and couldn't think when I had to fill out forms (hospital or doctor), but now I am calm...still nervous, but I can cope better now.

Long term learner, 2011

I can pick out my own mistakes when I'm reading now.

Mid term Learner, 2011

I am glad that somebody took the time to work with me. I was frustrated and fell behind in school and quit.

Long term Learner, 2011

READ Saskatoon's Accountability Project aims to revise and fine-tune an accountability framework which assures READ Saskatoon is effectively and efficiently serving local and provincial needs through the appropriate use of available resources. Tools for outcome-based evaluation were designed and piloted to measure the success, challenges and procedures of literacy projects and programs. By developing and implementing quality standards for evaluation, READ Saskatoon's Family Literacy, Adult Literacy and agency activities will be methodically measured to ensure standards of excellence remain in place and guide future directions of READ Saskatoon's Family and Adult Literacy projects and programs.