

# Educators' Notebook

## Reviews of Research of Interest to Educators

### **Canadian Council on Learning: Report on Learning in Canada, 2007**

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This article discusses the findings of the Canadian Council of Learning's report on learning in Canada, entitled, *State of learning in Canada: No time for complacency*. The report examines factors that contribute to lifelong learning from early childhood, through school years and into adulthood, with a special focus on literacy. It includes links between health and learning, and focuses also on the learning challenges of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada.

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## Canadian Council on Learning: Report on Learning in Canada, 2007

The Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) is an independent, not-for-profit corporation created in 2004 and funded through an agreement with Human Resources and Social Development Canada. Its mandate is to promote and support evidence-based decisions about learning throughout all stages of life, from early childhood through to the senior years. In 2007, CCL submitted a report on learning in Canada, entitled, *State of learning in Canada: No time for complacency*. The report examines factors that contribute to lifelong learning from early childhood, through school years and into adulthood, with a special focus on literacy. It includes links between health and learning, and focuses also on the learning challenges of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada.

In terms of early childhood learning, the report focuses on six indicators of learning among pre-school children: (a) birth weight; (b) physical development and movement; (c) cognitive development; (d) language and communication; (e) emotional and social development; and, (f) early childhood education and care. The report concludes that “one in four children enter Grade 1 with learning or behavioral problems that could affect future success in academics and life in general” (CCL, 2007, p. 20). Moreover, the report suggests that Canada is behind other OECD countries in its commitment to support early childhood education.

The report also discusses 5 indicators of school-based learning that affect learning across the school years: (a) student skills, (b) citizenship education; (c) healthy schools; (d) high school dropout; and, (e) post-secondary education. Based on the scores of students on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Canadian

math, science and problem-solving, though there were differences in Canada by province. The report details that Citizenship education has declined in favor of content more aligned with economic goals. Obesity and growing physical activity are of concern, as are school safety and student engagement. In 2005-2006, 9% of Canada’s students dropped out of school, though boys are more likely to drop out than girls, as are students from rural areas. More Canadians than ever before are completing post-secondary programs, and Canada has one of the highest rates of attainment in the world, particularly at the college and vocational level. However, women are more likely than men to enroll in post-secondary programs.

In terms of adult learning, the *State of learning* report focused on four perspectives of adult learning: (a) adult literacy; (b) health literacy; (c) work-place learning; and, (d) learning for personal development. Based on the 2003 *International Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey*, 42% of Canadian adults performed below the minimum standard necessary to succeed in today’s economy and society, and immigrant performance is significantly below the Canadian average on all literacy domains. Fifty-five percent of Canadians do not have adequate health literacy, though this rate rises with the amount of formal education attained. Lower rates also tend to occur for those living in poverty, Aboriginal peoples, and immigrants with low levels of education and a mother tongue that is not English or French. The proportion of Canadians who enroll in formal work-related training is rising, and women, as well as younger workers, are most likely to enroll. Larger firms are more likely to offer structured training programs, although Canadian firms

are less likely than other countries to offer such programs. A growing number of workers are taking this training at their own expense, but time, money, and family responsibilities are significant barriers to enrollment. For immigrant families, lack of recognition for previously acquired learning, experience, and credentials is a major barrier. Forty-five percent of Canadians over the age of 15 volunteer in community or social activities. Younger Canadians, those with higher education levels, and those with higher incomes are most likely to volunteer, but seniors and Canadians with lower incomes actually donated most hours of their time.

In terms of Aboriginal learning, the *State of learning* report focused on 5 parameters: (a) Aboriginal languages and cultures; (b) early development and learning; (c) school-based learning; (d) post-secondary education and skills training; and, (e) community-based education. The report advocates for a broader understanding of how success is measured for Aboriginal learners. In particular, the report suggests that there is a need to:

- Identify new indicators of Aboriginal learning that reflect the lifelong learning goals and values of First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples;
- Collect more reliable data on all practices of Aboriginal learning;
- Develop better approaches to understanding and sharing effective practices in Aboriginal learning; and
- Enhance or create mechanisms to strengthen knowledge of Aboriginal languages and cultures, while also improving literacy in English or French. (CCL, 2007, p. 120).

The report closes by advocating for raising the overall literacy rates of the adult population, ensuring children and youth acquire the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in today's society, and fostering the desire for lifelong learning in all Canadians. Suggestions for addressing this "literacy challenge" are made for governments, employers, labour unions, social institutions and non-governmental organizations, educators and individuals.

\*\*To access the full report on the Canadian Council of Learning website at <[www.ccl-cca.ca](http://www.ccl-cca.ca)>.

#### References

- Canadian Council on Learning. (2007). *State of leaning in Canada: no time for complacency*. Available at [http://www.ccl-cca.ca/NR/rdonlyres/5ECAA2E9-D5E4-43B9-94E4-84D6D31BC5BC/0/NewSOLR\\_Report.pdf](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/NR/rdonlyres/5ECAA2E9-D5E4-43B9-94E4-84D6D31BC5BC/0/NewSOLR_Report.pdf)
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This is a brief review of a complex body of educational research. Since no brief review can capture a full body of research, readers are urged to consult the references which have been cited. The views expressed in this notebook are those of the author. The sponsors welcome your comments on this issue and your suggestions for future issues of Educators' Notebook.