



# THE BUZZ ON LITERACY

Literacy Now, South Okanagan-Similkameen [www.literacynowso-s.ca](http://www.literacynowso-s.ca)

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For more information on any of the items in this month's newsletter or any questions about literacy services please contact Naomi Ludington at [literacynewsos@gmail.com](mailto:literacynewsos@gmail.com) or 250-462-0636.

### Shirley's Success continues...

In our February newsletter, we published the literacy success story of Shirley Fehr—The Gift of Reading. Great news! The National Adult Literacy Database (NALD) has chosen Shirley's story as their 'Story of the Week'. It will be published on their website during the week of March 22.

<http://www.nald.ca/story/story.htm>

Congratulation Shirley!

### Five signs your workers may be struggling with literacy and essential skills:

1. Employees avoid training sessions or fail external training programs.
2. Excellent employees continually turn down promotion opportunities.
3. Change initiatives often fail or are slow to be implemented.
4. Staff make excuses. For example, "I'll read it later," or "I forgot my glasses," when put in situations where reading or writing is required.
5. Employee absenteeism and turnover are high.

Source: Margaret Eaton, president ABC Life Literacy Canada

## Literacy Now SO-S

Presents the  
First Annual  
**ADULT  
SPELLING BEE  
CHALLENGE**

in support of

Literacy Now South  
Okanagan-Similkameen

April 19, 7:30—9:30AM

Hot Breakfast Buffet

included with registration

Penticton Golf  
and Country Club

Last Day to Register—April 2!

Contact Naomi

### The Centre for Literacy— Summer Institute 2010 Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills— What Works? and Why? June 28-30

**An Introduction**—After almost twenty years of workplace literacy initiatives in many countries, some carried out through government strategies, others more localized, policy-makers and providers are examining what we know about what does and does not work, and how we can use the knowledge to design better interventions and achieve better outcomes.

The literature on workplace literacy is significant and reasonably consistent. It sees an important role for government through a range of policy instruments, from subsidies to tax incentives, and a need for partnership models that involve all stakeholders. It recognizes the complexity of the challenge – differences in context from large to small businesses, across various sectors, within organizations, all of which can be barriers or enablers. It highlights the need for specialized provider training and professional development to assure quality service. Finally, it notes the difficulties of measuring the outcomes and impacts of these programs.

The 2010 Summer Institute will bring together policy-makers, literacy and essential skills providers, and researchers to examine what is currently being counted to evaluate the results of Workplace Essential Skills programs and whether enlarging the frame of reference could lead to better outcomes for workers, employers and the country as a whole.

Literacy Now South Okanagan-Similkameen will attend the Institute. We'll bring back the ideas and information and share with our community partners.

## Workplace Literacy

Canada's economy may be picking up, but experts say there's still one challenge that could stand in the way of the country's long-term economic success: workplace literacy.

"Technology has pushed the need for different skill sets," says Margaret Eaton, president of ABC Life Literacy Canada in Toronto. It's knowledge-based jobs that will carry Canada in the future.

It's no longer just about reading and writing. Today, the definition of literacy includes such things as numeracy, comprehension, communication, problem solving and technology know-how – essential skills that employees need to do their jobs, she adds.

And the challenge isn't confined to traditionally low-literacy jobs in manufacturing or industry. An ever-increasing reliance on computers, e-mail and social media means all workers are communicating more through written language and even staff in mid-level jobs may struggle.

Even workers agree there are problems. A 2009 survey by Ipsos found that 72 per cent of working Canadians believe that the current level of adult literacy is a problem among those for whom English or French is their first language and 21 per cent say they don't possess the necessary literacy skills to secure a new job.

"Literacy rates haven't improved much in the past decade, but the trouble is the workplace is more complex, more competitive, and there's more mobility," says Alan Middleton, executive director of the Schulich Executive Education Centre at York University in Toronto.

And many firms aren't stepping up to the challenge of increasing literacy skills. "There's a 'that's not my job' mentality. Plus, it's [literacy issues are] not supposed to happen in Canada, so they have difficulty accepting it as a problem," Mr. Middleton says.

That head-in-the-sand thinking is costing business big time, Mr. Middleton says. Indeed, experts estimate that low literacy skills cost organizations about \$2.5-million annually in lost productivity alone.

Ms. Eaton says that number will rise as the population ages and companies rely more on immigration for new skills. Her advice for companies: "Do a skills assessment\* to find out where employees are and what they need.

Excerpt from the Special to The Globe and Mail, March 5, 2010

**\*For information on skills assessment contact Naomi Ludington at Literacy Now to receive a Literacy Audit kit for your workplace or business.**

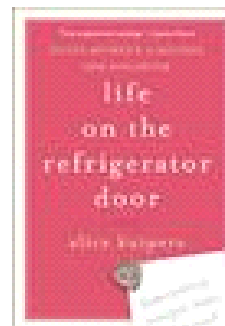
**...head-in-the-sand thinking is costing business big time... Indeed, experts estimate that low literacy skills cost organizations about \$2.5-million annually in lost productivity alone.**



## Life on the Refrigerator Door

**Notes Between a Mother and Daughter, a novel**

**Alice Kuipers**



Claire and her mother are running out of time, but they don't know it. Not yet. Claire is wrapped up with the difficulties of her burgeoning adulthood—boys, school, friends, identity; Claire's mother, a single mom, is rushed off her feet both at work and at home. They rarely find themselves in the same room at the same time, and it often seems that the only thing they can count on are notes to each other on the refrigerator door. When home is threatened by a crisis, their relationship experiences a momentous change. Forced to reevaluate the delicate balance between their personal lives and their bond as mother and daughter, Claire and her mother find new love and devotion for one another deeper than anything they had ever imagined.

Heartfelt, touching, and unforgettable, *Life on the Refrigerator Door* is a glimpse into the lives of mothers and daughters everywhere. In this deeply touching novel told through a series of notes written from a loving mother and her devoted fifteen-year-old daughter, debut author Alice Kuipers deftly captures the impenetrable fabric that connects mothers and daughters throughout the world. Moving and rich with emotion, *Life on the Refrigerator Door* delivers universal lessons about love in a wonderfully simple and poignant narrative.