

Family Literacy refers to the many ways families develop and use literacy skills to accomplish day-to-day tasks and activities, such as writing a note to a child's teacher, sharing a bedtime story, making a shopping list or using a recipe.  
(Family Literacy in Canada: Profiles of Effective Practices, 1998)

### **Parents with higher literacy skills have more secure incomes and that fact contributes to healthy child development**

- Adults with low literacy are more likely to be unemployed, work in lower-paying jobs and live in low-income households. Children of parents who did not complete high school are twice as likely to live in poverty as those whose parents graduated.  
(National Centre for Children in Poverty, 1992)
- People with better jobs and higher incomes tend to have more choices for their family's well being which has a positive impact on children's physical, emotional and social growth.

### **The way we learn before we are 6 years old stays with us all our lives**

- Research shows that early experience helps develop the brain and this helps shape the way we learn, think, behave and respond to challenges.
- Children aged 2 to 3 who are read to several times a day do substantially better in kindergarten at the age of 4 and 5 than youngsters who are read to only a few times a week or less.  
(National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, Statistics Canada, 1996-1997)
- Having a parent or other caring person to read aloud with helps children learn listening skills, vocabulary and language skills, as well as develop imagination and creativity.  
(Family Literacy Foundation, 2001)

### **The children of literate, middle-class parents are usually well prepared with knowledge, spoken language and literacy skills when they enter formal schooling**

- Reading to children more than once a day has a substantial positive impact on their future academic skills. In addition, research indicates children with early exposure to books and reading are better at performing mathematical tasks.  
(National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, Statistics Canada, 1996-1997)
- Children from poor families with lower literacy skills are less ready; and they are more likely to learn more slowly or to have problems settling in. (Functional Context Education, Dr. Thomas Sticht, 1997; and National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, 1994.)
- Less literate parents may also not have the information, confidence or skills to confront the school system when their children need help. Their children are twice as likely to drop out as other children.

## **A lack of educational and literacy skills often continues from one generation to the next**

- Low literacy limits informed choices, resources and the control which people have over their lives, as well over as their children's lives.
- There is a strong link between participation in family literacy programs and children doing well in school; and between family literacy programs and adults' success in finding and keeping jobs.

## **What can people do?**

### **Set a good example!**

- Show children how useful reading, writing and numeracy are in doing day-to-day tasks. If literacy is valued in the home, both children and adults are more likely to have strong literacy habits.

### **Support family literacy programs.**

- Tutors in family literacy programs know how families affect the literacy development of every member. Literacy programs for families (including grandparents) not only support early childhood development but also adult basic education.
- A study in Nova Scotia showed that adults stay in family literacy programs longer than in most adult-only programs and they miss fewer sessions. A long-term American study of 2000 families attending family literacy programs showed that these programs helped many learners on social assistance move into the workforce. (Source: National Center for Family Literacy.)

### **Reduce inequality.**

- Raise the incomes of poor families. This pays off in improved literacy for parents and children, as well as improved health, safer communities and a more stable society.

### **Get involved ABC CANADA Family Literacy Day™, each year on January 27.**

- ABC CANADA Family Literacy Day™, January 27, is a national awareness initiative created by ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation in 1999, This special day promotes the importance of reading and engaging in other literacy-related activities as a family.
- Find out how your community is celebrating with events and activities. Join in or start your own events to promote awareness of this important issue.

For more information about literacy and how you can help, contact:

#### **Literacy Alberta**

3060 - 17 Ave. SW

Calgary AB T3E 7G8

Phone: 403-410-6990 Fax: 403-410-9024

Literacy Help Line 1-800-767-3231

[www.literacyalberta.ca](http://www.literacyalberta.ca)

[office@literacyalberta.ca](mailto:office@literacyalberta.ca)