



PALS – PROJECT ADULT LITERACY SOCIETY

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“I only knew small words and wasn’t sure of the sounds of all the letters. The lessons in the books were a path, step by step to reading and they worked. I started being able to read very quickly! After two years I can read like any body.

--Dave Taylor (Adult Literacy Learner 2019)

Parental involvement in school has been demonstrated to be a key factor for children’s academic outcomes. However, one out of three adults in Alberta struggle with reading and writing and are reading below the grade 5 level. One in two struggles in basic math. This means that they cannot write a resume, fill in a job application or do a job search online. They can’t read letters from school, the government, or their doctors. They can’t read or understand instructions on a medical bottle for their child or themselves. Low level literacy skills impact their lives in a negative manner on every level.

Parent-school partnership allows for the conceptualization of roles and relationships and the impact on the development of children in a broader way. One way to build these partnerships is to help parents who struggle with literacy skills, connect with agencies such as PALS – Project Adult Literacy Society. PALS offer free programs to adults in Literacy (Reading and Writing), English Language, Math and Digital Skills. Adult learners work one-to-one with a volunteer tutor or in small groups (4 to 6 learners) to improve their skills. Lessons are available online, in our office or in a library near the learner’s home.

Learners attend 2-hour classes once a week for each program. There are established curriculums that they can work through that will help them build their skills. Classes are available during the day and in the evenings or on weekends so the learner can attend classes and continue working to maintain a living and support their families.

Many of PALS learners are preparing for entrance into a job training program and/or an apprenticeship. Improving their skills can help them pass an entrance exam and get them on a path to educational opportunities and better employment. Approximately 40 adults a year from PALS pass the apprenticeship entrance exam or the entrance exam to take a college program.

Why help adult learners improve their skills?

- Reading, math and computer skills are key factors in being able to find quality employment.
- Confidence gained through learning makes adult learners stronger and more active members in the community.
- Parents who improve their skills can help their children succeed, be good role models and providing better student outcomes in the public schools.
- Adult learners gain confidence to participate in children’s activities and communicate better with the teacher.

- For every level adult learners advance their reading skills there will be a correlating 10 to 15% increase in how much they are paid.
- Job vacancies in Canada remain near record highs with the lack of workers a hot topic in the news, yet adult learners have been ignored as a valuable and trainable resource to ameliorate the labour shortage.
- It is never too late to address our society's literacy challenge - the future social and economic success of Canada depends on it.

Just like PALS there are many adult literacy programs across the province that offer similar opportunities for those who wish to improve their literacy skills. If you are considering supporting parents who need adult literacy programs, PALS would be happy to offer training and share access to resources and learning materials. For more information on PALS, visit their website www.palsedmonton.ca.

For those outside of Edmonton, can checkout www.calp.ca for a program near you.