

# The Facts About Literacy

## Seeds of Literacy



### **66% of Cleveland Residents, ages 16 and up, are functionally illiterate.**

This means that they'll have trouble reading their utility bill or the labels on their medication. Using a bus schedule will present a serious difficulty, as will navigating legal forms or documents. (*Center for Urban Poverty and Community Development, Case Western Reserve University*)

### **The #1 most important factor in a child's academic success is the reading skill of his or her mother.**

It has a greater impact than any other factor, whether it's the neighborhood they live in or the income of their family. (*National Institute of Health, 2010*)

### **The Unemployment Rate for a person who doesn't have a High School Diploma is 50% higher than those who do.**

And the effect only grows with more education. Compared to someone with an Associate's Degree, the person without a Diploma is **twice** as likely to be unemployed. (*Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012*)

## Family Literacy

- Children whose parents are involved with them in family literacy activities score 10 points higher on standardized reading tests. (*Sénéchal, 2006*)
- A single year of parental education has a greater positive impact on the likelihood of a son or daughter attending a postsecondary institution than does an extra \$50,000 in parental income (*Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2011*)
- Low family income and a mother's lack of education are the two biggest risk factors that hamper a child's early learning and development. (*National Center for Family Literacy*)

## Economic Effects

- Adults with a bachelor's degree earn an average of \$48,485 a year, while those with a high school diploma earn \$27,281; those without a high school diploma average \$19,492. (*U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey*)
- Despite literacy skills being in high demand, only 41 percent of white students, 16 percent of black students, 18 percent of Hispanic students and 15 percent of low-income students reached proficiency on the 2007 National Assessment of Education Progress. (*Salahu-Din, D., Persky, H., & Miller, J. (2008)*)

## National Impact

- The United States ranks fifth on adult literacy skills when compared to other industrialized nations. (*National Assessment of Adult Literacy*)
- “The U.S. is the only country among 20 OECD free-market countries where the current generation is less well educated than the previous one.” (*National Commission on Adult Literacy, 2008*)
- Thirty years ago, the United States could lay claim to having 30 percent of the world’s population of college students. Today that proportion has fallen to 14 percent and is continuing to fall. (*National Center on Education and the Economy, 2007*)
- Approximately one in eight children in the United States never graduates from high school. Based on calculations per school day (180 days of seven hours each), one high school student drops out every nine seconds. (*Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosia & Thompson, 2004*)

## Criminal Justice

- 85% of all juveniles who interface with the juvenile court system are functionally illiterate. (*National Assessment of Adult Literacy*)
- 70% of inmates in the United States read below a fourth-grade reading level. According to the Department of Justice, “The link between academic failure and delinquency, violence, and crime is welded to reading failure.” (*US Department of Justice*)

## Personal Health

- “A study from Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine shows that older people with inadequate health literacy had a 50 percent higher mortality rate during a five-year period than people with adequate reading skills. Low health literacy was the top predictor of mortality after smoking, also surpassing income and years of education. (*Northwestern University, Feinberg School of Medicine, 2007*)
- “Reading fluency is a more powerful variable than education for examining the association between socioeconomic status and health.” (*Baker, Wolf, Thompson, Gazmararian & Huang, 2007*)