

Literacy New Jersey  
Why What we do is Critical

- The National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) shows that thirty million adults - 14% of the nation's population- lack basic prose literacy skills. This includes being unable to negotiate everyday tasks such as signing a form, adding numbers for a bank deposit slip, or reading instructions on how to prepare for a medical test. In New Jersey, 17% of the adult population was found to lack these basic literacy skills.
- Almost 1 million adults in New Jersey do not have a high school diploma. High school drop-outs with jobs earn an average annual salary of \$19,000 – that's \$7,000 less than their classmates who successfully complete their high school education.
- In New Jersey's urban school districts, between 40 and 60 percent of students drop out of school with reading levels well below the ninth grade.
- According to the U.S. Census Bureau one in four NJ residents speaks a language other than English at home.
- Nearly one-half of NJ's adults function at the lowest levels of literacy, according to the Report of the Task Force on Adult Literacy.
- Providing free literacy tutoring to participants in job training programs can increase the effectiveness of the State's investment in workforce preparedness.
- By offering individualized instruction, Literacy New Jersey is helping to remove barriers to employment in a very competitive job market that demands a vast array of skills, even for the lowest level positions.
- The single most effective predictor of children's literacy is their mother's literacy level. Reading aloud to children is the single most effective parental practice for enhancing language and literacy development.
- When adults enter literacy programs and improve their literacy skills, studies show that children have fewer nutrition and health problems, are less likely to drop out of school and are more likely to be employed.
- Literacy is directly related to health issues. According to the OCED multi-national study, "The odds of having low levels of health are four times higher for low-skilled US adults than for those with the highest skills, a ratio that is double the cross country average."