District 7070 Literacy Newsletter

Issue # 9 – March, 2016

Chairman's Message

At the moment, our diligent district chair, Dennis Bayley and his wife, Patricia, are on their way home from the Azores, so there is no specific correspondence from Dennis. Dennis will add his message when he returns to his club.

Upcoming Events - March is literacy month.

Every March, Rotary clubs around the globe turn their attention to the problem of illiteracy. In order to understand the current state of literacy, we have literally taken a page from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. The links are live so that you can explore this information at your leisure.





UNESCO eAtlas of Literacy

Overview of literacy

Data by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Facts & Figures

By 2015, the international community pledged to reduce adult illiteracy rates by 50% compared to 2000 levels as part of the Education for All Goals. While the number of illiterate people has steadily fallen, data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) show that 757 million adults and 115 million youths still lack basic reading and writing skills. UIS projections also show that most countries have failed to reach the EFA literacy goal, underscoring the need for the new literacy target,

which is even more ambitious in its current framing within the Sustainable Development Goals.

The UNESCO eAtlas of Literacy lets you explore and adapt maps, charts and ranking tables for indicators covering the youth, adult and elderly populations. Indicators are disaggregated by sex to better evaluate gender inequalities.

The UIS collects data for more than 200 countries and territories through its annual surveys and partnerships with organizations such as the OECD and Eurostat. The Institute is the official source of data used to monitor education and literacy targets associated with Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

URL: http://www.uis.unesco.org/data/atlas-literacy/en
For more information or to send comments: uis.publications@unesco.org

The data for this study paints a somewhat rosy picture of the current level of literacy. The testing, which previously was constituted on self reporting or family reporting, has been changed to a test which asks the person to read a simple statement about some common aspect of his/her life. More rigorous testing would undoubtedly reduce the literacy levels, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab countries.

Unequal Measures of Literacy

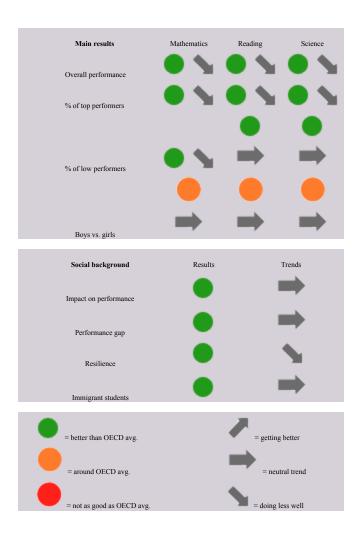
If you check the eAtlas, you will note that there is no data for North America. That is due to the fact that literacy data is taken using different measures here. In a hemisphere where compulsory public schooling is the norm, literacy testing is placed into the hands of district, state, national and international organizations. The tests are more rigorous and paint a completely different picture of literacy skills.

On an international level, PISA 2012 is the programme's 5th survey. It assessed the competencies of 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science (with a focus on mathematics) in <u>65 countries and economies</u>. In 44 of those countries and economies about 85 000 students also took part in an optional assessment of creative problem solving; and in 18 countries and economies, students were assessed in financial literacy.

Around 510 000 students between the ages of 15 years 3 months and 16 years 2 months participated in PISA 2012 as a whole representing about 28 million 15-year-olds globally.

The students took a paper-based test that lasted 2 hours. The tests were a mixture of open-ended and multiple-choice questions that were organised in groups based on a passage setting out a real-life situation. A total of about 390 minutes of test items were covered. Students took different combinations of different tests. They and their school principals also answered questionnaires to provide information about the students' backgrounds, schools and learning experiences and about the broader school system and learning environment.

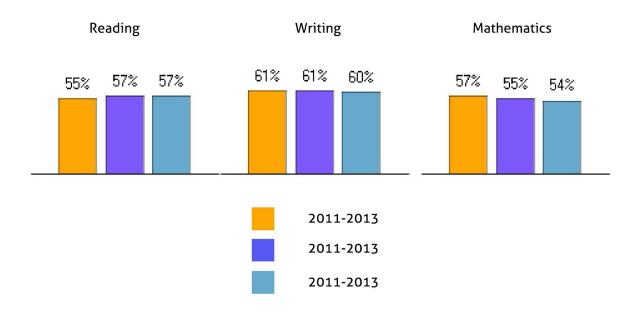
Canada



These data indicate that we have made no progress during the last 3 year test period. Whatever is being done is having no beneficial effect. Measured against poor and developing countries we are above average, but we are not outperforming other counties similar to ours.

Looking at Ontario, there are also annual test results from OECD. These results are not readily available for the entire province. Searchers are asked to input the name of a given Board of Education and are provided information like that depicted below. There is limited possibility for analysis given such scattered, meagre data. The simplest, most obvious conclusion is that over three years, not much has changed in the results for Ontario students in the basic literacy skills of reading writing and math, except for the gradual, continual decrease in math scores.

COMBINED ACHIEVEMENT RESULTS FOR 2011–2013, 2012–2014 AND 2013–2015 Percentage of All Grade 3 Students At or Above the Provincial Standard



So as Rotarians, we understand that illiteracy is still a major issue locally, nationally and internationally. Our role may be to keep ourselves aware of the continuing crisis, to find and support programs which consistently demonstrate positive results while advocating for such programs to be expanded and adopted more widely inside and outside of Rotary.