

What's in a Name?

As you read in the Leader earlier this month, Literacy Plus has changed its name to the Training and Learning Centre of Renfrew County. This was not an easy decision. Literacy Plus has been part of the community since 1994 and in that time many of you have come through our doors looking to enhance the literacy and basic skills you needed to successfully make a change in your life. We've grown from an organization that delivered services primarily through volunteer tutors who worked in peoples' homes on more basic reading, writing and math skills, to where we are now, offering small group training and learning delivered by staff on site at 232 Bridge St. We still offer basic literacy skill training but we offer much more than that too. Why? Because literacy is much bigger than learning your ABC's.

Here's the definition of literacy that is currently used in Canada and internationally:

Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society. — UNESCO

For many people, though, the word "literacy" continues to have a stigma attached to it. While some of those who use our services are at the very early stages of developing their reading, writing and math skills, no one wants to be labeled as "illiterate." Studies have shown that people become very adept at compensating for the skill gaps they deal with when it comes to, for example, the challenges of reading complex manuals, dealing with government baffle-gab or figuring out temperatures between Celsius and Fahrenheit. That's what the "Plus" in Literacy Plus was referring to: the essential skills that will help you find a better paying job, re-enter the workforce, volunteer in your local community, or rebuild your financial competencies after the loss of a loved one. But the "Plus" was no longer enough to help us convey the full range of skills and competencies we offer as the Training and Learning Centre of Renfrew County.

Over the coming weeks, this column will introduce you to each of the nine essential skills that have been identified worldwide as key to getting the most out of life. We hope our new name will put to rest any outstanding misconceptions about all the skills that the Training and Learning Centre can help you with.

Coming next time: Why knowing what your skill gaps are is so important.

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