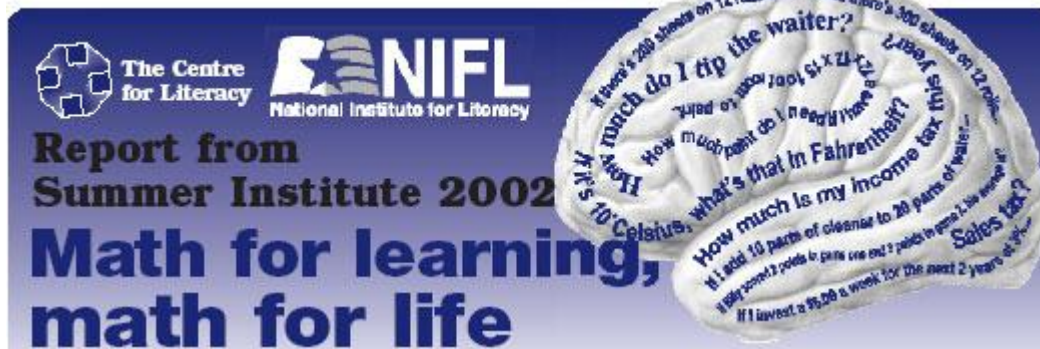


Report from Summer Institute 2002



Adult numeracy and basic skills



Numeracy Numeracy is now seen as the “mirror image of literacy” as applied to mathematics. International surveys are giving it equal weight, stressing the centrality of numbers in our lives, and the difficulties and fears faced by many adults when confronted by calculations.

Government policy makers are also talking about literacy and numeracy as foundational skills along with IT. However, there is still a general lack of understanding about the difference between “numeracy” and “math.” There are also challenges for many adult basic educators who now have to teach numeracy when a majority of them have come from language/literacy backgrounds, and



sometimes share a fear of numbers not so different from those of their students.



The 2002 Summer Institute brought together some of the best-known numeracy researcher/practitioners in the world for three days of talking, exchanging and exploring ideas on teaching, professional development, theory and policy related to adult numeracy.

This section includes the presenters and descriptions of their presentations. The text of the Think Papers by Dave Tout, Beth Marr, Donna Curry, and Lynda Ginsburg are printed in full. All presentations are described and web sites and e-mail addresses provided for direct contact.

KEY QUESTIONS AT THE INSTITUTE

- How does math thinking develop in adults?
- What is the math that adults need to know and be able to do in their roles as workers, family members, citizens, and lifelong learners?
- Why is numeracy/math not included in most adult basic education policies? When it is, why is the vision often so limited?
- Why are most adult basic education teachers limited in their own math background? How can this be addressed?
- Why is so much math classroom practice driven by rote learning and workbooks rather than starting from a vision of what students need?
- What kind of math learning is most effective in workplace training?
- How have visions such as the US *Equipped for the Future* (EFF) project shaped new practice in adult numeracy?
- How has the UK National Strategy for Adult Literacy and Numeracy affected practitioners in giving equal status to numeracy?
- How has Australian practice influenced colleagues around the world?
- How do Canadian teachers teach math in widely variant frameworks such as Ontario's Learning and Basic Skills Outcomes?
- How can cultural awareness be used to enhance math teaching?
- How is the new international survey, now called the Adult Literacy and Lifeskills (ALL) rather than the IALS, assessing "quantitative literacy" in 2002?



Format of the Institute

Institutes at The Centre are limited to under 40 participants, and anyone who has something to present is given the opportunity. Before participants arrive, they submit a short biography, any questions about the topic that they would like to see addressed, and recommended resources that have informed their thinking. These are integrated into the Institute binders. We invite a few of the presenters who have in-depth experience in particular aspects of the topic to prepare a short “Think Paper” of 4-5 pages that we send ahead to all participants to start ideas flowing. We ask that presentations be problem or issue-based, rather than show-and-tell; time is left at the end of each day for optional demonstrations and viewings, and display tables and screens are up for the full three days for sharing materials. Everyone attends all presentations with time for discussion and reflection throughout the three days.

The Centre produced an Annotated Bibliography on Adult Numeracy. It is on our website and can also be ordered in print. See sample entries on [p. 31](#).

Acknowledge

The Centre for Literacy organized the Institute with support from the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS), Human Resources Development Canada, and from Dawson College, Montreal. This year, our host partner was the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), Washington, DC, who sponsored the participation of Susan Cowles and Donna Curry. Fraser Beebe, husband of presenter Leonne Beebe, generously volunteered to videotape the entire three days.

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