

# LITERACY in Flint & Genesee County

F A C T S H E E T

## Overview

**B**eing able to learn and understand at school, work, the bank and the doctor's office is key to a successful education and bright, healthy futures.

Each year children spend about 900 hours in school versus 7,800 hours out of school. This means family is critical to a child's education.

More families are making family time learning time. Time spent learning and engaged in educational play with your children will give them advantages for years to come. Parental involvement is a more significant factor in children's academic performance than the quality of their school.

Literacy affects us all and is a challenge for many. The Flint & Genesee Literacy Network is committed to improving the quality of life of all learners in Genesee County.

Literacy affects all of us and the quality of our lives. It takes many forms: reading/writing, health and financial and is a challenge for many. The Flint & Genesee Literacy Network is made up of hundreds of individuals and organizations committed to improving literacy rates in Genesee County.

**Learn. Volunteer. Give.** Log onto [flintandgenesee-literacy.org](http://flintandgenesee-literacy.org) to learn more. Or call 810.232.2526.

The Flint & Genesee Literacy Network **Literacy for Life.**

## Flint & Genesee Literacy Network

The Flint & Genesee Literacy Network currently consists of a variety of community stakeholder organizations, and has launched an ongoing collaboration to align and improve literacy resources and services in Flint and Genesee County. The central idea of the Network is that solving the basic skills challenges requires new approaches to improving basic skills. In line with the strategic components of the recently adopted City of Flint Master Plan, the Network is committed to building on the strengths of community organizations, as well as ensuring that individuals needing to improve their literacy skills have access to sufficient and appropriate information.

### COMMUNITY-LEVEL RESULTS OF THE NETWORK

- Children enter Kindergarten ready to learn
- Children are succeeding in school
- People are prepared for and succeeding in post-secondary education
- People are employed at a living wage

### OUR DEFINITION OF LITERACY

**“An individual's ability to read, write, speak in English, compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual and in society.”**

- Workforce Investment Act, 1998

## The Issue

Genesee County is challenged by a silent crisis: up to 10%<sup>1</sup> of adult residents live with low literacy skills. Many are unable to use a bus schedule effectively, calculate change at a restaurant, complete a job application, or read the information on a prescription bottle. This crisis severely limits the region's potential for future growth and prosperity. Parents with limited skills are less able to assist their children and a cycle of intergenerational low literacy is perpetuated. A brief highlight of the crisis includes:

- 99% of early education providers are rated below top quality in the State of Michigan's quality rating program
- 29% of 4th graders are below the State of Michigan's standard in Reading

- 72% of 8th graders are below the State of Michigan's standard in Math
- 23% of high school freshman do not graduate with their class
- 11% of adults do not have a high school diploma
- 5 of the 7 most common occupations in Michigan have a median wage that will not bring a family of four out of poverty

Flint & Genesee Literacy Network is joining more than 120 literacy coalitions across the nation that are working to raise their community's literacy levels and address these issues.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Educational Statistics, <http://nces.ed.gov>

## Statistics

PERCENT OF ADULTS (AGES 18-24) NOT A HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE

United States **16.2%** Michigan **15%** Genesee County **19.5%**

PERCENT OF CHILDREN UNDER 18 LIVING IN POVERTY

United States **20.8%** Michigan **22.8%** Genesee County **30%**

PERCENT OF STUDENTS PROFICIENT IN GRADE 3 READING

United States **68%** Michigan **65.5%** Genesee County **65%**

PERCENT OF ADULTS LACKING BASIC LITERACY SKILLS

United States **14.5%** Michigan **8%** Genesee County **10%**

PERCENT OF ADULTS (25+) WITHOUT A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR EQUIVALENCY

United States **10.2%** Michigan **11.3%** Genesee County **11.1%**

## BACKGROUND & BEST PRACTICES

The link between low literacy and incarceration is well established:

- Michigan's economy would see a combination of crime-related savings and additional revenue of about \$280 million each year if the male high school graduation rate increased by just 5%.<sup>1</sup>
- A one-year increase in average education levels would reduce arrest rates by 11%.<sup>2</sup>
- More than 60% of all state and federal corrections inmates can barely read and write.<sup>3</sup>
- A total of 70% of prisoners scored in the two lowest literacy levels of the National Adult Literacy Survey.<sup>4</sup>
- More than 45% of all inmates in local jails, 40% in state facilities and 27% in federal corrections institutions did not graduate from high school. Inmates ages 24 and younger are less educated.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Alliance for Excellent Education. <sup>2</sup> Ibid. <sup>3</sup> The Literacy Company.  
<sup>4</sup> National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) (2003) Prison Component of the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy. Available online at: <http://nces.ed.gov/NAAL/pdf/PrisonFactSheet.pdf>. <sup>5</sup> Ibid.

The Flint & Genesee Literacy Network is made up of hundreds of organizations and individuals that are committed to improving the quality of life for all learners. To learn more please call 810.232.2526.