Health Literacy Challenges and Opportunities: Bringing Children's Mercy and Kansas City Together

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Literacy: The Kansas City Perspective

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Literacy KC
Changing lives beyond words
What is Literacy?
What is Literacy?

“The ability to understand, evaluate, use, and engage with written text to participate in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.”

2013 Survey of Adult Skills by the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)
Scope of Low Literacy

- 225,000 adults in the KC metro read below an 8th grade level (2003 NAAL Survey)
- 43% of adults living in poverty function at low literacy rates
- 70% of inmates have low literacy rates
- 30,000,000 fewer words in low-literate homes
- $225 billion in non-productivity in workforce, crime, and loss of tax revenue due to unemployment
- Only 59% of Americans are even aware it is a problem
- $238 billion added in costs to health care system every year
Literacy & Health

- Adults with low literacy skills:
  - Are less likely to obtain preventive services
  - Are more likely to be diagnosed with a chronic disease
  - Have poorer disease self-management skills
  - Are more likely to be hospitalized
  - Experience greater challenges when asking questions of health care providers:
    ■ Completing health history forms
    ■ Understanding printed directions, preoperative instructions, medication labels

Adapted from the Journal of Health Communication
Supporting Health Literacy for Low Literate Adults

- Present essential information only or first
- Use pictures to demonstrate benefits or risks
- Use a reduced reading level on health documents
- Use videos or illustrated narratives for explanation
Let’s play a game!
OUR MISSION
To advance literacy within the Kansas City Metropolitan area through direct services, advocacy, & collaboration

OUR VISION
Literacy for All
Literacy KC Programs

- Ticket to Read
- Digital Life Skills
- Let’s Read
- Career Online High School
- English Language Learning
Ticket to Read

- Leveled reading and writing classes
- Classes take place at multiple times and locations
- Instructor-led
- Tutor-driven
- Student-centered
English Language Learning

- Leveled classes teaching reading, writing, speaking and listening skills
- Offered twice per week
- Instructor-led
- Tutor-driven
- Student-centered
Career Online High School

- Online Scholarship Program
- Earn accredited high school diploma
- Receive a career certificate
- 18 months to complete the program
Digital Literacy

- Computer Lab open to the public
- Daily Help Hours
- Advanced & Basic Classes
- Subsidies for devices
Let’s Read: Family Reading Program

- Community sites
- 1 hour read sessions
- Send home books with each child
- Building a tradition of reading in the home