

Reading text an essential skill

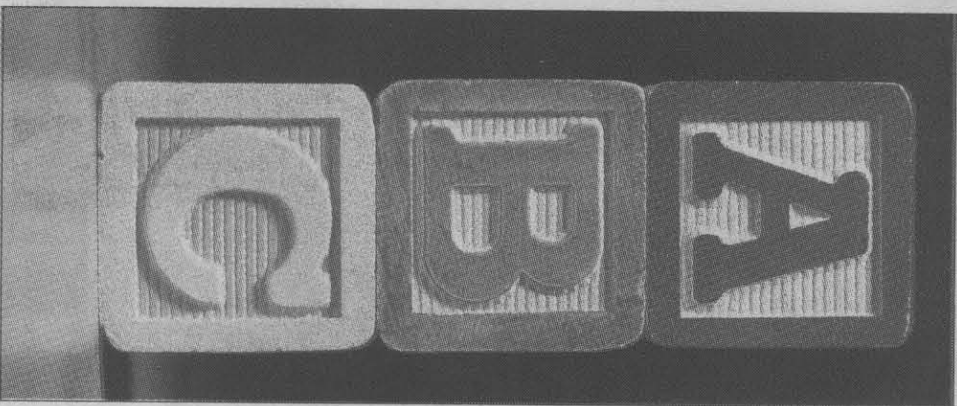
By **MICHAEL BERGER**
For the Report

A BC books. Dr. Seuss. Dick and Jane. For many people, this is their introduction to reading. While important to building a love of reading, most of what they learned in elementary school and beyond doesn't always translate to the workplace.

At its core, literacy is traditionally thought of as reading. For some, they might include the 3 R's—readin', rithing, and rithmetic. As discussed in last month's article however, literacy, and learning for that matter, is made up of at least nine essential skills. A lack or even low level of these skills can have a significant impact on business. Impacts range from compromised service quality to poor customer relations to workplace safety issues to the level of productivity.

Reading Text is the focus of this month's article. HRSDC defines Reading Text as "reading materials in the form of paragraphs or sentences." Seems pretty straightforward, doesn't it? But let's dig in a bit and see how that translates to the workplace.

Reading takes many forms in the workplace. For a lot of workplaces, it begins with reading and understanding simple texts such as product labels, emails or memos. Some workplaces require more involved reading such as skimming lengthy reports for overall meaning and key ideas. Still others require people to refer to manuals for information on



integrating and synthesizing information. How much reading takes place in your worksite?

Want to find out how your reading level stacks up? Go to www.hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills and print out one of the Reading Indicator assessments. It's free and only takes about 20 minutes to do. When you print out the Reading Indicator, you'll see examples of level 1 and level 2 reading skills.

If you (or others you know) do not achieve at least a level 2 on the indicator, please contact me. As part of the Workplace Essential Skills project in Chilliwack, we're looking to help people by offering training and support in improving reading skills. One of our goals with the Chilliwack WES project is to provide a network of businesses interested in free or low-cost confidential WES training for employees. If that sounds like you or your business, give me a call.

For more information on this topic, or to become involved in the WES project, please call me at 604-795-0025 x2434 or email michaelb@chilliwacklearning.com. HRSDC has provided funding for the WES project in Chilliwack.

Michael Berger is the president of Plan B Services and vice-president of the Chilliwack Chamber of Commerce. In future issues of the Chamber Report, he will review each of the nine Essential Skills in more detail and explain how they are used. For more information on WES, or to become involved in the project, please call him at 604-795-



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