

Exploring Research in Practice in Saskatchewan

by **Lisa Erickson**

In recent years, literacy practitioners in Saskatchewan have been curious about research in practice: What is it?

Why do it? Who does it? How does it work? This curiosity extended to what other provinces and territories were doing related to literacy research in practice.

Last fall, the Saskatchewan Literacy Network started to explore research in practice. With funding from the National Literacy Secretariat, we took on a project to explore whether people in the literacy community were interested in research in practice, and what form this work might take. To find out, we decided to

- review the literature about literacy research in practice;
- ask practitioners whether they were interested;
- find out what activities were underway in other provinces, territories and coalitions; and
- share information about research in practice generally and this project specifically with practitioners in Saskatchewan and those doing literacy research in practice work throughout the country.

At our provincial literacy meeting in November 2003, we invited practitioners to complete a questionnaire. Forty-six people answered the survey, and everyone indicated an interest in research in practice.

We used the understanding put forth by Horsman and Norton (1999), that research in practice includes

- reading and responding to research;
- reflecting on practice in light of research;
- applying research findings to practice; and
- doing research about practice.

More than half of the respondents indicated that they would be very interested in conducting some form of research in practice. Others were more interested in reading, reflecting on and applying research.

Practitioners who completed the questionnaire also clearly indicated that they needed to learn more about research in practice. They were interested in attending a workshop and told us that travel subsidies were critical to their participating in learning opportunities.

Many of the recommendations identified by

practitioners in Saskatchewan are shared by other provinces and territories; namely, the need for funding to support practitioner participation in research in practice, the importance of collaboration and networking, and the value of opportunities to learn about research in practice.

For advice about how to support research in practice in our province, we looked to the literature. The report by Jenny Horsman and Mary Norton, *A Framework to Encourage and Support Practitioner Involvement in Adult Literacy Research in Practice in Canada*, was particularly helpful. It identifies several concrete ways to support this work

- support to engage with others (e.g., research in practice circles);
- adequate working conditions, time and money;
- people support;
- access, publish and disseminate support to research and related readings;
- educational opportunities; and
- technical support.

The Saskatchewan Literacy Network decided that we wanted to continue to support practitioners interested in research in practice. To do this, we would like to

- offer an accessible opportunity for literacy practitioners in Saskatchewan to learn about research in practice;
- promote and support research in practice activities in the province;
- make and maintain linkages with literacy research in practice initiatives throughout Canada; and
- provide research stipends to support and assist practitioners who want to conduct research in practice.

We have applied to the National Literacy Secretariat for funding to support this work. Ultimately, we hope to cultivate a literacy research in practice community in Saskatchewan. We also hope to contribute to, and continue to learn from, the research in practice conversations occurring throughout Canada. ■



SOURCE:

Horsman, Jenny & Norton, Mary (1999). *A Framework to Encourage and Support Practitioner Involvement in Adult Literacy Research in Practice in Canada*. Ottawa: National Literacy Secretariat.