

Creative perseverance

How quickly things change! A few short years ago the National Literacy Secretariat consulted the field about the best ways to support adult literacy research. NLS saw that, as a federal body that cannot fund direct provision of education, one thing it could do was to support research. Under the current Office of Learning and Essential Skills, interest seems to have evaporated. The call for proposals last fall did not explicitly support research and, as far as we can tell, no project submitted under that call has received funding. Is this a case of death by neglect? Well, we're still breathing!

One of the most valuable final acts of the National Literacy Secretariat was funding for a large project to investigate the prevalence of practitioner research and to discover what conditions supported, and deterred, this work. I was involved in planning that project. I did so because I hoped that its findings would clarify the role that research in practice plays in the field and result in resources and structures to nourish the work. The outcome of this project was *Focused on Practice: A framework for adult literacy research in Canada*, edited by the national coordinators, Jenny Horsman and Helen Woodrow.

The book includes detailed reports about the actual conditions in the field. Not surprisingly, the picture is bleak. One chapter analyzes how those conditions affect research in practice. The practitioner-researchers concluded, among other things, that

the most important next step is for this study to be used as a building block. It is crucial that this latest RiP study not fail to deliver on its promises, reinforcing the widely-held belief that all research takes ideas and insights away from practitioners and does not give anything back in return.

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I'm afraid that the incredible wealth of *Focused on Practice* has not become the keystone in a structure that helps practitioner research thrive. But it did reveal much that had been hidden.

That project can still lead to action and help change literacy practice. By featuring its key findings and some of the stunning wildcards produced by practitioners, we hope that this issue leads others to its important and ground-breaking findings. We also hope that you are inspired by the vision, tenacity and creativity of the practitioners from coast to coast to coast who continue to do the rewarding work of adult literacy under such challenging conditions.

Tannis Atkinson
Editor, *Literacies*

Literacies

RESEARCHING PRACTICE
PRACTISING RESEARCH

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