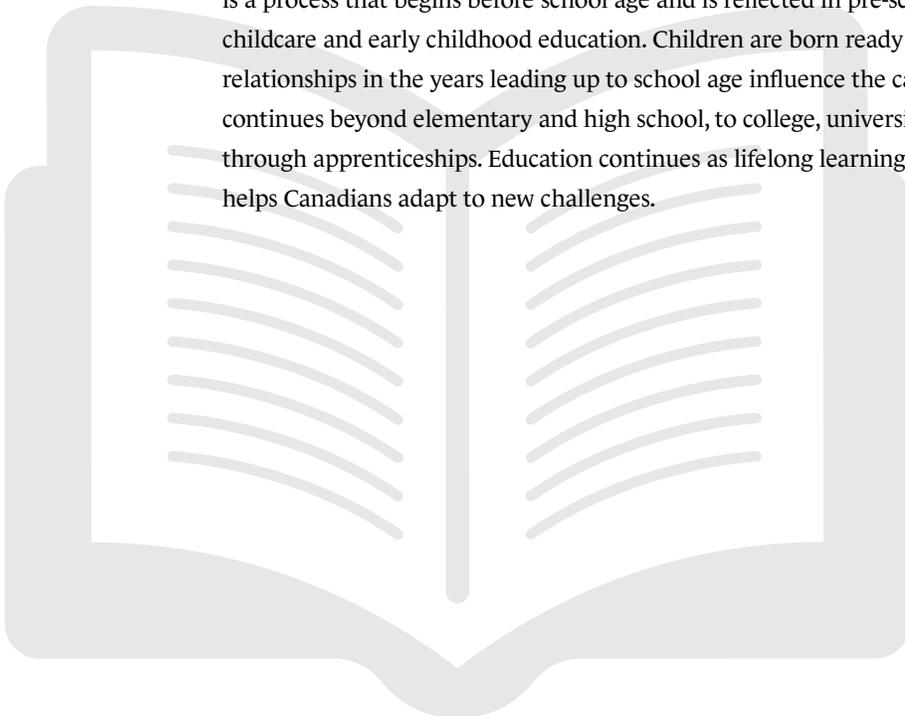




EDUCATION

Education is the systematic instruction, schooling, or training given to the young in preparation for the work of life, and by extension, similar instruction or training obtained in adulthood.

Societies that thrive encourage a thirst for knowledge – at every age and stage of life. Education is a process that begins before school age and is reflected in pre-school arrangements such as childcare and early childhood education. Children are born ready to learn – the experiences and relationships in the years leading up to school age influence the capacity for learning. It also continues beyond elementary and high school, to college, university, and professional training through apprenticeships. Education continues as lifelong learning. As the world changes, education helps Canadians adapt to new challenges.



ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Even though high school graduation rates have increased over the last six years in Oxford County (78.3%), the completion rate in 2016 was still among the lowest in the counties making up the West Region (85.2%) and among the lowest in the entire province (86.5%).¹ Nationally, the high school completion rate among 20 to 24 year olds is even higher (89.3%).

The percentage of residents who receive post-secondary education has risen steadily in recent years. However, only about 1 in 8 of residents in Oxford County, 25 to 64 years of age, have a university degree (12.9%), which is almost 6% lower than that in West Region (18.7%) and much lower than in Ontario overall (28.5%). Participation in education is critical for preparation for work as well as for ongoing personal development, which has positive impact on our living standards and social networks. Creating more opportunities and encouraging greater participation in education-related activities would serve to enhance wellbeing because of these activities' influence across many domains.

MEASURING PROGRESS

Elementary schools in Ontario make important contributions to the early development of our children and their preparation for life. Indeed, in the past year, the Ontario Ministry of Education added “wellbeing” to its goals for the education system and many schools are now including softer skills such as creativity and social-emotional skills among its key measures of progress.²

Just under 4 in 10 elementary schools in Oxford County (39.5%) are measuring student progress in health and wellbeing, which is more than 10% lower than in West Region (50.7%) and over 15% lower than the provincial rate (55.7%). The percentage of schools in Oxford County measuring progress in the school learning environment (51.2%) is similar to that across West Region (50.7%) and Ontario (51.9%), and is even better in measuring progress in student's socio-emotional skills (51.2%) than both West Region and Ontario overall (39.4% and 44.4% respectively). Oxford County elementary schools are also doing somewhat more in measuring students' progress in developing their citizenship skills (32.6%) than across Ontario (29.0%), but not as much as in the West Region overall (35.3%). More troubling, however, is the percentage of schools in Oxford County that measure progress in student creativity (9.3%), which is significantly lower than in the West Region (18.1%) and across Ontario (19.7%).³

¹ High school graduation rates for Oxford County, West Region, and the province are based on Ontario Ministry of Education figures whereas the graduation rate for Canada is based on data provided by Statistics Canada; therefore, comparisons may not be valid because they use different definitions and reference groups.

² People for Education. (2015). *Ontario's Schools: The gap between policy and reality*. Annual Report on Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools 2015. Toronto, ON: People for Education. Available from: <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/research/p4e-reports-bytopic/>

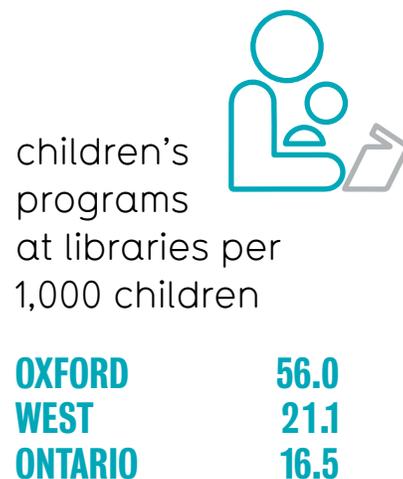
³ Data on measuring student progress in elementary schools provided by People for Education and are based on the results of their annual survey, conducted in 2015.

CONTRIBUTION OF LIBRARIES

Beyond their traditional role in providing citizens with the content they need to succeed, libraries in our communities have evolved to play a central role as a hub for community development, learning, and sharing. The many instructional programs and services they offer promote literacy, skills development, and access to technology for people of all ages.⁴

Public libraries in Oxford County offer an average of 34.0 early literacy and learning programs per 1,000 children, which is slightly higher than the 31.3 programs offered across the West Region, and much higher than 25.8 programs in the province overall. For other programs offered to children, such as arts and culture, health and wellness, and play groups, Oxford County leads the province. An average of 56.0 programs per 1,000 children are provided annually in the County compared to just 21.1 in West Region and 16.5 across Ontario.

In contrast to the offerings for children, libraries throughout the province, including in Oxford County, provide on average far fewer programs for adults. Libraries in Oxford County offer 2.5 programs per 1,000 adults concerned with career support and advice, job help, and skills training. This level of offerings far surpasses the average number of programs provided in both the West Region and in Ontario, both of which sit at 0.2 programs per 1,000 adults. In addition, libraries in Oxford County provide on average another 7.1 adult learning programs on other general topics of interest per 1,000 population, which is more than the 5.6 programs in West Region and considerably more than the 2.7 programs in Ontario. Even though the numbers of library programs dedicated to adults are comparatively lower across the province, Oxford County’s libraries have been giving even more attention to offerings in support of the development and training of adults.



⁴Federation of Ontario Public Libraries. (2012). *Annual Report on the State of Public Libraries 2012*. Toronto, ON: FOPL. Available from: <http://fopl.ca/news/2011-annualreport-on-the-state-of-public-libraries/>



children with
licensed childcare
available

OXFORD	10.1%
WEST	18.4%
ONTARIO	20.7%
CANADA	24.1%

CHILDCARE

The availability of quality childcare, which has expanded in Ontario in recent years, contributes to our pre-school children’s social, emotional, developmental, and educational outcomes, especially for children living in lower income families. In Oxford County, there is a lower proportion of children from zero to 4 years of age for whom licensed, centre-based childcare is available (10.1%) than almost anywhere else in the province. Across Ontario, about 1 in 5 pre-school children have access to such spaces (20.7%), and nationally, the percentage is even higher (24.1%). Clearly, more could be done to ensure that a greater number of spaces are available to pre-school children. Doing so would extend the positive benefits derived from quality childcare to more children, especially those most marginalized by income or access, and also provide families with more opportunity to allocate their time differently and reach work-life balance.