

## Plain Talk ~ Literacy Levels

### What is literacy?

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 defines literacy as "an individual's ability to read, write, speak in English, compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual and in society." This is a broader view of literacy than just an individual's ability to read, the more traditional concept of literacy. As information and technology have increasingly shaped our society, the skills we need to function successfully have gone beyond reading, and literacy has come to include the skills listed in the current definition. ~ *Source: National Institute for Literacy (NIFL)*

### Five Levels of Literacy

The information below is from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

- Level 1: People with very poor skills.
- Level 2: People who can deal only with simple material.
- Level 3: Roughly the skill level required for successful secondary school completion and college entry.
- Level 4 & 5: People who demonstrate command of "higher-order information processing skills.

The table below gives the estimated U.S. grade equivalents of each of the five levels above.

NAEP Literacy Levels	ETS Proficiency Scores	U.S. Grade Levels
<b>1 - Rudimentary</b>	150–299	1–2
<b>2 - Basic</b>	200–249	3–6
<b>3 - Intermediate</b>	250–299	7–11
<b>4 - Adept</b>	300–349	12–15
<b>5 - Advanced</b>	350–500	16+

*Table 1. NAEP literacy levels, Educational Testing Service (ETS) proficiency scores, and the estimated U.S. reading-grade-level equivalents. ~Source: Plain Language At Work Newsletter, October 10, 2005*

### Washington State Literacy Information

<b>Washington State</b> Level 1 - 15%      Level 1 & 2 - 35% High School Diploma - 28% Bachelors Degree - 15% Graduate Degree 6%	<b>Benton County</b> Level 1 - 13%      Level 1 & 2 - 34% High School Diploma - 28%
<b>Thurston County</b> Level 1 - 13%      Level 1 & 2 - 32% High School Diploma - 28%	<b>King County</b> Level 1 - 13%      Level 1 & 2 - 30% High School Diploma - 23%
<b>Clark County</b> Level 1 - 12%      Leve 1 & 2 - 33% High School Diploma - 31%	<b>Yakima County</b> Level 1 - 23%      Leve 1 & 2 - 52% High School Diploma - 27%

*Source: Database of Literacy statistics <http://www.casas.org/lit/litcode/Search.cfm>*