

# ***NEWS RELEASE***



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## **Free Innovative Online Tool to Assist Literacy Programs Unveiled at National Literacy Summit**

*Created by the National Center for Family Literacy, the Verizon Literacy Program Self-Assessment Tool Gives Users a Roadmap to Improve Literacy Program Success Rates*

**WASHINGTON** – An innovative online tool, designed to help local literacy organizations evaluate their programs and make changes to produce better results and help increase national literacy rates, was unveiled Monday (Oct. 15) at the National Literacy Summit at Georgetown University.

The evaluation program, known as the Verizon Literacy Program Self-Assessment Tool, was created by the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) and funded by the Verizon Foundation. It is the first time a comprehensive online literacy evaluation tool has been made available to all literacy programs for free at one location, [Thinkfinity.org](http://Thinkfinity.org).

“Thousands of people give their time and effort daily to advance the cause of literacy, but unfortunately, despite those great efforts, literacy rates in our country are still not where they need to be,” said Sharon Darling, president and founder of the NCFL.

“We believe this self-assessment tool can play a tremendous role in improving literacy rates,” she said. “It provides a roadmap with more scope and depth than any other tool currently available. It is unique because it incorporates the latest scientific research for literacy programs that serve populations from birth through adulthood. There’s no other tool that has greater potential to effect more change in overall literacy.”

The assessment tool provides a detailed online questionnaire that asks about a literacy program’s methods, the education level of its students, parental involvement and current tools used to assess the program’s success.

Based on the answers to the questionnaire, the literacy provider is given a grade of 1 to 5 in each of several areas to describe whether the organization is utilizing proven, research-based methods and achieving the best possible results.

For organizations receiving a 3 or lower in any particular area, a list of recommended resources, created by literacy and education experts, is provided. All of the recommended resources are also available for free at [Thinkfinity.org](https://www.thinkfinity.org), as part of the Thinkfinity Literacy Network.

[Thinkfinity.org](https://www.thinkfinity.org) is the Verizon Foundation’s free, comprehensive program and online portal to 55,000 educational resources, including standards-based, grade-specific, K-12 lesson plans, student interactives, researched-based literacy tools and online classes for literacy volunteers, all created or approved by 11 of the nation’s leading educational and literacy organizations.

“This program is a prime example of how technology can quickly and easily bring world-class resources to every literacy professional or volunteer in reach of a computer,” said Verizon President Patrick Gaston. “Within minutes of completing the self-assessment, the user will have immediate feedback and customized steps to improve literacy achievement.”

Using technology to improve literacy is one of the primary goals of the Verizon Foundation. The self-assessment tool builds upon the Verizon Life Span Literacy Matrix, also available at [Thinkfinity.org](http://Thinkfinity.org), which provides a comprehensive source for best-in-class literacy practices and assessment instruments to improve literacy skills at all stages of life.

This year’s summit, “Competitive Literacies for the Global Economy: Building Learning Communities,” focused on the impact of global issues such as immigration, population decline and workforce development, and the need for immediate improvement in literacy and education in the United States.

The Verizon Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Verizon Communications, is committed to improving literacy and K-12 education through its signature program Thinkfinity.org; fostering awareness and prevention of domestic violence; and promoting the use of technology in health-care delivery. In 2006, the foundation awarded more than \$69 million in grants to nonprofit agencies in the United States and abroad. The foundation also matched charitable donations from Verizon employees and retirees, resulting in \$29 million in combined contributions. Under the foundation’s Verizon Volunteer initiative, one of the nation’s largest employee-volunteer programs, company employees and retirees have also contributed nearly 3 million hours of community service since Verizon’s inception in 2000.

For more information on the foundation, visit [www.verizon.com/foundation](http://www.verizon.com/foundation).

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