



80 Bradford Street, Suite 508, Barrie, Ontario L4N 6S7
TEL (705) 733-2312 • FAX (705) 733-6197
E-MAIL clo@bellnet.ca • WEBSITE www.nald.ca/clo.htm

COMMUNITY LITERACY OF ONTARIO

EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO E-COMMUNIQUE – JUNE 2008

EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO PARTNERSHIP SUCCESS STORIES

Employment Ontario is all about partnerships. It was created following an agreement between federal and provincial partners, and one of its goals is to bring provincial and federal programs and resources together for employees, employers and people looking for work.

Partnerships are certainly not a new concept for literacy organizations. Agencies across Ontario, in communities large and small, have been working in partnership with other service providers to provide a wide range of opportunities and programs. For some agencies, the advent of Employment Ontario means business as usual: they will continue to work with their partners as they have always done. For others, it may mean enhancing existing partnerships or offering new or additional services. For some, it may mean learning about agencies they haven't worked with before and developing new working relationships or even partnerships.

Partnerships can take on many forms. They can be simple handshake agreements where two or more organizations agree to generally work together, or they can be more formal arrangements that include written agreements and specific roles and responsibilities for each partner agency. (For more information about partnerships and Employment Ontario, be sure to check out CLO's Employment Ontario module on Literacy Basics (www.nald.ca/literacybasics), coming in August).

In this E-Communiqué, Community Literacy of Ontario will take a look at some of the partnerships that are already in place along with some that are just being developed within the Employment Ontario network. The partnerships profiled include various types of delivery agencies within the network as well as agencies from diverse regions of Ontario (urban, rural and northern Ontario).

Partnership Success Story:

- PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs in Toronto

Barbara McFater, Executive Director of PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs in Toronto (www.ptp.ca), told Community Literacy of Ontario about an interesting partnership that brings a community-based literacy agency together with a college to help support training in the skilled trades. They call this **pre**-pre-apprenticeship training! The program has been delivered in conjunction with George Brown College.

George Brown College wasn't having any difficulty filling seats in their pre-apprenticeship program, but they were having some difficulty getting the right mix of learners into their programs, i.e., those who were truly committed to the trades. They would intake students with the right academic qualifications, but many of them dropped out or did not show up for class. There were some vital pieces missing, which prevented the success of these pre-apprenticeship programs.

PTP decided to supply one of the missing pieces – apprenticeship career exploration combined with the upgrading of skills. They created flyers and informed their community partners of upcoming information sessions on the skilled trades. PTP prepared sign-up sheets for potential learners that acted like a mini screening tool. They asked questions about the person's background and areas of interest. PTP also scheduled assessment appointments so that the potential client left the information session with an assessment appointment booked for the next week.

In order to prepare the clients for pre-apprenticeship, PTP used its own tool, *Building for the Future*, a career exploration resource. (You can find out more about this resource, including how to order it at www.ptp.ca). This valuable tool helped clients discover whether or not the trade they had chosen was really the right one for them. The final section in *Building for the Future* includes an assessment tool that will help the client determine whether or not he or she is ready for the pre-apprenticeship program or perhaps whether he or she may need some upgrading first.

Not only did PTP help clients with career exploration, but they also ensured that clients received the upgrading they needed to get into George Brown's pre-apprenticeship programs. Consequently, George Brown's pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs enjoyed a significantly higher success rate due to PTP *'filling the gap'*.

You can read more about this successful program on PTP's website www.ptp.ca/. Be sure to click on the Toronto Sun interview.

There will also be a project report about this program called *Filling the Gap: Building communities to support the aspiring apprentice*. It will be available in PDF format on PTP's website by the end of July.

Partnership Success Story:

- Peel-Halton-Dufferin Adult Learning Network / The Centre for Skills Development and Training

Matthew Shulman, Executive Director of Peel-Halton-Dufferin Adult Literacy Network (www.phdaln.on.ca) related an exciting partnership opportunity to Community Literacy of Ontario. Matthew reports that his organization is working with The Centre for Skills Development and Training (The Centre) (www.thecentre.on.ca) to coordinate their efforts in a three-step process to build bridges between organizations and form ongoing, meaningful partnerships.

The first step they have taken is to offer simple workshops for one another's agencies. These are short and informal and provide an overview that highlights the range and types of services that each agency provides. PHDALN, has offered workshops to employment agencies that focus on literacy awareness and sensitivity. They discuss low level literacy indicators and the importance of recognizing them. As well they cover what Literacy and Basic Skills agencies do in their region and their connections to employment.

The second step in this process has become a very popular stand-alone training method to learn about the depth and variety of Employment Ontario services available to clients. The workshop is called CSI and models itself on the trendy television show, *CSI: crime scene investigation*. However, instead of investigating a crime scene, participants do Client Service Investigation. Participants are divided into groups and work as teams. Each group is given a client profile and the task is to map out the best path to the client's goal. Teams begin with the profile, which includes things such as: education, employment experience, goals and personal information. Participants use various resources (for example, the Employment Ontario website) and talk to subject experts and representatives from various Employment Ontario agencies in their attempt to gather 'evidence' as they construct the best referral pathway.

Matthew says that the team format and consultations underline the importance of working in partnerships in Employment Ontario. He says, *"It reminds people we're working as a system now, not just as an agency."*

Inventors of this game, Matthew Shulman, and Lorna Hart, senior coordinator of The Centre for Skills Development and Training plan to create a workshop in a box. They visualize the CSI format having enormous possibilities, for example in the field of career exploration for high school students.

The third step in Building Bridges is underway. PHDALN and The Centre are creating an information and referral resource package called *Who Does What: A Guide to Employment Ontario Services in Halton Region*. This resource package will contain all of Halton's Employment Ontario agencies listed according to the official Employment Ontario program and service names. The guide translates this listing into full page descriptions of what the agencies actually do. This resource will be available on their website later this year.

Partnership Success Story:

- Prince Edward Learning Centre, Picton

Linda Conley, Executive Director of Prince Edward Learning Centre in Picton (www.pelc.ca) reports that a group of local agencies has been meeting since Fall 2007 to explore areas of common interest and how programs can complement each other and avoid duplication of services. They call their group the Prince Edward County Employment Partners.

One of their ideas to help bring about efficiency in their area is to provide a passport for program participants that would be issued at whatever agency a learner first visits. This would allow all agencies to link together to help the person and would reflect the Employment Ontario goal of ensuring case management learner-centred services are in place. The Prince Edward Partners group is in the initial stages of discussing how this would work including issues around personal privacy and release of information.

The Prince Edward County Employment Partners also did some group marketing including making a joint presentation to the Prince Edward Chamber of Tourism and Commerce at one of their "Meet and Greet" meetings. The purpose was to make the employer community aware of the free services they could access in their community.

Partnership Success Story:

- Conestoga College

Andrea Leis, former chair of Preparatory Programs and now Director of the School of Career and Academic Access at Conestoga College (www.conestogac.on.ca), says that she began informal partnership conversations in the summer of 2005. She and her counterparts in the College's Job Connect, Employment Assistance Programs, and Apprenticeship programs began to meet informally once a month in one another's offices. "It began simply out of a shared desire to help our students," says Andrea. They began to talk with one another about their respective program areas, both strengths and challenges. They talked about the areas of trouble their students faced and how their programs could jointly meet these challenges.

Consequently, when Employment Ontario became a reality, Conestoga College already had strong partnerships in place linking Academic Upgrading, Job Connect, Employment Assistance Services and Apprenticeship. Andrea Leis refers to these partnerships as a 'grass roots movement' that has mobilized recruitment for these programs at Conestoga. *"We know that we can't do it in isolation anymore," says Andrea, "Not because it's dictated by Employment Ontario, but because our students need it. What Employment Ontario has given us, is more momentum and greater visibility."*

Partnership Success Story:

- Focus on Learning, Wawa

Many literacy agencies have been working in partnership with other community agencies for years. However, in places like Wawa, the advent of Employment Ontario provided an opportunity to strengthen existing partnerships according to Lynne Zuliani, Program Coordinator of Focus on Learning (www.focusonlearning.info).

Wawa is a small town in Northern Ontario, and there are just three Employment Ontario partners serving the community there: Focus on Learning, Job Connect and the Employment Centre. In partnership, these three organizations have developed a flyer called "*Connected for Success*" that included information about each of these agencies and how they are working together. They have distributed the flyer throughout the community.

Partnership Success Story:

- Kingston Literacy (Napanee Site)

Laurie DesLauriers from the Napanee site of Kingston Literacy (www.kingstonliteracy.com) initiated quarterly meetings with her local Employment Ontario partners in Napanee. The purpose was to create referral protocols, program updates and ways to involve the community in Employment Ontario initiatives. For example, how could they include levels of local government to be part of the process, so that the Employment Ontario community would be kept informed of market trends, closures and opportunities?

Their hope is that they would automatically be contacted when any of the above occurred (in an ideal world). From meetings, the need to have a resume drop-in for people with barriers to be able to access the Employment Resource Centre was identified and Laurier now blocks off two hours a week for that very purpose.

Partnership Success Story:

- YMCA Career and Development Centre, Burlington

The YMCA Career and Development Centre in Burlington (www.ymcacareerdevelopment.on.ca) has created a great marketing mix for their clients. In their partnership with Job Connect they quickly realised that literacy was a missing link for many clients wishing to access training. The YMCA Career and Development Centre responded with targeted upgrading and 'Just in Time' services that meet clients' specific requirements in as short a time as possible. The programs are flexible to meet their clients' needs and are not focused on literacy criteria for success. Under their program, literacy is seen simply as another employment tool. It is less stigmatized and more work centred.

Partnership Success Story:

- Literacy Link South Central, London

Literacy Link South Central (LLSC) (www.llsc.on.ca) has been working on a resource called "*Academic Service Plans*" that will clearly mark out further academic pathways for clients who are seeking upgrading within their communities.

Literacy programs are usually only the first step for clients who are seeking further education and employment prospects. Executive Director of LLSC, Tamara Kaattari, says that it is critical for service providers to be clear on how literacy programs bridge to other academic services so that clients can navigate the many Employment Ontario pathways effectively.

With so many service providers in Employment Ontario, we in literacy need to be clear about what we can provide and how our services bridge clients to success in other academic pursuits (credit, GED, postsecondary, ACE, ESL). It is no longer enough to say that we can increase literacy skills. What we do needs to be clearly linked with what clients want and where they are going within the broader Employment Ontario environment. The clearer we can be about what our agencies offer, the more useful we will be as partners in the process.

Literacy Link South Central's "*Academic Service Plans*" will provide substantial support to various Employment Ontario partners in understanding and assessing appropriate educational pathways for clients.

Partnership Success Story:

- Project READ Literacy Network, Kitchener

Anne Ramsay, Executive Director of Project READ Literacy Network in Kitchener (www.projectread.ca) reports that Project READ has been producing a newspaper insert called "*Adult Upgrading in Waterloo-Wellington*" for more than six years. This insert includes listings for all of the LBS agencies in the region and has helped raise the profile of literacy programming locally. Last year, Project READ invited local Job Connect agencies to add their listings.

With these other partners onboard, they changed the name of the insert to "*Essential Skills and Employment Programs in Waterloo-Wellington*". There has been a high demand for the directory, and Project READ is reprinting the current edition. They are also updating information for the upcoming 2008-2009 edition. You can see the directory at their website by clicking on "publications" and then "directory".

Partnership Success Story:

- Literacy Link Niagara

Literacy Link Niagara (www.literacylinkniagara.org) has been working on a project funded by the Ministry of Education called the "*Niagara Pathways Project*". This innovative project explores how adult learning organizations with different funding sources work together in their region. The project outcomes include models and examples that will enhance partnerships across the province. The resources and tools produced by this project will be available at www.partnershippathwaysniagara.ca.

Literacy Link Niagara (LLN) involved the Niagara Training and Adjustment Board (NTAB) in their project advisory group. NTAB provided contact lists and software as well as consultants to facilitate online meetings. LLN and NTAB have enjoyed a long, strong partnership that will continue within Employment Ontario. LLN Executive Director, Gay Douglas, says that the Niagara region's literacy agencies benefit because of NTAB's high profile and influence. LLN is often used as an access point for literacy information and resources. And, because they have educated NTAB on literacy issues, Gay says that NTAB is more aware of the pervasiveness and complexity of literacy issues.



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