

Our Voice

Community Literacy of Ontario

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Essential Skills Resources

The Bare Essentials: An Introduction to the Essential Skills

The College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading, Community Literacy of Ontario, CESBA, and the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition worked together to create a useful training manual called: *Bare Essentials: An Introduction to the Essential Skills*.

The *Bare Essentials* covers the following topics:

- ⇒ Beginnings: An Introduction to Bare Essentials
- ⇒ Literacy and Essential Skills: The Canadian Experience
- ⇒ Defined and Aligned: the Meaning of Essential Skills and Their Connection to Adult Literacy
- ⇒ From Research to Practical Application: Essential Skills Profiles
- ⇒ Putting Essential Skills to Work: Tips for Using Essential Skills Profiles
- ⇒ Check It Out!: Essential Skills Tools and Resources

To download a copy of this helpful resource, just visit this website: www.nald.ca/litweb/province/on/clo/resource/bare/bare_essentials.pdf

Essential Skills Module on Literacy Basics

Community Literacy of Ontario has developed a self-directed online training module on the Essential Skills. The module is housed on our highly-regarded "Literacy Basics" training website. Our module covers the following topics:

- ⇒ Why Essential Skills?
- ⇒ Essential Skills Defined
- ⇒ The National Occupational Classification Matrix
- ⇒ The Essential Skills Profiles
- ⇒ Authentic Workplace Materials
- ⇒ Tools and Resources

You can access this online resource at: www.nald.ca/literacybasics/

Ten Key Facts about Ontario's Community Literacy Agencies

Those of us who learn, work, and volunteer in Ontario's community-based literacy agencies know all about the importance of what we do. But some of us may not realize the size and scope of our sector and the value of our collective work. Community Literacy of Ontario (CLO) is pleased to share statistics on the critically important, highly effective, creative, dynamic, and learner-centred, world of community-based literacy! While community-based literacy agencies are as diverse as the communities we serve, we all share one thing in common: a passion for providing quality, learner-centred literacy instruction that meets the needs of learners and our communities.

We are very proud to be an important part of Ontario's Literacy and Basics Skills (LBS) Program.

FACT 1: We are a key part of literacy delivery in Ontario!

There are just over 200 literacy delivery agencies and almost 300 delivery sites in Ontario. Literacy is delivered by community-based and Laubach agencies, colleges, and school board programs. All sectors bring unique and valuable strengths to literacy delivery. There are also four delivery streams: Anglophone, Deaf, Native and Francophone. Literacy agencies from all sectors and streams link to refer students to the appropriate literacy program and to share information and resources.

FACT 2: We are many!

The Information Management System (IMS) shows that in 2005/06, there were 140 community-based delivery agencies and 24 additional satellites, equating to community-based delivery at 164 sites throughout this province! Of these sites, 110 are Anglophone delivery agencies.

FACT 3: We are located in communities large and small

You can find community-based literacy agencies in diverse areas of our province. CLO's 2003 program survey found that 38% of agencies were rural; 29% served mixed rural/urban areas; 19% served small urban areas and 14% served large urban centres. Further, agencies are located in all regions of the province: 27% were located in central Ontario; 19% in the east; 21% in the northeast; 11% in the northwest; and 22% in the southwest.

FACT 4: We focus on learners with lower literacy levels

While agencies serve adult learners at all literacy levels, the majority of our learners (59%) are at levels 1 and 2. The IMS data from 2007/08 shows that 29% of learners served by community literacy agencies were at Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) level 1; 30% were at LBS level 2; 23% were at LBS level 3; and the remaining 18% were at LBS level 4 or higher.

FACT 5: We offer both 1-1 and small group programming

CLO's 2005 program survey showed that 92% of Ontario's community literacy agencies offer both small group and 1-1 programming. Adult learners were exactly divided between the two models, with 50% participating in 1-1 and 50% participating in small group learning. Both staff and volunteers are involved in delivering instruction to adult learners, depending upon the needs of the learners.

Ten Key Facts about Ontario's Community Literacy Agencies

FACT 6: We serve learners with diverse goals

IMS statistics from 2007/08 tell us that learners in Ontario's community literacy agencies have the following goals: further training and education (40%); employment (39%) and independence (21%).

FACT 7: Volunteers are involved

CLO's 2007 program survey found that the average community-based literacy agency in Ontario has 65 volunteers! Volunteers are involved in community literacy agencies in a variety of tasks including: tutoring, board governance, fundraising and administration. Volunteers help paid staff to deliver personalized programming to learners and also link us more closely with our communities.

FACT 8: We actively market literacy

Community-based literacy agencies are actively involved in our communities, and we play a key role in marketing literacy to diverse community stakeholders (service clubs, employers, social service organizations, community partners, etc.). For example, in our 2003 program survey, CLO found that 90% of community literacy agencies offer community presentations, 87% attend community fairs and special events, 84% write articles in local newspapers and 77% organize promotional events such as open houses, scrabble tournaments, etc.

FACT 9: We have strong community linkages and support

Community-based literacy agencies are integrally involved in their communities. In addition to the marketing and volunteer activities mentioned above, agencies also develop strong community linkages through partnership and fundraising activities. CLO's 2003 survey revealed that community literacy agencies are involved in a variety of innovative partnerships. Ninety percent partnered with local community agencies, 77% with Ontario Works; 68% with local referral agencies; 50% with local service clubs; and 45% with local employers. While community-based literacy agencies receive core funding from MTCU, most also receive some financial support from local sources. CLO's 2003 survey confirmed that agencies received funding from the following sources: the local community (63%); local businesses (44%), and the United Way (31%).

FACT 10: We are community-based!

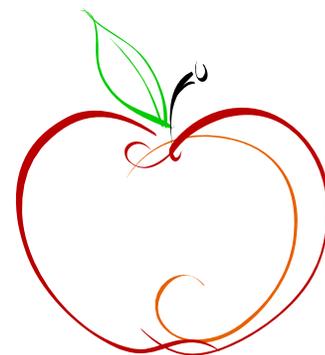
Ontario's community-based literacy agencies are not-for-profit organizations that are governed by a board of directors. Local governance links agencies closely to the community and allows us to quickly respond to community needs. Community-based literacy agencies meet the needs of adult learners in quality, supportive environments. Agencies use methods, curriculum, materials, and program models that respond to the needs of individual students. Also key to community-based literacy instruction is a flexible and participatory approach. Learner needs are considered at every step. Self-confidence is recognized as being integral to student success and agencies value all student goals equally.

Community-based literacy agencies are proud to be an important part of delivering literacy instruction to adult learners in Ontario!

Lifelong Learning for Literacy Practitioners Website

Community Literacy of Ontario has received funding from the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for a project called: "*Lifelong Learning for Literacy Practitioners Website.*"

A key goal of this initiative is to develop a website highlighting various issues relating to education and training in the Ontario literacy community. The website will be an invaluable resource for both new literacy practitioners and those who have been working in the field for many years. It will increase their knowledge and awareness of current training opportunities, experience requirements in the literacy field and will also help them to assess their future training needs.



As well, CLO's website will provide useful information for stakeholders or anyone outside the literacy field who wants to learn more about literacy practice in Ontario. It will increase their understanding and awareness of the skills and experience required to deliver literacy programming.

CLO's new *Lifelong Learning for Literacy Practitioners* website will include:

- ⇒ General information about the skills common to all literacy practitioners in Ontario
- ⇒ Specific skills lists for all sectors
- ⇒ Education and experience requirements for all sectors and streams
- ⇒ A tool for literacy practitioners to assess their current skills and skill gaps
- ⇒ A tool for literacy practitioners to develop individualized learning plans
- ⇒ Links to resources, training and professional development opportunities

The website researchers and writers, Karen Farrar and Sheila Marshall, bring wide-ranging experience to this project. As experienced literacy practitioners they are aware of the importance of quality training resources, the premium placed on time and the challenges of continuous professional development. CLO's *Lifelong Learning for Literacy Practitioners* website will support literacy practitioners in maintaining and increasing their professional standards. This website will be hosted by the National Adult Literacy Database and launched in July 2009.

Lifelong Learning in Canada

In 2008, the Canadian Council on Learning released an important report called "*State of Learning in Canada: Towards a Learning Future.*" This report highlighted the significant social and economic benefits that lifelong learning provide to individuals, communities and our country. The reports also noted that fewer Canadians engage in lifelong learning compared to many other industrialized nations. See: www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/StateofLearning/StateofLearning.htm?Language=EN.

Online Training Performance Management

Community Literacy of Ontario is pleased to present Performance Management Online Training. This training is designed to help you to:

- ⇒ Increase your understanding of CIPMS (Continuous Improvement Performance Management)
- ⇒ Discover performance management in action
- ⇒ Network with your peers and share successes and challenges
- ⇒ Develop your organizational capacity
- ⇒ Explore agency assessment
- ⇒ Encourage you to look to the future and determine where to go from here

Literacy practitioners from all sectors are invited to join their colleagues from May 4-29, 2009 to participate in CLO's facilitated and interactive performance management training. CLO's new CIPMS training will be offered online using Moodle technology. Join us starting on May 4, 2009 for CIPMS training that is:

- ⇒ **PRACTICAL AND USEFUL.** Our online classroom contains quality course content, audio and visual podcasts with literacy practitioners, weblinks to relevant material, a case study, real life literacy scenarios, online quizzes and many other useful features.
- ⇒ **CONVENIENT.** Our online classroom is available any time; anywhere.
- ⇒ **INTERACTIVE.** In addition to course content, there are opportunities for peer-based discussion groups and live chats.
- ⇒ **USER-FRIENDLY.** Moodle is an effective and easy online learning platform.
- ⇒ **FREE!** Our training is freely available to literacy practitioners from all sectors and to other interested members of the Employment Ontario delivery network and beyond. All you need to do is register.

To access our CIPMS online classroom, please go to <http://clo.alphaplus.ca>
Please note that while you can go to this site and register for CLO's performance management training at any time, the classroom will not be open until May 4th.

CLO wants to thank our funder, the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for their support. We are also grateful to AlphaPlus Centre for their technical support for our Moodle classroom.

Working Together Towards Ontario's Adult Literacy Curriculum

In December 2007, CLO concluded its *Success Indicators for Independence Goals* project which was part of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' Learner Skill Attainment (LSA) Initiative to develop a Learner Skills Attainment Framework that uses the Essential Skills/International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey scales as a common assessment language for learner skill attainment.

CLO's "Success Indicators for Independence Goals" project focused on the goal path of independence and resulted in the development of CLO's draft *Foundations for Independence Framework*, which is comprised of a wide variety of goals and success and transition markers that literacy practitioners can use to validate the achievements of learners with the complex goals of independence. This document is available at www.nald.ca/litweb/province/on/clo/resource/foundind/project_report.pdf.

Based on its LSA project work, Community Literacy of Ontario was funded in the fall 2008, by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to provide a member of a project work team, drawn from the Literacy and Basic Skills delivery sectors and delivery streams, to work on the Adult Literacy Curriculum (ALC) Initiative.



The work in this initiative is building upon previous research and analysis in the field. The five transition pathways (Independence, Employment, Secondary Credit, Postsecondary, and Apprenticeship) as defined in the Learner Skill Attainment Framework, are being used to categorize existing resources and research new ones. Essential Skills will be a significant part of this analysis.

The project work team led by a MTCU project manager is currently completing the analysis phase of the project. This phase has involved the definition of principles, the creation of a repository of research for the project team (and practitioners once the new curriculum is piloted), and the identification of existing recent research and development products which will inform work on the framework for each of the transition paths. The curriculum framework and the assessment framework, which will provide the information required in developing the actual syllabus for each transition path and stream, is also being completed.

Please refer to CLO's February 2009 E-Communiqué to read MTCU's communication about the ALC project (www.nald.ca/litweb/province/on/clo/communiqué/feb09.pdf)

In February 2009, CLO submitted two project proposals to continue working on the Adult Literacy Curriculum Initiative. The first is to have a project worker continue working on the ALC design and development phases throughout April 2009 to March 2010. The second proposal pertains to resource and validation research, and piloting of the draft Adult Literacy Curriculum in January 2010.

As proposals are confirmed by MTCU, we will update our members. Please stay tuned for further communications about the Adult Literacy Curriculum Initiative!

LITERACY FUNDING INCREASE!

In the March 26, 2009 Ontario budget, the Finance Minister Dwight Duncan announced additional funding of \$90 million to expand literacy and basic skills training, including funding for community projects, distance learning and workplace literacy. This \$90 million in funding will come from Labour Market Agreement money and will be for two years. You can read more about the 2009 Ontario budget here: www.fin.gov.on.ca/english/budget/ontariobudgets/2009/. While the specifics are currently unknown, this is indeed great news!

Community Literacy of Ontario would like to congratulate all of the literacy organizations, networks and agencies that participated in the letter writing campaign and other activities to encourage the Ontario government to allocate additional funding to literacy programs. CLO was proud to be a part of the campaign to raise awareness about the need for a funding increase for literacy programs. The combined efforts of many contributed to the promise in the 2009 provincial budget of additional funding to literacy.

Along with others, Community Literacy of Ontario will be involved in meetings with MTCU as the allocation details are determined.

CLO's provincial board of 12 literacy practitioners from community literacy agencies around Ontario sent in quotes from adult learners with their responses to the question: "What would an increase in funding for literacy programs mean to you?" We heard insightful responses from over 30 adult students. Here are some of their views:

"It would help some people that don't have the money to get the education that they need to get a good job. I am an adult and it is very hard on you when you don't have education because people look at you as if you were a dummy."

"I have been both a learner and a volunteer at the learning centre for a couple of years, now. There never seems to be enough funding to provide for the basic things like office maintenance and pays for staff time. I hope this new money can help to cover some of the things needed to keep the place going."

"I heard that our learning centre may have to start a waiting list, soon, because it is so busy here. That would be too bad. This has helped me so much that I will soon be able to go to college. There are a lot of people around here that are getting laid-off and will need some place like this to go."

Personally I think an increase in funding would result in a better learning experience, more opportunities and more resources for the students."

"With more funding the literacy schools will stay open. It will give me more learning options which will lead to more career options."

It helps a student to get a good schooling. And to get good jobs. If it was not for the funding a lot of students would not be in school."

"Opening a door to opportunities."



Volunteer Recognition

Volunteers are an important part of community literacy agencies. They serve as tutors, volunteer board members, and they help us with the administrative, technical and other key tasks in our literacy centres. They are a very valued asset.

National Volunteer Week (NVW) provides an excellent opportunity for volunteer recognition. This year, NVW is being held from April 19 to 25, 2009.

Volunteer Canada's website is chock full of resources to help with volunteer recognition. Their site includes information on event planning, promotions, media relations, templates, a campaign kit and a "marketplace" where volunteer recognition items can be purchased. Check it out at: www.nvw-sab.ca/

Volunteer recognition is all about noticing people's efforts and letting them know about it in ways that are meaningful to them. For people who volunteered primarily because of their deep concern for literacy, having students write them a note of thanks would be meaningful. For those who volunteered to gain employment experience, a letter of recommendation from the ED might be the recognition they are looking for!

Volunteer recognition can come in a variety of formal and informal ways. According to CLO's 2005 volunteer survey, here are some of the ways that volunteer contributions are recognized by Ontario's literacy agencies:

- ⇒ 83% recognize their commitment in informal ways
- ⇒ 75% of agencies host events to recognize volunteers
- ⇒ 62% offer occasional rewards or incentives

CLO's survey also revealed that most literacy volunteers preferred informal recognition to formal. When literacy volunteers were asked how they would like to be recognized, here is what they said:

- ⇒ 58% of volunteers like informal recognition
- ⇒ 24% like formal recognition events
- ⇒ 22% like occasional rewards or incentives
- ⇒ 7% like public recognition

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APRIL NEWSLETTER

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