

Our Voice

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What's Up with the Essential Skills?

Understanding the Essential Skills

Here in Ontario it has become increasingly important to understand the Essential Skills. They will form, along with the current LBS levels, a part of the new framework for learner skill attainment.

Essential Skills are the skills needed for work, learning and life. They provide the foundation for learning all other skills. Through extensive research, the Government of Canada and other national and international agencies have identified nine Essential Skills: Reading Text; Document Use; Numeracy; Writing; Oral Communication; Working with Others; Continuous Learning; Thinking Skills; and Computer Use. These skills are used in nearly every occupation and throughout daily life in different ways and at different levels of complexity.

The Essential Skills have many uses including:

- ⇒ Helping adults learn about the skills needed in various occupations
- ⇒ Helping adults to investigate career options
- ⇒ Providing educators with useful training tools

See: http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/Understanding_ES_e.shtml

Essential Skills Profiles

Essential Skills profiles describe how each of the nine Essential Skills are used by workers in a particular occupation. Over the past several years, the Government of Canada has conducted research examining the skills people use at work. From this research and through interviews with workers, managers, practitioners and leading researchers, close to 200 Essential Skills profiles have been developed for various occupations of the National Occupational Classifications. To date, profiles have been completed for all occupations requiring a high school education or less.

See: http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/ES_Profiles_e.shtml



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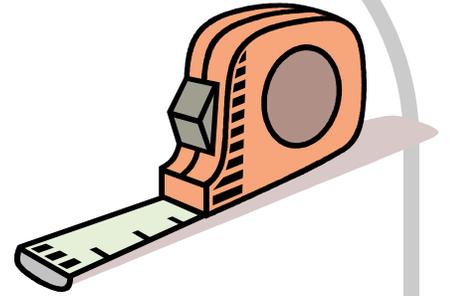
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Essential Skills Online Resources

How Do Your Skills Measure Up?

This is a free web-based tool developed by Skill Plan and TOWES (Test of Workplace Essential Skills) that can be used for self-assessment of the essential skills:

<http://measureup.towes.com/english/index.asp>.



The Essential Skills Equalizer

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada has an online tool called The Essential Skills Equalizer (http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/equalizer_e.shtml) that lets you explore a number of occupations and the Essential Skills they require.

Ontario Skills Passport (OSP)

The Ontario Skills Passport (<http://skills.edu.gov.on.ca>) is a resource that provides descriptions of the skills used in the work place and as well as important work habits. It also provides employers with a consistent method of assessing and recording the demonstration of these skills. The skills listed in the OSP are transferable skills that all learners (including high school students and adult learners), job seekers and workers can take from job to job or from school to work.

Applications of Work and Learning Project (AWAL)

The AWAL Database (www.awal.ca) was developed to provide workplace applications of the Essential Skills. This database is available on-line to anyone searching for ways to bring workplace relevance to classroom activities.

10 Myths We Shouldn't Believe About Essential Skills

See: http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/Myths_e.shtml.

Getting a Grip on the Essential Skills

See: Skill Plan's website: www.skillplan.ca.

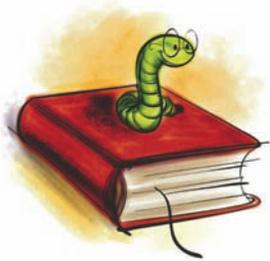
Hire Value

QUILL Literacy Network has produced an excellent resource called "*Hire Value*." This resource provides a guide to help employers with the employee selection process, learn about workplace preparation programs in specific areas, and to help local programs meet their hiring and training needs. See: www.quillnet.org/hire_value_ha.html or borrow a copy from your local regional literacy network.

Literacy Basics Plus: Something New in the Neighbourhood...

www.nald.ca/literacybasics

Community Literacy of Ontario is pleased to announce that we have just added four NEW training modules to Literacy Basics:



- ⇒ Learner Retention
- ⇒ Learner Recruitment
- ⇒ Self-Management and Self-Direction
- ⇒ Outcomes-Based Program Evaluation

Literacy Basics is a free, self-directed online training website for Ontario literacy practitioners. This innovative training website removes many of the typical barriers to training. Each training module contains course readings, sample tools, resources, supplementary readings and Internet links as well as "questions for reflection". Participants can work through the modules online, or they can print them and work on the modules at times and locations convenient to them. Participants can also return to the site as many times as they want and review as much or as little of the content as they need.

CLO's first four training modules on Assessment; Instructional Strategies; Exit and Follow-Up; and Volunteer Management are still available on Literacy Basics as well. CLO expresses its deep thanks to the National Literacy Secretariat, HRSDC for funding Literacy Basics.

CLO's Literacy Basics has proven to be an extremely valuable tool for providing training and resources to the literacy field. In CLO's annual survey of its members (75 agencies responded), 80% had used Literacy Basics and practitioners overwhelmingly shared positive comments about the quality and practicality of this training website.

Here are just a few of the large number of positive comments received about Literacy Basics:

- ⇒ *"What a beautiful and useful site! The whole thing is a great example of clear language and design"*
- ⇒ *"I think the website is easy to follow and provides excellent, useful information"*
- ⇒ *"Fantastic! Easy to use and great to be able to stop after an hour and pick up again."*
- ⇒ *"Love it! Very practical and very useful. It came at just the right time."*
- ⇒ *"Clear and easy to use with great web links. A job well done!"*
- ⇒ *"A great resource and time-saver for training new staff and volunteers."*
- ⇒ *"There is one word to describe your new Literacy Basics site: awesome!"*
- ⇒ *"Thank you for developing Literacy Basics. Phenomenal job, the site is so well done".*
- ⇒ *"Literacy Basics is a great resource! Thanks for your excellent work, CLO!"*

Come visit Literacy Basics and see what's new in the neighbourhood!

CLO's Annual General Meeting 2006

CLO held its Annual General Meeting on October 12, 2006 at Toronto's Primrose Hotel. This event featured displays and informal networking sessions led by CLO board members on topics such as the Essential Skills, fundraising, and Manitoba's learner certification materials. Participants also enjoyed a fascinating workshop by Garfield Gini-Newman on "Engaging Learners Through Critical Thinking."

CLO members elected their Board of Directors for 2006/2007. We are pleased to welcome three new directors to our board: Barbara McFator (Toronto); Bert Providence (Toronto); and Barb Duguay (Fort Frances). For a complete listing of our board members, please see the back page of this newsletter. As well, CLO members expressed their deep gratitude to our four retiring directors: Heather Hufton; Shelley Lawrence; Valeria Sadler; and Johanna White.



In a meeting following the AGM, CLO board members elected the following executive: Co-Chairs: Joyce Bigelow and Lindsay Kennedy; Secretary: Cheryl Reid; Treasurer: Carynne Arnold.

Strategic Planning

In April 2006, Community Literacy of Ontario received funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to create a strategic plan that will allow CLO to strengthen and increase its organizational capacity to serve its members. CLO's staff, board of directors and project consultant (Jane Barber) have worked diligently during the past year and have developed a concrete plan that we will soon share with our members.

The next phase of this project (April 2007 to March 2008) will focus on providing training to help literacy organizations engage in strategic planning to build their own organizational capacity. Throughout the next year, CLO will offer the following training opportunities:

- ⇒ Offering two face-to-face workshops on strategic planning
- ⇒ Delivering two online workshops via Centra Symposium
- ⇒ Developing a web-based, self-directed training module on strategic planning to be housed on our Literacy Basics website

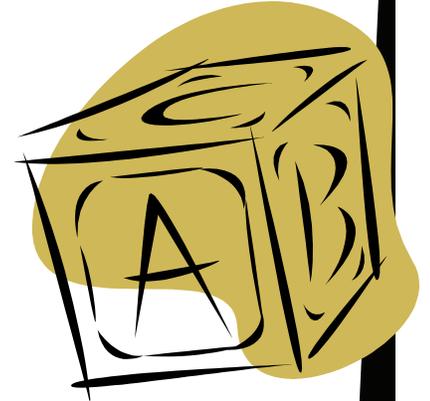


More information on these exciting training opportunities will be available in the near future!

The ABCs of the Continuous Improvement Performance Management System

CLO has recently received funding from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for a project called *"The ABCs of the Continuous Improvement Performance Management System."* This project will begin in March 2007. Project deliverables are:

- ⇒ **Research:** CLO will conduct research to identify the needs of community literacy agencies relative to implementing CIPMS.
- ⇒ **AlphaCom:** CLO will moderate a CIPMS AlphaCom discussion group to share tools, ideas and resources.
- ⇒ **Resource Guide:** CLO will write a CIPMS resource guide to help literacy agencies increase their capacity to implement the CIPMS.
- ⇒ **Face-to-Face Training:** CLO will deliver face-to-face training on the CIPMS at our Annual General Meeting in the fall of 2007.
- ⇒ **Centra:** CLO will deliver two online training workshops about the CIPMS.
- ⇒ **Literacy Basics:** CLO will write the curriculum for a self-directed web-based training module on the CIPMS. This module would be housed on CLO's highly popular Literacy Basics website.



Success Indicators for Independence Goals

Community Literacy of Ontario has also received funding from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for a project called *"Success Indicators for Independence Goals."* This project supports the Learner Skill Attainment Framework being developed for Literacy and Basic Skills programs. CLO is pleased to announce that Robyn Cook-Ritchie has been hired as the consultant for this important initiative.

CLO's project focuses on the learner pathway of Foundation Skills for Lifelong Learning and involves researching success indicators and transition markers in the domain of independence. Success indicators for independence goals are difficult to develop and difficult to measure effectively. How for example can independence goals such as "increased self-esteem", "improved attendance", "self-motivation", and "problem-solving" be effectively measured?

Based on the results of this research, a framework will be developed identifying the main transition and success markers (in the domain of Independence) needed to demonstrate foundations for learning relevant to the Essential Skills of Reading, Document Use and Numeracy.

Furthermore, CLO will assess where independence fits within the Essential Skills and identify how the framework for identifying and measuring success in the domain of independence could be expressed/articulated to the Essential Skills scale.

Stay tuned for future project bulletins!

Outreach and Partnering in our Communities

Community literacy agencies excel at being the face of literacy in their communities. CLO survey data shows that 90% of agencies conduct community presentations; 87% participate in community fairs and special events; 84% write articles for the local newspaper; and 77% hold promotional events.

Here are two of their stories...

Community Outreach at the Red Lake District Adult Learning Centre

By Johanna White



The Red Lake District Adult Learning Centre is very active in its community. Red Lake is located in Northwestern Ontario; the pavement actually ends here and the ice roads begin!

Our learning centre has a very good relationship with *Ontario Works*. Through provincial community enhancement funding, our centre established a partnership with OW to provide training sessions to our community on nutrition. We offered classes on basic nutrition, food purchasing and economical food preparation. Since a large proportion of our population suffers from diabetes, we also offered classes on how to eat on a diabetic diet. We believe that a main barrier to learning is the lack of necessities of life. We need to serve the whole person.

The Red Lake District Adult Learning Centre holds an annual *Coffeehouse*. This variety show is hosted by the learners at our Centre. We invite other entertainers from the community to perform. As well, our learners provide readings outlining their personal stories. Some are sad and some are so inspiring. *Community sponsors* purchase advertising in our programmes to allow this event to be free to the public. This encourages attendance from all walks of life. In our initial year we received funding for tablecloths from our local *Focus Coalition on Substance Abuse and Prevention* as we were and continue to be smoke and alcohol free.

We are currently partnering with our local *Community Living Centre* to build a kitchen in our facility. Their woodworking instructor will oversee the construction and our learners will provide the labour as practical skills in conjunction with the Skilled Trades Helper Module. With the aid of our new kitchen facility, we will be providing instruction for Hospitality and Food Counter Attendants, Kitchen Helpers and Related Occupations as outlined in the curriculum of Literacy Link Eastern Ontario's Essential Skills Training Modules.

The Red Lake District Adult Learning Centre is housed along with *Contact North*, *Cresive* (a busing organization) and *Ontario Works*. Our fee-for-service community training opportunities attracts members of the general public. We have had learners find employment through contacts they have made through these activities. Our staff are also involved in their community in a wide variety of ways.

Together we can do so much!

"Success is all about the quiet accumulation of small triumphs". (J.P. Donleavy)

Community Outreach at the Iroquois Falls Adult Learning Centre

By Denise Tremblay

I believe the greatest strength of our small community based literacy program is our ability to get out into our community. We attend community meetings, sit on local, regional and provincial boards, participate in local events, and undertake various activities in order to fundraise and spread the word about literacy. Here are some of the other ways we've been involved in our community the past few years.

- ⇒ Our literacy council has partnered with the local *Parent Resource Centre* for Family Literacy Day. We shared the cost of advertising, provided all participants with brag bags, gave handouts to the parents on fun things to do with their children, invited people to read, held a sing-a-long, and did a craft (we let the kids paint a teddy bear book holder provided by the woodworking students from the local high school).
- ⇒ We partner with our local *Ontario Works* and *Service Canada* to provide the "Opening Doors" workshops, and this coming year we are providing a workshop on "How to Stretch a Buck." The Ontario Works and Service Canada workers may not come to our Literacy Services Plan meetings, but we set up informal meetings, and bring them up to date on what we are doing, ask them what their concerns are and keep them informed.
- ⇒ Our literacy council provided our *Regional Corrections Centre* with 10 donated computers. We have volunteers go in to provide basic computer training and basic literacy training to the women inmates.
- ⇒ Along with various community service providers, on *International Women's Day* we set up our displays at a large community centre and made various program information available geared specifically to women. There was no cost to participants.
- ⇒ We are involved as well with our local *mental health survivor group*. Our literacy council provides the materials for the learners, and, at their request, they receive tutoring at their own office location. Basic computer training is available at our site.
- ⇒ Our literacy council partners with the local *Aboriginal Centre* to provide employability skills workshops to youth and the unemployed.
- ⇒ Recently, we began sharing a location with the *College Literacy and Basic Skills* program where we now deliver LBS 4 and 5. We then bridge students to the ACE program which is co-located in the same space.
- ⇒ We've held Community Garage Sales, BBQ's, an Open House and we speak to local community service groups whenever possible.



I guess you can certainly say 'we are involved' in our community!



OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Carynne Arnold (Kingston)
- Chris Benninger (Chatham)
- Joyce Bigelow (Sharbot Lake)
- Barb Duguay (Fort Frances)
- Linda Conley (Picton)
- Lindsay Kennedy (Wellington County)
- Sheila Marshall (Timmins)
- Barbara McFator (Toronto)
- Bert Providence (Toronto)
- Cheryl Reid (Toronto)
- Denise Tremblay (Iroquois Falls)

OUR STAFF

- Jane Barber (Project Staff)
- Robin Cook-Ritchie (Project Staff)
- Joan Beaudry (Administrative Assistant)
- Jette Cosburn (Co-Executive Director)
- Joanne Kaattari (Co-Executive Director)
- Vicki Trottier (Project Staff)

OUR CORE FUNDER

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Universities

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Joanne Kaattari

On the Home Front... CLO News!

The CLO board has had a busy few months. In addition to standard governance issues, here are some of the issues they have discussed at CLO board meetings:

- ⇒ Strategic planning
- ⇒ Academic upgrading partnerships
- ⇒ Essential skills and CIPMS
- ⇒ The Manitoba learner certification process
- ⇒ Marketing and outreach
- ⇒ Policies and procedures
- ⇒ CLO's 2007/2008 business plan
- ⇒ CLO project proposals to MTCU and NLS

CLO staff have also been active this fall and early winter with a variety of activities, including the following:

- ⇒ Participating in the Canadian Council of Learning's *Ontario Roundtable on Adult Learning*
- ⇒ Attending meetings of the *Ontario Network of the Canada Volunteerism Initiative*.
- ⇒ Participating in MTCU meetings about the CIPMS in November and December 2006 and January 2007
- ⇒ Holding our 2007 membership campaign
- ⇒ Writing four project proposals to MTCU and NLS
- ⇒ Participating in the "Financial Vibrancy For the Non-Profit Sector" Forum, held by Onestep
- ⇒ Organizing our 2006 AGM and workshops and CLO's board recruitment campaign
- ⇒ Meeting with the *Voluntarism Unit of the Ministry of Education*
- ⇒ Participating in MTCU meetings about the *Learner Skill Attainment* framework in November and December 2006 and January 2007
- ⇒ Writing CLO members-only e-bulletins
- ⇒ Participating in meetings of the Provincial Service Delivery Advisory Group on the *Labour Market Development Agreement*
- ⇒ Moderating an active *AlphaCom online discussion group* for community literacy agencies. Recent topics include: local academic upgrading partnerships, practitioner training, curriculum issues, program certification issues, federal funding cuts, resources and much more!
- ⇒ Giving input to MTCU on the *Academic Upgrading Partnership initiative*
- ⇒ Launching four new modules for our *Literacy Basics* online training website (www.nald.ca/literacybasics)