

COMMUNITY LITERACY OF ONTARIO

Practitioner Training Strategy - Project Report

**Skills For
The Future**

Skills For The Future

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	i
GLOSSARY	ii
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION	
CHAPTER 2	7
CORE SKILLS IN THE COMMUNITY-BASED SECTOR	
Overview	
2.1 Paid Staff Survey	
2.2 Volunteer Tutors Survey	
Key Messages	
CHAPTER 3	15
ACQUIRING CORE SKILLS IN THE COMMUNITY-BASED SECTOR	
Overview	
3.1 Paid Staff Survey	
3.2 Volunteer Tutors Survey	
3.3 Paid Staff Focus Groups	
3.4 Volunteer Tutors Focus Groups	
Key Messages	
CHAPTER 4	29
RECOGNIZING CORE SKILLS IN THE COMMUNITY-BASED SECTOR	
Overview	
4.1 Paid Staff Survey	
4.2 Volunteer Tutors Survey	
4.3 Paid Staff Focus Groups	
4.4 Volunteer Tutors Focus Groups	
Key Messages	
CHAPTER 5	39
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SKILLS ACQUISITION AND SKILLS RECOGNITION IN THE COMMUNITY-BASED SECTOR	
CHAPTER 6	45
CONCLUSION	
CHAPTER 7	47
APPENDICES	
7.1 Paid Staff Survey Results	
7.2 Volunteer Tutors Survey Results	
7.3 Paid Staff Focus Group — Skills Acquisition Worksheet	
7.4 Volunteer Tutors Focus Group — Skills Acquisition Worksheet	
7.5 Paid Staff Focus Group — Skills Recognition Worksheet	
7.6 Volunteer Tutors Focus Group — Skills Recognition Worksheet	
7.7 Volunteer Tutors — Education and Work Experience Survey Results	
7.8 Schedule of Focus Groups Sessions	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	77

PREFACE

Here's how our findings are presented in this report:

Chapter One	Background information and an overview of the research methodology.
Chapter Two	Each of these chapters focuses on one of the three MTCU research questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ the core skills required▶ acquiring the core skills▶ recognizing the core skills.
Chapter Three	Each of these chapters is arranged in sections to examine the findings related to Paid Literacy Practitioners and Volunteer Tutors.
Chapter Four	For both groups, survey information and then focus group information (if applicable) is presented. The chapter ends with the Key Messages which relate to the research question.
Chapter Five	Restates the recommended entry level skills for both Paid Staff and Volunteer Tutors, and provides recommendations for skills acquisition and certification (skills recognition) for each. These are based on the key messages from each of the previous chapters.
Chapter Six	Conclusion
Chapter Seven	Appendix

Unless otherwise noted, all the material in this report is original research data.

GLOSSARY

Accreditation: A term applied (generally) to training programs, rather than individuals. It usually involves an independent body reviewing the program to ensure that identified standards are met. It is assumed, in most cases, that a person successfully completing the program will have met the identified standards. (Norm Rowen, *Certification of Adult Non-Credit ESL Instructors*, 1997.)

Certification: A term applied to individuals. It usually involves a process of deciding if an individual, rather than a program, meets clearly defined standards of practice. These standards often include specific requirements for knowledge, skills and practical application through experience (Norm Rowen,., 1997.)

LBS: Literacy and Basic Skills: usually refers to the Guidelines for Program Delivery.

Literacy Practitioner: Facilitator of the learning process (MTCU, 1999).

Minimum or Entry Level Skill: The level at which someone new to a skill or attribute should be performing.

MTCU: Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, usually implying the Literacy and Basic Skills Section.

Skill: The ability to do something well.

Recognition: The more formal acknowledgment of achievement, ability or status.

Chapter**1**

INTRODUCTION

To develop agreed upon methods for initial training of practitioners in each stream and sector in order to facilitate the work of LBS consultants in monitoring agency compliance.

~ MTCU, Practitioner Training Strategy
October 1999

In the fall of 1999, Ontario's Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (Literacy and Basic Skills Section) launched its Literacy Practitioner Training Strategy. This multi-phase initiative funded each of the literacy delivery sectors and streams to carry out research on the skills, training and recognition issues within their respective sectors/streams. The initial training of literacy practitioners is the central goal of the Strategy.

In Phase One of the Strategy, each sector and stream was to answer three questions:

1. What are the core skills needed by a practitioner in a given sector or stream?
2. How should these skills be acquired by individuals working in a given sector or stream?
3. How should the acquisition of these skills be recognized by the sector or stream?

Community Literacy of Ontario (CLO) is a not-for-profit organization with over one hundred members from across Ontario. CLO plays an important role in the support of the literacy agencies and practitioners it represents. This project focused on literacy agencies which are not also affiliated with Laubach Literacy Ontario (LLO). This decision, made in consultation with LLO, was based on the fact that LLO was also funded to conduct research on behalf of practitioners working in Laubach-affiliated literacy agencies.

**Our
Approach**

In the fall of 1999, CLO hired two researchers, and a reference group was recruited from the field and the CLO board. At a team meeting in early January 2000, the project approach was finalized (see [Table 1.1](#)), the workplan was reviewed and activities were assigned to specific researchers. Throughout the project, the research team provided regular updates to MTCU, the reference group, the CLO board, and the field in general.

Some issues associated with practitioner training were identified as being beyond the scope of the project. These were things such as the ongoing support or professional development of practitioners and topics like program management, board development and organizational skills, even though they are also important concerns in our sector. Our focus was on the initial skills which could be considered minimum entry level, or core, skills for both volunteer tutors and paid staff in our sector, and on the skills training and recognition which would accompany these skills. We felt it was important also to keep in mind how this work would improve instruction to learners. Equally important was to think in future-oriented terms. We titled the project **“Skills for the Future.”**

**Our
Focus**

Although not limited to the community-based sector, previous research into literacy worker recognition and accreditation conducted by the Ontario Literacy Coalition (1999) revealed a number of key issues for all literacy delivery agencies around the province. It was clear from this report that although the community-based sector saw the need for accreditation and recognition differently from the school board and college sectors, a strong desire for greater

**Our
Research**

recognition did exist.

Community Literacy of Ontario's *Human Resource Survey* (1999) identified many key human resource issues in our sector for paid staff. CLO's *Economic Value of Volunteers* study (1998) did likewise for volunteers. These two reports, plus OLC's report on literacy worker recognition, Laubach Literacy Ontario's report *Tutor Training in Ontario* (1997) and our literature review, gave us a solid starting point.

The first task was to develop two separate surveys, one for paid staff and one for volunteer tutors from the programs we identified within our sector. The surveys contained components essential to gathering data which would assist us with answering each of the three key questions. Definitions for a number of field-related words and phrases were developed and included with the survey. Some of these definitions were later expanded and refined. The surveys also collected essential baseline data from the respondents on the length of time they had been working or volunteering in their literacy agencies.

Both surveys were field tested by members of the Reference Group and by volunteer tutors from their agencies before being sent out to the literacy agencies in our sector. The reference group also provided input to the cover letter. The reference group suggested that each survey package should contain one copy of the staff survey and five copies of the tutor survey, and that staff should be encouraged to make additional copies. This field testing stage was key, as it provided an assurance that our surveys would be easily understood by practitioners, which we felt would increase our return rate.

In March 2000, the survey was sent out by mail to over **70 literacy agencies** in our sector. The surveys were also made available in an online format. Rather than target paid practitioners by title, we invited any paid literacy practitioners who considered themselves “facilitators of the learning process” to complete the survey. Copies of the surveys can be found in [Appendix 7.1](#) and [7.2](#).

Each of the agencies was contacted by telephone approximately one week after distribution to ensure the receipt of the survey, and to encourage both the distribution and the completion of the survey. During this follow-up contact, programs were asked to consider

hosting focus groups for staff and/or volunteer tutors. A total of 80 staff and 147 volunteer surveys were completed and returned.

All returned surveys were entered into a database. The database was used to analyze the data, based on a number of queries. These results provided the direction for our focus group sessions. In May 2000 the survey findings were presented to CLO's board of directors. This provided an opportunity for the board to approve the future direction of the project. The board also served as a focus group "test site." Their input as paid staff helped us fine tune the materials we used in subsequent focus group sessions. Later in May 2000 the survey findings were also presented to MTCU at a joint sector/stream project meeting.

**Focus
Groups**

During May and June, focus group sessions were held around the province. Twenty-four sessions were held. Eleven with paid staff — 49 participants, and 13 with volunteer tutors — 67 participants. Reference Group members were very helpful in arranging and hosting the sessions. In each two- to three-hour session we focused on training and recognition issues, since the skills list had been overwhelmingly endorsed through the surveys. Work sheets used with all practitioners can be found in the Appendix. Details of the information recorded from the focus group sessions are discussed in Chapters Two, Three and Four.

The focus group sessions with volunteer tutors were also used as an opportunity to gather information from volunteers on their employment and educational background. See [Appendix 7.7](#) for a summary of this information.

Interpreting the themes from the focus group sessions and examining them in the context of survey findings was next. This gave us the basic elements of our recommendations for a practitioner training strategy for our sector. During July and August 2000, project researchers conducted an extensive Internet search and corresponded with individuals working on similar initiatives in Canada, Britain, Ireland, Scotland and the United States. In September, draft versions of this report were reviewed first by the reference group and then by CLO's board of directors. At its meeting on October 1, 2000, the

**Our
Analysis**

board accepted this report and approved the recommendations.

KEY MESSAGE

In Phase One of this project many implementation issues have surfaced. However, one important message we heard from the practitioners we worked with is the degree to which they are now ready for real action on these issues. While there are concerns about how a certification process might be launched and managed, **community-based literacy practitioners are sincerely committed to moving forward to develop their “skills for the future.”**

Table 1.1

Project Overview
Time Frame and Methodology

<p>October 1999 ↓ February 2000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ <i>Tutor Training in Ontario</i>. LLO, 1997 ▸ <i>Adult Literacy Educator Skills List</i>. OLC, 1999 ▸ <i>Human Resource Survey</i>. CLO, 1999 • Literature Review, Internet (ERIC, WWW, etc.) • Personal Communications with Key Contacts • Drafted practitioner surveys
<p>March 2000 ↓ April 2000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference Group input on Survey • Survey Distribution — 70 programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Paid Staff — 80 Respondents ▸ Volunteer Tutors — 147 Respondents • Scheduled Focus Group Sessions
<p>May 2000 ↓ June 2000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted Focus Group Sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Paid Staff — 11 sessions, 49 participants ▸ Volunteer Tutors — 13 sessions, 67 participants • Presentations to CLO board and MTCU
<p>July 2000 ↓ October 2000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzed Data collected from surveys and focus group sessions • Continued Internet searches • Personal Communications with Key Contacts • Final Report Draft <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Collected input from Reference Group ▸ Collected input from CLO board members • Wrote final report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Presented to CLO board, October 1/00 ▸ Report accepted by and recommendations approved by CLO board

Chapter**2****CORE SKILLS****In the Community-based Sector**

Question One: What are the minimum entry skills required of literacy staff and tutors?

~ MTCU, Practitioner Training Strategy
October 1999

OVERVIEW

As identified by the above question, CLO's goal was to develop a list of core/minimum entry level skills for literacy practitioners in our sector. Considerable time and effort were spent on developing a workable skills list. Using the OLC Skills List and skills lists from several other jurisdictions, we were able to develop a list which we felt reflected the needs of practitioners in our sector.

As mentioned in Chapter One, separate surveys were developed for paid practitioners and for volunteer tutors. Copies of the surveys can be found in [Appendix 7.1](#) and [7.2](#). On both surveys we asked practitioners to respond to a given list of skills. They were asked whether or not each was a minimum entry level skill for their group (staff or volunteers). We also asked respondents to rank the importance of each skill on a four-point "priority scale."

2.1 PAID STAFF SURVEY

From our contacts in the field we knew that many of the paid staff who had completed Community Literacy of Ontario's *Human Resource Survey* (1999) would also be completing the "Skills for the Future" survey. This led us to introduce the skills list by noting that 86% of respondents to the Human Resource Survey indicated that a common set of minimum skills was needed by paid literacy workers. We also thought it important to note that we were aware that not all paid staff are responsible for all the functions listed in our list. We encouraged respondents to think holistically and to think ahead. The five LBS Service Delivery Functions were used as headings and **nineteen skills** were given.

All of the nineteen skills presented were deemed, by respondents, to be **minimum entry level skills**. [Table 2.1](#), on the next page, provides a summary of all responses. As well, within each service delivery function clear priorities can be identified. For example, under the heading "Literacy Assessment," while two of the skills received very high rankings (over 90%), the other three skills received rankings of between 89% and 60%. This type of information will be very useful when determining implementation priorities. The strong positive response to the skills list in the survey helped us decide not to include the skills list as a topic for discussion during the focus groups. This decision was approved by the board at the May 2000 meeting.

Table 2.1 — Paid Staff

Minimum Entry Level Skills Percent Yes 80 Responses	
Information and Referral	
▶ Speak & listen effectively	100%
▶ Write clearly to express ideas	97%
Literacy Assessment	
▶ Observation skills	96%
▶ Interview & information gathering skills	94%
▶ Administer appropriate assessment tools and methods	77%
▶ Synthesize, interpret and organize assessment results	71%
▶ Select & modify assessment tools and methods	66%
Training Plan Development	
▶ Analytical skills	95%
▶ Organizational and planning skills	95%
▶ Presentation & explanation skills	95%
Training	
▶ Facilitate the learning process	96%
▶ Develop and use learning activities with learners	87%
▶ Develop and modify learning resources	76%
▶ Develop & deliver learner-centred literacy training	74%
▶ Train staff and/or volunteers to deliver quality instruction	62%
Follow-Up	
▶ Record keeping	89%
▶ Report writing	85%
▶ Evaluate training activities	80%
▶ Collect & record exit outcomes	61%

2.2 VOLUNTEER TUTORS SURVEY

What We Did Volunteers were presented with seventeen skills, grouped under the following headings: communication skills, assessment skills, training plan development, instructional design and delivery, and data collection and interpretation. We were aware that many volunteers could find this list of be intimidating. This lead us to introduce the skills list by suggesting that the list not be seen as a critique of skills they may currently have, but to think to the future and to think in terms of the learning needs of the adult learners with which they are working.

What We Found While fewer of the skills presented to volunteer tutors received a ranking of 80% or higher, a clear message can be seen in the results. Volunteer tutors currently in our sector do not see assessment as part of their tutoring job. [Table Two](#) provides a summary of all responses from volunteer tutors. Based on the clear and strong response to the skills list in the survey we decided to not include the skills list as a topic for discussion during the focus groups. Rather, the data collected from the survey was used as the beginning point in the focus group sessions to gather more information about skills acquisition and recognition in the future.

Table 2.2 — Volunteer Tutors

Minimum Entry Level Skills Percent Yes 147 Responses	
Communication Skills	
▶ Speak and listen effectively	97%
▶ Write clearly to express ideas	93%
Assessment Skills	
▶ Observation skills	90%
▶ Interview and information-gathering skills	60%
▶ Administer appropriate assessment tools and methods	48%
▶ Select and modify assessment tools and methods	46%
▶ Synthesize, interpret and organize assessment results	39%
Training Plan Development	
▶ Presentation and explanation skills	86%
▶ Organizational and planning skills	82%
▶ Analytical skills	70%
Instructional Design & Delivery	
▶ Facilitate the learning process	85%
▶ Develop and use learning activities with learners	70%
▶ Develop and modify learning resources	59%
▶ Develop and deliver learner-centred literacy training	54%
Data Collection & Interpretation	
▶ Document learning activities and learner progress	76%
▶ Report writing	59%
▶ Collect and record exit outcomes	41%

KEY MESSAGES

Based on our survey findings, CLO recommends that the following skills be considered the **minimum entry level skills** for practitioners. All of the skills received a ranking of 80% or more on our surveys.

Table 2.3

Recommended Minimum Entry Level Skills	
Paid Staff	Volunteer Tutors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Speak and listen effectively ▶ Write clearly to express ideas ▶ Observation skills ▶ Facilitate the learning process ▶ Analytical skills ▶ Organizational and planning skills ▶ Presentation and explanation skills ▶ Interview and information gathering skills ▶ Record keeping ▶ Develop and use learning activities with learners ▶ Report writing ▶ Evaluate training activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Speak and listen effectively ▶ Write clearly to express ideas ▶ Observation skills ▶ Presentation and explanation skills ▶ Facilitate the learning process ▶ Organizational and planning skills

A number of skills which received a ranking of less than 80% but more than 50%, are not included in this recommendation. These skills should be considered to be needed on-the-job skills, but further research should be undertaken to determine the time frame in which they may be required. For new paid staff, as an example, skills related

to literacy intake and assessment may not be required within the first three months on the job, but should perhaps be in place before the end of the first six months on the job.

While each of the above recommended skills should be a required skill, not every skill will necessitate the development of a specific course module. Also, agencies can certainly add skills to the recommended skills list. In fact, agencies should add skills specific to the needs of their client group.

Chapter**3**

ACQUIRING CORE SKILLS

In the Community-based Sector

Question Two: How should the minimum entry skills be acquired?

~ MTCU, Practitioner Training Strategy

October 1999

OVERVIEW

To best answer MTCU's second question, we felt it was necessary to find out first how the practitioners in the programs we surveyed currently get their skills and skills training. Once we gathered that information we would then ask them to provide us with information on how they could get skills in the future. We wanted to gather information on how training is delivered now and how it could be delivered in the future.

During May and June, the project researchers travelled to programs across Ontario to hold 13 focus group sessions with volunteer tutors and 11 with paid staff. The focus group sessions gave practitioners the opportunity to hear more about the project and to help shape the future of practitioner training in Ontario through their input. Forty-nine paid staff and 67 volunteer tutors participated. Materials created specifically for the focus groups helped guide the discussion and also helped to ensure some level of consistency in the information collected and recorded. Forms used in the focus group sessions can be viewed in the [Appendix](#).

3.1 PAID STAFF SURVEY

What We Found Documents such as CLO's *Human Resource Survey* (1999), LLO's *Survey of Tutor Training in Ontario* (1997), and other reference materials provided much of the background information we used to frame our questions for this section of the survey. For example, CLO's *Human Resource Survey* reported that "staff time to participate in training" and costs related to participating in training were two of the most frequently cited barriers to accessing training. Our goal was to collect data on methods of training delivery rather than on the content of possible courses modules.

What We Found At this time there is no universal formal training system for either staff or volunteers in the literacy programs we surveyed. We knew, however, from a number of sources that a large percentage of paid staff have some form of post-secondary education and often come to the literacy field with extensive training from prior employment. We learned from our survey (80 responses) that 63% of paid staff have over four years experience in the field. In addition, over 25% indicated that they had been working in the literacy field for more than ten years. This combination of education, prior employment experience and length of time in the literacy field gives us a core of literacy practitioners who are both well-educated and experienced.

While current paid staff in our sector may be experienced and well-educated, there is no one systematic career path into the literacy field. Our survey collected information on how paid staff acquired their literacy practitioner skills. As can be seen in [Table 3.1](#), most respondents acquired their literacy related skills on the job, through printed materials, files and resources, initial orientation, and periodic conferences, workshops and professional development events.

Table 3.1

Paid Staff
Method of Learning — Current*

Printed manuals, files and resources	86%
Informal professional development (such as workshops, online courses, conferences and training events)	86%
On-the-job orientation as the job started	79%
Prior work experience	76%
Academic qualifications prior to starting the job	69%
Prior volunteer experience	66%
Training for volunteer tutors**	48%
Ongoing accredited training (such as college courses, certificate programs)	40%
Other	19%
No training	3%

* Methods of Learning refers strictly to how practitioners learned skills in their literacy jobs.

** Many paid practitioners start out in literacy agencies as volunteers. This training refers to the training they took with the agency when they were volunteers.

When asked what would be the best way for paid staff to receive training in the future, 79% of respondents selected regional and local training. Table 3.2 provides a summary of the 80 responses to this section of the survey. Clearly there is a desire to move from the current in-house, on-the-job types of training methods to a more systematic approach, although the existing in-house training methods are still valued.

Table 3.2

Paid Staff	
Method of Training — In the Future	
Regional and local training with other literacy organizations	79%
Province-wide training*	54%
Distance education courses through an accredited institution	46%
Existing training methods by the program	36%
Classroom courses at an accredited institution	30%
Existing tutor training sessions	29%
Online learning	26%
Self-study resources	23%
Other	6%

* for example, the recent Outcomes Assessment Training delivered by the Learning Outcomes Resource Coordinators

Not only do paid staff take training, they also provide, or ensure the provision of, training for the volunteer tutors in their programs. Ninety-six percent of the respondents indicated that volunteer tutors receive initial training. Length of training ranges from 5 to 10 hours (60%), to 11 to 15 hours (36%). Only four percent of respondents provide training that exceeds 15 hours.

3.2 VOLUNTEER TUTORS SURVEY

What We Did We knew from CLO's *Economic Value of Volunteers* study that 89% of volunteers rated learning new skills as either “very important” or “somewhat important.” As with paid staff, we wanted to research how skills are acquired currently by volunteer tutors. We also used the survey to gather information from tutors on their perception of the ideal length (number of hours) for the training of new tutors and on ways to increase tutor participation in ongoing training opportunities. Once again, our focus was on the methods of training delivery rather than on possible content of courses.

What We Found From our paid staff survey, we learned that 96% of the programs we surveyed provide some form of initial training for their volunteer tutors. One hundred and forty-seven volunteer tutors returned the survey. Forty-nine percent of them indicated that tutor training should range in the future from 11 to 15 hours in length. We also learned that while 36% of volunteer tutors have over four years experience in the field, 31% have over one but less than four years experience and 33% have less than one year of experience. Since over half of our volunteer tutors have three or less years’ experience, there is a need to gather more information about the skills that volunteers bring to their tutoring positions, how to build this into tutor intake and how to make all training accessible and timely. Regardless of the skills needed by the tutors, 90% indicated that the most effective way for them to receive training would be from the program.

Table 3.3

Volunteer Tutors
Method of Learning — In the Future

Tutor training provided by the program	90%
One-on-one training with an experienced tutor	48%
Regional tutor training	33%
Self-study resources	29%
Blended training*	29%
Classroom courses at an accredited institution	16%
Other	15%
Online learning	14%
Distance education courses through an accredited institution	6%

* Blended training: a combination of best practices from community-based and Laubach-based programs.

3.3 PAID STAFF FOCUS GROUPS

Based on our survey and additional background information, we understood that paid staff in our sector have a wealth of education and experience. We also learned from our survey that, in the future, their preferred methods of training would be regional/local training and systematic province-wide training. We used the focus group sessions to have paid practitioners discuss how these training methods would work for them and also to discuss these training methods in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and difficulties. This allowed us to use their experience and knowledge to help shape the recommendations for skills acquisition in the future. Samples of the materials used during the focus group sessions can be found in [Appendix 7.3](#).

The information recorded from the focus groups sessions overwhelmingly verified the data collected from our survey. The desire to have credentials and/or certification and the identity of belonging to a larger professional system was strong. The desire for a locally available training system that would offer some choice was also strong. The focus group discussions provided important information around the components of skills acquisition in a more formal training system. Clearly, paid staff want a system which is flexible, cost effective, and most importantly, supported by a funder, or funders. Skill transferability, both into and out of the literacy field and within the field itself was also highly ranked.

Some of the challenges of a practitioner training strategy, as viewed by the practitioners in our focus groups with paid staff, are presented in [Table 3.4](#). The "categories" were not used during the sessions but rather emerged as themes when the data collected from all the sessions was reviewed by project researchers. Many of the comments made by staff are important "flags" for the implementation phase of this Strategy.

Table 3.4

**Paid Staff Focus Group Sessions
Challenges to Getting Skills in the Future**

TIME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Length of time needed to receive training ▶ Taking time off work
COST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Who's paying? ▶ Impact of staff turnover; wage replacement if training is mandatory ▶ Overall system — who's paying? ▶ Geography — time and travel costs
COURSE CONTENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Agreement on which courses are needed ▶ Covering all the bases, yet keeping it relevant and useful ▶ Who's designing the courses?
DELIVERY METHODS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Scheduling new training and timing of new staff entering the field ▶ How often are courses offered? ▶ Variety of methods of delivery
OTHER COMMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Will a system keep (good) people out? ▶ I won't do on my own time. ▶ We'll lose (good) people! ▶ Too much pressure to prove worth. ▶ Pass/fail?; tests/testing? ▶ Replacement issues — bodies and dollars ▶ How is it standardized and regulated, and by whom? ▶ If I am working full time, when can I do this?

3.4 VOLUNTEER TUTORS FOCUS GROUPS

The focus group sessions with volunteer tutors were similar to those held with paid staff. We wanted to give volunteer tutors the opportunity to tell us how tutor training in the future could benefit from the current situation and yet become more formal, and to help us define what "formal" would mean. We asked them to think about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and difficulties of acquiring skills. Samples of the materials used during the focus group sessions can be found in [Appendix 7.4](#). Information was collected through both verbal and written comments. Verbal information was noted on flip chart paper and later transcribed into written notes. Written comments from participants were collected at the end of the sessions.

What We Did Project researchers met with 67 volunteer tutors from 11 different literacy delivery agencies across Ontario. Many of the same concerns were expressed by individuals in different programs. Volunteer tutors were intensely loyal to the tutor training being offered within the program. They indicated that the topics covered were very useful as a foundation, and were especially grateful for the orientation to literacy issues and the issues and challenges facing adult literacy learners.

They spoke strongly about the need for a useful tutor resource manual and the need to be able to contact key resource people for help and support once they had started tutoring. They recognized that this was a time consuming role for their coordinators to take on, and frequently suggested that new tutors should be paired up with experienced volunteers.

Volunteer tutors were enthusiastic about and loyal towards the person who had delivered their training. They felt that the training time was an important time to build rapport with the program staff. In the discussions, tutors also supported regional training with nearby programs, as this would increase their contact with other volunteers. However, they still wanted to maintain a connection to their own program.

As mentioned in Chapter One, additional background information

was collected from volunteer tutors during the focus group sessions. This data was collected to increase our understanding of the types of skills that volunteers could bring to the tutoring experience. [Table 3.5](#) and [3.6](#) below present a summary of some of this information.

Table 3.5

Volunteer Tutors — Current Employment Status	
Number of completed questionnaires	67
Paid employment (current)	36%
Retired	58%
Other (e.g., student)	5%
Do you have any post-secondary education?	91%
Do you belong to any professional associations?	45%

Volunteer tutors tend to have fewer years of experience in the literacy field when compared to paid staff, but many (45%) belong, or have belonged, to professional organizations in their field of employment. Most (91%) have some form of post-secondary education, and most work, or have worked, in professional fields.

Table 3.6

Types of Employment — past and/or present*	
Self-employed	7
Education field	29
Medical/health care profession	12
Office or business manager	17
Senior level management	10

*This will not add up to the total number of questionnaires completed, as respondents either gave multiple answers or did not complete this section.

A skills acquisition system for volunteer tutors should be built on the strengths of our tutors. Based on the information provided by the volunteer tutors themselves we know they can come to tutoring already highly skilled from their employment experience. We believe many of their employment skills are the same skills that were identified in Chapter Two as the minimum entry level skills.

KEY MESSAGES

Literacy practitioners in the community-based sector, both paid and volunteer, are well-educated and highly experienced. Many have skills with a high degree of transferability into the literacy field. This indicates that many paths into literacy exist and they should be encouraged in the future.

We learned that **paid staff** value training, not just as an opportunity to gain skills but also as a way to build professional credibility, respect, identity and accountability. Training also serves as an important vehicle for facilitating networking and peer support.

Paid staff recommend the following components for their **skills acquisition**:

- ▶ Experienced practitioners from our sector should be involved in the development and delivery of training;
- ▶ Skills acquisition should be regionally/locally available;
- ▶ Skills acquisition should be part of a province-wide skills acquisition system;
- ▶ Courses should be available from accredited institutions, with both classroom and distance education options.

Implementation issues caused the greatest concern for paid staff. Discussion of a training /certification system led to questions about the costs, incentives, regulation, monitoring and what it will mean for experienced practitioners. Assuming that a sound implementation plan will address these concerns, the overall message was a readiness to get on with the process.

Volunteer tutors bring high levels of education and experience to their volunteer work. We learned that tutors were intensely loyal to the tutor training being offered within the program. They recognize the importance of building rapport with program staff through the program-based training. They also recognize the importance of developing a common standard for tutor training and the value of having a universal training resource.

They recommend the following components for their **skills acquisition**:

- ▶ Keep the current model of program-based tutor training, with a

- few modifications;
- ▶ Develop common province-wide standards for tutor training;
- ▶ Ensure that on-the-job training (learning by doing) is an essential component;
- ▶ Increase only minimally the length of initial tutor training;
- ▶ Have people and resources in place for ongoing and individualized support;
- ▶ Have program staff or volunteer mentors/ buddies in place for help with specific tutoring issues. These could be available regionally or provincially, and could be online.

Our practitioners will only buy into a system where the purposes and intentions are clear. The system must have validity for learners, practitioners and the field. Practitioners highlighted the importance of receiving timely clear communications from the key organizations and government programs involved in the various phases of the Practitioner Training Strategy. They must also be involved in all phases of the development of the system.

Chapter**4**

RECOGNIZING CORE SKILLS

In the Community-based Sector

Question Three: How should the acquisition of these skills be recognized by the sector or stream?

~ MTCU, Practitioner Training Strategy
October 1999

OVERVIEW

To begin our exploration of this third question with practitioners, we defined recognition as the acknowledgment of achievement, ability or status. We hoped this definition would help avoid any confusion between recognition (certification) and appreciation. Both surveys asked practitioners to identify the various types of recognition they receive and who provided this recognition. We also collected information on future skills recognition — why skills should be recognized and the types of recognition that should be provided. Respondents were given checklists and space to add their own suggestions. Responses to these questions provided useful information about the ways in which skills recognition is currently achieved, as well as recommendations for skills recognition in the future.

We knew from our survey results that there was strong support for skills recognition, but we were also concerned that there was still some confusion between the terms "skills recognition" and "appreciation." Focus group questions were formulated to expand on the data collected from the surveys and to help practitioners

understand that we were discussing skills recognition, or certification, not appreciation. Materials created for use in the focus group sessions can be found in the [Appendix](#).

4.1 PAID STAFF SURVEY

As mentioned in the overview above, three questions on the survey were designed to collect information about skills recognition. These questions were: Are your skills currently recognized by your agency? In the future, should the skills and training acquired by paid staff be formally recognized? In the future, what types of skills recognition would you recommend for paid staff? Full survey results can be found in [Appendix 7.1](#).

A universal system of recognition/certification does not exist for paid staff in the literacy agencies we surveyed. This is not to say that skills recognition does not currently happen. Ninety percent of the respondents acknowledged that their skills receive some form of recognition. [Table 4.1](#) provides the breakdown of the types of recognition currently being received.

Table 4.1

Paid Staff
Skills Recognition — Current
72 Responses

Regular performance reviews	82%
Agency reimburses successfully completed courses	45%
Training certificate issued by the network	32%
Tutor training certificate	25%
Other	10%

When asked about skills recognition in the future, 92% of respondents thought that the skills and training acquired by paid staff should receive some form of formal recognition. Career mobility/employment opportunities were cited by 85% as a reason for formally recognizing skills and training. Professional pride and the enhancement of qualifications were also highly ranked.

Table 4.2 shows the responses to the types of skills recognition that could be put into place in the future. Twenty-two percent of paid practitioners are satisfied with their current situation. If they are among the 45% percent who are reimbursed by their agency for successfully completed courses, or who are rewarded in some other way, this could explain why they are satisfied with their current situation.

Table 4.2

Paid Staff
Types of Skills Recognition — Future

79 Responses

None, I'm satisfied with the recognition given by the agency	22%
A certificate of achievement issued by the agency	13%
Regular written performance appraisals	42%
A certificate issued by an accredited institution	37%
Professional status at a provincial or national level	54%
Province-wide system of recognition for paid literacy practitioners	56%
Other	8%

The top two choices — professional status at a provincial or national level and a province-wide system of recognition for paid literacy practitioners — reflect the desire for a more meaningful, external to the agency, system of recognition.

4.2 VOLUNTEER TUTORS SURVEY

Volunteer tutors were asked to respond to three questions designed to collect information about skills recognition.

What We Did These questions were: Does your program currently recognize tutor skills? In the future, should the skills and training acquired by volunteer tutors be recognized? In the future what types of skills recognition would you recommend for volunteer tutors? Full survey results can be found in [Appendix 7.2](#).

Our survey results told us that 64% of respondents currently receive some form of skills recognition from the agency for which they tutor. Eighty-seven percent indicated that their skills and training should receive some type of formal recognition. Currently, certificates issued by the agency are the most common type of skills recognition. [Table 4.3](#) shows the response rate to the question of why skills training should be recognized in the future. Respondents could select up to three of the options.

Table 4.3

Volunteer Tutors
Reasons for Skills Recognition — In the Future
 141 Responses

Personal pride	70%
Provides evidence of an individual's qualifications	65%
Increased employment opportunities	59%
Provides recognition from the community	49%
Provides linkages with broader literacy movement	44%
Other	15%

Many volunteer tutors see the value of skills recognition, if not for themselves then for others. Although 70% of volunteer tutors gave personal pride as a reason for having a more formal system of recognition in the future, many are satisfied with the recognition they currently receive. Fifty-nine percent of the volunteer tutors receive a certificate issued by the program.

The final question on the survey asked respondents to select their top three choices for skills recognition in the future. [Table 4.4](#) provides the responses to that question.

Table 4.4

Volunteer Tutors
Types of Skills Recognition — Future
 134 Responses

None, I'm satisfied with the recognition that my program gives	40%
A letter of recommendation from the program	40%
A certificate of achievement issued by the program	38%
A province wide system of recognition for volunteer tutors	32%
Written performance appraisals	17%
A certificate issued by an accredited institution	11%
Other	9%

While 40% of volunteer tutors did not want any type of recognition in the future, an equal number indicated that some form of acknowledgment provided by the agency would be the type of recognition they would prefer. Forty percent wanted a letter of recommendation and 38% wanted a certificate of achievement, both issued by the program.

4.3 PAID STAFF FOCUS GROUP

What We Did We used the focus group sessions to have paid staff discuss in more depth the type of formal recognition they would like to receive and to give us more input into the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and difficulties of implementing a more formal system of recognition in the future. Ninety-two percent of our survey respondents thought that the skills and training acquired by paid staff should receive some form of formal recognition. Knowing that paid staff in our sector have a wealth of education and experience and knowing that so many felt recognition was important, we wanted to gather information that would help shape a certification system that would not be unduly onerous. Samples of the materials used during the focus group sessions can be found in [Appendix 7.5](#). Information was collected through both verbal and written comments. Verbal information was noted on flip chart paper and later transcribed into written notes. Written comments from participants were collected at the end of the sessions.

What We Found Overall, paid staff showed strong support for a formal system of skills recognition. Participants suggested that formal recognition could provide proof of excellence of service; could provide room for growth — both personal and professional; could provide an opportunity for advancement outside our sector or field; and could provide improved credibility outside the field, and with learners and tutors.

Some of the challenges of implementing a practitioner training strategy for paid staff, as viewed by the practitioners in our focus groups, can be seen in [Table 4.5](#). The "categories" were not used during the sessions but rather emerged as themes when the data collected from all the sessions was reviewed by project staff. Many of the comments made by staff are important "flags" for the implementation phase of the Strategy.

Table 4.5

Paid Staff
Challenges to Skills Recognition/Certification
in the Future

INITIAL PHASE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Is it mandatory or voluntary ▶ Whose time/ whose dime? ▶ Will there be a "granny" option? ▶ Who's responsible for the system? ▶ The role of the government, if any
TRANSITION PHASE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Who's setting the standards? ▶ Who's policing the course content? ▶ Will there be a PLAR component ?
ONGOING PHASE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How will we reach agreement on which courses are needed? ▶ How will the system be kept relevant and useful? ▶ Will re-certification be a part of the system?

For the most part, paid staff in the programs we visited supported the need for recognition as individuals and for an identity as a profession. They welcomed the opportunity to be taken seriously through the demonstration of their skills and abilities.

4.4 VOLUNTEER TUTORS FOCUS GROUP

Project researchers met with 67 volunteer tutors from 11 different literacy delivery agencies across Ontario. The focus group sessions with volunteer tutors were structured to allow the participants to tell us about the types of recognition they would like to receive and provide us with input about the possible strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and difficulties of implementing a more formal system of recognition in the future. On the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and difficulties of providing volunteers tutors with more formal recognition. Samples of the materials used during the focus group sessions can be found in [Appendix 7.6](#). Information was collected though both verbal and written comments. Verbal information was noted on flip chart paper and later transcribed into written notes. Written comments from participants were collected at the end of the sessions.

Many of the same concerns were expressed by individuals in programs across the province. During the focus group sessions many volunteers voiced the opinion that “they” didn’t need recognition, although most agreed that other volunteer tutors might find skills recognition useful. Some tutors did feel that a larger system of recognition for literacy volunteering would be important as it would draw attention to the cause of literacy and the collective contribution of volunteer tutors. Most participants acknowledged that it would be valuable to have set standards for tutor training and a universal tutor training resource manual.

KEY MESSAGES

Among paid practitioners there is a genuine desire for some kind of formal and external (beyond the agency) province-wide system of recognition that is tied to training. Many of the concerns raised were not concerns about having a more formal system of skills recognition, but rather concerns about how the system would be implemented and sustained. Concerns were also expressed that a certificate would eventually become a condition of employment.

Paid staff saw the value in a system that might mirror the Learning Outcomes approach being used for learners. They also felt they could serve as role models for the learners because of their participation in a learning continuum.

They recommend the following components for their **skills recognition**:

- ▶ The involvement of practitioners in all stages of development.
- ▶ The approach to the development of the system should not be top-down.
- ▶ Initially, participation in a certification system should be voluntary.
- ▶ The system should be flexible, with multiple pathways to certification.
- ▶ Government commitment and funding for such an initiative should be transparent.

While **volunteer tutors** are less concerned about a more formal province-wide certification system, they recommended the following two very important components for their **skills recognition**:

- ▶ Common standards for tutor training, and
- ▶ A universal tutor resource manual.

Current volunteer tutors felt it was important to note that, for them, skills recognition would not be sought for personal goals. Rather, it could be used to make a point to governments and society about the collective effort and value of volunteer tutors.

Chapter**5**

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SKILLS
ACQUISITION AND SKILLS
RECOGNITION**

In the Community-based Sector

Formal skills training and certification systems should be implemented and fully supported with adequate resources, including staff and finances for practitioners — both paid staff and volunteer tutors — in our community-based sector. The implementation plan must address the needs and concerns of:

- ▶ current practitioners
- ▶ people who become practitioners during the transition phase, and
- ▶ people who enter the field in the future under the guidelines for the new system.

In addition to the recommended minimum entry level skills, our recommendations provide minimum components for both skills acquisition and certification (skills recognition).

Recommended Minimum Entry Level Skills

Paid Staff	Volunteer Tutors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Speak and listen effectively ▶ Write clearly to express ideas ▶ Observation skills ▶ Facilitate the learning process ▶ Analytical skills ▶ Organizational and planning skills ▶ Presentation and explanation skills ▶ Interview and information gathering skills ▶ Record keeping ▶ Develop and use learning activities with learners ▶ Report writing ▶ Evaluate training activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Speak and listen effectively ▶ Write clearly to express ideas ▶ Observation skills ▶ Presentation and explanation skills ▶ Facilitate the learning process ▶ Organizational and planning skills

Recommendations for Skills Training and Certification

PAID STAFF

Recommendation	Keys to Success
Common standards and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ These are approved by sector/field and funder. ▶ These are supported by a governing "body" which has clearly defined goal(s).
Voluntary participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The decision to participate is made by individuals. ▶ Agencies should have option of using standards as hiring criteria.
A variety of assessment options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The time frame is clearly defined and change is phased-in. ▶ Current practitioners should have a number of options
Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) option	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The process which is developed is meaningful to our sector. ▶ Skills are demonstrated through a variety of methods.
A range of delivery options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Self-assessment plays a central role in determining which courses to take. ▶ Access to system is equitable across our sector.
Outcomes-based course modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The content and outcomes are well defined.
Involvement of paid staff in all aspects of system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Participation is encouraged and recognized. ▶ Replacement "dollars" are in place.
Multi-faceted access to training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Various learning modes are available.

Recommendations for Skills Training and Certification

PAID STAFF

Recommendation	Keys to Success
Reasonable costs for certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Neither agencies nor agency staff should bear unreasonable financial burden.

Recommendations for Skills Training and Certification

VOLUNTEER TUTORS

Recommendation	Keys to Success
Common provincial standards for tutor training and certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Training must respect the time limitations of volunteers.
A universal tutor training manual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Agencies may add components to the manual and may provide training that goes beyond the minimum standards.
Mandatory Initial tutor training in the core skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Training should be provided by agency and be 15 to 20 hours in length. ▶ Not all initial training needs to be face-to-face.
A standard province-wide certificate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Responsibility for ensuring compliance to common standards rests with the agency providing the training.
“Automatic” certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Successful completion of all initial tutor training is the only criterion.

Recommendations for Skills Training and Certification

VOLUNTEER TUTORS

Recommendation	Keys to Success
A variety of assessment options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The time frame is clearly defined and change is phased-in. ▶ Current practitioners should have a number of options
Individualized support to tutors after initial training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Access to and type of support are provided by a variety of methods
Low costs for training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Any cost for the provision of training courses must not be borne by the volunteer.

The above recommendations for minimum entry level skills, skills acquisition and skills recognition (certification) were accepted and approved by the Board of Directors of Community Literacy of Ontario on October 1, 2000.

The Board made an additional recommendation: That the Practitioner Training Strategy for community-based literacy delivery agencies in Ontario be phased in over time and that the appropriate support be given to all phases.

Chapter**6**

CONCLUSION

Overall Goal of the Practitioner Training Strategy:
*To develop agreed upon methods for initial training of
practitioners in each stream and sector...*

And, in Phase I, research the following questions:

Question One: *What are the minimum entry skills required of
literacy staff and tutors?*

Question Two: *How should the minimum entry skills be
acquired?*

Question Three: *How should the acquisition of these skills be
recognized by the sector or stream?*

~ MTCU, Practitioner Training Strategy
October 1999

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Practitioner Training Strategy currently has four phases. This report represents the answers, as provided by the paid staff and volunteer tutors in over 70 literacy delivery agencies from across the province, to the Phase I questions.

Some issues associated with the provision of service delivery in a community-based agency were identified as being beyond the scope of the project. Issues like program management, board development and organizational skills, while important to our sector, do not fit within the definition of practitioner provided by MTCU and will not be addressed by any phase of this Strategy. Other topics, like the ongoing support or professional development of practitioners, will be

addressed in other phases of this Strategy. In fact the goal for Phase II, as stated by MTCU in October 1999, will be "to develop methods to implement the three answers in order to satisfy the needs of each sector and stream."

The development of a more formal skills training and certification system for all literacy practitioners has been a topic of discussion for many years. While further research may be necessary to gain a more complete understanding of all the facets and implications of a formal skills training and certification system, the basic framework for the system is now well-documented.

The information presented in this report is based on solid, substantive research data collected from those who will be affected by the recommendations presented in this report. These recommendations are **their recommendations**. This report and the recommendations presented in it were accepted and approved by the Board of Directors of Community Literacy of Ontario on October 1, 2000.

"I think it's a great idea! Let's get on with it"

~ Focus Group Participant discussing certification,
May 2000

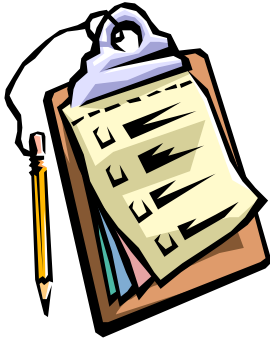
Chapter

7

APPENDIX

APPENDIX #	TITLE
7.1	Paid Staff Survey Results
7.2	Volunteer Tutors Survey Results
7.3	Paid Staff Focus Group — Skills Acquisition Worksheet
7.4	Volunteer Tutors Focus Group — Skills Acquisition Worksheet
7.5	Paid Staff Focus Group — Skills Recognition Worksheet
7.6	Volunteer Tutors Focus Group — Skills Recognition Worksheet
7.7	Volunteer Tutors Education and Work Experience Survey Results
7.8	Schedule of Focus Groups Sessions

Skills for the Future



A SURVEY of the SKILLS and TRAINING of PAID LITERACY PRACTITIONERS

To be completed by Paid Literacy Practitioners

Please read the following before you begin the survey.

Community Literacy of Ontario (CLO) is a network of 90 community-based literacy programs. We are conducting this survey to gather information about the skills and training needed by paid literacy practitioners. **Your input is essential!**

As one of the participants in the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' "Literacy Practitioner Training Strategy", CLO has the following research objectives for this project:

1. What are the minimum entry level skills required of literacy staff and tutors?
2. How are skills currently acquired and how could they be acquired?
3. How are the skills and training of staff and volunteers currently recognized and how could they receive more formal province-wide recognition?

By taking the time to complete this survey you will help **shape the future** skills and training practices that are in place in community-based agencies across Ontario. The results of this research will also help programs meet Core Quality Standard #12: *A quality literacy program has practitioners trained in adult education with a focus on basic education. They have initial and ongoing training.*

Keep in mind that the focus here is on the future and on the learning needs of our adult literacy learners. Our research focus is on practitioner training relating to core quality standard #12, at this time, CLO is not researching program management, board and volunteer development and office management skills.

Completing the survey should take you about **15 minutes**. You can return your completed survey to CLO by mail or fax. **Please return your completed survey BY April 20, 2000.**

Mail to: Community Literacy of
Ontario
80 Bradford Street, Suite 508
Barrie, ON L4N 6S7

Fax to: 1-705-733-6197

Please read these definitions before proceeding with the questions.

By Definition:

- accreditation** ▶ recognized as meeting certain standards
 - certification** ▶ obtaining a formal document which attests to a level of achievement
 - literacy practitioner** ▶ facilitator of the learning process
 - minimum or entry level skill** ▶ the level at which someone new to a skill or attribute should be performing
 - skill** ▶ the ability to do something well
 - recognition** ▶ the acknowledgment of achievement, ability or status
-
-

All information collected in this survey will be completely **confidential**. Individual data will never be used, only aggregate data. A final report will be available in November 2000.

Questions? Contact Fiona Huebner at 613-232-3893 or huebner@cyberus.ca. Please make as many copies as you need and please **encourage all your colleagues** to fill out the survey!

1. Your program name: _____ 80 Responses

2. How long have you been working in literacy (both paid and volunteer work)?

79 Responses

less than a year	12%
1-3 years	25%
4-10 years	34%
over 10 years	29%

In the 1999 CLO Human Resource Survey 86% of respondents indicated that a common set of minimum skills was needed by paid literacy workers. We understand that not all paid staff are responsible for all the functions listed here. Please indicate **what you consider** to be the most **important minimum entry level skills** needed in general by **paid** literacy practitioners in your organization. Remember that your response may not reflect current practice, but should **indicate an ideal for the future**. If you think that a particular skill is not a minimum entry level skill, then please check the no column.

Skill - the ability to do something well Listed by the five LBS Service Delivery Functions 80 Responses	Should this be a minimum entry level skill for paid staff?		Rank (✓) the importance of this skill for paid staff 1 = low priority 2 = medium low 3 = medium high 4 = high priority			
	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Information and Referral						
Write clearly to express ideas	97%		0	6%	23%	71%
Speak & listen effectively	100%		0	1%	15%	84%
Literacy Assessment						
Select & modify assessment tools and methods	66%		7%	24%	32%	37%
Administer appropriate assessment tools and methods	77%		1%	21%	30%	48%
Synthesize, interpret and organize assessment results	71%		4%	20%	30%	46%
Interview & information gathering skills	94%		1%	8%	32%	59%
Observation skills	96%		0	4%	31%	65%
Training Plan Development						
Analytical skills	95%		0	18%	36%	46%
Organizational and planning skills	95%		1%	8%	30%	61%
Presentation & explanation skills	95%		0	6%	31%	63%
More skills on the next page!						

Skill - the ability to do something well Listed by the five LBS Service Delivery Functions 80 Responses	Should this be a minimum entry level skill for paid staff?		Rank (✓) the importance of this skill for paid staff 1 = low priority 2 = medium low 3 = medium high 4 = high priority			
	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Training						
Train staff and/or volunteers to deliver quality instruction	62%		9%	12%	28%	51%
Develop & deliver learner-centred literacy training	74%		3%	7%	28%	62%
Develop and use learning activities with learners	87%		1%	7%	33%	59%
Develop and modify learning resources	76%		0	19%	37%	44%
Facilitate the learning process	96%		1%	7%	23%	69%
Follow-Up						
Evaluate training activities	80%		4%	15%	44%	37%
Record keeping	89%		7%	18%	37%	38%
Report writing	85%		8%	27%	32%	33%
Collect & record exit outcomes	61%		18%	21%	35%	26%
Your Comments						
18 comments						

4. How are entry level skills currently acquired?

Please indicate how **you** acquired the skills you need to be a paid literacy practitioner.

Method of Learning 80 Responses	Check (✓) all that apply
No training	3%
Academic qualifications prior to starting the job	69%
Prior work experience	76%
Prior volunteer experience	66%
On-the-job orientation as the job started	79%
Training for volunteer tutors	48%
Printed manuals, files and resources	86%
Ongoing informal professional development (such as workshops, online courses, conferences and training events)	86%
Ongoing accredited training (such as college courses, certificate programs)	40%
Other	19%

5. How should entry level skills be acquired?

In your opinion what would be the best way for **paid literacy practitioners** to receive training?

Method of Training 80 Responses	Check (✓) up to three choices
Existing training methods by the program	36%
Existing tutor training sessions	29%
Province-wide training (e.g. the recent Outcomes Assessment training delivered by the L.O. Resource Coordinators)	54%
Online learning	26%
Self-study resources	23%
Distance education courses through an accredited institution	46%
Classroom courses at an accredited institution	30%
Regional and local training with other literacy organizations	79%
Other:	6%

6. Training - Volunteers

Do the volunteer tutors in your agency receive initial tutor training? If yes, how long is the training?

Yes 96% No 4%

74 Responses

Number of hours 70 Responses	
5 - 10 hours	60%
11 - 15 hours	36%
16 -20	4%
Over 20 hours	0

Recognition: the acknowledgment of achievement, ability or status, not to be confused with appreciation.

7. Skills Recognition - Current

Are **your skills** currently recognized by your agency?

Yes 90% No 10% 72 Responses

If yes, how? 71 Responses	Check (✓) all that apply
Regular performance reviews	82%
Tutor training certificate	25%
Training certificate issued by local literacy agency or network	32%
Agency reimburses successfully completed courses	45%
Other:	10%

8. Skills Recognition - In the Future

Should the skills and training acquired by **paid literacy practitioners** be formally recognized?

Yes 92% **No** 8% 77 Responses

If yes, why? 76 Responses	Check (✓) all that apply
Career mobility/employment opportunities	86%
Job security	50%
Increased earning power	57%
Enhances qualifications	76%
Professional pride	74%
Provides linkages with broader literacy movement	70%
Provides evidence of making a difference	38%
Other:	9%

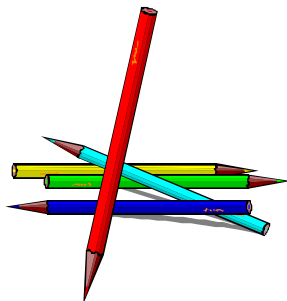
9. Skills Recognition - Types

In the future, what type of skills recognition **would you recommend** for paid literacy practitioners?

Recognition in the Future 79 Responses	Check (✓) up to three choices
None, I'm satisfied with the recognition given by the agency.	22%
Certificate of achievement issued by the agency	13%
On-going, written performance appraisals.	42%
Certificate issued by an accredited institution.	37%
Professional status at a provincial or national level	54%
Province-wide system of recognition for paid literacy practitioners	56%
Other:	8%

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!
If you have other comments, please attach them to the survey.

Skills for the Future



A SURVEY of the SKILLS and TRAINING of VOLUNTEER LITERACY TUTORS

***To be completed by Volunteer Tutors and
Program Coordinators who work with Volunteer Tutors.***

Please read the following before you begin the survey.

Community Literacy of Ontario (CLO) is a network of 90 community-based literacy programs. We are conducting this survey to gather information about the skills and training needed by volunteer tutors. ***Your input is essential!*** We need to hear from as many volunteer tutors as possible. We also want paid staff, who are involved with the training and/or coordinating of tutors, to complete the survey.

As one of the participants in the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' "Literacy Practitioner Training Strategy", CLO has set the following research objectives for this project:

1. What are the minimum entry skills required of literacy staff and tutors?
2. How are skills currently acquired and how could they be acquired?
3. How are the skills and training of staff and volunteers currently recognized and how could they receive more formal province-wide recognition?

We all want learners to achieve the highest level of literacy training they need. In most community-based agencies this training is delivered by volunteer tutors. By taking the time to complete this survey you will help ***shape the future*** skills and training practices that are in place in these agencies. These skills and training practices will help ensure that the literacy training we give our learners is the best it can be!

Completing the survey should take you about **15 minutes**. You can return your completed survey to CLO by mail or fax. **Please return your completed survey BY April 20, 2000.**

Mail to: Community Literacy of Ontario
80 Bradford Street, Suite 508
Barrie, ON L4N 6S7

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By Definition:

- accreditation** ▶ recognized as meeting certain standards
 - certification** ▶ obtaining a formal document which attests to a level of achievement
 - literacy practitioner** ▶ facilitator of the learning process
 - minimum or entry level skill** ▶ the level at which someone new to a skill or attribute should be performing
 - skill** ▶ the ability to do something well
 - recognition** ▶ the acknowledgment of achievement, ability or status
-

All information collected in this survey will be completely **confidential**. Individual data will never be used, only aggregate data. A final report will be available in November 2000.

Questions? Contact Lindsay Kennedy at 519-848-5141 or werekenn@sympatico.ca.

1. Your program name: 147 Responses

2. Are you:

a paid staff person?	14%
a volunteer tutor?	86%

3. How long have you been working/volunteering in literacy? 145 Responses

less than a year	33%
1-3 years	31%
4-10 years	27%
over 10 years	9%

4. What are the minimum entry level skills required of volunteer tutors?

Volunteers in community literacy programs have come to tutoring from a variety of backgrounds. We have our strengths, and of course, our weaknesses. The **intent of a skills list is not** to critique or evaluate skills we currently have. For this survey, we are looking to the future and are thinking about the **learning needs of our adult literacy learners**.

As you work your way through the following list of skills think about the learner you are tutoring (or the last learner you tutored) - which of the skills have you used? Are there skills on the list for which you have thought more training would be useful? If you think that a particular skill is not a minimum entry level skill, then please check the no column.

Skill: the ability to do something well 139 Responses	Should this be a minimum entry level skill for tutors?		Rank (✓)the importance of this skill for volunteer tutors. 1 = low priority 2 = medium low 3 = medium high 4 = high priority			
	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Communication Skills						
Write clearly to express ideas	93%		5%	8%	29%	58%
Speak & listen effectively	97%		2%	0	16%	82%
Assessment Skills						
Select & modify assessment tools and methods	46%		23%	28%	29%	20%
Administer appropriate assessment tools and methods	48%		20%	24%	34%	22%
Synthesize, interpret and organize assessment results	39%		27%	32%	26%	15%
Interview & information gathering skills	60%		17%	18%	39%	26%
Observation Skills	90%		6%	8%	34%	52%
Training Plan Development						
Analytic Skills	70%		12%	25%	39%	24%
Organizational and Planning Skills	82%		6%	10%	44%	40%
Presentation & explanation skills	86%		4%	7%	37%	52%
More skills on the next page!						

Skill: the ability to do something well 139 Responses	Should this be a minimum entry level skill for tutors?		Rank (✓) the importance of this skill for volunteer tutors. 1 = low priority 2 = medium low 3 = medium high 4 = high priority			
	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Instructional Design and Delivery						
Develop & deliver learner-centred literacy training	54%		11%	12%	34%	43%
Develop and use learning activities for learners	70%		6%	11%	41%	42%
Develop and modify learning resources	59%		10%	15%	41%	34%
Facilitate the learning process	85%		2%	7%	26%	65%
Data Collection and Interpretation						
Document learning activities & learner progress	76%		6%	23%	31%	40%
Report Writing	59%		24%	31%	26%	19%
Collect & record exit outcomes	41%		27%	30%	30%	13%
Your Comments						
48 Comments						

5. How are entry level skills currently acquired?

In your opinion, which of the following is the most effective way for volunteers to receive tutor training?

Method of Learning 145 Responses	Check (✓) up to three choices
Tutor training provided by the program	91%
Blended training (a combination of best practices from community-based and Laubach programs)	28%
Laubach training	8%
Regional tutor training (with tutors from other literacy programs)	34%
Classroom courses at an accredited institution	16%
Distance education courses through an accredited institution	6%
Self-study resources	29%
Online learning	13%
One-on-one training with an experienced tutor	46%
Other	7%

6. Tutor Training - Initial

A recent survey has indicated that the average length of initial tutor training in Ontario is 15 hours. Which of the following would you recommend as the ideal **length** for the **training** of new tutors?

Number of hours 142 Responses	
5 - 10 hours	23%
11 - 15 hours	49%
16 -20	22%
Over 20 hours	7%

7. Tutor Training - On-going

A recent survey has indicated that tutors who are trying to access ongoing training opportunities face a number of barriers. In your opinion, which of the following factors would **increase** the **participation** of volunteer tutors in ongoing literacy training opportunities?

Participation by volunteer tutors would increase if training: 146 Responses	Check (✓) up to three choices
fit with the volunteer's personal schedule	75%
helped improve specific tutoring skills	69%
enhanced employment opportunities	21%
allowed volunteers to train at their own pace	17%
provided formal recognition (e.g., certificate)	19%
was part of a province-wide training system	18%
was offered through self-teaching methods/modules	27%
was provided near by (in my region)	43%

Recognition: the acknowledgment of achievement, ability or status, not to be confused with appreciation.

8. Skills Recognition - Current

Does your program currently recognize tutor skills?

136 Responses

Yes

64%

No

49%

If yes, how? 94 Responses	Check (✓) all that apply
Certificates issued by the program	59%

Written performance appraisals	14%
Other?:	53%

9. Skills Recognition - In The Future

Should the skills and training acquired by volunteer tutors be recognized? 134 Responses

Yes	87%	No	13%
If yes, why? 130 Responses		Check (✓) all that apply	
Increases employment opportunities		59%	
Provides recognition from the community		49%	
Provides evidence of an individual's qualifications		65%	
Personal pride		70%	
Provides linkages with broader literacy movement		44%	
Other?:		15%	

10. Skills Recognition - Types

What type of skills recognition would you recommend for the future recognition of volunteer tutors?

Recognition in the Future 141 Responses	Check (✓) up to three choices
None, I am satisfied with the recognition that my program gives volunteer tutors	40%
A certificate of achievement issued by the literacy program	38%
The literacy program does on-going, written performance appraisals	17%
A certificate issued by an accredited institution	11%

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!
If you have other comments, please attach them to the survey.

Recognition in the Future 141 Responses	Check (✓) up to three choices
A letter of recommendation from the program	40%
A province-wide system of recognition for volunteer tutors	32%
Other:	9%

Paid Literacy Practitioners Focus Group Questions

SKILLS ACQUISITION IN THE FUTURE

Regional and local training and province wide training (like the recent Learning Outcomes Assessment Training) were the top two ways that paid practitioners recommended for skills and training in the future.

- 1] What would make these methods successful for **you**?
- 2] What do you think would be the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and difficulties of these methods for skills acquisition **in the future**?

[illegible]

2] skills acquisition in the future:

STRENGTH	
WEAKNESS	
OPPORTUNITY	
DIFFICULTY	
OTHER COMMENTS	

SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

Volunteer Tutors Focus Group Questions

SKILLS ACQUISITION IN THE FUTURE

Our survey asked volunteer tutors to review a list of possible methods of learning and then to select which would be the most effective for tutor training. The top 3 choices were:

- ▶ tutor training provided by the program
- ▶ mentoring
- ▶ regional tutor training

The table on the next page shows 9 of 13 skills that survey respondents agreed should be minimum entry level skills for volunteer tutors. That is, the minimum skills that volunteers should have before they are matched with a learner.

If, **in the future**, these skills formed the basis of a more formalized training delivery system (e.g., a provincial standard for the minimum skills and training for volunteer tutors), what do you think would be the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and difficulties of the methods for skills acquisition mentioned above? Can you suggest other ways in which volunteers could gain these skills?

Minimum Entry Level Skills Literacy (Volunteer) Tutors "Rank the importance of each skill"	
Ranking	Skills
1	Speak & listen effectively
2	Facilitate the learning process
3	Observation Skills
4	Write clearly to express ideas
5	Organizational and Planning Skills
6	Develop and use learning activities for learners
7	Develop & deliver learner-centred literacy training
8	Develop and modify learning resources
9	Document learning activities & learner progress

Skills Acquisition Worksheet

STRENGTH	
WEAKNESS	
OPPORTUNITY	
DIFFICULTY	
OTHER COMMENTS	

SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

Paid Literacy Practitioners
Focus Group Questions

SKILLS RECOGNITION IN THE FUTURE

- ▶ 92% of the survey respondents agreed that skills and training should be formally recognized
- ▶ 85% cited career mobility/employment opportunities as the most important reason for formally recognizing skills and training

- 1] What types of formal recognition would **you** like to receive?
- 2] What do you think would be the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and difficulties of formal recognition **in the future?**

1] I would like the following types of formal recognition:

- 2] formal skills recognition **in the future:**

STRENGTH	
WEAKNESS	
OPPORTUNITY	
DIFFICULTY	
OTHER COMMENTS	

[illegible]

Formal Skills Recognition Worksheet

STRENGTH	
WEAKNESS	
OPPORTUNITY	
DIFFICULTY	
OTHER COMMENTS	

APPENDIX 7.7

Volunteer Tutors — Education and Work Experience Survey Results

Number of completed questionnaires	67
Paid employment	36%
Retired	58%
Other (e.g. student)	5%
Do you have any post secondary education?	91%
Do you belong to any "professional" associations?	45%
<p>Please describe briefly what you do, or did before you retired:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ self-employed: caterer, retail store owner, tutor, writer (4) ■ technical librarian (2) ■ teaching profession (22) ■ medical/health care profession (12) ■ office/business manager (12) ■ theatre/entertainment (3) ■ engineering/science (4) ■ editor/journalist (3) ■ senior level management (10) ■ university professor(3) ■ mining (1) <p>This will not add up to the total number of questionnaires competed, as respondents wither gave multiple answers or did not compete this section.</p>	

APPENDIX 7.8

Schedule of Focus Group Sessions

SCHEDULE OF FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS
Paid Practitioners
May 8: CLO board of directors, Barrie May 18: North York Adult Literacy Program, Toronto May 30: John Howard Society, Oshawa June 6: People, Words and Change, Ottawa June 7: East End Literacy, Toronto June 13: Wellington County Learning Centre, Arthur June 7: New Leaf Literacy , Sudbury June 16: Program Read, Sault Ste, Marie June 19: Organization for Literacy in Lambton, Sarnia June 21: Staff from 6 Eastern Ontario Programs, Kingston

SCHEDULE OF FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS
Volunteer Tutors
May 12: Peel Literacy Guild, Mississauga May 18: North York Adult Literacy Program, Toronto June 1: Wellington County Learning Centre, Arthur June 7: East end Literacy, Toronto June 7: New Leaf Literacy, Sudbury June 13: People, Words and Change, Ottawa June 13: Neil Squires Foundation, Ottawa June 16: Program Read, Sault Ste, Marie June 19 Organization for Literacy in Lambton, Sarnia June 21: John Howard Society, Ottawa June 26: St Marys Adult Literacy Program, St Marys June 29: Trent Valley Literacy Association, Peterborough June 29: Reading Routes, Napanee

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Adult Literacy Resource Institute (Massachusetts)

www.alri.org

Brainbench, The Skills Authority

www.brainbench.com

Canadian Association for Distance Education

www.cade-aced.ca

Canadian Education Association

www.acea.ca/english/index.html

Canlearn Interactive (HRDC)

www.canlearn.ca

Coaching Association of Canada

www.coach.ca

The Commission on Nonprofit Professional Education

www.geocities.com/WallStreet/Exchange/8664/commision/intro.htm

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www.communitylearning.org/direct.asp

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National Literacy Trust (Ireland)

www.niace.org.uk

National Organization for Adult Learning (Britain)

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www.state.nj.us/njded

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www.ostd.ca

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www.pde.psu.edu/able/tlc.html

Pennsylvania Association for Adult Continuing Education

www.paacesite.org

Staff Training and Professional Development (Australia.)

www.tafe.lib.rmit.edu.au/demo/stpd/index.htm

Tennessee Education Association

www.tnea.org

Center for Literacy Studies, University of Tennessee

cls.coe.utk.edu

Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center

www.vcu.edu/aclweb

Volunteer Management Certificate Program, Washington State
University

vmcp.wsu.edu