

**Community Literacy  
of Ontario**

80 Bradford Street # 508

Barrie, Ontario, L4N 6S7

Tel: 705-733-2312

Web: [www.nald.ca/clo](http://www.nald.ca/clo)

Email: [clo@bellnet.ca](mailto:clo@bellnet.ca)

Twitter: [@Love4Literacy](https://twitter.com/Love4Literacy)

Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/  
CommunityLiteracyOntario](http://www.facebook.com/CommunityLiteracyOntario)

# Our Voice

## e-Channel and Blended Learning Q & A



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Community Literacy of Ontario is pleased to share information and updates about e-Channel services and blended learning being provided by and to Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) agencies.

e-Channel is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Colleges, Training and Universities (MTCU). The Ministry views e-Channel services and blended learning as important components of LBS programming and has dedicated funding for ongoing e-Channel support. e-Channel services and blended learning support MTCU's vision that "Ontario will have the most highly educated and skilled people in the world in order to build the province's competitive advantage and quality of life".

E-Channel services are provided to all LBS streams and sectors, in both official languages. Additionally, e-Channel services are available for learners preparing for apprenticeship and post-secondary through ACE Distance Delivery. e-Channel can also provide an accessible option for persons with disabilities and learners who live in remote communities who might otherwise be unable to access LBS services. e-Channel can be accessed by learners enrolled in an LBS program as well as by those who may have barriers that restrict them from fully participating in a face-to-face program.

While online learning can provide many benefits and options for literacy students, it may not be the best option for some. e-Channel service providers can help learners determine if they have the skills necessary to benefit from online learning.

MTCU is committed to ensuring privacy for LBS online learners who use e-Channel and all LBS services. All learner information that is collected by e-Channel providers will be protected, and providers will obtain consent before collecting personal information.

All e-Channel providers are currently working with MTCU to ensure that the milestones and culminating tasks that are integral to the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) are part of e-Channel services.

More information about the roles and responsibilities of e-Channel providers can be found in the *LBS Service Provider Guidelines* at [www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/2012\\_lbs\\_sp\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/2012_lbs_sp_guidelines.pdf).

Another good source of information is *An Information and Referral Guide for Ontario's Online e-Channel Program* available at [www.learninghub.ca/Files/PDF-files/eChannelInformationandReferralGuideE.pdf](http://www.learninghub.ca/Files/PDF-files/eChannelInformationandReferralGuideE.pdf)

MTCU also encourages literacy learners to participate in blended learning opportunities developed or provided within LBS agencies. Read more about blended learning on pages 10-12 of this newsletter.

## ACE Distance Learning

By Vicki Trottier, Lynne Wallace and Arlene Cronin

Ontario's community colleges offer e-learning opportunities to Ontario residents who wish to get their Grade 12 equivalency through ACE Distance Delivery ([www.acedistancedelivery.ca](http://www.acedistancedelivery.ca)). This is a very popular option as there are over 1500 students registered at any given time.



To begin the process, learners must successfully complete the 20-hour *Learn to Learn* course which is available in both French and English. This online intake and assessment module helps determine if learners have the right personal, computer and academic skills to succeed in ACE Distance Delivery courses. New learners must complete the first assignment within five days of registering, and they have up to 30 days to complete the course. *Learn to Learn* has introduced a new academic assessment, *ACE Essential Skills*, which identifies Essential Skills levels as they relate to specific postsecondary programs. Completing students are provided with an individualized training plan. Students must go to the website and follow the instructions under the *Learn to Learn* tab to register. Students can submit registration requests at any time. *Learn to Learn* is delivered using Moodle. An average of 200-250 new students enroll for *Learn to Learn* each month.

If learners are not ready to proceed with ACE Distance Delivery courses, they are referred to other learning options, including being directed to their nearest Literacy Network office or to another e-Channel program. New this year is a 30 hour Communications Support course for individuals whose language skills require focused remediation in order to succeed in ACE Distance courses. Students registered in *Learn to Learn* who are struggling with their language skills are provided the option of participating in this online course free of charge.

After successfully completing *Learn to Learn*, students can enroll in an ACE Distance Delivery course. All ACE Distance Delivery courses are available in both languages. Courses offered include English, French, Math (Core, Business, Apprenticeship and Technology), Self-Management and Self-Direction, Computers, Biology, Physics and Chemistry. Full course descriptions are available on the website at [www.acedistancedelivery.ca/courses.php](http://www.acedistancedelivery.ca/courses.php)

Students can register for ACE Distance Delivery courses monthly through 20 of the 24 colleges. (Humber, Sheridan, Seneca and Niagara do not participate.) Courses begin the first week of each month. Each college has its own procedures, so it is important to check online with the college for specific instructions. The maximum course load in the tuition-free stream is two courses. Students have up to 22 weeks to complete each course. Courses range in length from 80 to 120 hours. Technical support is available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for both *Learn to Learn* and ACE Distance Delivery courses.

As a result of ongoing funding limits, it has been necessary to restrict the numbers of students who can participate in the tuition-free stream of ACE Distance Delivery. There are waiting lists for Core Math, Communications, Biology and Chemistry. Tuition-free intakes are scheduled for September 2012, January 2013 and April 2013. There are no restrictions for admission to *Learn to Learn*.

Students who are unable to wait for a tuition-free month can opt to pay tuition for ACE Distance Delivery courses. Students should go to the website for information on colleges offering the fee paying option as well as the cost per course. Students in ACE Distance Delivery should contact the Financial Aid office at the college to determine if they qualify for financial support. Some referral agencies (e.g., OW, ODSP, WSIB) may also be able to pay tuition.

New in 2012 – 2013 for the fee-paying stream is university-stream Biology and Chemistry which are the prerequisites for admission to RN programs. (Chemistry is currently under development and will be available Spring 2013.) *Employment Track Express* (a career exploration and Essential Skills evaluation course) is also available to individuals and career counsellors.

Who signs up for ACE Distance Delivery? Seventy-five percent of students are women. Eighty-four percent identify further education as their goal. Sixty-one percent indicate they are employed. Many have completed their high school and have some postsecondary programming. Students are able to transfer grades from classroom-based delivery to ACE Distance Delivery.

## Deaf Learn Now

By Vicki Trottier, Wanda Blackett, Matt Foran and Andrea Kenney

In 2011, after completing an MTCU funded, Capacity Research project on e-Learning for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Adults in Ontario, George Brown College (GBC) was selected to develop an e-Channel portal for Ontario's Deaf LBS stream. In 2012, George Brown College chose to partner with Durham Deaf Services, an agency with extensive multimedia and curriculum development experience, to continue to develop what has become, Deaf Learn Now. Deaf Learn Now ([www.deaflearnnow.ca](http://www.deaflearnnow.ca)) was launched in April 2012. As of July 2012, over 120 students (more than 25% of all students registered with Deaf literacy programs) had signed up. This well exceeds the target of 75 learners!



Currently, Deaf Learn Now features a highly-interactive ASL video dictionary that presents vocabulary in context, helping learners and practitioners to develop greater vocabulary and navigate between English and American Sign Language. ASL Video Dictionary was imagined by GBC Deaf Upgrading teacher, Paul LeDrew to be a tool to help Deaf and Hard of Hearing learners expand their English vocabulary and also develop richer ASL skills. This helps to critically demonstrate to learners that there are many Signs for a single English word, with each Sign changing according to the word's context. As a result, there are hundreds of mini videos for learners to access with the tool. Learners can find words by searching through the alphabet or by choosing one of the 43 hand-shapes. The Deaf Learn Now team believes that it is the first online contextual dictionary available for Deaf literacy learners.

Two courses, one focusing on Ontario Disability Support Program and another one to help with the driver's license will be launched in the 2012-13 academic year. These initial two courses were chosen based on input from practitioners. Additional courses are being developed. Creating courses and learning material for Deaf Learn Now is a time and resource intensive process because not only does content have to be culturally relevant, but ASL videos must also be created. Deaf Learn Now also features resources for instructors and some printable material.

Currently, courses are assigned by LBS practitioners to complement the work that learners are doing in the program. Eventually, there will be online practitioners who will assign courses. Learners cannot see the full course catalogue; they will only see the courses that have been assigned to them. All learners have access to the ASL dictionary and a "welcome" course that includes tutorials on how to use the system.

Deaf Learn Now uses a social learning management system called TOPYX (<http://interactyx.com>) that allows for easy video integration, an essential component for both learners and tutors in the Deaf stream. TOPYX also offers a built-in, secure and private social networking site that allows users to easily communicate with each other and share resources, participate in discussion groups, program-specific forums, the broader Deaf Learn Now community, and more. TOPYX allows any user, ( i.e., administrator, teacher, learner) to upload videos. Deaf Learn Now users usually post blog entries using video so this feature is essential.

While participating in Deaf Learn Now courses, learners are gaining valuable digital skills and experience along with subject and content knowledge. Along with other e-Channel providers, Durham Deaf Services and George Brown College are participating in the provincial project to integrate milestones and culminating tasks into online learning.

Deaf Learn Now is currently available only for learners and practitioners within the Ontario Deaf Adult Literacy/LBS stream; however, if you would like to check the site out, Deaf Learn Now has offered readers of this article a guest log in. To visit the site, go to [www.deaflearnnow.ca](http://www.deaflearnnow.ca) and select LEARNER log in. Enter "visitor" in the log in box and "learn" as the password. From here, you will be able to select various resources to view, including the ASL Contextual Dictionary.

The Deaf Learn Now team hopes you enjoy your visit to their site!

Although they are just getting started, the Deaf Learn Now team is excited about what they have accomplished so far and are looking forward to introducing their new courses in September. You can also find Deaf Learn Now on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/DeafLearnNow](http://www.facebook.com/DeafLearnNow)



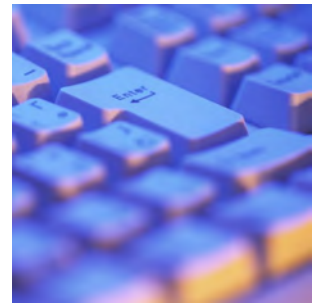
## Formation à Distance

By Célinie Russell



F@D, the distance learning service of the Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes (COFA), offers e-learning services to all francophone adults who wish to improve their reading, writing, math and computer skills in order to get a job or generally improve their quality of life.

F@D offers synchronous courses, with a teacher, at specified dates and times. It also offers asynchronous courses, where learners can log on when they choose. Learners can also access a mentor to help them when necessary. Courses cover a variety of themes including: French, math, computer use, managing finances, GED preparation and nutrition. Many courses are built around the OALCF and thus around daily tasks for work and for everyday life. F@D requires that all learners promise to participate in the course and do all required learning activities. All learners who successfully finish a course will receive a certificate of participation.



The list of courses and the course schedule can be found on F@D's website at [www.sefad.ca](http://www.sefad.ca). Interested learners can register for courses online. Learners may be asked to do an evaluation to find the right course for them. For more information or to see the course listings and schedule, please visit F@D's website at [www.sefad.ca](http://www.sefad.ca) or call 1-888-744-2178.

La F@D, le service de formation à distance de la Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes (COFA), offre des services de formation à tout adulte francophone de l'Ontario qui veut améliorer ses compétences en écriture, en lecture, en mathématiques ou en informatique dans le but d'avoir un meilleur employ ou une meilleure qualité de vie. La F@D offre de la formation à des adultes qui suivent des cours en face à face dans des centres de formation pour adultes et aussi à des adultes qui ne suivent pas des cours ailleurs. Tous les adultes qui satisfont les critères d'éligibilité du Ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités sont les bienvenus!

La F@D offre des cours en direct, en groupe avec une formatrice. Ces cours s'offrent à des dates et heures précises et sont animés par une formatrice ou un formateur d'expérience. La F@D offre également des cours d'apprentissage autonome, que la personne suit seule aux heures qu'elle choisit et à son propre rythme. La personne qui suit un cours d'apprentissage autonome peut communiquer régulièrement avec un mentor ou une mentore pour poser des questions et recevoir de l'aide lorsque nécessaire.

Les cours offerts présentement sont variés : le français, les mathématiques, l'informatique, la préparation au GED, mieux se connaître, la gestion financière et la nutrition sont quelques-uns des thèmes que l'on retrouve. Certains des cours sont de deux heures; d'autres durent jusqu'à huit semaines, au rythme de deux à trois heures par semaine.

Plusieurs des cours sont aussi en lien avec le cadre du CLAO et ses grandes compétences. Cela veut dire que ces cours sont axés sur des tâches et préparent les participantes et participants pour accomplir des tâches de la vie quotidienne. La F@D exige que chaque personne qui suit un cours s'engage formellement à participer au cours, à y consacrer le temps nécessaire et à faire les activités d'apprentissage requises. Lorsqu'une personne termine un cours avec succès, elle recevra un certificat de participation de la F@D.

La liste des cours et l'horaire se trouvent sur le site Web de la F@D: [www.sefad.ca](http://www.sefad.ca). Une personne intéressée peut s'inscrire par le biais du site Web. On y trouve des vidéos qui expliquent le processus d'inscription. En outre, il est toujours possible de communiquer par téléphone avec la F@D pour poser des questions et demander de l'aide. Lorsqu'une personne s'inscrit, un membre du personnel de la F@D communiquera avec elle pour établir un lien, poser des questions et découvrir quelle type de cours l'intéresse. Une personne intéressée par les cours de la F@D pourrait faire une évaluation diagnostique pour déterminer quels cours répondraient le mieux à ses besoins et à ses intérêts. Il faut faire attention aux dates limites pour s'inscrire!

Outre la formation, la F@D peut également aider une personne à découvrir quel organisme pourra le mieux répondre à ses besoins de formation et l'aiguiller ailleurs si nécessaire. Pour plus d'information, pour faire des commentaires ou pour voir la liste des cours et l'horaire des cours, visitez le site Web de la F@D au [www.sefad.ca](http://www.sefad.ca) ou téléphonez-nous au 1-888-744-2178.

## Good Learning Anywhere

By Vicki Trottier and Linda Wright



The Sioux Hudson Literacy Council ([www.siouxhudsonliteracy.com](http://www.siouxhudsonliteracy.com)), located in Northwestern Ontario, has been providing solutions to learners at a distance struggling to gain access to literacy courses for the past 10 years! What once started as a paper and pen service by float plane, has expanded into online delivery and is now part of the initiative known as e-Channel. Courses are now offered to learners across Ontario by their *Good Learning Anywhere (GLA)* program. This program focuses on working with Aboriginal communities, organizations and individuals to identify needs and provide literacy and Essential Skills training.

*Good Learning Anywhere* offers a wide variety of online classes for learners new to computers right up to advanced users. New users will be interested in the live "Introduction to..." classes on topics such as how to use Centra, Independent Learning and Moodle.

Most of our live courses (in Centra) are now 6 (2 hour) classes long in order to allow participants to practice the tasks involved and receive feedback from the instructor. Subjects include *Computers for Work, Social Media for School, Creative Writing, Self Management/Self Direction* and *Money Management*. New to Centra this fall are *Research and Report Writing*, as well as *Becoming a Volunteer in your Community*. Through a partnership with PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise, Good Learning Anywhere will be offering *Be Your Own Boss for Aboriginal Women* in October.

While live classes are still preferred by most learners, GLA also offers Moodle courses that allow the flexibility to access learning 24/7, while still learning in a group environment. In Fall 2012, Moodle courses will be offered that are 3 weeks long and are aligned to the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) such as *Complete an Online Job Application, Take a Test* and *Write an Essay*. Independent Learning continues to be available to learners all year round through Aztec and the Plato Learning Environment. This is a great option for learners with specific content needs or who prefer to work at their own pace. Thousands of hours of curriculum are available and alignments to the OALCF are available.

For all learners, a wonderful informal opportunity to come together online is the GLA Sharing Circle held the third Monday of every month (September to June). This 2 hour live Centra session is a time for learners to experience the online platform and become inspired by motivational guest speakers such as author Drew Hayden Taylor or musician Shy-Anne Hovorka (2012 Female Aboriginal Entertainer of the year). Discussions revolve around overcoming learning obstacles and often include traditional stories. New this fall will be an onsite practitioner handout with suggested OALCF tasks that could be done that link to the Sharing Circle. Also available to practitioners and learners on the GLA website are the unique Australian Online Toolboxes, which explore cultural resource management, music, and ecotourism.

*Good Learning Anywhere* offers a mentoring program to help learners achieve their goals. All registered students are assigned a mentor who can help them with any concerns they have about online learning, with choosing courses that fit with their goal, or with answering questions they have about the course they are currently taking. Learners are involved in and guide the development of their own training plan; this training plan can also be shared by the learner with their onsite practitioner.

Independent learning registration is available throughout the year. Registration for the Fall Centra and Moodle courses will open in September. Learners can register online at our website or call toll free at 866-550-0697. Individuals must be a registered learner to take any of the courses offered by GLA, except the Sharing Circle.

*Good Learning Anywhere* has proven to be a popular option with Ontario literacy learners. Between April and September 2012, over 600 students actively participated in GLA courses. The majority of the students who register are female (71%), with most being in the age range of 25 to 44. Student successes continue to be an inspiration for GLA staff, and this is celebrated monthly with our "Learner of the Month" award, and our yearly awards given to students who persevere through challenges and motivate those around them!

To celebrate 10 years, look for a new website September 2012! For more information now about *Good Learning Anywhere*, visit the current website at [www.siouxhudsonliteracy.com](http://www.siouxhudsonliteracy.com) where you can connect on Facebook and Twitter! Also keep up to date by signing up for their newsletter or by following their blog. Questions can be sent to [info@siouxhudsonliteracy.com](mailto:info@siouxhudsonliteracy.com).

## The LearningHUB

By Vicki Trottier and Heather Robinet

The LearningHUB is the e-Channel site managed by the Centre for Employment and Learning of the Avon Maitland District School Board (AMDSB), located in Southwestern Ontario. You can learn more at [www.learninghub.ca](http://www.learninghub.ca)



According to Heather Robinet, e-Channel Strategy and Literacy & Basic Skills Program Specialist for AMDSB, and Manager of the Centre's Clinton site, The LearningHUB served over 2,500 students between April 2011 and March 2012. In the first quarter of 2012-2013, the LearningHUB has already served 1072 learners.

Due to the large demand for its service, last year the LearningHUB introduced a screening process to better identify potential learners' ability to succeed with online learning. It resulted in 200 registrants being declined last year and referred elsewhere, and an additional 90 registrations have been declined this fiscal year to date.

The LearningHUB has also implemented new goal-setting activities, is requiring more learner commitment in terms of hours per week online, and is setting timelines with learners to work towards in terms of meeting goals. The idea is to move learners more quickly to their next steps.

The LearningHUB has also embraced the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework and promotes task-based learning. New curriculum and tutorials are available on subjects that align with the competencies. Staff are working on adapting Milestone and Culminating Tasks to the online environment. Additional assessment tools are being created which would more clearly direct assignment of curriculum and define status of upgrading. Online practitioners have adopted a more "case management" style of working with learners, encouraging more learner input into their learner plans, and more hybrid learning opportunities, ie, varied and blended learning options, and self-directed learning.

While the majority of students who register at The LearningHUB are female (63%), they represent all age groups. In fact, 35% of registered users this year are between 40 and 59 years old. with a further 32% between the ages of 27 and 39.) this confirms that online learning isn't just for youth! To learn more about e-Channel learners, be sure to check out some success stories at [www.learninghub.ca/get\\_information/who\\_we\\_are/our\\_learners.aspx](http://www.learninghub.ca/get_information/who_we_are/our_learners.aspx)

Learners who enrol for e-Channel courses at The LearningHUB have a number of options. They can participate in live classes (via Centra), register for independent study, or blend the two approaches to best suit their learning needs. Of course, they can also benefit by blending online learning with face-to-face learning at their local literacy agency.

Live classes begin and end on specific dates. Learners wishing to enroll in live classes must be able to attend class at the scheduled times. Live classes are led by an instructor and are a good option for learners who prefer group learning. Learners may register for up to five live classes at one time.

Independent study courses are available for those learners who are unable to commit to attending a live class or who prefer working on their own. Each learner is assigned to an online practitioner who will help him or her develop a learner plan. Learners can sign up for as many independent study courses as they like, although The LearningHUB suggests starting out with just one or two. These classes are offered using either Moodle or Plato.

The LearningHUB also offers a series of short courses as part of the independent study option. These courses can be started at any time, and last for up to five weeks. They do have a specific start and end date, but during these five weeks learners can log in to access the courses at any time that is convenient for them. Learners may register for only one short course at a time.

Before new students can complete registration for either live classes or for independent study, they will need to complete an online assessment to determine their learning levels and suitability for the learning platform and which options best suits their needs.

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The LearningHUB offers some brief tutorials that can help a new learner get started. For example, new learners can take tutorials on how to set up a Gmail account or to learn about the type of learning platforms that are used. There is even a tutorial explaining how to use The LearningHUB registration form. Learners do not need to register or set up a user name and password to take the tutorials. Tutorials are offered in both video and print formats at [www.learninghub.ca/get\\_help/video\\_tutorials.aspx](http://www.learninghub.ca/get_help/video_tutorials.aspx)



When it comes to choosing which courses to take, learners have a wide range to choose from. The main subject areas offered are math, reading and writing, GED preparation, and Essential Skills. Classes and courses are offered at all literacy levels (not including ACE) and include foundational math, algebra, life and job skills, business basics, dictionary basics, spelling and grammar rules, email, Workplace Writing Skills, discovery of your learning style and many more. For a full list of available courses and classes, be sure to check out the LearningHUB's e-Channel catalogue at [www.learninghub.ca/FILES/PDF-files/HUBcoursecatalogue.pdf](http://www.learninghub.ca/FILES/PDF-files/HUBcoursecatalogue.pdf)

## AlphaPlus

By Maria Moriarty



### ***Making it easier to use Digital Technology in Adult Literacy Programs***

At AlphaPlus (<http://alphaplus.ca>) our job is to support adult literacy educators in the use of digital technologies for teaching and learning, including e-learning and blended learning. We provide support through training, practical tools and information, and research in the areas of digital technologies, e-learning and blended learning.

AlphaPlus works with adult literacy agencies in the four adult literacy streams in Ontario, and with agencies and educators across Canada.

### ***Literacy Research and Good Practice***

AlphaPlus has been actively involved in sponsoring, conducting and publishing research reports on digital technologies and good practices in adult basic education. We explored cloud computing, social networking, and assistive technologies — we even went out and spent some time with community-based agencies to get a sense of how staff, volunteers and students are working with digital technologies.

To see what we have been up to and access the reports in PDF format, visit the “Tools and Resources” tab on the AlphaPlus website (<http://alphaplus.ca>).

Another great way to explore our latest research is to listen to some of our Tech Podcasts ([alphaplus.ca/en/web-tools/tech-podcasts-group1/tech-podcasts.html](http://alphaplus.ca/en/web-tools/tech-podcasts-group1/tech-podcasts.html)), in which we discuss technology with the authors of the research reports.

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### Teaching and Learning Resources

#### AlphaPlus website:

We constantly update the website information about our projects and initiatives, resources, training and what's happening in the field.

Each month we feature a new tool and showcase how it is used by organizations and/or educators in the field.

Our Web Index ([alphaplus.ca/en/web-tools/online-tools/alphaplus-web-index/alphaplus-web-index.html](http://alphaplus.ca/en/web-tools/online-tools/alphaplus-web-index/alphaplus-web-index.html)) offers over 1100 annotated web based resources to help educators find good materials to support their work. We have organized and tagged the content to make it easy to search through and find resources in each of the OALCF task groups ([alphaplus.ca/en/oalcf/oalcf-and-the-alphaplus-web-index.html](http://alphaplus.ca/en/oalcf/oalcf-and-the-alphaplus-web-index.html)).

To help educators keep up-to-date with the latest and greatest web tools and educational technology trends, we manage a blog ([alphaplus.ca/en/alphaplus-blog.html](http://alphaplus.ca/en/alphaplus-blog.html)) where we post our latest finds and encourage our visitors to comment and share their own experiences.

#### Training and Professional Development:

AlphaPlus uses Moodle to host and provide free training courses for adult educators interested in trying out blended and online learning. To date, over 250 adult educators have learned to use Moodle to deliver Moodle-based courses in their own programs. This Fall, once again we will offer "Introduction to Moodle" course for educators new to Moodle, and we will introduce a series of "Moodle Mondays" webinars for Moodle graduates. To request a seat or to learn more, visit the Training tab on the AlphaPlus website.

To explore how Moodle courses for an adult literacy student audience can look and feel, visit Sample Moodle Courses (<http://samplecourses.alphaplus.ca>). Several of these courses were developed and delivered by adult literacy educators in Ontario.

To give adult students a sense of what online learning is like and to help educators assess students' comfort level with computers, we also used Moodle to develop the "Are you ready to learn online?" course ([alphaplus.ca/en/training/moodle/are-you-ready-to-learn-online.html](http://alphaplus.ca/en/training/moodle/are-you-ready-to-learn-online.html)) with the learning activities aligned to the OALCF.

For those interested in exploring and sharing information about new and promising technology tools to support blended learning, AlphaPlus hosts *Tech Tuesdays* ([alphaplus.ca/en/training/tech-tuesdaysgroup1/upcoming-events.html](http://alphaplus.ca/en/training/tech-tuesdaysgroup1/upcoming-events.html)), a series of monthly webinars that showcase various digital tools and provide hands-on examples of how they can be used in literacy practice. This Fall, we will also introduce a series of webinars focused on the OALCF Digital Technology Competency called "*D Competency Wednesdays*". More information about this series will be available on the AlphaPlus website soon.

### How can we help?

There are several ways to get in touch and stay in touch with AlphaPlus. For the latest news, updates and information, we invite you to visit our website, follow us on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/alphapluscentre](http://www.facebook.com/alphapluscentre)) and Twitter ([www.twitter.com/alphapluscentre](http://www.twitter.com/alphapluscentre)), and/or subscribe to our monthly eNews .

To reach us, you can click on the *Just Ask* button on our website for a live chat with one of our staff, email us at [info@alphaplus.ca](mailto:info@alphaplus.ca) or simply call 1-800-788-1120. We look forward to hearing from you!





## Contact North

By Sarah Stocker



First, a big thanks to Community Literacy of Ontario for giving us the opportunity to share information about e-Channel Contact North | Contact Nord! Let's begin with who we are and what our role is within e-Channel; there is something for both literacy students and practitioners.

The name e-Channel was selected for use by the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU) in 2007. *MTCU e-Channel is defined as a web-based way to deliver literacy training, currently available for learners in three cultural streams: Aboriginal, Francophone and Anglophone. e-Channel services are also available for learners in higher literacy levels known as Academic Upgrading.* (Abridged from LBS Program Guidelines, December 2010, p. 32)

e-Channel's web conferencing technology provides online classroom and meeting space for students, teachers, coaches, trainers and leaders of adult literacy in Ontario. Contact North | Contact Nord provides support for both e-Channel instructor-led and independently followed online literacy programming created by e-Channel delivery organizations:

- Avon Maitland District School Board (the LearningHUB) for the Anglophone stream
- Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes (Formation à distance) for the Francophone stream
- College Sector Committee (ACE DISTANCE) for Academic Upgrading
- George Brown College for the deaf stream
- Sioux Hudson Literacy Council (Good Learning Anywhere) for the Aboriginal stream

Last year, more than 7500 students participated in e-Channel Contact North | Contact Nord classes in addition to another 1400 practitioners using it for training and meeting services.

### ***How can e-Channel benefit you and your students?***

As a practitioner you may find that e-Channel programming **complements your work in the face-to-face classroom** very well, allowing you to **enhance your students' digital literacy and independent learning skills** with **courses that you don't have to create**. e-Channel options can be **a better fit for student's personal schedules**, and many find this **suits their learning style**.

Using e-Channel for blended learning can help you free up time and resources, allowing you to **maximize the work you're doing with your students**. Ongoing **practitioner training opportunities** are available on e-Channel thanks to providers such as Community Literacy of Ontario!

For more information on the courses available to literacy learners, how to help students register, log in and use the online classes that are available here, and ways to get more information or technical help, visit our French and English websites: [www.apprentissageenligne.ca](http://www.apprentissageenligne.ca) and [www.e-Channel.ca](http://www.e-Channel.ca).

Visitors to the website can find information by using a screen reader, text resources, or videos. Students and practitioners can view a guided tour, watch how to log in to classes and how to communicate in live online classes. Those who have registered for a live online course, training or meeting also log in here.

Contact North | Contact Nord trains, and provides practice opportunities for literacy instructors/practitioners who wish to use no cost live online technology for classes, training, or meetings. e-Channel Contact North | Contact Nord provides secure access to these sessions, and to the recordings for review. e-Channel Contact North | Contact Nord schedules, coordinates, and provides live technical support for all e-Channel classes, training, and meetings via Contact North | Contact Nord that use SabaCentra, Moodle, and PLATO PLE online systems.

Our 112 Contact North | Contact Nord Centers in Ontario can provide literacy students a work station if they need computer and internet access (**note that students need to request this when they register with the host organization for their courses**), information on literacy programming available from the organizations above, as well as information about other educational opportunities for those ready to make a transition to secondary or post secondary goals.

**We hope that those of you already familiar with e-Channel will come back for additional information, and if we are new to you we invite you to visit us soon!**



## Blended Learning

Along with e-Channel, adult literacy learners in Ontario's LBS agencies have a wide variety of other online learning options to explore. MTCU supports learners to explore both e-Channel and other blended learning opportunities. Ontario's LBS agencies are leaders in providing online instruction to adult learners through e-Channel, online learning tools developed in their own programs, and through various instructional resources available for computers, tablets, smartphones and other digital devices.

Here are just a few ways that LBS includes e-Channel and blended learning in their activities:

- ⇒ All literacy support organizations have "providing support to e-Channel and blended learning" as one of four key priorities set by MTCU in their 2012-2013 business plans.
- ⇒ One of the program delivery activities that LBS agencies are monitored on by MTCU is "computer-based activities, such as e-Channel, enhance learning opportunities and contribute to learners attaining their goals".
- ⇒ The LBS Guidelines encourages the use of e-Channel either independently or as part of a blended learning plan (pg. 29: [www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/2012\\_lbs\\_sp\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/2012_lbs_sp_guidelines.pdf) )
- ⇒ The use of digital technology is a key competency of LBS training. The LBS guidelines state that "The value of knowing how to use digital technology is recognized by the Ministry as essential for success in employment, education and training, and independence. All learners must have the opportunity to develop competency in the use of digital technology, if they lack this ability, as all goals require proficiency in the use of digital technology. The LBS Program funds the teaching of digital technology including computer skills and particular computer software applications to learners who have been assessed as LBS Program eligible and for whom these skills contribute to successful transition to the learner's goal." (pg. 39)



## Sampling of Resources for Blended Learning

There are many websites and applications that learners can use on their computers, tablets, smartphones and other digital devices to supplement their learning. Below, we will share just a few of the sites that have been recommended by Ontario literacy practitioners and learners.

- ⇒ One very popular website is *GCF LearnFree* ([www.GCFLearnFree.org](http://www.GCFLearnFree.org)). This site is recommended by LBS agencies across the province. It includes over 750 free lessons on reading, math and computers. It includes tutorials on how to use common software such as Microsoft Word, how to use Facebook safely and more. Learners can choose to have information presented by video or text. The site also features a blog that is regularly updated with new information about the site and what it offers. *GCF LearnFree* also has a YouTube channel ([www.youtube.com/gcflearnfree](http://www.youtube.com/gcflearnfree)) that features hundreds of video. You can also find *GCF LearnFree* on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GCFLearnFree.org](http://www.facebook.com/GCFLearnFree.org)
- 
- ⇒ *Many Things* ([www.manythings.org](http://www.manythings.org)) is another very popular site with literacy students and instructors alike. Although it is designed for ESL students, it is useful for literacy instruction as well. The site features quizzes, word games, word puzzles and other language learning activities related to vocabulary, reading, grammar, and listening and speaking.
  - ⇒ *Ontario Skills Passport* (<http://skills.edu.gov.on.ca/OSPWeb/jsp/en/introduction.jsp?lang=en>). The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities jointly provide this site which includes clear descriptions of the Essential Skills and work habits important for work, learning and life. Interactive learning resources (including games) and other Ontario Skills Passport materials can be found at [www.skillszone.ca](http://www.skillszone.ca)

- ⇒ When it comes to math, there are many good online sites that explain concepts and provide practice work. One place to start is with *Math Goodies* at [www.mathgoodies.com](http://www.mathgoodies.com). This free site features interactive lessons, worksheets, puzzles and a glossary. There is also a “feature of the week”. You can log in as either a teacher or a student. The teacher section includes forums and articles that can be very helpful.
- ⇒ For communications, why not visit the *Adult Learning Activities* site at [www.cdiponline.org](http://www.cdiponline.org)? This site features articles on a number of topics that have been rewritten from an original, more complex article. Topics include health and safety, housing, working, family, nature and more. Many of the articles are accompanied by a video, and all of them are presented as text with an accompanying audio option. Each article also includes learning activities. The articles are from American news sites, but many are of general interest and are suitable for Canadian learners.
- ⇒ *Khan Academy* ([www.khanacademy.org](http://www.khanacademy.org)). This popular site offers over 2,500 educational videos on a wide variety of topics and is very popular with learners. It also offers online activities with helpful hints and the ability to check answers. You can find the Khan Academy on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/khanacademy](http://www.facebook.com/khanacademy)
- ⇒ *FOCUS* (<http://focus-alc.blogspot.com>). The Adult Learning Centres of Grey-Bruce-Georgian developed FOCUS to help literacy students and instructors work on personal development issues such as decision-making, goal-setting, anger management and more. This site features text and short videos related to each topic.
- ⇒ If you are looking for some Canadian content, there are a few good sites to visit. For example, *Literacy Nova Scotia* has a “Learner’s Links” section on their website. They include links to a wide variety of useful websites related to computers, math and communications. Links are updated regularly. You can find the site at [www.ns.literacy.ca/learnerslinks.htm](http://www.ns.literacy.ca/learnerslinks.htm)
- ⇒ The National Adult Literacy Database (NALD) publishes a *story of the week* written by a Canadian literacy student. This is a great way for learners to read about other learners and their experiences. Why not encourage students in your agency to submit their own stories? [www.nald.ca/sotw](http://www.nald.ca/sotw)
- ⇒ *The Language Portal of Canada* ([www.noslanguages-ourlanguages.gc.ca](http://www.noslanguages-ourlanguages.gc.ca)) offers writing tips, word games and exercises, and Canadian writing tools. There are also numerous links to other language-related sites, including online dictionaries, tutorials, information about clear writing and more.
- ⇒ *Qwiki* ([www.qwiki.com](http://www.qwiki.com)). This site was launched in early 2011 and is similar to Wikipedia but instead of text, information is presented as a slide show with narration. Narration can be turned off if learners would prefer to read the text on their own. Like Wikipedia, individual users can add to the content already on the site or add their own content. As well as searching for topics of interest, learners can sign up for a “qwiki of the day” email. Qwiki content can easily be shared through links to Facebook, Twitter and email.
- ⇒ *Summer in Smallywood* ([summerinsmallywood.ca](http://summerinsmallywood.ca)) is an interactive video game that was developed by The Centre for Skills Development and Training in Burlington. It was designed for young adults to help enhance their employability, but it has proven to be popular with adult literacy students as well. The game focuses on three Essential Skills: Oral Communications, Working with Others, and Thinking Skills. The site also features a facilitator’s guide, activities and an instruction manual.



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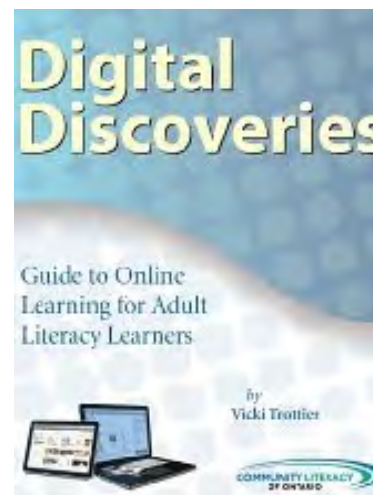
Community Literacy of Ontario is funded by the Ontario government, under

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- ⇒ For students who aren't sure if online learning is right for them, be sure to let them take the Ontario eLearning Consortium's short online quiz at [www.oelc.ca/elearningquiz.php](http://www.oelc.ca/elearningquiz.php)
- ⇒ OntarioLearn.com also has a helpful self-assessment tool at [www.ontariolearn.com/index.php/en/?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=3569](http://www.ontariolearn.com/index.php/en/?option=com_k2&view=item&id=3569)
- ⇒ *BBC Webwise: A Beginner's Guide to Using the Internet* ([www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/courses](http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/courses)). This is an excellent site, particularly for learners with little or no computer experience. Instruction is offered in everything from mouse skills to social media basics. The tutorials are provided in video format with some text.
- ⇒ *Math Drills* ([www.math-drills.com](http://www.math-drills.com)). This site has a collection of over 10,000 math worksheets with new content being added regularly. Subjects include: arithmetic, integers, decimals, fractions, percents, graphing, geometry, algebra and measurement.

You can find more links and online resources from CLO's *Digital Discoveries: Guide to Online Learning with Adult Literacy Learners*. This valuable 157-page guide provides an extensive overview of promising practices and strategies for online learning in the classroom.

*Digital Discoveries* also overviews popular digital learning technologies (including blogs, social networking, instructional websites, e-readers, cloud computing, podcasting and more). The guide includes an extensive annotated list of popular and useful digital learning resources.



This resource was provided free of charge to all CLO member agencies, regional literacy networks, MTCU and all literacy support organizations earlier in 2012. Due to the popularity of this resource, we have printed a few extra copies which are available on a cost-recovery basis of \$25 plus postage. You can order a print copy of this resource here: [www.nald.ca/clo/bookstore/clo\\_best\\_seller\\_list\\_2012.pdf](http://www.nald.ca/clo/bookstore/clo_best_seller_list_2012.pdf)

*Digital Discoveries: Guide to Online Learning with Adult Literacy Learners* can also be purchased as an e-book at [www.amazon.com/Digital-Discoveries-Learning-Literacy-ebook/dp/B007F1BZ0Q](http://www.amazon.com/Digital-Discoveries-Learning-Literacy-ebook/dp/B007F1BZ0Q)

CLO has also compiled a wider variety of website links for digital learning using Delicious, a social bookmarking tool: [www.delicious.com/communitylitont](http://www.delicious.com/communitylitont)