Skills For The Future

A Training Resource for Literacy Practitioners

by
Lindsay Kennedy

COMMUNITY LITERACY OF ONTARIO

SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE
A Training Resource for Literacy Practitioners

Community Literacy of Ontario
80 Bradford Street, Suite 508
Barrie, Ontario, Canada   L4N 6S7
Tel: 705-733-2312   Fax: 705-733-6197
E-mail: clo@bellnet.ca
www.nald.ca/clo.htm
September 2003

Skills for the Future

Training Resource for Literacy Practitioners
Table of Contents
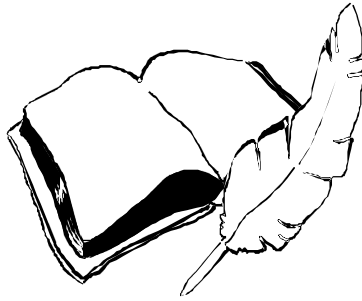
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"There's an old saying that the older you get the less you know. And I think that's true. It doesn't matter how many years you have worked as a literacy practitioner, there is always something new to discover or a new approach to try out. Not only is the field constantly changing and evolving, but each person we work with is unique, and sometimes we have to look for a new way of doing things. I welcome opportunities to participate in training, both face-to-face and online. And I like the chance to meet with my peers and discuss problems and find out what they are doing in their programs. I also look forward to new publications from organizations like CLO as I know I'll find practical tips and tools on topics and issues that are important to me."

A community-based literacy practitioner

The need to develop a training resource for literacy practitioners— specifically for paid staff—was clearly articulated by practitioners during the course of Community Literacy of Ontario's work on Phases One and Two of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' Practitioner Training Strategy. During both of these phases, CLO solicited input and feedback from practitioners through the use of surveys, focus groups, reference groups, field tests and online discussions. In Phase Three of the Practitioner Training Strategy, CLO used the information gained in previous phases to research and develop this resource, "Skills for the Future: A Training Resource for Literacy Practitioners".

The content of "Skills for the Future" solidly reflects and supports the work that practitioners do as literacy providers. The framework behind the content is a reflection of current approaches to and assumptions about literacy—in terms of both content and process. That is, the how and the why of our approach to literacy within our agencies, within our communities and most importantly, with learners.

Skills for the Future

The environment in which you provide literacy and basic skills upgrading is influenced by a wide variety of factors. The set of beliefs that you have about learning, and learners, is one of those factors. The demands placed on your agency by funders, the community in which your agency is located and the learning needs of the adults who come to your agency for literacy and basic skills upgrading are other types of factors that can influence and shape your approach to literacy. These factors also help to determine the different skills that you need to delivery literacy services and manage your agency now and in the future.

When thinking about your practice—that is, what you do as a practitioner—you also need to think in terms of external and internal influences. For example, are there federal or provincial initiatives that will have an impact on what you do as a literacy instructor or as the person who is responsible for training volunteer tutors? Is the board of directors, through a strategic planning process, taking the agency into new directions that will require new skills? Are there local, community factors that will impact on how your agency functions in that local environment? What skills do you currently have as a literacy practitioner? What skills do you need in the future? What skills are needed within your agency now and the future?

This resource is about bringing together your experience and the information in this resource to form a knowledge base that will help you to strengthen the positive and supportive learning culture that can be found within your agency.

The skills that you need to be proficient at your work will depend, in part on your specific duties within the agency. Literacy practitioners in community-based agencies often require a wide array of skills and abilities. This resource is an attempt to provide you with some key information about being a literacy practitioner and thereby help you to gain a better understanding of the skills your agency needs and the skills you need to have to do your job.

In *Skills for the Future* the word "skills" refers to the abilities you have and the knowledge you possess that allow you to be a competent literacy practitioner. The title also reflects the fact that we always need to be upgrading current skills or gaining new skills. While skills (knowledge and ability) are concrete they should never be static.

Resource Development

Information collected during the first two phases of MTCU's Practitioner Training Strategy and other information collected by CLO provided an excellent basis from which to develop a training resource for paid staff. For example, we know that over 70% of paid staff in Ontario already have some form of post-secondary education and they are:

⇒ Female (over 90%)
⇒ 37 % have been the field less than 4 years
⇒ 34% have been in the field 4 to 10 years
⇒ 29% have been in the field for over 10 years

CLO's Human Resource Survey reported "staff time to participate in training" and "costs related to participating in training" were two of the most frequently cited barriers to accessing training. Most respondents (86%) acquired their literacy related skills through printed manuals, files and resources. Research clearly showed that many practitioners would benefit from having access to a written training resource. By providing all community literacy agencies with a resource that can be used to educate and train practitioners, CLO will help to strengthen the literacy field. This will in turn strengthen the service that adult literacy learners receive from literacy delivery agencies.

The minimum entry level skills list developed by CLO during Phase One, the Provincial Standard for the Training of Paid Staff developed by CLO during Phase Two and other information gained from contact with the field provided a clear direction for the content of this training resource. Best practices from adult education and literacy fields across the county and around the world were explored and examined by CLO during the preliminary stages of resource development. This included approaches to many aspects of service delivery and agency management—from training and supporting volunteers to literacy instruction to the support and development of the board of directors.

This has resulted in the development of a training resource set firmly within the context of our working reality—a resource that provides up-to-date information about all aspects of agency management, service delivery, and most importantly your own professional development. CLO's *"Skills for the Future: A Training Resource for Literacy Practitioners"* is a resource that will help you strengthen your skills for now and for the future.

Shaping Our Practice

Our viewpoint shapes what we do and how we approach our work. Viewpoints are seldom static or unchanging, and over the years our view of literacy and adult learners has changed. The evolution of our viewpoint has been fuelled by research and practice in Canada, and around the world.

Not all that long ago the lack of literacy skills was seen as something that could be fixed "simply" by teaching the person to read and write. That is, the problem was defined in terms of the absence of a skill or skills. Someone was either literate or they were illiterate.

Today we know and accept that literacy is about more than just not being able to read or write or do basic math. We know it is not an all or nothing concept. We also know and accept that the lack of literacy skills limits the individual in ways that go beyond the ability to read the printed word. Analysis of the results of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), in which Canada participated in the mid-1990s, and other recent research has provided data that supports and verifies our current beliefs. In Chapter 2, Understanding the Need, the major results of IALS and definitions of literacy are explored.

The move toward a formalized learning outcomes approach also plays a role in shaping what we do and how we perceive learning and learners. This approach fits naturally into the community-based setting. If fact, when applied to all that we do as literacy practitioners it ensures that planning—whether for service delivery, actual instruction or for our own professional development—is situated in an environment that supports and encourages real growth and new learning for everyone involved with the agency. An overview of the MTCU's Literacy and Basic Skills Program is provided in Chapter 3, Understanding The Role of Your Agency.

Our approach to service delivery and agency management is shaped by the role that volunteers play within our agencies. Volunteers are not simply unpaid labourers and specific management skills are needed. In order to support volunteers in your agency, Chapter 4, Understanding the Role of the Volunteer, shares information on best practices in volunteer recruitment, screening, training, support, supervision and recognition. If you are responsible for training volunteer tutors you will find CLO's Provincial Standard for the Training of Volunteer Tutors (see Appendix B) to be a useful resource.

How learning happens and the factors that impact on someone's ability to learn are woven together to form the complex tapestry that is an adult literacy learner. Our approach to the delivery of literacy instruction has been shaped by both MTCU's program guidelines and by recent work in Ontario on the topic of self-direction. Research has validated what many practitioners know (based on both intuition and practical experience) about the important role that self-direction plays in the learning environment. This research has also provided the field with some tools that will help to ensure that practitioners can gain the skills to ensure that the learners in their programs are given both support and opportunity. In Chapter 5, The Adult Literacy Learner, the "Basic Principles of Adult Literacy Education" provide a foundation on which you can base your practice. This chapter looks at the roles that motivation and self-direction play in learner participation and it provides suggestions for strategies that can help you establish a learning environment that is built on mutual respect, trust and collaboration.

While not all the adults who approach your agency will end up as participants in the literacy and basic skills programs that you offer, many will. In most agencies it is a paid staff person who is responsible for taking the learner through initial intake and assessment process. Chapter 6, Identifying and Meeting Learner Needs, looks at MTCU's requirements and provides some strategies for ensuring that the learning environment supports a high level of learner involvement and participation in this first stage of literacy instruction.

What do you do with the information that you have complied once you and the learner have identified the learner's goal, the learner has participated in an assessment of his or her current skill level, and the training plan has been developed? How can you use this information to determine the most appropriate approach to helping the learner gain new skills? If your role as a practitioner includes the provision of literacy instruction the information and instructional strategies presented in Chapter 7, will help you examine and shape your instructional practice.

Learners are supposed to leave our literacy programs. It is the unplanned exit that literacy practitioners find frustrating. Do you, as a practitioner, know why specific learners leave? Is there a trend to learners leaving your literacy program? Are the factors that lead to their leaving internal or external to the agency, or are they internal or external to the learner? Conducting exit interviews is one way to gather information that may allow you to shape your current programming or instructional strategies in ways that will encourage learners to stay. In Chapter 8, Learner Exit and Follow-Up you will find a checklist that should help you identify learners who may be at risk of leaving your agency without achieving their goals. MTCU's reporting requirements for exit and follow-up activities are also explored.

Being a literacy practitioner should not just be about doing your job. It should also be about thinking about the "what" and the "why" of what you do! Like the process in place for the learners in our literacy programs, the skills that you need to do your job or to take on additional responsibilities should be clearly identified and a plan for acquiring skills developed. The final chapter in *Skills for the Future* explores the topic of Professional Development and gives you an excellent tool that will help you assess the skills you have, the skills you need and then it will help you think about how and where you can get the professional development you need.

Chapter One

At the end of each chapter in *Skills for the Future* you will find a section called "Questions for Reflection." It is hoped that these questions will encourage you to reflect on your work. Some of you may even want to gather more information about a particular topic or pose the same question to a group of your peers. It is through activities like these that you grow as a literacy practitioner.

Manual Overview

The following is an overview of the content of each of the chapters (excluding this first chapter) in this resource. After the "Questions for Reflection" section of each chapter (and in some cases at the end of specific sections within a chapter) you will find a list of suggested print and web-based resources.

CHAPTER ONE
You are reading it!
CHAPTER TWO
Good practice necessitates knowing not just about your own agency and community but also knowing about the larger national view of literacy. How is literacy defined across the country? How can you use that knowledge to shape the work you do? The International Adult Literacy Survey provided key information that has been used by policy advisors to shape the funders view of literacy. The role that community-based organizations play in the literacy field is also introduced.

CHAPTER THREE

As non-profit agencies, community-based literacy organizations are business entities in and of themselves and therefore staff need different skill sets to accomplish the work that comes with that responsibility.

Program guidelines for the delivery of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' (MTCU) Literacy and Basic Skills Program are also discussed, as service delivery is a key function for community-based literacy agencies. As well, the various roles of community literacy agencies are some of the important areas that are looked at in this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

Where would we be without volunteers? Volunteers are an invaluable and integral part of community literacy agencies. Obviously volunteer involvement does not just happen—time and energy must be put into planning and support. All aspects of volunteer management are discussed, including recruitment, screening, training, supporting, motivating and recognizing volunteers. Some tools and resources are included.

Agencies that depend on volunteers to deliver service must ensure that the volunteers have the skills and training needed to meet the learning needs of the adult learners. Community Literacy of Ontario's Standard for the Training of Volunteer Tutors is used to frame a training strategy.

CHAPTER FIVE

Who are the learners that come to our literacy programs? What do we know about factors that can impact on their ability to learn? What can we do to create a learning environment that is inviting, supportive and centred on the needs of the learner?

This chapter looks at learner motivation and participation and explores the role self-direction plays and how it is influenced by the environment in which the learner is functioning. Principles for adult literacy learning are provided. The importance of goal-setting, the identification of learning styles and learning disabilities are also discussed. Practitioners need a solid understanding of these important concepts.

CHAPTER SIX

Before instruction can begin, practitioners need to relate the skills that learners have to the skills that they need to achieve their goals. In fact, before assessment can begin, learners and practitioners need to work together to ensure that all learners have clearly articulated a goal and that the goal is defined by what the learner wants to accomplish. Helping learners to set realistic and achievable short- and long-term goals can be a challenge. This chapter provides some strategies that will help you to identify and begin to meet learner needs.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Whether you provide literacy instruction yourself or rely on the services of trained volunteer tutors, you need to develop a repertoire of strategies for teaching reading, writing and basic math skills. This chapter looks at each of the Domains that form MTCU's Learning Outcomes Approach (also called "The Matrix"). Information and suggested instructional strategies are provided for each Learning Outcome of the Communications, Numeracy and Self-Management/Self-Direction Domains.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Learners are supposed to leave our literacy programs and yet it is often easy to loose sight of this fact. What is disconcerting for instructors, and other practitioners, is the unplanned exit—the learner who is no longer participating in instructional sessions. Are there checks and balances that can be put into place to minimize learner drop-outs?

A literacy program that supports and encourages critical input from learners will learn much about the quality of the literacy instruction and about the organization itself. This information can go a long way toward ensuring that you and your instructors have a good understanding of the types of challenges that learners can face and to help minimize as much as possible losing contact with learners.

CHAPTER NINE

Where is **your** training plan? The literacy practitioner is a central figure in the literacy environment. Practitioners need to gain and keep skills that allow them to meet the needs of a wide variety of both internal and external stakeholders.

The Professional Development Planning Tool presented in this chapter can be used to help you verify your current skills and also identify training needs. When coupled with your agency's annual performance appraisal you can develop a clear plan for you training needs and provide clear documentation of current skills and abilities. Information about the various avenues for gaining skills and knowledge are discussed.
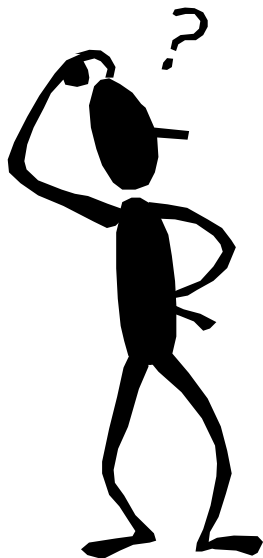
Questions for Reflection

⇒ If you are new to the field of literacy, do you know which organizations are in place to provide you with information and resources?

⇒ If you are the person in the literacy agency who is responsible for training new staff what resources do you give them to help them gain an understanding of the field?

Suggested Resources

The following list is but a few resources that could
be given to any new staff person.

Celebrating Literacy Volunteers in your community- A Promotional Toolkit.
Community Literacy of Ontario, 2001.

⇒ This resource was designed to help community literacy agencies
   promote and celebrate literacy volunteerism in their individual
   communities. The kit includes fact sheets, tip and resource sheets,
   overhead masters, sample media releases and a CD-ROM that
   includes everything in the kit and other valuable links and resources.

Entry to Exit: A Coordinator's Handbook for the Delivery of Literacy Services.
Marianne Paul. Laubach Literacy Ontario, 1999. AlphaPlus Call #:
374.01206 P134.

⇒ This resource provides valuable information about the service
   delivery functions and the responsibilities and tasks directly
   associated with providing service to learners.

New to Literacy in Ontario? Ann Semple. Literacy Link South Central, 2001.
AlphaPlus Call # 374.01202 S253

⇒ As of June 2003, this resource is being updated. *New to Literacy* still
   provides an excellent overview of the wide range of resources that are
   available to the field.

*On The Level: Demonstrating Skills and Knowledge in Ontario's Community
Literacy Agencies: Model Demonstrations, Tools, and Resources.* Lindsay
Kennedy. Community Literacy of Ontario, 2000. ISBN: 0968469825.
AlphaPlus Call #: 374.1264 K25.

⇒ This resource provides model demonstrations, tools and resources for
   Levels One and Two of the Communications Domain.

Reading the Future: A portrait of Literacy in Canada. Ministry of Industry, 1996. Statistics Canada. ISBN: 0-660-16514-7. Catalogue #: 89-551-XPE. Also available online at: http://www.nald.ca/nls/ials/introduc.htm

Smart Steps to Organizational Excellence. Community Literacy of Ontario, 2002. AlphaPlus Call # 374.01206 K11

$\Rightarrow$ This resource was designed to summarize the contents of five online workshops that were delivered from February to June 2002. The topics covered are: Proposal Writing; Fee for Service; Program Evaluation; Assessing Organizational Capacity; and, Organizational Outcomes.

Strategies Of Our Own: Learner Recruitment & Retention Toolkit. Judith Fowler. Community Literacy of Ontario, 2002. AlphaPlus Call #: 374.01206

$\Rightarrow$ The purpose of the kit is to provide Anglophone community-based literacy agencies with information and tools about learner recruitment and retention, and to provide literacy practitioners with practical, user-friendly and effective strategies and best practices for learner recruitment and retention.

Together We Can Do It! The Role of Volunteers in the Assessment Process. Vicki Trottier.

$\Rightarrow$ Community Literacy of Ontario, 2002. AlphaPlus Call #: 374.1264 T68. This resource provides information on effective strategies and best practices for volunteer involvement in the assessment process.
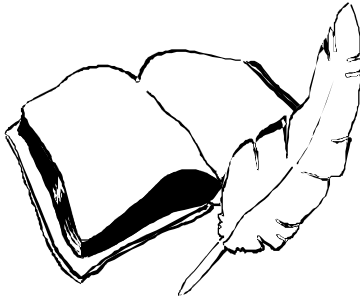
CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING THE NEED

> "… imagine a Canada where everyone reads and writes; where all children have people who read to them every day; where people who have difficulty reading and writing feel valued and supported; where language is plain; where literacy organizations have the resources to serve the literacy needs of their communities; where literacy in all its forms is celebrated and supported; and a Canada where a pan-Canadian literacy strategy facilitates the accomplishment of all of this."
>
> *Raising Adult Literacy Skills: The Need For A Pan-Canadian Response (Report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities)*

Introduction

The information presented in this chapter is intended to give you a strong foundation in the type of background information you need know so that you can communicate information about literacy to the general public and to interested stakeholders. As a literacy practitioner, it is important for you to think about, and be informed about, the bigger literacy picture. This will help you be an advocate for literacy in your community and beyond. The chapter also provides a useful orientation for new staff members or volunteers.

Community-based programs have always been learner-centred. That has not changed. What has changed is our need to better understand why learners come to our programs and how we can best meet their needs while they are in our programs. This chapter will introduce you to some of the factors that affect learners as they approach literacy and basic skills upgrading.

The Role of Literacy in Society

We will start with a straightforward definition of literacy. It is a definition that quite simply says that being literate means you have the ability to read, write, and use numbers every day.

This is a valid definition. We know, however, from many sources that it is not enough. The phrase "every day use" is an important qualifier. The increased use of technology in both the home and the workplace and the new demands on the labour force for highly skilled workers means being literate or having the necessary literacy skills in today's society requires a more complex set of basic skills.

As a practitioner you have to ask questions like:

⇒ What if someone lacks these skills?
⇒ What if someone's ability to read, write and use numbers isn't sufficient for "every day" use?
⇒ What if someone's "every day" use changes?
⇒ Where does that leave that person?

Before we try to answer these questions we will take a look at some statistical information.

International Adult Literacy Survey

In 1994, Canada (along with nineteen other nations) participated in the first International Adult Literacy Survey. Known as IALS, the survey measured literacy proficiency at five different levels—with Level One being the lowest and Level Five the highest. For IALS, literacy was defined as "Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve their goals and to develop their knowledge and potential[1]."

During the IALS survey, the literacy skills of over three thousand Canadians between the ages of 16 and 65, whose first language was English, were measured. Three pre-defined criteria, or domains, were used. These were:

1. Having the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts such as news stories, poems or works of fiction. This was labelled prose literacy.

2. Having the knowledge and skills needed to find and use information found in various formats, like job applications, or maps or tables. This was labelled document literacy.

3. Having the knowledge and skills needed to use basic math operations with numbers embedded in printed materials, such as adding the tip to a bill at the restaurant. This was labelled quantitative literacy.

The rating and testing scale used by IALS was very complex and technically sophisticated. The survey designers used something called "Item Response Theory" to assign a rating to each task based on an estimate of both the difficulty of the task and the proficiency (literacy skills) needed to carry it out.

---

[1] *Literacy, Economy and Society*: Results of the first International Adult Literacy Survey, page 14.

This allowed the results to provide detailed "portraits" of the skills of the people being tested. There were numerous tasks for each level and domain.

While the scale was complex, the tasks given to participants were based on materials found in everyday life—medicine bottle labels, simple invoices, prose articles from a newspaper. At Level One Prose, for example, one task required the participant to use the instructions on a bottle to identify the maximum duration recommended for taking aspirin. A Level Five Prose activity required the participant to use an announcement from a personnel department to answer a question that used phrasing different from the phrasing used in the announcement. If you were able to complete the tasks in a particular level correctly 80% of the time then you were deemed to be proficient at that level.

The results of this survey indicated that in Canada over 45 percent of the respondents were functioning at the lowest two levels. Twenty-two percent were at the lowest level. This means they had serious difficulty dealing with printed materials and most likely identified themselves as people who have difficulties reading. Twenty-five percent were at level two. This means they can read but not well and the material must be clearly written and laid out, and the tasks involved must be fairly simple.

Building on the information collected by IALS, Statistics Canada released *Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada.* (1996). The report looked at the data from the survey in terms of language, age, gender and region. Most importantly, according to Statistics Canada, "the report provided the information with which to judge Canadian policy on literacy, education and social and economic development[2]."

---

[2] Backgrounder to *Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada.* Statistics Canada, 1996.

Literacy Skills of Canadian Adults
Aged 16 and Over - By Percent[3]

Scale \ Level	1	2	3	4/5
Prose	22%	26%	33%	20%
Document	23%	24%	30%	22%
Quantitative	22%	26%	32%	20%
Average	22.3%	25.3%	31.6%	20.6%

One of the most important products of IALS was the compilation of data that allowed analysts to provide eight key findings.

Key Findings from the International Adult Literacy Survey[4]

Demographics:	The differences in skill observed in Canada across demographic groups are large. These differences are large enough to matter both socially and economically.
Economics:	Literacy is strongly associated with economic life chances and opportunities. This affects employment stability, the incidence of unemployment and income, among other things.

[3] Complied from data found in *Reading The Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada.* Canadian Report of the International Adult Literacy Survey. Statistics Canada. 1996.

[4] This table was developed based on information found in *Reading The Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada*, page 12.

Key Findings from the International Adult Literacy Survey[4]	
Income Generation:	There is a large "income bonus" in Canada for literacy proficiency at the highest level.
Workplace:	Literacy skill levels are clearly linked to occupations and industries. Some occupations need high-level skills, and others reflect requirements for intermediate skills.
Education:	There is a strong link between literacy skill level and the level of education achieved. It is, however, not so straight forward. Some adults despite a low level of education have relatively high literacy skills. Other adults, despite a high level of education, have low or poor literacy skills.
Population:	Low literacy skill levels are found across the entire adult population.
Self-identification:	Only a small number of people with poor literacy skills will say they need to improve their skills.
Usage:	Literacy skills, like muscles, are maintained and strengthened through regular use. The evidence indicates that applying literacy skills in daily activities both at home and at work is associated with high levels of performance.

Literacy is a complex topic. How we define or measure literacy skills affects what we say and how we think about literacy. How we define or measure literacy can also affect what we as individuals and as a society do about literacy[5]. Policy makers and government decision makers use

---

[5] S. Sussman. Workshop presentation notes, June 2001.

reports such as IALS to make funding and program development decisions that impact on how we, at the program level, do our work.

It must be noted that some educators, politicians, and even the general public have questioned the IALS survey methodology—including the definition of literacy that was used—and even some of the data interpretation. Given that Canada does not have a national system of adult basic education, the fact remains, however, that the information gathered as a result of IALS has provided a common language (the levels) for discussing the issue of literacy at both the national and local (Ontario) levels.

Reasons for Poor Literacy Skills

When examining the reasons for poor or low literacy skills you must keep two factors in perspective. First, you need to be aware of the factors that caused the adult to have difficulty with reading and writing in the first place. Second, you must become aware of the factors that influence the adult's motivation and ongoing participation in the current learning situation.

Much has been written about why over 45% of Canadians have difficulty with reading and writing and why they did not do well in school. Learners themselves can give a variety of reasons. Some moved a lot as kids and never had time to settle down in one school before they found themselves, yet again, the new kid in the class. Some learners may have come from a difficult home situation where personal issues were of a more immediate concern than getting homework done or attending school at all. Strong family support for literacy can play a critical role in the future development of literacy skills. For some, this early family support for literacy may or may not have been available[6]. As well, many adults went through school with undiagnosed learning disabilities.

---

[6] *The Early Years Study Final Report,* Ontario Children's Secretariat, 1999.

There is a strong link between poor literacy skills and family income. In fact, the *Early Years Report* (1999) reported as a key finding that "the highest proportion of children who are experiencing at least one serious learning or behavioural difficulty is in the lowest socio-economic group[7]." Children in the lowest socio-economic group also leave school at twice the rate of children in other socio-economic groups. According to a fact sheet from the Movement for Canadian Literacy children from middle class families enter the first grade with over 1,000 hours of storybook reading behind them, compared to "only 25 hours for children from very low-income homes[8]."

To help ensure that learners have positive learning experiences you need to understand the factors that will challenge their participation (physical or emotional), the process of learning (how people learn), and the outcomes of learning (what they will learn). For example, as you gather intake information from each person you need to make note of learning style and whether or not you think there might be a learning disability[9].

You also need to keep the adult literacy learner actively involved in the both the process and the outcomes—that is what being learner-centred is all about. This is not an easy task. Adult literacy learners will likely see you—whether your role is as the program coordinator or the instructor — as the person who knows more than they do. New learners usually need continuous encouragement to ensure their active participation.

---

[7] *Reversing the Real Brain Drain: Early Years Study Final Report*. Ontario Children's Secretariat, 1999, page 68.

[8] Movement for Canadian Literacy Fact Sheet: *Literacy and Families,* 2002.

[9] In Chapter 5, The Adult Literacy Learner, topics such as learning styles, learning disabilities and other factors that influence both motivation and participation are discussed in detail.

Understanding the Need

Impact of Poor Literacy Skills

As can be seen in the key findings from International Adult Literacy Survey, the impact of poor literacy skills can have an affect on many aspects of a person's life. Without adequate literacy skills some people find it very difficult to participate fully in their communities or even in the lives of their families and they can find it difficult to find or hold a job or to access employment related training.

Someone with low literacy skills can have more difficulty finding a job than someone who has good literacy skills. The unemployment rate for people at the lowest literacy level is twenty-six percent, compared with four percent for those at the highest IALS levels[10]. When the workplace undergoes change, whether from a down turn in the economy or as the result of other changes (such as the introduction of new technology), it is often those workers with low literacy skills who lose their jobs. This could be because they find it difficult to keep up with the changes, or because they are unable to take advantage of advancement or skills training opportunities.

Even in a country with universal access to health care, low literacy skills can also mean that your health is poor. You may not be aware of health care that is available to you and you may not be able to understand health information you are given. If your health is poor it makes it difficult for you to look for work or to look after your family. Many different sources confirm that low literacy can have a negative effect on all aspects of health.

There is direct correlation between low literacy skills and living in poverty. Just as literacy is about more than reading and writing, poverty is about more than not having enough money. According to IALS, those with the lowest level of literacy skills are more likely to live at the low end of Canada's income scale.

---

[10] Movement for Canadian Literacy Fact Sheet: *Literacy and the Workforce*, 2002.

Defining Literacy

As mentioned in the key findings of IALS, only a small number of people with poor literacy skills will say they need to improve their skills. While other factors may come into play, adults with the lowest skills may be the least likely to acknowledge that they have a problem with reading and writing. For example, many adults with low literacy skills define literacy in terms of "illiteracy", that is the inability to read or write at all. Since they have some skills, they, in their own minds, do not have a literacy problem.

While some adults may acknowledge to themselves, or to someone close to them, that they have a problem, they will go to great lengths to hide it publicly. Many adult learners have said that they found it relatively easy to hide their poor literacy skills. Learners will be the first to tell you about some of their coping skills—"forgetting" a pair of glasses so they won't have to fill in a cheque, or always ordering the same food in a restaurant or asking what the specials are, or using the largest denomination bill in their wallet to cover the cost of a lunch and then making a joke if the bill is too large (or too small). Many learners will tell you that they will avoid situations where reading or writing skills are required, like filling in a form on the spot, for example.

Literacy is a complex social issue. It is about communication and it is about choice. It is about being able to read or write for our own purposes—just because we can. It is about being able to read or write for our families—to send a note to the teacher at school if needed. It is about being able to read or write for our communities—to play whatever role we wish to play, or none. It is about being able to read and write for our workplaces—to keep a job or get a better one.

As literacy practitioners in the community-based sector, we need to explicitly state what we mean when we talk about literacy so that others will understand what we are talking about when we tell them about the issue of literacy and what it means when we say that someone has poor or low literacy skills. We also need to be explicit when we talk about the

context in which literacy training can happen. We need to talk about literacy as a whole, not as a part of something. Needing and using literacy skills is not, and cannot be, confined to an educational system. All of us use these skills everyday for a wide variety of tasks.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Skills Investment Branch is the current "home" of Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills Program. In its Literacy and Basic Skills Program Guidelines (October 2002) literacy is defined as "The ability to read, write, calculate, speak and understand, as well as sign (for the deaf), and communicate in other forms of language, according to need. Literacy is a continuum of these skills necessary for every day life in the home, at work, in education and in the community."

This definition acknowledges several important aspects of literacy and adult literacy learners. It recognizes that learning is continuous and that people need to engage in activities that help keep their literacy skills current and flexible. It recognizes that different learners learn the same things in different ways and have different learning needs at different stages of life. It also recognizes that needing adequate literacy skills is not confined to one place – like the workplace or the home – or that it can happen in isolation, but that those skills are needed in all these places.

As a staff person in a community literacy agency that probably receives most of its funding for literacy delivery from the provincial government, you will need to balance the needs of the funder with the needs of your community and the learners in your program.

Many community literacy agencies reflect their values and definition of literacy in their mission statement. In general, mission statements should tell someone who you are (as an organization), what you do (the type of service), who you serve (your client base), and where you deliver service (geographic).

Sample Mission Statements from Community Literacy Agencies in Ontario

The _____ _____ of _____ _____ exists to provide help to all area adults with English language literacy needs.

This help will be free-of-charge to the learner, confidential, and centred upon identified needs. Our services will respect the individual and will be strongly community-oriented.

_____ promotes literacy and provides upgrading in literacy and basic skills to adults, based on their individual needs. _____ offers one-to-one tutoring and small classes.

___ _____ is dedicated to helping adult learners acquire the skills to achieve their personal learning and employment goals.

Core Beliefs
1. We believe that everyone has the right to become literate
2. We believe in the dignity of work
3. We believe that effective learning requires a climate of mutual respect

We are committed to:
1. Respecting learners' choices
2. Celebrating individual success
3. Creating a welcoming, supportive environment for learning
4. Valuing of staff and volunteer commitment
5. Working cooperatively with the community to support our mission

The mission of the _____ (a multi-service agency) is to evaluate, develop, and promote literacy opportunities for adults in the Municipality of _____.

The Role of Community Literacy Agencies

Literacy delivery in Canada has been for the most part a "grass roots" movement with a heavy reliance on volunteers. In Ontario the number of organizations providing help to people to improve their reading and writing skills grew dramatically between 1970 and 1990. To this day, resourceful and dedicated volunteers continue to play critical roles in most of Ontario's community literacy agencies.

Community literacy agencies have an important role in both the delivery of literacy and basic skills upgrading in Ontario and in the life of the community in which they deliver the service. Agencies are continually striving to maintain a balance between meeting the needs of their funders and meeting the needs of both program participants and the community-at-large.

Community-based Structure

Most community literacy agencies are stand-alone not-for-profit organizations that have a local volunteer board of directors to oversee the business of the organization[11]. Some agencies may be housed within larger multi-service agencies that are also not-for-profit organizations, like the local library or a community centre. Regardless of where the agency is housed, community literacy agencies deliver learner-centred programming in a wide variety of locations, including literacy offices, community centres, libraries, social service agencies and even at the kitchen table in learners' own homes.

---

[11] Of the sixty-three organizations that provided information to Community Literacy of Ontario's 2003 "Survey of Ontario's Community-Based Literacy Agencies", 89 percent indicated that they were independent, self-governing non-profit organizations.

Effective partnerships within the community and strong accountability to all stakeholders (learners, the local community and funders) are also key characteristics of community-based organizations. In many community literacy agencies, adult learners, in addition to their literacy training, also participate in agency operations. Volunteer tutors and board members are drawn from the community in which the agency delivers service. The community and local businesses also support the agency by donating both time and money. All these local stakeholders play an important role in program development, evaluation, planning and governance.

At this time, Ontario's Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) funds[12] 112 Anglophone community literacy agencies. These agencies deliver quality instruction to adult learners in communities large and small, urban and rural across the province. Respondents to Community Literacy of Ontario's 2003 "Survey of Ontario's Community-Based Literacy Agencies", provided the following information about the communities in which they deliver service:

⇒   Rural – 38%
⇒   Mixed – 29%
⇒   Small urban (under 200,000)– 19%
⇒   Large urban (over 200,000) – 14%

While one-to-one instruction is still used by the majority of community-based literacy agencies, in recent years many agencies have begun to offer more opportunities for small group instruction. Community literacy agencies have a strong reliance on trained volunteers to deliver their one-to-one instruction. Agencies require their volunteers to participate in initial and ongoing tutor training[13].

---

[12] Literacy delivery in Ontario, it must be noted, is not confined to community-based organizations. MTCU also funds literacy programming in school boards and community colleges.
[13] See Chapter 4, The Role of the Volunteer for more information about volunteer management, including tutor training.

Community-based Philosophy

In *The Land That We Dream of...* the authors (Gaber-Katz and Watson) describe three elements as being intrinsic to community-based literacy. They define these elements as:

⇒   Learner centredness

⇒   Literacy from a critical perspective

⇒   Community building

Learner centredness—a cornerstone of community-based literacy—is said to encompass a commitment, beyond anything mandated by a funder, to active learning and it guides practice by reinforcing the prominence of learners within the organization. Learning is guided by the educational needs of each learner, and learners assist with the goal-setting and evaluation components of their participation.

Literacy from a critical perspective includes the elements that contribute to how we, as organizations and individuals, define literacy. For the authors it meant that programs assist learners to:

⇒ Improve their basic skills in reading, writing, numeracy, communication, life skills, abstract thinking and general knowledge

⇒ Increase their critical thinking abilities

⇒ Build self-confidence

⇒ Increase their understanding of self

⇒ Participate more fully in society

⇒ Create language and culture

⇒ Enhance the quality of their own lives

⇒ Work towards empowerment and social change

Community building "encompasses an exciting and creative process whereby people gather together in learning relationships that aspire to be equitable, just and tolerant." It is a community development process that "involves collective action by community members to strengthen the community[14]."

It is in our underlying philosophies and how we define our organizations and the work that we do as community-based literacy practitioners that provides our greatest benefits to the program participants, the local community and the literacy field in general. Programs and organizations evolved because of an identified need in the community. There is a tendency toward less bureaucracy. For example, anyone can walk in the door and see the "right" person right away—learners can become enrolled in literacy upgrading; volunteers can learn more about the intake and training process.

Community-based literacy organizations can often respond more quickly and with greater ease to situations and opportunities. Major decisions are made locally since most agencies are governed by a local board of directors. Also, in many agencies, the board of directors have entrusted paid staff with high levels of decision-making. There is a strong commitment on the part of all practitioners (paid staff and volunteers) to provide all learners with a positive, personalized learning experience.

[14] The Land That We Dream of …. Elaine Gaber-Katz and Gladys Watson (1991) pages 8, 35, 49.

Conclusion

In this chapter we looked at some of the fundamental information you will need as a literacy practitioner. Having a good grasp of the both the national and the provincial pictures of literacy should help you understand how the work you do in your agency contributes to the overall field of literacy. You can also use this type of information when talking to people who are not familiar with literacy as an issue.

Organizations that deliver community-based programming have been working the in literacy field for many years and they have a long history of placing a strong emphasis on a learner-centred approach to literacy delivery.
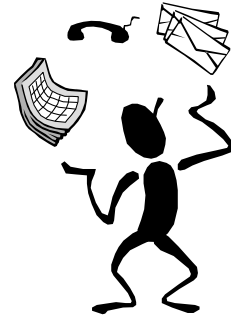
Questions for Reflection
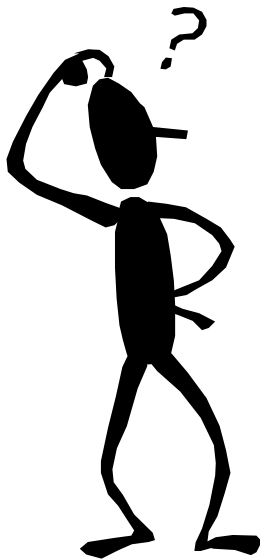
⇒ What is your definition of literacy?

⇒ Why is it important to think about the role of literacy and the impact of low/limited literacy skills on an individual?

⇒ Why is it important to have an awareness of literacy issues in Canada and locally?

⇒ What do you think are some of the reasons a learner would choose a community-based program?

Suggested Resources

In addition to the various reports, manuals, web sites and other resources mentioned in this chapter, we think you might find the following resources to be useful.

Print-Based:

Reading the Future: A portrait of Literacy in Canada. Ministry of Industry, 1996. Statistics Canada. ISBN: 0-660-16514-7. Catalogue #: 89-551-XPE. Also available online at: http://www.nald.ca/nls/ials/introduc.htm

The Value of Words: Literacy and Economic Security in Canada. Grant Schellenberg and Vivian Shalla. Ministry of Industry, 1998. ISBN: 0-660-17523-1. Catalogue #: 89-552-MPE. Also available online at: http://www.nald.ca/nls/ials/words/words.pdf

Web-based:

Literacy is for Life Fact Sheets published by the Movement for Canadian Literacy can be retrieved at: http://www.literacy.ca/litand/litand.htm

Literacy Fact Sheets published by the Ontario Literacy Coalition can be retrieved at: http://www.on.literacy.ca/literacy/litfacts/index.htm

Key Contacts:

Community Literacy of Ontario
80 Bradford Street, Suite 508
Barrie, ON   L4N 6S7
Tel: 705-733-2312 / Fax: 705-733-6197
Email: clo@bellnet.ca / Web Site: www.nald.ca/clo.htm

AlphaPlus Centre
2040 Yonge Street, 3rd Floor
Toronto, ON M4S 1Z9
Tel: (416) 322-1012 / Tel. (toll free): 1-800-788-1120
Fax: (416) 322-0780 / Fax (toll free): 1-800-788-1417
Email: info@alphaplus.ca / Web site: www:alphaplus.ca

Laubach Literacy Ontario (LLO)
591 Lancaster Street West, Unit 4
Kitchener, ON N2K 1M5
Tel.: (519) 743-3309 / Fax: (519) 743-7520
Email: literacy@laubach-on.ca / Web site: www.laubach-on.ca

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU)
Skills Investment Branch
23rd Floor, Mowat Block, 900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON   M7A 2B5
Tel.: (416) 326-5482 / Fax: (416) 326-5493
Website: www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/welcome.html

Movement for Canadian Literacy
300-180 Metcalfe Street
Ottawa, ON   K2P 1P5
Tel: 613-563-2464
Website: www.literacy.ca

National Adult Literacy Database Inc. (NALD)
Scovil House, 703 Brunswick Street
Fredricton, NB E3B 1H8
Tel.: (506) 457-6900 / Tel. (toll free): 1-800-720-6253
Fax: (506) 457-6910
Email: ContactNALD@nald.ca / Website: www.nald.ca

National Literacy Secretariat (NLS)
Human Resources Development Canada
Constitution Square, 360 Albert Street, 15th Floor
Ottawa, ON   K1R 7X7
Tel.: (613) 946-1388 / Fax: (819) 946-5882
Website: www.nald.ca/nls.htm

Ontario Literacy Coalition
365 Bloor Street East
Toronto ON   M4W 3L4
Tel: 416-963-5787
Website: www.on.literacy.ca
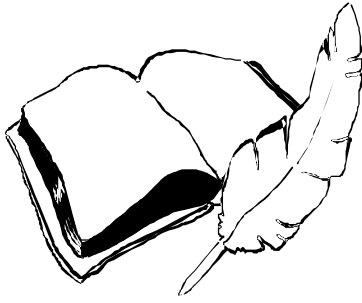
CHAPTER 3

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF YOUR AGENCY

"Many of the people who are disadvantaged in society as a whole—low income families, homeless people, the unemployed or underemployed, street youth and many others—come to our program. At our community-based literacy program we understand that getting help with literacy is about the whole. It's about empowering people by giving them the tools that are essential to their effective participation in our community, in their families, in the economy and in the larger social and political context of the world around them."

A community-based literacy practitioner

Introduction

In this chapter we will look at the role of your agency in terms of service delivery and the importance of organizational planning. As the provider of a service you must be fully aware of the needs of your community and your organization and balance those needs with the needs of the funder.

You must regularly assess your organization's ability to meet current demand for your services and to plan for the delivery of services in the future. Agencies must work hard to ensure that the needs of all stakeholders are clearly articulated and understood by everyone involved in the agency.

Service Delivery in Ontario

Canada is one of the few industrialized nations without a national system for adult literacy and basic education[15]. In Canada, adult literacy and basic education, like K-to-12 education, is a provincial or territorial concern. This means that funding for service planning and delivery is provided by the provincial or territorial government while most funding for research and policy development initiatives is provided by the federal government, through the National Literacy Secretariat.

At the national level, The National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) works to promote literacy as an essential component of a learning society and to make Canada's social, economic and political life more accessible to people with weak literacy skills. NLS activities, undertaken in partnership with the provinces, territories, non-governmental organizations and business and labour organizations, build capacity for literacy opportunities across Canada. There are two funding streams. Through one stream, NLS supports literacy projects that address provincial and territorial priorities (set by the province or territory). The other stream supports projects in the non-governmental sector, including national literacy organizations, provincial or territorial literacy coalitions, business and labour organizations and other non-governmental organizations with an interest in literacy.

Literacy and Basic Skills Program

In Canada, the provincial governments are responsible for the actual delivery of literacy services. Provincial government funding for literacy initiatives began in earnest in the 1980s. Since then, the part of the provincial government that is responsible for funding literacy in Ontario has had numerous "homes" within various provincial ministries.

---

[15] Movement for Canadian Literacy Fact Sheet: *Overview of Adult Literacy in Canada,* 2002.

Currently (2003) the responsibility for overseeing the literacy field in Ontario lies with the Literacy and Basic Skills Section of the Skills Investment Branch of the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU).

Although more government funding for literacy is great needed, Ontario does enjoy one of the highest levels of government support for literacy programming in Canada. Service delivery to 240 funded agencies (at 300 sites) is funded solely by the province. By itself, and in cooperation with the National Literacy Secretariat, MTCU also funds service development, research, resource development and literacy initiatives.

With the development of the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program in the mid-to-late nineties, MTCU published guidelines[16] that define, among other things, the LBS program's principles, objectives, and focus. The guidelines provide extensive information on services, funding requirements, and administrative procedures. They and your MTCU field consultant should be consulted if you have any questions about service delivery in Ontario.

It is through its LBS Program that MTCU provides funding to organizations for service delivery and service development across the province. Service development agencies provide local planning and coordination, field support, and research and development services to the field. Service delivery agencies provide information and referral, assessment, training plan development, training, and follow-up activities to program participants.

---

[16] The Literacy and Basic Skills Program Guidelines and your MTCU field consultant should be consulted for the most accurate and up-to-date information on this topic.

Literacy and Basic Skills Program Functions

The objectives of the LBS Program, as stated in the guidelines, are:

⇒ To help Ontario move toward a seamless adult education system that supports lifelong learning

⇒ To support literacy agencies in providing quality literacy services that meet learners' needs

⇒ To focus literacy services on those adults most in need of them

⇒ To ensure accountability to government, to the public, and to learners in the provision of literacy services that are effective, efficient and produce measurable results

⇒ To foster closer links between literacy training and employment

More than 200 agencies are funded to deliver literacy services in the Anglophone, Francophone, Native and Deaf communities (streams) across the province. This translates into the following breakdown of funded service delivery agencies in each stream[17]:

⇒ Anglophone; 164 agencies, operating at 240 sites

⇒ Francophone: 34 agencies, operating at 44 sites

⇒ Native: 30 agencies, operating at 30 sites

⇒ Deaf: 12 agencies, operating at 17 sites

Each of these streams is served by an umbrella organization that receives funding to provide service development functions:

⇒ Anglophone: The Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC)

⇒ Francophone: La Coalition francophone pour l'alphabétisation et la formation de base en Ontario (La Coalition)

⇒ Native: The Ontario Native Literacy Coalition (ONLC)

⇒ Deaf: Goal: Ontario Literacy for Deaf people (GOLD)

---

[17] These numbers are considered accurate as of June 2003.

The Ontario Literacy Coalition is the largest of these umbrella organizations and it provides a strong voice for literacy in Ontario and beyond. CLO and many Anglophone community literacy agencies are members of the OLC. For more information, please visit the OLC website at http://www.on.literacy.ca/.

Within the large Anglophone stream MTCU funds four organizations to meet the distinct service development needs of each sector. The four sectoral bodies are: Community Literacy of Ontario (serving community literacy agencies); Laubach Literacy Ontario (serving Laubach-affiliated agencies); CESBA (serving school board literacy programs); and the College Sector Committee (serving college literacy programs).

Umbrella and sectoral organizations provide expertise and advice to delivery agencies and the government. Among other duties, they are responsible for providing informed advice to MTCU, taking the lead role with coordination and management of literacy research and development projects, and public awareness.

In addition to the umbrella and sectoral organizations, MTCU funds 16 regional literacy networks. The networks are based in every region of Ontario and they provide service development activities to all of the literacy agencies within their network boundaries. Regional networks play a lead role in the development of the annual literacy services plan in their region. Networks are also responsible for:

⇒ Providing ongoing support to LBS funded agencies
⇒ Leading the development of a regional plan for information and referral
⇒ Providing a coordination role for the ongoing professional development of practitioners

There is considerable formal and informal communication between the regional, sectoral and umbrella literacy organizations in Ontario. The Ontario Literacy Coalition, for example, is structured so that it brings the

staff of both the regional literacy networks and the sectoral bodies together in a roundtable format to discuss issues and concerns.

In addition, the literacy field is supported by AlphaPlus Centre and the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD). The National Adult Literacy Database (NALD) provides a comprehensive, up-to-date and easily accessible database of adult literacy programs, resources, services and activities across Canada. AlphaPlus Centre serves literacy practitioners and organizations that work in the Deaf, Native, Francophone, and Anglophone literacy field in Ontario. Their goal is to help practitioners find relevant resources and information to enrich the learning of adults in literacy programs.

MTCU provides funding to over one hundred Anglophone community-based organizations to deliver service. Many of these agencies are stand alone non-profit organizations and some are part of larger non-profit organizations. For example, some John Howard Society chapters and public libraries offer Literacy and Basic Skill programming. All funded organizations must meet and maintain the eligibility requirements of the LBS Program.

Literacy and Basic Skills Program Principles

The LBS Program is guided by a number of key principles that are listed below. These principles help ensure that all literacy services provided by either delivery or development agencies are of high quality.

LBS Program Principles
(Adapted from LBS Program Guidelines Tab 1: Preliminaries)

The LBS Program is:

Results-based	All services are evaluated against demonstrable performance indicators
Community-based	Services are planned and coordinated with other local stakeholders
Cost effective	Services provide the best results at the lowest possible cost
Accessible	A reasonable and equitable level of access is provided to all learners
Accountable	Agencies can demonstrate their ability to meet set objectives
Flexible	A variety of learners and learning needs can be met within stated priorities and guidelines
Learner centred	Learners are respected, the learning environment is supportive and literacy services assist learners with reaching their goals
Based on adult education principles	Learning opportunities respect the range of learning needs and styles that adult literacy learners' have
Linked to the broader education and training system	The LBS Program links to and does not duplicate the broader education and training system in Ontario

Accountability is a crucial element of the key principles. MTCU is accountable to the provincial government and the general public. In turn, it holds the organizations it funds accountable. MTCU monitors and examines the goals and achievements that organizations set for service delivery through the annual process of local literacy service planning, business plan development, the submission of scheduled statistical, narrative and financial reports, and site visits. The accountability relationship between MTCU and the organizations they fund is set out in the individual contracts that are signed annually.

While MTCU has always required that its reporting procedures be followed, in recent years it has provided all LBS funded agencies with a computer-based format for information collection and data management. Beginning in 2002 the Information Management System (IMS) was available in an electronic format. That is, agencies could transmit to MTCU information that had been entered into the database. The information collected mirrors the Statistical Summary Report that was previously prepared manually and submitted bi-annually. The electronic transmission of the data maintains confidentiality. Beyond the mandatory data collection, agencies have the option to use the IMS to track various details such as learner progress and volunteer involvement.

Literacy and Basic Skills Funded Functions

While both service delivery and service development are main functions of the LBS Program, service delivery is considered its primary focus. Service delivery functions are those activities, or services, that you and your agency provide directly to learners—Information and Referral, Assessment, Training Plan Development, Training and Follow-up. Each service delivery function has specific agency responsibilities and performance indicators and the LBS Program Guidelines should be referred to for the exact wording for all funded services.

Though funding for the provision of the services is not based on a formula, the current funding model does link the number of student contact hours that an agency provides to a specific funding range and level. The costs for administering the LBS program are also factored into the funding ranges and levels. Currently (as of August 2003), MTCU is reviewing the funding model. Any changes to the funding model will be communicated to the agencies by the ministry.

The number of contact hours that the agency provides for each of the services is negotiated during the annual business planning process. A student contact hour is defined as the actual time (direct contact) spent with a learner during each of the service delivery functions. According to

the LBS Program Guidelines, homework and independent study cannot
be counted as contact hours.

Summary of LBS Service Delivery Functions

Information and Referral:

⇒ The agency must provide information about its learning opportunities to:
- Potential learners
- Potential volunteers
- Community as a whole
- Other service providers

⇒ The agency must also provide learners with information about other learning
opportunities and other service providers in the community.

Assessment:

⇒ During intake, the agency must gather and document biographical and goal related
information from learners, and information that gives an indication of learners'
current literacy and basic skills levels.

⇒ Ongoing and exit assessments must be conducted.

Training Plan Development:

⇒ The agency must develop individualized training plans that are clearly linked to
the initial assessment and outline the steps and skills that are required to achieve
the stated goal(s).

⇒ Training plans are revised as needed.

Training:

⇒ The agency must provide literacy and basic skills upgrading that leads to
measurable results. The agency is not tied to any one training approach or method,
but training must take place on a regular basis (that is, frequent and intensive) and
it must be delivered by trained practitioners.

Follow-up:

⇒ The agency must conduct ongoing and exit assessments and make contact, with
learners who leave the program after attaining their stated goals, at three
months and again at six months.

Literacy and Basic Skills Annual Planning and Funding Cycle

Service delivery planning is another important aspect of the LBS Program, in addition to the actual delivery of funded functions. At the local level, the planning cycle begins with the development of the literacy services plan. This activity is supported by the regional literacy network and all service providers within a designated area must participate in the process.

Although the principle participants in the local planning process are the LBS delivery agencies, regional networks are encouraged to solicit participation and input from other service providers, such as Job Connect and Ontario Works. MTCU feels that the inclusion of these other participants will help to ensure that a community's literacy needs are met.

The annual planning cycle time line is summarized in the table below. The summary is considered accurate at the time of writing, but as always, you should contact your MTCU field consultant for the most up-to-date information.

Literacy And Basic Skills Annual Business Cycle			
Cycle	**Delivery Agencies & Regional Networks**	**Umbrella, Service & Sector Organizations**	**MTCU-NLS Projects**
April	Allocations finalized, first payments sent Current fiscal year Schedule Bs to agencies, including approved projects	Allocations finalized, first payments sent Current fiscal Schedule B's sent to agencies including approved projects	
May	May 31, Statement of Revenue & Expenditure or Estimate of Revenue & Expenditure due	May 31, Estimate of Revenue & Expenditure due	May 31, Estimate of Revenue & Expenditure for Projects due or Statement of Revenue & Expenditure for Projects due
June			
July	July 31, audited Statement of Revenue & Expenditure due (if applicable)	July 31, audited Statement of Revenue & Expenditure due (if applicable)	July 31, audited Statement of Revenue & Expenditure for Projects due, (if applicable)
August			
September			Priority setting for next fiscal year
October	Mid-year business plan review of Regional Networks	Mid-year business plan review of Umbrella, Service & Sector organizations	

Cycle	Delivery Agencies & Regional Networks	Umbrella, Service & Sector Organizations	MTCU-NLS Projects
	Literacy And Basic Skills **Annual Business Cycle**		
November	November 1, LSP due to consultants November 15, consultants provide feedback to agencies/planning committees		November 4, call for project proposals for next fiscal year
December	December 1, business plans for Delivery Agencies due December 15, business plans for Regional Networks due	December 15, business plans for Umbrella, Service & Sector organizations due	
January			Project proposals for next fiscal year due
February			Interim project reports current fiscal year due
March	Year-end business plan review of Regional Networks Audit Guidelines sent to agencies	Year-end business plan review of Umbrella, Service & Sector organizations Audit Guidelines sent to agencies	LBS-NLS review of next fiscal year project proposals and recommendations

The LBS Guidelines state that the literacy services plan (LSP) should identify:

$\Rightarrow$ The community's literacy needs, based on demographic and labour market information

$\Rightarrow$ The client focus of each agency

$\Rightarrow$ Service duplications and gaps and how they can be addressed

$\Rightarrow$ The specific delivery services that local agencies will provide in the coming year

Once the LSP has been approved by MTCU it is used by delivery agencies to develop their business plans. In addition to reflecting the LSP agreements, an agency's business plan must describe[18]:

$\Rightarrow$ The agency's goals for the coming year

$\Rightarrow$ The success indicators that will tell the agency when it has reached its goals

$\Rightarrow$ The focus of the agency's programming and services as it relates to LBS Program objectives and to learners' goals for training, employment and independence

$\Rightarrow$ The services to be provided with MTCU funding, including service levels

$\Rightarrow$ LBS programming and services that the agency will provide on behalf of or with other agencies

$\Rightarrow$ The reason for any shifts or change in the activity that the agency contracted to deliver in the current fiscal year

$\Rightarrow$ Challenges facing the agency and strategies for dealing with them

$\Rightarrow$ The projected need for training support

---

[18] Literacy and Basic Skills Program Guidelines Tab 5, page 2.

Once the business plan has been accepted by MTCU, funding is allocated. The submission of the annual local literacy service plan, the agency business plan, the scheduled statistical, narrative and financial reports, and the site visits by MTCU field consultants all help MTCU with their examination and monitoring role of the goals and achievements that agencies set for service delivery—with an eye to providing support and guidance to each agency.

The diagram on the next page provides an overview of the various parts of the planning process and summarizes some of the key activities. As mentioned earlier, you should refer to the LBS Program Guidelines or consult with your MTCU field consultant for the most accurate and up-to-date information about the LBS program.

ANNUAL PLANNING PROCESS

LOCAL PLANNING AND COORDINATION
Service Providers (Literacy Delivery Agencies and Others) in a specified service delivery area supported b regional network

LITERACY SERVICES PLAN (LSP)
Describes the range of services that will be provided and the rationale for provision in a coordinated process for a specific area

Agency Business Plan
Reflects commitments made while developing the Literacy Services Plan

Service Delivery
Information and Referral
Assessment
Training Plan Development
Training
Follow-up

Monitoring and Evaluation

Site visits allow for evaluation of agency's progress as per Business Plan commitments, agency adherence to LBS Guidelines and incorporation of Core Quality Standards

Legal Contract with MTCU

Specifies funding for service delivery in terms of learners, contact hours and training support allocations

Core Quality Standards

The Core Quality Standards, or CQS, were first introduced to the Ontario literacy field in 1994/95. The intent of the CQS at the time they were introduced was twofold: to provide literacy programs with a tool that would allow them to evaluate every aspect of their organizations from the mission statement to service delivery to the annual planning/evaluation process; and, to provide LBS Program staff with documentation on every funded program (to help them with their planning cycle). CQS implementation plans were then built into the annual funding cycle of both the organizations being funded and MTCU.

It must be remembered that at this time (1994/95) none of the other components of the current LBS Program were in place. With the introduction of the other elements, under the heading of program reform—common assessment, fundable functions for service delivery, learning outcomes, etc.—the 18 CQS have been incorporated into the overall LBS Program.

The CQS provide useful benchmarks that help both agencies and MTCU field consultants to plan, monitor, and evaluate an agency's activities and to ensure that agencies are meeting the targets as per their business plans.

Core Quality Standards
(Taken from LBS Program Guidelines, Appendix 3)

Program Mission
A quality literacy program has a clearly written statement of mission and objectives that it follows and shares with the people involved in the program and with other stakeholders in the community.

Community Focus
A quality literacy program is rooted in the community it serves. Learners participate in decisions that affect them and their communities. The program reflects its own philosophy and objectives and strengthens individuals, their communities, and their cultural identity.

Program Commitment to Learners
A quality literacy program values, plans for, and provides opportunities for learners to increase literacy and numeracy skills, life skills, critical thinking, and problem solving.

Learner Commitment to Program
A quality literacy program asks for a realistic commitment of time and effort from learners to meet their identified goals.

Respect for Learners
A quality literacy program maintains a good rapport and promotes mutual respect among learners, practitioners, and others in the organization. Programs provide a supportive learning environment, respect for learners' privacy, and constructive feedback on achievements.

Learner-Centred Approaches and Methods
A quality literacy program uses approaches and methods that respect learners as individuals and that are learner-centred. It supports learners to participate individually and collectively in order to take control of their learning.

Chapter Three

Core Quality Standards
(Taken from LBS Program Guidelines, Appendix 3)

Access and Equity
A quality literacy program respects differences. It has structures and supports in place to increase access and equitable outcomes and to help learners from all backgrounds reach their goals.

Learning Assessment
A quality literacy program evaluates learners' progress on an ongoing basis. The process involves the learners and contributes to their development.

Instruction Time
A quality literacy program offers instruction often enough and long enough to allow learners to make reasonable progress toward their literacy goals. The frequency and duration of a program may vary according to learner needs and objectives as well as to the resources available to programs.

Ratio of Learners To Instructors
A quality literacy program has a ratio of learners to instructors that is appropriate to learners' needs and levels as well as to the mode of instruction.

Learning Materials
A quality literacy program uses a wide variety of learning materials that are consistent with the program's philosophy, suitable for adults, and relevant to learners' needs. The materials are in accord with the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Practitioner Training
A quality literacy program has practitioners trained in adult education with a focus on basic education. They have initial and ongoing training.

Outreach
A quality literacy program uses positive and effective strategies to attract learners and other participants.

Core Quality Standards
(Taken from LBS Program Guidelines, Appendix 3)

Support Services
A quality literacy program helps learners get the support services they need, either in the program or in the community. For example, these services are transportation, childcare, counselling, assessment, and information and referral for economic, cultural, and social needs.

Organizational Links
A quality literacy program has community and organizational links:
⇒ To meet program goals
⇒ To help learners move successfully from one educational program to another, to greater community involvement, to further training, or to employment
⇒ To integrate and strengthen literacy delivery at the local level
⇒ To ensure that literacy education is integrated within the broader educational and training system

Program Accountability
A quality literacy program does what it says it will do. It is accountable to its learners, sponsoring organizations, partners, community, and funders. All stakeholders, not only program staff, are accountable for the success of the program.

Administrative Accountability
A quality literacy program develops and maintains sound financial and administrative systems in order to provide accurate and timely program, statistical, and financial information.

Program Evaluation
A quality literacy program evaluates its effectiveness annually. Evaluation of the program is a participatory and continuous process.

Learning Outcomes Approach

The Learning Outcomes Approach was introduced as part of the LBS Program during the 1999/2000 funding year and the document *"Working with Learning Outcomes"* (October 1998) was sent to all funded agencies. The introduction of common assessment, the second phase of the recognition of adult learning strategy, began in the spring of 1999. As stated in the Program Guidelines, *"… common assessment refers to the use of compatible assessment tools and approaches across the field, not to the development of a single instrument. Common assessment is built upon a common language of progress: the LBS learning outcomes[19]."*

A learning outcomes approach places the learning emphasis on the integration of knowledge gained while participating in literacy training into the learners overall body of knowledge. Often learning outcomes are stated as the goals of a particular course of action—in terms of what the learner will achieve, not what the instructor or tutor intends to provide. For example, if a learner's goal is to improve her writing skills, a course of action—such as being able to punctuate a sentence properly—becomes part of the stated learning goal or outcome.

A learning outcomes approach requires that the learning process begin with an accurate assessment of the skills that the learner currently has and that the learning materials and learning activities reflect their stated goals. Learning materials and activities must also respect the range of learning needs and styles of adult literacy learners.

A high level of learner participation is implied with a learning outcomes approach. This high level of learner participation assumes that the adult literacy learner is prepared to take on this responsibility. In reality, some learners are prepared to take on this responsibility, while others are not[20].

---

[19] Literacy and Basic Skills Program Guidelines, Tab 3, page 4.

[20] Learner participation is discussed in detail in Chapter 5, The Adult Literacy Learner and in Chapter 6, Identifying and Meeting Learner Needs.

How the achievement of a learning outcome is assessed is crucial to its value as a measure of success. Assessment approaches should match the situation in which the learner will make use of the knowledge and skills gained. This is often referred to as "authentic assessment." By matching the demonstration as closely as possible to the situation in which the knowledge and skills will be used, the practitioner and the learner can both trust the results of the assessment to be an accurate, or authentic, reflection that the knowledge and skills have been learned.

Literacy and Basic Skills Learning Outcomes Matrix

The current (as of June 2003) LBS Learning Outcomes Matrix reflects the broad, transferable skills that literacy learners can acquire while working on their specific goals. Across a five level continuum, the matrix identifies learning outcomes for three domains. Each domain is subdivided into component outcomes and each component outcome is made up of skill sets. Each skill set has concrete and demonstrable indicators called success markers. Many skill sets also have transition markers. Transition markers provide indicators that allow learners to demonstrate skills that bridge two levels.

The LBS domains are Self-Management/Self-Direction, Communications, and Numeracy. The following table provides an overview of the outcomes and skills set for each domain. The Self-Management/Self-Direction domain does not have skill sets. Instead, a number of criteria specific to each learner can be attached to the outcome component as observable outcomes. For example, an improvement in a learner's attendance record could be an observable outcome as it shows that the learner is putting more effort into the learning process.

For complete information on the Matrix, please refer to MTCU's *Working with Learning Outcomes* or contact your MTCU consultant.

Learning Outcomes Matrix

DOMAIN: SELF-MANAGEMENT AND SELF-DIRECTION

Learning Outcome: Become a self-directed learner capable of achieving the best results possible in work and personal life
Skill Sets: None

Learning Outcome: Set, monitor, and revise long and short-term goals
Skill Sets: None

DOMAIN: COMMUNICATIONS

Learning Outcome: Read with understanding for various purposes
Skill Sets:

⇒ Decoding skills

⇒ Comprehension enhancement skill

⇒ Describing types of text and demonstrating an understanding of form and style

⇒ Read and comprehend

⇒ Read and retell

⇒ Read and interpret

⇒ Read to find information and for research

Learning Outcome: Write clearly to express ideas
Skill Sets:

⇒ Write for various purposes

⇒ Visual presentation

⇒ Grammar

⇒ Punctuation

⇒ Spelling

⇒ Vocabulary building in writing, reading and speaking

Learning Outcome: Speak and listen effectively

Skill Sets:

⇒ Use of words

⇒ Communicating interpersonally

⇒ Communicating in a group

⇒ Non-verbal communications skills

DOMAIN: NUMERACY

Learning Outcome: Perform basic operations with numbers

Skill Sets:

⇒ Write numbers
⇒ Count
⇒ Add and subtract
⇒ Apply place value
⇒ Multiply and divide
⇒ Construct and use fractions, decimals, ratios and percents
⇒ Perform basic money operations
⇒ Use roots and exponents

Learning Outcome: Use measurement for various purposes

Skill Sets:

⇒ Linear measurement
⇒ Measurement of time
⇒ Measurement of temperature
⇒ Measurement of capacity, volume and mass
⇒ Measurement of perimeter and area
⇒ Measurement concepts

Learning Outcome: Solve geometric problems

Skill Sets:

⇒ Three and two dimensional geometry
⇒ Transformational geometry
⇒ Grids and coordinate geometry

Learning Outcome: Manage data and probability
Skill Sets:

⇒   Collecting, organizing and analyzing data
⇒   Concluding and reporting
⇒   Probability
⇒   Analyzing data

Learning Outcome: Use patterning and algebra
Skill Sets:

⇒   Use patterning and algebra
⇒   Linear equations

Each of the skill sets in the matrix are also linked to Human Resources Development Canada's Essential Skills—reading text, writing, numeracy, oral communication, thinking skills, working with others, computer use and continuous learning. The five levels of the matrix are also linked to more traditional grade levels. The use of grade levels as indicators of skill level is limited as the skill level of adult literacy learners can vary, depending on the skill being demonstrated.

Since the introduction of the learning outcomes approach MTCU has funded a number of literacy initiatives that have produced some excellent resources to help practitioners learn about, understand and implement this approach in their programs. See the Suggested Resources section at the end of this chapter for a list of some of these resources.

Your Community-Based Organization

Overview

While the focus of the chapter up to this point has been on the agency's role in the delivery of funded service, agencies need to be aware of the needs of a variety of stakeholders. In addition to the funder, or funders, these other stakeholders include the larger community, learners, volunteers (tutors and board/committee members) and staff members. Each agency must work hard to ensure that the needs of all stakeholders are clearly expressed and understood by everyone involved in the agency.

The philosophies attached to a learning outcomes approach do not have to be limited to service delivery. In fact, a learning outcomes approach can be incorporated into every aspect of agency management.

The application of a learning outcomes approach to all aspects of agency management will provide an environment that is geared to continuous and ongoing improvement of the organization and anyone associated with it. Organizational goals will be based on an accurate and authentic assessment of the agency's current status and abilities, and the achievement of goals will be demonstrated in ways that are meaningful to the organization and to its stakeholders.

Qualities of Community-based Literacy Organizations

Literacy delivery in Canada has been mostly a "grass roots" movement. In Ontario (and indeed in many other jurisdictions) community-based literacy agencies have been, and continue to be, an intrinsic and valuable part of literacy service delivery.

Community literacy agencies are usually about more than *just* or *only* literacy service delivery. Often their autonomy as non-profit organizations allows them to take on additional roles in the community. This autonomy can also allow them be more flexible or responsive in their approach to program delivery.

Working in a community-based literacy organization is not unlike operating a small business. Long before the phrase "multi-tasking" became part of every day speech, practitioners in community-based organizations had learned how to take on a multiplicity of roles and responsibilities. Responsibilities relating to volunteer management, board development and support, finance, human resource, community and government liaison often fall onto the shoulders of the same paid staff who are also responsible for ensuring that the learning needs of adult literacy learners are identified and met.

A long tradition of providing learner-centred programming and support, a reliance on volunteers, strong community linkages and diverse community partnerships are some of the factors that make community literacy agencies different from literacy programs delivered by educational institutions.

An examination of the results of a survey conducted by CLO in 2003 helps put the roles and responsibilities of community-based practitioners into context. Sixty-three agencies responded to this important survey. Survey respondents reported they had 271 staff members. That is an average of 4.3 per program. When looked at in terms of full time staff, it works out to just 2.4 staff members per program.

That means 2.4 staff members who have, for the most part, the major responsibility for ensuring that literacy programming is delivered as per funder requirements, for ensuring that financial, statistical and narrative reports are complied and submitted to a variety of federal and provincial government departments, for ensuring that the organization has sufficient number of volunteers and that these volunteers are recruited, screened, trained and supported, that the program's services are well-advertised and well, that adds up lot of responsibility!

Understanding the Role of Your Agency

In 2003 the agencies in CLO's survey relied on 3,281 volunteers for an average of 52 volunteers per program[21]. While many of these volunteers tutored learners, some of them served in a variety of other capacities. For the most part it is the paid staff of the organization who take on the duties and responsibilities for meeting the training and ongoing support needs of the volunteer.

Not-for-profit literacy organizations must also meet federal and provincial laws that govern the day-to-day operations of a non-profit. From CLO's 2003 survey we know that 89% of literacy agencies in Ontario are self-governing not-for profit organizations, while 11% are governed by a multi-service agency. If the not-for-profit is a registered charity it must complete an annual charitable tax return.

When asked if anyone in their organizations had taken additional training in a number of key organization management areas, survey respondents indicated they had. It is clear from the results that the training taken by literacy practitioner in community-based agencies reflects their roles and responsibilities:

⟹ Board roles (52%)

⟹ Financial management (25%)

⟹ Human resource management (21%)

⟹ Volunteer management (63%)

⟹ Managing a not-for-profit organization (38%)

Some survey respondents also added examples of other training they had taken. These included things such as organizational management, computer courses, fundraising, marketing and strategic planning. While some of this training was delivered by the literacy field (CLO's *Smart Steps to Organizational Excellence* for example) practitioners had to also look outside the literacy field for training opportunities.

---

[21] The same agencies reported they provided service to 6571 learners, for an average of 104 learners per agency. The full results of the survey can be found on CLO's website: nald.ca/clo.htm

Organizational Planning

The development of MTCU's literacy services plan for a local community provides the organization with information that it can use to plan its marketing and recruitment strategies[22]. Both of these strategies, however, should be part of an overall organizational strategic plan.

While a full discussion on the development of a strategic plan is beyond the scope of this resource, the importance of regularly assessing your organization's ability to meet current demand for your services and to plan for the delivery of services in the future cannot be overstated.

Knowing your organizational capacity (or ability) will help you to:

⇒ Focus on your mission
⇒ Focus on what is really important in your organization
⇒ Improve current organizational practices to strengthen you agency
⇒ Make the most efficient and effective use of financial and human resources
⇒ Make sound decisions about current and future programs and services

Community Literacy of Ontario, in its resource *Smart Steps to Organizational Excellence,* has developed a guided process that will help any community-based organization examine its ability and readiness to plan for and make change happen. Please refer to this resource directly for the full details.

---

[22] See Chapter 2, Understanding the Need for more information about the literacy services plan. Recruitment, in terms of learner motivation, is discussed in Chapter 5, The Adult Literacy Learner and volunteer recruitment is discussed in Chapter 4, Understanding the Role of the Volunteer.

Community Literacy of Ontario's
13 Smart Steps To Assessing Your Organizational Capacity

Small group initial planning meeting

1. Is your agency ready?

2. Developing the process

Board and Staff Retreat

3. Developing your focus

4. Assessing organizational mission

5. Assessing board governance

6. Assessing paid staff capacity

7. Assessing volunteer capacity

8. Assessing programs and services

9. Assessing finance

10. Assessing communications and public relations

11. Assessing infrastructure

Board and Staff follow-up meeting

12. Setting your final priorities

13. Developing your plan of action

Conclusion

While the main focus of this chapter has been an exploration of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' Literacy and Basic Skills Program, we have also examined some of the qualities that community-based organizations possess. It is in this examination that we see the attributes that make community-based service delivery stand apart from other models of literacy service delivery.

Community-based organizations that provide literacy and basic skills are not limited to service delivery. Whether as stand alone agencies or as part of a multi-service agency community-based organizations take on activities that link them and the learners in their programs to other stakeholders and to the community-at-large. The types of skills that the community-based literacy practitioners must acquire to successfully meet the needs of the various stakeholders and the participatory approach these organizations take are characteristic trademarks of a community-based perspective to literacy.
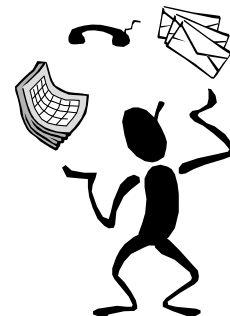
Questions for Reflection

⇒ Can a better 'fit' be made in your local area with regard to the services you supply and the provision of training and employment services?

⇒ Have you reviewed the results of the last program visit made to your agency by a MTCU Field Consultant?

⇒ What, if anything, would you change about the perception that other service providers in your local area have of your agency? How would you go about doing this?

⇒ Pat Campbell writes in *Teaching Reading to Adults, A Balanced Approach*, that "teaching reading in a participatory context creates opportunities for students to collectively read the word and the world around them." Is your vision of participatory literacy reflected in this statement?

Suggested Resources

In addition to the various reports, manuals, web sites and other resources mentioned in this chapter, we think you might find the following resources to be useful.

Print–Based:

Entry to Exit: A Coordinator's Handbook for the Delivery of Literacy Services.
Marianne Paul. Laubach Literacy Ontario, 1999. AlphaPlus Call #:
374.01206 P134.

⇒ This resource provides valuable information about the service
   delivery functions and the responsibilities and tasks directly
   associated with providing service to learners.

New to Literacy in Ontario? Ann Semple. Literacy Link South Central, 2001.
AlphaPlus Call # 374.01202 S253.

⇒ As of June 2003, this resource is being updated. *New to Literacy* still
   provides an excellent overview of the wide range of resources that are
   available to the field.

Smart Steps to Organizational Excellence. Joanne Kaattari and Vicki Trottier.
Community Literacy of Ontario, 2002. AlphaPlus Call # 374.01206 K11.

⇒ This resource was designed to summarize the contents of five online
   workshops that were delivered from February to June 2002. The
   topics covered are: Proposal Writing; Fee for Service; Program
   Evaluation; Assessing Organizational Capacity; and, Organizational
   Outcomes.

Web-Based:

Several MTCU related documents are available online at:
http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/training/literacy/main.html

To order print copies of government documents go to Publications
Ontario at: http://pubont.stores.gov.on.ca
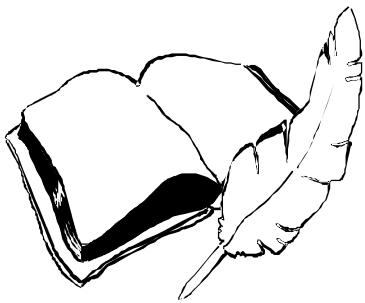
CHAPTER 4

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE VOLUNTEER

> "I became a literacy volunteer because I wanted to give to others the gift that had been given to me – the lifelong pleasure of reading."
>
> *An Ontario literacy volunteer*

Introduction

In 2000, the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating identified that 6.5 million Canadian volunteers over the age of 15 formally contributed their time and talents to a voluntary organization. In Making a Case for Volunteer Centres (Volunteer Ontario, 1996) volunteering is described as "the most fundamental act of citizenship and philanthropy in our society. It is offering time, energy and skills of one's own free will. It is an extension of being a good neighbour, transforming a collection of houses into a community, as people become involved in the improvement of their surroundings and choose to help others. By caring and contributing to change, volunteers decrease suffering and disparity, while they gain skills, self-esteem, and change their lives. People work to improve the lives of their neighbours and, in return, enhance their own."

Volunteers have historically played an important role in community literacy agencies in Ontario. They continue to play an important role. This chapter looks at various elements of volunteer management as it applies to our community-based organizations.

The Role of the Volunteer

Beginning with Frontier College in 1899, volunteer organizations have been tutoring adults in communities across Canada and throughout Ontario for over 100 years. Currently, there are approximately 11,000 people volunteering in more than 100 community literacy agencies throughout this province. Literacy volunteers are a vital and integral part of Ontario's community literacy agencies.

While the government's Core Quality Standards (CQS)[23] covered many aspects of program planning, management and delivery, there was no specific standard pertaining to the management of volunteers. Volunteer management—from intake and training through to support and release— is a core activity in most community-based literacy agencies. Agencies felt, therefore, that the development of such a standard was necessary. Community Literacy of Ontario (CLO) was able to develop this much needed standard.

During 1996-97 CLO held interviews and discussions with volunteers and program staff from across the province. This valuable information was used to develop "Community Literacy of Ontario's Standard on Program-Volunteer Relations". The full standard with suggested features and evidence can be found in Appendix A.

---

[23] For more information about and a description of CQS see Chapter 3.

The standard states that:

> "A quality literacy program provides volunteers with the
> resources to be valuable members of the organization.
> They are given initial and ongoing training, direction, and
> supervision. They are given written information about
> their rights and responsibilities. They are encouraged to
> contribute, based on their skills, time, interests, and the
> needs of the program. They are recognized for their work.
> The literacy program encourages respect for volunteers at
> all times from students, staff and fellow volunteers."

Use of, or adherence to, the standard is purely voluntary. The standard
clearly respects the fact that volunteers have always been the heart of
Ontario's community literacy agencies—they have been, and continue to
be, responsible for the provision of key services and support to literacy
agencies.

Economic Value of Volunteers

The National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (1997)
reported that, while each individual may have his or her own personal
reasons for volunteering, Canadians, in general, have seven top
motivators for volunteering. These motivators are:

⇒ To help a cause that is important to them
⇒ To use their skills and experiences
⇒ To support a cause that has directly or indirectly affected them
⇒ To explore and develop their strengths
⇒ To fulfil religious beliefs or commitments
⇒ To support an organization that a friend or family member also
    supports
⇒ To improve employment opportunities

People who volunteer at literacy organizations do so for some very fundamental reasons. CLO's *The Economic Value of Volunteers in Community Literacy Agencies in Ontario* (CLO, 1998) reported that the top motivators for literacy volunteers are:

⇒ A commitment to helping others develop their reading and writing skills

⇒ A love of reading

⇒ A need for new challenges

⇒ A desire to make personal and professional contacts

⇒ A desire to expand their own skills base

⇒ A desire to teach

⇒ A need to make a positive contribution in the community

The majority of people who volunteer in community literacy agencies in Ontario are engaged in tutoring and these volunteers report high levels of satisfaction with their commitment. Over two-thirds of volunteers surveyed by CLO in 1998 indicated that they had acquired new skills as a result of training they received during the course of volunteering in literacy agencies.

Volunteer Involvement

The Economic Value of Volunteers report provided the literacy field with important information on the role of volunteers and their value to literacy organizations. The report tells us that, on average, literacy volunteers provide 15 hours a month of their time to help community literacy agencies meet their mandates by serving in a number of key capacities or roles. The table below provides a brief description of the key roles taken on by literacy volunteers and indicates the percent of volunteers involved in each capacity.

Literacy Volunteer Involvement in Key Capacities
Adapted from *The Economic of Volunteers in Community Literacy Agencies in Ontario*

CAPACITY	DESCRIPTION	PER CENT INVOLVED
Administrative/ Technical:	In this capacity volunteers help with office work or provide technical support	• 10% assist agency staff with administrative operations • 10% provide technical support to staff
Direct Service (Tutors):	In this capacity volunteers become tutors in one-to-one or small group learning situations	• 82% of literacy volunteers are engaged in tutoring activities
Governance:	In this capacity volunteers serve on the board of directors or on committees	• 23% of literacy volunteers are either members of the board of directors or members of committees
Resource or Event:	In this capacity volunteers help with a specific activity or event	• 10% of literacy volunteers support programs by fundraising

We know from this report and from other sources[24] that volunteers have a wealth of skills and knowledge to offer both adult literacy learners and the literacy agency and its learners. In fact, *The Economic Value of Literacy Volunteers* reports that that the dollar value of the work done by all literacy volunteers (both as tutors and in other capacities) is almost $9 million dollars! That works out to almost $1,000 per volunteer[25]. This means that a volunteer is a valuable economic resource—one that you need to take care of by planning for and supporting his or her involvement with your agency.

Planning for Volunteer Involvement

Volunteer involvement does not just happen. You must put sufficient time and energy into planning for the involvement of volunteers in order to ensure that everyone concerned has a clear understanding of what is expected. You will need a solid plan for providing training and ongoing support. This planning should be done as part of your organizational planning process[26].

---

[24] CLO's *Skills for the Future* Phase One and Phase Two Reports and Volunteer Canada, for example, provide valuable information about the skills and knowledge of volunteers.
[25] This information, presented in CLO's report *The Economic Value of Literacy Volunteers in Community Literacy Agencies in Ontario,* was based on information published by the Ministry of Education and Training in 1996-97. Highlights of the report can be found online at: http://www.nald.ca/province/ont/volman/ economic/ecovalue.htm
[26] A full discussion on the topic of strategic or organizational planning is beyond the scope of this resource. Like so many topics that relate to the non-profit sector many useful resources have been written on the topic of strategic or organizational planning. See the "Suggested Resources" section at the end of this chapter.

Part of the planning process should involve looking at what volunteers do for your agency now and what they could do in the future. Here are some suggestions for tasks that might be accomplished by volunteers:

Potential Roles for Volunteers
(Taken from *Beyond Recruitment*, page 9.)

• Tutoring	• Board orientation
• Tutor/learner matching	• Board training
• Assessment	• Promotion/marketing
• Recruitment of volunteers	• Office support
• Tutor orientation	• Administration
• Tutor training	• Volunteer recognition
• Volunteer screening	• Policy development
• Record keeping	• Volunteer coordination
• Public relations	• Report writing
• Board of directors	• Technical support
• Special events	• Fundraising

How and in what capacity you involve volunteers in your organization should form an integral part of your organization's planning process. As an example, knowing how many volunteers you will need to deliver service in the next year can be gathered from your MTCU Business Plan. In this agreement your agency has committed to the delivery of a set number of training contact hours to a set number of learners. If you have agreed to deliver literacy training to 30 learners in your one-on-one program, does that mean you need 30 volunteers or do you need more to reach the agreed to service delivery targets? On the other hand, do you need fewer than 30 because you know that some of the service delivery will be provided by staff or that some volunteers will tutor more than one learner?

Chapter Four

Once you have determined your need for volunteers—whether as board members, committee members, or to deliver direct service—you should define what they will be doing as volunteers. Position descriptions should be developed (and reviewed periodically) for all volunteer positions within the organization. The position description should be provided, along with other key information, to all potential volunteers as part of your application package. See the section on Screening and Intake for more details about position descriptions and volunteer application processes.

The next step is to find the right volunteers for your organization. Before you begin to recruit, however, you should ensure that you have the organizational structure in place to support all your volunteers. How will you supervise, orient, train, and support your volunteers? Are there written position descriptions? Who is the key contact person for the organization? Does your organization have the necessary policies in place to guide all aspects of volunteer management? Finding the answer to these and similar questions should be an essential part of your planning process.

Volunteer Recruitment

To make recruitment effective you must develop a plan for how you will attract volunteers to your literacy agency. The National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating[27] (1997) reported that over the past decade the volunteer climate has changed. For example, the report identified that today's volunteers are generally employed, more often than not they are well educated, and they have less time for volunteering. Other factors may come into play. For example, in Ontario 40 hours of community involvement is needed by students in order to graduate from high school.

---

[27] This report and others relating to volunteerism can be found on the Statistics Canada website at: http://www.statcan.ca. Type "volunteers" into the search engine.

As you prepare your recruitment plan ask questions like:

$\Rightarrow$ What are the implications of the changing volunteer environment to the agency?

$\Rightarrow$ What is happening in our community that might affect our recruitment of volunteers?

Current and past volunteers are an excellent source of information. Involve them in the development of your recruitment strategy. Ask them:

$\Rightarrow$ How does the organization create a positive environment for volunteers?

$\Rightarrow$ Is the volunteer work meaningful and rewarding?

$\Rightarrow$ What current systems work well for volunteers? What could be improved?

$\Rightarrow$ Does the agency foster an accepting attitude toward volunteers? What are some suggestions and new ways to create a welcoming environment for volunteers?

$\Rightarrow$ Are volunteer suggestions welcomed, acknowledged or acted upon?

Answers to these and other questions can help you identify changes that you need to make to your current volunteer management practice to ensure that both the agency and the volunteer understand what is required. It will also allow you to target your recruitment. For example, you may not want to take on a high school student for only 40 hours as a tutor, but you could have her help you plan your next annual general meeting.

Beyond Recruitment (CLO 2000) describes a six-step process for recruitment. The steps are described in the following table with a corresponding list of sample actions. The list of sample actions is by no means complete and is provided solely to give examples of the type of activities in which you should engage.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGY	
Step:	**Sample Actions:**
Clearly identify your need for volunteers and develop position description(s):	• Review business and work plans to identify key area of current or needed volunteer involvement, and projected numbers • Clearly describe the skills needed and the duties of each position
Know what you have to offer:	• Conduct a "cost/benefit" analysis to describe the benefits of being a volunteer in terms of skills and other benefits to be gained by the volunteer
Plan your recruitment approach based on your identified needs:	• Contact professional associations for volunteers with specific skills • Contact your nearest volunteer centre or Volunteer Canada • Use the media (newspaper ads, public service announcement, etc.) • Develop your own posters, brochures • Develop a schedule for distribution
Implement your plan:	• Place ads in newspapers, company newsletters; distribute posters, brochures
Screen potential volunteers:	• Use a consistent approach for all volunteers • See the section on screening for more information on this topic
Provide proper orientation and training for all new volunteers:	• See the section on volunteer training for more information

Finding the right volunteers also involves knowing where to look. Make sure you keep abreast of changes or trends in volunteer patterns. For example, in recent years "family volunteering"—where the members of a family volunteer for the same organization— has become a popular trend. Volunteer Canada and The Canadian Centre for Philanthropy are great sources for information about volunteer trends and the topic of volunteers in general.

In its promotional tool kit, *Celebrating Literacy Volunteers in Your Community*, CLO provided the following scenarios for places or opportunities where you might find volunteers:

⇒ Just around the corner: Two-thirds of Canadians volunteer because they or someone they know has been personally affected by the cause an organization is addressing.

⇒ Waiting to be asked: Over 50% of volunteers said they became involved because they were personally asked by an organization representative, family member, friend or employer.

⇒ Hanging up their degrees: Canadians with a university degree are more than twice as likely to volunteer as those without a degree.

⇒ Being youthful: The fastest growing segment of the volunteer population are young adults between the ages of 15 and 24—nearly one third of this segment volunteers. Unfortunately, the actual number of hours they volunteer is decreasing.

⇒ Working: Part-time employed people are more likely to volunteer than those who are fully employed or unemployed. However, those volunteers who are unemployed contribute more hours than part-time or full-time employees.

⇒ Worshipping: Canadians who attend a place of worship on a weekly basis are more likely to volunteer and spend more time volunteering than the national average.

Literacy volunteers in particular have indicated that learning new skills is an important motivator. CLO's research into the economic value of volunteers found that 89% of literacy volunteers claimed that learning new skills was either "somewhat important" or "very important" to them. This means that the training you provide should allow volunteers to gain new skills or increase their level of expertise.

Regardless of where you find them, the volunteer base in your agency should reflect the diversity of community in which you are working. All agencies should respect the conventions of the Canadian Human Rights Act by accepting and reviewing applications from potential volunteers without discrimination.

The final product of your volunteer recruitment plan will be your promotional material, such as posters, brochures, public service announcements, etc. A successful volunteer recruitment message will always answer the question: "Why should I volunteer for your literacy agency—what is in it for me[28]?" To help the volunteer answer that question you should provide the following information on all your recruitment materials:

⇒ The name and address of the organization
⇒ Address, telephone and fax numbers
⇒ An email and/or website address (if applicable)
⇒ What type of volunteers you are looking for and why you need them (e.g., tutors, board members, program planning committee, etc)
⇒ Time commitment
⇒ The benefits
⇒ The skills needed

---

[28] *Beyond Recruitment*, page 22.

The depth of information will depend to some extent to the media being used. A recruitment poster, for example, has limited space. A three-fold brochure, while still limited, does provide the opportunity for supplying even more information about the organization. The information that you provide in any of these materials should act as a screening tool by helping potential volunteers decide whether or not they want to contact your organization for more information.

Although you should accept applications without discrimination this does not mean that your organization cannot set recruitment policies. For example, you may decide that you are unwilling to accept mandatory service placements as volunteers in your one-to-one program or that anyone under the age of 16 must provide a letter of written consent from a parent or legal guardian.

Volunteer Screening

Screening and intake refer to the range of activities that your organization should use to help it find the appropriate volunteers. Volunteer Canada defines screening as an on-going process designed to protect the organization and all people involved with it, particularly children or vulnerable adults. Volunteer screening will help you to create and maintain a safe environment. It will also go a long way toward ensuring an appropriate match between volunteers and their duties.

A thorough screening process will allow you and your volunteers to have a high level of confidence in their ability, and in the abilities of their fellow volunteers, to do the work. Job descriptions, interviews, and ongoing supervision all help to ensure that the volunteer is placed in a position that best suits his or her abilities and interests. Screening policies and procedures outline the volunteer's rights and responsibilities. Policies and procedures also explain how an organization will support or discipline the volunteer should a problem or incident occur.

The function of screening should be both implicit and explicit in everything that you do in your search for volunteers. It may be implicit in the wording of your promotional materials and explicit in questions that you ask potential volunteers during a telephone interview or on the application form. Some materials that you produce can allow potential volunteers to self-screen. For example, if you are looking for someone to maintain your website and have posted a notice at the town post office, many people may read your poster, but those who do not have the appropriate skills will probably not contact you.

Also keep in mind that the function of screening should focus on the task involved, not the individual. Screening is about identifying the level and degree of risk attached to each volunteer task and it is about helping you and your agency ensure that the right people are carrying out a clearly defined job.

The main reason for screening is "to carefully scrutinize individuals who apply for paid or unpaid positions in order to choose the best candidates and to weed out, as far as possible, those who would be incompetent or who would do harm[29]." As you develop your policies and procedures for screening you should answer questions like:

⇒ "Who in the organization is vulnerable and why are they vulnerable?"
⇒ "Are there steps we can take to reduce or eliminate their vulnerability?"

Once you have answered these types of question you can use this information to develop the policies, procedures, systems, supports and materials that will allow you to demonstrate that you are exercising "duty of care." The concept of duty of care recognizes the relationship that exists between two parties (e.g. two individuals or an individual and the organization) and then identifies the obligations that one owes the other. In particular, your organization is responsible—legally, morally

---

[29] *The Screening Handbook.* Lorraine Street. Canadian Association of Volunteer Bureaux and Centres, 1996.

and ethically—to ensure that you have exercised reasonable care with respect to the interests of the other party, including protection from harm[30].

Conducting a police and/or reference check may seem to be the most obvious opportunity for screening volunteers, but it is only one of many ways in which you can screen your volunteers. You can develop other tools, resources and opportunities that will help you with this task. Here are a few suggestions:

⇒ Position descriptions
⇒ Risk analysis (level and degree) of each position in your agency
⇒ Pre-application tests and assessments
⇒ Resumes and application forms
⇒ Interviews
⇒ Reference checks
⇒ Police records check
⇒ Driver's record check
⇒ Performance assessment
⇒ Orientation and training
⇒ Probationary period
⇒ Ongoing supervision

Volunteer Canada has developed a screening program that "provides an easy-to-use method for organizations to ensure that the people they serve are safe[31]." The 10 Safe Steps Screening Program can be used like a menu in that you "need only select those steps that apply specifically to positions within your organization[32]." Which steps you choose should be based on the level and degree of risk associated with a particular task or position. For example, applicants for low risk positions may not need police checks but all ten steps should be applied to positions or tasks where the both the level and the degree of risk are high.

---

[30] This statement is general in nature. It is the responsibility of each organization to seek out appropriate professional and/or legal counsel for matters specific to that organization.
[31] Retrieved January 2003 from Volunteer Canada's web site at: http://www.volunteer.ca
[32] Ibid.

Chapter Four

	Volunteer Canada's
	10 Safe Steps Screening Program[33]
1.	Determine the risk.
	Organizations can control the risk in their programs. Examining the potential for danger in programs and services may lead to preventing or eliminating the risk altogether. For example, a tutor who meets with a learner in an off-site unsupervised location should be considered to be more "at risk" than a volunteer organizing the office library.
2.	Write a clear position description.
	Careful position descriptions send the message that an organization is serious about screening. Responsibilities and expectations can be clearly set out, right down to the position's dos and don'ts. A clear position description indicates the screening requirements. When a volunteer changes to another position in the agency the screening procedures may change as well.
3.	Establish a formal recruitment process.
	Whether an agency posts notices for volunteer positions or sends home flyers, they must indicate that screening is part of the application process. Make your screening process consistent for each type of position in your agency.
4.	Use an application form.
	The application form provides needed contact information. If the volunteer position requires other screening measures (driver's record, police records check), the application form will ask for permission to do so.
5.	Conduct interviews.
	The interview provides not only an opportunity to talk to the potential volunteer about their background, skills, interests, and availability, but also to explore any doubts about the suitability of the candidate. In other words, the interview will help determine the "right fit".

---

[33] Ibid.

	Volunteer Canada's
	10 Safe Steps Screening Program[33]
6.	Follow up on references. By identifying the level of trust required in the position and asking specific questions, the applicant's suitability may be easier to determine. People often do not expect that their references will be checked. Do not assume that applicants only supply the names of people who will speak well of them.
7.	Request a Police Records Check. A Police Records Check (PRC) is just one step in a 10-step screening process. PRCs do signal—in a very public way—that the organization is concerned about the safety of its participants.
8.	Conduct orientation and training sessions. Screening does not end once the volunteer is in place. Orientation and training sessions offer an opportunity to observe volunteers in a different setting. These sessions also allow organizations to inform volunteers about policies and procedures. Probation periods give both the organization and the volunteer time to learn more about each other and their mutual suitability.
9.	Supervise and evaluate. The identified level of risk associated with a volunteer position will determine the necessary degree of supervision and evaluation. If the risk is great, it follows that the volunteer will be under close supervision. Frequent feedback in the first year is particularly important. Evaluations must be based on position descriptions.
10.	Follow up with program participants. Regular contact with learners and volunteers can act as an effective deterrent to someone who might otherwise do harm. All program participants should be made aware of any follow-up activities that may occur. These could include spot checks for volunteers in high-risk positions.

Resources like CLO's *Policies and Procedures for Ontario Community Literacy Agencies* (Volumes One and Two) can help you plan the policies you will want to set in place with regard to screening and many other aspects of volunteer management.

Volunteer Intake

A review of your process for intake and an analysis of the information that you provide to potential volunteers will allow you to assess whether or not you are giving out the most useful information. You should also analyze the information that you collect to determine if you are getting the type of information that will allow you to make a decision about accepting the potential volunteer.

The agency should provide potential volunteers with a standard information package. If someone is interested in being a tutor for example, this package could contain the following information:

⇒ Overview of the organization

⇒ Overview of the position and any qualifications or skills needed

⇒ Length of the required training and any costs associated with training

⇒ Details about the screening and selection process

⇒ Supports the volunteer will receive from the agency

⇒ An application form

⇒ A written position description

Providing this type of information to potential volunteers will give them a clear understanding of the position, responsibilities, qualifications, and required skills. It will also allow potential volunteers to make an informed decision about continuing with the process.

An application form will serve to give potential volunteers an additional opportunity for making an informed decision about continuing with the process. Your volunteer application form could collect the following information:

⇒ Name and contact information (including email addresses)
⇒ Education and employment history
⇒ Relevant skills
⇒ Availability
⇒ References (at least two), and
⇒ A writing sample (from tutors)

Completed applications will provide agencies with the information they need to make an informed decision about whether the volunteer suits the needs of their agency. All applications should be signed by the applicant.

Position descriptions for volunteer positions should mirror as closely as possible the position description for paid positions. This will provide consistency across the organization with regard to describing the work that is being done—this is especially important where the line between what a volunteer is doing and what a paid practitioner might be easily crossed

.

Unless you have your volunteers sign off on a contract, it may be prudent to include elements in the position description that would be included in an employment contract for a paid staff position. The following "Position Description – Key Elements" was developed by reviewing position descriptions from a variety of organizations, both inside and outside the literacy field.

Position Description – Key Elements

Position Summary
   Give a brief overview of the position including: Reporting
   requirements (e.g., reporting directly to the one-to-one program
   coordinator).

Key responsibilities
   Provide information such as: The volunteer tutor will be
   responsible for helping the learner, or learners, meet agreed
   upon learning goals.

Position Title
   Volunteer tutor, Board Member, Committee Member, etc.

Working Conditions
   Give information about where the tutoring will happen, the time
   commitment, length of probationary period and length of
   service. For example "Working at a location convenient to both
   the learner and the tutor, this position requires a time
   commitment of two hours per week for a period of one year;
   there is a six week probationary period."

Duties And Responsibilities
   List the **specific** responsibilities of the volunteer position.

Performance Appraisals
   Tell the volunteer how she or he will be evaluated, when and by
   whom and what the process will be for the volunteer to provide
   input into the evaluation.

Completed application forms should give you sufficient information to
decide whether to proceed to the next step with a volunteer, or not. For
many agencies the next step in the process is to interview, either by

telephone or in person, each potential volunteer. Some agencies omit this step and use the first training session as the opportunity to gather additional information from the volunteer. Whatever your process, you should ensure that you have developed a consistent process and a consistent set of questions and that you explain the interview process to all applicants.

If your agency does not currently conduct interviews, it may be something you want to consider. An interview will allow both the potential volunteer and you to explore whether there is a good fit between the needs of the organization and the needs of the volunteer before either of you invest too much time. If time constraints make it difficult to have applications returned to you before the first training or orientation session, then a telephone interview may be the perfect opportunity to give the potential volunteer more information about the organization and the commitment you are asking them to make. This makes a lot of sense especially if the interested person has to travel more than thirty minutes to attend the session.

Here is a list of questions you could ask a potential volunteer either on the application form or as part of the interview process:

⇒ How did you find out about this volunteer opportunity?
⇒ Where have you volunteered in the past?
⇒ Why do you want to be a volunteer with this organization?
⇒ What would make this a successful volunteer experience for you?
⇒ What are your hobbies or interests?
⇒ What skills and abilities can you bring to the position?
⇒ Do you have any special needs?

Make sure that you keep the volunteer informed at all stages of your screening and intake process. If the volunteer does not meet your criteria or requirements for the position, you must tell her that as quickly as possible. If the volunteer meets your criteria then arrange for her to attend the next training session.

Training Volunteers

Often agencies will have a structured process for training tutors and board members but will not have the same type of process in place for other volunteer positions. This is due in part to the fact that over 80%[34] of literacy volunteers are tutors. Also, many volunteers start as tutors and then become committee or board members.

You should take the time to give **all** volunteers (tutors, board and committee members and administrative volunteers) a solid grounding in the history and philosophy of your organization. You should give all volunteers written position descriptions and clearly outline for them—in writing—your commitment to them and what your expectations are of their commitment to you. If you are bringing together a group of volunteers for a specific activity, time should be devoted at the first meeting of this group to an orientation session.

Given that most literacy volunteers are tutors, this section will focus on tutor training. Much of the information presented can be applied to other types of training. Some literacy organizations insist that all volunteers must be trained as tutor since service delivery to adult literacy learners is the mainstay of the organization. These organizations feel strongly that all volunteers need to understand the challenges that adult literacy learners face and the challenges of being a literacy tutor.

---

[34] *The Economic Value of Volunteers in Community Literacy Agencies in Ontario*, page 1.

Planning and Delivering Tutor Training

One of the Core Quality Standards states, "a quality literacy program will have practitioners trained in adult education with a focus on basic education, and that they have initial and ongoing training[35]." Training volunteers to deliver service is one of the most important activities you will undertake as a practitioner. Luckily, a wide variety of print and web resources exist to help you with this task. As well, your agency probably already has a variety of "tried and true" in house or external resources for providing tutor training.

All literacy agencies provide tutor training to their volunteer tutors. About one-third of Ontario's community literacy agencies use the Laubach method of tutor training. For more information, please contact Laubach Literacy Ontario at www.laubach-on.ca. The remaining two-thirds of agencies use a variety of methods and resources for tutor training.

After extensive research within the community-based literacy field, CLO has developed a *"Provincial Standard for the Training of Volunteer Tutors"*. It is CLO's hope that this standard will set the bar and recognize the professionalism of community literacy agencies. The use of the standard is strictly **voluntary** and is meant to provide agencies with a tool to evaluate and enhance the practices currently being utilized. It is also meant to inspire and encourage agencies to look at the components of their tutor training and work towards consistency across Ontario. The complete standard can be found in Appendix B.

Over the past few years CLO has worked with practitioners (both paid and volunteer) to establish minimum entry level skills and to identify

---

[35] See Chapter 3 for more information about the Core Quality Standards and how they are used by MTCU to evaluate the work of the organization.

matching competencies for volunteer tutors[36]. These are embedded in the training components listed below. Initial tutor training should result in learners being matched with volunteers who have developed an understanding of the needs and the challenges of the adult literacy learner, and who have made a commitment to the agency and the learner.

Training should use active learning and a variety of delivery methods to maximize the opportunities for learning and should also provide potential tutors with the opportunity to gain and practice skills. CLO recommends, based on information collected from the field, that the initial training be at least 15 hours in length.

CLO's Minimum Entry Level Skills And Matching Competencies for Volunteer Tutors	
SKILL	CORE COMPETENCIES
Speak and Listen Effectively	• When dealing with learners: • Presents information clearly and appropriately • Uses empathy, openness and respect • Uses active listening techniques • Monitors the effectiveness of the communication activity
Write Clearly to Express Ideas	• Understands and uses clear language and clear design in the creation or modification of written materials • Uses correct grammar and conventions of writing

[36] See *Skills for the Future* Phase One and Phase Two reports for complete information about both Minimum Entry Level Skills and CLO's Standard for the Training of Volunteer Tutors.

CLO's Minimum Entry Level Skills And Matching Competencies for Volunteer Tutors	
SKILL	CORE COMPETENCIES
Observation Skills	• When dealing with learners: • Shows sensitively to different ways of participation • Understands the role of group dynamics and relationship building • Encourages cooperative decision making • Synthesizes and reports on observations in an objective manner, keeping the focus on the goals of the learner
Presentation and Explanation Skills	• Presents information clearly and appropriately • Uses a variety of instructional methods to match learners' needs, learning styles and reasons for learning
Organizational and Planning Skills	• Organizes and presents information to serve the purpose, context and audience • Develops an organized approach to activities and objectives; sets and prioritizes goals
Facilitate the Learning Process	• Encourages and plans for the active participation of learners on all aspects of the learning process • Encourages independent and self-directed learning • Recognizes, accepts and accommodates diversity in individuals, their motivations, goals learning styles and behaviour • Incorporates learners' personal and career goals as they relate to learning • Uses a variety of methods to help learners develop reading, writing, and numeracy skills

Recommended Core Components of Tutor Training

CLO's recommended core components of tutor training are outlined below. These components form part of CLO's *Provincial Standard for the Training of Volunteer Tutors.* Please see Appendix B for more information. CLO recommends that initial tutor training include the following components:

Understanding the Need

⇒ Reasons why people come to community-based programs
⇒ Factors affecting learning
⇒ Effects of low/limited literacy skills on an individual
⇒ Awareness of literacy issues in Canada and what this means locally

Understanding Your Role

⇒ Creating a positive learning environment
⇒ Using a learning outcomes approach
⇒ Monitoring and recording the learner's progress
⇒ Commitment to active/ongoing learning
⇒ Knowing your responsibilities as a tutor

Understanding the Adult Learner

⇒ Characteristics of adult literacy learners and adult learning principles
⇒ Accommodating learning styles
⇒ Understanding special needs
⇒ Goal-setting
⇒ Supporting learner input and participation

Understanding Service Delivery

⇒ How to get started with teaching reading, writing and numeracy
⇒ Introduction to the five LBS Levels
⇒ Using appropriate strategies for teaching reading, writing and numeracy
⇒ Lesson planning and tutoring with an outcomes-based focus.
⇒ Finding, creating, and modifying learning materials
⇒ Providing feedback to learners and the agency

If all literacy agencies provided training that met or exceeded the criteria set in the standard the following benefits would accrue to the volunteer, the program and to the literacy field as a whole:

$\Rightarrow$ The quality, effectiveness and consistency of training and service delivery would be maintained

$\Rightarrow$ Everyone who participates in the initial training will understand the needs and challenges of the adult literacy learner

$\Rightarrow$ Learners will be matched with trained and committed volunteers

$\Rightarrow$ Volunteers would be given opportunities to gain skills and knowledge and provide input into the process through active participation

$\Rightarrow$ The credibility of the community-based literacy delivery system will be assured

So, in your business plan you have agreed to provide literacy training to 30 learners in your one-to-one program using volunteers to deliver the training! In a perfect world your pool of available trained volunteers would match your learner intake so that neither would be waiting to be matched. This is never possible. Most practitioners would agree, however, that it is "better" to have a wait list of volunteers than to have a wait list of learners. You may be able to ask the volunteers to take on other activities while they are waiting to be matched with a learner.

How often you provide tutor training during the fiscal year is dependent on a number of variables. Answers to questions such as the following can provide you with critical planning information:

$\Rightarrow$ How successful has your most recent volunteer recruitment campaign been?

$\Rightarrow$ How many volunteers can you train at one time?

$\Rightarrow$ What is the smallest number of volunteers you are willing to train – is it 4 or 10?

You may already have your own "tried and true" tutor training program and resources. If you are like most trainers, however, you are always looking for new or additional resources. There is a wide variety of print or web resources available. You can search the Internet; view the "Suggested Resources" sections in this manual; or contact AlphaPlus, NALD, your regional literacy network or your fellow community based programs to find additional resources. One excellent resource for your tutors is the *Handbook for Literacy Tutors*[37], written by Chris Harwood.

The Training Process

Your role as the training facilitator will be to (1) plan, (2) design, (3) deliver, and (4) evaluate tutor training. Your goal should be to give volunteers the foundation they need to begin working with adult literacy learners – tools for teaching reading, writing, and numeracy. Your tutor training sessions should introduce various tools, give the volunteers opportunities to practice or reflect and to give them opportunity to discuss techniques and ask questions.

(1) Planning Training:

Objectives – Clearly define what is it you expect the participants to have achieved by the end of the training and also define specific outcomes for each of the training sessions.

Logistics – Develop a checklist to cover the activities that must occur at any stage of the training process. This can include things like confirming someone's participation in training (by letter, email or phone), confirming the training facility (if it is off site), making sure you have name tags, ordering refreshments, etc.

---

[37] *Handbook for Literacy* tutors can be ordered from Grass Roots Press by going to their website at: www.literacyservices.com.

(2) Designing Training:

Clearly lay out the information that you need to give to volunteers and break the training into sessions and/or modules. The following sample outline is based on the provision of 15 hours of initial tutor training:

Sample Session One: 2 hours (plus 3 hours of independent study)

Suggested topics[38] to be covered:

⇒ Understanding the Need

⇒ Understanding Your Role as a Volunteer Tutor

⇒ Independent Study (by the volunteer)[39]: 3 hours

⇒ Assigned reading, questions for reflection

Sample Session Two: 4 hours (plus 3 hours of independent study)

Suggest topics to be covered:

⇒ Understanding the Learner

⇒ Understanding Service Delivery

⇒ Independent Study: 3 hours

⇒ Assigned reading, questions for reflection

Sample Session Three: 3 hours

Suggested topics to be covered:

⇒ Instructional Strategies for teaching reading, writing and numeracy

⇒ Lesson planning

⇒ Tutoring with an outcomes-based focus

---

[38] The suggestions for topics to be covered are based on the training components that make up CLO's Provincial Standard for the Training of Volunteer Tutors and are not meant to suggest or prescribe curriculum.

[39] A comment about independent study: If a potential tutor does not have the time to commit to three hours of independent study between training sessions you should question the volunteer's ability to make an honest commitment to meeting the training needs of the learner.

For your training sessions to be successful you should:

⇒ Involve the participant

⇒ Show how particular skills will be used

⇒ Present your information in a logical sequence

⇒ Apply what you know about learning styles of adult literacy learners to the participants of the training and present your information in a variety of ways

⇒ Allow time for discussion

(3) Delivering Training

It can be difficult to use a truly learner-centred approach for the delivery of your tutor training. Constraints such as time and the nature of the subject matter can make it difficult. Give participants as much information about the structure of the training as possible before the first session and ask them to review it. This will allow them to come to the first session knowing what will take place.

Take the time before each session to review the participants' application forms and/or your interview notes. Make note of applicable skills or knowledge that a participant might have and then use that information to ask the participant to share her knowledge or to make a comment during training.

Be a role model. Use training as an opportunity to allow participants to model their behaviour with learners on how you treat them by creating a safe, non-threatening, and supportive learning environment. Make sure you are prepared, that you have enough handouts and that your presentation is organized. Be flexible by taking the time to answer questions and encourage comments from participants. Be enthusiastic and upbeat.

(4) Evaluating Training

How will you know if the training has been successful? Collecting feedback from participants can be very informative if you ask the right questions. The questions you ask should be aimed at providing feedback on the content of the training sessions and you should make sure that you allow enough time for the participants to complete the form before they leave.

What do you do with the information collected? First, you should think of participants' comments as suggestions, rather than direct criticisms. Second, examine each suggestion to see if it has merit and then try to make the change. For example, if one person says that there were too many handouts, do you immediately decide to reduce the number of handouts, or do you wonder if that person's learning style is more auditory than visual? If many participants say the same thing, then you should probably take that suggestion into consideration when you plan your next session.

Note on Facilitation

It is a challenge to be a good facilitator. This activity has been compared to being the conductor of an orchestra in that you must keep several dimensions in mind at the same time— presenting your information, watching the group for reaction, answering questions, keeping the discussion on topic and trying to encourage input from all participants.

While you undoubtedly have (or will develop) your own style as a facilitator, there are a few key elements to keep in mind:

$\Rightarrow$ Be well prepared and organized for your training event
$\Rightarrow$ Create a positive training environment
$\Rightarrow$ Be an active listener

⇒ Share knowledge, skills, and abilities in a productive and professional manner

⇒ Deal respectfully with information requests and questions from participants in a timely manner

⇒ Keep an open line of communication between yourself and participants, and between participants

⇒ Encourage respect among participants

⇒ Set up interactive opportunities (large and small) for participants

⇒ Have a clear agenda with a timeline and start and stop on time

⇒ Keep the activities on target and create a parking lot for issues that fall outside the bounds of the session

Supporting Volunteers

Supporting the efforts of your volunteers is all about communication. Your agency should have a written policy about its commitment to the ongoing support of its volunteers and a written plan for how and when it will communicate with them. This makes sense, since in the long run it takes more time and energy to recruit, screen and train new volunteers than it does to keep the ones you have.

An open and planned communication strategy will help volunteers, especially if they work off-site, feel more connected to the organization. Even if the volunteer and learner meet   on-site, regularly scheduled meetings should be arranged to discuss the needs of the volunteer.

The planned contact with the volunteer may be one of the most important things that you do to help ensure that a learner's short and long term learning goals are being met. In addition to the volunteer feeling connected to the organization, you may be able to spot "burn-out", or be able to give the volunteer the acknowledgement that they are on-track

and are doing a good job, or you may be able to provide them with needed resources and other supports. The more comfortable volunteers are with you the more likely they are to approach you for help if they feel things are not going well.

Build volunteer support components into every aspect of your volunteer management plan. Here are some areas where you can plan your support:

Information Sharing:

For tutors – give them, in writing, the information they need to understand the needs of their learners. It may or may not mean giving them a copy of the training plan. It may mean that you take the information from the training plan and put it into context for them.

For board or committee members or for volunteers involved in providing technical or administrative support – make sure they clearly understand their roles and responsibilities.

Regular Contact:

The onus should be on you to make regular contact with volunteers. Let each volunteer know that you will call or email them on a regular basis. For tutors you may want to contact them more frequently when they are first matched with a learner. Check in with board or committee members after meetings to thank them for their help or ask if they have any questions. Set up a regular check in time with volunteers involved in providing technical or administrative support.

Evaluation:

It is unfortunate, but the process of appraisal seems to make everyone uneasy. At its best, the process (with the emphasis on the praise!) should provide both parties with the opportunity to acknowledge the quality of the work being done or the service being performed. If problem areas are identified it is the perfect time to discuss these and make changes, or come up with a plan to provide support and/or training. Overall, volunteers' confidence in their ability to do the job should be increased as a result of the process.

Set up a schedule with each volunteer to discuss performance. Ideally, this would happen in person, but if time or travel is a barrier, a telephone discussion could also be held. Provide volunteers with a form that will allow them to self-evaluate, but make sure the whole process involves two-way communication. If relevant, input from learners, other office staff, or volunteers could also be included. It almost goes without saying that the whole process must be confidential.

If the volunteer is involved in short-term work, a special event evening for example, provide them with an evaluation form that allows them to both evaluate their experience ("I learned a lot helping create personnel policies for the literacy agency") and evaluate their role ("we were successful at our volunteer task because..."). In addition to allowing you to evaluate how successful the event was, their evaluation of their experience can provide you with excellent quotes that you can use in your next volunteer recruitment activity

Resources:

Make sure that you give all volunteers the resources they need to do their jobs effectively. For tutors, this could be a list of suggested books from your resource library or the actual books. It could also be copies of sample forms that you have collected. Remind tutors to refer to their tutor training manual and hand-outs from training. If you are supporting the work of committees, work with the committee chair to ensure that everyone has the information they need.

Ongoing training:

It is often difficult to get volunteers to attend additional training sessions. Unfortunately there is no magic wand for this. Try to accommodate their schedules as much as possible. If the training is being done in-house, decide on the smallest number of participants you can work with and offer the same workshop at a variety of times. If the training is being hosted by your regional network or if you are bringing in an "expert" try to find other accommodations. If transportation is the problem, will a carpool or pick-up service work? If daycare is needed, can you set something up on-site during the workshop?

Making the training available in an online format is fast becoming an alternative, or supplemental, method for the delivery of ongoing training. Although it lacks the "connectedness" of being with a group it may be the perfect solution for some volunteers. If you cannot provide your in-house training on spelling strategies, for example, in an online format, be proactive and compile a list of web sites where your volunteer can go and get information about that topic.

Tutor Support Meetings:

Bring your volunteers together in an informal but informative and structured setting. Ask participants ahead of time to share a highlight or a difficulty. Encourage them to communicate with each other outside these meetings. If you serve a large geographic area you might want to divide the area into smaller meeting "zones" to allow volunteers to spend as little time as possible travelling to the meeting.

Volunteer Recognition

Recognition can be described as the formal acknowledgement of achievement, ability, or status. There are no limits to the number of ways in which you can acknowledge the contributions made to your organization by your volunteers. To do this effectively, however, the recognition should be meaningful to the volunteers and appropriate to the activity in which they were engaged.

Volunteer recognition can come in a variety of formal and informal ways. In addition to, or instead of, a large annual event try spreading your recognition efforts out over the year. A simple thank you card or a potted plant can say more to the volunteer about your appreciation than an annual dinner.

Earlier in this chapter we talked about the seven key motivators for volunteers. Those key motivators are:

$\Rightarrow$ The cause is important to them
$\Rightarrow$ They can use their skills and experiences
$\Rightarrow$ The cause has directly or indirectly affected them

⇒ They can explore and develop their strengths

⇒ They can fulfil religious beliefs or commitments

⇒ A friend or family member already supports the cause

⇒ They can improve employment opportunities

Different types of volunteer motivation need different types of volunteer recognition. You will probably understand what is motivating your volunteers through the application or interview process and through your ongoing supervision and support efforts. Linking recognition to individual motivation will allow your volunteers to confirm that their initial motivation for volunteering was well placed.

In addition to the motivators just mentioned, there are other, perhaps more psychological reasons, behind someone's desire to volunteer. In *Beyond Recruitment*[40] these were identified as:

⇒ Praise: some volunteers like being recognized for their skills and accomplishment; they appreciate seeing their achievements noted and having others see the result of their efforts

⇒ Sense of Accomplishment: some volunteers like to participate in activities that are practical and have tangible results

⇒ Affiliation: some volunteers like to belong to a group and they like the social aspects that the organization might offer

⇒ Power/Influence: some volunteers like to influence others and they like to show others what they know; they like to fill positions where they are involved with training or supervising others and making decisions

---

[40] *Beyond Recruitment*, page 14.

Linking Recognition to Motivation
(Adapted from *Beyond Recruitment*)

Motivator:	Focus of recognition:	Examples:
Praise	Recognizing talents and accomplishments	• Say "thank you" • Provide public recognition via the local media, your website or newsletter • Write reference letters
Sense of Accomplishment	Having concrete evidence of achievement	• Present with certificate of completion
Affiliation	Getting together with others and being seen as part of the organization	• Say "we" and "us" • Post a list of volunteers in the office • Give them a badge or T-shirt with your logo to wear at events
Power/Influence	Providing leadership roles or opportunities to make decisions	• Take photos with executive director or VIPs • Ask for their advice

Community Literacy of Ontario's *Economic Value of Volunteers* report reveals some interesting information about volunteer recognition. The good news is that 75% of literacy volunteers were "very satisfied" and 24% were "somewhat satisfied" with their volunteer experience. Less

positive is that 28% of literacy volunteers said that they did not believe that volunteers get the recognition they deserve.

In CLO's recent research into practitioner training in Ontario, many tutors reported that they were less concerned with individual recognition and said that they would find it more valuable to highlight the collective importance of literacy volunteers in their community and throughout Ontario!

Include recognition in your planning process and communicate this to your volunteers—let them know up front that their time, effort and energy will be recognized. You may want to consider writing a formal policy on recognition.

Volunteer Retention

In a recent study of literacy volunteers conducted by Community Literacy of Ontario, 99% reported that their volunteer experiences have been positive. Moreover, almost 80% reported that they intended to continue working with their literacy agencies. These statistics likely explain why 43% of literacy volunteers have been involved with their agency for at least four years!

The most common reasons for volunteers losing interest have been identified as[41]:

⇒ There is a discrepancy between volunteer expectations and the reality they encounter
⇒ They feel they are not making a difference
⇒ Volunteers find their tasks too routine, or there is no variety

---

[41] Adapted from: *A Guide for the Development of Polices and Procedures*, Volume 2, CLO 2000
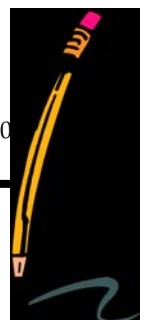
⇒ There is a real or perceived lack of support

⇒ They feel there is little prestige

⇒ Volunteers feel there is no chance for personal growth or to meet personal needs

⇒ There is too little chance to demonstrate initiative or creativity

⇒ There is a real or perceived tension among co-workers that makes them feel uncomfortable or unwanted

A successful volunteer retention program can begin with a review of five key areas that volunteers have identified as priorities. These are identified in the table below.

Volunteer Retention Checklist		
Volunteers need:	Have we:	✓
Resources	Ensured that volunteers have adequate resources to do their jobs properly?	
Rewarding opportunities	Given valuable and meaningful opportunities?	
Responsibility	Given them enough responsibility?	
Recreation	Provided fun, social opportunities?	
Recognition	Recognized each volunteer in a way that is appropriate and meaningful?	

Volunteer Exit

Overall, fewer Canadians are volunteering. According to the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, Canada is experiencing a sharp decline in the number of people volunteering. Between 1997 and 2000, there were one million fewer Canadians volunteering. Lack of time was the reason most often given for not volunteering (identified by 76% of non volunteers). The second most important reason identified for not volunteering was being unwilling to make a year-round commitment (identified by 46% of non volunteers).

As mentioned earlier, literacy volunteers tend to have a positive volunteer experience. This satisfaction is reflected by literacy volunteers staying with their agency for an average of four years[42]. However, literacy volunteers do move on for a variety of reasons.

Exit Interviews

When a volunteer lets you know that she is leaving you should try to schedule an exit interview. Conducting an exit interview can allow you and the volunteer to have a sense of closure and it can be the perfect opportunity for you to identify strengths or weaknesses in your program and to identify gaps in what you are offering to volunteers.

Ideally the interview would be conducted in person, but time or distance may make that unrealistic. An exchange of emails or a telephone interview may serve just as well. You might want to consider developing an exit questionnaire.

---

[42] *Skills for the Future* Phase One report, page 19.

The purpose of the exit interview is to understand the perceptions and experiences of your volunteers. Only through this input can an agency best evaluate its volunteer management practices. Most importantly, ask your volunteers for suggestions and input to help you do a better job with the many aspects of volunteer management! Ask them:

⇒ How does the organization create a positive environment for volunteers?

⇒ Is the volunteer work meaningful and rewarding?

⇒ What current systems work well for volunteers? What could be improved?

⇒ Does the agency foster an accepting attitude toward volunteers? What are some suggestions and new ways to create a welcoming environment for volunteers?

⇒ Are volunteer suggestions welcomed, acknowledged or acted upon by the agency?

Volunteer Dismissal

Your agency should have a written policy that covers the reasons why a volunteer's service might be terminated with a particular learner or with the agency itself. This policy is important because it will protect the rights of the agency, the learners, and the volunteers themselves. The reasons for dismissal, including those for immediate dismissal, and the procedures that you will follow need to be clearly laid out.

The policy and the steps you develop to carry out this policy must be given to volunteers as soon as they agree to become a part of your agency. If you have to terminate the services of a volunteer make sure the process and the reasons for dismissal are clearly explained to the volunteer at the time of the dismissal.

Here are a few reasons why you might dismiss a volunteer:

⇒ The volunteer arrives at a tutoring session, training or an event while clearly under the influence of drugs or alcohol
⇒ For the removal or theft of property
⇒ The volunteer is convicted of committing a criminal offence
⇒ The volunteer discriminates against someone (based on any grounds prohibited under the charter of rights and freedoms or the Ontario Human Rights Code)

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the key areas of volunteer management—from recruitment to recognition, from intake to exit. The valuable role that volunteers play in our literacy agencies is undisputable. That involvement, however, needs to be managed and supported with both human and financial resources. Literacy practitioners need to ensure that the needs of the volunteers are identified and met. By doing a good job of managing and supporting our volunteers, we can also ensure that we are providing adult literacy learners with instructors who have the skills to meet **their** needs.

Questions for Reflection
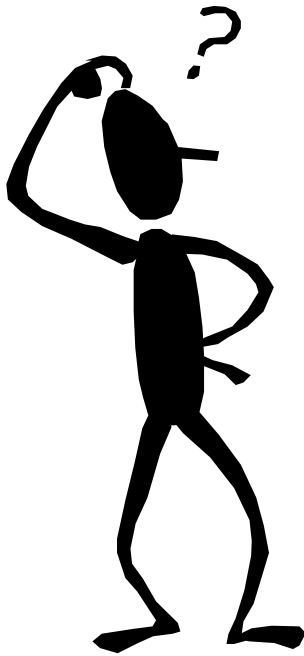
⇒ What changes, if any, could you make to your agency's current management practices with regard to working with volunteers?

⇒ Who, in your agency, is at risk and when? How could you change or modify your screening or program practices to reduce this risk?

⇒ Do your current volunteer recognition efforts meet the needs and motivators of your volunteers? If not, what could you change to recognize your volunteer more effectively?

⇒ What roles do volunteers play in your agency and why? Should these roles change and / or be adapted in any way?

⇒ Why do volunteers leave your agency?

Suggested Resources

In addition to the various reports, manuals, web sites and other resources mentioned in this chapter, we think you might find the following resources to be useful.

Print–Based:

Celebrating Literacy Volunteers in Your Community: A Promotional Toolkit. Community Literacy of Ontario. 2001.

The Economic Value of Volunteer in Community Literacy Agencies in Ontario. Community Literacy of Ontario. 1998.

Beyond Recruitment. An Online Workshop About Recruiting and Maintaining Volunteers in the New Environment. Community Literacy of Ontario. 2000.

Managing the Volunteer Process found in *Literacy Volunteer Resources*. Chris Harwood. Grass Roots Press. ISBN: 0-9731217-0-X. AlphaPlus Call # 374.01206 H125.
⇒ With a focus on volunteer tutors, this resource provides practical information on all aspects of managing you tutors.

Beyond Police Checks: The Definitive Volunteer and Employee Screening Guidebook by Linda Graff, 1999. Available from Linda Graff and Associates.
⇒ This is a comprehensive "how-to" manual on screening. It will help you understand screening responsibilities and it provides specific details on how to carefully choose screening methods matched to the requirements of any given position (paid, stipend, or volunteer).

Web-based

Volunteer Canada

⇒ In addition or valuable information about volunteers and the
   volunteer sector you can also access posters and other promotional
   materials (at reasonable costs—sometimes even free!) at:
   www.volunteer.ca.

Ontario Screening Initiative

⇒ The Ontario Screening Initiative has promoted the importance and
   benefit of screening individuals in position of trust. Many tools and
   resources are available for downloading from the web site at:
   www.volunteer.ca/volcan/eng/content/screening/ontario-
   init.php?display=4,0.

Community Literacy of Ontario

⇒ Online access to many of the resources mentioned in this chapter.
   Click on the link to the Volunteer Management Centre for information
   and resources that pertain specifically to volunteers:
   www.nald.ca/clo.htm

Laubach Literacy Ontario
⇒ www.laubach-on.ca
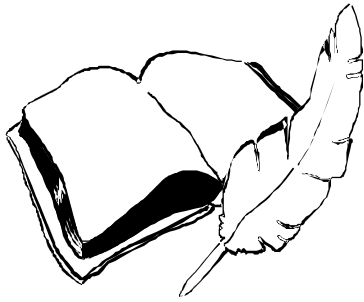
CHAPTER 5

THE ADULT LITERACY LEARNER

> "Our learners are not a 'different species,' as some would have us believe, and I must say immediately that I hate the negative stereotypes of our learners. Yet the common characteristic within our learner population, the one that distinguishes it from other populations in the educational spectrum, is that most of our students dropped out of school. Furthermore, most did so under unhappy circumstances. While our learners have many characteristics in common with mainstream adult students, they also have some radical differences. We can certainly learn from theories and research done with the larger adult population in mind, but we cannot extrapolate freely."
>
> *B. Allan Quigley*
> *The First Three Weeks: A Critical Time for Motivation*

Introduction

The reasons why adults decide to improve or get help with their literacy skills are many. Their motivation could come about as a result of family pressure or support; through ethnic, political, or religious affiliation; by the possibility for advancement in work; or by their desire to fulfill personal goals such as keeping up with their children's education. While these reasons may be enough to get them started, often the reality of the effort required can be overwhelming.

Adult literacy learners can also face additional challenges from the demands of family, finances or employment—some of the very things that motivated them in the first place.

Literacy agencies need to be aware of the challenges that learners may face so they can provide the best possible learning environment for all learners. Research has shown that most learners will persist with literacy upgrading when the activities they are engaged in make sense to them, when they are given tasks that will allow them to demonstrate strengths and when the learning activities grow from collaboration with the instructor. This chapter will look at a number of the key factors that influence and affect learning.

The Adult Literacy Learner

The environment in which literacy and basic skills upgrading is delivered is influenced by a wide and rich variety of factors. Over the years, paid staff and volunteers in Ontario's community literacy agencies have worked hard to gain an understanding of how adult literacy learners learn. They have also worked to understand the factors that can impact on learners' ability to learn so services can be delivered in a setting that supports and encourages adults with low literacy skills.

How learning happens and the factors that impact on someone's ability to learn are woven together to form the complex tapestry that is an adult literacy learner. In the following sections of this chapter, we will look at a number of the key influences that link together learner motivation and participation with: recruitment and retention; goal setting and self-direction; and the development of an optimal setting for learning.

Since the late 1990s, work in the field of adult literacy education[43] has allowed literacy practitioners to increase their knowledge about the types of challenges that can impact on learning. Much of this work has also provided information about approaches to learning that can help practitioners reduce the impact these challenges may have on the learners in their programs. An understanding of this type of information will help practitioners with recruiting and retaining learners and with the provision of service delivery within a positive and supportive learning environment.

Providing a supportive and learner-centred learning environment also means that literacy practitioners must understand how the presence of learning disabilities can impact on an adult's ability to learn. They also need to understand the role that learning styles and multiple intelligences play in the learning environment.

Learning Outcomes Approach

The introduction of a Learning Outcomes Approach to service delivery by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' (MTCU) Literacy and Basic Skills Program has provided new knowledge and challenges to literacy practitioners in recent years. In its document *Working with Learning Outcomes* (1998), MTCU states that in the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) program, "learning outcomes make it possible to assist students to demonstrate, apply and transfer learning when it is relevant to their goals. Learning outcomes allow practitioners to answer the question: 'How do you know that learners in your program have made progress toward their goals in measurable ways?'

---

[43] *Seeing the Need, Meeting the Need* (OLC 2001), *Patterns of Participation* (ABC Canada 2001), *The First Three Weeks: A Critical Time for Motivation* (Quigley, 1998) are but three examples of the many documents or reports that closely examine the types of things that impact on learner participation and learner motivation.

MTCU's Learning Outcomes Approach has three key characteristics that are considered "critical to its proper application." The application of these characteristics highlights the important role that self-directed learning plays in the learning environment.

Key Characteristics of a Learning Outcomes Approach
(Taken from *Working with Learning Outcomes*. MTCU, 1998)

- Learners remain at the centre of programs and instructors can be expected to bring professional judgement to bear on:
    - Learner assessment and assistance in goal-setting
    - Setting realistic time frames for the attainment of skills and goals
    - Curriculum development
    - Development of learning activities and learning demonstrations

- A learning outcomes approach focuses attention on the ability of learners to apply the learning that has taken place in settings and situation related to their goals. The attention paid to application of learning also supports and accommodates a goal-directed, learner-centred approach to instruction.

- In keeping with the focus on learners' ability to apply their learning in settings and situations related to their goals, the emphasis in learner assessment is on the *applied* demonstration of learning. Demonstrations of learning outcomes are what instructors can observe learners do to show that they have mastered the required knowledge, skills and behaviours specified by the learning outcome(s) they have strived to attain.

Guiding all the work that goes on in community-based literacy agencies is a strong desire to keep the learning environment learner-centred. Programs that depend on volunteer tutors to provide literacy and basic skills instruction to adult literacy learners will need to give their volunteers the appropriate skills, training and tools. A closer examination of each of the factors in the previous table will serve to strengthen the ability of instructors (both paid staff and volunteers) to provide environments conducive to learning and to enhance student outcomes.

Principles of Adult Education

In 1973 Malcolm Knowles published *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*. In this work Knowles, a well-respected figure in the field of adult education, described his theory of andragogy. For Knowles, and many others, the art and science of teaching adults (hence the term andragogy) was not the same as pedagogy (which is defined as the art and science of teaching children).

Initially Knowles developed four key assumptions for his theory:

⇒ Teachers have a responsibility to help adults move from dependency toward increasing self-direction.
⇒ Adults have an ever-increasing reservoir of experience that is a rich resource for learning.
⇒ Adults are ready to learn when it will help them to cope with real-life tasks or problems.
⇒ Adults see education as a means to develop increased competence.

Two additional assumptions were added at a later date:

⇒ Adults need to know the reason to learn something.
⇒ The most potent motivators for adult learning are internal, such as self-esteem.

While not everyone agrees with Knowles (that teaching adults is different from teaching children), his assumptions have been widely used as a guide to shape both the environment and curriculum when teaching adults. Andragogy, according to Knowles (1998) should be considered a model "in that it speaks to the characteristics of the learning transaction, not to the goals and aims of that transaction.[44]" His assumptions fit well

---

[44] In *Andragogy Revisited: Theory for the 21st Century?* Ralf St. Clair examines the viability of Knowles' theory in the twenty-first century.

within a learning outcomes approach to adult education—including the literacy field in Ontario.

Principles of Adult Literacy Learning

A learning outcomes approach, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, provides a context for learning in which goal-setting and ongoing assessment play an integral part, where new learning builds on learners' prior experiences and knowledge and where learners provide input and direction to the learning environment. The successful application of this approach relies on the active participation of the adult literacy learner in both the process and the product of learning.

While the assumptions made by Knowles and others may apply to most adult learners, people working with adult literacy learners know that additional assumptions need to be made. One of the main assumptions of both Knowles' model and a learning outcomes approach is that adults are self-directed and independent learners. Another key assumption is that adult learners play a key role in the decision making process.

In reality, many adult literacy learners lack both the confidence and the skills to be self-directed or independent learners. Many may need to learn how to learn. Many, at least initially, may be uncomfortable with being a co-director of their learning process. A larger number of adult literacy learners—especially those with very low literacy skills—must first be given the skills that will allow them to become more self-directed in their learning. Self-directed learning is discussed later in this chapter.

The following principles have been developed based on a review of many similar lists found in the literature. They should be seen as general principles and, as such, may not apply to all learners at all times. Also the categories are arbitrary—the intent is to provide a basic framework, not to create a "law." Some principles could be listed under more than one heading.

Basic Principles of Adult Literacy Education	
Principle	**Characteristics**
Learner Motivation: Learning is not separated from everyday life; it occurs in a context that gives meaning to learning and that actively engages and supports the learner.	• Learners' past experiences are acknowledged and used to "construct" new knowledge • Prior knowledge respects a combination of learners' pre-existing attitudes, experiences, and knowledge • Learners are able to associate new learning with previous experiences • New learning focuses on strengths and addresses specific needs • The emphasis is on the practical application of new learning
Learner Participation: Learners are encouraged to be active participants in all aspects of the learning process, beginning with intake and initial assessment and carried through to exit assessment and follow-up activities.	• Learning relates to the development of the whole person • Learners are engaged in a process that will encourage them to become increasingly self-directed • Learners provide key input into the planning of instruction

Learning Environment: Learning occurs in a climate of mutual respect and trust.	• Instruction and assessment methods respect preferred learning styles • Learners are given and use new information in a context that is familiar to them • Beliefs, religions, value systems and life styles of all participants are respected • Debate and the challenging of ideas is encouraged and supported • Learning is an active, not passive, process • All questions are treated with respect and learners are comfortable with admitting confusion and lack of knowledge
Collaboration: Learners and instructors are seen as co-directors of the learning process.	• Goal-setting and evaluation/assessment activities are discussed and a shared understanding is reached • Practitioners acknowledge the challenges faced by learners by helping them develop solutions • Learning is kept relevant and meaningful by keeping the focus on goals/outcomes • Learning and knowledge are shared resources

Learner Motivation

Overview

Motivation, as we all know, is that "thing" that inspires us to begin and continue a variety of activities—health related, educational related or related to personal satisfaction. Motivation is influenced by many factors. What are the internal and external factors that influence adult literacy learners?

Gaining an understanding of some of the internal and external factors that influence motivation can help with both organizational and program planning. In general, motivation can be influenced by:

⇒ The amount of energy that is required to achieve a goal
⇒ The fact that people change their minds about what they want
⇒ How someone feels (mentally, physically)
⇒ How much effort is needed to accomplish specific activities
⇒ The personal attachment to achieving the goal
⇒ Friends, family, job, sports, and normal life factors

For adult literacy learners, motivation comes into play at two important points in time: (1) when the learner "joins" a literacy program, and (2) during his or her participation in the program. An understanding of learner motivation should play a significant role in determining the strategies that literacy agencies use to attract (recruit) and keep (retain) learners[45].

---

[45] Specific information on recruitment and retention strategies can be found in *Strategies of Our Own: Learner Recruitment & Retention Toolkit*. Published by Community Literacy of Ontario (2002), the kit provides literacy agencies with information about, and tools, for learner recruitment and retention.

The advent of mandatory literacy testing for people in receipt of Ontario Works (OW) adds a layer of complexity to understanding learner motivation. OW participants in a LBS literacy program may not be, at least initially, willing participants. Practitioners may face additional challenges to ensure that the needs of OW learners are clearly identified and supported. The relationship that the LBS agencies establish with the OW offices in their regions will help to ensure that literacy training is viewed as a viable option by both OW staff and clients. Such relationships can also help OW staff and clients understand that low literacy skills can be a significant barrier to both finding and keeping employment.

In general, however, the information provided in the following sections of this chapter can be applied to all learners.

Motivation and Participation

In *Seeing the Need, Meeting the Need,* Roussy and Hart (2001) describe the results of their research into the kinds of things that encouraged people to seek out and enrol in literacy programs and the kinds of things that made it hard for them to stay in the program. Ninety-two learners from across Ontario took part in their study.

What motivated the learners to seek out a literacy program? Roussy and Hart noted the following as reasons given by the learners in their study:

Reason for Joining	**%**
Program feature attractive	73.9
Personal health/confidence higher	69.6
Social support (e.g. from friends, family)	52.2
Time available work-related (e.g. not working, working part-time)	38.0
New work related reason (e.g. skills to get or keep job)	32.6

In Roussy and Hart's study, a large percentage of the learners based their decision to join a literacy program on factors that are external to the program—personal health, social support, and time availability. This study notes that while learners make the decision to approach the program based on external (to the program) factors, the features of the program also play an influential role in their decision making process. These features can include things like the time and location of the literacy programming, the approach used in the learning environment (materials, settings), the actual experience of contacting the program (the way the staff person made them feel) or things they had heard about the program from others.

What did the learners expect from participating in the literacy program? Roussy and Hart discovered that while only 32.6% of the learners cited getting or keeping a job as a reason for joining a literacy program, "over 80% expected that they would have better employment prospects as a result of program participation.[46]" Other reasons are noted in the table below.

Expectations (as a result of joining)[47]	%
Work prospects better	84.8
Gain more confidence/motivation	60.9
Better prospects for credential program	50.0
Better dealing with computers, Internet	33.7
Better literacy communications skills	31.5

If there is a mismatch between the reason (or reasons) why a learner enrols in a literacy program in the first place, and that learner's expectation (or expectations) of what he or she will achieve as a result of enrolment, then the potential is there for the learner to become de-motivated. This potential for a mismatch emphasizes the need for

---

[46] *Seeing the Need; Meeting the Need,* page 52.

[47] Ibid, page 53.

program materials and for agency staff to work hard to ensure that learners (current and potential) are given clear messages about what types of literacy instruction the agency can provide and what will be required from learners. Learners also need to be given the opportunity— on many occasions—to express what they expect from the program. See Chapter 6, Identifying and Meeting Learner Needs, for some suggested strategies for increasing learner participation in the learning environment.

What other factors play a role in motivation? The link between motivation and dropping out has been well researched. In addition to the mismatch mentioned above, there are a number of other critical factors that will influence learner motivation. Understanding how these factors are related to motivation will allow practitioners to provide solutions or alternatives in an attempt to help learners remain motivated.

In a national study conducted by ABC CANADA, it was reported that "young people aged 16 to 24 with low incomes, men, and those living in rural areas/small towns or very large cities are the most likely to drop out[48]" of literacy programs. This group accounted for 33% of those who signed up for literacy and basic skills upgrading.

The above-mentioned study looked at the main factors associated with dropping out. This study labelled the factors as socio-economic-circumstantial, program/policy related, and cognitive-emotive. These factors are described below.

⇒ **Socio-economic-circumstantial:** 56% of the learners in the ABC CANADA study cited socio-economic reasons for leaving. Examples of this include: job-related pressures, family responsibilities and money problems.

---

[48] This information was taken from *Who Wants to Learn?* which is a summary of the results of ABC CANADA's national study: *Patterns of Participation in Canadian Literacy and Upgrading Programs* (2001).

⇒ **Program/Policy related:** 27% cited program/policy related reasons for leaving. Examples of this include: wrong program level, wrong content or program structure.

⇒ **Cognitive-emotive:** In the ABC CANADA study, 6% of the learners cited this as a reason for leaving. Examples of this include: the learner doesn't perceive a need for literacy upgrading, the learner is nervous about being in a program, or the learner believes that the program won't help them.

By gaining an understanding of the motivational factors that will influence an adult's decision to participate[49] in literacy training, the literacy organization can focus on those factors over which they can exert some control. Recruitment strategies can highlight, for example, specific program features that may influence an adult's decision to approach a literacy agency. Strategies that will keep learners motivated while they are receiving instruction can be developed. Some of these are discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Motivation and Instruction

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the factors that motivate adults to join a literacy program are not necessarily the same factors that motivate learners to stay or persist with their learning. An understanding of the variables that affect this second type of motivation will help practitioners develop strategies for keeping learners interested in learning.

Without question the experience that adult learners have while participating in a literacy program should not mirror learning experiences they may have had as children or youth. For many adult

---

[49] "Participate" here refers to both the initial decision to approach a literacy program and the decision to stay involved.

literacy learners, childhood schooling unfortunately represents a time for them when they:

⇒ Were asked to learn something that may have not have been of interest to them
⇒ Had little or no control or choice (whether to be in school or not)
⇒ Lacked the personal skills or resources needed to be successful
⇒ Lacked adequate external supports and resources, including adult help, respect, and encouragement

In one study[50] done in the United States, researchers found that, for the students in their survey, more students dropped out before they completed twelve hours of instruction than dropped out after attending for more than twelve hours. In this crucial time period, learners must perceive that their learning will be relevant—based on their needs, interests and goals. Practitioners must also use this time frame to work with instructors (paid staff or trained volunteers) and learners to identify and problem-solve barriers that may cause learners to lose their motivation. In fact, in *Reaching Out: Supporting Ontario Works Clients in LBS Programs* Roussy and Paul (2002) recommend contacting learners at least three times within the first month of instruction[51].

Metacognition and self-direction play key roles in the learning environment. As mentioned previously, Ontario's learning outcomes approach places a heavy reliance on learners being, or becoming, critical and self-directed learners. The links between motivation, metacognition and self-directed learning are discussed in the following sections.

---

[50] The study, *Doing Something about Attrition: A Project to Enhance Student Retention in Adult Basic Education* (Dirkx and Jha, 1994), examined student enrolment in adult basic education classes over a two-year period. Strategies to reduce attrition were designed and implemented based on the information collected. The implementation of the strategies resulted in a significant reduction in attrition.

[51] This project researched and tested strategies to recruit and retain Ontario Works clients in Literacy and Basic Skills programs. Although developed for a specific network region and for Ontario Works clients in particular, the information is of value to any literacy organization.

Self-Directed Learning

Overview

Some adults have great success with setting and achieving goals. Some do not. Some adults know how they learn, while others do not. In some settings, some adults may be comfortable with taking a lead role. These same adults in another setting may not be willing to take a lead role. This is true for all adults not just those in literacy programs.

Becoming self-directed is not, for many adult literacy learners, a simple matter of gaining new skills. It is, as noted by Grieve (2003), "strongly affected by social interactions, the learning environment and the broader context[52]."

Increasing Self-Direction

Gerald Grow, in his work on self-direction, developed what he called "a concept" around which he could organize his "understanding of teaching." He noted that:

⇒ Different students have different abilities to be self-directed
⇒ Teachers must adapt their methods in response (to this)
⇒ Self-direction can be taught

---

[52] *Supporting Learning, Supporting Change, An OLC Field Report* was written as a result of research conducted by the Ontario Literacy Coalition to gain a better understanding of MTCU's Self-management and Self-Direction Learning Outcomes and the importance this plays in the learning process. The field report can be downloaded from the OLC's web site at: www.on.literacy.ca. The full research report can be purchased by contacting the OLC.

Chapter Five

He defined self-directed learning as the "degree of choice that learners have within an instructional situation." In *Teaching Learners to be Self-Directed* he remarks that "even though one's ability to be a self-directed learner is ultimately (and sometimes strikingly) situational (depending, for example, on self-motivation in the specific learning situation), it is possible to learn how to learn, to learn how to see, to learn how to be, in ways that make one more self-directing in many areas of life[53]."

Grow bases his model on a number of assumptions. His assumptions are:

⇒ Education should produce self-directed, lifelong learners (but sometimes it creates, he notes, dependency instead)
⇒ There is more than one way to teach well
⇒ The ability to be self-directed is situational: one may be self-directed in one subject, a dependent learner in another
⇒ There is nothing wrong with being a dependent learner —one who needs to be taught.
⇒ Self-direction can be learned—and it can be taught
⇒ This is a model, not a law (he suggests that it should be treated "as a tool to dig with")

In his model, self-direction is described in terms of four stages that learners move through from dependent to fully self-directed learning. For example, learners at Stage One (low self-direction) will look to the instructor as the authority figure and will be dependent on the instructor to guide and shape instruction. Grow suggests a "coaching" approach, using immediate feedback and positive reinforcement, to help learners overcome a negative opinion of self and to increase self-confidence.

As learners move toward Stage Four (high self-direction), their view of the instructor should start to shift and they should become more engaged in the process. For example, at Stage Two, Grow describes learners as being "interested" in the learning process; at Stage Three they are described as being "involved."

---

[53] This document can be retrieved from http://www.longleaf.net/ggrow.

Some adult literacy learners may never reach Grow's Stage Four[54] while in a literacy program. However, this does not mean that they will never reach it. At this stage, Grow describes learners as very self-directed and the instructor is seen as someone with whom they consult. This stage may be reached when the learner moves on to further training.

The ability to be self-directed—first within the setting of a literacy and basic skills program and then in the community-at-large—is one of the major learning outcomes of MTCU's Learning Outcomes Matrix. The following checklist was developed based on indicators provided by Gerald Grow in his article, *Teaching Learners to be Self-Directed.* The indicators may help you determine a learner's degree of self-direction. Once you have completed the checklist, you can begin to develop specific strategies to address the areas of concern.

The questions posed in this table are provided as guidelines only—not all of the questions will apply to all learners. The answer to a particular question may change depending on the circumstance and you might not be able to answer "always" or "never" to all of the questions. In some cases, "sometimes" might be the appropriate answer. When that is the case, spend some time thinking about the situation—what does it tell you about the learner and/or the learning environment?

---

[54] Grow himself notes that this stage may also be difficult for **any** learner to reach if the system in which the training is being delivered does not allow for, or encourage, a high level of self-direction.

Degree of Self-Direction Checklist		
Indicators	Always	Never
Level of motivation:		
Does the learner take assignments and "run" with them?		
Does the learner only do the minimum, and in a perfunctory way?		
Does the learner come to class/session on time?		
Learner Performance:		
Does the learner perform well when asked to take the initiative in an assignment?		
Is the learner stopped by the first obstacle?		
Does the learner invent ways to continue?		
Can the learner explore a topic (e.g., when to use capital letters) independently?		
Does the learner always need a series of steps to follow?		
Learner Participation:		
Does the learner participate in class or tutorial discussions?		
Does the learner come to the session prepared?		
Support Required:		
How much detailed direction does the learner require?		
Does the learner insist on having everything spelled out verbally exactly what to do and when, for example?		

Degree of Self-Direction Checklist	
Indicators	Always ⟍ Never
Group Learning:	
How well does the learner work with others on group projects?	
Can the learner take a project, define it, break it into tasks, schedule the tasks so that the group completes them, and finish the project on time, up to standard, and with an internal understanding of why it was important?	
Authority Figure:	
How often and how much pressure does the learner put on you (the instructor) to be an authority figure who dictates the learning cycle?	
To what extent does the learner take ownership of the learning?	
Independent Study:	
Can the learner practice on his or her own to assimilate the skills necessary to the subject?	
Does the practice have to be mandatory and directed?	
Does the dependency result from a lack of self-direction skills?	
Does the dependency result from a lack of interest, low confidence, low motivation, or discouragement?	
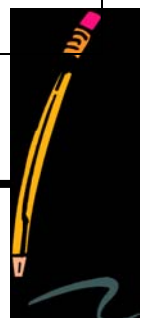
"Working On My Own" is another tool that you can give to some learners. It provides a checklist of suggestions for things they can do before asking for help from the instructor or teacher. This type of tool encourages learners to take more control over their learning. Taking on more responsibility for one's learning is one of the key indicators suggested by Grow for a learner becoming more self-directed. It is also a suggested criterion in MTCU's Self-Management / Self-Direction Learning Outcome.

Working On My Own
Adapted from *Working on My Own*, developed by the Literacy Council of South Temiskaming. Used with permission.

It is important to learn to work well on your own. Sometimes, the teacher is busy with someone else so you cannot ask for help right away. Even if the teacher is not busy, it is a good idea to begin to solve problems and find answers on your own or with another learner. You are more likely to learn something when you discover it for yourself!

Here are some ideas to help you out if you get stuck. Try out some of these ideas before asking the teacher for help. This will help you learn on your own.

☐ Read the question again. It might make more sense the second or third time you read it. Try reading it out loud – sometimes that helps.

☐ Read the story again. Sometimes, you have to read a story two or three times before you understand it all.

☐ Try to remember what you are supposed to do. Are you supposed to answer questions? Are you supposed to write something down?

❏ Circle the words you do not know or that were hard to read. Then, make a list of those words.

❏ Look up the words you do not know. Find out what they mean. This might help you understand the story or the question better.

❏ Make a note about what part you do not understand.

❏ Do something else for a while, then come back. Sometimes if you leave a problem alone for a while, it makes more sense when you come back to it!

❏ Ask another learner. They might be able to help you. (But remember, they have their own work to do so respect their time.)

❏ Look in your binder or your desk. Have you already done some work that is like the work you are doing now? Sometimes if you look back at your old work, it can help you with the new work.

❏ I have tried all these things and I am still stuck! Now I will ask the teacher for help!

Building Metacognition Skills

How do you know when you have learned something? What do you do if you do not understand something you have just read? When and how do you decide that you need more information to help you understand something? When do you ask others for help? When you ask and then answer these types of questions, you are using cognitive and metacognitive strategies. The term metacognition describes our knowledge about how we perceive, remember, think and act. In other words—what we know about what we know! Cognition is the act of thinking or the "product" of that act.

In recent years, studies in many fields (sociology, psychology and education) have increased our understanding about the role that metacognition plays in helping learners gain and keep knowledge. Research tells us that we employ all or some of the following strategies while engaged in thinking:

1. We talk ourselves through problems
2. We ask ourselves what we know and what we need to find out
3. We pose questions
4. We visualize the relationship with existing knowledge
5. We draw our own conclusions

In the past, it was thought that since metacognition often takes the form of this internal dialogue, it was not possible to teach the use of metacognitive strategies. Recent research has proven this to be untrue. It has been determined that fundamental metacognitive strategies include:

⇒ Connecting new information to former knowledge
⇒ Selecting thinking strategies deliberately
⇒ Planning, monitoring and evaluating our thinking processes

As noted by Gillespie, "good metacognitive strategy users engage in an ongoing process of identifying what their prior knowledge of a topic is,

what they do not know and what they need to learn. Metacognitive strategies enable learners to plan and self-regulate their work and to judge under what conditions to apply which cognitive strategies[55]." Good metacognitive strategies will allow learners to develop their knowledge base. The development of metacognitive (and cognitive) strategies will allow learners to develop the expertise they need to become self-directed and motivated learners.

The gap between what the learner can accomplish independently and what they can accomplish with someone's help (e.g., the instructor) is called the "zone of proximal development". In the literacy field, this process of helping learners to build more skills by relying on a foundation of previously learned skills is also known as "scaffolding". In the view of some academics, the role of education, is "to provide learners with experiences that are within their zone of proximal development—with tasks that are slightly above their level of independent functioning yet can be accomplished with sensitive guidance[56]." It is the role of the instructor (paid or volunteer tutor) to provide this guidance.

Taylor, King and Pinsent-Johnson in their paper *Understanding the Zone of Proximal Development in Adult Literacy Learning* (CASAE[57] 2002) note that it is the "Zone of Proximal Development that is critical for learning and instruction" when working with adult literacy learners. For instructors to maximize both success and motivation, they will need to use scaffolding and collaborative learning activities. This will result in a learning environment in which learners feel they can ask questions and get help with challenges they are experiencing. Scaffolding should provide

---

[55] *An Approach to Teaching and Learning That Builds Expertise*. Equipped for the Future Research to Practice Note 2. National Institute for Literacy, 2002.

[56] Ibid.

[57] CASAE is the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education. It was founded in 1981 to promote the study of adult education and to facilitate research and dissemination of knowledge in adult education. Research papers on a variety of topics relating to adult education (both literacy and non-literacy) can be retrieved from the CASAE web site at: www.oise.utoronto.ca/CASAE/maineng.html. The paper mentioned here was presented at the 2002 conference.

learners with an environment and activities in which they are "pushed" to work beyond the level of their current abilities or knowledge. It must be noted that all references to scaffolding make it clear that in "pushing" the learner the intent is not to cause frustration or to set up the learner to fail, but rather to encourage the learner to apply new knowledge to a variety of settings and to help create an environment where learning is exciting and rewarding.

Please see Appendix F to review a table called "Dimension of Performance" (adapted from *An Approach to Teaching and Learning That Builds Expertise*). This table provides questions that can help you determine a learner's ability to use both cognitive and metacognitive skills.

The following strategy will help learners strengthen their cognitive skills and gain metacognitive strategies It is a modification of the Know, Want to Know, Learned (K-W-L) strategy that is described in Chapter 7.

Suggested Strategy: Use this modification of the K-W-L strategy to provide learners with the opportunity to break tasks or activities into smaller "chunks." K-W-H-L is a strategy that can be used to help learners to visually organize what they already know (activates prior knowledge), what they want to know, and where or how to find the answers to their questions. The last column will be filled in once the activity is completed. Adding the "How to find out" column helps learners to identify skills and knowledge they already possess and determine when they need to get help or information from others.

Know	Want to know	How to find out	Learned

Wlodkowski (1991) described six psychological factors that he felt had a bearing on learner motivation. He described these factors as: attitude, need, stimulation, affect, competence and reinforcement and then situated each of these within a continuum of learning. While each of the factors may play a role at any point along the continuum of motivation, Wlodkowski felt that at specific points during learning (beginning, middle, end) certain of the factors played a greater or dominating role. A table that describes Wlodkowski's factors can be found in Appendix D. The table provides some strategies for motivating successful learning at various times in the learning continuum.

As noted by Grieve in *Supporting Learning, Supporting Change* (OLC 2003), "how much learners participate in a program and show self-direction depends on many factors[58]." An understanding of some these factors— like the ones mentioned by Galbraith—and the role they play at particular points in time can help ensure that the approach to learning is situated to best meet the learning needs of the adult literacy learner.

Learner Participation

Overview

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, many adult literacy learners— especially those with very low literacy skills— lack both the confidence and the skills to be self-directed or independent learners. They also can be, at least initially, uncomfortable with taking an active role in the learning process.

The involvement of learners in all aspects of the learning process is a fundamental tenet of a learner-centred approach. Long before MTCU's

---

[58] *Supporting Learning, Supporting Change*, OLC Field Report, page 18.

Core Quality Standards defined it, community literacy agencies worked hard to ensure that the learning environment was one in which adult learners could take an active role.

In addition to having an understanding of the impact that motivation plays in the recruitment of learners and how motivation shapes instruction, practitioners need to recognize the role that several other elements play in the provision of a learner-centred environment. The presence of learning disabilities, the need to identify learners' preferred learning styles, and the key role that is played by goals will be discussed in the next part of this chapter. Information about learner involvement with specific aspects of programming (e.g., intake, initial or ongoing assessment, self-management/self-direction, follow-up) can be found in Chapter 6, Identifying and Meeting Learner Needs, in Chapter 7, Instructional Strategies and Chapter 8,Learner Exit and Follow-up.

Note on "At-Risk" Learners

Successful attainment of stated goals is but one of the factors that determines the length of time that any one learner will stay in a program. The presence and impact of other factors may have a negative affect on learner participation. These are the factors that will put learners at greater risk of not being able to reach their stated goals. Some of these factors are internal and some are external to either the learner or the organization. We tend to assume that external factors are beyond our control. It is sometimes possible for practitioners to control the extent to which these external factors impact on learners and the learning environment. See Chapter 8 for more information about identifying "at-risk" learners and strategies to help manage the impact of these factors on both learners and the program.

Learning Disabilities

This chapter can only provide a brief overview of the complex topic of learning disabilities. For more information on this important issue, please contact the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario or Canada, or consult many of the excellent print and web-based resources available including *Learning Differently: A Learning Disabilities Resource Guide for Tutors and Staff* (produced by CLO in November 2001).

While experts may not know exactly what the causes are, it is commonly believed that up to 10% of the general population may have learning disabilities. It is also commonly believed that the number of learners in literacy programs who have learning disabilities makes up a substantial proportion of the learners in that program. In *Learning Differently*, Sheila Marshall writes "it is estimated that 10 to 15% of the general population has a learning disability… It has been my experience that anywhere from 40 or 50% of the learners in my program have learning problems[59]."

Learning disabilities, as defined by the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC), refer to "a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or non-verbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and or/or reasoning. As such, learning disabilities are distinct from global intellectual deficiency[60]."

---

[59] *Learning Differently* is a resource guide produced by CLO for tutors and staff. It provides information about the different types of learning disabilities and also provides effective strategies and resources.

[60] This definition was retrieved from the LDAC website at: http://www.ldac-taac.ca. Also note that this section of the chapter provides only a brief overview of learning disabilities. Practitioners should contact the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, or a local chapter for more information.

Practitioners in most literacy agencies are not qualified to conduct formal assessments for learning disabilities in adults. They are, however, extremely capable of making informed decisions about an adult learner based on observations and information that is collected during the initial intake, the initial assessment and during ongoing instruction. When a learning disability is suspected, the focus should be on the development of specific tools and techniques that will allow the learner to work effectively in the learning environment.

In its *Best Practice and Innovations Bulletin on Learning Disabilities*, the Ontario Literacy Coalition (2001) notes, "The practitioner should explain in as many ways and as often as possible that having special difficulties does not mean that the learner is not intelligent or cannot learn[61]." In fact, in this bulletin they emphasize the importance of practitioners instilling in learners with learning disabilities a belief that they can:

⇒ Learn
⇒ Be successful
⇒ Work with the instructor to find the best methods to help them learn in the program and to continue to learn after they leave the program.

The OLC also notes that without ongoing reassurance, the learner with learning disabilities may leave the program and make no attempt in the future to access help with their learning. The same bulletin provides a number of important strategies for working with learning disabilities.

Visual processing difficulties, auditory processing difficulties and / or organizational / information storage and retrieval difficulties are the most common types of learning disabilities identified by staff in literacy programs. Each of these is described below with a few suggested strategies.

---

[61] *Best Practice and Innovations Bulletin on Learning Disabilities*, page 14.

Three Common Learning Disabilities		
Adapted from the OLC's Best Practice and Innovations Bulletin on Learning Disabilities		
Disability	**Possible Signs**	**Potential Strategies**
Visual Processing:	• The learner may have trouble recognizing or remembering words or letters • The words on a page may "jump" • The learner may reverse letters when writing • The learner may have trouble integrating the relationship between the whole and the parts	• Use a phonics-based approach to reading • Show the learner how to recognize familiar patterns in the layout of a text • Use large print or coloured print • Use colour transparencies on printed pages • When writing give the learner paper with distinct lines • Provide writing space in clearly defined areas and allow extra spacing (line height)
Auditory Processing	• The learner may have trouble remembering or making sense of spoken words, letters or sounds • The learner may have difficulty processing oral instructions • The learner may have difficulty understanding the nuances and tones of speech	• Use a sight word approach to reading • Have the learner develop personal flash cards • Teach new words as part of the pre-reading activity • Make frequent eye contact with the learner • Say and write importa[nt] information

Three Common Learning Disabilities Adapted from the OLC's Best Practice and Innovations Bulletin on Learning Disabilities		
Disability	**Possible Signs**	**Potential Strategies**
Organizational / Information Storage and Retrieval	• The learner may need time to figure out what is meant and how information links to other or similar information • The learner has difficulty with sense of time and adhering to deadlines • The learner has challenges retrieving information quickly	• Provide extra time to complete activities and avoid timed tasks • Teach the learner to recognize the link between the types of material and how the materials are organized (e.g. textbooks have a table of contents, index, etc.) • Provide information as a list or set of steps

Note on Accommodations

When working with an adult with learning disabilities, an accommodation can mean the difference between success and failure. Making an accommodation does not mean that you make the activity easier; it does mean that you recognize that the learner requires extra time, or the use of coloured transparencies (as two examples) to complete the task. By providing accommodations you are removing, as the OLC notes, "roadblocks that interfere with performance and will not go away, despite instruction and work."

Note on Technology

Spell checkers, variable speed tape recorders, individual FM amplification devices, text readers and other computer software programs are but a few of the tools that are available to learners to help them work with their learning disabilities. While the computer may seem like the answer to all the difficulties facing adults with learning difficulties, the use of a computer can, for some adults, cause more problems or can make them feel—yet again—that they cannot succeed. It is important to provide appropriate instruction and support when encouraging the use of a computer, or any other "assistive device."

Learning Styles

The idea of learning styles is based on the theory[62] that there are different methods of gathering, organizing, and evaluating information. Each of us develops, over time, a preferred way to gather, organize and evaluate information. For our purposes, we will define a learning style as someone's preferred approach to thinking and learning.

An awareness of a learner's preferred learning style will help program staff and instructors provide literacy training that respects the preferred style and increase the likelihood that the learner will achieve his or her stated goals. An awareness of a learner's preferred learning style will also help program staff provide intake and assessment materials that respect this preferred learning style. Some suggestions for matching materials to learning styles are presented later in this section.

---

[62] A theory explains what has happened in the past, predicts what will happen in the future and implies ways to control or respond to what is happening in the immediate present. Theories can be based on our own personal knowledge or beliefs or based on scientific data and they can change as our information and/or experience changes.

Classification of Learning Styles

Over the past few years there has been a large amount of research into classifying and defining learning styles. The most commonly or widely accepted of these classifications is provided below. Please see the Suggested Resources section at the end of this chapter for specific books or web sites where you can learn more about learning styles. Several web sites provide the opportunity to complete a learning style inventory online.

Personality Theory Models

Several models are based on the personality theory developed by psychologist Carl Jung. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is perhaps the best-known application of his work. Another well-known model is the one developed by David Kolb.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator identifies sixteen combinations of eight personality dimensions. These are placed into opposition to create four base sets of indicators: Extraversion-Introversion, Sensing-Intuition (preferring the concrete or the abstract), Thinking-Feeling (preferring logic or values), and Judging-Perceiving (being organized or flexible and easygoing).

The Kolb Learning Style Inventory identifies four dimensions stemming from scales similar to those used by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator: Converging (prefer to learn by solving problems and doing technical tasks, good at finding practical uses for ideas and theories), Accommodating (hands-on, people-oriented, relies on gut feeling more than logical analysis), Diverging (imaginative and sensitive, prefers to learn by observing, brainstorming and gathering information, good at viewing concrete situations from many points of view) and Assimilating (prefers to learn by putting information into concise, logical order).

Sensory Perception Models

Other types of models look at learning styles in terms of sensory perceptions. This group contains many of the models with which the literacy field is most familiar. Under the sensory perception type models, visual learners prefer to learn through visual stimuli such as graphs and charts; auditory or aural learners prefer to learn by listening; and tactile, haptic, or kinesthetic learners prefer to learn through hands-on experiences involving touch or bodily movement. Some models identify additional sensory preferences.

The most common type of sensory perception model is the one that defines three learning style dimensions: Visual (Picture Style), Kinesthetic (Physical Style), and Auditory (Hearing Style).

Visual Learners

These learners need to see the instructor's body language and facial expression to fully understand the content of a lesson. They tend to prefer sitting at the front of the classroom to avoid visual obstructions (e.g. people's heads). They may think in pictures and learn best from visual displays including: diagrams, illustrated textbooks, overhead transparencies, videos, flipcharts, and handouts. During a lecture or classroom discussion, visual learners often prefer to take detailed notes to absorb the information.

Suggested Approach to Learning

Maximum use of visual aids will greatly enhance learning for individuals with a visual style. Some examples of visual aids include videos and films, written materials with lots of graphics (charts, tables, clip art) and computers. In general, any technique that allows these learners to use their eyes will be effective.

To enhance learning for individuals who learn best visually:

⇒ Use graphs, charts, illustrations, or other visual aids
⇒ Include plenty of content in handouts to reread after the learning session
⇒ Invite questions to help them stay alert in auditory environments
⇒ Post flipcharts to show what will come and what has been presented
⇒ Emphasize key points to cue when notes should be taken
⇒ Eliminate potential distractions

Auditory Learners

They learn best through verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say. Auditory learners interpret the underlying meanings of speech through listening to tone of voice, pitch, speed and other nuances. Written information may have little meaning until it is heard. These learners often benefit from reading text aloud and using a tape recorder.

Suggested Approach to Learning

Providing maximum opportunities to "hear' the materials to be learned will prove most useful for individuals with an auditory style. In general, any technique that involves listening and or talking will be effective.

To enhance learning for individuals who are auditory learners:

⇒ Begin new material with a brief explanation of what is coming and end with a summary of what has been covered
⇒ Pose questions to allow maximum participation for learners
⇒ Include auditory activities such as brainstorming or mind-mapping
⇒ Provide opportunity at the end of the session to talk about what occurred during the session

Tactile/Kinesthetic Learners

This type of learner will learn best through a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration.

Suggested Approach to Learning

Individuals with tactile/kinaesthetic style need to be physically involved in their learning. The key to enhancing their learning is to use a lot of hands-on activities. Some effective approaches include: field trips, experiments, role-playing, puzzles and games.

To enhance learning for individuals who are kinaesthetic:

⇒ Use activities that get the learners up and moving
⇒ Play music, when appropriate, during activities
⇒ Use coloured markers to emphasize key points on flipcharts or white boards and encourage learners to use coloured markers or highlighters
⇒ Give frequent stretch breaks (brain breaks)

Visual, Aural, Read/Write and Kinesthetic

Another commonly used sensory perception model is the VARK (V A R K stands for Visual, Aural, Read/Write and Kinesthetic). The VARK identifies four learning style dimensions: Visual (prefers to learn information through non-verbal depictions such as charts, graphs, symbols, hierarchies, etc.); Aural (prefers to learn information that is heard); Read/Write (prefers to learn information displayed as words); and Kinaesthetic (prefers to learn through experience and practice—simulated or real).

Note on Learning Styles

Some educators or researchers offer a note of caution about using learning styles to design or evaluate learning. These educators (Rayner and Riding, for example, as noted by Linda Suskie[63]) contend that the usefulness or validity of learning style models and instruments has not been definitively established. For these critics, not enough research has been done on learning style theory to show that people do learn better when their learning style is accommodated than when it is not. Many educators, however, do agree that learning styles exist and acknowledge that learning styles can have a significant effect on the learning process.

While an examination of learning styles is very useful, it must also be noted that no single "test" of style will ensure that a learner's individual needs will be met. Other factors, like learning disabilities or hearing impairment, may play a larger or more important role in the learning environment.

Multiple Intelligences

The identification and classification of multiple intelligences by Howard Gardner has, in recent years, gained acceptance as a way to look at how we learn. Gardner has identified eight intelligences[64]: verbal-linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, musical-rhythmic, naturalist, interpersonal and intrapersonal. Gardner argues that there is both a biological and cultural basis for the multiple intelligences and that an understanding of someone's areas of strength will increase that person's ability to learn.

---

[63] *What are Learning Styles*? Linda Suske. Retrieved April 2003 from: http://www.brevard.edu/fyc/listserv /remarks/suskie2.htm)

[64] Gardner is continuing to explore this area and is working on identifying a ninth intelligence. In fact, he hasn't set a finite number. He believes, as do others, there are other—yet to be identified—intelligences.

In the past, certain types of intelligence were sometimes more highly valued than others. Gardner's work points to the value in acknowledging the different types of intelligences. In fact, according to Gardner, all eight intelligences are used by each of us with one or more of the intelligences being dominant. A brief description of each of the intelligences[65] is provided below.

Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence ("word smart" or "book smart")

People who are strong in this intelligence have highly developed skills for reading, speaking, and writing and they tend to think in words. They love learning new words, do well with written assignments, and their comprehension of anything they read is high. Although not many adult literacy learners will have this intelligence as a strong preference, it does not mean that it should be ignored.

Suggested Approaches to Reading and Writing

Have learners:
⇒ Use "concept mapping" to help remember content
⇒ Write a sequel/next episode to a story or play
⇒ Create crossword puzzles/word jumbles for vocabulary words
⇒ Play "New Word for the Day" to learn a new word and then use it frequently during the day

---

[65] These descriptions were adapted from *Eight Ways of Knowing* by David Lazear. Retrieved May 2003 from: http://www.multi-intell.com/index.html

Suggested Approaches to Numeracy

Have learners:
⇒   Write a series of story problems for others to solve
⇒   Explain how to work through a problem to others while they
     follow along doing it
⇒   Follow written directions (e.g. recipes or patterns)
⇒   Use math vocabulary, terms, concepts and operations to
     create puns

Logical/Mathematical

Logical-mathematically inclined people tend to think more conceptually
and abstractly and they often see patterns and relationships that others
miss. They probably like to conduct experiments, solve puzzles and other
problems, ask questions, and analyze circumstances and people's
behaviour. They are probably systematic and organized, and likely have a
logical rationale or argument for what they are doing or thinking at any
given time.

Suggested Approaches to Reading and Writing

⇒   Have learners:
⇒   Learn to read, write, and decipher "code language"
⇒   Analyze similarities and differences of various pieces of
     literature
⇒   Use a "story grid" for creative writing activities

Suggested Approaches to Numeracy

Have learners:
⇒   Use a calculator to solve problems
⇒   Create number sequences and then have a partner find the
     pattern
⇒   Categorize or classify things like nails or screws

Visual/Spatial

People strong in this intelligence tend to think in images and pictures. They are likely very aware of objects, shapes, colours, textures, and patterns in the environment. They are likely excellent at performing tasks that require "seeing with the mind's eye," such as visualizing, pretending, imagining, and forming mental images.

Suggested Approaches to Reading and Writing

Have learners:
⇒ Play vocabulary games such as "Pictionary"
⇒ Draw a picture of the different stages of a story they are reading
⇒ Use highlight markers to "colourize" parts of a story or poem

Suggested Approaches to Numeracy

Have learners:
⇒ Do a survey of other learner's likes/dislikes, then graph the results
⇒ Estimate measurements by sight and touch
⇒ Learn metric measurements through visual equivalents

Bodily/Kinesthetic

People with strengths in this intelligence area tend to have a keen sense of body awareness. Often they can perform a task much better after seeing someone else do it first and then mimicking what they see. They may find it difficult to sit still for long periods of time and are easily bored or distracted if they are not actively involved in what is going on around them.

Suggested Approaches to Reading and Writing

Have learners:

⇒   Act out the meaning of vocabulary words
⇒   Learn the alphabet and/or spelling through body
     movements and physical gestures
⇒   Make up a "Parts of Speech" folk dance (e.g., create a dance
     move for each part of speech)

Suggested Approaches to Numeracy

Have learners:

⇒   Use different parts of the body as a "ruler" to measure
     different things
⇒   Add and subtract members to and from a group to learn
     about fractions
⇒   Create and act out a play in which the characters are
     geometric shapes or other math concepts

Musical-Rhythmic Intelligence ("music smart" or "sound smart")

A love of music and rhythmic patterns may indicate someone who has a strong musical-rhythmic intelligence. Often they are very sensitive to sounds in the environment like the chirp of a cricket, rain on the roof, and varying traffic patterns. They may study and work better with music in the background. They are often skilled at mimicking sounds, language accents, and others' speech patterns and can probably readily recognize different musical instruments in a composition.

Suggested Approaches to Reading and Writing

Have learners:

⇒   Learn Morse Code and then practice communicating with it

⇒   Use different kinds of music for different kinds of writing

⇒   Create song/raps to learn about grammar, syntax, phonetics,
      semantics, and other language concepts

⇒   Illustrate a story/poem with appropriate sounds, music,
      rhythms, and vibrations

Suggested Approaches to Numeracy

Have learners:

⇒   Learn addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division
      through drum beats

⇒   Play the "Rhythm Game" to learn times tables (slap thighs,
      clap hands, snap fingers)

⇒   Make up sounds for different math operations and processes

Naturalist Intelligence ("nature or environment smart")

People with strong naturalist intelligence can have a profound love for
the outdoors, animals, plants, and almost any natural object. They are
often fascinated by and noticeably affected by such things as the weather,
changing leaves in the fall, the sound of the wind, the warm sun or lack
thereof, or an insect in the room.

Suggested Approaches to Reading and Writing

Have learners:

⇒   Write poems or descriptive essays based on nature
      experiences

⇒   Learn and practice using the vocabulary of nature

⇒   Create stories using animal characters

Suggested Approaches to Numeracy

Have learners:

⇒ Use word problems with patterns in nature

⇒ Graph positive and negative influences on the environment

⇒ Create calculation problems based on nature/natural processes (e.g. rainfall)

Interpersonal Intelligence ("people smart" or "group smart")

People who are strong in this intelligence learn through personal interactions. Often they have lots of friends, show a great deal of empathy for other people and exhibit a deep understanding of other points of view. They are usually skilled in conflict resolution, mediation, and finding compromise when people are in radical opposition to each other.

Suggested Approaches to Reading and Writing

Have learners:

⇒ Experiment with joint story-writing: one learner starts the story and them it is passed to another learner

⇒ Use a "human graph" to see where a group stands on an issue

⇒ Read poetry that reflects different perspectives and in different moods

Suggested Approaches to Numeracy

Have learners:

⇒ Solve complex word problems in a group

⇒ Conduct an "interviewing others" research project and calculate the results as percentages

⇒ Describe to a partner everything that needs to be done in order to solve a problem

Intrapersonal Intelligence ("self smart" or "introspection smart")

People strong in this intelligence may like to work alone and may sometimes shy away from others. They are probably self-reflective and self-aware and tend to be in tune with their inner feelings, values, beliefs, and thinking processes. They tend to be strong willed, self-confident, and have definite, well-thought out opinions on almost any issue.

Suggested Approaches to Reading and Writing

Have learners:

⇒ Write an autobiographical essay entitled: "My Life to Date"

⇒ Write an autobiographical essay entitled: "My Life in the Future"

⇒ Analyze literature for "connections to our lives today"

⇒ Imagine being a character in a story/novel (what would they do the same or differently from the character?)

Suggested Approaches to Numeracy

Have learners:

⇒ Use guided imagery to see and solve complex word problems

⇒ Evaluate their strengths/weaknesses in understanding math and then plan new strategies for success

⇒ Watch their mood shifts/changes as they do math problems and make note of the causes

One of the easiest ways to informally assess a learner's learning style, or to determine which of a learner's multiple intelligences is dominant, is to ask questions about something they have learned. The learner's response to questions like the ones below can help provide some clues about the preferred way of learning. The list of questions below was developed based on an examination of a number of client intake formats.

HOW DO YOU LEARN? Informal Learning Style Assessment
Ask the learner to think about something learned in the past three or four years that they consider to be an achievement (learning to drive a car, learning to sew or knit, etc.) Make a note of the response to each of the following questions.
What did you learn?
Who helped you:(check all that apply) ❑　Family ❑　Friends ❑　Experts (teacher, instructor) ❑　Other (explain)
What did your helpers do?

HOW DO YOU LEARN? **Informal Learning Style Assessment**
What process did you use to learn? (e.g. took a class, listened to someone talk)
In what ways were you in control of the process?
What did you do to help you learn? (check all that apply) ❑   Took notes ❑   Read manuals ❑   Listened to tapes ❑   Watched video or TV programs ❑   Talked to myself ❑   Talked and listened to others ❑   Other (explain)
What was the purpose of learning this skill? (Check all that apply) ❑   Personal interest ❑   Work-related ❑   Others (explain)

HOW DO YOU LEARN? **Informal Learning Style Assessment**
How did you feel while you were learning this skill?
Is there anything else you would like to say about this learning experience?

As mentioned earlier, how a learner learns most effectively is affected by his or her learning style. Therefore, it is important for program staff and instructors to understand the role that a preferred learning style or a dominant intelligence will play in helping learners learn and retain new material[66]. A note of caution: you should not only teach a visual learner visually. Practitioners should help learners explore other methods of learning—not to the point of frustration, of course—but to help them understand that there can be more than one way to learn a new skill or to gain knowledge.

It is also important to note that many learners with low literacy will not identify writing as the way they prefer to learn something. This does not mean that they are not visual or kinesthetic learners. It only means that their lack of skill prevents them from relying on reading or writing to learn.

---

[66] When working with learners in small group setting, instructors will need to find the right balance of written, visual and auditory materials for the group.

Goal Setting

Overview

Setting a goal and developing an action plan based on that goal is hard work, even for people who have high levels of literacy skills. For both practitioners and adult literacy learners, the whole idea can seem overwhelming.

Goal setting plays an important role in MTCU's Learning Outcomes Approach. Goals, according to MTCU, must drive the assessment process. In *Goal-Directed Assessment: An Initial Assessment Process* (MTCU 1997) it states, "… the learner's specific goals form the basis of an instructional strategy and program. Furthermore, clearly defining prior learning levels makes it possible to develop or to select the most appropriate training program to bridge the gap between where learners are now and where they wish to go[67]."

The validity of establishing attainable goals is acknowledged by all literacy practitioners. However, many community-based practitioners are faced with the following dilemma: the initial assessment is a critical part of the development of the training plan[68]; goal-setting is a critical part of the initial assessment; many adults with low literacy levels have difficulty identifying and setting goals. The dilemma is apparent. To solve this, practitioners must ask "what strategies can I develop to help learners set realistic goals so that I can assess their current skills and abilities?"

---

[67] *Goal-directed Assessment: An Initial Assessment Process*, page 14.

[68] See Chapter 6 for information relating to intake, initial assessment and training plan development.
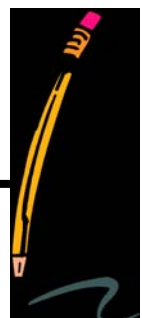
What is a goal?

Some people would argue that saying "I want to read and write better" is a goal in and of itself. Others would argue that the question "for what purpose?" must be asked as it will help to clarify the type of things about which the learner wants to read or write.

Simply stated, goals are accomplishments, results or end-points. Some goals can be considered short-term, others long-term. What is a long-term goal for some may be a short-term goal for others. For most learners in community-based literacy programs, short-term goals will include the attainment of specific skills that relate to being able to read and write better.

Barber, in *Assessing Up, Designing Down*[69], provides the following definitions of long-and short-term goals:

"Long-term goal: what the learner eventually wants to be able to do. Successfully reaching the long-term goal most likely will not happen in the time frame of the LBS program but knowing what the goal is will help in identifying the kinds of tasks the learner will eventually need to be able to do and in that way will contribute towards shaping the kinds of learning activities the instructor will develop for the training."

"Short-term goal: what the learner wants to be able to do on leaving the program that can be successfully achieved within the time frame of the learner's involvement in the program. The learner's LBS program will focus on successfully reaching one short-term goal."

In *The Dream that Walks*, long-term goals are defined as those that keep you working towards the dream. Short-term goals are those goals that keep you focused on the steps you need to take to get you to the dream.

---

[69] *Assessing Up, Designing Down*, page 14.

What kinds of goals are there?

Working with Learning Outcomes (MTCU 1998) states that a learning outcomes approach allows learners to set personal goals while delivery agencies "help learners set achievable goals related to further training, employment or independence[70]." A training goal could mean literacy upgrading at a community-based agency or participation in a LBS program in a college or school board. Employment-related goals could mean getting a job or getting a promotion at work. Goals related to independence could be anything that allows learners to live the way they choose—managing their own money, learning to drive, and finding an apartment are but a few examples of this type of goal.

To avoid the dilemma mentioned earlier in this section on goals, some literacy agencies are beginning to build goal setting, or goal clarification activities into the first four or five meetings with learners. The goal-setting sessions begin after the intake process (which includes some initial assessment components) but prior to the initial assessment. In some agencies, paid staff work with learners for the first critical meetings, and in others it is volunteers[71].

As a result of these meetings, a learner's goals (both long- and short-term) are identified and a training plan is then developed. Another result of this type of "pre-assessment" meeting is that the practitioner will have a much better idea of the current skills and abilities of the learner.

Learners need to know that they can modify or change the goals that they identify during either the initial assessment or as a result of the goal setting sessions. In fact, learners should be reviewing and revising their goals on a regular basis. For more information about ongoing assessment and evaluation see Chapter 6, Identifying and Meeting Learner Needs.

---

[70] *Working with Learning Outcomes*, page 5.

[71] Volunteers who are playing a large role in helping learners to identify and set goals must receive the necessary training in assessment—either as part of their initial tutor training, or as follow-up training.

Defining Short-Term

While long-term goals relate to what the learner wants to be able to do in the future, short-term goals, as noted above, are those goals that a learner can accomplish while they are a part of your literacy agency. It is a well-known fact that many learners in community-based programs are working at the lower levels of MTCU's Learning Outcomes Matrix[72]. This means that while their stated short-term goal may be classified as "further training" (as per MTCU's reporting requirements), it makes sense for community-based practitioners to take a cautious approach when developing both a timeline and an action plan for the attainment of the stated goal. For example, if you use "further training" as the short-term goal, but the learner leaves after six months having gained some skills but they have **not** gone on to further training, you cannot count the learner as a "successful" exit who achieved his or her goals. In this case, it may be advisable to be more specific and say, for example, that the learner's short-term goal is to "be able to write notes for personal use at a Level Three." His long-term literacy goal could be to go on to further training and his non-literacy long-term goal could be to become an apprentice mechanic.

Once the goal is "set", initial assessment and training plan activities can take place. See Chapter 6, Identifying and Meeting Learner Needs and Chapter 7, Instructional Strategies for information on assessment (initial and ongoing), training plans and instruction. The stated goal, like the literacy learning that is attached to that goal, must be reviewed and evaluated at regular intervals.

---

[72] For more information about MTCU's Learning Outcomes approach see Chapter 3, The Role of the Agency and also refer to MTCU's document *Working With Learning Outcomes*.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have looked at some of the characteristics and factors that influence how adult literacy learners perceive learning and some of the ways in which practitioners must shape their approach to adult literacy learners and associated learning. This view of adult literacy learners and adult literacy learning is very much one of constructivism— that is, a view of learning as a process in which learners relate new knowledge to what they already know, construct their own understanding, and then form new meanings. Prior knowledge and experience are used as scaffolds that support new learning.

Adult literacy learning, in Ontario, is grounded in a learning outcomes approach. This approach to learning is one that keeps learners at the centre of programs and focuses attention on the ability of learners to apply the learning that has taken place in settings and situations related to their goals and their day-to-day lives, with the emphasis in learner assessment on the applied demonstration of learning.

The learning outcomes approach is also one that can allow learners to contribute to a learning environment that supports learner motivation and participation. The establishment of realistic and achievable goals is a critical part of this learning environment. In all aspects of the program— from intake to exit—learners have a clear understanding of the work they must undertake to achieve their goals and they are encouraged to take an active role in the process of learning.

Questions for Reflection
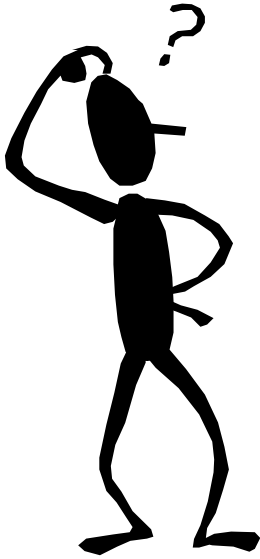
⇒ Approximately 5% of adults with low literacy skills are enrolled in adult literacy programs. Why do you think this percentage is so low? Are there ways to increase enrolment?

⇒ Do you agree or disagree with the thought that there are critical differences between teaching adults versus children?

⇒ What have you learned about motivating adult learners? How might you use this information to improve your instruction?

⇒ What strategies do you have for designing learning activities that make the most of scaffolding? How might scaffolding be applied in a small group of multi-level learners?

⇒ During intake and assessment, what non-verbal 'clues' can you use to gather information about the learner that will help you ask specific questions about learning styles, learning disabilities or the need for specific accommodations?

Suggested Resources

In addition to the various reports, manuals, web sites and other resources mentioned in this chapter, we think you might find the following resources to be useful.

Print–Based:

Making Sense of Adult Learning. Dorothy MacKeracher. Culture Concepts 1996. ISBN: 0-921472-26-9. AlphaPlus Call #: 374 M11.

$\Rightarrow$ This book grew out of MacKeracher's earlier involvement with writing a report for the Ontario Ministry of Education on the principles of adult learning. Each chapter provides a set of learning and facilitation principles.

Understanding the Zone of Proximal Development in Adult Literacy Learning. Taylor, M., J. King, C. Pinsent-Johnson.

$\Rightarrow$ Research paper presented at the 2002 Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education Conference. This paper, and others, can be retrieved from:
http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/CASAE/cnf2002/2002_Papers/21st_ACEEA-CASAE_Proceedings.html

The First Three Weeks: A Critical Time for Motivation. B. Allan Quigley FOCUS ON BASICS Volume 2, Issue A, March 1998.

$\Rightarrow$ This article and others from the same issue focuses on learner motivation. They can be retrieved from:
http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~ncsall/fob/1998/fobv2ia.htm.

$\Rightarrow$ Other issues of Focus on Basics can be retrieved from:
http://www.gse.harvard.edu/ ~ncsall/fob

Learning Differently: A Learning Disabilities Resource Guide for Tutors and Staff. Sheila Marshall. Community Literacy of Ontario, 2001. AlphaPlus Call #: 371.90475.M13

How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School. John D. Bransford, Ann L. Brown, and Rodney R. Cocking, editors.

⇒ This publication can be retrieved from: http://bob.nap.edu/html/howpeople1. As a result of the accumulation of new kinds of information about human learning, views of how effective learning proceeds have shifted from the benefits of diligent drill and practice to focus on students' understanding and application of knowledge.

Learning Disabilities Training: A New Approach. Judith Fowler. Literacy Link South Central. August 2003.

⇒ This manual follows the successful online delivery of 5 workshops: 1) Understanding the characteristics of adults with potential learning disabilities and the initial screening process; 2) Assessing individual strengths and struggles: the foundation for an effective training plan; 3) Building a training plan; 4) Preparation and additional supports to implement the training plan; 5) How to provide literacy instruction to adults with learning disabilities.

Web-Based

Learning Styles or How We Go From the Unknown To the Known. http://www.nwlink.com/%7Edonclark/hrd/learning/styles.html#kolb.

⇒ Provides an excellent overview of many different instruments used to validate learning styles. Links to some of the instruments will allow you to complete an online learning styles inventory.

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada. http://www.ldac-taac.ca

⇒ The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC) is a volunteer-led association with more than 10,000 members across Canada. From its web site, you can access links to provincial associations, resources and other services.
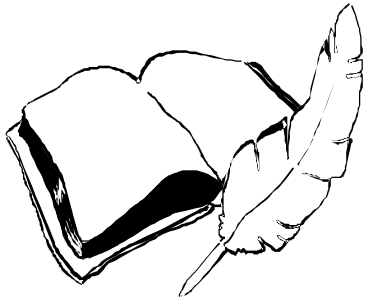
CHAPTER 6

IDENTIFYING AND MEETING LEARNER NEEDS

"What and how I learn will always be different than what you learn even if we are participating in the same activity".

Dorothy MacKeracher

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we will take a look at the processes and activities that are involved when identifying and then meeting learner needs. The processes used during intake, initial and ongoing assessment, the development of a training plan and the actual delivery of training should be viewed as parts of a continuum of learning and clearly situated within a learner-centred approach.

The focus is on a process that is driven by a learner-centred, goal-directed point of view and application, and one that is situated squarely within a learning outcomes approach to providing service delivery.

Identifying and Meeting Needs

"We undertake learning activities not merely as ends in themselves but as means for achieving larger objectives and goals that have meaning in the community[73]." Learning, for all of us, is a process in which we integrate new knowledge with our existing knowledge base. For any learning to be "successful" it must be part of an active, participatory process that meets our needs as learners. The information to be learned should be presented in a way that supports how we learn best. This truism is one of the fundamental tenets of a learning outcomes approach to learning.

The task of assessing and identifying the learning needs of adults in literacy agencies in Ontario is placed between two strong and equally demanding forces: one of actual learning (what and how it is learned) and the other of accountability (how you prove it was learned). In recent years these forces have become increasingly intertwined. Any attempt to treat them separately would place unnecessary burdens on the agency, the practitioner and the learner.

How and what we assess at intake provides us with the information we need to make a number of informed decisions:

⇒   Is your program the correct program for this learner, given the current communication and numeracy levels and the stated goal, or goals?

---

[73] EFF Research Principle: *A Purposeful and Transparent Approach to Teaching and Learning.* Marilyn K. Gillespie. National Institute for Literacy, 2002. This Research to Practice Note summarizes the growing body of research that supports a purposeful and transparent approach to learning, including findings that demonstrate that:

⇒   Learning itself is a purposeful, goal-directed activity. An ongoing goal-setting process is integral to effective learning.

⇒   Purposeful and transparent learning builds on learners' prior knowledge and experiences to construct new knowledge.

⇒   Purposeful and transparent learning also means that learners monitor and assess their own progress. Metacognitive strategies help them to be mindful of what is being learned and what good performance looks like.

⇒ Does the learner meet eligibility criteria set by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), your literacy community planning (LCP) committee or other stakeholders?

⇒ Do you have the information you need to begin to develop a training plan?

⇒ Does more time need to be spent on setting or researching the stated goal or goals?

⇒ Do you have the staff and / or volunteer resources to meet the needs of this learner?

Your answers to these and many other questions will form the foundation for the learning experience that the learner will have in your program. With this information, you can begin to identify the resources that will be needed to meet the actual learning needs of the learner. This information can also be used to form the basis of any reporting requirements to funders.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Learning Outcomes Approach was introduced as part of MTCU's Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program during the 1999/2000 funding year. A learning outcomes approach requires that the learning process begin with an accurate assessment of the skills that learners currently have, or perceive they have, and that the learning materials and learning activities reflect the stated goals. Learning materials and activities must also respect the range of learning needs and styles of adult literacy learners.

Assessing, or analyzing, information is something we do all the time. We observe actions and reactions and make decisions based on those observations—assessing and re-assessing situations on an ongoing basis. Much of it can happen at a subconscious level and be very informal in nature. When applied to our work, we need to use both formal (e.g., written) and informal (perhaps verbal) observations to conduct effective assessments.

Common Assessment

In 2000, MTCU introduced Common Assessment as the second phase of its Recognition of Adult Learning Strategy (RALS). The term 'common assessment' is not meant to imply that all LBS agencies in Ontario use exactly the same assessment tools and techniques. Rather, it is meant to refer to "the use of comparable assessment tools and approaches based on the common language of learning outcomes[74]." Common assessment also facilitates communication about the achievements of learners with other LBS stakeholders, such as training programs and employers.

Work on the development of what common assessment means is being carried out by networks and literacy community planning (LCP) committees across the province. In some areas, literacy delivery agencies have agreed to use a common assessor—either an independent agency or they have agreed that one agency will do all the assessments. Some LCP groups have agreed to a set of agreements or protocols that are followed by all service delivery agencies in that LCP's catchment. This type of agreement better serves adult literacy learners by providing consistency and compatibility in how agencies carry out assessment and communicating the results of assessments to learners and other agencies.

---

[74] *Common Assessment in the Literacy and Basic Skills Program*. MTCU 2000, page 1.

Assessing Learning Needs

Overview

In CLO's resource guide on volunteers and assessment called *Together We Can Do It!*[75], learner-centred assessment, as a practice, is defined by three criteria:

1. Assessment is done *with* students, not *to* students
2. Assessment is process-oriented
3. Assessment is empowering to both students and instructors.

Assessment that is done *with* students, not *to* students:
Learner-centred assessment does not involve the use of standardized, traditional tests. Rather it "engages students in an active process of finding out what they already know and what they would like to learn. Results are used to plan instruction that centres on student goals as well as to affirm students' pre-existing knowledge and steps made towards attaining goals[76]."

Assessment that is process-oriented:
Learner-centred assessment is part of an ongoing process of assessing the skills and knowledge of learners. It "should not be a one-time, one-way test geared towards determining a grade level[77]."

Assessment that is empowering to both students and instructors:
The results of the initial assessment form a critical framework for the learning process. "In order to empower the participants, assessment should be useful, practical, and related to the life and goals of the learner.

---

[75] *Together we Can Do It!* (CLO 2001) examines the role of volunteers in the assessment process.
[76] *Together We Can Do It!*, page 11.
[77] Ibid.

It should help the tutor know where to start and where to go. It should assist the learner in clarifying her goals and understanding her own strengths and weaknesses[78]."

Types of Assessment

There are three commonly used types of assessments. Although you may not know them by the following names, you will no doubt recognize them by the attached descriptions:

⇒ Standardized test
⇒ Competency-based assessment
⇒ Authentic assessment

Standardized test:
The Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT) is an example of this type of assessment. These assessments are always given and scored in the same way. Test results for a particular learner are compared to the performance of a group that has been declared the norm—hence the term "norm-referenced." Standardized assessments (tests) can be used to place a learner in a particular program or class. On the whole, this type of assessment is no longer used in community-based agencies in Ontario.

Competency-based assessment:
The Common Assessment of Basic Skills (CABS) is an example of this type of assessment. Assessments, when given, take into account the learner, the text and the context to determine what a learner knows and can do in specific contexts. Results are then compared to criteria within a matrix or rubric. This type of assessment is directly connected to outcomes or competency-based education. It is well-known in community-based agencies in Ontario.

---

[78] *Together We Can Do I!t*, page 11.

Authentic Assessment:

There are no "tools" that can be cited as examples of this type of assessment. In fact, practitioners who engage in authentic assessment (also known as performance assessment) will use a range of texts and tasks to assess learners' skills. Commonly used tasks are interviews, checklists, journaling and portfolios, to name a few. Authentic assessment evolved as an assessment technique as practitioners looked for ways to assess the gains made by adult learners that were inclusive, that supported and encouraged active participation by the learner and that could therefore be deemed learner-centred. This type of assessment can be used effectively for ongoing assessment.

Intake

Not everyone who calls or who walks in the front door of a literacy agency will end up as a program participant. At some point in the initial conversation, you will begin to make decisions based on your knowledge and experience about the skills and abilities, the goals and the needs of the potential learner. You may invite that person to set up an appointment for an initial assessment[79] or you may decide that his or her learning needs will be better served by another literacy agency or skills training program. For example, the individual may have special needs that are beyond the resources of your agency to meet or learning goals that may best be served by an LBS agency in another sector.

If time permits, many practitioners will conduct a formal intake and an initial assessment right away. Having made the decision to find out more about learning opportunities, learners are more likely to continue with the process if your intake procedure fits into their decision making process. Your ability to do that provides the learner with the positive reinforcement that they made the 'right' choice in coming to a literacy program to get help. Delays may cause them to re-think their decision.

---

[79] It is assumed in this resource that, in most literacy agencies, a paid practitioner conduct intake and initial assessment.

For more information on learner recruitment, retention and participation see Chapter 5, The Adult Literacy Learner.

Sometimes you have to take the learner further along the assessment continuum before you can identify the best learning option for that learner. As mentioned in Chapter 3, you will know, through the literacy community planning process, of the availability (or scarcity) of other service providers who might be able to better meet the learning needs of the learner.

Setting the Scene

Intake and initial assessment are part of a process that needs clear attention and focus to ensure that the information collected is an accurate "snap shot" of the learner. It should be given the same respect that you would give to the interview process if you were interviewing people for a position within your agency.

 In general you should:

⇒ Work in an area that is private and comfortable—you should not be interrupted.

⇒ Welcome the learner and introduce yourself. Engaging in small talk and offering drinks will allow the learner to relax and feel a bit more comfortable with the situation.

⇒ Outline the process to be adopted and confirm that the learner feels comfortable with the process. Explain clearly and slowly why you need the information and how the information will be used (e.g., for starting a physical file, matching with a volunteer tutor, or placement in a small group).

⇒ Use a standard intake form. When asking questions, try to avoid leading questions and also avoid personal bias in the words you use. Ask for clarification when necessary.

⇒ Summarize the information provided and then choose the assessment materials[80] and tasks to be used. Many programs have developed a "standard" initial assessment tool. Depending on the goals and prior knowledge of the learner, they may use all or only part of the assessment tool.

⇒ Explain the purpose of the materials and tasks selected—few people like to be "tested." Even when you say "this is not a test," the learner may still feel like it is a test. The time spent in discussion will give the learner time to adjust to the situation.

⇒ Ask the learner if they have any questions and answer questions as simply and as honestly as possible. The reason for asking learners to undertake certain tasks may be apparent to you, but you need to ensure that it is clear to the learner as well.

⇒ Review the results of the assessment with the learner. Although it is not really a test, all learners will want to know how they did (some will even ask "Did I pass?"). So be sure to give them your initial impressions and focus on at least one positive aspect of the assessment.

⇒ Explain the next steps—reiterate the process of matching with a tutor, placement in a small group setting or referral to another more suitable agency. Give the learner an indication of how long it will be before they can start participating in the program. You should also give them information about your organization's expectations and requirements with regard to attendance, progress and other learner responsibilities.

---

[80] As mentioned in Chapter 5, a learner's specific goals form the basis of the instructional strategy. The instructional strategy must be based on the training plan that is itself formed by assessing the learners current skills based on the learner's stated goal. Without a clearly stated and understood goal it will be difficult to conduct a learner-centred assessment. See Chapter 5 for more information on goal setting.

Chapter Six

Note on Referrals

As mentioned earlier, not all the learners who contact your organization may end up as learners with your organization. The information collected on intake and the results of the initial assessment may provide a clear indication that the learner has needs that cannot be met by your agency. For example, the learner may have literacy skills that will allow him or her to participate in a pre-credit upgrading program that is delivered by another literacy agency. On the other hand, the learner may have non-literacy needs that required more immediate attention, like housing or counselling needs.

Initial Assessment

Collecting intake information and conducting initial assessments are not new activities for community-based literacy practitioners and, over the years, we have become really good at it. With the introduction of the Core Quality Standards in 1995/96 and MTCU's goal-directed assessment process in 1997, both the process of assessing and the product became more formalized. Assessment has, in fact, become a measure of program accountability.

In the LBS Program Guidelines, agency responsibilities for the function of assessment are defined as:

1. Confirm an individual's eligibility for LBS service
2. Assist new learners in:
    - $\Rightarrow$ Identifying their short and long-term goals
    - $\Rightarrow$ Determining the learning style or model best suited to them
    - $\Rightarrow$ Determining their existing literacy and basic skills
3. Use assessment tools that are appropriate, meaningful, and understandable to the learners, and are suitable for their training plan and goals

4. Ensure that agency staff who carry out assessments have the appropriate skills
5. Assess learners' achievements as they progress through and complete their training
6. Use LBS levels to describe learners' literacy skills in all assessments (initial, ongoing, and exit)
7. Maintain up-to-date learner files
8. Ensure that assessment results can be understood by other LBS agencies and by key referral agencies, as agreed to in the literacy services plan

This can be a nerve-wracking time for new-or potential learners so it is important to conduct the assessment in such a way to allow them to relax. Many will think of this as a 'test' so you will need to reassure them that it is not—in the sense that there is no 'pass' or 'fail' associated with the activity. As mentioned above, explain the whole process to them before you begin to collect information and check in with them often during the process. Some practitioners will tell stories about themselves—how they felt or reacted in a similar situation—to help put learners at ease.

In programs that rely on volunteer tutors to deliver the literacy training, the initial assessment can be the most time that you, the paid practitioner, will spend with the learner. This means that you must collect sufficient and reliable information to pass on to the volunteer. This is not to say that this information cannot be modified later. If it is done well at this point, however, you will give the learner and the volunteer tutor invaluable information with which they can begin their journey. Your observations and judgements will combine with the written information that you collect to develop the learner's training plan. The challenge will be to keep the learner actively involved throughout the assessment process.

The information collected and evaluated will provide you and the learner with a snapshot of that learner's skills, knowledge, aptitudes and goals.

In an ideal world, the process should help the learner answer, or at least begin to think about, these questions:

⟹   What are my goals?

⟹   What skills, knowledge and abilities do I already have?

⟹   What do I need to do to achieve my goals?

Many adult literacy learners, especially those with extremely low literacy skills, find it difficult to set concrete education or workforce-based goals. Some literacy agencies build goal setting, or goal clarification activities into the first four or five meetings between the volunteer and the learner.

The initial assessment should gather basic background information. It should also identify the learner's long- and short-term goals, the skills they already have in relation to the goals and begin to identify areas where skills need to be developed or reinforced. Each of these information areas is described below. As mentioned in "Setting the Scene", the purpose is to collect the information you and the learner will need to ensure that the learning is meaningful to the learner and that the learning environment is supportive. The initial assessment will also help the learner begin to understand the importance of his or her participation in setting up and monitoring the learning process.

Initial Assessment Information

Basic Background Information:

This includes personal information, information about past educational experience and employment history. Does the learner meet the basic requirements for placement in your LBS funded program? Do you have another program (within your agency or community) in which you can place the learner?

Skills and Abilities:

These are based on both educational and employment experiences as well as the results of any assessment activities. You should generate a list of skills that the learner has, especially those that are transferable. Ask questions that will help you identify these skills:

⇒ What do you read and write now?
⇒ Do you have any hobbies?
⇒ What jobs have you had in the past?

Long and Short-term Goals:

These can be general in nature at this point, with the understanding that they will have to become more explicit in the future. (Remember: this is the initial assessment; it is the starting point.) Ask questions that will help the learner begin to focus on the tough task of goal setting:

⇒ Why did you decide to come here?
⇒ Why did you decide to get help now?
⇒ What are three things you want to be able to read and why?
⇒ Are there things you want to be able to write? Why?

Skills Gaps:

This will include the skills that are missing which are needed for the goal(s). (Note: skill gaps analysis is an activity that should be done more comprehensively while developing the training plan). Ask questions that will give you and the learner an idea of the types of skills that may be required:

⇒ Are there things you want to do that require you to have better reading and writing skills?
⇒ What skills do you think you need to get to where you want to be?

Learning Styles[81]:

Gather, at the very least, basic information about how a learner learns best. This information will help you develop a training plan that can accommodate a preferred learning style. Observing the learner's approach to the tasks that you ask him or her to perform will help you make even preliminary decisions about the preferred learning style. Ask questions like:

⇒ When you are learning something new, do you like to be shown how to do something, told how to do something or do you just like to get right at it?

⇒ Does noise break your concentration or is it okay to have the radio on?

Challenges to Learning[82]:

It is important to try and identify those issues that are present in the learner's day-to-day life that may make it difficult for the learner to participate in literacy training. This information will also shape the training plan. Ask questions that will begin to identify what these challenges might be and also spend some time discussing possible solutions or accommodations:

⇒ Do you have children who will need to go into daycare when you are meeting with your tutor?

⇒ How do you plan to get here to meet your tutor (or to attend class)?

---

[81] More extensive information on learning styles can be found in Chapter 5, The Adult Literacy Learner.

[82] More information on the challenges to learning can be found in Chapter 5, The Adult Literacy Learner and in Chapter 8, Learner Exit and Follow-Up.

Note on Goal-Setting

Goal setting is a practical and essential step in the assessment process. In reality, it is seldom easy. In theory, practitioners and learners—or the learners and volunteer tutors—will focus on "finding realistic long- and short-term goals for their vocational, educational, and personal lives[83]." In reality, many learners in LBS Levels One and Two may need to set goals that focus on the LBS outcomes of self-management and self-direction. They may need to learn to be learners. They will also need to set their goals to fit into the context of their lives—availability (time), finances, learning opportunities, family support, etc. Identification of specific long- and short-term goals can be set as a short-term goal. More information on goal setting can be found in Chapter 5.

Identifying Learning Needs

Training Plan Development

The development of a training plan for each learner is a requirement for all learners involved in literacy training at a LBS funded delivery agency. The purpose of a training plan is to provide a document that outlines the training in which the learner will participate. "It allows learners to understand the steps that are required to achieve their goals. Through the process of developing a training plan, learners map out a possible sequence for training and the time necessary to achieve their goals[84]."

---

[83] *Goal-Directed Assessment: An Initial Assessment Process*, MTCU 1997, page 18.

[84] LBS Program Guidelines, Tab 3, page 7.

MTCU defines an exemplary training plan as having a direct link between assessments, and training delivery. According to the LBS Program Guidelines[85], the literacy agency is responsible for:

⇒ Assisting learners in the development of training plans that are based on their goals.

⇒ Ensuring that learners develop training plans that:

- Use the information gathered in the learner profile
- Identify necessary referrals
- Are written in LBS learning outcomes language and use LBS levels as skill reference points
- Relate learners' entry skills to the skills they need in order to be able to demonstrate achievement of short-term goals
- Detail the training to be provided, stated in LBS learning outcomes language, that will enable learners to achieve their short-term goals
- Identify demonstration activities that will show learners and instructors that learners can apply new skills to real-life situations
- Indicate which components of the plans will be fulfilled by the delivery agency developing the plan, and which components may be delivered by other agencies
- Indicate dates and establish time lines (date the plan was developed, start date and projected end date for learner's program, and dates for the learner and agency staff to meet to review progress)
- Connect learners to the next steps toward their goals

⇒ Establish a process for ongoing review of learners' demonstrated achievements at key points in their course of study. The purpose of ongoing review is to establish when the expected outcomes identified in the training plan have been achieved, when goals have changed, and when a change in training activities is needed.

---

[85] Ibid.

⇒ Track numbers of learners who are enrolling in literacy training in order to achieve employment, training, education, or independence goals.

⇒ Provide a copy of the training plan(s) to the learner, keep a copy in the learner file and ensure that training plans are available for review by LBS field consultants.

In *Entry to Exit* (Paul, 2000) a training plan is described as a written document that:

⇒ Outlines the current abilities of the student
⇒ Outlines the goals of the student
⇒ Outlines the skills the student will need to acquire on the way to these goals
⇒ Provides other pertinent information that will impact upon the student's learning
⇒ Provides a strategy or blueprint for how the student can reach his or her goals

This last point is the main purpose of the training plan. A training plan should not be used, however, as a set of linear instructions or like a recipe. Rather, it is the list of ingredients from which many recipes can be built. The publication *Developing Training Plans for Learners[86]* (McKinlay, 1997) provides in-depth information about writing training plans.

Each training plan is written specifically for the individual learner and is based on the information collected during intake and the initial assessment. Without a goal, or goals, it is difficult to develop a true

---

[86] This resource was widely distributed when it was first published. If you cannot find a copy in your office, try your regional literacy network or borrow a copy from AlphaPlus (Call Number: 374.01207 M18).

Chapter Six

training plan. The lack of a goal, however, can be used to develop a plan of action that should lead eventually to the establishment of a goal.

Like the forms that you use for intake and the initial assessment, your agency should also have a standard format that is used for the training plan. Many agencies have this document set up as a computer file template.

In general you will want to provide the following areas on the training plan:

Background information:
Review the intake form and the results of initial assessment; include information such as name, address, telephone number and general comments about educational and work experience.

Learner Goals:
Focus on the learner's goals; both short and long-term goals should be identified as well as the skills and knowledge that are necessary for accomplishing the goal.

Current Skill Level:
Think about where the learner is right now; note the skills that the learner has that relate to his or her goal. These skills should be phrased in terms of the Learning Outcomes Matrix.

Goal Requirements:
Think about what skills the learner needs to achieve the stated goals. Like the current skills, these new skills should be phrased in terms of the Learning Outcomes Matrix. If goal attainment is used as a measure of success, what does that say to you about the setting of goals? It means that you must do an excellent job of establishing all the steps or short-term goals that must be accomplished before the larger or long-term goal is achieved. You must also link skills that learners already have to the types of skills needed for goal attainment (both short- and long-term). Finally, you will need to identify "missing" skills.

Action Plan:

Decide what specific literacy and basic skills training you can provide to the learner. This information will provide both the learner and the instructor (paid staff and/or volunteer tutor) with a clear indication of how those "missing" skills can be gained and a suggested time line for achieving the goal. Many agencies include a section that identifies materials and learning activities that can be used for each skill set.

Review Process:

Establish specific start and finish dates and evaluation dates. These dates and the types of evaluation activities should be reviewed on a regular basis. Many agencies also include projected contact hours in this section. This is also the area where you can include information that can be used for transition planning—that is the learner's next steps. See Chapter 8 for more information about learner exit and transition planning.

In most literacy agencies, the person who does the initial assessment is the person who writes the training plan. More often than not, it is a paid staff person, not a volunteer, doing this work. In most agencies, the same person also matches the learner to the training. The training may involve placing the learner in a small group setting, matching the learner with a volunteer tutor, or a combination of these approaches.

As mentioned above, one of the agency's responsibilities, according to MTCU's Program Guidelines, is to "assist learners in developing a training plan that is based on their goals." Paul (2000) in *Entry to Exit* provides the following suggestions for facilitating learner participation in the development of the training plan:

$\Rightarrow$ Have the student research specific portions of the training plan. For example, the student might find out the entry requirements for training.

$\Rightarrow$ Ask the match to research/explore together a specific component, such as the next steps or short-term goals.

⇒ Design timeframes with the student. Ensure that the student views the time frames as legitimate and achievable with effort.

⇒ Review the training plan with the student to ensure he or she understands it. Ask questions. Encourage input. Together, modify the training plan to better suit the individual. Ensure that the student is comfortable with the final draft of the training plan, understands it and sees it as a valid way to reach his or her goals.

While confidentiality may be an issue, training plans, according to MTCU, are supposed to be portable. This implies that the training plan is written to be shared. It is important that the learner understands that. Once you feel sure that the learner understands and agrees with the contents of the training plan, share the plan with the instructor (paid staff or volunteer), give a copy to the learner and place a copy in the learner's file. It is important to note that, since others will view the training plan, you will need to keep your language "neutral" and non-judgemental.

Note on Matching

Research has shown that the first twelve hours of instruction play a critical role in learner retention. If your agency uses a one-to-one approach using trained volunteers, it is imperative that a clear protocol for matching learners with volunteers has been established. Staff support (time and resource materials) to the match must be adequate. In addition, everyone involved must understand the roles and responsibilities of the learner, the volunteer, and the agency. The agency must also have a written process for what to do if a learner needs to be re-matched.

In Chapter 4, The Role of Volunteers, you will find information about the training that should be provided to the volunteers before they are matched with learners and in Chapter 7, Instructional Strategies, we provide suggestions for approaches to teach skills in each of the Learning Outcomes Domains —Communications, Numeracy and Self-Management/Self-Direction. The rest of this chapter will look at the training and resources needed to meet the learning needs of adult literacy learners.

Placing Learners at the Correct Level

One of the key components of MTCU's Learning Outcomes approach is its Learning Outcomes Matrix. As mentioned in Chapter 3, a learning outcomes approach places the learning emphasis on the integration of knowledge gained while participating in literacy training into the learner's overall body of knowledge. The matrix, across a five level continuum, identifies learning outcomes for three domains. Each domain is subdivided into component outcomes and each component outcome is made up of skill sets. Each skill set has concrete and demonstrable indicators called success markers. Many skill sets also have transition markers. Transition markers provide indicators that allow learners to demonstrate skills that bridge two levels. Knowing which level a learner is currently working at is a skill that is best developed through practice. A number of publications and documents have been published in recent years to help you think about and learn more about this process.

In *The Level Descriptions Manual* published by the Ontario Literacy Coalition (2000), summary statements as well as features and performance indicators have been created for each of MTCU's learning outcomes within each of the domains (Communications, Numeracy, Self-Direction/Self-Management). For example, the summary statement developed for MTCU's Learning Outcome "Read with Understanding for Various Purposes" at Level One states:

> "The reader locates, understands and responds to simple, concrete ideas and sequential information in graphics, sentences, and very short, simple texts about familiar topics. To do this, the reader uses basic reading strategies, personal experience and familiarity with some common forms and conventions of simple texts[87]."

---

[87] *The Level Descriptions Manual*, page 16.

The summary statements provide you with tools that allow you to share LBS required information about the skills and abilities of learners with others in a language that can be easily understood by people outside the literacy field. These people may include counsellors (such as Ontario Works) and employers (present or potential).

The **features** for each outcome are defined by the outcome. To continue with the example of the Learning Outcome used above ("Read with Understanding for Various Purposes"), the features are defined as: Reading Strategies, Forms and Conventions, Comprehension and Interpretation. These features are presented in a table with accompanying performance indicators, as shown below.

Description of Level One by Feature[88]	
Features	**Performance Indicators**
Reading Strategies	• Uses knowledge of alphabet and basic phonics to decode common words • Uses knowledge of basic grammar, predictable word patterns, and basic sentence structure in speech to understand phrases and sentences • Uses knowledge of basic spelling conventions and simple punctuation • Uses context cues and personal experience to gather meaning from the text • Scans simple text for familiar words • Uses pictures and illustrations to determine meaning of unfamiliar words and gather information about the text

[88] Ibid.

Description of Level One by Feature[88]

Features	Performance Indicators
Forms and Conventions	• Demonstrates basic awareness of familiar forms of writing by identifying how different kinds of materials are organized (e.g., simple schedules, charts, menus, personal letters, job ads) • Uses alphabetical order and basic conventions of formal texts (e.g., book titles) to locate information • Reads text of one paragraph (or a few short paragraphs) or a list of sentences • Text is familiar with everyday content with personal relevance • Text has simple, concrete information in simple, familiar wording
Comprehension	• Retells a simple story or event in order • Reads symbols and common sights words from everyday life • Follows simple pictorial instructions
Interpretation	• Expresses thoughts and feelings about stories and events • Predicts what may happen in a story; revises or confirms predications

The *Skills Level Checklist* published by the Wellington County Learning Centre (2000) is another example of a tool for assessing a learner's current level. This resource uses a checklist format ("Yes I can do this task" or "I need some practice") to provide specific skill-based activities under headings that correspond to the skill. For example, for the Learning Outcome "Write Clearly to Express Ideas" the section headings are

Printing and Handwriting, Spelling, Using Capital and Small Letters, Punctuation, and Sentence Structure. Under each of these headings are specific skills. Activities have been developed that can be used by the learner to demonstrate that they do indeed have these specific skills.

Choosing Materials

One of the basic tenets of a learner-centred approach to literacy training is the relevance of the materials to the learner. In a goal-directed environment, the materials must also be linked to the goal, which should have been determined by the learner. Relevance of the materials to the learner may seem like a simple thing to accomplish. However, choosing relevant learning materials for the full range of adult learners can be challenging for a variety of reasons.

Many practitioners (both paid and volunteer) spend a lot of time developing specific teaching materials for individual learners or groups of learners. Practitioners respect the skills and knowledge already held by learners. In addition, it is the role of practitioners to build upon learners' prior knowledge by using and, if necessary, creating materials that will help the learners reach their specified goals.

As the LBS program has moved away from a curriculum-based approach to literacy towards a learning outcomes approach, the result has been a truly learner-centred environment. Practitioners need to incorporate time for developing learner-centred materials into already busy schedules. However, they can also benefit from the existing resources produced here in Ontario and elsewhere. We are very lucky as the Ontario literacy field is extremely rich when it comes to resources!

There are many materials that exist that work to build the foundational skills of literacy learners. For example, the *Handbook for Literacy Tutors* published by the Ottawa-Carleton Coalition for Literacy and Laubach's *Challenger* series help practitioners to teach the foundational skills which

literacy learners require. You can learn more about the wealth of existing materials and resources that can be effectively used with learners by talking to practitioners in other programs, posting a question on AlphaCom, conducting Internet searches, visiting your local library or the library of your regional literacy network, visiting the web sites of AlphaPlus Centre and the National Adult Literacy Database and by contacting organizations/publishers that specialize in resources for adult learners for example, Laubach Literacy Canada (New Readers Press) and Grassroots Press.

Ideally, materials that are selected support a learning environment that encourages learner reflection on process and content. Materials should encourage learners to undertake their own inquiry and, most importantly, should encourage learner participation in the planning and assessing of the learning. It is important to keep in mind that many adult literacy learners may have to learn how to become learners. If they appear to be reluctant participants, it could be because they do not understand what is being asked of them or they are unsure of their role in the process. Take the time to check in with them and to encourage their participation.

At its best, the learning situation (including the materials) will encourage learners to want to learn and will support them to become more self-directed as learners[89]. By asking both instructors and learners for their feedback, you can validate the usefulness of particular materials (printed texts, word lists, computer software, etc.). An easy way to do this is to include a written assessment form with materials when you give them out to instructors and learners to use.

You will find that, over time, you will develop a library of "common" materials that can be used with more than one learner. Learners who are just one LBS level apart or a group of learners with an interest in the same

---

[89] Self-direction, as noted by Grieve (2003) is not simply a matter of individual skills. Self-direction is, in fact, something that is strongly influenced by both the context of the learning environment and by the broader context of the learner's life environment. More information on self-direction can be found in Chapter 5.

Chapter Six

topic may have similar learning needs so it may be possible to use the same materials with a number of learners.

The following guidelines have been adapted from guidelines developed in 1989 by members of the Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy. The guidelines, which look at materials in terms of content, format and application, can help you when you develop your own materials or when you want to select commercially written materials.

Guidelines For Selecting Materials	
Content	Materials are: • Relevant and interesting to adult literacy learners living in Canada • Relevant to, and respectful of, the gender, culture and learning needs of the learner • Logically ordered and make sense • Written in plain language • Written at the appropriate level for each learner
Format	Materials have: • Illustrations, graphics and text that are appropriate for the audience—adult literacy learners • Easy to read fonts and clearly rendered graphics
Applications:	Materials: • Include clear instructions for use • Encourage independent use by learners • Encourage learner participation in the learning process • Reinforce current skills and provide opportunity for practicing newly acquired skills

Tools such as the Fry Readability Graph or the FOG Readability Index can be easily used by any practitioner (paid staff or volunteer tutor) to determine the suitability of the materials to a specific learner or learning group. Some software applications can also give you information on readability.

Although these tools can give you an estimated Grade Level needed to read the selected text, they will not be able to tell you how well the material meets any of the material selection guidelines mentioned above. You will still need to ask yourself questions like:

⇒ Will this material allow the learner to gain confidence by making use of current skills? Materials should give learners the opportunity to build on current skills and knowledge by allowing them to make use of the skills they do have.

⇒ Will this material challenge the learner to learn new skills? Materials should encourage learners to develop and apply critical thinking skills and to develop their own conclusions. Materials should also give them the opportunity to learn and practice new skills in a non-threatening environment. In addition, materials should help learners make connections between concepts.

⇒ How does this material fit the learner's goal and/or interests? Materials should introduce concepts through experiences or scenarios that are relevant to learners' lives. Activities should allow learners to build from previous knowledge and lead toward further learning. Materials should allow learners to gain understanding through a variety of approaches—like discussion, application and practice. Further, the material should support the learner's predominant learning style.

⇒ Where will the materials be used and how much/how often? What kind of support will be required? Learners and instructors should be able to understand what is expected for each lesson and/or activity.

Chapter Six

⇒   Instructions for use should clearly describe the procedure and method of use. Support materials—such as word lists—should be provided with the learning materials. Use of technology (computers, software, and/or Internet-based materials) may need additional support.

⇒   Do the materials encourage the learner to learn? Materials should include suggestions for linkages to learning opportunities in the community-at-large. Materials that are tied to learners' goals and interests, that have applicability to their real world, and that provide for the continual use of the skills beyond the learning situation should encourage learners to become more self-directed.

Planning Lessons

Lesson plans provide a critical link between a training plan and the achievement of goals. The development of lesson plans provides an opportunity for every instructor (paid staff or volunteer tutor) to think in clear, concrete terms about what types of activities will help a learner gain specific skills as part of achieving the stated goal or goals. Lesson plans also allow instructors and learners "to focus on the whole picture rather than a series of disconnected activities[90]."

Lesson plans provide a written framework that will help keep the learning focused on specifics. Keep in mind, however, that while the intent of a lesson plan is to provide structure and guidance, it is not written in stone. What you have developed for a lesson may not be what actually happens during the instruction period. This could happen due to a crisis with the learner or because of a world event that presents the opportunity to discuss something other than what you had planned.

---

[90] *Are We Practising What We Preach?* Caroline Gear. Adventures in Assessment Volume 11: Winter 1998.

Also keep in mind one of the key tenets of facilitating the learning process with adult literacy learners is flexibility!

Sometimes, as you are using the lesson plan, you may realize that parts of it do not work. For example, your time estimates may be too long or too short or there may be too many activities for one lesson. Every lesson plan should include a place for user notes. This can be the place where you can notate what worked and what did not work.

The following information is not meant to be the one and only way to develop a lesson plan. Rather it is an overview of the key elements. In general, lessons should:

⇒ Allow time for learners to use and develop all of their communication skills—reading, writing, and speaking and listening.

⇒ Start with success! Make the first activity something easy that you know the learner can accomplish.

⇒ Put the harder material early in the lesson! Introduce new points when the learner is fresh and provide time for discussion.

⇒ Link to the learner's everyday life.

Seven Keys to Developing a Quality Lesson Plan

These "keys" to developing a lesson plan were developed based on a review of many lesson plans and information about lesson planning. They highlight the important role that a lesson plan plays in helping adult literacy learners work toward and achieve their learning goals.

1. Based on the learner's goal (or goals), what is it that you need to teach? This is the first thing you should consider. The lesson plan should be developed based on a stated goal and on the information presented in the training plan.

2.   What specific skill sets or markers will your lesson plan work toward teaching? Record those links on the lesson plan. For example, the lesson may focus on having the learner measure and record the size of physical objects, like windows, to increase his or her knowledge of measurement.

3.   How do you want to teach the topic? To make sure your lesson plan will teach exactly what you want it to, you need to develop clear and specific objectives. The objectives are the learning outcomes of those activities. For example, if you wanted to teach a learner how to add 2 + 3, one objective of the lesson plan may be that the learner will demonstrate how to add 2 + 3. You can have more than one objective for a lesson plan.

4.   What materials are you going to use for the lesson? This information should be recorded on the lesson plan in case someone else uses the lesson in the future.

5.   How would you describe the lesson? A brief description will help ensure that you are teaching what you want to teach and make it easy for someone else to see what you intended. A successfully completed lesson could be placed in a learner's portfolio as a clear demonstration of what was learned.

6.   What are the relevant actions that need to happen? Writing a step-by-step procedure of the actions that will end with the lesson objective (or objectives) being met will help ensure that objectives are successfully met. This will also help you to assign time lines to the various components. Make sure to include time for the learner to practice new skills.

7.   What is your evaluation plan? Is it clearly linked to the stated objectives of the lesson? Make sure that you record what needs to happen for the lesson to be a success for you and for the learner. Keep learners involved in the development of the lesson by discussing, at the end of the current lesson, what will happen in the next lesson. If you ask learners what they liked best or least about a lesson, make sure you write it down and then use that information to help you shape future lessons. The comments that are recorded on the lesson plan can form an important part of the ongoing assessment process.

Effective Ongoing Assessment

Overview

While the trend for the initial assessment may be to use a standard form and process (Note: this does not mean a standardized test), the trend for ongoing assessment is to use tools and techniques specifically for the learner being assessed. Ongoing assessment can be defined as an assessment that happens at any point in a learner's stay in a literacy program. To be of value to the major stakeholders—the learner and the instructor—the ongoing assessment must be effective. It must allow both the instructor and the learner to examine how they are progressing towards an agreed upon goal, how they might improve, and how well the learning program fits the learner's learning needs.

As ongoing assessment is also an accountability tool, the results of the process must be measurable and be an accurate reflection of what has been learned. Ongoing assessment can also be defined in terms of formal or informal assessment.

To help ensure that the ongoing assessment is effective, you should ask yourself the following questions:

⟹ Why is the learner being assessed at this time?
⟹ What are you hoping the assessment will tell you?
⟹ What do you want the learner to gain from this assessment?
⟹ What will be the follow-up activities, once the assessment results have been analyzed?
⟹ Do the learner and the instructor (paid or volunteer tutor) understand why the assessment is taking place?
⟹ Have the learner and the instructor played a role in the development of this process for this learner?

Learner Involvement

When learners are involved in the development of the assessment criteria, it is empowering for the learner. In fact, research[91] has shown that involving the learners:

⇒ Gives them a shared sense of ownership in both the learning activities and the results of the assessment process

⇒ Signals to them that they and their opinions are valued

⇒ Allows them to articulate what they already know, in the sense that they know what they need to demonstrate

Both ongoing assessment and instruction are linked to formal and informal assessment activities. In most agencies, paid staff leads formal assessment activities. The instructor—who may be a paid staff person or a volunteer tutor, most often leads informal assessment activities.

Formal Assessment (Ongoing)

There are a number of tools and techniques that can be used to facilitate the formal assessment process. The type of tool or the technique selected should be determined by answering the questions posed earlier. Two of the most common types of ongoing formal assessment tools are discussed below: demonstrations and portfolios.

Demonstrations and portfolios are considered authentic assessments. An authentic assessment allows gains made by adult learners to be assessed in a way that is inclusive, that supports and encourages active participation by the learner and that is highly learner-centred.

---

[91] *A Purposeful and Transparent Approach to Teaching and Learning* (Gillespie, 2002) and *Making Sense of Adult Learning* (MacKeracher, 1996) are but two of many publications that support that most fundamental of adult learning principles—that of learner involvement.

To be considered an authentic assessment, the tool or techniques should:

⇒ Require learners to develop their own responses rather than select from predetermined options

⇒ Elicit higher-order thinking in addition to basic skills

⇒ Use a holistic approach

⇒ Be developed based on learner input

⇒ Allow for the possibility of multiple human judgments

⇒ Teach learners how to evaluate their own work

⇒ Be personalized, natural, and flexible, rather than uniform, standardized, impersonal, and absolute

⇒ Be criterion-referenced rather than norm-referenced[92]

⇒ Be performance-based

Demonstrations

In Ontario's community-based literacy agencies, demonstrations have become one of the most widely used ways of assessing progress. As noted in Community Literacy of Ontario's *On the Level* (Kennedy, 2000), demonstration activities should resemble, as closely as possible, a real-life, real-world application of skills as they relate to the learner's goals. *On the Level* provides model demonstrations for MTCU's Learning

---

[92] The term "norm-referenced" refers to test results for a particular learner being compared to the performance of a group that has been declared the norm.

Criterion-referenced assessment is the assessment of the extent to which a student has achieved the intended learning and performance outcomes of a subject. This assessment will be carried out against previously specified yardsticks (criteria) and, where a grade is assigned, it will be assigned on the basis of the standard the student has achieved on the criteria. Criterion-referenced assessment stands in marked contrast to norm-based assessment in which the emphasis is on relating the achievement of a particular student to the achievements of other students.

From http://www.decs.act.gov.au/bsss/critref.htm (The ACT Board of Senior Studies in Australia)

Outcomes Matrix Domains of Communications and Self-Management / Self-Direction at Level One and Level Two. Resources for other domains and levels, although not necessarily for the community-based sector, have been developed by the literacy field in Ontario. See the "Suggested Resources" section at the end of this chapter.

According to *On the Level*, demonstrations should:

Be Meaningful and Integrated:

The successful completion of first demonstrations by learners should make them more enthusiastic about future demonstrations, not less! Learner participation should be encouraged in all the steps leading to the demonstration activity. Demonstration activities should, whenever possible, incorporate learners' goals, interests and prior skills and knowledge. Demonstrations should also reflect an integration of newly acquired skills and knowledge.

Be Reliable and Valuable:

The completed demonstration activity should give a fairly accurate reading of a learner's ability to apply skills gained in one setting (learning sessions) to another setting. The setting for the demonstration activity in a community-based program may not need to be formal or traditional (e.g., taking a time limited test on a given day). Learners working at LBS Levels One and Two do not always need traditional testing environments. Reliable and valuable results can still be obtained.

Have Clear and Simple Expectations:

Demonstration activities should have clear, simple instructions. Also, expectations and procedures need to be clearly communicated to practitioners and between practitioners and learners. Clearly communicated and simple instructions will help learners to feel secure in the learning environment and may also increase learners' willingness to participate.

Be Timely and Realistic:

Ideally, the practitioner and the learner will decide when to validate the learner's progress. However, the needs of the program may dictate a more regular schedule of validation. Either way, learner involvement must be at the forefront. Ideally, learners will make the key decisions, such as which Outcome (reading, writing, or speaking and listening) will form the basis of the demonstration; which tasks will be used to provide the agreed upon outcome; and which factors will be used to judge if the demonstration has been successfully completed.

On the Level also allows the volunteer tutor to play a large role in what can be considered a formal assessment process. This may not be a practice that paid staff are comfortable with, as formal ongoing assessment is about measuring progress—which is directly linked to program accountability. As noted by Trottier in *Together We Can Do It!*, "literacy practitioners must be properly trained to conduct formal assessments." She also notes that a significant amount of time and training is needed to give practitioners the required skills. This—the investment of time and training—may be beyond the scope of what you can expect from volunteers.

What you can expect from a volunteer will depend on the background skills and knowledge that a volunteer brings to the learning situation and the initial tutor training that you provide. It may be, however, easier to create a program-wide policy on who will conduct formal assessments in your agency rather than use a case-by-case approach. Volunteers can, and do, play a key role in *informal* assessment and their observations can be used to set the "right" time for a formal assessment.

Portfolios

Portfolios are another type of authentic assessment tool. It is important to note that it is neither the portfolios nor the contents that are the assessment tool; rather it is the *analysis* of the contents that will allow learning gains to be formally noted. Portfolio assessment allows for the assessment of active learning and performance.

The use of portfolios is not new. For many years, people like graphic designers have used portfolios to show evidence of their work, which illustrates their ability to apply knowledge to practice. With the implementation of outcomes-based learning in Ontario, the use of portfolios by literacy agencies has increased.

The criteria by which the contents of the portfolio are assessed must be linked to the training plan and must give a clear indication of where new skills have been learned and applied, and where gaps may still exist. The setting of criteria also provides an excellent opportunity for involving learners. "A good assessment model supports students' desire to learn, rather than impose a set of demands and expectations on them[93]." Collaboration with learners can help them take on more responsibility for their learning—a criteria of the LBS Program's Self-Management and Self-Direction Domain.

Informal Assessment (Ongoing)

As mentioned above, one of the key roles that instructors (paid staff or volunteer tutor) play is that of evaluator. In community-based programs, the instructor can provide program staff with a wealth of informal assessment information. This information can be used (by the person responsible for conducting the formal assessment) to determine learner

---

[93] *Portfolio Assessment: Missing Link in Student Evaluation*. ERIC Trends and Issues Alert, 1997. This Alert reviews the trends in portfolio assessment and examines the issues that guide its use as a tool for evaluating student learning.

readiness, the type of assessment tool or technique that should be used, and the type of skills that should be "tested". Where the one-to-one approach is used to provide literacy training, it will be the volunteer tutor who provides this information. In a small group setting (or where a combination of small-group supported by one-to-one tutoring is used), it may be a paid staff person and a volunteer tutor who provide this information.

There are a number of tools and techniques that can be used to facilitate the informal assessment process. For the information gathered by any tool or technique to be considered useful, the user (assumed in the following discussion to be a volunteer tutor) must be made aware of the importance of these tools and techniques to the learner, to the program and to the assessment process, and the user must be given training in their use.

Lesson plans provide a written framework that will help keep the learning focussed on specifics. A section of the plan should be set aside for the instructor to note what worked well and what did not. Trottier in *Together We Can Do It!*, offers the following as strategies for the incorporation of informal assessment into the learning environment:

Watch and listen:
Can a preferred learning style (visual, auditory, tactile) be identified? What does the learner do to help herself learn (repeats things out loud, rereads the same passage, asks questions)? Are some skills easier than others for her to learn? Tutors should keep an eye out for ways the learner is using her new skills in everyday situations. Perhaps she will bring in a list she wrote at home or she will read a notice on the bulletin board. She might also talk about things she has done or things her family has noticed.

Make notes:

Both the learner and the tutor can keep "learning diaries" that describe the lessons they are working on and the progress the learner is making. It is especially important to take note of how the learner is using her new skills in both her learning and everyday life. If she is just learning to write, she can dictate to the tutor. Note taking also makes an excellent writing activity for the beginning writer. These notes will come in handy for filling in reports or for ongoing assessment meetings with program staff. Written records can help keep track of resources used and activities completed. Diaries can also be used to list things like spelling words or new vocabulary.

Keep in touch:

It is important for the tutor and learner to keep a staff member up-to-date on the learner's progress. When the learner-tutor match is arranged, a regular system of reporting should also be established. It is important for the volunteer and the staff to keep in regular contact so that the learner's progress can be properly documented.

Encourage self-assessment:

Ongoing assessment is the job of both the tutor and the learner. It is important that the learner be able to recognize her own progress and become a full partner in determining her progress. The tutor and the learner should work together to identify the skills learned and how the learner is using those new skills. The next chapter will look at self-assessment in more detail.

Be flexible:

Sometimes, things will not go according to plan. If it is taking longer for a learner to grasp a new skill, the volunteer will need to adjust her lesson plans (provide extra practice, try a new teaching strategy). Teaching and learning are not exact sciences; there is no one way that works 100% of the time, and no two learners learn at exactly the same pace or in the same way. The volunteer must use her observations about the learner's skills and learning preferences to help her develop and adapt lesson plans as necessary.

Talk about how the learner learns:
Who better to ask than the learner himself? Ask him what makes learning easier or harder, how he likes to learn, what strategies he uses. Talk about how he learned things in the past, what worked and what did not.

Encourage reflection:
How does what the learner has learned relate to his goals? How do learning activities relate to the training plan? Which activities provide a good indicator of a skill learned? Reflecting on learning helps internalize learning.

Provide feedback to the learner:
The tutor should provide positive feedback on the learner's work. Positive, constructive feedback can help a learner identify areas of difficulty that she can work on. It is important, however, to direct any criticism at the work, not at the person. Providing this type of feedback helps the student learn to assess her own work.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the Learning Outcomes Approach to service delivery that is currently in use in Ontario. As discussed in the chapter, a learning outcomes approach allows for the establishment of a solid base of information about the learner's current skills and knowledge, proposed goals and a plan for achieving the goals. This base of information is essential before you can begin to provide learners with the literacy and basic skills training they need.

Questions for Reflection
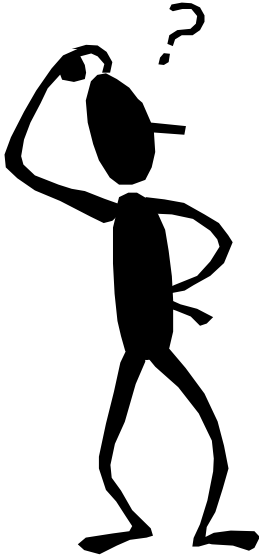
⇒ Could there be information coming out of the initial assessment that should be withheld from the learner? What kind of information? Why would you withhold it?

⇒ What kind of information do you give to learners regarding their progress?

⇒ How have you incorporated lesson plan development into your tutor training?

⇒ How do you decide when to conduct a formal ongoing assessment? What revisions do you make to the training plan, as a result?

⇒ Does the training plan provide answers to these questions: What does the student need to learn? How is the student going to get there?

⇒ Does the ongoing information that you get from instructors (paid staff or volunteer tutors) about learning activities tell you:
What was done?
Why it was done?
How it was done?

Suggested Resources

In addition to the various reports, manuals, web sites and other resources mentioned in this chapter, we think you might find the following resources to be useful.

Print–Based:

Entry to Exit: A Coordinator's Handbook for the Delivery of Literacy Services. Marianne Paul. Laubach Literacy Ontario, 1999. AlphaPlus Call #: 374.01206 P134.

⇒ This resource provides valuable information about the service delivery functions and the responsibilities and tasks directly associated with providing service to learners.

Technological Literacy and the Matrix: An Instructor's Guide. Tonya Beveridge. Waterloo Catholic District School Board, 2001 ISBN: 0969544014. AlphaPlus Call #: 374.1264 B265.

⇒ Learning activities and demonstrations focused on helping literacy students to learn to use technology in their personal lives are provided in this resource. Four technological areas of learning were organized into a domain, component outcomes, and skill sets with success markers. The main domain was labelled as technology, and the four component outcomes were data management, Internet use, office technology, and automated teller banking activities.

Linking Demonstrations with Laubach. Robyn Cook-Ritchie. Laubach Literacy Ontario, 2000. AlphaPlus Call #: 374.1264 L3.

⇒ This resource provides learning outcomes demonstrations for programs using Laubach materials.

Outcomes Based Assessment: Sample Demonstration Tasks. Christine Pinsent-Johnson, et al. Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, 2000. AlphaPlus Call #: 374.1264 O7923.

⇒ This resource provides sample outcomes and demonstration tasks, Levels One through Four for Communications and Numeracy Domains and for Self-management and Self-direction.

College Sector Demonstrations Project. Chan Madhavi Jadoonath, Ken Reynolds & Dee Goforth. Cambrian College, 2000. AlphaPlus Call #: 378.168 J11.

⇒ This resource provides demonstration activities for Communications and Numeracy Domains.

St. Lawrence College Learning Outcomes Project [kit]. Mary Gelinas, et al. St. Lawrence College, 2000. AlphaPlus Call #: 374.1264 S74.

⇒ This resource provides a curriculum framework and materials for a learning outcomes based LBS program in a college environment.

Learning Outcomes Demonstrations Development Project. Tara Duncan-Smith. Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators, 2000. AlphaPlus Call #: 374.1264 D78.

⇒ The purpose of the Learning Outcomes Demonstration Project was to facilitate the implementation of goal-directed assessment in a learning outcomes environment by providing support and guidance to the school board sector.

On The Level: Demonstrating Skills and Knowledge in Ontario's Community Literacy Agencies: Model Demonstrations, Tools, and Resources. Lindsay Kennedy. Community Literacy of Ontario, 2000. ISBN: 0968469825. AlphaPlus Call #: 374.1264 K25.

⇒ This resource provides model demonstrations, tools and resources for Levels One and Two of the Communications Domain.

Together We Can Do It! The Role of Volunteers in the Assessment Process. Vicki Trottier. Community Literacy of Ontario, 2002. AlphaPlus Call #: 374.1264 T68.

⇒ This resource provides information on effective strategies and best practices for volunteer involvement in the assessment process.

CABS: Common Assessment of Basic Skills: Initial Assessment in 5 Levels, 3rd *ed*. Judith Fox Lee & Rose Strohmaier. Literacy Link Eastern Ontario, 2000. ISBN: 1895999162. AlphaPlus Call #: 374.126 C11 2000.

⇒ This resource provides information about assessment and sample demonstrations for all levels of MTCU's Learning Outcomes Matrix.

Web-Based

CABS Online
Ten demonstrations from the CABS (Common Assessment of Basic Skills) manual have been recreated to provide a practical assessment tool for use with Literacy/Basic Skills (LBS) students who can work on computers.
Website: www.lleo.ca/col/cabs_online.html

The Literacy List
The Literacy List is a large collection of free Adult Basic Education and ESL/ESOL web sites, electronic lists ("listservs"), and other Internet resources for adult basic skills learners and teachers.
Website: www.alri.org/literacylist.html

Demonstrations Ontario
This site is designed to assist Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program delivery agencies in Ontario in developing and applying learning outcomes demonstrations.
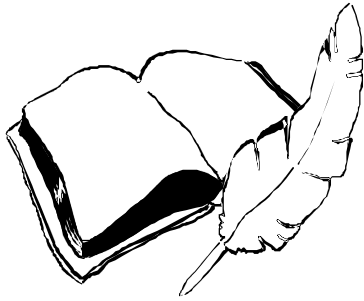Website: www.demonstrations.alphaplus.ca/DemonstrationBank

Essential Skills Portfolio
This site will help learners choose and prepare for many entry level jobs. It will help them decide what jobs they qualify for and it will help learners develop a portfolio of skills.
Website: www.portfolio.telecampus.com

CHAPTER 7

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

> *"During the past 18 years as an adult literacy educator I have noticed the same questions being asked by literacy coordinators and tutors. Consider this frequently asked question: 'What approach should I use—whole language or phonics?' This type of question reflects a desire to bypass analysis and dive right into the 'solution' ...there are a number of critical questions that educators need to ask and answer before they proceed to possible solutions."*
>
> Pat Campbell, Grass Roots Press

Introduction

Ideally, learning is a process of activating our prior knowledge related to a topic we want to learn about; questioning, interpreting, analyzing, and processing new information and concepts in light of our past experiences; using this information and our thinking processes to monitor, develop, and alter our understanding; and then finally, integrating our current experiences with our past experiences. Is the ideal possible?

The overall focus of the chapter will be to challenge you to think about process in the development of instructional strategies for adult learners. What is the reality of the learning process? The chapter will use the three domains of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' (MTCU) Learning Outcomes Matrix—Communications, Numeracy and Self-management/Self-direction—as the framework for discussion.

While some information will be given about specific instructional strategies (learning activities), it is not the intent of the chapter to provide specific tools. A list of suggested resources (print, online or software) will be provided at the end of each section.

Making Learning Relevant

It is current practice in most of Ontario's literacy agencies to use a competency-based assessment process—that is, skills are identified as being present or absent. Therefore, it makes sense for instruction to be set in a competency-based environment. While this means that the mastery of skills is crucial, it does not mean that instruction has to be completely structured or systematic in order to benefit learners. Learners can be encouraged to be active participants in the learning process!

Even in a competency-based environment, learning activities should be presented in ways that are engaging and meaningful to the learner and they should also promote a positive expectation for successful achievement. The learning environment should encourage learners to be reflective about their learning and support them through that process.

Through the processes of initial assessment and training plan development, you will have identified a learner's strengths and current skills and the learner will have set short and long- term goals[94]. More importantly, you will have identified skills that are needed for short-term goal attainment and consequently the skills the learner needs to acquire while in the program. The question then becomes – what do I do with this information? One of the most important questions that an instructor can ask is: "How can I determine the most appropriate approaches to best meet the learning needs of the learner (or learners)?"

---

[94] For a complete discussion about initial assessment and training plan development see Chapter 6, Identifying and Meeting Learner Needs. See Chapter 5 - The Adult Literacy Learner for information about goal-setting.

A recent report from the United States indicates[95] that, for children, reading is fundamental to their future success in both education and life in general. The same report provides statistical information that correlates almost directly to the statistical information from the International Adult Literacy Survey. In the *Teaching Reading* **is** *Rocket Science* report, about 20% of elementary students were reported to have significant problems learning to read and at least 20% of elementary students were reported to not read fluently enough to enjoy or engage in independent reading. As noted in Chapter 2, the International Adult Literacy Survey reported that 22% of Canadians were at the lowest level, while 25% had difficulty with a reading task unless the material was clearly written and designed. The results for adults in the United States were very similar.

Teaching Reading **is** *Rocket Science* suggests that the following components and practices should be present in all reading instruction:

⇒ Direct teaching of decoding, comprehension and literature appreciation
⇒ Phoneme awareness[96] instruction
⇒ Systematic and explicit instruction in the code system of written English
⇒ Daily exposure to a variety of texts, as well as incentives to read independently and with others
⇒ Vocabulary instruction that includes a variety of complementary methods designed to explore the relationships among words and the relationships among word structure, origin and meaning
⇒ Comprehension strategies that include prediction of outcomes, summarizing, clarification, questions and visualization
⇒ Frequent writing of prose to enable deep understanding of what is read

---

[95] Published by the American Federation of Teachers *Teaching Reading* **is** *Rocket Science* (June 1999) reviews and describes the knowledge base and essential skills that teacher candidates and practicing teachers must master if they are to be successful in teaching all children to read well.

[96] Phoneme awareness refers to the ability to detect distinct and isolated sounds in our spoken language and match these to the written symbols or words.

The information in this chapter is designed to help you understand the challenges instructors can face when working with adult literacy learners. If the above components and practices should be present in all reading instruction for children, as is argued in the mentioned report, then they could also be used to shape instruction for adults who are improving their basic literacy skills. More importantly, it may be possible that these components were present in instruction and the adult, as a child, still did not gain adequate reading skills. The challenge then becomes one of finding ways to design and deliver instructional strategies that will teach these necessary components without falling back on the methods that did not work for the adult in the first place.

There are a number of things that make teaching adults different from teaching children. For example, adults bring life skills and knowledge to the learning situation that children do not possess. This means that, as an example, the "direct teaching of decoding, comprehension and literature appreciation" can be built on the prior knowledge and life skills of the adult learner. The words and concepts used can come from the learners' everyday lives. Some adults possess an extensive vocabulary that can be used to frame learning activities that "explore the relationships among words and the relationships among word structure, origin and meaning." In their day-to-day lives, adults solve problems and make decisions based on their analysis of a situation. They can be shown how to transfer those skills to the learning environment so they can develop strategies for reading, writing and numeracy.

A program that is learner-centred and focused on the attainment of specific goals allows instructors to shape the instruction to fit the needs of each and every learner. We are, after all, trying to fit the learning to the learner. This means, for example, that "comprehension strategies that include prediction of outcomes, summarizing, clarification, questions and visualization" can be taught by integrating the learner's current skills with new skills that are specific to the learner's own goal.

This contextualized approach to skills acquisition applies what is known as a constructivist approach to learning. That is, learners relate new knowledge to what they already know, construct their own

understanding, and make new meanings. Prior knowledge and experience is used as a scaffold that supports new learning.

Making Learning Effective

What would you do with the following information? "Bob read slowly. In a short paragraph he skipped some words and mispronounced others. He corrected some of the words he mispronounced but not others. His reading was so jagged that it was difficult for him to retell the story."

While examining what this information tells you is an important first step, you need to also look at how you use that information. It should shape the specific learning activities that are used with that learner. According to Campbell (2003) "simply knowing whether a student leaves out, inserts or mispronounces words will not usually help an educator to select appropriate reading strategies."

The information in the following sections will try to provide an answer, or answers, to the question: "How can I determine the most appropriate approaches to best meet the learning needs of each and every learner?" Before you can determine the most appropriate approach, instructors must first understand the skills required at a particular level for a particular domain.

Many learners who are seeking literacy upgrading in community literacy agencies (whether in one-to-one, small group or a combination of these learning situations) are working at the lower levels of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' (MTCU) Learning Outcomes Matrix. Therefore, the strategies suggested and any examples given in the following sections will reflect, for the most part, the needs of those learners. The domains within MTCU's Learning Outcomes Matrix will be used as the framework for the following discussions.

Delivery Models

Traditionally, in most community literacy agencies, instruction has been delivered by volunteer tutors working with learners in a one-to-one setting. In recent years, an increasing number of agencies have also begun to include the use of small groups and, in some cases, classroom settings to deliver instruction. The following discussion gives an overview of three delivery settings.

One-to-one Delivery

Definition: Trained instructors —most often volunteers, but sometimes paid staff—work directly with one learner at a time.

Instruction Time: The learner / tutor match usually meets for two to three hours per week. Usually both participants have agreed to meet for a set time length, e.g., a one-year commitment. Participation is considered to be part-time.

Features:
⇒ Many adult literacy learners have expressed comfort with this type of situation
⇒ It fits into a learner's life schedule
⇒ It offers a high level of personal support and confidentiality
⇒ It is often less intimidating for low level learners
⇒ It is a highly learner-centred method of instruction
⇒ It lends itself to goal-based instruction because of the focus on the individual
⇒ This model can help a learner become comfortable with the learning environment before he/she moves on to other learning opportunities, e.g. college course, credit programming
⇒ It is particularly effective with low level learners because it provide one-to-one, highly personalized instruction
⇒ It helps adult learners return to learning after what is, for some, a very long absence
⇒ This model provides the opportunity and the privacy to focus on other types of barriers to learning, such as low self-esteem

Instructional Strategies

Small Group Delivery

Definition: Trained instructors—most often paid staff, but sometimes volunteers— work with two to a maximum of ten learners. Volunteer tutors often work with individual learners outside of the small group session or may assist the instructor during small group instruction time.

Instruction Time: Small groups usually meet for a minimum of three hours a week. Intake may be continuous or it may be time limited. Participation is usually considered part-time, that is, less than twenty hours a week.

Features:
⇒ Group learning is reflective of many work and life environments and the skills needed (e.g. group dynamics, team work)
⇒ By creating opportunities for learners to experience and observe the learning of others, it permits them to expand their repertoire of learning strategies
⇒ It can break down the isolation and stigma frequently experienced by adults with insufficient literacy skills and provides peer support for their learning
⇒ It makes available and can take advantage of the wide range of resources, including the thinking, experience, help, and encouragement that each learner brings to the group and offers opportunities for peer tutoring
⇒ This model can allow learners with similar goals to work together
⇒ It allows agencies to maximize available resources and possibly eliminate or reduce-waiting times, e.g. if a one-to-one tutor is not available, a learner can enrol in a small group
⇒ It may help adult literacy learners to not feel quite so isolated because they can share their experiences and challenges with other adult learners

Classroom Delivery

Definition: Trained instructors—almost always paid staff, but sometimes volunteers— work with more than ten learners. Volunteer tutors may also work with individual learners outside of the classroom session or may assist the instructor during class time.

Instruction Time: Instruction that is delivered in larger group settings also seems to be delivered for more hours. The class may run five days a week for a minimum of four hours a day. Intake may be continuous but it is usually time limited. That is, a class will have a defined beginning and end date.

Features: Many of the features are similar to those of the small group.
⇒ By creating opportunities for learners to experience and observe the learning of others, it permits them to expand their repertoire of learning strategies
⇒ Peer support can be better accommodated
⇒ It can allow learners with similar goals to work together
⇒ This model allows agencies to maximize available resources and possibly eliminate or reduce waiting times, e.g. if a one-to-one tutor is not available, a learner can enrol in a classroom
⇒ It can help a learner prepare for enrolment in traditional learning environments, e.g. credit courses, college courses, other training courses
⇒ It is a better simulation of real-life where learners may not be able to get one to one or individualized attention

Learner Groups

Many community-based agencies, regardless of how they deliver literacy training, encourage and support learner groups. Studies have shown that most adults facing a particular challenge benefit greatly from participating in peer support groups.

Participation in a learners' group can be the first step that some learners take to become more active participants in the community-at-large. Other learners have a great deal of experience with participation in group activities (through a service club, for example) that they can share with other learners and the agency. In addition to dissipating the sense of aloneness ("I'm the only one who can't read"), peer support groups can be a powerful tool for public awareness and education.

While a learner's group will benefit from staff support, the types of activities that the group takes on must be selected and supported by the group, not dictated by the staff. Below is a list of some of the activities that learner groups from across the province have participated in over the years.

Learners have helped with:

Recruitment: By speaking publicly about their own life experiences and about their learning experiences, learners have given others the courage to contact a literacy program.

Retention: Belonging to a learner's group provided additional support so learners were less likely to drop out.

Resource development: Educating policy makers, other funders, and the public about the need to invest in adult education is an important role; stories written by learners provide the agency with relevant learning materials.

Reforming education: Through their advocacy efforts and by sitting on boards and committees, learners have influenced local literacy programming.

Research: By talking to other learners, learners have identified the need for other types of programs and have helped find the resources needed for the programs.

Advocacy: By meeting with politicians and bureaucrats, learners can help to raise awareness of literacy as a social issue.

Public Awareness: Adult learners help to make the issue of literacy more real to the general public. Through public awareness events and presentations, they help to build sensitivity around the barriers and needs of people with low literacy skills.

Strategies for Developing Learning Activities

Overview

While some learning activities will be used in the following discussion to illustrate key points, it is really beyond the scope of this resource to provide examples of, or information about, each and every type of learning activity. The following information is provided to help guide or shape your practice when developing learning activities for learners or when providing training to volunteer tutors.

The Role of Motivation

According to research conducted by John Keller, motivation is the most important component of learner success. His research led him to develop a model of motivation in instruction called ARCS. Attention, relevance, confidence and satisfaction are the four essential components of his model.

Within each of these components, Keller further identified subsets of strategies that can be shaped to fit specific learning situations.

The strategies below have been developed to reflect the learning situation in a community-based literacy program.

Attention

How can you capture a learner's interest?
How can you stimulate an attitude of inquiry?
How can you keep a learner's interest?

Sample Strategies:
⇒ Interest is aroused and sustained by posing questions or by having the learner ask questions
⇒ Information is presented in a variety of ways but relevant, concrete, specific examples are used
⇒ The learner's predominant learning style is used to shape instruction and learning activities
⇒ Humour is used to break up monotony
⇒ Reading, writing, speaking and listening activities are incorporated into each activity and each learning session

Relevance

How can you best meet the learner's needs?
How and when can you provide appropriate choices, responsibilities and influences?
How can you tie the instruction to the learner's experience?

Sample Strategies:
⇒ Explain how the new learning will use existing skills and prior knowledge to develop new skills
⇒ Clearly link activities to learner goals and explain the link clearly to the learner
⇒ Base activities on authentic materials and concrete examples
⇒ Respect the learner's learning style
⇒ Use new learning as a scaffold for all future learning

Confidence

How can you build a positive expectation for success?

How can the learning support or enhance the learner's perception of themselves as learners?

How can you ensure that learner success is based on the learner's own efforts and abilities?

Sample Strategies:

⇒ Build learner confidence by working hard to establish a high level of trust and a shared understanding about what is to be learned and how

⇒ Build success into every activity and interaction to motivate learners

⇒ Present instruction in small steps

⇒ Increase opportunities for comprehension by involving the learner in questioning

⇒ Allow the learner to be an active participant by encouraging discussion of topics and activities

⇒ Explain expectations in terms of time and energy to the learner

⇒ Teach the learner how to assume more control over the learning situation (e.g., choosing materials)

Satisfaction

How can you provide meaningful opportunities for the learner to use new skills?

What can you do to provide positive reinforcement?

What can you do to help the learner feel positive about learning accomplishments?

Sample Strategies:

⇒ Learning activities and situations must be realistic and authentic

⇒ Feedback should focus on the positive

⇒ Criteria for success should be clearly defined and the learner must understand and agree to the criteria

⇒ Positive experiences will motivate the learner to want to learn more and take more control

Encouraging Self-Directed Learning

While the ARCS model incorporates a number of key strategies for ensuring that your approach to instruction is holistic and learner-focused, there are other aspects to learning you should incorporate to make learning effective. See Chapter 5 for more information on self-directed learning.

Here are some additional strategies to help learners become more self-directed:

Skills integration:
When designing learning activities, provide opportunities that involve the use of oral **and** written communication skills. This will help ensure that learners see reading, writing, and speaking and listening as interrelated processes. Since most adult literacy learners use the major conventions of speech correctly, you should allow them to build (scaffold) their reading and writing from this area of strength. For more information, see the Planning Lessons section in Chapter 6.

Journal Writing:
If done between meeting sessions, this activity can allow the writing process to become a more natural part of the learner's life.

Reading for pleasure:
Many practitioners talk about wanting to share the joy of reading with learners but often our practice seems to be totally focused on skills acquisition or employment related materials. Provide opportunities and materials during the session time for "pleasure" reading. This will allow reading to become a more integral part of the learner's life. Encourage the learner to read for pleasure outside of class time.

Discussion Groups:
While it may be thought of as a group activity, two people can certainly hold a group discussion. By posing questions or by having the learner ask you questions you will help the learner to become more independent.

Research:

Take field trips but plan the process thoroughly before you go. Have learners decide where to go, what will be learned and how the new knowledge will be integrated into recently learned materials and prior knowledge as well as how the new knowledge will be demonstrated. Have learners set the criteria for measuring a successful trip.

Feedback:

As discussed in Chapter 6, ongoing assessment can be both formal and informal. It is also important that the process is continuous and that it is built on strengths that learners already possess.

Homework:

Many learners do not understand the value or purpose of homework or they may be embarrassed to make it a part of their regular routine. Discuss with them the importance of practicing skills between sessions, especially if you are meeting one-to-one in weekly sessions. The simple message to give to learners is "doing homework and practicing skills will really help you remember what you learn." If you keep the homework activities simple and grounded in the learners' reality, it will increase the likelihood of learners actually doing the activities.

Study Skills:

Many adult literacy learners do not know how to study or do not understand the importance of studying. For many learners, studying is something that is done before you take a test. Instructors need to teach learners that studying is more than that! Studying is more about how a learner takes in and then reorganizes the information to make better use of it than it is about preparing to take a test.

Model Your Own Behaviour:

While the learner's preferred learning style will play a large role in determining how to maximize a learner's ability to learn, one of the best ways to help is to model your own behaviour.

Modelling your own behaviour could include:

⇒ Discuss out loud what you think the topic is about based on the
information at hand (pictures, headlines, sub-headings)
⇒ Review out loud what you know about the topic based on past
information or experience
⇒ Ask questions that will help clarify the topic or identify the need for
more information
⇒ At the end of the session, summarize out loud the key points of the
topic or session

Activities such as these will help the learner to understand that this type
of reflection and questioning is a normal part of learning. As time goes on
you should encourage the learner to be the one to suggest what the topic
may be about.

Self-Management and Self-Direction Domain

Overview

Self-management/Self-direction is a domain within MTCU's Learning
Outcomes Matrix. While there are no specific skill sets attached to this
domain, it is divided into two component outcomes: "Become a Self-
Directed Learner Capable of Achieving the Best Results Possible in Work
and Personal Life" and, "Set, Monitor and Revise Short- and Long-Term
Goals." These component outcomes can be considered the structure that
surrounds and supports the achievement of the outcomes.

How an adult learns and how well he or she learns will be affected by a wide variety of physical, social, emotional and intellectual factors. On the whole, however, adult literacy learners can be taught to become self-directed learners[97] and to monitor and revise their learning goals but the process must be highly individualized. For example, many adult learners have family and work responsibilities. This means they already understand the importance of commitment to others. They demonstrate self-directed skills by getting the kids to school on time, arriving at work on time, and fixing meals for the family. Becoming a self-directed learner could include understanding how to apply or modify current daily life skills to fit the learning environment.

Skills That Affect Self-Direction

According to the Ontario Literacy Coalition's *The Levels Descriptions Manual*, the following are the types of skills that may affect the learner's ability to become a self-directed learner. Each of these will be discussed in some detail below and sample instructional strategies will be provided.

Skill areas that affect self-direction[98]:

⇒ Concentration/memory
⇒ Goal-setting
⇒ Personal advocacy and self-motivation
⇒ Problem-solving
⇒ Self-assessment/self-reflection
⇒ Self-confidence building
⇒ Thinking
⇒ Time management/organization
⇒ Understanding of personal learning style
⇒ Working with others

---

[97] The topic of self-directed learning is also discussed in Chapter 5.

[98] *The Level Descriptions Manual*, page 100.

Concentration/Memory Skills

Many adult literacy learners have highly developed concentration and memory skills. They have had to develop these skills to compensate for their inability to read written information. Having good concentration and memory skills is all about focus—the ability to focus on the task at hand and the ability to stay focused on a particular task. However, being in a learning situation, whether it is one-to-one or small group, causes most learners (at least initially) to be nervous. Learners may also be facing situations in their everyday life that affect their ability to remember.

Sample Strategy:
The most important strategy you can employ is to make sure that the learner feels comfortable emotionally and physically in the learning environment. For some learners this may mean helping them understand that their input is crucial to the success of the session. This may mean providing them with physical comforts like a comfortable chair, or a table at the right height.

Goal-Setting Skills

Without a goal, the learner's participation in a literacy program will soon become meaningless. See Chapters 5 and 6 for in-depth information on goal-setting.

Sample Strategy:
Allow goal-setting to become an everyday activity by using-goal-directed language during the session. Talk about the learning activities in terms of goals. For example, rather than saying "today we will work on your spelling", say instead "Our goal for today's session will be to add three words to your vocabulary list by working on these spelling skills." Ask questions like "Do you think we met our goal for today's session?" or "What would you like to accomplish today?" to help keep the link between what you are working on and the stated goal (or goals) at the forefront of the learner's mind.

Chapter Seven

Personal Advocacy and Self-Motivation:

Research has shown that the first twelve hours of instruction are critical to whether or not a learner stays in the program. This means that the experience that the learner has must be extremely positive—it must motivate[99] the learner to continue. For learners who are experiencing psychological or economical difficulties, the learning session may become their temporary safe haven from the storm. Although your job as the instructor should not be one of counselling, you cannot ignore the learner's real world and the challenges it brings to, or barriers it may create in, the learning environment. To do so would fly in the face of a learner-centred, holistic approach to learning.

Sample Strategy:

If you are meeting with a learner in a one-to-one situation build in, at the front end of the session, time to unwind or vent but keep it focused and timed. Ask the learner to describe the best thing that happened in the past week and why it was the best. Tell the learner she has five minutes to verbally compose a letter of complaint to her landlord or social services or to tell you what she would say to someone else if that person was in the room. If it is appropriate, and if you have the learner's approval, use this type of activity to frame the current session or make it the focus of a future session. Once again, however, learners have to know that the environment is safe for them to share. The instructor must also feel comfortable dealing with the information and the situation.

Sample Strategy:

In a small group or classroom setting, activities such as the one described above, may be more difficult, but not impossible, to facilitate. Strategies employed will depend on factors, such as the type of information being presented, the "mix" of the group (male, female, age, etc.), how long the group has been together, the level of trust within the group, how many learners are in the group and whether it is a multi-level or single-level group. For example, problem solving someone's difficulties with a landlord could become a group activity.

---

[99] Learner motivation is discussed more fully in Chapter 5 - The Adult Literacy Learner.

Problem Solving Skills

Adult literacy learners solve problems every day and most of the time, it happens at the subconscious level. The adult may not even realize that they are using problem solving skills or that an internal discussion has taken place. For example, you say to yourself "It's raining and I'm going out. Where is my umbrella?" With this thought, you have identified there is a problem (it is raining) that affects something you want to do (I'm going out) and you come up with a solution (find my umbrella). Like most of the skills in this domain, the task of the instructor is to help learners acknowledge the problem solving skills they already have and then help them transfer this knowledge to the learning environment.

Sample Strategy:
Help learners understand how the skills that they already have will help them gain reading and writing skills by posing questions like:
How do you know you have a problem?
How can you identify things that keep you from solving a problem?
How well can you express what you are thinking so everyone understands you?

Self-Assessment/Self-Reflection

As discussed in Chapter 5, thinking about how you learn (metacognition) is a thinking process that can be taught to adult literacy learners. Self-reflection is an important skill to gain. In a learner-centred, outcomes-based learning environment, self-reflection encourages the learner to link past learning to current learning and to use the new knowledge in day-to-day settings. Self-assessment/self-reflection also recognizes the importance of learning styles and the role of a positive self-image ("as a learner, I know I can learn this.").

Chapter Seven

Sample Strategy:

Learners need to understand their own learning strengths and weaknesses. Instructors should encourage learners to increase this understanding by asking them to answer general questions like:

⇒ How do you know that you have learned something? (e.g., I can show others how to do it; I can do it automatically)

⇒ What has been the best way for you to show that you have learned something new? (e.g., I can answer questions about the topic; I can teach someone else how to do it)

⇒ What are the factors that will affect your present learning situation (both positive and negative)? Are there factors that you can control? Are there factors outside your control?

⇒ What affects your dedication to learning?

Other self-reflection questions can be asked about specific learning materials. These will be presented in the following sections on reading, writing, and numeracy.

Self-Confidence Building Skills

See the discussion above on the ARCS model.

Thinking Skills

In the learning situation, complex or critical thinking can involve a number of tasks, depending on what is being learned and the situation in which it is being learned. Like many of the skills or tasks associated with self-management/ self-direction, many low level literacy learners may need to be shown how the skills they already have can be transferred to their literacy training.

Sometimes learners just do not know which question to ask. To help learners think about and apply their thinking skills, three broad types of questions could be asked:

1. What is the problem and, am I sure it is the problem? This type of question will help to define and clarify the problem.

2. What do I already know about this and what new information do I need to get? This type of question will help clarify what information is relevant to the decision or situation and what is not.

3. Have I solved the problem or found a solution? This type of question will help to bring the process to a close.

Sample Strategy:
Use a real-life situation as a starting place to actively and openly discuss thinking skills. Ask learners to think about a situation where they had to make a decision (e.g., plan a party, ask someone for help, buy a car) or start with an example from your own life and then have the learner provide an example. If you begin with an example from your own life use the questions above as a model and then tailor your questions and response to fit the specific example. Other questions to consider may be:

⇒   What conclusions can you come to based on the information that you have at hand?
⇒   What can you say about the results of a particular action or reaction?
⇒   How do you know what is wrong with something and how do you describe what is wrong?
⇒   What are appropriate alternatives and how do you know they are appropriate to the decision at hand?

Time Management/Organization Skills

Often things like improved or steady attendance, assignments completed on time, and activities that are planned in advance are listed as evidence of someone's time management and/or organizational skills. The question then becomes "How or what do I teach to help the adult literacy learner achieve these outcomes?"

Sample Strategy:
Help learners integrate their literacy learning into their daily lives by having them develop a colour-coded calendar. This visual map will give them a graphic display of where their time is going and help them rearrange some activities so they can achieve their learning goals. Start by working with them to develop a list of activities and/or responsibilities. Have them organize these under different coloured headings. For example, blue for "Things I have to do every week"; red for "Things I have to do everyday"; and green for "Things that I have to do once a month". Block out a monthly calendar by colour. Other headings can be used as well: green for personal time (things I do for myself); black for things other people impose on us (that could be done by others); yellow for literacy learning; and orange for family obligations.

Understanding of Personal Learning Style

See Chapter 5 for the discussion on learning styles. See also the information provided earlier in this chapter on ARCS. See the sections below on reading, writing and numeracy for instructional strategies that apply specifically to each of these skills.

Working With Others

While this facet of self-management/self-direction may have more applicability to learners who are in small group or classroom settings, it can be a needed skill in almost any situation where you have to work with others—at home or in the community.
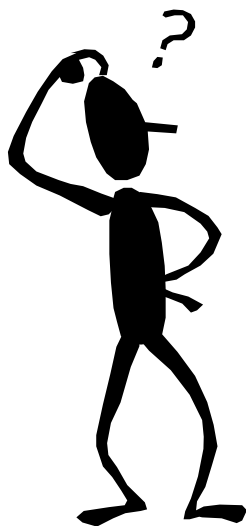
Instructional Strategies

Sample Strategy:

Have learners prepare a list of questions that they would ask a potential babysitter. Have them think about things like "What would you do if you found out that your sitter was not following the rules you had set?", or have them prepare a list of skills and knowledge that they would want the sitter to have. In a group setting, learners could be paired up to conduct mock interviews.

Conclusion – Self-Management and Self-Direction

Without a doubt, the skills and knowledge that can be grouped under the heading of "self –direction" are critical to the learning process. Most adult learners will of course already possess self-management skills and use them in their daily lives. However, they may need to learn how to transfer skills they possess in their everyday lives to the learning environment in order to acquire new skills. Many learners may lack the self-confidence needed to be proactive with their learning. For these learners, improving their literacy skills may mean they first have to learn how to learn effectively.

Questions for Reflection

⇒ Asking questions can be a very effective and powerful instructional strategy. What can you do to develop or improve your skills in this area?

⇒ It is sometimes difficult to interpret and account for a person's behaviour. Can you think of a situation where you were unsure of the reasons behind someone's behaviour? What you did about the situation?
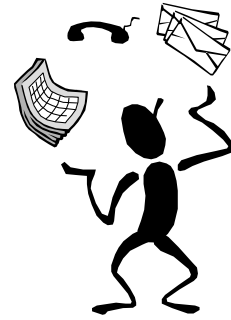
⇒ How would you define self-management and self-direction? Would a
     learner have the same definition?

Suggested Resources

In addition to the various reports, manuals, websites
and other resources mentioned in this section of
Chapter Seven, we think you might find the
following resources useful.

Print–Based:

Naming the Magic: Non-Academic Outcomes in Basic Literacy.
http://www.c2t2.ca (typing "Naming the Magic" into the search box will
take you to a PDF file that you can download.)
⇒ Outlines six techniques for the documentation of non-academic
     changes in the lives of learners participating in literacy instruction.

Supporting Learning, Supporting Change. Katrina Grieve. Ontario Literacy
Coalition 2003.
⇒ This report highlights the importance of self-management and self-
     direction to the learning process.

Learning For Life: A Social Skills Training Program For Young Adolescents.
Judie Bopp, Phil Lane Jr., Lenore A. Stiffarm. Four Worlds Development
Project, University of Lethbridge, 1992. AlphaPlus Call #: 362.74 B58.
⇒ A manual for teaching social and personal skills to adolescents (with
     particular emphasis on First Nations) who are at risk for substance
     abuse due to family background and/or socio-economic factors.

I Can Manage Life: Learning How To Make Major Life Choices And Decisions. Dennis Hooker. JIST Works, Inc., c1998. AlphaPlus Call #:153.4307 H58 1998.

⇒ Students learn what decision making is and what processes you need to go through to make sound and healthy choices. Each activity is broken down into a challenge, exercise and sharing which provides opportunity for students to reflect on their thoughts.

Team Problem Solving For Cook Trainees: A Skills For Success Curriculum Guide. Moira Gutteridge Kloster and Wendy Watson. B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, 2001. AlphaPlus Call #: 374.013 K48.

⇒ In a kitchen, you do not succeed or fail on your own. You are part of a team, and you must know how to play your part in the team properly. This program aims to help your students build the confidence and the skills it takes to succeed in problem solving and teamwork in the kitchen.

Expanding Perceptions: An Approach to Self-Management for Employment Preparation. Jennifer Tait. Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, c2002. AlphaPlus Call #: 374.01207 T11.

⇒ Activities are divided into five sections, and include dealing with change, self-assessment, getting organized, personal responsibility, and conflict resolution. Each section challenges the students to witness their impact and personal responsibility in the choices that they make.

Putting Your Best Self Forward. David Ward. Dryden Literacy Association, 2000. AlphaPlus Call #: 158.10715 W13.

⇒ With a focus on developing self-confidence and self-esteem, the objective of the unit is to familiarize and direct students to develop and practice the skills that will enable them to feel a greater degree of confidence when dealing with the public and be more knowledgeable of the positive qualities they can display.

Communications Domain

Overview

In MTCU's Learning Outcomes Matrix, there are three component Learning Outcomes for the Communications Domain. These outcomes are reading, writing, and speaking and listening.

Communicating with others, whether through reading, writing or speaking and listening involves the use of an inter-related and extraordinarily complex set of activities. Good communication skills require the use of both physical and cognitive attributes. Often the relationship between these two attributes is overlooked. Also, there is an intimate connection between reading and writing, reading and speaking, and reading and listening. It is important to keep in mind the value of integrating all the means by which we communicate into your approach to teaching adult literacy learners.

Read with Understanding for Various Purposes

Learning to read is a complex process. Reading has been described as the ability to construct meaning from written text. The text itself, the interaction of the reader with the text, and the context in which reading takes place all play a role in the reading process. Every adult learning to read (and understand) written text is also influenced by a wide variety of physical, social, emotional and intellectual factors. These factors add to the complexity of helping an adult improve his or her reading skills.

Most research into the acquisition of reading skills has focused, understandably, on how this takes place with children. Given the large number of children in any one school system at any one time, it is

relatively easy for researchers to survey, test and develop instructional models and materials for school aged learners. This research has provided a strong theoretical and empirical base from which instructional models and materials for children have been generated and tested.

A comparable base for instructional models and materials for adults has been slow to emerge. This is due, in part, to the fact that the number of adults in literacy programs is relatively low in comparison to school-aged children and also because adult learners of similar levels and background are not available in large numbers in literacy programs. This makes it difficult to develop a theoretical or empirical base that can be considered statistically reliable. Nonetheless, our knowledge about the acquisition of reading skills in adults is increasing.

In recent years, research[100] has affirmed that approaches to learning that make use of prior knowledge to identify words and construct meaning are appropriate to use when working with adult literacy students from the beginning to the advanced stages of literacy instruction. This approach to skills acquisition is known as a constructivist approach to learning. That is, learners relate new knowledge to what they already know, construct their own understanding, and make new meanings.

The advantage of this is approach is that instruction begins with what adults bring to literacy programs—what they already know—rather than with what they do not know.

So what makes someone a fluent reader? VanDuzer (1999) writing in "Reading and the Adult English Language Learner" provided the following list of characteristics of fluent readers.

---

[100] Beginning with Knowles' Principles of Adult Education and continuing to today's writers about literacy (e.g. Auerbach's *Putting the P Back in Participatory* and Campbell's *Teaching Reading to Adults, A Balanced Approach*) it seems almost self-evident to say that learning that is based on the adult learner's prior knowledge is "appropriate."

According to VanDuzer, fluent readers read:

⇒ For a purpose: they read to get information or for pleasure and they understand the purpose of different texts (e.g., ads to encourage buying, editorials to present and influence opinions, recipes to give instructions)

⇒ Quickly: they automatically recognize letters and words, and maintain a flow that allows them to make connections and inferences that make the text understandable

⇒ Using a variety of strategies: depending on the text, they may vary their reading speed, predict what will happen next, and preview headings and illustrations

⇒ By interacting with the text: they make use of background knowledge as well as the information on the printed page

⇒ Critically: they evaluate the text and determine whether they agree or disagree with the author

⇒ Expecting to understand the text and get meaning from it

⇒ Silently (usually)

Research, especially with children, has identified that readers can be classified as beginning, emergent and early independent[101]. The OLC's *The Level Descriptions Manual* provides a descriptive look at adult literacy learners as they move from beginning to more advanced levels of reading ability across the MTCU Learning Outcomes Matrix.

The Level Descriptions Manual shows how both the types of reading materials and the types of strategies being used become more complex as learners gain skills. Beginning readers use a "familiarity with some common forms and conventions of simple texts" and "various basic reading strategies, personal experience, and knowledge…" to gain reading skills. Learners reading at a more advanced level (MTCU Level

---

[101] LEARNS Literacy Assessment Profile (LLAP) developed for the America Reads initiative by Bank Street College of Education, in collaboration with Corporation for National Service is one such report. LLAP was designed to be most effective for programs that provide children with one-to-one tutoring in reading instruction.

Five) use "a wide range of appropriate and efficient strategies, including a deeper application of personal experiences and knowledge…."

Below are the summary statements from the OLC's *The Level Descriptions Manual* for each level of MTCU's Learning Outcome "Read with Understanding for Various Purposes":

Level One
The reader locates, understands and responds to simple, concrete ideas and sequential information in graphics, sentences, and very short, simple texts about familiar topics. To do this, the reader uses basic reading strategies, personal experience and familiarity with some common forms and conventions of simple texts.

Level Two
The reader locates, understands, and begins to interpret concrete and some inferential meaning in short, uncomplicated texts about familiar topics. To do this, the reader uses various common reading strategies, personal experience, and knowledge, as well as familiarity with some forms and conventions of more formal texts.

Level Three
The reader locates, understands, interprets, and makes judgements about ideas and information in a variety of texts that have some complexity of content and form. To do this, the reader uses a variety of more advanced reading strategies, personal experiences and knowledge and a familiarity with a variety of forms and conventions of formal texts.

Level Four
The reader analyzes, synthesizes, makes reasoned judgements, and draws conclusions about ideas, information and the writer's perspective in texts that are complex in form and content. To do this, the reader uses a wide variety of reading strategies, personal experiences and knowledge as well as familiarity with a wider variety of forms and conventions, including some stylistic elements.

Level Five

The reader analyzes, synthesizes, makes reasoned judgements, and draws conclusions about ideas and information, including the writer's perspective and bias, and the use and impact of stylistic devices in texts that are complex in form, content, and style. To do this, the reader uses a wide range of appropriate and efficient strategies, including a deeper application of personal experiences and knowledge and a familiarity with complex forms and conventions, including stylistic conventions.

As mentioned above, *The Level Descriptions Manual* gives us a picture of learning in which a learner can be seen to move from being a beginning reader who uses various but basic reading strategies at Level One, to become an increasingly more independent reader who uses various common reading strategies at Level Two and then to a variety of more advanced reading strategies at Level Three. What tools and techniques can you, as the instructor, employ to help facilitate the learner's process from a beginning to a more advanced reader?

Instructional Strategies

To understand what strategies you need to use to help facilitate a learner's skills development, you have to know (through the process of assessment) what skills the learner already has and what level of skill is required by the goal or goals set by the learner. You also need to know how motivated the learner is and, more importantly, whether or not learning disabilities may be an issue[102].

It must be noted that, while it is nice to think about skills acquisition as moving across levels in a concrete linear fashion, it would be a false assumption on which to base instruction. Reading is an active, complex process of comprehending written language that encompasses many

---

[102] For more information on Learning Disabilities see Chapter 5 – The Adult Literacy Learner. For more information on Assessment, see Chapter 6- Identifying and Meeting Learner Needs.

different skills. Some adult literacy learners may never be able to skim written materials to extract meaning, but this does not imply that they are unable to read. Some adults have excellent reading skills but still have difficulty spelling. For these and other reasons the acquisition of reading skills cannot be looked at in isolation. The acquisition of reading skills must be linked to other communication skills and the goals of the learner.

In keeping with the learner-centred approach that is at the heart of community-based literacy delivery, a variety of instructional strategies can be used to best meet the needs of individual learners.

Whole Language Approach

The whole language approach was developed based on two key concepts. These are:

1. That reading involves the use of three information processing, or **cueing**, systems— graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic

2. That errors, or mistakes made while reading, are not necessarily bad

Cueing Systems: In *Teaching Reading to Adults, A Balanced Approach* Campbell (2003) provides the following information on the three cueing systems. Campbell writes[103]:

"The graphophonic system refers to the relationship between letters and sounds. The reader maps sounds onto symbols in order to come up with words that sound and look similar to words in text.

"The syntactic system, sometimes known as grammar, refers to the conventional structure or word order of sentences. When using this system, the reader uses syntactic or grammatical cues to identify

---

[103] *Teaching Reading to Adults, A Balanced Approach* page 63.

unfamiliar words in order to come up with words that sound right in the sentence.

"The semantic system refers to meaning. When using semantic cues, the reader uses meaning to identify unfamiliar words that fit in with the rest of the sentence."

Miscue Analysis: Mistakes made during reading have been described as "miscues" and the miscues have been classified according to type. In *Teaching Reading to Adults*, Campbell identifies the following as common oral reading errors[104]:

Skips words	Repeats words
Guesses words	Mispronounces words
Inserts words	Misses beginnings and endings of words
Reverses words	

Miscues, according to Campbell and others, once identified, can be analysed to determine which cueing system (graphophonic, syntactic, and/or semantic) the learner is using or relying on when reading. The analysis of miscues is an important step that Campbell has identified as often being overlooked by literacy instructors (and educators in general).

Analysis of miscues will allow you to determine whether to use "print-based strategies, such as phonics and word families, or meaning-based strategies, such as the cloze procedure" when working with adult literacy learners. For more information on miscue analysis, see *Teaching Reading to Adults, A Balanced Approach*, by Pat Campbell or *Handbook for Literacy Tutors* by Chris Harwood.

The set of fundamental principles associated with a whole language approach have much in common with what we call our learner-centred,

---

[104] Ibid page 62.

goal-directed approach. As described by MacKillop (1995) in *Whole Language for Adults: a Guide to Administration and Staff Development*, these principles include things such as: linking reading, writing and spoken language; building on what the learner knows; using flexible approaches and varying activities; and basing instruction on learners' goals, needs and interests.

Phonics Approach

As noted in the *Handbook for Literacy Tutors*, "Phonics is a method of teaching reading, pronunciation and spelling by a system of rules that associates letters in words to the sounds heard when the work is pronounced. Phonics helps learners to see patterns in language."

According to Goodman (1993) phonics refers to "the set of complex relationships between phonology (which is the sound system of an oral language) and orthography (which is the system of spellings and punctuation of written language)." Goodman says that to describe phonics as a "set of one-letter-to-one sound correspondences" is too simple.

Phonics, according to Goodman and many others, is one way to link our oral language to our written language. The use of phonics-based strategies will help learners see patterns in our written language and then link these written patterns to what they hear when they read out loud.

Many community literacy agencies in Ontario incorporate phonics as one of the instructional strategies they use. One example of a highly successful phonics-based approach is the Laubach Method. This approach uses a structured, phonics-based method to teach the essential skills of reading and writing. Over the years, Laubach-based organizations have developed many excellent resources (workbooks and readers) that focus on basic skills such as word patterns and common spelling patterns. The three main reading resources are the Laubach Way to Reading series, the Challenger series and the Voyager series.

For information on the Laubach approach, contact Laubach Literacy of Ontario (contact information is provided in the "Suggested Resources" at the end of the Communication section).

The Handbook for Literacy Tutors reminds us that since phonics is a sound-based system, it may not work effectively with learners with auditory processing difficulties or with learners who have any type of hearing loss or deficit.

Beginning Readers

To improve their reading skills, learners may need to develop word recognition or decoding skills. Decoding skills are the first skill set in MTCU's Learning Outcomes Matrix.

There are several aspects to decoding. In her article *Techniques for Teaching Beginning-Level Reading to Adults*, Hager[105] lists a number of decoding components that she uses in her literacy classes with beginning readers. These are described below, with examples where applicable.

Phonological Awareness: This refers to the ability to differentiate and manipulate the individual sounds or phonemes in words. Phonemes are significant symbols perceived by speakers. For example, in English there are six consonant phonemes that are called "stops" because they stop the flow of air producing the sounds. These consonants are: P, T, K, B, D, G. Asking the learner to orally spell a word that you say or to say a word that you spell will increase the learner's ability to distinguish between and use letter sounds.

---

[105] Focus on Basics, Volume 5, Issue A, August 2001, pages 1 – 6. This issue of Focus on Basics provides several articles on the topic of "First Level Learners". It can be downloaded as a PDF file from http://www.gse.harvard.edu /~ncsall/fob.

Word Analysis: This refers to the ability to recognize that the graphic letter symbols in our alphabet correspond to speech sounds and to also recognize that these symbols and sounds can be blended together to form words. It is during word analysis that we apply the vowel rules that so many of us are familiar with. Here are some of those rules[106]:

⇒ When there is one vowel in the syllable and it ends with one or more consonants, the vowel usually has a short sound. Examples: pit, path, flash, mitten
⇒ When the syllable has a vowel-consonant-vowel combination, the first vowel usually has a long sound. Examples: rope, fine
⇒ When there in only one vowel in the syllable and it is at the end, the vowel usually has a long sound. Example: be, so, why
⇒ When there are two vowels side-by-side in the syllable, usually the second one is silent and the first one is long. Examples: beef, rain, boat

Sight Word Recognition: This refers to the ability to recognize on sight words that are stored in memory. Although the vowel rules above describe what usually happens there are, as we all know, many irregularities between sounds and written words in English. Learners will need to develop a list of words that they recognize on sight that do not fit the rules. For example, in the sentence "Put the photo in the frame." both photo and frame make an "f" sound. When seen as written words other skills are needed to decode these words.

Spelling: This is an effective way to reinforce both word analysis skills and automatic word recognition. Fluent readers make use of spelling patterns when they read. Teaching word families is a useful "word attack" skill[107] that should be taught to beginning readers.

---

[106] For a comprehensive list of vowel rules, please refer to a resource like *Handbook for Literacy Tutors* published by Grass Roots Press.
[107] Word attack skills are skills for decoding unfamiliar words, for example by the use of phonics, context clues, memory, etc.

Chapter Seven

Oral Reading: This is an effective way to build accuracy and fluency. Oral reading for accuracy puts the emphasis on using word analysis knowledge to decode unfamiliar words. Oral reading for fluency promotes reading that is smooth and encourages the reader to use appropriate expressions.

Sample Strategy:

Small Group Language Experience Approach
For many beginning readers, the Language Experience Approach is one of the best ways to create the content from which specific decoding techniques can be taught. While this approach has been traditionally (and successfully) used in one-to-one settings, the following is an adaptation for the small group or classroom setting.

1. The learners brainstorm and generate ideas on a common experience or topic of interest.
2. With learners' input, develop a process for picking the topic.
3. Use a mapping (also called spidering) technique to generate the broad ideas that will be used in the story.
4. Use a round robin approach in which each learner dictates a part of the story.
5. Write the story word-for-word. (The use of a computer will be invaluable here. If a computer is not available, then use flipchart paper or a blackboard.)
6. Read the story out loud and ask for initial changes.
7. Display the text using the most feasible method (overhead projector, on flipchart paper or a blackboard).
8. Read the story again, pointing to the words as you read. Ask and make any changes.
9. Give each learner a printed copy of the story.
10. To aid comprehension, have the learners read the story together out loud.

Once the story has been completed, the instructor can work with individual learners to establish word lists and to develop specific strategies to ensure comprehension (like cloze activities and word patterns).

Intermediate Readers

While intermediate readers may have mastered many decoding skills, they may still think of reading as a passive process. They may still not understand that what they bring to the process will add meaning to the printed word or that it is acceptable to make mistakes (when making predictions, for example).

Fluent readers, as noted earlier in the chapter, will actively use their background knowledge and prior experience to predict what may happen when reading a story and to bring "life" to the story. They are prepared to make mistakes when they read and they are able to constantly integrate what they read into what they know.

Sample Strategies:

Before reading: Before the learner begins to read, discuss the topic or story and ask questions (for example, "What do you know about _____?"). Make use of any pictures or graphics, titles, or captions by asking questions like "What do you think when you look at this picture?", or "What does the title say to you?" Record the learner's responses to the questions and make note of any key vocabulary that relates to the story used by the learner. This information can be used during and after reading to help confirm the learner's comprehension or understanding of the topic or to guide the type of questions that you ask the learner during or after the activity.

K-W-L: Another method that can be used with certain types of text is called K-W-L. This stands for What I Know (K), What I Want to know (W) and What I Learned (L). This strategy will help readers reflect on their reading. To use it, create a table or chart with the three headings (Know, Want to know and Learned). Under the first header, list everything that the learner knows and tells you about the topic: this will help the learner to think about what is already known (prior knowledge). Under the second header, list the learner's questions or what he or she wants to

know after having read the topic: this will help the learner to set specific goals for the activity. The third header will not be used until after the topic has been read. Through discussion, the learner will reflect on what has been learned and incorporate the new knowledge into his or her personal body of knowledge.

If, based on responses to "What I Know," the learner appears to know nothing about the topic you, should explore whether or not the learner is truly interested in the topic. If the learner is not interested in the topic, you will need to select another topic for a reading activity. If the learner is genuinely interested, suggest that you and the learner gather more information about the topic before actually reading the selected text.

While reading: As previously mentioned, fluent readers are active readers who are willing to take risks (that is, be wrong). They use a variety of skills to predict what might happen, they can describe what might happen (visualize) and they can make inferences. Although stopping the reading to ask questions may appear to be disruptive, you will, in the long-term, be helping the learner to develop these skills. Ask questions like: "What just happened?" "What do you think is going to happen next?" and "What did not happen?" This type of activity is called a directed reading thinking activity, or DRTA. The DRTA encourages readers to use background knowledge to predict what might happen and then to use cues from the story to evaluate and revise their predictions (Campbell 2003).

After reading: Many intermediate readers may have excellent recall and are able to read and retell a story or are able to answer comprehension type questions. These are the basic *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why* type of questions. Intermediate readers, more often than not, have difficulty with inference. Inference is a critical thinking skill that fluent readers use to question what they have read. Ask questions like "Do you think this is a true story?" "Do you agree with the author?" and "What would you say to the author if she were here right now?"

Common Reading Problems

Below are some "typical" problems that many learners encounter and some suggested approaches to those problems. This information was developed based on similar information that can be found in resources like *Handbook for Literacy Tutors* (Harwood 2002) and *The Tutor Resource Manual* (Kennedy 1991).

Common Reading Problems and Suggested Solutions	
Problem Identification:	**What you can do to help:**
• Reads very slowly or with no expression • Reads or sounds out word-by-word rather than in phrases	• Discuss the importance of reading for meaning. • Use duet or echo reading activities. • Read language experience stories together.[108] • Make sure the reading material is at the appropriate instructional level.
• Poor concentration • Is easily distracted	• Keep distractions to a minimum. • Use language experience materials or other materials that are short, interesting, and relevant. • Keep reading sessions very short (move on to writing or other activities). • Ask the learner to choose the best time in the lesson to do more demanding activities.

---

[108] In the whole language approach, the learner writes a language experience story – something about himself. Therefore the material is familiar so it is easier to read than unfamiliar material. If the learner doesn't write well enough, he dictates the story to the tutor who writes it down and then they read it together.

Common Reading Problems and Suggested Solutions	
Problem Identification:	**What you can do to help:**
• Many miscues, but understands	• Make sure the reading material is at the appropriate instructional level. • Let the learner read silently. • Encourage the learner to slow down. • Observe the learner's reading pattern and then develop learning activities that will help to eliminate problem areas (e.g., meaning-based pattern—drops endings, omits small words; print-based pattern—focuses too much on print). • Focus the learner's attention on miscues that change the meaning of the passage.
• Decodes but does not understand	• Discuss the importance of reading for meaning. • Engage in pre-reading and during-reading activities. • Ask questions before the learner reads. • Encourage the learner to become an active learner by visualizing, predicting, and summarizing. • Model the strategies that you use to comprehend.

Common Reading Problems and Suggested Solutions	
Problem Identification:	**What you can do to help:**
• Reads and understands well at a literal level (can decode) but does not understand the subtleties, inferences and connotations of the language	• The ability to make predictions or inferences is based on experience; make sure the learner has the necessary background knowledge (is familiar with the topic) before asking for this type of information. • Explain why making predictions or an inference is an important skill when reading. • Show how the author leaves clues, shows emotions, and sets mood. • Explain and demonstrate how to infer from details in a story.
• Substitutes words that look similar but do not make sense in context • Is unaware of miscues and so does not correct them • Skips hard words	• Stop the learner and ask, "Did that sentence (word) make sense?" If the answer is "No", then ask that the sentence (word) be read again and discuss what would make sense. • Use a cloze[109] activity. • Pull the word out of context and use word analysis to decode the word.
• No word attack skills (skills for decoding unfamiliar words, for example by the use of phonics, context clues, memory, etc.) • Weak phonics-based skills	• Establish a sight word list and use this list to explain and practice phonics and spelling rules, word families, etc. • Link oral and writing activities to reading activities to help embed word attack skills. • Explain why "guessing" based on context is an important skill when reading.

---

[109] A cloze activity is one in which key words are omitted from a sentence. In some instances choices are given; in other uses of this activity the learner must guess the correct word based on context.

Sample Learning Activities

Card Game: A card game like "Concentration" can really help to improve focus. A regular card deck can be used or you can have the learner create a personal deck using words or phrases that are part of his or her sight vocabulary. Make sure to include words that the learner is familiar with, in addition to using words that will challenge them.

Personal Dictionary: Learners can create their own picture dictionaries by gluing pictures onto recipe cards. Have them label the pictures and then put them into alphabetical order. Learners can also use a small address type book to create a personal dictionary that they can carry with them.

Conclusion – Communications Domain

As noted at the beginning of this section, learning to read is a complex process. It can also be a difficult one. Teaching reading is also a complex process. Developing the right approach can only occur after a careful analysis of the difficulties a new reader is facing. This chapter has provided basic information about some of the possible approaches to teaching—to help learners become better, or more fluent, readers.

Questions for Reflection

⇒ How would the reader's own background, cultural and historical knowledge affect what is being read?

⇒ To what extent do you rely on the language acquisition approach (phonics or whole language) that you learned in school or during your training to become an instructor (paid or volunteer)? Is your knowledge of approaches to language acquisition as diverse as it potentially could be?

Suggested Resources

In addition to the various reports, manuals, websites and other resources mentioned in this section of Chapter Seven, we think you might find the following resources useful.
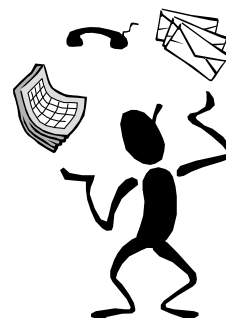
Print–Based:

Reading Without Nonsense. Frank Smith. Teachers College Press, New York 1997.
ISBN: 0-80777-3472-1. AlphaPlus Call Number: 372.4 S51 1997
⇒ Examines reading and reading instruction and provides information on: phonics and meaningful reading; comprehension and learning; the act and the range of reading; and the role of the learner and the teacher in reading.

Phonics Phacts. Ken Goodman. Scholastic Canada 1993. ISBN: 0-590-24051-X. AlphaPlus Call Number: 372.4145 G58.

⇒ Discusses the role of phonics in reading, in learning to read and in reading instructions.

Teaching Reading to Adults, A Balanced Approach. Pat Campbell. Grass Roots Press Edmonton 2003. ISBN: 1-894593-18-9. AlphaPlus Call Number: 428.40715 C12

⇒ Provides an examination of balance in the context of adult literacy.

My Front Yard. Donna Barnett, Charlene Keddy, Darlene Barkhouse et al. Dartmouth Literacy Network, 2002. AlphaPlus Call #: 971.00715 M91

⇒ Workbook developed by learners for adult learners who are at the beginning level in their reading. Learners researched various parts of Canada and wrote stories about history, geography, government, and lifestyles.

Workwrite Book 1. Organizing Information & Workwrite Book 2. Schedules. Karen Geraci et al. Preparatory Training Programs, 2001. AlphaPlus Call #: 650.14076 G26.2 & 650.14076 G26

⇒ Both use workplace documents to focus on developing the reading, writing and mathematics skills that are required for entry level jobs in four employment sectors - industrial, clerical, retail and hospitality. The documents have been organized using the LBS learning outcomes Levels One to Three.

Voyager: Reading and Writing for Today's Adults. 1. Vocabulary workbook. Terrie Lipke. New Readers Press., 2001. ISBN 1564202631. AlphaPlus Call #: 428.00715 V598.

⇒ Voyager is a nine level program (Foundation-8) that teaches the essential reading, writing, listening, speaking, and critical thinking skills and strategies needed by adults to function on the job. Within each of the nine levels there is a student book, a workbook, a vocabulary workbook, and a teacher's guide.

Web-based

Assessment strategies and reading profiles
Research-based assessment practices for the adult education classroom.
Adult learners are matched to one of eleven profiles based on their
individual reading skills and instructional needs. Mini-course provides
extensive information on the major reading components as well as
assessment, references and downloadable resources.
Website: http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/

Laubach Literacy Ontario
Website: www.laubach-on.ca

The Learning Edge
Interactive reading and writing articles and activities for low level literacy
learners.
Website: http://thewclc.ca/edge

Write Clearly To Express Ideas

One of the main challenges that instructors face when working with beginning level writers is helping the writers understand the parts, or activities, that contribute to the whole process of writing. What experienced writers have learned is that to end up with a completed piece of text, a number of activities must occur and the various parts of the writing process must interact.

Many adult literacy learners claim they find writing hard to do. Sometimes they will say things like, "My writing is awful" which may mean they are thinking about the physical aspects of writing. Or they sometimes will say "I can't write!" which may mean they do not think they have anything to say that is worth recording on paper (or in a computer file).

While learning to write is a complex process that incorporates physical, mechanical, and mental aspects, it is also a developmental process. Many learners may not understand that when they read text, they are seeing the final product of what has probably been a lengthy writing process. Another challenge then, for the instructor, is to help learners understand how a piece of writing is developed.

In *The Level Descriptions Manual,* four key features of writing are identified. These are: Purpose and Form, Organization, Style (voice, vocabulary, and sentence variety) and the Mechanics of Writing (grammar, punctuation, and spelling). The summary statements for these features are shown below. These statements were developed for each level of MTCU's Learning Outcomes Matrix.

Level One
The writer writes for some specific, personally relevant purposes, using a few simple forms and sentences, a familiar vocabulary, and some basic grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Level Two

The writer writes for a variety of specific, familiar purposes and audiences, using various simple forms and a basic paragraph structure, with simple support to convey a main idea. The writer uses words and phrases appropriate for the purpose and audience, and basic grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Level Three

The writer writes for a variety of specific purposes and audiences, using various forms of some complexity and developed paragraphs to convey a main idea. The writer begins to use an appropriate style for the purpose and audience and common grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Level Four

The writer writes for a variety of different purposes and audiences, using complex forms, and well-linked and well-developed paragraphs, with effective supporting details to convey a main idea. The writer uses a style appropriate for the purpose and audience, as well as more complex grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Level Five

The writer writes for a wide variety of different purposes and audiences, using a wide variety of complex forms and organizational approaches with appropriate and precise supporting details to convey a main idea creatively and logically. The writer uses a style that reinforces the purpose and engages the audience, as well as complex grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Instructional Strategies

The following chart presents one view of the stages through which writers move as they begin to write. As beginning writers become more comfortable with the writing process, they will come to understand the amount of work that is involved with the process. As mentioned above, one of the roles you, as the instructor, should play is to assist learners by encouraging, modeling, and supporting their growth when and where needed.

Developmental Stages of Writing[110]	
Stage 1 Novice Writer	• Has little, if any, individual writing style • Has little awareness of writing process • Has undeveloped writing skills and techniques • Seeks approval from instructor • Is reluctant to revise any writing • Believes good writing comes easily
Stage 2 Transitional Writer	• Needs support and coaching in order to develop writing skills • Learns writing skills from modeled behaviours • Is developing a degree of comfort with the craft of writing • Is developing an awareness of personal needs, interests, and preoccupations as they relate to writing
Stage 3 Willing Writer	• Is able to collaborate well with others in the writing process • Requires external feedback to shape progress • Is able to profit from criticism • Is developing objectivity concerning work • Enjoys practicing the craft of writing • Is developing a sensitivity to audience

---

[110] Taken from *The Writing Process* retrieved November 2002 from: http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/ docs/mla/writing2.html.

Developmental Stages of Writing[110]	
Stage 4 Independent Writer	• Makes highly objective self-assessments of their own writing • Has developed a sophisticated personal writing style • Has developed a writer's voice • Takes risks and experiments with writing • Is self-motivating and self-aware as a writer • Is a craftsperson

It is important for you and the learner to recognize that becoming an effective, independent writer takes time and practice. Below are a number of key concepts to keep in mind when working with new writers.

⇒   It may seem obvious but learners will learn to write, or to become better writers, by writing so provide lots of opportunities for practicing.

⇒   Printing or cursive writing can only become natural over time and with practice. (The degree to which "proper" penmanship is necessary will depend on the learner's goal or need.)

⇒   Keyboarding skills can only become natural over time and with practice. (The degree to which keyboarding skills are necessary will depend on the learner's goal or need.)

⇒   Help learners understand that writing has a place in everyone's life and use your own behaviour as a model.

⇒   Discuss and set assessment parameters before the learner begins to write.

⇒   Respond to learner's writing in a positive way and make your feedback fit the situation

⇒   Speaking, reading and listening activities will reinforce the learner's writing skills and writing will help them improve their spelling skills.

⇒   Date and keep all attempts at writing in a box or binder.

The Process of Writing

There are several parts to the process of writing—pre-writing, writing and revision. Discuss each of these with the learner. Model the process by taking him or her through a writing activity (for example, write a note to a co-worker). Give every learner plenty of opportunities to practice his or her writing.

Pre-Writing Activities

To help learners become more comfortable with the idea of writing, explore with them questions like:

⇒ Why do people write? (Reasons and purpose)

⇒ What types of writing are there? (Formal, informal, personal, business)

⇒ How would you get started? (Think about writing before writing, ask questions that will help the writer formulate and clarify thoughts)

⇒ Why do you have concerns about your writing? (Mechanical or physical difficulties)

⇒ Who is the audience?

⇒ What is the role of audience?

⇒ Use pictures/illustrations, drawing, or activities like brainstorming, mapping and free-writing to help start the writing process.

The answers to questions like these can help you and the learners explore their perceptions about both the activity and the process of writing and to identify activities that you can develop that will allow learners to become more comfortable with writing.

Writing

Once the topic or type of writing has been decided on, focus on meaning by exploring questions like:

⇒ Who are you writing this for—who will read it?
⇒ What do you want to say—what is the most important idea that you want to explore?
⇒ What information do you need to give to help the reader understand your point?
⇒ What kind of action or reaction do you expect the reader to have?
⇒ How long will it be?

The answers to these types of questions can be used to create an outline and the first draft. Then comes the tough part for almost all writers—even world-famous ones—putting pen to paper and actually beginning to write!

Revision

The focus of the initial round of feedback should be more on what the learner has written rather than on how it was written. As the reader, what are your responses to questions like:

⇒ Is the main idea clearly stated?
⇒ Does the flow of the information make sense?
⇒ Is there enough information?
⇒ Is there too much information?
⇒ What feedback can I give the learner to help them improve on this piece of writing?

If you feel, as the reader, that there are too many areas that need changing or revision, start with the most important one first. For example, if it is not clear to you what the learner was writing about, focus your feedback on helping the learner clarify the topic (what is the main idea?).

Below is a revision checklist that can be used as is or modified to suit the type of writing (formal or informal, business or personal). Tools like the OLC's *The Level Descriptions Manual* can help you revise this checklist to fit the level at which the learner is writing.

REVISION CHECKLIST (Adapted from The Writing Process http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/mla/writing2.html)		
	YES	NO
PURPOSE and FORM		
Is my purpose for writing clear?		
Have I given enough information?		
Is there anything I should delete?		
ORGANIZATION		
Is there a beginning?		
Is there a middle?		
Is there an end?		
Is there a clear transition between each (beginning, middle, end)?		
STYLE (Voice, Vocabulary and Sentence Variety)		
Is my reason for writing clear?		
Does my use of words suit the audience?		
MECHANICS (Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling)		
Is my punctuation correct?		
Have I left out any words?		
Have I made any spelling mistakes?		
Do my sentences make sense?		

Correcting Errors

Many of us can recall the experience of getting something that we had written back from a teacher and finding it to be a road map of red marks. Crossed out words, arrows and hieroglyphics marred our written words. It was disheartening!

In your role as the instructor, you must act as an editor (in addition to being the audience). This does not mean that you have to return written work that is filled with corrections. The process of correction should begin before the learner writes anything. Discuss with the learner how many drafts you will be willing to mark (and this will depend entirely on what the purpose of the writing is—is it an informal note to someone in my family or am I writing a cover letter for my resume?) and the types of corrections you will make with each draft.

If it is a first draft, correction activities should focus on the ideas and flow of the writing. In a second or third draft, begin to narrow the focus by correcting the more mechanical (grammar, spelling, and punctuation) type of errors.

You may notice that a learner is making the same type of error many times throughout the text. Only note, or mark, the first occurrence of that mistake on the text. Use the repeated error to form the basis for a lesson.

If the writing task was too difficult, you may notice the following types of errors:

⇒   There appears to be no evidence of overall organization.
⇒   The vocabulary usage is inappropriate to the level at which you think the learner should be writing.
⇒   Errors in the mechanical aspects (grammar, punctuation, and/or spelling) of writing are overwhelming or they impact on the clarity of the written piece.

Spelling

Without a doubt writing will improve a learner's ability to spell. However, before you can begin to help learners improve their spelling skills, it is important that you understand which type of spelling mistake is being made. Equally important is helping learners to understand that it is all right to ask for help with spelling.

According to *Bringing Literacy Within Reach: Identifying and Teaching Adults with Learning Disabilities* spelling in English is a complex process "because 26 letters are used in various combinations to produce 40 speech sounds and many of the spelling patterns are inconsistent[111]." Spelling brings into play a variety of skills including visual, auditory, memory, language, attention and motor abilities.

Brining Literacy Within Reach classifies misspellings as follows:

1. Errors relating to visual memory of the correct spelling (e.g., phonetic substitutions—Ogest for August; homonym confusion—there for their; transpositions—dose for does; etc.)

2. Errors relating to language and auditory processing difficulties (e.g., wrong or missing syllable, prefixes or suffixes—rembered for remembered; mispronunciations—filum for film; etc.)

3. Errors relating to spelling rules and conventions (e.g., changing "y" to "i"—cryed for cried; dropping silent "e"—copeing for coping; forming plurals—heros for heroes; etc.)

It almost goes without saying that activities aimed at helping learners reduce their spelling errors must occur within the context of meaningful communication activities. Take an integrated approach by using the problem words in reading, writing and/or speaking activities and provide lots of opportunity for practice.

---

[111] *Bringing Literacy Within Reach: Identifying and Teaching Adults with Learning Disabilities.* Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, 1991, page 59.

Here are a few guidelines to keep in mind when planning learning activities that focus on spelling:

⇒ Choose words that learners need to know and are having trouble with, based on their goals, and build new words on the backs of known words.
⇒ Develop spelling activities that incorporate learners' predominant learning styles.
⇒ Actively involve the learners in the selection of strategies that will help them remember problem words. If learners have trouble remembering what words look like (poor visual memory), concentrate on auditory or pronunciation cues. If learners have trouble remembering the sounds associated with the spelling of words (auditory difficulties), focus on the visual elements of words.
⇒ Try not to let learners become too dependent on you during the learning process. Help them look up rules for spelling or show them how to ask others for help and incorporate dictionary use into all communication activities.
⇒ Encourage beginning readers and writers to keep a personal dictionary of words that they consistently misspell.

Strategies used by Successful Spellers

One way of assessing a particular learner's progress in learning to spell is to look for the presence of techniques that successful spellers often use. These are outlined in the following strategies, adapted from Bernstein, 1987.

1. The learner notes that the word is similar to one he already knows and substitutes a letter (e.g., needs to spell "mast", knows the word "fast" and substitutes the "m" for the "f")

2. She divides the word into larger or smaller parts she already knows (e.g., candidate = can - did - ate, rainfall = rain - fall)

3. He divides words into syllables and sounds out them out phonically (e.g., permitting = per - mit - ting, unfortunate = un - for - tun - ate)

4.   She applies spelling "guidelines" (e.g., knows the effect of the silent "e" on the preceding vowel)

5.   He sounds out the word letter by letter or groups of letters

6.   She analyzes the word structurally (e.g., root, prefix, suffix - disagreement)

7.   He is comfortable with "inventing" spellings of words

Sample Learning Activities:

Create the Text:
Use wordless books and have the learner create the story. Wordless books use graphics or drawings to tell a story, but the words of the story are added by the learner. Cartoons can also be used. Cut out the existing text and have learners make up their own story.

Writing Warm-up Activity #1
Time allotment (5-10 minutes)
Give each learner a book or magazine to use (e.g., Readers' Digest, anthologies). The instructor should have a selection as well, in order to model the process.

⇒   Have learners open their book or magazine at any page and choose a word at random—the first word that jumps off the page at them—and record this as Word #1; close the book. Repeat this process until each learner has four words recorded.
⇒   Learners focus for about one minute on each word separately, and then they list all the thoughts, ideas and associations that the word generates.
⇒   Learners then begin to make connections among the four words and their lists of personal associations by writing phrases, sentences, and ideas that demonstrate a relationship among the words.
⇒   After 10 minutes, bring the activity to a close. Learners may continue developing these ideas or "bank" them for another time.

Warm-up Activity #2

Time allotment (5-12 minutes)

You can ask learners to bring in pictures of people, or you may supply them (photographs or pictures clipped from magazines). Each picture should show several people in sufficient detail to reveal size, facial expression, dress, and other facets of character. Ask learners to record the first thoughts and reactions that each picture generates. Begin by showing them one of the pictures and then asking questions like these:

⇒ Who is the main character in the picture?
⇒ What is an appropriate name for this character?
⇒ How old is this character?
⇒ What emotions is this character showing in the picture? Describe the evidence that you have for this (e.g., facial expression, gestures).
⇒ What kind of work might the character do for a living? Give reasons to support your decision.
⇒ What might the person be thinking or saying? What makes you imagine this?
⇒ What other characteristics are revealed by the character's dress and stance?
⇒ What might have happened before the picture was taken? What might happen next?
⇒ How are the other characters in the picture related to the main character? What evidence makes you think so?
⇒ What is the attitude of the main character to the other characters? What is the attitude of the other characters to the main character? What are some possible reasons for these attitudes?
⇒ What might it be like to be the main character or one of the other characters?

Have the learners write down their first responses to each of the questions that you ask for each picture. They should use phrases and words, not sentences. Keep the pace fast and challenging (but not to the point of frustration). Learners can use these ideas to develop a story.

Conclusion – Write Clearly To Express Ideas

Many learners will claim they cannot write either because they may believe they have nothing to say or because they may lack confidence in their ability to write. This section has looked at some of the strategies that you can use to support and encourage learners as they begin to write. Writing activities should be situated in the everyday and be meaningful to the learner.

Questions for Reflection
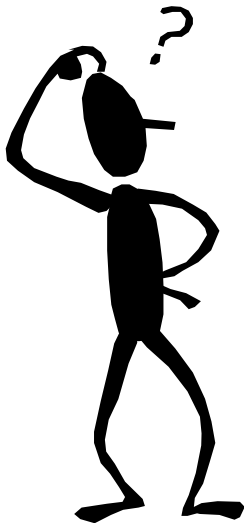
⇒ Writing is an important form of communication. How often do learners in your agency get to see you as a writer?

⇒ What information should you get from learners before asking them to write about personal experiences?

⇒ What is the best venue in your literacy agency for sharing learners' writings?

Suggested Resources

In addition to the various reports, manuals, websites
and other resources mentioned in this section of
Chapter Seven, we think you might find the
following resources useful.

Print–Based:

The Writing Process: A Concise Rhetoric. John M. Lannon. New York:
Longman, 1998. ISBN 0321011090. AlphaPlus Call #: 808.042 W68 1988
⇒   Promotes rhetorical awareness by treating the writing process as a set
     of deliberate and recurring decisions. Features include case studies,
     discussions, readings and sample essays, guidelines and applications
     for collaborative writing, computer projects and email
     communication guidelines.

Voyager: Reading and Writing for Today's Adults. 1. Vocabulary workbook..
Terrie Lipke. New Readers Press., 2001. ISBN 1564202631. AlphaPlus Call
#: 428.00715 V598.
⇒   Voyager is a nine level program (Foundation-8) that teaches the
     essential reading, writing, listening, speaking, and critical thinking
     skills and strategies needed by adults to function on the job. Within
     each of the nine levels there is a student book, a workbook, a
     vocabulary workbook, and a teacher's guide.

Workforce : building success. Harriet Diamond and Ellen Northcutt. Steck-
Vaughn, 1997. ISBN 0817265228 AlphaPlus Call #: 650.14076 W587 v. 6
⇒   Designed to help learners improve key job skills, the text provides
     activities that enable learners to improve their writing skills to
     prepare for a job and to write on the job. An initial skills inventory
     enables learners to identify those areas that require further practice.

Writing Out Loud. Deborah M. Morgan. Camrose, Alta. 1997. ISBN 0968199305. AlphaPlus Call #: 808.0427 M59
⇒   Writing skills and exercises for beginning writers.

The revised common writing assessment : a tool linked to Ontario's LBS learning outcomes levels. Norman S. Rowen. Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2000. AlphaPlus Call #: 374.1264 R596.2
⇒   An assessment instrument that shows how to evaluate a writing sample using scales based on focus, development and organization; voice, vocabulary and sentence variety; as well as grammar and mechanics. Scales include summary statements for LBS Levels Two to Five writing.

The Level Descriptions Manual: a learning outcomes approach to describing levels of skill in Communications & Numeracy. Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2000. AlphaPlus Call #: 374.1264 L265
⇒   Provides a holistic perspective to the description of skills for reading and writing that are detailed in MTCU's Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) document, Working with Learning Outcomes (1998).

English for everyday activities : a picture process dictionary. Lawrence J. Zwier. New Readers Press, 2002. ISBN 1564202852 AlphaPlus Call #: 428.24 Z84 2002
⇒   A verb-based multi-skills program that focuses on core vocabulary and language. A wide range of activities allows the student to process the vocabulary from the main text through reading, writing and speaking.

Web-Based

A Guide to Grammar and Writing includes definitions and activities at various levels: words and sentences, paragraphs, etc plus online exercises.
http://ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/index2.htm

The Learning Edge. Interactive reading and writing articles and activities for low level literacy learners.
http://thewclc.ca/edge

Speak and Listen Effectively

Speak and Listen Effectively is a Learning Outcome of the Communications Domain of MTCU's Learning Outcomes Matrix. Oral communications (speaking and listening) is one of the most common and widespread forms of communication. Every day, most people spend much more time speaking, listening and discussing than reading or writing. While talking is an important medium for getting things done, the ability to listen carefully and to act and reflect on what is heard is equally important.

Adult literacy learners come to literacy programs with a variety of skills and strategies as they have been "speaking and listening" their whole lives. They may bring to the learning environment specialized words from their employment or cultural background. They may be quite comfortable speaking in the home environment or in other familiar contexts but feel they lack the skills to speak in other situations, like to a child's teacher or in a learning situation.

The focus of instruction in this Learning Outcome should be on helping adults expand their capabilities—that is become better speakers and listeners—and to help them develop effective skills, strategies and competencies when interacting with others. Most adults will not have received explicit teaching in speaking and listening before, but they will have a lot of implicit knowledge and experience.

The OLC's *The Level Descriptions Manual* provides clear performance indicators that will help to determine the skills and strategies learners will need in a variety of situations and contexts. While summary statements were not developed for each of MTCU's Learning Outcome Levels (as they were for reading and writing), three key features of this outcome are presented—presenting, interacting, and listening.

On the following page is a modified description of each of the key features.

OLC Level Description: Speak and Listen Effectively	
Feature	Explanation
Presenting	This feature is about speaking. The focus is on the vocabulary used in speech and the ability to conceptualize, order, and present ideas and information in different situations. For the purposes of assessment, the focus should be on assessing the broader skills needed to speak and express ideas more effectively in formal and informal situations. Vocabulary is very integral to this as learners expand their repertoire of vocabulary to suit formal and informal situations.
Interacting	This feature is about interacting with others in one-on-one and group situations. The focus is on initiating and sustaining conversations, building skills to deal with misunderstandings and conflict, creating conditions for successful communication, and becoming aware of non-verbal communication cues. This feature emphasizes the strategies that are used in communicating in both interpersonal and group situations to clarify, facilitate, and encourage understanding. The performance indicators also emphasize strategies to build agreement as well as to deal with misunderstanding due to cultural, social, and linguistic differences. Non-verbal communication reflects a major element of communication. It is integrated into all aspects of communication and tightly linked to other factors (cultural factors, individual factors).
Listening	This feature is about listening. The focus is on building listening skills to better retain, order, and interpret spoken texts, and to develop strategies to check and ensure what is being heard.

Instructional Strategies

Listening actively to others with compassion, but without judgment, can be a powerful tool. Despite us having, as the saying goes, two ears and one mouth so that we may hear twice as much as we speak, studies show that it is very rare for people to really listen to one another on a deep and meaningful level – even in our own families.

Sample Learning Activities:

Active listening technique:
Commit to listening to someone uninterrupted for five minutes straight. Do not offer any opinions or any feedback—just truly listen to them. Do not think of your shopping list or your lesson plan or your upcoming board meeting—just concentrate on truly listening to what they are saying to you.

⇒ Look them in the eye and give them your total undivided attention.
⇒ Just listen.
⇒ Nod your head to indicate you are paying attention – but do not offer any comments.
⇒ Do not just focus on only the first thing they say and the feedback you are going to give them on that point as soon as they are done talking; listen intently for the entire five minutes to everything that they are telling you!
⇒ When they are done talking, thank them for sharing—but do not leap in to solve problems or brainstorm solutions for them.
⇒ Instead, ask them to listen to you in the same way!

Interview Preparation:

In this activity, learners will prepare for an interview with a child's teacher. They can start by developing a list of questions that they would like to ask and then the instructor can play the role of the teacher. In a small group or classroom setting, learners can be paired and take turns playing the parent.

Name Game: This activity is designed to increase sensitivity to the cultures and traditions of people in a group. Group members answer one or some of the following questions.

⇒   Are you named for someone?
⇒   Does your name mean something?
⇒   Are there other versions of your name?
⇒   Did / do you have a nickname?
⇒   Who named you?

An Integrated Approach:

Thematic Units can bring together all the Outcomes and Skill Sets from MTCU's Communications Domain. This activity will take place over a longer period of time but by laying out the whole process ahead of time, both the instructor and the learner will be able to see how each part of the process will contribute to the whole. Begin by having the learner pick a topic of interest to them (for example stars, breeding dogs, or planning a birthday party). The plan for the theme unit then incorporates a number of reading and writing activities that will allow the learner to use knowledge she already has and also add new knowledge (in addition to the needed reading and writing skills). To incorporate speaking and listening. the learner could give a talk on the topic to a group (for example at your annual general meeting).

Conclusion – Speak and Listen Effectively

As is pointed out earlier in this section, the focus of instruction for this MTCU Learning Outcome should be on helping adults expand their capabilities and to help them develop effective speaking and listening skills.
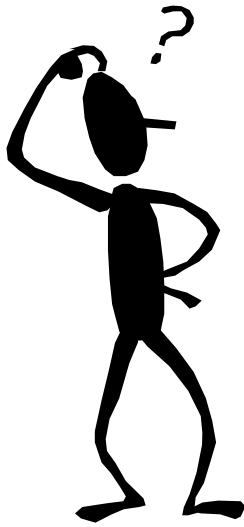
Questions for Reflection

⇒ Some people question the validity of having "Speak and Listen Effectively" as a learning outcome since we are working with adults. What do you think?

⇒ The language we use when we speak is part of our cultural heritage—whether that is regional, ethnic or religious. When is it appropriate to correct a person's speech?

Suggested Resources

In addition to the various reports, manuals, websites and other resources mentioned in this section of Chapter Seven, we think you might find the following resources useful.
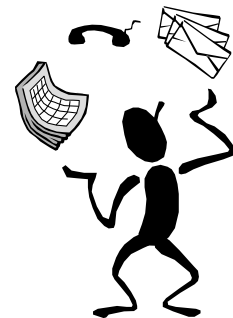
Print–Based:

Interpersonal Communication Skills. Barbara Balshaw-Dow. John Howard Society of Manitoba, Inc., 1995. AlphaPlus Call #: 302.224 B12
⇒   Problems and exercises for interpersonal communication skills.

Simple Listening Activities. Jill Hadfield. Oxford University Press, 1999 ISBN 0194421686 AlphaPlus Call #: 428.3407 H11.5
⇒   Instructional strategies, lesson plans, and learning activities for basic level listening skills.

Success On The Job: Communicating Clearly. Karen Kaser. J. Weston Walch, 1998. ISBN 0825137543. AlphaPlus Call #: 651.7 K129
⇒   Covers the six major areas of communication - oral, written, employment, technological, informational reading, and business listening. Activities include public speaking, business report writing, participating in employment interviews and listening for a specific purpose.

Talkabout: A Social Communication Skills Package. Alex Kelly. Winslow, c1996. ISBN 0-8638814-6-7. AlphaPlus Call #: 302.2242 K25.
⇒   Designed to be used with learners who demonstrate difficulties with social communication skills. The manual provides a framework for the development of social skills. Each level in the manual concerns a particular aspect of communication, and includes reproducible worksheets.

Good Day! How May I Help You? David Ward. Dryden Literacy Association, 2000. AlphaPlus Call #: 331.2592 W13
⇒   Thematic unit that focuses on developing the skills required to work in the hospitality and the retail sector. Includes a chart that identifies and codes learning outcomes based on the LBS Validation Draft, July 1998. Most instructions are written for a learning level 2-3.

Web-Based

News Stories.
The web pages focus on utilizing local, regional, and national news stories for educational purposes. Teachers can use the lessons for group activities and students can work at their own pace for individualized learning.
Website: www.cdlponline.org/cdlp/news.html

Numeracy Domain

Overview

Numeracy is the final domain in MTCU's Learning Outcomes Matrix. Just as the Communications Domain is divided into component Learning Outcomes (reading, writing and speaking and listening) so is the Numeracy Domain. The Learning Outcomes for this domain are:

⇒   Perform Basic Operation with Numbers
⇒   Use Measurement for Various Purposes
⇒   Solve Geometric Problems
⇒   Manage Data and Probability
⇒   Use Patterning and Algebra.

Many of us claim "I don't like math!" or I can't do math!" yet we use numeracy[112] skills every day. Wondering what time it is, or what the cost of gas is or how long something will take all involve the use and understanding of numbers and the relationship of numbers to each other.

When asked on intake or during the initial assessment about their interest in improving their basic math skills, many adult literacy learners' comments will often echo our own thoughts or feelings—"I can't do math!" How then do you encourage an understanding of the importance of basic math skills?

A good place to start is by asking the question, what is numeracy? If you were in a foreign county and saw $2 + 4 = 6$ written on the side of a building, you would not have any difficulty understanding what had been written. For this reason many people consider the use of numbers to be a universal language. What is universal about it is its written form. Its

---

[112] The terms math, math skills, numeracy and numeracy skills will be used interchangeably through this section of the chapter.

spoken form, at least at the commonly used level, will vary from place to place. For example, "2" will be spoken as "two" in English; "deux" in French; and, "zwei" in German.

Defining Numeracy

Like the word "literacy", there are numerous definitions for the word "numeracy". As mentioned in Chapter Two, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Workplace Preparation Branch is the current "home" of Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills Program and in its Literacy and Basic Skills Program Guidelines (October 2002), literacy is defined as: "The ability to read, write, calculate, speak and understand, as well as sign (for the deaf), and communicate in other forms of language, according to need. Literacy is a continuum of these skills necessary for everyday life in the home, at work, in education and in the community."

In a general sense, numeracy means knowing about numbers and number operations. Having good numeracy skills also implies the ability and inclination to solve numerical problems, including those involving money or measures. It implies a familiarity with the ways in which numerical information is gathered—by counting and measuring, how it is often presented—in graphs, charts and tables, and how numbers relate to shapes and movement.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities, which is overseeing the work on developing national literacy and numeracy benchmarks, has adopted the following definition:

> *"Numeracy is the effective use of mathematics to meet the general demands of life at school and at home, in paid work, and for participation in community and civic life."*

Numeracy, then, can be defined as the type of math skills needed to function in everyday life, in the home, and in the workplace. In fact, many of our daily activities involve the use of math skills. Cooking, shopping, doing crafts, conducting financial transactions, traveling, using VCRs and microwave ovens, interpreting information in the media, and taking medications are but a few of these activities. One of the ways in which you can encourage an understanding of the importance of good math skills with adult learners is to explore this everyday use with them.

Like literacy skills, our need for math skills, and the type of math skills we need, can change in response to changes in our circumstances. Numeracy skills, like literacy skills, exist along a continuum of different purposes for, and levels of, accomplishment with numbers.

Poor or low numeracy skills can have, like poor or low literacy skills, economic, social, and political consequences for individuals, organizations, and society. Poor numeracy skills can limit a person's access to education, training, and jobs. If employed, poor numeracy skills can hinder performance and productivity. Poor numeracy skills can "cause over-dependence on experts and professionals and uncritical acceptance of charlatans and the claims of pseudoscience[113]."

Finally, math is best understood if learned in familiar contexts that may provide cues to enhance problem solving. Familiar contexts will make math more accessible for those who have not had much exposure to it. Like reading and writing, the types of skills needed by adult literacy/numeracy learners will depend on their goals. Skills acquisition should be built on the skills, knowledge and abilities already held by the learner (scaffolding). That is, learners relate new knowledge to what they already know, construct their own understanding, and make new meanings. This approach can help learners recognize the math characteristics of every day situations and it can also help learners by respecting and considering individual learning style preferences.

---

[113] : *Not Just a Number: Critical Numeracy for Adults*. Sandra Kerka. Retrieved November 2002 from: http://www.ericfacility.net/ ericdigests/ed385780.html

Guidelines for Teaching Numeracy

The following general strategies for teaching numeracy skills were adapted from *The Mathematics and Reading Connection*[114]. Like literacy skills, the assumption is that numeracy skills are developed according to the learner's identified goal.

Numeracy Guidelines:

⇒ Discuss math in terms of daily activities to create a context for the knowledge and skills. This will make it meaningful and relevant to the learner and will increase the learner's appreciation for the value of math in the everyday.

⇒ Discover what skills and knowledge the learner already has by using authentic assessment techniques that are based on everyday activities.

⇒ Start instruction from what the learner already knows and use that knowledge as a scaffold from which to build your instructional strategy (specific learning activities).

⇒ Use concrete examples from your own experience as models so the learner can see practical everyday applications of the skills and processes needed.

⇒ Emphasize problem solving skills (critical thinking) and focus on the importance of how you get the answer (process) over getting the answer (product).

⇒ Encourage the learner to verbally express his or her learning processes to help place the new skills solidly in the learner's knowledge base (metacognition).

---

[114] Retrieved November 2002 from:
http://www.ericfacility.net/ericdigests/ed432439.html.

⇒ Ask questions that will help to build an understanding of the process:

- What do you think would be the best way to do this?
- What do you think should be your next step?
- How did you do it?

⇒ Acknowledge that there can be multiple ways to solve the same problem.

⇒ Provide a balance in each session between skill-building and functional needs. A lesson may begin with a problem (e.g. a mistake on a paycheque) that provides a context for learning new skills (such as subtracting decimals), or the lesson may start with a skill (e.g., adding decimals) followed by practical applications (such as adding sales tax to a restaurant bill).

⇒ Encourage the inclusion of numeracy in literacy instruction from the beginning. Even learners who claim to have no need for numeracy may need numeracy skills for such basic activities as shopping and riding the bus.

⇒ Encourage the learner (or learners) to keep a daily math journal that will be shared with the instructor. Some instructors have noted that journaling has led to the following:

- An increase in the ease of use of math language by learners during the learning sessions.
- Ongoing assessment was easier to facilitate and it was easier to provide both formal and informal feedback.
- Learners giving the instructor feedback on the techniques being used to teach the skills and thereby improving instruction.
- Learners being able to more easily give examples of their application of math learning to everyday life.

Key Verbs in Numeracy

Below are a number of key verbs that are commonly used when teaching numeracy skills. When helping the learner to add these verbs to a personal word list, make sure the examples of usage relate to numeracy. For example, the word "represents" is used in the sense that the learner would use concrete materials, like a drawing, to explain (represent) his or her understanding of whole numbers versus fractions.

Common Numeracy Verbs	
Adds	Multiplies
Compares	Names
Converts	Patterning
Counts	Performs
Creates	Recalls
Describes	Relates
Divides	Represents
Estimates	Selects
Explores	Subtracts
Expresses	Uses
Generates	

Note on Using a Calculator

Use of a calculator should be encouraged and supported. A calculator is a tool just as a pen or a computer keyboard is a tool. Here are some guidelines for calculator usage. A calculator should be used when it:

⇒ Promotes number sense
⇒ Encourages creativity and exploration
⇒ Removes anxiety
⇒ Provides motivation and confidence
⇒ Facilitates problem solving
⇒ Creates problematic situations
⇒ Supports concept development
⇒ Focuses attention on meaning
⇒ Relieves tedious computation
⇒ Facilitates a search for patterns

Critical Thinking

Problem solving, reasoning, and decision-making are three interconnected processes that adults engage in continuously. Problem solving is embedded in mathematics. It is a process that includes seeking to understand the problem, figuring out what information is needed (reasoning) and which math skills are important to use (decision making) and then finally, solving the problem. Please see Chapter 5 -The Adult Literacy Learner for a more comprehensive discussion on thinking skills (metacognition).

The Internet

The Internet is an excellent place to find numeracy activities, especially for adults. In addition to being able to print many of these activities for offline use, many can be done online. A list of web sites will be provided at the end of the chapter.

Numeracy Outcomes

The OLC's *The Level Descriptions Manual* provides a descriptive look at
skills used by learners for each of the Learning Outcomes across MTCU's
Learning Outcomes Matrix for Numeracy[115]. These descriptions will be
provided in the following discussion of each of the Outcomes. Please note
that *The Level Descriptions Manual* modifies slightly MTCU's component
Learning Outcomes. *The Level Descriptions Manual* incorporates the final
MTCU Outcome (Use Patterning and Algebra) into the first MTCU
Outcome (Perform Basic Operation with Numbers). This redefined
Outcome is called "Use Number Sense and Computation." It is
recommended that you refer to the original documents and consult with
your MTCU field consultant to verify specific information.

Number Sense and Computation

What is number sense? Being able to handle numbers comfortably and
competently is important to adults as parents, workers, and community
members. Number sense is a content skill that encompasses many areas—
whole numbers, fractions, decimals, percentages, ratio, estimation and
money. Estimation, mental math, computation, and calculators are all
tools that allow learners to develop a comfort level with numbers and
number sense. Where number sense is a priority, learners are, as always,
encouraged to be active participants who share their thoughts, ideas,
reasoning and conclusions. They are also given opportunities to create
their own procedures.

The Level Descriptions Manual provides the following summary statements
for this Learning Outcome. These descriptions provide a useful snapshot
of the types of skills and knowledge that will be used by a learner
working at each of the levels.

---

[115] *The Level Descriptions Manual* also has, beginning on page 83, an excellent glossary of
mathematical terms.

Level One

The learner reads and writes whole numbers to 100, adds and subtracts single-digit whole numbers, and understands the concept of "half". The learner names and states the value of Canadian coins and recognizes, describes, and continues simple number patterns.

Level Two

The learner reads and writes whole numbers encountered in everyday life and handles money for daily tasks. The learner adds and subtracts multi-digit numbers, multiplies and divides numbers, and uses common fractions to measure and describe. The learner recognizes and describes number patterns in which one operation is repeated.

Level Three

The learner adds, subtracts, multiplies, and divides whole numbers and decimals; understands the relationship between decimals and fractions; and creates and continues number patterns based on two alternating rules.

Level Four

The learner adds, subtracts, multiplies and divides fractions and integers, and performs simple calculations with percent, ratio, exponents, and square roots. The learner uses a variable to represent an unknown quantity. The learner creates and continues number patterns based on two alternating operations.

Level Five

The learner performs a variety of computations in which fractions, decimals, integers, percent, exponents, and square roots may be integrated. The learner creates and solves algebraic equations.

Instructional Strategies

Sample Learning Activity:

The Four-Card Shuffle

This game can be played briefly as a warm-up at the beginning of a learning session or played at greater length for more in-depth practice. Ask the learner (or learners) to record their results for each round.

⇒ Skills involved: number sense, basic operations, order of operations
⇒ Materials needed: 20 index cards, paper and pencils

The first time you play this game have the learner write the numbers from 1 to 20 on index cards, one number per card (a regular deck of cards could be used but having the learner make the cards builds on the learner's writing skills). Use the first couple of games to show the learner how to play and how to use problem solving to arrive at the answer. For learners with lower skills, limit the number of cards to ten and only use three cards for the activity.

In a small group or classroom setting players can play cooperatively. If skills are evenly matched, the player who finds a solution first scores a point.

1. To play the game, start by shuffling the cards well.
2. The first player turns over the top five cards. Using each value on the first four cards, and any of the four basic (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division) operations, the player tries to obtain the value on the fifth card. The first four cards can be used in any order but each card is only used once.
3. Play until all cards have been used (four rounds).

For example, if the five cards turned over are: 3, 7, 16, 14, and 5, you use the first four numbers any way you like to arrive at an answer of 5.

Have learners record their work on paper or on a blackboard and encourage them to talk through the problem. Based on the example above (3, 7, 16, 14, will be used to make or arrive at 5) ask questions like:

⇒ What is the largest number? (16) What is the smallest number? (3) Have the learner write the numbers down in order from largest to smallest.

⇒ What is the easiest way to make the larger numbers smaller? (Division.)

⇒ What would happen if you tried to use addition or multiplication to solve the problem? (The numbers would get larger, not smaller.) Have the learner add up all the numbers or start to multiply them.

⇒ What would happen if you only used subtraction? (The numbers would get too small, or you would end up with a negative number.) Have the learners start to subtract one number from another $(7 - 3$, then $16 - 14$ and then the result of each of these $[4 - 2]$ or have them write it out as $16 - 14 - 7 - 3$ if they understand negative numbers)

⇒ Which of the four numbers can you divide evenly? Ask: will 14 divide into 16 evenly? Will 7 divide into 16 evenly? Again, have them write each of these down on paper. Solution: $16 \div (14 \div 7) - 3 = 5$

Use Measurement for Various Purposes

Time, temperature, length and perimeter, area, capacity and volume, and mass are things that can be measured. Measurement is a tool used in many contexts at home, at work, and in the community. The ability to estimate and compare are two key concepts for this outcome.

The Level Descriptions Manual provides the following summary statements for this Learning Outcome. These descriptions provide a useful snapshot of the types of skills and knowledge that will be used by a learner working at each of the levels.

Level One

The learner measures length, perimeter, area, capacity, mass, time and temperature using non-standard units, and describes measurement attributes using everyday language.

Level Two

The learner measures length, perimeter, area, capacity, mass, time and temperature using common standard units and describes the relationships among units of measure.

Level Three

The learner measures length, capacity, volume, mass, time and temperature with precision using appropriate standard units, and calculates the perimeter and area of rectangles and squares using formulas.

Level Four

The learner calculates the area of parallelograms, triangles and trapezoids, and the volume and surface area of rectangular prisms using formulas.

Level Five

The learner calculates the surface area of prisms, pyramids and cylinders; the volume and surface area of prisms; and the radius, diameter, circumference and area of a circle using formulas.

Instructional Strategies

Sample Learning Activity

Brain Teaser
⇒ Skills involved: capacity, volume and mass
⇒ Materials needed: paper and pencils

A woman has nine gold bars that all look identical, but she has discovered that one of them is not pure gold and weighs less than the other bars. She has a balance scale. What is the fewest number of weighings she can do in order to locate the lighter bar of gold?

Help the learner solve this by using drawings or diagrams. Discuss what a balance scale is and how it works. Use physical objects to help the learner get a sense of the number of objects and pretend that one is lighter. Ask questions. (Solution: The woman first places three bars on each side of the scale. If they balance, she knows that the fake bar is one of the three not weighed. If they do not balance, she knows which group of three bars contains the fake. So for her second weighing, she takes the group of three that contains the fake and places two of these on the scale. If they balance, the fake is the bar not weighed. If they do not balance, the fake is the lighter bar.)

Solve Geometric Problems

If a learner has ever built a bookcase, laid out a garden, applied wallpaper or tiled a floor, then he or she will have used informally the rules that would apply to the formal study of geometry. For many learners, geometry—and the concepts of shape, symmetry and patterning—is the one math topic that immediately makes sense to them and gives them confidence in their ability to learn.

As one learner said: "We have four horses. Once we had to figure how much hay we'd need for a year. Then we had to figure if the hay would fit in the barn. So one horse eats about a bale a week, so multiply by four and so on. Then we had to know how big the bale was. And how big the loft was[116]."

The Level Descriptions Manual provides the following summary statements for this Learning Outcome. These descriptions provide a useful snapshot of the types of skills and knowledge that will be used by a learner working at each of the levels.

Level One

The learner identifies, describes, compares, and classifies basic two- and three-dimensional figures, and recognizes and creates symmetrical figures.

Level Two

The learner identifies, describes, compares and classifies various polygons, prisms and pyramids, and determines lines of symmetry for two-dimensional shapes. The learner identifies and performs transformations.

Level Three

The learner identifies, describes, compares and classifies quadrilaterals and triangles, and identifies and constructs similar, congruent and symmetrical figures. The learner identifies and applies transformations. The learner locates points on maps and grids using a coordinate system.

---

[116] *A Framework For Adult Numeracy Standards: The Mathematical Skills and Abilities Adults Need To Be Equipped for the Future*. Donna Curry, Mary Jane Schmitt, Sally Waldron. The Adult Numeracy Practitioners Network System Reform Planning Project July, 1996.

Level Four

The learner designs nets for three-dimensional figures, and identifies and constructs two-dimensional shapes that meet certain criteria. The learner applies transformations to create and analyze designs and tiling patterns. The learner locates coordinate points in the first quadrant of a Cartesian plane.

Level Five

The learner describes and applies the angle properties of triangles, and intersecting, parallel and perpendicular lines. The learner constructs circles given centre points and points on the circle. The learner solves problems using the Pythagorean relationship. The learner plots points and graphs lines on a Cartesian plane.

Instructional Strategies

Sample Learning Activity

Area of a Square

⇒ Skills involved: dimensional and transformational geometry (shape, patterns, and lines of symmetry)
⇒ Materials needed: paper and pencils

A rectangle is divided into eight congruent squares. The perimeter of the large rectangle is 60 cm. What is the area of each square?

Explain congruent and discuss perimeter. Draw the rectangle and then divide it into eight squares. (The answer is 25 square centimetres. There are several ways of arriving at this answer, which could make for a good discussion.)

Manage Data and Probability

The key skills for this outcome include the ability to collect, organize and display data; the ability to analyze the data collected and then draw conclusions; and finally, the ability to use probability. Asking the members of a small group "Who wants a coffee?" and then recording the response, thinking about the response ("how many people do I need to collect money from and how much do I need to collect?") and then using the information ("I need four small regulars and one large double-double, please.") is a simple example of the everyday use of these skills. Predicting when something might or might not happen ("I bet he's late again today!") is also an example of using a math skill in an everyday context. The use and understanding of patterns, charts and tables are important tools for this outcome.

The Level Descriptions Manual provides the following summary statements for this Learning Outcome. These descriptions provide a useful snapshot of the types of skills and knowledge that will be used by a learner working at each of the levels.

Level One
The learner collects and sorts a small number of simple data, displays these data on given charts and pictographs, and discusses these displays of data. The learner uses everyday language to discuss probability as part of familiar experience.

Level Two
The learner conducts surveys using self-generated questions, selects appropriate graphic organizers to sort data, and constructs simple bar graphs to display data. The learner interprets data on graphs and tables, and expresses understanding in a variety of ways. The learner predicts the results of simple probability experiments and carries them out.

Level Three

The learner designs and conducts surveys, records results on tally charts and spreadsheets, and displays data on labeled graphs. The learner calculates the mean and mode of a set of data, and identifies the important features of data collected by others. The learner conducts simple probability experiments and uses the results to make decisions.

Level Four

The learner collects and organizes data from primary and secondary sources, and decides on the best method of display. The learner identifies trends, calculates measures of central tendency, and makes inferences and convincing arguments based on a variety of displays of data. The learner conducts probability experiments, compares theoretical and actual results, and applies probability in familiar contexts.

Level Five

The learner designs and carries out experiments to test hypotheses and uses data in databases and spreadsheets to solve problems. The learner explains sampling techniques, and recognizes misuse of data in advertising and news reports. The learner calculates complex probabilities and applies probability in a variety of contexts.

Instructional Strategies

Sample Learning Activity

Grocery Shopping
⇒ Skills involved: collecting and organizing data, drawing conclusions
⇒ Materials needed: store flyers, paper and pencils

Use grocery or hardware store flyers to make a shopping list and calculate how much money would be saved if you were buying certain products on sale.

Conclusion – Numeracy Domain

Like reading and writing, numeracy skills should be gained in familiar contexts. While many learners may claim that they do not like math or that they do not use math, the reality is that many of them use math skills every day. Helping learners see how math is situated in the everyday is one of the keys to helping learners increase their math skills.

Questions for Reflection

⇒ Why do many instructors shy away from teaching numeracy skills?

⇒ Why do many learners shy away from numeracy instruction if numeracy is such a large part of everyday life?

Suggested Resources

In addition to the various reports, manuals, websites
and other resources mentioned in this section of
Chapter Seven, we think you might find the
following resources useful.

Print–Based:

Handbook for Literacy Tutors. Chris Harwood. Grass Roots Press, 2002.
ISBN 1-894593-10-3. AlphaPlus Call #: 374.01207 H13 2001.
⇒   The chapter on numeracy provides information about a variety of
     approaches to teaching numeracy. Instructional strategies for a
     number of basic concepts are provided.

Calculators at work in daily living. Susan Brendel. J. Weston Walch, c2001
ISBN 0-8251427-5-X. AlphaPlus Call #: 513.2028 B67 2001.
⇒   Introduces basic calculators and provides activities that develop
     learners' skills in the context of real-world situations such as banking,
     shopping, diet and nutrition and home improvement.

Use it or lose it? The impact of time out of work on literacy and numeracy skills.
John Bynner and Samantha Parsons. England: Basic Skills Agency, c1998.
ISBN 1-8599008-5-2. AlphaPlus Call #: 374.01207 B92.2.
⇒   Study examines whether people's literacy and numeracy skills get
     worse if they are out of paid employment. The study is based on a
     sample of adults who were part of the National Child Development
     Study.

Web-Based

Simply 123! Whole Numbers to Everyday Math.
READ Saskatoon in partnership with the Grassroots Resource and
Learning Centre. This resource was written for learners who want to
improve their math skills.
Website: It can be downloaded as a PDF file at:
http://www.nald.ca/PROVINCE/SASK/readsask
/pubs/simpl123/simply123.pdf

Catalogue of Recommended Resources for Teachers of Adult Numeracy.
Created by the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. Most, if not all,
resources mentioned can be borrowed from AlphaPlus.
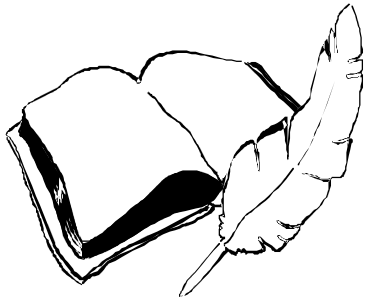Website: It can be downloaded as a PDF file at:
http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/ottawa /catalogue/Catalogue.pdf

What is Numeracy?

ABC CANADA's web site provides a number of resources for everyday
math use.

Website: www.abc-canada.org/math_literacy

CHAPTER 8

LEARNER EXIT AND FOLLOW-UP

"My experience with follow-up calls is that learners are pleased that they weren't just cut loose… after even six months they appreciate that we are still out there and may be able to refer them to another avenue to achieve a goal that they have identified in the last six months."

C. Benninger
Chatham Kent Council on Adult Basic Education

Introduction

When literacy instruction begins, practitioners are always hopeful that the learning path will be smooth and straight—that learners will achieve their stated goals and move onto to their next steps. Leaving the literacy program is a planned-for event. Often, however, the path is not without bumps or sidetracks. Some learners, for a variety of reasons, leave the literacy program without achieving stated goals and leaving becomes an unplanned-for event. Are they then dropouts, or are they stop-outs?

Learners are important sources of information for the programs they are attending. Their input and opinions should be sought at regular intervals. This chapter looks at the process of exit and the types of information that you should collect—for both program planning and to meet funder requirements. Before you can collect information, you will need to have established a process for collecting, analyzing and sharing information.

When Learners Leave

Learners are supposed to leave our literacy programs. It is a given. In fact, the aim of a training plan is to work toward that point in time in which the learner will leave. Leaving, then, is a planned event. The learner, having achieved his or her short-term goals[117]—personal independence, for example, moves on to the next step. The next step may be employment or further training, for example. When leaving is a planned event it becomes somewhat easier to collect information at exit and at follow-up.

While some leaving may be unanticipated—the learner must move, for example—far too often leaving is an unplanned event. The learner is just gone and the program coordinator hears "this number is no longer in service" when he/she attempts to make contact by phone. The learner who has left may have had some success with learning but without up-to-date documentation, the agency may not be able to "show" this to be the case.

Why do learners leave unexpectedly? Adult literacy learners can face a large number of socio-economic, psychological or physical challenges. A better question to ask might be: "Was there something we could have done differently to support that learner?" The presence and impact of any factors that are internal or external varies from learner to learner, but it is possible to analyze these factors and make some fairly reliable predictions. This type of analysis can help you in the future, to identify and then support those learners who are at greater risk of dropping out or becoming a "lost contact" statistic.

---

[117] For more information on goal-setting see Chapter 5, The Adult Literacy Learner. Information on initial assessment and training plan development can be found in Chapter 6, Identifying and Meeting Learner Needs.

Funder Requirements

Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) agencies are required by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) to conduct a number of post-training services. These services include collecting information that reflects each learner's status at exit and/or the reason for leaving, conducting a learner satisfaction survey and finally, contacting learners at three and six months after exit to gather follow-up information. Follow-up activities are only conducted with learners who successfully attained their goals at exit.

Please note: While this information is considered accurate at the time it was written, you should always contact your MTCU field consultant for the most recent information concerning this, or any, function of service delivery.

Post Training Services:

Status at Exit

MTCU requires all funded service delivery agencies to record, for every learner, what it refers to as a "status at exit" statistic and a corresponding reason for leaving. According to MTCU this information will help "in measuring the effectiveness of the program in meeting the literacy needs of the learner[118]."

The agency responsibilities for this activity are given as:

⇒ Ensure that only one status at exit and one reason for leaving is reported in the LBS-IMS for every learner that exits the program

---

[118] This information was taken from "Appendix 8 Post Training Services" sent to literacy agencies in January 2003.

⇒ Ensure that information collection and recording status at exit/reason for leaving is done in a convenient and effective manner

⇒ If the learner has more than one status at exit or reason for leaving, select the one which appears first on the LBS IMS list

⇒ Establish and maintain a process for receiving ongoing feedback and information from other service providers in the community, from employers (where appropriate), and from learners.

The agency must record, as a total of the number of learners who left the agency, the number of learners who:

⇒ Attained their LBS goal

⇒ Are currently employed

⇒ Are in further education and training

⇒ Are not possible to contact (reported as "lost contact")

Learner Satisfaction Survey

As part of its Continuous Improvement Performance Management System (CIPMS), MTCU also requires LBS agencies to ask **all** learners who exit the program to complete a survey on exit, or as soon as possible after the exit.

This survey is not meant to replace any other learner evaluation surveys already being conducted by agencies for their internal use. The goal of the MTCU's Learner Satisfaction Survey is to "assess the learner's satisfaction with the training they received and not the results he/she obtained from participating in the training." As with all information that relates to meeting funder requirements, you should refer to the documentation received from MTCU to ensure that you have the most accurate and up-to-date information about this, or any other topic.

Follow up

"Follow-up" is a service of program delivery—in other words, an MTCU funded function. According to MTCU follow-up activities will help "in measuring the effectiveness of the program in meeting the literacy goals of the learners[119]" and agency responsibilities are defined as:

⇒ Ensure that information collection and recording makes follow-up convenient and effective

⇒ Ensure that only one status[120] is reported in the LBS-IMS[121] for each learner

⇒ Establish and maintain a process for receiving ongoing feedback and information from other service providers in the community, from employers (where appropriate) and from learners

⇒ Follow-up with those learners who attained their LBS goal, at three months and six months after they leave the program, to document their current status

⇒ Record a status in the LBS-IMS for all learners at three and six months who attained their LBS Goal

The type of information that you collect at these points in time is defined in the performance indicators provided by the funder. You will need to record the number of learners who are:

⇒ Employed
⇒ In further education and training
⇒ Reported as lost contacts

---

[119] This information was taken from "Appendix 8 Post Training Services" dated January 2003.

[120] Status refers to the learner's status at exit and their reason for leaving. See the section Status at Exit (above) for more information.

[121] IMS stands for Information Management System.

Clearly then, at this current time, as far as the funder is concerned, you need to contact—at three and again at six months—only those learners who left your agency because they attained their stated goal (or goals). As mentioned earlier in this discussion you should contact your MTCU field consultant to ensure that you have the most current and relevant information available.

There is much to be gained from collecting feedback from learners, volunteer tutors, and paid instructors. Each of these stakeholders can provide a perspective on service delivery that can allow the literacy agency to improve and fine-tune all aspects of the organization—from the mission statement to the annual report.

Planning for Leaving

Overview

A planned process for exit is often overlooked. Your exit process should mirror your intake process in the sense that it should be used as an opportunity to gain information from the learner. This information can be used to develop reports, make changes to program delivery or be used as a planning tool. In addition to collecting valuable information about a learner's literacy upgrading, planning for leaving can help program staff link with and better understand external services offered in their communities and the services of other literacy providers.

Conducting assessments of the skills and knowledge that learners leave with is but one aspect of the process. In addition to collecting information about learners' skill levels you should collect other information from

learners[122]. The exit process should provide the opportunity for learners, instructors (tutors and/or paid staff) and program coordinators to reflect on and evaluate the learning experience, measure and record literacy progress and help learners link to the next step of their long-term goal.

The exit process should also provide the opportunity for learners and instructors—both paid staff and volunteer tutors—to comment on the specific learning experience. Learner evaluation will help the agency with program planning and to identify key areas of learner support that can lead to improvements in service that will benefit all learners. Instructors, in addition to commenting on the skills gained by a particular learner, can also help with program planning by identifying practitioner training needs, support or resource issues, and by being a source of solutions.

Exit Assessments

Much of the information presented in Chapter 6, Identifying and Meeting Learner Needs about initial and on-going assessment can be applied to the exit assessment. The approach you use should be learner-centred and it should provide ample opportunity for learner participation. Learner-centred assessment, as a practice, is defined by three criteria:

1. It is done with students, not to students
2. It is process-oriented
3. It is empowering to both students and instructors

As suggested in Chapter 6, the intake and initial assessment process allows learners to reflect on and answer three critical questions[123].

---

[122] As already noted, conducting a Learner Satisfaction Survey and specific follow-up activities became part of MTCU's Continuous Improvement Performance Management System (CIPMS) in April 2003.

[123] These questions were identified as: What are my goals? What skills, knowledge and abilities do I already have? What do I need to do to achieve my goals?

The exit assessment should then provide the opportunity for learners to answer these questions:

⇒ Did I achieve my goal (goals)?

⇒ What new skills, knowledge and abilities did I gain?

⇒ How do I know I achieved my goals?

⇒ Am I prepared to take the next steps toward my long-term goal?

In *Best Practices in Exit Assessment and Transition Planning,*[124] Pat Hatt identified a number of common elements of exit assessment. These common elements define, for Hatt, the best practice in exit assessment.

Common Elements in Best Practices in Exit Assessment
Exit assessments should: • Provide proof that the skills, which the learner wanted to learn, were acquired • Be in a form that the learner can appreciate, understand and share with others if they so choose • Be in a form that allows practitioners to document learner success based on the learner's goals using a training/learning plan that was mutually agreed upon • Reflect the learner's skills and have the flexibility to look not only at the learner's success academically but also at identified social or emotional skills that the learner identified as important to their future success • Be a confirmation of those skills and abilities that the learner already acknowledged having acquired • Be information that allows the LBS funded agency to measure the learner's progress as compared to the entry level

---

[124] The goal of this document was to identify best practices in exit assessment and transition planning by identifying the common elements of a best practice. Both practitioners and learners were interviewed.

In addition to providing valuable information, exit assessments can provide, for learners, for instructors (volunteers and paid staff) and for program staff, a sense of closure. Even if the short-term goal has not been met, an exit assessment can document the steps that have been taken towards the goal, thereby recording some marks of success.

When coupled with on-going assessment and demonstrations, the exit assessment can provide valuable information about the experiences learners had while in your literacy program. By reflecting on their learning experience, learners will be able to see what they have learned from participating in literacy and basic skills upgrading. The exit assessment can also be used to help link learners with new programs, services and support they may need to meet their future goals.

Sample Questions for Learner Exits

Learner Exit Interview:

⇒ Your training plan outlines your next steps. Do you need more information? Do you know how to access the next step?

⇒ Tell me three things about your literacy training that you found most useful.

⇒ What three things have you liked the least?

⇒ What suggestions do you have for making the literacy program better?

⇒ Describe how your reading, writing and numeracy skills have improved.

⇒ Do you have any other comments?

⇒ Would you recommend our program to others? Why or why not?

Transition Planning

"Next steps", like so many other things in life, often do not just happen. "Next steps" most often occur because they have been identified and a plan developed. Transition planning, for our purposes, looks at the next steps for adult literacy learners as they leave the community-based agency. Sometimes there is no next step but often the next step is to another literacy program, skills training, or employment.

Next steps are as much a function of what is available locally as they are about ensuring a smooth transition. If your agency provides the only literacy programming that is available in an area, learners may stay with your agency longer than if there is a wide range of opportunities available. As well, training and employment opportunities for learners will also depend upon local availability.

Transition planning seems to be a widely accepted term and activity within school systems. In fact, within many school systems, the need to help secondary students identify and plan for the next steps in their personal education plan is a given. The idea is to identify activities and actions that must occur and when, in order for the student to make a smooth transition from one school program to another, or from high school to another educational institution or to a training program.

Transition planning is also a term and an activity that is used by individuals who work with special needs clients. For example, agencies that work with adults who are deaf or those who work with developmentally challenged adults have used the concept of transition planning for many years. The transition plan forms, for these agencies and their participants, a critical component of that adult's individualized training/learning plan.

Transition planning or the identification of next steps was introduced to the adult literacy field in Ontario at the same time as was the development of written, organized training plans. In fact, the

identification of next steps or transition planning should form a part of the process when developing each learner's training plan. Like the training plan itself, the next steps section must be flexible to reflect the changing needs of the learner.

A transition plan can be seen to have two components. The first component encompasses the information within the training plan itself— the identification of short-term goals and the activities that must happen within the framework of the literacy organization for these goals to be realized. The second component identifies the possible next steps that will help adult literacy learners achieve their long-term goal.

In community-based literacy programs, the practitioners who are responsible for the development of learners' training plans do an excellent job of identifying the steps and actions that must occur within their literacy programs in order for learners to achieve short-term goals. They can successfully move (or transition) learners through their programs. Most practitioners agree, however, that "helping them (learners) move on to the next step after literacy was often difficult" (Hatt 2000).

Literacy practitioners in community-based agencies may have difficulty with helping learners identify next steps for a variety of reasons. One of the reasons may be a result of when "next steps" are identified: it forms part of a learner's training plan that is created before any literacy training has occurred (as a result of an assessment and goal-setting process). It is generally acknowledged that most learners who access literacy and skills upgrading offered by community-based agencies go to that agency's literacy program with very low literacy skills. Therefore the timeframe in which the learner must gain the necessary literacy and basic skills upgrading may seem too far away to provide a high level of comfort with putting that next step into writing.

Another reason that practitioners may have difficulty with helping learners identify next steps is the impact of factors that relate to things like self-image, employment status, family commitment, or health (see Chapter 5 for more information about challenges to learning).

Chapter Eight

Practitioners are well aware of how these, and other factors, can affect a learner's ability to participate in literacy upgrading. This in turn impacts on the length of time it may take a learner to gain the required skills for the next step.

While the length of time needed to gain the skills they need to move on to a next step may seem extraordinarily long, planning for the long-term goal does keep the learning focused on the needs of the learner. The transition plan will need to be flexible to accommodate this timeline.

Transition from a community-based literacy program could include entry or advancement to:

⇒ Another organization's literacy program (e.g., school board or college program)
⇒ Job training
⇒ Self-initiated employment
⇒ A better job
⇒ A workplace readiness skills course
⇒ Adult high school credit program
⇒ Postsecondary education (community college, or university)
⇒ Volunteer placement
⇒ Apprenticeship

Pre-exit planning

When the time comes for the learner to move on, the process will be smoother if a number of pre-exit activities have occurred. One of these activities would be the development of the final transition plan. This transition plan should identify both the activities that must occur, and the action plan for their successful completion. The learner should be given as much opportunity and responsibility as possible in determining the actions required to achieve the identified next steps. If, for example, the learner's next step is to go to a job training program, the activities in that

learner's training plan should include the identification of the specific job training program that the learner hopes to attend, and contact between the learner and staff from the program should be supported.

While literacy learners are adults and must be treated as such, almost anyone appreciates guidance and support, especially if the next step is into an area where that person has little or no experience. Here are some suggestions for activities that will help you help learners make a successful transition if their next step is further training or employment:

⇒ "Career" days: Invite staff from other agencies to speak to a group of learners. Ask local employers to be guest speakers or invite representatives from your local college to present information on apprenticeship opportunities and criteria. Look at your volunteers— perhaps one of them works in a specific industry or has special skills training that is of interest to a learner.

⇒ Pot Luck Suppers: Invite staff from another literacy agency to be the guest speaker.

⇒ Field trips: Take the learner, or a group of learners, to the community college or school board program so they can see exactly where they would be going. If possible introduce them to the instructors. Ask the Human Resources department of local industries if a tour of their plants is possible.

⇒ Job Fairs: If you have a group of learners with similar goals (e.g. to work in the hospitality industry) take them to a job fair. Before you go review the type of information that they may want to gather (that will help them achieve their goals) and prepare the learners for the possibility that recruitment may occur at the job fair.

Program Evaluation

It almost goes without saying that once you collect information from the program participants and stakeholders, you must do something with it[125]. If you collect more than the minimum data required by the funder you can use the information to help you with both program and organizational planning. Analysis of the collated data can allow you to link variables that impact on success or progress. For example, the average rate of retention and participation (for both learners and volunteers), the average rate of progress and demographic information. If you compare what you laid out in the training plan (e.g., the learner's short-term goal, the action plan for achieving the goal) with what actually happened (e.g., the timeline you put on the how long it would take the learner to achieve the stated goal) you will have information that will help you in the future when setting timelines.

Exit interviews and feedback forms should be designed to encourage and support a critical and honest look at the services provided. Consider using someone whose view may be considered impartial. This may help the respondents to feel more at ease, especially if they want to provide negative feedback.

It is important to keep in mind the current literacy level of the person providing the information or filling in the form. Learners working below MTCU's level three may not yet possess the writing or information gathering and communicating skills needed to provide constructive criticism. Provide forms that use icons to communicate a scale of responses (e.g. ☺ for positive response and ☹ for negative ones and using other icons used to fill in the range between these two extremes) and allow for feedback to be given verbally.

---

[125] For more information about program evaluation see the unit on Program Evaluation in CLO's *SmartSteps to Organizational Excellence*.

Note on Exit Reports

Do not undervalue the information that is collected as part of the exit process. It can have many uses. It can be used to form the basis of the annual report to the members of your non-profit organization. It can be used to shape public awareness campaigns or it can be used for the purposes of learner recruitment. Data can be used to make a case for support from the community or to seek funding from other sources. Make sure that you document changes you have made that have been prompted by the feedback from learners or instructors and communicate this type of information to everyone. Statistics that soundly demonstrate learner satisfaction with your program or the percentage of learners who met their goals can be an invaluable promotional tool for your agency.

Follow-up

MTCU requires literacy agencies to contact learners **who attained their goals** at three months and again at six months after they have left your agency. In practical terms planning and executing follow-up activities with adult literacy learners who have made a planned exit from your agency makes a lot of sense.

The information you collect should not be restricted to only that information you will need to complete the appropriate sections of your LBS Activity Reports (Follow-Up Status at Three and Six Months After Exit). For the purposes of overall program planning and evaluation you can also gain important information from these learners about how they are using the training received while participating in your literacy program.

Like all other aspects of program planning and service delivery you need to take a logical and structured approach to this activity. Fundamental questions need to be asked and answered before you begin. These are questions such as:

⇒ What kind of information do you need to collect (just what is required of you by a funder or more than that)?

⇒ How is the information collected (who is doing it, by what means and when)?

⇒ What do you do with the information once you have it (who sees it, who decides what is done with it and how is it used)?

Sample Questions for Follow-up

In the following table you will find a few sample questions that can be asked when making follow-up contact with learners. It has been assumed that most follow-up activity will happen by telephone.

Sample Questions for Follow-up	YES	NO
Are you working?		
If yes, please tell me what type of work you are doing:		
Are you in a training program?		
If yes, tell me about the program:		

Sample Questions for Follow-up	YES	NO
Are you in school?		
If yes, tell me what you are studying or what you are taking:		
Are you doing any volunteer work?		
If yes, tell what you are doing		
Do you think you are using the literacy skills you gained while with the literacy program?		
If yes, give me a couple of examples:		
Do you think you need to take more literacy upgrading?		
If yes, discuss this with the learner in more detail and make notes: (e.g. referred the learner to the college literacy and basic skills program)		
Is there anything else you would like to tell me about yourself?		
If yes, use this space to record the comments		

Note on Agency Initiated Exits

Your agency might have to initiate an exit for a learner. This could mean that the learner's behaviour (e.g., poor attendance or other unacceptable behaviour in the classroom or with a tutor) requires the agency to tell the learner that until she is willing to make an honest commitment to her learning, she will no longer be considered a program participant. Suggest another agency that may help her with the issues that are interfering with her commitment to learning and offer to assist her with making the initial contact. If there will be an opportunity for the learner to re-join the program at a later date make sure the learner knows this—you could, for example, give her a business card with your name on it and ask her to call you in six months.

Another reason for an agency initiative exit might be because some learners may have difficulty "letting go" of your agency. In addition to being the first positive learning experience they have had, it is possible that the literacy program has become for them a safe and welcoming environment. If you feel that the literacy training that your agency provides is no longer suitable for the learner suggest that he or she becomes involved in another way—as a volunteer for example. This could allow them to put to use skills that they have learned.

The Unplanned Exit

Overview

Many program coordinators will tell you that the call they dislike the most is the one from a volunteer who is telling them that she has not seen or heard from the learner for a number of weeks. If you succeed in reaching the learner a number of scenarios may unfold. It could be that the learner, for whatever reason (internal or external), does not wish to continue with his literacy and basic skills upgrading. The learner may, on the other hand, simply request to take a break (a break that started at least three weeks prior to your conversation with the learner). It could be that the learner does not find the volunteer helpful but was unsure how to ask to be re-matched.

If your attempts to reach the learner are unsuccessful you will need to decide what to do with the learner's file. Do you consider the learner to be a "drop-out" (and therefore will classify him or her as a lost contact) or do you think there is a reasonable chance that the learner may return? A review of the file will allow you to determine if any of the learner's short-term goals have been successfully documented.

In *Patterns of Participation* (ABC Canada, 2001) Long[126] reported that 33% of the learners who signed up for literacy programming dropped out within the first six to eight month period. In this report the main reasons for leaving were cited as being socio-economic-circumstantial. Reasons such as job-related pressures, family responsibilities and/or financial difficulties would fall into this category. The same report also identified

---

[126] *Patterns of Participation* presents the results of a national study in which 55 literacy organizations from across Canada provided data and contacts to researchers. Researchers conducted telephone interviews with 338 people from across Canada. The findings of the study revealed "critical problems with access to literacy and upgrading education in Canada" with regard to student recruitment and retention (page 9).

program-related reasons for leaving: learners stated that they felt they were placed at the wrong level or that the content or the instructional delivery method was wrong for them.

In *Seeing the Need: Meeting the Need* (OLC 2001) Hart and Roussy[127] reported that "a substantial proportion of the respondents cited social-psychological and other personal factors." They further reported that "almost a quarter cited lack of confidence, health and other personal problems …" as reasons for not staying in the literacy program.

Whatever the reason for leaving, make the most of the opportunity when speaking with the learner. Ask them questions to see if there is an opportunity to provide them with additional supports or to connect them with other service providers. Perhaps their living conditions have changed, or they are going through a divorce or they have lost their childcare provider. It may not be your job to provide them with counselling, but it is your job to refer them to supports that are outside your agency and to make sure they know what supports you can provide. Learners need to know that it is acceptable to take a leave of absence[128].

Stop-Outs or Drop-outs

Just because learners leave your literacy program does not mean they are giving up on achieving their goals. If they leave because of situational barriers (financial resources, family situation, and/or current health are examples of situational barriers), they may intend to return to the program because they are still committed to achieving their goals. In fact Comings, *et al* (1999) noted that, "using only attendance in class or in

---

[127] *Seeing the Need: Meeting the Need* collected information from 92 learners who were in a variety of Literacy and Basic Skills program across Ontario. The project looked at issue of recruitment and retention from a learner's perspective and provides recommendations for helping learners get into programs and for helping them stay.

[128] As mentioned earlier in this chapter, a more in-depth discussion on learner retention and why learners leave programs can be found in Chapter 5, The Adult Literacy Learner.

tutoring sessions as a measure of persistence undervalues effective learning activities that should be encouraged. A wider definition of persistence would allow practitioners to focus on helping adults become persistent learners who use episodes of program participation as critical parts of a comprehensive learning strategy that employs other forms of learning.[129]"

Using this view of learning does require you to rethink your relationship with the learners in your literacy program. You cannot, for example, encourage them to develop self-management, self-direction skills (like critical thinking, time management, etc.) and then tell them they can only do this within the confines of your program. That attitude is just not respectful of the principles of adult education.

On the other hand, you cannot just allow learners to jump into and out of your program as this can cause disruption to programming, to other learners and to volunteers. In fact, a commitment to learning is one the core quality standards developed by the literacy field and MTCU. Volunteer tutors, for example, are giving their time to your agency— when a learner does not show up for a tutoring session without just cause it is disrespectful to the tutor and may cause that tutor to withdraw from you organization.

Setting up a leave of absence policy will allow you to explore all the issues you need to address. A part of your policy should require you to keep in contact with the learner. Some programs tell the learner that they will be called every month or six weeks. If after a certain period, the learner cannot or will not make a commitment to return, then the learner should be considered to have left the program. It is important to assure the learner that they can return in the future (assuming that that is an option).

---

[129] *Persistence Among Adult Basic Education Students In Pre-GED Classes*. John P. Comings, Andrea Parrella, and Lisa Soricone. NCSALL Reports #12 December 1999, p 4.

If you notice a change in a learner's behaviour during a classroom or tutoring session, you should take the time to check-in with that person, in a non-threatening way. Perhaps the learner needs extra time to complete assignments, or needs to take a short leave of absence from the learning environment. As reported by Paul and Roussy in *Reaching Out*, Comings, *et al* noted that "often it was not so much what the specific barriers were, but whether or not the students could cope with the barriers they faced[130]." Supportive behaviour from an instructor may be just the help the learner needs to keep him from dropping out!

Identifying "At Risk" Learners

The preceding discussion focused on learners who had already left, or who were in danger of leaving—a reactive approach. What can you do to ensure that your approach is more proactive? One way would be to ensure that at specific points you collect or verify information with each learner.

The length of time that any one learner stays in a program will be determined by a number of factors. Some of those factors are external to the agency and some are internal. These factors can also be seen as being external or internal to the individual learner. In general, all of us tend to think of external factors as being beyond our control and internal as being within our control.

External factors can include situational or demographic variables. Situational variables can includes things like financial resources, family situation, current health, while demographic variables include age, number of dependents and gender.

---

[130] *Reaching Out: Supporting Ontario Works Clients in LBS Programs.* M. Paul and Y. Roussy. Project READ Literacy Network, 2002.

"At Risk" Identification During Intake and Initial Assessment

While it is true that the presence and impact of certain external factors is beyond your control, sometimes the extent of the impact can be within your control. Identifying potential barriers to learning that adult literacy learners may face can help you to develop program-based solutions that you can apply on a case-by-case basis. For example, you cannot do anything about the age of the learner or the number of dependents. However, you can plan for and allow accommodations that may help the learner achieve her goals by placing her in a small group with other learners in her age group, or by matching her with a tutor with similar interests, by providing a child-care subsidy or by offering more flexible attendance times.

When asking questions that will allow you to identify potential barriers make sure you do so in a non-threatening manner. Ensure that the learner understands the process by asking them questions as you work through the intake process. These questions will allow you to verify that they understand.

"At Risk" Identification During Literacy Instruction

If you are not the person who has regular or on-going contact with the learner, then make sure that the people who do understand the importance of identifying and quickly reacting to "at risk" behaviours. Provide instructors (volunteer tutor or paid staff) with training or tools and make sure that they include their observations in their written reports or as part of the informal assessment process. See the *following "The Warning Signs for Learners Who Are At Risk"* checklist as one type of tool that can be used by any practitioner.

"At Risk" Identification During On-going (Formal) Assessment

If your agency relies on volunteer tutors to deliver literacy training you will need to set up a schedule for conducting formal on-going assessment. At that meeting, take the time to verify basic contact information with the learner and ask them questions that will provide them with the opportunity to tell you if there have been situational changes in their lives.

Analyzing Information

Another way to be proactive in your approach to identifying and supporting at risk learners is to compile the information from individual learners and then conduct an analysis of the information. A checklist is one way to collect information about the learners in your literacy program.

The Warning Signs for Learners Who Are At Risk	
Adapted from *Reaching Out: Supporting Ontario Works Clients in LBS Programs.* Used with permission.	
Warning Sign	☑
• The learner has enrolled involuntarily, or states a lack of interest in learning at this time	
• The learner cannot formulate a long-term or a short-term goal	
• The learner reports financial, childcare or transportation problems	
• The learner reports lack of support for learning from family, friends or social workers	

The Warning Signs for Learners Who Are At Risk

Adapted from *Reaching Out: Supporting Ontario Works Clients in LBS Programs.*
Used with permission.

Warning Sign	☑
• The learner has difficulty with independent learning or with completing homework assignments	
• The learner does not or cannot participate in planning for tutorials or classroom discussions	
• The learner is frequently absent or absent for long periods of time without a reasonable explanation	
• The learner is disruptive in class/tutorials, or seems to have difficulty concentrating	
• The learner reports serious problems that interfere with learning (e.g. health problems, legal issues, addictions, etc.)	
• The learner experiences life changes (e.g. a new baby, divorce, death in the family, moving to a new home, etc.)	
• The learner has difficulty with problem solving or with identifying problems when they exist	
• The learner complains about an instructor/classmate, class schedules, level of learning, learning materials/approach	
• The learner demonstrates low self-esteem, or a lack of self-confidence	
• The learner personally identifies one or more of the above situations as serious	

A checkmark for any of the warning signs should indicate to you the type of action you need to take in order to reduce the potential of having that learner leave your program unexpectedly. By collating the information from a number of learners, you can identify trends or issues that may require you to change how or where you deliver literacy upgrading, or to add small group activities. For example, if you have a number of participants with small children you could consider setting up a peer support group or offering a parenting skills class.

Recording the learner's response to questions is another way to collect information. As noted in *Strategies of Our Own*, CLO's Learner Recruitment and Retentions Toolkit, the following questions can be incorporated into intake or initial assessment practices and will help you to identify potential barriers:

⇒ Why did you decide to come for upgrading?
⇒ Do you have supports for participating in the program? From whom? Is anyone discouraging you from participating?
⇒ How did you feel after your first visit to the program? During introduction or orientation? During the assessment?
⇒ What are your goals? How long will it take you to achieve your goals?
⇒ What are your expectations for the program? What do you think the program can do about your expectations?
⇒ What is your living situation?
⇒ What is your overall reaction toward your prior school experiences?
⇒ Is this the first adult program you have attended?
⇒ Were you ever in a special education program at public school?
⇒ Who were your best and worst teachers and why?
⇒ What are your strengths and weaknesses?
⇒ Tell me about your job history? Why did you leave?
⇒ What are your interests and hobbies?
⇒ Do you have time to study and a place to study?

CLO's *Strategies of Our Own* provides the following suggestions for questions to ask while the learner is participating in literacy instruction, as part of the on-going assessment process (either informal or formal):

⇒ How do you feel about your instructor/tutor? Do you feel like you may need to talk about personal problems with your instructor/tutor? Would you be able to?

⇒ Do you feel like you could talk to your tutor or instructor if there was a problem in the program?

⇒ Do you like the other adults in your program? Has the instructor done anything to help everyone feel comfortable together?

⇒ How do you think you learn best?

⇒ Are you involved with other social service agencies? List them.

⇒ Describe the learning setting in which you would feel most comfortable.

⇒ What problems do you think this agency has that will interfere with your learning?

⇒ What kinds of things could our agency do to better support you?

The responses you note to these, or similar questions, will allow you to make an informed decision about the strategies that you need to employ. Resources like CLO's *Strategies of Our Own: Learner Recruitment and Retention Toolkit* will help you plan the best strategy for each of your learners. See the "Suggested Reading" section at the end of this chapter for other resources that you may find useful.

It is important to remember, however, that for some learners no matter what you do they may leave without telling you. If you have done everything you can, given human and financial constraints, to identify and reduce barriers to participation and to learning then you just have to accept that fact that the learner is gone.

Note on Data Collection

Some practitioners may feel that asking certain types of questions oversteps certain boundaries. The intent, when asking questions like "how long have your lived at this address" is not to be intrusive. Rather, the intent is to ensure that you know enough about the learner to provide the right kind of supports or to develop the best learning strategy for that learner. The provision of supports or the identification of barriers will help ensure that literacy instruction is shaped to meet the needs of that learner. Involve learners by explaining, if they become concerned about the questions you ask, why you need certain types of information and invite them to tell you more about themselves. How can you offer childcare subsidies, if you have not asked if they have any children? How can you refer them to other service providers if you have not asked about other issues? You need to attempt to provide support to the whole person, not just that part of the person that needs literacy and basic skills upgrading. Ensure learners that the information collected will be kept confidential.

Lost Contacts

Overview

How many learners do you list as "lost contact" over the course of a year? This chapter began with the scenario that many program coordinators have encountered—calling a learner only to hear that dreaded recorded message: "This number is no longer in service." It seems obvious then, that in terms of service and program delivery, a lost contact would be a learner that you cannot reach by telephone, mail or other means of communication. Recording this information is a function of service delivery required by MTCU.

According to MTCU's LBS Program Guidelines[131] a learner who could not be reached for an exit interview or a follow-up interview would be reported as a lost contact. Follow-up is defined by MTCU as an activity that you only conduct with learners who have successfully attained their goals.

It has to be assumed that learners who successfully complete their stated goals and move on to the next step (as per their training plan) will do so as part of a planned process that will include an exit interview. In some situations, however, it may not be possible to conduct the exit interview. For example, a learner completes her literacy upgrading and then moves to another community to attend a community college. She might not leave a forwarding address or other contact information. If you were unable to arrange for an exit interview you would report this learner as a lost contact.

Many other learners will simply disappear from a program for a variety of reasons. These learners would be reported to MTCU as lost contacts.

Establish a Base Line

What percent of your learners would you classify as a lost contact? Over the course of a year, how often do you completely lose contact with learners? If you do not have a solid factual answer to those questions then it will be difficult for you to make a predication on what is an acceptable number of learners that will fall into that category on an annual basis. Also analyze, where possible, the reasons why you have lost contact. For example, is it because the contact information is no longer valid or is it because the learner does not return telephone calls? Are there points in time when you can verify the information that you have in the learner's file?

---

[131] LBS Program Guidelines, Appendix 8, Post Training Services.

Reducing Lost Contacts

Learners have cited the following as their main reasons for leaving a program:

Socio-economic:	Job-related pressures Family responsibilities Financial difficulties
Program related:	They felt they were placed at the wrong level They felt the content was wrong for them. They felt the instructional delivery method was wrong for them
Personal:	Lack of confidence Health-related issues Other personal problems

When the agency works with the learner to identify specific barriers, or when the agency can offer programming that will provide the learner with an opportunity to overcome the barrier, then the likelihood of the learner having a positive learning experience is greatly increased. The likelihood of the learner dropping-out or disappearing unexpectedly is then correspondingly reduced. Therefore, the number of learners who must be classified as "lost contact" is reduced.

Strategies for Reducing Lost Contacts

During an online focus group with 15 literacy practitioners held by Community Literacy of Ontario[132] community-based literacy practitioners offered some of the following ideas as ways to help reduce the number of lost contacts.

Strategies for reducing lost contacts at intake or initial assessment:

⇒ In addition to a physical address ask if there is a post office box number (some learners will keep the same box number even when they move)

⇒ Ask for more than one contact number or someone that could be contacted if needed (e.g., next of kin)

⇒ Ask learners how long they have lived at the address given

⇒ Ask if there is a cell or pager number

⇒ Ask for an email address

⇒ Ask them to identify factors that might impact on their ability to make a commitment to learning (see the sample questions and "at risk" checklist)

Strategies for reducing lost contacts during literacy and basic skills training:

⇒ Set smaller goals to assist learners with achieving attainable outcomes

⇒ Provide opportunities for increased contact with the program (learner support groups, reading clubs, etc.) to allow the learner to feel more connected to the agency

---

[132] The online focus group was held on March 6, 2003. Participants were invited to join the discussion in the weeks prior to the event. The resulting discussion was used as the basis for the strategies presented here.

⇒   Remind learners at regular intervals that exit and follow up activities
     will occur

⇒   Make learner participation in data collection part of the agency's
     commitment to learner involvement

⇒   Have regular on-going contact with learners even if it is only a phone
     call— do not limit your contact to the times when you are conducting
     an on-going assessment

⇒   Use **trained** volunteers or job placement personnel to make contact
     with the learners

Strategies for reducing lost contacts at follow-up:

⇒   Telephone: Make a minimum of three calls to follow-up, ensuring
     calls are made at different times of the day, including evenings and
     weekends

⇒   Mail: Send a letter, indicating a response date and incentive if they
     respond

⇒   Use an alternative address if available

⇒   Programs that have ongoing intake, will also have ongoing exits: Use
     a binder divided into months to organize your approach to
     contacting learners or create a spreadsheet on Excel for all learners
     for the entire year—if they leave highlight the months when a follow-
     up must occur

⇒   Do follow-ups the first day of every month

⇒   Have annual events such as end of year party and invite "exits" to
     attend

⇒   Use learner focus groups to collect valuable information about
     program delivery and quality of service and offer a stipend for
     participation

⇒   Contact other agencies/service providers with whom the client has
     contact: social services, OW staff, HRDC, Food Bank, and the
     neighbourhood sites, etc.

Note on Confidentially

The issue of confidentially is often given by agency staff as a reason why they cannot contact a particular learner. In a year, how many learners request full and complete confidentiality? A review of past files will allow you to determine this number. This number can then be used as the base factor when deciding on what percentage of learners will fall into the category (on the LBS Activity Report) of "Lost Contact."

If you realize that you have a large number of learners requesting complete confidentially you should ask why this is. Does confidentiality include a request from the learner that no one contact her by any means? Has it been requested because it is a feature that you put a great deal of focus on in your program brochures? Perhaps then, learners request confidentially because they think they should (it was "advertised" as something they could have). Is it because the learner is greatly ashamed or embarrassed? Perhaps knowing that there are other learners who need help with their literacy skills will help the learner see that there is no need to be ashamed and therefore no need to request strict confidentiality.

During contact with the learner, when conducting an ongoing assessment for example, revisit the request for confidentially. If the need for confidentially was requested because the learner was ashamed of needing literacy training, it is possible that, as a result of a positive learning experience, she may no longer place such a high value on confidentially.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at learner exits. As stated at the beginning of the chapter, learners can provide you with invaluable information that can be used to guide and shape the literacy programming that is offered by your literacy agency. Melding funder reporting requirements with an agency driven process for program and organizational evaluation will ensure that you have the information you need to make informed proactive decisions about service delivery, program planning and organizational development.

Questions for Reflection
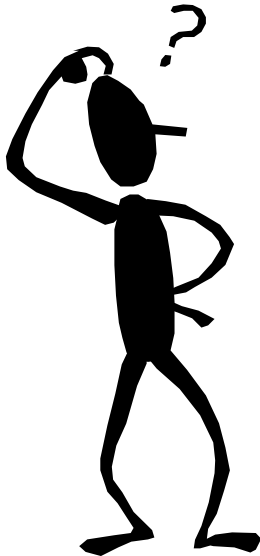
⇒ Are there valid reasons for you to be concerned about asking learners for their comments about their previous learning experience?

⇒ Information collected from learners when they leave your program can have many uses. In addition to program evaluation purposes how else might learner feedback be useful?

Suggested Resources

In addition to the various reports, manuals, web sites and other resources mentioned in this chapter, we think you might find the following resources to be useful.
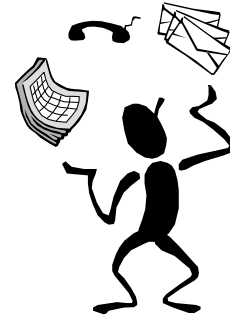
Print–Based:

Strategies of Our Own: Learner Recruitment and Retention Toolkit. Judith Fowler: Community Literacy of Ontario, 2002.
⇒   See page 152 for sample exit questionnaire.

Entry to Exit. Marianne Paul. Laubach Literacy of Ontario, 2000.
⇒   Chapter 6 has sample questionnaires for exit interview and follow-up

The Qualitative Tracking Project. Yvonne Roussy. Literacy Group of Waterloo Region, 2001.
⇒   This report provides information on ways to use exit and follow-up activities to benefit both learners and agencies and it examines how exit and follow-up data can be used in qualitative evaluation.

Reaching Out: Supporting Ontario Works Clients in LBS Programs. Marianne Paul and Yvonne Roussy-Henniger. Project READ Literacy Network, 2002.
⇒   The goal of the project was to identify, pilot and then evaluate strategies with regards to recruitment and retention of Ontario Works clients in LBS programs in all delivery sectors. Strategies are given for student retention and recruitment.
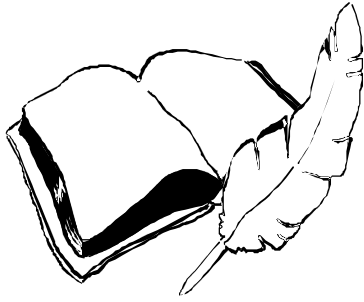
CHAPTER 9

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

> "At the heart of professional growth and leadership for professional development is the union of the reflective educator and the self-sustaining learning community. Professional development can be guided by leaders, tied to standards and learning goals. But the engine that drives it all, ultimately, is each individual's commitment to self-reflection and self-improvement. Simultaneously, as those individuals are drawn together into collaborative groups, there is a need not only to identify problems and come up with solutions, but to learn processes of working together that make it possible to succeed at the tasks before them."
>
> *John Norton*
> *Journal of Staff Development*
> *Spring 2002 (Volume 23, Number 2)*

Introduction

The literacy practitioner is central to the process of literacy education for adults. Daily, practitioners make decisions about the experiences that an adult literacy learner will have while a part of that agency's literacy program. It is through the professional development activities of practitioners that the field will develop and change and that new directions and possibilities will be explored. The value of professional development must be recognized for its potential to improve literacy

instruction and practice. It must further be recognized for both the professional and personal benefits it provides to the individual literacy practitioner.

This chapter explores some of the many ways in which you—as a literacy practitioner—can participate in training and professional development opportunities. Regardless of who provides the training, the onus must be on you to ensure that the training and skills development in which you participate is relevant to your professional development.

The Role of Professional Development

The term "professional development" implies a course of action that will allow you to develop new skills and knowledge that will allow you to become better at what you do: whether it is working with learners, coordinating volunteers or managing the literacy program. The types of activities and how these activities are linked to your needs should be part of a clear, coherent, and strategic approach to continuous growth and learning. Professional development does not just happen—you have to have a plan.

Most regional networks and provincial organizations collect information about literacy training needs. As reported in *Network Practitioner Training Manual* (Project READ Literacy Network, 2002) networks currently use a combination of methods to identify your training needs. Fifty percent of regional networks use information they collect from members of their literacy service planning committees and formal surveys as the two main ways they collect information about your practitioner training needs. In addition to this, 67% of networks plan training based on suggestions from their MTCU field consultant and 67% plan training based on the types of projects recently funded MTCU/NLS[133].

---

[133] *Network Practitioner Training Manual*. Jane Tuer. Project READ Literacy Network, 2003, page 37.

Community Literacy of Ontario uses similar methods. CLO provides professional development at its annual conference, online and through the production of resource materials. We collects information on agency needs through our annual telephone survey of our members, through AlphaCom, through our members-only e-bulletin and through our board of directors.

Regardless of how or when regional networks or provincial organizations collect information about your training needs, the onus is you to provide them with the information. If you have identified training needs that cannot be met by literacy organizations you will need to look outside the literacy field.

Many colleges and universities offer courses that may be relevant to your training needs. For example, at this time three colleges[134] in Ontario offer a certificate program called "Teacher of Adults – Literacy Educator." Other organizations in your community, such as your local United Way or volunteer centre, provide excellent opportunities for your professional development.

Unfortunately, budgets for professional development in most community literacy agencies are low. CLO's 1999 Human Resources Survey found that on average, the total annual professional development budget of literacy agencies in the community-based sector was as follows:

⇒ $0 in 5% of agencies
⇒ $100-$500 in 40% of agencies
⇒ $500-$1,000 in 25% of agencies
⇒   Over $1,000 in 30% of agencies

This means of course that you will have to be creative and probably take advantage of free or low cost professional development.

---

[134] The colleges are: Algonquin, Conestoga and Sault. Contact each college for up-to-date information about the courses in this certificate program.

However, do not sell yourself short: the continual development of your skills is very important to your agency and to you personally. Present your board with information on how important professional development is, given the wide variety of skills needed in a literacy agency. Ask your board to financially support professional development for all staff and to treat this budget line as an important one—not the first line to be cut from the budget! Your skills are one of the most important assets your agency has.

If your agency will not or cannot pay for professional development, do not give up. Try to take advantage of the free or low cost training offered by regional and provincial networks. Various literacy organizations have produced a wide variety of print and web-based resources over the years. To find out what is available, consult the library of your regional literacy network, and check out the websites of AlphaPlus Centra at www.alphaplus.ca and the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD) at www.nald.ca.

Another good place to start is by reading *New to Literacy in Ontario? What Literacy Staff Need to Know*. This resource, produced by Literacy Link South Central, provides information on many important aspects of literacy programming in Ontario and is designed to help literacy practitioners become aware of the resources that are available in the field. Also, much of the training offered by local organizations such as the United Way is offered at a very low cost. In addition, consider some of the web-based training opportunities. Web-based training requires dedicated time rather than money.

Memberships in various organizations such as Community Literacy of Ontario, Laubach Literacy Ontario, the Ontario Literacy Coalition, the Movement for Canadian Literacy and your regional network will ensure that your agency receives newsletters, reports and other publications produced by these organizations. In addition to providing you with ongoing information about professional development opportunities and new resources, membership in these organizations may allow you to attend workshops and conferences at low or no cost.

Practitioner Profile

From research conducted by Community Literacy of Ontario in 1999 and 2000[135], we know quite a bit about the practitioners working in the community-based literacy field in Ontario. In 2000 over 60% of those surveyed had been working in the field for four or more years, most had some form of post-secondary education and many practitioners brought to the literacy field extensive experience from prior employment

At that time respondents indicated that their initial literacy training took the form of:

⇒ Self-study of printed manuals, files and other on-site resources (86%)
⇒ Participation in workshops and other non-credit courses (86%)
⇒ On-the-job orientation (79%)

Seventy-six percent of practitioners indicated that their prior work experience provided them with skills and knowledge that they could transfer to the literacy field. Many respondents also indicated that their involvement with the agency started with them volunteering as tutors (48%)[136].

What Do Paid Practitioners Do?

Paid literacy practitioners take on a variety of roles. From the training and support of learners, new staff, new volunteers, and the board of directors, to understanding of financial statements to understanding and implementing new directives from funders, literacy practitioners need a

---

[135] For complete information please refer to *Skills for the Future Phase* One and Phase Two Reports. The reports are available from CLO or you can read them online at http://nald.ca/clo.htm.
[136] *Skills for the Future*, Phase One Report, page 17.

wide range of skills and knowledge. The key areas of responsibility are discussed briefly below.

Program Coordination and Delivery:

Many paid practitioners deliver literacy upgrading to the adult literacy learners or train, supervise and support others in this role. This of course means that they must have the skills, knowledge and training needed to be effective literacy instructors and educators. In most agencies, one staff person is responsible for the initial intake and assessment and the development of the training plan. See Chapter Six, Identifying and Meeting Learner Needs for more information about these and related tasks.

Volunteer Management:

In most community literacy agencies, volunteers are involved in some capacity. Paid practitioners are responsible for recruiting, screening, training, supporting and recognizing volunteers[137]. In its most recent survey of community-based literacy agencies, CLO learned that programs have, on average, 2.4 staff (full-time equivalent) and that these staff members manage an average of 52 volunteers.

Agency Management:

In Ontario, 89% of community-based literacy agencies[138] are stand-alone not-for-profit charitable organizations. This structure requires that someone associated with the agency—more often than not it is a paid staff person—has the skills to run a small business.

---

[137] For more information specific to the training and support of volunteers see Chapter 4, The Role of the Volunteer.

[138] CLO HR Survey conducted January 2003. Eleven percent are governed by a multi-service agency.

Agency management involves many important tasks such as:

⇒ Supporting and guiding the board of directors (who have the ultimate responsibility to oversee the management of the organization)

⇒ Recruiting, training and supervising staff members

⇒ Financial management

⇒ Planning and evaluation

⇒ Researching and writing grant applications

Board Development and Support:

The board of directors has the ultimate responsibility for the governance of the agency. To varying degrees the responsibility for the actual management is delegated to one or more paid practitioners. It is more often than not paid practitioners that provide information, training and support to the board of directors.

To successfully accomplish the tasks associated with each of the roles mentioned above, the literacy practitioner needs to develop a wide variety of skills. Therefore, the practitioner needs to seek training and development opportunities that match this diversity of roles.

Key Principles for Professional Development

Professional development is about more than your attendance at a training event or your participation in educational upgrading. Professional development is also about the development of a more positive attitude toward, and an increased confidence in, the work that you do as a literacy practitioner. Further, it is about developing your skills and interests for your current position or for positions you hope to hold in the future.

Equally important to the gaining of new skills or knowledge is the use to which you put your skills and knowledge. Professional development opportunities arise when you share resources or information with your peers, such as at literacy community planning meetings or on AlphaCom or at conferences. When you interact with volunteers and learners, you share your literacy expertise by guiding the work of the match and you model behaviour by involving both the volunteer and the learner in the development of the literacy and basic skills training for that learner. When you interact with your co-workers or colleagues, you are presented with opportunities to support one another and build mutual respect. When you pause and reflect on your actions and motives you can evaluate the integrity of your work. All of these activities provide you with the opportunity to grow and develop as a literacy practitioner.

When planning for your professional development, do not forget the basic tenets of adult education. Remember, like the learners you work with, you will learn best when you:

$\Rightarrow$ Feel comfortable with the learning environment and attempt tasks that allow you to succeed within the context of your limited time and the demands of your every day life

$\Rightarrow$ Provide input into the planning of the learning goals and process

$\Rightarrow$ Have opportunities to engage in social learning, - e.g. you learn from peers or colleagues as well as from the instructor

$\Rightarrow$ Have a variety of options appropriate to your learning styles

$\Rightarrow$ Are able to associate new learning with previous experiences and to use those experiences while learning

$\Rightarrow$ Have the opportunity to apply theory and information to practical situations in your own life

Think carefully about what kind of professional development you need and why. Time and money for professional development is limited, so chose strategically!

Your Plan for Professional Development

Paid practitioners in community literacy agencies have responsibilities that can encompass everything from program management to actual instruction—to recruiting tutors and learners to making presentations to executives from large corporations. However, as with most things, the first step in the creation of your professional development plan is a needs analysis.

Begin by answering the following questions:

⇒ Do you want to gain new skills for your current position or for a position you would like to hold in the future?

⇒ Do you have a good understanding of the skills and abilities that you currently possess?

⇒ If you are looking at positions you would like to hold in the future do you know what skills and knowledge are required?

⇒ How much time and money is available for professional development?

Fundamental to your professional development is the need to keep your skills and knowledge up-to-date in areas that are most relevant to the work that you are currently doing. For example, literacy instructors may need to gain new skills related to instructional design or delivery while volunteer coordinators may need to learn more about attracting volunteers in today's changing environment.

Ideally, the process you engage in to gain new skills and knowledge will allow you to interact with your peers. Collaboration (whether face to face or online) will increase your exposure to different (and sometimes differing) points of view. Collaboration can also allow you to feel more connected to the community that you work in and it can allow you to develop a support network of your peers.

Professional Development Planning Tool

Evaluation is something we all know is good for us, yet we always dread having someone else conduct an evaluation of our skills, knowledge, and abilities. Far too often we also avoid self-evaluation; however, self-evaluation puts you in the driver's seat. In fact, when coupled with a performance appraisal, self-evaluation will give you a strong voice in identifying the skills and knowledge areas on which future training or professional development activities are to focus, as well as the types of professional development approaches in which you choose to participate.

Your professional development plan should give you the opportunity to see where you can gain, strengthen or practice skills, both on the job and through various training activities. Ongoing training can be accessed by a variety of methods (e.g. on-the-job, face-to-face, online, web-based, self-directed, printed manuals and at conferences or workshops). Each of these are discussed later in this chapter.

CLO's Professional Development Planning Tool has been developed to help you create a plan that is specific to your personal training and skills development needs. It will help you and your organization understand your areas of strength and the areas where you may wish to build your skills. Use the results of this self-assessment to determine and systematically approach areas for personal and professional development based on your needs.

The PD Planning Tool has included sample areas of responsibilities and activities; however, it is important to recognize the range of experience that staff may have and the unique nature of individual community literacy agencies. The results (i.e. needs identified) will vary for different individuals who go through the self-assessment process.

Work through the self-assessment by:

⇒ Looking at the key functions and the typical responsibilities
⇒ Circling the corresponding ratings of relevancy, proficiency and priority, as they relate to you
⇒ Documenting training needs for each function as indicated by your personal rankings and needs
⇒ Upon completion of this planning tool, deciding how and when you will pursue the training that best suits your personal goals

Using this PD Planning Tool should help you to indicate areas of responsibility related to your career that would benefit from further training. Training could be obtained in the areas of human resources, finance, volunteer management, learning styles, adult education principles, learning outcomes and demonstrations, or whatever is relevant to you.

While you are at it, think outside of the box! What interests you – photography, desktop publishing, public speaking, yoga, etc.? Pursuing outside interests helps to create happy, more fulfilled practitioners.

Professional development moves practitioners forward both personally and professionally. This benefits agencies and learners by having happier, more skilled staff delivering the literacy services.

CLO's Professional Development Planning Tool

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3" align="center">**Understanding the Need for Literacy**</td></tr>
<tr><td>How relevant is this skill to my current position or work that I would like to do in the future?</td><td>Do I have this skill? If yes, how proficient am I at using the skill?</td><td>Is strengthening this skill a priority for me?</td></tr>
<tr><td>LOW   HIGH</td><td>LOW   HIGH</td><td>LOW   HIGH</td></tr>
<tr><td>1 2 3 4 5</td><td>1 2 3 4 5</td><td>1 2 3 4 5</td></tr>
</table>

An awareness of literacy challenges and the underlying issues is essential if practitioners are going to help meet the need of adults who are seeking to improve their literacy skills.

Typical responsibilities:
- Understanding literacy and its importance in society
- Understanding the reasons for poor literacy skills
- Understanding the role of community literacy agencies and the reasons why people come to community-based programs
- Knowing the impact of low/limited literacy skills
- Being aware of literacy issues in Canada and what this means locally
- Being aware of other social issues and organizations that affect literacy (OW, EI, etc.)

In the area of *Understanding The Need For Literacy* my training needs (if any) are:

Understanding the Role of Your Agency

How relevant is this skill to my current position or work that I would like to do in the future?					Do I have this skill? If yes, how proficient am I at using the skill?					Is strengthening this skill a priority for me?				
LOW				HIGH	LOW				HIGH	LOW				HIGH
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

In order to deliver appropriate programming, practitioners must know how their agency fits in the provincial picture of literacy service providers and the expectations of their funders.

Typical responsibilities:
- Understanding service delivery in Ontario
- Understanding the LBS Program
- Understanding and meeting the funding criteria of various government departments and ministries
- Communicating effectively with government officials
- Promoting clear procedures for collecting, documenting, and reporting data
- Creating a positive learning environment
- Monitoring, evaluating and recording learners' progress
- Supporting a commitment to active/ongoing learning
- Participating in community planning for literacy services
- Marketing, promotions and community outreach

In the area of *Understanding the Role of Your Agency* my training needs (if any) are:

Understanding the Role of the Volunteer

How relevant is this skill to my current position or work that I would like to do in the future?					Do I have this skill? If yes, how proficient am I at using the skill?					Is strengthening this skill a priority for me?				
LOW				HIGH	LOW			HIGH		LOW			HIGH	
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Practitioners need to understand volunteer management: the process of recruiting, screening, training, supporting and recognizing volunteers.

Typical responsibilities:

- Identifying the major aspects of planning for and supporting volunteers
- Creating volunteer opportunities that will contribute to the organization's mission and purpose
- Developing policies and procedures that will support volunteer effort
- Developing and implementing an effective recruitment plan
- Developing and implementing a consistent volunteer interview and screening process
- Providing appropriate initial and ongoing training for each type of volunteer position
- Providing effective support and supervision to volunteers
- Developing a transparent evaluation and communications process
- Recognizing volunteers

In the area of *Understanding the Role of the Volunteer* my training needs (if any) are:

Understanding the Adult Learner

How relevant is this skill to my current position or work that I would like to do in the future?					Do I have this skill? If yes, how proficient am I at using the skill?					Is strengthening this skill a priority for me?				
LOW				HIGH	LOW			HIGH		LOW				HIGH
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

It is important for practitioners to really know and understand adult learners in order that effective strategies and teaching methods can be implemented.

Typical responsibilities:

- Understanding the principles and theories of adult literacy education
- Highlighting the characteristics of adult literacy learners and adult learning principles
- Examining the challenges and solutions to learning for adult learners
- Recognizing and accommodating special needs
- Understanding instructional methods

In the area of *Understanding the Adult Learner* my training needs (if any) are:

Delivering Service		
How relevant is this skill to my current position or work that I would like to do in the future?	Do I have this skill? If yes, how proficient am I at using the skill?	Is strengthening this skill a priority for me?
LOW HIGH	LOW HIGH	LOW HIGH
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

A large portion of practitioners' time is spent providing direct delivery of services to adult learners.

Typical responsibilities:

Conducting information and referral:

- Understanding information and referral
- Understanding other community services (literacy and other)
- Understanding information and referral protocols

Conducting assessment:

- Understanding common assessment and common assessment tools within the community
- Recording and documenting intake and assessment results
- Providing feedback to learners on the results of their assessments
- Developing a plan of action based on assessment results that is learner-centred and goal-directed
- Understanding the implications of learning disabilities and how they relate to assessment

Developing training plans:

- Knowing how to help learners to identify their goals
- Identifying the required steps for the achievement of stated goals
- Knowing how to determine exit criteria and skills for successful transition (transition planning)
- Selecting or modifying resources based on individual training plans

Delivering Service
(continued)

Training:

- Using appropriate strategies for teaching reading, writing, numeracy and self-management
- Identifying and working to reduce barriers to learning
- Understanding teaching and learning techniques to enhance access to, and participation in, learning
- Understanding the relationship between learning styles and learning approaches
- Promoting and encouraging self-directed learning
- Including learners in the program planning process
- Knowing how to research or access learning resources effectively
- Establishing and maintaining an effective learning environment
- Evaluating teaching and learning activities

Conducting follow-up activities:

- Keeping up-to-date records
- Conducting effective learner exits and follow-up
- Analyzing follow-up data
- Planning for ways to support learners to be more successful in their next step

In the area of *Delivering Service* my training needs (if any) are:

Finance

How relevant is this skill to my current position or work that I would like to do in the future?					Do I have this skill? If yes, how proficient am I at using the skill?					Is strengthening this skill a priority for me?				
LOW				HIGH	LOW				HIGH	LOW				HIGH
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Practitioners need skills to effectively manage the financial resources of literacy agencies.

Typical responsibilities:

- Understanding and working with generally accepted accounting practices for not-for-profits
- Understanding the role of resource allocation in organizational planning and service delivery
- Understanding the financial requirements of various funders
- Understanding the financial reporting requirements of a not-for-profit organization
- Planning for the long-term financial health of your literacy agency
- Developing and monitoring budgets

In the area of *Financial Resources* my training needs (if any) are:

Human Resources

How relevant is this skill to my current position or work that I would like to do in the future?					Do I have this skill? If yes, how proficient am I at using the skill?					Is strengthening this skill a priority for me?				
LOW				HIGH	LOW				HIGH	LOW				HIGH
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Practitioners need to ensure that the Ontario Employment Standards Act is followed at all times and that the agency has appropriate policies and procedures and supports in place to interview, screen, hire, train and provide for the ongoing support of all staff members.

Typical responsibilities:
- Recruiting, hiring, training, supervising and motivating staff
- Developing job descriptions for all positions
- Developing and implementing regular performance appraisals for all positions
- Developing contracts for all positions
- Understanding the Ontario Employment Standards Act
- Ensuring that payroll deductions and other fees are submitted to the federal or provincial government

In the area of *Human Resources* my training needs (if any) are:

Technology-based Resources

How relevant is this skill to my current position or work that I would like to do in the future?	Do I have this skill? If yes, how proficient am I at using the skill?	Is strengthening this skill a priority for me?
LOW HIGH	LOW HIGH	LOW HIGH
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

The use of technology in the day-to-day operations of literacy agencies continues to grow. Practitioners need skills and knowledge that will allow them to use technology effectively in a variety of situations related to program management and service delivery.

Typical responsibilities:
- Understanding and using software applications for various purposes
- Integrating technology into instructional approaches
- Including technology and technological support in the annual budget
- Integrating technology into administrative activities
- Managing database information

In the area of *Technology-based Resources* my training needs (if any) are:

Government Funding and Reporting

How relevant is this skill to my current position or work that I would like to do in the future?	Do I have this skill? If yes, how proficient am I at using the skill?	Is strengthening this skill a priority for me?
LOW HIGH	LOW HIGH	LOW HIGH
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

In the not-for-profit environment practitioners must meet the requirements of a variety of government departments and ministries. Practitioners must be able to access funding, develop programs based on funding criteria and provide funders and others with appropriate and timely reports.

Typical responsibilities:

Government funding:

- Being knowledgeable about a range of potential funders
- Understanding and meeting the funding criteria of various government departments and ministries
- Writing effective proposals

Government reporting:

- Providing funders and others with appropriate and timely reports
- Communicating clearly and effectively with agents of the government
- Using clear procedures for collecting, documenting, and reporting data
- Filing a charitable return and maintaining charitable status
- Reporting to government on changes to organizational bylaws and to the board of directors

In the area of *Government Funding and Reporting* my training needs (if any) are:

Board Development

How relevant is this skill to my current position or work that I would like to do in the future?	Do I have this skill? If yes, how proficient am I at using the skill?	Is strengthening this skill a priority for me?
LOW HIGH	LOW HIGH	LOW HIGH
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Your board should play a critical role in policy development and leadership of your agency. Understanding how best to recruit, train and support a board of directors is an important skill for practitioners.

Typical responsibilities:

- Understanding the role of a board of directors
- Understanding various governance structures
- Developing a profile of the skills, knowledge and experience needed by board members
- Developing resources for board orientation
- Providing staff support to board and committee meetings

In the area of *Board Development* my training needs (if any) are:

Strategic and Organizational Planning and Evaluation

How relevant is this skill to my current position or work that I would like to do in the future?					Do I have this skill? If yes, how proficient am I at using the skill?					Is strengthening this skill a priority for me?				
LOW				HIGH	LOW				HIGH	LOW				HIGH
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Practitioners need to understand the importance of planning and using effective tools to undertake both strategic and organizational planning in their literacy agency. Further, practitioners need to be able to understand and implement effective processes for ongoing program evaluation.

Typical responsibilities:
- Understanding and implementing strategic and organizational planning
- Facilitating strategic and organizational planning in your literacy agency
- Understanding and implementing program evaluation in your literacy agency
- Understanding various approaches to program evaluation, including outcomes-based evaluation
- Collecting and analyzing data

In the area of *Strategic and Organizational Planning and Evaluation* my training needs (if any) are:

Personal and Professional Growth

How relevant is this skill to my current position or work that I would like to do in the future?					Do I have this skill? If yes, how proficient am I at using the skill?					Is strengthening this skill a priority for me?				
LOW				HIGH	LOW				HIGH	LOW				HIGH
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Given the huge skills set that literacy practitioners are required to have and the ongoing demands upon their time and energy, it is important to evaluate individual skills, needs and interests and identify areas for personal and professional growth. You will also need to be aware that since continuous growth is important to you and your organization you may need to actively request professional development from your employer.

Potential activities:
- Training in facilitation and communication skills
- "True Colours" training
- Training in Myers Briggs personality assessment
- Training in "humour in the workplace"
- Attending a provincial or national conference
- Dedicating two days per year to visiting educational websites to download material pertinent to your needs
- Having your literacy agency join an external organization that would contribute to your growth
- Taking some of CLO's online training workshops!
- Any other professional development training you need that was not covered earlier…

In the area of *Personal and Professional Growth* my professional development needs (if any) are:

In Conclusion

Now that you have used CLO's professional development planning tool, what are your most important professional development needs?

Where is this training available? (For example, local workshops, regional literacy networks, provincial literacy networks, online, on websites, resource manuals, at your local community college, etc.)

When will you take this training?

How much does this training cost?

Other considerations?

Professional Development Options

Overview

The use of a planning tool, like the one developed by Community Literacy of Ontario, should help you to clearly identify the areas where you need to gain knowledge and skills. Below are some suggested ways for you to acknowledge your current skills and knowledge or to acquire new additional skills and knowledge.

Most literacy practitioner learn job related skills on the job. With an average of only 2.4 staff (full time equivalent) at each community-based agency, most of the learning has to be self-directed as more often than not the new practitioner is replacing someone who has left the agency.

In addition to attending training workshops, you can gain skills and knowledge through a variety of text or web-based self-directed learning activities. To make it more relevant to your work and to help the board and other stakeholders realize the importance of professional development situate the activity within your organization's annual performance appraisal process.

Self-directed learning implies that you, as the learner, initiate the learning and that you will make the decisions about the types of professional development experiences in which you will participate and when you will participate. You will also set you own goals for the learning and the methods for demonstrating that the goals were met.

To make self-directed learning work for you, make sure you:

$\Rightarrow$ Define your learning needs and set achievable goals. What areas of knowledge and skills do you need to gain?

⇒   Describe your learning objectives and activities. How will you gain
     the knowledge and the skills?

⇒   Evaluate your learning. How will you know that you have met your
     learning goals?

⇒   Apply your learning. How will you apply your new learning?

The following sections describe a variety of ways for you to gain skills.

Training on the Job

On-the-job training is perhaps the most widely used approach to the
training of literacy practitioners in Ontario. In fact 79% of respondents to
CLO's survey of paid staff[139] indicated that they developed their skills on-
the-job.

On the job is not a bad way to receive training, especially if you have the
added advantage of having help and support provided on a daily basis.
However, for many practitioners in Ontario this daily support may not
occur—often you are starting to work in a position that was filled by
someone who is no longer working for the organization.

Training is an investment. In addition to allowing sufficient time for
specific training events, it is also important to provide a structured
context for the on-the-job training component. Here are some things to
consider when giving or getting on-the-job training:

⇒   Transfer of knowledge: How will new skills be acquired? Who will
     be giving the information and how will the interaction be structured?

---

[139] *Skills for the Future*, Phase One Report, page 17.

⇒   Skills acquisition and practice: Will you be required to read printed manuals, office files or use other on-site resources, such as intake or initial assessment forms? How will you get to practice the skills you have learned?

⇒   Coaching by an experienced practitioner: Is there an opportunity for you to be teamed with someone from the agency who does similar work, or with someone from another literacy agency? Is there someone, perhaps a board member or staff person from another literacy agency that you can contact?

⇒   Assessment of your skills acquisition: Will evaluation be on-going? Is there a probationary period in place? How will you be evaluated at the end of the probationary period?

Volunteer Work

In Chapter 4, The Role of the Volunteer, we discussed how many people volunteer to gain skills and experience. The same is true for you, as a literacy practitioner. There are many opportunities to volunteer in the literacy field in Ontario—reference groups, committees and boards of directors are the most popular. All of these volunteer opportunities will provide you with wonderful chances to increase your skills and gain valuable contacts. Travel and related costs (conference calls, etc.) are usually covered by the organization so this professional development option should not cost you or your agency any "out-of-pocket" money. Opportunities are available through provincial organizations such as CLO, regional networks, and local organizations in your community. Literacy practitioners usually find these volunteer opportunities to be extremely beneficial.

The types of skills you can gain will depend on the type of volunteer work. As a member of a reference group for a project, for example, you can increase your knowledge about a particular topic—or increase the

knowledge of others if this happens to be an area of knowledge for you. Volunteering for your regional literacy network will allow you to gain an understanding about literacy delivery in your local area. Volunteering for a provincial literacy organization will allow you to develop a more global picture of literacy and the literacy field. You can, for example, work on an initiative that helps the whole literacy field gain skills and knowledge. Volunteering to serve on committees or boards of directors, whether a local, regional or provincial, will help you increase your knowledge about topics such as finance, human resources, leadership or organizational planning.

Volunteering within the literacy field is a valid way for you to gain skills and knowledge. Often you can transfer this knowledge to your own workplace and help your literacy agency become better at what it does. You will also have the opportunity to network and share information and resources with colleagues from your region or from all around Ontario. One of the most important reasons people are motivated to volunteer is to get new skills. Consider volunteering on a board, committee or reference group that will help you to gain and practice the skills you need. Serving on boards and committees also looks great on a resume!

Workshops and Seminars

Attending workshops and seminars hosted by a regional or provincial literacy organization is one of the ways in which you can increase your skills and knowledge as a literacy practitioner. You can also gather valuable information and make important contacts through the informal networking that occurs at these events.

The "downside" to these events is that the priorities for training are usually set many months before the training is delivered (and this, of course makes sense—the organizations that are going to provide the training have to do so as part of a planned process and in consultation with both the field and the funder). This means that if you are new to an organization, or if your work responsibilities have changed, you may

have to wait months to attend a training workshop that meets your immediate needs. Also, such training opportunities are not offered frequently, usually annually or semi-annually. Depending upon your individual training needs, such events may, or may not, meet your specific needs.

Many valuable and timely training sessions and conferences are offered by diverse organizations. In fact, in 2003, 26% of the training taken by community-based literacy practitioners was provided by organizations external to the literacy field[140]. The type of training accessed included:

⇒ Board roles
⇒ Financial management
⇒ Human Resources management
⇒ Volunteer management
⇒ Managing a not-for-profit organization

E-Learning

Over the past few years the use of the Internet to provide training has increased dramatically. While it may never replace face-to-face training as a delivery method, its use has changed the way we look at the role of training in professional development. Online learning provides a way around many of the barriers to training and professional development faced by literacy practitioners: travel time, travel costs, lack of local availability, and lack of time to participate in more traditional settings. CLO has found that literacy practitioners have overall very much enjoyed the incredible accessibility and ease of web-based learning.

CLO was one of the first provincial literacy organizations to use computer and the Internet to deliver training to practitioners. CLO

---

[140] This information was taken from CLO's 2003 Survey of Community-based Agencies. The complete survey can be found online at nald.ca/clo.htm.

delivered its first online training in the fall of 1998[141]. To date, CLO has delivered online workshops on Board/Staff Relations; Volunteer Recruitment and Retention; Program Evaluation, Proposal Writing, Fee-for-Service, Organizational Capacity; and National Foundational Training in Family Literacy.

Other organizations external to the literacy field in Ontario also deliver online or web-based training. Live web-casts are also another way in which you can gain information that will expand your knowledge base. A search of the Internet using a search engine should give you plenty of "hits".

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities has purchased access rights to a state-of-the-art online delivery system called Centra. More and more training opportunities will be available to the literacy field on Centra in the years to come. For example, all of the following training opportunities were delivered on Centra: CLO delivered SmartSteps to Organizational Excellence and National Foundational Training in Family Literacy; AlphaPlus Centre delivered IMS (Information Management System) training; and Literacy Link South Central delivered training in learning disabilities.

What is E-Learning?

Learning online, also called E-learning[142], describes a method for learning that is delivered by a computer that is usually connected to the Internet.

---

[141] The title of the training was "Board/Staff Relations" and it was offered to an audience of 75 literacy practitioners. Two documents were produced as a result of that project: *Course Manual: Online Workshop on Board and Staff Relations* and *Tips and Tools for Developing and Delivering an Online Workshop*.

[142] Some other terms frequently interchanged with E-Learning include: online education, distance learning, technology-based training, web-based training, computer-based training—although this is generally thought of as learning from a CD-ROM.

This gives you the opportunity to learn almost anything—anytime, anywhere.

Learning online has become a widely accepted way to gain skills and knowledge. The experience that you have with learning online can be as rich and as valuable as a classroom experience—for some learners even more so. With features that are unique to the environment (e.g., being able to repeatedly look at the same screen of information or to view websites again and again) learning online can be a learning experience that leads to comprehension and mastery of new skills and knowledge, just like a more traditional approach to gaining skills and knowledge.

Types of Online Learning

There are at least two distinct ways in which training is delivered online—synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous, or real-time, delivery of training occurs when the instructor and participants all meet for class at the same time, but each person may be in different physical locations. In asynchronous, or "different time, different place[143]," learning, the instructor, and participants interact at a distance and not in real time.

Some training is presented using a combination of these and some also add in additional features such as e-mail or web-based discussion groups, or the use of "chat" rooms. Training can be blended to provide both online and face-to-face. The combinations and the potential for developing a well-balanced learning environment are almost endless. In the future, with the development of better technology and faster, more powerful computers, video and live telecasting will increase in use.

---

[143] *Leveraging the Web for Synchronous Versus Asynchronous Distance Learning*. Scott F. Midkiff and Luiz A. DaSilva. The authors also note that, "synchronous distance learning removes some of the limitations of space, but students must still go to a properly equipped and connected classroom at a specified time. Asynchronous distance learning effectively removes barriers of space and most barriers of time. This allows access to the class by a diverse group of students and, potentially, eliminates state and national borders and time zones as constraints."

Is Online Learning for You?

Online learning is a valid method for learning, but it is different in many respects from the traditional face-to-face learning. For many practitioners the face-to-face interaction with instructors and colleagues is just as important, or even more important, than the actual training delivered.

Whether or not the online learning environment is one you are suited to will depend, in part, on your preferred learning style. Many people say they learn more online, and their retention is better too. Self-directed learners do well at online learning. Others succeed because online instructional design is often sophisticated and planned to reach a wide variety of learners. For online learning to be successful for participants, both the content and the online facilitation and support must be very strong.

As with the adult literacy learners that we serve, there can be many challenges to our successful use of the online environment for the purpose of learning. Below is a list of traits that successful online learners seem to possess. Here success can be defined as getting what you need from the training—whether it is to gain a new skill, increase your knowledge base on a particular topic or to achieve an outcome like a mark for a credit course.

The following questions may help you decide if online learning is for you[144]:

Are you self-directed and motivated?
Since most types of online learning will happen around your life schedule, you will need to be self-directed and motivated enough to start and complete activities independently. You may need to initiate the required communications, like e-mails or discussion postings. You will be

---

[144] Adapted from "Is Online Learning for You?" retrieved from: www.worldwidelearn.com/ elearning/learning-online.htm

responsible for creating the structure and support that you need to complete each course.

Are your technical skills and computer hardware and software adequate?

Along with having access to a computer and the required hardware and software and having adequate keyboarding skills, you should be comfortable with Internet browsing and searching, email, sending and reading attachments, word processing, and sometimes downloading and installing software plug-ins (a normally simple but sometimes intimidating task).

Do you have strong reading skills?

Reading often plays a very large role in the online learning environment. The ability to read and comprehend subject matter without it being a chore is critical to your success. If you learn best by listening look for online courses that provide audio content.

Does written communication come easily for you?

If you are taking a credit course online (delivered asynchronously) written communications will be the primary method of communication. This means you should be at ease with writing to express your thoughts, share ideas, and ask questions. Some learning situations, usually non-credit, are rather passive in that you will get information via online but you may not have the opportunity or the need to respond. (Note that online learning that is delivered in real-time may have less of a written component—many real time online learning opportunities are audio-based, rather than printed-based.)

Will you ask questions when you need to?

Asking questions plays a critical role in most types of online learning. If the course involves an instructor or a facilitated discussion you will need to let the instructor know when you need help. Remember that they will not be able to see your looks of doubt, confusion, or your use of body language to indicate when things are not going well for you!

Will you miss the social interaction?

Face-to-face interaction with instructors and colleagues is often an integral part of the learning experience. It is mostly absent in the online learning environment. The whole sense of group interaction is harder to develop and so the sense of "going it alone" is often strong.

Do you have the discipline to study regularly?

If your online learning takes place over an extended period of time, or if it is linked to a credit or certification process you will need to set aside adequate time for studying and to complete assignments. Assignments for online courses will undoubtedly take as much time to complete as they would in a more traditional setting.

What is your preferred learning style?

As the use of the online environment becomes more and more popular as a way to provide training and development opportunities, the ways in which the environment is used becomes more sophisticated. Look for training that supports your preferred learning style.

The table below describes some of the features you should consider based on the most commonly accepted learning styles: auditory, visual and kinesthetic.

I learn best by:	I should look for online learning opportunities that use:
Reading (visual learner)	E-books, websites, downloadable printed training modules, email, chat rooms and threaded discussion groups
Listening (auditory learner)	Audio lectures or sound bytes to explain concepts; training delivered in real-time (synchronous delivery)
Seeing how things are done	Graphical demonstrations that illustrate new ideas
Doing (kinaesthetic learner)	Assignments, quizzes, exams, or practical application examples

Chapter Nine

What are some of the benefits of E-Learning?

If the online training environment is well-facilitated and well-constructed (meaning that the materials and the approach are well-developed), the use of this environment for learning can have many benefits. First and foremost, the learning can be self-paced and participants can speed up or slow down as necessary. The learning is also self-directed; this allows the participants to choose content and tools appropriate to their differing interests, needs, and skill levels. Some online training environments can also accommodates multiple learning styles using a variety of delivery methods geared to different learners.

Living in a rural or remote area is no longer a barrier! As long as you have a computer and Internet access you can take advantage of a wide variety of professional development opportunities. Depending on how the training is delivered, it may be possible to access some or all of the materials and resources at any time of the day or night.

Costs can be reduced. Depending on who is providing the training there may not be a cost for accessing the training. Other costs—such as transportation—become non-existent. Overall participant costs (tuition, residence, food, childcare) may also be less.

Distance Education

In the past distance education was truly the approach used by a very few hardy individuals. Most often the learning opportunities were credit courses being delivered by educational institutions. Service organizations—non-profit and for-profit—rarely used distance education as a method of providing professional development for staff members.

Distance education, although still used primarily by educational institutions, has undergone a transformation in recent years. Along with educational institutions, many service organizations have begun to integrate technology into the delivery structure of the learning

opportunities that they offer. Many credit courses, for example, make use of email and/or conference calls to allow participants to have some interaction with each other and with the instructor.

The "Teacher of Adults—Literacy Educator Certificate Program" is an example of a college course that uses a blended approach to delivery. While the reliance on independent study is still a major part of the program, each of the three colleges that currently deliver the program has developed its own approach to distance delivery:

⇒ Sault College uses Contact North[145] to deliver weekly two hours sessions to course participants

⇒ Algonquin College uses a combination of independent study and weekly face-to-face two-hour learning circles, supplemented by e-mail, phone and listserv services

⇒ Conestoga College uses an independent study that is augmented by a moderated discussion on AlphaCom and by the use of email

At each of the colleges, the delivery of the courses is facilitated by an instructor and course participants purchase a course text. Currently, there are six modules and a field placement component in the certificate program. The modules are:

⇒ The Adult Literacy Learner

⇒ Assessment and Evaluation for the Literacy Educator

⇒ General Instructional Strategies for the Literacy Educator

⇒ Strategies for Teaching Literacy and Numeracy Skills

⇒ Professional Issues for the Literacy Educator

⇒ Advanced Instructional Strategies for the Literacy Educator

---

[145] Contact North is the teleconferencing learning delivery network for Northern Ontario. Students are required to attend an "electronic classroom" at a Contact North site in their local community. Students are linked by speaker phone to their instructor and other students at different sites throughout Northern Ontario. Audio-graphic conferencing uses computer imaging or an electronic chalkboard to enable transfer of student/teacher notes and other images.

Portfolios

While the use of a portfolio to provide evidence of skills, knowledge, and/or abilities is well known in some professions, it is little used in the literacy field. Compiling a portfolio as a means to demonstrate the skills you already have does take time. If it is done well, however, it will provide you with a permanent and powerful record of your skills and knowledge and it is a record that you can continually update.

Your portfolio can be seen as being both a product and a process. As a "product" you can use it to:

⇒ Communicate your skills and knowledge to a current or potential employer
⇒ Communicate your skills and knowledge to colleagues or the community
⇒ Plan your future career path

As a "process" your portfolio will:

⇒ Record your working experiences over time
⇒ Provide themes and evidence for your evaluative portfolio
⇒ Build confidence in your own skills and abilities

A portfolio is not a random collection of "stuff." It is an organized collection of artefacts and products selected for a clearly defined purpose. It should allow you or anyone reading it to validate your success in acquiring a set of skills.

A professional development portfolio is a coherent set of materials including work samples and reflective commentary on them, compiled by a practitioner to represent his or her skills and knowledge. The portfolio provides an opportunity for you to demonstrate increased professional accountability by allowing you to analyze your skills and knowledge.

Who would use your portfolio?

When used with a professional development planning tool like the one developed by CLO, you can provide a variety of audiences (e.g., your board or your immediate supervisor or a current or potential employer) with solid evidence of the skills and knowledge that you possess. Your portfolio can also provide a well thought-out plan, based on a needs analysis, for gaining new or needed skills. Once it is completed and as long as you keep it updated, it will continue to be a useful tool for allowing you and others to see solid evidence that speaks to the skills and knowledge that you have gained. It may also be possible for you to use your portfolio to demonstrate prior knowledge and experience when applying for certain college or university courses.

Here are a few things to consider when developing a portfolio:

Organization

As a literacy practitioner in Ontario you could use the entry level skills developed by CLO to frame the organization of your portfolio. This would mean that you could divide you portfolio into sections that represent each of the function headings used by CLO. These are:

⇒   Information and Referral
⇒   Assessment
⇒   Training Plan Development
⇒   Training
⇒   Data Collection and Interpretation

For practitioners whose work responsibilities also include volunteer and or program management, additional heading could be used. Some of these heading could be:

⇒   Volunteer management
⇒   Agency management
⇒   Board development

$\Rightarrow$ Financial management

$\Rightarrow$ Human resources

$\Rightarrow$ Program evaluation

$\Rightarrow$ Computers and technology

$\Rightarrow$ Personal skills and interests

Evidence

Under each of these headings you could then provide evidence that shows that you have the skills that relate to each of these. Here are some suggestions for the types of materials that you could provide as evidence:

$\Rightarrow$ Certificates from workshops, training seminars or other courses taken

$\Rightarrow$ Summaries of self-directed learning activities

$\Rightarrow$ Annotated bibliographies of materials you have read

$\Rightarrow$ Letters from learners or volunteers

$\Rightarrow$ Samples of your work (e.g. a training plan you developed, a proposal you wrote, or a board orientation manual you prepared)

$\Rightarrow$ Documentation of presentations

$\Rightarrow$ Publications

$\Rightarrow$ Awards or commendations

$\Rightarrow$ Learner, peer/colleague, or supervisory evaluations

Explanatory Note

Each piece of evidence needs to be accompanied by an explanatory note. In this note you explain why you think the evidence demonstrates the acquisition of skills and/or knowledge. For example, if you included a certificate from a workshop on how to be an active listener the reader would only know that you had attended the workshop and that you got a certificate! The certificate, in and of itself, does not really prove anything! Your explanatory note would identify your rationale for including that particular certificate, the skills that you learned because you participated, and how you applied those skills to your work.

Presentation

You may want to have two portfolios—a "working" one and a presentation one. In the working portfolio you would keep all your information. The presentation portfolio would be the portfolio that you would build for a specific audience. For example, your board or your supervisor may only need to see your most recently gained skills. If you are applying for a new position you will want to showcase all the skills that you have that are relevant to that position.

Mentoring

Once you have completed your needs assessment and/or developed your portfolio you may have a list of skills you need to increase or wish to develop. You may be able to gain some of these skills through the use of a mentor[146]. A mentor can take on a variety of roles. In general, a mentor can be defined as a trusted and experienced individual who acts freely as a friend, advisor, coach, guide, teacher, or role model to someone less experienced. One mentor can take one more than role, or you many approach different individuals asking each one to take on a distinctive role.

In today's world mentoring can take on many forms and is used in a variety of settings. Mentoring can be used formally or informally. It has been defined by the setting in which it occurs (educational, career, faith-based) and by the location in which it takes place (work, school or sports arenas).

---

[146] The term 'mentor' comes from Greek mythology. While Odysseus was fighting the Trojan wars, he appointed 'Mentor' to develop his son, Telemachus, into a future king and warrior. The mentor in the Odyssey was actually Athena, Goddess of Wisdom, who took the male form in order to be accepted as an appropriate adviser and trainer to a king. Her method of teaching was to lead by example and to provide the opportunity for experiences so that Telemachus could learn from them.

It is used in most of these instances is as a development activity (personal or professional) that is linked to a supported system. For example, "Big Sisters of Canada" provides training to their volunteers that is based on a mentoring system. (See suggested resources for web site address). For our purposes we will look at a somewhat formalized approach that is linked to your own plan for professional development.

Formal mentoring happens when the relationship is structured. You and your mentor would agree to meet regularly over a specified period of time. The intention of this relationship is for you to gain new skills with your mentor's support and assistance. In larger organizations the mentor could be a co-worker. In smaller organizations or rural settings this may not be possible. Your mentor could be someone in the literacy field or it could be someone in another field, especially if the skills you wish to gain are not directly related to the delivery of literacy services.

While face-to-face contact during the mentoring process is ideal, it may not be possible or realistic. It is possible to meet with your mentor more frequently via e-mail or the Internet. In fact, in Ontario we are fortunate to have AlphaCom. Since 1991 AlphaCom has provided a space where literacy practitioners could meet and discuss common issues and concerns, a place where one practitioner can ask for help or pose a question and within days have received answers from colleagues from across the province.

What is in it for the mentor?

So what is in it for the mentor? Your mentor will be sharing their valuable time and skills to you. What will you give to them? Do you have skills or knowledge or contacts you could share with them? Sometimes, two people have different skill sets and decide to share those skills to their mutual benefit (reciprocal mentoring). Think about what benefits you could offer your mentor.

Guidelines for mentoring

The mentoring process we are describing has you actively looking for and selecting a mentor as part of an approach to your professional development. Although the mentoring process will not be formally linked to any organization, it does not mean that is should happen without structure or in the absence of agreed upon guidelines. The following description is not meant to be prescriptive. Rather, its intent is to help you identify some of the things that you need to think about when considering mentoring as a way to gain skills and knowledge.

The person you approach should be someone you can trust and should be someone who will:

⇒ Understand your motivation

⇒ Understand your goals

⇒ Give encouragement without being judgemental

⇒ Be able to suggest ways of getting around obstacles

⇒ Confront you if you are avoiding him or her or your agreed upon training goals

⇒ Be able to provide you with the support, information and resources to help you meet your training goals

⇒ Be willing and able to share their time and talents with you

Setting up a mentoring contract

A written contract will help ensure that you get what you need from your mentor and that you both understand the parameters of the commitment. While your contract will be specific to your needs, below are some of the areas that you should cover in your contract.

Vision or Statement of purpose: Do you understand what it is that you really want to gain from having a mentor? Do you have the self-confidence to initiate the relationship?

Goal of Mentoring: Are you able to clearly communicate your needs? What are the specific skills or knowledge that you hope to gain as a result of the mentoring relationship? How will you integrate new skills, knowledge, or abilities into your present work? Will you gain skills useful for future positions? What are the benefits for the mentor?

Expectations and benefits: Do you have the skills to initiate relationship-building activities? Do you know what you can contribute to the relationship? Do you know how to ask for and receive help? Do you understand what it is you hope to gain?
What do you need to help you feel that your mentor is confident and committed?

Expectations and restrictions: Can you clearly explain to your mentor what it is you want from her or him? How do you handle criticism? Do you know how to listen actively? Do you know what you want the mentor not to do?

Level of commitment: Do you have a sense of how long you think the mentoring process might last? Can you tell the mentor how much time you expect him or her to give to you? How will you decide when the relationship is over?

Communications Strategy: How often will you meet with your mentor? How will you meet? How will you deal with conflict or disagreements? Whose responsibility will it be to initiate meetings? What role will your employer play in the mentoring process, if any?

Learning Strategy: What activities will you undertake to help you gain the skills, knowledge, or ability? What roles do you expect your mentor to play? How will you demonstrate that you have gained new skills?

Research Inquiry

As a practitioner, you conduct informal research all the time. How often have you wondered if some instructional activities might work better than others, or how to reach certain students, or why some adults learn faster than others? What makes this type of inquiry informal is your approach to answering these, and similar, questions. Often you do not really answer the question or you may look for one or two articles on the topic. Because of the huge demands on our time, few literacy practitioners are able to look into these questions on a deeper, more formal level.

Research inquiry formalizes the approach to answering these types of critical and important questions. As a participant in an inquiry, you would identify the problem or issue that you want to study and develop questions that you would investigate in your agency.

Although most practitioner inquiry is undertaken as part of a research group it does not preclude you from conducting your own research into a particular problem or issue. It is the process that you use that will make the final product useful to you, your organization, and perhaps the field as a whole. As a method of professional development, it needs both time and structure to be successful. If research inquiry is coupled with mentoring, a powerful opportunity for both gaining and integrating skills, knowledge and abilities is created.

When practitioner inquiry has been undertaken as a group activity—with each participant working on a question or issue relevant to them—the process happens within a supportive group environment. Research participants become members of a learning community that develops along with their research projects. In a practitioner research network, participants have the opportunity to share their research as it unfolds, to focus on individual and group concerns, and to create strategies for dealing with issues at various stages of the research.

ROAD MAP FOR CONDUCTING PRACTITIONER RESEARCH

(Footnote: used with permission from Virginia Adult Learning Resource Centre. Practitioner Research as Staff Development: A Facilitator's Guide)

Learn About the Issue or Problem	Read about, talk about, and think about an issue or problem that is important to you and those with whom you work (e.g., learners, volunteers, board members). Identify possible issues or problems to explore in your literacy agency. Write a few paragraphs about the problem as you have experienced it in your situation and context.
Develop and Refine Your Research Question	Fine-tune the problem. Generate a research question. Questions that help frame a research study generally fall into two categories: 1."What is going on…?" type questions and 2."What happens when I try…?" type questions. "What is going on…" questions help us understand a situation better in order to think of appropriate strategies for instruction or action. "What happens when…?" questions help us see the results of some strategy or action we already decided to take to address the issue. Research questions should be personal, focused, and finite enough to be investigated within your available timeframe. Write a few paragraphs about your question and its importance.

ROAD MAP FOR CONDUCTING PRACTITIONER RESEARCH

(Footnote: used with permission from Virginia Adult Learning Resource Centre. Practitioner Research as Staff Development: A Facilitator's Guide)

Design Data Collection Activities	Think about what evidence or information you need to answer your question. Think about what method of data collection will give you that information. Consider the availability of resources, support and your available timeframe. Design your method for collecting data in your context. Common data collection methods include: • Interviewing students, volunteers, colleagues, and others • Documenting observations • Keeping a researcher's journal • Archiving pertinent work and other documents Write a few paragraphs about how you will conduct your research.
Conduct Research and Gather Information	Carry out your project, systematically collecting data about the results. Read the data you have collected. Listen to and transcribe your notes or tapes (if you used a tape recorder). Reflect on your progress and record your thoughts. Discuss the data with students, volunteers and colleagues. Read what other researchers and theorists have to say about your questions.

ROAD MAP FOR CONDUCTING PRACTITIONER RESEARCH

(Footnote: used with permission from Virginia Adult Learning Resource Centre. Practitioner Research as Staff Development: A Facilitator's Guide)

Analyze and Interpret Data	Read through all your data. After each passage, record a word or phrase that answers the question, "What is this about?" Organize your data into a few broad categories that make sense. Devise a coding scheme for your data according to categories and sub-categories. Code and sort your data. Decide what your data means. What are your impressions? What is your theory about the situation now that you have all the data before you? Seek the feedback and the perspectives of others. Document this stage by writing notes about patterns, hunches, and puzzles. Be sure not to ignore the data that challenge your theory.
Draw Conclusions and Share Your Findings	Draw conclusions about your study. Reflect on what you have learned. What are the implications of your research for your practice, for the people involved, and for the larger field? What is the significance of what you have discovered? Document this stage by writing about your findings and conclusions and the implications. Write up the results of your research inquiry. Share the results with others through publication, presentations, discussion groups, or post online on AlphaCom.

ROAD MAP FOR CONDUCTING PRACTITIONER RESEARCH	
(Footnote: used with permission from Virginia Adult Learning Resource Centre. Practitioner Research as Staff Development: A Facilitator's Guide)	
Make an Action Plan	Think about what your findings mean for changing your practice. Think about what your next steps should be. Based on your discoveries, make a plan for changing your practice, for further study and research. Implement your plan.

Sample Questions for a Research Inquiry

Below are sample questions that were investigated by literacy practitioners in the United States. While the exact wording of the questions might not fit the context of your agency, you can see how fundamental the questions are to the delivery of literacy upgrading and how each question hopes to increase learner participation.

⇒ Will a classroom book discussion group create a desire among learners to read for pleasure? Will attitudes toward reading and assessment results improve?

⇒ Will a new, more personalized in-take procedure influence learners' attitude and participation in our program? Will they return after the initial visit and attend at least 12 hours of instruction?

⇒ Will group participation and inclusion in structured classes and discussion increase retention?

⇒ How can I improve my learners' reading scores?

⇒ What will be the result if I intentionally encourage bonding among new students during the intake process?

⇒ If we make Patricia a peer tutor by helping her prepare lesson plans and actually teach fellow students, will she be able to pass the GED?

⇒ How can I use the Internet to engage students' interest in writing?

⇒ How can I help students to be participatory, cooperative learners instead of passive, competitive learners?

⇒ How can I use computers and specifically the Internet and E-mail to engage learners' interest in learning? In what ways will their online learning prepare them for the GED, future classes, the workplace, and real life learning? How will on-line learning affect learners' general attitudes and self-esteem? And, are learners better able to express themselves using E-mail than more traditional communication methods?

Conclusion

The term "professional development" implies a course of action that will allow you— the literacy practitioner—to develop new skills and knowledge that will allow you to become better at what you do: whether it is working with learners or managing your literacy agency. Professional development moves practitioners forward both personally and professionally. Professional development also improves and sustains the capacity of literacy agencies to respond to the needs of learners, volunteers and other key stakeholders. By inference it will also improve and sustain the capacity of the literacy field as a whole.

Consider your own personal training needs and goals and try to develop your own personal training strategy based on your needs and the variety of opportunities and delivery methods available. Yes, you are undoubtedly a busy professional, but professional development is something you can, and should, do for yourself. The benefits and satisfaction can be enormous!

Questions for Reflection

⇒ "Professional Development activities must be based on the systematically identified needs of practitioners and not simply on someone's perception of what is required." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why do you agree or disagree?

⇒ What work-based skills have you learned today and how have you applied this skills?

⇒ What professional development activities would you like to participate in over the next twelve months?

⇒ How can you overcome some of the barriers that you may perceive to your involvement in professional development?

Suggested Resources

In addition to the various reports, manuals, web sites and other resources mentioned in this chapter, we think you might find the following resources to be useful.
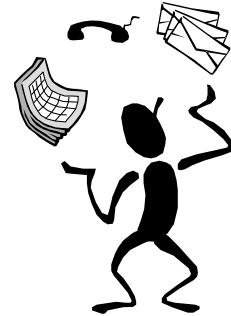
Print–Based:

New To Literacy in Ontario? What Practitioners Need To Know. Literacy Link South Central, 2001.

⇒   This resource lists and describes many of the resources available to practitioners at the time of publication. A revised edition will be published during 2003.

Becoming A Critically Reflective Teacher. Stephen Brookfield. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995.

⇒   Guides readers through the processes of becoming critically reflective about teaching, confronting the contradictions involved in creating democratic classrooms, and using critical reflection as a tool for ongoing personal and professional development.

Professional Development As Transformative Learning: New perspectives for teachers of adults. Patricia Cranton. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996.

⇒   Adapts and extends the transformation theory of adult learning to the professional development of adult educators.

Web-Based:

Center for Instructional Development and Research
This web site provides links to more information about developing a teaching portfolio.
Website: http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/PortfolioTools.htm

Mentoring Canada
Provides a course you can take at your own pace. If you wish, you can explore only those areas of greatest interest to you.
Website: www.mentoringcanada.ca/training/Mentors/index.html

Professional Development Kit
The Professional Development Kit (PDK): Multimedia Resources for Adult Educators, is a teacher-centered system that provides systematic and sustainable professional development opportunities to adult educators. Although you must register access to the site is open to everyone.
Website: www.literacy.org/pdk/

Online learning – is it for me?
Click on the "How Online Learning Works" tab and then click on "Is online learning for me?" to take the online quiz and find out if you will do well in an online course.
Website: www.onlinelearning.net/

Ten steps to follow for better on-the-job training.
Ten steps to help make your training (as the employer) more effective and long-lasting.
Website: http://careers.mainetoday.com/news/020308yourbiz.shtml

Planning Your Professional Development
Provides a good overview of the planning process including information on why you should plan and when, what you should include in your plan and links to some planning tools.
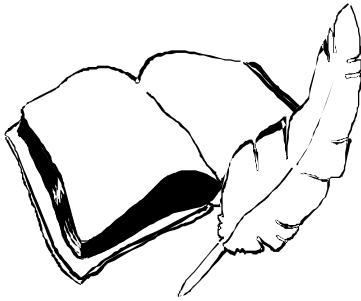Website: www.pd-how2.org/pd-how2/2_1.htm

Planning for Professional Growth
Provides links to numerous articles on professional development.
Website: www.2learn.ca/profgrowth/index.html

APPENDIX A

SPECIALIZED QUALITY STANDARD
"PROGRAM – VOLUNTEER RELATIONS"

A quality literacy program provides volunteers with the resources to be valuable members of the organization. They are given initial and ongoing training, direction, and supervision. They are given written information about their rights and responsibilities. They are encouraged to contribute, based on their skills, time, interests, and the needs of the program. They are recognized for their work. The literacy program encourages respect for volunteers at all times from students, staff, and fellow volunteers.

FEATURE #1

The literacy program has a welcoming, respectful environment for volunteers.

SUGGESTED EVIDENCE TO FEATURE #1

- Volunteers are made to feel that they are an important part of the literacy program
- Volunteers are given meaningful jobs in the literacy program.
- Volunteers are given tasks with regard to their personal preference and skills
- Volunteers are invited to all program events and meetings.
- Volunteers receive all information circulated by the program (i.e. newsletters, etc.)
- Volunteers are asked to help develop the goals of the literacy program

FEATURE #2

The literacy program has developed plans and processes for effectively recruiting and screening volunteers.

SUGGESTED EVIDENCE TO FEATURE #2

- The literacy program has developed a written process for recruiting volunteers
- The literacy program recruits volunteers with many different backgrounds and skills
- The literacy program gives volunteers a clear description of the program and the volunteer work available
- The literacy program appropriately screens each volunteer,
- The literacy program has developed written processes and policies for screening volunteers
- The literacy program conducts initial and ongoing screening of its volunteers

FEATURE #3

The literacy program provides orientation and training to the volunteers.

SUGGESTED EVIDENCE TO FEATURE #3

- A volunteer orientation kit is available
- A volunteer orientation program is in place
- Volunteers are familiar with the literacy program's goals and mission statement
- A volunteer training program is in place
- Volunteers have opportunities for ongoing training
- Board members receive training in board governance

FEATURE #4

The literacy program makes the volunteers aware of their rights and Responsibilities.

SUGGESTED EVIDENCE TO FEATURE #4

- Each volunteer is given a job description for their position
- Volunteers are consulted prior to any changes to their job description
- The literacy program has developed volunteer management policies and procedures
- Volunteers receive anti-harassment training

FEATURE #5

Volunteers receive ongoing supervision and support from the literacy program.

SUGGESTED EVIDENCE TO FEATURE #5

- Volunteers receive ongoing supervision from the literacy program
- Volunteers are regularly contacted about their support needs
- Policies are in place for dealing with problems between volunteers, staff, and/or board members
- Volunteers are informed about changes to the literacy program
- Volunteers receive an annual performance review

FEATURE #6

The literacy program actively recognizes and motivates the volunteers.

SUGGESTED EVIDENCE TO FEATURE #6

- Volunteers experience ongoing appreciation for their work
- The literacy program has a volunteer recognition program
- Volunteers are recognized for their work in the literacy program and in their community
- Volunteer recognitions are publicly made known to the community
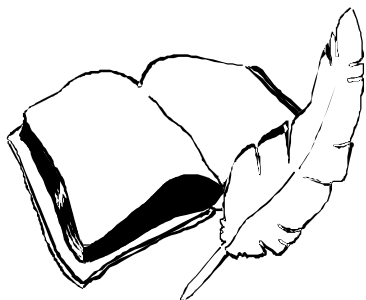
APPENDIX B

PROVINCIAL STANDARD FOR THE TRAINING OF VOLUNTEER TUTORS

September 2003

After extensive research within the community-based literacy field, the following *"Standard for the Training of Volunteer Tutors"* was developed by Community Literacy of Ontario. It is CLO's hope that this standard will set the bar and recognize the professionalism of community literacy agencies. The use of the standard is strictly **voluntary** and is meant to provide agencies with a tool to evaluate and enhance the practices currently being utilized. It is also meant to inspire and encourage agencies to look at the components of their tutor training and work towards consistency across Ontario.

INTAKE

The Canadian Human Rights Act
The agency respects the conventions of the Canadian Human Rights Act by accepting applications from potential tutors without discrimination.

Benefits:

- Diversity is encouraged
- The volunteer base in agencies reflects the community in which they deliver service

Standard Information Package

It is recommended that the agency provide potential tutors with a standard information package that contains: information about the position, the length of the required training, any qualifications or skills needed, costs (if any) associated with training; information about the screening and selection process, and about the types of supports the volunteer will receive from the agency, confidentiality agreements, an application form and a written position description.

Benefits:

- Potential tutors have a clear understanding of the position, responsibilities, qualifications and required skills
- Standard information allows all potential volunteers to make informed decisions about continuing with the process

Application Form

It is suggested that the agency provides all potential tutors with an application form that collects at a minimum the following information: name and contact information, education, employment history, relevant skills, availability, and two references; and requires the applicant to provide a writing sample. The application also includes written information about the agency's screening and intake process and any rules regarding confidentiality.

Benefits:

- Potential volunteer tutors are given the information they need to make an informed decision about continuing with the process
- Completed applications provide agencies with the information to make an informed decision about inviting potential tutors to the initial training
- Key information is given to the volunteer about the importance of the learning process taking place in a safe, comfortable environment

TRAINING and SERVICE DELIVERY

Service Delivery

The agency is committed to the delivery of a learner-centred, goal-directed service to adult literacy learners.

Benefits:

- Everyone is aware of this commitment and works toward it
- The learning needs of adult literacy learners are understood and respected
- The aims of the LBS Learning Outcomes Approach are achieved

Initial Tutor Training

The agency delivers, or participates in the delivery of, initial tutor training that provides potential tutors with the opportunity to gain and practice skills. It is recommended that the training is at least 15 hours in length and uses active learning and a variety of delivery methods to maximize the opportunity for learning. Common components should be included for provincial consistency.

Benefits:

- The quality, effectiveness and consistency of training and service delivery are maintained
- Volunteers have had initial training and understand the needs and challenges of the adult literacy learner
- Learners are matched with trained and committed volunteers
- Volunteers are given opportunities to gain skills and knowledge and provide input through active participation
- The credibility of the community-based literacy delivery system is ensured

CLO recommends that initial tutor training include the following components:

Understanding the Need
- Reasons why people come to community-based programs
- Factors affecting learning
- Effects of low/limited literacy skills on an individual
- Awareness of literacy issues in Canada and what this means locally

Understanding Your Role
- Creating a positive learning environment
- Using a learning outcomes approach
- Monitoring and recording the learner's progress
- Commitment to active/ongoing learning
- Knowing your responsibilities as a tutor

Understanding the Adult Learner
- Characteristics of adult literacy learners and adult learning principles
- Accommodating learning styles
- Understanding special needs
- Goal-setting
- Supporting learner input and participation

Understanding Service Delivery
- How to get started with teaching reading, writing and numeracy
- Introduction to the five LBS Levels
- Using appropriate strategies for teaching reading, writing and numeracy
- Lesson planning and tutoring with an outcomes-based focus.
- Finding, creating, and modifying learning materials
- Providing feedback to learners and the agency

ONGOING SUPPORT AND EVALUATION

Commitment

The agency is committed to the ongoing support and training of its volunteer tutors.

Benefit:

- Volunteer tutors get the resources, support and ongoing training they need within the individual agency's means

Evaluation

It is recommended that the agency provide an opportunity for volunteer tutors to participate in an evaluation process.

Benefits:

- Volunteers receive feedback on their performance
- Learners receive better instruction
- The ongoing training needs of volunteers are identified
- Volunteers receive information on what supports, resources and ongoing training are available from the agency and how to access them
- The volunteer tutors' confidence in their ability to do the job is increased

VOLUNTEER EXIT

Exit process

The agency has a clear process in place for volunteer exit. This process includes both voluntary and involuntary volunteer exits. Volunteer exits also may involve either leaving the agency completely, or exiting a specific match or volunteer position within an agency.

Benefits:

- The rights of the learners, the volunteer tutors and the agencies are protected in the circumstance of a voluntary exit
- The rights of the learners, the volunteer tutors and the agencies are protected in the circumstance of an involuntary exit
- Appropriate matches are supported and inappropriate matches are adjusted as necessary
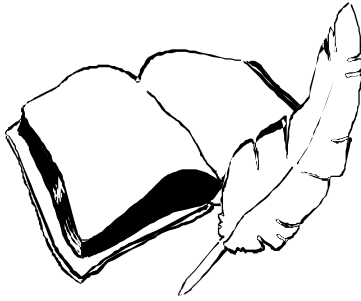
APPENDIX C

PROVINCIAL STANDARD FOR THE TRAINING OF PAID PRACTITIONERS

September 2003

The information included in Community Literacy of Ontario's *"Standard for the Training of Paid Practitioners"* is intended to assist agencies by supporting and increasing professionalism in the literacy field. This Standard is geared towards practitioners: those who work directly with learners in some capacity. CLO hopes that this Standard will also be a useful tool in assisting agencies in the complex area of practitioner training.

The use of the standard is strictly **voluntary** and agencies should feel free to make allowances where necessary to allow for the range of experience that paid practitioners may already have when they join your agency. It is also recognized that agencies are organized in different ways. It is hoped that agencies will strive to meet the full standard wherever possible, making adjustments as necessary to fit the uniqueness of individual community agencies.

Part 1: Initial Training

The agency is committed to providing staff members with the opportunity to gain and practise skills. Training can be delivered by a variety of methods (e.g., on-the-job, face to face, online, self-directed, workshops, manuals).
Initial training should cover the following core components:

Understanding the Need

- Defining literacy and the role of literacy in society
- Understanding the reasons for poor literacy skills
- Understanding the role of community literacy agencies
- Including the reasons why people come to community-based programs
- Examining the factors affecting learning
- Looking at the effects of low/limited literacy skills on an individual
- Broadening the awareness of literacy issues in Canada and what this means locally

Understanding the Role of Your Agency

- Understanding service delivery in Ontario
- Understanding the LBS Program
- Creating a positive learning environment
- Monitoring, evaluating and recording the learner's progress
- Supporting a commitment to active/on-going learning
- Examining community planning for literacy services
- Accessing regional and provincial support/training

Understanding the Role of the Volunteer

- Understanding the importance of volunteer involvement
- Recruiting, screening, supporting, evaluating and recognizing volunteers
- Providing initial and ongoing training to volunteers

Understanding the Adult Learner

- Understanding the principles and theories of adult literacy education
- Highlighting the characteristics of adult literacy learners and adult learning principles
- Examining challenges and solutions to learning for adult learners
- Recognizing and accommodating special needs

Delivering Service

- Information and referral
- Learner intake
- Assessment (initial and ongoing)
- Training plan development
- Training (literacy instruction)
    - ➤ Lesson planning
    - ➤ Reading theory and application
    - ➤ Approaches to writing and spelling
    - ➤ Strategies for teaching numeracy skills
    - ➤ Learning styles
    - ➤ Record keeping
- Learner exit and follow up
- Using a learner-centred, goal-directed approach
- Ensuring learner participation
- Using a learning outcomes approach
    - ➤ Understanding learning outcomes
    - ➤ Appropriate use of all domains and skill levels
    - ➤ The role of self-management/self-direction in assessment and demonstration activities

Benefits

Initial training of paid practitioners can:

- Support the delivery of quality instruction to adult literacy learners
- Give employers and employees (practitioners) a clear understanding of the core components of training needed by new staff
- Give employees (practitioners) the opportunity to gain skills and knowledge and provide input into their training
- Allow practitioners to understand the needs and the challenges of the adult literacy learner
- Allow practitioners to successfully implement and apply their skills and knowledge to the training of volunteers and learners

Part 2: Ongoing Training

The agency should be committed to providing **all** staff members with the opportunity to gain and practice skills, both on the job and through a variety of training activities. Ongoing training can be delivered by a variety of methods (e.g., on-the job, face-to-face, online, self-directed, manuals, and at conferences or workshops). Ongoing training can enable community literacy agencies to further strengthen and support their paid practitioners.

Ongoing training should:

- Encourage practitioners to develop a professional development plan that will help meet current and changing learner, program and community needs and goals
- Focus on the continuous improvement of practitioners' skills and knowledge and on the continuous improvement of the field as a whole
- Be incorporated into the agency's planning process
- Be supported financially and with release time, within individual agency's means

Benefits

Ongoing training can:

- Support the delivery of quality instruction to adult literacy learners
- Support practitioners to participate in ongoing training opportunities
- Move practitioners forward personally and professionally
- Provide direction to practitioners with regard to ongoing training needs
- Help program managers and boards to frame job descriptions and performance appraisals
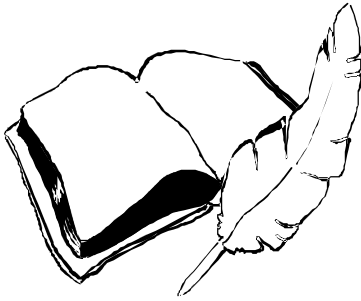
APPENDIX D
Wlodkowski's Strategies for Motivating Successful Learning [1]

Factor	Suggested Strategies		
	Beginning	Middle	End
ATTITUTE: Combination of concepts, information and emotions that results in a predisposition to response	➢ Make the first experience with a new subject or topic safe, successful and interesting ➢ As appropriate, stress the importance of the amount and quality of effort needed for success		
NEED: internal force that leds learner to move in a particular direction	➢ Plan activities to allow learners to share what they have learned		
STIMULATION: helps to sustain adult learning behaviour		➢ Provide variety in both materials and approaches ➢ Challenge learners by encouraging them to work outside their comfort zone	
AFFECT: positive emotion sustains involvement and deepens interest in subject or activity		➢ Link New material / information to learners prior knowledge or experience	

[147] This table was developed based on information taken from the article "Strategies to Enhance Adult Motivation to Learn" by Raymond J. Wlodkowski found in Adult Learning Methods. Krieger Publishing 1991.

APPENDIX D

Wlodkowski's Strategies for Motivating Successful Learning [1]

Factor	Suggested Strategies		
	Beginning	Middle	End
COMPETENCE: adults are especially motivated when they are aware that they are mastering valuable learning tasks			➤ Provide consistent and prompt feedback ➤ Ground evaluation/ assessment in real-life activities
REINFORCEMENT: clear explanation of progress will increase probability of learning being relevant			➤ Use positive reinforcement techniques to reward success ➤ Link knowledge gained in one skill area to other skill areas

APPENDIX E

MINIMUM ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS FOR PAID PRACTITIONERS

The following list of core, or minimum entry level skills was developed as a result of consultation with the literacy field in 2000. The consultation took the form of written surveys, face-to-face focus group sessions, key informant interviews and input from a reference group. For complete information about Community Literacy of Ontario's Practitioner Training Strategy see the Phase One and Phase Two Reports.

It's important, when reviewing this list of skills to keep in mind the following definitions which were used at the time the information was collected:

Literacy Practitioner: Someone who facilitates the learning process. That is, anyone who has direct contact with the learner (via intake, initial assessment, training plan development, training, ongoing or exit assessments and other follow up activities). This was the definition provided by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Minimum Entry Level: The level at which someone new to a skill or attribute should be performing. What we are doing at this point is trying to build a system that accommodates practitioners that are currently working in the field – like you! How can you demonstrate that you have this set of skills?

Entry Level Skills: The skills a practitioner needs to **begin** working with a learner.

Minimum Entry Level Skills for Paid Practitioners

INFORMATION & REFERRAL

⇒ Speak And Listen Effectively

⇒ Write Clearly To Express Ideas

INTAKE AND INITIAL ASSESSMENT

⇒ Observation Skills

⇒ Interview And Information Gathering Skills

TRAINING PLAN DEVELOPMENT

⇒ Analytical Skills

⇒ Organizational And Planning Skills

⇒ Presentation And Explanation Skills

TRAINING

⇒ Facilitate The Learning Process

⇒ Develop And Use Learning Activities With Learners

DATA COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION

⇒ Evaluate Training Activities

⇒ Record Keeping

⇒ Report Writing

APPENDIX F - Dimensions of Performance

Adapted from *An Approach to Teaching and Learning That Builds Expertise*. Equipped for the Future Research to Practice Note 2. National Institute for Literacy, 2002.

Examine each task that you are asking the learner to do in terms of the dimensions identified below. Is their ability to use either cognitive or metacognitive skills high or low? On the scale 1 = high ability and 4 = low ability		High		Low	
		1	2	3	4
Knowledge Base What strategies do learners have for organizing and applying content knowledge?	Recognize or create new relationships or connections				
	Identify information that is important to the task/problem				
	Understand when information or concepts apply				
Fluency How fluently can learners perform?	Effort required				
	Learner starts and finishes each task consistently				
	Barriers (to understanding or learning) are controlled or overcome				
Independence How independently can learners perform?	Amount of help needed from others				
	Amount of initiative shown when getting started				
	Learner generates own strategies for completing the task				
Range What kinds of tasks do learners carry out?	Complexity of the task				
	Number and type of different tasks that learner can take on				
	Learner can perform in a variety of different situations				

Chapter Ten
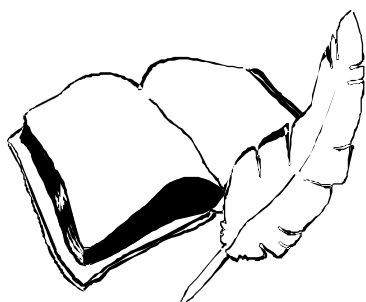
APPENDIX G

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The hyperlinks provided for some of the following resources were considered accurate at the time of publication.

Abdullah, Mardziah Hayati. *Self-Directed Learning*. ED459458. Bloomington, IN: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading English and Communication, 2001.

Adult Education Resource Guide and Learning Standards. Adult, Family, and Alternative Education Team, The University Of The State Of New York and The State Education Department, 1997.

Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit. *The Initial Certificate in Teaching Basic Communication Skills,* Session 1 – 8 Course Materials. London, 1989.

Alden, Harold, Audrey Anderson and Doug Perry. *Common Assessment in the Literacy and Basic Skills Program*. Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2000.

Allan, Laurinda. *Reflection and Teaching.* Sydney: Adult Literacy Information Office, 1994.

American Federation of Teachers. *Teaching Reading is Rocket Science*. Washington, 1999.

Ball, Charlene. *Demystifying Adult Literacy for Volunteer Tutors: A Reference Handbook and Resource Guide.* Winnipeg: Literacy Partners of Manitoba, 1995.

Barber, Jane. *Assessing up, Designing Down*. Toronto: Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2001.

Beder, Hal. *Teaching in Adult Literacy Education: Learner-Centred Intentions, Teacher-Directed Instruction*. Retrieved November 2002 from: http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca/aerc/2001/2001beder.htm

Bingman, Mary Beth, et al. *Practitioners Speak: Contributing to a Research Agenda for Adult Basic Education.* Philadelphia: National Centre on Adult Literacy, 1998.

Burwell, Karen and Nan Einarson. *Resource Package for Community Literacy Groups.* Oshawa: The Literacy Council of Durham Region, 1993.

Campbell, Pat. *Teaching Reading to Adults, A Balanced Approach*. Grass Roots Press. Edmonton: 2002.

Canadian Apprenticeship Forum. *Making it Work!* On-the-job Training in Apprenticeship. Ottawa, 1998.

Centre for International Education. *Widening Literacy: A Training Manual for Managers of Adult Literacy Learning Programs*. Amherst, 2000.

Chandler, Karen. *The Director's Role in Staff Development.* Interaction, Volume 15, Number 3 (Fall 2001), pages 18-22.

Community Literacy of Ontario. Beyond Recruitment, An Online Workshop about Recruiting and Maintaining Volunteers in the New Environment. Barrie, 2000.

Community Literacy of Ontario. Celebrating Literacy Volunteers in Your Community: A Promotional Toolkit. Barrie, 2001.

Conner, Marcia. *Learning: The Critical Technology*. Retrieved November 2002 from: http://www.learnativity.com /download/Learning_Whitepaper96.pdf.

Day, Malcolm. *Developing Benchmarks for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition: Executive Summary*. Belleville: Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment, 2000.

Dirkx, John M. *Transformative Learning and the Journey of Individuation*. ED448305. Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 2000.

Drennon, C. *Adult Literacy Practitioners as Researchers.* ED372663. ERIC Clearinghouse for ESL Education: 1994.

Drennon, Cassandra. *Naming the Power Dynamics in Staff Development*. Focus on Basics, Volume 6, Issue B (February 2003), pages 20-23.

Fowler, Judith. *Strategies of Our Own – Learner Recruitment and Retention Toolkit*. Barrie: Community Literacy Of Ontario, 2002.

Galbraith, Michael W. *Attributes and Skills of an Adult Educator* in Adult Learning Methods. Krieger Publishing Company, 1990, pages 2-22.

Goodman, Ken. *Phonics Phacts.* Richmond Hill: Scholastic Canada, 1993.

Grow, Gerald. *Teaching Learners to be Self-Directed*. Retrieved January 2002 from: http://www.longleaf.net /ggrow.

Hanna, Myrna. *A Dream that Walks*. Guelph: Action Read Community Literacy Centre, 2000.

Hatt, Pat. *Best Practice and Innovations: Learning Disabilities*. Toronto: Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2001.

Hatt, Pat. *Best Practises in Exit Assessment and Transition Planning*. Toronto, 2000.

Herod, Lori. *Learning Styles and Strategies* Winnipeg: Adult Literacy and Continuing Education, Manitoba Education and Training, 1999.

Howell, Cynthia Lake. *Facilitating Responsibility for Learning in Adult Community College Students*. ED451841. Los Angles CA: ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges, 2001.

Imel, Susan. *Effect of Emotions on Learning in Adult, Career and Career-technical Education.* Trends and Issues Alert # 43. Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 2003.

Imel, Susan. *Inclusive Adult Learning Environments.* ERIC Digest #162. Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 1995.

Johnson-Bailey, Juanita and Ronald M. Cervero. *Beyond facilitation in adult education: power dynamics in teaching and learning practices.* Retrieved April 2003 from: http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/000000248.htm.

Kaattari, Joanne and Vicki Trottier. *SmartSteps to Organizational Excellence:* Barrie: Community Literacy of Ontario, 2002.

Kennedy, Lindsay and Fiona (Huebner) Murray. *Skills for the Future: Phase One Report.* Barrie: Community Literacy of Ontario, 2000.

Kennedy, Lindsay. *Skills for the Future: Phase Two Report.* Barrie: Community Literacy of Ontario, 2002.

Kennedy, Lindsay. O*n the Level: Demonstrating Skills and Knowledge in Ontario's Community Literacy Agencies.* Barrie: Community Literacy of Ontario, 2000.

Kerka, Sandra. *Adult Learner Retention Revisited*. ED389880. Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 1995.

Kerka, Sandra. *Teaching Adults: Is it Different?* Myths and Realities # 21. Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 2002.

Koehler, Sandra et al. *Teachers, Tools and Techniques: A Handbook for Adult Basic Education and GED Instruction*. Macomb: Adult Learning Resource Centre, 1992.

Kutner, Mark and John Tibbetts. *Looking to the Future: Components of a Comprehensive Professional Development System for Adult Educators*. Washington: Pelavin Research Institute, 1997.

Kutner, Mark. *Staff Development for ABE and ESL Teachers and Volunteers.* Retrieved February 2002 from: http://www.cal.org/ncle/digests/staff_dvlpt.html. 1992.

Livingstone, D. *What is Informal Learning?* Retrieved December 2002 from: http://www.oise.utoronto.ca /depts/sese/csew/nall/inflearn.htm

Lowry, Cheryl Meredith. *Supporting and Facilitating Self-Directed Learning*. Retrieved April 2003 from: http://www.ntlf.com/html/lib/bib/89dig.htm

Chapter Ten

Lytle, Susan et al. *Initiating Practitioner Inquiry: Adult Literacy Teachers, Tutors and Administrators Research Their Practice*. Philadelphia: National Centre on Adult Literacy, 1993.

MacKeracher, Dorothy. *Making Sense of Adult Learning.* Toronto: Culture Concepts Inc., 1996.

MacKillop, Jane. *Whole Language for Adults: A Guide to Administration and Staff Development*. New York: New Readers Press, 1995.

Marshall, Sheila. *Learning Differently: A Learning Disabilities Resource Guide for Tutors and Staff*. Barrie: Community Literacy of Ontario, 2001.

McKinlay, Jean. *Developing Training Plans*. Mississauga: Peel Adult Learning Network, 1997.

McNamara, Carter. *Strong Value of Self-Directed Learning in the Workplace*: "How Supervisors and Learners Gain Leaps in Learning". Retrieved December 2002 from http://www.mapnp.org/library/trng_dev /methods/slf_drct.htm.

Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy. *What Doesn't Get Written Down*. Toronto: 2001.

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. *Literacy and Basic Skills Program Guidelines.* Toronto, 2000.

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. *Working With Learning Outcomes.* Toronto, 1998.

Morris, Joanne. *Meaningful Professional Development.* Interaction, Volume 15, Number 3 (Fall 2001), pp 17-18.

National Adult Literacy Agency. *Learning in Practice*: *A Resource Pack of Training Ideas for Inservice Development with Students and Tutors in Literacy*. Dublin, 1996.

National Institute for Literacy. *Professional Development for Adult Education Instructors*. Washington, 2001.

National Staff Development Committee for Vocational Education and Training. *Handbook for Coordinators of Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutor Programs*. Victoria, 1995.

National Staff Development Committee for Vocational Education and Training. *Inservice Program for Adult Literacy and Basic Education Personnel, Modules 1 – 5*. Victoria, 1995.

National Staff Development Committee for Vocational Education and Training. *Induction Program for Adult Literacy and Basic Education Personnel, Modules 1 – 5*. Victoria, 1995.

Nowlan, Diane. *Learner Retention: Indicators for Instructional Developers*. Retrieved April 2003 from: http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/faculties/EDUC/jdnowlan/concept3.htm.

Nowlan, Diane. *Principles of Adult Education as Related to Instructional Development.* Retrieved December 2002 from http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/faculties/EDUC/jdnowlan/adult.html.

Ontario Literacy Coalition. *Workplace Educator Professional Development Literature Review and Field Interview Report.* Toronto, 2002.

Ontario Literacy Coalition. The Level Descriptions Manual. Toronto, 2000.

Ottawa Board of Education. *ABE Handbook.* Ottawa, 1995.

Paul, Marianne and Yvonne Roussy-Heninger. *Reaching Out: Supporting Ontario Works Clients in LBS Programs.* Kitchener: Project READ Literacy Network, 2002.

Paul, Marianne. *Developing a Common Understanding of Assessment*: *Agency Agreements for the delivery of LBS training in Waterloo Region and Wellington County.* Kitchener: Project READ Literacy Network, 2000.

Paul, Marianne. *Entry to Exit, A Coordinator's Handbook for the Delivery of Literacy Services.* Kitchener: Laubach Literacy of Ontario, 2000

Preston, Jamie and Monty Wilson. *Staff Orientation Manual for Adult Basic and Literacy Education Providers.* Philadelphia: Centre for Literacy, 1993.

Purdey, Margaret and Pat Gale. *The Adult Education and Training Manual Volume One: The Adult Learner and Learning Environment*. Lancaster: Framework Press Educational Publishers Ltd., 1990.

Purdey, Margaret and Pat Gale. *The Adult Education and Training Manual Volume Two: Resourcing and Organizing Adult Learning.* Lancaster: Framework Press Educational Publishers Ltd., 1990.

Quigley, B. Allan. *The First Three Weeks: A Critical Time for Motivation.* Focus on Basics, Volume 2, Issue A, March 1998.

Renner, Peter. *The Art of Teaching Adults: How to Become an Exceptional Instructor and Facilitator.* Vancouver: Training Associates, 1993.

Roussy, Yvonne and Doug Hart. *Seeing the Need: Meeting the Need.* Toronto: Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2001.

Roussy, Yvonne. *The Qualitative Tracking Report.* Kitchener: The Literacy Group of Waterloo Region, 2001.

Sabatini, John P, et al. *Teacher Perspectives on the Adult Education: National Survey Findings about an Emerging Profession.* Philadelphia: National Centre on Adult Literacy, 2000.

SABES. *SABES ABE Teacher's License Self-Assessment Tool.* Retrieved February 2003 from: http://www.sabes.org/license/worksheetsindex.htm.

Sanders, Ray E. *The Art of Questioning,* in Adult Learning Methods. Krieger Publishing Company. 1990. pages 119-129.

Sault College. *General Instructional Strategies.* Sault Ste. Marie, 1997.

Schugurensky, Daniel. *The Forms of Informal Learning: Towards A Conceptualization of the Field.* Retrieved February 2003 from: http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/depts/sese/csew/nall/res/.

Segsworth, Heather. *Train the Literacy Practitioner: A Model.* Sudbury: Cambrian College, 1991.

Sherman, Rene, et al. *Instructor Competencies and Performance Indicators for the Improvement of Adult Education Programs.* Washington: Pelavin Research Institute, 1999.

Sherman, Rene, et al. *Professional Development Resources Supplement: Improving Instruction, Organization, and Learner Outcomes through Professional Development.* Washington: Pelavin Research Institute, 2000.

Smith, Frank. *Reading Without Nonsense.* New York: College Teachers Press, 1997.

Statistics Canada. *Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada.* Minis[try of] Industry, 1996.

St. Clair, Ralf. *Andragogy Revisited: Theory for the 21st Century?* Myths and Realities # 19. Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 2002.

Trottier, Vicki. *Together We Can Do It! The Role of Volunteers in the Assessment Process*. Barrie: Community Literacy of Ontario, 2001.

Tuer, Jane. *Network Practitioner Training Manual.* Kitchener: Project READ Literacy Network, 2002.

Vineyard, Sue. *The Great Trainer's Guide: How to Train Almost Anyone to Do Almost Anything*. Downers Grove: Heritage Arts Publishing, 1990.

Wlodkowski, Raymond J. *Strategies to Enhance Adult Motivation to Learn*, in Adult Learning Methods. Krieger Publishing Company. 1990, pages 97-118.