Introduction to the OALCF

Getting Down to Basics: Service Delivery in LBS Agencies

COMMUNITY LITERACY
OF ONTARIO

Acknowledgements

Project Host:

Community Literacy of Ontario

Research and Writing/Adaptation:

The original online modules on LBS Service Delivery and the OALCF were developed by Joyce Bigelow, Kelly Cowdy and Jim Tysick from Connections Adult Learning Centres www.ncalc.ca/ (March 2014).

This chapter has been adapted by Jette Cosburn, Community Literacy of Ontario.

Funder:

Ontario's Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities

Date of Publication:

June 2019

A Word of Appreciation:

Thanks to all of the Literacy and Basic Skills programs and practitioners who acted as key informants to the development of the original Literacy Basics training modules.

Disclaimer:

All information and URLs were accurate at the time of publication. The Government of Ontario and its agencies are in no way bound by the recommendations contained in this document.

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Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework

The Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) is the foundation of the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) program. The OALCF:

- is a competency-based framework
- supports task-based programming
- focuses on integrating skills, knowledge and behaviours to perform authentic, goal-related tasks
- supports contextualized programming
- reflects the learner's culture, language, etc. and his/her goal
- builds on current literacy practice
- strengthens the links between the LBS Program, other Employment Ontario services and the community

> The OALCF helps answer:
>
> - For the learner, "*Why am I learning this?*"
> - For the practitioner, "*What do I need to teach?*"
> - For all stakeholders, "*What does a person achieve in a literacy program?*"

Transition-Oriented Programming

Transition-oriented programming is the overriding principle of the OALCF. The term transition-oriented programming merges three key elements:

1. **Goal-directed learning**

- uses the learner's goal or purpose for coming to LBS to plan and deliver training activities specific to that goal and the gaps between the learner's current skills and those required by the goal

2. **Contextualized learning**

- uses authentic learning materials relative to the learner's goal and goal path
- takes into account cultural and linguistic beliefs and attitudes

3. **Coordinated supports and services for the learner**

- help learners deal with potential barriers to learning and to reaching their goals
- provide links and referrals to service providers with the mandate and expertise to provide financial, employment, health, academic and other social service supports
- coordinate 'wrap-around' services to meet the range of learner needs and challenges through interagency cooperation, integrated programming, community-wide planning and active case management

For more information, see the OALCF Foundations of Transition-Oriented Programming publication.

Goal Paths

During the development of the OALCF, five distinct goal paths were identified. Learners in Literacy and Basic Skills generally state they are intending to move on, or transition, to:

- Independence
- Employment
- Adult Secondary School Credit
- Postsecondary Education
- Apprenticeship

To help practitioners support learners to transition to their chosen goals, there are a number of OALCF tools and resources, which can be found on the Employment Ontario Partners' Gateway. These documents provide guidance on developing goal-directed assessment tools, learner plans and programming, and help learners and practitioners to:

- better understand each goal path and its eligibility and entrance requirements
- determine whether or not a goal is achievable and realistic
- select learning activities
- determine assessment tools and methods
- locate relevant resources in their community
- identify other needed supports

For more information on goal paths, check out these documents:

- The Goal Path Descriptions
  - Introduction
  - Apprenticeship
  - Employment
  - Independence
  - Postsecondary Education
  - Secondary School Credit

- Integrated Tasks by Goal Path

- Foundations of Transition-Oriented Programming

As literacy practitioners, we do not need to know everything about every goal that learners may choose. Instead, by referring to the OALCF documents noted in the pathway above, we can get a general understanding of the goal. We will also learn who we might contact in our communities and what questions to ask in order to have sufficient information to support learners in choosing and moving along their goal paths.

Competencies

Within the OALCF, the Curriculum Framework uses competencies to organize and articulate learning. These competencies help practitioners and learners make connections between literacy skills development and the real-life tasks that the learners will perform in their future learning, work and/or community participation. There are six competencies:

A. Find and Use Information
B. Communicate Ideas and Information
C. Understand and Use Numbers
D. Use Digital Technology
E. Manage Learning
F. Engage with Others
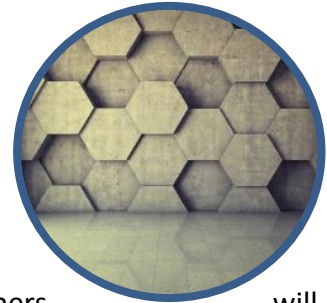
Together, these six competencies represent and describe the ways learners will need to use their abilities. The competencies are context-free and broad enough to apply to all learners, independent of the learners' goals, culture or learning environment. The competencies are not separate "subject" areas that are to be taught in isolation. Rather, the competencies work together, allowing learners to complete tasks that represent those they will undertake along their goal path. The competencies also take into account integrated thinking, interpersonal skills and behaviours. The Curriculum Framework notes that "Within a competency-based approach, the interaction of skills, knowledge and behaviours, as well as learners' understanding of how to use their skills, contributes to learners being able to perform tasks."

Task-Based Approach

The OALCF takes adult literacy learning from a skills-based to a task-based approach. Tasks

- bundle skills, knowledge and behaviour
- show how learning can be transferred to work, home and/or the community
- provide more targeted programming
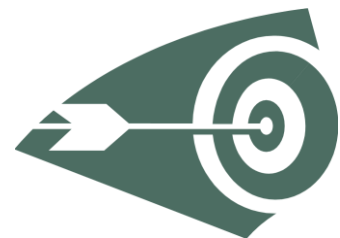
In a task-based approach, skills and tasks work hand in hand. Learners need to see the relevance of skills to tasks and goals. Skills enable task completion and tasks enable goal completion. If their skills are insufficient for the task, learners may need to step back to learn more skills.

The language of tasks helps stakeholders understand what learners will be able to do because of LBS training, how learners will be learning and why they will learn what they learn. Task-based language also helps to inform referral decisions.

Task Groups

Task Groups are used to arrange and categorize the content within larger competencies. They are links between the broad competency titles and the learners' actual abilities. For example, within Competency A. Find and Use Information, the task groups are:

Task Group		Example of a task
A1	Read continuous text	Read a brochure to learn about a course, new product or piece of equipment
A2	Interpret documents	Locate fire exits on a floor plan
A3	Extract information from films, broadcasts and presentations	Watch a webinar to learn about a topic

Task groups do not have a set ranking. They may be worked on in any order or combination, or not covered at all, depending on the learner's needs and goals.

OALCF Curriculum Framework Chart with Competencies, Task Groups and Levels

Competency	Task Group	Indicators		
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
A Find and Use Information	A1 Read continuous text	A1.1 Read brief texts to locate specific details	A1.2 Read texts to locate and connect ideas and information	A1.3 Read longer texts to connect, evaluate and integrate ideas and information
	A2 Interpret documents	A2.1 Interpret very simple documents to locate specific details	A2.2 Interpret simple documents to locate and connect information	A2.3 Interpret somewhat complex documents to connect, evaluate and integrate information
	A3 Extract info from films, broadcasts & presentations	Not applicable: Tasks in this task group are not rated for complexity		
B Communicate Ideas and Information	B1 Interact with others	B1.1 Participate in brief interactions to exchange information with one other person	B1.2 Initiate and maintain interactions with one or more persons to discuss, explain, or exchange information and opinions	B1.3 Initiate and maintain lengthier interactions with one or more persons on a range of topics
	B2 Write continuous text	B2.1 Write brief texts to convey simple ideas and factual information	B2.2 Write texts to explain and describe information and ideas	B2.3 Write longer texts to present information, ideas, and opinions
	B3 Complete and create documents	B3.1a Make straightforward entries to complete very simple documents B3.1b Create very simple documents to display and organize a limited amount of information	B3.2a Use layout to determine where to make entries in simple documents B3.2b Create simple documents to sort, display, and organize information	B3.3a Decide what, where and how to enter information in somewhat complex documents B3.3b Create more complex documents to sort, display and organize information
C Understand and Use Numbers	C1 Manage Money	C1.1 Compare costs and make simple calculations	C1.2 Make low-level inferences to calculate costs and expenses that may include rates such as taxes and discounts	C1.3 Find, integrate, and analyze numerical information to make multi-step calculations to compare cost options and prepare budgets
	C2 Manage Time	C2.1 Measure time and make simple comparisons and calculations	C2.2 Make low-level inferences to calculate using time	C2.3 Find, integrate, and analyze numerical information to make multi-step calculations using time
	C3 Use Measures	C3.1 Measure and make simple comparisons and calculations	C3.2 Use measures to make one-step calculations	C3.3 Use measures to make multi-step calculations; use specialized measuring tools
	C4 Manage Data	C4.1 Make simple comparisons and calculations	C4.2 Make low-level inferences to organize, make summary calculations, and represent data	C4.3 Find, integrate and analyze data; identify trends in data
D Use Digital Technology	n/a	D.1 Perform simple digital tasks according to a set procedure	D.2 Perform well-defined, multi-step digital tasks	D.3 Experiment and problem-solve to perform multi-step digital tasks
E Manage Learning	n/a	E.1 Set short-term goals, begin to use limited learning strategies, and begin to monitor own learning	E.2 Set realistic short- and long-term goals, use a limited number of learning strategies, and monitor own learning	E.3 Set realistic short- and long-term goals, use a variety of learning strategies, and monitor and evaluate own learning
F Engage with Others	n/a	Not applicable: Tasks in this task group are not rated for complexity		

Levels of Performance

Level Indicators

The Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) uses three performance levels with Level Indicator statements to describe the learners' proficiency to carry out tasks within the Task Groups. These indicators provide an overview of the programming focus for that Task Group level. They also illustrate learner achievement in the Task Group, at the end of each level. The following is an example of a Level Indicator:

- **Competency:**   **C**   Understand and Use Numbers
- **Task Group**:   **C1**   Manage Money
- **Level Indicator**:   **C1.2**   At this level, learners "Make low-level inferences to calculate costs and expenses that may include rates such as taxes and discounts."

The three levels of the OALCF use the same complexity factors as the first three levels of Canada's Essential Skills (ES) and the three international adult literacy surveys, carried out in Canada by Statistics Canada.

- The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)
- The Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALLS)
- The Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

The OALCF uses two factors in interpreting a learner's developing proficiency – Task Descriptors and Performance Descriptors. It is important that the description of both the task and the learner's performance be considered together.

OALCF Task Descriptors

Task Descriptors help us to understand the features of the task that determine the task complexity. According to the OALCF, tasks are more complex when they

- are not well defined
- require more steps
- can be completed in more than one way (have no set procedure)
- contain unfamiliar elements (context, vocabulary)
- involve multiple or complex documents and texts

For example, in the following chart, we make comparisons between the Task Descriptors for the three levels of Task Group B1 "Interact with Others":

Competency B Communicate Ideas and Information		
Task Group B1 Interact with Others		
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
B1.1 **Level Indicator** – At this level, learners: Participate in brief interactions to exchange information with one other person	**B1.2** **Level Indicator** – At this level, learners: Initiate and maintain interactions with one or more persons to discuss, explain, or exchange information and opinions	**B1.3** **Level Indicator** – At this level, learners: Initiate and maintain lengthier interactions with one or more persons on a range of topics
Task Descriptors • Scope of task is limited • Involves one other person • Is brief • Addresses a familiar audience • Contains concrete and familiar content • Has a highly explicit purpose • Is formal	**Task Descriptors** • Scope of task is clearly defined • Involves one or more persons • Can vary in length • Addresses a familiar or unfamiliar audience • May include unfamiliar elements (e.g., vocabulary, context, topic) • Has a clear, well-defined purpose • Is formal	**Task Descriptors** • Scope of task is not clearly defined • Involves one or more persons • Is longer in duration • Addresses a familiar or unfamiliar audience • May include unfamiliar elements (e.g., vocabulary, context, topic) • May require specialized vocabulary • Requires varied communication approaches

OALCF Performance Descriptors

The Performance Descriptors illustrate how learners' carry out tasks at the end of a level. According to the Curriculum Framework, learners who perform increasingly complex tasks can

- make inferences of task requirements
- apply background knowledge & experience to unfamiliar tasks
- manage tasks with unfamiliar elements
- identify a variety of ways to complete tasks
- find, integrate & analyze information
- experiment & problem-solve

A Note about Competencies and Levels

A learner's ability to perform tasks can vary amongst the competencies. A learner may well be able to "*Read longer texts to connect, evaluate, and integrate ideas and information*" (A1.3 – Competency A: Find and Use Information, Task Group A1: Read Continuous Text, Level 3), but need help with understanding and using numbers to manage data (C4) at a Level 3 – "*Find, integrate, and analyze data; identify trends in data.*"

"The Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) supports the primary purpose of the LBS Program to help learners bridge the gaps in the literacy and numeracy abilities they need for goal achievement." (*OALCF Foundations of Transition-Oriented Programming*, 2011)

For access to OALCF information and supports refer to the *OALCF Tools and Resources Summaries* publication.

Employment Ontario Information System – Case Management System (EOIS-CaMS)

EOIS-CaMS is a computer system developed to support EO service deliverers in the administration and management of their client cases. This includes Literacy and Basic Skills service providers' learner case management. The data collected from EOIS-CaMS helps MTCU to analyze our efficiency and effectiveness as LBS service providers. Reports that can be printed from EOIS-CaMS at the provider level also provide valuable evaluation data for program managers.