

Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Initiative

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The Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum (OALC) is a Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU) led initiative operating under the umbrella of the three learning ministries¹. The eight organizations² representing Ontario's literacy sectors and streams³ guide the OALC's development. This communiqué marks the start of the next phase of OALC development. Further communiqués will be distributed regularly between now and the scheduled implementation of the OALC in January 2011. You will find previous communiqués posted at <http://forums.alphaplus.ca/forum-22.html>.

The OALC Initiative so far...

Last fiscal year (2009-2010), the OALC Initiative developed a draft curriculum framework and guidelines. Six core competencies were defined and supporting tasks for three of these competencies were developed. Furthermore, key cultural considerations were identified. The OALC has three levels that align with the Essential Skills levels and are related to the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS). Practitioners from across the province representing all the sectors and streams piloted portions of the draft curriculum framework and guidelines. A select group of Employers, labour representatives, and trainers reviewed the approach and one competency.

The OALC Initiative going forward...

This fiscal year each of the partner organizations has taken the lead on a sub-project in the initiative. We will be using these Communiqués to keep you up-to-date on each project's activities as well as other developments. The projects and their lead organizations are:

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| • Curriculum and Framework | College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading (CSC) |
| • Assessment | <i>La Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes</i> & CESBA |
| • Materials Framework | Ontario Native Literacy Coalition (ONLC) |
| • Information Management | AlphaPlus |
| • Training Development | Community Literacy Ontario (CLO) |
| • LBS Agency Support | Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC) |
| • Sustainability | CESBA |
| • Allied Project | Deaf Literacy Initiative (DLI) |

¹ The Learning Ministries are composed of Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; Ministry of Education; as well as Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

² Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC), *La Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes*, Ontario Native Literacy Coalition (ONLC), Deaf Literacy Initiative (DLI) College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading (CSC), Community Literacy Ontario (CLO), CESBA, and AlphaPlus

³ "Sectors" – community-based, college, and school board literacy service providers. "Streams" – Anglophone, Francophone, Native, and Deaf literacy organizations.

1. Curriculum

The CSC is responsible for the curriculum and framework aspects of this initiative. The CSC has assembled a team of 13 highly qualified teachers representing programs from all sectors of LBS delivery. The work of this team is foundational for all the other OALC projects. This team is responsible for producing the first draft of the curriculum for use by LBS practitioners. The team is also responsible for developing resources including background/overview documentation, the framework, and the guidelines for all task groups within all competencies. Representatives of the Francophone, Native, and Deaf streams will also review the curriculum and framework materials before the documents are finalized.

The curriculum team completed a large selection of background reading and then met for a day and a half of training and orientation in North Bay on May 5 and 6. At this session, the team reviewed the processes and products that resulted from the Framework Development and Guidelines Development teams that met and worked during fall 2008 through spring 2010. The curriculum team is also responsible for reviewing the feedback from the OALC pilot project (winter 2010) and incorporating that feedback into the curriculum documents being produced.

The CSC is pleased with the response received to its cross-sector call for project workers in April. The CSC is confident that this team of teachers with more than 220 combined years of experience will produce resources that will enable teachers across the LBS system to move forward quickly to achieve the objectives of the OALC project.

2. Assessment Framework

The assessment framework portion of the OALC will be two-fold, divided between *learner gains* and *learner goal completion* aspects of the assessment. Each tier of this two-fold approach will directly inform its counterpart and the two teams involved in the OALC assessment framework piece will work closely together to ensure of its seamless, yet comprehensive progress.

The *learner gain* aspect of the assessment framework will contribute a series of research reports addressing literacy assessment theory and practice intended to inform the OALC assessment Framework at large. These reports will help Ontario's literacy field as it looks toward province-wide implementation of a standardized assessment tool in 2012. These discrete research documents will present an objective perspective on the key concepts and issues of assessment for learner gains. In turn, this will ensure the OALC Assessment Framework can respond to the needs of learners and other stakeholders today and in the years to come.

There will be a series of four reports. The first report in the series builds upon the research conducted by *La Coalition* that outlines the considerations of implementing a task-based assessment approach in a competency-based framework. It will address learner gains assessment, fair assessment, and literacy levels. The second report will focus on what learner gains means and considerations for the use of this type of assessment. The third report will review the assessment tool that has been identified for the OALC learner gains function. The last report will offer guidelines for the field in the use of a learner gains reading assessment using the IALS scale. Intended for a readership including literacy field practitioners and employers, the reports will follow the principles of clear language as they address key concepts and issues related to learner gains assessment.

Simultaneously, the *goal completion* aspect of the assessment framework will guide the development of the assessment framework approach in the OALC. Although the LBS program currently uses goal completion as one of its assessment-related indicators (along with LBS levels and outcomes), it has not been consistently described until now. The intent of the *goal completion* work is to provide practitioners with an assessment approach and related tools to support the development of the literacy *tasks* and *practices* that learners will need to achieve their goals. The OALC assessment approach will be organized around the following elements:

- Five goal pathways
- Transition tasks (actual and representative) for each pathway that indicate exit from LBS and participation in other learning, work and community endeavours
- Developmental milestone tasks to indicate progress
- Bridging points between pathways for goal changes
- Related training plan supports
- Complementary assessment tools (formal and informal) for intake for the time a learner is active in the program and at the point of transition.

The next communiqué be especially focused on the Assessment element of the OALC.

3. Materials Framework

The Learning Materials and Resources team will be developing a tool to assist practitioners in linking resources, including those currently used and new resources, to the OALC. The project will help provide guidance for the use, adaptation, translation, and creation of existing and new resources. The goal of the project team is to make the practitioners jobs easier during the implementation and the delivery of the new curriculum framework.

The Materials and Resources project team is currently working on its strategic plan. This plan will outline how the team will develop a materials framework from which a tool will be developed. The team is collecting information from the streams and sectors through allied projects. The team will be tracking frequently used materials to include examples of how the tool works using familiar materials.

The current project team consists of community-based Anglophone, Francophone, and Native organizations' representatives. The team will begin consultations with Deaf stream in June.

4. Information Management

The OALC Information Management Project involves three primary activities to support the development and delivery of the OALC once the initial version of the framework and guidelines are complete.

First, an Information Management Strategy will gather requirements for and document the future processes by which OALC content will be created, updated, and managed. In this process, the IM Strategy will identify the “types” of content to be published on the web along with requirements for the tools necessary to manage distributed collaboration on OALC content in the next phase of the project. Documented processes and requirements will be used to make technical recommendations, and to develop a phased implementation plan for this system.

Secondly, a Web Strategy will develop a vision and gather requirements for delivery of the OALC core curriculum and related content via the web, along with the associated content management processes. As with the IM Strategy, documented processes and requirements will be used to make technical recommendations and to develop a phased implementation for this system.

The third activity is the design and implementation of a Phase 1 Web Site that will provide access to the initial version of the OALC core content and related material as well as contextual information on the history of the project, project stakeholders, and funders. The site will also orient target audiences to the curriculum in the context of literacy and other related services.

The development of the initial project strategy will involve consultations with the other OALC projects and key stakeholders to fine tune and validate the scope and approach for engaging stakeholders in questions around the “care and feeding” of the OALC content, along with the delivery of the OALC and related content via the web.

5. Training and Implementation

CLO is delighted to have been funded by MTCU to develop OALC practitioner training that will be used for delivery to all sectors and streams. During the course of this project, CLO will:

- Develop a practitioner training strategy based on consultation with sectors and streams
- Plan for training delivery based on consultation with the sectors and streams
- Develop a training package to support trainers and practitioners in understanding a competency-based program approach, using the curriculum framework (including guidelines, assessment, and materials frameworks), and understanding the role and use of a web-based OALC
- Train the trainers in all sectors and streams so that these trainers will be prepared to deliver training at the various fall and winter training initiatives of the individual sector and stream organizations
- Provide ongoing mentoring and coaching supports to the trainers in the various sectors and streams.

CLO will develop a training package that will be conducive to face-to-face training and online training, in addition to developing training materials in a format that can be housed along with the OALC on its future website. The initial training package will be completed by late fall 2010. The follow-up training package will be completed by January 2011.

Each sector and stream organization will deliver the actual training to their respective sectors and streams agencies (including CLO delivering this training to the community-based sector).

6. LBS Agency Support

The LBS Agency Support project will examine current and emerging literacy service planning and the intersections with service planning and coordination among other elements of Employment Ontario (EO) and the Learning Ministries. This will support greater integration of the range of learner supports and increased service coordination to enhance learner transitions.

Over the course of the next year, the LBS Agency Support team will place the OALC into the framework of the evolving integration of LBS into EO including the key intersections between OALC/LBS activities and related EO service providers. As part of that process, the team will provide informed advice on OALC data management with a focus on the ways in which different stakeholders' needs are accommodated through developing types of indicators and data management that reflect both accountability and program improvement needs of LBS agencies.

As part of this work, the OLC will be managing external communications about the OALC initiative including communiqués and presentations.

7. Sustainability

Through the Sustainability Project, CESBA will develop a strategy for managing and maintaining an ongoing “ever-greening” of the OALC. The project will develop a thorough understanding of what is needed in the way of content management and processes in the future to ensure the integrity of the curriculum and OALC assessment. To this end, CESBA will do the following:

- Conduct an evaluation of the OALC framework and initial field training
- Define the deliverables/information that MTCU needs to own to ensure the integrity of the processes, including assessment
- Research models that maintain curriculum both in Ontario and outside the province
- Develop and propose a policy to MTCU for sustaining the Literacy Curriculum
- Develop protocols, processes, and criteria for field engagement in the use and revision of framework content on the OALC website
- Develop a decision process for sustaining and maintaining the interactive nature of the OALC
- Identify future opportunities both internally and externally for Sustainability

In order to be successful in these tasks, CESBA will work very closely with each of the other projects to stay abreast of developments and decisions. The goal is to become knowledgeable and stay well-informed regarding all aspects of the OALC that require supports for ongoing viability.

8. Allied Project

The Allied Project focuses on ensuring that the Deaf stream has enough resources to support the use of the new OALC at its implementation. To date, there are not enough resources for any of the pathways. This has been identified as a significant issue for the Deaf stream when introduced to new changes within the Literacy system such as the OALC. Pending funding approval from Research and Development proposals, DLI will be doing several projects to ensure that the Deaf stream will be well equipped to use the new OALC in the next year.

The Allied Project will be developing curriculum guidelines for the Employment pathway that have been re-conceptualized from *Signposts* developed by PTP and curriculum guidelines for the Independence pathway borrowing key concepts from the *Foundations for Independence* developed by CLO. Along with those curriculum guidelines, the Allied Project is in the process of adapting the CAMERA assessment tool for the Employment pathway to ensure that it is culturally and linguistically

appropriate for the Deaf stream. In addition, the team will create resources in American Sign Language that will include activities and examples of soft skills under competencies # 5 and # 6. Lastly, the team will develop an assessment tool that identifies level of proficiency in American Sign Language to recognize linguistic abilities of learners in their first language and how it compares to their level of proficiency in their second language, English.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns or wish to provide feedback, we welcome your comments.

Project contacts are as follows:

Lead Organization	Project Title	Contact Person	Email Address
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