

Literacy on the Move

Workforce LITERACY

April 2004

Executive Directors' Update

By Anette Chawla and Sue Folinsbee, Co-Executive Directors



THE LAST FEW MONTHS HAVE BEEN BUSY and productive ones for the Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC). We are pleased to report that we have completed a program plan that outlines future directions for the OLC in four results areas. Over the next few years, we look forward to making these directions a reality. The four areas set out how the OLC must work to achieve specified results for:

- ▶ deliverers of literacy programs
- ▶ people with literacy challenges
- ▶ the general public
- ▶ government and other decision makers

Deliverers of literacy programs

We hope to build on our current work in workforce literacy. This area is of increasing interest both to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) and to Literacy and Basic Skills programs. This issue of *Literacy on the Move* offers a variety of perspectives on this work. We also hope to continue our work in the areas of family literacy and self-management and self-direction.

Our focus is on providing support, professional development opportunities and resources to literacy program deliverers. We will also continue to provide an opportunity for the literacy field to have a voice with government and other decision makers through the OLC/MTCU liaison meetings and the OLC Advisory Roundtable.

People with literacy challenges

The OLC continues to find ways to integrate the voice of people with literacy challenges in all aspects of its work. The main ways are through the OLC Board, the Adult Literacy Network of Ontario (ALNO), forums for discussion with government bureaucrats and politicians, and in field development projects and initiatives.

In the future, we want to focus on how immigrants and refugees are affected by literacy issues in Ontario and what kinds of services they get and still need. We will work closely with groups like the Campaign for Stable ESL Funding and the Ontario Council for Agencies Serving Immigrants on this issue. We also hope to look more closely at the needs of youth, seniors and adults with developmental disabilities.

In addition, we wish to focus on those people with literacy challenges who may never attend a program, to determine how public services can be more accessible.

The General Public

We hope to be working on a number of fronts to make sure the general public is more aware of literacy issues. We have developed a “new look” including an updated logo. This is part of our effort to brand the OLC as the organization to speak for literacy issues in the province. This new look will lead to an overall communication package to present information on literacy and the OLC to the general public.

We recently held a two-day strategy session with key stakeholders to take stock of the social marketing work done to date and to chart a three-year direction that will meet the needs of the literacy community and complement existing work. We will shortly have a plan that builds on the OLC’s social marketing work of the last four years.

Government and Decision-Makers

We will continue to provide informed advice and build awareness with both politicians (federal and provincial) and government representatives. This includes building a relationship with the new provincial government to provide a positive legislative environment for literacy. We will provide this informed advice by first consulting with our members.

As part of its work on family literacy, the OLC has put together a provincial working group on family literacy—Action for Family Literacy Ontario (AFLO). In less than a year, AFLO has developed a vision, mission and values statement, the beginnings of a communications strategy and some preliminary research on best practices. In the future, a top priority is to move the work of AFLO forward by raising awareness about the multiple benefits of family literacy programming, and the need for greater financial support for programming and services.

The OLC welcomes back Lorri Sauvé as a project manager. Lorri will support the work of AFLO and coordinate July’s Foundational Institute in Family Literacy.

Executive Director Changes

THE OLC BOARD OF DIRECTORS would like to wish Sue Folinsbee the very best and every success in all her future endeavors. Sue is leaving the OLC to work on a number of exciting projects being coordinated by the Labour Education Centre. This work will include the “Hospitality Workers Resource Centre” and a “Union Passport to Learning.” Both projects are designed to assist unionized workers with their literacy, vocational training and employment counseling needs.

Over the past 2-years Sue has been a real asset to the OLC in her role as Co-Executive Director. Her strong determination, ability to advocate on behalf of people with literacy challenges and her knowledge of access and equity work has inspired the organization to form new and beneficial partnerships. We would like to thank Sue for her excellent contributions to the work of the OLC.

At the same time that we are sad to announce Sue’s departure, the board is pleased to announce that Anette Chawla has been confirmed as Executive Director. Anette has worked with Sue as Co-Executive Director for the past 2-years and demonstrated a remarkable commitment to the work of the OLC. The board is confident that under Anette’s leadership the OLC will continue to look for the most effective and respectful ways to help people who have literacy challenges in Ontario.

☞ *On behalf of the OLC Board of Directors,
Aaron Cantor, President and Chair*

OLC’s Board of Directors 2004	
Aaron Cantor	President
Joyce Banya	Vice-President
Debera Flynn	Secretary
Jennine Agnew-Kata	Director
Sarah Canzano	Director
Cheryl Conway	Director
Sandy Johnson	Director
Valerie Kenny	Director
Linda Lott	Director
Donna Lovell	Director
Corry Wink	Director

The Hospitality Workers' Resource Centre

By Wendy Tanner, Coordinator, Labour Education Centre

THE TORONTO HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY was severely affected with the onslaught of SARS in March 2003. Convention and conference organizers and tourists cancelled bookings by the thousands. The industry is subject to temporary lay-offs in the off-peak seasons. Low seniority workers, especially those working as room attendants, laundry workers and servers, rarely get regular full-time work. This workforce is also at the low end of the pay scale. A large proportion of hospitality workers lost their jobs or had their hours greatly reduced, and many were unable to claim Employment Insurance (E.I.).

The Hotel Workers Restaurant Workers union recognized a need for some supportive action. It initiated a large survey using 7 hotel room attendants and 1 maintenance worker to telephone over a thousand of their co-workers. The survey focused on four main areas: the need for training, emotional and financial hardship, E.I. difficulties and connection to the industry. Of the 1047 people who responded, over 70% were interested in taking some form of training, ranging from a need to learn additional industry skills to GED, ESL and literacy education. Over 70% reported experiencing extreme to moderate emotional or financial difficulties. We heard heart-breaking stories of workers being evicted, having to sell their houses, or not managing to pay for food or utilities. Only 19% were receiving E.I. benefits at the time we called. Despite the hardship, 97% reported that they would like to stay connected with the industry.

Through the initiative of the unions and the hospitality employers, and funding from the federal and provincial governments, the Hospitality Workers' Resource Centre was officially opened in November 2003.

Most of the eight workers who initially conducted the phone survey have remained with the project. These women are union activists.



BACK ROW LEFT TO RIGHT: Recalda Lucas, Renaissance Hotel, Imelda Basilio, Holiday Inn on King, Linette Brown, Sheraton Centre • **FRONT ROW LEFT TO RIGHT:** Calliopie Maikantis, Fairmount Royal York, Mei Wu, Metropolitan Hotel

Some have been working in the industry for 30 years. Their knowledge of the industry and their understanding and empathy with the needs of their co-workers is proving invaluable. However, they were unfamiliar with office and counselling work. After undergoing training in community referrals, computers, communication and presentation skills, reception duties and office procedures, they are now working as peer counsellors and are advocating, researching and making referrals to various support agencies, and presentations in hotels for outreach purposes.

Currently, we are providing a range of services in an attempt to help workers with a variety of needs. We offer job counselling, a job bank, and contacts with employers. We partner with two Job Track Centres for job search, resume writing and interview skills workshops. We have on-site classes in literacy upgrading and computers and hope to have an ESL class and an industry skills training program soon. We offer referrals to community organizations, a rent bank and the Foodshare program, which also delivers food boxes to the centre for those who need them. We have two yoga classes and an art program each week to relieve stress.

Although the industry is recuperating slowly, many workers have never really recovered, and some are in dire need of help. The funding for the Centre ends in September, but until then we are hoping to reach and assist as many workers as possible.

LBS Learners Target the Workforce

By Alexandra Sonson and Patricia Brady, OLC's Learner Coordination Team

JENNIFER GARIB AND ANNAKAY MYLES are upgrading their literacy skills so that they can look for jobs that will lead to careers. Both women are students at East York Learning Experience (EYLE) in Toronto, Ontario.

Jennifer Garib

Jennifer Garib has been a student at EYLE for about two years. She meets with her tutor, Tania Charzewski, at the program every Wednesday for two hours. They work on improving Jennifer's reading and writing skills. Jennifer wants to be able to put her thoughts on paper better than she can now. Her ambitions are to be able to help her nine-year-old daughter as well as find a job that will improve their future.

Jennifer had to leave school at the age of ten. Her family's home in Trinidad had burnt down. School in Trinidad, where she was born, was not free. Jennifer, as the oldest child in a large family, had to make a hard decision.

"I had to choose the option of my family building a home with the funds or to further my education. This was just something I overheard between my mother and father. I eventually choose to quit school which was my own personal choice but my family did not object."

Jennifer began working at eleven years old. She came to Canada at eighteen and has been working here ever since.

Jennifer always wanted to return to school but was afraid to make the attempt. She did not have the confidence she needed when she came to Canada. This lack of belief in herself showed in other parts of Jennifer's life. She said:

"So many doors have been open to me but I shut them myself because I did not have the confidence."

She recently got to a point where she felt that she needed to do something positive for herself. This feeling, plus the support of her daughter,



Tania Charzewski and Jennifer Garib

helped her to make the decision to improve her skills. She realizes that she needs to be able to read and write well to get anywhere in life.

Jennifer would like to get her high school equivalency and then go on to college. She is interested in taking courses in interior design or gourmet cooking. Her dream is to have her own business, either a restaurant like her mother's family had in Trinidad, or a flower shop.

At the moment, Jennifer is looking for another job. Her last job as a babysitter has just ended. She hopes that the work that she has put into her studies will lead to a better occupation, perhaps in the hospitality industry. She would like to work full time and attend school part time.

Jennifer has finally found the confidence that will help her be able to reach her goals. Her advice to other learners reflects this new confidence. She says:

"For everyone who has a disability, or has struggles — don't give up, have some faith and believe in yourself."

Annakay Myles

Annakay Myles has been attending the EYLE Program since the end of 2001. She also wants to improve her reading and writing skills so that she can build a better life for herself and her daughter.

"I have a three year old daughter who is a great influence in my life. I decided to continue my education because I don't want reading to her to be a problem."

Her main focus is to upgrade her education so that she can pursue a career either as Personal Support Worker (PSW) or as a police officer.

Annakay is currently employed as a salesperson. Before this she worked with a cleaning agency. When asked why she felt that she needed to change jobs, she said,

"There is nothing wrong with it, it's just not me. I realized that I wasn't going anywhere — these were dead end jobs. The cleaning company was too hard, both physically and on my family, as it was night work. Everyone in the family was on a different schedule. This is not what I want to do for the rest of my life. I just have to meet higher goals for myself. I need a night school that will accommodate work, and give me time with my daughter."

Annakay mentioned,

"I dropped out of high school because it was getting harder. Some teachers were concerned about my level of reading and writing in elementary school. In grade four, things got harder and harder. I was to be tested for a learning disability but it never happened."

Annakay emphasized that her decision to attend the literacy program is to improve her living standard. She states,

"For my career choices, I need to upgrade my reading and writing skills. I need to cope with resume's, application forms, orientation questionnaires, other typical work related reading and writing stuff. I was embarrassed to come at first, not any more. I am doing the effort to do something about life. I left school because I just couldn't keep up with kids my age. If I had help I would have stayed, instead the problem compounded."



Annakay Myles

Annakay has given herself some concrete goals. She said,

"I have given myself a timeline for the year 2005 to get into college part time while working. I have done my research on how to get into college. I also do not want my daughter to grow up in this city, I want better schooling for her. The actual turning point is having my daughter — I wouldn't have thought of doing it before."

"If anyone has been in Toronto — minimum wage jobs can't pay the bills — you can't exist. I don't want my daughter to see me struggling like I do now. I want to be a role model. The moment I started this program — I've noticed a lot of improvement. And I am persistent."

"In this program, my tutor focuses on what I need to know. She gets me to read stuff that I like to read. It keeps my mind going, and I am not bored. If I don't know words — she helps me to find out through dictionaries."

Annakay's words of advice for other students are:

"Nobody can force you to go back to school, you need to do it for yourself, only then will you make the effort that is needed to succeed."

Sustaining Workplace Education PROGRAMS

By *Connie Nelson*
Director, Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable

THE MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION has provided seed funding grants for workplace education for many years, to expand access to adult basic education for working adults and to leverage private investment in workplace learning.

A partnership of a business and/or union and an educational provider gets funding for 3 years to establish an educational program at the workplace. There is a match that grows each year, and there is an explicit expectation that the employer and/or union will continue the program after that time. But does that really happen? Views in the field varied widely on whether program continuation was common or rare.

My organization, the Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable, a network of union-involved programs (mostly labor-management partnerships), tried to start programs with these grants, hoping the grants would help overcome employer reluctance to start programs, and then hoping they would continue, I wondered why we succeeded in some cases and not others, and about the general discrepancy in perception about continuation in the adult education field.

When I had the opportunity to conduct a research project for my doctoral dissertation, I chose this as my topic. I followed up on 50 workplaces that had received Workplace Education grants to find out what had actually happened.

I interviewed respondents who had been on their program's Planning and Evaluation Team while decisions were made about continuation.

The respondents were not providers but workplace "insiders": human resource professionals, union representatives, managers, or owners. I found that 48% of the programs interviewed did continue in some form for at least one year. As expected, larger businesses were more likely to continue. There were no significant differences in continuation rates for different industries, or between union and non-union facilities, though programs bargained into a union contract were more stable than programs in non-union workplaces.

Some programs continued or even expanded their programs with similar content and intensity and using the same provider. Others made major changes, such as reducing class time. Some hired an independent instructor to teach classes or workshops on demand. Some firms altered their skills training programs to include basic skills or English language instruction.

I also asked about the decision-making process and found several common features. All continuing programs had one or more internal champions who made sure financial allocations for the program were made. These champions had identified at least one workplace problem that they believed the educational program could address, and collected evidence to show that it did. Successful champions also knew how to influence the real financial decision-makers. The identity of champions, the problem definition, their connection to the purse and their sources of evidence varied considerably, but all successful continuations had these four elements in some form.

Train Ontario

By Cindy Davidson, Executive Director,
Quill Learning Network

Literacy and Basic Skills practitioners will have the opportunity to participate in training this spring designed to build their capacity to serve learners with employment goals. “Building Practitioner Capacity: Establishing the Foundation” is a project funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) and the National Literacy Secretariat. The project is part of MTCU’s Taking Stock and Building Our Capacity Initiative.

The main outcome of the project is to develop and deliver training across Ontario in 20 communities, reaching over 500 practitioners from all sectors and streams. The training will be divided into two parts:

- ▶ Foundational
- ▶ Skill-specific

A one-day training event will be held in 16 communities, hosted by regional literacy networks. As well, three events will be held for the Francophone, Native and Deaf cultural streams. Events will run from April 2 through to June. A complete list of communities and dates have now been posted on AlphaCom. Lastly, the training components will also be available at the OLC Conference Literacyworks! in Hamilton June 17–19.

The objectives of the foundational training are to:

- ▶ Increase awareness of **federal and provincial** information
- ▶ Build upon key **skills and knowledge** of practitioners
- ▶ Provide an opportunity to share **experiences** with fellow practitioners
- ▶ Integrate **practitioner knowledge** in LBS agencies
- ▶ Understand the value of **community collaboration**
- ▶ Identify “**next steps**” to continue building practitioner capacity

There will be five workshops that address skill-specific training. Each training will offer two of the possible five workshops. The five areas addressed in the skill-specific sessions are:

1. Developing Employment-Related Demonstrations
2. Developing Goal-Related Learning Activities
3. Using Authentic Workforce Materials
4. Understanding Employment-Related Goal Requirements
5. Helping Learners Set Employment-Related Goals

The project committee is developing a plan to sustain the training and make the sessions accessible after the spring sessions. Some possibilities being explored include on-line training opportunities using Centra or archived sessions via videotape.

This is only the first phase of training to be offered to the field and future plans may include more skill-specific training and training geared to LBS administrators.

Committee members for the “Building Practitioner Capacity: Establishing the Foundation” have been putting in enormous amounts of time to ensure the training content and delivery reflects the priorities of the field. They have worked closely with the field through consultations with regional and sectoral literacy networks, cultural umbrella stream organizations and the Ontario Literacy Coalition.

The following committee members are to be highly commended for the dedication they have shown to this project.

- ▶ Gay Douglas, Executive Director, Literacy Link Niagara
- ▶ Nancy MacDonald, Literacy Link Niagara
- ▶ Kathy Neill, Executive Director, Literacy Ontario Central South (LOCS) Network
- ▶ Patty Morrison, Literacy Ontario Central South (LOCS) Network
- ▶ Cheryl Conway, Executive Director, MidNorth Adult Learning Network
- ▶ Sande Minke, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
- ▶ Anne Ramsay, Co-Executive Director, Project READ Network
- ▶ Jane Tuer, Co-Executive Director, Project READ Literacy Network

For more information about the project and the training events contact Cindy Davidson, Project Manager at 519-881-4655 or e-mail cindy@quillnet.org

Workplace Learning Conference in Chicago

By Sue Folinsbee, Co-Executive Director

IN DECEMBER 2003, I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO attend the 7th annual Workplace Learning Conference. The conference, entitled *Advancing Adult Work-based Learning: Building a 21st Century Community of Practice*, did not disappoint me. The three-day conference focused on research, practice and policy related to workforce education and development with presenters from across the United States and Canada. Of particular interest to me were three U.S. based presentations that focused on integrating literacy into job or vocational training, and employment services. These presentations also looked at literacy and language upgrading for “good jobs.”

For example, in his research Paul Jurmo found that successful strategies that career centres used to respond to people with literacy challenges included having carefully planned, well-supported, integrated services. These services were based on a solid understanding of literacy challenges as a barrier to employment and effective practices from adult basic education and workforce development. Ineffective strategies included referring clients to the overburdened adult education system, and use of inappropriate assessment tools and curricula in in-house literacy programs. Stand-alone literacy programs that were not tied into job opportunities and other job-related services at the centres were also ineffective.

In a similar vein, Deborah D’Amico talked about the need to embed literacy in job training that is part of work that learners are doing or will need to do. D’Amico documented and compared five short-term training programs for workers with literacy challenges in the health care sector. She concluded that integrating job training with language, literacy and math instruction increases employment and earnings. The most successful outcomes were in the occupational training programs that infused literacy, extra support and team teaching with a literacy and skills instructor into the program.

Laura Chenven examined programs in hospitality, manufacturing, construction and health care for promising practices that integrated workers with language and literacy challenges into existing union-based and labour-management workforce development programs. At least three of the five models of instruction used in these programs focused on integrating language instruction and occupational training.

Important ideas for policy come out of her research. These ideas centre around how to best serve employers looking for skilled workers and workers with language and literacy challenges who are looking for family-sustaining jobs. Chenven found that there were good programs that were preparing workers to get relatively well-paid jobs while learning English. Like Jurmo and D’Amico, she also noted that contextualized curriculum, good instructional methodology and worker support systems were important. Chenven also found that tailoring language instruction to occupational training and the needs of specific jobs led to more successful job placement, retention and advancement. She adds, however, that continuing English instruction is necessary for the long-term interests of all workers with literacy and language difficulties, employers and communities.

If you are interested in getting a copy of these papers and presentations, please contact the OLC office. There will be a small charge for copying, shipping and handling.

References:

- Chenven, L. (In press). *Getting to work: A report on how workers with limited English skills can prepare for good jobs*. Washington: AFL-CIO Working for America Institute.
- D’Amico, D. (2003). *Embedded literacy: Strengthening the connection between work and learning*. Washington: US Department of Education.
- Jurmo, P. (2003). *How career centers can better serve job seekers lacking in basic skills and high school credentials*. Washington: US Department of Education.

Revisiting Literacy and Employment: A Research Study

By Dr. Pat Campbell, President Gras Roots Press

I finished my course... I couldn't find a job you know... Like at this moment like, I can't say anything, I'm so disappointed. — (*female participant*).

TO WHAT EXTENT DO LITERACY PROGRAMS HAVE a positive impact on employment? Does participation in literacy programs lead to increased economic well being? A decade ago, Dr. Grace Malicky and Dr. Charles Norman explored the relationship between participation in literacy programs and employment status. Their findings are worth revisiting.

A total of 94 adults enrolled in urban literacy programs participated in this three-year study. Forty participants were Canadian-born, and 54 were immigrants, primarily Asian. The majority of participants were attending formal literacy programs on a full-time basis. All the literacy programs either explicitly stated or implied vocational goals in their program agendas.

Formal testing was used to assess reading achievement, and interviews were used to gather information on employment history, vocational goals, and reasons for entering the program. Follow-up interviews were conducted at six-month intervals across a 3-year period. The purpose of the interviews was to monitor any changes in the vocational goals and employment status of participants both during participation and after leaving their literacy programs.

The study found that before starting literacy programs, most participants were employed in the service sector, making low wages and often living below the poverty line. The majority of learners believed that participation in literacy programs would lead to more and better job opportunities, and they cited this factor among their list of reasons for enrolling in the program. However, during the course of their programs,

the participants' optimism began to wane. They reduced their expectations about job prospects, and frequently became frustrated and discouraged. After completing programs, many realized their doubts were well-founded.

At the end of their program, most participants returned to the same type of jobs they had held before enrolling in literacy classes, sometimes even with the same employer. On the few occasions when participants did find jobs in the new areas in which they were trained, the positions were part-time. In fact, none of the participants in the study achieved their vocational goal, which was to obtain a full-time job in a specific area.

Assumptions about the relationship between literacy and economic development which underlie many literacy programs were not supported by the findings. The results of this study have implications for funding bodies, literacy program providers, and participants alike. Each of these stakeholders must critically examine the assumptions underlying literacy programs. In particular, each needs to question the strong employment focus of literacy programs in order to avoid creating unrealistic expectations and the frustration and disappointment that follow those expectations.

References:

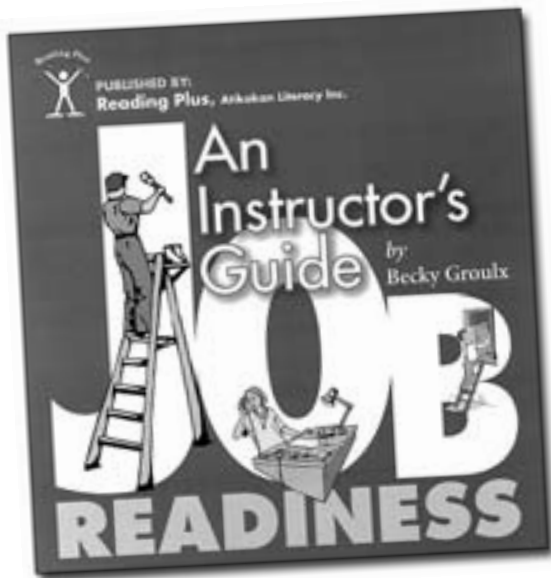
To learn more about this study, visit the Directory of Canadian Adult Literacy Research at:
<http://www.nald.ca/crd/>

Malicky, G. V. & Norman, C.A. (1994). Participation in adult literacy programs and employment. *Journal of Reading*, 38(2), 122-127.

New Resources

By Maria Moriarty, Centre AlphaPlus Centre
1-800-728-1120 — www.alphaplus.ca

The following materials may be borrowed or purchased through AlphaPlus.

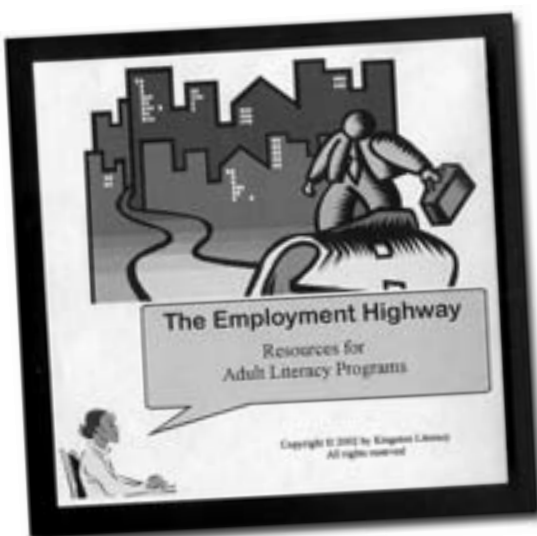


Job Readiness: An Instructor's Guide

Groulx, Becky. Atikokan, Ont.: Reading Plus, Atikokan Literacy, Inc., 2003
Call No. 650.1407 G68

Job Readiness comes straight from the literacy field in Ontario. This comprehensive resource consists of a curriculum manual for instructors and a CD-ROM containing student handouts. The *Job Readiness* guide is based on work at Reading Plus in Atikokan, over a three year period, to provide a job readiness program to students in the literacy and basic skills program. It is designed to provide literacy instructors with a 12-week curriculum relating to essential and workforce skills. It is designed to encompass three main components of learning domains: Self-management & self-direction; Workforce essential skills; and Computers and Internet use. Day by day planners provide the instructor with a guide that includes domains, lesson topics of the day, additional resources, suggested activities and handouts, and the learning outcomes that reflect the areas of integrated learning.

Job Readiness is a very valuable resource for field workers providing well tested activities, ideas and practical supports to literacy instructors who are developing workforce literacy programming.

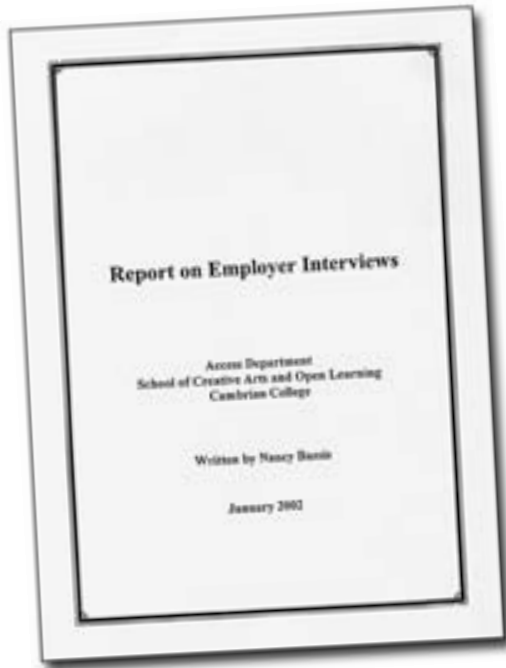


The Employment Highway: Resources for Adult Literacy Programs

Kingston, Ont.: Kingston Literacy, 2002
Call No. 650.14076 E52

An interactive CD ROM with hyperlinks to the Web, *The Employment Highway* has been developed as an information resource for learners at LBS Levels 1-3 who want to enter the workforce. Reading, writing and numeracy activities relate to the following occupations: fast food server, retail clerk, cashier, truck driver, call centre representative, construction labourer, and janitor/custodian. Skill set charts for reading, writing and math are included for each occupation and a link to the HRDC Essential Skills for each occupation is included. Each unit includes instructional notes and strategies as well as sample demonstrations for each unit.

The Employment Highway provides a very useful tool for instructors and learners to begin exploring the literacy and numeracy skills needed and to develop a training plan to support learners to enter the workforce.

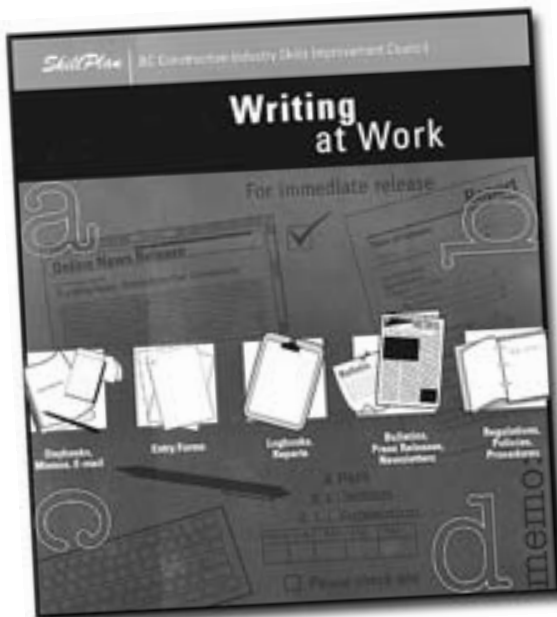


Report on Employer Interviews

Bassis, Nancy. Sudbury, ON: Cambrian College. Access Department. School of Creative Arts and Open Learning. 2002

This resource reports on interviews with employers in the Sudbury area, conducted by staff at Cambrian College. The project was intended to determine the availability to students of entry level jobs, what skills were required for those jobs, what prospects existed for advancement, and what barriers students might face in the job. Employers in the retail, hospitality, medical, government, financial and entertainment sectors were interviewed. Employers were asked to report on the frequency and importance of a range of tasks under the headings of: Communication Skills, including reading, writing, speaking and listening; Math, Computer Use, and Self-Management and Self Direction.

This resource provides an interesting snapshot of the requirement of employers in a specific area and is a useful support to instructors who are developing workforce literacy programming.



Writing at Work

Burnaby, B.C. SkillPlan, 2003, **Call No. 808.06665 G67**

A resource that comes from the world of work, this publication is intended to give instructors examples of common workplace writing tasks that will enhance instruction and allow students to develop an understanding of writing in the context of work.

The descriptions of writing tasks and practice activities related to these tasks are organized according to the following formats:

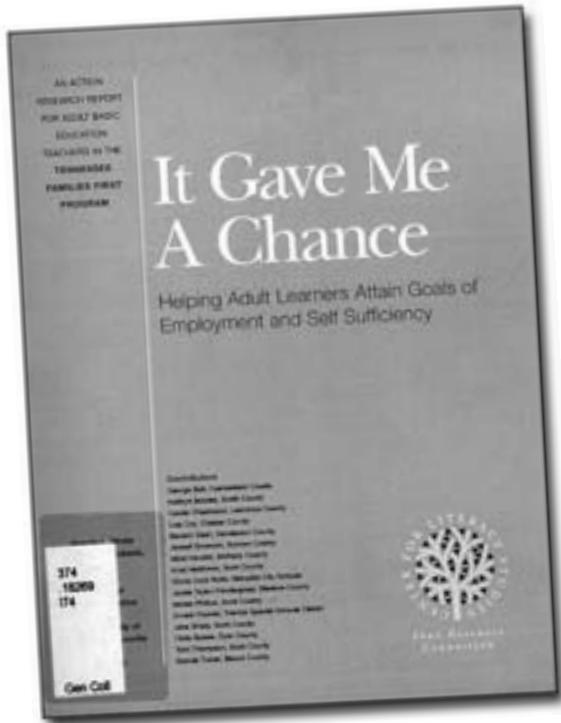
- Daybooks, memos and e-mail
- Entry forms
- Logbooks, reports
- Bulletins, press releases, newsletters
- Regulations, policies & procedures

Using the language of the Essential Skills, *Writing at Work* examines the purposes of writing, which are usually practical and related to action; the conditions under which writing is done, which often make the writing task more challenging; how writing is integrated with other skills; why writing needs to be efficient; what style of writing suits the purpose and audience; and how the effects of writing can be significant. Photos of the workers consulted with brief descriptions of the work they perform and the writing skills required to perform their work provide a valuable context and add interest and depth to the text. *Writing at Work* includes a wide variety of suggested practice activities and samples of over 50 workplace documents.

It Gave Me A Chance: Helping Adult Learners Attain Goals of Employment and Self-Sufficiency

Knoxville, TN. The University of Tennessee.
Center for Literacy Studies. 2000
Call No. 374.18269 I74

This resource recounts the experiences of sixteen adult education teachers who participated in an action-



research project to explore ways to make their classes more work-focused so as to better support students who were seeking to enter the workforce, while working on basic skills. Each of the instructors offers a first-person account of her experience and a description of the work-related activities that she tried, with her students, in the classroom. All of the instructors report learning gains on the part of their students and for themselves. As one instructor writes,

“Sometimes success cannot be determined through quantitative methods, but in increments too small, but no less significant to see. Increases in teamwork, cooperation, motivation, self-initiative, dependability, reliability, and trustworthiness; increases in math, writing, language, keyboarding and social skills all intimately affect an individual’s self-worth.” (p. 16)

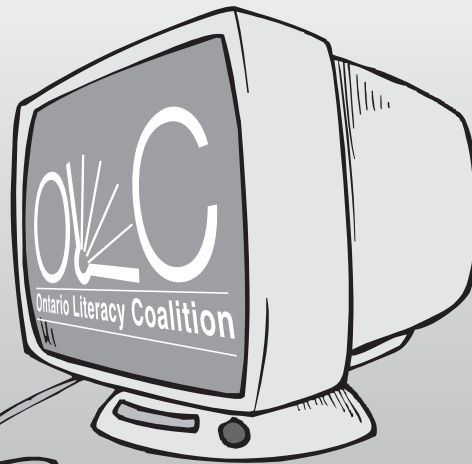
What did you learn today?

Learn even more by
improving your reading,
writing and math skills!

LOOK UNDER LEARN
in the Bell Yellow Pages™ directories.



Visit OLC’s website at:



www.on.literacy.ca



Message from the Chair

By Aaron Cantor, President and Chair, OLC Board of Directors

EXCITING AND IMPORTANT WORK IS ALWAYS happening at the Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC). At the last board meeting in February, the board agreed on a definition of literacy that will clarify and provide a framework for the work of the OLC. The definition is as follows:

“Literacy gives all the foundational skills that people need to achieve their personal and societal goals in our complex and ever changing world. Literacy makes it possible for people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse abilities to live with dignity in our communities. Literacy helps reduce the barriers to meaningful participation in society.”

It has been two years since the OLC board adopted the Carver policy governance model. This model makes a strong connection with the moral ownership of the organization. The moral ownership is basically made up of the communities we serve: people with literacy challenges and people with an interest in the issue of literacy. This connection between the OLC and its moral ownership is important for developing priorities for projects and new

initiatives. For the past two years, the OLC board has been developing a policy framework that will guide the work of the organization into the future. We believe that this definition of literacy is an important piece of work that will give us the breadth of vision to grow in ways that benefits the moral ownership.

At that February board meeting, board members visited the provincial headquarters of the Ontario Council for Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI). The OLC board had identified that immigrants, especially those who come to Canada without a strong educational background, are among the people who can be excluded from community participation the most. The staff of OCASI agreed that their clients often have a great deal of difficulty finding their place in Canadian society. We look forward to exploring a partnership with OCASI as part of our access and equity work.

The board also adopted a new logo that will complement the new directions that the OLC is taking. This modern logo moves beyond just a book to give off energy and movement. This new logo will help the OLC to become more easily recognized in the literacy community and amongst the general population. We hope that you, our members and stakeholders, will like it as much as the board and staff do.

OLC's New Logo



Literacy for Newcomers a Critical Issue

By Sue Folinsbee, Co-Executive Director

AS PART OF ITS ONGOING WORK, the Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC) is looking to build new relationships and for new ways to support people with literacy challenges. One area of concern is adults who settle in Canada who do not speak English or French as a first language, and who may have literacy challenges.

In her research *Moving the Markers*, Susan Sussman found that, according to the results of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) one-third of adults with neither English nor French as a first language were at the lowest level (Level 1). This represents about 1.4 million people across Canada. In Ontario, the figures are higher. Half of Ontario's adults who do not have English or French as a first language were at Level 1 according to Susan's analysis of IALS.

There is a recognition on the part of literacy deliverers, ESL providers and settlement organizations of the gap in services to immigrants who need access to literacy programs. Other research in the Toronto area has found that, while some language programs may focus on ESL, they do not necessarily meet the needs of adult immigrants with low literacy in their first language.

The OLC Board and staff recently met with staff at the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) to exchange information and see how we might work together to address literacy issues and needs. OCASI serves over 150 immigrant-serving agencies in Ontario. Member agencies provide settlement counselling, language and citizenship training, employment, social support, health, community preparation, education and legal services.

We learned that there has been a reduction in funding to language training services in the past three years. OCASI confirmed the need to focus on services to newcomers who are not literate in their own languages. Recent programs have been

defunded and as a result, there are not enough programs to refer clients to. In language assessments of newcomers, literacy issues are often not picked up. OCASI also noted that more high needs people are being admitted to Canada. While literacy is not often an immediate priority for some immigrants, (shelter, health care needs, etc.), literacy quickly becomes a focus as a newcomer is trying to secure employment. Agency needs assessments show that literacy is a component of the needs of a refugee or immigrant but mention of it is small.

Position papers on ESL and literacy do not exist. The limited research is scattered and is not easy to locate. There is no research into the gaps in literacy services. Databases do not include literacy. Some community-based research includes literacy but it is not the main focus of the research.

The OLC is looking forward to working with OCASI and others to find ways of consolidating current information on the issue of literacy for newcomers and its impact. We can then together look for ways to ensure access to appropriate services to newcomers with literacy challenges.

E-mail Updates

The OLC has started to send out regular e-mail updates, e.g., election information, and family literacy updates. ***Make sure we have a current e-mail address on file for you.*** Send your e-mail address to **olc@on.literacy.ca**

Our members like how we communicate!

By Anette Chawla, Co-Executive Director

In January 2003, we surveyed our members to find out what you think about the way we communicate with you.

We heard back from a stunning 58 people or about 20% of our membership. Thank you so much to all of you who shared your views with us.

Overall communication

49 respondents found the Ontario Literacy Coalition's overall communications "very useful" (28) and "useful" (21). Here is what you said:

- ▶ *Thank you to the OLC ...for doing a great job of keeping us up-to-date and informed. We need you.*
- ▶ *The OLC does a super job. Thank you.*

Newsletter

The OLC publishes this newsletter *Literacy on the Move* three times a year. 24 respondents found it "very useful" and 23 saw it as "useful."

Members commented that they like the focus on learners and the resources section continues to be popular. While some like articles that give a global look at literacy issues, a few readers find that the information is a little too far removed from the day-to-day, frontline literacy work.

Many read the newsletter from end to end as soon as it comes in, while others prefer to read only what affects them personally or what they are interested in.

What's New at Queen's Park

The OLC's first issue of *What's New at Queen's Park* was considered the most useful of all our communication tools with 30 respondents finding it "very useful" and another 13 finding it "useful." Our members found it an excellent way to stay informed and liked the brief format. One person found it a very useful way to convey information to their Board of Directors. Sadly, seven people

commented that they had not yet seen this document. There are likely many reasons for this. *What's New* is also posted on our website.

Ongoing e-mail updates

As with other organizations, the OLC is relying more and more on electronic communications. We send out ongoing e-mail updates and briefings. 25 of the members who completed the survey judge this communication tool as "very useful" and 18 judged it "useful."

- ▶ *Well done. Brief, relevant and to the point*
- ▶ *Always timely, informative and easy to read*

Quite a few respondents commented that the usefulness to a large degree depends on the topic. Also, if people are pressed for time, they might not always read the updates right away, if at all.

The widespread use of e-mail does pose a challenge to those who do not have access to e-mail or the internet. The OLC recognizes this limitation, but because it is very cost effective, it makes us able to communicate with our members more often and faster.

Website

The survey showed that the least useful communication tool was our website. Only 13 respondents found it "very useful," but fortunately 28 considered it "useful."

Many said the website was easy to navigate and it was easy to find information. Particularly, members enjoyed having access to our fact sheets and learner profiles. Some members suggested that it is a problem finding the time to visit the website and were wondering if the OLC could send a notice by e-mail when new content is posted. This is something we will consider in the future.

In conclusion

Evaluating our work is an important commitment for the OLC. We are pleased that we got such a positive response to our communication efforts. It is always gratifying to find out that our members like what we are doing. This is not to say that there isn't room for improvement. You have made many good suggestions for how we might do that. In the coming months, we will continue to take a look at how we might better meet your needs.

June 17-19, 2004
Literacyworks! Conference, Hamilton Convention Centre



Before you realize the days are getting longer, it will be JUNE...

and too late to make the registration deadline, so don't delay, **get that registration in today** to be part of this exciting literacy conference!

The conference is becoming the most talked about event of this summer. The professional development that will be offered is of the highest calibre and of interest to the entire literacy field.

Here are some of the exciting words that people are using in their topics...

Effective! Wellness! Dare!
REVOLUTION! Connecting!
Quest! Professional!
Powerful! Clear! New!
Successful!

For more information call Diane at (416) 963-5787
or visit www.on.literacy.ca/confer04/menu.htm

Literacy on the Move

Literacy on the Move is published three times a year by the Ontario Literacy Coalition



OLC STAFF

Co-Executive Directors
Anette Chawla & Sue Folinsbee

Learner Coordinator
Patricia Brady

Assistant Learner Coordinator
and Administrative Assistant
Alexandra Sonson

Office Manager
Diane Douglass

Field Development
and Membership Assistant
Urszula Mazur



NEWSLETTER

Coordinated by:
Alexandra Sonson

Copy Editor
Daniel Shapiro

Layout
The Right Type

Distribution
Alexandra Sonson & Urszula Mazur



To submit material to Literacy on the Move, contact:

Literacy on the Move
Ontario Literacy Coalition
365 Bloor Street East, Suite 1003
Toronto, ON M4W 3L4
E-mail: olc@on.literacy.ca
Website: www.on.literacy.ca

Tel: 416-963-5787
Fax: 416-963-8102

The articles in **Literacy on the Move** do not necessarily reflect the view of the Ontario Literacy Coalition but are published to share experience and stimulate interest in, and discussion on, adult basic literacy and numeracy issues.