

Literacy on the Move



March 2005

What's up with the "e" in e-learning?

By Matthias Sturm, Distance Learning Coordinator, Centre AlphaPlus Centre

E-LEARNING IS A TERM THAT COMES UP A LOT these days when talking about new approaches to literacy programming. However, many people have questions about what e-learning really means.

The "e" in e-learning stands for electronic. People talk about e-learning as if it was the newest invention since chalkboards were mounted in almost every school in the mid-1800s. Because of the creative thinking of instructors, chalkboards soon became the most important learning tool across Canada. Just like chalkboards, e-learning tools, such as computers, change the way we all learn.

What does this mean for learners and instructors? What's wrong with the way people have been learning? Nothing really. The way we learn changes because the way we live changes. E-learning tools help us to face the challenges of a world that keeps changing.

Why isn't e-learning called e-teaching? Long before someone put the "e" in e-mail, e-cards and e-learning, instructors were looking for more creative, interactive learning approaches. They wanted learners to participate more actively. They wanted learners to share their experiences and work together with their instructors to achieve their learning goals. Instructors started to teach learners how to find answers to their own questions and how to solve problems on their

own. E-learning tools are simply new learning tools. With e-learning, Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs can continue to put the needs and goals of learners first. E-learning supports this learner-centered approach.

Where did e-learning come from? E-learning is part of the same family as blended learning and flexible learning. This family is all about focusing on learners. Blended learning is learning that employs multiple strategies, methods, and delivery systems.¹ Flexible learning expands the choice on what, when, and how people learn.² Each method focuses on different things. For example, blended learning blends books with technology, and flexible learning tries to be flexible about when to learn and how to learn. E-learning uses technologies like computers and television to connect learners to instructors, fellow learners, and materials. E-learning, blended learning, and flexible learning often work together.

How does e-learning fit with adult learning? Many adults have different experiences and learning goals when it comes to their homes, families, communities, and places of work. When we identify personally with what we learn, we feel more connected to what we need to learn and why we need to learn it. E-learning tools help focus on the needs of learners, and integrate adult learning principles that ensure learning is connected to life experience and personal goals.

Respect for adult learning has changed the way instructors teach. Many instructors are facilitators now. Instead of writing on chalkboards, they now use e-learning tools to guide learners in their learning. Just as students are learning about e-learning, blended learning, and flexible learning, so are instructors. We are all in this together.

What role do e-learning tools play? More and more learning comes to us through computers and television. E-learning tools do not work magic by themselves. Learners and instructors choose the right materials and the right e-learning tools that support achieving their learning goals. Support from instructors is very important, so that learners can ask for help when they are stuck while continuing to work on their own.

What difference does e-learning make? For example, AlphaRoute is an e-learning tool provided by the AlphaPlus Centre. If you were to ask one of the 142 learners who participated in a survey³ about how using AlphaRoute affected their learning, you may or may not be surprised by what they said. Many learners said that they felt they were better and more confident readers; many learners said that they felt more comfortable and skilled with computers; and many said that they felt more in control of their lives and wanted to go on learning. All learners underlined the importance of instructors guiding and supporting their learning. To learn more about the AlphaRoute pilot project, read the article on page 3 of this newsletter.

What role do the right resources play? AlphaRoute is not the only e-learning tool out there. There are a lot more e-learning materials available. There are many software programs to help literacy students work towards achieving their goals.

There are also many resources on Internet websites that are helpful to literacy learners. For learners who don't know what they are looking for, the Internet can be a frustrating place. Instructors and other learners can help students find websites that are fun and useful. Learners who would like to try AlphaRoute can ask their instructor to help them set up a user name and

password to access the program. To get started, go to the website <http://www.alphaplus.ca/alpharoute.html>, type in your user name and password, click **login**, and then get set for a new adventure in e-learning!

References

- 1 *The Node Guide to Blended Learning*.
Source: <http://www.thenode.org/publications/>
- 2 *Australian Flexible Learning Network*.
Source: <http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/>
- 3 For a copy of *What difference does it make? Literacy learner perspectives on web-based learning with AlphaRoute*, go to <http://alphaplus.ca/images/pdf/Whatdifferencedoesitmake.pdf>

FOCUS ON E-LEARNING

This issue of *Literacy on the Move* focuses on e-learning. Computers and the Internet are a part of everyday life for almost everyone, and literacy organizations have increasingly been exploring the use of e-learning approaches in their adult literacy programs.

This newsletter is a timely one. New e-learning software programs and delivery methods are being developed and tested, and there has been recent research to determine the quality and effectiveness of e-learning techniques.

Several Ontario literacy groups have participated in e-learning/distance program delivery pilot projects ([see the articles starting on page 3](#)). The AlphaPlus Centre has been a primary partner in pioneering e-learning. The Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) the National Literacy Secretariat, and other funders have supported a number of e-learning initiatives.

This newsletter includes perspectives on e-learning from practitioners, administrators, researchers, and adult literacy learners. It also includes an article about a Canada-wide research project on e-learning, and stories from individual programs that have used e-learning.

Reflections from the field

Four distance e-learning pilot projects in Ontario

Community Learning Centre Napanee—Distance Delivery Development Project

By Laurie Deslauriers, Project Coordinator

The Distance Delivery Development Project run by the Community Learning Centre Napanee (CLCN) in eastern Ontario allows eight to ten learners in the Tamworth and Kaladar communities to access a blended and flexible literacy program from their homes. This allows the learners to meet the training and computer components of the LBS guidelines. The learners are at literacy levels 1 to 4.

Two mentors meet with learners on a weekly basis in the learners' homes. Computers with Internet access were placed in each learner's home. There are also on-site locations in each community for distance learners to meet, ask questions, and participate in group learning activities. Each learner participated in an assessment, and developed an individualized training plan with the support of the CLCN staff.

Although there has been a trial and error period, the project has many strengths. It supports learners who cannot attend a regular literacy program, and is helping to change learners' outlooks on learning. According to the learners themselves, computers have "brought the world to them." The project also has helped learners develop self-esteem and self-confidence, and to take more risks. Learners appreciate the fact that they have access to support from each other and from AlphaPlus.

For more information, contact:
clcn@kingstonliteracy.com



Using e-learning at the Community Learning Centre Napanee.

Confederation College—LBS Distance Delivery

By David Porlier, Project Manager

Confederation College in Thunder Bay, Ontario has a goal to create a learning community that is both flexible and dynamic and that puts



A participant in the LBS Distance Delivery Program at Confederation College.

learning and learners first. The Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) distance learning pilot model serves to reduce barriers to literacy and to increase opportunities for further education, training, and employment. Learners who otherwise might not be able to access literacy services are provided an immediate training opportunity that emphasizes learning and flexibility.

Learners are supported by direct access to one-on-one/small group instruction and to ongoing mentor support and interaction. As a result, they are able to work independently on activities according to their personal schedules. Depending on individual needs and circumstances, one-on-one instruction may take the form of face-to-face meetings, phone calls, e-mail, or online conferencing.

A blend of learning resources, activities, demonstrations, delivery strategies, and one-on-one instruction provides a framework for a learner-centred approach. This works in conjunction with individual training plans, personal planners, self-management logs, and personal achievement records.

The *LBS Distance Delivery Resource Toolbox* is a web application/learner portal developed for the pilot project. It provides learners and mentors with access to a range of online learning resources including AlphaRoute and to Confederation College's LBS print materials. It also allows mentors to guide learners to relevant online resources, and to post all user and individual messages online. Personal planners help to target immediate learning priorities, establish short-term learning goals, and to provide a clear focus for independent learning activities.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.confederation.on.ca/lbs/>

J'aime apprendre inc.—Multi-mode training at the literacy level

*By Luc Beaudesne, Project Administrator,
and Carol Escobar, Program Director*

Creating a program aimed at distance learning for literacy learners is challenging. Until recently, the terms "distance learning" and "literacy" were not linked to each other whatsoever. Very few models exist for basic skills training at a distance. At J'aime apprendre inc., based in Cornwall, Ontario, we have worked on combining traditional teaching methods, such as in-class scheduled group meetings, tutorials, and distance learning techniques. These distance learning techniques include Internet, e-mail, and CD programs. Distance learning works best for independent and motivated learners.

The results of the pilot project demonstrate the need for a training program adapted to each learner who needs help to improve their skills. There is also a need for a wide range of teaching methods and a variety of activities suited to the demands of each learner. The methods chosen at our centres have permitted a hairdresser



Participants using computers as part of the *J'aime apprendre* program.

to practise her grammar skills between her scheduled appointments, and permitted one mother to learn grammar rules during her children's hockey practices. Our programs have given all the participants a chance to profit from the hundreds of resources available online, on CD, or in a regular classroom.

With a 76% success rate, many of our learners were very interested in continuing with the program. The integration of computer technology with literacy leads us to believe that there can be greater self-determination and an increase in independence for today's learners.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.jaimeapprendre.on.ca>

Sioux-Hudson Literacy Council—Good Learning Anywhere

*By Jonathan Baum, Project Coordinator,
and Michelle Eady, Mentor Coordinator*

This project in northern Ontario consists of three focus pilot groups.

At **Pikangikum**, learners are individuals who have dropped out of school, and who want to complete their education through either Grade 12 ILC or GED preparation. They have the technology skills needed to participate in the program, but they have literacy challenges

and score, on average, at a level 2 reading assessment. For such a small and isolated community, the initial interest was impressive. However, skill retention has been a challenge with this learner group. The majority of learners are under 25 in a community strongly affected by substance abuse.

Learners at the **First Nations Management Training Program** are northern residents who are employed but lack the appropriate literacy skills needed to fulfill their expected job description. Learners are not always strongly motivated because their participation is a job-training requirement. However, the number of learners involved has been impressive—32 so far! In the end, this program is successful as the participation rate is high.



Audio and visual technologies are combined in the Sioux-Hudson Literacy Council distance learning program.

The participants of the **Hudson** program included Ontario Works recipients who were required to attend, but did not have access to, a skills development program. Although the main goal is employment, further education and training were also important. Two challenges of the program were securing high-speed Internet connections, and recruiting a consistent number of learners to participate.

A big success for the Hudson program was obtaining high-speed Internet access. A bigger success occurred when learners finally felt comfortable with the program and started to spend 20–30 hours a week with their materials!

For more information, visit:
<http://www.siouxhudsonliteracy.com>

Message from the Chair

By Corry Wink, Chair, OLC Board of Directors



Computers are everywhere and we all need to know how to use them. Literacy and basic skills, and upgrading (LBS/OBS) students enjoy having computers in their classrooms. They can learn to type and get instant feedback privately. Computers provide

different ways of practising math, grammar or reading skills. While using computers, students often learn useful skills such as navigating in a web-based environment. Before they know it, they have valuable skills that they can transfer to other parts of their lives.

However, learning to use the Internet or work in any computer-based environment can be a frustrating task. Students often need a good deal of help and support from the instructor to become comfortable with the technology and to use it independently. Often the instruction is print-based, which may not be the best delivery mode for LBS students. When students run into difficulty, the software often fails to diagnose their problems and provide appropriate remediation.

Computer and web-based learning tools are useful for students in distance learning situations. These tools reach individuals living in remote communities who previously had little access to learning and literacy programs. Computer and Internet learning tools also provide stimulation and variety to isolated students. However, learning is a social activity and for learning to be effective, we need to share what we learn with others. Students using e-learning still need access to support from instructors and other students.

As we integrate computer-based approaches into literacy programming, we must ensure that new technology is always well-balanced with that essential human touch.

Recent Research

Assessing the value of Text-Reading Software

By Dr. Pat Campbell, President, Grass Roots Press

HOW DO YOU TEACH ADULTS who have severe and multiple barriers to learning? Could text-reading software provide the support these learners need? Text-reading software uses a computer synthesized voice to read aloud any onscreen text selected by the learners. Action Read, a community literacy centre in Guelph, Ontario, recently conducted a study to explore whether text-reading software could help literacy learners. The study also evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of six text-reading software packages.

Participants

A total of 13 learners who had been enrolled at Action Read for at least a year participated in the study. They had made slow progress since coming to Action Read. These learners had difficulty and became frustrated when reading text independently.

Determining Unassisted Reading Levels

The learners' unassisted reading levels were taken from the learners' recent Literacy & Basic Skills (LBS) assessments before they started using the text-reading software. Learners were asked to read symbols, individual letters, and word lists, and to complete written documents without assistance. The learners were evaluated on their ability to decode and comprehend the materials.

Tutors and Students Working Together

Volunteer tutors were recruited to work with the learners who field-tested the text-reading software. Each learner was asked to select a topic of interest to research. The students chose topics such as photography and biographies. These individualized projects kept the learners

Text-reading software uses a computer synthesized voice to read aloud any onscreen text selected by the learners.

motivated and served as the catalyst for using the software. The learners used the text-readers to read out menu items, Internet links and so on. Once a large block of text was identified, it could be read aloud by the software. The text-reading software allowed learners to access a wide range of materials. After a few hours of instruction, the majority of learners were able to use the software with minimal assistance from the tutors. The tutors shifted their focus to helping the learners to sift through and collect information.

Improvement in Reading Levels

After completing their individualized projects, the learners were assessed to determine their assisted reading levels. The assisted reading level was measured based on the highest level of material that could be read and understood using the text-reading software. The findings indicated that all learners improved their reading by one or two LBS levels, with an average improvement of 1.2 LBS levels. On average, each learner spent approximately 28.5 hours using the software. Interestingly, no correlation was found between the amount of time the learners used the software and their improvement in reading.

The data indicates that text-readers greatly increased the volume of text students could read in a given time and the level of material which they were able to access. Clearly, text-readers are helpful to literacy learners. Given this finding,

text-reading software should be considered as one of the core acquisitions for programs serving learners facing multiple learning barriers.

Software Evaluation

The study evaluated six different types of text-reading software using the following criteria:

- a) features
- b) popularity with students
- c) ease of independent use
- d) technical flaws
- e) cost.

The six software packages that were evaluated are listed and briefly described below:

The evaluators highly recommended *ReadPlease*, because of its low cost and ease of use. The software package *Write:OutLoud 3.0* was not recommended because of its limited features and many flaws.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that text-reading technology can be successfully integrated into classroom and one-to-one instruction. One of the major benefits of this software is that students can read text that would normally be at their “frustration” level. Text-reading software also includes learning tools that encourage independent learning and increase motivation.



To Learn More

To obtain a copy of the complete study report, visit the Directory of Canadian Adult Literacy Research in English at: <http://www.nald.ca/crd/>. This document provides detailed descriptions and ordering information for the six software packages.

Action Read. (2002). *Literacy and adaptive technology project: A one-year field test of text-reading software with adult literacy learners*. Guelph, ON: Author.

Software Package	Brief Description	Cost
Kurzweil 3000	Can read aloud electronic files, using synthetic speech	\$395.00
Write:OutLoud	A speaking word processor with simple formatting tools	\$158.00
Co:Writer 4000	Predicts a typist's next word, and provides spoken feedback	\$520.00
Read & Write	A text-reader with additional features and a friendly interface	\$349.00
ReadPlease	A simple, straightforward, inexpensive text-reader	\$80.00
Zoom Text Level 2	Features high contrast options and magnification	\$719.00

Let the Experts Do the Talking

Learners and Learning on the Internet

By Patricia Brady, OLC Learner Coordinator

What do adult literacy learners think about online learning and using the Internet? I asked a number of students their opinions.

Ida Hilson is a student at the Literacy Council of South Temiskaming in northern Ontario. She uses the Internet at school to get onto AlphaRoute. AlphaRoute is an interactive Internet system that provides activities and courses to help people learn literacy and numeracy skills. Learners can work and learn at their own pace. Learners can send their work via the Internet to an online mentor. The mentor checks the students' work and helps them when they need it.

Right now Ida is doing a course on learning to appreciate poems. She is also writing poems of her own. She also enjoys the other activities and games that she finds on AlphaRoute.

Ida feels that using AlphaRoute has been a very good experience. She says that AlphaRoute has helped her with spelling, writing stories and math. It has helped her gain computer skills. She has also learned how to search for information on the Internet.

Ida likes AlphaRoute so much that she has volunteered to be a moderator on AlphaChat. This is a place where students can write messages to other students. Ida welcomes new learners to AlphaChat. She wants to encourage other people to share what they have done. She believes that learners can help each other to learn.

Shirley Annable uses a different online learning program called PLATO. Shirley goes to the Wheable Centre for Adult Education in London, Ontario. She says online learning is something that she has

wanted to try for a long time. Like AlphaRoute, PLATO uses both pictures and sound to help students do learning activities. Shirley uses headphones to hear the instructions.

Shirley explained, "If someone reads to me, I can understand it. If I get it wrong, the PLATO program will explain the task in several different ways. It makes it easier for me. You have to do the work correctly or the program won't let you progress. You can't skip ahead. You really have to learn it."

PLATO can create learning plans for each student. Shirley says that the activities are exciting and interesting.

Many other students I interviewed said they enjoy learning via the Internet. They like the independence and personal control that online learning allows. Like all types of learning, it is not perfect. Sometimes it takes a long time to get to where you want to go. Some people would prefer working face-to-face with a tutor who is in the same room, rather than with a mentor who works with them online.

Overall, most of the students I spoke to said that Internet learning programs like AlphaRoute and PLATO are a good addition to their educational programs.



E-learning at East End Literacy

The Practitioner's Perspective

By Alicia Homer, OLC Communications Coordinator

E-learning has become an integral part of the adult literacy curriculum at East End Literacy in Toronto. I recently met with Brenda Silver, the centre's Assessment Coordinator, to find out more about the impact of e-learning on East End Literacy students.

According to Brenda, by far the most important impact of e-learning is how much it helps strengthen self-management and self-direction. Self-management and self-direction are about the life skills needed for life-long learning and problem solving—the skills that everyone needs to act confidently and independently in daily life.

"E-learning is a key component between the first phase of acquiring basic literacy skills and the second phase of becoming an independent learner," she says. "Initially, literacy students are not used to taking control of their own learning, but with the computer they have to become more independent. Computers are a great way to wean students away from depending solely on instructors."

East End Literacy has integrated e-learning into all of its programs. There is a computer for each student, and the centre also has a small studio with sound equipment for audio-visual learning activities. As well as participating in computer lessons, students take part in the AlphaRoute online literacy program, and use the Common Assessment of Basic Services (CABS) Online Program to complete skills assessment



Photos (left and right): Adult literacy learners working in the East End Literacy Computer lab.

demonstrations on the Internet. "CABS is a fun and popular program for students as it gives them a chance to see what they are capable of," Brenda says.

Students also really enjoy the AlphaRoute chatroom, the NALD "Story of the Week" program, and the Golden Oak (GO) Adult



Literacy Book Club, sponsored by the Ontario Library Association. These programs encourage learners

to participate in online discussions and to post their own writing on the Internet. Students find it exciting to see their own work online, and to know that what they write is being read and responded to by others.

Based on her fifteen years of experience in the field, Brenda considers e-learning to be an indispensable tool for adult literacy programming.

"Students are without a doubt more excited about computer-based learning than about traditional approaches," Brenda says.

"Computers are part of the world today. Integrating e-learning into literacy brings adult literacy students to the same place where everyone else is."

For more information about the programs mentioned in this story, visit:

<http://www.eastendliteracy.on.ca>

<http://www.alphaplus.ca/alpharoute.html>

http://www.lleo.ca/col/cabs_online.html

<http://www.nald.ca/STORY/Story.htm>

<http://www.accessola2.com/goldenoak2005/>

Linking Literacy and e-learning: Research in Canada

Dr. Kathryn Chang Barker, President, FuturEd Inc.

E-LEARNING IS BECOMING one of the many tools used to provide learning programs and services to adult literacy learners. For learners and program providers, e-learning presents both opportunities and challenges. For these reasons, FuturEd is studying how e-learning is being used in Canada.

In the summer of 2003, FuturEd launched a research project in collaboration with ABC Canada and with the participation of Canada's adult literacy community. FuturEd, a consulting firm based in Vancouver, has extensive experience and expertise in the areas of adult literacy, research planning, e-learning, and education. The research was commissioned by ABC Canada with funding from the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (NLS, HRSDC).

The links between e-learning and adult literacy are of interest to the adult literacy community for a number of reasons. Many literacy practitioners and researchers have speculated that e-learning would benefit adult learners, for example by increasing access to learners at distance and individualizing programs. FuturEd has found that since so few learners are using e-learning, the benefits often have not yet reached them. However, e-learning is continuously evolving. There are greater investments in online systems to provide learning, so program providers and policy makers want to know more about how they are being used.

The research project has resulted in an inventory of e-learning services to learners, which will be made available in the next few months. The inventory is rather small, as there are very few learning programs online. This is not surprising, because we know many

learners do not have easy access to computers and the Internet, and many learners do not have experience with computer skills. However, there are interesting and innovative uses of the Internet beyond teaching and learning.

The most intriguing use is the electronic portfolio or ePortfolio. A growing number of tools and services make it possible for learners to set out their competencies acquired through all types of learning—to focus on what they can do, rather than what they can't. There is a growing movement to use ePortfolios for better assessment and recognition of learning. The Learning Innovations Forum d'Innovation d'Apprentissage is actively advocating for an ePortfolio for every Canadian, and one ePortfolio for life. For more information on the ePortfolio, visit <http://www.lifia.ca> and <http://www.futured.com>.

The research project also looked at both the quality of e-learning, and Return on Investment (ROI) in e-learning in the field of adult literacy. AlphaRoute in Ontario is piloting the ROI tool developed for the project. As well, AlphaRoute has undergone a quality analysis against the Canadian Recommended eLearning Guidelines. The lesson learned from these two analyses is that they are difficult but important methods of showing the outcomes and benefits of e-learning as a delivery option.

On a global basis, e-learning is continuously evolving and it requires scrutiny if we are to maximize its potential. There is an ongoing need to understand and evaluate approaches and innovations in adult, workplace, and family literacy programs in the face of limited resources, competing demands for investment, and public policy imperatives. The general public, literacy practitioners, learners and their

advocates, academic institutions, and policy makers have many unanswered questions about the use, effectiveness, and efficiency of e-learning and the use of information communication technology (ICT) in learning systems in general, and literacy in particular. We all want to see the “digital divide” reduced, overall literacy levels increased, and all learning systems using innovations to their best advantage.

From both the learning perspective and the e-learning industry perspective, there is constant change in the services available to learners. The industry is totally unregulated, and there is no relationship between cost and quality. It is really important that all Canadians have access, choices, and tools to make informed choices in e-learning. Literacy learners are no different. E-learning may have particular benefits to learners who have limited literacy skills. We need to know a great deal more before we invest too much—or not enough—in e-learning.

The overall purpose of the project is to explore the application of e-learning in literacy programs with a view to continuously improving e-learning and literacy practices and policies. The research balances the perspectives of learners/clients and program/e-learning providers, and includes a variety of data gathering methods: environmental scanning, focus groups, surveys, and structured interviews. Results include general findings about the uses of e-learning in literacy programs, and also detailed research findings, synthesized implications and recommendations. This will further result in e-learning tools and advice for specific use by literacy practitioners, learners, and leaders.

The interim report states: “It is important to note that e-learning, in the overall delivery of literacy programs and services, is relatively new. The inventory in literacy and in other education/training endeavours is small but growing. What is most interesting is the innovation that e-learning represents—new ways to do old things as well as different ways to do different things.” For example, the initial surveys indicate that in addition to providing

programs and services to students/learners, literacy programs often use e-learning to train and support those who deliver the learning, for example, tutors, volunteers, instructors, management, and advocates.

FuturEd is in the final stages of the research project and has just completed a resurvey of stakeholders. It is already evident that since the project commenced, the number of literacy programs using e-learning has increased. Final reports will be available from ABC CANADA in the spring 2005.

For more information about the research project, visit:
<http://www.abc-canada.org/research/> and
<http://www.futured.com>

Dr. Kathryn Chang Barker
 (kbarker@futured.com) is
 the founder and president of
 FuturEd.



KEY DEFINITIONS

What is e-learning?

E-LEARNING is a learning process created by combining computer-based or electronically-based methods with traditional learning support and services.

E-LEARNING is the delivery of a learning, training or education program by electronic means.

E-LEARNING still involves interaction between students and instructors, and tutor support, through communication at a distance or in person.

E-LEARNING involves the use of a computer or electronic media such as the Internet, intranet, CD-ROM or DVD programs, video, television, etc.

E-LEARNING involves more than online or Internet-based tools.

E-LEARNING can involve formal or informal learning.

New Resources

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

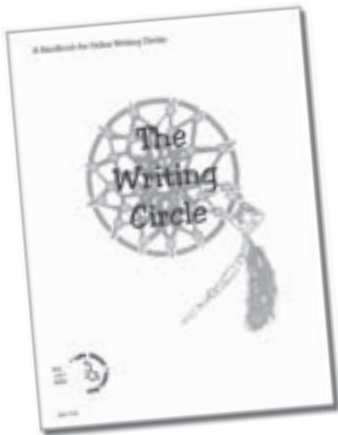
The following materials may be borrowed or purchased through AlphaPlus.

Resources on e-learning

PRINT RESOURCES

The Writing Circle: A handbook for Online Writing Circles

By C. Mochrie. Red Lake, ON: Red Lake Adult Learning Centre. 2003.



Call no. 808.0427 M568

Borrow *Writing Out Loud* from AlphaPlus. Call no. 808.0427 M59

This publication is an account of an online writing circle conducted by the Red Lake Adult Learning Centre in 2002 and based on *Writing Out Loud* by Deborah Morgan. The participants in the writing circle live in remote locations and are unable to attend the program in Red Lake. Using online technology, participants were able to work on their writing skills without leaving their communities. This handbook gives an inspiring account of the work of participants in the circles, and a clear and practical outline of the steps to create such a circle. It is an example of simple and effective use of online technologies to serve literacy students in remote areas and a reminder of why technology matters for the adult literacy community.

Guide to Blended Learning

By T. Kennell. Toronto, ON: AlphaPlus Centre. 2004.

Call no. 650.14071 S44 guide A

This guide is part of the Skills at Work series. This series of 5 books was designed to support adult literacy practitioners and tutors as they deliver workforce literacy programming. The *Guide to Blended Learning* is a practical, easy-to-use resource to assist the field in combining the best features of face-to-face programming with the flexibility of e-learning. The key to blended learning is integration, and the guide provides tips, ideas, and suggestions on how to integrate a range of technology and media into adult literacy programs so that practitioners and learners can benefit from the potential of technology to contribute to and enhance practice.

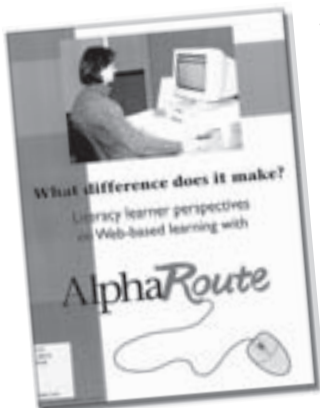


What difference does it make? Literacy learner perspectives on Web-based learning with AlphaRoute

Toronto, ON: AlphaPlus Centre. 2003.

Call no. 374.26072 W34

This is the report of a research study exploring what adult literacy learners think about learning online using AlphaRoute. In the study 142 learners at 42 literacy programs were surveyed. The learners were asked to reflect upon their experiences with AlphaRoute and to share their opinions on whether using AlphaRoute made a difference in their learning, and if so, how. In general, learners surveyed believe that using AlphaRoute helped them to build



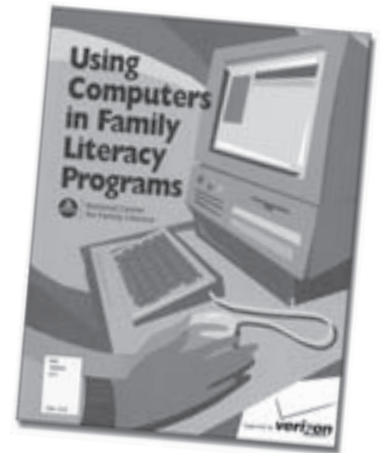
literacy and technology skills and to be more comfortable using computers and the Internet. The report offers a unique insight into the learners' perspective on AlphaRoute, and gives voice to learners as they consider the benefits and challenges of learning online.

Using Computers in Family Literacy Programs

Louisville, KY: National Center for Family Literacy, 2003.

Call no. 649.58028 U71

This publication is a guide to how to use computers in a family literacy program, as a literacy tool: "a pencil, typewriter, paintbrush, crayon, recorder, scissors and eraser all rolled into one easy-to-use machine" (p. 4). It provides a series of practical suggestions and ideas on how to incorporate the computer into a family literacy program, how to evaluate software, how to assist practitioners and program participants to become comfortable with computers, and how to evaluate web-based resources.



ONLINE RESOURCES

The NODE

<http://thenode.org/>

The Node Learning Technologies Network began in 1996 as the Network for Ontario Distance Educators. The Node has made two of its publications, *The Node Guide to Blended Learning* and the *Guide to Online Discussion* available for download on its website. These guides provide practical, easy-to-use information to assist and support educators in the effective integration of technologies in their teaching practice.

Technology in Today's ABE Classroom. A look at the technology preferences and practices of adult basic education teachers.

By J. Carter and J. Titzel. Boston, Mass: World Education, 2003.

<http://literacytech.worlded.org/weitechreport.pdf>

This publication reports on the results of a regional survey of 482 paid instructors and program directors in 129 Adult Basic Education programs in 11 states in the Northeastern United States. The survey, conducted in the winter of 2003, focused on the extent to which practitioners are using technology, the barriers and challenges they experience as they work to use and integrate technology into their practice, and a self-assessment of their technology skills including Internet use, and multimedia. The report makes for interesting reading for practitioners in Ontario to compare their own experiences with the use of technology in the United States and to see a snapshot of the working lives of American literacy practitioners.

The Technology Training Special Collection

<http://www.altn.org/techtraining/>

The Technology Training Special Collection from the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) provides electronic access to a variety of resources. At this site you can explore resources dealing with using technology in teaching and learning. For example, in the Teacher/Tutor section you will find information on curriculum, lesson planning, and software evaluation and accounts of successful technology integration in programs across the U.S.

Captured Wisdom

<http://www.ncrtec.org/pd/cw/adultlit.htm>

This is an interactive resource showing five innovative technologies-based projects in adult literacy and ESL settings. Visitors to the site can literally see and hear from practitioners and learners about their learning in the project classes and chat directly with the learners and teachers about their work together.

OLC Highlights

By Lesley Brown, Director, OLC Program Development

What have we been up to lately?

This winter has been a busy time for everyone at the OLC, including members of our various working groups and committees.

- ▶ The OLC Board of Directors has met for two 2-day meetings since November 2004.
- ▶ The Adult Learners Network of Ontario (ALNO) met in December 2004, and the OLC Advisory Roundtable Meeting took place in January 2005.
- ▶ In December 2004, the OLC organized a MTCU/OLC Liaison Meeting.
- ▶ In January 2005, the OLC participated in an umbrella group meeting hosted by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU).
- ▶ The OLC prepared a written submission responding to the MTCU 'One Stop' initiative. This document can be found on the OLC website at: <http://www.on.literacy.ca/whatsnew/onestop/onestop.pdf>
- ▶ In February 2005, the OLC attended the Ontario government's pre-budget consultation with the Honourable Greg Sorbara, Minister of Finance. We also submitted a written response to the Minister, which is located at: <http://www.on.literacy.ca/whatnew/sorbara/01.htm>.
- ▶ Also in February 2005, the OLC participated in a national meeting organized in Ottawa by the Movement for Canadian Literacy, for the Executive Directors of provincial and territorial literacy coalitions.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the various meetings, consultations, and project support activities in recent months. We could not have done it without you!

OLC plans Workforce/Workplace Symposium for May 2005

Preparations are on track for the OLC's *Workforce/Workplace Literacy Symposium: Building Linkages for Action* on May 31, 2005 in Toronto.

The "by invitation" event will bring together representatives from various stakeholder groups including: literacy, business, labour, education and trainers, learners, employment preparation organizations, and government. Participants will discuss current issues and priorities and strategize for future action in supporting basic education training in the workplace and better transitions from LBS programs to the workforce.

The business and labour groups will be responsible for identifying the stakeholders to represent them at the symposium. With input from an advisory committee, the OLC will carry out a selection process to identify representatives to invite from the literacy community. A call for participation will go out to the field by the week of March 21, 2005.

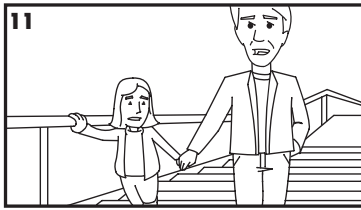
Workforce Bulletins

The first draft of the OLC Workforce Bulletin # 1—*"Whatever Works"* is ready and has been sent out for field-testing with four community-based, school board and college programs. The first bulletin reviews essential skills and how these skills can be incorporated and used by Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs in preparing learners for workforce programs. The next five bulletins will highlight labour market information, new research, program profiles showcasing model program ideas, resource reviews, profiles of workplaces and employers and exploration of complexities involved in workforce literacy, and lesson learned from the field.

Social Marketing—"Taking a Step"

The goal of the OLC's 2005 social marketing campaign is to motivate people to take action and to attract learners to literacy programs. Our primary target audience will be potential literacy learners who could benefit from upgrading their literacy skills. Our secondary audience will be community members at large who may pass on information about literacy programming to potential learners, or who may be interested in volunteering.





A father and daughter “take a step” on a visit to the library, as part of the storyboard concept for the OLC’s new PSA.

As well as stimulating public awareness and action on literacy, the campaign will also help dispel some myths about literacy issues. The OLC is developing one radio and one television public service announcement (PSA) around the theme of “Taking a Step”. The PSAs will feature a diverse group of real adult learners and volunteers who will talk about how attending classes or volunteering in literacy programs helped them to take a step towards upgrading their skills, participating more in their community, and changing their future.

The PSAs will be launched during Adult Learners’ Week in September. The PSAs will be distributed to all radio and television stations across Ontario, and will be available for viewing on the OLC website.

Action for Family Literacy website launched on Family Literacy Day 2005



The OLC working group, Action for Family Literacy Ontario (AFLO), is proud to announce the launch of its new website on Family Literacy Day 2005! Featuring information about family literacy programs, important resources and research,

training, and community news, the AFLO site will help build greater connections within the family literacy community in Ontario. The site is designed as a resource for family literacy practitioners, parents, caregivers, and others interested in family literacy issues. The website launch took place as part of a Family Literacy Day (FLD) event in Ottawa, hosted by the Literacy and Basic Skills Program of the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board.

To learn more about Action for Family Literacy Ontario, visit: <http://www.aflo.on.literacy.ca>



France Matte-Lebeau from the NLS cuts the ribbon launching the AFLO website on Family Literacy Day 2005.

Family literacy research project moving ahead

Research on the state and strategic planning of family literacy programs in Ontario is well underway. We received over 100 completed surveys from family literacy programs, early years centres, adult literacy programs, and libraries across Ontario. Thank you to everyone who took part in the extensive survey process!

Kim Falcigno, the project researcher, will soon be contacting programs and individuals who indicated an interest in taking part in the focus group sessions. The sessions will be organized geographically in the North, the East and the West to look at questions specific to the sustainability of family literacy programming as it relates to demographics, geography and

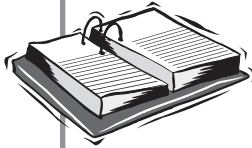


AFLO members and other guests at the Family Literacy Day event in Ottawa.

partnership opportunities. Additional sessions will focus specifically on family literacy training needs and ideas for training models. All the sessions will be conducted using online discussion boards and telephone audio conference meetings.

If you are interested in participating in any of these focus sessions please contact Kim Falcigno at: kim.falcigno@lakeheadu.ca

A REMINDER ABOUT MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL



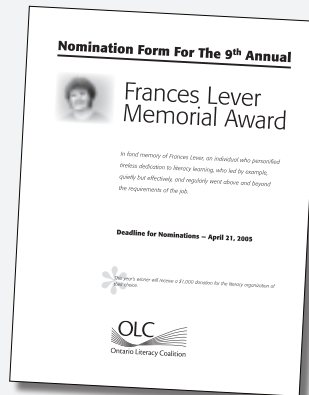
It's not too late! If you haven't yet renewed your OLC membership for this year, there is still time. Send in your membership renewal form today to be a part of the OLC community and have access to OLC events, publications, and other benefits.

Annual membership runs from January 31, 2005 to January 30, 2006. Contact the OLC at olc@on.literacy.ca for more information.

Nominations for the 9th Annual Frances Lever Memorial Award

Do you know a person who should be recognized for their dedication to and involvement in literacy? The OLC is now accepting nominations for the 9th Annual Frances Lever Memorial Award. Please see the nomination form enclosed with this newsletter for more information about the award and about Frances Lever.

Deadline for Nominations: April 21, 2005



Find out about the OLC Employee Benefits Program

There is an Employee Benefits Program designed specifically for Ontario Literacy Coalition member agencies. Customized choices are available to you at an affordable price. Enrolling is easy! For more information contact the OLC's insurance broker, Owen & Associates, at 416-252-6116.



OLC Board Nominations

The OLC is now accepting nominations for the Board of Directors.

For more information, see the enclosed nomination form.

Deadline for nominations: April 20, 2005

Kim Strickland Memorial Learner Leader Sponsorship Program

For details on how to apply, see the enclosed flyer.

Deadline for applications: April 22, 2005

Positions available on the Adult Learners Network of Ontario (ALNO)

Are you a literacy learner who would like to join ALNO? See the enclosed nominations form for more information.

Deadline for nominations: April 25, 2005

Literacy on the Move

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



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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.

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