



Enhancing Pathways: The Literacy and Language Continuum



**Project Report
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Acknowledgements

This project was made possible with the cooperation, support and commitment of numerous individuals and agencies. While we can't name each one, we do extend our genuine gratitude for their contributions to the success of this initiative. It would not have been possible to accomplish what we did in our one-year timeline without their collaboration.

We thank the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for the project funding. We would also like to acknowledge the valuable support of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and the Ministry of Education. This project would not have been possible without the collective support of the Learning Ministries.

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Thank you to all the agencies involved in either the Peel/Halton or the Waterloo/Wellington pilots. We appreciate your commitment to this process.

This project sought to bring together the agencies that provide language and literacy programming in their communities. It was intended to enhance communication and referrals among the agencies. We appreciate all the agencies and their representatives who took a leap of faith and agreed to devote time and energy to examining how we each provide service to the adults in our communities. It is said that the beginning of any journey takes one step. This project was our first step in a journey to provide the best and most responsive services to the adults who have language and literacy challenges in our regions. Throughout this project, it was very clear that all the practitioners, instructors, assessors and administrators in the literacy and language systems consistently put students' needs and goals first. Thank you to all of those individuals who dedicate their efforts to teaching and supporting adults so they can reach their dreams.

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Please Note: For the purposes of this report, “learner”, “student” and “client” refers to any adult who enrolls in a literacy or language class. The terms are used interchangeably.

Please Note: Each Pilot Report has its own table of contents.

Pilot Report Table of Contents

- Facilitative Process & Agencies Involved
- Funding Mechanisms
- Learner Pathways, Outcomes and Profiles
- Assessment Tools & Practices
- Vocabulary and Level Matrices
- Client Eligibility & Program Entry Criteria
- Mode of Delivery - Program Models and Teaching Practices
- Accountability Parameters and Statistical Reporting
- Existing Coordination and Referral Practices
- Gaps, Needs, Issues
- Recommendations & New Ideas
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Executive Summary

*Partnerships: the **sharing** of power, work, support and/or information with others for the achievement of joint goals and/or **mutual benefits**.*

- Source: Adapt Community Initiative 1999, National Development Plan, Ireland

*Collaboration: the action of **working with** someone to **produce or create** something.*

- Source: Oxford Dictionary

The key goal of this project lies in the above definitions. From the outset, this project was committed to making an initial step to working together across literacy and language programs to address the needs of adults in the community. The focus was the creation of a mutual understanding and a commitment to working together to lay the foundation for future collaboration. It was prompted by the escalating demands from adults affected by the economic recession to access literacy and language programs to improve their skills for future employment, education and training.

The proposed goal of the project was to initiate steps to coordinate and align the three existing language and literacy systems to enhance learner pathways and transitions. The systems to be included in the project were Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS), funded by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU); English as a Second Language (ESL), funded by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI); credit ESL programs, funded the Ontario Ministry of Education (MEd); and Language Instruction for Newcomer Canadians (LINC) programs, funded by the federal government through Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). Employment services, libraries, local immigration groups and other concerned groups and agencies were also invited to participate.

The project's objectives included: initial research on each of the three systems; community meetings to discuss the current systems and learner pathways; the documentation of all findings; and the identification of recommendations, gaps and needs among the three systems to better improve learner pathways. The impact of these objectives were to be realized in the following outcomes: increased understanding among the agencies of the three systems – LBS, ESL, LINC (structure and content of each system); enhanced knowledge of transition points and efficient pathways for learners; identification of gaps and needs within the current continuum of language development; and increased knowledge among various Employment Ontario partners/sectors of the coordination among LBS, ESL and LINC programs.

The project was piloted in two regions and involved a variety of agencies and institutions from those regions, including community-based agencies, school boards, colleges, multi-service agencies and local planning groups. The pilots were conducted in Waterloo-Wellington and Peel-Halton by the regional literacy networks in those areas, Project READ Literacy Network (PRLN) and Peel Halton Dufferin Adult Learning Network (PHDALN). Each pilot approached collaborative development in a unique way. Project READ facilitated a series of community meetings, along with the gathering of key program and client profile information. PHDALN focused on bringing together

agencies within the context of an Action Centre to meet the needs of recently laid-off workers who have a variety of literacy and language needs. Each pilot benefited from the development of an initial *Discussion Paper* that outlined basic information about each system, including: client eligibility, assessment tools, mode of delivery, client supports and funding. A glossary of terms was also included in the Paper to aid in the development of a mutual understanding and common language among project participants.

An Advisory Committee was constituted to provide support and guidance to the project and pilots. The Committee included representatives from: the provincial government (MCI, MTCU, MEd); educational institutions and agencies (school boards and colleges); regional literacy networks; the Ontario Literacy Coalition; and the Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin. The representatives focus on the broader context and influencing issues was very valuable in the process.

In each pilot, participants were asked to identify conclusions and develop recommendations as a result of their local collaborative efforts. Below is a summary of the key recommendations. More details on the conclusions and recommendations can be found in the final section of this report, Overall Project Conclusions and Recommendations.

Recommendations:

(Stated briefly and listed in random order)

- **Practitioner/Educator Support** – All those practitioners working in the three systems should be supported with key information, best practices and government policy updates via regularly scheduled networking meetings. By clarifying the context and expectations for service, it encourages practitioners to meet students' needs and goals in a client-centred manner.
- **System Coordination and Program Partnerships** – There should be a formalized, ongoing cycle of service coordination and planning that exists between ESL, LBS and LINC, with the addition of other systems (transition points) such as Adult Credit. The coordination process should have embedded, formal expectations from the Learning Ministries and include: the identification of services niches; the creation of responsive programming; and the formation of delivery partnerships to offer flexible, hybrid programs.
- **Client-centred, Flexible-access Programming** – Adults should be able to access more than one system according to their needs. Students are diverse and have diverse needs and goals. Agencies should be allowed and encouraged to develop a unique mix of programs to meet those needs. The policies of the Learning Ministries should be aligned to support program flexibility.
- **Consistent Standards of Practice** – No matter the system, adults should receive consistent (not identical) information during initial intake and assessment. There should be commonly held best practices for the treatment of adults as they enter adult education agencies (intake and referral). Practitioner training should be provided on an ongoing basis to support the implementation and maintenance of best practices.
- **Informed Advice** – Agencies are encouraged to inform government and policy development with their experience and knowledge of students, communities and trends. This advice could include trends in learner profiles and pathways, effective program approaches, coordination efficiencies and gap identification.



Project History and Context

This project began as a concern voiced at the Literacy Service Planning (LSP) Committees in Waterloo and Wellington in early 2009. The role of the LSP Committees is to engage in an ongoing cycle of service system planning. The Committees meet monthly to identify local needs, plan programs, discuss ongoing delivery, and to evaluate current program offerings. Annually, the Committees, facilitated by Project READ Literacy Network, produce the Literacy Service Plan Report that outlines in detail the program offerings for the coming year. The Committee members include the agencies funded by Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) in each county.

Due to the Recession, which began in Fall 2008, the LBS agencies experienced overwhelming demand for their programs from displaced workers. During 2009, approximately 265 adults per month waited for access into LBS programs across Waterloo and Wellington. Many of those workers were adults who fell into a "grey area" of not being clearly LBS students nor clearly English as a Second Language (ESL) students. They had several common characteristics: they spoke verbal English, had lived and worked in Canada for many years (ten+ years), were Canadian Citizens, may have taken ESL classes when they first arrived in Canada, and they wanted employment-focused upgrading to move on to their next job. The Committees were also aware of the concurrent pressure for service on ESL and Language Instruction of Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs. There was a huge number of adults with various language and literacy needs searching for service across all agencies.

In recent years, the LSP Committees had discussed the issue of the "grey area" adults, whose first language was not English and who wanted access to LBS programs. They had looked at the various aspects of the issue, including Ministry Program Guidelines, individual organizational policies, the appropriateness of second language learners in LBS classes and the purpose and parameters of LBS programming. In October 2008, the Committees developed a working draft document, "LBS-ESL Guidelines¹" in consultation with Assessors and ESL Program Coordinators in Waterloo and Wellington. The opening section of the Guidelines states the intent of the document. "The Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Agencies* in Waterloo-Wellington agree to use the following guidelines as a consistent method for determining suitability of adults entering their programs. The purpose of the guidelines is to identify whether LBS programs are best suited for students who were originally English as a Second Language (ESL)." "We want to be inclusive of students who might be best served in LBS programs but at the same time clear about the limitations of the [LBS] programs." (December 2009) LBS Agencies continued to work with the draft and modified it as needed. The latest working draft, dated December 2009, will be reviewed again in 2011.

The implementation of the Draft Guidelines plus the increasing pressure for service brought about the desire to initiate a concerted dialogue among LBS, ESL and LINC programs. The Committees felt that the best way to approach the whole issue was through dialogue focused on learner pathways, referrals and program information sharing. It was thought that the activities would fit well under a project proposal.

¹ Please refer to the Appendices in the Waterloo-Wellington Pilot Report for a copy of the LBS-ESL Guidelines.

Project READ spoke to other regional literacy networks regarding the idea of a collaborative project proposal. Peel Halton Dufferin Adult Learning Network expressed interest since their largely urban network included a high population of immigrants. They had struggled with similar “grey area” issues. This partnership lead to a project proposal submitted to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). The “Enhancing Pathways: The Literacy and Language Continuum” project was funded for one year, September 2009 to August 2010.

It is interesting to note the context for this project and its initial development. There were several factors happening that encouraged the potential of a dialogue among language and literacy providers. Some of these factors are outlined below.

As mentioned earlier, the economic recession was causing a great deal of demand for upgrading from displaced workers seeking to gain skills for future employment and to prepare for post-secondary training. In response a new initiative of MTCU, “Second Career”, was rolled out by the government to help workers access upgrading and training. “The objective of Second Career is to support laid off, unemployed individuals who require skills training to assist them to find employment in occupations with demonstrated labour market prospects in Ontario. The ultimate goal of SC is to return individuals to employment by the most cost effective path.”² Under Second Career, individuals could access up to one year of LBS programming if that was an identified first step in their training path, i.e., the individual needed to improve their basic skills before enrolling in post-secondary level training. Second Career was widely advertised in the media to Ontarians. It helped to bring about an attitudinal change in the public towards retraining and “school”. It became quite acceptable to enroll in upgrading as part of a retraining plan. This added to the demand for services at LBS and ESL agencies.

Another contextual factor was the ongoing discussions regarding adult education taking place between the Learning Ministries – Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), Citizenship and Immigration (MCI), and Education (MEd). MTCU supports Literacy and Basic Skills. MCI funds ESL programming and MEd supports secondary school credit courses for adults. Each ministry has a role in adult education within Ontario and a mutual interest in building collaboration among providers. Within LBS, a new initiative was being developed, the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum (OALC), which featured competencies for the five key transition points for adult learners. The OALC will be introduced widely to the field in fall 2010. MCI was undergoing program reform, which included the introduction of a new Coordinated Language Assessment and Referral System (CLARS). CLARS was designed to be an “assessment and referral delivered by a neutral party ensuring that the services are learner-centred”³.

Great labour market shifts took place due to the Recession that added to the context for this project. It was widely predicted that Canada would move from an industrial-based economy to a knowledge and technology economy. Fall 2008 saw that prediction

² Taken from the Second Career Client Information Sheet, June 8, 2010, Ministry for Training, Colleges and Universities

³ Coordinated Language and Referral System Slide Deck, LINC Administrators Conference, February 1, 2010

become reality with the sizeable layoffs throughout the automotive and manufacturing sectors. Another widely predicted trend was the need for immigration to ensure adequate numbers in the labour force and to address specific skills shortages. In February 2010, the report, "People Without Jobs, Jobs Without People" was released with some key recommendations for Ontario's labour force. "So, we will need both a larger workforce and increased skills. For potential solutions, increasing the size of the population (immigration) with more skilled workers could help, but it will not solve the problem. Increasing the participation rates of those currently under-represented in the labour force is another option that needs to be explored, as do ways of accelerating graduations, increasing employer-provided training, improving literacy rates, and creating a more unified educational system. But what is most clearly needed is a change in our society's attitude towards post-secondary education. We have to accept attainment of post-secondary education or training as the expectation for all but a small minority of Ontarians."⁴

Finally, the federal government, through Citizenship and Immigration Canada, in partnership with Ontario's Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, supported the development of Local Immigration Partnership Councils (LIPC) throughout the province, including the pilot sites (Waterloo, Wellington, Peel and Halton). "The funding is being provided through the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement, a partnership between Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. Almost \$3 million will be allocated to municipalities and service provider organizations across Ontario to establish the partnerships."⁵ Waterloo Region LIPC stated, "The purpose of this initiative is to enhance existing partnerships to establish a comprehensive Local Immigration Partnership Council in Waterloo Region. Through the coordination and work of this partnership, a collaborative strategy that includes solutions for successful settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees in the Waterloo Region will be developed."⁶ This purpose was common to all LIP Councils regardless of the geographic region.

With a great deal of public focus on language and literacy services by the community, government and business, it was an ideal time to initiate our discussions among frontline and management level staff at LBS, ESL, and LINC agencies. While public policy may be decided at the highest levels, the frontline educators actualize implementation and direct service. It is their job to help individuals identify their needs, plan their learning pathways and reach their goals. If we were to be a truly learner-centred system, then we needed to develop a process for dealing with those adults who fell between the existing literacy and language systems.

4 Pg. 1, *Executive Summary, People Without Jobs, Jobs Without People*, Dr. Miner, Miner Management Consultants, February 2010

5 Source: www.cic.gc.ca

6 Source: Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network website – www.wrien.com

Project Outcomes and Goals

Stated below are the original goals, outcomes and performance indicators from the project proposal. These statements were our guideline and parameters for all project activity. It also guided the Project Advisory Committee who provided valuable support and advice to the project and the pilot sites.

Project Goal:

This project will produce a report on the process for enhancing the learner pathways between LBS, ESL and LINC programs. This project is an initial step in coordination and alignment. It will include: initial research on each of the three systems; community meetings to discuss the current systems and learner pathways; the documentation of all findings; and the identification of recommendations, gaps and needs among the three systems to better improve learner pathways.

Project Outcomes:

- Increased understanding among the agencies of the three systems – LBS, ESL, LINC (structure and content of each system)
- Enhanced knowledge of transition points and efficient pathways for learners
- Identification of gaps and needs within the current continuum of language development
- Increased knowledge among various EO partners/sectors of the coordination among LBS, ESL and LINC programs

Performance Indicators:

The project's effectiveness will be determined by our accomplishment of our project outcomes.

Increased understanding among the agencies of the three systems – LBS, ESL, LINC (structure and content of each system) – Performance Indicator: 60% of participating agencies will report satisfaction with the coordination process and an increased understanding of the three systems.

- Enhanced knowledge of transition points and efficient pathways for learners – Performance Indicator: 60% of participating agencies report an increase in their knowledge of transition points and pathways.
- Identification of gaps and needs within the current continuum of language development – Performance Indicator: List of current gaps and needs regarding the alignment of the three systems.
- Increased knowledge among various EO partners/sectors of the coordination among LBS, ESL and LINC programs – Performance Indicator: 60% of participants report satisfaction with the presentation (content and facilitation) and increased knowledge of the coordination process.

Partnership Development

The foundation for this project was partnership development. While each pilot region took a different approach to accomplishing the outcomes of the project, each used partnership or relationship building processes and tools to build rapport, trust and dialogue among the various participants. Trust is vital to the open exchange of information and ideas as well as the basis for moving up the partnership pyramid. (Please refer to Figure 1.)

Partnerships are by definition the “sharing of power, work, support and/or information with others for the achievement of joint goals and/or mutual benefits”⁷. Partnerships usually exist because of the incentive of accomplishing more by sharing the load. Mutual benefits being the enticement to working out a productive relationship. Partnerships range from information sharing or networking arrangements through to highly integrated, formal collaborations. They may focus on a program or project (operational), an issue or policy (consultative) or a situation (community-based).

At its heart, partnership is the equitable sharing of four key elements – decision-making, risk, responsibility and communication. (Please refer to Figure 2.) In highly formal partnerships, there is a great deal of documentation and detail regarding how the elements will be balanced and all parties’ interests respected. At the other end of the scale, information sharing and networking relationships exist informally between workers at various agencies all the time. Meeting a new colleague at an event, then discussing common program interests usually leads to client referrals. It is a basis of trust that develops from an initial, informal dialogue.

Partnerships, also known as collaborations, alliances or coalitions, follow the same process of development: Identification of potential partners, Connection Strategies, Determining the Partnership Structure (four key elements), and Review and Evaluation. In the initial stage of Identification, the initiator (the agency seeking partnerships) conducts a scan of the community to determine likely alliances. These potential partners may share a mutual interest or complementary service. During the second stage, Connection, there are many strategies that can be used to build relationships based on trust, mutual vision and rapport. This stage is vital for ensuring a solid foundation. Open communication must be fostered and cultivated during this stage. In determining the Partnership Structure, players must address the four key elements, establish a basis for sharing them and determine a timeline for the partnership. This is also the stage for carrying out the work of the partnership, i.e. the project, program, initiative, or issue for which they came together. During Review

⁷ Source: Adapt Community Initiative 1999, National Development Plan, Ireland

and Evaluation, partners not only examine what they have accomplished, but how they have done it (meta-analysis of the partnership).

When planning for our project, we knew from previous research on learner transitions and referrals that the vast majority of referrals happen because one frontline worker at an agency knows another worker at another agency. Referrals and the planning of learner pathways also depend on the knowledge of the individual frontline worker. For example, an assessor at an LBS program will identify a learner's needs and goals, but can only take into account options that she is aware of for the learner. She may not have the time or access to information to consider all possible program options. Understanding this interpersonal factor to referrals and program planning, we knew that we needed to build relationships among frontline LBS, ESL and LINC staff to encourage and cultivate future referrals and pathway planning. Concurrently, we wanted to develop relationships among supervisors and managers so as to plant the seeds for future program and system planning.

We applied our experience from facilitating Literacy Service Planning, which is an ongoing cycle of collaborative system planning, to the project pilots. As well, we were able to draw upon group dynamics, connection strategies and collaborative leadership skills⁸. All these elements helped to shape how the partners were approached and relationships were cultivated through face-to-face meetings. There was a conscious decision to engender trust, build familiarity and rapport, and to share information openly.

Each Pilot Report has more details regarding their individual processes for partnership development and collaboration.

⁸ Adapted from W.K. Kellogg Foundation - <http://www.wkkf.org/> and The Partnership Handbook - [http://www.servicecanada.](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/epb/sid/cia/partnership/handbook.shtml)

[gc.ca/eng/epb/sid/cia/partnership/handbook.shtml](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/epb/sid/cia/partnership/handbook.shtml)

Figure 1: Levels of Partnership



Figure 2: 4 Key Elements of Partnership



Pilot Methodology

The project partners, Peel Halton Dufferin Adult Learning Network and Project READ Literacy Network Waterloo-Wellington, agreed to approach each geographical pilot in a different way. This approach would ensure that the local pilots respected and recognized existing and unique community characteristics and key stakeholders, while exploring two methodologies that would be helpful in other regions in Ontario.

Project Discussion Paper:

During an initial project planning meeting of the two networks, it was decided that it would be helpful for both pilots to have a Discussion Paper outlining some basic information about the three systems – LBS, ESL and LINC. The purpose of this paper was to be a “spring-board” for discussion and a basis of commonly accepted information about each system. It stated the structure of each system, including funding mechanisms, assessment processes, delivery modes and learner supports, among other features. It assisted Pilot Coordinators, who were facilitating the partnership development process, to launch discussion among the various players, who were often only intimately familiar with the structure of their own system. It provided a neutral document for everyone to comment on and discuss. (Please refer to the Appendices for a copy of the Discussion Paper.)

Project Advisory Committee:

In addition to the Pilots, an overall Project Advisory Committee was struck to solicit wisdom, advice and guidance for the project’s outcomes. The Committee consisted of representatives from both network areas (PHDALN and PRLN), from the Learning Ministries (Citizenship and Immigration; Education; and Training, Colleges and Universities) and from various sectors involved in literacy and language programming (school boards, colleges, community-based) as well as a representative from a Workforce Planning Board. We sought out representation from the federal government which funds LINC programming. They were not able to send a representative since they were rolling out the Local Immigrant Partnership Council initiative across the province.

The Advisory Committee met twice during the one-year project (October 2009 and June 2010) and kept in touch via email. At the initial meeting, the Committee reviewed the terms of reference, the project’s outcomes and timelines, and discussed the prepared Discussion Paper.

Role of the Advisory Committee:

- To provide information to accomplish our project outcomes and achieve project effectiveness.
- To provide timely feedback and input relevant to the project and its outcomes
- Represent the perspectives of their constituency at the table to further the outcomes of the project.
- Communicate any concerns or conflicts one may experience with the project outcomes.
- Participate in the evaluation of the project.

Advisory Committee Members:

- Anne Ramsay, Project READ Literacy Network, Project Supervisor
- Lorri Sauve, Project READ Literacy Network, Pilot Coordinator
- Matthew Shulman, Peel Halton Dufferin Adult Learning Network, Pilot Coordinator
- Felicity Burr, Ministry of Education
- Joseph Colonna, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration
- Paul Cox, Waterloo Catholic District School Board, Principal of St. Louis Adult Learning and Continuing Education Centres
- Janet Gambrell, Sheridan College, Associate Dean, School of Workforce Development
- Barb Krukowski, The Centre for Skills Development and Training, Manager of Languages and Newcomer Services
- Andrea Leis, Conestoga College, Dean of Career and Academic Access
- John MacLaughlin, Ontario Literacy Coalition, Manager of Program, Business and Partnership Development
- Sande Minke, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
- Carol Simpson and Brad Labadie, Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin

Peel/Halton Pilot:

In Peel Halton, the regional network focused the pilot activities around the literacy and language needs of displaced workers accessing a local Action Centre. It took a case-study approach that focused on a task-based consultation with a variety of service providers in the language and literacy continuum. Using this real-life scenario, they were able to solicit solution-focused responses to the needs presented at the Action Centre. They consulted with over twenty organizations and individuals during various stages of the pilot facilitation process.

Waterloo/Wellington Pilot:

Project READ used a community-development approach through the facilitation of community meetings and individual interviews with key stakeholders. Prior to the community meetings and concurrent to them, individuals were contacted for opportunities to solicit their support and to explain the project's goals in a transparent manner. The community meetings were open to any agency with an interest in literacy and language programming, but specific relevant agencies were invited to send representatives to all meetings. The discussion was focused but the membership was open.

There was an initial meeting to present the project's outcomes and goals to all representatives in Waterloo-Wellington. Subsequently, two meetings each were held in Waterloo and in Wellington. This geographic separation was the choice of the participating representatives and of Project READ. It was important to respect the community differences between Waterloo Region and Guelph-Wellington.

Pilot Report Format:

Before the pilots began, the Pilot Coordinators and the Project Supervisor met to create a common Table of Contents for the final pilot reports. This ensured that each pilot would gather common information regardless of the players or methodology. Our intention was to capture the steps followed and the wisdom gathered from all project participants. The project sought to begin a process of bringing together agencies that provide literacy and language programs, specifically English as a Second Language (ESL), Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) and Language Instruction for New Canadians (LINC). To this end, the table of contents for each pilot report reflects the findings and results of that overall intention.

Please find in the following sections the Pilot Reports from PRLN and PHDALN, including pilot-specific Recommendations and Appendices. Each report follows the same format, using a common Table of Contents (see below). The overall project conclusions and recommendations follow those sections.

Pilot Report Table of Contents

- Facilitative Process & Agencies Involved
- Funding Mechanisms
- Learner Pathways, Outcomes and Profiles
- Assessment Tools & Practices
- Vocabulary and Level Matrices
- Client Eligibility & Program Entry Criteria
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- Accountability Parameters and Statistical Reporting
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- Recommendations & New Ideas
- Appendices

Peel/Halton Pilot: A Solution-Focused Case Study Approach to Bridging the Literacy and Language Continuum





Peel/Halton Pilot Report

Enhancing Pathways: The Literacy and Language Continuum

Facilitative Process & Agencies Involved

In the Peel/Halton pilot area the facilitative process evolved from a widespread, information sharing-based consultation to a selective, task-based consultation. We used a real community scenario that illustrated one of the overlap points of the language and literacy continuum. Using this scenario, we approached selected service providers to solicit solution-based responses to the scenario we had analyzed. We captured input from language and upgrading service providers from colleges, school boards, other non-profit organizations and individuals with expertise and experience working with similar clients found in our scenario. In total, over 20 organizations and individuals were consulted at various stages of the facilitation process.

Reflections:

We are especially grateful for the opportunity provided by the USW Job Action Centre in Mississauga to work with their members. This real-life situation allowed for a more collaborative pilot project. Action Centres, union halls and workplaces seem to offer wonderful opportunities for collaborative service provision since communities are responding to group needs rather than individual needs.

Funding Mechanisms for LBS, ESL, LINC

Language and literacy programs receive funding from a variety of sources.

LINC, ELT and OSLT programs are funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

ESL/FSL, job-related language training and bridge training programs are funded by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

LBS and AU programs are funded by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

There are also fee-based ESL courses at private training institutions and Ontario community colleges.

Many of the service providers that deliver these programs also receive additional funding to complement and enhance their services. The most frequently cited examples of additional funding include United Ways, private donations and institutional in-kind support.

	CIC	MCI	MTCU	Fee-based
Bridge training				
ELT	✓			
ESL / FSL				✓
Job-related language training		✓		
LBS / AU			✓	
LINC	✓			
OSLT	✓			

Reflections:

The scenario explored during the pilot resulted in a funding proposal to MTCU through the Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills project call for proposals. This was deemed the most efficient way of responding to the needs of the client group encountered at the USW Job Action Centre in Mississauga.

There were differences of opinions among the organizations consulted about whether a collaborative approach to serving this group would have been successful within existing program and funding structures. Most respondents believed it could be possible, but capacity (including time and resource) constraints would have made it very difficult.

Another point of agreement was that it would be extremely unlikely that the necessary assemblage of organizations would have been able to self-organize to respond to the needs of the USW Job Action Centre workers. It required a coordinating body (in this case the Peel-Halton-Dufferin Adult Learning Network) to pull the necessary components together.

Learner Pathways, Outcomes and Profiles (case studies)

In the Peel/Halton pilot area, we worked with forty-three clients from the USW Job Action Centre. From their interviews and assessments, we constructed general groups of individuals, which aided our ability to serve them. While 88% of the clients were born and educated outside of Canada, the assessment results and programming needs were not nearly as concentrated.

Group 1: ESL / LINC

About 32% of the clients were in this group initially. They all spoke English as a Second Language and would normally be referred directly to an ESL program to improve their language proficiency.

Group 2: Literacy & Basic Skills

About 18% of the clients, most of whom spoke English as a Second Language, required basic upgrading in reading, writing and math, but not in basic oral comprehension skills.

Group 3: Academic Upgrading

About 35% of the clients could pursue higher-level skills upgrading, especially in writing and math. The majority of these people also were born outside of Canada. These results were surprising to the USW Job Action Centre staff because they had long assumed and were often told by others, including former employers and other community service providers, that the majority of their members would require ESL training.

In fact, some of the clients had taken up on that suggestion. One gentleman we assessed was in a LINC class, but in our tests his reading and math scores were post high school level. He just need to improve his writing.

This is not uncommon in an area like Peel/Halton where newcomers make up a large portion of the community and language training programs are in abundance. The prevailing assumption is that newcomers should attend language programs first.

Unfortunately, not all people who were born outside of Canada fit that profile. In this group, the median age was 48 years old and many clients had over 15 years experience working in Canada. The largest portion of this group required the Essential Skills that would help them pass employer tests, fill out job applications and make them more employable for more types of jobs.

In the end, a few clients were referred to ESL programs in the community and another few clients were referred to upgrading programs in the community. Those were the easiest of the clients for people to identify and decide which programs were best suited to their needs.

The remaining clients (over 20) were not interested in a regular language program, nor were they interested in attending an upgrading program outside of the action centre. These clients were happy to wait for an Essential Skills program to start at the USW Job Action Centre that would enable them to build both language and literacy skills in the context of boosting their employability.

When asked about how to serve this group at the Action Centre, most of the practitioners consulted could not figure out a solution within their existing program structure. The pathways they identified required at least two separate programs and potentially many months, if not years, of language and skills upgrading.

Reflections:

While the client population at this Action Centre may not be representative of the community at large, it does represent one of the emerging client groups of the last few years.

Both ESL and LBS programs must start working together to develop programs that reflect not the language capabilities, but the Essential Skills needs of people who simply want to and need to remain in the workforce to take care of their families.

Assessment Tools & Practices

The language and literacy continuum encompasses many skill levels in many skill domains. In addition, as silos, each system developed its own method of assessment and approach to identifying and measuring skill levels. Resulting in numerous assessment tools and practices that are not always easily articulated to each other. Also resulting in complications to the development of a single comprehensive pathway for some client profiles. In the Peel/Halton pilot area, we utilized a variety of assessments – ones we administered and ones that were previously completed – to understand the diverse needs of this particular client group. All of the assessments are in regular use in the wider community, including CLBA, WLA, CAAT, LBS writing, CARA and Brigance CIBS-R.

On the surface, this client group had a few notable attributes in common. They all belonged to the same union, had held similar jobs and were all presently out of work or working reduced schedules. However, they had a variety of language, education and employment backgrounds and experiences and a wide range of goals and interests. A single assessment tool and approach would not have worked for the entire group.

We devised an approach that would allow us to efficiently assess this fairly large group (50 people). A team of assessors conducted short one-to-one interviews that gathered basic personal information and client goals. Then all willing clients took part in a short screening for reading, writing and math. The results from the interviews and screening gave us enough information, in most cases, to make broad determinations about the likely next step for each client. About half of the clients required further assessments to determine readiness for a particular academic or training goal.

Stage	Activity	Duration	Tools	
1	1:1 interviews	15 – 45 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• interview script• report form	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• compile relevant demographic information• determine ability and interest to conduct screening test
2	Screening assessment	30 – 60 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brigance CIBS-R• simplified writing task	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• gauge language proficiency• determine if client can handle more comprehensive skills assessment
3	Comprehensive assessment	up to 4 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CARA• CLBA• CAAT• WLA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• diagnose skills for on-site training purposes• determine if client meets intake requirements for external programs
4	Feedback and needs assessment	up to 1 week	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• assessment report form	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• provide feedback to client about skills and upgrading options• determine feasibility of on-site program development

Reflections:

Perhaps more important than the actual assessment tools used is the approach to assessment itself. In this situation, we used a variant of a goal-directed assessment approach. The clients' goals determined the assessment tool, but a general screening test established the range of tools that would be effective.

Assembling a team of assessors with diverse educational experiences and skills sets contributed significantly to the effectiveness of the assessment approach. Our team consisted of assessors from different organizations who work with different types of clients. This enabled us to overcome any biases in the types of assessment tools we used as well as blind spots for types of clients that any one assessor may not normally encounter.

A diverse client group requires an equally diverse assessment team in order to develop the comprehensive pathways that some client profiles require.

Vocabulary and Level Matrices

This report utilizes many acronyms, specialized terms, and local jargon to describe the activities and details of the Peel/Halton area pilot. These terms are also frequently used by practitioners of language and literacy programs to describe assessments, programs, level and referral options.

While most assessments describe skill level by domain name (reading, writing, and so on) and numerical level (1, 2, 3...), we also discovered that a highly localized dialect also exists to describe levels. Some assessors would describe a person's level by the name of the agency or program that the client would be most suitable for. For example, a practitioner would describe a client as, "He's LINC." With this term, the practitioner is communicating information about program eligibility (in this case, possibly citizenship status), language proficiency, and educational goal.

These type of descriptors serve as stand-ins for specific skill levels and seem to provide shorthand amongst practitioners. It's unclear how effective this shorthand is as there is some ambiguity around the edges of each programming silo and each practitioner's experience and understanding of language and literacy levels and program options. These terms would certainly make developing an individualized learning pathway more difficult.

In the Peel/Halton pilot area, the overarching goal was to refer clients immediately to higher level skills training programs if they were ready, and to determine the feasibility of running an on-site upgrading program at the USW Job Action Centre for the other clients who were interested and required skills upgrading for general employment purposes. Therefore, it was important that our assessments drilled down to the point where we knew enough about each client so that we could determine whether there were enough clients to fit into manageable skills clusters to run a class or two.

The skill and level divisions from the community (for example, CLB 6 is used to distinguish between someone attending an ESL or an LBS program) did not have to be as strictly adhered to because of the nature of the program in development.

Here is the glossary of terms used in this report:

AU	Academic Upgrading
Brigance CIBS-R	Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills – Revised
CARA	Canadian Adult Reading Assessment
CCLB	Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks
CLB	Canadian Language Benchmarks
CLBA	Canadian Language Benchmark Assessment
ELT	Enhanced Language Training
ES	Essential Skills

ESL	English as a Second Language
FSL	French as a Second Language
LBS	Literacy & Basic Skills
LINC	Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada
OSLT	Occupation-Specific Language Training
USW	United Steelworkers
WLA	Workplace Language Assessment
WLES	Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills project

Reflections:

There are many pedagogical and program operational reasons for establishing a more narrow range of skills for each class or program. However, too often the level matrices become too dominant a focus for the purpose of the program. It should not be the objective to move clients from one level to the next; rather, it should be to help clients build the skills they need for their goals.

By taking this approach to analyzing the client group instead of merely trying to slot people into existing level matrices, we were able to recommend the development of a program that will more closely fit the needs and goals of the group. Remarkably, this proposed program will be run using existing instructors and curricula and learning materials from across the language and literacy continuum.

Client Eligibility & Program Entry Criteria

The wide array of program offerings in the Peel/Halton area ensures that virtually everyone is eligible for one or more literacy and/or language program(s). Also true is that virtually no one is eligible for every program at a certain time. This makes it difficult for the client who could benefit from both a traditional language and a literacy program at the same time.

Due to the approach to interviewing, screening and assessing that was implemented at the USW Job Action Centre, we had minimal eligibility criteria. Clients only required enough oral language (speaking and listening) facility to participate adequately in the one-to-one interviews. Even direct membership in the USW wasn't a barrier as the Job Action Centre works with families of members as well.

By widening the program entry criteria, we were allowed to serve clients and to develop an on-site program from the bottom up. Since top-down program tracking requirements, such as information management systems and performance measures were not necessary at this stage, we were not limited to any specific assessment tools or demographic profiles.

Reflections:

The elimination of most client eligibility and program entry criteria refocused the team's approach toward and perception about, the client group. Typically, most practitioners look at the people that inquire at their program as potential clients or not potential clients. This is a sensible approach when time is limited and a range of other programs exist in the community.

However, as we found, the key to developing a program that could meet this diverse client group was in changing the underlying question from "Am I allowed to serve you?" to "How should I serve you best?"

Mode of Delivery - Program Models and Teaching Practices

Adults who require language or literacy programs in Peel/Halton are pretty well served by the variety of program models and teaching practices if they are part of an identified client group. As mentioned above, the options are considerably more limited when a client requires the services of both language and literacy programs simultaneously or as a blended program.

Many people involved in this pilot agreed that individual clients can and should access different aspects of two different programs at the same time to achieve all of their goals. However, those same people could also identify several perceived barriers why this has rarely occurred and would be unlikely to happen in the near future.

The approach that we took in the Peel/Halton pilot area to work with the clients at the USW Job Action Centre suggests that there may be sufficient flexibility within the existing language/literacy continuum of services to address most groups of client needs.

However, given the time frame of this project and the window of opportunity that the WLES call for proposal presented, we opted for the project funding route instead of attempting to pull together the program using existing program funding in the community.

Reflections:

The parameters of the WLES projects were such that clients that are normally streamed into separate language and literacy programs could take part in a single program. The program model and teaching practice that best allows for the instruction of Essential Skills was the perfect bridge between these two traditional programming silos.

Whether this funding envelope continues or not, Essential Skills training may allow for more innovative program blending between the language and literacy program service providers.

Accountability Parameters and Statistical Reporting

The notion 'what gets counted, counts' may be a barrier to better coordination of language and literacy programs. There are individual language and literacy assessments in the Peel/Halton area both at the program level (LBS and ESL) and at

the community level at a testing centre (LINC). However, there is no funded service that assesses groups of clients for the purposes of developing a program for that group.

Since the main funders of the language and literacy programs don't measure assessments in this way, most agencies cannot and would not pursue this activity regularly.

Similarly, a specialized blended language and literacy program would not be pursued because it may not attract enough clients for those programs that count attendance or would not easily fit into existing performance measures for those programs that measure outcomes.

There is no reason to believe that blended or coordinated language and literacy programming could not be measured, but the perception is held amongst the practitioners involved in this project that it would be difficult, and even unwise, for existing service providers to deviate from their current programming practices within their existing accountability parameters and statistical reporting requirements.

Reflections:

Perhaps the launch of Employment Ontario's new Employment Service guidelines might show a way toward the establishment of better coordination between language and literacy programs. Employment Service providers are measured in part on their service coordination which tells how integrated they are with other services in the community.

Service coordination for language and literacy programs may include establishing complementary programming for a certain percentage of clients.

Existing Coordination and Referral Practices

In the Peel/Halton area, language and literacy programs tend to work on coordination and referral practices separately.

The Newcomer Organizations Network is a networking group comprised of organizations that assist with settlement issues for immigrants.

The Peel Newcomer Strategy Group is comprised of key stakeholders that came together because of a growing recognition that there was a need to develop a coordinated newcomer/immigrant services strategy. The vision for a coordinated service strategy is to develop a client-focused service model.

The Peel-Halton-Dufferin Adult Learning Network (PHDALN) supports and coordinates the Literacy & Basic Skills and Academic Upgrading programs.

There are several other information networking groups in the Peel/Halton area, but all tend to be issue or sector specific.

Similarly to this pilot project itself, efforts to blend language and literacy programs have historically been done on an ad-hoc or one-off basis. PHDALN has offered its coordination services to Action Centres, such as Polywheels in Oakville in 2009, to help facilitate the provision of blended language and literacy services to laid-off workers. Other times it has simply been the client him or herself that actively pulls together the various services required to move forward.

Reflections:

The prematurely concluded Adult Education Centre Demonstration projects, sponsored by the three provincial learning ministries in 2009, were the last community-wide attempt at coordinating adult learning services, including language and literacy services. Many practitioners involved in this project remain hopeful that an opportunity like that would become available again.

Pilot Conclusions & Recommendations

1. First Point of Contact

- Conclusions:

The first point of contact with the system can be critical to achieving positive outcomes, including saving time, reducing frustration for a client and increasing the chance of engaging a client in a particular service.

Results from the case study suggest that the larger challenge with establishing appropriate initial pathways is with referrals from non-literacy and/or language service providers, for example, employment services and other social services. Literacy / language providers have a screening / assessment process that is more likely to determine the best route for the client. Non-literacy / language providers do not have as in-depth or formal screening / assessment process and are more likely to rely on other demographic indicators, such as language spoken and citizenship. These characteristics are superficial and often misleading as indicators of the most suitable program or pathway.

Organizations must be aware of available community services, knowledgeable about different client pathways and demonstrate the ability to make referrals that are both appropriate and efficient.

Recommendations:

Informal and formal information sharing and service coordination activities should take place amongst language and literacy providers and with other common places of first contact with clients, including employment service providers, settlement and neighbourhood centres and other social and cultural service organizations.

The Learning Ministries in partnership with subject matter experts should consider developing a screening tool that frontline workers can utilize (with appropriate training) to identify potential literacy and language issues and to make appropriate referrals.

1. Client Choice

- Conclusions:

Clients are rational actors ('consumers'). They will choose ('purchase') the service that they prefer or think is right for them. This does not always mean they choose the right service. However, there should be some leeway for the client to decide their best fit.

Recommendations:

Service providers should consider developing and implementing good practices when it comes to providing information and referral. Good practices should develop around how to provide a full range of program options and how to discuss assessment results that do not conclusively indicate a specific intervention.

These protocols should indicate the need for ongoing training of frontline workers, which may provide another opportunity for continuous networking and service coordination.

1. Client-centred Programming

- Conclusions:

There is a need to revisit the traditional notion of the agency-client relationship in literacy and language programs. Let's dub this notion the "you belong here and we can address all your particular literacy and / or language needs". This notion can also be flipped around: "you don't belong here and we cannot address any of your particular literacy and / or language needs".

Individual clients can and should access different aspects of two different programs at the same time to achieve all of their goals. Theoretically this can be achieved at the program level within the existing program structures and policy environment (except where external eligibility restrictions exist). This is largely a practitioner perception / behavioural change that needs to occur, but it could have program accountability implications and could be aided with policy changes and / or performance incentives.

There may be sufficient flexibility within the existing language/literacy continuum of services to address most groups of clients' needs, for example, groups of union members or employees. It is not as clear whether programs have the necessary capacity, creativity or permission to do this.

Recommendations:

Language and literacy service providers should make all reasonable efforts to explore the inherent program flexibility in coordination with each other to meet identified client needs.

These efforts must be encouraged and recognized by funders in order to facilitate further service coordination.

1. Approaches to Cross-Sectoral Networking and Service Coordination

- Conclusions:

Building a culture of networking and service coordination takes time and the lack of immediate success should not be seen as a failure.

The approach taken in the Peel/Halton pilot site was effective because it was a community response to the real and identifiable needs of a group of clients. Cross-sectoral activities are increasingly required in order to develop new or easier pathways for clients with multiple, simultaneous needs.

Recommendations:

Perhaps all adult learning services should have service coordination activities built into their performance measurement frameworks.



Enhancing Pathways: The Literacy and Language Continuum



Final Report on the Waterloo and Wellington Working Committee Pilots



Lorri Sauvé September 2010



Introduction

The importance of looking at literacy as an issue of integration with citizenship and immigration is a beginning. The ultimate goal of literacy and language programs is to provide appropriate learning instruction for learners. Likewise, a goal for practitioners referring adults to programs is to refer adults to the most appropriate program for the adult learner's goal whether it is for employment, further training and education or for further independence. In other words, the goal is to enhance an adult student's learning path in the most effective and efficient manner possible (Sauve, 2009).

The pathways are not always apparent or available and are therefore difficult for all learners to navigate in order to reach their employment and training goals such as accessing Second Career, Ontario Skills Development, direct employment, apprenticeship and trades, and other choices in an efficient and effective manner. This is one of the main reasons why this project came to fruition.

The three systems are English as a Second Language (ESL), Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) and Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS). Although various definitions for literacy and language acquisition exist, for the purposes of this paper and pilot, the following definitions are to be used. *Literacy focuses primarily on language development in English (usually but not always the student's first language) and ESL focuses on language transfer from another mother tongue* (PRLN, 2008). Admission into a LINC program is based solely on whether or not the adult has Canadian citizenship. If they are a Canadian citizen and are a Second Language Learner, then they must be admitted to an ESL class.

Literacy is the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities at home, work and in the community to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potential (Statistics Canada, 2005). *Literacy is more than knowing how to read and write. A person who is literate can use reading, writing, speaking and numerical skills effectively to understand and participate in the world around them. Literacy is not a fixed skill. It needs to be exercised and challenged. Otherwise, the skill will not strengthen and may weaken.* (Project READ Literacy Network website, 2009).

This project presented an opportunity to inform policy makers about the best practices in enhancing learner pathways, regardless of the language or literacy program they chose. In 2000, Project READ Literacy Network through its Literacy Services Planning (LSP) explored better ways to facilitate learner referrals and transitions among Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) in Waterloo-Wellington (Paul, 2000), which at that point in time was seminal work. Now referrals within and between LBS programs occur regularly. It was hoped that by holding working committee meetings that a process may unfold, not only in this region but across Ontario between and within the three systems. In any case, trust-building and information-sharing will occur which will likely lead to better-informed referrals.

Almost half of Canadian adults (48%) lack the necessary skills to succeed in today's

information society. At present, 22% of Waterloo Region residents are immigrants or refugees from diverse regions of the world, a number which is projected to grow to 30% by 2030 (WRIEN, 2010). These adults have a lot of difficulty with printed materials and many identify themselves as having difficulties with reading. In Waterloo Region, 57% of adults fall into that same category, which is higher than the national average. Approximately 20% of those collecting Employment Insurance and 40% of social assistance recipients are found in these low literacy levels (Project READ Literacy Network, 2010). If one examines the research on poverty and literacy, one can see that it is a causal relationship meaning that often, but not always, people living in poverty have low literacy skills (IALSS, 2003, Payne, 2005).

After doing a Discussion Paper for the Discussion Paper, the author began meeting with prospective partners to encourage their participation in this project. The author was aware of the approaches and theories of partnership building and intended to incorporate them within this project. Initially potential partners were identified to form the Working Committees, namely the staff at agencies within Waterloo and Wellington regions that offer language and literacy programs. Staff persons from other key agencies were solicited for their participation on the Working Committees as well. Membership included managers and front line staff from one-to-one agencies, school boards, colleges and other agencies who deliver ESL, LINC, and LBS programs. Additionally, staff from Action Centres, Employment Assistance programs, counselling services, and other agencies were contacted to join the Working Committees.

The author was aware that a key element of partnership success is building personal relationships with the staff from these agencies. That is where the author began. First, individual and group meetings with staff from agencies were set up, both agency staff that were known and those staff who were unknown, in order to describe the project and get "buy in" from the ground up. The author also asked for feedback and names of other potential partners to join the Working Committees from both regions to enhance the quality of membership on the Committees. After outlining the project outcomes, expectations and time input required from Committee members, an initial Waterloo-Wellington combined meeting was held for all potential Working Committee members.

Project Outcomes

- Increased understanding among the agencies of the three systems (LBS, ESL, and LINC), including the structure and content of each system
- Enhanced knowledge of transition points and efficient pathways for learners
- Identification of gaps and needs within the current continuum of language development
- Increased knowledge among various EO partners/sectors of the coordination among LBS, ESL and LINC programs

Facilitative Process and Agencies Involved

Step Summary of Facilitative Process

1. Discussion paper was created
2. Individual meetings were held to describe project and get potential partners interested
3. One Waterloo-Wellington Working Committee combined meeting
4. Separate Wellington-only Working Committee meetings were held (2) also separate Waterloo-only Working Committee meetings were held (2)
5. Individual communications with Working Committee members between meetings to cull and clarify information
6. Presentation to share results from pilots was held for all interested parties

The step summary above shows the general facilitative process taken to enhance the project. The Discussion Paper (see appendices section from overall report) was created by doing a literature review and attending community forums surrounding topics pertinent to ESL, LINC, and LBS and then reporting on what was discovered. This Discussion Paper was created in order to be used as a starting point for discussion at the initial Waterloo-Wellington combined Working Committee meeting.

It was felt that the best way to get the information needed for this project was to focus the discussion, not the membership, so promotion to all professional network contacts was taken. Additionally, everyone who received the invitation was asked to share with other people they thought might be interested in attending these meetings. This openness ensured transparency of the project motives, goals, and process to the broad community.

After all this background work was done, a large Working Committee meeting including all Waterloo and Wellington representatives was held at location convenient for staff from all areas. Representatives from language and literacy service provision as well as Employment Ontario agencies and other agencies that serve families in Waterloo and Wellington Regions were in attendance. Other agencies included were those that assess LINC, ESL, and LBS adults as well as libraries.

At the initial meeting held November 26, 2009, both Waterloo and Wellington Working Committees met to explore and review the Discussion Paper, terms of reference, outcomes of the project, and goals for each agency and to find a process for how they could work together. The second and third Committee meetings were held from January to April 2010 and they moved the project along in information gathering. Following each meeting, we conducted a formative evaluation. Evaluations from the meetings stated in general that members found value in participating in this process and appreciated being prepared for the meetings so that valuable work could be done at the meetings.

What follows below is the membership of both Waterloo and Wellington Working Committees. Please note that following the agency name, the area that they represented on the Committee will be marked. The Legend details what letter represents each area or sector including Second Language Learning, Literacy and Basic Skills, Employment, or Other.

Legend:

- S – Second Language Learning, either ESL or LINC
- L – Literacy and Basic Skills
- E – Employment
- O – Other

Waterloo Working Committee

Cambridge Action Centre - E	Northern Lights - E
Conestoga College - S, L, and E	Project READ Literacy Network, Waterloo-Wellington - L
Downtown Community Action Centre, E	Region of Waterloo Employment Services - E
Chamber of Commerce (Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network) - S	St Louis Adult Learning Centres – S, L and E
Francophone Employment Centre - E	The Literacy Group - L
Focus For Ethnic Women - S	Waterloo Region District School Board - L
Kitchener Public Library - O	YMCA (Language Assessment Centre and Newcomer Employment Centre) - S
Lutherwood - E	

Wellington Working Committee	
Action Read Community Literacy - L Conestoga College - L Immigrant Services, Wellington-Guelph - S Linamar Action Centre - E Lutherwood - E Naylor-McLeod LINC Program- S	Project READ Literacy Network, Waterloo Wellington - L Northern Lights - E Upper Grand District School Board – S, L Wellington County Learning Centre - L

First Working Committee Meeting

At the large initial meeting, Working Committee members from both Waterloo and Wellington explored the Discussion Paper. Members were allowed immediate input into the paper and feedback was recorded. Expectations were delineated for upcoming meetings including communication between meetings and methods of problem-solving. It was decided that communication would be primarily done by email and face-to-face meetings. Working Committee members were told that they would be given the topics that would be explored in the Committee meetings ahead of time, so that they could prepare for the meetings. The topic areas would be distributed via email about two weeks prior to the meetings with the expectation that committee members would come prepared for the meetings. All information that was gathered during the meetings was to be used in this Final Report.

After presenting the outcomes of the project, common terms were explored. A large discussion ensued surrounding the definitions included in the Common Language Work Sheet located in the appendices of this paper. Please refer to the Common Language Worksheet found in both the Discussion Paper as well as this report. These definitions have been modified and changed to suit the Committee Members. They are located in the appendices section.

This first meeting was primarily a presentation of the project with a few guided discussion questions to explore (see Appendix 4). Following the meeting, many participants phoned or emailed the researcher with comments or questions since they did not feel comfortable speaking up in the large group. About 40 members were in attendance. By the second and third meetings, Waterloo and Wellington members met separately. Members felt more comfortable making points and asking questions in the smaller groups during the meetings rather than waiting and contacting the researcher privately following meetings.

Second Working Committee Meetings

Separate Waterloo and Wellington Working Committee meetings were held. Prior to these meetings, *LBS-ESL GUIDELINES for Accepting Former ESL Clients* was circulated. This was circulated as a document that could be used in Waterloo/Wellington for all language and literacy service providers. This paper is a working document that has been used in both areas to guide LBS staff in making referrals to ESL and LINC programs. It was created by the Literacy Services Planning Committees of Waterloo and Wellington with input from Immigrant Services Wellington-Guelph, as well as providers of Second Language services. Although the guidelines were reviewed and discussed briefly, it was felt that further exploration would be required in order to determine if these guidelines would be used locally by ESL and LINC service providers as well.

Lower attendance at both of the second meetings occurred for different reasons. In Wellington, there was the threat of bad weather. In Waterloo, some participants sent regrets at the last minute. There was much more sharing of information at this meeting because members from both Waterloo and Wellington Working Committees felt more comfortable with one another. "*Excellent job breaking down initial barriers/insecurities*" (quote from Second Committee Meeting evaluation). This likely occurred because of the initial relationships that had developed at the initial large meeting when participants were instructed to do "small group work."

At the Waterloo Working Committee meeting, after exploring the initial topic, many members felt comfortable presenting general information about their program to the large group of the entire Committee, not just in the small discussion groups at individual tables. These program presentations helped members discern the different and similar elements within each program (i.e., ESL, LINC, LBS). The result was that partners were informed about the available programs in the regions. It was felt this would ensure that agency staff would be better informed to make learner referrals, whether they were language or literacy students. Throughout every meeting, the common theme that arose was that all agency staff support **learner-centred practices** that include being respectful of each learner and providing learners with the best information possible at the time, but allowing the learner the choice as to where they go and which pathway they pursue. Two other common themes that surfaced were that many learners lived in poverty and that empowering learners was a necessity in all programs.

A product from the second meetings can be found in the appendices entitled "*Literacy and Language Service Provision in Waterloo and Wellington*" (Appendix 2). It is a chart that includes information on location of program, client eligibility, program models used, and other relevant information to aid in more effective learner referrals.

Third Working Committee Meetings

Good attendance at both of the third Working Committee meetings occurred and members brought more program information to share with each other. Unfortunately, there was no employment representative at the Wellington meeting because of the Employment Ontario changes and Linamar Action Centre being closed. There was much more sharing of information; members (at both Committee meetings) felt more personally comfortable with one another and were excited to continue meeting on an ongoing basis. *"I wish I had attended all of the sessions and I hope we can meet regularly in the future."* Members from both Committees were comfortable emailing and/or speaking with the researcher to clarify points, etc. before, during, and after meetings. This was an obvious change from the initial meeting where members did not feel comfortable asking for or providing information during meetings.

One of the best outcomes from these Working Committees was that each participant felt empowered and safe to share expertise, experience and ideas. This was stated on numerous occasions in the formative meeting evaluations.

Finally, results were shared at a public presentation on July 22, 2010. Participants included members from both Working Committees, other Employment staff, a member from the Ontario Literacy Coalition and community members.

Products from these meetings can be found later in the document. They include:

- Eight Learner Pathways, Outcomes and Profiles (located in Profiles section)
- Six Key Questions for Effective Referrals (located in Profiles section)
- Literacy and Language Service Provision in Waterloo and Wellington Regions (Appendix 2)
- Guiding Questions for Working Committee Meetings (Appendix 4)

Funding Mechanisms for ESL, LINC and LBS

The provincial Learning Ministries namely the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, fund the literacy and language programs in Ontario. There are inconsistencies in funding because the language service provision programs (ESL and LINC) have their funding fall under separate policy jurisdictions (OLC, 2007) that include both provincial and federal funders. This means that language and literacy programs are funded by four different government departments at two levels of government, both provincial and federal.

LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada)

The federal government, through the department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), funds the LINC program. CIC funds many programs to help newcomers settle in Canada, adapt and integrate into Canadian life (CIC, 2009). *The government goal for LINC is to improve settlement and integration outcomes for immigrants* (CIC, 2009; OCASI, 2009). LINC classes are open to immigrants who are not Canadian citizens.

ESL (English as a Second Language)

The provincial government funds most ESL programs through the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI); however, ESL credit courses are funded through the Ministry of Education. ESL classes are open to any person interested in learning English or French. English or French as a Second Language (ESL/FSL) classes are offered through local school boards in order to provide English and/or French classes at every level from beginner to advanced. School boards are the sole provider of ESL/FSL programs and in these ESL classes, participants must be someone whose first language is neither English nor French (MCI, 2010).

LBS (Literacy and Basic Skills)

The provincial government, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), funds LBS programs, which are now included under Employment Ontario (EO). *LBS agencies have the mandate to provide free training in reading, writing, math and basic work skills in order to reach goals of further education and training, employment and/or personal independence* (MTCU, 2009).

Learner Pathways, Outcomes and Profiles

Profiles were created in order to determine the various pathways that agency staff would normally recommend for learners in Waterloo and Wellington regions, whether they are literacy or language learners. These case studies have learners with fictitious names; however, their cases are real. They were created in order to help Committee members identify niches that they already saw in their region. It is interesting to note that once trust-building was done with the Committee members, they felt comfortable knowing who and where to refer. Creating these profiles to determine adult learner pathways was made possible by all the relationship and trust-building that occurred during the Committee meetings. This case study activity was a neutral and very rich way to discuss pathways that adult learners could take because practitioners determined where they would send adult students, based on what they learned at these meetings.

Various members of both Waterloo and Wellington Working Committees were contacted, either by phone, email or face-to-face interview, and asked to provide the process they would take to help learners determine the pathway the individual adult student should access. Please note that not only staff from literacy and language agencies were consulted, but also members from agencies that offer employment, counselling services, libraries, assessment, and other agencies where adults would access information.

A number of approaches are detailed following each case study. Sometimes one staff person from an agency suggested the pathway; in other instances, more than one staff person recommended this particular pathway. Pathways suggested depended on the perspective and the role of the individual staff person.

Eight case studies were created that include eight different learner profiles. These profiles included adults who have presented themselves at either a language or literacy service provider's door, wanting help. These case studies were used to demonstrate the range and variety of language and literacy learners who enter programs in Waterloo and Wellington regions. These case studies in no way demonstrate all of the diverse types of learner situations that practitioners see and help on a daily, weekly, monthly and annual basis, but they provide a glimpse into some common profiles.

"I found comfort in knowing that wherever I send a client, they will be assessed and be able to move forward." (Member from Working Committee following Third Working Committee Meeting, 2010)

Eight Case Studies

Case Study # 1

*Frank arrived in Canada in 1992 from Poland at the age of 22 where he took ESL classes on and off for 8 months. He has a good grasp of Polish and graduated from College in Poland. While in a language training program, he got a job at a corner store. He stayed in the language training program for 2 more months before he burned out with working full-time and going to school full-time. He quit his language classes. He recently moved to Kitchener, is now married with 2 children and is unemployed again. He has come through your agency's doors. Where should he be referred? **This case study has six approaches detailed below.***

Approach 1

First I would have this individual undergo an ESL assessment to find out his "English-speaking" proficiency. This gentleman would not fit in to the program if he was lower than a CLB 6. If he had a CLB 6, then I would give him information on the programs that serve people with his functional English abilities. If he was higher than CLB 6, I would refer him to another agency that offered CLB 6 and higher programs or refer him to a credit program. **This approach is from the Second Language perspective (language acquisition).**

Approach 2

I would first ask a bunch of questions that determine what his goal is including "What does he want to work on? Does he want to find a job, go to college, or improve his English?" "Does Frank speak and understand oral English well enough to take instruction on literacy skills?" "Could he pass a college upgrading assessment and get into their program?" "If I can converse with Frank fluently, I might assess his reading and writing skills and decide whether to refer him on to college upgrading. If not, I'd refer him for a CLB assessment at Immigrant Services." **This approach is from a literacy perspective.**

Approach 3

That depends on what he wants to do and it depends on his language proficiency. He can be referred for CLB assessment as a beginning step. If he has access to funding for retraining or is willing to go for OSAP, he can also be assessed with the Conestoga English Language Studies “in house” placement test and be placed into the program which will give him the opportunity for intensive work on the language skills needed for success in a retraining program. If he has no funding source, refer him to St Louis Adult Learning Centre. Again, depending on his level of language proficiency, they are implementing courses focusing on specific skills. In the bigger picture, advocate as a community for funded ESL programming specific to the needs of people like Frank. LBS doesn’t take Frank’s second language issues into account. ***This approach is from a Second Language perspective (language acquisition).***

Approach 4

Let’s assume that Frank has been in Canada for 5 years and working at corner store jobs or factory work based on his training in Poland. First of all, determine if Frank is eligible for Second Career or Skills Development. Have Frank go to a school that offers ESL to determine his Canadian Language Benchmark level. Have Frank show his credentials to the registrar of his local college to see if he qualifies for entrance or to see what he needs to do to enter college. Determine Frank’s goals. Identify what he likes to do and whether it is related to his college training. Assess Frank’s reading, writing and math skills with a view to upgrading in the LBS program for employment or credentials. Choose the order of the above that best suits Frank’s profile. Further decisions need to be made and discussed after determining these basics. Frank may be looking for a quick training in a trade, or further education and training in ESL and LBS. After choosing a pathway, Frank will need help mapping out the route since he is new to the country. ***This approach is from an employment perspective.***

Approach 5

This client has unemployment and language issues. I would refer him to Project READ Literacy Network for an assessment. This agency would know the steps for the client to take following assessment. ***This approach is from a non-language or literacy service provider perspective.***

Approach 6

Option 1 – Job Search

First determine if Frank’s English skills are strong enough for him to job search and secure employment. If they are not, then we can discuss further ESL courses to improve them. If Frank has a clear job goal and wants to find employment, then we would verify if he has the skills/qualifications to meet this goal. If he does, then we would refer him to appropriate Employment Ontario programs for job search supports, including resume, cover letter, interviewing and job search help such as the YMCA. He can also take part in Essential Skills Upgrading. ***This approach is from an employment perspective.***

Option 2 – Career Decision-Making and Training

If he does not yet have a career goal, he can be referred to a career counsellor for career decision-making to help to determine a goal at organizations such as the YMCA or Career Development Services. Once he has established his career goal, if he wants to proceed with training, he would have to have an English language assessment to see if his English skills are high enough, and if they are not, then he would have to take ESL to reach the required level. If they are, then he can see if he is eligible and/or suitable for Second Career to achieve his career goal. ***This approach is from an employment perspective.***

Case Study #2

Josephine is a 44-year-old Canadian-born woman with 3 children and is married. She recently lost her job at a factory in Cambridge where she worked on the line. She does not have her Grade 12. She wants to gain employment but doesn't know where to go for help. What do you recommend? This case study has six approaches detailed below.

Approach 1

I would refer this woman to literacy and basic skills because she is a Canadian citizen. They would be able to assess her and determine if she fits within LBS or if she should be referred to a credit program or work towards obtaining her General Education Development (GED) certificate. ***This approach is from a Second Language perspective (language acquisition).***

Approach 2

Josephine doesn't need ESL. Refer her to one of the excellent adult education upgrading programs here in the Region. She should be referred to Adult Literacy and Basic Skills because she is a Canadian citizen. ***This approach is from a Second Language perspective (language acquisition).***

Approach 3

I would ask Josephine if she is connected to an Action Centre close to where she lives or if her company has one set up for her use. I would ensure she has an assessment and a possible referral to Northern Lights to access the Second Career Strategy. ***This approach is from an employment perspective.***

Approach 4

Does she want a job as soon as possible or does she want to train for a new career? If she wants to go to college, I'd assess Josephine's reading, writing and numeracy skills, her ability to work in a classroom or from a curriculum, and her study skills. I might refer her on to Continuing Ed or GED upgrading, or I might recommend Action Read programs to prepare her for further training/education goals. ***This approach is from a literacy perspective.***

Approach 5

I would recommend that she gets assessed by the LBS Assessor, assuming that she wants Literacy Upgrading (with a goal path of employment once she attains her Grade 12). If she is looking for employment without Upgrading, I would call the program manager/assessor and ask where I could re-direct Josephine, i.e., to the closest Employment Ontario centre. ***This approach is from a non-language and literacy service provider perspective.***

Approach 6

First determine what Josephine's career goal is and if a Grade 12 diploma is required to do it. If Josephine does not have a clear career goal, she can be referred for career decision-making at Career Development Services to receive help with establishing one. ***This approach is from an employment perspective.***

Option 1 – If a Grade 12 diploma is required, she can go to St. Louis for academic upgrading or to the Waterloo Region District School Board for Essential Skills Upgrading. ***This approach is from an employment perspective.***

Option 2 – If Grade 12 is not required, she can be referred to job search services, including resume, interviewing and job search skills. ***This approach is from an employment perspective.***

Case Study #3

Charles has been in ESL classes for the past year and has a good grasp of written English language. He was a doctor in his country (Africa), however, when he arrived in Canada, the only job he could get was driving a taxi. His English speaking skills are fairly good and he would like to enroll in LBS classes in order to push his conversational skills even farther in a quicker time. Is this the best fit? He wants to take some college courses to become a lab technician. This case study has six approaches detailed below.

Approach 1

This scenario doesn't make any sense from a language perspective. Why would a doctor with good written skills want to enroll in LBS classes for conversational skills? He must not know what all his options are. Refer him to Occupation Specific Language Training for health care. Charles will receive the opportunity to learn more about the sector he is interested in at the same time that he works on his oral skills in the context of the profession he is interested in. Occupation Specific Language Training is funded for Permanent Residents and Protected Persons. ***This approach is from a Second Language perspective (language acquisition).***

Approach 2

If he were in ESL classes, we would know his benchmarks. Based on his benchmarks, we would place him in the most suitable class. ESL has Listening-Speaking- Pronunciation classes at each level. Would LBS push his conversation skills further? ***This approach is from a Second Language perspective (language acquisition).***

Approach 3

Recommend a CLB assessment and debrief with the assessor afterwards. If Charles' English is nearly good enough to get into college, refer him to the Internationally-Trained Immigrant advisor at Conestoga for further information about language requirements in a lab tech program and advice about bridging programs (i.e., there was a special program for International Trained Professionals with a healthcare background last year). ***This approach is from a Second Language perspective (language acquisition).***

Approach 4

I know there are organizations that help "Foreign-trained Medical professionals" and I think it is at the College. I would research this and send him there or otherwise, I would contact WRIEN (Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network) to see if they can help him. Either of those places would be able to assess his skills and then determine the best place for him to be. I would give him the option between those two choices. ***This approach is from a non-language and literacy service provider.***

Approach 5

This is an issue that I have been faced with a few times this past year. I do not think that Charles is best off by coming to a LBS class to increase his conversational skills. We don't know his ESL Benchmark level. That would be what I would want to know first. Because my class is instructor-led, understanding spoken words and communicating through spoken words is a big part of the learning. I think that I would recommend that he enrolls in ESL to upgrade his English writing and speaking and then have Charles be assessed/re-assessed to see if he is then a better fit for an LBS class. ***This approach is from a literacy perspective.***

Approach 6

We would suggest to Charles that LBS may not be the best fit since LBS is designed for people whose reading, writing, math and essential skills are below the Grade 9 level. Charles was a doctor in his country and, therefore, this may not be necessary for him. We would encourage Charles to take an English Language Assessment to see if he has the required level of English to successfully take the college courses to become a Lab Technician, and this could be done through the YMCA, Conestoga College or St. Louis. ***This approach is from a Second Language perspective (language acquisition).***

Case Study #4

*Cindy is a 33-year-old woman who speaks Mandarin and is a Canadian citizen; however, she does not speak English or Mandarin well. She has no children and is not married. Before immigrating, she did not finish school in her country. She wants to get a job and learn how to read and write English well. What do you recommend? **This case study has five approaches detailed below.***

Approach 1

Cindy should take the English Language Assessment. Her profile indicates she might benefit from an ESL Literacy class. She also might have some learning issues....where should she be directed? **This approach is from a Second Language perspective (language acquisition).**

Approach 2

She does not speak English or Mandarin well. I don't know how I'd ever know that. Does she have a developmental disability? I would refer to healthcare supports and suggest Ontario Disability Supports Program. I would also suggest CLB assessment and let the assessor know there could be a 1st language literacy issue. **This approach is from a literacy perspective.**

Approach 3

I would make an ESL referral to St Louis since she is not a LINC student (has her Canadian citizenship). They would be able to determine if she needs to be placed into ESL Literacy or regular ESL classes. **This approach is from a non-language and literacy service provider.**

Approach 4

I recommend that she is assessed and enrolled in a Second Language Learning program full-time until she can attain the language skills needed to become employed. After ESL classes, she may need further upgrading in LBS before employment is a reality for her. **This approach is from a Second Language perspective (language acquisition).**

Approach 5

Refer Cindy to Action Read or The Literacy Group for reading and writing assistance in English followed by job search help once she has determined her career goal for resume writing, interview skills and self-marketing. Also, verify what level of school she last attended as the case study indicates that she did not finish school in her country to see if she needs to access academic upgrading. She may also need to take ESL courses to improve her English skills. Ensure that Cindy is also aware of organizations such as Focus for Ethnic Women and the YMCA that may be more specific to her needs. **This approach is from an employment perspective.**

Case Study #5

Jack has his Grade 12 diploma but cannot read or write effectively to maintain jobs. His employment history is intermittent. Most jobs he held were odd jobs such as landscape work in the summers, construction work, and snow plowing in the winter. He is 30 years old and has arrived at your agency wanting to become a welder. What do you recommend? This case study details six approaches below.

Approach 1

Definitely refer to a community-based program to start . He needs to be assessed and then supported in his Labour Market Research. Finally, help him make connections to welding programs, if appropriate. **This approach is from an employment perspective.**

Approach 2

Jack would be sent to the Guidance Department as he is not ESL and we would not assess his skills. The Guidance Department would determine if he should be referred to LBS or take some welding-specific credit courses or specific courses at Conestoga to be ready for welding. **This approach is from a Second Language perspective (language acquisition).**

Approach 3

I would refer to St Louis. Since he has his diploma, he needs to be assessed by the LBS assessor (because he doesn't read or write well). He will likely need specific upgrading that focuses on improving those skills. Then he would be referred to Conestoga College for Apprenticeship or Job Connect or to the program in Guelph that is co-located in the Adult High School. **This approach is a literacy perspective.**

Approach 4

Refer Jack to any of the programs with LBS 3 and an Essential Skills focus, which includes either St Louis Core Essentials or the Public Boards Essential Skills classes. **This approach is from a Second Language perspective (language acquisition).**

Approach 5

I would recommend that he is assessed by the LBS assessor and then enter an LBS Upgrading program full-time. Once he has developed his skills, he could then look into apprenticeship at the local college to become a welder. **This approach is from a non-language and literacy service provider.**

Approach 6

For Jack's literacy concerns, we would recommend that he access Project READ Literacy Network for an Educational Essential Skills Assessment (EESA). Secondly, due to his intermittent work history, Jack may be a good candidate to meet with a

career counsellor or to go to Action Read to address possible job maintenance issues. Jack would then continue working with a career counsellor for career decision-making to ensure that welding is the right career goal for him and then determine if he is eligible and/or suitable for Second Career to become a welder. ***This approach is from an employment perspective.***

Case Study #6

Larry has been in Canada for 5 years. English is not his first language. He wants to join a community-based LBS program to prepare for college, but his oral comprehension and speaking skills are not high enough to take literacy instruction. When the assessor suggests a CLB assessment, Larry indicates that he tried a LINC program for a few weeks and he will not go back. Larry needs one-to-one support, and the LBS program provides it, so he wants to come here. What do you do? This case study details four approaches below.

Approach 1

Refer Larry to the Literacy Group or Action Read for assessment. They can then determine placement. Even though he is struggling with English speaking skills, a tutor will be able to work one-to-one with him. Otherwise, the YMCA has English Conversation Circles that he may feel comfortable attending. This will also link him up with other adults who he may connect with for social and possible job opportunities.

This approach is from a literacy perspective.

Approach 2

If he cannot comprehend/communicate with his tutor, then he cannot continue until he can. Perhaps recommending another agency that provides more small group and/or one-to-one ESL training would be something that Larry would benefit from and that he would agree to. ***This approach is from a literacy perspective.***

Approach 3

I would encourage Larry to have a CLB assessment and let him know that ESL classes (and LINC classes) can really provide him with oral comprehension and oral communication skills. The instructors are specialists in Language Instruction whereas in LBS classes, they have skills in literacy development for those who already grasp the English language. There are a variety of LINC and ESL leveled classes that would likely fit his needs. ***This approach is from a Second Language perspective (language acquisition).***

Approach 4

We would first determine why Larry does not want to return to LINC. It may be helpful to know what he did not like about that program so that any future programs he

chooses to access are a better fit. We agree that a Canadian Language Benchmark assessment would be a great next step for Larry and we would highly recommend he consider this option since he is interested in preparing for college, as it would measure reading, writing, speaking and listening skills and help to customize a curriculum for his personal needs. We would suggest that Larry consider doing this first and then the LBS is still an option for him if he feels that he needs it as it offers the 1:1 support that he wants. ***This approach is from a Second Language perspective (language acquisition).***

Case Study #7

Lin Yan can understand oral instruction in English and wants to work on vocabulary development and pronunciation. She needs 1-1 support, tried ESL programs but doesn't want to go back. Her goal is to get into a Registered Practical Nurse (RPN) program at college and she has lots of healthcare experience in her native land, but no credentials. What do you do? This case study details four approaches below.

Approach 1

I would refer Lin to St Louis ESL for assessment. They will determine the best placement for this student. ***This is from a non-language and literacy service provider.***

Approach 2

This is another tough one because the learner has specific issues with a previous ESL program for whatever reasons and whether or not rightly justified. I think that in order for literacy instruction in an LBS class to be beneficial to a learner, the learner must have a high level of comprehension of the English language if English is not their first language. Perhaps she could go to LBS to upgrade her skills to prepare for and get into a RPN course; as well as ESL at the same time, assuming that her English is high enough to understand what she is learning in the Upgrading classroom. ***This approach is from a literacy perspective.***

Approach 3

I would encourage Lin to be assessed so that we know what level she is at. If she will not go to an agency that provides ESL training, perhaps she could be assessed at the College where they have Enhanced Language Training programs or Occupation Specific Language Training. If she has high enough skill levels (although from this case study it appears that she likely will not be at a high enough level) perhaps she will be willing to improve her English language skills in an ESL class. If she refuses, then I would refer her for an LBS assessment to determine if she could function within an LBS class. ***This approach is from a Second Language perspective (language acquisition).***

Approach 4

In this case, we would recommend that Lin access Project READ Literacy Network for an assessment on vocabulary development and pronunciation. Lin will likely need to complete an ESL assessment as well to see if her English level is appropriate for the RPN course she is interested in taking. This would likely be followed by a meeting with a career counsellor who would be able to help her determine if RPN is the right career fit for her and assess her eligibility/suitability for Second Career. ***This is from an employment perspective.***

Case Study #8

Yousef immigrated to Canada last year from Croatia. He got a job at a factory that has recently closed. He speaks a bit of English and tells us that he speaks and writes well in Croatian. He has the equivalent of a grade 12 from Croatia. He wants to improve his English speaking and writing skills as well as gain computer skills. Where should he be referred?

This case study details two approaches below.

Approach 1

Refer him to the Immigration Services for Placement Assessment into a LINC class at either Naylor-McLeod or St George. Either of these places will help him to improve those skills. ***This approach is from a Second Language perspective (language acquisition).***

Approach 2

What needs to happen in this case is simple . . . he needs to be assessed and then placed into the appropriate LINC class. ***This approach is from a literacy perspective.***

Overall Conclusions from the Case Studies

It was discovered that there were various approaches to referring learners to different language and literacy classes. The exciting piece was that most agency staff, even those not working in literacy and language service provision, had a good grasp of referring adults initially for assessment to place them in an appropriate class. It is understood that front line staff need to know the level an adult is functioning at as well as the goal they have before making specific suggestions on programming for the adult to choose.

You will see in Figure 1, ESL or LINC Learner Common Pathway, which can be found at the end of this section in the document, the common pathway a language learner might take with the goals of either employment or further language and training for employment. Referring to the case studies, it was often suggested that ESL and LINC

learners be referred for a Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) assessment. From there, the client would be asked his or her goal and then be referred to a specific ESL or LINC class at the appropriate level for their CLB levels. If the student had CLB 6 level or higher, he or she would be referred to either an Occupation Specific Language Training program, Specific Language Training, or Bridging program that would suit their needs and match their goal. (For clearer definitions of these terms, refer to the Common Language Work Sheet - Appendix 1). This would provide them with the language necessary to function in their particular profession. Employment counselling would occur as needed during the journey.

Figure 2, LBS Learner Common Pathway, which can also be found at the end of this section, shows the common pathway an LBS learner would take with either an employment or a further training and education goal – the two most common goals of LBS learners. In LBS classes, learners are asked their goal and then referred for an LBS or an Essential Skills Assessment. Following that, the appropriate LBS class is suggested, depending on the skill levels and goal. Employment counselling would occur at the appropriate place in the learning path.

If language and literacy learners had an independence goal, the first three steps remain the same but instead of referring for employment counselling and/or credit/GED courses, the student would remain in either the ESL, LINC, or LBS class until the student felt confident in his or her abilities and/or if the student determined that he or she wants to achieve another goal.

Practitioners constantly referred to the clients' needs being kept at the forefront. Remaining learner-centred was a common theme throughout all meetings as well as the interviews and information gathering for the case studies. You will notice that in all cases, the learners were asked their goals in either the first or the second step in their initial meeting with the agency staff.

Since some of the Working Committee members were practitioners from agencies other than literacy or language service providers, a request came to develop key questions that would help front line staff from one of these agencies to make effective referrals. These key questions are still up for discussion and remain in draft format.

The Committees settled on six questions. Some felt uncomfortable even considering these questions as guidelines. However, these questions were designed to help a front line staff person such as a receptionist at a non-literacy or language agency streamline the process for a better referral. These questions were by no means intended to replace having a trained assessor interview and assess adult clients, but were merely meant to provide these staff with some guiding questions to begin discussion and information gathering. It was suggested that during a Phase 2 of this project, these questions could be further refined. Also, common referral forms could be developed that would be shared with all agencies working with adults who would be interested in using them.

Six Key Questions for Effective Referrals

Begin by determining the goal and learning path of the client:

1. What is your goal?

Then determine client needs:

2. Why have you chosen this agency? What program are you looking for?
3. What was your experience like in school?

Finally, give options on the best program:

4. Are you a Canadian citizen? Were you born outside of Canada?
5. Have you already had language or literacy training?
6. What programs or services are you accessing now or have you accessed in the past?

By determining the goal of a client (the first question), agency staff can get an initial idea of where to send a client. There are various learning paths that adults can choose that include:

- Employment
- Post-secondary Learning
- Independence
- Apprenticeship
- Credit

For example, if a client wants to switch careers and is a potential LBS client, then having an employment goal might suggest the adult is referred to LBS for assessment and to an employment counsellor to find out more about eligibility for Skills Development, Second Career, or other government incentives.

The next two questions deal with client needs and provide more information about client needs. The first question may glean that the client lives in a particular neighbourhood and only knows about your program, or a practitioner may find out that the client has chosen your particular agency because a friend recommended it. There may be a more appropriate agency to serve the learner, based on his or her goal. The third question may provide information on what type of education the client has experienced (ie., post-secondary, in another country, very little education) or it may uncover that the client experienced a lot of difficulty with learning in a certain manner. New information may suggest different programs or supports for the learner.

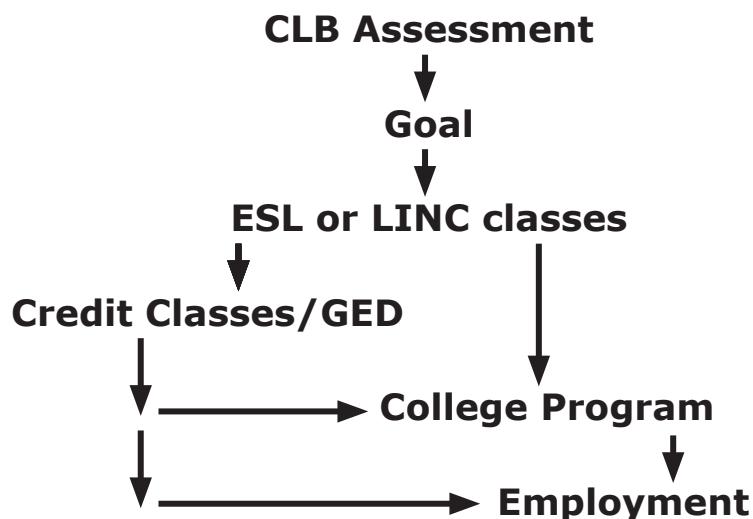
The next three questions all gather more information on the best program to refer the

client; however, the client has the final choice and may not take the advice given by the practitioner. This is okay in a client-centred approach. The first question in this section (question 4) would rule out LINC as an option if the client is a Canadian citizen and is looking for language training. It would provide information on whether ESL or LBS is a more appropriate system for this learner. The fifth question may help a practitioner determine if the client should remain at this agency or try someplace else. If a client has already had literacy or language training, further questions regarding what agency and the likes and dislikes of the client will help with referral. Finally, if a client has already accessed Second Career, for example, he or she would not be eligible for that funding a second time. Used together, these questions may provide direction as to where to refer an adult. Also, if referral forms were developed, as suggested for a Phase 2, then a lot of this information would not have to be asked again. In other words, the information would be recorded and passed on with the student to the referring agency. This would save the client time in repeating answers to common questions, and it would make the system work more effectively.

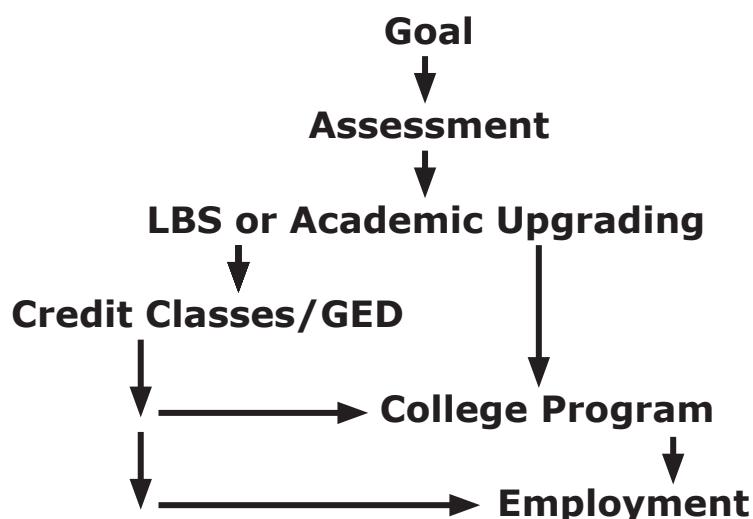
Figure 1. ESL or LINC Common Pathway

Figure 2. LBS Common Pathway

**ESL or LINC Learner Common Pathway:
Employment of Further Training and Education**



**LBS Learner Common Pathway:
Employment or Further Training and Education**



Assessment Tools and Practices

Doing assessments has become commonplace in both language and literacy programs because of the need for more detailed accountability. Program accountability is providing information on whether or not your program is delivering the program as proposed. It concerns program effectiveness and efficiency. Providing assessment data are one way to show accountability for various stakeholders. Both “low stakes” and “high stakes” assessments exist. A “low stakes” assessment would be one used within a program to determine when to move a learner from one level to another; an intake or placement test would also be considered to be “low stakes.” On the other hand, an assessment used to make decisions external to the program are considered “high stakes.” These assessments might include those used to determine eligibility for post-secondary programs, employment and income-support benefits.

All practitioners stated that gathering assessment data is important for learners, practitioners, and funders, but the data can only explain part of the program if measuring program quality, and it only shows what the learner is capable of on that particular day if measuring learner skills. No one assessment tool can capture the entire picture. Assessment data must be used with caution since it only provides a picture of “what is” at this present moment. A learner may have had a “bad day” and not been able to really demonstrate knowledge or vice-versa; the learner may have shown higher skill than normally possessed. It is the assessors knowledge, experience and ability to analyze and interpret that can make the assessment a valuable tool and the assessment data worthwhile.

ESL and LINC

In both Waterloo and Wellington ESL and LINC programs, the Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement tests are used and are administered by an unbiased third party. In Waterloo, Kitchener, and Cambridge the tests are conducted by the Kitchener-Waterloo YMCA Language Assessment Centre. In Wellington, they are conducted by Immigrant Services, Wellington-Guelph. These assessments, although standardized, are considered “low stakes” in that they are used for placement purposes only.

Assessment tools used to measure progress also follow the Canadian Language Benchmarks and are administered by practitioners once learners are in programs. These tools are checklists of skills that the learner must demonstrate. If all skills have been demonstrated, then the learner is progressed to the next level. SAM is a Summative Assessment Manual, commonly used in LINC and ESL for promotion purposes and in-class assessment. It is not mandated that it is used for all promotions, and it is just one assessment tool that teachers use among many self-created and purchased assessments. Conestoga College has a Language Institute that tailors courses for specific workplaces or sectors through the LINC program. Assessments used are tailored to the specific workplace or sector served. The other providers of Language-Specific Training also use these assessments.

Changes in Language Service Provision (ESL and LINC) Regarding Assessment Tools and Practices

MCI is undergoing program reform. Coordinated Language Assessment and Referral System (CLARS) is a new initiative and it is being rolled out by 2012. CLARS developed out of the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA), which was signed in November 2005 and was designed to allow for expansion of services to help newcomers integrate into Ontario successfully. At present they have not identified transition paths. CLARS is welcomed by language service providers. CLARS will provide consistent assessment from one community to another. At present, the framework is in place but some specific details may change. It has four main elements that include:

- An overall shift to a coordinated assessment and referral system (same assessment tools)
- Assessment and referral delivered by a neutral party, ensuring that the services are learner-centred
- Common protocols defined
- Federal and provincial eligibility will apply (CIC, Feb 2010)

LBS

LBS programs have a common understanding of assessment but do not necessarily use common or standardized assessment tools. All LBS programs are required to use demonstrations of learner progress but assessment tools used are not predetermined. Various assessment tools for intake and placement are used. For detailing learner progress and at exit, both formal and informal tools are used including CABS (Common Assessment of Basic Skills), CAMERA (Communications and Math Employment Readiness Assessment), CARA (Canadian Adult Reading Assessment), TOWES (Test of Workplace and Essential Skills) and others. Some LBS programs also use portfolios in addition to the demonstrations to indicate learner progress.

All LBS agencies in Waterloo and Wellington have assessors on site to do placement assessment. Additionally, Project READ Literacy Network provides Educational Essential Skills Assessments for Employment agencies, Educational Interviews for Action Centres, and Educational Skills Assessments for Ontario Works clients. The assessment data is provided to the client plus their counselor or caseworker so that, in tandem, they can decide on the best agency or agencies for that client's chosen path. These assessments also provide a projected timeline for completion of the course of study.

Changes in Literacy Services Provision (LBS) Regarding Assessment Tools and Practices

LBS agencies are also in the process of program reform and will fall under the Employment Ontario Information System (EOIS) beginning in 2011. When this system is fully implemented, there will be the capability to track all learners within a common data collection system, no matter through which agency they enter the Employment Ontario system. Presently, all learners are tracked within literacy programs under the Information Management System (IMS), a system used exclusively by LBS agencies in Ontario. Clients accessing Employment Services under Employment Ontario are

tracked within the EOIS.

Additionally, the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) is being developed and will be fully implemented in April 2011. The Framework will have LBS practitioners tracking learner pathways according to five key transition points and their learning progress including learner gains and goal completion. At present, research is being done to determine how to move the LBS field toward the new tracking method.

A third change comes as a request from both LBS learners and practitioners. Learners have been saying that they want their experience in adult non-credit education to be meaningful to other stakeholders such as post-secondary institutions, Apprenticeship, and adult credit. They want them to recognize what their participation has meant. In other words, they want recognition that it is not just participation in LBS, but that they have also gained some skills and will have certification for the work they have accomplished.

Accountability Parameters and Statistical Reporting

Since language and literacy providers collect and input different data, it was difficult for language service providers to determine the actual statistics for learners enrolled in courses. Data tracked was not exactly the same across all agencies. In language programs, each program inputs data, which is sent to the respective government office, either CIC or MCI on a monthly basis. In both ESL and LINC programs, quantitative data are gathered to determine how many students have attended for a certain number of hours per month. These data are collected on a daily basis, inputted regularly and sent to both CIC for LINC programs and MCI for ESL programs. This quantitative tracking states nothing about the quality of the program. To enhance data, providing qualitative data would give a clearer picture as to the program effectiveness. These programs do have anecdotal measures of quality, done in a journal format to the funder on a monthly basis.

When program staff was asked how many learners actually take part in their programs, practitioners were only aware of the number of students that attended their classes, not their program as a whole. Since there are many instructors at various campuses in language classes across the region, it was difficult to determine how many language learners are involved in programs across Waterloo and Wellington. It is also not a topic that practitioners discuss at community meetings, so this data was not brought to the meetings. An approximate number for learners enrolled in the St Louis ESL programs was about 2000 learners accounting for 7500 contact hours. At Conestoga College, over 1000 learners were served in LINC and Specialized Training Programs. To extrapolate data for the other programs would not be an effective way of gathering data for this report, but for a future project, managers may be contacted at the outset individually, so that the data can be available.

All LBS programs are required to input data on a monthly basis based on learners' attendance records, type of goal (i.e., independence, employment), goal completion,

literacy level, source of income, and status at 3 and 6-month follow-ups. Additionally, there is a common coordination body, namely Project READ Literacy Network that collects statistics and creates an annual Literacy Services Plan Report, to show program delivery, service coordination, identification of needs and proposed regional program delivery. Last year (April 2009 to March 2010), in Waterloo-Wellington, 3,476 learners took part in LBS training for a total of 372,302 contact hours. (Waterloo Region – 2196 learners and 250,770 contact hours and Guelph-Wellington – 1280 learners and 121,532 contact hours)

Vocabulary and Level Matrices

In LINC and ESL programs, the *Canadian Language Benchmarks* (CLB) Framework exists. The CLB is a task-based descriptive framework that uses communication tasks to describe the communicative competency of Second Language Learners. Communicative competency is having language learning take place in an integrative manner with an emphasis on making meaning by unconscious assimilation of knowledge through practice. It addresses four language skills including reading, writing, listening and speaking. The CLB is a national skill standard that is divided into 12 levels and is articulated to the Essential Skills levels (CCLB, 2009; CCLB, 2005).

In LBS, the *Learning Outcomes Matrix* has been in use since 1998. It has five skill domains (reading, writing, math, speaking and listening, and self-direction/self-management) within a five-level matrix. LBS programs also use the Essential Skills Matrix based on the International Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey (IALLS). It is a five level matrix with nine skill domains including reading text, document use, writing, math, computer use, thinking skills, working with others, continuous learning, and oral communication. In 2010, MTCU is going to begin implementation of the OALC, which is focused on developing tasks to build competencies for learners in transition from LBS to five key transition points including:

- employment
- apprenticeship
- credit
- post-secondary
- civic participation or independence

This work is currently underway and is being done in cooperation with the other "Learning Ministries" (OLC Communiqué, 2009). In the past few years, LBS practitioners have become familiar with the nine Essential Skills and how they correlate with the LBS Matrix in preparation for the shift in the New Year. Essential Skills language is beginning to be used as a common language between LBS, LINC and ESL programs. The OALC implementation is expected to:

- Foster greater quality and consistency in LBS instruction
- Contribute to improved outcomes for learners
- Assist adults in demonstrating skills to employers and future training providers
- Enhance learner pathways

Moving Levels in ESL, LINC, and LBS

There was some discussion about how quickly learners move from level to level within language and literacy programs. Although there is no timeline that has been defined anywhere, it has been discovered that in ESL and LINC programs, it may take as long as seven years for a learner to move from CLB 1 to CLB 9 or CLB 10 (WRIEN, 2010) because to move up a CLB level, learners must demonstrate all skills for that particular level. On average, it takes 4-6 months for a learner to move from one level to another in ESL and LINC programs (Interview, 2010). In LBS programs, it takes on average, 3 – 6 months for a learner to move up one level, unless they begin at a low LBS level 1. In this case, it will take longer to move up a level since the learner will have low functional literacy skills that need improvement and LBS level 1 is a large level. The goal of LBS is not for a learner to accomplish full levels, but rather to accomplish specific outcomes within the levels according to their goal. Therefore, they do not need to master everything in the level, they only need to master the specific skills required for their goal.

Client Eligibility and Program Entry Criteria

ESL

English as a Second Language (ESL) is open to:

- Any person interested in learning English (landed immigrants, convention refugees, refugee claimants, Canadian citizens)
- Work/Study Visa holders and international visitors, both who must pay fees to attend
- Those who are 18 years or older or have high school diploma to be in adult non-credit ESL

If the adult is a Canadian citizen, and does not have English (in Ontario) or French (in Quebec) as their first language, then he or she may attend an ESL class. The goal of participation in both LINC and ESL classes is to improve the communicative competency of adults (see Appendix 1 for definition).

LINC

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) is open to adults who are:

- Permanent residents of Canada, including persons determined to be convention refugees
- Protected persons
- Persons whose applications for permanent resident status are being processed
- Those who are 18 years or older and are not Canadian citizens

Admission into a LINC program is based solely on whether or not the adult has Canadian Citizenship. One can be a Landed Immigrant, a Convention Refugee, or a Permanent Resident. Participants can attend LINC for 3 years from the time they start the program. Adults may attend LINC classes for free and have childcare provision as well.

Specialized Language Programs

In Waterloo and Wellington literacy and language programs, there also exist specialized programs for Second Language Learners that incorporate the specialized English language needed for certain professionals. Enhanced Language Training (ELT) provides language training based on a specific profession such as Enhanced Language Training for Engineers. These courses provide lower level language training to immigrants who have landed in Canada within the past three years and higher level language training only to immigrants. ELT programs are funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC).

Occupation Specific Language Training (OSLT) is also funded by CIC and provides training or experience through various fields, but it requires higher level skills; a minimum of CLB 6. Specialized Language Training programs (SLT) are language programs for Canadian citizens in the workplace who still have language challenges. Finally, there are some bridging programs for internationally trained professionals which are courses of shorter duration that require a minimum of CLB 7.

For specific information on programs in Waterloo and Wellington, please refer to *Literacy and Language Service Provision in Waterloo and Wellington Regions* (Appendix 2).

LBS

Literacy focuses primarily on language development in English (usually but not always the student's first language) and ESL literacy focuses on language transfer from another mother tongue (PRLN, 2008).

Literacy and Basic Skills is open to adults who are:

- At least 19 years of age or older (some exceptions if 16 – 18)
- Out of school (elementary and secondary)
- Without a post-secondary education
- Able to show progress

The focus is on:

- Adults who are unemployed, especially those on Ontario Works
- Adults who have a speaking facility in English or French

Participation in LBS programs is for adults who wish to increase their foundational skills as described in the LBS Learning Outcomes Matrix and the Essential Skills Matrix. Type of citizenship and source of income are not determining factors for entry into LBS programs.

Mode of Delivery - Program Models and Teaching Practices

There are a wide variety of program models and teaching practices in use in both regions (see Appendix 2). They range from one-to-one and small group programs to large classrooms. They can be held anywhere from community centres and/or schools to a community college.

Waterloo

In Waterloo region, St Louis offers a variety of ESL programs at a number of locations,

consisting of small and large classroom delivery. They offer literacy to ESL 6+ in reading, writing, listening, speaking, pronunciation, and grammar. All classes are based on the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) and offer continuous enrollment. They also offer higher language learning that includes advanced reading and writing, advanced communication, advanced computers, and ESL for Credit.

St Louis also offers LINC classes at a variety of different locations and at a variety of different levels from literacy to Level 7, all based on the CLB Matrix. Conestoga College also offers a variety of LINC programs that begin at CLB Level 6. Conestoga College has a Language Institute that caters to various professions. It offers courses, including Occupational Specific Language Training (OSLT), Bridging Courses, English Language Training (ELT), and English Language Studies as well as part time ESL classes.

LBS classes are offered in one-to-one, small group, and large classroom formats. The Literacy Group of Waterloo Region offers one-to-one tutoring and small groups for learners functioning at LBS levels 1 – 4. St Louis, Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB) and the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) offer small and large classroom programs for learners in LBS 2 – 5. The WRDSB also offers GED preparation courses and offers flexible programming for learners. Conestoga College offers large classroom learning for adults functioning at LBS levels 3 – 5 and it offers Academic Upgrading including GED preparation.

Wellington

In the language programs at St George Campus of the Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB), they offer both ESL and LINC programs at various levels. Naylor-McLeod also offers LINC programs from literacy to level 10, including ELT for nurses, which has a minimum requirement of CLB Level 7. St George also offers specialized language training.

In Wellington, Action READ (serves Guelph) and the Wellington County Learning Centre (serves rural Wellington County) offer one-to-one tutoring and small groups for learners functioning at LBS levels 1 – 4. The Wellington Centre for Continuing Education (UGDSB) offers small and large classrooms for LBS levels 2 - 5. Conestoga College offers large classrooms for adults functioning at LBS levels 3 – 5 and it offers Academic Upgrading including GED preparation.

Existing Coordination and Referral Practices

At present, managers and practitioners meet in both informal and formal settings. For example, the ESL and LINC managers meet at an annual conference to share best practices and innovative ideas. LINC managers meet regularly to discuss programming options, joint promotion and other needs. These meetings are coordinated by the Language Assessment services. Additionally, the Local Immigration Partnership Council (LIPC), funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, has been holding community forums to collaborate and plan for the influx of immigrants this is anticipated to occur over the next 20 years. The purpose of the LIPC is to enhance partnerships to

establish a comprehensive local immigration partnership (WRIEN, 2010). Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN) also exists to enhance labour market access for immigrants to Waterloo Region. Their mandate is to ensure that Waterloo Region has future growth and prosperity by attracting and integrating skilled immigrants into the region. The YMCA also hosts networking meetings 3 times per year for anyone interested in sharing programming ideas and to network with agencies that primarily provide programs for Second Language Learners.

The LBS managers meet on a monthly basis at the Literacy Services Planning meetings (LSP), with Project READ Literacy Network coordinating these meetings. They identify best practices, needs and gaps, and look at service delivery within Waterloo and Wellington to determine which provider might offer programs to meet the identified needs in the region. They produce an annual report and share it publicly. Additionally, staff from LBS programs can attend conferences and training sessions delivered by the various LBS Anglophone-sector agencies such as the College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading (CSC), the Continuing Education School Board Administrators (CESBA), Community Literacy Ontario (CLO) and Laubach Literacy Ontario (LLO). LBS agency staff can also attend local training offered by Project READ Literacy Network on an ongoing basis.

At present, the language providers refer as needed within the range of ESL and LINC programs. Because centralized assessment occurs for every language learner, only placement is done by these agencies. Language programs do refer to the specialized training programs once learners have met the criteria delineated within the programs. Minimal referrals were being made to literacy programs from language programs prior to the "*Enhancing Pathways*" project. The same was happening in literacy programs. Very few referrals were being made to language programs. Although literacy practitioners did feel that some learners in their programs would be better served in language programs, the problem was that many felt they didn't know enough about the language programs to refer learners to them and vice-versa.

Gaps, Needs, Issues

At every meeting in this pilot project, gaps, needs and issues were identified. What follows is a comprehensive list of what surfaced at these meetings in response to the guided questions. If solutions were identified, they were also described below. For many of these questions, the discussion was not fully completed during this phase of the project. The guided questions surfaced from the research done in the writing of the Discussion Paper. See the Guiding Questions used at the meetings in the appendices (Appendix 4).

The need for clarity on how to determine whether a client should be referred to LBS or to ESL programs. What is the connection if there is one? How do we work together across sectors and how do we make good referrals? This need was identified at the first meeting and at every meeting thereafter. Working Committee members also emailed frequently with suggestions as to how to approach this issue at future meetings. Working Committee members felt that we were beginning to address this

issue by meeting on a regular basis but felt that since there is always staff turnover, as well as changes in programming to reflect the changing needs in the community, regular meetings were needed to keep everyone informed. Overall, in the case study section, readers can see that, in general, there are ways to make decisions about who best serves the client; however, they are not always straightforward. Continuing to further refine strategies for decision-making was suggested.

Employment, language, and literacy all go hand in hand. How can we work together better? Most Committee members felt that these discussions have just begun and would like them to continue. Initially, some LBS staff thought that ESL and LINC programs had a prescribed curriculum that every learner took a long time to progress through ESL and LINC leveled classes. Both ESL and LINC practitioners discussed their programs and stated that their classes were not purely curriculum-based but rather focused on what the learners needed. Because the language programs do have the added requirement of helping learners to acclimatize to Canadian culture, practitioners have many strategies to do this other than what is prescribed in the curriculum.

Working Committee Members want and need perspectives on what is happening in the field. Members have really benefitted from the discussions and networking done at these meetings and want this method of information-sharing to continue. Practitioners were not familiar with which doorway was the starting point for learners. They knew many of the agency names, but it wasn't until the meetings occurred on a regular basis (one every 2 months in the case of this pilot) that they began to understand and know the services that individual agencies could provide.

Second Career and Skills Development is an area that practitioners who are not working in Employment do not fully understand. There are issues with getting upgrading done for ESL clients who request it. Also there are misunderstandings with identifying and knowing where the starting point to access services for employment exists or should occur. This was not explored in great detail because these meetings occurred when the EO transformation was occurring and, for this reason, there wasn't always an employment representative who could address the questions about Second Career.

Different definitions of literacy, language acquisition, and other terms used by language and literacy practitioners exist. When does an immigrant stop becoming an immigrant? We wanted and needed to come up with more clear working definitions for this Committee. This was addressed and the common understanding of terms was shortened for the Waterloo and Wellington Committee members. They now have some common terminology. Please refer to Appendix 1, Common Language Work Sheet for the terminology used in this pilot project.

Members want to have a better understanding of programs and services. This understanding began in this project; however, committee members wanted to see more meetings in the future in order to continue this process

There are gaps in ESL, LINC, and LBS, but what are they? A general discussion surrounding this theme occurred at the last two meetings, but no conclusions surfaced. Further exploration is needed.

We have a workforce of older English language learners who depend on their families for information because they are scared to go to programs. Would one-to-one programming, which already exists within LBS, work for these communities? Also, older ESL adults started working young, but never received the English reading and writing skills they need. They don't want to attend classes for a credential, but they do want to improve their English speaking and writing skills in order to function more effectively in Canadian society. What can be done to help these learners? This was not addressed in these meetings because of lack of time. This would be an area to explore in Phase 2.

Further support is essential for highly needy learners. Rarely do literacy agencies encounter adults who have a total absence of literacy skills whereas in LINC and ESL programs, some learners may have an absence of literacy skills in their own language as well as those in English. This type of learner has even more challenges to learn English since they don't have a framework or the thinking skills for learning. It would be great if there were one-to-one classes available for low-literate Second Language Learners, just as there are for LBS learners. This Second Language Learner should not be held to the same timelines as other learners. This area was not addressed because of the lack of time.

Recommendations and New Ideas

What follows is a list of 13 recommendations that surfaced from the meetings held in Waterloo and Wellington. The list is by no means exhaustive, but can be used as a starting point for future discussions. Please note that these recommendations are not in any particular order.

New Programming

1. In discussions following the case studies, agency staff felt that the "grey area" adults (i.e., those adults who don't fit easily into the available classes) need to have programming provided that meets their needs. For example, provide Occupation Specific Language Training (OSLT) that is open to Canadian Citizens as well as non-Canadians. So rather than being exclusive, make the classes more inclusive while retaining the quality of the program.

Service Planning

2. Next, partners need to continue to meet in order to identify gaps in service provision and to problem-solve ways to meet client needs. *"We all have a willingness to look at changing programs to reduce inappropriate referral or over-referrals."* The networking that was gained by having regular meetings (every 2 months in this case) provided valuable information. The fact that many partners continued to meet and eventually sent even more staff to these meetings (based on the topics for discussion at the meetings) is a positive

step in showing that literacy and language providers as well as other agencies where adults “show up” found these meetings useful. Ensuring that members continue to know about different programs available for all literacy and language learners, including class sizes, modes of delivery, etc., will all aid in problem-solving.

Program Niches

3. *“Having open meetings where gaps were acknowledged, needs were identified, and the various programs were able to share their program’s expertise was exceptional. This breaking down of the barriers and opening up trust amongst the providers was ideal.”* Continue to further refine strategies for making recommendations as to the best agency to serve the learner’s goal is suggested. Looking at a referral process for specific clients such as refugees, learners from rural areas, and others is suggested for the next phase.

Older ESL Adults

4. A workforce of older Second Language Learners exists who depend on their families for information because they are scared to go to language and literacy programs. Would the one-to-one work programming that already exists in LBS work? Also, older ESL adults started working young but never got the English reading and writing skills they need. They don’t want credentials now but they do want to improve their English literacy skills. What can be done to help these learners? This was not addressed in these meetings because of lack of time. This could also be explored further in phase 2.

Essential Skills

5. Explore Essential Skills and their connections to language and literacy programs in future meetings.

Assessment

6. In the assessment of ESL, LINC, and LBS clients, many other factors need to be considered besides their CLB or LBS levels. Assessment, as stated previously, is not a one-time activity. How does assessment fit within referral? Can forms be designed that have a similar language for language and literacy programs? Since practitioners were all interested in key questions, exploring this further is suggested. This will help to identify what pathway is the best and most direct for the client.

Employment

7. There should be a Standing Committee of ESL, LINC, LBS, Employment, and other practitioners to share programming information, client issues, etc. We weren’t sure how ESL and Second Career/Skills Development fit. That is where we can expect real change in referral practice.

Expansion

8. Include employers and staff from Adult Secondary Credit programs in the next phase. This would help with referrals and information sharing, which will help with quality referrals.

Guidelines

9. Creating guidelines for admitting people with foreign degrees into our programs would also be helpful.

Self-Identification

10. How do we help people to identify themselves when they have barriers with their literacy and English speaking skills? This pertains to both language and literacy programs.

Independence Goals

11. The goal for many ESL and LINC students is to manage in daily life. This is beyond the employment pathway. With the implementation of CLARS, it will be necessary to recognize the value of each program that is helping adults to meet with their child's teachers, function daily, elect members of parliament, understand job idioms, and get along with co-workers (if one is employed). The basic tenants of Canadian life need to be valued highly in language programs. MCI and CIC need to look at more than just employment as a main goal for students.

Demand for Services

12. We do not want to slow students down, whether it is because of a wait list (limited staff time to assess, no room in classes, etc.) or another reason. We want to get them into literacy or language classes as soon as possible. Having the ministries support this notion is essential.

Best Practices

13. Finally, various "best practices" are already occurring within Waterloo and Wellington regions in language and literacy programs. It would be interesting to record the best practices and share them with other practitioners throughout Ontario.

Conclusions

As you can see, this pilot project was an all-encompassing, albeit brief, look into the referral practices in place in both Waterloo and Wellington that incorporated various stakeholders from across the Region. This project presented an opportunity to inform policy-makers about the best practices in enhancing learner pathways, regardless of the language or literacy program learners chose. During the pilot, Working Committee meetings were held to establish what referral practices were taking place, if any, and what would be solutions to ensure that adult students would be directed to the best agency to suit their goal, if they so chose. From these Working Committee meetings, we found a great need and desire among practitioners to continue to meet to further enhance effective referrals between agencies.

The members found that there were commonalities among them. First, their learners had a lack of power, whether they were from a language or a literacy program, because many lived in poverty. Empowerment for all learners was deemed an daily necessity. Next, there were lots of changes occurring at the time of these meetings. Initially, some members felt it would be pointless to attend these meetings when other meetings within either language or literacy service provision were occurring. Participants were hesitant to state some things conclusively because that might not be what occurs when new things are implemented. During this project, the Coordinated Language Assessment and Referral Service and of the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum were being implemented concurrently with the transformation of the Employment Services within Employment Ontario. It is hoped that the recommendations from this project will be taken seriously and will inform implementation for language and literacy programs.

Additionally, practitioners have stated that providing the learner with positive outcomes in their learning process is essential. By continuing to have Working Committee meetings, increased awareness of agency staff that provide services to adults will occur. It is likely that better referrals will take place, thereby reducing frustration for the client and increasing the chance of them having success in their chosen literacy or language program. These processes should be tracked by both quantity and quality of cross language and literacy referrals to see if this process is working. Begin by finding out the numbers of referrals occurring at a baseline point of time, and then at 3, 6, and 12-month follow-ups.

Continue to explore the notion of moving from a program-based framework of program delivery to a service-based framework, also known as "client-centred" program delivery. Adults should be able to access different aspects of different programs simultaneously to achieve their goals. Over and over again, practitioners from the Working Committees stated that this region has a plethora of great programs available for both language and literacy learners. Creating more flexibility within the programs to adapt to various client needs would move programs along the continuum towards a service-based framework of program delivery.

The importance of keeping learners' best interests in mind is critical. *"No matter which*

point of access the client enters the system, they are the reason for us to be here. This is essential for us to continue to be learner-centred and outcomes-based. We want clients to have access to what they need and we want to help them make an informed decision.” The process is threefold:

- Meet the client and find out what he or she wants
- Provide the available information to the client (based on what the practitioner knows) - therefore practitioners must be supported to stay informed
- Encourage the client to choose the programs or services based on the information given

Many members from the Working Committees stated that the meetings provided an excellent forum for breaking down initial barriers and insecurities and began to build relationships within and among the attending agencies. Members were glad that, in general, the meetings had good representation from all areas. What was missing, however, were staff from Adult Credit Programs as well as employers. These two areas need to be added for the next phase.

In conclusion, these pilots began to “scratch the surface” regarding the continuum of literacy and language. Partnerships have begun but it is too early to determine whether cross-language and literacy referrals are occurring. The project outcomes included:

- Increased understanding among the agencies of the three systems – LBS, ESL, LINC (structure and content of each system)
- Enhanced knowledge of transition points and efficient pathways for learners
- Identification of gaps and needs within the current continuum of language development
- Increased knowledge among the various Employment Ontario partners/sectors of the coordination among LBS, ESL and LINC programs

All four project outcomes have been realized to some extent; however, further time and research is needed to determine if coordination is occurring between and within ESL, LINC, and LBS programs.

Waterloo/Wellington Report



Appendices

- 1. Common Language Work Sheet**
- 2. Literacy and Language Service Provision in Waterloo and Wellington Regions**
- 3. LBS - ESL GUIDELINES for Accepting Former ESL Clients**
- 4. Guiding Questions for Working Committee Meetings**
- 5. References**



Appendix 1

Common Language Work Sheet June 2010

Term	Meaning
Accountability	Accountability is a framework and process for measuring the achievement of pre-set outputs and outcomes within the aspects of effectiveness, efficiency, and customer service/satisfaction.
Assessment	Identification of present skill levels and knowledge.
Bridging	Language programs in which international students can take language skills related to their occupation; requires CLB Level 6 or higher.
Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB)	Canadian Language Benchmarks is a national skill standard and is divided into 12 levels. This standard is used in both ESL and LINC classes. The main purpose of the CLB is to provide a measure that can be used to describe communicative ability in English as a Second Language. It addresses four language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking.
Client/Learner	An individual receiving services at any agency or business; have been used interchangeably in this document.
Collaboration	The continued process to construct and maintain shared goals and values.
Communicative Competency	Communicative competency is having language learning taking place in an integrative manner through an emphasis on making meaning by unconscious assimilation of knowledge through practice.
Document Literacy	The knowledge and skills required to understand and appropriately use written information such as graphs, charts, and application forms. (IALS)
English Language Studies (ELS)	Specific studies for those with a career goal and language training is a prerequisite.
Enhanced Language Training (ELT)	Training in any field of engineering with language proficiency of CLB 6. Funded by CIC.

Term	Meaning
Essential Skills	<p>Developed in 1994 by Human Resources Development Canada (now HRSDC – Human Resources Skills Development Canada). A nationally recognized framework, these are the skills necessary for work, learning, and life. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Text • Document Use • Writing • Numeracy or Math • Oral Communication • Working with Others • Continuous Learning • Computer Use • Thinking Skills, which include problem solving, decision making, critical thinking, job task planning and organizing, significant use of memory and finding information.
Language Acquisition	A natural progression or development in the use of language. Second language acquisition is the process by which people learn a second language in addition to their native language.
Language Development	The process by which people acquire their first language.
LBS Programs	Literacy and Basic Skills Programs including the delivery of Academic Upgrading by colleges. There are 5 levels of LBS in Ontario at present. They are articulated to the Grades 1 to 9.
Learning Path	This is the path that a learner may choose on the way to obtaining or accomplishing his/her goal.
LINC	Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada. Newcomers to Canada are individuals who do not have their Canadian citizenship. LINC classes follow the CLB benchmarks.
Literacy	The ability to communicate including reading, writing, math, and self-direction including all the Essential Skills by HRSDC.
Literacy Learners	Individuals enrolled in LBS programs.

Term	Meaning
LSP (Literacy Services Planning)	LBS Managers meet on a monthly basis to identify best practices, needs and gaps, examine service delivery and determine the best provider to meet identified needs. The LSP is coordinated in Waterloo and Wellington by Project READ Literacy Network.
OSLT (Occupation Specific Language Training)	Specific language training in any field of study with language skills of CLB 6 or higher.
Prose Literacy	The knowledge and skills required to understand and appropriately use information from print materials. (IALS)
Quantitative Literacy	The knowledge and skills required to understand and appropriately use math information. (IALS)
Second Language Learner	A learner whose first language is neither English nor French. Also referred to as an English as a Second Language Learner.
Specialized Language Training	Programs for SLL that incorporate specialized English language skills needed for certain professions.

Appendix 2
Literacy and Language Service Provision in Waterloo and Wellington

Agency, Location, Area	Client Eligibility	Registration Process	Program Models	Refer To Receive From	Average Learners/ Clients	Curriculum Used	Assessments Used
Literacy and Basic Skills - LBS							
Action READ, Guelph, LBS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ontario residents • LBS levels 1 – 4 • Does not have the literacy skills necessary to find or keep a job or to meet everyday needs • At least 19 years of age 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone for intake interview • Assessed for eligibility • Placed on list to find suitable tutor • Adult is given choices as to when to schedule tutoring sessions/tutor chosen 	Referrals to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conestoga College • Wellington Centre for Continuing Education 	One or small group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific curriculum – is outcome based • Used Laubach materials sometimes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • various
St Louis Core Essentials Kitchener and Cambridge, LBS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ontario Residents • LBS 2-5 • Goal of OSSD or employment • Does not have the literacy skills necessary to find or keep a job or to meet everyday needs • At least 19 years of age 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult student phones to make appointment • LBS secretary books placement assessment • Assessor to determine eligibility • Adult is given choices as to class desired and if available, is invited to class 	Referrals to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Literacy Group • Credit St Louis College • Conestoga College 	Per Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrading -10 Computers -13 PSW Essentials - 20 Gear UP - 10 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CABS, CARA, CAMERA + demonstrations for initial, ongoing and exit assessments • General Upgrading – no specific curriculum but a vast array of resources to fit individual needs • Learning Through Computers curriculum PSW Essentials – equips students with skills to have success in PSW program (notetaking, test taking, study skills) • GEAR UP curriculum – group process model that focuses on dev

Agency, Location, Area	Client Eligibility	Registration Process	Program Models	Refer To Receive From	Average Learners/ Clients	Curriculum Used	Assessments Used
Conestoga College, Guelph, LBS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LBS level 3 or higher • Minimum CLB 7 • Ability to listen and respond to English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Conestoga to book an assessment • Assessment done will be based on goals • Orientation usually within 1 month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large classroom ranging from 3 – 25 adult students at any given time • Independent and group work that is all individualized based on goals • Self-directed; lessons mostly one-to-one; student does assigned homework and gets feedback from teacher 	Referrals To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action READ, Wellington Centre for Con Ed – students below LBS 3 • St George's and Taylor McLeod's LINC Programs • Guelph Immigrant Services for students who need a CLB assessment 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential Mathematics and The Least You Should Know About English • GED Preparation 	
The Literacy Group, Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, LBS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ontario Residents • LBS 1 – 4 • Goals are employment • CLB 6+ 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call to schedule placement assessment interview • Have assessment, then orientation and placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LBS at various "Low income" community centres • Individualized programming • Small group and small classroom focus • Essential Skills focus • Online learning e.g. The Learning HUBs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We refer to and from all LBS agencies and Service providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 students maximum • At community centre classes 8 – 15 students • One-to-one tutoring • Small groups 6 - 10 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed to focus on student goals including Voyager, Laubach Way to Reading, Challenger, Work Write • Depends on learner and learning styles

Agency, Location, Area	Client Eligibility	Registration Process	Program Models	Refer To Receive From	Average Learners/ Clients	Curriculum Used	Assessments Used
Wellington centre for Continuing Education, Guelph, LBS	18 years of age and older	or Guelph: Contact Barbara for all intake and assessment For Wellington: Contact individual instructors at rural program location	Small group	We refer to and from all LBS agencies and service providers	6-10 ratio to teacher	Flexible upgrading curriculums based on student pathways to Education and employment	Flexible initial on-going and final assessments based on the students' goals and Essential Skills requirements
Assessment	Language Assessment Centre Immigrant Services Guelph Wellington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent Residents (or "Landed Immigrants") Includes Convention refugees, some PR applications 'in process', Minister's Permit, Protected Persons. • 18+ years of age • Fee-based Assessments for non-eligible clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call office and book appointment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual assessment done to determine Canadian Language Benchmark levels, as well as to determine other needs such as childcare and transportation • Report on levels received directly after assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LINC/ESL programs • OSLT/ SLP (Bridge programs) • ISAP (Settlement Counsellors) • ELT • Job Search • Workshop (JSW) Credit courses • Academic Upgrading • TOEFL Preparation • Conversation Circles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CLBA (Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment) CLB 1-8 CLBLA (a Literacy Assessment for first language literacy, not English literacy) CLBPT (Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test) CLB 1-8 ELTPA (Enhanced Language Training Placement Assessment) CLB 6-10 	<p>* all tools are based on Canadian Language Benchmarks</p>

Agency, Location, Area	Client Eligibility	Registration Process	Program Models	Refer To Receive From	Average Learners/ Clients	Curriculum Used	Assessments Used
YMCA Assessment Centre, Kitchener and Cambridge, LINC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 years or older • Permanent residents of Canada including Convention Refugees • Protected persons including Convention Refugees, • persons in need of protection, persons for whom the minister has allowed an application for protection • Persons in Canada whose application for Permanent Resident Status are being processed, including applicants on humanitarian and compassionate grounds, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call office and book appointment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual assessment done to determine LINC level and placement grid as well as to determine other needs such as childcare and transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LINC/ESL programs • Employment Support Programs • Bridge Programs • ELT • Credit courses • Academic Upgrading • TOEFL Preparation • Conversation Circles 			Canadian Language Benchmarks

Agency, Location, Area	Client Eligibility Process	Registration Process	Program Models	Refer To Receive From	Average Learners/ Clients	Curriculum Used	Assessments Used
St Louis Adult Learning Centres, Kitchener and Cambridge, ESL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open to any person interested in learning English including landed immigrants, convention refugees, refugee claimants, Canadian citizens, work/study visa holders and international visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call office to book assessment with St Louis English Language Assessment Centre (agency) Student must register in Person for Assessment Following Assessment, student registers for recommended classes Student receives admit slip and is welcomed into new class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large Classroom ESL Levels pre-benchmark to level 6 Specialized courses including literacy, TOEFL, ELTS, ESL for Credit and Computer Training, ESL for Trucking, Service Industry, Reading and Writing for Intermediate Speakers and ESL summer school 	Referrals To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LBS St Louis The Literacy Group Credit St Louis LINC Y programs such as Business Quest, Focus for Ethnic Women Conestoga College Referrals From: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> YMCA LBS 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CLB
St Louis Core Essentials Kitchener and Cambridge, LBS	<p>ESL Program Canadian citizens, permanent residents, convention refugees, refugee claimants, live-in caregivers with valid work permits who are eighteen years or older or have completed high school in their country of origin, and do not have knowledge of either of Canada's official languages</p> <p>OSLT – Occupation Specific Language Training same as ESL with CLB pre-requisites</p> <p>LINC program – Permanent residents, convention refugees and applicants to become permanent residents who have received an initial level of approval who are of school-leaving age and who do not speak English</p>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom delivery Communicative and task-based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various LINC and OSLT curricula 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial – CLB Ongoing – SAM tests and CLB 5 – 10 exit tasks

Agency, Location, Area	Client Eligibility	Registration Process	Program Models	Refer To Receive From	Average Learners/ Clients	Curriculum Used	Assessments Used
Conestoga College Conestoga Language Institute, Kitchener, Waterloo ESL – part time	• Open to all adults • Fee-based	• Apply through Continuing Education online or in person at one of the campus offices	• A variety of evening courses including conversation, pronunciation, writing, business English	Adults who are working during the day with a variety of language-learning goals	Tailored to different skills, based on learning needs and interests in the community	• Tailored to each course	
LINC	St Louis Adult Learning Centres, Kitchener, LINC	• Permanent residents • Landed immigrants • Convention refugees	• Contact the YMCA Language Assessment Centre • Register at St Louis	• Large classroom	Referrals From: • Language Assessment Centre	Newcomers to Canada who have not yet become Canadian citizens	• CLB
Conestoga College Conestoga Language Institute, Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge LINC	• Permanent residents, protected persons • Funded by CIC	• Email, telephone office or walk in • Contact the YMCA Language Assessment Centre	• Literacy to LINC 7 • Maximum of 20 students per class (smaller classes for Literacy)	Referrals From: Language Assessment Centre	Newcomers to Canada who have not yet become Canadian citizens	Conestoga LINC Curriculum, based on the LINC Curriculum Guidelines, adapted to each class based on needs assessment	• Portfolios and task-based assessment tools based on CLB
Naylor-McLeod, Guelph, LINC	• Permanent residents • Landed immigrants • Convention refugees	• Contact Immigrant Services – Wellington-Guelph	• Literacy to LINC 7 • Also have some specialized language training programs	Referrals from Immigrant Services Wellington-Guelph	Newcomers to Canada who have not yet become Canadian citizens	LINC curriculum based on the LINC curriculum guidelines	• Task-based assessment tools based on CLB
Specialized Language Training	Permanent resident protected persons	• Email, telephone office or walk in • Job developer assists with arranging CLB assessment and assessing background	• Maximum of 20 students per class • 186 hours of language/skills instruction • Mentoring with a professional in the Waterloo Regions • Funded by CIC	Referrals From: Language Assessment Centre, Employment counsellors, settlement agencies, LINC programs Goal - employment	Newcomers to Canada with a minimum of CLB 6 and a background in engineering/technology	Essential Skills Technical English Curriculum, CLB 7-9	• Assessments based on Essential Skills and CLB, imbedded in realistic technology scenarios

Agency, Location, Area	Client Eligibility	Registration Process	Program Models	Refer To Receive From	Average Learners/ Clients	Curriculum Used	Assessments Used
Conestoga College Conestoga Language Institute, Kitchener OSLT for Early Childhood Educators, Accounting, Health Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent residents, protected persons Minimum CLB 6 Background in Early Childhood Education, Accounting, or Health Care Professions Funded by CIC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email, telephone office or walk in Advisor assists with arranging CLB assessment and assessing background 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum of 20 students per class 180 hours of language/skills instruction 	Referrals From: Newcomers to Language Assessment Centre, Employment counsellors, settlement agencies, LINC programs Goal – employment or further studies	Newcomers to Canada with a minimum of CLB 6 and a background in Early Childhood Education, Accounting, or Health Care Professions	Occupation Specific Language Training curriculum tailored to specific sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments based on CLB, imbedded in realistic sector-specific scenarios
Conestoga College Conestoga Language Institute, Kitchener, Pre-health Bridge to Nursing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Diploma or Degree in a healthcare discipline and CLB 7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-step process through Conestoga Language Institute in cooperation with Health Sciences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 weeks of full-time pre-health education, including language preparation for the health care sector 	Goal – entrance into semester 3 of the 4-semester Practical Nursing program	Newcomers to Canada with a minimum of CLB 7 and a diploma or degree in a healthcare discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridging curriculum at Conestoga College 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CLB Placement test Assessments imbedded in health-care scenarios and academic tasks
Conestoga College Conestoga Language Institute, Kitchener, Waterloo, • English Language Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open to all adults Fee-based, eligible for OSAP, Second Career, and other funding sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply through Ontario College Application Service online or in-person at the Doon Campus Levels established through IELTS, TOEFL, or in-house placement test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 4 levels, 15 weeks each The listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills required for college/university studies 	Referrals From: • Employment counsellors, LINC and ESL programs • Self-referrals Refer to: • Post-secondary programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Students Newcomers to Canada who wish to pursue post-secondary studies Second Career or WSIB clients seeking to re-train 	Skills-based English for academic purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A variety of assessments, including portfolios, tests, and oral presentations

Agency, Location, Area	Client Eligibility	Registration Process	Program Models	Refer To Receive From	Average Learners/ Clients	Curriculum Used	Assessments Used
Conestoga College Conestoga Language Institute, • English in the workplace	• Open to all adults • Available through a participating workplace OR through Continuing Education	or Guelph: Contact Barbara for all intake and assessment For Wellington: Contact individual instructors at rural program location	• Through a participating workplace OR through Continuing Education online or in person at one of the campus offices	• Information available through Continuing Education and Corporate Training calendars	• Individuals wishing to further their career aspirations through focused language training	Tailored to specific workplaces or sectors	• Tailored to specific workplaces or sectors
Conestoga College Conestoga Language Institute, Kitchener IELTS (International English Language Testing System)	• Fee-based, open to all adults	In person at Conestoga College, Doon Campus or by mail – application downloaded from Conestoga College website	• An internationally recognized test of language proficiency for academic entrance requirements, professional associations, and immigration purposes • For general use or academic use		• Broad range of test-taker profiles		
Lutherwood Employment Program Listing, Kitchener, Cambridge and Guelph, Emp Services	• Is varied, depending on program but ranges from “at risk youth” to new Canadians to persons with disabilities to older adults	• Call or check website to find out about services right for you	• Is varied depending on program desired				

Agency, Location, Area	Client Eligibility	Registration Process	Program Models	Refer To Receive From	Average Learners/ Clients	Curriculum Used	Assessments Used
<p>Franco-phone Employment Resource Centre of Cambridge, 647 blvd. Franklin, 2nd Floor Cambridge, On N1R 7Z1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Francophone speakers • Bilingual people • Students • 15 years of age, adults, Immigrants with Work Permit, and Permanent Residence Card. • The person needs to be eligible to work in Canada and <u>must</u> have a social insurance number. 	<p>Students and adults should call for an appointment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A choice of appointments will be given by phone or by e-mail depending on the circumstances. • The future client will be informed about what he/she should bring to that 1st visit. • The new client must complete a Registration and Authorization forms. 	<p>Individual services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual workshops • The coordinator will see that person individually. The needs of that person will be evaluated during the 1st visit. • During 1st visit, find out his/her needs to find work as rapidly as possible. • If needed, individual computer workshops, will be suggested. • If outside help is needed, inform the client and refer him/her to other organizations. 	<p>Refer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on services needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boréal or Conestoga Colleges • YMCA • Northern Lights Vocational Services of their region • Cambridge Career Counselling • Second Career Learning Centres • Project READ Literacy if needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 to 40 years of age for people looking for work • More than 66 years of age for people using our Community Access Program and taking individual computer workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To suit individuals in their work search • More than one style, depending on the individual needs. • Other documents are also provided (documents listing references; to keep a record of their work search 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If someone is not bilingual, I will talk to him/her in both languages in order to find out at which level he/she might be on a scale 1 to 10. • No formal evaluation is done in this office. If the client will request one, I will then see what I can do for him/her but it will be informal and only for his/her own satisfaction. 	

Agency, Location, Area	Client Eligibility	Registration Process	Program Models	Refer To Receive From	Average Learners/ Clients	Curriculum Used	Assessments Used
Northern Lights Canada Kitchener, Fergus, Mount Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open to the general public • Canadian Citizens, Permanent Resident • Must have a valid social insurance number. • Open to the general public. • Canadian Citizens, Permanent Resident • Must have a valid social insurance number. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals can call in or book an appointment for an assessment in person. • Client needs to fill in a personal information sheet, bring in their resume and know their social insurance number. • An initial assessment will be completed to answer questions and provide information. 	<p>Employability Model: Northern Lights will complete an assessment (return to work action plan) to determine what the client's needs are and make referrals to assist the client in meeting their employment goals.</p> <p>Employment Service Model:</p> <p>Northern Lights Canada will assist clients based on their needs with: resource & information, client service planning and coordination, job matching/placement/incentives, job search assistance, job retention</p>	<p>Referrals To: service providers for: career decision making, job maintenance, training, application assistance, job search assistance, job development (wage subsidy), self-employment consideration.</p> <p>Referrals will include: exploring self-employment, Practice Firm and other community partners (i.e., The Literacy Group, CMHA, CHS).</p>			Employment Planning Interview

Appendix 3

Project READ Literacy Network Waterloo-Wellington LBS - ESL GUIDELINES for Accepting Former ESL Clients VERSION: PROPOSED REVISION DECEMBER 2, 2009

- Approved for Use by the Waterloo and Wellington
Literacy Services Planning Committees -

Purpose of the Guidelines:

The Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Agencies* in Waterloo-Wellington agree to use the following guidelines as a **consistent method for determining suitability** of adults entering their programs. The purpose of the guidelines is to identify whether LBS programs are best suited for students who were originally English as a Second Language (ESL). We believe that Literacy and ESL are opposite ends of the same educational continuum. In our view, "Literacy" focuses primarily on language development in English (usually but not always the student's first language) and "ESL" focuses on language transfer from another mother tongue. We want to be inclusive of students who might be best served in LBS programs, but at the same time, clear about the limitations of the programs. These guidelines do not address the specific group called "ESL Literacy". These adults are low literate in their first language, which is making it difficult for them learn English. They need specific and special approaches not found in LBS programs. *Refer to Page 3 for a list of LBS Agencies.

LBS programs are **intended for adults who wish to increase their foundational skills** as described in the LBS Matrix of 5 Levels of Learning Outcomes (5 domains) and in the Essential Skills Matrix (9 domains). Type of citizenship and source of income are not determining factors for entry to LBS programs.

Types of Students Who May Be Affected, but not limited to:

- An adult who has been in Canada many years, who has been in the workforce, may have Canadian Citizenship, and who may speak English very well, but does not have the reading and writing in English that is necessary for work and life.
- An adult who has been in the ESL and/or LINC systems in the past and wishes to have more specific literacy training to improve their skills for the workplace. LBS programs focus on three goal pathways (employment, further education & training and independence) and are driven by individual training plans and outcomes.
- Any adult who has a "jagged" foundational skills profile; specifically they may be at a higher level in one or two domains (e.g. writing and speaking)

but lower in other domains (reading). (This jagged profile is a common occurrence among ESL and LBS students.)

- An adult who wishes to gain skills to be successful in a post-secondary program. While CLB Level 7 is the minimum requirement for post-secondary entry, students will be more successful if they are functioning at higher CLB and LBS levels (CLB Levels 8 & 9 and LBS Level 5+). It is interesting to note that job search activities require a minimum of CLB level 5 (Essential Skills Level 2) and most jobs in the workforce require at least CLB Levels 7 – 9 (Essential Skills Level 3).

Premise of Levels Comparison:

Using Essential Skills as the commonly referenced matrix, we were able to first **compare*** LBS Levels to Essential Skills Levels. Then we compared Essential Skills Levels to Canadian Language Benchmark Levels (CLB). CLB Levels and domains are the matrix commonly used in LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomer Canadians) and ESL classes. We determined the following comparisons (not articulations) in the domains of reading, writing, speaking & listening:

*These are only estimated comparisons, not a scientifically validated articulation of level matrixes.

Literacy & Basic Skills Levels	Essential Skills Levels
LBS 1 & 2	1
LBS 3 & lower 4	2
LBS upper 4 & 5	Lower 3
	3
	4
	5

Essential Skills Levels	Canadian Language Benchmark Levels
1	CLB 1 - 5
2	6
Lower 3	
3	CLB 7 - 9
4	CLB 10
5	CLB 11 - 12

Criteria for determining entry into LBS programs for former ESL students:

1. The adult who wishes to enroll in an LBS program must be able to participate in and understand a **verbal conversation** with the program representative (Assessor, Program Coordinator, Instructor, etc.) without the aid of a translator. **CLB Level 7** in the speaking & listening domain indicates this level of verbal communication. This level of communication is needed for the student to be successful and functional in an LBS program.
2. LBS programs **may ask for proof of an adult's CLB levels** in reading, writing, speaking, and listening or any other domains as deemed appropriate. This documentation can come from the ESL or LINC Instructor or Language Assessor. Please see chart below for more information regarding required CLB levels for LBS entry.
3. **LBS agencies have the ultimate discretion** in accepting any adult into their programs. These guidelines provide an inclusive and informative framework for helping to determine eligibility.

LBS Entry Level Adults wanting to enter:	Recommended CLB Level for Entry We recommend that adults should be at this CLB level.
LBS 1	CLB Level 5 in reading & writing CLB 6-7 in speaking & listening
LBS 2	CLB 5 in reading & writing CLB 7 in speaking & listening
LBS 3	CLB Level 6 in reading & writing CLB Level 7 in speaking & listening
LBS 4	CLB Level 7 in reading & writing CLB 7 – 8 in speaking & listening
LBS 5	CLB 7 – 9 in reading & writing
Academic Upgrading LBS (high school credit course equivalencies & the highest level of upgrading offered only by colleges)	Minimum CLB 7

*This table is based on the CLB's Essential Skills Comparative Framework (www.itsessential.ca) and the Level Comparison Charts from "Construction Zone" developed by the Waterloo Region District School Board. Specific domain comparisons may vary slightly, e.g., LBS Reading with Understanding compared to ES Document Use versus LBS Reading with Understanding compared to ES Reading Text.

These guidelines are supported by the following LBS agencies:

Action Read

Conestoga College – Cambridge, Guelph, & Waterloo Campuses

The Literacy Group of Waterloo Region

Waterloo Catholic District School Board – Core Essentials Program

Waterloo Region District School Board – Essential Skills Program

Wellington County Learning Centre

Upper Grand District School Board - Wellington Centre for Continuing Education

Project READ Literacy Network Waterloo-Wellington

Appendix 4

Guiding Questions for Working Committee Meetings

Working Committee Meeting 1:

Goals:

- To share the process for this pilot project
- To recognize some of the agency staff present at the meetings

1. What is happening in your area regarding programming?
2. What is your interest in the project and being at these meetings?
3. What is working in the current system of literacy and language service provision?
4. What are the needs and gaps that you have experienced in literacy and language service provision?

Working Committee Meeting 2:

Goals:

- To get to know the other literacy and language service providers as well as the other staff from agencies represented here
- To make more effective referrals

1. Who can attend your programs and how do these participants/clients register?
2. How do you deliver programs?
3. What is the philosophy of your agency?
4. How do you refer to other agencies? Do you refer to other agencies?

Working Committee Meeting 3:

Goals:

- To continue to get to know the other literacy and language service providers as well as the other staff from agencies represented here
- To make more effective referrals

1. "Employment, language and literacy all go hand in hand." How can we work together better?
2. What is working well right now? How are LBS, ESL, and LINC programs working together already?
3. Looking at the following case studies (Learner profiles), please determine how and where you would refer this client and be prepared to discuss why.
4. Referring to the "LBS - ESL GUIDELINES for Accepting Former ESL Clients", do these guidelines help you or will they help you to make referrals? Yes/No. If no, how can they be more clearly written in order to be helpful? How do we disseminate referral information to front line staff at agencies working with adults?

How can we work together better?

Appendix 5

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Overall Project Evaluation

Project evaluation was conducted in two ways, informal and formal, at both formative and summative points in time. The formative evaluation was implemented by the pilot coordinators, using formal tools, such as meeting evaluations, and informal feedback from participants (individually or in groups). The formative methods ensured that pilot coordinators could determine whether their partnership approaches and strategies were being effective and if meeting content was relevant to the participants and their group goals. Generally, the formative evaluation results were positive and informative. It supported the pilot coordinators' activities and facilitation.

For the summative or overall project evaluation, Project READ engaged Evaluation Consultants. Their focus was to evaluate the accomplishment of the project's outcomes and the project process (communication and implementation). The evaluation was conducted using two tools: an online survey of the Advisory and Working Committee members (all pilot participants) and a paper-based evaluation of the "Sharing the Results" presentations. These presentations were given to a wide variety of community agency representatives with specific invitations to Employment Ontario stakeholders in each pilot site.

The online survey was disseminated to all individuals who participated in the project (both pilot sites). The survey focused on project communication, accomplishment of the project outcomes, and unexpected benefits. For each project outcome there was a performance indicator or target for accomplishment. Overall, the results were very positive and the outcomes were accomplished. Respondents felt they benefitted greatly from their participation and wanted more meetings. They felt it benefitted their work with students and that future meetings and discussions were merited.

- a) Increased understanding among the agencies of the three systems – LBS, ESL, LINC (structure and content of each system) – Performance Indicator: 60% of participating agencies will report satisfaction with the coordination process and an increased understanding of the three systems. Result: 90% of respondents reported an increased understanding among the agencies of the three systems (ESL, LBS, LINC).
- b) Enhanced knowledge of transition points and efficient pathways for learners – Performance Indicator: 60% of participating agencies report an increase in their knowledge of transition points and pathways. Result: 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the project met this objective.
- c) Identification of gaps and needs within the current continuum of language development – Performance Indicator: List of current gaps and needs regarding the alignment of the three systems. Result: Service gaps were addressed with specific suggestions listed in the Recommendations Section of this report. 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the project had addressed this issue.

- d) Increased knowledge among various EO partners/sectors of the coordination among LBS, ESL and LINC programs – Performance Indicator: 60% of participants report satisfaction with the presentation (content and facilitation) and increased knowledge of coordination process. Result: 80% responded that the project successfully met this objective. *"I think this is one of the strongest benefits that has occurred."* – Respondent

For more details regarding the summative evaluation, please refer to the Project Evaluation Report in the Appendices.

Overall Project Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall Project Conclusions:

At the outset of this project we sought to accomplish four outcomes:

- Increased understanding among the agencies of the three systems
- Enhanced knowledge of transition points and efficient pathways for learners
- Identification of gaps and needs within and among the systems
- Increased knowledge among various EO partners/sectors of the coordination among LBS, ESL and LINC programs

In reflecting on our process and evaluating our results, it was clear that we accomplished a great deal in this project that was intended as a first step to dialogue, mutual understanding and relationship building. We wanted to cultivate effective learner pathway planning, build agency and staff rapport through shared knowledge, respect for all three systems, and an understanding of the shared context for language and literacy programs. At the time of this project's inception (fall 2009) the pilot site communities and the whole country were reeling from massive unemployment and factory closures. There was a huge influx of adults seeking programming from all agencies. It became clear that an open dialogue that focused on program planning and learner pathways would be of benefit to all, especially students. Further, we needed, as partners, to examine what was not being provided and to whom.

From the two pilots there arose some common conclusions. These are listed in random order below.

- **Strong commitment to learner-centred programming and practices** – No matter the system, educators (frontline instructors and managers) were devoted to providing the best service to the students they served. Educators viewed students as “rational actors” who had the free will to choose from among services, even if they are not always the best choice. To that end they developed a list of “six key common questions for effective referrals”⁹. It was suggested that all agencies use these questions provide learner-centred service. It was very helpful and powerful for practitioners to understand that they all shared that commitment to learners. It assisted in building mutual respect and trust, while allaying fears of other agencies wanting to “take” their learners. One challenge identified was the use of three different matrices (domains and levels) to identify current skills and knowledge of learners and to document learning progress. ESL and LINC programs utilize the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) and LBS programs use the LBS Learning Outcomes matrix. One possible common language would be the Essential Skills matrix. This issue needs to be explored in any future discussions.
- **Dialogue and collaboration** – As relationships were built and student pathways and needs revealed, it became clear that project participants valued the meeting process and wished it to continue. Agencies stated they wanted to continue to build a culture of networking and coordination. They clearly understood the benefit to themselves, their agencies and their clients. They began to understand the broad

⁹ Waterloo-Wellington Enhancing Pathways Pilot report

range of language and literacy programs and established personal links to support learner transitions and referrals. This project has laid the groundwork for future program coordination and it should not be wasted or neglected.

- **Identification of needs and gaps** – It was clear that all partners from the three systems saw similar gaps between and within the literacy and language systems. They put forth that the eligibility criteria currently in place makes it difficult for some learners to access needed programs, especially those who fall within the “grey area”. Learners should be able to access different aspects of various programs, i.e., Taking LBS math upgrading while attending ESL language classes. They identified the need for new hybrid programs that bridge the gap between current LBS and ESL programs.
- **Understanding the broader context** – All three systems exist within the broader context of adult education, training and employment. Employment included the larger context of labour market trends and economic recovery/development. Learners in all systems often have as their long-term goals, future training (post-secondary and apprenticeship) and employment. For this reason, the meetings held in both pilot areas were open to representatives beyond ESL, LBS and LINC. It was beneficial to all those who attended that they understood the other policy frameworks that their clients/students may be subject to if they were considering or were currently attending other programs such as those provided by employment services. Much was made of the Employment Ontario context and the need to support learner transitions to other agencies beyond literacy and language. Further, it was recognized that policy alignment among provincially funded programming would be most beneficial to the adults served.
- **Contribution to policy development** – As was voiced throughout the project from agency staff and government representatives, there was and continues to be opportunities to inform government policy. At first, many project participants felt that government policy was static and unrelated to current program provision and learner profiles. They also did not understand all the policies that were in place and the flexibility inherent in those. It was important to discuss government policy since there are different sets of program guidelines for each system based in three different ministries and two levels of government (provincial and federal). It was made clear that government policy development depends on a cycle of communication between the field (service providers) and government representatives. This was a welcome concept to those involved in this project.

Overall Project Recommendations:

These recommendations reflect the commonly held suggestions and ideas from both pilots and the Project Advisory Committee. There may be unique community-specific recommendations that appear in the Pilot Reports that may or may not be reflected in this section. The recommendations appear in random order.

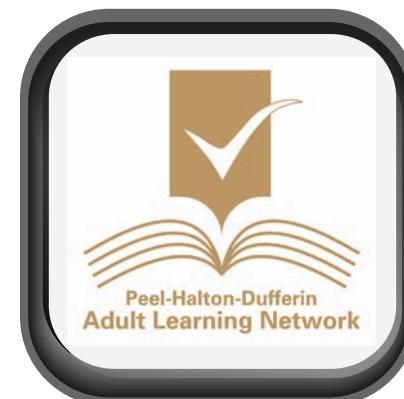
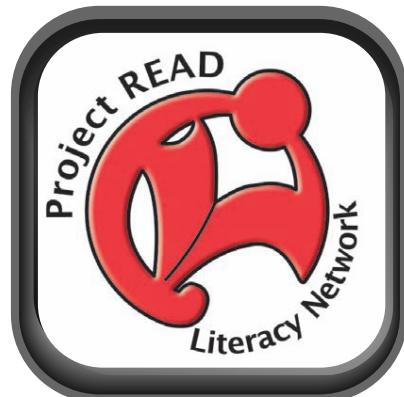
- **Practitioner/Educator Support** – All those working in the three systems should be supported with: information about programs in all three systems; discussion of level matrices (CLB, LBS and Essential Skills); time for referral meetings to cultivate and maintain relationships vital to learner transitions; information regarding best practices in each system; and information regarding government policies for all three systems. By clarifying the context and expectations for service, it encourages practitioners to meet students' needs and goals in a client-centred manner.
- **System Coordination and Program Partnerships** – There should be a formalized, ongoing cycle of service coordination and planning that exists between ESL, LBS and LINC. Adult Credit should also be included as many students move on to this system after ESL or LBS. The coordination process should have embedded, formal expectations from the Learning Ministries. The process should be resourced adequately to ensure ongoing quality (effectiveness and efficiency). It should encourage agencies to identify their service niches, create responsive programs and form delivery partnerships to offer flexible, hybrid programming, e.g., programs that span the gaps between the systems.
- **Client-centred, Flexible-access Programming** – Adults should be able to access more than one system according to their needs. Example: a student could be enrolled in LBS and ESL to upgrade their math and English skills respectively. Students are diverse and have diverse needs and goals. The systems must be responsive to this diversity. Agencies should be allowed and encouraged to develop a unique mix of programs to meet those needs. Example: creating hybrid programs that blend LBS and ESL for those students in the "grey area" (ones that are not clearly ESL nor clearly LBS students). The policies of the Learning Ministries should be aligned to support program flexibility.
- **Consistent Standards of Practice** – No matter the system, adults should receive consistent (not identical) information during initial intake and assessment. There should be commonly held best practices for the treatment of adults as they enter adult education agencies (intake and referral). This consistency supports client-centred programming, effective identification of learners' needs and efficient referrals and learner pathways. Practitioner training should be provided on an ongoing basis to support the implementation and maintenance of best practices.
- **Informed Advice** – Agencies are encouraged to inform government and policy development with their experience and knowledge of students, communities and trends. Government welcomes this information since it allows them to be responsive to student needs. This advice could include trends in learner profiles and pathways, effective program approaches, coordination efficiencies and gap identification.

Appendices:

A. Project Discussion Paper

B. Project Evaluation Report

**Appendix A -
Enhancing Pathways
The Literacy and Language
Continuum
Discussion Paper**



**Lorri Sauvé
October 2009**

**Project READ Literacy Network
Peel-Halton-Dufferin
Adult Learning Network**





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Enhancing Pathways

The Literacy and Language Continuum

Discussion Paper

Preamble

Canada's place in the world regarding literacy has been tracked for countless years. In comparison to other countries in the global communities, some studies suggest that Canada is doing well. One global assessment put Canadian students in the top 25% for reading, math, and science. However, these data hide the significant literacy problems regarding adult literacy in Canada. Close to half of Canadian adults (48%) have inadequate prose and document literacy skills, which means they lack the necessary literacy and math skills to succeed in today's society. This results in a decreased standard of living (IALSS, 2003). In 2007, the Canadian Council on Learning uncovered research that showed 42% of all working age adults aged 16 – 65 have low literacy skills. The report, *State of Learning* acknowledged that in order to improve adult literacy, further research was needed. It was determined that there is a need to understand the social and economic factors behind Canada's adult literacy rates including looking at the characteristics of different groups of adults with low literacy skills in order to explore barriers and solutions to their learning (CCL, 2008).

The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) found that 60% of immigrants score below level 3 on the IALS scale, compared with 37% for adults born in Canada; however, there is little information available about newcomers to Canada and their proficiency in their first language literacy (Folinsbee, 2007). IALS has five levels. Level 3 is deemed to be the minimum level required to fully function in today's knowledge-based society. Countless research states that having literacy skills is necessary for prosperity, regardless of being Canadian born or an immigrant (Alexander, 2007). The converse includes poor youth literacy rates that result in elevated high school dropout rates, long-term unemployment and higher rates of crime. Additionally, low literacy skills in both English and French, Canada's two official languages decreases the ability of new immigrants to integrate into Canadian society and economy (Alexander, 2007).

If literacy is a key component for functioning in today's economy and society, then individuals with lower literacy skills do not have as many options as their higher literate counterparts. Persons with higher literacy and math skills are more likely to complete high school and post-secondary education. Following that, individuals with higher literacy skills are more likely to become employed at higher skilled and higher paying jobs. Research has shown that each additional year of education increases annual earnings by 8.3% (IALSS, 2003). This means that having lower literacy skills is a huge disadvantage.

It is clear that Canada needs to develop a more skilled workforce in order to continue

to compete on the global market. By increasing the education and literacy of workers, productivity will be increased. A 1% increase in literacy levels would boost labour productivity by 2.5% and a 1.5% increase in output per capita (Statistics Canada, 2004). This should be a compelling statistic for both government and businesses to ponder.

Disclaimer: This paper contains statements and opinions from a wide variety of reports, key informants and documents. **It is meant to open up dialogue and discussion while provoking thoughtful contemplation** of the current English as a Second Language (ESL), Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) and Language Instruction for New Canadians (LINC) systems. It is a starting place not a definitive statement. Our intention is to inform and to put key issues on the table. We hope it will be read in the spirit of exploration for the purpose of contributing to the process of developing the final project report.

Methodology

This Discussion Paper is part of a larger project to explore the process for enhancing the learner pathways between foundational skills programs (Literacy and Basic Skills or LBS) and English as a Second or Additional Language programs (ESL/EAL) and Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC). Learners are found in all three programs for various reasons. The pathways between the three systems are not always apparent or available and therefore, it is difficult for all learners to reach their employment and training goals such as accessing Second Career, Ontario Skills Development, direct employment, apprenticeship, trades, etc. in an efficient and effective manner. The importance of looking at literacy as an issue of integration with immigration and citizenship is a beginning. The ultimate goal for programs is to provide appropriate instruction for learners. Another goal for practitioners referring adults to programs is to refer adults to the most appropriate program for their goal. In other words, to enhance their learning path in the most effective manner possible. **This Discussion Paper attempts to highlight commonalities as well as differences in an effort to begin discussion around the possibilities for making adult transitions easier.** We have included information that arose frequently during interviews and informal discussions and that has a definite basis in research. Individuals interviewed may have their individual perspectives, but it was important that these viewpoints could be backed up with research.

This Paper will be shared with the Project Advisory Committee and the Working Committees in Waterloo-Wellington and Peel and Halton Regions in hopes of having a starting point for discussion in order to ensure or at least become more aware of the pathways so that learners can receive the best instruction for them. For this Discussion Paper, countless articles were reviewed and key informants were interviewed,

including ESL Managers, LINC Administrators, Assessors, LBS Coordinators, Ministry representatives, etc. The reviewer focused on documents that addressed not only ESL and ESL Literacy, but also documents that explored assessment practices, best practices in adult literacy, literacy statistics, and LINC and LBS programs.

Definitions and Learner Eligibility

One of the first issues surrounding this Discussion Paper is the number of various definitions of literacy, ESL Literacy, ESL, and other terms used by practitioners and researchers in the respective fields of literacy. For the purposes of this paper, the following definitions are to be used. That is not to say that these are the ultimate definitions, but rather definitions to accept in order to explore the broader issues at stake. For a list of all definitions used in this paper, please refer to Appendix 1, Common Language Work Sheet.

Literacy is the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities at home, at work, and in the community to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potential (Statistics Canada, 2005). Literacy is more than knowing how to read and write. A person who is literate can use reading, writing, speaking, and numerical skills effectively to understand and participate in the world around them. Literacy is not a fixed skill. It needs to be exercised and challenged. Otherwise, the skill will not strengthen and may weaken. (PRLN website, 2009).

Literacy focuses primarily on language development in English (usually but not always the student's first language) and ESL Literacy focuses on language transfer from another mother tongue (PRLN 2008). Participation in LBS programs is for adults who wish to increase their foundational skills as described in the LBS Learning Outcomes Matrix and the Essential Skills Matrix. Type of citizenship and source of income are not determining factors for entry into LBS programs.

Admission into a LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) program is based solely on whether or not the adult has Canadian citizenship or not. One can be a landed immigrant, a convention refugee, or be a permanent resident. Participants can attend LINC for 3 years from the time they start the program (Folinsbee, 2007). If the adult is not a Canadian citizen, he or she may attend LINC classes for free and have child care provision as well. If the adult is a Canadian citizen, and does not have English (in Ontario) or French (in Quebec) as their first language, then he or she may attend an ESL class. The goal of participation in both LINC and ESL classes is to improve the communicative competency of adults. Communicative competency is having language learning take place in an integrative manner through an emphasis on making meaning by unconscious assimilation of knowledge through practice. (Prabhu, 1987)

There also exists a third category of adult learner within ESL classes called an ESL Literacy learner. This type of adult learner is not literate in his or her own native language and may require some combination of ESL and literacy education. This type of learner has more challenges because not only do they need to learn how to learn, but they also need to learn how to read and write (The Centre for Literacy of Quebec, 2008; Folinsbee, 2007). This concept of ESL Literacy is difficult to define. Adults who are considered ESL Literacy learners can be placed into 6 different groups depending on their native tongue:

- Pre-literate (the learner's native language has no writing system)
- Non-literate (the learner cannot read the native language)
- Semi-literate (the learner's reading abilities are minimal)
- Non-alphabet literate (the learner can read a non-alphabetic language)
- Non-Roman alphabet language literate (the learner can read a language that has a non-Roman alphabet writing system)
- Roman alphabet language literate

There is also discrepancy about how many years of schooling should be considered necessary to make one literate. In some cases, agencies consider an ESL literacy learner as having 6 or fewer years of education in their native country; in others it could be up to 8 years (The Centre for Literacy of Quebec, 2008, Folinsbee, 2007). ESL Literacy learners face extra obstacles because of lack of education, lack of familiarity of written language and learning to learn in a foreign language (OLC, 2008). From this basis, it is likely that because of the diverse issues and needs of ESL literacy learners, this topic will likely fall outside of the scope of this project.

Exploration of the Issues – Is there a literacy and language continuum?

Accountability, Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment, evaluation and accountability are connected. Accountability is a framework and process for measuring the achievement of pre-set outputs and outcomes within the aspects of effectiveness, efficiency, and customer service/satisfaction. Assessment is identification of present skill levels and knowledge whereas evaluation is the monitoring of learning gains in knowledge, skills and attitudes or behaviours. Publicly-funded programs such as LBS, LINC and ESL adult programs need to show more and more that they are achieving what they have been funded to do. They do this through formative and summative assessments (entry, ongoing and exit assessments).

We know that adult education is affected by people's previous schooling, their life experiences, and their current circumstances. There will inevitably be differences in what adults learn over a given period of time and standardized tests do not always capture this well. This is why a combination of evaluation tools provides better information on the program's quality (ABC Canada, 2009; Sauve, 2008; MET, 1998). See the chart below for a more figurative explanation of the three measures.

Assessment	Evaluation	Accountability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification or determination of present skill levels and knowledge • Is formative • Key question is “what is?” • Tries to capture what adults actually learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning process or gains from intervention or training in 3 areas of knowledge, skills and behaviours • Key question is “what has changed?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs need to show that they are achieving what they've been asked to do • Is summative and quantifiable • Program outcomes • Is a specialized form of program evaluation that sets out to prove the program is meeting its goals effectively and efficiently

Adult literacy education, including LBS, ESL, and LINC programs, often have many expectations such as providing language instruction to people who are in ESL classes or who have moved beyond ESL classes, finding work for participants, and getting adults to participate in adult education, and/or community development. Since LBS programs are required to be outcomes-based and learner-centred programs, there have been many frameworks designed to ensure accountability, including the current approach of “Continuous Improvement Performance Management”. (ABC Canada, 2009; MET, 1998)

LINC and ESL programs also have accountability measures in place, which are statistical in nature. These measures are essentially quantitative (outputs) in nature. Basically, a documentation of the number of individuals that have attended regularly and the number of hours of instruction provided per month. But these measures are not similar to each other or to LBS and they state nothing about quality. Once again, the variety of accountability measures reinforces the differences in the systems (ABC Canada, 2009).

Funding, Policy, and Goals of the Programs

There are inconsistencies in funding because Literacy and English Language training for adults fall under separate policy jurisdictions (OLC, 2009; Folinsbee, 2007). In Canada, the federal government funds language training, including the LINC program through the department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), whereas the provincial government funds most ESL programs through the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI), while ESL credit courses are funded by the Ministry of Education. *The government goal for LINC is to improve settlement and integration outcomes for immigrants.* Since 2006, the plan is to increase the Newcomer Settlement Program

(NCP) and make improvements to the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP). Under the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA) which is set to expire in November 2010, the government is trying to improve ISAP, and respond to settlement needs of French-speaking immigrants, among other needs (Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration website, 2009; OCASI, 2009).

The Government of Canada, through CIC, identified that increasing the participation of immigrants in settlement programs is a federal priority. CIC funds many programs that help newcomers settle in Canada, adapt and integrate into Canadian life. Recently, they announced the use of "Language Training Vouchers" to motivate newcomers to participate in language training programs, which is an effort to help newcomers find employment and become more involved in their communities (CIC, 2009).

The Ontario government funds Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (TCU). These programs are now included in the Employment Ontario (EO) stream. *LBS agencies have the mandate to provide free training in reading, writing, math and basic work skills in order to reach goals of further education and training, employment and/or personal independence* (MTCU, 2009). Having different ministries fund each of the three systems creates the opportunity for inequities, inconsistencies and varied policy frameworks. It misses out on possible coherence in delivery practices and system development. This diverse funding structure leads to differing accountability mechanisms as well. These are both issues in adult literacy.

Because education in Canada is primarily a provincial and territorial responsibility, when the federal government wants to provide leadership in this area, research suggests that providing partnership-based leadership needs to be respectful of the jurisdictions of other levels of government (ABC Canada, 2009). An example of this partnership is having school boards providing LINC classes with funding from the federal government. In Ontario, a variety of organizations deliver ESL, LBS and LINC including community-based agencies, colleges and school boards. Additionally, there are 16 regional literacy networks that coordinate service delivery for the LBS agencies. These regional literacy networks work in collaboration with the LBS agencies to identify gaps in service, identify the most appropriate delivery agency to fill that gap, and ensure that there is no duplication of services (CESBA, 2008).

Level Matrices and Entry Assessment Processes

Canadian Language Benchmarks

In LINC and ESL programs, the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) Framework exists. The CLB is a task-based descriptive framework that uses communication tasks to describe the communicative competency of ESL speakers. It addresses four language skills including, reading, writing, listening and speaking. Communicative competency is having language learning taking place in an integrative manner with an emphasis on making meaning by unconscious assimilation of knowledge through practice. The CLB is a national skill standard that is divided into 12 levels (CCLB, 2009).

Currently, no consistent placement tools exist for ESL or FSL literacy. Often students are assessed based only on their English skills using the CLB; however, many argue that these adults' native language skills should also be considered which is not tested in the CLB. *Learner placement practices need to be researched further to determine the complexities of their needs because of the range of learning needs involved* (Centre for Literacy of Quebec, 2008; Folinsbee, 2007).

Centralized placement assessment is done for LINC learners by trained assessors. This results in a common assessment approach. The Language Assessment Centres assess adults' language skills and then refer to language training or enhanced language training. Once the assessment has been done, adults are referred to appropriate LINC or ESL classes, in close proximity to where they live, if available. (KW YMCA, 2009)

LBS Learning Outcomes Matrix

In Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs in Ontario, the Learning Outcomes Matrix has been in use since 1998. It was developed by the Ministry of Education and Training (MET), the funder at the time, in order to have a common language for measuring and documenting the achievements of learners. It, however, is not a placement assessment. In 1998, the MET document, *Working with Learning Outcomes* was created as part of a learner-centred, goal-directed, and outcomes-based program. Using this matrix, delivery agencies were to be better able to measure and document the progress of adult learners in their programs (MET, 1998).

The *Learning Outcomes Matrix* is divided into 3 domains, including communications (reading with understanding, writing, speaking and listening), numeracy, and self-management/self-direction. Within each domain there are outcomes and skill sets that learners need to demonstrate before moving towards another short term goal. There are 5 levels within each domain (MET, 1998). Four years earlier, the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) 1994 had been done. The IALS was a collaborative effort by seven countries including Canada. The task was to measure the levels of adult literacy. IALS had three domains in five levels, including prose literacy, document literacy, and quantitative literacy. Unfortunately, these 5 levels do not articulate to LBS levels, which continues to create confusion for LBS instructors. Generally, the five levels of LBS fit within the bottom two levels of IALS with some overlap into the low level three IALS. See Appendix 2 for further detail.

Entry into LBS classes is varied throughout the province. In some regions, similar to LINC and ESL, adults are assessed by the local network and then referred to the appropriate LBS agency. In other areas in Ontario, LBS agencies have their own assessors who assess the adult and refer to the appropriate service at their agency. In smaller communities, it is often only one agency providing all LBS services (PRLN, 2001). Common assessment practices and protocols are a frequent focus for discussion and development work among LBS agencies.

Presently, the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (TCU) is creating an Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALC) that is focused on developing

tasks to build competencies for learners to transition from LBS to five key transition points – civic participation or independence, post-secondary training, apprenticeships, credit courses, and employment. This work is currently in development with all sectors of the LBS field and in cooperation with the other “Learning Ministries” (MCI and MEd).

Essential Skills

In the mid 1990’s, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) created and validated the Essential Skills (ES) across Canada. Essential Skills are the skills necessary for work, learning, and life. The nine essential skills include oral communication, reading, writing, document use, thinking skills, computer use, continuous learning, numeracy (math), and working with others. The ES is a broader framework for looking at the skills of adults. Presently, many practitioners in the LBS field have been attempting to articulate the LBS Levels to the ES but there is no accepted articulation to date (Gill, 2009). There is a general approximation that LBS Levels 1 to 5 fit into Essential Skills Levels 1, 2 and lower 3.

Relating Canadian Language Benchmarks and Essential Skills

In 2005, the CLB were compared to the ES. Since the Canadian Language Benchmarks provide a framework for describing and learning language, it can be used to support how ES are shown in individuals. Newcomers will certainly have some degree of all nine of the ES, but may not have all the necessary English language skills to function well (CCLB, 2005).

Benchmark levels pinpoint a learner’s ability to demonstrate language proficiency; an ES complexity level is a way of ranking a descriptor or task. A CLB benchmark can be used to describe a learner’s overall language ability or that of a specific language skill within the context of a given task. ES describe the level of difficulty of the task rather than an individual’s ability to complete the task.

Transitions

Learners leaving a literacy program (LBS program) are making a leap of faith from a familiar place to that of the unknown. Practitioners need to know that they have prepared the adult students well for the next step. At the same time, referral agencies need to know where the next best place is for the adult learner to continue their education journey. Transitions need to be easy to do and need to provide the learner with confidence. Knowing what literacy programs are available for adults is important for practitioners because an adult’s next step, whether they be a former ESL/LINC learner or a former LBS learner is paramount. This step will impact the learner positively or negatively, depending on if it is a good fit for the adult (Hagedorn, 2001, MTCU website, 2009).

Learners in ESL and LINC programs are also expected to make transitions to employment in Canada, integration into Canadian society, and an overall improvement in standard of living. There are various programs for immigrants and Canadian citizens who do not have English or French as their first language. These programs include Enhanced Language Training for Professionals (ELT), Occupation Specific Language

Training (OSLT), and English Language Studies (ELS). All of these programs are offered at Colleges and are provided for immigrants who have high literacy skills in their own language. These individuals would be in a CLB 6 or better (Conestoga College, 2009). There are also specialized programs for ESL learners but they are only offered at School Boards since ESL is funded by the provincial government, the Ministry of Education. Transitioning out of an ESL class often occurs into an LBS class or a credit course, even if the adult has not fully grasped all of the language concepts facilitated by the ESL instructor (Interview, 2009). Some adults feel that they need more "Canadian spoken English" so that they will better adapt within the Canadian workplace.

Program staff and all people responsible for referrals should know their communities, both in literacy and in the broader sense. They need to:

- Be aware of current labour market trends that will affect learners leaving their programs because this will help the learner in making choices about further education and training
- Have an effective, customized assessment system to aid them in planning and development
- Help learners develop transferable skills and know what these skills are
- Ensure skills are integrated into a functional context curriculum because people learn faster and retain skills longer when the skills are taught in a meaningful context related to their goals (Hagedorn et al, 2001).

Specialized Programs

Enhanced Language Training (ELT)

Many immigrants balance multiple jobs, childcare, and transportation and often lack the time or energy to learn (Canadian Labour and Business Centre, 2004). Additionally, immigrants often enter directly into employment, unaware that they will become ineligible for LINC or Enhanced Language Training (ELT) after residing 3 years in Canada, both of which provide many supports to learning, including childcare and transportation (Folinsbee, 2007).

Skilled workers are the primary target of the ELT program. These immigrants are much more likely to arrive with more English and/or French language skills. At present, the system provides language training based on time limits or immigration rather than on individual need. The system provides lower level language training to immigrants who have landed in Canada within the past 3 years and higher level language training only to immigrants. This system only targets two of the groups in need of enhanced language training. The ELT initiative could be more effective in addressing shortages in specific work sectors by recruiting foreign trained workers and providing them with Enhanced Language Training (Canadian Labour and Business Centre, 2004).

While ELT favours newcomers and non-citizens of Canada, ESL issues in the workplace affect many others. Some workers, who have been living in Canada for numerous years and who have become citizens, still have language challenges. Others have managed

until the literacy demands in the workplace have increased and their language skills are not sufficient. Although ELT provides assistance for special-purpose English needs such as occupation-specific language, many semi-skilled workers already in the workplace could use a more general *English in the workplace* approach (Canadian Labour and Business Centre, 2004).

ESL Literacy Learners

This is a diverse group deserving its own structure and funding. Most information about this group of learners is general. We do not know what skills and strategies they bring from their own language. We also do not know how many immigrants and refugees who have high oral skills in English or French but limited literacy skills could or would access ESL Literacy programs were they readily available. Commonly among ESL Literacy learners is that many have come from rural cultures where they left school early to work. War was another common factor that resulted in little opportunity for schooling. Third, for some women, getting married and having children was more important than going to school. Low literacy in one's first language compounds other issues faced by immigrants and refugees that include racism and discrimination, poor housing, lack of access to health care, and lack of employment opportunities, all of which prevent integration and quality of life for the adult (Folinsbee, 2007; OLC, 2007; Jangles Productions, 2006).

Certification and Training of Instructors

At present, both LINC and ESL teachers are required to obtain TESL certification in the province of Ontario. These programs are offered at Colleges. Research suggests there is a high staff turnover because, in general, ESL Literacy teachers are often poorly paid, work part-time in crowded classrooms without suitable instructional materials, and receive little or no professional development after their initial certification (OLC, 2007; Jangles Productions, 2006). Additionally, through the ESL certification process, there is little if any direct instruction regarding ESL Literacy instruction and research has shown that this is definitely a group of adult learners that needs specific instructional methods and has different concerns from other adult students (Prabhu, 1987; Folinsbee, 2007; OLC, 2007; Jangles Productions, 2006). After initial certification, few opportunities exist for professional development for ESL and LINC instructors, which makes it difficult for instructors to be using up-to-date instructional methods and to have a network of colleagues to share and model best instructional practices (OLC, 2007).

At present, there is no specific certification requirement for becoming an adult literacy instructor; however, there is an online certification program offered by Conestoga College and Sault College called *Teacher of Adults: Literacy Educator Certificate* (TALEC). In order to be hired as a literacy Instructor in Ontario, most agencies look for experience in working with adults and some form of post-secondary education. Some agencies do recommend that LBS instructors take at least one of the TALEC courses; however, this is not a mandatory requirement for employment. Many agencies offer their own training on-the-job and it varies from agency to agency. There are professional development opportunities for further training that are offered

by regional literacy networks throughout the province of Ontario. Training varies from online delivery to face-to-face workshops. This creates an inequity in practitioner skills, expertise, wage and opportunity since some literacy networks cover quite large urban and rural areas in Ontario.

Differences in Support for Learners in all Systems

Learners found in the LINC and LBS programs have childcare and transportation provided for them. ESL learners are not as lucky. The ESL system does not have supports such as childcare or transportation available. This occurs because the funding sources are different. CIC, a federal funding source, and MTCU, a provincial ministry, consider both childcare and transportation necessary training supports. ESL language training falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education which funds all regular school programming from junior kindergarten to Grade 12. Unfortunately for ESL adult learners, the additional supports needed are not available under this ministry (CIC, 2009; MTCU, 2009; MCI, 2009).

Summary

There have been many strategies identified to enhance the pathways for learners. This Discussion Paper skimmed the surface regarding the exploration of issues. Remember, this is to be a beginning point for discussion. Issues were identified surrounding funding policy, goals of the programs, accountability, assessment and placement, transitions, specialized programs, certification and training of instructors, and differences in support for learners in the three program areas. Every area identified similarities and differences. All of these areas deserve further exploration. From this exploration, a continuum of language and literacy may develop.

Four key areas emerge: policy, program development, professional development, and awareness. Under policy, it is advisable to conduct further research on an integrated policy framework that would recognize that there may be a continuum of language and literacy for adults in Ontario. These policies may allow for learners to attend classes at their workplaces, in their homes (online), with a tutor, or in a classroom, but these opportunities will not be limited to whether or not they are a Canadian citizen. The policy might recognize that ESL, ESL Literacy, LINC, and Literacy (LBS) learners have differing needs and similar wants; however, all ministries can begin with the commonalities and work from there. In all cases, social supports such as childcare and transportation are elements that enable adults to attend these programs and are vital to success. Additionally, ensuring that there is adequate and equitable funding for all sectors within adult education is a must.

Under program development, the sharing of expertise within the specific sectors (ESL, LINC, and LBS) could be advantageous as well as the sharing of expertise between the sectors. Each segment of adult education comes with a specialized set of instructional methods, assessment needs and wants, but also with a common goal of serving the learner. Ensuring that class sizes are not too large for individual adult students to learn is a first step. Providing and understanding clear transitions and learner pathways for not only adults accessing the programs, but also for practitioners

making those referrals, is important. This information can only make the adult literacy field stronger. Continuing to explore and name these pathways is recommended. There is a vast array of knowledge already in place. Tapping into it, recording it, and sharing it will be helpful.

Under professional development, providing ongoing professional development for instructors will ensure that all have a varied toolkit of teaching strategies, including how language makes meaning in texts, cross-cultural communication, learning-to-learn strategies, and embedding learning in specific content works great for all adult learners. Team-teaching approaches between literacy and ESL practitioners is also recommended so that all instructors can learn the best practices from each discipline.

Finally, building awareness with all stakeholders, including policy makers and practitioners involved in ESL, LINC, and LBS will help to show the connections and the differences between each. So, the question remains, is there a language and literacy continuum? If so, what is it?

Discussion Paper Appendices

Appendix 1 – Common Language Work Sheet (Please refer to Appendices in Waterloo/Wellington Pilot Report)

Appendix 2 – Comparative Framework of CLB, Essential Skills, LBS and IALS

Appendix 3 – References

Appendix 1

Common Language Work Sheet

Please find this document in the Appendices Section of the Waterloo/Wellington Pilot Report.

Appendix 2

Comparative Framework of Canadian Language Benchmarks, Essential Skills, Literacy and Basic Skills Levels, and International Adult Literacy Skills

CLB	ES	LBS	IALS
Speaking	Oral Communication	Communications Speak and Listen Effectively	
Listening			
Reading	Reading Text	Communications Read with understanding for various purposes	
Writing	Writing	Communications Write clearly to express ideas	Prose Literacy
Reading and Writing	Document Use	Communications Reading and Writing for various purposes	Prose Literacy
	Thinking Skills Significant Use of Memory, Job Task Planning and Organizing, Problem Solving, Decision-Making	Self-Management and Self-Direction	
	Computer Skills		
	Working with Others		
	Numeracy	Numeracy	
	Continuous Learning	Self-Management and Self- Direction	

Caveat: Please note that the comparative framework of CLB and ES was designed so that ESL and LINC instructors could understand ES descriptors within the familiar lens of the CLB. It was not intended as an equivalency table.

Adapted from CCLB, Relating Canadian Language Benchmarks to Essential Skills: A Comparative Framework, 2005

Complexity Levels

CLB	ES	LBS	IALS
5-6	1	1-2	0-225
7-8	2	3-4	226-275
9-10	3	5	276-325
11-12	4		326-375
	5		376-500

Caveat: Again, please note that these standards use fundamentally different scales and a precise correlation is not possible. This chart is simply meant as a quick overview between the four scales. Adapted from Gill, S. Essential Skills Assessment, Adult Basic Education Association, Hamilton, 2009.



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Appendix B: Enhancing Pathways Project

Evaluation Report

Prepared for

Project READ Literacy Network Waterloo-Wellington

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Introduction

The Enhancing Pathways Project sought to explore and report on the process of enhancing learner pathways between LBS, ESL and LINC programs in Waterloo/Wellington and Peel/Halton/Dufferin, in order to assist adults to reach their employment and training goals in an efficient manner.

This was achieved by: the striking of an Advisory Committee, research, and the creation of two Working Committees of agency representatives to identify current pathways, transition points, gaps and needs and recommendations. The information was disseminated to Employment Ontario agencies and other interested community agencies via two "Sharing the Results" presentations.

The following measurable outcomes were proposed for this project:

1. *60% of participating agencies report "Increased understanding among the agencies of the three systems-LBS, ESL, LINC (structure and content of each system)."*
2. *60% of participating agencies report "Satisfaction with the coordination process".*
3. *60% of participating agencies report "Enhanced knowledge of transition points and efficient pathways for learners".*
4. *"Identification of gaps and needs within the current continuum of language development"*
5. *60% of participants report "Increased knowledge among various EO partners/sectors of the coordination among LBS, ESL & LINC programs".*
6. *60% of participants report "satisfaction with the "Sharing the Results" presentation (content & facilitation)."*

Evaluation Methodology & Tools

Evaluation of the Enhancing Pathways Project was performed using two tools; an online survey of Advisory and Working Committee members and a paper-format survey of Sharing the Results presentation participants. The Final Project Evaluation was created, disseminated and collated using Survey MonkeyTM resources at www.surveymonkey.com. The link to the evaluation was forwarded in May 2010 to Advisory and Waterloo/Wellington Working Committee members via e-mail. Committee members were instructed to complete the survey within four weeks. An e-mail reminder was sent to all Committee members after 2.5 weeks. The same survey was sent to Peel/Halton/Dufferin Working Committee members in September 2010, but due to project deadlines, this group was only given two weeks to complete the survey. As a result, only two (33.3%) of the six Peel/Halton/Dufferin Working Committee members responded to the survey.

The participants of the Employment Ontario *Sharing the Results* presentation were surveyed using a pre- and post-presentation evaluation tool. In the case of Waterloo/

Wellington presentations, raw data was collected by the presentation facilitator and delivered to the evaluators who tabulated the aggregate by hand. The responses from Peel/Halton/Dufferin were collected and aggregates were tabulated by the presentation facilitator. A summary of the responses was provided to the evaluators.

Evaluation Results

Of the 60 participants from Advisory and Working Committees, 23 (38.3%) responded to the online survey. Respondents worked in a variety of positions within their agencies but the greatest number of responses (12, 52.2%) came from either administrators or managers. All geographic regions were represented and, in many cases, participants reported working in more than one location within these jurisdictions.

The primary results obtained from the online survey data are as follows:

1. 91.3% of respondents reported an "*Increased understanding among the agencies of the three systems-LBS, ESL, LINC (structure and content of each system).*"
2. An average of 81.1% of respondents reported "*Satisfaction with the coordination process.*"
3. 81.8% of participants reported "*Enhanced knowledge of transition points and efficient pathways for learners.*"
4. 90.5% of respondents reported "*Identification of gaps and needs within the current continuum of language development.*"
5. 81.8% of respondents reported "*Increased knowledge among various EO partners/sectors of the coordination among LBS, ESL & LINC programs.*"
6. Over 80% of respondents reported "*satisfaction with the "Sharing the Results" presentation (content: 81.8% & facilitation: 88.6%).*"
7. 82% of respondents were "*satisfied with the final results of the Enhancing Pathways Project.*"

The responses exceed all outcomes set forth in the project proposal.

Additional Findings

Respondents were generally satisfied with the results of the Enhancing Pathways Project as a "good start" and would "like to see it continue" with a "follow-up workshop on how to do more". Communication during Working Committee meetings were often viewed positively as: "highly successful", "extremely useful", "truly useful dialogue" but shortcomings were noted in that Advisory and Working Committees had no opportunity to connect and more time and discussion was required to address many issues within and between the three systems.

There is ongoing debate regarding transition points between the three systems and whether there is a “continuum” of language development. Participants reported this area needs: “more dialogue”, “a lot more work”, a clear “process”, but despite a “fundamental disagreement between the literacy agency and the providers of English language training”, “gaps and needs were identified”, and there is a sense that participants are willing to continue working together to come to a constructive process.

Respondents enthusiastically reported on the new relationships they developed during the Enhancing Pathways Project, citing “an excellent opportunity for networking”, “better lines of communication with ESL & LINC staff & programs”, greater ability to “make connections/referrals”, “understanding the teaching approach of each system”, and the development of “relationship pathways for clients” to “make referrals easier”. There is a clear sense that this communication is important and should continue and it was suggested by more than one respondent that “an annual (even quarterly) meeting of these professionals would be very useful”. Many participants went so far as to call for a continuation of this project and the relationships built during the process to “solidify targets for change”, identify “emerging needs” and “pathways”, and “share reports and trends” and “perhaps case conference”.

Respondents indicated that they were already taking the information from the Enhancing Pathways Project to develop a “possible screening tool” for “gap learners who have difficulty fitting typical program profiles” as a “needs assessment for their programs” and, in a greater number of cases, to “find appropriate placements” for those learners.

Participants had varied expectations of the purpose and/or scope of this project. Many reported, during the two surveys, that they were expecting a “final summary/analysis/report of some kind” to be delivered to them at the culmination of the project and “not just a review of how the project happened” or “more fact gathering”. Two respondents requested advance “pre-reading materials” and “more handouts” and another had concerns that “inaccuracies in the draft report presented to both committees” were not addressed at the time of the final Working Committee meeting. While the Waterloo/Wellington facilitator was generally praised for her enthusiasm and “open facilitation style” one participant had concerns that the “free structure of the meetings” might prevent capturing important information from the meetings to “reflect it in the report”.

Recommendations

The following actions are recommended based on evaluation results:

- More networking opportunities between agencies, possibly in the form of an annual meeting
- Regular dialogue between referring agencies
- More structured process of communication between agencies, both within and outside of the project
- Clear project outlines & goals for reference during the subsequent phases of

the project

- Clear project documents for reference during subsequent phases of the project
- Dissemination of the final report to all members of the Advisory Committee and the Working Committee

Meta-Evaluation

While the overall results of the evaluations were positive, there were limitations inherent in the process that need to be taken into consideration. Only 23 of 60 Committee members responded to the Final Project Evaluation. Despite allowing extra time to complete the online evaluation tool, less than half (38.3%) of the participants responded. Some Waterloo/Wellington Committee members, according to their e-mail auto-responder, were on vacation and would not return till after the evaluation due-date in early May. Due to evaluator error and the delay in scheduling the Peel/Halton/Dufferin presentation, the Peel/Halton/Dufferin participants (6) were not given the link to the online survey till September and only had two weeks to complete the questionnaire. Paper versions of this evaluation tool could have been provided but not all participants attended all meetings and limited responses would have resulted from this method as well. E-mailed surveys generate reliable feedback as respondents can remain anonymous but responses are often low with little recourse to increase the number of responses. While surveys present a challenge in that the wording can bias the participants' responses, the wording of these evaluation tools was taken directly from the project proposal outcomes. In questions where the wording was not verbatim from the project proposal, opportunity was given for the respondents to use their own words to comment rather than be given a choice of set responses.

The two evaluators were, in the case of this project, also members of the Working Committee. Their responses are included as part of the online survey, but they did not attend nor did they provide feedback on the *Sharing the Results* presentation. In an effort to provide impartial feedback as Committee Members and impartial reporting as Project Evaluators, the issue of conflict of interest was raised between the Project Manager and evaluators at the outset of the project. It was determined that the evaluators could separate their responsibilities as Committee members and as evaluators. As such, the evaluators consciously examined, evaluated and were prepared to veto each others' views and actions throughout the project to limit bias.

