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Supporting Research

Understanding Literacy

Before we can define best practices for literacy programs, we have to spell out, in some way, our general understanding of what constitutes literacy. The best practices themselves will then articulate our philosophy of literacy in concrete terms and guide our programs.

Literacy is much more complex than it first appears. In today's world, there are many different understandings of it. For example, the dominant model of literacy has been one of a single phenomenon that consisted of an “autonomous, neutral and universal set of skills” (Street: 2003, xiii). In other words, it focused on reading and writing print and numbers, and usually in the dominant national language. More recently, other, more complex, models of literacy have emerged that try to describe the complexity and meanings of literacy in people's everyday lives (Collins & Blot, 2003). These models tend to see literacy as a social practice, embedded in particular cultures. Literacy may change from situation to situation: for example, it may look different in the home, the community, the group to which people belong, the workplace, and so on. These models involve more complex symbol systems that include written-linguistic, oral, visual, audio and gestural ways of making meaning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

The NWT literacy strategy document, *Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework—2001-2005* (Dept. of ECE, 2001), reflects the north's commitment to maintaining and enhancing the use of the eleven official languages in the NWT (English, French, Cree, Chipewyan, Dogrib, South Slavey, North Slavey, Gwich'in, Inuvialuktun, Inuinnaqtun and Inuktitut). It defines literacy as:



... an individual's ability to listen, speak, read, write, view, represent, compute and solve problems in one or more of the NWT official languages at levels of proficiency necessary to function in the family, in the community and on the job. (p. 5)

Literacy, in its broadest sense, is a foundation for wellness. It is empowering. It lets people take control of their lives and participate fully in society. Low literacy, on the other hand, may adversely affect people's lives both directly or indirectly. For example, people with low literacy:

- May not be able to read the instructions on medicine, or contents on food labels.
- Are more likely to have poorer health and live a shorter life.
- May be unable to participate fully and meaningfully in the lives of their families, communities and society.
- May feel ashamed and have low self-esteem.
- May end up in trouble with the law.
- Are more likely to be unemployed or earn less money.
- May not be able to read with their children.
- Are more likely to have children with low reading skills.

In the NWT, low literacy is a concern, because many adults reach adulthood without the knowledge and skills to achieve their personal or career goals.

A Range of Adult Literacy Programs

Learners in adult literacy programs often come with a broad range of needs, not just a need to improve their reading, writing and math skills. They may not have experienced success in school; they may not have completed their schooling; they may have had personal life experiences that have acted as



barriers to learning. Now they need a variety of opportunities to develop literacy and other basic skills that will meet their needs as individuals, as family members, as community members, as employees and as members of society.

Community-based literacy programs that offer a broad range of programs are one way to provide these opportunities. The specifics of these programs will vary according to:

- The community in which the program is offered.
- The needs of the learners in the program.
- The skills and expertise of the staff who deliver the programs.

In recent years, the scope of community-based literacy programs in the NWT has begun to change considerably. Today in a community, you might see any or, ideally, all of the following:

- Community-based adult literacy and basic education programs
- Family literacy programs
- Workplace literacy programs
- Integrated or comprehensive literacy programs
- Literacy integrated into other programs.

Community-based adult literacy and basic education programs are stand-alone programs that are an integral part of the literacy continuum and offer an essential service in the delivery of literacy programs to adults. These programs may include basic literacy, high school completion, academic upgrading, pre-employment and also personal development skills.

Family literacy programs are programs that involve adults and children learning and using literacy together. They may take many forms, but are most effective where:

- Adult education is central to the program



- Adults learn to be literate and to use their literacy in life roles, such as parenting, working or participating in community life
- Adults are encouraged and helped to transfer literacy and learning skills to their children (Dept. of ECE, 2001, p.12).

Workplace literacy programs help people continue to learn while they are employed. They are located in the workplace, and benefit both the employee and the employer. Employees have opportunities to improve their literacy and basic skills, and increase their self-confidence. Employer benefits include improved health and safety, as well as quality of work.

Integrated or comprehensive literacy programs combine existing adult and child learning programs and blend them into a more effective literacy model. An example of an integrated literacy program is the **4-component model**, which consists of:

- Children's learning, where children attend a quality early childhood program or school program every day.
- Adult learning, where adults develop basic literacy skills and life skills, but also develop learning materials to use with their children at home.
- Parent and child time together (PACT), where parents go into their children's class and play with and read to their children.
- Parent time, where parents learn about child and literacy development and community resources, and have time to network and develop mutual support with other parents.

Literacy integrated into other programs means that the program is not a stand-alone literacy program, but that literacy is incorporated into other programs, such as an Arts & Crafts program like jewelry-making. The successful literacy outcomes of these programs relate to hands-on literacy use, such as business planning, marketing, and so on.



The original intent of this document was to be inclusive, and to cover all these models. The reality, however, is that it is very complex to do so. Perhaps the time has not yet come to be able to describe them in this way. Thus the document focuses on the first type of program: Adult Literacy and Basic Education Programs. We are confident, however, that because all models involve adult literacy, some of the best practices could easily apply to other types of literacy programs. In the *Resource Manual of Practical Ideas* and in the *Examples of Best Practices in Action*, you will see ideas from some of these other programs.

The document builds on work that the Department of ECE and literacy providers began in 1999 to define standards for ALBE programs and also on the *Directive: Adult Literacy & Basic Education*, published in 2000.

The directive identifies five principles for Adult Literacy and Basic Education in the NWT. These same principles are used for this document:

Learner-centred—programs where the needs, interests, abilities and goals of the learners are a priority.

Accessible—programs and services that are broadly available. They support lifelong learning and recognize that learners enter and re-enter learning environments based on individual needs and goals.

Coordinated and Integrated—programs where responsibility, decision-making, and resources, for example, are shared among a variety of agencies and organizations to meet the needs of adult learners.

Community-Based—programs that are responsive to the unique needs and conditions of each community, and that support individual and community development.

Respect for Cultural Diversity—programs that promote cultural diversity and recognize the importance of cultural literacy to the survival, development and empowerment of individuals and language communities.

(Dept. of ECE, 2002)



A Comparison of Best Practices from Other Jurisdictions

This project focuses on best practices in adult literacy and basic education in the Northwest Territories. However we are not the first jurisdiction to try to define them. Our starting point therefore was to examine what is “state of the art” in other parts of the country and the world and build on that work.

Adult Literacy and Basic Education

In May 1988, the International Reading Association (IRA) passed a Resolution calling for the development and promotion of “standards for volunteer tutoring programs and the training of literacy volunteer tutors” and “evaluation standards for literacy programs”. In its background statement, the IRA acknowledged the contribution of volunteer tutors in literacy work, but stressed the need for well-planned training for them. The IRA attributed the high drop-out rate in part to the lack of qualified tutors and program shortcomings (Thomas, 1989a).

In Canada, work on best practices in adult literacy also began in 1988, when the Executive of the Adult Basic Education Association of BC approved a statement on “Quality Literacy Programs” (Thomas: 1989a). This was followed in 1989 by the development of the *Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutor Program Evaluation Kit* for the BC Ministry of Advanced Education and the National Literacy Secretariat. Programs can use the kit for self-evaluation or can have someone outside the program use it for an external evaluation. It has four components:

- A Program Questionnaire that consists of 17 good practice statements, the conditions that support each statement and a rating scale from 1-5 for each statement.



- A Program Profile that collects quantitative and descriptive data about the program, provides information about the resources available to the program, and other background information to help explain the findings from the evaluation.
- A Tutor Questionnaire that is keyed to the appropriate good practices in the Program Questionnaire.
- A Learner Questionnaire that is also keyed to the Program Questionnaire.

The evaluation leads into program planning, where people determine their priorities and the help they need to achieve their objectives for the coming year.

At the time of its development, the *Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutor Program Evaluation Kit* was considered a leading-edge document. It helped stimulate other initiatives in best practices and quality standards in Ontario and Alberta. The model has since been adapted for workplace, ESL, family literacy and most recently for use with Francophone groups using employment skills as a basis of training (Audrey Thomas, personal communication).

BC later developed the *ABE Program Quality Framework*. This consisted of 15 common components, each of which has a good practice statement followed by a list of relevant indicators. It too leads into program planning.

Also in 1989, the Province of British Columbia and the National Literacy Secretariat sponsored a project to identify and report on exemplary programs and innovative practices for adult literacy across Canada. *Exemplary Adult Literacy Programs and Innovative Practices in Canada* describes a variety of models of institutional, workplace and community-based programs in different locations throughout Canada.



Best Practices in Action

In 1991, Ontario began work on developing an accountability framework. After this work was completed, the province then began to develop quality standards and evaluation guidelines. Representatives from different Ontario literacy organizations were part of the development team. Eighteen standards were identified. In 1994, 13 pilot projects were funded to develop program features and evidence for each standard. Five principles for the development of literacy programming are reflected throughout the core quality standards:

- Belief in learners
- Respect for racial and cultural diversity
- Lifelong learning and adult education
- Adequate and appropriate service provision
- Integrated services.

The GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment used Ontario's framework as a basis to develop its draft quality standards in 1999.

In 1995, Manitoba Education and Training produced *Exemplary Practice in Manitoba: Models of Quality in Literacy Programming* to celebrate excellence in literacy programs. It describes exemplary programs in rural, urban, northern and workplace settings each of which “. . . contribute to the development of the principles of Good Practice in Manitoba” (Introduction). It identifies the elements of Good Practice that each program exemplifies.

In 1996, the Saskatchewan Literacy Network began work on developing provincial tutor training materials. As a result of the research for this project, the steering committee decided that a preliminary step should be to articulate what good literacy practice was. In 2000, the Saskatchewan Literacy Network published *Best Program Practices*, which “. . . provides an opportunity for programs to reflect on their current initiatives, identify strengths and plan further improvements” (p.iii). Guiding principles for this project include:



- Learner-centred programming
- Universal access
- Life-long learning
- Developing pro-active, nurturing learning environments
- Free services
- First language literacy.

The tool consists of three parts: a Program Questionnaire, a Tutor Questionnaire and a Learner Questionnaire. The Program Questionnaire has 13 best practice statements, followed by indicators of success, and sample measures in a checklist format. It also includes questions to guide future program planning. As with similar tools, wherever possible, people work together to complete the Program Questionnaire.

Common Themes

A review of the Canadian documents shows a number of common themes for best practices in adult literacy. These include:

- Philosophy
- Planning and evaluation
- Instruction
- Learning materials
- Assessment
- Accessibility
- Support for learners
- Staff training and development
- Community
- Partnerships
- Program administration

Newer documents include a section on Accountability. None of the documents includes Culture as a separate theme, although indicators



Best Practices in Action

relating to the culture of the learner appear in a number of documents. Similarly, Transferability of Learning does not appear as a separate theme.

We have had to fit indicators from a variety of different best practice themes into our comparison charts. We trust we have managed to reflect those from other jurisdictions as accurately as possible.



Best Practices: A Comparison of Canadian Documents

| Best Practice and Indicators | BC Tutor Evaluation Kit | BC ABE Program Quality Framework | Ontario Quality Standards | Saskatchewan Best Program Practices | NWT Quality Standards (Draft Document) |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Philosophy | | | | | |
| Philosophy/Mission | • | • | • | • | • |
| Includes goals and objectives | | • | • | • | • |
| Clearly written or stated; plain language | • | • | • | • | • |
| Reviewed regularly; updated | • | • | | • | • |
| Participatory process | | • | | • | • |
| Communicated to stakeholders, partners, etc. | • | • | • | • | • |
| Guides decision-making/ reflected in practice | | • | • | • | • |
| Prominently displayed | | | • | • | • |
| Used for promotion | | | | • | • |
| Program Planning | | | | | |
| Goals and objectives consistent with philosophy, needs of learners, demands of funders | • | • | | • | |
| Participatory process | • | • | | • | |
| Occurs regularly | • | • | | • | |
| Communicated to stakeholders, partners etc. | • | | | • | |
| Reviewed and updated | • | | | • | |
| Includes long-range/strategic plan | • | | | • | |
| Involves needs assessments | • | | | • | |
| Networks to keep informed of changing needs | | | | • | |



Best Practices: A Comparison of Canadian Documents (cont.)

| Best Practice & Indicators | BC Tutor Evaluation Kit | BC ABE Program Quality Framework | Ontario Quality Standards | Saskatchewan Best Program Practices | NWT Quality Standards (Draft Document) |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Program Evaluation | | | | | |
| Ongoing | | | | | |
| Participatory | | | | | |
| Regular | | | | | |
| Includes quantitative and qualitative data | | | | | |
| Is built into program design | | | | | |
| Results direct future planning | | | | | |
| Includes monitoring learner progress | | | | | |
| Includes learner follow-up | | | | | |
| Includes staff evaluation | | | | | |
| Results communicated to stakeholders etc. | | | | | |
| Celebrates achievements | | | | | |
| Has an evaluation plan that it completes | | | | | |
| Demonstrated satisfaction | | | | | |
| Program Accessibility | | | | | |
| Respects differences | | | • | • | • |
| Recognizes different goals and learning styles | | | • | • | • |
| Flexible | • | | • | • | • |
| Works towards fair, equitable outcomes | | | • | • | |
| Location is identifiable and convenient | • | • | | • | |
| Facilitates access to other learning opportunities | • | | | • | • |
| Advertises the program (in plain language) | • | | | • | |
| Facilities are physically accessible | • | | | • | • |
| Safe; conducive to learning | | • | | | • |



Best Practices: A Comparison of Canadian Documents (cont.)

| Best Practice & Indicators | BC Tutor Evaluation Kit | BC ABE Program Quality Framework | Ontario Quality Standards | Saskatchewan Best Program Practices | NWT Quality Standards (Draft Document) |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Program Accessibility (Cont.) | | | | | |
| Accessible to the broadest range of learners | | | | • | • |
| Location, equipment suitable for adults, program | | | | | |
| Provides support to overcome barriers | | | | • | |
| Instruction | | | | | |
| Reflects principles of adult/lifelong learning | | • | | • | • |
| Time reflects needs of learners | | • | • | | • |
| Learner-instructor ratio reflects needs/levels of learners | | • | • | | • |
| Well-planned | | | | | • |
| Responds to specific goals, needs of learners | • | • | • | • | • |
| Reviews goals collaboratively | | | | • | |
| Teaching & learning are participatory, interactive | | | | • | |
| Promotes the development of transferable skills & lifelong learning | | | | • | |
| Provides a variety of learning opportunities, delivery models | | • | • | • | • |
| Prerequisites, completion described | | | | | • |
| Takes into account learner's prior knowledge, experience; uses learner skills etc. | • | • | | • | |
| Takes into account initial assessment results | • | | | | |
| Builds in progress checks; acknowledges achievement | • | | | | |
| Encourages discussion and critical thinking and integrated communication | • | | | | |



Best Practices: A Comparison of Canadian Documents (cont.)

| Best Practice & Indicators | BC Tutor Evaluation Kit | BC ABE Program Quality Framework | Ontario Quality Standards | Saskatchewan Best Program Practices | NWT Quality Standards (Draft Document) |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Instruction (cont.) | | | | | |
| Follows prescribed curricula | | | | | • |
| Attendance is monitored | | | | | • |
| Plans for individual assessment | | | | | • |
| Helps learners assume responsibility for learning | | • | | | |
| Provides staff training for new courses | | • | | | |
| Encourages first language literacy | | | | • | |
| Learning Materials | | | | | |
| Uses a wide variety of learning materials | • | • | • | | • |
| Consistent with philosophy, goals | • | • | • | | • |
| Appropriate for adults | • | • | • | | • |
| Relevant to learners' needs | | • | • | | • |
| Demonstrate respect for human dignity; free of bias except to generate critical thinking | • | • | • | | |
| Culturally relevant | | | | | • |
| Current | | • | | | • |
| Wide variety of books available | | | | | • |
| Artifacts available | • | | | | • |
| Canadian content, where appropriate | • | • | | | |
| Encourage discussion, critical thinking | • | • | | | |
| Produces its own materials | • | | | | |
| Reviewed regularly | • | | | | |



Best Practices: A Comparison of Canadian Documents (cont.)

| Best Practice & Indicators | BC Tutor Evaluation Kit | BC ABE Program Quality Framework | Ontario Quality Standards | Saskatchewan Best Program Practices | NWT Quality Standards (Draft Document) |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Learner Assessment | | | | | |
| Evaluates learners' progress on an ongoing basis | • | | • | | • |
| Assesses learners regularly | | • | • | | • |
| Assessments have a positive impact | | | • | • | • |
| Assessments are participatory | • | | • | • | • |
| Encourages voluntary assessment | | | | • | |
| Assessments are linked to instruction | • | | | | • |
| Assessments are used to develop learning objectives with learners | • | | | • | • |
| Helps learners understand procedures and results | | | | • | • |
| Uses a variety of assessment tools | | • | | • | • |
| Identifies special learning needs | • | | | | |
| Refers learners to programs/agencies as needed | • | | | | |
| Involves learners in designing assessment procedures | • | | | | |
| Uses prior learning, challenge and equivalency | | • | | | |
| Is sensitive to learners' issues re: assessment | | • | | | |
| Assessment includes non-academic outcomes | • | | | • | |
| Provides time for thorough assessment | | • | | | |
| Follows up on learners | | • | | | |
| Keeps results of assessments confidential | | | | • | |



Best Practices: A Comparison of Canadian Documents (cont.)

| Best Practice & Indicators | BC Tutor Evaluation Kit | BC ABE Program Quality Framework | Ontario Quality Standards | Saskatchewan Best Program Practices | NWT Quality Standards (Draft Document) |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Respect and Support for Learners | | | | | |
| Recognizes learner needs go beyond literacy and numeracy | | • | • | | |
| Assists learners to access available sources of support | • | • | • | • | • |
| Respects learners' privacy and confidentiality | | | • | | • |
| Provides a supportive learning environment for learners | | | • | | • |
| Involves learners in decision-making | | | | | • |
| Learners manage learning environment | | | | | • |
| Informs learners of why and how information is collected | | | | | • |
| Follows up regularly with learners | • | • | | | • |
| Provides opportunities for learner networking | • | | | | • |
| Publishes learner writing | • | | | | |
| Identifies learners' needs & arranges for appropriate assistance | | • | | • | • |
| Provides intake orientation | | • | | | |
| Provides ongoing support for learners | | • | | | • |
| Communicates information on learner progress | | | • | | • |
| Learning materials reflect learners' cultures, needs and interests | | | | | • |
| Recognizes prior learning | | | | | • |
| Uses a variety of delivery models and learning materials | | • | | | • |



Best Practices: A Comparison of Canadian Documents (cont.)

| Best Practice & Indicators | BC Tutor Evaluation Kit | BC ABE Program Quality Framework | Ontario Quality Standards | Saskatchewan Best Program Practices | NWT Quality Standards (Draft Document) |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Respect and Support for Learners (cont.) | | | | | |
| Involves former learners in assisting current learners | • | | | | |
| Offers tutorial help as needed | | • | | | |
| Creates partnerships with human services agencies | | | | • | • |
| Instructor is an advocate for learners | | | | | • |
| Transferability of Learning | | | | | |
| Outcomes are recognized by other educational programs, business, industry, etc. | | | | | • |
| Learners can progress to further education, training, and employment | | | | | • |
| Programs and program/learner success are promoted | | | | | • |
| Program tracks its learners | | | | | • |
| Has articulation agreements | | | | | • |
| Uses a standardized curriculum recognized by outside agencies etc. | | | | | • |
| Records are available for each learner | | | | | • |
| Community | | | | | |
| Rooted in the community | | | • | • | • |
| Creates and counts on community support | | | • | • | • |
| Assesses and responds to community needs/helps the community meet its goals | • | | • | • | • |
| Involves learners from the community in decision-making re: community issues | | | • | • | |



Best Practices: A Comparison of Canadian Documents (cont.)

| Best Practice & Indicators | BC Tutor Evaluation Kit | BC ABE Program Quality Framework | Ontario Quality Standards | Saskatchewan Best Program Practices | NWT Quality Standards (Draft Document) |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Community (cont.) | | | | | |
| Involves community in program planning, delivery & evaluation | • | • | | | • |
| Learners are involved in the community | | | | | • |
| Uses a community development approach | | | | | • |
| Reflects the values and culture of the community | | • | | | • |
| Community recognizes learner success | • | | | | • |
| Community is aware of & involved in the program | | • | | • | • |
| Creates links with community social agencies & educational programs | • | • | | • | |
| Has community advisory committee | | | | • | • |
| Publicly credits the support it receives from the community | | | | • | |
| Outreach | | | | | |
| Uses positive and effective strategies to attract learners and other participants | | | • | | |
| Has determined which recruitment strategies are most successful for learners & staff | • | | | | |
| Experience of previous staff and learners is used to create awareness | • | | | | |
| Makes and maintains contact with media | • | | | | |
| Publicizes program regularly | • | | | | |



Best Practices: A Comparison of Canadian Documents (cont.)

| Best Practice & Indicators | BC Tutor Evaluation Kit | BC ABE Program Quality Framework | Ontario Quality Standards | Saskatchewan Best Program Practices | NWT Quality Standards (Draft Document) |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Outreach (cont.) | | | | | |
| Advocates for literacy and learners in the community | • | | | | |
| Organizational Linkages and Partnerships | | | | | |
| Has good relationships with other organizations that serve its learners | | | • | • | • |
| Is being funded by a variety of partners | | | | | • |
| Has an advisory group | | | | | • |
| Refers learners to other organizations/programs on completion | | | • | | • |
| Shares projects and resources with other organizations | | | | • | • |
| Has a variety of guest speakers from partners | | | | | • |
| Learners participate in field trips to other organizations | | | | | • |
| Sponsors visit program regularly | | | | | • |
| Ensures a strong coordinated system | | | • | | |
| Member of literacy coalition/provincial network | | | | • | |
| Submits annual report to provincial network | | | | • | |
| Sends resources created in the program to public library, SLN and NALD for distribution | | | | • | |
| Joint activities/resources with schools | | | | | • |
| Supports literacy fundraising efforts | | | | • | |



Best Practices: A Comparison of Canadian Documents (cont.)

| Best Practice & Indicators | BC Tutor Evaluation Kit | BC ABE Program Quality Framework | Ontario Quality Standards | Saskatchewan Best Program Practices | NWT Quality Standards (Draft Document) |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Staff Development & Support | | | | | |
| Has well-trained literacy instructors | • | • | • | | |
| Support for orientation and training | • | • | • | • | • |
| Appropriate supervision of staff | | | | | • |
| Recognizes and uses training and expertise of staff | | | | • | • |
| Knowledge and skills in volunteer management | • | | | | |
| Staff have opportunities to remain current | • | • | | • | |
| Funding is designated for training/PD | | • | | | |
| Training is appropriate to the needs of learners | | • | | | |
| Adequate time is allowed for PD and networking | | • | | • | |
| Instructors demonstrate commitment and create positive learning environment | | • | | | |
| Communicates openly with staff | | | | • | |
| Funding | | | | | |
| Has sufficient funding for staff, learning resources, infrastructure and student support | • | | | • | • |
| Consistent, reliable long-term commitment to funding | • | | | | • |
| Has promotional materials available | • | | | | • |
| Has current, relevant learning materials | • | | | | • |



Best Practices: A Comparison of Canadian Documents (cont.)

| Best Practice & Indicators | BC Tutor Evaluation Kit | BC ABE Program Quality Framework | Ontario Quality Standards | Saskatchewan Best Program Practices | NWT Quality Standards (Draft Document) |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Funding (cont.) | | | | | |
| Student evaluations are positive | | | | | • |
| A growing number of organizations are receiving operational funds | | | | | • |
| No fees charged for tuition | • | | | | |
| Funds for transportation and babysitting | • | | | | |
| Funds available for program expansion when required | • | | | | |
| A diversified funding base, if independent of an institution | • | | | | |
| Consults stakeholders when setting priorities | | | | • | |
| Calculates and includes in-kind donations | | | | • | |
| Networks re: funding opportunities | | | | • | |
| Financial administration is sound | | | | • | |
| Students are receiving equitable sponsorship | | | | | • |
| Program Administration | | | | | |
| Hires professional staff | • | • | | • | |
| Resources are adequate for program needs | • | | | • | |
| Qualifications for staff are specified and appropriate for adults | • | | | • | |
| Commitments are required of tutors and learners | • | | | | |
| Staff and learner records are kept | • | | | | |
| Confidentiality of records is assured | • | | | • | |



Best Practices: A Comparison of Canadian Documents (cont.)

| Best Practice & Indicators | BC Tutor Evaluation Kit | BC ABE Program Quality Framework | Ontario Quality Standards | Saskatchewan Best Program Practices | NWT Quality Standards (Draft Document) |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Program Administration (cont.) | | | | | |
| Develops and maintains sound financial and admin. systems and keeps accurate records | • | | • | • | |
| Has appropriate policies, procedures and accountability mechanisms in place e.g. hiring | • | • | | • | |
| Provides opportunities for staff/learners to have input into decision-making | | • | | | |
| Recognizes staff achievements, provides support | | • | | • | |
| Provides time to liaise with funders, partners | | • | | | |
| Promotes learner/program achievements | | • | | | |
| Provides regular reports to funders | | | | • | |
| Accountability | | | | | |
| Demonstrates accountability to sponsors, funders, partners, community | | | • | • | |
| Accountability is shared among learners, staff, funders, sponsors, administrators and practitioners | | | | | • |
| Has appropriate procedures and processes in place for learners | | | | | • |
| Final reports/financial statements are available | | | • | | • |
| Follows accepted provincial criteria and standards | | | | • | |



Best Practices: A Comparison of Canadian Documents (cont.)

| Best Practice & Indicators | BC Tutor Evaluation Kit | BC ABE Program Quality Framework | Ontario Quality Standards | Saskatchewan Best Program Practices | NWT Quality Standards (Draft Document) |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Accountability (cont.) | | | | | |
| Provides quantitative and qualitative indicators of success | | | | • | |
| Instruction develops learners' skills for real life | | | | • | |
| Encourages learners' active participation in learning and evaluation process | | | | • | |
| Ensures evaluation process allows for learners to measure their own progress | | | | • | |
| Documents increased learner participation in literacy at home, at work and in the community | | | | • | |
| Documents staff perceptions of progress | | | | • | |
| Completes learner and staff evaluations | | | | • | • |
| Program Commitment to Learners/Learner Commitment to Program | | | | | |
| Helps learners meet their goals | | | • | | |
| Recognizes that learners' goals are broad | | | • | | |
| Has structures and supports in place to increase access and equitable outcomes | | | • | | |
| Helps learners' obtain the skills for everyday life in the community according to learners' goals | | | • | | |
| Helps learners set goals based on understanding of time and commitment requirements | | | • | | |



Best Practices: A Comparison of Canadian Documents (cont.)

| Best Practice & Indicators | BC Tutor Evaluation Kit | BC ABE Program Quality Framework | Ontario Quality Standards | Saskatchewan Best Program Practices | NWT Quality Standards (Draft Document) |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Documented Outcomes | | | | | |
| Each course has clearly stated outcomes | • | | | | |
| Achievement of learners' goals is documented | • | | | | |
| Learners' knowledge and skills are documented on exit | • | | | | |
| Learner, institution and employer satisfaction with program is documented | • | | | | |
| Program successes are documented | • | | | | |
| A system for long-term follow up of learners and graduates exists | • | | | | |
| Learner-Centred Approaches and Methods | | | | | |
| Encourages learners to share control of the learning | | | • | | |
| Involves staff and learners in decisions that affect learners | | | • | | |
| Staff and learners identify appropriate methods and approaches for learners | | | • | | |
| Respects and accommodates learner differences | | • | | • | |
| Encourages learners to become active participants in learning | | • | | • | |
| Creates a supportive learning environment | | • | | | |
| Shows mutual respect for everyone in the program | | • | | | |



Best Practices: A Comparison of Canadian Documents (cont.)

| Best Practice & Indicators | BC Tutor Evaluation Kit | BC ABE Program Quality Framework | Ontario Quality Standards | Saskatchewan Best Program Practices | NWT Quality Standards (Draft Document) |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Learner-Centred Approaches and Methods (cont.) | | | | | |
| Responds to individual learners' goals | | • | | | |
| Makes referrals sensitively and respectfully | | • | | | |
| Assures confidentiality of sensitive information | | • | | | |
| Includes learner membership on advisory body | | | | • | |
| Uses appropriate assessment procedures to guide instruction | | | | • | |
| Helps learners with career planning | | | | | |
| Encourages lifelong learning | | | | • | |
| Facilities and Equipment | | | | | |
| Space is adequate for program needs | • | • | | | |
| Space is safe and free from hazards | • | • | | | |
| Necessary instructional equipment is available | • | • | | | |
| Accommodates people with disabilities | | • | | | |
| Meets WCB regulations | | • | | | |
| Participation | | | | | |
| Learners and staff participate in planning and review processes | • | | | | |
| Learners and staff are represented on advisory body | • | | | | |
| Learners and staff are involved in community awareness activities | • | | | | |
| Help plan and participate in program activities | • | | | | |



Best Practices: A Comparison of Canadian Documents (cont.)

| Best Practice & Indicators | BC Tutor Evaluation Kit | BC ABE Program Quality Framework | Ontario Quality Standards | Saskatchewan Best Program Practices | NWT Quality Standards (Draft Document) |
|--|----------------------------|---|------------------------------|---|---|
| Relevant Curriculum | | | | | |
| Curriculum is adult-oriented | | • | | | |
| Accommodates a variety of learning styles | | • | | | |
| Is related to program goals, has clearly stated learning outcomes for each course, and established performance standards | | • | | | |
| Reviewed regularly and adapted to reflect changing requirements | | • | | | |
| Combines theoretical, practical and experiential approaches | | • | | | |
| Is sequenced to enhance learner success | | • | | | |
| Builds on learner experiences and existing skills | | • | | | |
| Is related to further education and training | | • | | | |
| Participants evaluate program components to determine their effectiveness | | • | | | |
| Outlines are kept on file and available to learners | | • | | | |
| Designed to address continuous intake of learners | | • | | | |



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What is the Resource Manual of Practical Ideas?

The *Best Practices in Action Resource Manual of Practical Ideas* is a collection of best practices submitted by adult educators and literacy practitioners across the Northwest Territories. It documents the many activities and practices that have proven successful in literacy and basic education programs and illustrates the wealth of knowledge and experience of literacy practitioners in the north.

This resource manual is designed as a “living document” that we hope will continue to grow. As you read through the resource we hope it will spark ideas and excite you to share the best practices that are working in your community. New submissions can be sent to the NWT Literacy Council. The resource manual is available online on the NWT Literacy Council, Aurora College and Department of Education, Culture and Employment websites.

How to Use the Resource Manual of Practical Ideas

The *Best Practices in Action Resource Manual of Practical Ideas* is a collection of activities and practices. It is meant as a guide to spark ideas and to try to build best practices into your program. You can take these ideas and adapt them to meet the needs of your learners and community.



Best Practices in Action

The submissions are organized in sections based on the best practices they support. You can use the **Table of Contents** to search for a submission. In some cases, a submission supports more than one best practice statement so you can search in the **Index**, which provides links to all the best practices that a particular submission supports.

Each submission in the *Resource Manual of Practical Ideas* follows the same basic format, although not all headings will be included in each best practice. These are the headings:

- **Title**
- **Submitted by** – The practitioner’s position when they submitted the best practice.
- **Best practices supported** – Indicates the best practices that the submission supports.
- **Curriculum links** – Where appropriate, the best practices are linked to the Government of the NWT Adult Literacy and Basic Education Curricula.
- **What you need** – A list of supplies you will need
- **How it works** – Provides a description of the best practice and how it is done
- **Web links** – Links to internet sites are given where appropriate



Philosophy

A quality adult literacy and basic education program has a clearly stated philosophy and mission that guide its work and practices.



Best Practices in Action



Sharing our Philosophy

Submitted By

Miki O’Kane, Campus Director, Aurora Campus, Aurora College, Inuvik

Best Practices Supported

- Philosophy

How It Works

At the beginning of each academic year, staff orientation workshops are held for adult educators and instructors in the Inuvik region. During these workshops, the campus director takes the time to review Aurora College’s mission, goals and objectives with the staff. This is very beneficial because all staff are able to ensure that their program’s practices reflect Aurora College’s mission and philosophy.

Aurora College Mission

Aurora College is dedicated to excellence, leadership and innovation in Northern education and research.



Mission Statement

Submitted By

Liz Pope, Adult Educator, Hay River CLC, Aurora College

Best Practices Supported

- Philosophy

How It Works

As you enter the Hay River Community Learning Centre you will see a plaque with the Aurora College mission statement engraved onto it. The mission statement is clearly written and displayed prominently for all to see. This allows all who are involved in the centre's programs to be aware of the mission statement.

