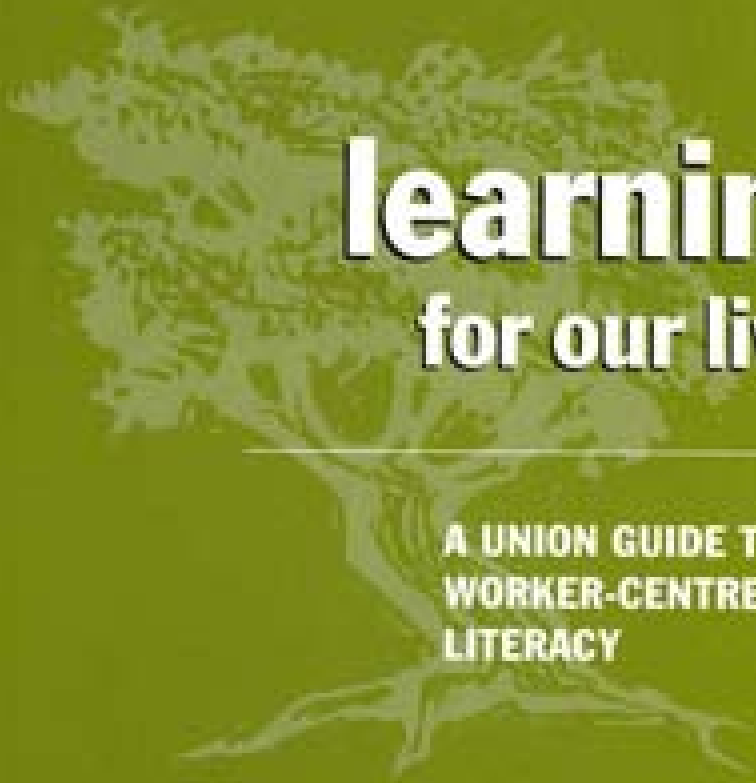

learning for our lives

A UNION GUIDE TO WORKER-CENTRED LITERACY

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LEARNING IN SOLIDARITY

Learning For Our Lives:
A Union Guide To Worker-Centred Literacy

Publié en français sous le titre, *Apprendre pour la vie : guide syndical d'alphabétisation pour les travailleurs et les travailleuses*.

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Other resources in the *Learning in Solidarity* series:

- What Unions Should Know about Getting the Money for Literacy and Basic Skills Programs
- Making It Clear: Clear Language for Union Communications
- Bargaining Basic Skills:What Unions Should Know about Negotiating Worker-Centred Literacy Programs

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Contents

Forward **4**

About this handbook **6**

SECTION 1 - Why get involved? **7**

A) LITERACY: WHAT DO WE MEAN? 7
B) LITERACY - A UNION ISSUE 8
C) LITERACY PROGRAMS IN A UNION CONTEXT 12

SECTION 2 - What a union approach looks like **14**
A) UNION INVOLVEMENT 14
B) PROGRAM MODELS 16
C) KEYS TO A WORKER-CENTRED APPROACH 18
D) UNIONS, LITERACY AND CLEAR LANGUAGE 19

SECTION 3 - How-to guide **21**
STEP 1 - DECIDING TO GET INVOLVED 21
STEP 2 - RAISING AWARENESS & GETTING SUPPORT 22
STEP 3 - DEFINING YOUR UNION'S ROLE 23
STEP 4 - FUNDING AND NEGOTIATINGYOUR PROGRAM 24
STEP 5 - SETTING UP A COMMITTEE 25
STEP 6 - IDENTIFYING NEEDS 28
STEP 7 - BUILDING YOUR PROGRAM MODEL 29
STEP 8 - DESIGNING A WORKER-CENTRED PROGRAM 31
STEP 9 - GENERATING INTEREST 34
STEP 10 - WORKING WITH A PUBUC EDUCATION PARTNER 36
STEP 11 - SELECTING AND TRAINING PEER INSTRUCTORS 38
STEP 12 - EVALUATION AND REPORTING OUT 39

SECTION 4 - Getting more information **42**
A) PROGRAM PROFILES 42
B) SUMMARY OF CONTACTS 57
C) CONTACT LIST 60
D) RESOURCES 61

Endnotes **66**

Forward

This handbook has been developed by the Canadian Labour Congress as part of its action plan *Learning in Solidarity: Sharing a Vision of Union Literacy.* A key objective of the action plan is to share the wealth of collective experience and information we have gained to help the labour movement play amore active role and have a stronger voice in worker- centred literacy.

We want to thank the many union literacy advocates and activists that have helped shape labour's vision of workplace literacy. We have drawn heavily on the expertise the labour movement has developed over the years.

I would like, in particular, to thank Sylvia Sioufi for her work in researching and writing the handbook and Tamara Levine, Coordinator, CLC Workplace Literacy Project, for coordinating and providing direction to the project. In addition, I would like to express my appreciation to the members of the project reference group for their insightful feedback and advice: Graham Deline, Senior Education Officer, Canadian Union of Public Employees; Graham Dowdell, Training Centre Director (Winnipeg), United Food and Commercial Workers; Debra Hutcheon, Director, Ontario Federation of Labour's BEST Program; Anna Larsen, Editor, Metro Labour Education Centre (Toronto); Nathalie St. Louis, former National Representative (Research), National Union of Public and General Employees and Brenda Wall, CLC Training Advisor, Ontario Region.

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About this handbook

This handbook is a guide for unions looking to set up or strengthen a literacy program for their members. If you are just getting started, this handbook will help you explore the issue of literacy from a labour perspective and guide you in the planning and implementation of your program. If you are currently running a literacy program, this handbook can help you evaluate and strengthen your program. Unions who are not currently in a position to implement workplace literacy programs can use the handbook to develop policy and a strategy on literacy.

The handbook is made up off our sections: 1) Why Get Involved; 2) What a Union Approach Looks Like; 3)How-to Guide; and 4) Getting More Information.

In Section 1, *Why Get Involved?*, you will find out why literacy is a labour issue and why unions need to take an active role. We explore what literacy is and who needs literacy programs. We look at the link between literacy and the broader labour agenda, and at the need to link literacy to labour education and to workplace training. You will see that the payoffs go beyond the benefits to the members who participate in the program. Your union will be strengthened and so will your struggle for social change. But not all workplace literacy programs are good programs. We'll look at the union approach to literacy and how it differs from the corporate model.

In Section 2, *What a Union Approach Looks Like*, we take a closer look at the union approach to literacy. We show that there is no "preferred model" but rather a set of solid principles that can be applied in different programs to address the diverse needs of unions and their members.

You'll find out what sets union programs apart from other literacy programs. In union programs, the union plays a central role and the program is based on worker-centred learning. A worker-centred approach means that the program is rooted in the needs of the workers, the learners. Your members' needs determine how the program is designed, what it offers and how it is delivered.

In Section 3, *How-to Guide*, you will find a step by step guide to help you design, promote, implement, monitor, and evaluate your literacy program. The guide will give you a general sense of what needs to be done without tying you to a specific process. You will also find checklists to help keep you on track. Because there is no point in re-inventing the wheel, the guide will help you build on existing resources and draw from the experiences of your sisters and brothers.

In Section 4, *Getting More Information*, you will find profiles of union literacy programs that give concrete examples of labour program: models; a contact list of people and organizations that can help you with your program; and resource material, including publications, websites, and Internet discussion groups.

SECTION 1
Why get involved?

A) LITERACY: WHAT DO WE MEAN?

A Broad Definition of Literacy

We usually think of the word literacy in simple terms. We think of a person as literate or illiterate, as someone who is able to read and write or not. In recent years this narrow view has given way to a broader view of literacy.

We now see literacy as a continuum of skills that people gain and develop throughout their lives.

DEFINING LITERACY

The International Adult Literacy Survey uses the term literacy to refer to "the ability to understand and use printed information in daily activities one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential."[1]

In a country like Canada, the question is no longer whether someone is literate or not. Rather, the question is how one's skills meet the literacy demands presented within the various contexts of our lives.

Dispelling the myths

But old notions die hard. Many people say that "Canadians are literate - we all went to school, we can all read and write - so what's the problem?" Information from studies like the International Adult Literacy Survey help us dispel some of the myths about literacy in Canada. It is true that most Canadians can read and write at least at a basic level. However, as many as 22 per cent of us have serious difficulty reading, and an additional 24-26 per cent can only deal with material that is simple and clearly laid out.[2]

These numbers suggest that many of us have difficulty in one or more areas of basic skills in our everyday lives. The world today is very complex. As a result we may be highly able in one area of life but lack the skills to interpret and use information in another area.

With this in mind, the central issue in workplace literacy programs is not simply whether members are able to read and write. The issue is how well we are able to understand and respond to the constant barrage of information we face every day; information that is essential to our daily lives at work, at home, and in our community.

Workplace literacy programs address a broad range of skills. Thinking about literacy as an on going goal helps to dispel the old notion of literacy as an all-or-nothing question. It also helps to remove the stigma of literacy training.

However, *it is important to recognize that the term literacy still carries a stigma*. People don't want to be thought of as illiterate. *Signing up for a course needs to be viewed as a positive step. That's why unions have chosen terms like basic skills, foundation skills, and essential skills to capture the definition of literacy*. Whatever the name, we are talking about programs that build on members' literacy abilities and programs that also build on our members' lives.

Who are we talking about

Literacy program participants represent a broad cross-section of people, backgrounds, and needs:

- *Workers who were born and raised in Canada and never had a chance to complete secondary school.* Many had to leave school for economic reasons or because the education system failed them.

- *Francophone workers who live outside Quebec.* Their literacy skills in English or French may be low because of assimilation and the lack of access to education in their mother tongue.

- *Workers who are learning French or English as a second language.* Immigrant workers are often highly educated in their country of origin but need to learn one of Canada's official languages. Some may lack literacy skills in their first language as well as in French or English. Immigrants, whether newly arrived or longtime residents, often have little access to support networks and literacy programs.

- *Workers who need to refresh or upgrade their skills.* Literacy skills need constant practice to stay strong. Many people leave school with good literacy skills but like any skills, without practice they can become weak over time. There are often few opportunities within our jobs to keep our literacy skills up to date. This can make it difficult for some workers to maintain their jobs or move to better jobs.

B) LITERACY - A UNION ISSUE

Changing times

People are constantly talking about the changing economy. Globalization, downsizing, restructuring, and new technology have become part of our lives. These terms are used so often that their relevance may be trivialized. But the magnitude of the structural changes taking place in our economy and society cannot be understated. It is hard to find a workplace or a community that has not been affected in someway. What does all this change mean for workers?

In the workplace, restructuring means that job demands are continually shifting and that new skills are necessary. Globalization means that workers are facing increasing job insecurity and job losses. Downsizing means that chronic unemployment and even higher rates of underemployment have become acceptable. New technology means that the promise of decreasing workloads has turned out to be a call to do more with less.

These changes have hit our communities very hard. Whole neighbourhoods and entire towns have been devastated by the loss of one major industry. Often these communities have nowhere to turn. In the name of the new economy, governments have chipped away at our social safety net. They have handed over public services to for-profit corporations. They have gutted unemployment insurance and welfare, leaving many with little or no support. They have cut funding for health and education, compromising corner stones of our social fabric. People are falling through the cracks.

Unions fight back

Unions are drawing on their traditions of activism and social justice to fight against these social and economic changes. We are lobbying governments and waging public campaigns at the local, national, and international level. We are mobilizing union members and whole communities in an effort to alert people to the dangers of our decaying public safety net. This activism is important because unions are now one of the only alternative voices.

At the bargaining table, unions are negotiating various forms of protection for their members. Employment security, early retirement options, adequate severance and adjustment programs, job sharing, and training are some of the ways unions try to make sure changes don't take place on the backs of workers. Training has become a key means of ensuring greater job security and mobility for workers.

What happens to members who cannot access workplace or other training because they never had a chance to finish high school, or because English or French is not their first language or because the mere mention of school brings feelings of anxiety? What happens to members who have difficulty understanding the union notice or newsletter - not to mention the union contract?

Literacy - a key building block

Literacy programs are an essential part of this struggle to protect and empower working people. Literacy programs help include those who most need protection and support, and strengthen our collective effort for social change.

Uncertainty and anxiety are greater for members who have to overcome literacy issues in their lives. Because these workers tend to be less involved in the union and the workplace, a mobilizing campaign can reinforce feelings of exclusion. For this reason, literacy programs can be the starting point for everything else the union does. They can be a tool for achieving individual as well as collective goals.

The payoff

Workers and unions who take part in literacy programs know that the payoff goes well beyond better language and math skills. The impact on participants has a powerful ripple effect:

"I speak up more at work. I'm not so quiet anymore and not everyone likes it. I used to be the one who put up with things but not anymore."

Program Participant

1. Workers benefit as individuals. Greater literacy skills improve the self-esteem of members and empower them to take control of their lives.
2. Workers are better able to deal with their responsibilities at home. Increased literacy skills make it easier for members to handle their finances, deal with income tax and home repairs, and help their children with homework.
3. Workers feel more prepared to deal with workplace changes. Stronger literacy skills increase opportunities for further training and education as well as for new job placements.
4. Workers are more likely, and more able, to participate in further education and training at the workplace or in the community. They are also more likely to participate in labour education.
5. Workers develop the tools to better understand information such as collective agreements, benefits, and health and safety regulations. Members who understand these issues are more likely to be involved with their union to improve working conditions and to protect their rights as workers.
6. Workers develop the tools to better understand the economic and political issues behind the broad goals of the labour movement. Members are therefore more likely to get involved in efforts to achieve a more just and equitable society.
7. Workers are able to increase their participation in the community. Good literacy skills help members get involved in opportunities to contribute to the community, such as activities at their children's schools, recreation programs, and social justice groups.

A survey carried out by WEST, the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour's workplace literacy program, illustrates the impact of literacy programs. The survey shows that members enjoy increased personal benefits, and that many of them have a greater desire to be involved in union and community activities.

"Before when I attended a union meeting, I held back ideas I had about the union movement. Now I'm able to express these ideas."

Program Participant

WEST SURVEY RESULTS

89 per cent of participants reported that they read a little or a lot more.

62 per cent of participants said that they liked writing more.

71 per cent of participants said that math is a little or a lot easier.

38 per cent of participants now want to attend a union education program (8 per cent prior to WEST)

25 per cent of participants have joined a community organization since they began WEST.[3]

While literacy is a starting point, it cannot be a stand-alone issue. To be successful, our literacy work needs to be an integral part of labour education and social activism. With today's focus on training, literacy also needs to be part of labour's workplace training strategy.

Literacy and training

In response to new technology, restructuring, and job loss, skills training has become a means of increasing employment security. Labour's involvement in training is essential.

Federal and provincial governments have been chipping away at the public education system. While governments are retreating from their responsibility to ensure a better future for working people, employers have failed to recognize that they too have an important role to play in employment training. There is a growing expectation that workers must take individual responsibility for their own education and training.

The labour movement has responded by taking a more active role in workplace training both to ensure workers have access to training and that training programs meet workers' needs.

An effective training strategy has to consider the literacy needs of members. If you've been out of school for 20 years, if you left school early because you didn't fit in or had to go to work, if English or French is not your first language, how likely are you to take part in training? How likely are you to succeed?

Unfortunately, it is these workers - already at a disadvantage - who receive the least training. Statistics Canada reports that more than 40 per cent of workers with a university degree are engaged in work- related training, compared with 13.5 per cent of high school dropouts and only 5.9 per cent of those with less than eight years of education.[4] Unions have to work hard to ensure the greatest number of workers at every level of the workplace get access to workplace training.

Making training accessible goes beyond bringing programs to the workplace or ensuring support for tuition and materials. It means making sure that our training strategy and our training programs are designed to respond to our members' literacy needs. It can mean offering a program for those with English or French as a second language, or providing a workplace literacy class before a training program is offered. It's also about ensuring that training programs are based on the worker- centred approach championed by union literacy programs.

Labour education, activism, and literacy

Labour education and literacy both complement each other and strengthen each other. Literacy programs are a critical foundation for labour education, and labour education is an important element of workplace literacy.

Because programs have to be relevant to members' lives, the workplace literacy class can be an important forum for labour education. A discussion about the employer's latest contract offer gets members involved in bargaining while they practice reading, conversation, and math skills. While increasing their literacy skills and self-confidence, members learn about the union and their rights as workers. Participants begin to see, often for the first time, that the union includes them. This can lead to taking part in other union activities.

We know there is strength in numbers. A strong union is one in which all the members take part. A literacy program can reach people who often feel excluded from the union and can give them a voice in our collective efforts. It can open the door to immigrants and linguistic minorities. It can reach out to those who have shied away from the union because they feel intimidated by their lack of skills. In many ways, literacy helps build a more open, equitable, and democratic union.

"One day we were reading the contract about pay increases. I had changed my job but I was still being paid my old rate of pay. Because of this program, I am now getting paid the correct rate and I received a retroactive cheque for $375."

Program Participant

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C) LITERACY PROGRAMS IN A UNION CONTEXT

Education isn't neutral

A labour approach to literacy recognizes that literacy training isn't neutral. The payoffs we talked about earlier come about because a program goes beyond the mechanics of reading and writing. They are the result of putting the worker as a *whole person* at the centre of the program.

Education reflects the point of view and the bias of those who control it, whether in the school system or in the workplace. That bias determines the approach and the content of the program. More importantly, it can determine the impact the program has on the learner.

The labour point of view

A labour approach to literacy recognizes that its goals may be quite different from those of the employer. It looks at participants as whole persons with a range of learning needs and interests. It starts with the premise that workers are adults with a great deal of knowledge and experience and builds on the skills they already have. A labour approach counts on workers to be active participants in planning their program and in the decisions that affect its design and content. It makes sure that access to training is equitable. It works to ensure accountability and confidentiality. It looks to integrate literacy training into other aspects of workplace education. It aims to create a climate where lifelong learning is fostered. A labour approach promotes union values of democracy, citizenship, justice, and empowerment .

> "This is different from a lot of the training we traditionally receive because it is not about teaching a specific curriculum. It is about empowering people with learning tools that they can transfer to many aspects of their life."
>
> Labour Leader

BEST'S PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy that guides the Ontario Federation of Labour's BEST program, since adopted by many union literacy programs, captures the goals of the labour approach to literacy.

- to help empower working people to take control of their lives both individually and collectively
- to better speak with their own voices
- to be better able to have those voices heard
- to question, criticize, evaluate, and act as full citizens, with a broad social vision in a democratic society[5]

The corporate point of view

Unions need to understand the corporate point of view on workplace literacy. Why are employers interested in workplace literacy when their concern is the bottom line? Their main interest stems from the belief that if workers had better skills their productivity would increase and problems like accidents in the workplace would be solved.

A side from having a very narrow focus, the corporate view implies that individual workers are to blame for the problems of the workplace. This can lead to programs that are designed to serve the employer's interests. Programs that are based on the assumption of "skills deficits." Programs that focus on competency-based skills that are limited to specific jobs. Programs that promote corporate values at the expense of the worker and the union.

This is an issue with employers both in the private and public sector. In the private sector, employers are looking for higher profits. In the face of cut backs, public sector employers are looking to stretch workloads (and workers) to the limit.

It is clear that employers benefit from workplace literacy programs - even union literacy programs. Employers have reported better health and safety, increased profitability, reduced absenteeism, improved labour-management relations, higher earnings, and better job mobility as a result of implementing workplace literacy.[6]

The key issue is in what context do those benefits come about? Does increasing productivity become the goal or rather a by-product of the program? Defining the context is where the union has a key role to play; More and more unions are countering the corporate model by ensuring that union principles are front and centre.

Unions are increasingly bringing workplace literacy to the bargaining table and joint training committees, and many union literacy programs are run jointly with the employer. In Section 3 we'll take a closer look at how to ensure a union approach to literacy in spite of differing agendas.

SECTION 2

What a union approach looks like

How do we translate labour's vision of literacy into an actual program? What does a labour "model" look like? Labour's expertise in literacy programs has grown a great deal in the last decade as more unions become involved. We have built on each other's experience and learned from our successes and challenges. We have learned that there is no single "union model" but rather a set of union principles that can be applied within different program models to address the diverse needs of unions and their members.

In Section 4 you will find profiles of various workplace literacy programs initiated by unions across Canada. These varied programs have a lot in common. The underlying principles and the goals that have guided their development are the focus of in this section.

A) UNION INVOLVEMENT

The union plays a central role

Union literacy programs may be union-run programs or joint programs. In *union-run* programs the union plays the lead role in developing and delivering the program. Because these programs are often offered in the workplace, they sometimes also involve the employer as part of a local coordinating committee. In *joint programs*, the union works with the employer and decisions about the program are made together. Whether the program is union-run or joint, it often involves other partners such as government and public education institutions.

The role the union plays varies from program to program - from primary role to equal partner. Anything less than an equal partnership can compromise the union's ability to meet workers' needs and maintain labour principles. As we'll discuss below, sometimes it is better not to have a program at all than to have a bad program.

What sets union literacy programs apart from others is that the union plays a central role. Whether working with management, government, or public educators, the union is in a position of strength and can put forward union values and objectives and make sure they are met. These values are reflected in the worker-centred approach which is the cornerstone of labour's vision of workplace literacy. Later in this section we'll discuss the key aspects of a worker-centred approach.

Working with management

Unions who work with management on workplace literacy must not compromise basic union principles. Working with management on a literacy program is not about agreeing to some corporate aspects of training in order to include labour ones. It is about working together - as equals - to bring a high quality literacy program to the workplace.

The support from employers who have worked with unions to bring literacy to their workplace is growing. We know that the employer benefits from good literacy programs. Enlightened employers have also learned that the involvement of the union means that employees will feel safer about participating. The issue for unions is how to work with management. As unions have learned in areas such as health and safety, the best means is often through a joint committee.

"It is important that the program is run through the union. Workers feel more comfortable with the program and are more likely to enroll. If we offered it again, I'm sure twice as many people would show an interest."

Employer

The role of the joint committee will largely depend on the level of employer involvement in the program. Are you working with management to develop a program or are you working to implement a program the union has already developed? In either case, to be an equal participant the union must be in a position to make decisions, not just recommendations.

You will need ground rules to make the committee work effectively. These terms of reference help you and your employer clarify your roles and responsibilities. They explain how the committee works and how decisions are made. It is important to establish this from the start so that your employer understands your expectations. If you are not able to agree on ground rules you probably won't be able to work together. (See Step 5, *Joint committee ground rules*).

When to "Just Say No"

Workplace literacy programs can be abused. A badly designed program can harm your members and your union. If the employer, the government, or the educational partner advocates a program that doesn't meet your members' needs, just say "No."

- Don't sign onto a program if you're not a full partner. A lesser role for the union means you can't protect your members' interests.
- Don't endorse approaches before you've examined their potential impact on your members. You might unknowingly recommend activities that damage their employment rights and opportunities, their self-respect, or their dignity.
- Don't let the content and goals of the program be imposed by others because "any training is better than no training."
- Don't agree to a program where there is testing and reporting to the employer on individual results or progress.
- Don't give union approval to a program where there are no union principles to be found.

If this is not the best time for your union to start a program or if your plans fall through you can still work on literacy. This can help you lay the ground work should you be in a position to start a program later.

- *Connect your members with local public education facilities:* Make information about public adult education and second language courses available to your members.

- *Get involved with local public education facilities:* Work with your local school board and community college to improve existing courses. Start with the teachers' and instructors' unions. Share your vision of literacy and the worker-centred approach.

- *Integrate literacy with your labour education program:* Look at how your labour education program can be modified to address the literacy needs of your membership. Some members stay away from labour courses because they are afraid of the amount of reading and writing they might face.

- *Adopt a clear language communications strategy:* Ensure that union materials are produced with clear language principles. This can be the first step to making your members more comfortable with written communication.

B) PROGRAM MODELS

What's in a model

A program model means the nuts and bolts: how the program is coordinated, where the classes take place, how often and for how long, who facilitates learning, what is taught and how. The model you choose should embody the best means to respond to your members' and your union's needs. That is why each program looks a little different from the next.

Literacy programs have been initiated by various labour bodies: federations of labour, labour councils, union locals, and union centrals - either on their own or as part of a sectoral initiative that includes other unions.

Unions are involved in programs that are offered in the workplace, at the union hall, at a union training centre, or through a public education facility. Some programs are taught by workers trained to be instructors, others by public educators, and some have both worker instructors and public educators teaching together. Instructing in the context of workplace literacy is not traditional teaching. The role is more that of facilitator, building on what participants already know.

Most classes are small with groups of about 10 participants. Workplace classes usually take place at least partly on work time. How often classes take place and how long the program runs varies. It depends on the kind of work members do, on their shifts and, in some cases, how much money there is to run the program.

Although programs focus on literacy - that is reading, writing and math - many also include English or French as a second language. Because labour views literacy in its broadest sense, these programs also cover communications, critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving. Some unions have included technology readiness and computer literacy to respond to specific changes in their workplace and because members have identified it as a need.

At this point, look at the program profiles in Section 4 for concrete examples of different program models. Section 3 will help you decide what model will work for your members and how to make it happen.

THE EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

"The act of learning to read and write has to start from a very comprehensive understanding of the act of reading the world, something which human beings do before reading the words."

Paulo Freire[7]

Education isn't just about schools, and workplace literacy is not about bringing the school to the workplace. Most adult education courses are oriented to the traditional high school curriculum or to preparation for a high school equivalency diploma. The objective of labour literacy programs is much broader. The approach to the curriculum - what we teach and how we teach it - is an integral part of union literacy programs.

The curriculum sets out the learning goals, the subject matter, the method of teaching, the materials and activities to be used, and the evaluation of what has been learned. In a traditional course, the curriculum is established before you sign up. You attend classes, information is given, there are various activities to put the information in context, and at the end you take a test and are graded accordingly.

Good union literacy programs use adult education principles. There is no standard or set curriculum. Rather, the curriculum emerges from the learning needs of the participants on an on going basis. The themes come from the participants' own lives. By exploring their own experience, participants build on what they already know. This way, the course is always relevant and current.

"ADULT" EDUCATION RELATES TO PEOPLES' LIVES

Manuel was a maintenance worker and groundskeeper at Queen's University who loved to garden. Manuel had never been able to take advantage of the free tuition available to university employees. Finally, he had the chance to sign up for a workplace program in English as a Second Language offered by his union. Manuel did a presentation to the class on composting, a subject he knew a lot about. His challenge was to share his skills and experience in his second language.

In a worker-centred program there can be no right or wrong answer, there is no pass or fail. Learning becomes an on going process rather than a specific goal. Each participant determines their own success and the success of the program.

Some participants will experience the learner-centred approach for the first time and may have difficulty adjusting to this learning style. Many will come to the program with histories and expectations of traditional classroom learning. However, they will soon enjoy this educational approach and will be encouraged by the empowerment that the approach fosters. It counters apprehension about school, and gives education a new dimension. This worker-centred approach seeks to provide education for the learner as a whole person - an individual, a worker, a family member, a trade unionist, and a citizen.

C) KEYS TO A WORKER-CENTRED APPROACH

"I enjoyed it because it's kind of like a family. You don't feel embarrassed, its discreet and it is kind of warm feeling to be there with everybody."

Program Participant

A worker-centred approach means that the program is rooted in the needs of the workers, the learners. Their needs determine how the program is designed, what it offers and how it is taught.

Worker-centred learning enables workers to have more control over their lives and jobs.

The objective of a union literacy program is to empower its participants. Programs promote union values like fairness, solidarity, and community. While building on their literacy skills, members also learn about their individual and collective rights. A worker-centred approach builds confidence and self esteem. It strengthens the role participants play in the union, in the workplace, and in society.

Worker-centred learning builds on what workers already know.

Participants build on their strengths rather than focus on their weaknesses. This approach recognizes that everyone who takes part in a literacy program brings skills and knowledge to the class. It also recognizes the learner and the instructor as equals, working and learning together. A worker-centred approach affirms the importance of the participants' life experience and recognizes how it contributes to what it means to be literate.

Worker-centred learning addresses the needs of the whole person.

Worker-centred learning looks at the individual's total needs. It is not solely guided by the needs of the learner as a worker. The goal is to enrich the lives of the learners and expand their potential not only as workers but also as individuals, union members, family members and citizens.

Worker-centred learning Is developmental.

A literacy program that is worker-centred is not limited to building skills for a particular job. It approaches literacy in its broadest sense and is rooted in the varied interests of the learner. It embraces life-long learning by opening the door to further education and training opportunities.

Worker-centred learning reflects the diverse learning styles and needs of adult workers.

The curriculum content and program structure respect different adult learning styles and are sensitive to the participants' race, ethnicity, gender, and culture. Cross-cultural understanding and anti-racism are explored as workers take an active role in setting their own educational goals. The curriculum flows from these diverse needs and backgrounds.

Worker-centred programs Involve workers In decision-making.

The worker-centred approach counts on workers to be active participants in planning the program and in decisions about its design and content.

Worker-centred learning looks to integrate literacy training with other aspects of workplace training.

Literacy is not a stand-alone issue. A worker-centred program needs to be integrated into a larger strategy for training that responds to current and anticipated changes in the workplace

Worker-centred programs assure confidentiality.

Individual needs assessments and classroom records are confidential. Participants are assured that their privacy will be respected and that their employer will not have access to information about their individual progress in the course.

Worker-centred programs are open to all.

Access to training is equitable. That means that the program is open to all members of the union, regardless of their skill level, job classification, physical activity, seniority, gender, or race. Priority access is sometimes determined by addressing particular barriers, like serving participants with the greatest need first.

Worker-centred programs are accessible.

Barriers to access are identified and addressed. Every effort is made to facilitate attendance by addressing issues like family responsibility and transportation. Programs are given at times and in places that are convenient to workers and their busy lives. Access also means that programs are free of charge.

D) UNIONS, LITERACY AND CLEAR LANGUAGE

Access and inclusion are important elements in labour's vision of literacy programs. Union literacy programs build understanding of workers' situations so they can ask questions, stand up for themselves, and participate in making changes. It's about reaching all of our members in a meaningful way so they can participate more fully in their workplace, in their union, their families, and their communities.

Access and inclusion have to work both ways. We need to provide opportunities for members to gain new skills and participate and we also have to make sure all of our practices are accessible and inclusive. That includes making our print materials readable and understandable. Clear language must be an integral part of our workplace literacy agenda. It can help unions reach beyond active members to those who don't yet fee connected.

Clear language and design is away of writing and presenting printed material so that it is easy to read and understand. This involves both how we say things in writing and how we present them on the printed page. Clear language writers organize information in a way that makes sense to the reader by thinking about their audience. It involves using simpler words, shorter and clearer sentences and paragraphs, and better layout and design.

Whether it involves union course manuals, newsletters, notices, posters, or campaign material, our message will have a better chance of getting through if it is communicated in clear language. The CLC has produced a clear language guide to help unions communicate better: *Making it Clear: Clear Language for Union Communications (1999)*.

SECTION 3
How-to guide

This guide will help you build on existing resources and draw from the experience of your sisters and brothers. If you are already running a program or have just completed a pilot or trial, you can use this guide to help you evaluate and strengthen your program.

Don't feel that you have to follow the steps in exact order. You might work on more than one step at a time, or work on one step before another. Our goal is to give you a general sense of what needs to be done. The check lists will help keep you on track.

STEP 1 - DECIDING TO GET INVOLVED

Workplace literacy may not yet be a priority for your local or union leadership. Think of yourself as a literacy advocate. The first question you want to answer is why your union should be involved with literacy.

Make a list of reasons. Include as many as you can. The reasons may be very broad, such as figuring out away to respond to your employer's restructuring initiative. Or they may be quite specific, such as a need for second-language training. These reasons will eventually help you shape your program objectives.

Don't be limited by logistics at this point. Don't worry about how to put the program together, or where to get the money, or whether your employer will be supportive. Focus on why you think this is important and why your union should get involved with literacy.

BRAINSTORMING

- How will our members benefit from a literacy program?
- What are the main issues in our workplace now and in the foreseeable future?
- How is literacy linked to our union's broader agenda?
- How will our employer benefit from a literacy program?
- Why is this a good time to start a literacy program?

After you have made an initial list, think about how to explain this to someone in your local. You have a list of reasons, but you may not be able to articulate them yet. It may be helpful to go over Section 1 where we discussed why unions should get involved. Thinking through your reasons and arguments can help you to be clear when you promote the idea of a literacy program.

STEP 2 - RAISING AWARENESS & GETTING SUPPORT

"Members participate more now in monthly meetings and get more involved in what's happening in their trade, as well as more involved in union activities."

Local executive member

Talk to your local

Talk with members of your local executive and set some time at a meeting or other forum to have a full discussion. The objective at this point is to get more people working with you. Even if the local is not sure whether to take action, you can, at a minimum, get a group together to explore the issue further.

Get a planning group together

You are looking for members who are interested in the issue of literacy. They need to have the time and energy and be likely to remain involved. These members don't have to be experienced activists. In many cases literacy has sparked the interest of members who haven't held leadership positions or been very active in the union. If possible, it's a good idea to have at least one person who is already involved with education and training. Remember, you want to be able to link your program to the on going work of the union and to other aspects of workplace training, making it part of your response to workplace change.

The first task for the planning group is to prepare an information package. You want material you can show to union activists (including those from other local sat your work site) and to your employer to raise their awareness about literacy issues and get their support for a program. Remember to present literacy in its broadest form so everyone understands your vision from the start.

This handbook is a good beginning. The stories and quotes from participants, instructors, labour leaders, and employers can help you illustrate the impact of literacy programs. You can use some of the program profiles to show what they can look like. Use the contact list to get more information. There may be unions or central labour bodies in your region already involved with literacy. Your own union, labour council, or federation of labour may have a program planned or in place. Check with your local representative or contact the main office. You can get flyers, videos, and other material from them to help with promotion. They can also be a great source of support. Invite them to your planning group meeting.

Find a name for your program that will spark the interest of your members. The term literacy of ten makes people think of illiteracy, and no one likes to think of themselves as illiterate. The program needs to be viewed as inclusive and non-threatening and the program name should reflect that notion. It can be as simple as "the workplace education program."

INFORMATION KIT

- List of reasons why a literacy program is important.
- Benefits to the members and the employer.
- What other unions have done program profiles.
- Quotes: what people are saying about these programs.
- Material from existing programs: videos, flyers, posters.

Talk to your members

Present the idea at a local meeting and talk to co-workers informally. The goal is not to find out who wants to sign up. You will do that later. The goal is to share the information your group has gathered to get members thinking about it. Let them know you are thinking about setting up a program and find out their feelings on the issue. You'll start to get a sense of what your members are interested in and what kind of program model might work for them. You may be surprised by the number of members interested in improving their math, writing or communications skills, or how many are looking for second language training. If your workplace has a number of people who do not have English or French as a first language, be sure to have discussions or prepare material in the languages of those workers.

Once you have raised awareness and built support, it is time to make the program happen.

STEP 3 - DEFINING YOUR UNION'S ROLE

Your planning committee now has to decide what kind of involvement your local is going to have. Are you going to set up a union-run program or will you work with your employer on a joint program? You need to determine how big a role your union will play.

Union-run program

Running the program yourself gives the union more control, freedom, and flexibility. You are in a better position to ensure union values and objectives are met. You are also better able to integrate literacy education with other union priorities. This option does not have to mean that you are going at it alone. You can share the work with other locals or unions at your workplace or in your community. You can also call on your local community college or school board, or a labour sponsored program for their experience and expertise in workplace literacy.

Even if you choose a union-run program, you might still need some support from your employer. If you want to hold classes in the workplace, if you want financial support, if you want members to be released from their job to attend the class, then you will need your employer on side. Some union-run programs work with the employer on a joint coordinating committee to determine the logistics of the program at the local level.

Joint program

Although union-run programs are often the first choice, some successful programs are jointly-run. Running a joint program with your employer can offer benefits to the union. It can provide you with an opportunity to work with your employer in a non-confrontational setting. This can help improve labour relations in the workplace. A joint discussion on workplace needs can also help you learn about your employer's long-term plans.

QUESTIONING A JOINT PROGRAM

- Is a joint initiative possible within the current labour-management climate?
- Will the local be able to ensure that the program is based on union values and objectives?
- Is it better in the long run to work on a joint program?
- What are the potential risks of running a joint program?
- Will my employer support the program if it is not jointly-run?
- Which approach will limit or improve our funding options?

STEP 4 - FUNDING AND NEGOTIATINGYOUR PROGRAM

Where to get the money

There are two main sources of funding: the government and the employer. Take a look at your collective agreement (or ask your staff representative). Your union may have negotiated money for training that you can access for workplace literacy. If there is no language in your agreement, you might consider running a pilot project rather than an on going program.

Your employer may be more willing to contribute to the program on a trial basis. The federal and some provincial and territorial governments have funds to support literacy pilot projects. There maybe several sources of government funding. The Hospital Employees' Union basic skills pilot project at Vancouver Hospital received funding from four government agencies and departments.

Each funding agency may have different rules to qualify for funding. For example, many government agencies and departments will only fund programs that involve a partnership between the union and the employer. Some funders only provide "matching funds." That means that if you can get $10,000 from your employer, they will match that amount.

Once you have run a successful program you will be in a better position to look for and negotiate on going funding. You can find more information about funding in the CLC publication, What Unions Should Know About Getting the Money for Literacy and Basic Skills Programs (1998).

Preparing a budget

Regardless of the source of funding, you are going to need a program budget. A budget includes all the items that have a cost: promotional material, paid time off for union representatives, participants' lost wages, instruction costs, classroom space, etc. Don't forget to show "in- kind" or non-cash contributions. If the union or the employer provide photocopying or classroom space or if your staff representative helps you set up the project, indicate that in your budget as an in-kind contribution.

Whether you are working with a labour-sponsored program or a public education facility, your education partner can help you put together the program budget.

Getting the employer on side

"When I first came to Canada, I went to night school, but at that time I was working too. After work I went there, but I was so tired I didn't finish the whole course."

Program Participant

Most programs seek some support from the employer, particularly if the union is hoping to offer classes in the workplace, get release time for participants, and if you want your employer to support the program financially.

If your local is part of a joint training or education committee, this is the best place to raise the program proposal with management. In the absence of a formal structure, find someone in management you think will be open to the idea of a workplace literacy program and work from there. This may be someone within the Human Resources Department responsible for training or education.

The following points can help you prepare your presentation to the employer:

- *Why does the union want a literacy program?* Be sure to place the needs of your members in the context of your workplace and the Canadian workforce. The International Adult Literacy Survey can help you illustrate the relevance and need for literacy programs.
- *What are you asking for?* Be clear about your expectations of the employer. Are you just looking for financial support or are you asking the employer to take an active role in the program?
- *Why should the employer be on side?* Anticipate your employer's arguments against implementing a literacy program and be prepared to respond to them. Point out that employers can benefit from these programs. You can use quotes from other employers who have supported similar initiatives.

For a more in-depth look at getting management on side and negotiating ongoing support please refer to the CLC guide, *Bargaining Basic Skills: What Unions Should know about Negotiating Worker-Centred Literacy Programs (2000).* This guide provides information about various negotiated funding arrangements for literacy and training. Unions have bargained cents per hour training trust funds; hours of training per employee; designated percentage of payroll for education; leave programs; tuition advances, rebates or loan programs; apprenticeship and adjustment programs; paid time for training; union paid educational leave programs; and sector council programs.

STEP 5 - SETTING UP A COMMITTEE

Whether you are running a program on your own or with your employer, you will need a coordinating committee. The committee will over see the program from beginning to end, including planning, design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation.

Relating to existing union structures

Where possible, your coordinating committee should be part of a structure already in place. This will facilitate the integration of literacy education with other aspects of your workplace.

Take a look at your local structure and existing committees. If you have an education or training committee you may want to set up a workplace literacy sub-committee or expand the existing committee's role. It is a good idea to have a union committee even if the program is jointly-run.

The union committee can provide support for union representatives on the joint committee and it can also ensure their accountability to the membership.

Union representatives on the joint committee should have access to a labour education course on working with management on a joint training project. If your union or labour council does not offer such an education course, consider building it in as part, of the workplace literacy project.

If you are running a joint program, examine existing union-management structures to see where workplace literacy fits best. If you have a joint training committee, the choice is obvious. Look at where you currently deal with issues such as workplace restructuring, worker adjustment programs or technological change. If union-management relations within existing committees have been difficult, you may want to start fresh with a new committee. In that case, make sure the coordinating committee provides regular reports to other committees where appropriate so as not to isolate literacy from other joint workplace initiatives.

Committee members

This is a working committee so you want to ensure that committee members have the necessary time and energy for it. In a joint committee, union members are selected by the union and are accountable to the local. Encourage the employer to appoint representatives who are involved with workplace training as well as with the operations side of the organization. Committee members must have authority to make decisions on behalf of the organization they represent.

Don't let the committee get too large. Start with four or six people. You may want to add representatives from a labour body or public education facility to work with you on this project.

In keeping with the spirit of a worker-centred program, you may want to consider building into the committee structure a mechanism for input from a program participant representative once the program is running.

Joint committee ground rules

Your union and your employer are likely to have different perspectives on why a program is important. Agreeing on ground rules can facilitate that discussion and help you work out a plan you can both accept. Establish terms of reference from the start to clarify how the committee will work and how decisions will be made. Be sure to include the coordinating committee's role and goals as part of the terms of reference.

You have a right to expect to be on an equal footing with management, to be able to select your own representatives, and to favour a decision- making process that is based on consensus. You may not achieve agreement about everything. Consensus agreements are simply those that reflect agreement on things that are achievable, in spite of the different vantage points we come from.

You have a right to expect management to share relevant information with you. Planned changes in the workplace are very relevant to a literacy program. As we have discussed, literacy is not a stand-alone issue. It needs to be integrated into a broader strategy to respond to anticipated changes.

COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

- The role and goals of the coordinating committee are agreed upon.
- The union and the employer have an equal number of representatives.
- The union and the employer take turns chairing the meetings.
- The committee meets regularly.
- Union representatives have the opportunity to caucus or meet independent of joint meetings.
- The union representatives are selected by and are accountable to the union.
- Union representatives attend on work time.
- The union has access to all relevant information.
- Decision-making is a participatory process based on consensus.

Defining committee tasks

The coordinating committee will develop a plan of action to make the literacy program happen. It is a good idea to begin the committee's work by ensuring all members read this handbook and other information on workplace literacy. This will facilitate full participation from all committee members. It will also help the committee determine if more information is needed.

The next step is to agree on the role of the committee and define the committee's goals. Once you are clear on your objectives, you can develop the plan of action and set out your tasks.

COORDINATING COMMITTE'S TASKS

- Identify members needs and goals
- Identify workplace needs and anticipated changes
- Identify potential accessibility barriers and how to address them
- Choose a program model to address identified needs
- Link with your broader training strategy
- Adapt the program model to your reality
- Explore links with your local community college, school board, or labour-sponsored program
- Develop a worker-centred program
- Work our program logistics
- Promote the program in your workplace
- Define and carry out a process for selecting participants and instructors
- Carry out individual needs assessments of prospective participants
- Provide instructor training/orientation
- Monitor the program
- Evaluate the program
- Report the success and challenges of the program

Once you have defined your tasks, establish responsibilities among committee members and make timelines for completing your tasks and meeting your goals. You now have a plan of action.

STEP 6 - IDENTIFYING NEEDS

A good means of identifying needs is to carry out an organizational needs assessment. This will help determine and document members' education needs and goals. This is not to be confused with the individual needs assessment which will be carried out once members have signed up for the program.

The organizational needs assessment can help you:

- assess the skills your members need in the workplace
- assess their broader personal and educational goals
- determine what training or education will help them meet these needs, and
- determine what additional support services they need

If you are running a joint program, the needs assessment may need to be more broadly based to help the committee determine the training needs of the organization.

The assessment process can also help the committee identify ways of making the program accessible. The results of the needs assessment will help you build an education program to respond to your members' identified needs and goals.

If the organizational needs assessment is not done well, it can be counter-productive. Your local community college, school board, or a labour-sponsored program can carry out the organizational needs assessment or help your committee through the process.

Assessments are often carried out in small group discussions. The process involves talking with members as well as union officers, stewards, supervisors, and human resources representatives. The discussion with union members should be carried out by the union representatives on the committee. This will ensure confidentiality and encourage members to participate. Participation in the organizational needs assessment is voluntary! It is important to let participants know that they are helping to develop a workplace literacy program.

Training Inventory

It is also a good idea to do a workplace training inventory alongside the needs assessment. This will identify what training opportunities currently exist, who is accessing them and who is not, and what kind of barriers to training exist. Remember, you want to link the literacy program to the broader training strategy.

YOU'LL WANT TO FIND OUT...

- What education and training is currently offered through the workplace?
- What are the objectives of these courses?
- How were these education and training needs determined?
- Who is getting training opportunities now?
- Are there groups of workers who tend to be left out of training? (Can these groups be identified in terms of gender, age, language, job classification?)
- Who provides the education or training?
- Has the training been evaluated and, if so, what were the results?
- Is participation voluntary?
- What kind of financial and other support is available to pursue education and training outside the workplace?
- How much money does the employer spend on education and training?
- How much of that goes to train union members?

The committee should prepare a report to document the findings of the organizational needs assessment and the training inventory.

STEP 7 - BUILDING YOUR PROGRAM MODEL

Now that you have a sense of your members' needs it is time to build the program. You need to determine the specific objectives of your program and how to meet them. Working through these questions will help you build your program model. Once you have a picture of what your program will look like, contact a union with a similar model for additional information and feedback.

What are the members' Interests?

Look at what your members raised as needs and interests during the organizational needs assessment. For example: to qualify for a better job, to be able to help my children with homework, to get my high school equivalency, to help me in everyday life.

What are the program objectives?

They need to respond to your members' interests, while keeping in mind the discussions you had with union representatives and with management. They can provide a broader context in which to operate the program. Examples of specific objectives are: to provide an opportunity to strengthen reading, writing, and math skills; to encourage education as a life long process; to foster an understanding of labour's role in the workplace and in society; to improve communications in the workplace; to provide access to further training opportunities.

Where will the classes take place?

"For me it was great because it was at work and it was free. I could not afford togo on my own."

Program Participant

Holding the classes in the workplace and at least partly on work time makes it easier for your members to attend. Holding classes as part of the workday also makes it easier to learn. The end of along shift is not the best time to go to class. The most effective learning often happens when there is the least disruption in your members' regular work day. This way the class won't conflict with family or other responsibilities, or with transportation arrangements.

Some workplaces don't have suitable classroom space in a quiet area with proper lighting and work space. Workers in the building trades or in home care, for example, don't have set workplaces. The union hall, community centre, or public education facility can then become the ideal location.

How often and for how long will your program run?

This often depends on what resources you have been able to win through bargaining or how much money your program has. You should also consider whether participants attend classes on their downtime or as part of the workday and whether they are attending on paid time or not.

For example, you·could run a four hour per week program in two, two- hour sessions if all workers in the program are in the same location. If they are in different locations within a municipal operation for example, one four-hour class per week might be better.

Attendance sometimes falls off over a long program due to family and work commitments, sickness, vacation, etc. However, the program needs to be long enough to allow participants to feel good about the progress they have made. Programs between 18and 24weeks are probably the most effective.

Look at the shift schedules and talk to members and supervisors about the best days and times to offer the class. *The less disruption in the workplace the more supportive supervisors and co-workers will be.That includes ensuring replacement for participants to avoid increased workloads.* If you can offer more than one class,make sure to cover different shifts, including rotating shifts on days, evenings, nights, and weekends.

It can be difficult to come up with a class schedule that fits into participants' work and home lives. The committee can't foresee every difficulty and you may find that adjustments to scheduling have to be made along the way.

How many members should participate?

This largely depends on the resources available. You should keep classes small. If you only have one instructor in the class you should have no more than six to 10 participants. If you are able to have more than one instructor in the class you can have groups of 10 to 15. Keep in mind the literacy needs of the participants. If the identified needs are high, the class groups should be smaller.

How should participants be selected?

The coordinating committee should clarify from the outset the selection criteria. You want to make sure that the criteria are as fair, equitable, and democratic as possible. The employer should not be able to pick and choose who has access to the program. Keep in mind the principles of equity and affirmative action. A number of unions give priority to members with the greatest need because they are less likely to access programs in the community or other workplace training. Shifts and other workplace requirements, however, can limit the number of participants from a given department. Make sure to talk to supervisors to determine the maximum number of workers they can release for the class.(For more information about this, see Step 9, *Participant selection*).

Who should deliver the course?

You can have co-worker instructors, college or school board instructors, or the two working together. There is a strong tradition in labour education of members instructing other members. The co-worker instructor model has been very successful in reaching and empowering members. At the same time, labour supports the public education system. We know that labour programs often provide a spring board for members to access school board and college programs. Bringing the college or school board to the workplace can facilitate that link.

STEP 8 - DESIGNING A WORKER-CENTRED PROGRAM

Regardless of who is teaching, the worker-centred approach needs to be a key element of your program. This is the centre piece of the labour approach. The following steps will help you and your educational partner design a worker-centred approach:[8]

Shape the classroom to your members' needs

Your members' participation in planning their education begins with the design of the program itself. They voice their needs and interest through the needs assessment process and, through their union, they can participate in developing a program to fulfill those needs.

Go back to the results of the needs assessment and the program objectives regularly and make sure they are front and centre when you are working with your educational partner to plan classroom activities and develop course material.

Set the stage

From the outset, set the stage for a positive and supportive learning environment in the class. The physical atmosphere is important. Ideally, the room will have some natural light, be quiet and uncluttered, and have a large table rather than rows of desks for seating. To ensure confidentiality, the class should have access to a locked filing cabinet or cupboard to store material.

BEST PROGRAM GROUND RULES

Participants should be part of developing ground rules that encourage respect and listening

- This is our program
- We are all responsible for the success of this program
- All of us can participate
- Only one person speaks at a time
- We respect one another, even when we disagree
- We will be patient with one another
- We will take each other's feelings into account
- We will share what we know and be open to the possibility of learning from each other
- We will listen to each other
- We will make decisions democratically
- We will reflect on our progress and make plans for the future

Develop individual and collective learning plans

You can help your members take responsibility for their education through individual learning plans. The individual plan is something learners should develop jointly with their instructor or tutor when they enter the program. The learning plan will briefly outline the worker's own learning goals and show how he or she proposes to achieve them.

Recognizing that learning continues throughout our lives, the plan can help members set immediate as well as long term learning goals. It can assist them in making plans for their further education at a local community college, for example.

Each individual plan should contain interim goals for measuring progress through the course of the program. The instructor can use these goals to help learners identify problem areas and recognize their accomplishments. The plan should be treated as a living document that learners can revise and update as their needs change.

The individual learning plans form the basis of the collective learning plan that will guide the literacy program.

Get workers' Ideas on the curriculum

Your workplace literacy curriculum can be built around practical issues that interest adult workers and provoke discussion, such as:

- applying for a job
- getting to work
- finding childcare
- solving difficulties in the workplace
- learning to use new equipment on the job
- understanding the pension plan
- understanding the benefits of union membership
- following current events

Workers can contribute a great deal to planning the curriculum. They can bring copies of actual materials they use in their jobs or in their everyday lives: employee manuals, job application and other forms, pay cheque stubs, union newsletters, income tax forms, newspaper and magazine articles, recipes, notes from their children's school,and children's bedtime stories.

AN EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

In a literacy class at a hospital, Farm, a long time employee brought to class a disciplinary letter she had received. The letter said she had taken too much sick leave following surgery. Together, the class read the letter. They discussed what they knew about sick leave. Then they looked in their collective agreement at the articles concerning sick leave. It seemed clear that Fran was entitled to her sick leave. She filed her first grievance, which resulted in the letter being withdrawn. Similar letters sent to other employees were also withdrawn.

Workers can contribute a great deal to planning the curriculum. They can bring copies of actual materials they use in their jobs or in their everyday lives: employee manuals, job application and other forms, pay cheque stubs, union newsletters, income tax forms, newspaper and magazine articles, recipes, notes from their children's school, and children's bedtime stories.

Help workers take control of learning

Good learning implies an active role for the student. The active participation of learners needs to be central to your union's literacy program. When adults are in control of their learning, they learn more effectively. Their participation also promotes the growth of individual and collective awareness and of social and communication skills that help individuals function more effectively in a variety of settings.

Participatory learning fosters self-esteem and empowers adults to take greater responsibility for their lives. This is the kind of learning that a worker-centred program seeks to encourage.

A COMPARISON

Participatory Learning		**Passive Learning**
Learn by understanding	→	Learn by repetition
Discuss ideas	→	Memorize facts
Help develop learning plans	→	Follow pre-set curriculum
Develop self-awareness	→	Acept classroom rules
Examine social issues	→	Accept status quo

Teach for the way adults learn

Adults learn literacy skills best when they are taught in the context of their own lives and jobs. They get more out of what they learn when they use their new skills immediately in the real world. Teaching new skills in the context of your members' lives and jobs means your curriculum must recognize and build on what your members know:

- Help your members understand what they are going to learn and why
- Recognize and build on the skills and knowledge they already have (academic skills, job skills, life skills)
- Develop new lessons that build on lessons they have already learned
- Incorporate tasks, materials, and procedures that workers actually use

"It always took me three days to write a short letter. Now I write letters to my relatives, and write my own cheques."

Program Participant

Use computers where they are appropriate

The computer is no substitute for a good teacher. It should be viewed as one of many educational tools. As with any instructional material, computers can be useful when they support workers' learning objectives. Computers can expose learners to new technology. Workers who feel threatened by the introduction of computers in their jobs can become familiar with them in a less threatening setting.

WORKER-CENTRED CLASSROOM CHECKLIST

- Shape the classroom to your members' needs
- Set the stage
- Develop individual and collective learning plans
- Get workers' ideas on the curriculum
- Help workers take control of learning
- Teach for the way adults learn
- Use computers where they are appropriate

STEP 9 - GENERATING INTEREST

If you have built the program from the bottom up, your members know you have been working on setting up a workplace literacy program. Now you are looking to see who wants to sign up as participants. Depending on the model you have chosen, you may also be looking for peer instructors.

Information sessions

Keep print material to a minimum. The best way to reach your members is by talking to them in groups. The process should be inclusive. For example, gather "everyone from the maintenance department" or "everyone from the afternoon shift" rather than "anyone interested in improving their skills."

Try to address prospective peer instructors and participants at the same time. This way if members ask questions or show interest, no one will know if they intend to be a participant or an instructor. Have a simple sign-up sheet ready because at this point you are just looking for their name and how to contact them. Provide the option of coming to see you (and where to find you) for more information.

Answering frequently asked questions at the beginning will make it easier for members to focus on the objectives of the program.

Frequently asked questions

- When will classes start?
- How long will classes run?
- How often will classes be?
- What time of day will classes take place?
- Where will classes take place?
- Are classes on paid time?
- Will I get credit for this course?
- How big will the classes be?
- Will there be childcare?
- Will the classes be open to other family members?

If you are running a pilot or a small initial program you may want to limit your information sessions to a couple of departments or shifts. Other wise you run the risk of creating a demand you cannot meet. Unions and employers often underestimate the interest in the program and can be caught by surprise when they see how many people come forward to sign up.

INFORMATION SESSION CHECKLIST

- Organization department meetings. Try to cover every shift in each department.
- Use concrete examples of what will take place in the class to show the diversity of interests that can be met
- Cover the frequently asked questions
- If you are running a joint program, let members know that both the employer and the union support the program
- Let members know that confidentiality will be assured
- Make up simple, straightforward posters in as many languages as needed. The poster will let members know that free upgrading classes are available, and where to find out more.

Participant selection

You will probably need guidelines for selecting who will be first to enter the program. The committee should commit to providing an individual needs assessment for all those who sign up for the program. This will give you a picture of your members' needs and what the initial goals of the program will be. The program may not meet the needs of all workers who come forward. The union and the employer should be able to provide information about other available programs in the community.

The list of prospective participants will also make it easier for you to form and prioritize your waiting list. When the next session begins you can draw on this list to select the participants. If your committee decides to have ongoing intake, you can draw on the waiting list to replace participants who have left the program.

There are three main issues to keep in mind when the committee takes on the difficult task of developing the selection criteria:

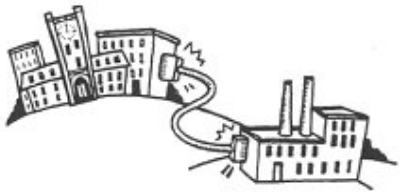
- Guiding principles: equity, affirmative action, access
- Program objectives: priorities identified through the organizational needs assessment
- Workplace demands: shifts, department needs, co-worker replacement

STEP 10 - WORKING WITH A PUBUC EDUCATION PARTNER

Linking union programs to public education

The labour movement has actively worked against cutbacks to the public education system. The attack on public education has limited access to training and education at a time when working people and their families need it most. Private training agencies have seized the opportunity to cash in on programs previously delivered through public education facilities. Government is taking away training money from the public education system and giving it to these private, for-profit training agencies. Many of these private trainers now deliver workplace literacy and other education programs.

Union literacy programs need to support and work with publicly funded community colleges and school boards. This is in keeping with our broader campaign to protect public services and to create a public education system that is responsive to workers' values and needs. It also supports unionized jobs.



In response to the growing number of union-sponsored training and education programs and employment services, the CLC has developed a protocol[9] between the unions involved in these programs and the unions that represent public education workers. Here are some of the *general principles* contained in the protocol to help guide your literacy program:

- Public institutions should be the primary deliverer and preferred means of delivering training, education, and employment services. Funds must be made available to ensure the continuing strength of public education and government programs in these areas.

- Union literacy programs must enhance and not duplicate public programs and services already in place. However, union programs can create new opportunities for working people to gain access to education and training.

- In working with public educators, workers and their unions must play a central role in determining the direction and delivery of training and education. This can help the public education system become more responsive to the values and needs of working people..

Developing a good partnership

Local school boards and community college scan be a great resource for your program. They can help you design and carry out the organizational needs assessment, develop a worker-centred program, train peer instructors, deliver the course, and carry out a formal evaluation.

It is important to develop a good working relationship with the school board or community college. You want them to become your educational partner. At the same time you want to make sure that your objectives won't be compromised. Your union needs to play a central role in determining the direction and delivery of your program.

Start by contacting the instructors' or teachers' union. Discuss your program and how you see your relationship with the public educator. The instructors' union can facilitate the partnership and put you in touch with the right person. Make sure that the instructor you work with is unionized. As part of cut-backs, many unionized public institutions contract with non-union temporary instructors to deliver special projects such as workplace training.

The worker-centred approach and the labour education focus of union-based programs can sometimes challenge the educational approach of school boards and community colleges. Sharing and discussing this handbook with your educational partner is a good means of beginning to establish an understanding of your program values and objectives. You can also contact unions and public educators who have worked together on a program to get advice on building a good working relationship.

You want to find out:

How much say do we have in selecting the instructor?

"Everybody in the class helps each other and I'm sure I've learned as much from the participants as they have from me."

Instructor

As with peer instructors, you are looking for individuals with the qualities that will help to create a supportive learning environment. The public educator needs to support and be willing to work within the principles that guide the labour approach to literacy. You will be contracting with the public institution and they need to be responsive to the needs you have established. Remember that the instructors are covered by a collective agreement and you may need to respect seniority or other provisions in selecting an instructor.

Do we need to sign a contract?

This will vary from institution to institution. At a minimum, you want to have a partnership agreement that reflects and outlines your understanding of each other's roles and expectations.

How do we ensure a central role for the union?

Choose an institution and an instructor that are committed to union- based literacy. The partnership agreement should specify that you are accountable to your members and as such the union needs to play a central role in determining the direction and delivery of your program. Your educational partner should be part of the program coordinating committee so that you are working together on an on going basis.

Don't agree to a partnership unless you feel comfortable with the public education facility's ability to be responsive to the values and needs of your members.

STEP 11 - SELECTING AND TRAINING PEER INSTRUCTORS

Creating a supportive learning environment

A worker-centred learning environment empowers people and builds on what they already know. The process must always maintain the workers' dignity and build their feelings of self-worth. The selection and training of peer or co-worker instructors must be guided by the goal of creating a supportive learning environment. We are not training teachers, we are training workers to facilitate the learning of their fellow workers.

Participants must never feel stigmatized about their participation. They should never feel that they are going to be seen in a negative light. It is important to foster a positive attitude toward learning in the workplace so that it becomes a venture to be encouraged.

"I've gotten to know more about the people I work with. Not only about their personal lives but also about different countries and cultures. It's so exciting to learn all this stuff"

Program Participant

The learning environment must also support cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity. The program must provide safe opportunities to bring varied perspectives and experiences into the classroom.

Instructor selection

Make sure prospective instructors understand that the selection is not based on their academic skills. Rather, the committee should be looking for individuals with the qualities that will help to create a supportive learning environment. Peer instructors need to support the principles that guide the labour approach to literacy. They also need to be able to commit their time for the duration of the program. The following are some of the qualities to look for:

THE PEER INSTRUCTOR IS ...

- supportive of union principles
- sensitive to issues of equity, race and culture
- open-minded
- willing to learn
- resourceful
- creative
- democratic
- approachable
- a good listener
- empathetic
- comfortable in open-ended situations

Instructor training

Several union programs have successfully trained and supported instructors. They have a wealth of expertise that can be shared with your committee, whether you are training the instructors yourself or with the help of a community college or school board.

The federations of labour in Saskatchewan and in Ontario operate programs that rely solely on peer instructors trained and supported by federation staff. In British Columbia, the health care and forestry industry unions have programs that combine the use of community college instructors and peer instructors. The B.C. tutors are trained by the community college based on a model developed in consultation with the unions. (You can find contact information in Section 4.)

STEP 12 - EVALUATION AND REPORTING OUT

Be clear about the purpose of an evaluation. Participants are not In addition to the evaluated. The purpose is to evaluate the program. formal evaluation outlined below, the program should have a means for ongoing evaluation. That is one of the tasks of the coordinating committee.

Creating evaluation criteria

Establish the evaluation criteria early in the process so there are no misunderstandings when it is time to carry out the evaluation. Employers are often looking for ways to measure the impact on productivity and the bottom line. In keeping with the philosophy of the labour approach, unions are more interested in finding out what works, what doesn't, and how to do it better.

THE EVALUATION SHOULD HELP YOU FIND OUT:

- Is the program accessible?
- Are barriers to access addressed and overcome?
- Are participants satisfied with their progress?
- Is the instruction effective?
- What can participants do now that they could not do before at work, at home, and in the union?
- What changes do they observe in themselves?
- Are participants considering further education or training?
- What aspects of the program help participants achieve their goals?
- What aspects of the program hinder learning?
- Do participants have any problems with their work schedule, co-workers or supervisor? Is there a solution?
- What can make the program better for them?
- Would they recommend the program to a co-worker?

Carrying out the evaluation

A good means of conducting evaluations while maintaining confidentiality is one-on-one interviews. The union representative should be the one talking with union members. The evaluation can also be carried out within the group, with participants discussing an evaluation questionnaire.

Supervisors should also be surveyed to explore the impact of the program on their department and any difficulties with the logistics. This information can be gathered through interviews or written questionnaires.

"At the end of the pilot project at the hospital, I carried out one-on-one interviews with participants to prepare the evaluation report. I asked one of the women what she felt she had gained. She told me quite excitedly that she had just joined the Health and Safety committee. She had been a union rep on the committee but had quit because the reading was too difficult as English is not her first language. Now she can handle the reading and pursue her interests as a health and safety activist."

Program Co-ordinator

Based on the information gathered, a report can be pre pared outlining the objectives of the program and presenting the evaluation results. The report should be widely distributed. You may want to write an article or, better yet, have the program participants tell their story in the union or company newsletter.

You may want to complete the evaluation process with a follow-up survey of participants a year after the program. This can help you document broader objectives such as union and community involvement, further education and training, job promotion, etc.

Revising the program based on feedback

The last step is to make recommendations for future programs. Go over the evaluation results and look at how to improve the program.

SECTION 4:
Getting more information

A) PROGRAM PROFILES

The following program profiles illustrate different workplace literacy models. They all have one thing in common - the unions or labour organizations either developed or played a central role in the development of the program. In addition, they either control or are equal partners in the program. There is a growing number of union-based literacy programs and the profiles that follow are by no means an exhaustive sample.

Labour-run programs

These are programs initiated, developed, and coordinated by a union or labour organization. Although there may be some employer involvement in these programs, they are largely controlled by labour:

- *Building Educational Skills for Tomorrow (BEST)*, Ontario Federation of Labour
- *Workers' Education for Skills Training (WEST)*, Saskatchewan Federation of Labour
- *Workplace Education Project*, United Brotherhood of Carpenters Local 1338, Prince Edward Island
- United Food and Commercial Workers Training Centre-Winnipeg, Local 832
- *Skills for Tomorrow*, Union of Needle trades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE)
- *Metro Labour Education Centre*, Toronto and York Region Labour Council

Joint labour-management programs

These are programs initiated and often developed by a union or labour organization. However, these programs are jointly run with the employer:

- *Basic Education Program*, Hospital Employees' Union (CUPE), British Columbia
- *Learning and Education Assisted by Peers (LEAP)*, Joint Union Management Program (JUMP); Communications, Energy and Paper workers Union of Canada (CEP) and the Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers of Canada (PPWC), British Columbia
- *Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress (CSTEC)*, United Steelworkers of America
- *B.C. Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council (Skill Plan)*, B.C. and Yukon Territory Building and Construction Trades Council

BEST - Building Educational Skills for Tomorrow (formerly Basic Education for Skills Training), Ontario Federation of Labour

What is BEST?

BEST was established in 1988 and is a labour education project of the Ontario Federation of Labour and its affiliated unions. As a unique literacy program, BEST is an important part of the labour movement's efforts to promote social and economic justice.

BEST programs are open to workers in unionized workplaces across Ontario. Programs have been offered to workers in mines, paper mills, lumber camps, hospitals, hotels, boards of education, nursing homes, universities, garment factories and many other manufacturing plants. There have also been programs for municipal workers, taxi drivers, construction workers and bus drivers.

Locals interested in setting up a program can contact BEST. BEST staff can assist the local in all aspects of establishing the program, including negotiating with management, training instructors and conducting an organizational needs assessment.

What does BEST offer?

BEST offers classes in:

- English and French as a second language
- Basic Skills (upgrading in reading, writing, and math)
- Communication skills
- Preparation for high school credits
- Numeracy

BEST also offers other services such as:

- Instructor training
- Literacy Advocate training
- Workshops in clear language
- Joint Committee training
- Materials development
- Creating links between workers and public education
- Organizational Needs Assessment

How do BEST programs work?

BEST combines the philosophy of popular education with labour's traditional use of worker instructors to deliver quality worker-centred literacy programs.

BEST programs are run in groups of 6 to 12 participants. The collective interests of the participants in each group shape the learning content and direction for the program. Group members do not participate in an individualized program in a group setting, but rather in a collective process that works to meet the needs of all the group members.

The instructor is a co-worker from the same workplace who is selected by the BEST staff through consultation with the employer and the union. The prospective instructor participates in an intensive two-week training program. Instructors are provided with material, ideas and techniques which can be used as catalysts to help the group achieve their goals. The instructor receives support from the BEST staff and takes part in additional training over the course of the year.

BEST believes that in order to be successful, programs have to be relevant to workers' lives. The starting point of each BEST program is what the participants want and need to learn. BEST uses learning resources that come from the lives of the participants rather than standard one-size-fits-all text or curriculum. In this respect every BEST program IS unique.

Throughout the year, participants assess their progress and the progress of the group. Although there are no tests in the program, the participants and instructor use a portfolio process to help in determining if they are moving toward the goals they have set for themselves. No information about the progress of any individual is shared with the employer or the union.

Programs typically run for about 36 weeks in a year. The classes usually meet for four hours a week - in two, two-hour sessions, however times are flexible. Classes are run at all times of the day and night. The time is negotiated according to what is most convenient for the participants. Program participants are members of the same union working in the same workplace. Wherever possible, the program is held in the workplace. This makes it more convenient for the participants.

The costs associated with the delivery of the program, including the instructor training, are paid by the employer. The employer is also involved, through a joint committee, in the coordination of the program.

To find out more about BEST:

OFL BEST Program
15 Gervais Drive, 2nd Floor
Don Mills, ON M3C 1Y8
1-800-668-9138 (Ontario only)
416-441-2731
Web site: www.creativewizardry.com/Best

WEST - Workers' Education for Skills Training Saskatchewan Federation of Labour

What is WEST?

WEST is a trade union education program of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. The purpose of WEST is to enable workers to develop and strengthen their skills in the manner that best meets their needs. Through WEST, union members are able to improve their basic skills in reading, writing, and math by attending classes at their workplace or at their union office.

WEST has a full-time coordinator to assist unions with all aspects of the program, from the training of co-worker facilitators to the final evaluation.

WEST is funded by a yearly grant from the Saskatchewan government, and by substantial in-kind support from the Federation of Labour.

What does WEST offer?

WEST classes help workers improve their basic skills in:

- reading, writing, and arithmetic
- English as a second language and
- technology readiness

Although these basic skills are central to the program, so are skills in:

- decision-making
- critical thinking
- problem-solving
- applying acquired knowledge to everyday life

How do WEST programs work?

WEST uses a modification of the Ontario Federation of Labour's BEST model. Programs are offered to groups of up to 10 workers at their workplace or union office, with trained co-workers facilitating the classes. Programs generally operate four hours per week in two, two- hour sessions, with half of the class time held during working hours.

The curriculum is emergent, that is it flows from what the participants want to learn. Progress is evaluated by using portfolio assessment. Resources used are primarily workplace-based: policies, procedures, manuals, union newsletters, notices, campaign material, pay slips, etc.

WEST charges no fee for its services. Employers contribute through coverage of lost time required to train the facilitators and to run the classes.

To find out more about WEST:

WEST Program Co-ordinator
Saskatchewan Federation of Labour
220 - 244 513th Avenue
Regina, SK S4P 0W1
1.888.SFL.WEST (Saskatchewan only)
306-924-8574
E-mail: sfl.west@sk.sympatico.ca

Workplace Education Project United Brotherhood of Carpenters Local 1338 (PEI)

What is the Workplace Education Project?

The Workplace Education Project began as a pilot project to help carpenters upgrade their skills in order to keep up with changes in their trade and industry. Carpenters realized that they needed to start with a good foundation in literacy skills and that meant improving their math, reading, and communication skills.

The project received funding and assistance from Workplace Education PEI, a joint initiative of the provincial and federal governments that includes representatives from business and labour.

What does the Workplace Education Project offer?

Using carpentry as a background, the project offers courses to improve:

- math skills
- communication skills
- reading skills
- preparation for Red Seal exam (trade certification)
- employability skills

How do Workplace Education Programs work?

At each location, the program begins with the establishment of a Project Team. The team coordinates the project, including the selection and hiring of the instructor. The instructor is an adult educator with a trade background. The instructor works with the group to design and create the curriculum in response to the participants' goals and objectives.

Typically the course runs for about 12 weeks, with three-hour sessions, two nights a week. Participants attend on their own time and work in small groups of no more than 12 people. Classes are free for the participants and take place in the union office and in community sites in rural areas. They are open both to union and non-union participants.

To find out more about the Workplace Education Project:

Workplace Education PEI
3 Queen St. Rm 214 & 215
P.O.Box 3254
Charlottetown, PEI C1A 8W5
902-368-6280

The United Food and Commercial Workers Training Centre - Winnipeg

What is the UFCW Training Centre?

The UFCW Training Centre in Winnipeg - one of eight such UFCW centres across Canada - is the largest union-owned and operated training centre in Manitoba. It offers a full array of education and foundation skills training opportunities designed to help the members of UFCW Local 832 build their confidence, knowledge and skills. The Training Centre offers general non-credit courses as well as credit courses to help members bridge into post-secondary education. The Training Centre also offers a comprehensive Career Transition Service - including workshops, computer and other upgrading courses, counselling and job placement and are source room - for those members who have lost their jobs due to layoffs or plant closures.

The Training Centre is financed by an Education and Training Trust Fund. Cents per hour contributions are negotiated with employers in collective bargaining. Additional project funding is made available through numerous partnerships with various levels of government.

What does the Winnipeg UFCW Training Centre Offer?

1. General Session (Non-credit)
   - Writing, Reading and Math Refresher courses
   - English as a Second Language (with childcare): bilingual beginner, intermediate
   - Computers: Intro to Computers, Windows, Word, Excel, Access, Publisher, Internet, Power point,
   - CPR/First Aid
   - Wen Do (Women's Self Defence)
2. Mature Student Grade 12 Diploma
   This provincially-accredited program is delivered in partnership with the Morris Macdonald School Division. Courses include General Educational Development (GED) and a full range of high school credit courses such as Math, Computers, Language Arts, Science, Law and Psychology. The program is also open to family members and friends.
3. Shop Steward Diploma Program
   This expanded program under development consists of a range of participatory workshops designed to provide shop stewards with the skills they need to service members and build the union in today's workplace. Courses include New Steward Orientation, the Effective Steward, Stress Management, Communication Skills for Conflict Resolution, Dignity in the Workplace - Fighting Workplace Discrimination and Harassment, Collective Bargaining and Organizing.
4. Job Skills Training
   The Centre is also developing more specific job skills training initiatives in areas such as Security Officer and Food Handler training.

Training Centre Facilities

The Training Centre houses two new computer labs, a multipurpose room with space/sound system for 200 people which converts into two large classrooms, four additional classrooms, instructor resource room, student lounge/lunchroom, career transition resource room and an administration area.

How Do Training Programs Work?

Courses run during the day and evenings from Monday to Saturday. Workshops and courses range in length from a single day to 110 hours for high school courses. Course fees range from $15 to $30. Members attend courses on their own time, with the exception of steward courses for which they are booked off by the union. Instructors are union activists, adult educators and/or certified instructors from the public education system who practice participatory education techniques.

Off-site Programs

In addition to the courses at the Training Centre, there are ESL and Literacy classes offered at Western Glove-a Winnipeg garment plant. A new satellite facility in Brandon features a new computer lab and two classrooms. Shop Steward courses are offered across the province. Computer and other courses are offered in different communities in the north and western part of the province in partnership with public education providers.

To Find Out More About the Winnipeg UFCW Training Centre

Director
UFCW Training Centre
2nd floor – 880 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3G 0P1
(204)775-UFCW (8329)
e-mail: info@Ufcwtraining.mb.ca
web site: www.ufcw832.mb.ca

Skills for Tomorrow Union of Needle trades, Industrial and Textile Employees {UNITE}

What is Skills for Tomorrow?

Skills for Tomorrow was a UNITE research project to identify the education needs of its members across Canada. The project was funded by the National Literacy Secretariat and conducted for UNITE by ABC Canada.

The needs assessment found that UNITE members were interested in two kinds of skills upgrading. In apparel, language learning was the first choice of most members and in textile and other sectors, computer skills ranked first.

The second phase of the project has been to mobilize the union around essential skills. With funding from the National Literacy Secretariat, UNITE has trained regional interns to promote literacy and work with local executives to get literacy programs started for UNITE members. Two such programs are the Learning Experience Centre of Local 459 in Winnipeg and the Montreal Joint Board's Skills for Tomorrow Education Centre.

Learning Experience Centre

The purpose of the Learning Experience Centre is to accommodate learners from UNITE 459 membership, their families and friends. The Centre focuses on the holistic approach to teaching, one which allows the worker to use what they are learning in whatever way they choose. It is the goal of the Learning Experience Centre to offer programs that meet the needs of each individual, which requires taking the whole person into account; their needs as workers, community members, and members within their family unit. The Learning Experience Centre program is geared toward developing the wellness of each student as well as workplace skills.

The Learning Experience Centre is run by a committee that reports to the Joint Council of Local 459. The committee is comprised of executive members as well as program participants, and is responsible for making decisions and recommendations concerning the overall operation of the Centre.

The Centre has received seed funding from the National Literacy Secretariat as well as the provincial government. On going funding is provided by Local 459 and the UNITE Education and Research Fund, which collects .25 per cent of payroll from participating employers in Winnipeg.

The Centre has developed an integrated computer based learning program using computers as primary tools in the teaching of literacy skills. Participants do not just sit in front of a computer. They work in cooperative groups helping each other learn. The Centre employs three instructors as well as three teaching assistants. Programs offered include:

- English language
- mathematics
- reading comprehension
- writing
- General Educational Development (GED)
- family learning: school age children have a place to do their homework and participate in learning activities

Montreal Education Centre

The UNITE Montreal Joint Board worked with the public service Adult Basic Education Committee (Comite d'education des adultes - GEDA) to bring basic skills courses to its members. The program is funded by a grant from the Quebec National Training Fund (Fonds national de formation de la main-d'oeuvre), and is coordinated by at raining committee set up by the union.

Classes are set up in direct response to individual needs assessments carried out by CEDA. In the spring of 1999,the union offered four conversational French classes and two reading, writing, and math classes.

The program is facilitated by CEDA instructors at the union centre. Participants work in small groups to develop skills both for work and their everyday life. Labour material is used to help members learn about their union while they improve their French skills.

Free classes are offered four hours a week for 11 weeks in the evening and on Saturdays. To facilitate access, the union provides financial assistance to cover childcare costs.

To find out more about Skills for Tomorrow:

The Learning Experience Centre
UNITE Local 459
508-138 Portage Ave. East
Winnipeg, MB R3C OA1
204-956-4868

Education Services Director
UNITE Montreal Joint Board
20 Maisonneuve Blvd. W.
Montreal, QC H2X 1Z3
519-844-8644
1-800-994-8644

Metro Labour Education Centre Toronto and York Region Labour Council

The Toronto and York Region Labour Council was a pioneer in the field of workplace literacy. Long aprovider of labour studies, in the early 1980s the Labour Council initiated the English in the Workplace program. Union instructors delivered English as a second language classes in a wide variety of workplaces with the sponsorship of the workplace union and employer.

In 1987, the Metro Labour Education Centre (MLEC) was born, offering literacy, adult basic education, computer literacy and adjustment services as well as English as a second language and labour studies.

Although the Ontario government no longer funds delivery of workplace literacy, MLEC continues to provide free English upgrading, communication skills, and computer literacy to unemployed workers.

MLEC offers extensive services to the labour movement across Canada ona fee-for-service basis: curriculum development, adjustment and joint committee training, train the trainer, clear language and design, organizational needs assessments, orientation to ISO 9000 workshops, and a broad range of computer training and technical resource services.

To find out more about MLEC:

Metro Labour Education Centre
1209 King St. W. Suite 201A
Toronto, ON M6K 1G2
416-537-6532
Website: www.mlec.org

Basic Education Program Hospital Employees' Union (CUPE), British Columbia

What is the Basic Education Program?

The Basic Education Program is a workplace literacy program initiated by the Hospital Employees' Union,a servicing division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees. Through the Healthcare Labour Adjustment Agency (HLAA), the program is open to all healthcare unions in British Columbia. The HLAA is a union-management agency funded through the Ministry of Health to provide worker adjustment programs such as job placement, early retirement, and training.

The Basic Education Program is funded and promoted through the HLAA. Local joint labour adjustment committees apply to the HLAA for funding approval. Agency staff help local committees bring the program to the workplace. The HLAA covers instructional costs, including peer tutor wages, materials, and childcare costs. The HLAA and the local employer cost-share the wages of students scheduled to work during class time so students can participate without loss of wages.

What does the Basic Education Program offer?

The specific objectives of the program model are to:

- provide a framework for a joint union-management approach to basic education in the workplace
- facilitate access to basic education by offering a program in the workplace, during the workday, at no cost to participants, and without loss of wages
- enhance learning by offering a program that is based on participants' needs and goals, and that makes use of learning resources that are relevant to their life and workplace
- provide a supportive and comfortable learning environment by having workers help workers with their basic education needs
- facilitate further training by providing a link with the community college

Within this context, the program helps workers:

- improve their reading, writing or math skills
- acquire greater ability in English, for those whose first language is other than English
- prepare for the GED or grade 12 equivalency
- refresh or upgrade their skills to go onto further training or education

How does the Basic Education Program work?

The HEU model has been largely inspired by the BEST and WEST programs, but is run jointly with the employer and with the help of a community college. The program offers workers the opportunity to upgrade their skills in a context that is relevant to their daily lives, with the support and encouragement of their peers. It combines the strengths of a community with a peer tutor model.

The program is run jointly by the employer and the union through a local coordinating committee that includes the community college. The committee is responsible for class logistics, the recruitment and selection of participants and tutors, and on-going coordination and support.

The course is free and participants don't suffer loss of wages. As much as possible, the class is part of the participants' work schedule, so that they are not expected to attend class at the end of along shift.

Classes are generally offered in two hour sessions, twice a week for 24 weeks. Typically, each class has 10-12 participants and up to four peer tutors as well as a college instructor. The high number of tutors enables the program to meet different needs in a single class. Participants are often grouped with others sharing similar needs with the groups changing as activities change. The instructors and peer tutors develop lesson plans in direct response to students' needs.

Tutors attend a week-long training session delivered by the community college, and then continue to learn on the job. The college instructor spends more time in the class at the beginning of the program and peer tutors take on more responsibilities as the program evolves.

To Find Out More About the Basic Education Program

Hospital Employee's Union
2006 West 10th Ave.
Vancouver, BC V6J 4P5
604-734-3431

Healthcare Labour Adjustment Agency
300- 1195 W. Broadway
Vancouver, BC V6H 3X5
604-775-1886

LEAP - Learning and Education Assisted by Peers B.C. Pulp and Paper

What is LEAP?

LEAP is the basic skills initiative of the Joint Union Management Program (JUMP) in the E.C. pulp and paper industry. JUMP is a training initiative funded through Forest Renewal E.C., a program negotiated between the government of British Columbia and forestry companies and funded through royalties and stumpage fees.

The Communications, Energy and Paper workers Union of Canada (CEP) and the Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers of Canada (PPWC) have teamed up with Capilano College to bring the LEAP program to pulp and paper workplaces across British Columbia. LEAP is part of JUMP's endeavour to provide access to training for all workers in the industry. Without foundation skills, there are people who will not access any of the training opportunities offered by JUMP.

The LEAP program is aimed at workers who do not have the reading, writing, and math skills they need to participate effectively in the workplace, union, home,and community. The LEAP model provides accessible educational upgrading to those who may have a difficult time accessing community based programs.

What does LEAP offer?

LEAP can help workers:

- improve their reading, writing or math skills for work or home
- prepare for the GED or Grade 12 equivalency
- improve their ability to work with technical or work-related materials
- gain a basic understanding of computers
- learn to learn again
- refresh or upgrade their skills to go onto further training or education
- improve their ability to keep pace with changes in the workplace

How LEAP programs work

The LEAP program provides the tools and an environment in which participants can work together with peers to achieve their own goals. The atmosphere is one of mutual support and encouragement and builds on relationships already established at the workplace. There are no fees and no tests to pass. Participants work at their own pace and assistance is available as needed. Typically, two peer tutors and the six to eight participants work together in a group setting with the support of a college instructor.

The LEAP program combines elements of both the OFL BEST program and the Hospital Employees' Union program. Like the HEU program, LEAP was inspired by the philosophy of BEST and combines the use of peer instructors and a community college. However, in LEAP the role of the community college is to train the peer instructors and provide them with on-going support. Classes are delivered by the peer instructors and are source person from the college is available by phone (1-800 number) to assist the peer instructors as needed.

Peer instructors participate in a seven-day intensive training session, followed by a three day session after eight weeks.

The LEAP program is committed to making linkages with community colleges in their role of supporting peer instructors. The community college also helps coordinate and promote the program, and works with the local JUMP committees. Depending on the needs of the workers and the workplace, the community college can also deliver the course directly with the help of peer instructors.

To find out more about LEAP:

305- 235 Bastion St.
Nanaimo, BC V9R 3A3
250-716-8989

Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress (CSTEC) United Steelworkers of America

What is CSTEC?

CSTEC is a joint venture between the Steelworkers and Canada's steel producing companies. The key goals in regard to worker adjustment are to improve the skills, adaptability, confidence,and employability of laid off workers within the steel industry. The main objective of skills training is to improve the level, quality, and transferability of skills within the industry.

Initial development costs of the program were funded by all participants, including industry, unions, companies, the college/cegep system, and provincial and federal governments. On going funding is negotiated with local employers. The federal government used to match employer contributions but that support ended on March 31,1999.

What does CSTEC offer?

Tools for local committees:

- workshops that address the roles and responsibilities of trainers in the training development process
- needs assessment manual and questionnaire to assess local training needs

Three types of training:

- foundation programs
- generic programs
- specific programs

Foundation courses include basic skills in areas such as communications, problem-solving, basic math and computer applications. These courses receive credit from community colleges/GEGEPS which have agreements with CSTEC.

How do CSTEC Programs work?

CSTEC programs are delivered through joint-labour management committees that are co-chaired by local management and the union. The programs are delivered to meet the needs of a)adjustment and b) workplace training committees. Programs are tailored to meet particular needs. CSTEC assists in administering the programs locally.

CSTEC has agreements with 20 colleges/cegeps across the country to develop and assist in the delivery of modularized courses. Courses are delivered either by the college/cegep or by workplace instructors. These instructors must be recognized by the Joint Training Committee and the college/cegep.

Although basic skills are developed within the context of the needs of the steel industry, the union plays a major role in the development of the courses.

Depending on need, classes take place either in the workplace, union hall or at the college. Costs are generally paid by employers, although in each case, these arrangements are worked out at the local workplace.

To find out more about CSTEC/USWA:

USWA
500- 234 Eglinton Ave. East
Toronto, ON M4P 1K7
416-480-1797

E-mail: general@cstec.ca
Website: www.cstec.ca

Skill Plan B.C. Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council

What is SkillPlan?

SkillPlan is a not-for-profit society that develops strategies to improve the basic skills of workers in the unionized construction industry in British Columbia and the Yukon Territory.

Skill Plan was founded in 1991 by the Construction Labour Relations Association and the B.C. and Yukon Territory Building and Construction Trades Council. The Board includes equal representation from union and management.

Skill Plan was founded in 1991 by the Construction Labour Relations Association and the B.C. and Yukon Territory Building and Construction Trades Council. The Board includes equal representation from union and management.

What does Skill Plan offer?

Skill Plan has demonstrated that basic skills issues - reading, writing, math, problem-solving and oral communication - can be approached on an industry-wide basis more effectively than trade by trade. The goal is to promote a "learning culture" that encourages a life time of learning for everyone, regardless of what skills they start with. Skill Plan provides:

- service to individuals
- service to training coordinators and trades instructors
- research
- publications

Skill Plan supports a network of 100 trades instructors by developing short courses and workshops such as:

- writing for work
- study skills
- test taking
- reading, thinking, and problem solving
- language at work (technical reading)
- math for crane operators
- basic skills strategies for trainers
- workplace coaching

How do Skill Plan Programs work?

Individuals may be referred to Skill Plan by trades instructors, union leaders, management, or may come on their own. Individual learning goals vary and so does Skill Plan's response. Skill Plan consults trades instructors and identifies learning goals. Then Skill Plan supplies course related materials, finds a tutor, links with colleges, coaches over the phone, etc. In short, Skill Plan finds away for the learner to meet basic skills needs.

Skill Plan also facilitates training for specific groups. A short needs assessment determines how the needs of that group can be met. Workshops are modified to use the materials for the context of the group and their trade.

Where appropriate, Skill Plan uses distance education technology. Video conferencing can be used to deliver workshops. Stand alone computers in a training facility or union hall can be used with a trades specific learning program alongside regular instructor support.

Skill Plan publications - such as Language of Documents: A Guide to Information Display in the Workplace; Document Literacy: A Guide for Workplace Trainers and Educators; and Concrete Words: Strategies for Learning Technical Language - are available at cost.

Currently, Skill Plan and Bow Valley College have formed a partnership to develop a tool that assesses essential skills (reading text, using documents and solving problems using numbers). TOWES - Test of Workplace Essential Skills - consists of a bank of question sets using authentic workplace documents and recreating actual workplace tasks. More information is available at www.TOWES.com.

To find out more about Skill Plan:

SkillPlan
405 - 3701 Hastings St.
Burnaby BC V5G 1J3
Tel: 604-436-1126
Fax: 604-436-1149
E-mail: skillplan@telus.net
Website: www.towes.com

B) SUMMARY OF CONTACTS

Provinces/ Territory	Labour	Literacy Coalition	Government
Canada	**Canadian Labour Congress** 2841 Riverside Drive Ottawa, ON, K1V 8X7 613-521-3400 www.clc-ctc.ca	**Movement for Canadian Literacy** 180 Metcalfe St., Ste. 300 Ottawa, ON, K2P 1P5 613-583-2464 www.literacy.ca **Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français** 235 Montréal Rd., Rm. 205 Vanier, ON, K1L 6C7 613-749-5333 www.franco.ca/alpha/	**National Literacy Secretariat** 15 Eddy Street, 10th Floor Hull, QC, K1A 1K5 819-997-7296 www.nald.ca/nls.htm
British Columbia	**B.C. Federation of Labour** #200-5118 Joyce St. Vancouver, BC, V5G 1H1 604-430-1421 www.bcfed.com	**Literacy BC** 622 - 510 West Hastings Vancouver, BC, V6B 1L8 604-684-0624 www.nald.ca/lbc.htm	**Ministry of Education, Skills and Training** P.O. Box 9177 Stn. Prov. Govt Victoria, BC, V8W 9H8 205-387-6174
Alberta	**Alberta Federation of Labour** 10451-170 Street, #350 Edmonton, AB, T5P 4T2 780-483-3021 www.afl.org	**Alberta Association for Adult Literacy** 332 - 6th Ave. SE, Rm. 605 Calgary, AB, T2G 4S6 403-297-4994 www.nald.ca/aaal.htm	**Advance Education & Career Development** 10155-102 St. 10th Fl. Commerce Place Edmonton, AB, T5J 4L5 780-427-5704
Saskatchewan	**Saskatchewan Federation of Labour** 220-2445 13th Ave. Regina, SK, S4P 0W1 206-525-0197	**Saskatchewan Literacy Network** 220 3rd Ace. S., #206 Saskatoon, SK, S7K 1M1 206-653-7178 www.nald.ca/sklitnet.htm	**Saskatchewan Post-secondary Education and Skills Training** 3085 Albert St., Rm. 129 Regina, SK, S4P 3V7 206-787-2513

Provinces/ Territory	Labour	Literacy Coalition	Government
Manitoba	**Manitoba Federation of Labour** 101-275 Broadway Ave. Winnipeg, MB, R3C 4M6 204-947-1400 www.mfl.mb.ca	**Literacy Partners of Manitoba** 998 - 167 Lombard Ave. Winnipeg, MB, R3B 0V3 www.nald.ca/litpman.htm	**Department of Education and Training** 400-209 Notre Dame Ave. Winnipeg, MB R3B 1M9 204-945-8247
Ontario	**Ontario Federation of Labour** 202 - 15 Gervais Dr. Don Mills, ON, M3C 1Y8 416-441-2731 www.ofl-fto.on.ca	**Ontario Literacy Coalition** 1003 - 365 Bloor St. E. Toronto, ON, M4W 3L4 416-963-5787 **Regroupement des groups francophones d'alphabébetisation populair de l'Ontario** 2 Nelson St. W. Suuite 303 Brampton, ON, L6X 2M5 905-454-7702	**Ontario Literacy Coalition** 1003 - 365 Bloor St. E. Toronto, ON, M4W 3L4 416-963-5787 **Regroupement des groups francophones d'alphabébetisation populair de l'Ontario** 2 Nelson St. W. Suuite 303 Brampton, ON, L6X 2M5 905-454-7702
Quebec	**Fédération des travalleurs** 545 Cremazie Blvd. E. 17th Floor Montréal, QC, H2M 2V1 514-383-8008	**Regroupement des groups populaires en alphabétisation du Quebec** 2120 Sherbrooke St., #302 Montréal, QC, H2K 1C3 514-523-7762 **Literacy Partners of Quebec** 3040 Sherbrooke St. W. Montréal, QC, H3Z 1A4 514-931-8731 ext. 1413 www.bakd.ca/lpq.htm	**Minitry of Education** 1035 rue de la Chebrotiére, 17th Floor Québec, QC, G1R 5A5 418-644-0220
New Brunswick	**New Brunswick Federation of Labour** 96 Norwood Ave. Moncton, NB, E1C 6L9 506-857-2125 www.intellis.net/fttnbfl	**New Brunswick Committee on Literacy** 88 Prospect St. W. Fredericton, NB, E3B 2T8 506-457-1227 http://www.nald.ca/nbclhome.html	**Literacy New Brunswick** 548 York St. P.O. Box 6000 Fredericton, NB, E3B 5H1 506-457-4949

Provinces/ Territory	Labour	Literacy Coalition	Government
Prince Edward Island	**PEI Federation of Labour** 420 University Ave., Rm. 113 Charlottetown, PEI C1A-7Z5 902-368-3068	**PEI Literacy Alliance** P.O. Box 400 Charlottetown, PEI C1A 7K7 www.nald.ca/peila.htm	**Department of Education** P.O Box 2000 Charlottetown, PEI C1A 7N8 902-368-6286
Nova Scotia	**Nova Scotia Federation of Labour** 212-3700 Kempt Rd. Halifax, NS, B3K 4X8 902-454-6735	**Nova Scotia Provincial Literacy Coalition** P.O. Box 1516 Truro, NS, B2N 5V2 902-897-2444 www.nald.ca/nsplc.htm	**Department of Education and Culture** 2021 Brunswick St. P.O. Box 578 Halifax, NS, B3J 2S9 902-424-5162
Newfoundland & Labrador	**Newfoundland & Labrador Federation of Labour** P.O. Box 8597 Stn. A St. John's, NF, A1B 3P2 709-754-1660 www.nf.sympatico.ca/nlf	**Literacy Development Council of NF & Labrador** Arts & Culture Centre St. John's, NF, A1E 3A3 709-737-3964 www.nald.ca/nfldlit.htm	**of NF & Labrador** Arts & Culture Centre St. John's, NF, A1E 3A3 709-737-3964 www.nald.ca/nfldlit.htm **Department of Education and Training** P.O. Box 8700 St. John's, NF, A1B 4J6 709-729-5711
Yukon Territory	**Yukon Federation of Labour** 106 Strickland St. Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 2J5 867-667-6676	**Yukon Learn Society** 308 Hanson St. Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 1Y6 867-668-6280 http://www.nald.ca/yuklearn.htm	**Department of Education** P.O. Box 2703 Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 2C6 867-667-8213
Northwest Territories	**Northern Federation of Labour** 206 Bowling Green Ave. P.O. Box 2787 Yellowknife, NT, X1A 2R1 867-873-3695	**NWT Literacy Council** P.O. Box 761 Yellowknife, NT, X1A 2N6 867-873-9262	**Department of Education, Culture and Employment** P.O. Box 1320 Yellowknife, NT, X1A 2L9 867-920-3482

C) CONTACT LIST

Canadian Labour Congress
2841 Riverside Dr.
Ottawa, ON K1V 8X7
613-521-3400

Atlantic Region
2282 Mountain Road
Moncton, NB E1G 1B4
506-858-9350
atlantic@clc-ctc.ca

Ontario Region
305-15 Gervais Drive
Toronto, ON M3C 1Y8
416-441-3710
ontario@clc-ctc.ca

Prairie Region
1888 Angus Street
Regina, SK S4T 1Z4
306-525-6137
prairie@clc-ctc.ca

Pacific Region
201-5118 Joyce Street
Vancouver, BC V5R 4H1
604-430-6766
pacific@clc-ctc.ca

D) RESOURCES

Publications

In this section you will find a selection of material to complement the information in the handbook. We have selected resources that support or recognize the labour approach to workplace literacy.

Reference material

Bloom, M., Burrows, M., Lafleur, B.and Squires, R. *The Economic Benefits of Improving Literacy Skills in the Workplace.* Conference Board of Canada. 1997.

Hoddinott, Susan. *Something to Think About / Please Think About Us.* Report on a National Study of Access to Adult Basic Education Programs and Services in Canada. Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. 1998.

National Literacy Secretariat. *Bibliography: Workplace Literacy Resources.* Human Resources Development Canada. 1998.

Nutter, Patricia. *The Writing's on the Wall: Investing in Municipal Workforce Literacy.* Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators. 1996.

Taylor, Maurice. *Workplace Basic Skills: A Study of 10 Canadian Programs.* University of Ottawa. 1995.

Program material

Canadian Labour Congress:

- *Learning in Solidarity: What Unions Should About Getting the Money for Literacy and Basic Skills Programs.* Canadian Labour Congress. 1998.
- *Bargaining Basic Skills: What Unions Should Know About Negotiating Worker-Centred Literacy Programs.* Canadian Labour Congress. 2000.
- *Making it Clear: Clear Language for Union Communications.* Canadian Labour Congress. 1999.

Davison, Marjorie and Temple, Paul. *Workplace Education, Making it Work: A Resource Guide for Business, Labour, Government and Practitioners Interested or Involved in Workplace Education.* Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture. 1997.

Deschamps, Johanne and Miller, Louise. *La formation en emploi: ça se négocié.* Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec. January 1995.(Available only in French).

Folinsbee, Sue and Jurmo, Paul. *Collaborative Needs Assessment: A Handbook for Workplace Development Planners.* ABC Canada. 1994.

Gibson, Diana. *Making it Happen Handbook: Implementing Labour's Agenda on Training.* E.C. Federation of Labour, Canadian Labour Congress, Capilano College. 1998.

Haney, Ann and Howell. *The Integrated Learning Program: a curriculum sample.* UNITE Local 459.

Jurmo, Paul and Folinsbee, Sue. *Collaborative Evaluation: A Handbook for Workplace Development Planners.* ABC Canada. 1994.

Learning Capacities in the Community and Workplace: An Action Research Project. *Skills and Knowledge Profile (and Coach's Manual).* Advocates for Community-based Training and Education for Women, The New Approaches to Lifelong Learning Network (OISE). 1999.

MacLean, Cathy, Wedel, Robert and Acosta, Joan. *Workplace Curriculum for Healthcare.* Capilano College, British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training. 1997.

Miller, Louise and Deschamps, Johanne. *L'enquête sur les besoins de formation; complément au guide La formation en emploi: ça se négocié.* Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Quebec. March 1995.(Available only in French).

Sarmiento, A.R. and Kay, A. *Worker-centered Learning: A Union Guide to Basic Skills.* AFL-CIO Working for America Institute. 1999.

Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. *Changes in the Rate of Community, Workplace and Union Participation by Learners in a Workplace Education Program.* 1997.

Shore, Lee with Alkin, Jerry and Taub, Edward. *A Union Approach to Workplace Education.* Labour Education and Research Centre, University of Oregon. 1995.

In the Classroom

Metro Labour Education Centre publications:

- *Heritage of Struggle: Canadian Labour History Workbook.* Toronto. 1996.
- *Working in the Hospital* (1990).
- *Unseen Healers: A History of Hospital Workers* (1990).
- *Crosswords and Word games for Workers*; volume I (1990) and volume II (1992).
- *Getting the Credit You Deserve: Portfolio Development Course for ESL Speakers.* Carrozzino, G., Burnie B.,and Hynes, M.(1994).
- *Labour Verses: Poetry of Anger, Poetry of Faith* (1992).
- *Our Stories* (1992).
- *In Our Own Words* (1990).
- *Coming to Toronto.* Myshrall, Stanley (1991).
- *I Am On My Way Home*, Newby, Robert (1990).

Ontario Federation of Labour. BEST publications (English):

- Problem Solving Union Style
- Paper - It Doesn't Growon Trees
- An Injury at Work
- Shoes in Canada
- The Long Road Home
- The Open Window
- Go For It

Ontario Federation of Labour. BEST publications (French):

- *L'orignal*
- *Les mains*
- *Petites Histoires du Grand Nord*
- *Un nouveau jour*
- *La route du Nord*
- *Des travailleurs racontent leur histoire*

Zuern, Guenther. *Ontario Reader for ESL and Literacy Learners.* Newcommer Communications. Toronto. 1997.

Newsletters

- The Bottom Line, newsletter of the Western Canada Workplace Essential Skills Network tel. 403-541-1367.
- Literacy at Work. ABC Canada.
- Learning Together: Solidarity at Work. Canadian Labour Congress.
- NLS Newsletter. National Literacy Secretariat. Human Resources Development Canada.

Videos

- *Best for Us.* BEST, Ontario Federation of Labour.
- *A Lifetime of Opportunity.* WEST, Saskatchewan Federation of Labour.
- *Working Together, Moving Ahead.* Capilano College and Hospital Employees' Union (CUPE).
- *Jamais trop tard.* Federation des travailleurs et travailleuses du Quebec.

On the Internet

The Internet can be an excellent source of information, as well as a means to stay current about literacy initiatives. If your union is not "on-line" you can access the Internet at most publiclibraries free of charge.

Websites

In addition to the many web sites listed in the Program Profiles and Contacts sections here are a few other sites you may find useful:

National Adult Literacy Database: www.nald.ca

The National Adult Literacy Database (NALD) is a non-profit organization that provides information about adult literacy programs, resources, services and activities across Canada. It also links with other services and databases in North America and overseas.

AlphaPlus Centre: www.alphaplus.ca

Ontario-based source of information on adult literacy. AlphaPlus provides access to an on-line catalogue, library information, a database and other resources, as well as a discussion group.

International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS): www.nald.ca/nls/ials/introduc.htm

The 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey is the first multi-country and multi-language assessment of adult literacy. Conducted in eight industrialized countries (Canada, Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States), the survey's goals were to develop scales to compare literacy performance among people with a wide range of abilities, and to compare literacy across cultures and languages. The site provides the survey results as well as follow-up reports and newsletters.

Discussion Groups

Internet discussion groups or listservs are a good way to exchange information and ideas about adult literacy. You need to have access to e-mail in order to sign up and participate in these discussion groups.

Canadian Adult Literacy Educators: list@nald.ca

This discussion group provides an avenue for dialogue among literacy educators across Canada. To join, send an e-mail to the address above and include in the body of the e-mail the words: Join CALE.

Family Literacy Canada: list@nald.ca

Established in November 1998, Family Literacy Canada is a new forum for sharing information, discussing issues and raising questions about family literacy in Canada. To join, send an e-mail to the address above and include in the body of the e-mail the words: Join FLC.

LITERACY: listserve@nysernet.org

LITERACY is a moderated general listserv for those concerned with the issues of literacy, particularly those involved in teaching adults to read and write. To join, send an e-mail to the address above and include in the body of the e-mail the words: subscribe LITERACY (your name).

National Institute for Literacy: www.nifl.gov/forums.html

This American site has several on-line discussion groups that can be accessed through the above Website address. For example, you can join the forum on Workplace Literacy, on the Use of Technology for Adult Literacy Instruction, on English as a Second Language, or on Women In Literacy.

Endnotes

[1] *Statistics Canada. Reading the Future; A Portrait of Literacy in Canada.* 1996.

[2] *Statistics Canada. Reading the Future; A Portrait of Literacy in Canada.* 1996.

[3] *Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. Changes in the Rate of Community, Workplace and Union Participation by Learners in a Workplace Education Program.* 1997.

[4] *Statistics Canada. Education Quarterly Review.* Spring 1997, Vol.4, No. 2.

[5] James Turk and Jean Unda in *Basic Skills for the Workplace*. Culture Concepts, Toronto. 1991.

[6] Conference Board of Canada. *The Economic Benefits of Improving Literacy Skills in the Workplace.* 1997.

[7] Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Continuum Publishing, New York. Revised 20th anniversary edition, 1998.

[8] Adapted from: Sarmiento, Anthony and Kay Ann. *Worker-Centered Learning: A Union Guide to Basic Skills*, AFL-CIO Working for America Institute. 1999.

[9] *CLC Protocol on the Delivery of Training, Education and Employment Services*, CLC Training and Technology Committee, April 27, 1998.