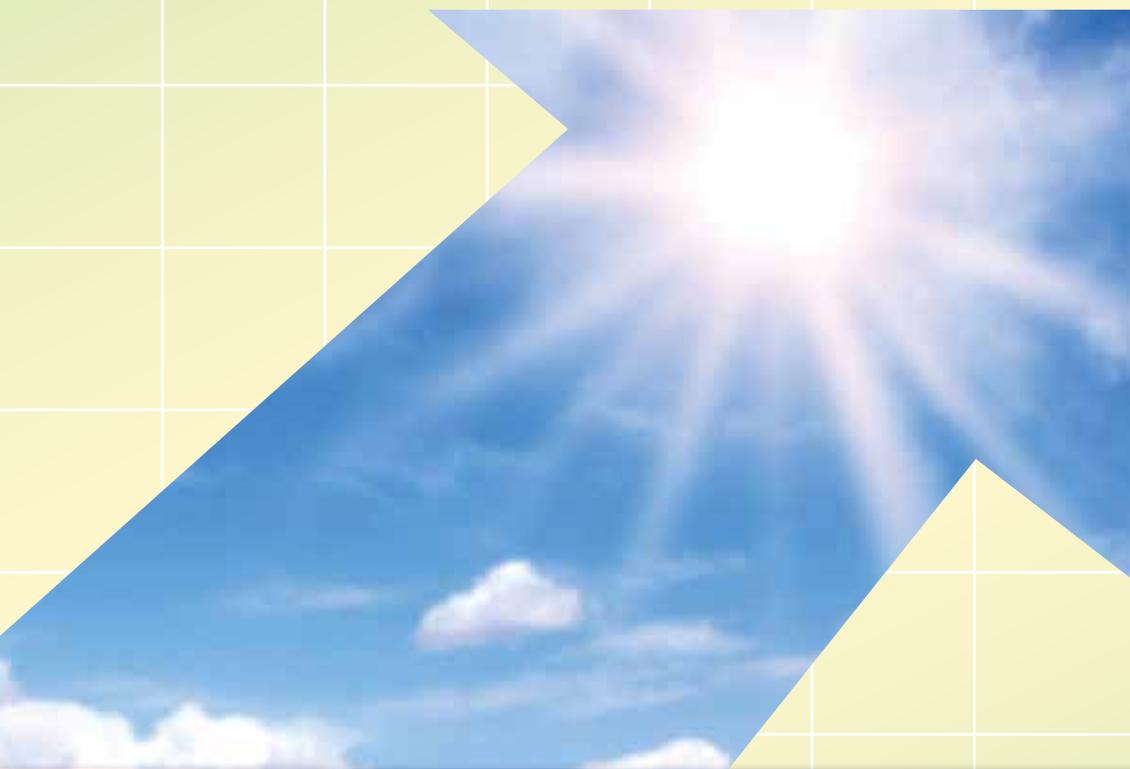


Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework

Implementation Training Guide

SPRING • 2011



Compiled by Community Literacy of Ontario — February 2012



COMMUNITY LITERACY
OF ONTARIO

Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework Spring 2011 Implementation Training Guide

Compiled in February 2012



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Foreword

The Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) has generated a number of training opportunities for Ontario's literacy practitioners. Perhaps you have participated in face-to-face or online training, or perhaps you have viewed a PowerPoint presentation on the OALCF. No doubt you have received handouts, web addresses and a copy of the Framework. With all of this new information, it's easy to lose sight of the goal of the OALCF and its place in your program. It's also easy to forget parts of the trainings, and you might feel that you need a refresher on a specific topic.

Community Literacy of Ontario (CLO) has produced this training guide based on OALCF implementation training that was delivered to Ontario's literacy field in the Spring of 2011. This resource has revised content where any significant changes have been made to the OALCF since the delivery of the original training in 2011. This resource is a training enhancement and will be beneficial as a refresher for those who attended the original training,

You can use this manual for review and reference, and you can also use it for new staff and volunteers who are not familiar with the OALCF. The *Implementation Training Guide* can also help you to explain OALCF concepts to other stakeholders, including Employment Ontario partners.

The OALCF has changed the way we think about and deliver our programs. At the same time, it has underpinned LBS philosophy and supported its outcomes. A deep understanding of the OALCF concepts will help practitioners to ensure learners derive the maximum benefit from the Framework.

An Introduction to the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework

This section briefly introduces the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF). It includes a discussion of what the OALCF is and is not, its purpose, its benefits to learners and to LBS programs and a historical overview.

What is the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework?

The term “Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF)” refers to all of the features of delivering a competency-based program: the competencies; assessment; learning materials and learner goal paths of employment, secondary school credit, postsecondary, apprenticeship and independence. The term “Curriculum Framework” refers specifically to the guiding master document, which contains the elements of the Curriculum Framework, including six competencies, task groups, indicators, levels, performance and task descriptors, and example tasks.

The OALCF is not a curriculum in the traditional understanding of the term. It is a multi-part framework that supports LBS programs’ delivery of task-based programming to learners. The OALCF provides tools that help LBS practitioners strengthen the programming that is already in place. The OALCF provides a structure wherein the field can be more precise and transparent with goal-directed, learner-centred programming. The components of the OALCF give us the foundation to strengthen what we already deliver.

What is the purpose of the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework?

The purpose of the OALCF is to improve the transitions of adults through Employment Ontario (EO) and the broader education and training system. It provides criteria against which learning achievements can be compared in the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) delivery system. It makes LBS services and client outcomes easier for EO referral partners to understand by shifting from a skills-building approach to the performance of tasks needed for meeting the learner’s goal. But the OALCF isn’t only about helping our Employment Ontario partners. Primarily, the OALCF was developed for literacy learners.

How does the OALCF benefit learners?

All sectors and streams have been involved in creating the OALCF from its inception. This process gave practitioners the opportunity to reflect upon and clarify what learners need for success. Thus the OALCF offers a heightened vision of learner-centredness. It provides greater support for programs to understand and deliver appropriate and relevant programming for culturally diverse populations. As well, the OALCF supports goal-directed programming by placing greater emphasis on the specific tasks related to learner goals. Tasks become the focal point for learning.

How does the OALCF benefit LBS programs?

The OALCF strengthens and supports Literacy and Basic Skills programming in Ontario by building on the system that is already in place. The OALCF strengthens the field's ability to work towards the LBS mission, which is “...to contribute to a skilled workforce and strong communities in Ontario by providing Ontarians flexible and integrated literacy and essential skills programming for transitions to employment, higher skills training, and enhanced personal independence...”. (From CLO's *Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Initiative, Communiqué #2*, November 2009)

LBS programming remains learner-centred and goal-directed. It enables learners to make transitions to their next destinations through the use of specific tasks related to their goals. The tools the OALCF provides will enhance the LBS programming that is already in place.

Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework – Historical overview

The OALCF was part of the Ontario government's 2007 Ontario Plan which stated that under a Smarter Ontario, Ontario would work together with the college sector and non-profit groups to design and deliver an adult literacy curriculum. The first and second phase of the Initiative followed in 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. These phases included the initial pilot project where literacy agencies from across the province, representing all streams and sectors, provided feedback on the first draft of the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework's Competency and Guideline Component. The final development phase took place in 2010-2011. Ontario's adult literacy service and support organizations have been involved in all of the OALCF development work through a series of funded projects and a variety of piloting opportunities.

An Overview of the Curriculum Framework

This overview is meant to orient you to the Curriculum Framework and to how its two main components – competencies and task groups (tasks are dealt with more fully later in this training manual) – work together. The Framework introduces you to:

- the concept of competency-based learning
- the six broad competencies of the OALCF
- task groups, which organize the content within competencies
- complexity, which is measured in three levels

The Curriculum Framework is the core of the OALCF. It prescribes the scope of learning in Ontario's adult literacy programs by identifying the competencies learners need to succeed. The Curriculum Framework provides common criteria which allow learning to be commonly described and understood. It focuses on the performance of realistic tasks related to learners' goals.

The Curriculum Framework supports the development of learner **competencies**. Competencies are comprised of skills, knowledge and behaviours that adults need for success at work, in the community and in learning situations. The competencies within the Curriculum Framework focus on the interaction of skills, knowledge and behaviours that reflect learners' goals and interests. The Curriculum Framework helps practitioners and learners make clear connections between literacy development and the real-life tasks that are performed in work, learning and community contexts. Making these connections can be highly motivating for learners.

Skills + knowledge + behaviours = competency

Why competencies?

The Curriculum Framework focuses on the achievement of competencies rather than isolated skills. Learning extends beyond skill attainment and also incorporates knowledge and behaviours. While skills can be learned in isolation, competencies link the skills with knowledge and behaviour. Within a competency-based approach, it is the interaction of learners' skills, knowledge and behaviours that supports their ability to perform tasks.

Competencies represent the full range of skills, knowledge and behaviours adult literacy learners can build upon while participating in literacy programming. They are context-free so that they can be applied within all streams and sectors, regardless of a learner's culture, background or level.

The Six Competencies of the OALCF

The OALCF competencies were established by asking Ontario's literacy service providers, "What should learners learn in literacy programs?"

Development team members representing the community-based, school board and the college sectors; and the Francophone, Deaf, Native and Anglophone streams independently identified potential competencies. Through discussion, the team reached consensus on the set of competencies that would comprise the Framework. This shared understanding of competencies means that we can progress from creating lists of desirable skills to identifying and exploring the competencies that underlie all performance. By using a common framework of competencies valued in Ontario, we can help to ensure that teaching and learning is focused on educating individuals to perform effectively in a range of contexts.

The resulting Curriculum Framework is organized into six sections, one for each competency.

- Find and Use Information
- Communicate Ideas and Information
- Understand and Use Numbers
- Use Digital Technology
- Manage Learning
- Engage with Others



Introducing Competency Task Groups and Complexity

Within the Framework, each one of the six competency sections starts with a definition of the competency. Then associated task groups, if there are any, are identified and defined.

Tasks are purposeful activities that bundle skills and knowledge in specific ways. When a competency has a number of features, task groups allow for more specific exploration of the competency's different dimensions. For example, under **Find and Use Information**, task groups are:

- Read continuous text
- Interpret documents
- Extract information from films, broadcasts and presentations

There is no hierarchy of task groups; they can be selected in any order depending on the learners' goals and needs. There are, however, levels of complexity within task groups. You are already familiar with these levels of complexity as described in the Essential Skills scale. The OALCF addresses levels one, two and three, which are consistent with the Essential Skills and IALS findings. The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) findings indicate that adults with level three skills can meet most of the Essential Skills demands of daily life and transfer their learning more easily from one context to another. For programming purposes, there may be tasks practitioners choose to carry out with their learners that rate beyond level three. The focus of the Curriculum Framework remains on the three levels indicative of foundational literacy and numeracy needs.

It's also useful to recall here that the Curriculum Framework is based on competencies which comprise not only skills, but also knowledge and behaviour. These last two factors also affect levels. Increased proficiency is the ability to combine and use competencies appropriately in increasingly complex situations, rather than as a straight line of development, keeping the learner's goal in mind.

When tasks are demonstrated successfully, they show both practitioners and learners how learning can be transferred to activities in work, family and educational and community contexts. A task-based approach draws connections for learners between what they learn in an LBS program and how they apply their skills, behaviour and knowledge in everyday activities. The task-based nature of the Framework supports practitioners as they determine how learning can be taught and assessed.

OALCF Competency Task Groups

Find and Use Information explores tasks that involve the different ways of finding and using information in the world. Learners need to be able to find, use and evaluate sources (e.g., text, documents, and broadcasts). The information sources may be written in the form of sentences and paragraphs, displayed as documents and/or presented through films, broadcasts and presentations.

Find and Use Information

- A1 Read continuous text
- A2 Interpret documents
- A3 Extract information from films, broadcasts and presentations

Communicate Ideas and Information explores tasks that involve the different ways learners communicate. Learners need to be able express themselves, share ideas, and document information. The competency explores verbal, signed and written modes of communication.

Communicate Ideas and Information

- B1 Interact with others
- B2 Write continuous text
- B3 Complete and create documents
- B4 Express oneself creatively

Understand and Use Numbers examines how adults use numbers to perform tasks in a wide variety of contexts. Learners need to be able to successfully manage money, manage time, use measurement and manage data.

Understand and Use Numbers

- C1 Manage money
- C2 Manage time
- C3 Use measures
- C4 Manage data

Use Digital Technology explores tasks that require meaningful interactions with the digital component of a device. Digital technology tasks require users to make one or more choices in the course of the task's completion. This includes tasks where users must make or change settings and use digital interfaces to create and adapt products. Typical examples of using digital technology include using cell phones to send text messages, using personal computers to produce documents, and navigating the Internet to find information.

The competency **Use Digital Technology** is not organized by task groups. The factors that drive complexity are consistent across tasks; thus the full range and dimensions of tasks can be captured by the competency as a whole.

Manage Learning is intended to encompass all of the elements that contribute to successful learning. This competency is about helping learners develop the abilities necessary to manage not only in literacy programming, but also in other formal and informal learning situations – in fact, lifelong learning. This competency addresses goal setting, planning, learning strategies, self-reflection and evaluation as they relate to the learning process.

While this competency is not organized by task groups, it is composed of performance descriptors, which are observable characteristics of learner performance. Some performance descriptors are organized by level, while others apply to tasks across levels (more about levels and descriptors in the next section).

Engage with Others supports interactions and collaborations between individuals, extended over an indeterminate period of time. These interactions call upon communication skills as well as soft skills, such as interpersonal skills, to establish and maintain associations or relationships, with the ultimate goal of achieving shared outcomes. This competency differs from **B1 Interact with Others** which focuses on single exchanges.

While the competency **Engage with Others** is not organized by task groups or levels, it is composed of performance descriptors, which are observable characteristics of learner performance. The features of performance in this competency apply to tasks across levels throughout the Framework. In other words, it is the tasks that individuals perform as they engage with others that can be rated for complexity.

Curriculum Framework Indicators, Descriptors and Example Tasks

The Curriculum Framework describes three levels of task complexity for every task group, using:

1. Indicators
2. Descriptors
3. Example tasks

Indicators, Descriptors and Example Tasks provide an easy to use scale that helps practitioners identify task features at various levels of complexity. Once a task level is identified for a learner, the practitioner can refer to that page of the Curriculum Framework to better understand what performance and tasks look like in that task group and level. The practitioner can refer to example tasks to better understand what types of tasks can be performed by the learner at the end of a given level.

- 1. Indicators** help assign levels to tasks. They describe achievement and present a snapshot at the end of each level. Indicators can give a practitioner or learner a sense of how complexity increases across a task group or competency.
- 2. Descriptors** provide detail about the qualities of tasks and performance at a given level. They work in combination with each other to increase understanding of task complexity at a given level. Descriptors are typically unique to a level; however, some descriptors may apply to more than one level.

- **Performance descriptors** are observable characteristics of learner performance. Performance descriptors provide the expected features of a learner’s performance at the end of a given level. Learners who perform increasingly complex tasks can:
 - make inferences to determine task requirements
 - apply background knowledge and experience to carry out unfamiliar tasks
 - manage tasks with unfamiliar elements
 - identify a variety of ways to complete tasks
 - find, integrate and analyze information
 - experiment and problem solve to achieve desired results

- **Task descriptors** describe the qualities of tasks and features of tasks at the end of a given level. Tasks are more complex when they:
 - are not well defined
 - require more steps
 - can be completed in more than one way, especially when they do not have a set procedure
 - contain unfamiliar elements, such as context and vocabulary
 - involve multiple or complex documents and texts

When tasks include both performance descriptors and task descriptors, they must be used together to understand what a learner can do at each level.

3. Example tasks captured in the Curriculum Framework illustrate what a learner can do at the end of a level.

Example tasks illustrate the task group, indicators and descriptors at a given level. They help practitioners understand how the Framework applies to all learners.

Within the Curriculum Framework, example tasks are arranged in a table for easy reference according to the five goal paths.

Supplemental Tasks

The Curriculum Framework's supplemental tasks provide practitioners with ideas for creating task-based instruction that is relevant for a learner's level of ability, interests, cultural stream and goal path.

Additional stream tasks were included only where there was a need for more cultural context. In time, there will be further development and sharing of tasks that relate to a range of contexts (culture, language, goal path) as service providers become more familiar with using the Curriculum Framework. Supplemental tasks are available from the OALCF website.

A Quick Re-cap:

- Six Competencies organize learning that takes place in LBS programming
- Competencies are comprised of task groups that show how the competency can be expressed
- Each task group is described at three levels
- The levels, defined by indicators, descriptors and example tasks, describe developing proficiency

You have now completed the Curriculum Framework Overview. Reflect on the following brief scenarios to ensure that you have a good foundational understanding before moving on to the Using the Curriculum Framework.

Elizabeth is the Executive Director of a community-based learning centre. One of her instructors has developed three "tasks" for a learner. When Elizabeth looks over the tasks, she realizes that they are all skill-building activities. *How can she explain the difference between a task and a skill building activity to the practitioner?*

Another staff member asks Elizabeth to clarify the difference between performance and task indicators. He wonders if he can just use performance indicators when assessing a learner's ability to perform a task. *How should Elizabeth explain the difference between performance and task indicators? What should she say about using only performance (or task) indicators?*

One of Elizabeth's colleagues calls and asks about task complexity. She is wondering if the levels are related to LBS levels one to five. *What should Elizabeth tell her?*

Using the Curriculum Framework

The best way to familiarize yourself with the Framework is to begin using it. This section shows how the Curriculum Framework benefits both learners and practitioners. This information is supported by case studies which allow you to see the Framework in action.

Benefits to learners

The primary purpose of the Curriculum Framework is to support adult learning. It makes clear connections between literacy learning and literacy use at home, in the workplace, in the community and for ongoing learning.

The Curriculum Framework helps learners understand the broad competencies required to achieve their goals of education and training, employment or independence. Completing tasks that are broad in scope helps learners understand what they need to be able to do in order to successfully achieve their goal.

The Framework helps learners to understand the types of tasks they need to be able to do to make progress towards their goals. Thus, literacy programming becomes more connected to their goals and the world around them.

The Framework responds to the diversity of learners in Ontario by allowing for and ensuring culturally relevant task-based learning. Tasks ought to be connected to individual goals and cultural backgrounds, encouraging learners to feel more motivated and empowered and to become more self-directed in their learning.

Benefits to literacy practitioners

The Curriculum Framework supports a range of service delivery functions in Ontario's literacy programs, including information and referral, learner plan development, training and assessment.

Information and Referral. The Curriculum Framework provides practitioners with a common language for describing and discussing learner performance across the six competencies. Informed decisions about referral can be made based on an understanding of what learners can do and need to work on. The consistent use of indicators allows learners to move fluidly between literacy programs in Ontario. Other stakeholders can use the indicators to help make informed decisions about client referrals to literacy programming.

Page six of the Curriculum Framework is a useful stand-alone tool to provide to your stakeholders and partners. It allows them to understand the Framework at a glance. The Curriculum Framework master document can be accessed at:

www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/OALCF_Curriculum_Framework_Oct_11.pdf

Case Study: Luke

Luke left high school about a year ago without graduating. Unable to find a job, Luke registers at a local employment service agency to seek help.

Luke doesn't know how to complete the online service application form so he is given a paper copy to fill out. As Luke is filling out the form, the employment consultant notices that he is having trouble and is leaving many of the entry fields blank. Having recently reviewed the "OALCF competency, task and indicator overview" (page 6 of the Curriculum Framework), she realizes that Luke is unable to complete a level two, "Complete documents" task. Based on this information she suggests that Luke go to a literacy program for further assessment. She has information on hand from local literacy service providers and is able to suggest a starting point for Luke.

Assessment. The specificity of the Framework allows practitioners to identify individuals' strengths and weaknesses with some precision and to target training in areas of need based on the learners' goals. At the same time, it accommodates learners who may be able to do tasks at different levels across the six competencies.

Case Study: Jeremiah

Jeremiah was recently laid off after working in a factory for 15 years. He was referred to a literacy program through an Action Centre. Jeremiah is interested in becoming a welder and wants to obtain his Secondary School Diploma because he is just a few credits short of achieving it. He can then apply to the welder program at his local community college.

In order to successfully make the transition to credit classes, Jeremiah needs to work on improving his abilities in a number of competencies. In particular, his individualized program will focus on:

B2 Write continuous text

C3 Use measures

Together with his literacy instructor, Jeremiah selects tasks that will help him prepare to complete his secondary school credits.

Case Study: Julia

Julia is an Ontario Works recipient and she wants to be able to understand and fill in the many forms that she receives in the mail and from her caseworker. Her initial assessment (her goal path is independence) indicated that she was able to manage level one tasks in these areas. The literacy program focused primarily on building her skills through a variety of in-class and online learning opportunities. When Julia exited the program after six months, her exit assessment indicated significant improvement in her ability to understand and complete forms.

Learner Plan Development. The Curriculum Framework provides the foundation for the development of the learner plan by describing the indicators and task groups that can be related to learners' goals.

A Learner Plan **template** has been developed that captures information under four broad categories: Background, Goal, Program Activities and Outcomes. (See page 30 of this guide for a more in-depth discussion of the Learner Plan.)

Training Development

The Curriculum Framework is just that: a framework that organizes the competencies and task groups into which a plan for learning will fit. The Curriculum Framework provides direction but does not specify details of what is taught. It provides the foundation to build training packages, resources and curricula. The Curriculum Framework can be used to select and develop appropriately levelled learning activities and tasks related to learner goals. It can provide guidance to help identify learning activities related to the six competencies.

For example, Julia, from the previous case study, also expressed an interest in learning how to improve her family's diet. Lessons included: interpreting the Canada Food Guide to understand nutritional requirements (*A2 Interpret documents*), reading informational brochures about the link between poor diet and chronic illness (*A1 Read continuous text*), comparing fat and sodium counts of different products on nutritional labels (*C3 Use measures*), and producing a shopping list with healthy food choices (*B3 Complete and create documents*).

Learning Materials

The Curriculum Framework supports the continued use of existing materials. As has always been the case in LBS programming, appropriate materials should be made available to learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Learning materials ought to support learners in gaining the ability to integrate and apply the skills, knowledge and behaviours that are required to achieve their goals.

The OALCF website includes five lists of selected learning materials that have been evaluated using criteria from the *Learning Materials Evaluation Tool*. There is one list of about 25 learning materials for each of the five streams:

- Anglophone
- Deaf
- Francophone
- Native
- Academic Upgrading

The *Learning Materials Evaluation Tool* is available to practitioners to assess learning materials and to determine their “fit” within the OALCF. The standards set by the evaluation tool will help you to assess the learning materials for:

- content quality
- potential effectiveness as a teaching or learning tool
- ease of use for both practitioners and learners

Assessment

In general, there are four audiences, or end users, of LBS assessment results: learners, practitioners, other education and training programs, and funders. Each group has a slightly different interest in LBS assessment:

- Learners want to know how they are progressing and whether or not they will be able to develop the literacy skills needed to support their goal.
- Practitioners use assessment results to help them inform learners of their progress, and to help them with program planning.
- Other educational institutions, training providers and employers *may* be interested in LBS assessment to determine whether or not a potential participant will be able to manage program or job requirements.
- LBS Program funders are interested in assessment for accountability purposes to help determine whether or not programs are providing an expected level of service, and to ensure others (the public, ministers, higher level government workers) that LBS is providing quality service.

The purposes for which individuals are assessed can be grouped into four broad assessment categories: intake, ongoing, exit and gains. The first three purposes of assessment are considered to be related to goal completion. Intake, ongoing and exit assessments are familiar to the field; however, learner gains assessment, the primary purpose of which is to furnish data for program accountability, is being introduced to Ontario’s Literacy and Basic Skills program as part of the OALCF Initiative.

Learner gains assessment collects and uses numerical data about the progress of groups of learners and is used primarily for accountability purposes. Although individuals are assessed, aggregate scores are of particular interest. These are typically used to identify trends and inform decisions.

Intake Assessment: Administered at the beginning of programming, intake assessments are typically used to obtain information that will help program staff make decisions about programming levels and content. Learner statistics and other tracking data are collected and reported upon at the intake stage.

Ongoing Assessment: Administered while learners are attending programming, ongoing assessments are used to monitor progress and to identify ways to help learners develop the abilities they need in order to make transitions.

Exit Assessment: Administered at the end of programs, exit assessments are used to make determinations about the skills, knowledge and abilities learners have gained during their programming and to identify whether they have met their learning goals. In many cases, exit assessments are also used to confirm promotion readiness when learners are ready to move on to another skills upgrading program or their specified goal.

Gains Assessment: Administered at any point when information is required about the progress of learners as a group within or across programs, gains assessment serves to provide information that can be used to make comparisons.

Learner Gains Assessment Tool

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is considering a tool for learner gains assessment that is currently being developed by Bow Valley College as part of their *Read to Succeed* project. The assessment tool results would be an indicator of organizational and system accountability. The test provides scores using the IALS 500-point scale. The test is being developed in both English and French in accordance with the IALS (International Adult Literacy Survey) model of measurement.

Goal Path Completion

Goal path completion means that the learner is ready to make the transition to his/her chosen goal:

- Employment
- Secondary School Credit
- Postsecondary
- Apprenticeship
- Independence

Readiness to transition is indicated by the successful performance of the goal-related milestones, the goal-related culminating task and goal-related learning activities which have been identified in the Learner Plan.

Milestones

For accountability purposes, the Ministry will use standardized **milestones** as key indicators of learner progress towards goal path completion. Practitioners and learners will work together at the outset of the program to choose which milestones learners will perform to demonstrate progress towards the achievement of their stated goal. The selected milestones will be included in the Learner Plan and will help to inform program planning. The successful performance of all required milestones for goal path completion is one indicator that learners are ready either to exit the LBS Program completely (transition-ready) or to transfer to another LBS service provider that will take them closer to their goal. Goal path completion is similar in many respects to current reporting practices except that with milestones there will be greater consistency in understanding learner progress.

Milestones are only one part of a program's overall assessment strategy and will provide practitioners with a fair way to assess learner progress towards goal path completion. Task-based programming will provide learners with daily practice and preparation for this type of assessment. Milestones will provide meaningful and easily communicated indicators of learner progress.

Milestones will reflect three levels of task complexity for each goal path at end-of-level performance. Learners will not be expected to perform every milestone task but only a selection that are appropriate to their goal path. Milestones will be related to goal path completion and reflect what the learner has needed to focus on in the program.

Each learner's selected milestones will appear on the Learner Plan. Milestones will be selected for each learner and will serve as indicators of learner progress and goal path completion on EOIS CaMS (Employment Ontario Information System's Case Management System).

Assessment Tools

The *Selected Assessment Tools* resource provides examples of a wide range of assessment activities from informal processes such as conversations to more formal tools like tests. The resource emphasizes the importance of using a variety of assessment tools and processes; no single tool or process should be relied upon to provide comprehensive information about learning.

The resource also affirms that practitioners may be using tools and processes that will continue to be effective and meaningful. At the same time, it introduces practitioners to new or different tools and processes that they may want to begin to use. Thirdly, it situates a task-based approach to assessment and learning within a broader context of literacy learning.

Please note that similar to the *Selected Learning Material List*, the *Selected Assessment Tools* collection is **not** comprehensive. It should not be interpreted as a listing of recommended assessments, but simply as a collection of examples that practitioners can choose to use.

The two key criteria that guided the selection of tools were accessibility and usability. Factors included how widely the tool is used, adaptability, cost (under \$300), level of expertise required, time to administer, and its support of a task-based approach.

How Assessment Tools Are Organized

Tools are organized according to four aspects of literacy learning:

1. Skills
2. Tasks
3. Practices
4. Changes in learner's lives

These categories reflect how literacy is actually organized and developed in programs and support the OALCF competencies by focusing on the skills, knowledge, and behaviours involved in literacy learning. The Curriculum Framework is a set of standard competencies and task groups intended to be used as the basis for assessment and learning. It is task-based and directly supports the task aspect of literacy learning. However, practitioners will also need to consider the development of skills, practices, and changes in learners' lives to determine whether or not a learner is ready to transition to their next steps or has completed the requirements of his or her goal path.

Skills are discrete descriptors of literacy and numeracy development, such as decoding, identifying sentence structure, and locating information. **Skills-based assessments** most often:

- use texts in sentence and paragraph form or use single words to look at spelling, decoding and sight word abilities. For example, see the *Canadian Adult Reading Assessment (CARA)*.
- focus on assessing the development of print and meaning-based component skills or on developing the writing process and the presentation of text using a structured format (main idea, supporting details, sequential connection of thoughts). For example, see *Bridging the Gap Education Component: Evaluation Tools*.
- focus on assessing the development of numerical operations and calculations without a direct application of operations and calculations to get something done. For example, see *Skillswise*.

Tasks emphasize more than skills, as they consider purpose, context and culture to reflect actual use.

Task-based assessments most often:

- use texts, including graphics, symbols, charts, and lists that apply literacy and numeracy abilities for a stated purpose; these are referred to as tasks.
- result in a measurable performance or product. For example, some task-based assessments focus on
 - assessing the development of print and meaning component skills, such as decoding and vocabulary development as they apply to a task; they may also focus on reading comprehension, the writing process, or numerical operations and calculations. For example, see *Common Assessment of Basic Skills Online (CABS)*.
 - using information-processing skills that require the learner to find the correct type of match (locating, cycling, integrating, generating) between the test question and text using specific types of concrete or abstract information, with the possibility of distracting information. For example, see *Measure Up*.
 - performances and products as they articulate with the nine Essential Skills and other standards lists. For example, see *Recognizing Life's Work: Leisure & Home-based Activity Identifier Tool*.

Understanding literacy and numeracy as a social **practice** involves consideration of what people are doing, feeling and thinking when engaged with actual print and numeracy activities. **Practice-based assessments** most often:

- explore the uses of literacy and numeracy in daily life using the learner's own words, experiences, and understandings. For example, see *Connecting Literacy, Learning & Work: Learner Photostories*.
- define literacy based on a learner's uses and experiences, not only by levels, skills descriptors, or constructed tasks
- acknowledge how literacy changes, for example, with the use of technology
- acknowledge the feelings, values, and wide range of social and personal dynamics related to using literacy and numeracy. For example, see *Changing the Way We Teach Math: Evaluate Teaching Strategies, Expressing Feelings and Just Do It*.

Task-Based Approach

What is a task within OALCF? A **task** is defined as an activity that has a particular purpose and an authentic application. **A task can be understood in real-life terms** – providing value in a goal-directed, learner-centred program. Tasks that are related to a learner’s goal make it easy to see the connection between the learning and its application. This is especially important to the learner.

Tasks are relevant to learners, service providers, stakeholders and the funder.

A task can be levelled by analyzing its underlying complexity using the descriptors, indicators and task examples in the Curriculum Framework. By being able to determine with consistency the level of a task and expectations of task performance, practitioners can more accurately choose or develop tasks that are appropriate for each learner. Tasks provide a clear and easy way for learners and agencies to talk about progress and achievement with other LBS providers and with other stakeholders.

A task can be assessed. The ability to level tasks brings greater consistency to assessment province wide. Province-wide consistency in assessment of learner progress is necessary for an accurate accounting of the overall success of LBS, and that is important to government and to the public. Tasks are purposeful activities that bundle skills and knowledge in unique ways. Tasks typically have two elements:

1. A specified action or activity – what a person is asked to do.
2. A stated purpose or anticipated outcome – why a person is asked to do it.

E.g., Send an email to request technical assistance.

- Action = send an email
- Purpose = to request technical assistance

E.g., Find the expiry date on a coupon

- Action = find the expiry date
- Purpose = to know if you can still use the coupon

Authenticity is an important consideration when identifying tasks related to a learner’s goal. To determine authenticity, ask yourself the question, “Is this activity something a person would actually do outside the classroom?” If the answer is “yes,” then the task is a real-world, authentic task.

Seven reasons for using a task-based approach in LBS programming

1. Task-based programming is an effective way to help learners use their literacy skills and competencies. Research and experience confirm that knowledge is better retained when applied and integrated into daily practice.
2. Task-based programming is consistent with the principles of adult learning. Because adults live in a task-driven world and are, either by choice or of necessity, practical “doers,” a task-based approach to learning has particular appeal. Adults are more highly motivated by program content that has immediate relevance and applicability.
3. A task-based approach builds on successful LBS practice. Most LBS programs are already using some task-based programming. For example, many Learner Plans organize learning by tasks, and most programs use task-based demonstrations for initial, ongoing and exit assessment. Over the years, a wide range of task-based instructional materials and resources have become available to programs through field research and development projects.
4. The Curriculum Framework supports a consistent interpretation of learner progress through the levelling of tasks. In time, a set of standardized, goal-related tasks that indicate a learner’s progress towards goal completion will be used for program accountability. The standardized criteria found in the Curriculum Framework in the creation and levelling of tasks will lend currency and credibility to a task-based approach in educational, training or employment settings.
5. Task-based programming supports fair assessment practice. By using a task-based approach in day-to-day programming, learners are:
 - better prepared to perform well on task-based assessment activities such as: milestones, literacy assessments, demonstrations and on-the-job assessments
 - more aware of applicability and of their capacity to use literacy in work and life
 - better able to recognize goal completion and/or readiness to transition out of LBS
6. The OALCF levels are informed by the same factors that drive task complexity at Essential Skills levels one, two and three. Because of this, LBS practitioners are able to draw upon the wealth of Essential Skills-related information and resources for program enhancement.

7. A task-based approach provides familiar language to describe the performance of everyday tasks. Conversations among various stakeholders about roles and responsibilities and about the transferability of skills from context to context and across cultural and social boundaries are more easily understood when grounded in the common language of the tasks that people do.

Comparing Task-Based and Skills-Based Approaches

Skills are still important, and often skills need to be built before a learner is ready to complete a given task. Compare the differences between task and skills-based approaches in an LBS program.

Task-Based	Skills-Based
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The learner's goal path determines program content. The primary focus is on specific tasks that are necessary for success in life, learning and work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The primary focus is on specific skills that are embedded in authentic tasks. Program planning centres on skills acquisition along a continuum of learning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program planning starts and ends with tasks related to a learner's goal. Tasks are deconstructed to identify embedded knowledge, skills and behaviours that are necessary for successful task performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The learner's goal is deconstructed to identify embedded skills and skill levels.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning activities are authentic and meaningful to the learner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning activities are characterized by a focus on discrete skills in isolation (e.g., multiplication, spelling, grammar, and reading comprehension) and learning by rote, repetition and practice.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discrete skills are focussed on only when foundation skills are too weak to support successful task performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task-based activities are used mainly to check learner understanding and proficiency regarding applications of skills.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tasks are context-rich and reflect the context of the learner’s cultural and linguistic strengths and the goal. Successful performance of a task is measured in accordance with expectations that are appropriate to the purpose and to the particular context in which the task is being performed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task-based demonstrations for assessment purposes are selected or created based on their ability to showcase particular discrete skills at particular levels.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress is recognized by the learner’s ability to perform tasks at increasing levels of complexity until the tasks related to goal completion have been performed successfully. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress is recognized by the learner’s ability to demonstrate understanding and acquisition of foundation skills at increasing levels of proficiency until the skill levels required by the learner’s goal have been reached.

Goal Path and Goal

Goal

A **goal** is what the learner wants to achieve *after* the LBS Program. A learner’s goal should:

- be set by the learner with assistance from the instructor where necessary
- be a SMART goal: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely
- take into consideration the learner’s current knowledge, skills and behaviours
- be detailed in a Learner Plan so that instructional objectives are clear and understood

Goal Path

The **goal path** comprises all that is delivered by an LBS service provider in order for the learner to achieve his/her goal. The LBS Program has five goal paths:

- Employment
- Apprenticeship
- Secondary school credit
- Postsecondary
- Independence

Goal Setting

Task-based programming begins with goal setting, a practice already firmly embedded in LBS programming. Goal setting helps the practitioner and learner identify and clarify:

- **Goal** – where the learner wants to go after exiting the literacy program
- **Goal path** – what the learner needs to accomplish in the LBS program in order to transition to his/her goal
- **Goal-path completion** – what the learner will be able to do that demonstrates transition readiness
- **Goal-related tasks** – what is required for successful goal-path completion, i.e., tasks the learner will focus on in the program plus skills, knowledge and behaviours that are necessary for task completion
- **Gaps** the practitioner has identified during initial and ongoing assessment – what the learner needs in the way of goal-related skills, knowledge and behaviours in order to navigate his or her goal path
- **Cultural considerations** – what differences there are between the learner’s cultural and linguistic strengths and the cultural and linguistic environment of the learner’s goal.

Goal-Setting Process

Step One gathers background information on the learner's:

- educational experience
- work experience
- transferrable skills
- preferred learning style
- obstacles and challenges

Step One tells you whether or not your program can build upon the learner's identified strengths and transferrable skills and whether or not your program can deal with the obstacles and challenges that may seriously affect learner progress.

If the answer is, "not currently" to either of these conditions, discuss with other program staff how the learner's needs might be best accommodated (e.g., through supports your agency provides, supports you can facilitate through other providers, or referral to another LBS agency in your community better able to meet the learner's needs). Through the assessment process, gather as much information as you can to inform your decision about the learner's program plan.

Step Two identifies the learner's goal (achievable after LBS). Step Two tells you the learner's goal path within the program and where the learner will be able to go at the end of the program.

Step Three assesses the requirements of the learner's goal and identifies important indicators of task performance for accountability purposes. Step Three identifies:

- the goal-related tasks that are necessary for the learner's goal path
- the complexity level of each of those tasks
- the knowledge, skills and behaviours that are necessary for successful task performance
- any skill development that is required
- the cultural and linguistic requirements of the goal path
- any other non-LBS Program credentials, certificates, test completions, or personal attributes required for transition to the long-term goal destination

Step Four assesses the learner's achievements and current capacity to complete goal-related tasks. Step Four identifies:

- goal-related tasks that the learner can already perform
- tasks that will become the focus of learning
- important embedded skills development and knowledge required to perform goal-related tasks

Step Five creates the Learner Plan.

Step Five produces a plan that:

- summarizes the pertinent information from Steps One to Four
- lays out the action plan for goal path learning
- provides a way to monitor learner progress
- identifies estimated program duration based on the learner's commitment to participation

Goal Path Completion

Goal path completion means that the learner is ready to transition to his/her chosen goal. This is indicated by the successful performance of the goal-related milestones, the goal-related culminating task (if appropriate) and goal-related learning activities which are identified in the Learner Plan.

Milestones will provide practitioners with a fair way to assess learner progress towards goal path completion. Milestones will be developed at three levels of task complexity for each goal path and reflect end-of-level performance. Each learner's selected milestones, appropriate to their goal path, will appear on their Learner Plan.

Learner Plan

Within the OALCF, all programs will use the same Learner Plan. The Learner Plan captures information in four categories:

- A. Background
 - 1. Personal
 - 2. Education
 - 3. Employment
- B. Goal
- C. Program Activities
 - 1. Learning activities
 - 2. Other supports
- D. 1. Outcomes at exit
- D. 2. Follow-up

Using these categories, the Learner Plan:

- 1. Specifies the goal path
- 2. Includes key indicators of goal-related achievement
- 3. Includes key indicators of the learner's readiness for transition
- 4. Identifies any required learner support, service coordination or referral the agency arranges for the learner
- 5. Identifies the program elements, i.e., tasks and related development of skills, knowledge and behaviours the learner needs to achieve his/her program goal
- 6. Maps out how the instructional elements will be met in the time the learner commits to participate
- 7. Identifies an assessment strategy
- 8. Provides learner progress tracking information that corresponds to the requirements of the learner's individualized program

The Task-Based Programming Process

Task-based programming facilitates a consistent process from intake to exit. At the same time, it allows for flexibility and specific, goal-directed programming for each learner.

Learners are assessed at intake. First learners are assessed using a range of task-based assessment tools and activities (such as demonstrations). Secondly, where necessary, learners are assessed with skill-based activities that may involve math problems, a reading comprehension exercise and a writing sample. Initial assessment provides an understanding of the learner's ability to use his/her existing literacy skills and competencies at particular levels of task complexity.

With practitioner assistance, learners **identify a goal** for learning within the LBS program. The practitioner works with the learner to **develop a Learner Plan** that includes specific tasks that are necessary for goal completion.

Practitioners analyze the goal to identify the competencies involved, embedded tasks and levels of task complexity. Then they look for the embedded knowledge, skills and behaviours that are necessary for successful task performance.

Practitioners integrate materials from a variety of sources in order to build competency and to reinforce task performance. Daily learning activities are selected or created to support the development of knowledge, skills and behaviours required by each particular task and other similar tasks at the same or lower complexity levels. Additional goal-related tasks are included for practice purposes.

Selecting and Developing Tasks

Step 1: Review the learner's goal. Determine what tasks are related to the learner's goal.

Step 2: Consider learner performance on tasks. Through initial assessment, you will gain some understanding of the knowledge, skills and behaviours the learner brings to the program and this will tell you what levels of tasks are appropriate for the learner's program.

Step 3: Identify the primary competencies that are associated with the learner's goal. All competencies are necessary for success in whatever goal path the learner chooses; however, they are not all involved in every goal-related task, nor are they all of equal importance. Therefore, practitioners will want to look first at the competencies that are most strongly linked to successful goal completion.

Step 4: Select a Task Group. Having identified one or more competencies, the practitioner chooses one competency to start, and examines the task groups that accompany it. The question to ask is, "Which of these task groups are clearly related to the learner's goal completion?" The answer to that question helps the practitioner **select a particular task group** which sets the stage for designing a task.

Step 5: Consult the Curriculum Framework to learn more about tasks. The **Indicator overview**, along with example tasks and Supplemental tasks, provide ideas for the kinds of tasks that can be developed.

Step 6: Consult the task descriptors to ensure that the task is within the competency and at the appropriate level.

Step 7: Check the performance descriptors. Remember that the performance descriptors are meant to work together.

Skill-building activities are introduced when the lack of component skills is interfering with successful task performance. As quickly as possible, the focus returns to the performance of tasks and the learner continues with task-based activities, completing tasks until goal completion has been achieved.

What about skills?

Tasks are built on a solid foundation of component skills. Component skills, sometimes referred to as academic skills, are those discrete skills an individual acquires along a continuum of skill development that build proficiency in, for example, reading, writing and math. As most practitioners are aware, the *Matrix*, i.e., the *Appendix* of the *Working with Learning Outcomes Validation Draft*, contains a collection of academic skills described across five LBS levels. Skills are integral to the successful performance of the multitude of tasks that adults carry out for various and particular purposes throughout the course of the day. In almost every situation, successful task performance is dependent upon some necessary background knowledge, a good understanding of expectations related to appropriate behaviours and, very importantly, mastery of the embedded skills. Skills and tasks are interdependent; they work hand in hand. Skills enable task completion; tasks enable goal completion.

Choices regarding the appropriate amount of time to devote to skill development and to task performance will vary from program to program. There are, however, a number of determining factors that can affect this decision, including but not limited to:

- Learner goal path
- Learner proficiency
- Targeted programming

Learner goal path. If the learner's long-term goal is related to apprenticeship training, secondary school credit, or postsecondary study, the learner will require particular concentration on skill development in order to be equipped for the demands of the next academic learning environment. By contrast, a learner with a long-term goal of independence or employment will likely spend more time on task-based activities.

Learner proficiency. Gaps in skill development may become evident early on through the learner's performance of tasks during intake and initial assessment. If the learner is struggling to complete tasks at basic complexity levels, it may mean some skills are lacking. When that's the case, practitioners may decide to use a skills-based assessment tool in order to gather more detailed information about the learner's skill development. For learners working at these lower literacy levels, considerable time will no doubt be devoted to building an adequate foundation of skills, but tasks will still have a part to play.

Skills always support tasks, so even at basic levels authentic tasks can be found or developed that bring meaning to skill development and provide concrete evidence to the learner of progress being made towards goal completion.

Targeted programming. Programming that is developed to meet specific needs in the community is another determining factor in the ratio of time spent on skills versus tasks. Programs that advertise increased skill proficiency for a particular purpose will naturally place the emphasis on skill development even though there is a purpose identified.

A few examples are: Computer Skills for Business Purposes, Pre-GED Math, MSWord for Beginners, Improve Your Spelling at Work, and Mathematics for Work and Every-Day Life.

Programs that market to a clientele interested in a specific job or in preparation for job-specific training usually organize curriculum in relation to the various tasks required in that particular occupation.

Practitioners track progress through ongoing assessment of the learner's performance of goal-related tasks. As the learner completes more complex tasks, progress towards the requirements of the goal become evident.

Learner progress is measured and tracked through the use of tasks that are related to the learner's goal path. In time, milestones will be identified by goal path and will provide a standardized way of communicating results of learner progress. Goal completion is recognized when the learner can successfully complete all tasks identified on his or her Learner Plan.

Conclusion

This concludes the Spring Training 2011 review for the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework. For more information, visit the OALCF webpage at the Employment Ontario Partners' Gateway (EOPG) website. Specific documents related to this training can be downloaded from the EOPG site at www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/oalcf/tools-and-resources.html.