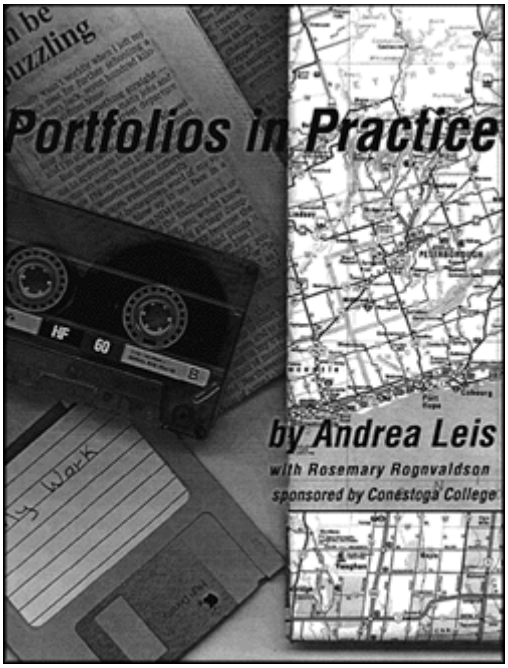

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Flowchart of Learning Outcomes

Unit 1:

Portfolios -

what are they and why do them?

1. Identify your current tracking methods.
2. Define a learning outcome and understand its relationship to a learner's goals and the curriculum.
3. Demonstrate the application of foundation level outcomes with your learners.

Unit 2:

How to create a portfolio

1. Describe the kind of portfolio a learner will develop.
2. Record a learner's short and long-term goals.
3. Use a learner's work to prove he or she has achieved an outcome.
4. Show how the learner's reflection on his or her work improves self-confidence and awareness of learning which, in turn, increases motivation and success in future learning.
5. Evaluate the achievement of a learner's learning outcomes.

Unit 3:

Factors affecting the use of portfolios

1. Match your philosophy of literacy education to your approach to portfolio development.
2. Identify the pros and cons of portfolio development.

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Unit IV - Appendix

Contacts for finding adult literacy programs
in Ontario which are current using portfolios

Works consulted

Endnotes

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- Rose Grotsky, Learning Communications Inc.
- Terri Lyn Hall, Literacy Link Eastern Ontario (LLEO)
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As a result of distance, the reference group met face-to-face only once. However, thanks to the Ontario Literacy Communications Network (AlphaCom) and the hard work and loyalty of these individuals, we were able to have effective communication on a regular basis using distance learning technology.

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Andrea Leis April 30, 1996

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to provide experienced literacy practitioners with an introduction and guide to the portfolio development process. It can be used with adult learners in school board, college, or community-based programs; for small group or one-to-one instruction; and by paid or volunteer literacy practitioners.

The project is a response to the work of developing a strategy to recognize adult learning in Ontario. It recognizes the training needs of practitioners who would like to offer learners the opportunity to demonstrate the achievements of learning outcomes at a foundation level of attainment

Work on this project was funded from September 1 to December 31, 1995, by the National Literacy Secretariat with support from the Literacy and Basic Skills Section of the Ontario Training and Adjustment Board, now with the Ministry of Education and Training

- Phase I of the project generated a report which provided a brief review and analysis of existing models and applications of the portfolio development process. It assessed existing portfolio development courses and feedback from current users of the portfolio development process.
- During Phase II, a self-directed portfolio instructor's manual was developed. This manual is directed towards experienced literacy practitioners who may be in a leadership role with regard to program planning and delivery. It is not meant to be an introductory course on portfolio development. Literacy Opportunities in Ontario North (LOON) has developed practitioner training modules for distance education in the North. One of these is an Assessment and Evaluation Module containing an introductory unit on portfolio development. Relevant parts of it are quoted in this manual.

Though this manual is largely intended for individual, self-directed learning, tips for group facilitators are noted for workshop presentations. For a group to cover the information given, some preparatory work will be necessary. Distributing the supplementary readings and the recommended resource list in advance of the workshop would be a good idea. Also, participants should come to the workshop with notes or logs they have kept on individual learner progress.

Practitioners should be able to demonstrate the following learning outcomes on completion of the manual:

- Practitioners will be able to use the portfolio development process with adult literacy learners to document learning for a variety of purposes.

- Practitioners will be able to identify a theoretical basis for the portfolio development process.

- Practitioners will be able to document learners' achievement of outcomes within the context of foundation level outcomes.

Supplementary readings are included. The following resources are not included but are highly recommended:

Fingeret, Hanna Arlene. *It Belongs to Me: A Guide to Portfolio Assessment in Adult Education Programs.* Durham, North Carolina: Literacy South, April 1993.

Ontario Training and Adjustment Board. Learning and Employment Preparation Branch. Literacy Section. *Quality Standards for Adult Literacy. A Practitioner's Guide to the Accountability Framework for the Adult Literacy Education System and Core Quality Standards for Programs.* Toronto, March 1995.

Taylor, Maurice. *Literacy Portfolio Assessment: A Resource for Literacy Workers.* Ottawa: University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education, Partnerships in Learning, June 1994.

Unit I:

Portfolios - what are they and why do them?

In this unit you will read about what portfolios are and recognize their role as a tool and a process in adult learning. You will also read about current trends in education which support using portfolios.

Learning outcomes

1. Identify your current tracking methods

   .
2. Define a learning outcome and understand its relationship to a learner's goals and the curriculum.

3. Demonstrate the application of foundation level outcomes with learners.

Key terms

portfolio development
outcome-based education
alternative assessment
foundation level outcomes

Unit 1:

Portfolios - what are they and why do them?

What is a portfolio?

The word *portfolio* is used to describe a variety of things. It is used by artists as the name for a collection of the pieces of their work that they regard as truly showing their style and ability. It is used by financial planners to describe a collection of investments, stocks, bonds, GlCs, and so on. A portfolio can also be used as a tool by both educators and learners to collaboratively evaluate the work of an individual and decide whether the individual has mastered new skills and concepts to established standards. It ensures that the learner has full input into both what actually goes into the portfolio and the evaluation process. Learning how to select and how to evaluate are highly desirable skills the learner gains by using portfolios.

Leon and Pearl Paulson describe a portfolio in this way:

A portfolio is a carefully crafted portrait of what a student knows or can do... a personal and public statement... a purposeful, integrated collection of student work showing student effort, progress, or achievement in one or more areas. The collection is guided by performance standards and includes evidence of student self-reflection and participation in setting the focus, selecting the contents, and judging merit. A portfolio communicates what is learned and why it is important.[1]

In a workshop she gave at the Ottawa Board of Education Professional Development day, Kate Parry, associate professor in the Department of English of Hunter College, City University of New York, said,

While student portfolios were first developed for purposes of assessment, they have proved to be valuable teaching tools: they give focus to students' work and they make it possible for students to evaluate for themselves what they are doing.

First, when setting out to produce a portfolio, both teachers and students have to decide what they are going to work on. In adult basic education this means discussing the students' aims in coming to learn and agreeing on what they might reasonably expect to achieve within a specified period. On the basis of this discussion, teachers and students can identify the sorts of written documents or texts that will be produced as they work together. In this way they formulate a programme of work and set themselves a goal: to produce a specified range of texts over a specified period.

Then, in the course of the work, and especially at the end of the period, students with the help of their teachers look over what they have done and decide which particular pieces should be selected for the portfolio. They often write an introductory cover letter too, in which they explain what they have included and comment on what they have achieved. These activities promote reflection and evaluation and so they are valuable learning experiences in themselves.[2]

In summary, the portfolio is both a tool and a process which serves two important purposes for the learner:

1. demonstrating the learner's abilities and achievement of personal goals;
2. assisting learners in gaining greater control over learning and evaluation of their learning.

Pauline Larabee, Recognition of Adult Learning, Outcome Based Assessment Guide (draft), (Ottawa: Ottawa Board of Education, Continuing Education Centre, 1995)

WHAT IS A PORTFOLIO?

- In literacy programmer, a portfolio is a file that contains a representative selection of a learner's work.
- It is meant to show the learner's progress over a period of time so that both learner and teacher can see what has been achieved.
- The portfolio can also be used to show the work of a whole programme.

HOW CAN WORKING ON A PORTFOLIO CONTRIBUTE TO TEACHING?

· Learner portfolios were first developed for purposes of assessment and accreditation, but have become a valuable teaching tool for:

Planning helps learners to set goals and see where they're going

Motivation helps learners to take responsibility for their own learning and progress

Accreditation helps learners to see progress and accomplishments

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT

GOAL SETTING: When setting out to produce a portfolio, both teacher and learner have to decide what they are going to work on. In literacy this means discussing the learner's goals in returning to school and agreeing on what they might reasonably expect to achieve within a specified period.

Learning activities

Outcome: Identify your current tracking methods.

Answer the following questions:

1. Do you have ongoing or periodic check points?
2. Do you review your notes with your learner?
3. Do you ask your learner how he feels things are progressing?

Tips for group facilitators: Ask participants to explain how they document learning. Create a chart which shows kinds of documentation (ongoing, checkpoints, tests, journal, portfolio) used by each program. Discuss why there is a variety of documentation (does it vary by sector? by the practitioner's or learner's style.?) and what purpose each serves.

Why do portfolios?

There are currently a number of convergent and interwoven themes emerging in the field of education: concern about accountability, a shift towards outcome based education, and an interest in alternative assessment models. The shift represents a concern about what learners can actually do outside the classroom after completing a course, as opposed to how long it takes them to **finish** a course.

The field of adult literacy has not been insulated from these issues. In fact, in many ways, the philosophy and practices of adult literacy programs in Ontario reflect the "new view" of education. Portfolios are one way to document this kind of outcome-based learning in a very portable way. The portfolio belongs to the learner; it represents what she can do and can pave the way to the learner's next goal. There are currently many adult literacy programs in Ontario using portfolio development as a way to acknowledge learner achievement.

Accountability

In an increasingly competitive, businesslike environment, doing what you say you are going to do—accountability— has made its presence felt in the educational world. The consultation and resulting document, *Quality Standards for Adult Literacy: A Practitioner's Guide to the Accountability Framework for the Adult Literacy Education System in Ontario,* represented one response to this concern.[3] After three years of consultation with the field, including Anglophone, Francophone, and Native representatives from college, school board, labour, and community-based adult literacy programs, the Core Quality Standards and accountability framework were approved by the Ontario Training and Adjustment Board (OTAB) in June 1994.

The Core Quality Standards and accountability framework address accountability and evaluation concerns of fenders, programs, and adult learners. On a system-wide level, the framework includes definitions of literacy education and literacy, principles, a vision statement, objectives, and strategies to achieve the objectives. For programs, it includes core quality standards, program features, and evidence for each program feature. "These elements are to make the entire literacy system accountable so that its success can be evaluated."[4]

Recognition for Adult Learning (RAL) pilot projects were funded between 1991 and 1995 to develop a strategy for recognizing and accrediting the foundation skills of adults at all learning levels. RAL and the growing interest in portfolio development respond to the following systemwide objectives referred to in "Framework and Quality Standards for Adult Literacy Education in Ontario."

4.4 Literacy Education System - To establish a well co-ordinated comprehensive literacy system which shares resources and avoids duplication

4.5 Program Evaluation - To establish core quality standards and methods of evaluation for literacy education and to implement them in all programs and services

4.6 Recognition of Learning - To implement a system for recognizing and accrediting the foundation skills of adults at all learning levels[5]

In early 1996, math and communications outcomes at the foundation level were consolidated from the range of activity of pilot projects. There are three levels of recognition at the foundation level. Foundation level outcomes reflect pre-credit program competency in math and communication.

Outcome-based education

The emphasis in education has shifted from acquiring knowledge to knowing how to apply it. Outcome-based education (OBE) focuses on whether, not when, a learner achieves success. K.A. Fitzpatrick says a key principle of this model of education is:

expanded opportunity... Our instructional model could be described as a second chance system. The notion that failure is not absolute, but rather a temporary setback that may be overcome, stands among the core set of beliefs.[6]

Therefore, it is critical to consider carefully what actually constitutes an outcome. The College Standards and Accreditation Council (CSAC), a government body that develops standards for Ontario's colleges, describes learning outcomes as representing

culminating demonstrations of learning and achievement. They are not simply a listing of discrete skills nor broad statements of knowledge and comprehension. They describe performances that demonstrate that significant learning has been achieved and verified by graduates of the program.[7]

This shift in educational philosophy, from curriculum-based to outcome-based, takes time and doesn't occur in one step. Rather, educators may find themselves moving along a continuum of change. W.G. Spady and K.J.

Marshall note a difference between "traditional" OBE and "transformational" OBE ("transitional" OBE lies in between the two). Curriculum is still the starting point for traditional OBE; teachers determine what is "truly important for students to learn to a high level of performance" and the content and structure of the curriculum remains the same.

Transformational OBE, on the other hand, focuses on equipping "all students with the knowledge, competence and orientations needed for success after they leave school." Spady and Marshall described the following as "role-grounded, transformational outcomes": involved citizen, collaborative contributor, adaptable problem solver, and perceptive thinker.[8]

Traditional OBE puts the teacher in charge of the outcomes while transformational OBE points to broader outcomes which can't be broken down into discrete skills. The goals of transformational OBE are consistent with the definition of Literacy Education and Literacy as spelled out in *Quality Standards for Adult Literacy:*

1.1 Literacy education is part of a process or cycle of lifelong learning, based on life experience, shared knowledge, and decision-making by learners supported by their instructors. Literacy education contributes to the development of self-knowledge and critical thinking skills. In turn, this development empowers individuals and communities.

1.2 Literacy is the ability to read, write, calculate, speak, and understand as well as sign (for the Deaf) and communicate in other symbolic forms of language, according to need. It is a continuum of these skills necessary for everyday life in the home, at work, in education, and in the community.[9]

Adult educators need to consider where they fit along the continuum of applying outcome-based education in their teaching. This will be reflected in the kind of outcomes which they write with their learners and work towards. According to Rick Arnold and associates, effective adult education practice starts with the sharing of experience or knowledge of participants. Patterns are then discussed, new information is added, new skills are practiced, and action is planned and applied.[10] This approach supports Spady and Marshall's concept of "Outcomes of Significance," which "require **substance** of significance applied through **processes** of significance in **settings** of significance."[11] In other words, for an outcome to be significant, its definition and application must be genuine and reflective of real-life learning needs.

There is a philosophical match between transformational OBE and literacy in Ontario; the challenge is to ensure that the implementation of outcomes in literacy reflects this. It is critical that learning outcomes used in literacy programs reflect the depth and breadth of learning which is desired, not just the skills attained in the process. The whole is truly larger than the sum of its parts.

Outcome-Based Education (see next page) by Joyce White highlights this continuum of philosophies which underlie outcome-based education.

For Your Information

Joyce White, Recognition of Adult Learning & Portfolio Development information (Ottawa Board of Education)

Outcome-Based Education:

Outcome-Based Education happens when educators base all decisions about students and learning on the outcome they wish to achieve; on the learning they wish students to demonstrate at the end of the learning activity.

Transformational Outcomes are focused on real life roles and in real life contexts.

Students are asked to demonstrate their learning by using it to do something significantly related to their future functioning as an adult and to perform that demonstration in a real life setting.

Traditional Outcome-Based Education

Traditional OBE happens when educators are basing all decisions about students and learning on outcomes that are curriculum-based rather than life-role-based.

Transitional Outcome-Based Education

Transitional OBE happens when educators are basing all decisions about students and learning on higher-order competencies (e.g., critical thinking skills, problem solving skills). The intent is to demonstrate that they can apply these competencies to the traditional curriculum.

Alternative assessment

Evaluating outcome-based education requires a different approach to assessment. Subject matter no longer dictates test content. Or as Martin Good and John Holmes write, "We don't believe in using 'tests'... Partly because they tell you nothing that you can't find out without using them, and partly because there are a lot of things you won't find out if you do use them, especially if you don't do other things well."[12]

How we think about learning also affects how we think about assessment of learning achieved in general and about testing in particular. Cognitive learning theory challenges the idea that learning is linear and consists of "assembling bits of simpler learning." It also reminds us that "learners are multi-talented" and therefore assessment needs to recognize more than verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical skills. Alternative methods of assessment are needed to provide feedback on alternate methods of teaching and ideas about learning. Alternative assessment invites a wider range of possible responses— not just right or wrong.[13] Or as one cartoonist phrased it:

School is mostly true/false; real life is all essay questions.

Alternative assessment can include exhibitions, investigations, demonstrations, written or oral responses, journals and portfolios.[14] The need to find new ways to assess reflects the recognition that there are also other ways of learning and new ways of looking at learning. In a survey about learner assessment, program evaluation, and the potential use of portfolios in literacy development conducted by Maurice Taylor of the University of Ottawa, one of the respondents said, "Alternative assessment is all about how to assess, document and be accountable, while being true to beliefs about literacy development."[15]

Portfolio development

The explosion of interest in portfolios—there are some 600 entries in the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) database on portfolios—is an obvious response to concerns about accountability and a shift to outcome-based education. Effectively used, portfolios are one kind of alternative assessment.

Maurice Taylor defines a portfolio as "a purposeful collection of a learner's work that tells a story of the efforts, progress or achievement in a given area." Portfolios are participatory, learner-centred, "individually adaptable, flexible and comprehensive."[16] Agreeing that each person's literacy is unique and dynamic

...leads to the realization that no one test could possibly satisfy the varied needs of students, and thus it became necessary to look for a way to respond to each person's individuality. Paulson, Paulson & Meyer (1993) sum it up nicely when they write that portfolios are as varied as the students who create them. The most fundamental element of portfolios is that they are learner-centred. Portfolios are molded around the student. A true portfolio stresses the student's participation and ownership.[17]

It is not surprising that these features of portfolio development echo several Core Quality Standards: Respect for Learners (5.5), Access and Equity (5.7), Learning Assessment (5.8), and Program Evaluation (5.18).[18]

In the context of foundation level outcomes, the literacy practitioner has a responsibility to assist the learner in identifying which outcomes have been achieved. The process of portfolio development serves to bridge the actual learning collected and reflected in the portfolio with the need for a commonly understood standard of achievement. This in turn assists learner mobility and credit portability.

By identifying which learning outcomes have been achieved, the literacy practitioner also helps the learner and helps the program to meet program Core Quality Standards such as Program Commitment to Learners,

Learning Activities

Learner Centred Approaches and Methods, Access and Equity, Learning Assessment, and Organizational Links.

Outcome: Define a learning outcome and understand its relationship to a learner's goals and your curriculum.

Read Maurice Taylor's text, *Literacy Portfolio Assessment: A Resource for literacy Workers.*

Read K.A. Fitzpatrick's "Restructuring to Achieve Outcomes of Significance for all Students" and William G. Spady and Kit J. Marshall's "Beyond Traditional Outcome-Based Education," both of which are provided in the supplementary section.

Answer the following questions:

1. What do you think makes a good outcome?

2. What learning outcome would describe a learner's general goal of learning to read?

3. How does outcome-based education influence curriculum?

4. What changes would this create in your curriculum?

Tips for group facilitators: Discuss the above questions in a group format. When possible, participants should come to the workshop having read the articles and book beforehand.

Outcome: Identify foundation level outcomes.

Read the foundation level outcomes.

Describe:

1. How these outcomes can be applied with your learner(s)
2. How different learners might approach these outcomes
3. What activities might be useful in documenting the demonstrations listed

Tips for group facilitators for Activities 1 and 2: Give participants time to work in small groups to discuss and, when appropriate, share results.

Unit II:
How to create a portfolio

Learning outcomes:

In this unit you will identify the parts of a portfolio and show how you and a learner can develop a portfolio.

1. Describe the kind of portfolio your learner will develop.
2. Record a learner's short and long-term goals.
3. Use a learner's work to prove he has achieved an outcome.
4. Show how reflecting on your work improves self-confidence and awareness of learning which, in turn, increases motivation and success in future learning.
5. Evaluate a learner's learning outcomes.

Key terms

goal setting
documentation
reflection
evaluation

Unit II:
How to create a portfolio

There are many ways to present a portfolio; each portfolio is unique, as its owner is. However, to assess and evaluate portfolios in the context of the foundation level outcomes, there need to be certain standards. Therefore, it is recommended that each portfolio consist of the following sections:

1) Cover page and introduction
2) Goal statements
3) Evidence of work
4) Reflection
5) Evaluation

1. Cover page and introduction

The cover page(s) should address the following:

- who I am
- what I want to accomplish

The introduction should also indicate what the learner already can do that is relevant to her identified goal. Since portfolios are highly individual, the information in this opening section will vary greatly from person to person.

Learning Activities

Outcome: Describe the kind of portfolio your learner will develop.

Choose a particular learner you work with and answer the following questions:

1. What will the portfolio look like?
2. Do you plan to use a file folder, a three-ring binder, a box or a computer disk?
3. What is the purpose of this learner's portfolio?
4. Who is going to see it?

5. How will the portfolio be set up - will it contain every piece of work (selection to be made at a later date) or will each piece of work be evaluated as it is completed? For more on this question, refer to the section on evaluating learning outcomes on page 49.

6. Where and how will the portfolio be stored? Will it be possible to maintain confidentiality?

Outcome: Compare different initial assessment inventories.

Review the Ottawa Board of Education sample cover page (page 24) and "Learner Profile" (page 25), and Maurice Taylor's Early Assessment inventories (pages 26-30), and Cambrian College's OBS Literacy Program Portfolio Development/Learner's Background (page 31) on the following pages.

Comment on:
1. what purposes they serve;
2. what differences you see;
3. what sort of cover page you would develop for your program

Tips for group facilitators: Prepare overheads of these pages and discuss the questions as a group

Outcome: Recommend how you will implement portfolios with your adult learner(s).

Answer the following:

1. How will you introduce the idea of keeping a portfolio with your learner(s)?
2. How will you help learners develop the material necessary for the cover and introductory page(s)?
3. How much time do you think will be needed for this?
4. Do you think that this will help or hinder you or the learner in the teaching/learning process?

Try this!

Pauline Larabee, Recognition of Adult Learning, Outcome Based Assessment Guide (draft), (Ottawa: Ottawa Board of Education, Continuing Education Centre, 1995)

PORTFOLIO:

RECORD OF LEARNING

SUBJECTS

Reading **Writing**

Math **Computer**

Name:

Date:

Program:

Try this!

Pauline Larabee, Recognition of Adult Learning, Outcome-Based Assessment Guide (Ottawa. Ottawa Board of Education, Continuing Education Centre, 1995)

Learner Profile

Education background and goals

Last grade completed? _____

When? _____

Where: _____

(name of school, city and country)

If you left school, why did YOU leave? _____

Other educational programs attended:

O Literacy: _____
O EEL: _____
O Post Secondary: _____
O Other: _____

Why are you returning to school now? _____

Employment background and goals:

Are you working now?

O Full time
O Part time
O No

What jobs have you had in the past? _____

What kind of job would you like to have? _____

Interests and activities

What have you been doing the last five years? _____

Do you have:

O special interests?
O hobbies?
O volunteer work?

Comments: _____

Recommended Placement:

Maurice Taylor, Literacy Portfolio Assessment: A Resource for Literacy Workers (Ottawa: of Ottawa, Faculty of Education. Partnerships in Learning June 1994)

Try this!

Phase 1 - Early Assessment

Pre-attitudes of Adult Students

1. How sure do you feel about being able to succeed in this program at this time?

O very sure O unsure

O sure O don't know

O not so sure

2. How do you feel about taking the literacy training?

O very good O not so good

O good O bad

O ok

How do you feel about attending class?

O very good O not so good

O good O bad

O ok

4. Have you ever used a computer?

O yes O no

5. How do you feel about reading books for learning?

O very good O not so good

O good O bad

O ok

6. How do you learn best? By working:

O alone O in a class

O in a small group O some of each

O with one other person

7. How do your fellow workers feel about your taking this training?

O very good O not so good

O good O bad

O ok

8. How do your family members feel about your taking this program?

O very good O not so good

O good O bad

O ok

9. What do you want to get out of this training? Mark all that apply.

O learn to read better

O learn to write better

O keep my job

O be a better worker
O get a better job
O please my family

Phase 1 - Early Assessment

Pre-attitudes of Adult Students (continued)

10. Check which of the following things will be hard for you:

O reading O using the computer

O writing O attending class

O math O remembering what I learned

11. Check which of the following things will be most helpful to you.

O reading O using the computer

O writing O attending class

O math O remembering what I learned

12. How do you usually feel about yourself?

O very good O not so good

O good O bad

O ok

13. What are your chances of getting a better job in the next few years?

O very good O not so good

O good O bad

O ok

Try this!

Maurice Taylor, Literacy Portfolio Assessment: A Resource for Literacy Workers (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education, Partnerships in Learning, June 1994)

Goals List and Literacy Inventory

Personal Goals:	**Can do**	**Work on**	**No**
1. Read/write address	☐	☐	☐
2. Write a shopping list	☐	☐	☐
3. Write cheques	☐	☐	☐
4. Read bills	☐	☐	☐
5. Use the phone book	☐	☐	☐
6. Read a menu	☐	☐	☐
7. Read/write recipes	☐	☐	☐
8. Take the driver's test	☐	☐	☐
9. Read leases or contracts	☐	☐	☐
10. Read/write letters or notes	☐	☐	☐
11. Improve math skills	☐	☐	☐
12. Learn to use a computer	☐	☐	☐
13. Read a newspaper (what parts?)	☐	☐	☐
_____			
14. Read magazines (which ones?)	☐	☐	☐
_____			
15. Read labels & signs	☐	☐	☐
16. Read maps & write directions	☐	☐	☐
17. Cursive writing	☐	☐	☐
18. Improve printing	☐	☐	☐
19. Write your life story	☐	☐	☐
20. Write short stories/poems	☐	☐	☐

Goals List and Literacy Inventory (continued)

Family:	**Can do**	**Work on**	**No**
1. Read to children			
2. Help children with homework			
3. Read/write notes to children's school			
4. Read write names of family			
Community:			
1. Church reading			
2. Voting registration/info			
3. Find out more about how the government works			
4. Join a group to solve a problem			
Work:			
1. Fill out job applications			
2. Write résumés & cover letters			
3. Read/write telephone messages			
4. Read/write job instructions			
5. Read to learn about other jobs			

Goals List and Literacy Inventory (continued)

Education

[X] Check only if you are interested in these educational goals.

[ ] 1. Attend a job training program (what kind?)

_____

[ ] 2. Attend classes to learn something new
(crafts, self-improvement) _____

[ ] 3. Pass a work-related test (what type of test?) _____

[ ] 4. Study for a grade 12 certificate _____

[ ] 5. Other: _____

_____

_____

Can you think of any other goals that aren't on this list?

_____

_____

_____

Of all the goals we've talked about, what are the 2 or 3 that are the most important to you right now?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Try this!

Courtesy of Dee Goforth. Cambrian College 1995

OBS Literacy Program - Cambrian College

Portfolio Development/Learners Background

Date _____

Teacher _____

Student's name _____

Address _____

_____

Postal Code _____

Birthdate (d/m/y) _____ Male _____ Female _____

Language spoken at home: _____

Years spent in Canada: _____

Number of children at home: _____

Last grade or high school attended: (name and location)

_____

_____

Final grade completed and year: ___

What did you like best about school?

_____

What did you like least about school?

_____

If you quit school why did you quit?

_____

Have you attended other literacy programs?

_____

Other education or training:

_____

Why did you choose this program?

_____

Are you working part time?

_____

What are your educational goals?

_____

What are your work/career goals?

_____

Are you sponsored by a social service agency:

No _____ Yes _____

Which one: _____

Worker's name: _____

Other information: _____

_____

_____

_____

2. Goal statements

In order for a portfolio to properly assess learners' work, you need to be explicit about what the learners are doing- what the work and the goals actually are. Otherwise you fall into that common trap: you test what is testable. You assess what is easy to assess, and neglect important progress or achievement that does not fall into easily assessed categories.[19]

For learning to be effective and satisfying, it needs direction. Before setting off on a vacation you need to decide where you want to go and then how you will get there. The same two components are a part of planning a learning journey: deciding on the destination, then deciding how you will get to it. The long-term goal is your destination; the short-term goals are how you get there. Goals are different from outcomes: goals identify where an individual wants to be as opposed to what an individual has learned to reach that destination. As an example, a learner's goal might be to go to college but the outcomes of instruction for this individual might be to be able to research and use information or use measurement for various purposes.

Demonstrations listed in the foundation level outcomes may resemble a learner's list of short-term goals. The short-term goals will represent the smaller steps necessary to achieve the long-term goal. The long-term goal will take time to achieve. It will be substantial, but at the same time it should be realistic and achievable.

To borrow from Literacy Link Eastern Ontario's Common Assessment of Basic Skills (CABS) document:

Goal setting is an ongoing process. The success of the process depends on how well you know yourself and how familiar you are with the options available to you. Goals may be personal, academic or vocational. They may be based on interests, abilities, the anticipated results of achieving the goal. knowledge of alternatives, values, personal commitments, and societal or personal conditioning, to name a few.

Goals should be specific, measurable and attainable so that the client can track progress. For example, "reading and understanding the newspaper on a regular basis" is a specific goal; "improving my reading" is too vague. The expression short term goals refers to the series of steps needed to reach a more distant long term goal.

A short term goal could take one month to achieve, or it could take two years. It is very important to consider goals within the bigger picture; each goal is a stepping stone towards the future.[20]

As you begin to set short- and long-term goals, the necessity of establishing a starting point becomes very obvious, which is why it is necessary to record what is already known. This prevents duplication and "gaps" in the work and determines where to begin new learning. It also sets the baseline against which all future work can be evaluated.

Learning Activities

Outcome: Record a learner's short- and long-term goals.

Review the map and goal path from the Ottawa Board of Education and the inventories from Taylor's book on Portfolio Assessment which are included in the following pages.

Describe:

1. how an adult learner might complete the maps;
2. how the inventory differs from the map approach and which you prefer;
3. how useful you would find these aids in assisting you and a learner in identifying and recording short- and long-term goals;

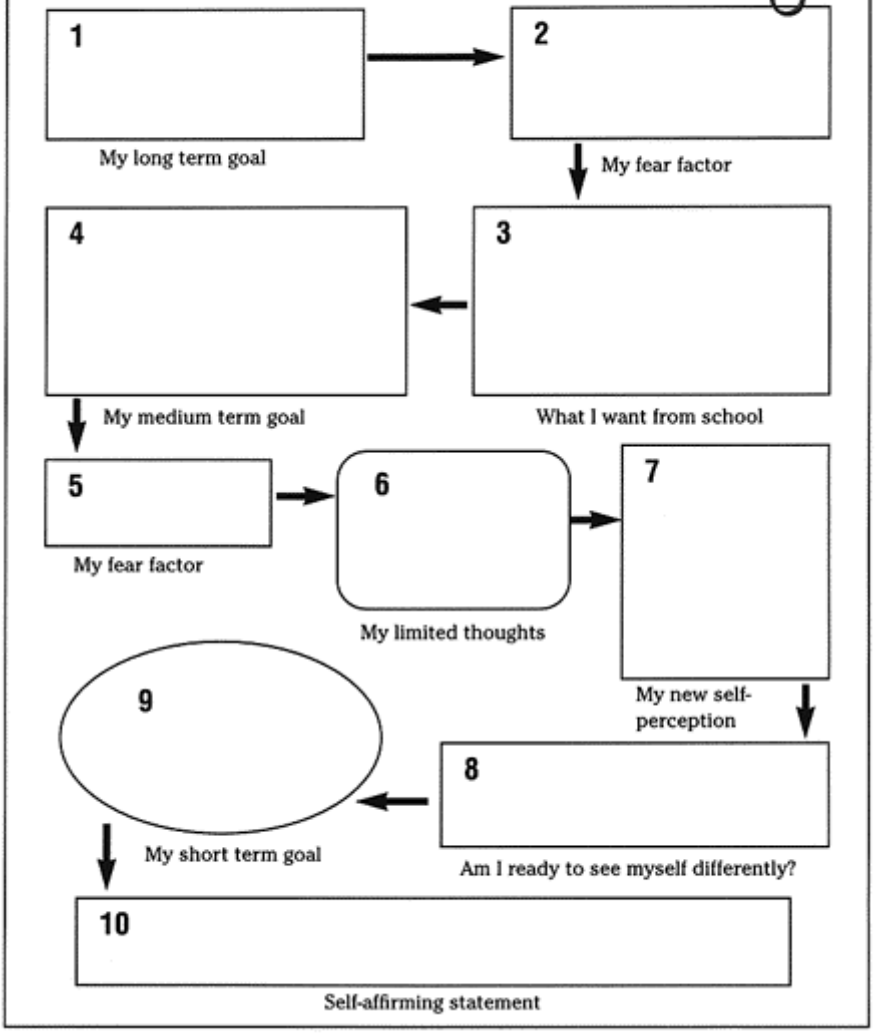
4. whether you are able to identify any problems/difficulties with these methods and, if so, what you could do to overcome these problems;

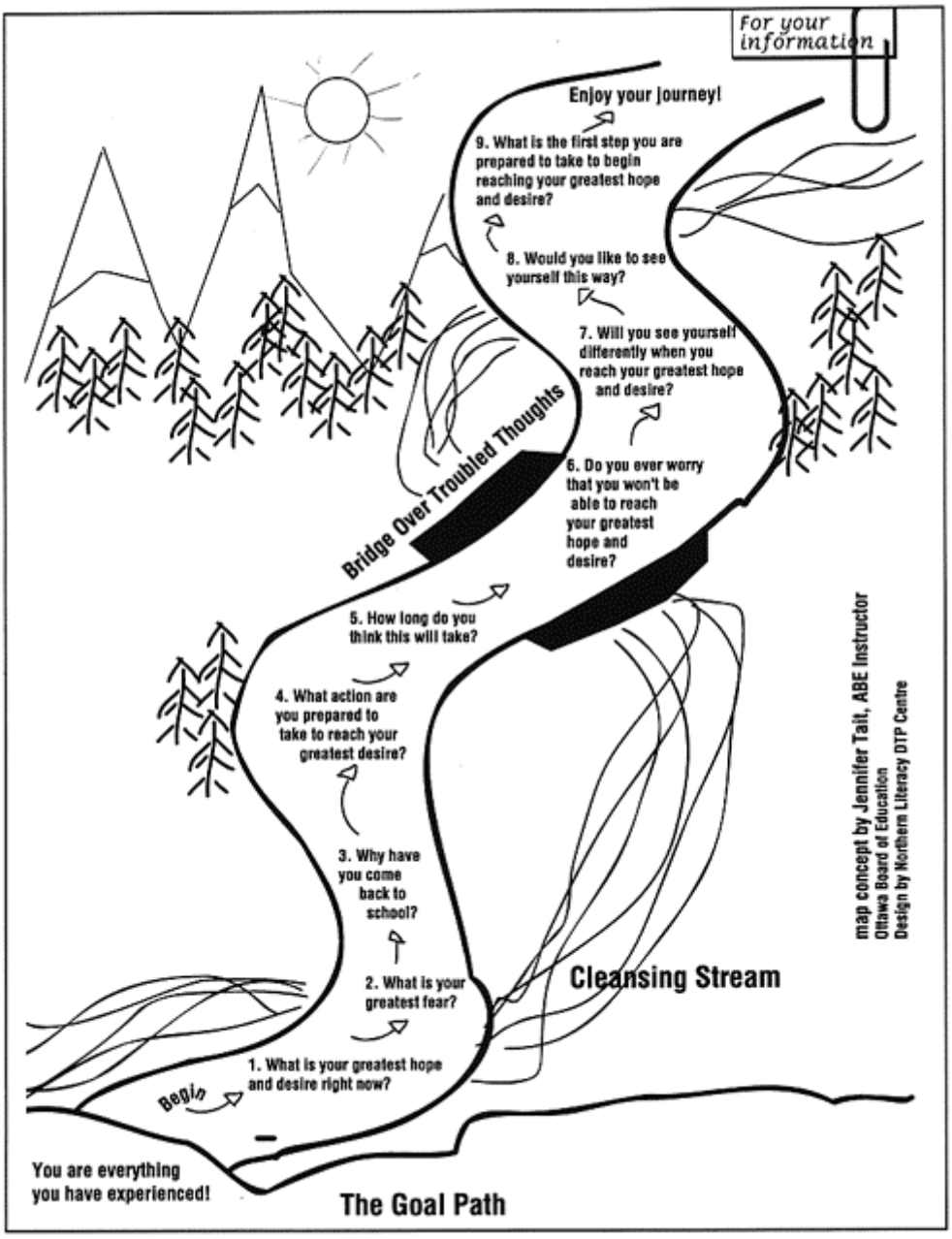
5. whether you think that the goal-setting process will add to or detract from your current program (explain your answer).

Tips for group facilitators: Have the group work in pairs to discuss and record a hypothetical learner's long-term goal and some short-term goals. It might be desirable to role-play with one person acting as adult learner and the other as practitioner.

Pauline Larabee, Recognition of Adult Learning, Outcome Based Assessment Guide (draft), (Ottawa: Ottawa Board of Education, Continuing Education Centre, 1995)

Try this!




For your information
Enjoy your journey!
9. What is the first step you are prepared to take to begin reaching your greatest hope and desire?
8. Would you like to see yourself this way?
7. Will you see yourself differently when you reach your greatest hope and desire?
6. Do you ever worry that you won't be able to reach your greatest hope and desire?
Bridge Over Troubled Thoughts
5. How long do you think this will take?
4. What action are you prepared to take to reach your greatest desire?
3. Why have you come back to school?
2. What is your greatest fear?
1. What is your greatest hope and desire right now?
Begin
Cleansing Stream
map concept by Jennifer Tait, ABE Instructor
Ottawa Board of Education
Design by Northern Literacy DTP Centre
You are everything you have experienced!
The Goal Path

3. Evidence of Work

The portfolio will contain work that shows that learning has been achieved, progress has been made, and goals have been met. Ultimately it will be used to document achievement of outcomes. It is important to remember to date everything that goes into the portfolio! The evidence may fall into two categories: **actual work** by the learner and **supporting evidence** from external sources. Actual learner work may include first- and final-draft writing samples, a résumé, reading samples, or an audiotape of the learner reading aloud. A statement by the literacy practitioner about the effectiveness of the learner's participation in a particular discussion is an example of supporting evidence. "Records of Learning" on page 41 provides other examples of evidence which can be used in the portfolio.

It is necessary to establish what constitutes documentation and what is proof of learning. Obviously some things are much easier to document than others. It is far easier to show an ability to write than an ability to read.

K.A. Fitzpatrick reminds us that "an ability is larger than the observed performance of it" and "that any performance or demonstration of an ability is larger than the sum of the criteria applied to it. "[21]

In *It Belongs to Me: A Guide to Portfolio Assessment in Adult Education Programs.* Hanna Arlene Fingeret writes.

Portfolio assessment requires that we creatively figure out ways to reflect new literacy practices in folders and portfolios. This may be as simple as writing about them in dialog journals. Or it may include gathering evidence, such as copies of restaurant menus or copies of the title pages of books that have been read to children. Evidence of using math in daily life might include copies of receipts for purchases made according to a budget, or copies of ads that were compared to find a best buy. At first, students will need help remembering to put material in their folders, and remembering to bring materials from outside the classroom. Sometimes students can help each other find creative ways to document new literacy practices; students often get ideas about things to contribute to their own folders by examining other students' folders as part of a group activity.[22]

Learning Activities

Outcome: Use a learner's work to prove he has achieved an outcome.

Read over the foundation level outcomes, available at programs, networks, and Alpha Ontario.

Answer the following Questions:

1. What evidence might a learner provide for one of her stated outcomes?
2. What questions could you ask to guide assessment of the learning outcome?

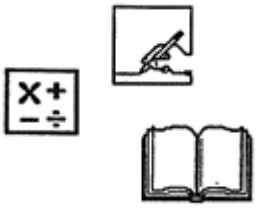
Tips for group facilitators: Have the group work in pairs. One person must prove to the other that she can read without actually reading. What kinds of "evidence" does she use? Put ideas on a flip chart for discussion by the entire group. Does the group agree or disagree that the evidence given is proof? If not, why not?

Copy "Records of Learning for the Portfolio" onto an overhead transparency and discuss how you would do this in your learning situation.

Pauline Larabee, Recognition of Adult Learning, Outcome Based Assessment Guide (draft), (Ottawa: Ottawa Board of Education, Continuing Education Centre, 1995)

RECORDS OF LEARNING

FOR THE PORTFOLIO

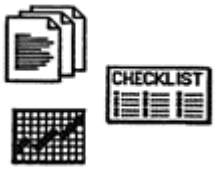


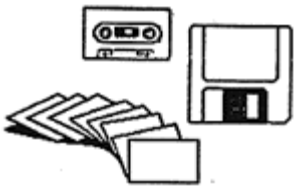
Daily Work

- writing samples
- numeracy lessons
- book reports

Assessment and Tracking

- reflection sheets
- learning logs
- anecdotal notes
- pre and post tests
- checklists





Other Records of Learning

- photos
- computer work
- VCR or cassette tapes

4. Reflecting on Learning

Learning is not just taking in new information. We know we have learned something when it changes our thinking or affects how we deal with new situations. Janine Huot describes the Dimensions of Learning Model which defines learning as "a process of constructing personal meaning from the information available in a learning situation and then integrating that information with what we already know to create new knowledge."[23]

In *Educating for a Change,* authors Rick Arnold, Bev Burke, Carl James, D'Arcy Martin, and Barb Thomas use "the spiral model" to describe learning and plan workshops.

This model suggests that:

- learning begins with the experience or knowledge of participants;
- after participants have shared their experience, they look for patterns or analyze that experience (what are the commonalities and what are the differences.);
- to avoid being limited by the knowledge and experience of people in the room, we also collectively add or create new information or theory;
- participants need to try on what they've learned: to practice new skills, to make strategies and plan for action;
- afterwards, back in their organizations and daily work, participants apply in action what they've learned in the workshop.[24]

In terms of the role of self-reflection in the portfolio development process, Taylor writes,

Encouraging analysis of one's work through self-reflection adds an important dimension to literacy instruction. This process of self-reflection can lead to recognition and acknowledgment of progress and improvement which results in superior performance

and increased positive self-esteem. Increased confidence becomes a key motivator.[25]

Learning Activities

Outcome: Show how reflecting on your work improves self-confidence and awareness of learning which, in turn, increases motivation and success in future learning

Describe something you have learned from this manual so far (such as writing a learning outcome).

Describe:

1. how it has changed your thinking or action;
2. how you would "prove" it to someone else;
3. what next steps in learning about this you want to take.

Tips for group facilitators: Have participants complete these questions individually, and then share their ideas for Proving learning.

Outcome: Compare different reflection pages.

Look at the reflection pages provided in the following pages.

Choose a particular learner:

- What page would you use? Why?
- How would you create a different way to encourage your learner to reflect on his own work?

Tips for group facilitators: Allow time for individuals to complete a reflection sheet, ask a few participants to share their work, discuss other ways to encourage reflection.

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Goal Statement and Reflections

Date: _____

My Goal: Long-term: _____ Short-term _____

_____
_____
_____

Steps I will take to reach my goal:

1. _____
   _____
2. _____
   _____
3. _____
   _____

Reflections on the progress towards my goal *(2 or 3 sentences describing specific thoughts and feelings you had while you were in the process of reaching your goal):*

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

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Questions that Promote Student Self-RefIection

1. What makes this your best piece?
2. How did you go about (writing, solving) it?
3. What problems did you encounter? How did you solve them?
4. What makes your most effective piece different from your least effective piece?
5. What goals did you set for yourself? How well did you accomplish them?
6. Why did you select this piece of work?
7. What was particularly important to you during the process of creating this work?
8. If you could work further on this piece, what would you do?
9. What do you want me to look for when I evaluate this work?
10. How does this relate to what you have learned before?
11. What grade would you put on this paper? Why?
12. Of the work we've done recently, I feel most confident about...
13. What I still don't understand is...
14. I (don't) enjoy this type of work because...
15. The type of work I find most challenging is...

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Sample Reflection Sheets

Portfolio Entry

Date:

Title:

This is what I learned:

I selected this because:

Portfolio Entry Cover Sheet

1. Explain the assignment
2. What did you learn from doing this assignment?
3. What did you learn that will help you outside the classroom?
4. In this assignment, what do you want noticed?
5. What would you improve if you could do this over again?

Reflection Cover Sheet

1. Explain what you were supposed to do.
2. What did you do well? Why?
3. What key things did you learn?
4. What was your least favourite part? Why?
5. With what do you need help?
6. Set a goal based on this assessment.

Reflect and Justify

1. I chose this piece because:

2. I would like you to particularly notice that:

3. One thing I would improve next time is:

5. Evaluating Learning Outcomes

What a learner can do at the exit point of a program or learning plan is the basis of outcome-based education. In a guide produced for the Ottawa Board of Education, Pauline Larabee wrote, "Outcome-based assessment assesses learners on the basis of their ability to perform real life tasks. Demonstrations of learning take the form of set tasks performed with specific conditions."[26]

Two separate but related advantages of assessing with portfolios are that they can show both the progress of learning and proof of abilities in different situations over time. By contrast, a test just shows the ability to do something at one fixed time and place.

Foundation level outcomes are currently written at three successive levels in three subject areas: math communications and computers. An adult learner can work on specific learning outcomes in any level. A future consideration is whether all the demonstrations for outcomes in that level would have to be achieved to earn recognition of that level. Adult learners in literacy programs in Ontario, regardless of sector (community-based, college, or school board) have the opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of the foundation level learning outcomes.

The foundation level learning outcomes are broad statements which are supported by demonstrations and criteria for each learning outcome. A demonstration is something you can observe a learner doing. The criteria describe how well or under what conditions something is done. If a learner cannot demonstrate the outcome, he or she is most likely missing skills or knowledge. The section called, "trouble shooting," suggests incremental units of knowledge or skills which would help the learner to build towards achieving the outcome. The instructor and learner would examine these suggestions together to determine appropriate programming. Please don't forget that learning outcomes, demonstrations, criteria and trouble-shooting suggestions may help you develop appropriate curriculum: they are not curriculum. Though the skills may appear to represent a sequence, not all learners will follow it.

The foundation level outcomes serve as a bridge to the activity required to demonstrate achievement of college preparatory program outcomes. The Adult Preparatory Programs Articulation and Standards Project Steering Committee has recommended that this document be issued by colleges and credentialed by the province to acknowledge completion of a set of learning outcomes which could lead to post-secondary education, training, or employment. These college preparatory program outcomes describe learning achievements in mathematics, science, communication, computer, and personal and career development

The portfolio is one way to document the achievement of learning outcomes. There is general agreement that a portfolio is a process as well as a product, but the emphasis varies depending on the goals of the learner, the purpose of the portfolio, and the philosophy of the teacher, and institutional constraints.

Portfolios can be reviewed in an analytic or holistic fashion, that is piece by piece or as a whole. Practitioners need to consider whether individual items of work document outcomes or whether the total portfolio documents outcomes. Analytic and holistic scoring are terms used to highlight this distinction in reviewing. Analytic scoring refers to identifying individual elements which are important and determining their relative weight in the final score. Holistic scoring looks more broadly at the final product without explicitly scoring individual elements. However, it is possible that holistic scoring may weight certain elements against the whole without saying so up front. Neither is right or wrong; it's a question of how the teacher approaches assessment.

Jean Connon Unda, a trainer with the Ontario Federation of Labour's Basic Education for Skills Training (BEST) program, suggests that "an analytic approach allows us to identify some salient features of the whole for further development but we need to start with the whole and keep returning to the whole."[27]

The 1994 College Standards and Accreditation Council (CSAC) Guidelines say that assessment of learners to ensure the attainment of learning outcomes is best if based on:

- evidence collected over a period of time;
- the application of skills in a variety of contexts (e.g. classroom, lab, independent study, group work, field placements, etc., as appropriate);
- the use of a variety of activities (e.g. projects, simulations, self-assessments);
- the use of instruments which are demonstrably reliable and valid measures of the achievement of the learning outcome.

The sum total of the above assessments forms the basis for a final evaluation that, in the judgement of the learner and the assessor, the learner has indeed met the learning outcome.[28]

One question Norm Rowen of George Brown College then raises is, "What do you need for comparability for certification and at what possible cost to instructional benefits?" That is, if different scoring methods are acceptable, where is the point of comparison and how far can you go in comparing outcomes for the sake of certification without compromising an individual's learning?

Learning Activities

Outcome: Evaluate a learner's learning outcomes.

Review the sample assessment pages from the Cambrian College Ontario Basic Skills Literacy program. This is one example of how a program addresses assessment.

Describe:

1. how you would use this list with your learner(s);
2. how these questions fulfill the CSAC Guidelines;
3. how you could modify this to match the foundation level outcomes.

Read the following two case studies (one college and one community-based) and prepare a similar one for a particular learner of yours.

Be sure to include:

- learner's initial level;
- learner's goal statement;
- reference to work which documents learning;
- why that work was chosen - reflection;
- how the learner's goal and, if appropriate, foundation level outcomes have been achieved.

OBS Literacy Cambrian College Assessment

Speaking and Listening Skills	**Has demonstrated**		
Student can:			
1. give information to one person on one main topic	Yes	No	With assistance
How: _____			
2. receive information from one person on one main topic	Yes	No	With assistance
How: _____			
3. support and encourage someone in an unfamiliar situation	Yes	No	With assistance
How: _____			
4. give a short talk or presentation to small group	Yes	No	With assistance
How: _____			
5. orally summarize a story	Yes	No	With assistance
How: _____			
6. identify appropriate language for different situations	Yes	No	With assistance
How: _____			
7. explain or describe a familiar activity, place or object to help one or more people do something (fire safety, operation of equipment)	Yes	No	With assistance
How: _____			

Reading Skills

Student can:

1. recognize and respond to single words and symbols found in everyday printed materials Yes No With assistance

How: _____

2. read and respond to short, simple texts Yes No With assistance

How: _____

3. read and respond to texts containing 4 or 5 sentence paragraphs Yes No With assistance

How: _____

4. read and respond to short stories Yes No With assistance

How: _____

5. read and respond to short novels Yes No With assistance

How: _____

6. read and follow simple written directions or instructions Yes No With assistance

How: _____

7. interpret simple schedules, maps, plans and tables Yes No With assistance

How: _____

8. read and follow a number of instructions given in logical order Yes No With assistance

How: _____

9. use simple reference systems to get specific assistance information (dictionary, telephone book, postal code book)	Yes	No	With assistance

How: _____

Writing Skills

Student can:

1. fill out a simple form	Yes	No	With assistance

How: _____

2. write short letters, memos and take messages	Yes	No	With assistance

How: _____

3. write simple instructions for another person	Yes	No	With assistance

How: _____

4. write a simple paragraph about personal ideas and experiences	Yes	No	With assistance

How: _____

5. maintain a writing journal on a regular basis	Yes	No	With assistance

How: _____

Research Skills

Student can:

1. find and apply information using a variety of written texts (newspapers, résumés)	Yes	No	With assistance

How: _____

2. find and apply information using graphical texts (charts, schedules, tables)	Yes	No	With assistance

How: _____

3. find and apply information from spoken sources (radio programs, social organizations)	Yes	No	With assistance

How: _____

	Yes	No	With assistance

Editing Skills

Student can:

1. edit short simple texts	Yes	No	With assistance

How: _____

CASE STUDIES **A PROFILE OF JANE**

Community-based literacy program

Personal information

43 years old
Married with 3 children
Homemaker and helps husband run the dairy farm
One of 9 children
Learns slowly and with difficulty
Did not finish elementary school
Stayed home to help family
Does not read or write at home
Knows some alphabet letters and some letter sounds

Learning goals

To read for shopping
To read mail
To look up telephone numbers
To fill out forms for record keeping for dairy business

Interest and hobbies

The farm
Her children
Animals
Cooking
Crafts

Work chosen to document learning

- Work began with review of the alphabet letters and sounds Jane knew. Other alphabet letters and sounds were added each week as appropriate. A running record was kept of the letters and sounds learned and kept in Jane's portfolio.
- A sight list of words and symbols Jane already knew was devised. These were put in the portfolio and reviewed frequently.
- Each week Jane and her tutor would make new word lists. Appropriate symbols and signs were also included. These word lists included names of Jane's

family, names of the farm animals, and other words concerned with the farm and the dairy business.

- Jane brought in forms she had to fill out for the business. When Jane felt comfortable filling these in, samples were put in her portfolio.
- An easy-read book with lots of pictures about dairy farms was found in the library. As Jane learned more sight words, she was able to read parts of the book. When she could read a section well, it was copied and put into her portfolio. The tutor added comments about her reading, indicating how well she read the story and what aspects were giving her problems (for example the "ed" ending). Problems encountered led to new lesson plans. For example a list of verbs was devised and the "ed" ending added to each. Flashcards were made of the root words, and another set with the "ed" ending. These were used in matching games. When Jane learned the words, she put them in her portfolio.
- The tutor noted that following pictorial and written instructions were two demonstrations of the Level I learning outcomes. The tutor found a pictorial recipe book. She helped Jane make two recipes from the book. When this was documented by the tutor, Jane put it in her portfolio.
- Based on Jane's information, the tutor wrote out some simple steps to follow concerning tasks required in the dairy business. When Jane could read and understand these instructions, Jane inserted them in her portfolio.
- As Jane became more familiar with the alphabet, she devised a list of her family and friends and Jane learned to look up their numbers in the telephone book. She put this list in her portfolio.
- Jane and her tutor would work together to make up shopping lists. They also spent time reading flyers and comparing prices.

- Jane would also bring in her mail to have her tutor help her read it.
- Much time was spent each lesson talking about the farm and the dairy business as well as events which occurred in Jane's life. When looking over the foundation level outcomes, the tutor realized that much of this related to the Speak and Listen Effectively Level I learning outcome. They began to document these discussions and insert them in the portfolio as demonstrations.

Reflection All work put in Jane's portfolio was chosen by Jane. If Jane did not feel comfortable about putting it in the portfolio, it was not included. Since Jane's writing skills were very poor at this time, all comments were written by the tutor with Jane's input. The tutor would ask Jane why she would like to put a particular piece of work in her portfolio and her comments were written down by her tutor. Any comments the tutor would like to make were discussed with Jane and added only with her permission.

How the learner's goals were achieved

- By using Jane's initial goals and interests as a guideline for instruction, her goals were slowly being met.
- Jane was able at the end of six months to read short easy passages, write and read simple shopping lists, family names and fill in some forms for the farm.
- She could find some phone numbers in the book and read parts of her mail. Progress was being made, although she still had a long way to go.

Foundation Level Outcomes achieved When compared to the foundation level outcomes, it was clear that demonstrations existed for the Level I Communications outcomes. These included:

1. Read with understanding for various purposes

- Read words
- Read signs
- Follow pictorial instructions
- Follow written instructions
- Read to find information (phone book)
- Describe types of text
- Read a short text
- Read and retell

2. Speak and listen effectively

- Listen and retell
- Converse
- Provide simple information
- Obtain information
- Follow verbal instructions
- Respond to questions and directions

3. Write clearly to express ideas

- Write words
- Complete forms

4. Research and use information (looking up phone numbers, finding recipes)

- Identify information needs
- Identify useful information
- Report orally

Jane and her tutor were surprised to find that the work they had done which all related to Jane's personal goals and interests had also led to demonstrations towards the Level I foundation outcomes. As they reviewed the outcomes together, they planned to work on other things which could be used for outcome demonstrations. They realized that more time needed to be spent on writing in particular.

College - OBS Level 1 (Literacy)

A PROFILE OF JAMIE

Jamie, a single male in his early twenties on social assistance, was referred to the OBS Level 1 Literacy Program for a more detailed assessment after writing the initial college upgrading assessment intake test. He had completed Grade 12 Basic six years before, but felt that his general educational skills needed improvement. This was his first attempt to upgrade.

His long-term goals involved completing OBS Level 4 and getting "a good job." He was confident that he was able to handle all of the personal reading and writing goals listed on the program's goal sheet. His personal writing sample, however, indicated a weak ability in paragraph development. His writing sample was really just a short listing of activities and events with little or no description, and he had difficulty recognizing sentences. Jamie's spelling was accurate, however, and he showed some understanding of basic punctuation and capitalization. Jamie was very eager to move to OBS Level 2, but needed to demonstrate he could write a simple paragraph about personal ideas and experiences. This is one of the foundation Level III outcomes - Write clearly to express ideas.

Jamie and his instructor had reviewed the learning outcomes together so Jamie realized he had to learn much more about the writing process including recognizing and using correct sentence structure. This was reinforced by an OBS Level 2 English instructor whom his instructor had asked to review his work. Jamie also asked his instructor to do a readability check of one of his paragraphs.

Although Jamie took part in many group discussions and activities, his efforts were focused clearly on writing and the elements of grammar that would assist him with this. His writing centered on personal interests and activities that happened during class: for example, the marriage of

one of his classmates. In a matter of months, Jamie's work improved significantly. He learned about ideas mapping, the 5 W's, using adjectives and details to expand thoughts, revising, and basic editing. He performed very well on a variety of sentence recognition exercises, always trying to transfer that knowledge to his writing. Jamie reflected on and tracked his progress by keeping samples of his work in his portfolio. One of his later writing assignments was 29 lines long, compared to his first at six. Jamie and his instructor also met formally on a one-to-one basis to review his work for the month and do a program evaluation. This helped him reflect further on his progress and focus on new goals and challenges. Since then, his instructor has developed a list of eight questions to help guide this process.

In four months Jamie made tremendous strides in writing and was able to demonstrate the desired learning outcome (Write clearly to express ideas). Based on this demonstration and a more general test to determine his readiness for OBS Level 2, Jamie was accepted in OBS Level 2 where he is currently doing very well.

Unit III:
Factors affecting the use of portfolios

Learning outcomes

In this unit you will interpret the match between your philosophy of literacy education and your use of portfolios. You will also define some issues concerning the use of portfolios

1. Match your philosophy of literacy education to your approach to portfolio development.
2. Identify the pros and cons of portfolio development.

Key terms

Accountability Framework
Core Quality Standards
constraints

Unit III:
Factors affecting the use of portfolios

Philosophical match

The marriage between portfolio development and adult literacy programming appears to be a good one, given the current emphasis on accountability, outcome-based education and alternative assessment. Portfolios reflect the Core Quality Standards and respond to the systemwide objectives for the adult literacy education system in Ontario.

Hanna Arlene Fingeret of Literacy South in Durham, North Carolina, believes that to be effective, using portfolios for assessment must match a program's philosophy. She writes,

Portfolio assessment is most congruent with whole language, learner centered and participatory approaches to instruction. It assumes a concern with literacy tasks and practices, and an emphasis on meaning. Portfolio assessment is most effective for examining individual and group development of literacy practices, and for ongoing instructional and curriculum decisions. It should be only one part of a larger, multifaceted assessment and evaluation process.[29]

If this is the case, programs must examine their philosophies and practices to be consistent with portfolio assessment. It is not enough just to collect materials in a folder and call it a portfolio or to list discrete skills and call them outcomes.

As Spady and Marshall write, "Transformational OBE [outcome-based education] has its roots in the future-scanning procedures found in well-designed strategic planning and design models."[30] So too, literacy practitioners in Ontario should refer to the Accountability Framework and Core Quality Standards for adult literacy education as a strategic plan if portfolio development is to be implemented in an effective and holistic way.

Learning Activity

Outcome: Match your philosophy of literacy education to your approach to portfolio development.

Review the quote by Hanna Arlene Fingeret.

Answer the following questions:

1. What is your approach to literacy education?
2. How will this be reflected in your own portfolio and in the portfolio development of your learners?
3. How similar do you think portfolios should be to one another?

Tips for group facilitators: Discuss these questions as a group, noting different ideas for approaches and their relationship to portfolio development.

Read the following *Quality Standards for adult Literacy* definition of literary education:

Literacy Education is part of a process or cycle of lifelong learning, based on life experience, shared knowledge, and decision-making by learners supported by their instructors. Literacy education contributes to the development of self-knowledge and critical thinking skills. In turn, this development empowers individuals and communities.[3]

Describe:

1. how this definition matches your own or your program's definition;
2. how this will be reflected in the portfolio style you choose;
3. how you think an individual learner in your program would respond to your definition.

Issues concerning the use of portfolios

- **Time** Adult literacy practitioners who are currently using portfolios with their learners have expressed concerns about the amount of time required to meet individually with learners to assess the work to be included in a portfolio. Coordinators of volunteer literacy programs wonder how much training time (for learning about portfolio development) can realistically be expected of volunteers.
- **Physical space** Space and privacy issues were mentioned in terms of where portfolios will actually be stored.
- **Administrative support** Practitioners also ask, "What kind of administrative support and program intake procedures are necessary for an effective portfolio process to occur?"

Other factors to consider in your program include:

- Counselling support - personal support needs may arise as goals are identified.
- Registration - whether learners enrol any time or at specified times may affect how a practitioner supports portfolio development.
- Class size - One-to-one or small-group instruction will affect how a practitioner works with learners who are developing portfolios.

We can learn more about the challenges of using portfolios by looking at their use in the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) system in Ontario's Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology. PLA "is the evaluation of learning gained outside the college system for awarding of college credit" mandated by the PLA Secretariat between 1993 and 1996. During these first three years, the PLA system focused on portfolio development and challenge processes.[32] By June 1996, all colleges must have the ability to implement PLA for up to 75 per cent of course credits.

The following list was adapted by the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Secretariat for a presentation at St. Lawrence College.[33] Brent Sargent of Vermont State College is the original author.

Pros and Cons of Prior Learning Assessment

Advantages:

- Extremely learner-centered
- Enables the development of attributes, skills, and understandings beyond simple assessment
- Prepares learners for college level learning
- Allows learners to present knowledge from their unique perspective
- Enables learners to organize and articulate knowledge derived from a variety of learning experiences
- Enables a variety of subject areas to be assessed at their own convenience
- Minimizes evaluator bias
- Allows faculty to perform the assessment at their own convenience
- Accommodates diverse backgrounds and learning styles
- Contributes to the learning process

Disadvantages

- Team approach expensive process for an institution
- Dependent upon writing skills of learner
- Is biased toward articulate writers
- Requires individualization
- Requires significant advance preparation of learners and faculty
- Demands extensive training or experience in PLA
- Time consuming for learner

For portfolio development to be effective in a literacy program, it is important that we don't reduce the goals of literacy education to a set of isolated skills. A quote reportedly posted on Albert Einstein's office wall expresses the same idea: "Not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts."

Not all practitioners will have the time to complete training in how to do portfolio development but they can learn to follow the minimum expectations of setting up a portfolio with a learner. A lead tutor or program coordinator may do an initial assessment and take responsibility for matching learner goals to foundation level outcomes if recognition is desired.

Volunteer tutors and part-time teachers have a valuable role in working with a learner in developing a portfolio whether or not they play a role in its assessment or evaluation. The development of a portfolio reflects an attitude about learning which may benefit the learner as well as the practitioner. It doesn't have to represent an added-on responsibility; rather, it may be a new way of "doing business."

Regularly scheduled "conferences" between the practitioner and the learner to check progress on short-term goals in the context of a learner's long-term goal or recognition of foundation level outcomes don't have to be added to regular lesson time. Instead, they may take the place of lesson time periodically, or perhaps be done by a lead tutor or program coordinator. This is a good way of noting progress and checking to see whether the original goals still make sense or whether they need adjustment.

Conclusion

If we retain the standards and outcomes set out for literacy education and honour the basic principles of portfolio development - holistic, confidential, participatory, self-reflective and learner-centred - portfolios can be a powerful way to document learning in adult literacy programs. It is rarely possible to meet the ideals, but they serve as principles to strive for. As more practitioners, learners and programs participate in the portfolio development process, perhaps it will seem less foreign and the necessary supports will follow.

One of the Principles for Quality Teaching defined by a taskgroup in Australia is particularly appropriate for the current state of portfolio development in adult literacy programs in Ontario:

The practice of teaching is a complex and creative process and should be influenced by ongoing critical reflection and informed by research and practice.[34]

Now is the time to research, practice, reflect, and respond to the concepts of outcome-based education and portfolio development. I hope this manual is a starting point.

Learning Activities

Outcome: Identify the pros and cons of portfolio development.

The "Advantages/Disadvantages" list is clearly written from the perspective of a college PLA system where a learner's portfolio is used to document college-level learning for college credits.

Answer the following questions:

1. Which of the items listed are similar or different from items in a list you could write for your program?

2. How could you mitigate the disadvantages?

3. What other advantages and disadvantages can you think of? What ideas do you have for dealing with these factors?

Tips for group facilitators: If the participants in your group come from different delivery sectors, discuss the considerations and recommendations for doing portfolio development in each sector. For example, how much time would a learner have in a classroom versus a one-to-one weekly situation? If workshop participants come from one delivery sector, discuss ways to work out the listed concerns.

Unit IV: Appendix

1. Some contacts for finding adult literacy programs in Ontario which are currently using portfolios.

2. Works Consulted

3. Supplementary Readings

4. Endnotes

Unit IV: Appendix

Some contacts for finding adult literacy programs in Ontario which are currently using portfolios

Adult Basic Education Association of Hamilton-Wentworth (ABE), Hamilton: (905) 527-2222

Literacy Network of Durham Region, Oshawa: (905) 725-4786

Halton Adult Learning Network (HALN), Milton: (905) 875-3851

The Literacy Alliance of North Bay, North Bay: (705) 476-8588

Literacy Link Eastern Ontario (LLEO), Kingston: (613) 389-5307

Literacy Link Niagara, St. Catharines: (905) 682-2222

Literacy Northwest, Dryden: (807) 937-6033

Literacy Ontario Central South (LOCS), Peterborough: (705) 749-0777

London Literacy Network, London: (519) 661-5182

Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy, Toronto: (416) 961-4013

Northeastern Ontario Literacy Network (NEON), Sault Ste. Marie: (705) 945-0811

Ottawa-Carleton Coalition for Literacy, Ottawa: (613) 233-4545

Peel Adult Learning Network (PALN), Mississauga: (905) 507-9834

Project Read Literacy Network, Waterloo: (519) 884-1318

Queensbush Initiatives for Literacy and Learning (QUILL) Network, Walkerton: (519) 881-4655

Simcoe County Literacy Network, Barrie: (705) 734-2543

Sudbury Literacy Network Sudbury: (705) 734-1499

Southwestern Ontario Adult Literacy Network (SOALN), Strathroy: (519) 246-1577

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