

# TRAILS TO LITERACY AROUND THE PROVINCE

Positive Pathways To A Brighter Future



## Report Manual & Toolkit

*September 2002*

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We also wish to remind our many **community partners** that we appreciate their ongoing support, without which all of our programs - including 'Trails to Literacy' - would not be possible.

To obtain additional copies, or for more information about 'Trails to Literacy',  
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# Introduction







# *Trails to Literacy: INTRODUCTION*

## Preface

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This report is developed to assist literacy agencies and their partners in developing a *Trails to Literacy* project. *Trails* is a 'participatory' learning concept developed to link learner-driven literacy upgrading with community marketing.

We will start by giving you some background on our original project at North Frontenac Literacy Program in Sharbot Lake. However, we recommend that you read our full report of this project, written in August 2001.

Next, we will run through the various stages that make up this type of project: **Vision, Action and Evaluation**. The Vision section covers **Goals, Concept, Benefits and Recruiting**. In the Action phase, we take a little time out for some theory on **Authentic, Collaborative and Participatory Learning**. Then we will move on to the activities that the various **Pilot Projects** carried out or plan to carry out. Of course, no project can carry on without the **Evaluation**. In a *Trails* project, practitioners and learners take part at various levels. The original goals, benefits and concepts need to be evaluated, as well as the activities and direction of the participants. Beyond this, the learning also has to be evaluated for the group and all individuals.

We will discuss the challenges and hopes for the future for *Trails to Literacy* and show you how to get in touch with a program. Oh dear, we can't keep a secret - check out [www.trailstoliteracy.com](http://www.trailstoliteracy.com)

Finally, we offer a variety of suggested activities and sample forms that may help you in your *Trails* effort.

We hope that you enjoy our report and that you will consider joining *Trails to Literacy, Positive Pathways to a Brighter Future*.



# *Trails to Literacy: INTRODUCTION*

## Original Project

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In 2000 - 2001 the North Frontenac Literacy Program (NFLP) piloted a new and very successful approach to literacy and basic skills (LBS) training ..... ' *Trails to Literacy*'. The intent of this project was to develop a literacy marketing strategy in conjunction with participatory, hands-on, outcome-based learning.

*Trails to Literacy* is a client/community driven program. It partners community interest groups and volunteers with program staff and learners, doing activities that are based upon individual interest streams and goals. They include: clerical, administrative, environmental, public relations/marketing, fundraising, bookkeeping, historical, carpentry, computers, outdoor maintenance, etc.

The participants involved in the planning, research, writing, production and construction not only gain new literacy and basic skills but, perhaps even more significantly, they develop self-confidence and enthusiasm for learning. In our pilot project this contributed to a 43% employment rate at exit.

*Trails to Literacy* is transferable almost anywhere. It is a pathway to skills attainment, a way to market literacy while still doing what we do best - facilitate learning. A trail can be: a cultural or multi-cultural study; a historic walk; a waterfront beautification project; a path of native healing; the creation of community gardens; the ecological rehabilitation of a body of water or significant land area; a path of sound, touch and scent for the blind; starting a clothing depot; or interpreting an outdoor conservation area. The possibilities are endless. It is participatory learning linked to individual communities.

"Trails to Literacy" has been such a positive influence in my life. It started me on the road to employment, after five years of welfare. Today, after one year of employment at Startek I have been promoted, and have started my new position.

Ray Fletcher, participant in the initial pilot group and current Board of Directors volunteer.





# *Trails to Literacy: INTRODUCTION*

## **Trails Around the Province**

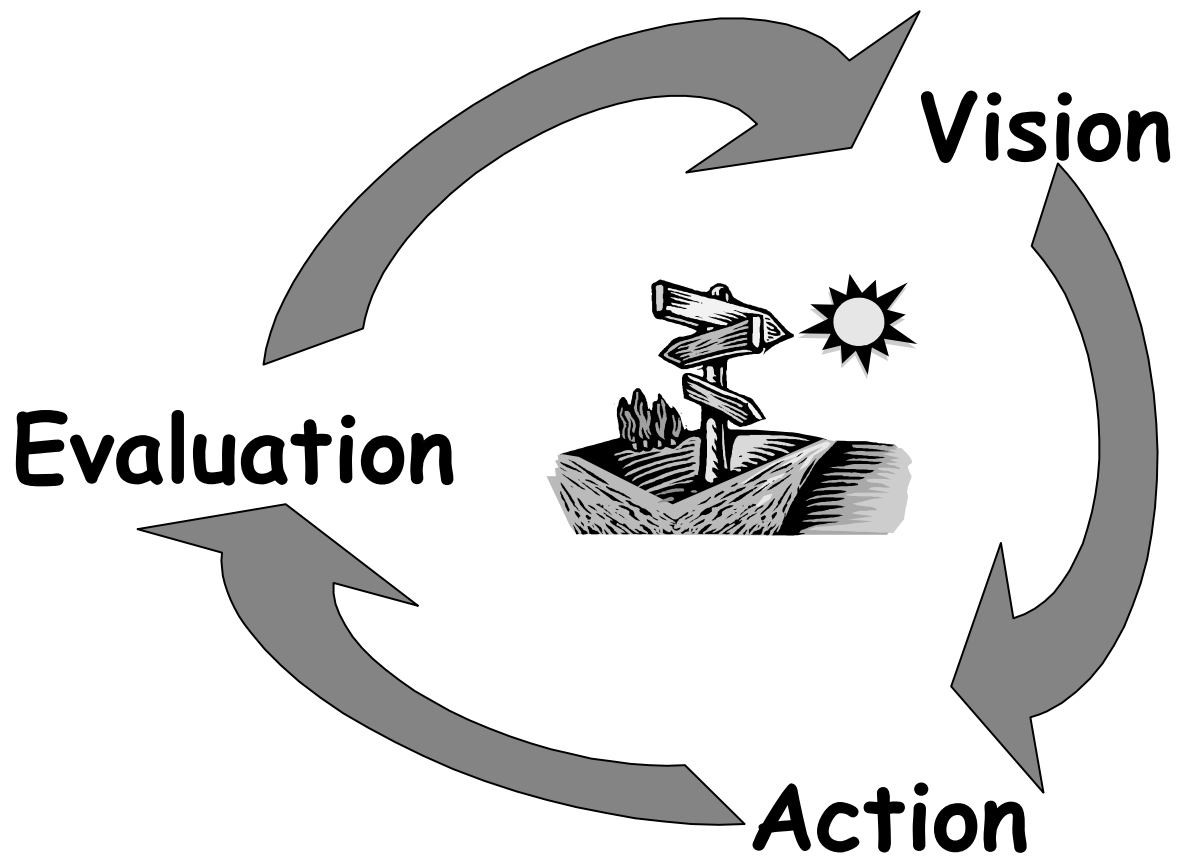
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*Trails to Literacy Around the Province* is an expansion of our original project. Through further NLS funding (to August 2002), the original project was promoted to other literacy agencies and organizations across the province. Continuation from the original project into the second phase ensured that the momentum was not lost and the marketing aspect was improved with increased acceptance of literacy and wider public awareness. Through the Internet, workshops, coaching (on and off-line) and networking, NLS funding was used to:

1. Share the experience and knowledge gained of what is most effective in the development of such a project.
2. Develop a manual, useful to a variety of agencies.
3. Provide a series of examples that show how initiatives within various communities can be fostered to establish productive working possibilities between LBS programs and the public.
4. Provide a website and database of 'Trails to Literacy' projects and activities
5. Seek province-wide sponsorship and partners.
6. Establish a provincial steering committee.
7. Reinforce the relationship with various trail groups, etc, to a provincial level to build upon the partnerships, research and development, started by NFLP and other agencies.
8. Build on the partnerships with Ontario Works throughout the province to increase referrals of learners and boost opportunities through various communities.



# Project Phases



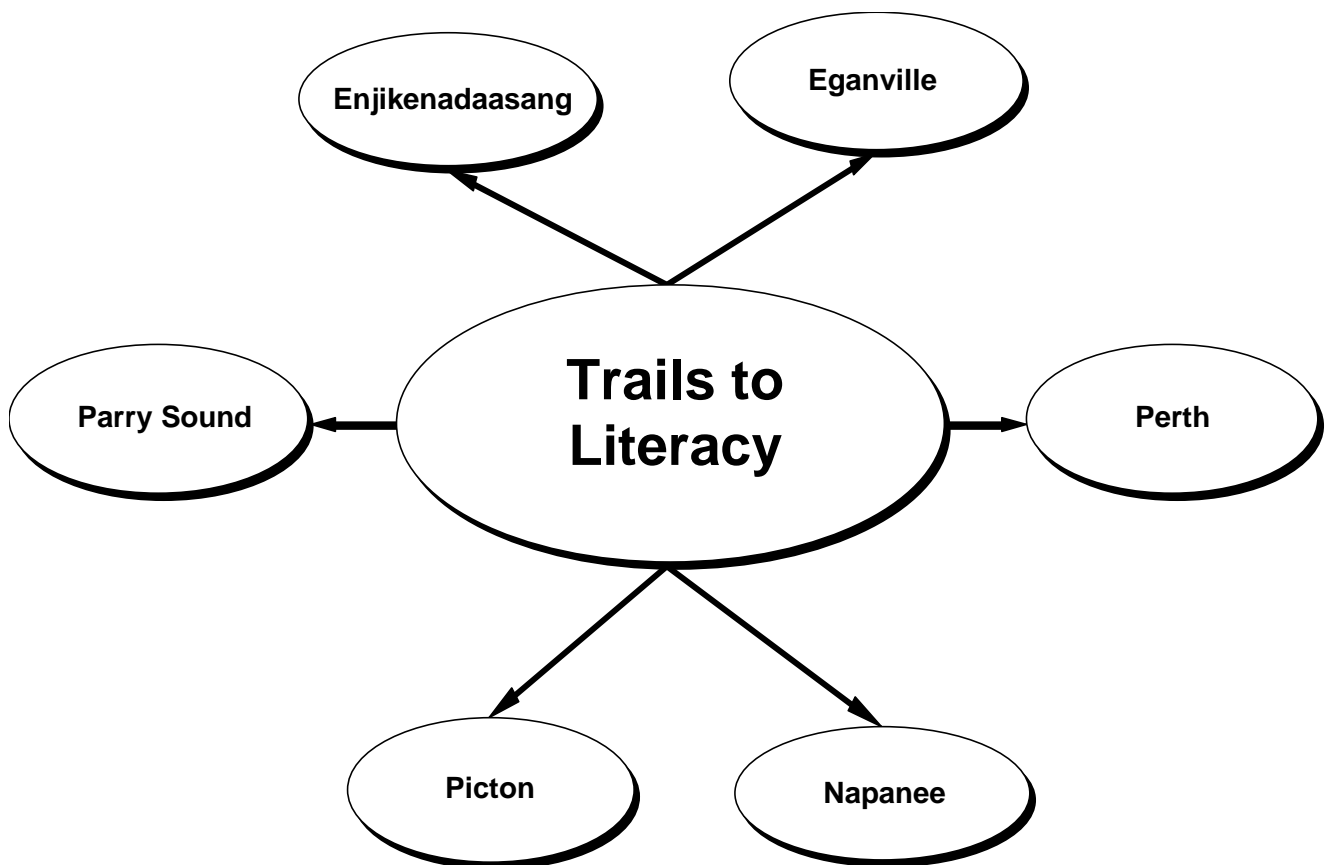




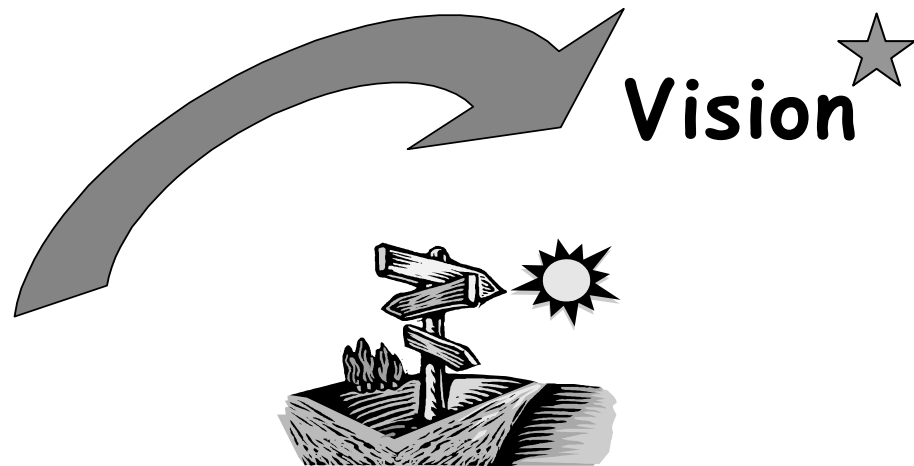
## *Trails to Literacy: PHASES*

The implementation of a *Trails to Literacy* project in any area of the province or country, no matter how diverse or unique each one might be, will have similar aspects, overall.

We have found that these aspects divide themselves into three distinct phases: vision, action and evaluation.



# Phase 1



The staff, board and volunteers of the agency initiate the "visioning" process. The vision is the rough idea or concept that the project will be built upon. It is developed within the community context to meet the perceived needs of the learner participants and the agency.

During the visioning phase there are several facets that need to be addressed:

- Defining goals
- Envisioning a concept
- Deciding "Who benefits and how?"
- Developing a recruiting plan



# Trails to Literacy: PHASES

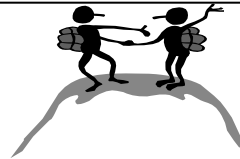
## Phase 1 Vision - Defining Goals

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The definition of a set of goals at the onset is essential to the success of any project. It provides a benchmark for the direction a project takes, ensuring that those involved stay focused on the original target.

We see the following goals as uniform for all *Trails* projects.

### Goals



- Enhance partnerships
- Show benefits of applied learning and placements
- Encourage skills development
- Inspire desire to upgrade
- Learn in context of community
- Increase employability
- Build self-confidence and pride in accomplishment



# Trails to Literacy: PHASES

## Phase 1 Vision - Who Benefits & How?

It is important to decide what benefits your project will provide:

- To participants
- To the community
- To partners
- To the literacy agency/field

Articulating the benefits will ensure a "buy in" from the needed participants and partners. The following includes example slides of the Sharbot Lake project's planned benefits.

### THE PARTICIPANTS:

The attainment of better academic, communications, teamwork and research skills benefits an individual throughout his/her entire life, both privately and within a work environment.

Working with a project such as *Trails to Literacy* provides a participant with a wider perspective of community development. By becoming involved with various district groups and their projects, participants can get an overview of the needs and opportunities within their region. They may also come to an awareness of the need of further upgrading to improve their employment outlook.



### Benefits To the Participants

- Better academic, communications, teamwork and research skills
- Perspective on community development
- Networking opportunities
- Real-life work experience
- Pride in accomplishment





Having first-hand experience with the internal workings of a project promotes a sense of connection and active membership within the community. While participants are involved in a *Trails* project, they have the chance to build networking opportunities that may help gain future employment.

Gaining real-life work experience reinforces any theory or traditional classroom style learning by actively demonstrating the practical application of a subject in an everyday type of work environment. It can also provide references for future job applications.

Pride in accomplishment grows with the degree of involvement. The more involved participants become, the more they tend to take on the ownership of a project. The successful completion of their undertaking creates fertile ground for the growth and blossoming of self-esteem.

### THE COMMUNITY:

Each community benefits in a different way, as each project is geared to the unique circumstances and resources of the area.

## Benefits

### To the Community

- More enjoyable trails
- Increased tourism
- Stimulate economy /more work
- Use of trails promotes health
- Knowledge of local history and environment

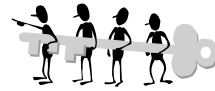


Some areas might enjoy increased tourism; a better understanding of culture or history may be built elsewhere; environmental improvements may be provided to some areas; others could profit from the promotion of health.

The wide variety of skills developed, through the 'participatory' nature of this project, leads to a better-prepared workforce. This results in a benefit to the whole community.

**THE PARTNERS**

Working closely in partnership with other organizations in the community is an opportunity, a marketing advantage and a benefit to the literacy agency and its partners. A community-based project provides the chance to establish new links, or to build upon established connections, to organizations that can provide learner referrals, volunteers, community placements, and expertise. All of these are needed in order to provide a quality literacy program.

**Benefits****To The Partners**

- Opportunity to work together
- New or improved relations
- Visible to community
- Positive image - benefits many
- Increased numbers (in & out)

However, there are advantages to the other partners as well. Many agencies in our communities are looking for organizations like ours to provide services or positions for their clients. Many special interest groups exist only to share their interest and increase public awareness. Partnering with a *Trails to Literacy* project increases their exposure and possibly provides a workforce for *their* projects.

Our experience has shown that we are welcomed with open arms in these partnering schemes. Of course, it is well worth your while to consider and lay out the advantages that partnering with your *Trails* project will offer them.

**THE LITERACY AGENCY AND LITERACY FIELD:**

The development and positive outcome of this project has produced a literacy-marketing tool that promotes literacy and its benefits to the community: referral agencies, clients, employers and volunteers. It shows the true value of outcome-based real-life learning, not only to the participants but also to potential employers.

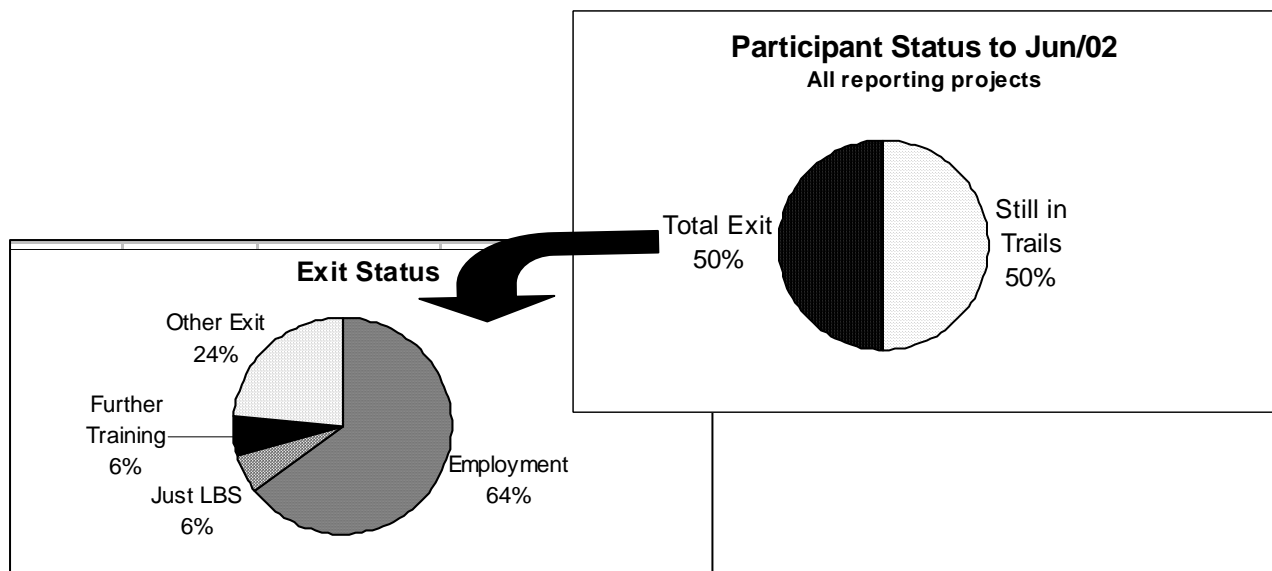
Having participants and partners actively working together within projects that enhance or develop new community ventures make not only the project, but all those involved, highly visible in a positive way to the community at large.

### Benefits To Literacy

- Marketing tool:
  - To community
  - Referral agencies
  - Clients
  - Employers
  - Volunteers
- Shows value of outcome based real-life learning
- Beneficial to community
- Highly visual



**Trails to Literacy leads to higher retention rates within the projects. Fewer learners leave. Those that do exit have met their goals. The following is a graphical representation based on the numbers reported by pilot sites.**





## *Trails to Literacy: PHASES*

### **Phase 1 Vision - Concept**

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Of course, you will need a "platform" to build your project upon. This will be unique to each community and may change over time to suit the needs of the agency, participants and partners in producing a *'Positive Pathway to a Brighter Future'*. The concept must allow you to achieve the goals and benefits that you have set out for the project; it should have a clear marketing potential; and it ought to spark an interest with potential participants, volunteers and partners.

Use your imagination and your community's resources! Some of the pilot 'trails' involved:

- Improving an actual physical trail and interpreting its surrounding plants, animals and/or history;
- Workshops involving native heritage-ceremonies, crafts, healing, etc.;
- Working with a local museum to provide a plain language brochure for *all* members of a community, even those with low literacy skills; or
- Becoming involved with a local conservation committee to promote a better environment.

Considering "what learning opportunities and ways there are to demonstrate skills through concrete, hands-on activities" is a key factor when investigating your concept. Will there be a wide enough scope to provide for a range of goals, interests and learning levels? Will there be various streams of learning such as research, writing, clerical, administrative, public relations, fundraising, historical, carpentry (or other trades), computer, environmental, tutoring, etc.?

One of my employees has graduated from the Trails program and has found it made a tremendous difference in his life. *Trails to Literacy* also adds to the infrastructure of the community, in our case improving the Trans Canada Trail, which improves life for the residents and tourists alike. This program is definitely an asset to the community."

Mayor Bill MacDonald



# Trails to Literacy: PHASES

## Phase 1 Vision - Recruiting

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In order to accomplish the goals, benefits and the concept of your vision you will need to get many people and organizations to "buy into" your *Trails* project. Deciding the minimum support needed to ensure the success of your plan and establishing a recruiting plan are essential steps in the visioning process.

Each *Trails* project will have its own needs and will therefore need to develop a specialized plan for recruitment, however, we offer the following advice:



### PARTNERSHIPS

Build partnerships with other agencies to promote and develop not only the project but also further the goals of each individual partner.

Since an integral purpose of a *Trails* project is the marketing of literacy through improved public relations, starting or enhancing partnerships within the community is essential. Connecting and planning with other agencies and special interest groups for a common purpose builds strong links. These partnerships: increase the community focus; supply local expertise (often free of cost); establish networking links for our clients; and provide needed volunteers. These connections, in turn, promote a wider range of association between the literacy agency and the community at large.

**LEARNERS**

Promote the project to learners already involved with your agency. Potential learners might also find this method of learning more appealing than the traditional classroom setting. The learners will need to see how the activities in the *Trails* project will provide learning opportunities, reinforce their other literacy/numeracy activities and demonstrate their learned skills. They should also understand how it fits into their overall learning plans and goals. The appeal of 'doing something for someone else' is also a good drawing card.

"My real life working experiences at Trails to Literacy really helps me with my work at the theatre where I work. I am fixing chairs and stuff and I know how to use wood and wood related tools. I've learned how to work with wood at the Trails workshop. Plus it gives me great experience with home projects and helping friends by giving them birdhouses. I enjoy being at the workshop."

Ricc McVicker,  
Trails participant

**STAFF**

Encourage existing staff to be involved and enthusiastic, as their assistance and support is necessary to a successful project.

Coordination amongst the staff is important. Adequate discussion, providing a clear outline of needs and expectations, ensures a smooth working relationship between staff and participants (and even staff and staff!). The necessity of keeping tutors/instructors 'up to speed' on the activities, the individual's progress and any supports needed cannot be understated. It enables the learning started within the *Trails to Literacy* project to be carried over into the other delivery options within the literacy agency. This proved to be an important part of coordinating and promoting a common theme on their training plan and learning development.

" I enjoy my time at the workshop. There are times when I am working in the office at the computer and listen to the conversations of the participants as they are problem solving through a building project. They have become a real team, and listen to everyone's ideas. I also like when I can ask a student to teach me to use one of the tools I haven't used before, especially when I know that 3 months ago that student would not have been able to do that."

- Lori Farrington  
Project Coordinator

## PLACEMENTS

Advocate the participation of placements in the project, especially through benefit providers such as Ontario Works (social services provider), Ontario Disability Support, Workers Safety and Insurance Board, private insurers, Employment Insurance, etc. Work placements encourage a broader scope of workforce-type training for the individual. Many referring partners appreciate placement opportunities as a way for their clients to gain employment skills that are not provided in most 'school-based' learning formats.

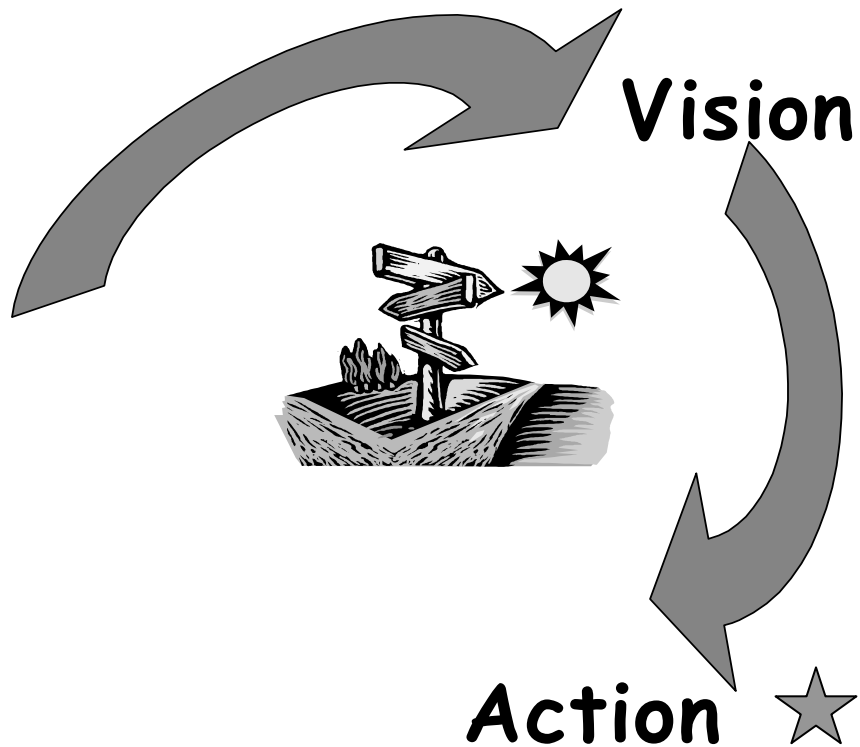
People on placement may take on purely volunteer-type activities such as tutoring, carpentry supervisor or administration. They may also concurrently be active literacy/numeracy learners.

## VOLUNTEERS

Gaining a strong volunteer base ensures a continuity that is positive for any project. Contact local community groups and individuals to promote the idea of your *Trail to Literacy* and its benefits. Consider beforehand how your project ties in with their needs and objectives. What will be the benefits to them? The opportunity for individuals to share their 'passion' or to volunteer their talents and experience is a satisfying option for many.



## Phase 2



Once the visioning phase has been completed and the participants are present, it is time to move on to a course of action. During this 'participatory' phase, the participants start, from the very beginning, to take control of the ideas, plans and activities.





# Trails to Literacy: PHASES

## Phase 2 Action-Time Out for a Little Theory

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One fundamental part of any *Trails to Literacy* project is its learner-centred approach. It is important to design a literacy program that is practical, useful and relevant to the participant(s). When doing research into the theory of learner-centred approaches we come across a number of learning deliveries which are relative to *Trails* projects: Collaborative, Authentic, Participatory, Intentional, Generative, Contextual, etc. Some of these overlap in their philosophy and some, in their truest state, would not be applicable, yet all have value to consider. Perhaps the most unique to *Trails* are the first four Collaborative, Authentic and Participatory and Intentional.

Rich Environments for Active Learning include the following characteristics:

- [Authentic Learning](#) occurs when students learn through participating in activities that solve real life problems or create products that have real life purposes.
- [Collaborative Learning](#) requires students and instructors to work together to complete a task, accomplish a goal, and reach a shared objective.
- [Generative Learning](#) occurs when students are given an open-ended problem and are asked to identify sub-problems, create theories to solve the sub-problems, and test and refine their theories.
- [Intentional Learning](#) allows students to establish their own goals and the strategies to achieve their goals.
- [Reflection](#) requires introspection and interpretation of what is learned as well as the learning process.

-Kendra Gollihar  
(<http://www.gollihar.com/real/real/collaborative.htm>)

**COLLABORATIVE LEARNING**

During the intake process, when clients are asked 'How do you learn?', the answers given show that most of them perceive learning as being something that is teacher led, with little mention of independence. In many cases this previous 'teacher led' learning was not a positive experience.

CL is a philosophy: working together, building together, learning together, changing together, improving together.

- Scott  
(<http://www.collaborativelearning.org>)

In traditional classrooms the teacher provides the knowledge to the student. The collaborative style depends on shared knowledge amongst the group. The instructor still has information about content, skills, and instruction. However, equally important are the knowledge and skills that the participants bring to the learning

**A list of different kinds of thinking demands**

Classifying, Comparing, Contrasting, Defining, Describing, Estimating, Evaluating, Explaining, Formulating hypotheses, Generalizing, Inferring, Interpreting data, Judging, Justifying opinions, Labelling Measuring, Noting a process, Ordering chronologically, Ordering spatially, Predicting, Problem solving, Rank ordering, Recommending, Testing hypotheses, Understanding and applying cause and effect, Understanding and applying rules and strategies.

**Scott**  
(<http://www.collaborativelearning.org>)

situation. Also, in traditional classrooms, the teacher is responsible for setting goals, designing learning tasks, and assessing what is learned. Collaborative instruction differs by inviting students to set their own goals, decide on activities that suit their interests, and encourage them in self-assessment.

The collaborative process encourages the sharing of knowledge, strategies and decision-making. The ideas and life experience of all participants are important to achieve the teamwork, motivated learning and respect for self and others. Everyone learns from everyone else, everyone has an opportunity to make contributions.

Lower level learners learn from those farther up the matrix, but, more importantly, the 'brighter' participants have just as much to learn from their more average peers.

Instructors ensure that participants treat each other respectfully, focusing on communication skills and levels of understanding. They help students listen to and express opinions; support opinions with evidence; and use both creative and critical thinking.

Collaborative learning demands a lot from every participant. It requires and develops social skills. It is necessary to take some time to help the participants, as a whole group and as individuals, to acquire the team, communication, and conflict resolution skills necessary for group activities. Some participants will take longer than others to pick up and master these skills, but they are skills that they may carry with them into their social and working lives, so it is well worth the time. (See suggested learning activities in appendices)

### **AUTHENTIC LEARNING**

Authentic learning involves 'learning by doing' activities that solve real life problems or create products that have real life purposes. Because authentic learning activities deal with real life situations and questions they have more meaning than more traditional ways of learning.

In authentic learning, the student does an activity not for the sole purpose of learning about something, but rather, for the sake of achieving a real goal. Thus, the products of authentic learning, as well as the process, can be shared with others outside the classroom.

(Kendra Gollihar (<http://www.gollihar.com/reals>

***Skill to do comes of doing.***  
**- Ralph Waldo Emerson**

The rationale for stressing authentic learning activities is threefold: It encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning and increases the relevance of that learning; it develops deeper and richer knowledge structures, facilitating knowledge transfer; and it encourages collaboration and negotiation ([Grabinger, 1996](#)).

## PARTICIPATORY LEARNING

Collaborative Learning and Authentic Learning are both encompassed in the Participatory style. To this combination is added empowerment of the participants. The participants govern their group and become activists on its behalf. The group is formed to serve a need in their community and to learn in the context of the community.

The authoritative, knowledge- owning position of teacher or instructor changes to that of a facilitator. The learners are not passive recipients of assistance. Staff and volunteers must work side by side with them, building up their confidence in their own abilities and promoting their self-reliance. Essentially, the facilitator, has three basic roles:

- **Group advisor** - strengthening the participants' leadership, teamwork and planning skills.
- **Participatory trainer** -providing group members with basic technical, literacy and problem-solving skills.
- **"Link person"** - to the literacy agency, staff, funding sources, etc.

The facilitator's task is to help group members become *self-reliant*, i.e. able to manage planning and activities on their own. In the ideal participatory learning model the facilitator's role will move from initiating and leading to guiding and assisting, and finally to advising. Initiating and leading, however, does not mean 'teaching' - and even less dictating. The participants have a lot of knowledge and expertise. It is your task to help them: a) realize the hidden potential of their knowledge and expertise; b) find ways to expand their learning skills; and c) develop the confidence to decide and do things on their own.

### Why Participatory Literacy? Reasons for Designing a Custom Programme for Each Community

If you devise your own methods and your own content, based upon local needs, interests, characteristics and conditions, (*ie functional*) your approach will be more meaningful to both you and those learning literacy.

*Phil Bartle, PhD,*  
<http://www.scn.org/ip/cds/cmp/modules/lit-why.htm>

Whether your participants are literacy learners, placements or volunteers, the principle of "*learning by doing*" can (*and should*) be extended to finding ways for the participants to teach others the skills and principles that they are learning. When they do, they will learn better themselves.

### **Participatory learning**

Participatory learning is a creative problem-solving method, in which every member participates actively. The approach involves specific attitudes, skills and knowledge. In the participatory approach, the learning process is just as important as the subject being learned.

### **Characteristics of participatory learning**

- Originates from the needs and problems of group members
- Uses each group member's knowledge, experience and skills
- Considers every participant a trainee and a trainer
- Uses practical real life activities so participants learn by doing
- Takes place at a location and in a setting where participants feel at ease.

### **Benefits of participatory learning**

- Gives group members better insight and understanding of their situation
- Makes them more aware of their own values, attitudes, skills and knowledge
- Allows them to discover their hidden talents and capacities
- Gives them experiences in problem solving and decision making
- Above all, increases their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Phil Bartle, PhD,  
(<http://www.scn.org/ip/cds/cmp/modules/lit-why.htm>)

## **INTENTIONAL LEARNING**

In intentional learning, like collaborative and participatory learning, learners set their own goals. However with intentional learning they also learn and apply effective and appropriate strategies to achieve these goals. The learners have "intentional control over their own learning" (Scardamalia, & Bereiter, 1994; Swallow, & Woodruff, 1989,

There are several examples of Intentional Learning that are quite applicable to the *Trails to Literacy* platform:

### Learning Contracts

A learning contract is a written agreement that defines learning goals and how they will be successfully accomplished. The contract is a collaborative effort between the learner and their tutor, facilitator or the group. It is used to negotiate the learning goals for activities done within the *Trails* project. Plans can be broken down for individual activities, for thematic sections or for the learner's whole involvement period. Examples in our LBS programs are Training Plans and, to a lesser degree, Lesson Plans. The four key elements of learning contracts are:

- Determine learning objectives
- Specify learning resources and strategies
- Define evidence of accomplishment of objectives
- Validate evidence of accomplishment of objectives

The contract encourages learning that is intentional by allowing the learner to address individual needs, objectives, and approaches to learning. Completing learning contracts requires self-analysis, self-evaluation and reflection.

### Problem-based learning

The ability to solve problems is more than just regurgitating knowledge and following rules; it is the development of flexible thinking strategies and analytical skills to produce meaningful solutions. This piece is often missing from instruction. Many learners are not adequately prepared when they encounter problems in which they need to transfer their learning to new domains, a skill required to function effectively in society (Reich, 1993).

Real-life problems aren't usually well-structured problems. In real life, we seldom repeat exactly the same steps to solve

All PBL problems should be created with the following components. These descriptors are for use by facilitators, not students. It is important to have a facilitator's guide and a student's copy of the problem.

- introduction,
- content,
- learning objectives,
- resources,
- expected outcome,
- guiding questions,
- assessment exercises,
- and time frame

(Bridges, 1992).

problems. Learners need to be able to solve more than the traditional school-based problems.

They need to gain critical thinking skills to take appropriate steps and apply relevant solutions in multiple contexts. The real-life problems that face participants in *Trails* projects provide a variety of goals, contexts, contents, obstacles, etc. To be successful in their chosen careers, our clients need practice solving problems that reflect life. This skill is the goal of problem-based learning. This is also *Trails to Literacy*

Problem-based learning (PBL) occurs when the learners purposefully and knowingly head towards their learning goals. Throughout the PBL process he or she reflects upon how prior knowledge and experiences are used to meet the learning objective.

The instructor's role becomes one of subject matter expert, resource guide, and task group consultant. This arrangement promotes group processing of information rather than an imparting of information by faculty (Vernon & Blake, 1993). The instructor's role is to encourage student participation, provide appropriate information to keep students on track, avoid negative feedback, and assume the role of fellow learner (Aspy et al., 1993).

The students must be guided to reach both the objectives involved in solving the problem and the objectives related to the process.

### 11 Commandments For An Enthusiastic Team

1. Help each other be right - not wrong.
2. Look for ways to make new ideas work-not for reasons they won't
3. If in doubt- check it out! Don't make negative assumptions about each other.
4. Help each other win and take pride in each other's victories.
5. Speak positively about each other and about your organization at every opportunity.
6. Maintain a positive mental attitude no matter what the circumstances.
7. Act with initiative and courage as if it all depends on you.
8. Do everything with enthusiasm- it's contagious.
9. Whatever you want- give it away.
10. Don't lose faith- never give up.
11. Have fun!!

Ian Percy

## Reflection

Learner-directed methods encourage learners to reflect on, or interpret, what they are learning, as well as the *process* they are using to learn. As a result of the reflection, the learner can continue or change the process, whichever is more beneficial to knowledge acquisition. Reflection happens when learners analyze their learning experiences and identify (see "Questions... What & Why" in the toolkit section):

- What was learned?
- Why the learning was important?
- What was most useful in the process?
- Why was it useful to you?
- What change or improvement will this give you?

Many learners aren't unaware of how they reflect and the ways in which they may actively take part in the process. Some examples are: applying the knowledge to a different activity, journaling, sharing the knowledge in a presentation, or teaching the skill to others. Deliberate, self-driven, reflection activities help make learning more personally meaningful, holistic, and lasting. The result is integrated, transferable knowledge.

### POTENTIAL BARRIERS OF LEARNER OWNERSHIP

Handing over ownership of the project can prove to be a challenge. Many participants have never had the opportunity to control even their day-to-day lives let alone this type of project. Possibly, they have not experienced work in this kind of environment where learning, teamwork, planning and decision-making are integral parts. These methods of participatory learning require more of the student's time and expect students to be responsible and independent learners. It is important to provide sufficient training and facilitation to help the participants acquire the skills they will need to work in a cooperative, functioning group. As well as being necessary for the *Trails* project, these skills are highly valued in the workplace, therefore their integration into the learning process will be appreciated by referring partners and future employers.

Most students have spent their previous years assuming their teacher was the main disseminator of knowledge. Because of this orientation towards the subject-matter expertise of their instructor and the traditional memorization of facts required of students, many students appear to have lost the ability to "simply wonder about something"

(Reithlingshoefer, 1992).



Program staff who are used to the traditional role of "teacher", instructor" or "tutor" are often uncomfortable withholding information as they watch students struggle with goal-setting, problem-solving and reflection. In these learner-driven formats the instructor acts more as a facilitator than information provider. Therefore, facilitators and tutors need to focus their attention on questioning student logic and beliefs, providing hints to correct erroneous student reasoning, providing resources for student research, and keeping students on task. Because this role will be foreign to some teachers, they may have trouble breaking out of their past habits.

We have provided some training content suggestions and tools in the **Toolkit** section of this report.

Once teachers relinquish the lecturer's role, they are forced to develop and enhance their repertoire of teaching responses: listening to students; answering questions; helping students frame good questions; formulate problems, and make effective decisions; directing students to appropriate resource materials/faculty; and being fellow learners.  
(Farnsworth, 1994).



## Trails to Literacy: PHASES

### Phase 2 Action- And now back to the Action

As we consider the Action Phase to be 'participatory', we must now turn it over to the recruited group members. All members - learners (of all levels), volunteers, placements, and staff - have an equal value or say. They should all be involved in the planning process to ensure this equality, ownership and 'empowerment'.

#### **PLANNING**

Setting up a focus group with regular meeting times to discuss plans and ideas proves to be beneficial not only to the participants but also to the general progress of the project.

This group communicates, plans and makes decisions on:

- Project plans suited to the group and individual interests,
- Equipment lists,
- Needs for training, experts' knowledge, etc.
- Usefulness and content of reports and surveys,
- Feasibility of activities and their timelines, costs, etc.
- 'Ownership' of individual projects
- Transferring information when a participant will be leaving for employment
- Bringing new participants 'up to speed'.


#### **What our students say.....**






"Trails is great, I get a say in what work the team will do and how we will do it."

"Working through Trails is helping me to use new skills"

"Trails is fun and I get to meet new people"

**Lanark County Reading Network , Perth**

**Action**  
(Participatory) 

-  Planning
-  Activities
-  Links to learning
-  Resources
-  Do it!

Having the group, as a whole, become responsible for the planning and decision-making promotes teamwork, allows for peer learning, provides a synergistic effect, and builds morale/spirit. Learners also have numerous opportunities to acquire and hone 'soft skills', such as speaking and listening, in a real-life group environment.

With sufficient training of the participants, the presence of a coordinator or staff member at these meetings as an occasional facilitator and support person is all that is needed

"...you often hear adult educators wringing their hands and saying, "oh, how can we motivate people to learn, I can't get people to learn." And I say, nonsense, people are already learning, they're already doing it, what do you mean you can't motivate people. Maybe you can't motivate them to learn what you want them to learn, but they're motivated to learn. They're already doing it. You don't have to stimulate people to learn, and yet a lot of adult educators perceive adults as not normally learning. It's not a normal thing for them, you have to somehow motivate them or force them or persuade them to do this thing. Well, they're already doing it, they just may not be doing it the way the educator wants them to do it."

Kendra Gollihar (<http://www.gollihar.com/>)

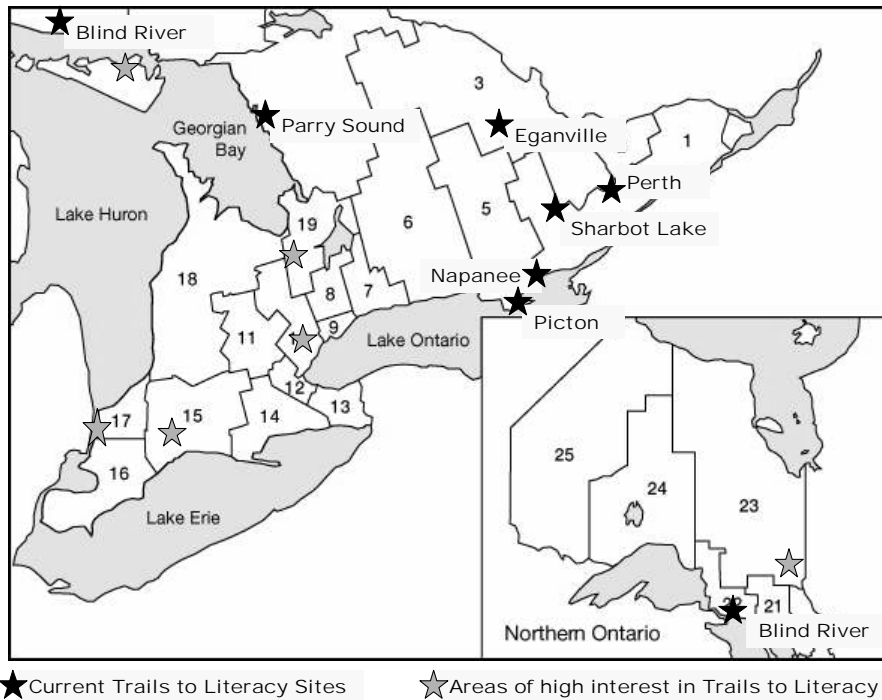
"From an LBS viewpoint these meetings provided an excellent venue for participatory learning in Speaking & Listening and Self-Direction & Self-Management. The group moved itself and each participant forward in these domains with no 'teaching' and little facilitation by staff. These 'soft skills' are often more difficult to 'teach' in a formal setting. "

-Trails to Literacy-Report on Pilot Project (NLS 2000)



**ACTIVITIES**

A total of seven literacy agencies participated in the initial phase of *Trails to Literacy Around the Province*. These seven agencies provided a sampling of community-based literacy programs from different areas of the province. They were: Enjikenadaasang Learning Centre serving the native community in the mid-north at Blind River, the Sound Learning Centre in Parry Sound on the shores of Georgian Bay, Prince Edward Learning Centre in Picton on Lake Ontario, Reading Routes (Napanee Community Learning Centre) in Napanee, Renfrew County Community Upgrading Program in Eganville, Lanark County Reading Network in Perth and the original pilot North Frontenac Literacy Program in Sharbot Lake.



In keeping with the 'participatory' approach of *Trails to Literacy*, each project's concepts and activities are developed in a community context. Therefore, the planning, delivery and activities differ greatly. The timelines for each are also significantly different, both in the dates started and in the length of time to complete each phase. We will therefore present each project's 'action' separately.



## *Trails to Literacy: PHASES*

### **Phase 2 Action- Blind River**

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#### **ENJIKENDAASANG LEARNING CENTRE** **MISSISSAUGA FIRST NATION,**

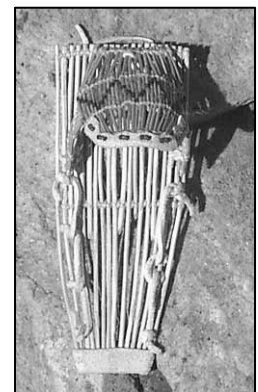
Enjikendaasang Learning Centre is located in the Village of Blind River along the north shores of Lake Huron. The Centre provides services to the native population from a large area stretching both east and west of Blind River, encompassing a number of native nations.

Enjikendaasang Learning Centre joined Trails to Literacy in December of 2001. They had a number of ideas they were investigating that would fit well with the Trails to Literacy participatory learning profile.

They finally decided to do a series of workshops that featured different aspects of their culture and demonstrated and taught many skills from the 'old' ways. This series of workshops included the creation of cradle boards, talking sticks (a particular favourite), ceremonial roaches, moccasins, picture frames and concluded with a study of native plants under the guidance of a horticulturalist.

The participants were very enthusiastic about the projects and attendance remained steady with little or no dropouts from those involved.

This kind of enthusiasm, while directing the project toward cultural and historical goals is rewarding not only for the individual but also for the Trails to Literacy projects' goals of encouraging self-direction and discovery.





## *Trails to Literacy: PHASES*

### **Phase 2 Action- Parry Sound**

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#### **SOUND LEARNING CENTRE** **WEST PARRY SOUND ASSOCIATION FOR ADULT LEARNING,**

The Sound Learning Centre joined Trails to Literacy in November of 2001. Originally they had plans of working with the local snowmobile groups on area trails but the winter weather proved uncooperatively warm and so the Centre turned to investigating alternative projects. One of the possibilities they looked at was working with a local food bank, helping design menus, coordinating inventory of donations, etc. However, while deciding on a project they were approached by the West Parry Sound District Museum. The museum's directors requested the Sound Learning Centre's help in designing and producing a specialty brochure for their museum.

The museum already had a brochure that guided visitors through the exhibits, but they felt there was a need for another geared to low literacy visitors who had difficulty with the existing guide. The museum staff felt that making this kind of guide available would encourage more people to visit and enjoy the museum.

The project was taken on by the Sound Learning Centre and is in the process of being developed. This undertaking will cover learning and practising a wide range of skills during its creation, such as: reading, writing, research, organizing, computers, graphic design, math, typing, speaking and listening, etc.



## *Trails to Literacy: PHASES*

### **Phase 2 Action- Prince Edward County**

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#### **PRINCE EDWARD LEARNING CENTRE**

Prince Edward Learning Centre (PELC) is located in the town of Picton on Lake Ontario. 'Visioning' toward the *Trails To Literacy* project began in the summer of 2001. The Millennium Trail was chosen as the 'platform' for the project. This decision was driven by the proximity of the trail and the good working relationship previously established with the County - the owners of the trail bed.

The initial task completed was to obtain permission to work on the Prince Edward County Millennium Trail. We were provided with the report of the public consultation on the use of the Trail and made contact with the County Millennium Trail committee through the Commissioner of Community Services, Barry Braun.

Our next task was to find a suitable place to house the Trails project. We were fortunate to be able to rent a building owned by the County. Again the positive relationship paid off through reduced lease rates for the workshop, as well as the use of some equipment. So, the project was set up in the Don Baxter Memorial Building in Bloomfield, a short walk from the Trail as it passes through Bloomfield.

As all of this was happening, we were working with Prince Edward Lennox and Addington Social Services (Ontario Works) to build a partnership to enhance the project. There were two reasons to develop this partnership. First, we wanted to provide community placement opportunities to Ontario Works participants. Second, we applied for funds through the National Child Tax Benefit program to be used to extend and add depth to the project.



Alec Lunn was hired to coordinate the project. He started working at the Trails site in March after visiting the North Frontenac Literacy Centre site to pick up ideas and advice from the first project.

Partnering was important from the beginning. The coordinator contacted the chairperson of the Millennium Trail committee and attended a number of their meetings to discuss the possibilities of a joint project between the Millennium Trail and the Trails to Literacy. The proposal was accepted with the stipulation that all work done on or for the Trail was to be approved by their committee.

Initially, our participant group was made up of two literacy participants and one OW community placement. They set up the shop, planned activities, and started learning woodworking skills by building signs, birdhouses, and bird feeders.

Gradually, interest in the project grew and others joined the crew. The first official project was to build signs to mark the access points to the Trail. These signs are beautiful affairs in robin's egg blue, yellow, and white. An outline of a heron is cut out in the background by using a scroll saw. The County Trails committee liked them so well that they adopted the design as a logo for the Trail and the colours as official Trail colours (what a feather in our cap and esteem builder for the group!). The next activity was the creation of forty-nine kilometre markers to place along the trail from Picton to Carrying Place (a great math exercise).

Next, the participants plan to do research activities and develop ways to convey the findings to the people using the Trail. Participants are building samples of birdhouses, bat houses, and bird feeders. They will be applying to the Trails Committee for permission to place them along one section of the Trail close to the shop so we can maintain them. In the future we may even be involved in building rest areas. The possibilities are endless.

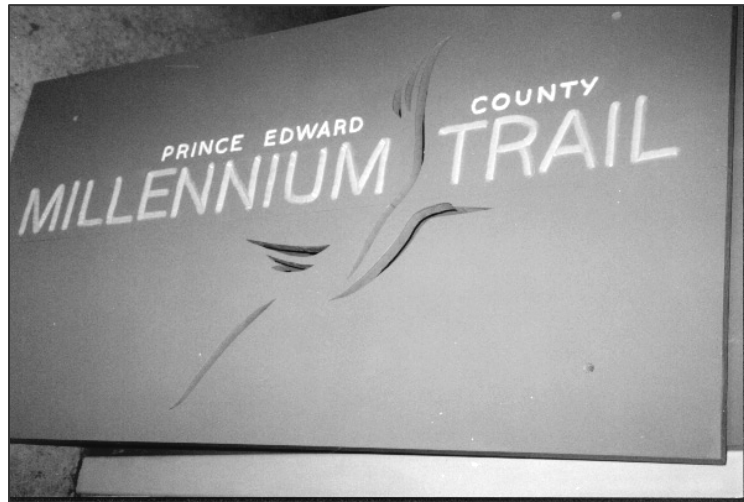
In the four months that the program has been operating, there were five participants - one left to return to college and two left for employment.

**Participatory Learning** - The majority of the learning is participatory, although the group's negotiating and problem-solving skills are put into play by having to gain approval from the County's Trail Committee.



**Benefits** - The benefits to the participants were evident almost immediately. They gained skills and confidence. One of the earliest participants left the project for paid employment. The benefits to the agency are just beginning to become apparent. We are getting positive publicity and the project is providing a base for our new workforce focus.

**Community** - The most obvious community involvement is through the County Trails Committee. A councillor for the County, who sits on the Millennium Trails Committee, has become one of the greatest advocates for the *Trails To Literacy* project. She promotes it at every opportunity and has been effective in gaining donations for the project. The other main source of community support has come from Ontario Works. They promote the opportunity to do community placements at the Trails project and worked with us to apply for National Child Tax Benefit program funding.



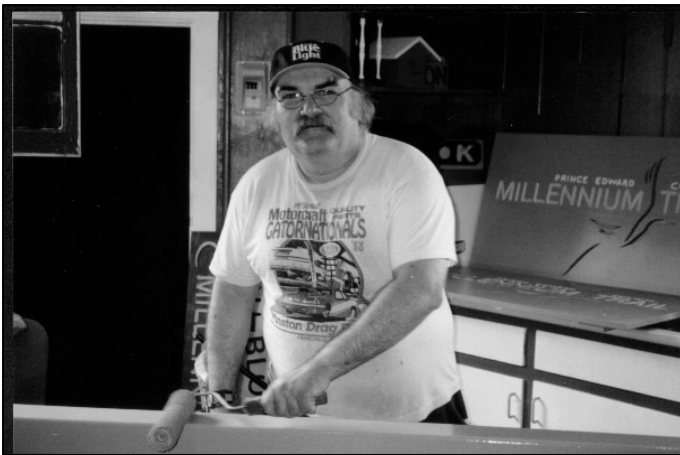
Sign designed for Millennium Trails

**Recruitment** - Most of the recruitment for participants was through word of mouth, normal assessment process and Ontario Works.

**Evaluation** - Because the project, as a whole, is really in the development stage, evaluation has been limited to observation of changed behaviour, tracking of contact hours, observation of products and skills developed, and positive participant comments.

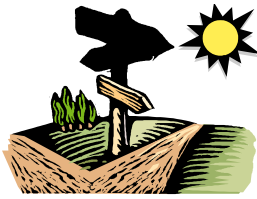
**Public Relations** – Write-ups and photos in the local papers, *The County Weekly News*, and *The Times*, provided us with opportunities to promote our Trails to Literacy project and 'show off' our signs that have been adopted by the Prince Edward Millennium Trail. The positive coverage of such a worthwhile project, from these publications, was a boost in endorsing the clear-cut benefits to the community, as well as to the participants.

We will most definitely continue the project. We have accessed funds from the National Child Tax Benefit program and from the joint Trillium Grant to sustain the project for at least another year. This project will be the base on which to build our participatory and workforce programming.



"I wanted to give something back to the County. People now have a great place to ride bikes, walk, jog, and see nature along the way."  
 Albert  
 Trails participants





## *Trails to Literacy: PHASES*

### Phase 2 Action- Renfrew County

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#### RENFREW COUNTY COMMUNITY UPGRADING PROGRAM (RCCUP)

We have encouraged a type of participatory learning in our program for a long time. Because we believe strongly that participatory learning is an ideal approach for adult learners, we will continue to use it, not only with ongoing *Trails to Literacy* projects, but also in our other programs. Learners in our computer-based communications classes have prepared a class newsletter, a brochure for a local historical society, agendas for meetings, posters, notices for the classrooms, and invitations to special events. One tight-knit group in a very small community has begun to research the Trillium program with the idea that they might submit a proposal for a playground in their community. That particular group was not involved with *Trails to Literacy*, but their instructor knew about it and was encouraged to use its methods.



We are excited about the *Trails to Literacy* approach because it fits so precisely with everything we know about principles of learning, especially adult education.

## Recruiting Community Partners

- Several members of the Bonnechere River Watershed Project (BRWP) committee were connected with RCCUP, both as volunteers and through personal friendships. Knowing each other and being acquainted with both organizations made it easy to connect.
- Through these connections RCCUP staff contacted the Bonnechere committee and outlined the *Trails to Literacy* project, asking if they thought a partnership was worth pursuing.
- Next came an invitation to BRWP Annual General Meeting. This meeting was very dynamic and the idea of a *Trails to Literacy* partnership was met with enthusiasm and support.
- The BRWP assigned one of its executives the role of liaison with RCCUP.
- This project is still in the visioning process, however, the recruitment of participants will be starting in September 2002. At that point the 'action' will begin.
- Similar connections with other community projects, such as a new museum in Eganville, have raised suggestions that RCCUP become involved with other projects as well as the Watershed. This is an idea we would like to explore instead of all participants supporting one project; they could be involved in one or several.
- Previously, we had started working with Ontario Works' Community Placement program by providing placements for individuals who met our Literacy & Basic Skills learner criteria. OW is seeking community placements tied to educational experiences and involving authentic work experience. With the *Trails* project, we are able to build on our previous experience in providing effective OW community placements, to make this possible. When the participation agreement is signed, we prepare a training plan for the participant, based on the learning that will take place and the activities that will be completed during the placement.



## Challenges

Geography is always a challenge for our program. We serve a rural population sparsely distributed over an extremely large area. That means that none of the individual communities has a large enough population base to feed a large program. Lack of transportation is a barrier for many. RCCUP has very few group learning activities and primarily offers 1-1 instruction or tutoring. The agency's premises are used mostly for administrative work and are not conducive to group work. These factors have caused some difficulty in getting the action portion of the project up and running. This may be counteracted by having a number of different projects within the main Bonnechere River project and/or following a new approach for Trails to Literacy participatory learning by offering a number of different projects.

However, on the flipside, it also means that people in this region do not have alternative programming. When we can find ways of meeting the challenges, we are likely to get a strong support from both the individuals and agents that need services.

Ideas for dealing with geography and transportation challenges:

- Expect to work with a small group of participants, at least to start the project
- In future, look at ways of developing the project with two (or more) teams in different parts of the county. In effect, this would mean operating separate but perhaps loosely connected projects. This idea still has many details to work out, but it is an approach that would be helpful for our widely dispersed program.





## *Trails to Literacy: PHASES*

### Phase 2 Action- Lennox & Addington County

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#### COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE - NAPANEE KINGSTON LITERACY,

Reading Routes provides learner-centred instruction for adults who wish to upgrade their basic literacy and numeracy skills for employment, further education or personal fulfillment. It began in 1996 as a branch centre of Kingston Literacy, to provide services for people in the rural community of Lennox and Addington County.

Learners in the program can participate in small group instruction facilitated by paid staff or they may choose to be matched in the one-to-one program with a volunteer tutor. The choice is up to the learner depending on which stream best fits his or her goals. Reading Routes also offers a family literacy program.

Ontario Works heard about the *Trails to Literacy* project and felt this project would work very well in cooperation with Community Placements and the town recreation committee. They found that a *Trails to Literacy* project had to be run by a literacy agency, so they contacted Reading Routes with their proposal and promise of support.

The town of Napanee has been upgrading its waterfront. This includes developing walkways, with a historical perspective, for tourists and residents. Reading Routes contacted the Town of Napanee Parks and Recreation Department and formed a partnership to work together on this waterfront project.



**Short-term Goals: (first 10 weeks)**

It was important that each member of the group have a short-term goal so he or she can see the results of his or her hard work. A short-term goal was determined to be something that could be completed within approximately ten weeks. Some examples are:

- Research (birds, plants, historical events, materials, costs, etc.)
- Design building plans (birdhouses, feeders, planters, historical gardens)
- Complete small construction projects

**Long-term Goals:**

Reading Routes along with NFLP and Prince Edward Learning Centre has, in the fall of 2002, received an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant to continue their *Trails* projects. This grant will allow the project to run for a further year. It will also provide the means to plan for the longevity of the project.

Long-term Concepts:

- Historical garden
- Interpretive signs
- A wall of history
- New boardwalk
- Brochure for the tourist office
- Website for the town that includes a list of "things to do in Napanee"



**Benefits:**

## To Learners:

- Upgrade their skills through real life activities
- Improve the soft skills that are essential to employment but often not addressed
- Confidence is improved because the control is put into the hands of the learners
- Having the opportunity to showcase their work should help reduce the stigma attached to low literacy

## Ontario Works:

- Community placement participants can provide leadership
- Opportunity to share their expertise, providing new skills to learners
- Build their self-confidence
- The project can help them identify areas where they could need new learning (literacy/numeracy needs)

## Town of Napanee:

- Work in partnership with community members
- Receive support with long-term goals
- A tourist attraction especially if long-term funding allows us to continue

**Project to Date:**

- Completed our first vision
- Brainstormed our own personal contacts for support (*Who do we know who could help*)
- Set individual short-term goals based on interests and employment goals
- Set some long-term goals for the project as a whole
- Began research according to goals
- Completed an electrical and small tool safety course
- Written letters asking for support from the community
- Interviewed by the local paper
- Visited the local library for information
- The project had a total of 9 participants - one exited for employment and one exited for further upgrading at the Literacy Centre





# *Trails to Literacy: PHASES*

## **Phase 2 Action- Lanark County**

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### LANARK COUNTY READING NETWORK (LCRN)

#### Project Mission Statement

To preserve a part of our heritage, to educate ourselves as well as our community, and to provide an environment in which to exercise the body, the mind and the spirit.

#### Trails to Literacy Project

LCRN is still in the process of developing the *Trails to Literacy* project - moving from the 'vision' to the 'action' stage. Outlining the goals, determining what benefits we hoped to achieve and brainstorming possible activity concepts to help achieve these goals has taken place.

We feel that presenting participants with some options to help with choosing projects would be a good resource for them. The following are some of the activities that could fit into the goals, provide a variety of learning possibilities, and benefit participants in the Trails project:

- Arts and crafts
- Research
- Administration and secretarial duties
- Finance and purchasing
- Fund raising
- Public awareness
- Advertising and media
- Historical research
- Photography
- Health and fitness
- Geography
- Cartography



**Award**

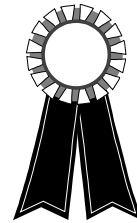
The possibility of a monthly achievement award has been considered. This would be presented to the client who shows significant improvement in certain areas, a strong and cooperative work ethic or other positive qualities, which are significant to the *Trails* project.

This award would consist of a certificate for the participant and having their name engraved on a plaque. A staff member from Ontario Works has offered to do the presentation of the award. This would give the participant a sense of accomplishment and pride as well as showcase the success of the project.

The cost would be minimal, as we have received an offer to donate a plaque; the certificate can be created on the computer as a learning experience; and the engraving could be done by a local business

"Trails to Literacy is a recent addition to our programs and compliments them well. As a community placement program, it combines literacy and numeracy training within a workplace environment and therefore opportunities to learn other valuable skills including decision making, team work and planning."

Liz Brown  
Executive Direction, LCRN

**Possible Project Concepts**

Taking a small section of local trail or parkland and beautifying it or landscaping it for the better public interest. A local greenhouse operator/business has offered to be a source of information and provide a price discount on certain flowers or materials as needed.

Research can be done on types and quantities of plants, animals, soil, trees, water levels, etc. It could be presented to the public in an educational and artistic way. There are several local horticulturalists that could instruct the group or be a resource on their specific area of interest.

With input from a local high school student who is interested in studying Economics in University, there is the possibility of working with participants to develop a program that will deal with finance.

It would cover the following topics:

- How to create a monthly and yearly budget
- Buy healthy, yet affordable food
- Comparative shopping
- Saving and investing your money
- Dealing with financial stress
- Setting financial goals
- Using financial software



Perth is a very historic town so there is great potential to link to historical service clubs. If community members were interested in a specific historical fact or site, they could contact the *Trails* group. We could then research the topic, interview people, create a model, prepare a report or presentation, write a news article, start a petition, etc. This project has many interested members of the community willing to help: conservation groups, local museum, and newspapers that run weekly historical sections.

A series of activities that could link to any of the other concepts above would be an ongoing Art Workshop that could start with a sketching workshop, possibly progressing on to pastels, water colours, acrylics, etc.

### Fundraising Ideas

Participants are considering running a barbecue at a local grocery. This would also involve the creation of a banner and brochures to raise public awareness of LCRN, its *Trails to Literacy* project, and its goals.

Create some paving stones for an artistic activity. They could be sold to local businesses and then painted or engraved with that business name or logo. They would then be placed at points within the project area, such as: along the trail, within a park, part of a garden scheme, or as a historical facts walkway. This would also act as a learning activity to promote:

- Artistic abilities, carving, engraving, painting
- Salesmanship, promotional, organizational
- Budgeting vs. cost for profit
- Dealing with the public, professionals



# Trails to Literacy: PHASES

## Phase 2 Action Central Frontenac

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### NORTH FRONTENAC ADULT LEARNING CENTRE, SHARBOT LAKE NORTH FRONTENAC LITERACY PROGRAM

The Sharbot Lake *Trails* project involves activities related to the section of the Trans Canada Trail that runs through the Township of Central Frontenac. In the introduction of this manual, a brief overview of the original project is provided. We would also recommend reading of our original report, '*Trails to Literacy, Positive Pathways to a Brighter Future*', written in August 2000.

"This Trillium grant will provide 'Tails to Literacy' learning opportunities in four regions of Eastern Ontario. In 'Trails' projects participants are involved in the planning, research, writing, production and construction, which allows them to increase their literacy/numeracy and group communication skills. Even more significantly, they develop self-direction and enthusiasm for learning."

Joyce Bigelow

Executive Director North Frontenac Literacy

As this project moves on through its second year we notice different behaviour and results. Here are some of our observations:

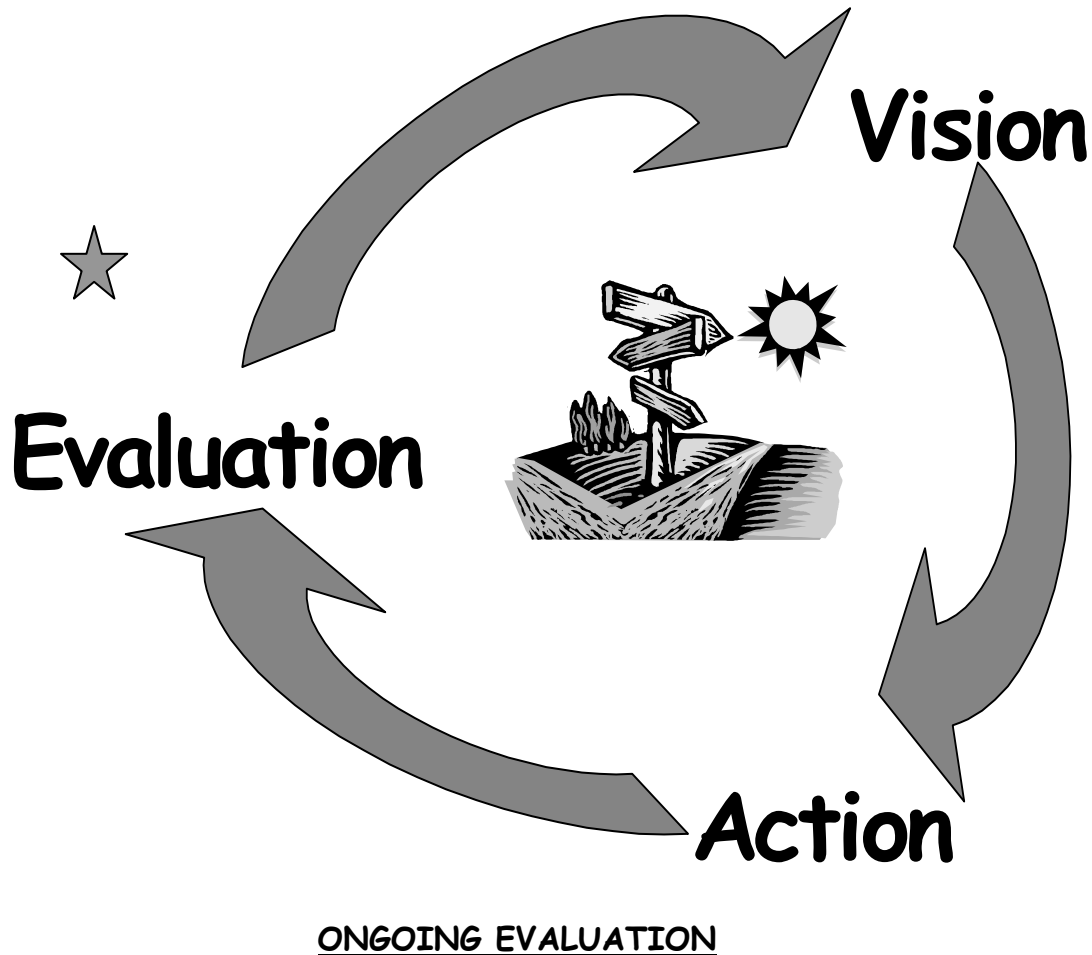
- The participants are uniting more as a group. They are working as a team, resolving more of their own problems. There is less need for staff facilitation, intervention and conflict resolution. The group dynamics training, provided to the participants by staff and outside speakers, has certainly paid off.
- On the flipside of this, the numerous entries, exits and even re-entries cause instability to the team. With each change in membership, new balances have to be achieved. This is accomplished through peer discussion and revisiting prior group training. Major increases in self-confidence and self-direction have continued to impress us. This has now moved past the individuals' improvements to improvements in the group's drive.
- The exception to the point above occurred during, and immediately after, summer lulls. The decreased attendance and intermittent absences caused the group to struggle with common activities and projects. Individuals sometimes found it difficult to find things to do, things they could do by

themselves. Some found it difficult to pick up where they had left off, or fit in to where the activity had moved.

- New ideas are more participant generated. There is less gentle 'prodding' required. We feel this change happened as a consequence of pulling the staff facilitator away from direct contact with the group more often. It was particularly evident after the facilitator's vacation.
- Outside barriers can plague individuals and the ramifications are sometimes evident in the group. Problems such as substance abuse, mental health issues and lack of anger management, need to be addressed. Their effects can be more critical in this type of group dynamic where the members may be more vulnerable and may not know how to deal with the issues, fallout, etc.
- 'Ownership' is also a two-sided coin. It is wonderful to watch the participants take control and feel pride in the project, driving them on to further accomplishments and public relations. However, competition amongst the group for 'bragging rights' or control is not positive. The group will need to turn their support to each other as much as to the project. New ideas should be welcomed. New ways of doing things do not negate the efforts of previous ideas and activities.
- Perhaps the most dramatic result of the project is the transference of this 'ownership' from the *Trails* project to the other areas of our organization. The learners and community placement participants have, on their own initiative, sought more involvement in our agency. They want to help, to feel valued, to be 'givers'. On their own, they have painted rooms, made signs, and refurbished parts of our building. They have joined the Board, worked on committees and helped with fundraising/marketing activities. All these activities continue to allow for learning, but they also provide 'spirit' to our program. This spirit is infectious. People want to come here to learn and they want to stay!



# Phase 3



The process of evaluation is one that is continuous. It allows project goals and efforts to be measured against the original objectives on an ongoing basis. In a *Trails to Literacy* project there are two levels of evaluation that must go on simultaneously. There is the evaluation by the 'overseers' who originally envisioned the project and are ultimately responsible for literacy or other funders' goals being met. There is also the evaluation by the participants, ensuring that they are meeting their own goals, both for the group and individually. It is often a struggle, especially for program staff, to juggle or balance the evaluative efforts, and subsequent directions, of the two groups.



## *Trails to Literacy: PHASES*

### Phase 3 - Evaluation- Steering Committee

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Setting up a steering committee with membership from the various stakeholders, including the participants, helps in this balancing act. Having the steering committee oversee the progress of the project enabled a multi-faceted viewpoint on the success of certain parts of the project. Their input and suggestions enabled the project to remain on track with regard to the original concepts.

By including representatives chosen by the participant group, it ensured that they had understanding of the governance, and it was not taken out of their hands.

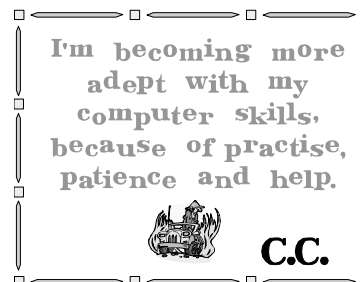
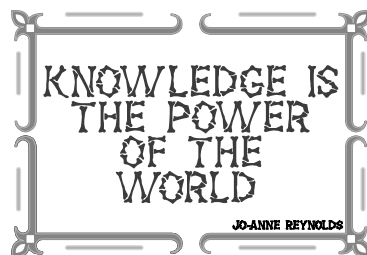
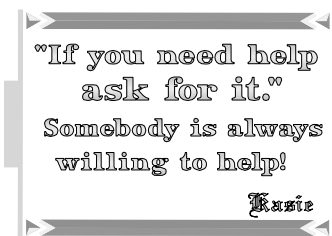
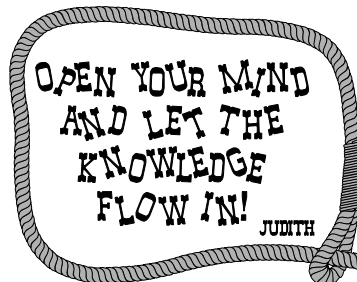
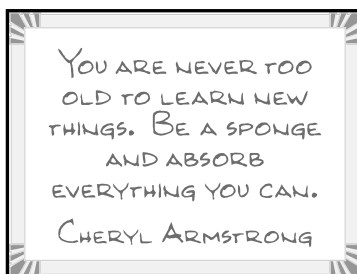




# Trails to Literacy: PHASES

## Phase 3 - Evaluation- Participant Focus Group

In most cases, the individual groups around the province hold weekly participant meetings. This helps them to keep the project's focus and its various activities. It enables them to assess their plans and actions, taking on new activities and make changes that are sanctioned by the group, as necessary. This kind of evaluation helps the individuals gain assessment/self-assessment skills. It gives them a share of the governance - planning and decision-making. It also ensures that the individual's needs, opinions and interests are considered. These factors all lead back to *Trails to Literacy's* learning concepts - collaborative, authentic and participatory.







## *Trails to Literacy: PHASES*

### Phase 3 - Evaluation- Program Staff

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A continuous evaluation by the program staff reveals the progress of individual participants in new skills, self-esteem, decision-making, teamwork, a more positive view of learning/literacy, etc. The results of individual progress will also act as a gauge for the effectiveness of the group and the project as a whole.

Although the need for staffing has proven to be minimal as the projects develop, the necessity of having someone act as a coordinator or liaison between the group and other factions is often necessary. He/she is also required to give encouragement and advice - especially in the initial development or when there is a high rate of turnover. As their self-confidence and teamwork skills improve, the need for such staff support or intervention decreases. However, it is important that the program staff never withdraw completely and that they continually monitor or evaluate the group processes and interactions.

"The 'Trails to Literacy' project in Prince Edward County is a dream come true for me. I love to watch our learners develop new skills and new confidence in their abilities. I am so proud of the contribution they are making to our community.

Linda Conley  
Executive Director of Prince Edward  
Learning Centre



Another important way to gauge the positive benefits of the *Trails to Literacy* project is the evaluation of contact hours, referral sources and the exit status of participants to employment, volunteer positions or further learning.



## Trails to Literacy: PHASES

### Phase 3 - Evaluation- Demonstrations

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Having participants demonstrate newly learned or improved skills provides the literacy centres, and also the individual, the opportunity to show improvement. Concrete, real-life ('authentic') demonstrations of learning are the most valuable. There isn't any feeling of 'pretend or made-up' activity. Taking the activities out of isolation and applying the skills to the overall project improves transference of skills and makes the skills development more visible.



“How do I know  
That I really know  
What I need to know?”

**CELEBRATE SUCCESS**



# Summary







# *Trails to Literacy: SUMMARY*

## Trails Around the Province Project-

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### REACHING OUR GOALS:

The *Trails* concept was promoted throughout the province to a large number of literacy agencies around Ontario. Sharing experiences from the projects and the benefits of *Trails to Literacy* helped other groups see how the *Trails* concept could work in their community. Our speaking engagements, press coverage and website have given *Trails*, and thereby literacy, a higher profile throughout the province.



Productive partnerships between LBS programs and the public at large were effectively demonstrated through the development of the seven pilot *Trails* projects. The groups worked with a variety of partners and volunteers, such as: Ontario Works providers, municipal representatives, trails committees, provincial interest groups, museum directors, environmental organizations, local experts, etc.



Research has been done to seek corporate sponsorship for *Trails to Literacy*. The development of these partnerships will help the creation and sustainability of *Trails* projects.

Presently, Community Literacy Ontario (CLO) is considering taking the *Trails* into a new direction by researching and providing a toolkit for workforce-based *Trails to Literacy* projects. This approach would give *Trails to Literacy* an even wider exposure for its concepts and benefits.



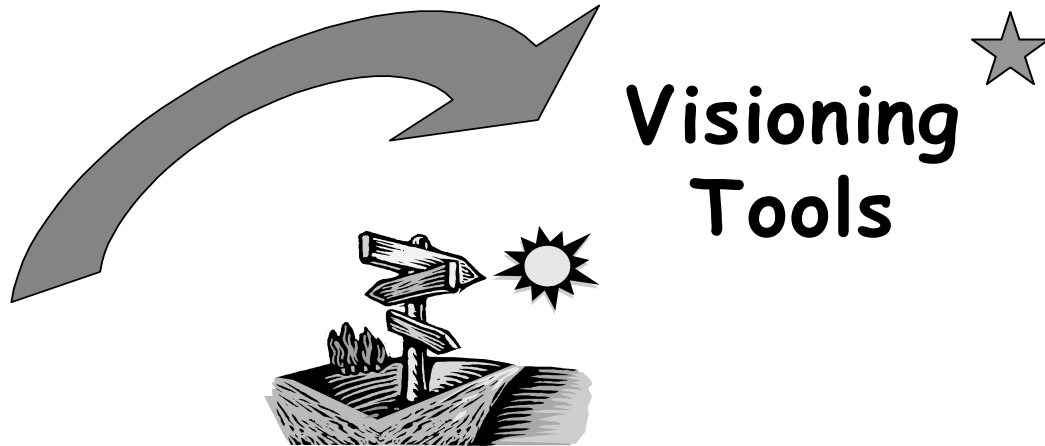
# Toolkit







# Toolkit



'Visioning' is a process to identify or envision the future for your *Trails to Literacy* project and how you plan to achieve it. Through involvement in visioning discussions and activities, stakeholders identify the purpose, values and vision of the future *Trails* project. They will also determine one or more 'platforms or themes' around which the activities will take place. From this 'vision' we can create a manageable and practical set of goals; recruit participants and partners; and develop an action plan.



# *Trails to Literacy: TOOLKIT*

## **Visioning Tools- Finding A Vision**

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### **Why Vision?**

Without guidance, it is difficult to establish activities. The vision and mission provide the basis for evaluating the success of the project and its activities. It helps to verify if the participants are on the right track and are making the right decisions. It provides direction when the *Trails* group needs to adapt to new demands. It helps the group to stick to its primary purpose and helps during conflicts by serving as an 'acid test' for every decision. A powerful vision and mission can also attract donors, volunteers, and community involvement.

### **Community Involvement**

In *Trails* visioning, the goals and action plans are firmly tied to the purpose, values and needs of both the literacy agency and the local community. It is therefore important to involve the community, at the beginning stages and throughout the entire planning process.

Every organization needs to define its fundamental purpose, philosophy, and values. So should a project like *Trails to Literacy*. The vision and mission make clear the reason for the project's existence. They describe the needs the project was created to fill, answer the basic question of why it exists, and create a picture for the future.

**What is a vision?**

- A look at the future (long term)
- It includes both path (the *trail*) and purpose
- It is idealistic (a dream)

A 'vision' is based on what people want rather than what they think is possible.

- ❖ What are we ultimately trying to achieve?
- ❖ What do we wish to happen?
- ❖ What is the right thing to do?

**A vision is** seeing your project as part of the wider community  
➤ its interests and economy.

**A vision is** the means through which the agency can convey its values and goals.

**A vision** addresses these questions:

- "What will be different in our community in 3 to 5 years because our *Trails* project exists?" and,
- "What role will *Trails* play in creating that difference?"

**A vision is not:**

- ❖ *Worrying* about specific activities or implementation details
- ❖ *Focusing* on the obstacles.

**What is a mission?**

- ❖ It defines the project's purpose.
- ❖ It identifies the client, community, agency and partners' needs that the project will meet and how to do so.
- ❖ It responds to the questions:
  - "Why do we exist?"
  - "What good will we do, and for whom?"

**What are values?**

- ❖ Guidelines for how to treat people and how to make decisions
- ❖ Values are aligned with principles

**What is a *Trails to Literacy* 'Platform' or Theme?**

- A place, subject or project upon or through which you can complete activities to achieve your mission and vision.
- It should be tied to community needs and interests.
- It should ensure the values and principles of the project.

## **Establishing a *Trails to Literacy* Vision**

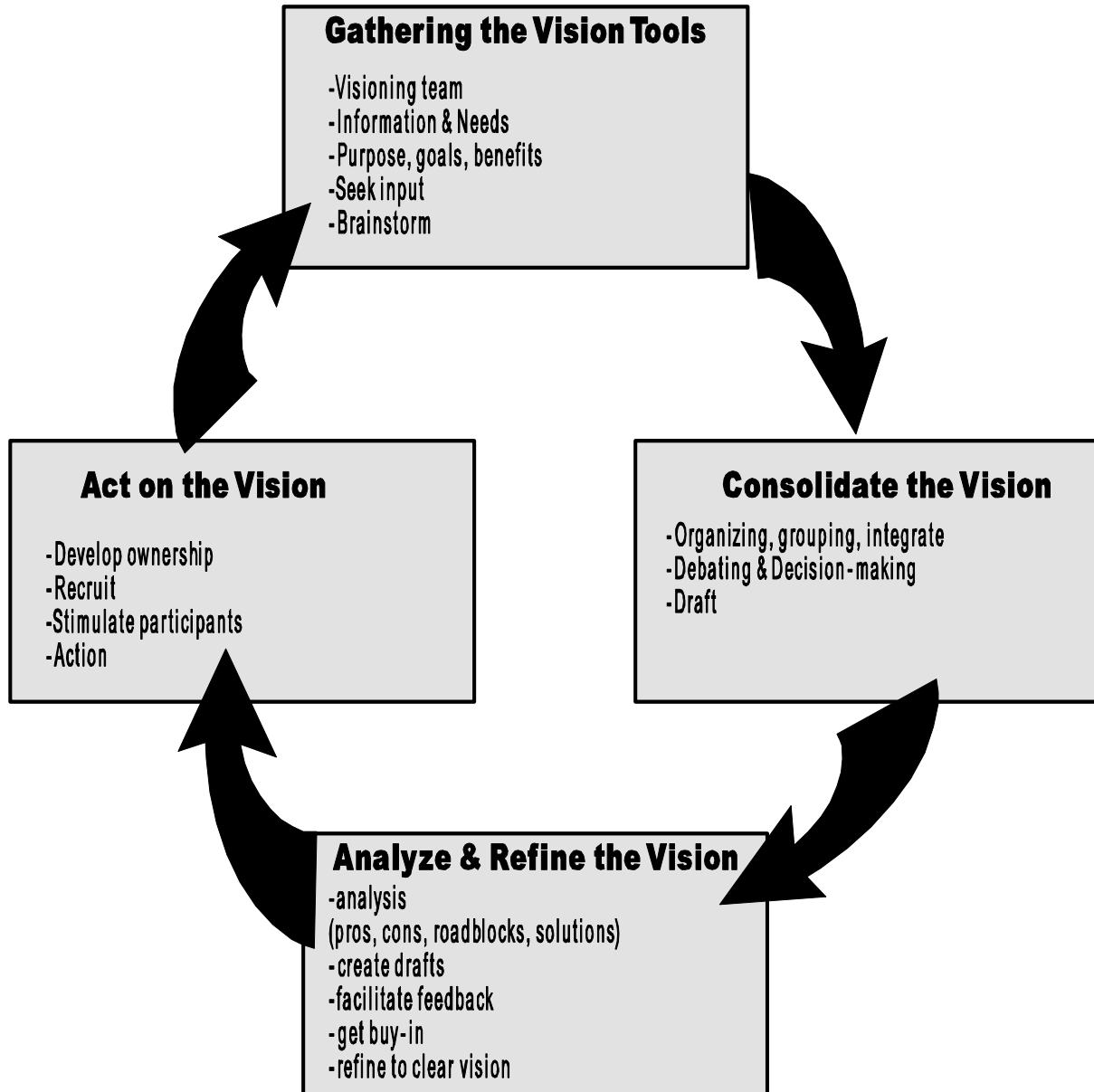
In the context of a *Trails* project we feel that the 'visioning' exercises should combine the components of Vision, Mission and Values with the common Goals and Benefits of *Trails* (see Phase 1 - Vision) and the community-based 'platform' or theme. Therefore we will encompass the group under "Establishing a Vision".

- **A vision begins as imaginative ideas.**
- **Through discussion these ideas come together to become a group desire.**
- **The desire turns into determination.**
- **Refining and clarifying the ideas turn them into a vision.**
- **The vision voices that the desired future is better than what exists now.**

The process of developing a vision may just happen through an obvious link with your community or pre-established partnerships. More likely, though, it will be a process requiring several months of networking involving the following steps:

- 1) Develop 'visioning' team
- 2) Gather information & needs;
- 3) Consider purpose and desired outcomes of project:
  - (a) *Trails* goals,
  - (b) Benefits to participants, community, partners & agency,
  - (c) Community needs & resources,
  - (d) Current & potential clientele;
- 4) Brainstorm ideas (dreams) in team setting of staff, volunteers, Board of Directors, etc.;
- 5) Use organizing, grouping and decision-making tools\* (provided in Toolkit) to link ideas and gain support for 3 or less *dreams* - see *Goal Setting From a Dream Tool*;
- 6) Facilitate analysis of 1 to 3 *dream* ideas (pros, cons, roadblocks, possible solutions) - see *Goal Setting From a Dream Tool*;
- 7) Write 1 or 2 draft vision(s);
- 8) Present the vision to stakeholders - facilitate feedback;
- 9) Refine to one clear vision;
- 10) Remove obstacles;
- 11) Develop ownership;
- 12) Recruit participants, partners and resources; and
- 13) Stimulate participant-driven action

# Visioning Cycle



**VISIONING EXERCISE****VISITING YOUR *Trails* COMMUNITY**

Take a few minutes; let your imagination go forward. It is five years from now. You have been away and left your community. For five years you haven't visited or had any contact with your literacy agency.

Now you are coming back, driving into the community, taking a walk around, stopping to talk to old acquaintances and strangers, too.

Now imagine, as you wander you happen to meet with a number of people: the first you remember from the *Trails* group when you left; the second has joined *Trails* recently; next you meet a community member with a visiting tourist; and finally you meet the mayor or another elected representative.

- What changes would you like to see in your community?
- What would you like each of the people you meet to say about the *Trails to Literacy* group and the community?
- What kind of group is *Trails* today?
- What are its values? What difference did *Trails* have on the lives of these people?
- What kind of character did the *Trails* group develop?
- What were the group's greatest accomplishments since you moved?
- Why did *Trails to Literacy* continue?

Here come the speakers. What would you like each one to say?

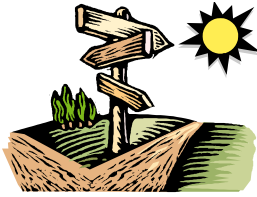
1. A Retired Member of the Group
2. A Current Group Member
3. A Community Member with a Tourist
4. An Elected Official

Adapted from [http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~bdg/word\\_docs/e/E05.doc](http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~bdg/word_docs/e/E05.doc)

VISITING YOUR *Trails* COMMUNITY

What changes would you like to see in your community?				
What would you like each of the people you meet to say about the <i>Trails to Literacy</i> group and the community?	A Retired Member of the Group	A Current Group Member	A Community Member with a Tourist	An Elected Official
What kind of group is <i>Trails</i> today? What are its values?				
What difference did <i>Trails</i> have on the lives of these people?				
What kind of character did the <i>Trails</i> group develop?				
What were the group's greatest accomplishments since you moved?				
Why did <i>Trails to Literacy</i> continue?				





# *Trails to Literacy: TOOLKIT*

## **Visioning Tools- Goal Setting**

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### Goal Setting Starts with a Dream

#### Instructions

1. Start by writing out or expressing a dream that you would like to have or achieve.
2. Look at the "Pros" - the positive reasons why you would want the dream to come true and the positive results of the dream.
3. Write out the "Cons" - the things that are negative about the dream.
4. What are some of the "roadblocks" that might stand in the way of your dream?
5. Consider possible solutions to the "cons" and "roadblocks".
6. Adjust your "dream" into a "reality goal". Take into account the previous 5 steps and set yourself a goal.
7. Now how will you get there? Set out steps to reach your goal. Make them clear and give yourself timelines.

(Samples and blank form on following pages)

## Goal Setting Starts with a Dream

### Samples from Presentation Groups Throughout Province

<b>Concept/Dream</b>	<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>	<b>Roadblocks</b>	<b>Possible Solutions</b>
<b>Trails to History:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local historical sites</li> <li>• Connect with local historical groups</li> <li>• Research, plaques, brochures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connection to the community, legion, libraries, churches, seniors groups, businesses, economic development</li> <li>• Provide volunteer opportunities</li> <li>• Community awareness, networking</li> <li>• Pride in accomplishment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visibility – need to be prepared to defend non-traditional model</li> <li>• Time intensive to develop</li> <li>• Cost</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not have enough history</li> <li>• Mind-set to experiential learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do one project (maybe per year)</li> <li>• Founding families</li> <li>• Work backward from their goal</li> </ul>
Quilting Circle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History, design, fabric measuring, social, research, bookkeeping</li> <li>• Donate products</li> <li>• Fundraising, team skills</li> <li>• Sell quilt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Space</li> <li>• Not so male-oriented</li> <li>• Disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Money</li> <li>• Location</li> <li>• Long-term, curriculum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundraising, societies and groups,</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• Piecework</li> <li>• Contracting</li> </ul>
Archaeological Dig	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research, hands-on, communications skills, math skills (measurement, models), tourism, variety of skills and tasks to choose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seasonal</li> <li>• Convince owners of value in partnership</li> <li>• Finding local experts</li> <li>• Dealing with cultural issues surrounding artefacts/sites</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good sales skills</li> <li>• Email and internet access to experience</li> <li>• Indoor/outdoor projects</li> </ul>
<b>Proud to Be Canadian</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture – Multi-cultural</li> <li>• Tap into a variety of backgrounds</li> <li>• ESL's</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciate their country and diverse backgrounds</li> <li>• Connection to community</li> <li>• Sense of belonging</li> <li>• Share and build skills</li> <li>• Increased oral skills</li> <li>• Self-management/direction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barriers can be strong</li> <li>• May not be funded by MTCU</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community acceptance</li> <li>• Racism</li> <li>• Small town mentality</li> <li>• Religion</li> <li>• Funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active interest in the community</li> <li>• School visits</li> <li>• Guests</li> <li>• Special cultural occasions</li> <li>• Multi-cultural cooking classes</li> <li>• Present to children (less intimidating)</li> <li>• Crafts (historical/cultural)</li> </ul>

## Goal Setting

Starts with a dream

Pros	Cons	Roadblocks	Solutions	Reality Goals	Action Steps



# *Trails to Literacy: TOOLKIT*

## **Visioning Tools- Recruiting**

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### **RECRUITING**

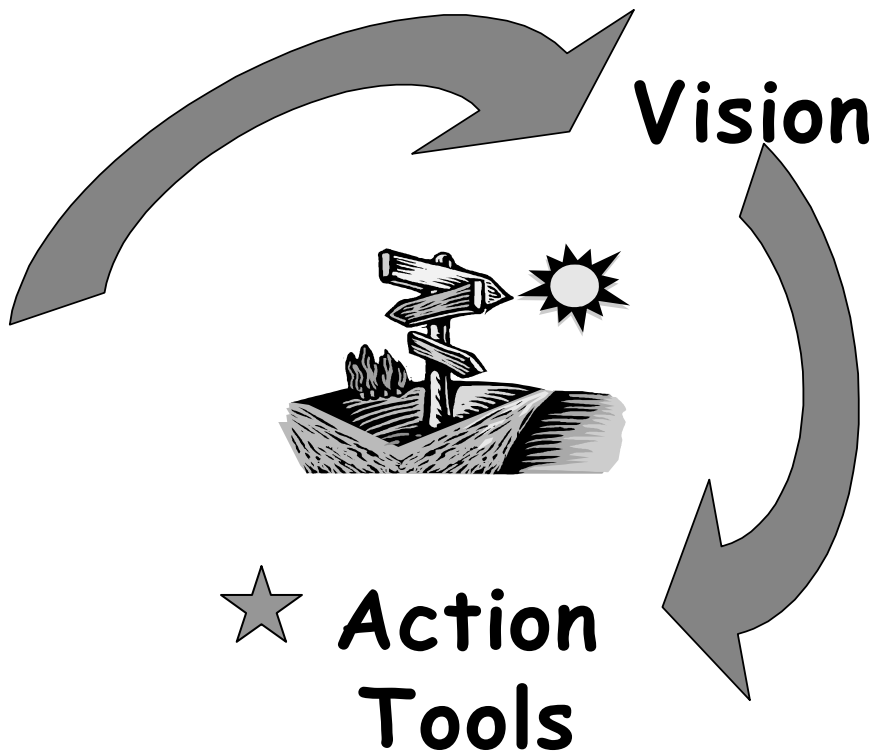
Recruiting has recently been the subject of significant study and discussion in the community-based sector. Community Literacy Ontario has completed a report and toolkit. This was developed through theoretical study, focus groups, online conferencing and piloting of various tools by community-based agencies and practitioners.

Rather than including activities in this report, we recommend the *"Recruitment and Retention Toolkit"*, available through Community Literacy Ontario ([www.nald.ca/clo.htm](http://www.nald.ca/clo.htm)).

#### **Organizing a Team**

- **Who are the people who have a stake in this process?**
- **Where are the "Spark Plugs"?**
- **Where are the experts?**

# Toolkit





# Trails to Literacy: TOOLKIT

## Action Tools- Facilitator

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### THE TRAILS FACILITATOR

As the group's facilitator you are the key to the success of this collaborative, participatory project. It is up to you to allow the participants to build their competence to manage their own activities and learning. You work side by side with them, encouraging their growth, building their confidence and promoting self-reliance.

#### Your job as facilitator includes three basic roles:

- **As Group Advisor to:**
  - Encourage group planning, decision-making & problem-solving
  - Stimulate leadership skills throughout the group
  - Ensure fair treatment and equality of all individuals
  - Promote consensus building and cooperation, in contrast to competition.
  - Assist with conflict resolution
  - Facilitate the group's development of 'participatory' evaluation and assessment tools
  
- **As 'Participatory' Trainer to:**
  - Assist the group and individual participants to improve basic literacy, numeracy and self-direction/self-management skills
  - Encourage learners to set individual goals and training plans
  - Help each participant to gain self-assessment skills
  
- **Link Person**
  - Remind the group of the original vision and goals of the project.
  - Facilitate communication between the group and:
    - Your literacy agency
    - Other *Trails* partners (Ontario Works, special interest groups, local government, etc.)
    - Outside trainers/resource people
  - Provide accountability for finances to your agency and ultimately to funders.

## What qualities and skills are important in a facilitator?

- Understanding of (and belief in) learner-centred approaches used in *Trails* projects: collaborative, authentic, participatory and intentional (see "Phase 2 - Action, Time Out for a Little Theory" in the manual)
- A way of dealing with people, respecting individual abilities and contributions.
- Willing to share ownership and responsibility with group members.
- Capacity to motivate and build team-spirit
- Techniques to help the group acquire skills in planning, goal setting, team building, record keeping, evaluation, etc.
- Ability to pass-on literacy and numeracy skills required to complete project activities
- Desire to learn from group participants

### Remember: you are a facilitator!

Don't forget, your job is to help the group, and its individual participants, become self-directed, able to identify and manage their own goals, learning and activities.

Over time your role will have to change - from starting-up and recruiting, to leading and guiding, to assisting, and finally to just advising. With the ongoing intake of most *Trails to Literacy* projects, you will need to continually adapt your role to the current group and its individual participants' abilities.

Leading, guiding, assisting and advising never means lecturing or dictating. You will be working with adults, who come to the project with individual knowledge, skills and expertise. It is up to the facilitator to help them gain self-confidence, realize their potential and develop their abilities in communication, numeracy and self-direction/motivation.

### Help the group to understand your role.

It is important to make it clear to the group that you are a facilitator, not a leader. Although part of the group itself, you cannot be the chairperson, secretary, 'teacher' etc., as these are perceived as being positions of authority. This participatory approach will be unfamiliar to most of the group. They may need encouragement to speak, to give their opinions and to make suggestions. Help them by listening and seeking their active involvement.



# Trails to Literacy: TOOLKIT

## Action Tools- Group Dynamics

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### Group Ground Rules

It is important for the participants and agency to establish a statement of the rights, responsibilities and behaviour acceptable to the group. It should be negotiated at the beginning of the project and readdressed on a regular basis as changes in participants occur. If a rule isn't working it should be looked at again. If situations occur which cause group discord, new rules should be established.

The 'ground rules' belong to the whole group, including the facilitator. The group should consider some of the following:

- Behaviour generally accepted by society
- That a *Trails* project is like a workplace with similar practices and norms
- 'Common' group meeting rules
- Respect for all
- Any rules of the agency
- How the group will deal with improper behaviour/broken rules
- Don't make too many rules

### Activity (approximately 1 hour)

With the whole group sitting in a circle or around a table, the facilitator explains that it is often necessary to establish "ground rules", to allow everyone to feel comfortable and to allow the group to work as a team. Ground rules are the basic etiquette and rules that everyone will "live by" when the group is working together. The facilitator should advise the group that the exercise or activity is to establish a list of rules. Everything agreed to by the group will be acted upon but: some rules, national laws and whole agency rules, cannot be negotiated; and the overall vision and goals of the *Trails to Literacy* project should be kept in mind at all times.

If the group is large, participants can form smaller random groups. Probably four in a group is best to encourage the best discussion and allow everyone some input. Each group should have a pen and a large sheet of paper. They draw a large circle on the paper and inside the circle write everything they would like to see happening



in a good group meeting or in a good team. Outside the circle write everything they would not like.

Then, everybody returns to the whole group to discuss their ideas. If time is short, you can limit the discussion to just the positive things - the "Do's" (those inside the circles) or the "Don'ts" (outside the circles).

The activity finishes with a discussion of *their* rules, focusing on areas where all the groups agree. Attempt to resolve areas where there is little agreement. Unresolved areas should be put off for later discussion as "voting" will cause bad feelings and dissention within the group.

After the negotiation, someone can take all the sheets of paper and combine the rules. These should be given to all participants and displayed in an obvious spot.

The group needs to decide on their own 'bottom-line' ground rules, but here are some suggestions:

### **Ground Rules**

1. We believe that everyone is responsible for his/her own actions.
2. We will help each other in every way. This means everyone working together for the good of the project and each person in it, including giving and receiving feedback, joint decision-making, and support.
3. We believe in a policy of non-violence. Everyone has the right to live without verbal, physical or emotional abuse.
4. Everyone is a learner, whatever their role in the project.
5. We believe that everyone has a right to feel good about themselves and what they do.
6. We believe in equal opportunities for everybody.

(<http://www.saqnet.co.uk/users/moostuff/collab/index.htm> )

**Handout**

**Not everyone feels comfortable in a group. Some people are shy and find it hard to speak up. Others take over or don't pay attention. Some people just have to have it their way. Many find it difficult to make the compromises needed to reach an agreement.**

*Trails to Literacy*, however, needs to involve every participant actively. It will require building the attitudes, skills and knowledge to work together in a group, as a team. These are useful transferable work skills – skills that are useful in any job. In *Trails*, the learning process is just as important as what is being learned.

The following are some things to consider when working with your *Trails* group:

***Trails* learning:**

- Is based on the needs and interests of group members
- Uses each participant's knowledge, experience and skills
- Considers every participant a trainee and a trainer
- Uses practical real-life activities so participants learn by doing

**Group members benefit by:**

- Seeing and more clearly understanding their own goals and needs
- Becoming more aware of their own values, attitudes, skills and knowledge
- Discovering their hidden talents and abilities
- Getting experience in problem solving and decision making
- Above all, increasing their self-confidence and self-esteem.

**The role of a *Trails* group member**

As group member, you are both a facilitator (someone who makes things easier) and a participant. As a participant, you contribute your knowledge, ideas and experiences. You also learn from the other people. As facilitator:

- You ask, probe and listen to make sure you understand and to encourage discussion: "What do you mean", "why do you think so?"
- You listen to other people's views and opinions: "I understand that you think..."
- You give participants time to express opinions and ask others to pay attention
- You encourage everybody to contribute
- You support creative ideas
- You look for ways to get the other participants involved
- You consider carefully how others may react.
- You help guide the discussions – you may introduce a topic, bring others into it, avoid 'ganging-up' and recap regularly

## Meetings

People don't want to attend meetings where they feel they are just wasting their time. At the end of any meeting, it is important that the group members feel that the time spent was worthwhile, and that they were an important part of the discussions/ decisions. Meetings are excellent places to improve speaking and listening abilities. They also build valued team skills.

To make sure that members get the most from their meetings, you should help the group to:

- Have a chairperson and note-taker for each meeting. (Rotation is good).
- Structure the meeting by setting an agenda with topics and priorities
- Allow flexibility so that the agenda can be changed if other topics arise during the meeting
- Report about the previous meeting and any other important group (sub-group) activities
- Use group tools, such as brainstorming, to gain more ideas and ensure *group* planning
- Encourage members to participate in discussions - one (or a few members) should not dominate the others
- Encourage decision-making - but do not push for decisions, which may split the group (ex. Consensus vs. Votes).

Again, we remind you that the participants may not be familiar with group processes. They will need help to set up practices to make the team and its meetings run smoothly and efficiently. But remember, it is their group and their learning that is important.

## Other Group Functions

The backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints of all participants are valued in a *Trails to Literacy* project. Everyone learns from everyone else. Everyone has the opportunity to make contributions and to value the contributions of others.

It is important that participants are not 'grouped' according to levels, ability, interests, etc. Without 'integration' the participants do not get the opportunity to learn from each other, provide peer assessment, and, possibly most important, feel like valued contributors (givers, not just receivers).

Some of the positive group functions that should be promoted include:

- **Planning together** and setting mutual goals. This encourages the participants to depend on each other. Working together as equals in the group helps to build confidence and cooperation.
- Being **responsible as individuals** and committed to a task for the sake of the whole group. This promotes dependability.
- **Good communication** between members. Poor communication can cause misunderstanding and bad feelings. Good communication builds trust and strengthens relations between members. It needs to be two-way, sharing and listening. It needs to be open to the whole group, not done in small 'cliques'. Breaking into small groups at irregular intervals to work on common interests or projects allows a shy participant to open up and can also allow a break from possible personality conflicts.
- **Peer tutoring** - Find ways for the participants to teach, demonstrate, or illustrate the things they are learning. (When we learn something, and then we must teach it, we learn it better. We retain it longer. We help ourselves to understand more about it.)
- Peer **evaluation**, group evaluation, and group reflection all allow the participants to move towards self-assessment.
- Development of **group skills** (team-building, group dynamics, problem-solving, conflict management, etc.).
- Providing plenty of **positive feedback**: recognition of achievement.

### Group Training or Workshops

Group meetings also offer an opportunity to organize workshops or training sessions to improve the members' understanding of useful topics or skills improvement. Examples:

- **Group participation and processes** such as decision making, group dynamics, leadership, planning of group activities, budgeting, cost analysis, basic bookkeeping, monitoring and evaluation, and negotiating and bargaining.
- **Specialized training** (to suit the groups' & project's needs) Subjects could include hand-tool safety, health, sanitation, first-aid, writing to an audience, sewing, introduction to computers, desk-top publishing, genealogy, etc.
- **Outings, Field Trips and Guests**  
Don't get stuck in a rut, get out and enjoy time together! Bring in a fresh face!



# Trails to Literacy: TOOLKIT

## Action Tools- Planning & Problem Solving

### TOOLS FOR PLANNING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING

A 'Quick Pick" to help choose which tool to use:

If you want to do this:	Gather as many ideas as you can	Group your ideas	Figure out how ideas connect	See the steps	Help make decisions
This tool may be useful:	Affinity Diagram	Affinity Diagram	Affinity Diagram		Affinity Diagram
	Brainstorming				Brainstorming
		Fishbone Diagram	Fishbone Diagram	Fishbone Diagram	
	Issue Bin				
	Lotus Diagram	Lotus Diagram			
			Tree Diagram	Tree Diagram	
			Venn Diagram		

## Issue Bin

*An issue bin is a great tool that allows open communication. It helps participants express concerns, issues, or suggestion in a non-threatening way.*

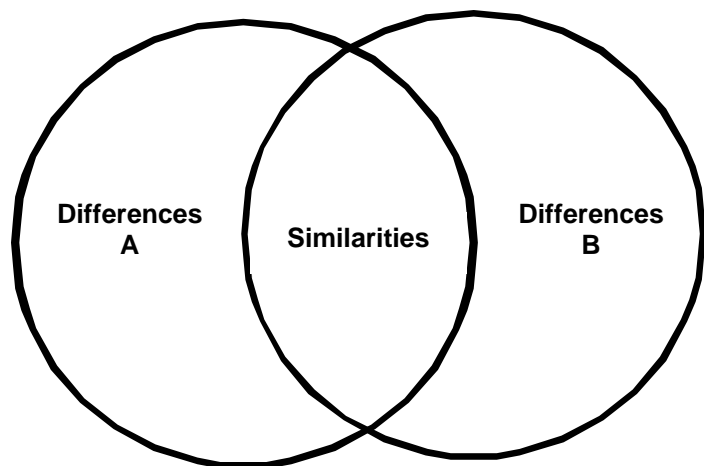
Set up a large sheet of paper, poster or white-board as your issue bin. Using post-it notes, participants are allowed at any time to post issues, concerns, or suggestions. (Make sure there are always post-its available near the "bin". This allows participants to become involved in the communication process without being identified. The group should be encouraged not to mention names and to try not to "pick on" any one individual.

The issue bin gets checked weekly by the facilitator or other person chosen by the group. At the next meeting discuss the suggestions or use brainstorming, the fishbone, etc. to come up with solutions to the problems listed in the issue bin.

Issues may range from petty to serious, but they are all worth addressing. Small issues can become very large disagreements if ignored. Finding solutions to basic situations helps build the skills to communicate and problem-solve. The participants are learning life-long skills to help them in any situation.

**Venn diagram** The Venn Diagram is used to compare similarities and differences. When you compare, you need two or three ideas. The diagram below illustrates the comparison of two ideas. If three ideas were compared, a third circle would be added.

- Decide what the differences are between the two ideas.
- Write the differences of one idea on the left side of the diagram and the differences of the other idea on the right side of the diagram.
- Decide how the ideas are similar; these are written in the central where the two circles overlap Finish the diagram by writing a title that summarizes the diagram. A summary or conclusion statement can be added



## **Brainstorming**

Brainstorming is one of the most commonly used group decision-making techniques. It is designed to generate a large number of creative ideas through an interactive, inclusive process. A brainstorm starts with a clear question, and ends with a list of ideas. That's what it does well - give you a 'raw' list of ideas. Some will be good, and some won't. But, if you try to analyze ideas in the brainstorming session, you will ruin the session. Wait. Later, you can analyze the results of a brainstorm with other tools. In particular, *Affinity Diagrams* are designed to sort a raw list, to begin to categorize these ideas.

A **Structured Brainstorming** can sometimes help a group get into the idea of brainstorming or can ensure that all members get a chance to provide ideas. It can be done as a **round robin**, where participants take turns shouting out ideas, passing when an idea does not come to mind quickly. Another way to ease into the technique is dividing the group into **small groups** of three or four. Brainstorming is done in this smaller unit, with all ideas generated being shared with the whole group later.

### **Guidelines:**

- Make sure that all team members understand the objective of the brainstorming.
- Encourage active participation of *all* members.
- Develop a high energy, enthusiastic climate.
- *Avoid discussing* ideas as they are presented. Don't criticize, compliment, etc.
- Encourage creative thinking, including far-out ideas.
- Build and expand on the ideas of others.
- Record all ideas exactly as presented on a flipchart. Try two 'recorders' to keep up with the pace.
- Avoid stopping when the ideas slow down. Rather, try to generate as long a list as possible.

**How to conduct a brainstorming session:**

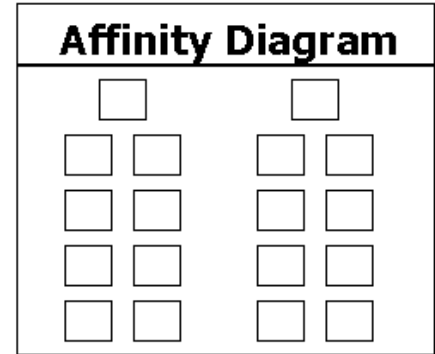
1. Review the guidelines and these steps for brainstorming.
2. Make it clear what the objective of the brainstorming is. Make sure everyone understands and is satisfied with the question before you open up for ideas.
3. Give everyone a few seconds to jot down a few ideas before getting started.
4. Members shout out ideas (Optional: Begin by going around the table or room, giving everyone a chance to voice his/her ideas or to pass. After a few rounds, open the floor. )
5. More ideas are better. Encourage wild ideas and piggybacking upon others' ideas.
6. Each idea is recorded exactly as presented on a flipchart. Don't judge or comment on ideas - neither good nor bad.
7. Record exactly what is said. Go back to make ideas clear only after everyone is out of ideas.
8. Don't stop until ideas stop. Allow for late-coming ideas.
9. *After* all ideas have been presented, the team makes the list clear by discussing the ideas to ensure that everyone has the same understanding of each idea. Duplications are also eliminated in this step along with ideas that aren't appropriate.



**Affinity Diagram (Grouping things that are related)**

Affinity Diagrams are a group decision-making tool that allows the participants to sort and process large quantities of ideas, choices or opinions into related groups. Usually, an affinity diagram is used to refine a *brainstorm* into something that makes sense and can be dealt with more easily.

To create an affinity diagram, you sort the brainstormed list, moving ideas from the brainstorm into affinity, or "like", sets, creating groups of related ideas.

**As you sort ideas:**

1. *Brainstorm* ideas should be recorded on small cards or post-it notes.
2. Randomly lay out cards on a table, flipchart, wall, etc
3. Rapidly group ideas that seem to belong together - get up and gather around the area where the cards are placed.
4. It isn't important to define why they belong together.
5. Clarify any ideas in question.
6. Copy an idea into more than one 'affinity' set if appropriate.
7. Look for small sets. Should they belong in a larger group?
8. Do large sets need to be broken down into 2 or 3 smaller sets?
9. When most of the ideas have been sorted, you can start to enter titles for each set.
10. Discuss the groupings and try to understand how they relate to each other.

**Suggestions**

- To be clear, ideas should be in phrases or sentences, not just single words
- Minimize the discussion while sorting -- discuss while developing the heading cards.
- Aim for 5-10 groups of ideas.



## Ideas i

This is a *Brainstorming/Affinity Diagramming* activity to help the group make decisions for future direction and activities.

### Equipment

- 30 or so sheets of paper in the shape of flying birds, depending on number of participants. Different colours are more visually appealing.
- Fine to medium point felt markers.
- Sticky-tack putty or scotch/masking tape pieces
- About 10 sheets of paper for title cards - try sun and cloud shapes for positive and negatives if applicable

Time Required: This activity should be broken up into steps and done over a series of meetings.

### Instructions

***Everyone is to imagine that they are a bird that has been away on a long migration flight. You are just returning after \_\_\_ amount of time and you are flying over your community and your 'Trails' site. What would you like to see when you look down? (or What don't you want to see?)***

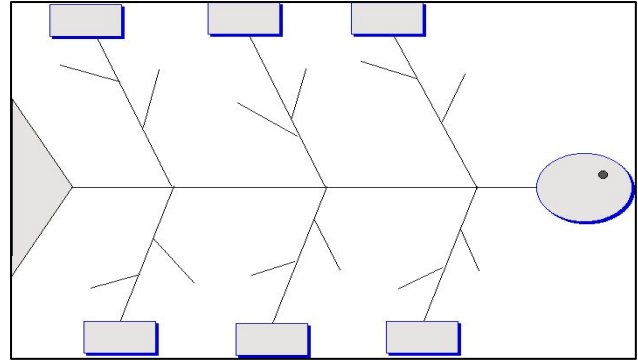
In *Brainstorming* fashion call out your 'vision' of the future. Record ideas onto the bird-shapes either using one recorder or having each participant write out their own idea.

When all the ideas have dried-up, use the *Affinity Diagram* process to sort ideas in similar visions.

Use the title cards (in shapes of the sun and moon) to label your groups or sets of ideas. As a whole group or in smaller groups, consider each set of ideas. Decide what is most important to you. Use the *Goal Setting Starts With a Dream* chart to help set "SMART" goals. Use the *Tree Diagram* or *Lotus Diagram* to help plan steps and activities to reach your 'vision'.

## Fishbone Diagram

This tool is referred to by several different names: Ishikawa diagram, Cause-and-Effect diagram and Fishbone diagram. The first name is after the inventor of the tool, Kaoru Ishikawa (1969) who first used the technique in the 1960s.



The Fishbone Diagram is a skeleton of a fish. The fish skeleton consists of head, spine, ribs, and bones attached to the ribs. It is an organizing or problem-solving tool and is often used to visualize cause and effects of a decision. It can be used to show the various jobs to be done in an activity or project, to help sequence steps in a process, show the positive and negative aspects to a decision, and of course help show what is leading to a problem.

Fishbone Diagrams allow you to add ideas as they occur. If you write these ideas in a linear form, it is very difficult to add ideas. This kind of diagram allows you to see the various relationships between and among ideas. The linear format does not do this.

### **Suggestions**

The Fishbone Diagram helps groups to organize their thoughts and work towards solutions. It is easy to learn and use. However, as with other group processes, it shouldn't be used without learning group organizational skills, such as working with others, searching for the truth, being open to different ideas, seeing others who disagree with you as just 'team mates' with different ideas. Without training, internal politics can take over (e.g., the most powerful opinion dominates; or team members bring to the diagram construction personal agenda). The group should work through some samples with a facilitator before being left on their own.

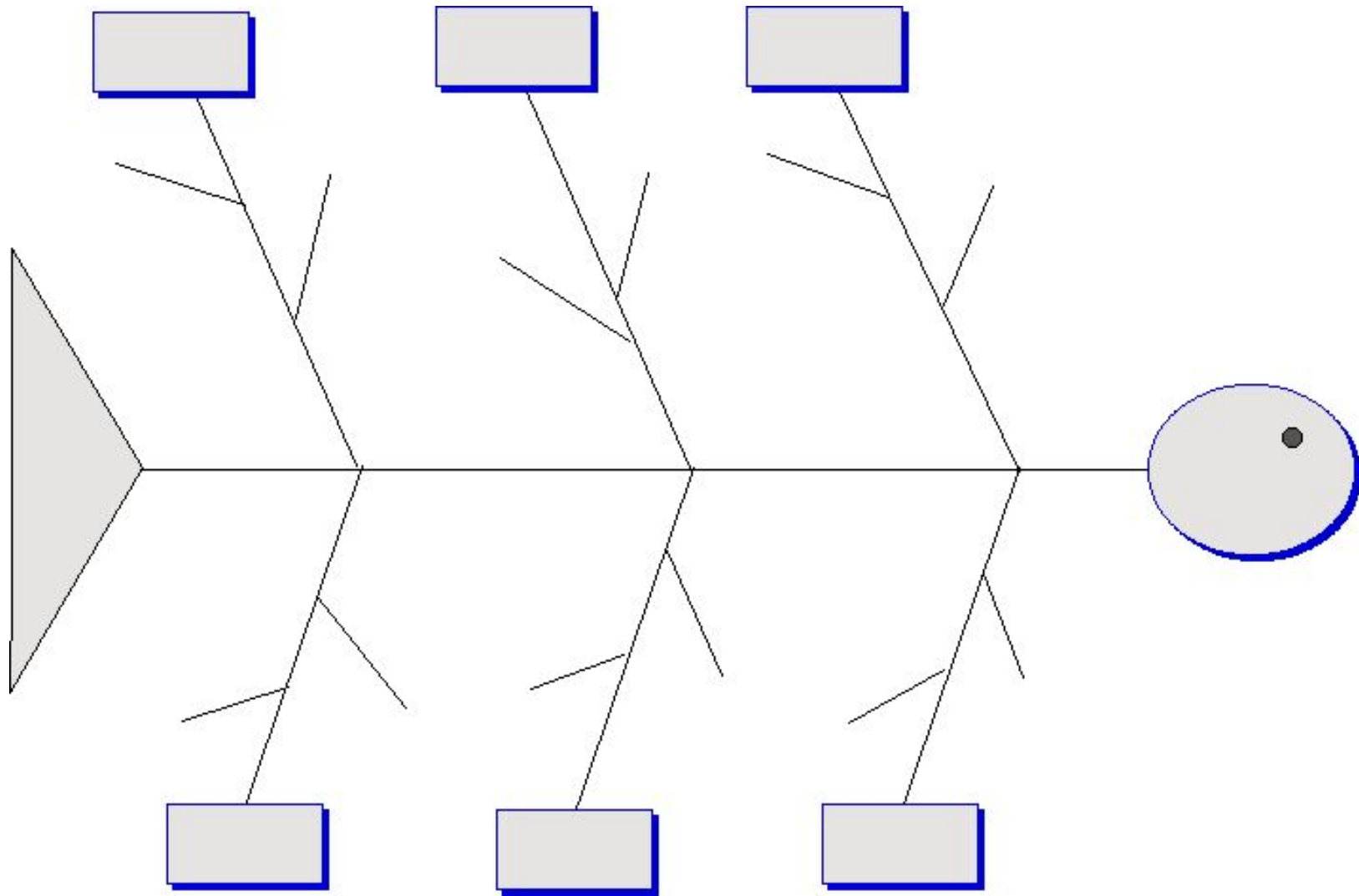
## Fishbone Instructions

1. Turn your sheet of paper to a landscape position. Draw fish or use sample form that follows.
2. Label the head of the fish. (Ex. Identify the problem.)
3. Add as many ribs to the fish's spine as you need. Each rib is a major idea/concept. Use Brainstorming or Structured Brainstorming techniques (Round Robin, Small Groups, etc.) to gather input.
4. Add as many smaller fish bones to this skeleton, as needed. Only single words or phrases are needed to express your ideas. Each detail or related detail is written on one fishbone.
5. Use different colour for a major idea or concept and all its details. Many people find that colour is a great way to remember related ideas.

## Example

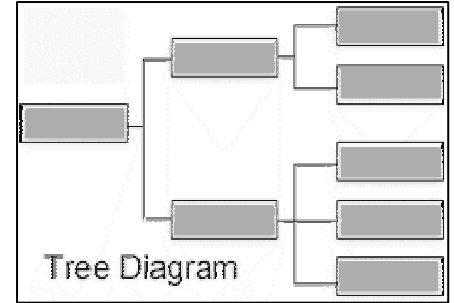
To analyze the reasons for a specific topic like a native wildflower community garden, draw the bones of the fishbone diagram. On the right side write the topic, "Wildflower Garden". Next, divide the major bones of the diagram to show different kinds of reasons for doing the project: improve reading and research skills; create something pleasing for the community; gain awareness of environment; improve team skills; and learn about medicinal uses of native plants. Participants brainstorm activities that would be involved in each of these reasons. Record these activities under the appropriate category. When finished, you will have a number of reasons and activities to start your project. Take one section and work on it by setting goals and an action plan.

**Fishbone Diagram**



## Tree Diagram

The Tree Diagram is used to figure out all the various tasks that must be carried out to achieve an objective. It is a useful planning tool that helps structure the activities of the team. If the group uses it carefully and thoroughly, it will give them a better understanding of the a project, and will help the team focus on specific tasks that are needed to get something done.



The Tree diagram is a linear thinking tool. Each level of detail is determined by moving from left to right, and asking, *"What needs to happen to achieve this outcome, goal or action?"* Participants usually start off slow and then pick up momentum as they become familiar with linear thinking.

### Tree Diagram Instructions

- The Tree Diagram maps out details of a plan and levels of tasks needed to accomplish a goal.
- The major headings are the tasks, the sub-goals or the means by which the plan will be achieved.
- Breakdown each major task area into more detail by providing answers to the question "What needs to addressed to achieve the solution?" Repeat the question for each successive level until the team agrees there is enough detail to complete the plan or until all the tasks are assigned.
- Review the completed Tree Diagram to determine if all the tasks need to be done. If team members are unsure about the value of some tasks/activities, use decision-making tools to evaluate the possible activities against things such as costs, risks, timelines, and feasibility.
- Review the completed Tree Diagram to determine if all the necessary tasks are included. If necessary tasks were omitted, add them to the diagram.

**Tools needed for Tree Diagram:** *flipchart paper, markers, post-it notes.*

1. **Create an outcome statement.** Discuss and agree on the specific desired outcome, what you want to accomplish.
2. **Identify the goals that will achieve the outcome.** Brainstorm, "What needs to be done that will allow you to reach the outcome?" Goals should be written so that you know when something is done (ex. Five benches will be placed along the path. )
3. **Brainstorm the "actions" necessary to achieve each goal.** Develop statements of activity, something to be done. This is how the goals will be achieved.
4. Review the chart, discuss the details and arrive at consensus.

### **Suggestions**

- This tool may take a moment for the group to grasp. An exercise to demonstrate is helpful.
- Use felt pens and post-it notes. They can be seen from a distance and can be rearranged as needed.
- Keep asking, "What needs to be done to achieve...?"
- Focus on one goal at a time while identifying the actions. Do not be concerned with the chronological ordering at this time. Some actions may crossover between goals.
- Encourage action statements, with verbs and details.
- Two levels of actions are usually enough to start the planning.

### **Lotus Diagram**

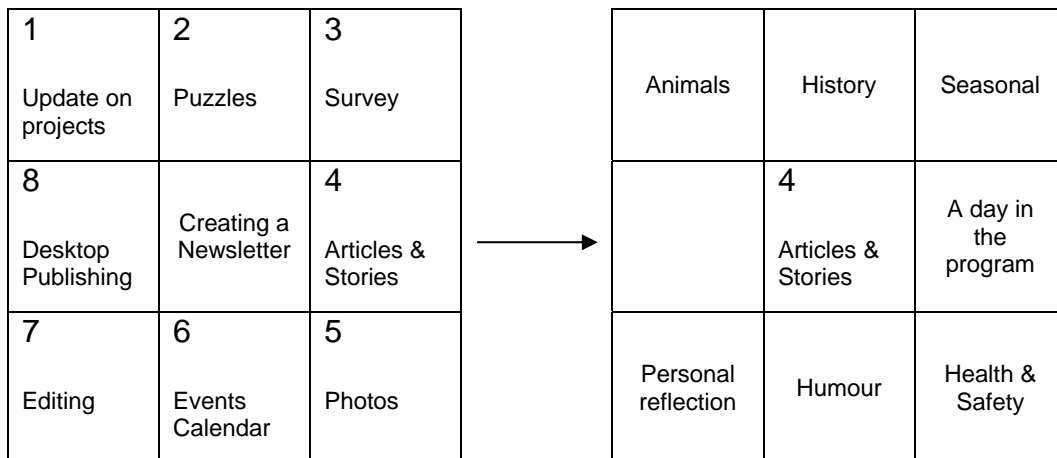
A Lotus Diagram allows individual participants, project teams or the whole group to:

- Plan activities
- Organize and prioritize information
- Build on ideas
- Break broad topics into parts
- Use logical thinking patterns

**Lotus Diagram Instructions**

1. Use the form included here or draw a 'Tic-Tac-Toe' chart (9 squares in 3 rows and 3 columns) on a piece of paper. Depending on the size you prefer you could use anything from 3"X3" post-its to full-size paper. You will need a total of 9 charts.
2. Number the boxes as in our examples or use colour coding.
3. Put your main idea, topic, project or problem in the centre box of the centre chart.
4. Think about or *Brainstorm* up to eight sub-topics or parts of the main idea.
5. Place these sub-topics into the eight outside squares of the centre chart.
6. Transfer these eight sub-topics to the centre squares of a correspondingly numbered or coloured chart.
7. Brainstorm again.
8. Finally, prioritize your ideas and decide what you want to do, or who you want to do it.

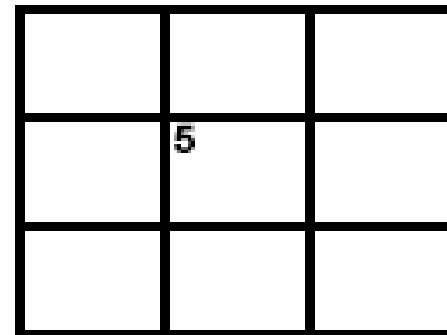
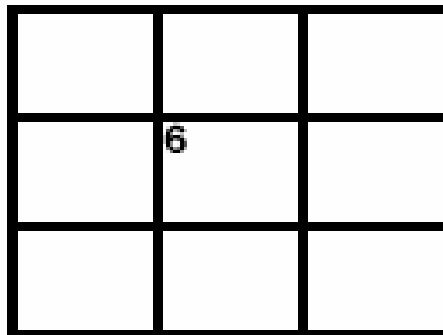
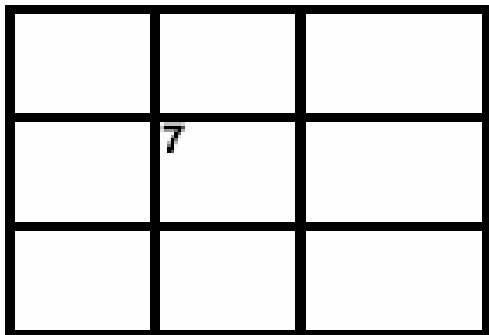
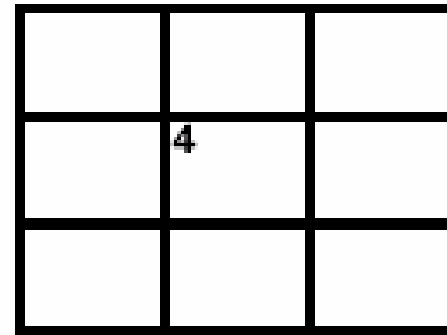
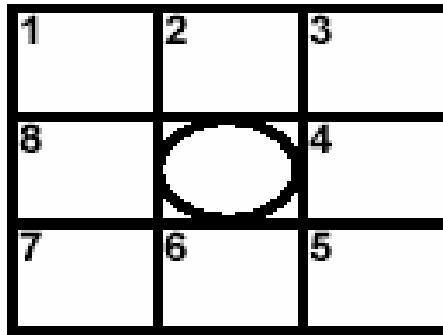
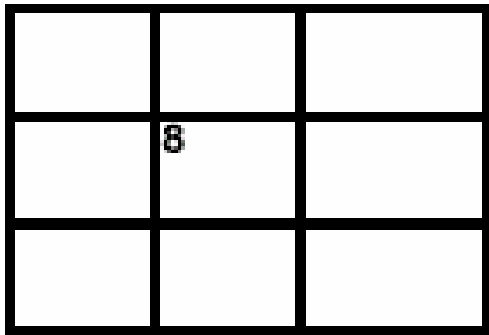
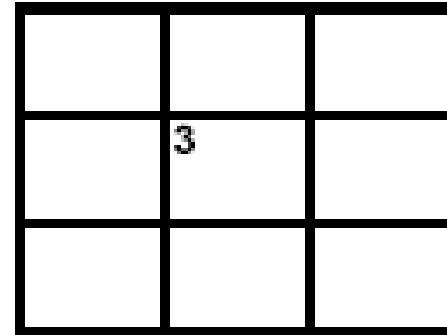
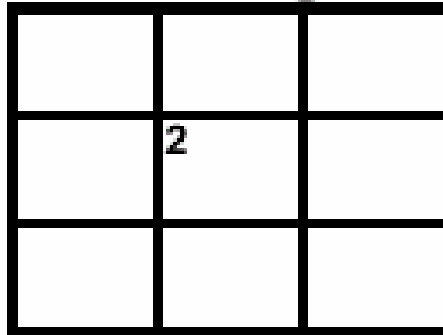
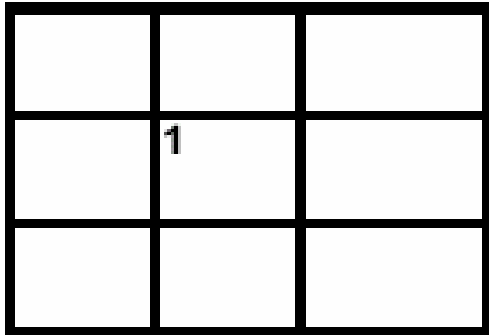
Below is a sample of a Lotus Diagram's central chart around the main idea of writing a newsletter. To its right is a sample of the breakdown of the sub-topic #4 "Articles and Stories":



As said earlier Lotus Diagrams can be used for a variety of purposes. Another example would be a writing project, let's say about a certain animal. The animal would be your main topic. Sub-topics could be: what it looks like, what it eats, how long it lives, where it is located, where it makes its nest, etc. The Lotus Diagram helps the participant to break their writing down into paragraphs, each with its own theme.



### Lotus Diagram





# Trails to Literacy: TOOLKIT

## Action Tools- Tools for Individuals

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### TOOLS FOR INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS

Group activities, where the team works collaboratively to plan, act and evaluate, help individuals to learn in a social context. They learn from each other about how to listen, speak and act; how to become more open to varied opinions; and how to deal with difficulties and complex situations.

However, the basis of *Trails to Literacy's* effectiveness to learning is that students are in charge of their own learning - they provide the direction, set the goals, reflect on the value, and evaluate the results of their own learning processes. Therefore we offer some thoughts and tools to help individual participants 'take charge'.

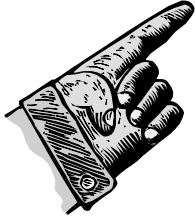
#### **Characteristics of a student responsible for own learning:**

- Self-directed
- Sets goals
- Planner, decision-maker
- Problem-solver, manages change
- Ability to process information
- Self-confidence & belief in ability to succeed
- Awareness of their thinking & learning processes; "thinking about thinking,"
- Reflects, and monitors progress
- Evaluates

From the world of business we know that people who achieve success are those who engage in planning, identifying specific goals, and designing strategies to work toward them  
(Peters & Waterman, 1982)

...reflecting on their own performance by engaging in planning, monitoring and evaluating behaviors that foster self-awareness and can work in conjunction with personal goal setting.  
(Barell, 1995).

## Self-Direction Handout



"I choose to direct my thoughts and energies toward accomplishment. I choose not to be discouraged by my worries or feelings of failure."

1. What are your needs?
  - Recognize
  - Develop
2. Who can help?
  - Resources
  - People
  - Programs
3. What can help?
4. How can it be done?
  - Plan the steps
  - Milestones
5. Is it working?



**Self-Direction**

<b>K</b> <b>(Know)</b>	<b>W</b> <b>(Want to know)</b>	<b>H</b> <b>(How to find out)</b>	<b>L</b> <b>(Learned)</b>

**What is Self-Direction?**

- **Setting your own direction**
- **Having control over and personal investment in your life**
- **Knowing what you know, what you want to know, why you want to know it**
- **Being able to plan and follow-through on your goals**
- **Taking responsibility for your own life, your behaviour**
- **Deciding who you are and who you want to be**
- **Believing in yourself**

**Blocks to Self-Direction**

- **Not given the opportunity**
- **Threat to others**
- **Unaware of personal power**
- **Low self-awareness**
- **Lack of self-esteem**
- **Procrastination**
- **Lack of goals**

**Helps to Self-Direction**

- **Self-reflection**
- **Smart goal-setting**
- **Recognition and rewards**
- **Practise**
- **Matching strengths and interests**
- **Investigating options and resources**
- **Planning**
- **Decision-making**
- **Problem-solving**
- **Time-management**
- **Self-assessment**
- **Motivation**
- **Pride and self-confidence**
- **Baby-steps**
- **Focus**

## Goal-Setting

### What is a goal?

A goal is something you want to do, to accomplish, or to achieve. It's as simple as that. Usually a goal has some time line attached to it.

### What is the difference between a goal and a dream?

Some people say that a dream is something you would like to happen, and a goal is something that you plan to happen. What do you think?

### Why is Goal-Setting Important?

Many study problems such as procrastination, poor concentration, and lack of motivation are really caused by not having clear goals. Goal-setting is a skill that needs practise; it is a muscle that requires exercise. Without goals that are clearly defined, stated and written down, you will drift through life and certainly drift through your learning and study sessions.

If you do not have a clear vision of what is important to you in your life, you will be distracted by whatever crosses your path. It's not a bad thing to be curious and interested in those things that stray into your attention range. But without the focus you get by having defined goals and priorities you can easily be led off-track.

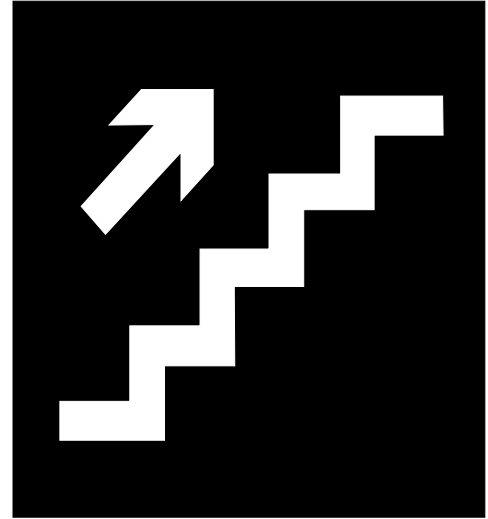
### Smart Goals

**S**pecific  
**M**easurable  
**A**ttainable  
**R**ealistic  
**T**ime-based

Be specific (not "Do some studying" but "Complete 15 problems")  
Be reasonable  
Be measurable  
Be rewarded

## Goal-Setting Steps

1. **Decide specifically what it is you want.**  
Before you can work towards your goal you have to know what it is.
2. **Write it down.** Don't keep your goals in your head. Putting them down on paper helps you commit to them.
3. **Set a deadline.** Deadlines have a way of motivating us and help us to set time lines.
4. **Make a list of what's in it for you.** This is the fun part!
5. **Prepare yourself for obstacles.** Don't fool yourself about the bumps you may hit along the way.
6. **Identify all the information, people, etc. that can help you get to your goal.**
7. **Create your plan.** Make a first draft of your plan of action. Set priorities.
8. **Break it down into basic steps.**
9. **Act on it now!** Finally you have to get busy working on it.



## Types of Goals

Personal Goals /Lifetime Goals



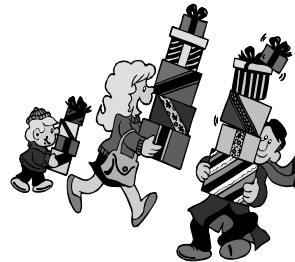
Artistic



Attitude

Career

Education



Family

Financial



Physical

Pleasure



Public Service





**Decision-Making**

- Every decision that we make (or don't make) will affect our future.
- We all try to make good decisions. Sometimes, though, we might not have all the important information, we might not consider everything, we might miss out on a 'good thing',
- Being afraid of making a wrong choice, or not knowing how to make a choice, can make us 'put off' decisions. Again, we may miss out.
- Following a decision-making process can help us make sure that we make 'smart' decisions on time.
- The time and effort spent on making a decision should match with the importance of the decision.

**Decision-Making Process**

- 1) Identify and write out the problem or decision.
  - What am I trying to decide?
- 2) Gather information.
  - Make sure you have it all!
- 3) Brainstorm options.
- 4) Predict consequences.
  - Think about what might happen. Good & Bad.
- 5) Check the "forgotten factors"
  - Attitudes, values (yours and other's)
  - Feelings, emotions
  - Pressures: friends, family, funder
  - Risk levels (What do you have to lose?)
  - Habits
- 6) Choose an option.
- 7) Create an action plan. (Try to think about possible barriers.)
- 8) Try it out.
- 9) Evaluate.
  - Did it work? What went well? What didn't?

Adapted from: <http://www.nksuccess.com>

**Activity** Try this activity, and then talk out your answers with someone else – your tutor, facilitator, or the *Trails* group.

**What if:** *James has offered to coordinate or ‘run’ the newsletter project. He has written an article and received a puzzle and a picture from some other Trails group members. He is only two weeks away from his original deadline and he is getting worried and upset that he doesn’t have enough. What if you are James’ friend? Decide what you will do?*

**What are you trying to decide? (Identify the problem.)**

**Gather information:** (What, When, Why, Who?)

**Brainstorm:**

Options	Positive Consequences	Negative Consequences	Factors	Rating
Possible ways to solve the problem.	What’s the best thing that can happen if I choose this option?	What’s the worst thing that can happen me if I choose this option?	Who would be affected by this solution? How would they be affected? What are the risks?	

Create an action plan for the best option (including possible barriers and solutions)

**Trails Training Plans**

Considering the real-life activities that *Trails to Literacy* projects use to support learning, it is very important that the links to the learner's goals and their literacy, numeracy and self-development skills are clearly articulated. It is also important to ensure that the participatory nature of *Trails* is carried through the Training Plan and Lesson Plans development. Both the learner and the facilitator need to understand, at all times, what literacy and basic skills are being developed.

<b>When developing an individualized training plan:</b>					
<b>The tutor needs:</b>					
Good interpersonal skills: - listening - questioning - acknowledging - reassuring	A knowledge of: - strategies - learning styles - resources available - other learning opportunities	The ability to break tasks down into skills needed	The ability to identify which skills need reinforcing and which need to be learned	To use the appropriate language	To have information from initial interview (personal aspirations, learning styles, needs etc.).
<b>Learners need:</b>					
To understand the process and the rationale for it	To feel: - accepted not judged - able to ask questions - able to say what they want - able to disagree - comfortable	To have to think about what they want to do	To understand their commitment to the programme		

*Adapted from: Individual Training Plans by Janet Field, The Basic Skills Agency Magazine Feb. 2000 <http://www.basic-skills.co.uk>*

**Short-term Goals to be developed or demonstrated in Trails to Literacy group work**

**For:**

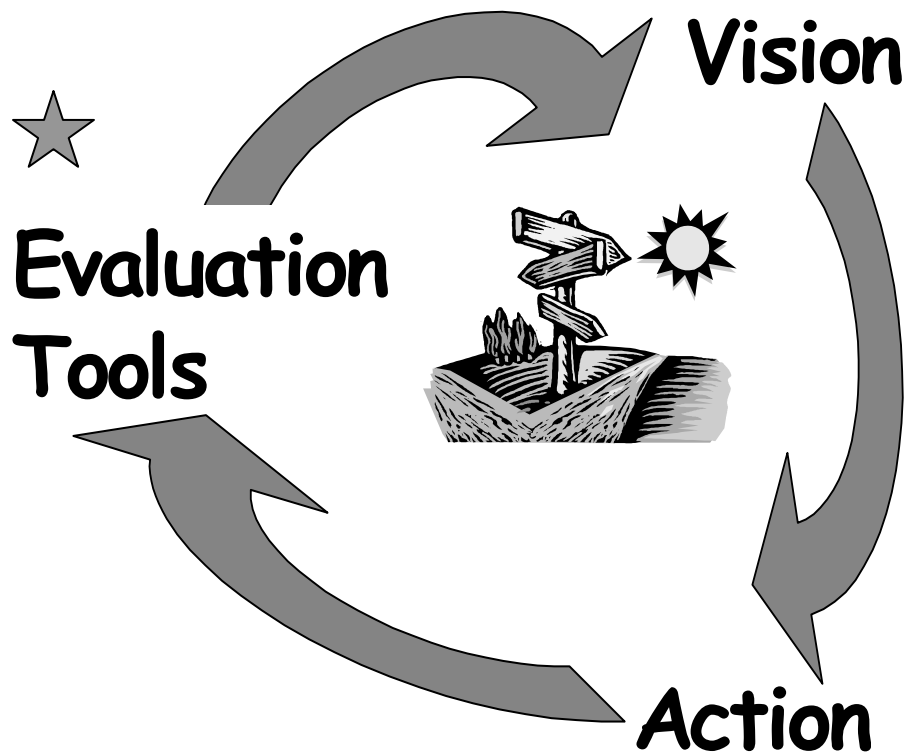
**Date:**

Area	Specific Skills/Level	Suggested Approaches	Demo	Time Frame	Goal Met

*Sample***Short-term Goals to be developed or demonstrated in Trails to Literacy group work****For:** Jack Spratt**Goal:** kitchen staff/cook**Date:** Oct 25/02

<b>Area</b>	<b>Specific Skills/Level</b>	<b>Suggested Approaches</b>	<b>Demo</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Goal Met</b>
Self management	Time management for personal life management	Daily use of a day-timer and "to do" lists.			
Reading for info-research	To be able to read and understand various materials (level 3)	Follow steps of written instructions, read menus, recipes, order forms, safety manuals, policies, time sheets, evaluations, scheduling, labels, memos, notes, specifications, regulations.	X	3 months	
Speaking and listening effectively	To be able to verbally express opinions and share ideas. To develop effective listening skills. (level 1&2)	Reporting to the group and keeping them updated re: Upcoming Festival of Trees. Sharing ideas with the group and offering his personal opinion. Participation in daily group meetings.	X	3 months	
Numeracy	( level 1&2 ) Money math, measurement and calculation math, numerical estimation	Measure recipes for Festival of Trees. Budgeting and costing for various projects. Fractions and percentages. Basic operations.	X	3 months	
Writing	( level 1&2 )To be able to organize and record information. To share and request information	Maintain a daily journal Newsletter articles and recipes.	X	3 months	
Computer Training	To be able to use computers for research, personal use and to develop a portfolio.	Introduction to -computers, Internet, and portfolio development	X	6 months	

# Toolkit





# Trails to Literacy: TOOLKIT

## Evaluation Tools

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### Self-assessment

*Trails to Literacy* groups are natural places in which to learn self-assessment. Participants learn to take responsibility for monitoring, adjusting, and questioning themselves and each other. In *Trails*, students learn to evaluate their own learning from their experiences with group evaluation. Also, because decisions about activities and group performance are shared, students feel freer to express doubts, feelings of success, questions, and concerns, than when they are evaluated only by a practitioner. They monitor their progress toward goals, and, based on monitoring, make changes in what they are doing in order to reach their goals.

In a participatory *Trails* group, assessment means evaluating...

- Whether you learned what you wanted to learn;
- The effectiveness of the learning activities;
- The quality of learning in real-life application;
- The validity of decisions about which results show the best work;
- The usefulness of the activities used for learning; and
- Whether future learning is needed and how that learning might be realized.

Participants can assess themselves and their peers using checklists, tally sheets, rating scales, rubrics, discussion (whole-class or small-group), or open-ended reflection sheets.

Meaningful reflection takes practice. Regular, uninterrupted time for participants to think about their progress is necessary. At first, you may need to guide their reflection with questions such as these:

- What did I learn today?
- What did I do well?
- What am I confused about?
- What do I need help with?
- What do I want to know more about?
- What am I going to work on next?

**Questions - What? & Why?****Activity** \_\_\_\_\_**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_**What did you do (steps)?****What did you learn?****Why is it useful to you?****What more do you want to learn?****Why do you want to learn that?**



## Portfolios

Portfolios are an excellent way for students to show who they are, what they are able to do and how they are able to do it. A portfolio should be a collection of the student's best work. However, a portfolio's most effective purpose is in self-evaluation.

Without the student evaluating his or her own work, a major piece in learning is lost.

- Students should be able to select their best work samples for their portfolio (although some peer group assistance is helpful at first).
- They should understand why they chose it and be clear about why it is their best writing so far. This will allow them to identify their errors by themselves in the future.
- They should comment on what they did to complete the samples to help them identify their learning process. Explaining how these 'best' pieces are different from their other or earlier pieces, allows them to see for themselves the skills they have learned and the improvements they are making.
- From the comparison and analysis they set their own goals for future learning.

It is clear that students must think carefully about their work as they complete their portfolios. This self-assessment becomes part of the program's assessment as well.

### Choosing Work for My Portfolio Activity

1. Look at your recent work, reviewing it to see if you used the skills you are trying to learn. What are these skills? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Arrange your work in order, leading up to the best. You should keep all the evidence of what you did to develop each piece behind each final draft.
3. Select your two best work samples. Place these samples of your 'best' work in your portfolio. Why did you choose these as your 'best' over your other work? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Reflect on these 'best works' by answering the following questions on a separate sheet of paper for each piece:
  - a. What makes this your best (second best) piece? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. How did you go about doing it? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. What was difficult for you? What problems did you have? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - d. How did you solve your problems? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Did you set goals for yourself while doing this work? What were the goals?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - f. Did you take any special steps to make sure you reached your goals?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Place your 'reflection' sheet in front of each final draft when completed.
6. On a sheet of paper at the front of your portfolio, answer these two questions every time you add something to your portfolio (try setting up a chart with the date and the questions):
  - g. If you already have work in your portfolio, think about the difference between your previous samples and your new 'best' samples. What new skills are shown?
  - h. What are your new training goals?

### Tips

*Here are some tips to help you assess your own work:*

Start with what's good about it. Point out specific things.

Next look at what needs to be improved.

Decide ahead of time what you're going to look for. Focus on the things you're learning.

Decide how well it needs to be done. Think about the purpose. For example, you'll look at a note to a friend differently than a letter to apply for a job.

Don't just say something's bad or wrong. Think of ways to improve it.

Check your work against the work of others doing the same kinds of things.

Watch for patterns. Maybe you make the same mistake. You can start looking for it in your work, and then fix it.

Recognize that it's okay to make mistakes. That's how you learn. If you never make mistakes, you'll never learn anything.

### Checking in with your learning

*Here are more signs that show you're learning. Do they describe your experiences? Check off the ways that do. Watch for the other as you progress.*

- You remember something new you've learned, even days after you've learned it.
- The skill becomes easier to do. You make fewer mistakes at it.
- You do the skill faster.
- You feel more confident.
- You need less help with the skill.
- You explain what you've learned so that someone else understands it.
- You help someone else who is struggling with something you've already learned.
- You try your new skill in new ways.
- You feel more comfortable about sharing your work with others.
- You see the good in what you've done, and not just the mistakes.
- You accept praise from others about your work.
- You accept corrections and ideas for improving your work from others.

Above two excerpts from *Way to Go! A bulletin of the Ontario Literacy Coalition*  
 Written for LBS Learners issue # 3 of 4 June 2001

## Journals

Journal writing is an excellent way for learners to reflect on their activities. Journals can follow a variety of formats depending on the writing and self-direction skills of your participants and what you wish to accomplish.

- **Free writing journal.** There is no required structure, guidelines or expectations. Participants write as their thoughts lead them.
- **Group list.** The whole group brainstorms a list of topics or questions to follow.
- **Structured journal.** Students are expected to respond to one or more questions or to comment on a specific list of topics. The questions and topics should require some thought and reflection on their learning and goals.

It's best to react to student's responses, but not to judge them. One effective way to react to student's journals is to respond to their thoughts by asking them questions.

## Rubrics

Before having students complete a particular project or activity, ask students to create a rubric for assessing their work.

A rubric helps students to think about what they will be learning and what will. Rubrics also serve as a check to ensure that activities are related to the original training plan and specific learning goals (i.e. grammar, spelling, measurement, etc.).

"Rubric" is an odd sounding word to many participants and therefore threatening. They should be provided with a friendly 'orientation', such as rating a chocolate chip cookie, pizza, video game, etc. There are numerous rubric samples available over the internet.

## **Rubric Handout**

**RUBRICS** are charts that are used to tell us how good something is or how well something is done.

Down the rows we list:

- The content or performance that is to be judged.
  - *What the learner needs to know or should be able to do?*
  - *What skills will demonstrate success?*
  - *What parts of the whole thing we are judging?*
  - *To judge cookies: Texture, Number of chips, Flavour, Size.*

Across the columns we list:

- Levels of rating
  - *For judging cookies – Never try again, If I'm desperate, Worth a second one, Wow, Pig Out!*

Where the rows and columns meet:

- What would fall into various levels for each performance to be judged?
  - *What would be considered poor, okay, good, best, etc*
  - *For the cookies: under the Number of Chips, 2 chips would be "Never Try Again. 10 chips would be "Wow!"*

## **Chocolate Chip Cookie Rubric**

(Adaptation used by permission of Elaine Murphy, Durham District School Board)

	<b><u>Ugg! (Never again)</u></b>	<b><u>Not bad (If I'm desperate)</u></b>	<b><u>Okay (Worth a second one)</u></b>	<b><u>Wow, Yummy Pig Out!</u></b>
<b>Texture</b>	Hard as a rock	Dry	Crunchy	Moist & chewy
<b>Number of chips</b>	2 or less, tiny chips	2 to 5, still not too big	5 to 10, medium sized	Loaded, 10 or more chunks
<b>Flavour</b>	None, might as well be cardboard, burnt	Boring but edible	Sweet but not quite there	Buttery, chocolaty, yummy
<b>Size</b>	One nibble only	2 bites I'm done	3 to 4 good chews	Meal replacement

**Rubric Template**

(Describe here the task or performance that this rubric is designed to evaluate.)

	<b>Beginning</b> <b>1</b>	<b>Not Bad</b> <b>2</b>	<b>Almost There</b> <b>3</b>	<b>Great!</b> <b>4</b>
First performance to be judged				
Second performance to be judged				
Third performance to be judged				
Fourth				

## Minute Paper

One quick way to allow for reflection at the end of the day is a Minute Paper. The group stops a few minutes early and the participants respond to two questions:

- 1) What was the most important thing you learned in class today?
- 2) What important question remains unanswered?

Responses can be shared with the whole group and recorded on flip charts, or they can be written privately on index cards or  $\frac{1}{2}$  sheets of paper, etc. The questions can be modified to collect any type of information needed by the group or facilitator.

## Recall, Summarize, Question, Connect, Comment (RSQC2)

For this self-assessment tool, all five steps are completed by the learner. RSQC2 encourages them to make connections between old and new information - to build on their present skills, linking them to the skills they are learning.

### Steps to RSQC2 (Recall, Summarize, Question, Connect, Comment)

1. **Recall:** At the beginning of the lesson, (day, week, etc.) make a list of the most important ideas they learned in the previous lesson.
2. **Summarize** the important points into one summary statement.
3. **Question** Write out one or two questions that you still had after the last lesson.
4. **Connect** Think about how the important ideas and your remaining questions connect to your training plan and overall goals. Write down your thoughts.
5. **Comment** on how you 'evaluate' your last lesson. Review your *important ideas, questions and connections*. Ask yourself questions like: Was it helpful? What did you find difficult? What things made learning easier or more fun?

Adapted from Melland, Helen I. and Volden, Cecilia V., Classroom Assessment Linking Teaching and Learning. *Journal of Nursing Education*, Spring 1998.

**SWOT Analysis - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats**

SWOT Analysis is an effective method of identifying your Strengths and Weaknesses, and to examine the Opportunities and Threats you face.

**Do a SWOT Analysis**

Doing this analysis will help point out what you need to do, and put the problems into perspective.

Write down answers to the following questions in a chart like this:

<p><b><i>Strengths:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your advantages?</li> <li>• What do you do well?</li> </ul> <p><i>Consider this from your own point of view and from the point of view of other people. Don't be modest, be realistic. If you are having any difficulty with this, try writing down a list of your characteristics. Some of these will hopefully be strengths!</i></p>	<p><b><i>Weaknesses:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What could be improved?</li> <li>• What is done badly?</li> <li>• What should be avoided?</li> </ul> <p><i>Again this should be considered from your point of view and from others' - do other people see weaknesses that you don't see? Do other people do any better?</i></p>
<p><b><i>Opportunities:</i></b></p> <p>What good chances are there for you? What are the interesting trends?</p> <p><i>Useful opportunities can come from such things as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in technology and markets on both a broad and narrow scale</li> <li>• Changes in government policy related to your field</li> </ul> <p><i>Changes in social patterns, population profiles, lifestyle changes, etc.</i></p>	<p><b><i>Threats:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What obstacles do you face?</li> <li>○ What is your 'competition' doing?</li> <li>○ Are the requirements changing?</li> </ul> <p><i>It is best to be realistic now, and face any unpleasant truths as soon as possible.</i></p>



**ACTIVITY REPORT**

Activity:		Date:
Purpose of Activity:		Cost:
# Participants:	# Staff Hours:	# of Volunteer Hours:
Comments:		
Evaluation:		
Follow-up Required:		By Whom: