What Doesn't Get Written Down:

How Experienced Literacy Workers Move from the

Generalities of Training Plans to the Specifics of Daily Practice

Contents

Introduction

In 1999-2000, the Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy conducted a project called *Adapting for a New Environment.* The purpose of this project was to try to relate existing knowledge about literacy work to the new requirements of the provincial Literacy and Basic Skills Section. Two sets of workshops were held. The first set of workshops, facilitated by Elaine Benton, was called *Rereading the Matrix* and related the new Learning Outcomes Matrix, mandated by the Literacy and Basic Skills Section, to existing knowledge, both research-based knowledge and knowledge from practice, about how adults learn to read.

The second set of workshops was called *What Doesn't Get Written Down: How Experienced Literacy Workers Move from the Generalizations of Training Plans to the Particulars of Daily Practice*. These workshops looked at the interaction between written documentation and spoken language in the new Literacy and Basic Skills environment, which requires written "training plans" as one kind of documentation. What kinds of relationships are possible between a written training plan and the ongoing process in which a learner and the people who support his or her learning work and plan together?

To initiate discussion at the *What Doesn't Get Written Down* workshops, three experienced literacy workers made presentations. David Greig, who is currently the coordinator at the Independent Studies Program at Frontier College, has a variety of experience in community literacy programs and board of education literacy classes. He is the author of a widely-used series of learning materials for adult literacy learners, *Core Sequential Basics*. Barbara McFater has a background in assessment. She honed her skills at the Peel Adult Learning Centre in Mississauga, and now works for the Preparatory Training Program, an employment-focused literacy program in Toronto. Gail Funston, an instructor at

the Toronto District School Board, has taught in a variety of adult basic literacy classes. She has experimented with various kinds of outcomes-based programming, including outcomes-based programming for physically disabled adult literacy students.

This resource book presents some follow-up material from their presentations. It also includes an interview with Wendy Tanner, a community literacy worker at Parkdale Project Read. This interview elaborates on an evocative point that Wendy made at one of the workshops, that "what doesn't get written down is who the learner is."

What have we learned from the presentations, and from the discussions which followed them? Several points stand out.

1. For David Greig, training plans are the "what". **Having developed a training plan, one still has to develop the "how".** David examines this process by taking notes as he plans the "how".

2.   By keeping her training plans simple and informal, Barbara McFater is able to integrate them into an ongoing discussion, in spoken language, with learners. In the follow-up interview included here, Barbara shows us how **one can make good use of written language in assessment and planning while keeping written language in the background.**

3. For Gail Funston, training plans have replaced an earlier form of written plans that she used. These plans had a simple format, but they included the "how" in a column called "Tasks, Materials, Tools,

Techniques." Gail's plans, included here, speak for themselves. They tell us that **simplicity in written plans does not indicate a lack of sophistication.**

4. Finally, at the workshop and in the follow-up interview here, Wendy Tanner has asked us to look beyond training plans to the person whose learning they are intended to support. **Knowing how to use written plans sometimes means ignoring these plans if they aren't right for the person.** This is an important lesson for staff to pass on to volunteers, who might otherwise be blinded to the learner by the authority of the learner's written plan.

The new Literacy and Basic Skills environment, with its emphasis on written records, calls for new ways of applying old knowledge. The material presented here suggests ideas for doing this, and may be useful in helping literacy workers to maintain a balance between written language and spoken language in their work.

Writing Down What Doesn't Get Written Down: Notes by David Greig

In these notes about his presentation at the workshops, David Greig writes about aspects of planning how to learn that do not usually get written down. As he explains in these notes, these aspects got written down this time because David wanted to make the process more explicit for volunteer tutors.

• My presentation at the MTML workshop focused on goal setting. I am working in a community-based program that uses volunteer tutors. I found that the idea of ensuring that students set and work towards goals that can be demonstrated after an established time period was usually clear for tutors, but how to implement it was not. I wanted to demystify the process by getting tutors to start to think about goal setting for students in the literacy program in the same way they would think about any kind of goal setting for adults in any context.

• One reason why tutors had a hard time understanding and then implementing an ongoing goal setting process with students was because I rarely provided them with clear written documentation of this process. Many of the written examples of goal setting from various literacy publications often seemed too abstract for volunteer tutors to be able to use with students. (Note that I personally wrote some of those publications so am criticizing myself here!) I felt

the tutors needed a real life concrete example of the goal setting process that was clearly written down.

• I realized that I didn't have any clear examples of goal setting from students' files to show to tutors at the training because I had never written enough of this information down on paper. I did not write information down because I had it in my head and found it too time consuming to transcribe it all onto paper. I realized that a funder or anyone looking at these notes might think that very little transpired in the goal setting process. To demonstrate that the process was thorough even though little was recorded, I did a goal setting session with a student while a literacy staff co-worker watched me.

• At the end of this session, the student's goals were clearly thought through; language and other areas to work on were clearly identified; steps and timelines were established; a demonstration was planned out; the student's confidence in their ability had been increased through realistic reflection on what they could actually achieve and through encouragement of their abilities to do so; the tutor had numerous new techniques, materials and ideas to use; and we as staff people had a complete picture of who this student was and what they would be working on.

• At the end of this goal setting session, which took about one and a half hours, my co-worker and I reflected on how meaningful this interaction had been for everyone involved. I pointed out that despite this, we still had written almost nothing down on paper! The process was so verbal and intuitive for us that writing it all down became a chore that was quite difficult to do. Not writing information down was also a matter of logistics: taking notes while talking to the student and tutor interfered with the smooth flow of the conversation.

• This is a critical point for many community-based (and other) literacy workers: The entire goal setting interaction is a conversation. Almost none of this conversation is written down because it is too time consuming and because it is often not necessary. Even though a lot of staff time is used in the goal setting process (engaging in lengthy conversations) on paper it looks like very little happened because most of this interaction is not recorded. These kinds of conversations make up the bulk of staff time spent on goal setting but are not "visible". On a training plan, funders may only see a few hasty notes made by staff to ourselves after the fact, but will never "see" the entire complex process of conversation that these notes represent.

• One reason for this lack of written notes is professional experience and expediency. As staff, we have so much experience talking with students that we fully understood what this student wanted to do and what the tutor and student would work on despite the fact that we wrote nothing down. An entire picture of this student was in our heads. Later, at staff meetings to discuss students on our case loads, we could easily and at length tell other staff about this student and what they were doing with complete accuracy despite the fact that none of this information appeared anywhere on paper. We wondered how we could get this information on paper, and more importantly: what part of this information should be documented on paper?

• I wanted to experiment with writing down the goal setting process to see if it could capture a full picture and yet do this quickly and easily. I intended to use this experiment in a tutor training to see if the idea of the goal setting process and what needs to be written down about it was clear and could be understood by tutors.

• I used an example from my own life. I was trying to learn to play the piano as an adult. I found there were many similarities between how I would break down this goal for myself and how I would break down goals for students.

• Step One involves an informal conversation about the goal, as follows.

1st: TALK TO ME ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT
TO DO

[STEP 1]

GOAL: I want to play the piano

points talked about

• what's a chord?

• I have a piano

[CONVERSATION]

• I often play but don't know what I'm playing

• I am very "musical"

• what are the symbols in the music for?

• what's the pedal for?

• It looks so easy.

• I feel like a fool not knowing something so simple.

• do you have to read music to be able to play?

• what is sharp + flat
what's a treble clef?

• I don't freak out over not being able to play because it isn't crucial to my life + I know a lot of other things

The above notes represent some of the general topics that came up in the conversation about the goal. This preliminary general conversation is important to establish rapport and trust with the student. It is not merely "chitchat": it is the first and crucial step in mapping out the variables that will impact the goal setting process for a particular student. In my personal example, I talked about general things I knew or felt about the piano and about taking piano lessons. During this conversation phase, I might casually scribble down some of the key points of the conversation in a manner like that presented above.

• Step Two, below, involves getting a bit more directed in the conversation.

Criteria to direct the goal setting conversation is presented as "elements to consider" on the left side of the page. These include questions about motivation, attitude, prior knowledge, transferable skills, and so on. Using these criteria to direct the conversation, I would ask questions and record general responses. Again, this process is still informal and random; however, the focus of the conversation is determined by the criteria that is directing the key question asked. The key question is "How will you go about this?" I might record information in the manner presented on the right hand side of the above notes.

• Note: I personally call this entire goal setting process "Outcome Parsing" though more jargon is perhaps not what anyone in the literacy field needs at this moment! The concept of "outcome parsing" specifically refers to extracting or "parsing" out the constituent elements of a goal that are needed to complete it (language or other skills). The literacy program I work at is developing this idea further.

• Step Three, on the following page, involves developing actual concrete steps to take to work towards the goal. Using the conversations from Step Two, a more direct path of action is developed and notes about this path are written down. Demonstrations of learning are developed and timelines are introduced.

OUTCOME "PARSING" — LET'S MAP OUT A PLAN

[STEP]
_____

OUT key steps

✓ — get a piano
✓ — sign up & pay
    for lessons
✓ — begin & attend   →
    lessons (2 hrs wk)
— make time to
    practice
_____

* also
  Create a system
  for learning the
  "A, B, C" names of
  the key read notes

* = additional
  learning task

basics — step 1
_____

Study and practice
"key read" music
    system
    ↓
practice fingering
    exercises
  ↓
  learn and practice
← where the notes are. *
    ↓
DEMO: play one short song
    from the key read
    book and name (A, B, C)
    the notes *
WHEN: 2 months from now

— learn scales and
  key of C+
— learn basic chords
  in this key
— practice key read
  song using basic
  chords in C+ key

step 2 →

basic
chords
C+ key

DEMO: play a song
WHEN: for a friend
4 months w/out
from now. embarrassment!

next step 3
_____

REVIEW

new
map

- I presented this idea at a tutor training in the fall of 2000. Twenty-five out of twenty-six tutors along with a number of other staff people present all "got" the idea. (One tutor did not understand this presentation at all and kept asking what

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piano lessons had to do with reading.) Other than this one person, all the other tutors felt that this example did two things: it allowed them to understand that goal setting for literacy students was exactly the same as setting goals as adults to do anything (and so they could apply it to their own experience as adults learning anything). It also allowed them to see the process of goal setting that moves from general conversation to more "formal" steps. More work is needed on this idea; however, it is a starting point for thinking about the goal setting process and for reflecting on what doesn't get written down.

Talking, Writing and Planning: An Interview with Barbara McFater

In the following wide-ranging interview with Guy Ewing, Barbara McFater discusses the importance of the process in which training plans get written down. The interview illustrates that when experienced literacy workers plan learning with the active involvement of learners, what gets written down can be brief and informal, a reminder of the more detailed goal setting, discussion and decision making that doesn't get written down.

G: Many kinds of demands are placed on training plans. How do you see these demands?

B: To begin with, training plans are written for many audiences: the Ministry, the program, the instructors and the learners. Having many audiences can take something that should be relevant and appropriate for the learner, and turn it into something too complicated, too detailed, too complex. Who they are written for is just the first demand.

For those of us writing and developing training plans, we need to be aware of all the elements: background information, short and long term goals, timelines, initial assessment information, skills to develop, and learning outcomes. What

we need to do is gather a great deal of information, know how to gather this information, have good assessment skills and a clear understanding of the LBS levels across all domains, help learners set goals, and be knowledgeable about goal requirements. We need to make judgments, plan and predict. So many demands, I could go on . . .

G: How do you respond to the various kinds of demands?

B: Well, this has changed over the years. I've thought a great deal about what I could do to simplify training plans while still meeting all the demands. The training plans I developed in the past were not part of a process. I tried to include too much, too soon, and they weren't useful. So I have come to realize that a good plan needs to evolve, to change over time. I do things differently now.

G: So how do you begin the process?

B: Well, we all know the first step is to meet with the learner and gather all the necessary information. This information can be documented simply and briefly. The next step is to place the student in the program and let the process begin. From this point forward there needs to be ongoing, continuous assessment. After the initial assessment, when all the information has been gathered, the process of ongoing assessment, goal setting, instruction, and learning begins.

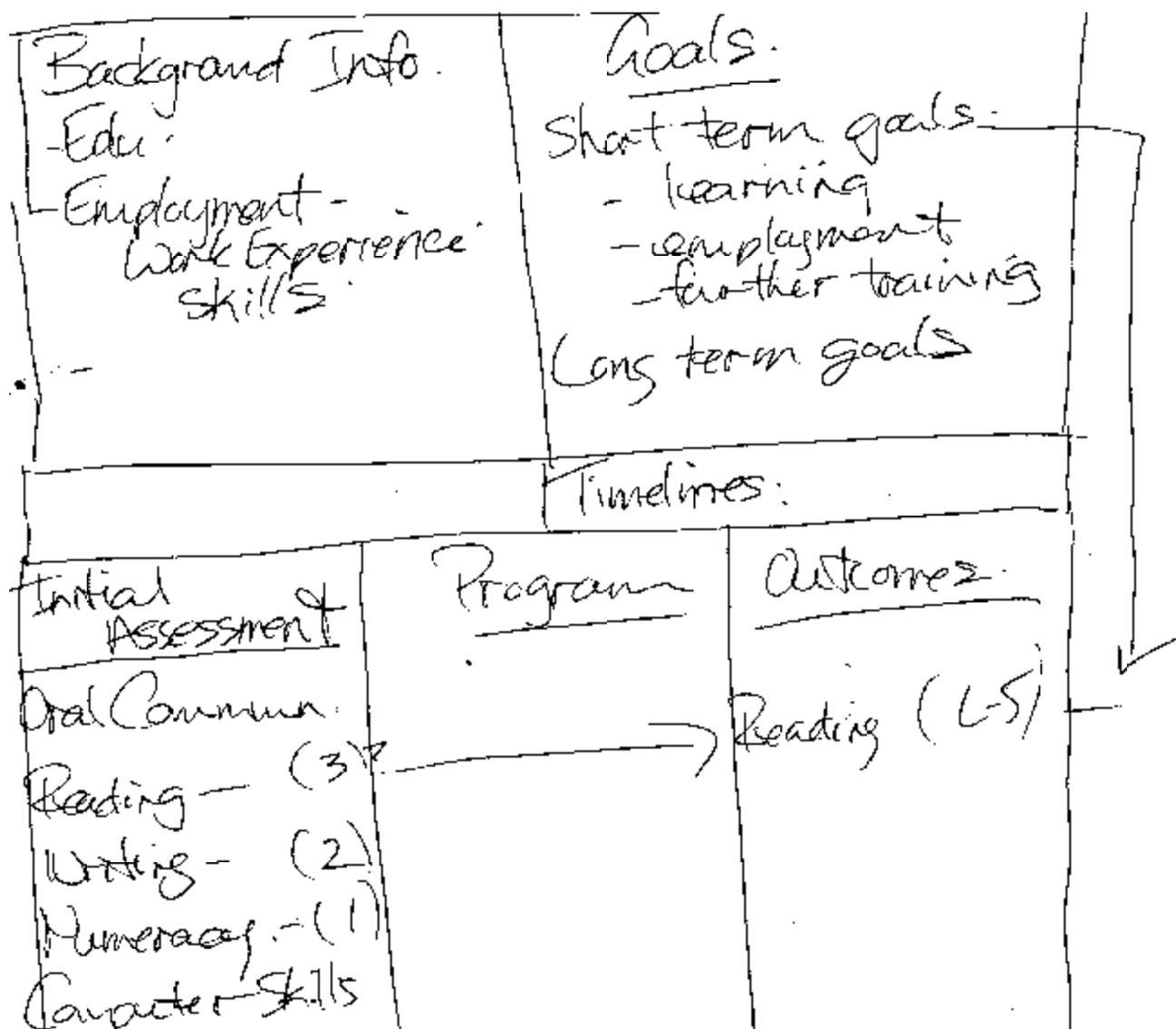G: How much of that ongoing assessment gets written down?

B: Well, the program I'm with now . . . not a lot gets written down between meetings with me. We have a system in place where learners have the opportunity to write a formal, evaluative assessment at regular intervals throughout their program. This assessment includes many work-related tasks and activities that involve reading, writing and math skills.

After I score this assessment, I meet with the learner for, what we call at PTP, a "Next Steps" meeting. This meeting is a time for reflection, self-assessment, sharing results and setting new goals. I write down comments the learner expresses as a part of his or her own self-assessment. We set new goals, and these get written down too. It's like a contract. And again, I don't think that something necessarily happens just because it gets written down.

I think this process works because it has more to do with communication: a dialogue where the learner has the opportunity to articulate concerns, set new learning goals as well as future employment goals. After this discussion the learner returns to his or her program with a renewed sense of commitment. The notes from this meeting are a guide for the learner and the instructor and for me to refer back to when we have our next meeting. This is how training plans become part of a process. It is a movement away from an initial three to four page document that tries to say too much too soon. What gets written down is very little.

G: O.k., so just to pin this down a bit, can I ask you to imagine going through an initial assessment where you gather all the information for developing a learner's training plan, just to see how you do it?

B: O.k. Well, I begin with a discussion. Initial assessment is about open dialogue: communication, sharing information, information that covers past education, training, work experience, transferable skills, financial supports . . .

Background Info.
- Edu.
- Employment -
  Work Experience.
  Skills.

Goals.
Short term goals.
  - learning
  - employment
    further training
Long term goals

Timelines:

Initial
Assessment
Oral Commun.
Reading ─ (3)
Writing ─ (2)
Numeracy ─ (1)
Computer Skills

Program

Outcomes.

Reading (L-5)

Goal setting usually comes next. It's really important to encourage learners to articulate their short and long-term goals. This area, however, always presents us with a challenge at PTP because learners in our program usually have employment goals. Setting short-term learning goals are one thing, but setting long-term employment goals is another.

This is a challenging and time-consuming process and we often remind ourselves at PTP that we are not 'employment counsellors'. But learners often need an

enormous amount of support if they are going to move towards suitable employment in their chosen field when they leave our program. So, I encourage learners to do research, or small in-class projects to gather information on their goals. So, again, setting goals.

We also talk about timelines. I don't know if everyone else finds this in the field, but I find learners always ask, "How long do you think this will take?" So we set timelines, with the provision that they can always change.

This is followed reading, writing and math tasks. But before I assess, I always ask lots of questions, to get learners to think about what they perceive to be their strengths and weaknesses in the areas of reading, writing, math, listening and speaking, as well as computer skills. We also talk about fears and hopes. This is the beginning of the process, a process called a training plan.

A Hypothetical Training Plan (Part 1)

Background Information	Initial Assessment Report
Education: Elementary in Jamaica (not consistent) **Work Experience:** Automobile Mechanic Shipping and Receiving General Labour **Transferable Skills:** John said he has excellent mechanical skills. He can take an engine apart and put it back together. He also routinely fixed a variety of machines in the workplace. He enjoys working with his hands and considers himself hardworking, reliable and responsible.	**Reading:** Recognized a few, familiar words on a simple, personal information form (e.g., name, address). Limited sight word recognition (e.g., you, are, in, on, at). Could not use phonics to sound out words. **Writing:** Completed personal information form with assistance. Had difficulty copying. **Math:** Completed a few simple, whole number questions. John said he finds math difficult. **Listening and Speaking:** John spoke candidly during assessment and listened and responded to all questions. **Keyboarding/Computer Basics:** Has no experience.
Placement at Intake Level 1	

Other Comments:
On the job, John had problems handling workplace reading (lists, labels), writing (short notes, messages) and numeracy (sequencing numbers for shipping) tasks. His goal is to build his basic skills so he can feel more confident completing workplace literacy and numeracy tasks.

G: So, under the various headings on the training plan template would be your notes.

B: Yes, including assessment information and levels.

G: What do you find the most challenging part of this process?

B: One of the hardest parts (but what we all get better at over the years) is assigning LBS levels. This is where experience and judgement come into play. Well, assigning levels, projecting timelines, outlining skills to be developed, predicting learning outcomes, setting goals . . . Actually, all of these things are challenging.

G: When you assign levels to reading and writing, are there particular features that you concentrate on, or do you have a more holistic sense?

B: I think for me, it's a more holistic sense for sure. It wasn't always this way. I just have more experience now, and I don't rely on all the little details to make

A Hypothetical Training Plan (Part 2)

Goals	Training Plan (Timeline for assessments and follow-up)		
Long Term Goal/s	**Start Date**	**End Date**	**Revised End Date**
Sector: Industrial ⊔ Retail ⊔ Clerical ⊔ Service ⊔ • To find suitable employment	February 5, 2001	August 3, 2001	
Short Term Goal/s (Initial 6 months with PTP)	**CAMERA Schedule** (Communications and Math Employment Readiness Assessment) **My first CAMERA Assessment will be:** *The week of March 5th 2001*		
To complete PTP Level I John will need to focus on some very specific tasks to prepare for work in shipping and receiving. Level I tasks to focus on: ▪ Reading warehouse signs and symbols ▪ Reading labels on packages, shelves, mail ▪ Writing notes with name, time and number to record telephone calls ▪ Writing short reminder notes ▪ Filling in simple handling and shipping labels ▪ Reading numbers on signs, reading serial numbers	My interim CAMERA Assessment will be on: *(Set date 8 weeks after initial CAMERA assessment)*		
	My exit CAMERA Assessment will be on: *(Set date approximately 4 weeks before exit)*		
	Next Steps Meetings: ☐ Follow-up (six weeks) Date: ☐ Progress (midpoint) Date: ☐ Next Steps (four weeks before exit) Date: ☐ Exit Meeting (last week of program) Date:		
	Required Supports: ⊐ Transportation Allowance		

my judgements. But I'm very familiar with the level descriptions, and they act as my 'guide on the side'.

G: If you could stress one thing, what would it be?

B: I guess what I would like to stress, or continue to stress, is that all this assessment information, goal setting, and assigning of levels are all very important first steps to begin the process. But don't let this first step become too burdensome by trying to write down too much information. Write down what is relevant, useful, appropriate and meaningful for the learner. Simplify, simplify, simplify. And keep reminding yourself that training plan development is a process.

G: I suppose, in a way, when a training plan is a more informal document it allows for more flexibility. Do you think?

B: Yes, exactly.

G: So, training plans are really like notes from an interview, organized in a certain format.

B: Yes. Especially when the notes are a part of ongoing assessment.

G: Can you give me an example of what happens when goals change, or when a learner wants a particular kind of training to get a job. How do you include this is in the training plan?

B: I'll give you an example of a learner from our program who recently changed her plan and decided she wanted to work in a daycare centre. I suggested she look into the job requirements and research three short training programs for Early Childhood Education Assistant. She was also on Employment Insurance benefits and would need to complete their unusually lengthy and detailed application forms. I also went to the HRDC Essential Skills profile for ECE

Assistant to gather information for both the learner and the instructor. We needed to find out what skills she would need and at what level.

This learner needed a great deal of support from PTP staff; and eventually everyone's hard work paid off. She was accepted into a training program and it was approved by HRDC. Our hope is that when we do our call-back in six months, this learner will have achieved her goal, full-time employment in a daycare centre. All of this is a difficult and challenging process . . . This takes us back to your first question about the demands of a training plan.

G: Would you put the HRDC stuff on the training plan?

B: Not necessarily, but all this 'stuff' is a part of the training plan.

G: So the HRDC information would be relayed to the instructor, but it wouldn't necessarily go down in writing.

B: Again, it is down in writing. If I think the student can handle the reading, I give him or her a copy of the Essential Skills Profile for the occupation he or she

A page from the HRDC Essential Skills profiles, available at http://15.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/profiles

has chosen to read. The instructor will also review the skills profile to get ideas for reading, writing and math tasks, which are related to the goal. At PTP we have a curriculum that includes performance markers based on essential skills profiles. Instructors can choose appropriate tasks from PTP's performance markers and individualize a learner's program.

G: Well, actually, to write all of that stuff down again would be redundant.

B: Totally redundant.

G: It's already written. That's why you don't put it in the training plan.

B: But this information is part of the training plan.

G: Well, if you stop looking at the training plan as a set of linear instructions, first you do this, then you do that, but just a lot of ideas, basically, and a context for what you're doing, then you can just throw in something like an Essential Skills Profile and it doesn't trap you in any way . . .

B: It frees you up, actually.

G: So, in a way, what you write down on the training plan are notes for the instructor, or rather for what you're going to say to the instructor. The materials from the HRDC Profiles are ideas, source materials. You've said that the most important information gets communicated orally. Can you expand on this point?

B: For sure. I think what sticks is what gets communicated orally. When I sit down with learners to discuss the next steps in their training plans, or have them self-assess, they commit to the plan. They commit to what they want to focus on in order to make progress.   When they are able to articulate what they want to achieve, there is more of a chance that they will achieve it. So, very little needs to be written down.

G: You were saying earlier that part of the process is people learning how to articulate their needs and being able to advocate for themselves. Could you talk a little about that?

B: Well, I think that it is giving learners the language to self-assess. What I've worked really hard at since I've been at PTP is having learners understand what "assessment" means. They all know what the word "test" means, but not "assessment". If learners know the language of assessment, they are better equipped to discuss their strengths and weakness. This in turn helps them focus their energies on the particular areas they need to work on.

G: Any final comments?

B: Well, in the end, I think what's really important is to spark an interest in language and learning when you meet with a learner. Writing down every little detail will be irrelevant if you don't have open communication. Through talking, I think we are more likely to motivate the interest, the curiosity and the enthusiasm of the learner, and this motivation, in turn, is what I feel leads to learner progress.

Learning Plans: What Gail Funston Used to Write Down

Before the advent of "training plans" in adult literacy work, Gail Funston used to develop "learning plans" with her students. The following examples of learning plans, which Gail used in her workshop presentation, speak for themselves. Like Barbara McFater's training plans, they are notes from the planning process, and written reminders. Studying these notes, we can imagine some of the discussion with students from which they came.

Gail's learning plan includes a category which training plans leave out: "Tasks, Materials, Tools, Techniques." This category points to aspects of planning the learning process which are often not written down; in fact, Gail feels that she has now reached a point in her work where she does not need to write anything down in this category.

LEARNING PLAN

GOALS	SKILLS	TASKS, MATERIALS, TOOLS, TECHNIQUES	DEMONSTRATIONS
To publish her writing ------------------------ Improve paragraphs	• Topic sentences • Unity • commas	• Write 2 paragraphs a week • Books: The Paragraph; Improving Punctuation Skills • Computer, Spell check • Do exercises from books as necessary Read paragraphs to class and ask for feedback	A paragraph demonstrating the use of topic sentences, unity and commas
A job in a store stocking shelves ------------------------ Improve money skills	• Use a calculator • Add and subtract • Count money	• Make shopping lists adding, subtracting for change, counting out change • Money box, flyers • Calculator • Practise in pairs	A shopping list with total cost, change necessary and money counted out.

Knowing What Wasn't Written Down: An Interview with Wendy Tanner

When the question, "What doesn't get written down?" was posed to the participants of the first workshop, Wendy Tanner answered, "What doesn't get written down is who the learner is." This answer resonated through much of the following discussion. In this follow-up interview, Guy Ewing asks Wendy to discuss her point further, in light of the workshop discussion. For Wendy, who works with volunteer tutors, "What doesn't get written down?" leads to the question, "When I write a training plan for a learner, how I convey what doesn't get written down to the learner's volunteer tutor?"

G: What did you mean at the workshop when you said: "What doesn't get written down is who the learner is"?

W: You have to know who the student is to do a good job with the teaching, especially with literacy students. How can you really help somebody when there are so many other difficulties that they're dealing with? I don't think tutors have to be counsellors, I'm not talking about that level of involvement, but I do think that tutors need to understand why students aren't achieving their goals.

G: Can you think of two students who had quite similar goals, and even quite similar learning plans on paper, but where the paths that they needed to follow in order to learn were quite different?

W: Yes. Both students went to George Brown College. Neither student actually finished the program. But one of them was much more able to ask for the help she needed, to take on the curriculum and she got further. She was very goal-oriented. The goal was: "I'm going to finish my high school education, I'm going to go to George Brown and I'm going to get there through 'this' route." And the other one had the same goal, to get to George Brown, but there were so many problems that stood in her way, because her personality was very different from the other student's personality. She needed a lot more support around how to organize childcare so that that didn't affect her learning and, you know, she was worried about the child at home, and how to . . . I know that all of that could have been part of the goal setting, but it wasn't for this student; her goal was to get through George Brown. She didn't understand that there were all these things that were going to impinge on her learning and create difficulties for her. And we didn't know that, either, until she started, and then we could identify some of the difficulties. All right, well, you're not reaching your goals not because you're not capable but because there are all these things that are affecting your life at this point. The other student had more strength to be able to address some of her barriers. She didn't finish, but she was still able to attack her learning in a much more direct way.

G: And were both of these students working with tutors?

W: Yes.

G: So how did that work? I mean, the person who needed more support and help around organizing childcare and those things, was it that the tutor

responded to that need, or did you help the tutor respond to that need, or how did it work?

W: No, actually, we sort of took it on. It was something that we helped her with rather than telling the tutor what she needed. We explained to the tutor that there's reasons why she's not getting to her sessions on time, and that there are reasons why she might be struggling with remembering things, and why she's so disorganized in her work planning and her work habits and everything, but the actual helping through the process is something that we tried to help her with. It really was more of a counselling role.

G: When you think of those two people, is there any way that you could explain why they were so different?

W: I think it's around looking at the individual. People come with different needs and different histories, and with different resources and different strengths, so that the student who was clearer about where she was going, more directed in a way, had also had a tough time, but, in her later experience, she'd had more success. Her inner resources were, I feel, much stronger than the other student's. So how do you reflect that on a learning plan? How do you let a tutor know . . . And probably, for a lot of tutors, they would understand that. That would be part of our tutor training, that we let people know who the students are. But it takes a very long time, I think, to understand that teaching is more of an art than a science. It takes time to understand that. Teaching is not about the subject, it's about teaching a person. That's something that we look at through the training, but I think that somehow we've got to get that into the learning plan, that we're not teaching a subject, we're teaching an individual. So when you're teaching a goal, you're not really teaching a goal, you're having to look at who the individual is and how they're going to get to that goal, and not through the activities, not through the linear activities, but through the whole process of

encouraging whatever it is: self-esteem or confidence or whatever it takes, or just helping somebody get dignity. That's going to improve their learning.

G: So you would say that, in general, it's easier for tutors to think about teaching a subject than teaching a person. Are there some tutors who see that right away, or . . .

W: Yes. And it's become a much bigger component in the tutor training. We talk much more about who the learner is, what the difficulties are . . .

G: Do you find that tutors come to you about those kinds of things, or do you usually find yourself intervening and saying, "Well, you know what this person needs . . ."

W: I intervene a lot. Especially when I know that a student is particularly sensitive or vulnerable or that the tutor might be struggling because it's a student with developmental delays who'd take a long time to learn something or would learn in a very particular way. It's not really about learning styles. Styles are very sort of formulaic. I mean, it's about who are you at the core of who you are.

It worries me when I write something down on a form, on a plan for a student that is this linear approach that I give to a tutor. We try and have a joint meeting with tutors and students, but it doesn't always work because of times and hours and things. So I'm giving this plan to somebody, who might then be following this plan without being able to adapt and change what they're doing to fit the needs of the student.

Conclusion

The quality of literacy work is realized in small details: how a tutor responds to a moment of hesitation by a learner, how carefully an instructor notes the pattern of spelling mistakes by a learner, how exactly a staff person describes a learner's goal in a training plan. To do good literacy work, literacy workers need the support of workshops that look at the learning process at this level of detail.

The *What Doesn't Get Written Down* workshops, and the follow-up material in this book, were an example of this kind of detailed work. At the end of each workshop, participants expressed their interest in further detailed discussion of process.

Subsequent to this workshop, a group of community literacy workers began meeting to compare their experiences with training plans.

A number of workshop participants expressed an interest in filtering different theoretical perspectives on adult literacy learning through concrete examples of the learning process as they have observed it.

We are only beginning to understand the process of adult literacy learning. As well as adapting old knowledge to the LBS framework, we must continue to develop our knowledge further.