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### **Stories from the Field January 2013 to February 2014**

*Stories from the Field* reports on current issues, challenges and innovative work happening in the adult literacy and Essential Skills field throughout Alberta. The focus is on teaching and learning **Reading, Writing, Numeracy and Technology**. This is the first in a series of stories that will run until the end of February 2014.

### **Things are cooking in my kitchen**

I've been at Bow Valley College just over a month now gathering and soaking up information on teaching and learning practices in adult literacy and Essential Skills. I've talked to people, researched and read. I feel like a cook, gathering my ingredients and putting them together on a slow simmer. I thought it was time to share some highlights and learning about my process and progress to date.

I started my learning by getting familiar with some of the programs and projects happening at Bow Valley College's Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning.

One of the first people I interviewed was Karen Mercer. I learned about the **Aboriginal program**, the **FlexClass**, **Artstream** and the evening **GED course**. The Aboriginal program provides both academic preparation and high school upgrading. It was exciting to hear about their plans to introduce Life Management and Aboriginal Leadership courses in partnership with the BVC Aboriginal Centre. Another unique program, Artstream, is run in partnership with Alberta College of Art and Design. Students who have completed a portfolio for ACAD, but who don't have the academic qualifications can enroll to complete this piece through art history and humanities courses taught at BVC. I learned more about the FlexClass, a self-directed program of learning that allows students to work at their own pace to complete high school courses. The class is expanding in May to include even more hours (Monday to Thursday 9 am - 9 pm, Friday 9 am – 4 pm and Saturday 9 am - 2 pm). This innovative way of delivering services makes it possible for students to work or take care of their families, and continue their learning. The evening GED curriculum teaches courses to help students take the grade 12 exams needed for work

or for challenging exam results. I look forward to talking with other practitioners in the Centre and learning more about their programs and projects.

I've sat in on meetings for both **WriteForward** and the **Learner Progression Measures** projects. WriteForward, the adult writing assessment project, is facing the challenging task of creating a new informal writing assessment resource. The Learner Progression Measures project is looking at how learner progress is measured by funders, literacy practitioners, and most importantly, by learners themselves. Both project teams are pioneering new ways of looking at assessment and learning.

I've also started to reach out to the larger literacy community to initiate talks about how we can work together sharing information and resources. I met with Laura Godfrey, manager at **LearningLinks Resource Centre and Library** to discuss linking their website to ours, giving practitioners throughout the province another avenue to learn about each other's work, and the resources available to help them. LearningLinks has one of Canada's largest collections of resources that focus on literacy, English as an Additional Language and learning disabilities. Practitioners looking for resources in these areas are encouraged to contact Laura at 403-249-4606 or [lgodfrey@canlearnsociety.ca](mailto:lgodfrey@canlearnsociety.ca).

In preparation for my own project, **Stories from the Field**, I've been researching the teaching and learning practices in adult literacy and Essential Skills in the areas of **Reading, Writing, Numeracy and Technology**. To date, we've collected over 100 articles. Once we've identified the most relevant and useful, they will be featured on the Centre's website:  
[www.centreforexcellenceinfoundationallearning.ca](http://www.centreforexcellenceinfoundationallearning.ca)

A major part of **Stories from the Field** involves talking to practitioners to learn about your experiences, innovations and challenges in teaching and learning **Reading, Writing, Numeracy and Technology** (both learning to use technology and using technology to learn). In early April, I will send out an invitation asking you to participate in a short phone interview.

Throughout the project, we will post your stories on current issues and innovative work in the adult literacy and Essential Skills field on the Centre's website. By the end of August, we hope to identify areas for future development and research.

If you would like to share your stories: your recipes for success, your discoveries and your challenges in your corner of the literacy world, please contact me.

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