

Essential Skills Survey of Renfrew County

**Prepared for
LOCS Regional Literacy Network**

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Geographical Area of Survey

Map of Renfrew County



○ - Indicates areas represented in survey

Acknowledgements

Literacy Ontario Central South would like to sincerely thank everyone who made this project a success.

The information gathered will enhance all Employment Ontario services delivered within Renfrew County and lead to a more seamless system for the client.

This project would not have been realized without the dedicated and long hours of work by Gary Johnston and Lee Torvi.

A special thanks goes to the participants who have provided us with valuable information. Their contribution makes this report comprehensive and rich.

Thank you to our Employment Ontario partners for making this process an enjoyable and positive experience for all.

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Background

Why are displaced workers not seeking upgrading from Renfrew County's Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) agencies? Are LBS services not needed or could there be other reasons?

Employment Ontario agencies in Renfrew County met at Algonquin College on Tuesday, March 10, 2009 to discuss Literacy and Essential Skills of displaced workers and how best to identify the skills needs of this particular group of workers.. Approximately 2,000 people in Renfrew County are directly or indirectly impacted by recent plant closures and layoffs. Therefore, many Employment Ontario agencies have increased numbers of clients. Workers displaced from the manufacturing sector in particular need to find employment in other sectors. Therefore, education and training programs expect to see increased applications from this category of job seeker. Jamie Bramburger of Algonquin College, for example, reported that 44 individuals, referred by employment services, had met with him to discuss the Second Career Strategy. Literacy and basic skills service providers - Renfrew County District School Board, Renfrew County Catholic District School Board, and Literacy Plus- stated, however, that they had not seen an increase in enrolment in their literacy and basic skills (LBS) agencies.

To introduce this research project in Renfrew County, Lesley Hamilton, Executive Director of Literacy Ontario Central South (LOCS) gave a presentation on the Literacy and Essential Skills. Following the presentation, she explained the research project. The project would inform the Employment Ontario agencies of the training needs, skills levels and challenges facing the unemployed worker in Renfrew County.

The components of this project included:

- Conducting a Literacy and Essential Skills workshop
- Completing an Essential Skills Survey
- Completing a Skills Inventory
- Completing a Skills Assessment
- Reporting on these finding to the Employment Ontario agencies and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

It was determined through collaboration with all Employment Ontario agencies in this meeting that we would need to carry this out in all parts of the county. This included locations where employment service agencies are located, such as Barry's Bay and Eganville, not just the Highway 17 corridor.

All Employment Ontario agencies in attendance were asked to refer clients, if possible, to participate in the research up to a total of 100 participants. By April 15th, 97 volunteers had participated in the survey at nine workshops delivered throughout the county. The Employment Ontario agencies and their clients provided valuable information at each of the sessions. The project deliverables include information on the education, skill levels and barriers and challenges faced by the participants.

Additionally, this report will assist the Literacy and Basic Skills agencies in their planning for the needs of the community.

Key Findings

- Participants who have completed high school may still need upgrading, especially if they are moving into new careers or into further education.
- Participants are frustrated with the lack of coordinated services
- Participants are not aware of Literacy and Essential Skills training available to them in the community and that these services are free

Essential Skills Survey Summary

The following survey is a summary of the personal information collected from the participants

Essential Skills Survey – Renfrew County

Gender: Male **66** Female **31**

Age range: 16-24 **26** 25-44 **48** 45-54 **16** 55+ **7**

Who referred you to this project?

Algonquin College	7	ontrac	14
Employment Networks	9	Petawawa Military Family Resource Centre	9
Job Connect	29	Rural-Outreach Employment Services	26
MTCU (EI)	1	Other	2
OW	0		

For the purpose of this survey the literacy agencies were not included.

First language

English **90** French **4** Other **3**

Goals/ Job Search:

What services have you used from Employment Ontario agencies?

registered with employment agency	99
prepared a job search plan	33
updated résumé	78
attended workshops	32
applied for further education/training	33
applied for jobs	59
started a course	10
started a job	11
other (please specify)	1

Where have you been referred?

employers	36
education/training programs	43
other programs/services	16

Work History:

Type of Work /Skills	Length of Time

Education and Training:

What I have now:

Less than grade 9	1	GED	2
Grade 9	1	Some college/university	14
Grade 10	9	College/university graduation	18
Grade 11	16	Country/province of study:	
Grade 12	4	Ontario	15
Grade 13/OAC	0	Other Province	2
High school completion	35	Other Country	1

Are your skills still at that level?

90 participants responded

1 (forgot everything)	2 3 4			5 (know more now)
0	9	40	27	14

Additional Courses done in the past

Additional courses both work-related and personal interest included:

First Aid	39	WHMIS	58	Computer	32
Other	37				
CPR		Crisis Prevention/Intervention		Sander Operation	
Forklift		Machining		Industrial Spill Prevention	
Fall Arrest		Security		Truck License	
Oil Field Training		Self-Defence		Tree Cutter	
Some Military training		Coaching		Skidder Operator	
Accounting				Smart Serve	

Where I want to go from here:

Review / Upgrade (basic math and English)	15
Computer Skills	18
High School Diploma	9
English as a Second Language	0
Apprenticeship	27
GED (General Educational Development)	2
College / University	41
Specific workplace skills (e.g. WHMIS, Forklift, Fall Arrest, Lockout Tagout, Service Excellence)	27
Other Technology (explosives, environmental technology, data entry, software/hardware course)	9
Other (back to work, CPR/First Aid, farming, A-Z license, D-Z license, military)	25

For those who are interested in upgrading basic skills (math, English, computers):

Are you interested in attending

Day	36	Evening	21
Full-time	24	Part-time	29

How do you want to learn?

1 to 1 Tutoring (once per week)	21	Classroom learning	39
Online learning	17	Other (no preference)	2

Where would you prefer to attend training?

Arnprior	7	Renfrew	4
Barry's Bay	6	Pembroke	26
Deep River	0	Petawawa	2
Eganville	1	Other	9

Assessment Tools

The 97 participants demonstrated various skills and skill levels as they did two different sets of tasks. First they provided information by filling out forms and answering questions on the Essential Skills Survey, and then they completed a set of communication and math activities in the Skills Assessment package. Those activities came from the CABS (Common Assessment of Basic Skills) manual or were our adaptations of CABS materials. The answers to both sets of tasks provided evidence of the participants' skills levels. The survey documents as well as the educational assessment activities were included as assessment tools.

In LBS terms, the documents that make up the survey required reading skills at level two (simple sentences in single paragraphs, concrete common vocabulary) with a few items at level three. The inventories, for example, included more complex vocabulary. The participants' written responses demonstrated a wide range of writing skills: level-one writing of just a few common words up to level-four writing of thoughts and opinions regarding barriers and recommendations.

Essential skills survey

This document asked for personal information (identity, education, skills, goals, etc). Completing this document provided clear demonstrations of skills in reading text, document use, writing, and thinking (decision-making and use of memory). Although the purpose of the survey was to gather information, the survey also gave us an opportunity to assess various literacy and essential skills as people performed an authentic task.

Writing samples

In order to assess the participants writing skills', we explained that we would use their answers in the survey for the required writing samples. We asked for opinions about barriers to training and upgrading as well as suggestions about ways to make it easier for people to access training or upgrading. We emphasized that their answers were extremely important both for the fact-finding part of the project and also for the skills assessment component. This part of the survey also provided evidence of essential skills used to perform an authentic task.

Skills inventories

The Skills Inventories are in the language of Essential Skills and are the skills that many clients would have used in their previous employment. The Skills Inventories included:

Communications – Reading, Document Use, and Writing

Math – Foundations and application settings

Technology

Personal Management

Deciding which were the least and most difficult skills required by previous jobs required some memory work and decision making. In LBS terms, participants demonstrated reading and writing skills at levels 1, 2 and 3 depending on how detailed an explanation they gave. The technology inventory was our only indicator of computer skills. We depended on the participants to tell us whether or not they could use a computer and if they would like to improve their skills.

Skills assessment activities

Most of the numeracy and literacy assessment activities will be familiar to the LBS service providers although some associated tasks were modified or added. The tasks were all pen-and-paper based. Math activities were completed without the use of calculators. Although we did not provide dictionaries, we answered questions and explained questions to those who asked for help. Skills demonstrated in these activities fit the Literacy and Basic Skills Outcomes and are reported in LBS levels.

Assessment Tools and LBS Levels

Most pages included a number of questions with a range of skill levels.

Math

Skills assessment activities

- numbers in words LBS 1 / 2
- basic operations LBS 1 / 2
- fractions LBS 3/4/5
- percents LBS 3/4/5
- decimals LBS 3 / 4
- measurements LBS 3 / 4
- conversions (fractions, decimals) LBS 3 / 4
- budget & graph LBS 3 / 4

Communications

Essential Skills survey

LBS 1-3

- reading and writing to complete forms

Skills inventory

LBS 1 / 2

- reading and writing to complete forms

Opinions all

levels and above our assessment

- writing samples

Skills Assessment activities

- alphabetical order LBS 2
- start a business at home LBS 3 / 4
- 3 common emergencies LBS 3 / 4
- earn \$800 per week LBS 4/5

Assessing and reporting results

The Assessed Skills chart reports participants' skills in four levels: Beginning, Intermediate, LBS 5 and OBS, and Post High School.

Beginning (LBS 1-2) - *Participants at this level did some but not all of the LBS 1-2 tasks.*

Participants at this level needed some help to read and write common vocabulary in short, simple sentences of up to one paragraph. They printed or wrote legibly to provide some personal information. They needed help to understand and respond to the survey and the skills assessment documents. At this level of math, the participants demonstrated the Learning Outcome – Perform Basic Operations with Numbers up to LBS Level 2 added and subtracted one and two digit numbers, read and wrote numbers in words, identified fractional parts of a circle ($\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{2}{3}$, $\frac{5}{6}$ and $2\frac{1}{4}$).

Intermediate (LBS 3-4) - *Participants at this level did some of the LBS levels 3 and 4 tasks.*

Participants with literacy skills at this level read the survey and skills assessment documents without help unless to clarify what was required. They wrote more than one paragraph to express their opinions. They used mainly correct grammar and spelling. They identified main ideas of readings. They provided correct answers to the math questions involving multiplying and dividing multi-digit integers and decimals. They added and subtracted equivalent fractions. They chose the most appropriate metric unit to measure common items.

Advanced (LBS 5 to OBS) - *Participants at this level completed some of the LBS 5 tasks.*

They correctly answered comprehension questions about multi-paragraph articles, picked out, reworded and organized details to express and support an idea. They recognized persuasion and made inferences. Their writing used most conventions of standard spelling and grammar. The math activities called for solving multi-step problems with fractions, percent, and ratio.

Above LBS 5 and OBS – Our assessment tool did not measure above LBS 5/OBS

Participants whom we assessed that were able to do all of the activities, and their writing samples demonstrated that they did not need LBS 5 or OBS upgrading.

Fig. 2 CABS Quick Screen Markers: Initial Assessment in 5 Levels

This chart is based on the quick screen chart provided by the CABS manual, *Common Assessment of Basic Skills*. (Fox Lee & Strohmaier, 2000, p.35). These are the levels of Literacy and Basic Skills Outcomes

Outcome	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Reading	Reads symbols and common sight words from everyday life.	Reads simple sentences. Finds concrete details. Makes straightforward inferences.	Finds main idea. Reads passages longer than one paragraph. Recognizes writer's point of view. Makes predictions. Draws conclusions based on text.	Clarifies own opinion by examining ideas in text. Makes complex inferences. Understands phrasing specific to writing (uncommon to speech).	Reads many paragraphs with challenging subject matter. Questions and evaluates ideas. Recognizes cultural influence and bias.
Writing	Writes a few words of personal relevance. Writes short sentences or sentence fragments. Uses conventional or invented spelling. Fills in simple forms with personal information.	Writes short, informal notes, or simple instructions. Writes complete sentences at least one simple paragraph. Uses capitals and periods. Spells many common words.	Expresses own point of view in writing. Gives supporting details, in two or three clearly defined paragraphs. Uses mainly standard spelling.	Writes an organized composition (4+ paragraphs). Develops a central idea. Uses paragraphs that are well developed and linked. Spells a wide range of words.	Writes a persuasive article (4+ paragraphs) aimed at a specific audience. Uses voice, vocabulary and style to effectively influence readers. Language is polished and controlled.
Basic Operations & Measurement	Adds and subtracts numbers to 20. Compares objects with respect to size and weight.	Adds and subtracts multi-digit numbers, with regrouping. Identifies fractions used in real life situations (1/4, 1/2, 3/4, 1/3, 2/3) Measures length using cm or m. Reads analog clock to nearest 5 min.	Multiplies and divides multi-digit decimals. Recognizes equivalent fractions. Chooses most appropriate metric unit to describe size and weight. Converts one unit to another.	Adds, subtracts and orders integers. Calculates percent. Calculates volume of rectangular objects using measurement and formula.	Solves multi-step problems involving fractions, percent, and ratio. Calculates volume of cylindrical objects using formula.
Computers (based on what clients say they can do)	Has seldom or never used a computer or video game.	Has gained a little experience with computer programs that use a mouse and keyboard.	Can independently start the computer and access a familiar program for personal use.	Has routinely and independently used a computer to produce well-formatted products	Has routinely used a variety of programs at home and work. Uses them in conjunction with each other.

Analysis of Survey Results and Skills Assessment

Ninety-seven volunteers participated in this project. All of them completed both the survey and the skills assessment. Their personal information, thoughts and opinions, and the skills they demonstrated gave us information about training needs, barriers to training as well as indications as to how these barriers might be addressed. Furthermore, their responses in the skills inventory indicated a high level of interest in learning or improving their skills.

In terms of education, only 32 of the 97 participants said they had **not** completed high school or earned a GED. In terms of demonstrated skills, however, the majority of participants had skill levels that were lower than their educational qualifications suggested. Despite the fact that 65 participants had completed high school, only 23 demonstrated literacy skills and four demonstrated math skills at a the LBS 5/OBS level. This finding is not surprising since the participants were asked to do a range of literacy and numeracy tasks some of which they had not done since leaving school .

In the skills assessment part of the survey, only eight of 97 participants demonstrated beginning LBS level literacy levels, while 47 demonstrated beginning level math skills (working without calculators). In the intermediate range for literacy were 34 participants and for math, 37 participants. These participants will all receive follow up letters suggesting the LBS service providers to contact if they wish to upgrade their skills. Participants with advanced LBS level skills in literacy (32) or in math (9) will be advised of LBS programs and also Algonquin's OBS program. Those at a higher level of skills will also receive a similar follow up letter with thanks, information about the report and responses to whatever specific questions they asked, but without a referral to a particular program. All participants will receive a letter.

In the skills inventories, the participants described the easiest and the most complex tasks that their previous jobs had required of them. These tasks indicated which skills had been reinforced since the individuals had left school and gave some insight into the skill levels that were demonstrated during the assessments. Despite the fact that people do use and develop skills outside the workplace, their

responses suggest that the essential skills profiles of the jobs in their employment history may be an indicator of which skills that person can currently demonstrate. Using the Essential Skills profiles to compare past jobs and target jobs or training may be a strong indication of whether or not upgrading is advisable.

The large number of people who demonstrated skills at the medium range is a measure of the skills they have been using in their former jobs. These individuals likely will not encounter difficulty in performing similar work. However, this information suggests that some individuals will need to upgrade skills if they are to be successful in new jobs or college courses which demand different skill sets. These people include some who are about to begin college programs through the second career strategy. They had the necessary educational qualifications but not the necessary skills to ensure success. One man, for example, was about to start a PSW program, yet he could not put a list of names into alphabetical order. He is an extreme example, but not the only person who demonstrated a need for upgrading before starting post secondary courses despite adequate academic credentials.

The survey of these 97 clients indicated that Employment Ontario agencies readily identify clients with skills at LBS 1 up to 2 levels. The survey's participants with skills at that level reported that Renfrew County Employment Ontario agencies had recognized their clients' levels 1 and 2 skills: The EO agencies had referred these clients, were in the process of referring them, or had tried to persuade them to go to an LBS agency for upgrading. Participants who lacked high school diplomas had also been encouraged to complete their educations.

The survey shows that people with literacy and numeracy skills at medium and high LBS levels, yet not at post high school levels are not easily identified. People with medium level skills can fill out forms adequately and may have good speaking skills. The skills assessment activities measured

their skill levels, but otherwise a need for upgrading is not easily identified. This fact is particularly important with people who indicate they have completed high school. The survey suggests that the following indicators may help to identify people who would benefit from mid level upgrading:

- Self evaluation: In the inventories, many participants said that they wanted to do better at various tasks. Self evaluation is one indicator of the need to upgrade skills. In fact, asking people what skills they would like to learn or to improve is more effective and more respectful than asking what they cannot do.
- Years out of school: They may have been out of school for a number of years. (However, some who claimed to be recent high school graduates also demonstrated low levels of literacy and numeracy.)
- Type of high school diploma: People say they have completed high school; they do not specify whether they took a general, basic, or even a basic modified program.
- Essential skills profiles from their employment history. People who had been working in jobs that did not call for high levels of literacy or of numeracy skills tended to have lower skills than those in more demanding jobs.

Whatever their level of education and their levels of skill, many participants expressed an interest in learning or improving specific skills. They checked off specific tasks listed in the skills inventories (e.g. plot information on a graph, summarize a passage from a text book) that they wanted to learn or to improve. Expressing an interest in learning or improving a skill is a positive action, while identifying a weakness focuses on the negative. People can say, for example, that they have no trouble with reading but at the same time say that they would like to improve at reading a textbook for a course or doing research. Such responses suggest that participants would be more likely to register for short courses which are very specific and which focus on practical applicable outcomes. Also, students who need to brush up their skills to prepare for further education or for a specific job can relearn previously held skills quickly. Short courses would be enough for them to accomplish that relearning. In response to our request for comments and suggestions, some participants suggested that these courses be offered: basic computers, filling out forms/applications, organizational skills, personal finances, time management.

The workshop and survey itself was well received by the participants. They were fully engaged in the process and gave excellent feedback. The employment service agencies deserve thanks for their work in setting up these meetings and for their hospitality in hosting them. The atmosphere during the sessions was positive, focusing on what skills job seekers have and what can be done to improve training opportunities rather than a negative focus on what job seekers lack in terms of skills. This information will help all Employment Ontario agencies work in the best interests of the client.

The following charts outline the correlation of the education levels, where the participant thinks their skill level is currently, literacy and math levels and the self-identified skills the participants would like to learn or improve. These charts are divided by referring agency rather than by location within the county.



Algonquin College									
Education Level	Are your skills still at that level 1 2 3 4 5 1-forgot everything 5-know more now	LBS Levels *note - not assessed above LBS/OBS		Would like to learn or improve skills					
		Literacy	Numeracy	Reading Text	Document use	Writing	Numeracy	Personal Mgmt	Technology
Gr. 10	3	OBS	5		✓		✓		
Gr.11	3	OBS	OBS				✓		✓
HS	3	OBS	LBS 3 -4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HS	3	LBS 3 -4	LBS 3 -4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HS /Some college	3	OBS	5+/OBS		✓		✓		
HS/ college	5	LBS 3 -4	LBS 3 -4						
PS	3	*	*	✓	✓	✓	✓		
PS	3	OBS	5	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
PS	5	LBS 3-4	LBS 3 -4						



Employment Networks									
Education Level	Are your skills still at that level 1 2 3 4 5 1-forgot everything 5-know more now	LBS Levels *note - not assessed above LBS/OBS		Would like to learn or improve skills					
		Literacy	Numeracy	Reading Text	Document use	Writing	Numeracy	Personal Mgmt	Technology
HS	3	LBS 3 -4	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
HS	4	LBS 3 -4	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓		
HS	4	LBS 3 -4	LBS 3 -4				✓		
HS	3	LBS 3 -4	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
HS/Some college	4	LBS 3 -4	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HS/Some college	4	5/OBS	LBS 1 -2		✓		✓		✓
HS/Some College	2	*	LBS 3 -4		✓	✓	✓		
PS	3	*	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓		
PS	3	*	LBS 3 -4			✓	✓		



Job Connect									
Education Level	Are your skills still at that level 1 2 3 4 5 1-forgot everything 5-know more now	LBS Levels *note - not assessed above LBS / OBS		Would like to learn or improve skills					
		Literacy	Numeracy	Reading Text	Document use	Writing	Numeracy	Personal Mgmt	Technology
GED	3	5/OBS	LBS 3 -4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gr. 10	5	LBS 3 -4	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Gr. 10	3	LBS 3 -4	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gr. 11	3	5/OBS	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Gr.10	3	LBS 5	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓		✓		
Gr.11	3	LBS 3 -4	LBS 1 - 2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Gr.11	3	LBS 3 -4	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Gr.11	2	LBS 3 -4	LBS 3 -4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gr.12	4	5/OBS	LBS 3 -4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
HS	4	*	LBS 3 -4				✓		



Job Connect - Cont'd									
	Are your skills still at that level 1 2 3 4 5 1-forgot everything 5-know more now	LBS Levels *note - not assessed above LBS / OBS		Would like to learn or improve skills					
Education Level		Literacy	Numeracy	Reading Text	Document use	Writing	Numeracy	Personal Mgmt	Technology
HS	5	LBS 1 -2	LBS 1 -2		✓				
HS	4	LBS 5	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
HS	4	LBS 5	LBS 1 -2	✓		✓	✓	✓	
HS	3	LBS 3 - 4	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓		
HS	4	5/OBS	LBS 1 -2						
HS	5	LBS 3 -4	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓		
HS	3	*	LBS 3 -4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HS	4	*	LBS 3 -4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HS	2	LBS 3 -4	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



Job Connect - Cont'd									
	Are your skills still at that level 1 2 3 4 5 1-forgot everything 5-know more now	LBS Levels *note - not assessed above LBS / OBS		Would like to learn or improve skills					
Education Level		Literacy	Numeracy	Reading Text	Document use	Writing	Numeracy	Personal Mgmt	Technology
HS	4	*	LBS 1 -2						
HS	3	LBS 3 -4	LBS 3 -4	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
HS/Some College	4	LBS 3 -4	LBS 3 -4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HS/Some college	5	LBS 3 -4	LBS 1 -2			✓			
PS	4	*	LBS 3 -4		✓	✓	✓		
PS	5	*	LBS 3 -4				✓		
PS	3	LBS 3 -4	LBS 3 -4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PS	4	LBS 5	LBS 3 -4	✓	✓				
PS	4	*	LBS 5	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
PS	2	LBS 3 -4	LBS 3 -4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



ontrac									
Education Level	Are your skills still at that level 1 2 3 4 5 1-forgot everything 5-know more now	LBS Levels *note - not assessed above LBS/OBS		Would like to learn or improve skills					
		Literacy	Numeracy	Reading Text	Document use	Writing	Numeracy	Personal Mgmt	Technology
Gr. 11	2	LBS 3-4	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gr. 11	3	LBS 3-4	LBS 1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Gr. 11/Some college	n/a	*	LBS 3 -4	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Gr. 12	4	LBS 3-4	LBS 3-4	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
HS	4	OBS	LBS 3 -4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HS	4	OBS	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



ontrac - Cont'd									
	Are your skills still at that level 1 2 3 4 5 1-forgot everything 5-know more now	LBS Levels *note - not assessed above LBS/OBS		Would like to learn or improve skills					
Education Level		Literacy	Numeracy	Reading Text	Document use	Writing	Numeracy	Personal Mgmt	Technology
HS/Some college	3	*	LBS 3 -4	✓		✓			
HS/Some college	n/a	OBS	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
HS/Some college	3	OBS	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓		✓	✓	
HS/Some college	4	*	LBS 3 -4	✓		✓	✓		✓
PS	3	*	*			✓	✓		
PS	2	*	LBS 3 -4		✓	✓			
PS	5	*	LBS 5				✓		
PS	n/a	LBS 3-4	LBS 1 -2	✓		✓			
PS	5	OBS	*						

Petawawa Military Family Resource Centre									
	Are your skills still at that level 1 2 3 4 5 1-forgot everything 5-know more now	LBS Levels *note - not assessed above LBS/OBS		Would like to learn or improve skills					
Education Level		Literacy	Numeracy	Reading Text	Document use	Writing	Numeracy	Personal Mgmt	Technology
Gr 11	3	LBS 1-2	LBS 1-2		✓	✓	✓		
HS	5	*	LBS 3 -4				✓		
HS	3	*	LBS 1 -2				✓		
HS	4	*	LBS 1 -2	✓		✓	✓		
HS	4	OBS	LBS 1 -2		✓	✓	✓		
HS/Some College	3	*	*	✓	✓	✓	✓		
PS	3	*	LBS 3 -4				✓	✓	
PS	1	*	LBS 3 -4	✓	✓	✓	✓		
PS	4	*	5/OBS				✓		



Rural Outreach Employment Services									
Education Level	Are your skills still at that level 1 2 3 4 5 1-forgot everything 5-know more now	LBS Levels *note - not assessed above LBS/OBS		Would like to learn or improve skills					
		Literacy	Numeracy	Reading Text	Document use	Writing	Numeracy	Personal Mgmt	Technology
GED	3	LBS 3-4	LBS 3 -4						✓
Gr. 9	2	LBS 3 -4	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Gr. 10	n/a	LBS 1-2	LBS 1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gr. 10	3	LBS 3 -4	LBS 1 -2						
Gr. 10	5	LBS 3 -4	LBS 1 -2	✓		✓			✓
Gr. 10	5	5/OBS	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gr. 10	2	LBS 1 -2	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gr. 11	4	5/OBS	LBS 3 -4		✓	✓	✓		
Gr. 11	4	LBS 1-2	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓



Rural Outreach Employment Services - Cont'd									
Education Level	Are your skills still at that level 1 2 3 4 5 1-forgot everything 5-know more now	LBS Levels *note - not assessed above LBS/OBS		Would like to learn or improve skills					
		Literacy	Numeracy	Reading Text	Document use	Writing	Numeracy	Personal Mgmt	Technology
Gr. 11	4	LBS 1-2	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Gr. 11	3	LBS 3 -4	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HS	3	LBS 3 -4	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
HS	4	5/OBS	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HS	3	LBS 3 -4	LBS 1 -2						
HS	4	5/OBS	LBS 3 -4	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
HS	3	LBS 3 -4	LBS 3 -4	✓	✓		✓		
HS	3	LBS 3-4	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓



Rural Outreach Employment Services - Cont'd									
	Are your skills still at that level 1 2 3 4 5 1-forgot everything 5-know more now	LBS Levels *note - not assessed above LBS/OBS		Would like to learn or improve skills					
Education Level		Literacy	Numeracy	Reading Text	Document use	Writing	Numeracy	Personal Mgmt	Technology
HS	n/a	LBS 3 -4	5/OBS				✓	✓	✓
HS	2	LBS 3-4	LBS 1 -2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HS/Some College	5	5/OBS	LBS 3 -4	✓		✓			✓
HS/Some College	5	*	LBS 3 -4	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
HS/Some college	4	*	LBS 1 -2				✓	✓	
N/A	n/a	LBS 1-2	LBS 1-2	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
PS	3	*	LBS 3 -4		✓		✓		
PS	n/a	LBS 3 -4	LBS 3 -4				✓		
Some College	3	5/OBS	LBS 3 -4						

Summary of Assessed Skills Levels

Skills Assessed	Skills Demonstrated	Participants
<p style="text-align: center;">Literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reading text ▪ Using documents ▪ Writing 	Beginning (*LBS 1-2)	8
	Intermediate (LBS 3-4)	34
	LBS 5 and above *OBS/High School	32
	Above LBS and OBS	23
<p style="text-align: center;">Numeracy</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Math Foundation Skills</p>	Beginning (LBS 1-2)	47
	Intermediate (LBS 3-4)	37
	LBS 5 and above *OBS/High School	13

*LBS (Literacy and Basic Skills)

*OBS (Ontario Basic Skills)

Would like to learn / improve skills: Summary of responses

Algonquin College - Pembroke								
	LBS Levels		Would like to learn or improve skills					
	Literacy	Numeracy	Reading Text	Document use	Writing	Numeracy	Personal Mgmt	Technology
Clients								
1	5	3-4			✓	✓	✓	✓
2	5	5						✓
3	5	5		✓		✓		
4	5	5	✓		✓			
5	5	3-4						
6	5	5						
7	5	5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Employment Networks - Renfrew								
	LBS Levels		Would like to learn or improve skills					
	Literacy	Numeracy	Reading Text	Document use	Writing	Numeracy	Personal Mgmt	Technology
Clients								
1	*	3-4						
2	*	1-2		✓	✓	✓		
3	*	3-4		✓	✓	✓		
4	5	1-2		✓	✓	✓		
5	5	1-2		✓		✓		✓
6	5	1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓		
7	3-4	1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓		
8	3-4	1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
9	3-4	3-4						
10	3-4	1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

B- beginning (LBS 1-2) I - Intermediate (LBS 3-4) A - Advanced (LBS 5+ to *OBS)
 LBS (Literacy and Basic Skills) OBS (Ontario Basic Skills)

Job Connect - Pembroke								
	LBS Levels		Would like to learn or improve skills					
	Literacy	Numeracy	Reading Text	Document use	Writing	Numeracy	Personal Mgmt	Technology
Clients								
1	3-4	1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓		
2	3-4	1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓		
3	3-4	3-4	✓	✓	✓			✓
4	3-4	3-4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	*	3-4				✓		
6	*	3-4				✓		
7	*	1-2	✓			✓		
8	*	5	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
9	*	3-4	✓	✓	✓	✓		
10	5	3-4	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
11	*	3-4	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
12	3-4	3-4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13	3-4	1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓		
14	3-4	3-4						
15	*	3-4				✓		
16	*	1-2						
17	3-4	3-4			✓		✓	✓
18	5	3-4	✓	✓				
19	5	1-2	✓	✓		✓		
20	1-2	1-2						
21	3-4	1-2						

B- beginning (LBS 1-2) I - Intermediate (LBS 3-4) A - Advanced (LBS 5+ to *OBS)
 LBS (Literacy and Basic Skills) OBS (Ontario Basic Skills)

ontrac - / Job Connect - Arnprior								
	LBS Levels		Would like to learn or improve skills					
	Literacy	Numeracy	Reading Text	Document use	Writing	Numeracy	Personal Mgmt	Technology
Clients								
1	*	1-2		✓		✓		✓
2	*	5						
3	*	1-2	✓			✓		
4	*	3-4				✓		✓
5	*	3-4			✓			
6	*	PHS						
7	*	3-4		✓	✓			
8	*	3-4			✓	✓		✓
9	5	PHS						
10	5	1-2			✓	✓		
11	5	3-4		✓	✓	✓		
12	5	1-2	✓					
13	5	1-2		✓		✓		
14	5	1-2		✓	✓	✓	✓	
15	5	3-4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
16	3-4	1-2		✓	✓	✓		
17	3-4	3-4			✓	✓		✓
18	3-4	1-2		✓	✓	✓		
19	3-4	1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Petawawa Military Family Resource Centre								
	LBS Levels		Would like to learn or improve skills					
	Literacy	Numeracy	Reading Text	Document use	Writing	Numeracy	Personal Mgmt	Technology
Clients								
1	*	*						
2	*	1-2	✓			✓		
3	*	1-2				✓		
4	*	3-4				✓	✓	
5	*	*		✓				
6	*	3-4				✓		
7	1-2	1-2			✓	✓		
8	5	1-2				✓		
9	*	3-4						
10	*	3-4			✓	✓		

B- beginning (LBS 1-2) I - Intermediate (LBS 3-4) A - Advanced (LBS 5+ to *OBS)
 LBS (Literacy and Basic Skills) OBS (Ontario Basic Skills)

Rural Outreach - Barry's Bay								
	LBS Levels		Would like to learn or improve skills					
	Literacy	Numeracy	Reading Text	Document use	Writing	Numeracy	Personal Mgmt	Technology
Clients								
1	1-2	1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	3-4	1-2		✓	✓	✓	✓	
3	3-4	3-4		✓	✓	✓		✓
4	3-4	3-4					✓	
5	3-4	1-2			✓	✓		✓
6	3-4	1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	5	3-4	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
8	5	3-4						
9	5	3-4	✓		✓			✓
10	5	1-2				✓		

Rural Outreach - Eganville								
	LBS Levels		Would like to learn or improve skills					
	Literacy	Numeracy	Reading Text	Document use	Writing	Numeracy	Personal Mgmt	Technology
Clients								
1	3-4	1-2	✓		✓			
2	3-4	3-4				✓		
3	3-4	1-2						
4	3-4	3-4						✓
5	5	3-4			✓	✓		
6	3-4	1-2						
7	*	3-4				✓		
8	1-2	1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	3-4	1-2	✓		✓	✓		
10	*	3-4			✓	✓		✓
11	1-2	1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

B- beginning (LBS 1-2) I - Intermediate (LBS 3-4) A - Advanced (LBS 5+ to *OBS)
 LBS (Literacy and Basic Skills) OBS (Ontario Basic Skills)

Rural Outreach - Pembroke								
Clients	LBS Levels		Would like to learn or improve skills					
	Literacy	Numeracy	Reading Text	Document use	Writing	Numeracy	Personal Mgmt	Technology
1	3-4	1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	3-4	1-2	✓		✓	✓	✓	
3	3-4	1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓		
4	3-4	5					✓	✓
5	3-4	1-2		✓	✓	✓		
6	3-4	1-2		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	3-4	1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	1-2	1-2		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	1-2	1-2	✓	✓		✓		✓

B- beginning (LBS 1-2) I - Intermediate (LBS 3-4) A - Advanced (LBS 5+ to *OBS)
 LBS (Literacy and Basic Skills) OBS (Ontario Basic Skills)

Barriers to Accessing Training

See the charts below for the participants' responses about barriers and their suggestions about how to address them.

Barriers revealed by their responses and also by the survey itself can be put into two categories: external and internal.

- External barriers
 - relate to the participants' circumstances
 - lack of transportation
 - barriers set up by EI rules

These are barriers which prevent them from getting training which they might otherwise choose to take. These barriers mean that individuals **can't** choose to access training.

- Internal barriers
 - relate to the participants' skills, knowledge and motivation
 - lack of confidence
 - not motivated to attend or find information

These are personal factors. These barriers mean that individuals **don't** choose to access training.

Although the barriers are different, some of the ways of addressing them will work for both.

External barriers

Stigma is an important factor

Accessing training at literacy and upgrading programs could be viewed as evidence of inadequacy on one level or another. Service providers work hard to address that issue, yet much of their own public information and certainly the stereotypes about people served by literacy and basic skills programs focus on individuals whose skills are very low and who are described in terms of what they cannot do. Agencies are advised to watch for clients who have trouble filling out forms, who bring another person to complete documents for them, or who say they will do them at home. Such clients are struggling with low level literacy tasks. Referring them to adult literacy programs is appropriate. However, basic literacy is only the beginning of the literacy continuum. There is a reluctance to refer people to literacy programs unless those people have very low levels of skills. The description of the low level learner is an example of the way this reluctance is reinforced. Instead of the training being described in terms of what is offered, it is described in terms of the problems faced by people who could be referred for training.

When service providers advertise the course content and the skills that are taught, rather than the problems that the training is meant to resolve, they address the issue of stigma. Agencies might feel more comfortable telling their clients, even high school graduates, that if they want to prepare for a college course, they can take a course in study skills and note-taking, rather than saying that if they have trouble with reading they can go to an upgrading program.

Lack of understanding of what free training is available

Many participants in the study said they did not know about the free adult upgrading programs. Some commented that they were new to the area and hadn't had time to learn about what is available. Others commented that they thought the courses are irrelevant and boring. Increased focus on specific courses (not necessarily changing the courses, but naming them clearly) would increase understanding. Employment agencies would find it easier, too, to pass on information if it were given in terms of course content.

Red tape, delays, rules

Several people mentioned the problems they have had in registering to earn prerequisites for post-secondary courses. They have applied for college through the Second Career and their conditional acceptances are based on their earning the prerequisites beforehand. They must begin earning the prerequisites when those courses are available; otherwise they will not be able to take the post-secondary courses that have been approved. Employment services are becoming experienced at addressing these barriers.

Difficulty accessing apprenticeships

Many participants expressed an interest in apprenticeships. They spoke of their interest in hands-on learning and their interest in the trades. One of the barriers they identified was the need to find their own placements and the lack of people willing to take on apprentices. The Trends, Opportunities and Priorities (TOP) report has also spoken about the need to increase opportunities for apprenticeships.

Internal barriers

Lack of awareness of skills gap

Individuals whose skills are at mid levels of literacy may not be aware of skills gaps until they move into, or try to move into, new situations such as a new job or a training program. Their skills had been adequate for the lives they had been living; therefore, they were not aware that their new circumstances might require them to upgrade their skills. In this survey, for example, many participants checked “I can do this” in the skills inventories next to tasks that they could not do when they came to the skills assessment activities. People who checked off that they could multiply fractions may have once been able to do so and assumed that they still remembered how.

Skills gaps at low levels appear to be readily identifiable by agencies as well as by the individuals with those low level skills. Information provided by literacy service providers to raise awareness of literacy generally focuses on the lowest levels of skills; or if not, those skill gaps are the most distressing so they attract the most attention. Also, people with such low levels of skill are aware that they cannot do all that they need to do. In this survey people with skills at LBS levels one and two are few in number and are being referred to service providers.

Individuals at intermediate and advanced LBS levels need more information about education and training options and they need educational assessments. It would be most useful for them to receive these services at the employment centres.

Recommendations

- Promote literacy and essential skills training in terms of its content
- Refer learners based on what they want and need to learn rather than only on their educational qualifications
- Prepare standard information sheet on EI regulations
- Provide a Literacy Service Committee representative to offer educational assessment and referral in the EAS offices
- Use Essential Skills Occupational Profiles to assist in identifying clients' current skills
- Be more flexible in the hours courses are being offered
- Use Essential Skills Occupational Profiles of clients' target jobs to identify where upgrading may be needed

Barriers/Challenges to Finding work

34	Lack of jobs, and too much qualified competition for those that are available	34	Lack of education and/or specific job skills, therefore limited to low paying jobs or can't get job
16	Transportation (e.g., no vehicle, no public transit, driving in bad weather)	10	Not willing to take low paying jobs (e.g. retail, some seasonal work)
10	Location of jobs (e.g. time factor, travel costs, arranging transportation, extra childcare costs, too far to travel)	2	Limited or no access to high speed internet (e.g. access job and labour market information, online applications, job related research)
5	Discrimination (e.g. age, race, culture, sex)	1	Childcare costs or availability of childcare

Participant suggestions about employment barriers:

get feedback from all employers in Renfrew County and base programs on what they are really looking for	upgrading of basic math and English skills should be offered in the workplace
employers should allow workers time off to get education and training outside the workplace	local government must make it attractive for new business to locate in Renfrew County
need more opportunities for apprenticeships, give employers more incentives to take on apprentices	employers should be willing to train on the job more

Barriers/Challenges to Education/Training/Upgrading Programs

31	Don't know about free adult upgrading programs, and lack of or conflicting information about particular programs, times, dates, locations	26	Limited courses offered (e.g. should have more that vary in length, want specific skills; not enough variety)
21	Location of programs (e.g. time factor, travel costs, arranging transportation, extra childcare costs, too far to travel)	20	Program costs (excluding free programs)
16	Transportation (e.g., no vehicle, no public transit, driving in bad weather)	15	Time restraints (e.g. may need upgrading before higher education, time away from family)
13	Either takes too long to get into education/training, have been denied the opportunity, or not clear on rules for collecting EI and attending educational programs	13	Not comfortable in a classroom setting (e.g. embarrassed, prefer hands on)
12	Cannot commit to education because of personal financial situation and childcare costs	11	Trouble finding someone to take them on as an apprentice
8	Feel it is unnecessary	4	Little confidence in their ability to learn – based on their previous educational experiences
2	Limited or no access to high speed internet (e.g. for information, online learning)		

Barriers/Challenges to Education/Training/Upgrading Programs

Participant suggestions	
more information sessions and advertisement about education and training, particularly the free upgrading	reduce number of steps involved in getting into education and training if on EI
agencies need to work together	have a more centralized system for accessing education and training
course information should be provided to all workplaces in Renfrew County so that employees can make themselves aware of what is available if they need to take a course, or the plant closes	reduce costs of college education
more government subsidies (e.g. transportation, living expenses, low interest loans)	offer more specific workplace training for Renfrew County employers
offer more co-operative education programs	need more variety of programs/courses
need shorter training programs	consider clients' interests when looking at their needs
agency staff could be more approachable	provide more locations for education and training
more online courses	

Recommendations summary

1. Increase awareness of the services available to clients.
Agency/agencies responsible - *All Employment Ontario Service Deliverers*

2. Use newly developed tools to identify skills levels of clients rather than educational attainment.
Agency/agencies responsible - *Assessment Centres, Action Centres*

3. Complete Skills Assessments with clients once identified by Assessment Centre, and Action Centres.
Agency/agencies responsible - *Regional Literacy Network*

4. Offer courses at different times of the day to accommodate the clients availability.
Agency/agencies responsible - *Literacy and Basic Skills agencies*

5. Develop and promote workshops and training for clients who need LBS/OBS upgrading.
Agency/agencies responsible - *Literacy and Basic Skills agencies*

6. Develop and promote training with more focus on the specifics clients needs to succeed in their goals of employment.
Agency/agencies responsible - *Regional Literacy Network and Literacy and Basic Skills agencies*

7. Provide a Frequently asked Questions (FAQ) document of EI requirements for clients.
Agency/agencies responsible - *HRSDC and MTCU*

8. Increase awareness for Assessment Centres on the uses of Essential Skills Occupational Profiles
Agency/agencies responsible - *The Regional Network*

LBS Agencies in Renfrew County

Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley - Call (613) 735-4700 ext. 2764

Literacy Plus – Call (613) 628-1720

Renfrew County Catholic District School Board - Call (613) 735-1031 ext. 217

Renfrew County District School Board - Call (613) 732-8740

Literacy Ontario Central South – (705) 749-0675

Employment Ontario Partners in Renfrew County

Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley – (613) 735-4700

Employment Networks – (613) 432-3424

Job Connect, Arnprior – (613) 622-5524

Job Connect, Pembroke – (613) 735-4308

Job Connect, Renfrew – (613) 432-5863

ontrac Employment Resource Services (613) 623-4680

Petawawa Military Family Resource Centre – (613) 687-1717

Rural Outreach Employment Services – (613) 732-3334

