



Got 'em, need 'em, want 'em: The Essential Skills Paradox

Movement for Canadian Literacy

The Skilled Workforce: Getting to Essentials

Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters

Mississauga, February 4, 2009



Objectives

- Identify and describe Essential Skills
- See how to fit Essential Skills into existing training
- Embed Essential Skills into a learning culture



What do Essential Skills mean to you?

Discussion



The Nine Essential Skills

- Reading Text
- Document Use
- Numeracy
- Writing
- Oral Communication
- Working with Others
- Continuous Learning
- Thinking Skills
- Computer Use

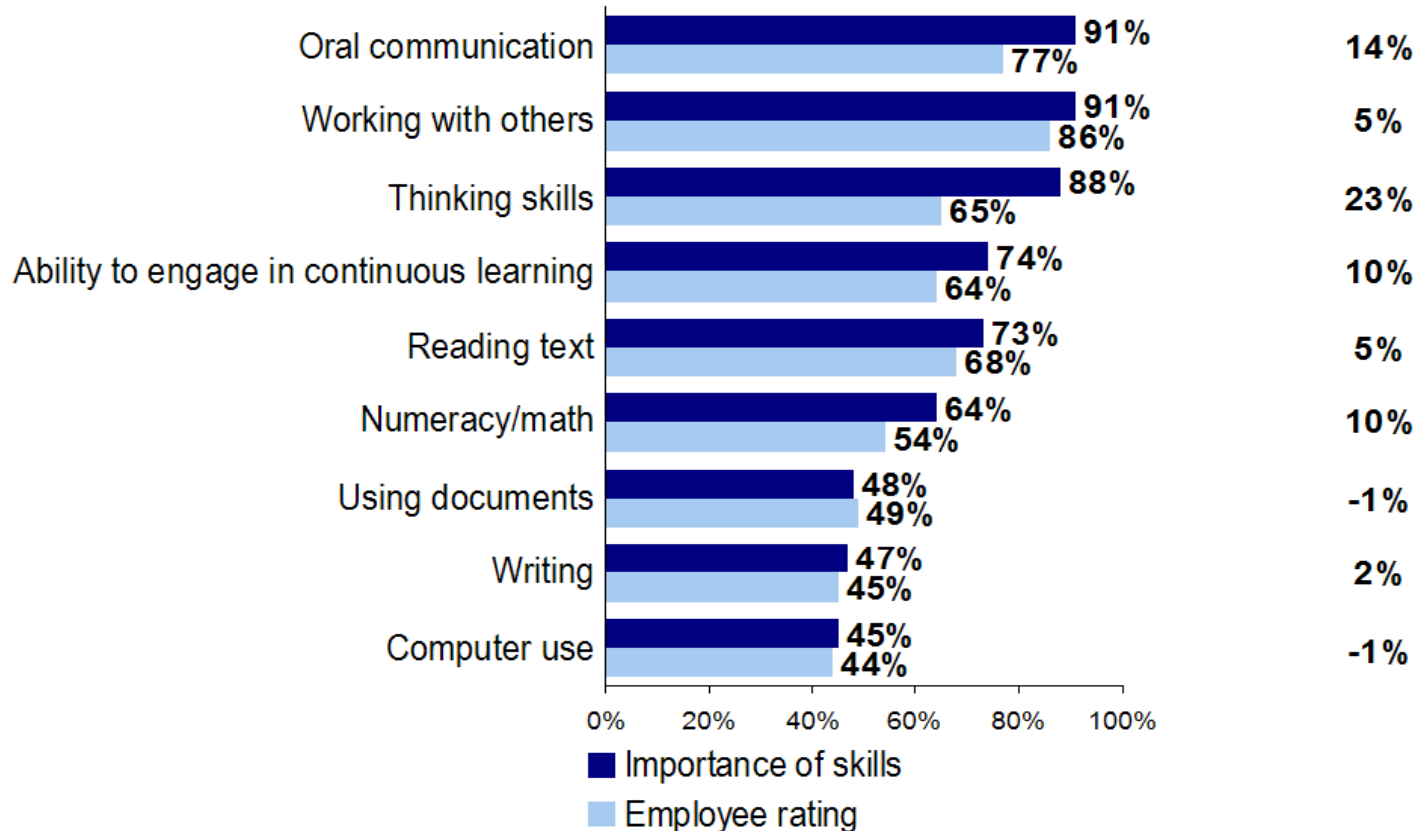
For more on essential skills go to hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills



Importance and Rating of Skills

“How important is it that the employees have skills in.../
How would you rate the level of employees’ skills in...?”

GAP





Could this apply to your organization?

A few years ago, we introduced new tools in a firm of 550 employees. The union thought 30 or so employees would need assistance. An inquiry revealed that 178 employees experienced difficulties, at different degrees.

Fédération des travailleurs et des travailleuses du Québec



Today's Challenge

Workplaces are facing many challenges.

- You need to compete in the global market.
- You need to increase productivity through employee training in Essential Skills.
- However, in hard economic times it is difficult to find money for training.

What can you do?



Essential Skills Explained



Literacy and Essential Skills

- HRSDC has introduced the term *Essential Skills* to define the transferable skills that everyone needs to succeed in life
 - ◆ There are 9 Essential Skills
 - ◆ Gradually educators, employers and service providers across Canada are becoming familiar with the term and its meaning
- Essential Skills are also a structured way of thinking about Literacy – skills are not new
- Literacy is the foundation of every Essential Skill



A Common Language

- Essential Skills provide the foundation for learning all other skills
- Essential Skills are adaptable to all situations
- Essential Skills help people to be more productive and to more easily learn new tasks
- Each job needs different skills and will have varying complexity levels



Assemblers and Inspectors - NOC 9484

- Assemble prefabricated parts for household, commercial and industrial appliances and equipment
- Employed by electrical appliance and electrical equipment manufacturing companies
- Inspectors inspect and test assembled products
- Workers who set up and prepare assembly lines for operation are included



NOC 9484 – Reading

- Instructions for procedural changes and run quantities (1)
- Health and safety notices posted on bulletin boards (2)
- Quality assurance binders to find out about parts (2)
- Newsletters to stay abreast of company news (2)
- International Standards Organization and Canadian Standards Association bulletins to apply quality standards to their job tasks (3)
- Defect reports to ensure product quality (3)



NOC 9484 – Document Use

- Read parts lists to ensure all parts are on hand (1)
- Complete checklists to ensure all parts are installed (1)
- Read WHMIS labels to follow safety procedures (2)
- Read posted schedules to receive work assignments (2)
- Interpret drawings to verify measurements and sequence for assembling prefabricated parts (3)
- Interpret blueprints to assemble components (3)



NOC 9484 – Oral Skills

- Listen to announcements to receive information (1)
- Interact with supervisor to receive parts lists, discuss quality problems (1)
- Interact with suppliers to obtain information on availability of parts or to explain rejection reports (1)
- Troubleshoot assembly problems with co-workers (2)
- Discuss work processes and quality problems with employees during production meetings (2)
- Propose solutions for improving work processes (3)



NOC 9484 – Thinking Skills

- May realize that a rivet does not fit. They check parts list to verify if they are using the prescribed rivet and, if they are, cross reference the original documentation to determine if the part number was transferred correctly (2)
- May be unable to secure the parts shown on the parts list. They identify substitute parts and find them efficiently to maintain production (2)
- May trace technical problems to a new product design. They learn more about the problem and identify and share possible solutions with design technicians (3)



Equalizer

The screenshot shows the 'Essential Skills equalizer' interface for the occupation 'Industrial Instrument Mechanic'. At the top, there is a bar chart with nine colored blocks representing skill levels: Reading Text (3), Document Use (3), Numeracy (4), Writing (4), Oral Communication (3), Computer Skills (2), Thinking Skills (4), Working with Others (3), and Continuous Learning (3). Below the chart are nine vertical sliders, each with a blue knob. The 'Writing' slider is highlighted with a red arrow. At the bottom, there are buttons for '< Back', 'Help', a dropdown menu showing 'Industrial Instrument Mechanic', and 'Get Report'. A 'Reading Text' section is visible, containing the text: '- Paragraph-length text in charts, tables and graphs'.

The screenshot shows the 'Essential Skills equalizer' interface for the occupation 'Accounting and Related Clerks'. At the top, there is a bar chart with nine colored blocks representing skill levels: Reading Text (3), Document Use (3), Numeracy (3), Writing (3), Oral Communication (3), Computer Skills (2), Thinking Skills (3), Working with Others (3), and Continuous Learning (3). Below the chart are nine vertical sliders, each with a blue knob. The 'Writing' slider is highlighted with a red arrow. At the bottom, there are buttons for '< Back', 'Help', a dropdown menu showing 'Accounting and Related Clerks', and 'Get Report'. A 'Reading Text' section is visible, containing the text: '- Paragraph-length text in charts, tables and graphs'.

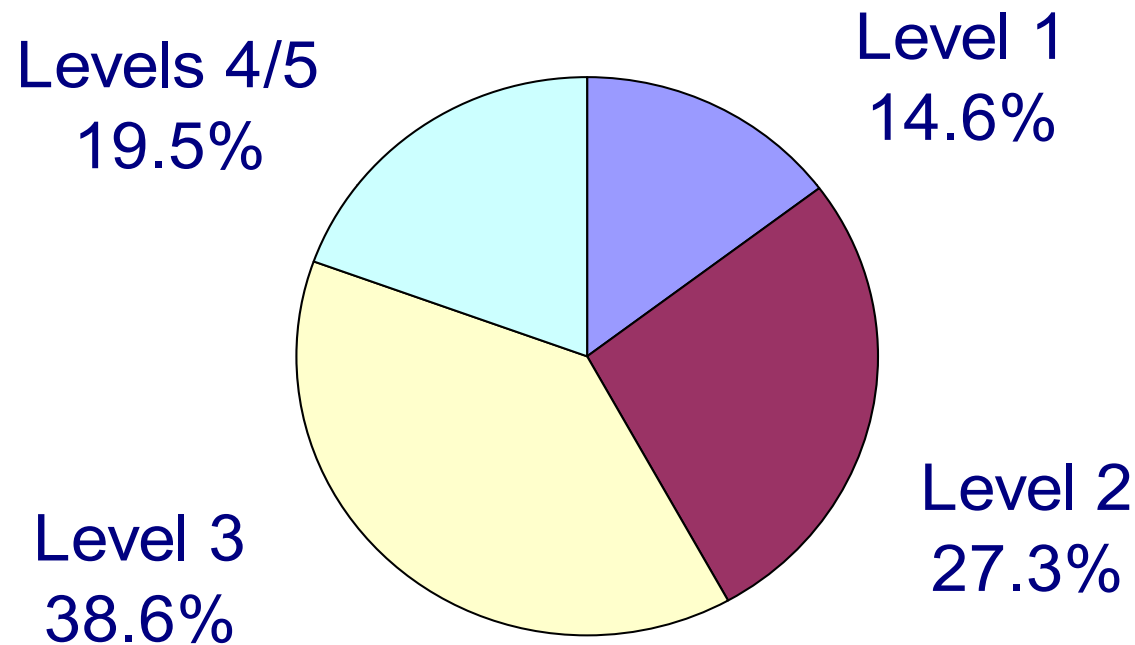


Skills in Canada

What the figures tell us



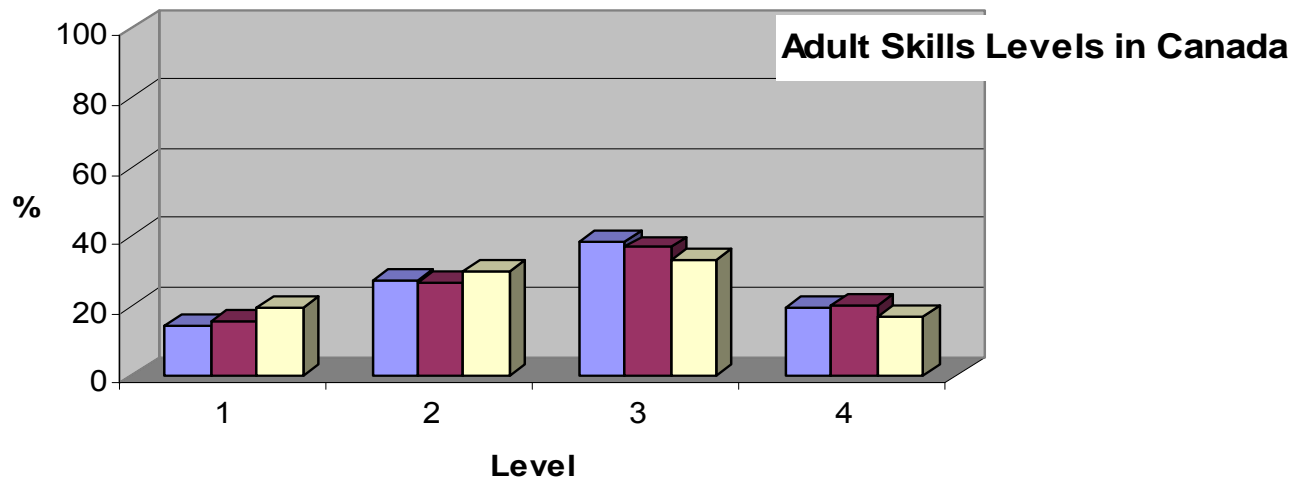
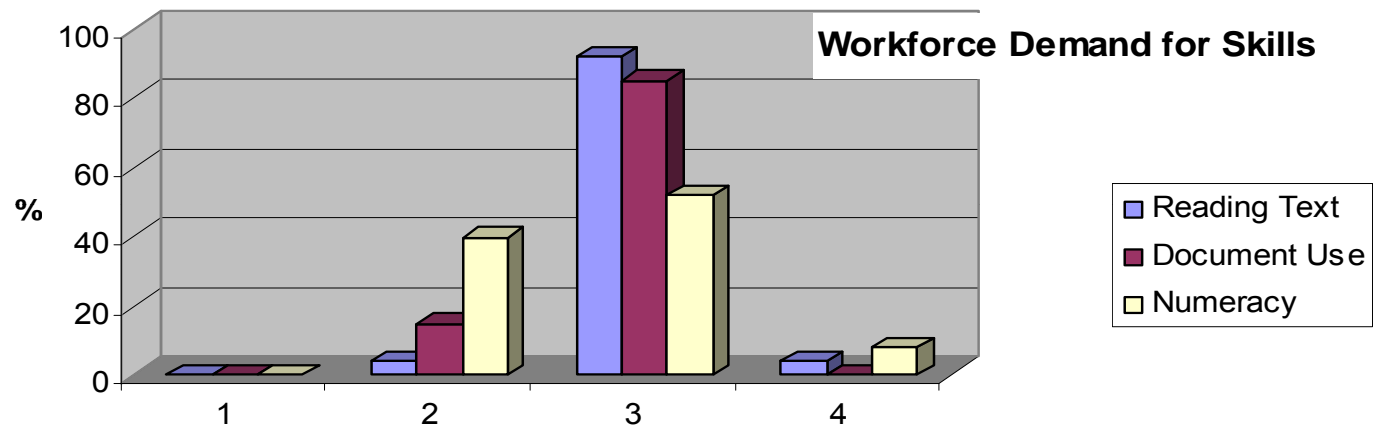
Literacy Levels for Canadian Adults



Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL) 2005

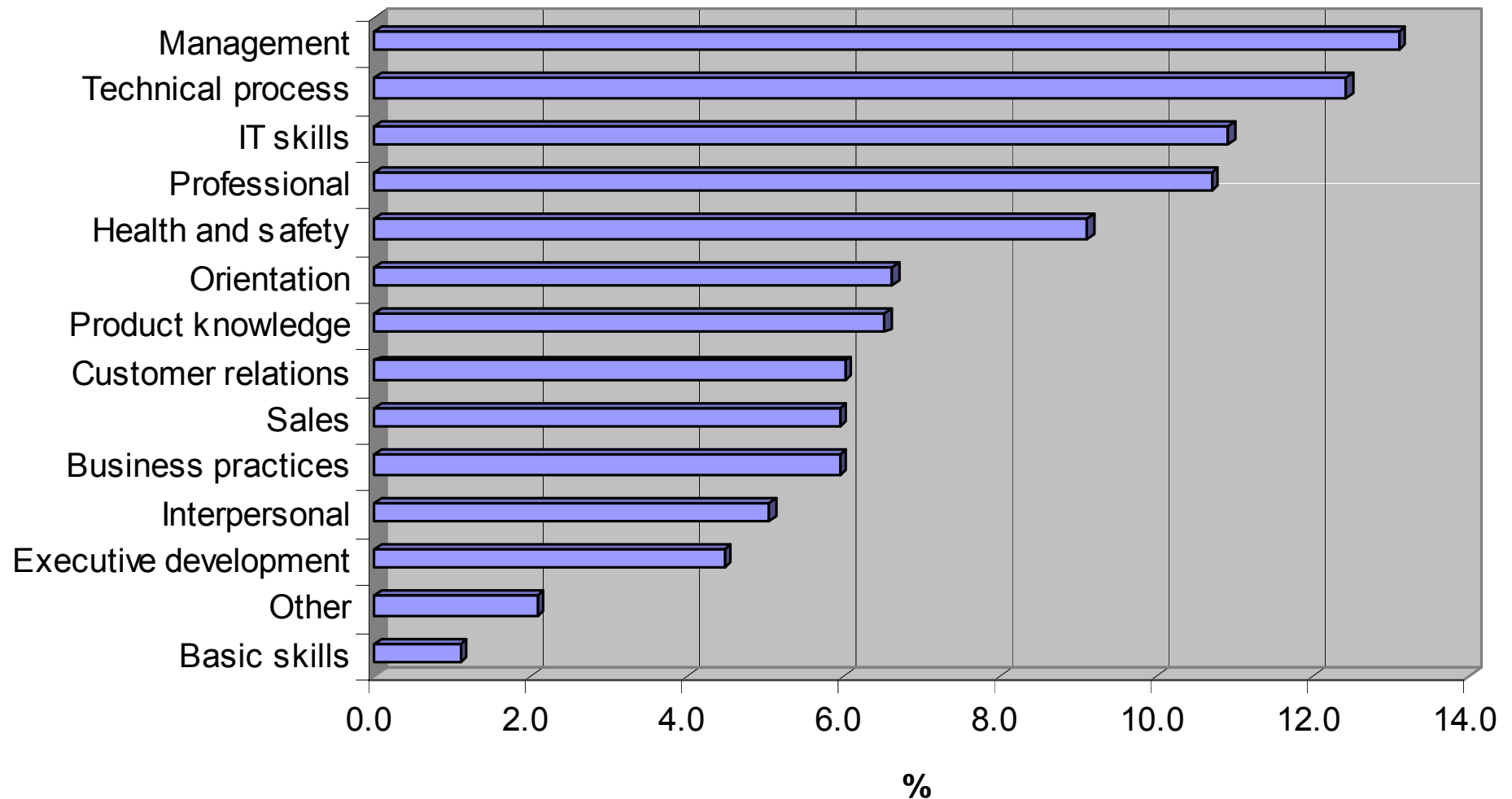


Skills we need / Skills we have





Employers' Investment in Training





Benefits versus Costs



A Cost/Benefit Analysis

- Goal is to get everyone to Level 3 literacy- roughly equivalent to a high school diploma standard
 - ◆ some people gain high school diplomas but don't actually have skills at that level
- A 1% increase in average literacy scores results in a 1.5% permanent increase in GDP per capita
- A 1% literacy increase results in a 2.5% increase in productivity



Costs to Canadian Business

- The estimated annual cost of low literacy to Canadian business is \$4 billion
- Of this, \$1.6 billion is for industrial accidents

Source:

Measuring the Costs of Illiteracy in Canada,
Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy, 1988



Problems in the Workplace

- Are you experiencing any of the following?
 - ◆ High staff turnover?
 - ◆ High absenteeism?
 - ◆ Low motivation and/or productivity?
 - ◆ Employees who resist change?
 - ◆ On-the-job accidents?
 - ◆ Difficulty meeting business goals?
- If so, your employees may need to further develop their Essential Skills



Direct Benefits - Employees

Workers with good Essential Skills are:

- ◆ better at their jobs
- ◆ adaptable to new tasks
- ◆ more likely to have skills for advancement
- ◆ more self-confident
- ◆ motivated to succeed



Direct Benefits - Employers

Essential Skills training results in:

- higher productivity and reduced error rates
- improved health and safety
- enhanced communication and teamwork
- improved morale and retention
- enhanced corporate image

Everyone benefits from a learning culture



Investment in Essential Skills Training

Identifying the Need

Organizational Needs Assessments /
Workplace Survey



Organizational Needs Assessment

- This will help you find out if Essential Skills gaps are affecting your organization's performance
- It is available on the Essential Skills website
www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/essential_skills/ona.shtml
- It will help you identify Essential Skills training needs for your whole organization, a specific section, or a group of employees, e.g. entry level



Completing an ONA

- Questions about each Essential Skill
- You can complete it yourself or have managers complete it for their departments
 - ◆ They may have valuable input into the current skills
- Complete the Assessment Results Charts
- Decide on a training action plan
- Communicate regularly with employees
 - ◆ Open lines of communication improve employee motivation



Essential Skills Workplace Survey

- This tool can also help you identify potential Essential Skills Issues or areas of strength
- There is a section for each of the 9 Essential Skills
- Use it for:
 - ◆ Your organization as a whole
 - ◆ Different sections of your organization
 - ◆ Different groups of employees
- Employees can use it to assess their strengths and weaknesses



Workplace Check-up - Employees

- This tool will help you get employee feedback on training needs – it is quick to implement and provides an overview
- It will help you provide training support
 - ◆ Look for broad trends
 - ◆ Identify training gaps
- Use it to identify skills for new hires



Workplace Check-up Questions

Employees submit their responses anonymously

- Skills most important to do my job
- Skills I need most training in
- Skills I feel my co-workers need most training in
- Skills I have received workplace training for
- Skills I feel I can ask for help with

Employees answer these questions for each ES



Record Your Information

- Now record the information from your Needs Assessment or Survey.
- You will have identified *Performance Issues*.
- From these you can create *Training Objectives*



Performance Issues

Some possible examples:

- Common mistakes
- Unfinished tasks
- Safety incidents
- Poor customer service



Identify Training Objectives

- improve productivity
- reduce errors
- improve customer service
- empower employees
- improve communication
- improve teamwork
- improve safety
- reduce absenteeism
- reduce turnover
- improve ability to implement change
- other.....



Developing Essential Skills Training

Employee Development



Train or Revise Process

- Review your hiring process
- Restructure tasks
 - ◆ simplify process
- Revise Workplace Documents
 - ◆ use clear language
- Provide support when implementing changes
 - ◆ explain step-by-step when making changes
 - ◆ know your employees' skills and challenges
 - ◆ don't make assumptions



Hiring Checklist

- Before you consider hiring new employees, find out which Essential Skills an employee needs
- Essential Skills Profiles can help you to do this hrsd.gc.ca/essentialskills
- Check these statements against job descriptions
- Ask questions that will show if a candidate has these skills
- This will help you decide if a candidate's skills match the requirements of the position



Training Supports

- Mentoring / Buddying Program
- E-learning
- On-the-job training
- Self-study
- Adding Essential Skills training to existing training

Consider setting up a learning centre for employees



Existing Training - Safety

- Warning Signs
 - ◆ What does this poster mean to you?
- Procedures / Tasks
 - ◆ Provide scenarios of situations that employees might encounter. Have them use problem solving steps.
 - ◆ Have them role play scenarios.
 - ◆ Have them write instructions in their own words.
 - ◆ Have them summarize what they have learned.



Mechanical Millwright - Success

Continuous learning from some of my colleagues also played a role in my success. They taught me lessons that helped my career in the skilled trades. One co-worker helped me to improve my thinking skills by giving me advice on decision making and problem solving. Another role model taught me how to be proud of my work and be a confident worker. They inspired me to mentor new employees.



Developing In-House Training

- Make a list of occupations
- Which of those groups need ES training?
- Find ES profile / or similar profile for that group
- Incorporate into existing training using authentic materials or examples from your workplace
- Give opportunities for employees to practice skills



External Expertise

- Ontario Literacy Coalition
- Regional Networks of Literacy Providers
- The Learning Hub (online training)



Employee Skills



Essential Skills Indicators

- Tool to help gain a better understanding of Essential Skills levels
- Short quizzes to provide an indication of skill strengths and areas that may need improvement
- Can help guide training and career planning
- Available online and as print-based documents.
More will be coming soon

www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/essential_skills/general/toolkit.shtml



Reading Indicator

- This tool is designed to give you an indication of employees' Reading levels
 - ◆ It provides examples of Level 1 and Level 2 assessment questions
- It can be used to obtain useful information about skills in order to enhance training.



Reading Indicator - Example, L2

Look at the Emergency Code Manual below.

A patient at a hospital is angry and has thrown a dangerous chemical product onto the floor.

*Circle or underline the **two** codes that the nurse aide must transmit over the intercom.*

Emergency Code Manual		
Emergency Code	Description	Immediate Action(s)
Code Pink	A child has been abducted.	Contact Security to provide a description of the abducted child.
Code White	Hazardous materials have been spilled.	Cordon off the area. Contact maintenance to clean the spill.
Code Yellow	The hospital will be receiving a large number of patients at once.	Activate the disaster plan.
Code Grey	A patient or other individual is being combative.	Contact Security. If possible, contain the individual in an isolated area.
Code Purple	An adult patient is missing.	Contact Security to provide a description of the missing patient.
Code Red	There is a fire in the building.	Pull the fire alarm. Close all doors and windows.



Document Use Indicator

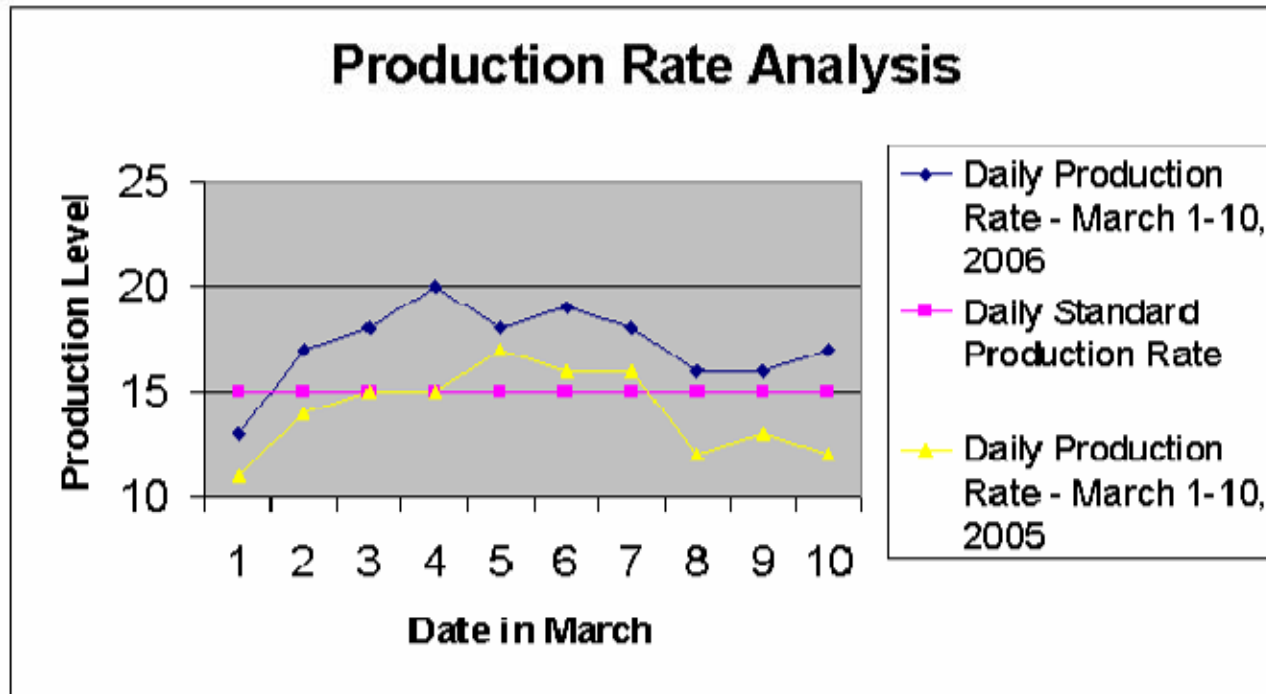
- This tool is designed to give you an indication of employees' Document Use levels
 - ◆ It provides examples of Level 1 and Level 2 assessment questions
- It can be used to obtain useful information about skills in order to enhance training



Document Use Indicator – Example L2

4. Fabric cutters record daily production rates.

Look at the graph below.



What is the daily production rate on March 4, 2006?



Numeracy Indicator

- This tool is designed to give you an indication of employees' Numeracy levels
 - ◆ It provides examples of Level 1 and Level 2 assessment questions
- It can be used to obtain useful information about skills in order to enhance training



Numeracy Indicator - Example, L2

1. Electricians complete and submit expense claim forms.

Look at the form below.

Expense Claim Form			
Date	Type of Expense	Rate	Claim (\$)
March 12, 2006	Lunch	Exact amount	7.00
March 12, 2006	Telephone	Exact amount	3.50
March 12, 2006	Travel – 200 km	\$0.42 per km	
Signature: _____			Total

What is the total amount that the electrician can claim for km travelled?

\$



How Do You Measure Up

- Helps employees assess the skills they have and recognize the skills they need to strengthen.
- It's free and provides a range of workplace related levelled activities for assessing or practising skills in Reading Text, Document Use and Numeracy

<http://measureup.towes.com/english/index.asp>