

Millennium Project Final Document

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Stevenson-Britannia Adult Literacy Program
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The face of adult literacy has changed dramatically over the past 10 years. In addition to literacy/upgrading, programs are being called upon to offer employment development skills, family literacy, life skills training and various short courses. Practitioners are also expected to offer expanded needs assessments as well as counseling supports. Literacy has expanded to include the workplace and the family as well as the individual. Clearly the roles of literacy practitioners have changed.

The Millennium Project sought to determine program and practitioner's needs and how they could best be addressed both now and into the future.

Methodology

Mail-out surveys were relied on to gather information. Completed surveys were returned by 25 instructors and/or coordinators and 7 literacy working group members, representing 17 programs, or about half of the provincially funded literacy programs. Respondents gave complete and thoughtful responses to the surveys, and represented a range of program types, sizes and locations. As a result we are confident that the data collected in this way provides a valid basis for analysis and recommendations.

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SECTION 1

Strengths of community-based programs

Instructor commitment

When asked why they stay in the field, practitioners consistently report that they enjoy teaching, feel gratified to see learner progress, enjoy the challenges of adult education and feel they are making a positive contribution in an area of great importance to society. It appears that one of the greatest strengths of the programs is this base of committed experienced practitioners. Learners consistently report that one thing that keeps them coming to class is the relationships they have established with the instructor, and the supportive atmosphere that a skilled instructor can create in the classroom. The commitment and skills of the instructor and the relationships he or she nurtures in the classroom lie at the heart of the successes of all literacy programs, whether adult literacy, family literacy, or workplace education.

Flexible program model

A second strength is the flexibility of the program model. Programs are able to adapt programming to meet local needs. As a result each program has a unique 'flavour', and a number of programs have been able to develop expertise in particular areas, such as ESL, working with low-level learners, learning disabilities, high school programs, or family literacy. It may be possible to deliberately build on the particular strengths of programs for purposes of training practitioners or developing and piloting curriculum.

Changes in learner base

Statistical returns

ALCE statistics indicate:

- an increasing number of women in the programs,
- no clear trend in the number of learners at various stages (though there may be some reduction of Stage 1 learners in some programs, the programs with large numbers of Stage 1 learners also have a large number of ESL learners),
- range of levels and needs remains broad,
- more learners have employment related goals, and
- fewer learners are dropping out of training, new enrolments are increasing, and fewer learners are identified as returning.

Survey responses

Practitioners identified a number of changes in the kinds of learners in the programs and the goals and needs of these learners. Some changes include:

- Increasing numbers of learners, especially younger learners, have plans for further education such as high school completion and job-specific training,
- Both unemployed and under-employed learners have employment related goals,
- More referrals from other agencies,
- Learners are increasingly interested in understanding their past barriers to learning, and learning strategies to overcome them. They want to learn how to learn and deal with learning disabilities (LD) and other barriers,
- Some programs report an increase in the number of involuntary participants,
- There is a tendency for learners to want more specific outcomes and to have higher expectations of programs, as well as to want shorter-term training,
- Greater interest in developing both basic and more advanced computer skills,
- There seem to be more learners with significant personal and learning needs, and
- Learners are interested in career exploration and work experiences.

Recommendation 1

That research be conducted on the types of jobs that learners are seeking and obtaining. What levels of literacy skills are required for these jobs and how can programs better meet the needs of learners who are looking for employment?

Curriculum and materials

Manitoba Stages

ALCE has developed curriculum based on three stages of literacy development. A number of programs are using the curriculum quite successfully. The curriculum seems to be most suitable for groups that have some commonality of learners goals, for learners who are comfortable with and expect a high level of structure in their learning, and for learners who have fairly general goals for literacy skills development.

However, although this material has been available for ten years, it is not being extensively used in the field. It may be time to concede that this curriculum is neither engaging the learners nor meeting the needs of the field. Certainly, for learners who have very specific learning goals and limited time to invest in literacy training, the stage curriculum is simply not appropriate. It is not reasonable to expect these learners to complete a stage that contains assignments that do not meet their immediate needs.

Curriculum revision

Other approaches to curriculum development are possible. For example, curriculum development could be based on the primary goals of learners. These goals are: employment, high school graduation, personal goals, and job training at a community college or other training institution. A list of skills required for success in these four areas could be created, and materials located or developed to help learners meet their goals.

Learner goal	Possible curriculum content
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Workplace specific literacy skills ◆ Job search skills ◆ Understanding the needs of the workplace
High school completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Learning and study skills ◆ Research and writing skills ◆ Pre-requisite math skills ◆ Test-taking skills
Job training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reading and study skills ◆ Test-taking skills ◆ Workplace specific literacy skills ◆ Pre-requisite math and science concepts, if applicable
Personal goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Family literacy skills ◆ Other literacy skills for active community participation

Employment goals

As mentioned earlier, the number of learners with employment related goals is increasing. However, the percentage of program participants who actually obtain employment has not increased in the past 5 years.

Literacy programs are in a unique position with respect to employment goals: practitioners have intensive contact with learners and can help them to understand their personal and academic skills and challenges, and to develop realistic, long term plans for achieving their goals.

Materials and resources

Practitioners made a number of specific suggestions about the kinds of materials and resources they need and would like to see developed.

At the Stage 1 and 2 levels, there is a need for:

- High interest reading materials with age appropriate topics,
- Reading material about real people and events,
- Reading material that deals with substantive issues of interest to adults, or provides interesting information, and
- Life skills math materials.

At the Stage 3 and 4 levels, there is a need for:

- Authentic workplace materials,
- Short non-fiction pieces,
- Readings on world issues and historical events,
- Materials that will help motivate learners to write, and
- Materials that help learners make the transition to mature student courses, continuing education, high school courses, or job training.

At all levels, there is a need for:

- Authentic fiction with simplified vocabulary using the works of real authors,
- Materials with themes and characters that learners from low-income, non-white, western can relate to,
- Materials that can be used in a multilevel class could be the basis for interesting group activities,
- Material written as sources of information about Manitoba/Canadian themes,
- Materials that develop problem solving skills,
- Self directed materials for learners working independently,
- Computer instruction materials at an easy reading level, and
- Materials that help integrate technology with reading, writing and math skills.

Recommendation 2

That the Stages curriculum be redesigned in order to reflect the range of learner goals.

Recommendation 3

That training about workplace essential skills and the use of workplace authentic documents in literacy curriculum be provided for community - based practitioners. Workplace education practitioners could conduct this training.

Program design

Stage 3 learners	Both learners and instructors reported that the optimum class size and intensity of instruction varies with the level and goals of the learners and extent to which class members share goals and academic needs. Those who are employed have little time and energy to spare after looking after work and family responsibilities. Stage 3 learners need less actual classroom time as they quickly become more independent learners. For the same reason, groups can be larger. Three to nine hours of instruction in groups of 12-15 learners would be reasonable. A very diverse class must be much smaller to be workable.
Stage 1 and 2 learners	Stage 1 and 2 learners need more class time in order to make progress and require much more instructor attention. They need more weeks of instruction as they are more likely to “forget” over the summer. A small group of learners meeting in the neighbourhood of 15 hours a week would be practical. Stage 1 learners, in particular should be able to attend classes 4-5 days a week.
Special needs	Learners with special needs also require more class time and more intensive instruction. There is, in addition, a limit to how many of these learners can be absorbed into the classroom. Stage 1 learners and those with significant learning disabilities place heavy demands on the resources of programs, and programming must be planned to accommodate their needs. For example, programs may need to budget more for one-on-one tutoring, training additional volunteers, or providing smaller classes and more intensive training.
Program size	<p>Ideas of what is a good size of program varied greatly. Some learners, particularly Stage 1 and 2 learners, liked the intimacy of smaller programs. However, some preferred the greater flexibility and increased programming options of larger programs. Instructors generally preferred a program size a little larger than what they were currently offering. Urban programs tended to think that larger programs were a good idea, likely because they had a larger population from which to draw learners.</p> <p>Some advantages of larger programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Able to offer a greater range of programming,· Better able to focus classroom instruction, without having to meet the needs of an excessively diverse group, by grouping learners according to skills level and/or goals,· Learners can progress from basic literacy to meeting their educational or employment goals in a comfortable, supportive setting,· More able to offer learner supports,· Less duplication of activities from program to program,· Greater visibility in community enhances learner recruitment,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Better able to establish credibility with other agencies, · Able to offer both day and evening classes to meet the needs of learners, and · More cost effective way to deliver literacy training
Recommendation 4	That where feasible, larger, better resourced programs be developed in the different areas of Winnipeg, with smaller, short-term satellite programs that could feed learners into the program options in the main centre.
Recommendation 5	Recognize the special expertise that has been developed in individual programs, and establish centres of excellence for different areas of literacy practise, for purposes of practitioner training, materials development and piloting, and professional development. Learners with particular goals or needs could be directed to the program that would best meet their needs. This recommendation recognizes that all programs cannot be expected to have expertise in all areas of literacy training.

Learner supports and retention of learners

Childcare and transportation	Instructors, learners and Literacy Working Groups unanimously emphasized the importance of learner supports for the success of programs. For learners on assistance or those with very low paying jobs, the ability of the program to provide assistance with childcare and transportation often means the difference between attending and not attending classes. Even for parents who are able to make their own childcare arrangements, the unreliability and poor quality of this childcare frequently affects attendance in the program.
Counselling supports	Programs that offered counselling services reported that this was an important part of the program. Those who did not frequently stated that they would like to be able to offer these services. The need to help learners deal with personal problems takes away from the effective use

of class time for literacy instruction. Practitioners thought counsellors would be able to deal with the crises that interfere with participation, make appropriate referrals, provide advocacy for learners as needed, provide diagnostic and programming expertise regarding learning disabilities, and help learners make realistic career choices.

Access to counselling services varies greatly by community. Program staff mentioned unavailability of many services in rural areas, and long waiting lists for many services. In addition, learners frequently did not access these services because they found the agencies intimidating, were unaware of services, had weak literacy skills, or did not want anyone to know they were using mental health or other services. Being able to deal with some of these issues within the program and then easing learners into relationships with other agencies would be one way to help learners stay in the programs and move toward their goals.

Counselling and crisis intervention services are particularly important in family literacy programs, in which, because of the emphasis on children and their development, issues related to child abuse, spousal abuse and other family related issues are more likely to surface.

Recommendation 6

That programs be supported in providing counselling services for learners, either through trained program staff or through partnerships with other agencies.

Referrals

Referral sources

About 25% of the learners in the programs come through referrals from other agencies, including social services, EI and other employment programs, community colleges, local high schools, resource centres, groups homes, and health centres, and vocational rehabilitation services.

The understanding of literacy demonstrated by these agencies varies considerably. While some agencies are beginning to understand that learners need more time in literacy programs and that there are no quick fixes, others expect clients to be job ready very quickly. Many referring agencies have limited understand of literacy, and have unreasonable work expectations, either because they underestimate the time it takes to develop literacy skills, don't understand the effects of learning disabilities, or don't know the literacy levels of their clients. The programs who reported positive relationships with referring agencies had put considerable effort into nurturing these relationships and saw that they had a role to play in educating these agencies about the importance of literacy training.

Worker education

It appears that it will be come increasingly important for social services

agencies to be educated about literacy training, as most of the clients who can be made job ready through short term training initiatives have already been trained. Many of the remaining clients have multiple barriers to employment and will require longer term, more intensive training. These multiple needs will also affect the literacy programs, likely requiring additional learner supports to be in place.

Recommendation 7

That initiatives be developed to educate referring agencies, both at director and caseworker level, about the literacy implications of their work.

Technology

Computer use

Computers can be used in literacy programs as a medium of instruction or to enhance the employment skills of learners. Learners expressed a strong interest in opportunities to develop computer skills, and it is clear that access to computer training is a strong motivator for them. Practitioners expressed a need for updated computer hardware and software, as well as more computers. However, some serious thought needs to be given to how computers can be most beneficially used. Some questions to consider:

Some questions

- What specific computer skills are needed for learners to succeed at the kinds of jobs they are seeking?
- How can programs deal with the problems caused by beginning computer users working with a variety of computers in the classroom, often with different versions of operating systems and software?
- What research has been done about the advantages and drawbacks of heavy reliance on computers as a medium of instruction?
- How can practitioners with limited computer experience raise their skills to the level required to provide computer instruction?
- How can programs deal with the high reading levels of most computer-related instructional materials?
- Might it be beneficial for programs to partner with organizations

who already have up-to-date computer labs to develop the kinds of computer training experiences appropriate for literacy learners?

- Of what value are outdated computers and software for employment preparation purposes?

Recommendation 8

That computers in the literacy programs be used primarily as a support for literacy learning, rather than as a primary medium of instruction.

Recommendation 9

That programs wishing to deliver computer skills for employment purposes do so in partnership with another educational organization such as a community college or high school that already has an up-to-date computer lab.

Training and professional development

Training needs

Practitioners in the programs are a diverse group. Some have extensive experience, while others are new to the field. Some, but not all, of the practitioners are certified teachers. Programs vary in size as well as focus. As a result, practitioners have diverse needs for initial training and for professional development (PD). On the survey, they requested a wide range of PD topics based on their own needs and interests. As a result it would be difficult to develop PD workshops that would meet such diverse needs.

It may be useful to follow a more learner-centred approach to PD, with practitioners including a plan for their own learning in the coming year with the Good Practice Guide. Learning activities could include conference attendance, consultations with experts in the field, personal research, a learning log related to the topic, or meetings with a group of practitioners who shared the same interest. This process could be monitored by ALCE or other staff designated to do so, and could be incorporated with program supervision to help practitioners to integrate new learning into their practice. This would also help to meet the need expressed by many survey respondents for a more support and stronger presence by ALCE staff in the programs.

Recommendation 10

That a system of learner-centred professional development for literacy practitioners be developed and implemented.

Wages and working conditions

Practitioner concerns Staffing is key to the success of a literacy program, and Manitoba literacy programs are fortunate to have a core of committed experienced practitioners. However, many of these practitioners are deeply dissatisfied with the level of pay they are receiving and with the inconsistency of pay from program to program. Some instructors receive substantial amounts of paid prep time, while others receive none.

Many of these practitioners are putting in substantial amounts of unpaid time--on average, an additional 20% above their paid hours--thus reducing their effective hourly wage. Tasks that they perform that are not included in their job description include counselling and advocacy, fund-raising, writing grant applications, professional development activities, and a variety of administrative functions. The table below gives some details.

Position	Average hours worked	Average hours paid	Average hourly wage	Low/high wage	Time in program
Co-ordinators	30.22	24.67	14.64	14/25	7.1
Co-ordinator/ instructors	36	29	16.6	12/19	4.8
Instructors	22.4	19.65	20.1	10/25	6.9
Overall	27.64	23.14	17.63	10/25	6.3

Wage scales

In the past, ALCE has stated that determining wages should be the responsibility of the Literacy Working Groups, and about one-third of those surveyed supported this approach. However, the reality is that the LWG is often faced with choosing between improving wages or offering more programming.

On the other hand, two-thirds of those surveyed felt there was a role for ALCE to take leadership, in consultation with practitioners, to establish guidelines, and that salary levels should reflect qualifications, training, experience, and class size.

Practitioner retention

These issues need to be dealt with if experienced practitioners are to be retained in the field. While the average length of time in the field is a little over six years, in reality, there are two groups of practitioners. Some have been in the programs for 10 or more years, and are experiencing burnout, stress, frustration with low wages and unstable employment, as well as lack of recognition and support. Another group has been in the field for a relatively short period of time. A good proportion of these practitioners are younger women who see the literacy programs as a way to get experience in the adult education field, and who intend to move on to more financially attractive work as opportunities arise. Literacy

working groups members expressed concerns about their ability to retain skilled and experienced staff with current wage and funding levels.

Wages also have an implication for instruction. It cannot be expected that instructors who feel exploited, disempowered and devalued will be able to effectively empower learners.

Recommendation 12 That programs be funded at a level that enables them to provide staff with fair wages.

Recommendation 13 That ALCE develop wage guidelines for instructors and coordinators that reflect training and experience.

Literacy working groups

Reports on the effectiveness of the literacy working groups differed widely. Some literacy working groups are very well-informed about literacy and the needs of the programs and are committed to its work. Literacy Working Group (LWG) members work as many as 20 hours a month in activities that support the program. Other programs are not so fortunate. Some LWGs are uninformed about literacy, have never visited the program, and are not aware the variety of responsibilities performed by program staff.

Purposes of LWG There appears to be some lack of clarity in the overall purpose of the LWGs. Some LWGs are very hands-on and a number of administrative or co-ordinating functions. These boards function as a group of volunteers actively involved in the functioning of the actual program.

If, on the other hand, the purpose of the board is to enhance partnerships within the community, then it would make sense for the board to be an advisory one, with representatives from partnering agencies. A board of this nature would be very useful in charting the future direction of the program and locating potential funding sources, but it may not be reasonable to expect a board of this nature to be actively involved in the actual program. However, there may be expectations from program staff for them to do so, especially if the coordinating and administrative functions of the program are underfunded.

Some challenges

Many instructors expressed the wish that LWG members be more active in supporting the program, and reported a number of problems regarding the functioning of LWGs:

- Infrequent meetings or poor attendance at meetings,
- Lack of interest in or understanding of the program,
- Inactive in seeking out new sources of funding, planning for the growth and development of the program, or generating ideas about how the program could be improved,
- No procedures for selection or replacement of officers,
- Not enough members for fund-raising, publicity or other committees,
- Lack of support for or hostility towards staff, and
- Lack of leadership.

Recommendation 14

That programs be funded at a level that allows them to hire paid staff for administrative functions, without assuming that Literacy Working Groups will do these tasks, or that practitioners will do them on a volunteer basis.

Recommendation 15

That ALCE resources be made available to programs whose Literacy Working Groups would benefit from board development activities.

SECTION 2

Workplace change

Initially when Workplace Education programs were begun in Manitoba, federal funding was available for program delivery. Changes in policy have meant that employers have had to assume some or all of the costs associated with the delivery of these programs. Because the Workplace Education coordinator is no longer coming to industry with money in hand, she can no longer determine program design. All these factors have in turn resulted in a number of changes to programming.

- Standard 80-hour courses replaced by shorter, more focused courses and modules,
- While employers are encouraged to provide release time for employees to attend classes, this frequently does not happen,
- It is becoming increasingly difficult to get small employers to cover program costs,
- Increasing numbers of programs, such as pre-employment programs or Union-sponsored programs, being sponsored by organizations rather than by employers, and
- Continuous intake in some workplace programs.

There have been substantial changes in society and industry as well, and these changes have also resulted in changes to workplace education programs.

- Low unemployment rates mean employers may not be able to find employees with adequate literacy skills, and may need to train for skills rather than recruit for skills,
- Increasingly, employees need to have basic computer skills. In some industries, there is a need for more advanced computer skills, such as those required for computer aided manufacturing,
- Technological change, changes in methods of production and the introduction of quality systems increase the literacy demands on employees,
- Employers are increasingly aware of literacy requirements. However this does not automatically translate into willingness to provide literacy training to employees,
- Some employers have instituted just-in-time training initiatives that are focused on the literacy implications of specific workplace changes, and
- Higher expectations of skill level of new employees, as determined by testing or requirement of credentials, has implications for expectations of current employees.

Marketing to employers

If employers are going to take advantage of the programs and services offered by Workplace Education, they need to understand the organizational and financial costs of having employees with poor literacy skills. They also need to be aware of the resources available. So marketing is critical to the success of workplace education programs.

Employers will not be interested in workplace education programs if they do not believe that there will be tangible benefits. Unfortunately, return on investment is hard to calculate and some benefits of training are seen only over the long term. However, it should be possible to communicate to employers the potential concrete benefits of workplace education programs.

Recommendation 16

Use the results of the Marketing project to develop and conduct a focused campaign to market workplace education programs and to educate employers about the importance of literacy skills in the workplace.

Recommendation 17

Conduct and/or review research that documents the short and long term outcomes of workplace education programs, for the purpose of demonstrating to potential clients how workplace education programs could benefit their organizations.

Recommendation 18

Focus marketing towards industries/companies that are undergoing technological change, as technological change and introduction of computerized processes appears to be an impetus for organizations to consider literacy training for employees.

Recommendation 19

Conduct research that explores the personal and social impact of training on learners. How is training a catalyst for change? What aspects of the training are critical in making this change happen?

Recommendation 20

Conduct research into the gap between employers' awareness of literacy issues and their willingness to commit to providing training. What keeps them from taking concrete steps to address their literacy training needs?

Recruiting and retaining participants

Barriers to recruitment

For a workplace program to be successful, management supervisors and potential participants all need to be convinced of the program's value. A number of factors can cause employees to be reluctant to participate in programs. Some of these factors include:

- Reluctance to admit a need for literacy training,
- A desire to save face with peers and supervisors,
- Negative educational experiences,
- Perception that the program is based on a deficit model of training,
- Long term employees who see no benefit for themselves in enhancing their literacy skills,
- Lack of employee awareness of the personal and professional benefits of literacy training,
- Lack of time because of family responsibilities or the expectation that they work overtime, and
- Supervisors and managers unwilling to have people off floor need to see the importance to self and company.

Incentives for recruitment

Employees are more likely to participate in workplace education classes if:

- Incentives for participation are provided,
- Immediate supervisors are committed to the success of the program and see how improvements in literacy skills will enhance employees' job performance,
- Goals are concrete and clearly relevant to the learners and the company's needs,
- Employees' prior learning is respected and they only take the training they really need,
- Previous successful programs have created a positive perception on the floor of workplace education, and
- Participation does not require a lengthy time commitment.

A number of recent programs have demonstrated that workplace education can be successfully delivered off-site and involve employees from a variety of workplaces. Some employees prefer off-site training opportunities because this setting allows them to save face in the workplace, and it is not necessary for them to reveal to anyone that they are attending literacy training. They feel that they are attending a real school, and the variety of programming offered in these centres provides employees with opportunities for other learning.

- Recommendation 20** Design promotional materials and activities that help employees see how the training could benefit them.
- Recommendation 21** Develop programs that involve collaborations between workplace education instructors and technical trainers. Training in the related literacy and numeracy skills could then be embedded in the technical training.
- Recommendation 22** Involve learners in determining course content.
- Recommendation 23** Incorporate prior learning assessments into programs so employees only need to attend the classes they really need.
- Recommendation 24** Continue the trend towards short-term highly focused training.
- Recommendation 25** Continue to support the development of off-site training opportunities, such as union sponsored training, as well as the provision of workplace literacy training in community based literacy programs.
- Recommendation 26** Conduct research into how power issues in the workplace and classroom impact literacy training.

Program design and curriculum development

Customised curriculum

Employers generally prefer customised rather than generic training programs and materials. While there are many literacy and numeracy skills that are common to a wide range of employment settings, the manner in which these skills are used varies widely. Employers and employees want to see the content of training to reflect the specific needs of their organization.

Practitioners did not think that there was any need for formal assessment measures, and were also concerned that there was considerable potential for their misuse. If training is developed to meet the specific needs of an employer, then assessment measures need to be developed that enable employees to demonstrate that they have met the learning objectives of course. Practitioners felt that information on alternative evaluation methods and process-oriented instruments would be more useful.

Recommendation 27

Emphasize the needs assessment phase of projects, allowing time for practitioners to get to know the company, gather relevant information and to clarify the goals of the program.

Recommendation 28

Include employees in the process of determining course content.

Recommendation 29

Ensure that the company has committed itself to concrete goals before the program begins.

Recommendation 30

That conducting the needs assessment, developing material, and delivering the instruction be separate modules on the instructor's contract.

Recommendation 31

That practitioners be given access to high-quality models of customised curriculum.

Practitioner recruitment and retention

	<p>Workplace education practitioners report that they greatly enjoy their work, and the field of workplace education in general. They enjoy the learners and the feeling of giving people something crucial that can have a major impact on their lives. They like the excitement of working in a field that demands that they continually develop and learn.</p>
Practitioner concerns	<p>However in spite of this love for the work, it has been difficult of late to retain experienced practitioners in the field. Workplace education is a demanding field, and new instructors cannot become skilled in a short time. As a result, it is important to look at why people are leaving the field, and what can be done to maintain a pool of skilled and experienced practitioners. The following issues came up repeatedly in conversations with practitioners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Instability and uncertainty of employment,· Dependence on political changes and trends,· Inadequate compensation for work; lack of benefits,· Difficulty of working in the field without a financial anchor elsewhere,· Working alone coupled with lack of supports for practitioners,· Burnout and exhaustion,· Lack of control because decisions are made elsewhere,· Having fingers in lots of pies in order to survive financially, leaving no choice but to go elsewhere,· Need to be recognized as partners in the process,· Need for recognition for work,· Need for opportunities to learn and grow, and· Need for opportunities to work with and gain support from respected colleagues, in order to overcome the isolation many feel in their projects. <p>Because ALCE act as brokers, in effect there is a single employer. Therefore the practitioners need to be viewed and treated as parts of a single organization, with a succession plan and rewards for performance.</p>
Recommendation 32	<p>That a succession plan be developed that addresses the need to benefit from the experience of seasoned practitioners.</p>
Recommendation 33	<p>That a graduated wage scale be developed that adequately compensates practitioners for their training and experience.</p>
Recommendation 34	<p>That a plan be developed, based on the needs of practitioners as employees, for retaining experienced workers in the field, as well as attracting new practitioners.</p>

Practitioner training and professional development

Practitioner needs

The field of workplace education demands a high level of skill from practitioners. Practitioners need to be able to meet the needs of industry, labour, and learners. They recognize that, in order to remain marketable, they need to keep learning and growing. Practitioners expressed the need for professional development in a number of areas:

- Information on industry trends,
- Training in how to conduct a needs assessment, as well as models of needs assessments,
- Information about funding sources and requirements for funding,
- Opportunities to bring information back about needs and trends in the field,
- More detailed information about the mission and policies of Manitoba Education and Training as they relate to all aspects of literacy, including community-based and workplace programs, and how these policies are translated into funding decisions, and
- Information about how provincial policy on literacy relates to policy on health, education social services, women, workforce development, and employment.

Practitioners feel strongly that their training and professional development should present a model of adult education. It should include an analysis of the skills that are needed for success in the field, prior learning assessments, and learner-centred training plans. They recommended that people working in the field deliver the bulk of training and PD and favoured an apprenticeship/mentorship model of initial training.

Recommendation 35

That research be conducted to determine the knowledge, skills and abilities used by successful workplace education practitioners, and how these skills were learned.

Recommendation 36

That the results of this research be considered in developing training for new practitioners.

Recommendation 37

That a mentorship/apprenticeship model of practitioner training be developed, and a prior learning assessment of new practitioners be used to determine what training is required.

Recommendation 38

That practitioners conduct a self-assessment to determine which of these skills they have, and develop a personal training plan, which they communicate with the Workplace education coordinator.

Recommendation 39

That ALCE sponsored training be developed to address the knowledge, skills and abilities that practitioners wish to develop.

General recommendations

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|--------------------------|---|
| Recommendation 40 | That connections be built between schools, workplaces and literacy organizations. |
| Recommendation 41 | That ALCE develop a vision for how the programs are to be moved forward. |
| Recommendation 42 | That greater leadership and support for programs be provided by ALCE. |
| Recommendation 43 | That ALCE be funded at such a level that they are able to fund their own projects without requiring support from NLS, as this cuts into the funding that is actually available for programs. |
| Recommendation 44 | That programs be funded at a level where they can offer an adequate level of learner supports, fair wages for employees, and, where numbers of learners warrant this, a range of programming options. |
| Recommendation 45 | That staffing levels at ALCE be increased so that staff can perform the function of support for the field and have a stronger presence in the field. |

APPENDIX 1

English

Survey of Literacy Working Groups

Survey of Program Staff in Community-Based and Family Literacy Programs

Survey of Workplace Practitioners

Employee Focus Groups

Questions For Learner Focus Groups

French

Available in HTML only

Survey of Literacy Working Groups

Name

Program

Length of time on Literacy working group

Position on Literacy working group

Learner needs

1. How has the make-up of learners changed in terms of:

- Age
- Literacy levels
- Academic goals expressed
- Employment goals
- Personal needs
- Expectations of program
- Voluntary vs. involuntary learner participation in programs

2. What learner needs is the program able to meet with your current level of funding and programming?

3. What learner needs are you not able to meet with your current level of funding and programming?

Program design

4. What would you like add to your programming in order to meet your learners' needs?

5. What additional staff would you need to have, in terms of staff hours and skills sets, to offer this additional programming?

6. What do you consider to be the optimum size for a literacy program, in terms of staff hours per week and numbers of learners served? How big a program is too big, and how small is too small? Please provide reasons for your answers.

7. What would it cost to deliver the level and quality of programming you would like to offer?

Role of Literacy Working Group

8. What motivated you to join the Literacy Working Group?

9. What has motivated you to remain active on the LWG?

10. On the average, how many hours a month do you spend in activities related to your participation in the LWG?

11. What is your role on the group? What specific tasks have you taken on?

12. How does the Literacy Working Group support the work of the literacy program?

13. How would you like the role of the LWG to change in the future?

14. How would you describe the current relationship between the LWG and program staff?

15. Are there changes you would like to see in the relationship between the LWG and program staff?

Staffing and wages

16. In your program, who performs these non-instructional tasks? Please check the appropriate place in the table below:

Task	Instructor	Coordinator	Literacy Working Group	Other: (specify)	Not applicable
Locating and applying for funding					
Other fund-raising activities					
Recruiting learners and other community outreach					
Conducting intake and assessment of new learners					
Counselling and referral of learners to other services					
Advocacy work on behalf of learners					
Answering the phone					
Purchasing supplies and materials					
Maintaining student records					
Reporting to funders					
Establishing partnerships and maintaining relationships with other agencies					
Keeping financial records					
Writing checks, handling payroll, etc.					
Attending staff meetings					

Attending Literacy Working Group meetings					
Hiring staff and handling personnel issues					
Determining program policy					
Maintaining facility					
Other: please specify					

17. What is the hourly wage of program staff in the literacy program?

18. How do you think wages for program staff should be determined? (ALCE guidelines, at the discretion of literacy working group, etc.)

19. Have you experienced any difficulty attracting and/or retaining trained and skilled program staff?

20. To what do you attribute your difficulty or lack of difficulty in attracting and retaining skilled, well trained program staff?

21. Have you established processes for evaluating staff performance? If yes, briefly describe them.
22. What kinds of professional development would be useful to staff in the program? Consider the skills of staff members, changes in learner needs, and changes in expectations of the program in your response to this question.

Program supports and resources

23. Are the educational resources and materials in your program adequate? Up to date? Please consider the program's print, technology and other resources in answering this question.
24. What other materials and resources are needed?
25. What do you think the role of ALCE should be with respect to literacy programs?
26. What do you feel ALCE is doing well?
27. How could ALCE support the program more effectively?
28. What does the program need that would help it better meet the needs of learners? Who should be providing this?

Survey of Program Staff in Community-Based and Family Literacy Programs

Name _____

Program(s) _____

Position _____

Learner needs

1. How has the make-up of learners in your program changed in terms of:

- Age
- Literacy levels
- Academic goals expressed
- Employment goals
- Personal needs
- Expectations of program
- Voluntary vs. involuntary learner participation in program

2. What learner needs do you feel your program is able to meet with your current level of funding and programming?

3. What learner needs are you not able to meet with your current level of funding and programming?

Program design

4. What would you like add to your programming in order to meet your learners' needs? What additional staff would you need to have, in terms of staff hours and skill sets, to offer this additional programming?

5. What do you consider to be the optimum size for a literacy program, in terms of staff hours per week and numbers of learners served? How big a program is too big, and how small is too small? Why?

6. What does your program offer in learner supports? What would you like to be able to offer? (eg. Child care, assistance with transportation, counselling, employment services, etc.) Why do you feel these supports are important?

7. What is the optimum number of hours per week for learners to make progress in their literacy skills? What is the minimum number of hours per week for progress to be made?

8. What would it cost to deliver the level and quality of programming you would like to offer?

Staffing and wages

9. How many hours a week do you work?
10. For how many of these hours are you paid?
11. What is your hourly wage?
12. What do you think is a fair hourly wage for your position?
13. How long have you been working in community-based literacy programs?
14. What has kept you in the field?
15. If you were to leave the field, what do you think might be a likely cause?
16. What tasks do you perform that are not included in your job description?
17. How do you think wages for program staff should be determined? (ALCE guidelines, at the discretion of Literacy Working Group, etc.)

18. In your program, who performs these non-instructional tasks? Please check the appropriate place in the table below:

Task	Instructor	Coordinator	Literacy Working Group	Other: (specify)	Not applicable
Locating and applying for funding					
Other fund-raising activities					
Recruiting learners and other community outreach					
Conducting intake and assessment of new learners					
Counselling and referral of learners to other services					
Advocacy work on behalf of learners					
Answering the phone					
Purchasing supplies and materials					
Maintaining student records					
Reporting to funders					
Establishing partnerships and maintaining relationships with other agencies					
Keeping financial records					
Writing checks, handling payroll, etc.					
Attending staff meetings					
Attending Literacy Working Group meetings					
Hiring staff and handling personnel issues					

Determining program policy					
Maintaining facility					
Other: please specify					

Recruitment and retention of learners

19. How do learners find out about your program? Please indicate approximately what percentage of your learners are recruited to the program through the following methods.

- _____ Referrals from other agencies or programs
- _____ Word of mouth
- _____ Promotion efforts (please specify the promotion methods you have found most useful)

20. From what agencies do most of your referrals come?

21. Which understanding of literacy and literacy training do these agencies have?

22. Have there been any changes in the expectations of referring agencies regarding the content, duration and intensity of literacy training?

23. Which factors influence learners to leave the literacy program before they have met their learning goals? Check all the factors listed below that are significant for your program.

- _____ They are not ready for training
- _____ Involuntary participation in program
- _____ The programming offered does not meet their needs
- _____ Financial problems
- _____ Require supports that the program does not offer

- _____ Classes are scheduled at times that do not meet the learners needs
- _____ Work expectations of EI and income support workers
- _____ Uncomfortable with the way the program is delivered (size of classes, level of structure in classes, etc.)
- _____ Lack of support from family members
- _____ Unclear learning goals
- _____ Transportation problems
- _____ Do not have access to reliable child care

24. Have you experienced changes in the number of learners expressing interest in your program? If you have a waiting list, has the number of names on the list increased or decreased?

25. Are there currently services available in your community to meet the non- academic needs of your clients (counselling, crisis intervention, employment-related services, etc.)? Which of these services do learners have difficulty accessing?

Curriculum and resources

26. Do you have adequate instructional resources and materials in your program?

27. Are these resources up to date?

28. What additional resources do you need?

29. Does your program have the skills and resources needed to integrate technology into the curriculum? _____ If you answered no, what additional skills and/or resources would you find helpful?

30. What kinds of curriculum materials would you find most useful?

- _____ Curriculum suitable for use by individuals working with tutors
- _____ Curriculum suitable for use by small groups
- _____ Curriculum suitable for use by a whole class working together

31. What kinds of curriculum materials would you like ALCE to develop? Please complete the following chart.

	What kinds of materials should be developed for this level?
Level 1	
Level 2	
Level 3	
Level 4	

Program supports

32. What have been the most useful PD events you have attended?

33. Are there any changes you would like to see in the ways PD is delivered? What topics would you like to have addressed in future PD sessions?

34. Does your program have adequate technology to perform administrative functions? What additional technology does the program need?
35. In what ways does your Literacy Working Group support the work of the program?
36. Does your LWG share your vision for the program? If there are differences, where do they lie?
37. What changes would like to see in the way your LWG functions and the roles it performs?
38. What roles would you like to see ALCE take on that it is not performing now?
39. What do you need that would help you to do your job better? Who should be providing these things?

SURVEY OF WORKPLACE PRACTITIONERS

Part A: Issues related to program design

1. What changes have there been in the structure and delivery of workplace programs in the past few years?
2. How have these changes worked out? What have been the effects of these changes?
3. Which have been beneficial and which have not?
4. What is the perception of Workplace Education programs in your workplaces?
5. How could programs be promoted and advertised in such a way as to overcome these any negative perceptions, and encourage people to participate in classes?
6. Are there significant numbers of employees in the workplaces who would benefit from programs, but do not participate?
7. What do you think the reasons for this lack of participation might be?
8. When employees drop out of classes, what are their reasons for doing so?
9. What could be done with regards to the design and promotion of programs to encourage reluctant learners to enter training and to keep learners in programs?
10. Do unions have meaningful input into the design and delivery of courses?
11. Have there been significant changes in the literacy requirements of your workplaces? What have these changes been and what has caused them?
12. How can workplace education courses be adapted to meet the literacy needs of smaller employers?

Part B: Issues related to retention of practitioners

13. Why did you enter the field of workplace education?
14. Why have you stayed in the field?
15. If you were to leave the field, what factors do you think would influence your decision?
16. When you think of people who have left the field, what reasons have they expressed for doing so?
17. What changes need to be made to enhance the retention of skilled and experienced staff?

Part C: Role of ALCE

18. How do you get information about trends and future directions in the field?
19. Are there any changes ALCE could make regarding the flow of information about trends and future directions in the field?
20. How do you use information from IALS and ESP in your planning and teaching?
21. Is there need for materials related to assessing learners and documenting and measuring progress?
22. In what areas do you see the need for research and/or curriculum development?
23. What could ALCE do that would make your work easier or more effective?

Employee focus groups

1. Why did you decide to participate in the course?
2. What makes you want to keep coming to class?
3. How did you find out about the course?
4. What opinions do people who have not taken Workplace Education courses have about the courses?
5. Do you know any people who would benefit from the courses, but are unwilling to sign up?
6. If you answered Yes to the previous question, what do you think the reasons might be?

- _____ The classes are an unsuitable time.
- _____ The courses are too long.
- _____ The courses take too many hours a week.
- _____ The classes are in an unsuitable location.
- _____ Family responsibilities make it hard to come to class.

- _____ The courses aren't of use or interest to them.

- _____ Negative opinions of people on the shop floor.

- _____ They don't think they have a problem with reading and writing skills.
- _____ They don't want coworkers or supervisors to know they have are taking the course.
- _____ Part of the course takes place on company time, and supervisors don't want workers off the floor.
- _____ They have to work a lot of overtime and can't come to class.

7. When you think about your answers to the previous question, what do you think are the main reasons people do not sign up for workplace education classes?

8. What specific changes could be made to the courses so that people would be more willing to attend?
9. How could courses be advertised so that more people would be interested in attending?
10. What courses would you like to see offered in the future?
11. What advice would you give to a company that wanted to set up its first Workplace Education class?

QUESTIONS FOR LEARNER FOCUS GROUPS

1. How did you find out about the program you are in?
2. How did you decide to attend this program instead of another one?
3. How long have you been attending classes? Why have you stayed in the program? (Other than not having met goals)
4. Why do you think people drop out of the program before they meet their goals?
5. What could the program do to make it easier for learners to stay in classes?
6. How many hours a week do you go to class? Is this enough class time for you to make progress in your skills? How many hours/days a week would you like to attend?
7. What is your opinion about class size? What is too big/small? Why?
8. What is your opinion about having learners with very different goals in the same class? How might this affect your learning?
9. Would you prefer to attend a small program with just one or two classes, or a larger one with more learners and instructors? Why?
10. What kinds of courses would you like this program to offer in the future?
11. Many people enter programs for employment reasons. What workplace reading, writing and math skills are you learning now? What else could the program do to help prepare learners for the workplace?

12. Do you think the program has enough resources such as books, computers and software? What additional resources do you think the program should have?

13. What advice would you give to someone who wanted to start a new literacy program?