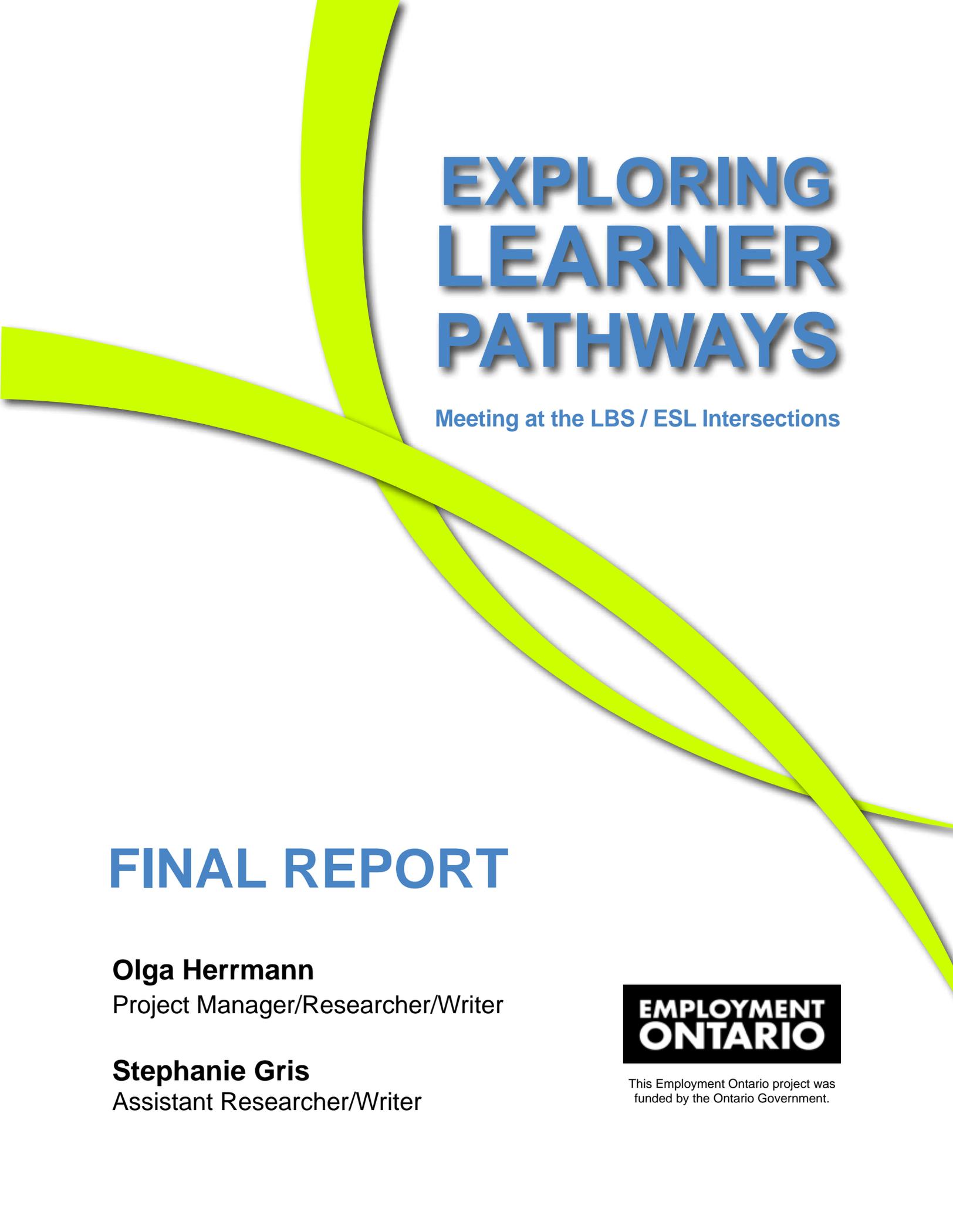




EXPLORING LEARNER PATHWAYS

Meeting at the LBS / ESL Intersections

Olga Herrmann
Stephanie Gris



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FINAL REPORT

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**EMPLOYMENT
ONTARIO**

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Literacy and Basic Skills class students from Labour Education Centre working on their writing skills - <http://www.laboureducation.org>

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Jennifer Huang

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For more information about this and other materials related to the *Exploring Learner Pathways* project, visit <http://learnerpathways.wordpress.com>

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“Education is an indispensable strategic instrument for sustainable human development. It is a tool. But it is also the right of every person – the right to become an active and creative citizen. Lastly, learning is a joy: in it each person may discover a sense of freedom, self-realization and independence. Once experienced, the joy of learning can never be forgotten; it repeats and returns throughout a lifetime; and it is inexhaustible.”

– FEDERICO MAYOR, Director General of UNESCO
Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, Hamburg, July 1997



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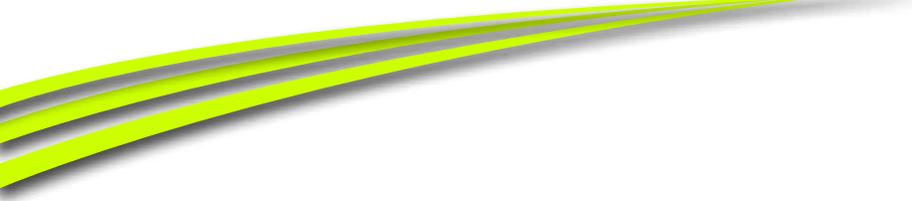
A huge thank you, as well, to AlphaPlus for the technical expertise it provided, and to Monika Jankowska-Pacyna, whose flair for design gave the project its sleek and distinct style. Many thanks go out, as well, to Christina Boutsis who assisted in producing copious transcripts from hours and hours of focus group recordings.

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Thank you all!

Olga Herrmann
Project Manager





PROJECT SYNOPSIS AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy's (MTML's) ***Exploring Learning Pathways: Meeting at the LBS/ESL Intersections*** project researched the learning pathways and needs of Anglophone-stream low-level Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) learners whose mother tongue or primary language is other than English. The project sought to contribute valuable front-line information and insights that aim to fortify a vital adult education priority identified by all three Ontario 'learning ministries'¹ (Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (TCU); Ministry of Education (EDU) and Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI)), namely, strengthening the coordination of services across the education and training programs serving adult learners in the province.

The project focused primarily on second-/additional-language² learners currently in Toronto and York Region LBS programs, some of whom have previously attended English language training classes within the federally-funded Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program and/or attended MCI-funded English as a Second Language (ESL) non-credit classes or EDU-funded ESL credit classes.

The project's six objectives were to:

- Document assessment, referral and placement practices and challenges
- Explore the particular needs of second language learners and how they are met within LBS programs and other programs
- Document the factors that support learning and learner transitions for this group
- Develop profiles of second language learners and how these may relate to particular pathways
- Document gaps in service
- Document promising practices and possible models

All project activities addressed aimed to fulfill the following key project outcomes:

- Validating learner pathways and enhancing the knowledge of key transition points along the pathways
- Improving the coordination of services between LBS, ESL (non-credit and credit) and LINC programs in Toronto and York Region
- Building/strengthening relationships between LBS, ESL and LINC programs to ensure smoother transitions for adult learners

¹ Ontario - The Learning Ministries, Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Initiative, Communiqué, vol. 2, no. 1 (May 2010), 1.

² Many immigrants may already speak more than one language, and English may be their third or fourth language. To avoid the laborious repetition of second-/additional-language learner of English, this report will employ the phrase "second-language learner" which aligns with the use of the acronym ESL used by language training programs in Ontario. [Note: Several countries do employ the term English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)].

The various learning pathways of second-language learners with LBS needs warranted a detailed exploration that could tease out the particular needs of this learner group. To accomplish this, project researchers ventured into the front lines – a space where LBS teachers/tutors, assessors and the learners themselves helped to answer a basic, yet involved two-pronged question:

What is working and what isn't working when it comes to responding to the learning and transition needs of the LBS learner with ongoing ESL issues?

Before heading out to the front lines, the researcher reviewed literature pertaining to adult education reviews and roundtable discussions in the province and across Canada, pathways approaches, adult ESL literacy research, second language acquisition theories, demographic trends in Toronto and York Region, learner identity, acculturation processes, effective learner transitions, assessment practices across the ministries, relationship-building and collaboration theories, local immigration partnership documents, literacy rates in Canada, and non-academic outcomes. Program guidelines, education catalogues, curriculum framework documents and presentation slides/documents pertaining to changes and transformations within adult education programs across the ministries (MCI, EDU, CIC, and TCU) were also consulted. The researchers also attended local and provincial TESL conferences in order to gain a better understanding of language training initiatives that are on the horizon. This extensive review provided the foundation for the discussion paper/collaboration tool unveiled at the forum, and was used to inform all aspects of the final report.

The project relied primarily on qualitative research tools – interviews, focus groups, and online surveys – that helped to illuminate the experiences of learners who grapple with English language acquisition and literacy development, either separately or concurrently, as they move along their learning pathways. The observations, experiences, and insights of teachers, tutors and assessors were also elicited so as to build a greater understanding of this learner group as viewed by those who inhabit their learning and assessment spaces – the intake office, the assessment room, the classroom, the exit interview area and even the hallways.

In addition to drawing out data (both quantitative and qualitative) about the programs, the learners, assessment and referral practices, and transition points along the learner pathways, a great deal of effort on the part of the researchers was put into information sharing and relationship building between LBS, ESL (credit and non-credit) and LINC programs.

The ***Exploring Learner Pathways: Meeting at the LBS/ESL Intersections*** culminated in a 1-Day Forum where highlights from the consultations and focus groups were presented to 56 attendees from across the programs. Among the attendees were teachers, program managers, assessors (from LBS, ESL and LINC programs), government representatives from the three Ontario education ministries (TCU, MCI, and EDU) and from the federal ministry that oversees the LINC program – Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). Those in attendance spent the afternoon strengthening their understanding of each other's programs and partaking in enriching dialogue and activities. These activities targeted the following issues:

- Participants' understanding of the term 'ESL Literacy' and the 'grey area' low-level literacy learner
- The challenge of keeping up with diversity and diverse needs in Toronto and York Region
- The components necessary for successful transitions
- Effective screening, advising and referral practices
- The learner pathways and profiles encountered in our programs
- How to best approach information sharing; and some points of commonality – 'intersection points' – between ESL and LBS programs
- Meeting at the intersection points of LBS and ESL programs in order to examine program challenges and complexities

A discussion paper/relationship building tool titled ***Embarking on a Collaborative Exploration of Adult Learner Pathways: A Tool for Building both Relationships and Understanding across Programs and Services*** was also unveiled at the forum. The tool contains information about:

- The inter-ministerial vision of service coordination
- New initiatives, transformation, and curriculum frameworks within Employment Ontario programs and Language Training
- An approach to relationship building: Intersections and Connections – Dialogues of Discovery
- A snapshot of literacy and language training programs
- Brief overview of the Canadian Language Benchmarks and the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS)
- Adult learning pathways and the need for collaboration

This discussion paper/forum 'tool' document can be accessed on the project's website at <http://learnerpathways.wordpress.com>. It also includes useful website links and helpful 'discussion prompts' that can be used by service providers facilitate relationship-building opportunities with other programs and solidify understanding of other program offerings and eligibility criteria.

A FRONT-LINE FOCUS

Learner Focus Groups

A major component of the ***Exploring Learner Pathways: Meeting at the LBS/ESL Intersections*** project involved a front-line exploration of the learning pathways of adults who

speaking English as their second or additional language who are attending LBS Anglophone stream programs in Toronto and York Region (many of whom had previously attended LINC or ESL programs). An initial review of immigration figures and trends in both geographic areas provided a statistical illustration of the evolving and expanding demographic ‘superdiversity’ therein. The learner focus groups, however, provided a stunning snapshot of how the wealth of diversity in York Region and Toronto is also mirrored within LBS programs in York Region and Toronto – the 74 LBS learners who participated in the focus group sessions hailed from 40 different countries and spoke 40 different languages. Beyond linguistic and cultural diversity, however, the focus group discussions revealed that within today’s LBS programs there has been an evolution in the types of learners that are found there and that this evolution brings with it a set of new realities and considerations for programs and policymakers as well.

In addition to the Canadian-born literacy learners who have traditionally benefitted from literacy and upgrading programs, the research revealed that there are several profiles of learners across the LBS program sectors that are a part of a learner base of individuals who speak English as second or additional language. These second/additional language learners include:

- Displaced workers
- Settled immigrants
- Generation 1.5 learners³ – learners who arrived in Canada as children or adolescents
- Newcomers with no Canadian experience

The LBS learners who speak English as a second language and who participated in the focus group identified a number of needs – academic and other – and conveyed how they envision these needs could best be met in their adult learning journey. These needs include:

- The need to work specifically on reading and writing, math upgrading, computer instruction
- The need for a supportive environment and manageable learning pace
- The need for targeted and goal-oriented learning
- The need for strict classroom structures and protocols, combined with concrete tools that regularly measure progress
- The need to integrate into Canadian society and feel part of the mainstream (for settled immigrants/citizens, this may include the need not to feel like a newcomer in the classroom)
- The need to feel challenged and feel that one is moving towards something concrete that links to what is valued in the ‘real world’
- The need for clear information with respect to learning options, programs, and varying level matrices - learners find navigating the program options confusing
- The need for a wide range of supports (financial, housing, childcare, transportation, and tutoring supports)

³ An emerging profile identified in all three LBS sectors (community-based; school board; and college sectors)

Although the above learner needs articulated by the 74 focus group participants may not be conclusive, they are indicative of the complexity of needs that second language learners bring to LBS programs (and to other adult education programs, too) – these include pedagogical needs, integration and acculturation needs, psychosocial needs linked to identity and social capital, and the need to feel that they are learning things that will allow them to contribute to their families and to Canadian society and become socioeconomically mobile within that society.

Learner profiles and pathways were also extracted from the focus groups and 12 ‘learner portraits’ are showcased in this report. These portraits provide rich, intimate and nuanced summaries of learning journeys, which detail learner motivations, transitions, successes and challenges.

Other data that surfaced from learner focus groups are:

- Learners who have attended LINC or ESL courses may mistakenly consider their language learning to be complete, so they no longer think they need language training and check off the ESL learning as complete – the ‘checkmark phenomenon’
- Most adult learners find their programs through word of mouth (primarily through family and friends)

LBS Teacher/Tutor Focus Groups

The 18 LBS practitioners who participated in the project’s focus group sessions reported that, initially, many of the ESL background LBS learners view their literacy/upgrading classes as extensions of their ESL classes; however, in time they come to realize the differences between LBS and ESL programs. Practitioners also stressed the ESL/literacy learners benefit from the transition-oriented focus and embrace any and all information related to workplace culture and workplace vocabulary. It was also noted that learners often view LBS as an ‘immersion experience’ – the chance to be learning alongside native speakers of English and to part of a supportive community that includes Canadians as well as immigrants.

Teachers and tutors did draw attention to the fact that, in addition to their literacy and upgrading needs, these learners do have ongoing ESL needs that require tending to – vocabulary development; pronunciation needs; writing issues and grammar clarifications. Some LBS practitioners felt challenged by these issues and others reported quickly addressing grammar questions and then returning back to the program’s LBS focus. Most teachers felt that even though their learners did have strong spoken English, they could still benefit from more opportunities to practise speaking. Several lamented that the only time some learners may speak English is in their classroom and never outside in their daily lives.

LBS practitioners and college upgrading instructors described the LBS learner who speaks English as a second/additional language as having a different emotional profile than Canadian-born learners in the classroom. They indicated that these learners are motivated, work hard

and are frustrated when they do not move ahead as quickly as they would like to. This learning group often possesses a metalinguistic awareness and many have learned how to learn. Some learners are from war-torn countries and have experienced trauma that affects their learning, but many have stronger supports in their communities than do their Canadian-born LBS classmates. Some of the more challenging learners in this group have English that is fossilized and effecting any changes in their English is a challenge.

Practitioners did voice concerns about Canadian-born program participants sometimes feeling ‘ostracized’ when the class had many second language learners, but also shared examples of how mixed learner groups also resulted in benefits for all learners.

All practitioners did stress that it was much harder to diagnose learning disabilities (LDs) in LBS learners who speak English as a second language because it is difficult to distinguish whether gaps exist as a result of language acquisitions or LD issues.

Assessors focus groups

The 9 LBS assessors who participated in the focus groups echoed practitioner concerns about distinguishing language issues from learning disabilities. Most stated that although they had a general understanding about language training options, they felt they did not know how to properly refer individuals to the appropriate ESL programs – particularly those individuals who are professionals or insist they have already attended LINC or ESL programs.

These LBS assessors also mentioned that even learners who have completed certain credentials or attained a number of credits (e.g. adult credits or OSSD) find that gaps persist between the credentials and their skill levels. This causes considerable frustration for learners who feel they have caught up, only to learn upon assessment that they are not ready to move on to their next step.

When adults were not an appropriate fit for their programs assessors relied on program catalogues and their own folder containing program options they had researched. Paramount to effective referrals are the relationships LBS assessors have built with other programs.

Assessment Practices and Appropriate Referrals

Complementing the assessor focus group is the data that was collected through the project’s online LBS assessor survey and MTML’s Literacy Access Network (LAN) telephone hotline case studies. The majority of the 24 survey respondents indicated that, in addition to the placement assessment piece, they employed probing questions during the intake interview and their experience as assessors to holistically determine whether adults who speak English as a second/additional language are a good fit for the LBS program. They gave examples of effective screening questions that help determine whether the client would benefit from being placed in the LBS program or would do better in a language program or adult credit course.

MTML's LAN hotline also lent valuable insights as to the benefits of probing the caller for information that helps direct the individual to the appropriate program. Case studies cited by the LAN line operator further informed the project and added to the list of screening questions that assessors provided in the online survey.

The majority of respondents also indicated they would like more information on language training options in order to develop a solid understanding of them, thus informing their referral practices in order to better direct learners to the appropriate language training and/or to CLARS assessment centre.

RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING – LEARNING ABOUT EACH OTHER AS WE CONNECT

The relationship-building component of this project took place in the midst of major transformations and impending new initiatives⁴ within the various adult education programs serving adult learners with both ESL and literacy needs (e.g. CLARS, OALCF, centralized databases [EOIS-CaMS and HARTs], etc). Oddly enough, the notion of change acted as a catalyst for dialogue and discussion. Behind many of the changes lay the key principles that inform Ontario's adult education programs as outlined in the 2005 Ontario Learns report, namely accessibility for and inclusion of all adults; coordination and integration between and among programs; innovation and flexibility in meeting learner and community needs; accountability and effectiveness in the use of public resources and faster integration of new Canadians into the economy. Coming together and understanding that all adult education and training programs in the province are influenced by a guiding vision comprised of these principles made for lively and engaged dialogue.

Sharing the objectives of this project with ESL, LINC, and adult credit managers and front-line staff, while at the same time asking them about their top-of-mind issues started to lay the foundations for relationship building across the programs. Misinformation regarding each other's programs was also corrected and partial information was clarified; there seemed to be an appetite for understanding what each program could offer adults who are speakers of English as a second or additional language. The project's 1-day forum tapped in to this appetite for cross-program dialoguing and information sharing.

SUPPORTING SMOOTHER TRANSITIONS

Ensuring smooth transitions for learners with both ESL and literacy needs was a key discussion point in the focus group sessions, during the stakeholder interviews and in the course of the 1-day forum. There seemed to be a consensus that a holistic understanding of adult education

⁴ For a comprehensive look at these initiatives and transformations you can consult the relationship building tool posted on the project website at <http://learnerpathways.wordpress.com>.

options on the part of learners and service providers could facilitate well-timed learner transitions. The following were considered to be factors that supported/could support learner transitions:

- Ensuring regular communication/meetings take place with next-step programs (something many admitted there was too little of), especially if programs are co-located or are within a learning hub setting
- Including a formal orientation piece at the start of a new program helps clarify the program's objectives and expectations, allowing the learner to understand how these may or may not fit with his/her goals and learning expectations
- Visiting each other's programs; having representatives from next-step programs come in and speak to learners
- Explicitly making learners aware of the time and commitment demands of their next step – helping learners have a realistic sense of what comes next
- Devoting more time to bridging learners to the next step, thus effecting a 'warm handover'
- Recognizing that learning pathways are not necessarily linear for adult learners – making room within the pathways construct to allow for unforeseen interruptions along the learning journey or for changes in goals.
- Finding ways of gently easing the learner to the next step, perhaps having a mechanism in place for learners struggling with the transition, particularly if the learning experience differs greatly from the processes of academic institutions in the learner's country of origin – e.g. allowing learners to 'come back' periodically for support in a comfortable setting; having access to an academic counselling that explicitly addresses transition challenges; introducing time management workshops with respect to new academic demands.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This project's front-line exploration revealed that the learning pathways of adults who have both language and literacy needs are complex and shaped by a multitude of factors. Clear and accessible information regarding adult education and training options – for both learners and service providers – assists in the navigation of learner pathways and helps to strengthen service coordination which is so crucial to an integrated adult education system that is envisioned for Ontario.

Learner pathways are rendered far more complex as the diversity of learners in Toronto and York Region who speak English as their second/additional language introduces a complex set of needs to their learning journeys – distinct pedagogical and andragogical needs that are intertwined with issues of acculturation, identity, belonging, and are also influenced by social and

economic realities. The project findings underscore that the unprecedented ‘superdiversity’⁵ in the region calls for greater flexibility and innovation within the adult education programs across the ministries, which all seek to provide a range of relevant educational opportunities for adults.

The relationship-building activities that were carried out throughout the course of this project revealed a cautious, yet deep-seated need for programs to come together and address the complexity and challenges that exist in the classroom and when dealing with placement and referral issues. Opportunities to come together and dialogue on the needs, learning pathways and transition points of adult learners with both language and literacy issues helped clarify misinformation, and helped build awareness and understanding across the programs. The project revealed an appetite for dialogue and for coming together to view adult education more holistically.

The following recommendations have been formulated as a result of the project’s findings:

1. Improve access to information about the range of learning and training programs offered by the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, the Ministry of Education, and by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.
2. Create opportunities and resources for service delivery agencies providing adult language, literacy and learning programs to increase their knowledge and awareness of each other.
3. Develop and implement a screening and assessment approach that is flexible and responsive to the complex needs of the learners, to be used by language programs/CLARS centres and literacy programs when determining a learner’s eligibility and suitability.
4. Provide a greater diversity of language training and literacy programs in order to address the distinct needs of different groups of learners.
5. Support partnerships and collaborative initiatives between language and literacy providers.

5 A term coined in James Simpson, Melanie Cooke, and Mike Baynham, *The Right Course? An Exploratory Study of Learner Placement Practices in ESOL and Literacy*, p. 11.



PROJECT BACKGROUND

LBS clients in MTML's Toronto and York Region network are a reflection of the diversity of the area and neighbourhoods they serve, and, as such, LBS and Academic Upgrading (AU) classes are comprised of a mix of Canadian-born adult learners whose mother tongue is English, and of learners who hail from other countries whose primary language may or may not be English. Since the economic downturn in 2008, however, many LBS service providers have noted an increase in second language learners who enter their doors. At the network's Literacy Service Planning meetings [see **Appendix 1** for an overview of MTML's function as a regional network] the challenges of meeting the needs of second language learners and the difficulty of determining which program would be the best fit for adults with both second-language and literacy needs has been a frequent topic of discussion. The questions and concerns of LBS service providers pointed to two overarching necessities:

- the need for strengthening service coordination between English as a Second Language programs and literacy/upgrading programs
- the need for better understanding “grey area learners” – those who fall into a grey area between ESL and literacy and who could “quite easily be here or there”⁶ – and their varied needs

The Phase 1 Enhancing Pathways project carried out by Project READ Literacy Network in 2010⁷ provided a solid example of information sharing and collaboration between ESL, LINC and LBS programs. That project developed general profiles of learners in the Wellington-Waterloo region and reported on a team approach when it came to assessing displaced workers within a Peel/Halton Action Centre setting. It also signalled the importance of gaining a more detailed picture of second-language learners' experiences and the factors that support their learning along the pathways. It is this need that the **Exploring Learning Pathways: Meeting at the LBS/ESL Intersections** project is addressing within the context of Toronto and York Region programs and adult learners.

The array of language and literacy programs in Toronto and the sheer number of delivery sites and classes create particular challenges when it comes helping adult clients navigate their learning pathways – a reality which was noted in MTML's *Connecting Pathways for Adult Education Learners*⁸ report. [**Appendix 2** provides a quick snapshot of LBS, LINC and ESL non-credit programs in both Toronto and York Region]. Indeed, preliminary discussions with staff and practitioners in LBS agencies prior to the start of this project made it clear that not all program

6 James Simpson, Melanie Cooke, and Mike Baynham, *The Right Course? An Exploratory Study of Learner Placement Practices in ESOL and Literacy* (London, UK: National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy, 2008), accessed April 4, 2011, http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=136#, p.6.

7 Anne Ramsay, Lorri Sauve, and Matthew Schulmann, *Enhancing Pathways: The Literacy and Language Continuum* (Project READ Literacy Network, 2010).

8 Glenn Pound, *Connecting Pathways for Adult Learners* (Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy, 2008).



managers and front-line staff had a thorough understanding of the array of language training options available. There was spotty knowledge about job-specific language training programs, misinformation about ESL programs held by many and a lack of understanding when it came to understanding what ESL Literacy and LINC Literacy classes offer the English as a second language learner with literacy needs.

York Region, the second geographic area served by our network, continues to experience a rapidly burgeoning population growth fueled by secondary migration from Toronto to the north and by virtue of the fact that a large number of newcomers are choosing York Region to settle in. The large geographic area of nine municipalities has met with challenges related to transportation and a scarcity of language programs. More recently the area has seen the opening of four new Welcome Centres and the creation of more ESL classes to meet the needs of newcomers and settled immigrants alike, thus making information sharing across the adult education programs in York Region a necessity so as to ensure informed and appropriate referrals.

A diverse and evolving population base with diverse and evolving needs acts as the backdrop for our exploration of learner pathways. An overview of immigration figures and trends in York Region and Toronto (see pp. 32-40) provides a detailed picture of the diversity in language, culture and educational backgrounds. The numbers, however, are not enough when it comes discerning the pressing needs of learners who may struggle with learning English and developing their literacy. For this reason ***Exploring Learner Pathways: Meeting at the LBS/ESL Intersections*** sought to conduct a front-line exploration of learner needs by heading straight to LBS classrooms to speak with LBS learners, teachers/tutors, and assessors.



PROJECT CONTEXT

Meeting the literacy and upgrading needs of immigrants is particularly important given that recent immigrants (who have arrived since 2001) are over three times more likely than Canadian-born workers to have lost jobs in the recent economic downturn, and will likely face greater challenges re-entering employment.

– Toronto's Vital Signs (2009)

With recent immigrants providing a growing segment of York Region's labour force, the successful economic integration of immigrants is important to keep our economy healthy and competitive.

– Changing Landscapes: Recent Immigrants Living in York Region (2011)

Almost 1 in 5 of immigrants with low-level literacy skills (i.e. 1,033,660 individuals) are expected to be living in Toronto by 2031.

– The Future of Literacy in Canada's Largest Cities (2010)

Language acquisition is the number-one precursor of success on the settlement and integration pathways. It is essential for us to support our clients accordingly.

Darlyn Mentor, Director Settlement Programs – CIC, Ontario Region

– 2010 TESL Ontario Conference – Panel Presentation

Adult Education and the Social and Economic Integration of Immigrants

The above excerpts from various reports and presentations all point to the link between foundation skills – language acquisition and literacy skills – and immigrants' successful integration into the economic and social fabric of Ontario. The Ministry of Education's 2005 *Ontario Learns* report posited that an adult education policy framework "should be flexible so that communities might meet local needs, particularly responding to Ontario's diverse population."⁹ The report also stated that the vision of adult education in Ontario is built on four principles¹⁰:

1. accessibility and inclusion for all adults
2. co-ordination and integration between and among programs and levels of government
3. innovation and flexibility meeting the learner and community needs
4. accountability and effectiveness in the use of public resources

⁹ Kathleen Wynne, *Ontario Learns: Strengthening Our Adult Education System* (Toronto, Ont.: Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005), p. 6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

These principles are reflected in Employment Ontario's LBS Program objectives through which LBS agencies are mandated to provide effective client referrals and to improve service coordination between the LBS Program and the language training programs of MCI and credit programs of EDU so that clients may benefit from seamless transitions, service integration and appropriate education and training opportunities based on needs and goals.

Flexibility, local needs, outcomes-based programming, enhanced coordination and shared planning – The similarities across the ministries

The focus on local needs is also a driver for this project which aims to explore the needs of second language LBS learners in Toronto and York Region. As we embarked on this front-line exploration of learner needs and learning pathways, we remained mindful of the importance of relationship-building to better serve learners/clients. In meeting with individuals from ESL, LINC and even settlement programs, the researchers could not help but appreciate the overarching similarities that exist with respect to systemic overhauls taking place within the ministries – all focusing on service coordination and integration, facilitated by centralized databases. Much like Employment Ontario's transformation (begun in 2009) which shifted service delivery to a client-centric model comprised of a suite of integrated services, the federally funded Settlement Program has adopted a modernized approach,¹¹ which shifts the focus from four separate programs, to an integrated, results- and activity-oriented single program model. The Settlement Program now focuses on six activity streams – needs assessments and referrals; information and awareness services; language learning and skills development; employment-related services; community connections; and support services.

Large-scale systemic changes in CIC's Settlement Program and within Employment Ontario, as well as the coordination of federal and provincial language training programs and processes prompted by the Canada Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA) – [please see the section regarding the Coordinated Assessment and Referral System (CLARS) on p. 9 of the relationship-building tool available on the project's website at <http://learnerpathways.wordpress.com>] – are, indeed, indicative of results-oriented streamlined approaches that strive to use public resources accountably and effectively. All levels of government seek to be effective and efficient as they work to meet the education, skills and training needs of a diverse population.

A pathways approach

Everyone is talking 'pathways'. This term is being used by agencies, programs and ministries [please see p. 33 of the 'Tool' available on the project's website at <http://learnerpathways.wordpress.com>], and is often seen in education and training ads and brochures, but what does

¹¹ Adrienne Smith, "CIC's Modernized Approach to Settlement Programming: A Brief Description," *INSCAN (International Settlement Canada)*, Winter 2010, 23, no. 3, p.1, <http://integration-net.ca/english/index.cfm>.

it mean? TCU considers pathways as the routes that students take to move between and among levels of educational credentials, institutions, and programs as they move towards a goal. The new Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) was designed to incorporate a transition-oriented curriculum built around five broad goal paths onto which adult learners may map their personal goal. Below are the five OALCF goal paths – employment; apprenticeship; secondary school credit; postsecondary; and independence – showing the point of exit from the LBS Program into the next-step program or the end-goal.

THE 5 OALCF GOAL PATHS

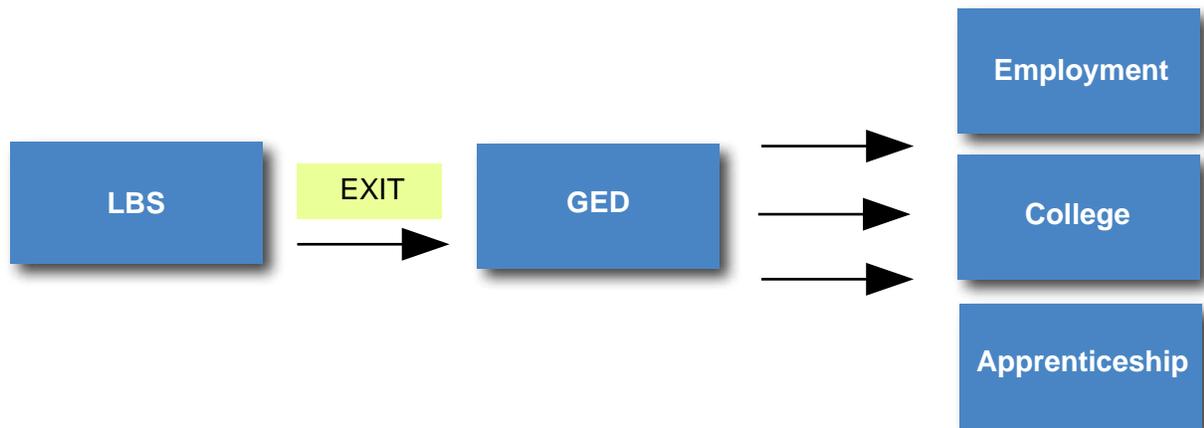
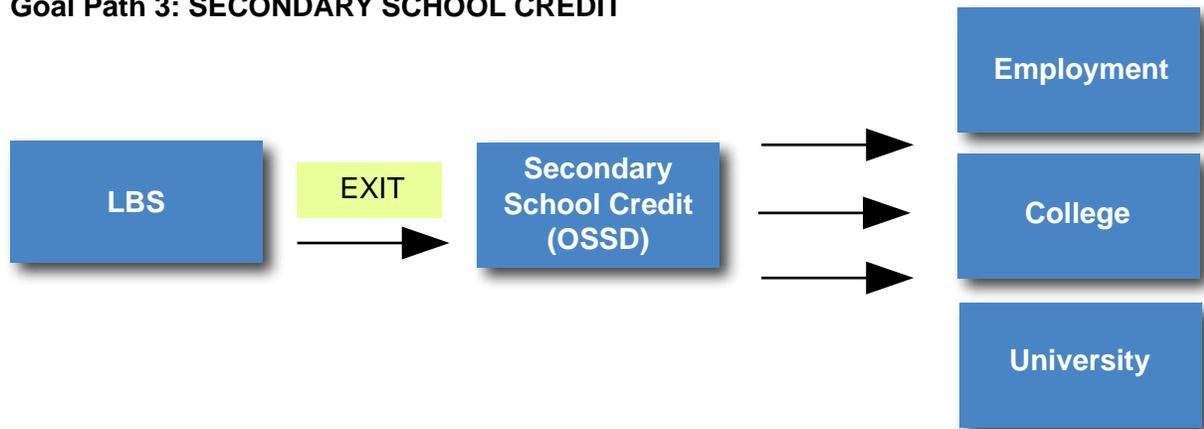
Goal Path 1: EMPLOYMENT



Goal Path 2: APPRENTICESHIP



Goal Path 3: SECONDARY SCHOOL CREDIT



Goal Path 4: POSTSECONDARY



Goal Path 5: INDEPENDENCE



Much of the positive discourse around adult learner pathways in Ontario has been influenced by two successful applications of a pathways approach to education – one local and one from our American neighbours to the south:

- The success of the *Pathways to Education Program* – created in 2001 and focusing on teens in Toronto’s Regent Park community – has documented numerous successes and has been adopted by 10 other communities between Winnipeg and Halifax.¹²
- The ‘career pathways’ approach to adult education in the United States where “jurisdictions have responded to the issue of transitions and persistence by developing initiatives that more closely link literacy with occupational training, accelerate learning and create more transparent learner pathways linking foundational training to college postsecondary program.”¹³ Some American colleges have worked within the career pathways framework integrating work experience and support services, “enabling students to combine school and work and advance over time to better jobs”¹⁴ while “work[ing] on multiple fronts to ease student transitions” to the next step.

The comprehensive career pathways framework in the US, which has seen some promising results, involves six core elements¹⁵, many of which we are seeing figure into Ontario policy frameworks and models. These six core elements are:

1. Institutional and instructional transformation
2. Supports and tools to help students succeed
3. Partnerships that drive planning and implementation
4. Employer involvement in all phases of the process
5. Commitment to continuous improvement
6. Commitment to sustainability

In its review of adult education in Ontario, the *Ontario Learns* report identified *learner pathways* as one of the six key focus areas¹⁶ of the adult education framework it put forth for the province. Within that seminal document it was acknowledged that the adult education pathways “are much more complex” than the elementary-secondary to postsecondary K-12 system, and that when dealing with adult learning journeys “prior learning assessment and referral [PLAR] is an important first step.”¹⁷ The report’s two recommendations pertaining specifically to learner

¹² For more information on the Pathways to Education Program, visit www.pathwaystoeducation.ca

¹³ Karen Myers, David Gyamati, and Jean-Pierre Voyer, *Skills Upgrading for Ontario Working Age Adults: An Environmental Scan of Programs, Gaps, and Opportunities, report* (October 2009), p. 69, http://www.srdc.org/uploads/Career_pathways_report.pdf.

¹⁴ League for Innovation in the Community College, *Career Pathways as a Systemic Framework: Rethinking Education for Student Success in College and Careers - A Call to Action* (Phoenix, AZ, 2007), pp. 3-4, http://www.league.org/league/projects/ccti/files/Systemic_Framework.pdf.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-10.

¹⁶ See p. 7 in the “Tool” available on the project’s website at <http://learnerpathways.wordpress.com> for a list of the six focus areas of the *Ontario Learns* adult education framework.

¹⁷ Kathleen Wynne, *Ontario Learns: Strengthening Our Adult Education System* (Toronto, Ont.: Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005), p. 39.

pathways advised that agencies and institutions “devise clear pathways for learners to achieve their learning goals”, and that “adult education deliverers work with social assistance agencies to ensure that adult education programming meets learners’ goals, including development of employability and essential skills and life skills”.¹⁸ To this end, adult education and training providers across the programs are encouraged to share information and work collaboratively, embracing the tenets of the ‘no wrong door’ philosophy in order to ensure seamless learner pathways. With this in mind, the coordination of services between LBS, ESL credit and non-credit, and LINC programs becomes essential to better serving and directing the learner who has both literacy and language needs. But first, we must come to understand who the learner is that this project is focused upon.



THE LEARNER

WHAT TYPE OF LEARNER DOES THIS PROJECT FOCUS ON?

Navigating the adult education and training programs in Ontario can be especially tricky if one counts oneself amongst adult learners whose mother tongue or primary language is not English, who may at different points in life be at various levels of English language proficiency, and who may have literacy and basic skills needs as well. Throw into the mix a multitude of other factors – previous level of education, interrupted learning, number of years living in or outside Canada, additional barriers, etc. – and you may indeed be what the literature terms a ‘grey area’ learner.

The term ‘grey area’ learner implies that it may be difficult to gauge what program may be the best fit for a learner who has both language and literacy needs. It can also be challenging for the program that acts as the initial point-of-entry into the adult education system. What does it mean to navigate adult education and training programs in Toronto and York Region when you are what the literature identifies as a ‘grey area’ learner?

In the 2008 British study *The Right Course?*, the ‘grey area’ learner is described as a bilingual learner who may “quite easily be here or there” [i.e. in LBS or ESL] because the boundary between the programs is not clear-cut.”¹⁹ If we use the definition of ‘grey area’ learner as defined in that study²⁰ (but adjusted the descriptions to match a Canadian context), the range of ‘grey area’ learners may encompass those who:

- Were born in non-English/French speaking countries and now live in Canada
- Spent a great deal of time outside Canada even if they were born here

¹⁸ Kathleen Wynne, *Ontario Learns: Strengthening Our Adult Education System* (Toronto, Ont.: Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005), p. 39.

¹⁹ James Simpson, Melanie Cooke, and Mike Baynham, *The Right Course? An Exploratory Study of Learner Placement Practices in ESOL and Literacy* (London, UK: National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy, 2008), pp. 5- 6, accessed April 4, 2011, http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=136#.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 6

- Arrived in Canada as teens
- Have an expertise in languages other than English/French

The learners this project is focusing on are:

- English as a second language learners in the LBS programs in York Region and Toronto who have been deemed capable of managing the demands of the LBS program by the delivering agencies
- Low-level literacy learners – i.e. LBS Levels 1-3 [this project ran prior to the new OALCF implementation and the introduction of complexity levels]
- Many have attended ESL or LINC programs prior to being in LBS

The target group whose needs and learning pathways being explored are often ‘grey area’ learners. Where they come to be placed within the array of adult education programs depends on how much is understood about the nuances of both the learners and the programs at key transition points in their learning journeys.

LANGUAGE TRAINING IN ONTARIO: WHAT IS ESL LITERACY?

In Ontario, newcomers and settled immigrants/citizens who have both ESL and literacy needs often have at their disposal federally-funded LINC Literacy classes or provincially-funded ESL Literacy classes that are designed for individuals who are learning English as a second language and who are not functionally literate in their own language.

The *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners* document indicates that **the ESL Literacy program is appropriate for adults who²¹:**

- Are speakers of a language that does not have a written code
- Have very little education (1-2 years) in their home countries
- Had attended school for up to 8 years, but sporadically due to a number of reasons (ill health, war, family responsibilities, etc); don’t usually have the skills to read new words; probably lack study skills; avoid reading or writing whenever possible
- Come from a country with a non-Roman alphabet and have difficulties reading English due to the challenges of adjusting to the new phonetic and syntactic aspects of English – [these learners may have the study skills]

²¹ Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners* (2000), p. ii, http://www.language.ca/pdfs/esl_literacy.pdf.

Individuals are regarded as **NOT true ESL Literacy**²² learners if they:

- Have learning disabilities
- Have been through trauma of some kind
- Are literate in their native language but prefer the slower pace and collaborative aspect of an ESL Literacy class

A TRANSITION POINT FOR THE ESL LITERACY LEARNER – A CRUCIAL LBS/ESL INTERSECTION POINT

ESL Literacy stream learners are described as existing along a continuum of literacy levels in their first language (L1). On the low-end of the continuum are those who are “pre-literate [hail from an oral culture that has no written form] or “non-literate” [hail from a culture that has a written form but the student never learned to read or write]”.²³ At the centre-point along the continuum is the “semi-literate” individual who has some reading and writing ability in their L1 but is not functionally literate in that language. ESL Literacy students are typically considered to be fall somewhere between “pre-literate/non-literate” and “functionally literate” categories. A functionally literate learner is appropriate for regular ESL non-credit classes. [It is important to note that ESL credit classes are offered at school board adult learning centres. See the note below to learn more about the ESL credit classes].²⁴

ESL and LINC Literacy program streams are tied to the 4-phase ESL Literacy Benchmarks detailed below:

The ESL Literacy Benchmarks

- Lay out the progression of **READING, WRITING and NUMERACY skills for ESL adults who have little or no literacy skills in their first language**
- Are descriptions of what ESL Literacy students are able to do at various stages of their development
- Are divided into 4 phases: Foundation Phase (pre-reading and pre-writing phase), Phase I, Phase II and Phase III

22 Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners* (2000), p. ii, http://www.language.ca/pdfs/esl_literacy.pdf.

23 Ibid., p. ii.

24 NOTE: the Ministry of Education offers **ESL credits and English Literacy Development credits** that adult learners may earn towards their Ontario Secondary School Diploma. The glossary of terms in this report provides detail about ESL credit and English Literacy Development (ELD) credits. Please refer to these terms in the glossary and to the ESL program chart (pp. 20-21) in the collaborative tool available on the project’s website at <http://learnerpathways.wordpress.com>

Foundation Phase	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
<p>This phase describes a small minority of beginning ESL Literacy second language learners who need to develop and practice the specific visual and motor/mechanical skills that are needed in the pre-reading and pre-writing literacy processes.</p> <p>These learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have little or no schooling in their home country • Have developed a number of strategies for coping with survival and everyday life • Lack skills necessary to facilitate successful language learning 	<p>Phase I learners are becoming aware that print conveys meaning and there is a connection between oral language and print. They are beginning to recognize the value that Canadian society places on reading, writing and numeracy for employment purposes, reading letters from the government, etc.</p>	<p>Phase II learners are developing expectations around print: i.e. that print is organized in a way that aids comprehension.</p>	<p>Phase III ESL Literacy learners are expanding in their knowledge of the written language. They can read and respond to a wider variety of authentic and teacher-adapted texts.</p> <p>NOTE: The end of Phase III ESL Literacy is considered to be the time when ESL Literacy learners can transition to an LBS program or continue on to regular stream ESL classes.*</p>

Source: Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners (2001), Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks.

**Please consult pp.26-27 of the collaborative tool available on the project's website at <http://learnerpathways.wordpress.com> to see the correspondence between CLB Levels 1-12 and the Literacy Phases and to gain an understanding of the Phase III transition point – a key intersection point between when it is advisable that a second-language learner move into either an LBS program or into a regular ESL program.*

WHY THE LEARNER’S LEVEL OF SPOKEN ENGLISH MATTERS...

As adult education programs work in partnership to ensure seamless transitions and effective referrals, the various adult education and training programs seek to clarify *when a learner is best served by specific programs*. The above section provided a brief overview of the key aspects of ESL Literacy within federal and provincial language training programs and set out to show which learners are served by the ESL Literacy stream classes in LINC and ESL language training programs. [The number of ESL literacy learners attending LINC and ESL programs in Toronto and York Region can be found in charts in Appendix 2].

The current LBS guidelines also set out to clarify which ESL learners would best be served in LBS programs. It is recommended that if learners are non- Canadian-born that they “have a demonstrated proficiency at or above Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level 6 for speaking and listening and less than CLB level 6 in reading and writing.”²⁵ The reasons behind this delineation rest in research that supports a strong oral English base.

Long before an ESL Literacy stream was in place, ESL learners with literacy needs struggled in either their ESL or LBS classes. In *A Handbook for ESL Literacy*, Bell and Burnaby (1984) explained the difficulties these learners faced:

*ESL literacy students therefore fall between two stools. Their lack of English language skills makes literacy [ABE / LBS] difficult. Their lack of literacy makes ESL language difficult. They are attempting to cope with two challenges simultaneously – learning the language, and learning how to read and write.*²⁶

The authors of the handbook stated that English-speaking students did not struggle as greatly with the reading and writing components because:

- They had “a depth of vocabulary and control of sentence patterns which is not available to the ESL student”²⁷
- Text is “meaningful to the students once they have sounded out the letters correctly”²⁸

Simply put, the ability to hear and know what sounds right (and what does not sound right) when it is read aloud is the litmus test for being able to benefit from reading and writing practice within the LBS program. But, there is nothing simple about the complex set of cognitive processes, language transfer issues and independent variables that impact on second language acquisition and literacy.

²⁵ LBS Guidelines, November 2011, p. 31.

²⁶ Jill Bell and Barbara Burnaby, *A Handbook for ESL Literacy* (Toronto, Ont.: OISE Press in Association with Hodder & Stoughton, 1984), p. 7.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

A recent report exploring the link between oral fluency, literacy, and Essential Skills concluded that “the relationship between oral language proficiency and literacy skill development for adults ...is an important but little understood transition point in adult literacy development” and “marks the nexus point at which daily language skills of orality begin to shape the reading and writing skills of literacy.”²⁹ Scott Murray and his colleagues conducted an extensive literature review that covered typical and atypical language development, as well as second language development and second language literacy acquisition. The report details a number of research studies conducted within the past decade that have produced evidence that “literacy development is built upon the foundation of oral language acquisition.”³⁰

“ESL LITERACY” – MULTIPLE UNDERSTANDINGS AND UNCLEAR BOUNDARIES

Although language training programs do endeavour to clearly define which learners are best suited for ESL Literacy, ESL, or LBS based on their standardized assessment tools and related curriculum frameworks, a series of studies, both in Canada and abroad have signalled the difficulties inherent in defining “ESL literacy” and in drawing clear program boundaries. In 2007, Sue Folinsbee prepared a discussion paper for the Movement for Canadian Literacy in which she stated that “there is not a complete or common understanding of who might be considered an ESL literacy learner.”³¹ From key informants across the country she heard that “immigrants learn literacy in both ESL programs, and literacy and ABE programs”³²

Through a comprehensive literature review on the topic of ESL literacy conducted in 2008 in Quebec it became evident that “‘ESL literacy’ is a concept that is even more difficult to define than ‘literacy’”³³ and that several reports, when considering the boundaries between the ESL and literacy field as “porous”, “ambiguous”, and “fuzzy”³⁴. This lack of clarity around terms is something that needs to also be considered as we explore assessment and referral practices with respect to learners with both ESL and literacy needs.

29 T. Scott Murray et al., *Towards a Better Understanding of the Link between Oral Fluency, Literacy and Essential Skills*, report (Kanata: DataAngel Policy Research, 2011), p. 9.

30 Ibid., p. 10.

31 Sue Folinsbee, *Linkages: Connecting Literacy and English as a Second Language* (Movement for Canadian Literacy, 2007), p. 12, accessed March 28, 2011, <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/mcl/linkages/cover.htm>.

32 Ibid., p. 9.

33 The Centre for Literacy of Quebec, *ESL and Literacy: Finding Common Ground, Serving Learners’ Needs*, p. 3, accessed March 27, 2011, http://www.nald.ca/library/research/esl_lit/est_lit.pdf.

34 Ibid., p. 10.

A NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER...

Please visit our project website at <http://learnerpathways.wordpress.com> and click on the “Other Research” tab to access several of the reports on ESL literacy referred to in the preceding pages.

TWO HELPFUL LINKS FOR ESL, LINC AND LBS INSTRUCTORS WHO TEACH ADULT LEARNERS WITH MINIMAL EDUCATION:

Throughout the course of this project, teachers and tutors from across the programs regularly approached me and asked me for relevant resources and research about teaching reading and writing to adult learners who had very little schooling in their mother tongue. I would like to draw their attention to the two following websites that offer recent and relevant resources that may inform and enhance their teaching practices:

1. The ESL Literacy Network

An innovative website that responds to the needs of Learners with Interrupted Formal Education (LIFE) and addresses the professional development needs of ESL literacy practitioners. It is an Alberta-based initiative, but one that will resound with teachers in Ontario as well.

www.esl-literacy.com

2. Low Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition (LESLLA) – An International Research Forum

Low Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition (LESLLA) for Adults is an international forum of researchers who share an interest in research on the development of second language skills by adult immigrants with little or no schooling prior to entering the country of entry. The LESLLA website is a window onto the empirical research and information on second language acquisition for the low-educated adult population. Symposia and past conference proceedings are available on the site.

www.leslla.org/



PROJECT OVERVIEW

The project focuses on the learning pathways of second language learners who attend Anglophone- stream LBS programs in Toronto and York Region LBS. The two preceding sections of this report – Background and Context – have offered a glimpse into the multitude of factors that often converge when it comes to determining which adult education/training program may be the best fit at key points along the learning pathways. Linguistic processes; pedagogical and andragogical considerations; curriculum frameworks and program guidelines; varying assessment tools, paradigms and practices; life circumstances and systemic realities intermingle and often impact the assessment and referral processes which inform learner pathways.

This project recognizes that there may be several points along a learning pathway where the above factors can act together, becoming the key points – intersections points, if you will – at which adult education/training directions are often determined. As we aim to make appropriate referrals and work towards seamless transitions, understanding the implications of these intersections necessitates the coming together of those who assess, refer and guide learners with both ESL and literacy needs. Building relationships across the TCU, MCI, and EDU programs becomes a crucial first step that sets the foundation for collaboration which can benefit the learners in Toronto and York Region.

PROJECT VISION

The guiding vision of the ***Exploring Learner Pathways: Meeting at the LBS/ESL Intersections*** is enabling the ‘coming together’ of those involved in program delivery, next-step guidance, and referrals. Service coordination is important to enhancing effective learner pathways; however, coordinating services to better serve our learners requires that programs and people know more about each other, understand what particular learner needs each of the various adult programs may be able to meet and when, and foster relationships in which stakeholders from across the programs can come together to speak frankly about the challenges and concerns they have with respect to meeting the needs of the learner with both ESL and literacy needs in a geographic region that boasts the greatest diversity in the province.

The project aims to explore the learning pathways and needs of second language learners within LBS programs with the intention of answering two basic questions:

- **What is working?**
- **What isn’t working?**

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Document assessment, referral and placement practices and challenges
- Explore the particular needs of second language learners and how they are met within LBS programs and other programs
- Document the factors that support learning and learner transitions for this group
- Develop profiles of second language learners and how these may relate to particular pathways
- Document gaps in service
- Document promising practices and possible models

PROJECT OUTCOMES

- Validating learner pathways and enhancing the knowledge of key transition points along the pathways
- Improving the coordination of services between LBS, ESL (non-credit and credit) and LINC programs in Toronto and York Region
- Building/strengthening relationships between LBS, ESL and LINC programs to ensure smoother transitions for adult learners

PROJECT COMPONENTS

- Conduct research with second-language learners, teachers/tutors, and assessors in LBS programs
- Build relationships with ESL, LINC and LBS programs to explore the transition needs of the learners
- Hold a 1-Day forum to discuss project findings with stakeholders

PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Hanna Cabaj, Toronto Catholic District School Board
- Guy Ewing, former MTML Executive Director
- Katrina Grieve, Literacy Researcher
- Anne Ramsay, Project READ Literacy Network
- Susan Richarz, York Region District School Board
- Carol Visser, Toronto District School Board
- Fran Zimmerman, St. Christopher House



METHODOLOGY

The advisory committee provided information, insights and helpful critique throughout the course of the project ensuring that our exploration of learner pathways would be thorough, thoughtful, and representative of a number of perspectives. Our research approach employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. While there were some quantitative components applied to this work, it must be noted that the project was primarily a qualitative research piece – what Gary Shank terms “a systematic empirical inquiry into meaning”³⁵ – that sought to develop a rich and textured picture of front-line realities as experienced by learners, practitioners and assessors.

Data from the front-lines was gathered using the following qualitative methods/tools:

- Focus Groups (Learner groups; teacher/tutor groups; assessor groups)
- Interviews/Consultations
- An Online Assessor Survey
- An Online Project Blog (comments were encouraged from the field)
- Dialogue Prompts at the 1-day Forum

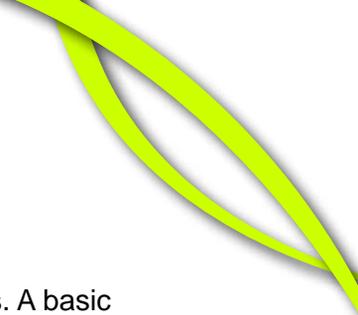
Quantitative data was also gathered (background information about learners, teachers and assessors via short questionnaires just prior to the focus group sessions) in order to provide a snapshot of *who* the focus group participants and online survey respondents were.

The nature of a project exploring transitions from ESL programs in both Toronto and York Region while trying to forge relationships with programs in the ESL field also required researching the following:

- Immigration figures and trends in York Region and Toronto
- Eligibility criteria and types of language training programs available
- Statistics that show number of learners attending LINC, ESL and LBS programs
- New initiatives within language training and the LBS programs
- Research that addressed the needs of adult second-language learners who also have literacy needs

The above information components were gathered so that the researchers could work from a solid base of understanding regarding the local realities and new initiatives and directions for ESL, LINC, and LBS programs in Toronto and York Region. This knowledge base was

³⁵ Gary D. Shank, *Qualitative Research: A Personal Skills Approach* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), p. 5.



instrumental in that it helped facilitate dialogue with individuals across the programs. A basic understanding of the challenges and initiatives others were dealing within the context of Toronto and York Region's unique demographic realities, not only helped to foster dialogues in our first steps towards relationship-building, it also helped the project manager inform the LBS agencies in the region about new developments in the language training field.

Useful Research

Throughout the course of this project, sharing useful pieces of information with LBS agencies and other programs we came in contact with was also a priority. Information sharing helped increase mutual awareness of program offerings (ultimately enhancing service coordination) and helped build goodwill and understanding across the programs. The collaborative exploration tool available on the project's website at <http://learnerpathways.wordpress.com> was developed with the usefulness-factor in mind.



THE NUMBERS

IMMIGRATION FIGURES AND TRENDS – TORONTO AND YORK REGION

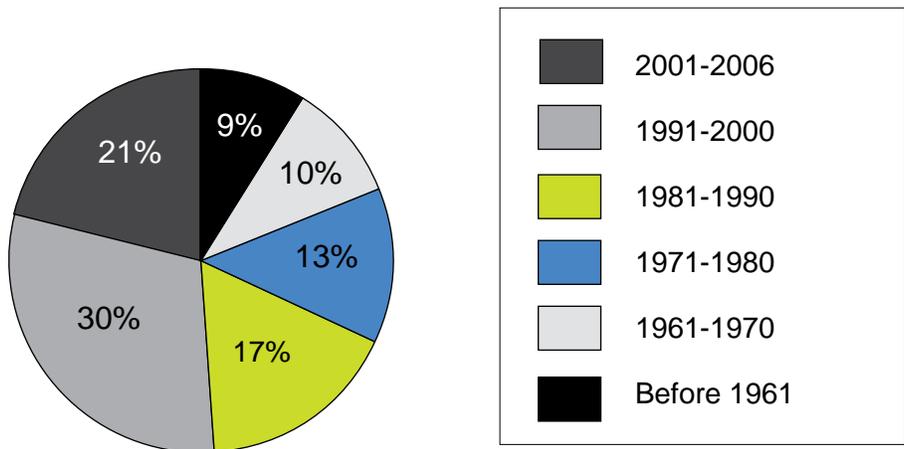
The following section presents data about immigration and immigrants in Toronto and York Region – providing a detailed picture of immigration trends, income and employment realities, education and literacy levels of immigrants, employment realities and immigration growth projections. awareness of trends in migration and settlement is essential when evaluating current and future service delivery needs for adults who require both literacy and second language instruction. One limitation of the current report is the availability of current data: statistics on language and immigration from the most recent Census (2011) were not available when this report was prepared. It is anticipated that these data products will be available from Statistics Canada in October 2012.

TORONTO

According to 2006 Census data, 50% of Toronto residents are immigrants. Between 2001 and 2006, one quarter of all immigrants to Canada settled in Toronto. Although this proportion is declining, immigration continues to make up a large part of the City’s population growth.

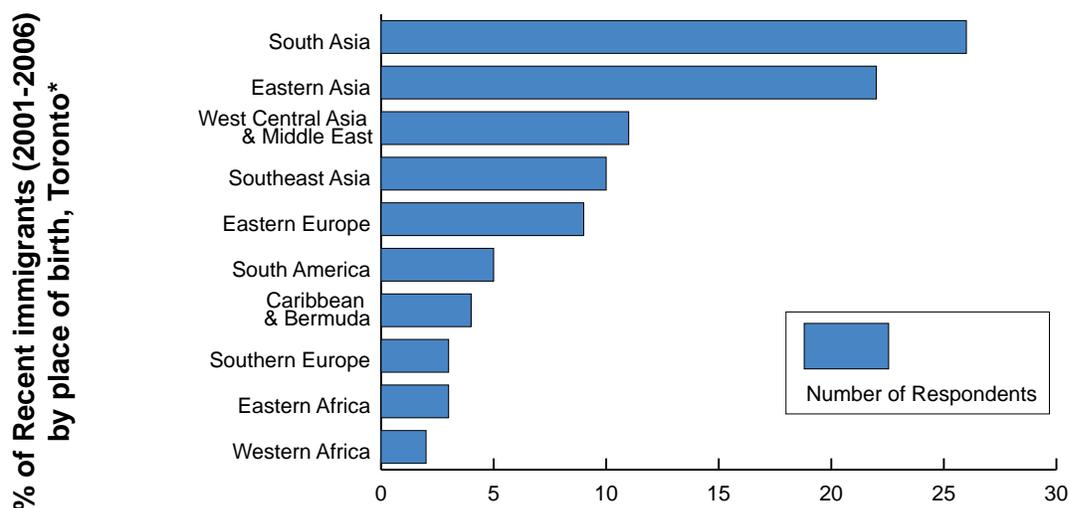
Between 1996 and 2006, the growth in the number of immigrants living in Ontario and the City of Toronto surpassed growth in the non-immigrant population. Immigrants are expected to account for all net labour force growth by 2011 and all net population growth by 2031.

Immigrants by period of immigration City of Toronto



Source: City of Toronto Ward Profiles, 2006 Census data

- Recent immigrants who arrived between 2001 and 2006 accounted for 10.8% of all Toronto residents (and 21.6% of all immigrants in Toronto). Half of all immigrants in Toronto have lived in Canada for less than 15 years.
- According to the 2006 Census, more than half of all foreign-born residents of Toronto were aged 25 or older; 7% were pre-school aged (5 and under); 16% were school age (6 to 14); and 22% were youth, aged 15 to 24. Nearly 135,000 children immigrated to Toronto with their families between 2001 and 2006.
- The top regions of origin of recent immigrants are Asia and the Middle East (66% of recent immigrants).



*Ten most prevalent groups Source: City of Toronto Ward Profiles

Immigrants, income and employment in Toronto

While, on average, recent immigrants are more educated than their Canadian-born counterparts, they are more likely to be unemployed and live with low income. Among recent immigrants in the work force, the decline in employment resulting from recent economic downturn was over three times greater than job loss among Canadian born workers. Between June 2008 and June 2009, employment levels fell 1.6% among Canadian born workers, 3.0% among established immigrants in the workforce and 5.7% for recent immigrants.

In 2006, recent immigrants made up 10.8% of Toronto's population, but over 28% of individuals working in sales and service occupations. In comparison, non-immigrants – who represent 47.8% of the population – comprised only 21% of individuals working in this sector. Less than 10% of individuals in management positions were immigrants, despite the fact that immigrants make up more than half of the city's population.³⁶

36 Toronto Community Foundation (2009). Toronto's Vital Signs, 2009

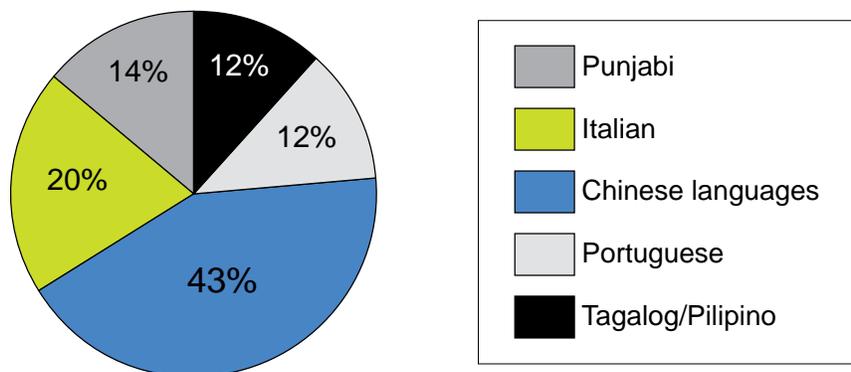
Areas of the city with larger numbers of recent immigrants are generally concentrated in the 'inner suburbs' and the northern parts of the city – areas which also tend to have higher concentrations of low income households. 65% of recent immigrants live in neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty.³⁷

Immigrants and language in Toronto

Immigrants who arrived in Canada between 2001 and 2006 are less likely to have English or French as a mother tongue than earlier generations of newcomers. In the City of Toronto in 2006, 10% of recent immigrants spoke neither official language (compared to 8.5% of established immigrants and 1% of non-immigrants).

Data from the 2006 Census showed that nearly 150 languages were reported as a mother tongue among the foreign-born population of Toronto. 47% of the City's residents had a mother tongue other than English or French, and 31% of residents spoke a language at home other than English or French.

Top five non-official mother tongue languages, Toronto, 2006



According to 2006 Census data, 113,000 people in Toronto speak Portuguese as a mother tongue and 195,000 have Italian as their mother tongue. However, the number of people who speak Tamil as a home language is now greater than the number of people who speak Italian at home, and the number of people who speak Spanish at home has surpassed Portuguese.

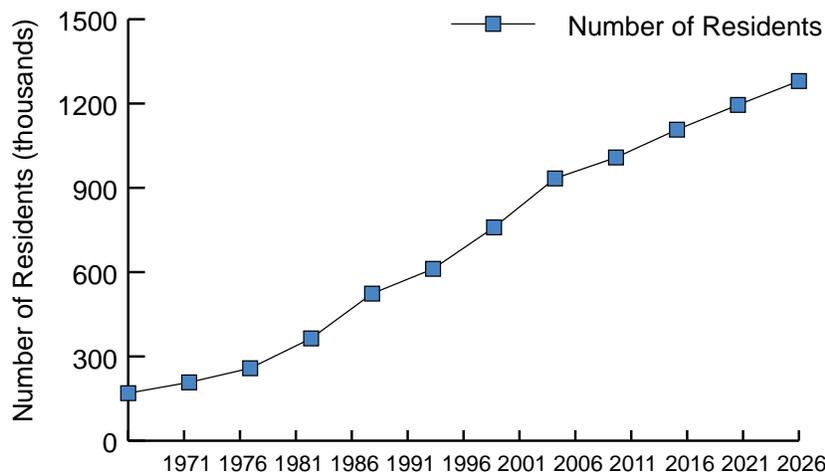
³⁷ Toronto Community Foundation (2009). Toronto's Vital Signs, 2009

YORK REGION

York Region and the Town of Bradford have experienced rapid population growth in the past twenty years. York Region is now the sixth largest municipality in Canada. As of February 2011, York Region was home to an estimated 1,065,159 residents³⁸. The population is expected to increase to 1.5 million by 2013 and immigrants will account for 55% of all York Region residents.

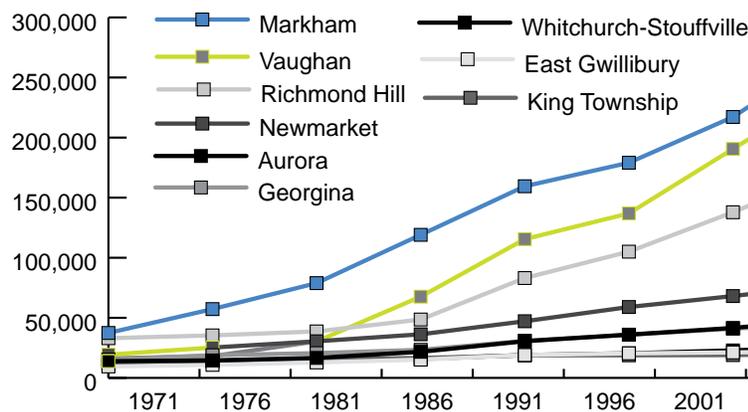
While the populations of Bradford and all municipalities in York Region are growing, the largest increases are concentrated in the southern part of York Region – in Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Markham, which together are home to over 74% of the Region’s residents.³⁹

York Region Population Growth



Data source: Municipality of York Region Planning Services

Population growth of York Region municipalities



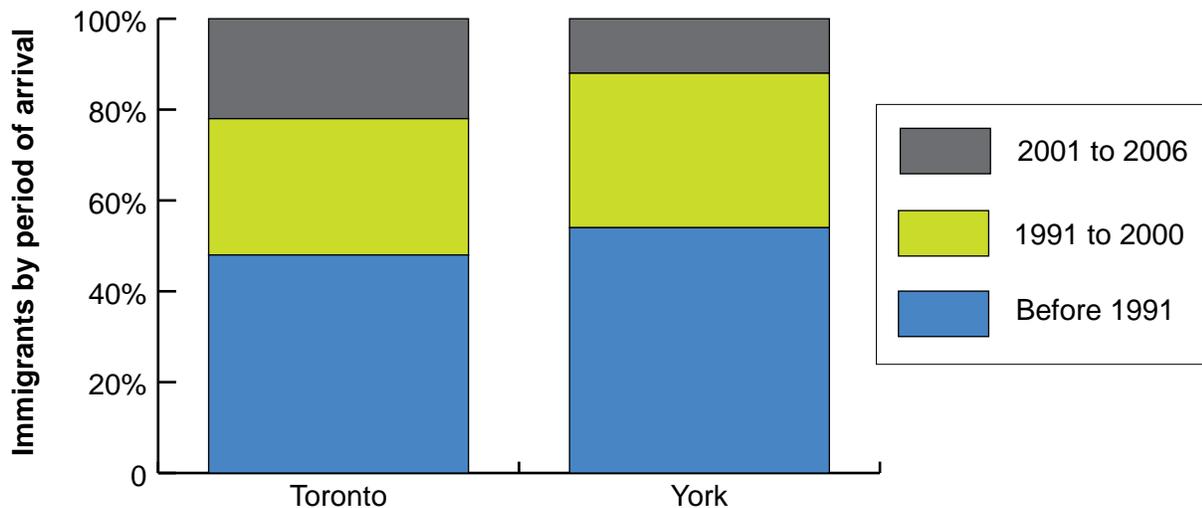
38 Regional Municipality of York, Planning and Development Services Department. 2011 Population Estimate.

39 Regional Municipality of York Planning Services (2009). *Population and employment forecasts*.

<http://www.york.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Long+Range+Planning/popstat1.htm>

Retrieved December 2, 2009.

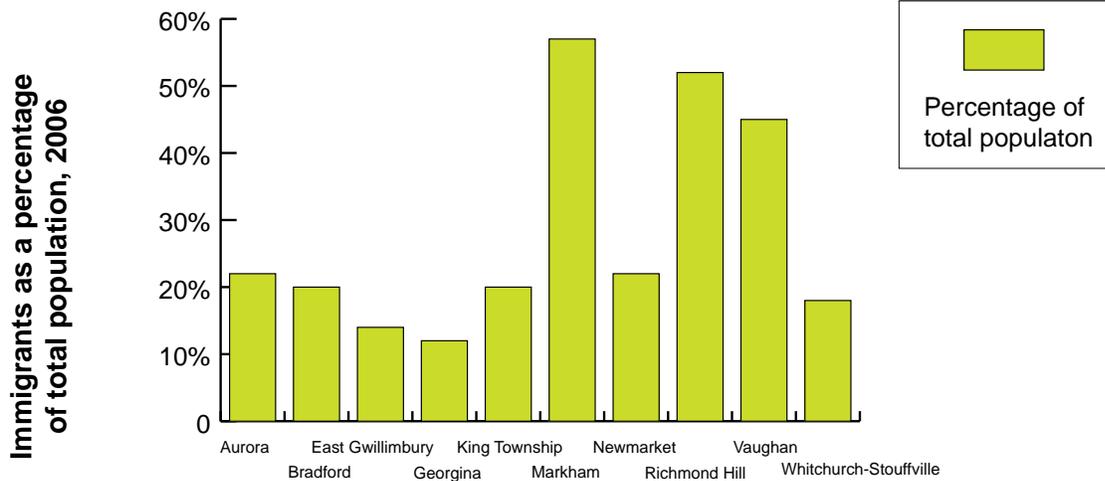
Between 1991 and 2001 in York Region fewer people entered the workforce compared to the number of people leaving it, resulting in an over net decline. To increase the size of the labour force into the future, the Region must continue to attract immigrants to offset retirement and low birth rates. Immigration will therefore play a key role in the growth of York Region's economy, and shape the needs of municipalities in the future. As the York Region Immigration Settlement Strategypoints out, "at a time when populations are aging, the successful integration of immigrants is critical to our ability to compete globally, grow economically and develop a vibrant community."⁴⁰



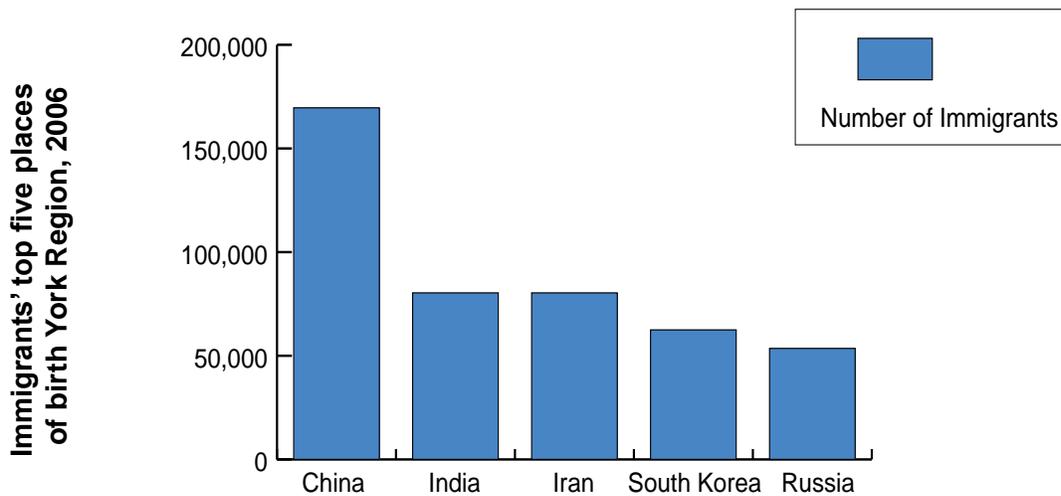
- In 2006, York Region was home to approximately 380,500 immigrants (43% of the total population), and an increase of over 96,000 individuals from 2001.
- Of the 380,000 immigrants, 54% arrived before 1991; 34% between 1991 and 2000; 12% between 2001 and 2006.
- But not all municipalities are equally shaped by a rapidly growing immigrant population.
- In 2006, Markham was home to 147,400 immigrants, 13% of whom arrived between 2001 and 2006. In Vaughan, 10% of the 106,960 immigrants had arrived between 2001 and 2006. In Bradford, East Gwillimbury, and King Township, 4% of immigrants had arrived in this period.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census Community Profiles

40 Regional Municipality of York (2011). *York Region Local Immigration Partnership: Immigration Settlement Strategy*.



In 2006, the top five places of birth of newcomers to York Region were China, India, Iran, South Korea and Russia.



Although newcomers arriving in York Region are highly educated (approximately half have a certificate, diploma, bachelor's degree or higher), LBS service delivery agencies in York Region have reported a growing number of learners in their programs whose primary language is neither English nor French. Some of these learners are immigrants who have resided in Canada for many years and who have a high level of proficiency in spoken English, but require additional assistance with literacy skills. Others are recent immigrants who have received English as a Second Language instruction, but are also in need of literacy programs. As the number of immigrants in the Greater Toronto Area continues to grow, literacy agencies will increasingly be faced with the task of addressing the literacy needs of this population. This trend is also influenced by the fact that make up a large proportion of workers recently laid off in the manufacturing sector.

As of 2006, almost 46% of York Region residents reported that their mother tongue is neither English nor French, and 35,000 individuals had no knowledge of English or French, which is a 50% increase from the 2001 Census. Residents aged 65 and older were the most likely to speak neither English nor French.

The top five non-official languages spoken in York Region homes are Chinese languages (40% of households); Italian (8%); Russian (8%); Persian (6%) and Tamil (5%).⁴¹ Data from the 2006 Census shows that, among newcomers, the most common non-official languages spoken at home are Chinese languages, Russian, Persian (Farsi), Korean and Tamil.⁴²

Residents' Knowledge of Official Languages, York Region, 2001 and 2006⁴³

Language	2001 Census	2006 Census	Percent increase
English only	645,590	787,140	22%
French only	390	575	47%
English and French	56,125	64,320	15%
Neither English nor French	23,565	35,310	50%
Total population size	729,254	887,345	22%

Most Common Non-Official Languages Spoken at Home, York Region, 2001 and 2006

Language	2001 Census	2006 Census	Percent increase
Chinese languages	71,735	94,270	31%
Italian	19,895	19,975	Less than 1%
Russian	10,600	18,600	76%
Persian (Farsi)	5,970	14,210	138%
Tamil	4,580	11,475	156%
Korean	3,955	7,475	89%
Urdu	3,240	7,085	119%
Punjabi	5,275	7,010	33%
Spanish	3,650	5,935	63%
Guajarati	3,360	4,585	36%

Immigrants, education and literacy levels

Among recent immigrants in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) who arrived between

41 Regional Municipality of York (2007). *Just the Facts About Your Community: Diversity of Residents Living in York Region – Immigrants and Mobility*.

42 Regional Municipality of York (2011). *York Region Local Immigration Partnership: Immigration Settlement Strategy*.

43 Regional Municipality of York (2008). *Just the Facts About Your Community: Languages of Residents Living in York Region*.

2001 and 2006, 17.2% of women aged 25 to 64 had less than a high school education and 15.7% of men in this same age group had less than high school education. 17% of Canadian-born women aged 25 to 64 and 19% of Canadian-born men have less than a high school education.

Among women aged 25 to 64, high school was the highest level of education for 20.9% of recent immigrants, compared to 28.4% of Canadian-born women. Among men of the same age group, high school was the highest level of education for 20.3% recent immigrants compared to 27.5% of Canadian-born men.⁴⁴

According to projections from the Canadian Council on Learning, the percentage of adults with low prose literacy skills⁴⁵ in the Toronto CMA (Census Metropolitan Area) will decrease from 50% (IALS Levels 1 and 2 added together) in 2001 to 48% (IALS Levels 1 and 2 added together) in 2031. However, the total number of adults with low literacy skills will increase 64% in this same time period because the absolute number of immigrants with low-level literacy skills will continue to rise. Almost 1 in 5 immigrants with low literacy are expected to be living in Toronto by 2031.⁴⁶

Prose literacy levels, Toronto CMA, 2001 - 2031 (percentage)

Year	IALS Level 1	IALS Level 2	IALS Level 3	IALS Level 4/5
2001	23.35	26.86	32.40	17.39
2006	22.30	26.88	32.89	17.93
2011	21.42	27.02	33.28	18.31
2016	20.81	27.12	33.46	18.61
2021	20.48	27.35	33.56	18.68
2026	20.13	27.58	33.59	18.71
2031	19.97	27.79	33.54	18.73

The proportion of immigrants in the Toronto CMA with low prose literacy skills is also projected to decline from 65.5% in 2001 to 59.6% in 2031. However, the total number of immigrants in the CMA with low literacy will grow almost 80% in this same time period, to 2,336,000 adults by 2031.⁴⁷

44 Toronto Immigrant Employment Data Initiative. Analytical Report 16. *Do educational attainment, gender and age affect market outcomes of immigrants?* July 2011.

45 To gain a better understanding of prose literacy and skills, consult Section E - "Literacy and the International Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS)" - p. 26 of the tool/discussion paper attached to this report.

46 Canadian Council on Learning. (2010). *The Future of Literacy in Canada's Largest Cities*.

47 Canadian Council on Learning. Projections of Adult Literacy: Measuring Movement (PALMM). www.ccl-cca.ca/PALMM/projection.aspx

An eye towards ‘superdiversity’⁴⁸

In reviewing the above figures and charts one comes to appreciate the evolving diversity of the regions we serve, realizing, too, there is not only a diversity with respect to countries of origin and language, but with respect to education levels, levels of bilingualism (or multilingualism), economic realities, varied lived experiences and abilities, and, ultimately, a diversity of adult learning needs within our region. Second language learners in LBS programs are deemed to be English speakers (i.e. to have relatively strong English speaking/listening proficiency) falling on a certain point along the continuum of bilingualism, but requiring focused instruction on reading, writing, numeracy and Essential Skills. Whether second language learners find themselves in LBS, ESL, LINC or adult credit ESL programs, along the ‘literacy and language continuum’⁴⁹ they are bringing an amalgam of needs and expectations to their learning.

In view of the quantitative data above, this project has anticipated the diversity to be encountered on the front lines and set out to explore learning pathways and needs of second language learners within the context of a Toronto and York Region “kaleidoscope of diversity.”⁵⁰ In conducting our research we made the express decision of “looking into the kaleidoscope, with a clear eye, a taste for the complexity of diversity and a willingness to consider other perspectives”⁵¹ based on the multiplicity of needs and realities we were set to explore.

48 A term coined in James Simpson, Melanie Cooke, and Mike Baynham, *The Right Course? An Exploratory Study of Learner Placement Practices in ESOL and Literacy*, p. 11.

49 Anne Ramsay, Lorri Sauve, and Matthew Schulmann, *Enhancing Pathways: The Literacy and Language Continuum*.

50 Liz Suda, “A Kaleidoscope of Diversity: The Convergence of ESL and ALBE,” *Fine Print*, Winter 2003, p. 1.

51 *Ibid*, p. 1.



THE FOCUS GROUPS

The project researchers employed focus groups as the primary data collection tool. From June 2011 to February 2012, focus groups were conducted in Toronto and York Region with three general groups: learner groups, teacher/tutor groups, and assessor groups. The focus groups yielded valuable information regarding:

- the needs, learning pathways and experiences of LBS learners for whom English is a second or additional language
- front-line observations and insights from teachers and tutors with respect to learner needs and classroom realities
- intake and assessment processes and challenges
- the transition needs of learners

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Three general groups were sought to participate in the project focus groups:

1. LBS Level 1-3 learners⁵² who speak English as a second or additional language, attending Anglophone stream classes
2. Practitioners from LBS agencies – teachers and tutors from all three sectors (school board; community-based agencies; and colleges)
3. LBS assessors from all three sectors

It must be noted that purposive sampling – i.e. participant selection based on certain attributes relevant to the project's focus and objectives – was the sampling technique used in this research. Certainly, the learners needed to fit the profile as per point 1 above, but much effort was also made to recruit focus group participants from both York Region and Toronto, and from across the sectors, in order to provide a representative sample of the target learners attending LBS programs.

Invitations to participate in the project focus groups were extended via telephone calls, face-to-face requests to program coordinators, postings on the project website. Three calls for focus group participants over the course of the project went out to all agencies using a formal email campaign. Potential learner participants were then approached by program coordinators and instructors with a description of the project, and, when individuals expressed an interest in participating, they were added to the focus group participation list. Focus groups sessions were set according to location and participant availability. Most of the focus groups took place on-site

⁵² The project focused primarily on low-level literacy learners with English as their second language. The LBS Level Matrix measures were used due to the fact that OALCF had not fully been implemented in the course of the project.

at the program locations. One focus group took place at the MTML offices. A limitation of this project was that focus group participation was voluntary in nature [an honorarium was proffered, however, as an incentive to participate]; therefore, the participant pool was based on those who came forth wishing to participate.

There was focus group participation⁵³ from learners, practitioners, and/or assessors from the following LBS agencies⁵⁴:

- Alexandra Park
- Davenport Perth Neighbourhood Centre
- Labour Education Centre
- Lakeshore Area Multi-Service Project (L.A.M.P.)
- Literacy Council York South
- PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs
- St. Christopher House
- Seneca College
- Toronto Catholic District School Board
- Toronto District School Board
- Toronto Public Library
- YMCA Learning Opportunities
- York Region District School Board

NUMBER OF FOCUS GROUPS / NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

The above agencies extended an invitation to learners, practitioners and assessors and the resulting number of participants and focus group sessions were as follows:

- **13 learner focus groups ; 74 participants in total**
- **4 teacher/tutor groups; 18 participants in total**
- **2 assessor groups; 9 participants in total**

Note: More data was gathered from assessors regarding assessment and placement practices through an assessor online survey detailed later in the report.

⁵³ Participation in this project from other agencies also came in the form of taking part in stakeholder interviews and consultations. The list of participating agencies pertains only to focus group participation.

⁵⁴ Those agencies with multiple sites also ensured that we had the opportunity to conduct focus groups at several of their program sites.

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOLS

Size of Group and Length of Focus Group Session

Manageable focus group sizes were formed – 4 to 9 participants – however, several instances warranted conducting larger groups (one group had 10, another 12 participants) due to time constraints, site realities and participant schedules. Focus groups sessions ran 1 ½ hours, with approximately 20-30 minutes allotted for reviewing the project context, filling in background questionnaires, signing consent forms and answering participant queries and concerns.

Honoraria

Each focus group participant received an honorarium amount:

- Learners - \$25 each
- Teachers / Tutors / Assessors - \$20 each

Ensuring that Context and Purpose were Understood

Information sheets which gave an overview of the project and the manner in which the data would be used were distributed to each focus group participant. The facilitator read the clear language information sheets for learners aloud, and answered questions and concerns. The learner consent form contained a checklist of items and facilitators ensured that learners were able to check off each item, indicating they had understood the purpose behind their participation. [**Appendix 4** contains the information sheets and consent form used].

Consent, Privacy and Confidentiality

Gathering informed consent to participate and taking necessary steps to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of participants was paramount. A consent form was handed out to each participant and it required a signature from the participant and the facilitator.

All participants (learners, practitioners, and assessors) were given the opportunity review the consent form with the focus group facilitator(s) and this was done line by line with learners. Each participant received a copy of the signed consent.

It was clearly explained to all participants that their names would not be used in the final report, but rather a pseudonym or a generic reference (e.g. 'Min', who transitioned from an ESL program found the program...; A Spanish-speaker who has been in Canada 'x' number of years benefits from the program because...). Facilitators also ensured that they would strive to create a safe and respectful environment for the participants.

Audio Recording and Transcription

Each focus group session was digitally recorded. A co-facilitator was often present – particularly with the larger groups. The second facilitator took detailed notes throughout the session, and the notes were used for clarification purposes and to better identify who spoke when. Audio files were also meticulously transcribed, and no changes were made to participants' wording, thus respecting and staying true to words and manner of expression of each participant.

The information gathered during the focus group sessions has been distilled into categories flowing from the questions asked. The data was also analyzed holistically by the researchers in order to identify trends, patterns and grand themes that surfaced.

The following sections detail the highlights from the learner, teacher/tutor, and assessor focus groups. Each section is followed by a brief discussion regarding the information the focus groups yielded.



LEARNER FOCUS GROUPS

LEARNER PROFILE QUESTIONS

Before the focus group sessions began, learners were asked to complete a profile sheet. They were asked to supply the following information:

- Mother tongue
- Other languages I speak
- Country of origin
- Number of years in Canada
- Where I learned English (They had a number of choices from which they could choose as many as applied).
- Highest level of education completed

A SNAPSHOT OF THE LEARNER PARTICIPANTS

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

The charts below offer quick snapshot of the diversity of the LBS learners who participated in the 13 focus group sessions conducted across Toronto and York Region. Even within this relatively small sample, the broad diversity of LBS learners who speak English as second or additional language is indeed a reflection of the diversity in both Toronto and York Region (also highlighted in the demographics section of this report), and indicative as well of the *cultural and linguistic diversity within LBS classrooms*.

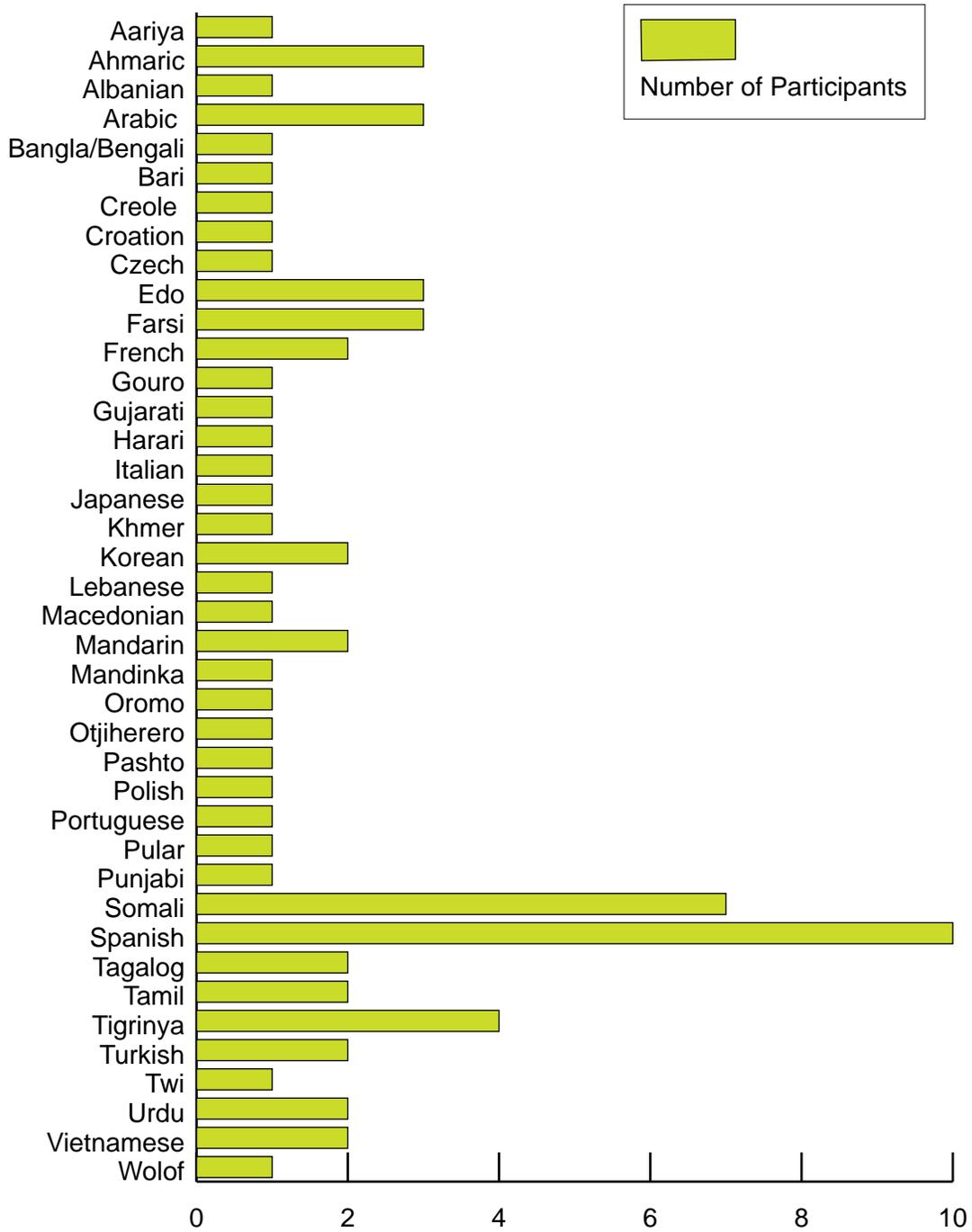
The 74 LBS learners reported 40 different mother tongues and 40 different countries of origin, with 29 learners reporting they spoke 3 or more languages (including English).

Approximately 70% of the focus group participants were female, which is representative of the greater proportion of female learners typically found in LBS Level 1-3 classes.

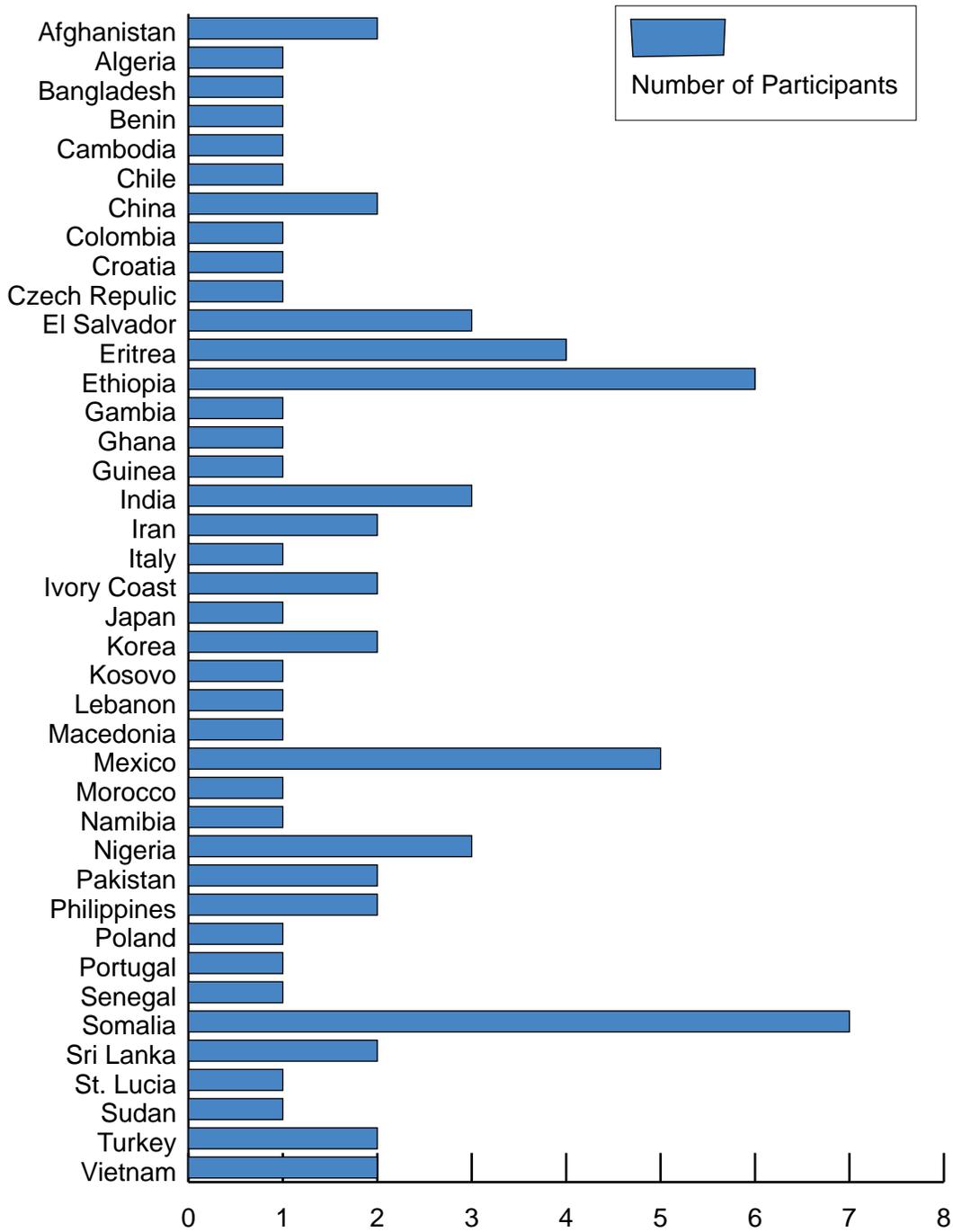
A note about age of participants

The profile sheet did not include a field for participants' age; however, through general observation and the learners' own references to their age during the discussions, it can be confidently stated that 7 learners were over the age of 55, and 5 learners were in their early 20s. The remaining focus groups participants (52 out of 74 or 70% of participants) fell between the ages of 25-55.

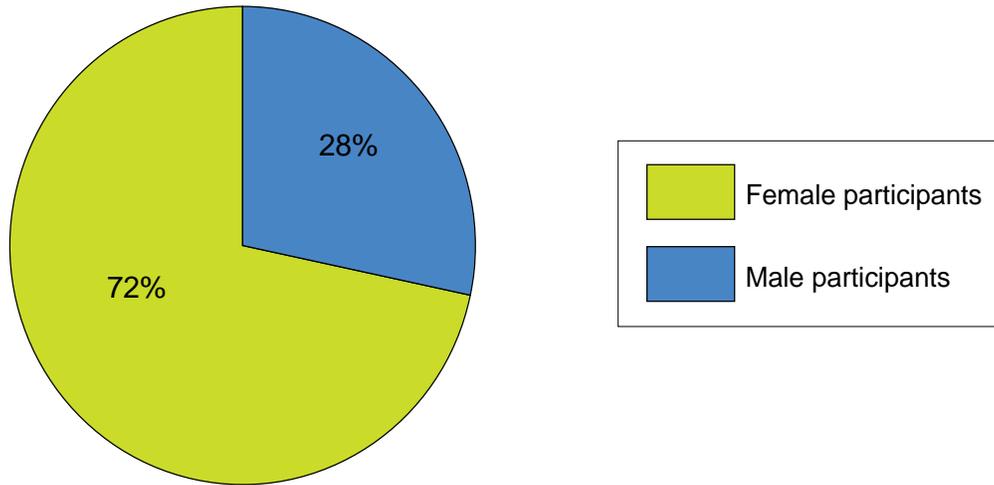
Mother Tongue



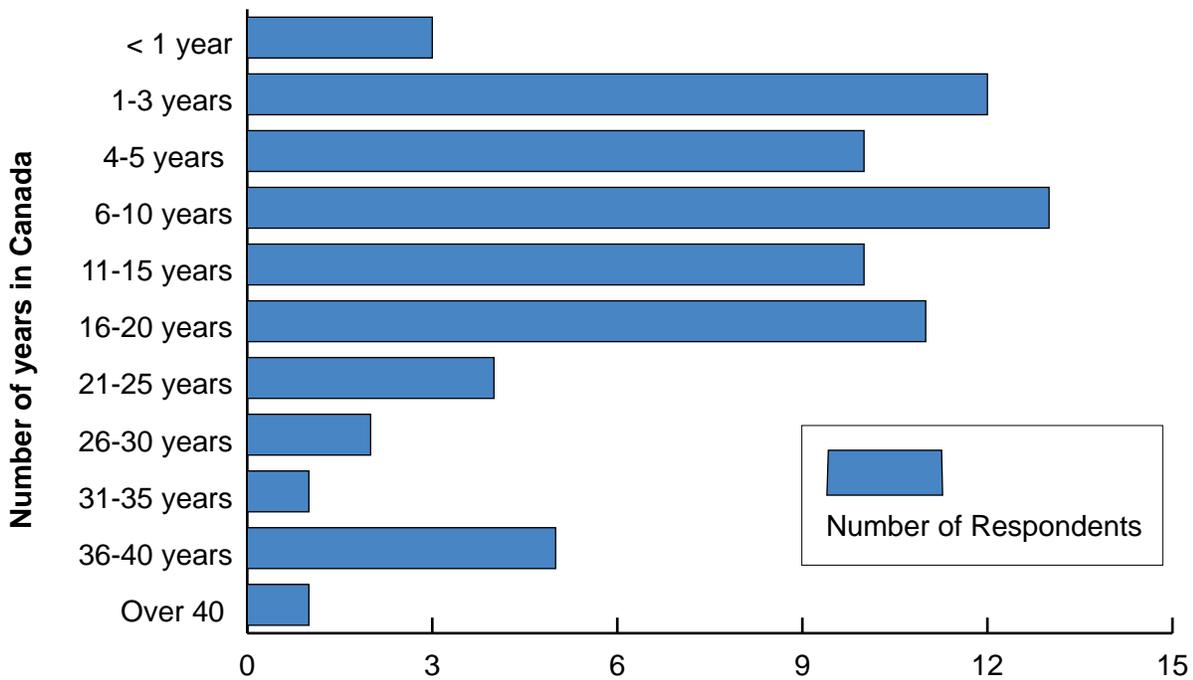
Country of Origin



Learner Focus Groups

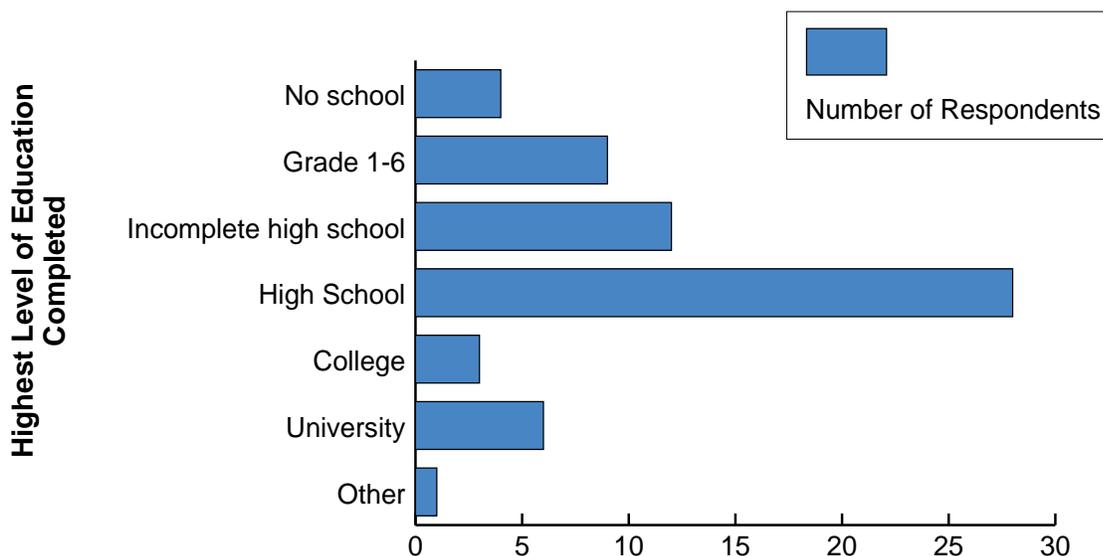
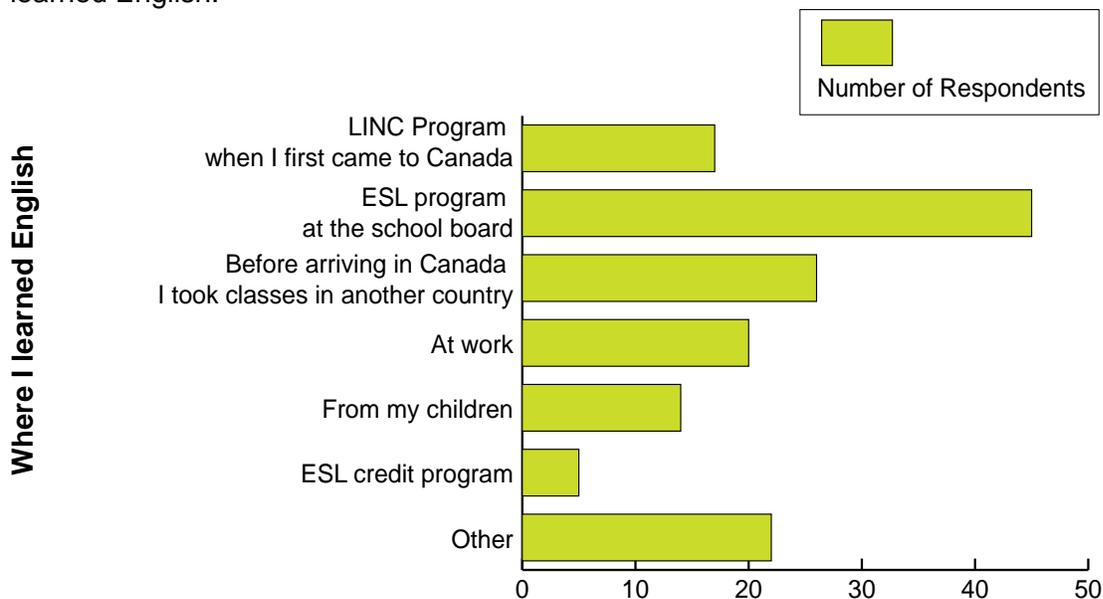


The chart below identifies the number of years learners reported having lived in Canada. Of particular note is the fact that **just over a third of the focus group participants were newcomers, i.e. had lived in Canada for 5 years or less.** Also, **just under a third of participants had lived in Canada 16 years or more.**



Previous Education and English Instruction

The two charts below provide information as to where the learners had learned their English and highest level of education completed. You will note that they were also given informal learning options as well. There was a line for clarification beside the 'Other' category, and many who marked this field reported that it also was through television and everyday life that they learned English.



There was also some diversity with respect to highest level of education completed. The above chart shows that 23% of these LBS learners indicated they had completed a Grade 8 education or less. 47% of the participants had completed high school – most in their country of origin – however, 3 participants had done so here in Ontario, either through the regular school system or as in adult credit learners. Over 10% reported they had completed postsecondary education in their country of origin.

LEARNER FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. How did you find this LBS program? Did someone tell you about it? Did someone send you here?
2. Why are you taking the classes here?
3. What helps you learn here?
4. How do you know you're improving?
5. Are there any services or supports that allow you to be in the program?
6. What else would be helpful in supporting you in your learning and your learning pathway?
7. For those who were in ESL or LINC programs before, how is the LBS program different?
8. Tell me about your goals – short-term and long-term.
9. What is the next step for you after this LBS program?
10. Is there anything you wish to add?

FOCUS GROUP HIGHLIGHTS – LEARNERS

Rich data surfaced from the learner focus groups which also appeared to energize the participants, for as they responded to the questions, they found each other's learning journeys fascinating, their common challenges reassuring, and their experiences – similar or different – encouraging. The facilitator was mindful to stand back and allow the participants opportunities to respectfully engage with each other. Indeed, it was in these moments of agreement or disagreement where the facilitators were able to understand added motivations and bits of reasoning behind learners' choices and preferences along their learning pathways.

This section is organized around the above questions. Learners' responses have been synthesized, and direct excerpts from the focus groups are also included because learners' own words convey the nuances best.

At the end of this section you will find a Summary/Reflections section and key takeaways from the learner focus groups.

Learner profiles and pathways were also drawn from the focus group sessions [specifically from the responses to the last two questions above] and are presented as 12 Learner Portraits on pages 66-67. The term 'LEARNER PORTRAITS' was chosen to signal a more detailed picture of learners along their learning pathway – one in which the learners' motivation and experiences are part of the picture. We come 'face to face' with the learners and hear about their learning journeys in their own words.

How did you find this LBS program? Did someone tell you about it? Did someone send you here?

“My friend brought me here.”

“My friend who had come here told me.”

Overwhelmingly, word-of-mouth/through friends and family, was the response the participants gave most often.

“I start in ESL, then start a credit class. I didn’t write anything like a paragraph. I was so confused and the teacher sent me to LBS class. I’m much more better to write a paragraph and the essay... more confidence.”

Other responses included:

- My ESL teacher (both from non-credit and credit classes)
- My math teacher in credit; my math teacher at college
- My case worker
- Found it through a flyer/brochure
- Front-line office staff sent me here
- On the Internet
- From the library
- Walked in and saw program
- My employment counsellor
- My union

Why are you taking classes here?

The responses to this question provide insights as to the learner needs and motivations.

“The most thing I benefit in this school for me is math class. I really improve my math skills during this program. Especially math that you can use at workplaces – like doing invoices, adding bills and stuff like that. And computer class of course.”

"I'm over here to learn more how to write better, grammar, spelling and math because I like to take Grade 12 equivalency – GED. I want to learn more because I want to be able to teach my children so if they need help with math...with grammar, I'm able to teach them and to help myself also."

"I'm working on my grammar, spelling, reading, writing...I start to read books in English."

"First I have a problem with writing and my grammar is poor. So I finished Grade 9 and I passed Grade 10. So I understood the further I go, the mark come lower. Finally I failed and I had to repeat. The other option was to come here to improve my grammar. The writing and the reading. That's the main goal, reading comprehension."

"I'm looking for the AZ truck driver... So that when I get an AZ it's easy for me to get that job."

"I came here to take the ECE."

"I start Level 3 in ESL classes. I finished all, but I still make mistakes in writing and also speaking. Sometimes I can't express myself. I finished my level ESL class and I was talking to my teacher. My goal is to get a job. I'm looking for a job in the same field, banking or something, and I need writing and more talk. That is why I'm in the LBS class."

"Improve English. I plan to work in own store. Handling food."

"Forklift is the goal."

"Getting into the English environment, it's really important to me, because at home we have Mandarin or Chinese language environment. When I come here we speak English and also have some special helpful advice for how to...workplace."

"I used to work in a factory. I got laid off."

"I came here for my first reason to get a high school. So, in order to go high school, first year after I need to know to write a paragraph, essay in class. I'm prepared to go finish high school in order to get my diploma. So this class is just basic for me, to build up the way of going to high school and prepare my future in a good way."

"To get my skills to be a chef. I went to Seneca...she said I should come for assessment. She said I need for English and math, so now I'm here."

"Reading. To understand the English."

"I want to improve my language to help my children to do work with them. Also, I am planning to work for childcare, ECE. When I ask to take that program, they want high school."

“At first my goal was independence, but now my goal path is the secondary. I’m trying to do that.”

“I want to know how to read and write before I leave this world.”

The above is but a sample of the reasons we heard for learners taking their LBS classes, but they are representative of the oft-cited reasons articulated by all for attending their program. The learners said their LBS program meets their needs by providing the following:

- Math upgrading
- Computer instruction
- More writing
- More reading
- Preparation/upgrading before a skills training program or college
- A place to work on grammar
- A way to move towards their next step
- More spelling practice
- Filling in gaps that were discovered from failed attempts in other programs
- To be in an English-speaking environment
- To be working with workplace relevant activities
- To get skills that allow a learner to help his/her children
- To be more confident

Several of the learners knew that even though they had a certificate or diploma, they did not have the skills in place yet to move to their next step. They had realized – either through experience or through an intake assessment in a next-step agency – they were not yet ready. One student who had done some PSW training and work said she knew she does not yet have the skills in place when the stakes are high:

“I took the course PSW and I have the diploma. The only thing is when you work in a nursing home you have to write in charts...I worked for PSW for five years, home to home. It’s just a chart, just a little thing to write. But, when we had training, it’s a lot to write. I don’t want to get it wrong with the medicine so I don’t want to get in trouble. I’m going back to work.”

Another learner had obtained high school credits through the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process explained how, despite the four credits she did complete to get her OSSD, she needed more to move on to a college program.

“Because, what happen when you come to Canada, they give you some credits for whatever you studied in your country. I get twenty-six credits. And then I went for two years to Emery to learn some English, but I wasn’t ready for me to go to college to pass any test.”

Many of the learners perceived obtaining the OSSD as a piece of accreditation that grants them more credibility in the real world and puts them on a more even playing field with Ontario-born learners or allows them to access training that specifies prior high school completion:

“In Canada some places for training they say you have to finish in Canada twelfth Grade. I see in many places is the same – it’s a problem going on. I say I have to take this opportunity to finish high school and I have to take another learning program. That’s why I come here.”

What helps you learn here?

Participants were asked to reflect on what helps them learn in their program. The question was posed with the intention of discovering how their learning needs were being met and what was working well for them at this particular point along their learning path.

“For math, I started math course at the same school, CALC, and it was too hard...it was too much. You could not handle sometimes. Here, you don’t have to be in a class of forty, fifty students – just five or six students.”

“Here they help you come up with a goal. When you go to an interview, they ask you what is your goal.”

“I learned a lot of things, because the place they get a lot of donation...Then we put it the warehouse, and also sometimes I help the driver and we go to the downtown and we have schedules and we go to the houses to deliver.” [The community-based program this learner attends incorporates volunteer opportunities].

“They give you a test on the math, on the English, on the speaking even. All that. They know exactly what you’re suffering about...They move you up, for example when you’re at Level 2, so you’re good now at Level 3 and they move you.”

“I find this place equal to my pace of learning. They go really slow, so I have the opportunity to develop my language skills. I cannot go fast. If I go fast it gives me trouble.”

“It’s good if you have a training plan, for the both sides it is easy – for the teacher, for the student – because you know what’s your weakness. You know what you need most. You don’t waste time.”

“I need to understand things, more than grammar, because grammar I can read at home and go pass exam. Here, it is totally different I found out, because we work on several things. We work on vocabulary, we work on speech and presentation.”

“Using computers and online programs.”

“The teacher, she pushes you...If you miss a class one day, it’s like you miss a lot from the beginning. She is positive. She push you towards your goal. She want you to be independent and I really appreciate her for that.”

“At home, my husband, kids very stubborn. They don’t want you talking any words in English. My husband doesn’t want to do English at home. Here I can speak and work in English.”

The following is a list that summarizes what helped this group of adult learners with respect to their learning in the LBS program:

- Smaller class sizes
- Individualized attention
- A slower pace that allows the learners to dig
- The teacher
- Tutor support
- Targeted study for their goals
- Having learning plan in place to helps “push” learners to the next step
- Teachers’ high expectations
- Speaking with learners whose mother tongue is English
- Online independent study their teacher introduced (e.g. www.learninghub.ca)
- Strict attendance rules
- Situated learning opportunities (e.g. volunteering, participating in workplace oriented ‘team’ groups⁵⁵)
- Regular tests to gauge progress; ongoing assessment

⁵⁵ One community-based agency offers opportunities for learners to be part of a student-run snack shop, food preparation team, and newsletter team.

- Spelling tests
- Supportive and caring community
- Time management and supplementary tutoring supports (this was referred to by learners attending a college upgrading program)

How do you know you're improving?

This question was asked to explore how learners view their progress and how they determine 'what is working' when it comes to their learning.

"By the marks, the writing. The way I write I see my improvement."

"I improve grammar, paragraph, confidence."

"I remember when I was working I pretend I have email. And know what I did, I ask my kids to set up email for me and I pretend I know but I didn't. They were doing work for me. My manager would send me schedules and stuff and I was answering, but it was not me – it was my kids. And now I'm able to do that myself."

"When I'm writing, I know it's not right... If I want to speak something it's not right. But, now I know... I understand for myself."

"I write faster."

"I can correct myself."

"My wife said my English is getting better."

"My reading is now getting better than before. Before when I read anything my kids laughed at me and told me that I was singing."

"Now I can make people understand me and I can understand people. In any situation I can understand the English and I have the confidence, but somebody needs to be very patient."

"I use to ask my son to write a cheque, fill an application and now I do everything. Now he says, 'you don't need me.'"

"When the teacher gives you something and you accomplish, you have a high self-esteem."

“Spelling...it’s getting better. I’m starting to know the vowels, to spell right.”

“When she marks it there so much red before. After a few practice of writing, fewer red marks.”

“Big difference in the last six, seven months because I know improving my English writing and reading and understanding. ... Now I feel more confident. The teacher has a special strict rules.”

The above quotes taken from the focus group sessions illustrate the varied way through which the participants determine how much they are improving. Marks matter, progress matters, family’s pride in their learning matters, and certainly being understood and feeling self-confident and proud of accomplishments were very much indicators of improvement for these LBS learners who speak English as a second or additional language.

It must be noted, however, that in several instances, female participants were hard on themselves if their spouses and children provided negative feedback. The following is an example of how one learner who had done LINC courses and was now in LBS Level 3 was negatively influenced by a family member’s feedback:

“So for me, my husband said, ‘You were in the program for three months and you still cannot talk very good’. I’m so uncomfortable when I talk to people.”

Are there any services or supports that allow you to be in the program?

Ensuring that learners receive the supports they need along their learning pathways prompted us to ask the above question. Participants viewed support in various ways.

“For me I need the daycare. If I don’t get daycare I don’t come.”

“I appreciate the tokens.”

“The information is very valuable – guidance for which courses, which exams – the system dedication.”

“If I don’t understand she gives extra time.”

Pedagogical supports:

- Extra help from the teachers – students appreciate the teachers who stay behind and answer their questions
- More time to study in class because life is busy outside of the class

Financial supports:

- TTC tokens
- Childcare subsidies
- We don't have to pay for books

Other:

- Information about the workplace

What else would be helpful in supporting you in your learning or learning pathway?

“More sources to get extra information for things we are working on.”

“There are people who have problems with disabilities and if they could include people with mental health problem, it would be greatly appreciated and it would be a great place for learning.”

“More hours.” [A learner who attends a program twice a week].

“A textbook. The book I can review and prepare at home. You can prepare sentence. It's yours.”

“For me it is very important about the information, again. That's the most important. We know about this program, for most of the person somebody tell. I have another friend who experience ESL, high diploma, LBS and now he is at college and his life changed. We are a person who doesn't know something about the country. We need to follow the instructions.”

The learners participating in the focus group discussions made reference to the following as items that could support their learning as they move along their learning journeys:

- More information about education programs
- Textbooks we could take home
- Tutors outside of class/tutors who speak their mother tongue
- More housing information and support
- Child-minding on-site
- Greater awareness of mental health issues by teachers and program managers and more support around these issues while in the program



For those who were in ESL or LINC programs before, how is the LBS program different?

This question was asked in order to better understand how the LBS program is perceived as *different or offering different things* from the English language training classes that learners had attended. The facilitators were keenly aware that the learners were likely excited about their current LBS program and that their responses may include this bias.

“I want to be more like a normal person; here is no difference.” [This learner has been in Canada 10 years].

“When I went to ESL I improved my reading and to speak in English, but we interrupt when the people is immigrant. The most is immigrant and here is another people and this is very good because you improve more. Like our vocabulary grows even bigger now.”

“Here we get to be mixed. Cause we’re all different backgrounds, people that are born here or immigrants. Community I guess. We see people mixing through the math, communications and computer.”

“More complete than ESL... In ESL only how to speak... here it’s like you go back to high school or secondary school and learn everything.”

“ESL is more how to communicate and how to speak. It’s too easy. LBS is how to write and is more harder than ESL.”

“In ESL we have to touch a different topic. A little grammar, reading, focus in group, we took something to talk about it. Here in writing class we focused in one thing. In ESL we are jumping around.”

“We feel improved inspiration to get the goals.”

“Here I learn how to do the job interview.”

“There, in LINC, is more relaxed. Here give you credit, but there nothing. You just you know very relaxed... There very slow, here they push you to get the level of whatever you want.”

“ESL and LINC you can write a little and speak better, but you don’t know what’s beyond for college and university like LBS.”

“When you reach LBS, you feel like you are going to school and you are learning now. And you have a goal to be accepted. In order to go to LBS, you have to go to ESL. That’s the bottom line.”

"I think LINC teach you more stuff than ESL. Like become a citizen. They ask you so many things. They give you papers for the citizenship programs. That's the differences. When I was there in ESL.. they don't have tests when they make assessments. You don't move. You stay there for life."

"I speak already. It's [ESL] for people who don't speak well English."

According to these learners they perceive their LBS program as:

- Having more focused instruction
- Providing motivation to set and reach goals
- More relevant to employment
- An opportunity to interact with people who speak English as their mother tongue
- A way to feel 'normal' – part of the mainstream
- A more serious program that pushes them to strive toward their goal
- Having higher status
- Giving them a chance to move to different levels; a sense that they are moving to
- Spending more time on writing and reading – not only on speaking

On goals and pathways...

The language of goal-setting

It must be noted that learners who have done work in their programs around their goals and training plans felt more comfortable discussing next steps. Some learners used the vocabulary of goal paths. For example, some learners would say:

"My goal is employment."

"My goal is more independence."

"I'm going for postsecondary path."

Several learners did stress that, as they learned more about the realities of what their initial goal entailed, they began to shift their expectations towards something more manageable. What follows are the thoughts of one focus group participant who has been in Canada for 20 years and brings tremendous awareness to her next steps:

“For me, my short-term goals and my long-term goals...I just wish to finish and then be able to write proper English. I always wished since I was a little girl—since I was sixteen and my father died of a heart attack—I’ve always wished to become a nurse. So, what happened to my dad I can help somebody survive. But because of my spelling disability, I wasn’t able to reach there. I’m a grown woman now and I’m thinking that if I have to take a three years course at the university or community college, that’s not possible. My kid sees me as someone who always helps them with homework. With the one year college they were suggesting. But in case you want to change your mind you can be just helper or maybe lunch worker in a school. That’s a good security job that you can work until you retire.”

LEARNER FOCUS GROUPS – KEY POINTS AROUND LEARNER NEEDS

The 74 learners who participated in this project’s focus group sessions provided the researchers an opportunity to document some of the learning pathways and experiences of speakers of English as second/additional language who attend LBS programs in York Region and Toronto. The information and insights this group of learners shared provide a rich and valuable starting point from which one begins to comprehend what the multiple needs of these learners are. A rare and privileged glimpse into the learning pathways of these learners highlights the fact that a great number of adult learners we see in LBS programs today are indeed an intricate mixture of varying educational, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds with a specific set of needs. Although the sample group of learners is small, the information that was gathered with respect to learning needs.

Learner Needs

As a whole the learners articulated a number of academic/training needs that were being addressed in the LBS programs they were attending. The needs they identified were:

- Math upgrading
- Computer instruction
- More writing
- More reading
- Preparation/upgrading before a skills training program or college
- A place to continue working on grammar
- A way to move towards their next step
- More spelling practice
- More vocabulary building
- A second chance to fill in the learning gaps discovered through failed attempts within other programs

- The opportunity to be in an English-speaking environment and improve their English
- A chance to practice workplace relevant activities
- Somewhere one can gain the skills that allow a learner to help his/her children

Additional components of the LBS learning experience were pinpointed by learners as helping them learn. The importance the focus group participants placed on these components signals that additional needs of a more abstract nature are also being fulfilled in their current program.

The need for a supportive environment and a manageable learning pace

- Smaller class sizes
- Individualized attention based on learner goals
- A slower pace
- Tutoring support

The need for individualized and goal-oriented learning

- Targeted study based on learner goals
- Having a training or learner plan in place to help “push” learners to the next step
- Online independent study

The need for structure and concrete tools that can regularly measure progress

- Strict attendance rules
- Regular tests to gauge progress; ongoing assessment
- Spelling tests
- Completing formal writing assignments (e.g. full paragraphs, essays, reports, etc.) and receiving a mark and/or feedback

The need to integrate into Canadian society and feel part of the mainstream

- Being part of a learning environment that includes learners whose mother tongue is English
- Being part of a supportive and caring learning community
- Feeling “normal” and part of the mainstream
- Working towards goals that Canadian-born citizens have achieved and are rewarded for (e.g. OSSD)

- Perceiving that you are in a program that is higher status
- Not feeling like a newcomer (particularly for individuals who have lived in Canada for many years)

The need to feel challenged and to feel that one is moving towards something that will be useful/acknowledged in the real world

- Being in a program that pushes you to do ‘serious’ work
- Participating in situated-learning opportunities (part of the programming at some LBS sites – volunteering, being part of a workforce focused groups [e.g. newsletter writing team, tuck shop management team, food preparation team])
- Working on a training/learner plan with assessors and instructors
- Having the opportunity to do presentations in front of your peers using the computer
- Having the confidence do something you could not do before (e.g. read and understand text, send an email)
- Receiving praise from family and friends that you are more self-reliant and making progress

The need for clear and comprehensive information about adult education options and level matrices

The focus group discussions had the participants sharing details about their learning pathways and the steps that had led to their being in the LBS program. There were some who had taken adult credit courses, some who had attended LINC and/or ESL classes and others who had done some skills training. As people spoke about wanting to do their GED or ACE, their peers listened intently, often exclaiming that they were not aware of all these program options and alternatives. Most often this group of learners relied on those closest to them – friends, family members, and teachers – and their own resourceful ears for information about education and training, which resulted in partial information, misconceptions and misinformation. For example, a learner who has lived in Toronto for more than 15 years hold this incorrect notion of ESL programs: “If you speak English – eighty percent – I don’t think you need to go to ESL program, because you don’t do higher levels like you do in LBS.”

Many lacked a clear overview of options (within language training programs and other programs) and explicitly stated that as immigrants they needed more information because they did not understand the system.

Confusion also existed when it came to the level matrices from program to program. Those who had done adult credit courses said “I only know Grade 11”. Many spoke about the levels they had completed in other programs, but were not able to reconcile what it meant to be CLB Level 5 and now LBS Level 2. [For information on the various level matrices and comparisons please consult **Appendix 3**].

Additional needs

- Textbooks we could take home
- Tutors outside of class/tutors who speak their mother tongue
- More housing information and support
- Child-minding on-site
- Greater awareness of mental health issues by teachers and program managers and more support around these issues while in the program



REFLECTIONS

In reviewing the above needs, what is striking is that the training and pedagogical needs expressed by the learners reveal a tremendous awareness of what is demanded of individuals in a print-saturated society – excellent spelling, ability to use documents, strong writing skills, etc. This awareness may stem from what they have observed as they navigate their daily lives in Toronto and York Region, from having completed high school in their countries of origin, or perhaps as a result of what they have been told by teachers in their various programs.

For this group of learners there is comfort in talking about a next step and in feeling that they are making progress. They appreciate formal and informal ways **through which their progress can be measured**, and actively pursue education/training options that mirror those of Canadian-born learners – perhaps subconsciously seeking to increase their cultural capital.⁵⁶

How learners identified showing improvement often included non-academic outcomes, many of which are difficult if not impossible to measure. A number of these non-measurable outcomes were identified within the literature that was reviewed by Tracy Westell in 2005⁵⁷ (e.g. self-confidence, perseverance, independence, community building, learning how to learn, etc.). The tangible proof of improvement – e.g. spelling tests scores, fewer red marks on the page – validate to a degree the progress they are making in a more abstract realm.

Many participants spoke of the lack of learning opportunities due hardships in their countries of origin, and due to family and work obligations. There was also some discussion around the frustration of having completed certain pieces of their training but being told they needed more upgrading before proceeding to their goal.

⁵⁶ Cultural capital is a sociological term that refers to the knowledge, skills, attitudes and education that lead to a higher status in society.

⁵⁷ Tracy Westell, *Measuring Non-Academic Outcomes in Adult Literacy Programs: A Literature Review*, (2005).

It must be noted, as well, that some of these learners consider their having lived for a number of years in Canada as an indicator of good English. For them, the idea of attending more ESL classes seemed to threaten their identity as functioning Canadians. They had already taken language training classes – they could check off that piece of learning. This checkmark phenomenon speaks directly to the sociological dimension of language learning⁵⁸ that has recently made headway in the field of language acquisition. Language is “theorized not only as a linguistic system, but as a social practice in which experiences are organized and identities are negotiated.”⁵⁹ For many learners, the fact that they took a LINC or ESL class may mean that they have already done the newcomer learning piece.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Learner Focus Groups

- Learners rely primarily on word of mouth when it comes to learning about adult education options
- The needs of LBS learners who speak English as a second or additional language are an amalgam of academic needs and non-academic needs that are often linked to both goals and the need to feel integrated into mainstream society
- A means of relaying clear, comprehensive, and easily accessible information to learners about adult education programs in Ontario is needed because learners often make program choices based on partial information or misinformation
- The transition-oriented LBS program appeals to English as a second language speakers because it pushes learners to move to the next step along their learning pathways
- Learners who speak English as a second or additional language perceive the LBS program as one that provides targeted reading and writing practice and a real-world focus
- Stakeholders need to be aware of the ‘checkmark phenomenon’ – Adults who have taken a LINC or ESL course in the past may naively consider their language learning to be complete so they check off this part of their learning as done

58 Bonny Norton, “Chapter 13: Language and Identity,” in *Sociolinguistics and Language Education*, by Nancy H. Hornberger and Sandra McKay (North York: Multilingual Matters, 2010), p. 355.

59 Ibid., p. 355.



LEARNER PORTRAITS



GEN 1.5 works toward a brighter future...

'Jenny' is a Tagalog speaker from the Philippines. She has lived in Canada for 14 years (since she was 9 years old). She completed high school in Canada and had been placed in ELD/ESL classes in elementary school in Canada. She is currently attending the LBS program in York Region at Level 2/3.

SHORT-TERM GOAL

Improve writing to go to Academic Upgrading college – post-secondary goal

LONG-TERM GOAL

Become a nurse



WHAT SHE FINDS HELPFUL

"Reading newspapers and it helps me to tell the difference between using one kind of article in three different newspapers and writing it. Also, taking what are the verb tenses and what I need to improve. Or what's missing in the verb tense in the paragraph that I am describing. Also, there is a program online.... The learningHUB. I'm doing the reading comprehension. I'm doing the science to make my memory come back again."

HOW SHE KNOWS SHE'S IMPROVING

"Well I'm improving because, my writing is slowly, slowly—when she marks it there is so much red—after a few practice of writing fewer red marks."

"Because I was out of school for five year. I finished my high school here in Canada and I was working in a factory for five years. Working there was not my lifestyle and I wanted to improve my English. My English is, like, poor language for me. I need more practice and writing in order for me to go to college. So, I went online and checked the adult learning school—YDAL school and it wasn't really good—so I went here and I met up with X. She assessed me and she told me to come to the LBS."



A new stage in life...

'Deka' has lived in Canada for 20 years. Her mother tongue is Somali. Deka completed high school in Somalia but had been out of school for a while because she was raising her children. She waited until her youngest was at school full time. She is currently enrolled in a school board LBS program in Toronto.

SHORT-TERM GOAL

To get her high school in Ontario.

LONG-TERM GOAL

To work in childcare –
Early Childhood Education



WHAT SHE FINDS HELPFUL

"Still I like to take this class, because when I was in ESL class it was more basic, I was learning more listening, but not for write. When I came here, I feel comfort to learn more, to go ahead, to wish my goal."

HOW SHE KNOWS SHE'S IMPROVING

"I know I improve because I read the story, I know the topic."

"I was busy with my children. My last child go full-time and came to the school and started ESL Level 2, then 3, 4, until 5. I went down to the assessment office... There is a different program they told me that LBS...asked the testing and after I waited maybe six months on the list. Still in ESL, and one day they told me I come to LBS and I'm so happy."

"I want to improve my language to help my children to do work with them. Also, I am planning to work for childcare – ECE. When I asked to take that program, they want high school. I want to finish."



Life demands and goal changes...

'Senait' has lived in Canada for 7 years. Her country of origin is Eritrea and her mother tongue is Tigrinya. She also speaks Amharic and Arabic. The highest level of education that she completed in Eritrea is high school. She reports having taken ESL courses at the school board and having finished Level 6 ESL. After her ESL (non-credit) courses, she went to high school and completed a hairstyling pre-apprenticeship certificate program at Yorkdale Adult Learning Centre. Her teachers told her that her spelling was poor and recommended an LBS program. Senait says that her spelling in her mother tongue is 'perfect'. After completing her certificate program she had trouble finding employment due to childcare issues. She is currently in a Level 2 class in school board LBS program.

SHORT-TERM GOAL

Spelling improvement

LONG-TERM GOAL

University



WHAT SHE FINDS HELPFUL

The writing and spelling focus.

HOW SHE KNOWS SHE'S IMPROVING

"My spelling...it's getting better. I'm starting to know the vowels – to spell right."

"So I am gifted with my hand. I am very creative, that's why I take the hairdresser. That was my short-term goal. So, I learned to do hair and get a job. But I couldn't do it with my daughter because they told me to work weekends, evening. So I can't do these things. So, I have to go back to school and do a better career. So I will have to go to college or university. Maybe university this time."



What the field demands...

'Azeeza' arrived in Canada 19 years ago with elementary school being the highest level of schooling completed. Tigrinya is her mother tongue, but she also speaks Amharic. She explains that she has completed a personal support worker course and has her Personal Support Worker diploma. Azeeza had worked as a homecare PSW for 5 years. [Level 1 LBS learner]

SHORT-TERM GOAL

Improve spelling, writing

LONG-TERM GOAL

Go back to work with better spelling and writing skills



WHAT SHE FINDS HELPFUL

Teacher provides help with next steps and gives hope.

HOW SHE KNOWS SHE'S IMPROVING

"Teacher, he care when we are angry about the spelling. He says, 'It's going to be okay.' One sentence, six wrong spelling is now three or four."

"I took the course PSW and I have the diploma. The only thing is when you work in a nursing home you have to write in charts. What happened and what people say. As soon as I know, I'm going to find a job and go back to work. Spelling with the dictionary... I worked for PSW for five years, home to home. It's just a chart, you don't have to write. It's just a little thing to write. But when we had training, it's a lot to write. I don't want to get it wrong with the medicine so I don't want to get in trouble. I'm going to go back to work."



A chance to build foundation skills...

'Rafael' has lived in Canada for 23 years. He is originally from El Salvador and Spanish is his mother tongue. He never attended school in El Salvador. He said he learned his English through everyday life. He explains that he worked for many years in Toronto and now he is receiving OW supports. He was sent to an ESL class but was only there a couple of days when the teacher told him the LBS program may be a better program for him. He says this program is a good fit because he is finally learning how to read and write. Rafael finds he speaks English only in his daily life. He is a Level 1 learner at a Toronto school board LBS program.

SHORT-TERM GOAL

Build foundation skills for reading and writing.

LONG-TERM GOAL

Become his own boss in landscaping.



WHAT HE FINDS HELPFUL

"I try to find out what is consonant, what is vowels. If I know the phonetic sounds, then I can reach my goal."

HOW HE KNOWS HE'S IMPROVING

"I know that I'm improving because it was like I was sleeping and then I read, I understand. What I'm reading is much clearer than before. And if I go somewhere, I watch the signs there and I catch what I've learned in school."

"I have to learn how to read and write... And if I don't do that I will always be like a cripple. I know I can do it. I just didn't have the time. I speak English every day and I don't speak Spanish, only English."

"My wish is that if I can get this straightened out – because I like to work in landscaping industry which I work before for a long, long time – I could become my own boss."



A slower pace...

'Adara' is an Arabic speaker from Morocco who has lived in Canada for 20 years. The highest level of education she completed was Grade 5. She raised her children and when they started high school she decided to go to school again. Adara attended Grade 11 adult credit courses at the Yorkdale Adult Learning Centre and found the courses too challenging. Adara attends an LBS program in her local community centre. The program is delivered by school board staff.

SHORT-TERM GOAL

Improve math and spelling.

LONG-TERM GOAL

Work in an office using a computer.



WHAT SHE FINDS HELPFUL

The math, computer practice and the pace of learning.

HOW SHE KNOWS SHE'S IMPROVING

"My reading now is getting better than before. Before, when I read anything, my kids laughed at me and told me that I'm singing. And computers, too. Now I know what to do. Now I know how to go to websites and check e-mail. Better than before."

"When I was in Yorkdale school, the teachers rush, rush to teaching you. You know, I need somebody close to me and teach me slowly....I was like grade 11 and, I couldn't do it there. They rushed, rushed. Here I find the teachers are heartfelt. They take time to teach you."



A program that pushes her...

'Min' attends an Academic Upgrading program and her goal is to enter a college Early Childhood Education program. She is a Mandarin speaker who arrived in Toronto from China 5 years ago. The highest level of education that Min attained was high school completion in China. Two years ago she attended a LINC class for two months but a friend told her about the AU program.

SHORT-TERM GOAL

"To improve the English."

LONG-TERM GOAL

Do the college ECE.



WHAT SHE FINDS HELPFUL

"Computer and English, because before I don't know how to write an essay or business letter or a cover letter. But the teacher taught me a lot about how to write and prepare my resume and cover letter."

She also enjoyed tutoring supports at the college this past summer – support from tutors who spoke her mother tongue.

HOW SHE KNOWS SHE'S IMPROVING

"I understand 80% now when I read."

"I was in LINC only two months. After I find this program, so I moved to here because LINC is for English, for the people who come to Canada new, right? So, I was here almost three years. I know some basic of Canada. The culture or something. So, I don't need to stay there. I moved here. So I need to focus on the English and the computer and math."

"There [in LINC] more relaxed. Here give you credit, but there nothing. You just you know, very relaxed. For the people who come, they don't know Canada very much. In there I feel very enjoy, very relax, but here they push you. They mark the attendance very serious."



Volunteering and teamwork broaden skills/ vocabulary...

'Ayman' is an Arabic speaker who hails from Somalia. He arrived in Canada over 2 ½ years ago. Ayman had taken some English classes in Somalia. He also attended an ESL program at the school board. The highest level of education that Ayman attained was Grade 8. His goal is to obtain his GED so he can go to college for math and computers. He is currently enrolled in a community-based agency LBS program that offers a 'teamworks' component. As part of his LBS training he has been volunteering at the Daily Bread Food Bank where he reports he is learning a number of things.

SHORT-TERM GOAL

GED

LONG-TERM GOAL

Attend college for computer/math course.



WHAT HE FINDS HELPFUL

Hands-on learning.

"Here we cook food – learn how to cook different foods."

HOW HE KNOWS HE'S IMPROVING

"I learned new words. Better work vocabulary."

"My friends wanted me to go to other schools. I decide to stay because the program help me go to college."

"At Daily Bread I learn to organize, help driver with schedule of delivery, use money, working with forms and meeting people."



Appreciating learning...

'Giuseppe' has lived in Canada for 43 years. His mother tongue is Italian and the highest level of education he completed outside Canada was Grade 5. When he arrived in Canada he started working immediately as a carpenter. Giuseppe worked in his trade for more than 40 years until he was injured on the job. He is currently attending a school board LBS program in York Region.

SHORT-TERM GOAL

Work on his
English and computers

LONG-TERM GOAL

Employment

Highest level of
education attained
in country of origin:
Grade 5;
43 years in Canada

Employed
for over
40 years

Injury

LBS

Re-enter
workforce

WHAT HE FINDS HELPFUL

"The teacher is number one! She's very well maybe because her way of teaching adults is perfect the ways she does. Learning that's the first priority. Before we didn't have time to come to school, before it was not enough time to study. ... We slow learners. We learn and then we forget again, and this learning-forget goes back and forth. We picking up each time a little bit."

HOW HE KNOWS HE'S IMPROVING

"Now I can email my family back home and friends. And even some company, and now like insurance companies or gas company, now they have my email. We start to pass information even though it's still my low level but we starting, and when I go there practicing word I learned that I didn't know before even my kids said, 'Dad, you're getting know what we know now.'" (laughs with joy). So that's how we notice, the way we speaking, we look at a piece of paper – we don't know 100% yet, but it's better than before. It's clear, that's how we know that we are improving."

"I work all my life, and never home before. And I injured myself I don't want sit home. And I'm learning here, thanks to this program. And now I can send an email. Was a dream before."

"My English, I talk, but I can't read and write. So I took an opportunity in order to sit home and do nothing, I go to school I learn maybe after if I feel better after I would do anything to enter in the workforce in a better understanding."



Moving towards skills training...

'Ugoulo' arrived in Toronto 3 years ago from Nigeria. He speaks Edo and he has indicated that he had some English in classes he took in school many years ago. The highest level of education he completed outside Canada was Grade 6. Ugoulo is currently attending a school-board LBS program that is delivered within a learning hub setting where LINC, LBS and skills training programs are co-located.

SHORT-TERM GOAL

Improve writing

LONG-TERM GOAL

Forklift skills training

Highest level of education
attained in country of origin:
Grade 6;
3 years in Canada



LBS



Forklift Training

WHAT HE FINDS HELPFUL

The teacher is helpful – *“The way we speak is very different from the way we write. She teaches very well.”*

HOW HE KNOWS HE'S IMPROVING

“When you see your skills to move to the next step.”

“For me it's not easy. I've been a long time out of school. It's easier for baby to learn than adult....When I was young, in my country we have a lot of different tribe. Some tribe, we call them Ebu. They were staying at my father's house...speaking different language. I was speaking with them.”



Confidence on the path to employment...

'Shamim' is an Urdu-speaker who arrived in Canada 5 years ago from Pakistan. The highest level of education she completed outside Canada was Grade 12. Shamim took ESL classes and finished Level 5. Her ESL instructor told her about the LBS program. She is currently attending a school-board LBS program in York Region.

SHORT-TERM GOAL

Computers and writing

LONG-TERM GOAL

Employment
in a daycare centre.



WHAT SHE FINDS HELPFUL

"My goal is employment. I had some courses in daycare from York Region programs. So, that's why I want employment for different daycare centres. And here, our teacher helps us for filling applications for any place... She helped me and I got a [seasonal] job."

HOW SHE KNOWS SHE'S IMPROVING

"I can go anyplace... I am going and talking. For health card, for doctor, for a job... interview in English. I was very confident."

"If you are going somewhere that you same language people... we are talking in own language. When I came to Canada, my husband and me go to English classes and my teacher say you don't sit together. So, this is very good for us. And here in the program, a different culture, so we must speak English. If people are coming and speaking just mother language this is not a good thing."



College bound...

'Jose' arrived in Toronto from Mexico 4 ½ years ago. The highest level of education he completed outside Canada was Grade 12. In Mexico he had worked in sales in a large company. He attended some ESL classes upon arrival, but friends recommended the community-based LBS program he is currently attending, which is part of a learning hub setting where LINC, LBS and skills training programs are co-located.

SHORT-TERM GOAL

Improve writing, reading and understanding

LONG-TERM GOAL

Attend a college business course



WHAT HE FINDS HELPFUL

"When I started ESL class you understand what they teach to you. You understand the meaning of the sentence. But, you think in your own language. Here it's more deep. For example, they teach you the proper use of the verbs. When you choose a verb. And then you start to think in English. This gives us more confidence to express experience. We are able to make conversation with English people."

HOW HE KNOWS HE'S IMPROVING

Explains that he can do presentations now and use the computer: *"[The teacher] say choose one topic and we have to develop the topic, and search the Internet, and we have to present in front of the people. PowerPoint. We have the minimum time and the maximum time. I am more confident to do this."*

"I know that I need to complete my English skill in this school. I need to work hard to improve my writing, reading, my understanding. After that, I wish to get a job in sales person, because, in the past I work at 'x' as a sales manager. I know to reach my goals I need to work very hard in my English skill. After that, I go to college, maybe, to complete that program?"



TEACHER/TUTOR FOCUS GROUPS

Four (4) teacher/tutor focus groups sessions were conducted with a total of 18 LBS practitioners taking part. Three sessions took place at program sites in Toronto and York Region and a final session was conducted at the MTML office. The information and insights the teachers and tutors provided added breadth and depth to the project's focus around learner needs, transition points and learning pathways.

TEACHER/TUTOR FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What are the more common profiles of LBS learners who speak English as a second or additional language that you encounter? Are you seeing any trends with respect to learners with both literacy and ESL needs in your program?
2. How would you describe the particular needs of the second-/additional-language LBS learner?
3. How do you as a teacher/tutor/practitioner meet the needs of learners who have both literacy and ESL needs?
4. Describe the dynamics within an LBS environment when you have LBS learners with ESL needs in the classroom.
5. What are the transitions like for this group of learners into the LBS program (perhaps after language training) and onto next steps?
6. What are some of the more common learner pathways you are seeing with respect to the learner group we have been discussing?
7. As your work with the English as second-/additional-language LBS learners to help them meet their short-term and long-term goals, what are some of the challenges you encounter? What are the strengths that these learners bring as they navigate their learning pathways?
8. What supports could you use to better meet the needs of these learners?
9. Reflect on the relationships you have in place with other programs that help you serve this learner. If there are no such relationships, what relationships would you like to foster to support the literacy- and ESL-needs learners?
10. Anything you wish to add?

THE FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Prior to the focus group session, participants completed a brief teacher/tutor background information sheet. They were asked which sector they worked in; whether they were TESL certified or had training teaching English as a Second Language outside of Canada; number of years teaching; and the programs in which they teach/had taught.

Who participated in the teacher / tutor focus group sessions:

- All were all from community-based agencies delivering Anglophone stream LBS instruction
- 11 out of 18 participants (61%) had obtained their Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) certification or had taught English classes overseas.
- 10 LBS instructors from community-based agencies where delivery takes the form of small-group or classroom-based instruction; 8 tutors delivered 1-1 instruction
- More than half of the focus group participants had taught English as a second language at some point
- The number of years teaching/tutoring ranged from 2 years to 35+ years; approximately 75 percent had been teaching 10 years or more. [Some had also been teachers in the K-12 system].

FOCUS GROUP HIGHLIGHTS – LBS TEACHERS/TUTORS

What follows is a synthesis of the information that the four LBS teacher/tutor focus groups yielded. The subheadings of this section broadly align with the focus group questions and additional subheads have been added to address key themes that also surfaced during the focus group discussions.

Common Learner Profiles and New Trends in Profiles

The teachers and tutors who participated in the focus group sessions spoke of the various learner profiles they see in their programs.

The English as second-language LBS learner profiles they most typically see are:

- **The settled immigrant:** LBS learners who have been in Canada for a significant number of years (many 20+ years); have raised their children; many found a job when they first arrived and much of their language-learning took place at work; those who came 10-15 years ago might have initially done some language classes; often, many within this profile are displaced workers.

Two sub-groups of settled immigrants were discussed by teachers:

- i. Those who rarely speak English outside the classroom – For these learners, their time in an LBS setting is like an ‘immersion’ experience because they have worked and lived within a community where they were able to function and be productive without needing to speak much English.
- ii. Those who are “living an English-speaking life” – These learners have a functional level of English and use English throughout their daily lives.

LBS practitioners had this to say this about learners who arrived in Canada more than 15 years ago and view themselves as settled Canadians and different from newcomers:

“Those students who have been here a long time, I know that they have ESL needs, but I find it would be hard to put them in an ESL class when they’re functioning day to day, and not just making it, they’re functioning well, they interact with you know their community, their co-workers in English, and they’re living an English speaking life. So it’s kind of hard to say, ‘okay, go here’ because, and they’re kind of like a middle child. They might have like amazing vocabulary, that if you put them in ESL it might not be enough for them, but at the same time there are other elements that they need to really pick up on.”

“It’s a pride thing. They find ESL too basic. They feel like they are past needing ESL because they live an English-speaking life.”

- **The newcomer:** LBS learners who arrived in Canada within the past 5 years; some are very highly educated; some may have very little previous education; most have never worked in Canada; most have done some ESL or LINC courses; a large number are OW recipients, as well.
- **Generation 1.5 learners:** These learners have arrived in Canada as children or teenagers and moved through the school system, yet many gaps exist in their English language skills particularly when it comes to their writing proficiency.

Strengths second language English-speaking learners bring to LBS programs

LBS practitioners all seemed to stress that this group of learners are motivated and know what they want to achieve.

“They say, ‘Great, let’s go!’ ... I think they’re very good at envisioning what they would like their end outcome to be and having clarity about that. I think it’s the steps in between that we need to work on.”

“I think a lot of people that we have who are native English speakers who are here and in the system have already been lost for so long that it’s hard for them to figure out why they’re here. Whereas, an ESL student comes here, and even if they finally realize we’re not an ESL program, they see the value because they have a different approach.”

New trends with respect to learner profiles

- Practitioners reported that the backgrounds of the learners they see in their programs are in fact a reflection of the neighbourhoods they serve and of large scale immigration trends.

“I think one of the trends that I’ve noticed is that they’re coming more specifically from a certain region in the world and that’s South America.... I don’t know if the community is changing to be one that is Latino or whether it’s just because of the referral process.”

– An LBS instructor in a community-based agency in Toronto’s east end

“A lot more Africans now, more Asian, and we’ve always had Caribbean.”

– An LBS instructor from a community-based program just east of downtown Toronto

“We’ve certainly had a large number of Somali, both women and men actually. But I think it seems to be I can recall a time when we had a huge group of Polish speaking, so now we went through a time when we had a huge group of Spanish speakers, so, but I think it’s whether they are referring each other, telling each other.”

– An LBS instructor from a community-based program in Toronto’s west end

- A lot of young adults who have finished school and are now “lost” are attending many of the LBS tutor programs. English was their second language and they struggle still. They often have an ESL background that is accompanied by a learning disability. A Gen 1.5 profile with an LD. First impressions may not always be indicative of the complexity of needs the learner may have:

“It takes being with the person for seven months, once a week to really understand what is going on.”

- There is change in that there used to be more EI clients and older displaced workers, but now people who have never worked before and cannot get employment are coming to the programs.

Needs of LBS learners who speak English as a second or additional language

Focus group sessions with teachers and tutors surfaced a number of needs the participants viewed their learners as having. Some were pedagogical needs, some were emotional and psychological needs, and some were also needs that LBS programs could not provide and are therefore presented as wants in the section below.

“They can understand what we’re saying. They can express themselves, but the writing and reading skills need improvement for them.”

“There are students who are very obviously ESL but with a couple of vocabulary lessons and you know a few months of upping their workplace language they’re completely capable and totally fine. But, the needs of the lower level students I’d say one-on-one, they need tutoring.”

“They love doing vocabulary, they love doing essays.”

“The students that are born in Canada, their needs are different and it’s interesting that they just want to do their work. ...Whereas an ESL student, in my experience, is they’re lost sometimes because they don’t know, they’ve never experienced this type of exercise and so there needs to be more discussion.”

“But the only problem is—going back to ESL—there is more of a focus on the speaking and the verbal skills [in ESL]. There is not much in the writing. The classes are large and the teacher basically gives the lesson and we all work on conversational skills. The writing is very limited even on the higher end. We get many students that progressed through the ESL. And the ESL program said, ‘You’re too high for us, go to the literacy.’ We have quite a few of those students. Those students can speak. They are very sharp and they come and they can barely write at a grade two level. So, they’re stuck and they’re coming in with the literacy students.”

LBS teachers and tutors described a range of needs specific to LBS learners who speak English as a second or additional language:

- Vocabulary gaps need addressing – “developing vocabulary – workplace vocabulary – You have to have that constant explanation and discussion...”
- More writing and reading skills practice
- Presentation skills - a means of synthesizing what they’ve read or have written; this leads to greater confidence
- Information around workplace etiquette and cultural norms

- Preparation for the helping professions pathways which are the programs they're most interested in – particularly PSW, ECE, social work, and nurses
- Many newcomers ask for essay writing in particular
- More time – time to learn and to study in class – Adult learners with multiple obligations often don't have time to study at home
- Punctuation – practice using English punctuation rules
- Learning strategies – particularly for lower levels learners

The wants of LBS learners who speak English as an additional language:

- Grammar and more grammar
- Pronunciation practice
- Several tutors spoke of learners wanting to read material beyond their level – with content that they perceived as being more aligned to levels of text they are able to read in their mother tongue or more like the types of dense texts they felt as adults they needed to be reading

“They either can't get into the ESL program or have passed through it and have ended up at our doorstep. I found with the ones that I was dealing with, they wanted to read very advanced books and they look up every single word because they didn't understand it, but missing the basics.

– An LBS tutor in York Region

Other needs:

- These learners need more support in using what they are learning also outside of the classroom (e.g. using their computer skills to perform tasks in their daily lives)
- The lowest level learners need to work past their feelings associated with the idea of school and previous failures
- Learners who find themselves attending LBS tutoring sessions need time to gain trust in their tutors

“They're embarrassed and they have to first feel an element of trust. That they can only get one-on-one. Once they get the confidence, then they're okay working with a couple of tutors or a bigger group. But, they have to be able to be comfortable coming through the door. Remember 'Learner X', she actually wrote down, what she felt the first day she came – the fear.”

“With the younger students—the ones who are eighteen, nineteen, twenty—it is a bit difficult with them because a lot of them have not had a lot of success in the education field. They have always been told they weren’t good and they got into all sorts of trouble. So there’s that element of trust to get through.”

Classroom dynamics

Addressing ESL issues that arise

Although the LBS practitioners in the focus group sessions were asked to reflect on their learners who speak English as a second/additional language, the majority of the instructors said they do not label their learners. In fact they see their role as meeting the needs of all their learners as needs arise:

“I adapt as I need to adapt. As, you know, you see someone not understanding, then you adapt for the people who obviously are not coping. So I don’t think I treat them any differently – ‘these are ESL students, these are LBS students’ – I don’t see it that way at all. They all have different needs and different strengths.”

“I usually deal with it [grammar issues], you know, very quickly and briefly, you know, I don’t want to bore other students who aren’t interested, but clearly a lot of them do need the grammar as well, not just the ESL students. So some of them do need the grammar teaching as well, but we’re not grammar-based, so I don’t want to get into it too much. That’s usually enough for them, when we do the basics.”

Diversity in the classroom

Some LBS instructors did indicate that there were challenges related to having a classroom in which English speakers whose mother tongue is other than English are placed with learners who speak English, however others discussed how compassion exists and a community built around diversity does form. Both first language and second language speakers of English do offer something to each other.

“I’ve had native speakers of English.... feel ostracized because he or she feels this is a classroom for immigrants. It’s happened to me three times in the past three years where the native speaker, after two to three months drops out of the class.”

“Sometimes the native English speaking students really, really respond positively to the

ESL students. 'Cause it's funny. 'Cause you see the ESL students teaching EQ⁶⁰ to the native English students, and you see the native English speaking students upping their compassion component when it's a learning disabled or ESL student. You see, kind of, because we're a mixed up bunch... and I think people have compassion for each other, whether it's a language struggle or learning disability or something like that. They kind of feel for each other."

"My students ask the native speakers 'why are you here?'"

"The ESL students tend to be a little more focused – they're a lot more goal-oriented, they know where they want to go, they've had more formal education quite often, and I think they kind of set an example for some of the LBS students. And on the other hand, LBS students can help the ESL students with the language issues..."

Meeting these needs in an LBS classroom – Successes and Challenges

"The hardest thing is an undiagnosed learning disability in an ESL person. You can bang your head against the wall for a whole month thinking it's strictly ESL and then it dawns on you that 'Oh my God, they have literacy issues in their first language as well,' and it's probably focused back to an undiagnosed issue."

"And not all learners, unless they've been in the class for over 6 months understand the distinction between ESL and LBS."

"Our teamworks component allows them to have a chance – at least a glimmer – of Canadian work experience."

Challenges

- Undiagnosed learning disabilities – particularly difficult to spot when dealing with multiple needs learners
- English as a second language speakers in LBS sometimes view the LBS program as another English class and it takes time for their LBS instructors to have them see the focus is different
- A couple of teachers wished some of their learners would not rely so much on "those little electronic dictionaries"

⁶⁰ When we asked this LBS instructor to explain what she meant by EQ she said Emotional Quotient. This concept refers to emotional intelligence – a concept linked to multiple intelligences and brought to the fore in Daniel Goleman's 1995 book Emotional Intelligence – a non-cognitive intelligence that can be more significant in a person's professional and personal life as his/her intelligence quotient (IQ).

Successful outcomes

Several teachers explained how it takes a while for the learners to understand the relevance of what is being taught to them because they don't have a sense of the 'usefulness factor' of what they're learning until they move to that next step:

"I think our best outcomes are the people who do recognize that what we do in the classroom has a direct relationship to their goal. Whether it's going on to college or whether it's getting employment. So I can quote a couple of people from my class – there's some people who have gone on to George Brown College or others have gone on to employment – x from Tim Horton's for example, they say 'I really appreciate what we did in the classroom because I see it every day behind the counter.' And those are the ones that are most successful."

Supports that could help programs meeting this learner group's multiple needs

"All of us – we're counsellors – housing and daycare and financial/money issues always come up. So when they have those problems you can tell. I have some students who are ESL learners and I can say to them, 'What's wrong today?' and they'll say 'Oh, I need an apartment'. You can tell they can't work."

Teachers and tutors often act as more than teachers – they are advisors and confidants. When asked about supports for their learners, they stressed that **the following supports would be helpful:**

- Supports in diagnosing learning disabilities in ongoing ESL-needs learners; programs that can address these needs
- For women from specific backgrounds, an LBS program option that is specifically for women
- On-site childcare – learners with unreliable or unattainable childcare for their children often miss classes
- Counselling that could be available on-site to address the multiplicity of issues encountered – housing, financial hardships, and substance abuse issues

Transitions: From language training to LBS and from LBS to next steps

With respect to the second language learners in the LBS programs, LBS practitioners referred to a number of challenges when it comes to these learners transitioning to the next step along their learning pathways.

It was pointed out that despite discussions around the demanding nature of their next step, many times learners in the lower LBS levels did not have a clear conceptualization of what would truly be required of them. LBS teachers and tutors said that transitions are difficult when:

- The next-step criteria may be higher than envisioned by the learners – learners overestimate their readiness when it comes to the next step
- There was a lack of awareness around the time and effort required to meet the demands of the next level – a lack of mental preparedness for the volume of work and the time required
- Learning disabilities remain undiagnosed

The following is an LBS tutor's reflection about a successful transition:

“The pathways with GED for example, those that are successful are the ones who understand... who are prepared for the volume of work... A perfect example of someone we knew was going to be successful: He's a student who just got his GED. He had those skills – self-discipline. He came everyday and he never missed a class. He's an exception. We knew that he was going to be successful.”

Another LBS teacher explained how the pressure of demanding next-step criteria could lead to training 'short-cuts' that may be detrimental to the learner in the long-run.

“They're not realistic. They're very optimistic about entering... The learner's pathway is usually employment or the other one would be college program training – and it could be public or private. Some students are discouraged that with the high criteria it takes to enter public college that they find the private colleges attractive. They'd rather do private school for 6 months as opposed to college for 2 years.”

Common goal paths for these learners

“I've seen that half of the students want to go to PSW and ECE. ... some social worker and some nurses.”

“The majority of them are employment – especially with the recent recession, we've encountered more students are switching from further training or education to immediate employment. ... People are really desperate to get a job, realizing 'oh my gosh, I can't be in training for two years, five years.’”

“A lot of people are doing food service programs, food handling.”

“None of my students ever go into the trades, I wonder why? It could be the numeracy part. ... My student who’s a carpenter in the other country, and I was surprised he couldn’t do basic fractions. - ...criteria for a carpenter you need like a Grade 12 math.”

The LBS teachers and tutors we spoke to indicated that the second-language LBS Level 1-3 learners they see in their agencies often wish to enter many of the helping professions or enter skills training opportunities that provide certificates (e.g. food handling, forklift operator, etc.).

Certain LBS agencies certainly become goal path niche sites. For example, the TCDSB LBS program located within the Learning Enrichment Foundation – a major learning hub offering a number adult education opportunities and skills training courses – often prepares learners to enter the co-located training programs.

Other issues surfaced by teachers/tutors

A number of issues were also introduced by LBS practitioners during the focus groups sessions. The following briefly covers the issues the teachers and tutors raised.

Basic skills not in place even with credentials

Whether a native speaker of English or an English speaker whose mother tongue is not English, LBS practitioners expressed that even with their OSSD in place and any credentials, there still exist tremendous gaps in learners’ basic skills and literacy:

“...so lots of people have literacy issues and they’ve been attenuated by the education system in some way. But when we approach them, we find that the basic skills are not there. And that cuts across the board for both ESL and native speaking students.”

Ontario Works Clients

An LBS instructor from a community-based program indicated that in her program 80% of her learners are newcomers with less than five years in Canada, and 90% of these learners are Ontario Works clients.

“I think it’s a requirement for them to receive OW doing something productive, such as either working or in a training program, and it’s up to them to just decide whether that’s ESL or literacy. A lot of the students in my class are referred here by their friends, that is word of mouth, and so not necessarily by their caseworker.”

Another focus group session had teachers reflecting on the challenge for Ontario Works caseworkers when it comes to determining the appropriate adult education program their clients:

“...when people are referred to us, sometimes it is difficult for caseworkers to filter and screen these people to find out if the problem that they have is ESL problem or is literacy problem. An example would be, a couple of months ago someone who was from Vietnam, he came here and he took our test and he was placed at Level 1. After we found out that this guy is brilliant. He’s doing very good in computer lab and other classes, but the problem the barrier was the language. ...Before he had gone to COSTI... He was only here for 3 days.”

Comments on intake and assessments

On the whole, teachers and tutors felt that the LBS assessments carried out at intake did ensure that the majority of learners did have a level of spoken English that allowed them to benefit from LBS instruction; however, several recognized and mentioned that some of the assessment tools did have a cultural bias. Also, it was echoed by several teachers that if learners are admitted to the program that are struggling with English, it becomes challenging to re-direct them if they are not a good fit because they bond with their teacher and their classmates.

“Students are placed because of the CAMERA test and the CAMERA test is not sensitive to the ESL needs and background.”

“Be cautious about assessing them because once you have them enter your class they don’t want to leave.”

Those working with LBS Level 1 learners felt that what was missing was an ESL assessment they could quickly conduct:

“The issue is that we don’t have a test to distinguish between ESL and literacy. When the new student comes to our office, right, because we deal with adult literacy, we give a bunch of tests to see if they are illiterate or how literate they are. We need some assessment for the ESL.”

Learners’ preconceptions/biases around what learning is

Within every teacher/tutor focus group the notion of learners expecting learning to look a certain way was brought up. The notion of learning they have affects how they react to group work and pair work. One instructor felt preconceptions played a huge role in learner classroom expectations:

“I also think that there is a preconception on the learner’s part about what learning is. If they’ve been exposed to some education what they expect is a continuation or a development of what they’ve already had. So if they’ve been to classes in the past that focus on grammar, they figure they’re going to come here and see further installments of that.”

We also heard from a number of teachers and tutors that the oft-used group work and pair work learners are asked to do in their ESL or LINC classes seemed odd for those who are used to a more traditional classroom in their countries of origin. Several LBS instructors mentioned that some of their learners who had experienced English language learning as only grammar-based had been frustrated by the communicative language teaching⁶¹ methods they had encountered because they could not understand why there was so much focus on speaking:

“Someone who’s used to a paper and pen method thinks ‘I’m wasting a whole bunch of time.’ They think, ‘Teacher you are wasting my time. Let me do my own work.’”

Needs of teachers

Several LBS instructors stressed that that they would like to see more ‘ready-to-use’ resources that pertain to the various goal paths.

“I want somebody to give me materials. I don’t want to walk away from things like this and be like okay, we’ve discussed it again, now what? Like, it’s really the most frustrating part, is having material to use. ‘Cause you know what? I know that we could go to real places and get their applications, and I know that we can go to real places and get their menus and talk about stuff, but at the end of the day there’s only so much time, and only so many times that you can do that and only so many people that we can do that with.”

One TESL trained instructor who also tutors in an LBS program felt that it would be helpful to have an idea of the CLB reading level to assist in the choice of reading materials to be used in the learner’s LBS instruction.

“We need to have mapping. If a student comes in...we have books to teach them to read and write. They are junior books, which is good, everybody has to go through that. What if a student comes in and says, “Yes, I have a problem.” What do we do? We need to have a mapping to see, okay, if that student is CLB level such and such, he/she should be using this book.”

61 Please consult the glossary for some background Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).



REFLECTIONS

Meeting *all* the needs – a tall order across the programs

The three general ESL learner profiles that the LBS practitioners described – the settled immigrant; the newcomer; and the Generation 1.5 learners – were definitely represented within the groups of learners that we encountered in the focus groups. Beyond the general categories, however, what lends added complexity in teaching the language- and literacy- needs learners within the LBS program are additional characteristics that may complicate things even further⁶²:

- Proximity of the learner's mother tongue to the English language (e.g. German is closer to English than Japanese, therefore English language acquisition is easier for German speakers)
- The age of the learner
- Whether the learner is literate in his/her L1
- Whether the learner has had formal schooling
- Whether undiagnosed learning disabilities are present

The LBS teachers and tutors participating in the focus groups were cognizant of the fact that they could not provide everything to the diverse set of learners they teach; however, several did acknowledge the tension between the needs of the ESL/LBS learners and the goals of LBS program. They struggled with being accountable to learners, who often asked for more grammar and vocabulary, while staying within the program mandate. One practitioner highlighted the fact that, initially, some learners who speak English as a second language come into the program with different expectations, and eventually come to understand the difference between LBS and ESL programs.

It must be stressed, however, that this struggle around meeting the needs of learners with both language and literacy issues is not only the providence of LBS instructors but of ESL Literacy and LINC Literacy instructors as well. Instructors from language training programs also approached the researchers throughout the course of the project with concerns about not being able to meet the needs of their learners and looking information that could inform their teaching methods.

⁶² Jill Bell and Grainne O'Donnell highlighted many of these points in the 12th Annual Research Symposium at the TESL Ontario Conference. The topic, discussed October 27, 2012, was *Adult Learners – Are We Meeting their Needs?*



A NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER...

A useful report that may be of interest to both the LBS and ESL teachers and programs is a research review piece⁶³ that includes emerging findings around six categories of adult readers (good readers, beginning readers, advanced Adult Basic Education (ABE) readers; adult English language learners (ELLs), and adult learners with learning disabilities). The review details how each of these profiles presents differently with respect to the four key aspects of reading – i.e. alphabets [phonemic awareness and word analysis], fluency, vocabulary⁶⁴, and comprehension.

http://nald.ca/library/research/adult_lit_instruction/adult_lit_instruction.pdf

Teachers/Tutors need more information about adult program options

Teachers and tutors pointed out how they often act as ersatz counsellors for their learners. Their discussions revealed that some practitioners do have gaps in their understanding of the ESL program offerings out there. Busy LBS practitioners cannot keep abreast of what is out there and some may also be operating with misinformation. The following excerpt taken from a focus group session shows how teachers may have an erroneous perception of programs and eligibility criteria: “A lot of times it’s ESL learners who have been in the country for many many years who are suddenly unemployed. So they don’t qualify too often to go into an ESL program because they’ve been here too long.” (N.B. ESL is not only for newcomers).

The project has sought to build relationships and develop tools and information pieces that address the misconceptions and myths that are out there across the programs. It is a first step that seeks to give LBS programs some basic information they may not have the time to gather.

Workplace language and literacy

During one of the teacher focus group sessions, LBS practitioners lamented that fact that on-site workplace training is less prevalent than it was ten years ago, and this leaves learners with ESL and literacy needs at a disadvantage when layoffs occur. Several instructors who have worked with learners in action centres wanted to highlight that they felt workplace classes could act as a “preventative strategy” by creating a more agile workforce.

63 John R. Kruidenier, Charles A. MacArthur, and Heide S. Wrigley, *Adult Education Literacy Instruction: A Review of the Research* (National Institute for Literacy, USA, 2010) http://nald.ca/library/research/adult_lit_instruction/adult_lit_instruction.pdf

64 The Kruidenier et al. review may shed some light on why vocabulary preoccupies the target learners of this study. The research also suggests that vocabulary and comprehension improves as oral language ability improves.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

LBS Teacher/Tutor Focus Groups

- One of the greatest challenges that LBS instructors face is an undiagnosed learning disability in learners who speak English as a second/additional language. Supports are needed to help clarify whether there is an underlying LD or whether first language transfer issues are at play
- LBS teachers and tutors report a range of needs specific to this group of learners (see pp. 61-64) and say they devote some extra time inside and outside class to address these needs
- Diversity in the classroom does raise concerns for teachers regarding the native speakers of English (NSEs) in the classroom. The opportunity to mix English speakers (ESL and Canadian-born) does result in mutually beneficial community building
- LBS practitioners view ESL adults attending their classes as having a particular mindset: In general, focus group participants viewed this group as being highly focused, goal-oriented and motivated. Many of the learners who had done English language training before bring metalinguistic awareness⁶⁵ to the classroom and ask for grammar clarification [grammar terms are their comfort zone]. They note that these learners may become discouraged by the next-step criteria demands
- Teachers/tutors noted that successful transitions for this group of learners occur when learners are realistic about the amount of time and personal commitment that will be demanded in their next step
- Initially, it is a challenge to relay to some students that LBS is not an ESL program because they view all classes in English as a chance “to improve my English”. Once these learners conceptualize the difference they embrace the task-based, transition-oriented approach that aligns with their explicit short-term and long-term goals

65 Please consult the glossary of terms.



LBS ASSESSOR FOCUS GROUPS

WHO PARTICIPATED

Two (2) assessor focus group sessions were conducted, with a total of 9 assessors taking part. Both were Toronto groups. One discussion group took place on-site at a school board location and the second group took place in a library location that was convenient for all participants. The second group included assessors from a college sector program, a 1-1 tutoring program, and a community-based agency.

In addition to the data collected regarding assessment challenges and processes through the assessor focus group, considerable data was collected via an online assessor survey, the results of which are detailed in the section that immediately follows this one.

LBS ASSESSOR FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What are some trends you are seeing regarding adult learners with both ESL and literacy needs?
2. What are some of the challenges you face when it comes to assessing and/or referring adults who come to your program who speak English as a second or additional language?
3. What are the more common ESL- and literacy-needs learner profiles and pathways you encounter?
4. How do you determine whether these learners are suitable for your program? Where do you send them if they are not a good fit?
5. What are the goals and top-of-mind priorities these learners articulate to you?
6. Do you do anything different when assessing individuals who speak English as second language?
7. Reflect on the transitions the learners make into or out of your program.
8. Reflect on the relationships you have in place with other programs that enhance referrals?
9. Anything you wish to add?

FOCUS GROUP HIGHLIGHTS

Trends in LBS agencies regarding adult learners with both ESL and literacy needs

The assessor focus group participants discussed the trends they were seeing in their programs with respect to adult learners with both ESL and literacy needs. The following trends were underscored by the assessors who took part in the discussions:

- School board assessors had noticed a decrease in the very low-level literacy ESL learners because the MCI's ESL language training program offers ESL Literacy classes in school boards
- Learners who are coming from war-torn or impoverished countries are becoming more common (e.g. Afghani learners, learners from African nations)
- An increase in learners who came to Canada many years ago and started working right away; they may be unemployed now or have time to attend school - "A big increase in displaced workers since the economic troubles of the last three years"
- An increase in lower level students who want to work on math
- An increase in learners with mental health issues – "We seem to get the more challenging cases directed to us by other programs"

An assessor from a community-based agency reflected on the changes in LBS program learners in Toronto – the evolution that has taken place as the area's demographics have changed:

"When I was first in literacy there were many Canadian-born people who had been pushed through the school system and were first language English as part of literacy, and I would say, now, I probably have one person in my program who fits that, and everyone else is either second language from some other country, or they're Caribbean – usually originally English speaking or French patois. So I think my feeling is that the literacy learners in Toronto have changed in a combination of ways."

Referral and Assessment Challenges

"A lot of learners will say that they've gone through the ESL program, through the LINC program. And I don't know where else to send them."

“A challenge is not knowing where to send the learners who have a high level of education but who are just struggling with the fluency of spoken English, and also not knowing what the options are out there.”

Not having enough information around language training options

The majority of the assessors stated that when clients were not a right fit for their LBS program they **really did not know where to refer them, particularly when the learners insist they have already ‘done ESL’**. The learners, too, do not know what their options may be and often end up “begging to get into the program.” Assessors felt that they could benefit from more information about the array of language training options⁶⁶ in order to be able to provide informed suggestions.

Assessors also indicated that for newcomers who may not have all their immigration paperwork in place, LBS may be the only option available to them due to eligibility criteria.

Awareness of cultural bias with respect to assessment tools

There were concerns that the assessment tools did present some problems when it came to truly capturing abilities:

“The ideal tool wouldn’t be culturally biased. Ours is, but at least we know its weaknesses and we make allowances... but most of these Essential Skills activities are strongly culturally biased.”

Learning disabilities or second language issues

All participants admitted they need some way of understanding what issues the learner was indeed challenged by:

“How do you tell the line between learning disabilities and language problems? Because we get a lot of people who have both issues, and it’s sometimes the student has to be working in the program for a long time before we realize that there’s more than just language going on here too... You realize this person is not progressing the way other people from a similar background are progressing. There’s something else. How do you test it?”

⁶⁶ Please consult the collaboration ‘tool’ available on the project’s website at <http://learnerpathways.wordpress.com> for language training programs and eligibility criteria.

What the speaker of English as a second/additional language is looking for

Depending on the program the assessors were involved in, what this project's target group of learners were looking for varied.

"They're looking for more academic English, for the skills they need to get into educational programs – the reading the writing which they feel is not emphasized in some of the LINC programs. Community ESL is more survival English."

– Assessor in the college sector

"It's one to one, individual help. They want to start from scratch, because if they go to a class everyone's at a different level, everyone speaks a different language becomes really tough, they kinda get lost in the crowd"

– Assessor from a community-based tutoring program

We've got a lot of math referrals."

"Writing is the draw to LBS . It leaves me wondering, don't they do any writing in an ESL class?"

Note: The above comments from the assessors do mirror what the learners in the focus groups had shared in their groups.

Reflections on learner goals and pathways

Those agencies dealing with lower level learners (LBS Levels 1 and 2) see more employment and independence goal path learners:

"They may have a job, they just kind of need these life skills – they want to go shopping or just be able to read with their kids, and some, they can't find a job so they need those basic skills to get a job."

A college preparation course is something that many learners who speak English as a second language aspire to in order to move on to a postsecondary program. One college assessor pointed out that even when being assessed for entry into academic upgrading strengthening English is still a priority:

"But many come in and say, when I ask them 'What college course are you interested in?', they say I know I want to improve my English and then I'll decide."

In fact, the assessors in the focus group who deal with learners in the lower levels stated that it is difficult at those levels for learners to explicitly state a goal.

Assessor 1: People will say 'I want to read and write.'

Assessor 2: Every learner you ever assess will tell you that.

Assessor 1: They all say that, and to tell you the truth, I find it really a shame that people around literacy who are literate do not respect that, because that is really what they want... It's just the freedom to be able to do that easily like other people do.

For those moving into college preparation, there is one overarching goal for many adults who recently arrived in Canada:

A lot of them are wanting to secure a more prestigious career – ECE, nursing, social work, these types of careers.

Transitions

There was consensus during the course of the assessor focus group discussions with respect to transitions not always being a linear phenomenon. Adult learners' goals can change or gaps they must tend to in order to meet entry criteria of their next-step program.

"On a daily basis I am in contact with the fluidity of learners who have experienced both programs. Even today, I readmitted a learner who was initially in ESL, was sent to LBS, then required ESL and now needs to be back in LBS before moving on to college in the winter. Although not a common case, such examples exist when transitioning from lower levels to higher levels."

Communication with next-step programs

Assessors lamented the fact that they often did not have enough time to do outreach with other programs. Communicating with next-step programs helps LBS agencies understand what the expectations for learners would be as they make their transitions, and helps create opportunities for bridging.

"We need to recognize bridging a lot more than we do – to reduce the fear and help them in that transition phase."

More opportunities to speak English

One school board assessor felt frustrated with the learners who never speak English when they go home and “often speak their own first language in class,” fearing that transitioning to the next step may never happen for these individuals. Several others suggested more opportunities to have English-only conversations. Assessors mentioned that they encouraged learners to attend conversation circles offered at library locations.

Additional comments

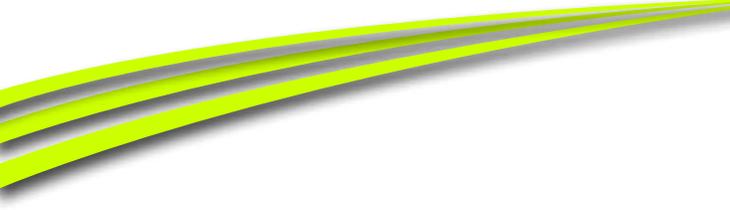
Adult credits do not ensure learners are college-ready

Assessors have observed that the fast pace of adult credit often leaves gaps in learning and basic skills:

“A significant number of people who took some English courses through adult credit... Very often they say I have a Grade 12 English and they test at a Level 3. It’s very common. ... Some are not sure how they handle to the transition from ESL [credit] to Grade 12 English, but for a lot of students, especially those who are a little older, it goes too fast.”

ESL streams – A way of addressing the diverse needs within college programs

Assessors discussed the changing demographics in Toronto and York Region and how LBS programs – indeed, all programs – were seeing adult learners who speak English as a second language making up more of their learning base. In that conversation it was mentioned that college post-secondary English programs are also struggling with whether to have two streams – an ESL stream and a non-ESL stream as part of their offerings. The assessor was aware that George Brown has two streams; Humber has two streams; Seneca still has one; and that George Brown also offers supports to first generation students – i.e. those who are the first in their families to attend a post-secondary program.



REFLECTIONS

The LBS and academic upgrading assessors who participated in the project's focus groups were quite reflective about the intricacies of conducting intake assessments with adults who speak English as second or additional language. They considered issues such as cultural bias in their assessment tools, and indicated they also asked a number of questions to help them decide whether the learner would be a good fit for their program (the Online Assessor Survey immediately following this section contains many of the questions assessors ask during intake interviews).

A number of assessors spoke of how they took great pains to try to learn about the language training options, but they confessed they did not know what to do with learners who said they had done ESL classes yet were not a fit for their LBS program.

Relationship building with other programs was something that many wished they had time for, and some who had been assessing for a number of years said they rely on their ever-thickening folder containing contact names, program flyers and course catalogues. Their personal contacts across the programs and the 'tattered folder' or 'crowded corkboard' are treasure troves of referral resources.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

LBS Assessor Focus Groups

- Trends LBS assessors have noticed: an increase in mental health issues; more learners from war-torn and impoverished nations; an increase in displaced workers
- Toronto assessors acknowledged that an evolution has taken place within LBS programs with respect to demographics – the traditional Canadian-born literacy learner from 30 years ago is often the minority in the LBS classes now
- ESL Literacy classes have helped reduce the number of very low-level ESL learners entering the LBS program
- Assessors felt that learner pathways were not always linear; individuals may sometimes move back and forth between programs as they work on different goals or try to revisit and fill gaps in order to meet the criteria of the next-step education or training program
- One of the biggest challenges for assessors is not knowing where to send the learner who says he/she has already attended an ESL or LINC program
- Discerning whether a learner's English gaps and challenges are related to English language or a learning disability (LD) is extremely difficult
- Those who have been admitted into an LBS program and have been deemed to have a high enough level of spoken English to attend LBS classes/tutoring sessions still need the opportunity to improve their English speaking skills – assessors would like to know more about formal and informal conversation circles in their areas
- LBS assessors recognize that their assessment tools are often culturally biased
- The helping careers – ECE, PSW, nursing, and social work – are a common long-term goal for those on the postsecondary goal path
- Adult credits and an OSSD earned during fast-paced quadesters do not necessarily mean the learner is college-ready



THE ONLINE SURVEY FOR LBS ASSESSORS

To obtain a deeper understanding of assessment, placement and referral practices within LBS agencies when it comes to adults whose mother tongue is other than English, an online survey link was sent out to all Anglophone stream LBS service providers in Toronto and York Region on November 21, 2011. The online survey provided valuable information regarding assessment, placement and referral practices, and assessment tools used.

PARTICIPATION IN THE ONLINE SURVEY

Twenty four individuals who identified themselves as LBS assessors participated the online survey.

- 58% of the 24 respondents were from community-based literacy programs.
- 21% were assessors with one of the three school boards that offer LBS programs in the network.
- 21% of respondents were assessors with a college upgrading program.
- The majority of respondents (17 of 24) work with LBS programs in Toronto. Six of the 24 respondents work with LBS programs in York Region. One respondent was from outside the region.

ASSESSMENT TOOLS USED BY RESPONDENTS

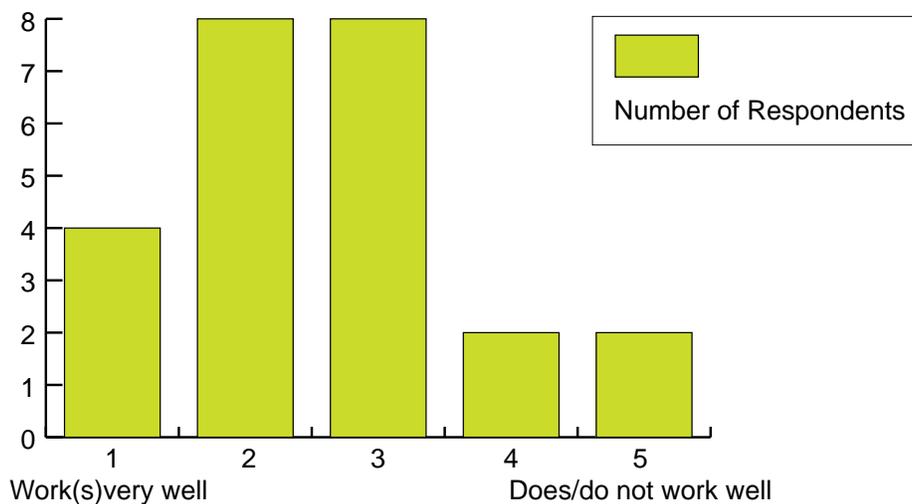
The survey asked respondents to identify **which formal assessment tools they use to determine appropriate placements for learners**. Respondents were able to indicate if they used more than one tool:

Assessment tool	Respondents
Canadian Academic Achievement Test (CAAT) or portions of it	5
Common Assessment of Basic Skills (CABS) or portions of it	7
Canadian Adult Reading Assessment (CARA) or portions of it	5
Test Of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES) or portions of it	1
Communications & Math Employment Readiness Assessment (CAMERA) or portions of it	3
Proprietary tool used by my organization	12
Other	11

Twelve of the 24 respondents indicated that they use more than one tool (or parts of more than one tool).

RATING THE TOOLS THEY USE – APPROPRIATE FOR ADULTS WITH ONGOING ESL NEEDS?

Respondents were asked to use a rating scale to indicate whether the assessment tools that are currently used by their program are suitable to assess the skills of learners who need improvement in their use of English as a second language:



Respondents were asked to explain their rating of their program's assessment tools:

The CAMERA was considered to be unsuitable for newcomers or immigrants who have little spoken English skills.

Tools were considered good or appropriate if/because:

- Used for many years; familiar with tool
- Simple to use
- Use real life tasks
- Consistent with what language level is used in class/tasks that are done in class
- Instructions are given verbally as well as on paper (verbal component of the assessment, whether formal or informal)
- It assesses reading skills – whether English is their first language or not doesn't matter

Not appropriate if:

- Not able to monitor which parts a learner is struggling with because of language

Respondents were asked if they **had considered adapting their assessment tool for adults whose mother tongue is other than English:**

- Almost half of respondents (48%) said that they had considered adapting their assessment tool(s) or intake process for individuals whose mother tongue is not English. The other 52% indicated that they had not considered adapting or modifying their existing tools or processes
- Some felt that a different assessment tool is not needed, as long as the learner's spoken English is at CLB Level 5 or higher and the content is culturally unbiased.
- One respondent said that he/she modifies it on the spot, as necessary, because there is not enough time to do the work needed to implement a whole new assessment tool.
- Another said that they give second language speakers additional time to complete the assessment, recognizing that these individuals face added stress, which may affect their outcomes.
- One respondent said that they try to find something that is culturally relevant for the learner and of interest to him/her.
- A number of assessors who said that they had considered modifying their tools gave reasons for why they have not yet implemented a modified assessment. Reasons for not moving forward on a modified assessment included: uncertainty regarding assessment requirements for the OALCF; wanting to learn more about various assessment tools.

THE INTAKE INTERVIEWS

Survey participants were asked to **list the questions they ask second language learners during the intake interview.**

For some respondents, the questions focused on the learner's past learning experiences and goals, while for other assessors the focus was on how the learner uses English in his/her everyday life. The following are questions asked by respondents during intake:

- What level of education has the learner completed? In what country and in which language?
- What languages does the learner speak?

- Can the learner read and write in his/her first language?
- Does the learner have any problems expressing him/herself in his/her first language? For example: learning disabilities, concentration problems.
- What was the learner's experience of school growing up, if any?
- How did he/she learn English?
- Does the learner have any difficulty understanding the assessor?
- What adult learning programs has he/she attended in the past? For how long did he/she attend? These could include LBS, ESL, LINC, high school credit, etc.
- What is the learner's CLB level?
- How long has he/she been in Canada?
- How has he/she used English? (at work, home, with children, etc.)
- What is the learners employment and educational background?
- What language is spoken at home? Does the learner speak English at home with his/her children or partner?
- What are the learner's short-term and long-term goals? Do they want to work on speaking skills or writing skills? Do they want to write the TOEFL? Why does the learner think that LBS is more appropriate than ESL?
- What are the learner's strengths?

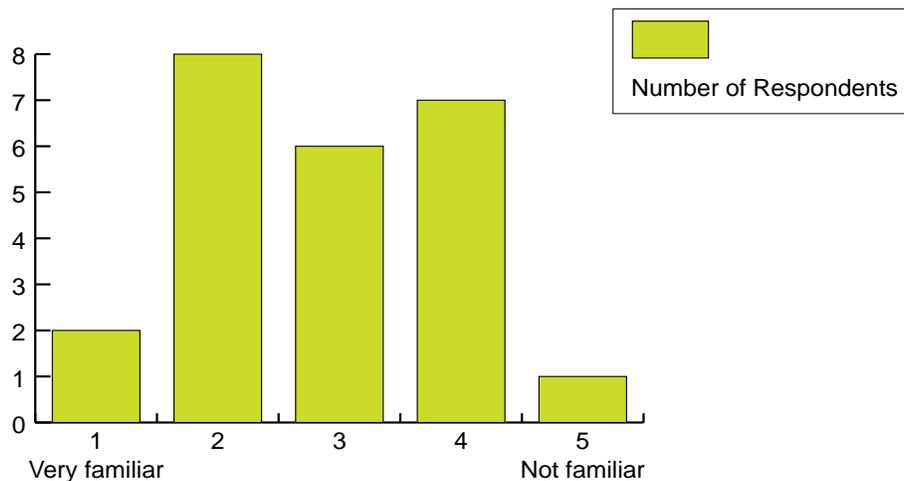
Survey participants were asked to **identify the ways in which they discern whether an individual is a good fit for their program**. The respondents were able to select multiple set responses from a menu:

Menu choices	# of respondents who use this approach
Determined through a set of screening questions	15 of 24
Determined through a specific speaking/listening task	6 of 24
Holistically drawing from the interview and my past experience as to individuals who would be a good fit	20 of 24
Asking for the client's Canadian Language BenchmarkLevel (if available)	12 of 24
Other	3 of 24

UNDERSTANDING OF THE CANADIAN LANGUAGE BENCHMARK LEVELS

Survey participants were asked to **rate their familiarity with Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) levels on a scale from 1 (very familiar) to 5 (not familiar):**

Responses showed that the **majority of respondents had some familiarity with CLB levels:**



Of the 24 survey participants, **21 (88%) indicated that they would like more information about Canadian Language Benchmark levels.** The remaining 3 participants said they do not want additional information.

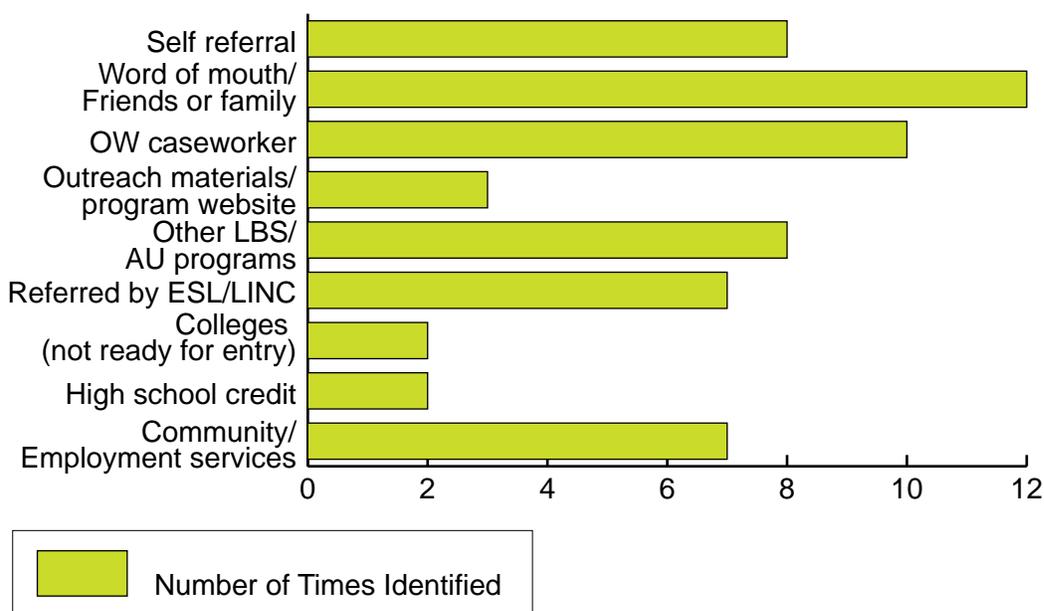
LEARNER PROVENANCE – HOW LEARNERS FIND THEIR WAY TO THE LBS PROGRAM

The online survey asked assessors **how learners with ESL needs come to their literacy or upgrading program.** Respondents were able to select multiple options:

The chart that follows on the next page shows that self referrals, word of mouth, referrals through other LBS programs and through clients' OW caseworkers are the most common ways through which the learners targeted in this report come to be in their LBS programs.

	Percentage of respondents
Informally referred from an ESL program	42%
Informally referred from a LINC program	42%
Referred through an Ontario Works caseworker	71%
Referred through Employment Ontario Employment Services	67%
Directed to the LBS program by the Literacy Access Network hotline	33%
Through word of mouth information from family, friends or other LBS students	83%
Referred from another LBS program	75%
Referred informally from Adult Credit high schools	38%
Self referral (learner found the program on his/her own; internet search/posters/walk-in)	88%
Other	25%

When asked what the **top three ways that learners with ESL needs come to their program**, survey participants identified a number of referral pathways:



REFERRING TO OTHER PROGRAMS WHEN CLIENTS ARE NOT AN APPROPRIATE FIT FOR LBS?

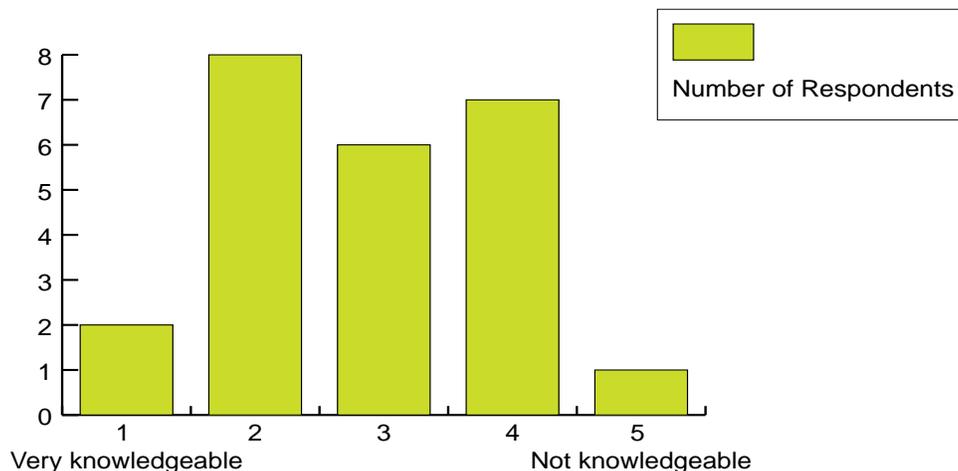
Survey participants were asked **where they refer students with both ESL and literacy needs whom they deem NOT the right fit for their program:**

When an LBS or AU program is not an appropriate fit for learners with ESL needs, they are referred to a number of different learning programs. ***When referring a learner, assessors take into consideration the learner's settlement status, language proficiency, educational/employment history, and education and/or employment goals.***

- Employment services for foreign trained professionals
- ESL or LINC programs
- English conversation classes or paid ESL classes (if the learner's status prevents them from accessing LINC or government-funded ESL)
- School board ESL credit or high school credit programs
- School board continuing education classes (non-credit)
- LBS programs with one-to-one tutoring
- Welcome Centres/settlement services

Respondents were asked **how knowledgeable they were about the range of English language training program options in the area:**

The majority of survey participants reported that they are somewhat knowledgeable about the various English language training programs in the area near their LBS agency. Only 8% of respondents said that they are "very knowledgeable" and only one respondent said that he/she is "not knowledgeable".





The survey had respondents indicate **what online tools or print materials they use to help them with referring second-language learners to language training programs:**

The respondents indicated that they use a variety of resources, including:

- Local Immigration Partnership maps
- *Learn 4 Life*, the Toronto District School Board catalogue of ESL programs
- The Toronto Catholic District School Board catalogue of continuing education programs
- Flyers and brochures gathered at different events and agencies
- College program catalogues and calendars
- Personal contacts
- Online search tools
- Websites: school board ESL programs, MTML, COSTI, Employment Ontario, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Canadian Language Benchmarks
- Phone calls to Welcome Centres and other community services
- 211 information

All survey participants said that they would like more information about the variety of English language training programs available to adult learners. One respondent wrote:

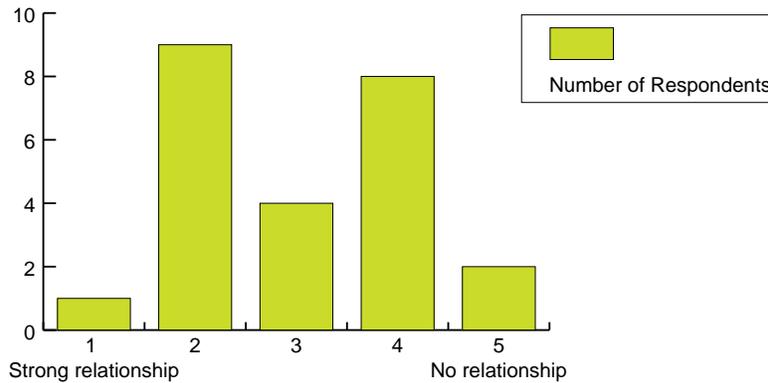
“I would love to see a central location on the web or booklet format that lists ALL the referral options in the GTA for additional language learners. If this website or booklet also explained each of the English language training options, that would be amazing.”

RELATIONSHIPS AND SERVICE COORDINATION WITH LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAMS



Survey participants were also asked to **rate the strength of their LBS program’s relationships with ESL, LINC and ESL high school credit programs and their existing level of service coordination with these programs:**

The chart on the following page shows that most respondents have some kind of relationship with language training programs.

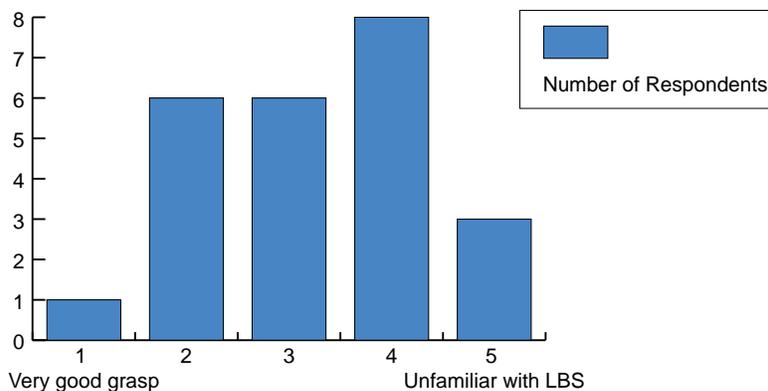


Only one respondent indicated that their agency has a “Strong relationship” and ten of the 24 respondents indicated that their agency has a weak relationship or no relationship with these providers.

Most respondents said that their agency does not have a formal referral process in place with language training programs. Many said that they have relationships with other service providers in their area, and that these support informal referral processes.

One assessor explained that, when assessments for both ESL and LBS are done at the same site, or if ESL and LBS classes are offered at the same location, informal referral relationships have developed out of necessity. Because school boards offer both programs, LBS and ESL instructors keep in touch with each other, even if they are not teaching at the same location. At another agency where both ESL and LBS are offered at the same site, an internal referral protocol is in place for learners who have reached an appropriate CLB level.

Survey respondents had mixed views about other adult learning programs’ understanding of Literacy and Basic Skills programs. Only one assessor felt that ESL, LINC and adult credit high schools have a ‘very good’ grasp of LBS programs offer. Three respondents felt that, in their experience, other adult learning programs are unfamiliar with LBS.



Survey respondents shared **some of the challenges they face when conducting placement interviews with individuals who have both literacy and ESL needs:**

- The learner's reason for coming to an LBS program is not appropriate (for example, because they have a friend who is in the class);
- The learner doesn't understand the difference between ESL and LBS;
- The learner is unable to complete the 'Personal Information' section of the intake form on their own;
- The individual's language skills are very poor and an interpreter is needed;
- The learner is a newcomer who is still facing pressing settlement issues;
- The learner has been referred from an agency that doesn't fully understand what "LBS upgrading" means;
- The learner thinks that they will complete training in two weeks;
- The learner has no formal documentation of their language levels (for example, the results of a CLB assessment);
- The assessor does not have sufficient information to determine an appropriate alternate placement for the learner;
- The learner does not fully understand the eligibility requirements with regards to (spoken) language level. It can be difficult to convince the learner that an LBS program is not appropriate for them and some learners feel that there is discrimination when they are turned down.

Survey participants were asked to identify any **new needs that have arisen among adult learners with both ESL and literacy needs:**

Status: Language training is often not accessible for people who do not have status. Many prospective learners come to LBS programs because they have heard that they will not be asked for Permanent Resident cards, SIN cards, etc.

Francophone learners: A growing number of women from Francophone African countries who want English language upgrading are coming to LBS programs.

Unemployed immigrants: A significant number of individuals who have very good fluency in spoken English but weak writing skills have lost their jobs in the recent economic downturn. Many are coming to LBS programs for upgrading. Some started working soon after they immigrated and never attended language training programs.

Mental health: Literacy programs have seen an increase in the number of learners who are dealing with mental illness.

Need for support services: A number of survey respondents said that they have seen an increase in the number of second language literacy learners who need transportation support, child care, housing assistance, financial counseling.

Number of learners: Programs in York Region have seen a steady increase in the number of individuals who need both ESL and literacy programs.

Assessors who participated in the survey identified the following gaps in service for learners with both ESL and literacy needs:

- There is a need for ESL training for people who have low literacy skills
- There is a need for ESL training for people who do not have status
- Lack of childcare, inconvenient childcare hours, lack of transportation support
- Need for different upgrading programs for native English speakers and ESL speakers
- Insufficient range of ESL programs in the area (only low level classes are offered)
- TTC tokens are provided to LBS learners but not learners in ESL programs
- There is a need for high level formal grammar instruction for ESL learners. Even if an individual has a gap between their strong speaking skills and weak writing skills, they often need formal skills-based training to address their structural grammar issues; however, this is not part of the LBS program and most LBS instructors are not trained in language instruction strategies.
- Very few or no services in rural areas
- No one-to-one tutoring programs for ESL learners

The assessors who participated in the survey were invited to share additional comments:

- One respondent felt that referrals from ESL to LBS programs may be limited because most LBS programs don't offer child care.
- Another respondent said that the ideal program would include training in speaking and listening, but also include math and computers. The majority of learners would benefit from this full range of instruction.
- Within one school board, the younger grades now use the term ELL (English Language Learner) while adult education is still using the term ESL. This is confusing for learners and LBS programs.
- One respondent described what he/she sees as specific categories of second language literacy learners: newcomers who studied English in their home country; immigrants who have lived in Canada for many years who have strong speaking skills but weak reading and writing; individuals who attend ESL classes but also have a desire to move forward with their education once their language skills are strong enough.
- Implementation Coordinated Language Assessment and Referral Services (CLARS) sites will ensure that learners with ESL needs are correctly referred to an appropriate program.



ONLINE LBS ASSESSOR SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

Assessment Tools

- Survey respondents across the sectors indicated that they employ a range of formal assessment tools; half of the respondents use more than one tool (or parts of several tools)
- The majority of respondents (over 80%) felt that the assessment tool(s) they use are suitable with respect to assessing the skills of adults they are assessing who speak English as a second or additional language; 20% felt that these tools did not work well for this target group
- 48% of the respondents said they had considered adapting their assessment tool(s) or intake process for individuals whose mother tongue is not English

Intake Interviews

- The majority of respondents (80%) indicated that they used the intake interview and their experience as assessor to holistically determine whether adults who speak English as a second/additional language would be a good fit for the LBS program
- Over 60% of the respondents determined program fit through a set of screening questions (see pp. 104-105) for a compiled list of questions (asked during the intake interview)
- 50% of respondents asked the client for his/her Canadian Language Benchmark CLB Level
- 88% of the survey respondents indicated that they would like more information about Canadian Language Benchmark levels

Learner Provenance

- Respondents were asked how the learners who speak English as a second language come to their LBS program
 - 88% indicated that learners were self-referred
 - 83% indicated that learners heard about the program through word of mouth
 - 75% indicated that learners were referred from another LBS program
 - 71% indicated that learners were referred through an Ontario Works caseworker
 - 67% indicated that learners were referred through their EO Employment Services
 - 42% indicated that learners were informally referred from ESL or LINC programs

Referring to Other Programs

- When not an appropriate fit for the LBS Program, adults with English as their second/additional language were sent to the following:
 - Employment services for foreign trained professionals
 - ESL or LINC programs
 - Conversation classes
 - School board ESL credit or high school credit programs
 - LBS programs with one-to-one tutoring
 - Welcome Centres/Settlement Services
- The majority of survey participants reported that they are somewhat knowledgeable about the various training programs in the area near their LBS agency; all survey participants said they would like more information about the variety of English language training programs available to adult learners
- LBS assessors use a variety of resources to help them refer clients to language training programs (see p. 109 for details)

LBS Relationships with ESL Programs

- Respondents were split approximately half/half as to whether they had strong or weak relationships with language training programs and adult credit programs
- 10 out of 24 respondents indicated that their agency has a weak relationship or no relationship with language training providers
- Most of the relationships that are in place support informal referral processes
- The majority of respondents indicated other adult education programs did not have a clear understanding of Literacy and Basic Skills programs

New needs/trends

- A growing number of women from Francophone African countries who want English language upgrading
- A significant number of displaced workers/unemployed settled immigrants with good fluency in spoken English coming to LBS for upgrading
- An increase in learners who are dealing with mental health issues
- There has been an increase in the number second language LBS learners who need transportation support, childcare, housing assistance and financial counseling
- York Region is seeing a steady increase in individuals having both ESL and literacy needs



LITERACY ACCESS NETWORK (LAN) TELEPHONE HOTLINE

The Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy operates the Literacy Access Network telephone hotline – ‘the LAN Line’ – to provide learners, practitioners, community agencies and the general public with information about adult literacy and upgrading programs in Toronto and York Region. MTML’s providing information and referral to both second language and literacy learners via the LAN line provided a natural site for more research on the needs, pathways and referral challenges related to learners with both ESL and literacy needs.

Established in 1989, the LAN hotline was initially funded by the provincial government with the mandate to provide information about and referrals to adult literacy programs.

The LAN line is not currently funded by MTCU. MTML maintains the hotline because we believe that it is a valuable and important service for potential learners, frontline workers and referral partners who need information about adult learning programs.

The LAN line now receives calls about a wide range of adult learning options, including literacy programs, high school credit programs, ESL/LINC, academic upgrading (Academic and Career Entrance), GED preparation, apprenticeship and certificate programs such as Personal Support Worker and Early Childhood Education, as well as computer skills training, math upgrading, and tutoring.

When providing information and referrals, the LAN operator usually asks some or all of the following questions to assess the caller’s needs and to ensure that they are given appropriate information:

- What is your learning or employment goal?
- Are you looking for a class to work on your reading and writing skills?
- Are you looking for a class that will help you prepare for college?

A large number of callers say they want to finish Grade 12 or get their high school diploma. While some people call specifically asking for information about ACE, most people are not aware of this option. The LAN operator usually tells people who want to finish high school that they have three options: credit high school, GED, or ACE. The caller is told that, when selecting a pathway, he/she should consider how many credits they already have; how long they have been out of school; whether their goal is employment or further education; and whether the cost of the GED test and preparation is a barrier.

Callers often say they want “an English class”, in which case the LAN operator asks if they want to improve their speaking and listening skills. If they indicate that working on speaking skills is their main objective, then they are referred to an ESL or LINC class, depending on their settlement status. And if it becomes evident during the call that they

are struggling with spoken English, then they are usually referred to ESL or LINC. The LAN operator also asks callers if they have been in an ESL or LINC class before; what CLB level they attained; why they left the class; and why they are looking for a literacy or upgrading class.

Some callers are able to clearly communicate their needs and their current skill level. If this is not the case, the operator asks:

- Have you done some high school in the past?
- What other upgrading programs have you participated in before?
- What kinds of things do you read? What do you find challenging to read?

Additional questions help the LAN operator to recommend a program that will likely be a good fit:

- Do you want to learn full time or part time? Daytime or evening?
- What part of the city do you live in? OR Where would you like to attend classes?
- What mode of transportation do you use?
- Would you prefer to learn in a classroom environment, in a small group, or one-on-one with a tutor?

The LAN caller profiles below highlight many of the issues that are discussed in the research report. Caller 4, for example, would like to pursue high school credit classes, despite the fact that she is a foreign trained professional, because she sees it as a way to improve her English skills and develop a better understanding of Canadian culture. This reflects the finding from the focus groups that some learners see a high school diploma (OSSD) as a 'real' credential because it is what most of their Canadian-born peers have attained.



CALLER 1

- Male
- Completed high school at home; no university degree
- Professional program in accounting from back home
- Goal: University program in accounting
- Looking for a referral to high school credit courses to get OSSD
- Formerly assessed at an adult high school where he was told to attend ESL credit courses
- Did not enroll because ESL credit courses are only offered at C-level
- Referred by LAN to MCI Bridging program for accountants at Ryerson



CALLER 2

- Female
- Asian heritage
- Completed education in Toronto (JK through to high school graduation/OSSD)
- Goal: Personal Support Worker certification
- Self referral through internet search
- In the process of applying for Second Career through Employment Service
- Was referred by Employment Service counselor for a CLB assessment
- Assessed at CLB level 4
- Looking to upgrade (at recommendation of the ES worker); concerned that she was not CLB 6
- Resident of Pickering – was referred to Durham regional literacy network for information on local programs and referred to Seneca College for an academic assessment



CALLER 3

- Female
- Immigrated from Russia last year; completed high school diploma at home
- Currently enrolled in LINC – Level 2 at a community college
- Sister called on her behalf looking for information about math classes
- No services to which she could be referred because her language skills are too weak
- Told that, when her language skills are stronger, the LBS program is an option



CALLER 4

- Female, Asian heritage
- Immigrated to Canada; trained as an MD in home country
- Currently working (not as a doctor)
- Looking to enroll in an adult high school; said that LINC and ESL were too easy and that other students were not interested in learning.
- Desire to improve English and learn about Canadian culture.
- Has an adolescent daughter who is currently enrolled in high school



CALLER 5

- Female, Spanish speaker
- Completed Grade 12 in home country; was told that most of her credits would not be considered towards an OSSD
- Currently enrolled in TOEFL preparation at COSTI
- Looking to enroll in academic upgrading
- Concerned that TOEFL was not the right path; the caller felt that, to succeed at the TOEFL, she would need a very extensive vocabulary and 'perfect' pronunciation.
- Also expressed concern that other students in the TOEFL class don't speak English so she is not exposed to correct pronunciation
- Referred to George Brown ACE program

The above LAN operator case studies demonstrate the importance of probing using effective questions that will help direct the caller to an appropriate program based on needs, eligibility criteria, education history, location and time preferences.



THE INTERVIEWS AND CONSULTATIONS

Between the months of April 2011 to February 2012 the lead researcher consulted with more than 55 individuals representing a range of stakeholders from across the programs. The individuals consulted were school board program managers/officers (LBS and ESL), LBS community-based program executive directors, community-based LBS practitioners, AU college instructors, ESL (non-credit) instructors and assessors, LINC and ESL coordinators, several adult learning centre principals, ESL adult credit leaders/instructors, representatives from other regional networks, and program site managers. Apart from the aforementioned language training and LBS program representatives, the researcher also initiated several preliminary discussions regarding the needs of adult clients with both language and literacy issues with settlement service agencies, Toronto social service staff, and Employment Service managers. Consultations also took place with staff from the Ontario Literacy Coalition, and Ontario Ministry representatives from EDU, MCI and TCU.

All interviews were semi-structured, inviting participants' general insights pertaining to the needs of second language learners with both literacy and language concerns and to the strengthening of service coordination. When possible, the interviews took place at program sites.

The interviewer ensured that the following themes and related questions were raised during the interviews:

- Needs and wants of adult learners
- New trends programs are seeing
- What makes for seamless transitions
- Gaps in Service
- Other comments

This section highlights the information that surfaced directly from the project's stakeholder interviews, with the data yielded arranged around the above themes. You may notice that the information yielded through the focus groups was often echoed in the comments and observations of the various stakeholders interviewed. When possible, supporting research has been inserted to clarify and enhanced the issues that were brought forth by the stakeholders we spoke to.

Needs and wants of English as second language adult Learners in LBS programs

Almost all LBS stakeholders who were consulted first expressed relief at the fact that “someone is finally looking at this issue,” underscoring that both Toronto and York Region were seeing second language learners in their classes or tutoring sessions or during intake.

A manager of a community-based agency that provides on one-to-one LBS tutoring described the following dilemma:

“Increasingly we are getting a lot of interest with people who have ESL needs and we are trying to be accountable to them within the constraints of the funding...”

LBS is ‘not an ESL program’

Several agencies specified that whenever a learner comes in who speaks English as a second language, staff will explicitly point out to the client that LBS is ‘not an ESL program’. Some agencies also include in their flyers that the program is for English speakers with a comfortable fluency. Indeed, current LBS Service Provider Guidelines recommend that LBS learners with English as a second or additional language should have a minimum Canadian Language Benchmark Level 6 speaking and listening skills.

Drawing points of LBS programs

Program managers felt that LBS classes/tutoring sessions were attractive to adults who spoke English as a second or additional language because they offered adult learners:

- Computer training
- Math upgrading
- E-learning opportunities
- Goal-oriented training/learner plans; transition-focused training
- The smaller classes - i.e. 15 in LBS versus 35 in ESL; or 1-1 tutoring offered by some LBS agencies. Several individuals mentioned that for some learners this format avoids replicating previous negative scenarios in which students (some with LDs) had been overwhelmed by large class sizes.
- Targeted learning for a purpose – i.e. assistance with writing exams (GED, WHMIS, food handling certificate, etc.)

Additional needs

Several college sector academic upgrading instructors approached the researcher with information they felt related to meeting learner needs. These instructors spoke of persistent Second Language Acquisition (SLA) gaps they see in learners who speak English as a second language with great fluency (including those learners who had moved through the school system). They noted gaps in the following areas:

- **Vocabulary development** – Even learners who are relatively fluent in their spoken English ask for ‘the meaning of the most basic of words’ and require help with the use of collocations (i.e. two or more words commonly used together)

- **Grammatical structures** – Problems persist with advanced grammatical structures, many of which are required in academic writing (e.g. use of the gerund)
- **Writing samples present issues that denote L1 interference** – The writing the learners submit often contains a multitude of errors (different from the errors of native speakers of English)

“Our funding is not ESL but we do have ESL needs. I go to ‘x’ because she has TESL training. I think our programs needs to address it. Not addressing the grammar needs is a disservice to the students.”

– A college ACE instructor in Toronto

The instructor’s words closely relate to a conclusion made in a 2008 UK study that explored the placement practices in ESL and literacy programs:

“Teachers recognise the overlap between bilingual learners in the two different kinds of provision, but institutionally there is a separation. Learners have to be defined as one or the other to fit, but for a large and growing number of learners in metropolitan and urban centres, the distinction is not a valid one. The ideas of literacy pedagogy, and of literacy itself at an institutional and policy level, have not kept up with the changes in the types of learners who are coming to literacy classes.”⁶⁷

A NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER

The researcher looked into the issue of writing difficulties for ESL learners who transition to programs that demand an academic writing focus. The following resources may provide some direction for instructors and programs when it comes to understanding why bilingual/ESL learners function on a different timeline with respect to the language skills and details what is being done with various programs to support the “catch up” period.

Cummins, Jim, Vicki Bismilla, Sarah Cohen, Frances Giampapa, and Lisa Leoni. “Timelines and Lifelines: Rethinking Literacy Instruction in Multilingual Classrooms.” *Orbit*, Vol. 36, No. 1. 2005. <http://www.tvoo.org/TVOOrg/Images/tvoresources/901D3C15-F854-5899-DEE921790AC5AD4E.pdf>

Gardner Flores, Lisa, and Dominique T. Chlup. *The Transition from Adult Literacy ESL Programs to Academic Reading and Writing: Next Steps for English Language Learners*. 2005. <http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/research/flores05trans.html>.

Harklau, Linda. “CAL: Digests: Generation 1.5 Students and College Writing.” Center for Applied Linguistics. October 2003. <http://www.cal.org/resources/digest/0305harklau.html>

⁶⁷ James Simpson, Melanie Cooke, and Mike Baynham, *The Right Course? An Exploratory Study of Learner Placement Practices in ESOL and Literacy* (London, UK: National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy, 2008), p.6, accessed April 4, 2011, http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=136#.



REFLECTIONS

Powerful Perceptions, Needs and Client-Centric Services

The learner focus group data presented in an earlier section of this report illustrates how powerful perceptions or misconceptions are when the learners also weigh in on whether a program is an appropriate fit for them. In our interviews it was also made clear that all programs deal with perceptions influencing decisions to attend or not attend. Programs go to great lengths to provide learning opportunities and develop curricula that are theoretically sound from pedagogically appropriate, but learner perceptions may trump such efforts.

“LINC is perceived as something inferior because it is a free program as opposed to paying... There’s also a misconception about the communicative tasks which are very much needed. They see it as chit-chatting but they need it.”

– LINC to College Program Coordinator

“LBS is perceived, on the surface, as being more advanced. What they do not know is that they had so much academic achievement at home that they do not realize that others have not yet finished high school.”

– Principal of an Adult Learning Centre in York Region

What also came to the fore was that we, as adult education programs, also need to examine our own perceptions. A school board program manager who understands LINC, ESL and LBS learners had the following to say about learner needs:

“Our perception of needs and their needs are two different things. We need to review our perception of what we think the adult client’s needs are and we may be surprised at what we find.”

As service deliverers of education and training programs to adults who are also our clients, this may be a point worth reflecting on. It may also point to the need for imparting more accessible information to learners so they can make more informed choices about their learning options.



New trends programs are seeing

All the stakeholders we spoke to indicated that the diversity within York Region and Toronto is indeed reflected in all adult education programs across the ministries.

*“Ten years ago you would be surprised to find ESL people in the LBS program. Things have changed today... We are lucky to have LBS here because **with greater probing at intake we see that some learners have been here long enough, adjusted, learned the language relatively well and would best be served in LBS.**”*

– School board ESL site manager

“The majority of adults who are in credit programs are immigrants.”

– Adult Credit Instructor

“LBS has evolved from 30 years ago from the 40-year-old Canadian-born learner to a mix of learners made up of traditional LBS learners, Caribbean learners and ESL learners.”

– LBS Officer at a school board program

Another trend that has surfaced in community-based, school board and college sector LBS programs is the presence of more and more young learners in their 20s who had struggled in school – learners who arrived in Canada as children or adolescents and attended school in Ontario.

“We are seeing an ever-increasing group of adult Grade 9 and Grade 10 early school-leavers who may have an element of LD or don’t speak English at home.”

– Coordinator of a York Region LBS tutoring program

A meeting with adult credit staff in a Toronto west-end adult learning centre revealed that they are seeing new immigrants who would rather do the Grade 9-12 adult credits in order obtain a high school diploma because “they are scared of the TOEFL” (a challenging, high stakes exam makes one eligible for university entry). Adults can start Grade 9 in September and finish OSSD by June because, as mature students, they can obtain up to a maximum of 26 high school credits for prior learning.⁶⁸

Keeping an eye on recent and emerging trends allows programs to consider their evolving learner base and take stock of whether the program is indeed serving the needs of these learners.

Seamless transitions – Are we there yet?

Fourteen years ago, Norman Rowen’s seminal report on learner transitions, *More Walls than Doors*, stated that “for at least a decade there have been pronouncements...about the need for education in Ontario to become more seamless.”⁶⁹ Back then, administrators and practitioners had “voiced the need to develop new relationships among programs and funders/sponsor which will meet the needs, including better transitions...”⁷⁰ Almost 25 years later, the LBS Program has

68 Please consult the Glossary of Terms for details on Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR).

69 Norman S. Rowen, *More Walls Than Doors* (Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy, 1998), p. 1.

70 *Ibid.*, p. ii.

now implemented a transition-oriented curriculum framework and the province has identified service coordination across the ministries as a key priority.

Several of those who were interviewed and asked to reflect on transitions had this to say:

- The shift in both ESL and LBS to learner-centred and outcomes based programming will set the foundation for smoother transitions because the learner's goal will guide the learning path.
- Building relationships across the programs and becoming familiar with the different programs that are out there will help in guiding learners to their next steps.

Academic upgrading instructors at college programs, however, mentioned that there are problems in transitioning even for the most diligent of ESL-needs learners in their classes. Many of these learners lack the readiness to proceed to the next step after one semester. Even when the learners do manage to move to the next step, the instructors worry that they may not be able to handle moving from a supportive LBS learning environment into a mainstream postsecondary without those supports. How will they fare? How would lower level LBS learners who speak English as a second language fare as they transition to their next step?

Research predicts they may not fare well because they may not have been given the time to catch up and move to the next step with all the pieces in place. Consider the following learning timelines⁷¹ cited by Cummins et al. with respect to younger ELLs in the K-12 system:

- *It usually takes one to two years for students to become reasonably fluent in conversational English*
- *It usually takes two years for students in the early grades to acquire basic decoding skills to a level similar to their English-speaking classmates*
- *It usually takes at least five years for bilingual/ESL students to catch up to native English speakers in academic English*

Although SLA processes are different for adults than they are for children, adults would certainly require ample time to catch up as well. When Ontario Works caseworkers ask why their clients are often stuck at CLB Level 3, the language skills acquisition timelines may play at least a partial role.

Building our understanding of SLA processes and timelines may also inform what academic supports may be necessary for the learners this project targets as they move along their pathway.

71 Jim Cummins et al., "Timelines and Lifelines: Rethinking Literacy Instruction in Multilingual Classrooms," *Orbit*, Vol. 36, No.1, p. 22, accessed February 22, 2012, <http://www.tvoo.org/TVOOrg/Images/tvoresources/901D3C15-F854-5899-DEE921790AC5AD4E.pdf>.

Gaps in service

The following gaps in service or wish-list items were identified in our stakeholder interviews:

- The need for **academic counselling** for adult learners was mentioned several times. People felt there were EO employment counsellors and CIC settlement counsellors, but no counselling services available that tackled adult education options holistically through an adult education lens (an adult guidance counsellor of sorts). Counselling would be based on pedagogical and andragogical needs. Counsellors would have a solid understanding of all program options and would be well versed in literacy development and language acquisition theories and approaches.
- There is no dedicated program/stream of language training that focuses on settled immigrants who may still be at a low proficiency level, but refuse to attend ESL programs because they do not perceive themselves as needing ESL training which they perceive to be only for newcomers. The following excerpt from one of our interviews truly captures why this gap poses a number of dilemmas:
“What tends to happen is that they were people who came as immigrants 20-25 years ago, didn’t do a lot of ESL if any and who have learned what they know how to speak based on television and what they picked up at work. But usually, at home, it’s their native language that they speak. And now they think, ‘Oh, I don’t need ESL, I can speak,” but they’ve learned - they’ve mislearned a lot of English, and that is quite solidly mislearned. But they also don’t see themselves as fitting into a newcomer ESL program because they’ve been here for 25 years. That is where there’s a gap, and they don’t want to be doing ESL, and they don’t want to do an ESL assessment, and you don’t know what language benchmark they’re at. ...What do you do?”
- Several Ontario Works (OW) caseworkers noted that many of their clients stay stuck at CLB Level 3 classes. They expressed a need for more job-specific training options/courses for these lower language proficiency levels.
- More opportunities to have learners within their adult education training options gain Canadian work experience. (Note: Several adult learning centres in the Toronto area offer a CanEx co-op option).
- No next-step counselling is available when a learner exits LINC and ESL programs. Language training programs involve only an open exit policy.
- Canadian Language Benchmark assessments should be free for Canadian citizens too.
- More bridging supports are needed for LBS learners with ongoing ESL issues after they move out of LBS. Providing tutoring support or a ‘come back once in a while option’ on a needs basis was something stakeholders felt would truly
- A program manager of a York Region tutoring program articulated that Welcome Centres

would benefit from having LBS expertise on-site once a week. An LBS resource person could “help people with that imminent career or college goal. Within a short time we could put them on the right path.”

What follows are also the gaps in service that were articulated in the responses from the project’s online assessor survey.

- Some assessors identified a need for different upgrading programs for Canadian-born English speakers and ESL speakers
- An insufficient range of ESL programs in some areas (only low level classes are offered)
- TTC tokens are provided to LBS learners but not learners in ESL programs
- There is a need for high level formal grammar instruction for ESL learners. Even if an individual has a gap between their strong speaking skills and weak writing skills, they often need formal skills-based training to address their structural grammar issues; however, this is not part of the LBS program and most LBS instructors are not trained in language instruction strategies.
- There is a need for ESL training for people who do not have status
- Very few or no services in rural areas for learners with both literacy and ESL issues
- Very few free one-to-one tutoring programs for ESL learners⁷²

Promising Practices and Models

As we visited program sites and talked to a number of people within the various programs, we had the opportunity to ask about processes and practices in place that enhance learning pathways, support transitions and help strengthen service coordination and relationships across the programs.

- Having an **orientation protocol and visual materials** in place helps learners situate themselves within their learning pathway. Some promising practices we hear are:
 - The Toronto Catholic District School Board distributes an orientation letter to its adult learners, and within the ESL classes it displays posters that provide learners information about their CLB levels.
 - The York Region Catholic District School Board ESL program employs large posters and bookmarks that help learners visualize their learning steps.
- The TDSB has a **telephone pre-screening tool in place to direct the call** to the appropriate program

⁷² Frontier College runs ESL tutoring for adult learners either wholly or in partnership with other programs.

- The academic upgrading program at George Brown College delivers a **3-week assessment component** focusing which includes a counselling piece and a communications assessment piece. The intention is to gently ease the learner's transition into the program. Students see a counsellor for the self-management piece and self-awareness is fostered through writing a self-discovery piece. Students do an essay refresher and this helps determine where it would be best to place them. A group writing paragraph exercise is done so that learners do not feel singled out.
- Some sites are considering making an **ESL library** available to LBS learners.
- Setting up **conversation circles** or **book clubs** in order help learners strengthen their English speaking skills may also be helpful.

Stakeholders also felt that both learners and service providers have benefitted from:

- Co-located programs where programs and services are under one roof. Assessors who deem that another program may be a better fit can walk the person over to the other program.
- The learning hub model (e.g. the Learning Enrichment Foundation which houses LINC, skills training, an LBS program, settlement supports, employment services, and much more) can help solidify niche pathways. For example, many of the learners in the LBS program at that site transition into the skills training programs. It is their one-stop learning centre.
- The flexibility that is afforded to the partnering service providers within an action centre model to meet the complex needs of displaced workers was noted by those who were part of the PMP action centre. The YCDSB had the ESL piece in that initiative and the manager saw tremendous benefits for the adult learners they were serving: "The curriculum we used was customized once the learner identified what their goal was. For the most part the learners were never confused and there was a straight line to follow... We also had the luxury of passing them on when they progressed."
- In-service professional development that is done with ESL, LBS, and LINC staff all together. This is possible in school boards where one manager oversees all three programs in the Continuing Education department.

Our research also uncovered a creative and promising collaborative teaching approach that has been piloted in the United States with great success:

- The I-BEST approach: The Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) program pairs English as a second language (ESL)/adult basic education (ABE) instructors and professional-technical instructors in the classroom to concurrently provide students with literacy education and workforce skills. The contextualized team teaching approach was pioneered by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and offers enhanced supports and student services to students with limited English proficiency. Learn more about I-BEST by visiting <http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/e-integratedbasiceducationandskillstraining.aspx>.

All the above practices and models draw on the spirit of collaboration, creativity, and openness, as programs try to address the needs of learners in new ways.

In the Best Interest of the Learners

The ***Exploring Learner Pathways: Meeting at the LBS/ESL Intersections*** project explores the issues surrounding ESL- and literacy-needs learners from a front-line perspective. The researchers would be remiss not to include some of what was shared by stakeholders with respect to systemic barriers when it comes to service coordination across the programs.

Stakeholders frequently lamented the separation of programs that are siloed under the various ministries, stating openly that a separation of programs often leads to competition for the same learner base. What is heartening, however, is that this project has given ‘official license’ for front-line staff across the programs (MCI, CIC, EDU and TCU) to be frank about their experiences in trying to meet the needs of ESL learners. What has been humbling for the researchers is the fact that individuals from ESL, LINC and adult credit programs have graciously opened their doors to TCU-funded researchers, and have candidly shared their insights and experiences. The best interest of the learners who try to navigate our numerous programs seems to be at the heart of this opening up to each other. Expanding on Norm Rowen’s ‘doors’ metaphor, the relationship-building piece of this project may be showing us that as programs open their doors to each other, they may be setting the stage for a more holistic take on adult education in Toronto and York Region, ultimately opening the right doors for our adult learners.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Stakeholder Interviews

- Stakeholders identified LBS learners who speak English as a second or additional language as having many of the same needs as the Canadian-born speakers of English, but they indicated they have additional needs that are different as well:
 - Ongoing vocabulary development
 - Grammar needs that need addressing
 - Writing issues/errors that present differently from the those of Canadian-born LBS learners
- Powerful perceptions (or misconceptions) on the part of learners as to whether they feel a program is an appropriate fit for them plays a significant role as to whether they wish to be in a particular program (LINC, ESL, or LBS) – programs may be viewed as carrying a certain status or prestige. The adult learners may

be closing off valid options to their learning due to misinformation or partial information.

- Misinformation or gaps in information with respect to other programs and their eligibility criteria were found to be a reality as the researchers interviewed a number of stakeholders in LBS, language training, settlement, and OW programs.
- Many stakeholders expressed concern that - whether in ESL or LBS programs – many adults rarely spoke English outside the classroom. They felt this impeded their progress.
- An emerging trend that all three LBS sectors are seeing younger second-language adult learners who arrived in Canada as children or adolescents (Generation 1.5 learners) and who attended some elementary and/or high school in Ontario. Some are early school leavers (who may or may not have had a learning disability) and some have completed high school but have noticeable gaps.
- LBS college sector instructors indicated that learners with ongoing second language issues attending college programs often are not ready to move to the next step after one semester. If learners do reach a certain level of readiness and move to the next step, there is concern they may not succeed in their college courses without the supportive structures akin to those in their LBS program. More bridging are often needed for LBS learners with ongoing ESL needs after they transition out of their LBS program.
- Several stakeholders directly involved with EDU's adult credit offerings indicated that although not originally intended with ESL students in mind, the adult credit courses (which include ESL for credit offerings) delivered within the fast-paced quadesters (8-week sessions) have become a commonly chosen education option by adults born outside of Canada who wish to complete an OSSD. It was also noted that some second language adult learners choose the adult credit route as a 'TOEFL avoidance' pathway – i.e. the TOEFL is perceived to be too challenging, therefore some adults would rather do an accelerated OSSD than write the intimidating high-stakes test.
- In York Region, some LBS agency staff felt there may be a role that LBS programs could play within Welcome Centres to fast-track newcomers who have a facility in spoken English toward employment or postsecondary.
- A number of stakeholders mentioned that LBS practitioners who have both LBS experience and are TESL trained are an under-utilized resource.
- Stakeholders from ESL and LBS programs underscored the fact that probing during the intake process is the key to determining where the adult would best be served. Understanding a client's educational background, goals, needs, and challenges makes for more appropriate placements and referrals.

- Co-located programs or learning hubs facilitate informal referral processes. Managers, teachers, and assessors in ESL, adult credit and LBS programs all stressed that the simple act of being able to walk the client across the hall to another program that may be a better fit for the client *immediately* helps to set adults on their learning path. The physical proximity of programs makes being directed to another program less frustrating for the client.
- A formal orientation piece helps adult learners to better understand the program they are about to participate in and to locate themselves and their current program along their learning pathway.
- Many stakeholders across the programs felt that the separation of programs under the various ministries – siloed program and funding structures – did create an element of competition between the programs. It was noted, however, that the informal relationships between programs and the initiative of staff dedicated to serving the best interest of the learners are what lead to learners being referred to other adult education and training options that make more sense from both a pedagogical and/or goal-oriented perspective.
- Managers from some of the larger education institutions offering ESL (credit and non-credit), LBS, LINC and EDU courses report that the program managers rarely if ever sit down together to discuss learner transitions across the programs.
- The various adult education fields have their own workplace culture, processes and terminology in place (chock-full of acronyms). The level matrices and assessment procedures they use are often foreign to those outside of the field. Several of those we interviewed indicated that sometimes these differences make it difficult to dialogue across the programs.⁷³
- Stakeholders involved in alternative delivery models which allow for more collaboration between service providers across the programs and which introduce greater flexibility with respect to program pace and effective and timely transitioning – e.g. the action centre model – indicated such models serve the learner well because the learning timelines and points at which learners can transition are negotiated between the service providers based on the specific needs of the learners.

⁷³ The collaboration tool available on the project's website at <http://learnerpathways.wordpress.com> and the glossary of terms aim to facilitate dialogue and collaboration across the programs.



CONCLUSIONS

The *Exploring Learner Pathways: Meeting at the LBS/ESL Intersections* project focused on the needs and learning pathways of second language learners who attend Anglophone stream LBS programs in Toronto and York Region LBS. The researchers ventured into the front-lines – into classrooms and tutoring sites – and this report has spotlighted the voices of learners, teachers and assessors who have profound insights and knowledge when it comes to answering the project’s two-pronged guiding question, i.e. ‘What is working and what isn’t working when it comes to responding to the learning and transition needs of the LBS learner with ongoing ESL issues?’ The ‘takeaways’ at the end of the research sections in this report are where readers will find what was felt to be working well and what gaps or concerns were held by LBS learners, practitioners, assessors and an array of stakeholders interviewed.

Based on the findings yielded from the focus groups, it can be concluded that, provided learners have a rather solid proficiency of spoken English and a significant gap in their reading and writing in relation to their higher level of spoken English, the LBS program is an appropriate option along their learning pathways. The LBS learners who speak English as a second/additional language all reported that the LBS programs they were attending were giving them a chance to focus meticulously on math, computers, reading, writing and spelling. Many of these learners welcomed the opportunity to be part of a program that works on targeted tasks that will help them move towards their next step – be it further learning, employment or greater independence. As learners who speak English as an additional language, many of the LBS learners who participated in the project’s focus groups still frame their learning experience in LBS as ‘improving my English’; however, according to LBS practitioners and assessors, the second language learners who were clear on how their literacy and upgrading program was indeed different from an ESL program, were the ones who benefitted the most from LBS instruction.

The *Learner Portraits* presented in this report offered a privileged glimpse into the learning pathways and goals of second language learners in LBS programs and an understanding as to the motivations that drive the adults along their learning journeys. The pathways also demonstrated how life circumstances (e.g. layoffs, non-recognition of previous training, interrupted/terminated learning due to war/trauma, being out of school for a while, not being able to find work) and/or the learners’ perceptions of what they now need to be productive in their daily lives (e.g. more math, an OSSD, computer training, a class that came highly recommended, a chance to take part in something other than language training) impact their learning paths. The conclusion that can be drawn from the portraits showcased in the report is that learner pathways are complex and are shaped by a multitude factors that impact learning and transitions.

Learners’ perceptions as to which program was appropriate for them along their learning path – an EDU, TCU or MCI program – were often influenced by the recommendations of their friends, their previous teachers and their caseworkers (if they were Ontario Works clients), and their own estimation of what they needed to work on. The researchers also found that a lot of misinformation or partial information existed on the front lines regarding the various adult

education programs and eligibility criteria. Many who were interviewed, took part in the focus groups or completed the online assessor survey indicated they did not know enough about other programs and felt others did not know much about their programs. Thus, in the most basic of ways, service coordination can only be strengthened if more effective ways of sharing or displaying information about the programs are in place.

In addition to a more effective information sharing strategy, another crucial piece in ensuring that learners are directed toward the appropriate program is the commitment on the part of intake officers or front-line staff to asking probing questions. Whether we spoke to LBS or ESL assessors or read the comments of assessors who responded to the online survey, it was consistently stressed that probing yields a more detailed picture of learner needs, previous training and education, work history, number of years in Canada. Formal assessment tests coupled with a series of probing questions help make for more accurate assessments and referrals.

The demographic data presented in this report statistically illustrate the diversity that exists within York Region and Toronto, but the diversity that was encountered in our learner focus groups – 74 learners who speak 40 different languages and who hail from 40 different countries of origin – underscores the ‘superdiversity’ that is found in LBS programs in the region. In addition to the cultural and linguistic diversity, however, one finds diversity in other aspects of the learners: their age, their educational backgrounds, the number of years they have resided in Canada, their literacy levels in the mother tongue, etc. All these variables add a ‘super-complexity’ to the overarching goal of meeting the needs of the learners. We heard from some learners that a slow pace was key for them; from others we heard that writing progress was slow; from others we heard that they continue to struggle with speaking. A one-size fits all adult education program does not exist and could not possibly meet the needs of learners with both literacy and language issues. Even the array of adult education and training programs that exists still cannot match the diversity of profiles and needs within the Toronto/York Region context. Perhaps that is why there is a great appetite amongst service providers across the programs to discuss the challenges they face and the diverse needs that are emerging in their classrooms. The project’s 1-day forum was an example of how valuable it was to have both program managers and front-line staff from across the programs meet and dialogue about learners and smoother transitions along the learning pathways.

Learners who participated in this project expressed a number of needs, including needs related to program content and teaching approaches that appealed to them; androgogical needs (being able to direct their own learning , to see relevance in their learning experiences); and psychosocial needs (needs related to identity and belonging to the mainstream community). Although beyond the scope of this project, there are a number of other issues that were raised in the discussions with learners. One cannot discount in the least the effects of poverty⁷⁴, discrimination, levels of acculturation/integration, labour market realities, disappointment in being told one does not have what it takes to move ahead just yet, and limited social capital.

74 23.8 per cent of new immigrants in Ontario (5 years or less) were considered low incomes in 2009 (much higher than the overall low income rate in the province of 13.1 per cent) – cited in the 2012 Drummond report, p. 292

Consider the following statement from a study exploring the experiences of immigrants completing a health care aide training program:

Participating in and successfully completing programs is not a panacea. It is just part of a long, difficult process of acculturation, adaptation, socialization and negation that continues on a daily basis as immigrants struggle to find satisfactory work, interact with co-workers and residents, and juggle the personal and professional demands and stress of modern life and sometimes discrimination as well...⁷⁵

As we aim to meet learners' needs, make appropriate referrals and work towards seamless transitions, grasping the implications of the diversity of learners in Toronto and York Region and the sheer complexity of needs that need addressing as they move along their learning pathways makes it clear that greater communication across the adult education programs is a necessity. Building relationships across the TCU, MCI, CIC and EDU programs becomes a crucial first step that sets the foundation for collaboration and innovation in program design and delivery, which can benefit all learners with both literacy and language needs in the region.

⁷⁵ Ping Wong, Patricia Duff, and Margaret Early. "The Impact of Language Skills Training on Immigrants' Lives." *TESL Canada Journal*, Spring, 18, no. 2 (2001), p. 27.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the project's research findings, the project team puts forth the following recommendations:

- 1. Improve access to information about the range of learning and training programs offered by the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, the Ministry of Education, and by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.**

Research findings show that adult learners would benefit from:

- A one-stop portal for information about adult learning, such as a website or telephone hotline in order to learn about the range of options and determine the best course of learning to achieve their goals;
 - Resources or orientation materials that provide an overview and description of adult learning programs and pathways;
 - Impartial counseling related to adult learning programs and pathways;
 - Formal orientation to adult learning programs and educational pathways for newcomers
- 2. Create opportunities and resources for service delivery agencies providing adult language, literacy and learning programs to increase their knowledge and awareness of each other.**
 - Research findings show that the LBS field needs to develop its understanding of language learning programs and increase its capacity to determine when a learner's needs are best met by a language program (beyond simply looking at an individual's CLB levels). Similarly, the language learning field needs to develop its understanding of literacy and Essential Skills programs and increase its capacity to determine when a learner's needs would best be met by a Literacy & Basic Skills (LBS) program.
 - Forums, such as the one organized as part of this project, create opportunities for dialogue, collaboration and mutual understanding across adult learning fields.
 - 3. Develop and implement a screening and assessment approach that is flexible and responsive to the complex needs of the learners, to be used by language programs/ CLARS centres and literacy programs when determining a learner's eligibility and suitability.**
 - Although many LBS assessors have the knowledge and experience required to determine whether or not a learner who speaks English as an additional language is a

good fit for a literacy program, there is a lack of consistency in how prospective learners are assessed. A common reference point would strengthen common understanding across the programs.

- Co-location of ESL and LBS programs improves practitioners' ability to determine whether a learner is best suited for a literacy or language training program; however most LBS programs are not co-located with ESL or LINC classes.

4. Provide a greater diversity of language training and literacy programs in order to address the distinct needs of different groups of learners.

- LBS learners who speak English as an additional language have many of the same needs as Canadian-born LBS learners; however, they also have additional needs, such as ongoing vocabulary development, structural grammatical issues, writing difficulties that are distinct from the errors made by learners whose first language is English.
- Some assessors identified the need for academic upgrading programs to also address the needs of adults who speak English as an additional language. These learners often need additional support or instruction to move on to their next step – they often require focused ESL explanations and more time to be able to show gains and transition to next steps.
- Research revealed that some settled immigrants who have been living in Canada for many years need language instruction to improve their spoken proficiency, yet they perceive ESL classes to be for new immigrants or feel that, because they took ESL classes when they first came to Canada, they are 'done' language training.

5. Support partnerships and collaborative initiatives between language and literacy providers.

- Research findings show that co-location of language and literacy classes promotes enrolment in appropriate training and smoother transitions between the two programs, as well as understanding and communication between practitioners.
- Programs that allow for collaborative teaching among language and literacy instructors within the same classroom holds promise for adult learners who need to upgrade both their language and Essential Skills.
- The Action Centre model of collaborative, highly targeted service delivery holds promise for adults with complex and intersecting learning needs.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Academic and Career Entrance (ACE): Adult upgrading certificate delivered by community colleges in Ontario and partnerships between colleges and community literacy organizations. ACE is recognized as a Grade 12 equivalency by colleges and apprenticeship offices in Ontario and by a growing number of employers. ACE is available at all 24 community colleges and online.

Academic Upgrading (AU): Prepares learners for college postsecondary programs and technical training. AU typically serves learners who may not have a high school diploma but whose skills are above a Grade 9, or learners who have a high school diploma but lack specific prerequisites for postsecondary training.

Adult Education: All sustained, systematic, and structured educational activities, at any level beyond initial education, whether offered formally or non-formally, which are undertaken by all of those defined as adults in their society for the purposes of personal, social, or workplace knowledge, skills, attitude and values acquisition. Adult education learning experiences can be categorized into three types: certified, not certified and experiential (categories consistent with formal, non-formal and informal learning).⁷⁶

Andragogy: An approach of learning strategies focused on adults where learners are engaged in a learning process which involves self-direction and autonomy.

Articulation: Systematic coordination of course and/or program content within and between educational institutions to facilitate the continuous and efficient progress of students from grade to grade, school to school, and from school to the working world.

Assessment: Any process or procedure that gathers information to decide about a learner's knowledge, skills, and behaviours. Service providers conduct three kinds of assessments – intake assessment, ongoing assessment and exit assessment.

Basic Skills: The additional skills a learner needs to use their literacy skills, such as, digital technology, interpersonal skills, problem solving and critical thinking.⁷⁷

BICS and CALP: Basic interpersonal communication skills (i.e. conversational fluency in a language) and cognitive academic language proficiency (i.e. students' ability to understand and express, in both oral and written modes, concepts and ideas that are relevant to success in school).⁷⁸ The distinction between BICS and CALP [introduced by Jim Cummins in the early 80s] was made in order to draw attention to the timelines and challenges that second language learners encounter as they attempt to catch up to their peers within an academic context.

⁷⁶ Council of Ministers, Canada (CMEC), *Developing an Adult Education Policy Framework: Terminology, Typology and Best Practices* (2005), p. 7.

⁷⁷ LBS Support Organization Guidelines, December 2011.

⁷⁸ Jim Cummins, "BICS and CALP: Empirical and Theoretical Status of the Distinction," eds. B. Street and N. H. Hornberger, in *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (New York: Springer Science + Business Media LLC, 2008), p. 71.

CLARS: Acronym for the Coordinated Language Assessment and Referral System – a common third-party assessment approach through which an adult immigrant learner’s readiness and proficiency level is assessed in a CLARS centre/site in order to place the learner in an appropriate language training class, whether in a federally funded CIC program (such as LINC/CLIC) or a provincially funded MCI program (such as ESL/FSL). Full implementation expected in Ontario by the end of 2012/start of 2013.

Canada Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA): The five-year agreement signed in 2005 by federal and provincial ministers responsible for immigration (CIC and MCI) that was extended to March 2011. This agreement sets the framework for enabling and enhancing the coordination of federal and provincial settlement policies and programs, defining common standards and harmonizing approaches as both ministries address gaps in services to immigrants. The CLARS initiative sprang from COIA.

Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT): An assessment tool that measures an adult’s current functional level in math, reading and language as they correspond to school grade levels.

Canadian Adult Reading Assessment (CARA): An assessment tool that is comprised of reading passages with a readability range that covers Grades 1-12 followed by a set of comprehension questions.

Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB): A set of language performance standards with levels literacy to 4 (basic/elementary), 5 to 8 (intermediate), and 9 to 12 (advanced).

Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB): A not-for-profit, national standard-setting body for the Canadian Language Benchmarks.

Common Assessment [in the LBS Program context]: The approach to assessment used by LBS service providers, whereby agencies use comparable assessment tools and approaches, based upon the common language of learning outcomes, in order to enable learners to move among these agencies without being unnecessarily reassessed. Common assessment also facilitates communication about the achievements of learners with other stakeholders of the LBS Program, such as training programs and employers.⁷⁹

Common Assessment of Basic Skills (CABS): CABS is assessment tool used to support initial assessment using the LBS Levels. The tasks in CABS focus on the development of print and meaning component skills, such as decoding and vocabulary development, the writing process, or numerical operations and calculations. A CABS online tool also is available. LBS Levels are articulated to Essential Skills levels 1-3 in the domains of Reading Text, Document Use and Numeracy.

Competencies: Broad, generic categories of learners abilities that capture and organize the

⁷⁹ Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. *Common Assessment in the Literacy and Basic Skills Program*, (August 2000), p. 7.

learning in a program⁸⁰; Statements of intended outcomes of learning applicable to a variety of specific contexts; observable, measurable behaviours, usually evaluated against specifically stated objectives, conditions or standards of performance.⁸¹ The six **OALCF competencies** are: Find and Use Information; Communicate Ideas and Information; Understand and Use Numbers; Use Digital Technology; Manage Learning; and Engage with Others.

Competency-based approach: An approach encompassing the interaction of skills, knowledge and behaviours that contributes to learners being able to perform authentic and purposeful tasks.

Communicative competence: A speaker's fluency and accuracy in a given language that demonstrates communicating in socially appropriate ways within a particular speech community. It involves knowing both the language code and what to say to whom, and how to say it in a particular cultural context. Communicative competence involves knowing how to:

- Use language for a range of different purposes and functions
- Vary our use of language according to the setting and the participants (e.g., knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication)
- Produce and understand different types of texts (e.g., narratives, reports, interviews, conversations)
- Maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge (e.g., through using different kinds of communication strategies)⁸²

Communicative language teaching (CLT): An approach to second language instruction that emphasizes interaction through role-plays, games, pair work and other kinds of partner/group activities.

Curriculum: The planned content and experiences to which learners should be exposed to in order to achieve learning goals.

EAL: Acronym for English as an Additional Language

EFL: Acronym for English as a Foreign Language

EOIS-CaMS: Acronym for the Employment Ontario Information System - Case Management System – a web-based, real-time software solution that supports the administration and management of clients participating in EO programs and services.

ESL: Acronym for English as a Second Language

80 Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, (2011). *Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework: Glossary*. Employment Ontario.

81 Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks. Glossary of Terms website page. http://www.language.ca/display_page.asp?page_id=999.

82 Richards, J.C. (2006). *Communicative language teaching today*. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp.2-3

ESL credit: An English as a Second Language credit course offered in 5 levels (ESL A-E) – intended for secondary school student or mature students with age-appropriate literacy and educational backgrounds in their first language but whose second/additional language (English) is significantly different from that used for instruction in Ontario schools

ESL non-credit: English as a Second Language classes offered through the local school boards – funded by the provincial Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI).

ESL Literacy: A program for individuals for who are learning English as a Second Language and who are not functionally literate in their own language.⁸³; Also, a growing field in Canada and throughout the English-speaking world.

Employment Ontario (EO): Ontario’s integrated employment and training network in the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities that oversees programs, such as Apprenticeship, Literacy and Basic Skills, Second Career, and more.

English Literacy Development (ELD) programs: Programs that are a part of the Ontario Grade 9-12 curriculum intended for students whose first language is a language other than English or is a variety of English significantly different from that used for instruction in Ontario schools and who have significant gaps in their education. Students in these programs are most often from countries in which their access to education has been limited, so that they have had limited opportunities to develop language and literacy skills in any language.⁸⁴ There are five ELD course levels (ELD A-E) and a student is placed depending on the amount of prior schooling, literacy development and knowledge of English. Note: Adults may work on an ELD credit during a quadmester in an adult learning centre setting.

English Language Learner (ELL): English language learner – this term is primarily used by teachers in the Ontario schools for students K-12 and in the ED-funded adult credit courses.

Enhanced Language Training (ELT): Federally funded language training programs with a work-language component for high English proficiency level adults (workplace experience must be included in this program).

Essential Skills: The nine skills needed for work, learning and life, as researched and defined by Human Resources and Development Canada – i.e. reading; writing; document use; numeracy; computer use; thinking; oral communication; working with others; and continuous learning. These skills are considered the foundation for learning and all other skills.

Fossilized English: English that contains long-established habitual errors that are difficult to correct.

83 Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: *ESL for Literacy Learners* (2000), p. ii, http://www.language.ca/pdfs/esl_literacy.pdf

84 Ontario Ministry of Education, *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12 (Revised) - English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development* (2007), p. 6, accessed November 6, 2011, <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/esl912currb.pdf>

Fossilization: A habitual language error that does not interfere with communication. The error usually develops and becomes permanent due to years of use and lack of correction.⁸⁵ In attempting to explicitly correct and address this type of error, ESL instructors often are frustrated that the habit is so ingrained in the individual that the error persists despite targeted correction efforts.

General Educational Development (GED): An international testing program for adults who have been unable to complete high school. Adults write a set of five tests in core high school curriculum areas. The tests measure the knowledge and skills usually acquired during a regular high school program of study. If the writer obtains a standard score of at least 450 on each of the five GED tests, s/he will receive an Ontario High School Equivalency Certificate that is recognized by colleges, employers, and apprenticeship offices as equivalent to an OSSD/ Grade 12.

Generation 1.5 students: Students who arrived in Canada as children or adolescents and attended school in Canada. These students share characteristics of both first- and second-generation Canadians.

Grey Area Client: A client whose needs/wants, eligibility criteria, and language and literacy levels make it difficult for service providers to immediately determine which agency offers training or services that would be the best fit for this individual.

HARTs: Acronym for the History of Assessments, Referrals and Training system – a web-based database where each language training client (whether a LINC or an ESL non-credit adult learner) will be assigned a unique identifier. Attendance and CLB proficiency levels (beginning competency; developing competency; and completing competency) will all be entered into the common database.

Income Support: Government payments to a learner that are administered via Ontario Works (OW), Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), or Employment Insurance (EI).

L1: First language/mother tongue.

L2: The second language that an individual is learning/acquiring (i.e. target language of second language instruction).

LBS Levels: Up until the introduction of the OALCF, the LBS Program described literacy skills in terms of domains, skill sets and success markers over a series of five levels - LBS Levels 1-5). *The Level Descriptors Manual* (<http://www.nald.ca/library/research/levels/levels.pdf>) published by the Ontario Literacy Coalition details the levels and their descriptors as well as performance indicators for the domains of self-direction and self-management. Programs often placed students in classes according to these levels, but with the advent of the OALCF,

85 Xuemei Li, Johanne Myles, and Pamela Robinson, *Teaching ESL in Canada* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 273.

instruction and progress will revolve around the Complexity Levels 1-3 [which correspond with HRSDC's Essential Skills Levels 1-3] within the of the new curriculum framework's context of goal-oriented tasks. As the transition to OALCF takes place, LBS agencies and programs may still find themselves referring LBS Levels when it comes to their learners.

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC): Federally funded English as a Second Language program for newcomers.

Language Skills: A learner's communicative proficiency in a language is described in relation to four language skills: speaking; listening; reading and writing.

Learner Plan: Describes the learning or program elements that prepare learners for their next steps beyond the LBS Program. It includes the learner's goals, background information, assessment results, milestone tasks to indicate goal completion, indicators of progress, program duration, additional learner supports required, service coordination, and referral results.

Learner Supports: Five (5) categories of supports that may be included in the learner plan in order to help the learner succeed and meet his/her goal in a broader sense. Through service coordination the LBS agencies coordinate with other organizations to provide any of the following supports if required for learner success: financial/material supports; academic supports; employment supports; social service supports; life/social skills supports; and health supports. [Learner supports are also known as 'wrap-around services'].

Learning Path: The training/education path a learner may choose as s/he works towards a goal

LINC Literacy: The ESL Literacy component within the federally-funded LINC Program.

Literacy / Basic Skills: [as defined in the 2011 LBS Service Provider Guidelines] Literacy is the ability to read, write, calculate, speak and understand, as well as sign (for the Deaf) and communicate in other forms of language according to need. Literacy is a continuum of these skills necessary for everyday life in the home, at work, in education and in the community. Basic skills are the additional skills a learner needs to use their literacy skills, such as, digital technology, interpersonal skills, problem solving and critical thinking.

Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program: An Employment Ontario program funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities that provides adults with literacy, numeracy, and essential skills training to help them achieve their goals of employment, apprenticeship, secondary school credit, and postsecondary education, or to enjoy increased independence.

Literacy Learner: An individual enrolled in an LBS program.

Mature Student: [As identified by the Ministry of Education] A student who is at least 18 years old on or before December 31st of the school year; is enrolled in a secondary school credit program for the purposed of obtaining an OSSD; and has been out of school for a period of at least one year before returning as an adult.

Metalinguistic Awareness: Conscious reflection on different aspects of language, apart from the unconscious processes of understanding and production of language. This awareness covers a number of linguistic areas (e.g. phonological awareness; lexical/semantic awareness; syntactic awareness; syllogisms).⁸⁶

Newcomer: An individual who was born in another country and settled in Canada 5 years ago or less.

Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF): The OALCF has been developed to include all the features of competency-based programming (i.e. competencies; assessment; learner transitions to work, further education or independence; and learning materials). The OALCF is comprised of six competencies that organize learning content and describe learner proficiency, using three levels of performance [these three levels coincide with the HRSDC's first three Essential Skills levels]. The OALCF's primary purpose is to make visible the skills, knowledge, and behaviours that adult learners need to fulfill their responsibilities at work, in the community.⁸⁷

OSSD (Ontario Secondary School Diploma): Adults can obtain their OSSD by enrolling in an adult credit program delivered by school boards or the Independent Learning Centre. This credential is recognized by all employers, apprenticeship programs and educational institutions, including colleges and universities.

Outcomes-based education: A learner-centred approach to education that focuses on the intended learning outcomes resulting from instruction. Three components comprise an outcome-based approach to learning: i) an explicit statement of learning intent (outcome); ii) the process/strategy that enables intended learning to be achieved and demonstrated (curriculum, teaching, learning, assessment and support and guidance methods); and iii) criteria for assessing learning which are aligned with intended outcomes.

PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition): The formal evaluation and credit-granting process through which mature students may obtain high school credits for prior learning – the knowledge and skills that adults have acquired in both formal and informal ways. A Grade 9 and 10 individual assessment/equivalency process exists that grants up to 16 credits; and a Grade 11 and 12 equivalency process involves an evaluation in which students may gain no more than 10 credits. (Note: A maximum of 26 credits can be 'PLARed'; however, the mature student must complete four credit courses to obtain an OSSD [it is recommended that principals of adult learning centres delay granting the Grade 11/12 equivalent credits until the four courses that complete the 30-credit OSSD requirements are completed].

PLAR challenge process: An assessment process in which a mature student who successfully challenges a credit may receive a percentage grade that is recorded on his/her transcript.

⁸⁶ Jeanne Kurvers, Ton Vallen, and Roeland Van Hout, *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition: Proceedings of the Inaugural Symposium*, Netherlands, Utrecht, p. 70, <http://lotos.library.uu.nl/publish/articles/000172/bookpart.pdf>

⁸⁷ Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. *OALCF Curriculum Framework*. October 2011, p. 1. http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/OALCF_Curriculum_Framework_Oct_11.pdf

Pedagogy: Strategies of classroom instruction and methods of teaching.

Prose literacy: The knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts including editorials, news stories, brochures and instruction manuals.

Quadmester: The academic year in adult learning centres is divided into 4 quadmesters. A quadmester (often called 'quad') runs approximately 9 weeks. Students can take up to 3 credits per quad, meaning that a total of 12 credits can be acquired per year.

Reading components in literacy development instruction: Four crucial aspects of reading – alphabets [phonemic awareness and word analysis]; fluency; vocabulary; and comprehension.⁸⁸

Referral: The act of recommending a client to a different agency or program that is better able to meet the client's needs.

Referral Protocols: Systems and processes that ensure appropriate referrals and support effectiveness and efficiency.

Second-language Acquisition (SLA): The process of learning or acquiring a second language. Second-language Acquisition also refers to the field of study devoted to studying that process.

Service coordination: LBS service providers coordinate their literacy services with other service providers in a community, such as income support or health services, to meet the range of non-LBS Program-related needs and challenges brought to the LBS program by a learner.

Situated learning: Learning by doing in an authentic environment (e.g. on the job). Situated learning theory posits that learning is embedded within activity, context and culture. It is also usually unintentional rather than deliberate. Lave and Wenger (1991) call this a process of "legitimate peripheral participation".⁸⁹

Specialized Language Training (SLT): Provincially funded language training [MCI funded] with a workplace focus around a specific occupation (e.g. language training for healthcare; hospitality) – offered as either Language Training in the Workplace (LTIW) or Language Training for the Workplace (LTFW).

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language): A high-stakes English proficiency test for non-native speakers of English who wish to enter a university program.

Task: [OALCF context] A purposeful activity that bundles skills, knowledge, and behaviours in unique and authentic ways. Tasks require learners to perform an action or activity, resulting in something concrete or tangible (e.g. a completed form, a to-do list, etc).

⁸⁸ John R. Kruidenier, Charles A. MacArthur, and Heide S. Wrigley, *Adult Education Literacy Instruction: A Review of the Research* (National Institute for Literacy, USA, 2010), p. 8.

⁸⁹ Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge [England: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Tasks: [CLB context] Practical applications and demonstrations of language abilities; practical activities or actions that result from using language⁹⁰.

Task-based learning/Task-based approach: An instructional approach that helps adults draw connections between what they learn in an educational setting and how they can apply their skills and knowledge in everyday activities.

Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES): Measures three Essential Skills needed for employment – Reading Text, Document Use, and Numeracy. It uses the 500-point IALS scale.

Third-Party Assessment: [in the CLARS context] Assessment that takes place at a site independent of ESL or LINC program service providers.

Transition-oriented programming: A term that brings together three key program elements: goal-directed learning, contextualized learning, and coordinated learner supports and services. These three elements maximize a learner's successful transition to the next step along their goal paths.

90 Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks. Glossary of Terms website page. http://www.language.ca/display_page.asp?page_id=999



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APPENDIX 1

MTML REGIONAL LITERACY NETWORK

Sixteen Regional Literacy Networks provide support to adult literacy programs in designated regions within the province of Ontario. Networks represent all the programs in their region across sectors – school boards, colleges, and community-based agencies – and cultural streams – Francophone, Anglophone, Aboriginal, and Deaf (serving Deaf and Deaf/Blind learners – and provide a variety of services to these agencies and programs. Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy (MTML) is the Regional Network for service delivery agencies in York Region, the Town of Bradford, and Toronto.

Regional Literacy Networks

- Enhance communication among and between literacy programs and facilitate communication between literacy programs and the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU);
- Assist literacy programs in understanding and implementing government initiatives;
- Submit applications for literacy development projects and manage their implementation;
- Coordinate information and referral services;
- Raise awareness of literacy, its importance, and literacy programs;
- Plan and provide professional development opportunities for literacy practitioners and other community partners;
- Coordinate literacy service planning for their region and oversee the development and promotion of an annual Literacy Services Plan (LSP).

Centralized information referral: The Literacy Access Network

MTML also runs a referral hotline called the Literacy Access Network (LAN). The Literacy Access Network is Toronto's only adult literacy referral line. LAN is committed to ensuring that callers speak to a real person who will listen to their needs and assist each caller in making the next steps when looking for literacy, upgrading or English as a second language services in Toronto and York Region. For many people with literacy difficulties, the telephone is their preferred means of accessing information. Our service is dedicated to responding to the needs of callers in a manner that is respectful and maintains confidentiality. Through the Literacy Access Network, MTML provides accurate information to allow callers to make informed decisions about their upgrading choices. This commitment to quality referral is a first step to ensuring that callers find access to lifelong learning opportunities, particularly for people who have literacy difficulties and may use the telephone as a preferred means of gathering information. A visual representation of this service including maps linked to the referral database is available online.

Professional development

MTML responds to the needs of member agencies by delivering relevant professional development to people interested in adult literacy. Workshops, seminars, forums, and other materials are developed and presented by MTML and its members, providing professional development that will help in the delivery of good literacy programming in the region.

Literacy work is creative work, as literacy workers are always developing new techniques and methods for reaching their learners. MTML offers workshops and information sessions to keep inspiration alive and to share information and ideas about innovative educational practices. There is a broad range of subjects that literacy workers need to know about, including teaching, learning, assessment, and program management. Through professional development activities, MTML supports its members in their own learning efforts.

MTML also works in partnership with other organizations, such as The Festival of Literacies at UofT/OISE and the Toronto Public Library Adult Literacy Program to increase and expand professional development opportunities for adult literacy workers.

Network communications

MTML stays in touch with its membership through monthly newsletters and information sessions, as well as through the day-to-day workings of the organization. Information on the literacy movement in the region and elsewhere is collected and distributed, helping to insure an informed literacy community.

Members of MTML receive a free monthly newsletter. Delivered in hard copy, on-line, and via email, the newsletter provides information on items of interest to literacy workers and learners - from social service announcements and new teaching resources, to research updates and policy developments. Issues are also available in the online archive at www.mtml.ca.

Public education

Whether responding to questions about adult literacy from the media, participating in public events, or researching and distributing information on changes in the educational system, MTML is dedicated to raising public awareness on adult literacy issues. Raising awareness fosters the promotion of action on adult literacy issues and the improvement of access to good literacy services.

Although much of our work is spent behind the scenes, actively working to support front-line literacy, we also work to raise the public profile of literacy as a social cause. Through various partnerships including City of Toronto, the Toronto Public Library, and The Word On The Street, we are working to educate the public and create awareness about the importance of adult basic literacy for our communities.

With over 25 years of charitable service, MTML has a solid reputation locally, regionally, and nationally. Our services and events like the Literacy Access Network, the MTML tutor training, the MTML Learners' Conference, and the MTML Poetry Challenge have been very well received and are used as models for agencies across the country.

Common Assessment and Information Referral

MTML has Common Assessment and Information Referral Agreements in place to provide learners with seamless transitions between Literacy and Basic Skills, Academic Upgrading and Academic Upgrading Partnership programs and to ensure that all LBS/AU/AUP agencies and program sites have the necessary supports and information in place to coordinate smooth movement within the LBS/AU/AUP system and links to services in the community. These Agreements were established through the work of a Common Assessment Working Group, which was assembled in the fall of 2005 to develop the agreements and work with the Local Literacy Committees to adopt them. The membership was established by the MTCU literacy field consultant and consisted of representatives from each of the Local Literacy Committees and the three delivery sectors (community-based, school boards, and colleges). This work culminated in December of 2006 with the production of the document: *Common Assessment and Information & Referral Agreements for Literacy and Basic Skills and Ontario Basic Skills-Funded Agencies in Toronto and York Region*, which is available on the MTML website.

Since the spring of 2010, the MTML Common Assessment and Information & Referral working group has been meeting regularly to evaluate the implementation of the agreements and protocols, to assess their effectiveness, revise the original document, and develop strategies to improve the existing system of procedures and protocols.

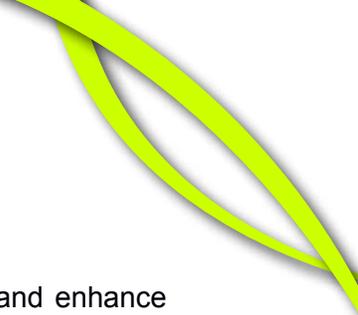
Research and development

MTML is involved in adult literacy research projects, and stays current on projects in other regions, in order to continue the development of the literacy field. Receiving input from people interested in literacy and informing them of the findings, builds a path for new, innovative ways to deliver services.

In addition to facilitating and contributing to local research efforts, MTML also applies for and manages literacy development projects. We have a long track record of successfully completing a wide variety of research and development projects funded primarily through government sources.

Literacy Services Planning

Each region and community has different literacy needs. Through the literacy services planning process, the regional networks document and guide the development of literacy services within their respective regions. They bring literacy programs and literacy stakeholders together to talk



about the specific literacy needs of communities within the region, and to create and enhance learning pathways and partnerships. These pathways enable people who have developed their literacy skills to transition into work, into further education and training, or to greater personal independence.

Literacy programs across Ontario make every effort to be as responsive to the needs of their individual communities as possible. Utilizing their Regional Networks, these programs partner with not only with Employment Ontario stakeholders (Job Connect, Apprenticeship/Pre-Apprenticeship, Employment Assistance Services, Local Training Boards) but with other community stakeholders such as mental health agencies, local community development councils, public health organizations, Ontario Works and Associations for Community Living. It is recognized that literacy intersects with most areas of community development and as such it plays a significant role in meeting the essential skill needs of any community. Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy (MTML) works with Local Literacy Committees in the City of Toronto and York Region to develop a strong network of literacy providers and services and to support the development of excellent adult literacy services throughout the region.



APPENDIX 2

PROGRAM NUMBERS IN TORONTO AND YORK REGION

The numbers below are meant to provide the reader with a general sense of the numbers of learners and Literacy learners attending LINC, ESL and LBS programs in Toronto and York Region and the size/scope of the programs.

Literacy Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) – Funded by Citizenship Immigration Canada (CIC)

Total Number of Clients Who Attended a LINC Program Between January 1 - December 31, 2011

Year	Region	LINC Clients Attended
2011	TORONTO	22,080
2011	YORK	3,849

Note: Total number is unique per region.

January 1 to December 31, 2011

Region	Service	Organizations	Sites	# of LINC Courses
TORONTO	College	3	5	47
	Community Based Agency	33	60	1,009
	School Board	2	26	604
	Welcome Centre	1	3	25
Total		39	94	1,685
YORK	Community Based Agency	5	6	74
	School Board	1	1	22
	Welcome Centre	1	4	76
Total		7	11	172
TORONTO AND YORK REGION	Grand Total	46	105	1857

Data furnished by the Citizenship Immigration Canada, Ontario Region

Total Number of LINC Literacy Courses By Level - January 1 to December 31, 2011

Year	Region	LINC Level	# of Courses per Level	# of Literacy Clients Attended
2011	TORONTO	L	88	1,085
2011	TORONTO	L/1	73	1,155
2011	TORONTO	L/1/2	3	102
2011	TORONTO	L/1/2/3	1	8
2011	TORONTO	L/1/2/3/4	1	35

Year	Region	LINC Level	# of Courses per Level	# of Literacy Clients Attended
2011	YORK	L	6	100
2011	YORK	L/1/2	3	33

English as a Second Language (ESL) Non-Credit – Funded by Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI)

The school boards supplied the following numbers pertaining to the 2010/2011 school year.

2010/2011 School Year

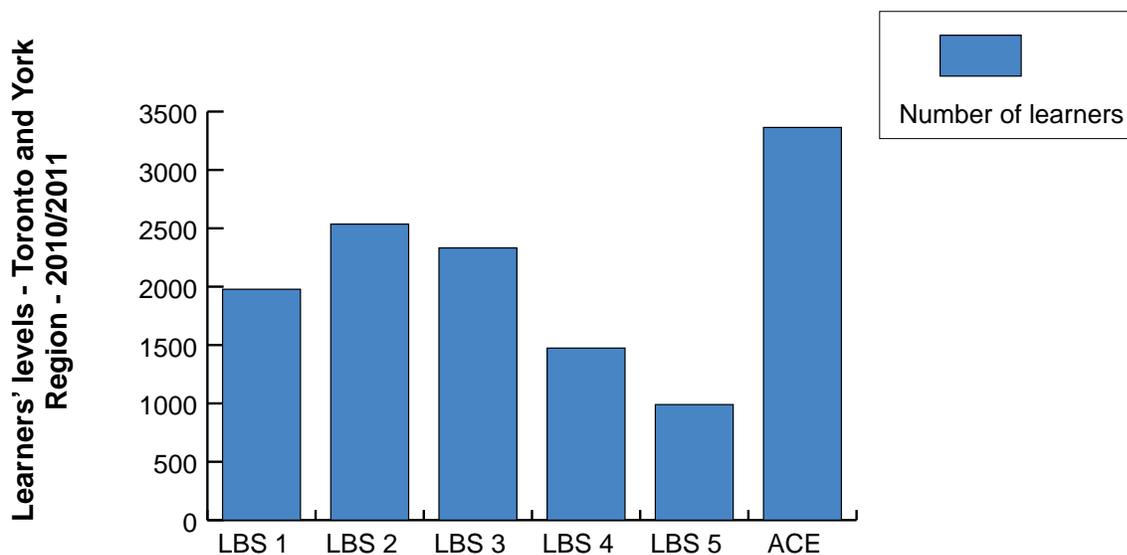
School Board	Total Number of ESL (non-credit) Learners	ESL Literacy Learners	Number of Sites and Classes
Toronto District School Board (TDSB)	27,543	640	Sites: 112 Classes: 544
Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB)	8,074	521	Sites: 43 Classes: 466
York Region District School Board (YRDSB)	6,602	780 (in Basic & ESL 1)	Sites: 39 Classes: 235
York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB)	15,612	1,662	Sites: 29 Classes: 128

Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program – Funded by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

In 2010-2011, Literacy and Basic Skills and Academic Upgrading programs in Toronto, York Region and Bradford served 12,795 learners. Over 75% of learners were between the ages of 25 and 64. The breakdown by region and levels is as follows:

Toronto and York Region LBS Figures – 2010/2011

Region	# of Clients - LBS (Levels 1-5)	# of Clients - ACE	Total Learners
Toronto	8,213	3,101	
York Region	802	263	
Toronto and York Region	9,015	3,364	12,795



Learners enrolled in Academic & Career Entrance (ACE) courses represented over 26% of all learners. The ACE Program is an adult upgrading certificate program delivered through the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program. This program prepares students for admission to post-secondary college programs and apprenticeships.

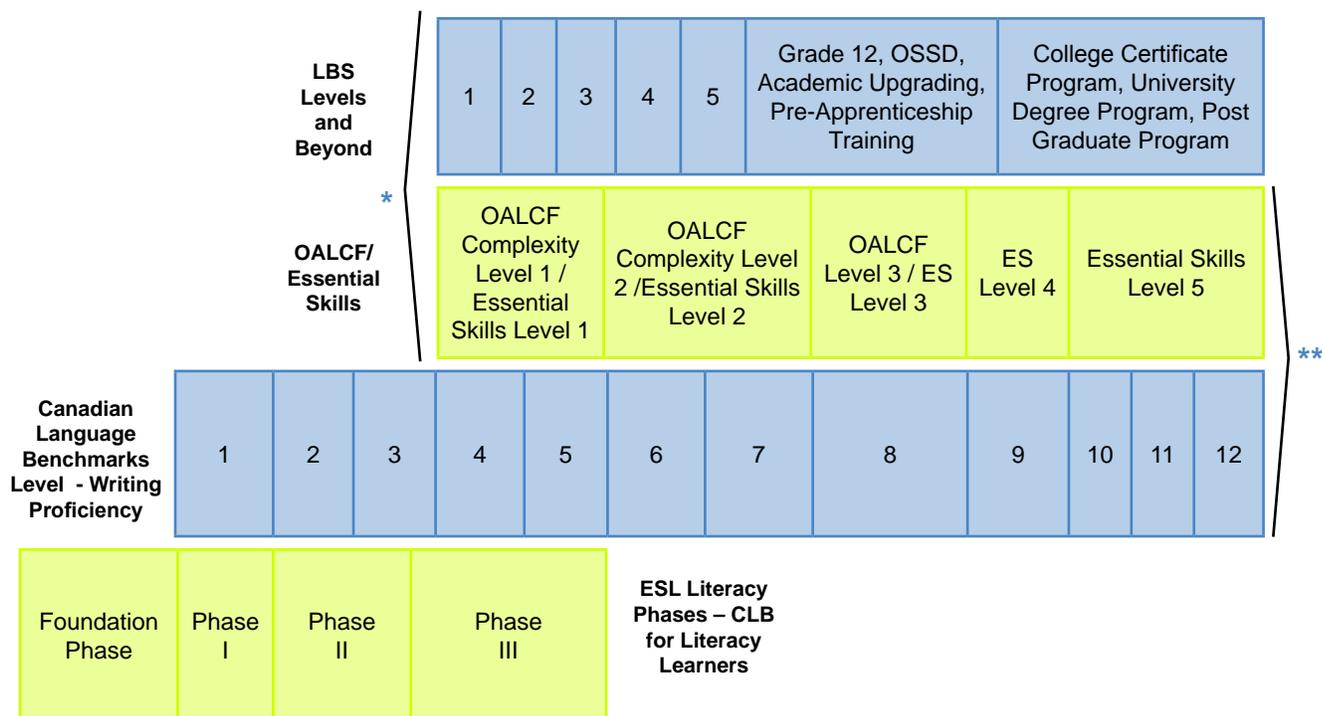


APPENDIX 3

LEVEL COMPARISONS

The Multiple Measures Conundrum

IMPORTANT NOTE: Level comparisons of the various matrices below are not exact. They measure different competencies, proficiencies and skills. The following charts are only an approximation of level comparisons. They are not meant to be used to describe absolute correlations between the various matrices in literacy and language programs.



* Adapted from the information depicted on the GATES (goals and training for employment success) website – www.mygates.ca – in the *Instructors* section

** As approximated in the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks Comparative Framework, *Relating Canadian Benchmarks to Essential Skills: A Comparative Framework* (2005) document



APPENDIX 4



LEARNER FOCUS GROUP – PROJECT INFORMATION

About the Project

This project is looking at the experiences of literacy learners whose mother tongue is not English and who are in Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs. This project takes place in Toronto and York Region from April 2011 to March 2012.

We want to find out:

- How you came to the LBS program; where you want to go from here
- What your learning needs are
- How this program helps you move toward your training goals
- What helps you learn here
- What other supports would help you with your training/learning

How will we collect information for this research?

We collect information by asking teachers, students and assessors to participate in **focus groups**. If you agree to take part today, you would be part of a learner focus group.

A focus group is a group of people who come together to discuss a subject that can help the researcher understand something. In this case, what we want to understand is the learning pathways and the needs of LBS students like you. During the focus group the researcher acts as a facilitator (a person who helps guide the discussion by asking questions). The discussion is recorded using a digital recorder and a second facilitator may be taking notes when people are speaking. The focus group will take about 1 ½ hours, and when the focus group ends you will be given \$25 for participating.



Your name and personal information will not be used

It is important to know that your name and any other information that shows who you are will not be used in any of the report or presentations. Your ideas, opinions and experiences are important for this research because they give information about your experiences as an LBS adult learner whose first language is not English. Some of your exact words may be used in the written report, but if they are used we will show in a general way who said those words. Example: An LBS student who has been in Canada for 7 years and whose mother tongue is Mandarin said this: "I learn better..."

The Research Report and Presentation of Findings

The researcher will use the notes from all the focus groups and the recordings, and information from interviews and surveys to help write a report and do presentations about what we found to the LBS and ESL education communities. The notes for this project will belong to the Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy (the literacy organization that received funding to do this project). The report will go to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) and will be made available online for assessors, teachers, program managers and anyone else interested in the learning pathways of adult LBS learners whose mother tongue is not English.

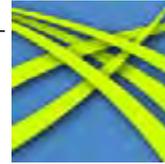
Who will benefit from this project?

The project may help a number of people in both literacy programs and language programs understand the learners better:

- Assessors, teachers and program managers may find the information useful in helping deliver a better learning experience to literacy students with ongoing English language needs.
- Learners like you may also benefit because your experiences, pathways and needs will be better understood by those planning and delivering the programs
- Policymakers in the government may use the information to make more informed decisions about how programs serving learners with both literacy and language needs can better meet the particular needs of these learners.

Thank you for your time!

LEARNER FOCUS GROUP – CONSENT FORM



Please check box to show that each item was done:

The project information sheet was read out loud and explained to me.

I understand what this research project is about.

I know that the focus group will be digitally recorded.

I know that the facilitator(s) will take notes during the discussion.

I understand that some of what I say may be used in a report or presentation.

I understand that my name and personal identifying information will not be used anywhere in this project.

I understand that I do not have to answer a question if I am not comfortable answering that question.

I understand that the facilitator(s) will do their best to make the focus group a space for safe and respectful discussion.

I understand that at the end of the focus group I will get an honorarium amount of \$25 for my participation.



I, _____, agree to be part of the research project by
(your name)

participating in a learner focus group on _____.
(today's date)

Olga Herrmann and Stephanie Gris will be the facilitator(s) who will ask questions and take notes. I have been given a copy of this consent form and the project information sheet.

Signature of Focus Group Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Facilitator: _____ Date: _____



PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET:

The Project – Meeting at the LBS/ESL Intersections

We are researchers contracted by the Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy to work on a project funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). This project focuses on exploring the learning pathways of Level 1-3 learners in Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs in Toronto and York Region who have ESL-needs. These learners may have already attended ESL or LINC programs and now find themselves in an LBS training program.

Goals of this project

- To better understand *who* the ESL-needs literacy learners are
- To better understand the needs of this particular learner and how those needs are met (or not)
- To identify the common learning pathways, program entry points and transition points of this particular learning group
- To identify barriers and gaps in service
- To build relationships between language programs and LBS programs that will assist in coordination of services between the various provincial ministries charged with adult education pieces (EDU, MCI, MTCU)

Gathering data

Qualitative data will be collected from focus groups and learning circles. Three types of focus group participants have been targeted for participation: assessors, teachers/tutors and learners. The data we collect will inform the exploration of the current learning pathways of ESL-needs literacy learners and the creation of learner profiles common to Toronto and York Region. The researchers will facilitate the focus groups, asking questions that surface the front-line realities of assessing, teaching or being an ESL-needs LBS learner.

Each focus group session will be digitally audio-taped and the co-facilitator will make detailed notes intended to complement and clarify the session during the transcription process. The files will be transcribed; however, portions of the focus group sessions that veer off-topic and/or are outside the scope of the project will be summarized by the transcriber and not recorded word for word.

How the findings will be used

The focus group findings will be combined with data gathered from one-on-one interviews, comments from the project's online presence and surveys. The overall findings from the various data collection modes will be presented at a one-day forum to stakeholders from the LBS field and ESL and LINC fields in early 2012.

The findings will help form the base from which collaboration and relationship-building between the LBS and language programs can be strengthened.

A final written report will also be submitted to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) and the report and supporting information sheets will be posted online.

Who may benefit from this project

- *LBS Assessors* may benefit from: our documenting the front-line challenges surrounding placement and referral of learners with both literacy and language needs; our sharing examples of successful learner transitions to LBS programs; learning about supports that are required by particular learner profiles, which could help direct learners to appropriate programs and services
- *LBS Practitioners* may benefit from: learning how others from programs across Toronto and York Region have responded to the particular needs of these learners (or not); having a greater awareness of the range of options available to learners if their program is not a good fit
- *Assessors and practitioners from the ESL and LINC communities* may benefit from: gaining a greater understanding of LBS programming and how second-language learners can be supported in these programs
- *Learners* may benefit from: having the opportunity to voice their needs and to provide insights as to the successes and struggles they have encountered along their learning pathway; having stakeholders understand their front-line realities around assessment, placement and transitions; having the adult education partners coordinate services to reduce frustration for these learners as they move along their learning journeys
- *Policymakers* may benefit from: hearing about the struggles of agencies serving literacy learners with ongoing second-language needs; coming to understand the diverse needs and pathways of these learners; and developing an understanding of the strengths and gaps in service with respect to foundation skills programs in Toronto and York Region

The Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy's (MTML's) ***Exploring Learning Pathways: Meeting at the LBS/ESL Intersections*** project researched the learning pathways and needs of Anglophone-stream low-level Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) learners whose mother tongue or primary language is other than English.

This Employment Ontario project was funded by the Ontario Government. MTML is grateful to Ontario's Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), without whose funding and support this important project would not have been possible.



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